

Future Public Environments: Work in Progress

Edited by Philip Beesley, Miriam Ho, Marta Kubacki, Eisa Lee
and Kristal O'Shea

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Future Public Environments was held as a collaborative studio coordinated by Professor Philip Beesley at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture during fall, 2011. Graduate students Miriam Ho, Marta Kubacki, Eisa Lee, and Kristal O'Shea developed individual outlines for thesis research that form the content of this book. The studio focused on several questions: what boundaries might lie between living systems and inert buildings? What might a future architecture look like, and how might it behave? Amidst polarized scales of personal communication and global economies, what public space might be found? As turbulent natural forces assert themselves, how might we search for renewed human relationships with the environment that can grow, and flourish?

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PHILIP BEESLEY
FUTURE PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTS
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edited by Philip Beesley · Miriam Ho · Marta Kubacki · Eisa Lee · Kristal O'Shea



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Philip Beesley, Miriam Ho, Marta Kubacki, Eisa Lee, Kristal O'Shea editors

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· Riverside Architectural Press

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PREFACE

PHILIP BEESLEY

Future Public Environments was held as a collaborative studio at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture during fall, 2011. Professor Philip Beesley worked with graduate students Miriam Ho, Marta Kubacki, Eisa Lee, and Kristal O'Shea. The studio focused on several questions: what boundaries might lie between living systems and inert buildings? What might a future architecture look like, and how might it behave? Amidst polarized scales of personal communication and global economies, what public space might be found? As turbulent natural forces assert themselves, how might we search for renewed human relationships with the environment that can grow, and flourish. Might architecture contribute to a renewed whole?

The studio included an extended visit with Dr. Rachel Armstrong, synthetic biologist, science fiction writer and TED global fellow. In addition, a design charrette entitled Future Public Environment provided an intensive visioning and workshop session in collaboration with the Situated Technologies group from the University of Buffalo, and with the department of Knowledge Integration, University of Waterloo.

Miriam Ho

ON SHIFTING GROUND

Renegotiating the Ecological Crisis of the Disappearing Sea

This thesis looks at textile craft as a means of comprehending complex ecologies, and of contemplating upon fragility and mortality. In the man-made disaster of the dying Aral Sea in Central Asia, often told as a parable of the tragic end to industrial greed, there exists a history of anthropogenic modifications to the land, and continually mutating ecosystems and economies. A speculative design for an artificial landscape which reinhabits fragments of the disappearing sea presents the possibility of grafting new ecologies on shifting terrain. Extended exercises in material craft will accompany the design: the inherent systematic, mimetic and haptic qualities of cloth offer an intimate synthetic medium to perceive and reconstruct nature. Drawing from cultural sources in environmental theory, philosophy and literature, a discussion of a modern condition of traumatized landscape and turbulent nature further attempts to articulate the tenuous relationship between human artifice and the natural world.



pre-dessication
shoreline

aral sea
drainage basin

UZBEKISTAN

TURKMENISTAN

IRAN



KAZAKHSTAN

KYRGYZSTAN

CHINA

TAJIKISTAN

fig 0.1

ENERGOCORP.UK

ON SHIFTING GROUND

RENEGOTIATING THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS OF THE
DISAPPEARING SEA

This is an investigation of ecology as a paradigm to counter a prevailing fatalistic view of human progress and resource consumption. Ecology, from the Greek “oikos,” meaning house, and “-ology,” emplaced knowledge of a discipline, considers the existential act of dwelling within an environment, however mutant the shape of this milieu may be. The abiding opposition of modernity and “nature,” forged by the Promethean spark of technology in the Industrial Revolution, and the seeming obliteration of the wilderness in its wake, drives us “repeatedly [to] the brink of self-destructive catastrophes”¹ with the quandary of regaining control: nature, regulated for consumption or sanctified by a return to origins?

Both positions are untenable, detaching the environment from what contemporary cultural theorist Sanford Kwinter calls “human social destiny.” In “The Third Ecology,” Kwinter echoes philosopher Felix Guattari’s social critique in “The Three Ecologies” by defining the ecological crises as a failure to valorize a deeper human connection to the universe rather than as a human assault against the physical environment: “If there is an ecological crises at hand, it is one that as much concerns the deterioration and deformation of human experience as it does that of the physical habitat on which we rely to provide overabundant wealth.”² Kwinter identifies human social destiny as the true core of ecological thought, seeking a broader framework for creativity and innovation, social and cultural acts which engage the materials, processes, and inherent logic of the natural milieu.

1 Felix Guattari, ‘The Three Ecologies’, in *New Formations* (1989), 135

2 Sanford Kwinter, ‘Notes on the Third Ecology’ in *Anticipate*, 94

A COMPLEX PROBLEM

The near-disappearance of the Aral Sea in Central Asia is often seen as cautionary tale of industrial greed: spurred by economic development goals, increased irrigation for cotton production has caused rapid evaporation of what was once the world's fourth largest lake within forty years. Besides the loss of water and its associated ecosystems (wildlife habitat, marshlands) and industries (primarily industrial fishing), repercussions include groundwater contamination from chemical fertilizers, dust storms, airborne pollutants and illness, and rising regional temperatures. The severe consequences, and causes, implicate a multi-national region.

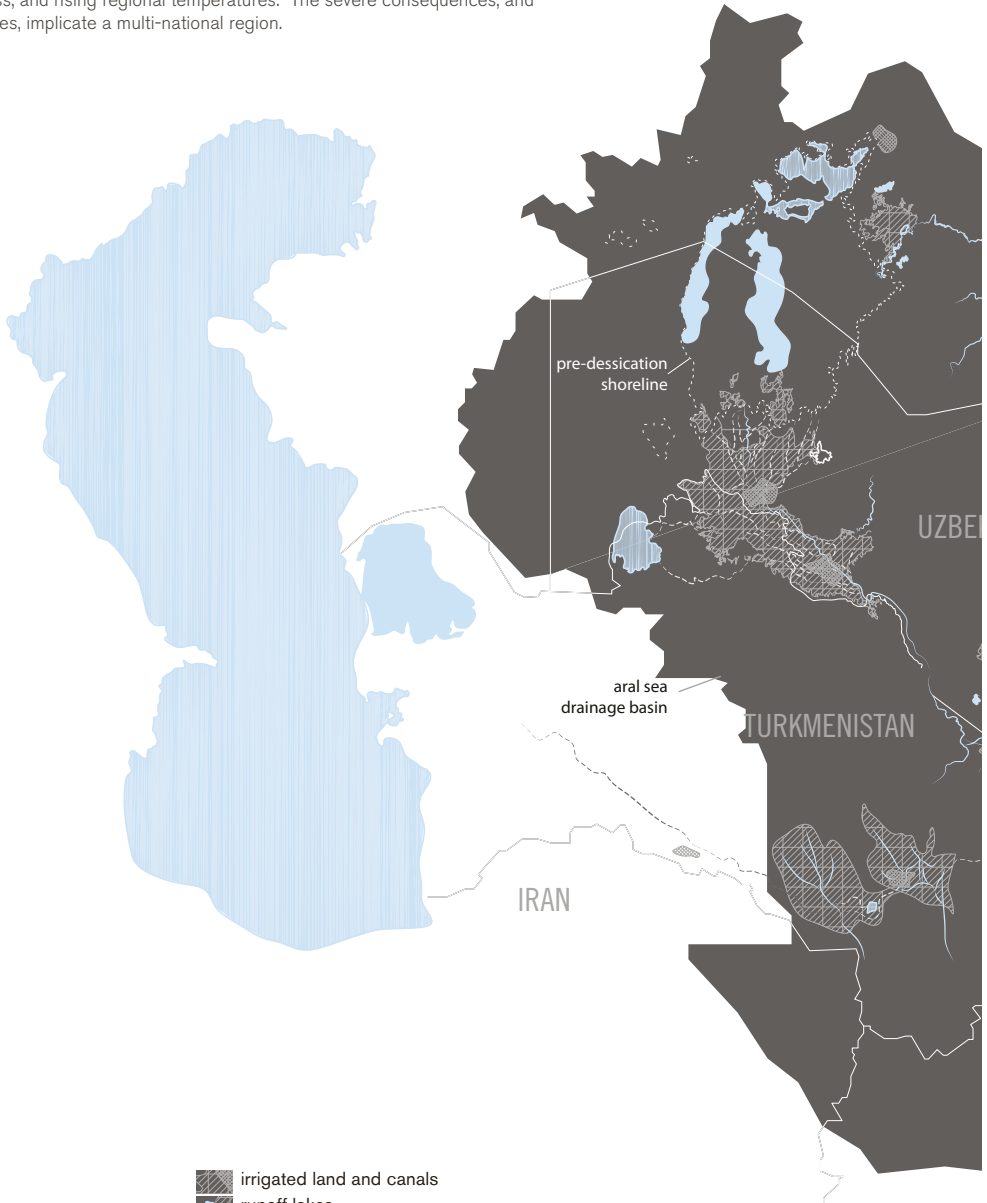
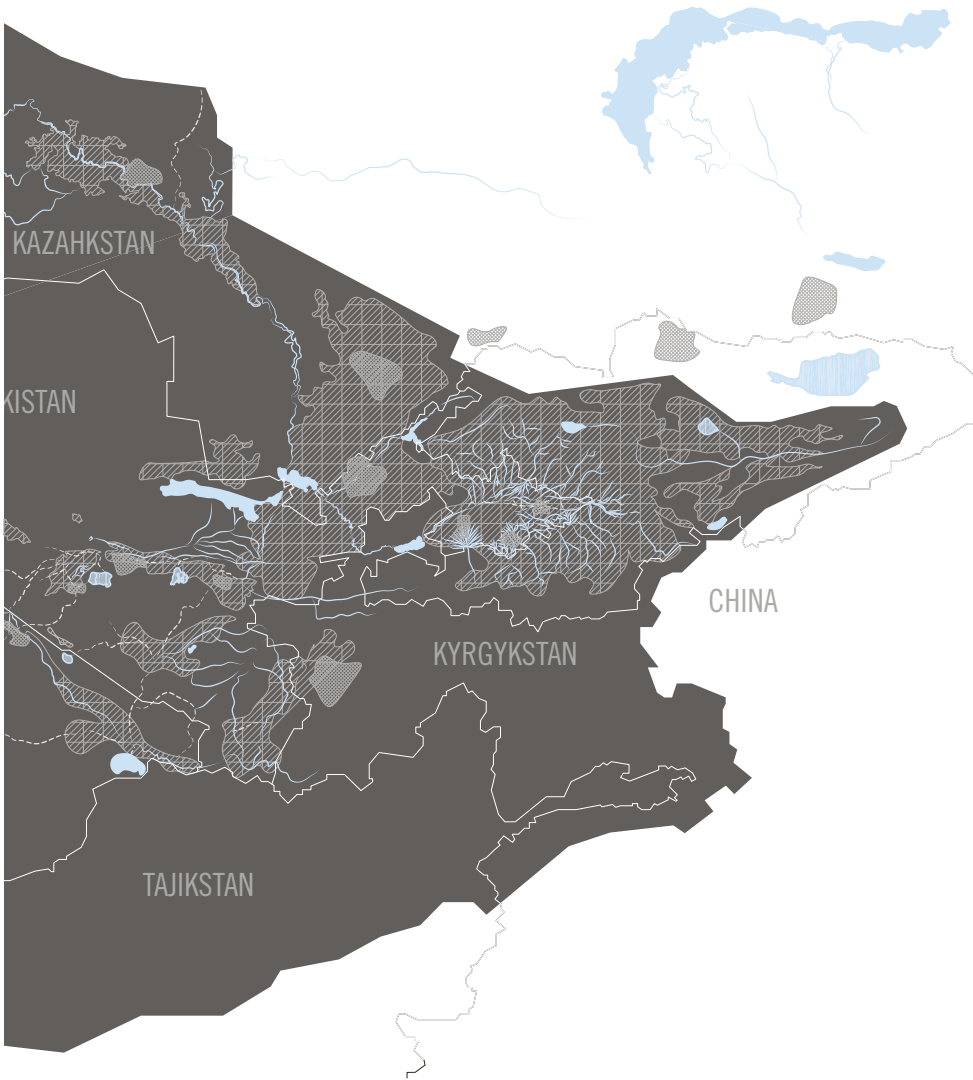


fig. 0.3

above
hydrology of the
Aral Sea Basin

- irrigated land and canals
- runoff lakes
- river systems
- urban areas



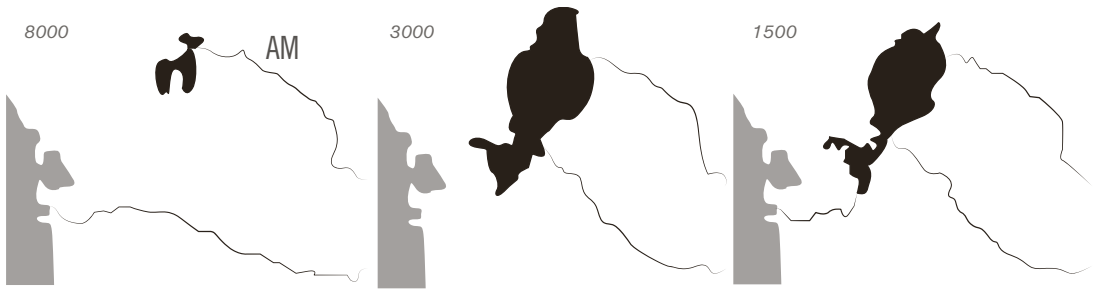


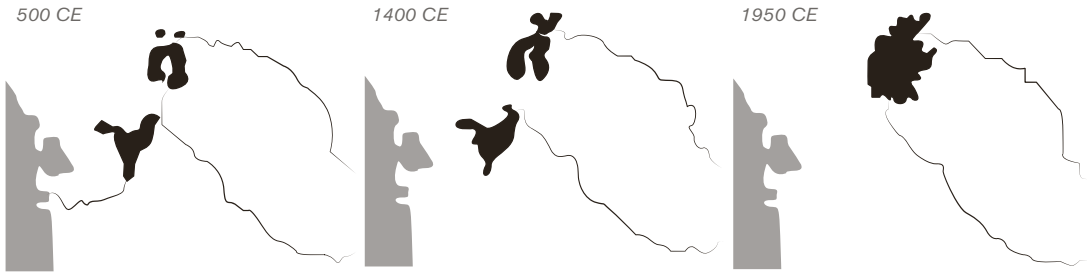
fig. 0.4

above
Historic Evolution
of the Aral Sea

of canals supplying water to 3.5-3.8 million hectares of farmland in the Karakoum desert at Aral's eastern shore. Conversely, the incessant negotiation for fertile land from the desert is also evinced by the withdrawal of waters. A terminal inland sea fed by inflowing rivers, the shoreline of the Aral Sea transgressed and regressed as irrigated land expanded and contracted along its feeder rivers from the 5th to 15th century.

Historic sources document apparently ineffective and unsustainable irrigation practices: in 1558, English cartographer Anthony Jenkinson wrote that "the water that serveth all the country is drawn by ditches out of the river... in short time all land is like to be destroyed, and to become a wilderness for want of water when the river Oxus [former name of the Amu Darya] shall fail."⁴ Medieval agrarian settlements in the Karakoum desert have reverted to pasture grounds for present farmers, although abandoned canals are still registered amid sand-dune formations. Irrigation in the Central Asian desert, where the soil is infiltrated by calcium sulfate, a salt that seeps to the surface to stunt plant growth when the land is excessively irrigated, requiring yet greater amounts of water to wash it away, has only ever been a temporal and fatal state. The recent dessication of the Aral Sea reiterates the hopes and failures of former empires: it is largely attributed to the Soviet Union's aims of increasing cotton production, which propelled the construction of a large-scale infrastructure of dams, hydraulic pumps and water intake structures to regulate and divide the water supply of the Aral Sea's feeder rivers, the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya amongst an extensive network of irrigation canals and reservoirs. In the last half

4 Ian Boomer et. al, 'The Paleolimnology of the Aral Sea: a Review' in *Quaternary Science Reviews* 19 (London: 2000), 1266



century, increased agricultural water consumption, accompanied by population and industrial growth within the Aral Sea basin is reciprocated by the apocalyptic transformation of the Aral Sea into a desert wasteland. A catastrophe with severe regional consequences, the Aral Sea's irreparably damaged ecosystem also raises global concern over the rapidity with which landscapes are erased by human activity.

Alternately, the present reality of this desert wasteland may be perceived as part of an evolving process rather than the terminal end. Contemporary philosopher Elizabeth Grosz advocates a non-deterministic view of history. She criticizes the simple ordering of memory into history, a method which inverts progress:

Architecture has tended to face time and temporality through the questions posed by history, and through its response to the ravages of that history, its orientation towards monumentality. Architecture has thought time, with notable exceptions, through history rather than through duration, as that to be preserved... honored and respected through immortality.⁴

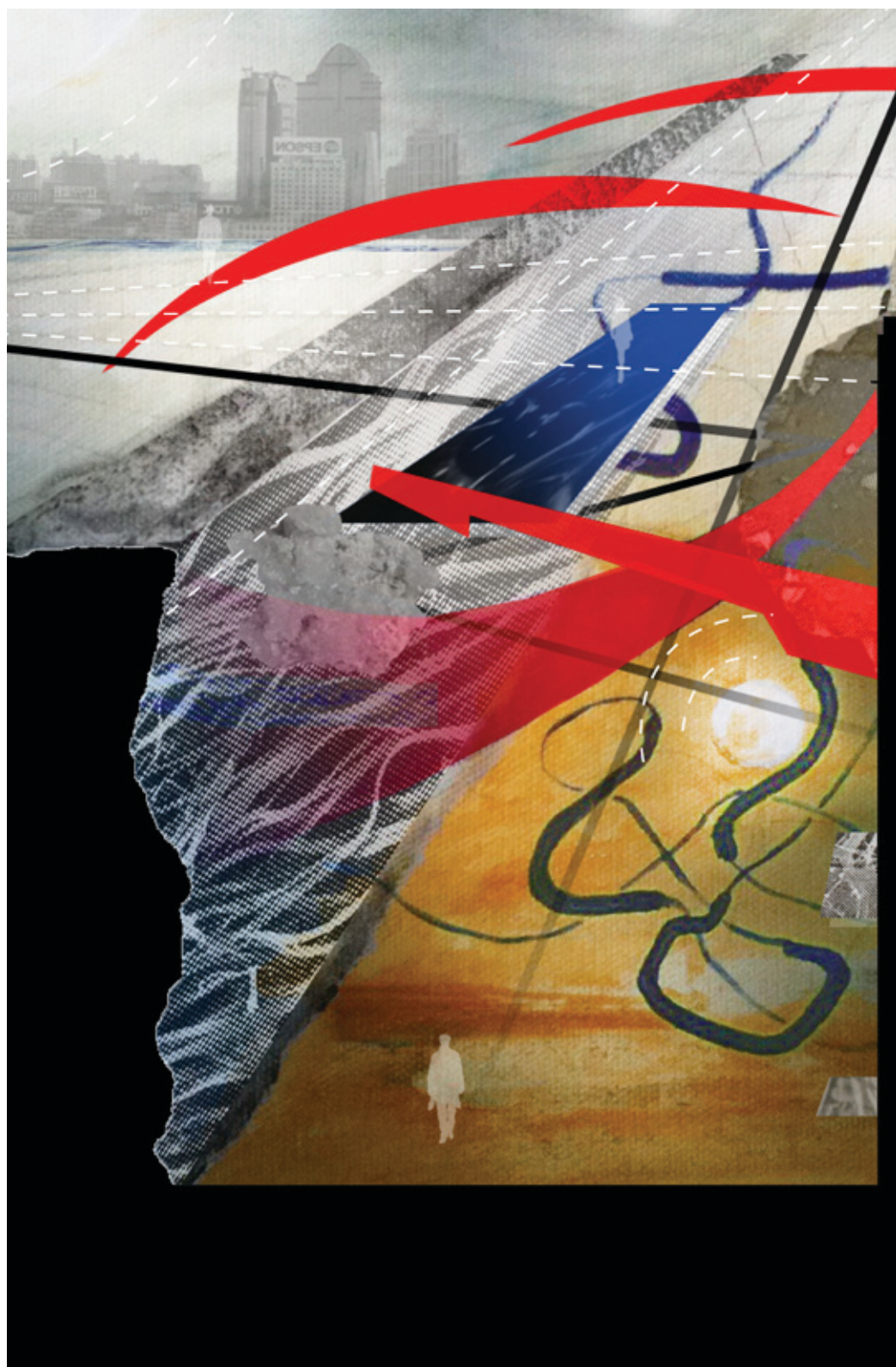
5 Elizabeth Grosz, 'The Future of Space: Towards an Architecture of Invention,' in *Architecture from the Outside* (MIT Press, 2001), retrieved from <http://dpi.studioxx.org/>

For Grosz, a place should not merely represent the direct outcome of a linear progression of time, rather, it embodies the temporal quality of "becoming." The undefined past from which a site has emerged, and simultaneously the unfolding of the future, are hidden potentials within a space that liberate it from a static understanding of its present state. In a region of constant renegotiations for fertility from the land, the desertification of Aral Sea is a state of becoming

Marta Kubacki

SIHANG WAREHOUSE

A Proposal for Change



SIHANG: A PROPOSAL FOR RENEWAL

INTRODUCTION

As a quickly developing city, Shanghai has been forced to make quick decisions about which of its historic buildings will continue to have a presence in its future.

For its rich culture, I will argue that historic Sihang Warehouse in Shanghai, should have a place in Shanghai's newly forged modern identity. I will further argue that the ultimate design should not be a traditional adaptive use project, but a forward thinking project addressing current issues, celebrating the culturally significant past, and providing solutions for the future.

The project will be part of the greater aqua park complex which is also part of the proposal, stretching for 2 kilometers along Suzhou Creek. Using water as a primary material for partitioning, cladding, and function of the aqua park and proposed exhibition centre within Sihang warehouse, the project will use an integrated approach, benefitting the community, attracting visitors, and solidifying Shanghai's reputation as a culturally rich, sustainable and forward-thinking metropolis.

1 *facing page*

Original thesis sketch depicting the energies and edges of the Shanghai city fabric (see appendix for a Shanghai walk-through description- "15 minutes in Shanghai")

SUMMARY

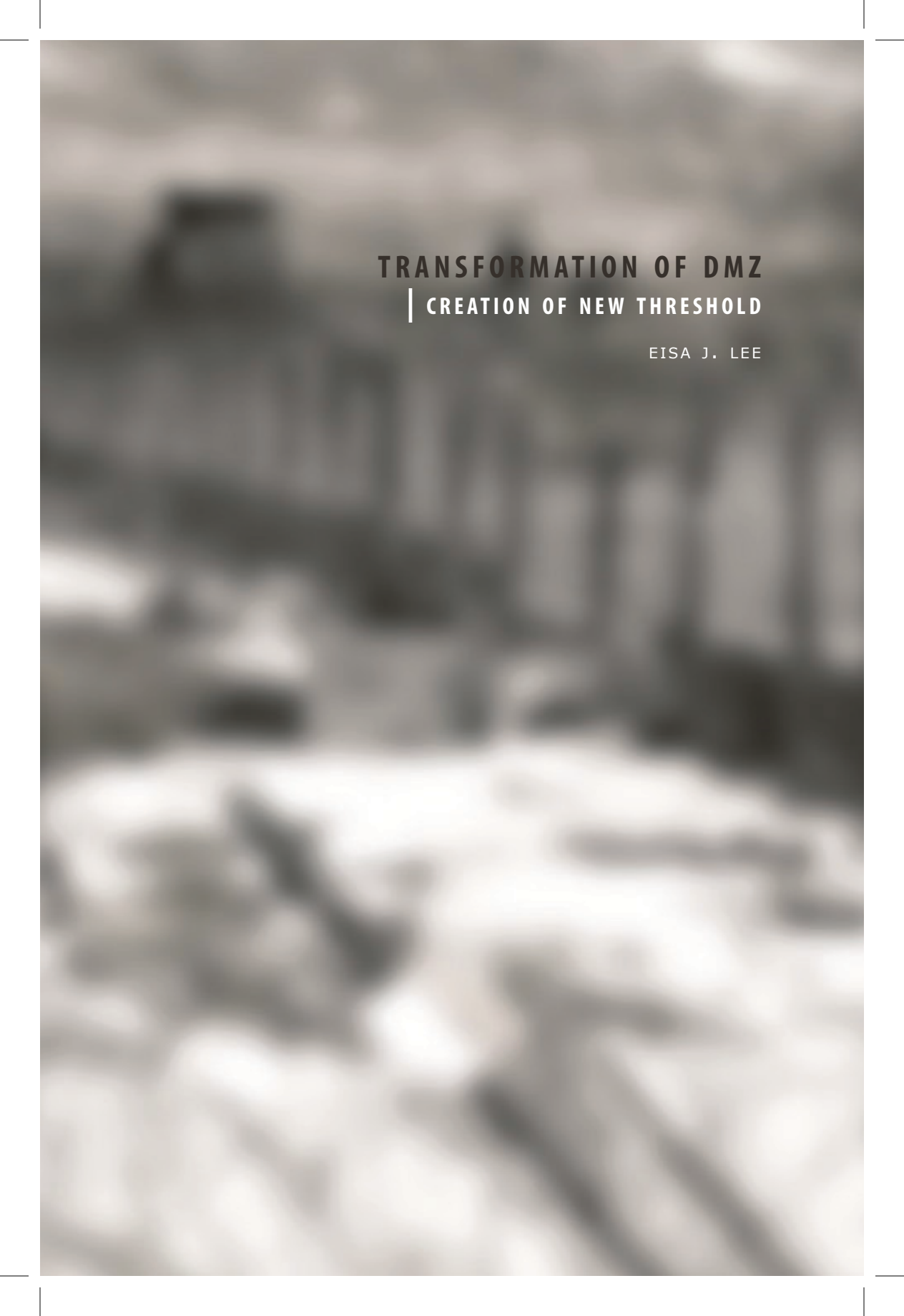
Situated in the Zhabei District of Shanghai, China (on Tibet North Road and Guangfu Road on the north edge of the Suzhou Creek and meandering north-west along the creek toward the arts district) the proposed Sihang Aqua Park aims to provide a meaningful space for the nearby residential community and visitors. While the Aqua Park appears to be a large sculpture made of interactive sheets of flowing water, its main function is to work as a filtration system, filtering water, air, and noise to provide a tranquil, cooling microclimate and unique park experience in a bustling metropolis. This intervention will create much needed park space for local residents, a unique tourist experience for visitors, produce gallery and exhibition space, provide water for riverside irrigation, and clean the environment. The park will meander

Current Sihang Warehouse, as commercial and office space, in



for two kilometres along the Suzhou Creek's north edge, using the Arts District and Sihang warehouse as anchors. The project aims to transform Sihang Warehouse, a culturally significant and robust structure, currently in need of maintenance and used as commercial and office space, into the first large-scale building to use water as a primary partition and cladding element. Pouring from a network of suspended, programmable water channels, the filtered water screens will function as a partition system controlling the interior pedestrian circulation of the proposed Sihang Aqua Centre. This system will be customized to suit the needs of various scales of exhibits while creating an ethereal backdrop for the pieces on display. These aqua screens will help control the interior temperature, cooling the building in summer by the screens' absorption of heat, and heating the building through an integrated in-floor radiant heating system. Finally, by careful control of water flow, cascading water flow patterns will be used to create downward moving text along the building envelope, displaying the name of the centre and promoting its upcoming exhibits.

Thus, by intergrating an environmental mediation and cleaning system with much needed program (park space, exhibit space, a connection to the Art Distric),the Sihang Aqua Park and Centre proposal will benefitting the community, attracting visitors, and solidifying Shanghai's reputation as a culturally rich, sustainable and forward-thinking metropolis.



TRANSFORMATION OF DMZ
| CREATION OF NEW THRESHOLD

EISA J. LEE

ABSTRACT

248km of cold wire fence embedded into the ground, full of unbearable memories and trace. After being the physical barrier between the two Koreans for decades, DMZ holds the possibility of becoming a new threshold. Under the hypothesis that reunification is near, this thesis proposal will attempt to suggest a possible method of reunification in spatial terms rather than political terms. The major issue of this proposal will be creating a synthesis between the nature of DMZ and the newly built environment. To illustrate this clearly, the site for this study will be near Panmunjeom, where the 4km apart DMZ fence lines become one. Along with a specific site study, ecosystem of the DMZ, conditions of natural succession, threshold conditions, new spatial system incorporating vernacular attraction of the two Koreans, and the balance between nature and architecture will be discussed in or-



der to come up with the final method. These studies will be done in reference to various literatures such as theses written by Korean scholars and students on topics related to DMZ (social and ecological), an anthology of essays on architecture and nature by contemporary architects, and books on current residential and social life of the two Koreas as well as their history. These studies will lead up to a preliminary attempt in proposing a design method to create the new threshold condition of DMZ in post-unification.

below
Initial visualization



THRESHOLD

introduction

One piece of land, one peace of mind, two countries. Although sharing the same national origins, the two Koreas have been physically divided for over 60 years. In the middle of these two countries is the DMZ, a demilitarized zone created during armistice agreement in 1953. Being desolated over the years, it has grown into a world of its own, a world of great wonders and treasures. With its rich ecosystem, DMZ has been under the process of acquiring designation as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO for several years. The condition of its ecosystem now was only possible because it had a definite boundary line to keep human contact away from it. What will happen if the two Koreas were to unite? Will cities rise out of urban development and eventually destroy the natural landscape, or, will people treat it as a sacred place and reserve it at its state? The major issue here is the condition of the boundary—the threshold. Once the DMZ fences lose their political significance, they simply become physical barriers. The question being asked is how to transform this barrier into an opportunity, an opportunity of new environment where nature and human coexist.

What would happen if the reunification of DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, informally North Korea) and ROK (Republic of Korea, informally South Korea) is near? The following thesis proposal will attempt to presume the transformation of DMZ's boundaries into thresholds. The thoughts of this idea will be drawn over the site that is located near Panmunjeom. Panmunjeom is the physical border crossing between DPRK and ROK and it's the only area where

DMZ turns into a single line between Gijeong-dong of North Korea and Daeseong-dong of South Korea. As DMZ directly engages with the built environments, it will be an appropriate site to study the transformation of boundary into threshold. The condition of the design method is to keep the natural conditions of DMZ undisturbed while some level of urban development occurs. In order to work within this condition, diverse approach methods from various disciplines have to be used: ecological approach is required to understand the natural system of DMZ, historical approach (in social and cultural perspectives) is required to contemplate on the quality of the urban development after unification, and then architectural approach is required to render the final outcome in the form of spatial syntax.

To work with the nature of DMZ, we first have to acknowledge and understand the system within it. Nature is not a static element like most architecture is. It cannot be planned nor predicted because it breathes, it grows, it moves, and it dies. In her essay "Shifting Sites", Kristina Hill refers to this idea as 'ecological complexity', where she states:

contemporary ecological theory does not see sites as the fundamental unit of prediction for future states of nature ...it must consider systems that exist at both larger and smaller scales than the site

the multiplicity of perspectives that must be understood in order to capture even an approximate picture of ecological functions can be daunting... this enormous complexity and variety can be organized only by using some form of approximate reasoning that finds similarities among the morphological characteristics and life history traits of many species.¹

¹ Hill, Kristina. "Shifting Sites", p148.

The approximate reasoning that Hill discusses about in her text is an inevitable factor in predicting the natural

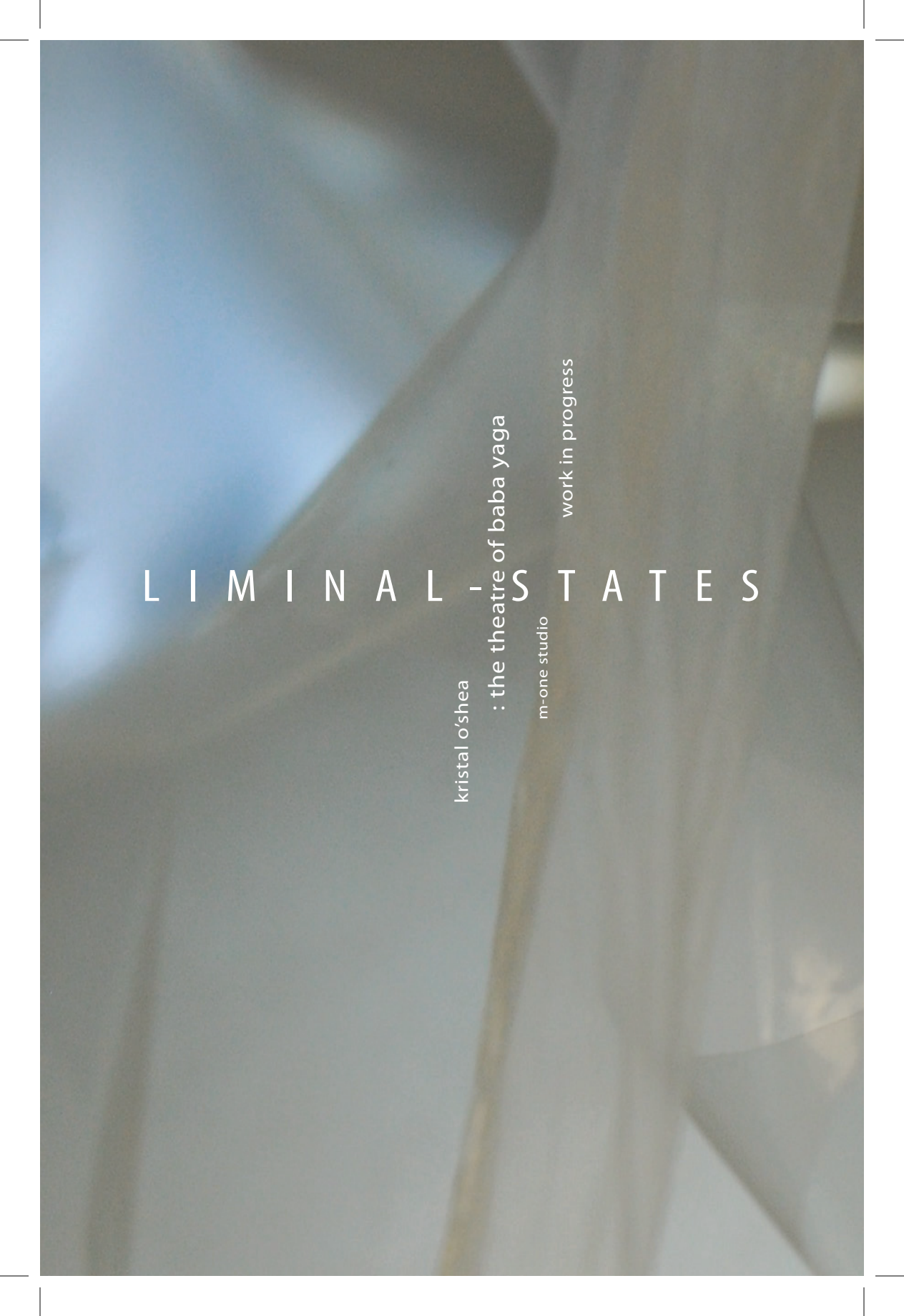
systems of the site. To be able speculate on the future ecological image of the site, we must first analyze the types of existing species and their characteristics of the system and then can we come up with the logic to establish approximate reasoning. Once it is established, speculations on the possible pattern of natural succession can be derived. This pattern will then allow the site itself to become a large 'shifting mosaic', which Hill defines as "a pattern that consists of sporadic, repeated emergences and disappearances of different ecosystem types (vegetation or hydrologic features like wetlands, for example)."²

Once the natural systems have been registered, the urban environment has to be carefully looked at as well. To understand the two different urban fabrics, which will most likely be applied to the new development, vernacular architecture of the two Koreas will be investigated in social and cultural perspectives. More traditional residential areas will be covered to look at the spatial organization before division, and then Sinuiju of North Korea and Seoul of South Korea to compare the more contemporary residential areas. These studies are done to reflect upon the general construction of the different urban fabric before going into speculating the new. These existing urban fabrics will be retranslated into the new urban system in human scale.

Hill, p.146. 2

The new urban fabric, or the threshold, will be designed using the combination of ecological system and spatial organization. A layer of circulation grids will be applied on top of the existing farmlands. These grids will be visible from the overall urban planning of the area, more so than the actual human scale; however, users will be able to experience the change in orientation and material.

As this thesis proposal explores on the possible outcome after unification, I hope that this will be a new approach in creating the balance between not only nature and architecture, but also between social and cultural relationships of the two different Koreas.



L I M I N A L - S T A T E S

kristal o'shea

: the theatre of baba yaga

m-one studio

work in progress

ABSTRACT

This thesis is inspired by the Slavic folk tale character Baba Yaga and her hut. It includes a gathering of related yet diverse material that subsequently informs a design proposal for integrating the spatially and psychologically complex nature of the mythological figure into the realm of contemporary architecture. This thesis explores whether an understanding of the grotesque, earthly, dark, kinetic, material, ritualistic and visceral associations of Baba Yaga might offer a renewed, empowered social realm evoked by the architecture that contains it.

The content of this thesis consists of four modules: The Myth, The Personal, The Site and the Design Synthesis. The progression of material begins by first offering discourse that examines and interprets the prevalent ambiguity of Baba Yaga's character. The content then transitions from the mythological realm of Baba Yaga into the physical realm by offering a narrative of my own psychologically challenging experiences in order to offer varying degrees of public understanding. Following this, an involved visual analysis of subtle phenomena in Kensington Market will be presented.

Afterward, I continue the narrative of Baba Yaga through the design of a spatially expansive and interactive theatre located within Kensington Market. The theatre will have the potential to expand its program beyond its physical boundaries into the public domain. It will additionally embody different complex characters inspired by Baba Yaga in order to evoke different psychological responses within the theatre's occupants as needed.

The intervention will reference contemporary projects and theories that are concerned with architectures rela-

tion to the unconscious, the 'underworld' and sensuality, as well as theatres role in public expression and liminality. The gathering of discourse will reference architect Raimund Abraham's projects and his material quests for revealing the unconscious, Juhani Pallasmaa's theoretical proposal for integrating sensuality into architecture, Christine Macy and Sarah Bonnesmaison's theories on ephemeral constructions and empowerment, as well as Mark Pizzato's analysis on how the program of theatre can perform as the "liminoid" edge for concerned societies.

The Theatre of Baba Yaga aims to emotionally stimulate its participants by creating an enchanted private and public realm, charged with emotionally evocative tectonics in its creation. It will have the potential to create a spatial environment that challenges one's perceptions of space by revealing subtle phenomena that might alter an occupant's otherwise orthodox experience.

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title page

- 1 Photograph detail of material exploration made from helium balloons and polyethylene

INTRODUCTION

"The grotesque body is open, protruding, irregular, secreting, multiple and changing; it is identified with non-official "low" culture or the carnivalesque, and with social transformation.

"The 'grotesque body' exaggerates its processes, bulges, and orifices... [It] breaks down the boundaries between itself and the world outside it."

1 Russo, Mary. *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 1994: 8.



I have endured great loss: loss of life, of innocence, and of trust in humanity. In its absence I have gained paranoia, hesitation, and introspective behaviours. Such qualities have thickened the Ukrainian blood flowing through my veins and arteries, evoking previously unknown spirits beyond my control. I can feel their nails scraping and digging inside of me, as I lay motionless and alert during my bouts of insomnia. Baba Yaga has revealed herself in my blood, awakening from her slumber, burrowing herself in my organs as she claims my body. Her protective hut is now my skin-an enclosure of secrets. Her mind is now my mind; full of torment and turmoil. I have transformed into a vessel for unwanted memories, trapping me within a liminal state of alterity. During all attempts to banish her from being, I find myself unsuccessful - she only burrows deeper - masking herself deep beneath my skin. Her power is all consuming.

In my final attempt to banish her from my being, I have created for her a new place to dwell in Kensington Market, Toronto. It will be made from my hands and

designed by her mind, allowing her to transition from my own body into an architectural form, manifesting her complex nature within a new place of inhabitation. It is from this exorcism that I propose to contribute a contemporary Baba Yaga to the architectural realm. A keeper of souls and hesitation; a spatial tracing of unseen truths and unveilings of subtle phenomena; a place suspended within a state of dynamic tension, thriving on both hesitation and impulse, forcing a constant negotiation of space amongst both its guests and its own form.

This thesis is inspired by the Slavic folk tale character Baba Yaga and her hut. It includes a gathering of related yet diverse material that subsequently informs a design proposal for integrating the spatially and psychologically complex nature of the mythological figure into the realm of contemporary architecture. This thesis explores whether an understanding of the grotesque, earthly, dark, kinetic, material, ritualistic and visceral associations of Baba Yaga might offer a renewed, empowered social realm evoked by the architecture that contains it.

The content of this thesis consists of four modules: The Myth, The Personal, The Site and the Design Synthesis. The progression of material begins by first offering discourse that examines and interprets the prevalent ambiguity of Baba Yaga's character. The content then transitions from the mythological realm of Baba Yaga into the physical realm by offering a narrative of my own psychologically challenging experiences in order to offer varying degrees of public understanding. Following this, an involved visual analysis of subtle phenomena in Kensington Market will be presented.

The first module will be devoted to understanding the cause and reasoning behind the complex character of Baba Yaga. An analysis of her mythological, ritual and psychological interpretations will be offered in order to potentially reveal the underlying value of the mythological figure. By revealing qualities in Baba Yaga's character, it is of my intention that both the descriptions and interpretations of the conscious versus unconscious

realm, the 'other' world, and Baba Yaga as the gatekeeper might be able to offer a renewed approach and understanding to architectural design.

Secondly, in order to move from the mythological realm into our own physical realm, I have offered my own development of existence for further understanding of the psychologically complex nature of Baba Yaga. Comparisons may be realized between my own narrative and psychoanalyst Caroline Scielzo's interpretation of Baba Yaga as a tale of the fragmented female. Additionally, links may also be made between the mythological, ritual and psychological interpretations of Baba Yaga as the gatekeeper. Since I have identified myself as being suspended within a liminal state of alterity, I act as my own gatekeeper between two polarized realms.

Furthermore, Scielzo's analysis might offer a connection between the mythological narrative and the architectural realm. When she interprets the action of entering Baba Yaga's forest as symbolically entering one's own unconscious, she sets up a relation between physical space, translations of movement and their psychological implications.

Such a relation is more clearly expressed in the study of human embodiment in architecture. While Scielzo's interpretation more closely relates to contemporary architect Raimund Abraham's projects that seek to reveal the unconscious realm of given locations through ephemeral constructions, the relation between the body and architecture can also be traced back to the time of antiquity. While Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man (1487) is predominantly concerned with embodying human proportions within architecture and space making, later works completed, such as art theorist Charles Le Brun's (1600s) study of psychology in art, attempted to evoke human emotions through built environments by embodying specific human postures, age, and facial expressions within architecture in order to prescribe it meaning.

Later, Juhani Pallasmaa's book *The Eyes of The Skin* drastically expanded on the relationship between humans and architecture. While his theory accepted

the desire for aesthetic, visual human stimulation, he also requested that the other senses become just as relevant, which includes touch, taste, smell, and sound. His theory suggests that by creating a sensual built environment, architecture can potentially inspire its occupants and enhance one's quality of life.

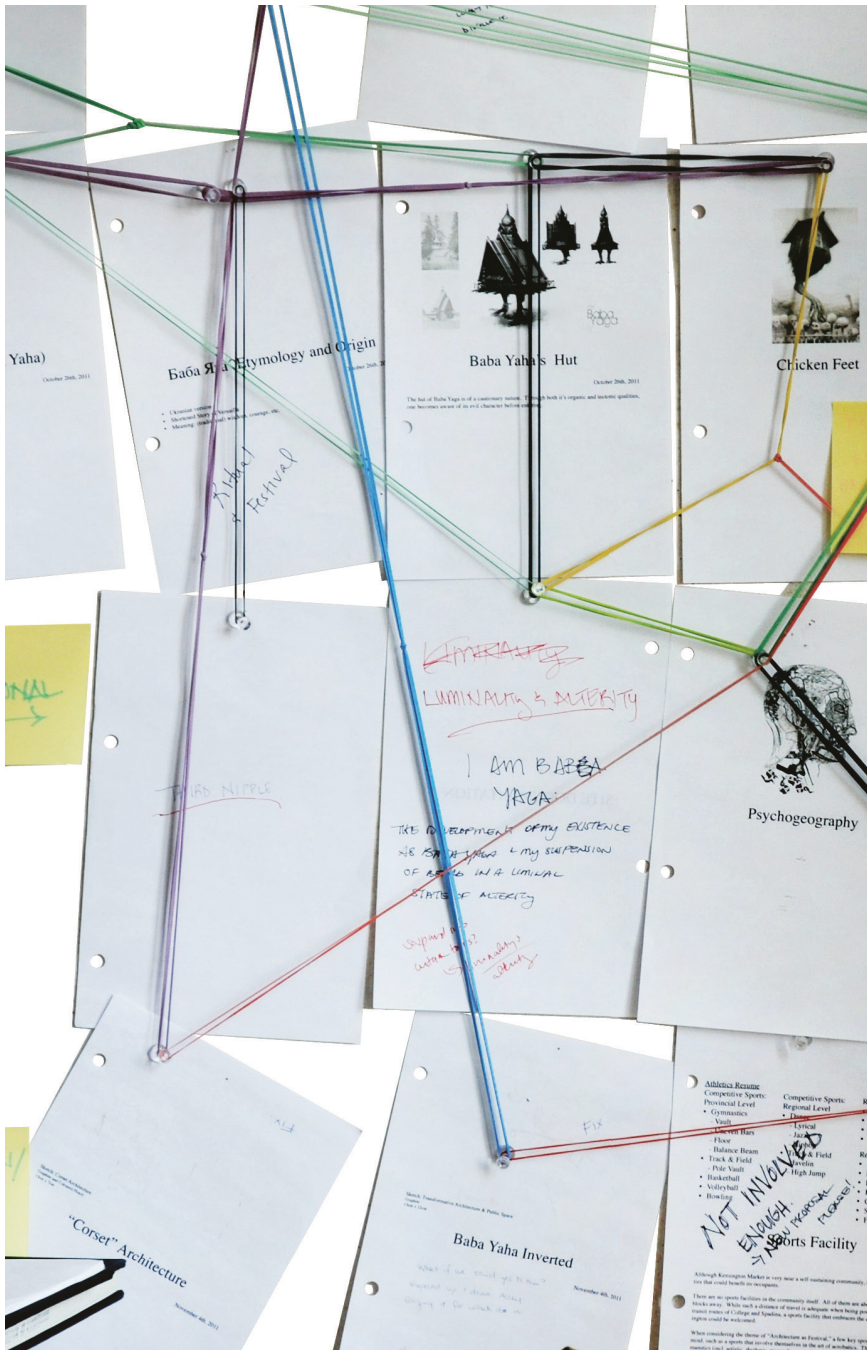
Shifting from the discourse itself, an evaluation of Kensington Market will also be completed. I will attempt to reveal the unconscious or 'other' world that may already be present within Kensington's vernacular system. The study focuses on both the spatial syntax of Kensington and its contribution to space making through ephemeral constructions.

And finally, the three previous manifolds will subsequently inform an interactive design intervention for Kensington Market, Toronto. By reinterpreting and applying the grotesque, earthly, dark, kinetic, material, ritualistic and visceral associations of Baba Yaga to the culturally unique site location, such understandings might offer a renewed and empowered social domain for Kensington Market. Constructing and revealing hidden vitalities manifested within the architectural tectonics of the theatre might offer a renewed, evocative sense of space and spatial translations. Additionally, by moving beyond proportion and aesthetics and including all other senses and understandings of psychology, the intervention might offer the 'keys' to unlocking the hidden realm not only within Kensington Market, but within occupants' own minds as well.

facing page

Photograph detail of my personal working method while determining associations between different modules, as indicated in Contents. An individual row is assigned to each module.

2



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