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RICE UNIVERSITY

INFINITE PROJECTIONS
FOR ATOPIC LANDSCAPES

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

Infinite Projections for Atopic Landscapes

by

Karin Elise Taylor

Atopia: without landscape, place.

Methods are explored for both recording and activating atopia: by introducing the subject, rather than the object; and through projections, both literal and figurative, in order to create an event. Projections are necessary for atopic sites because the sites themselves do not appropriate, but exist as receptors/collectors of the unexpected. Ideas have been projected through site, history, and abstract context in the creation of events within specific situations, while objects collected are incorporated for further investigation of the ideas or subject relative to the urban condition. The importance of spectacle based on found objects or conditions inherent to a site is examined in both on-site and "nonsite" arenas.
Acknowledgments

I am very grateful to the members of my thesis committee for their support and patience this semester: to Yung Ho Chang, for not letting me take for granted the explanation of either project or process; to Bill Thomas, for trudging into what he thought would be unfamiliar territory, to find that the critical roles of art and architecture in the public realm are not so disparate; and in particular, to Albert Pope, who not only took me seriously, but also laughed at/with me through the entire process.

I would also like to thank my other thesis committee, primarily Matt Greer for his incredible talent, tenacity, and confidence; Sommer Schauer for her companionship and composure; and my family for their support over the last 26 years, and without whom I could not look at the world the way I do.

Many other people offered help very generously throughout the course of my education at Rice, particularly during my thesis: Julie Bargmann, Thaddeus Briner, Peter Chen, Marana Chow, Phil Davis, Brian Huberman, Lars Lerup, Bob Potter, Jim Powell, Mark Kroekel, Petia Morozov, Rick Odom, Kathleen Roberts, Peter Rockrise, Blair Satterfield, Terry Schoenberg, Elaine Sebring, Rebecca Sternberg, Steve Traeger, Kerry Whitehead, Dana Weeder, and Christy Wilson.
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There is a tenuous connection between a series of light bulbs that have washed up on the beach, and the atopic landscapes investigated in the following thesis: a seemingly empty, thin existence.

The result of intensive visual analysis reveals that neither one truly suffers from such barrenness, but exists instead in an in-between state which serves to amplify irregularities within what can be otherwise recognized as normal for those sites. The irregularities can be in the form of fluctuations in the everyday events, or in spectacles staged on a moment's notice in reflection on or reaction to the existing conditions on either side of the in-between.

We can project onto atopic spaces within many different contexts relative to a city like Houston because it supports local densities rather than overall unity as an urban construct. There are "dead" zones adjacent to "live" ones, zones which can be defined relative to each other and to their typical nature, and zones with life spans shorter than ours but with larger areas of influence. They could be a lightbulb, they could be a part of our immediate environment, or even within the day-trip radius.
"Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector’s passion borders on the chaos of memories. More than that: the chance, the fate, that suffuse the past before my eyes are conspicuously present in the accustomed confusion..."  

Walter Benjamin  

In the Passagen-Werk, Benjamin describes the collector as one who “assembles things that have been set out of circulation and are meaningless as use values,” compared to the ponderer/allegoricist, the recollector, “the man who already had the resolution to great problems, but has forgotten them... and now he ponders, not so much about the thing as about his past meditations over it.” One of the city-dwelling types Benjamin defines is the flaneur, the margin-dweller. The flaneur is the nomad within the spatial apparatus of the capitalist cities, traveling the streets as an observer, a collector of images. Identification with the flaneur is recognition of our consumerist mode of “being-in-the-world,” because in a commodity-based society, we are all collectors/observers, participants in what M. Christine Boyer describes the City of Spectacle--one in which the art of selling dominates the urban space via the stage-set-thinness of billboards, shop windows, mass media, and television, one in which history is revised or forgotten in favor of an image-saturated, aestheticized popular landscape. The City of Spectacle is reduced to imagery, and the spectacle is welcomed as time off from everyday life. The following research examines the relation between participants or observers, their environments and the artifacts with which they identify, based on history, memory, and context.

"One can deduce and conclude that every object has two aspects: one current one which we see nearly always...; and the other, which is spectral and metaphysical..."  

DeChirico

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3 Ibid 345.
4 Ibid 345.
A primary concern of collecting is that the objects accumulated are taken out of all the original functions of their use. They are found objects which, once removed from their sites, retain little of the information of their origins and uses; elements for bricollage, the taking of effects from one field and using them for other purposes elsewhere. In The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Benjamin describes the process for creating a new thought for an object or place by removing it from its context, and putting it into another context, associate it with another point of view, replacing the previous significance with the new thought and perception. Benjamin as a collector makes an attempt to overcome his existence by ordering collections into a historical system, gathering all pertinent and tangential information and compiling it, in the case of the Passagen-Werk, into methodological concepts and temporal frameworks. In the film by Wim Wenders, Tokyo-Ga, the filmmaker interviews clothing designer, Yamamoto, who describes the act of collecting as gathering extensively first, and then discerning the direction based on the development of the collection itself.

Le Corbusier's focus in terms of the collection of images and artifacts was their classification. His description of the state of the museum predicts the museum as an institution giving way to the classification of informations. He believed that the true museum is the one that contains everything, everyday objects of contemporary culture -- a cultural record, a filing cabinet organized systematically, not merely a repository. This museum, though, he counters, can be made available to the mass media, and therefore becomes obsolete. Memory in terms of the city is an "art that connects disparate events" and reveals its grip on the imagination of the spectator by tactics of surprise and spontaneity, ruptures and overturnings. This memory is anti-museum.⁷

Part of Le Corbusier's influence seems to lie in his techniques of the representation and promotion of architecture. His use of the advertising mass media and publicity, the "mechanisms of

⁷ Boyer 68.
consumption that sustain contemporary conditions of production,9 were used in particular to promote both his urban projections and his mass-produced houses, for instance, inserting architecture into contemporary conditions of production by appealing to the image of sleek aircraft. This employment of the image to advance the concept in the public realm contributed to the domestication of military technology.9 Charles and Ray Eames were also quite skillful at promoting their wide range of activities in the public realm. The Eameses work covered many areas, perhaps to the point of comparison with a gesamtkunstwerk, including architecture, mass production of molded plywood products such as splints and slings, the construction of a case-study house, furniture design and, again, mass production, graphic design, and filmmaking.

Le Corbusier referred to the camera as another system of classification, a kind of filing cabinet, although in a different sense than the museum/filing cabinet analogy he made. "To inhabit" means to inhabit the camera, and inhabiting requires employing the system, capturing reality, but still interpreting the world. Susan Sontag refers to photography as an extension of the eye of the flaneur, the eye out of which they see, collecting the images of the city as a landscape of "voluptuous extremes. Jasper Johns includes in his work the consideration of the watchman, who falls into the trap of looking, who is a natural observer, and of the spy, who designs himself to be overlooked, who is a prying voyeur.10 Walter Benjamin observed that reproduction begins to give back the capacity for the urban experience, in particular, that technological production threatens to take away.11

Film slows down the crisis in perception caused by industrialization, which speeds up time and fragments space. Photographs are neat slices of space and time; not a flow in themselves, but stationary. Photography, at the same time, expresses the especially-American impatience with

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9 ibid 168.
10 Sobieszek and Irmas 22.
11 Buck-Morss 266.
reality, as Hart Crane noted: "Speed is at the bottom of it all, the hundredth of a second caught so precisely that the motion is continued from the picture indefinitely: the moment made eternal."\(^\text{12}\) One sometimes problematic aspect of photography is that it can never be detached from the space, language, and culture of the time which it depicts. So while photography can serve as both a pseudo-presence and a token absence,\(^\text{13}\) it is also, for instance, part of an environment which we recognize as modern, and with that it maintains the effects of the different manifestations of what is modern. A photograph is perceived to be a substitute for that which was photographed, an experience captured. While an image is an object, lightweight, cheap to produce, easy to carry accumulate and store, this lies in contrast to the role of Duchamp's ready-mades in relation to their initial object, which uses that which was captured, but does not stand for its original intentions.

The 'snapshot effect' is an analogy which Duchamp employs in his process of ready-mades and other projects -- a product of chance configuration, a certain combination of events and participants in a frozen slice of time -- taking advantage of accidental subject matter as a fundamental trait of photography; employing the laws of exception. A ready-made was planned for a particular day, date, and minute. By planning for a moment to inscribe a ready-made, it could later be looked for. The important thing, then was the timing, a kind of rendezvous between existing events and the inscription of the ready-made, like a "speech delivered on no matter what occasion, but at the appointed time."\(^\text{14}\) Chance is a means by which work can happen without intervention by the artist—participation by spectators introduces yet another random influence, makes the work subject to yet another unpredictable variable. Chance relationships resulting from random influences are impossible to reproduce. Duchamp tied chance to the practice of automation, as a weapon against habit. His process was to repeat procedures three times: the first interaction is a singular occurrence. The second, if the same as the

first, forms a pair. If the third iteration of the procedure produced the same result, it implied infinity and therefore mass production. This system, the codification of the “throw of the dice,” was employed for Three Standard Stoppages and as a theoretical basis for the large Glass. Duchamp paired chance with precision in reference to quantum physics, in which precision is only possible in the context of indeterminacy. ¹⁵ John Cage’s Rolyholyover, exhibited at the Menil Collection during Spring 1994, systematized the arbitrary by devising structures according to deliberate chance methods for ordering relationships. These methods are not necessarily perceptible within the physical manifestation of the works, however.

Le Corbusier’s work was based on the way that he thought the world should be, full of objects which “spur poetic responses” while Duchamp’s was solidly rooted in the way the world is, happy accidents and all. Foucault detailed the concept of a heterotopia which might combine the two. Heterotopias are the result of the power to jutuxtapose in a single real space different spaces and locations otherwise incompatible with each other. That power is linked to the arrangements of transitions, such as roads, trains, etc, the arrangements at which one may make a "temporary halt" – cinemas, restaurants, beaches and other recreational areas, and an interest in these "arrangements" in relation to the others, but particularly in the case that they "neutralize or invert the set of relationships designed and reflected or mirrored by themselves."¹⁶

I am interested in examining and perhaps subverting the expectations of encounters with specific environments or objects. Windows/screens/apertures are a means by which these encounters can be framed. The aperture, whether it is a window, surface, automobile windshield or television

¹³ Ibid
¹⁵ Ibid
screen, provides a view of both the chaos and the lucidity of reality. Televisions and other light-driven projections provide visibility without direct confrontation and an ambiguity of scale.

Screen "apertures" map the movement of lines of light. Film merges reality and its representation in a fabricated space-time, exploring the banal in order to increase our insight into the necessities that rule our lives. The projector serves as a secondary aperture, a telescope of sorts for copying landscapes and events as they exist, segmenting the information and images such that they exist within collapsed cyclical and linear time. Filmmaker Guy Debord is quoted in Situationist descriptions as saying:

"Of all aspects of modern capitalism and its general systems of illusions, cinema is one of the tools. Its language must be revolutionized for it to serve other ends. The coherence of the text-image relations is neither one of illustration nor of demonstration but the fluid language of anti-ideology."  

Surrealism used photography and projections, as Susan Sontag pointed out, to create a duplicate world but narrower and more dramatic than the real, in contrast to the somewhat wider interpretation of the Situationists:

"Surrealism has always welcomed the uninvited, disorderly presences. What could be more surreal than an object which virtually produces itself, and with a minimum of effort, an object whose beauty, fantastic disclosures, and emotional weight are likely to be further enhanced by any accidents that might befall it?"  

Walter Benjamin also notes the Surrealist fascination with urban phenomena, with interest in the objective and the dreamt— the duality also existing in the sale of flanerie in two week-packages by the tourist industry, in which we become observers and margin dwellers, and in the combination of imagination and collective memory which comprise the urban artifacts also existing in those margins. The tourist is relegated to zones of established circulation, where the official views are the photo opportunities and photographs are the souvenirs, which are the traces accumulated. Photographs are

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18 Sontag 52.
19 Buck Morss 345.
also the way in which the thing photographed is appropriated—they are miniatures of reality accessible to anyone, capturing time, but still interpreting the world. Boyer’s City of Collective memory is described as rich in the play of oppositions and dualities, the existence of randomness, disturbances, dispersions, and accidents as innovative tactics to deal with the uncertainty and disorder in this city of lost narrative forms and decomposed centers.\textsuperscript{20} Aldo van Eyck raises the question of twin phenomena: the question of making the in between spaces where dualities and oppositions can be encountered\textsuperscript{21}: unity and diversity, part and whole, small and large, many and few, simplicity and complexity, change and constancy, order and chaos, individual and collective. I do not aim to create complexity or chaos, but instead to investigate the dualities of the site and choose a framework upon which the complexity can evolve in the way that a car chassis eventually can support the ecosystem of a coral reef. By attempting to perform an extensive visually-based analysis, my intention is not to fragment the subject through documentary overload, but instead to define an open-ended strain of analysis which grows upon itself, but which also supports interest in the particular spaces I have identified as seeming empty and the projections proposed for them.

\textsuperscript{20} Boyer 68.
\textsuperscript{21} Ockman 347.
"The fold becomes the site of all the repressed immanent conditions of existing urbanism, which has the potential not to destroy existing urbanism but to set it off in a new direction...by introducing the concept of the fold as a nondialectical third condition, one between figure and ground, yet reconstituting the nature of both, it becomes possible to reframe what is extant on any site. Such a reframing would express that which was repressed by former systems of authority and transform it into potentially new interpretations of existing organizations." Peter Eisenman

The second phase of this research takes a closer look at the collector/participant and the found object in urban conditions, and the city as a "place for concern," specifically the voids, or interrupted landscapes. By examining the approach of the Situationists and certain projects by Robert Smithson and by Robert Frank in particular, I would like to link my two research processes in such a way that a minimal, optimistic strategy for 'projecting' on/for sites, particularly ones that exist as temporary zones of emptiness, might be outlined, with the intention of being applied towards the environments within which I find myself.

The Situationists believed in the theory or practical activity of constructing situations, and experiencing the city. Their methodology was based on employing the existing conditions, constructions, etc. in the urban fabric as the basis for the future city, but also incorporated the exploration of leisure pastimes. They proposed to use the banal, mundane, and existing as the basis for the future city—the found object in the city. Photography fits also into this process. A photograph is an artifact, but has the status of the found object as an unpremeditated slice of the world, unaltered and still valid. By defining culture as "a complex of aesthetics, feelings, and mores through which a collectivity reacts on the life that is objectively determined by its economy," the Situationists set up a framework within which to work that takes into account the behavior and habits of people within any given physical, social or political construct. They opposed the passive spectacle in that they saw cities as "terrain of a game in

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which one participates, developed out of the experience of the current terrain and based on existing constructions." The point, therefore, is to both analyze/interpret/participate in the world and to activate change within it. They also saw the city disintegrating to the point of becoming supplementary to the museums for tourists who are driven around in glassed-in buses, viewing the city from a safe distance, and through mediatory lenses. The idea was to employ the entire usage of a building including the imaginative and the dynamic—architecture as the means of creating relationships between the subject and the context.

The concept of unitary urbanism prevalent within the Situationist movement at the end of the 1950's, was used to avoid the "temporal fixation" of cities, by leading, instead, to the advocacy of a permanent transformation, an "accelerated movement of the abandonment and reconstruction of the city in temporal and at times, spatial terms." Unitary urbanism, in this way, envisaged a terrain of experience for the social space of the cities of the future. Foucault includes in his description of heterotopia, heterochronism, a breach of traditional time. Heterotopias therefore can be linked to time that is transitory and precarious, time that can be seen as celebratory such as the element of time in the durations and mechanisms of fairgrounds, where the contrast between incompatible spaces in a temporary, impartial realm brings people into the space between the real and the imaginary, which the Situationists might see as ideas about the future of the city from unexpected points of view. The fairgrounds are spaces where, for approximately one month out of every twelve, twinphenomena occur: the virtual toggle between change and constancy, simplicity and complexity, order and chaos, individual and collective. Fairgrounds provide the in-between spaces where twinphenomena can be

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24 Sussman 21.
25 ibid 21.
26 ibid 23.
27 Ockman 315.
28 ibid.
29 ibid 422.
30 ibid 347.
encountered and remain in the memory as an overlap, a third condition based on the hybridization of each side of the duality. A definition of spectacle can include that of a concept which brings together and explains a range of apparently disparate phenomena, but that has a visual form of its own. Many times, the spectacle is a social occurrence between people that is mediated by images. The fairgrounds fall into these definitions, and dualities of which are negotiated by the spectacle. One of the views on the connection between people and the perpetuation of the city is that of Maurice Halbwachs, who includes imagination and collective memory among the typical characteristics of urban artifacts, while those artifacts\textsuperscript{31} indicate, in a larger sense, a chain of events. Foucault's heterotopia also identifies the concept of "elsewhere" which creates the definition of a heterotopia “without geographical coordinates" as a product of the denial of place and time in reality.\textsuperscript{32}

In many of Robert Smithson's works, the chain of events which produced the conditions of his chosen sites, has led to entropy, and his actions address the interpretation of such. Smithson's view is that entropic sites cannot be restored, even though popular opinion might tend toward that effort.\textsuperscript{33} Instead, entropy is the condition between the past and the future, contingent on upon the site, but not overtly visible. In this sense, the use of the nonsite, the mapping of a site in an impartial location, is not detrimental to the site, but actually allows the participant to focus on different aspects of the site, to perceive him/herself as the activator, not only the viewer and passive participant. Photographs play similar roles in that they serve as nonsites for events, fixed images of non-fixed events.

Smithson's involvement with the issue of entropy is not only a site-specific one, a condition which draws attention by a marked lack of attention, but can also be a result of surplus. A surplus of documentation can result in the fragmentation of the event or object, rather than the representation of the temporal object intended to extend the life of the object/event. Surplus as a result of mass production

\textsuperscript{31} ibid 394.
and industrialization has created entropic pockets within various landscapes, particularly urban ones. Entropy can also be interpreted as the threat that what is happening will "slowly, irreversibly dissolve itself, run down, come to a full stop," exhaust itself, resulting either in fear or relief. Entropic sites contain traces. Traces of industry, residue of urban pursuits, indications of the intervals or cycles of urbanism. The trace is a presence which defines the dimension of absence, but absence in an urban context is a presence. Vacant spaces frame constructions, both physical and social, allowing the urban participant to stand back an observe as an alternative to the ordinarily myopic view afforded by constant growth. This view is also an episode of memory. Maurice Halbwachs' explanation of memory includes its unfolding in a spatial framework, responding more than recording. Memory therefore demands the alteration of established traditions and views. The product-to-context relation in which the effect of the existence of a product on the world is anticipated and designed ensures that the "technology" embodies the complex social processes and social misunderstandings. Designing situations and activities allows for the option of changing what people do. "Empty" sites are fields upon which any event or change in scenario is perceived in a magnified state, perhaps because of context.

In the musical compositions of both Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, the notion of gap or silence is used as an expression of the inbetweenness, the hypothetical space between the real and fictitious, the objective and the subjective. In Duchamp's gap music, the gap is intended to be filled by the audience who carry the notes to resolution. Hidden Noise can be compared to his ready-mades in several ways. Primarily, they are both metaphorical objects that stand for aspects of a geometry that is invisible but that nonetheless have a speculative kind of presence. Music and ready-mades are also both part of a potentially infinite line: the sound continuum and the production line, rhythmic iterations that

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32 Ibid 422.
34 Ibid.
35 Boyer 68.
are continuous. Another analogy between the city and music is in the understanding of rhythm. By being able to fine tune rhythmic or urban/political systems, participants become better able to recognize irregularities, and are drawn into the resolution of such events. Rhythm also occurs in a number of other systems subject to the same requirements of perfection such as the zipper, the assembly line, the conveyor belt, the escalator, motion picture cameras and projectors³⁷, systems that are both literally and figuratively continuous presences in our culture — systems without gaps, only points of contact.

John Cage describes his interest in silence as part of an exploration of "the sonic and cultural dimensions of the in-between."³⁸ He used the notion of silence as a structural device for organizing materials,³⁹ while at the same time, contrasting silence with its opposite, sound, which are mutually dependent, and both integrally related to duration. In a performance, experiences are influenced by the controlled durations of what the audience sees or participates in. Cities are similar, such that, either in the comparison with Foucault’s heterotopia, or the Situationist participatory game, the information gathered about a location within a temporal dimension is based on a series of controlled durations of view, passage, transmission and projection. In what Eisenman calls the "media age," static objects are not as meaningful as timely events, in which the temporal dimension of the present merges past and future.⁴⁰ Film today is reliant on the speed of observation to which we have become adapted, in the segmentation of information and images within cinema-time, and architecture in combination with media results in an event structure. Walter Benjamin compares architecture and cinema in their simultaneous collective receptions, but also introduces the contradiction between the reception of film and the perception of architecture as a privileged but difficult relationship.⁴¹ What previously existed as a gaze

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³⁷ Hilhel Schwartz, "Torque," Incorporations 69.
³⁸ ibid
³⁹ ibid
⁴⁰ Hilhel Schwartz 426.
has been replaced by the glance. Pynchon equates film and calculus as "pornographies of flight," as breaking the actuality of movement into an illusion of movement without participation in the real experience itself. Each individual frame of a film is the collapse of cyclical and linear time to become the chronicle of a pause, a spatial narrative of one instant. Time is metered in seconds and frames relative to script, speech, action and environment, reliant on the speed of observation to determine the segmentation of information and images. Real-time and drive-time are easily translated into cinema-time. Film exists in a public sphere of its own, defined by representation and reception, but it is also part of a larger social scheme, the overlap of the local with the national and the global, the deterritorialized structures of public life. There are relationships between representation and subjectivity. Cinema works to construct, interpolate and reproduce its viewer as the subject, and solicits to identify with ideologically marked positions of subjectivity. Film is also a live public performance. There is a margin of improvisation, interpretation and unpredictability—chance—that make every projection, every public episode or event different and essentially spatial. In my film, I used the movie camera in order to imply a lack of center, an ambiguity between sites as they were depicted with the overlapping analysis.

Robert Frank composed photo groupings in terms of cinematic flow, achieving senses of both rapid syncopation and meandering. Tension and rhythm were achieved through contrast, sequence, light and dark. The photographic series is a logical, viable method of presentation, and the most effective means of communication, but sequences can collapse or subvert time, present multiple and layered meanings, elicit numerous and conflicting emotional responses and recreate the experience instead of merely describing it:

"Like a poem, a photographic series must be read several times. Like a poem, it can be appreciated on many different levels; and like a poem, it has multiple, even contradictory meanings that can only be inferred by each individual viewer."2

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Paul Virilio, in the book *Lost Dimension*, claims that people occupy transportation and transmission time instead of inhabiting space, a view that can be easily understood based on the pervasiveness of technology and the rhythm of the transmission of images and information. The "intermittent structuring of duration" equally affects spatial arrangements as does the parceling of land, and is set up by the automobile and the television, which merge to collapse traditional perceptions of architectural structures by contributing to the deterioration of stability. Both the car and the television are apertures, thresholds of transformation, which provoke the anamorphosis (accelerated perspective, well-illustrated in the film of the same name by the Brothers Quay) of such structures. Speed distance is defined by Virilio as the obliteration of the notion of the physical dimension, defying physical and temporal measurement. The importance of speed in an urban environment defies the urbane: speed disqualifies environments that are the "victims of instantaneous broadcasts," relocates the city center to the satellite, in both the geographical and astral senses of the word.

Research Document [process 01.3 Speculation]

In a lecture given 24 January 1994, Lars Lerup outlined the stim and the dross mentioned in an accompanying text. The stim is something of an event, something that is turned on and off, but light turns back to dark—it becomes invisible when it is not active. The framework for a stim can be provided by architects who create not only physical frameworks but also social ones—in other words, a stim does not rely on architecture for activation. The dross is a field for a stim—something without value, the dregs, perhaps something even that makes us re-evaluate certain moments which occur within a dross as unique. The interaction between the subject and the object is what I think is critical. By creating a film and a space within which an event occurs, creating a context, introducing the subject rather than the

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43 Ibid 80.
object, I aspire to creating the surface for a stim. Levi-Strauss identifies the city as achieving a balance between natural and artificial elements: the object of nature and the subject of culture.46

There is an undercurrent to my thesis and its investigations in the incorporation of light bulbs, electricity, and the result of the combination of the two. In Learning from Las Vegas, Venture and Scott-Brown describe the architecture of persuasion as wattage and the Iconography of sprawl. The activation of light bulbs along the Las Vegas strip lends animation, illustration and high-speed mobility and emphasizes the diagram of the big sign and little building. The architecture of night is the architecture of illumination, and refers to the urbane myth of the perfect artificial light. It forms an image of night in the form of a counterpart to day, analogous to the photographic negative and positive, where night is distinguished from day by not only a sense of enclosure but also a mixture of threat and fascination, providing a need for not only safe haven, but also a desire for access to public nocturnal life. Activities at night sometimes extend the working hours of locations otherwise limited to daylight hours, adding different program or participants.

I found 24 lightbulbs along a 3-mile stretch of beach one day in October. None worked, and all but three were completely intact, after having floated from off shore to rest among the fragmented garbage along the coast. These lightbulbs represent for me the expired, entropic, atopic and the spatial. They are universal, technologic, empty, mass-produced, circuited, fragile, and specific. Full of dualities and oppositional roles. They indicate activation and can be the source of projections of image or shadow, as well as exist as objects in their own right.

44 Ibid. 80.
46 Ockman 394.
In selecting programs and projections, the analysis of the sites was used in order to determine the banal or expected within the mundane of the site, but specific to the abstract context influencing it. The analysis is what ends up being the fantastical. The differences between the projection and the typical, though has to do with marginality, scale, the local, the independent, and the avant garde, while still attempting to negotiate the global, the consensual, the mainstream. The attempt is to use the small in order to understand the vast. This is one of the results of maintaining one chain of analysis and letting the three projects explore different branches of the same emptiness. The initial site and the identification of its abstract contexts led to the identification of the second, which exhibited similar emptiness within a different relationship to the urban. The investigation into the second led to the discovery of the third. An intermediate projection which presents the first three stages of the exercise might serve as a “nonsite” and indicate where the analysis leads next, i.e: the fifth site.
Initial Thesis Statement: [process 01.5 January 1995]

My thesis will involve the gaps and the vacancies, sites and nonsites, and the city as a place for concern. The modern American City is an icon, like the West, the Border, the Beach, the Farm, the Forest, and so on. There are images, expectations and conditions to which the city as icon is supposed to conform: the timeless, tireless, 24-hour, controlled and self-sustaining environment which is, in reality, experienced from the relative comfort of one's car. The building facade serves as the basis for the staging of communication, and the speed of travel influences how much information is accumulated either actively or passively, via signs, billboards, and activity as perceived through the windshield. The city has become an information-channeling platform, and life within it, a search for fast, efficient, effective ways to transmit surface information. I am concerning myself with the pieces and parts of the physical city which are affected and influenced by the invisible forces imposed by the city, spaces considered not as an absence but as a presence, temporary zones of emptiness.

A city like Houston has many lapses in the urban fabric. Among them is the zone surrounding the downtown center, which we recognize as the "middle landscape." The sites in which I have been interested each have aspects of the middle landscape, such as displacement from center and continuous passage through rather than within that give them a common ground. There may not be a singular proposal or position to take relative to the sites as a group, but I believe there is a strategy which would draw on existing components inherent to each site.

Buildings in Houston have specific life spans depending on their market and methods of construction. The real estate surrounding them is affected by their conditions. A vertical vacancy translates into a horizontal spread of emptiness, a lapse, however temporary. Vacancy does not seem to have such a specific duration. The various sites which I am considering contain an element of

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\(^{47}\)Thall 27.
dissolution, whether as a result of an act of vacancy or of natural forces push/pull-ing with urban forces. Robert Smithson's view on such entropic sites is that they cannot be restored, even though many people would like to think so, and that nostalgic relations to place should be avoided. Landscapes become "zero panorama -- 360 degrees of virtual emptiness" where the natural flatness of a horizon such as Texas' is reinstated over the history of a place in the form of a parking lot, etc. There are methods of activating thought about spaces, facilitating change, rather than imposing a forced direction and structure. My proposals will be intended to design situations and event frameworks which might provide the option of changing what people do, or perceive on a particular site, and anticipate the effect of their existence on not only the immediate site, but also the larger landscape.

...the idea of the place...such ideas, rising out of the inadequacy of representation, are characteristic of the sublime. Before the sublime -- the absolutely immense object or the absolutely powerful event -- the visible object dissolves and the mind is thrown back on itself. 49

There is some relation between the nature of my strategy and "unitary urbanism" of the Situationist movement in the 1950's. Unitary urbanism is the theory of the combined use of "arts and techniques for the integral construction of a milieu in dynamic relation with experiments in behavior," opposing passive spectacle. It envisages a "terrain of experience" for the social space of future conditions of the city. The city of the future might be an urban environment, a game in which inhabitants participate, using the banal, the mundane and the existing -- the experience of the city and found objects -- as its basis. This bricolage, the taking of effects from one field and using them in other contexts, the use of things available, is an opportune strategy for the cyclic city such as Houston. Dominique Perrault's industrial hotel draws on some of the same ideas. It is intended to be an intelligent space designed to house a multiplicity of activities whose development could not be foreseen, the building's energy taken when and where it

48 Sayre 222.
49 Ibid 220.
could be found, mainly from the surroundings of the site, in a tight space, residual space in the crux of various transportation systems.

Post-war American cities have become de-centralized, edge-cities. The core of the city vacates with the five o'clock rush out to the suburbs, becoming a museum, a graveyard of darkened towers of steel and glass, hybrids of old and new, public and private, center and edge. Urban lives become divided between weekdays and weekends, removed from each other. American recreation time has, in the twentieth century, been integrally tied to views and transportation, travel to places, to the 'other' experiences. The thesis involves the tourist as well as the resident, as witness, observer, spectator, viewer and voyeur.

Smithson's involvement with the issue of entropy is not only a site-specific one, a condition which draws attention by lack of attention, but can also be a result of surplus. A surplus of documentation can result in the fragmentation of the event or object, rather than the representation of the temporal object extending the life of the object/event. Surplus as a result of mass production and industrialization has created entropic pockets within various landscapes, particularly urban ones. Entropy can also be interpreted as the threat that what is happening will "slowly, irreversibly dissolve itself, run down, come to a full stop," exhaust itself, resulting either in fear or relief.

Representation plays a large role in both the research, execution, and documentation of the types of proposals I am investigating, having to do with the idea of place, rising from the inadequacy of representation, which is a characteristic of the postmodern sublime. Urbanity is perceived and evaluated through the senses before the intellect. Vacancies can be filled, as noted in the Perfect City, about Chicago, with comforting images and associations, turning the visible catastrophe into a video bite. The silence of the photograph and the absence of the subject induces us to think, whether or not the

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60Sayre 217.
photograph is captioned. Photographs and films which capture experiences are part of an environment we recognize as modern. A photograph is a trace, a trace is a presence which defines the dimensions of absence.

Photography is an extension of the eye of Walter Benjamin's flaneur, who sees the city as a landscape of voluptuous extremes, a passive participant but active observer in the everyday events of the city. We each develop a visual code of what is worth looking at and what we feel a right to observe. Each person is transformed into a voyeur, the master of the situation, spanner of distances, viewers of the mythic space of private and public lives. To take a photograph is to have an interest in things as they are, to participate in mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Photographs are a method of capturing a reality, a transitorized landscape that is understood as inaccessible, of making it stand still. They can enlarge a reality that is felt to be remote or perishable. One can possess records of a reality which cannot be held. One potential problem with photography is that it can never be detached from the thinking about space, language, and the culture of the times.

Le Corbusier proclaimed for people to "record while there is still time, in photographs, films, tapes, books, and magazines, the sublime evidence of age-old cultures..." The camera is a system, therefore, of classification, a kind of filing cabinet. To inhabit means to inhabit the camera, to employ the system. The point of view of the participant, whether passive or active, is important. I am interested in both the window and the screen in terms of view from and reflection upon. The screen provides visibility without direct confrontation, here and elsewhere all in the same view, a space which brings everything into an absence of place. Suspended landscapes of disconcerting scale. The window is a point of view outside of which you are the object, and inside of which you own the view. Photographer Josef Sudek used the window in his work as the mediator between two worlds, in and out, separated and united. He

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61 ibid 217.
set up a theater of the ordinary, using everyday items and creating remote images that produce a 
window to the soul. The poet, William Carlos Williams, whose generally concise, brief poems led to the 
six-book American Idiom, addressed the inherent beauty of the vernacular and of everyday things. The 
image is a fabricated space-time; reality and its representation. I am interested in the found object and its 
use, or interpretation, as the case may be, not so much as in a cycle, but as incarnation.

Accidental subject matter is a fundamental trait of photography. The surrealists always courted 
accidents, welcomed the uninvited, drew upon disorderly presences. Susan Sontag writes “What could 
be more surreal than an object which virtually produces itself, and with a minimum of effort? An object 
whose beauty, fantastic disclosures, emotional weight are likely to be further enhanced by any 
accidents that might befall it?”[8] Photography in surrealism was the creation of a duplicate world, a 
narrower and more dramatic view than the one perceived by natural vision. As a result of a photograph 
being a thin slice of space and time, the world becomes a series of unrelated, freestanding particles and 
history a set of anecdotes. It is a view of the world that denies interconnectedness, and continuity. Any 
photograph has multiple meanings by virtue of deduction, speculation and fantasy of the 
viewer/participant. Spectator participation makes works contingent on one more unpredictable variable 
beyond the random influences by which it was generated.

Chance, especially in the work of Duchamp, is tied to the practice of automation, a pairing of 
chance and precision. Ready-mades were contingent on a structure of chance, by planning for a day, 
date, minute to inscribe a ready-made, the work could later be looked for. The chance occurrence of 
unpredicted events occurring simultaneously produces a kind of rendezvous. Chance relationships are 
impossible to reproduce, and permit the existence of infinity.[chance] Situationist André Breton’s 
concept of everyday life was to produce involuntary contact between unconscious desire and reality by

a voluntary form of communication. "...We should be equally alert to the potential of reality in our
dreams and fantasies and of desire in our mundane reality." The point was both to change the world
and to interpret it, to have faith in the unconscious and belief in objective chance. John Cage
systematized the arbitrary in his work and collections by devising structures according to deliberate
chance methods for ordering relationships.

Absences, gaps, voids, emptiness. Found in constructions of all sorts. Duchamp used silence
in his gap music, in which the audience is meant to carry notes to resolution. The relationship to the
ready-mades is the potentially infinite line – the mathematical line of sound continuum and the physical
continuum or production line. [wireless imagination] Rhythm and the ready-mades were iterated
elements. The Hidden Noise piece, like the ready-mades, represent what is missing. They are
metaphorical objects that stand for aspects of a geometry that is invisible but that nonetheless has a
speculative kind of presence. Urban sites are also subject to invisible forces that influence their
continuum, their potential role in the reoccupation of the emptiness. Hidden Noise is also the expression
of the in-betweenness, the hypothetical space between the real and the fictitious, the objective and the
subjective. There exist in music and in urban configurations spatial and temporal intervals in terms of
taking "cuts" out of a continuum. The work of John Cage implements the sonic and cultural dimensions
of the in-between. The opposite and necessary coexistent of sound is silence. Duration deals with both.
He used silence as a structural device for organizing sonic material. Silence as both a phenomenal and
an abstract notion.

A photograph or body of works cannot create a moral position, but they can reinforce or build
even a nascent one. Images that mobilize conscience are generally linked to a specific historical
situation. This method activates the imagination and actions of the participant more than general photos

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53 Sussman 57.
do. The works of artists such as Klefer, Boltanski, Cage, Cornell, Ruscha, Rauschenberg, Schwitters, Beuys, Duchamp, and Le Corbusier, among others, and the writing of Walter Benjamin evoke history in order to awaken its participants from it. They are all collectors/ponderers, who assemble things set out of circulation, things meaningless as use values, but who create work of experimental character that jog the memory and imagination. The images break traditional connections between form and function.

Advertising uses photographic images, also, as forms of persuasion and insinuation. The poster and billboard have become the modern fresco. Instead of permanent stories of virtue or vanity, integral to the surface condition of a wall, advertising exploits vanity in the realm of the street in fragments of time lasting approximately two weeks. It is a prominent aspect of architecture of the road, especially in flat expanses of Texas, where signs can be read from long distances, even at high speed.

I plan to use photography in my thesis to explore representation relative to the documentation of the empty or in-between zones and to the presentation of ideas/strategies/negotiations. At this point, I consider my course of action to be:

- scouting: "site scouting isn't over until you pass out." (Yamamoto)
- site specifications: typical nature, comparison of criteria
- mapping: documentation, translation into object, investigation
- analysis: research, speculation
- remapping: site/nonsite, object/subject
- presentation: translation, participation.

This method will hopefully lead to explorations into the role of the small project in the city, the possibilities for subtlety in activation of sites of urban, industrial, or rural natures. Organization of these materials will also be important in order to understand where the hypothesis of the strategy works and where its shortcomings lie. I intend to progress with the list-objects, and compilation of mappings in keeping with some of the research I have done into collections and presentation of ideas, mainly small documentary objects such as books, vitrines, filmic investigations, and visual compositions.

Document [process 02.1
Site one: Remote
Location: car beach, Bolivar Peninsula, east of High Island, Texas.

Phase one: inventory
21.8 miles Federal Aid Secondary Route.
   washed away by the ocean.
1 heliport, vacant
1 state park
3 counties
1 dumping site
1 radio beacon
6 triangulation stations/horizontal markers
1 submerged pipeline
31 oil rig platforms
2 external points of vehicular entry

found:
residue: chairs
   stools
   bottles
   lightbulbs
   shoes
   cans
   balloons
road
beach
oil
sun
phosphorescence
nudists
line and plane
power lines
thundering silence
rhythm
camps
la z boy
horizon
shells
glass
fossil/bone
hooks
fan

Figure 1: Inventory, remote
megashapes:
  oil
  railroad
  ship channel
  port
  jetties
  tides
  weather
  tourism
  point-line-plane
  power lines
  phone lines
  sand
  water
  sky
  weekends
  seasons: weather
    commercial
  radio signal

program:
pier: infrastructure
  viewpoint
  framework
minimum requirements for: car
  pirate radio
  panoramic viewer
  picnic
  9' wide
  tower
  power
  viewer
  shelter
  lights

icon:
  beach

dualities/oppositions
  parallel and paradox
  north and south
  tide in and tide out
  temporary and permanent
  tourism and industry (foreign and local)

Figure 2: Inventory, cont.
Document [process 02.1.01]
Site one: Remote
Location: car beach, Bolivar Peninsula, east of High Island, Texas.

Phase two: documentation

Locating this property requires some patience. From Houston, it is a day trip. One heads south to Galveston and across the free ferry to Port Bolivar which runs 24 hours a day. From there, it is about an hour's drive to where the road branches to the north and a ROAD CLOSED sign is encountered. Instead of taking the left fork, drive around the sign. After about a mile or so, the 2-lane road disappears.

It will be approximately 21 miles before you reach another paved surface.

This stretch of Texas coast has a historically sparse population, made even more scarce by the deterioration of the infrastructure. There has been a push-pull between the land and the ocean. The water washes away great quantities of sand and road in cycles, but also washes in the urban residue in the form of garbage. The beach itself displays somewhat savage qualities as a result of its encrusted condition. There is a sense of anonymity and lack of supervision, which in addition to the remote nature of the site, lend to the feeling that just about anything could happen there, and nobody would ever know or relay the experience. This beach, as typical as it may seem, is even more conspicuously empty because of the activities that are expected upon it. Very few sandy beaches in warm southern climates are as empty as this one is. Galveston Beach, a 15-minute ferry-ride away, is extremely active in both family and "wet" beach areas. But whereas Galveston's is a pedestrian-only beach with vehicular traffic dramatically removed from the sand in a vertical direction, Bolivar's is a car-beach. There is no vertical displacement on or near the site, and as the road has been washed away, there is no distinction between where you drive and where you park your towel and umbrella. Thin, vertical elements are overwhelmed by the dominant horizontal of ocean to beach to road to field, almost to the point of
disappearing. You might encounter 30 people along the 20 mile stretch in a day, but rarely more. For the most part, they are friendly, conversational nudists who spend the day fishing and practicing their marksmanship, and who are keen observers of people and things not “regular.”

I chose to document the site by activities by which the site could be seen as both expansive and contractive.

Twenty pinhole cameras were constructed out of found wood and copper sheeting and black tape. They were taken to the site. At every mile marker, beginning with mile zero [0] the mile number was painted on the corresponding power pole, and a pinhole camera was stationed on the beach. An exposure was taken, extracted, and the camera installed on the site in a semi-permanent manner, accompanied by a numbered tag corresponding also to the mile. On the tag was information about the aperture and exposure time of the box for both film and for photographic print paper, and the telephone number to call if the box were encountered. Cameras were recorded by conventional cameras, and left behind. There was one response on 27 February, 7:09am. about the camera at mile one.

caller:  “I found a box, and it has this number on it.”
“thank you for calling. Is there a number on it?”
caller:  “three eight one.”
“where are you calling from, sir?”
caller:  “near High Island. Am I supposed to do anything with the box?”
“no, please leave it where it was found.”
caller:  “what's it for?”
“recording the beach.”
caller:  “okay. I'll leave it there. good-bye.”
“thanks again for calling.”
7:12am.

The mile markers fragment the site into one mile increments, and are mostly on the north side of the site, bordering cow pastures and oil fields. The cameras attempted to record the infinite nature, the vast flatness, of the beach side of the site. Pinhole cameras are appropriate for this application because they have an infinite depth of field when properly exposed, so they have the ability to capture objects
Immediately in front of them as well as information about the landscape beyond. They can also be shaped to collect information in a panoramic format or very narrow cone of vision. In addition, pinhole camera exposures are so long that movement through the image is not recorded, except perhaps as a blurred line.

The logical program for this site is a pier, a projection from land to sea, half in the water, half out. This pier, though, must react to the specific conditions of this site that cause its emptiness. The paved pier is 9 feet wide—wide enough for a car to drive out and drive back off in reverse. The pier has three sections between which there are three anchored connections and one which responds to the level of the tides and the weight of the car. There is a panoramic viewer at the furthest point from the land for surveying the site at a distance, extending its boundaries visually, and facilities for a pirate radio station which might normally operate off-shore, extending the boundaries even further via radio signal. The first section of the framework is accessed from the beach, by car. Eventually, when the sand has eroded enough that the car can no longer gain access, pedestrians may climb up and walk out, or the pier becomes another artifact on the site. Until then, there is also no "under the boardwalk" area normally found at a pier, recognizing that there is vehicular traffic on the beach proper.

During the six months in which I documented the site, I saw fluctuations in the amount of debris on the beach itself as a direct result of the season for the fishing channels, fluctuations in the amount of sand on the beach, decomposition of a porpoise, cause of death unknown, all mediated by the strength of the horizon, the sense of infinity. Lately, it seems, though, that the highway department has realized that there are a few people who frequent the area regardless of the ROAD CLOSED sign and deteriorated quality of the road, and have added more signs in areas of more severe conditions.

FOUND [abstract context] + PLACED [architecture] = PROJECTION
Continuation: [process 02.1.02]

mediation between the existing and the abstract, or the perception of reality and actual reality, without nostalgia and without divorcing progress.

the ghost state: where are people NOT when they are participating? where is the shadow of the tourist?

The idea of place and inadequacies of representation are a characteristic of the sublime—the indecipherable, the timeless, the vast.

sublime vs. atopic

**project** latin roots: pro/ before + jacere/to throw

noun: 1. proposal, plan, scheme
2. organized undertaking
   a. specific unit of work or research
   b. extensive public undertaking — conservation, construction

verb [i]: 1. to propose
2. to hurl forward, throw
3. cause ones voice to be heard clearly and at a distance.
4. get ideas across effectively
5. cause to jut out
6. cause an image or shadow to appear on a surface
7. extrapolate: speculate as to consequences based on facts/observations
8. [psychol] to externalize thought/feeling so that it appears to have objective reality.

verb [j]: 1. to jut out; protrude
2. to be effective in the projection of one’s voice, ideas....

**jetty** latin root: jectare/jacere = set in motion, throw, send.

noun: 1. wall built out into the water to restrain currents, protect a harbor, etc.
2. landing pier.
3. projecting/overhanging part of a building.

verb: 1. to project or jut out
Document [process 02.2]

Site two: Removed
Location: photoelectric power site, Substation, Westpark Drive between Kirby Dr. and Loop 610.

Phase one: inventory
1 substation
4 water tanks
2 railroad lines (Southern Pacific)
X electrical structures
7 intersections
3 miles @ 4 lanes of traffic
1 gulch with water
2 radio towers
1 all-purpose arena
7 commercial and residential towers
found:
USA Today box, smashed
railroad spikes
circus parking
bus passes

megashapes:
utilities
railroad
automobile traffic
power lines
power towers
signal

program:
fairground/carnival site: temporary
viewpoint
framework
wind turbines: generators
cumulative energy production
minimum requirements for: carnival
rides
platform uses
blade span
10' wide
ramped
collapsible/adaptable
65' tall
blue

icon:
barren swath, virtual wall, typical of all
locations with electrical services.

dualities/oppositions
parallel and paradox
lights on and lights off
temporary and permanent
foreign and local
active and passive
infrastructure and parasite

Figure 3: Inventory, removed
Site two: Removed
Location: photoelectric power site, Substation, Westpark Drive between Kirby Dr. and Loop 610.

Phase two: documentation

The documentation of this site began with the abstraction of the remote site. There were initially a set of 24 photographs of lightbulbs collected along the beach in an approximately 3-mile stretch. They were paired as a set with a series of photographs taken at regular intervals along the substation swath, where long perspectives, accentuated by the power lines, could be seen. The tension between the two sets of photographs was a result of the identity of the substation and its barrenness because of ownership, and the lightbulbs, none of which worked, some of which were broken or filled with water, all expired.

Within the site is the spot, near the intersection of the north/south with the east/west train lines, where the circus train stops once a year to unload the elephants and other animals for the circus at the Summit. This annual activation could have large repercussions if it were paired with a carnival nearby. Carnivals around Houston are generally located in the parking lots of malls or the parking lot of the Astrodome during the month of the rodeo.

The projection for this site would be the platforms which straddle the carnival rides and allow access to the rides. When the fairgrounds are not to be in use, they would lie low to the ground, unlit, used only by people who locate the platforms for use as campsites or flea market stations. They are jacked up to accommodate the assigned ride, and once the rides are installed and their lights activated, the site would serve as a demonstration of the activity as well as the services of the site. Even if a Ferris wheel or another such ride were to be permanently installed, it would not be too foreign in a landscape of other frameworks as viewed from either Westpark Drive, Newcastle Drive, Highway 59, or Loop 610.
During the 11 months out of the year where the rides would be inactive, the turbines would be generating power on a credit-basis for the rides. As a result, a second system linked to the substation would be constructed within the site into which the rides would plug for power.

This site is conspicuous in its emptiness because it is actually full—full of skeletal structures and power lines which give a density to the area above the ground surface, but not the ground itself. There is an incredible density of built form on all sides of the site, but not within it as a result of the utility ownership and the foreign nature of the structures to residential areas. These utility swaths cut through areas that would be otherwise populated, and overwhelm their specific sites, especially in Texas, where they compete with the flatness of the terrain and the decentralization of the city.

FOUND [abstract context] + PLACED [architecture] = PROJECTION
Continuation: [process 02.02]

"...our eyes aren't really too attuned to picking up [these forces] anymore. What our eyes see are all these huge chunks of reality, not these invisible forms that are the only thing that tell us anything worth knowing about reality. We are trained to think only in terms of physical reality, surface appearances..."

Joseph Beuys

"...[our] aim should be "sculpturally" to mold and set in motion energy forms lying beyond the thresholds of human perception...only those whose senses have been deformed by the excesses of reason, who are too narrowly "intelligent" could ignore the reality of these invisible forces animating life..."

Joseph Beuys

"Our ideas are in everyone's head and one day they'll come out."

Guy Debord

"I do not anticipate that the onlooker will share my viewpoint. However, I feel that if my photo leaves an image on his mind, something has been accomplished."

Robert Frank

projection

1. something being projected
2. something that projects or juts out.
3. something projected -- ie map making, where projecting = representation on a plane of the earth's surface or celestial sphere.
4. prediction or advance statement based on known data or observations.

gaff [fairground terminology]
eroded wasteground/fallow fairgrounds

tober [f.g.]
atmosphere, layout
roundabouts, booths, joints, transport vehicles
service units/satellites of light and power
movement of light and sound
mechanism
assembled around natural features, complementary to them.

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64 Joseph Beuys, Arena. 63.
65 Ibid
66 Sussman 10.
Document [process 02.3]
Site three: Urban
Location: top level, Houston Gas Company parking deck, downtown Houston.

Phase one: inventory
7 levels plus roof
80 parking spaces on roof
typical condition of emptiness among rooftop parking sites.

found:
6 cars parked, maximum
one mid-afternoon napper
one security guard
one flood light

megashapes:
workday
workweek
weekday
weekends
parking structures
parking surfaces
high rises

program:
drive-in cinema: infrastructure
viewpoint
framework
shockwaves

minimum requirements for: car
screen
projector
ticket booth
speakers
viewing

small scale: retractable screen
backside billboard surface
front-row seating
entrance and exit ramps

large scale: apertures mounted to canopy
system of Exxon Building activation by electronic magnet
viewpoints from numerous locations, both downtown and the city at large

icon:
drive-in

dualities/oppositions
parallel and paradox
night/day
work/leisure
passive/active

Figure 3: Inventory, urban
Document [process 02.3.01]
Site three: Urban
Location: top level, Houston Gas Company parking deck, downtown Houston.

Phase two: documentation

The documentation of this site is linked to that of the substation in the investigation into Houston's infrastructure, and mechanical space. Downtown, this means parking. Houston's downtown is full only during the day, during business hours. Parking decks and lots empty at the same time as their accompanying building. Rooftop parking is not popular in Houston because it is not sheltered from the weather, and it is physically further away from the employee's destination. The top deck also holds a certain level of mystery resulting from its removal from the cityscape in a physical sense, but also in being virtually unpatrolled as the beach is--nobody else sees you there.

Images were created as an analysis for the one site by taking photographs of various parking deck roof conditions and subjecting them to the same manipulation in the darkroom of rotation, so that a slight blurring would occur, but would also create a vortex in the same position on each photograph.

The projection for this urban site is a literal one: a drive-in cinema. Film draws on the immediate urban context and brief urban episodes to attract participants. The light itself is also an attractor, the cone of projection visible from a distance, embedded with the dust present in any congested area.

This particular deck is one of the older ones, connected to another Houston utility company. There are two separate ramps, one for up, and one for down. With 81 available spaces, the top deck has the smallest capacity of all the levels, nevertheless, there have been only as many as 6 cars parked up there on any given weekday. Three sides of the structure are banked by high rise office buildings. The fourth side is open to the south, and from there one can identify five other parking decks and four street-level parking lots. It is in this direction that the larger projection is conducted, over a span
of three city blocks onto a building that is just barely separated from the density of high rises in the central business district of downtown Houston, and therefore its activation would be visible particularly from both the east and the west, and up to two miles away.

Cars on the roof decks are conspicuous in their absence because of the analogy which can be made between the deck and a balcony or terrace, poised between in and out, at situated at a relative distance to the city and to the anonymity of the city. A deck can be seen as a privileged place from which to perceive and experience the city, while at the same time existing as an ambivalent place, a spatial nonentity. The parking deck becomes a private external space when you are on it alone, without the elements of the urban which we have come to accept such as noise, fumes, etc. It enables us to see from a distance and participate in what is going on without being exposed to view. It can be regarded and organized as a special place within a city such as Houston.

The smaller projection of films would occur on a screen mounted to the parking structure itself. Projection would initiate at the other end of the deck, and parking occurs between the source and the surface. This would probably occur more often than the large projection, at least until the effect of the activity is felt. One of the ideas behind these projections is that it has the potential of sending shock waves through downtown. It recognizes the 24-hour nature of the parking garage, but provides the framework for its activity at night instead of during the day, when it would remain virtually unchanged. The landscape as viewed from these spaces downtown are practically indistinguishable because they view adjacent structures without their street levels, and skim over the lower buildings out to the flatness of the horizon. The rooftop parking deck is a typical condition for downtown Houston, and the nighttime activation of the space could also be universal.

FOUND [abstract context] + PLACED [architecture] = PROJECTION
In order to create the context within which these proposals could be understood, I used the images from the array, real-time 16mm and split-16mm (regular 8mm) film footage from the sites to construct a 16mm film montage to be projected in the School of Architecture. Three craft were built to represent the three sites and their links. The craft are 450-pound concrete pads on wheels, each with a retractable tripod projection screen and welded-steel projector stand embedded in them. All three are wired for electricity and sound, and plug into each other. The first one plugs into the switch, which is an outlet box connected to the wall. It projects the first third of the film onto the screen embedded in the second craft. It also holds a filmstrip projector which projects onto an adjacent wall the image of the filament of its bulb. The second plugs into the first, and holds the stereo receiver and tape deck. It transmits image onto the third, and sound onto both the first and third. The third plugs into the second for both power and sound. It projects onto the opposite wall space from both the last third of the film from the 16mm projector and the text from a 35mm filmstrip projector, which is displayed on the wall below the film projection.

The film is structured in three pieces, each with its own projection site and surface. They communicate and coordinate throughout the 18 minute presentation, demonstrating that there is one strain of analysis off of which all three projects feed. The first segment is an introduction to the analysis, consisting mainly of images from the array, the first phase of the beach analysis, and overlaid text. The segment projected by the second craft completes the beach site and moves into the midway. Much of this projection is of real-time footage. The images that are transferred to the wall by the third projectors are primarily of the parking deck at night, overlaid with images of the model constructed for that site.
These are not clean divisions, as there are glimpses of the other sites being projected simultaneously within the strain of the analysis, but general divisions, instead.

There is an accompanying soundtrack of waves and wind at the beach. There is a lot of ambiguity in terms of identifying the particular sound so that it starts to drift according to the site projected. In some sections it begins to sound like traffic or even the buzz of power lines. There is also an industrial-type hum created by running five projectors at once, which adds to what in the end becomes a deafening silence.

The entire presentation is preceded by the three-minute film created in the semester preceding the thesis, which actually initiated the investigation. The subject is a three-block site on Main Street in what we call “the middle landscape” between the medical center and downtown, where there exists a dead space, a true in-between space. The site has a college building on it, but has been empty for 15 years. The building is type of which there are many in Houston, built in the late 1950's, and about 75% vacant today. It is concrete frame, bookend-type building with a continuous window system—essentially a framework, but somehow not found appropriate as office space in Houston.
The introduction of the thesis film, 5:30 pm on 28 April 1995, simply included the mention of

1. spaces that seem empty

2. one analysis

3. three sites.

The film was intended to be the product of the thesis as a way of translating the sites, creating an event
and an event-space. What had a greater effect than anticipated was having images projecting on all
three screens simultaneously, as well as the movement of the film from surface to surface. With a large
number of people, the migration of the “swarm” is easily identified, simply by the observation of heads
turning to catch flashes of light on otherwise inactive screens, and the movement of the pack to achieve
a better point of view within the space created by the projections. In the same sense that projections
are appropriate for atopic landscapes, projection as part of a spectacle or event was also the most
effective way to present ideas about those same landscapes in a neutral environment. Each participant
became the subject, projecting themselves into the sites to understand them initially from a visual
standpoint.

Continuation: [process 03.1.01]

film as a medium for populations, information, commodity, rumors, stories, histories.

the screen interface provides visibility without direct confrontation.

film shows here and elsewhere in the same view.

television or film can bring everything into a space which has an absence of place.

photography and motion pictures as activators, as means for participants to master the situation.

Walter Benjamin: "Architecture, like cinema, presents material to a simultaneous
collective reception."⁵⁸ reception (film) vs. perception (architecture)

Bibliography: [process 01.13 arrested April 1995]

Baudrillard, Jean. The Ecstasy of Communication. New York: Semiotext(e),
Beuys, Joseph. Areva: Where would I have got if I had been intelligent.


Wenders, Wim. *Tokyo Ga* (film)


*Assemblage 21*: Vidler: The Explosion of Space: Architecture and the Filmic Imaginary

*Teyssolt: Specular Relation*

*Assemblage 20*: Fuss: The Phantom Spectator

*Hamacher: space/place*

Appendix 1

Array: Coordinates and Links
Site One: Remote
animation image #58.
link to col.1 (B-H),
row A, ...

animation image #64.
link to col.1 (A-C-H), ...

animation image #71.
link to col.1 (A-B,D-H),
1 ... D

animation image #83.
link to col. 1 (A-C, E-H),

1 ... E

animation image #92.
link to col. 1 (A-D, F-H),

1 ... F

animation image #103.
link to col. 1 (A-E, G-H),
1 ... G

animation image #102.
link to col.1 (A-F,H), ...

1 ... H

animation image #101.
link to col.1 (A-G), ...
2 ... A
animation image #160a.
link to col.2 (B-G), 1F-H,
4C, 5C ...

2 ... B
animation image #161.
link to col.2 (A,C-G),
1F-H, ...

2 ... C
animation image #162.
link to col.2 (A-B,D-G),
1F-H, ...
2 ... D
animation image #163.
link to col.2 (A-C,E-G),
1F-H, ...

2 ... E
animation image #165.
link to col.2 (A-D,F-G),
1F-H, ...
2 ... F
animation image #166.
link to col.2 (A-E,G),
1F-H, ...

2 ... G
animation image #167.
link to col.2 (A-E),
1F-H, ...
animation image #59.
link to col.3 (B-D),
row A, ...

animation image #60.
link to col.3 (A,C-D),
4B, ...

animation image #61.
link to col.3 (A-B,D),
5C, ...
3 ... D

animation image #61a.
link to col.3 (A-C), 5D, ...
4 ... A

animation image #65.
link to col.4 (B-C),
row A, ...

4 ... B

animation image #66.
link to col.4 (A,C), 3B,
5B, ...
4 ... C

animation image #61.
link to col.4 (A,B), 2A, 5F, ...
animation image #72.
link to col.5 (B-D),
row A, ...

animation images #79,
#86a, and #87.
link to col.5 (A,C-D), 4B,
6B, ...

unknown animation image
link to col.5 (A-B,C-D), 2A,
3C, 8C, ...
animation images #80 and #87a.
link to col.5 (A-C), 2A, 6C, 3D, ...

animation image #73
link to col.5 (F-G), 7I and ?.
animation image #75.
link to col.5 (E,G), 4C, 6D, ...

animation image #77.
link to col.5 (E-F), ...
animation image #84.
link to col.6 (B-D),
row A, ...

animation image #86.
link to col.6 (A,C-D), 7B,
7E(1-2), ...

animation image #85.
link to col.6 (A-B,D), 5D,
7C, ...
unknown animation image.
link to col.6 (A-C), 5F, ...
animation image #94. 
link to col.7 (B-E), row A, and ?.

animation image #95. 
link to col.7 (A,C-E), 6B, 8B, and ?.

animation image #93. 
link to col.7 (A-B,D-E), 6C, 8D, and ?.
7 ... D

animation image #138a. link to col.7 (A-C,E), 6C, 5E, ...
7 ... E (1-2)

animation image
link to col. 7 (A)
8H, 9D ...
animation image #110.
link to col.8 (B-G),
row A, ...

animation image #108.
link to col.8 (A,C-G), 7B,
9B, ...

animation image #105.
link to col.8 (A-B,D-G),
5C, ...
8 ... D

animation image #107.
link to col.8 (A-C,E-G), 7C, 9C, ...

8 ... E

animation image #104.
link to col.8 (A-D,F-G), 7D, 11E, ...
animation images #96 and #109, link to col.8 (A-E,G), 7E2, 9D, ...

animation images #106, link to col.8 (A-F,H-I), row 19, ...
animation images #153.
link to col.8 (G,I),
7E1, ...

animation images #154.
link to col.8 (G-H), ...
9 ... A

animation image #116.
link to col.9 (B-D),
row A, ...
animation images #139 and #142. link to col.10 (B-D), row A, ...

animation images #138 and #141. link to col.10 (A-C-D), 9B, 11B, ...

link to col.10 (A-B-D), 8C, 9B, 9C, 11C, ...
10 ... D

animation image #136. link to col.10 (A-C), 9C, 11D, ...
animation images #143.
link to col.11 (B-G),
row A, ...

animation image #144.
link to col.11 (A,C-G), 10B,
12B, ...

animation image #146.
link to col.11 (A-B,D-G),
10C, 12C, ...
animation image #145. link to col.11 (A-C,E-G), 10D, 12D, ...

animation image #147. link to col.11 (A-D,F-G), 8E, 12E ...
11 ... F

unknown animation image.
link to col.11 (A-E,G),
9D, ...

11 ... G

unknown animation image.
link to col.11 (A-F), 9D, ...
animation image #144a.
link to col.12 (B-E),
row A, ...

animation image #199.
link to col.12 (A,C-E), 11B,
13A, ...

animation image #149a.
link to col.12 (A-B,D-E),
11C, 13B, ...
unknown animation image
link to col.12 (A-C,E), 11D, 13C, ...

animation image #196.
link to col.12 (A-D), 11E, ...
13 ... D

animation images #150
and #273.
link to col.13 (A-C),
11F, 11E, 14F, ...
animation image #126.
link to col.14 (B-H),
row A, ...

animation image #125.
link to col.14 (A,C-H), 13A,
15B, ...

animation image #127.
link to col.14 (A-B,D-H),
13B, 15C, ...
14 ... D

animation image #121.
link to col.14 (A-C,E-H), 13D, 15D, ...

14 ... E

animation image #122.
link to col.14 (A-D,F-H), 12E, 15E, ...
14 ... F

animation image #209a.
link to col.14 (A-E,G-H),
13D, 15E, ...

14 ... G

animation image #209.
link to col.14 (A-F,H),
15F, ...
14 ... H

animation image #128. link to col.14 (A-G), 15F, ...
animation image #131. link to col.15 (B-F), row A, ...

animation image #132. link to col.15 (A,C-F), 14B, 16B, ...

animation image #133. link to col.15 (A-B,D-F), 14C, 16C, ...
animation image #130.
link to col.15 (A-C,E-F),
14D, 16D, ...

link to col.15 (A-D,F), 14E,
16E, 14F, 17E, ...
animation image #189.
link to col.16 (-2A+1A,B-E)
row A, ...

animation image #190.
link to col.16 (-1A-A,C-E),
17B, ...

animation image #192.
link to col.16 (-2A-B,D-E),
15C, 17C, ...
animation image #191. link to col.16 (-2A-C,E), 15D, 17D, ...

animation image #193. link to col.16 (-2A-D), 15E, 17E, 17F, ...
17 ... A

animation image #182.
link to col.17 (B-F),
row A, ...

17 ... B

animation image #183.
link to col.17 (A,C-F), 16B,
18B, ...

17 ... C

animation image #186.
link o col.17 (A-B,D-F),
16C, 18C, ...
animation image #184.
link to col.17 (A-C,E-F), 16D, 18D, ...

animation image #185.
link to col.17 (A-D-F), 16E, 18E, ...
link to col.17 (A-E), 15E, 16E, 18F, ...
18 ... A

animation image #207.
link to col. 18 (B-J),
row A, ...

18 ... B

animation image #124.
link to col. 18 (A-C-J),
17B, ...

18 ... C

animation image #203.
link to col. 18 (A-B,D-J),
17C, ...
18 ... D

animation image #205.
link to col.18 (A-C,E-J),
17D, ...

18 ... E

animation image #206.
link to col.18 (A-D,F-J),
17E, ...
18 ... F

animation image #204.
link to col.18 (A-E,G-J),
17F, ...

18 ... G

animation image #200.
link to col.18 (A-F,H-J), ...
animation image #137.
link to col.19 (A-I), ...
animation images #120, and #155.
link to col.19 (B-G), 8G, 9D, ...
animation images #129, and #157.
link to col.19 (A,C-G), ...
animation images #123, and #156. link to col.19 (A-B,D-G), ...
animation images #135, and #158. 
link to col.19 (A-C,E-G), ...
animation images #140, and #159. link to col.19 (A-E,F-G), ...
19 ... F

unknown animation images.
link to col.19 (A-E,G), ...
animation images #87c, and #169.
link to col.19 (A-F), ...
animation image #250.
link to col. 20, ...
animation image #249.
link to col. 20, ...
20 ... C

animation image #247.
link to col. 20, ...
animation image #245.
link to col. 20, ...
animation image #243.
link to col. 20, ...
animation image #235, link to col. 20, ...
animation image #234.
link to col. 20, ...
animation image #233. link to col. 20, ...
Appendix 2

Lightbulbs, Mechanical Space
Site Two: Removed
Appendix 3

Projections
Site Three: Urban
Karin Elise Taylor

INFINITE PROJECTIONS
for
ATOPIC LANDSCAPES

A film
submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Architecture.

first edition presentation
4-28-1995

advisors
Albert Pope
Yung-do Chang
Bill Thomas

Nina University
Houston, Texas
Lars Lerup - Dean
The only sounds are the...
A single "all-weather" light bulb was found in a string of decorative lights that surround the top level of the deck.