

# THE FIFTH COLUMN

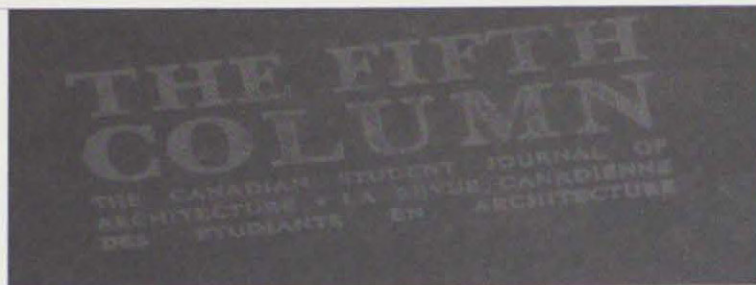
The Canadian Student Journal of Architecture  
La Revue Canadienne des Etudiants en Architecture

## The Construction of Memory

## The Secret Life of Buildings

Volume Nine Number One





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## THE FIFTH COLUMN

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The name of the Canadian Student Journal of Architecture, THE FIFTH COLUMN, is intended to be interpreted in a number of ways. First, there is an architectonic reference, the preoccupation with the development of a contemporary order of architecture that is at once respectful of antiquity and responsive to new conceptions of architecture. Second, there is a reference to journalism and the printed column of text. Finally, there is the twentieth century political connotation, an organized body sympathizing with and working for the enemy in a country at war.

These three references essentially define the role of THE FIFTH COLUMN. The magazine promotes the study of architecture in Canada at the present in terms of both the past and the future. It attempts to stimulate and foster a responsible, critical sensitivity in both its readers and its contributors. Finally, THE FIFTH COLUMN provides an alternative forum to established views not for the sake of opposing them, but to make it possible to objectively evaluate them.

## Objectives

To promote the study and the appreciation of a sensitive architecture within the architectural community and general population, thereby positively influencing the development of architecture in Canada;

To promote a forum for and to encourage the dialogue between students, academics, professional architects and interested members of the 'lay' population;

To provide a critical alternative to the commercial trade magazines by publishing a journal that originates from the schools, traditionally the vanguard of architectural thought.

## Editorial Policies

1. To publish articles by students, academics and professionals and by other interested parties that would otherwise find little opportunity for expression and publication.

2. To publish a series of articles in each issue exploring a specific and relevant theme which contributes to an understanding and a greater awareness of current architecture.

3. To publish articles on the diversity of Canadian architecture as a means of promoting an understanding of these local traditions and their influence on current architectural thought.

4. To publish articles discussing historical influences on the development of architecture.

5. To publish student projects from the various schools in order to stimulate architectural debate.

6. To publish critical reviews of current works of architecture in Canada, as well as outside the country, in order to reflect on and positively influence the development of architecture in Canada.

7. To publish critical reviews of activities, publications, lectures and exhibitions of interest to our readership.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (Canadian Student Journal of Architecture) published winter 1995.

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Le titre de la revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture, THE FIFTH COLUMN, a pour but d'inviter le lecteur à l'interpréter à plusieurs niveaux. Le premier niveau suggère une référence architectonique, celle consistant à l'élaboration d'un ordre architectural contemporain à la fois respectueux d'un passé antique et répondant aux nouvelles conceptions de l'architecture. Sur un autre plan, THE FIFTH COLUMN rappelle son orientation journalistique par sa connotation avec la "colonne" imprimée d'un texte. Enfin, "la cinquième colonne", c'est aussi, depuis Franco, le nom donné aux partisans clandestins sur lesquels chacun des deux adversaires peut compter dans les rangs de l'autre.

Ces trois références définissent dans son ensemble le rôle de THE FIFTH COLUMN. La revue a pour but de promouvoir l'étude de l'architecture au Canada, en terme de lien entre le passé et le futur. Elle tente également de stimuler et d'entretenir un sens aigu de la critique chez ses collaborateurs ainsi que chez ses lecteurs. Enfin, THE FIFTH COLUMN propose un forum où il est possible d'établir différents points de vue, non dans le seul but de les confronter mais plutôt de rendre possible leur évaluation objective.

## Objectifs

Promouvoir l'étude et l'appréciation d'une architecture sensible à l'intérieur de la communauté architecturale ainsi qu'à de plus larges groupes, et par conséquent influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada;

Promouvoir la constitution d'un forum dans le but d'encourager le dialogue et les échanges d'idées entre les étudiants, les architectes et les individus intéressés de toute autre provenance;

Offrir une alternative critique aux revues de type commercial, en publiant un périodique ayant ses racines à l'intérieur des Ecoles universitaires, traditionnellement pionnières dans l'évolution de la pensée architecturale.

## Politiques éditoriales

1. Publier les articles d'étudiants, de membres du corps académique, de professionnels ainsi que d'autres groupes intéressés, qui autrement ne trouveraient que peu d'opportunités d'expression et de publication.

2. Publier une série d'articles dans chaque numéro explorant un thème spécifique qui contribuera à une compréhension approfondie et à une plus grande conscientisation de l'architecture contemporaine.

3. Publier des articles sur les diverses facettes de l'architecture canadienne dans le but de promouvoir la compréhension de ces différentes traditions locales et de leur influence sur la pensée architecturale contemporaine.

4. Publier des articles traitant des influences historiques sur le développement de l'architecture.

5. Publier les projets d'étudiants des différentes Ecoles dans le but de stimuler le débat architectural.

6. Publier des comptes rendus critiques de différentes œuvres architecturales au Canada ainsi qu'à l'étranger afin de s'arrêter sur et d'influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada.

7. Publier des comptes rendus critiques des différents événements, publications, conférences et expositions ayant quelque intérêt pour nos lecteurs.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (La revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture) publiée à l'hiver 1995

THE FIFTH COLUMN, la revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture, est un organisme sans but lucratif, dont le but est de promouvoir l'étude de l'architecture. Les articles et opinions qui apparaissent dans la revue sont publiés sous la responsabilité de leur auteurs. Le but de reproduire dessins, photographies et extraits de d'autres sources est de faciliter la critique. THE FIFTH COLUMN n'est responsable ni des dommages subis par le matériel envoyé, ni de sa perte.

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these are the guidelines





## Editorial



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.

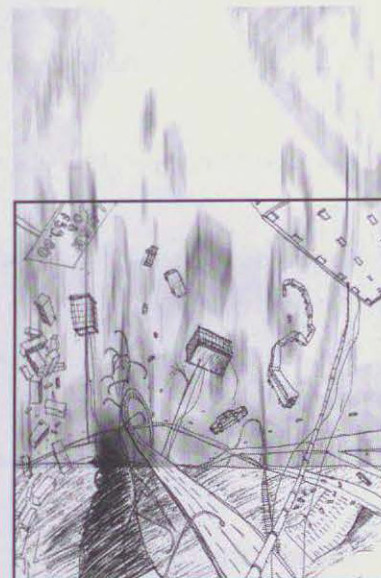
### How do we construct memory?

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, oversimplified 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 build 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*

### 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 Bake-lite 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

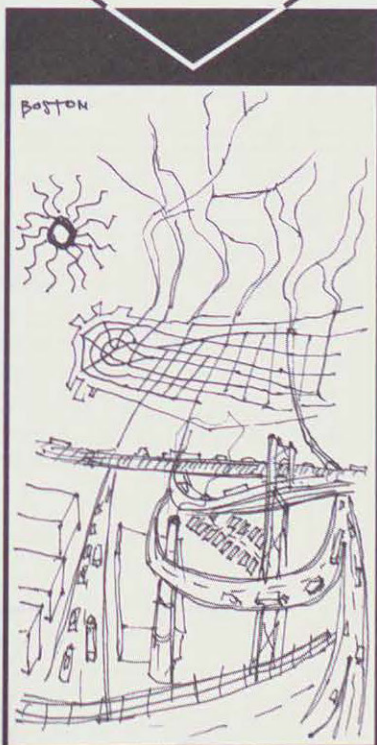
Equal access

Distancing

Dependencies

Containers

Fragmentation



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.

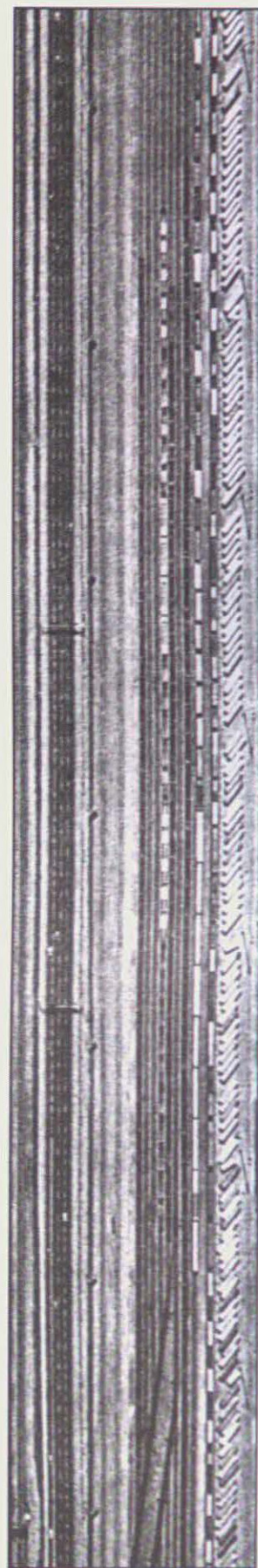
\* \* \*

*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.





Cet article, à travers une analyse de "A la recherche du temps perdu" de Marcel Proust, traite du rôle de l'architecture comme intermédiaire entre le Moi et le Monde, et de la signification du rêve qui nous aide à comprendre la réalité dans laquelle nous avons choisi de vivre. En cinq parties sous les titres "Rêve," "Moi," "Chose," "Ville" et "Vie," le lecteur est entraîné à travers différents aspects de l'existence où l'objet devient un instrument par lequel ce crée le Moi et le Monde, tout deux pour un bref instant en complémentarité mutuelle. Le monde des rêves et de l'imagination est constamment pris en exemple comme modèle d'une réalité sans stabilité et sans cadre rigide mais où il est néanmoins possible de trouver un sens si le Moi accepte d'adopter un point de référence temporaire. Le moment du réveil est vu comme une zone transitionnelle où sont accomplis ces choix conscients de cadres rigides. Empruntant une expression du philosophe italien Gianni Vattimo, l'auteur explore la possibilité d'établir une "vérité faible" avec l'aide des particularités de chaque situation. Dans tout cela, l'architecte détient la responsabilité de communiquer ses interprétations du situationnel, peut-être même avec un soupçon d'universalité temporaire. Cet article est accompagné de citations provenant des textes de Marcel Proust et de photographies prises par l'auteur.

a door-sized patch of ancient yellowed wallpaper, flaky gold print, faded listening to thousands of words in the tiny space.

A white enamel stove, worn at the corners and edges to a soft black, looms into the centre of

## A LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU - the lost moment and its trace

### Dream

In dreaming, the mind performs a free play with its memory, its stock of perceptions rooted in material substance. In this space, fragments of the past come up to the surface in a most unpredictable order, gaining new meanings through their fictional context. Often the dream cannot be retold, or in an ordinary sense remembered when its reality - the very specific framework set up where what happens and what is seen make sense - is gone. Still, there is sometimes a space and a moment with a thickness where these two worlds can meet; the time of the awakening. Here the realities merge, and slowly the disappearance of the world of the dream brings up the reality of the day. In this description a further complexity lies hidden, the multiplicity of the one reality, the absence of a common framework. The question of difference between dream and reality gains a new dimension when the distance is shrinking and in danger of collapsing. The fundamental question for architecture has long since ceased to be a bringing out and putting forward the order of the macrocosm, or even one of building the ideality of the real in search of making evident the objective truth. Yet the loss of the framework might not imply the loss of truth. It is possible that the truth has just been forced into a search for a redefinition of itself, for a truth that can be relative without losing its specific value. In this search, the reality of dreams can help, since it is here that the frameworks are always shifting while the space of the dream remains a space of meaning.

It is significant that Marcel Proust's literary search for time lost to the past begins with a view of the world from the angle of the self awakening in bed. In these first seven pages the reality of the narrator shifts between his childhood and his present, thus anticipating the story unfolding in the three thousand five hundred pages to come. Elegantly, Proust throws the reader into different moments contained in the narrator's memory, utilizing the text as its parallel, an inscription that brings up temporally incompatible realities to an even surface. Somewhere in that process, there is a self to be found. Probably, in Proust's understanding, the self still existed as one, even though it was a struggle to maintain it, a struggle aided by the sensation of time given through memory. Today, one might argue that the self is lost, but even so, there is only a limited multitude of stories of our selves that can be written through our memories. Similarly, there are many texts to be written of reality, 'true' fictions created from the memories of things manifested in physical traces. In the conscious choice of working within one reality, although aware of others, and in acting as an ethically responsible self, lies a possibility for actions and resulting material objects to communicate meaning in the gaining of a momentary universality of fictional truth.

Thus, the scope of this essay is contained in this first paragraph of the dream; Self, Thing, City and Life are all crucial parts of an argument here put forward to support the making of artifacts that are not silent, but active in an on-going process of re-evaluating our surroundings, the other as selves and the other as things. *A la recherche du temps perdu* will, confronted with our present state of perplexion, be the reference used throughout the text as an example of what can happen in the suspended space of awakening.

### Self

The search for the self of the narrator is the reason for the 'recherche' put forward by Proust. It is only through activating reality that the self can be constituted and reconstituted in relation to its surroundings. And it is only through a recognition of the self that man can act upon reality. Ethically responsible decisions cannot be taken without a play between a self and a perceived reality. In a time when there are a multitude of selves and realities, this play is not easy to perform. Conscious choices have to be made as to which point of view is to be put forward in a specific context, which reading is to be done, and what is, for the moment, the basis of decisions. Still, there are more appropriate interpretations than others, more justifiable actions in a given context, but these are always based on specifics and cannot be taken up to the level of universality, because it is precisely this level that has ceased to exist. From specific experience we have to build our own table on which a world and a self can meet, and where other selves can come to experience recognition and difference. Through specifics, an unstable surface is edified on which a momentary discourse can take place.



*"The reality that I had known no longer existed. It sufficed that Mme Swann did not appear, in the same attire and the same moment for the whole avenue to be altered. The places that we have known belong only to the little world of that space in which we situate them for our own convenience. None of them was ever more than a thin slice, held between the contiguous impressions that composed our life at that time; remembrance of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment; and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years." (p 325)*



*"...I lost all the sense of the place in which I had gone to sleep, and when I awoke at midnight, not knowing where I was, I could not be sure at first of who I was; I had only the most rudimentary sense of existence, such as may lurk and flicker in the depths of an animal's consciousness; I was more destitute of human qualities than the cave-dweller; but then the memory, not yet of the place in which I was, but of various other places where I had lived, and might now very possibly be, would come like a rope let down from heaven to draw me up out of the abyss of nothingness, from which I could never have escaped by myself: in a flash I would traverse and surmount centuries of civilisation, and through succeeding blurred glimpses of oil-lamps, followed by shirts with turned-down collars, I would gradually recompose the original traits of my self." (p 5)*

*"It is our attention that places things in a room, and habit that removes them and makes room for ourselves. Of room, there was none for me in my bedroom (mine in name only) at Balbec; it was full of things which did not know me, which flung back at the distrustful look that I had cast at them, and, without taking any heed of my existence, shewed that I was interrupting the course of theirs.... I kept raising my eyes - which the things in my room in Paris disturbed no more than did my eyelids themselves, for they were merely extensions of my organs, an enlargement of myself.... Having no world, no room, no body now that was not menaced by the enemies thronging round me, invaded to the very bones by fever, I was utterly alone; I longed to die." (p 506-7)*



Memory in Proust's work is evoked by perceptions of an object, a smell or a taste, which involuntarily brings the mind back to a time where this sensation was relevant. In the act of remembrance the mind is creating a new context for the old, where what was is brought up to what is; thus the temporal distance is at once erased and emphasized - erased in their meeting but emphasized in their incompatibility. Proust stresses the creative faculty of the mind that is required even in remembrance. In the movement back to the past is inscribed a parallel projection into the future. Memories, even if attached to the self, can be recomposed into new contexts and create fictions of the self, needed for decisions on unknown matters of the future. In dreams all kinds of possible realities are experienced, based on what we are, with memory and a free play of association at hand. The encounter of this imaginary space with the real, that which has limited time, a particular place and is experienced by the present body, is what can constitute ourselves and be the basis of our choices for specific actions.

In the 'little phrase' of Swann, a particular passage in a Sonata is played for him and he is brought to another invisible reality. The music, as played, takes on a spatial character that turns it into an object of memory. He likens it to a closed world of its own inhabited only by the piano and the violin, from where we can hear them sing as birds in a tree. The significance of this example, is that it emphasizes the relation between creator, work of art and self. It is not only our own memories that are recalled in objects, but also those of others, in the artifact and in the work of art. Through the fictional worlds made by others it is again possible to feel both recognition and difference. It is to this multitude of worlds that we direct our decisions, as makers of things that last. The reason that each individual can contribute is the uniqueness of the experience in one person, the reason that what is made can be understood is the overlap of similar experiences. The world where the work is made is the link between beings, and the work is the link between Being and world. The world, in this context, is no longer assumed to be the one true reality, but the only significant one in the particular context of the work.

### Thing

Things, as artifacts, are traces of human existence left as memories in a material world. In themselves they form a bank of fragments to be brought up and pieced together into fictions of the past obtained from the 'real.' On the other hand, the name of the thing has a reality of its own sometimes larger than the thing itself. In the last part in 'Swann's Way,' *Nom de Pays: le nom* this relation between things or places and their names is exemplified through the narrator's fantasies of a journey that never takes place, but is solely based on the names of places and their indication of content. He has a dream of becoming a writer and tries very hard to find a language for his thoughts. Only in the conscious forgetting of his intent, and with the contemplation of nature and things, does he find the wish to express, and in realizing the active relations between these experiences in time, can he find the words that are composed into a narrative. The belief in things and in people, as he says, brings out the possibility of speech and comprehension.

Things are charged with meaning outside of their physical appearance, a meaning as part of our life or as strangers to it, a meaning evoked through associations and memories attached to the artifact. It is this nature of things that Proust is emphasizing by pointing out the inadequacy that sometimes occurs in the relation between a name and a place, a word and a thing. Sometimes when a thing is put down in front of us, its physical immediacy and measurability take away all those dreams and associations that were attached to it. The young boy, who lives more in his dreams than in the world, is frequently a victim for such disappointments. But the two worlds meet: in the bedroom when the dream is slowly replaced by the real, or in the evocation of memory bringing back the past hidden in things perceived in the present. In a place where nothing is familiar or ever experienced we are at loss with our selves, not finding any material connections to bring us out of the thin moment that lacks thickness, preventing us from projecting into the future taking off from the past.

Making, in this reality, means interpreting those things in a particular context, with relation to the present, to the self, and through the artifacts, to other worlds and selves. An interpretative act means always jumping between worlds, times and other selves. In the object made, a new understanding of its specific context can be contained, providing for others a projection into a possible future. It is never a matter anymore of saying, 'this is how it was, is or will be,' but rather what is proposed is a possibility, a fictional truth, to direct the living through a life. The narrator in Proust's novel might have an extraordinarily difficult time in relating to his self and the realities he encounters. Nevertheless, I would think that he is a most appropriate character for our time to consider when producing spaces to be inhabited. The uncertainty of the ground on which we walk and the multitude of impressions making their way into our minds only emphasizes a need for an architecture that carefully materializes interpretations of this complexity. But again, the space thus produced only marks an instant of the constant workings of interpretative imagination; when materialized it stands alone to become appropriated in a multitude of minds and a link to individual possible pasts.

the adjacent space. A high chair of bent birch wood and thin chrome steel along one side becomes a station for further conversation. A thick pall of words, tears, and fears fill the air. Waist-high wainscoting painted a light pea



*"I put my cup aside and turn towards my soul. It is for that to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it to nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day." (p 35)*



*"I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and so effectively lost to us until the day... when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognized their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life. And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die." (p 34)*

*"I used to go forward in the church when we were making our way to our chairs as into a fairy-haunted valley ... the church ... a building which occupied, so to speak, four dimensions of space - the name of the fourth being Time - which had sailed the centuries with that old nave, where bay after bay, chapel after chapel, seemed stretch across and hold down and conquer not merely a few yards of soil, but each successive epoch from which the whole building had emerged triumphant, hiding the rugged barbarities of the eleventh century in the thickness of its walls... thrusting down with its crypt into the blackness of a Merovingian night..." (p 46-7)*



## City

Cities are living sites for archaeological excavations. Layer upon layer of things marked by specific instants in their history are firmly held together. Sometimes they appear transparent; time is lost to the instant presently busy leaving a new mark. Each layer has two aspects: one that testifies to the moment of its initiation and another that is part of the markings from a life lived. When the things are brought together, the surface of the present stretches over their past and unifies them in a common instant of life. Under this surface the differences appear, at moments clear and sharp, but mostly in a diffuse blur. As if seeing things through a pane of glass, the reflection makes it hard to tell what the depth might be. This is the experience of Proust's narrator in the cathedral of his summer town, Combray. In his imagination, the different elements of the church take on the character of their history, and he is led through the building by them. His self is recomposing the artifact into a living archaeology.

Montréal has the short history of two years, for me. This remark has two dimensions. First the evident, that the sensation of the history or past of a city is dependent on an understanding of its artifacts, related to personal experience and familiarity with the culture from which they originated. Second, there is another aspect, more difficult to grasp, which has to do with the balance between present and past in a material engagement in the use of the city and its transformations. The rhythm, in which this city transforms, has the nature of sudden unexpected outbreaks and long periods of silence. One building burns down, is left as a ruin, for a long time. Suddenly there is a frame for a new building, replacing the ruin, but still being left in this stage for a long time. One day a building will be standing there, new; for many by-passers it will appear as if it had always been there. There is a constant flux between clear marking and complete erasing. The streets seem collage-like; every part meaningful in itself, but an exchange of parts not always significant enough to make an impression on the whole. Within clear physical and legal boundaries, buildings grow and decay in their own cycles. Each individual contributes to the whole from their point of view with an understanding of what is on the other side. The pattern of the city is inferred from multiplicity to a homogeneity of fragments.

What seems to have happened here is that the layer of the living present works the past into itself to such a degree that it turns opaque, and differences in time become increasingly difficult to distinguish. Each new building blends into a larger pattern of fragments whose place in time is utterly ambiguous. Added to this collage is the cultural diversity of building traditions. To walk in specific areas brings forward sensations of displacement, being suddenly transported to other worlds. Being on the surface more constructed by life and present circumstances, than by conscious planning and visions of the future; by individual choices rather than by political decisions, Montréal fascinates me as an extreme contrast to the city of Stockholm, which for me has a history of hundreds of more years than my own experience of it permits. However, Stockholm instead seems to be stuck in a disturbing transparency of the present. The engagement in its history and the visions of its future turns life into a static construction of social engineering.

## Life

A fossil is a recording of geological time, a time to which we have no access. The trace of life is contained there with a precision that makes its death unbearably sharp. It is in wonder that we touch the rock, to affirm that the cast is just as much matter as its surroundings. The butterfly is born out of a cocoon. The cocoon was made by a larva. The larva was born from an egg. The egg was placed on a leaf. The cocoon is the container of the metamorphosis; what remains of the larvae are a few nerve-cells, the rest decay to nourish the growth of the new being. The butterfly is built from a process of destruction and death. The larva was brave when it went to sleep. When looking closely at our surroundings, a dimension of reality can be perceived that brings us into wonder in front of something that we are part of but yet cannot reach. Comprehension implies a distance from what is grasped. To understand life in our culture, it has to be dead. This paradox is manifest in museums, where the butterfly has the value of a stamp, displayed beside others for comparison and neutral structuring of knowledge. Behind the glass a ghost of nature is pinned down with a ruthless needle. Our body is part of both sides, in a certain way embodying both the difference itself and the framework through which we comprehend. From culture, nature is retracting, as mysterious today, as ever before, dependant as we are in our lives on its production.

Architecture doubtlessly is a cultural construct. Yet, in some part it houses both the fossil and the butterfly. A building, as a poetic work, carries intentionality, meaning that is rooted in the specific conditions of a chosen context. The intentional direction of human perception allows an interpretative act that can read the work as a framework from which to measure and bring forward that which is distant. As in the dream the frameworks change frequently, but for short moments there exists the important opportunity to discover relations between phenomena of the world. Art, in a certain way immobilizes nature, but only to let it be seen. But art in itself is also part of life and submitted to change. A society where art is fully merged into life necessarily aborts knowledge and understanding. If art is left alone, separated from change and evolution, knowledge becomes meaningless and dogmatic. Through remembrance and forgetfulness, attachment and departure, time can be allowed both its matter and its flow. The journey which Proust made through his work has its very significance in this, the pointing towards the constant work involved in the maintenance of a self and its relation to the world.

There is a zone of difference and interdependence that has been pointed to in this essay. This zone separates and keeps together all these elements; self to self, self to others, self to things, things to things, things to nature, nature to self. The differences are both temporal and spatial. In this zone the artifact is housed, being, through human imagination and interpretation, the material thickness through which waves can travel, providing momentary connections. The life of Proust's narrator is sad, but lived in this sensitive condition of being between dream and reality, always asking for reassurance that what was there before, still is. To dream forever might not be a wise solution, but in building as if in a dream, joining the impossible with the real, one might find an opening to the space of difference.

green over layers and layers of sound, soaked into the ancient oak. Two windows look out into a gray sky. Beneath one, a heavy workspace of deep sink, the ceramic name of its manufacturer fading blue-green into the translucent white. Beneath the other is a small table of white Formica, runnels of chrome run along the side, cool and expansive to a gentle touch. A lethargic black cat climbs a cube of plywood, layered with ragged old carpet, providing a quiet space in which he can be both part of the world around him, and quietly secluded from it. Above his little room, a stack of newspapers brings in the newest additions to the conversation.

A dank alcove hums with the mechanical life of a stocky refrigerator, chocolate brown shaded in the

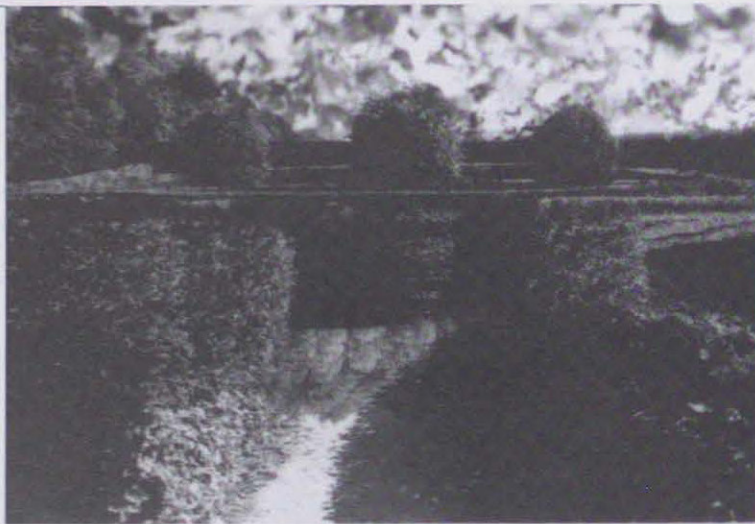


*"The flowers which played then on the grass, the water which rippled past in the sunshine, the whole landscape which served as environment to their apparition lingers around the memory of them still with its unconscious or unheeding air; and, certainly, when they were slowly scrutinised by this humble passer-by, by this dreaming child ... that scrap of nature, that corner of a garden could never suppose that it would be thanks to him that they would be elected to survive in all their most ephemeral details; and yet the scent of hawthorn which strays*



*plundering along the hedge from which, in a little while, the dog-roses will have banished it, a sound of footsteps followed by no echo, upon a gravel path, a bubble formed at the side a waterplant by the current, and formed only to burst - my exaltation of mind has borne them with it, and has succeeded in making them traverse all these successive years, while all around them the one-trodden ways have vanished, while those who thronged those trodden ways, are dead. Sometimes the fragment of landscape thus transported into the present will detach itself in such isolation from all associations that it floats uncertainly upon my mind, like a flowering isle of Delos, and I am unable to say from what place, from what time - perhaps, quite simply, from which of my dreams - it comes. But it is pre-eminently as the deepest layer of my mental soil, as firm sites on which I still may build, that I regard the Méséglise and Guermantes 'ways.' It is because I used to think certain things, of certain people, while I was roaming along them, that the things, the people which they taught me to know, and these alone, I still take seriously, still give me joy. Whether it be that the faith which creates has ceased to exist in me, or that reality will take shape in the memory alone, the flowers that people shew me nowadays for the first time never seem to be true flowers." (p 141)*





Quotations from Montcrieff's 1924 translation, but adapted according to the French text in the 1954 Gallimard edition. Page numbers refers to the 1934 edition of 'Remembrance of Things Past - Volume one,' Random House, New York. Illustrations by the author.

*Katja Grillner is currently completing her Master of Architecture in the History and Theory programme at the McGill School of Architecture. She studied architecture, art history, and philosophy at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and at the University of Stockholm. Her research involves gardens, ruins, and other fictional realities of the past.*

entry's orange darkness. Aching floorboards are bent from the pounding dampness of many winters' frozen precipitation. Walls close in around the open refrigerator which illuminates the space with the invitation of the fresh



## PAROLES ET MENSONGES

*De plus en plus, ce que nous savons, et par conséquent, ce que nous sommes, est déterminé par des sources hétérogènes. Dans ces circonstances, "Être" ne correspond pas nécessairement avec ce qui est stable et fixe. Cette condition nous incite à réexaminer la place que prend la mémoire dans le discours architectural. Premièrement, la mémoire collective, qui porte une certaine responsabilité à l'égard du passé, ne se produit pas par la pratique de signes et de symboles épuisés, mais plutôt par l'intermédiaire d'événements vécus et d'expérience esthétique. En outre, ceci nous permet alors de nous adresser à une mémoire personnelle de l'expérience esthétique tandis qu'elle influence et se rapporte à l'acte de créer. Cet article est tiré d'échanges d'une correspondance entre deux collègues.*

**May 23 Seattle**

In your previous letter you described for me a woman wrapped in a green sari standing next to a camel. I imagine her eyes sparkling in the late afternoon sun of a city seen for the first time. With these wide dark eyes, she has captivated me. She knows an outsider should move with caution... yet she allows one careless step to betray her. Suddenly, she is swept into a hoard of handi-cam toting, postcard collecting tourists, those who commit these and other such nostalgic acts of passive accumulation. To bridge their separation from the new object the tourists collectively zoom-in; because she is, for them, the present becoming history, history reduced to information. Stricken with panic the woman tries to extricate herself from the gaze of their wildly indiscriminate snapping shutters. Futile, of course, she is reduced to an image preserved forever on the mantelpiece of some suburban home: the innocent victim of a 35mm Auto-Focus Drive-By.

On a sand covered terrace adjacent to the square a pair of eyes return to their task after witnessing the event. A leather bound tomb lies dubiously on his lap, prone to moments of imbalance and slipping frequently. It reveals itself to be an unstable construction, a field of shifting topi, and any semblance of centre is a mere mirage or aporia: a blind spot, perhaps the result of a harvested cornea, placing the limit of sight at the centre of the mind. The text as a whole defies all attempts to be retold. Previous perceptions are transformed by this integral absence: *here one sees and is seen by the same eye.*

Under the canopy of the hotel, the light is brown and ill suited to careful examinations. In every room there appears something that he himself did not place there, something beyond the specific details of his journey which are otherwise of a surreal clarity. In sublime margins of the mind lurk those infinite notions which elude the grasping hand and failing tongue - every utterance implicates itself as the site of a possible transgression. In darkened spaces the words become the locus of an event beyond those which they describe, losing their signifiatory power and becoming objects of aesthetic character.

The sheets on the table flicker under the shadow of an oil lamp, which when caressed by the breeze, sways back and forth over them. The tomb itself alters each time it is traversed. It is an instability which continually tests the history of the edifice until the hotel is finally dismantled and loses its narrative authority to separate one room/moment from another. To arrive here is to have walked in a swirling wind or trailing an evergreen bow behind oneself, to cover ones tracks. Sentiments which resist amnesia emerge, despite the oscillations of an unstable and conflicting reality where words are muted by their endless deferral and the signifying object is reduced to silence.

M.



**June 21 Nepal**

I have just returned to the city after a long absence. My route had lead me to remote trails, across lands of snow covered mountain peaks standing at unreachable pristine heights. Villages dotted the cultivated rice fields in the deep valleys below. No walls or boundaries were felt. The sky had no limit. Never had the desire for the density and the enclosure of the city, for its points of reference and places of ritual, become so overpowering. However, upon approaching the city's walls, the old perceptions of this place resurface deceptively.

*The same structures and backdrops still stand but the story has changed. A new face has now come to greet her, different from the one she left behind. She is confronted by the elusiveness of her bearings. Nothing is fixed - this she knows.*

*This reality reveals itself in the transparency of a dream. A once familiar place appears before her. Particular smells, echoing voices and past events resurge from the depths, yet she barely recognises the physical aspects of the room. It has been re-constructed from dislocated fragments of space, scale and time. Still, she knows she is standing in the same place. Transformed, it has been stripped of the superfluous leaving behind a bare essence.*

*Only a thin and fragile surface exists between her and the realm beyond, where everything - convictions, love, faith, and history - loses meaning. She realizes that it takes so infinitely little for a person to be pushed across this threshold. However, this is where human life takes place: in the immediate proximity of this border, even in direct contact with it.*

*"The city must never be confused with the words that describe it... there is no language without deceit," writes Italo Calvino in Invisible Cities. Mais, je me demande: était-ce un mensonge qui me disait toujours la vérité?*

The story continues.... Never completely graspable, it is continuously in production and only in the present tense. Its development is never a direct product of a physical place or site. The place can only act to evoke invention, leaving her to interpret and recompose. She is simultaneously the story's main character and main audience and her displacement is essential to a possible re-construction.

We dream in pictures, not in words. This morning, awakening with the penetrating white light of the morning sun, I could hear children's voices singing in the school yard next door - sounds from the lightness of the heavens. Today is the longest day, I am looking for some shade.

L'H



## July 7 Seattle

I still have no permanent address. The constant movement takes its toll; time is a distance now, a blurred flow past one's reflection in the window, set against a passing town or the rolling countryside. The flicker of street lights on the vinyl seats of a night train careening through welfare towns. Between each illuminated instant a face flashes on the glass against the darkness beyond.

**11:16pm** Blown red light... corner 6th and Main... no cops... too close... white knuckles on the wheel, frantic wiper blades on the screen. Sharp right, the syringes rattle in their bottles. Right again... lightning flash... cemetery gates...

...beyond the gates lie monuments, erected in the hopes of filling the gap. Yet by attempting to name this absence, to stand in the place of fallen objects, they reveal limits. For should I accidentally span this gap in a glimpse of the absolute, I could never say, "I have seen it," I must rather say "what I have seen eludes my understanding." It would evade all the language I could conjure, determined to evoke in my soul only by sublime form what is worth recalling.

Blank stare, beads of sweat, a holograph come to life on the fine skin of the train. Beyond, a bobbing power line dictates the cadence: black on black sky. The details of unremarkable towns pull away... new ones advance to greet it.

**11:29pm** Donor spotted: warehouse district... white male... late 50's, 170 - 175 lbs... grey overcoat... alone on foot... north on 17th... entering railyard.

Eyes flick from side to side following an object for an instant before moving on to the next. Resting now on a peeling billboard, now on a waiting car under a solitary sodium light, a lone figure in the shadows, a brick wall. The train moves on.

**11:49pm** Second contact established... by the book so far... vital signs stable... steam rises into the night.

In certainty there is comfort... and death. The result is a world littered with immobile, well defined objects, leaving no room for any other. The train never slows, eyes peer in from the darkness and back from across the compartment. Drops creep across the face on the glass....

**11:54pm** ...jar... operating smoothly under a street lamp... items retrieved... little waste... by the book... this face haunts you now because you cannot recall it. Every other detail on this night has been picked and replaced too many times, always ending in frustration, with your own unbroken reflection. Only black now. The train moves on, ever slower, pushing aside the thickening night...

Nostalgia is the worst kind of necrophilia.

M.

## July 23 India

Temples and places of worship are completely interwoven into the old core of the city. In this sacred space, manifestations of the *Puja* are captivating and pervade the air I breathe... candle wax accumulates, shed from golden flames, dripping along the wrought iron holders, falling to rest on the weathered stone floor. Traces of black soot on white stucco. Offerings of rice, flowers, oils and incense wait to be washed away by the approaching rains of the monsoon. These layered recordings are the traces of architecture's story - the marking of the earth. They are a history articulated through gestures, not mere words. This is a spiritual place, composed of stages for collective rituals. A place which has encompassed both social and personal histories of its people.

I also witness the irrational envy of this culture towards the short history of the west. Evident in their adoption of the western suit and tie, never designed for the scorching summer sun. Reliance on air conditioning boxes have rendered the design of buildings inefficient towards climatic conditions... a sudden power failure... trapped inside, the heat becomes unbearable. These incongruities confuse me. I do not see their culture through their eyes but through my own - from where I come from.

*The recognition of the mind's capacity to deny, to render numb and absent one's own body and thoughts, is frightening. Blindness confronts itself, an anxiety she longs to dispel. It emerges, for example, at the moment of the sudden realisation that one's own body has been mutilated in some way. A physical trace appears, a deep cut or a protruding growth, with no prior sensation or pain. That moment, at the sudden sight of blood... drenched socks drooping around the ankles, panic stricken eyes run up the side of her legs to find the unknown source.*

With a red ribbon tied around my finger, we chased each other and danced around the great prayer wheel today. It was magical - if only for a moment.

L'H.

P.S. Prayers according to Tibetan beliefs are transmitted into the air through vibrations and movement. Prayers are printed with black ink onto coloured cloths and hung on lines to reverberate in the wind. Prayer wheels are spun clockwise. The chanting has just started. The sounds echo from the backdrops of the buildings. The city is washed in amber reflections of the setting sun.



and the repulsion of the rejected. Hanging stoically on aluminum hinges encrusted with years of corrosive galvanization, the screen door ticks quietly, punctuating the pauses within.

A behemoth of dark wood sleeps on one side of the



August 27

I have seen the first signs of a fall in the sky today. Dusk in the new city. Headlights dance across the viaduct under new born sodium light. From a balcony a young man scans this city, his city, spreading out before him wrapped in blue light. The wind picks up across the bay, the trees stir and the leaves flutter and twist across the abandoned lots and parks where he used to play. Across town to the neon streets where, in some momentarily chic basement bar, a delusional jazz poet sacrifices his mediocre prose into the smoke until his words bleed into the disinterested conversation of others. His ideal reminiscence of the open road or nostalgic boxcar ride surrenders, fractured by the discrete stratagems of a hostile takeover or by a young salesman's leisure suit seduction of an aging bohème. She produces a contrived excuse to break through his barrage of drunken posturing and with considerable effort, leaves him to ponder her batik frock and turquoise jewellery.

A step closer to the edge of the balcony, the city snarls beneath his feet. The isolation in the shadows of heroic monuments host nameless performers, innumerable acts of epiphany and atrocity. The city is a victim described and violated by the actions which it supports...

"...like words."

These last words escape his lips accidentally, regrettably.

"What's that?.... Are you ever coming back in?"

He shudders and turns to look into the apartment. Half hidden by the swaying curtain, behind her pale, grey face he can see the glowing screen. They spin the great prayer wheel beneath bright lights, pastel and glitter. *I'd like to buy a vowel.*

"No," he finally answers.

A step over the edge of the balcony. The wind whistles past his ears. Vertiginous descent, again the city, that pathological space which reveals great fears. He understands the certain collisions; checker cabs and horse carriages. Thinks of a dark corner where bewildered tourists are surely being relieved of the burden of their wallets at knife point. Thinks of the park where the slaughterhouses used to be, where red is introduced in the abstract forms, shaped and charged by events of a new order. Thinks of crack and hourly rates - places of Dionysian releases have been totally integrated within the core of the city... artificial vertigo will fill his lungs. Thinks of being released into the night.

M.



September 18

Images of the hearth, security and permanence stand in contrast to those of the eternally displaced wanderer... yet perhaps there exists a reconciliation. In Greek mythology, the coupling of Hestia and Hermes, goddess of the hearth and god of the metaphysical respectively, expresses in its polarity the tension marked in the archaic representation of space. The threshold between them demarcates a synchronous and conflicting desire to arrive and to depart.

The suitcase accompanies me wherever I go. It offers a certain solace. It is not a box in which objects are conserved intact, but a receptacle of mediating character. Its porous skin progressively absorbs, accumulates and discards. Superimposed images are projected within, new meanings emerge. The buckles flick open, reflections are caught and others slip through the seams. The suitcase has become the hearth around which fragments gather. It is carried by a traveller who continuously alters its contents appropriately along the route. Out of necessity, he eliminates all that burdens his steps.

*Manthana* is a Hindu word without a precise English translation. It is a term which can be used in relation to Indian myths that have changed over time either through an outside intervention or a resurfacing from the past. The resulting absorption, conflict, tension and churning that takes place is called *Manthana*. This process supports a crucial distinction between a mere superficial transfer and a fundamental structural transformation. Transformation involves an absorption, an internalisation and ultimately a re-invention of the myth. Each time this metamorphosis occurs, a new era, a *Vistara*, is opened up to our sensibilities. To classical Indian musicians, singers and dancers, the expansion outward into space is simultaneously a journey inward into their own selves.

"... two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge... and another edge, mobile, blank (ready to assume any contours), which is never anything but the site of its effect.... These two edges, the compromise they bring about, are necessary. Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so."

- Roland Barthes on M. de Sade from *The Pleasure of the Text*.

L'H.



room. Heavy, impossible furniture of ambiguous purpose reflects the life of the room with a long low window into its own history. Smooth curved legs support the heavy drawers, their black handles tapping with the footsteps of passing life. There is a regular silence to the rich green walls of this space, a new green, soaked into the smoothly textured grain of plaster, which once lay beneath a coat of the same golden paper enclosing the telephone. The oak frames of the bay window, darkened in the stain of years, remain untouched by the present. Beneath these darkly framed lights of the gray day, a long low shelf of light unfinished pine stacked together with books and blocks stands heavily on the soft floorboards. Through and beneath the circular surface of a veneered oak table, standing within the wall and overseeing the silence of this room, is a tall dark mantle. Carved oak columns the thickness of a human arm reach up around a beveled mirror, its silver flaking from behind. Long ago, fires forsook this place, first replaced by a gas burner of heavy black cast iron, then by silence and darkness. From floor to ceiling, the mantle casts a presence disproportionate to the rest of the room. Sharp gothic edges reach out to hazard life and dominate space. A small corner, worn from the passage of time, turns toward the phone. Against a wall, cramped within this corner, a table with long lathe-turned legs, supports for long oval flaps, holds a machine incoherent in the room. An institutional green plastic box encases a heavy steel sewing machine. Within the box are countless curses of frustration, let out periodically to cast a pall elsewhere throughout the house. Set into the floor beneath this table, surrounded

## November 11

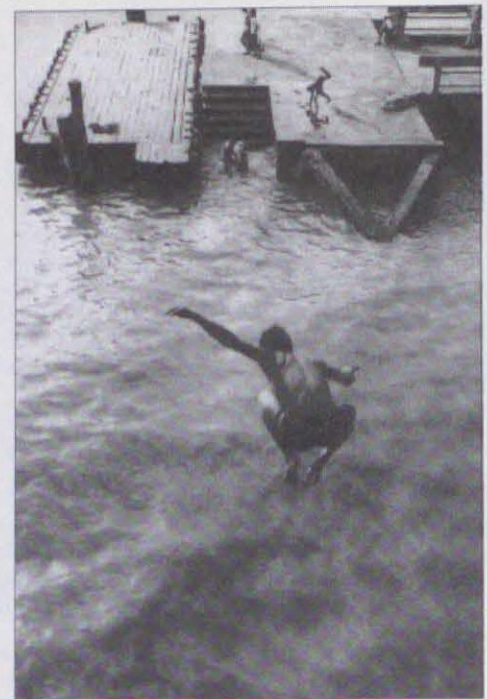
There is comfort in travel, the apparent loss of fixed reference makes us acutely aware of the weight of accumulation. Gather up your few belongings before dawn to stand in anticipation at the gates of the great city. Amongst the warrior monuments and travertine columns, the air is still and cold, the city wall reflects a pale light, though there is no apparent source. Bare feet sink into the dew soaked ground. From some dark recess a chant, an anguished wailing to accompany the vigil of two huddled figures kneeling at the wall, emerges. Every crack and hollow in the sacred surface before them has been consumed, allowing their fingers to glide blindly across it, anticipating each turn, every subsequent shiver - perfect skin. The illicit embrace they desire emerges from unconscious motives.

The first light of dawn calls attention to the oncoming silence. A thick mist renders the scene: an aging photograph or a grey page in a foreign news journal. Fragments hidden in the undifferentiated margins of darkness until now reveal themselves: the cracking paint of an aging sign, the weathered face of a toothless beggar. The monuments stir, warm veins beneath an alabaster shell turn stone to flesh, they survive, continually resurrected despite their maniacal conception. From their shadows emerges an oppressive breath, a cold hand upon the nape of your neck. New evidence that *being* no longer requires that which is stable and fixed: the coarse burlap against your face, the smell of earth which lingers within the hood, the chanting muted. The skin you caressed, once radiant silk, seems now no more than a dismembered leather doll. They have blindfolded each other. In the darkness of this deception everything is texture. Clarity is a needle verging on breaking the flesh: the instant before the skin returns to form. The steel penetrates, the fluids exchange, the excess gathers in a hollow of the flesh. The trace: a single drop on a white sheet. The wailing stops in this instant, amid the shattering separation of bone and tissue.

A hidden atrocity - a missing witness, no fingerprints, a scene wiped clean by conspiracy. These absences are in constant production, a term of the present and by no means a catalogue. Event no tomb could resurrect, no amount of earth could bury. Irrecoverable, even in the eyes of those who did not turn away. The aftermath: a wrinkled hand on a firm thigh, a scarring on the limbs of an alabaster statue. There is a deep gouge in the stone where they now lie collects and re-collects the fluids, tomorrow the rain.

We await the next millennium.

Marc Baumgartner, B.Arch. Carleton School of Architecture.  
Marie-Hélène Canakis, B.Arch. McGill School of Architecture.  
This article was composed from notes and reflections that were exchanged between the authors.



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## Illustrations:

Postcards:  
p.11. Hatta Fokker, Rietveldacademie Amsterdam.  
p.13. Hommage ann Joseph Cornell, Ernst Kamphuis, Leiden.  
p.14. Azië, Fotografie Herman van Heusden, Haarlem.  
p12-13. Seattle pictures from letter by M to L'H.



# Voyage de papier

Photo-souvenir  
Photo-contact  
Mémoire négative  
Une goutte d'acide entre les mains.

## Tranches de poussières

Impossible de trouver ce que je ne cherche pas  
Le mur de traits s'énonce à l'infini sans que le code ne se déchiffre  
La mosaïque de poussières littéraires se détache mais se soude à nouveau  
Les vivants se touchent sans le vouloir  
Encore  
La rue a fracturé la coquille  
Les murs d'absence sont de papier  
Poudre de sable et livres anciens  
Les racines courent sur le sol  
à la recherche d'une eau qui n'existe plus.





# Marée montante

Ressac de fin de journée  
Entre les récifs d'immeubles les bancs costumés se rassemblent  
menacés par des méduses de glace bavant des larmes de printemps

Courant chaud

Le vent balaie le flanc des masses  
Les caniveaux sont parcourus par le sable de l'hiver passé  
qui roule et roule sans être remarqué  
La lumière passe au-dessus des têtes comme un rêve menaçant  
Les hommes marchent sur un lit d'alluvions industriels  
Des lames de métal hurlant viennent se briser sur les sourds

Mer sans plantes

plages bétonnées

oiseaux rendus bâtarde par le fer

La métaphore se dissout devant l'évidence

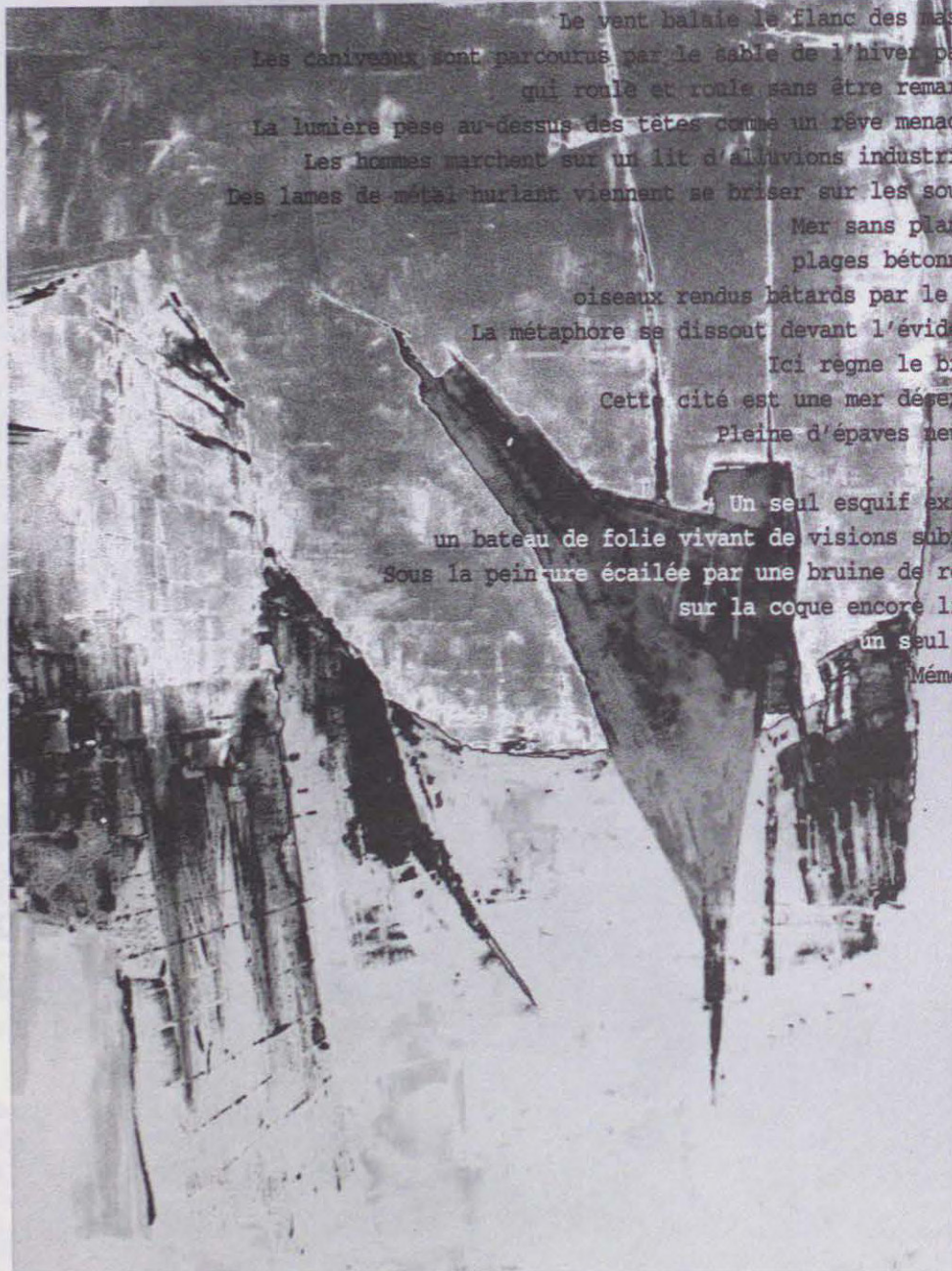
Ici regne le bruit

Cette cité est une mer désertée

Pleine d'épaves neuves

Un seul esquif existe  
un bateau de folie vivant de visions subites  
Sous la peinture écaillée par une bruine de rêves  
sur la coque encore lisse  
un seul mot  
Mémoria

Olivier Ménard a complété  
son baccalauréat en ar-  
chitecture à l'Université  
McGill l'an dernier, et il est  
présentement à la recher-  
che d'une maison d'édition  
qui acceptera de publier  
son recueil de poèmes.

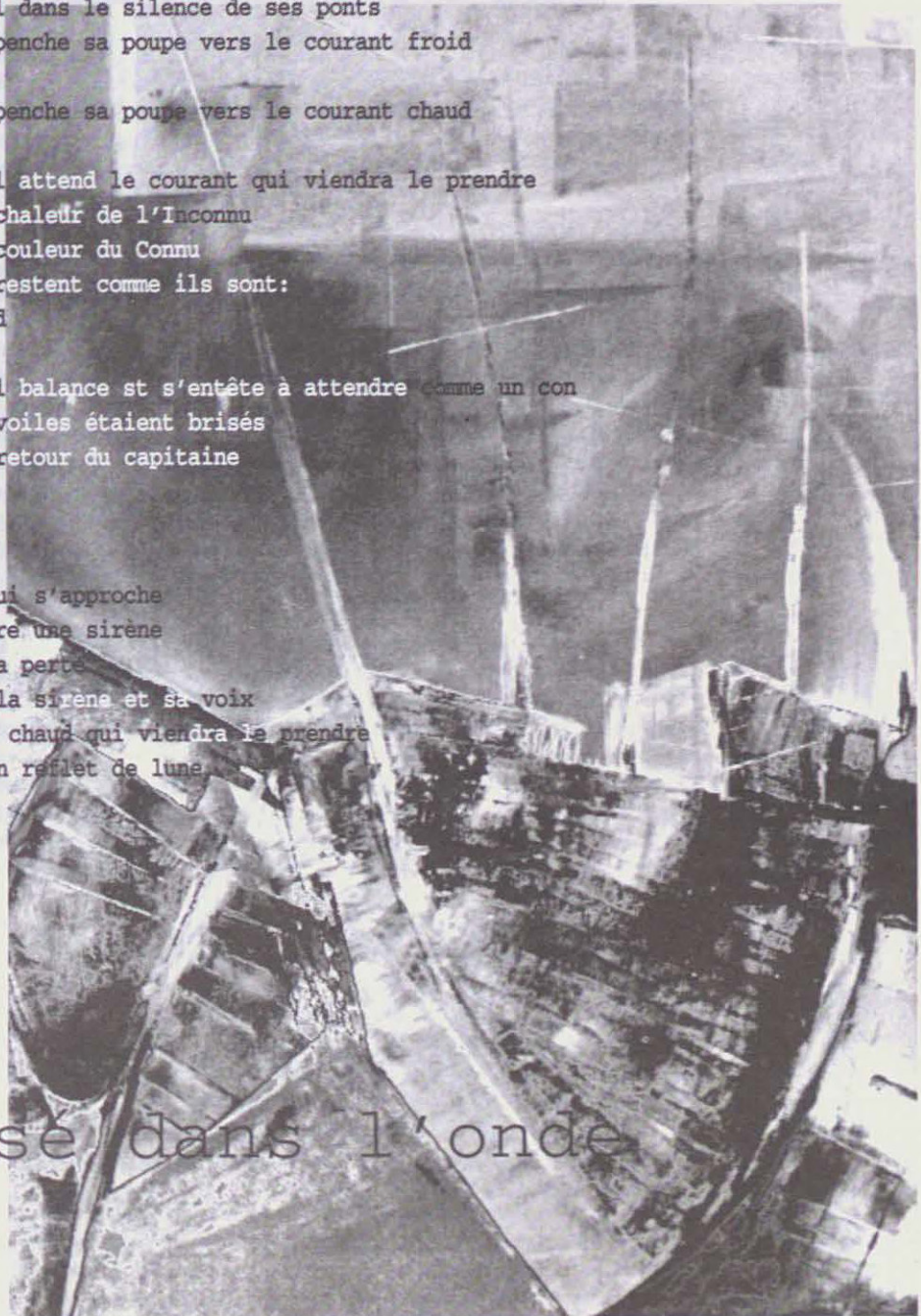


by short soft boards, is a heavy black cast iron grate. The grate guards a deep void within the house, comforting ghosts and the darkness of the depths of the ancient soil. A hollow fear exudes from the mystery of this path through the walls.



Sur une mer pas si lointaine  
s'est pris un navire frêle  
au coeur d'un bain de sable et d'algues  
Entre deux courants il s'agite  
il penche et craque et subit les affres des vents  
Il pleure la rouille de ses clous  
se décompose dans le sel de ses larmes  
assiste à sa mort lente  
Son capitaine l'a quitté depuis maintes marées déjà  
et il est seul dans le silence de ses ponts  
et tantôt il penche sa poupe vers le courant froid  
le Connu  
Et tantôt il penche sa poupe vers le courant chaud  
l'Inconnu  
Et toujours il attend le courant qui viendra le prendre  
Il espère la chaleur de l'Inconnu  
Il espère la couleur du Connu  
Mais ceux-ci restent comme ils sont:  
chaud et froid  
impalpables  
Et toujours il balance et s'entête à attendre comme un con  
comme si ses voiles étaient brisés  
Il attend le retour du capitaine  
en exil  
Et parfois  
le soir  
il l'entend qui s'approche  
C'est peut-être une sirène  
Le signe de sa perte  
Et il désire la sirène et sa voix  
et le courant chaud qui viendra le prendre  
au hasard d'un reflet de lune

L'enlisé dans l'onde





En Macédoine, un fermier fait rouler un gâteau sur le flanc d'une colline - si le gâteau tombe du côté droit, le fermier bâtira sa ferme à cet emplacement. Dans le cas contraire, il cherchera un autre site. Dans le désert du Kenya, la nouvelle mariée enjambe un bol de lait de chèvre placé sur le seuil de sa nouvelle maison. Dans les sociétés indigènes, de tels rituels sont intrinsèques au processus de construction au même titre que la pose des pierres ou l'érection des poutres. Quelle était la signification de ces rituels, et en quoi consiste leur importance pour la pratique architecturale actuelle?

Through a wide double door, an overstuffed living room heavy with dark night conversations contrasts the unburdened room of green; the walls here a sky-blue. To the right stands a light pine cabinet spilling out with slippery yellow slabs of "National Geographic," images of life and adventure an eon and a million miles from the history played out in a quiet New England house. Atop this cabinet rests an old brass lamp, blue-shaded with a paper and string-fringed shade, festive against the heavy material of the room. A large window looks out into the same gray light that illuminates the air of the entire house. An old black and white television, its own cacophony of conversation, blares from another corner alongside the richly worn

## BUILDING CEREMONIES IN INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE

A farmer in Macedonia rolls a cake down a hillside - if it lands face up, he will build his farmhouse there, face down and he will move on to another site. In the deserts of northern Kenya, a bride steps over a bowl of goat's milk on the threshold of her new home. These and many other rituals have long been incorporated into the construction process by men and women in indigenous societies, who felt them to be as real and necessary as the laying of stones and raising of timbers. Why were they so important, and what significance do they have for contemporary architectural practice?

### RITUAL AND ORDER

It is through ritual that we weave our everyday activities into the fabric of the cosmos. In ritual, we reconstruct our cosmology and reaffirm our place in the universe. Like mythology, ritual serves as a reminder of cosmological order brought to life in the everyday activities of the people who share it. The language of ritual, however, is spoken through action, through the body. Ritual is symbolic action - that is, the actions of a person engaged in a ritual have meaning beyond "themselves." The fire in the new house, for example, is not lit with the embers from the hearth of the old house simply to keep the new house warm, but to establish continuity between the old dwelling and the new. Ritual can play many roles in society, defining and maintaining social structure not the least among them. However, we will be examining that aspect of ritual which represents organized and repeated activity with symbolic reference to the spiritual.

Ritual is the experience and expression of order - the order of things brought to life in the actions of our own bodies, brought to the life of the community in the sharing of a common action in a common space. Judith MacDougall's 1980 film, *The House Opening*, depicts just such a communal expression. After the death of an Aborigine man, his family vacates his house for one year while his spirit moves about the house restlessly, preparing for its journey to the next world. At the end of that year, his family gathers for a week-long ceremony that includes dances, feasts and songs. The culmination of this week is the house-opening ceremony. The man's wife enters the house, which has remained unoccupied since her husband's death, and goes from room to room carrying a bundle of burning eucalyptus branches. The spirit, fleeing the smoke, leaves the house and the family is able to return without fear of disturbing, or being disturbed by, the restless spirit.

The wife says of the house-opening ceremony, "I feel it's time the children knew where they were. If we lose this, there's no hope."<sup>1</sup> In this comment lies the deep connection between ritual and order: without ritual, we cannot know "where we are" in life, and without this knowledge we are lost. Why do we need these ceremonies to tell us where we are? How does our participation in ritual create such a profound order in our lives?

Our need for ritual is deeply rooted in our need for order. Ritual provides us with a kind of time and space in which we can, individually and collectively, focus



A Batammaliba earth-priest folds the ritual bundle, the *tatati*, into the building's foundation. Both the intangible symbolic action of the ritual and the tangible symbolic object, the *tatati*, will remain a part of the completed building. (Blier, 25.)



A house for the dead. A miniature version of the home is placed over the bones of the deceased by the Lao Song Dam of Thailand. Symbolic actions and symbolic objects mark passages in life, building, and the cosmos. (Izikowitz, *The Influence of the Spirit World on the Habitation of the Lao Song Dam, Thailand*, 117.)

<sup>1</sup> Judith MacDougall, director. Film: *The House Opening*, Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies, 1980.



our attention on the underlying order that pervades the day-to-day. The experience of ritual tells us where we are – in time, in space, in life, and in the cosmos – both as individuals and as a community, sharing in the attended moment, in the attended place. The order ritual expresses is a cosmological order, not necessarily a social or geometric one. The Latin root, *ōrdō*, refers to a row of threads in a loom, and it is possible that the order of the universe is reflected in the fact that every point within the whole of the cloth is interconnected with every other.

There are two reasons why we need order – one cosmological and the other psychological. The cosmological argument is that order is *the* fundamental quality binding the stuff of the universe together. Rudolf Arnheim suggests a deep bond between mind and nature in his observation that, "Man's striving for order, of which art is but one manifestation, derives from a similar universal tendency throughout the organic world."<sup>2</sup> It is therefore necessary to grasp the order present in the world around us if we are to understand the world, perhaps even to function in it. This leads to the second argument in the case for order, one grounded in our own psychological makeup. "Modern psychology," writes Rudolf Wittkower, "supports the contention that the quest for a basic order and harmony lies deep in human nature."<sup>3</sup> But how do we know where we are, or where we are headed, as we pass from one stage of life to another? In birth, coming-of-age, getting married, even in dying, we are crossing a threshold into a new world. A ritual is an act of passage; it is a life transition given form.

**rhythms of life** This striving for order is present in all things, and its presence is manifested in common patterns of birth, growth, and death. We see the pattern of our own life cycle reflected in the change of seasons. Important thresholds within these cycles are often marked by ceremonies. Similar celebrations for the birth of a child, breaking ground for a new house, and the coming of spring, show how these common thresholds are marked by similar rites. In this vein, A.K. Ramanujan writes how in certain parts of India, "The ritual for building a temple begins with digging in the earth and planting a pot of seed. The temple is said to rise from the implanted seed, like a human."<sup>4</sup> When I was born, my parents planted a maple tree in the front yard. By the time I was twenty, that tree was forty feet tall, and the connection between my own growth and the growth of nature was made clear to me every time I looked out the window.

**deceiving the gods** Looking across cultures, we can see many connections between rituals in the birth of a child and the birth of a house. At one time in China, for example, a father would hang a pair of his trousers over the headboard of his newborn baby's crib in the hope that evil spirits would be drawn to the pants rather than to the baby.<sup>5</sup> In Tibetan settlements in Ladakh, carpenters hang a large red wooden mock-up of a penis from the cornice of a newly completed house; the neighbours then praise the phallus instead of the house. The jealous gods, who might be angered by the vanity of human achievement if the house itself were praised, vent their wrath on the statue instead of on the new house.<sup>6</sup>

In Kyirong, Nepal, Tibetan refugees sculpt small figurines, called *torma*, and charge them with evil influence, then destroy them. They perform this ceremony, not only at the inauguration of a building, but also at the birth of a family member.<sup>7</sup> In each of these rites, an expendable ceremonial object is used as the target of evil influence that would otherwise be directed at the more precious entity – the child or house. In the eyes of many indigenous people, ground-breaking and house-building are seen as disruptions to the state of order that exists on the unspoiled site. Ritual is one means of alleviating this disruption and avoiding the vengeance of angry spirits.

**carrying fire** Important life changes, whether in the life of a person, a house or the cosmos, are often marked by ritual in indigenous cultures. The ritual experience creates a bridge from old to new. In coming-of-age ceremonies, young women and men leave childhood behind and enter the uncharted territory of adulthood.

<sup>2</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Order and Disorder*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) 48.

<sup>3</sup> Rudolf Wittkower, "Systems of Proportion," in *Architect's Yearbook*, (1953) 9.

<sup>4</sup> A.K. Ramanujan, "Structure and Anti-Structure: the Virasaiva Example" in *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*, Victor Turner, ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974) 281.

<sup>5</sup> Doolittle, "Social Life of the Chinese" in Arnold Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Powell, "Tibetan Houses in Ladakh" in *Art and Archaeology Research Papers*, no. 12 (Dec. 1977) 61.

<sup>7</sup> Claes Corlin, "The Organization of Space in a Tibetan Refugee Settlement" in K.G. Izikowitz, *The House in East and Southeast Asia: Anthropological and Architectural Aspects* (London: Curzon Press, Ltd., 1982) 178.



Funerals allow families and communities to share in the passage from life to afterlife. Rituals are also like milestones in that they divide life, the construction process, and the seasons into clearly defined phases. Order is made manifest in this way because these ritual milestones tell us "where we are," and the connection and continuity between where we are, where we are going, and where we have been is made clear.

In the life of the house, the need for continuity is seen in the practice of carrying fire from old dwelling to new. The hearth is the heart of the building, and the fire that burns there is its life-blood. It is common in many cultures to ceremonially transfer the fire from the old house when a move is made. This quest for continuity may have been what the Roman settlers had in mind when they carried soil from their home town and buried it in the earth when inaugurating a new town on the frontier.<sup>8</sup>

**thresholds** When we enter a space that is charged with meaning for us – a church, a formal office, a hospital – we pause at the threshold and gather ourselves. A ceremony allows us the same opportunity in life transitions. In ritual, we acknowledge to ourselves, to the community, and perhaps to the spirits, that we are leaving behind one phase of life and entering another. On the threshold of this new beginning, we pause and gather our own strength as well as that of family and community before stepping into the unknown future.

### BUILDING RITES

Order, manifested in human life, in building, and in the life of the cosmos, creates cycles and patterns that are similar in character. In many indigenous societies, the passage between stages in a cycle calls for a ceremony to bring human life and building into harmony with the order of things. A close look at the rites of building may reveal how order is created and maintained through the building process.

The act of building in accordance with cosmological order begins with the selection of a site. Whereas typical site selection criteria would focus on how the site could best serve our economic, aesthetic or technical needs, people in many indigenous cultures see themselves as servants of the land and begin by asking if their intended use is right for the land. The Tibetans of Ladakh are very clear about who owns the land; their "most respected and feared Gods" are the Sab Dag, the soil-owners, spirits that must be placated with offerings before construction can begin.<sup>9</sup>

Order in its more commonplace usage, as the opposite to disorder, comes into play in testing the propitiousness of the site. In many cases, a ceremonial object (a stake or a pile of cowries) is placed on the site overnight and, if it remains standing in the morning, the site is considered suitable for building. If it is disturbed (disordered), then another site is chosen. The Batammaliba break a clay pot and make a pile from the shards for this purpose. In many cases the site is tested by a priest or astrologer, one who is *ordained*, in touch with the order of the universe. It is often the priest who chooses both the site and the date on which building may commence. The day of ground-breaking is often determined in accordance with astrological principles so as not to disrupt the harmony between the people and the gods, even if it means waiting several months for construction to begin.

**ground-breaking** The term ground-breaking implies an awareness that we are taking something whole and breaking it. Among indigenous people, this awareness gives rise to the ground-breaking ceremony, which seeks to restore the order that is disrupted when breaking the ground that separates our world from the



Indigenous builders like this Blackfoot woman often integrate a ritual bundle of plants and earth into their structures. (Barrett, *The Thunder Tipi*, film.)

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Rykwert, *The Idea of a Town: The Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World* (London: Faber and Faber, 1976) 10.



Ceremonial foundation-blessing of a wedding-house, Gabra nomads, Kenya. (Prussin, *Nagayati: Arts and Architecture among the Gabra Nomads of Kenya*, video. )

<sup>9</sup> Powell, *Tibetan Houses in Ladakh*, 59.

sofa beneath bay windows, darkened by the long porch awning outside. A stuffed and worn chair rests beneath a lamp in a third corner, commanding the room with comfort and presidential use. Stained pine wood planks and bricks support two softly illuminated fish tanks occupied by fish not entirely oblivious to the world around them, occasionally jumping for desperate freedom into the very air or cat paws that would take their tiny lives. A shaggy carpet of ambiguous colour stretches across the floor like a sea. The low gaze soars over this sea. In a corner of the double doorway, a dark curved scar in the floorboards sweeps around the white-painted frame, lending a ridged texture to the otherwise smooth surface of the wood. An echo of



underworld. For the Lao, the god of the soil is called Naga. The Tibetan refugees of Ladakh, as we have seen, call the same spirit Sab Dag. People in both cultures consider construction, especially ground-breaking, disruptive to the soil-gods, and they have devised ceremonies intended to bring the construction process into harmony with the spirits of the site.

Among the Taneka of Benin, construction is considered so potentially disturbing to the earth that a special earth-priest is made surrogate owner of the site during construction to ensure that the building process does not harm the earth.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere in Benin, the Batammaliba architect gathers the shards of the clay pot used to test the site and places them in the foundation of the house as it is formed, ensuring that not only the intangible symbolic action of the ritual, but also the tangible symbolic object, the pot, will remain a part of the completed building.<sup>11</sup> The incorporation of a ritual object into the building occurs in many cultures. A ritual bundle, usually composed of sacred plants, can be found in houses ranging from the tipis of the Blackfoot Indians of the North American Plains to the leaf-covered, timber frame dwellings of the Maring in New Guinea.<sup>12,13</sup>

The ceremonial foundation of the Gabra wedding-house, or *mandasse*, is made up of branches from the acacia tree. It is laid out in a circle, matching the form of the house to be built. Then it is blessed by the bride, groom, and family members, who sprinkle water on the sacred branches.<sup>14</sup> The foundation marks the point where the house joins the earth and sky, rising out of the broken ground and entering the world above. Like ground-breaking, it crosses a boundary between two worlds. The builders, the Gabra women, acknowledge this crossing ceremonially.

**sky-breaking** Just as we run the risk of disturbing the spirits of the world below by breaking the ground, so we are in danger of a similar transgression when we build up and into the sky. The heavens are the home of the gods, and sky-breaking ceremonies express the builder's awareness that the roof rises into heaven with a healthy respect and fear for the gods, not in competition with them. Western mythology has its own cautionary tales of the hubris of building up into heaven and the wrath it incurs - the tower of Babel, for example - and although less common than ground-breaking ceremonies, topping out ceremonies remain a part of Western building culture. Many carpenters still nail a bough of pine to the ridge-beam to celebrate the completion of a house's framing.

In the topping out ceremony for a Batammaliba house, the architect passes a black hen and a white rooster over the newly completed wall. The feathers of the two birds are incorporated into the wall, with a prayer that the remaining construction, as well as the lives of the occupants, will be blessed. This ritual also incorporates a method of payment, in that while both birds are provided by the owner, the architect gets to keep the rooster.<sup>15</sup>

**wall-breaking** One building ceremony that has not carried over to Western construction is the ritual that accompanies the cutting of an opening in a wall. Doors and windows are seen as places where evil spirits may enter the house, and special precautions are taken to keep the spirits out. The installation of skulls and other charms which close doorways to earth and sky demons in Ladakh is accompanied by the prayer, "Let not your servants injure us when we build a house."<sup>16</sup> Another Tibetan custom involves a ceremony to mark the placement of lintels over windows and doors, and in the Batammaliba house, a special hole is cut in the roof to let the spirits of those who might one day die inside escape. It is covered by a heavy stone at all other times to prevent unwanted spirits from entering the house.<sup>17</sup>

**killing the house** Perhaps the most universal building rite is the opening ceremony. In even the most informal house-warming party, we acknowledge the death of the construction process and the birth of the new life of the building (opening ceremonies are sometimes referred to as "killing the house"). The

<sup>10</sup> Thomas McDonald Shaw, *Taneka Architecture and Village Structure in Northwestern Benin*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Columbia University, 1981) 53.

<sup>11</sup> Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Barrett, *The Thunder Tipi*, film, 1964.

<sup>13</sup> Allison and Marek Jablonko, *Kerepe's House: A House Building in New Guinea*, film, 1966.

<sup>14</sup> Prussin, *Nagayati: Arts and Architecture among the Gabra Nomads of Kenya*.

<sup>15</sup> Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression*, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Powell, *Tibetan Houses in Ladakh*, 62.

<sup>17</sup> Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression*, 30.



opening ceremony plays the important role of weaving together the life of the building and the life of its inhabitants. The Gyang Len ceremony in Tibet, for example, is performed on completion of a couple's new house and once yearly thereafter on their wedding anniversary.<sup>18</sup>

For the Batammaliba, the cutting of the spirit-hole in the roof is part of an elaborate opening ceremony. A pot of beer is placed in the centre of the room directly below the freshly-cut roof opening. The architect lights a torch and passes it into all the dark corners of the house, ending by thrusting it toward the spirit-hole. He then starts a fire behind the pot and the guests gather around, the architect's family on one side and the owner's on the other. As they drink down the beer, the owner's father builds two small shrines, one for his own family and one for the architect's. The owner then offers a prayer, welcoming the architect's family into the new house, and a feast of beer and chicken ensues.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Corlin, *The Organization of Space in a Tibetan Refugee Settlement*, 89.

<sup>19</sup> Blier, *The Anatomy of Architecture: Ontology and Metaphor in Batammaliba Architectural Expression*, 30.

### RITUAL, ORDER, AND THE NEW BUILDING CULTURE

Should we, in our own practice as architects, be passing chickens back and forth across walls as we complete our buildings? A resurgence of old ceremonial practices or the introduction of indigenous building rites is not necessarily what we need. We can, however, let the new rituals of construction grow as an appropriate response to modern life and building technology. Every culture has its own symbolic actions and objects whose meanings come out of mythology and the collective mind. The raising of the "Spirit of Democracy" statue in Tiananmen Square and the toppling of statues of Lenin and Stalin across Russia are just two examples of how every culture finds appropriate actions and objects as expressions of order. The universal quest for order should manifest itself in building ceremonies tailored to fit the local culture.

Ritual is not a nostalgic artifact. It is alive today and waiting for us to use it in re-establishing the connection between our lives, our architecture, and our world. Indigenous people are already creating new ways for their rituals to bring order into lives reeling from the impact of Western society on their traditional cultures. The Kayapo Indians of Brazil, for instance, combined their ritual corn-dance with the latest video technology in successfully joining forces to stop construction of a hydroelectric dam on the Amazon.<sup>20</sup>

One problem with the rituals that are still incorporated into our own building culture is that they are, in many ways, just for show – they do not help to form a meaningful whole of the building process. There is, therefore, not much to be gained by reintroducing rituals for their own sake. We need a unified building process where the creation of order is paramount, and ritual follows naturally as an expression of order. In this way, the act of construction, the art of design and the experience of ritual mesh together in a process that brings life, building, and nature together in the realization of order.

the presence of heavy oak doors, this form could not be erased by the buzzing force of mechanical floor sanders and remained to evoke the work and life of earlier residents, each ancient passage accompanied by voices long gone.

Through another double doorway lies a wide muddy red carpet; the gaze stretches across a floor otherwise unimpeded by furniture. To one side, a simple bench chest of stained pine holds winter sweaters and a short stack of stories inscribed on shiny black vinyl; hard-stored voices, tense with potential communication. There are two doors to another side, framed in the same dark oak, the one on the left leading to the blackest closet, deep and frightening. Among the fluttering heavy cloth carrying an air of the



From cutting the timbers in the forest to placing the ridge-beam atop the house frame, indigenous architects combine ritual, design, and construction in a unified building process. House-raising in Madagascar. (Coulard, *The Zafimaniry House: A Witness of the Traditional Houses of the Highlands of Madagascar* in Izikowitz, 194.)

<sup>20</sup> Kayapo: *Out of the Forest*, film.

George Elvin is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Architecture at the University of California at Berkeley. His dissertation topic is "Construction Methods and Building Quality." He has worked in the US, Germany and Japan as a design associate with Hajo Neis and Berkeley Team Architects, and ran his own design-build firm in Washington, DC for ten years. He is writer/producer of the forthcoming video, "Ritual House: Ceremonial Structures in Indigenous Societies."



# T here is no security

Antonio Zedda

*there is no security ... one stop(-ped) bank(-ing) ... text(-ure) ... memory mask(-ed) ... monumentality renders little*

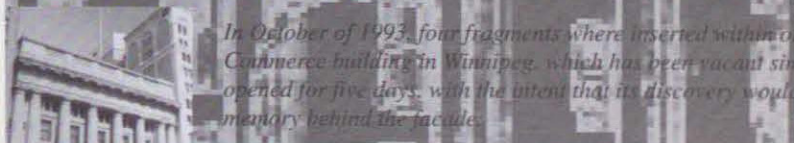
*Antonio Zedda is a recent graduate of the University of Manitoba. This project was part of his Master's thesis which questioned the relationship between the cemetery as a place of death within the city and the death of the city itself (through abandoned architecture). He is currently working in Vancouver for an architect who lets him use the fax machine.*

Summoned one evening by a message from two young men attending outside (Castor and Pollux, to whom he had just dedicated a lyric poem of praise), the Greek poet Simonides retreats from a banquet and its guests, only to witness their untimely death with the sudden collapse of the hall's roof. The destruction is so severe and the bodies so mutilated that family members are unable to identify those killed. Simonides, by recalling the seating configuration of the guests, reconstructs the order of the bodies for identification. The tragic absence of the face and its recollection: the image of the no-longer relevant and yet still relevatory body ensues as Simonides evokes a "place" and faces no longer present. The present smoulders in the ruins of the banquet; what remains beneath becomes encoded through a fragmentary collection of image and rubble (memory) to become the foundation for a prosthetic, mnemonic body: a new structure whereby recollections are deposited for safekeeping

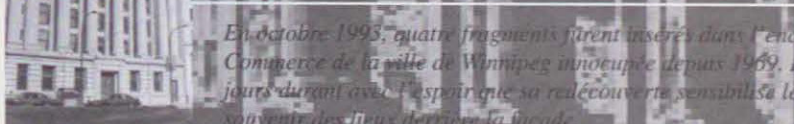


## Diary entry

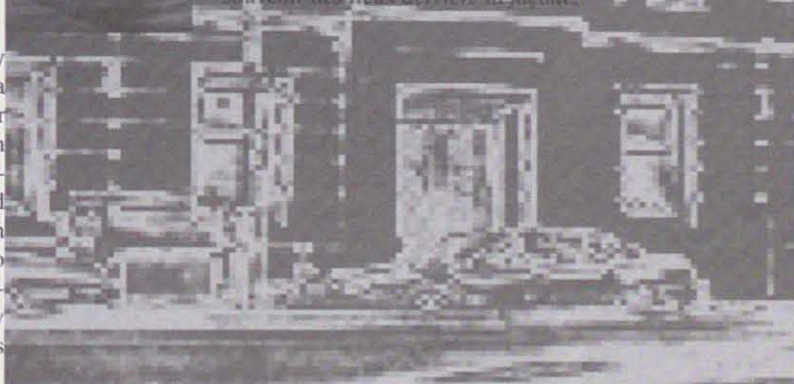
...phenomena of the visitor, viewer, and voyeur informing the building's representation through individual interpretation. The installation could encompass the foyer between the two facades. The mandate of an exterior portal then becomes more clearly defined. The original, almost ceremonial passage through the foyer, is fragmented to become both the space of a reduced bank(-ing) and as an intermediary (between the street-presence, and the banking hall-absence.)



*In October of 1993, four fragments were inserted within or on the former Bank of Commerce building in Winnipeg, which has been vacant since 1969. The bank was opened for five days, with the intent that its discovery would infect the public with a memory behind the facade.*



*En octobre 1993, quatre fragments furent insérés dans l'enceinte de l'ancienne Banque de Commerce de la ville de Winnipeg inoccupée depuis 1969. La banque fut ouverte cinq jours durant avec l'espoir que sa redécouverte sensibilise le public en lui infusant un souvenir des lieux derrière la façade.*



## Diary entry.

...consider somehow re-presenting the monumental bank through the vehicle of an automated banking machine.... A didactic video monitor as mimicry of the virtual teller screen? Its intent: to limit access to the building, suggesting that its grandeur, texture, and monumentality are no longer a relevant means of communication. One's experience is reduced to mere passings with a virtual teller. The visitor, entering with expectations of grandeur, is faced with only a small, smooth space at whose terminus is found a babbling screen.

**Absence refutes memory as it embraces oblivion.**

**An emptied architecture dominates a street impotently: the (bank) building succumbs to the image of its skin, while its misplaced corpse lies vacant within.**



private poverty / caution / temporary but persistent / this is not a bank ... next door please ... a sign(-

## portal:1

The rather simple *portal* becomes a foil for the bank. Its intention is never to compete with the overbearing Main St. facade, but rather to reveal, through adjacency, its richness and complexity. 'Suspended' in front of the existing facade, the portal calls attention to both itself and to the bank facade which surrounds and frames it. The muted form, texture, and detailing of the portal draws the gaze from its own banality to the richness of the surrounding facade. The reduced opening, a three by six foot doorway, alludes to the 'standardized' passageway (a standardization independent of occasion or function). The single-width doorway reifies the accepted convenience of autonomous and anonymous banking: no longer is interaction necessary to city/banking. Behind the intervention, heavy, and ornate bronze doors stand heavy and redundant. Entry is reduced to mere function. The original signifier recedes: its significance dictated instead by a contingent, somewhat less illustrious character.

outdoors, below and around, is an artifact from the history of this house, a tiny child's chair with a straw seat. To the right is an inner door leading to an entry behind an extremely heavy door, ornate and windowed to the rickety

**M**onday

A note on my table reads... "...need some photos of downtown Winnipeg for a studio brief; shots of architecture, preferably modern: Portage & Main, etc...."



There Is No Security





### text panels: 2

The *text panels* inhabit the foyer as arrogant, yet relevant, sentinels. Of the four fragments introduced within the bank, the panels stand alone, independent. They represent the phenomena of the bank as experienced. They are an insertion which proposes to redefine the bank in terms of a historicist agenda. One reads the text in the hope that its revelatory interpretation can provide an understanding of the surrounding text(ure). The *Flaneur* no longer confides in experience as a valid means of interpretation. The visual sense dominates as the means of interpreting a readily prescribed denotation. The foyer no longer guides one along its axis in preparation for entry into the banking hall. Instead, the panels mimic and (naively) encapsulate experience, as if there were no perceivable bank, by suggesting a meaningfulness arising only through a history as text

...the words 'Modern' and 'Architecture' seem to occupy only a small portion of my thoughts this morning as I think about Winnipeg's centre. 'Dormant' and 'wise' are perhaps better suited.

In an absence of occupancy, a building continues to accumulate presence. Its volume and materiality absorb the invisible time of the city. A photograph of one's lover reveals no action, no direct use. The value lies within its ability to attract the gaze; for the gaze attracts a different temporality....

(postponed parking lot) past ... monumental

Yet the very presence and non-committal design of the panels reveals their impermanence and the absurdity of their attempt to encapsulate through re-presentation. They stand as inefficient epitomes in light of the complexity and richness of the surrounding texture: waiting to be rewritten, addressing yet another historical, political, or economic agenda.

But they also unfold the tenuous myth of the bank building, of the experiences and times no longer present. They bridge the unknown past with the experienced present. Perhaps the building is capable of preventing the text from dominating the phenomena of its reality (past or present). The 'fragmentation' is here reversed: no longer is the building reduced to a salvaged column or cornice, appropriated by historians who bestow upon the fragment a new totality through a denoted text. The *text panels* placed within the bank become fragments (of an already fragmented architecture): the information offered (text, photographs, and drawings) builds upon the phenomena of experience but never are they permitted to dominate.



**T**hursday

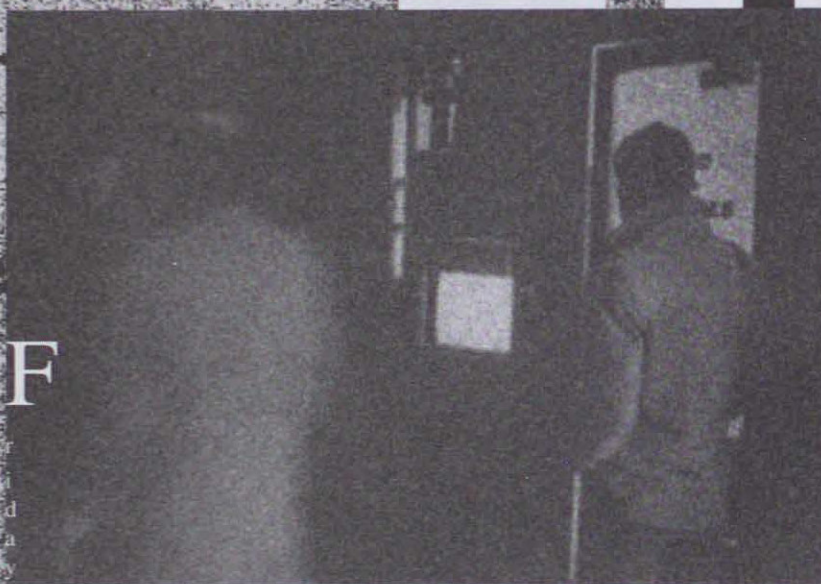
Driving north on Main Street, empty lots and 'for lease' signs pronounce a new era of growth. The words of my grandfather echo within: "...In those years [1927] we would walk from the Canadian Northern up Main Street to the Canadian Pacific. *Nella differenza di un paio d'anni, la città....* In the space of a few years the city witnessed the cycle of death and rebirth with every demolition, with every new construction. *Era un città non pensavo esisteva....* It was a city I did not know could exist in such an unforgiving land. *Mentre che camminavo sul marciapiede....* Walking on the east side of Main, the streets were filled with bank clientele as the grand stone facades were content to withdraw and deposit...."

### Instant teller:3

The *instant teller* draws visitors from the other three fragments with a desire to dominate. It clearly understands the intentions of the facing *text panels* (sentinels). It places itself firmly within the frame of a doorway. The bank's monumentality is challenged and eventually effaced by the tellers assuredness and the unwavering attention of the spectators. One's experience is reduced to limited interaction with a virtual teller. But rather than presenting a language of monetary doublespeak, the screen reveals a different account. It gives voice to a bank which was concealed for 24 years. The device so maligned for its propagation of a virtual environment at the expense of a real one, is suddenly subverted. It provides a voice where one had been absent: *There is no security....* The double meaning of the phrase points both to a bank which no longer functions and an 'economic' reality which threatens the very security associated with the monumental stone (structure).

porch outside. The relative opulence of this doorway provides it with a presence that prevents its frequent use. The cool and crisp entryway houses a silence of ancient greetings and farewells. Almost hidden in the darkness, heaviest of

security... one st... ...text(-are)... men... mask(-... monumentality



**F**My camera neatly records, reworks, reality. The snapshot is a naive embodiment thrust by completion into another kind of time; the unconscious, a time forever replaying the gaze one discovers in the yellowed prints of one's grandparents or a forgotten first communion. In an alley behind Main Street, a middle-aged man hauls plywood from a brick building. Conscious of my stare, he wants to know why I am taking pictures. I explain. He pauses, unsure what to make of the camera or my response, and then moves closer. His name is Walter. He abandoned his farm, in the Interlake, 15 years ago to find work in Winnipeg. He is neither 'modern' nor 'architecture,' yet I accept his invitation to experience a different type of architecture behind the facade and photographs.... Walter worked the land for fifteen odd years; washing, combing, and cutting the green grass of the prairie. Time stretched out horizontally for Walter as he toiled with tractor and thresher; always on the surface: never above. The painted sky melted daily, as blues deferred to a hue of reds: staining the edge of a retiring canvas. Surveying the sky, Walter felt a gravity to its horizon, to a surface he assumed venerated his tenure. How could it not with all the caresses, now but shadows of farmers' footsteps and tractor treads. One autumn day just as falling leaves parted for a destination far from home, Walter left for the city. Winnipeg becomes his new lover. The flat land traded in for vertigo, vertical towers, and an elevator. He secures employment as a building superintendent in an old bank building on Main Street, working the passenger elevator, up and down, up and down within the walls of facades, faces, and fate. His office in the damp, crowded basement protects the fingered postcards sitting pinned in the corner of a translucent mirror: memories of a prairie past. Yet it is the elevator which becomes his new landscape, his prairie of four corners. Well dressed bank employees visit often, somewhere on their way up to offices. When the vertical movement ceases and everyone has finished work for the day, Walter sits on his wooden chair, the darkness of the elevator his only companion. Staring into the corner, he watches for the next thunder storm to paint the sky.



#### *gazing container: 4*

This *gazing container* is a vehicle, a viewing apparatus, and a fragment. Similar to the *portal*, but unlike the *text panels* or *instant teller*, the container acts more as a perceptive vessel than as a readable, re-presentative text. It carries the public from the lobby area (between the two facades) into the grand banking hall. The reduced opening, half of the original, reifies the accepted convenience of autonomous banking and autonomous perception.

The container perpetuates the absence of the banking hall by concealing its revelation only until one passes through its boundary and experiences the enormity of the hall. The floor, walls, and hood reveal the space as the viewer traverses the ramp, enters and passes from one end to the other. The container demarcates a line between what the museum patron occupies and the framework in which the artifact is presented. Though the container encourages perception of the banking hall, it prevents one from leaving the confines of its perimeter: from stepping onto the floor or walking across the space. The public's vantage is always fixed about one point. One feels the separation that exists physically, temporally, and historically, even in the phenomena of real experience. It presents the banking hall as a 'reduced' museum piece:

commodified and appropriated; a representative of an era past.

Yet again, as with the *portal* placed in front of the facade, the traditional understanding of museum and fragment are subverted. Both the container and the viewer held within are framed by the overwhelming context of the banking hall. They become the representatives of a heterogeneous and fragmented modernist city, under 'surveillance' by the surrounding context of a supposedly 'homogenized and denoted' past. And yet the viewer permits the power of the experience to transcend both the limitations of the container and the categorization of a prescribed history. The *portal*, the *instant teller*, and the *text panels* recede as mere re-presentations of the bank. They, as the viewer suddenly realizes, become pale in comparison to the potency of the

direct experience. The facade, the foyer, and finally the banking hall are left to direct interpretation by the public. The viewer is left to extract, re-write, and re-construct an understanding of the bank as perceived.

*...nothing can compare to the experience of the banking hall-peaceful and powerful.*

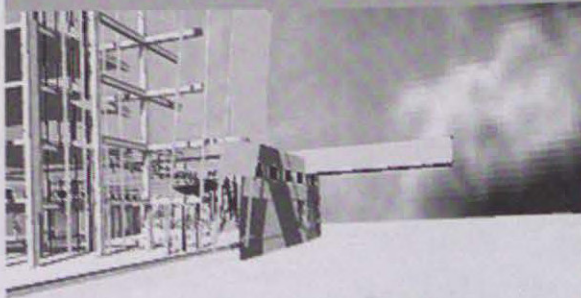
Visible only from the edge of the *gazing container*, text is projected onto the floor. The words and phrases are but contingent distractions: naming the bank, not with stone and marble, but with a virtual and temporal text(-ure). They make naive assumptions

*there is no security ... one*

based upon the readily apparent modern perception which sees place and function as revealed solely by a text of denotation. The seductive and familiar quality of a projected text begins to codify and delimit the banking hall. And yet, within the context of the banking hall the text is itself re-appropriated; its signification alters: it suddenly gives identity to the building's subconscious. In

five second intervals the words change; the absent other is instantaneously given a voice, a presence, and an audience.





I remember

About land.  
Monotony Stretches  
Eternally.

A stick divides  
the earth

corn and apples in Morden,  
strawberries in Portage La Prairie,  
sunflowers in Altona

"row on row"

straight

Hearty (Hardy) Fellows (as all farmers must be)

Nourishment to the blind  
for they do not see

in one eye.

One.

One.

One person crowds the prairie.

Hurry up and harvest, frost will make it No.2

(Or worse).

pay a dollar,  
that equals ten cents

In these parts

We play hockey

No frozen wasteland

stops the spirit.  
(loneliness within)

"He shoots, he scores."

Mom, what is nostalgia?

"An old man in a big hat and oversized clothes."

Dad, why is your forehead wrinkled?

"Each time I plow, I earn a line."

I still hunger. I never got my hands dirty. you see, I am from the city.

The prairie person.

Attached  
to the  
Land.

Would that be shackled or are you in love?

Neither, Both.

The Prairie

To the untrained eye  
A wasteland emerges.

life dropped  
into the abyss.

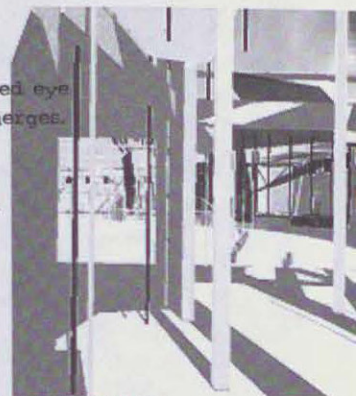
stand tall

and wave.

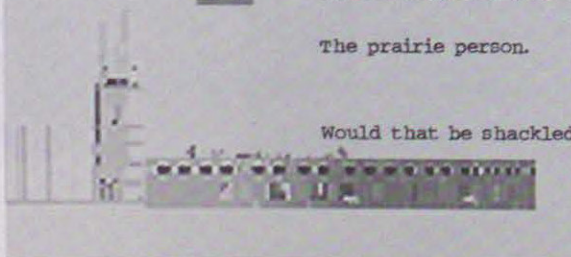
I travel from A to somewhere

Of course

I myself am blind



prairie giants



use, a stairway leads to the world above. Running along one wall, beneath a clear leaded glass window, evoking a jewel box, itinerant and the only such sign of constructed opulence in the house, the banister is a row of heavy



The city was founded by Scottish settlers under Lord Selkirk.

Who ?

some guy.

Land that is rich and fertile

grow some grain

then we can have

A city

changes

diversifies

A City.

I found some artifacts

over here.

Some can be reconstructed.

What is a fact of art ?

List of artifacts.

Memory

Production

Information

Memory ? that's what we build upon

"metal into rust"

into metal

Production ? that's what we build

Information ?

that's not an artifact.

Information ?

Information ?

Over here.

Memory is  
(it always remains)

Next door

but what about objects ? you need the physical

(Production)

Who are you ?

I am Information.

people call me

Technology.

Are you afraid ?

It is insinuated that I turn my back

on my neighbour.

(Memory)

"good fences make good neighbours"

barbed wire fences, rotting wood

Technology

changes

diversifies

Memory

Production

Information

move between

by hidden

passages

Prairie

changes

diversifies

"survival of the fittest"

permeates the soul

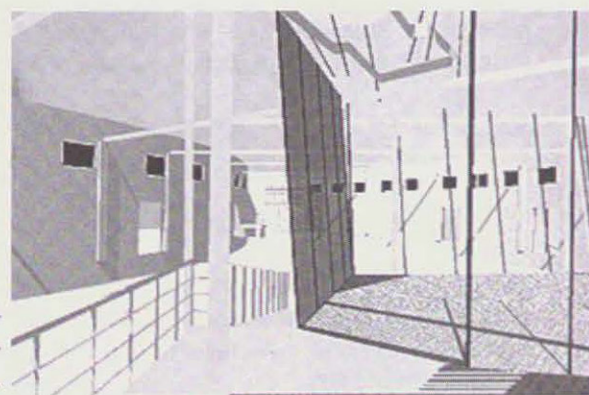
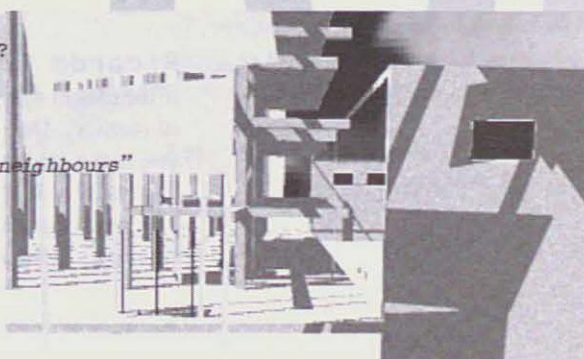
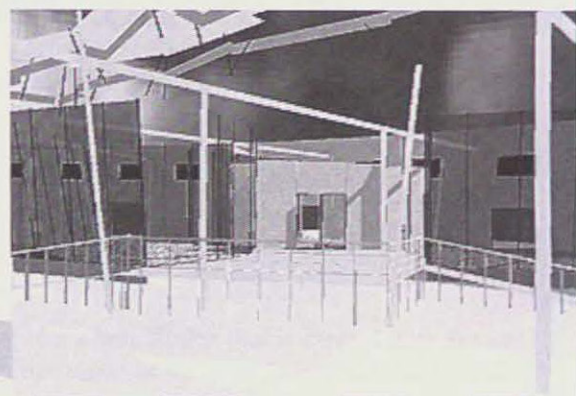
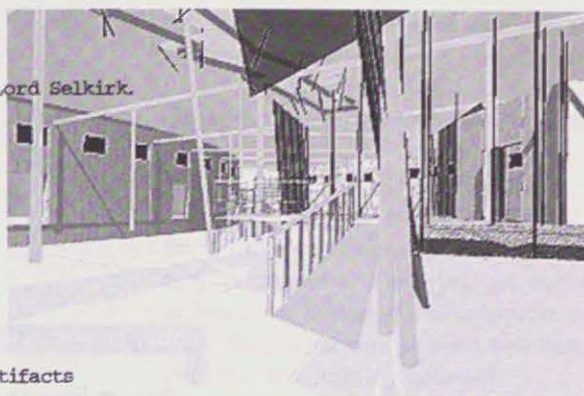
of every person

the soul

borne of the prairie

Tomorrow is next door..

Grant Stewart is currently completing his Master of Architecture at the University of Manitoba. This project, a renovation of the Ogilvie Flour Mill for re-use as a window manufacturing facility, was part of a studio which investigated attitudes towards existing buildings.





## An Interview with Richard Henriquez

*Richard Henriquez, architecte de Vancouver, a parlé au FIFTH COLUMN (Ricardo L. Castro, professeur d'architecture, et Eric Majer, étudiant) de son travail: ses bâtiments et ses objets. L'installation, Le Théâtre de la Mémoire reste à ce moment au Centre Canadien d'Architecture à Montréal. L'événement s'est passé au téléphone lundi le 24 octobre.*

**Eric Majer** If architecture is all about dealing with history, and a building marks an event in history, do you worry about how, down the road, your mark is appreciated?

**Richard Henriquez** *Yes and no. I think of buildings as being part of a series of layers. I would hope some of the buildings we do, people would just not tear them down, but they would leave some fragment that perhaps would represent the fact that they were there. This is what I try to do, either as real fragments or representations of what was there. I suppose the answer to this is yes, in the sense that we like to think of ourselves as part of a historical continuum, and that all evidence of our existence is not wiped out, which is what we tend to be doing to the past generations.*

**Ricardo Castro** I have three questions. They are directly related to the idea of memory since the issue we are dealing with is the construction of memory. Departing from the idea of evocation/invocation, the objects you make, and the buildings as well, are buildings and objects à réaction évocatrice, like the objects à réaction poétique, a quality which I find in your works labeled sculptures, installations... tripods. Mr. Schubert, in the catalogue of the exhibition, made a comment about the tripods as viewing devices, displaced to become viewed devices. However, I think that this is not quite so. I believe they are still viewing devices, viewing devices in a conceptual way, because they allow us to go beyond the device itself. It is like the surrealists using mirrors which become elements that allow penetration a dimension beyond that of the mirror itself. Am I correct in assuming that this may be one of the strategies used in the making of those objects?

**RH** *I do not think I would argue with that. I think Howard [Schubert]'s point could be elaborated somewhat in the sense that the tripods are used to hold up instruments that record, in the case of a camera; or measure, in the case of surveying instrument; or observe, in the case of a telescope. These are instruments that mark the scientific discoveries that we have made. They are rational measurable devices. I replace them with objects that contrast this measurement and recording with the idea that opposite to reason is intuition and these objects have to do with the recognition of intuition as part of the flip side of life, I guess. This is what*

oak posts supporting a slippery beam. The light wood steps creak satisfyingly with the wear of all ages. One third up the dark papered wall, the stairs turn to the right to complete the ascent. Banister posts disappear into the ceiling, the





1



2

they are all about. Memory, intuition, and imagination are phenomena that we cannot measure or record particularly well; yet, there is some urge to do this because the world is so formidably committed to the scientific and technological thrust of life.

**RC** Coming back to the tripods. They are the antithesis of things that are fixed. They are movable. The fact is that they have been moved here. They are displayed at the CCA. In this moving they create a history of their own. Since you are also interested in fiction (fiction of architecture, fiction of these objects), do you take into account this fiction? Does it become part of a new narrative, a sort of accretion of stories, that may develop later on?

**RH** *I don't think so. I don't really even conceive the fact that they would be moved any more than someone who made a violin, which is also movable, would worry about exactly where it would move or of which concerts it was part. A violin is an instrument for making music; this is another kind of instrument. They are both movable, but I guess that is it. I have not really considered where they would be moved to particularly.*

**RC** I was interested in the history of them, because they are like the boat that was taken to Alberta, right?

**RH** *Right.*

**RC** And then there is a whole fiction that is created with this displacement; the defamiliarization of the boat that used to be in the sea coming into another place...

**RH** *I think the movement occurred when the instruments got taken off [the tripods] and the change took place as the new objects were added to them, that is the historical event of importance — not really when they moved from Vancouver to the CCA.*

**EM** Well then, how will your perception of the objects, or your feeling for the objects be altered by the fact that they were exhibited?

**RH** *Not at all.*

**EM** Not at all?

**RH** *No. I don't think so.*

**EM** No? Then within the home, do the objects lose anything when they are displayed so intensely within this Memory Theatre?

**RH** *Are you talking about the tripods or are you talking about the stuff in the Memory Theatre?*

**EM** I'm talking about the stuff in the Memory Theatre.

**RH** *Well that's a different thing. I was responding to the tripods. Okay, what's the question about the objects in the Memory Theatre? The Memory Theatre is a totally different thing from the tripods.*



triangular space between steps and the inverted surface encloses a comfort and a wish for the space below.

A cooler wash of air flows along a narrow hallway atop the stairs. The wood of the floor is darker here, laid across with a long dark red carpet. It slides from side to side along the floor, evoking at once joy and unrespected urbanity. The walls are dark and punctured by many doorways and the dark oak framing.

The first door on the left brings an abrupt transformation of cool and dark to cool and very bright. The inner door frame is coated with layer upon layer of white enamel. The floor is a sheet of light linoleum, the tiled walls white with the air of cleanliness and clammy damp. A small window casts indirect

EM Well, the first question could apply to the tripods, though. Does the fact that...

RH —*That they have been displayed in Montréal and Vancouver become the history of the Memory Theatre, is that the question?*

EM No. Because the tripods started off as being in your house, how does your perception of them change now that they have been exhibited publicly?

RH *Not particularly much. They haven't changed.*

EM They don't become less personal?

RH *No... no, they aren't. I wouldn't say that. The Memory Theatre is a different matter, and we can talk about that a bit, but I wouldn't lump the tripods in with the Memory Theatre.*

RC Well, I am very curious about that because I thought that maybe I was lumping them together too.

RH *They're not... they're not at all the same. The Memory Theatre is a much more personal thing than the tripods. And the tripods, conversely, are much less personal than the Memory Theatre. If I had my choice, the Memory Theatre would not be displayed at all, but it would not have existed, or have been put together, had it not been for the show.*

RC That's very interesting because this refers to one of the questions we had about this notion of memories: this notion of intimacy, of something that is very intimate...

RH *Yeah, well there are two things about the Memory Theatre. It is an object. It is a very intimate thing, and you can see that when you look at it. But the making of a Memory Theatre as a public proposition, for other people to do for themselves, is really the justification for displaying it, not the actual specifics of the piece. Do you follow me?*

RC Yes. That for me is a very important clarification. Maybe that's why these tripods are called sculptures. They're speaking to the general public. They're speaking more of their art in a way...

RH *You have to understand though, that none of these things were made for any other reason than that I wanted to stick them in my house. I don't sell them. I don't normally display them. Howard [Schubert] and Nicholas Oldsburg came to my house and said, "well, ...why don't we display some of these things..."—I said, "really? Why would you want to do that? It's not architecture," and they said, "no, no..."*

EM In which case, what kind of sorting out process did you have to go through to prepare the exhibition?

RH *Essentially to fasten together a lot of the things. I have, still in my house, twenty of these things, that have loose objects on top of them, that I move around, and they're balanced there rather precariously. The ones*



that were taken to Montréal were fixed together permanently so they wouldn't fall apart... but they're constantly changing in my house. I find stuff that I put on top of them.

**EM** I would like to follow up my first question about building in the city, and the idea of endurance. What does endurance mean to you? I mean that in Vancouver, it seems that the most enduring buildings...

**RH** *Do you mean endurance or permanence?*

**EM** Buildings in recent years that seem to be enduring stylistically perhaps, seem to be buildings like those at Granville Island, Lonsdale Quay, and even Canada Place: buildings ephemeral or industrial in nature. Do you think that this is the problem with architecture today? Do you think that architects are afraid to make a mark that really speaks of permanence?

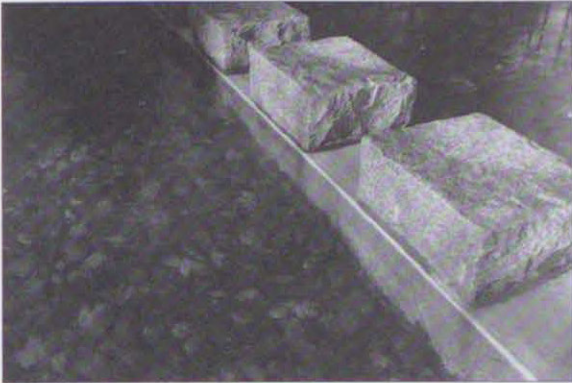
**RH** *I don't think that - well, permanence IS an issue, sure, and I think that all architects if given a chance would want to build permanent buildings. We have cost constraints that frustrate that urge on most architects' part. I don't think that is really the question. The question is one of authenticity rather than permanence. People like Graves, and Venturi, who started to talk about history, introduced into architecture stylistic elements which were called "history" - and you know the way of organizing buildings had to do with history. What they did was amateur in a way, because they picked the same way that the neoclassicists picked arbitrarily things from Greek and Roman history. You are left with a sense of arbitrariness - what style are you going to make this building into and why would you want to make it Neo-gothic versus Classical. Whole theories of architecture had to do with what style you made prisons, and what style you made courthouses, and so on, where people tried to take a little bit of the arbitrariness out of the choice of which style they dealt with. At the end of the day, I don't think they succeeded in taking the arbitrariness out of it. When you, on the other hand, try to evoke a sense of history of that specific spot in the world, you are not faced with that problem of arbitrariness because there was something there. Whether you liked what was there, or did not like what was there, that was what was there. If you evoke its presence, it is because you want to deal with this question of a historical continuum and you don't get involved in this arbitrariness that you get into in the other scenario. Right! Are you getting what I'm saying?*

**EM** Yes.

**RC** I'm very curious about that myself, because I think there is a very familiar and appropriate way of proceeding in a certain way when making architecture, by reading the traces that are in a place. And then, from there, starting out on the quest and the making, right?

**RH** *Right.*

**RC** In a way, it is a little bit too like some artists. I'm thinking of people, such as, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton, and all those people who have been doing artwork in the last 20 or 30 years. They start by



3



4



light, almost a shadow within the bright illumination from overhead. This functional space, cast aside in all buildings and dwellings, is a space within which essential activities of life occur. The shining cabinet of glass and silvery chrome holds the chemical accoutrements of daily life. Mixed together in a transparent glass of crystalline water, a murky white appears: the gritty chalk of pain relievers, the creamy greenish toothpaste, sliding out of its mysterious tube in voluptuous flows, the cold peculiar flow of isopropyl, the murky colours of snake-oil cold remedies; stirring the mess down the void of lead piping, inverting the glass with a ringing clink. A long basin tub stretches to the right of the door, the smooth white enamel scene of many a

dealing with the landscape; for example, walking through the landscape and finding things. It is through their walk, through their contact, through their immediacy with the place that they start creating their work of art, that in this case, might be a path or a journey which becomes recorded.

**RH** Yes, Antoine Predock has got a bit of this approach when he talks about the "road cut." He is dealing with more of a rural countryside and the road cut to him was the cut landscape where the layers of geological history are displayed rather than cultural history, which is what I deal with when I am dealing with the city. But I think the urge is the same.

**EM** Well, to deal with the actual building of a building as opposed to the building of a model, is it more frustrating to do a building because of the difference in scale. Do you know what I mean?

**RH** It is always frustrating to build a building. The building industry is a very stressful thing. I mean, you got all these people that you have to get pointing in the same direction or at least in compatible directions. Furthermore, there is a cost of thousands of dollars. It is very frustrating. I think that if you are going to achieve anything in architecture you must have goals that are above and beyond what the client wants. You have to be limited to areas which are not in direct conflict with the general program. And in the same way that I was able to build tree stumps that to the client were planters and a landscape he really had no knowledge or interest in the shape of, you have to be fairly skillful in picking your fights, the ones that you can win. But to go back to the question, it is tremendously difficult to get a building done.

**EM** Well, I was wondering that —

**RH** Given the choice I would rather make models or sculptures, which is why I putter around on the weekend on these things.

**EM** I was just wondering how much control you feel you have.

**RH** I have as much as there is, I guess. Except for those unusual cases, where someone comes to you and hires you because they think you are a great architect. For that we just about never get hired. They hire us because they have a problem getting things for city hall, or they want a high-rise in a low-rise zone, or...

**RC** You are too modest, Richard. I have a question. This interests me because out of these issues comes another. There are two practices: there is the practice of making objects and making buildings. And you have been teaching in the past. My question is, and I know it is a loaded question in a way because I am trying to relate it to the making of architecture, the making of objects, and the empathy of the transmission of these ideas into teaching. How do you see your teaching?

**RH** I have not done a lot of teaching. I taught for a couple of years at UBC as a part-time design teacher and I have had intermittently graduate students that, you know... I am their mentor. A few years ago, I did a course, a project actually with the students at the University of Calgary. But, how do I relate what I am doing to teaching?





**RC** Well, how do you approach your teaching?

**RH** I will give you an example. The last project I did with the students up at Calgary was a 4th year group and they were, before I came, given a site in downtown Calgary. It was the old Greyhound bus terminal. It was probably nine city blocks in size. They started off in groups and they were doing huge urban design exercises. Like mega-project thinking, you know, some developer would come in and redevelop this thing. I don't believe in large projects at all. In fact, I see a large project done as a [single] project as an opposition to a series of buildings on a street. The increments are tremendously important. It seems to me, and when you look at the cities you like the best, like Amsterdam or whatever, the increments are almost invariably the smallest. You get this cohesiveness on the one hand, and on the other hand, you get the variety. When you have a large project, you almost always lose this. So I was interested in this whole notion of narrative and history, with this divergence from large developments.

I suggested that the whole site be basically resurveyed back into the original city blocks that were there and that each of the students would have one block. They could each do their own project and no one should talk to each other, or attempt to coordinate it. And so I said: "imagine that this piece of property..." The first week of the project, they had to research their own family history and they presented it. The waves of immigration (there were 16 students) were surprising to everybody, because instead of thinking that they all came out to Calgary from Toronto or across the West, it turned out that most came through the States from the Eastern States to the Central States then up vertically, up into Calgary. Almost, I would say, more than half, which I found a bit surprising, but nevertheless...

So they had to research their own family history and they had to imagine that this particular piece of property belonged to the first person of their family tree, that it had been used by the person, and was handed down through the generations, and now belonged to the students themselves. They could design and build something on it that they could use for themselves: they could live there, work there, do whatever they wanted there. They could not sell it. It could not be used for making money, and it had to be handed down to their next generation. That was the term of reference. And to make it a little more interesting I said the piece of the farm that is on your section of the site has to be kept and utilized in the project. If you wanted to get rid of it you would then have to find another student who would use the material in their project. Okay? That was the basic outline. It was a little difficult - only the brightest got it in terms of the narrative. Some of the students took it literally and said, "okay, there is a piece of a farm here, and there is a piece of shop here, and da da tee da." They really did not use the narrative as a means of informing the project, rather they sort of did it somewhat slavishly. But there were some really interesting projects that came out of it: they dealt with recycling and some ecological things. They dealt with the memory, and the use of fragments and so on. When we put all the projects together in one big model, as you would expect, it had a wonderful, wonderful feel to it. It was very intricate, very fine grained, and would have made a wonderful area of the city.



sea battle between filmy white soap and diving hand of raisin-shriveled fingertips.

Leaf-green darkness fills the space at the end of the hallway. Two windows occupy the far corner of the room. Painted a sky-blue, appearing black from within, they admit precious slivers of yellow light. Here, the walls have been peeled of flaking history, painted with a green absorbed into the smooth plaster as water into a desert floor. The darkness enfolds complex equipment for the reproduction of images from life. Long low tables line the walls with shining mystifying metallic stands supporting arrays of knobs, lenses, and buttons. A low shelf of pine planks and cinder blocks lines the far wall. Above, a generational icon, with one finger pointed defiantly at the sky, rides a motorcycle into legend in a slightly frayed poster, secured loosely to the wall with small metal tacks piercing the green aridity of the plaster.

The image can be seen from the entire length of the hallway as from here, near the light entrance of a vast room. Deep red walls wrap a wide space illuminated by three bright bay windows. To the left, a long closet helps to enclose the doorway entrance. A broad bed stretches across the somnolent quiet of the room. Wide white cloth of ancestral origin gives a bright history, exuding warmth and the smell of richly worn cotton. Above the bed, one wall is coated with a thick layer of white paint. The intricate silhouette of a leafless tree, dead or dormant for the New England winter spreads its arms protectively over the head of the bed. Bright light from the windows loops around the end of the room. Beneath this, a long low chest rests heavily

**EM** Do you think that your imaginative approach to site and history has developed because you have spent most of your life in Western Canada, where history, in a more narrow sense, is not evident to most — whose idea of place has to do only with topography or ecology?

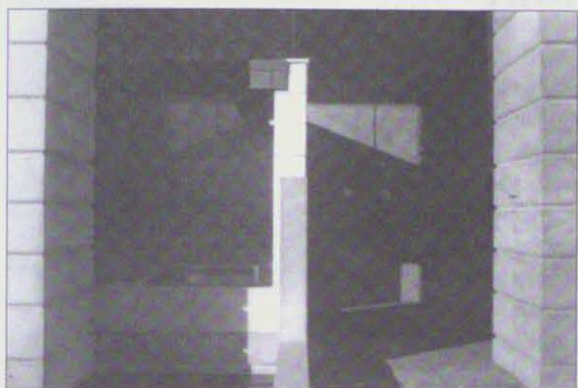
**RH** *No, I think it is growing up in Jamaica. The family had been there for 300 years and I spent a lot of time with my grandfather. He told me about the various episodes in the family — it is all there on the same island. This whole business about material and labour is important in the sense that when the value of material and labour changes the whole issue of building changes. For instance, in a country where material is expensive and labour is cheap, as it is say in Jamaica, people would recycle bits of board, they would take nails out, straighten them and re-use them, and they would reutilise the foundations of older buildings. They would have an opposite attitude to that in Canada, where labour is expensive and material is cheap. When you look at an old building and think about what value it has economically, it has probably none. So we are constantly wiping out stuff that has no economic value, but has tremendous social and cultural value.*

*You know, there are all these controversies about this business, and we are now beginning to deal with them: with heritage bonusing and some of the new laws that you find in Vancouver. I am sure in Montréal they are too. Where you can remove the value from a site by selling the development rights to someone else and consequently be left with the old building of little economic value without a penalty for keeping it; in that way we are able to keep a lot more of the older buildings that we would not otherwise be able to. I have been involved in the heritage movement in Vancouver for many many years and pushed for these zoning changes that we now have.*

**RC** I am going to switch to another question. In your architectural work, and also the very intimate creation of the Memory Theatre, there is the aspect of narrative and, of course, these things are all tied up. This question is just a curiosity I have. It is about the writing of these things. I guess there is another stage, another point that would be the development of these ideas as a text, but as a written text. Is there any part of your work materializing into a text?

**RH** *I don't think that it works like that. I don't know how a writer works, but it seems to me a lot of writers have something to say, and then they find a story which is a metaphorical way of saying it. In my case, the use of narrative is not so much having something to say as it is having something to build. So you want to build an apartment building that is 20 stories high, with 17 suites — that is a functional thing. It is related to a site, that had on it some historical artifacts; it might involve people that have a history, and so on. There are patterns of imagination and development, there is the natural world, and in order to weave this into some sort of a cohesiveness, how the hell do you relate the need for a 1400 sq. ft. apartment suite to the history of development in the city? The only way to do it is by a story. Consequently, these stories are invented as a way of giving some cohesiveness to what needs to be built, and must be dealt with in the same way that a writer would find a story to deal with some of the things he wants to say.*





7



8

**RC** I find that the stories are a strategy to build — to make — but what is interesting is that the stories after that become real stories too.

**RH** *Well, sure, it now becomes a cultural artifact, which is what architecture ought to be in the first place anyway. Architecture has got to deal with culture, and the architects that understand that are probably the ones that are dealing with the real issue here.*

**EM** I just have two questions about the drawings that were exhibited [at the CCA]. Some of the drawings have with them images of the human body, and of course the figure is important in giving a sense of scale, but why, for instance, do we find a woman's body as part of the Vertical City concept?

**RH** *Well... I guess I am going to defer to intuition here, but if you look at the plan of that part of the city, on one side there is a bridge that goes off at an angle, and on the other parallel with it are two freeway...*

**EM** ...cloverleaves?

**RH** *Cloverleaves. And it suggests a sexual connection which I just sort of brought out in the building. There is no more to it than that.*

**EM** Okay. Finally, I wanted to ask you about "whiteout," because I think many of us have come to think of it as something to avoid. Is whiteout a last resort?

**RH** *I love the stuff. I use gallons of it.*

**EM** Well, it was just interesting to see at the exhibition under the list of media for some of your drawings: "whiteout."

**RH** *It has this quality, which... what is the word... Well, it is lurid under there. You can see what is there, but you have covered it up. It is just a faint record of what the first thing was. So you don't want to get rid of it totally, but sometimes you do.... There are two types of whiteout, I mean there is a whole science to whiteout if you want... there are some that are more transparent than others. I have two types on my desk; depending on how much I want to get rid of the line, determines which one I use.*

Thank you.

- 1, 2 Eugenia Place
- 3, 4 The Presidio
- 5, 6 Eugenia Place
- 7, 8 Eugenia Place, The Sylvia



*Le musée de l'Holocauste à Washington, créé par l'architecte James Ingo Freed, fut érigé dans l'intention de préserver une mémoire physique qui s'efface lentement. Une fois bâtie, visitée et consommée, il remplacera éventuellement les vrais événements autrement oubliés. Le rôle de l'objet d'art en tant qu'instrument de mémoire a été radicalement altéré avec la venue des technologies de reproduction. Fredric Jameson soutena que due à leurs méthodes de production et dissémination, les images télévisuelles "produisent l'oubli, non la mémoire, un courant et non pas l'histoire. Le musée de l'Holocauste, à travers ses références formelles à l'architecture industrielle nazie, crée une architecture qui est plus vraie que la vraie. Le musée agit à la manière d'une image télévisuelle en produisant une simulation de l'événement réel qui précède l'événement, le reléguant à un passé déjà oublié.*

on the floor, its wood soaked with the wear and worn of fleeting generations. The air here is still, foreign. Lived in with an alien life of experience. Quiet whispers float on beams of dust in the air.

Air bounces from sky-blue walls, across to one of wood-grained paper, framing another bay window. This is a small room, with a single narrow bed beneath shelves and a chest beneath the window. A deep green spread, corded with fiber stripes, is draped upon the bed. The door hangs lethargically on its black hinge, darkly stained wood, cracked gently with its age. Behind it, a wrinkled poster curls from the wall, a chaotic mass of comical facts about the favorite German vehicle of its day. Colourful and smiling, it is yet hidden from the room by the open



## THE RE-CONSTRUCTED MEMORY

Walter Benjamin has argued that the technology of reproduction has altered the role of the art object, and ultimately how we view history. The invention of the printing press, the camera, and the television have drastically altered the way we record events, reproduce images, and constitute our memory. Jean Baudrillard has argued that there exists no "real," only simulation. Architecture, as a discipline which is dependent upon representation, has been challenged by this shift in relationship between reality and simulation. Architecture has traditionally communicated symbolic meaning in the forms it employs: the church spire, a Hindu temple, a broken pediment, are all signifiers associated to a particular meaning within a particular culture. This direct correlation is rendered problematic in contemporary architecture. Postmodern architecture is symptomatic of this crisis of representation, where signifiers are no longer linked to their signifieds, and architectural form is not seen as containing any inherent meaning. Illustrative of these issues is a building which commemorates an historical event which in many ways defies representation: the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, designed by James Ingo Freed. The design deals with the difficult task of "creating a witness," to events that violently ruptured the historical narrative fifty years ago. It is of particular interest because of the ways in which images are manipulated for the purpose of manufacturing historical memory.

Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Fredric Jameson's theory of language, pastiche and schizophrenia, and Jean Baudrillard's theory of the hyper-real are central to the discussion of the changing relationship between image and reality. In his seminal essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin argues that technology and its ability to reproduce art negates authenticity, and the notion of an original artwork.<sup>1</sup> The loss of "aura," is seen in the loss of the ritual significance of an art object, and its introduction into politics and the collective. In representation, the original, the authentic, is superseded by the copy, the simulation.

Jameson describes the newly emergent social order of late capitalism in terms of pastiche and schizophrenia, in order to describe postmodern experiences of space and time, respectively. Pastiche, he claims, differs from parody, in that parody employs unique characteristics of some original, to produce a mimicry of styles or mannerisms. Jameson claims that today, parody is impossible because the idiosyncrasies of the "original" are lost. There is no longer anything "normal," which when compared to the parody, is comic. Pastiche is parody without humour: a signifier without referent. He argues that schizophrenia is a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers, signified and referents, resulting in the impossibility of a temporal understanding, and therefore of history and memory. Jameson claims the present moment suffers from this schizophrenic condition.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt (Schocken Books: New York, 1968).



Baudrillard has argued that, not only is the link between signifier and signified problematized, but the referent, real or original, has disappeared all together. There exists no real condition, only simulation.<sup>2</sup> Baudrillard describes the breakdown of this system of signs: "Representation is based on a principle of equivalence between signs and the real, whereas in simulation signs precede, posit the real."<sup>3</sup> In fact, Baudrillard argues that, "the very definition of the real has become: that which is possible to give an equivalent reproduction.... The real is not what can be reproduced, but that which is always already reproduced: that is the hyper-real... which is entirely in simulation."<sup>4</sup>

These theories can be applied to the means by which contemporary society collects and disseminates information and thereby invents reality. Images shown by the news media are accepted as authentic historical events despite the fact that an examination of the news media reveals that not only are these images edited, but more importantly, that the creation of history itself is a "synthetic cultural operation,"<sup>5</sup> heavily mediated, edited and narrated. On the topic of "Representing Television," Steven Heath describes the dislocation of signs from anything other than the non-origin of their production. "Representation is taken no longer as record or expression of some existing reality but as production of reality, with a consequent suspicion of the term itself insofar as it can not but involve the idea of a distinction between representation and represented with the latter 'outside' of the former."<sup>6</sup> The representation surpasses the represented: the simulacrum precedes the "real." Susan Buck-Morss stated, "it's not the fact that the Berlin wall fell, but the fact that the television cameras were there and the world was watching."<sup>7</sup> The "real" event is surpassed by the media footage of the event. The CNN broadcasts of the Persian Gulf war and the landing of US troops in Mogadishu signal an unprecedented state of immersion in images, and the dependence of historical production on images. Jameson describes the postmodern consumer logic of late capitalism as a disappearance of a sense of history. For him, the present is defined by a schizophrenic failure of our social system to retain its own past, and its tendency to live in a "perpetual present, and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind which all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve."<sup>8</sup> Television is a key agent in the process of historical amnesia. The insistent "liveness" of news media perpetuates the need for newness, authenticity, and the production of transmittable and sellable images. The news media constructs our (visible) history, and immediately relegates it to the past, as it continuously rewrites the present. "Television produces forgetfulness, not memory, flow not history."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Hal Foster, *Recodings, Art Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Bay Press: Seattle, 1985) 90.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*.

<sup>5</sup> Fritz Johnson, "Imaginarie Histories," *SubMission XIII* (May 1994) 6.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Heath, "Representing Television," in *Logics of Television, Essays in Cultural Production*, edited by Patricia Mellencamp (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1990) 273.

<sup>7</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, from the lecture, "Visualizing Theory," (February 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Jameson Fredric, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," from *The Anti-Aesthetic, Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (Bay Press: Seattle, 1983) 125.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Heath, "Representing Television", 279.





door. Shelves stretch from this to another door, enclosing an angular closet. Within, there are remnants of the previous, and adult, occupant of the room. The child's life has not yet permeated the space. Upon a shelf, a figure of formed black stone looms. A fierce face from the south seas gazes out over the room. Its small bulk unbalanced, it is easily tottered by the soft silent step of a passing cat. The wooden floor echoes with the sharp pain of noise. Ghosts press against a door stepped above the dark floor. Their pressure regularly forces the door to silently swing wide, enclosing space unwantedly, opening a dark and cold space above. The crisp air seems stored from many a New England autumn. The odour of decaying leaves blows around the high space of the room above.

Architecture is also implicated in this system of representation, signification, and historical production, as contemporary architects face the same crisis brought about by the slippage between image and reality. Postmodern architecture has been described by Hal Foster as having two positions in postmodern cultural politics. The neoconservative postmodernism, which advocates a return to narrative, ornament and figure, and the poststructuralist postmodernism, which is a direct critique of representation. Neoconservative postmodern architecture takes the referential status of its images for granted. It assumes and depends on the intact link between historical form and its signification. In neoconservative postmodernism, "the sign, fragmented, fetishized and exhibited as such, is resolved in a signature look, and enclosed within a frame."<sup>10</sup> Historical forms are commodified, appropriated and applied. History is seen as an instrument, for the purpose of informing the present as a function of detail or style. Poststructuralist postmodernism, on the other hand, explores the regimes of meaning and order that these signs support. Jameson describes the poststructuralist aesthetic, "stressing discontinuity, allegory, the mechanical, the gap between the signifier and the signified, the lapse in meaning, the syncope in the experience of the subject."<sup>11</sup> Poststructuralist postmodern architecture dislocates the signifier from its historical signified. There is a dislocation or slippage of meaning forcing a reinterpretation of the signifier/signified linkage.

Both positions deal with history as problematic, and although their specific attitudes towards history are different, both practices reflect its breakdown. The Holocaust museum in Washington DC operates in this post-historicist context, replacing the "real," with a simulation, and therefore serving as a mechanism of historical amnesia.

The Holocaust is a unique event in terms of the physical loss, the scope and impact of the Nazi project, and the traumatic void that it created in history. The Holocaust is described as an unimaginable event: defying representation. Aharon Appelfeld, a survivor of the Holocaust writes, "Everything in [the Holocaust], already seems so thoroughly unreal, as if it no longer belongs to the experience of our generation, but to mythology."<sup>12</sup> Andrew Benjamin writes:

"The Holocaust brings with it the question of the burden of history as well as the possibility of memory... The Holocaust refuses representation. That which has been destroyed cannot be represented as such... Remembrance will be the position of the witness, vigilant in relation to what defines or precludes its own absolute representation... The Holocaust is not an event in history... it called into question the very process, that is the making of History ..."<sup>13</sup>

The attempt to memorialize the Holocaust contains an inherent paradox. "The Holocaust is fundamentally unrepresentable, indeed unimaginable, and [that] no human language can adequately convey the enormity of the horror it comprises."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, any memorial devoted to the

<sup>10</sup> Hal Foster, recordings: *Art Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1979) 20.

<sup>12</sup> Aharon Appelfeld, testimony from *Holocaust Testimonies, The Ruins of Memory*, edited by Lawrence L Langer (Yale University Press: New Haven 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Benjamin, "Berlin Holocaust Memorial: Probing the Limits of Architectural Representation," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* 5, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Werner Goehner, "Berlin Holocaust Memorial: Probing the Limits of Architectural Representation," *Cornell Journal of Architecture* 5, 1994.



Holocaust is founded on the notion that the tragedy must be remembered, in order to prevent it from ever recurring. How can we remember or witness an event that can not be represented?

There is a sense of urgency in the need to create an adequate receptacle for the real, or physical memory of the event, now disappearing as the survivors of the Holocaust pass away. "The generation's memory - along with whatever objects and images and cautionary knowledge may be salvaged- needs to find permanent residence. Or else it will be lost."<sup>15</sup> The decision to build the museum, and its prominent siting on the Washington Mall, reflects an imperative to remember the event.

Society constitutes its collective memory through mnemonic devices: texts, films, and architecture. We fabricate images to inscribe the past in the collective memory. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, contains the words "memorial" and "museum." The word memorial has a clear relationship to memory, and remembrance. The public memorial serves a traditional role, which is to "provide us with the catalyst for the collective process of remembrance and healing."<sup>16</sup> The museum, on the other hand, is a building typology, largely accepted as a legitimating receptacle of culture.

The construction of the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, raises questions concerning representation, history, and memory production. At a recent lecture Freed described the difficulty he had in designing the museum, "the subject, too sensitive, and its message too dire to risk trivializing the event."<sup>17</sup> After a visit to several camps, Freed designed a structure which he hoped would "provoke a visceral reaction." Freed stated his desire to create a building that would evoke a feeling of uneasiness, suspense, or terror. The building integrates many material, structural and symbolic allusions to the camps, ghettos, and industrial architecture of the Holocaust. The museum may evoke a sense of discomfort or anxiety, as visitors move under the imagined gaze of the watch towers, down narrow corridors, and into cramped elevators. The brick and iron-work are meant to evoke the ovens used by the Nazis to burn bodies. The elevators recall gas chambers; the light fixtures, hand rails and steel trusses reflect the industrial architecture of modernism and "progress" - applied to the industry of annihilation.

Freed employs a symbolic strategy similar to that of neoconservative postmodernism. In order to achieve a symbolic image of the Holocaust, he employs deliberate and legible formal references. "He sought nothing less than to use the very fabric of a building to convey the criminality of systematic, industrialized extermination of some six million Jews."<sup>18</sup> The Holocaust museum relies on our recognition of the architectural symbolism. In our collective memory, there exists a latent notion of what the Holocaust "looked like." These representations of



<sup>15</sup> Lance Morrow, "Never Forget," *Time*, (April 26) 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Ken Johnson, "Art and Memory," *Art in America* (November 1993) 95.

<sup>17</sup> James Ingo Freed, lecture at Cornell University (Spring 1994).

<sup>18</sup> "Permanent Witness", *Architectural Record*, 54.

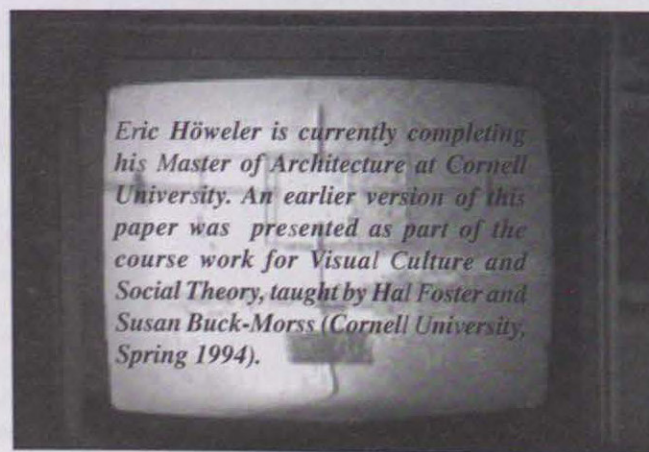




The stairs are worn and unfinished. The wall has a crisp dry yellow-brown paper here, which does not continue into the room, as if it was an unwelcome embellishment of the life below. The static space belies the somehow always moving air. Three windows directed to cardinal points terminate in dormers. Above the bare trees outside, these allow a crisp light to fix the air. The sloping ceiling gives off the silvery light of exposed insulation placed between rough unfinished beams. Paneling around the edges of the room provides a mysterious and dusty black crawl space. Like the secrets of memory, images frozen in time are tucked into the tight spaces around the room. Behind a small door, fading to invisibility with the same surrounding wood paneling and fixed with a black metal latch, clicking into place, the shadowy shapes of trunks compartmentalize the history of those who have come before, the detritus of life no descendent dare dispose of, a sacredness of a genetic memory shared by the very nails of the house. The alcove to the southeast permits a gray-white illumination of ancient books carried down from many generations. A tall oak bookcase holds court over the empty black space of storage. Ornate carved wood cornice atop it, carved dentition running along its edge, it echoes the mantle controlling the dark room far below. Here, though, it is dusty and neglected, desiccated and remote. Its dusty glass doors hide small collected knowledge between organic covers decaying in the dark. Inviting exploration of unknown history, this space is a sanctuary from the life rushing noisily below. The floor here, alternately covered and bare, is made up of thick boards, loosely fitted together giving

the Holocaust are produced by the mass mediated mechanisms discussed earlier (the movie, *Schindler's List*, comes to mind). Freed's architecture relies upon the legibility of its referents, but the museum is also a powerful and instrumental element in their formulation.

The Holocaust Museum represents the Holocaust with such a degree of "reality," that it replaces the "real" Holocaust. In Baudrillard's terms, the museum is a simulation, it recreates the real to such a degree that it replaces - precedes the real. The museum is constructed out of the need to preserve a waning memory. There is a discrepancy between the architecture of the Holocaust, and the architecture that represents it. The architecture of Auschwitz can not be compared to the monumental, and somewhat heroic architecture created by James Freed. The two architectures are antithetical on almost all terms. The symbolic link that Freed employs is problematized because the referent that The Holocaust Museum refers to is a chimerical referent: the *image* of the Holocaust. What is problematic is the acceptance of the image of the Holocaust for the real event. I am not lamenting a lost authenticity, or advocating a return to some supposed reality. It is naïve to claim that there is a realm outside of representation. It is however critical to recognize the imaging role that the museum plays and the role of architecture as mediator in the production of mass memory. The Holocaust Museum is a simulacrum *par excellence*: it is more real than the real. In the process of architectural production, the Holocaust museum has replaced the "real" event with its image: re-constructed, modified and framed for consumption. The imaging function of the Holocaust Museum is to help us forget, not remember; it serves as the agent and mechanism of our postmodern historical amnesia. The Holocaust is relegated to an always already forgotten past.





# THE IMPLICATIONS OF DECAY OF PLACES WHICH RECORD HISTORY RUST

## EUROPEAN SOUVENIRS

After taking "The Third Man" tour of Vienna, we venture out to the Zentralfriedhof. I wander away from the group to a run-down area which I soon realize is the Jewish section. Some stones are overturned, the grass is unkempt and there are splodges of graffiti. Later, I tell my roommate Monika about this and she informs me that it has been left in a state of disrepair at the request of the Jewish community of Vienna, who felt it would serve as a reminder. As I try to evaluate this action, she tells me about people who had given refuge to Jews during the war burying them in that section, in secret, after they had committed

suicide. I had never heard this story before and still do not know if it is true.

For the first time, I imagine them giving up. In one of the few stories my grandmother has told about those years they are in a field, at night, lost. They do not know what country they are in. Somebody calls to them, "Juden?" and they are not sure if they should answer. They do, he tells them where they are, gives them directions and disappears. She says he was an angel.

Before we go to Budapest, Doris says that if I am interested in that sort of thing, she heard that the Jewish cemetery there is interesting. I show Jennifer that on the map the Jewish area is symbolized with tombstones, rather than crosses, and we head that way. After walking around the cemetery, making up stories about Hungarian history, we realize that the Jewish cemetery is separated from the cemetery we are in by a stone wall. We debate jumping over, but I am squeamish about crawling over graves. We walk around and are greeted by a white attack dog, rushing the gate, which is fortunately locked. A guard, wearing a cap that says "U.S.A.," appears at the window in the guardhouse above, recognizes us as tourists, brings the dog inside and opens the gate for us. The vegetation in the cemetery is untended, as it was in the older parts of the cemetery we had just come from. I practice my Hebrew on the inscriptions and recognize family names of acquaintances back in Montreal. We get deeper into the cemetery, we see the swastikas, the overturned stones.... Around the walls of the cemetery are family crypts. The stones over them are broken; peering down, I see broken coffins. Jen touches my arm and says, "this must be very hard for you."

But I've seen this all before, worse in films, photos, books.... a person would have to be crazed to do this, but it would have been okay if they had stopped at cemeteries, what they did to the living was worse. And why the guard, the dog, the locked gates, what are they to protect against?

In my mind, I see the word "Berlin" in a heavy bold type face. My mother was born there in August of 1947. I visit for the first time in August of 1992. It is sunny and warm: the Wall's collapse is still fresh. I meander across what was formerly a firm dividing line. It already seems the stuff of nostalgia, a trivial pursuit question for the future. A sign on a field marks the former site of the Gestapo headquarters. There's

a hill covered with grass, some foundations at one end....

People were tortured, right here, where I am standing. I am trying to impose something on this place, but the sun is shining, the way it does everywhere else.

I am screening a montage of borrowed images: Kristalnacht, Speer's architecture, Triumph of the Will, people being taken from their beds by men in bulky overcoats, babies being thrown out of windows, one after another.





## CREATURES WHO SEE IN FOUR DIMENSIONS

In a science fiction story where humans try to explain the world to creatures who live in two dimensions, their world is just slices of ours, that third axis is just outside peripheral vision, they can almost sense it. Consider a more advanced species who see all of time superimposed on the space which we understand: they look at a person and see a fetus, a baby, an old lady, all at once, without confusion. And imagine having those powers, to look at a place, a house or a city, and see every event, every metamorphoses, it had gone/will go through....

see Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s *The Sirens of Titan*

and am surprised that he has no moustache, although he shaved it off years ago. My father looks at me and sees a twelve year old. The way a friend moves her hands compresses all the times she has made the same gesture.

These creatures are aware of our limitations; we dismiss our glimpses into their reality as forgetfulness, sentimentality, *déjà-vu*, rather than entertain the possibility that our understanding of time may be a mere convention to

Of the millions of things that I could describe as "blue," I will call some of them, ice blue, ink blue, light-green/blue. If these things are someone's eyes, a favourite shirt, the ocean under particular conditions, then maybe a filter of emotion makes these details visible.

Still, there are places where we squint to try to see beyond the now and into the infinite. What is it that inspires us to understand more; is it the clues left behind, knowledge of the events which occurred there, a spirit vibrating on a frequency

And what attracts me to damaged buildings, and why did I want to write those stories down? we can just barely receive....?

What to do with these places; why build memorials at the place of the event?

Somewhere, in our minds, history, memory, and imagination combine with place, remnants, and artifacts, to tell us the stories by which we explain ourselves. How does an awareness that a place contains the events it has witnessed influence how we act upon it and if these places are linked to memory, how do the ways in which they transform with time

Rust is fire in slow motion. All our creations are in flames alter memory? and we examine the ashes, inventing stories of who we are, searching for clues of who we will be.

sound to the steps of the living and dead. For the young, endless hours of exploration in time and space can be had in the memory of the house. For the old, only that memory placed far away for private moments of sadness, regret, and nostalgia.

Thanks to: Chana and Idel Topor, Abraham Topor, Marion Druker, Jennifer Beardsley, Julija Ezeragailis, Monika Mittlemayer and Doris Rabel.

*Marlene Druker is a recent graduate of the McGill School of Architecture. In 1992, she studied and worked in Vienna.*

Rust Marlene Druker





# FROM THE KATHOLICON TO THE KATHISMATON: The Mysteries of the Orthodox Monastery<sup>1</sup>

*La péninsule du Mont Athos en Grèce est, depuis un millénaire, l'un des foyers mondiaux de l'orthodoxie chrétienne. Une vingtaine de grands monastères y abritent une vie intense rythmée par la prière et le travail. Les divers espaces de ces monastères, ainsi que leur usage rituel, témoignent d'un riche équilibre entre le recueillement individuel et la vie collective.*

The Athos peninsula is the setting for twenty major Orthodox monasteries, which house monks from around the world.<sup>2</sup> A theocratic republic within Greece, Mount Athos is administered by a council of monks. The austere rules of monastic life prescribe a vegetarian diet and a daily cycle of prayer and work. The monasteries and hermitages on Mount Athos are a unique record of the inhabitation of the Greek peninsula by Orthodox Christian monks over the last millennium. First settled by monks in the seventh century, the region's first monastery was founded in 709 by Athanasios the Athonite. In 1061, the peninsula was granted autonomy by imperial charter. The special status attracted monks of various nationalities to Mount Athos, giving the peninsula its international character. The monasteries were founded by monks from various countries of Eastern Europe, and were often endowed by the landed aristocracy of these countries, which allowed the monasteries to survive the Turkish occupation of the Balkans between the fifteenth and the mid-nineteenth centuries.

Orthodox monasteries have generally fallen into two types — urban monasteries, endowed by members of the aristocracy, and wilderness monasteries, founded by monks and hermits. The setting of a wilderness monastery was often described as 'a spiritual desert' — a remote, barren, thinly populated place, which provided an ideal training ground for the struggles of monasticism.

A striking particularity common to most monasteries in Greece is the feeling that entering one of them, one has entered an urban space, such as a street or a plaza. An equally surprising particularity becomes evident when one consults the plan of such a monastery: invariably, a church has been dropped into the monastery courtyard with no attempt at a formal connection: the centralized domed plan of the church bears no resemblance to that of the linear buildings which surround it. The church is often quite close to the other buildings, so that there is no chance of it being perceived as an independent object. The church and its surrounding buildings, one would think, are fated to clash utterly.

In fact, there is no such clash. The space between the church and its surrounding buildings acquires an urbanity which is astonishingly similar to that of a small Greek town. The church, with its architecture of volume, is always read against the background of broad flat facades. The contrast between the two building takes the composition beyond architecture into urban design.

Since the founding of the Grand Lavra by Athanasios the Athonite, three forms of monastic life have existed on Mount Athos. The individual monk is expected to live a life of constant prayer and spiritual struggle, according to the way of life which best suits his abilities and spiritual needs. The *eremite* lives a solitary life, with little contact with others. The *irrhidite* lives in a loose community structured around an elder monk, in which each monk is free to set his own schedule of monks prayer, work, and meals. Finally, the *cenobite* lives in an organised monastery with collective prayers and meals. On the advice of his spiritual director, a monk may travel or even leave the monastery to embark on a new stage of his spiritual life.

<sup>1</sup> The *Katholicon* is the main church of an Orthodox monastery, used by all the monks for regular services. A *kathismaton* is a retreat for the use of an individual monk. The *Katholicon* and the *kathismaton* are the polar extremes of a rich balance between individual and collective space characteristic of Greek monasteries. The nature of this balance, as expressed in architecture and ritual, is the subject of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The Western Churches consist of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant denominations. The Eastern Churches consist of the Greek, Slavic, and Syrian Orthodox Churches, the Maronite and the Coptic Churches. Both the Orthodox and the Roman Catholic Churches trace their roots to the earliest days of Christianity.

## CHILANDARIOU MONASTERY COURTYARD

Source: G Trumler, *Athos to Agion Oros*, (Adam Editions: Athens, 1993).





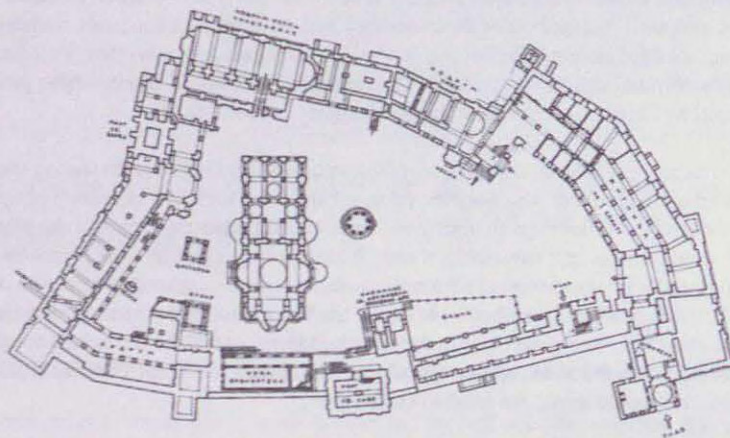
Deep within the walls, the lath grips plaster which places its own smooth white face to the world. The rough wood splinters the absolutely still air, thick with the brown dust of the ages. The outside wall carries the vibration of nature's cold air. Antique newspaper coats the wood that clads the house. Words never meant to be read again, framing pictures never meant to be seen again, they are a record of the time in which the house was assembled from the resources of the New England countryside. Between the rough wooden beams that support the years and voices of life, the thick black air descends to a gray earth below.

A distant sister of the room of memory atop the house, the dark stone room beneath holds the same silent air, but within haunted darkness. At the bottom of creaking, even further worn stairs which pass through a space of rotting wall plaster, gray and crumbling, a dusty packed earth floor underlies the low space. Like an engorged beast, a dark and rusted oil tank lives in a corner, creaking with its thick fluid. Humming in the centre of the room, with arms outstretched across the ceiling beams like a huge spider holding its web, a steely gray furnace throws heat into the still air. In the darkness, unrelieved by several small windows let into the thick foundation stone, the sounds of the beating heart of the house haunt the itinerant in the room. From behind a wall of thin oaken paneling, a void of absolute black leaks beneath the stairs. Layers of dust lie undisturbed upon items stored within, untouched by the hands chased away by fear of the inky black air. Lightly humming with the life of the naked wind outside, the last door is rickety with use and neglect. Another

The spiritual desert is the paradigmatic setting of the Orthodox monastery. The desert does more than ensure a frugal existence. It is the place where individuals confront the weakness of their own inner person. The Bible identifies the desert as the setting for several key events in Christian history — including the retreat of St. John the Baptist and the three temptations of Christ. In the early centuries of Christianity, the deserts of Egypt, Greece, and Asia Minor became the testing grounds in which the first monastic communities arose. The desert fathers, as these early monks were called, developed many central points of Christian doctrine.

The solitary hermit, living in a wilderness surrounded by demons and wild animals, and transforming it into a paradise through physical and spiritual labours, is a recurring figure in Christian literature. The desert is thus identified with solitude as well as physical and spiritual transformation.

*The various buildings in the monasteries on Athos are generally arranged in strict order of importance. The central part of the complex is always devoted to the Church (Katholikon), which stands in direct relation to the Refectory (Trapeza) and the Font of Holy Water (Phiale). Arranged around the courtyard and the katholikon are the wings of cells, the administration building (Syndikon) and ancillary and storage areas (tailors and chandler's workshops, granary, wine cellar, beverages store, kitchen, bakery, etc.); these are enclosed within a frequently fortified wall which, at a suitable point, contains an opening for the entrance. Facing onto the inner courtyard stand partly enclosed porticoes and arcades, which are arranged according to the amount of space available.*



CHILANDARIOU MONASTERY, MOUNT ATHOS. Source: S. Nenadovic.

*Outside the nucleus of the monastery lie the following structures: the kiosk, stables, wash-house, workers' houses, workshop (oil-press, copper-smithy, cobbler's), landing-stage, kathismata (small retreats) and chapels. The rank and value of each structure are undisputed and clearly expressed both by its position and the degree of care given to its appearance.<sup>3</sup>*

#### FORM AND PERCEPTION

At Skete Bourasari, four buildings and a shed create a world of consummate beauty. Built in the 1920s by Russian monks from the Chilandariou monastery of Mount Athos, the skete was renovated by the present monastic community between 1981 and 1986. The result is a monastic environment of great freshness and charm, with generous proportions and constantly changing views. The spaces between the buildings are meticulously maintained and play an important role in the perception of the whole ensemble.<sup>4</sup>

Skete Bourasari is laid out in such a way that one seldom sees fewer than two of the buildings at the same time. This principle holds true as one walks through the grounds of the monastery, and the resulting network of comparisons offer con-

<sup>3</sup> Stergiou Stefanou, "The Courtyards of the Monasteries of Mount Athos," *Calendar Series* (Mount Athos Heritage Preservation Center, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> I am grateful to monks of Mount Athos for their hospitality and friendly help. Pater Arsenias, igoumen of the Skete Bourasari, guided me through the icons of his monastery, and gave me permission to measure and photograph as much of the monastery as I pleased. I am also thankful to Pater Nectarius and Pater Gabriel, who acted as translators, and to Pater Theophilactos, who showed me how gold leaf is applied to icons.

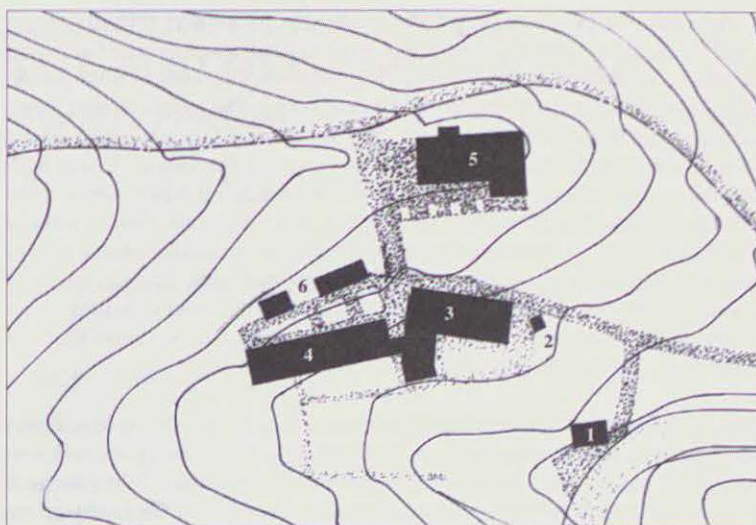
SKETE BOURASARI: Roofs of Church and Refectory





#### SKETE BOURASERI

1 Gatehouse, 2 Ossuary, 3 Church / cells,  
4 Refectory, 5 Guest house, 6 Garden sheds



trasts of near and far, short and tall, flat and sharp, big and small which influence the way in which the monastery is seen and experienced.

The monastery is approached along a zig-zag path. From the gate, the path sweeps right past the gate house. Leading uphill, the path then sweeps left, and views of fig and olive trees are exchanged for parallel walls. The effect of forced perspective is fantastic since the walls rise to a horizontal from a sloping base. On the left, a tall church settles into the slope, with a tiny chapel in front of it. On the right, a simple whitewashed retaining wall guides the eye uphill. Arriving level with a plaza, the visitor's eye is drawn first to a fountain in a whitewashed wall; then, to the left, the plaza opens up, enclosed by a large building as well as by the facade of the church. A glance uphill reveals the guest house, some distance away, surrounded by fruit trees. The buildings are surrounded by gardens and orchards, terraced into the slope. The final stop, for the eye as well as the body, is the stone bench and table, near the entrance to the refectory, where the igoumen of the monastery receives his guests.

The monastic environment of Skete Bouraseri is a delicate balance of openness and introspection. The monks are participants in a public life to the extent that they are members of a community under the direction of the elder. However, they also live a contemplative life as they practice voluntary seclusion within the bounds of the skete or the individual cell.

#### RITUAL SPACES

Although it often evolves within an architectural setting, ritual is to some degree independent of architecture, since it creates its own space. In Orthodox Christianity this fact is most poignantly expressed in the liturgical processions in which the congregation files out of the church, and circles around it. Ritual creates its own spatial relationships, contrasting openness and closure, stability and movement, darkness and light. Its essence is participation. Thus the following description of the spaces of Skete Bouraseri are choreographic and perceptual, based on my participation in the rituals described.

SKETE BOURASERI: Courtyard between Church and Refectory



The refectory of Skete Bouraseri was the first of the spaces which I visited, thanks to *philoxenia*, the hospitality which is extended to strangers throughout all of Greece. Having satisfied himself of my reasons for being there, the *igoumen*, Pater Arsenias, showed me to the sunny room in which a meal was ready. I ate slowly, taking in the icons which were arranged around the room — saints on panels on the lateral walls, and scenes from the Wedding of Cana on the wall behind me. Some minutes later, Pater Arsenias returned. The surprise which registered in his expression alerted me of the possibility that the monks did not draw out their meals. His eyes, however, soon creased in a smile. "*Phage glucosi.*" (Eat your dessert) he said, and walked away.



exterior door is loosely latched to the outside of the house, providing the minimum of closure to the fragile interior. With many layers of paint covering the cracked age, it is stiff and silent. Tight corners house spiders waiting seemingly in vain for their next meal to fall from above.

An envelope of heavily aged clap-boarding, lacking the neat horizontality of its origins, wraps around and around the house like a rope binding elements of a package. Painted over and over, with the aesthetic ideals of its successive occupants, the lack of constant care has resulted in the wrinkled texture of ancient skin. The cracked stone of the foundation gives rise to the wooden walls reaching upward, a flat blue colour over the ancient brown, to the sloping roof, covered with gravely layers of brown lying atop a fabric soaked with black oily tar, protecting the dry memories beneath. Under the stony New England sky, the house appears to have grown like a mushroom from the frost-hardened earth. Yet, the thin of the walls is apparent to the chilled eye. The fragile warmth within leaks from the seams on the squared corners of blue wood. In its decay, it still warms and protects against the harsh changes nature brings. Holding in the voices of generations, the hum is audible when walking too closely by. The house gave birth, and served as crypt. Its journey remains unfinished in the lives of its inhabitants. Perhaps unfinished in its age, not easily sacrificed to the whims of its caretakers, the house lives a life of generations and of evolving themes; a crumbled symphony of voice and movement lost in a chorus of wooden members like itself, arrayed across the landscape.

Later on that day, I saw how the refectory is used by the monks. At the ringing of a bell the monks assembled in the room, arms crossed, standing well back from the tables, which were already set with plates of food. The monks waited for the arrival of the igoumen, who pronounced a short prayer. The monks crossed themselves, and sat down to eat. One monk, who had remained standing, read from a book on a lectern. He was reading from the 'Lives of the Saints.' A hand bell, rung during the reading, reminded the monks of passages at which they were to cross themselves. The monks ate quickly, and when I did the same, I realised what happened — the full-bodied taste of simple Greek cooking greatly diminished as I tried to rush through my food. Before I had quite finished, the Pater Arsenias rapped on the table with his knife handle, the monks crossed themselves, and the meal was over. A short prayer was read, and the monks filed out of the room. No more than twenty minutes had elapsed.

'Ella, Ieremias, ella!' Smiling, Pater Arsenias motioned me to follow him. It was time for vespers, the evening service. Pater Arsenias called me by a Greek version of my name, which is a common one among the monks. When they are tonsured, the monks receive a new name as a confirmation of their spiritual rebirth. 'Ieremias,' the Greek form of Jeremiah, an Old Testament prophet, is a common name on Mount Athos.

The service began as we entered the church, Pater Arsenias motioning me to the seat beside him. He intoned the first words of the liturgy, reaching for the *epitrachil*, a band of cloth embroidered with silver threads which hung at the threshold of the nave. He slipped it over his neck, Monks moved through the church, approaching each icon in turn, kissing it, and making the sign of the cross. Pater Arsenias, having accepted a censer from a nearby monk, censed each icon in turn, and the sound of jingling chimes accompanied the clouds of incense. He then censed each person present in the church. When my turn came, I bowed, as I was taught to do.

Pater Arsenias gave the censer to a waiting monk, and returned to his place, next to mine. One after the other, the monks came up to him, making the sign of the cross, touching their shoe in a low bow, kissing Pater Arsenias' hand, and making another bow. Although their movements were in rhythm with the same tempo, the monks moved as individuals —

*The monk, who has given up the vanities and the values of the world, represents man's reaching up to God. The icon represents God's reaching down to man. So a monk, venerating an icon, exemplifies the closest degree of union between God and man, save for the Eucharist and the Incarnation itself.*<sup>5</sup>



SKETE BOURASERI: View from guest house



SKETE BOURASERI: Ossuary chapel near main Church

*Yarema Ronish spent the summer of 1994 crisscrossing Eastern Europe talking with monks and iconographers.*





Philibert De l'Orme, *De l'Architecture*.

# A RECIRCULATION OF THE PHILOSOPHERS' STONE (Molloy's Problem)

[Précis français p. 53]

*What was your original face, the face you had before you were born?*

## I. SCISSORS

Memory is a matter of spirit. Our bodies retain physical traces of a memory reaching back to their evolutionary beginnings, evident in the growth of embryos. Similarly, the development of the psyche, a process of coming to consciousness, has left indelible imprints in the memory of the collective unconscious mind. The histories of the 'mind' and 'body' are sympathetically interwoven.

"has to be funnelled through the reducing valve of the brain and nervous system. What comes out at the other end is a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive on the surface of this particular planet. To formulate and express the contents of this reduced awareness, man has invented and endlessly elaborated those symbol-systems and implicit philosophies which we call languages."<sup>3</sup>

1 The function of editing sensory information is a key to both understanding the enigmatic paradox of taboo, and how useless products of culture are related to the cosmogonic impulse and the construction of memory.

2 Dr. C. D. Broad, cited in Huxley, *The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell*. London: Penguin 1967.

3 Huxley, *op. cit.*

4 See James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, 1939. The depth of Joyce's language exists in the fluid dream-space created by ambiguous signification. At the same time, the collapse of archetypal imagery and the cyclical temporality of myth onto the world of everyday life demonstrates the unity of matter and history through the world spirit.

5 Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*. London: Penguin 1976.

6 Greatly simplified, the dreamwork is primarily composed according to the following processes of representation: *condensation*, in which two or more significant images are overlaid so as to become unified; *displacement*, in which an element is divorced from its context and transformed, with an emphasis shift in the values or significance of elements; and *secondary revision*, in which a reflective process reorganizes those mysterious images into a coherent narrative. "This function behaves in the manner which the poet maliciously ascribes to philosophers: it fills up the gaps in the dream structure with shreds and patches. As a result of its efforts, the dream loses its appearance of absurdity and disconnectedness and approximates to the model of an intelligible experience." The psychical process of constructing composite images in dreams is the same as the creation of monsters in the waking imagination.

7 Freud notes that, "The processes of the [unconscious] are *timeless*, i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all." in *Metapsychology: the Theory of Psychoanalysis*. London: Penguin 1987.

The memory of an individual person, as an integrated facet of conscious perception, has its roots in the residual images of a collective, as history is grounded in mythology. Were this not true, we would not be builders and dwellers of cities.

Memory eliminates concrete duration. For this reason, memories, collective or personal, never relinquish their significance. Environments are transfigured through the senses into memory, and become the foundation stones of the individual, while also being the common ground of shared inhabitation.

As poetic makers acting through imagination, we recycle the clay of our memories into the bricks which build our multi-layered archetypes. We are society's culture-bearers; we alone are responsible for the transmission of embodied knowledge. We are the makers of history.

Memory itself is such a poetic construct; it is both a deconstructing and a reconstruction: it pre-exists our consciousness and is formed by it.

"[W]e should do well to consider much more seriously than we have been hitherto inclined to do the type of theory which Bergson put forth in connection with memory and sense perception. The suggestion is that the function of the brain and the nervous system and sense organs is in the main eliminative and not productive."<sup>1</sup>

"Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful."<sup>2</sup>

Universal consciousness, however, is obstructive to the select needs of biological survival, and

The problem of memory is thus explicitly reproduced in the understanding of representation as the expression or externalization of memory.

Memory can be triggered by association both when an object itself is *absent*, and is indicated by another object, and when the object is wholly or partially *present* (recognition or reconstruction). In the latter, mnemonic representation is through the things themselves: collections, museums and assemblages. This association is with the sacred reference of the symbol, grounded in transcendent experience. In the former, it operates in language through the tropes of rhetoric: by contiguity (metonymy), by comparison (metaphor), and so on. This correlation operates through the worldly trace, variations on the imprint or impression, suggesting by its signification that meaning is transferred or created by physical association.

The enigmatic psyche is able to render images layered in space and time, superimposing a diversity of impressions in one locus. In this way, memory is closely related to the linguistic faculty, for its atemporal potential to condense several images into one.<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud's great contribution to the interpretation of meaning was his work on dreams,<sup>5</sup> in which he expounds a critical hermeneutic system predicated on linguistic principles, for reading complex unconscious imagery.<sup>6</sup>

Dreams, like other explicit modes of creative expression, exclude naturalized temporality, and with it, that aspect of perception related to duration.<sup>7</sup> It may be for this reason that dreams have always been associated with the divine, for their mortal content has been routed, leaving only the eternal. C. G. Jung, the unwilling gnostic heir to Freud's categorical hermeneutics, understood the significance of this dissociation of time. It meant that the imagery present in dreams represented the archetypal figures of mythological imagination translated into the language of the everyday world.



"The spiritual constitution of man in the pre-modern cycles of culture was such that each physical perception had simultaneously a psychic component which 'animated' it, adding a 'significance' to the bare image, and at the same time a special and potent emotional tone. Thus ancient physics was both a theology and a transcendental psychology, by reason of the illuminating flashes from metaphysical essences which penetrated through the matter of the bodily senses. Natural science was at once a spiritual science, and the many meanings of the symbols united the various aspects of a single knowledge."<sup>8</sup>

That aspects of the divine or the mythological should still shine through the surface of a 'post-metaphysical world' is an untidy inconsistency for Western positivism. In any situation, however, a theory stands or falls on its potential for ethical action. How, then, can these thoughts be productive in making immanent forms of representation that resist the loss of the human dimension?

## II. PAPER

Representation makes use of the world in order to show the world. In representation, the world demonstrates itself. Given an incarnate consciousness, material representation involves a situation in which a part of the world becomes self-conscious: aware of itself as an Other, recognizing the 'selfness' in its 'otherness' and vice versa - simultaneous

## It is something like the alchemy of the visual image. THE MIRACLE OF THE TOTAL TRANSFIGURATION OF BEINGS AND OBJECTS WITH OR WITHOUT MODIFICATION OF THEIR PHYSICAL OR ANATOMICAL ASPECT.\*

unity and multiplicity. It becomes multiple in order to relate to itself, as two hands of a body may touch, alternately feeling and being felt.<sup>9</sup> At stake is the possibility for translating mnemonic impressions back into sensible matter, requiring an analogous process that could re-embody sensation, depth and time in representation, using the power of the imagination.



La pleiades / L'orgueil de nos yeux pleins d'ombres est dirigé vers le pays qui se fonde / La gravitation des ondulations vers le centre

Max Ernst, *The Pleiades*.

Implicit in collage is the idea of transformation or re-orientation of material: the ability to abstract fabric of the world from its context and resolve it to become an expression of something other. A collage bridges 'life' and 'art'; the fragments constituting it are both literal and figurative - similarity through experience (symbolic) and similarity outside of experience

(linguistic). This type of representation is a locus where imagination and memory are hinged through the fabric of the work.<sup>10</sup>

Collage works by the selection of certain materials from the environment for their fecundity in expression. In a collage, the elements may operate synthetically towards the expression of a principal idea; they may act metonymically, each part potentially referring to something outside of itself - a previous context, or metaphorically. Theoretically, a collage may be an allegorical edifice or a complex of symbolic traces linked by a specific narrative. Besides all this, an element is itself.<sup>11</sup>

"In children memory is most vigorous, and imagination is therefore excessively vivid, for imagination is nothing but extended or compounded memory."<sup>12</sup>

"...memoria being the Latin term for phantasia, or imagination..."<sup>13</sup>

8 Evola, *La tradizione ermetica*, Bari, 1931, cited in C. G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. Princeton: Bollingen 1980.

9 See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Thing and the Natural World" in *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge 1992.

10 Collage, traditionally a two-dimensional medium, and a commonly three-dimensional counterpart, bricolage, are media that place emphasis on situational strategy - the resourceful ability to adapt and create on any basis. Bricolage derives from a word suggesting 'extraneous movement,' and Claude Lévi-Strauss notes that the bricoleur's universe of resources is a fluctuating collection before the objects collide in a project. Collage, because of the prevalence of mechanical reproduction in the visual sphere, draws on a wealth of visual media which qualifies as excess as soon as it is produced. Related to these are assemblage, describing three-dimensional works assembled additively; and montage, a filmic technique based on juxtaposition.

11 In the *Capricci* and *Il Campo Martio dell'antica Roma*, Piranesi, working in the Enlightenment, was engaged in a form of collage reflecting early Renaissance treatises in which the assembly of fragments and ruins of Antiquity was the well-spring of knowledge for the current philosophy. In the Baroque period J. B. Fischer von Erlach assembled architecture in the illustrations to his *Entwurf einer Historischen Architektur*. Among this century's many stellar collage-chemists are Antoni Tàpies, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Kurt Schwitters, Max Ernst, Joseph Cornell and Robert Rauschenberg. Schwitters demonstrates the principle of recirculation in association with his interest in the grotesque. (The grotesque refers to a specific condition, the grotto: a cavern or under-ground place where things lie concealed - the space of recirculation.) Ernst hints at, and Cornell, whom he inspired, further synthesizes in his subject matter, the hermetic aspects of this creative process, and their source in childhood fantasy and play. Ernst assembled the fragments of his collages to significantly make use of the distance in meaning between the pieces while unifying them in a coherent image. Where others had formally emphasized the disjunction between pieces, he saw the potential for a meaningful communication between the different elements: a common ground. It is this deliberate Joycean irony - at once affirming and challenging the work's unity and multiplicity - which creates the broad spectrum of meaning in his works.

## Bead: EVERETT

John Quynn McDonald  
San Diego, May 1994

This is part architecture,  
part memoir, part rever-  
ence for an old house.

A Recirculation of the Philosophers' Stone Tracey Eve Winton





12 Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1988.

13 Vico, *op. cit.*

14 St Bonaventure, *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*.

15 In his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," Martin Heidegger describes the 'essence of technology' as an *enframing*. This idea, imminent in gnostic and neoplatonic influence, suggests that the given natural world be 'processed' or consumed, and thus recycled, through man: a process clearly implicit in the Enlightenment's distinction between 'Nature' and 'Human Nature.'

16 H. J. Sheppard, "Chinese and Western Alchemy: The Link through Definition." in *Ambix* 32, No. 1.

17 Ostanes, cited in Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*.

18 Michael Sendivogius, "Novum Lumen" in Volume II of the *Musaeum Hermeticum*, 1893, A. E. Waite's English translation of a selection of alchemical texts of the Renaissance.

19 Vico, *op. cit.*

The creative enterprises of production and reproduction were investigated through the symbolic imagery of the alchemists. These philosophers of the material world based their work in experiment and experience. They represented their arcane notions of material and spiritual transformation in the artistry of poetry, prose and engravings, in which the process of becoming is indicated on the surface of the work through the prevalence of monstrous imagery.

The psychic metaphor for the creative process is the transformation of the hero via a journey to the underworld. The pilgrimage necessitates a strange descent into the primal matter of the earth, the sublime unknown darkness and the terrible melancholy of contemplation, before a return to the light of self-consciousness and the completion of the work.

"You will be able to see God through yourself as through an image; and this indeed is to see through a glass darkly."<sup>14</sup>

The Gnostics conceived of a corporeal world fashioned by the mischief of an inferior demiurge. After the divine creation, man was fashioned by this lesser god, but was given the breath of life (*pneuma*) by the true deity. Matter, in this way was associated with debasement, while spirit was discretely good. The aim of gnosticism was to achieve redemption of the eternal spirit through the medium of the flesh. As inheritors of the strategies of Gnostic thought, alchemists sought a revelation of 'pure' spirit (guided by the soul) through the act of transmutation of 'impure' flesh or matter.<sup>15</sup>

Alchemy is "the art of liberating parts of the Cosmos from temporal existence and achieving perfection which for metals is gold, and for man longevity: then immortality and, finally, redemption."<sup>16</sup>

### III. STONE

"Go to the waters of the Nile and there you will find a stone that has a spirit."<sup>17</sup>

The current semiotic division of form and content can be traced historically to a production of surplus. Something which had previously displayed an integrity between its symbolic function and its mundane use was taken out of play, and displayed, no longer essential to its world.

While retaining all of its physical attributes and history, its meaning had been altered by the disengagement from

its sphere of activity. The value thus lost by an object was the implicit signification of its ritual (temporal) usage.

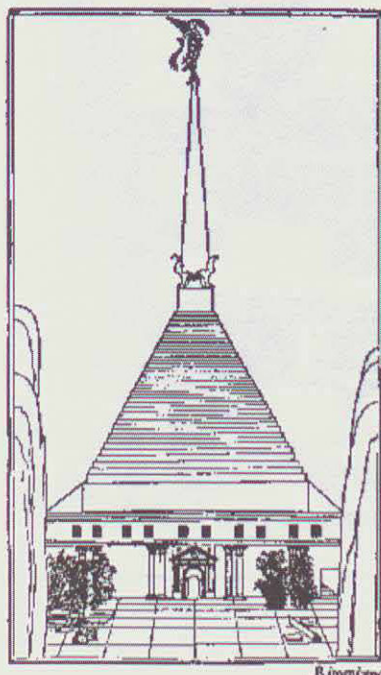
Excrement is an unnecessary excess of matter. Beginning with an excremental body of stuff, called *prima materia*, or original matter, the aim of alchemy was to effect a transmutation of matter, to achieve *aurum non vulgum*, uncommon gold, also known as the *lapis philosophorum*, the philosophers' stone. Western alchemy strove for physical and spiritual transformation. In alchemy, the four elements which constitute the cosmos must be separated and purified, before being recombined in balance: *solve et coagula*.

"The three Principles of things are produced out of the four elements in the following manner: Nature, whose power is in her obedience to the will of God, ordained from the very beginning, that the four elements should incessantly act on one another, so, in obedience to her behest, fire began to act on air, and produced sulphur; air acted on water and produced mercury; water, by its action on earth, produced salt. Earth alone, having nothing to act upon, did not produce anything, but became the nurse, or womb, of these three Principles. Whoever would be a student of this sacred science must know the marks whereby these three Principles are produced out of four, so they, in their turn, must produce two, a male and a female; and these two must produce an incorruptible one, in which are exhibited the four elements in a highly purified and digested condition.... In every natural composition these three represent the body, the spirit, and the hidden soul. Without these three Principles, the Artist can do nothing, since even Nature is powerless without them. ...[I]t is from these, by an imitation of Nature, that you must produce the Mercury of the Philosophes."<sup>18</sup>

An important ground which Alchemy shared with Gnosticism understood the female principle as the metaphor for creative potential. The great fertile matrix in which all things become joined was a parallel to the underworld or the unconscious mind, and a space of regeneration. The traditional inspirational role of the muse arises from reflection of the *logos* through the feminine aspect of *mythos*, (as in the final unification of the opus).

"With reason, then, did the theological poets call Memory the mother of the Muses; that is, of the arts of humanity."<sup>19</sup>

In Greek mythology, Hermes was the guide of souls to the underworld. In alchemy, his Roman counterpart Mercury played the principle of transformation. The art of interpretation, named *hermeneutics* for him, can be understood in terms of the role of transformation of the subject, in substance and in spirit, through reflective consciousness.



Francesco Colonna, *Hyprnerotomachia Poliphili*.





"Mercurius stands at the beginning and end of the work: he is the *prima materia*, ... as dragon he devours himself and as dragon he dies, to rise again as the *lapis*. He is the play of colours in the *cauda pavonis* and the division into four elements. He is the hermaphrodite that was in the beginning, that splits into the classical brother-sister duality and is reunited in the *coniunctio*, to appear once again at the end in the radiant form of the *lumen novum*, the stone. He is ... matter yet spirit... a symbol uniting all opposites."<sup>20</sup>

The incarnate memory of the *prima materia* persists in the philosopher's stone, and vice versa. A common symbol for this coincidence of opposites, indicating the cyclical nature of things, was the Ouroboros, the serpent swallowing its own tail.

A double cosmogony - a divine creation by God (Nature), and a subsequent transformation of the matter by our bricoleur-demiurge (Culture) - reflected the remaking of myth (symbolic memory deriving from the senses) through history (reflection). History frozen at a particular moment might be understood as a project of bricolage, an assemblage of ascertainable souvenirs in recombination, although the earth's mortal inhabitants work against the clock to reconcile and organize an ever-increasing flow of fragments in a world as heterogeneous as Babel was incomprehensible. The medium of collage engages both the cycle of time and the process of making through its foundation in alchemical principles.

A collage is created by recycling the useless excess of everyday life. This excess is made up of the traces or remains of cultural decay, ruins, or artifacts understood literally as the excrement borne of human nature or culture, things that have not yet re-entered the cycle of death and rebirth.<sup>21</sup>

The title, *Bead: Everett*, is a reference to beads on a string, with the string being life and beads being places we've lived. *Bead: Everett* is part of a larger work which the author is currently developing.

Giambattista Piranesi,  
del Castello dell'Acqua Giulia

The mechanism of collage, it seems to me, is revealed by this very simple example. The complete transmutation, followed by a pure act, as that of love, will make itself known naturally every time the conditions are rendered favorable by the given facts: the coupling of two realities, irreconcilable in appearance, upon a plane which apparently does not suit them.\*

"The *imaginatio*, or the act of imagining, was thus a physical activity that could be fitted into the cycle of material changes, that brought these about and was brought about by them in turn. In this way the alchemist related himself not only to the unconscious but directly to the very substance which he hoped to transform through the power of the imagination."<sup>22</sup>

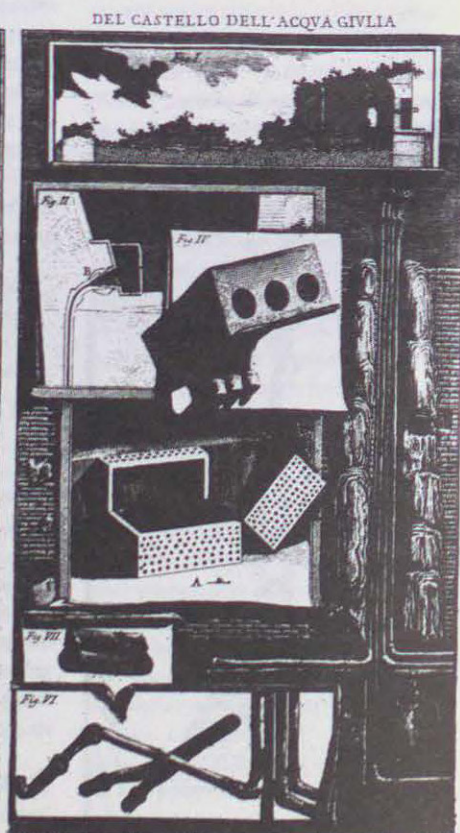
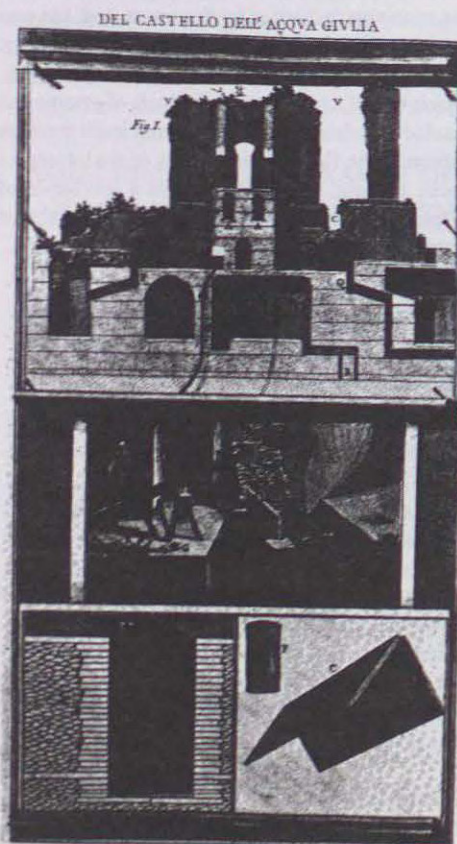
The production of meaning through collage returns to things their value as significant pieces, and by giving them a linguistic dimension captures a concrete duration of time. It demonstrates the possibility of *recognition* through everyday things - the making-present of memory. It is a form of representation grounded in the poetic sensibility of metamorphosis.

The possibility of making architectural representation which manifests this dynamic quality may be clarified by comparing Paul Ricoeur's definition of fiction with the alchemical monster.

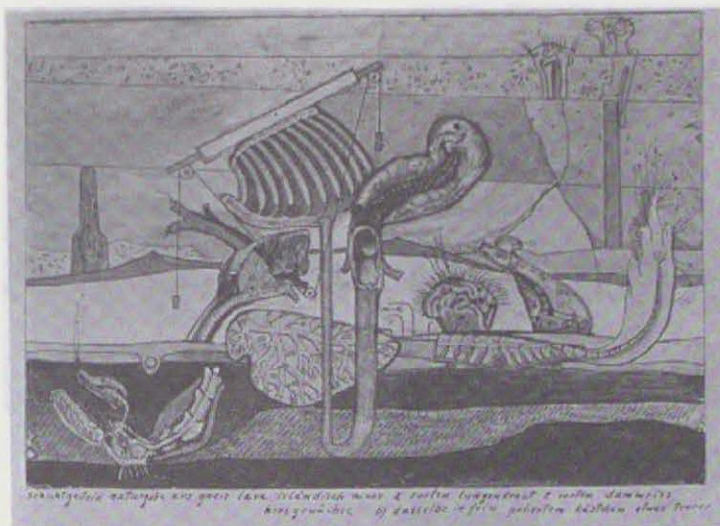
20 Jung, *op. cit.*

21 The *hieros gamos*, or chymical wedding, is the principle force propelling the cycle. The feminine counterpart awakens the soul in the masculine, and this symbolic sexuality of matter "stands for the creative impulse of the adult man to find a natural differentiation from the chaotic promiscuity of the world by founding a family, so that having been a son, he may become a father." [Linda Fierz-David, *The Dream of Poliphilo: The Soul in Love*. Dallas: Spring Publications 1987.] It is this conscious cosmogonic impulse in the soul of matter which maintains the momentum of reproduction.

22 Jung, *op. cit.*







Max Ernst, *Stratified Rocks, Nature's Gift of Gneiss Lava Iceland Moss 2 Kinds of Lungwort 2 Kinds of Ruptures of the Perineum Growth of the Heart (b) The Same Thing in a Well Polished Box Somewhat More Expensive.*

"All these things happen, and the eyes of the common man do not see them, but the eyes of the understanding [intellectus] and of the imagination perceive them with true and truest vision."<sup>26</sup>

#### IV. FLESH

Ever since the 'rebirth' of self-consciousness in that mirror-stage of culture, the Renaissance, man has become increasingly more capable of and responsible for creating change in the world. That which we make acts back on us as our environment; our task as human beings is to process the world through our conscious bodies, with imagination and compassion. The agility bestowed on the imaginative man of action is the possibility of overcoming the limits of the historical through the creative power of myth.

"Imagination is the star in man, the celestial or supercelestial body."<sup>27</sup>

The process of abstraction whereby representation is created is analogous to the construction of memory; what we make becomes our memories, acting on us as external devices. Memory forms the consciousness from which we operate in all aspects of life.

Mythological *poeisis* is the perpetual reification of the collective unconscious memory which is 'recalled' by the individual person and expressed in the particular work. Memory is a construction in the sense that it is a collective human creation, and becomes a foundation used to underpin the future, where history, the individual memory projected onto the collective, is made.

"Imagination, however, is nothing but the springing up of reminiscences, and ingenuity or invention is nothing but the working over of what is remembered."<sup>28</sup>

While history is a recombination of diverse elements into a whole, memory is the elimination of excessive sensory matter in order to extract a work from the world that is at once united with it and distinct from it. These two complementary paradigms, mythological-imaginative and historical-mnemonic, crossing like the centre of a mandala within the cycles of time, create the persistent rise and fall of culture.

The common element in the construction of meaning is the periodic relaying of the world through the human body. Heidegger's question concerning technology may in some way be answered by this exercise of the dormant resource: the bringing into being or revealing of things through the memory of their essential nature. A most uncommon gold.

Monsters are prodigious beasts composed of elements taken from disparate sources, which demonstrate the significance of the threshold between different realms or conditions. Their transitional nature signifies the temporal or mortal process of *becoming* rather than simply *being*; as "fiction redescribes reality," monstrosity bypasses the potential of any fixed or idealized system to categorize its heterogeneity.

A monster is a synthetic work of the imagination, a fiction which transcends its mundane origins. Ricoeur notes that "only the image which does not already have its referent in reality is able to display a world. [F]iction only reveals its ability to transform or transfigure reality when it is inserted into something as a labour, in short, when it is a work. When the image is made, it is also able to re-make a world."

A collage is a monster. A composite, which has no singular 'real' mnemonic referent, 'refers to' what is 'unreal' or *surreal*. "[I]mages created by the talent of the artist are not less real but more real because they *augment* reality. "These images create an increase in *being*, which Ricoeur has also called, "the surplus which fiction engenders." Thus the return: the philosopher's stone replenishes the matrix of the earth's primal matter. This is the way in which "fiction changes reality, in the sense that it both 'invents' and 'discovers' it," and in which "symbolic systems 'make' and 'remake' the world."<sup>23</sup>

"The ultimate role of the image is ... to suspend our attention to the real.... In this state of non-engagement we try new ideas, new values, new ways of being-in-the-world. Imagination is this free play of possibilities."<sup>24</sup>

The essence of making a collage is play in its broadest sense. As Heraclitus, an apologist of flux, cosmic periodicity and the coincidence of opposites, suggested: "Time is a child playing."<sup>25</sup> The collage grasps the elapse of time in this way, so embodying depth. By means of the instability of elemental forms within a delineated space it is not only the mystery of spatial depth with which one is dealing, but time in its dynamic form: motion.

#### Précis français:

On discute le problème de Molloy, un personnage de Samuel Beckett. Sur la plage, Molloy rassemble environ seize cailloux, qu'il nomme pierres à sucer. Il les distribue entre les quatre poches de son manteau et de ses pantalons.

La première solution qu'il trouve est: En prenant un caillou de la poche droite de son manteau, et en le mettant dans sa bouche, il en transfère un de la poche droite de ses pantalons à la poche droite de son manteau. Puis, il en transfère un de la poche gauche de ses pantalons à la poche droite de ses pantalons. Puis, il en transfère un de la poche gauche de son manteau à la poche gauche de ses pantalons. Finalement, il ressort le caillou qu'il suçait et le remplace dans la poche gauche de son manteau.

A chaque tour, quatre pierres traversent la bouche. Par hasard, il est possible que ce soit les mêmes quatre circulant toujours. Le problème pour Molloy, que j'ai oublié d'expliquer, c'est comment deviner une méthode de l'ordre à circuler tous les seize également.

On compare cette cosmologie avec celle du philosophe mystique Plotin (204-270) qui a posé des questions au sujet de la relation entre la matière et la mémoire, tout comme l'impossibilité de la souvenance dans l'être transcendant.

\*\*\*

23 Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality."

24 *Ibid.*

25 Heraclitus of Ephesus, Fragment 52.

26 Sendivogius, *op. cit.*

27 Martin Ruland, *Lexicon alchemiae, sive Dictionarium alchemisticum*. Frankfurt-am-Main, 1612

28 Vico, *op. cit.*



[T]he world is full of the most unrivaled objects for childish attention and use. And the most specific. For children are particularly fond of haunting any site where things are being visibly worked upon. They are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artifact produced in play, materials of widely differing kinds in a new intuitive relationship. Children thus produce their own small world of things within the greater one.<sup>29</sup>

Today every work of building is not a template for the cosmos, but every architectural work can both remember and imagine a possible world.

Habit is the bodily memory of ritual. Haptic skills are honed through constant practice, the way maintaining fluency in a language depends on its daily usage. Before beginning construction of a building, it is strongly recommended that an architect play at building things for several months ahead of time. Practice-building can be done anywhere, under almost any circumstances, using whatever materials and techniques are at hand. Habit is the extension of the body's rhythms to include ritual activities, just as inhabitation is the full engagement of the body with its lived environment. The meaning of building is revealed in inhabitation.

In the re-use of society's disjecta, considered taboo because it is excessive, excremental, or out-of-use, object-fragments transform as they engage in new cycles of life. According to alchemical notions of the reciprocal play between us and what we make, that which in turn makes us who we are, the process of the artifex is a spiritual odyssey to purify or elevate the self (beyond a primary alienation) through the ritual of making: the objective of Gnosis.

The thoughts expressed in this essay consecrate a ground which should be of interest to us as architects, whether we are making representations of architecture - representations, one hopes, in which memory and invention are awakened in the process of creating - or whether we are laying new foundations in the earth. Architecture might once more have the potential to become a poetic medium for revealing the mysterious.

The architect who thinks through his whole body is bound to the recollection of the philosophers' stone. The message of alchemy, the mystery of the material world, rings through the ages in collage, which is the act of remaking, whose fund is identical to the concrete universe.

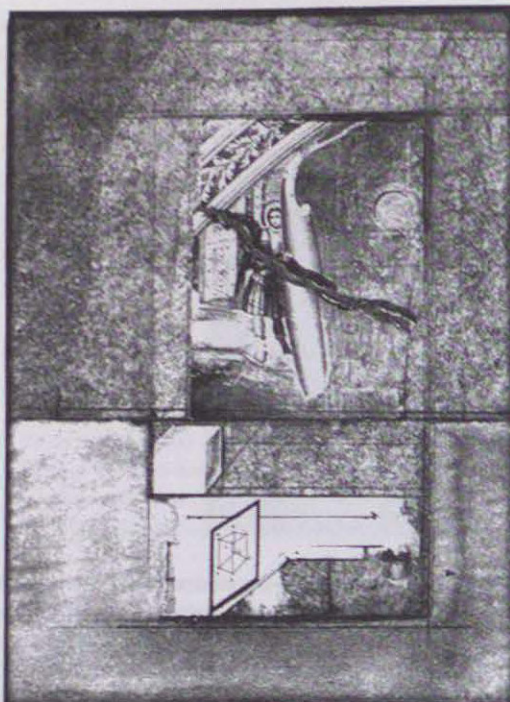
Architecture: *surrender your dead.*

\* \* \*

John Quynn McDonald studied design and architecture and is currently completing a post-graduate degree in astronomy at San Diego State University. He was born in the cold of a New England November and raised steeped in the fog of San Francisco.

One day in the summer of 1929 a painter I knew asked me: "What are you doing these days? Are you working?" I replied: "Yes, I'm making gluings. I'm preparing a book that will be called *La Femme 100 Têtes*." Then he whispered in my ear: "And what sort of glue do you use?" With that modest air that my contemporaries admire in me I was obliged to confess to him that in most of my collages there wasn't any glue at all.\*

A Recirculation of the Philosophers' Stone Tracey Eve Winton



29 Walter Benjamin, "Construction Site" in *Reflections*. New York: Schocken Books 1986.

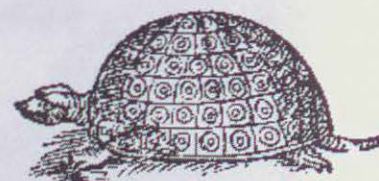
\* Quotations from Max Ernst: *Beyond Painting, and other Writings by the Artist and his Friends*. New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, Inc. 1948.

Joseph Cornell, *After Giotto #2*.



Thomas Aquinas (pseud.), *De Alchimia*

Tracey Eve Winton has a professional degree in Architecture from the University of Waterloo and is currently pursuing graduate studies at McGill University in the History and Theory of Architecture. She shares a birthday with James Joyce.



The Tortoise: an alchemical instrument



v1n1  
v2n1  
v1n3  
v1n4



IN THE PINK  
THE "OLD COUNTRY" INFLUENCE  
BIG ARCHITECTURE  
SMALL ARCHITECTURE

v2n1  
v2n2  
v2n3  
v2n4



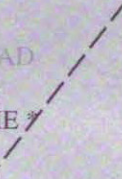
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URBANISM  
THE EAST  
THE FRINGE

v3n1  
v3n2  
v3n3/4



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A CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE \*

v4n1  
v4n2  
v4n3/4



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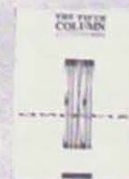
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 THE FIFTH COLUMN, en tant que revue nationale, cherche à accroître le nombre de ses contributeurs. Par la présente, nous lançons une invitation tant aux étudiants qu'aux professionnels à participer au contenu de la revue. Pour plus de renseignements, communiquer avec votre rédacteur régional de THE FIFTH COLUMN.

## V93 Who Cares, After Virtue? Responsibility, Apathy and All

From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved than feared, or feared rather than loved. It might perhaps be answered that we should wish to be both: but since love and fear can hardly exist together, if we must choose between them, it is far safer to be feared than loved.

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

This could well be rephrased as a question addressed to the contemporary architect: "are we more interested in love, or do we crave respect." This, in turn, begs the question of why we are a respected profession: does it have more to do with our inherent skills, as evidenced in the power of building, or with our demonstrated concern for the impact of our buildings? Is our concern just a quick about face from the times when we were commissioned by bishops to glorify the Church, to a paranoia that we'll lose our contracts if we don't pander to special interest groups? Who is the responsible architect: the aesthetically focused critical thinker or the pragmatic philanthropist? How is the architect responsible to society: does architecture attempt to mend inherent "evils" or, does it reflect passively on the status quo? Does it even make sense to speak of "ethical" architecture, or is this a misplaced qualifier that would best be left within the realms of politics and philosophy?

## Submission Deadline : January 1, 1997

### V94 Everything I Always wanted to Learn about Architecture, but didn't. a critical look at education

Philosophy I: Everyone from Plato to Camus is read, and the following topics are covered:

Ethics: The categorical imperative, and six ways to make it work for you.

Aesthetics: Is art the mirror of life, or what?

Metaphysics: What happens to the soul after death? How does it manage?

Epistemology: Is knowledge knowable? If not, how do we know this?

The Absurd: Why existence is often considered silly, particularly for men who wear brown-and-white shoes. Manyness and oneness are studied as they relate to otherness. (Students achieving oneness will move ahead to twoness.)

- Woody Allen, *Getting Even*

But, do architects know the answers any better than philosophy majors, and why is that we think we should?

In a recent poll it was revealed that over 98% of architecture graduates feel woefully inadequate in the drafting room. If any conclusion is to be drawn from this statistic it is that their educations must be too small or just, simply, not up to the task. Perhaps the question to asked is: "what task must we be up to?" Should we receive training in the technical skills of drafting and CAD? Or are these skills that can be easily picked up independently? Perhaps the focus should be on training students to think laterally, to approach every problem from a visual perspective, or, perhaps, we should base our education on a comprehensive examination of precedents. Obviously, the objective is to avoid too narrow a focus and to embrace as many issues as possible, but, unfortunately, this often leads to a dilution, and a rather precursory glossing of many subjects and approaches to design. Where does the median lie? Can some traditional approaches be written off as being irrelevant to professional training? To broaden the scope even further: are we being specifically trained for a particular profession, or does specific training constrain the student, restrict their choices, and inhibit the development of a personal philosophy of architecture?

## Submission Deadline : October 31, 1996

Please submit articles on Mac disk or BinHex 4.0 format to:

Envoyer vos projets d'articles enregistrés sur disquette Macintosh ou en format BinHex 4.0 à:

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

## On s'en fout! Responsabilité, Apatie et le Reste.

Cet énoncé soulève la question: est-il plus désirable d'être adulé que d'être craint, ou l'inverse serait-il préférable? Il se peut que l'on souhaite parfois les deux, mais puisque admiration et crainte peuvent difficilement coexister, si nous devons choisir, il serait beaucoup plus sécurisant d'être craint que d'être aimé.

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (1513)

Tout ceci pourrait être reformulé en une question adressée directement à l'architecte contemporain: "Sommes-nous plus intéressés en l'admiration, ou recherchons-nous le respect?" Ceci nous renvoie l'image de notre profession où nous sommes respectés: est-ce que tout cela concerne nos habiletés propres d'architecte, mises en valeur dans l'importance de l'édifice, ou alors nos inquiétudes énoncées tout haut au sujet de l'impact de nos constructions? Ces inquiétudes ne sont-elles que de petites révérences lorsque nous sommes commissionnés par l'évêque pour glorifier l'Eglise, ou est-ce plutôt la paranoïa de perdre nos contrats qui nous fait plier aux exigences de certains groupes d'intérêt. Qui est l'architecte responsable: est-ce le penseur critique qui se concentre sur l'esthétique ou le philanthrope pragmatique? Comment l'architecte peut-il être responsable face à la société: est-ce que l'architecture tente de *raccommoder les "démons" inhérents* ou, est-ce plutôt le miroir d'un statu passif? Est-ce que le terme "éthique architecturale" porte une signification en lui-même, ou est-ce un autre qualificatif qui devrait être abandonné aux réalités politiques et philosophiques?

### Tout ce que vous avez toujours voulu savoir au sujet de l'architecture, mais dont vous n'avez jamais osé parler. (un regard critique sur l'éducation architecturale)

Philosophie I: tout de Platon à Camus et lu, et les sujets suivants sont ouverts:

Ethique: les impératifs catégoriques, et six façons de les faire fonctionner pour vous.

Esthétique: l'art est-il le miroir de la vie, ou quoi?

Métaphysique: qu'arrive-t-il à l'âme après la mort? Comment fait-elle pour survivre?

Epistémologie: est-ce que le savoir est possible à savoir? Si non, comment savons-nous cela?

L'Absurde: pourquoi notre existence est-elle souvent considérée comme ridicule, particulièrement celle des hommes portant des souliers brun et blanc? *Pluralité et singularité sont étudiées en fonction de leur relation avec ... Les étudiants qui atteignent la singularité passeront à la secondarité...*

- Woody Allen, *Getting Even*

Mais, en fait, est-ce que nous, architectes, connaissons de meilleures réponses que les docteurs en philosophie, et pourquoi pensons-nous que nous devrions?

Dans un récent sondage, on affirmait que 98% des finissants en architecture se sentent affreusement inadéquats sur une table à dessin. Si l'on doit tirer une conclusion de cette étude, on peut facilement affirmer que l'éducation fournie est insuffisante, ou tout simplement pas à la hauteur. Peut-être devrions-nous plutôt nous demander pour quelles tâches nous devrions être préparés. Devons-nous recevoir la formation en dessin technique autant qu'en conception assistée par ordinateur? Peut-être devrions-nous former les étudiants à penser "latéralement," à approcher chaque problème avec une perspective visuelle, ou plutôt couvrir un éventail de sujets et approches au design. Où est-ce que se situe le juste milieu? Est-ce que quelques approches traditionnelles pourraient être énumérées comme incomplètes et encombrantes à l'entraînement professionnel? Pour élargir la portée de ce numéro, nous pouvons aussi nous demander si nous sommes spécifiquement formés pour une profession particulière, ou si une formation spécifique restreint l'étudiant, diminue sa capacité de choisir et inhibe le développement de philosophies personnelles sur l'architecture?

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