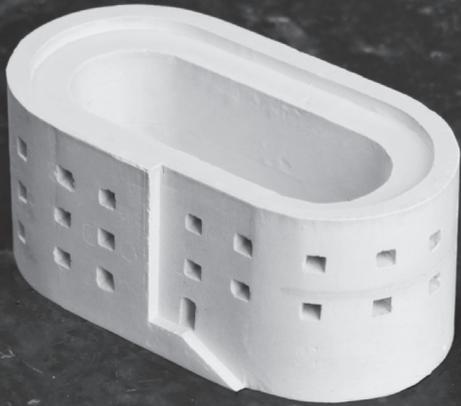


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SAN ROCCO ISLANDS

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San Rocco
Dorsoduro 1685/A
I-30123 Venezia
+39 041 0994628
www.sanrocco.info
mail@sanrocco.info

Editor
Matteo Chidoni

Editorial Board
Matteo Costanzo, Francesca
Pellicciari, Giovanni Piovone,
Giovanna Silva, Pier Paolo
Tamburelli

Graphic Design
pupilla grafik, Salottobuono,
Paolo Carpi

Copy Editor
Krystina Stermole

Website
Michele Marchetti

Administration
Ludovico Centis

San Rocco is an idea by:
2A+P/A, baukuh, Stefano
Craziani, Office KGDVS, pupilla
grafik, Salottobuono, Giovanna
Silva

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On the previous page: model of Fort Boyard by MONADNOCK. Photograph by Bas Princen

Fort Boyard: the Voluntary Prison of Architecture or the futile frolic of Sebastien de Vauban? Above all, it is the perfect refuge for sidelined divas and former starchitects who are handpicked to live out their last days in this secure fortress in the middle of the Atlantic. They are fiercely attracted to this remote community because of the overexposure it provides thanks to the television shows broadcast from it around the world. Once you're in, this bastion of smugness and divertissement forces you to participate in game shows as one of their flamboyant cast. Tough competitions play themselves out around the clock, including solving de Vauban's riddle that "it would be easier to catch the moon with your teeth than build a replica of Fort Boyard", and the participants are guaranteed to have the full attention of all cameras present. The purpose of victory is ambiguous, as the divas tend to flee at the first opportunity due to a lack of elegant distractions. The architects, on the other hand, being accustomed to providing free labour, remain there until the end of their days, surrounded by the joy of perfect geometry. *-Job Floris*

EDITORIAL

An island is any piece of land that is surrounded by water.

An island is any object lost in an endless extension of a uniform element. As such, the island is *isolated*.

The island is by definition remote, separated, intimately *alternative*. The island is *elsewhere*.

Islands can be natural or artificial: atolls, rocks, volcanos, oases, spaceships, oil rigs, carriers.

In his *L'île déserte*, Gilles Deleuze divides islands into the *oceanic* and the *continental*. Oceanic ones are “originary, essential islands”. Continental ones are “accidental, derivative islands”.

San Rocco 1 will try to use *oceanic* and *continental* as categories to explore *the possibility of architectural islands*, either literally or by analogy.

Oceanic islands are the *radical* islands, truly *isolated*, not only in space, but also in time. Oceanic islands have no past. Oceanic islands are immediately a “new world”, a reconstruction, a miniature, a utopia. Oceanic islands need to contain everything, because they cannot rely on anything else. Oceanic islands are “a world”, one that appeared all of a sudden. Oceanic islands are fortresses (and fortresses are always doomed to surrender). Contrary to an archipelago, which is *a project of a civilization*, an oceanic island is a project of a world (and *a project of escape*).

Continental islands, on the contrary, are the product of the erosion of a continent. Continental islands are linked to something that exists close by or that existed sometime before. Like icebergs, they are the ruins of what previously contained them. Continental islands are fragments. They presuppose a totality (either lost or promised), to which they belong. Continental islands can be part of a larger ensemble: a continent, an archipelago, a city. Continental islands are “urban” islands. They host the domesticated heterotopias that are necessary in a city: prisons, zoos, hospitals, theme parks.

TWO DESERTED ISLANDS

Mark Lee

Islands and Boundaries

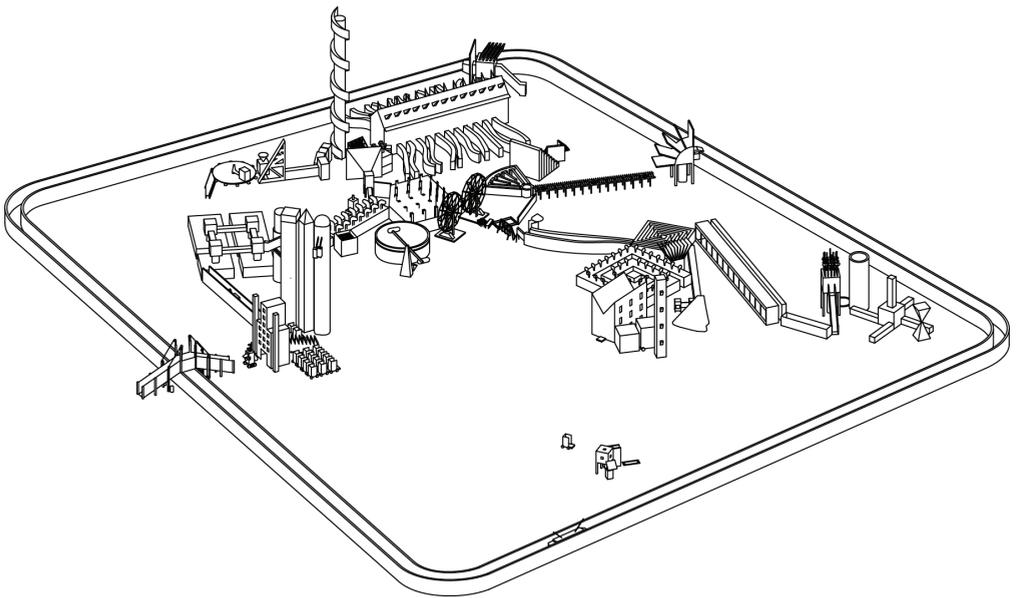
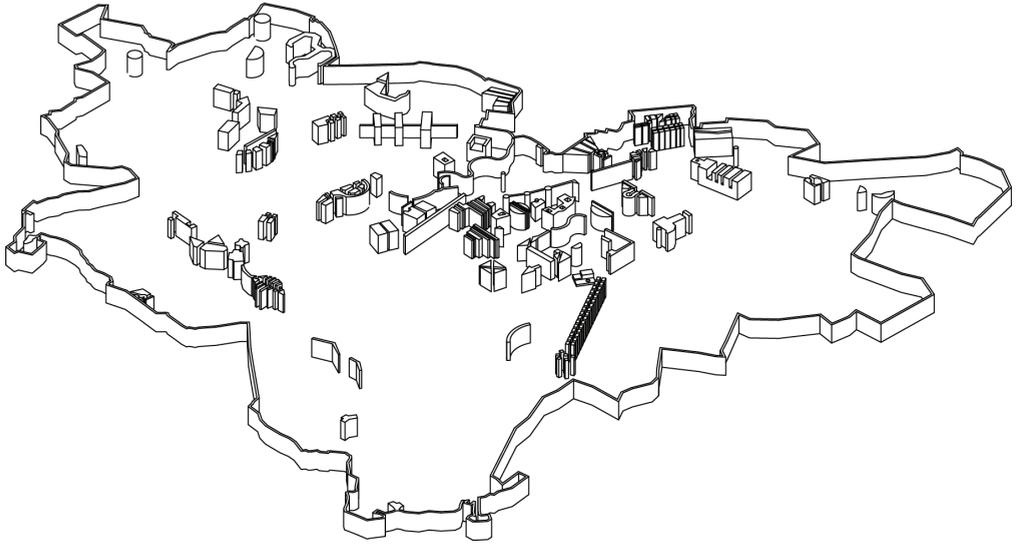
While recent research in architecture has generated a set of theoretical inquiries into the dissolution of boundaries, this trajectory is being countered by the opposite propensity for a search for limits and the decisive definition of borders. On one hand, the impetus behind the dissolution of boundaries, whether substantiated by desires for interconnectivity, indeterminacy or multiplicity, has seemingly reached an impasse. On the other hand, the proliferation of privatized, single-use programs such as gated communities, special economic zones or tax havens has reinvigorated a renewed interest in segregated organizations and their impact on cities.

Consequently, the study of island and archipelago organizations and their potential as generative models in the contemporary city has gained momentum within current discourse. Rather than viewing such island-like monocultures as fissures within the inclusive mentality of globalization, these organizational models provide opportunities to promote alternative forms of connectivity through the precise demarcation of limits and borders. Characterized by impermeable, hard boundaries and limited checkpoints, island and archipelago organizations are spatial segregation taken to the extreme, a world of fragmentation where definition triumphs over blurring, separation over combination, destination over nomadism.

Two Berlin Islands

Given Berlin's seven-hundred-year history as a repository of island organizations of varying degrees of effectiveness, certain models that responded to the city's specific social political circumstances at

Facing page: O. M. Ungers's
"Green Archipelago" and J.
Hejduk's "Victims"





Left: figure ground of
"Berlin as Green
Archipelago"



Right: redistributed figure
ground of "Berlin as Green
Archipelago"

a particular moment in time often take on a life of their own and are extrapolated from their original context to become global models. Two speculative models of "archipelago" organizations – the agglomeration of dense programs segregated from one another – stood out as prescient examples in exploring the relationship between island organizations and metropolitan forces.

The first is Oswald Mathias Ungers's "Berlin as Green Archipelago" of 1977, where depopulation is treated as a future model for the walled-in city. The second is John Hejduk's "Victims" project of 1984, in which anthropomorphic buildings wander within a walled-in camp. Although different in scale and intention, both models are composed of isolated, dense and defined artefacts surrounded by residual and un-programmed spaces contained within a hard boundary. Both are paradigmatic models for the city; both rely on the amount of distance between islands for their efficacies; both are models of smaller islands within a larger island. They differ, however, when examined through Gilles Deleuze's distinction between "continental" and "oceanic" islands, for one model is the former and the other represents the latter. While both seemingly take on an isolationist posture, each instigates new forms of connectivity through the introduction of hard boundaries.

“Berlin as Green Archipelago”

In 1977, O. M. Ungers Berlin collaborated with a group of architects on an urban project for the city of West Berlin. Titled “Berlin as Green Archipelago”, the project consisted of approximately sixty isolated “urban islands” floating within the ocean of open spaces surrounded by the Berlin Wall.

Characterized by the extreme spatial contrasts between enclaves of densely urban fabric versus the vast emptiness caused by wartime destruction, the city of West Berlin was contemplating its future at a time of urban crisis and depopulation. Ungers realized that the centre of the city could no longer be maintained by the conventional approach of restoration and that a new model was needed as a response to its population shrinkage while being situated in a walled-in island with definitive borders. But instead of viewing the post-war city as a crisis that needed rectification, Ungers radically treated the existing condition of the as-found city as a projective model for Berlin’s future.

After surveying the remains of the city, parcels within the existing urban fabric were first selected by Ungers and his team for their respective historic, social and environmental identities and their relevance for West Berlin. Through a process of demolition and infill, the enclaves were then sculpted, defined and subsequently turned into archaeological artefacts liberated from the anonymity of the city and transformed into quasi-islands. The empty spaces between the islands were then to be filled in by a forest over time, thereby turning West Berlin into an archipelago of dense urban islands in a sea of greenery. While the green forest is a mere infill compensating for Berlin’s former density – a place-holder for the city’s future growth – the islands/enclaves containing Berlin’s quintessential DNA were preserved and embalmed by the forest to ensure the continuity of the city’s identity.

Although generated as a temporal response to a specific geopolitical context of the time, and often considered a transitional purgatory model for Berlin’s future growth, the “Berlin as Green Archipelago” project produced a paradigmatic model for island organizations that transcended its origins. Unlike Colin Rowe’s “Collage City”, Ungers’s “Dialectical City” was achieved through the clear definition of the borders of each entity, separated by an abundance of space without overlap or collision. Instead of healing the wounds of the war, Ungers exacerbated the differences among the islands through definition and distance, turning Berlin into a Noah’s Ark of the city’s future.

Victims

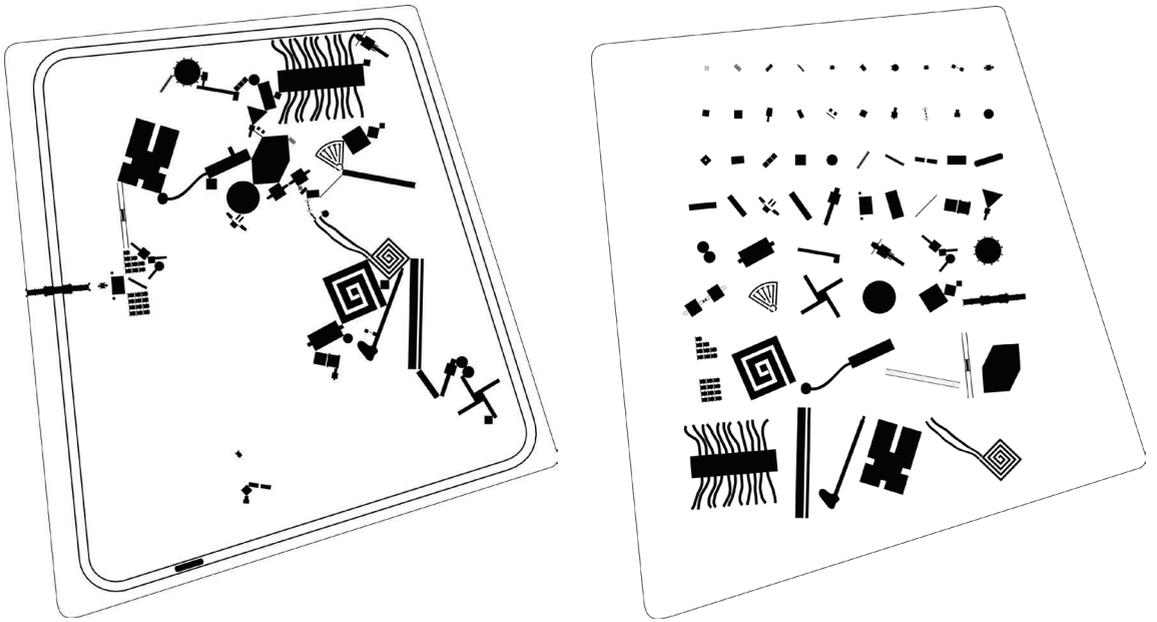
John Hejduk began his theatre masque series two years after Ungers's "Berlin as Green Archipelago". Named after rituals of Carnival, the masque series forwarded a theatrical model for the city whereby buildings were scripted as characters that played out their respective roles. Starting with the "Berlin Masque" of 1979, the series developed into the "Lancaster / Hanover Masque" of 1982 and finally culminated in the 1984 project entitled "Victims".

"Victims" was designed for the Prinz-Albrecht-Palais competition for a memorial park on an old Gestapo site in Berlin. Planned as an incremental piece to be created over two thirty-year periods, the project tested the transferability of the islands-within-an-island model from the urban scale in Ungers's "Green Archipelago" to an architectural scale and, in many ways, became a microcosm of Ungers's project.

In "Victims", Hejduk defined and enclosed the site with two layers of tall hedges, between which a tram circulates. Not unlike the double-tiered Berlin Wall with limited checkpoints, the site for "Victims" is entered through a controlled entry point by way of a bus stop from which visitors proceed over a drawbridge and through a gatehouse. Within the hedges the site is colonized by a grid of young evergreens, which was to reach full maturity over the course of the first thirty-year cycle. Over the second thirty-year cycle, Hejduk offered the citizens of Berlin the opportunity to insert any number of his sixty-seven anthropomorphic structures, or "Victims", into the site, as well as the opportunity to decide upon the time sequence of their construction and their relationships with one another.

As with his earlier "masques", Hejduk emphasized the individual, discrete buildings by employing elemental biomorphism and typological variations to create the mythologized structures. Often situated on motorized wheels or limb-like supports, the structures are characterized by a lack of stability or permanence. Each structure is complete and figural; each structure is an island in its own right. But unlike Hejduk's previous masques, in which the transient individual structures are isolated, most of the structures in "Victims" are precariously connected to one another, touching one another without interlocking. The "Victims" maintain their autonomy while implying a loosely held together network.

While Aldo Rossi's "Analogous City" treated the city as a static stage set and backdrop for theatrical life, Hejduk's version treated the city itself as the accumulation of dynamic individuals. Whereas



Ungers provided stability in an unstable scene by treating the city as a museum of islands, Hejduk injected instability into a stable and quarantined city in which his “Victims” oscillate between the roles of contemplation and participation within a walled island.

Desert Islands

Within Deleuze’s endogenous framework of “Desert Islands”, “continental islands” refer to the islands formed by separating from the continent, and “oceanic islands” refer to those formed by originating from the ocean. In the case of continental islands, the ocean is understood as being always on top of the earth; in the case of oceanic islands, the earth is always conceived of as being under the ocean. Hejduk’s islands, being imported from without, are therefore essentially “oceanic”, while Ungers’s islands, having once been part of a larger urban fabric, are fundamentally “continental”.

While different in origin, both continental and oceanic models rely on detachment as a means of generating an alternative connectivity. In both Hejduk’s and Ungers’s Berlin islands, the hard boundaries around the sites form new universes and allow for the smaller islands within to be removed from any sense of scale or reference. Although the scale of

Left: figure ground of “Victims”

Right: redistributed figure ground of “Victims”

Hejduk's islands resides between building and subject while the scale of Ungers's islands is situated between urban and metropolitan, both the "Berlin as Green Archipelago" and "Victims" projects are heuristic models of island organizations that transcend scale. This is evident in Ungers's drawings, in which the islands of urban fabric are given architectural form as single buildings, as well as in Hejduk's drawings, where individual transients gather to generate the city.

Consider a speculative redistribution of the smaller islands into a gridiron structure for both Berlin models: detached from their original relationship with one another, the smaller islands begin to relinquish their respective autonomies and form a new taxonomy of parts. The logic of this alchemical alphabet soup, in which new forms of connectivity begin to emerge within hard boundaries, is the precursor to what the "red follies" did for Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villette or the "preservation islands" did for Rem Koolhaas's plan for La Defense. Hejduk's and Ungers's two Berlin islands paved the way for the two Paris islands which came later, which indicates that their generative potential in architectural and urban design has yet to make itself manifest.

* The author would like to thank Christian Seidel, Christian Rutherford, Gabriel Coin and the students at the Technical University of Berlin for their research and drawings of "Berlin as Green Archipelago", and Lindsay Erickson for the drawings of "Victims".

OCEANIC

LETTERS FROM HAWAII: A SELECTION OF EXCERPTS BY MARK TWAIN

YellowOffice

Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910), aka Mark Twain, wrote twenty-five letters from Hawaii for The Sacramento Union.

At about 31 years of age, Twain arrived in Honolulu aboard the steamer Ajax on Sunday, 18 March 1866, and spent four months and one day on the islands. At the time, the archipelago of Hawaii, which was still known as the Sandwich Islands, was ruled by the House of Kamehameha, but the Americans had already started to show an interest in it.

After the 1887 Constitution and the establishment of the short-lived Republic of Hawaii (1894–98) and the U.S.'s annexation of what became known as the Territory of Hawaii (1898), Hawaii finally became one of the United States of America in 1959.

Apart from engaging in various adventures like climbing to the summit of Kilauea, hiking through forests, surfing and talking to the natives, Twain also studied the local economy and its potential for the Californian market. Twain's "Letters from Hawaii" thus offers the most important – and brilliant – description of the archipelago. It is Twain's first work; it was from this experience that he became inspired to pursue a literary career. And there's more: it is easy to believe that this collection of letters has been a model for later adventure literature, even that of today. J. J. Abrams, Damon Lindelof and Jeffrey Lieber, the authors of the immensely popular television series "Lost", may have gotten several ideas for the show's plot and locations from these letters.

This theory seems to find proof in the fact that the series was filmed entirely on the island of Oahu.

What follows is a series of excerpts from Twain's Hawaiian letters.

Letter 2

Honolulu, March 1866

The Pacific Ocean

"... [A]nd all the days of our boyhood we read how that infatuated old ass, Balboa, looked out from the top of a high rock upon a broad sea as calm and peaceful as a sylvan lake... and named his great discovery 'Pacific' – thus uttering a lie which will go on deceiving generation after generation of students while the old ocean lasts... for the other seven or eight months of the year one can calculate pretty regularly in the head winds and stern winds, and winds on the quarter, and winds several points abaft the beam, and winds that blow straight up from the bottom and still other winds that come so straight down from above that the fore-stuns'l-spanker-jib-boom makes a hole through them as clean as a telescope.

Letter 3

Honolulu, March 1866

The Steamer Ajax

It is a matter of the utmost importance to the United States that her trade with these islands should be carefully fostered and augmented. Because – it pays... Let Congress moderate the high duties somewhat, secondly – let the islands be populated with Americans. To accomplish the latter, a steamer is indispensable. The sailing vessel can carry freight easily enough, but they [are] too slow and uncertain to build up the passenger trade from which immigration and permanent settlement here must gradually result. In California people are always pressed for time..."

Letter 4

Honolulu, March 1866

The Islands

"Oahu loomed high, rugged, treeless, barren, black and dreary, out of the sea, and in the distance Molokai lay like a homely swaybacked whale on the water... As we rounded the promontory of Diamond Head (bringing into view a grove of coconut trees, first ocular proof that we were in the tropics), we ran up the Stars and the Stripes at the main spencer gaff and the hawaiian flag at the fore... The eight stripes refer to the eight islands which are inhabited; the other four are barren rocks incapable of supporting a population."

Honolulu

"The town of Honolulu (said to contain between twelve and fifteen thousand inhabitants) is spread over a dead level; has streets from twenty to thirty feet wide, solid and level as a floor, most of them straight as a line and a few as crooked as a corkscrew; houses one and two stories high, built of wood... [and] in the place of the customary infernal geranium languishing in dust and general debility on tin-roofed rear additions or in bedroom windows, I saw luxurious banks and thickets of flowers, fresh as a meadow after a rain, and glowing without the richest dyes; in the place of the dingy horrors of the 'Willows', and the painful sharp-pointed shrubbery of that funny caricature of nature which they call 'South Park', I saw huge-bodied, wide-spreading forest trees, with strange names and stranger appearance – trees that cast a shadow like a thundercloud, and were

able to stand alone without being tied to green poles;..."

Cats

"... [I]n place of those vile, tiresome, stupid everlasting goldfish, wiggling around glass globes and assuming all shades and degrees of distortion through the magnifying and diminishing qualities of their transparent prison houses, I saw cats – Tom cats, Mary Ann cats, long-tailed cats, bobtail cats, blind cats, one-eyed cats, walleyed cats, cross-eyed cats, gray cats, black cats, white cats, yellow cats, striped cats, spotted cats, tame cats, wild cats, singed cats, individual cats, group of cats, platoons of cats, regiments of cats, armies of cats, multitudes of cats, millions of cats and all of them sleek, fat, lazy and sound asleep..."

Letter 5

Honolulu, March 1866

Goods

"You must have fruit. You feel the want to eat here... You pay about twenty-five cents... a dozen for oranges; and so delicious are they that some people frequently eat a good many at luncheon... Bananas are worth about a bit of a dozen – enough for that overrated fruit. Strawberries are plenty, and as cheap as the bananas... I have the general idea that tamarinds are rather sour this year... Mangoes and guavas are plenty... The limes are excellent, but not very plenty... Ice is worth a hundred dollars a ton in San Francisco, and five or six hundred here, and if the steamer continues to run, a profitable trade may possibly be driven in the article hereafter."

Letter 6

Honolulu, March 1866

Horses

"I would like to have a gentle horse – a horse with no spirit whatever – a lame one if he had such a thing... I had no time to label him 'This is a horse', and so if the public took him for a sheep... I named him after this island, 'Oahu' (pronounced O-waw-hoo)... There is no regular livery stable in any part of the kingdom of Hawaii; therefore, unless you are acquainted with wealthy residents (who all have good horses), you must hire animals of the vilest description from the Kanakas... If you raise a row, he will get out by saying it was not himself who made the bargain with you, but his brother, 'who went out in the country this morning'. They always have a 'brother' to shift the responsibility upon."

The Heathen Temple

"This ancient temple was built of rough blocks of lava, and was a roofless inclosure, a hundred and thirty feet long and seventy wide... It is said that in old times thousands of human beings were slaughtered here, in the presence of multitudes of naked, whooping, and howling savages. If these mute stones could speak, what tales they could tell, what pictures they could describe, of fettered victims... of dense masses of dusky forms straining forward out of the gloom, ... of the dark pyramid of Diamond Head..."

Letter 7

Honolulu, March 1866

The Line

"Presently we came to a place where no grass grew – a wide expanse of deep sand. They

said it was an old battle-ground. . . . All sorts of bones could be found except skulls; but a citizen said, irreverently, that there had been an unusual number of 'skull hunters' there lately – a species of sportsmen I had never heard of before. . . . He said that when Kamehameha (who was at first merely a subordinate chief on the island of Hawaii) landed here, he brought a large army with him, and encamped at Waikiki. The Oahuans marched against him, and so confident were they of success that they readily acceded to a demand of their priests that they should draw a line where these bones now lie, and take an oath that, if forced to retreat at all, they would never retreat beyond this boundary. The priests told them that death and everlasting punishment would overtake any who violated the oath, and the march was resumed."

Letter 8
Honolulu, April 1866

Poi
"The poi looks like common flour paste, and is kept in large bowls formed of a species of gourd, and capable of holding from one to three or four gallons. Poi is the chief article of food among the natives, and is prepared from the kalo or taro plant. . . . All agree that poi will rejuvenate a man who is used up and his vitality almost annihilated by hard drinking, and that in some kinds of disease it will restore health after all medicines have failed. . . ."

Letter 10
Honolulu, April 1866
The Palmy Days of Whaling
"It is said that in the palmy days of whaling, fifteen or twenty years ago, they have

squandered as high as a million and a half in this port at the end of a successful voyage. There have been vast fleets of whaleships fitted out here and provisioned and recruited in a single year, in those days, and everything promises that the whaling interest will now move steadily forward, under the impetus of the long continued high rates of oil and bone, until it eclipses in importance any degree it has ever attained in former times. . . . and next year the 'palmy days' may come again, for everything that can be turned into a whale ship by any process known to art is being bought up or chartered in the East now for this trade, and in due time the icy solitudes of the north seas will once more become populous with the winged servants of commerce."

Letter 12
Honolulu, April 1866

The Suspension Bridge
"The Government of the Hawaiian Kingdom is composed of three estates, viz.: The King, the Nobles and the Commons or Representatives. . . . This Legislature is like all other Legislatures. A wooden-head gets up and proposes an utterly absurd some thing or other, and he and half a dozen other wooden-heads discuss it with windy vehemence for an hour. . . . Now, on one occasion, a Kanaka member, who paddled over here from some barren rock or other out yonder in the ocean – some scallawag who wears nothing but a pair of socks and a plug hat when he is at home, or possibly is even more scantily arrayed in the popular malo – got up and gravely gave notice of a bill to authorize the construction of a suspension bridge from

Oahu to Hawaii, a matter of a hundred and fifty miles! He said that natives would prefer it to the interisland schooners, and they wouldn't suffer from sea-sickness on it."

Letter 13
Honolulu, April 1866

Populating the Island
"The first business that was transacted to-day was the introduction of a bill to prohibit the intermarrying of old persons with young ones, because of the non-fruitfulness of such unions. . . . This may be convenient enough for the members, but it must necessarily be troublesome to the clerks and reporters. Then a special Committee reported back favorably a bill to prohibit Chinamen from removing their male children from the islands, and the report was adopted – which I thought was rather hard on the Chinamen."

Letter 14
Honolulu, April 1866

The Missionaries
". . . [W]hen I say that the Sandwich Islands missionaries are pious; hard-working; hard-praying; self-sacrificing; hospitable; devoted to the well-being of this people and the interests of Protestantism; bigoted; puritanical; slow; ignorant of all white human nature and natural ways of men, except the remnant of these things that are left in their own class or profession; old foggy – fifty years behind the age; uncharitable toward the weaknesses of the flesh; considering all shortcomings, faults and failings in the light of crimes, and having no mercy and no forgiveness for such – when I say this about the missionaries, I

do it with the explicit understanding that it is only my estimate of them – not that of a Higher Intelligence – not that of even other sinners like myself. It is only my estimate, and it may fall far short of being a just one."

Letter 15
Honolulu, June 1866

The Hornet on Fire
". . . [I] gave you the substance of a letter received here from Hilo by Walker, Allen & Co., informing them that a boat containing fifteen men, in a helpless and starving condition, had drifted ashore at Laupahoehoe, Island of Hawaii, and that they had belonged to the clipper ship *Hornet*, Mitchell master, and had been afloat on the ocean since the burning of that vessel, about one hundred miles north of the equator, on the 3rd of May – forty-three days. . . . The men seem to have thought in their own minds of the shipwrecked mariner's last dreadful resort – cannibalism; but they do not appear to have conversed about it. They only thought of the casting lots and killing one of their number as a possibility; but even when they were eating rags, and bone, and boots, and shell, and hard oak wood, they seem to have still had a notion that it was remote."

Letter 18
Honolulu, July 1866

Hawaii
". . . [A]nd at the bottom of the mountain he could see the home of the tufted cocoa palms and other species of vegetation that grow only in the sultry atmosphere of eternal Summers. He could see all the climes of the world at a single glance of the eye, and that

glance would only pass over a distance of eight or ten miles as the bird flies."

Letter 19
Honolulu, July 1866

James Cook, the Fake God
"Plain unvarnished history takes the romance out of Captain Cook's assassination, and renders a deliberate verdict of justifiable homicide. . . . When he landed at Kealakekua Bay, a multitude of natives, variously estimated at from ten to fifteen thousand, flocked about him and conducted him to the principal temple with more than royal honors – with honors suited to their chiefest god, for such they took him to be. They called him Lono – a deity who had resided at that place in a former age, but who had gone away and had ever since been anxiously expected back by the people. . . . The fraud which had served him so well was discovered at last. The natives shouted, 'He groans! – he is not a god!' and instantly they fell upon him and killed him."

Letter 21
Honolulu, July 1866

Two Independence Days in July
"It was the 31st of July, 1843. There was immense rejoicing on Oahu that day. The Hawaiian flag was flung to the breeze. The King and as many of his people as could get into the great stone church went there to pray, and the balance got drunk. The 31st of July is Independence Day in the Sandwich Islands, and consequently in these times there are two grand holidays in the Islands in the month of July. The Americans celebrate the 4th with great pomp and circumstance, and the natives

outdo them, if they can, on the 31st – and the speeches disgorged upon both occasions are regularly inflicted in cold blood upon the people by the newspapers, that have a dreary fashion of coming out just a level week after one has forgotten any given circumstance they talk about."

Letter 22
Honolulu, July 1866

The City of Refuge
"Here was the ancient City of Refuge – a vast enclosure, whose stone walls were twenty feet thick at the base, and fifteen or twenty feet high; an oblong square, a thousand and forty feet one way, and a fraction under seven hundred the other. Within this enclosure, in early times, have been three rude temples; each was 210 feet long by 100 wide, and thirteen high. In those days, if a man killed another anywhere on the island the relatives of the deceased were privileged to take the murderer's life; and then a chase for life and liberty began – the outlawed criminal flying through pathless forests and over mountain and plain, with his hopes fixed upon the protecting walls of the City of Refuge, and the avenger of blood following hotly after him! . . . Where did these isolated pagans get this idea of a City of Refuge – this ancient Jewish custom?"

Letter 23
Honolulu, September 1866

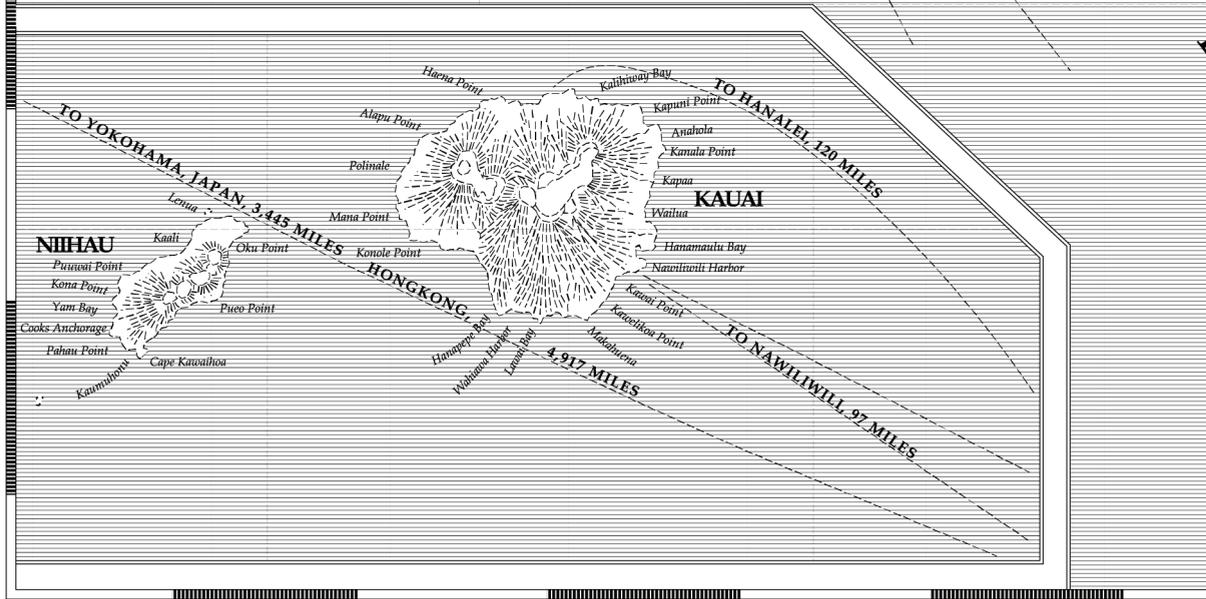
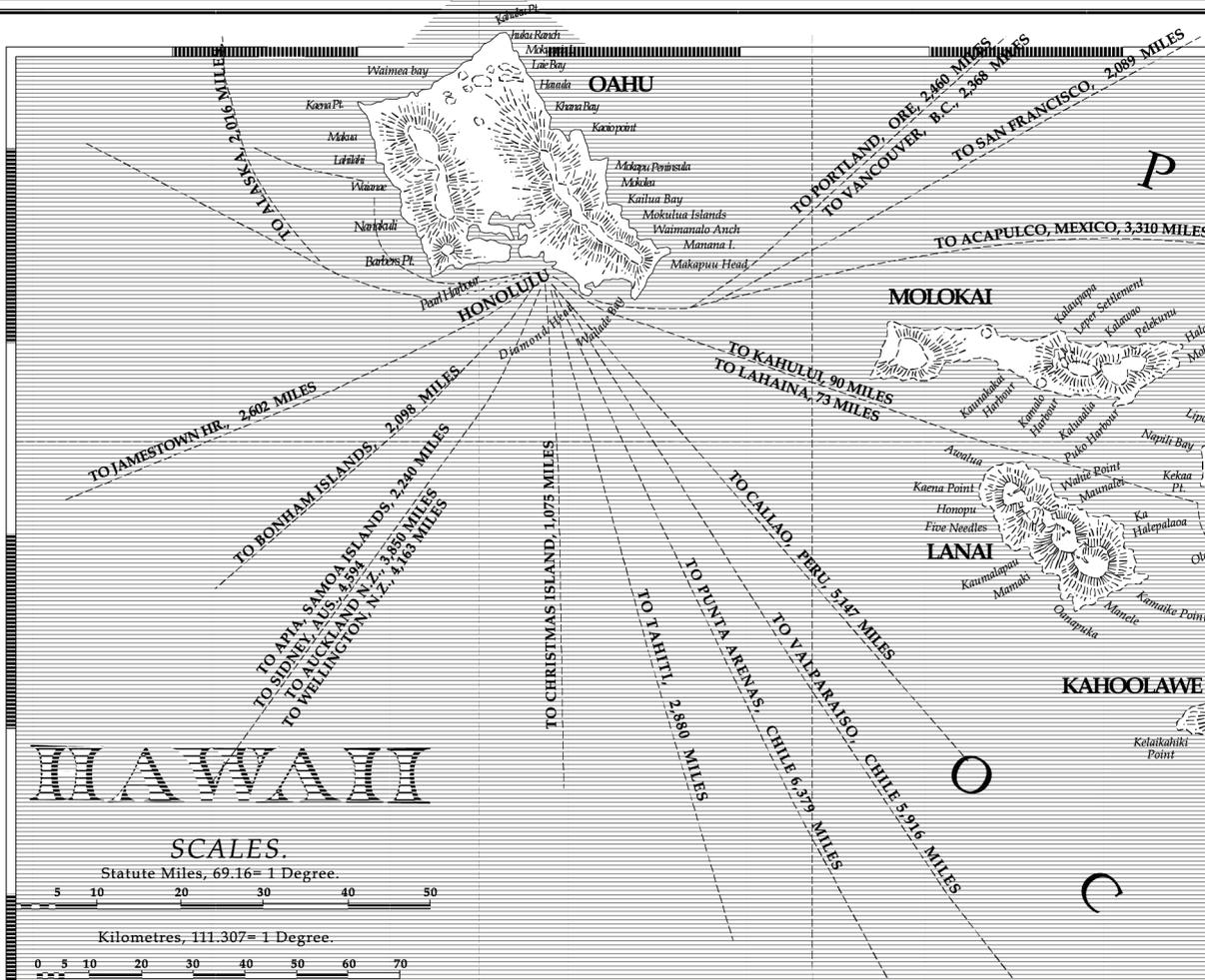
Sugar Plantation
"I have visited Haleakala, Kilauea, Wailuku Valley, the Petrified Cataracts, the Pathway of the Great Hog God – in a word, I have visited all the principal wonders of the island, and now I come to speak of one which, in its importance

to America, surpasses them all. A land which produces six, eight, ten, twelve, yea, even thirteen thousand pounds of sugar to the acre on unmanured soil! . . . This country is the king of the sugar world, as far as astonishing productiveness is concerned. . . . By late Patent Office Reports it appears that the average sugar yield per acre throughout the world ranges from 500 to 1,000 pounds. The average in the Sandwich Islands, lumping good, bad and indifferent, is 5,000 pounds per acre. . . . It would be more profitable, as you will readily admit, to the great mining companies of California and Nevada to pay 300 Chinamen an aggregate of \$1,500 a month – or five times the amount, if you think it more just – than to pay 300 white men \$30,000 a month. Especially when the white men would desert in a body every time a new mining region was discovered, but the Chinamen would have to stay until their contracts were worked out. People are always hatching fine schemes for inducing Eastern capital to the Pacific coast. Yonder in China are the capitalists you want – and under your own soil is a bank that will not dishonor their checks."

Letter 25
Honolulu, September 1866

Kilauea Volcano
"Disappointed, anyhow! I said to myself. 'Only a considerable hole in the ground . . .' But as I gazed, the 'cellar' insensibly grew. I was glad of that, albeit I expected it. I am passably good at judging of heights and distances, and I fell to measuring the diameter of the crater. After considerable deliberation I was obliged to confess

that it was rather over three miles, though it was hard to believe it at first. It was growing on me, and tolerably fast. And when I came to guess at the clean, solid, perpendicular walls that fenced in the basin, I had to acknowledge that they were from six hundred to eight hundred feet high, and in one or two places even a thousand, though at a careless glance they did not seem more than two or three hundred. . . . Here and there were gleaming holes twenty feet in diameter, broken in the dark crust, and in them the melted lava – the color a dazzling white just tinged with yellow – was boiling and surging furiously; and from these holes branched numberless bright torrents in many directions, like the 'spokes' of a lady's fan, and kept a tolerably straight course for a while and then swept round in huge rainbow curves, or made a long succession of sharp worm-fence angles, which looked precisely like the fiercest jagged lightning. . . . I thought it just possible that its like had not been seen since the children of Israel wandered on their long march through the desert so many centuries ago over a path illuminated by the mysterious 'pillar of fire.' And I was sure that I now had a vivid conception of what the majestic 'pillar of fire' was like, which almost amounted to a revelation."



A PACIFIC SOLUTION

Lorenzo Pezzani



1

Paul Hirst, *Space and Power: Politics, War, and Architecture* (Cambridge and Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005).

The Setting (or, a Geographical Introduction to Politics)

“Land and sea do differ in certain basic ways. However, neither is a constant: the salience of both and their relative value alter through time with changing technology, cultures and institutions. . . . In this sense, we can only talk about spaces like the sea historically and specifically.”¹

The Prologue: The Tampa Affair

Towards the end of August 2001, a few days before 9/11, 438 migrants who had left Indonesia for Australia aboard a small fishing boat became stranded in international waters about 140 kilometres north of Christmas Island, an Australian territory in the Indian Ocean off the country’s western coast. The MV Tampa, a Norwegian freighter that happened to be the closest ship to the location of the incident,

reached the boat a few hours later and rescued its passengers, who were in precarious physical and psychological conditions. The migrants, who were predominantly Afghan, demanded that the captain of the Tampa give them passage to Christmas Island, which was only a few hours away and thus the designated point of disembarkation according to international law. Australia denied the ship permission to enter its territorial waters but, with conditions rapidly worsening onboard, the captain of the Tampa declared a state of emergency and proceeded towards Christmas Island. In response, Australian Special Forces boarded the ship and stopped it at a distance of four nautical miles from the coast while the governments of Australia, Norway and Indonesia debated who was responsible for the asylum seekers' fate.

The solution to the diplomatic standoff was reached when Nauru, a Pacific island nation a few thousand kilometres north-east of Australia, agreed to host the migrants in a specially built detention centre. In return for accepting the asylum seekers aboard the MV Tampa and other migrants subsequently intercepted at sea by Australian border patrols in the following months, Australia gave Nauru more than sixty million dollars of aid over six years, an impressive amount for such a minute country. With the exhaustion of the phosphate mining that had brought Nauru riches in the 1970s, the opportunity to host asylum seekers provided the small island state with an unexpected "solution" to its economic downturn. The opening of Nauru's detention centre marked the beginning of a series of new migration control policies in the South West Pacific that came to be known by the grandiose name of "the Pacific solution".

The Plot: Offshore Sovereignty

The map accompanying this article shows the complex geography generated by "the Pacific solution". It is a snapshot in which the effects of some of the measures taken by the Australian Government over the last decade regarding migration management are simultaneously presented as a territorial strategy.²

One of the measures, as mentioned above, was the externalization of asylum procedures, something that is now a common characteristic of the global war on migration. On Nauru and Manus Island (Papua New Guinea)³, offshore detention centres were opened and their management entrusted to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). In such offshore camps, asylum requests are often

2 Migration management designates the new approach to migration elaborated by various international organizations. It defines a new form of "softer", postliberal control that tries to regulate the porosity of borders.

3 Another camp was opened in 2006 on Christmas Island itself.

4

The International Organization for Migration is one of the most influential intergovernmental organizations in the field of migration. It is at the forefront of the conceptualization and implementation of migration management policies. The UNHRC is the UN agency that deals with refugees.

5

For an interesting account of this phenomenon, see Paolo Cuttitta, "Points and Lines: A Topography of Borders in the Global Space", *Ephemera* 6, no. 1 (2006), 27–39.

processed by the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC)⁴ and follow a specific procedure with reduced juridical guarantees. Nowadays, the term outsourcing, which has come to designate a specific way in which capital has operated in the global economy in recent years, can also be employed to describe the mechanisms that are shaping a "new asylum paradigm". By this means, Nauru, which used to think of itself as an oceanic island, instead discovered itself to be a continental island, a leftover of Australian quasi-sovereignty, and therefore began being a part of Australia's archipelago of migrant detention centres. Nauru's status was not shaped by slow, almost geological erosion, however (which would be the case for a continental island), but by an active process of fragmentation and reshuffling. It was as if the linear border of Australia had shrunk to a discrete point that was later moved a few thousand kilometres to the north-east, onto Nauru itself.

At the same time that Australian detention camps were being established externally in other countries, several Australian islands (the Cocos Islands, Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Christmas Island as well as every other Australian island north of a certain latitude) were excised from Australian territory for the purposes of migration law. This meant that people without a visa arriving in these "excised offshore places" (on the map, they appear as the grey cushion zone that divides Australia from its neighbours) were banned from applying for refugee status and were instead taken to an offshore island camp. Thus, at a precise moment in time, Australian national territory was removed from under the migrants' feet, and as it receded, the rights deemed to go along with it disappeared as well.

Other types of borders, such as those determined by temporal or biopolitical rather than merely territorial dimensions, have been emerging,⁵ replacing and overlapping with traditional state borders and reorganizing the geography of Australia and the South Pacific. New archipelagos have been formed and new relations between distant islands have been established, while other connections have been severed. By challenging the modern isomorphism of "national territory" and "nation state", the Pacific solution has heavily reshaped Australian sovereignty as well as, one could argue, the notion of sovereignty itself. It would be wrong, however, to depict this process as a consistent and systematic process of planning and implementation masterminded by Australia. Various other actors have played their role in the entangled but anarchic formation of these spaces.

“The existing regime of mobility control is, in fact, itself challenged by fluid, streamlined, clandestine, multidirectional, multipositional and context-dependent forms of mobility”.⁶ Different but interconnected flows of money, goods and people traverse this border regime, modifying and sometimes countering its mechanisms of control, its spatial boundaries and temporal rules.⁷ First and foremost, the shifting pattern of migration itself, to which governmental policies have tried to respond almost in real time, and often *ex post facto*;⁸ then, the UNHCR and IOM, which have managed Australian offshore detention centres and assessed asylum requests on behalf of Australia (from which they have received substantial funding), or also private companies, to which the management of detention inside Australia and the removal of failed asylum seekers have been contracted out; and finally many other governmental and non-governmental agencies, which have operated in this field and thus contributed to its modulation.⁹ All of them have contributed to the formation and disappearance of contingent border zones that pop up and are suppressed according to changing needs.

The Epilogue?

Despite its highly symbolic value, the Pacific solution should not be seen as a turning point or a radical shift, but rather as a paradigmatic example of a global phenomenon that has inspired – and was inspired by – similar policies in other parts of the world (the southern and eastern borders of Europe are the most obvious examples).

Even if the Pacific solution was formally abandoned in 2007, many of the provisions associated with it (above all, the excision zone and the camp on Christmas Island) are still in place. The issues raised by immigration and refugees have continued to play a central role in Australian and Western Pacific politics, especially in the debate generated by the recent federal elections. In this evolving situation, newly elected Prime Minister Julia Gillard, seeing the increasing number of asylum seekers’ arrivals after the “demise” of the Pacific solution, has been negotiating the possibility of opening a new offshore processing centre in East Timor. Moreover, a few days before submitting this article, a ruling of the Australian High Court has declared the laws restricting offshore asylum seekers’ rights illegal. This ruling could open the way to unforeseen scenarios and force the government to review its migration policies, thereby inaugurating a new phase in the war on migration.

6
Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson and Vassilis Tsianos, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

7
Eyal Weizman has effectively described this spatial situation by talking about the route of the West Bank wall. He writes: “Architecture becomes implicated in politics through the elasticity of its structures. Spatial deformations occur in response to economic, aesthetic, cultural and political influences. Elasticity is the condition by which form adapts to a changing environmental force-fields. . . . Architecture, that is the formal characteristics of the elastic medium in which we flow, can thus no longer be said to be simply ‘political’ (or not political) but rather ‘politics in matter.”

8
When the Australian parliament passed several pieces of legislation that progressively excised various areas, it often did so a few hours after and in direct response to the arrival of asylum seekers in those areas.

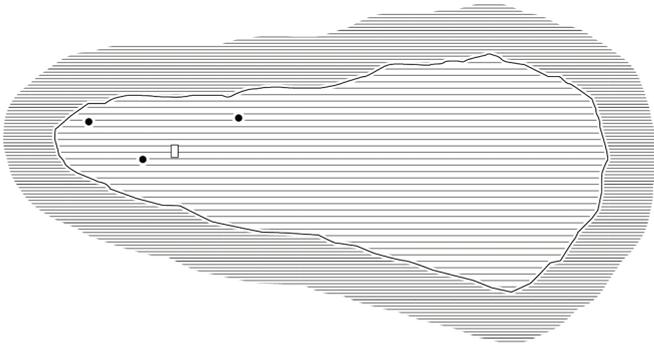
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The modes of operation of all these organizations, however, is much more difficult to represent on a map, precisely because their presence is often “diffused” or scattered, and thus difficult to locate.



- Australian Exclusive Economic Area Boundary
- Australian Territorial Sea Boundary
- Australian Territory
- ▨ Excision Area
- Countries that participated or with which negotiations are underway to participate in Australian externalization policies
- Other countries
- ☆ Location of former and present offshore detention centres

GROWING AN ISLAND: OKINOTORI

Dirk De Meyer



The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines an island as “a naturally formed area of land, surrounded by water, which is above water at high tide”.¹ However, according to this international law, not every kind of island engenders the same legal effects, for “Rocks which cannot sustain human habitation or economic life of their own shall have no exclusive economic zone.”² The primary purpose of this paragraph was to ensure that insignificant geological features, particularly those far from areas claimed by other states, could not generate broad zones of national jurisdiction in the middle of the ocean. Otherwise, the smallest rock would be capable of suddenly generating an enormous exclusive economic zone, a circular area with a radius of 200 nautical miles or 370 kilometres, i.e. an area of roughly two thirds the size of France.

1 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 10 December 1982, Part VIII, art. 121(1); reprinted in “United Nations, Official Text of the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea with Annexes and Index”, UN Sales No. E.83.V.5 (1983). The law entered into force 16 November 1994.

2 Ibid., Part VIII, art. 121(3).

In fact, there have been few circumstances in which rocks have given rise to such claims. Most often, these have been located in coastal areas subject to conflicting state claims. However, there is an interesting, utterly isolated case: that of a rock, or actually two rocks, in the middle of the western part of the Pacific Ocean known as the Philippine Sea. The first of the rocks is barely the size of a small room, and the second, that of a twin bed. At high tide, the smallest pokes some seven centimetres out of the ocean, while the bigger one reaches twice this height. They are part of a submerged reef formation that is about 4.5 kilometres long and less than 2 kilometres wide called Okinotorishima which is located 1,740 kilometres south of Tokyo and a thousand or so kilometres away from the nearest Japanese islands. These geological features are defined by the Chinese as rocks and by the Japanese as islands. Behind the linguistic disagreement, as the UNCLOS definition of an island makes clear, lies an economic and strategic one: if considered an “island”, Okinotori’s nine square metres of solid rock would allow the establishment of an exclusive economic zone measuring approximately 430,000 square kilometres – slightly more than the total surface area of Japan. It makes the claim to Okinotori a unique territorial issue, for this is not a case in which countries struggle for control of a territory. There is no chance that China would obtain territorial rights in the Okinotorishima dispute. The heart of this quarrel is the question of whether Japan can maintain its claim to an exclusive economic zone either by linguistically defining the unmanned rocks as islands or, as I will shortly explain, by growing them into “a naturally formed area of land” that can “sustain human habitation or economic life”.

Originally named the Douglas Reef after the British naval officer William Douglas discovered it in 1789, the atoll, which at the time amounted to a handful of rocks or islets uninhabitable by humans, was long ignored by imperial powers. This all changed in the early 1920s, when the Japanese navy began surveying the seas south-west of Okinawa and the Ogasawara Islands. In 1931, after confirming that no other countries had laid claim to it, Japan declared the reef Japanese territory, placed it under the jurisdiction of the City of Tokyo as part of the Ogasawara Islands, and gave it a new Japanese name: Okinotorishima, or “remote bird island”. Though it was debatable even then whether a coral reef could be claimed as territory from the viewpoint of the international law, the government decided to “make [the question] a *fait accompli* by claiming it”.³ No country officially made any objection to the inclusion.

3

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “Douglas’ Reef no ryodoken ni kansuru ken” in *Honpo tosho ryoyu kankei zakken* (n. p., 1931); cited in Yukie Yoshikawa, “Okinotorishima: Just the Tip of the Iceberg”, *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 9 (2005).

While the Imperial Navy had ambitions to transform what at that point were five rocks jutting out of the Philippine Sea into a hydroplane base, the government decided to refer to the base in international communications as a lighthouse and a meteorological observation site. By 1941, the foundations for the buildings were completed. Construction, however, was interrupted by the outbreak of the Pacific War. After the war, Japan lost sovereignty over the Ogasawara Islands, including Okinotorishima, until they were returned to them in 1968 by the U.S. The territorial possession of Okinotorishima did not attract much attention until the late 1970s, when nations started to claim their exclusive economic zones. In 1983, when Japan signed the UNCLOS (which took effect for most nations in 1994, but for Japan in 1996), the Japanese started to realize that their territorial claims could evaporate together with Okinotorishima's two remaining rocks, which were disappearing due to rising sea levels and the constant pounding of waves during the typhoon season. In order to stop the physical erosion of Okinotorishima, the City of Tokyo, and later the central government, carried out protective efforts from 1987 to 1993 by building steel breakwaters and concrete walls, and by having helicopters carefully drop tetrapods around the rocks. In 1988 an artificial structure was erected on the reef next to the rocks to house the facilities of the Japan Marine Science and Technology Centre. In the same year, American law professor Jon Van Dyke wrote that "the more than 200 million dollars the Japanese are spending to construct what is in essence an artificial island cannot . . . be the basis for a claim to the exclusive control over the resources in the waters around such a construction".⁴ Van Dyke's academic opinion was in line with the Chinese political one, which was expressed later, and with growing insistence, during bilateral talks in Beijing in April 2004. Although China has no basis for laying claim to the rocks, it does have a military interest in keeping them from being declared part of Japanese territorial seas, because they are situated midway between Taiwan and Guam, a U.S. territory in the Pacific: the rocks would be located along the ideal route that an American fleet, including submarines, would take in the event of American military engagement with China to support Taiwan. Were such a situation to arise, the People's Republic might well want to place its submarines in the area in order to delay the arrival of U.S. Navy vessels without being annoyed by what would have been, until then, an essentially pro-Taiwan Japan.

4
Jon Van Dyke, "Speck in the
Ocean Meets Law of the
Sea", *New York Times*, 21
January 1988.

China's challenging of Japan's territorial right to Okinotorishima led to a resurgence in nationalism in Japan as well as some vigorous reactions: in May 2005, Shintaro Ishihara, the nationalist Governor of Tokyo, rushed to the rocks, raised the Japanese flag on the largest one, mounted an address plaque reading "One Okinotori Island, Ogasawara Village, Tokyo" and had a 330-million-yen (three-million-euro) radar surveillance system installed.⁵ With his actions, Ishihara asserted that recently developed international law could not repudiate the past investments Japan had made in Okinotorishima and that Tokyo had a legitimate claim over it. In an essay appearing in the *Sankei Shimbun* on June 6, he said that Japan had been spending money on Okinotorishima for future development since 1932, including the investment of 85 billion yen (approximately 770 million euros) in building and maintaining a residence.⁶ According to the governor, these were historical facts that could not be reversed by the UN convention. Moreover, he argued, it was Japan's responsibility to hold the area and establish effective control over the surrounding waters through economic activities such as fishing in order not to allow the Chinese to develop the area into a base for submarines.

Japan's claim to this rock is not unique. In a decades-long dispute with Ireland, Iceland and Denmark, Britain has been seeking UN recognition of its rights to the seabed – and to the oil beneath it – around Rockall, an uninhabited granite outcrop measuring 31 by 25 metres located halfway between Ireland and Iceland. South Korea, for its part, has been involved in a conflict with Japan that has stretched on since the end of World War II but intensified after 1996, the year in which the UNCLOS took effect, and has renamed the Liancourt Rocks "Dokdo", or "solitary island", and is planning to double the number of resident households on the rock from one to two couples, to plant trees in order to develop "a forest", and to secure an adequate supply of potable water by installing a water purifier.⁷

While Japan's claim might not be unique, its solution to the problem is. Confronting Van Dyke's criticism, Tadao Kuribayashi, a professor of law at Toyoeiwa University in Tokyo, insists that the Japanese claim is justifiable as there is no definition of a "rock" in international law. Geologically speaking, he argues, coral reefs and rocks (objects consisting of hard continental soil) are different.⁸ Thus, he argues, a country can claim its own exclusive economic zone based on its possession of coral reefs. Again, as with the island-versus-rock issue, there is more at stake with the difference between rock and coral: over

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See "Japan sets up address plate on controversial reef in Pacific", Xinhua News Agency, 20 June 2005, consulted at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-06/21/content_3111889.htm; and "Japan to establish surveillance system on Okinotori Island", BBC News, 16 May 2005.

6

Cited from Shintaro Ishihara's website in Yoshikawa, "Okinotorishima".

7

Jeong In-seop, "Dokdo, Island or Rocks? A Patriotic Misunderstanding", *Northeast Asian History Foundation News* (2010), 5.

8

Tadao Kuribayashi, "The Position of Okinotorishima in the International Law" in Nippon Foundation, *Report on Promoting Economic Activities in Okinotorishima* (Tokyo, 2005); see <http://nippon.zaidan.info/seikabutsu/2004/00009/contents/0001.htm>.

time, rocks are, at best, stable, and are subject to erosion, but coral has the potential to grow.

Kuribayashi defended his position in the Report on Promoting Economic Activities in Okinotorishima, published by The Nippon Foundation (Nippon Dankai). This Japanese private foundation has been criticized for advancing right-wing and nationalist goals in the deceptive guise of a charity. It has shown a particular interest in the disputed rocks as part of its maritime programmes. For the preparation of the report it dispatched missions to the “islands” in November 2004 and March 2005.⁹ The first mission was intended to investigate the ways in which the exclusive economic zone could be used, and its participants included experts in the fields of international law, and coral reef ecology and construction. The suggestions put forward in their report included the erection of a lighthouse, the cultivation of the existing coral reef and the development of an artificial one and the building of the social infrastructure necessary to sustaining human habitation. Once it bore a lighthouse, the island would be added to the charts around the globe as Okinotorishima, and the awareness of its presence would be enhanced. The breeding of the coral reef and sand by various means, such as planting glauconite and foraminifera (hard-shelled microscopic organisms whose bodies become sand as they die), was important as a means of enlarging the “island” due to the trend of rising sea levels that has resulted from global warming.

According to the *New York Times*, by 2005 the Japanese government had spent over 600 million dollars, or 500 euros, to keep the barren islets above water. It had encased the tiny protrusions in 25-metre-thick concrete that was 60 metres in diameter at a cost of 200 million euros, and had then cut slits in the concrete so that the “island” would comply with the UN law that “a naturally formed area of land” be “surrounded by water”. The smaller one got a 40-million-euro titanium net to shield it from being chipped away at by wave-hurled debris.¹⁰ Since then, Japanese scientists have been developing genetically modified species of coral with the aim of expanding the rocks into a small but internationally recognized archipelago: the Okinotori Islands. China, however, has criticized the Japanese government for planting coral, saying that the action runs counter to international conventions. Japanese officials, for their part, have confirmed that Japan had begun planting coral on Okinotori as part of a three-million-euro project to defend its territory.¹¹

9

See Martin Fackler, “A Reef or a Rock? Question Puts Japan in a Hard Place: To Claim Disputed Waters, Charity Tries to Find Use for Okinotori Shima”, *Wall Street Journal*, 16 February 2005; and id., “Japan’s Ultranationalists: Stuck between a Rock and a Hard Sell”, *Wall Street Journal*, 20 February 2005.

10

Norimitsu Onishi, “2 Rocks in Hard Place for Japan and China”, *New York Times*, 11 July 2005.

11

“China Criticizes Japan for Planting Coral around Pacific Reef”, *Xinhua News Agency*, 19 June 2007.

Science and construction are the keys to solidifying Japan's ownership of the atoll. Concrete is the visible marker of Japan's sustained claim to Okinotori. However, most of the "island-making" is being done off site and out of sight. With the support of the wealthy Nippon Foundation, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has tried to speed up the rate of coral accumulation on Okinotori through the cultivation of coral polyps in Tokyo and their transplant to Okinotori for the purpose of creating a surface area that can "sustain human habitation". The first of these transplants was carried out in 2007. The government intends to graft millions of coral fragments, which are netted together, not only to save the two small islets that poke out of the water during high tide, but also to produce even more land area above sea level.

This is not Japan's first foray into making artificial islands. The tradition goes back to the creation of Dejima, a man-made island built in Nagasaki Bay in 1634. The island served to house Portuguese and then Dutch merchants as part of a shogun strategy to keep Japan culturally isolated while still permitting some trade. With an area of 120 by 75 metres, the fan-shaped island was administratively part of Nagasaki but autonomous in many other ways. Heavily controlled, it hosted, at some point in time, residences for twenty Dutchmen, warehouses and accommodations for Japanese officials.

The Okinotori project is also not Japan's first attempt to build artificial reefs. The first on record in Japan were built out of bamboo in the 1800s. Since the early 1950s Japanese marine fishery interests have been investigating the use of artificial reefs for the manipulation of fish populations by utilizing concrete riprap, natural stone, bricks and a plethora of other materials. All too often these installations furnished a welcome excuse to discard unwanted refuse like automobile tires, cars, ships, planes, streetcars, tanks and even offshore platforms ("rigs for reefs") for economic gain with little or no regard for marine ecology. In the 1960s and '70s, power companies even sponsored research for the utilization of highly toxic fly ash in artificial reef components.¹² None of these methods, however, would easily qualify as "natural growth".

Over the last fifteen years, several companies that market structures for artificial reef building have popped up, including ReefBalls, Grouper Ghettos, Ecoreefs, Eco-Coral and Biorock. The most advanced techniques used by the Japanese are genetically modified species of coral and a technology developed by Biorock called "mineral

12
Wolf Hilbertz and Thomas
Coreau, "Third Generation
Artificial Reefs", *Ocean
Realm Magazine* (October
1997).



accretion”, which uses electricity to “grow” limestone rock on artificial reef frames and thus increases the growth rates of corals and other reef organisms.¹³ A wide range of organisms on or near the growing substrate is affected by electrochemically altered conditions, which shift growth rates. According to the developers of Biorock, one of whom is the German-born architect and marine scientist Wolf Hilbertz, “reefs of any configuration and size can be grown for purposes of reef restoration and shore protection”.¹⁴ Although originally carried out on a small scale, recent projects include developing reefs of up to 630 metres in length and up to 20 metres in width. For Hilbertz and his partner Goreau, their work serves as the basis for a new profession: seascape architecture, which they present as the younger sibling of landscape architecture.

In an era of rising sea levels, and with many reefs and small atoll nation-states at risk of being submerged by this phenomenon, island-growing techniques and advanced coral cultivation technologies might become a flourishing business. Moreover, the Japanese government is adroitly turning its costly investments in these technologies into a form of environmental diplomacy. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government and the Nippon Foundation are promoting their efforts in island-growing as a means of overcoming environmental disaster. Yet for Japan, the key issue will be if it succeeds in growing coral fast enough to outpace rising sea levels. The Chinese might simply need to wait. Their large-scale turn to driving cars, using more appliances and heating larger homes might do the rest.



13

“Two electrodes, supplied with low-voltage direct current, are submerged in sea water. Electrolytic reactions at the cathode (negatively charged electrode) cause minerals naturally present in seawater, primarily calcium carbonate and magnesium hydroxide, to build up.” Ibid.

14

Ibid.

THE MULTIPLICITY OF AL-MANSUR'S BAGHDAD

Martino Tattara

The project of founding new cities is again at the centre of architectural discourse. In the last decades we have witnessed the rise of numerous cities in many East Asian countries, and the announcement of newly founded cities continues unabated today. In 2001, China's Minister of Civil Affairs acknowledged his ambition to build 400 new cities by 2020 in order to accommodate rural migrants and foster the ongoing process of the country's industrialization. In the Middle East, the recent urban boom has been twinned by ambitious projects for new cities that have attracted widespread media attention thanks primarily to the involvement of various starchitects. Moreover, the recently celebrated fiftieth anniversary of the inauguration of Brasilia (2010) swung attention back towards those often neglected experiences in the history of modern architecture and planning that for many years historiography has considered as nothing more than utopian failures. Although it would be necessary to make a distinction between those projects that have been or are able to further a new "idea of the city" and those that are simply replicas of pre-existing urban paradigms by looking at a few relevant cases in the history of architecture, analyzing these projects makes it immediately clear that designing a city from scratch is actually not a rare task that few architects might have to confront during their careers, but perhaps the most challenging design exercise, one in which the scope, possibilities and limits of our discipline are pushed to their extremes and where the operative capacity of the instruments of our work is fundamentally put to the test.

The project of the city is an oxymoron – an impossibility in its own terms – in which the role of the architect is necessarily limited

to the action of delineating those essential formal, typological or even normative principles that would prove capable of controlling the development of the city over time. First and foremost, the project of the city is, in contrast with the dimension and scope of the endeavour itself, a matter of reduction, restraint and limitation. In “The Lettered City”,¹ an essay on the power of the written discourse in the formation of Latin American societies, author Angel Rama explores the fundamental role of the “lettered man” in order to understand what he considers to be a crucial aspect of the Latin American colonial city. The main characteristic of the colonial city is not, according to Rama, the application of the square grid as the fundamental settlement principle of the city, but rather the rigor of describing in writing those principles that are capable of guiding the composition of urban space, so that the technical order can therefore reproduce and confirm the social order as established by the project. The attempt to distil the essential and dispose of the superfluous is confirmed by another important project for a city, the plano piloto of Brasilia. In the case of the newly built Brazilian capital (1956–60), its architect did not win the competition thanks to the clarity of his drawings but essentially thanks to the text of the competition report – the famous relatorio (1957) – in which the few formal and organizational principles of the city (i.e. the use of the superquadra as the city’s main residential solution) were clearly described and as such made available to future builders.

This reductionist attitude is also what characterizes the great city project of Al-Mansur’s Baghdad, the mysterious and famous “round city” begun in 762 AD and of which no archaeological trace remains. The plan of the city has been the object of historical reconstructions based upon the few available literary sources – the History of Baghdad written by Khatib al-Badhdadi (d. 1071) and Ya’qubi’s Geography – carried out primarily by K. A. C. Creswell, who in his *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*² (1958) provided a first possible interpretation of the plan of the city, and later by Jacob Lassner in *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (1970).³

Although al-Mansur’s Baghdad is not the first circular city to have ever been built, it should be considered one of the most remarkable examples of Muslim town planning. The city can generally be described as a ring with a circumference of 16,000 cubits (circa 8.3 km), which gives a diameter of 5,093 cubits, or circa 2.6 kilometres. (The cubit is an ancient measurement of length that is approximately equal to the length of a forearm and that Creswell suggests measures

1
Angel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

2
K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958; new ed. 1989).

3
Jacob Lassner, *The Topography of Baghdad in the Early Middle Ages* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970).

51.8 centimetres). Yet, in contrast with the circular plans typical of Renaissance thinking, where the circle was used to convey the “social hierarchy desired by the planner, with the governing body located at the centre and living spaces assigned to respective social strata radiating from the centre in concentric circles”,⁴ al-Mansur’s Baghdad is nothing more than a thick inhabitable structure delimiting a large circular emptiness – the great Rahaba – at the centre of which the palace of the Khalif was located adjacent to the mosque. The radicalism of the city does not lie in the deployment of an abstract geometrical figure that, as Creswell suggests, can in fact be found in several other cities in the Muslim world beginning with Assyrian military camps, but rather in the attempt to conceive the possibility of the city through the project of its edge, a thick, multilayered inhabitable fortress that simultaneously contains and organizes residential, defensive and communication functions.

4

Rama, *The Lettered City*, 5.

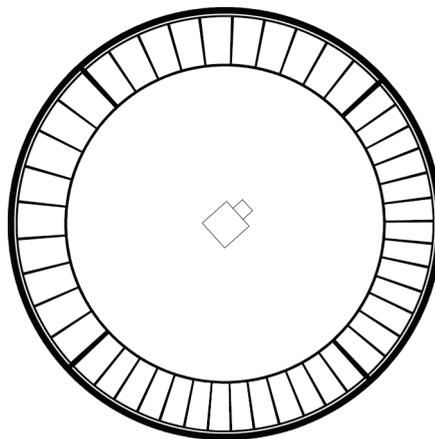
The two main reconstructions of the plan put forward by Creswell and Lassner propose the same organization of the linear circular element. The typical section of the ring is characterized by a series of five concentric walls forming three circular inner roads (indicated as the first, second and third *fasil*) that run uninterruptedly from one city gate to the other. Four equidistant doors, each named after the city or province towards which it opened, allow entrance to the city and cut through the three *fasil*, thereby interrupting the continuity of traffic. Besides providing overall accessibility to the city, the four doors organize distribution among the several residential sectors, facilitate interchange among the three *fasil* and allow penetration of the circular inner courtyard. Each gate is, starting from the outer wall, organized as a linear spatial sequence consisting of the bridge that crosses the ditch running around the city’s outer wall, a first courtyard, the two city gateways separated by a narrow corridor, a long arcade designed for some 1,000 guards, a small courtyard cutting through the third *fasil* and, finally, an inner wall. The definition of a city through the description of a single component, as witnessed in Creswell’s and Lassner’s reconstructions, confirms the reductionist attitude necessary for designing a city.

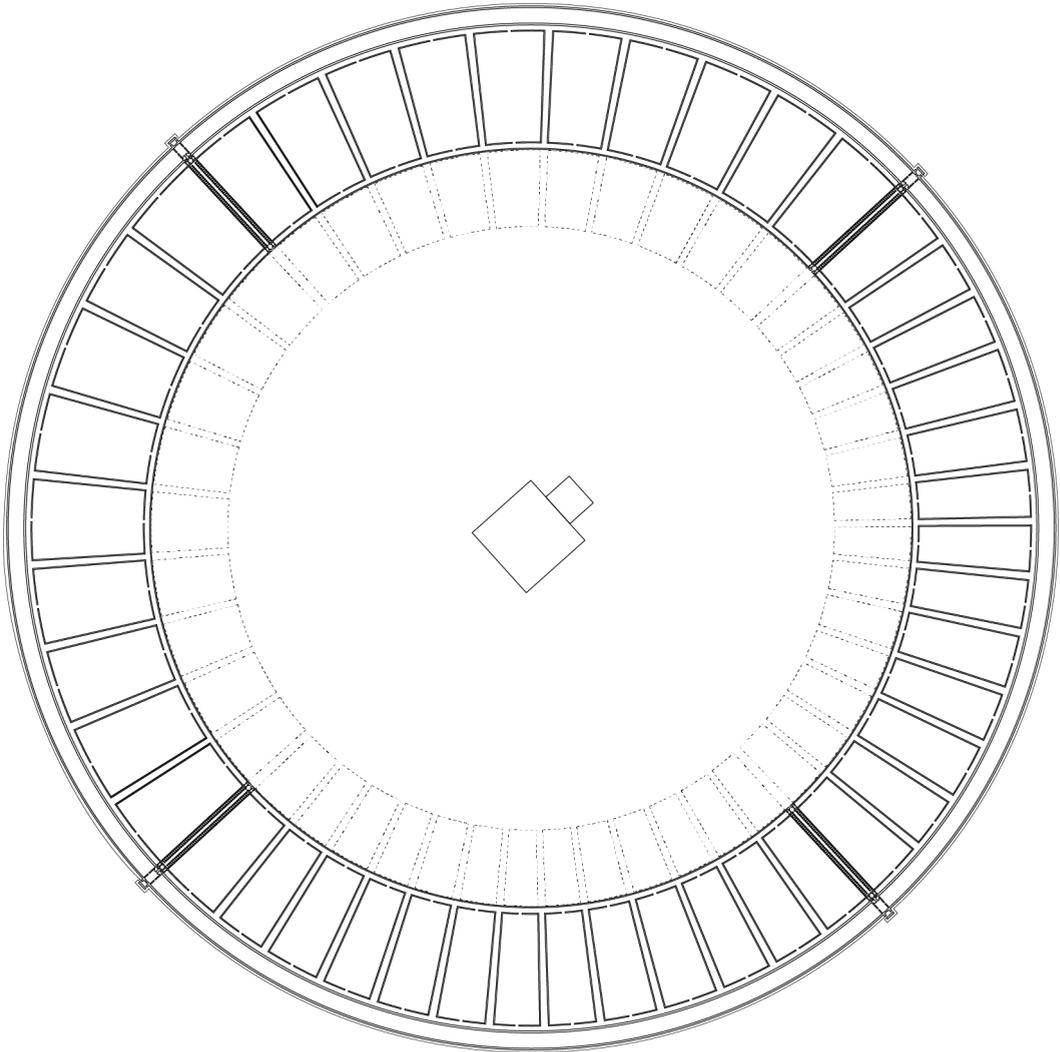
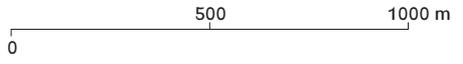
While Creswell believes that at the end of the linear sequence of the gate, after the last vaults, one would have passed out into a court 20 cubits square that led directly to the central square, Lassner suggests that “surrounding the central court were the residences of al-Mansur’s younger children, his servants in attendance, the slaves,

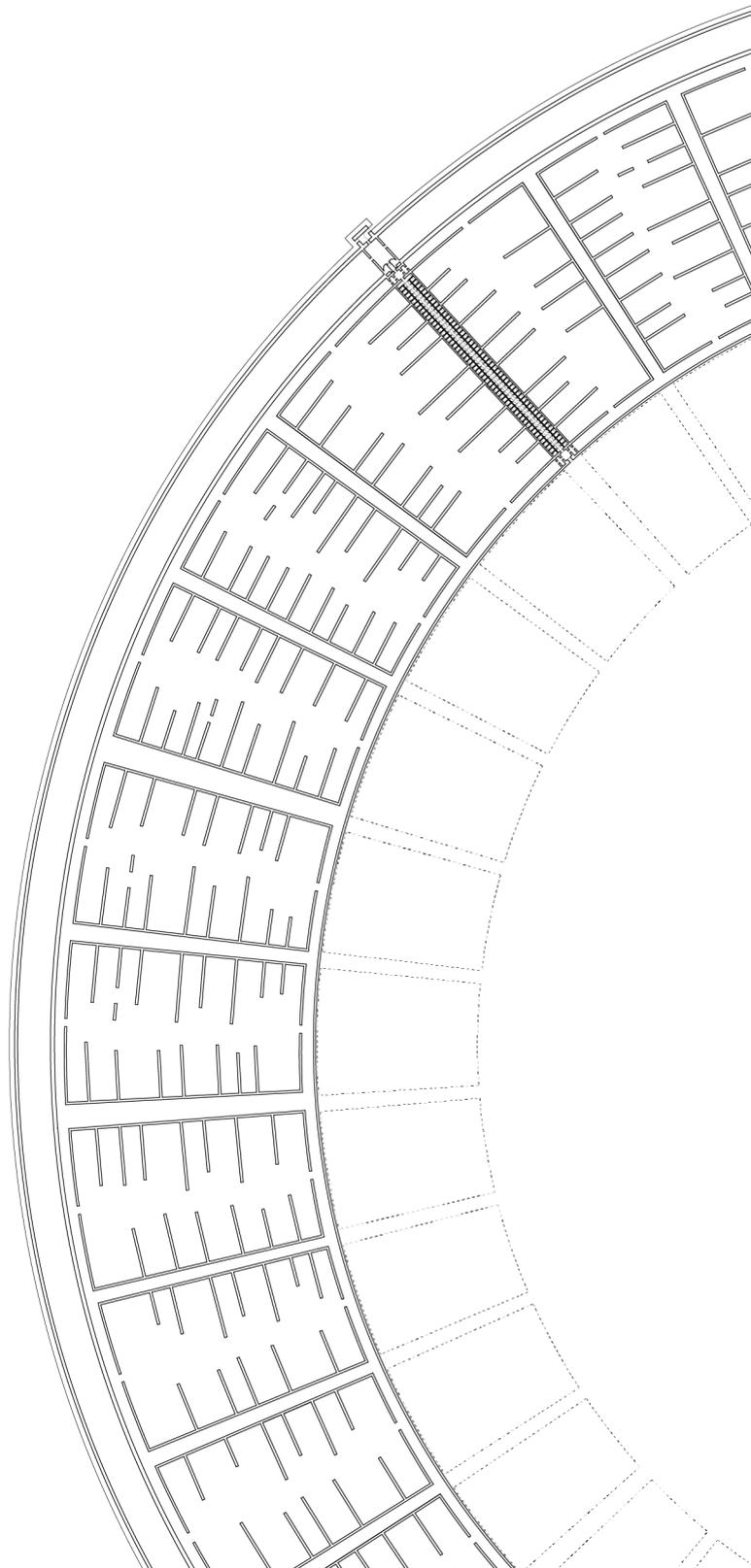
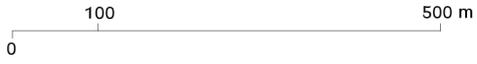
the treasury, the arsenal, the diwan of the palace personnel, the public kitchen, and various other government agencies”, so that there was a ring of building between the third fasil and the central courtyard.⁵ The possible addition of a residential ring located towards the inner courtyard confirms the essence of the entire urban project as a simple skeleton of walls that supported the process of the city’s formation. The three fasil and the gates represent the major infrastructural elements of the city, supporting and serving the areas dedicated to residential functions and eventual urban growth. The existence of the inner ring is an irrelevant issue, as it could easily be read as the natural outcome of the idea of the city itself – a skeleton around which the urban body develops. The project of al-Mansur’s Baghdad and the possible reconstruction of its plan have therefore never been and will never be fully achieved, for the nature of the city itself is based on the control and design of only a few aspects – the gates, the rituals of entering and moving through the city, the linear walls – while the rest seems to be open to a multiplicity of interpretations.

The drawings that accompany the present text offer a few possible developments of this radical city’s plan in the attempt to envision the outcomes that these formal principles and this attitude toward design could produce.

5
J. W. Allan, “New Additions to the New Edition”, *Muqarnas* 8 (1991), 17.

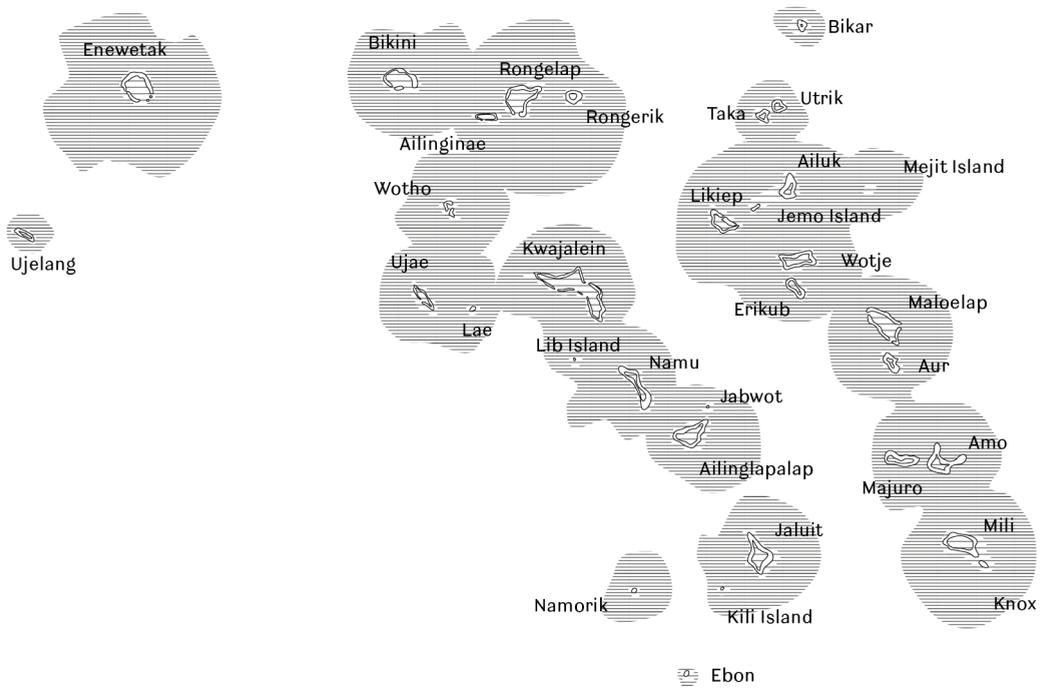






NAVIGATIONAL MAPS OF STICKS AND SHELLS

Cae Aulenti



It is a ten-hour journey from Los Angeles to the Marshall Islands. After a five-hour flight, the plane lands on an island that is not located on the map and has no name. You can't get off the plane, but you can see hundreds of containers covered in dirt and sand – you can just make out their edges.

Upon our arrival in Majuro, we board a sailboat. There are six of us, and we know that what are known as the “Marshall Islands” are composed of 29 atolls and 5 islands divided into two groups: the Ralik (Sunset) Archipelago and the Ratak (Aurora) Archipelago, which occupy an area larger than a thousand square kilometres. To the north we see Bikini Atoll, and our curiosity is peaked. This curiosity remains with us for the entire duration of our trip, as we seek out tales and traces of the past.

The reoccurring traces of the past that we notice include a cannon lying on the beach in the lagoon as the waves crash against it; on another atoll there is a runway for airplanes covered in shrubbery, and there is even a reinforced concrete construction with an entrance made of scraps of steel at the bottom of the sea, a sunken landing craft that has become home to thousands and thousands of fish.

We are in Micronesia, the western part of Oceania. These islands were named after John Marshall, the English captain who discovered them at the end of the 1700s, but the nineteenth-century explorer Otto von Kotzebue would be the first to draw detailed maps of them.

After 1914, Japan colonized the islands by building fortresses. During World War II, the Americans conquered the islands. Majuro Island became a base for aircraft carriers, and then atomic experiments were held on Bikini Atoll. The atoll's inhabitants were relocated and told they could only return in 1970, at which point everything had been destroyed. The Marshall Islands gained political independence in 1979.

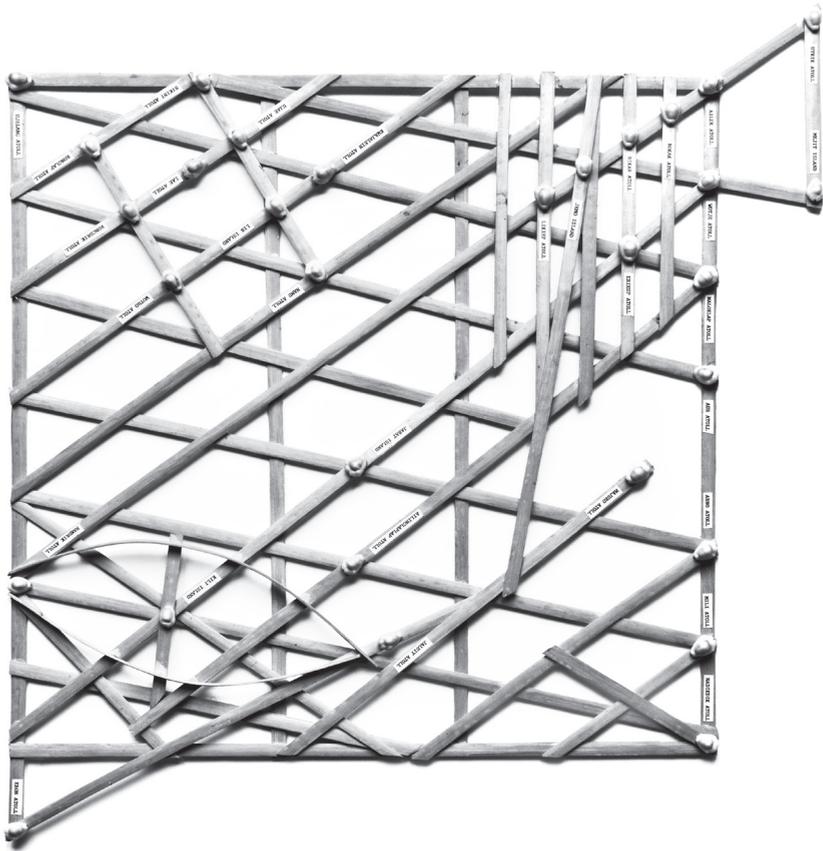
When navigating from the ocean into the lagoons of islands and atolls, it is difficult to identify the navigational routes; the inhabitants of the islands, who are skilled navigators, are familiar with each passageway, and their ocean-faring canoes, which are built by hollowing out the trunk of a breadfruit tree, have only a single oar and a simple square sail.

The islands' residents are able to explore uncharted oceans by using flexible sticks and shells to construct accurate geographical maps that reflect the immensity of this place.

The maximum height of the islands is a mere ten metres.

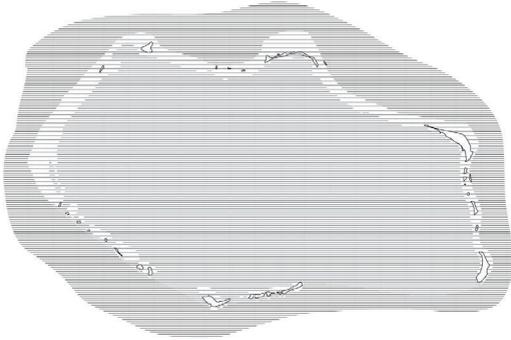
**Next page: Micronesian
stick charts**

Milan, 6 December 2010



BIKINI

Francesco Librizzi



Atoll

An atoll is a coral island, or a group of them, encircling a lagoon either partially or completely. It is the product of the subsidence of what started as an oceanic volcano.

Darwin observed several tropical islands during his five-year voyage aboard the HMS Beagle in the Pacific Ocean (1831–36). He organized his collection of different island types as if they were still frames of a single transition in a geological time scale. Each frame is a step in the process of the gradual sinking of the inner land, as opposed to the outward growth of the coral reef surrounding it. The fringing reef becomes a barrier, because the outer part of the reef maintains itself near sea level through biotic growth while the inner part falls behind and becomes a lagoon where conditions are less favourable for the reproduction of the corals and calcareous algae. When the subsidence has lowered the old volcano completely below the ocean's surface, leaving only

the barrier reef, the island has become an atoll. The explanation given by Darwin's construction is still accepted as basically correct.

Charts (1)

Micronesians travel by canoe between islands using what are called stick charts.

The charts trace the main ocean swell patterns and the way the islands disrupt these. Stick charts are made from the midribs of coconut fronds tied together to form an open framework. Shells are tied to the framework to mark the islands' positions. The threads represent the prevailing wave-crests on the ocean's surface, indicating the direction they take as they approach the islands and meet other crests. You can only "draw" a stick chart by navigating the area yourself and sensing how your canoe's hull disrupts the ocean swells. This makes a stick chart paradoxically subjective. The navigator who designs it is often the only person who can fully interpret and use it.

Charts (2)

Bikini Atoll, one of the thirty-four atolls making up the Marshall Islands group, is but a dot on the navigator's chart of the vast reaches of the Pacific. Discovered in 1526 by a Spanish sea captain, the islands are rediscovered and named by the English captains Gilbert and Marshall in 1788. The islands become a Japanese mandate after World War I and then fall under the exclusive control of the United States on 15 January 1946, when Truman declares the United States to be the sole trustee of all the Pacific islands captured from Japan during World War II.

Requirements

The minimal requirements for a nuclear test site are: A protected anchorage at least six miles in diameter; it must be capable of containing the target fleet and the supporting fleet.

An uninhabited site, or one that is nearly so.

A location at least 300 miles distant from the nearest city.

A location within 1,000 miles of a military base.

Freedom from extremely cold and violent storms.

Predictable winds that are directionally uniform at all altitudes between sea level and 60,000 feet. Predictable water currents of great lateral and vertical dispersion; fast currents that avoid important fishing areas, steamer lanes and inhabited shores.

Control by the United States.

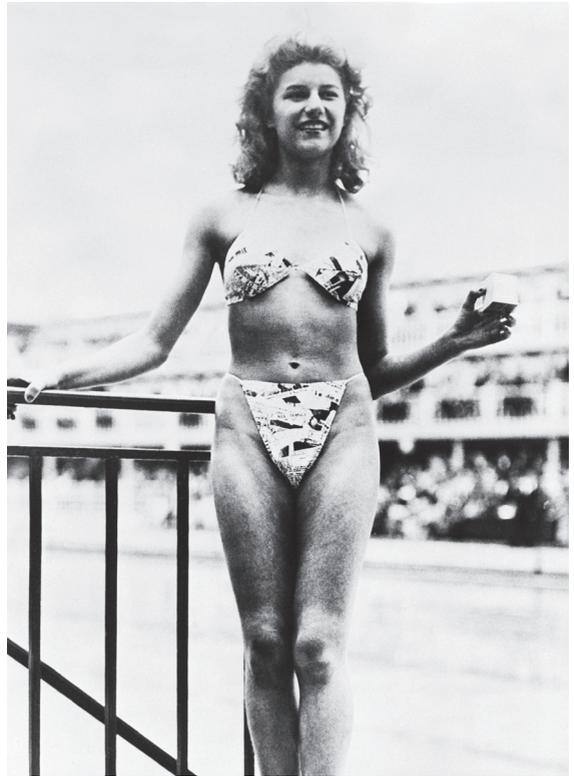
Features

The picturesque village street of Bikini, with its surface of coarse particles of coral and its coconut palms overhead, is typical of the Marshall Islands. Tranquil beside the clear water of the lagoon it borders, no part of Bikini is more than ten feet above sea level. Its temperature is high and uniform all year round, averaging 80 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and 12 degrees lower at night. Humidity is high, and there is heavy precipitation, about 80 inches of rain per year. The tropical heat is mitigated by strong sea breezes.

On 6 February 1946, the survey ship Sumner begins blasting channels through the Bikini reef into the lagoon. The local residents are not told why.

Model (1)

In preparation for the Bikini tests, a number of scale-model experiments are conducted at the Taylor Model Basin near Washington, D.C. Scale-model ships, constructed of thin sheets of brass, are set afloat in an artificial "lagoon". Scaled amounts of dynamite are used to simulate the actual blasts. The tests are made in a specially constructed tank known as the "Little Bikini". Other studies are carried out on a larger scale, using 500-pound amounts of explosive, in tests conducted at the Naval Mine Warfare Test



Station at Patuxent, Maryland. In both types of scaled experiments, the effects noted are the size of the resulting water crater and the height, persistence and diffusion of the plumes created.

Model (2)

The modern bikini is introduced to the world by French engineer Louis Réard and French fashion designer Jacques Heim in Paris in 1946. Réard had been a car engineer, but by 1946 he is running his mother's lingerie boutique near Les Folies Bergères in Paris. Meanwhile, Heim is working on a new kind of two-piece bathing costume. Réard cannot find a model to wear his scandalous design, which has only thirty square inches (194 square centimetres) of cloth with newspaper type printed across it. He ends up hiring Micheline Bernardini, a nude dancer from the

Casino de Paris, for a first show on July 5 at Piscine Molitor, a public pool in Paris. Although Heim's design is the first to be actually worn on the beach, Réard gives it its name. The Paris fashion press suggests that the bikini's name derives from the fact that it looks as if its wearer is emerging in tatters from a nuclear bomb blast clothed in what little has survived. Or perhaps it is the combination of half-naked south sea islanders coupled with the atomic impact that strikes a chord in haute couture circles, reminding them that atom bombs reduce everybody to a state of primitivism. Réard simply describes it thus: "Bikini: smaller than the smallest bathing suit in the world."

Substitution

While 167 Bikinians prepare for their exodus, some 242 naval ships, 156 aircraft, 25,000 radiation recording devices and the Navy's 5,400 experimental rats, goats and pigs begin to arrive on the atoll. Over 42,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel are involved in the testing program. The principal structures built are the following: 12 steel towers assembled on the ground and hoisted into place; 5 25-foot wooden towers; 12 20-by-20-foot steel huts; 5 Seismograph huts; 5 dead-man moorings; 6 photography beacons for aerial photography fixes; 1 club for officers and civilians (measuring 20 by 200 feet); 1 club for enlisted men (measuring 16 by 300 feet); 5 concrete basketball courts; 10 volleyball courts; 4 softball diamonds; 1 trap-shooting range; 1 concrete athletic court (measuring 100 by 100 feet); 26 dressing huts; 1 water distillation and distribution system; 1 shore patrol and dispensary building; 3 lifeguard platforms; 1 seaplane landing ramp; 2 swimming floats; 7 pontoon causeways; 1 air-coordination station; 3 construction battalion shops; 1 sonobuoy workshop; 10 wave-height-measurement piles; 14 shallow-water moorings for evacuation barges and other small craft; 2 radio beacons; 5

twenty-five-man camps, 1 aerological station. To reduce the insect nuisance, the islands of Bikini and Enyu are sprayed every few weeks with DDT. This precaution proves effective.

Mike Hour

From a photographic standpoint, both the Able and Baker Days are excellent, with bright sunshine and few clouds. Television and still-motion cameras mounted on lofty grandstand seats are focused on the target array. More than 10,000 instruments are placed on target ships, onshore and observer ships and aircraft installations. The devices that take part in the planned scientific observation measure: pressure and shock; wave motion and oceanography; electromagnetic propagation and electronics; radiological safety; radiation; radiometry; and technical photography. The target fleet is still, with "Yoke" flags flying to signify that all personnel has been evacuated. The light emitted by an atomic bomb covers all parts of the spectrum, ranging from visible light to ultraviolet and infrared light. Most of the 42,000 witnesses are ordered to stand with their backs toward the target and to remain in this position until the all-clear sign is given. Only 6,000 pairs of special dark goggles are staring at the target as the countdown begins.









Cake

The celebratory event takes place on 5 November 1946, a Tuesday evening, at the Officers' Club of the Army War College in Washington, D.C. The occasion is the disbanding of Joint Army-Navy Task Force Number One, the body that had organized and overseen the first post-war atomic tests in the Pacific. The controversial photograph above perfectly matches the biggest media storm of 1946. Operation Crossroads, as it is called, is remembered today – if at all – for having displaced an entire indigenous population of islanders, for having inspired a revealing line of swimwear for women and for having unleashed the myth that movie star Rita Hayworth's image was once affixed to an atomic bomb. The entire function would have occurred without notice were it not for the presence of a photographer from the prestigious Harris & Ewing Studio. In the picture he takes, Vice Admiral H. P. Blandy (the so-called "Atomic Admiral") is seen cutting into an elaborately

engineered cake topped by a "mushroom cloud" with his wife's assistance while Rear Admiral Frank J. Lowry looks on with a smile. The unusual cake had been ordered from a bakery in East St. Louis, Illinois, and had been delivered to Washington by car.

Footnote

"Here's a footnote on Bikini. I don't know what this means or even if it has meaning, but I can't resist mention of the fact that this much can be revealed concerning the appearance of tonight's atom bomb: it will be decorated with a sizeable likeness of the young lady named Rita Hayworth.

"Not long ago I watched quite another sort of young lady paint her lips with something called, over the counter, 'the Atom Lipstick' – the case of the cosmetic being fashioned according to the popular conceptions of the original war engine. I'm sure you won't need to be told that Miss Hayworth is not one to use such a thing or hold it as anything less than

a very hideous conceit. Her face is not on the atom bomb then by her own choosing, but by election of the fliers who will drop the bomb and who are clearly for business according to their tastes. In regard to their selection, I find their taste beyond reproach, but the bomb dropping itself better be worthy of the accompanying photograph.

“Is this’, Faustus claimed of Helen of Troy, ‘the face that launched a thousand ships and burnt the topless towers of Ilium?’ Well, I want a better toast, a better boast, for Rebecca. I want my daughter to be able to tell her daughter that grandmother’s picture was on the last atom bomb ever to explode.”

Orson Welles, ABC Radio Network Commentary, 30 June 1946

Theorem

The atomic tests at Bikini introduced a paradigm of organized visibility: it was a worldwide statement involving 42,000 people and 1,550 devices in the organization of a visible phenomenon. Visibility is here intended as evidence: the truth. It is the final proof, an absolute communication of the level of precision and control that a nation was already able to achieve on a global scale.

Visibility is intended as extreme light. Only on this monstrous scale could aesthetics overtake ethics and allow millions of international viewers to see atomic explosions with their own eyes, thereby turning them from witnesses into accomplices thanks to their uncurbed voyeuristic instinct. The famous image of a group of VIPs smiling while wearing protective goggles in front of the big flash makes the memory of the catastrophic effects of atomic bombs used during war time seem distant. The images of bombs 2 and 3 launched over Hiroshima and Nagasaki only one year before the Bikini tests now seem to have faded into the history of centuries past.

The daring French swimming costume perfectly embodied a society at a turning point: with a new

brutality, the world’s population was asked to observe reality in its barest form. The body, and the bomb, quickly pushed the envelope with regard to the “spectrum” of what is visible: a rapid expansion of the range of what one can see and what one is allowed to communicate to and share with the global masses.



Operation Crossroads was a series of nuclear weapon tests conducted by the United States at Bikini Atoll in the summer of 1946. Its purpose was to investigate the effect of nuclear weapons on naval ships. The series consisted of two detonations, each with a yield of 23 kilotonnes: Able was detonated at an altitude of 520 feet on 1 July 1946; Baker was detonated 90 feet underwater on 25 July 1946. A third bomb, Charlie, which was planned for 1947, was cancelled primarily because of the Navy’s inability to decontaminate the target ships after the Baker test. The Crossroads tests were the fourth and fifth nuclear explosions conducted by the United States (following the Trinity test and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). They were the first of many nuclear tests carried out in the Marshall Islands, and the first to be publicly announced beforehand and observed by an invited audience, including a large press corp. For a complete official account on Operation Crossroads, see: United States, Joint Task Force One, *Crossroads: The Official Pictorial Record* (New York: H. W. Wise & Co., 1946) and W. A. Shurcliff, Joint Task Force One, *Bombs at Bikini: The Official Report of Operation Crossroads* (New York: H. W. Wise & Co., 1947).

CERTAIN TROPICAL FEEDBACK

Troy Conrad Therrien

1
Alvin Boyarsky, as cited in Irene Sunwoo, "Pedagogy's Progress: Alvin Boyarsky's International Institute of Design", *Grey Room*, 34 (Winter 2009), 29.

2
Sunwoo, "Pedagogy's Progress", 53.

3
Boyarsky, "Academicism Lives On", quoted in Sunwoo, "Pedagogy's Progress", 42.

The influence of the products of London's Architectural Association (AA) in the 1970s on contemporary architecture culture is not to be underestimated, nor has it been overlooked. A cosmopolitan cultural nexus, the AA gave birth, residence and refuge to a significant subset of the figures who still tower over architectural production and discourse – Koolhaas, Tschumi, Zenghelis and Hadid, to name very few. Described by its chairman, the "well-laid table" that was its structure has since proliferated and infected much of the architectural education around the world.¹ An internationally networked feedback-driven apparatus rooted in a fixed cultural institution more than a distinct material training ground for professional practice, Boyarsky's AA has been characterized as an ambient "medium of communication".² A pedagogical atmosphere governed by cybernetic principles was not, its steward himself conceded, "necessarily a novel idea"; rather, "the novelty of it was that it worked fabulously well".³ Rather than attempting the historically specious and recursive task of assembling the network of influence that may have explicitly and implicitly influenced Boyarsky's network model, this essay asks a much more modest question. Just how well laid was the AA's table upon Boyarsky's arrival? It also asks, less modestly, what role did colonialism play?

In 1971, Boyarsky inherited the AA, a hybrid of a members' association and the oldest independent architecture school in Britain, at an important juncture in its history. The school had been working out the details of assimilation into Imperial College for the better part of the 1960s, a deal which the latter unilaterally dissolved at the end of the decade, throwing the AA into a financial, and organizational, tailspin. Clandestine attempts of overthrow coincided with a state

of emergency wherein the association's membership – composed of alumni, students and a few others who had democratically governed the school in one way or another since its inception – took hold of the association, retrofitted its constitution, reorganized its governance and trimmed its budget in an act not unlike the coup it dramatically staged in the 1930s in order to usher in the first modernist architectural education in Britain.⁴ Drama can be historiographically seductive, coaxing one to overlook a longer process of transformation. The task here is to dig into the archive beneath the drama in order to distinguish the threads of continuity that lie across the chasm that otherwise separates the AA of the 1970s from its previous incarnation from those of innovation.

Boyarsky was not the first to skipper the school in a period of economic hardship. In 1949, the financial committee projected insolvency in the mid-1950s as the building lease would have to be renewed at a considerable increase. The school instated a policy of halving its student body, which makes it all the more curious that it took on, in precisely the target year, a new department at a cost of one quarter of the projected deficit. Conceived of in the spring of 1953, the Department of Tropical Architecture was instituted in the fall of 1954 as the first post-graduate research program in a British architecture school, four years in advance of the Oxford Conference on architectural education that instituted the so-called “Official System”, whereby the education board of the Royal Institute of British Architects finally assumed a modernist stance, promoting post-graduate advanced study and research.⁵

The AA council, the governing body of the association and school, selected the tropical architecture theme from among a number of alternative topics for advanced study largely for its joint satisfaction of the then conservative RIBA stance on architectural research, and for its ability to lure funding from the widest potential sources, which ranged from the British American Tobacco Company to the UN. It began under the directorship of Maxwell Fry, the modernist co-founder of the MARS group, predominantly as an alternative for ambitious undergraduate thesis students – Kenneth Frampton was the department's first graduate. Interest quickly dwindled as jobs for Britons dried up abroad, and in 1957, Fry stepped down and was ultimately replaced by Dr. Otto Koenigsberger, who immediately revived the program by shifting its focus from outbound Englishmen to practicing architects from the tropics who sought expert training.

4 See Charles Jencks, “125 Years of Quasi Democracy”, in James Cowan (ed.), *Continuing Experiment* (London: Architectural Press, 1975), 149–59; and Mark Crinson and Jules Lubbock, *Architecture—Art or Profession?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

5 See Crinson and Lubbock, *Architecture—Art or Profession?*.

6
Personal conversation with
Diana Lee-Smith and David
Etherton (AA students from
1958 to 1963), May 2010,
London.

7
George Atkinson, "British
Architects in the Tropics",
*Architectural Association
Journal*, 69 (1953), 8.

8
Ibid., 14.

9
AA Council Meeting Minutes,
28 September 1961,
Architectural Association
Archives, London.

The tropical department population was thereafter an anomaly within the school. Middle-aged and wearing "strange pants", its students stood out in the very halls in which the architectural avant-garde was being incubated.⁶ Under the principalship of Michael Patrick and the directorship of Koenigsberger, the Department of Tropical Architecture was effectively an isolated commercial laboratory predominantly linked to the association by the revenue stream it generated from research funding. For the state, however, the department was precisely a device to avoid isolation.

As the colonial liaison of the British Building Research Station (BRS), George Atkinson argued in his appeal to the AA membership in 1953 for the establishment of the department that although decolonization was underway, this did "not mean, however, that the historic interest of Britain in the Caribbean and the Pacific, in tropical Africa and Asia is ending; but rather that it is entering on a new phase."⁷ In this new phase, "the biggest contribution we can make, as a profession," he concluded, "is in the field of education."⁸ The tropical department was to be the first British architectural node in a post-colonial apparatus of knowledge dependency. It was constituted as the reification of a post-war architectural answer to the Orientalist practice that Edward Said has characterized as the imperialist means by which, in an explicitly Foucauldian sense, knowledge is converted into power. Although operationally international, it was precisely the primary irreducible quality of Orientalist ideology that characterized the internal institutional topology of the department within the AA. For the Orientalist, "the Orient" is necessarily "other"; at the AA, the tropical department was pedagogically, culturally, demographically and, indeed, all but economically other. Within yet isolated from the association, it was, in short, institutionally an island.

In February of 1961, while Reyner Banham extrapolated the "history of the immediate future" for a RIBA audience, the AA council selected William Allen to replace Patrick as school principal. A central figure of the 1958 Oxford conference, and chief architect of the BRS, Allen brought to the AA the future Banham had contemporaneously prophesied. That the tropical department would provide the conduit is evidenced in Allen's first private and public acts as principal. In his first meeting with the AA council, Allen rechristened both Koenigsberger and his department: "in order to avoid confusion", Koenigsberger would be known as the head, rather than the director, of what was to thenceforth be called the Department of Tropical Studies.⁹ The

nominal displacement of Koenigsberger demonstrates Allen's plans to ultimately direct the department from above. His swapping of "studies" for "architecture" was designed "to bring [the department] more closely within the system of the school",¹⁰ a system akin to that projected by Banham that would privilege "non-architectural content" in its embrace of Human Science, which he claimed was "not only the strongest discipline adjacent to architecture", but "also becoming the most powerful discipline there is".¹¹ In February 1962, he went public with his agenda, explaining in his first address to the AA membership that he had found the tropical department "in fact already doing, sometimes on a modest scale, three or four of the things I had hoped to find a way of doing," which led him to say, "you will I am sure already see what I have in mind, which is an extension of this departmental structure".¹² This process was already underway. The previous month, the tropical department had begun its first semester focusing on town planning, a restructuring organized by Allen that introduced empirical, statistical sociology into the program. Rather than a disjointed commercial laboratory, Allen re-appropriated the tropical department as a sort of experimental laboratory for testing, filtering and eventually assimilating the human sciences into the general AA curriculum, beginning the process of reframing the previously disjointed island as, in Allen's terms, the "way forward".¹³

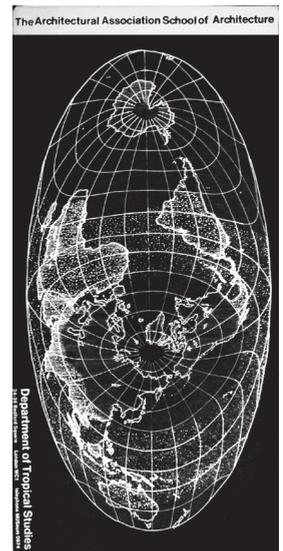
By the spring of 1963, a new institutional topology began to crystallize. The AA, on the merits of its tropical department, was invited to oversee the architecture department at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana. The connection immediately scored the AA an invitation to provide advisory services to the Northern Rhodesian government in a practice that was soon institutionalized into a very active Tropical Advisory Service (TAS), an extension of the department that allowed students and faculty to participate in real projects for tropical governments, commercial firms, local architects and other tropically minded organizations. By the end of Allen's second term, the tropical department was thus reformed as the central node in an international network that fulfilled Atkinson's aspirations of a decade earlier. This new topology was celebrated on a departmental Christmas card of the time, which depicted London near the centre of a projection of the world as a connected oval island against a black nothingness illuminated only by a stipple-penned tropical belt. The following autumn, the department initiated what would effectively fulfil the cybernetic function of feedback for its network. An

10 William Allen, "The Training and Education of Architects", *Architectural Association Journal*, 77 (1962), 230.

11 Reyner Banham, "The History of the Immediate Future", *RIBA Journal* (May 1961), 256.

12 Allen, "Training and Education", 230-31.

13 *Ibid.*, 230.



14

See Georges Canguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett (New York: Zone Books, 1989).

15

William Allen, memorandum to the AA Faculty, September 1965, Architectural Association Archives, London.

16

Ibid.

17

William Allen, "Science in Schools of Architecture", *RIBA Journal* (August 1953), 409.

18

Allen, memorandum to the AA Faculty.

19

Peter Cook, "75 New Architects", *Architectural Design* (December 1971), 753.

Educational Buildings Course (EBC), dedicated to testing new theories of teaching methodology, simultaneously introduced psychology into the department – notably the work of Jane Abercrombie – and provided a veritable Petri dish in which to explicitly test progressive pedagogical techniques in the extreme tropical environment that could then ultimately be fed back into the general AA curriculum. The feedback loop was completed in Allen's contemporaneous reorganization of the undergraduate thesis curriculum, which he subdivided into three streams: general design, planning and tropical architecture.

An island no more, the internationally networked tropical department had been effectively normalized into the school in the sense elaborated by Georges Canguilhem.¹⁴ Allen's utilization of the department as a testing ground for radical new pedagogy instrumentalized the tropics not as a qualitatively different "other", but simply as an extreme environment of merely quantitative difference, thereby establishing it as the leading end of the AA spectrum rather than as an outlier. Although this pedagogy rested on empirical Human Science, Allen's position was tempered by humanist doubt. In a memorandum to the AA faculty outlining his pedagogical stance prior to the 1965 fall semester, Allen stated his desire "to produce cultured people," which he qualified as possessing an "activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and human feeling. Scraps of information have nothing to do with it. A merely well-informed man is a bore."¹⁵ Forced to resign only months later, the closing lines of the document serve historiographically to name his pedagogical model at its apotheosis: "We not only say, but actually believe and live by the idea that students learn much inadvertently from all around them. . . . A cultural milieu with conviction, enthusiasm and authority is the right environment for education."¹⁶

In an earlier paper, Allen explained that "the resolution of the group of functions to be provided for in the normal building is usually too complex to resolve by the step-by-step scientific method," and thus "architectural design is at its roots an intuitive act by which the mind works through its imagination".¹⁷ The function of the "cultural milieu" was precisely "to develop imagination", which was "a purpose of all higher education, and especially ours."¹⁸ He was not speaking of the imagination that served as the source of avant-gardist creative wandering – as in Peter Cook's claim that "it is imagination that we would rate first, beyond relevancy, beyond technique – even, sometimes beyond achievement"¹⁹ – but rather of the scientist's "disciplined

imagination”, that which separated scientific genius from layman, as Karl Pearson asserted in his 1892 book *The Grammar of Science*.²⁰ This becomes significant – indeed, remarkable – in considering Allen’s use of the tropical department. By introducing Human Science into the AA through the tropical department, Allen effectively, albeit implicitly, treated the tropical subject as “not other”, as undifferentiated in both body and mind from the Western British subject. In testing the post-war human scientific theories of the West on a tropical population, Allen discredited such concepts as “the Negro Mind,” “the Arab Mind”, “the Oriental Mind”, and other similar typologies of non-Western cognitive otherness, effectively universalizing a Victorian concept of the mind originally referred to as specifically distinct from that of the passionate, lecherous, unreasonable south. He also dodged the Orientalist reductivist tendency, maintaining his position that the complexity of contemporary architectural design was an upper limit to the reaches of a scientific approach even in the tropics, the very doubt that focused his pedagogy on the development of intuition. John Lloyd, his successor, possessed no such doubt.

Lloyd shared Allen’s admiration of a particularly British practice, operational research (OR), but none of his reservations about its educational utility. Developed during the war, OR consisted of interdisciplinary teams of young scientists “of high talent, zeal, initiative and imagination, working under the guidance of experienced scientists”.²¹ Not plagued by disciplinary conditioning, they could assume the role of scientific generalists entrusted with collecting novel data, designing new metrics and applying the principles of cybernetics and systems theory to fresh problems characterized as occupying “larger dimensions than can be comprehended in one man’s brain”.²² Which is to say, OR provided a practice whereby the very imagination Allen cultivated to account for science’s shortcomings was instrumentalized in a scientific method applied exclusively to problems for which the bounds of the human mind provided a lower limit. Lloyd completely restructured the AA curriculum in 1967, his first year, according to this principle. Although often associated with Boyarsky, the unit system, still practiced at the AA, was introduced by Lloyd as part of his atomization of Allen’s set curriculum into an alphanumerically encoded table of courses from which students could choose their path. Indeed, the possible permutations offered were necessarily so vast that the system “would not be possible in a fully developed form without the advent of computers”.²³ Lloyd’s zealotry both breached the limits

20
Karl Pearson, *The Grammar of Science* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 30–31.

21
Stafford Beer, *Decision and Control: The Meaning of Operational Research and Management Cybernetics* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 1966), 37.

22
Ibid., 40.

23
John Lloyd, “The Quality of Architectural Education”, *Architectural Association Journal*, 82 (1967), 275.

24
Cook, “75 New Architects”, 755.

25
Lloyd, "Quality of
Architectural Education",
275.

26
Alvin Boyarsky, as cited
in Sunwoo, "Pedagogy's
Progress", 29.

27
Mark Crinson, "From Haifa
to Stevenage: The British
Avantgarde, Colonialism and
the Welfare State", keynote
lecture, "Architecture and
the State Symposium",
Columbia University, April
2010.

28
Edward Said, *Orientalism*
(New York: Random House,
1979), 49.

of complexity set by Allen and lost the intended balance of his cultural milieu, generating instead what Cook retroactively condemned as a sort of greyness, "a technocratic cool".²⁴

Basing his system on the "mass-based education"²⁵ of American universities, which was governed paradoxically by American ideals of freedom and individuality, Lloyd bequeathed to Boyarsky precisely the system for implementing his "market-place" of ideas.²⁶ Boyarsky may have been responsible for laying the table, but the table's foundations were laid by Lloyd. What history has forgotten is not only the prep work of Lloyd, and that of Allen before him, but, in a process of what Mark Crinson has called "willed forgetting", also the role of colonialism in forming the conditions of historical possibility for Boyarsky's AA.²⁷ Lloyd, selected in 1963 to assume the post of dean at the architecture school in Ghana, developed the unit system in the tropics. Overseeing teams of tropical department graduates – like so many young scientists – as they took students into the Ghanaian interior and collected the data necessary for designing for novel problems, operational research as architectural pedagogy was developed on tropical soil. The resulting statistical fatalism, the very cold, dehumanizing, objective determinism that Allen guarded against, evidences the enabling function the tropics provided. Displaying what Said has called "the apogee of Orientalist confidence," wherein, "no merely asserted generality is denied the dignity of truth," Lloyd was liberated in, and by, the tropics of Allen's doubt.²⁸ It was this certainty, bred in the absence of resistance, that Lloyd fed back into the AA, thereby completing Allen's process of normalization by making the entire AA over in the model forged in the tropics and preparing the ground for a period of unequalled fertility.

PROLOGUE/EPILOGUE

Charles Avery

Prologue

I first came to the Island at the end of the great kelp rush, although I was not aware of that at the time. On the contrary, I had sought this strange land with a view to being its discoverer.

When I dragged my boat onto that remote shore it was with the last of my strength, for I had fought the tide and rain and the forests of seaweed that had wrapped around my oars.

I threw down my bag, sat on a rock and peeled a banana.

Darkness had fallen, and huge raindrops flooded my eyes; I could not see far, so I listened. I heard the seaweed crackling in the sway, the patter of rain on the clay and the cracks and hoots of unknown beasts living their dark lives.

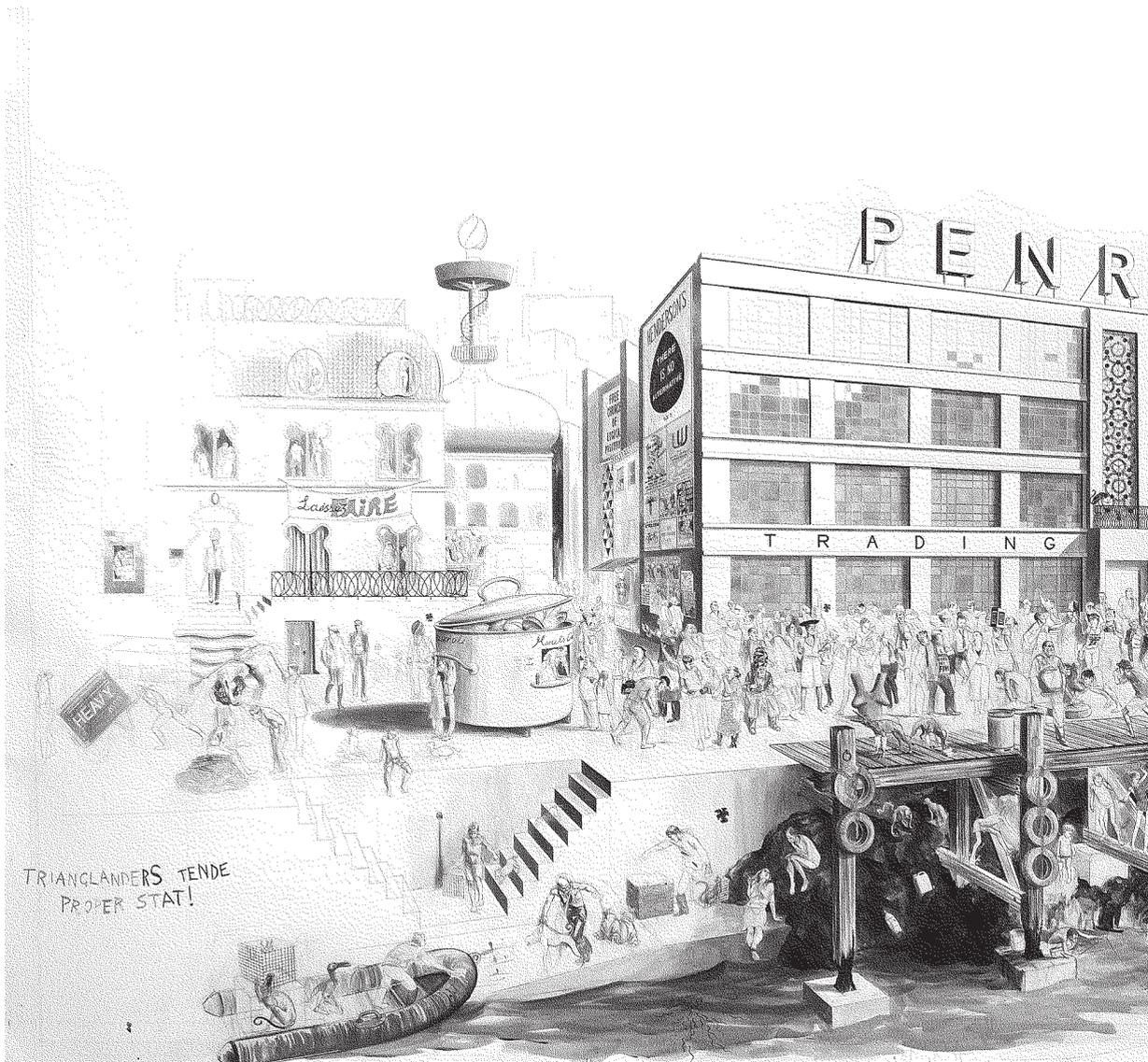
I started to contemplate my greatness, and the hero's welcome that I expected to receive on my return home: the crowd on the pier, an interview with *Fancy That* magazine, a message from the government. As I sat in thought I became aware of something stirring in the corner of my eye. Turning my head I saw, camouflaging itself amongst a cluster of rocks, an extraordinary being: a Stonemouse (part animal, part mineral, whose heart beats only once every thousand years and for whom even the slightest movement is an agonizing contortion), a pathetic specimen, but an untroublesome one. I would take it home and present it to the queen as proof of the New World. So I took an old pickle jar out of my bag and scooped the creature up together with some of its environment and screwed the lid on tight.

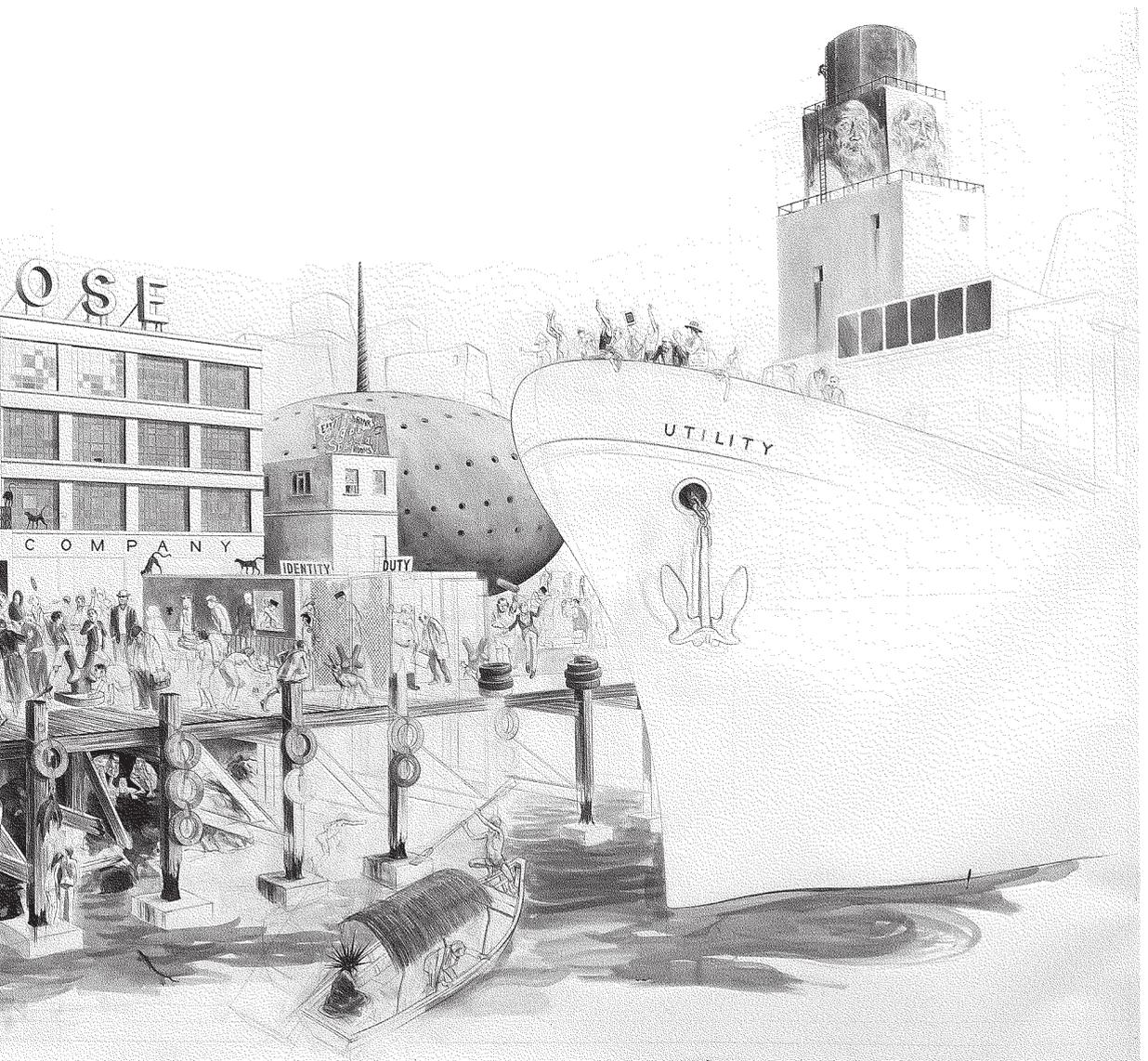
The rain had started to fall heavily now, and horrible little noises were emanating from the darkness, the source of which seemed to be getting closer. True, I had a gun, but I did not really know how to use it.



Satisfied with the Stonemouse, I decided to leave. As I untied my boat, however, I was startled by another sound, more familiar, but nonetheless terrible to me: that of Humanity.

In disbelief, I turned towards the land, for it must surely have been a trick of the wind. Alas, it was not, for now that my eyes had become slightly accustomed, I could make out a pale figure coming towards me.





Epilogue

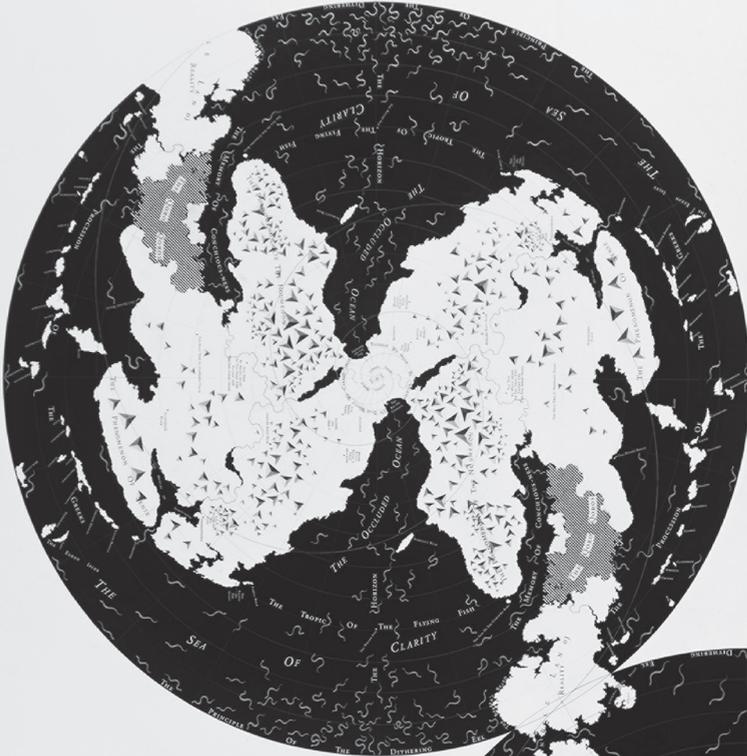
Since I first came to the Island I have travelled the extent of it, from Descartes' Axiom across the cold northern Plane, through the alleyways of Onomatopoeia.

I have the trust of the Riders of the Invisible Reigns, as I do that of the junkies and pushers who stalk the tourists.

I have recorded what I have seen in drawings and what I have heard-say in writings. I have exported many specimens and artefacts in order to evince the substance of this place.

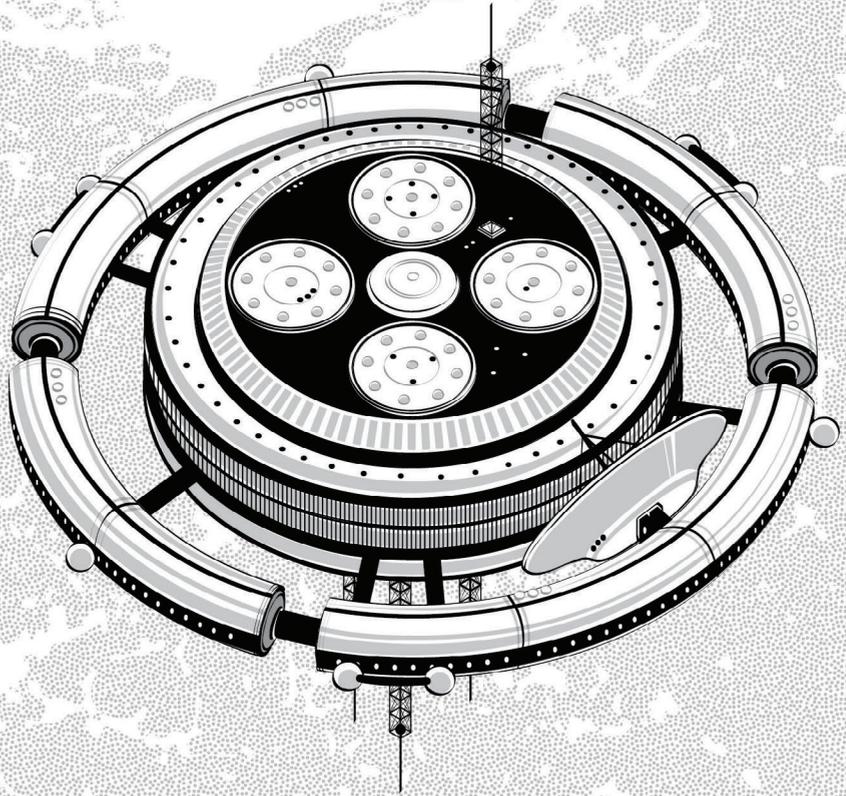
Yet my drawings are but picture postcards of an ever-changing world. The specimens are as fossils of their former selves, once expatriated from their realm. Subjected to the harsh light of Reality the grass withers and dries and the Stonemouse becomes merely a stone that looks like a mouse.

I cannot tell you how this world really is – I have no idea; I can state only the facts as I perceive them. You must be satisfied with this or you must travel there yourself sometime and see these beings in their natural environment, for the place is utterly subjective.

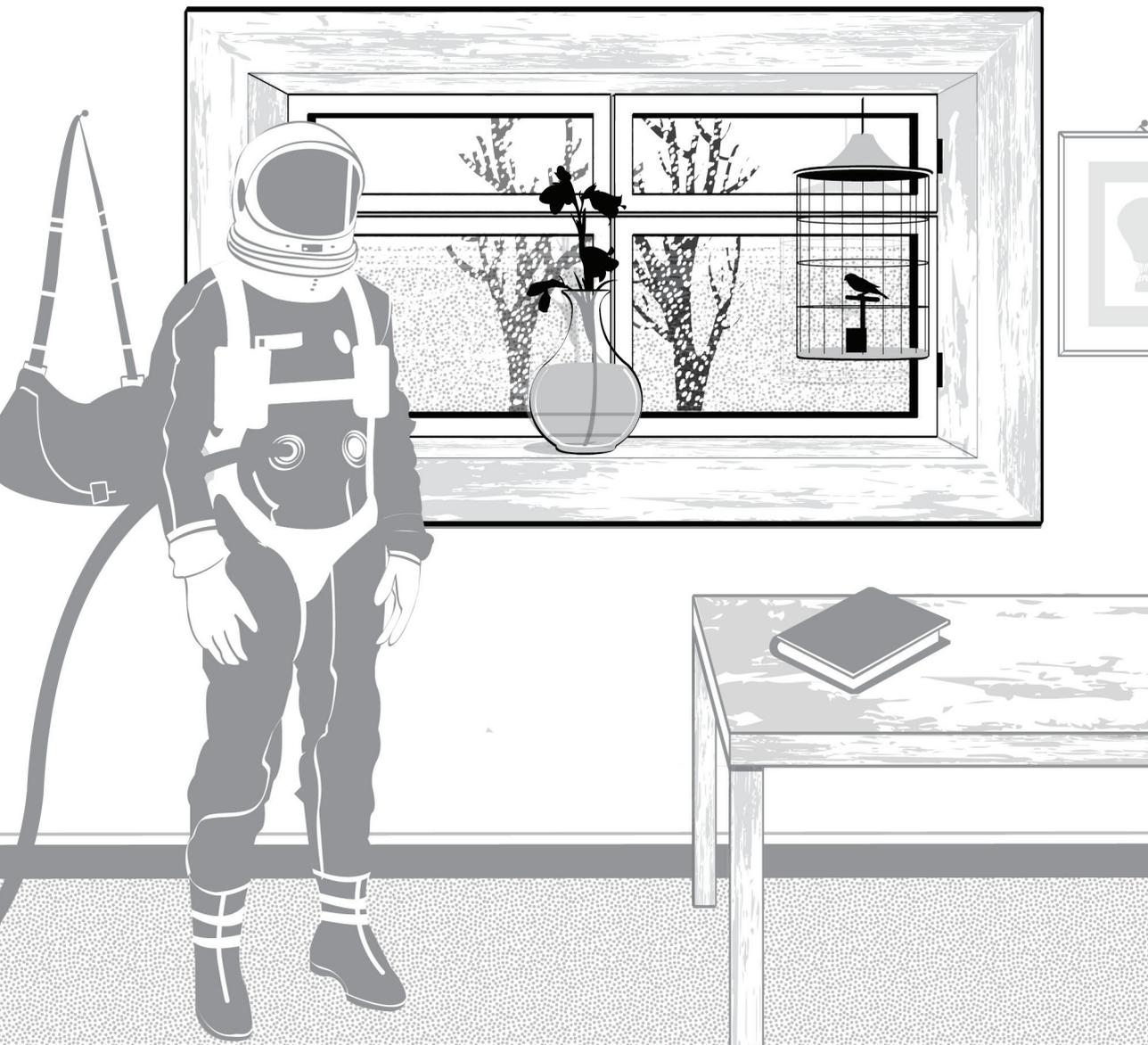


ISLANDS OF MEMORY

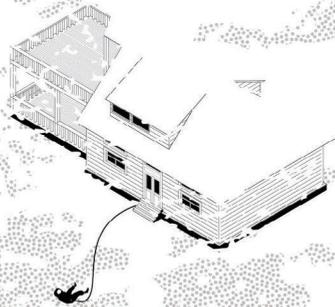
Davide Rapp











“This began after we experimented with X-rays. We wanted to test the ocean, so we initiated a concentrated surface sweep using high intensity rays. . . . Apparently the ocean somehow probed our brain centres, from which it extracted something like islands of memory.”

Solaris

Andrej Arsen'evič Tarkovskij

165 min., colour/b&w

Soviet Union, 1972

BEACH-UMBRELLA READINGS: THE ISOLA FERDINANDEA

Matteo Norzi



Island: a place, often utopian, surrounded by water; it is the opposite of a lake, which is water surrounded by a place.

Aimaro Isola

Preamble

The age of exploratory voyages and the Grand Tour obviously ended long ago, and imperialism and colonialism are terms that now arouse fondness in the face of the mass tourism that has been aggressively transforming most of the world's shores into non-places for tanning, swimming and vacationing. The non-place is utopia's opposite. Perhaps if the following story were to have transpired today, then none of it would have happened. But a story like this one has to have taken place

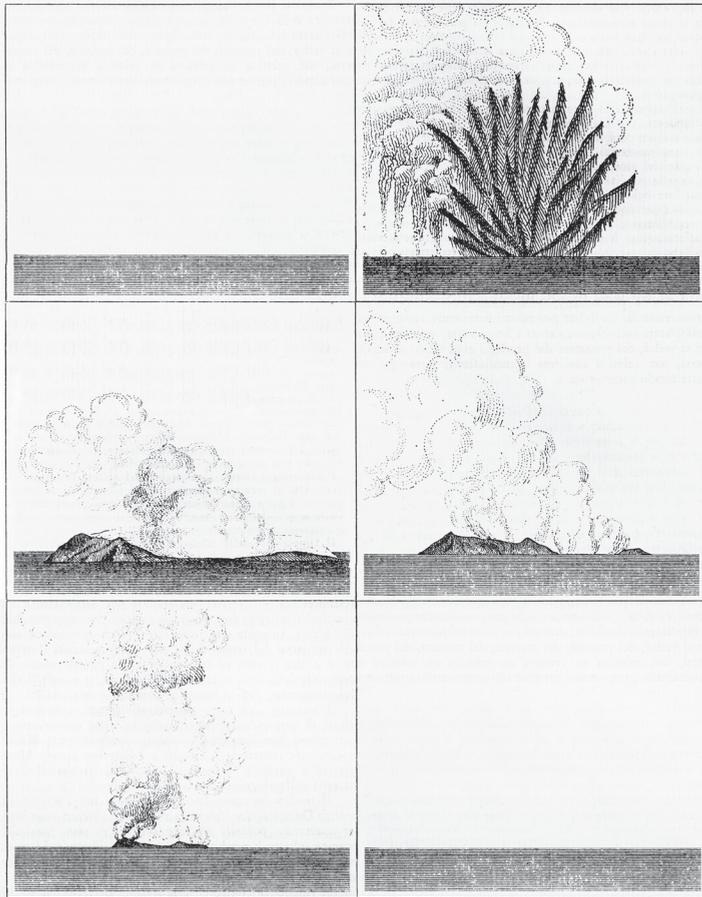
in the 19th century, an epoch when the voyager, someone who loitered along his journey, searching for something unknown, was still distinguishable from the passenger of today, someone who is unmistakably defined by his or her destination.

For the voyager staring at the sea, the horizon was perceived as a means of reaching the remote, not just as the subject of a modern traveller's postcard snapshot. With our modern approach to travel, and with a good supply of travel novels to hand, our summers are always tinged by a vague sense of distress, a disillusioned pursuit of adventure and traces of lost feelings. We ended up travelling from island to island, delving into our beach-umbrella paperbacks in search of a placebo that would counteract the prosaic reality of our modern times. The words of Hernán Díaz, who recently published an essay on the concept of islands entitled "A Topical Paradise" in the magazine *Cabinet*, are relevant here:

In a fully charted world, it seems hard to think of any place that remains truly isolated, completely detached and sealed off within its geographic, historic, and linguistic confines. Even being encircled by water no longer seems a sufficient condition for isolation. In a way this has always been the case: just by being seen from elsewhere, an island loses part of its insularity, since this gaze connects it to the outside – and if the spectator is foreign, it will probably be named in a new language and included in some sort of cartographic representation, both of which are already bridges to other lands. In other words, it wouldn't be excessive to claim that no one has never seen a truly isolated island, and that these are entirely fictional spaces, possible only in literature.

Sometimes, however, reality anticipates imagination and the exception to the rule occurs.

The following story is actually historical and really took place in space and time. In the summer of 1831, a volcanic island emerged from the sea south of Sicily, engulfed in flames and deadly smoke, and was then soon lost again to the waters. The island was moved from the Mediterranean to other imaginary seas by various journalistic chronicles of the day, including *Le Speronare* by Alexandre Dumas, James Fenimore Cooper's *The Crater*, Emilio Salgari's *L'isola di fuoco*, Jules Verne's *Le Chancellor*, and *Jingo* by Terry Pratchett. It is still an idiomatic episode in the Sicilian people's superstitions. But perhaps 19th-century history is so novelistic to begin with that it is we who no longer want to distinguish the difference between fiction and historical fact.



The Island

It began with boiling waters and a terrible smell of sulphur in the air. Dead fish floated up to the surface of the sea. In 1831, Benedetto Mazzolla described it like this:

On 12 July 1831, between Sciacca [a town on the Sicilian mainland] and the island of Pantelleria, precisely in the middle of the sea that divides them, a submarine volcano emerged – and from it, after huge eruptions, a little island remained. Here it is described. The Island consists of a plain that is only barely above sea level. It is composed of fine, blackish sand strewn with little boulders of heavy lava and other highly friable debris. Nearly in the center of the island a small mountain stands without a volcanic crater on top. It rises steeply on all sides, and thus climbing it is very uncomfortable, for step after step the ground crumbles under one's



feet and collapses under a person's weight. West of the mountain there is a lake that contains boiling water and emits steam like a geyser. The water table is slightly above sea level and it is blackish or brownish, like the water used to rinse India ink from a brush. When the sea is even a bit rough, its waves wash away the sand from the plain, and from the mountain too, which, being directly exposed to the sea's fury, cannot stand strong against it. Probably in a few months the Island will cease to exist.

This description, the only one resulting from a survey expedition on site, would have been enough to dampen anyone's enthusiasm, but the time that passed before it appeared in print was long enough to allow a debate over the island's possession to begin, one which set off an international dispute that is still, theoretically, unresolved: *insula in mari nata*. The British planted their flag on it, laying claim to the sizable hill and naming it Graham Island after the First Lord of the Admiralty. They were giddy at the opportunity to acquire such a strategic position for controlling commercial and military traffic along the major Mediterranean shipping routes – it was one last little thing to add to the territories of the Empire. In response, the nearby Sicilians indignantly sent a ship to claim the island for themselves; they named it the *Isola Ferdinanda* in honour of King Ferdinand II, who declared with an Act of Annexation that it was part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The Spanish showed an interest too, and the French sent a geologist to christen it *Île Julia*, for the ill-fated island had appeared in the month of July. The conflict raged in the press as the various nations fought over a lump of ash. Tourists travelled to the island, but could hardly climb to its peak due to clouds of noxious gas. Local Sicilian fishermen watched with suspicion and superstition, muttering about evil forces, while the nobles of the House of Bourbon reportedly planned to set up a first-class holiday resort on its beaches. But it was all of no use. As predicted, little by little the island sank back beneath the waters, and by 7 December 1831 officials reported no trace of it: it had already collapsed in on itself and disappeared below the waves long before international diplomatic efforts could ever have resolved the question of its ownership. A few days after the island's disappearance, the Royal Topographical Institute of Naples released the new cartographical atlas of the area, fixing forever on paper something that had already vanished. Today the volcano's summit is six metres below sea level and seems unlikely to erupt again any time soon. In the meantime, its reef has become rich with algae. Coral has begun to grow, too, providing an eden for fish, invertebrates and underwater

plants. The rush to raise a flag on the island's once visible shores seems like a geopolitical parody, a comical quarrel that poked fun at nineteenth-century politics. As Victor Hugo has remarked, "Nothing changes form so quickly as clouds, except perhaps rocks."

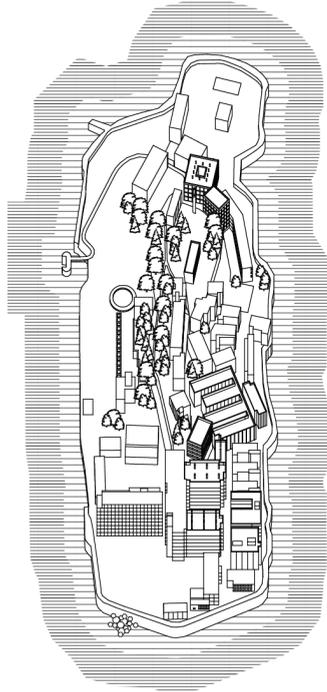
37°10'North, 12°43'East

The north wind, the mistral, the mistral, the levanter, the sirocco, the mistral – each day the island is buffeted by a different wind, and our mood follows in its wake; we are drawn to the idea of the island called Ferdinandea. Finally, we are granted a few halcyon days, so we get our speedboats ready the night before and head out to sea at sunrise. For thirty miles we travel towards a point on the blue sea that seems like any other in the Sicilian Canal. We think of it as a migration trajectory, one which hovers above the tectonic border between Africa and Europe. We sight a huge oiler and a Chinese freighter on their routes. The sea is so calm that it looks like a piece of paper, a Battleship game-board. With the clearness of intuition, we find out what Tunisian fishermen and gulls have always known while we are cruising to reach our destination and dive. Even if invisible from elsewhere, even without a foreshore as a life-line for castaways or a beach to host tourists, even without sovereignty or a proper name, this is a place in the middle of a non-place: it is still somehow an island. It is the only spot in an area stretching as far as the eye can see where a boat can lie at anchor, a truly isolated island indeed. For us, the very last moment before our dive into the water takes the form of a vision – a dream of underwater land art, most definitely a new subject of research, possibly an ephemeral artistic intervention that would add another chapter to the island's story. Once more it is from our beach-umbrella readings that we have learned how trifles of this kind would, in the end, be quite irrelevant. In the words of Predrag Matvejević, "Literature has attempted to classify dreams of the sea according to the age and sex of the dreamer, dividing them, for example, into masculine and feminine, early and late, fateful and routine, memorable and forgettable, night dreams and daydreams, dreams of sailing and sinking, coast dreams, island dreams, high sea dreams. But literature does not have an easy time of it: dreams vary from sea to sea, and the Mediterranean itself surpasses all Mediterranean literature."

Pantelleria, Summer 2010

BETWEEN ARTIFICE AND NATURE

Tetsuo Kondo Architects



1

The island of Hashima currently hosts a concrete labyrinth of multiple-storey abandoned apartment houses and forgotten mining structures that are beginning to be overrun by nature. The small size of the island means that a transformation can be performed with relative ease. Our proposal is to cover the island with a green layer. The layer could be a composite of green nature and other green man-made materials. By transforming the entire island into a green field, the boundary between the man-made and the purely natural is lost. The green colour will act as a camouflage between the different natural and man-made elements. By failing to classify trees, bushes and valleys as “natural” and buildings, bridges and staircases as “man-made”, a new perspective is gained. By blurring this distinction and treating



everything as a single environment, new possibilities become apparent. Various habitats such as valleys and caves start to appear within this new environment, and opportunities for the emergence of new habitats can be created.

What was once considered an uninhabitable environment could thus become a playground suitable for particular species of plants and animals. A “new nature” emerges, a world between new and old, city and forest, opaque and transparent, man-made and natural.

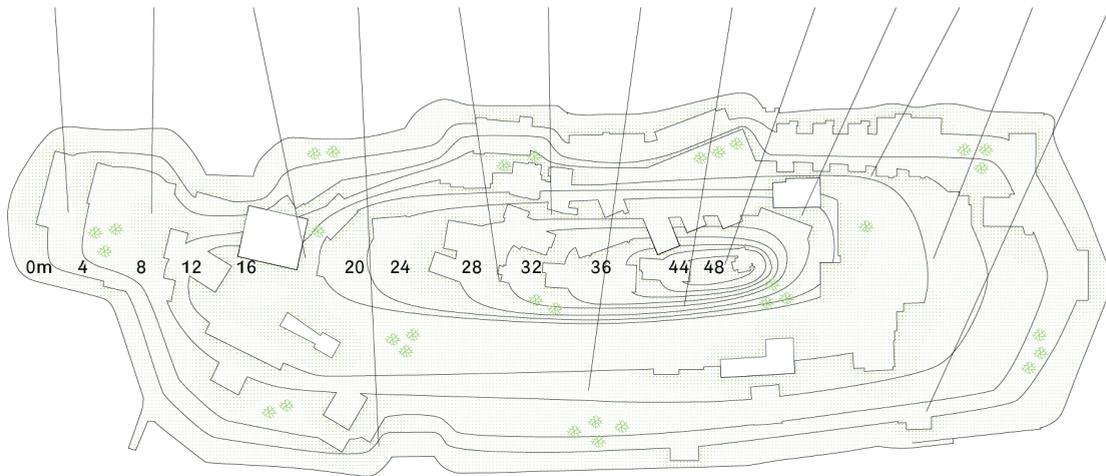
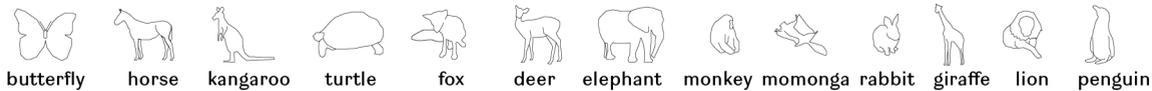
Below: photograph taken from O-project, *Cunkanjima Zenkei – Cunkanjima Odyssey Archives* (Sansai Books, 2008), www.o-project.jp



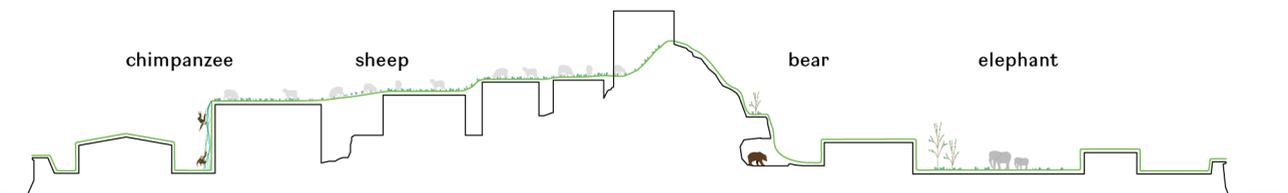
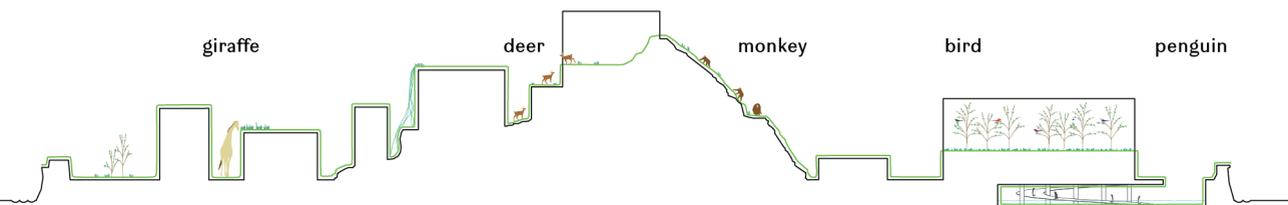


2

The animals will inhabit an environment that is neither man-made nor purely natural.



Plan scale=1:4000



3

Man-made structures and natural growth co-exist and overlap, and therefore a new environment emerges.

4

Various habitats emerge from the existing topography. Open, flat grasslands, protected hidden cavities, steep valleys and various other unique terrains are generated.

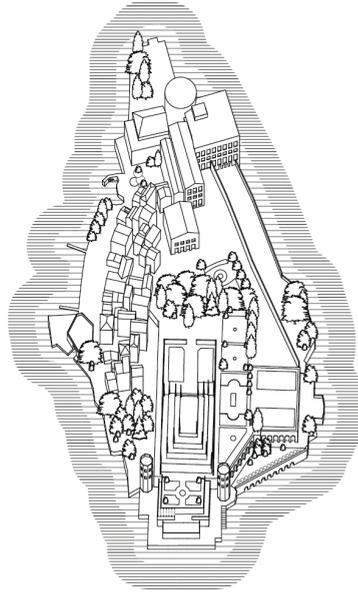
5

Hashima Island is transformed into a landscape that blurs the boundaries between the man-made and the natural.



DRAWING THE PERIMETER

Kersten Ceers
photographs by Stefano Craziani



In a curious afterword to a monograph on the idiosyncratic work of his friend Stanley Tigerman, John Hejduk wrote:

When I examine his plans it occurs to me that, throughout the history of architecture, plans have changed the least. This, I think, is a curious phenomenon. It is sometimes stated that the plan is a horizontal section, in relation to the well-known vertical section of architecture. So it may be, but I think architectural plans are something else. I think they are architecture in a state of sleep. Plans are sleeping architecture that, in the extreme, are architecture in death. We tend not to want to disturb architectural plans, for they are so still and so quiet, abstract and awesome. The plan shows the death of the soul of architecture. It is an X-ray of the soul. The plan returns architecture to a state of timelessness. The plan has no need for clothes or ornamentation; it carries with it an inevitability. The plan is sacred and inviolate.



It was with this in mind that I visited Isola Bella with Stefano Graziani. It was raining. The elegant pseudo paradise in late Baroque style was a ghost of itself, a pompous marriage cake in the drizzly weather. The white peacocks in the flower garden were lost remnants of a former grandeur, the rainy destination of a family trip, an amusement park on a wet and windy off-season day. It was the last day the island was open to visitors, for the next day Isola Bella was going to close for the winter holidays. The wet cobblestones one passes before entering the main palace, to which the gardens are attached, were slippery. You could only see a metre ahead; the universe was reduced to its smallest contour.

Isola Bella is a curious construction. Obtained by the Borromeo family in the 17th century, it is one of a set of five properties belonging to the exiled family, all but one of which are parcels of land in the Lago Maggiore area. This combination of property and exile is interesting, as it seems to be celebrating the family's main characteristic. Isola Bella is the construction of property in exile.

In what is now the sequence of the visit, a set of remarkable and exuberant spaces, worthy of a Sunday afternoon's time, brings you to a rather unspecific room with a view of the garden where the Borromeo's coat of arms is inscribed in a flower bed near the edge of the island. On the walls of that room, one finds vedute by Francesco Zuccarelli, landscape views of lush gardens dotted by buildings that represent idealized tableaux of the different pieces of property belonging to the Borromeo family. The different views of the properties are remarkably framed. With what you could call Late Baroque exuberance, the frames of the views are meticulously composed with curves of different radii. The eccentric frames demand the viewer's attention. They are gilded and stylized, as I suppose Baroque taste obliged them to be. Even curiouser still, since their design is far more specific than what the walls would have required, the shapes of the frames seem to become the protagonist, for it is truly impossible to observe the views without seeing or noticing their frames. So, apart from Late Baroque custom, why were these frames made? Why their bizarre appearance? Suddenly, a bigger picture comes into focus. There is one view missing: that of Isola Bella itself. This is interesting and logical, somehow, since as one looks from the Isola itself one finds windows onto all the other Borromeoan properties. From the main island one looks at the others. It all makes sense, except for the exuberant window frames! I look outside at the coat of arms again, see the flowers in the grass,



and then the stone wall that separates the island from the water – the perimeter that divides the water from the land, that defines the land as distinct from the water: the property line. The whole island is designed this way. All of its edges are defined. Again, we must return to the frames. Isola Bella is the only designed island of those belonging to the Borromeo family. Of course, on the other islands there are hard edges here and there that have been created to make harbours, but most of their edges are soft: they are, after all, islands. Isola Bella's perimeter, in contrast, is all curves. There is a precise line between land and water; it is a strange line, just like the ones the frames present. Isola Bella has a plan. It is architecture, the pure and controlled translation of a property line.

Viewed from the same perspective, the golden frames around the depictions of the other Borromeo properties are no more than a correction: an artificial window, a frame designed to declare (eternal) ownership. On Isola Bella, this perimeter is executed in reality. The room thus shows four idealized perspectives in an idealized yet real territory. The rest of the island is irrelevant. We can forget about the truncated pyramid garden design, the mediocre cellar vaults of rough stones, the dome that looks old but was only finished in 1986 . . . These elements are part of the bizarre universe (and amusement park) that Isola Bella has become over the course of time, and they are an evident consequence of the perimeter. The plan came first. Things became the way they did because the plan allowed it. The plan is the unchangeable architecture of the island. The depictions of the island may be perspectives, typically and historically. They are often views from the shore that have been stretched as Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach did to the Isola Bella when he incorporated it into his *Entwurf einer historischen Architektur*. This may be so, but it is the island's plan that justifies its appearance in Fischer von Erlach's work. The golden frames around the landscape views are the embodiment of the plan, the physical model of the plan: Isola Bella is architecture.

John Hejduk was clearly in difficulty when he was invited to write an afterword to his friend Stanley Tigerman's monograph *Buildings and Projects 1966–1989*. He could not refuse. He wrote with empathy and interest, but could not hide a feeling of discomfort with his friend's most recent work. As a result, he systematically returned to early projects from before “postmodernism's Napoleonic winter retreat” and focused on groupings of projects that shared similar roots and elements. As such, his strategy is ingenious and refreshing, for he



J. B. Fischer von Erlach,
view of the Isola Bella, from
Entwurf einer historischen
Architektur (Vienna, 1721)

singlehandedly found a way out of the idiotic discussion and redefines architecture's beginning as the "sacred and inviolate" plan. From here one can then engage in "the austerity of the black robes and monochromatic predilections" – which Hejduk prefers (as I would) – "or run naked into a pan-Bacchanalian phase of anything goes". Stanley did the latter. Still, it allowed his friend to come to the (curious because seemingly evident) conclusion that "Stanley is an architect." It is an important conclusion, for it appears at the very end of Hejduk's afterword. Simultaneously, and no less importantly, Isola Bella is architecture thanks to its plan, and it clarifies in one gesture the fundamental difference between land and landscape: landscape is the drawn, constructed version of the world. So is landscape architecture?

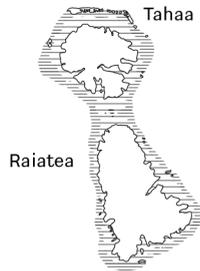






1,100 PALM TREES

Ido Avissar



Paul-Émile Victor

Motu Tané is a very small island, about 200 metres long and 100 metres wide. In the Polynesian language, a motu is a reef islet formed by broken coral and sand surrounding an atoll. There are countless motus scattered all over the Pacific Ocean. This motu is situated near Bora Bora, one of the Society Islands of French Polynesia. It was the last home of Paul-Émile Victor, a French arctic explorer, scientist and ethnologist who spent the final twenty years of his life there.

In 1999, eight years after the Wasa cyclone devastated Motu Tané, architect and landscape designer Pascal Cribier planted 1,100 coconut trees (in addition to the 300 existing ones) for its new urbanite owner, François Nars, a make-up artist and photographer from New York.

As Polynesian law prohibits any plant transfer from one atoll to another, new plants could only come from Bora Bora. The additional

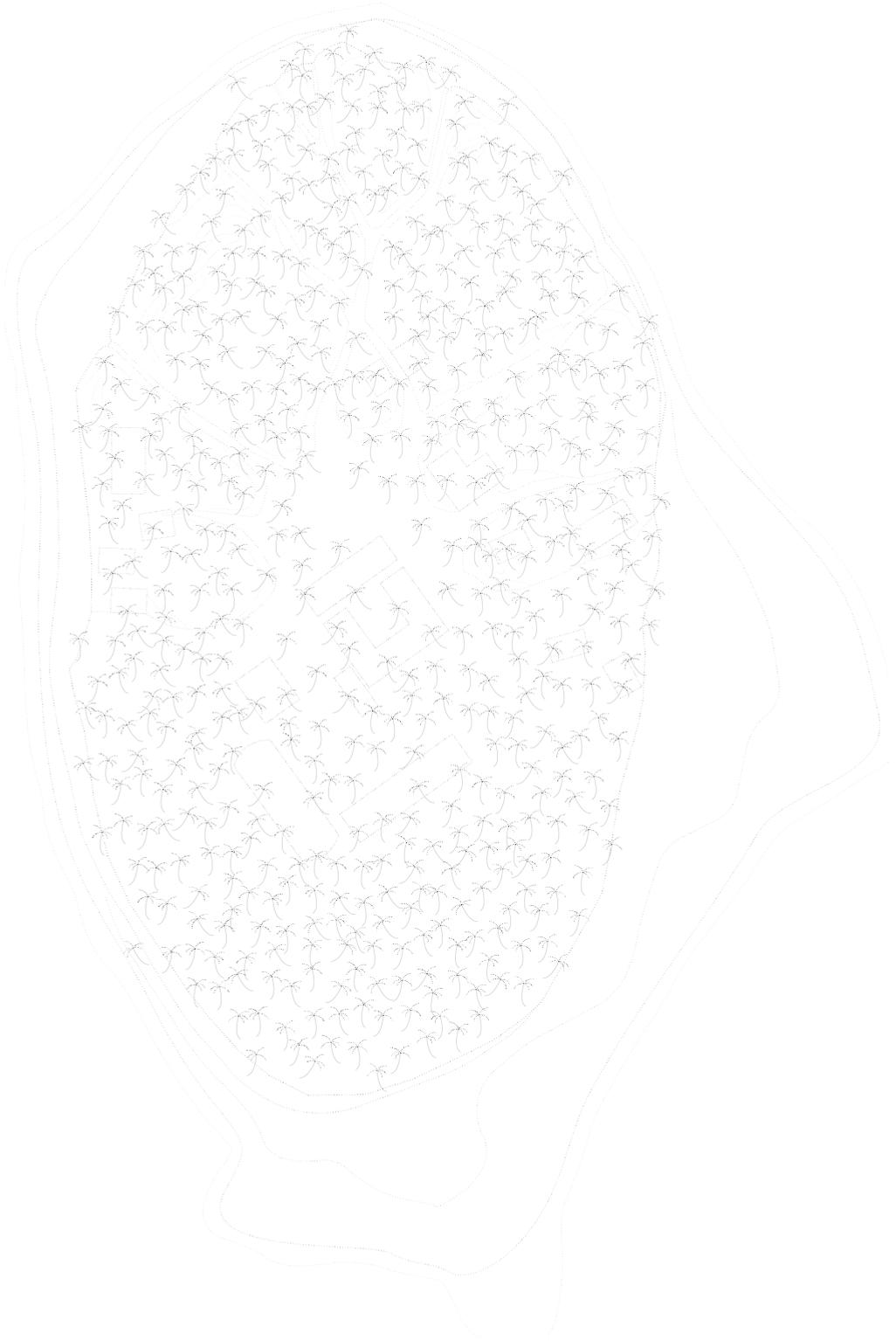
coconut trees (Niu-Kafa) were therefore transplanted from the neighbouring motus. In spite of its long roots, the coconut tree, which has almost the same botanical structure as a leek, can be easily transplanted. The trees were transferred in a small boat that carried out several round-trips between motus – a sort of informal variation on Robert Smithson’s Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island. The new trees were deliberately inclined and intuitively planted without any prior plan or geometrical system. The soil was covered with Tahitian gardenias (tiaré) and fern, which was cultivated in rice punnets from the local Chinese restaurant.

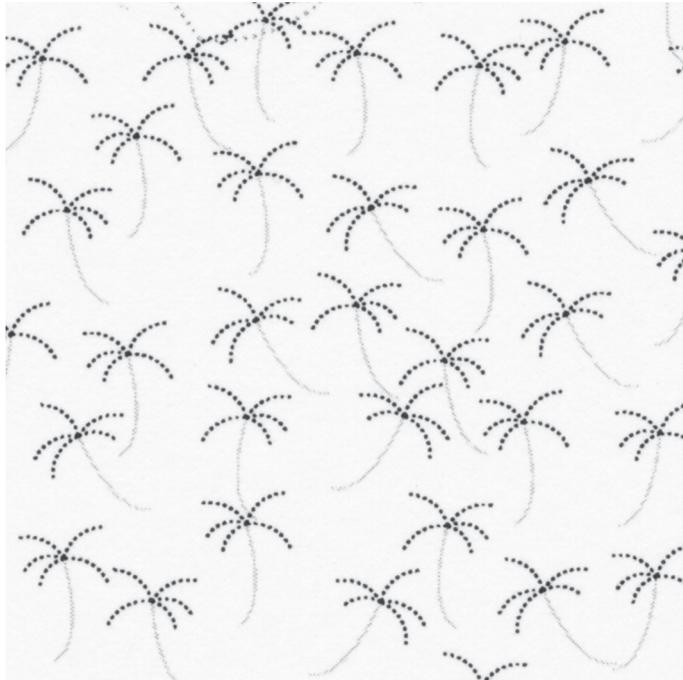
Cribier, who refers to himself as a gardener rather than a landscape designer, defines a garden, unlike “landscape” or “nature”, as a parcel with defined borders that always tries to appear bigger than its real dimensions. The two-minute walk from one side of the motu to the other, which creates the impression that wind is increasing as one walks, seems to be the perfect phenomenological demonstration of his point.

The beauty of Motu Tané is highly fragile. Although the trees resisted the February cyclone Oli – only one of them went down – its soil, which is a mere two metres above the water, is slowly eroding and disappearing into the lagoon. If interested, one can experience its ephemeral beauty for the price of 30,000 dollars a night.

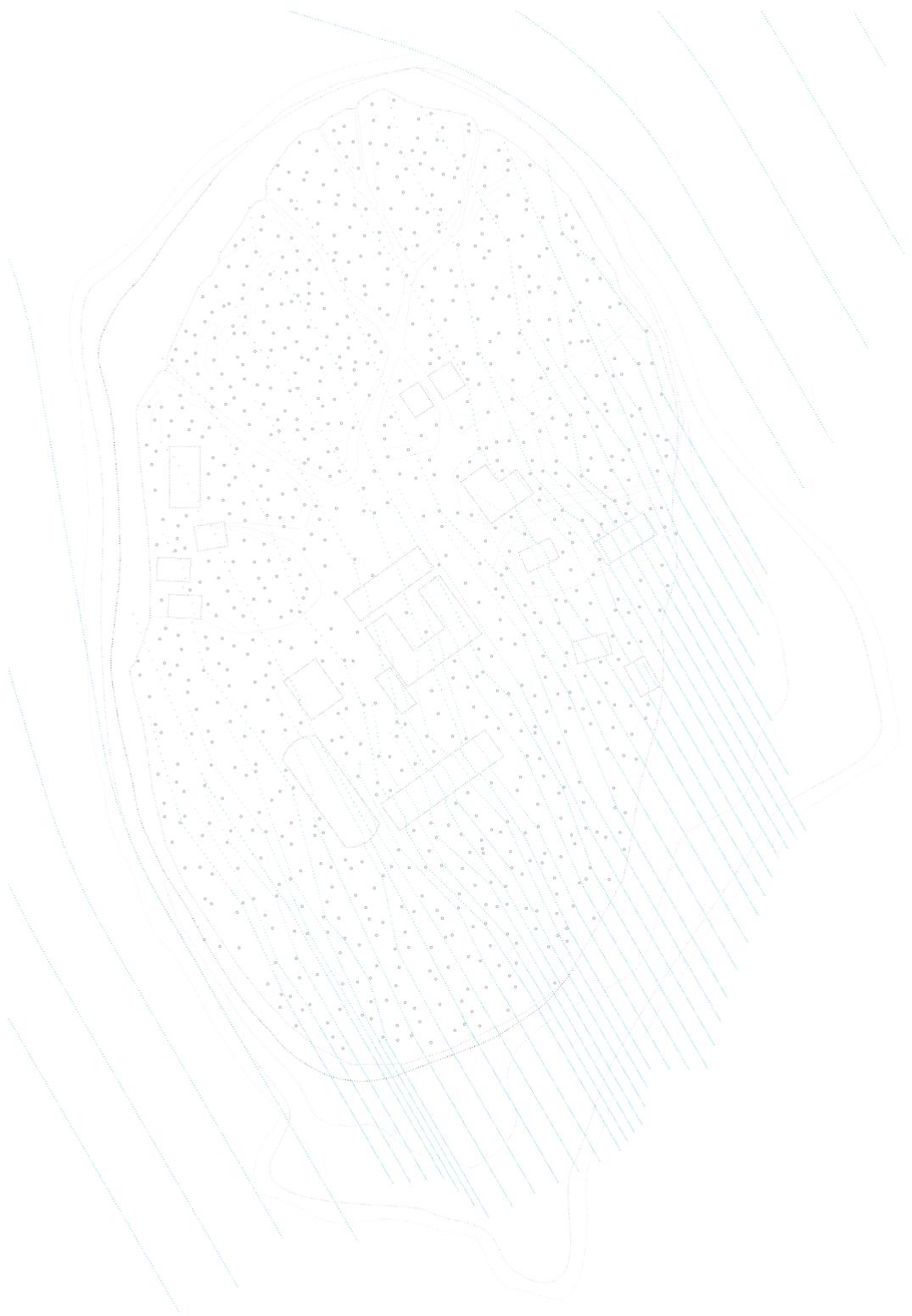


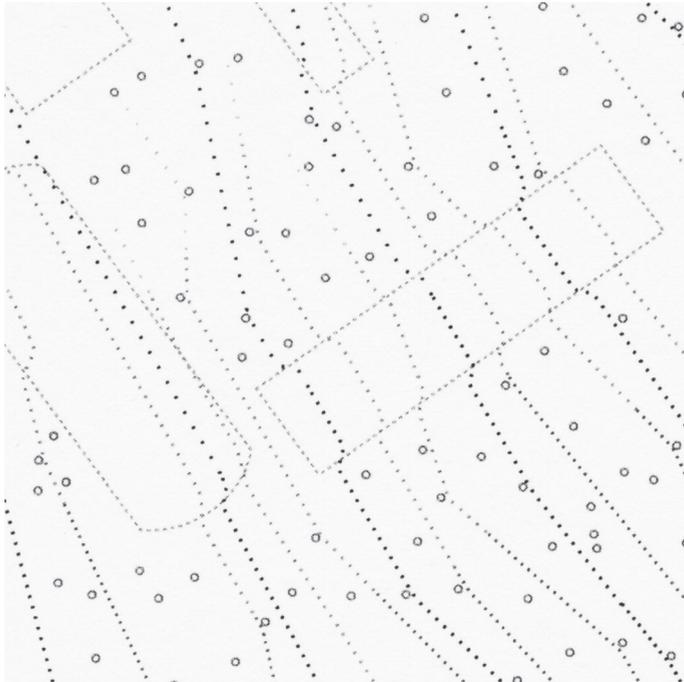
Small barge transferring fern (metapuha) to Motu Tané (© P. Cribier)





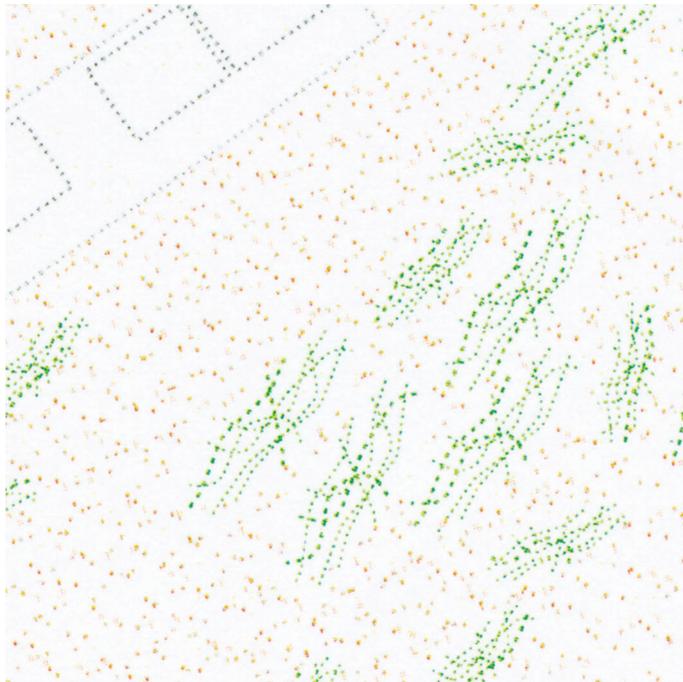
Coconut tree plan
(© I. Avissar)





Wind plan (© I. Avissar)





Soil plan (© I. Avissar)



Panoramic view (© P. Cribier)

CONTINENTAL

AFTER CORNARO

A proposal by baukuh and Salottobuono



Pink Floyd concert in Venice, 15 July 1989

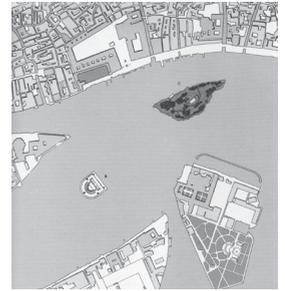
In 1989, Pink Floyd did an epochal free concert in Venice in the basin in front of St. Mark's Square on July 15. The vast stage was located on a barge in front of the piazzetta, the small, lagoon-facing arm of St. Mark's Square, and it was surrounded by a vast gathering of private boats. The unique event does not need to be remembered for the concert itself, and not even for the ninety minutes of predictable post-Roger Waters music, the police charging the crowd, the day-after garbage, or the inevitable range of supposed controversies that were sparked by all of this. The point is that it clearly showed the still huge potential of St. Mark's Basin as a proper public space. More than 200,000 people invaded the square and nearby areas, thereby producing an event that will last a long time in Venice's memory. Certainly the Sansovinian Loggetta will not forget it, as numerous spectators, literally hanging from its sumptuous architectural apparatus, completed its marvellous set of sculptures that night.

In the glorious past of the Venetian republic, the Basin often hosted similar shows. Canaletto offers us a vivid portrait of the Basin as a public space in a set of paintings depicting monumental civic events such as the Sposalizio del mare, or Venice's ritual Marriage of the Sea, with the Doge's impressive boat, the Bucintoro, returning to the city. Nowadays, a distant echo of these civic festivities can still be felt every year on the night of Il Redentore – a feast day celebrating Christ the Redeemer's liberation of the city from plague – with its famous fireworks, even if the centre of attention is shifted towards the island bracketing the other side of St. Mark's Basin, the Giudecca. Besides this, the only other things that are still capable of even partially filling the Basin's vast space are the strikes organized by municipal

transportation workers and the gathering of a large number of boats for events like the *Regata storica*, or Historic Regatta. Such events clearly show that Venice's primary public space is not only St. Mark's Square: the Basin, too, should be considered in the same way, for it was the real backdrop for the public celebrations staged by *La Serenissima*, the Most Serene Republic of Venice.

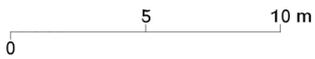
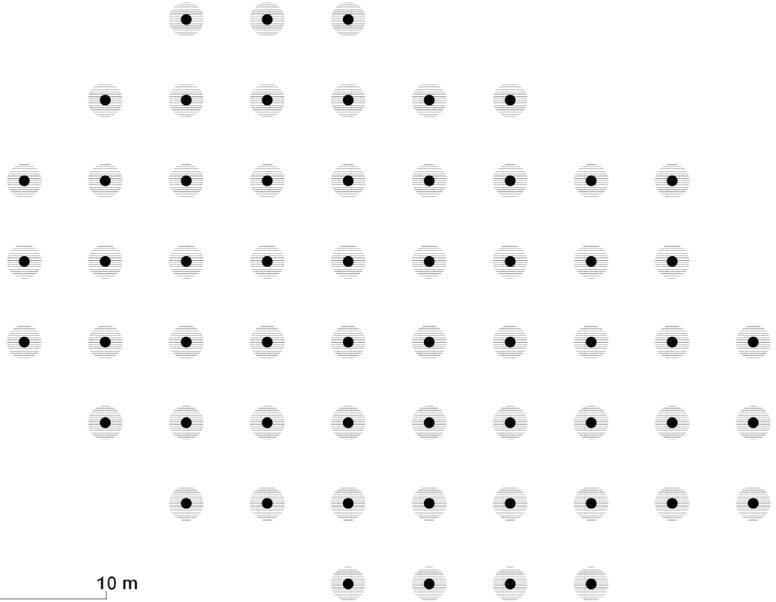
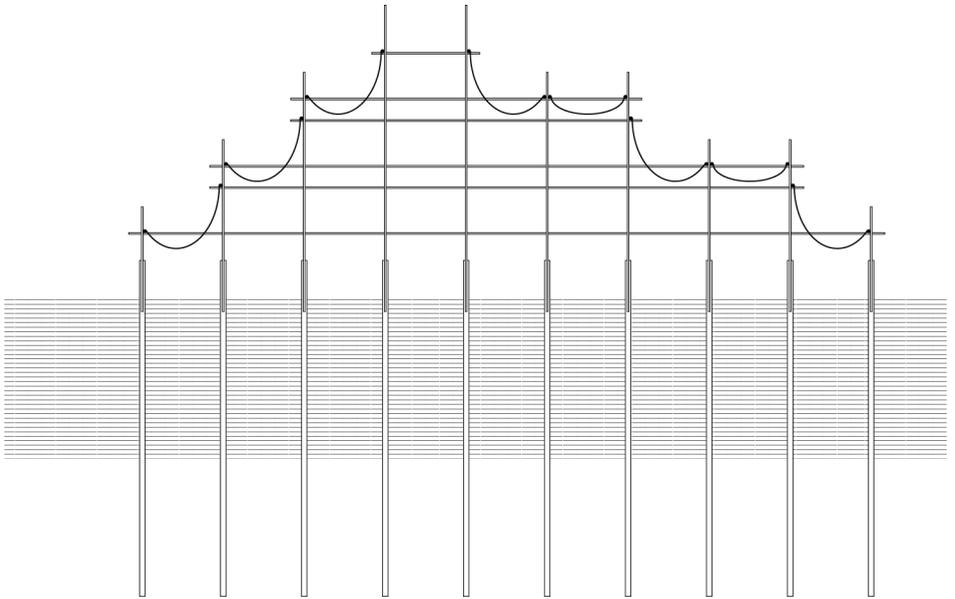
In his book *Venezia e il Rinascimento*, *Manfredo Tafuri* informs us that around 1560 *Alvise Cornaro*, a versatile and powerful figure of the Venetian Renaissance, proposed a visionary project for the Basin. Its aim was to boost the Basin's potential as a public space by physically conquering it and to enhance the capabilities and equipment of the city's urban assets. Three elements were to be displayed: un teatro, uno vago monticello and una fontana del sil. The theatre, shaped in the Roman manner, was supposed to rise from the water close to the *Punta della Dogana*, in an area where the lagoon floor was higher. Designed to be large enough to host the entire population of Venice (!), it would sport a permanent architectural stage. The second – and strangest – element of the trio, a landscaped hill covered by trees and lawns, was to be placed on an axis linking the piazzetta with the island of *San Giorgio*; a belvedere resembling a small temple was to crown the top of the hill, which was supposed to serve as a public park. Finally, a fountain fed by fresh water piped in from the mainland was supposed to be placed between the two columns of the piazzetta, and would thus have anticipated *Napoleon's* aqueduct by two and a half centuries. Obviously, the beautifully eccentric proposal remained on (now long-lost) paper.

Unconscious traces of *Cornaro's* vision for the Basin can be spotted in *Andrea Palladio's* monumental attempt to triangulate the Basin's vast surface a few decades later. Indeed, the façades he designed for the churches of *San Giorgio Maggiore* and *Il Redentore* do not physically occupy the Basin. At any rate, it is a matter of fact that these two projects deeply enhanced the definition of the Basin's borders and, together with the *Sansovinian* monuments of St. Mark's Square, allowed its measurement. The ghosts of *Cornaro's* islands still float before *Palladio's* churches.



Cornaro's project for St. Mark's Basin: a) fountain; b) theatre; c) "vago monticello".

Drawing by Luca Ortelli, from *Manfredo Tafuri Venezia e il Rinascimento* (Turin: Einaudi, 1985)

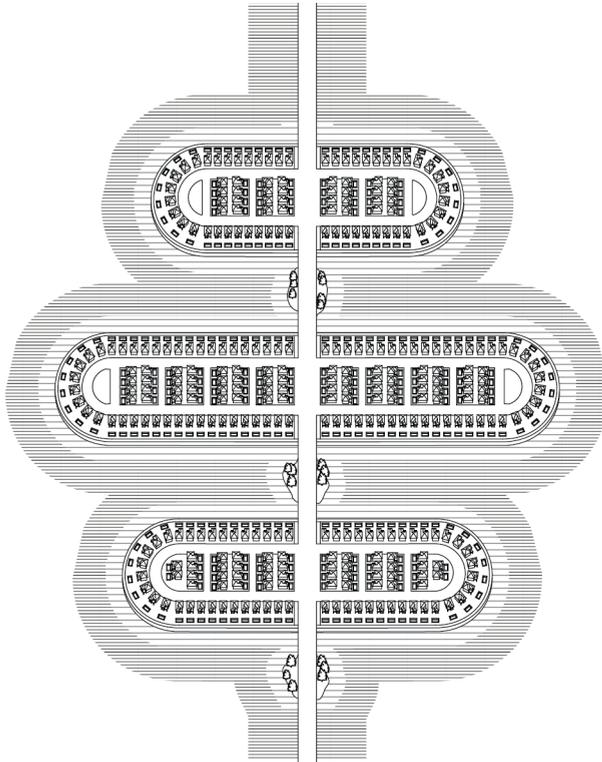






PIN-UPS, RACETRACKS AND BABY ELEPHANTS, OR HOW TO DEVELOP AN ARTIFICIAL ISLAND STRATEGY

Eduard Sancho Pou



The Formula 1 championship was recently held at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi. It was the final race of the season, and the training sessions and the race itself were followed by millions of fans. Amidst the noise, the engines and the thousandths of seconds the cars gained over or lost to their adversaries, an enormous yacht appeared in the distance between the asphalt curves. The camera followed the cars, yet at the same time sought to sell the site where the race was being held by including aerial broadcasts of the circuit. The circuit is surrounded by water, so boats and even a port could be seen. It was in looking at these that one realized that the huge racetrack was located on an artificial island.



Yas Island is one of the many large-scale projects constructed in the Persian Gulf, where millions of dollars (thirty-four billion dollars has been cited in the case of the racetrack) and major brands are being used to attract the general public, the masses. The racing circuit is one of these attractions. There is also a Ferrari theme park, a water park and a Warner Bros. Park, but above all, there are 1,700 hectares on which to develop 300,000 square metres of retail space. Everything is oversized and built on dredged sand. The profile of the coast was shaped by GPS, and all its twists and turns seek the spectacularity of a track inspired by Monaco's street circuit. However, while the curves in Monaco are necessary for the racing circuit to fit into the city's urban fabric, here everything has been simulated. Rather than taking advantage of the tabula rasa and proposing a new model, the builders of the Abu Dhabi track chose to copy or improve upon what already works. What is more, the copying is not direct but exponential. All of the track's attributes have been multiplied so that it always comes out ahead of pre-existing circuits in a battle of numbers.



Aerial photographs of
Yas Marina Island

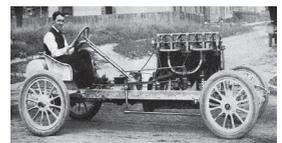
The question that everyone has in mind and no one will actually articulate is whether an investment of this kind in a complex half an hour outside the capital of Abu Dhabi will be profitable, or whether dredging so much sand to reclaim land from the sea is even necessary when there is already so much consolidated desert. The same question was posed a thousand times to Carl G. Fisher in the 1920s, and no one believed in him until he earned a fortune in Miami.

Fisher was one of the first developers to prove that more money could be made by investing in land flooded by salt marshes and mangroves than by investing in dry, consolidated land. The reason for this was the result of cheaper dredging systems and the Riparian Act of 1855, a law conceived to encourage commercial shipping and the

dredging of channels and ports, thus ensuring a depth sufficient for larger vessels. This law, interpreted in a broader sense in the Riparian Act of 1921, allowed coastal landowners to fill in tidal floodplains. Sand could be dredged to consolidate the land, provided it was beyond the limits of navigation channels, and its most important feature was that it allowed warehouses, housing and other buildings to be built on it.

It all started when Fisher bought a holiday home in Miami in 1910. He was already a public figure by that time thanks to his business acumen and eccentricities. Self-made in the purest American sense, he started out marketing bicycles but then saw the potential of automobiles. His passion was speed, and he understood before others did that cars would become wildly popular and that people would even want to drive at night. Fisher therefore bought the patent for the acetylene gas lamps that were to become the first car headlights, before electric models were used. Fisher's company produced most of the headlights used by the automotive industry and had manufacturing plants across the country. In 1913, he sold his Prest-O-Lite company to Union Carbide for nine million dollars and began his wanderings through the South to Miami in search of better weather.

Before devoting himself to industrially dredging channels, Fisher undertook several unique adventures that are worth mentioning. His passion for cars – in 1904 he held the world speed record of sixty miles per hour – led him to create a race-car track in his native Indiana in 1909. Injured in several illegal races, he found a way to finance an oval with very broad straightaways on which to race: the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. He committed to something that no one except racers considered useful. Yet it was a popular success, because people wanted to see these new gladiators in their iron wagons. The track's inauguration was a very rough affair, because of its crushed-stone-and-tar pavement. Right after the start, the fragments of stone thrown off by the competitors became shrapnel that fatally riddled a driver, two mechanics and two spectators. As a result, the entire circuit was re-paved with bricks – a feat accomplished in just sixty-three days – and renamed “The Brickyard”. How far these Indianapolis bricks are from the fine Greywacke (a variety of sandstone generally characterized by its hardness, dark colour and poorly sorted angular grains of quartz, feldspar and small rock fragments or lithic fragments set in a compact, clay-fine matrix) used in the Yas Marina Circuit! The Abu Dhabi pavement offers the best grip in the world.



Top: Carl C. Fisher in 1909

Bottom: Fisher on the circuit of the Illinois racetrack in 1904

After a mere hundred years, Fisher's old headlights, which exploded upon the least provocation because of the unstable gas they employed, have been replaced by bulbs that illuminate the entire area, thereby creating the world's largest illuminated space. Everything in Yas Marina earns the tagline of "the world's largest" – Carl G. Fisher's tagline. Fisher, too, had sought to create business by entertaining the masses and to do so he had to do something unprecedented on a worldwide level. In 1911, the Indianapolis 500 was held for the first time, and eighty-seven thousand people paid a dollar to attend the race. Once again, Fisher had understood what people wanted and where the demand was.

Fisher also invested in motorways by designing and promoting the Lincoln Highway (1913), the first highway to cross the country from New York to San Francisco, and the Dixie Highway (1914), which linked his native Indiana to his adopted land of Miami and was subsequently extended to Montreal. In fact, what he did was build the necessary infrastructure to reach his business interests in Florida – highways on which motorists could not travel at high speeds and which have nothing in common with the highway linking Dubai and Abu Dhabi and the main access to the Yas Marina Circuit. This latter highway's five lanes in each direction – virtually empty, but with the highest proportion of Ferraris per driver – would certainly have been Fisher's dream of Eden.

But we must return to the question at hand, one which eventually became Fisher's greatest venture: the creation of Miami Beach. While in his new home in Miami, where he spent the winter season, he was surprised at how cheaply land could be reclaimed from the sea. It all started when a dam was erected to protect the little dock behind his house. Fisher saw the potential of dredging, of creating new coastland with the best possible views.

He teamed up with John Collins, who at that time was building a bridge to link Miami with the channel of the sea on the far side of Biscayne Bay. The place was infested with mosquitoes and a mangrove forest that only turtles and snakes could navigate. Collins built a 2.5-kilometre-long wooden bridge to gain access to his lands across the bay, where he dreamed of establishing an avocado plantation. Fisher lent him 50,000 dollars to finish the bridge and received as collateral 200 acres to the south of the arm of the sea, the site that would eventually become Miami Beach.

It took fifteen years to reach agreements with the Collins family and other owners to buy their land and to fill in the marshes with sand. Fisher managed to triple the area encompassed by the mangroves

and made the terrain reach one mile wide. By dredging, he also managed to increase the water's depth and allow recreational boats to get close to this new artificial coast. This magnificent oceanfront site was untouched and ready to be occupied by thousands of people, who had to reach it by travelling down Fisher's highway. Polly Redford describes the situation in her book *Billion-Dollar Sandbar: A Biography of Miami Beach* (E. P. Dutton, New York, 1970, pp. 71-73):

In the summer of 1913 new land began rising from the bay at the South end of the Beach where Fisher and his business associates spent \$600,000 replacing a thousand acres of mangroves with six million cubic yards of fill. The forest was cleared by gangs of Negro labourers armed with saws and axes. They worked hip-deep in mud, a pall of smoke hanging over them because smudge pots and bonfires of palmetto fiber were the only available defense against clouds of mosquitoes and sandflies that made life miserable for men and mules alike. When the many-branched mangrove roots proved ruinously expensive to remove, they were cut off two feet above the mud and left there for dredges to cover later on. At the water's edge, steam shovels heaped the bay bottom into dikes while pile drivers sank rows of supports for a bulkheaded shoreline of wooden timbers anchored to pilings with steel cables. The shoreline alone cost \$10 a running foot. Behind it, long pipelines reached from the mangrove stumps to the bay where suction dredges borrowed into the bottom, turning the water a muddy milky white. Fisher's largest dredge, the Norman H. Davies, could pump fill through a mile of pipe, and in places where this was not far enough, another dredge was rigged in tandem to boost the pressure . . .

So year by year, a uniform, five-foot plateau spread northward along the bayfront. As it rose, the bay bottom fell, and what had been hundreds of acres of turtlegrass flats covered with a foot or two of clear water became a deep, turbid pool running parallel to a smoothly bulkheaded shore. In this manner, the original landscape was erased as if had never been and a more saleable one built in its place.

The problem was that nobody understood Fisher's vision. He had already spent two million dollars by 1917 and had the accesses and infrastructure ready to be able to sell the plots, but there was no demand. He therefore turned to his skills as a salesman, just as he had when he had sold bikes or cars. What he did – which was to look for celebrities – now seems obvious. He hired movie stars and sports figures to attract the public through the media. David Beckham's dapper profile was not in style at the time, so he turned to swimmer Johnny Weissmuller, who later came to worldwide fame as Tarzan,



Miami Beach in 1940

and to golfers such as Bobby Jones and even an elephant caddy known as Rosie. Fisher bought the baby elephant, which was always featured in the advertisements he commissioned in newspapers and national magazines, in order to ingratiate himself with families. He needed something to counteract the effect of girls photographed in very short, provocative swimsuits. His famous winter campaigns – when half the country was covered in snow – used to feature photographs of pin-ups on the beach as a reminder that the sun always shines in Miami. In the 1999 PBS documentary *Mr. Miami Beach*, they expressed Fisher's approach: "We'll get the prettiest girls and put them in the goddamndest tightest and shortest bathing suits, and no stockings or swim shoes either. We'll have their pictures taken and send them all over the goddamn country!"

In 1921 when President Warren G. Harding visited Miami, Fisher managed to "kidnap" him so that he would stay a week at the brand new Hotel Flamingo, which featured authentic Venetian gondolas with Italian gondoliers garbed in striped jersey uniforms. The chronicles say that the president stayed there the week immediately after he was elected, during the lame-duck government. He had a few days free and Fisher managed to keep him in the hotel by plying him with whisky and organizing poker games. In exchange, Fisher received the best publicity possible when the president proclaimed: "This beach is wonderful. It's developing like magic. I hope to come here again" (*Mr. Miami Beach*, PBS documentary, 1999).

His message was widely covered in the news, because that same day, he had played a game of golf with Rosie as his caddy, which made both the elephant and the politician tremendously popular. And, of course, the American people heeded their President by flocking to Miami, thereby sparking the Florida boom of the 1920s. David McCullough, the host of *Mr. Miami Beach*, described the scene as follows:

People all over America began to empty their bank accounts, pack the family car and join the exodus rolling down Carl Fisher's Dixie Highway to Florida. Six million of them came in three years, all determined to get their share of the Florida miracle. When they arrived they found a real estate gold rush in progress. Overflow crowds slept in the parks and pored over Sunday papers with 500 pages of real estate ads. Caravans of buses from the upper midwest brought thousands of prospects on tours of new developments. Seventy-five hundred real estate licenses were issued in Miami in 1925. Subdivisions sold out the day they went on the market.

One office sold thirty-four million dollars' worth of property in a single morning. Prices soared, and speculators rushed in. For a hundred dollars down, anyone could get in on the action, buying and selling land without ever setting foot on it.

Millions of people headed south in search of the climate and the home of their dreams. Growth was so fast that in just three years there were already 56 hotels, over 800 luxury villas, eight bathing pavilions, three polo fields, three golf courses and the best church in Florida . . . all in Miami Beach. Fisher once again promoted races, this time at sea aboard speedboats. They served to demonstrate the status of their owners, as well as the status of the new islands Fisher was creating. He built oval islands in the bay, such as the Venetian Islands and Star Island, which are very reminiscent of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. The latter island measures half a mile long and a quarter mile wide. And benefitting from the I. I. Board's norm, which allowed sandbanks of less than three feet deep at high tide and not separated from land by more than five feet to be filled in, he bought a flooded sandbank from the state for 17,000 dollars. He subsequently filled it in with sand and managed to sell it for 200 dollars per foot of coast through dredging, making enormous profits. Star Island became a sanctuary for celebrities, including the likes of Al Capone, who died there, and Don Johnson, who sailed in its waters dressed in Armani in the Miami Vice series. Shaquille O'Neal, Lenny Kravitz, Will Smith, Gloria Estefan, Madonna, P. Diddy and Sylvester Stallone live or have lived there.

This success is also being sought by Yas Marina, which – consciously or unconsciously – is copying some of Miami's gimmicks. Ninety years later, prestige brands and the indiscriminate use of covert advertisement in the media are being relied on once again. False news reports are devised to show off idyllic hotels and views, and the public once again believes it is real. It is a place where the sun always shines, but where the temperatures make even peeking outside unbearable, where pin-ups are hidden behind their veils and where the “black labourers” that cleared mangroves have been replaced by “salaried Asian labourers” whose passports have been withdrawn to ensure their safety.

Miami was ravaged by a hurricane in September 1926. Hundreds of people were killed and many others were never found. As the ocean struggled to regain its territory, millions of residents cowered in fear. They were not locals. No one had explained anything to them, nor



Top: Al Capone's home in the Palm Islands, Miami Beach



Bottom: Venetian Islands, Miami Beach

were they prepared to face nature. They were ignorant of the habitat they populated.

The city was flooded by three feet of sand and the real estate bubble burst. Fisher's losses were considerable, and what he managed to hold on to was lost in the Crash of 1929. He ended his days in Key Largo at the Caribbean Club, the beach bar that was his last adventure, from which he viewed the sea, held at bay. This was the same Key Largo that inspired the film starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall produced by Warner Bros., and the same Warner Bros. that now has a theme park at Yas Marina.

Ninety years later, the approaching storm is not natural but financial. The sand that rises up and batters its physical infrastructure will not be physical, but rather a social hurricane that results from a society with extreme socio-economic differences. And surely fear will rear its ugly head again, since millions of dollars are being held hostage in an unpredictable habitat.

Miami was saved thanks to its infrastructure, thanks to Fisher's Dixie Highway, which allowed for various migrations and the city's repopulation. Yas Marina, in contrast, has no motorways to connect it to large masses of people; it lacks that umbilical cord to the middle class. The models of the past must be studied if we are to know how to act in the future. And our mistakes must be validated in order for progress to be achieved. The hurricane is approaching. But rest assured that once the sand is removed, the set will still be standing for Warner Bros. to make another Oscar-worthy film.

THE ISLAND OF THE MAN WITH THE GOLDEN GUN

2A+P/A



At the beginning of the 1970s, the world had to face a new kind of disaster. An energy crisis was altering the political and economic balance of the whole world. Francisco Scaramanga, a man with a dark past who had become very rich through mysterious circumstances, decided to realize an artificial island capable of producing and storing solar energy through the use of experimental devices – a self-sufficient island conceived to navigate the oceans as a cruise liner.



London, 1974

– Good evening, Mr Scaramanga!

– Good evening.

– Please, take a seat. Would you like something to drink? A scotch?

– No, thanks. Is the island project ready?

– For sure, sir. It is.

– Let me see.

– Here you are. These are the drawings.

– Hmmm . . .

– As you can see, I designed a sequence of spaces that spreads over the entire island, whose interior is dug out in order to maintain the naturalness of the appearance of its surface. At the bottom there are all the technical spaces, including the machine room housing the engines and the access door for the submarine. However, the most important space is the solar energy station, the beating heart of the system. Believe me, sir, there is nothing like it in the whole world. The system works by means of thermoelectric generators that convert solar energy into electricity and super-conductivity

coils that are cooled by liquid helium kept at a temperature of -453° Fahrenheit, absolute zero. Everything will be automated and, thanks to the Solex Agitator, your island will be completely self-sufficient, Mr Scaramanga.

– Very interesting, architect. How much energy can be produced using this technology?

– Well, it is not easy to calculate that with precision. We are talking about a technology capable of solving the energy crisis of the entire planet, sir.

– Thus the island could be a sort of prototype to be shown to all the world powers . . . The highest bidder could build hundreds of stations and sell additional franchises for even greater profit.

– You will literally have the sun in your pocket! A monopoly on solar power . . . And the oil sheikhs will pay just to keep solar energy off the market.

– The thought had occurred to me . . .

– Well, to continue, going upstairs we enter the first areas of the residential part of the complex: the hobby room, the funhouse and the sports hall.

– Great. I need to be trained for my job. I also need a Hall of Mirrors.

– Do you mean a room covered

in mirrors?

– Exactly.

– No problem; we can dig one out in this area close to the funhouse. It wouldn't introduce any structural problems there.

– And inside it, I want a statue.

– Sure, sir. What kind of statue. A classic one?

– I want a statue of Bond.

– Do you mean *the* Bond? James Bond, the MI6 agent?

– Yes, exactly. We can say that he is one of my . . . obsessions. Go on, please.

– Right. Here we are in the main hall that faces the grand landscape of the archipelago, which will be visible thanks to these huge windows. The elevator connects it directly to the beach on the little bay.

– That's good. And the dining room?

– Ah, the dining room is conceived to enhance the view of Ko Tapu Island! In these spaces I would like also to make some rocks visible – you know, to unveil the natural character of the house. Then, through this door we go directly to the bedrooms, the most intimate area of the house. Here I designed a little living room and a study, private spaces where you can rest by yourself.

– As I said to you, there will only

be two of us in this house: my loyal butler, Nick Nack, and myself.

– I see. But surely you will have a guest at some point . . .

– Sure, but only for short periods. Intense but really short ones.

– I see . . . Anyway, on the top of the island, there is the solar energy collection point. This steel device you see here is the collector. The Solex will transmit the heat to the thermal generators. Light will enter the sliding opening, which faces Ko Tapu Island, where we will install panels that lock onto the sun and then track it automatically. Reflected through the Solex Agitator, these panels will produce a heat of at least $3,500^{\circ}$ Fahrenheit!

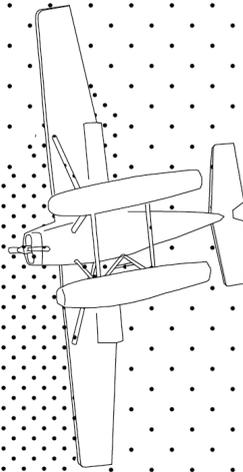
– Very interesting . . .

– Then, this system is capable of storing such a great quantity of energy that, if it were properly focused, it could become a sort of energy weapon.

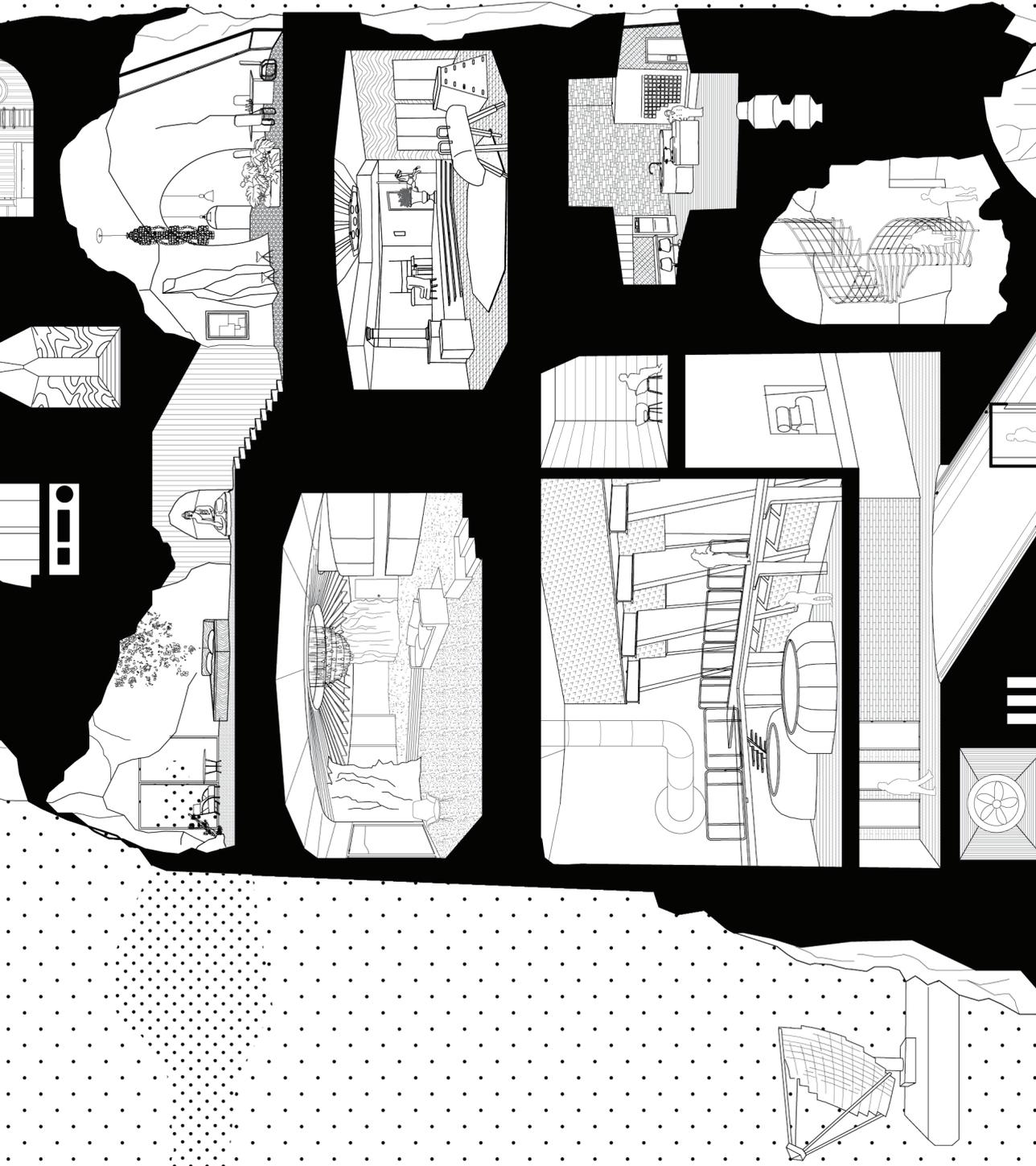
– That's what I call solar power! Well done, architect. The project is complete. So, I would like to settle your fee. Ready?

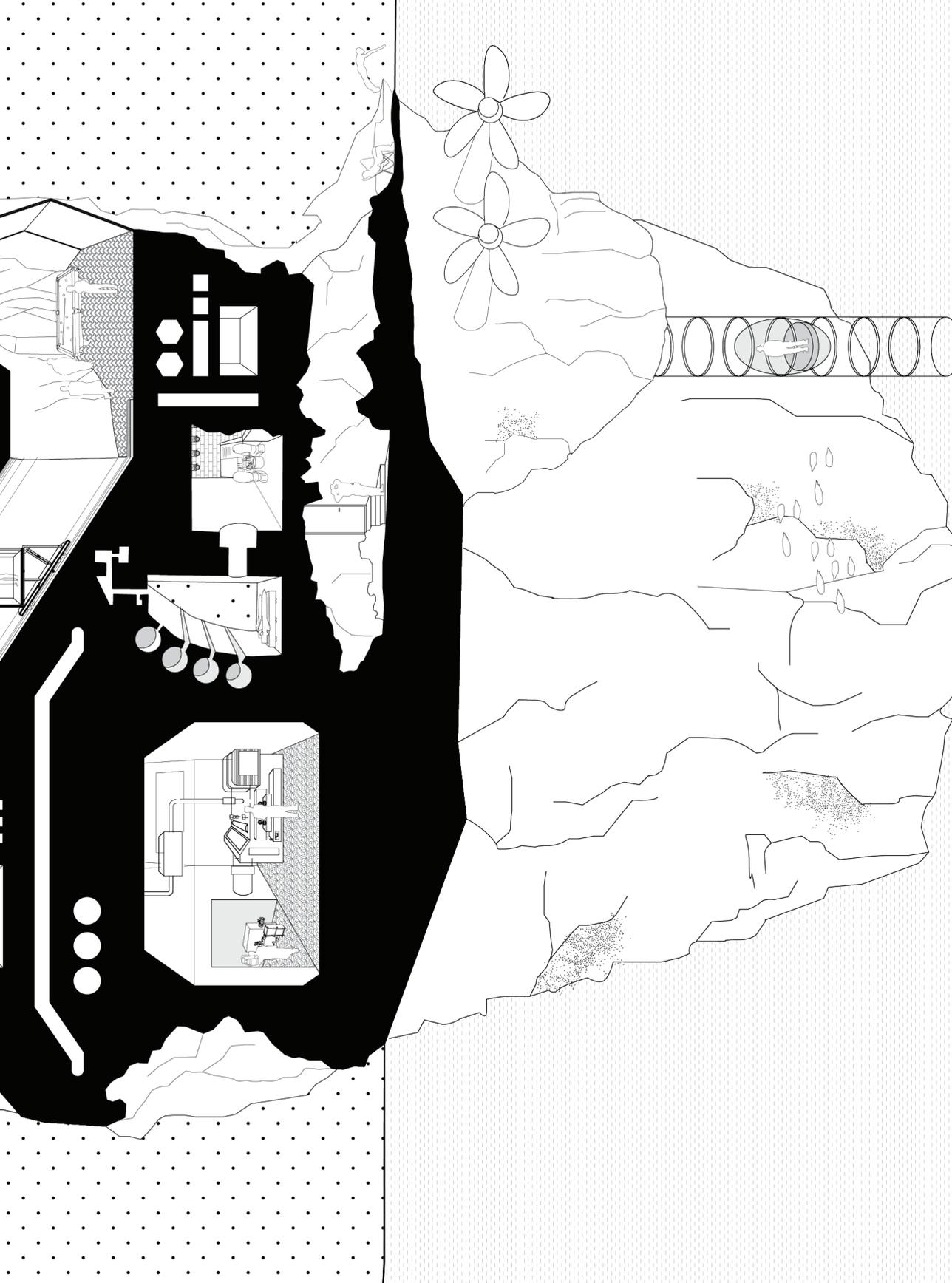
– Thank you, Mr Scaramanga. May I ask you what this is? It seems like a golden bullet . . . with my name incised on it. . . Sir?

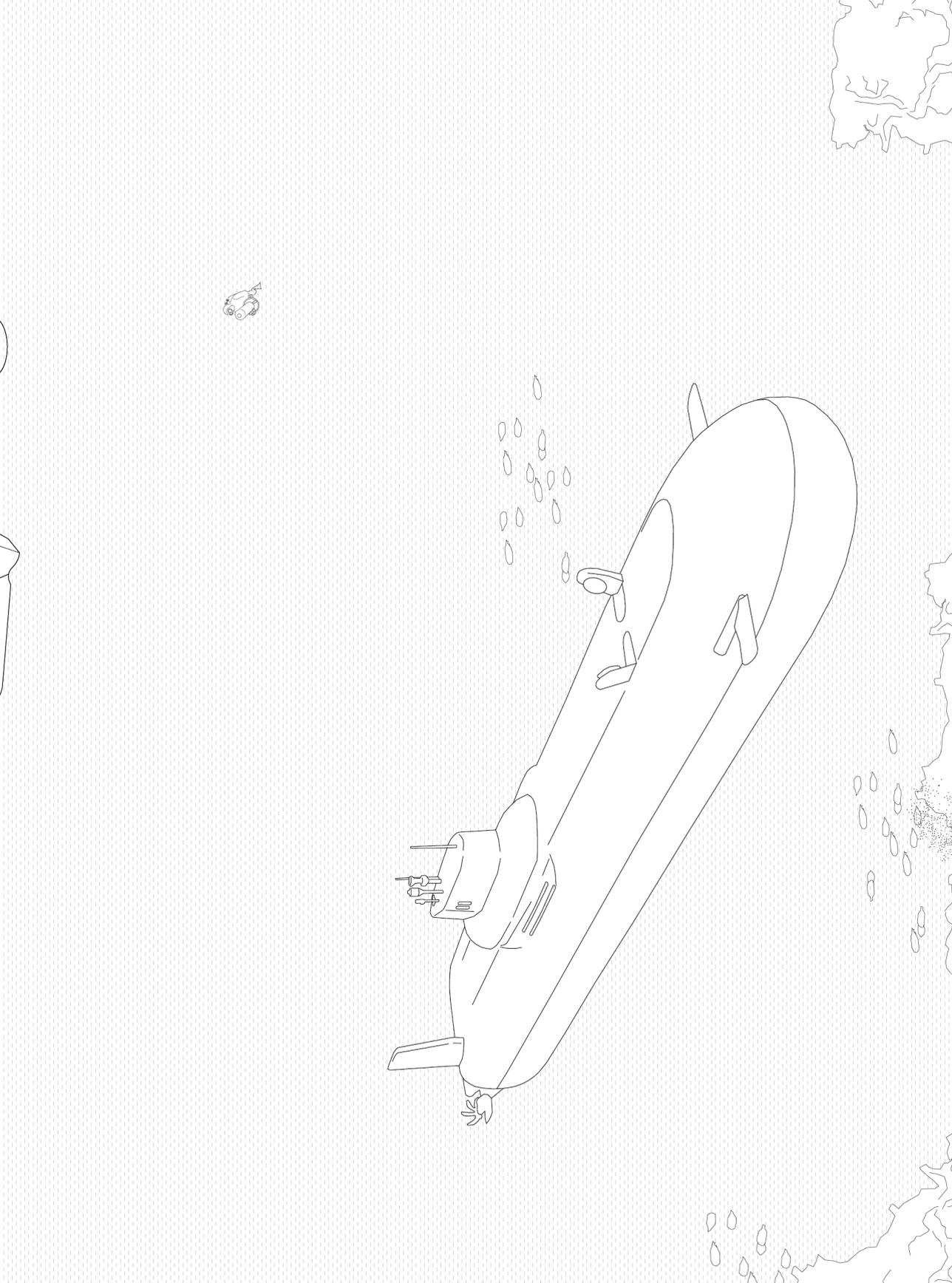
– Exactly, architect.











CONTEXTS IN EXPANSION: ON VESSELS AND SPACESHIPS AS OBJECTS AND NETWORKS

Pietro Pezzani

“No one has ever observed a fact, a theory or a machine that could survive outside of the networks that gave birth to them.”

Bruno Latour

“Context stinks.”

Rem Koolhaas

Some objects have special powers. They seem to convey the interests of scholars from different disciplines. Their shape and function attract converging or controversial, but never indifferent, interpretations. These objects seem to act as toolboxes that can be used to provide strength and concreteness to ideas and theories belonging to seemingly distinct areas of interest.

I'd like you to think about the vessels of the age of discovery and their contemporary descendant, the spaceship.

I

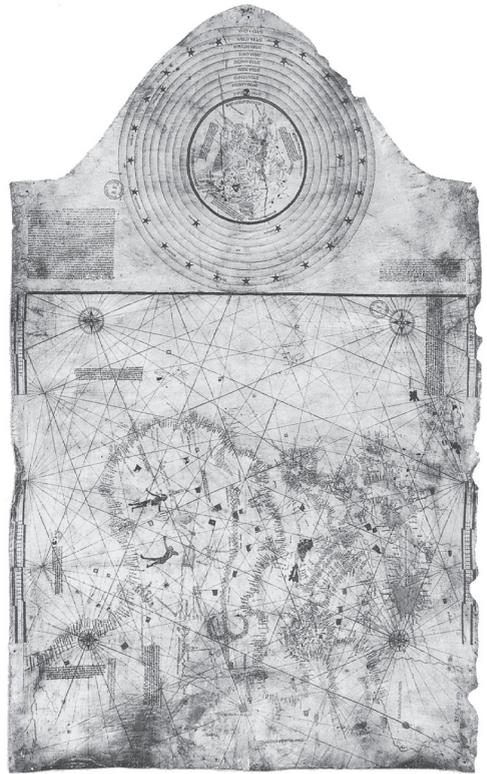
In one of his writings entitled “Fluid Geography”, Richard Buckminster Fuller compared the “sailorman’s and the landlubber’s” *forma mentis*. Having been trained himself as a mariner in the U.S. Navy, Fuller was inclined to praise the sailor’s dynamic proclivity over the static mentality of

the “landlubber”. The latter perceives the Earth’s movements in terms of night and day or seasonal cycles, and refers to cardinal points as if they were places; his perception of space is thus eminently Euclidean, linked to local lines of division between fields, regions and states.

The sailor, on the other hand, is challenged by a much more dynamic environment: to give himself a minimum sense of stability on the fluid surface of the sea under the magnified fury of the elements, he has to develop superior sensitivities, skills and technologies. Being constantly in motion, he has no problem in perceiving the Earth’s rotation.

The kind of space he experiences every day is extensively crossed by lines of connection, by vectors whose length is deformed by parameters of time and weather (*tempo*, in Italian). Moreover, he is compelled to determine his position on the globe by referring to distant objects, like the sun and the stars, a fact which provides him with a natural “cosmic” viewpoint, that is, the ability to “come upon the land” and build a unified whole out of distant and apparently incommensurable elements. By joining forces with the heavens, sailors make geography and astronomy work in the same context. In this text, Fuller uses the paradigm of navigation to introduce his *Dymaxion Map*.

Later in this discussion I will suggest some implications of this system, but what I want to stress now is the importance that the “cosmogonist sailorman” had in Fuller’s writings as a metaphor of the synergetic thinker he aspired to be his entire life. Moreover, Fuller seems to suggest here that different practices, even different movements, can produce different kinds of spatiality that are not necessarily separate, but rather intertwined and interdependent. When Fuller concludes that “rule of the world derived from rule of the sea”, he seems to allude to this relationship of mutual dependence between different practices and spatialities.



Above: Columbus map

**Left: Gustave Doré,
illustration for *The
Adventures of Baron
Munchausen***



Forty years later, sailors and their vessels would return to centre stage in the writings of John Law and Bruno Latour. This time, however, the sailor's act of "cosmic transcendence" would be empirically traced in its details. In Law's and Latour's works, vessels were described as fundamental actors in the establishment of Western colonial domination, and more generally, as a major example of mediators in a system of remote control. In other words, vessels played an essential role in the construction of the "long-distance networks" that made possible both the institution of centre-periphery relations between European capitals and the rest of the world and the accumulation of remote knowledge in these capitals.

II

When Columbus sailed west for the first time, he did not adopt previously recognized routes and was thus unable to identify his position in relation to the vessel's motion.

His boat was virtually still, suspended like an island within an extraneous and homogeneous context that was something like a blank piece of paper.

During the 15th century, with the dawning of the age of exploration, Spaniards and Portuguese had already escaped the context and scale of earlier European methods of navigation.

New unexplored places and distances were reached – places from which nobody had returned to relate their experiences and distances that made it impossible to rely on previous navigational systems based on "near at hand" mapped elements, such as the visible coastal landscape and the topography of the seabed.

As John Law has explained, a context had to expand in order to provide a certain security in the new challenges of navigation. If vessels were to return safely to the coasts of the Iberian Peninsula, many different elements from the technological, economic, natural, social and political realms

needed to be brought together as allies.

Seen in these terms, the innovative Portuguese vessel known as the carrack owed its efficiency to more than just its improvements in size, carrying capacity and defence systems. Although far from irrelevant to its success, these characteristics only partially describe its "shape", which is better understood as a stable network of relations between many scattered and heterogeneous elements. As long as maps, political systems, ocean currents, astrolabes, winds, navigational logs and the stars maintained their reciprocal position within the network, the complex and fragile set of relations known as the "carrack" would have a chance to perform its mission and return safe and sound.

It was only after many carracks had returned that the former blank surface of the ocean would be transformed into a recognizable and relatively stable territory intersected by mapped routes and firmly anchored to what Fuller defined as the "mechanism of the stars".

III

But how was this "expanded context" to be constructed? John Law has used two metaphors to explain this process. On the one hand, vessels had to create an "envelope" for their travels, one that had to incorporate and turn into allies the greatest possible number of the elements that were capable of disrupting their movements.

As Bruno Latour has suggested, vessels could only survive "inside" the network that gave birth to them. This network would have obviously been made richer and more secure by the accumulation of previous travels and experiences: if a vessel was going to survive the threat of the barrier reef, then someone had to have already marked the danger on a map. On the other hand, this meant bringing elements belonging to the network "inside" the vessel, for reality had to be "translated" into information,

or “systems of inscription” like the maps and navigational registers that peppered the interiors of the vessels of that time. This transformation was necessary in order to exert control over the new and otherwise incommensurable environment; it was also essential to “bringing back” information to the capitals of Europe as material for further exploration and exploitation.

IV

“Contexts”, however, never ceased to expand. When a new age of exploration finally hurtled mankind into space, it was not just a matter of detaching some Munchausen-like vessel from the surface of the sea and launching it towards what John F. Kennedy called the “new ocean” during the Space Race. Just like their predecessors (but more so due to their cost and superior technology), spaceships had to minimize the risk of getting lost in outer space or being destroyed by some space equivalent of the barrier reef. If Cape Canaveral was to be transformed into a new centre for a system of long-distance control (over distances far greater than any known before), people at NASA had to ensure that the trajectory of the ship would bring it back to Earth. Once again, a vehicle had to incorporate features from an unknown territory by extending the scale and dominion of its networks. As Latour has commented, this was made possible by mounting a number of simulated flights inside the launch station that reproduced every single aspect of the experience of outer space before an astronaut had to face it in reality. Therefore when the first flight finally took place, it was in effect flight number $n+1$, and it had been made possible by a network that had been extended from Cape Canaveral to the Earth’s orbit. A new context had been constructed around the spacecraft, like an “envelope” designed to make its journey reasonably secure.

V

But what features were necessary in order for objects to perform as “context producers” and long-distance control devices? Latour identifies three of them: mobility, stability and combinability.

The attribute of mobility is related to the object’s capacity to move within Cartesian space (the landlubber’s dominion), and thus to weave a unity via the articulation of its movement.

The attribute of stability refers to the network of relations that define the object and its capacity to perform – for example, a movement in Cartesian space. As Law suggests, and as Fuller seemed to have already known, “network” and “regional” spatialities are not, on their own, a given. They are mutually dependent; they shape each other. If it’s true that the objects forming a network are “contained” by Euclidean space, then it is also true that it would be difficult to define Euclidean space without referring to the syntactical networks and the material practices that make its definition “stable”.

The last attribute Latour cites is combinability, and it refers to the definition of standards for the translation of reality, so that an accumulation of knowledge becomes possible by working at different degrees of abstraction.

Think of the Dymaxion World Map: by strenuously trying to minimize distortions in the transfer of geographic information from the surface of the globe to a polyhedron, Fuller was providing an extraordinary example of a “system of inscription” – a highly abstracted, geometrical “translation” of reality – whose result is surprisingly mobile, stable and combinable: a dynamic machine that makes the experience of ever-changing spatialities possible.

ISLANDS WITHIN ISLANDS

Elisa Ferrato

The first morning in Ramallah. I wake up and hasten to open the window. “What are these elegant houses, Abu Hazim?” I asked, pointing at Jamal al-Tawil, which overlooks Ramallah and Bireh. “A settlement.” Then he added: “Tea? Coffee? Breakfast is ready.”
Excerpt from Mourid Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah*

“It’s a dream to own a house here, in a new city where you work and live quietly with your kids . . . It will be similar to life in the U.S.”
Sawalha, a 45-year-old father of six, future resident of Rawabi, Palestine

Al Manara square is the central heart of Ramallah, where all the city’s crowded streets converge. During this summer, the four stone lions in the centre of the square have witnessed mysterious events. Some large billboards, showing the real estate advertisement for a new residential neighbourhood called Al-Riyadh, were stolen one night. The day afterwards, all the merchants of the souk were murmuring that the Palestinian Authority had had them removed. The billboards displayed a huge image of a gated community comprised of villas and gardens wiping out the historical architectural heritage of the city. Part of a fictional art project, the images played with the models inspiring the ongoing urbanization happening all around Ramallah and pointed to the paradox that this activity masks.

As the headquarters of the Palestinian Authority, Ramallah is the city to which wealthy Palestinians returned from their exile after the Oslo agreement, recreating their own spaces and modes of living according to their personal (and often transnational) cultural references. In the last fifteen years, Ramallah has become a unique city in the occupied West Bank, the place where the economy seems to be booming and life seems finally normal. But this is just an illusion: Ramallah is an island closed within itself, surrounded by the

borders set by its military occupant. This city has more in common with Amman, Cairo or Abu Dhabi than with nearby Nablus or Hebron, and yet it is surrounded by the same insurmountable boundaries as the latter. It is a five-star prison ruled by the Palestinian Authority according to the scheme set by the Israeli Defense Forces.

This burgeoning 16-square-kilometre city of 28,000 inhabitants (including its twin city al-Bireh, which measures 38 square kilometres and hosts 65,000 inhabitants) is now demanding different homes for its families, transposing universal references drawn from the Western world but also from nearby Israel. It is in the news that al-Rawabi, “the first designed settlement”, is under construction on the hills 9 kilometres north of Ramallah. Occupying an area of 6.3 square kilometres, it will provide housing for 25,000 residents (40,000 in its final stage) with a Palestinian-Qatari investment of 800 million dollars. Clearly, the production of space in Palestine still remains to be analyzed according to a specific geography of power. In order to achieve more recognition and to gather further infusions of cash, the Palestinian Authority is mirroring the occupation mechanisms of the occupants as well as actively promoting urban and territorial politics similar to theirs. Following the rules of the paradox, the model for the new towns that are intended to represent the new Palestinian state is the gated community. The first properly planned Israeli settlement in the occupied territories, Ma’ale Adumim, was designed in the 1970s by Thomas Leithersdorf, who had previously worked on suburban projects in Florida and U.S. military bases worldwide. Al-Rawabi simply mimics this model, enclosing its residents within a safe space protected by private access, security guards, security cameras and fences. Becoming islands within an island, these Palestinian gated communities are designed to segregate the society further by restricting access to these housing provisions to the rich and the upper middle class. In the illusion given by the freedom of their movement between their safe houses and their offices in the centre of Ramallah, the elite mirrors the life of the orthodox Jews barricaded in the settlements who commute every day to Jerusalem or to the urban centres along the coast. The fact is, however, they can’t go beyond Ramallah; they are far from crossing borders, and far from belonging to the world. They are stuck within these islands of their own, controlled by Israel on the outer edges, by the PA on the inner roads and by private security guards in the very centre, at the very heart.

The paradox extends even further, straight to the core of the chosen architectural language: Rawabi will appear to have more in common with Israeli cities like Modi'in than with nearby Palestinian ones. They display the same middle-class suburban aesthetic of villas with red pitched roofs and green gardens out front. But what has a partial security function in the settlements (the red roofs help identify from afar the locations of foes from those of friends during military actions) is just a mirroring element in the Palestinian city, being reduced there to a mere sign of wealth.

For panoptic military reasons it was important to place the settlements on top of the hills, where they would be visible to one another and able to monitor the Arab villages down in the valleys. In addition to this, the settlements' houses were distributed following the curves of the topography, exploiting the double advantage of having a view over the surrounding land from one side and creating a safe inner common area behind them.

The Palestinian middle class is now taking possession of the few remaining hilltops and "doubles" this suburban model, unaware of the hostile military logic that had shaped it.

Unsurprisingly, the Jewish National Fund contributed 3,000 pine tree seedlings for planting in what is meant to be a forested area on the edges of the new city.

Just like al-Rawabi, other neighbourhoods are growing around Ramallah. Some of them are mimicking the suburban model of Orange County-style villas, while others carry out the mirroring act in a more extreme way by offering a Palestinian version of the aggressive architecture of the high-density colonies clustered around Jerusalem. The disturbing computer renderings of the al-Reehan neighbourhood (10,000 inhabitants over 0.25 square kilometres) now under construction are similar to the frightening architecture of Har Homa or Gilo. Squared, stone-clad high-rise buildings climb upward along the slopes of the hills at a furious pace. Here, the mirroring process gets more and more complicated. The Israelis were trying to reproduce the beloved Old City of Jerusalem in the occupied lands, covering all the concrete buildings with slated "Jerusalem stone" in the attempt to define a contextual architecture, and thereby legitimize their illegal expansion towards the east. Palestinians are now reproducing this Israeli aesthetic as if it were a local style, confusing it with their national architectural history.

Driving through the West Bank a few years ago, two things were visible and distinct: Palestinian villages and huge, illegal Israeli settlement

blocks atop hills overlooking beautiful olive groves and old vineyards. And this was all that the real estate market was selling to the American Jews eager to start a new life in the Holy Land: a house with a view on the biblical landscape. But now that Palestine is moving on a parallel track, the mirrored panorama is shown in advertisements for Ramallah's new neighbourhoods that announce "On a clear day you can see the high-rises in Tel Aviv from here". Herein lies the paradox: in the end, you can't go to Tel Aviv, and your dream is merely to look upon it from afar.



ضاحية الرياض السكنية
فلل فخمة ومبوبة ومجهزة بأحدث أنظمة الأمان والمراقبة

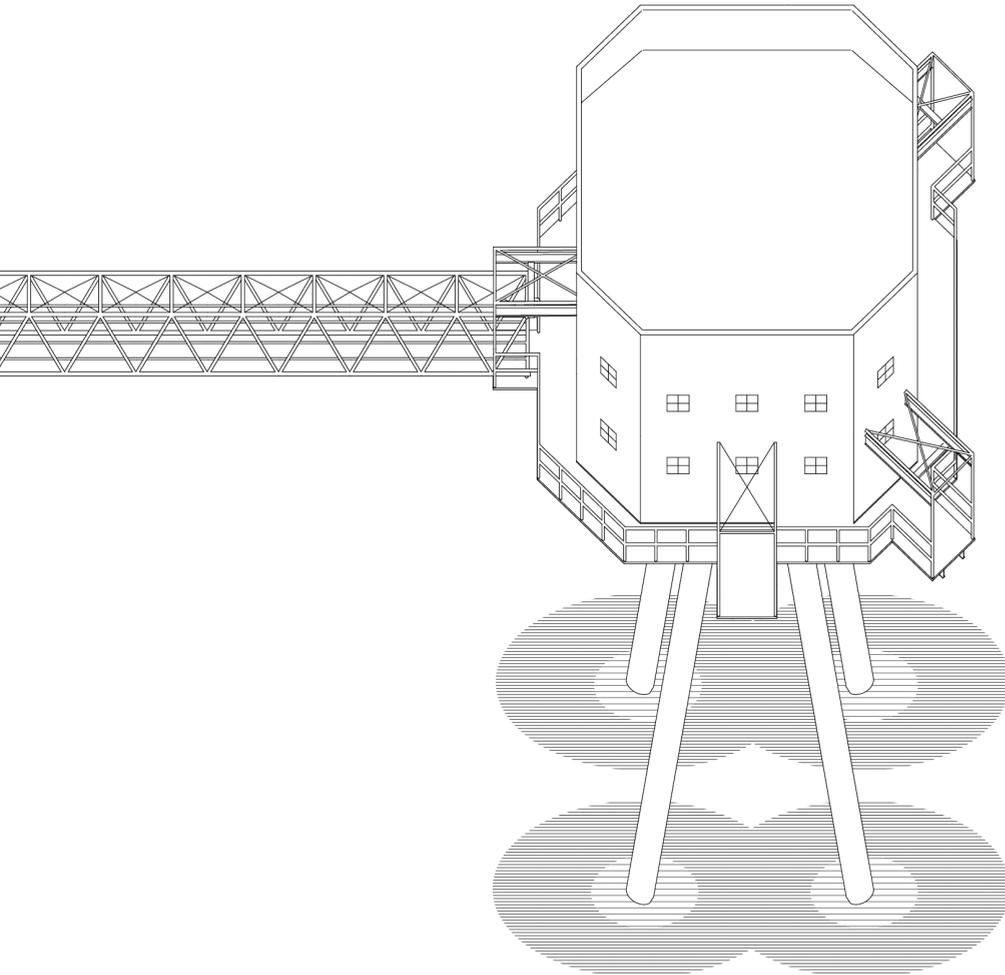
الرياض هي حلم عائلتك للسكن في قلب رام الله القديمة. على انقاض مركز رام الله التاريخي، نبني أحدث الفلل السكنية الخلابية. الرياض تُمنحك السعادة وتُحقق أحلامك وسط حراسة أمنية مشددة. زمتع بالعيش في الرياض - الخضرة والماء والوجه الحسن. حدائق وأحراج يتبرع من JNF.

الرياض
هاتف: +974-4974444
فاكس: +974-4974333
بريد إلكتروني
info@al-Riyadh-projects.com

JNF

ISLANDS OF LIGHT AND STEEL

Joana Rafael
photographs by Alessandro Sambini



Soldier with binoculars: Enemy aircraft approaching!
Officer in charge: Pose! Pose! . . . And target it. Target it out!
Go to southwest. Expose!
Soldier: Expose!
Officer: . . . and target it! Hold it! Go to the right a bit.
Soldier with binoculars: He's waving!
Officer: Don't lose him.
Soldier: What are the gunners doing? What are they hitting?
Soldier with binoculars: He is on fire!
Operator: He is diving! He is coming down!
Official: Go to the gun!
Operator: Look up! He's coming straight at us!*

This excerpt of dialogue comes from a comedy-drama made in 1961 that satirizes the manners of a World War II British Army Searchlight Squad. The operator, played by Benny Hill, shines a searchlight through the dark to expose German retaliatory raids approaching England. After he is hit, however, the enemy appropriates the searchlight, reversing the roles of target and hunter and placing the British unit in danger.

Night-time attacks were one of the most important tasks for airships conducting "strategic bombing" during World War II. This strategy usually involved carrying out sustained attacks over a lengthy period on targets deemed vital to the enemy's capacity to wage war, and thus bypassed the enemy's frontline defences and helped to defeat him by destroying the civilians' will to fight. In the visible battle between power and resistance, fear and security, and the benefits and restrictions of war being waged in the sky, the darkness of night was the symbolic shroud that permitted attempts to control both land and sea; both sides knew that under the cover of darkness it was possible to master the skies unseen.

Being highly vulnerable to ground fire as moving points in the sky, reconnaissance aircraft (designed to find targets) and bomber planes (designed to bomb targets) were sitting ducks during the day, but could be far stealthier at night. The introduction of night-time attacks reduced the number of accidents and casualties among pilots, fighters and anti-aircraft gunners while increasing a sense of protection and intensifying the attacker's power over the enemy by adding a psychological element to war through the need to defend oneself against a threat that was difficult to detect.

* Excerpt from *Light Up the Sky!*, directed by Lewis Gilbert, United Kingdom, 1961.



With the outbreak of World War II, the implementation of systematic night bombings generated powerful new ways of gaining a military advantage or mounting a defence. The night thus became witness to the deployment of sophisticated decoys and innovative applied technologies (used in both research and the development of new weapons). In keeping with the wartime code of secrecy, the conquest of the night spurred the development, coordination and combination of instruments such as airborne and ground-control radar, night navigation, aircraft recognition, control rooms, fake airfields, dummy production plants, intelligent fortresses and incendiary rounds as well as stronger light sources, better lenses and reflectors, yehudi lights and other equipment, thereby changing the nature of warfare.

As the conflict evolved, the Germans built larger and faster airships for the Führer's fleet and the British sought to save the Queen by building better defence systems in the form of secret military structures with powerful searchlights and radar, three of which were the Thames Estuary Army Sea Forts.

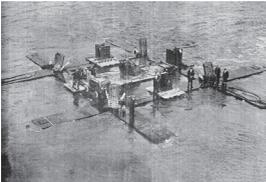
Constructed in 1943 from May 20 to December 13, Her Majesty's (H. M.) Fort Nore (U5), H. M. Fort Red Sands (U6) and H. M. Fort Shivering Sands (U7) employed, strategically, a generic but pure technical design, all sharing the same complex, "unorthodox engineering solution".¹ Since they were scattered, they constituted a more challenging target for enemy planes.

The Army Sea Forts were located outside the three-mile limit of British waters and served as both checkpoint and barrier, two functions that were vital to limiting the range of German attacks and to increasing British territorial control. Approached only by boat, the Forts provided anti-aircraft defence against enemy bombers by protecting the airfields on the nearby mainland and the shipping channel, and prevented the loss of ships headed towards Liverpool or the capital (mainly American supplies) to mines set in the seabed.

Guy Anson Maunsell (1884–1961) was the civil engineer commissioned to design the structures. Maunsell had worked on massive civil engineering projects during the interwar years, and when the hostilities of World War II broke out, he was in charge of overseeing many secret projects for the Ministry of Defence. These included the successful construction and deployment of the Thames Estuary Naval Sea Forts and the Army Sea Forts of the Mersey Estuary, efforts that acknowledged the failure of both the Blitz and the Battle of Britain.

1

Paul Hirst, *Space and Power: Politics, War and Architecture* (Malden: Polity Press, (2005), 213.



For the Army and the Thames Estuary, Maunsell elected to solve the problem of the need for speedy construction as well as that of the estuary's tides and shallowness by designing modular towers consisting of a two-storey steel pod supported on four slim, reinforced concrete legs attached to a self-burying base. Easy to transport, the towers were manufactured on the south bank of the Thames at Red Lion Wharf and then towed into position and grounded onto the sand-and-shingle seabed. Maunsell was adept at devising schemes that were uncomplicated to build and to position, as well as practical, functional and affordable to operate.

The Army's intentions involved the construction of forty-nine modular towers to be linked by underwater telephone lines, but only three forts, each comprised of seven towers, were deployed. Based on the polygonal layout of land fortifications – aimed not at minimizing blind spots, but at providing the possibility of multi-sided, or “revolving,” fire – each of the forts consisted of seven separate modular towers positioned in clusters: a central radar/control tower was surrounded by four 3.7-inch heavy anti-aircraft gun towers, one 40-millimetre Bofors light anti-aircraft gun tower, and a searchlight tower at the rear, which was located beyond the pentagonal tower arrangement to the north.

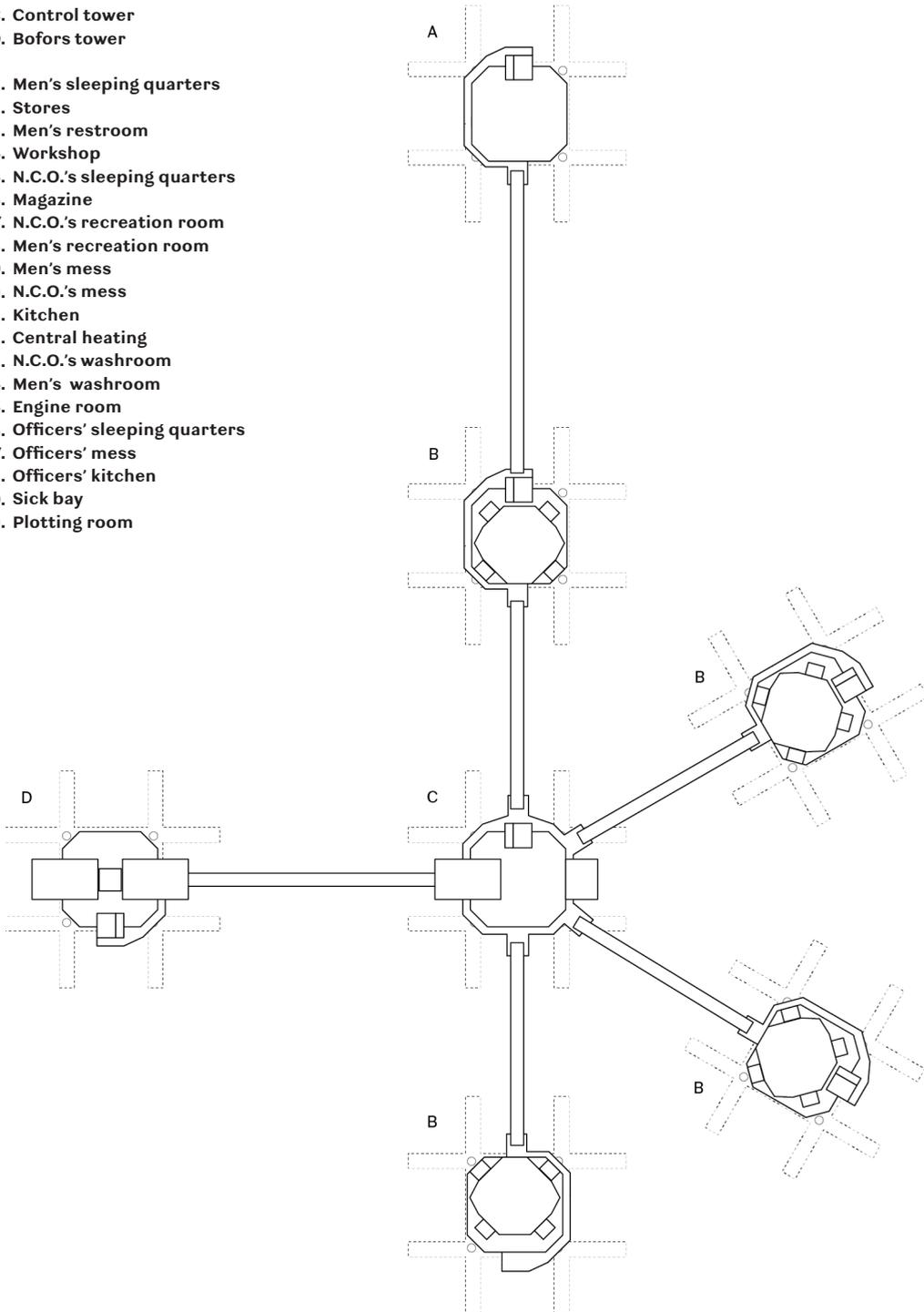
Each of the modular towers was self-sufficient, having its own living and sleeping areas inside the octagonal steel pods with armoured parapets surrounding the armour-plated top deck and magazine chambers. The outer towers were connected to the central tower via tubular steel walkways that helped move – and, if necessary, evacuate – the crew of between 165 and 265 men. Referred to as “soldiers on steel”, the full complement crew of each fort included mechanics, fitters, armourers, controllers, anti-aircraft gunners, radio interceptors, ground observers, switchboard operators and searchlight operators who served tours of four weeks aboard, all of them using the latest and most advanced weaponry of the day.

For the conceptual structure and logical organization of the Maunsell Army Sea Forts, the rear searchlight position, with its 360-degree visibility and its distance from the sound and radar locator, was of crucial importance to the success of the other towers. It served not only to detect, locate and illuminate enemy aircraft after nightfall, thereby enabling the defenders to fire upon their attackers even in the dark, but also to give overhead camouflage to the defensive fort by means of deceptive arrangements. The rear position assured that whenever the enemy planes tried to bomb the Sea Forts, the bombs would overshoot



- A. Search light tower
- B. Gun tower
- C. Control tower
- D. Bofors tower

- 1. Men's sleeping quarters
- 2. Stores
- 3. Men's restroom
- 4. Workshop
- 5. N.C.O.'s sleeping quarters
- 6. Magazine
- 7. N.C.O.'s recreation room
- 8. Men's recreation room
- 9. Men's mess
- 10. N.C.O.'s mess
- 11. Kitchen
- 12. Central heating
- 13. N.C.O.'s washroom
- 14. Men's washroom
- 15. Engine room
- 16. Officers' sleeping quarters
- 17. Officers' mess
- 18. Officers' kitchen
- 19. Sick bay
- 20. Plotting room

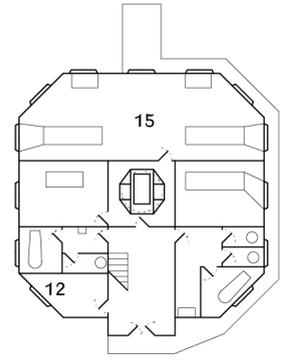
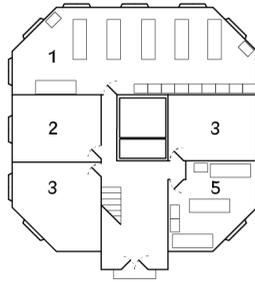
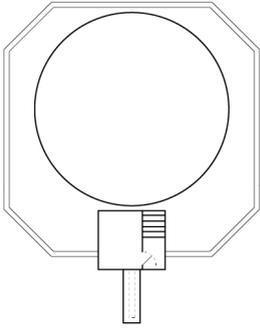


TOP FLOOR

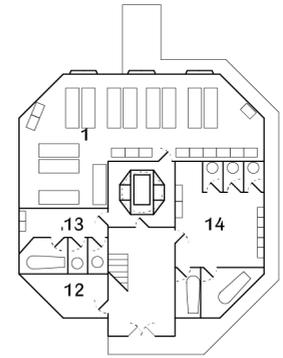
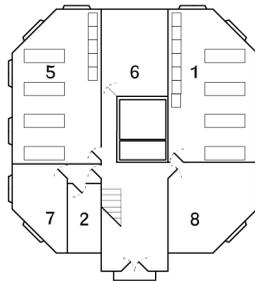
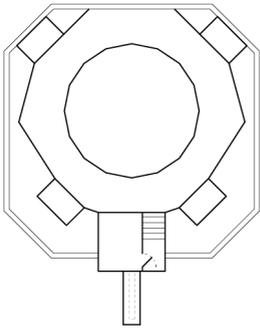
INTERMEDIATE FLOOR

BOTTOM FLOOR

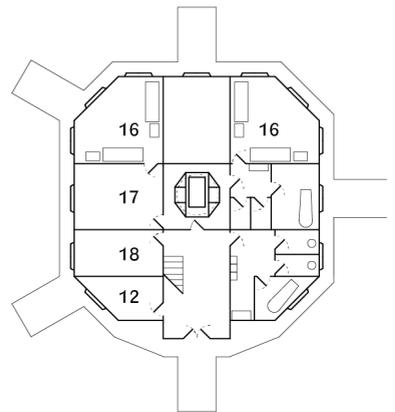
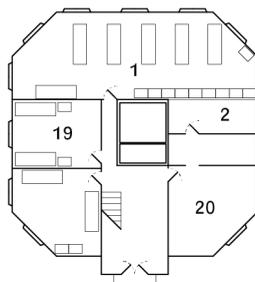
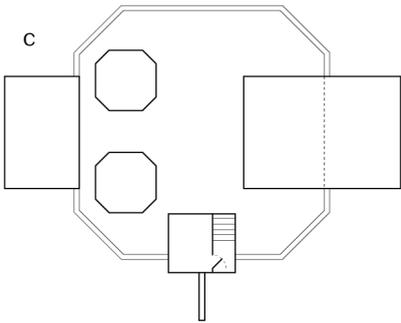
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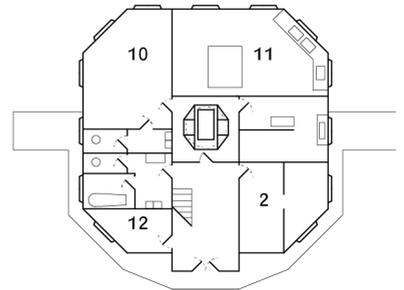
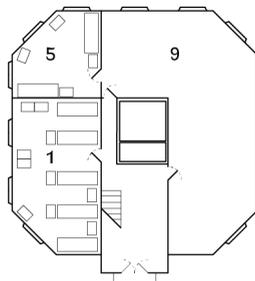
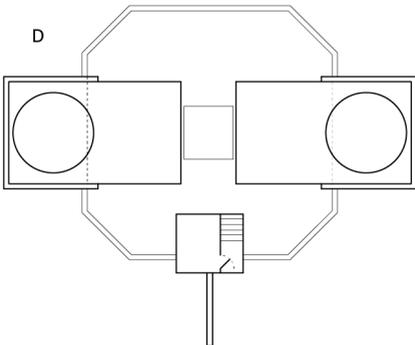
B



C



D



their mark and fall in the waters beyond it. As an apparatus designed to project a powerful beam of light comprised of nearly parallel rays, the searchlight objectified the signal of the stronghold and singled out distinct bodies in the vast expanse of the night-time sky.

At that time, the radar, the spotlight and the machine guns were synchronized with one another, so the radar told the light where to shine, and then the guns followed the light in order to open fire on the exposed target. At night, when the horizon disappears and the sky becomes one with land and sea, all that would be visible from the targets would be the cone of illuminated atmospheric particles caught in the searchlight's beam. These beams would simultaneously isolate and connect the adversaries (the Allies and the Axis), thereby opening corridors of light that provided each with a momentary advantage.

Watching the landscape of darkness during World War II, the movement between the sky and the ground was cast in lines or corridors of calculated precision, with beams that shot upwards, creating dazzling "islands of light" that scanned the night sky. Used tactically, the light emitted by the searchlight should be understood as power opposed to darkness – in its intrusiveness, the light exposes, makes visible. In its disempowering exposure of the invisible and its empowering provision of visibility, the searchlight is in fact an example of an optical instrument that, to borrow Paul Virilio's words, "pierced more than the darkness . . . [I]t [also] illuminated a future where observation and destruction would develop at the same pace".²

2
*War and Cinema: The
Logistics of Perception*
(London: Verso, 1989), 68.



THE PRISON ISLAND AND THE STATE OF NATURE (FIRST NOTES)

Lieven De Caeter

The island is one of the ur-sites of human non-migratory dwelling on the crust of this inhospitable planet. It offers man a safe haven: the island's isolation gives him protection, and the water surrounding it provides a means of transportation and commerce. Due to this two-sided nature of isolation and connection – though it is almost too obvious to express in words – islands have been the chosen sites of the “eternal” cities, from Paris's Île de la Cité to Manhattan. So the island as a naturally enclosed territory is the ideal space in which to instil the law, or *nomos*, the norms of a society, to counteract the nature, or *fusis*, that surrounds it (such as water, in the case of an island in the ocean, or other land, in the case of an island in a river). An island is a natural stronghold – like a rocky castle, a *burcht*, a *borgo*, a fortress – because it is always surrounded by water. In fact, all military defence begins with an imitation of the concept of the island. Inversely, or, rather, symmetrically (we must still kick down supposedly wide-open doors now and then in order to rethink or reconsider things), the island is also the perfect prison: you don't have to build it, you don't have to guard it, you don't have to maintain its physical structure, it costs nothing, and it is more secure than most other prison typologies. And, of course, most real prison islands will actually embody a combination of typologies; Alcatraz, for instance, is an island with a prison fortress built atop it as an additional measure of security.

But there is also another aspect to the character of the island: the uninhabited island represents the outside, the frontier of civilization, nature in its pure, undiscovered form that has not yet been touched by humans (for example, the Island of Robinson Crusoe). There is a whole body of

literature on the island as unknown territory, a place of absolute nature and survival (especially after a shipwreck). By considering these two aspects of the island together, we stumble upon a sharp contradiction, for a deserted island represents an absolute wilderness or a state of nature while the prison embodies the state of law. The island as a locus of the state of nature is not a prison island, at least not at first glance. Furthermore, an island cannot be equated to the state of nature, least of all a prison island. Nonetheless, an intersection of the two can be found in the factor of banishment. The prison island is less a place of incarceration than one of a bizarre form of freedom, because its inmates are as “free as a bird”, which means they are loose and can be shot down like outlaws. The prison’s residents are banned from society and abandoned to the wilderness of the isolated, deserted island. To abandon, or a-ban-donner in French, means donner au ban – to give unto banishment. Those who are outlawed or banned, according to the now classic distinction proposed by Giorgio Agamben, are reduced to bare life (zoë), for their civility or acculturation (bios) is taken from them.

An island is also a utopia: Plato’s Atlantis, for example, was an island, as was Thomas Morus’s utopia. The undiscovered island could be the imaginary place of an ideal society, a counter-image that compensates for the negative qualities of real society. But even more so, it is a heterotopia, an existing place of otherness, of vacation, of escape, of adventure, of a return to nature, of sovereignty, etc. Ibiza played that role for the intelligentsia in the early 20th century. Later it became a heterotopia of abandon for the masses. There are countless other examples, such as Crete, whose town of Matala was a gathering place for hippies. “The island” is always a heterotopia in the collective imagination. But is this concept applicable to the prison island? Is a prison a heterotopia? The prison, in fact, is a problematic one that appears on Foucault’s list of heterotopias (which also includes the theatre, the graveyard, the museum, the library, the fair, the sauna, the brothel and the ship) in his now-legendary lecture “Of Other Spaces” because it is not a space set apart from daily life, or a cult space located outside the spheres of politics and economics. The prison is an extension of power, and therefore it is a truly political space – the darker side of the architecture of power (the fortress).

According to Foucault, the ship is also a heterotopia. The prison island as heterotopia merges the two concepts – that of the boat and that

of the prison – in a strange synthesis. As prisoners are returned to, reduced to, and given up to nature (banished, outlawed, reduced to bare life [zoë]) on the island, this place becomes a fixed geological vessel in the vastness – the immensity, the seemingly boundless wilderness, “the desert” – of water. The water becomes a “solid sea” or hard border (Multiplicity, the collective that operated around Stefano Boeri, called the Mediterranean a “solid sea” to emphasize that it served as a hard border for illegal immigrants). But because of the island’s isolation, discipline there can be weak or even non-existent (Napoleon, for instance, was totally free on his island). So the prison island can often become heterotopian in a bizarre, Kafkaesque but definitely inverse way. The castle is empty; the bureaucracy has left the building. The prison island becomes a liminal space, a ship of fools, an asylum, a strange refuge. It takes on heterotopian overtones, precisely because heterotopias, as spaces of otherness, are often a clearing, a void, a terrain vague, an indeterminate wasteland, a space of wilderness or *fusis* (nature) within the space of normality, or *nomos* (the political space of the polis, the city, la cité). The prison island is a twilight zone.

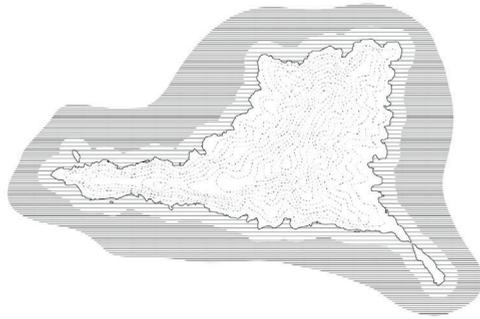
Desertmed

A project by Giulia Di Lenarda, Giuseppe Ielasi, Armin Linke, Amedeo Martegani, Renato Rinaldi and Giovanna Silva

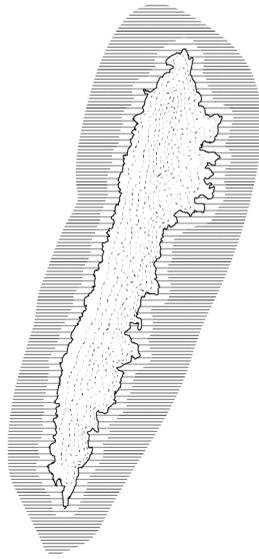
These photos are part of a project designed to document the deserted islands of the Mediterranean Sea. They show the Italian islands of Pianosa (a maximum security prison until 1997 that is still under the management of the Italian Ministry of Justice), Asinara (a national park that had been a maximum security prison until 1999), Santo Stefano (the home of a Bourbon-era panoptic prison), and the Greek islands of Gyros and Makronissos (prisons for political dissidents in Greece from 1948 to 1974).

Desertmed also documented Gorgona (Italy), the only active penal colony in the Mediterranean, and Goli Otok (Croatia), an island concentration camp under Tito’s regime.

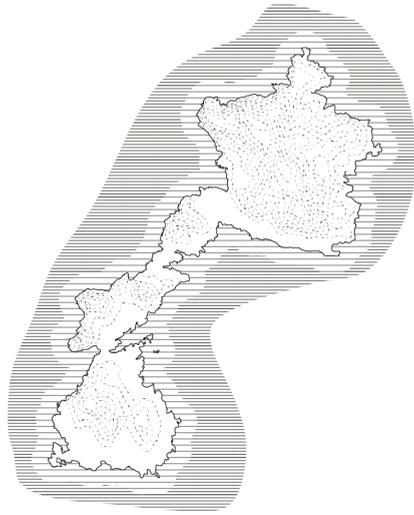
Cyros, Greece, 2010



130 – 37°36'40.42"N, 24°42'31.48"E



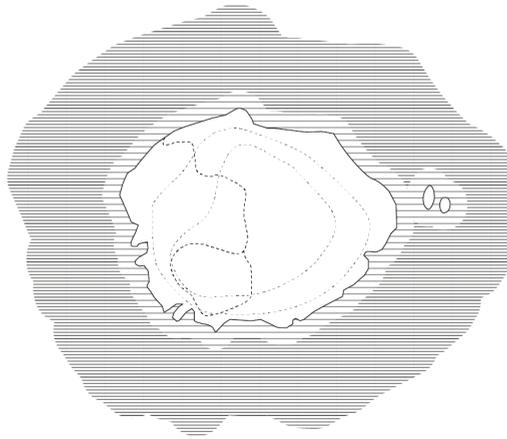
Asinara, Italy, 2010



132 – 41°4'14.44"N, 8°19'11.26"E



Santo Stefano, Italy, 2009



134 – 40°47'20.69"N, 13°27'14.37"E



ARCHIPELAGO CITIES

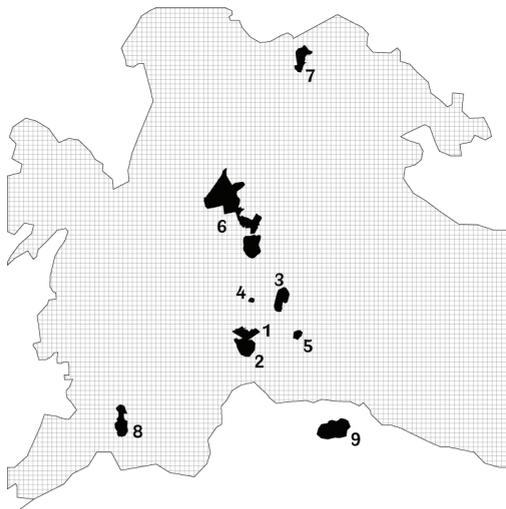
Point Supreme Architects

Athens is a real city. Hills and smaller mountains emerge from its seamless ocean of apartment blocks in a rough circle. The Acropolis majestically sits on a gigantic piece of rock at the circle's centre.

The geography of the Greek archipelago seems to reappear within the urban setting of Athens; in other words, Athens translates the Cyclades' archipelago landscape into the form of a city. The random, "unorganized" physical relationship between the hills, which was once explained by the now hidden topography lying in between, prevents them from being easily perceived or appreciated as a whole; it is only when the viewer is standing on the top of the Acropolis or the surrounding mountains that he can appreciate their full impact on the organization of the city.

Kawaii is an imaginary linear city built by the people of Hawaii and located in the ocean. It is autonomous and self-sustaining. Kawaii's urban fabric connects a linear series of hills of different uses and features that mysteriously resemble Hawaii's linear collection of islands.

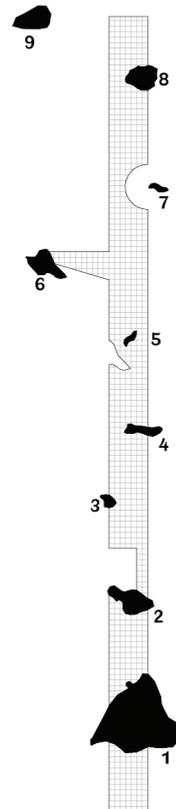
The hills in Kawaii are experienced in a predefined sequence; the presence and development of each specifically influence both the previous hill and the next. One's experience of the city depends on the direction in which one is moving, as if the city had a beginning and an end (that are eternally interchangeable). The two side views of Kawaii reveal its hills in breathtaking simultaneity, thereby making the perception and experience of the city objective.



0 2km

Athens Plan

1. Akropolis (the ancient hill)
2. Filopapou (the promenade hill)
3. Lycabettus (the cultural hill)
4. Strefi (the sports hill)
5. Arditos (the Olympic hill)
6. Tourkovounia (the wildlife hill)
7. Vrilissia (the eco hill)
8. Nikaia (the observation hill)
9. Artificial hill (new leisure hill)



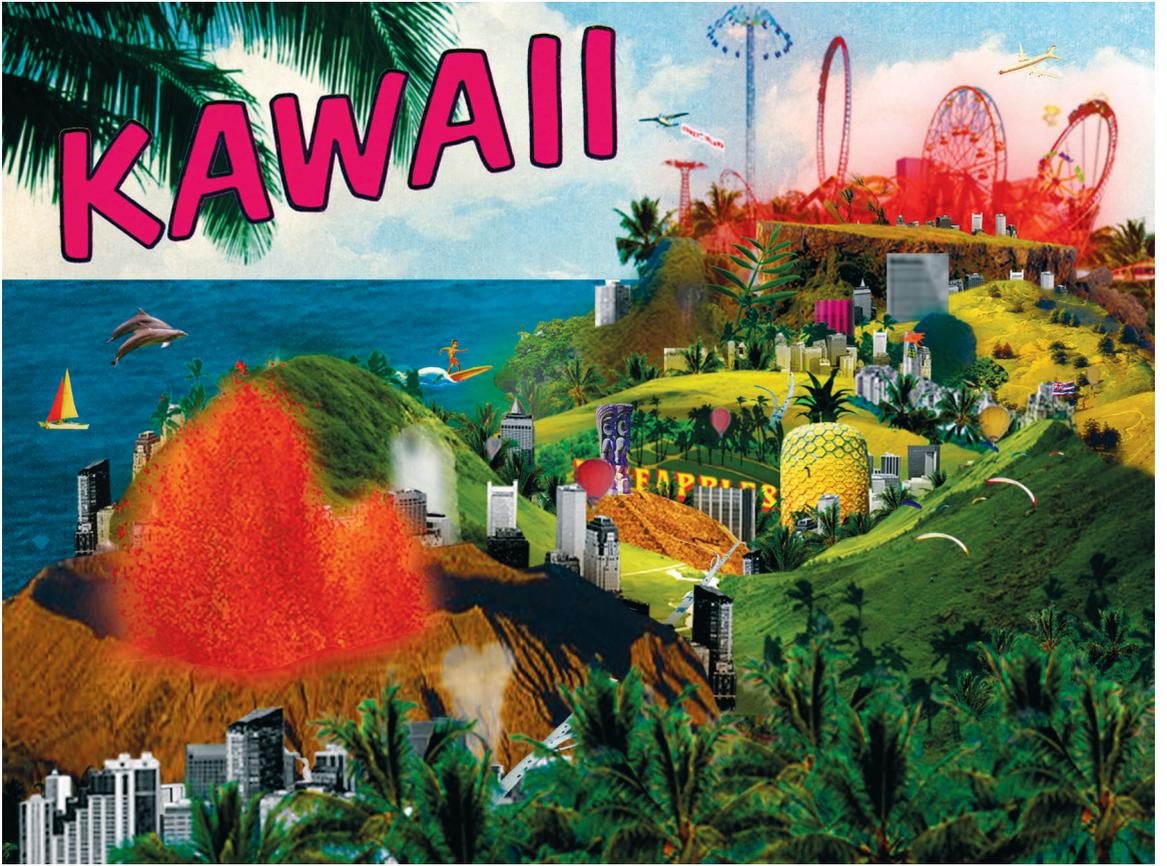
Kawaii Plan

1. Hawai'i (the big hill)
2. Maui (the valley hill)
3. Kaho'olawe (the target hill)
4. Lana'i (the pineapple hill)
5. O'ahu (the gathering hill)
6. Moloka'i (the friendly hill)
7. Ni'ihau (the forbidden hill)
8. Kaua'i (the garden hill)
9. Ki'kuni (new leisure hill)









AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREA ZITTEL

Andrea Balestrero



Above: Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Deserted Island I*, 1997
© Andrea Zittel, Courtesy
Andrea Rosen Gallery, New
York. Photograph by Orcutt
& Van Der Putten

Facing page: Andrea Zittel,
*A-Z Prototype for Pocket
Property*, 1999
© Andrea Zittel, Courtesy
the artist, and Andrea
Rosen Gallery, New York

Andrea Zittel is an American artist whose work focuses on all the aspects of daily life with the aim of understanding and analyzing human nature, the perception of social needs and the construction of human values. Her activity is run under the label of A-Z Enterprise, a one-woman, corporation-like experimental artistic project founded in New York in the early 1990s and now based in her house in the Joshua Tree National Park in the California desert. Zittel's works are experiments about design, home furniture, clothing, food and other things. Every aspect of the artist's life is used as an opportunity for investigation. Many of her works are objects, structures or inhabitable spaces designed with the aim of rationally solving every problem of life by focusing on concepts like control, independence, freedom, autonomy and isolation. Among these works, Zittel has designed some islands, so I asked her some questions about them.





Above and following pages:
Andrea Zittel, *A-Z Habitable
Island for the Indianapolis
Museum of Art: Customized
by Student Residents from
the Herron School of Art and
Design*, 2009

© Andrea Zittel, Courtesy
the Indianapolis Museum
of Art, Indianapolis, and
Andrea Rosen Gallery, New
York

Andrea Balestrero: You have realized three different projects for floating islands. In your work, it seems that the island is playing the role of the symbol of a contrast between the tendency to individualism and the idea of community that you try to analyze and challenge with the activity of A-Z Enterprise. Where does your interest in these objects (if we can call them that) come from?

Andrea Zittel: I find that I am repeatedly drawn to the idea of an island because I think that it has become the ultimate metaphor for being alone – which in this culture, is both our greatest fear and our greatest fantasy. As you suggest, it points to an ideal of individualism, solitude, independence and sometimes self-sufficiency. Yet I feel that both the structure of the island and the ideals that it points to are something of a double-edged sword. Such an individualized state also creates a certain kind of helplessness – ultimately it requires a group or a collective to enact any kind of true change or revolution.

AB: Does your interest also have to do with a fascination with nature (I'm thinking also about other projects of yours, such as Rough Furniture and Point of Interest) and/or the redesign and artificialization of it?

AZ: I have found that I'm often drawn to structures that represent or embody different sorts of human desires or ideas – and often these come from nature. It isn't that I'm directly interested in nature itself, so much that I'm interested in how we project various human yearnings onto natural form.

AB: There are interesting differences in the aesthetic of the three projects. Your Deserted Islands look like industrialized products, more like white boats than pieces of land, but they also seem to be looking for a

relationship with the outside, like observation posts, or maybe the shuttles of a panoramic wheel. This contrasts with the title – why “deserted”? Weren't they supposed to be used? Or is it because they are one-seaters?

AZ: The Deserted Islands were made for Skulptur Projekte in Munster in 1997. At the time, I was really noticing the differences between European and American perceptions of personal space, territory and autonomy. The works are called “deserted islands” because they remind me of the deserted islands in comics, where some character, such as a businessman or insurance salesman, finds himself marooned alone on a very small island. I also wanted the islands to look a bit like amusement park rides since I was interested in commenting on the way that we seek out authentic experiences through mediated environments.

AB: Pocket Property is more mimetic of a landscape, made in concrete, with some vegetation on top and conceived to be inhabited for a long period, more in its interior than on the outside. It makes me think of an artillery bunker floating on the water. As with many of your projects, your islands seem to be designed to host life in some kind of extreme (or at least unusual) conditions; do these island signify isolation from a hostile “outside”?

AZ: Pocket Property was made in Scandinavia and, as you suggest, was intended to be an experimental living condition. When I constructed it, I had just moved back to Southern California (where I had grown up) and was struck at how it was such a “capsule” society. I felt that this kind of privatization was a glimpse into the future – and started to imagine a scenario where one's vehicle, land and dwelling could all be combined into a single mass-produced commodity. Much of my work draws from

elements of science fiction – and I think that Pocket Property is a good representation of this influence. I wanted Pocket Property to be big enough to function as a viable habitat. The interior space was fairly large, and on the outside there was a growing area with soil that hosted a tree and various plants. I don't know if I meant it to be a shelter from a hostile environment so much as a territory of extreme independence and autonomy. Like a country where I could be in charge of everything in my domain.

AB: Indianapolis Island is like the model of a landscape – white again, but also similar to a survival capsule or a life raft. Is the whiteness of this island related to a kind of platonic idea of it?

AZ: When we were constructing Pocket Property we experienced a lot of difficulties with the chosen fabrication techniques. The island was made of concrete shot over a steel armature with metal tanks underneath for flotation. The concrete was heavy; it leaked water, and it eventually began to crack. For years I had wanted to build a lighter, tighter and better-designed island that would truly be viable for living in the long term. The Indianapolis Museum of Art had a large body of water that was part of their art and nature park, so when they approached me about commissioning a work it seemed like the ideal situation to try a new version of habitable island. Shortly after we began the project, the recession set in and we had to scale back the project, which accounts for the smaller size. As for the color, I do think that on some level white represents an “ideal”, and I have used white in this way in the past. But also it is the color of fibreglass when it is used in boats and [therefore] seems like the most logical color for a fibreglass island.

AB: Apart from the aesthetic, the different ways in which the islands are inhabited seems fundamental

to me. Two of them, for example, are hollow and host a shelter inside, being a synthesis of house and landscape. What are the differences between the three projects from that point of view?

AZ: The Deserted Islands were a participatory yet highly conceptual statement about isolation, independence, autonomy and how we seek out experiences in safe and predictable packages. Both Pocket Property and Indy Island were attempts to make a viable alternative living situation. They both had embedded conceptual references – but more than anything else I wanted to create a functional experimental living system, and to then learn from the experience of inhabiting them.

AB: Generally speaking, your projects are, I would say, mainly experience-based and really concrete, something like tests or experiments, since they refer also to a different way of life. From a conceptual point of view they are extremely clear and coherent. Do you consider them also in terms of utopias or as reconfigurations of possible scenarios?

AZ: Absolutely, but the utopias that they refer to are individual ones, not group utopias, or situations that can be prescribed for other people. For instance, there is a man in Mexico who lived for an extended time on an island that he made out of plastic bottles – I am totally inspired by this project because it truly functioned as a real living situation that he was able to construct both by himself and for himself.

AB: Indianapolis Island was inhabited last summer by two young artists and functioned like a platform for their interaction with the visitors of the Indianapolis Museum Park and its territory (their blog – <http://www.imamuseum.org/island/> – is amazing). How did the experiment work? Was it as you expected?



AZ: When I made Indianapolis Island I wanted people to be able to truly live on it – I had lived on the Pocket Property myself, but felt that in this case it wasn't so important that I personally was the subject of the experiment; it was just important to me that someone would be able to live on the island and to communicate those experiences to a larger audience. Of course, when you create any kind of "real" living situation there is always the problem of how to present it to the public. With the Indy Island project we solicited proposals from young artists and art students who were willing to come live on it for a summer (Indianapolis gets really cold in the winter) and the plan was that the island's residents would interact with the public, explaining what life on the island was like and bringing them out to it with a rowboat so that they could view it in person. Mike and Jessica, our island residents, were amazing. They were incredibly charismatic, personable and had a lot of great ideas for projects of their own that dovetailed with their existence on the island.

AB: Reading one of your interviews about Pocket Property I was struck by the image of "a suburbia floating out in the ocean"; have you imagined creating a kind of archipelago comprised of your islands? What would a community living there be like?

AZ: This was the original plan when I submitted the proposal for Pocket Property in Scandinavia, and initially we thought it would be possible to fabricate a cluster of islands! Unfortunately, it turned out to be so costly and labour intensive to make just one island that we had to give up the dream of making more of them. But it is something that I would still very much like to do someday . . . I think it would be interesting to see how people negotiate this space and if they would choose to secure the islands in a community, or if they would want to cut them free and create large spaces between them.

AB: The island contains in itself the contrast between a defined space and the sense of the infinite: limitation and freedom. Your islands are also floating (so they are, at least theoretically, movable). Is this just the result of practical reasons or is there some specific meaning? Have you ever thought of building a real island? Or of moving A-Z Enterprise to an existing island?

AZ: I think that this question perfectly defines some of the qualities of islands that appeal to me. Of course, in my fabricated islands the fact that they are floating introduces yet another variable in the way that they relate to other forms (islands, land masses, etc.). One proposal that I submitted for an island was that I wanted to build an island and live on it while it was free floating in the ocean; I imagined that I would just have a lifeboat and a radio so that if things got too out of hand I could call in for a rescue. At the time everyone in my family besides me was living on sailboats and they were a little worried about this plan – if nothing else they said that I would stand a big chance of eventually being hit by a shipping boat. But I do sometimes think about moving to a real island someday. Of course, living in the desert sometimes feels a bit like being on an island in and of itself.

THE GRAVITATIONAL PULL OF THE MAINLAND: THREE STORIES ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR AUTONOMY OF COASTAL ISLANDS

Valter Scelsi

1.

The medieval Torre Astura is a tower on a little island situated about fifty metres from the mainland. The tower is located about five kilometres south of Nettuno (south of Rome), on the edge of a thick pine forest historically known as the Forest of Astura in an area that now belongs to the military.

The place is quite remote. The area falls within the polygon of the Ufficio Tecnico Territoriale Armamenti Terrestri, a military institution.

Torre Astura rises on the remains of an artificial island that was part of a Roman villa from the time of the empire. Around the tower, under the water, it is still possible to recognize the perimeter of an ancient Roman fishpond. Pliny the Elder described Astura as an island connected by a bridge to the mainland, and significant remnants of the Roman bridge survive.

The tower itself was built by the Frangipani family in the twelfth century. It later became the property of the Colonna and Borghese clans, until it was ceded to the Italian Ministry of Defence in the 1960s. In a bizarre and ephemeral form of acceleration of historical sedimentation, in July 1962 the place became the location where the Hollywood blockbuster *Cleopatra* was shot.

From 1966 to 1971 three Italian film directors, the masters of the *commedia all'italiana*, or Italian comedy, chose the Torre Astura as a location. In 1966 Ettore Scola filmed *L'arcidiavolo* (*The Devil in Love*), starring Vittorio Gassman, Mickey Rooney and Claudine Auger, there. In 1970 Mario Monicelli filmed some scenes of *Brancaleone alle crociate* (*Brancaleone at the Crusades*), the sequel to *L'armata Brancaleone*

(For Love and Gold), on the same site. And in the summer of 1971, Luigi Comencini used the location for the final scene of *Le Avventure di Pinocchio* (The Adventures of Pinocchio), a six-episode television miniseries adapted from the novel by Collodi and produced by RAI, the Italian government television network; in the final frame, under the credits, there is a view of the island seen from the beach at sunset.

The remoteness and protection that result from military ownership have protected the islands since then, so the Torre Astura is still an island today.

2.

Nisida is a small circular island with a flooded crater forming the small bay of Porto Paone on its south-west coast. It has a diameter of a half a kilometre and a maximum altitude of 109 metres. Nisida is located approximately 300 metres from the Bagnoli steel plant.

Nisida was privately owned until 1593, when the City of Naples purchased the Scoglio di Chiuppino, a rocky reef emerging from the waters halfway between the coast and Nisida, in order to use it to build a lazaretto (a hospital and storage area where crews and commodities were put in quarantine). The project was realized only years later as a place to host the victims of the plague in Messina (1626–28). In 1814, during Napoleon's reign, Joachim Murat decreed the creation of the Lazzaretto Port with a new pier connecting Nisida to Chiuppino – which was called *il Lazzaretto* – and the construction of a new hospital. The task of transforming the long-abandoned tower of Nisida into a jail was also initiated at this time. When Ferdinand IV of Bourbon returned to Naples, he implemented Murat's project. Under Fascist rule, the prison was transformed into a reformatory with the demolition of the old two-storey tower at the top of the island and the construction of seven new pavilions for the Agricultural Colony of the young detainees. In 1936, through the addition of a new layer of cement and by chipping away at Chiuppino, Nisida was finally connected to the mainland. The island



A reconstruction of the Porto Alessandria on Torre Astura created for the set of *Cleopatra* (1963), directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz (from *Cinecittà tra cronaca e storia, 1937-1989* [Rome, 1990])

is not yet open to the public. It plays host to NATO's Allied Maritime Component Command, some barracks of Italy's Guardia di Finanza (military corps dealing with financial crime) and the juvenile detention facility. Until the last years of the twentieth century, there was a notice that absurdly read "Proibito osservare" (observation prohibited) on a curve of Coroglio, the promontory facing Nisida. The inaccessibility of the area has been an obstacle to the island's conquest by the mainland (and by the steel plant).

3.

The island of Sant'Andrea lost its status as an island in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Matteo Vinzoni's atlas, published in 1758 on behalf of the Republic's Ministry of Health and describing the Ligurian coast in thirty-six line drawings in ink with watercolour shading, calls the place the isola di Sant'Andrea (in the third table, which is dedicated to Sestri Ponente, a suburb of Genoa). In his later work *Il dominio della Serenissima Repubblica di Genova in terraferma* (The Mainland Dominion of the Most Serene Republic of Genoa), which consisted of two volumes and was penned with the help of his son Panfilo and submitted to the government of the Republic of Genoa as early as 2 August 1773, Vinzoni labelled the place on plate 44 (showing Cornigliano) simply as Sant'Andrea.

At the time of the Vinzoni's second survey, only a small military battery seems to have survived, welded to the mainland by a strip of land.

Before then, Sant'Andrea, which is located between the small rocky outcrop of Sestri Ponente and Cornigliano Ligure, numbered among those islands that exist in a labile state not because of geological reasons, but because of their dangerous proximity to the mainland.

Abandoned in 1860 by the last military garrison, the island lost its military role. In 1869 the Regio Demanio put it up for sale. In 1879 Edilio Raggio, a steel tycoon, bought the "island" for 50,000 Italian lire. The island's new private owner removed it from the protection of

Nisida and Coroglio at the end of the 19th century (photographic reworking of images from *Ilva, Alti Forni e Acciaierie d'Italia 1897-1947* [Bergamo, 1948] in the Alinari archive)



military guardianship, opening it up to the impact of the free market. This proved to be the beginning of the end. Raggio decided to build a private home on Sant'Andrea. The building took the form of a castle and covered a large part of the isle's surface, recklessly exposing itself to the action of the waves arriving from the south-west. The new castle was compact, and it was marked by the presence of a tower and by the recurring use of the pointed arch. The building was rapidly completed, and the grand unveiling occurred on 12 September 1892. The guests included members of the royal family, Umberto I and Margherita of Savoia, who were in Genoa for the Columbian Celebrations at the time.

Despite the fact that the nearby village of Sestri was already becoming an area of heavy industry in this period, the construction of the new castle reinforced the characterization of Cornigliano as a holiday resort. As a result, as late as 1889 Cornigliano still attracted spoiled tourists like the Piedmontese poet Guido Gozzano. Cornigliano's happy days, however, would soon draw to a close.

In September 1938, in the context of the Italian autarky, the construction of a large coastal steel plant was begun in Cornigliano. Although completed in 1942, the plant did not go into production, and after the armistice of 1943 the Germans dismantled it.

At the end of World War II, Cornigliano's artificial esplanade thus appeared to be largely empty. With the new resources freed up by the Marshall Plan, the steel plant was finally realized. It was more than a reconstruction of the pre-war version, for it also incorporated modern innovations that drew upon American technology. The growing scale of the plant's production required the reclamation of additional land from the sea. A dam was erected to obtain an area of approximately 350,000 square metres by infilling. But to make room towards the west for the rolling mills, it became necessary to demolish several houses and, eventually, even Raggio's castle. In 1953 a factory consisting of a coke plant, two blast furnaces with a 750-tonne-a-day capacity, a steel



20 October 1950: infilling occurring within sight of Castello Raggio (Archivio Storico Fondazione Ansaldo)

mill with six open-hearth furnaces and a hot-rolling wide strip mill began operation. The natural island of Sant'Andrea was thus swallowed by its artificial development.

In a movie by Giovanni Paolucci entitled *La costruzione di un nuovo impianto siderurgico a ciclo integrale* (The Construction of a New Steel Plant in Full Cycle, 1951–55), the final disappearance of the island of Sant'Andrea is documented. In the film's twelfth minute, you see an aerial image of the area without the island of Sant'Andrea. The movie was filmed in early 1952, shortly after the demolition of the castle via explosive charges had begun on 14 April 1951.

4.

If we try to create rules to define the relationships of small islands located very close to the coastal mainland, we can suggest following:

I. In general, the sand beneath the waters completes the artificial connection to the mainland with the formation of a short isthmus. As a result, islands that are very near to the coast have little chance of preserving their island status. In the long run, all small islands found close to the mainland are conquered.

II. The smaller these little islands are, the more they are in danger of this.

III. Distance from urbanized areas helps protect the island status of these small isles.

IV. Military or state custodianship seems to protect the islandness of these small islands. These seemingly innocent, often paradise-like little islands actually seem to secretly seek out authoritarian protection. Little islands tend to survive when under military control.

V. Whenever small islands near the coast are abandoned to the free market, they end up losing their island status. Aside from being promilitary, little islands are also anti-capitalistic.

VI. Little islands (at least, those off Italy's coasts) seem to have an inexplicable connection to steel plants. However, the relationship between little islands and steel plants does not follow any clear set of rules.

EMBASSIES: AN ARCHITECTURE OF EXCEPTION

Marco Ferrari

Uncodified, implicit or even unilateral agreements between nations have been present throughout the history of politics since the establishment of the very first nation-states. Rooted in economic interdependence or military balance, or derived from the legacy of ancient privileges, protocols of dialogue and interchange have found the necessary balance between kingdoms, dictatorships and republics. The need for interaction beyond taking up arms sanctioned the principle that the person responsible for the communication between two states would remain untouchable.

The idea of diplomatic immunity arose as part of an embryonic ethical system in which the importance of the word as a means of communication still possessed an aura of the holy. Even in the middle of long-lasting hostilities, the violation of the sacred nature of ambassadors constituted the crossing of a line: any harm inflicted upon them would immediately signify an explicit declaration of war. There is a close relationship between the physical body of the representative and the integrity of a nation's borders. Stronger than the equation of the body of the sovereign with the collective body of his kingdom's inhabitants (which has to be intended as a rhetorical pattern of power and dominance), the paralleling of an emissary and his land of origin served for many centuries as the most evident vehicle for the acknowledgment of a nation's right to be part of a wider, international community. The figure of an undefended body in a potentially hostile territory transcends any military opposition based on actual defensive strength, thereby legitimizing the identification of a community with its own land.

Within this framework, the first attempt to define modern diplomatic relations officially was carried out during the Congress of Vienna,

between 1814 and 1815. An international system of diplomatic ranks was drafted, along with manifest assertions about the rights of ambassadors and their diplomatic personnel. Nevertheless, a legal basis for the codification of diplomatic immunity has only ever been clearly stated during the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, which was held on 18 April 1961. The most important achievements of the assembly's final document regard the inviolability of the embassy's building,¹ documents, information archives and correspondence with the state it represents as well as, of course, the immunity from jurisdiction and detection of any person who is part of the embassy's diplomatic body. The representative presence of the sending state within the receiving one is canonized within a legal condition of exception: the embassy is exempted from the restrictions of local law and occupies an area that is physically impermeable and virtually detached from the rest of the city, thus producing a discontinuity within the potential isonomy of the built environment that surrounds it.

1

"The 'premises of the mission' are the buildings or parts of buildings and the land ancillary thereto, irrespective of ownership, used for the purposes of the mission including the residence of the head of the mission"; *Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations*, 1961, United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 500, 95 (Article 1).

What we usually mean by the term "embassy" is the compound of buildings destined to provide offices and residential space to the ambassador and his staff. While before the twentieth century these two main uses normally overlapped within the same structure – since the ambassador was essentially a self-promoting gentleman whose commercial interests and personal wealth allowed him to take on the role of representing his country within the domain of another state – the dawn of modern diplomatic policies has brought about a more scattered articulation of roles, programmes and architectural layouts, all of which have shaped the design of embassies.

Usually – as in prisons or urban military barracks – a no-walking distance is established on the outer perimeter, while its visual perception is always forestalled by recurring elements: a metal fence, a cluster of closed-circuit TV cameras, a sign bearing warnings, an armed police vehicle or a series of anti-ram barriers. Pedestrian and automobile traffic around the building is often diverted or slowed down according to the changeable needs of intensified control procedures or privileged access. Taking pictures of the areas adjacent to the chancery is discouraged or even forbidden, and any behaviour that could be considered anomalous – such as protracted loitering, an unsure step while crossing the road, a hesitation about one's direction in the vicinity of the entrance gates – provokes a suspicious reaction from the guardsmen, who are implicitly permitted to intervene

at their own discretion. Contravening the habitual randomness and unpredictability of urban flows, movement around the embassy is expected to stream smoothly and steadily, without interruptions or sudden inversions. As if the building were on the edge of a black hole, where the balance of contrasting forces creates a regular, circular flow of the particles around it, this invoked fluidity generates a forced unawareness of the embassy's presence. Any single individual not previously monitored and empowered to licitly interact with the facility is induced to forcefully forget its presence, while being disciplined at the same time. The extra-territorial status and the extraordinary need for additional security and police surveillance of an embassy's premises² end up creating a sort of magnetical field that has an effect on the surrounding neighbourhood.

Contemporary U.S. Embassies are the ideal case study for the understanding of this condition, which mirrors and fosters modern-day geopolitical routines, constantly producing alternative typologies of camps with the slightest variations capable of adapting to widely differing environments.

Compared to European standards and achievements within the praxis of international relations, U.S. involvement in diplomatic affairs was not one of Congress's first priorities. The main phase in the construction of U.S. diplomatic posts imitated the creation of the U.S.'s huge overseas network of military bases during the years before and immediately after World War II. The deployment of modern architecture as a predominant stylistic concern was an aspect of Cold War rhetoric, intended as a counterpart to the extravagant grandeur of traditional Soviet buildings. Beginning in the 1960s, the heightening crisis of the Vietnam War and the greater involvement of the U.S. in armed interventions around the globe generated a widespread distrust of American presence abroad. A long series of terrorist attacks was launched by the car bomb that exploded in 1965 outside the U.S. Embassy in Saigon and culminated in the synchronous assaults upon the African outposts of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in 1998. In response to these episodes, the Department of State underwent a rearrangement of its organizational structure and embarked upon a 21-billion-dollar multi-year programme to replace 201 unsafe and decrepit diplomatic facilities.³ A new Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) was instituted to implement the programme, and the reorganization of the legislative body presiding over diplomatic issues has been accompanied

2

"The receiving State is under a special duty to take all appropriate steps to protect the premises of the mission against any intrusion or damage and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of the mission or impairment of its dignity"; *Vienna Convention* (see note 1), (Article 22, paragraph 2).

3

The programme, which is called the Capital Security Construction Program, implemented the Secure Embassy Construction and Counterterrorism Act approved by Congress in 1999, which set forth physical security standards (i.e., collocation into a single, unified compound and setback requirements) and policies for all New Embassy Compounds (NECs).



U.S. Embassies

Rome, Italy

Paris, France

Bern, Switzerland

Madrid, Spain

Lisbon, Portugal

The Hague, The Netherlands

by the ongoing development of a theoretical apparatus designed to sustain American presence abroad.

The economic and organizational effort deployed in the Bureau's mission is huge. During the first phase of the programme – from 2000 to the beginning of 2009 – OBO completed more than 250 projects.⁴ From 2009 to 2018, the state predicts an average annual funding level of approximately 1.4 billion dollars for New Embassy Compounds (NECs). In total, the Department of State is planning to build 201 new NECs through the Capital Security Construction Program.

The attempt to anticipate change and the development of advanced methodologies for risk management and counter-terrorism measures have shifted the balance of U.S. intervention in foreign countries from the tasks of providing support and assistance to the single objective of shaping the local context both socially and on a physical urban scale according to American geopolitical directions and aims. In fact, the use of the term “preventive” has spread from the military realm to other spheres of political intervention: the principles of preventive diplomacy mirror the rhetoric and objectives of preventive war. To prevent, in military jargon, means to focus on a strategic goal which is to be pursued with any technological resources necessary and which has to be concretized into a spatial order. The alignment of the fight against terrorist threat and post-conflict reconstruction operations – which are pursued by the growth of diplomatic activity – is total.

The backbone of the programme has been a huge effort to achieve the standardization of a combined knowledge between construction, industrial, military and counter-intelligence domains. Together, all of this input created a heterogeneous corpus of guidelines and handbooks covering every aspect from the investigations that precede the choice of an NEC site to the handling of the maintenance of technological equipment.

This encoding of procedural expertise acquired a virtual homogenization in the Standard Embassy Design (SED) agenda, a series of documents that outline site and building plans for NECs. According to Administration sources, the SED initiative has the aim of providing not an actual building design, but “rather a template that standardizes the basic plans for the structural, spatial, safety, and security requirements for each embassy”.⁵ The SED presents model layouts for each of the elements comprising a typical NEC: main office buildings, utility buildings, warehouses and a general service annex; living quarters for Marine Security Guards; security features such as the Compound

4
Of these, 68 were part of the Capital Security Construction Program, 93 were “Major Rehabilitations” and 90 were “Security Upgrades”.

5
AIA 21st Century Embassy Task Force, *Design for Diplomacy: New Embassies for the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The American Institute of Architects, 2009), 11.

Access Control (CAC) buildings and nine-foot, anti-ram/anti-climb perimeter walls with lights; and employee and visitor parking. Some compounds can also include other programmes or agency functions, plus optional services such as maintenance shops or recreation facilities. On rare occasions (as in high-security-risk locations), the new compounds may also host housing units for the post's employees.⁶ Recommendations take into account not only design issues, but also every step of the planning and construction process.

The SED first came in three main prototypical designs of varying size, each with its own predefined construction schedules: Small (4,300 m² for \$47,000,000), Medium (4,300–7,400 m² for \$68,000,000) and Large (bigger than 7,400 m² for \$88,000,000). In 2004, a fourth class of SED was introduced – the Extra-Large (or “Special SED”) – for sites which need compounds exceeding the large embassy model in size and cost. A fifth template design was developed in 2007, the Standard Secure Mini Compound (SSMC), a smaller, cost-effective NEC that is usually adopted to meet post-operational and security needs. Finally, in 2008 a new Urban SED initiative specifically conceived for urban environments with a tower block typology was launched and is currently under development.

The SED plans clearly show the emerging importance of the perimeter. The space of the embassy compound is designed according to calculations derived from the analysis of possible attacks from unknown agents and the prevention of the destructive potential of an explosive. The context is considered merely as an amount of input data aimed at the decodification of a possible alert level and transformed into statistics. The output of the analysis results in direct architectural choices, from the percentage of façade allowed for windows to the type of vegetation planted in the compound's yard. The perimeter becomes a sophisticated and adaptable instrument for the control of the outer urban tissue: it is the sensory system of the embassy. According to the demands placed upon it, it can widen the area it encloses or shrink it, it can become broader, and it can intensify its lighting system, thereby allowing it to virtually extend its physical sphere of influence beyond the space that immediately surrounds it.

The SED outcomes are perfect replicas of a sketched layout and the poor translation of these numerical prerequisites. Competing contractors have to slavishly adhere to the basic instructions in order to be able to formulate their lowest offer, while the state has the same interest in not exceeding predetermined costs, which are obviously

6

The new 104-acre compound inaugurated in Baghdad in 2009 – the most expensive American diplomatic facility ever built in foreign territory – hosts 3,000 staff members inside its heavily fortified perimeter walls.

calculated on the basis of the typical NEC theorized and described in the SED guidelines. The focus of attention on minimizing time and cost mimics the operational attitude of private construction enterprises.⁷

SEDs were implemented in 2002 by OBO after their development was commissioned from a private-sector organization, URS Corporation, an engineering and design firm that develops projects, technical solutions and assistance and management support for public agencies and other private-sector companies. The company's interests mainly revolve around military know-how: installations management and base operations, military training, threat reduction, homeland security and disaster response, military and government facilities and international aid programmes. Not only have SEDs been formulated by a corporation fully involved in military affairs, but new NECs are being developed and built by contractors and construction managers who are usually engaged in the realization of high-security military facilities for the U.S. Army.

Halfway between a federal building and a military installation, U.S. Embassies have become the physical and symbolical stage upon which the merging of military and civilian realms takes place. They are civilian buildings inserted in an urban context, but the ineluctable necessity of their protection justifies their place within the purview of military praxis. While the aesthetic of their architectural semblance is bringing them progressively closer to the typology of the military base, the differences between the circumstances of their specific production are fading away too: they are both designed and conceived via the same procedures by the same private corporations and they are built by the same private contractors. The programmes they facilitate and the functions they carry out are entirely mixed, as both support the army through the stabilization of emergency situations.⁸

Their extraterritorial dislocation beyond U.S. national borders legitimizes their use of devices judged "unconventional" within America. But their role is precisely to bridge this gap, to mediate and slowly introduce practices of armed surveillance within the urban field of the homeland. Sited in remote countries and acting as architectural manifestations of a foreign presence, they exert a peculiar double effect: as laboratories for the experimentation of new technologies of security, they actively engage with the urban context in which they are inserted and, secondarily, they are an example of a future scenario for

7
"We are in the government, but we run the organization just like a private-sector organization would." Charles E. Williams, director and chief operating officer of OBO from 2001 to 2007.

8
The main role of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad is to help with reconstruction and, more precisely, to train Iraqi armed forces and policemen.

the country to which they belong. Seen from this perspective, Baghdad and New York can be considered to share the same destiny.

The U.S. is actually the main country that is consciously producing new prototypes of extraterritorial spaces, is theoretically engaging in the manipulation and modelization of these spaces, and is investing an incredibly large amount of its GDP in the realization of these models. Embassies are one of the main components within this programme. They don't just represent a space of exception; they also produce a new kind of spatial paradigm that is exportable virtually everywhere and constitutes a model for the transformation of their homeland's urban order.

Within this landscape, it is the city itself which is becoming an overall extra-territorial space, a site of continuous alerts, both temporary and permanent – a protracted state of exception, delayed in time and extended in space. In this context, any real distinction between a homeland and its colonies is irreparably blurred: “A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself.”⁹

The weaving process of militarization follows precise stages: from the field application of warfare, it makes its entrance into the city through the embassy, which allows this shift because it is still something abroad, something outside the political borders of the nation. After this, the last step towards the application of the exception to the daily routine of our everyday life, in our ordinary Western cities, is very small.

9

Michel Foucault, *“Society Must Be Defended”: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* (New York: Picador, 2003).

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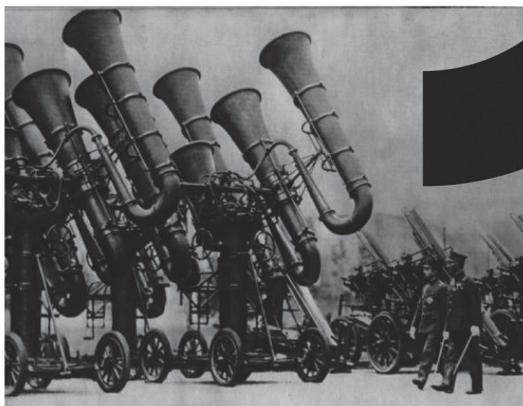
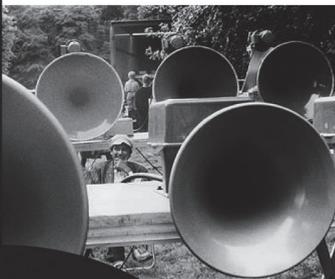
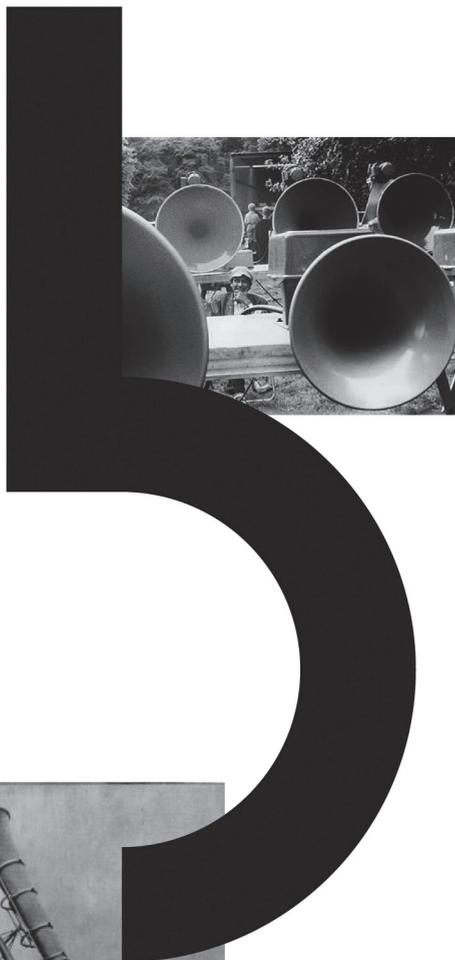


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Marianne Vitale, Barn Again (per Milano), 2011, Legno recuperato, 185 x 249 x 272 cm, Courtesy Galleria Massimo De Carlo

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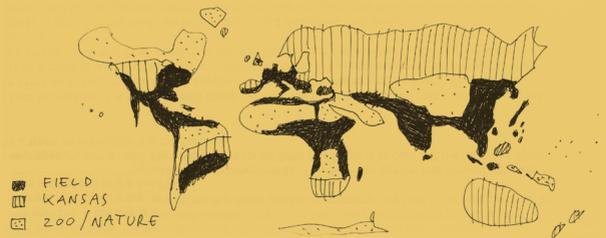
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CALL FOR PAPERS

San Rocco 2: The Even Covering of the Field

San Rocco is interested in gathering together the widest possible variety of contributions. San Rocco believes that architecture is a collective knowledge, and that collective knowledge is the product of a multitude. External contributions to San Rocco might take different forms. Essays, illustrations, designs, comic strips and even novels are all equally suitable for publication in San Rocco. In principle, there are no limits – either minimum or maximum – imposed on the length of contributions. Minor contributions (a few lines of text, a small drawing, a photo, a postcard) are by no means uninteresting to San Rocco. For each issue, San Rocco will put out a “call for papers” comprised of an editorial note and of a list of cases, each followed by a short comment. As such, the “call for papers” is a preview of the magazine. The “call for papers” defines the field of interest of a given issue and produces a context in which to situate contributions.

Submission Guidelines: **A** External contributors can either accept the proposed interpretative point of view or react with new interpretations of the case studies. **B** Additional cases might be suggested by external contributors, following the approach defined in the “call for papers”. New cases might be accepted, depending on their evaluation by the editorial board. **C** Proposed contributions will be evaluated on the basis of a 500-word abstract containing information about the proposed submission’s content and length, and the type and number of illustrations and drawings it includes. **D** Contributions to San Rocco must be written in English. San Rocco does not translate texts. **E** All texts (including footnotes, image credits, etc.) should be submitted digitally in .rtf format and edited according to the Oxford Style Manual. **F** All illustrations and drawings should be submitted digitally (in .tif or .eps format). Please include a numbered list of all illustrations and provide the following information for each: illustration source, name of photographer or artist, name of copyright holder, or “no copyright”, and caption, if needed. **G** San Rocco does not buy intellectual property rights for the material appearing in the magazine. San Rocco suggests that external contributors publish their work under Creative Commons licenses. **H** Contributors whose work is selected for publication in San Rocco will be informed and will then start collaborating with San Rocco’s editorial board in order to complete the preparation of the issue. Proposals for contributions to San Rocco 2 must be submitted electronically to mail@sanrocco.info before 15 March 2011.



The field is where we live. *Buildings in cultivatable soil* – that is the field. Agriculture and city and expansion of city and sprawl and infrastructure and trash and buildings and favelas and old villages and gated communities and agriculture and some more other buildings. A collection of “organs without a body” (Angéilil and Sires, 2008) laid down horizontally as far as geography permits it. In fact, apart from mountains, deserts, jungles and large areas of mechanized agriculture/mining with little human personnel (as in Kansas, Siberia or Rio Grande do Sul), everything is field: East Java, northern Italy, the valley of Mexico, the Taiheiyu belt, Flanders, greater São Paulo, Cuangdong, New Jersey, the Nile valley or Bangladesh.

The field is the place where William Morris’s scary definition of architecture as “anything but desert” becomes true. It is associated with a Malthusian tone, with the concept of no escape: more people, more capital, more cars, more buildings, more energy, more noise, less soil, less water, less food.

Even if it is not *all the same*, the field is *one*. A condition with no alternatives. Still, patterns in the field are different, and figures in the patterns are different once again.

The field lies outside of the binary opposition of city and nature. From the point of view of nature, it is dirty, polluted, compromised, settled and consumed. From the city’s point of view, it is rusty, uninteresting, sleepy, backward and provincial.

The field is not an evolution of the city, but its *natural domain*: it is both its pre-condition and its unavoidable

conclusion, the (urban) consequence of the Neolithic Revolution.

Today the field is almost filled and it looks like a monstrous version of the city, but it is not. The field logically precedes the city. The city evolves within the field like a historical process within a geological one. The city is just a possibility within the field, but not the only one, and not the primary one.

According to contemporary statistics, two thirds of the world's population will be living in cities by 2050. But these agglomerations are cities only according to statistics. Nothing about them is metropolitan except their density. To understand these systems as *cities* is a mistake. They are merely denser rural areas crowded with restless masses of (underemployed) farmers. Finally, after the modern infatuation for cities, we are going to have to consider *villages* once again.

The field is slow, resistant, heavy, opaque: anything but a *tabula rasa*. What is there remains there. It is not possible to add to it, and it is not possible to get rid of things (in the field, you need to bring trash to a filling dump, or – at the very least – throw it into a canal). There are even *identities* embroidered into the field. Habits and traditions resist within the field automatically, because of the inertia of the sheer mass of what has accumulated there.

The field is *landscape* not because it is natural or green, but because it has no centre and is horizontal. In fact, the field stretches over a large surface, a kind of thin, dirty incrustation of the planet.

In the field, there are places, not just positions. Objects are not purely defined by their relationship with the other objects around them; there is a geographic background. Still, the background does not appear anymore. Geography survives as an explanation of bizarre infrastructural solutions, a sort of psychoanalysis of the field.

The field defines a new condition for architecture, reducing its ambitions and mocking its principles (at least the Western ones). In fact, the very existence of the field makes the figure–ground relationship look obsolete. The figure is lost among figures. The possibility of the figure disappears not because of abolition, but because of proliferation, of visual pollution. The land-

scape becomes a “figure–figure” universe, to the point that figures become irrelevant. Form disappears because of the oversupply of figures, desires and creativity. Architecture disappears because of the oversupply of architects.

Within the field, creative interventions can only modify and transform. Modifications are of the kind common in contemporary electronic music: sampling, remixing, dubbing. The themes are already there; they cannot be invented, just found. The garbage already in the field is the raw material from which to shape any contemporary architecture, urbanism or landscape architecture. Re-cycling is the compulsory exercise.

“The even covering of the field” is an expression coined by K. A. C. Creswell. According to Creswell, a bored British Army Captain posted in Egypt during World War I who became a scholar of early Muslim architecture, “the even covering of the field” is a basic principle of Muslim art (Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, 1958). Although Creswell does not elaborate much on his statement – the “even covering” is proclaimed more than explained – the expression nonetheless suggests the existence of an entirely developed aesthetic, precisely what we are now lacking with respect to the contemporary field.

San Rocco 2 would like to investigate the *aesthetic consequences* of the field, from both urban and architectural perspectives. What does “field” mean, exactly? How do we experience it? What kind of knowledge do we need to understand it? What is the difference between field and city, and between field and territory? What kind of images do these jammed scenarios leave in our memories? What (and how) can one design in a world without a background? And without a background, what happens to the figure? Should the figure disappear as well? Are there exceptions within the field? Should the “covering of the field” be “even”? Does the field have borders? What kind of operations are possible within it? *Field operations?*

Finally, San Rocco 2 raises a political question: should the field ever be *planned*?

In the next pages San Rocco presents a provisional list of possibilities for dealing with “the even covering” of the field.

▪ White Noise ▪

Don de Lillo publishes *White Noise* in 1985. The novel is staged in a fictional place called Blacksmith, a perfectly generic non-town in suburban America. Yet something is different there: from the very beginning, professor Jack Gladney and his fourth wife Babette complain about the lack of a leading metropolis in their territory. The mall is the only shiny place in their otherwise ugly and chaotic landscape. There's nothing but the field. And the field is polluted, pervaded by radiation and electronic waves. White noise is everywhere. An airborne toxic event enhances spectacularly prolonged sunsets, which have to be seen from the bridge crossing the highway. The weak equilibrium of the territory is always in danger, due to the extreme and unplanned proximity of everything. Imminent yet bearable catastrophe is perpetually present. There is even a specific science in the field: at the College-on-the-Hill, Hitler studies accompany research on texts printed on the packaging of breakfast cereals, data analysis of VIP car-crash deaths and secret studies of pills that treat the fear of death. The narrative structure of *White Noise* mirrors the geography of the described landscape: there is no hierarchy, no proper beginning or end. The novel produces a field in which the possibility for action in the traditional sense is definitely ruled out. The geometry of the composition displays the same fluctuating regularity of Steve Reich's minimalist music. All the elements appear to be interchangeable.

▪ Campus Martius ▪

In 1762, as a fellow of the London Royal Society of Antiquaries, Giovanni Battista Piranesi publishes the groundbreaking *Campus Martius Antiquae Urbis*, which he dedicates to his former pupil, the Scottish architect Robert Adam. The book is an extensive project for an analogous Rome, masked as an archaeological restoration. The frontispiece, showing a bird's-eye, quasi-axonometric perspective of a part of the city, displays an impressive array of urban objects that entirely fill the frame and suggest an endless urban field. The plans strengthen the notion of a completely new kind of urbanism, although one still produced by following all of

Classicism's clichés. Well-established compositional rules (axes, symmetry, circular elements used as centres of rotation) define the disposition of the huge complexes within the field; at the same time, the ridiculous amount of elements creates a continuous, pattern-like (and therefore utterly anti-Classical) design. The intimate monumentality of the objects is nullified through repetition.

Piranesi shows his plans as if they were engraved on newly discovered stone slabs. This trick emphasizes the impression of an endless composition that happens to be known only from its surviving fragments. Within these documents of a non-existent past, buildings float as microorganisms observed through the lenses of a microscope. The space in which these creatures swim is too tight: sometimes they touch each other, and sometimes they collide or merge. There is no space left for autonomy or aura. The outside and the inside are barely distinguishable. It is not clear whether incestuous inbreeding created the overcrowded field or the other way around.

▪ The Even Covering of the Field ▪

It does not come as a surprise that in these post-colonial times one must go to Berlin in order to appreciate one of the clearest (and most beautiful) examples of "the even covering of the field". The Pergamon Museum hosts more than just its eponymous altar: on its upper level, one of the rooms displays a superbly decorated wall roughly 5 metres high and almost 60 metres long. This is a fragment from the 144-metre-long southern façade of the never-completed Umayyad palace at Mshatta (about 30 kilometres south of Amman, Jordan), which was probably built around 740 AD and was rediscovered by Layard in 1840. The stone façade consists of a plain socle, a richly decorated base (a network of interlacing vine-stalks forming loops), a wall face and an entablature (vine ornament again, together with acanthus leaves). The wall surface between the socle and the entablature is divided into upward and downward triangles by a cornice-like moulding that runs up and down in a zigzag. Exactly in the centre of each triangle is a great rosette. The rest of the space is filled with vine-

stems in which birds appear plucking at the grapes. Sometimes a pair of animals appears in the centre, on either side of a vase. Here, the field is the entire building; the decoration simply stops dead at the perimeter. Everything else is filled. Hierarchy is weak. The only rule is that a limited set of elements be repeated, mirrored and rotated. The decoration at Mshatta repeats the textile-like richness of the tent in the emptiness of the desert (here it would even be possible to give Semper some credit). The "covering of the field" becomes an act of appropriation. Primitive accumulation is immediately turned into decoration. The result is surprisingly light: abstract patterns evoke paradisiacal nature in the middle of the desert.

• From the Object to the Field •

In the work of Superstudio, the Miesian grid, as the conceptual tool that embodies the mathematic precision of architecture, leaves the borders of the building to conquer the entire world except the wilderness of the mountains and the deserts. In Superstudio collages, the grid crystallizes in an endless plateau that is at the disposal of the wandering new (wo)man, finally freed from his/her local roots, thereby defining the premise for a new appropriation of the world.

Around the same time on the other side of the pond, a similar relationship seems to develop between the vocabulary of Le Corbusier (in his Purist period) and a series of drawings by John Hejduk. The "Diamond House" series depicts the dissolution of the architectural object into a set of compositional variations. The components of Le Corbusier's villas are sampled and recombined in innumerable reconfigurations. What Superstudio realizes as an expansion of the Miesian grid, Hejduk produces through the repetition of Le Corbusier's elements. Hejduk's rigorous formalism arrives at the same conclusion as the politically committed (?) Italian Radicals. Once again the object becomes the field. Still, for Hejduk, the field maintains a border. Contrary to Superstudio's images, the frame of the field in Hejduk's "Diamond House" does not coincide with the frame of the image. Hejduk perceives the frame as part of the picture; it itself is a subject for

architecture. And so architecture still seems possible, even within the field.

• Weak Urbanization •

For Archizoom Associates, the city is the weakest form of organization of the entire industrial system and the most confused and outdated tool of capitalist society. Starting from this consideration, the Florentine group redefines the city as an urban process of quantitative accumulation. *No-Stop City* (1970) is organized as a factory or a supermarket where the productive functions are distributed over a continuous and homogeneous surface. Starting from this ruthless interpretation of the capitalist city, Andrea Branzi develops a theory for an architecture that gradually loses its physical borders, a non-figurative architecture that defines a continuous and permeable territorial system: a series of evolutionary and temporary "weak urbanization models". In *Agronica* (1995), Branzi postulates the coexistence of agricultural production and temporary architecture by imagining flexible territorial policies based on seasonal cultivation rules rather than on urban planning. In *Pineti di architettura* (Architectural Pine Forest, 2007), architecture disappears and the territory becomes a homogeneous surface covered by enzymatic spots of nature, a freely crossable artificial wood. Throughout his career, Branzi has moved his attention from urban to territorial phenomena. He has been developing a new grammar in which architecture is nothing but an infrastructural device, a climatically safe universe open to endless transformation. What kind of knowledge do we need to manage this type of infrastructure? What kind of experience is related to this type of environment? *Spatziergangen* in the architectural pine forest? Or *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* in the architectural pine forest?

• Early Muslim OMA •

In the 1980s and early '90s, OMA releases an impressive set of projects that investigate the field from an architectural and urban perspective. The projects range from medium-scale (Nexus Housing in Fukuoka, Kochstrasse/Friedrichstrasse Housing in Berlin, Convention Centre

in Agadir) to large-scale (Congrexpo in Lille, Parc de la Villette in Paris). In all these projects, the design is produced by overlapping three different figures: a pattern and a border define a field and then some independent figures are randomly placed within this. The repetition of cells incorporates minor variations each time (e.g., hotel rooms in Agadir, housing units in Fukuoka, functional strips in La Villette, structural elements in Lille). This texture is abruptly truncated by the “borders”, such as the streets surrounding the plot (as in Fukuoka, Berlin and Paris) or by an independent Platonic shape (as in Agadir), if not by a weird combination of the two (as in Lille). Larger-scale elements appear within the field, cutting the pattern-like background; these elements can be the main circulation routes (Agadir, La Villette), pre-existing buildings (La Villette) or spaces with special functions (the “royal chamber” at Agadir). In plan, the buildings take the form of a uniform pattern of dots in which an apparently illogical geography of islands seems to emerge. Difference is produced by combining patterns of different intensity in sequences. These postmodern fields have a strange early-Muslim tone. This aspect becomes extremely clear when OMA designs a Convention Centre in Agadir, Morocco: a strange superimposition of Mendes da Rocha’s pavilion at Osaka 70 on an Umayyad mosque. As early Muslim mosques, OMA’s fields of the 1990s are rough hypostyle halls that are designed more in terms of geography than in terms of geometry. The positioning of the elements is not sharp; the order is approximate. Architecture is tolerant, or even fond, of accidents. More than anything else, there is a sincere passion for emptiness.

• Superstructure vs. Superflat •

The Japanese are cautious about transforming the natural environment. Villages rarely modify the topography of a place, and buildings are gently inserted, usually on raised platforms. A permanent state of emergency and regeneration resulting from frequent natural disasters influences the way settlements are conceived. As a result, Japanese cities are light and temporary; the urban elements are somehow negligible. This trend reaches its peak in the second half of the 20th century. Thanks

to increasing wealth, built matter “circulates” fluently. Every year Japan is flooded by an enormous quantity of new buildings with an average lifespan of only thirty years.

Starting in the late 1950s, the Metabolists (a group involving, among others, Kikutake, Kurokawa, Isozaki, Maki, Otaka and, to a certain extent, Tange) try to oppose this phenomenon by imagining an alternative way of housing the enormous populations of the very near future. Their proposals, in contrast with Japanese tradition, are conceived on a colossal scale. Metabolism is an attempt to resist *the field* in the name of *the city*. Viewed from a contemporary perspective, what is even more striking in the Metabolists’ designs than their Gargantuan cellular accumulations is their infatuation with ruins, their desire for an architecture that can survive the test of time, gather stories and help document collective values. Some traces of *city* inside the *field*.

Soon after its emergence, however, the Metabolist agenda proves obsolete. Postmodern Japan goes on becoming more and more crowded by an infinite array of small, independent urban artefacts (a condition effectively described by Takashi Murakami as “superflat”). In this period, the major shift is not in scale but in density. Contemporary Japanese architects (including SANAA, Fujimoto and Ishigami) have completely forgotten the fight of the Metabolists. By surrendering to the field, the contemporary Japanese *New Naives* appear to discover an entirely new set of possibilities. A possible new urbanism emerges on an unexpectedly small scale: moving cups on top of a table, putting flowers into vases, leaving a chair outside the door. Is contemporary tolerance for the field a sign of the decline of Japan’s economy and population? Is this a new gentle/cruel technique of fighting that we need to learn in order to survive in the field? A new martial art? As Bruce Lee would put it: “the art of fighting without fighting”?

• The Nile City •

The Nile city is a series of settlements located in the Nile valley (“city” is used for lack of a better expression; its use should be taken as more of a suspicion than a description). The Nile city is 900 kilometres long. Its

population is 26 million, and its density, 2,100 inhabitants per square kilometre. The Nile city has the clarity of a scientific experiment. Variables are reduced to the minimum: the valley is entirely flat; there is either fertile land or desert, with very little in between. Water comes only from the Nile. Agriculture is possible only because of irrigation. Population increase corresponds to expanding settlements and shrinking fields.

The Nile city is enclosed within the Nile valley. The Nile valley is a *landscape*, an artificial environment entirely defined by man-made interventions. The stability of this geography does not depend on *natural* features. The Nile valley is the most abstract, and the most boring, of all possible countries. The conditions never change: the valley is almost always visible in its entire width. The border – an enormous sand barrier – always appears in the background. Crops are the same all over the valley: wheat, corn, cotton, clover, onions, tomatoes, sugar cane. Palms are the only trees. Fields are organized according to an extremely tight orthogonal grid. The result is a landscape that is at once very abstract and very intense – an abstract grid dotted with an infinite number of rough bits charged with primal human experience, a world as primitive and as artificial as those of ATARI videogames from the early '80s.

How can one understand the paradoxical beauty that hides beneath the drama of this crowded strip of brilliant green running into the desert?

• In the Name of Thoth •

Since ancient Egyptians consider all arts to be different forms of *writing*, there seems to be only a single form of ancient Egyptian art: *graphic design*.

Ancient Egyptian architecture is graphic design as well, although it operates on the scale of an entire landscape. Buildings such as pyramids are “linguistic signs, [or] monumental speech acts” (Assman, 2000) crystallized into the crowded flatness of the Nile valley. The landscape is *written* by means of architecture.

On an architectural scale, buildings are just a way to produce walls that can be filled with text. Temples thus function as monumental hard drives encrusted with hieroglyphic code. A series of courtyards, each more

exclusive than the last, are permeated by ever more inaccessible secrets. The Egyptian temple looks like an extreme version of the “decorated shed”; actually, the “decorated shed without the shed”, or the “decorated wall”, or even better, the “monumental page”, or more precisely, a “monumental page not intended for readers”.

Is there something we can learn from the radical flatness of ancient Egyptian architecture? Is there something familiar in the horror vacui of Egyptian walls? Is the Egyptian page/wall somehow similar to the contemporary field? Does it represent something we can reuse? Is graphic design the architecture of the future?

• Field Photography? •

“An atlas is a book, the place where all the signs of the earth, from the natural to the cultural, are conventionally represented: mountains, lakes, pyramids, oceans, cities, villages, stars, islands. In this totality of symbols and descriptions, we locate the place in which we live and where we would like to go, the route to follow. I think that travelling on a map, something that writers are particularly fond of, is one of our most natural mental activities.”

Luigi Chirri, *L'atlante* (Milan, 2000)

If “the even covering of the field” is an experimental attempt to imagine an aesthetic for the contemporary landscape, we suspect that photography beat us to it. The field has already been understood by photographers. The accumulation of objects has always been part of the game, and the selection of a subject and the impossibility of eliminating its context has always been an issue. Because of the unavoidable realism of photography, the field has never been erased, nor the figure cut out. In fact, photography has always provided irreplaceable support for science because of its documentary power and its embarrassing likelihood. We can read the great illusions of Thomas Demand, the cinematographic photography of Jeff Wall, the early masterpieces of Lewis Baltz, the language investigations of Florian Maier-Aichen, the replica studies of Armin Linke, Joel Sternfeld's women looking at models and the

helicopter surveys of Olivo Barbieri in this way. Far from any reference to painting, these works provide an additional level of abstraction; they are, above all, classic photography.

• Planispheres •

Following the tracks of his distant ancestor, an 18th-century Piedmontese Dominican who became a legendary leader of the Caucasian resistance against the Russians, Alighiero Boetti arrives for the first time in Afghanistan in 1971. There, in what will become his second home, he meets the carpet-embroiderers with whom he will establish a long collaboration, one destined to resist the Soviet invasion of the country. The logic behind Boetti's carpets is cumulative rather than selective. The carpets display grids of squares, numbers, characters, multiplication tables, or large and playful inventories (as in the series *Tutto*, "Everything"). Boetti and his assistants saturate the surfaces with a kaleidoscope of figures, leaving the Afghan embroiderers the freedom to choose most of the colours to employ. A further level of complexity is reached in the series *Planisferi* (Planispheres), the weave of which evolves chromatically according to geo-political evolutions. Boetti is not interested in controlling every single step of the process: "My problem is not in fact to make choices according to my taste, but to invent systems that then choose for me" (interview in the *Corriere della Sera*, January 1992). Boetti's carpets turn artificial, flat, conventional signs into a thick landscape of threads. The artificial code of contemporary heraldry – the very abstract alphabet of flags – gains life through Afghan material culture; conventions turn into objects, and legal definitions end up being a pretext for the activation of desires. In these flat geographies automatism and tolerance seem to coincide in a sort of *cadavre exquis* of weaving, in which the work is designed by one hand and woven by another.

• The Figure in the Carpet •

Starting in the late 1960s, Roberto Cabetti and Aimaro Isola d'Oreglia begin to disseminate subtle and uncomfortable projects throughout northern Italy, includ-

ing the Olivetti housing in Ivrea (1969–74), the design for the FIAT headquarters in Candiolo (1972–73), the housing development in Sestriere (1974–80), the Snam Headquarters in San Donato (1985–92) and the competition proposal for the Bicocca in Milan (1985–87). These projects are usually described in baffling water-colours, presenting very unusual proposals with the mild tone of a gardening magazine for old ladies. The proposals are difficult to decipher: provincial and spoiled, cosy and distant, conformist and radical. Pure, geometric forms gently emerge from an everyday landscape to suggest a new possible equilibrium. Yet these figures, sometimes colossal, do everything they can to undermine their own monumentality. It seems that the architects consider it impolite to disturb the ugliness around their interventions. The figures seem to be caught in the moment of their appearance (or, perhaps, disappearance?). Cabetti and Isola look at us with the icy politeness of old Piedmontese landlords; we do not understand if they are really serious; we do not know if what they propose could really have any positive use. We suspect genius, but we are not really able to see how to make use of it.

• The Territory of Architecture •

In 1966 Vittorio Gregotti published *Il territorio dell'architettura* (The Territory of Architecture). Although this text has yet to be translated into English, a translation of Gregotti's "La forma del territorio" (The Form of the Territory), which came out in *Edilizia Moderna* a year before the publication of his book, recently appeared in the Dutch magazine *OASE* (OASE 80: On Territories).

Gregotti's book is probably the first detailed discussion of what later started to be called *landscape urbanism*. In the book, Gregotti supports the idea of architecture as a modification of the environment. Nevertheless, Gregotti understands modifications as landscape interventions happening in an empty, *natural* context – monumental gestures before an empty background (such as his contemporary designs for the University of Calabria and a housing development in Cefalù). What is the difference between the "territory" described by Gregotti

and the “field”? Is modification, as Cregotti suggests, still a viable strategy within the field?

▪ The Field Is Already Here ▪

Recent Japanese architecture seems to be the first to develop an aesthetic that entirely depends upon a “field” condition. The *New Naives* appear to take this for granted. The result of their attitude is a set of buildings whose ambitions do not expand beyond their borders. These projects are incredibly ambitious – and almost cruel – inside, and desperately resigned outside, towards the environment in which they are located. The *New Naives* suggest designing the city starting from a new, sublime weakness. It is possible to find a somewhat similar attitude in recent British architecture, yet in England the “field” seems to be less naive. In recent British architecture (like that of Caruso St John, Fretton or Sergison Bates), a picturesque attitude provides a possible reading of the micro-geographies hidden within the field. Feeble traces of beauty are recognized in the grey fragments scattered around. Contemporary British architects try to convince us with their eulogy of the banal: the brick, the pebble, the ivy on the wall, the asphalt of the car park, a concrete pillar with smoothed corners, an ugly lamp. More than a dubious phenomenology (touching the brick, eating the moss, licking the pillars), this type of attention seems to contain a residual urban potential: the mediocrity of our cities finally confronted in all seriousness; “context” in its unbearable extension; context as a *field* – “Reality as found” next to “Reality as found” next to “Reality as found”.

▪ Black Hole House ▪

While mourning the death of her daughter, a woman loses her young husband, the firearm magnate William Wirt Winchester. Saddened by these tragic events, the widow is drawn to consult a medium, who leads her to believe that there is a curse upon her family: thousands of people have died because of the guns the Winchesters have manufactured, and the spirits of the dead are seeking revenge. She thus has to leave New Haven, go west and build a house for herself and the vengeful spir-

its. Sarah moves to San José, California, where she buys an old country mansion. Under her day-to-day direction, from 1884 until her death in 1922, a team of craftsmen expands the house without any precise long-term plan. The building grows into a seemingly inexhaustible balloon-frame Maelstrom, continuously consuming materials and time: 160 rooms, 47 fireplaces, 10,000 windowpanes. Sarah Winchester elevates the everyday paranoia of contemporary suburbs to the level of madness. To build is to defend. To build is to protect. To build is to escape from the city. The villa is actually a stronghold. Yet in Winchester House, the labyrinthine field that is usually produced on the outside of paranoiac villas invades the interior as well. The confusion of the city outside takes its revenge on the heavily protected interior. In 1906, an earthquake levels the top three floors of the house, leaving only four floors standing. Sarah is trapped inside the building. Given that she sleeps in a different room each night, the servants do not know where to search for her. They take almost twenty-four hours to find her.

▪ Planning, What Else? ▪

It would seem that contemporary environmental issues can only be solved by starting from the point of view of totality (“Aus dem Gesichtspunkt der Totalität”, to use a marvellously outdated expression by Lukács). Is it time for the great revenge of planning?

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