PAPRIKA!

The Moment Before

Issue.1

Vol.7

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Editors Note

The architectural discipline is constantly required to define the existence. The forces of territory and property attempt to structure a cathexis for architecture as a final artifact measured by a system of approaches between concrete, relating object but to a process. As we become active observers, this issue's canvas serves as a host to an elaborate array of anxieties, anticipation, and love. We don't wait, we slap paralyzed at the moment before.

This issue of PAPRIKA! invites contributors to ponder questions to define the existence. The forces of territory and property attempt to structure a cathexis for architecture as a spectrum of measured by a system of approaches between concrete, relating object but to a process. As we become active observers, this issue's canvas serves as a host to an elaborate array of anxieties, anticipation, and love. We don't wait, we slap paralyzed at the moment before.

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What if the Moment Before Never Ends?

Evangelos Fokialis
Alkiviadis Pyliotis

The critical gaze of the "Moment Before" is that it questions essential aspects in architectural creation; the timeline of a project, the phases, the stages, the edges, the boundaries, and the process. In a society that favors the specialization of knowledge and fragmentation, the "Moment Before" seeks to identify Ariadne's thread in the labyrinth of contemporary architectural production. It belongs to a series of rising movements that inaugurate a new era of the architectural discourse in the generation to come; an era with changes in the perception of architecture, where the process becomes the main point of interest in architectural creation.

This inclination to the process of making architecture possibly originates from a series of realizations in architecture today. First, the accessibility to a considerable quantity of information channels, images, ready-made solutions, and the total freedom in the choice of their strategies was not enough to form the architectural identity of our times. And second, the myth of the architect magician that effortlessly creates miracles collapses, as specialization in architecture completely disconnects the profession from its holistic nature. It seems nowadays that the instant moment of the built artifact struggles in defining the relevance of architecture in the wider milieu. Perhaps the final artifact is dying, and there is no time for lamentations.

Instead of criticizing (or being inspired by) every photoshopped image on the web, there is an opportunity to look for a common ground able to offer coherency in the architectural discussion. In this transition, the term synthesis, as the process of combining elements to form a connected whole, is reemerging at the surface of contemporary architectural discourse. As a procedure that is at the same time an act of anticipation and discovery. A series of actions described by constant doubt and restlessness; An effortful process in which the protagonist is the continuous and dynamic search of ideas and not only the aesthetics of a finalized outcome. At the same time that the finalized artifact operates as a monologue, the communication and unraveling of architectural Synthesis could serve as a collaborative dialogue that questions various phases of the creative procedure: the formal gestures, the decisions, the neglections, the reason, the specific character of the project, and its universal values.

In this perception of the creative process, the "final" artifact is never a conclusion but just an instance in a sequence of circumstantial but ordered choices. This frozen moment of the compositional process underlines something more significant - the idea that Synthesis never ends. It continues to evolve for every creator, as a constant doubt of the outcome and as something that is subconsciously and perpetually reshaped, rethought, and rewritten. Thus the "final" project paradoxically works as a "Moment before"; an end that heralds a new beginning enhancing the feeling that something is always waiting to be revealed.

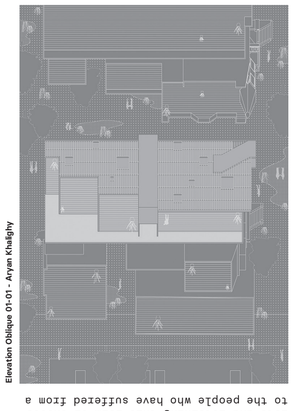
Autonomous Party Wall

Aryan Khaligh,
Daniel Haliaerrnota

Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood is a market of contrast between overcrowded black housing projects and the prevalence of empty plots. The inset border of our project's site corresponds to a completely open and empty ground level, nodding to the complex and unequal history represented by Bronzeville's empty lots and returning this form of excess to the people who have suffered from a congressional dispute, when it was realized that mining was extending past the claims boundaries and into the park itself. A national spectacle ensued, as the role of environmental federal oversight and individual freedoms ensued. The mine and adjacent resort were closed and fenced off in 1969, becoming a barrier on the famous South Rim Trail. The Havasu Tribe, one of the only tribes with remaining land claims within park boundaries, worry today that contaminated soils might eventually affect their sources of water several miles downstream. Partially reclaimed in the early 2010's, work remains incomplete.

The question of these toxic landscapes begs a proposal and speculation for the remediation of such sites, unusable in their current state. Through past governmental proposals for disposal cells, the image of the mound as architecture was perverted by its implications in modernity.

Derived from the Latin word *mundus*, meaning world, might a reassessment of the Mound allow us to see our physical surroundings differently? In these unintended architectures, might we be able to discern and thus grapple with the byproducts of human inventions and mistakes in the late anthropocene? Is there a way to foreground and reevaluate our dealings with toxic ecology, while creating a collaborative dialogue between federal lands and their original inhabitants? Mounds today continue the sacred nature of the countless mounds of indigenous cultures, persisting as an elegy to the sacred dedication of the modernist notions of progress.



indexes the moment *after* the displacement of inhabitants. In hopes of bringing them back, our proposed party wall is treated as a freestanding autonomous stage for the moment *before*.

["House with 2 Party Walls" is our response to the RFP entitled "Up from the Past: Housing as Reparations on Chicago's South Side" to showcase as a collection curated by Isabel Strauss for the 2021 Chicago Architectural Biennial, "The Available City".]

Architect's Block

Joshua Abramovich

As a student of design,
Or an aspiring architect that's gaining
experience,
My mind will occasionally resign,
Making the thought process delirious

I long for a solution-
My sketches are in scribbles
While I ponder in dissolution,
They appear to me as riddles

I browse Raf Simons shoes online
Looking out the window, I see cars rushing
through the rain
Twenty minutes pass, and I'm running out of
time

Soon enough, I go on a whim
Then realize, that can't be submitted on Miro
Like Eisenman's philosophy, I attempt to win
By becoming the "architectural hero"

Maybe a distraction would re-energize my
brain
Or bringing them back to life, I'm
Making the thought process delirious

The mere thought of infinite possibilities
Reminds me of the professors' stern revisions
While the "creative genes" present
themselves as liabilities,
I contemplate my life decisions

Perhaps I'll browse Pinterest, Instagram,
books for inspiration
Yet not a thought bubble in sight
Like Fuller's imagination,
I sit at my desk, thinking into the night

Towards the climax of this antagonizing
investigation
I feel as though the world is crumbling
Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication,
Yet my will to continue is struggling

Exiting the studio, I leave the architect's
block behind

Wall Search

Andrea Sanchez Moctezuma

E I N V F V N C L S O P E A R G F W B
M F E U H W N Z O Z E N C O G O I B F
B H C N A R R A T I V E R N G O F E R
D M T R B X O B F J V A F B H X F E F
O G O V V T H O O N Z E H C O I A N G
I X I D Z F V U I H A F W A C K W E L
E E A R K O M E T S F A D Y N X M G F I
S I T O F Z K R B E J P Z X G J X R M
P K S T N M A T E R I A L I Z I N G S A
R A D D O Z I C O W V I L L U B D S N L
C K E C R L C E F N C G T T C L C T
O F E T T U B E V U B F I C N H P Y D L
T K C N I L X D M I Z Q C N O Z Y K
C U S B E N T I Y M M Y I Z O Z N H O V
U B M A S L B O U D U D A H I E S R Y R L
C M P E R T G V R U U K K Z C C U M T G
Y O W Z Z C B N W D K O H H T V W P A E
M Y G C T Q N E P W A Z U N Y W R F Y M
J N M D R G I A C Y J I R C E I W E E I
Q A W B D W Z H J Y H R E S H O L D L T

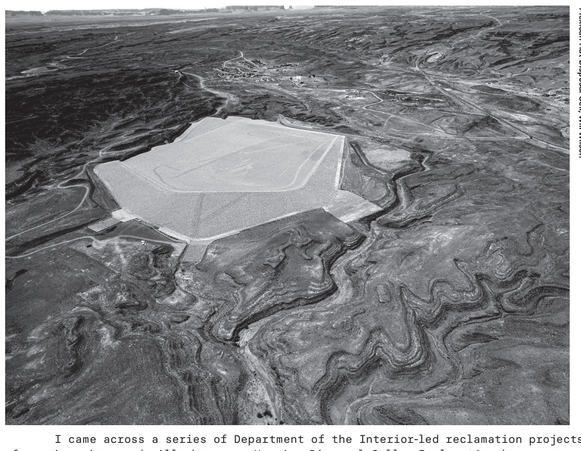
If the _____ of the wall can be said to have a poetic nuance.
We must remember that what it _____ is not
always independent of what it is.
Stand in El Chaparral Tijuana, at the foothold of the rusted
facade _____ two horizons.
An accumulating _____ testament,
constantly negotiating between two _____.
Before the wall, who protected the land?
What remains of the unspoiled views of boundary-less _____?
To travel through the _____ of a border is not an
experience that sentences transiate.
Like a poem would, it is build and presence,
which trace the route and the _____.
If we embrace that obstacles of untangible _____ can be
_____ in any context. We shall still ask: how does _____
the untamed agency of migration cease territorial movement?

Uranium Disposal Cells

Nick Gochnour

"If we come across a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forest, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something in us says, "Someone lies buried here" That is Architecture. - Adolf Loos

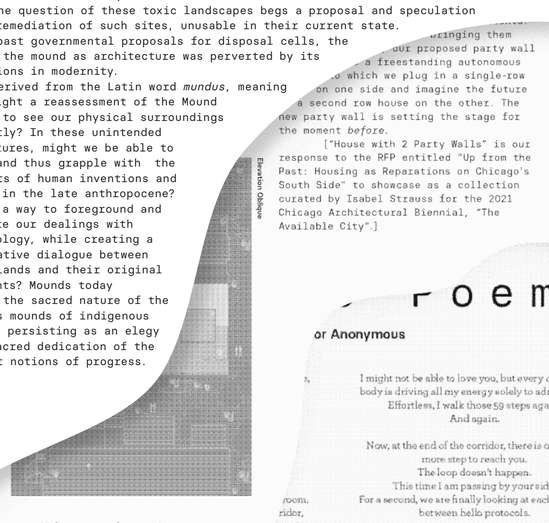
The toolled, technical form of a mound combined with its cultural/cognitive presence, as described by Adolf Loos, has been the impetus for much recent theoretical and pedagogical discussion surrounding the origins of architecture. Looking beyond the simple grave, there remains an unexplored trove of works, ancient and modern, that demonstrate our innate tendency to produce and also inhabit piles of earth and materials shaped through the angle of repose. In a built environment characterised today by complexity in skins, structures and constructions, we might ask - is it still relevant to think about simple forms like the mound today as relevant forms of architecture.


Mexican Hat Disposal Cell, Will Wilson

I came across a series of Department of the Interior-led reclamation projects of uranium mines and mills known as Uranium Disposal Cells. Reclamation here means the burying of toxic tailings under acres of clay, plastic protective sheeting and rip rap rock. These protective measures are intended to contain the toxicity present in the mill sites, preventing radioactive soils from leaching into local water sources. Their effectiveness is disputed. The expansive forms of infrastructure developed through this process fall under the logic of the mound on a much larger, monumental scale. These legacies of the modernist ideals of progress are hidden literally out-of-site, out-of-mind in small communities across the southwest, permanent fixtures for at least the next 1,000 years.

One such disposal cell exists in Mexican Hat, Utah on the Navajo Nation, a site complicit in decades of environmental injustice against indigenous peoples. Here, locals worked towards the production of the United States war and energy machine of the mid century without protection and knowledge of the radioactive and potentially deadly impact of the rocks they interacted with daily. The expansive protective cell was completed in the 90s becoming a terrain vague, a land with no real use, a blank spot on the map.

There are 4,000 such unreclaimed and unremediated uranium mine and mill sites in the US alone, many on tribal lands. The Orphan Lode Mine, located on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon on a popular tourist track is a site rich in minerals, natural beauty and land disputes. The South Rim, often touted as a place of pure untarnished nature, is, through settler prospectors, pocked by discrete industrial landscapes. The Orphan Lode Mine, permit obtained in 1893, mined through 1,000 feet of rock to extract some of the richest contents of Uranium in the nation. Grand Canyon National Park took ownership of the 26 acre site, 5 of which are above the rim of the canyon, in the late 1960s. In the years prior it had been central in



A Deadline for Zeno

Ana Gabriela Loayza

What is the architect's position along with the paradigms of time? A traditional conception of time in architectural production relies on the links between past and present events towards one future project[1]. Beyond this notion, building and author relate differently to time and between themselves, meeting in moments of leverage and, on a later date, separation. A conscious selection of knowledge and

Through the intentional use of this flawed logic, architects find a way to incorporate more of their passion and knowledge into the craft of an artifact.

The trade of logic for the gain of faux time is forced by introducing a deadline, a conceptual limit to create conditions of discomfort. The deadline instrumentalizes anxiety as fuel for both learning and practice within the time constraints of the architectural project. It is not an analogy of a stop sign nor the call for a pause, but the ceasing of the opportunity to develop mastery, build a position, tend to cultural demands, challenge or reinforce canons, and experience the paradigm of the nurturing pain in the profession.

With few exceptions[2], the hours and minutes to which the architect's presence is reduced at completion are inverse to the incremental presence of the building over the years. Within the realm of traditional time and deadlines, the building's absence is the author's opportunity for presence in the discipline. There the architect holds two ends together. On the one hand, acknowledging an architecture delimited by time implies a look and eventual regard for the historical past. The architect may opt to secure their design processes and methods through historical knowledge in the shape of tools, precedents, or guidelines, later calibrating lessons for a present project within its own assigned time. On the other, the authority of the future deadline forces the abstract exercise of subdividing remaining time to allow design speculations and technical refinements on behalf of anticipation, encompassing an obsessive attitude towards mastery and leading to the spike of authorship traits or novel findings.

But does the abstract manipulation of time ensure mastery? Punctual deliveries are great, but polemics of large-scale buildings such as Herzog & De Meuron's Elbphilharmonie or Eisenman's The City of Culture, seven to ten years late (and 10 and 4 times over the budget respectively)[3], question the rigidity of deadlines and the density of the experience. Did it represent any anxiety-relief for the architect? Did they meet new discoveries for the field? Is it always worthy, then, to grant a deadline extension?

The alleviation of workloads by computational tools allows, for moments, a different reaction to the deadline. The regard for the historical past is supplanted by the task of introducing information for calculations and iterations that are not intimidated by the idea of a liminal experience. This means the detachment of perfecting patterns and the reproduction of work in fast and repeatable phases that value iterations over knowledge baggage. This approach, through iterations, independently of the tools and against a qualitative quest, focuses on the chances offered by quantity and intuition to detect potential and built upon.

If the previous take doesn't relax the experience at large, it at least provides a brief escape while still moving forward: a transition that waives the irony of creating time. It becomes necessary at times since the original metaphor is tacit about resources. The more subdivisions of shorter spans each, the more intensity and consumption of work and knowledge are needed after every subdivision, at a faster pace. The gain of time is mutual to the exhaustion it will retrieve.

Contemporary readings of Zeno's paradox rely on physics to solve it. The paradox was depicted in terms of time only, but solutions are found in terms of speed, rates, and forces. The problem relates metaphorically to an experiential phenomenon of the profession before delivery, and its solution foreshadows manners to escape an anxious experience by relying on a wider network of information. Far gracious than a race, it could be understood as a productive state rated across actors, along time, avoiding reference to an imposed death.

If so, maybe the social hallucination of a project limit can be mastered: make passion crawl into time but also among actors, subdivide one possibility into many instead of for time, share the tectonic challenge.

[1] May, John. Signal. Image. Architecture: (Everything Is Already an Image). p.34. Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2019.

[2] Sagrada Familia, for instance.

[3] "The Elbphilharmonie. A New Concert Hall Is Worth the Wait, and the Cost." The Economist. January 21, 2017.

[4] Said, Edward W. On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

A Love Poem

Author Anonymous

Seeing you for six hours in a row would
compensate your absence,
the cancelled sessions
the narrow classroom,
the cold day.

I missed your intensity.
It was snowing outside.
Weather matters.

It was a sixty-steps walk to the classroom.
You, standing at the end of the corridor,
waiting for your group and the
conversations,
making time feel real.

It was a forty-steps walk to the classroom.
Your kindness at its best,
your gestures of politeness,
forcing time to run slower.

It was a twenty-steps walk to the classroom.
Capturing my approach with your
formalities,
Expanding the distance with your voice.
Time goes dense, impossible. Add some nice
glitching.

The moment I am one step away from your
oldish beauty,
I am sent fifty-nine steps back to my desk.
The loop starts again.

I might not be able to love you,
but effortless, I walk those 59 steps again.
And again.

Now, at the end of the corridor, there is only
one more step to reach you.
The loop doesn't start.
This time I am passing by your side.
For a second, we are finally looking at each
other in between hello protocols.
Here, my intensity.

Modern Moments of Anxiety

Carlos Blanco

After enduring centuries of rapid extraction, unsustainable living methods, and climate-altering systems of production, consumption, and waste - our planet is reacting back with force. We've created a world that no longer wishes us to exist in it. Within the last few decades, the planet has shifted with oscillating patterns of abnormal and extreme weather conditions; overall global environmental health has depleted. Planet Earth is taking its ownership in its final attempts of ensuring longevity. *We as the human race, have majorly screwed up!*

How much longer can we continue existing on this planet before it reclaims itself and us in the process? What will we see at that moment before the shores consume us? Before the heat scorches us? Before massive hurricanes and tornadoes rip apart our homes? What will it feel like when we are all left alone and stranded?
Who and what will survive? **And more importantly, will anyone get to see the moment after?**

We need a raw and sincere outlook into our lives within a few years and decades into the future as we face the consequences of our actions. Climate-induced disasters are ever more frequent, breaking records across the board and they're only going to get worse as the years go by without substantial changes.

Look around at the beautiful little world that we've fabricated and realize that our decision-makers have failed us, treating climate change-induced disasters as an issue for our future selves. Well, sorry to break it to you, but there will not be a future self to deal with these issues, because it's at our front doorstep; your doormat just got washed away in the heavy flash flood this morning. Perpetual and repetitive habits of ignorance have forced us into these conditions, *riddled with anxiety.*

Answer this truthfully, do we need all that we have? Why do we consume so much, yet hold so little to our name? Being wasteful is not a good look on you. Why is your online shopping cart filled with fast fashion pieces that ultimately use cheap exported labor in factories and pollute marginalized communities? Excessive emission of greenhouse gases and pollutants has had far-reaching effects, just check the smog conditions in Los Angeles and Beijing. You don't need that 100th bottle of dry shampoo; put it down.

As the onset of higher global temperatures, many regions will encounter extensive monsoon rains and millions will endure a world rampant with mosquito-borne diseases, such as Malaria and Dengue. Before you start applying that useless bug spray, just know that it's only going to get worse. Other regions will experience prolonged dry seasons, forcing millions to leave, accounting for climate-induced migration. What a paradox! To live in a world that's drowning in humidity and floods while others are in droughts, and yet both lack safe drinking water due to the ever-increasing issue of depleting water reservoirs and salinization of fresh bodies of water. In short, enjoy your Evian water bottle while you can.

Do we love our AC units as much as we love those summer power outages and failing electrical circuits? If our indoor conditions aren't sufficiently comfortable, how will we thrive in a world that requires us to check toxicity levels in the air before exiting our homes? What will you do when your eyes begin to tear up when urban heat zones and smog combine to create engineered biohazards in record summer temperatures? Darling, pick yourself up! You're crying all over the splendid paprika-colored carpet.

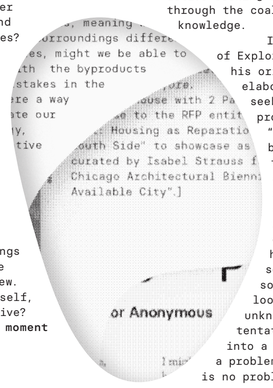
Weather extremes will be extensive and yet not exclusive. *This is not a hyperbole, this is an understatement!*

There is an underlying level of restlessness creeping in. Wake up! The doom of our planet is quickly approaching, seemingly arriving before your UberEats food order!

Before we begin to panic and grab every roll of toilet paper off the shelves, we need to question our capitalistic modern world and set of values. What will be the moment that finally shakes us to the core, perhaps before we enter into a world ravaged by unpredictable weather conditions, viruses, and food and water shortages?

What are we going to do? The polar caps are melting, droughts are intensifying, forests are being cleared, water resources are depleting, floods are washing away everything, and yet here we are, worried about line weights as we wait at the plotter for our fanciful drawings that will ultimately be tossed away after review.

Again, ask yourself, who and what will survive? **Is there going to be a moment after?**



Tracing

Christopher Beck

TRACE,
verb: to copy by following lines
noun: a mark or line left by something that has passed

From Latin
TRACTIARE "delineate, score, trace"
TRACTUS "track, course, a drawing out"
TRAHERE "to pull, draw"[1]

> "That's what I'm interested in: the space in between, the moment of imagining what is possible and yet not knowing what that is."
> - Julia Mehretu

Tacit Knowledge

In 1962, Dr. Michael Polanyi delivered a series of lectures at Yale University, initiating his transition from a decorated career in science to one in philosophy. Acutely aware of the nature of scientific knowledge and discovery, Polanyi posited an original insight regarding personal knowledge, declaring, "we can know more than we can tell." Serving as an orienting principle throughout his book, The Tacit Dimension, this terse, and perplexing, statement has not only significant implications in scientific discovery, but also in the creative process, a point Polanyi himself addresses by directing attention towards literature, the fine arts, and other "non-scientific" pursuits, emphasizing that: "the pressure exercised by literary and artistic circles is notorious."[2] Purporting that these other spheres have as much to offer society, if not more, Polanyi's theory draws parallels between the sciences and arts, in that both experience an emergence of ideas through active seeking and discovery, not merely through the coalescence of a priori knowledge.

In chapter 3, "Society of Explorers," Polanyi concludes his original declaration by elaborating on the acts of seeking and recognizing problems:

"Yet, looking forward before the event, the act of discovery appears personal and indeterminate. It starts with the solitary intimations of a problem, of bits and pieces here and there which seem to offer clues to something hidden. They look like fragments of a yet unknown coherent whole. This tentative vision must turn into a personal obsession; for a problem that does not worry us is no problem: there is no drive in it, it does not exist. This obsession, which spurs and guides us. Is about something that no one can tell: its content indefinable, indeterminate, strictly personal."[3]

While some of these "bits and pieces" might have origins in familiar material, Polanyi argues that they are pointing towards that which is not yet known, that which is hidden. In other words, the intimation of a problem is a significant act in and of itself. If taken as a basis for not only knowing, but also acting, and subsequently being, this assumption has far reaching consequences for other creative endeavors. Polanyi continues:

"Indeed, the process by which it will be brought to light will be acknowledged as a discovery precisely because it could not have been achieved by any persistence in applying explicit rules given to fact. The true discoverer will be acclaimed for the daring feat of his imagination, which crosses uncharted seas of possible thought."[4]

Directed specifically towards visual representation, the question becomes: can we draw more than we know?

Emergence through Drawing

Polanyi defines the process of the revelation of something hidden as an "emergence," a particularly useful word in the examination of the multi-disciplinary act of drawing. Do we draw what we already know, or are we drawing to know? Artists have historically embraced the idea of drawing as the fledgling existence of an idea, by using paper as a space to construct the potentiality of a non-existent work[5], and even further, as something that might never be described as "existing." Drawing is also the common language that unites the fine arts and design disciplines, serving as a common method in which practitioners first visualize something that previously existed only in their mind. It is the most primal act.

In my own drawing practice, I am often caught between discovery of unknown territory while feeling a simultaneous sense of familiarity. The tension between these two conditions is what propels the work forward – energy generated from an ambivalent state of being both lost and at once knowing exactly where the drawing is. Most concretely, this process begins through the tracing of video source material, the drawing initially a recording of obvious forms and outlines. Sometimes, what is found is known, like a literal outline; other times, it is the discovery of a new path of movement, or previously unknown geometry. Further, the content of the drawings I work on is typically of the observed world around me, often through the slowing down of, or an expansion of, natural movement patterns. Both the material constraints and slowness of the process open up new possibilities, the chance of discoveries through a process of hunting out that which I am not sure about yet.

Drawing as Hypothesis

How does the body relate to the spatial and temporal qualities of drawing? Can these characteristics spur further inquiry and generative ways of working? In Polanyi's terms, the exploration of "true discoverers" implies a type of risk, relying heavily upon the imagination, particularly that which does not yet exist. Emma Cocker similarly defines a hypothesis as "the pioneer who pushes at the edges of territorial frontiers."[6]

In this way, a process that relies on tracing is also fruitful because it lifts the yoke of meaning, allowing instead for the propulsion of not-knowing, coupled with the anticipation that something will emerge. There is a sense of trust required, that a process is indefinitely going to lead to something meaningful, even if the origin is unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Oscillating somewhere between the "known and unknown," the drawn hypothesis can serve to destabilize preconceptions or otherwise seemingly familiar things. Again, drawing is the language that unites such varied disciplines; as such. it is typically treated as a stepping-stone to the final act:

"Drawing is the language through which the hypothesis is shaped within art practice, since it too has been habitually designated as a preliminary activity, always coming before, rarely taken for what it is in itself."[7]

Cocker points to Paul Klee's drawing of some thrown object experiencing gravity, always anticipating its return to earth. Klee urges the reader to think about the object's ability to experience a "cosmic curve," on which the hypothesis, or the "if" continues without an indefinite resolution. Richard Hugo similarly urges young poets to be aware of the difference between the "initiating or triggering subjects" and the "real or generated" subject. He notes that young poets tend to cling onto the triggering subject, moving laterally (or through the full gravitational arch, in Klee's words), never quite ascertaining the subject matter that can be generative (the object that defies gravity). There is the investigation, material, or process that might begin a project, but the real project lies somewhere just beyond the horizon. But what if drawing is also taken for what it is in itself? Can it tell us something about which we think we don't know if it is both the question and the answer? Can the drawing continually propel itself, following a new path one never foresaw at the origin of the drawing? If indeed the drawing is taken for what it is, it becomes an event, something worth viewing from an objective perspective, but also participating in.

If understood through this context, we can now define this inchoate space as a "trace" dimension, one which is elucidated through the hand but takes place in the mind[8]. It is articulated and comprehended through our thoughts and experiences: as the pencil is pulled across the page or the mouse dragged across the desk, and the subsequent drawing is constructed, we inhabit the ostensibly unseen places that occur in-between, underneath, and within.

[1] "Trace | Search Online Etymology Dictionary," www.etymonline.com, accessed September 5, 2021.

[2] Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, p.84

[3] Ibid., p.75

[4] Ibid., p. 76

[5] Diana Petherbridge writes about the role of the hand and its thought process in drawing in her prolific and deeply insightful historical work, The Primacy of Drawing: "In many respects, the moving hand of drawing registers the movement of the thinking eye, the degree of coordination being susceptible to multiple external and internal influences and depending on the skill perfected by the artist" p.90

[6] Emma Cocker, Distancing the If and Then, p. 98

[7] Ibid., p. 100

[8] "My paintings are not about what is seen. They are about what is known forever in the mind." - Agnes Martin

Habemus Cella*

Ibrahim Kombarji

On a large dry plot in the suburbs of Yamoussoukro in Ivory Coast, sits the 30,000 square meter 'Basilica of Our Lady of Peace'. This ambitious project is an almost exact replica of the Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. It was commissioned by Houphouët-Boigny, the first President of the Ivory Coast, in power from 1960 to 1993, in his hometown. The Basilica was built between 1985 and 1989 by Lebanese architect Pierre Fakhoury. The Yamoussoukro Basilica has not had the same history as the 'original' Saint Peter's Basilica, and its story is 'yet to come'.

In an attempt to better understand the 7,508 kilometers that separate these two sites - the Vatican City and Yamoussoukro - this short essay will draw on the text of Bruno Latour and Adam Lowe "The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original Through its Facsimiles'[1] (2011). The authors argue that the production of facsimile (meaning 'make similar') paintings using digital 3D tools creates a quasi-transported - almost transcended in time and space. This is precisely one of the architectural intentions seen in the most enchanting religious constructs. In many churches, for instance, this is done through the use of light entering the space through stained glass windows, proportions beyond human scale, the use of holy relics. In this sense, both Basilicas can have an aura, a 'distinctive atmosphere or quality that seems to be generated by a place'.

Yet the different contexts and geographic locations of the two Basilicas may alter or accentuate this feeling of 'aura'. A 'copy', Latour reminds us, derives etymologically from 'copious', and thus 'designates a source of abundance'. The Yamoussoukro copy is thus a site of abundance in a context of poverty, unemployment, and unachieved promises. In the close-by district of Yakro for instance, 750 hectares were intended to accommodate companies that work in the agri-food sector making the city 'the epicenter of the industrialization'[6]. Instead, the immense Basilica, an unmissable symbol of the city, remains the only very well-maintained part of the city for the few thousands of tourists who pass there each year. The replica Basilica stands as a veneer and an archive of these conflicting realities.

Annexed to the Yamoussoukro Basilica, a papal villa was designed for the speculative trip of the Pope and in the hopes of hosting his holiness in his usual bedroom setting. The room has ever since been empty. In 1990, during his African Tour, Pope John Paul II consecrated this Basilica and did a sermon there, asking the Ivory Coast President to build hospitals around the edifice. Curiously, the Pope did not stay for the night and instead returned to the Vatican City that evening.

This architectural edifice still lives today in a constant state of 'yet to come.

The Yamoussoukro Basilica and the Papal visit reflect the larger entanglement of geopolitics and architecture in a transnational display of power, pride, and faith.

The architect of the Yamoussoukro Basilica explains his work as translating the faith of the President into a 'magnificent edifice'[7], he also describes the capacity of architecture to go beyond what exists. In this race for highest-tallest-shiniest, the 'trajectory' of a copy can perform as a 'trompe l'oeil' (meaning visual illusion) and lose part of its meaning. It is this 'cognitive dissonance' that we as active diplomat architects should transcend and instead identify ways to reproduce such titanesque projects using more responsible and contextual modes of production. The Yamoussoukro Basilica is seen by many as the 'Saint Peter's of the Savannah', but the only real manifestation of a 'savannah', is the shadow it casts on the close-by fields of cocoa.

In a final attempt, one might use speculation as a tool to think of the futurities of the Yamoussoukro edifice, in a way for it to better suit its context and local needs, whilst constantly 'fecundating' its aura. The Basilica could host within it, a hospital structure on one end and at the other a museum annex with part of the Vatican's impressive collection of artifacts from across the world (but 7,508 kilometers away from Vatican City). The surrounding of the Basilica can be the site of regenerative agriculture with Baobab trees, that with time, could go even higher than both Saint Peter's Basilica and ascend to the promised heavens.

* Borrowed from the holy Latin phrase 'Habemus Papam'.

definition: 'we have a Pope'. It is usually pronounced by a Cardinal at the end of a Papal conclave, from the central balcony of Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, in order to announce to the whole world, the identity of the newly elected Pontiff.

'Cella' means 'room' in Latin.

[1] Latour, Bruno and Adam Lowe. "The Migration of the Aura, or How to Explore the Original Through Its Facsimiles." Switching Codes: Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts. Eds: Thomas Bartscherer, Roderick Coover. Chicago: Chicago UP (2011)

[2] E. Howard and M. Howard

[3] Hauser

[4] Bosman

[5] Scotti

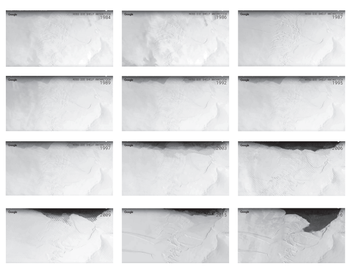
[6] 'Yamoussoukro, capitale endormie de la Côte d'Ivoire' by Youenn Gourlay, Le Monde, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/07/20/yamoussoukro-capitale-endormie-de-la-cote-d-ivoire_6046762_3212.html (2020)

[7] Interview of Pierre Fakhoury

An Anticipatory History for Antarctica

Nitzan Zilberman

In Antarctica, the unit of time, which we refer to as 'a day', is measured by 24 hours of sunlight during the summertime and 24 hours of darkness during winter. This is an enigma; a day is approximately the period during which the Earth completes one rotation around its axis, alternating between sun and moon, what we refer to as day and what we call night. Theoretically, Antarctica is located in all time zones as it sits on every line of longitude due to the South Pole's location near the middle of the continent. Early southern-ocean explorers claimed the islands closest to Antarctica for their own countries, as they discovered them in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Seven Antarctic territorial claims still exist today, all using lines of longitude to define their boundaries. For practical purposes, time zones in Antarctica are usually based on these territorial claims or the time of the country they are owned by, resulting in nearby stations with different times. Some areas in Antarctica have no time zone at all since there are no temporary settlements in those locations and no clocks to keep the time. What is the moment before in a clock-less world? What is the moment before when there is no time left?


Google Timelapse, 2013

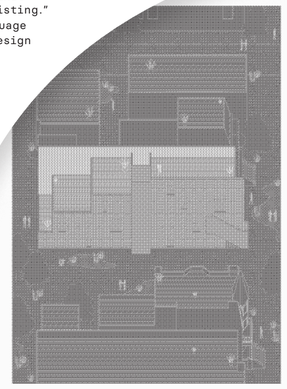
RADARSAT 1 is the first seamless mosaic of Antarctica - compiled from radar images acquired by the Canadian Satellite between September and October 1997 as part of the Antarctic mapping mission, a collaboration between the United States and NASA, and the Canadian Space Agency. Bill Clinton referred to this satellite image as "a bridge to our future and a window on our past" (International Antarctic Centre, New Zealand, 1999). Clinton ties the production of satellite imaging with the production of truth and urges the illumination of images to create awareness and positive action on the "war" on global warming. While the data of this image represents the present, the representation of the maps hints at a possible future, turning the image into a spectacle of destruction and a document that can alert a potentially threatening outcome.

Antarctica, the fifth-largest continent in the world, holds 90% of the ice on the globe and is the coldest, driest and windiest continent. 98% of Antarctica is covered by ice. It is a desert and maintains an average temperature of -49 degrees Celsius. This is Earth's only continent devoid of native human population - each year, only 1,000-5,000 people reside in research stations across the continent. However, the icy fields conceal a surprisingly inhabitable past: 50 million years ago, Antarctica was a green, tropical continent with an average temperature of 14 degrees Celsius, beaches, rainforests, and an extremely biodiverse ecosystem. At the time, there were 1,000 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that had heated the world enough to melt all of its ice caps and raise the sea level 60 meters higher than its current state today. If the PPM keeps rising at the same rate as it does today, by 2318, all of the ice in the world will melt, sea level will rise by 65 meters, and we will achieve a full cycle - Antarctica will become a warm and livable continent once again.

By manipulating a digital elevation model of the globe, one can "cut" the world 65 meters above sea level and illustrate a speculative future image of what it might be like if all the ice caps were to melt. The familiar Mercator projection borders are shrunk into a new, unfamiliar map, where Australia has an inland sea, the state of Florida is entirely underwater, and Antarctica is an archipelago. The new Antarctic land is 5.8 times smaller than the land area that is now underwater - creating a political constraint and design problem; Can the world's sunken land be redistributed in the now habitable Antarctic land? Which countries get to claim the land and which are left out? Antarctica with a stable flight schedule? Light pollution? A network of roads? A participant in world trade?

Following disputes over Antarctic grounds during the 1940s and 1950s, the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 put a halt to any territorial claim being made over the south pole. This treaty ensures freedom of scientific investigation, exchange, and cooperation while prohibiting any military activity. There have been no armed conflicts over Antarctica since the treaty's signing, and unless the continent becomes habitable again, there probably never will be. For now, Antarctica remains a model for a world yet to come, where negotiations and disputes over ownership no longer occur between countries but between humanity and the climate. If the changing borders of our countries illustrate relationships of power, our changing border with the sea shows the consequences of our environmental numbness. In the moment before a drowning world, the diminutions of our borders act as reminders and a tropical Antarctica as a shiny glass mirror, reflecting the world itself.

Vol. 7 Moment Before



Do You Read Me?

The Moment Before Hiring, As Narrated By Your Portfolio PDF

Katie Colford

Do You Read Me is a recurring column that uses humor as a way of cutting through academic jargon while thoughtfully communicating something about the discipline of architecture. It is situated at the intersection of punditry, poetry, and absurdity.

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PDF overhears laughter on page 12 and the comment, "Imagine trying to build phenomenal transparency in Revit!"

Anger and resentment builds in PDF, torn between a devotion to the design genius of Creator and a commitment to earning Creator's health insurance.

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