

Tales of Two Brothers:

Speculative Documentation, Futures, and More

(Ten ((or more)) Multiverses Between Two Brothers)

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The Garden of Earthly Delights (Detail), Hieronymus Bosch. (1460-1516)

Once upon a time there were two brothers. The North Brother Island and the South Brother Island. Located just on the backdoors of one of the densest and most culturally sophisticated cities on earth, these two islands were strangely left alone on the East River for the centuries as New York City developed into what it eventually became. This studio will take a closer look at these two small islands as architects, journalists and speculators, in hopes of learning something more about not just the past and present of Manhattan, but the United States at large.

In an ultimate declaration of the orientation of Manhattan, perhaps one can discover both the importance of Governor's Island (and Statue of Liberty), and the severe lack thereof the two brothers. As though the nose of Manhattan points only at its front of house, and forgot about its back. This condition offers us an opportunity to study what it means for something to be in the foreground, or background

In political geography, an enclave is an isolated piece of land surrounded by a foreign territory. An exclave, conversely, is a piece of land which is politically attached to a larger piece but not physically conterminous with it because of surrounding foreign territory. The two Brother Islands are so foreign to New York culturally; it may help provide a new lens into a viewing what New

York is to the nation at large. In other words, a conceptual exercise on the qualification of insiderness and outsiderness.

The two Brother Islands were first claimed by Dutch West India Company in 1614. At one point, the North Brother Island housed a hospital performing quarantine-related purposes, but it has since been abandoned and currently it is a favorite subject of individuals interested in haunted houses. The South Brother Island was privately owned until 2007 when New York Parks and Recreations purchased it, and it has never been fully occupied. Largely left intact with its natural flora and fauna, it helps us understand what Manhattan must have been like when human explorers first arrived. As of 2016, the two Brother Islands function well as bird sanctuaries.

There are layers of mystery to these two vacant pockets so closely proximal to Manhattan, Queens and The Bronx. We will spend parts of the first half of the studio trying to produce some answers and clarify a deeper sense of understanding as to the cause and effects that may have stirred the ripple reactions to the nearby neighborhoods, and vice-a-versa. In other words, we will engage in intensive field-research and documentation on the two islands. We will also spend time in the first half emulating a few journalistic approaches from the history of architecture, cinema, and art. We will finish the first half by reviewing ten (or more) possible proposals for the future in or around the two Brother Islands.

We will enter a very brief intermission by conducting a field trip to the Islands, and produce a series of photo-essays from participants of this studio. The final review of this studio will be comprised of two parts: first, a very large collective painting, and second, a collection of museum-ready presentations of the ten or more possible futures.

It is the intent of this studio to become compiled as a book, with its corresponding three acts. We will print a limited run of this book at the end of this studio. Part of the emphasis of this studio is on the quality of representation (graphic and otherwise), as well as the refinement of arguments. We intend to carefully consider all projects so that history can be on our side. We hope to produce first-rate works of architecture, and become great storytellers.

Related References:

Manhattan Transcripts
Made in Tokyo
Learning from Las Vegas
Helvetica
Delirious New York
Along the River during Qingming Festival
Garden of Earthly Delight
October: Ten Days That Shook the World
Meshes of the Afternoon
Roosevelt Island Redevelopment Project
Nolli Plan
Micromegas
Ladders
The Peak Project, Hong Kong
Rome Interrupted
Campo Marzio
Hall of Bulls