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# FROM THE DARK DEPTHS OF EMOTIONAL DESPAIR AND HILARIOUSLY FAKE INFRA-STRUCTURAL PROMISES, MAY A NEW GENERATION OF SAVVIER, FICTITIOUSLY BLAZING AND VICIOUS ARCHITECTURAL ANGELS ARISE.

# ARCHITECTURE IS RICH AND EXCITING AND INSPIRATIONAL PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS MESSY AND UNCOMFORTABLE.

of their own. Progressive fictions. Architectural fictions. Architecture, as a discourse with a deep history in speculation, only momentarily forgotten, may be surprisingly and uniquely qualified to out-Trump, Trump. To use speculative fiction politically is not a development to be mocked and lamented, but rather the only way forward—a tool that architecture might claw back from its own deep history in a re-energized effort to be politically re-empowered. From the dark depths of emotional despair and hilariously fake infrastructural promises may a new generation of savvy, fictitiously blazing and vicious architectural angels arise...

- A MOSTLY EMPTY
- B VAULT FOR KELLYANNE CONWAY'S SOUL
- C IMPERIAL SPRAY TAN BOOTH (ORANGE MARBLE)
- D STEVE BANNON'S CONTROL ROOM—NO ACCESS
- E TREMENDOUS ROOM #1
- F ROSIE O'DONNELL'S REMAINS
- G GALLERY OF TWEETS
- H IMMIGRANT DETECTOR / ENTRANCE HALL
- I RALLY SPACE FOR LARGEST CROWDS, EVER
- J HALL OF CAGED NASTY WOMEN
- K-M UNKNOWN (OWNED BY VLADIMIR PUTIN)
- N SHRINE TO JAMES COMEY
- O PAUL RYAN PLAYROOM
- P HALL OF ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS
- Q TACO SALAD CAFETERIA
- R EXTREME TORTURE DUNGEON FOR NAUGHTY U.S. CITIZENS
- S BEST ROOM IN HUMAN HISTORY
- T CLIMATE SCIENTISTS PRISON

## DARK INVASIONS: A REPORT FROM SWEDEN

Todd Reisz, Daniel Rose '51  
Visiting Assistant Professor,  
Yale School of Architecture

Like other exported Swedish crime dramas, "Jordskott" has its fair share of sublime morbidity. I haven't finished the series, so I will betray here only a partial spoiler. Like other Swedish crime dramas, this one follows a sharp, socially awkward, beautiful, and preternaturally tough protagonist. The plot focuses on Eva's return to her hometown Silverhøjd, which is being strangled by the forest. She learns that ingesting a nasty-looking parasite can save your life in Silverhøjd and even clean up a rash on your supermodel-proportioned forearm.

A mirrored society of non-humans haunts Eva's hometown. These other creatures are of the forest while the humans are of the town once built with wood fairly harvested from the forest. There once existed a symbiosis between the two societies (town and forest). But then Silverhøjd's industrialists became stricken with capitalist greed for more forest access, which led to a xenocide campaign to clear out the resisting forest people.

At great risk, police officers, miscreant children, and loggers enter the contentious forest. Its cushiony floor is blanketed in a disarming misty green. But that's a ruse. Festering heaps of organic rot conceal chutes to caverns below where shadow people mix potions to kill some people and heal others. The protagonist probes this underground, searching for clues about an aboveground epidemic of throat-slittings and kidnappings. She becomes entwined in a forest resounding with darkness, decay, transgression, and most of all, pending environmental catastrophe.

There are a few lessons in "Jordskott." One is a horror tale about the need for forest stewardship. Another is the discovery of dank passageways that drip muck, channel rancid stenches, and lead eventually into the hallways of the town's houses. Until the discovery that the town is penetrated by the damp hollows of nature, it might have seemed that civilization had been safely severed from the dark, that modern ideals of assured profits and hygienic lifestyles would reign. In a last effort to protect this appearance of nature's submission, the industrialists of Silverhøjd are ready to take out the forest and its mirrored society by total annihilation. Once and for all, civilization would rule.

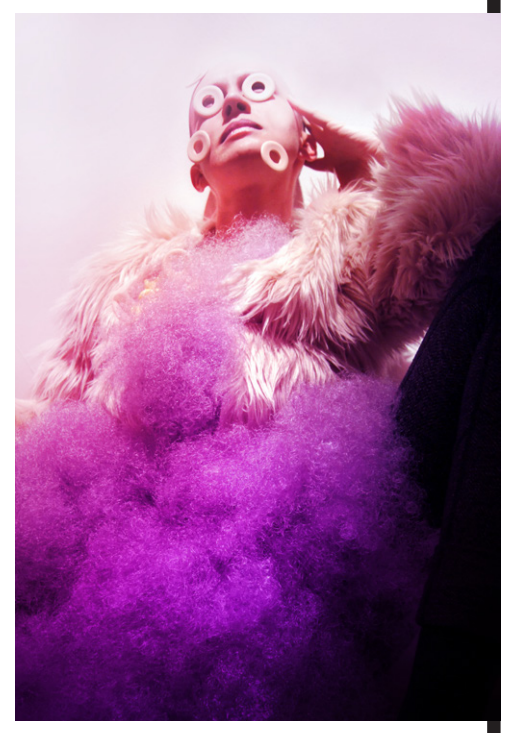
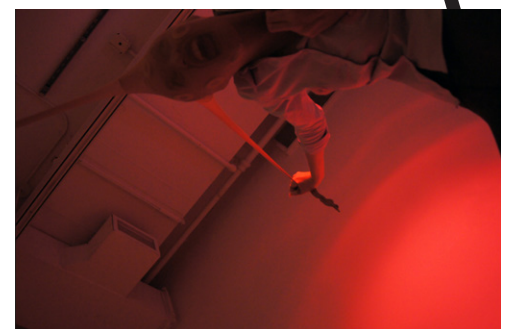
I don't know yet if the annihilation plans will be successful, but it's difficult to imagine a world where

fetid tendencies have been entirely eliminated. The forest, whether it is filled with the mirrored race or our own feral selves, must creep into our perfect systems. Not simply because of neglected "design flaws," but because it has to. Effluent pipes will burst, mold will paint itself on to pristine interiors, and creeping plant life will take over war zones. Putrid surfaces and scents need to be let into our well-drawn plans. Our grids and our systems are sold to us as the countermeasures to nature's fecund mush of decay and life. Knowing better, we should instead seek out a regular dose of dark invasion.

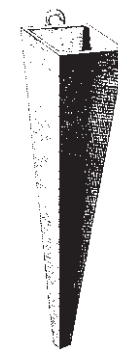
## PRIMA MATERIA

Caitlin Thissen, M.Arch '16  
Edward Wang, B.A. '16

Opposing atmospheres, references, themes, symbols... The ambiguous nature of the work, the who, the when, the where, and the why, elude control, precision, resolution, and/or reduction.



PRIMA



MATER

## WHAT WILL YOU BUILD?

Gentley Smith, M.Arch '18

What will you build? Prisons, abortion clinics, barracks, worship-houses? Will you replace trees with a house, houses with a stadium? How about weapon facilities or parking lots? Is there a moral imperative to your work?

Unlike doctors and lawyers, architects don't always stick to well-defined ethical codes. Some of us focus on community building or intellectual production. Others work on space-planning or technical innovation. Architecture is neither black nor white, but usually an awkward shade of collaborative grey. Where do you stand?

When we face controversial clients and a stubborn industry, we can look the other way or we can try to change a few minds. Rather than merely insisting on change, we can work hard with good intentions. Or we can say no, even if it means watching a lower bidder do worse. Bold actions have ripple effects in contentious spaces. Will you work or will you walk?

## "AGAINST THE SLOPE" A REVIEW OF NOAH'S ARK: ESSAYS ON ARCHITECTURE

Robert Smith Waters, M.Arch '18

*Noah's Ark: Essays on Architecture* is the most recent publication from Anyone Corporation's *Writing Architecture Series*. Edited, translated and introduced by Anthony Vidler, *Noah's Ark* is a collection of 13 essays by philosopher Hubert Damisch that span between 1963 and 2005. The subjects explored throughout the book deal with theoretical questions about architecture. The general ideas of structure—both linguistic and anthropological—meaning, origin and material permeate the entire collection.

Damisch's exploration into architecture represents an alternative and sometimes taboo way of thinking about architecture which makes this book an essential addition to anyone's library who wants to have a broader understanding of our art.

In the introduction, Vidler makes a distinction that is fundamental to understanding how Damisch thinks about architecture:

"His aim is both more philosophical... and less systematic. Here, the conjunction that appears often in his titles *-with-* is symptomatic: His aim is not to treat architecture and philosophy, but to discuss, to formulate a discourse of architecture with philosophy."

This distinction shows that architecture can exist outside of the structures of both philosophical and linguistic analysis to which architectural thought has so often been beholden too. For Damisch, essays on architecture appear with, between, to the edge of, and against other disciplines.

In keeping with the topic of this issue, it is not surprising that one of the essays by Damisch is a contrarian and counterintuitive examination of La Tourette called *Against the Slope*. Within this essay, Damisch builds a reading of La Tourette as a "theoretical object" and hypothesizes that La Tourette has a space within it to hold 'something resembling thought.' That is, that La Tourette has the capacity to be both a built architectural object and an abstract conceptual object for the mind to occupy. Damisch deconstructs the phenomenological and physical structures of La Tourette, analyzes them with his own experience and thought, then concludes that, La Tourette is indeed a conceptual work, from "the top down and from the inside out." He references Le Corbusier's explanation of the project as the most explicit summation:

"Walking is from the first a part of the phenomena constituted in perspectives through the play of all the kinesthesis together. And this occurs already in closed spaces, in which everything becomes accessible in the normal way and everything is thus constituted in the same way as real things spatiotemporally exterior to one another."

Here, by citing Le Corbusier directly, Damisch attributes the material experience of space in La Tourette to the controversial rationalist. If you take anything away from this review, let it be that Damisch is a "displaced philosopher" viewing architecture from an alternative perspective. His views are as unique as they are intuitive and *Noah's Ark* creates a new platform to examine the discipline. It is a must read for anyone interested in theory today.

# NOWADAYS, THE ARCHITECT MUST RECKON WITH THE FACT THAT TODAY'S DESIGN TOOLS CAN BE TOMORROW'S TRASH.

UNSPEAKABLE  
HORRORS

## QUALITY CONTROL

Interview with Nader Vossoughian Associate Professor of Architecture, New York Institute of Technology

To start off, can you describe your current and ongoing research interests? And also your various relationships to architecture as a scholar and educator?

I am a Germanist, philosopher, and architectural historian by training, and I have always been attracted to research topics that blend these disciplines. I currently teach architectural history and theory at the New York Institute of Technology, and I was a guest professor at the University of Kassel a year ago. I had the privilege of studying with Keller Easterling at the Jan van Eyck Academy about five or six years ago. It inspired my current work on standardization, which I consider my life's work.

During Keller Easterling's studio midterm review you challenged yourself to rethink how tenuous even "taboo" subjects are taught in a theory seminar or architectural studio. Why do you think in architecture school that there are issues that are considered forbidden?

This is a fascinating question. I don't believe that the existence of taboos are unique to architecture schools. Virtually all institutions have them to some degree. I also believe that the existence of taboos is not a bad thing *per se*. Freud suggests as much in *Totem and Taboo*, and I find myself agreeing with him. Taboos can indeed be oppressive, but they can also bring continuity and provide boundaries.

What I think that I wanted to say with my remark about taboos is that the election of Donald Trump represented a violation of a number of taboos—or at least it felt that way to me. It was depressing and demoralizing to witness, particularly given the way in which he utilized bigotry and misogyny to gain votes. Yet it also galvanized many of us. My seventy year-old mom has become an activist, which was never the case while I was growing up. We're also seeing just a lot of people stepping out of their comfort zones artistically and professionally as well as politically. To some extent, Roger Waters was right when he said that, "the only thing... that's positive is that a new kind of anarchy is going to happen next."

And as a scholar and educator, is there subject matter that you believe should be more widely considered as part of the pedagogy of an architecture school?

I think that schools need to rethink the one-size-fits-all model of design education: we need to create spaces for less structured and more self-guided forms of inquiry. The Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht did this beautifully under the directorship of Koen Brams. He did away with academic degrees; he also did away with "students" and "faculty." Everyone was a researcher. Researcher-driven projects were the norm at the school. Effectively, if you wanted to organize an exhibition, write a book, put together a colloquium, or invite a guest speaker, the resources were available to you. A person simply needed to come up with a convincing proposal. It was exciting, and it was kind of lawless, in a good way, with artists squatting in the main building, etc. It produced philosophers, artists, designers, and historians of the highest caliber. It stimulated some very exciting and memorable discussions that continue to this day for me. There was a strong sense of community.

Your body of work has shown that you are able to negotiate many disciplines in the pursuit to understand transcendent models of space-making. Is it possible to describe how you understand

your own model of interdisciplinary research?

Thank you for saying this. I've always thought of myself as a bit of an intellectual nomad, and my scholarly interests probably reflect this to a degree. I studied philosophy and German in college, as I already mentioned, and I was lucky enough to be able to take classes in a range of disciplines, from German studies to comparative literature, from art history to architecture, during graduate school. I am not sure I work with any one model as a scholar. A main theme for me, however, is that I have always been fascinated by language—particularly universal languages such as those developed by Otto Neurath, among others. My work on standardization is a product of this interest. It has brought into play ideas and protagonists that span various disciplines. It allows me to think about the *design of design*—the systems, practices, techniques, and institutions that shape how it is that architects think and act. It also permits me to engage theoretically with the ideas of Keller Easterling, Reinhold Martin, Markus Krajewski, and a host of other individuals whose ideas matter a great deal to me. All of these researchers have introduced important methodological innovations. I've tried to build upon their efforts in varying ways.

Much of the criticism and skepticism around studios like Keller Easterling's is that they are too topical or "hot off the press," in so far as that they are responding to developing issues and unpredictable circumstances.

These studios do not rely on a critical distance to history for models of design, but are trying to invent their own. How have you observed our rapid fire world influencing the design process or even the parameters employed by the architect? What would you say to those who are critical of studios that operate in these ways?

I wish that more professors had the courage to engage topical issues! I am grateful to Keller for that. I also think it is a mistake to believe that historical research can ever give us "models of design." It needs to be seen rather as a *Gesprächspartner* or interlocutor. It should foster critical reflection—it should never tell us what to do.

Keller's work is deeply historical, in my opinion. I also consider her to be an artist, designer, and theorist of the highest caliber. She embraces the standpoint of the *Flâneur*, which has its roots in the writings of Baudelaire, among others. The *Flâneur* has inspired some of the most nuanced and profound analyses of modern capitalism—most notably Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, for example. It has paved the way for a number of highly incisive contributions to architectural theory, for example Rem Koolhaas's *Delirious New York* in addition to Keller's 2007 book, *Enduring Innocence*. It influenced at least one very noteworthy contribution to the history of technology, namely Sigfried Giedion's *Mechanization Takes Command*. This represents a study of "anonymous history" that I see as a precedent for my work today.

In response to your question about how our world has influenced the design process or the parameters employed by the architect, I have a couple of thoughts to offer. First of all, I think that "the world" (however we construe it) is always an ever-present force in design and architecture. The two can never be separated. Having said that, one noteworthy thing that I think that new technologies are reminding us is the fact that design *is itself designed*. And it is today more so than ever. It used to be that the architect had a relatively stable set of representational tools and instruments at his or her disposal (e.g., T-squares, pencils, drafting tables, plans, sections,

elevations, etc.) This gave the designer a feeling of mastery and control, artificially perhaps, but still. Nowadays, the architect must reckon with the fact that today's design tools can be tomorrow's trash. Digital software applications obsolesce at a dramatic rate. What is more, these tools have a direct impact on the quality and character of one's work. They are influencing choices about materials, costs, and labor needs.

Take some of the newer (maybe now not so new) plug-ins, for example. Every student has software at his or her disposal that allows him or her to import manufacturer-issued specifications at the click of a mouse. These specifications are time-saving tools that help with meeting deadlines. They help assure compliance with code and safety requirements. They automate the selection of materials and the placement of fabrication orders. They also, however, erode the value of the architect's expertise. They represent a form of automation. They enforce specialization. They *standardize standardization* on an entirely new level.

Nearly a century ago, an architect had to pick up a copy of the *Sweet's Catalog* to partake in this process. Deciding on whether to embrace prefabrication and automation was a conscience choice. Today, under the current economic circumstances, it is not a choice at all. It is almost indistinguishable from design itself. What we call "architecture" is increasingly a cut-and-paste job that requires at least as much administrative and logistical expertise as it does artistic imagination or cultural acumen. What is more, the fact that architects are succumbing to these shifting expectations so readily in academic settings—and with little to no theoretical reflections—demonstrates a lack of historical imagination, at least in my opinion.

The Germans have in fact a beautiful word for what I am describing—it is called *Typisierung*. *Typisierung* could best be translated as "templating." That is to say, it is about using templates in deriving architectural solutions. This is not necessarily a bad thing—usage of templates can actually enhance quality in design, as architects such as Hermann Muthesius argued over a century ago. But it appears to be consuming design theory and practice today in ways that are just unprecedented. Details that once represented earnest and serious design problems—office furnishings, for example—are now just called "equipment." The equipment, moreover, is often what gets used to signify the program, as though having a toilet bowl icon and sink icon in a drawing is enough to signify "bathroom."

Now I don't want to suggest that educators are responsible for promoting this sort of thing. On the contrary, I'm sure it bothers my designer-colleagues more than it does me. I also don't want to sound like a technology-naysayer. I accept that the very tools of standardization that are rationalizing and automating the design process can also work to democratize prosperity, at least to a degree. Having said that, I regret that architects are not spending more time today talking about the *infrastructure* of design—they are not talking about the design of design itself. I also think that questions about *labor* need to be foregrounded in the discussion. This is because the technology questions of today are also labor questions—they are reorganizing the workplace in profound and unmistakable ways.

I should say that I consider the writings of architects and theorists such as Keller Easterling, Peggy Deamer, and Pier Vittorio Aureli to

