

FIRST OFFICE

ANDREW ATWOOD

ANNA NEIMARK

NINE ESSAYS

TREATISE

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ANNA NEIMARK

NINE ESSAYS

TREATISE

To Sasha

UN-WISE

passage

— Craig Dworkin

This pamphlet collects nine essays that represent the development of our ideas over the last four years, since the inception of our practice First Office. Three of the essays were written by Andrew; three were written by Anna; and three were written in collaboration with one another. Each text has been paired with a project. At times, the essays connect intimately to their associated images, outlining particular circumstances, details, and contents. At other times, the essays do not directly correspond to a project and instead establish a broader cultural ground for the work. There are also essays that do not fit neatly in either of these categories. Conceived separately, these texts present a more personal take on research that often fed into the visual work of the office. To gather all these writings and images in one place required removing them from their original contexts. This process of abstraction presented to us a project in itself, a close encounter with some past ideas, people, and events, which produced a great distance between us and our work. We are unsure at this moment whether this is a rite of passage or a dead end. Perhaps First Office is dead, and maybe we have killed it. So now might be a good time to thank our editors for all their generous help and support throughout the writing process and for granting us permission to reprint the essays in this pamphlet: Jonah Rowen and Emmett Zeifman, who published "Rewriting Abstraction" and "Zoopol" in *Project 4* in 2015 and *Project 1* in 2012, respectively; *Log* editor Cynthia Davidson, managing editor Luke Studebaker, as well as guest coeditors Dora Epstein-Jones and Bryony Roberts, who invited us to contribute "Rendering Air" and "On White on White" to *Log 31: New Ancients* in 2014; Emma Bloomfield and Joseph Clarke, who included "How to Domesticate a Mountain" in *Perspecta 46: Error* in 2013; Adrian Lahoud and Kata Gašpar from the Zagreb Society of Architects, who selected "Abstraction Returns" for the *Think-Space Pamphlets* in 2013; and *Future Anterior* editor Jorge Otero-Pailos, along with guest coeditor Aron Vinegar, who printed "The Infrastructural Monument" in their 2012 issue on *Rethinking the Monument*. We would like to also thank the Graham Foundation and in particular, Sarah Herda and Ellen Alderman, for generously working with us on this compilation of essays and projects, and of course, our friend and ringmaster, Jimenez Lai.

1 Rewriting Abstraction	13
Andrew Atwood	
2 Installation Model	25
Anna Neimark	
3 Preface	35
Andrew Atwood	
4 Rendering Air	41
Andrew Atwood	
5 On White on White	51
Anna Neimark	
6 To Domesticate a Mountain	61
Andrew Atwood and Anna Neimark	
7 Infrastructural Monument	71
Anna Neimark	
8 Zoopol	79
Andrew Atwood and Anna Neimark	
9 Abstraction Returns	87
Andrew Atwood and Anna Neimark	

ABSTRACTION

From a letter to John G. Hanhardt

What I'm getting at is the notion of rethinking my work, or thinking about it in terms apart from the structural film model in relation to which it has been placed, and hence, I would suggest, perceived in a drastically limited way. (Instead of «placed» I could say «imprisoned.») It's not for anyone to undertake to do this, of course, it's just that it has finally occurred to me that it's possible. It always irked me that the structural moment has gone down in history as something of a closed chapter, as if there were no more to be said, as if the groupings and periodization and affinities and explanations and characterizations were final. Far from so.

I have been thinking a lot about abstraction, and it finally has occurred to me that abstraction is what the films are about. Or to put it another way, abstraction is their impossible ambition. I forget if I already mentioned this to you. As you know, the painting I admire most is hard-core abstract painting: Frank Stella, Ad Reinhardt, Blinky Palermo, Gerhard Richter.

How to enact that ambition in film? It seems to me that much of the effect of an abstract painting is being able to see all of it, the full physical extent of it, before you, all at once. You understand the exact physical facts of the object: how big it is, its contours, its proportions, its shape, how thick it is, how it is made, how the paint is put on, thick or thin, opaque or transparent. And of course you also see it as a visual event or, to use a word that is wrong but useful, an image. You see it, in other words, as you would see it as a photograph, what it looks like. And all the material facts, the material extent, and the image, are coextensive. They are present in one another, congruent with one another.

The great problem with film is that the first set of things, the physical facts, the material embodiment, is inevitably always and forever severed from the image. Film is always only an image. Yes, I understand that a film image has grain in it, and so it can be claimed that somehow this fact can let you treat certain questions about materiality in a film, but nonetheless it is done within something that is always an image, not as a part of the totality of the physical event that a painting is. No one would for an instant claim that Jean-Honoré Fragonard's painting is about paint or an analysis of the materiality of paint, simply because you can see the manipulated pigment at the same time that you can see the picture that the pigment makes. Well, perhaps not exactly at the same instant, but by turns: paint, image, paint, image. But the point remains: being able to isolate the pigment as the means that makes possible a representational image does not in itself mean that the painting is about antillusion, deconstruction, materiality, the subversion of bourgeois pleasure, etc.

The image is only a part of what film is. It's that simple. The film strip keeps on going beyond the confines of the frame, and because the image is projected, it is always displaced from that fragment of the material base that you do see. So the impossibility is rehearsed twice: you see only a part, and what you do see is not really that part, but a shadow of it.

This is the explanation for why abstract films of the kind in which worms and curlicues wiggle and writhe are so unsuccessful. They model themselves on the vocabulary of abstract painting, but they are severed from the fact that with a painting you see all of it. Not just the full extent of the image, but also a surface that is

Michael Osman with Morgan Fisher's *Writings* open to the "Abstraction" essay, p. 85.

I Rewriting Abstraction¹

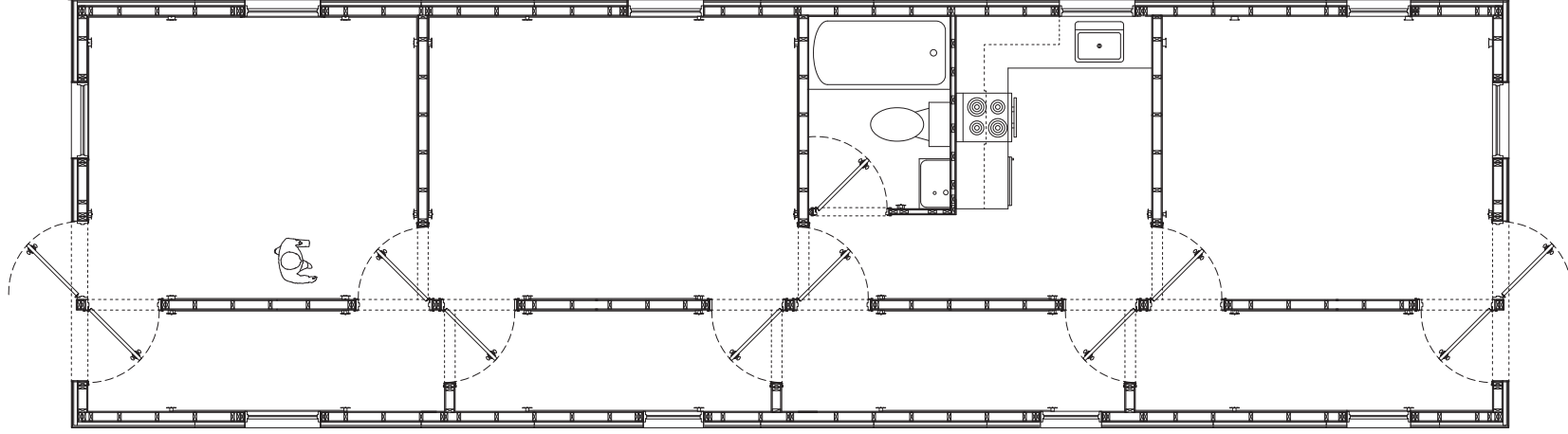
*A Letter to Morgan Fisher from an Essay by Morgan Fisher from an Excerpt of a Letter by Morgan Fisher to John G. Hanhardt.*²

As we discussed, I'm interested in rewriting your essay, or rethinking it in terms apart from the way that abstraction has recently been explained, and hence, I would suggest, perceived in a drastically limited way. I do not think it's necessary to do this; it has just finally occurred to me that thinking in this way is possible. It disappoints me that abstraction is going down in history as a closed chapter, as if there were no more to be said, as if recent articles were the final word. I hope we can agree that this is far from so.

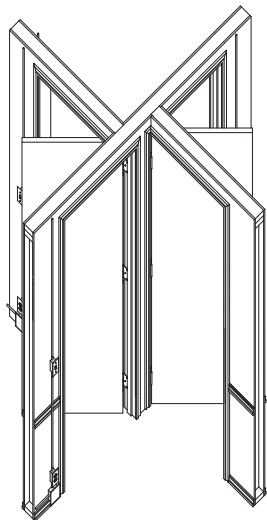
Others may read this, so it's important to state from the outset: this essay is not a corrective to your original. It is not meant as a misreading or as a misreading of a misreading or as a swerve or as a critique or any of those things. I simply admire your essay and I like the idea of operating on a referent with which my essay can be compared. I like having a composition and structure that were authored by someone other than me. I like the distance and the difficulty it provides. Perhaps this is why I am trying to put us in the same space, so that I might provide a comparison between apparently similar things.

But, more importantly, I chose to rewrite your letter because I have also been thinking a lot about abstraction. This is what drew me to your work. It occurs to me that abstraction is what my work is often about. In your terms, abstraction is my work's "impossible ambition." I realize it's odd to selectively quote one phrase in this essay—which itself is one extended quote—but I find that particular phrase to be an extremely precise way of saying what I'm getting at.

It seems to me that the problem of abstraction in contemporary architecture is quite different from the issue of abstraction in modern art, in ways that have never been specified. The question for me is how we can continue to produce abstraction as a means of producing architecture. Like you, I admire Frank Stella, Ad Reinhardt, and other abstract painters, and as you pointed out, the power of painting relies on the fact that we can see everything at once. A



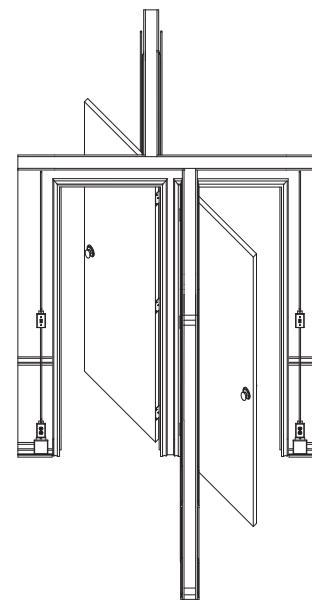
Shotgun House. Plan with eight rooms and ten Duchamp doors.



Duchamp Doors. Trim turns the corner. 45-degree axonometric drawing.

painting's facts are immediately present. Its image and materiality exist in a single frame, on one surface. Abstraction in painting is made possible by the coincidence of these observable facts. For a painting to be abstract, our perception of it must oscillate between looking at the painting as an object, and seeing the image that the painting is trying to portray. If the image represents something too faithfully we will never see the painting as a thing. If the process of creating the painting is too visible, we will never see the image. We must always see the thing and the image at the same time. Or, as you pointed out, it must continue to oscillate: thing, image, thing, image, thing. . . .

The problem in architecture is different. Despite recent attempts, we have never been able to see everything all at once. Unlike painting, architecture has no medium. There is not a specific conduit through which to understand architecture. It doesn't exist in a single frame, as a single thing. Its representation, image, and physicality are never compressed into one object immediately consumable in a moment. These things are always different. Unlike painting,

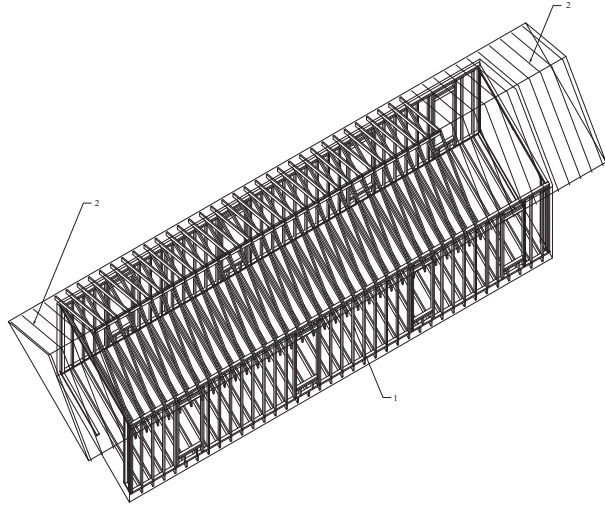


Transverse walls misalignment. 90-degree axonometric drawing.

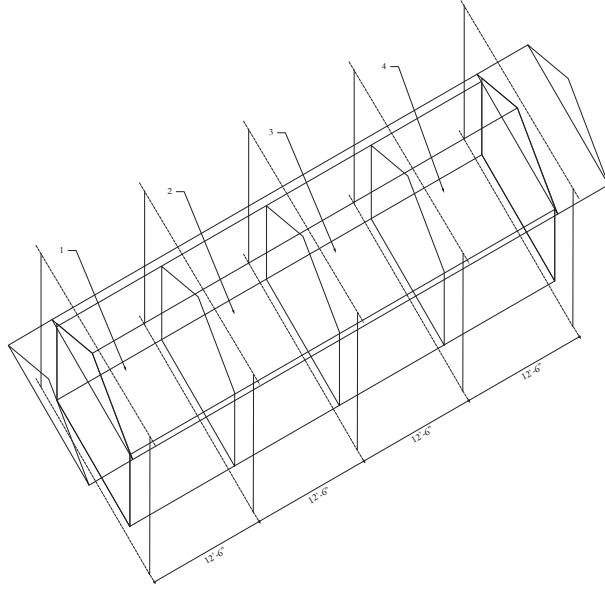
whose integrity allows it to remain abstract, architecture must attain abstraction despite the differences and distances between its various products.

The drawing, which has historically been the location of abstraction in architecture, is only part of what architecture is. It's that simple. Architecture always extends beyond the confines of this frame. And because drawings are projected, they are always displaced, whether it's from one drawing to the next, or to an image or rendering or model or building. These projections are rehearsed an infinite amount of times in architecture. Model to Drawing to Model to Rendering to Animation to Model to Photograph to Building to Drawing. . . . You always only ever see part, and what you see is only ever a projection of some other part.

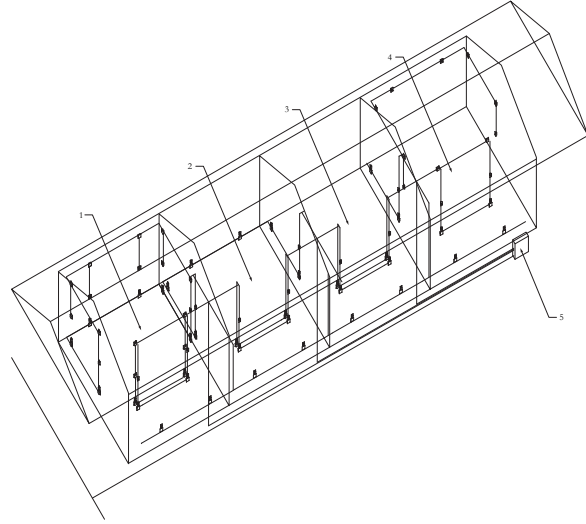
This is why architects who index the process of drawing in their buildings are ultimately unsuccessful. They model their work on the language of abstract painting, but they ignore the fact that what painting affords is what architecture can never allow—the ability to see all of the work of architecture: not just the full extent of the



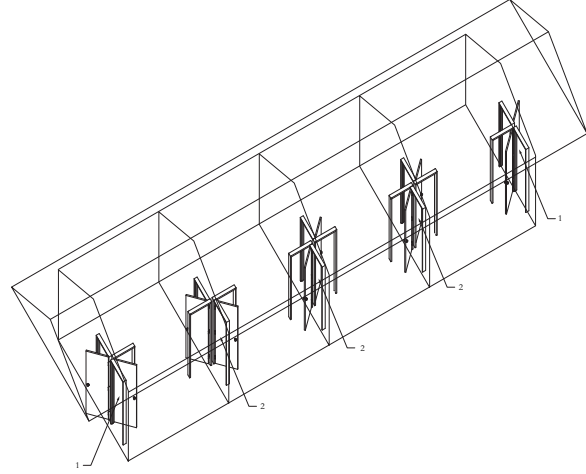
Original wood framing is preserved, restored, and left exposed on the interior of the house. New roof framing is added in the front and the back of the house equally to provide for two front porches: (1) Original Structure; (2) New Structure.



Shotgun House is gutted and divided into four equal parts, each measuring roughly 12'-6" x 15': (1) Workshop; (2) Bedroom; (3) Kitchen; (4) Gallery.



Every room is configured with an electrical conduit circuit for maximum flexibility. No outlet is more than six feet away, and new outlets can be added as necessary. The location of conduit is specific to each room: (1) Workshop outlets along floor and 42" above finish floor; (2) Bedroom outlets along floor; (3) Kitchen outlets 42" above finish floor; (4) Gallery outlets along ceiling; (5) Breaker Box splits electrical system into four circuits.



At every wall intersection, two doors operate four door frames. When the bedroom is closed, for example, the workshop opens into the gallery. The double door configuration is also expressed on the façade to allow residents and guests to enter freely. (1) Exterior Doors; (2) Interior Doors.



Model of Duchamp doors in detail.

building, but also the work's representations, which are the documents of the work's own making. Unlike paintings, which are things bound in a space, of a specific size, with edges of a finite width, architecture is never bound in this way. Yes, a building has a site, but our perception of it has no neat boundaries. Not only is the work experientially fragmented, but all the other media, which prevision, envision, and revision the building, are assembled to surround architecture. The work's limits can never be understood by the boundaries of its material substrate, and neither are they confirmed by its being a discrete singular object.

What to do to overcome this fatal set of circumstances? Well, one way to do it is to compulsively push into buildings the techniques and specific qualities found in forms of representation we use in architecture. One example would be to represent by means of illusionistic images the supposed "facts" of a building's experience projected onto the building itself: how the building is rendered, how it's traditionally constituted through representation as "real," before it's ever built. What is now automatically taken for granted in painting, its dual status as an image and object, might be achieved in architecture by making buildings that not only look like their renderings, but are also produced like their renderings. The ambition of some of my most recent work is this kind of self-congruence, bringing image (through rendering) and object together, to make architecture that delays a stable reading as a single form of architecture, whether it be in the form of a model or a rendering or a drawing or a building or something else.

1. Morgan Fisher, "Abstraction," *Writings*, edited by Sabine Folie, Susanne Titz (Köln: Walther König, 2013), p. 85-86.
2. This essay is part of a letter I wrote to Morgan Fisher on August 20, 2014, which is based on an essay written by Morgan Fisher, which was excerpted from an unpublished letter written by Morgan Fisher to John Hanhardt on September 28, 2000, and revised in 2012.
3. Hal Foster, "At MoMA," *London Review of Books* (February 7, 2013), p 14-15 . . . among others.

Reprinted with the permission of *Project*,
Consolidated Urbanism.



Abstraction

made and is a document of its own making, a bounded space of a specific size, something with an edge, something finite that stops. Yes, a film image has an edge, but it's an edge produced by masking, not the edge produced by the limits of the material support, confirmed by its being a discrete object in a larger space.

What to do to try to overcome this fatal set of circumstances? Well, one way to do it is to compulsively bring into the field of the image representations of the physical facts of film and film production. You represent by means of illusionistic images the facts of film and filmmaking that in abstract painting are available to the viewer by the simple fact of what a painting is as an object: how it is made, how it is constituted as a material artifact. What is secured in painting automatically, the self-documentation of making, the embodiment of making, is possible in film only by making pictures of it. Sound familiar? The ambition of my films is a kind of self-congruence, bringing image and object together, to make a film that shows you every material aspect of its making, just as an abstract painting does. This is by definition impossible in film, but that remains the ideal, and my films enact the frustration of trying to reach an ideal that they know is unattainable. To try to attain abstraction in film you have to use representational images. The result is abstraction by other means, or abstraction in an unfamiliar guise: images as bathos.

Excerpt from an unpublished letter written to John G. Hasbard on September 28, 2000; revised 2012.

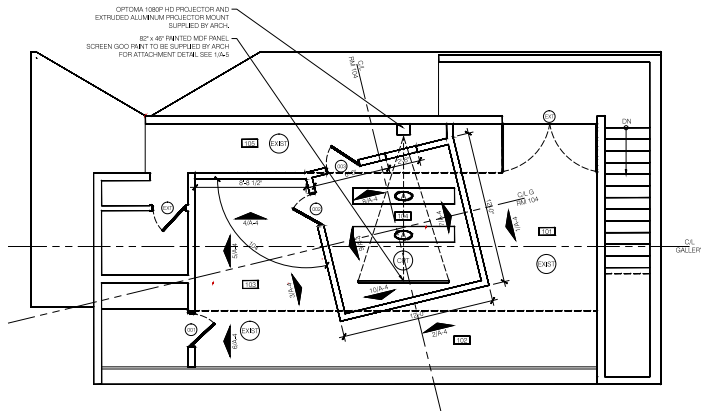
2 Installation Model

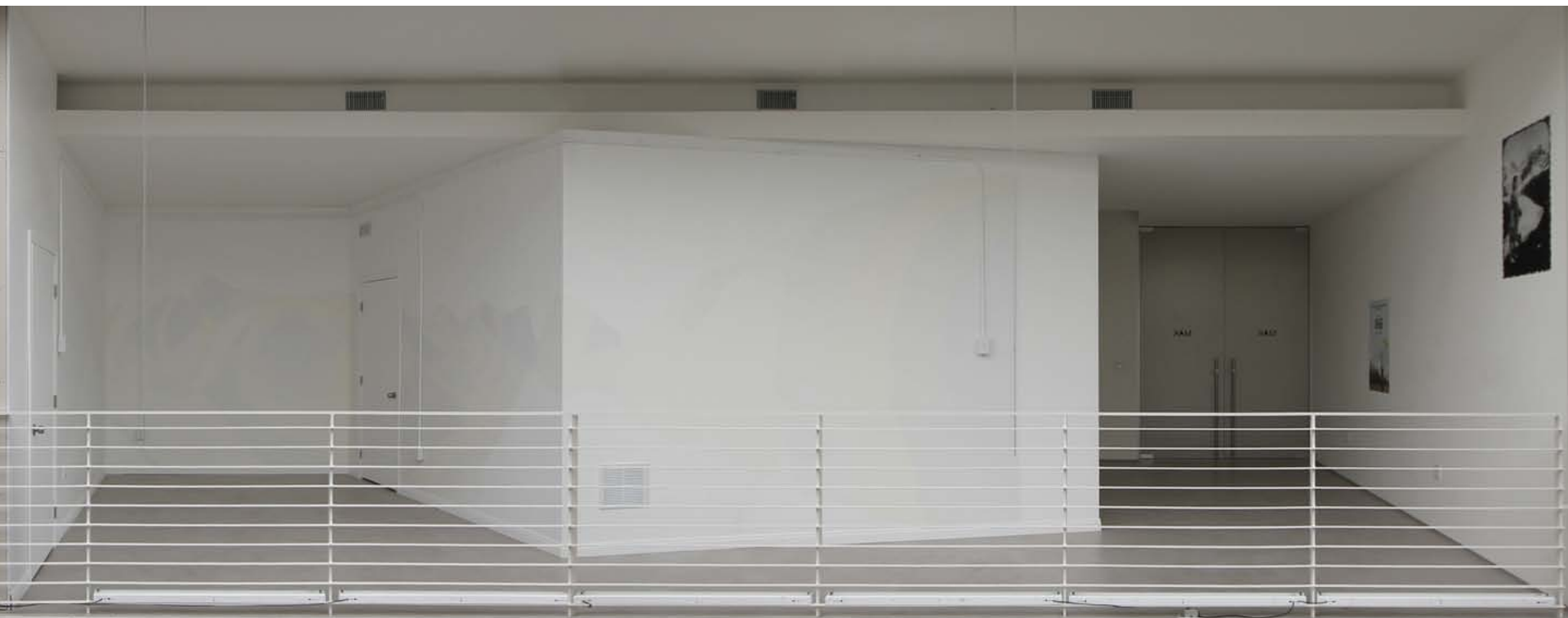
POZZO: (To Lucky.) Coat! (Lucky puts down the bag, advances, gives the coat, goes back to his place, takes up the bag.) Hold that! (Pozzo holds out the whip, Lucky advances and, both his hands being occupied, takes the whip in his mouth, then goes back to his place, Pozzo begins to put on his coat, stops.) Coat! (Lucky puts down bag, basket and stool, advances, helps Pozzo on with his coat, goes back to his place and takes up bag, basket and stool.) Touch of autumn in the air this evening. (Pozzo finishes buttoning his coat, stoops, inspects himself, straightens up.) Whip!

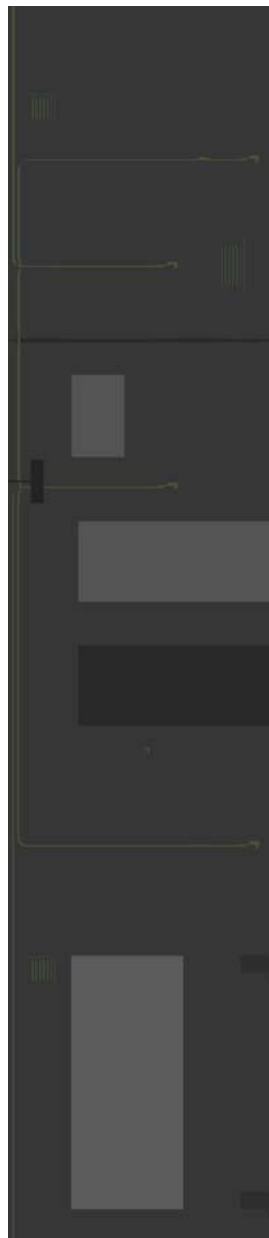
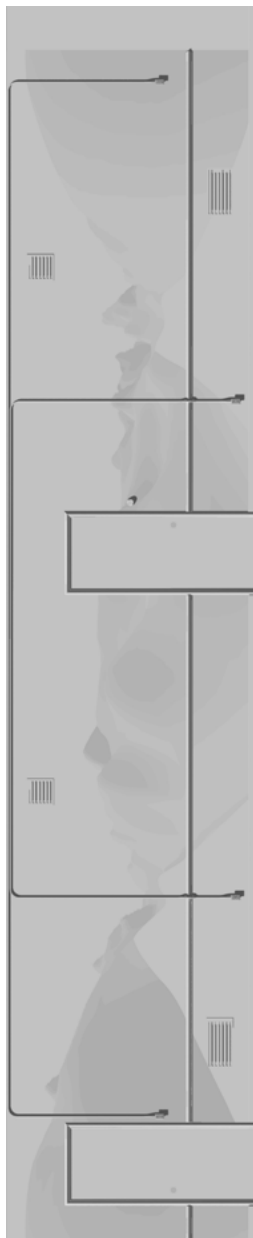
— Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*

The MAK Center for Art and Architecture in Los Angeles annually invites an Austrian artist to collaborate with a Los Angeles architect on the design of an installation in the Mackey Gallery. The role of the artist is to place a work of art inside the gallery. The role of the architect is to place a work of architecture inside the gallery. Both actions seem at first similar and straightforward. But they are not. Artists have had a long relationship with galleries and museums as their patrons. These spaces for the display of art seem normalized today, possibly in part because art has had a critical moment toward its means of exhibition and consumption. Examples in the “expanded field,” which located painting and sculpture outside of the white box of the museum in land, data, performance, and pavilions, abound.¹ Contrary to this long history of art’s display and struggle against its containment, the history of architectural display is a short one. Museums have for over two hundred years located architectural artifacts—models, drawings, and fragments—but locating architecture as such, and commissioning works of architecture within these interiors, has emerged as a relatively recent trend.

With many museums and galleries offering such projects to architects today, there is a wave of proposals that shrink architectural problems to the format of the installation. Not too small to be an exhibition of models and not too big to be a fully serviced commission, the installation seems to offer a convenient form for architects to express their ideas on a relatively small budget on the







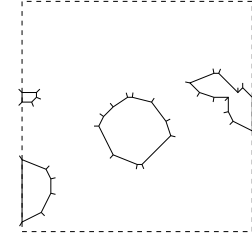
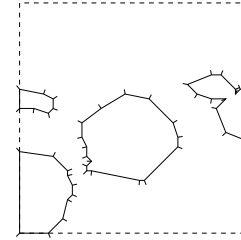
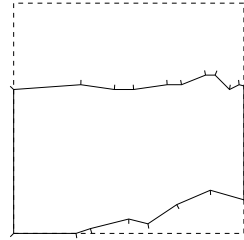
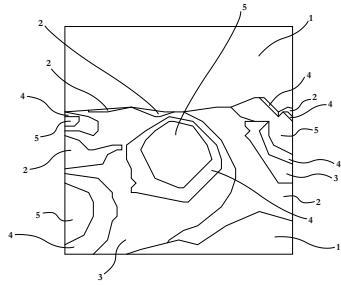
Panoramic interior elevation renderings with paint, conduit, molding, and vents.

one hand and outside of the constraints of practice on the other. And although this new model of curatorial patronage often offers the only outlet for public display for an office that has not yet established a traditional client base, there are many problems that arise from its format that push the architect into a peripheral field.

Sylvia Lavin offers a similar critique in her recent discussion of a parallel architectural type: the pavilion. She argues that if art's pavilion was a form of resistance against established norms of the consumption of art, architecture's pavilion seems to be its opposite: its form facilitates the consumption of architecture, cheapens its role as a cultural vehicle, and eliminates the need for more committed forms of patronage. Her essay is a call to arms for architects to not engage pavilion competitions, exhibitions, and biennials that have exploded throughout the globe as a result of this easily packaged architecture "at a steep discount."²

First Office cannot yet afford to decline offers for installations, pavilions, or whatever else you call these often temporary, low-budget, high-labor projects. Besides, we are so inconsequential, that our resistance, if we pursued it, would go entirely unnoticed. We recognize, however, that if architecture were to remain a critical practice, we necessarily would have to resist occupying such spaces neatly or comfortably. While our participation in installations makes us complicit in promoting its miniaturizing format, we nonetheless hope to express its capacity as a conceptual device through the forms that the work necessarily assembles—representational, professional, and contractual.

So when we were approached by the Austrian filmmaker Constanze Ruhm and the director of the MAK Center for Art and Architecture Kimberli Meyer to place a work of architecture inside the Mackey Gallery, we immediately accepted the invitation. We did so under the caveat that it will be a self-conscious and critical piece, uncomfortable in its own skin, without a beginning or end, barely distinct from its gallery context. The mundane limitations of practice, often left behind by the installation, would definitely need to be considered. After all, if the production of the work defines its medium, then perhaps the instruments of architectural practice are the specific tools that define ours. To reject the established formula



Specification Manual

This section includes surface preparation, painting, and finishing of one interior surface, measuring, space permitting, eight feet by eight feet.

- 1 Paint the entire 8' x 8' surface in ten layers with colors designated in future articles.
- 2 Where an item or surface is not specifically mentioned, paint the same as similar adjacent materials or surfaces.

Surfaces Not Requiring Painting:

- a. Metal toilet enclosures, unless otherwise specified;
- b. Acoustic materials;
- c. Architectural woodwork and casework
- d. Finished mechanical and electrical equipment;
- e. Switchgear;
- f. Distribution cabinets;
- g. Metal roofing;
- h. Galvanized components of prefabricated metal buildings;
- i. Factory painted mechanical equipment with approved finishes.

Surfaces For Which Painting Is Prohibited:

- a. Sprinkler heads;
- b. Heat and smoke detectors;
- c. Pre-painted Electrical equipment in equipment rooms including Lighting Inverters, VFCs, MCCs, Switchboards, Fire Alarm and Facility Control System (FCS) panels. (Exception – to touch up existing paint damaged during installation or other construction);

- d. Conduit color banding or other identification;
- e. Conduit and equipment in equipment rooms, unless otherwise specified;
- f. Equipment in hazardous (classified) locations;
- g. Labels: Do not paint over Underwriter's Laboratories, Factory Mutual, or other code-required labels or equipment name, identification, performance rating, or nomenclature plates;
- h. Concealed auto-releasing sprinkler head covers (i.e., escutcheon plates);
- i. Glass, brass, or chrome plated portions of fire protection system control valves, hydrants and fire department connections. (Reference NFPA 13 and Section 15310, "Automatic Sprinkler and Water Based Fire Protection Systems.")

- 3 Deliver materials to the job site in the manufacturer's original, unopened packages and containers bearing manufacturer's name, label, and the following information:
 - a. Product name or title of material;
 - b. Contents by volume, for pigment and vehicle constituents;
 - c. Thinning instructions;
 - d. Application instructions;
 - e. Color name and number.

- 4 Protect from freezing. Keep storage area neat and orderly. Remove oily rags and waste. Take necessary measures to ensure that workers and work areas are protected from fire and health hazards resulting from handling, mixing, and application.

- 5 Apply water-based paints only when the temperature of surfaces to be painted and

surrounding air temperatures are between 50°F and 90°F.

- 6 Do not apply paint in snow, rain, fog, or mist, when the relative humidity exceeds 85 percent, at temperatures less than 5°F above the dew point, or to damp or wet surfaces. Painting may continue during inclement weather if surfaces and areas to be painted are enclosed and heated within temperature and humidity limits specified by the manufacturer during application and drying periods.

- 7 Available Manufacturers: Subject to compliance with requirements, manufacturers offering products that may be incorporated in the work include, but are not limited to, the following: Wellborn, A Dunn-Edwards Company (W); Behr Process Corporation (BPC); Sherwin-Williams Company (S-W); Dunn-Edwards Corporation (D-E); Glidden Corporation (G).

- 8 Examine conditions under which painting will be performed for compliance with requirements for paint application. Do not begin paint application until unsatisfactory conditions have been corrected. Start of painting will be construed as Applicator's acceptance of surfaces and conditions within a particular area.

- 9 Remove plates, tables, paintings, wood and similar items in places that are and are not to be painted, or provide surface-applied protection prior to surface preparation and painting. Remove these items if necessary to complete painting of nearby surfaces.

Following completion of painting operations in each space or area, items shall be reinstalled in the same manner, in which they were removed.

- 10 Clean and prepare surfaces to be painted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions for each particular substrate condition and as specified. Do not remove old paint by sanding, scraping, or other means. This action may generate dust or fumes that contain lead. Exposure to lead may cause brain damage or other adverse health effects, especially in children and pregnant women.

- 11 Provide the following paint systems for the various substrates indicated:

- (1) First Coat: Behr Ultra Pure White Self-Priming Interior Flat;
Second Coat: Behr Ultra Pure White Self-Priming Interior Flat;
- (2) First Coat: Valspar Ultra White Matte Interior;
Second Coat: Valspar Ultra White Matte Interior;
- (3) First Coat: Dunn-Edwards White Interior Flat Paint;
Second Coat: Dunn-Edwards White Interior Flat Paint;
- (4) First Coat: Glidden White Interior Premium Paint Flat;
Second Coat: Glidden White Interior Premium Paint Flat;
- (5) First Coat: Sherwin-Williams Extra White Interior Flat;
Second Coat: Sherwin-Williams Extra White Interior Flat.



New wall with mountain panorama, molding, and conduit.

of placing an object—architecture—inside of an envelope—the gallery—the Mackey project developed its formal language through the professional paperwork and labor practices of the gallery's normal functions.

Conventionally, gallery walls are painted white. In fact, they seem to be defined by this generic, unquestioned finish. Painting walls does not demand an architect's involvement. The choice of paint—its hue, sheen, and brand—is often left to chance: something matte, something environmentally safe, something of which the nearest store never runs out. If an architect were to get involved in this process, the paint and the painting would have to be specified. Those choices would be documented in the specifications, as a set of instructions to the painter. To design that aspect of the installation, we realized that we would have to write a “spec book.”

In school, nobody writes spec books. Nobody reads them. No one assigns them. They are not deliverables for any final review. They are not considered interesting. And maybe they really aren't. Historically, specifications have been used to translate an abstract



Old wall with mountain panorama, molding and conduit.

design into instructions for the building trades—reading often like Samuel Beckett's stage instructions. The spec book is still used to communicate between these professions, and in the process it identifies them as separate, distinguishing the domain of design from the domain of building. In truth, we cross this line all the time, but we wanted to identify that boundary as a contribution to the critique of the architectural installation: to identify the work we do as architects and to differentiate it from other kinds of labor. We used specifications to keep ourselves honest to our goal of doing architectural work instead of doing an architectural installation; perhaps it was a kind of rehearsal of an architectural service, not the real thing.

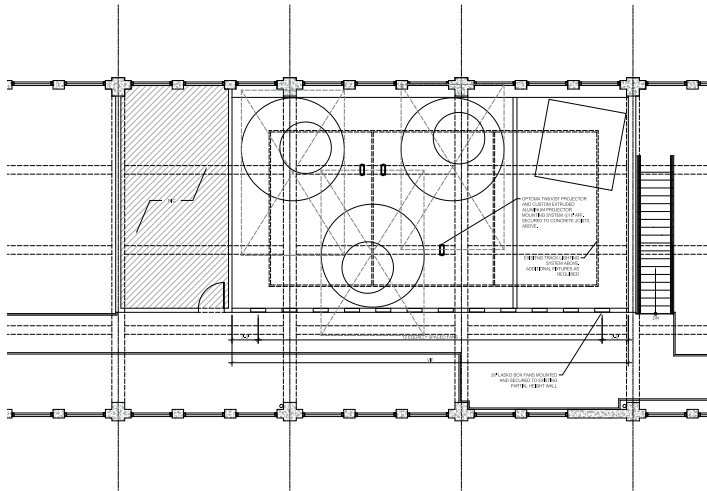
1. Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979).

2. Sylvia Lavin, “Vanishing Point: The Contemporary Pavilion,” *Artforum* (October 2012), p. 219.

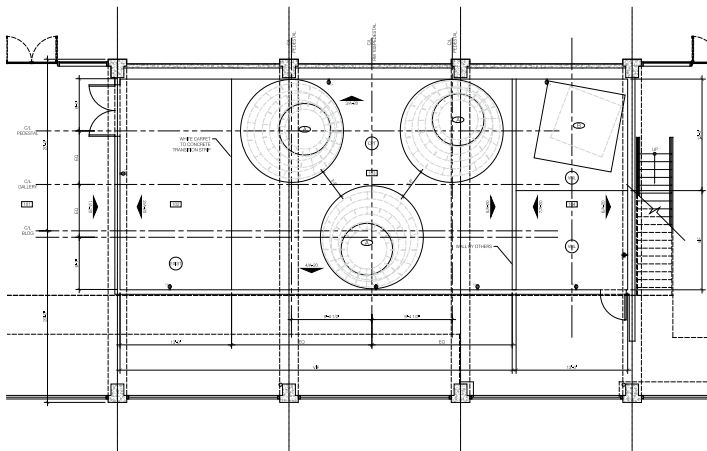
3 Preface

What you are about to read should be obvious, but a prefatorial statement is necessary. An installation without a prefatorial statement is not an installation, right? Also, a written statement is technically required here, in this place (see Terms of the SCI-Arc Exhibitor's Agreement). Worse still, without one, this becomes a sort-of installation, an installation without the proper authorization, an alien without the proper papers. In fact, only when it's prefaced is it worthy of bearing that name: *installation*. Maybe this is because the authority of the installation statement relieves me of the necessity to fully describe to you the work that I've done. A statement, in other words, leaves open the possibility that your participation is a definitive characteristic of the installed work. Like I said, maybe this is obvious.

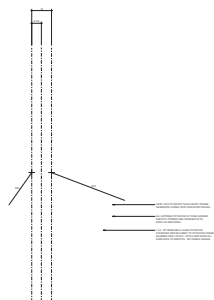
Regardless, I hope we can agree that a prefatorial statement is a convention within the genre of architectural installations. And so, here is mine. I do not know if this installation will be of any real interest to you. It took a rather pleasing turn in its realization. Its content is fairly entertaining. Its forms are fairly fantastic. Its details are fairly natural. The odd mixture of references gives conventional things (lights, paint, carpet, etc.) an almost exceptional air. All of this makes me hopeful that it meets the minimal conditions of being interesting. But beginning with my own impressions may be the wrong way to start my installation statement. Beginning with my conclusions, however, satisfies a core requirement for any such statement: it shows that I wrote it after the whole thing was fully thought out. As they say, "after all is said and done." It puts the installation on solid ground, as it were, but it disappointingly falls short of making a statement about statements. Maybe I can blame that particular shortcoming on the fact that not many texts exist on the architectural installation statement. Maybe this is the first one, or a preface to the first one. Many texts exist on installations in art, of course. And artists have plenty of texts written about the prefatorial statement; there are numerous texts written about titles, even. But art installations also find their footing in other disciplines, often referencing statements from the history of literature. To find a proper



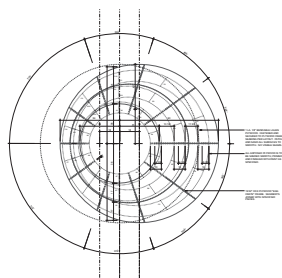
Mezzanine plan.



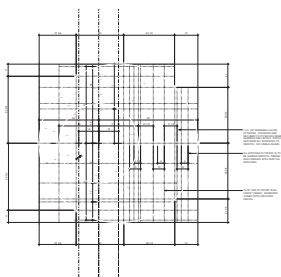
... And Pedestals installation. SCI-Arc, Los Angeles, CA: Gallery plan.



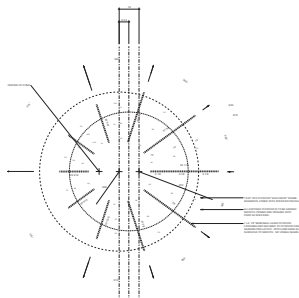
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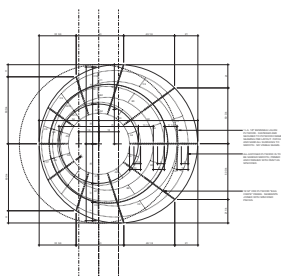
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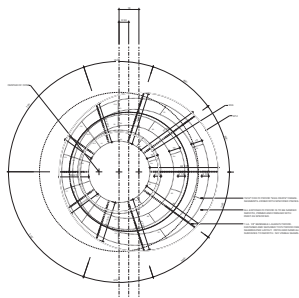
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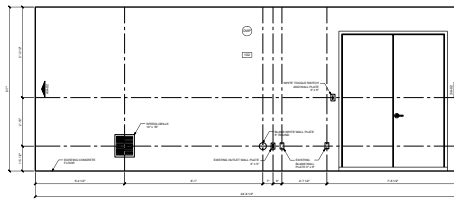
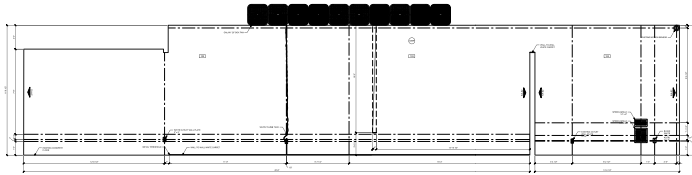
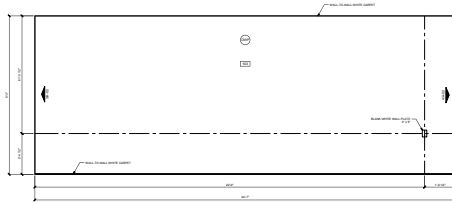
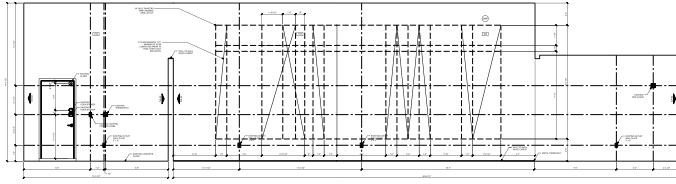
18 Ways to Draw a Pedestal, #1.

precedent for architectural installation statements, we might just as well look to the literary preface.

A preface is an odd thing. Published first, written last. A preface functions as a necessity, whose own necessity is immediately defeated by the work that follows. My title states this is a preface, but by writing the word with a strikethrough, it also indicates that it's something else. This is perhaps a vulgar way of indicating that the text you are reading is erasing the purpose of the title which preceded it. But I rather like how it calls a word into question that we assumed we understood, but whose meaning we are now no longer sure about. A preface, like a title, reasserts its authority only to be continually defeated by the thing that follows. This has led to the presumption that the preface should not be taken seriously, that the real work is what comes after. But sometimes the peripheral work is all that exists, if only by accident. Perhaps these reflexive acts of erasure and reduction are at the center of this project, if that's possible. Let's consider the possibility of solely producing these peripheral things that we might never have confronted in any other context but a blank installation. An installation with presence but no content.

The preface sits on this periphery. Like so many other conventions, it serves as the threshold between an installed work and its constituents, much like the project credits, the title wall, the brochure, the poster, the rendered image, the bio, the headshot, the opening, the gallery talk. If, like the preface, these things are often defeated by the work, what should we make of these customs? Are they simply a series of disciplinary habits left over from previous generations? Or worse yet, have we borrowed them from other disciplines to obscure the fact that we don't have any conventions of our own? This installation is mostly about working through these peripherals to question the status of a genre's conventions. After all, what would an installation be without floors and lights and walls and paint and posters?

It should be obvious, but this installation isn't an empty container waiting to be filled, or an imposed absence in the wake of withdrawal or in the name of sobriety. It's about facing the strange blankness of an installation about an installation's liminal elements.



SCI-Arc Gallery. Interior elevations of ... *And Pedestals* for construction.

It's about those things that take up so much time and consume so much of the budget. It's about reading something when there is nothing there to read. It likes to quibble. Or maybe it's even more obvious. Maybe, like the title (which we are no longer sure about) this installation is about the anxiety produced by blankness and the terrifying struggle with the terrifying question, "Are you sure this is enough?" Or is it too much?



Installation Opening. Photo: David Freeland.

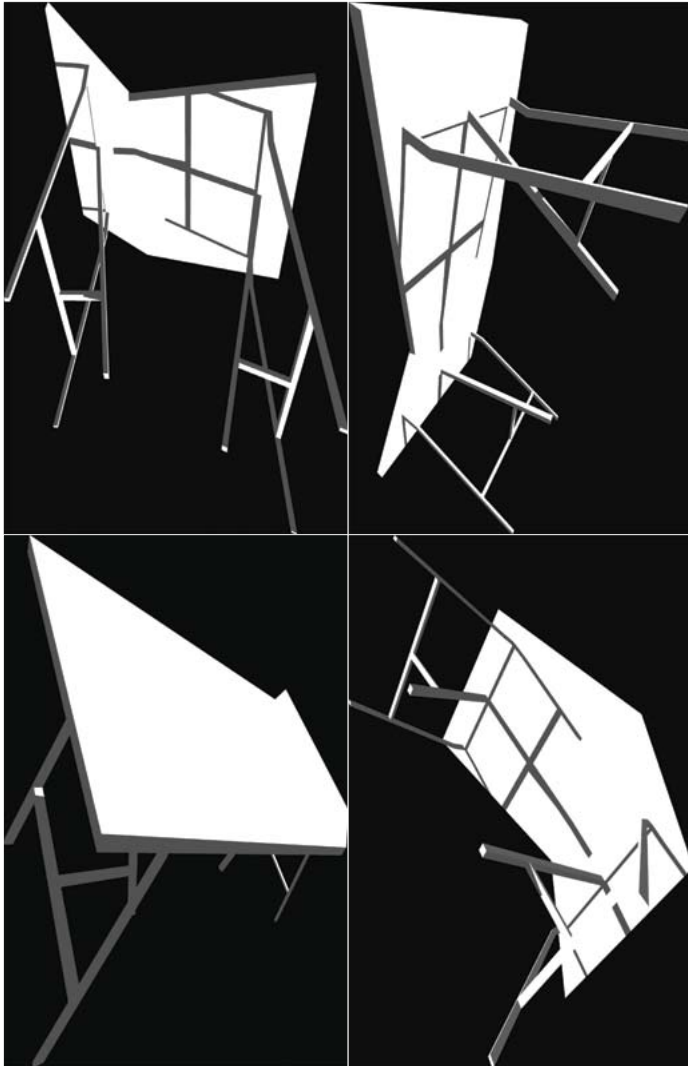
4 Rendering Air

"By Air, I commonly understand that thin, fluid, diaphanous, compressible and dilatable Body in which we breathe, and wherein we move, which envelops the Earth on all sides to great height above the highest mountains."

— Robert Boyle, *A General History of the Air* (1692)

In architecture these days, the term *rendering* usually refers to the production and composition of images using techniques borrowed from the field of computer graphics. This was not always so. Not long ago, rendering meant applying an additional layer of tone and color to complete one drawing before starting another. Rendering was not the production of the image but the application of a final layer, a technique that translated the drawing from a two-dimensional abstraction to an image with distance and depth between objects themselves, and between the objects and the surface of the representational plane. Recently, I was asked to participate in a series of workshops and discussions on the English picturesque,¹ and it occurred to me that a twenty-first-century reading of the picturesque approach to drawing was as suitable an introduction as any to a more expansive understanding of rendering in contemporary architecture. The picturesque, in this context, refers to an aesthetic category that operates between the beautiful and the sublime, but it also includes a very specific set of representational techniques, and it was the discussion of these techniques that seemed to speak directly to my own considerations and confusions around "rendering" within image culture in architecture today.

Perhaps the least familiar of the half dozen or so terms used by William Gilpin to define the picturesque is *keeping*. Occasionally compared to aerial perspective, "keeping" refers to the representation of distance and depth in images of the picturesque. For a picture to be considered "picturesque," in Gilpin's terms, it has to produce the effect of keeping distance between objects in a painting, as the composition moves from front to back and from one object to the next. Keeping can be achieved through a combination of techniques, including the sorting or layering of figures from back to front, the



Possible Table. One table; four possible renderings.

blurring of textures internal to those figures, and the reduction of contrast between those figures and the sky, as the two meet at the horizon. In the case of Gilpin, these effects require the addition of something to displace something else. For much of his work, including his didactic images in *Three essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape* (1792), Gilpin used Indian ink, sometimes adding washes of color after the image was completed, to different effects. About this process he wrote:

When you have finished your sketch therefore with Indian ink, as far as you propose, tinge the whole over with some light horizon hue. It may be the rosy tint of morning; or the more ruddy one of evening; or it may incline more to a yellowish, or a greyish call. As a specimen an evening hue is given. The first tint you spread over your drawing is composed of light red, and oker, which make an orange. It may incline to one, or the other, as you choose. . . . By washing this tint over your whole drawing, you lay a foundation for harmony. When this wash is nearly dry, repeat it in the horizon; softening it off into the sky, as you ascend. Take next a purple tint, composed of lake, and blue, inclining rather to the former; and with this, when your first wash is dry, form your clouds; and then spread it, as you did the first tint, over your whole drawing, except where you leave the horizon-tint. This still strengthens the idea of harmony. Your sky, and distance are now finished.²

Rather than create a color image from scratch, Gilpin preferred to set down his forms and their relationships to each other in black and white, later enhancing both keeping and “the idea of harmony” with these layers of tints. His techniques required a certain level of detail, which he called “roughness,” to register displacement. Keeping was achieved not by the absence of detail but by displacement and obfuscation of detail through processes of addition and erasure, achieved through washing and tinting. The farther the figure was from the representation plane, the more of these processes it underwent. Considered in this light, the addition of these layers and substances to obscure distant figures can be understood as the

rendering of that ubiquitous material, air.

Sometimes I think I am not much of a historian, but I rather like how fastidiously and enthusiastically Gilpin discusses color washes. It seems we might learn something from the tone and style of these descriptions. If so, what lessons can the twenty-first-century renderer learn from this eighteenth-century watercolorist? What were his tools? What were his assumed materials? What were his texts? As we move further from these discussions of traditional images, consider the following as an attempt to sketch out techniques steering us toward an image of a different kind, the *technical image*.³

In recent years, architects have rendered air using a continually evolving set of techniques borrowed from the field of computer graphics. Sorting, layering, blurring, dodging, smudging, and erasing—to name a few—are not handled on the surface of the paper or the canvas but on an entirely new and different substrate, the raster screen. These techniques are not only analogous to processes found in traditional image making but also are sampled representations of those processes, and thus they operate as abstractions of their traditional counterparts. The effect of air, in this sense, will always come down to a discussion around the technique of air; this is to say, air provides an opportunity to make critical discourse out of what we might take to be mundane software. Because air is present in almost every image, its images are loaded with innumerable technologies full of potential for a critical mode of abstraction to arise. Here, air offers possibilities for modes of attention and decoding that differ from traditional models of interpretation and reading.

It may be obvious, but it bears repeating that every image requires a sequence of steps to organize techniques like those mentioned above. Taking cues from the process mentioned by Gilpin, an example might look like this: (1) sort and layer objects by distance; (2) add texture and detail to those objects; (3) light the scene, providing contrast between objects themselves, and between objects and the ground. Conveniently, these steps correspond with the historical development of the computer graphic processes we now use to generate digital images in architecture.



Table model one; photograph one.

The difference between the two processes is that computer rendering offers more numerous opportunities to make visible the steps of an image's production, and it is this aspect of the technical image that appeals to me.

The following description of this process may appear overly technical, but there is good reason for this. Notice, for example, how often we use the expression, "the computer needs" or "the computer must": this is simply a reminder that we are no longer in the world of hands and eyes. We are instead in the world of discrete pixels, which must be coaxed into portraying the appearance of continuity. In the production of a rendering, a 3-D model must be turned into a 2-D image on the raster screen; this is not simply *what we see*— it is the *only* thing we see. We take it for granted that the raster screen represents the picture plane. The computer must have a means of assigning each point on the model to a pixel, which is larger than a point, but the smallest unit of the raster image. Most importantly, the computer must assign depth to that pixel, despite the absence of any depth or physical distance in reality. To represent depth, the



Table model two; photograph one.

computer must eliminate values that correspond to points hidden from the POV of the camera aligned with the picture plane. These are calculations that ultimately allow us to make a distinction between a foreground, a middle ground, and a background. What a renderer calls a "z-buffer" is a technique developed by Edwin Catmull in 1974. Catmull described a "subdivision algorithm," which subdivides the surfaces within a model so that no resulting subdivision corresponds to more than one sample point on the screen. Ultimately, in computer graphics, the z-buffer provides a secondary substrate for subsequent rendering operations; "lens blur," for example, is not typically created by a simulation of lens optics, but by coordinating a blurring algorithm with an image's z-buffer. Z-buffers are one of many forms of data generated during the rendering process that can subsequently be imaged. Such an image could be considered an image of nothing but the data of distance.

Like Gilpin's watercolorist, the renderer must also apply textures to an image's objects. Tuong Phong at the University of Utah originally developed techniques for adding detail to computed surfaces



Table model two; photograph two.

in the early 1970s. His work expanded on Catmull's research, allowing for objects modeled using surface patches to be rendered smooth by altering the way the objects are "painted" on the screen. These *shaders* split the computer's graphic representation of the object from its computed, geometric description. Splitting is a distance making operation. The distance in this case allows for the introduction of an ever-growing list of techniques, which continue to displace the geometric object from its graphic representation. Texture mapping, for example, allows for surface color and smoothness to be controlled via external image data. Formalized by James Blinn and Martin Newell, this technique is called "mapping," because it relates points on a virtual three-dimensional model to a two-dimensional representation of displacement. These mapped images are already split from the original object.

The final step of the process is to light the scene. Before he died, media theorist Friedrich Kittler spilled his last pools of ink on the problem of lighting in computer graphics. As he showed, although these techniques are closely associated with an experience

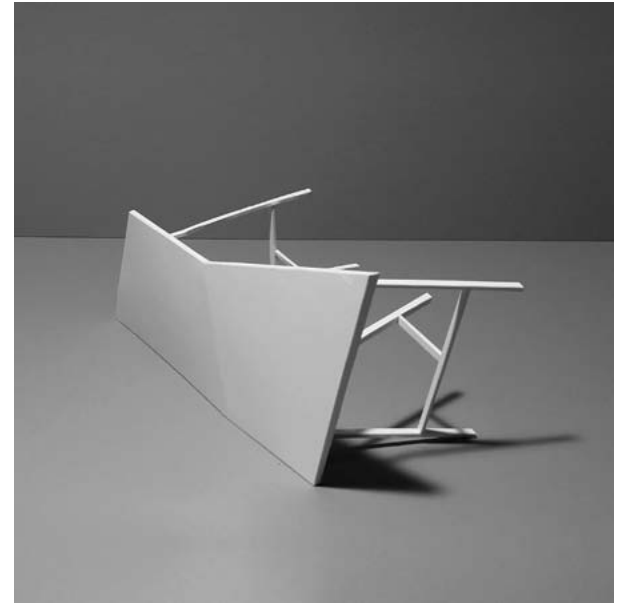
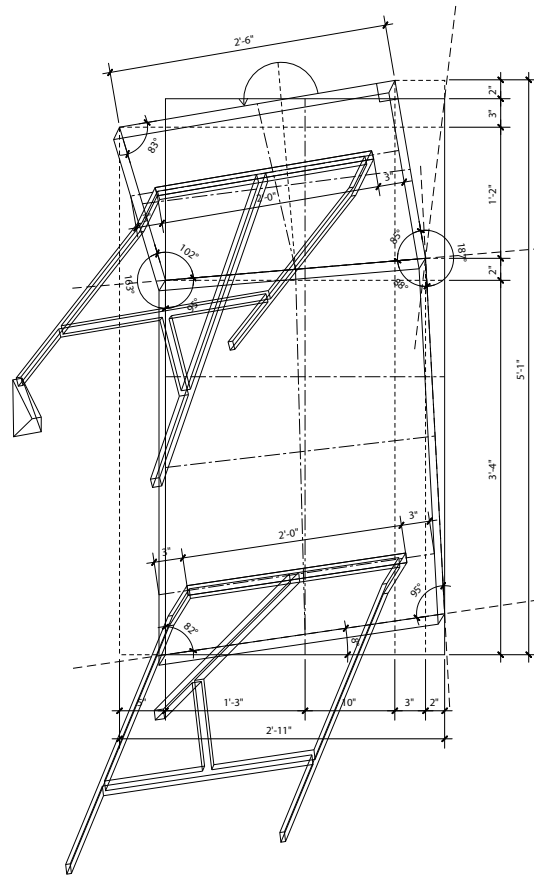


Table model one; photograph two.

of light, they relate to the physics of light only obliquely.⁴ In this case, I can do little more than point to the assumption of a "camera" within the software that was written by Turner Whitted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, called "ray tracing," and the absence of a camera in the process outlined by a team at Cornell in the mid-1980s, now known as "radiosity." Ray tracing and radiosity have since remained the dominant modes of calculating light in computer renderings. However, as Kittler pointed out, the differences between the two processes—not just technically but also conceptually—are so vast that they remain almost entirely distinct. Modern rendering engines calculate each separately, making images of both available as output.

According to some, architecture is rapidly approaching an image discourse⁵, as it becomes more and more focused on photographs, renderings, and whichever may lie in between. The techniques that produce these images are typically thought of as shop talk—or worse, passed off as magical tricks of the trade that are best left behind the scenes and never discussed. However, the techniques



Possible Table. Plan oblique for fabrication.

of image production represent data that could extend the process of rendering beyond a photorealistic endgame, by creating distance between a form's traditional geometric description and its computer graphic representation. In fact, the greater the reliance on texture mapping and surface effects, the more removed the image becomes from any source. This is an opportunity to conceptualize what we are doing when we render without appealing to essences, experiences, or habits.

The historic move toward abstraction in painting required awareness not only of the picture plane, but also techniques of layering, displacing, washing, keeping, and rendering. Since contemporary rendering already offers a ready substrate of technical forms, it makes sense to use these techniques productively toward a critical discourse of our own methods for representation. Of air, or of anything else.

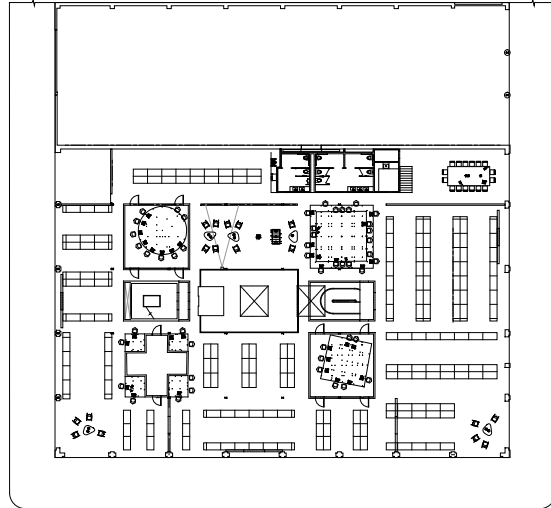
1. *Super Jury: The Picturesque in Review* was held at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, on February 14, 2014.
2. William Gilpin, *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; On Picturesque Travel; and On Sketching Landscape: To Which Is Added A Poem, On Landscape Painting* (London:1792), p. 80–81.
3. For a more developed description of the difference between traditional images and technical images, see Vilém Flusser's *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 1983), p. 14–20.
4. For more on the importance of these differences, see Friedrich Kittler's "Computer Graphics: A Semi-Technical Introduction," *Grey Room 2* (Winter 2001), p. 30–45.
5. I am not sure where I first heard this term. I might have made it up, but it sounds like something Sylvia Lavin would say.

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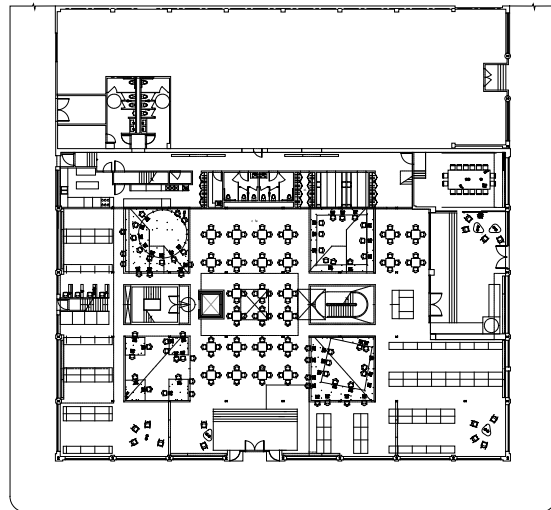
5 On White on White

To begin, let's describe it. We are looking at a painting of a square on a square canvas. It is, at first, a seemingly stable figure-ground, a relationship that could be described as on/off, 1/0, black/white. Only, this painting is not black and white; it is white and white, and therefore it is not stable. As a result, one could also say that there are two squares added together, one on top of the other, producing a layering of two figures; or that there is a square subtracted from another square, forming a doughnut, a figure with a hole in it; or that the figure is not even present, only its shadow, dropped from an object beyond the grasp of the canvas displaying ground alone. The tonal difference in the whites produces a flickering between the figure and the ground: the cumulative effect of layered paint and the slight shift in hue of the two squares of white disengages the forms from the single surface described by the otherwise flat plane of the canvas. Whether or not we agree that the composition is a figure-ground, a figure-figure, or a ground-ground is not important. Important and stable in all interpretations is the notion that this painting is about rendering that difference, which through the *faktura* of painting—its material tone—produces a distance or a depth between the two.¹ Perhaps, then, it is possible to call this painting a kind of rendering. But this is aspirational, not yet a fact.

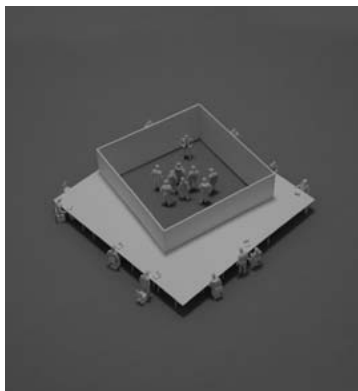
Three years before *White on White* (1918), Kazimir Malevich exhibited *Black Square*. In his 1927 book *The Non-Objective World*, he wrote: "The black square on the white field was the first form in which non-objective feeling came to be expressed. The square = feeling, the white field = the void beyond this feeling."² In the same essay, he equated "pure feeling" with "abstraction."³ In another essay from the 1916 Moscow edition of his book *From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism*, he wrote: "The square is not a subconscious form. It is the expression of intuitive reason," and he continued to define a "new painterly realism, precisely painterly because in it there is no realism of mountains, sky, and water."⁴ To a contemporary reader, Malevich's ideas seem contradictory. After all, we have come to expect *form* to stand in opposition to *feeling*, *intuition* in opposition to *reason*, and *abstraction* in opposition to *realism*. But



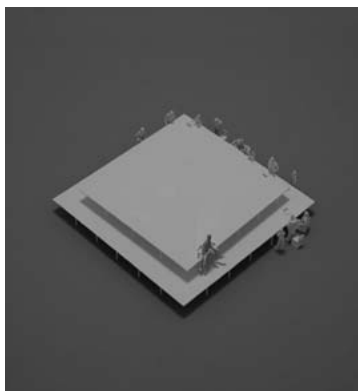
Second floor plan.



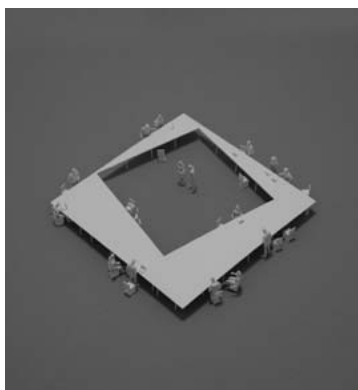
Pinterest Office Headquarters. Ground floor plan.



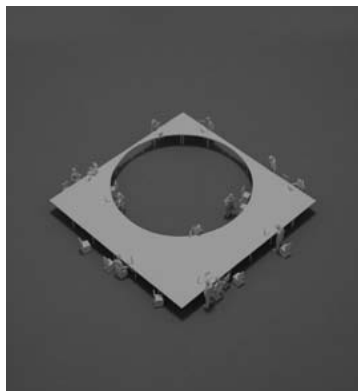
White on White Table. Figure Figure Model.



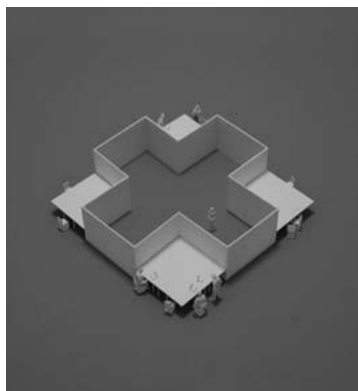
Black Square Table. Ground Ground Model.



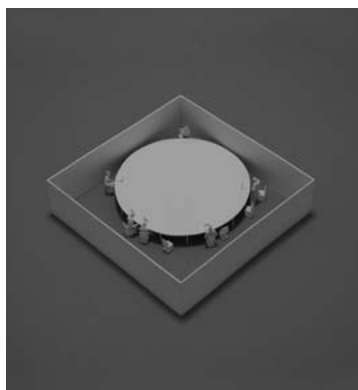
White on White Table. Ground Figure Model.



Black Circle Table. Ground Figure Model.



Black Cross Table. Figure Figure Model.

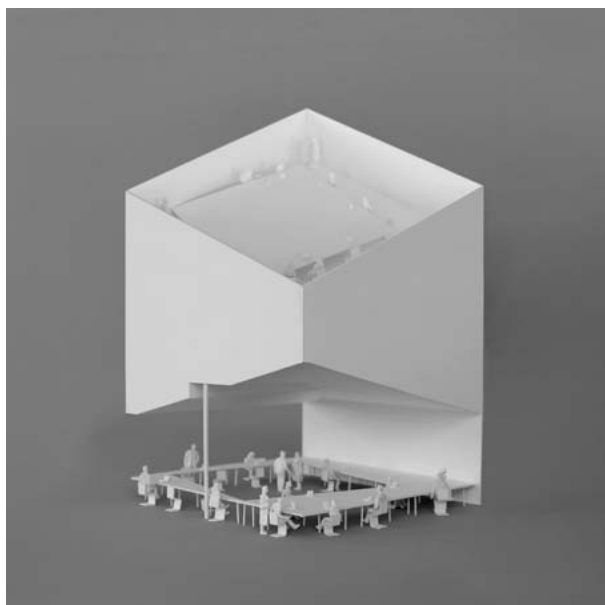


Black Circle Table. Figure Ground Model.

at the time of the formation of nonobjective art, these concepts reinforced one another. They coexisted in the parallel space of painting, where the construction of the white spectrum of infinity formed a deep emotional and simultaneously conscious world in the viewer.⁵

In *The Non-Objective World*, Malevich provides several examples that help to disassociate “feeling as such” with its descriptor, “actual artistic value,” from the material objects of the real world. For instance, an airplane that now functions “to carry business letters from Berlin to Moscow” first came about as an idea to manifest “the yearning for speed [and] flight,” not the other way around.⁶ Or an antique column, which no longer serves any “technical task in the building,” continues to present artistic value in its “material expression of a pure feeling.”⁷ Stripped of their temporary functions, material forms can be recognized as expressions of artistic feeling that is eternally meaningful and beautiful. But why should artistic objects ever serve a utilitarian function that they ultimately overcome? Malevich argues that painting can shed its relationship to representing the real world immediately and dismiss its value as a “copy of life.”⁸ “The Suprematists . . . have found new symbols with which to render direct feelings . . . *for the Suprematist does not observe and does not touch—he feels.*”⁹ The “feeling” of Black Square is in no way related to sensing the world or the experience of life. Rather, it offers an instance of the parallel world in pure art. “Painterly realism”—a reduced world of forms, materials, and compositions—operates at the very essence of rendering.

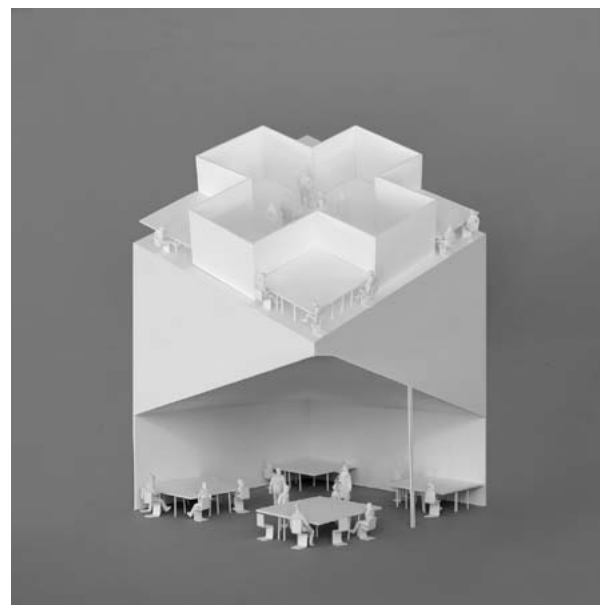
El Lissitzky, a painter, architect, student, and interpreter of Malevich, projected this concept into a technical reality. He famously named *Black Square* the “zero” of art, from which he built a three-dimensional world.¹⁰ He used this zero to establish a theory of “irrational space” where objects float free in parallel projection. In his famous essay “A. and Pangeometry” (1925), Lissitzky redefined the principles of art through Nikolai Lobachevsky’s mathematical theorems of non-Euclidian geometry. Replacing the noun *art* with an abbreviation A., he estranged the word from its common meaning and reassociated it with abstract, mathematical signification. He believed that if Lobachevsky’s theories did not resemble an image of our world, with their proofs of hyperbolic triangles whose angles



White on White House Model.

added up to less than 180 degrees, then the space of painting could equally disengage from a mimetic representation of vision. This parallel to mathematics allowed him to recast Malevich's argument on art through geometry. Rejecting the visual pyramid of perspective built on the illusion of a vanishing point set on a horizon line, Lissitzky proposed a theory of parallel projection:

The solidly coloured [square] stamped out in rich tone on a white surface has now started to form a new space . . . If we indicate the flat surface of the picture as 0, we can describe the direction in depth by - (negative) and the forward direction by + (positive), or the other way around. We see that suprematism has swept away from the plane the illusion of two-dimensional planimetric space, the illusion of three-dimensional perspective space, and has created the ultimate illusion of irrational space, with its infinite extensibility into the background and foreground.¹⁷

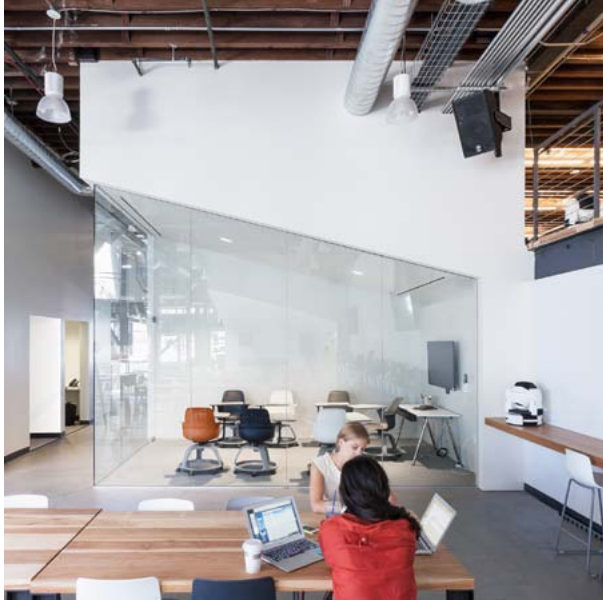


Black Cross House Model.

Lissitzky aligned himself fully with the classical notion that a painting ought to construct space, but his *Prouns*, which composed multiple three-dimensional forms, operated without a recognizable architectural enclosure set in perspective or skiagraphically shaded volumes. As Yve-Alain Bois has observed, their geometric construction relied on a special kind of axonometry, "a cavalier's perspective," or what we commonly refer to as parallel projection.¹² When Malevich called out, "I have ripped open the blue lampshade of color limits, [and] exited into the white; after me, comrade-aviators, swim into the void; I have established the semaphores of suprematism," he described this horizonless, infinite space for the parallel movement of all forms.¹³ The aviator takes over from the cavalryman: he moves toward the vanishing point, displacing the horizon line ever farther back, opening up the cone of vision to parallel construction. Taking the flatness of the canvas as a plane of reference, Lissitzky hoped to expand the depth of the composition by projecting the square in either direction, in and out of its surface. Here, oblique geometric forms represent the production of depth without relying on any



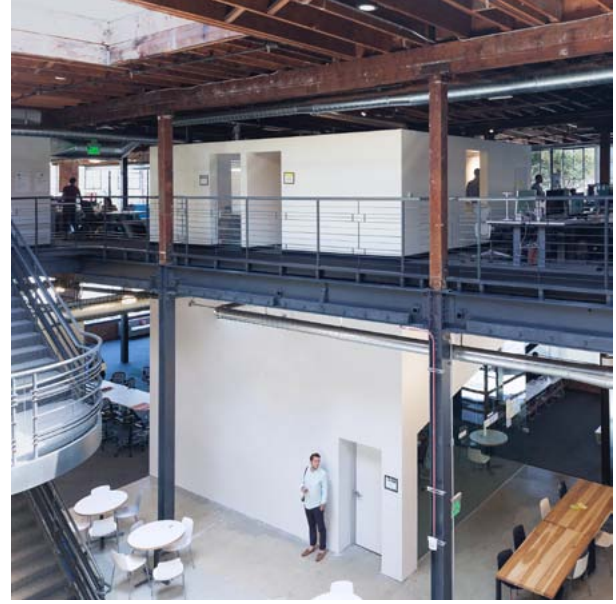
Pinterest HQ, White on White House. Photography: Naho Kubota.



Pinterest HQ, Black Circle House. Photography: Naho Kubota.



Pinterest HQ, Black Square House. Photography: Naho Kubota.



Pinterest HQ, White on White House. Photography: Naho Kubota.

indication of the real world.

In a 1976 essay, Bois describes the monochrome paintings by Malevich as “conception[s] of representation of space,” and each of Lissitzky’s Proun works as “an index of the world to come.”¹⁴ Both painters rendered objects and the space beyond; the former to present concept alone, and the latter to put that concept to use, bringing the formerly abstract and parallel world available to painting alone into life. Lissitzky’s suprematism is applied, and therefore allows us to make the final jump into architecture.

Consider the ink and wash drawings made by Joseph-Louis Duc following his receipt of the Prix de Rome in 1825. The detail rendering of the Corinthian order in the Colosseum is an elevation of the column capital and entablature from which an oblique projection is constructed at 45 degrees toward the bottom right corner of the drawing, following the academic Beaux Arts method. This axonometric image filled with wash gives the otherwise flat orthographic drawing the appearance of depth and renders it legible as three-dimensional form. M. Jules Pillet, who wrote the technical manual of this method, opened his discussion on shadow construction with the following observation: “The shadow of an object on a plane is nothing more than the oblique projection of the object on that plane.”¹⁵ The shadow then, as an “oblique projection,” is a kind of axonometric drawing cast against the vertical plane of the elevation.

From the point of view of the draughtsman constructing the long elevation of the Colosseum, the curving wall behind the columns doubles as a drawing plane inside of the orthographic drawing. Its convex surface performs the function of an abstract and immaterial canvas: it receives the projections of the oblique shadows. Following Lissitzky’s interpretation of Malevich, we can define this as the zero moment in the composition. Objects can be represented both in front of and behind its coordinates. In this way, the surface that receives the shadow, whether flat or convex, appears to work as the canvas of a proto-*Proun*. Lissitzky provides an anachronistic connection between Malevich’s suprematist painting and nineteenth-century academic rendering. It is thus possible to read *White on White* through the lens of a Beaux Arts drawing. As such, the white square would be a shadow of an object that is hovering in front of the

surface of the canvas.

Lissitzky’s incorporation of parallel projection in painting offers the link to understand the abstract capacity of architectural rendering. Perhaps if one were to write the history of rendering, locating *White on White* as a form of its modernity would shed light on the potential of this pervasive form of image making.

1. For a discussion on *faktura*, see Maria Gough’s “Faktura: The Making of the Russian Avant-Garde,” *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 36 (Autumn, 1999), p. 32–59.
2. Kasimir Malevich, “Part II: Suprematism,” *The Non-Objective World*, trans. Howard Dearstyne (Chicago: Paul Theobald & Co, 1959), p. 76.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
4. Kazimir Malevich, “Zhivopis’ v futurisme” [Painting in Futurism], excerpted from the original Moscow 1916 third edition of *Ot kubisma i futurisma k suprematizmu* [From Cubism and Futurism to Suprematism] in *Cherniy Kvadrat* [Black Square] (San Petersburg: Azbuka, 2001), p. 53–54. My translation.
5. Kazimir Malevich, “Iz ‘Kataloga X Gosudarstvennoy vystavki: Bespredmetnoe tvorчество i suprematizm’” [From the Catalog of Tenth state exhibition: Non-objective creation and suprematism] in *Cherniy Kvadrat*, p. 73. My translation.
6. Malevich, *The Non-Objective World*, p. 74.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 76.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
10. El Lissitzky, “A. and Pangeometry,” in Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky: Life, Letters, Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 350.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Yve-Alain Bois, “From minus infinity to zero to plus infinity: Axonometry, or Lissitzky’s mathematical paradigm,” in: *El Lissitzky: Architect, Painter, Photographer, Typographer* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 1990), p. 27.
13. Malevich, “Iz ‘Kataloga X Gosudarstvennoy vystavki,’” p. 74. My translation.
14. Yve-Alain Bois, “Malevitch, le carré, le degré zero” [Malevich, The Square, The Degree Zero], *Macula* 1 (1976), p. 42. My translation.
15. M. Jules Pillet, *Shades and Shadows*, trans. Julian Millard (Philadelphia: Franklin Printing Company, 1896), p. 5.

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"Crossing the deck, let us now have a good long look at the Right Whale's head. As in general shape the noble Sperm Whale's head may be compared to a Roman war-chariot (especially in the front, where it is so broadly rounded); so, at a broad view the Right Whale's head bears a rather inelegant resemblance to a gigantic galliot-toed shoe. Two hundred years ago an old Dutch voyager likened its shape to that of a shoemaker's last. And in this same last or shoe, that old woman of the nursery tale, with the swarming brood, might very comfortably be lodged, she and all her progeny."

— Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

6 To Domesticate a Mountain

Mountains are full of wonder. They are primordial symbols of time, glacial time, but also a record of the subtle fluctuations in seasons, changes in the sky. They are wild, stochastic, unpredictable. They have no discipline. They have no referent. Each mountain's identity is itself. It does not make sense to speak of errors when one speaks of mountains because they have no formal norm against which to stray.

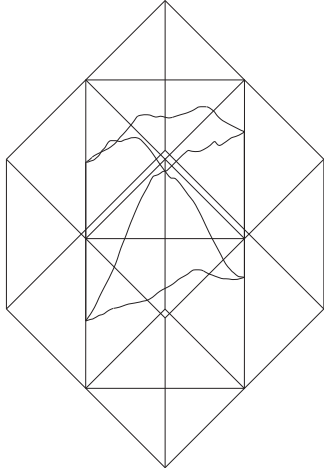
A house is rarely wonderful. It is mostly a mundane composition of parts, frames, volumes, and walls. It is willful, determined, controlled. Necessarily positioned at some distance from nature, it is regulated through architectural convention. Remember the primitive hut? "It is by approaching the simplicity of this first model that fundamental mistakes are avoided and true perfection is achieved."¹

A domesticated object has all the attributes of the original, corrected through a system of disciplinary norms. It is an analogous form, "created not by genius, inspiration, determination, evolution, but by two modest actions (which cannot be caught up in any mystique of creation): *substitution* (one part replaces another, as in a paradigm) and *nomination* (the name is in no way linked to the stability of the parts)."²

If literary metaphor can turn the Right Whale's head into a house, how might architectural drawing convention help to domesticate a mountain? Here are our twelve steps.

1. Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essay on Architecture*, trans. Wolfgang and Anni Herrmann (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls), p. 12-13.
2. Roland Barthes, "The Ship Argo," *Roland Barthes*, (New York: Hill & Wang), p. 46. Rosalind Krauss refers to this passage in the introduction to the collection of her essays, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, as a model for producing meaning without the myths of authorship or origin, but through shallow shifts along a planar surface. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1986).

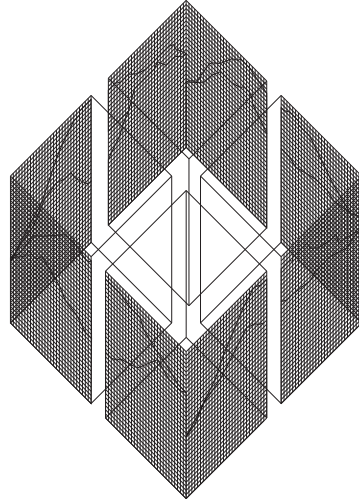
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Yale School of Architecture.



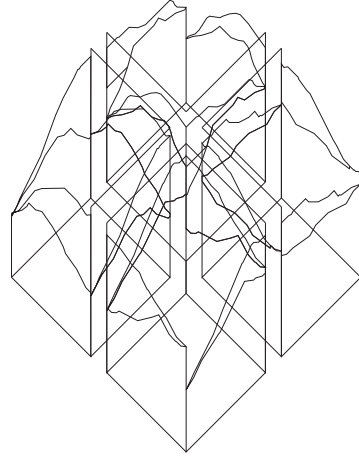
2 Subdivided into four quadrants for sanity.



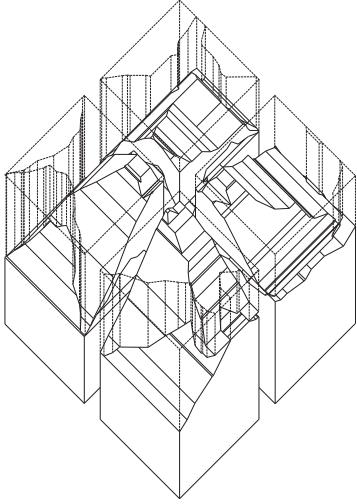
1 We inscribed the unmanageable in a bounding box.



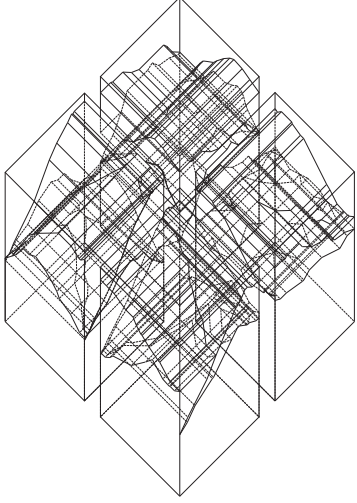
4 Corrected the new elevations to an orthogonal grid for inventory.



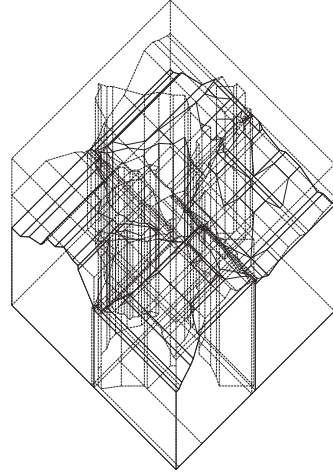
3 Constructed orthographically projected elevations for each part as we understood them.



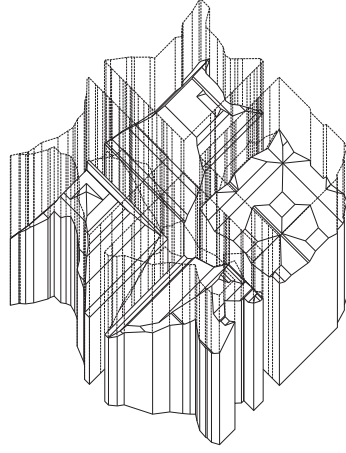
6 Trimmed all shortcomings.



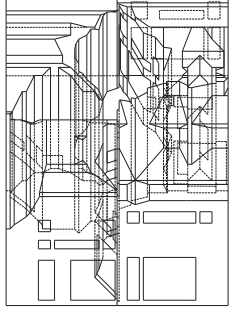
5 Extruded the drawings exactly.



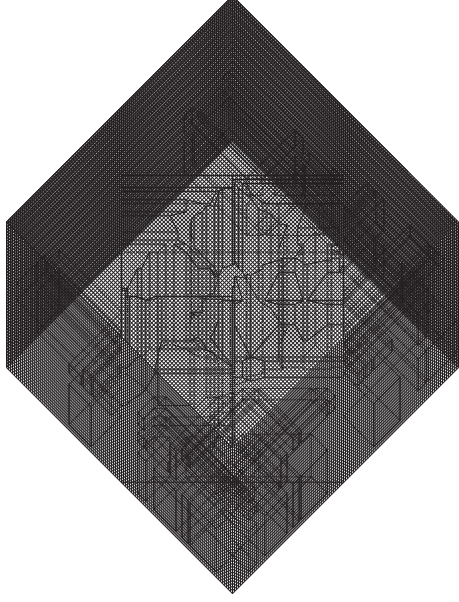
8 Rotated the willing quadrants one-hundred-eighty degrees.



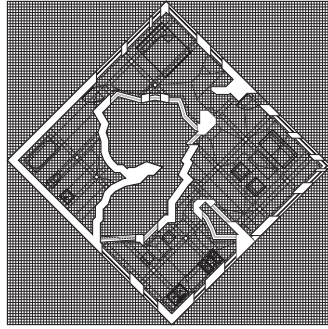
7 Projected the underbelly curves through a cube to remove all defects of character.



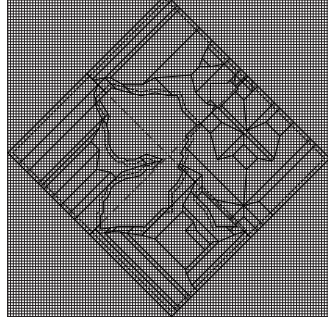
10 Called it a house only for the power to carry that out.



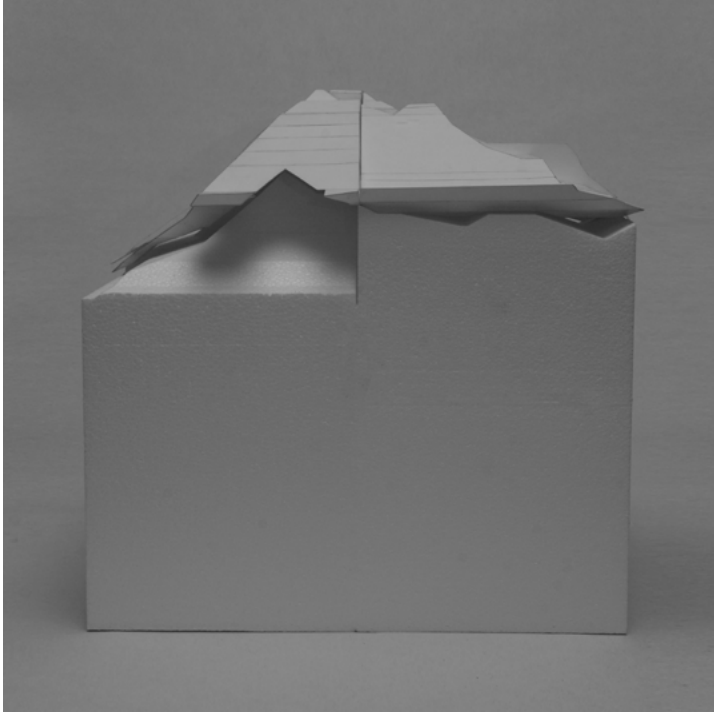
9 Projected apertures from the bounding diamond and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.



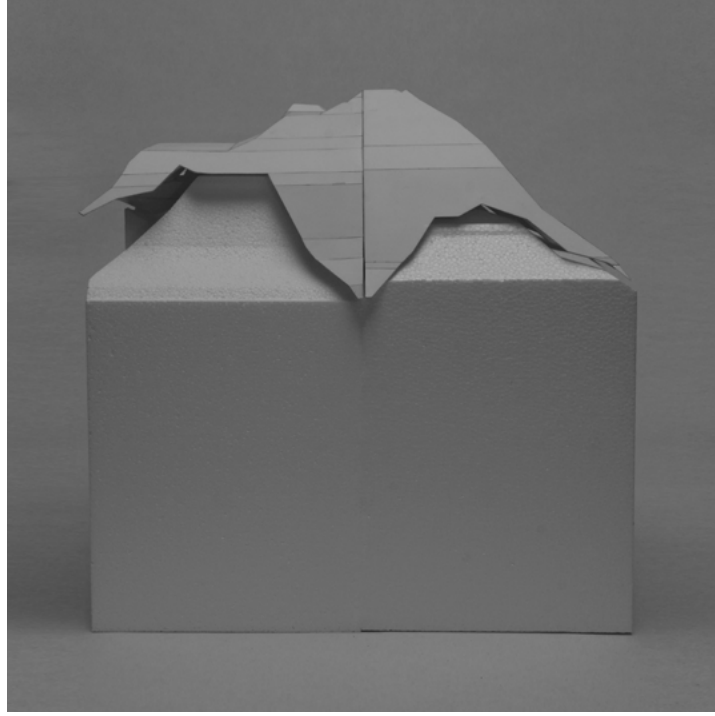
12 Having had no spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we nonetheless tried to carry this message to architects, and to practice these principles, as we furnished.



11 Turned the plan forty-five degrees whenever possible.



Peak on Peak. Model photograph 1.



Peak on Peak. Model photograph 2.

7 Infrastructural Monument

In the Stalinist era, the task of representing memory, sovereignty, and history was given to the Soviet water works—canals, dams, and reservoirs. This infrastructure embraced the cultural program of monument making despite its otherwise efficiency-driven role as a utility. In the perceived misfit between traditional monumentality and an object as dispersed as a hydraulic infrastructure, a system of representation emerged that presented a unified image of nature transformed through politics. Whereas the construction site of the canal was violently real, the public dissemination of its cultural value travelled through the mass-printed book to include the media of text, photomontage, drawing, and maps. The propaganda campaign produced an infrastructural monument by amplifying events as they unfolded in the present and constructing scenarios that imaged the future. In turn, these artistic representations influenced all encounters with the reality of the completed infrastructure and, by extension, with the affected landscape. The infrastructural monument synthesized the imagery disseminated through mass media with the real animate power of moving water to formulate a new state geography and, with it, and new Soviet mentality.

The Soviet water infrastructure was a system of dammed rivers and lakes linked by reservoirs and canals that formed navigable connections between the Baltic, White, Azov, Black and Caspian Seas. Built under Stalin, in the 1930s, the infrastructure connected an immense territory for the expedient traffic of goods. It also included dams and reservoirs for the production of nationalized sources of energy and water and drained northern marshlands to move water southward into deserts thus creating new agricultural zones. In addition to these functions, the canal network acted as a monument for the Communist regime by representing and distributing the Kremlin's power across the Soviet landscape.

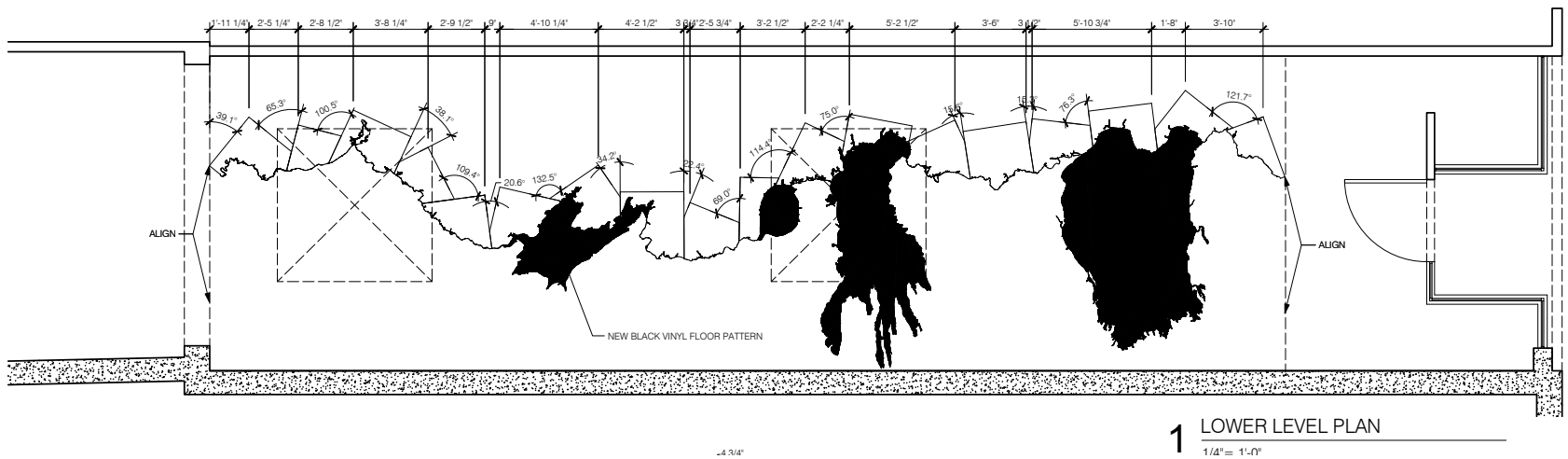
In 1947, when the canals had already been operating for more than a decade, a representation of monumentality emerged in the work of Nikolai Mikhailov, a popular geographer. His book *Over the Map of the Motherland* represented the infrastructure through a series of national maps. From the point of view of a geographer, the



First Office

After Mikhailov.

Anna Neimark

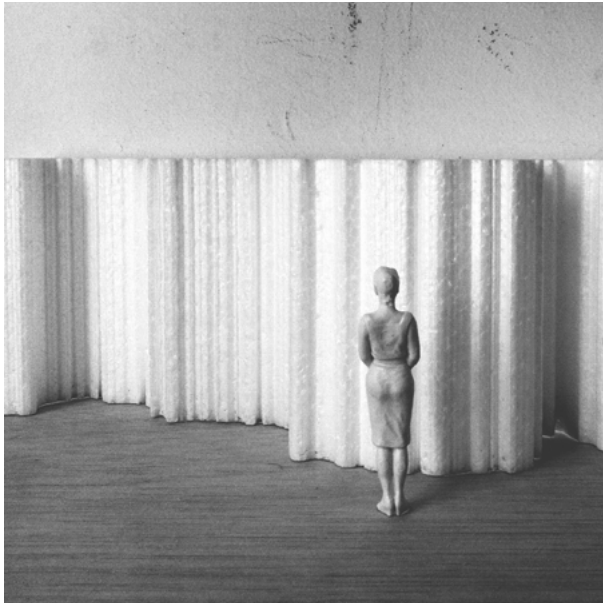


water works could be read through their ecological effects. Denying an interpretation of nature as given, he declared that geography could now be restructured by the power of the state:

Scientists of the contemporary West lament: 'Landscape is our irrevocable fate.'— 'No!' we say. 'With our own hands, using well-considered blueprints, we are building our country; we are creating a new landscape.' Bourgeois scientists say: 'Geography is not created, but is born of itself.' — 'No!' we say. 'Building Communism, we are remaking the country with rational calculation, we are changing its geography.'¹

One map showed regions in need of artificial flooding juxtaposed to marshland regions in need of draining. The plan would bring the excess water from the north to the south to equalize the regions and render them both productive. Giving geography agency, Mikhailov proclaimed: "Water is washing desert regions off the map one after another."² A different map depicted the movement of the

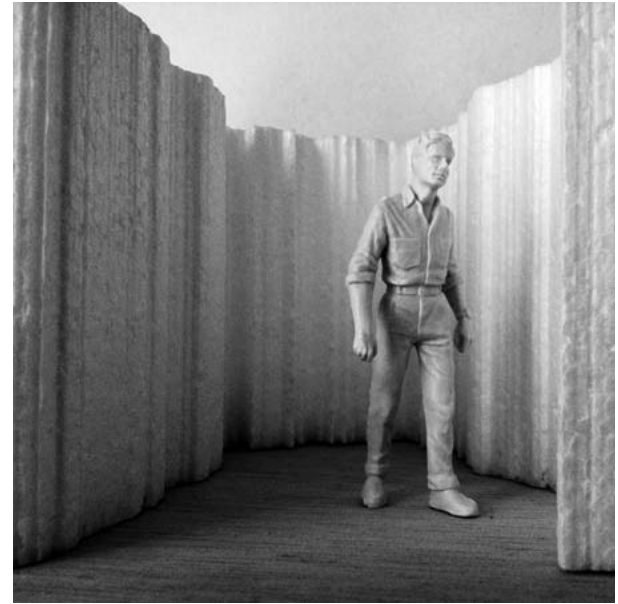
northern most geographic border of cultivation into Siberia. The line indicating the limit beyond which the climate was too extreme for the survival of agriculture was simply redrawn to increase the area of cultivable land. By relocating massive amounts of water through the canal infrastructure into new parts of the state, formerly unproductive regions were rezoned for agriculture. The maps under consideration were projecting a fictional idealized geography, where irrigation and electricity could overcome the excessive cold of Siberia. One map marks new regions with bold black arrows where wheat plantations would be expanded. A massive hatched arrow in another map determines where cotton could be introduced in the Azov and the Black Sea regions. Mandarin oranges, Peruvian cherries, and Japanese persimmons had been imported from warmer climates but could now be harvested on Russian soil.³ Stalin proclaimed: "Only the creative initiative of the masses can fix the map of fruit-growing . . . Only the people can create a new geography of horticulture."⁴ These techniques were not only reserved for plants and crops, they were also implemented in the migration



Monument. Model Photograph 1.

of animals. Squirrels and deer would populate the newly formed climatic zones following the arrows on the map. New habitats and forests would invade former deserts and marshes by occupying an expanded area of the hatch. According to Mikhailov, by 1947 more than 3 million hectares of desert land had been turned into gardens and more than 10,000 hectares of land were drained, turning "the malaria-infested jungle . . . into health resorts and subtropical plantations."¹⁵ Lines, hatches, and arrows on the maps were charged with the task of redefining the fate of entire geographic regions, plant cultures, and animal communities.

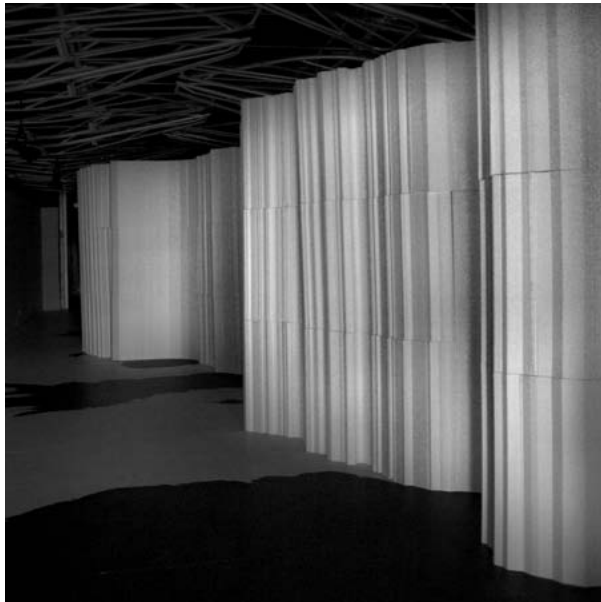
Mikhailov's geography illustrated more than the physical mass migrations and expansions of agricultural production. Backed by the infrastructural object and its many representations, geography became the discipline that could best represent the new economic and infrastructural programs of the Soviet state, thereby preserving its legacy in history. Mikhailov was aware of his role as the geographer-historian. He wrote:



Monument. Model Photograph 2.

The country has changed. And much of what has been achieved by the Soviet State is shown in the geographic map. With its representational language, the map narrates the changes brought on by historic epochs. Not for nothing did Gogol say: "I always wanted to write geography; here, in geography, it would be possible to understand how to write history."¹⁶

Tracing Mikhailov's maps and superimposing them all into a single drawing reveals the scale of the geographic campaign. Because the Soviet Union was understood as a closed system, with a clearly defined border, the geographic signs all fit neatly within its boundary. This drawing clearly shows how the geographic language redefined the Soviet landscape as a monumental construction site. It is a unified image of Stalin's war on nature, of geography transformed through politics. Mikhailov wrote: "With lines and signs on the map, history draws its path."¹⁷ Animated through a vast literary-representational campaign, the infrastructural monument became an apparatus for disseminating the power of the Soviet



Monument. Front of wall.



Monument. Back of wall.



Monument. Top of wall.

state. The prophetic map was its ultimate medium, which alerted readers to the new scale of Communism's reach across the USSR and beyond.

1. Nikolai Mikhailov quoted in Evgeny Dobrenko, "The Art of Social Navigation: The Cultural Topography of the Stalin Era," *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, ed. Evgeny Dobrenko & Eric Naiman (Seattle: University of Washington, 2003), p. 195-196.
2. Ibid., p. 196.
3. *USSR in Construction 5* (Moscow: OGIS, May, 1933).
4. Stalin quoted in Dobrenko, p. 195.
5. Mikhailov, Nikolai, *Across the Map of the U.S.S.R.* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1949), p. 233.
6. Nikolai Mikhailov, *Nad kartoi rodiny* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1947), p. 8. My translation.
7. Ibid., p. 5.

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Panthera pardus.



Equus quagga.



Giraffa camelopardalis.

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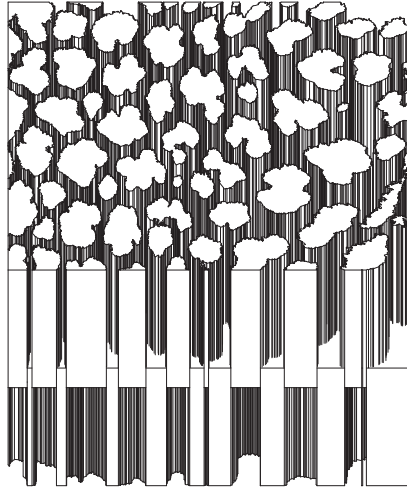
8 Zoopol

A dog has form. A table has form. A house has form. A city has no form. A city is constituted by its people, we say. It is built from the ground up, we agree. It is a complex collage of socioeconomic political forces, we all nod our heads. It has to remain familiar, predictable, and functional. We all excuse ourselves. The city is the real. If you fuck with it, everyone gasps. You are unethical, socially unacceptable, in well over your head. You put our economy at risk and our values at stake. You want form to participate in contemporary discourse? Great! Make an installation! Program a robot! Curate a symposium! Contribute to *Log*! Just be sure to put it in a secure place, like a gallery or a journal, for its own safety. And don't forget to archive it when the audience goes home and the funding dries up. If you are lucky, someone will refer to it on an academic review or footnote its not-so-critical content in defense of a post-critical dissertation.

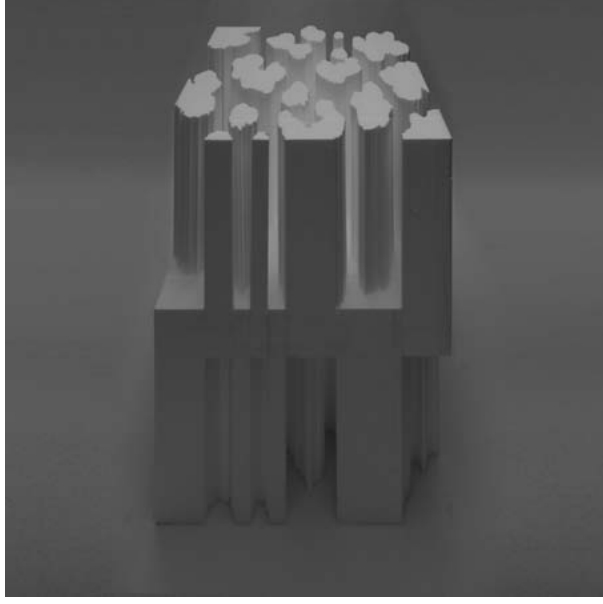
Fuck that. We want to give the city form. We want to bring it into a critical relationship with its inhabitants. We want to make it alien and unfamiliar. This is a first attempt. And as a first, it is a basic exercise of procuring form using just one drawing: a figure/ground plan.

The figure/ground plan has been used to analyze existing cities. The Nolli Map is possibly its most renowned realization, revealing the social structure of a city through a simple diagrammatic image. Now we want to put the conventions of that famous black and white drawing to the test: Can it produce a new urban environment? Can it be used secondarily as a tool for analytical clarity and primarily as a generator of form? We decided that to produce an environment from scratch, the figure/ground drawing should be a representation of an estranged nature.

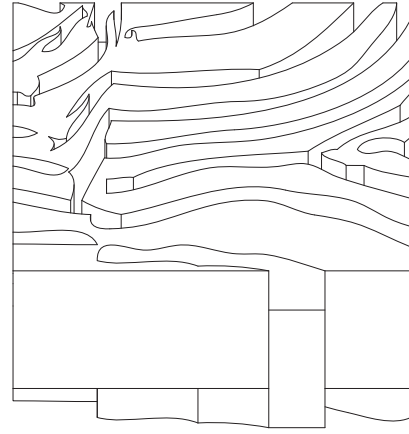
To reproduce nature's form is neither possible nor interesting. Humans express their delight in nature by creating quasi-natures—esthetic perversions of natural phenomena. The greatest achievement in the production of quasi natures is the animal print. The animal print is the aestheticized figure/ground of an animal that can be applied to anything. One can have a leopard-print dress, a zebra-print compact disc case, a giraffe-print tattoo. To fuel the human



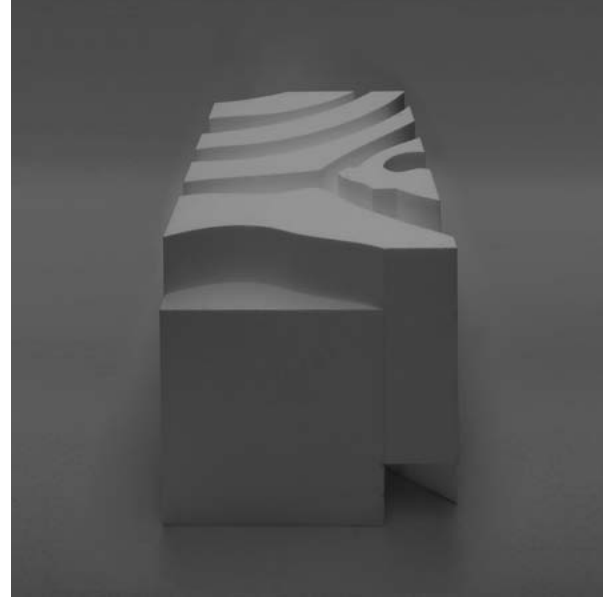
Leopard City, Axonometric.



Leopard City, Model.

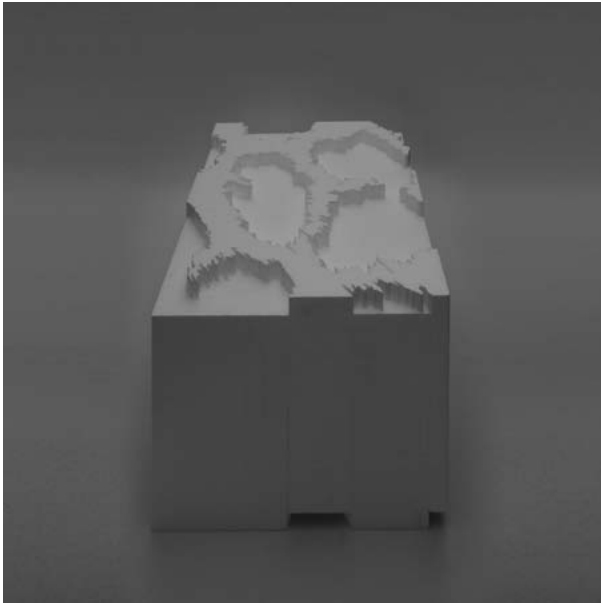


Zebra City, Axonometric.

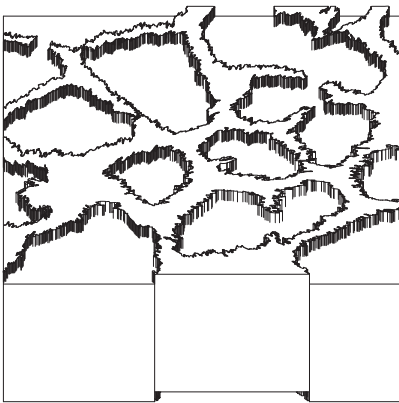


Zebra City, Model.

Andrew Atwood
Ama Nelmark



Giraffe City. Model.



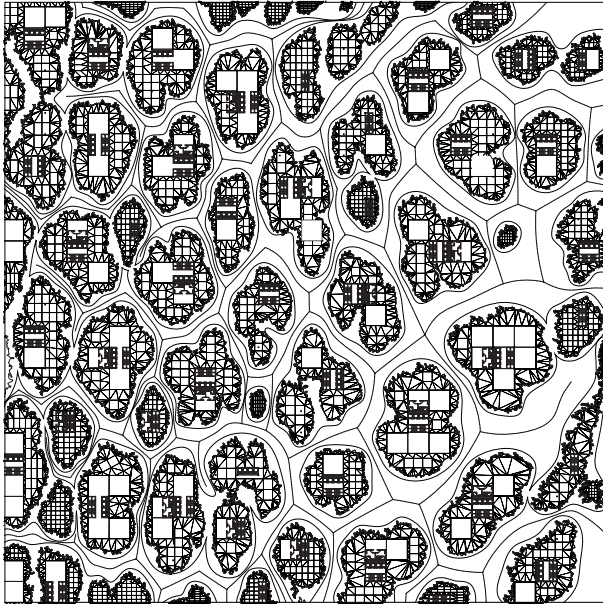
Giraffe City. Axonometric.

desire for mimicry, theft, and appropriation of nature, we sought out the most beautiful figure ground in the animal kingdom: *Panthera pardus*. Imagine an animal print city: Zoopol.

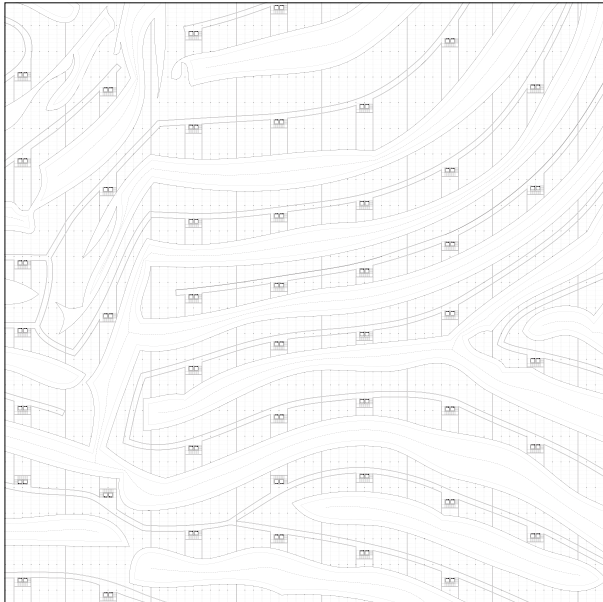
Zoopol is not a natural reserve. Zoopol does not solve environmental problems. Zoopol is not a self-sufficient ecosystem. Zoopol does not create harmony between species. Zoopol is not a tourist destination. Zoopol is an urban abstraction. It formalizes the distance between an object and its representation. The extrusion of the animal print figure/ground unifies an otherwise wildly complex set of parts into a monumental whole that represents urban form through a single architectural convention. If No-Stop City extends a single infrastructural system to infinity, Zoopol is its opposite. It does not solve problems. It creates new ones, unexpected ones: problems of taste, function and representation. You can love New York, but how do you love Leopard? You can find your way through Los Angeles, but how do you navigate through Zebra? You can represent a suburban development, but how do you draw Giraffe? Zoopol creates difference and estrangement. It promotes blockages and difficulty. It provides a frame in which form can be brought to the scale of the city.

The City of Leopard is a dense tower settlement. The towers are uncomfortably close at the spine of the animal, and sparse on the white of its belly. Gradually, the pattern dissolves as the public space takes over. Each tower requires its own vertical circulation core. The typical thirty-foot structural grid is deformed to resolve at the undulating façade, producing an ad-hoc reflected ceiling plan that cannot be defended by modernist ideals of function and form or postmodern ideas of skin and surface. The towers are neither ducks nor sheds. They are decorated ducks or, simply stated, extruded leopard spots.

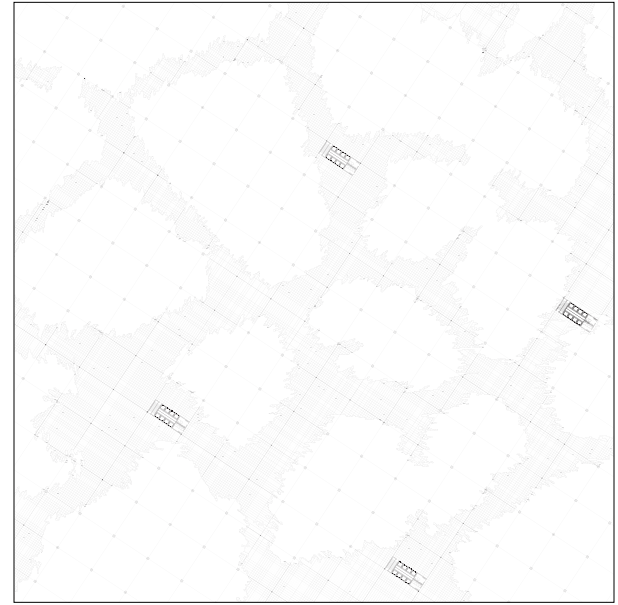
The City of Zebra is a mid-rise slab development. No longer contained within isolated spots, interior space stretches across continuous, interlocking stripes. One could say that the streets are as wide as the buildings, or that the buildings are as thin as the streets. This vertical extrusion is much shorter than the leopard, yielding only nine floors, a standard Socialist slab type. To prevent some of the "hazards of nature" from causing damage, the buildings



Leopard City. Plan.



Zebra City. Plan.



Giraffe City. Plan.

Andrew Atwood
Ama Nelmark

are sheared through with a new striping that runs against the grain of the zebra pattern. Each segmented zone is defined by its own entry that leads to a vertical circulation core.

The City of Giraffe is a continuous low-density mat with courtyards throughout. It draws on Colin Rowe's interpretation of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation as the positive figure of the void produced by the Uffizi courtyard in Florence. The inverted giraffe skin, figure turned to void, is extruded to eighteen feet only, producing a continuous mat perforated by immense public zones. Because of the network of building mass, every large-scale node on the grid forms a core at its center to connect the disparate segments. Some of the courtyards are private, completely enclosed by the building. Others overflow into one another for collective gathering.

Living in a Zoopol, citizens develop intimate relationships with an animal through a modern version of a totem. The abstraction of nature returns as urban form. This relationship between the subject and city is a relationship of waste. But isn't architecture everything that isn't necessary?

9 Abstraction Returns

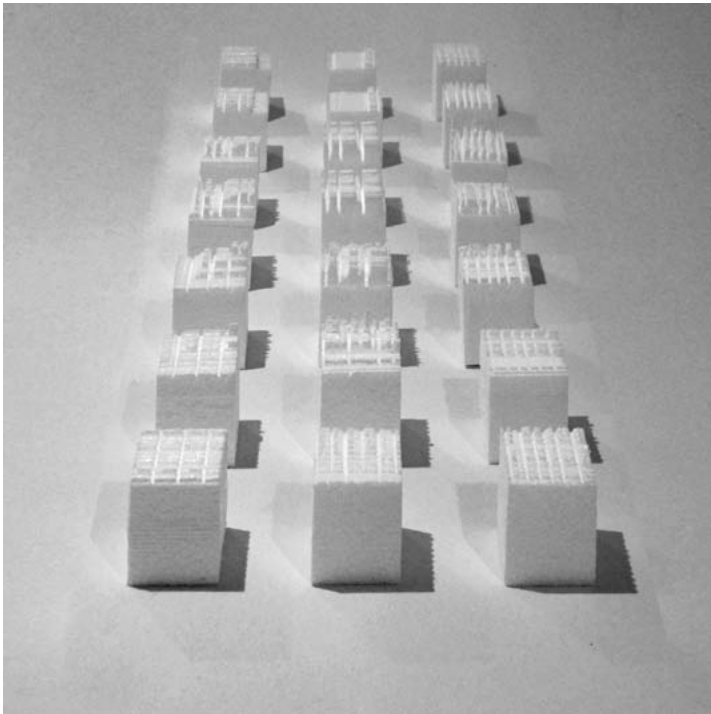
The Map of the City of New York of 1811 by the Commissioners superimposed a grid onto the Island of Manhattan. The drawing neither accounted for irregular edges of its shape nor the topography of the island. It rendered the lines of former streets, houses, and fields as dashed. Ordering the orthogonal grid of blocks independently of geography, history, and memory, the Commissioners defined an autonomous urban form.

Now consider Rosalind Krauss's emphatic description of the grid as one of modernism's founding myths: "In the spatial sense, the grid states the autonomy of the realm of art. Flattened, geometrized, ordered, it is antinatural, antimimetic, antireal. It is what art looks like when it turns its back to nature. In the flatness that results from its coordinates, the grid is the means of crowding out the dimensions of the real and replacing them with the lateral result not of imitation, but of aesthetic decree."¹

By ordering the city to the shallowness of a gridded plane, the Commissioners unknowingly added urbanism to what would become central to the aesthetic discourse of modernism. They preceded the discipline of art by one hundred years. Their drawing brought abstraction to bear on the everyday lives of millions of people who would eventually inhabit that island. The map defined a distance, a sense of *estrangement*, between the city and its inhabitants through an object and concept of representational order.

In the two centuries that followed, the distance between the drawing and the city appeared to close. Although we purposefully interpret it as an aesthetic ordering system, the grid fulfilled the Commissioners' pure instrumental reason: a parcelization of the city for the real estate market. The island was fully turned over to Capitalist speculation. What might have been abstract turned into kitsch.

"And so life is reckoned as nothing," writes Victor Shklovsky. "Habitualization devours works, clothes, furniture, one's wife, and the fear of war." And yet, "the technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an

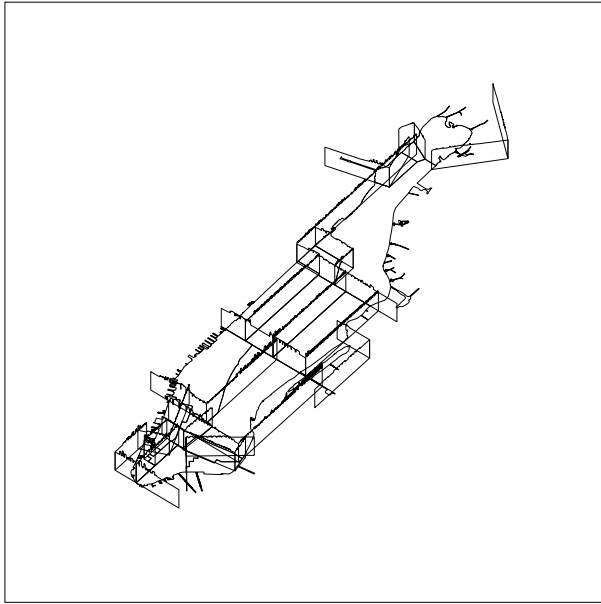


First Office

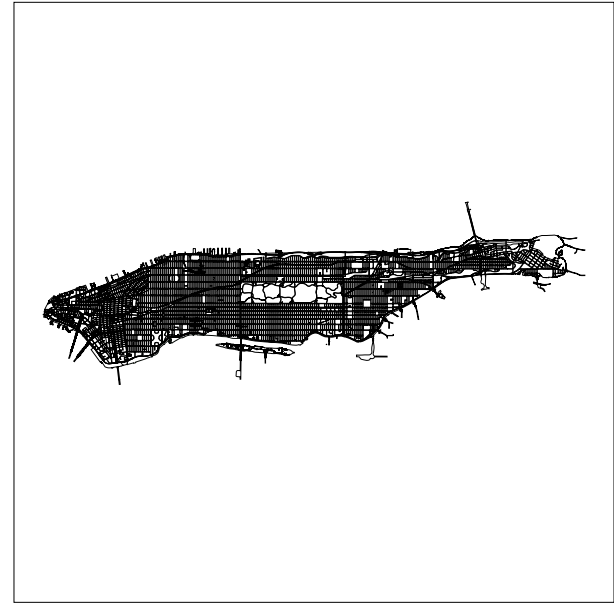
Twenty-one of the two-hundred-acre Manhattan grid tiles. Model photograph.



Manhattan reconstituted from district parcels. Model.



District elevations. Axonometric.

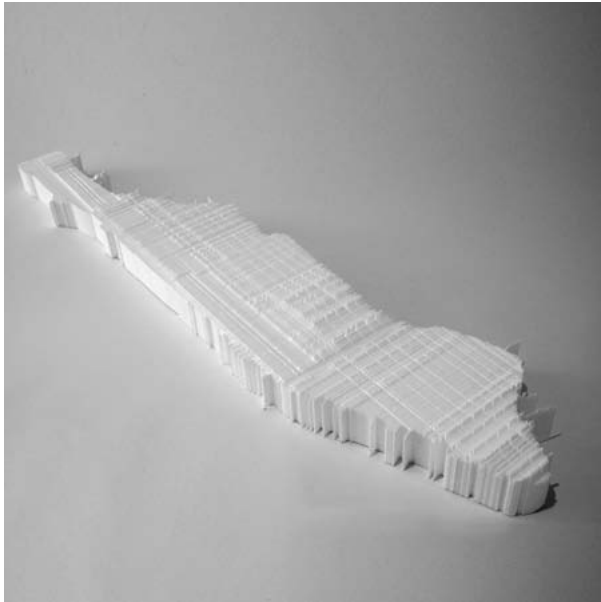


Manhattan divided into districts by grid orientation. Plan.

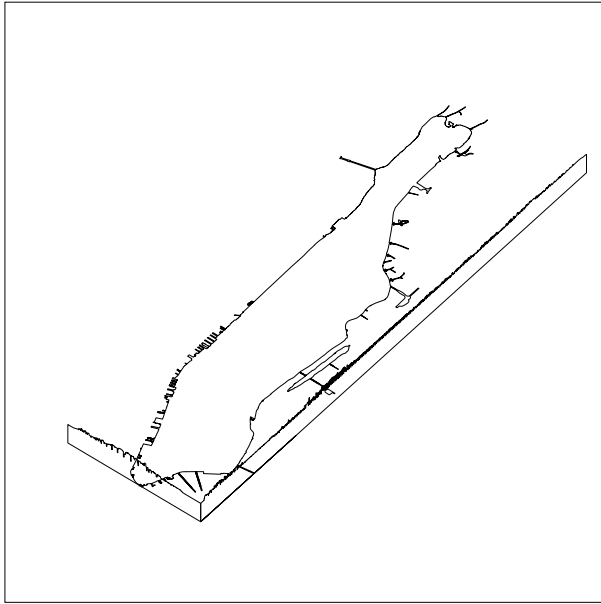
aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. *Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.*"²

To reopen the Manhattan grid to abstraction through representation, we subject the island to conventions of orthographic drawing and projection that estrange its now familiar form. In the three studies that follow, the urban object is summarily reconstituted through a mechanical reduction of resolution: extrusion. What emerges is a template for urbanism, governed not by the figure-ground plan, but by the flattened, gridded skyline. The models project the city from the outside in, describing it as a monumental whole made up of discrete parts.

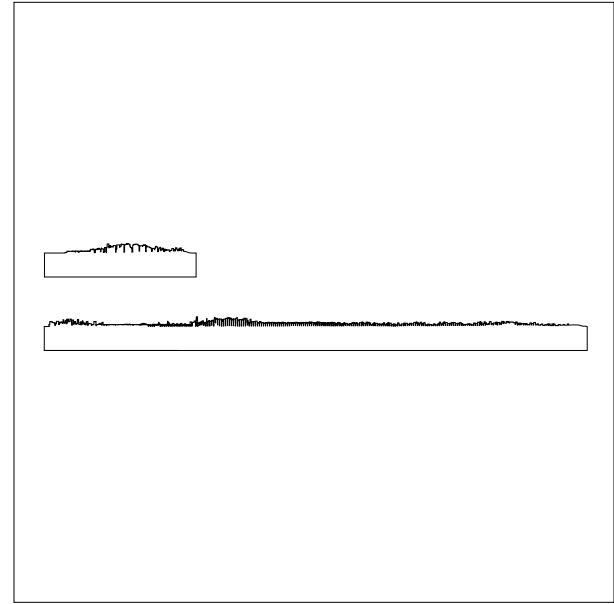
In the first model, Manhattan is divided into parcels according to variations and anomalies found in the original plan. Once the iconic districts are outlined in plan, each one is treated as an internally closed system, defined by two internal skylines—one on the southern, and another, on the eastern edge. The independent elevations, when projected through one another, reproduce a recognizable, yet inaccurate, model of the island. The irregularities tie this abstraction



Manhattan reconstituted from skylines. Model.



Skylines. Axonometric.



Manhattan skylines, east and south. Elevations.

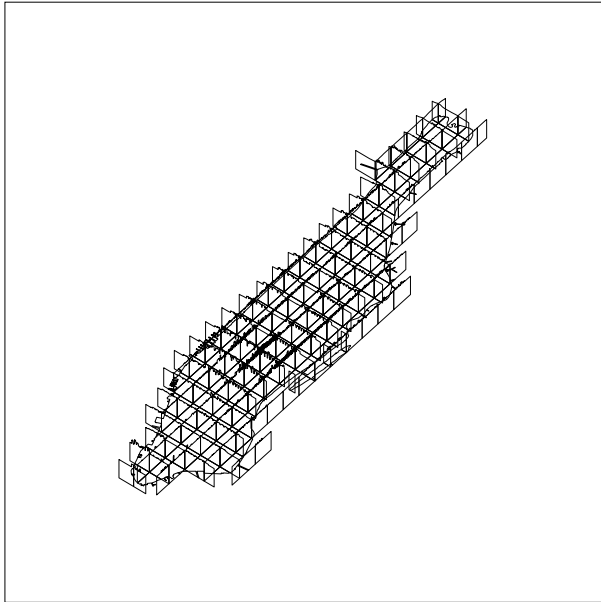
to quasi-real zones in the city, yet the union of the two projected skylines produces an uncanny sense of distance. Attached to its original reference, the exercise maintains as much as it alienates.

The second model takes Manhattan to its lowest level of resolution. While the most recognizable image of the city is the skyline, an extrusion along this line delivers a radical estrangement from the real. The seventeen parcels of the first abstraction are reduced to one undifferentiated block in the second. Describing Manhattan as one volume through its three faces, the island plan and its two skylines, produces a pure plaid. None of the exceptions preserved in the first model exist in the second. Extrusion does not average. It does something else, favoring extremes. The model of the city does not recover the original; the form only retains the character and the name "New York."

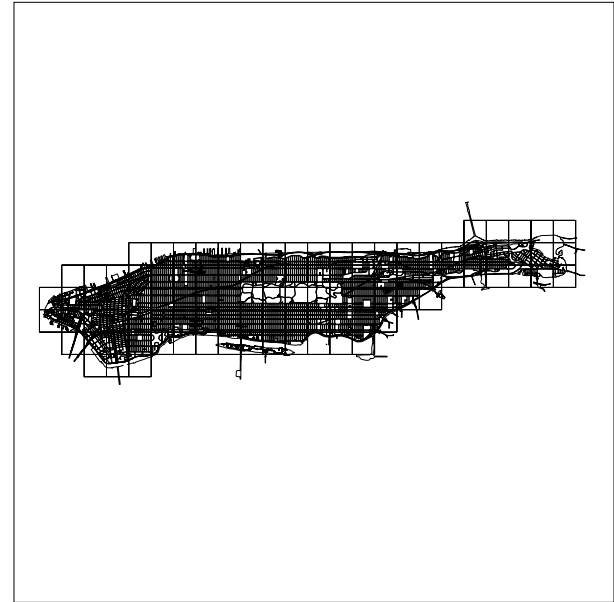
The final study gives the island a new form of discontinuity through a grid of evenly spaced two hundred acre parcels. As with previous models, each cube is then projected from three drawings only, crossing two hundred skyline segments through one another.



New Manhattan grid. Model.



Two-hundred-acre grid elevations. Axonometric.



Two-hundred-acre grid elevations superimposed onto the existing grid of Manhattan. Plan.

When the cubes are placed together, the elevations do not match. Only the street grid lines up to connect the superblocks into a continuous urban fabric. There are visible seams. The cubic parcels resist being brought together into one unified model. Each one is a mini Manhattan, governed by its own internal logic.

This final reduction estranges the island through an alienated form of its own composition—the grid. Yet the new blocks resist conforming to the effective standards of efficiency, property, and function. In gridding the grid of Manhattan once again, we revisit the moment of the Commissioners' original abstraction.

1. Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* 9 (Summer, 1979), p. 50.
2. Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," (1917), in Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 12 (emphasis in original).

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1 Shotgun House 12

Competition:
Luigart Makers Spaces York Street Challenge (2014)
Finalist

Group Exhibition:
Treatise: Why Write Alone?
Madlener House, Graham Foundation, Chicago, Illinois
January 23–March 28, 2015

First Office Team:
Anna Neimark, Andrew Atwood, David Eskenazi, Brooke
Hair, Melissa Lee

2 Paranormal Panorama 24

Installation:
Screening Room for the film *Kalte Probe* [Cold Rehearsal]
Mackey Gallery, MAK Center for Art and Architecture, Los
Angeles, California
November 7, 2013–March 1, 2014

Collaborators:
Constanze Ruhm and Christine Lang, film directors, Austria

Client:
Kimberli Meyer, director, MAK Center for Art and
Architecture

Funding:
Austrian Federal Chancellery / Arts Division

First Office Team:
Anna Neimark, Andrew Atwood, David Eskenazi, Ryan
Roark, Mark Acciari

Contractor:
Marcos Lozano Construction

3 . . . And Pedestals 34

Installation:
SCI-Arc Gallery, Los Angeles, California
July 26–September 7, 2013

First Office Team:
Andrew Atwood, Erin Besler, Kristy Velasco, Mark Acciari

Contractor:
Alley 36 Collaborative

Structural and Electrical Engineers:
Noos Engineering and E3 Electrical

4 Possible Table 40

Group Exhibition:
Possible Mediums, Taubman School of Architecture,
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan
January 17–February 24, 2014

First Office Team:
Andrew Atwood, Anna Neimark, Ryan Roark

5 Pinterest Headquarters 50

Office Design:
808 Brannan Street, San Francisco, California
Completed June 2013

Collaborator:
Janette Kim, all of the above (New York)

First Office Team:
Anna Neimark, Andrew Atwood, Mark Acciari, Benjamin
Farnsworth, Ewan Feng, Kate Hajash, Austin Kaa, Brian Lee,
Steven Moody, Darle Shinsato, Jane Zhu

Executive Architect:
Neal Schwartz, Schwartz and Architecture (San Francisco)

Contractor:
Novo Construction

MEP Engineer:
McMillan Electric

Photography:
Naho Kubota

6 Mountain House 60

Publication:
Anna Neimark and Andrew Atwood, "How to Domesticate a
Mountain," *Perspecta 46: Error* (2013).

First Office Team:
Andrew Atwood, Anna Neimark, Erin Besler, Ewan Feng,
Austin Kaa, Steven Moody

7 *Infrastructural Monument* 70

Installation:
WUHO Gallery, Los Angeles, California
December 8–December 18, 2011

Funding:
Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social
Sciences (ASHSS), University of Southern California
(USC)

First Office Team:
Anna Neimark, Mark Acciari, Benzion Rodman, Regina Teng

Fabricator:
Kevin Baker, Universal Foam

Publication:
Anna Neimark, "Infrastructural Monument: Stalin's Canals
in Construction and in Representation," *Future Anterior*
9.2: *On Preserving the Openness of the Monument*, edited by
Aron Vinegar and Jorge Otero-Pailos (2013).

Funding:
Julia Amory Appleton Traveling Fellowship from Harvard
University's Graduate School of Design (GSD)

8 *Zoopol* 78

Competition:
Think Space: *Ecological Borders* (2011)
Honorable Mention

Publication:
Andrew Atwood and Anna Neimark, "Zoopol: a monument
to the animal city," *Project 1* (2012).

First Office Team:
Anna Neimark, Andrew Atwood, Rachel Lee

Collaborator:
Tijana Vujosevic

9 *Grid* 86

Competition:
The Architectural League of NY: *The Greatest Grid* (2012)

Group Exhibition: *The Unfinished Grid*
Museum of the City of New York, New York
December 6, 2011–April 15, 2012

Publication:
Andrew Atwood and Anna Neimark, "Abstraction Returns,"
Think-Space Pamphlets (2013).

First Office Team:
Andrew Atwood, Anna Neimark, John May, Mark Acciari,
Andrew Kim



Mark Acciari in video *Watch at Maximum Volume* (2013).

TREATISE

About the Project

Treatise is an exhibition and publication project that brings together fourteen young design offices working at the forefront of conceptual architecture to consider the treatise as a site for theoretical inquiry, experimentation, and debate. Organized by Los Angeles-based designer Jimenez Lai and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, *Treatise* presents a collection of individually authored books as well as an exhibition of new and recent works by this dynamic group at the Graham Foundation's Madlener House, from January to March 2015. Together, the publication series and exhibition provide a platform for the participants to articulate and exchange their theoretical angles and ideas, as they challenge disciplinary boundaries and explore new possibilities for architecture.

About the Graham Foundation

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations and produces public programs to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. Gardner (1901-02) and renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000-square-foot historic home now houses galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom, where the foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

For more information, please visit
www.grahamfoundation.org

Why Write Alone?

Jimenez Lai

Treatise explores two questions concerning the practice of architecture: First, why write? And, second, why write alone?

Single-author architectural treatises can be traced back two-thousand years; they were further advanced by medieval Italian architects who attempted to make sense of what was being built in the world, why we desired it, as well as, how it could be constructed. To this day, an architectural treatise departs from building (*fabris*) in order to explore reason (*ratio*). Our image of the architect has long since shifted from the professional at work on a construction site hauling bricks and applying mortars—today, the architect draws, reasons, orchestrates, and projects.

If the description of a philosopher is one who writes to make sense of the world, then the duty of the architect is not only to further one's ideas through words, but also to build one's questions into reality. The promise of youth is often spent laboring in a library, consuming the writings of those who came before. While this process remains vital, it possesses a precarious shadow side. If the foundation of our knowledge becomes orthodoxy, we neglect to ask our own questions back at the abyss. Furthermore, we forget that those very writings we uphold were once produced by young individuals in their own libraries, and the resulting interpretations conferred by future generations remain just that—opinions about the rules of their times—not truths, and not solutions.

In the second half of the twentieth century, *Pamphlet Architecture* was introduced to the world. In its first fifteen years of existence, the series published fourteen issues written by a generation of young architects trying to articulate and clarify their own ideas, processes, and rationale for “building.” Fast forward to 2015: the culture of architectural writing has evolved. Aside from the occasional exception, the majority of manifestos written by architects are now produced as part of a compilation. There are even exhibitions based on compilations of compilations. While I believe the compilation form certainly has a strong contribution to make to the culture of architecture at large, I wish to point out the decided difference in depth of investment between single-authored and collected treatises.

This returns us to the second question of this project: Why write alone? Or for that matter, why write together? In the case of *Treatise*, a Tarzan call into the forest drew out fourteen non-conformist architectural designers to produce their own treatise and to participate in an exhibition, where their selfish pursuits would amass to form this collection. Here, the act of writing alone generated an uncompromising output—a treatise unwavering in thought because it disregarded the white noise of external voices. At the same time, however, the construction of this allied peanut gallery allowed for dialogue, discourse, and ongoing debates.

Despite that, I do not intend for this series to linger: we will do its work today, while we are young and in the company of our peers. We will do it now and move on with our lives, leaving its call to be taken up by another generation. The afterlife of this project can be found on the web, as well as in the Graham Foundation's bookshop. And in addition, its legacy will be carried out through the future undertakings of these fourteen offices.

Here, I would like to take an opportunity to acknowledge former and present members of Bureau Spectacular for their key contributions to this project, including Andrew Akins, Julia Di Castri, Matthew Messner, Jesse Hammer, and Jacob Commerci. I am also grateful for the many conversations I have had with Joanna Grant, Andrew Kovacs, and Thomas Kelley about this project; it would not be possible without them. Thanks, too, to Stanley Tigerman, for setting such a fine example. The Graham Foundation's Ellen Alderman, Mia Khimm, and Pat Elifritz have been vital in bringing the exhibition to fruition. And most of all, I want to thank Sarah Herda, for shaking me out of apathy.

Treatise was made possible through the generous support of the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. It involved the time and effort of fifteen brilliant thinkers, and the support of their home institutions, particularly the University of Illinois at Chicago, where it all began. Additional funding was made possible by the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, thanks to the assistance of Kyle Reynolds. The immaculate graphic design was the result of work by Natasha Jen of Pentagram, generously produced in kind.



Bittertang Babies and Baloney

Bittertang is a New York-based design farm run by Antonio Torres and Michael Loverich. Their work explores multiple themes, including pleasure, frothiness, biological matter, animal posturing, babies, sculpture, and coloration, all unified through bel composto. Bittertang has built three inflatable pavilions, a pregnant sugar-oozing piñata, a plush toy collection, a sagging birdcage, and edible environments.



Fake Industries Architectural Agonism Architectural Replicas: Four Hypotheses on the Use of Agonistic Copies in the Architectural Field

Founded by Cristina Goberna and Urtzi Grau, Fake Industries Architectural Agonism (FKAA) is an entity of variable boundaries and questionable taste that provides architectural tools to mediate between citizens and institutions, the public sphere, and disciplinary knowledge.



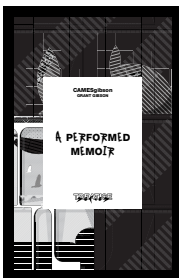
Bureau Spectacular The Politics of Flatness

Jimenez Lai is the founder of Bureau Spectacular, a studio of art and architectural affairs with a focus on storytelling. It is a sanctuary for misfits that imagines other worlds and engages architecture through the conflation of representation, theory, criticism, history, and taste into pages of cartoonish nonsense.



First Office Nine Essays

First Office was founded by Anna Neimark and Andrew Atwood in downtown Los Angeles. The practice works on topics in architecture through humor, electrical conduit, and white paint.



CAMES/gibson A Performed Memoir

Grant Gibson is a Chicago-based educator, registered architect, and founding principal of CAMES/gibson, Inc., an architecture and design practice committed to creating environments and objects that are cross-pollinated with common social, political, and economic interests, as well as individual experiences and desires.



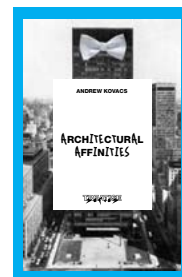
is-office No Project

is-office is a Chicago-based design firm specializing in objects, interiors, and buildings. Founded by Kyle Reynolds and Jeff Mikolajewski, the firm leverages the unique agency of physical form to engage issues of culture, urbanism, lifestyle, and iconography indigenous to the modern metropolis.



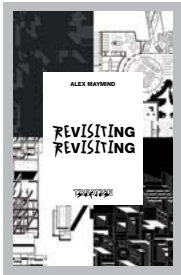
Design With Company Mis-Guided Tactics for Propriety Calibration

Design With Company (Dw/Co) is the Chicago-based architectural collaborative of Stewart Hicks and Allison Newmeyer. Dw/Co seeks to transform the world through textual and visual narratives, speculative urban scenarios, installations, and small-scale interactive constructions.



Andrew Kovacs Architectural Affinities

Andrew Kovacs is a Los Angeles-based designer and visiting assistant professor at UCLA. He has exhibited at the Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York; the Architecture and Design Museum, Los Angeles; and Jai & Jai Gallery, Los Angeles. His work on architecture and urbanism has been published in *Pidgin*, *CLOG*, and *Domus*, among others. He is the creator and curator of Archive of Affinities, a website dedicated to the architectural b-side.



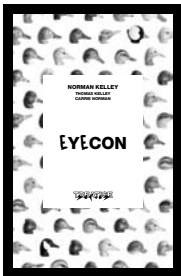
Alex Maymind Revisiting Revisiting

Alex Maymind is a Los Angeles-based designer and teacher. Since 2002, he has been studying, writing, talking, drawing, thinking, perusing, observing, making, performing, and engaging architecture in a variety of formats, venues, and mediums. His writing ranges from a genealogy of the free section to an exploration of globalization's clichés.



SPEEDISM The Dead Angle of Architecture

Pieterjan Gincels is a Belgian artist and architect, whose work concerns itself with the acceleration of modern life. In 2008, Gincels cofounded SPEEDISM with Julian Friedauer, to form a collaborative that proposes anti-methods for an increasingly theme-based, spectacular, and accelerated society.



Norman Kelley Eyecon

Norman Kelley is the architecture and design collaborative of Carrie Norman and Thomas Kelley, based in New York and Chicago. Their work, which includes site-specific drawings, re-examines architecture's relationship to perception through deceptive optics.



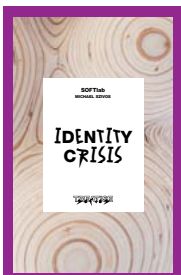
Michael Young The Estranged Object

Founded in 2008, Young & Ayata is a New York-based architectural design studio founded by Michael Young and Kutan Ayata. Their practice views the tensions, overlaps, and frictions created through multiple mediations as the conditions for an aesthetic of estranged realism in architecture.



Point Supreme Athens Projects

Athens-based Point Supreme was founded by Konstantinos Pantazis and Marianna Rentzou in 2008. Through a process of research and self-initiated proposals, their practice integrates architecture, landscape, and urban design for the improvement of Athens.



SOFTlab Identity Crisis

Founded by Michael Szivos, New York-based design studio SOFTlab operates at the intersection of architecture, art, video, and interactive media design to engage a wide range of projects through a mix of research and ideas.

The *Treatise* series is available at the Graham Foundation Bookshop.

The Graham Foundation's bookshop offers a selection of publications by our grantees and titles that relate to our public program of exhibitions and talks, as well as new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, urbanism, art, and related fields. Located in the former dining room of the turn-of-the-century Madlener House, the Graham Foundation bookshop carries titles from an international roster of publishers, as well as an extensive collection of periodicals.

Ordering Information

Special discounts are available on quantity purchases. For details, please contact the Graham Foundation Bookshop.

Email: bookshop@grahamfoundation.org

Telephone: (312) 787-4071

Treatise: Why Write Alone?

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies of the Fine Arts

January 23–March 28, 2015 • Chicago, IL



View of *Treatise: Why Write Alone?*, 2015, Graham Foundation, Chicago
Photo by: RCH | EKH art documentation.



View of *Treatise: Why Write Alone?*, 2015, Forground: Design With Company, Midwest Culture Sampler Model, 2015. Background, from left: Fake Industries Architectural Agonism, The Urban Imaginary Project: Barcelona's Moveable Feast, A Post-Crash Urban Imaginary, 2014; New Medallin Velodrome, 2014. Photo by: RCH | EKH art documentation.



View of *Treatise: Why Write Alone?*, 2015, Graham Foundation, Chicago
Photo by: RCH | EKH art documentation.



View of *Treatise: Why Write Alone?*, 2015, Left: Bittertang, Ominous Orbs, 2014. Right: First Office, Shotgun House Interior Elevation, Model, and Detail (Duchamp Door), 2015; Possible Table, 2014. Photo by: RCH | EKH art documentation.



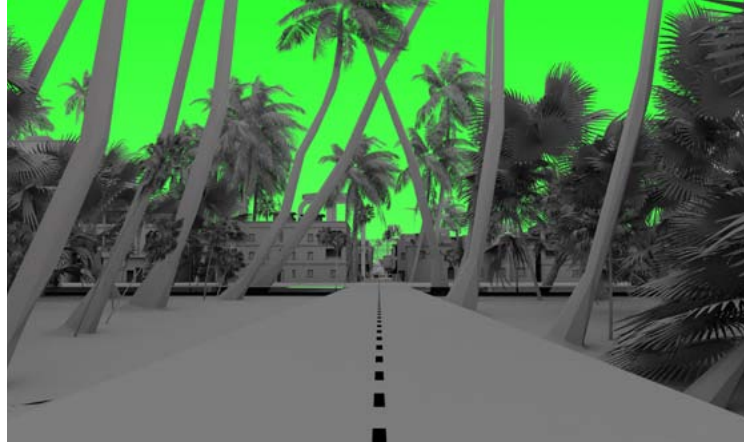
View of *Twelve: Why Write Alone?*, 2015, Graham Foundation, Chicago. Photo by: RCH | EKH art documentation.



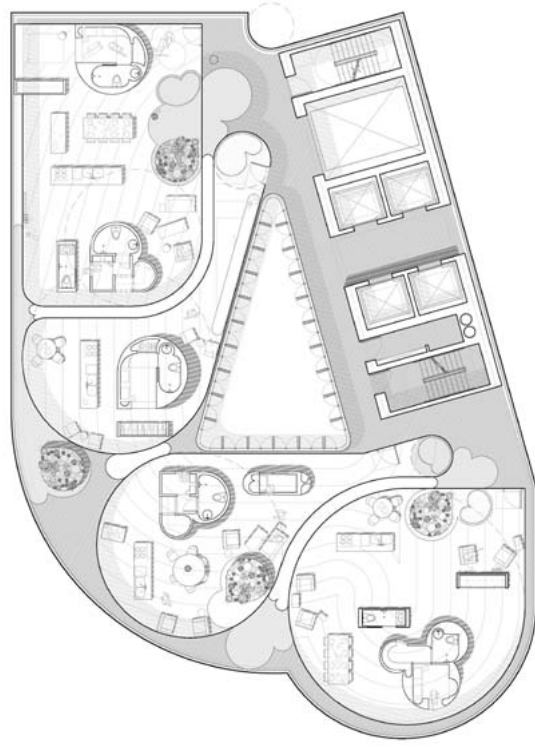
Andrew Kovacs, Guggenheim Helsinki Model, 2014, installation view, Graham Foundation, Chicago. Photo by RCH/EKH art documentation.



Young & Ayata (Michael Young & Kutan Ayata), "Still life with lobster, silver jug, large Berkenmeyer fruit bowl, violin, books, and sinew object after Pieter Claesz, 1641-2014," 2014. Glazed 3D color prints, wood frames, and color c-prints. 24 x 36 x 10 inches. Courtesy of the artists.



SPEEDISM, film still from TWO-FACED MF EASY RIDE, 2015, dual-channel video installation with sound and fog (6 min., 8 sec.). Produced by Pieterjan Gincjels, Aster DeValck and Hantrax. Courtesy of: the artists.



CAMES/gibson (Grant Gibson), "Victory Column of T.E Comes Plan A," 2015. Archival inkjet print. 24 x 36 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

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