Columbia University Graduate
School of Architecture Plan-
ning and Preservation

Master of Architecture
Portfolio

A SERIES OF UNRAVELLINGS

EMILY MEI-MEI TAW

01 PAPER TRACES

NY/PARIS Architecture Studio
Spring 2021 | Critic: Thomas De Monchaux

Seduction is dual. "If this duality doesn't exits — if there's no interactivity, no context — seduction doesn't take place. A successful object, in the sense that it exists outside its own reality, is an object that creates a dualistic relation, a relation that can emerge through diversion, contradiction, destabilization, but which effectively brings the so-called reality of the world and its radical illusion face-to-face."

- Jean Beaudrillard

The following project is an exploration of the vital relationship between the body in movement and design. Through a process of experimentation and creation I investigate how design might affect the body's movements — encouraging some gestures, while restricting others — and how, in turn, the body might affect an object of design — bringing life to an object upon encounter.

GARMENT AS PERFORMATIVE DEVICE

Inspired by the designs produced by the trace gestures of the shoe on the page, I designed a garment made primarily of vellum and drafting tape, that, when worn, would attach at the seams to the heal of the shoe, generating entirely new curves and shapes with each minute movement of the body.

When connected to the shoe, the dress would become taut. The body then became the defining structure of the garment, and as the dress worked both with and against the body, the garment became a device, restricting the body's range of motion and breaking up the movements of the body into stop-motion-like gestures. As a result, the device generated a heightened awareness of the most subtle gestures and the garment became a performative object, as with each gesture, each step, the garment subtly transformed.










Hanging


Attached


Hanging


Attached




Emily Mei-Mei Rose
wearable device (front)
vellum with drafting tape
2021

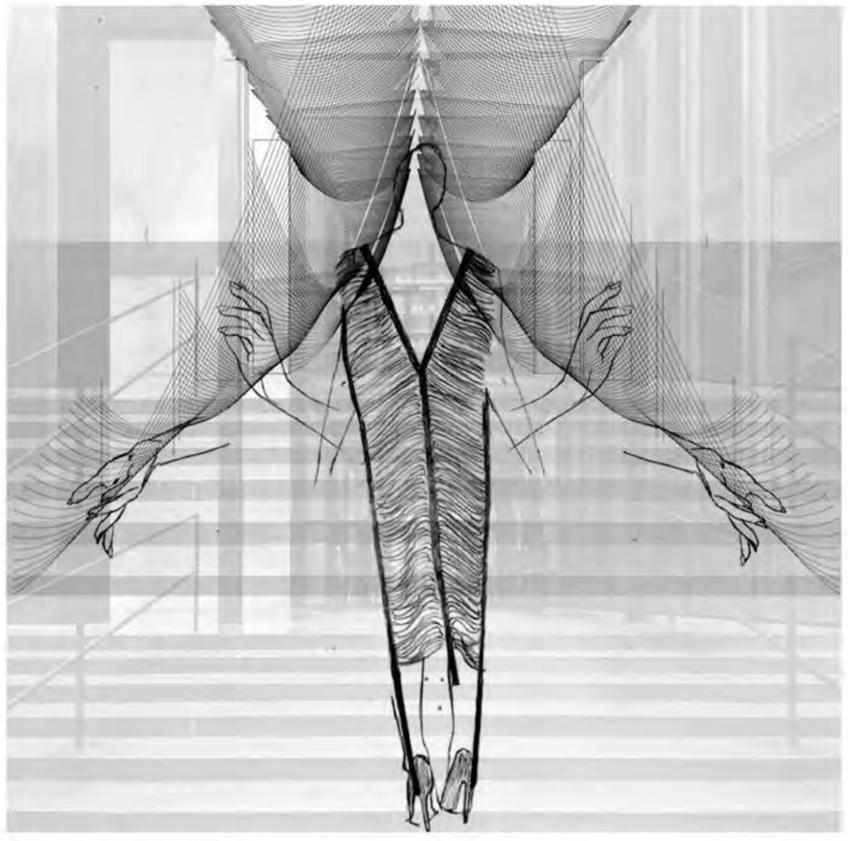
Emily Mei-Mei Rose
wearable device (back)
vellum with drafting tape
2021

In tribute to the shoe that began this exploration, I imagined this space would be populated by ballet performers, who elevate the body from the toe, arching the foot, and extending the limbs in graceful gestures, liberating the body from the habitual movements of the everyday. To further enhance this experience, the ground plane, made up of a repetition of the exterior marble bench, elevates and drops at degrees of 5 inches - the height of the original heel.

The sky plane, which drapes down in varying degrees closer or further from the ground, is activated by the users, whose bodies brush up against the drapery as they walk through the pavilion. The site, as a result, becomes unpredictable, never stagnant.

NY/PARIS Architecture Studio
Spring 2021 | Critic: Thomas De Monchaux

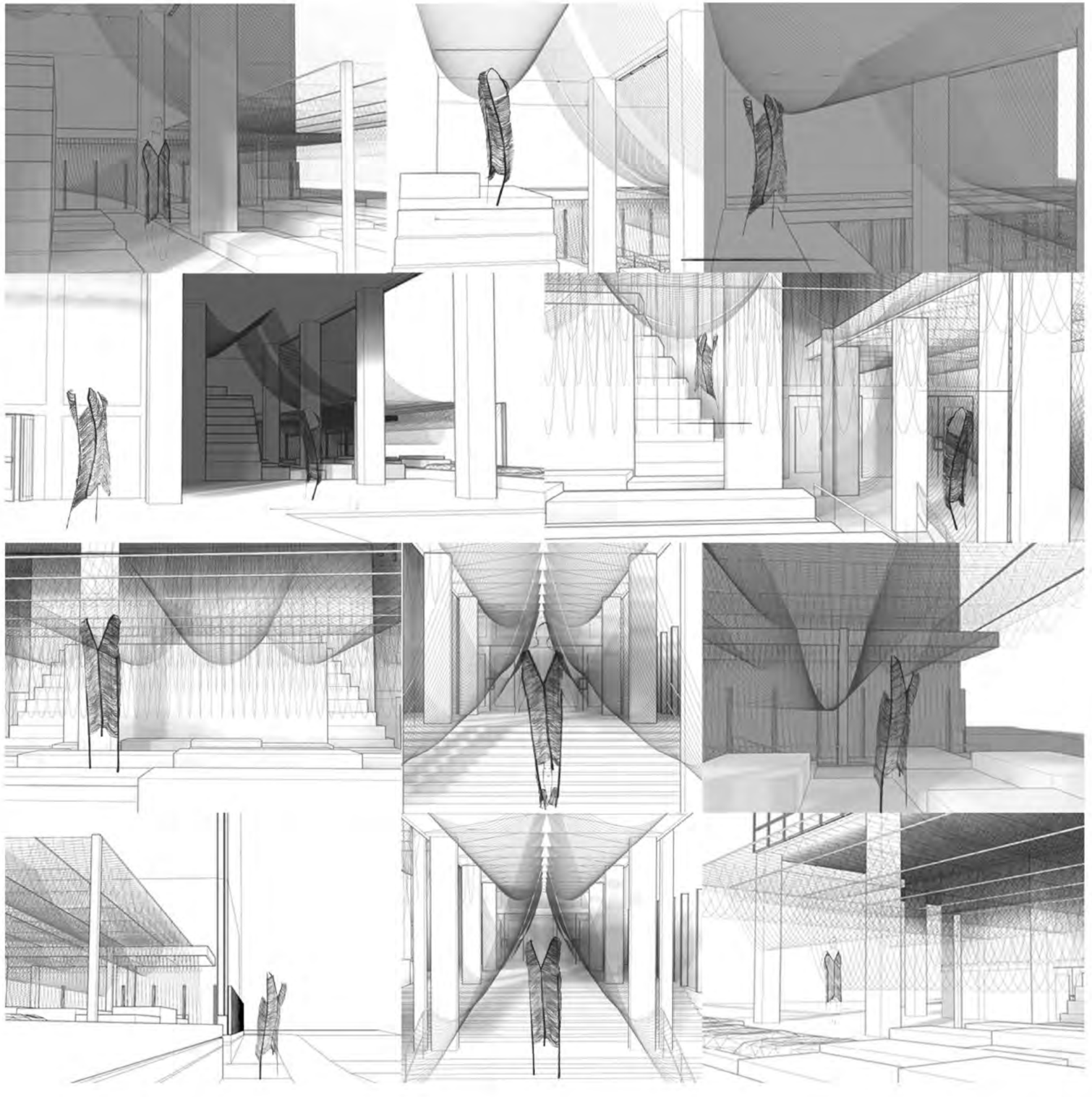
PAPER TRACES



The site offers both a visual and kinesthetic user experience as the users become more aware of their own movements in dual relation to the design. At each moment of engagement, the user is given a multiplicity of sensory feedbacks. Users might experience tactile feedback when their hand brushes against the curtain-strands connected to the handrail along the entrance stairs...or if they reach up to touch the top canopy... or as the strands brush against their shoulders as they move towards a shaded space below the canopy curtain...

With every step, every slight gesture of the users, the visual feedback shifts.

Like the performative garment, this performative architecture slows movement, highlighting different moments of encounter but never resting in stagnation, to create a dynamic, unpredictable space, in which the user is hyper-aware of their body in relation to this transformative environment.



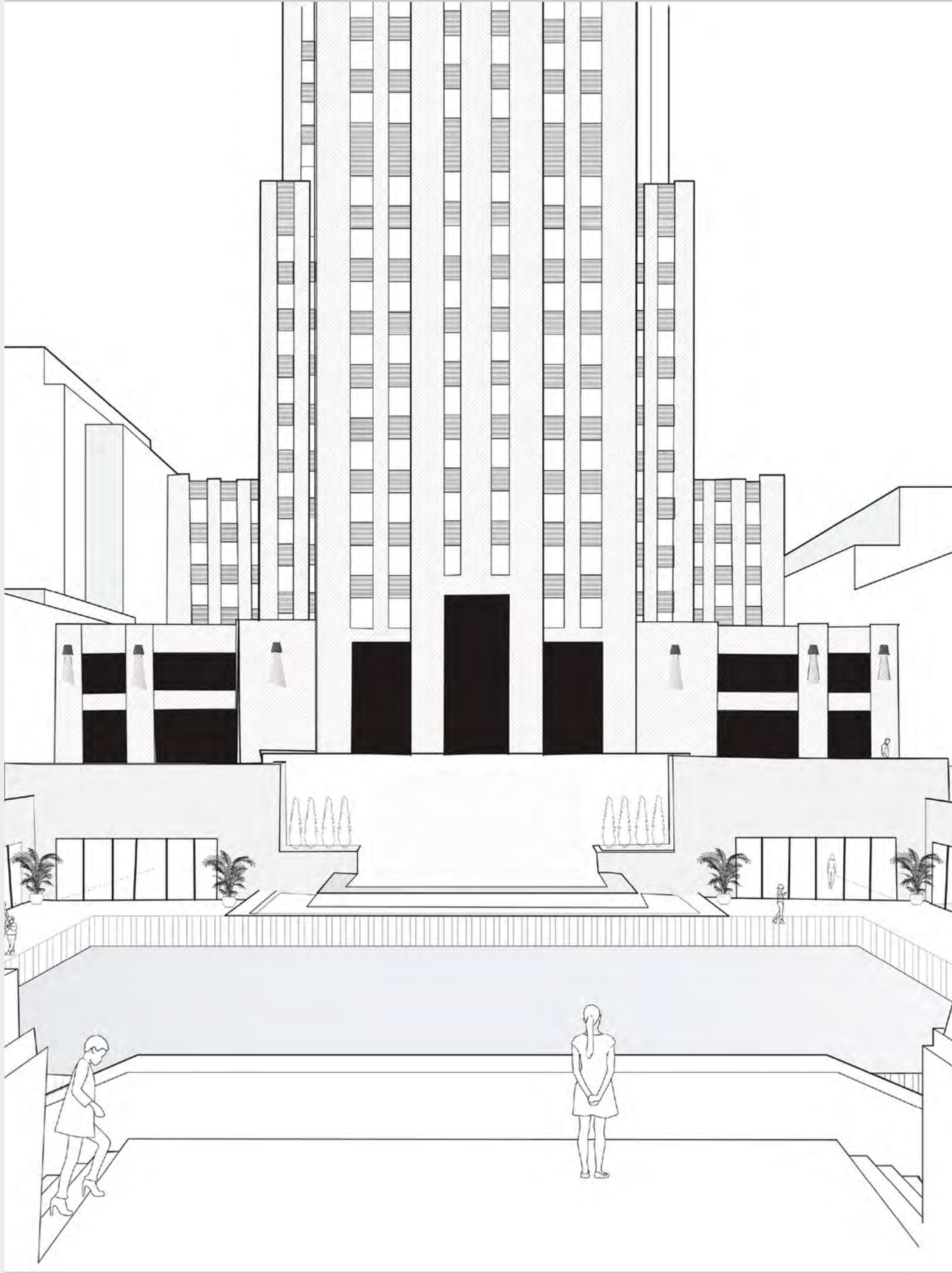
02 DISMANTLING LEGACY

Fall 2022 | Core I Architecture Studio | Critic: Carlyle Fraser

Historic preservation has typically privileged the stories and the spaces of wealthy white men. Many designated landmarks represent a stronghold of social, racial, and economic exclusivity—pointing towards a need to reassess the ways in which institutions circumscribe and define public space.

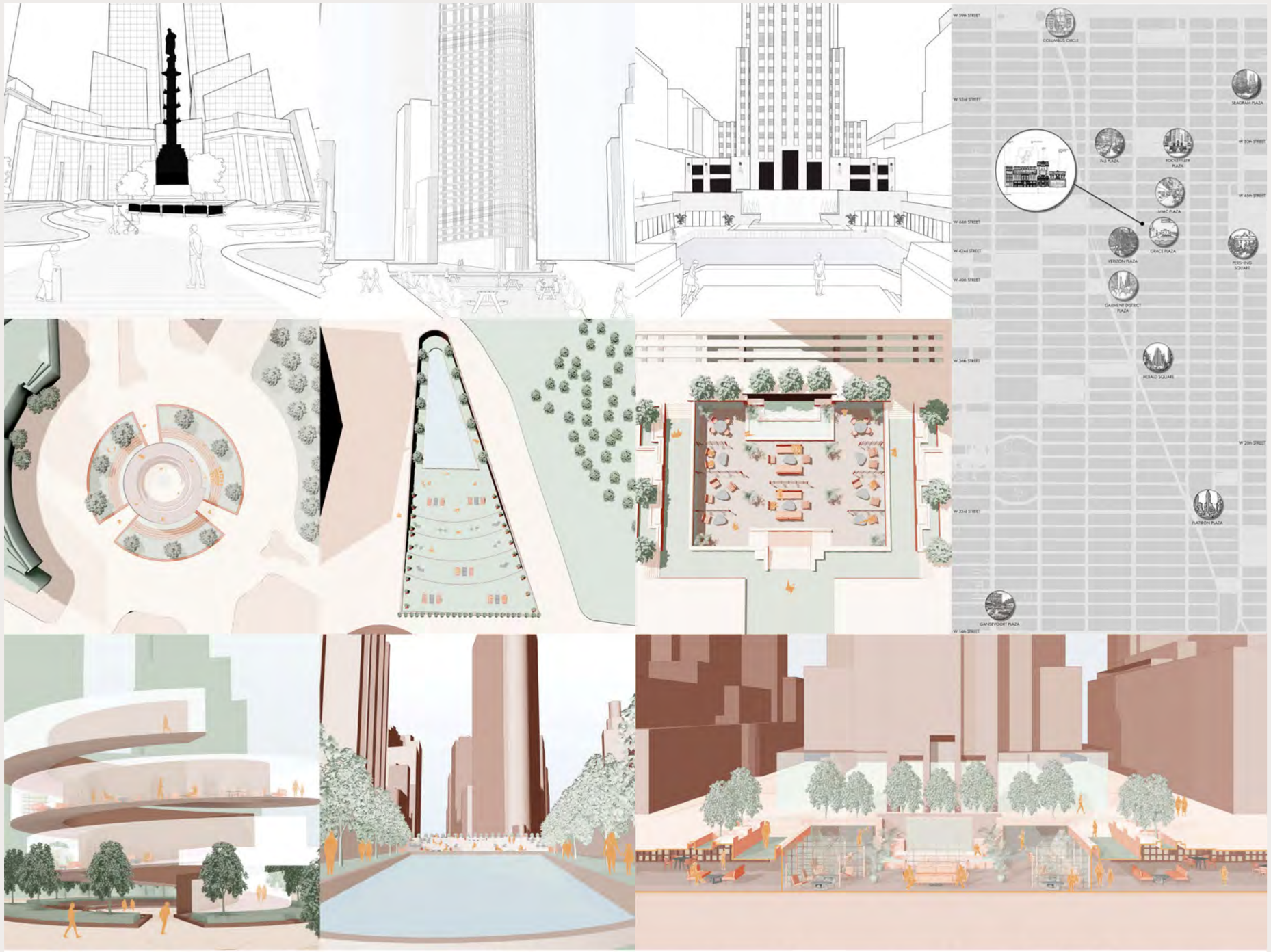
Through a study of accessibility and exclusion; transparency and opacity; light and shadow; we might better understand how social divisions are enforced and how they could be dismantled.

The proposed interventions at each site seek to re-define the spatial voids that they inhabit to find new conditions of habitation.



Core I Architecture Studio
Fall 2022 | Critic: Carlyle Fraser

DISMANTLING LEGACY



At Columbus Circle this is done through a strategy of unraveling. The site becomes a space of observation as the structure spirals upwards to allow for elevated views previously reserved for the monument that once stood there.

The Flatiron intervention explores both strategies of excavation and elevation, becoming a space for reflection where the beloved building lends itself as a palate for the interior, not only looming above, but also reflected below.

The intervention at Rockefeller Center employs a strategy of excavation. The site becomes a space for knowledge and community resources as the grounds are reclaimed to carve out space for a public library.

The strategies proposed are intended to reach beyond the scope of this project as a toolkit that might help us better understand the conditions that space establishes and expand the ways we think of public spaces in our city to enable different types of public programming in response to different urban conditions.

03

IMPERIAL DISPLAY: EMPIRE, COMMODITY, AND RACE IN 19TH CENTURY WORLD EXHIBITIONS

The World Exhibitions of the 19th Century—designed to celebrate the industrial and cultural achievements of the Western nations—played an integral role in establishing the imperial narratives of progress and civilization that would come to dominate the West's imagination of itself as a civilizing and innovating force on the global stage.

> The logic of empire was apparent in the spatial organization of the World Exhibitions, which set up particular ways of viewing the world, providing the structural and visual frameworks that worked to order the world into distinct categories of meaning based on colonial status, productive value, and race.[1]
>
> Central to the spatial logic of the exhibitions was the racialization of cultural "others" or what Irene Cheng describes as "the specific role of racialism—the idea that humankind can be divided into indelible and unequally endowed biological groupings—in the entanglements of modernity, history, empire, and architecture…"[2].

A study of the spatialization of racial and cultural difference in the designs of the 1851 Great Exhibition in England and the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in the United States points towards the different ways in which these exhibitions fed into imperial narratives of Western superiority and the colonial projects of both countries. While the Great Exhibition organized the world's nations under one roof—in a display of Britain's already expansive empire—the World's Columbian Exposition organized the world's nations along a linear hierarchal streetscape—the logic of which became instrumental to an American national narrative in which the former colony becomes a colonizer on the world stage.

The Great Exhibition was the first of its kind and was designed to celebrate technological innovation, educate the general population, and communicate the power of Britain's industry and empire on a global scale. The Crystal Palace that housed the exhibition was a powerful symbol in itself. Designed by architect Joseph Paxton, the building was constructed almost entirely of glass with a cast iron frame—an unprecedented use of glass made possible by modern technological innovations in the manufacture of glass sheeting. As such, the Crystal Palace stood as a monumental testimony to British industrialism and innovation on the path towards modernity. The palatial scale of the building was seemingly important to its function as a symbol of both empire and industry, in which the nations of the world were organized within one large structure constructed by the British nation on British soil. In a publication promoting the commercial benefits of the Exhibition, William Felkin writes:

> "How many will see London for the first time, in its innumerable points of historic interest, and in its present magnificence and power; constituting it the real metropolis of the world."[3]

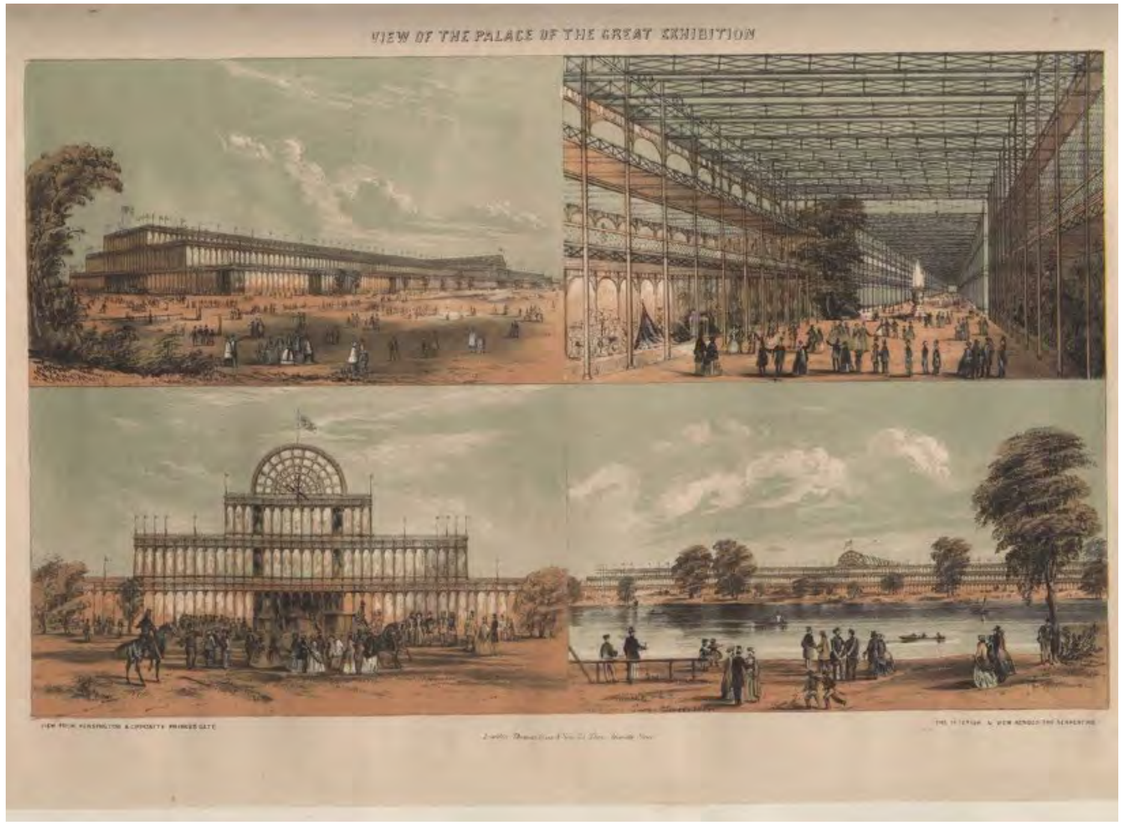
The organization of the world's nations within the Crystal Palace followed the logic of a world market, in which commodity, resource, and material wealth were put on display

[1] Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988): xiii.

[2] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," in Race and Modern Architecture: From the Enlightenment to Today, by Mabel O. Wilson, Irene Cheng, and Charles Davis (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 134.

[3] Felkin, W. and Edmund Potter. "The Exhibition in 1851, of the products and industry of all nations: its probable influence upon labour and commerce." Great Exhibition Collection . Comp. The Victoria and Albert Museum. London: Arthur Hall, Virtue, and Co. , [1851]; [1853]. Pamphlet; Correspondence: 9.

Figure 1. Exhibition 1851: prints. c.1851. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, World's Fairs, http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/Documents/Details/VAM_106_A_26 [Accessed November 09, 2022].



as the products of imperial gains. As historian Paul Greenhalgh notes,

> "By 1849, when the Great Exhibition was in its planning phase, British life was already difficult to conceive of in the absence of overseas resources…On the domestic front, power groups within British society increasingly saw the need to educate the population on the merits of the empire… Empire was to be 'naturalized' for the British public, settled into their way of life in order to make them feel comfortable with the thought of Africa, Asia, and India."[4]

He goes on to argue that "the first organizational task that the Royal Commission controlling the Exhibition set itself was the orchestration of colonies, dominions and dependencies into a huge imperial display."[5] The validity of this claim is evidenced in the visual and spatial emphasis put on the Indian section of the exhibition, which was heavily endowed by the East India Company and prominently positioned in the center of the of the exhibition hall ***(Figures 3 and 4)***.

In privileging the Indian display, the Royal Commission was able to construct a sort of imperial success narrative, in which the British Empire benefits from the material wealth extracted from the territories and the territories benefit from the "civilizing" influence of the British Empire.

> This logic is apparent as Felkin writes, "Civilization, comfort, elegant refinement, and excellence in the arts, are attained only by each man endeavoring to improve upon the works of others." Felkin goes on to write, "…it is an important fact, with which men have to deal: to compete more or less with the whole world, is their lot. To induce all the world to become customers and consumers, would seem to be the wisdom of our country and age."[6]

The production of the global market through commodity spectacle and displays of the accumulated wealth of the British Empire was central to the commercial and imperial projects of The Great Exhibition.

> "Like everything else at the Great Exhibition," Greenhalgh argues, "Empire was a commodity…This point was reinforced by the way the countries within the empire were exhibited, as quantifiable batches of produce rather than as cultures."[7] The spatial organization of countries and territories into a "universe of commodities" contained under one roof in The Great Exhibition operated to both naturalize the British Empire's projects of territorial expansion in the public consciousness and to alienate the products of colonial extraction and the productive powers of each territory from their context of displacement.[8]

The placement of countries into museum-like displays of commodities framed within cultural embellishments, as seen in ***Figure 5***, confuse the distinction between reality and representation and create an image of culture that is designed to be consumed. The interplay of cultural and commercial spectacle casts the objects on display as at once commodity and artifact. In presenting cultural and material difference in this way, the displays cast the cultural "other" as a commodity within the framework of modern capitalism and a historicized subject in a narrative of modern European progress. As historian Timothy Mitchell explains,

> Physical barriers separate the exhibition from the real world outside. The displays inside are arranged to express the European historico-geographic order of culture and evolution…As a result, the exhibition appears not just to mimic the real world outside but to superimpose a framework of meaning over its innumerable races, territories, and commodities. Made to appear an abstract order apart from physical reality, this framework is an effect of structure analogous to those of military order, urban planning, and other colonizing practices…produced by similar methods of coordination and arrangement.[9]

The European historico-geographic order laid out in the world exhibitions relied heavily on the racialization of non-Western nations—a process that was intimately entangled with the expansion of Western territories and capitalist relations of production.

> The racialized imperial logic that found its form in the construction of the Crystal Palace and spatial organization of the Great Exhibition went on to inform future exhibitions across Europe and America, foreshadowing "a trope of Europeans being considered capable of progress and historical advancement, while other groups were condemned to historical stagnation."[10]

As Mitchell's commentary suggests, it is difficult to separate the spatial logic of the world exhibitions from the urban and colonial projects of the Western nations. While the Great Exhibition can be understood as a celebration and naturalization of Britain's already powerful empire, which focused primarily on the economic value of colonial economies, the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in the United States helped to establish both the architectural and ontological framework for imperial projects to come.

The primary attractions of Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition were the Midway Plaisance—an ethnographic display which was presented as a sort of carnivalesque museum of human evolution—and The White City to which the Midway

[4] Paul Greenhalgh, Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions, and World's Fairs, 1851-1939, Studies in Imperialism (Manchester, UK : New York: Manchester University Press ; Distributed exclusively in the USA and Canada by St. Martin's Press, 1988), 53.

[5] Greenhalgh, 53.

[6] Felkin and Potter, 12-13.

[7] Greenhalgh, 53

[8] Walter Benjamin and Howard Eiland, "Selected Writings. Volume 3: 1935 - 1938 / Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings ; Translated by Edmund Jephcott, Howard Eiland, and Others," ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans. Edmund Jephcott, First paperback edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 37.

[9] Mitchell, xiii-xiv.

[10] Cheng, 137.

[11] Greenhalgh, 53

Figure 2. Exhibition 1851: prints. c.1851. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, World's Fairs, http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/Documents/Details/VAM_106_A_26 [Accessed November 09, 2022].

Figure 7. Flinn, John J., Comp. Official guide to Midway plaisance. [Chicago, The Columbian guide company, 1893] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/05028671/.

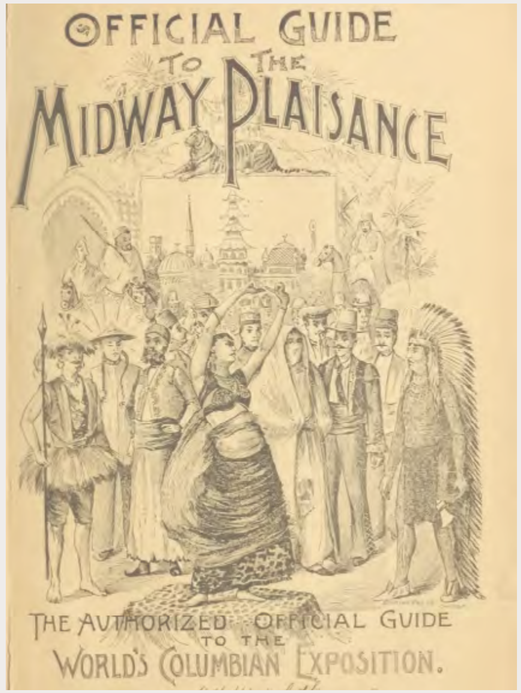


Figure 4. The Art journal illustrated catalogue of The Industry of All Nations, 1851. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, World's Fairs, http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/Documents/Details/VAM

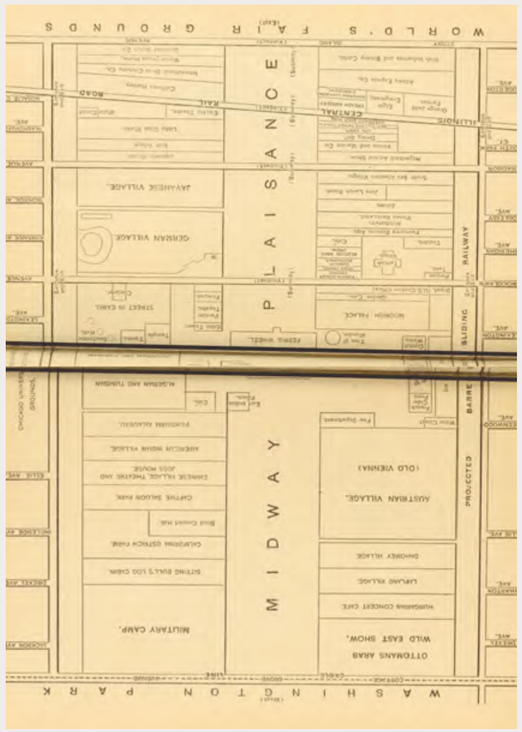


Figure 5. Dickinsons' comprehensive pictures of the Great Exhibition of 1851, volume 3.) 1852. Available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough, World's Fairs, http://www.worldsfairs.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/Documents/Details/VAM_46_K_3a

Figure 6. Flinn, John J., Comp. Official guide to Midway plaisance. [Chicago, The Columbian guide company, 1893] Pdf. https://www.loc.gov/item/05028671/.

led—an aspirational exhibition of neoclassical architecture that was designed to assert America's place among the European powers of the Western World. Borrowing from the racial logic of the European World Exhibitions, the Midway Plaisance shifted the focus that had been placed on the material resource of the territories in The Great Exhibition to a racialized anthropological exposition of cultural difference. While still following the same civilizing narrative of Western progress promoted by The Great Exhibition—which claimed to celebrate the "Industry of All Nations" under one roof—the World's Columbian Exposition kept the displays of the non-Western nations distinctly separate from the main fairgrounds, placing them on the outskirts in the Midway Plaisance.

The Midway Plaisance was comprised of a series of ethnographic displays organized in a hierarchical linear arrangement from the most "primitive" cultures to the most advanced. Each display was modeled as an "authentic" ethnic village which functioned as a sort of living museum in which visitors could observe the lifestyle, architecture, dress, and habits of the peoples of exotic nations in their "natural" environments. Nations considered to be lowest on the evolutionary scale were placed at the far end of the strip, while nations that were deemed to be more advanced were placed with increasing proximity to the main fairgrounds and the pinnacle of civilization embodied by The White City (**Figure 7**). The spatial organization of ethnic populations along a developmental scale was complimented by and reproduced in numerous pamphlets and publications documenting the exhibition. In a photo published in Views of the World's fair and Midway Plaisance (1894), a man participating in the "Wild East" display—located at the farthest reaches of the strip—is shown posing with a heavily adorned camel (**Figure 8**). The subjects of the image are centered in the frame against a background of hut-like structures in the distance. The composition of the image works to alienate the subjects from their context, suggesting that the image itself be read as a sort of cultural artifact. The caption to the photo reads:

> In the Wild East Encampment, as it was called, there was a very fair representation of the races who do not leave the deserts of North Africa altogether uninhabited and who take their horses and camels almost into the family. The illustration gives an excellent idea of the type, both of man and beast.[12]

Here too, the subjects of the image are treated in abstraction, placed within a categorical framework that type-casts "both man and beast"—who are treated in close proximity to each other—as abstracted representations of cultural difference.

The perceived proximity between the more "primitive" populations and their animals was a common trope throughout the fair and worked to emphasize the spatial, temporal, and cultural distance between non-Western populations and the civilizations of the West. This imagination of the non-Western nations as far removed from the civilized West is made explicit in the Official Guide to the Midway Plaisance which reads,

> The Street In Cairo is one of the great attractions of the Midway Plaisance. Only a few steps from the crowded roadway one finds oneself in the center of a busy thoroughfare in ancient Egypt, where the architecture, the surroundings and the people are as far removed from anything American as could well be imagined.[13]

Significantly, this portion of the Plaisance, which was designed as an immersive replica of a Cairo streetscape and promoted as a place in which visitors could observe the wonders of ancient Egypt, also housed the displays of many contemporary African nations, including representatives of the Nubian and Soudanese peoples, pictured in **Figures 9 and 10**. In collapsing the spatial and temporal distinction between ancient Egypt and contemporary African populations, the display locates the nations of Africa in a sort of ahistorical pastime, frozen in a stagnant stage of development long surpassed by the West.

The language and reproduction of images in such publications provide critical insight into the framework through which the ethnographic displays were being received and how the racialized perceptions of cultural difference that were being produced and consumed fed into a larger narrative of Western superiority that drew a direct connection between race and a capacity for cultural development.

> The racialized spatial logic of the Midway Plaisance reflected rising trends in the field of anthropology, in which "older ideas of cultural and population groups being distributed across geographic space gave way to chronological schema that arrayed different races along a hierarchical developmental timescale..."[14]

By inviting visitors to travel through a living timeline of human development that dissociated non-Western populations from their contemporary context and situated them within a constructed timeline of Western progress, the Midway Plaisance was instrumental in fostering an American sense of self that relied on a comparative study of American achievement against the perceived stagnation of racial and cultural others. Further, in organizing the peoples of the world into distinct racial categories along a spectrum from the primitive to the civilized the Plaisance played into an American mythos predicated on the belief that racially diverse non-Western populations were, by nature, inferior to white Americans, who were cast as the decedents of Anglo-European societies.

> "The consensus among many anthropologists, race scientists, and historians," Cheng explains, "was that European societies had evolved through historical time, whereas non-Western cultures remained "arrested" at their moment of inception, suspended in a nonhistorical mode."[15]

[12] W.B. Conkey Company. "Views of the World's fair and Midway plaisance ..." Chicago: W.B. Conkey Company, 1894.

[13] Flinn, John J. "Official guide to Midway plaisance." Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893: 20. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/05028671/.>.

[14] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," *136.*

[15] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," *146.*

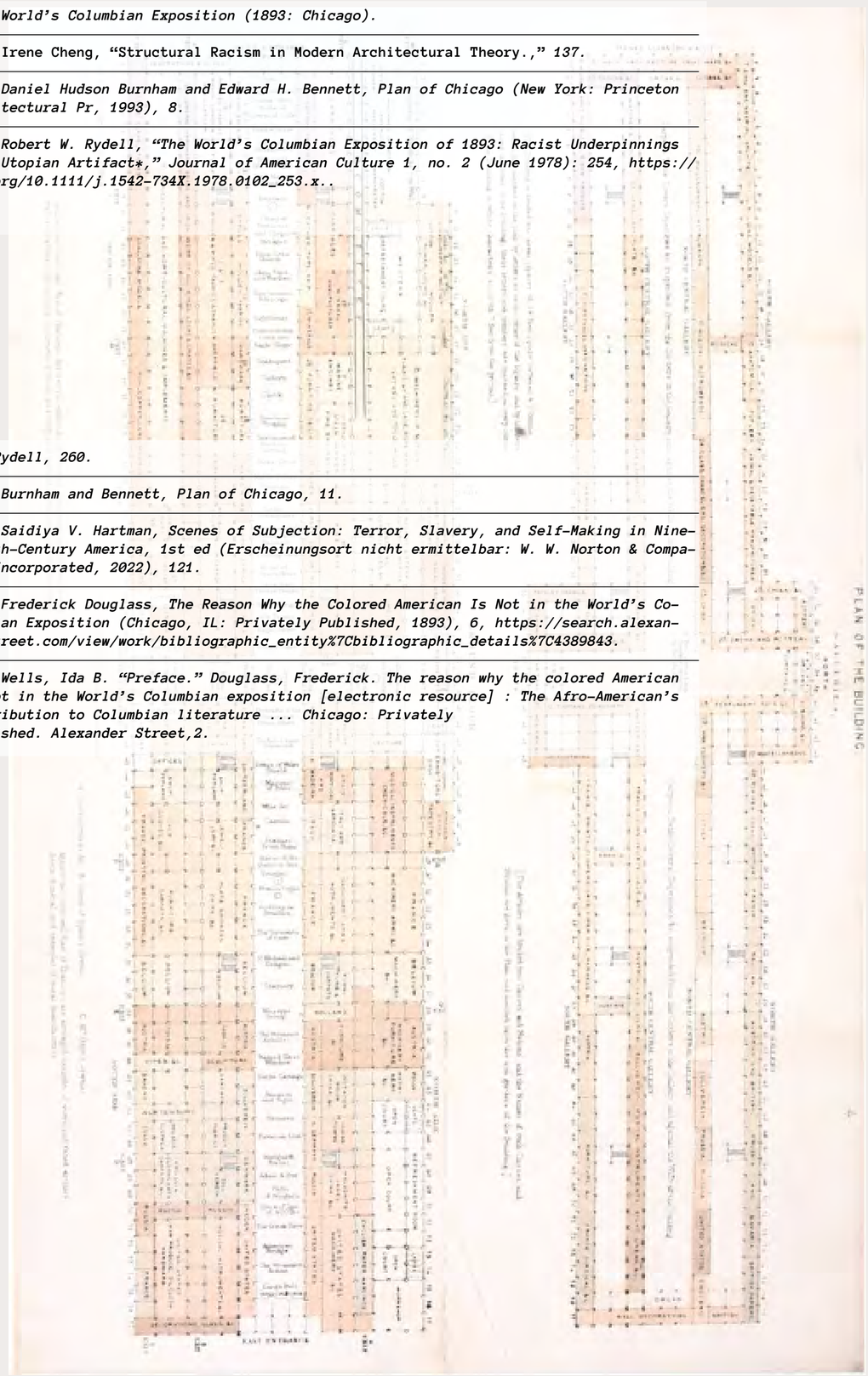


Figure 3. Great Exhibition (1851 : London, E. (1851). Plan of the building, Great Exhibition, 1851. [London]

These ideas were further reinforced by the exhibits contained in the Anthropology Building which acted as the scientific compliment to the ethnographic displays of the Plaisance and included exhibits such as the "Skulls of Races" which offered a comparative study of human skulls as a means of tracing racial genealogies and distinguishing between the races.16

Working in tandem with the ethnographic exhibits of the Midway Plaisance, the exhibits contained in the Anthropology Building served to draw a connection between the biological and cultural evolution of humanity in which different races were "scientifically" proven to be at differing stages of development.

The racialized logic of the Midway Plaisance was mirrored in the exhibition as a whole which established a spatialized hierarchy between the non-Western nations of the Plaisance and the White City to which they ultimately led.[17]

While each nation's proximity to the White City reflected its perceived position along the scale of progress, they remained distinctly separate. Positioned on the main fairgrounds, the White City was cast as the architectural embodiment of Western civilization's advance and the antithesis to the ethnographic displays on view in the Midway. As such, the spatial relationship between the White City and Midway Plaisance contributed to an imagination of the city itself as a sort of civilizing force.

Organized by architect Daniel Burnham, the White City was an exhibition of both neoclassical architecture and modern technological innovation (Figure 12).

For Burnham, the city represented "not merely civic pride", but rather the promise of a "constant, steady determination to bring about the very best conditions of city life for all the people…".[18]

Meant to embody the heights of Western civilization, the White City was presented to Americans and spectators around the world as a sort of model utopia of civic order and moral virtue during a period of extreme social and financial unrest in America's urban centers. As historian Robert W. Rydell explains:

"For Americans bewildered by the industrial transformation of their society, the palatial grandeur of Jackson Park served to confirm belief in an idealized American past, as well as to sustain faith in America's future, by providing visible examples of the actual and potential morality, progress, and culture of the nation."[19]

To this end, the White City's neoclassical architecture was a way for America to lay claim to a cultural heritage passed down from the Greek and Roman empires—establishing a visual connection between America's imagination of itself as a rising Western power and the ancient civilizations of the West.

"Both America and Chicago," Rydell argues, "were determined to present themselves to the rest of the world as the rightful inheritors and guardians of all that was best in the world's high culture and civilization…".[20]

Burnham describes his admiration for the architectures of Greece and Rome in his Plan for Chicago, writing, "As Athens represents the highest expression of civic beauty which mankind has witnessed, so Rome stands for power and the magnificence thereof. Mistress of the world she styled herself; and to-day she can still lay claim to her other proud title of the 'Eternal City'".[21]

For the fair's designers, the White City was meant to harness the power of the eternal, placing a national American mythos into a grand narrative that existed beyond the scope of the nation's borders. For Burnham and his counterparts, the city embodied both an idealized American past and the projected values of America's future.

In reality, Burnham's supposed "determination to bring about the best conditions of city life for all the people" fell short of its promise.

The American utopia celebrated in the exhibition was, by design, a racially exclusive one that reinforced ideas of "a descending scale of humanity that legitimated and naturalized subordination" while furthering "whiteness as the norm of humanity and the scale and measure of man."[22]

In addition to confining Indigenous and non-Western populations to the Midway Plaisance, the fair's organizers notably excluded the stories and participation of recently emancipated Black Americans from the fair's program entirely. In response to this exclusion, Frederick Douglas wrote:

"America is just now, as never before, posing before the world as a highly liberal and civilized nation, and in many respects, she has a right to this reputation. She has brought to her shores and given welcome to a greater variety of mankind than were ever assembled in one place […] and as if to shame the Negro, the Dahomians are also here to exhibit the Negro as a repulsive savage."[23]

In the same publication Ida B. Wells asks, "Why are not the colored people, who constitute so large an element of the American population, and who have contributed so large a share to American greatness, more visibly present and better represented in this World's Exposition?"[24]

For Douglas, the answer is clear as he goes on to explain "the grounds of the prejudice, hate and contempt in which we are still held by the people, who for more than two hundred years doomed us to this cruel and degrading condition. So when it is asked why we are excluded from the World's Columbian

[16] World's Columbian Exposition (1893: Chicago).

[17] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," *137.*

[18] Daniel Hudson Burnham and Edward H. Bennett, Plan of Chicago (New York: Princeton Architectural Pr, 1993), 8.

[19] Robert W. Rydell, "The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893: Racist Underpinnings of a Utopian Artifact∗," Journal of American Culture 1, no. 2 (June 1978): 254, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1542-734X.1978.0102_253.x..

[20]Rydell, 260.

[21] Burnham and Bennett, Plan of Chicago, 11.

[22] Saidiya V. Hartman, Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America, 1st ed (Erscheinungsort nicht ermittelbar: W. W. Norton & Company, Incorporated, 2022), 121.

[23] Frederick Douglass, The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, IL: Privately Published, 1893), 6, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4389843.

[24] Wells, Ida B. "Preface." Douglass, Frederick. The reason why the colored American is not in the World's Columbian exposition [electronic resource] : The Afro-American's contribution to Columbian literature ... Chicago: Privately Published. Alexander Street,2.

> Exposition, the answer is Slavery."[25]

The decision to exclude Black Americans from the national narrative of American progress is indicative of the ways in which the fair was organized to present America as a civilizing imperial force of cultural and moral superiority in the service of global progress. As Saidiya Hartman has argued,

> "Emancipation had been the catalyst for a transformed definition of citizenship and a strengthened national state. However, the national identity that emerged in its aftermath consolidated itself by casting out the emancipated from the revitalized body of the nation-state that their transient incorporation had created."[26]

As a recognition of white America's domination, exploitation, and subjugation of former slaves did not readily fit into the fair's moralizing narrative and could undermine America's imperial ambitions, it seems the fair's organizers chose to disregard the reality of slavery and the formerly enslaved population entirely. Instead, as Douglas points out, the representation of Black populations within the fair was limited to the African villages of the Midway Plaisance. The exhibition of the Dahomey peoples, in particular, functioned as a sort of racialized barometer by which white America could measure its own superiority. Located at the far end of the Plaisance, the Dahomey Village was cast as the antithesis to everything The White City represented. The public reception to the Dahomey peoples as such is evidenced in James William Buel's 1894 photographic portfolio of the exhibition, in which two Dahomians—one of whom appears to be wrapped in an American flag—are pictured sitting on a grassy mound (Figure 13). The caption below the photograph reads:

> DAHOMEY CANNIBALS. —It was a strange but purely scientific motive that prompted the bringing from Africa of a company of savage Dahomians, to exhibit them before the sharp and curious gaze of the World's Fair visitors. But they afforded a remarkable contrast, the extreme of barbarity in contact with the highest types of civilization.[27]

The deliberate presentation of the Dahomey peoples as barbaric cannibals in contrast to the glorified civility of The White City, in consort with the exclusion of Black Americans from the national narrative, further encouraged a perception of non-White populations as ahistorical "others" abstracted from their contemporary context. As Cheng explains,

> "A great many of these racialized architectural histories depicted white Aryans as agents of historical change whose architecture was uniquely capable of progress and development. Other, weaker groups were implicitly or explicitly portrayed as prone to stagnation or conquest."[28]

In this regard, the exhibition of non-Western cultures in juxtaposition to the architecture of The White City operated as a framework through which white America could define itself as racially and morally superior agents of civilization.

[25] *Frederick Douglass, The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, IL: Privately Published, 1893), 6, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C4389843*

[26] Hartman, Scenes of Subjection.

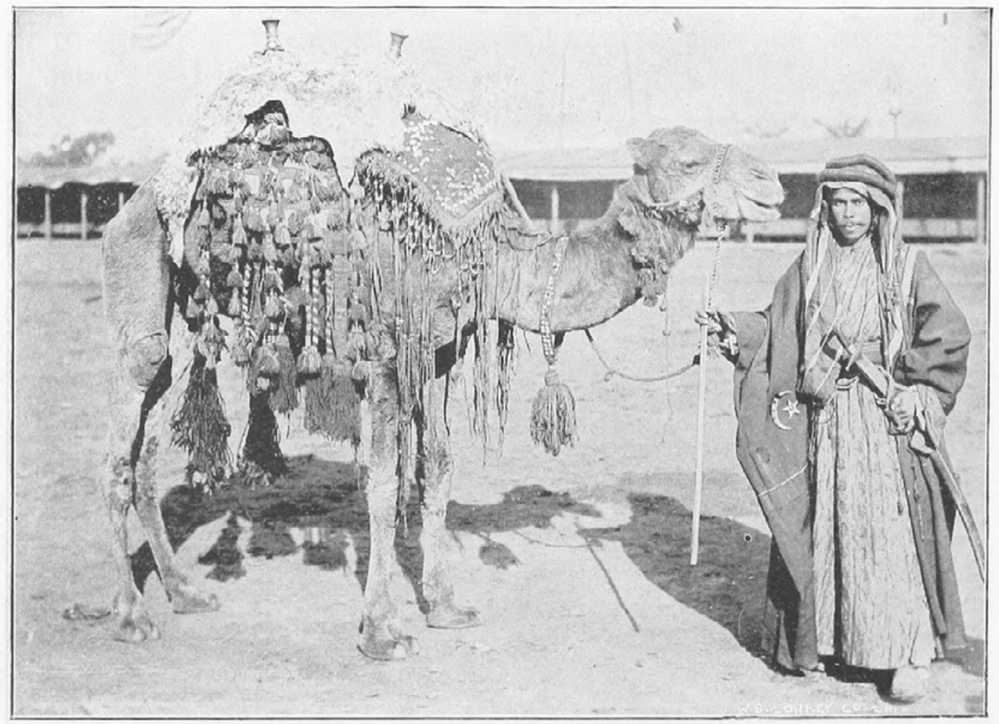
[27] James William Buel. "The Magic City: A Massive Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair and Its Treasures of Art, Including a Vivid Representation of the Famous Midway Plaisance: With Graphic Descriptions by America's Brilliant Historical and Descriptions." 1894. Smithsonian Collections Online. Historical Publishing Company. November 2022.

[28] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," 146.

Standing under the shadow of the Colonnade and looking north to the far distant Illinois Building, there was spread before the observer's gaze a view so replete with charms as to hold spellbound the true lover of the beautiful. Here art proclaimed herself, and so true had she been to nature that nature's own handiwork seemed to pale before such magnificence.

Figure 10. W.B. Conkey Company. (1894). Views of the World's fair and Midway plaisance ... Chicago: W. B. Conkey company.

Figure 8. W.B. Conkey Company. (1894). Views of the World's fair and Midway plaisance ... Chicago: W. B. Conkey company.



In the Wild East Encampment, as it was called, in the Midway Plaisance, there was a very fair representation of the races who do not leave the deserts of North Africa altogether uninhabited and who take their horses and camels almost into the family. The illustraiion gives an excellent idea of the type, both of man and beast.

A Group of Nubians, in fact a group of almost any sort of people from the north of the Dark Continent, could be seen in the village known as a Street in Cairo. That was a sort of free for all place for all classes of African population, white, brown or black. The specialty of this particular group seems to be the coiffure.

A Soudanese Woman and Child, who were with the odd lot who occupied huts in the Street in Cairo, are the interesting pair shown in the accompanying illustration. The youngster was much the more important personage of the two, her queer little face and lively ways attracting much attention.

Figure 9. W.B. Conkey Company. (1894). Views of the World's fair and Midway plaisance ... Chicago: W. B. Conkey company.

Figure 10. W.B. Conkey Company. (1894). Views of the World's fair and Midway plaisance ... Chicago: W. B. Conkey company.

The hierarchical racial logic put forth in the exhibition was intimately entangled with America's projects of territorial expansion and the domination, transformation, and commodification of the American frontier. As Cheng argues,

> "Beliefs about the inherent superiority of European civilization helped justify imperial subjugation and racial slavery—economic systems that surged to meet large-scale industrialization's need for raw materials and expanded markets."[29]

Just as Britain's emphasis on the Indian territories in the Great Exhibition encouraged an imagination of these territories as the natural imperial subjects of an inherently superior nation, the racialized logic of the World's Columbian Exhibition helped to construct particular ways of viewing non-Western populations as not only inferior, but as incapable of progress without the help of the rapidly modernizing West.

The relationship between territorial domination and a racialized understanding of progress becomes particularly apparent in the treatment of America's Indigenous populations throughout the fair. In the Official Guide to the Midway Plaisance the North American Indian village is described with the following:

> "To the eastern and foreign visitors this village will, perhaps, have a greater attraction than many of its neighbors, for here may be seen the remnants of some of the greatest tribes of North American Indians that the white man has disinherited and almost annihilated. The Pottawatomies and Winnebagoes have a peculiar interest, for these tribes less than one hundred years ago were in possession of the land upon which Chicago stands today.[30]

Here, even as living representatives of Indigenous tribes actively participated in the display, they were cast as the "remnants" of an already conquered people.

> The display thus becomes "instrumental in dissociating Indigenous populations from their contemporary context and presenting them instead as subjects belonging to a distant past."[31]

At the same time, the fair's organizers present the decimation of North America's Indigenous populations as an event confined to the chapters of history and as such something to be understood as a necessary step along the civilizing path towards progress, without which America's great cities would not exist. A photograph taken from Buel's collection further illustrates how Indigenous peoples were figured into the America's civilizing narrative (**Figure 14**).

> "Our illustration is one of two Sioux men," the caption reads, "whose style of dress shows the result of contact with civilization. In earlier years their raiment was principally a breech-clout and blanket, but progress has effected changes, which, though gradual, will in a few years more eliminate every appearance of savagery in the dress and customs of the plains Indians."[32]

Buel's caption points towards the ongoing policies of cultural erasure that were presented to the American public not only as a natural step in the civilizing and colonizing processes but as something to be celebrated.

> In addition to the display, as the Official Guide goes on to advertise, "War dances are given and trinkets are sold as souvenirs."[33]

Here, the war dances and "trinkets" of Indigenous peoples are extracted from their original context and presented as both spectacle and commodity to be consumed by curious visitors. The narrative seemed clear: Manifest Destiny was complete, the Indigenous peoples of North America had been conquered, and just as Indigenous land had been transformed from the wild frontier into commodified territory; Indigenous populations and their cultural practices had also been transformed from a formidable threat into harmless commodified entertainment and living testimony to America's power as a civilizing force.

> In reinforcing this narrative, the fair "became complicit with processes of genocide and empire expansion," encouraging a colonial imagination that native populations needed to be conquered and brought into civilization; and that native lands could be transformed through processes of domination, urbanization, and extraction.[34]

The strategic positioning of the Pacific Nations just after the American Indian display in the Midway Plaisance further reinforced the idea that Manifest Destiny had been successfully completed across the North American frontier and seemed to imply that the natural next step was to extend America's imperial reach beyond the frontier into overseas territories.

> Each ethnographic display was promoted by the fair directors as "an exact representation of a native village" from which visitors could walk away with exotic souvenirs made by the native peoples of far-away lands.[35]

This carnivalesque display of exoticized cultures, in which everything was for sale, encouraged visitors to view the culture, labor, resource, and land of foreign nations as theirs to be consumed. In this sense, the Midway Plaisance not only established a hierarchal developmental schema of cultural difference, but also operated as a spatial mapping of each nation's potential value in the context of America's burgeoning imperial ambitions.

In the years following the World's Columbian Exhibition, the United States extended its imperial reach overseas, formally annexing Hawaii, pushing into Latin America, and taking possession of former Spanish colonies in the Caribbean and Pacific.

> America's projects of territorial expansion were analogous to European expansions into "The Orient", which, Mitchell explains, "refused to present itself like an exhibit, and so appeared simply orderless and without meaning." As a result, "the colonizing process was to introduce the kind of order now found lacking…"[37]

For this, the United States looked to the White City as a model of structural order and stylistic coherence that could be applied beyond the scope of the exhibition. Designed to embody the

[29] Irene Cheng, "Structural Racism in Modern Architectural Theory.," 136.

[30] Flinn, John J. "Official guide to Midway plaisance." Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893: 20. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/05028671/.>.

[31] Ana Leon. "Bones of a Nation." Manifest Journal (2020): *22.*

[32] James William Buel. "The Magic City: A Massive Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair and Its Treasures of Art, Including a Vivid Representation of the Famous Midway Plaisance: With Graphic Descriptions by America's Brilliant Historical and Descriptions." 1894.

[33] *Flinn, John J. "Official guide to Midway plaisance." Chicago: The Columbian Guide Company, 1893: 27.*

[34] Ana Leon. "Bones of a Nation." Manifest Journal (2020): *22*

[35–37] Timothy Mitchell, Colonising Egypt: xv.

civic values, moral superiority, and cohesive power of white American civilization, the White City was viewed as the antidote for the perceived chaos of the territories.

The policies of exploitation, cultural erasure, displacement, and racialized ideas of American superiority propagated by the World's Fair went on to be enacted both at home and abroad through the City Beautiful Movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

> Taking inspiration from Burnham's White City,"City Beautiful architects constructed neoclassical civic buildings and ornamental landscapes that symbolically restored order to rapidly changing cities by exerting[...]'extensive monumental control of the ground'".[38]
>
> The City Beautiful Movement was particularly influential to projects of American imperialism in Latin America and the Philippines. Burnham's extensive urban renewal in Manila was a poignant example of how the urban strategies modeled by the White City could be used "as a means of undermining the historical authority of local traditions" and concretizing U.S. control over the territory.[39]
>
> "Such enterprises," historian Mario Manieri-Elia explains, "were naturally accompanied by an elaborate ideological program that presented the Americans as missionaries of order and civilization and thus by right the arbiters of all controversies."[40]

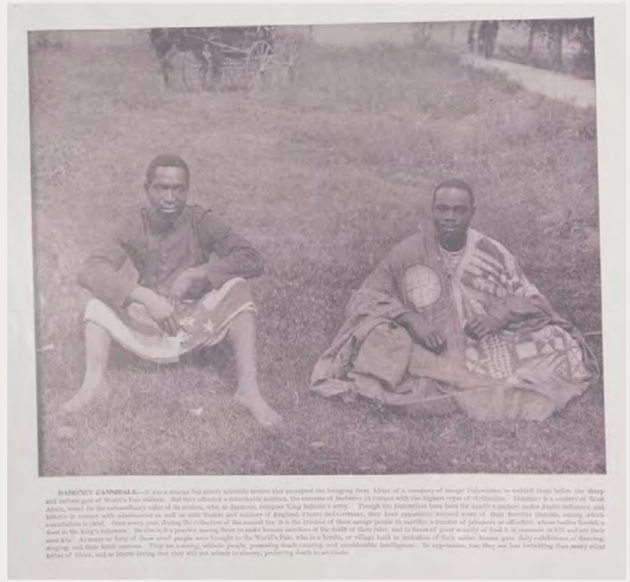
The City Beautiful Movement adopted the Beaux-Arts plans and neoclassical monumental structures perpetuated through the White City as a means of establishing control, order, and American values on communities that were seen as somehow lesser than and in need of reform.

At the same time that City Beautiful designs were being used in the service of American imperialism abroad, they were also being enacted in American cities in the name of progressive reform. As industrialized cities were facing issues of overcrowding, congestion, poverty, immigration, and sanitation, civic leaders and reformers looked to the White City as a means of mitigation these issues within the American cityscape. Large-scale City Beautiful urban renewal projects were undertaken in cities such as Harrisburg, Chicago, and Detroit, each one disproportionately displacing immigrant communities and communities of color.

Whether at home or abroad, the racialized imperial logic of the World's Columbian Exposition remained central to America's urban and colonial ambitions. Analogous to the ways in which Britain's World Exhibition worked to naturalize a public imagination of the territories as a universe of commodities with unlimited resources for the British population, the World's Columbian Exposition was instrumental in popularizing a sense of white American superiority defined by a racialized comparison to non-white populations whose racial, cultural, and commercial proximity to white America dictated their placement on the developmental scale of human progress, their position in the national narrative, and their status as potential colonial subjects. While the European World Exhibitions largely served to defend, justify, and expand the already expansive imperial projects of the European nations, the World's Columbian Exposition laid the foundations for America's future imperial ambitions. Moving from the self-contained structure of the exhibition hall to the self-propelling logic of the street, the spatial organization of each fair reflected the colonial impulse of each nation. Beyond the United States and Great Britain, the World Exhibitions of the 19th Century—as elaborate displays of imperial power, cultural difference, and commodified territories—were instrumental in popularizing racialized imperial narratives of progress and civilization that worked to legitimate, justify, and naturalize the subjugation, exploitation, and displacement of racial and cultural "others" in the service of Western imperialism.

Figure 11. Heinze, Hermann, A. Zeese & Co, and World'S Columbian Exposition. Souvenir map of the World's Columbian Exposition at Jackson Park and Midway Plaisance, Chicago, Ill, U.S. A. Chicago: A. Zeese & Co., Engravers, 1892. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/20105

Figure 13. Buel, James William. The Magic City; a Massive Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair (1894)



[38] Krysta Ryzewski, "No Home for the 'Ordinary Gamut': A Historical Archaeology of Community Displacement and the Creation of Detroit, City Beautiful," Journal of Social Archaeology 15, no. 3 (October 2015): 410, https://doi.org/10.1177/1469605315601907.

[39] Mario Manieri-Elia. "The City Beautiful under Imperialism." Ciucci, Georgio, et al. The American City: From the Civil War to the New Deal. M.I.T., 1979: 81.

[40] Mario Manieri-Elia. "The City Beautiful under Imperialism.", 78.

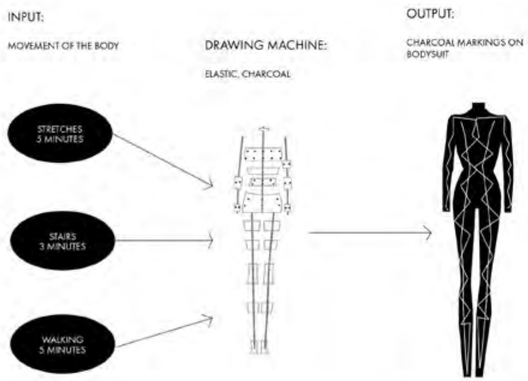
Figure 14. Buel, James William. The Magic City; a Massive Portfolio of Original Photographic Views of the Great World's Fair (1894)

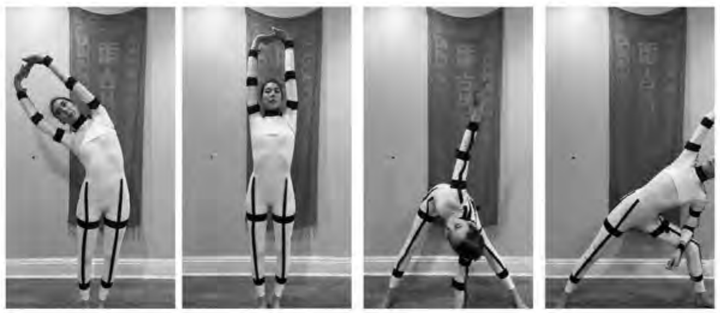
04 KINESTHETIC MAPPING DEVICE

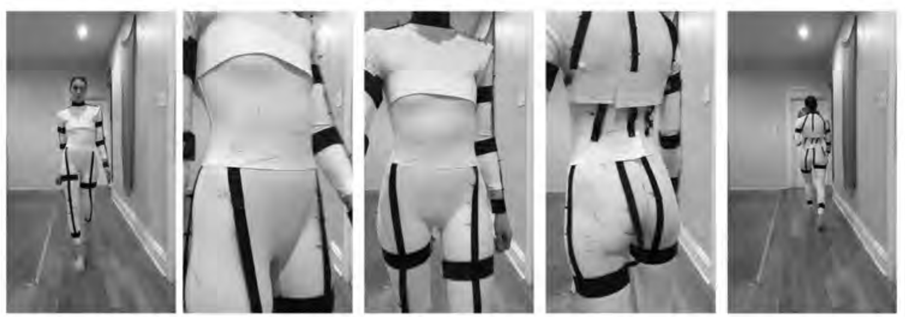
Architectural Drawing & Representation II
Columbia University GSAPP, NYC
Term: Spring 2023
Instructor: Lorenzo Villagi

DRAWING MACHINE CONCEPT:
Garment that generates a topographic mapping of the body in motion focusing on an awareness of bodily gesture through visual feedback

THEMES OF EXPLORATION:
range of motion, subtlety of gesture, tension, vision, binding, entanglement, object memory of engagement







FORM FITTING FURNITURE DESIGN

A series of chairs, each designed from the isolated curves of one single moment of the subject's body in motion. Each chair is perfectly form fitted to the subject's body at one particular moment in time that would otherwise just be a passing motion within an endless series of movment.

05 ANOTHER SAD DAY IN AMERICA

In 1996, the day after Christmas, six-year old JonBenet Ramsey was found murdered in the basement of her family's home in Boulder Colorado, sparking a nation-wide media frenzy. JonBenet's murder remains unsolved, but her story has taken on a life of its own. Following her death, JonBenet's name dominated media headlines and her pageant photos dominated tabloid covers at every newsstand.

Almost 30 years later, JonBenet Ramsey remains ingrained in the American psyche. However there seems to be a dissonance between the crime itself and the story that has developed in the social imaginary. Details of the ongoing case continue to be circulated among the public. False confessions, mishandled evidence, and sinister suspects, have been a fascination for armchair detectives and conspiracy theorists.

Core Architecture Studio
Damage Control | Spring 2023
Critics: Mark Wasiuta + Jarrett Ley

ANOTHER SAD DAY IN AMERICA

This project is an investigation of both the crime and the culture that obsessed over it. This project explores media sensationalism, disinformation, and conspiracy theories and their effects on public health and the American imagination.

America's fascination with the case is deeply entangled with America's imagination of itself. The Ramsey home acted as an iconic symbol of white upper middle class suburbia and the death of JonBenet sparked a wide-spread sense that the idealized American lifestyle this family represented was under threat.

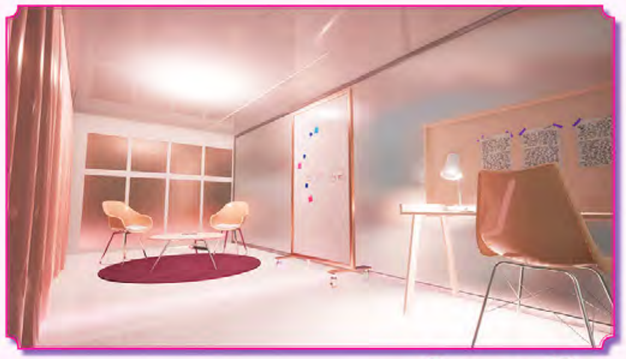
The family home acted as a stage for the unfolding of various conspiracy theories sparked by a public desire to participate in the case. The ruptured sphere of domesticity became an intimate site of damage in the cultural psyche of America. The mishandling of evidence, gaps in the timeline— the space between the known and the unknown— leaves the case itself ripe for conspiracy as America found itself deeply enthralled with this American dream gone wrong.

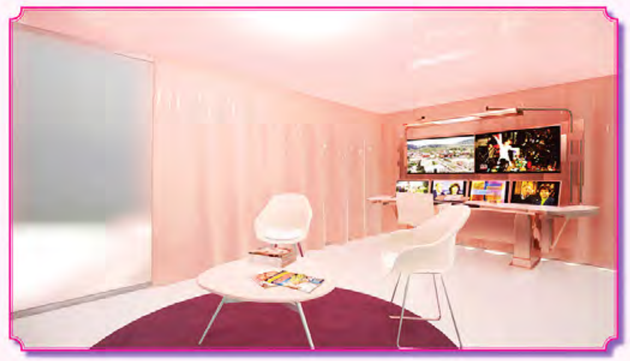
Core Architecture Studio
Damage Control | Spring 2023

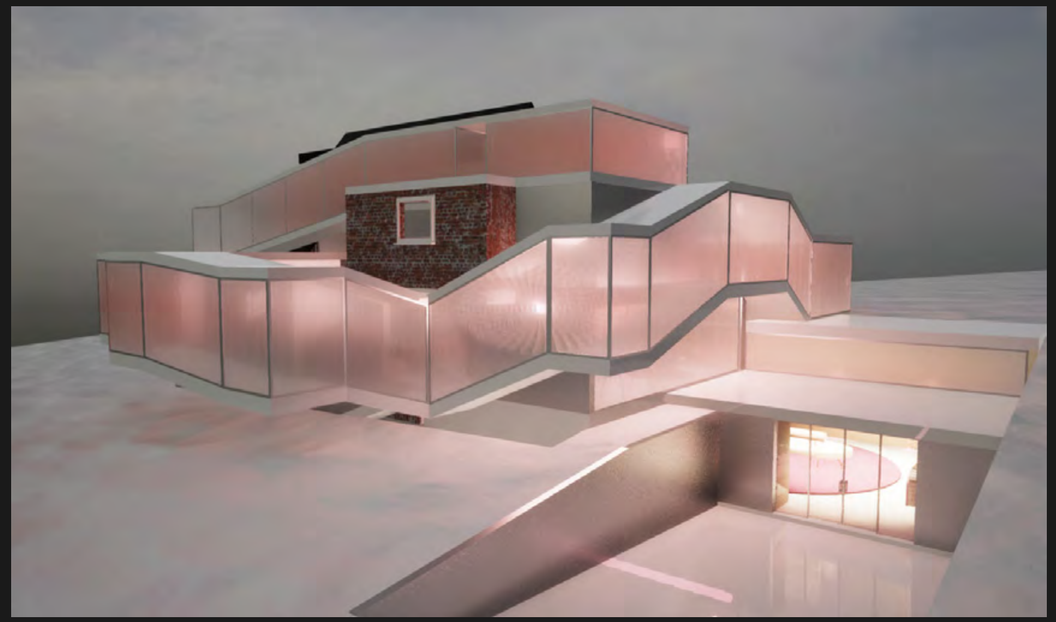
Critics: Mark Wasiuta + Jarrett Ley

ANOTHER SAD DAY IN AMERICA

The proposed JonBenet Ramsey Research Institute for Forensic Conspiracy is a forensic reconstruction of the Ramsey home in which various pieces of evidence are put on display. These objects are treated as both artifacts of the crime and artifacts of domesticity, both of which have been constituted by a culture of commodification and display. The design looks at the house as a constellation of scenes of evidence, providing vantage points that the house otherwise wouldn't allow — a forensic testing chamber that takes on a sort of dollhouse logic to allow visitors to simulate different scenarios.







Core Architecture Studio
Damage Control | Spring 2023

Critics: Mark Wasiuta + Jarrett Ley

ANOTHER SAD DAY IN AMERICA

.

VIDEO LINK

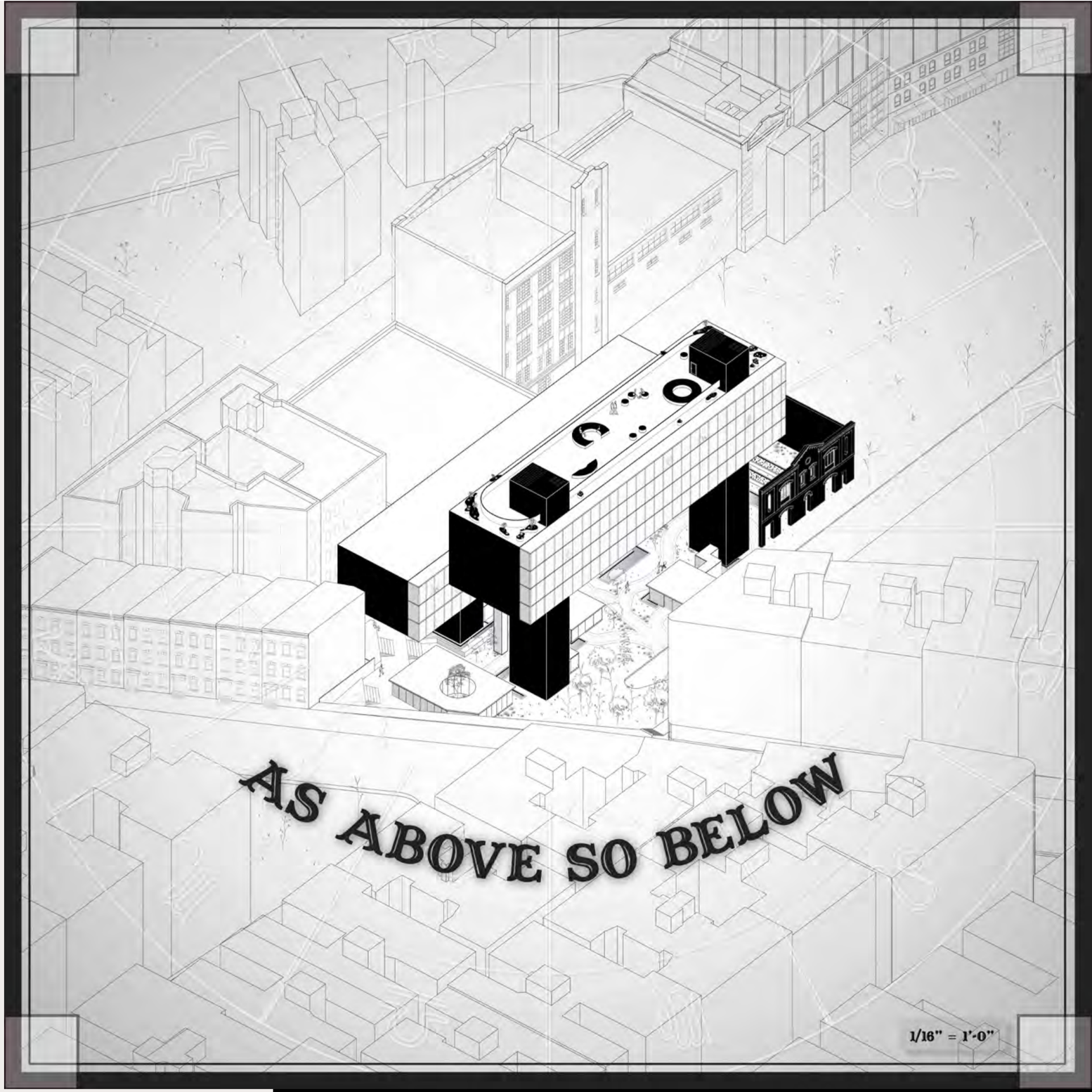
FALL 2023

06

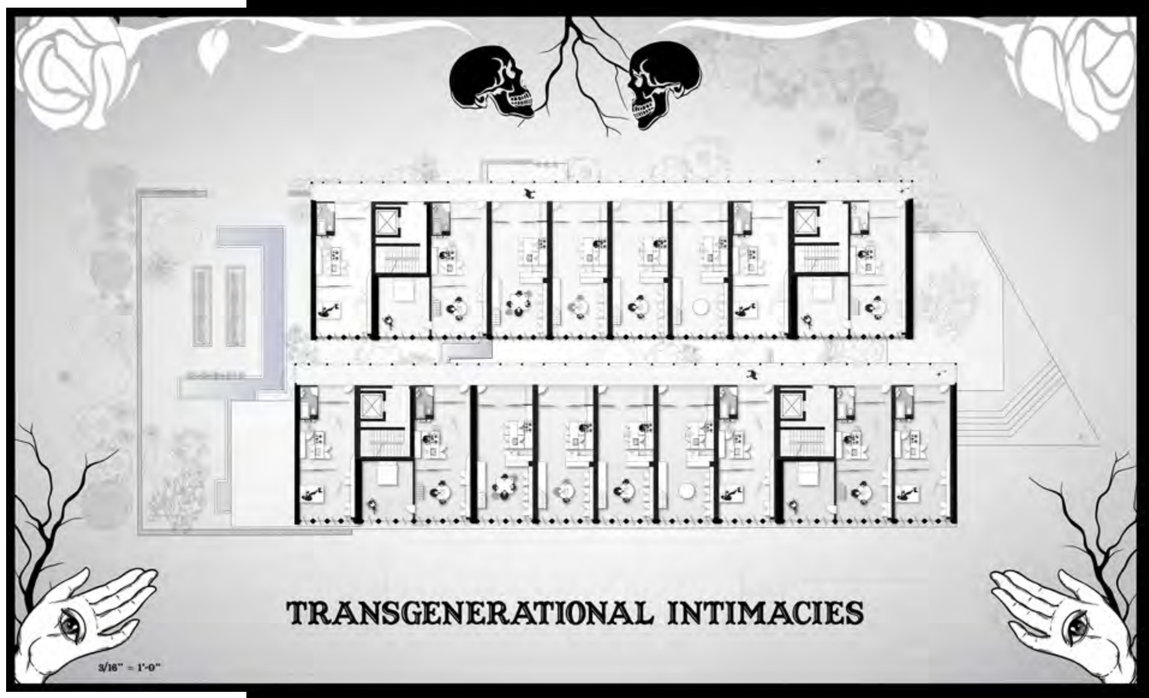
CORE III ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

06 COMMON GROUNDS

From the eradication and dispossession of indigenous lands to the decimation and displacement of African graves, the grounds of Harlem carry violent colonial legacies of dispossession and erasure. However, Harlem is also home to rich cultural histories and a diverse range of cultural and spiritual practices that not only recognize the reality of generational trauma, but also the power of generational strength and support in the context of colonial processes of erasure.



Core Architecture Studio III | Fall 2023 | Critic: Benjamin Cadena | Design Parter: Caroline Smith



Core Architecture Studio III
Fall 2023 | Critic: Benjamin Cadena
Design Parter: Caroline Smith

COMMON GROUNDS

Thinking through the layered histories entangled in the landscape and ourselves, this project seeks to provide a space for transgenerational living in which the architecture of the home allows for a fluidity between worlds and a space for cohabitation with our ancestors.

In designing not only for the living, but also for the ghosts that remain, we hope to foster an environment in which our ancestral relations are woven into the fabric of everyday life to allow for transgenerational intimacies and care.

While the living spaces are raised above the ground–each unit designed to collect and contain ritual objects that embody complex structures of ancestral relation–the ground floor is treated as a common ground for reflection, healing, and cultivation guided by ancestral knowledge passed down and built upon through generations.

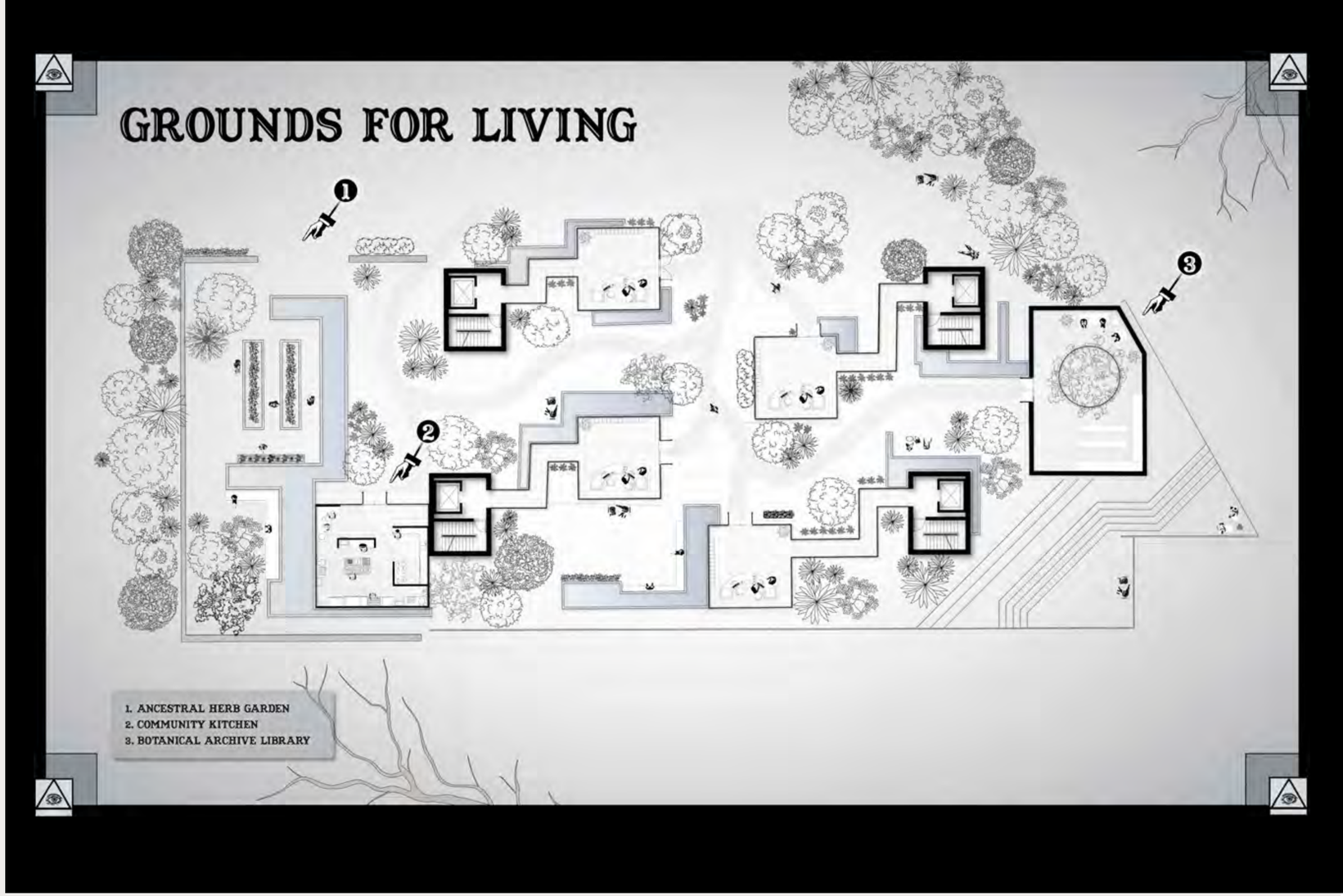
Core Architecture Studio III
Fall 2023 | Critic: Benjamin Cadena
Design Parter: Caroline Smith

COMMON GROUNDS

The site itself is currently occupied by an abandoned warehouse that stands at the edge of the lot. Seeing this existing structure as an opportunity to rethink the concept of adaptive reuse, we decided to allow for the shell of this vacant warehouse to fall to ruin, imagining that the bones of this structure would progressively crumble over time, becoming a part of the landscape.

Within the ruins, we've placed a community herb garden, in which members of the community can cultivate, learn, and build upon botanical knowledge passed down through generations.

At the back of the garden we've placed a community kitchen. This design focuses on the kitchen in both the private and public realms, as a key space for ritual communion with the dead. This is a space where you might feel especially connected to your ancestors. Here, as recipes passed down through generations are adapted, shared, and built upon, the kitchen acts as a space of collaboration between the living and the dead.



06 COLONIAL AESTHETICS: IMAGING THE MIDDLE EAST

Spirits and Matters | Spring 2024
Alireza Karbasioun

Emily Mei-Mei Taw

Spirits and Matters | Alireza Karbasioun

May 6, 2024

Colonial Aesthetics: Imaging the Middle East

At the height of European colonialism, the nineteenth century was subject to a confluence of technological advancements, emergent academic disciplines, and imperial ambitions that reshaped the global the landscape of the western imagination. This was a period in which new forms of media and cultural entertainment—the advent of photography, the proliferation of print culture, and the emergence of museums as nationalist institutions of culture—were intimately intwined with the emergence of new disciplines—such as archeology, anthropology, and architectural history—all of which were closely entangled with projects of colonial expansion. As historians Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai explain, "Images and ideas thus circulating between metropole and colony crystallized as colonial knowledge," realized through print media and photographs, "as well as in more formal institutional frameworks such as the museum, departments of archaeology, and the preservation of cultural heritage."[1] Photography, in particular emerged as a divisive tool for documenting the peoples, cultures, and landscapes of the colonized world. At the same time, the logic of the exhibition became crucial in establishing the organizational and visual frameworks to accommodate a colonial pursuit of knowledge focused on "the creation and possession of knowledge about the colonized."[2] As national institutions of

[1] Mrinalini Rajagopalan and Madhuri Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories: Imperial Legacies, Architecture and Modernity*, Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 10.
[2] Rajagopalan and Desai, 5.

collection and display, museums became sites of cultural stewardship and the proliferation of colonial imaginaries, playing an integral role in establishing the imperial narratives of progress and civilization that have come to dominate the West's imagination of itself as a civilizing and innovating force on the global stage. The "ideological function" of museum institutions, as Rajagopalan and Desai have explained, relied on new scientific disciplines to forge conceptual links between the histories and geographies of imperial nations and those of the colonized.[3] "These technologies and epistemes of seeing landscapes and framing histories" not only facilitated colonial exploration and exploitation but have had an enduring impact on the construction of identities and narratives in the so-called "postcolonial" world. Despite claims that contemporary society has reached a postcolonial era, the logic of empire remains apparent in cultural institutions across the globe, which continue to rely on colonial epistemologies to provide the structural and visual frameworks that work to order the world into distinct categories of meaning based on colonial status, productive value, and race.[4]

Focusing on the production and legacies of colonial knowledge in the context of western imaginations of the Middle East, this essay will first look at the role of travel photography—specifically the published works of French-colonial photographer, Maxime Du Camp—as a European colonial apparatus that brought the region "within European horizons of intelligibility and visibility," rendering the Middle East and its peoples as objects of the colonial gaze.[5] In conversation with a number of scholars who "actively interrogate and challenge the very Euro-centric frameworks on which modernity was articulated and justified as a regime of truth," this essay will then investigate the role of museum archives and exhibitions in the construction,

[3] Rajagopalan and Desai, 10.
[4] Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), xiii.
[5] Derek Gregory, "Between the Book and the Lamp: Imaginative Geographies of Egypt, 1849-50," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 1 (1995): 29. https://doi.org/10.2307/622723.

preservation, and interpretation of colonial knowledge.[6] Focusing on the ways in which colonial epistemologies continue to shape contemporary imaginations, this essay will look at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2023 retrospective exhibition "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa"—to investigate the role of archival exhibitions in establishing and maintaining the racialization of cultural "others" in what Irene Cheng describes as "the entanglements of modernity, history, empire, and architecture…"[7]. While Du Camp's 1852 publication, *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*, set a stage for colonial encounter—cataloging photographic renderings of monuments, ruins, and mosques throughout the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa and presenting them as unchanging and timeless—the MET Museum's 2023 exhibition examines how Maxime Du Camp's archival photographs contributed to shaping European perceptions of the region, highlighting the complexities of representation and power dynamics inherent in the colonial imagery. In examining these archival photographs, their exhibition, and their implications, this essay aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how colonial epistemologies continue to influence contemporary imaginations of the Middle East, feeding into ongoing imperial narratives of Western superiority and contemporary colonial projects.

In October 1849, 27-year-old Maxime Du Camp, accompanied by his friend, the then un-published novelist Gustave Flaubert, began his journey to photograph sites across the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. To ease their journey, Du Camp persuaded the French government to entrust each of them with a diplomatic mission. As a result, the Ministry of Public Instruction officially endorsed Du Camp's mission to photograph ancient monuments of the

[6] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 14.
[7] (Cheng 134)

region, encouraging him "to collect visual proof of what he saw by exploiting photography's 'uncontestable exactitude.'"[8] The Ministry's request was one that reflected the attitude of colonial historians, who "looked towards monuments as the 'stable' texts through which the past of the colony could be read."[9] But, as Rajagopalan and Desai argue, "such of claim of objective inquiry privileged the colonial author as expert and belied his biases, which were then reproduced as regimes of truth."[10]

Du Camp's participation in this colonial endeavor was canonized shortly after his return to France. After a year and a half of travel Du Camp returned with over 200 paper negatives, from which 125 were selected for publication in his widely distributed book, *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* (1952). Published in 1852, this was the first photographically illustrated book to be published in France, the first commonly circulated photographic album on the Middle East, and one of the first significant photographically illustrated travel publications of its time.[11] As such, *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie* effectively "solidified European perceptions of the Middle East and North Africa and arguably set an aesthetic standard for documentary photography—one characterized by a cool neutrality."[12] Du Camp, it seems, was acutely aware of what this privileged role of colonial author required, not only in his choice to focus almost exclusively on monuments and ancients ruins, but also in his attitude toward the camera as a narrative apparatus. Commenting on his choice of medium, Du Camp stated that he brought a camera because "he needed an instrument of precision in order to bring back images which would allow me exact

[8] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa," The Met, October 23, 2023. https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/proof-maxime-du-camp.
[9] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 15.
[10] Rajagopalan and Desai, 15.
[11] JULIA BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie'Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850." *The Classic* (blog). March 15, 2021, https://theclassicphotomag.com/la-maison-demolicphotographs-of-egypt-by-maxime-du-camp-1849-1850/.
[12] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa."

1 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894). *Pyramid of Chephren (Khafre), Middle Egypt.* December 10, 1849. Salted paper print (Blanquart-Évrard process) from paper negative, Mount: 12 in. × 16 15/16 in. (30.5 × 43 cm). Robert O. Dougan Collection, Gift of Warner

reconstructions."[13] As described by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the salted paper prints included in Du Camp's 1852 publication "are rendered in cool, gradated tones that one contemporary critic described as 'vapourous gray.'"[14] The grey tones and crisp horizons that characterized Du Camp's published photographs with a "cool neutrality" are testament to Du Camp's desire to produce "exact reconstructions" as they were chemically altered through the Blanquart-Évrard technique—a darkroom process which entailed "smearing more chemicals over

[13] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie'Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."
[14] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa."

the skies to remove all signs of contemporary life."[15] The effects of this process recall Foucault's ideas on "the discovery of what he called 'a new imaginative space' in the middle of the nineteenth century," by which he suggested that "conjuring up dreams of the fantastic was no longer confined to the stillness of the night but now took place in the hushed precincts of the modem library"—or in the case the dark room.[16]

2 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894). *Palestine. Jérusalem. Partie Occidentale Des Murailles.* August 20, 1850. Salted paper print (Blanquart-Évrard process) from paper negative, Frame: 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm). Robert O. Dougan Collection, Gift of War

[15] John Haber, "THE OLDEST AND THE NEW," *Haberarts.Com Art Reviews from around New York* (blog), January 17, 2024, https://www.haberarts.com/tag/maxime-du-camp/.
[16] Gregory, "Between the Book and the Lamp," 29.

The tranquil colonial dreamscapes rendered by the photographs featured in Du Camp's publication are part of an established Orientalist vocabulary by which "European colonial apparatuses constructed 'historical pasts' for subject populations based on Orientalist perspectives of space, time, and subjectivities…"[17] Devoid of any signs of contemporary life, and set against the backdrop of an empty sky, the monumental subjects of Du Camp's photographs appear as pictural abstractions, outside of both time and place. The illusion of neutrality and unbiased exactitude of the photographic gaze is heightened by Du Camp's "direct frontal stance from a middle terrain, his distance from his subjects, and his positioning of the monument in the central ground."[18] As one critic has noted, "He likes scenes divided between bulky structures and utter ruins, but without a moral. He likes to center a panorama on an ancient dome or minaret, but they pop out of nowhere, more as landmarks than signs of foolishness or faith."[19]

Du Camp's compositional strategies also worked to obscure his own voyeuristic position within the landscape. As Timothy Mitchell has argued, Du Camp's ideal point of view,

> was not just a place set apart, outside the world or above it. Ideally, it was a position from where, like the authorities in Bentham's panopticon, one could see and yet not be seen. The photographer, invisible beneath his black cloth as he eyed the world through his camera's gaze, in this respect typified the kind of presence desired by the European in the Middle East, whether as tourist, writer or indeed colonial power.[20]

As Du Camp captured the Middle Eastern landscapes of Europe's colonial imagination, what was decidedly not shown was the presence of European colonialism itself. As Mitchell has noted, "To establish the objectness of the Orient, as a picture-reality containing no sign of the increasingly pervasive European presence required that the presence itself, ideally, become invisible."[21] The

[17] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 6.
[18] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie' Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."
[19] John Haber, "THE OLDEST AND THE NEW."
[20] Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 230.
[21] Mitchell, 230.

3 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894). *Palestine. Jérusalem. Mosquée d'Omar*. August 20, 1850. Salted paper print (Blanquart-Évrard process) from paper negative, Frame: 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm). Robert O. Dougan Collection, Gift of Warner Communications

success with which Du Camp helped to establish the objectness of the Orient, was in large part due to his strategic ability to see yet not be seen, whereby Du Camp's distance from the objects of his gaze worked to confirm the separation of the European voyeur from the historicized object of fascination, further "structuring a denial of the object's presence in his individual space and time."[22] It was through this process of rendering the monuments of Middle East as objects outside of time and place that "these 'stable' texts also became the medium through which difference (between colonial other and colonizer) could be read and maintained as historical fact."[23] Insofar as Du Camp's images were taken to be "visual proof", captured with the camera's "uncontestable exactitude", the proof that they offered was that of barren desert landscapes, populated by crumbling ruins, and cities devoid of any people. These quietly monumental scenes, abstracted from both time and place, from which the very prevalent European colonial presence was obscured, presented a world untouched by civilization—rendered exclusively for European consumption. In this way Du Camp's photographs set the stage for European imaginations of the Middle East, as his published work neatly presented the monumental wonders of the region as "endless spectacles of the world-as-exhibition." As Mitchell has argued, these spectacles not only reflected the political certainty of the imperial age, but "by their technique of rendering imperial truth and cultural difference in 'objective' form, the means of its production."[24]

While Du Camp's carefully composed photographs staged the spectacles of the Orient with "the apparent certainty with which everything seems ordered, organized, calculated and rendered unambiguous," the letters of his traveling companion, Gustave Flaubert, conveyed a very different reality.[25] In a letter from Cairo in January 1850, Flaubert wrote,

> So here we are in Egypt…What can I say about it all? What can I write you? As yet I am scarcely over the initial bedazzlement ... each detail reaches out to grip you; it pinches you; and the more you concentrate on it the less you grasp the whole. Then gradually all this becomes harmonious, and the pieces fall into place of themselves, in accordance with the laws of perspective. But the first days, by God, it is such a bewildering chaos of colours ...[26]

Contrary to the distant, static views captured in Du Camp's photographs, Flaubert's initial experience of Cairo is one of both visceral and visual turmoil. Unable to hide behind a camera Flaubert expresses an undeniable presence. He is "here" in Egypt, where "detail reaches out to grip you," where the proximity of the encounter is so close it pinches you. The chaos of Flaubert's

[22] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie'Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."
[23] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 15.
[24] Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," 222.
[25] Mitchell, 226.
[26] Mitchell, 227.

experience in the streets of Cairo is "expressed as an absence of pictorial order"—a chaos of colors "which refuses to compose itself as a picture."[27] With time, however, as Flaubert describes, the chaos of the city becomes harmonious, as the pieces fall into place and the "world arranges itself into a picture and achieves visual order, 'in accordance with the laws of perspective.'"[28] Notably, as the city achieves this visual harmony, Flaubert seems to disentangle himself from the city. He is no longer grasped, gripped, or pinched. Instead, he watches with the distance of "perspective" as "the pieces fall into place of themselves." While Du Camp's photography and Flaubert's writing render radically different images of the region, both speak to European desire to image the Middle East "in accordance with the laws of perspective." "The problem for the photographer or writer visiting the Middle East," writes Mitchell, "was not to make an accurate picture of the East, but to set up the East as a picture…The problem, in other words, was to create a distance between oneself and the world, and thus to constitute it as something picture-like—as an object on exhibit."[29]

While the majority of Du Camp's images are devoid of any signs of life, the particular violence of his project to exhibit the region and his use of photography as a narrative device, are particularly legible in the few photographs that feature a human figure. Throughout Du Camp's photographs of Egypt—which was of particular importance to the colonial interests of France—Du Camp situates a living protagonist amongst the ruins, who appears as a simi-naked dark male figure, presumably as an indication of architecture scale. While this figure is not mentioned in Du Camp's photographic publication, Du Camp does mention him in *Le Nil. Egypte et Nubie* (1954), in which Du Camp writes,

> Each time I visited a monument I had my photographic apparatus carried along and took with me one of my sailors. Hadji-Ishmael, a very handsome Nubian, whom I had climb up on to the ruins which I wanted to photograph and in this way I was always able to include a uniform scale of proportions.[30]

4 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894). *Thebes. Médinet-Habou. Partie Orientale Du Péristyle Du Palais de Ramsès-Méiamoun.* May 8, 1850. Salted paper print (Blanquart-Évrard process) from paper negative, Frame: 20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm). New York, Robert O. Dougan Collection, Gift of Warner Communications Inc., 1981

Hadji-Ishmael's position in relation to the architecture—which is often unusual, sometimes placed so strangely against the ruins as to be almost invisible—suggests that his presence in these photographs is meant to communicate something beyond architectural scale (Figure 4). While the

[27] Mitchell, 227.
[28] Mitchell, 227.
[29] Mitchell, 229.
[30] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie'Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."

use of a scale figure was common practice at the time, figures were typically positioned to be looking at the architectural subject of the photo. Here, however, Hadji-Ishmael is placed on the façade of ruins, as though he is a part of the crumbling monument. Throughout the photographs in which Hadji-Ishmael appears, his position in relation to the architecture is always bizarre. At times his body is framed by the architecture, in one instance he has been placed on a pedestal, and in "several photographs he inhabits the image as a dab of matter, barnacled onto an ancient edifice."[31] As Julia Ballerini has argued, "This body, as it is positioned in the crevices and summits of the remains of a monumental past, serves as a cipher for Du Camp's ambivalence towards the destruction and possible preservation of the past…"[32]

5 Maxime Du Camp. *Hypètre d'Athor, sur la Terrasse du grande Temple de Dendérah (Tentyris),* 1849–50, salted paper print from paper negative. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005 (2005.100. .376.40)

[31] BALLERINI.
[32] BALLERINI.

Du Camp's attitude towards his model as a cipher of the past becomes clear in *Le Nil*, where he writes about photographing Hadji-Ishmael at the Temple of Dendera (Figure 5). Here, the temple is described as a site of lost origins, having "no cartouche, no inscription to indicate the date of its construction nor the name of the founder."[33] Du Camp then describes how he "orders Hadji-Ishmael 'to climb up on a column that bore the huge face of an idol,' an example, he writes, 'of extreme degeneration.'"[34] The resulting photograph stands out from the others in that Hadji-Ishmael is much more visible than in other photos. Dressed in a loin-cloth, he is posed standing tall next to a crumbling column of the temple. This image in particular highlights Du Camp's use of Hadji-Ishmael, not only as cipher of the degeneration of his own cultural past, but as a lonely figure meant to represent the primitive native—an object of fascination as well as a symbol of an undeveloped civilization.

In his role as colonial author, Du Camp casts Hadji-Ismael amongst the ruins as a character upon which to project Western conceptions of the primitive—thereby projecting this imagination "onto the contemporary societies of the colonized."[35] In both his attitude towards the Egyptian native and his strategy of rendering the colonial subject as yardstick by which to measure civilizational progress, Du Camp's work is positioned within the broader ambitions of the French colonial project in which "the documentation of such conditions of architectural degeneration and the obliviousness of the indigenous inhabitants to their own heritage illustrated the opportunity and need for French intervention in Egypt."[36] At the same time, Du Camp's work reflected European anxieties around the need for self-definition, by which the articulation of European progress "depended upon the fiction of a primitive other, either as an embodied subject or in the

[33] BALLERINI.
[34] BALLERINI.
[35] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 8.
[36] BALLERINI. "'La Maison Démolie' Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."

form of tribal or nonmodern objects that existed outside the time and space of modernity."[37] Ultimately, the popularity of Du Camp's publication helped render the Middle East as an object of fascination in the colonial imaginary and established a precedent for photographers who following in his footsteps, "journeyed to other lands and made their occupants, as well as their artifacts, objects of scientific study, incorporating them into Western history as "discoveries."[38]

In 1889, some years after Du Camp's book had been widely circulated amongst the public, the Eighth International Congress of Orientalists visited the World Exhibition in Paris, where they were confronted with a life-size representation of the lens through which Western Europe had come to view the East. As historian Timothy Mitchell writes.

> The Egyptian exhibit had been built by the French to represent a street of medieval Cairo, made of houses with overhanging upper stories and a mosque like that of Qaitbay. "It was intended," one of the Egyptians wrote, "to resemble the old aspect of Cairo." So carefully was this done, he noted, that "even the paint on the buildings was made dirty."[39]

Mitchell goes on to describe how the carefully crafted chaos of the Egyptian exhibit, which was designed to stand in stark contrast to the "civilized" order of the surrounding exhibition. As Mitchel describes, "The way was crowded with shops and stalls, where Frenchmen, dressed as Orientals, sold perfumes, pastries, and tarboushes."[40] While Mitchell's description of the Egyptian exhibit paints a scene bustling with movement, it captures the stasis that the exhibition inscribed upon Egypt—a stasis in which Egypt and its peoples are perpetually confined to a romanticized pastime of the colonial imagination. "Almost everywhere that Middle Eastern visitors went," Mitchell writes, "they seemed to encounter this rendering up of the world as a thing to be viewed. They visited the new museums and saw the cultures of the world portrayed in the form of objects arranged under glass in the order of their evolution."[41] As Mitchell describes, the Europe of Arabic accounts was one in which Middle Eastern cultures, lands, and peoples were rendered as objects of curiosity organized with a photographic gaze into objects of exhibition.

6 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894), *Coiffure Des Femmes de Nazareth,* August 14, 1850, Salted paper print from paper negative, 16.5 x 19.9 cm (6 1/2 x 7 13/16 in.) Frame: 16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm), August 14, 1850, Purchase, Jennifer and Joseph Duke Gift and Gifts in memory of Harry H. Lunn Jr., 2000, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The endurance of this romantic historicization of the region and its peoples in the colonial imagination becomes increasingly evident when tracing the throughlines of Du Camp's own photographic legacy. Despite a wealth of scholarship, documentation, and decolonial movements that challenge Du Camp's portraits of the region, the romantic exotification that Du Camp's photographs so effectively visualized continues to set the tone in the contemporary Western

[37] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 8.
[38] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie' Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."
[39] Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," 217.
[40] Mitchell, 217.
[41] Mitchell, 221.

imaginary. The archival lifespan of one image in particular, carries with it the enduring legacy of the colonial gaze. In his photograph entitled *Coiffure des Femmes de Nazareth* Du Camp focuses on what appears to be a sort of costumed still life, in which an ornamented headdress is displayed upon a figure-like mount positioned in front of a hanging rug (Figure 6). While not included in Du Camp's 1852 publication, the image was featured in a small album printed separately from the edition. In contrast to the majority of Du Camp's photographs of the region, which primarily depict monumental scenes poised upon the backdrop of sprawling landscapes, the zoomed-in frame of this image obscures any geographical context. Draped over what appears to be a rock wall, the hanging rug serves as the backdrop for Du Camp's perfectly staged costumed subject. The only direct indication of specific geographic location is in the title of the photograph, which translates to *Hairdos of the Women of Nazareth*—though it should be noted that much in the same way that the scene is depicted out of context to render a non-descript scene of "exotic" lands, the women of Nazareth seem to exist only in the realm of fantasy, as there are no actual hairdos or women in the photograph. This photograph speaks to the ways in which "the local inhabitants, their traditions, and their architecture are all tightly imbricated within the commonly assumed metaphor of woman for nation."[42] As Ballerini notes,

> It was in the *maision démolie* – "shattered, broken, violated, dishonored," as was the mosque and the faith it symbolized – that Du Camp "saw the uncertain future released" and heard "the tumultuous swarm of erased dreams." It was through the destruction of this longed-for space of the woman's body that a future, however uncertain, could be released, that dreams could finally be erased.[43]

[42] BALLERINI, "'La Maison Démolie' Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850."
[43] BALLERINI.

Du Camp's imagination of the Orient as violated woman is further articulated in his 1855 poem "Les Soeurs sanglantes", in which he writes, "In my travels I saw Nations, they were women lying on their backs, moaning, bleeding, dying."[44]

As a visual testament to "the eroticization and sexualization of the Orient as female Other, different from and desired by a masculine European subject," the erotic fantasy that Du Camp's *Hairdos of the Women of Nazareth* seems to invite continues to weave through the Western imagination.[45] The allure of this enduring fantasy is most recently evident in the inclusion of this photograph in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's 2023 exhibition, *Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa*, in which the photograph was exhibited, and is now archived, alongside an interpretive text that describes the work as a "somewhat ambiguous, if fascinating image" in which "what at first seems to be a study of a veiled woman…ultimately seems to be a still life of an ethnographic souvenir propped on a cloaked mount."[46] The description then takes on a seemingly inspired shift in tone, reading,

> Despite our romantic cravings for the exotic, no eyes hide in the dark triangular shadow cast by the headdress. It is nothing more than a well-crafted mirage constructed in part by the intense desert sun and by a pair of romantic Frenchmen known to have bought elaborate hairdos as keepsakes of their journey.[47]

The legacy of the colonial imaginary is distinctly apparent in this bizarre yet revealing exhibition text, which only reinforces the fantastical feminization and sexualization of "the exotic" Du Camp so carefully staged in 1850. Rather than providing a critique of Du Camp's decontextualized "ethnographic" lens, the museum description seems to celebrate the West's "romantic craving for the exotic" as it is allowed to play out in Du Camp's photograph. The particular violence of this

[44] BALLERINI.
[45] Gregory, "Between the Book and the Lamp," 42.
[46] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa."
[47] The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

craving for the exotic is evidenced in the space of fantasy the photograph creates in which the women of Nazareth are rendered as objects to be observed, unveiled, undressed, by the viewers imagination which plays upon the desire to see the eyes behind the mirage. Ultimately, the figure in the image acts as a projected space of dream, desire, and violation made possible by the cloaked suggestion of the absent woman's body.

7 Maxime Du Camp (French, 1822–1894). *House and Garden in the Frankish Quarter, Cairo*, January 9, 1850. Salted paper print from paper negative, Image: 8 3/8 × 5 7/8 in. (21.2 × 14.9 cm). Gilman Collection, Gift of The Howard Gilman Foundation, 2005. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2005.100.376.4

Aside from Hadji-Ishael, who appears in the "proof prints" featured in the MET's exhibition, the only other human figure featured in Du Camp's photography is Gustave Flaubert, who appears in one of the photographs selected by the MET from their archive Du Camp's unpublished prints (Figure 7). The image depicts Flaubert standing in front of the Hotel Du Nil in Cairo, dressed in a jalabiya. The photograph itself recalls the "Frenchmen, dressed as Orientals" described by Mitchell, in which the costumed Frenchmen of the 1889 World Exhibition seem to echo the performative nature of Du Camp's staged fantasy. As Ballerini explains,

> The construction of an alien alter ego through which to enact oneself was a common nineteenth-century literary trope, and by the 1850s the "Orient" in particular was established as the locus of cultural transvestism for the French. In Egypt, the French dressed in local costume and often assumed foreign names as did Du Camp. He became "Abu Muknaf," the "Father of Thinness." Flaubert, photographed by Du Camp in a long flowing robe, was known as "Abu Schenep," the "Father of the Mustache."

For Flaubert and Du Camp these alter egos were simply an extension of their imagination of the Orient as a picture to be staged. Describing their costumed play, Flaubert wrote in a letter, "We look quite the pair of Orientals."[48]

This photograph, entitled, *House and Garden in the Frankish Quarter, Cairo*, was exhibited and is now archived alongside a text that reads:

> Gustave Flaubert posed only once for Du Camp, wearing a loose-fitting jalabiya and what he called a "screaming red" fez outside the garden of the Hotel du Nil, where the two friends lodged for most of their two-month stay in Cairo. Flaubert, still an aspiring novelist at the time, accompanied Du Camp on his Mediterranean trip. After their return to Paris, both men wrote narrative accounts of their travels together. Flaubert's chronicle of the friends' journey (published after his death) differed substantially from Du Camp's version, in which Flaubert is not even mentioned.[49]

[48] Gregory, "Between the Book and the Lamp," 44.
[49] The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa."

The MET's description of this image. does little to address the particular colonial contexts that brought this image into being and informed the two friends' attitudes towards their hosts. Nor does it address the stark difference between this image and those of Hadji-Ishmael. Instead, the exhibition seems to understand both this image as well as *Hairdos of the Women of Nazareth* as "evidence of modern civilization." when they write, "Inconsistencies between Du Camp's proofs and the published prints are…revealing: in contrast to the book's focus on expected monuments and ancient ruins, the proofs provide evidence of modern civilization in unfamiliar. arid landscapes."[50] The MET's treatment of these scenes, which focus entirely on the colonial imagination, as evidence of modern civilization in the Middle East, it offers only a rearticulation Du Camp's colonial authorship. In so doing, *Proof* ultimately only continues the colonial imagination of the Orient as "something to be rediscovered. To be grasped representationally, as the picture of something, it was inevitably to be grasped as the reoccurrence of a picture one had seen before, as a map one already carried in one's head, as the reiteration of an earlier description."[51]

In revisiting the colonial aesthetics that have long permeated Western imaginations of the Middle East, "through an investigation of shared regimes of knowledge; the articulation and management of difference; and continuities between the colonial, the national and the postcolonial" it becomes evident that the legacy of colonial epistemologies continue to shape contemporary perceptions and representations of the region.[52] As Edward Said has argued, "Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas and forms, about images and imaginings."[53] Maxime Du Camp's carefully composed photographs, helped to train a European gaze that rendered the Middle East as an exotic landscape of colonial desires and historicized peoples, conveniently divorced from the realities of colonial presence and exploitation. The contemporary exhibition of Du Camp's work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is testament to the ways in which the enduring legacy the photographer's colonial imaginary remains palpable in contemporary cultural institutions. "From its very inception the institution of the museum was essential to establishing the knowledge base of colonialism," and it continues to participate in framing the Middle East as a historicized region of timeless fascination rather than sites of violent colonial occupations and ongoing struggles for self-determination.[54]

[50] The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
[51] Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," 234.
[52] Rajagopalan and Desai, *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories*, 14.
[53] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 7.
[54] Rajagopalan and Desai, 16.

Bibliography

BALLERINI, JULIA. "'La Maison Démolie' Photographs of Egypt by Maxime Du Camp 1849-1850." *The Classic* (blog), March 15, 2021. https://theclassicphotomag.com/la-maison-demolie-photographs-of-egypt-by-maxime-du-camp-1849-1850/.

Edward Said. *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage, 1993.

Gregory, Derek. "Between the Book and the Lamp: Imaginative Geographies of Egypt, 1849-50." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 1 (1995): 29. https://doi.org/10.2307/622723.

John Haber. "THE OLDEST AND THE NEW." *Haberarts.Com Art Reviews from around New York* (blog), January 17, 2024. https://www.haberarts.com/tag-maxime-du-camp/.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

———. "The World as Exhibition." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, no. 2 (1989): 217–36.

Rajagopalan, Mrinalini, and Madhuri Desai. *Colonial Frames, Nationalist Histories, Imperial Legacies, Architecture and Modernity*. Ashgate Studies in Architecture Series. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Proof: Maxime Du Camp's Photographs of the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa." The Met, October 23, 2023. https://www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/proof-maxime-du-camp.

07 (RE)CREATION ARCHIVE

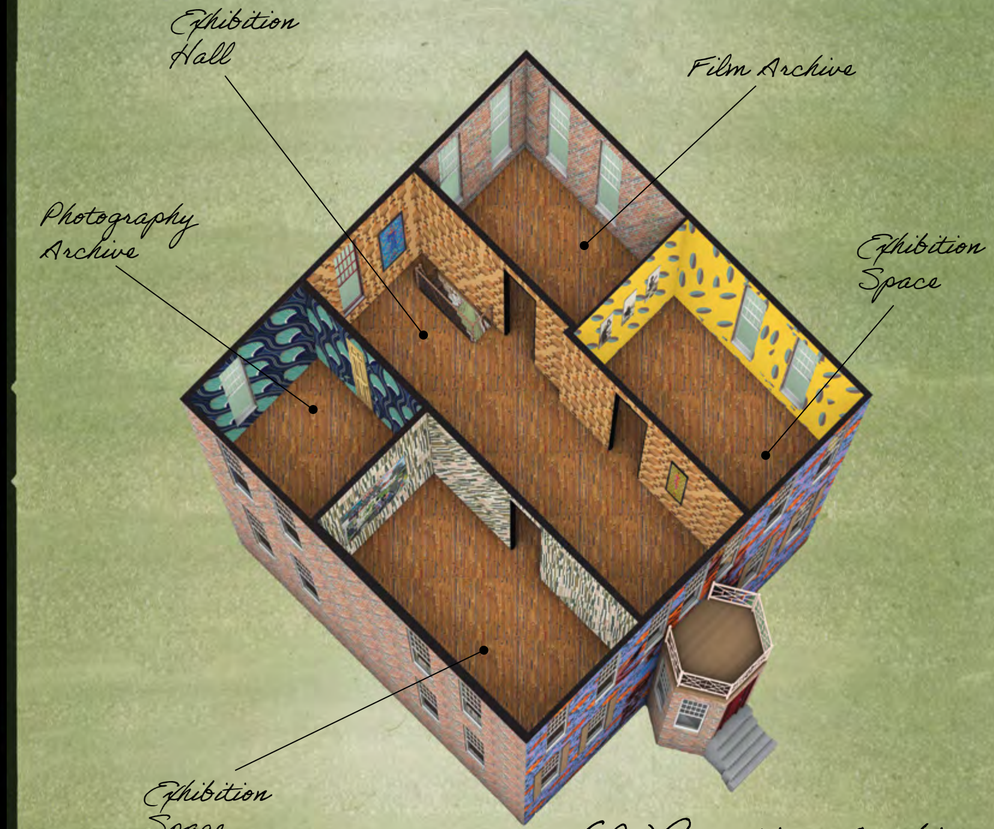
The lands and spaces of Colonie, New York and the surrounding area have been the sites of countless erasures against Black and Indigenous peoples, histories, and cultures. Operating in close proximity to the New York State Museum on a constellation of sites formerly owned by the Schuyler family estate, the (Re)Creation Archive and (Re)Generation Artist Residency recognize the interconnectedness of people and land. In an act of reclamation, this project proposes to return the lands and relics of America's colonial past to Black and Indigenous communities in order for them to reclaim, recontextualize, repurpose, and re-tell these colonial legacies.

This project was conceived as a supportive environment for research, writing, and artistic expression, which coincides with re-imagined archival and exhibition spaces designed to facilitate the collection, reclamation, preservation, and accessibility of materials documenting, generating, and exploring Black and Indigenous life.

Embedded within the former sites of the Schuyler estate, this project reclaims its colonial backdrop to host Black and Indigenous creatives as well as educational programs, research programs, exhibitions, seminars, and community events, that amplify and support both the preservation and generation of Black and Indigenous history, heritage, and culture.

Advanced IV Architecture Studio | Spring 2024 | Critic: Todd Levon Brown

(Re)Creation Archive



(Re)Creation Archive
Second Floor

10 200-8

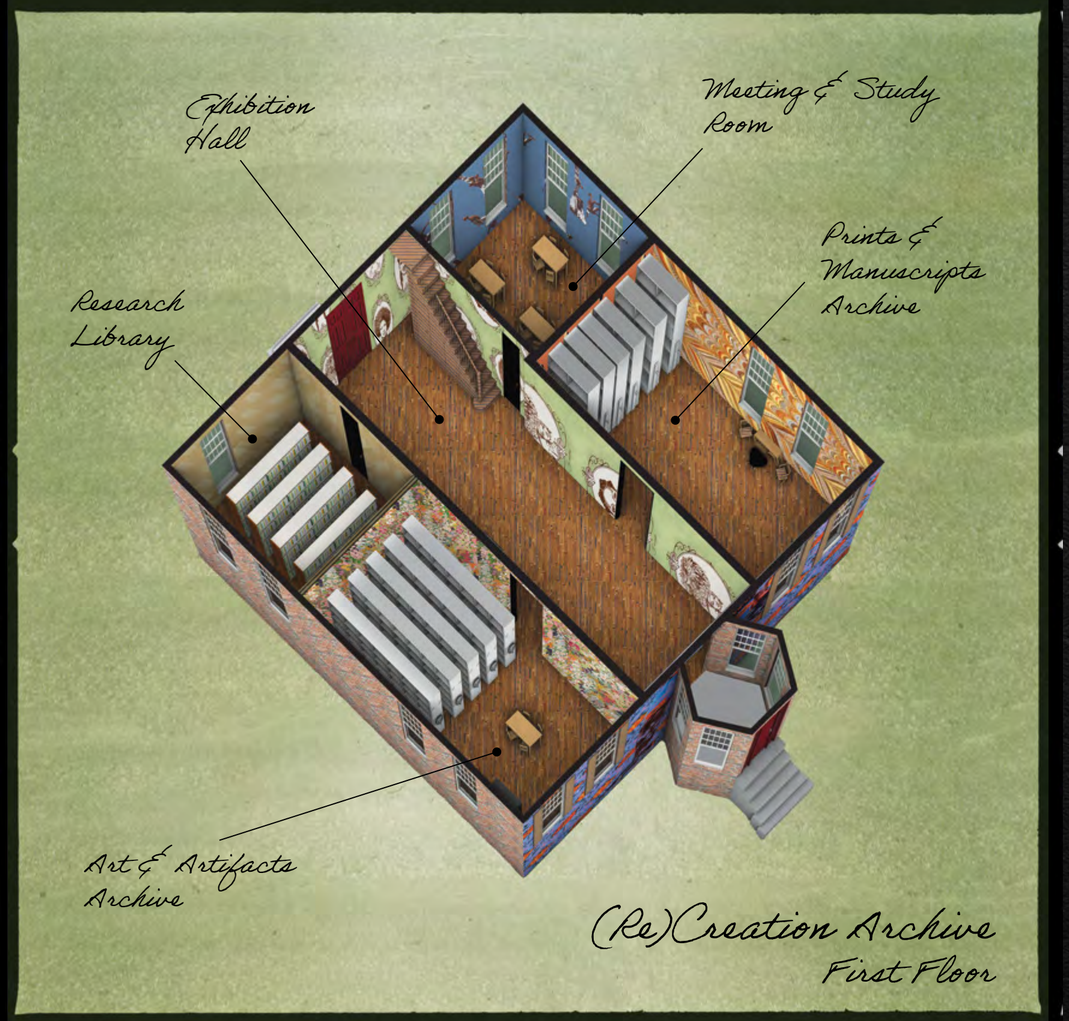
10 10A

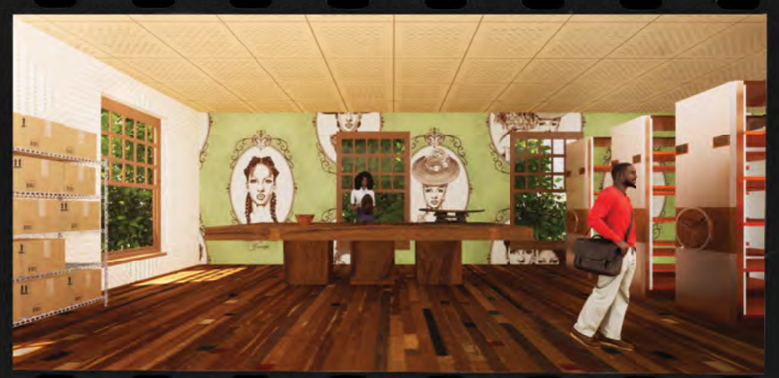
11 200-8

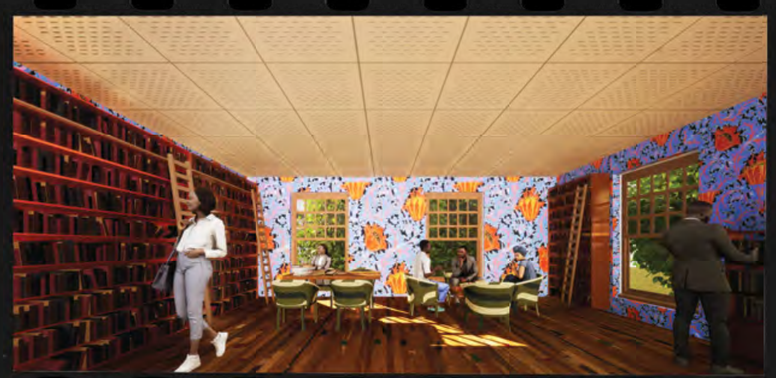
11 11A

12 200-8

12 12A

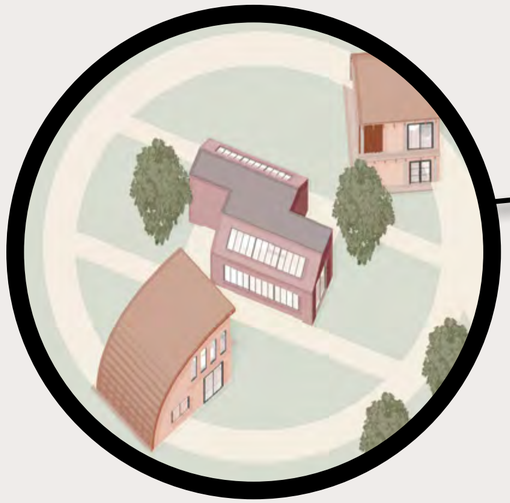

Exhibition Hall
Meeting & Study Room
Research Library
Prints & Manuscripts Archive
Art & Artifacts Archive
(Re)Creation Archive
First Floor





Advanced IV Architecture Studio
Spring 2024 | Critic: Todd Levon Brown

(RE)GENERATION ARTIST RESIDENCY



The artist residency program is designed to offer support for Black and Indigenous creatives, curators, and writers. With the intent of fostering creative engagement beyond institutional confi nes, the program provides a sanctuary for exploration and expression, rooted in Black and Indigenous histories and culture, offering an environment where creativity, community, and heritage converge.

Advanced IV Architecture Studio
Spring 2024 | Critic: Todd Levon Brown

(RE)GENERATION ARTIST RESIDENCY

Central to this vision is the provision of resources and support for artists-in-residence. In addition to traditional archival spaces, residents will have access to a living seed archive and recipe library, as well as a material culture lab where they can access, contribute to, and play with a growing collection of natural materials which provide insight into the material cultures that are so deeply rooted in colonial paths of migration and legacies of creativity, resilience, and resistance.

Operating at the intersection of cultural production, historic reinterpretation, invention, and tradition, this residency program rejects the notion of art as mere commodity, instead valuing the inherent worth of creativity as a conduit for social change and empowerment.

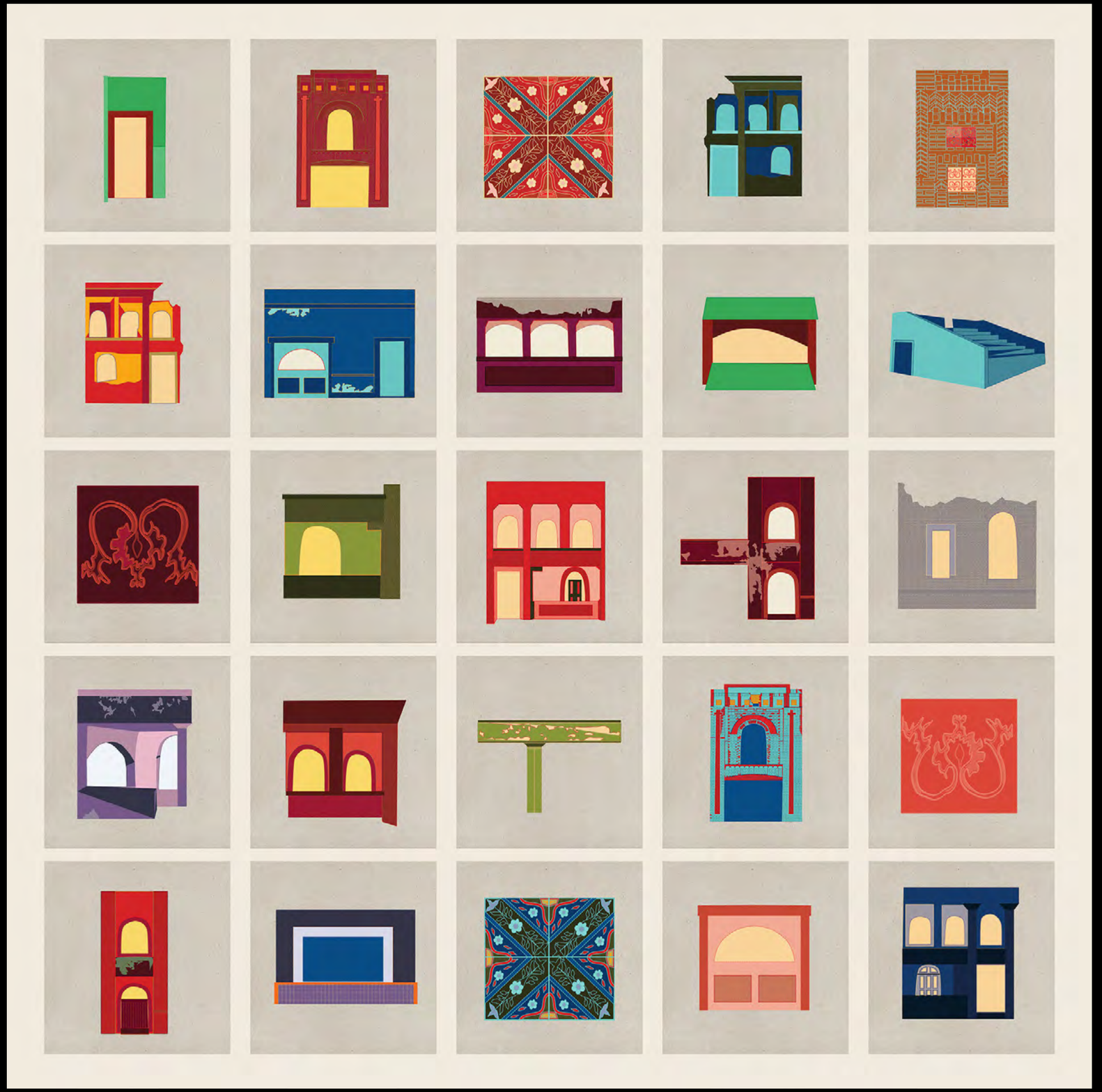
FALL 2024

08 (IN)BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE

ADVANCED V ARCHITECTURE STUDIO
Fall 2024 | Critic: Emanuel Admassu

After its closure in 1979, Harlem's Renaissance Ballroom remained abandoned for over 30 years. Left to decay, it became a living document of its own gradual erasure—a testament to the violence of a proprietary system that rendered it obsolete.

(IN)BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE responds to the ways in which the logic of property functions as a mechanism of erasure. Drawing on Saidiya Hartman's method of critical fabulation, the project engages the site's layers—its imprints, material traces, and dispersions—as fragments of discourse, weaving past, present, and future into a series of recombinant narratives.



ADVANCED V ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

Fall 2024 | Critic: Emanuel Admassu

(IN BETWEEN) ARCHITECTURE

Reimagining the site at the moment of its ruination, the material remains of the Renaissance Ballroom are treated as active elements of assemblage that might accommodate different forms of occupation made possible through the building's fragmentation. The movement of these materials and their engagement with the temporal passages within which they are assembled and reassembled offer a way to think beyond the finality of a building.

Following Fred Moten's concept of seriality—"a seriality of the not-in-between, the un-enclosed"—(IN) BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE is not a design proposal, but rather a series of events—an "un-enclosed" continuum. It is an architecture in transition, an architecture of passage between form and formlessness, allowing for a spatial and temporal extension into what was, what is, and what could be.

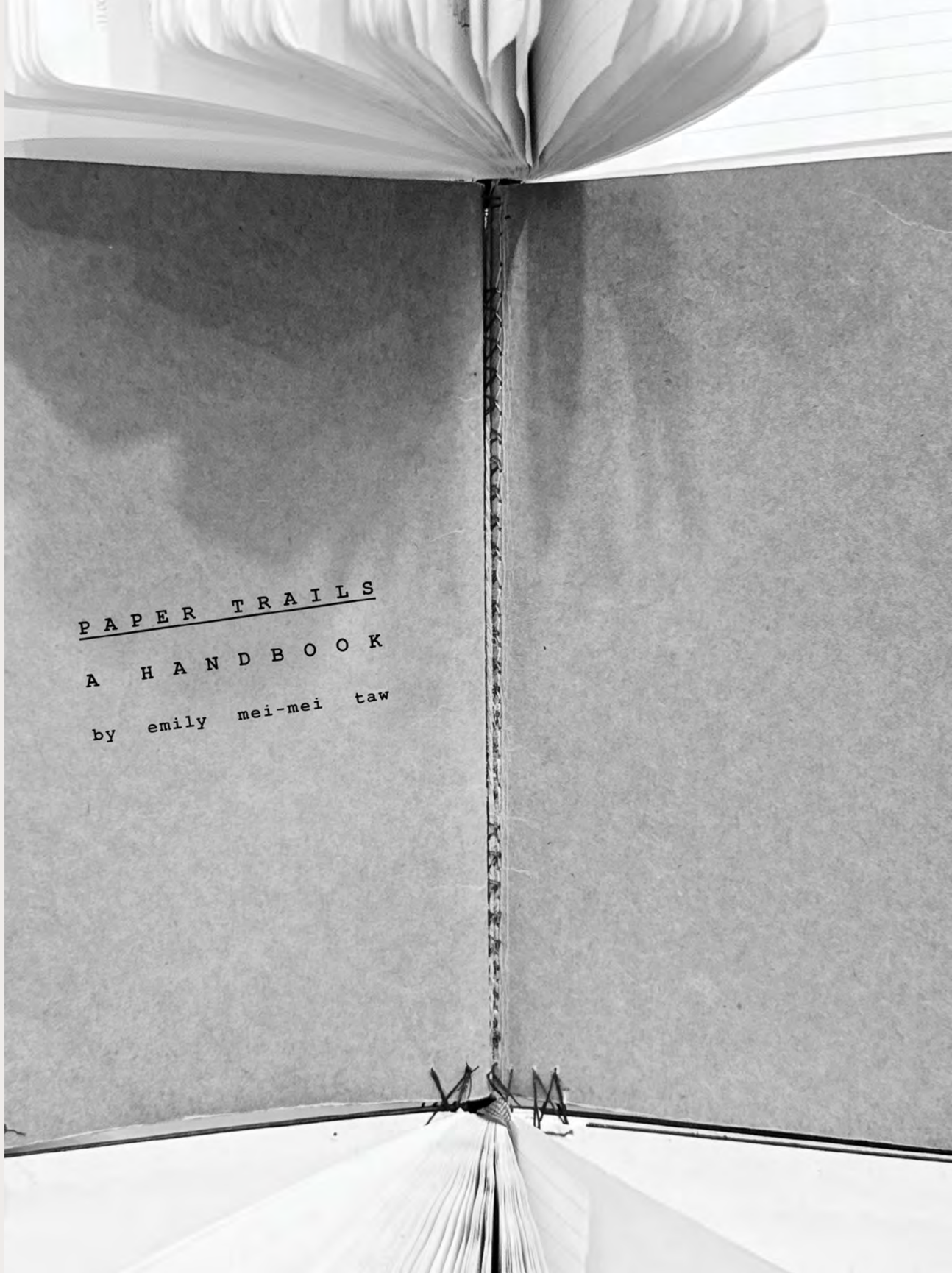
ADVANCED V ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

Fall 2024 | Critic: Emanuel Admassu

(IN BETWEEN) ARCHITECTURE

09 PAPER TRAILS: A HANDBOOK

Spring 2025 | Advanced VI Architecture Studio
Critics: Ada Tolla + Giuseppe Lignano



Introduction

Working on this project has been a process of returning to, working with, organizing, reassembling, and building upon the seemingly ephemeral material of my personal archive:

old notebooks, published writing, collaborations, poses in various states of decay, iPhone photos, and correspondences.

I've approached this work with the notion of connecting the threads, threading together the seemingly disparate fragments of my life:

academic, professional, personal, relational, and internal.

A R C H I V E

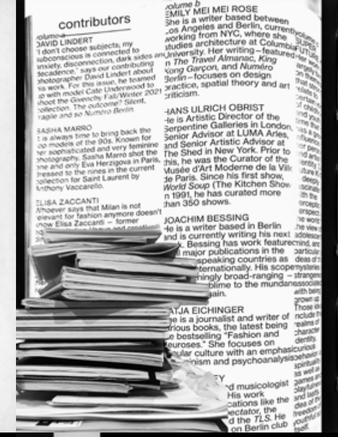
> Having reached my final semester of a three-year architecture program, throughout which I never intended nor had any desire to become an architect, I find myself asking: What am I doing? What have I done? What can I make of myself, for myself?

So, I've returned to the paper trails of my personal archive—the notebooks and published writing I've accumulated and left to collect dust on my shelves. Dating back to 2018, when I returned to the U.S. after many years in Berlin, these notebooks contain class notes, lecture notes, meeting notes, questions, calendars, and ideas quickly scribbled and forgotten.

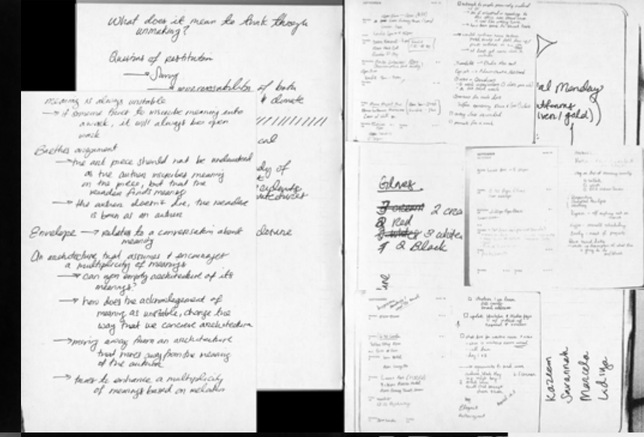
> Alongside these notebooks are a collection of magazines that contain my published writing—*King Kong Garçon*, *The Travel Almanac*, and numerous issues of the encyclopedia-sized *Numéro Berlin*. In many ways, these publications are not dissimilar from my notebooks. They contain hastily written articles born from fleeting fascinations; cultural, critical, and emotional musings; and conversations with some of my closest friends.
>
> Together, these materials serve as an archive of the disparate thoughts, interests, and relationships I've developed, nurtured, and sometimes abandoned over the years.

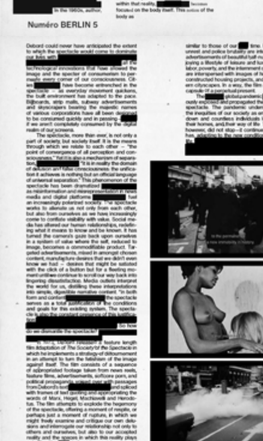
As such, I decided these pages would be an appropriate, if somewhat awkward, foundation upon which to build a structural system designed to facilitate, unpack, process, and unravel my own working "practice." Built over a period of eight weeks around my studio desk in Avery Hall, the resulting structure took form through many adaptations, assemblages, and iterations. Throughout this process of returning, (re)organizing, scanning, and binding, I discovered things I had forgotten, things I had never known were there, and new ways of looking at the objects and thoughts that have quietly encircled me for years.


MATERIALS:
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. A, SS23 (12" x 8.75" x 0.75")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. B, SS23 (12" x 8.75" x 1")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. C, SS23 (12" x 8.75" x 0.25")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. A, AW22 (12" x 8.75" x 0.75")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. B, AW22 (12" x 8.75" x 1")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. A, AW21 (12" x 8.75" x 0.75")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. B, AW21 (12" x 8.75" x 1.15")
• Numéro Berlin, Vol. B, SS21 (12" x 8.75" x 1.75")
• grey notebook (8.25" x 6" x 0.125")
• 2 x grey notebook (8.25" x 6" x 0.25")
• 2 x grey notebook (8.25" x 5.75" x 0.25")
• beige notebook (8.25" x 5" x 0.25")
• beige notebook (10" x 7.5" x 0.25")
• black notebook (10" x 7.5" x 0.25")
• composition book (10" x 7.5" x 0.25")
• shoe box (12" x 10.25" x 4")
• twine
• thread
• gravity

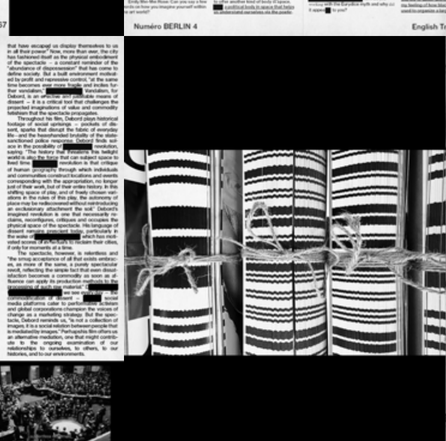

contributors
DAVID LINDERT
I don't choose subjects; my
subconscious is connected to
anxiety, disconnection, dark skies and
decadence," says our contributing
photographer David Lindert about
his work. For this issue, he teamed
up with model Cate Underwood to
shoot the Givenchy Fall/Winter 2021
collection. The outcome? Silent,
fragile and so Numéro Berlin.
SASHA MARRO
It is always time to bring back the
top models of the 90s. Known for
her sophisticated and very feminine
photography, Sasha Marro shot the
new and only Eva Herzigova in Paris,
dressed to the nines in the current
collection for Saint Laurent by
Anthony Vaccarello.
ELISA ZACCANTI
Whoever says that Milan is not
relevant for fashion anymore doesn't
know Elisa Zaccanti — former
EMILY MEI MEI ROSE
She is a writer based between
Los Angeles and Berlin, currently
working from NYC, where she
studies architecture at Columbia
University. Her writing—featured
in The Travel Almanac, King
Kong Gawpon, and Numéro
Berlin—focuses on design
practice, spatial theory and art
criticism.
JOACHIM BESSING
He is a writer based in Berlin
and is currently writing his next
book. Bessing has work featured in
major publications in the
speaking countries as
internationally. His scope
mystery
broad-ranging – strange
sublime to the mundane
again.
ATJA EICHINGER
e is a journalist and writer of
rious books, the latest being
e bestselling "Fashion and
orism and psychoanalysis
musicologist
His work
cations like the
ectator, the
d the TLS. He
on Berlin club


"In a Soviet fairy tale, you always have a choice to do the bad or the good. To be Soviet or not to be Soviet."
132
133
Numéro
Culture
Alter
Numéro

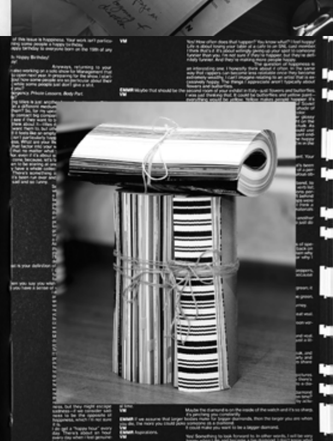

What does it mean to think through working?
Questions of restitution
→ Irony
→ unaccountability of both
→ Monday
Meanings is always unstable
→ if someone tries to integrate meaning into a work, it will always fail upon
Barthes assignment
→ the text piece should not be redundant
→ the curtain regarding meaning
→ the author doesn't live, the reader is born as an author
Envelope → relates to a conversation about meaning
On aesthetics, that assumes / encourages
→ can open enough enrichment of its meanings?
→ how does he acknowledgement of meaning as unstable, change his way that we conceive consideration
→ moving away from an architecture that veers away from the meaning of the author
→ texts & ambience as multiplicity of meanings based on relation
Gilmer
2 cross
& Red
& white
& Black
Kazuon
Savannah
Marcela
Ludwig

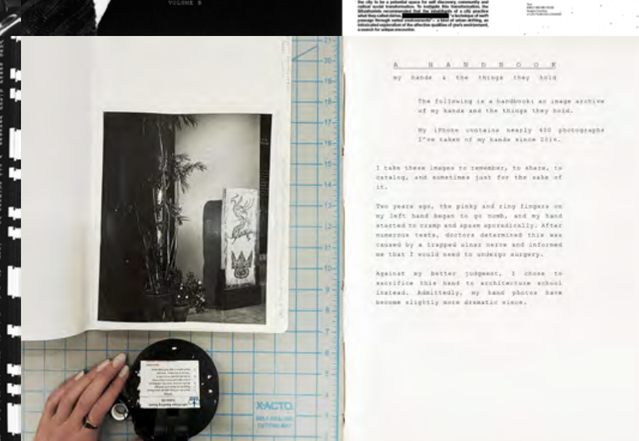

Subject
Bodies


HOUSE

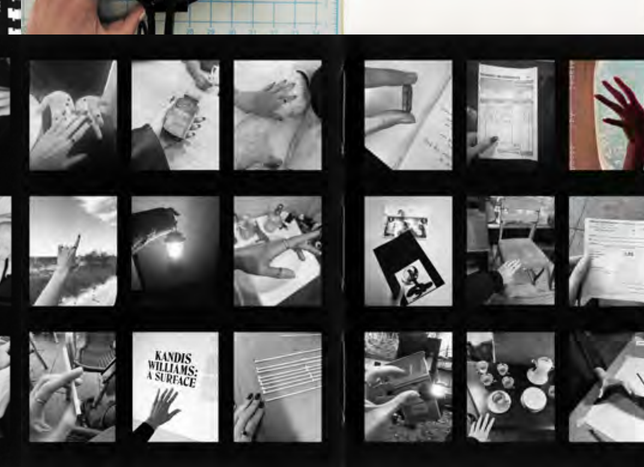

originally published in
NUMERO BERLIN, Volume 8, Spring/Summer 2019
Dissonances


originally published in
NUMERO BERLIN
Autumn/Winter 2021
VOLUME 9


Emily Mei-Mei Rose
Culture


SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACL
originally published in
NUMERO BERLIN
AUTUMN/WINTER 2021
VOLUME 9


KANDIS WILLIAMS: A SURFACE



c Making archive more public

Surfaces.

Thinking inside out

selection of objects to reshape the experience

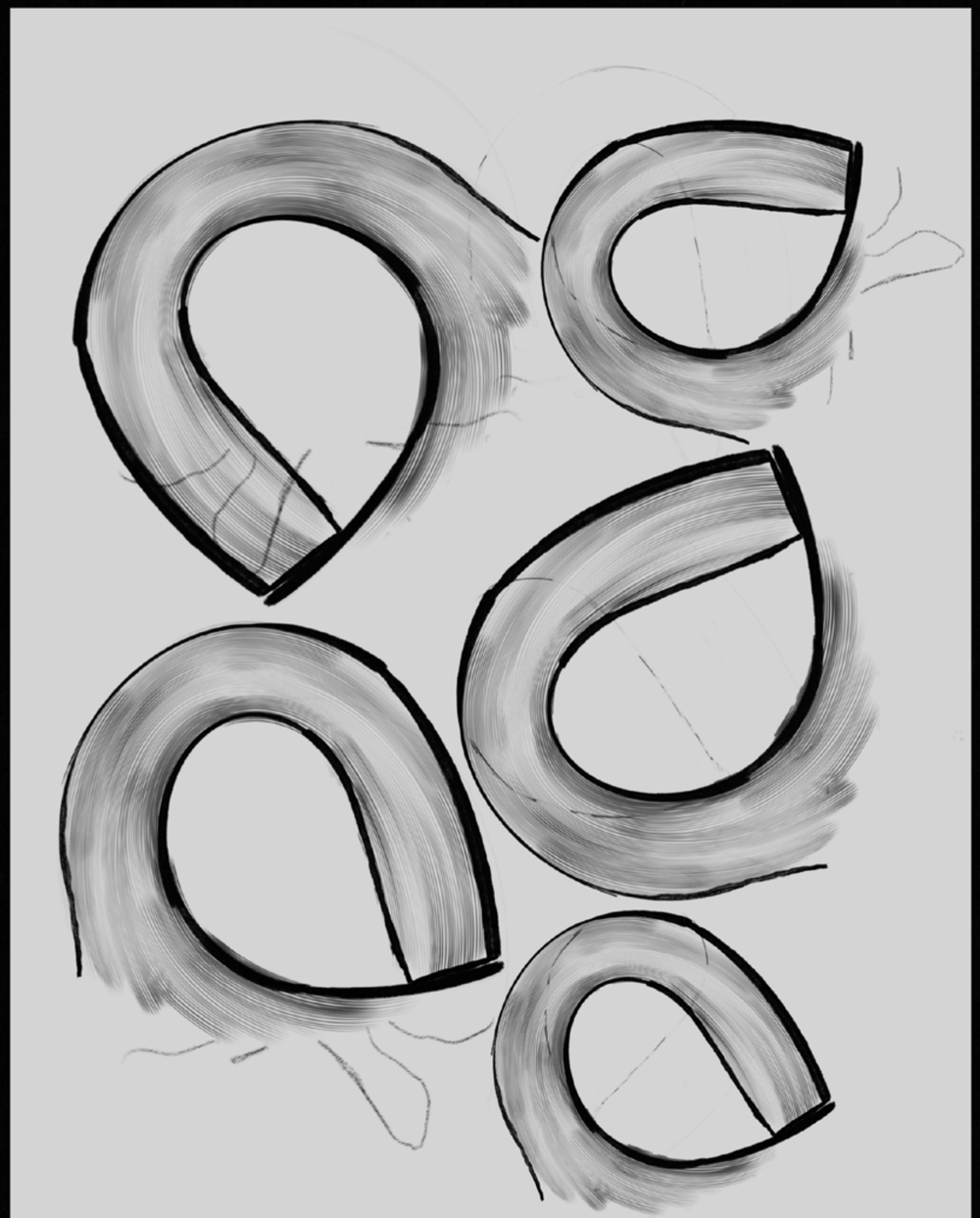
Surface-like

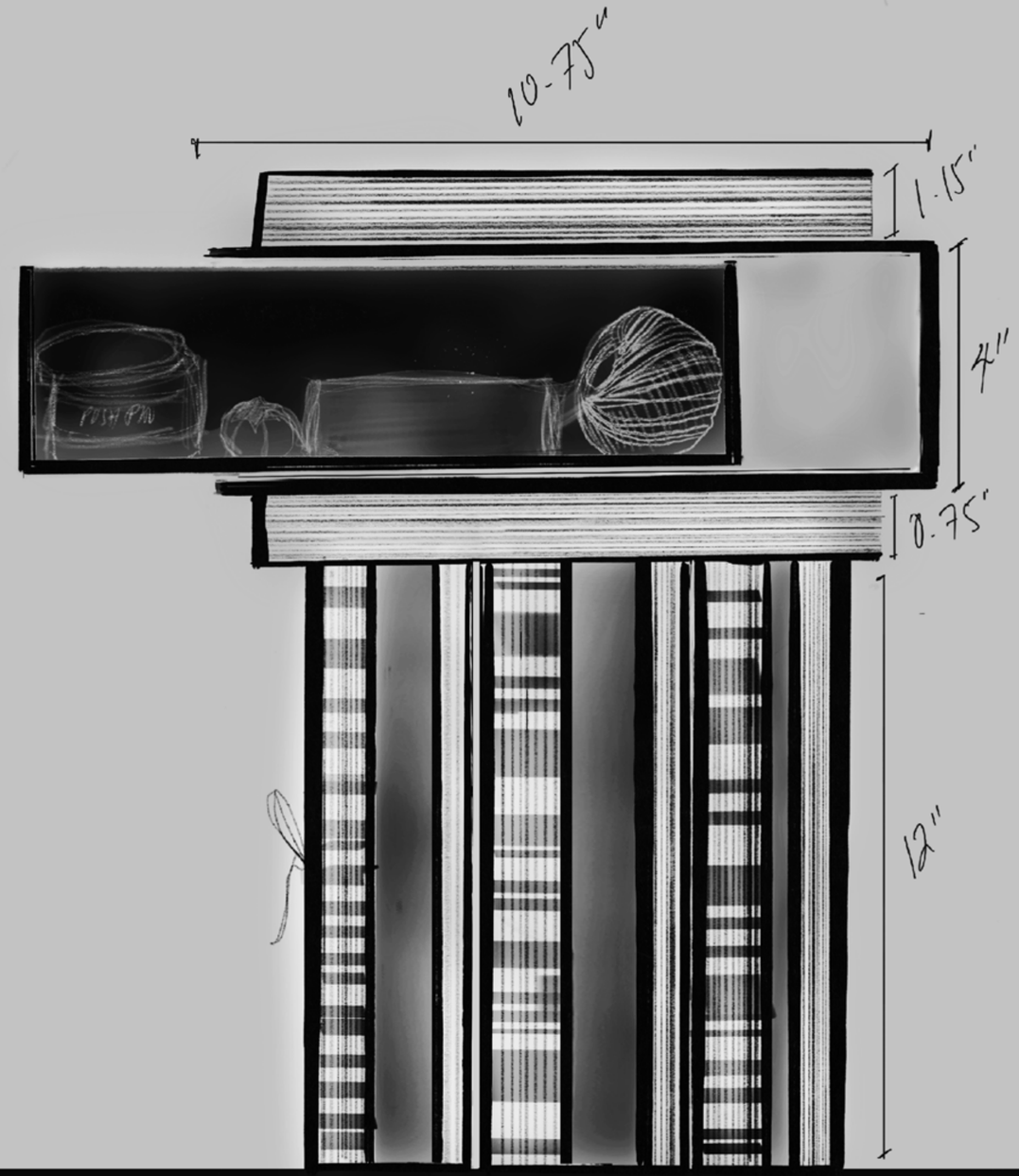
use artwork

more volumetrically

→ more spacially

think about scale




10.75"
1.15"
4"
0.75"
12"
PUSH PIN





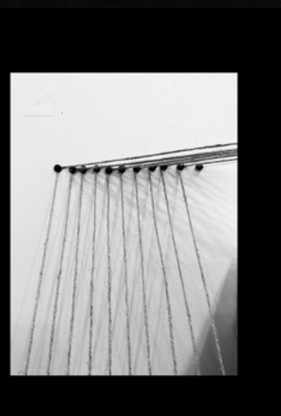
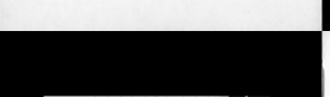
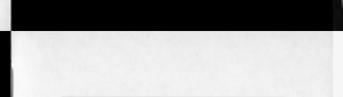
First Aid

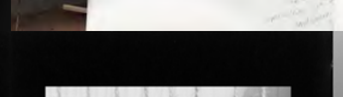


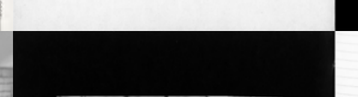




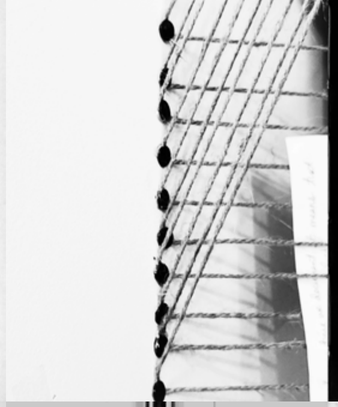

ROTATION
to annotate, to listen, to learn, to tell, to make legible
to organize, to unravel, to perform, to hold, to carry, to support, to give attention to...
working with the fragments
a system for arranging and re-arranging thoughts...a form of note-making released from the note-book...
a space for working ideas, a space for unfinished thoughts...
MATERIALS:
• 22 black pushpins
• 3 A beige notebook (8.5" x 5.5" x 0.25")
• 1 black notebook (8.25" x 5.125" x 0.5")
• 1 Xiaygirl coffee-table book
• 2 Ring Bong Earjun
• twine
• t-pins
• post-it notes
• gravity
OPERATIONS:
• pull
• wrap
• tie
• push
• pin
• place

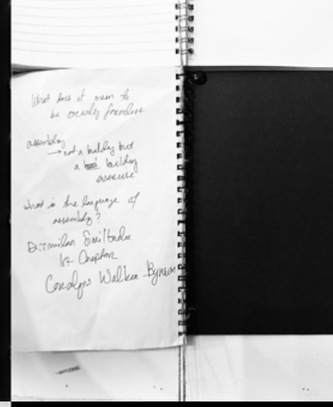



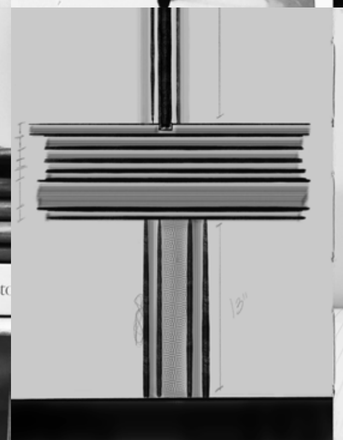
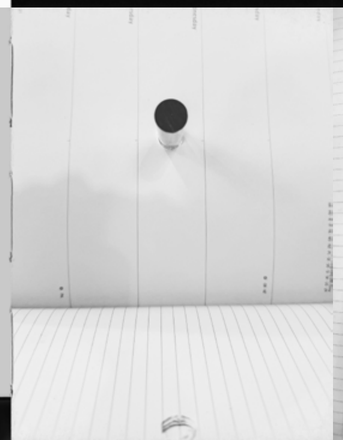
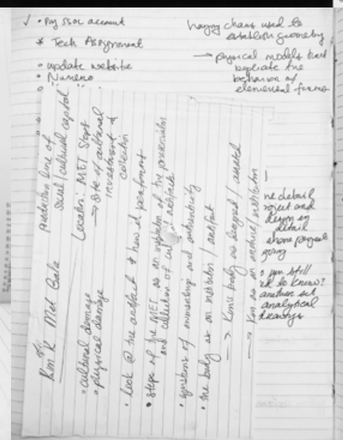


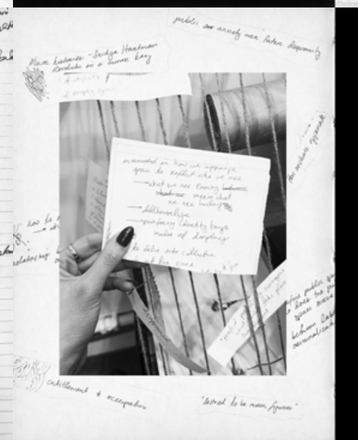







Playgirl The Official Histo



Wrapping chairs used for exhibition processing
→ physical models test replicate the behaviour of elaborated forms
credit card delivering
Gallery Manager
Pearl Benjamin Stephens
→ Dennis Khlentzos Bailey
→ Mechan (one man show)
→ can't get the TVs nearby
→ pick-up June 15th
(Dennis said takes 4 days to send the agreement)
→ 20-25 10/6
→ need 3/4 footage of the TVs
→ if they can pack it
→ confirm pick-up on 15th
→ 3-4 by install process




A READER'S HANDBOOK

I like to think of reading as a form of practice. The space of a book is both intimate and collective, passed between hands and held by them.

It is an active space—one of connection and conversation. And it is an expansive space—of unfurling, unfolding, unraveling.

I have books upon books that I rarely open, but I know they are there, and therefore, they support me.

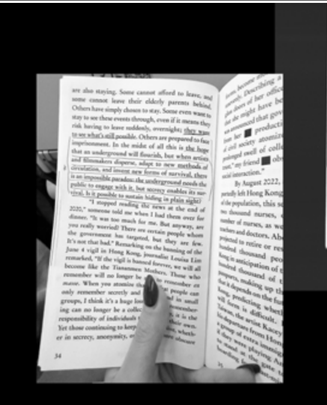
They are my foundation, as my words are my foundation. And as my words unfurl, so too do these books, the ideas they contain, the thoughts they provoke, and the friendships that weave in and out of them.

What follows is a collection of publications I have held in my hands, documented, and shared alongside a selection of annotated texts that have become formative to my research, thinking, and "practice." Many of these publications were gifted to me, some were exciting discoveries, some contain my own writing, and some were written and published by people I love.


A RAGE IN HARLEM
JUNE JORDAN
ARCHITECTURE NIKIL SAVAL
Television
KANDIS WILLIAMS: A SURFACE
EBONY & IVY
SCHOOLS

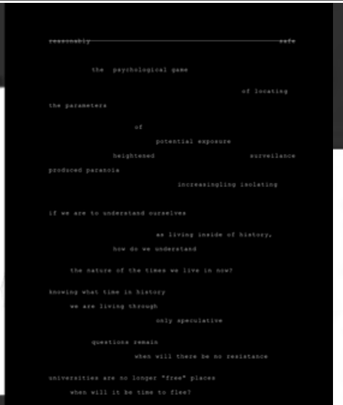

CARRON COMPOSIT
DAN SPARCKES
LINA BIBARS AND THE FIGHT TO THE DEATH
JG BALLARD
deem
Venus in Two Acts


KISSES

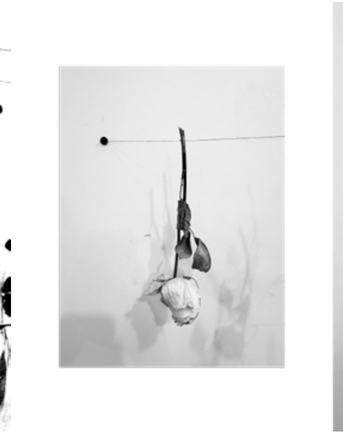


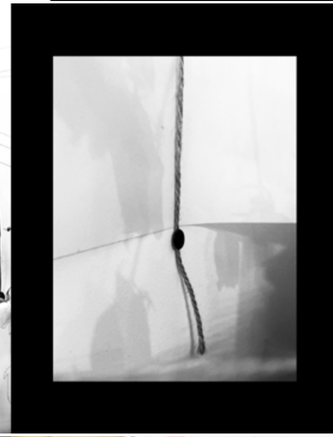

the red zone
the crackdown
fear
paranoia
this environment demands
what actions are still possible
collapsing infrastructures
disappearing university jobs
denied visas
imperiled government funding
how can they endure?
they want to see what's still possible
an underground will flourish
artists disperse
adapt new forms
survival is
an impossible paradox
but secrecy
enables
hiding in plain sight
excerpts from
Xie, Tiffany. On and Off-Screen Imaginaries.
New York: Primary Information, 2024.

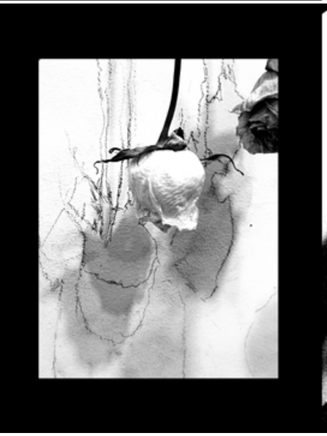

This page and previous page:
Tiffany Xie, stills from What Rolls the Invisible, 2023.

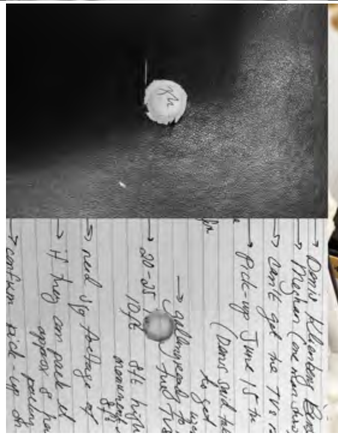



MATERIALS
10 black pushpins
2 strands twine
6 strands of thread
3 dozen roses
1 roll of tracing paper
1 acrylic rod
gravity
OPERATIONS
pin
roll
wrap
tie
thread
balance
place
stack









S C R O L L

I keep circling around ideas of the scroll as both a mediadic form and an intellectual logic. Describing the printed pages of her work, *Too Salty Too Wet 更咸更濕*, as "a hellish scroll," Tiffany Sia places the contents of her book in conversation with *The Hell Scroll*, a 12th century Japanese scroll depicting the seven lesser hells.[1]

The mediatic space of the scroll, however, takes many forms and carries many meanings. For Sia the scroll format is treated not only as a referential object, but as a site of communication across spatial and temporal distances.

As Joan Kee has argued, the scroll develops, through the hands of various artists, as a method of referential exchange and conversation in which the model of the ancient scroll, "its histories, politics, and above all its cultures can serve as a point of reference able to initiate self-transformation for viewers and creators both."[2]

As the space of the scroll has traditionally been used to depict narratives occurring within the context of particular landscapes, the scroll itself functions as an intermediary space of relation, straddling categorization between the printed page and installation. "Exceeding matters of technique or even authorial choice," Kee writes, "the hanging scroll format structures the conditions of viewing and reading, the practice of which is inescapably social…"[3]

1 Tiffany Sia, *Too Salty Too Wet 更咸更濕*, 4.
2 Kee, Joan. *The Geometries of Afro Asia: Art Beyond Solidarity*. 137.
3 Kee, Joan. *The Geometries of Afro Asia: Art Beyond Solidarity*. 140.

S C R O L L

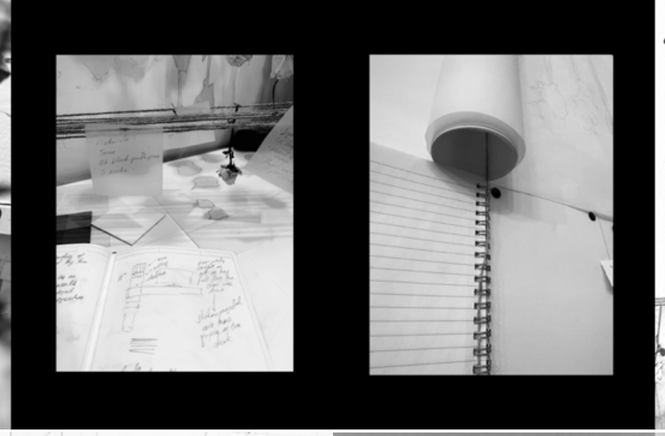
> I've always had trouble throwing away roses. As a result, my home is usually filled with vases of dead roses, my writing continues to be published under the name "Emily Mei-Mei Rose", and despite our best efforts to separate, my husband and I still—and will likely always remain "The Roses".[1]

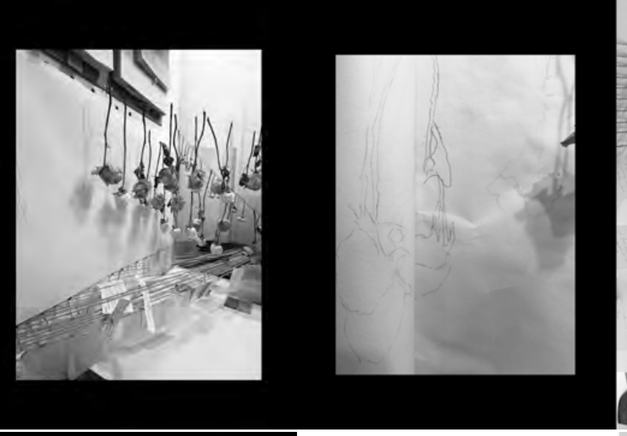
As part of my personal archive, I decided to hang my roses out to dry. In various states of decay, these roses act as a sort of timekeeper, becoming lighter, but more fragile as they wither, casting shifting shadows on the wall. In an effort to record this process, I developed a system for tracing the shadows on a continuous scroll.

> Thinking through the logics of the scroll as a relational practice—a method of recording, sharing, reading, viewing, and making legible—I can't help but think about the 12th-century Hell Scroll and the temporal expanse of archival practices. Over[2] the centuries, this scroll has survived many Hells, circulating through various media and called upon by artists such as Sia, as they grapple with the realities of their own collapsing worlds. Upon viewing this project, one critic commented that

it seems to be about "what stays"—paper traces, traditions such as hanging roses, and ideas that continue after the writing has been lost—things that overcome time. I'm inclined to think that she was right[3]. But perhaps, more so, this project is about the things we hold onto and the ways in which they weave through and support a form of practice.

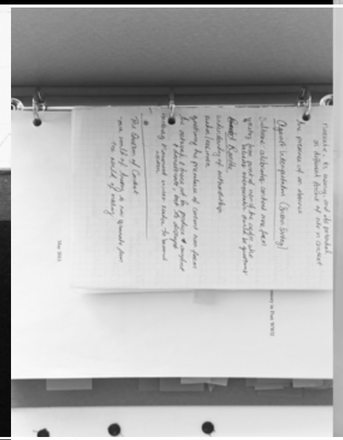

Playgirl The Official History of a Cult Magazine

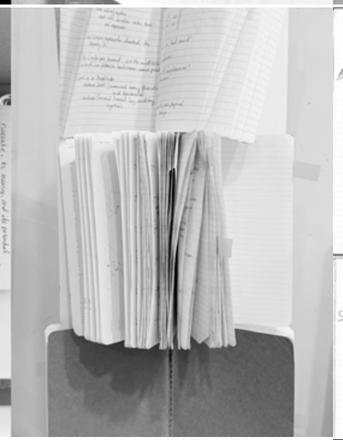


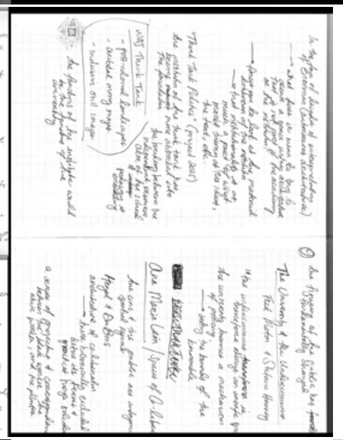



OPERATIONS:
• pull
• wrap
• tie
• push
• pin
• stitch
• hang

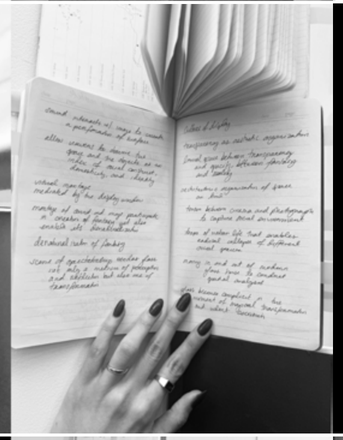

MATERIALS LIST:
• 4 cloth binders
(12.6" x 2" x 10.5" each)
• 22 black pushpins
• twine
• 5 t-pins
• thread
• notebooks from my foundation

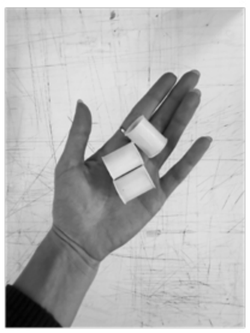


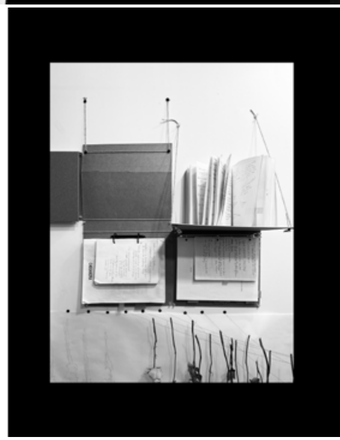


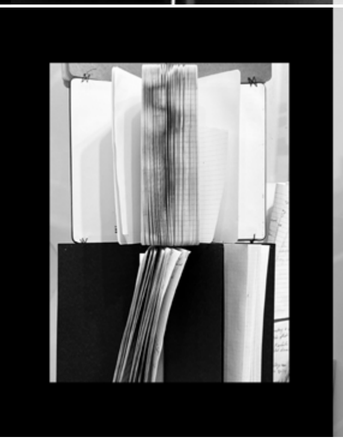


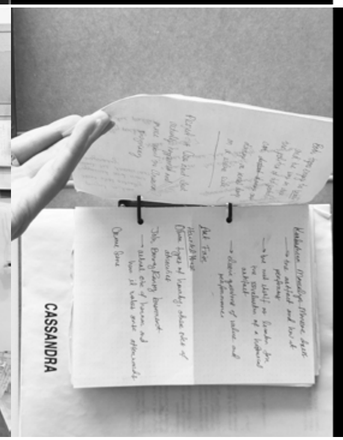

Frankenstein ideal

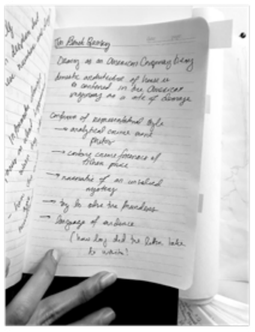


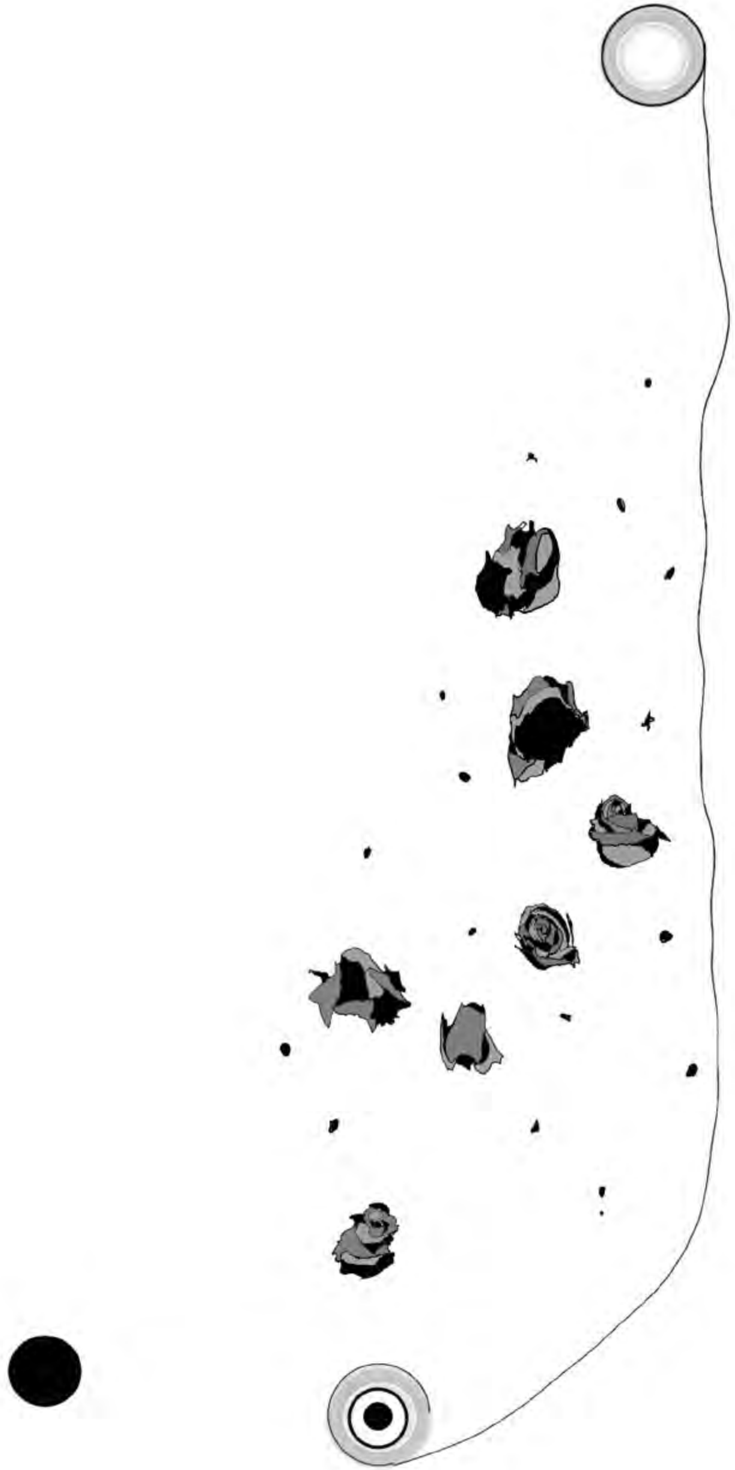







CASSANDRA





S T I T C H

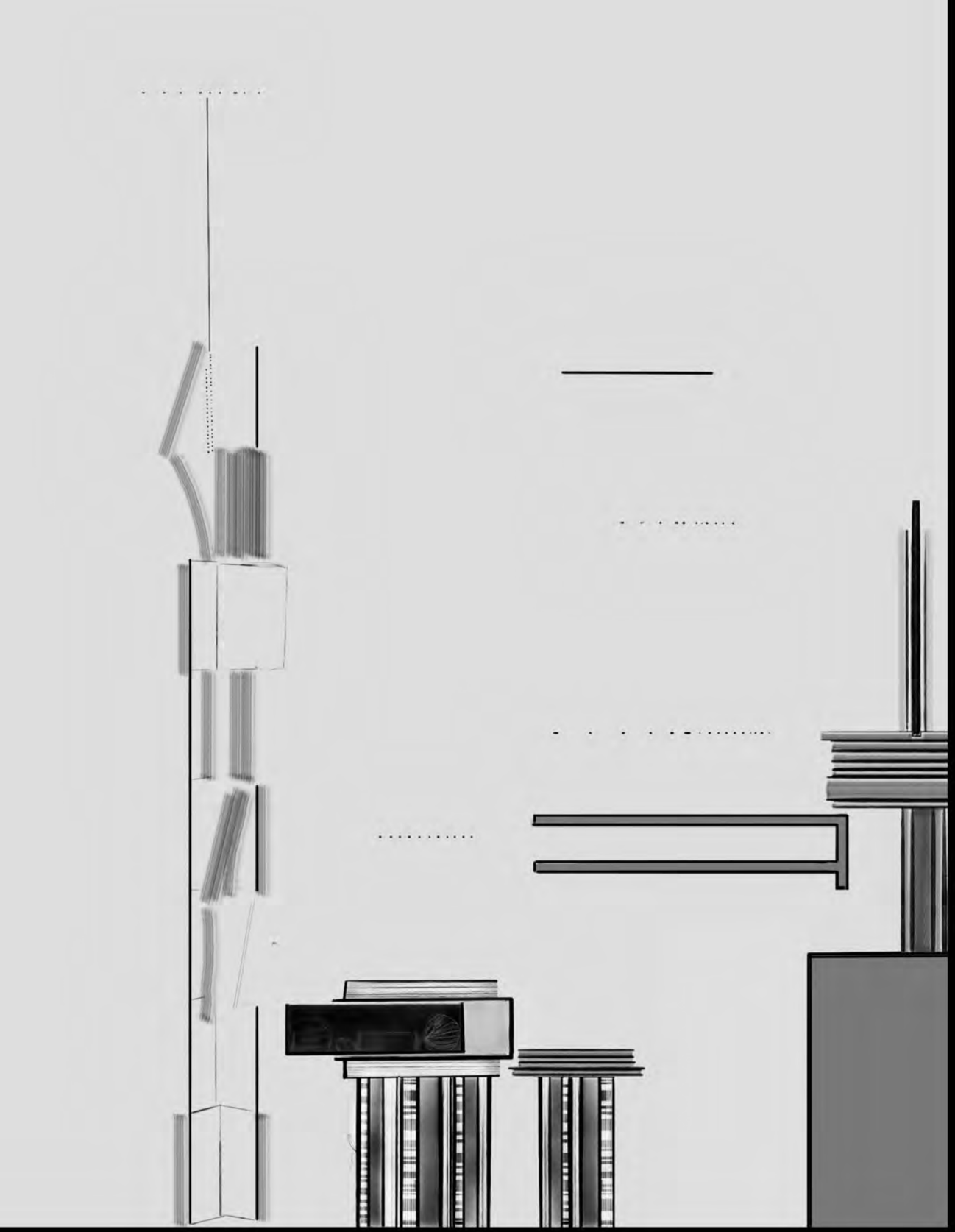
I've come to think of this project as a series of unravelings. In many ways, the final iteration of my structure is an unraveling of my previous work.

Ideas of decay, fragility, durability, and support thread through my project. Working with the notebooks that were previously tucked into the foundation of my structure, I wanted to re-arrange my structure to create a system through which they could both stand alone and support each other—a system through which they could breathe, remain open, and become fully accessible to anyone who wished to browse their contents or take a page.

Stitching the notebooks together along their spines, I was able to create a column that creeps up the entirety of my workspace. Suspended from one of the floating shelves I had previously made using binders that contain my printed archive of annotated readings, the notebooks now stand one atop the other, their pages opening to the room.

Through this process, I was able to find a relationship between stitching and scrolling. To think through what it means to create space for processing.

Adopting the scroll as a technology of unfurling and a space of relation, this object and my project as a whole follow the conceptual and organizational logic of the scroll—in all its iterations—as a mediatic format to create and hold space for relation-building between disparate yet mutually supportive practices.



HANDBOOK OF CARE

to & from

> I've been thinking about *no place* and I've been thinking about *practice*. I've been thinking about what it means to practice in the space of no place. What are the things that anchor us, support us, hold us? What do we hold on to?

I have been thinking about the archive—what it means to unravel, what it means to return, to rewrite, to reorganize, to revisit, to create something new.

> I've been thinking about the *undercommons* and Fred Moten. I've been thinking about the limits of possibility and the conditions of possibility.
>
> I've been thinking about sustainability—of this space, of my work, of my friendships, and of this world.
>
> > I look at the things on my wall and realize that I am surrounded by the conditions I have made for myself from the gifts I have been given. I am surrounded by Kandis, Armando, David, and Juan—some of them are dead, and some of them are living—and they all support me.

I am surrounded by the things I love, given to me by those I love. I am surrounded by things I do not let myself forget, and I am surrounded by things that do not let me forget them. Sometimes, I feel as though I am lost, but then I look up and realize there is something to cling to.

> For me, these perseverances are the papers that cling to the wall, the fragments of collective utterances, the fragments of life still hanging on as we watch our world crumble. Nothing seems complete, and perhaps this is a good thing, though it carries a sadness.
>
> It is perhaps within that practice, within that space that is *no place*, that practice that is undefined, that we might find something to hold onto. That we might begin to unfurl, thread together, and pull the strings into some cohesive entanglement that holds us.

TO BE CONTINUED...

EMILY MEI-MEI TAW