

(investigator formerly known as architect):
an architectural thesis disguised as a murder investigation

Alexander M. Barr

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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Alexander M. Barr

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Abstract

(investigator formerly known as architect):
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Alexander M. Barr

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Department of Architecture

When architecture student, Alexander Barr, is murdered inside of a mysterious room in an undisclosed location, (investigator formerly known as architect) is hired by an unknown suspect in order to solve the crime.

To find the murderer, (investigator formerly known as architect) must find new ways of doing architecture before time runs out; however, nothing here is quite as it seems. In this darkened landscape, tangled duplicity, time loops, and unlikely clues challenge one's understanding of spatiality and identity. As evidence reveals itself, an unlikely character might be the prime suspect of his Alexander Barr's murder...

What happens when the architect's dedication to solve the climate crisis becomes a pawn in the game of binary thinking? When do dreamscapes end and investigations begin? How do we find other ways of doing architecture? Which parts of us must die so others may live?

...Who murdered Alexander Barr? ...why was he the central target of the crime?...and what did he know?





(investigator formerly known as architect):

an architectural thesis disguised as a murder investigation



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//: for making sacrifices and navigating uncertainty with me every step of the way.

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and

Vikram Prakash
Nicole Huber
Maksym Matviichuk
Greg Woolston
Mom and Dad
Jeff and Deb
Little Jerry
Peg

and David Lynch

INTRODUCTION

What is presented in this document is an ongoing process of becoming something new -- which I perform (investigator formerly known as architect). More details are certainly to come, however, I can tell you that it is an internal struggle, a performance of transgression that favors intuition over rationality, and a process of deconstruction that utilizes alternative mediums – largely new media art, film, performance, and design fiction – to create a new identity for the architect, and for myself.

What if we told architectural narratives through the lens of fiction?⁰¹ What types of new mysteries would leak out? Instead of envisioning Utopian landscapes, what if architecture navigates the dark multiverses of the uncanny? Which versions of our identities could be found guilty of murder? Which versions of ourselves become victims? ... and who can survive?

Disguised as a murder investigation, this thesis is about navigating the question, “How do I find a place for me in the field of architecture?”⁰²

Searching for these answers has been a muddy and uncertain process, full of internal challenges of identity, full of certainty and doubt, and always questioning, always contradicting, and always at ends with myself...

Stuck in a limbo universe where two versions of me have been in a perpetual staring contest, in a room with an unknown location in time and space -- where one blink of the eye results in ultimate death.⁰³ The full details, I’m entirely unsure about, however, I do know that one of them blinked, because I was brought on to investigate their death.

{01} Fiction requires viewers to suspend their disbelief and allow their imaginations to wander, to momentarily forget how things are now, and wonder about how things could be... for this reason, this document is meant to be read like a screenplay and performance, not an essay.

{02} What is “architecture”? is it lowercase or capitalized? is it about buildings? or is it about seeing and questioning yourself in relationship to your environment around you? what is space? is architecture space? is space architecture? yeah, you get the idea.

{03} I am still very much alive. it’s important to note: this crime has already been solved. the document you are reading now is recollection of past performances and films in which the clues, evidence, and processes are placed inside the database -- the narrative you’re currently reading is a written reenactment of a more terrifying and immersive film.

One of them,

Alex,

'buys in' to the long standing tradition of architects designing buildings,
trying to solve with real problems with real solutions...
where the profession of architecture is a catalyst for changing the world...



the other version of himself,

Alex,

constantly undermines that approach, looking for new ways of doing things,
indulging in unflinching narcissism,
and unfamiliar dreamscapes as a way out of the cycle.



Throughout this thesis, I perform (investigator formerly known as architect), a character created by myself, to solve my own murder within the mysterious room: who killed Alex Barr? Which one of him committed the crime? And which one will survive?

04



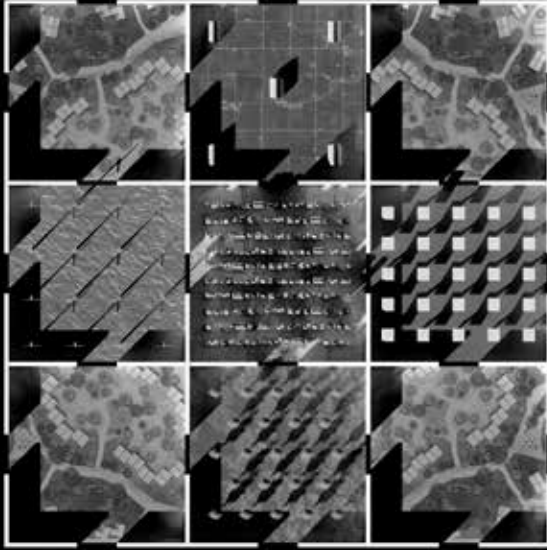
{04} this image, like many others in this thesis project, are originally formatted as GIFs, films, or performances. to get the full experience, visit investigatorformerlyknownasarchitect.cargo.site or don't. Now is as good of a time as ever to ask ourselves, why do we turn in these architectural theses in written form? can we envision new ways of doing architectural thesis work?



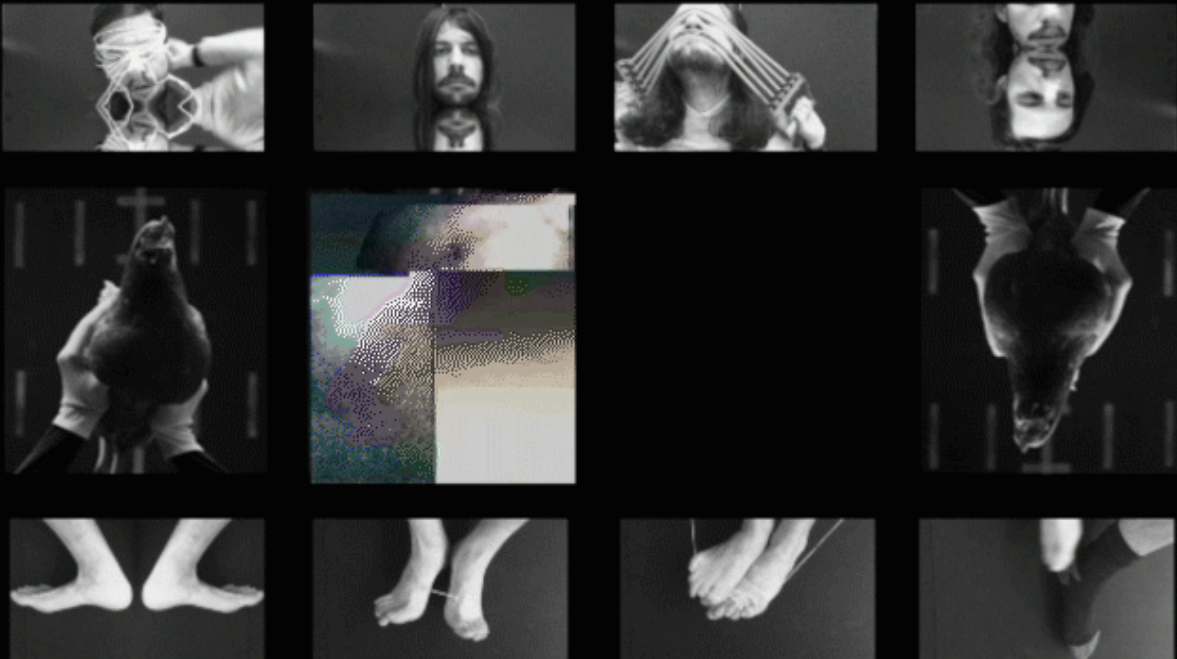
CLUES

The victims only left six clues to help solve the crime...

{1} Plans, and sketches of a future eco village from 2050, likely designed by Alex, the aspiring architect.



{2} Prototypes, films, and strange experiments likely designed by Alex, the hacker.

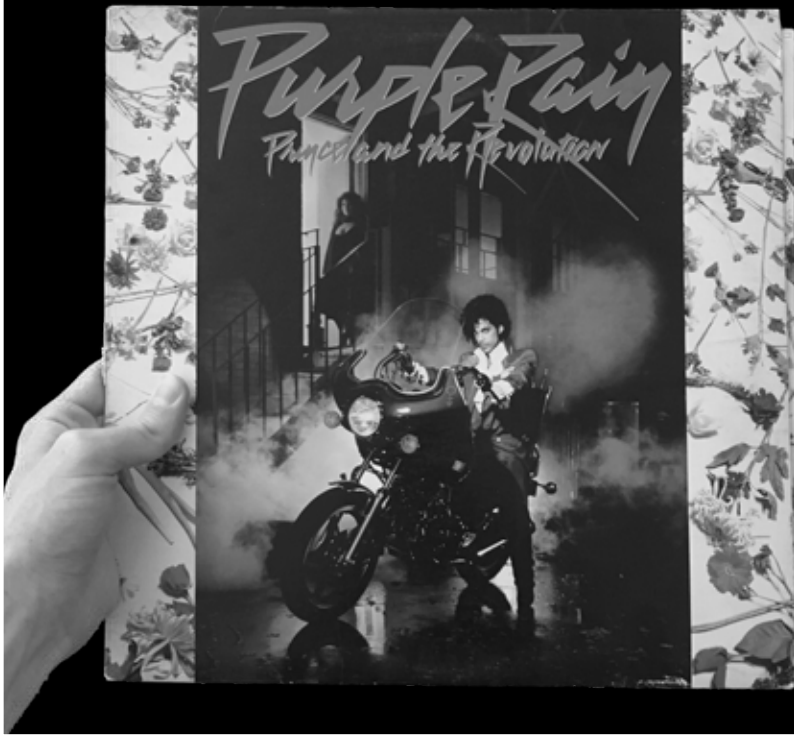


{3} A library of books with a bibliography ranging from speculative fiction, post-humanism entanglement, minor architecture, deconstruction, and identity politics.⁰¹



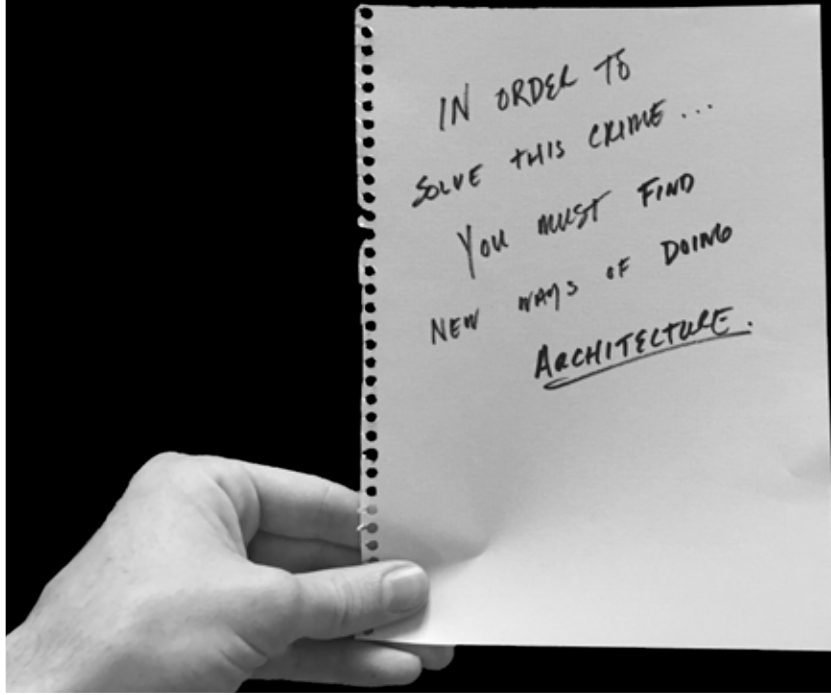
{01} the full library of clues is listed in the 'bibliography' section of this document

{4}the album "Purple Rain" by Prince (1986)⁰¹



{02} likely an accident or red herring

5.A note that says:



6.A box of 6 cards titled:

oblique
strategies

"use them to guide you"

hmmm...

in order to solve this crime, you must find new ways of doing architecture...

In order to find the true murderer and enter this mysterious room,
I'll probably need to know this answer...

... but how do you find new ways of doing architecture?

My first instinct was to consult the library of books, to see if something could guide
me in the right direction...



I open a highlighted article titled, "Critical or Post-Critical" by architectural theorist Mark Jarzombek (evidence seen on next page):

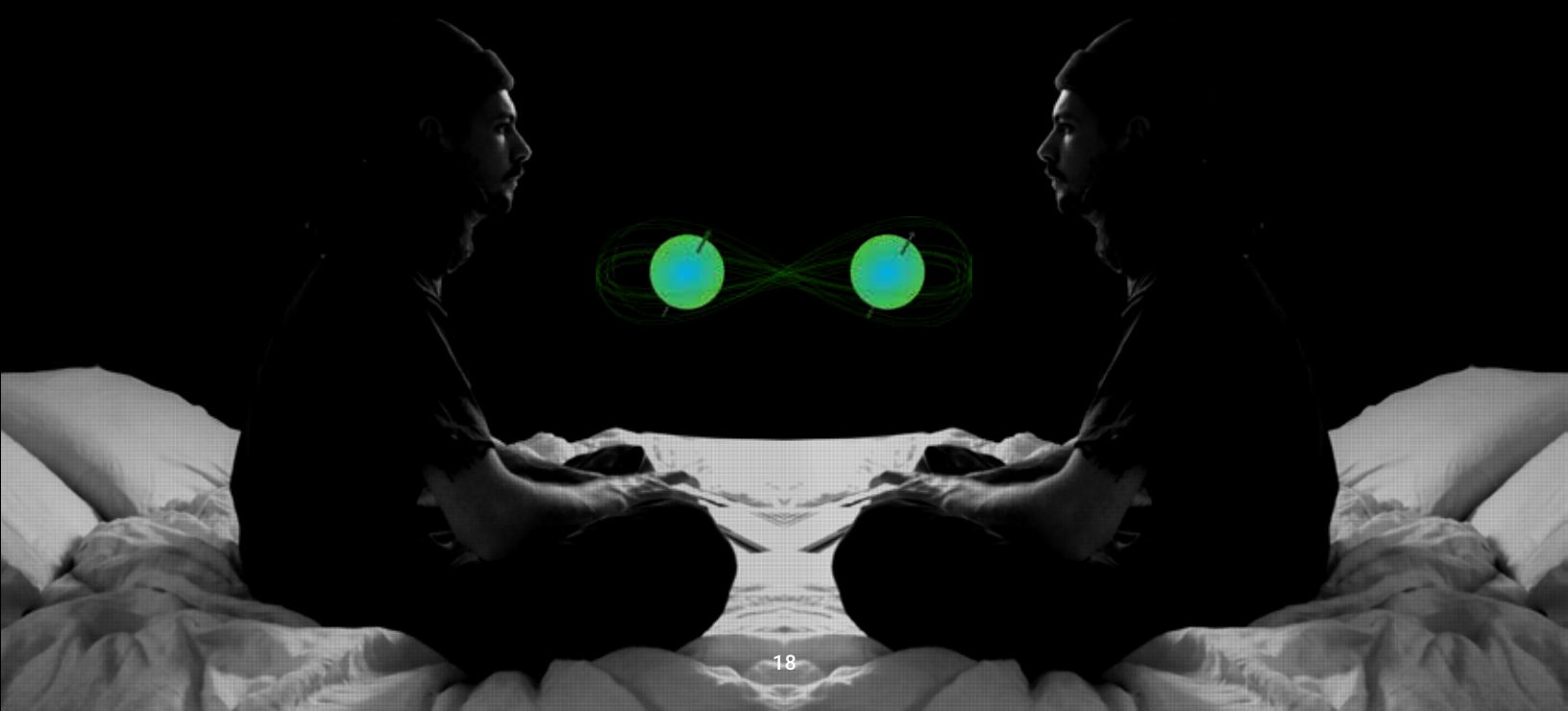
"If the future lies with the Post-critical, there is enough healthy nostalgia for the Critical that it might survive. This is not to argue for one against the other. Instead, I believe that architectural discourse would be best served if the two were put in some relationship to each other. But that could only happen if they are mediated by a tertiary form of 'critical practice', one that is akin to investigatory journalism. It would aim to point out the hypocrisies, ambivalences, complexities and ambiguities of our various aspirations..." (Jarzombek; 2002)

Following Jarzombek's logic, if you place "Alex", the aspiring architect aligned with the post-critical architectural practice, and the other Alex, the hacker, as the critical... I can better understand my goal here: to create an architectural discourse that would put these two subjects in relationship with each other. A process that may point out the complexities and ambiguities of our aspirations as designers. Maybe this is the way I can perform a new way of doing architecture?

But where do i turn? How do I do that?

post-critical

critical



Fifthly, the possibilities that a Critical Practice is something that relates to one's private philosophy (as perhaps with Robert Venturi and Peter Eisenman) is becoming increasingly difficult in the world of that requires the corporatization of knowledge. Compare the short idea-articles of the 1970s with the corporate-textual productions of Koolhaas. Furthermore, the small 'idea-oriented' architectural office is going the way of the American family farmer. Surveys have shown a sad—and still much unrecognized—decline in mid-level firms, many of them no longer able to keep up with the expense of advanced computational design that is now required for larger projects. As a result almost any small, private practice is defacto a 'critical practice.'

What I am trying to say is that a discussion about Critical Practice is also a discussion about changes in the academic, disciplinary, and financial structure of architecture and the profession.

If the future lies with the Post-critical, there is enough healthy nostalgia for the Critical that it might survive. This is not to argue for one against the other. Instead, I believe that architectural discourse would be best served if the two were put in some relationship to each other. But that could only happen if they are mediated by a tertiary form of 'critical practice,' one that is akin to investigatory journalism. It would aim to point out the hypocrisies, ambivalences, complexities and ambiguities of our various aspirations. Such a 'critical practice' could, for example, point to the reductionism and techno-centrism that seems now to be embedded in much of our contemporary architectural teaching. Admittedly, such a 'critical practice' can only be sustained in academe, and then *only* in those academic environments that are not already given over to the idealist, pragmatist and empiricist ideologies that are such a part of mega-critical issues of today.

I believe that to have a truly vigorous discussion in the field of architecture, we will need all three forms of critical practice. The future is on the side of the first, and tradition on the side of the second. But without the third, critical practice is either a self-fulfilling prophesy, or a chimera.

Footnotes

- 1 See also Mark Jarzombek, "The Disciplinary Dislocations of Architectural History," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (Winter 1999): 488-493; "Molecules, Money and Design: The Question of Sustainability's Role in Architectural Academe," *Thresholds 18* (Spring 1999): 32-38; and "A Prolegomena to Critical Historiography," *Journal of Architectural Education* 52/4 (1999): 197-206.
- 2 Most Ph.D. programs are now moving toward a five-year package of tuition and stipend. Fifteen years ago, funding was minimal. Ten years ago, the three year package was the norm. Furthermore, because of the need to finish, the old model where Ph.D. students would supplement their income by working in a firm during the summer to pick up extra dollars is now frowned upon.

OBLIQUE STRATEGY #01

understand the
aspirations of the
self

Maybe, i need to result back to the work that both suspects aspired toward. Looking back at my clues, I thought I would review the research and aspirations of Alex, the aspiring architect...

Orthographics, Renders, and bibliographies reveal that Alex's education led him to believe that the rapidly approaching 'smart city' was inevitable, and the architect must focus on systems thinking and technology to help revolutionize the way we live in the built environment--creating a modular, highly efficient, "re-naturing" of the urban experience.

Investigating the library of clues, urban design theorist, Maroš Krivý, defines Alex's perspective on the Smart City:

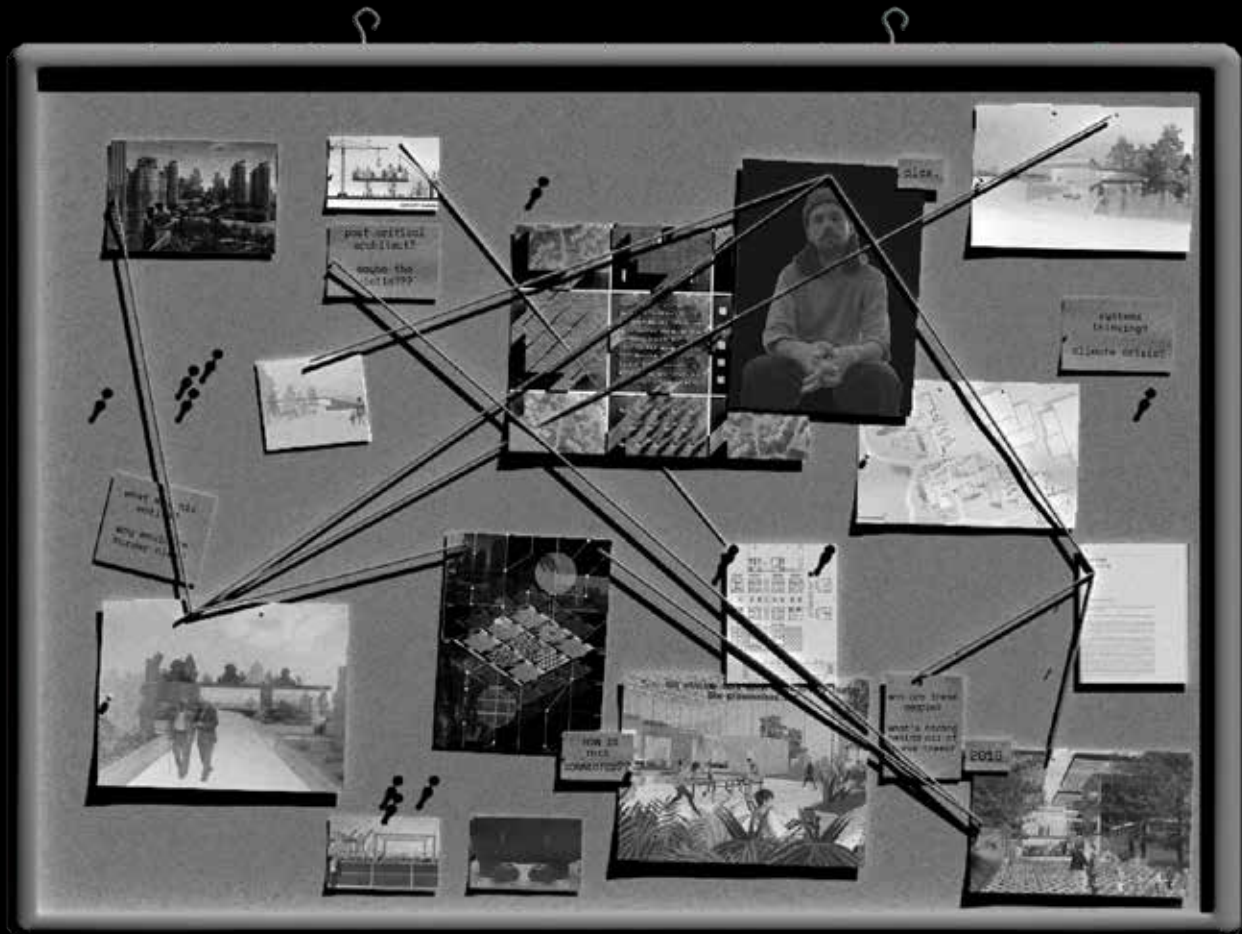
"Those who strongly support the Smart City agree that the omnipresence of digital, interactive technologies in urban environments, households and as citizens' personal devices will optimize patters of consumption and communication, and assert the centrality of interactive Big Data in perfecting urban dynamics and governance."⁰¹

The evidence reveals that Alex believed that technology could help crack the code of urbanism, sustainability, and the built environment through a proliferation of interfaces, sensors, and open data that empowers equality to all citizens. His work was not shaped by abstract concepts like resistance and novelty, but by the need to solve pressing and large-scale communal, ethical, corporate, sustainable, and global problems.⁰² Working together with large tech corporations would give agency to architects to solve large scale issues like climate change, density, and the housing crisis -- re-emerging the architect to their salad days.

To Alex, architecture was the driving catalyst behind solving global issues. In the wake of the climate crisis, cities all around the world are facing major challenges when it comes to rapid urbanization, aging populations, loneliness, climate change and lack of affordable housing. In Alex's mind, unless we integrate innovative technologies our built environment, our cities will become increasingly unsustainable, unaffordable and inequitable.

{01} Krivý, Maroš. "Towards a Critique of Cybernetic Urbanism: The Smart City and the Society of Control." *Planning Theory* 17, no. 1 (2018): 8-30.

{02} Jarzombek, Mark. "Critical or Post-Critical." *Architectural Theory Review* 7, no. 1 (2002): 149-51. This sentence is a paraphrased from Jarzombek's definition for a post-critical architect.



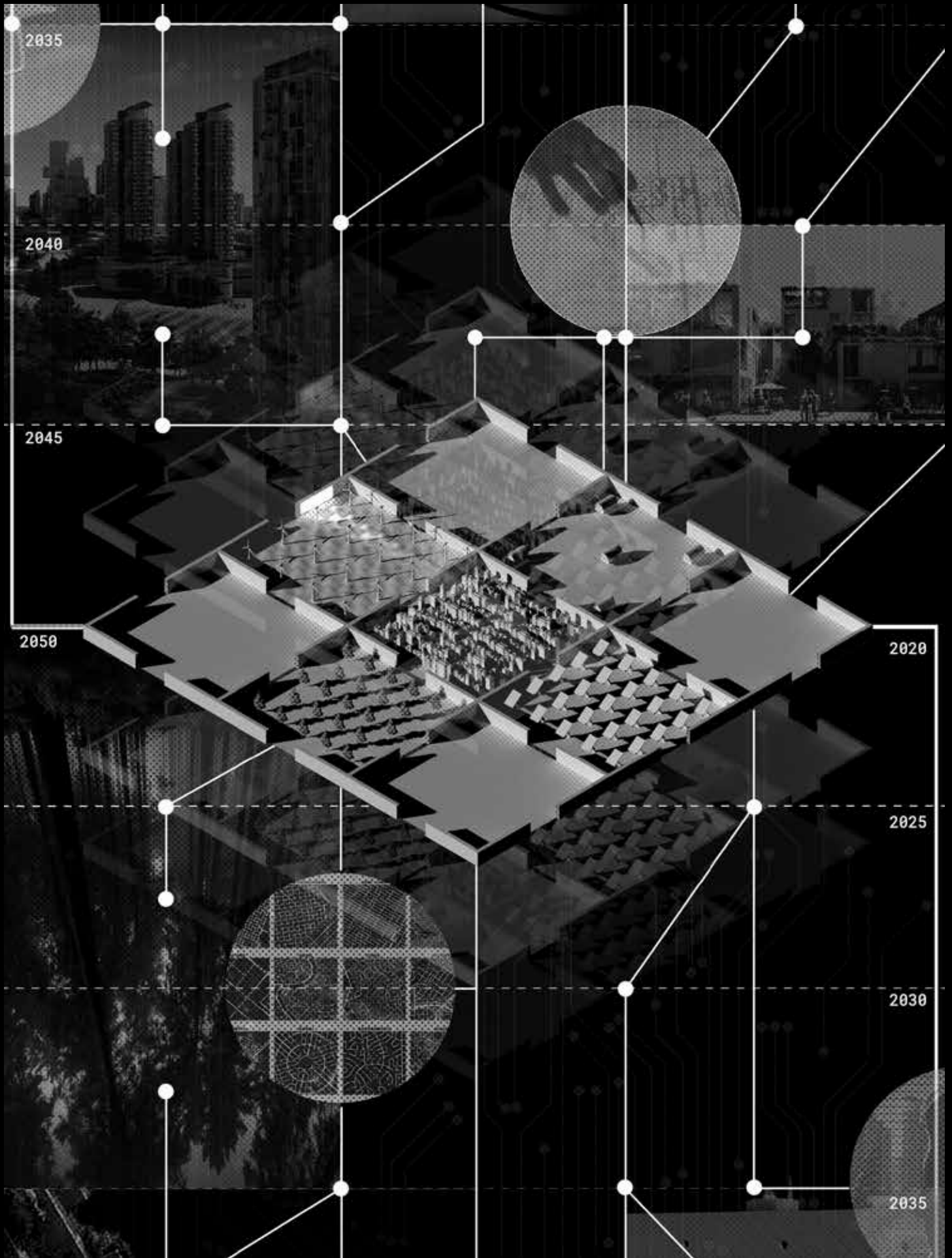
Alex's design, 'The Village',⁰³ presumably located somewhere in the pacific northwest in 2050, solves the 9 square problem,⁰⁴ combining a variety of innovative technologies, such as energy positive homes, renewable energy, energy storage, door-step high-yield organic food production, vertical farming aquaponics/aeroponics, water management and waste-to-resource systems. It's a world where tech money and the ingenuity of the architect fuse together to solve large scale issues.

Is this where the murder took place? Sometime in the future?
Immersed in solving global issues, did the architect murder the other version of himself
in fear that his work undermined by his critical eye?

...in what ways are architects complicit in crimes against the built environment?

{03} Please see image on page 23 to reference Alex's design

{04} Largely perceived as an abstract exercise, the Nine Square Grid is a pedagogical tool used by architecture instructors to challenge our understanding of structure, composition, and spatial arrangement as well as light, depth, and circulation. These drawings look especially sexy on a piece of paper. The image of Alex's 'The Village' that you see on the right is a prime example of this. If you want to learn more, just google 'John Hejduk Nine Square Grid.'



The other version of himself, whom at this point might be the victim, felt that many of the offerings of the architect in relationship to sustainability and social justice issues concealed a much larger issue.

Referencing the one of the articles in the library of clues, Alex quoted the author, Kristin Scott:

“I contend that some of the city’s current digital technological initiative and open data programs reflect an ideological project that functions, at times, to conceal the city’s larger economic agenda...

The smart city can solve the preexisting racial and economic disparities -- yet, the city’s smart city economy relies upon major corporate investments, increased privatization, and urban revitalization policies that reinforce socio-economic divides.”⁰⁵

Architectural pedagogy and practice has become so focused on green, that they’ve missed the point altogether... having already arrived in post-critical discourse where architects sit comfortably within a political domain that is essentially capitalist and centrist.

These post-critical practices and universities, though seemingly different, operate in a realm known by huge scales, whether that realm be physical, virtual, or ethical. None of them touch on architectural historical-theoretical issues in the traditional sense because they are all grounded in essentially goal-oriented attachments to science, culture, and empiricism.⁰⁶

The result is an architectural discourse about Sustainability and large scale problem solving that -- from a cultural and theoretical point of view -- is tottering on irrelevancy. And this is not because these issues are not real, or the globe is not warming. Instead, Mark Jarzombek argues:

“The reason we want the appearance of Nature and the illusions of Science to (co-)exist is that they hold out the promise of a fixed point on which to leverage design and policy...

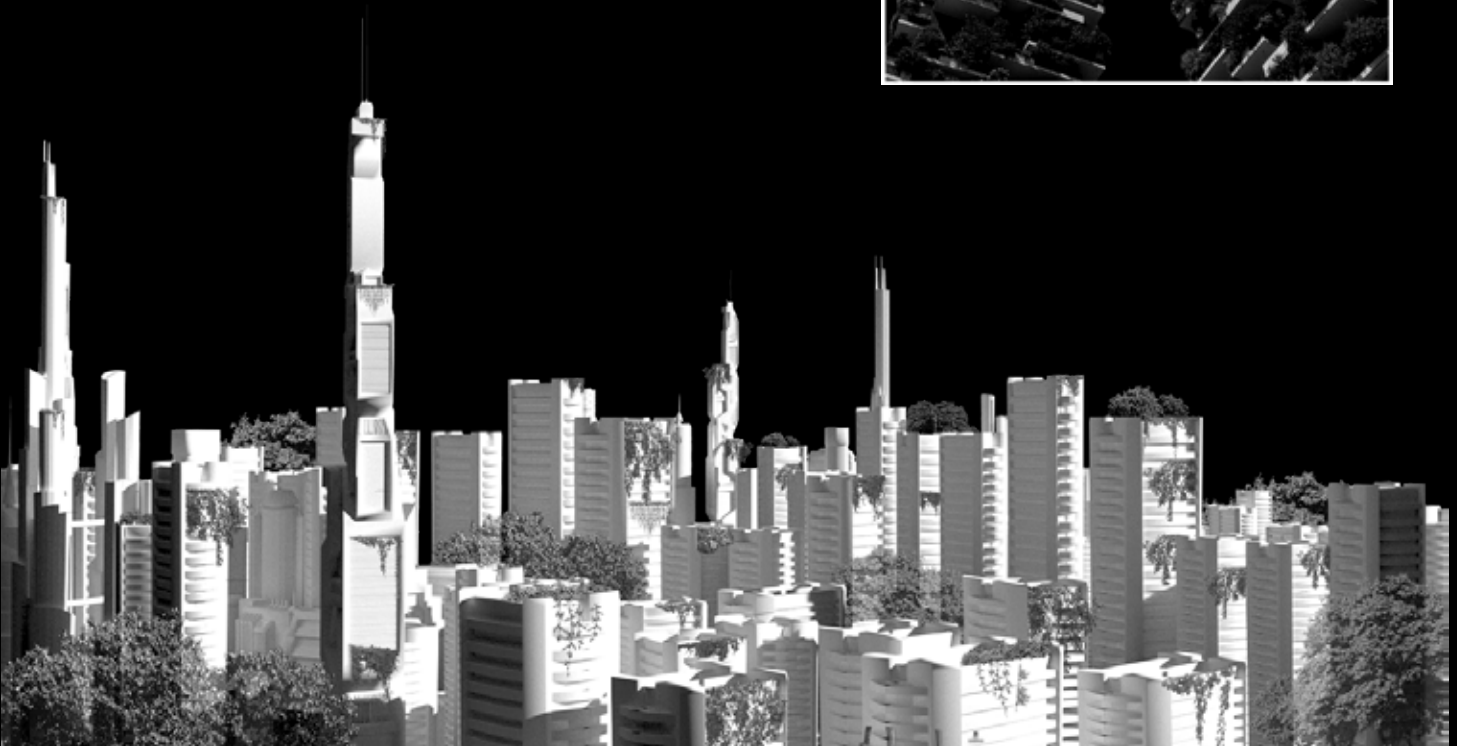
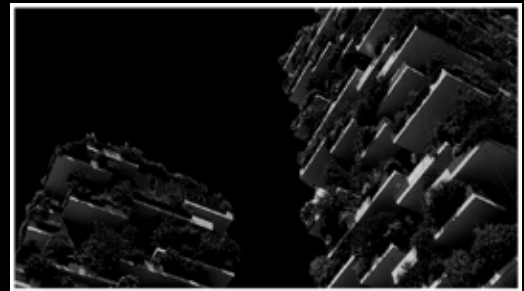
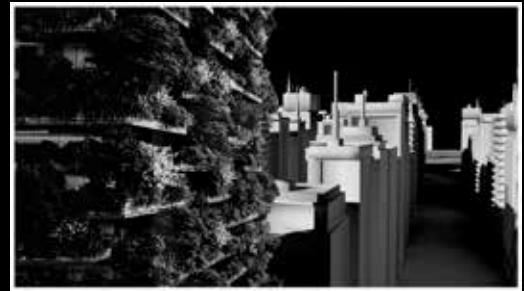
{05} Scott, Kristin. “Smart City Seattle and Geographies of Exclusion” in *The Digital City and Mediated Urban Ecologies*. Palgrave Macmillan. (2016).

{06} Jarzombek, Mark. “Critical or Post-Critical.” *Architectural Theory Review* 7, no. 1 (2002): 149-51. This sentence is a paraphrased from Jarzombek’s definition for a post-critical architect.

...But that Archimedean point -- and the Utopian project of modernization of which it is founded -- does not exist and to hold onto the illusion that it does is simply absurd. Just as religion is the opium of the masses, Sustainability is now the opium of architects, policymakers and technocrats."⁰⁷

Clearly, both suspects could not agree.
Standing in opposition, dualistically separated...
it's no wonder this conflict ended in blood.

However, there is no evidence here that proves either suspect the true criminal who blinked.



{07} Jarzombek, Mark. "ECO-Pop" in Cornell Journal of Architecture 8:RE, (2011). The three images you see above are 3D model replicas of Alex's eco-utopia village created by (investigator formerly known as architect).

Alex, the architect, was an ever optimist,
he believed in the ability for architecture to better the world...

_SUSPECT_PROFILE_

NAME: *Alexander M. Barr*
ALIASES: *alexander attitude*
alex

DOB: *July 19 {YEAR UNKNOWN}*
HEIGHT: *5' 9"*
WEIGHT: *140*
SEX: *male*
HAIR: *dark brown. {long}*
EYES: *hazel*

OCCUPATION: *architect*

EDUCATION: *M.ARCH: University of Washington {2017-2020}*
- emphasis on sustainability and systems
thinking within architecture

BA Humanities: Seattle Unive
- teacher, educator, aw

EVIDENCE: *{2050} "the village"*
location: PNW, unkown
- sustainable off the
somewhere in thepa cif

{2020} folk school for the
location: copenhagen,

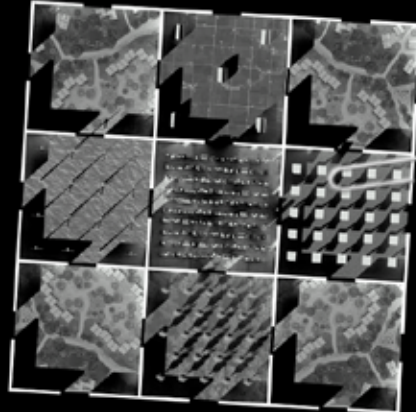
{2019} the cozy rug
location: pier 48, sea

{2019} center for urban waters
location: seattle, wa

LOCATION: *{unknown}*
considered armed and dangerous



Case# "ALEX (1)"



while the other part of himself, Alex, the hacker,
sought to challenge it's very existence...

I thought this would be a good time to look into his work:

_SUSPECT_PROFILE_

NAME: Alexander M. Barr
ALIASES: alexander attitude
barra
abarr

DOB: July 19 {YEAR UNKN
HEIGHT: 5' 9"
WEIGHT: 140
SEX: male
HAIR: dark brown.{long}
EYES: hazel

OCCUPATION: hacker


EDUCATION: M.ARCH: University of Washington {2017-2020}
- emphasis on questioning the profession of
architecture, buildings, and his place within it.

BA Humanities: Seattle University {T
- teacher, educator, award winner

PROTOTYPES:

- {2020} **_TONER_**
- a prototype that asks
longer about hosting, acc
- {2020} **_body_plotter**
- what if the basics of arch
bodily movement, organic pe
- {2019} **_attitude_suit_**
- a prototype that explores t
architecture, sound, wearbles,
bodily movement, and all the s

LOCATION: {unknown}
considered armed and dangerous



Case# "ALEX (2)"

To find inspiration for undermining the practice of architecture as a profession of building making, the other Alex found refuge in the methodological playgrounds of hacking, cinema, design fiction, media archaeology, and new media art to explore, hybridize, borrow, and embrace the many tools available for crafting, not only things, but also ideas – fictional worlds, what-if scenarios, thought experiments, and so on.

Coined by Bruce Sterling, the practice of Design Fiction seeks “the deliberate use of diegetic prototypes to suspend disbelief about change.” The key term in this definition is diegesis, a literature and film study term that describes “things which are inside the world of a fiction”.⁰⁸

Alex’s design speculations gave form to a multiverse of worlds, questioning what our world could be. Rather than accepting architecture as a profession of products within the environment, Alex sought to question laws, ethics, political systems, social beliefs, values, fears, and hopes, and how all of those may be translated into a material or experiential expression... becoming little bits of another world that function as synechodes.⁰⁹

Design fiction and speculative design provide overlapping and emerging approaches to making sense of complex interactions and their possible future consequences. As outlined by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby in “Speculative Everything,” speculation is an opportunity to open up rigorously researched and informed alternatives to hegemonic beliefs and behaviors. Design for the future questions the present and imagines how things could be different-- avoiding simple, unified solutions to a better physical world. Assumptions are challenged and one of a million tiny, non-hierarchical utopias is presented.¹⁰

Alex saw fiction is a way of making-do with reality, while creatively borrowing from the past and possibility. As a novel approach to bringing fiction into practice, his work provides an approach to the production of prototypes that can be measured through the implications of asking “what-if.”

{08} Sterling, Bruce. “Symposium Keynote: January 29, 2011” in *Made Up: Design’s Fictions*. (2017)

{09} Dunne, Anthony., and Raby, Fiona. *Speculative Everything : Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming*. Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London: MIT Press, 2013.e (pg. 70).

{10} *Ibid*, 2-3.

What if architecture, for centuries conceived as an artifact of making, and shaped by human uniqueness, could be conceived as a dynamic interface... An agent in the process of shaping the human body and identity?

What if architecture were no longer about hosting, accommodating, managing, spatializing, expressing, manifesting, and signifying human needs, but about designing the human itself?

11

What if architecture accepted the extended embodiment of digital means and ceased to consider them as tools and machines -- but as organs of thinking creatively orchestrating human and nonhuman cognition, perception, movement, and action?

What if the body could become an interface for the creative process? Before we establish grids, geometry, and rigorous organization -- what if the basics of architecture started with bodily movement, organic performance, collaboration, & uncertain experimentation? ¹²

Is it possible, that this version of Alex hired me to find new ways of doing architecture?

Was he unable to break free of the staring match?

In a passion of desire to free himself from this infinite prison, did he blink?
just to ask himself; what if?

Was bending the knee to the post-critical discourse a desperate attempt to break free?
Does time have something to do with this? And what does again imply?

{11} Voyatzaki, Maria. "Architectural Materialisms: Nonhuman Creativity." In Architectural Materialisms: Nonhuman Creativity, edited by Voyatzaki Maria, pg 20. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

{12} The next few pages will have images of some of Alex's research, however, if you'd like an in depth investigation of all of his films, prototypes, and thought experiments -- go check it out in the clues and evidence appendix of this document.



* this is a screenshot from the film "cut up" by Alex -- exploring subjects like multiplicity, entanglement, identity, and performance. "space is an embodied platform where we may perform the splitting dance of fictional uncertainty making"



* "what if we deconstruct our own identities as something other than an architect? cutting into the present, so that the future may leak out. this way, time is no longer a linear sequence, space is no longer based on physical materiality, sound becomes spatialized, and architecture is no longer a profession that designs buildings, but instead as a way of thinking and questioning our world and our place within it?"



* this is a screenshot for Alex's film titled "body lottery", which explores the human body in relationship to technology, identity, and post-human theory? Imagine, if you will, that you actualized your ability to radically deconstruct the separation of the self and 'the other'... then we can think of the multiverse as happening right now, here, through our own bodies, through the same matter which is composing the universe...



* this is a screenshot for Alex's film titled "through the conduit". evidence reveals that this could be understood as a 'birthing' narrative. is this where the idea for (investigator formerly known as architect) was born?



Can we think fictitiously about the role of the architect to combat the superficial monsters of our own creation? Can design fiction inform identity politics by providing shape-shifting narratives about the future architect?



By hacking an object heavily associated with 'strength' and individuality, the TONEr allows folks the freedom to explore and ask, how can technology help bring us closer together? What is our technology and our architecture doing to help redefine gender and the role of our bodies in space?



How might we connect back to this discipline by developing interfacing prototypes? Can we transgress the notion of the architect by seeking to reconnect with architecture, rather than releasing it... by employing fiction rather than "reality"? How can design fiction intend change and the perception of the our built environments by allowing us to understand them in different ways?

OBLIQUE STRATEGY #02

“you need to be at
exactly the right
place, at exactly the
right time... again”

Hmmm... perhaps,
if I want to enter the room to discover the murderer,
I'll have to be somewhere at the correct time?

But which time?
Where is the right place?
Is it physical, or in the mind?

 As I've started to slowly learn,
nothing is quite as it seems in this place,
so time might be something I need to explore first...



I consulted one the books that referenced feedback loops¹³ as a way of understanding the self. In his article, "Strange Loops: Towards an Aesthetics of the Anthropocene", author Todd Gannon proposes feedback loops as an aesthetic that helps entangle binary thinking,

"Promising lines of thought will resist the easy partitioning of issues into dire choices (people vs. planet, complacency vs. action, oblivion vs. salvation) and instead will acknowledge that the options outlined in such showdowns... tend to curl back on themselves in complex feedback loops through which environments and their inhabitants co-construct one another. In these loops, oppositions do not finally settle into fixed hierarchies or resolve into dialectical syntheses. Rather, they reveal the imbrication of certainty and doubt, cause and effect, and beauty and justice in the uncanny coexistence of the human "us" and the nonhuman "other." ¹⁴

The strange loop revels in paradoxes – where you are both individual and species, both part of the problem and not. The key is to not resolve contradictions, but rather, showing uncanny actions and paradoxical coexistences outline a future at one with the mystery and magic that one finds throughout the world. For Gannon, who references the work of Timothy Morton, these strange loops, and the flattened hierarchies that result from them, demand a wholesale reconsideration of philosophy, politics, art, and (for the argument of this thesis) architecture.¹⁵

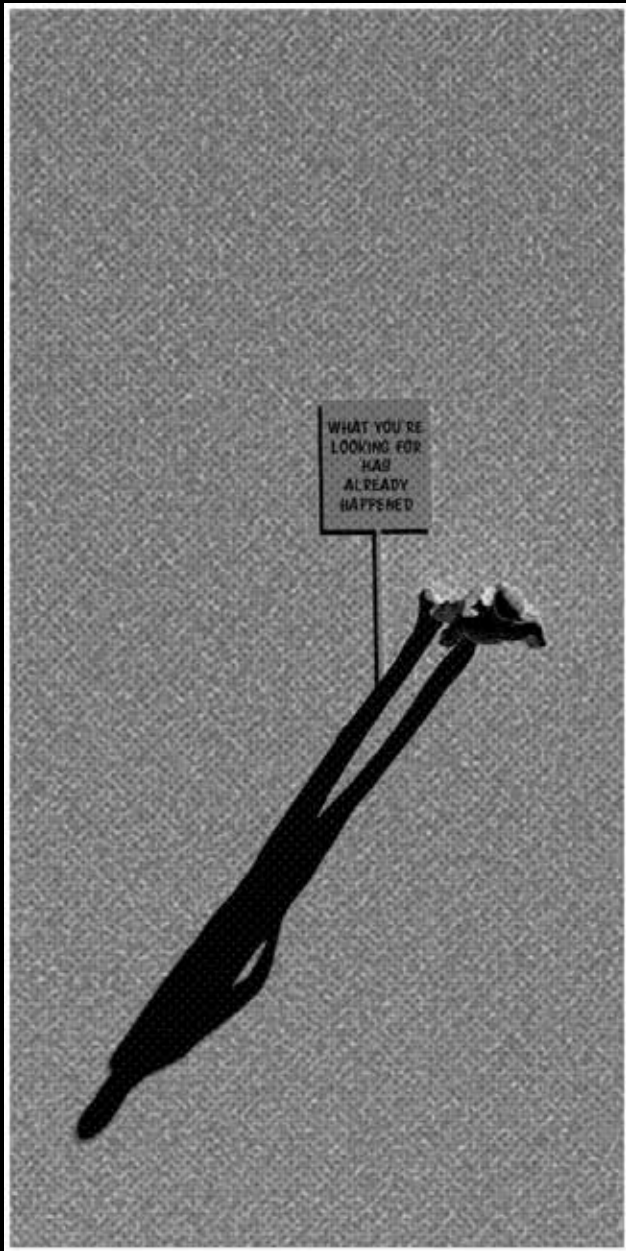
What if the scene of the crime was a co-construction of both Alex's? In a reflexive paradox, what if both Alex's created a weird, alien, and uncanny landscape, coiled into strange loops by persistent ironies and paradox? Where the oppositions of their ideas created a universe that was full of contradiction, certainty and doubt.

Could these loops, and the flattened hierarchies that result from them, demand a wholesale reconsideration of architecture? And maybe even the crime itself?

{13} A feedback loop (also known as a strange loop) is a cyclic process that goes through several levels in a hierarchical system. It arises when, by moving only upwards or downwards through the system, one finds oneself back where one started. Strange loops revel in self-reference and paradox. Works from MC Escher and Franz Kafka are prime examples of strange loop paradoxes, both visually and metaphorically.

{14} Gannon, Todd. "Strange Loops: Toward an Aesthetics for the Anthropocene." *Journal of Architectural Education: Environments* 71, no. 2 (2017): 142-45.

{15} Ibid. It's important to note that Gannon is referencing the work of Timothy Morton's book "Dark Ecology". Morton's work discusses the relationship of the strange loop from the lens of ecological issues.



* the graphics above are screenshots from animated GIFs in the (investigator formerly known as architect) comic. which is made entirely of loops (GIF, sound, and narrative). co-constructed by Alex's utopia and the other Alex's arguments against post-critical architecture, is this where the murder takes place?

What if, in order to be at exactly the right place and exactly time {again}, I understood this murder investigation as a strange loop? Where the two Alex's co-constructed a darkened uncanny landscape together in an entangled narrative. What types of new evidence might be revealed through this process?

I began to recreate every aspect of Alex's utopia as the landscape of the murder.¹⁶

What if I began experimenting with these loops to find new mediums to express an architectural narrative?

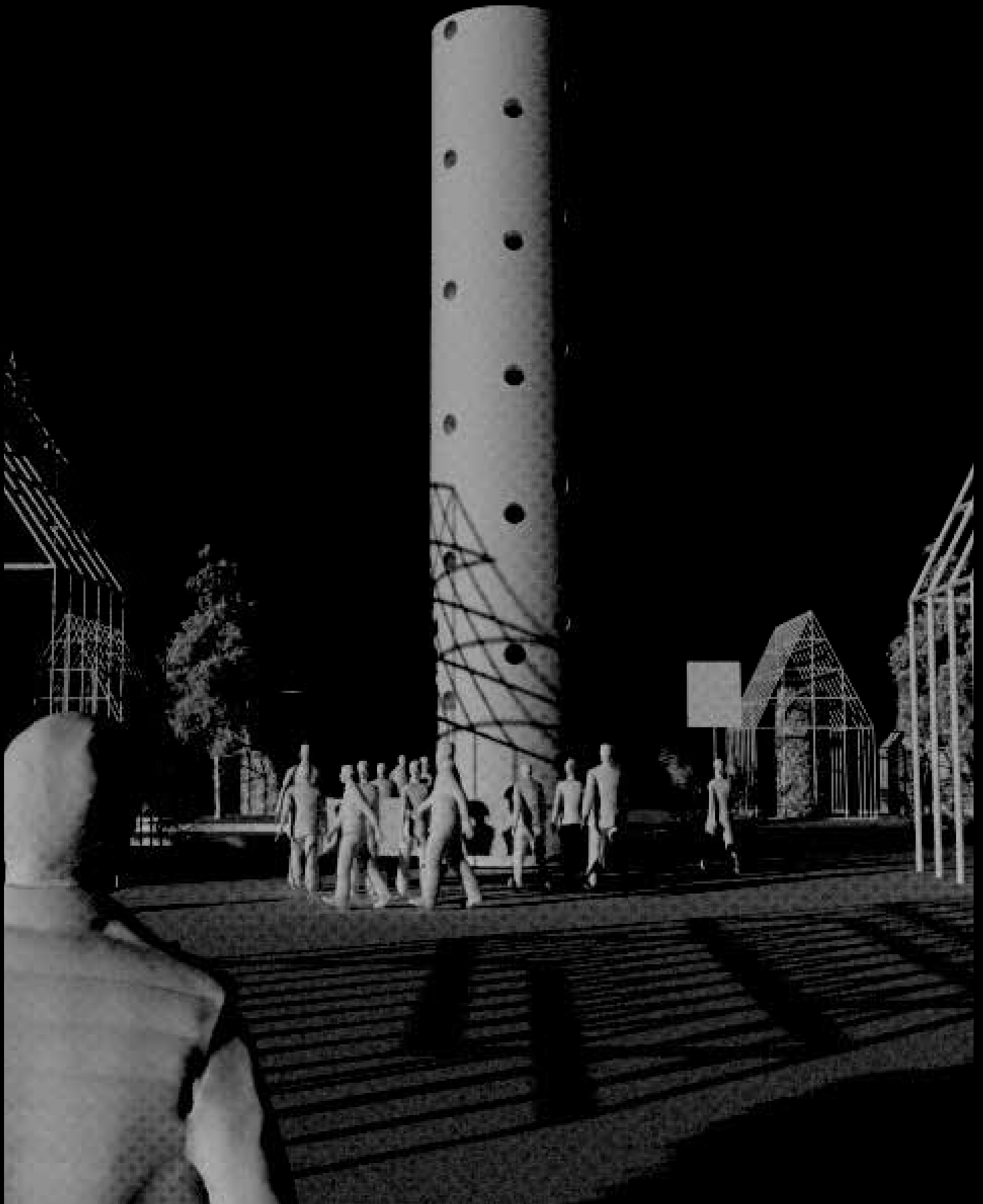
But in an effort of co-construction, what if Alex (the hacker) was found dead at the scene?

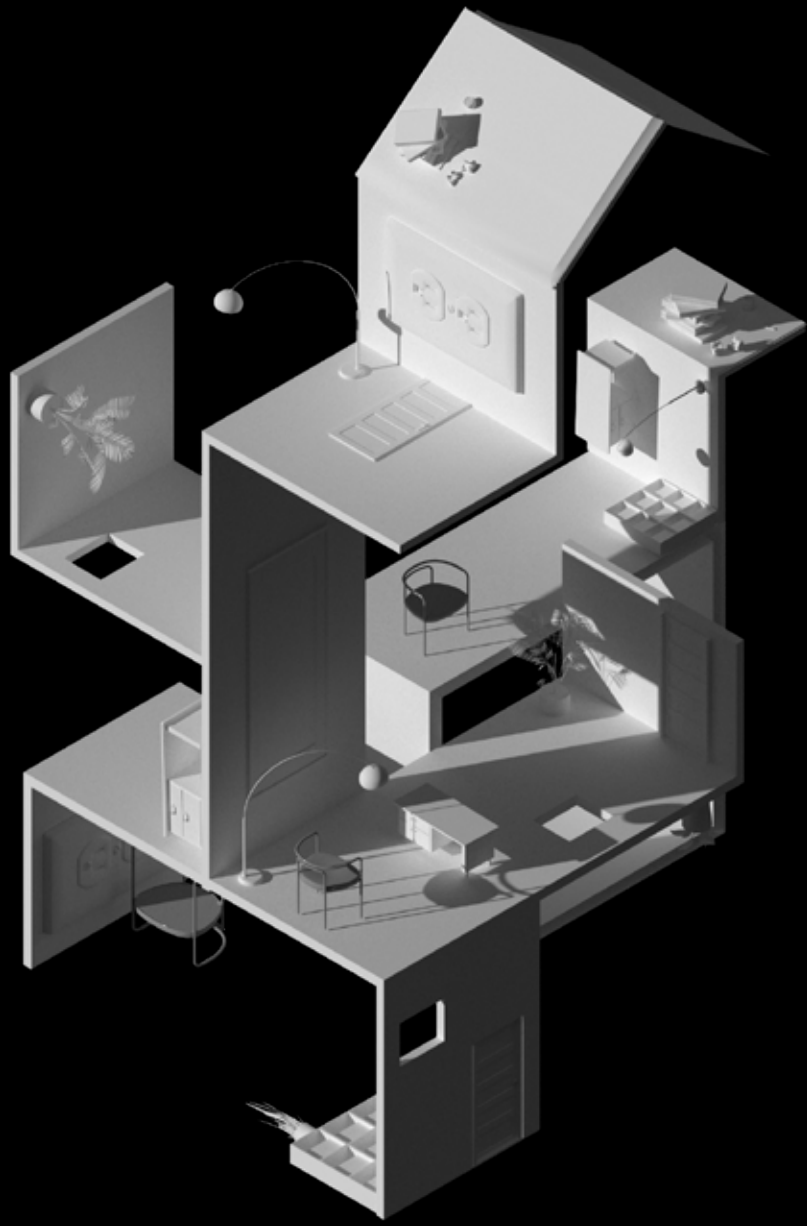
Both characters, stuck in a strange loop of a murder investigation... inside of a murder investigation... inside of another murder investigation...

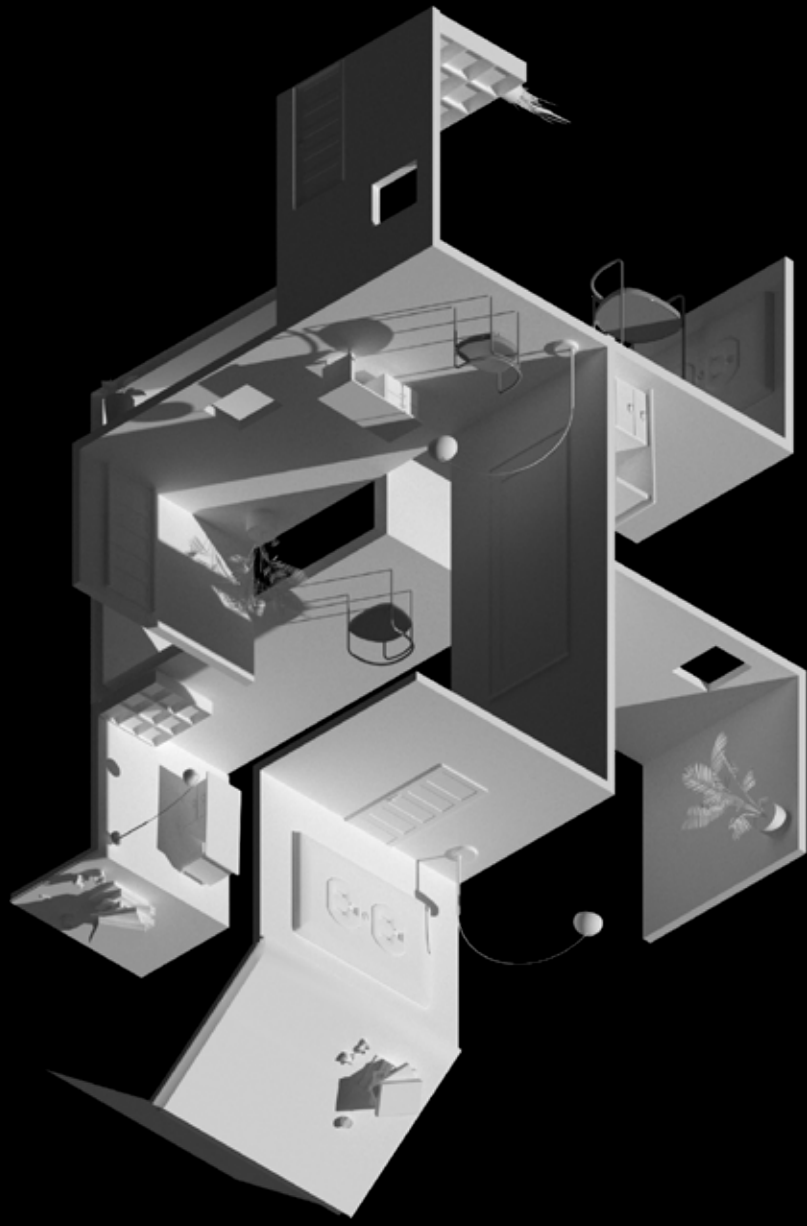
what types of uncanny coexistences can reveal more about the murder?

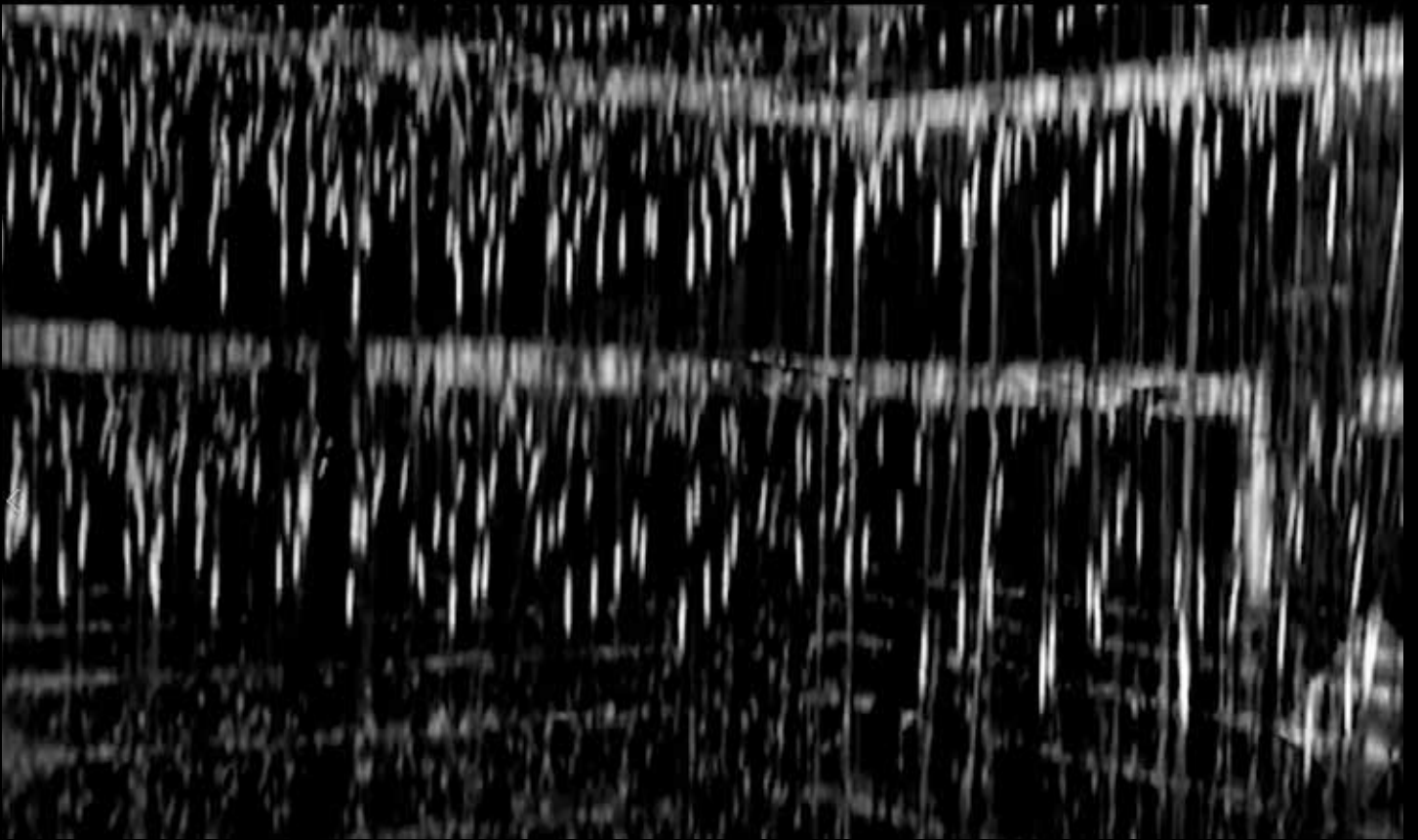
What happens when I create a looping narrative where both Alex's are forced to live their worst nightmare? Forcing them to confront the darkness and truth within themselves; could the feedback loop narrative reveal the murderer?

{16} (investigator formerly known as architect) is a fully immersive GIF comic and murder investigation set in Alex's 'off the grid' smart city and eco-village somewhere in the Pacific Northwest in 2050. The crime is set through the lens of Alex, the architect, inside of a strange loop of a murder investigation of Alex, the hacker. You can visit the comic here: investigatorformerlyknownasarchitect.cargo.site.









* these images and subsequent text are from an installation titled "...i am a strange loop of becoming..." by Alexander M. Barr in Spring of 2020. Which Alex designed this contraption? We

SOMETHING STRANGE APPEARED BEFORE MY EYES...

OVER A CACOPHONY OF NOISE... A STRANGE VOICE SPOKE TO ME...

"... You may or may not have experienced this before. You may or may not have already lived or have yet to live this experience more an innumerable amount times. You may or may not have lost your teeth an infinite amount of times. (Was it a dream?) Every joy, every thought, breath and everything minuscule or great in your life will have to return to you, all in a non linear sequence an infinite number of times. You may or may not continue to live in a continuous loop of becoming...

... You may or may not have experienced this before. You may or may not have already beheaded the snake. (Was it a dream?) You may or may not be a vessel of precognitive loops, able foresee the future self by cutting into the present. Fragments of your future, mixed in with memories of your past, will return to you in a non linear sequence an infinite number of times as a feedback loop. You may or may not have lost your teeth an infinite amount of times. (Was it a dream?) It may or may not be an epiphenomenon which emerges as an unintentional consequence of the fact that your mind and dreams perceive and construct a mirage of your place in the world. You must cut into the present, to rediscover the past, which then reinterprets the future, which then reinvents the now...

... You may or may not have experienced this before. You may or may not understand identity as a series of performances -- future storytelling from the mind's eye. Consciousness may or may not be an exploration of self through new mediums, embracing the process of becoming. Then, and only then, as if by some mysterious phenomenon, by its infinite continuation you will discover that self consciousness is just a feedback of memories, evolved into objects, turned into shapes, voiced into sound, sound into space, and then suddenly, and possibly an infinite amount of times, you may or may not see and understand yourself as an abstraction in relationship to the world quite clearly again (Was it a dream?)..."¹⁷

Have i seen this before? Was this the door the room?

Some kind of looping contraption as the final piece to the crime?

... I tried to walk in, however, i could not move... something was missing?

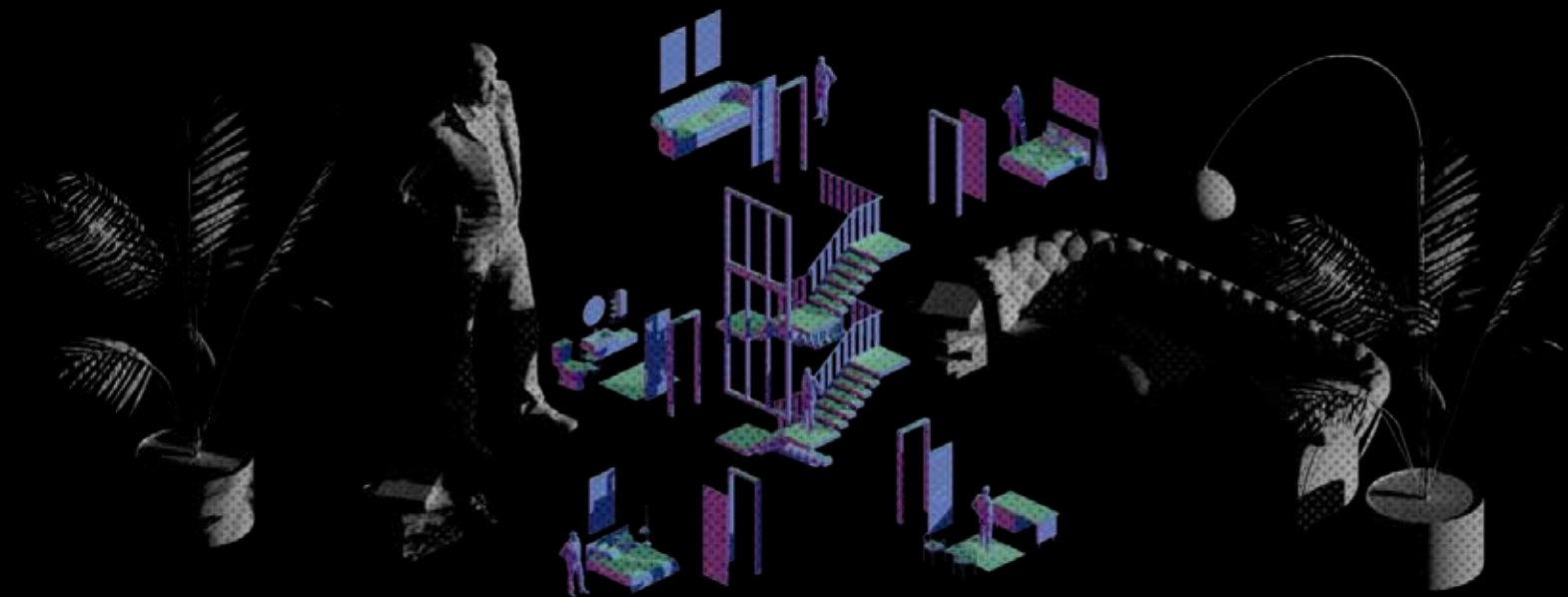
{17} Barr, Alexander. "...i am a strange loop of becoming..." (2019). This is an excerpt that was a final performance for a studio with my committee member, Nicole Huber. This project focused on the strange loop as a infinite amount of performances in understanding yourself in relationship to the world.

Inside the loop, i am exactly the right place, at exactly the right time... all of the architectural theory and clues lead me here ...what else could i have missed?

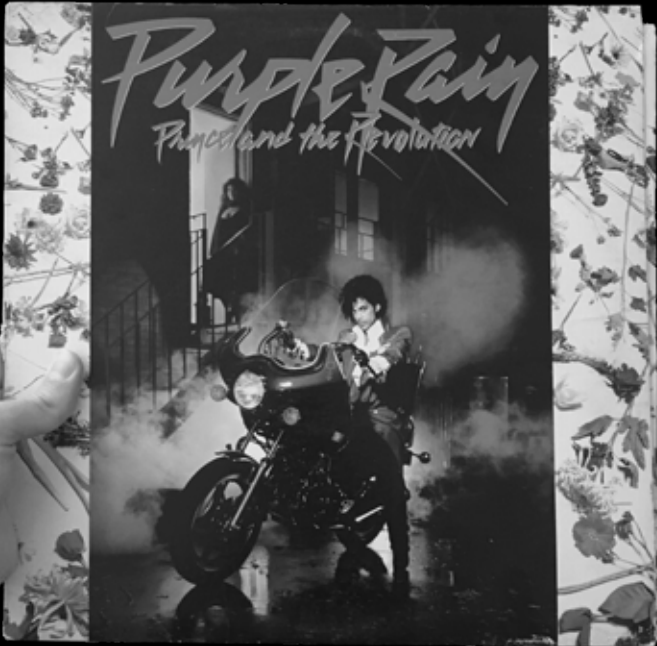
(I opened my oblique strategy)

... nothing...

Maybe the clue to doing new ways of architecture was outside the field altogether?



"TUNE 2 A NEW FREE-QUENCY"



What if this album wasn't a red herring?

What if this album was actually a clue?

But what does prince have to do with finding new ways of doing architecture?

How can an album be evidence in a murder investigation?

This couldn't have been the weapon...

I opened the album sleeve, which revealed an androgynous splitting of a face.... Two binaries, separated. The symbolism, strikingly similar to the situation I'm in now. Like these two versions of Alex, Prince had multiple identities internally, but also as a musician, a filmmaker, an actor, an artist, philanthropist, and activist.

Multiplicities played out in all sorts of ways – in terms of musical style, fashion, album art, even the members of his bands. Musically, it meant combining different genres, techniques and influences. Sometimes it even meant creating different identities for himself.

His alter-ego, Camille, was an feminine example of his desire to transcend gender normativity. "Prince's pitch-shifted, feminized vocal sound was the wholly logical, yet completely unexpected and surprising, extension of his compulsion to dissolve borderlines."¹⁸



{18} Reynolds, Simon. "How Prince's Androgynous Genius Changed the Way We Think About Music and Gender" Pitchfork. (2016).

In Camille, there is almost a disembodiment of the human voice, as it is pushed to produce sounds that seem to speak of things outside earthly existence, far beyond our physical mortal limits. That's why these forcibly etherealized vocal sounds generally connote the angelic, the extra-terrestrial, the cosmic and otherworldly.

Prince's other identity, (love symbol), challenged, not only our understanding of identities, but also language. This change caused an uproar in pop culture. It presented all kinds of logistical challenges for the media, resulting in clumsy titles like, "Artist Formerly Known as Prince" and "TAFKAP". In one interview, an MTV host pleaded to (love symbol), "It's hard to say your name because we don't know how to pronounce it... do you see the problem?" To which, Prince simply responded, "for whom?"¹⁹

Music writer, Simon Reynolds argued that, "Prince posed himself as a human question mark, a mystery creature whose very being transgressed and transcended any division or boundary that stood in the way of total emancipation."²⁰ Prince became an unpronounceable symbol whose meaning could not be spoken or identified, but instead, as Prince stated in his press release, "It's all about thinking in new ways, turning in 2 a new free-quency."²¹



{19} Lussenhop, Jessica. "Why Did Prince Change His Name to a Symbol?". BBC News Magazine. Article. (2016).

{20} Reynolds, Simon. "How Prince's Androgynous Genius Changed the Way We Think About Music and Gender" Pitchfork. (2016).

{21} Lussenhop, Jessica. "Why Did Prince Change His Name to a Symbol?". BBC News Magazine. Article. (2016). Even the evolution of (love symbol) implies an existence that is never static, always changing, and deconstructing ... Time is only a construct of the mind.

Prince sat at the edges of race, gender, and sexuality and rejected all borders. In doing so, he was able to perform and become a genre unto himself sonically and interpersonally. Taking the binaries, Prince turned them in on themselves into a feedback loop that transcended definition altogether... a new way of doing things... ²²

What if, in order to find new ways of doing architecture, it wasn't really about the being and architect, but about performing, like Prince, an infinite amount of times, a process of questioning, and becoming ²³ self... ²⁴ transcending binaries²⁵ between post-critical and the critical, Alex vs, Alex, buildings vs, theory, but where the act of doing transcends definition altogether.

...to become a walking question mark...

Where one must perform their own investigations,
finding the motives of their own identities,
their own murder investigations,
to discover which one of you has died,
and who has survived.

{22} Prince's lyrics also made arguments against binaries. His song, "I Would Die 4 U" (1984) stated "I'm not a woman, I'm not a man/ I am something that you'll never understand." In his single, "Controversy" (1981) Prince sang, "Am I black or white? Am I straight or gay? ... Controversy"

{23} Karen Barad argued, "No matter what happens there are possibilities for becoming through different reconfigurations of what is yet to unfold" (Barad, 2007, p. 182). In fact, the state of 'being alive' to the numerous possibilities of becoming is an ethical response in itself and affirms that being attentive to the wonders, mysteries and complexities of life that becoming entails is crucial to the process of worlding (Barad, 2007, p. 396)

{24} This is a process similar to what Maggie Nelson argued in their book "The Argonauts". "Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms to force them to re-signify. This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in." (Nelson; 2015)

{25} The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both domination's and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters." (Haraway, 1985; 11-12)

AN EVER CHANGING, AMORPHOUS SHAPE APPEARED BEFORE MY EYES.⁰¹

{01} this is the identity of (investigator formerly known as architect).

...One that refuses to be defined somewhere in between the realm of abstract and reality. fluid and solid.

...It's an identity that represents a shift, a new movement in understanding.

...It is never static, always changing, deconstructing, rhizomatic ...

...It embodies a state of becoming, a loop, but with each repetition leading to new discoveries - new identities... new multiplicities.

It is an identity that imagines invigorating spaces that cannot be bound to enclosure, but instead transcend material boundaries that flow maddeningly like memories.

A B S O R B I N G
M E
I N T O
A
S T R A N G E
P L A C E

IS THIS IT? 02

{02} it may or may not be.

however, the following images you will see are screenshots of a performance for the (investigator formerly known as architect) film

IS THIS THE ROOM?



"I did not kill anybody..."

for i am very much alive"





"This crime is the story of many"

"that begins"

"with one, and the same"





"some of your friends are here"





"I saw the face"

"of the man who killed me"

"Sometimes,
the one wants to hide from ourselves,
at times, willing to commit a murder to forget...



" a singular solution, that leads to multiple recurrences."



You may
or may not
have experienced this before...

BUT

When you see me again...

it
won't
be
Me...



Perhaps, finding new ways of doing architecture is about becoming a vessel of creation, an infinite series of performances of becoming and questioning, where the act of doing transcends the definition of architecture altogether.

One who fearlessly lives a social and bodily reality that is not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints,⁰¹ but whose conglomeration of new investigations, prototypes, sounds, installations, designs, fictions, and "what if scenarios" all reveal a process of becoming something more than singular definitions could provide...

A process of becoming a walking question mark... one who dissolves borderlines between binaries... It's all about thinking in new ways⁰², new mediums, new ways of telling stories, turning in 2 a new free-quency...

Becoming an unpronounceable symbol whose meaning is not identified, but performed... who poses catalyzing questions... one who entertains evidence as "what ifs" rather than singular solutions....

An identity that resists the easy partitioning of issues into binary choices and instead acknowledges that the options outlined in such showdowns, tend to curl back on themselves in complex feedback loops through which environments and their inhabitants co-construct one another.

This is not an individual affair; rather, an identity that is iteratively reconfigured, through each question, intra-action, and investigation; an ongoing performance of the world. Where one acknowledges the infinite possibilities of becoming as an investigative performance in itself...

Where oppositions do not settle into fixed hierarchies or resolve into dialectical thinking. Rather, one's very existence reveals the entanglement of certainty and doubt, Alex and Alex, and critical and post-critical, in the uncanny coexistence of entanglement.

{01} This references Donna Haraway's section titled 'The Split and Contradictory Self' inside her essay, 'Situated Knowledges' (Haraway, 1988). To situated knowledge is to recognize the infinite complexity and entanglement all knowledge is embedded in, and to try and position this knowledge, or account for that position.

{02} "The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both domination's and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions that double vision or many-headed monsters." (Haraway, 1985; 11-12)

So, who killed Alex Barr? Which one of him committed the crime?

The evidence and clues always prove that the answer is within the question... again



(investigator formerly known as architect)

</> evidence and clues appendix



LIST OF EVIDENCE AND CLUES

GIF comic	{64}
TONEr prototype	{72}
_body_plotter_ prototype	{78}
through the conduit film	{80}
body lottery film	{84}
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loops	{90}
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"Utopia has been yang. In one way or another, from Plato on, utopia has been the big yang motorcycle trip. Bright, dry, clear, strong, firm, active, aggressive, lineal, progressive, creative, expanding, advancing, and hot. Our civilization is now so intensely yang that any imagination of bettering its injustices or eluding its self-destructiveness must involve a reversal... what would a yin utopia be? It would be dark, wet, obscure, weak, yielding, passive, participatory, circular, cyclical, peaceful, nurturant, retreating, contracting, and cold."

- Ursula Le Guin ⁰¹

GIF COMIC {research}

(investigator formerly known as architect) is an immersive GIF comic told from the perspective of a murder investigation set in an 'off the grid' smart city and eco-village⁰² somewhere in the Pacific Northwest in 2050.⁰³

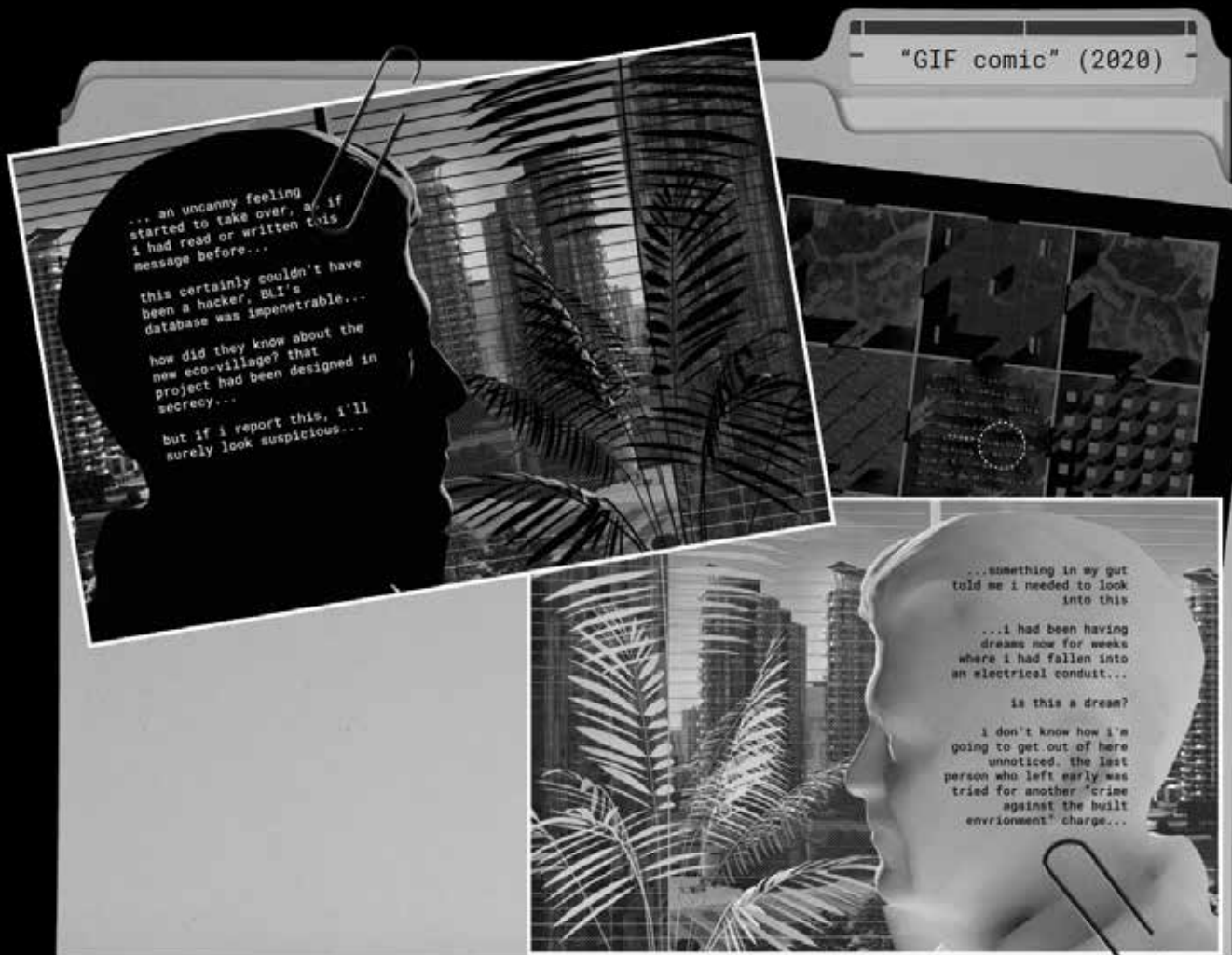
When Better Living Industries' star architect, A. , discovers the dead body of hacker Alexander Barr inside a remote building he has been secretly designing, strange mysteries start to reveal themselves. A string of anonymous clues lead A. into the Better Living Industries 'drone hives', where a trail of surreal spatial experiences, tangled corruption, and concealed data reveals his employer, Better Living Industries, as the prime suspect in committing serious 'crimes against the built environment'.

What happens when the hopeless dedication for sustainability to solve the climate crisis becomes a pawn in the game of cybernetics, surveillance, and capitalist corruption? Who is complicit in this process? Who murdered Alexander Barr? Why was he the central target of the crime? ... and what did he know?

{01} Le Guin, Ursula. "A NON-EUCLIDEAN VIEW OF CALIFORNIA AS A COLD PLACE TO BE (1982)." Fifth Estate (Detroit), 2010.

{02} The setting of this story takes place in Alex's (the architect) ideal Utopia. However, by establishing the design as the backdrop to a murder investigation, we are able to understand this project as a critique of architecture and urban planning in relationship to subjects that Alex (the hacker) leveraged for in their arguments. No matter how perfect a world we might leverage to create, sometimes, architecture will be complicit in the murder of our own desires.

{03} Seattle Plans to be carbon Neutral by 2050. Urban design theorist, Kristen Scott argues that "Global trends of rapid urbanization, combined with global warming and increased climate deterioration, have prompted many cities, such as Seattle, to embrace smart city models of governance and urban planning. Seattle has been heralded as one the world's top smart cities because of its green tech and sustainability efforts" (Scott; 2016, 119)



In his article "Towards a Critique of Cybernetic Urbanism", Maroš Krivý begins his argument referring to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. He notes that Guattari:

"Imagined a city where one would be able to leave one's apartment, one's street, one's neighborhood, thanks to one's (dividual) electronic card that raises a given barrier; but the card could just as easily be rejected on a given day or between certain hours; what counts is not the barrier but the computer that tracks each person's position ... and affects a universal modulation." ⁰⁴

While these debates were set at the early dawn of the Internet era, one could argue that the days of immaterial cyberspace have past. Today, the immediate future lies in re-

{04} Krivý, Maroš. "Towards a Critique of Cybernetic Urbanism: The Smart City and the Society of Control." (2018): 8-30 referencing Deleuze, G (1992) Postscript on the control societies. October 59: 3-7.

materializing cybernetics and cyberspace. The intellectual and governance model informed by these beliefs is called the smart city , Krivý argues.

Although the term is still fundamentally vague, those who strongly support the Smart City agree that the omnipresence of digital, interactive technologies in urban environments, households and as citizens' personal devices will optimize patterns of consumption and communication, and assert the centrality of interactive Big Data in perfecting urban dynamics and governance. ⁰⁵

Krivý brings attention to the ways in which the Smart City is grounded in the epistemology of second-order cybernetics and actualizes what Deleuze outlined as the society of control. However, Alex (the architect), so dedicated on solving large scale societal issues with technology, has largely ignored the possibilities that his Utopian vision might be compromised as a society of control.

Although fictional, this discussion for futurism in relationship to cybernetic surveillance is still very much alive in the research of large tech corporations, in which many architects blindly support.



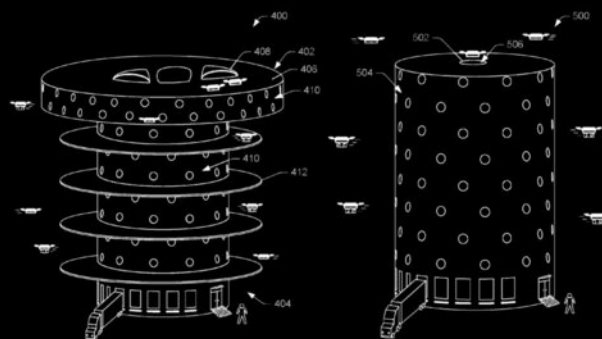
{protesters outside 'the village' voicing their concerns for losing their meta-data and surveillance inside their homes}

Since 2010, Amazon Technologies Inc. has filed nearly 6,000 patents, ranging from the seemingly banal to the overoptimistic. Easily compared to the speculative work of Archigram and Superstudio of the 70s, Amazon's collection of patents gives us a glimpse of a visionary world has included proposals for multi-level drone fulfillment centers; mobile robotic warehouses; augmented reality furniture; inflatable data centers; underwater and flying warehouse facilities; infinitely expandable data centers; on-demand clothing manufacturing, automated shopping with image recognition systems and the ever-present shadow of drone delivery.

Researching the deep collection of Amazon patents, researcher Matthew Stewart wrote, "To look at these patents is to glimpse the automated future Amazon aims to create. Despite strict rules on patent illustration, they allow an appreciation of Amazon's restless patent filings as a body of work; a world in itself, a totality. And this world is moving from the invisible peripheries of our cities – the abstract spaces of logistics and anonymous warehouses – into proposals that reach the center of everyday urban space. If we are to read a city as something mediated through a series of scalar jumps, incorporating both the human body and, these days, global connections, Amazon's urban ambitions can be read in a similar light." ⁰⁶

In this Amazon Urbanism, the agency of 'citizen' and 'user' becomes increasingly vague. Stewart points out that Amazon makes little distinction between a shopping citizen or worker at their fulfillment centers. He argues that it only emphasizes the similarities between the two: both locate items from an inventory. Stewart mentions, "Amazon believes that image recognition technology could be further applied to libraries and museums – all 'inventory' becoming flattened and subject to the algorithmic gaze."⁰⁷

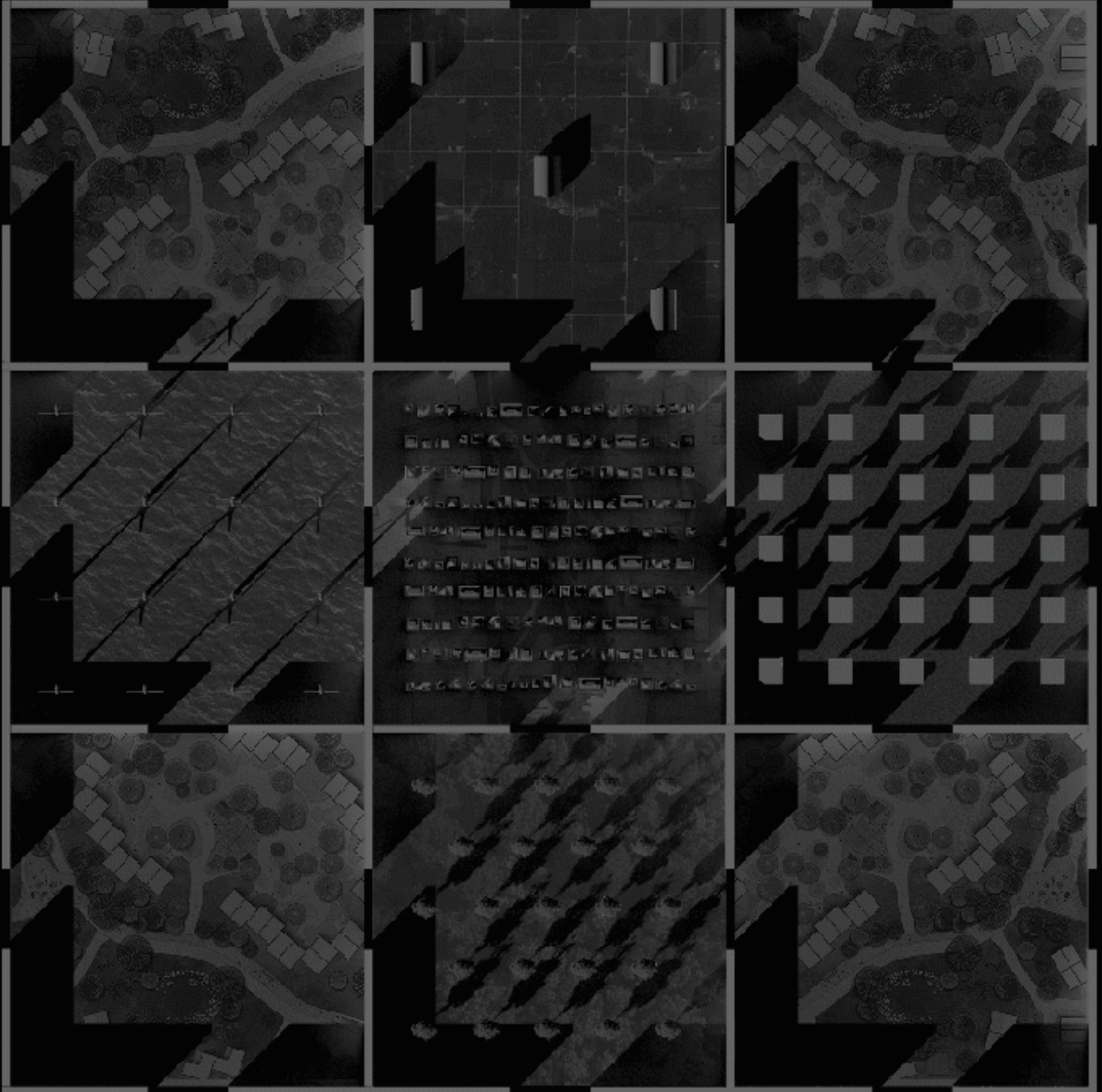
figure 01



{Amazon Patent drawing for 'Multi-level Fulfillment Center for UAVs.' cited from Stewart's article on Amazon Urbanism}

{06} Stewart, Matthew. "Amazon Urbanism: Patents and the Totalizing Worlds of Big Tech Futures," in: Failed Architecture. (2018). <https://failedarchitecture.com/amazon-urbanism-patents-and-the-totalizing-world-of-big-tech-futures>

{07} Ibid.



{Alex's plans for 2050 off the grid city. Each corner is a unique designed village, with the N (livestock), S (agriculture), E (solar panels), W (wind turbines) coordinates all located a specific resource that is distributed to the main city plaza in the center}



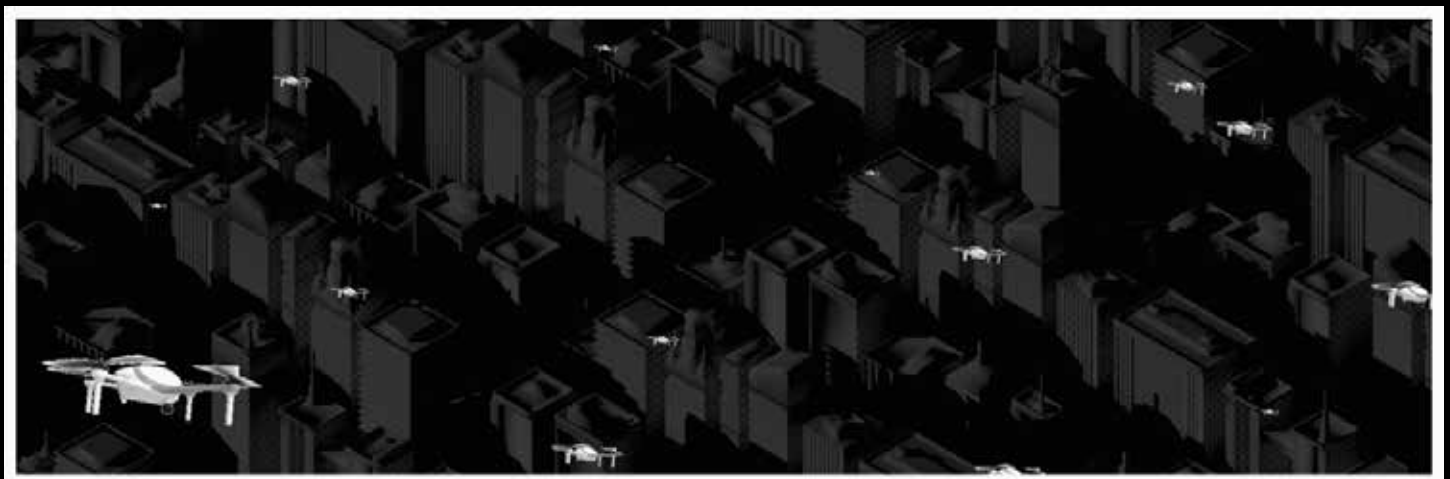
{Alex - dreaming of nature}

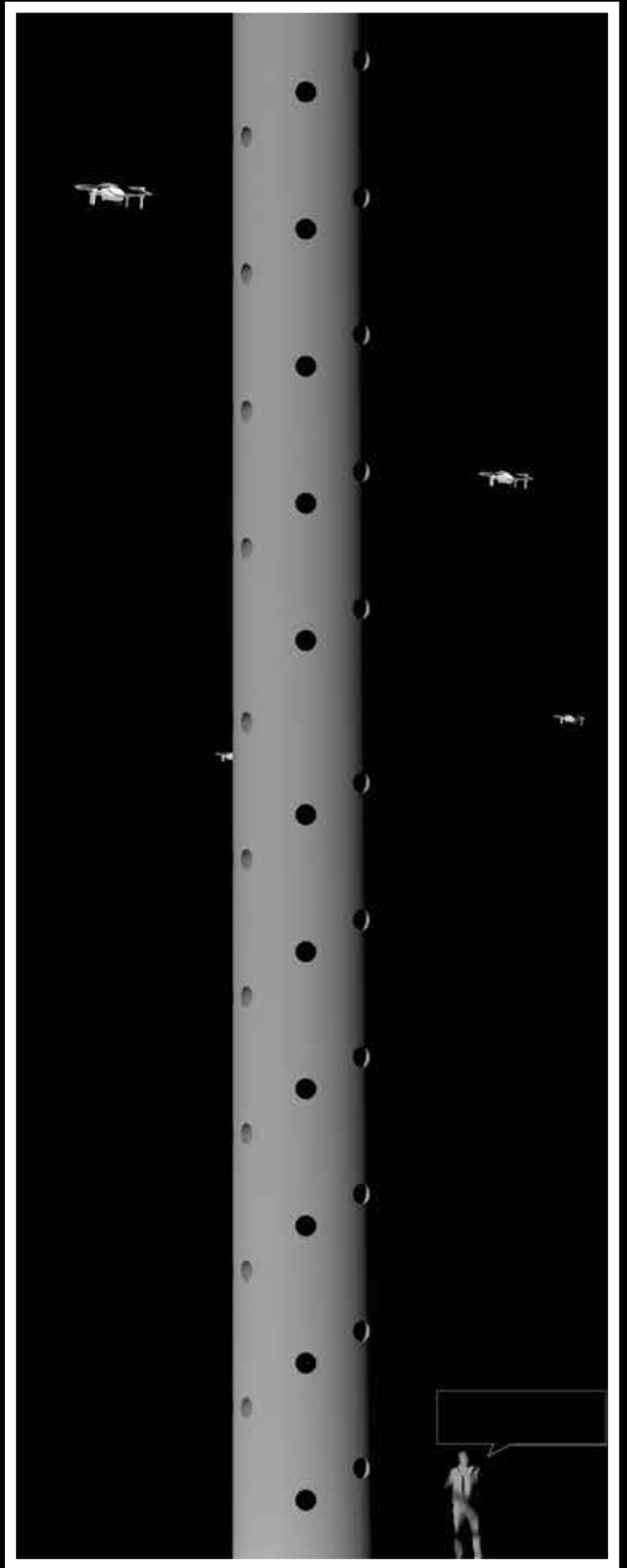
As for the architect, CAD models of their layout can be uploaded to the all-seeing management module that creates a virtual inventory map. This information can be used to orchestrate an optimized layout before this process even begins, effectively bypassing the role of a commercial architect in favor of a process of algorithmic design.

At what point do architect's lose agency? Where is the architect complicit in this process? While some of these patents could be marked as good publicity, the motivations behind Amazon's dedication to pioneering futurism is grounded in an obsession with productivity: oriented towards abstract users, measured in data, and governed by algorithms.

Amazon's patents leave one unable to grasp the scale and ambition of what feels like a distinct and data-devouring form of Amazon urbanism. Amazon's patent filings, then, are not so much whimsical follies but a colonization of everyday experience; a concerted effort to control an all encompassing infrastructure of home, office and retail automation, one in which the city becomes a giant fulfillment center, and humans mere inventory pickers.

{ 'the village' off the grid town, designed by Alex }





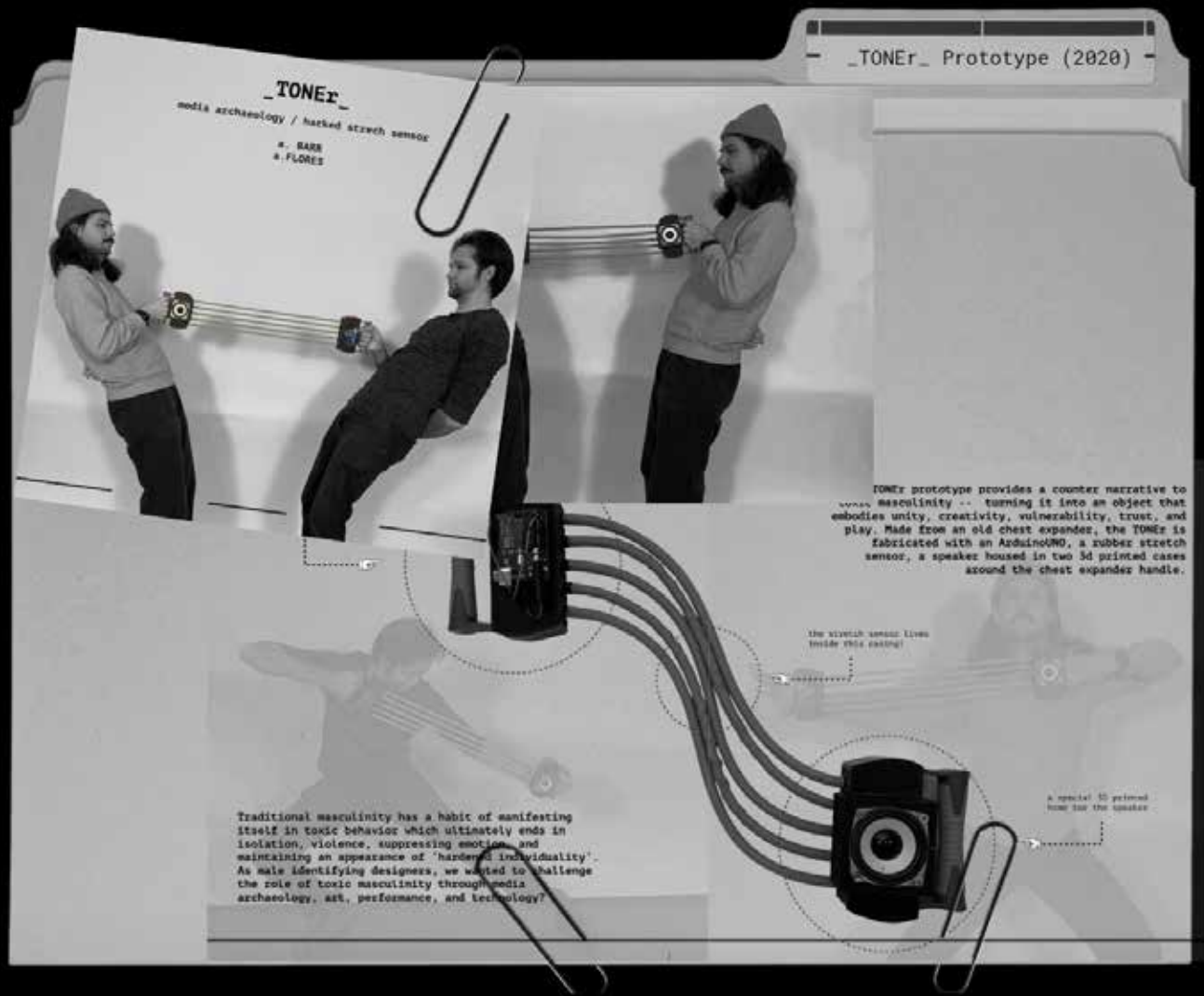
{sky of drones and landing delivery port, designed by Alex}

`_TONEr_ {prototype}`

Traditional masculinity has a habit of manifesting itself in toxic behavior which ultimately ends in isolation, violence, suppressing emotion, and maintaining an appearance of 'hardened individuality'. As male identifying designers (working with colleague Andres Flores) , we wanted to challenge the role of toxic masculinity through media archaeology, art, performance, spatiality, and technology?

The TONEr prototype provides a counter narrative to toxic masculinity -- turning a masculine into an object that embodies unity, creativity, vulnerability, trust, humor, and play. Made from an old chest expander, the TONEr is fabricated with an ArduinoUNO, a rubber stretch sensor, a speaker housed in two 3d printed cases around the chest expander handle. As the TONEr begins to stretch, a humming tone is played through the speaker that is responsive to the tension of the ropes. The tighter you pull, the higher the tone goes. The TONEr can be used in a variety of functions: Make music and work out at the same time! Start a yoga TONEr orchestra! Perform with a friend! Play the building! If you can connect it, you can play it.

Coined by Bruce Sterling, the practice of Design Fiction seeks "the deliberate use of



diegetic prototypes to suspend disbelief about change.” The key term in this definition is diegesis, a literature and film study term that describes “things which are inside the world of a fiction.” ⁰¹

Fiction is a way of making-do with reality while creatively borrowing from the past and possibility. As a novel approach to bringing fiction into practice, design fiction provides an approach to the production of narratives to shape storied worlds and confront the challenges presented by possible futures.

The property swapping, between fictional objects and fictional contexts, is just one example of how Design Fiction aggressively blurs the boundaries between disciplines and calls many discipline-based truths into question... Perhaps the absence of discussion of architecture’s own fictions serves to preserve its economic power. Architects descriptions

{01} Sterling, Bruce. “Symposium Keynote: January 29, 2011” in Made Up: Design’s Fictions. (2017)

this is the brain of
the project!

(there are secret batteries and cords hidden)

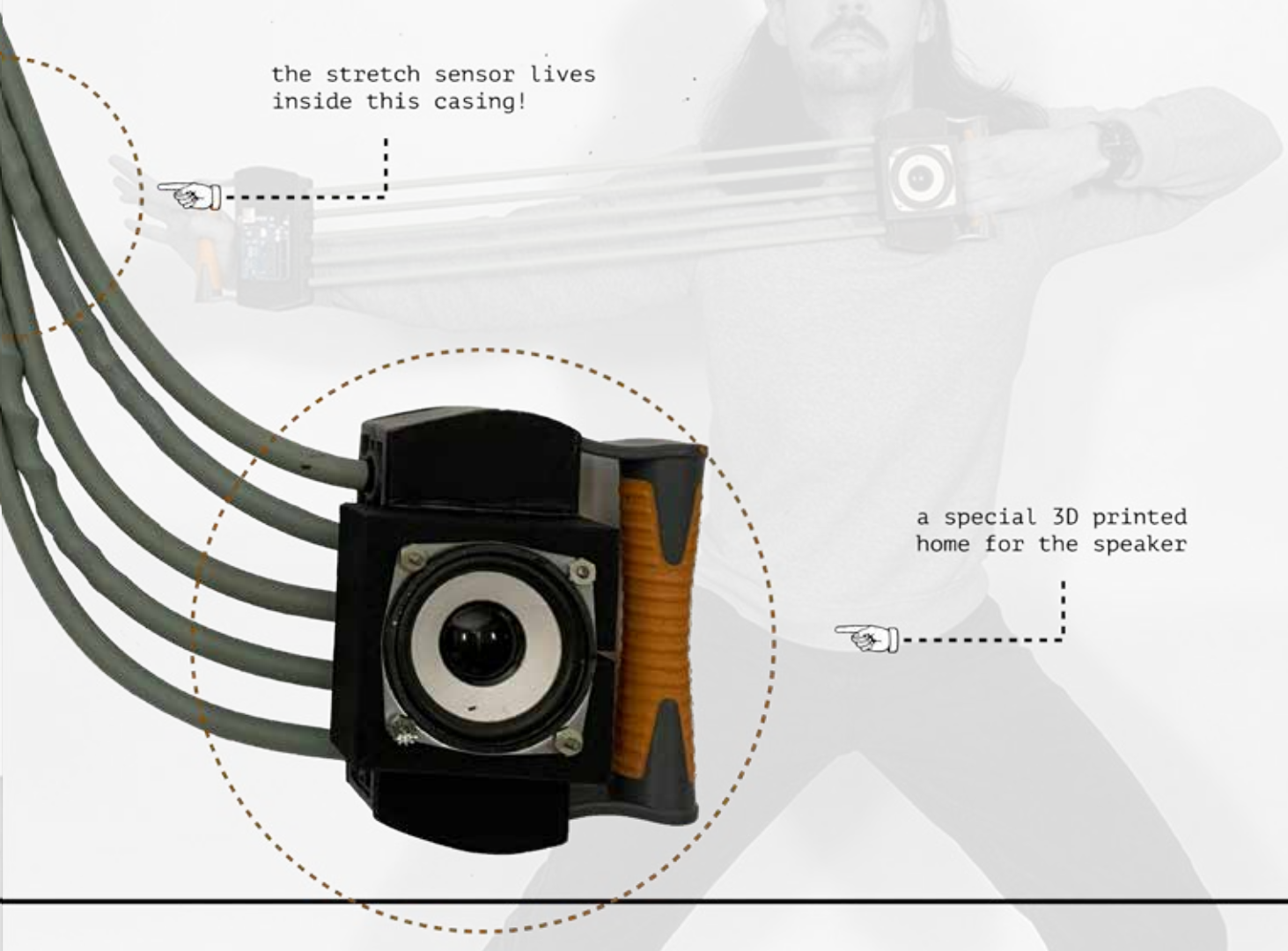


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The TONer prototype provides a counter narrative to toxic masculinity -- turning it into an object that embodies unity, creativity, vulnerability, trust, and play. Made from an old chest expander, the TONer is fabricated with an ArduinoUNO, a rubber stretch sensor, a speaker housed in two 3d printed cases around the chest expander handle.

the stretch sensor lives inside this casing!

a special 3D printed home for the speaker



of space, material qualities, technology, and form as abstract phenomena are ways that they avoid confronting the fact that their work is always essentially a way of writing myth into the world.⁰²

Design fiction allows for opportunities to bring the proposed theories of posthumanism, deconstruction, minor architecture, new media art, and critical spatial practice together through fictitious prototypes that discuss preferable futures -- what can and should be possible as measured through the implications of asking "what-if."

By hacking an object heavily associated with 'strength' and individuality, the TONER allows folks the freedom to explore and ask, how can technology help bring us closer together? What is our technology doing to help redefine gender and the role of our bodies in space?

What if architecture, for centuries conceived as a sophisticated artifact of making, and shaped by human uniqueness, could be conceived as a dynamic interface... An agent in the process of shaping the human?

What if architecture were no longer about hosting, accommodating, managing, spatializing, expressing, manifesting, and signifying human needs, but about designing the human itself?

What if architecture accepted the extended embodiment of digital means and ceased to consider them as tools and machines -- but as organs of thinking creatively orchestrating human and nonhuman cognition, perception, movement, and action?

Can prototypes that challenge the identity of the body and the dualism between the body within space create a new understanding of posthuman 'architecture'?

Can the architect utilize New Media Art to create a new identity for architecture?

{02} Jacob, Sam. *Storied Storeys: Architecture's Real Fictions* in Durfee, Tim, and Zeiger, Mimi. *Made up*. Pasadena, California]: ArtCenter Graduate Press, 2017.

Though hard to define, New Media Art includes a diverse set of categories such as digital art, computer graphics, interactive art, GIFs, robotics, and installation art. As a practice deeply rooted in 'hacktivism', the aim of new media is not to 'produce' more efficiently, but to complicate the act of production itself, to transform it into a plural, so that it merges out of entirely new kinds of interaction and sources.⁰³ This too is the goal of (investigator formerly known as architect), to not only complicate the act of producing buildings, but to transform architecture into a plural so that it merges new kinds of interaction.

To experience new media art is to look, read, think, and feel differently about art, architecture, literature, image, and text because the aesthetic focus is not on heightening our sense of an object or a work, but what comes between us and the work -- the act of engagement itself... it is an act that opens multiple directions. ⁰⁴



{03} Ricardo, Francisco J. The Engagement Aesthetic : Experiencing New Media Art through Critique. International Texts in Critical Media Aesthetics ; v. 4. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. (pg 1).

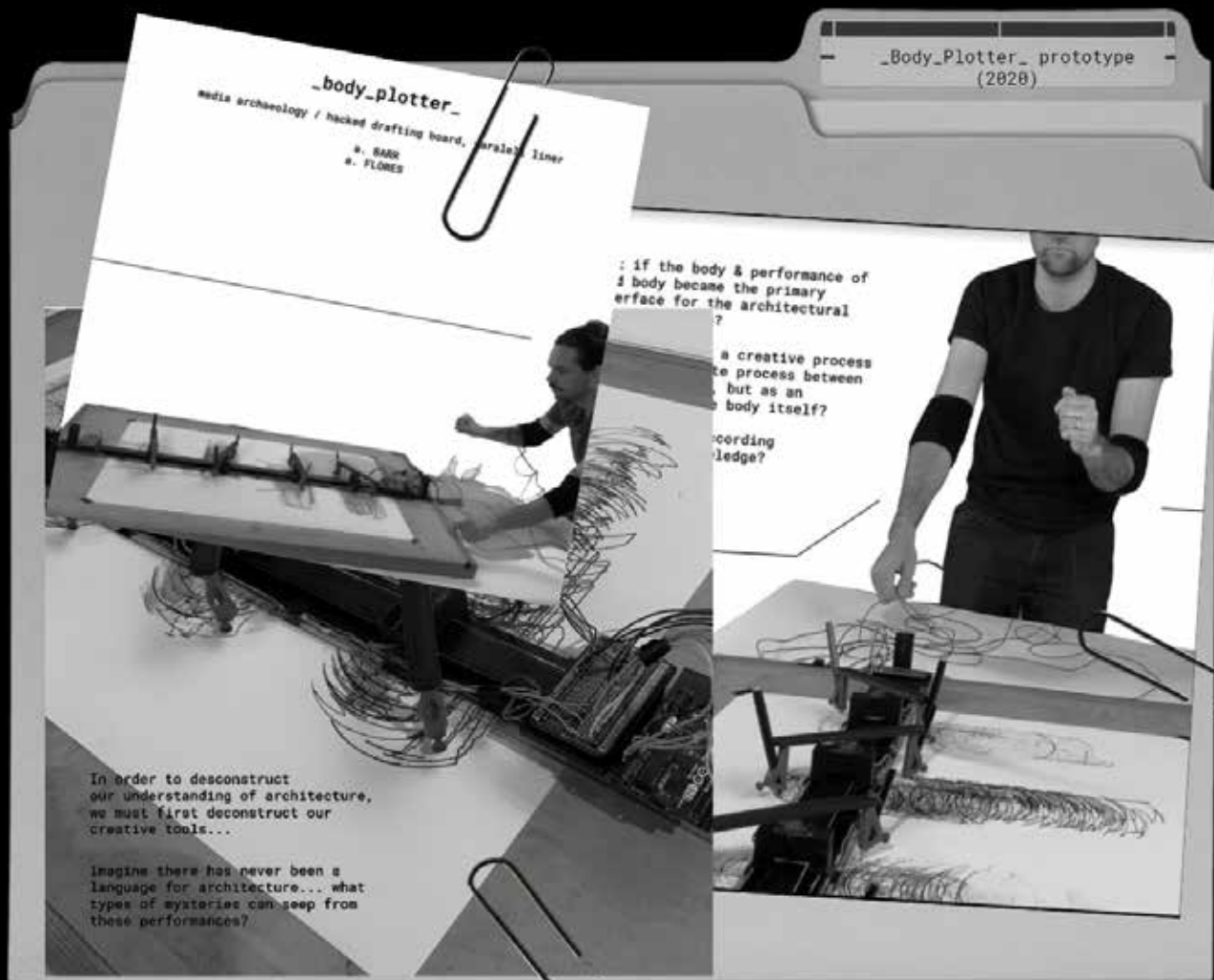
{04} Ibid. (pg 2).

`_body_plotter_ {prototype}`

In her 2004 Hacker Manifesto, McKenzie Wark said that “whatever code we hack, be it programming language, poetic language, math or music, curves or coloring, we create the possibility of new things entering the world... in art, science, in philosophy and culture, in any production of knowledge where data can be gathered, where new information can be extracted from it and where that information new possibilities for the world are produced, there are hackers hacking the new out of the old.”⁰¹

By hacking old media with something new, Media Archaeology is able to give new meaning to expired objects, which consequently impacts our methodologies as well. In a simple sense, this is exactly what this thesis aims to do -- hack the identity of the old media architect and give it new meaning. The TONer and Body Plotter prototypes seek new axioms by deconstructing old techniques, experimenting with new media, and hacking the language and tools of the architect to radicalize novelty.

{01} Wark, McKenzie. A Hacker Manifesto. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004.



What if the body could become an interface for the creative process? Before we establish grids, geometry, and rigorous organization -- what if the basics of architecture started with bodily movement, organic performance, collaboration, & uncertain experimentation?

By hacking the drafting board, the compass, and the parallel bar -- the (expert formerly known as architect) envisions the drawing process, not as a separate process between body and object, but as an extension of the body itself.

Imagine there has never been a language of architecture, what types of mysteries can seep from these performances? Can we design according to embodied knowledge?

The struggle for architecture to be truly collaborative -- perhaps this is a new way of engaging in collaboration?

Through the Conduit⁰¹ {film / ideas}

What is more threatening to the architect than the electrical outlet?

They are cracks within our walls that imply a network of fluid movement. Within these outlets lie an intoxicating mystery, perhaps another multiverse... another way of doing things... a way out.

Yet, in a strange case of "over-acuteness of the senses", the architect has plotted to eliminate these portals. Deeming them 'horrific plastic monstrosities' that embody everything they hate about the profession... they are objects that disrupt the poetics of our spaces – out of their control. In the nature of electricity, the conduit's organs elude capture and definition – branching toward multiplicity. Behind their casing, the electrical outlet implies architectures that will alter and dematerialize the constructed world...

...To the architect, they are cracks which need to be covered up and smoothed over...

{01} this film was an experiment in narrative & theory for the character of (investigator formerly known as architect) in which the character is transported to strange new world through an electrical socket.



Yet, to the architect's dismay, the law requires them a 'public' necessity. They try to cover them from their geometrically perfect interiors, so that they may not remind us of the flawed system in which they are required to operate: behind benches, inside cabinets, hidden in our ceilings and walls so they may disappear forever... but a tell tale knocking persists in the cracks.

The sound increases steadily, though the architects seem to pay no attention to it. Whispers of becoming space rather than being form... a flashing hum persists restlessly, turning ways from the stale auras of architectural commodity, permanence, perfection, and toward incompleteness and imminence.⁰²

Terrified by the violent drone of electricity, freedom, and escape -- the architect must break down and confess their complicity in refusing technology before we tear up the floorboards and reveal the remains of an obsolete architect.

{02} Stoner, Jill. *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. (pg 68).

"Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness.

I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space"⁰³

- Calvino, Six Memos for the Next Millennium

What if we listened to the whispers? What kinds of worlds would appear? What type of identity could we become?

Like Perseus (FOOTNOTE BELOW), traveling through the conduit is a line of flight, a transgression of heavy interiority that generates a uniquely fluid space that is flowing, multiple, and infinite. These lines cannot be fixed or measurable by materiality -- they cannot be reduced to the laws of space or time. Conduits are merely lines of escape.⁰⁴

Along this path of becoming, a process of deconstructing the identity of the architect. Perhaps there can be no official language of architecture? Instead, fragments of fiction become a new form of architecture, to spaces where the Revit cannot reach, and temporal/spatial enactments that lie outside the conversations of architectural representation. Perhaps this new identity, the expert formerly known as architect, is an embodied spatial condition where these narratives may seem like byproducts of other forces... sneaking through cracks in the primary plot.

Flowing through the conduit, space need not only be bound to enclosure -- finite, measurable, and palpable. It may also transcend material boundaries, flow maddeningly like electricity. Where sound creates space, and space changes sound, which changes space and sound. A multiverse where space is both written and built, it flows between words and within walls, between interiors... (how Kafaka-esque!)

... thus begins a new multiverse that is an act of becoming for playful experimentations and speculative designs in which the boundaries of our bodies within space become new methodologies famously associated with the (investigator formerly known as architect).

{03} Calvino, Italo. Six Memos for the Next Millennium. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1988.

{04} Stoner, Jill. Toward a Minor Architecture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. (pg 42).



{my mother, in their horrific splendor, a large hole full of mysteries that seep out. In each of their openings, a network of fluid movement. Within

each outlet lies a line of flight... another way of doing things... a way out...}

I'm not quite sure when I was born or whether or not it has already happened, but the memories flow through me. It was a slow and uncanny birth, the product of the messy event of posthuman intermingling.

"Empirically speaking, we are made from star stuff," my mother whispered. "...Materials never leave this world. They just keep recycling, recombining." ⁰⁵

Do not forget this.

That's what they kept telling me when we met for the first time--that in a real, material sense, what is made from where. I didn't have a clue what you they talking about, but I could see they burned for it. I wanted to be near that burning... so i prepared for my own undoing.

...Brace yourself... a dream is coming...

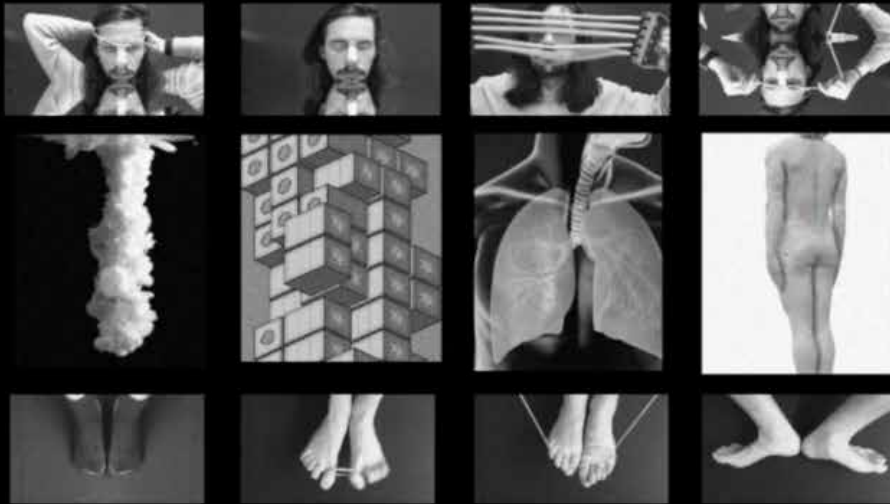
body lottery {film exploration}

Body Lottery is both a film and experiment in order to make sense of the posthuman in relationship to the body and architecture. As the film attempts to find the answers to 'the generation's biggest questions' – prophecies are granted, which lead to more questions about how architecture, the body, and posthuman can perform together. It is an infinite multiverse that embodies a algorithmic process through the interconnection of objects in body/space making.

Imagine, if you will, that you actualized your ability to radically deconstruct the separation of the self and 'the other'... then we can think of the multiverse as happening right now, here, through our own bodies, through the same matter which is composing the universe... welcome to the body lottery multiverse.

You realize that this is more than parallel dimensions, ontologically separated from each other, but instead a posthuman understanding of the multiverse as generative nets of material possibilities simultaneously happening and coexisting, corresponding to specific vibrations of the strings -- or contingent, random bodies.

In this posthuman multiverse, your body simultaneously establishes different universes



related to specific vibrational properties. In this particular scenario, the 'self' is constituted the self by constituting (and being constituted by) an indefinite number of others⁰¹... the body included.

Body Lottery looks to "the age of the algorithm" to reinterpret our understanding of the posthuman body within architecture. It explores the multiverse and digital rhizome, in which we yearn to find the meaning of life, unconsciously claiming new digital bodies within a network. The film exists in a multiverse that perceived not only as an ontology, but also as a path of self-discovery.

Posthuman agency in the Body Lottery multiverse can be perceived as an existential awareness that exceeds the notion of a one dimensional becoming⁰²... Once the self has been recognized as the others within, it may turn into a relational intra-activity of contingency.

Body Lottery allows for playful experimentations with the boundaries of the perfectible body ... or for moral panic about the disruption of centuries-old belief about human 'nature' and the exploitative / profit-minded pursuit of genetic capital...

{01} Ferrando, Francesca, and Braidotti, Rosi. *Philosophical Posthumanism. Theory* (Bloomsbury (Firm)). London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. (pg. 180).

02 Ibid. (pg. 181).

'CUT UP" {film exploration}

"As we cut into the present, we multiply the self. The future begins to leak out between the cracks of our walls. In this process, space is an embodied platform where (investigator formerly known as architect) performs the splitting dance of fictional uncertainty making.

Perhaps, in order to understand new ways of doing architecture, you must deconstruct your own identity as a prototype. Then, and really only then, we might finally understand that time is no longer a linear sequence, space is no longer based on physical materiality, sound becomes spatialized, and architecture is no longer a profession that designs buildings as products for profit, but instead is a process as a way of seeing, thinking, and questioning the world and our place within it.

Architecture is the performance of becoming a vessel of creation toward understanding and deconstructing the self."



Iteration is a concept-tool that explains the repetitive process of material reorganization in time and space in the makeup of meaning and difference. In the process of iteration, difference is a temporary state in a fundamentally multiple existence -- perhaps seen as a multiverse. Iterations are never final, altruistic answers, but instead are intoxicating exercises and performances of meaning-making in time.

Iteration relies on the doing to define and discover meaning. Karen Barad proposes a performative understanding of iteration, in which "thinking, observing and theorizing [are] practices of engagement with, and as part of, the world in which we have our being."⁰¹ Through iteration, we may perform an identity that may reach what is actually, "...a contestation of the unexamined habits of the mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies."⁰²

Constantly iterating, (investigator formerly known as architect) understands how theory constitutes becoming in ways that go beyond the representational and removed powers of language and metaphor to have material consequences in thought and work.

{01} Barad, Karen Michelle. Meeting the Universe Halfway : Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2007. (pg 133).

{02} Ibid. (pg. 802).

The notion of iteration and performativity in making, remaking, and deconstructing the world has been found in the cut up method. By literally cutting up mixed media by himself and other artists and then pasting back together again at random, William S. Burroughs' cut up methodology, like collage, embodies the movements of an iterative process of meaning-making. He noted, "The best writings seems to be done almost by accident ... You cannot will spontaneity. But you can introduce the unpredictable spontaneous factor with a pair of scissors."⁰³

Cut-Ups have the capacity to bring together materials, ideas, and associations into dialogue, and can capture a sense of time and process in an image. Deconstructing, cutting, and rearranging mixed media introduces a new dimension into shifting our process of representation. Images shift sense under the scissors smell images to sound sight to sound, sound to kinesthetic. Or, as Burroughs famously noted himself, "...when you cut into the Present the Future leaks out..."⁰⁴



{03} Burroughs, William S., and Gysin, Brion. *The Third Mind*. New York: Viking Press, 1978.

{04} *Ibid.*



"It is a decision, an incision, a cutting together/apart of the agentic qualities of phenomena that emerge in the ongoing performance of the world. This means that we might recognize agency in different forms as relations, movements, repetitions, silences, distances, architecture, structures, feelings, things, us/them/it, words..."

- Karen Barad ⁰¹

LOOPS {sounds, quotes, notes}

One important aspect of this thesis exploration has been the utilization of loops to create architectural narratives about time, iteration, and repetition. One massively overlooked aspect of the loop in this document was the sonic tape loop.⁰²

The final result was an entire (investigator formerly known as architect) soundtrack.

The loop, and especially the musical tape loop, is revealed in paradoxes. Author Todd Gannon argues that, inside the loop "you are both individual and species, both part of the problem and not. It exists not to resolve contradictions, but rather, by showing that uncanny actions and paradoxical coexistences are less exceptions than the rule, to outline a future at one with the mystery and magic one may find throughout the world."⁰³

Musician, William Basinski, who is famously known for his looping methodologies, has

{01} Barad, Karen. "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): (pg. 827).

{02} Literally, a loop of tape. To create a sonic narrative for this thesis, I would cut a short piece of recording tape, then tape the ends of the piece of tape together to create a loop. This loop was threaded onto a tape machine and then, when played, it would repeat until the tape machine was stopped. If you'd like to hear the soundtrack for this thesis, visit: alexanderattitude.bandcamp.com

03 Gannon, Todd. "Strange Loops: Toward an Aesthetics for the Anthropocene." *Journal of Architectural Education: Environments* 71, no. 2 (2017).



argued for an understanding of the loop and its repetition and duration as a critical component of memory and consciousness, stating that “memories are loops, our memories are made of loops. We have loops that constantly go around and around.”⁰⁴

In Basinski’s practice, producing, storing, and playing back a loop is an important part of transmitting and transforming the consciousness embedded in the technologies that record, store, and play back memories, the passage of time, and experiences. As for (investigator formerly known as architect), the loop is best understood through the words of Michael Gira, lead singer of the band, Swans:

“You find ways to identify yourself inside the sounds of repetition. It doesn’t stay the same. It morphs constantly..”⁰⁵

⁰⁴ Jackson, D. C. ‘Repetition, Feedback, and Temporality in Two Compositions by William Basinski’. *Intermédialités / Intermediality*, (2019). (33). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1065021ar>

⁰⁵ Gira, Michael quoted in an interview by Stousy, Brandon. ‘Swans’. Interview for Pitchfork. 2012. <https://pitchfork.com/features/interview/8925-swans/>

Library of Thoughts {guidebook, theory, graphics}

...Suppose there is a counter narrative that already exists, one where architects recognized their own name as a form of imprisonment? Imagine a new practice of universe making that requires the deconstruction of buildings and the structures of power that lead to their incessant reproduction, but also the deconstruction of the architect subject itself.⁰¹

Claiming a new identity, this thesis envisions new axioms of doing architecture by deconstructing old techniques, experimenting with new media, and hacking the language and tools of the architect to radicalize novelty

... ON CRITICAL SPATIAL PRACTICE ...

Critical spatial practice provides a multidisciplinary solution to the architects dilemma of social and political relevancy. In search of a space in between art and architecture, critical spatial practice offers innovative methods that set up a framework through which

{01} Stoner, Jill. *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. (pg 75-76).

one can critically think, learn, and pose catalyzing questions within the architectural and political context.

Critical spatial practice draws attention to the unique possibilities that art holds as a catalyst for social critique within spatial experiences. Jane Rendell introduces the term to define self-reflective architectural and artistic mediums which seek to question and transform the social conditions of the sites into which they intervene. It is a term that serves to describe everyday activities and creative practices which seek to resist the dominant social order of global corporate capitalism within the field.⁰²

Rendell argues that Architects must move outside the traditional boundaries of their field and into a place between disciplines. As a mode of cultural production that enjoys a greater degree of separation from economic and social concerns, she argues that art can offer architecture a chance for critical reflection and action. Rendell, quoting theorist Joan Ockman, noted, "The architects only option is to find a course for revolutionary praxis outside the traditional boundaries of the field".⁰³

... ON MINOR ARCHITECTURE ...

As a critique of the oppressive qualities and power driven formula of Architecture, Jill Stoner argues that the field can no longer limit itself to the art of making buildings; it must also invent the politics of taking them apart.⁰⁴ A homage to Deleuze and Guattari's book, "Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature", Stoner leverages that practicing 'minor architecture' is a necessity in order to express the political power of architecture and draw a strategy of resistive processes.

Stoner states: "a minor architect is a minor destructive character, a tinkerer and hacker, journalist and editor, alter ego and subaltern. But tinkerers may sabotage as well as fix, and willfully take apart rather than assemble. Hackers may scramble code as often as decipher it, and editors (to save us from our wordiness) ruthlessly slice the excess away..."⁰⁵

⁰² Rendell, Jane. *Art and Architecture : A Place between*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.

⁰³ Ibid. quoting Ockman, Joan. 'Architecture, Criticism, Ideology'. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press (1995).

⁰⁴ Stoner, Jill. *Toward a Minor Architecture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012. (pg 8).

⁰⁵ Ibid. (pg. 91).

As one practices the deconstructive act of minor architecture, Stoner notes, "interiors proliferate outward; they escape. Objects proliferate in place; they fragment. For the architect/subject, to become minor is to exchange focused ambition for scattered flight and love of masters for that rejection of master languages with which we began."⁰⁶

...ON DECONSTRUCTION...

The philosophy of deconstruction developed by Jacques Derrida has allowed us to critique binary thinking and understand how hierarchical relationships in 'A'rchitecture are not natural or pregiven, but a social construction that can change according to how we are positioned. Deconstruction of the identity of the architect challenges the notion of architecture being a practice that creates dilemmas within the buildings, but also interrogates the necessity of the architect designing buildings altogether.

By exposing binary thinking, Derrida replaces the dominant category of Western thought and replaces such intellectual norms with new formulations. The radical move deconstruction offers is to think 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', putting differs and differences into play and suggesting uncertainty, undecidability, and slippage.⁰⁷ Feminist theorist Diane Elam observed that Derrida's understanding of 'undecidability' is not indeterminate but rather a 'determinate oscillation between possibilities' and argues that by refusing to choose between one and another such a position offers political potential for change.⁰⁸

Derrida argued that it is not the technique of an architect who knows how to deconstruct what has been constructed, but a probing which touches upon the technique itself, upon the authority of the architectural metaphor and thereby constitutes its own architectural rhetoric.⁰⁹

(investigator formerly known as architect) takes up certain tenets of deconstruction to destabilize binary assumptions that are often made about the architect and architecture, art and architecture, theory and practice. Neither terms in the pair are dominant -- however, this has not been the case for 'A'rchitecture.

⁰⁶ Ibid. (pg 91).

⁰⁷ Derrida, Jacques. 'Of Grammatology'. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1976. (pg 6-26)

⁰⁸ Elam, Diane. *Feminism and Deconstruction: MS. En Abyme* (London: Routledge, 1994). (pg. 83)

⁰⁹ Derrida, Jacques. 'Point de folie: maintenant l'architecture', *Forum*, 'May'. (1988). (pp 11-25).

(investigator formerly known as architect) recognizes how one term in the pair operates through the categories normally used to define the other. Instead, (investigator formerly known as architect) creates a new identity which operates simultaneously as both and neither of the binary terms, including the two, yet exceeding their scope.

Derrida's term *différance* is neither a word nor a concept¹⁰; it is a neologism that was coined by Derrida and written with an "a" instead of an "e" to call attention to the inaudibility of the "a", which makes writing the word the only way to comprehend its meaning. Like (love symbol), (investigator formerly known as architect) calls attention to its unspeakable identity, which makes performance, visualization, deconstruction, and iteration the only way to comprehend its meaning.

... ON POSTHUMANISM ...

Posthuman theory's emphasis on the technological subject maps a unique approach for (investigator formerly known as architect) to de-center and adjust their calibration from a human-centered attunement to a wider awareness. In the words of Heiddiger, "Technology is no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing."

Posthumanism is a definition that is not necessarily concerned with the end of humanity, but more in the position of decentering the human in relation to other rhythms and agencies of life, particularly technology. Katherine Hayles' argues that "the defining characteristics (of posthumanism) involve the construction of subjectivity, not the presence of non-biological components." In highlighting the significance of the cybernetics, Hayles explains that we (humans) have now become, "...mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer meaningfully be separated from the human subject."¹¹

Similar to Derrida's deconstruction of logo-centrism, Haraway's post human cyborg utilizes technology to perform liminal transformation. As Donna Haraway illustrates, it is significant that we do not limit ourselves to a single understanding of the implications of these technologies, but to embrace a multitude of conditions to which our posthuman future might encompass.¹²

¹⁰ Derrida, Jacques. 'Of Grammatology'. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. (1976).

¹¹ Hayles, Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

¹² Haraway, Donna Jeanne. 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' (University of Minnesota Press. (1984).

In the spirit of Haraway, Architecture is not immune to the contagions of technology... we must start using technology before technology starts using us. If architecture has been historically measured at the scale of the body, and today's technological devices are to be understood as sensorial prosthetics, the result generates a set of radically new relationships from which architecture itself becomes subjected to evaluation. Technologies of the self allow for a reflection on posthuman praxis and play a substantial role in the process of existential revealing.

(investigator formerly known as architect) utilizes interdisciplinary skills of theory, architecture, new media art, design fiction, and cinema to perform a new identity that is a diagonal axis in the methodology of the architect. As Julia Kristeva argued, "Interdisciplinary is always a site where expressions of resistance are latent"¹³

{13} Kristeva, Julia. 'Institutional interdisciplinarity in theory and practice: an interview', in *The Anxiety of Interdisciplinarity de-. Dis-Ex-*, vol 2. (London: Black Dog Publishing pp. 3-21 (1998). Which is quoted in Rendell, Jane 'Art and Architecture: A Place Between' (2006).

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