

# Speculative Friction:

## Seven Stories from the Geneva Freeport

by

Alice Jia Li Song  
Bachelor of Architectural Studies  
University of Waterloo, 2016

+

Yaara Yacoby  
Bachelor of Art in History of Art and Architecture  
Harvard University, 2017

Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture at the  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology. February 2022.

© 2022 Alice Jia Li Song & Yaara Yacoby. All rights reserved.

The authors hereby grant to MIT permission to reproduce and to distribute  
publicly paper and electronic copies of this thesis document in whole or in  
part in any medium now known or hereafter created.

**Signatures of Authors** \_\_\_\_\_

Alice Jia Li Song & Yaara Yacoby  
Department of Architecture  
January 14, 2022

**Certified by** \_\_\_\_\_

Nicholas de Monchaux  
Professor and Head of Architecture  
Thesis Supervisor

**Accepted by** \_\_\_\_\_

Leslie K. Norford  
Professor of Building Technology  
Chair, Department Committee on Graduate Students

Thesis Committee

Nicholas de Monchaux  
Professor and Head of Architecture  
Thesis Supervisor

J. (Jeremy) Jih  
Visiting Lecturer  
Thesis Reader

Caroline A. Jones, PhD  
Professor of the History of Art,  
Associate Dean, School of Architecture and Planning  
Thesis Reader

# Speculative Friction:

## Seven Stories from the Geneva Freeport

by Alice Jia Li Song & Yaara Yacoby

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 14, 2022 in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **ABSTRACT:**

Speculative Friction uses storytelling to explore the line between fact and fiction, implicating the construction of reality in the construction of speculative futures. This project is interested in the Geneva Freeport (Switzerland) as its central character. This Special Economic Zone legally operates outside of global trade taxation laws as a free-market tool to expedite the import and export of commercial goods. While there are hundreds of modern freeports around the world, the Geneva Freeport is unique in allowing “passing” objects to be stored indefinitely in its storage spaces. As a result of this state of stasis, as well as Swiss confidentiality laws, the Freeport has been the storage facility for anything considered to be of value. Grains, gold bars, art objects, and illegally extracted antiquities are all stored in the Freeport without public access and without taxation, even as ownership is exchanged. It is estimated that there are as many as 1.2 million objects in storage.

This thesis opens the conversation to the banal and absurd capitalist reality at the Geneva Freeport and looks at this uncanny world from within. What are the objects and their entanglements with the world outside? What happens when the objects begin to push back on their container?

Thesis Supervisor: Nicholas de Monchaux  
Title: Professor and Head of Architecture

Acknowledgments  
A Sincere Thank You

Thank You

To our committee: Nicholas, J, and Caroline - for your unwavering enthusiasm and support from the very beginning. Your steady presence helped us navigate out of the dark corridors of the Freeport.

To all the people who helped us along the course of the semester: Chris Dewart, Shah Paul, Jeff Landman, Garnette Cadogan, Geoff Manaugh, Kateri Bertin, Deborah Garcia.

To our friends and classmates, especially Ryan Clement, Emma Jurczynski, Taylor Boes, Jon Brearely, Emma Pfeiffer, Chris Moyer, Charlie Janson, Edward Wang, April Gao.

*From Yaara:* Alice, thank you for taking the leap with me, for indulging my curiosities and challenging my preconceptions. Thanks to you, I learned as much about Freeports as about the beauty of partnership. Thank you, Matt (M), for your unconditional support throughout these especially challenging 3.5 years, for your love, and companionship.

*From Alice:* Thank you, Yaara, for both trusting me and challenging me. I'm so thankful for a semester of learning alongside you. Cheers to the hive mind! Thank you to all my friends, and especially Matt (L), for listening, for understanding, for lifting me up, and for simply staying along the journey with me even through hard times.

To our families with love.

## On the Purpose and Structure of the Book

This thesis book aims to convey as well as reflect the thesis it concludes. It seeks to draw connections, and suggest the possible rather than the definitive. It is a representation of the thoughts, ideas, and conversations that ran between two minds throughout four months. It is intended to serve as a set of references for the authors who created it and for any one who happens upon it.<sup>1</sup>

This book serves as a lexicon<sup>2</sup> containing documentation of the authors' thesis work as well as approximately fifty references. Each entry is crossed-referenced to other original work and referenced works that informed the thesis itself. Documentation of the final project is divided into 3 sections: 1. Overview, 2. Detail Views, and 3. Final Review Conversation. References are spread between each section and are categorized by type: architecture, exhibition, film, image, model, story, academic, text, article, and opinion (primarily our own).

While the book can be read in the linear order it inherently suggests, we invite readers to follow their curiosity, cross-reference, and meander between the pages.

<sup>1</sup> A note on citations: functioning, in part, as an index of references, only images on pages 10 - 17, 37 - 43, 52 - 81 are our own creation. All text is original work unless directly attributed.

<sup>2</sup> A word borrowed from the artist, Sandra Kühne, as she described her lexiconic book, *Blank Spot Cartography*, which inspired the structure of our own book.

## The Collaborative Structure—The Social Contract

### 1 Recording the process

Notion records conversations, notes, research, dates. Dropbox tracks media created for these dates and meetings.

### 2 How and when we come together and rituals around coming together

We will begin our conversations with a check in, how are we feeling, whether we are stressed and what is going on in life.

We move cyclically with each other, coming together and making sure to move apart and have space to contemplate.

In the span of a week, we would like to have a(n illicit) beer in studio once a week at the end of the day (Thursday PM). Alternating the task of bringing in beer.

We would like to focus on weekly cycles: a specific meeting about the exercises (Monday 10am - 11:30am), a general meeting about the project (Wednesday 10am - 11:30am). Experiment with taking turns week to week to present research.

Monday will be a closing/starting meeting where we decide on how we want to come together for the next week.

### **3 Guidelines for conversation**

Cards on the table approach:

We don't expect perfection, we expect to work together and to work through problems together.

We would like to continue voicing our concerns, our imperfections, our pinch points.

We recognize that not every decision can be logical - we give ourselves permission to not always have to justify ourselves to one another. We respect each other's intuitions and we admit stubbornness when it occurs.

We will continue to be curious with ourselves and our reactions and communicate through images, models, drawings.

### **4 Guidelines for disagreement**

We recognize that disagreement is productive for our process, we cherish and respect it, and do not feel threatened by it.

We respect that sometimes a break is productive in a disagreement, we vocalize it and suggest an alternative time for conversation.

We realize we are two individuals and at times disagree in the presence of the committee, we seek honest discussion and openness above all else, our disagreements are not performative.

### **5 On partnership roles**

We are not interested in taking on permanent positions with one another.

### **6 On production**

We do not feel obligated to have synthesis, conclusions, and resolutions.

We are committed to curiosity and patience.

## **Table of Contents**

### **The Set Up**

Abstract	3
Acknowledgments - A Sincere Thank You	4
On the Purpose and Structure of the Book	5
The Collaborative Structure - The Social Contract	6

### **The Thesis**

Part 1 - Overview	9
References - Part A	19
Part 2 - Detail Views	51
References - Part B	83
Part 3 - Final Review Conversation	121



# Part 1

## Overview



Introduction to the audience and short film.

SEE ALSO

**Architecture, DSR, p 27**

**Details, Film Stills, p 46**

**Film, Marker, p 48**

**Opinion, Film Noir, p 100**



Table featuring the exhibition booklet, a model of the Geneva Freeport, and a large book of drawings.

SEE ALSO

**Exhibition, Blum, p 24**

**Exhibition, Museum of Jurassic Technology, p 26**



Please pick up an exhibition booklet.

SEE ALSO

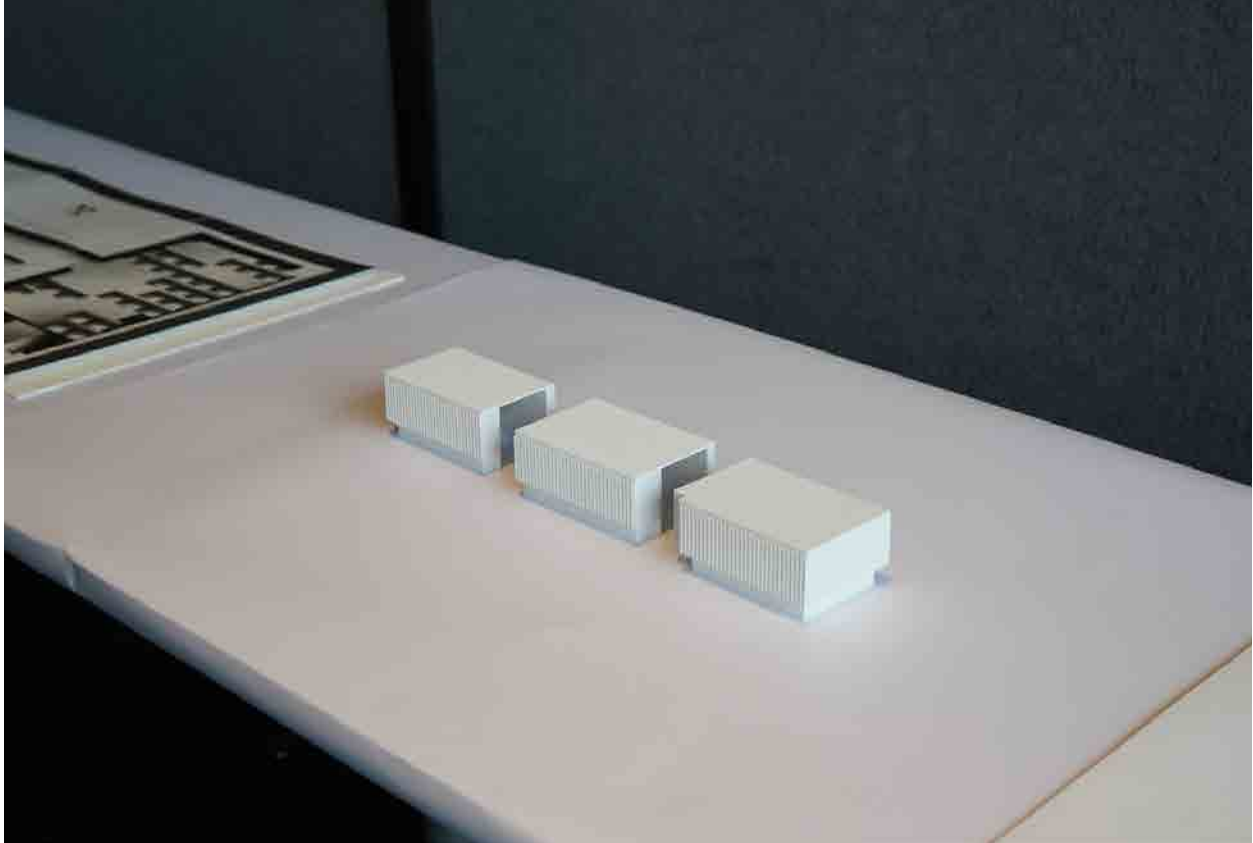
**Exhibition, Cardiff**, p 25

**Story, Hemingway**, p 30

**Detail, Stories**, p 54 - 60

**Academic, Lambert-Beatty**, p 99

**Opinion, Why Stories**, p 109



A model of the Geneva Freeport spliced into three parts.

SEE ALSO

**Article, Segal, p 18**

**Film, King, p 49**

**Academic, Easterling, p 89**

**Academic, Steyerl, p 90**

**Text, Geneva Freeport, p 111**



An unfolding, accordion-style book featuring risographed drawings to flip through.

SEE ALSO

**Image, Bronstein,** p 47

**Detail, Drawings,** p 62 - 73



View of models.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Models**, p 74 - 81

**Model, CCA**, p 85

**Model, Whiteread**, p 90

**Academic, Wharton**, p 97



Overview of interior exhibition and conversation space.





SEE ALSO

Exhibition, Raad, p 23

Opinion, Framing, p 105

Opinion, Outtakes, p 108

Conversation, p 121





“ He was taking inventory for one of Switzerland’s best-known gallery owners, who rented the space. ‘I was checking sizes, condition, looking for a signature,’ Mr. Studer recalls, ‘and making sure the art was properly measured.’

...

The second peek came when he realized what the guy in the vault next door was doing: counting a roomful of gold bars.

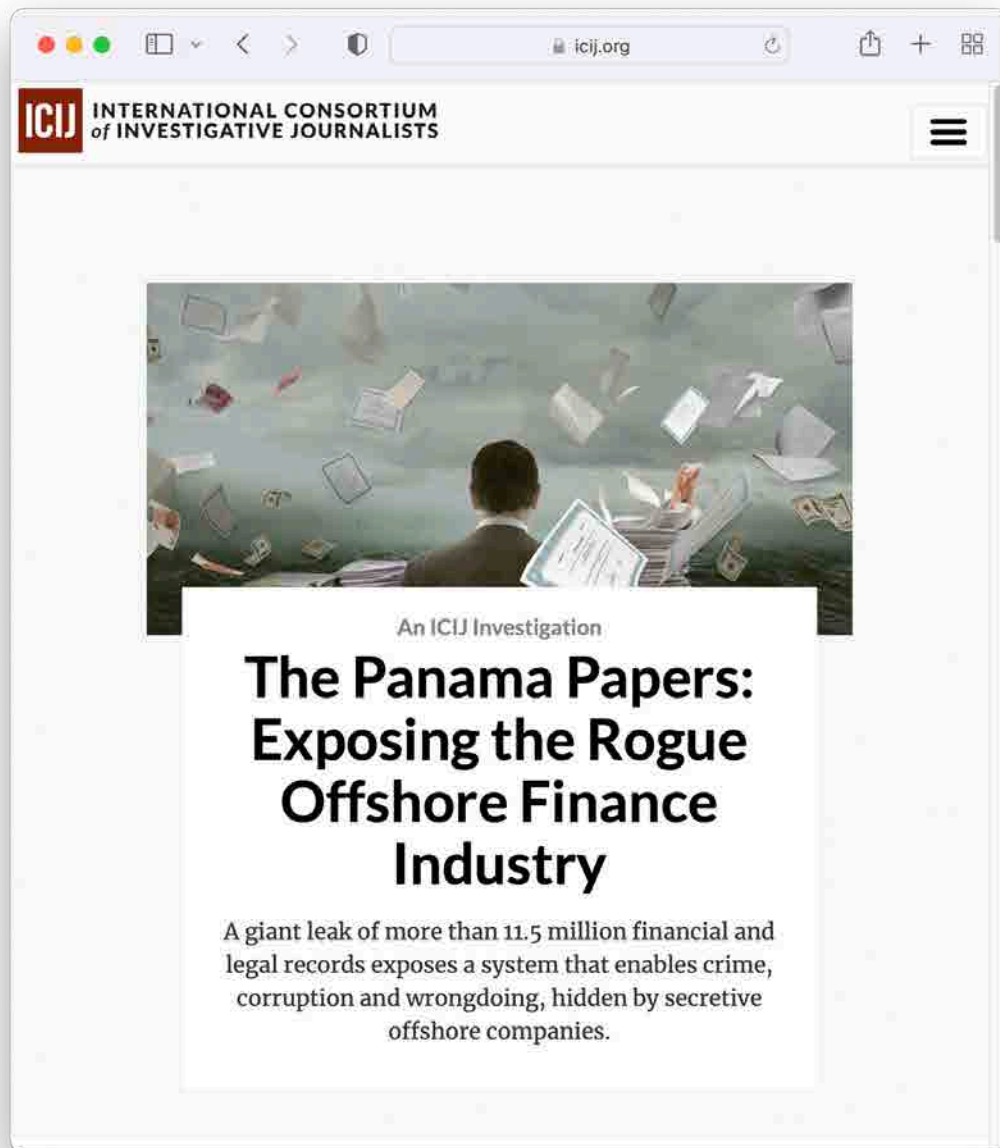
‘That’s the Freeport,’ says Mr. Studer, who now runs his own gallery. ‘You have no idea what is next door and then you happen to be there when they open a door and, poof, you see.’ “

**David Segal**, “Swiss Freeports Are Home for a Growing Treasury of Art,” *The New York Times*, July 21, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/22/business/swiss-freeports-are-home-for-a-growing-treasury-of-art.html>.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Freeport**, p 13

**Detail, Unit 2014**, p 56



ICIJ, "The Panama Papers: Exposing the Rogue Offshore Finance Industry," *ICIJ*, April 2021, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/>

SEE ALSO

Article, *Pandora Papers*, p 22

Architecture, *Forensic Architecture*, p 30

Image, *Modigliani Collage*, p 43

Detail, *Unit 1012*, p 54

Academic, *Taussig*, p 91

Text, *Geneva Freeport*, p 111

Text, *Modigliani*, p 112



ICIJ, "Pandora Papers: The Largest Investigation in Journalism History Exposes a Shadow Financial System that Benefits the World's Most Rich and Powerful," *ICIJ*, December 2021, <https://www.icij.org/investigations/pandora-papers/>

SEE ALSO

Article, *Panama Papers*, p 21

Architecture, *Forensic Architecture*, p 30

Opinion, *Heterotopia*, p 104

Text, *Geneva Freeport*, p 111



**Walid Raad**, *The Atlas Group*, exhibition, 2015-2016, (<https://www.moma.org/audio/playlist/21/426>).

In this exhibition-performance, Raad guides visitors through the exhibition, telling anecdotes of a history that contextualize and complicate the typical narrative.

Over the course of the performance, Walid Raad slowly emerges as a less-than-trustworthy narrator and the visitor is left pondering the uncanny parafictional elements of the piece.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition**, p 17

**Academic, Lambert-Beatty**, p 99

**Opinion, Uncanny**, p 110



**Michael Blum**, *A Tribute to Safiye Behar*, mixed-media installation, 2005 (<http://www.blumology.net/safiyebehar.html>).

A historical exhibition on the life and impact of a little known figure in Turkish politics, but there's a twist: Safiye Behar is not real. The exhibition included photographs, letters, accounts.

However, whether Behar ever existed matters less than the audience's newfound understanding of history, inspired by the possibility of her life, experiences, and actions.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition**, p 11

**Academic, Lambert-Beatty**, p 99





**Janet Cardiff**, *Her Long Black Hair*, audio Walk with photographs, 2005, (<https://cardiffmiller.com/walks/her-long-black-hair>).

Janet Cardiff walks alongside listeners in an audio tour that meanders through Central Park, recontextualizing familiar scenes. Intimate speech leads listeners on a journey through a set of memories that are not their own and walking becomes the narrative.

SEE ALSO

**Overview**, *Exhibition Booklet*, p 12

**Model**, *DSR*, p 86

**Model**, *Jonas*, p 87

**Opinion**, *Uncanny*, p 110



**David Hildebrand Wilson & Diana Wilson, *Museum of Jurassic Technology*, series of exhibitions, 1988 - present, (<https://www.mjt.org/>).**

A museum that explores museology as much as its own content. The deeper visitors venture, the more they may begin to doubt the authenticity of the exhibitions.

Artifacts are can be misleadingly nonfactual.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition, p 11**

**Opinion, Framing, p 105**



**Diller Scofidio + Renfro**, *Facsimile*, video installation, 2015, (<https://dsrny.com/project/facsimile>).

A revolving screen transmits plausible interiors. The desire to project one's own imagination of the interior life of the spaces is projected onto the facade of the building, presented to the world. A means of mapping localized fiction onto a background of realism.

One rarely know what happens inside buildings, especially ones we have no access to.

SEE ALSO

**Overview**, **Film Intro**, p 10

**Film**, **King**, p 49



**Carlo Scarpa**, *Castelvecchio Museum*, architecture, 1959-1973, (<https://www.archiobjects.org/museo-castelvecchio-verona-italy-carlo-scarpa/>).

Scarpa's design of Castelvecchio Museum is a restoration and repurposing of a medieval castle in Verona. The architect uses a fictional narrative based on a set of Romanesque period artifacts to create architecture that at once reveals the history of the site and the artifacts themselves.

SEE ALSO

**Story**, *Calvino*, p 36

**Detail, Drawings**, p 62 - 63

**Model**, *Rizzi*, p 89



**Luis Barragán**, *Casa Luis Barragán*, architecture, 1948, (<https://daily.jstor.org/casa-luis-barragan-sacred-space-of-mexican-modernism/>).

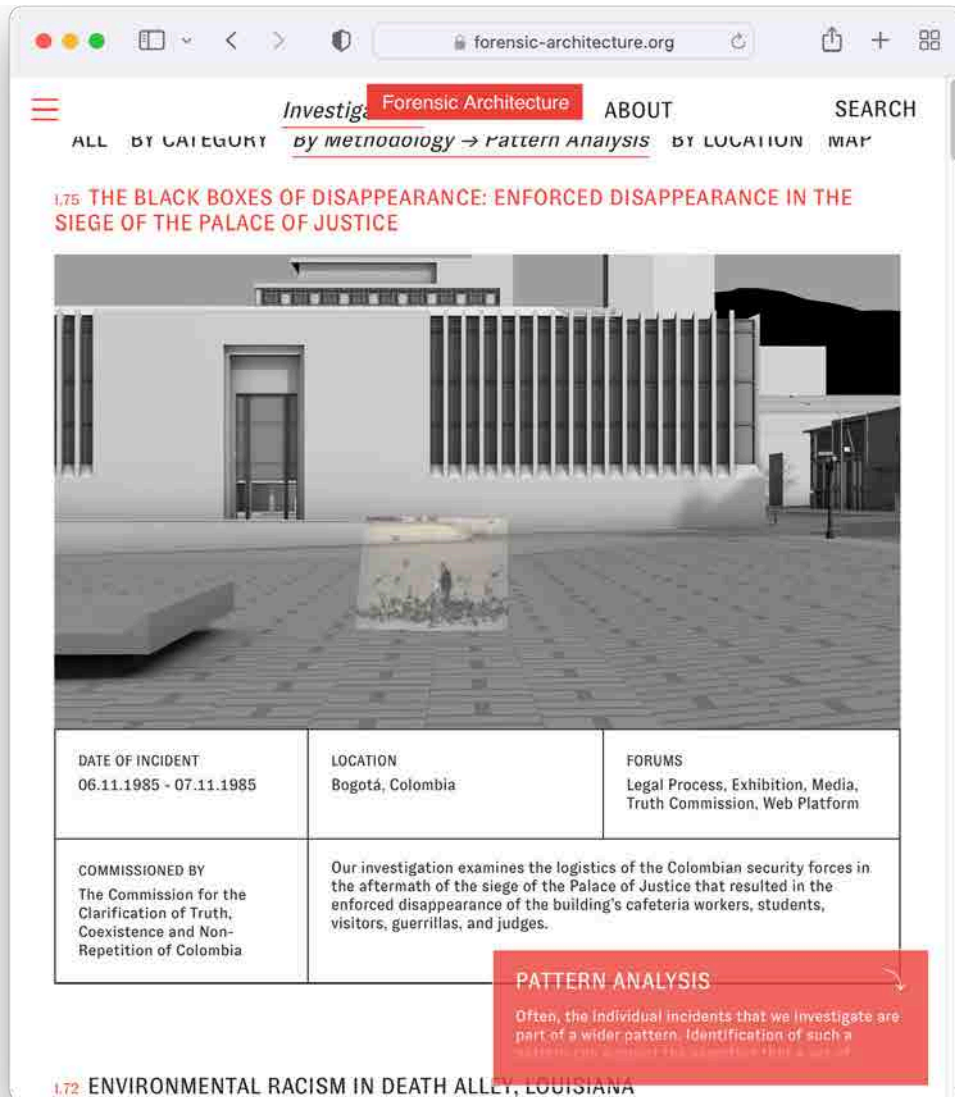
Barragán writes in an *Artes de Mexico* issue, “It is impossible to understand art and the glory of its history without avowing religious spirituality and the mythical roots that are the very *raison d’être* of the artistic phenomenon.”

The architect’s devotion to Catholicism is an important underlying influence for this design.

SEE ALSO

**Story**, *Calvino*, p 36

**Detail**, *Drawings*, p 62 - 63



**Forensic Architecture, Methodology by pattern analysis,** (<https://forensic-architecture.org/methodology/pattern-analysis>).

Forensic Architecture repurposes familiar digital architecture and media tools to analyze and translate information-rich documents into decipherable evidence often used for humanitarian missions and court documents. It is possible that rich information is already in front of us if deciphered with the right tools.

SEE ALSO

- Article, Panama Papers, p 21
- Article, Pandora Papers, p 22
- Story, Manaugh, p 35
- Image, Simon, p 45

“ For sale: baby shoes, never worn.”

**Ernest Hemingway**, *For sale: baby shoes, never worn*, date and publication contested.

In 6 words, Hemingway conveys grief with nuance, and an entire story.

While it is contested who this story is actually attributed to, this work of fiction inspired writers to say less, and think more carefully about each word and each piece.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet**, p 12

**Detail, Unit 4015**, p 58

**Opinion, Story**, p 109

“ My informant should not have seen the posters. They were not in his country. He should never have told me. He made me accessory. The information was an allergen in Beszel – the mere fact of it in my head was a kind of trauma. I was complicit. It was done” (37).

**China Miéville**, *The City & The City*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2009).

A gritty detective investigates a murder that traces the contours of a delicate balance - two cities occupying the same geographical location but not permitted to acknowledge one another. Using fiction, Miéville explores the very prevalent contemporary condition of borders, unknowability, inaccessibility, and public secrets. In the book, the citizens of both cities are required to unsee on a daily basis.

SEE ALSO

**Film**, *Marker*, p 48

**Academic**, *Taussig*, p 91

**Opinion**, *Excessive Neutrality*, p 103



“ You who read me, are You sure of understanding my language?” (1).

**Jorge Luis Borges**, Erik Desmazières, Andrew Hurley, and Angela Giral, *The Library of Babel*, (Boston: David R. Godine, 2000). Originally published in Borges' collection *Garden of Forking Paths* in 1944.

Borges demonstrates the allegorical power of architecture, where the universe is a library consisting of an infinite number of hexagonal chambers, and its occupants are Librarians, Inquisitors, Purifiers, Infidels who seek to find the meaning of existence.

SEE ALSO

**Story, Calvino**, p 36

**Model, Fonseca**, p 84

“ Without knowing it, he had constructed a gigantic vertical zoo, its hundreds of cages stacked above each other. All the events of the past few months made sense if one realised that these brilliant and exotic creatures had learned to open the doors” (162).

**J G Ballard**, *High-Rise*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977).

A luxury high rise shepherds the disintegration of society. Each apartment contains a story that sometimes breaches into neighboring units as it unfolds. In this piece of fiction, narrative is closely tied to an understanding of the spatial form of the architecture.

SEE ALSO

**Image**, *Real Estate Collage*, p 38

**Detail**, *Unit 1072*, p 55

**Detail**, *Drawing*, p 67, 69

**Opinion**, *Gluttonous Architecture*, p 101

“ For the burglar, every building is infinite, endlessly weaving back into itself through meshed gears made of fire escapes and secondary stairways, window frames and screened-in porches, pet doors and ventilation shafts, everything interpenetrating, everything mixed together in a fantastic knot. Rooms and halls coil together like dragons inside of dragons or snakes eating their own tails, rooms opening onto every other room in the city. For the burglar, doors are everywhere. Where we see locks and alarms, they see M. C. Escher” (14).

**Geoff Manaugh**, *A Burglar's Guide to the City*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016).

Manaugh recasts the city, guiding our view of it through eyes that notice new patterns and details.

Through unlikely characters, this book redirects our perception of the built environment and leads readers to the many other possibilities that extend beyond its normative usage.

SEE ALSO

**Architecture**, *Forensic Architecture*, p 30

**Image**, *Simon*, p 45

**Academic**, *Prown*, p 96

“ Leaving there and proceeding for three days toward the east, you reach Diomira, a city with sixty silver domes, bronze statues of all the gods, streets paved with lead, a crystal theater, a golden cock that crows each morning on a tower. All these beauties will already be familiar to the visitor, who has seen them also in other cities. But the special quality of this city for the man who arrives there on a September evening, when the days are growing shorter and the multicolored lamps are lighted all at once at the doors of the food stalls and from a terrace a woman’s voice cries ‘ooh!,’ is that he feels envy toward those who now believe they have once before lived an evening identical to this and who think they were happy, that time” (7).

**Italo Calvino**, *Invisible Cities*, (New York: Harvest , 1974).

Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* tells 55 versions of a city life, each pointing to a strong conviction of living within the built environment. Calvino uses narrative to point to architecture’s impositions on the lives and experiences that are contained within it.

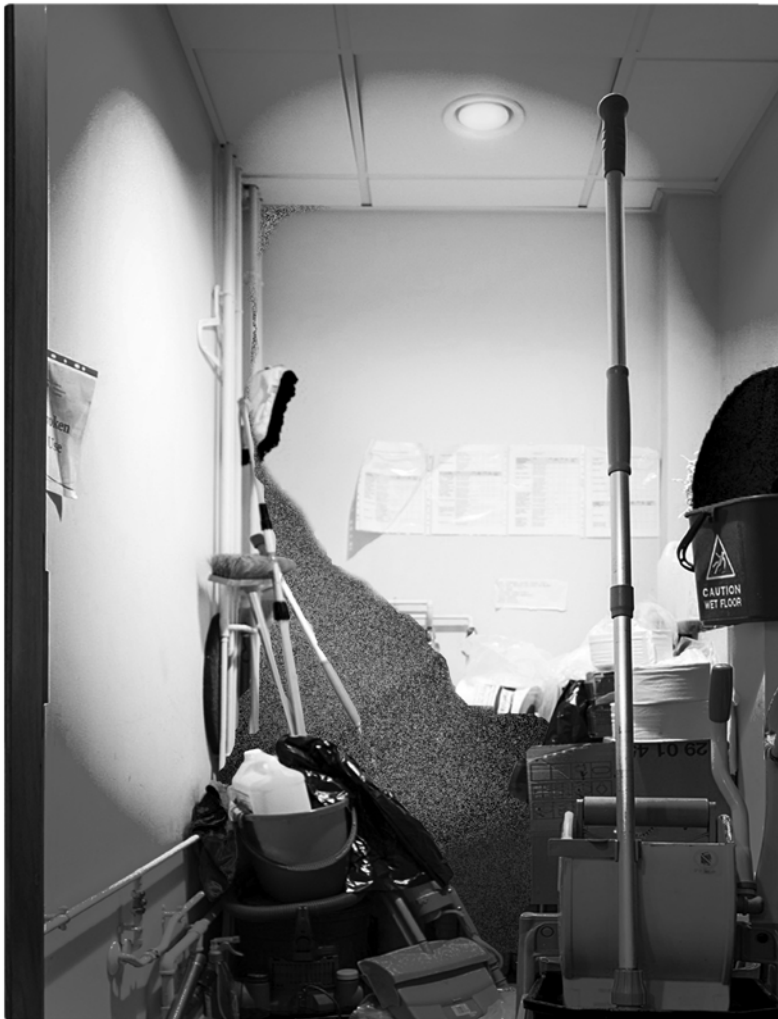
SEE ALSO

**Architecture**, Scarpa, p 28

**Architecture**, Barragán, p 29

**Story**, Borges, p 33

**Opinion**, Story, p 109



That's a lot of sand.

SEE ALSO  
Detail, Unit 6171, p 60  
Detail, Drawing, p 70  
Text, GSO, p 116



Rent in Geneva Is pretty expensive.

SEE ALSO

**Story, Ballard, p 34**

**Detail, Unit 1072, p 55**

**Detail, Drawing, p 67, 69**

**Opinion, Film Noir, p 100**



This doesn't seem structurally sound.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Unit 4105, p 58**

**Detail, Drawing, p 71, 72**

**Text, Seed Vault, p 117**



"We thought it came that way"

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Break Room, p 57**

**Detail, Drawing, p 65**

**Story, Replication, p 118**





Russian oligarch constructs gilded storage unit.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Unit 2104**, p 56

**Detail, Drawing**, p 66

**Text, Bouvier**, p 114



Who loves Elvis this much?

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Unit 4014, p 59**

**Detail, Drawing, p 71**

**Academic, Prown, p 96**



Decree: the painting will be visible, but no one will have it

**SEE ALSO**

**Article, Panama Papers, p 21**

**Detail, Unit 1012, p 54**

**Detail, Drawing, p 68**

**Opinion, Film Noir, p 100**

**Text, Modigliani, p 112, 113**



**Simon Stålenhag**, *Europa Mekano*, illustration, (<https://www.simonstalenhag.se/euromek.html>).

An unremarkable scene of a hazy sunset over a highway, but the driver is unexpected. Stålenhag weaves together recognizable and fantastical elements to create evocative, haunting composition.

Through a careful attention to detail, each illustration is a story onto itself.

SEE ALSO

**Model**, Dahlberg, p 88

**Opinion**, Uncanny, p 110



**Taryn Simon**, *An American Index of the Hidden and Unfamiliar: Jury Simulation, Deliberation Room with Two-Way Mirror, DOAR Litigation Consulting, Lynbrook, New York*, framed archival inkjet print and Letraset on wall, 2007, (<http://tarynsimon.com/works/aihu/#11>).

Interested in documenting the United States' most secret rooms, Simon displayed the images in laboratory-like conditions in the Whitney, supported by extensive research. The harder you try to look beyond, the more you see what is right behind you. And yourself.

SEE ALSO

**Architecture**, *Forensic Architecture*, p 30

**Story**, *Manaugh*, p 35

**Academic**, *Taussig*, p 91



**Laurie Simmons**, *Woman/Purple Dress/Kitchen* from the series *Interiors*, gelatin silver print, 1976-77, ([https://www.moma.org/collection/works/55974?artist\\_id=7015&page=1&sov\\_referrer=artist](https://www.moma.org/collection/works/55974?artist_id=7015&page=1&sov_referrer=artist)).

Simmons creates intricate tableaux that evoke American domestic scenes. Through her use of scale, she points to the all-too-familiar American sphere of domesticity yet with a twist of the uncanny and abstract.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Model**, p 74

**Model, Jonas**, p 87

**Opinion, Genre Diagram**, p 106 - 107

**Opinion, Uncanny**, p 110



**Pablo Bronstein**, *Cross Section of the Via Appia in Late Antiquity*, ink and watercolor on paper, 2015 (<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/bronstein-cross-section-of-the-via-appia-in-late-antiquity-t14791>).

Bronstein's drawing tells a story through what is illustrated as well as what is absent, alluded to in negative. Using detail and color, he illustrated intricate scenes, while using white and poche suggestively to call to what is probable but not explicitly present.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Drawings**, p 14

**Detail, Drawings**, p 62 - 63

**Opinion, Gluttonous Architecture**, p 101



*La Jetée*, directed by **Chris Marker** (Paris: Argos Film, 1963).

Chris Marker's twenty-eight minute post-apocalyptic science fiction film recounts a story of time travel, love, and death using only still images.

Each shot is carefully calculated, capturing both action and emotion without sacrificing cinematics. The image itself is further liberated by other characteristics of time-based media, namely sequence, pace, pattern, and audio to create an immersive experience.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Film Intro**, p 10

**Story, Miéville**, p 32

**Opinion, Film Noir**, p 100





*National Disintegration*, directed by **Braden King**, (New York: Field of Vision, 2017).

In his short documentary on the Geneva Freeport, King conducts a vivid examination of the free flowing streams of wealth and property in this extralegal space, contrasting it with the stagnation of migratory populations. The documentary points to the economic liberalism that allows the Freeport to be a powerful accomplice to capital.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Geneva Freeport**, p 13

**Architecture, DSR**, p 27

**Detail, Drawing**, p 69

**Text, Geneva Freeport**, p 111



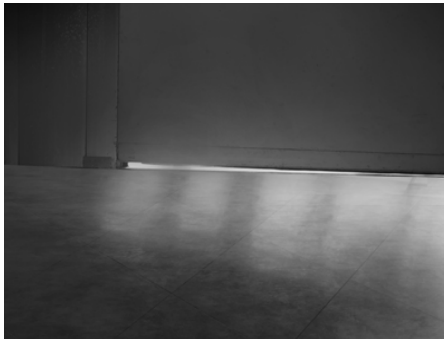
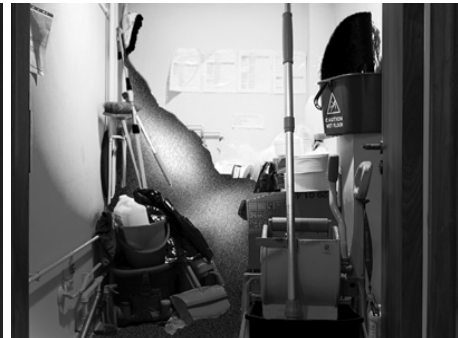
# Part 2

## Detail Views

The Geneva Freeport is a highly calibrated machine, regulated by laws, logistics, dimensions, and habits.

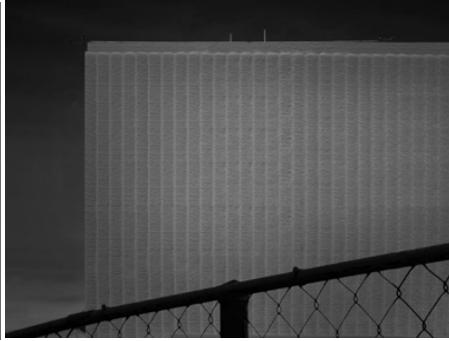
Every day, trucks, trains, cranes, and teams of handlers move objects in and out of the highly secured site.

Few individuals hold full knowledge of the building and of the millions of objects in its custody



Twenty-three stills from the introductory film.

Bearing the combined load  
of material, value, and secrecy,  
can this machine continue to  
sustain the churning of the  
global capitalist system?



Behind a closed door is  
endless entropy, the allure  
of a speculative kind of  
friction.

speculative  
friction

SEE ALSO

Overview, Film, p 10

Detail, Unit 6171, p 60

Text, Mattern, p 95

Opinion, Film Noir, p 100

Despite more than two decades of legal battle to determine the rightful owner of Modigliani's *Seated Man With a Cane*, the contentious case was never settled. The painting arrived at its current ownership and was stored at the Freeport through falsified provenance. Although it was initially stolen by Nazis from a Jewish collector, the collector's grandson was not able to claim ownership. Held in legal stasis, the painting is secured through the publicness of its display. The Custodian took us to see it.



---

**SEE ALSO**

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Article, Panama Papers, p 21**

**Image, Modigliani Collage, p 43**

**Detail, Drawing, p 68**

**Detail, Model, p 74**

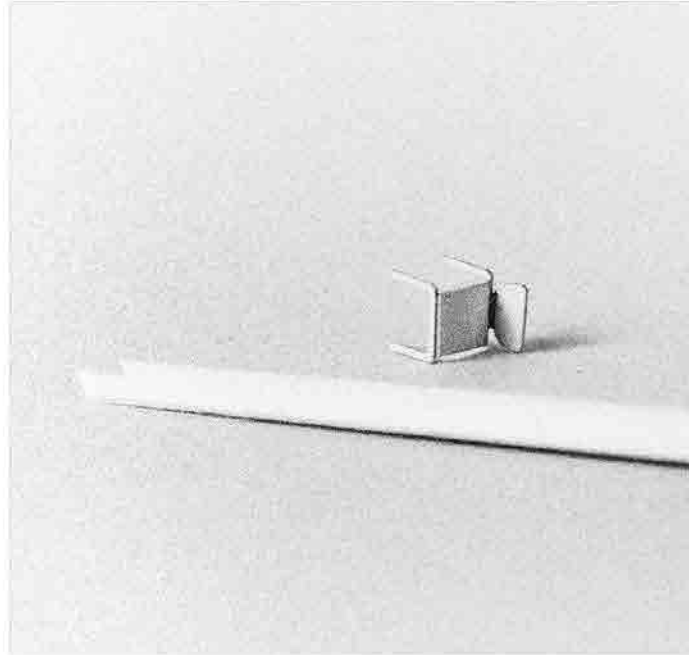
**Opinion, Excessive Neutrality, p 103**

**Text, Modigliani, p 112, 113**

---

Unit 1072

She described the sound as the kind you feel in your chest, but it was the ear-splitting screeching that bothered her most. Inside the unit, we found pieces of lumber, concrete mixtures, and drilling equipment. It seemed that the developer of this ultra-thin tower intended to keep his investment safe, but someone may have also been living there for quite a while.



---

Unit 1073

---

Unit 1074

---

**SEE ALSO**

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Story, Borges, p 33**

**Story, Ballard, p 34**

**Image, Real Estate Collage, p 38**

**Detail, Drawing, p 67, 69**

**Detail, Model, p 75, 79**

---

Unit 2008

---

Unit 2009

---

Unit 2010

---

Unit 2011

---

Unit 2012

---

Unit 2013

---

Unit 2014

We stood in front of the closed unit as the Custodian told us about the gilded room behind. A Billionaire in the midst of an ugly divorce spitefully encrusted the unit to secure his collection in place and to protect his wealth. The unit door was gilded shut and no one has seen him since.



---

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Article, Segal, p 20**

**Image, Gold Collage, p 41**

**Detail, Drawing, p 66**

**Detail, Model, p 80**

**Opinion, Blackhole, p 102**

**Text, Bouvier, p 114**



**BREAK ROOM**

On our lunch break, she told us the story behind the eight-foot tall statue of the Egyptian god Horus standing in the background. A team of fabricators working in the Replication Lab took matters into their own hands when a failing column was not replaced promptly. They must have hundreds of extras hoarded somewhere from a previous order, she sighed into her soup.



---

**SEE ALSO**

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Image, Break Room Collage, p 40**

**Detail, Drawing, p 65**

**Detail, Model, p 77**

**Text, Replication, p 118**

---

Unit 4100

---

Unit 4101

---

Unit 4102

---

Unit 4103

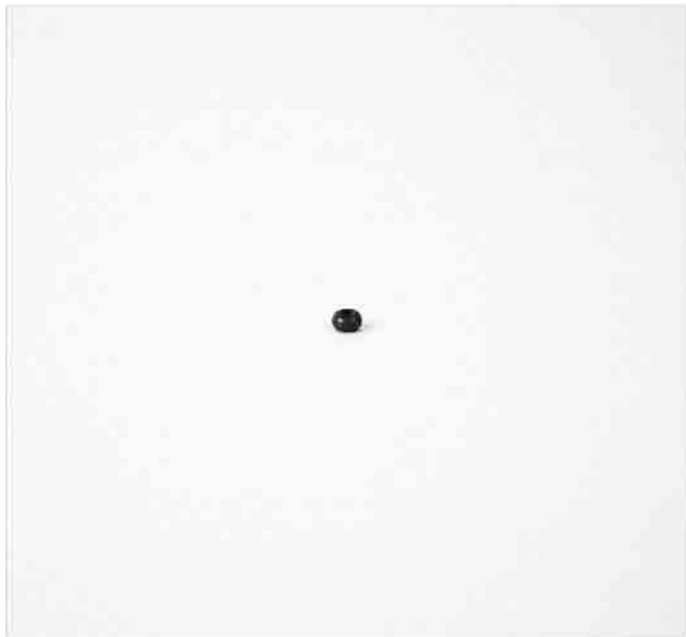
---

Unit 4104

---

Unit 4105

The Custodian gestured towards the darkness:  
A too-moist ground and a vault full of seeds  
grew into a secret garden, forgotten even by its  
owner.



---

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Story, Hemingway, p 31**

**Image, Seed Collage, p 39**

**Detail, Drawing, p 71 - 72**

**Detail, Model, p 78**

**Academic, Morton, p 98**

**Text, Seed Vault, p 117**

---

Unit 4012

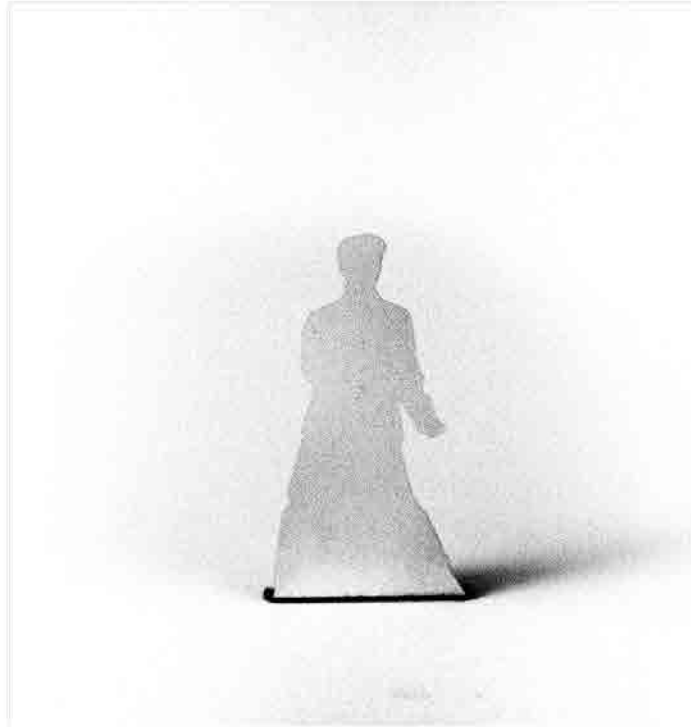
---

Unit 4013

---

Unit 4014

We paid homage at the Shrine of Elvis.  
The unit was opened unintentionally when  
a search warrant issued on behalf of the  
Billionaire's estranged wife directed them to Unit  
4014 instead of 2014. The owner of the unit has  
not come forth yet.



SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Image, Elvis Collage, p 42**

**Detail, Drawing, p 71**

**Detail, Model, p 81**

**Academic, Prown, p 96**

**Opinion, Blackhole, p 102**

---

Unit 6171

When we finally met with her, the Custodian explained that it had been several weeks before anybody did anything about the sand. She speculated that the sand had eroded its concrete container, trickling into the Custodial closet below. In the investigation that followed, they discovered the sand was smuggled from Morocco. The Custodian was directed to return all the sand she had accidentally smuggled but the cleanup took longer than anticipated. The tools of her trade were very sandy and every grain counted.



---

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Image, Sand Collage, p 37**

**Detail, Film Stills, p 53**

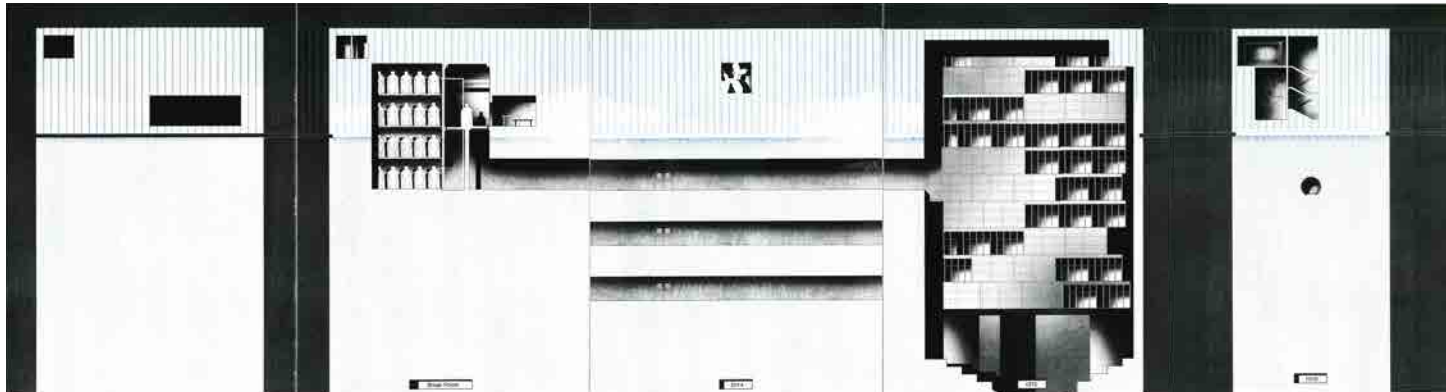
**Detail, Drawing, p 70**

**Detail, Model, p 76**

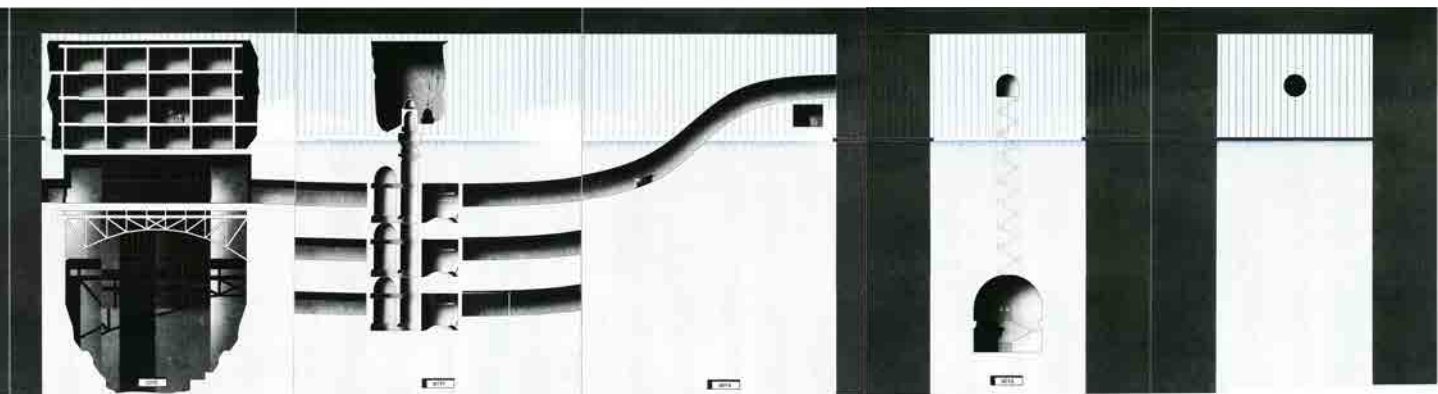
**Academic, Mattern, p 95**

**Text, GSO, p 116**

Unit 6091
Unit 6093
Unit 6097
Unit 6099
Unit 6100
Unit 6101
Unit 6102
Unit 6103
Unit 6114
Unit 6115
Unit 6116
Unit 6117
Unit 6118
Unit 6119
Unit 6120
Unit 6121
Unit 6122
Unit 6123
Unit 6125
Unit 6126
Unit 6127
Unit 6128
Unit 6129
Unit 6130
Unit 6131
Unit 6132
Unit 6133
Unit 6134
Unit 6135
Unit 6136
Unit 6137



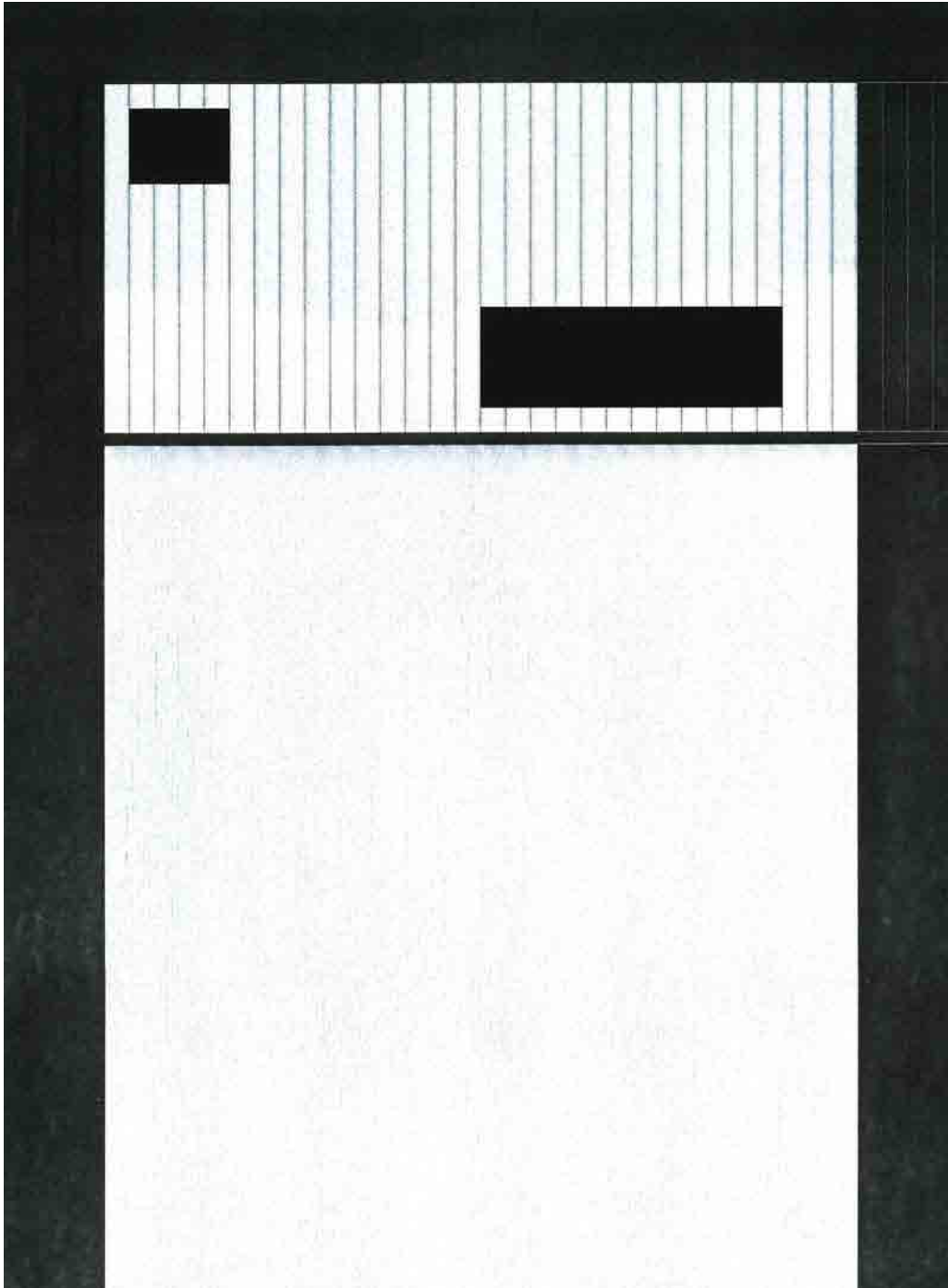
Expanded view of the accordion booklet.



SEE ALSO

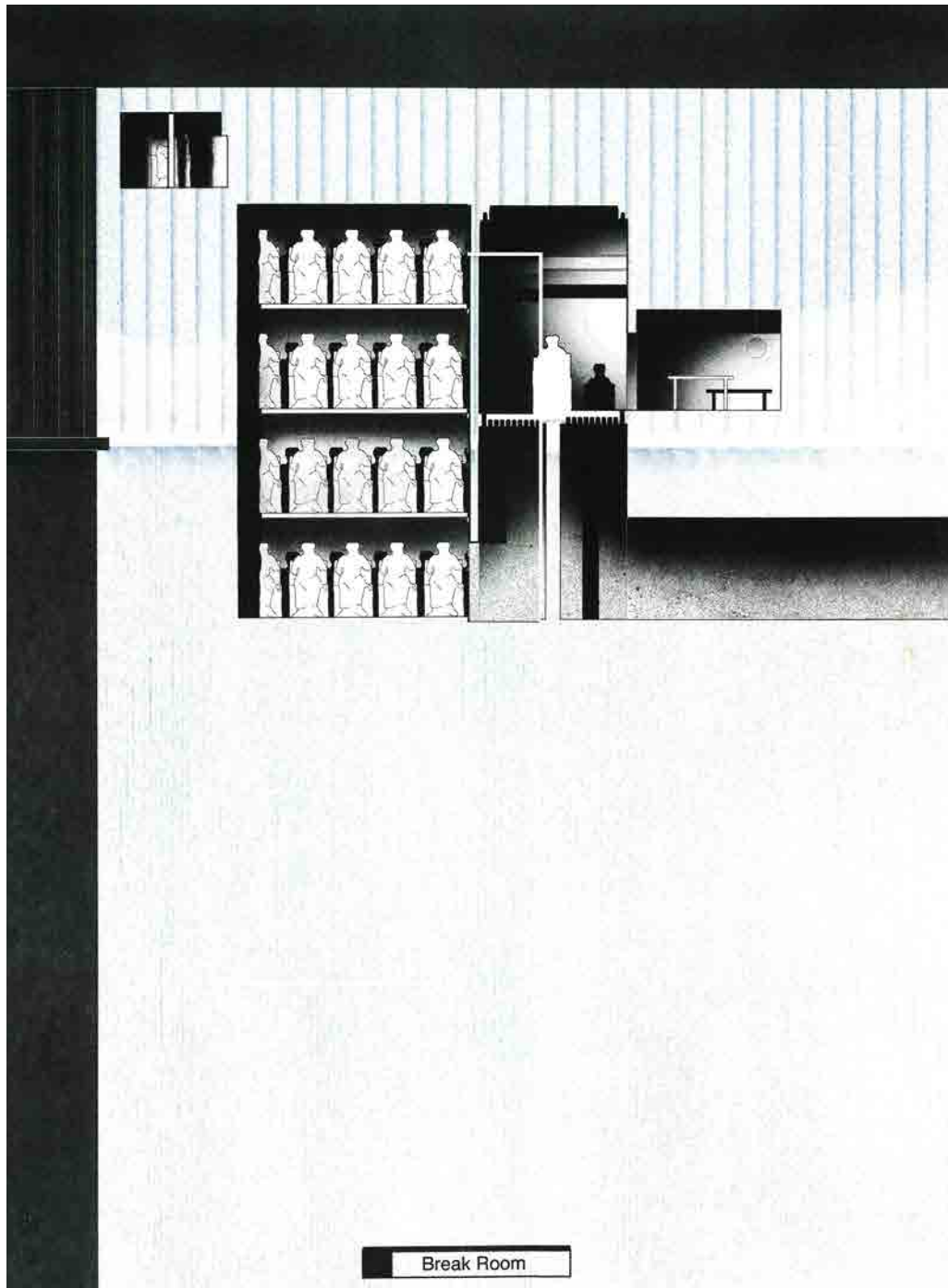
Overview, Drawings, p 14  
Architecture, Scarpa, p 28  
Architecture, Barragán, p 29

Image, Bronstein, p 47  
Model, Rizzi, p 89  
Text, Gluttonous Architecture, p 101



SEE ALSO  
**Overview, Drawings, p 14**  
**Model, Whiteread, p 90**





SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

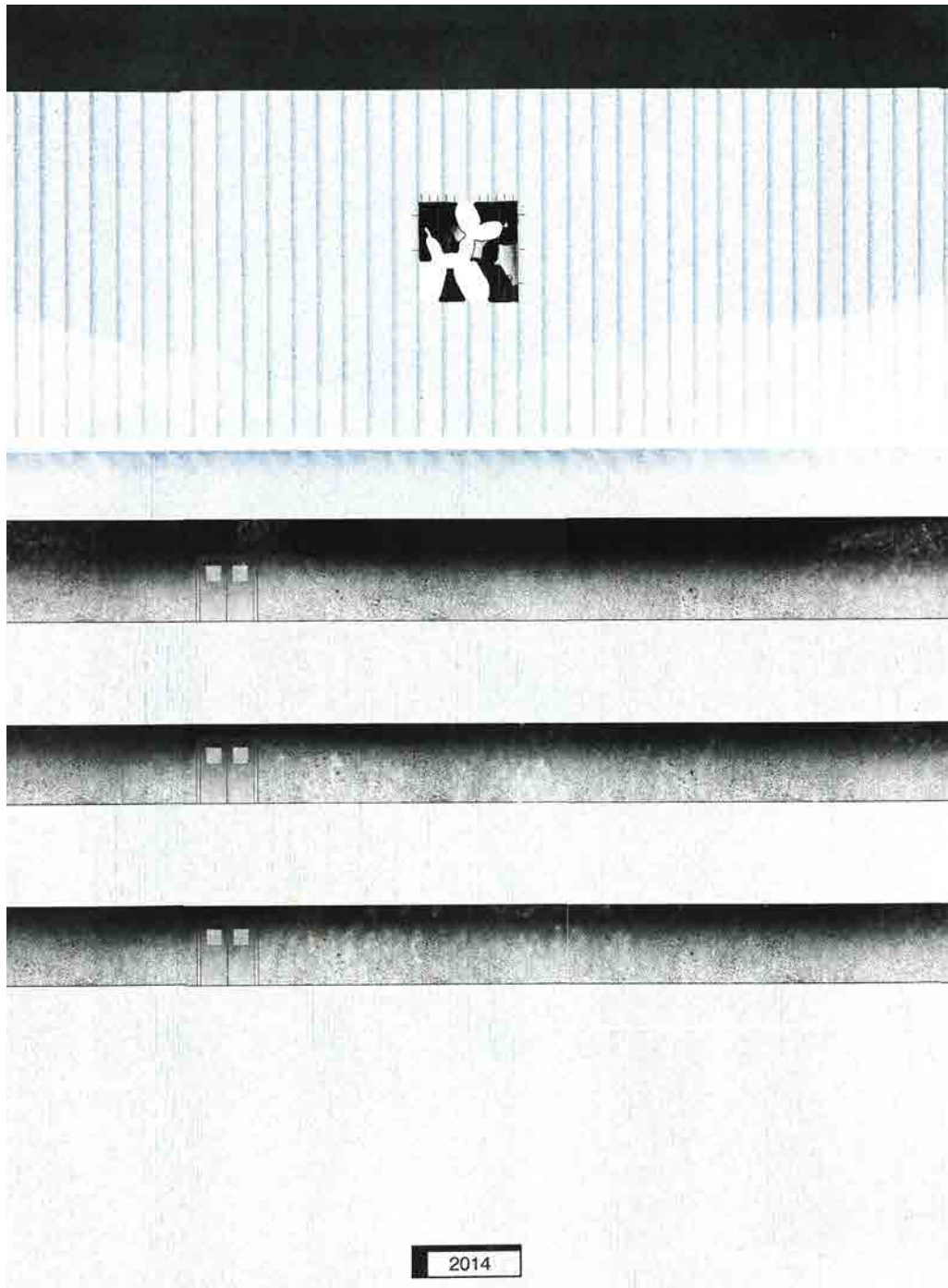
Image, Break Room Collage, p 40

Detail, Break Room, p 57

Detail, Model, p 77

Text, True, p 115

Text, Replication, p 118



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

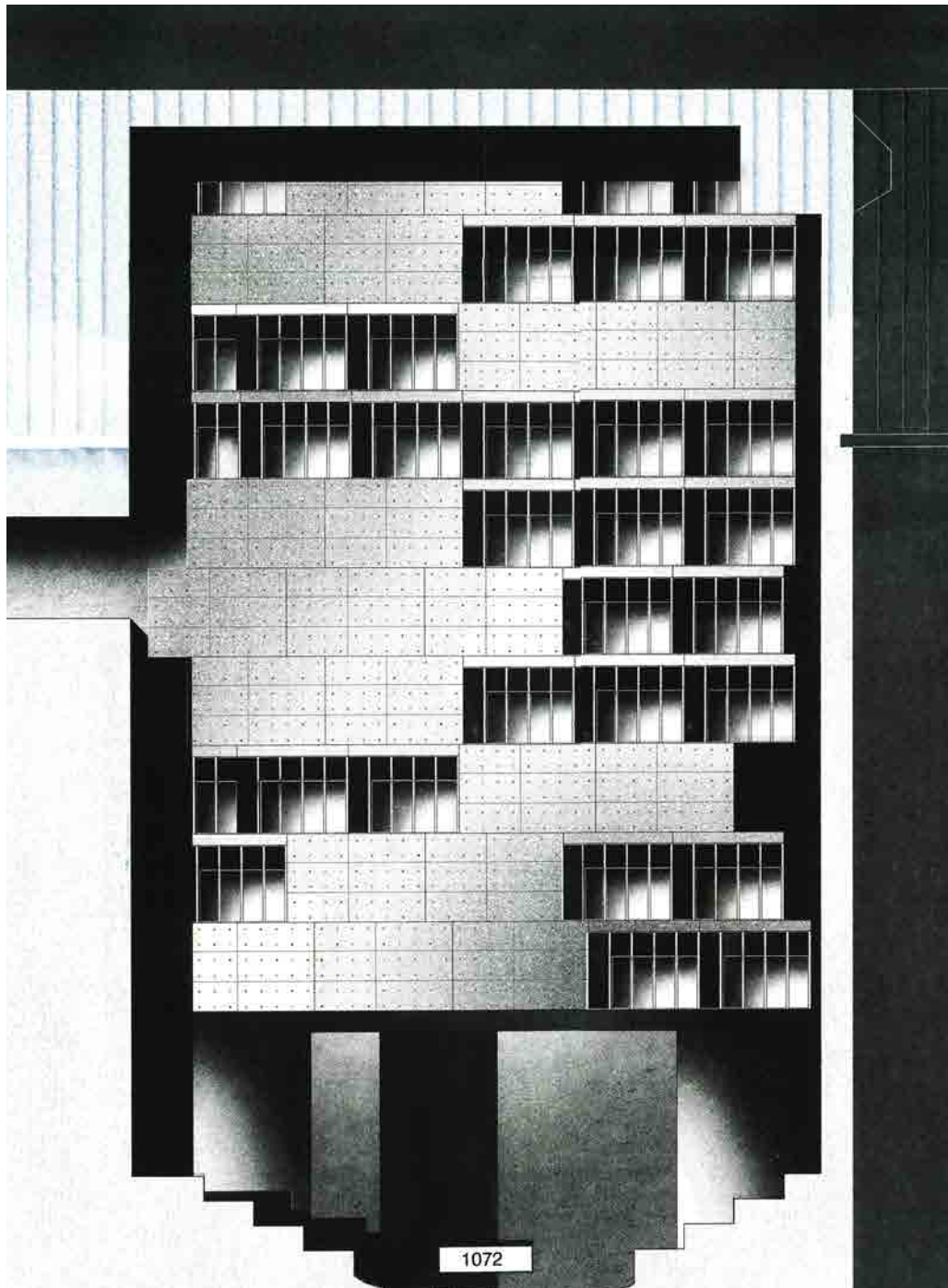
Image, Gold Collage, p 41

Detail, Unit 2014, p 56

Detail, Model, p 80

Academic, Bataille, p 92

Text, Steyerl, p 94



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

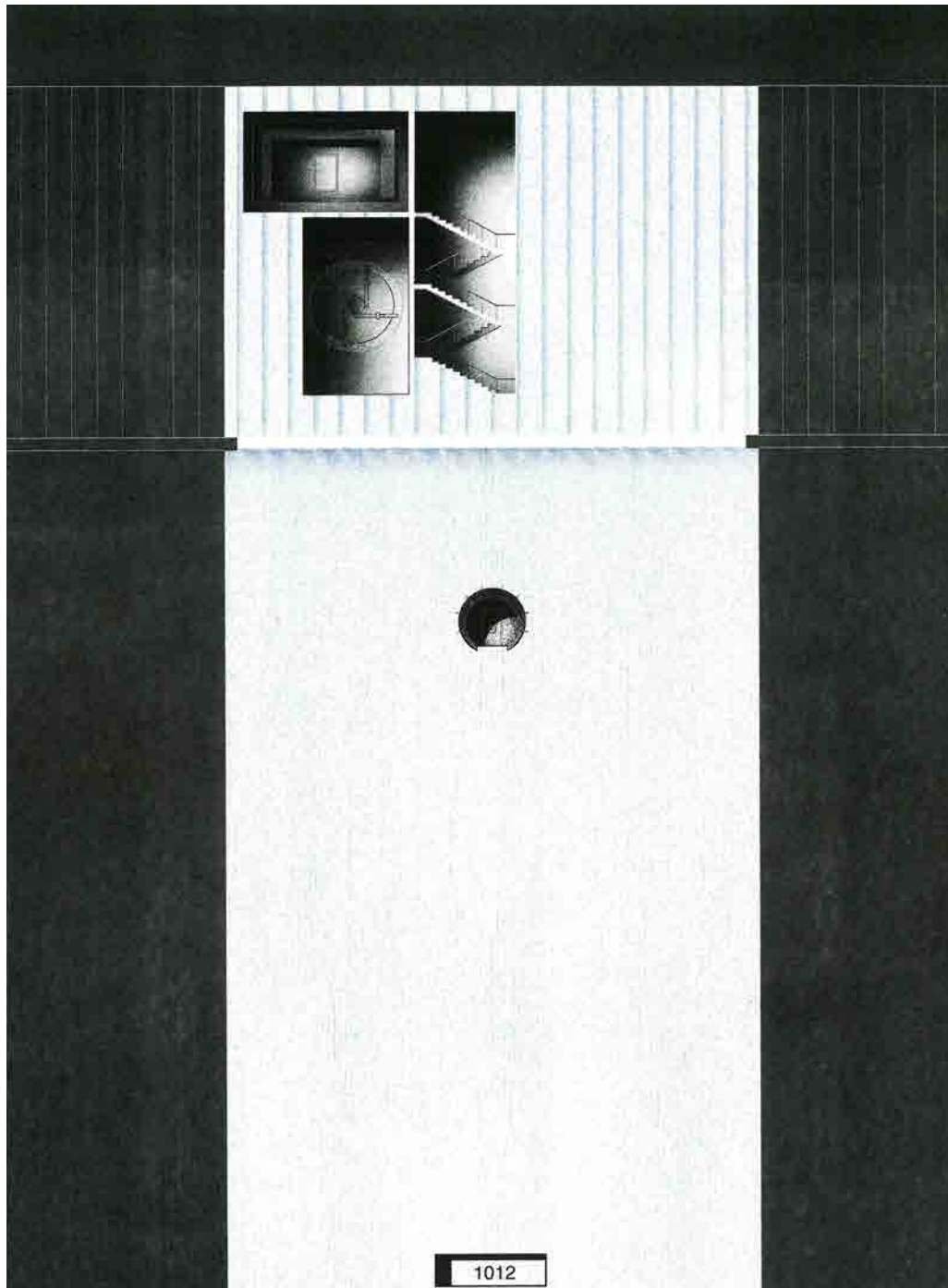
Story, Borges, p 33

Story, Ballard, p 34

Image, Real Estate Collage, p 38

Detail, Unit 1072, p 55

Detail, Model, p 75



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

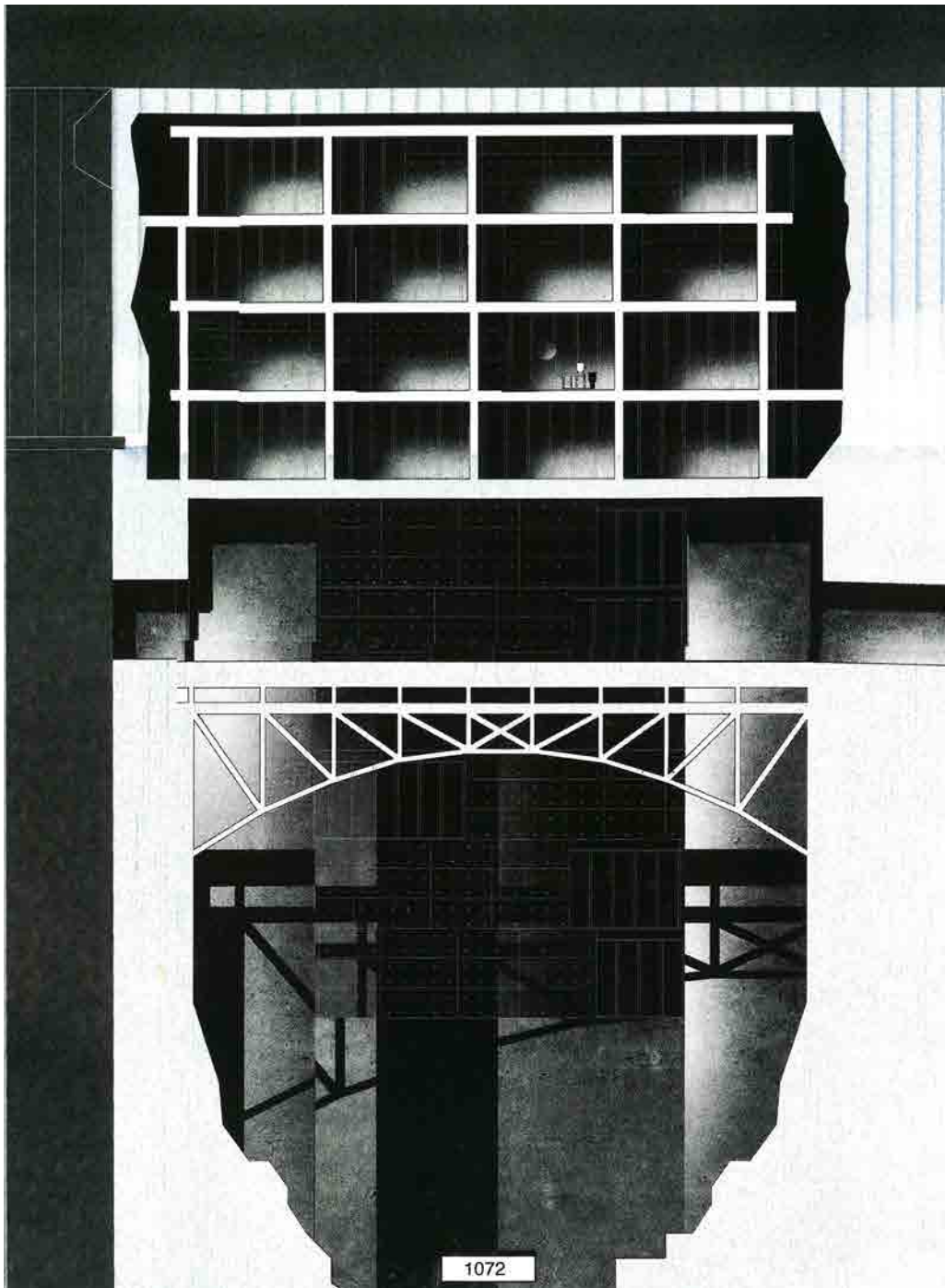
Image, Modigliani Collage, p 43

Detail, Unit 1012, p 54

Detail, Model, p 74

Opinion, Excessive Neutrality, p 103

Text, Modigliani, p 112, 113



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

Story, Borges, p 33

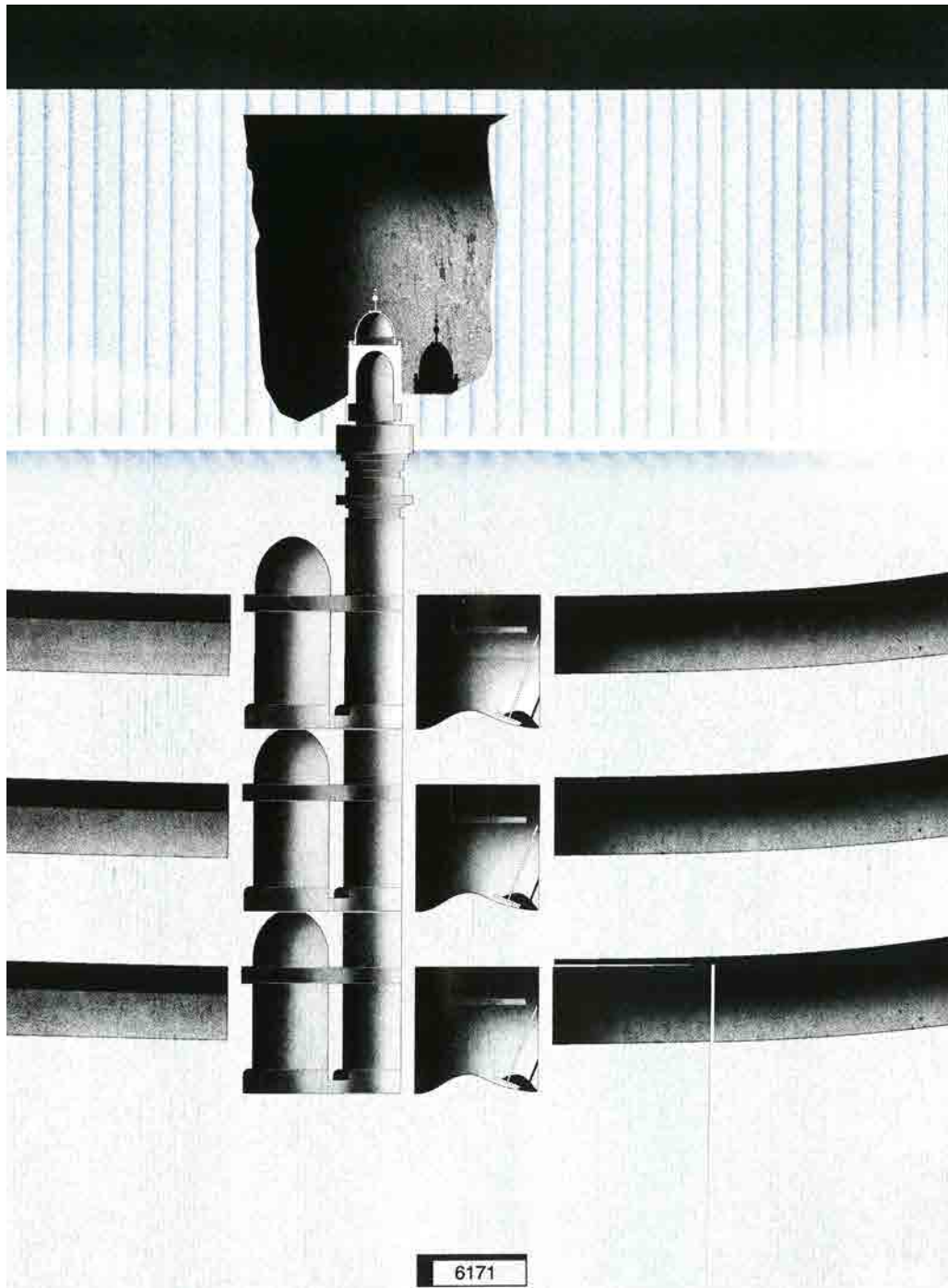
Story, Ballard, p 34

Image, Real Estate Collage, p 38

Film, King, p 49

Detail, Unit 1072, p 55

Detail, Model, p 79



SEE ALSO

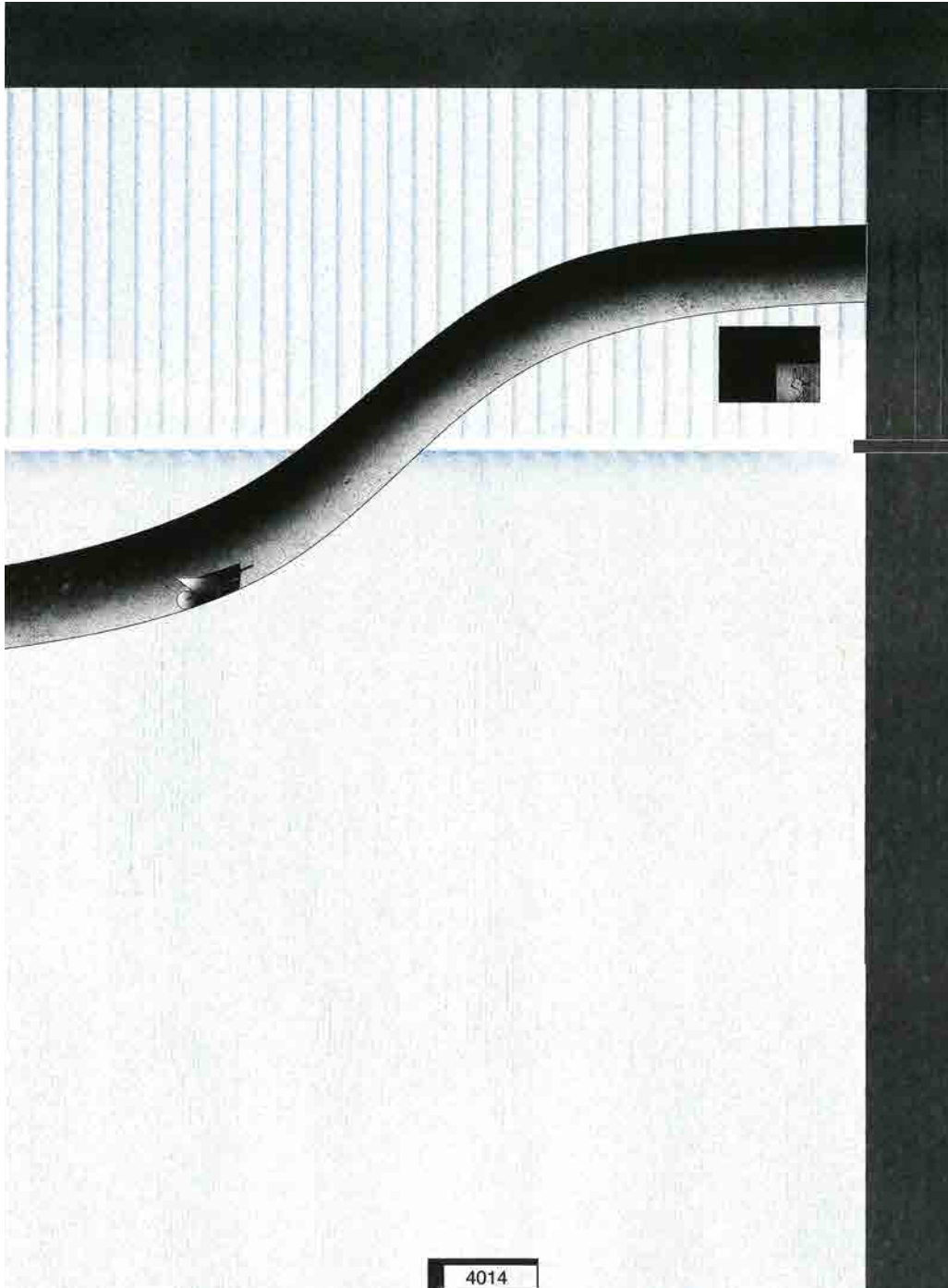
Overview, Drawings, p 14

Image, Sand Collage, p 37

Detail, Unit 6171, p 60

Detail, Model, p 76

Text, GSO, p 116



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

Image, Seed Collage, p 39

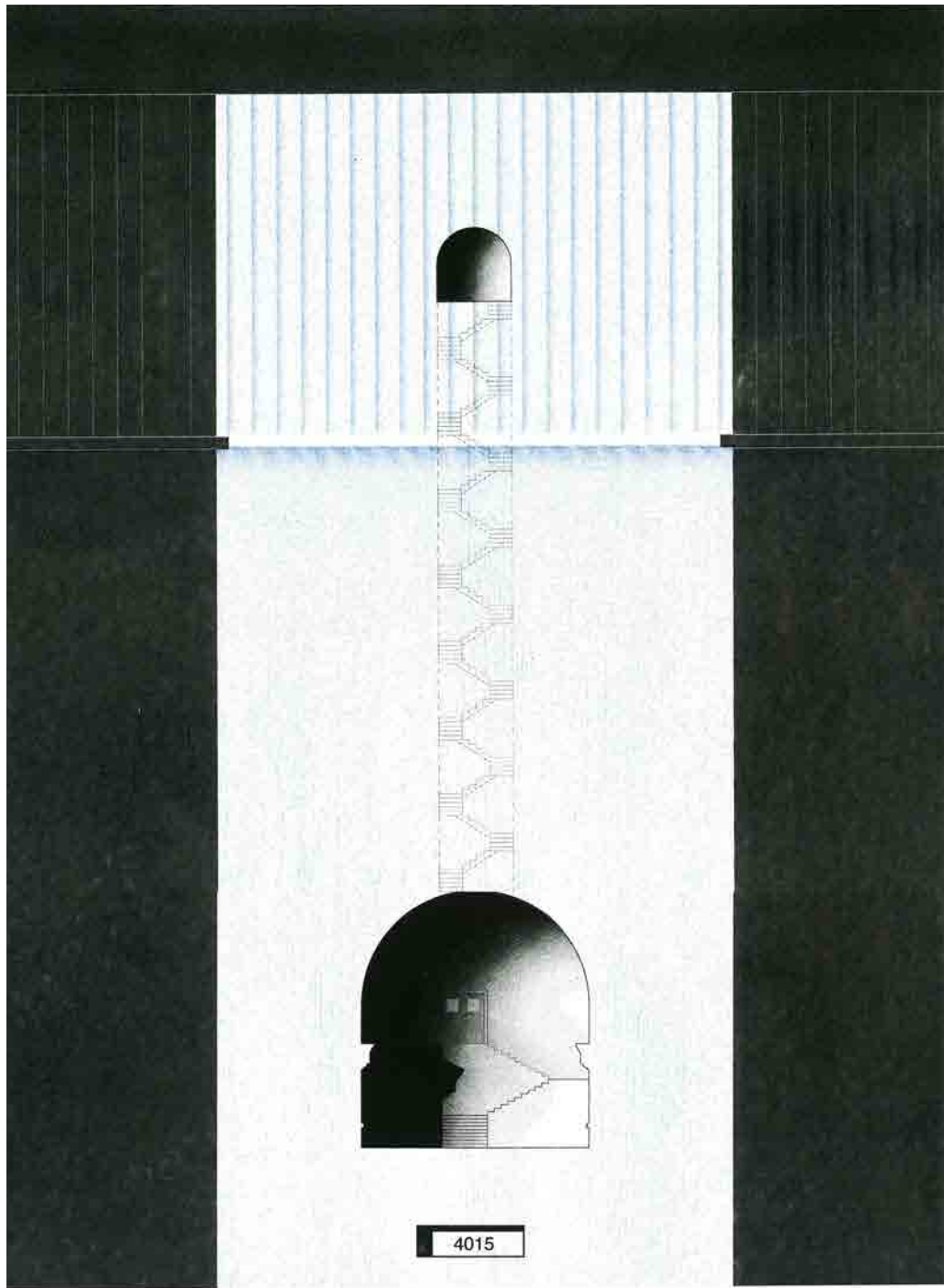
Image, Elvis Collage, p 42

Detail, Unit 4105, p 58

Detail, Unit 4014, p 59

Detail, Model, p 81

Academic, Morton, p 98



SEE ALSO

Overview, Drawings, p 14

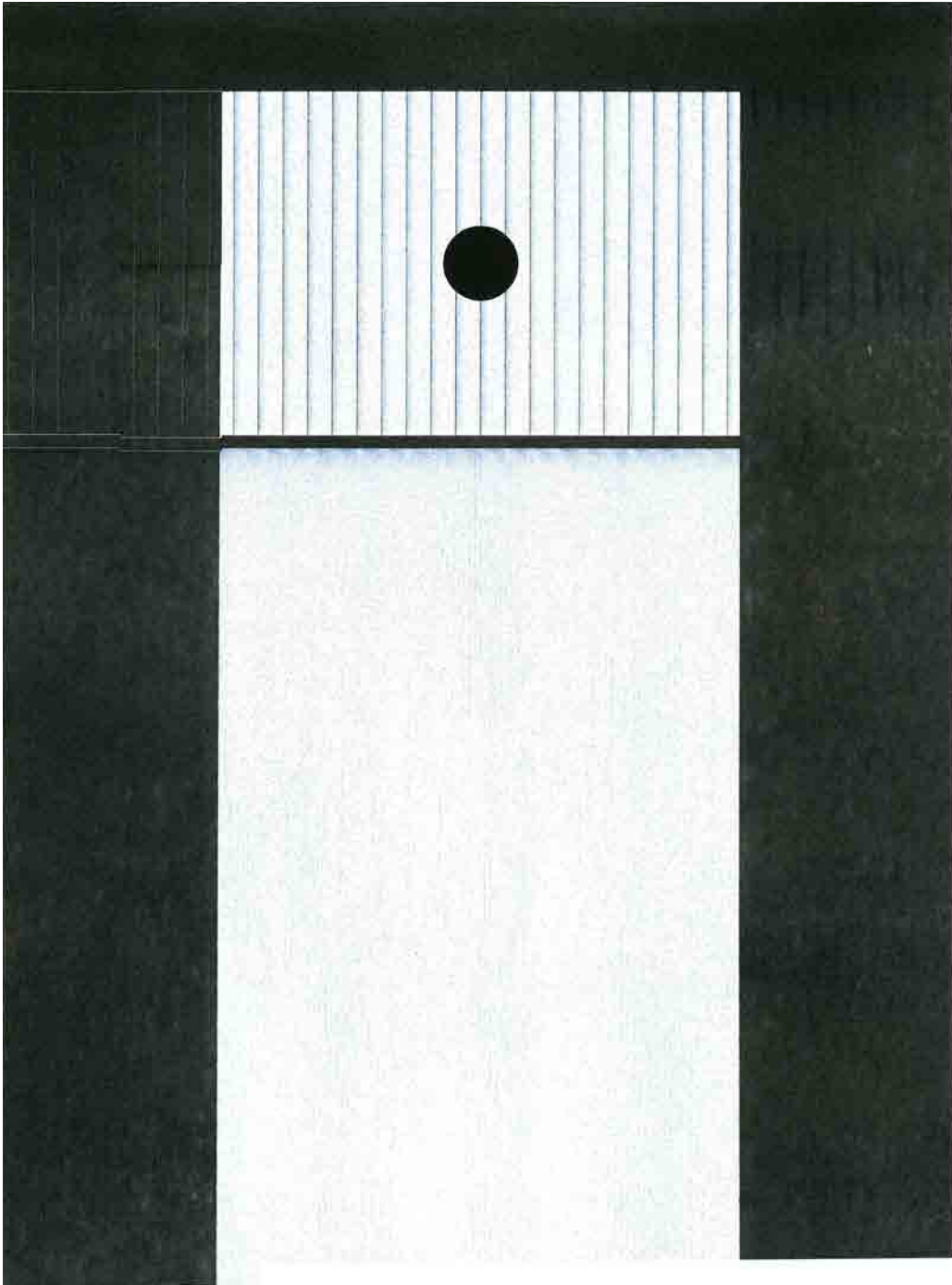
Image, Seed Collage, p 39

Detail, Unit 4105, p 58

Detail, Model, p 78

Text, Seed Vault, p 117





SEE ALSO  
Overview, Drawings, p 14



Unit 1012

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models**, p 15

**Image, Simmons**, p 46

**Detail, 1012**, p 54

**Detail, Drawing**, p 68



Photo by Andy Ryan

Unit 1072

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, 1072, p 55**

**Detail, Drawing, p 67**



Photo by Andy Ryan



Unit 6171

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, 6171, p 60**

**Detail, Drawing, p 70**



Photo by Andy Ryan



## The Break Room

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, Break Room, p 57**

**Detail, Drawing, p 65**

**Model, Fonseca, p 84**



Unit 4105

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, Unit 4105, p 58**

**Detail, Drawing, p 72**



Photo by Andy Ryan

Unit 1072

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, Unit 1072, p 55**

**Detail, Drawing, p 69**



Photo by Andy Ryan



Unit 2014

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models**, p 15

**Detail, Unit 2014**, p 56

**Detail, Drawing**, p 66





Photo by Andy Ryan

Unit 4014

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models, p 15**

**Detail, Unit 4014, p 59**

**Detail, Drawing, p 71**







**Gonzalo Fonseca**, *Untitled (White Marble)*, White Marble, (<https://www.gonzalofonseca.com/sculpture>).

Fonseca uses simple shapes to conjure spaces using architectural allusions without specificity. An impenetrable mass, whose interior is not revealed but carved into.

SEE ALSO

**Story, Borges**, p 33

**Detail, Model**, p 77

**Model, Whiteread**, p 90

**Text, Morton**, p 98

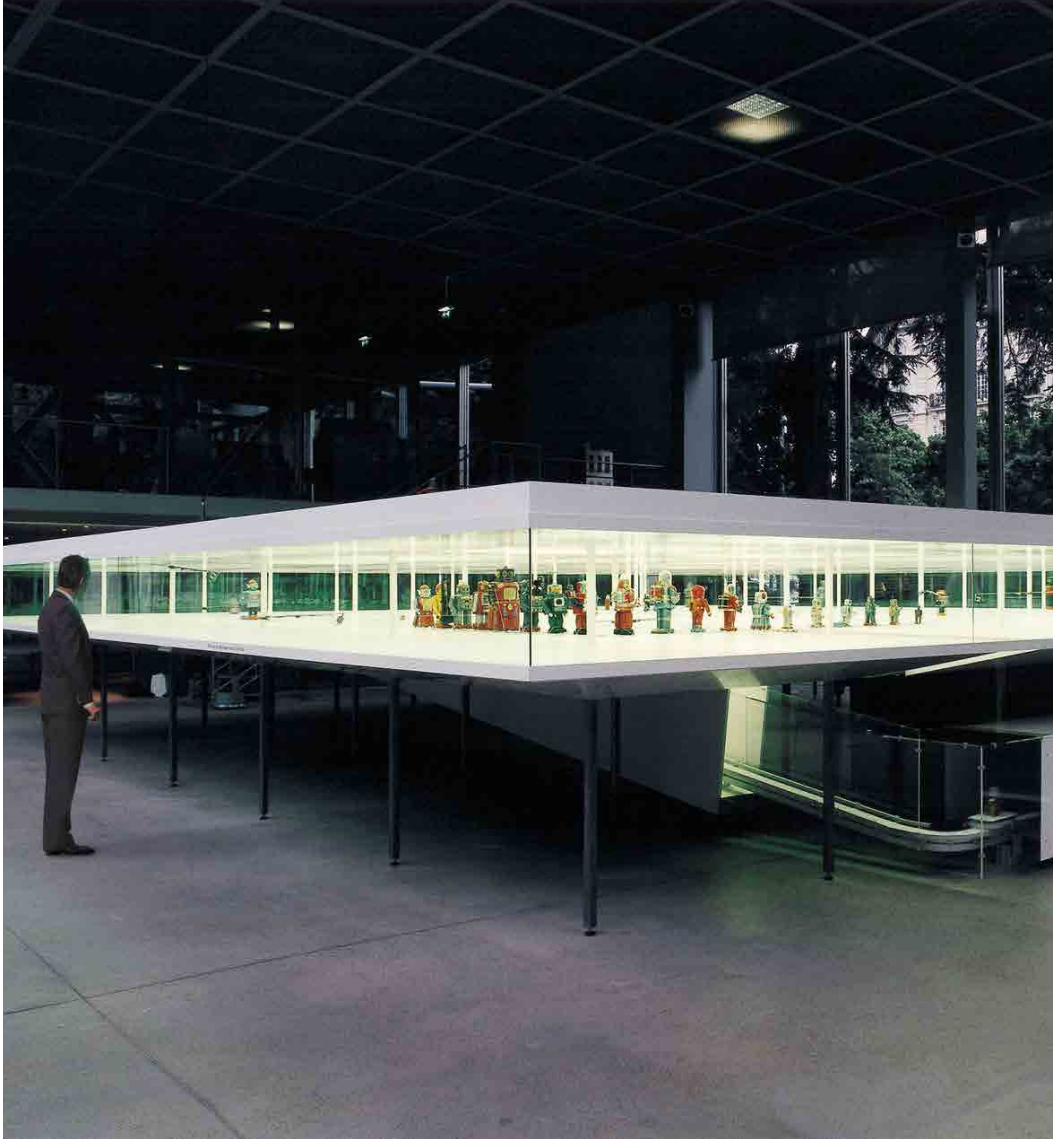


**CCA**, *Eye Camera Window: Takashi Homma on Le Corbusier*, multi-media installation, 2020, (<https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/events/71506/eye-camera-window-takashi-homma-on-le-corbusier>).

In this exhibition at the CCA, *Eye Camera Window* focuses on apertures as complex objects that mediate between interior and exterior, architecture and landscape.

Each viewing device is a directive object, guiding the vision to a captured viewport, suspended above the ground.

SEE ALSO  
**Overview, Models**, p 15



**Diller Scofidio + Renfro**, *Master/Slave*, installation, 1999, (<https://dsrny.com/project/master-slave?index=false&section=projects&tags=&search=built>).

Spectators gaze into a 1000 sf glass vitrine, placed at eye-level, in order to enter the robotic space: a colony of robots parading on 300 ft of conveyor belts. In this installation, DSR invites spectators to enter and inhabit the interior of the model as well as break out of it to meditate on the model's mechanization.

SEE ALSO  
**Exhibition, Cardiff**, p 25  
**Academic, Wharton**, p 97



**Joan Jonas**, *My New Theater 1*, multi-media installation, 1997 (<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/85900>).

*My New Theater 1* is a tabletop theater that uses both projection (installed as the background of the installation) and maquettes (found in the foreground) to reenact a classic stage design.

The miniature's usage of digital and analogue mediums to create a cohesive scene harkens to avant-garde theater works.

SEE ALSO

**Exhibition, Cardiff**, p 25

**Image, Simmons**, p 46



**Jonas Dahlberg**, *View Through a Park*, video installation, 2009, (<https://www.jonasdahlberg.com/video-works.html>).

In this piece, Dahlberg tells the story of an apartment bordering New York's Gramercy Park. The film begins at the apartment, but then pushes out the window, across the park, and through the window of a twin apartment on the opposite side.

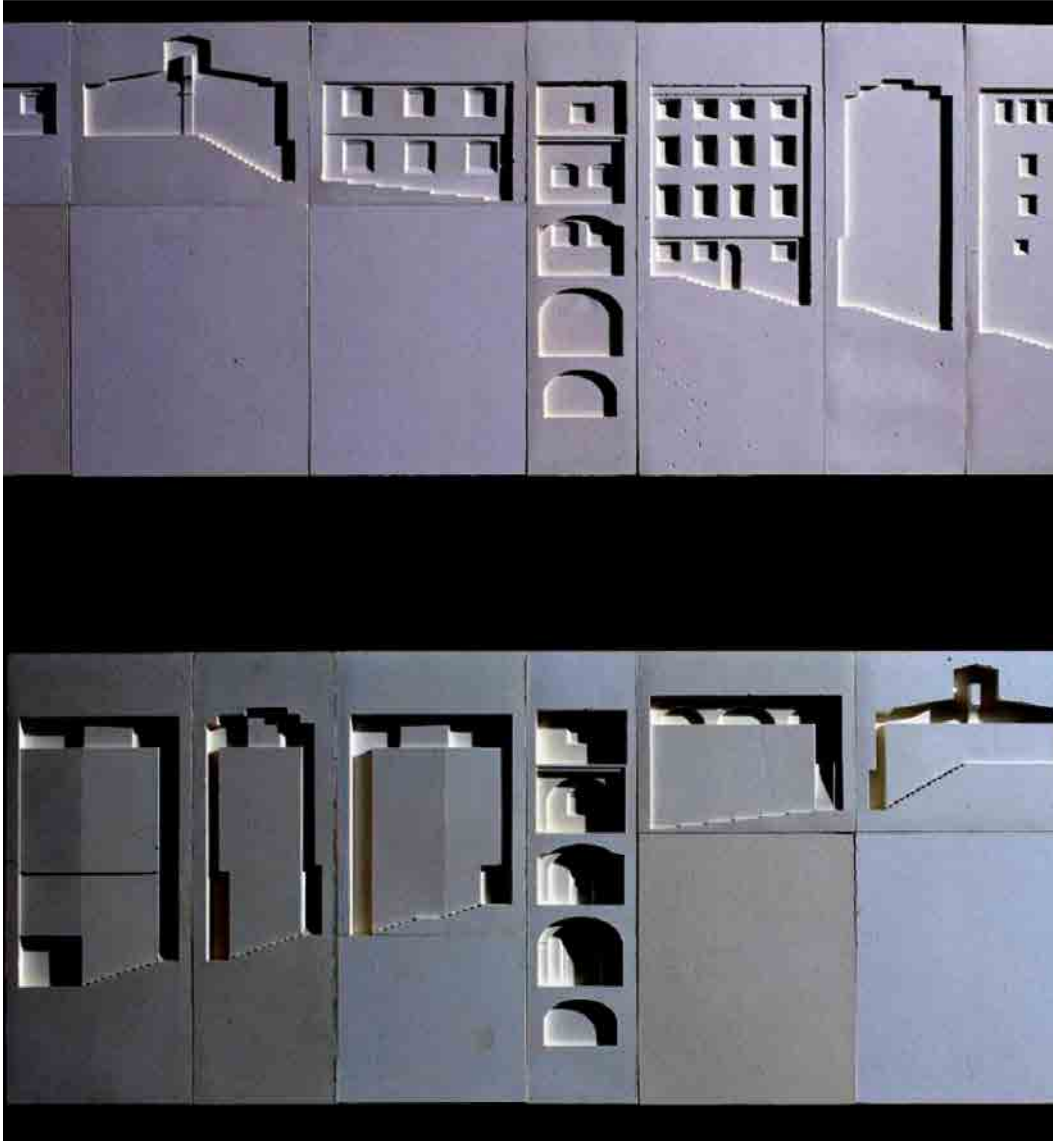
Filming from a miniature set rather than real life, it is a meditative film, every banal detail carefully noticed.

SEE ALSO

**Image**, *Stålenhag*, p 44

**Opinion**, *Genre Diagram*, p 106 - 107





**Renato Rizzi**, *The Casa d'Arte Futurista Depero*, plaster, 2009 (<https://divisare.com/projects/17103-renato-rizzi-pietro-savorelli-progetto-di-restauro-e-ristrutturazione-del-museo-depero>).

The cast simultaneously reads as a drawing and a model, a relief evoking a space without creating an inhabitable space.

SEE ALSO

**Architecture**, Scarpa, p 28

**Detail, Drawing**, p 63



**Rachel Whiteread**, *Judenplatz Holocaust Memorial*, mixed media 1995-2000, (<https://artistprofler.art/Artist/447799>).

The memorial, a steel and concrete construction, reads as a monolith. The exterior texture is that of books, spines facing inward and unreadable. The only disturbance of this pattern is a detailed cast of a door.

A space turned in on itself, an impenetrable volume.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models**, p 15

**Detail, Drawing**, p 64

**Model, Fonseca**, p 84

**Opinion, Heterotopia**, p 104

“ ... there may be nothing more dissatisfying than the exposed secret, the triumph of exposure giving way to some vague sense of being cheated. There was nothing after all. This I take to be emblematic of Enlightenment, bringing light to dark places, most ethnographies being the verbal form of the museum exhibit, which, no matter how transparent the glass or bright the light, reflects an increasingly opaque display, ever more turned in on itself” (157).

**Michael Taussig**, *Defacement: Public Secrecy and the Labor of the Negative*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Taussig argues that an object becomes most alive when it is on the verge of ‘death,’ or an “unmasking.” Through the “drama of revelation,” the object is unmasked and the “public secret” is revealed. The Freeport is a site that upholds many instances of what Taussig calls “active not-knowing.”

SEE ALSO

**Article, Panama Papers**, p 21

**Story, Miéville**, p 32

**Image, Simon**, p 45

**History, True**, p 115

“ The living organism, in a situation determined by the play of energy on the surface of the globe, ordinarily receives more energy than is necessary for maintaining life; the excess energy (wealth) can be used for the growth of a system (e.g. an organism); if the system can no longer grow, or if the excess cannot be completely absorbed in its growth, it must necessarily be lost without profit; it must be spent, willingly or not, gloriously or catastrophically” (21).

**Georges Bataille**, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

To Bataille, the moment a system can no longer grow and value begins accumulating is the moment when value must be destroyed or else it will destroy us. Through this lens, the Freeport emerges as an artifact of a system that views the loss of value as a failure and manifests a belief that value can be collected indefinitely.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Drawing**, p 66

**Opinion, Gluttonous Architecture**, p 101

**Opinion, Blackhole**, p 102

**Opinion, Excessive Neutrality**, p 103

“ For all of its efforts to be apolitical, the [Freeport] zone is often a powerful political pawn. While extolled as an instrument of economic liberalism, it trades state bureaucracy for even more complex layers of extrastate governance, market manipulation, and regulation. For all its intentions to be a tool of economic rationalization, it is often a perfect crucible of irrationality and fantasy” (27).

**Keller Easterling**, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space*, (London: Verso, 2016).

Easterling argues that while the Freeport disguises itself as a rational tool of economy, it is rather a tool of “irrationality and fantasy” because of its extrastate governance. This begs the question: what other fantasies of irrationality can Free Economic Zones create?

SEE ALSO

**Overview**, *Geneva Freeport*, p 13

**Academic**, *Prown*, p 96

**Opinion**, *Heterotopia*, p 104

**Text**, *Geneva Freeport*, p 111

**Text**, *Bouvier*, p 114

“ ... history only exists if there is a tomorrow. And, conversely, a future only exists if the past is prevented from permanently leaking into the present and if Mimics of all sorts are defeated. Consequently, museums have less to do with the past than with the future: conservation is less about preserving the past than it is about creating the future of public space, the future of art, and the future as such” (17).

**Hito Steyerl**, *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Civil War*, (London: Verso, 2019).

Steyerl unpacks the critical currencies of art and politics in contemporary capitalism. Pointing to the fictitious system of capital and power held by art objects and institutions, she argues the system is stagnant, incapable of generating futures because of its implication with the past.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Geneva Freeport**, p 13

**Detail, Drawing**, p 66

**Opinion, Blackhole**, p 102

**Opinion, Excessive Neutrality**, p 103

**Text, Replication**, p 118

“ If we wish to better support the critical work performed by the world’s maintainers, we must recognize that maintenance encompasses a world of standards, tools, practices, and wisdom. Sometimes it deploys machine learning; other times, a mop.”

**Shannon Mattern**, “Maintenance and Care,” *Places Journal* (2018).

The focus on maintenance is a shift away from a preoccupation with innovation and obsolescence and towards longevity and adaptation. Maintenance and care are also not antonyms of waste or consumerism, but concepts that point to the systems that support our world.

It is important to remember that maintenance exists even when we do not discuss who performs this labor. What are the ways the Freeport must be maintained in order to ensure its operational smoothness?

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Film Stills**, p 53

**Detail, Unit 6171**, p 60

“ The underlying premise [of material culture] is that objects made or modified by man reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and by extension the beliefs of the larger society to which they belonged” (2).

**Jules David Prown**, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio v 17 n 1* (1982).

Through Material Culture Theory, the Freeport is not only a stagnant storage space, but is recast as a built manifestation of the beliefs of its time and place. The Freeport serves as evidence of societal approaches to value (ie hoarding, collecting, and doing so in secret).

SEE ALSO

**Story, Manaugh**, p 35

**Image, Elvis Collage**, p 42

**Detail, Unit 4014**, p 59

**Academic, Easterling**, p 93

**Opinion, Excessive Neutrality**, p 103



“ Architects, like other model makers, might well claim their models as their property, as instruments of service. But although architectural models, like the models of scientists, social scientists, automobile makers and fashion houses, may be under their producers’ control legally, they are not under their makers’ power practically. Once they are created, models, like humans, have a life of their own.”

**Annabel Wharton**, “Scaffold, Model, Metaphor,” *ARPA Journal* (2016).

Wharton argues that models, much like chemical-agents, have agency in their physical environments and mental spaces. She challenges readers to entertain an unruly understanding of the role of model-making in service to an architect or designer, where the model contributes to its own creation.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Models**, p 15

**Architecture, DSR**, p 27

**Model, DSR**, p 86

**Opinion, Outtakes**, p 108

“ It’s ironic that we can imagine the collapse of the Antarctic ice shelves more readily than we can the collapse of the banking system - and despite this, amazingly, as this book was written, the banking system did collapse.”

**Timothy Morton**, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2021).

Hyperobjects are objects which transcend the human scale of experience in terms of size, dimensionality, duration, and interconnection. Through this definition, the Freeport can be entertained as a hyperobject: an object of massive scale whose full entanglements are impossible to comprehend as they push through time and space.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Unit 4105**, p 58

**Detail, Drawing**, p 71

**Model, Fonseca**, p 84

**Text, Seed Vault**, p 117

“ Parafictioneers produce and manage plausibility. But plausibility (as opposed to accuracy) is not an attribute of a story or image, but of its encounter with viewers, whose various configurations of knowledge and “horizons of expectation” determine whether something is plausible to them. While something similar is true of any artwork – that its meaning is produced in the encounter with the spectator – a parafiction creates a specific multiplicity” (72).

**Carrie Lambert-Beatty**, “Make-Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility\*,” *MIT Press n 128* (2009).

Parafiction is a practice that does not entertain differences between real and imagined, colliding all in a single plane that casts doubts on the real and sows belief in the imagined. Parafiction plays on a viewer’s trust, allowing them to experience fiction as fact. And, while such deception can raise ethical questions, Lambert-Beatty believes (as do we) that Parafiction proves itself to be instrumental in truth-telling.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet**, p 12

**Exhibition, Raad**, p 23

**Exhibition, Blum**, p 24

We approach **Film Noir** as a literary and cinematic style marked by thematic and visual indicators. Noir uses high-contrast black/white imagery that focuses on a lone figure who's world and worldview is (sometimes) equally black/white. Noir often pairs with mystery and explores themes of alienation, masculinity, and longing.

While Noir was stylistically integrated into the project in earlier stages (see also, collages), it was eventually left out because of two reasons: its character focus on masculinity and isolation, and its plot focus on mystery. In terms of character, we were interested in prioritizing a less dominant narrator than the detective who self-destructively searches for the truth. In terms of genre, we noticed the dark mystery of Noir was already present in popular accounts on the Freeport and were curious about pushing back.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Film Intro**, p 10

**Detail, Real Estate Collage**, p 38

**Detail, Modigliani Collage**, p 43

**Film, Marker**, p 48

**Detail, Film Stills**, p 53

Denis Villeneuve's short film, *Next Floor*, opens with a shot of a lavish table setting that might allude to decadence from another era, perhaps ancient Rome or 18th century France. The trope of a lavish feast is often used as a commentary or signifier of imminent collapse. As in Villeneuve's film, this was quite literally the case: as dinner guests consumed more and more of the meal, the rounded bellies of the gluttonous attendees fell through a tower from floor to floor.

A system cannot hold excess as it is produced. Excess must be destroyed (see also, Bataille).

In the past, excess and gluttony was visually communicable to the public through ornamentation and exquisit detailing that signaled the presence of labor where labor was not strictly needed. In modern capitalism, where value production is the primary goal, it is no longer necessary for excess to be communicated in such obvious ways. Power and value are instead tucked away from the public and placed inside generic and empty buildings where architecture is stripped of its meaning, serving only as containers.

The Freeport is an example of this **gluttonous architecture**, stripped of its signifiers of wealth, communicating security and confidentiality. But what could it look like had it been less reserved? Perhaps this is too much of a neoliberal question when thought about in the context of our reality, but in a science fictional world, this question might subvert and tell a story that was not possible. Much like Villeneuve's *Next Floor*, or J.G. Ballard's *High Rise*, architecture becomes allegorical as it narrates our current absurd capitalist reality.

SEE ALSO

**Story, Ballard**, p 34

**Image, Bronstein**, p 47

**Detail, Drawings**, p 62 - 63

**Academic, Bataille**, p 92

**Text, Replication**, p 118

Freeports are a privileged space that few can enter. They are spatially ambiguous, an offshore island within a landmass. When things enter the Freeport, they are in a sustained state of transit.

What happens when they don't leave? They effectively disappear.

Today, the Freeport is also associated with valuables. In a world driven by competitiveness and insecurity, people desire to protect and hide their possessions and wealth.

Historically, the Freeport emerged out of a desire for globalized ease, to help with trade (of grain, initially). It fell prey to human ingenuity, greed, and value hoarding, and transformed into a gravitational field pulling global capital into it: a **Blackhole Architecture**

Value, here, is the equivalent of mass. The more value the Freeport has, the greater its gravitational pull.

We can foresee that as our social and cultural definitions of value shift, so will the contents of the Freeport, until it expands to pull us all in.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Unit 2014**, p 56

**Detail, Unit 4014**, p 59

**Academic, Bataille**, p 92

**Academic, Steyerl**, p 94

The Geneva Freeport emerged at a moment of interconnection in Swiss history. With the establishment of rail lines and Swiss banking (which were founded to fund the rail lines), Switzerland experienced an increase in land transport and, as a result, there arose a need for a pure transit zone: a space where goods can be held while in transit from one country to another without paying the tariffs mandated by that entry.

Since its establishment in 1888, the neutral economic haven in the neutral capital of the world (home to the UN) changed alongside society's material demands. Its contents shifted from grain to cars to looted goods and paintings. The objects within the Geneva Freeport began remaining there longer and longer, until today, many never leave. These objects exist in a limbo of statelessness and placelessness within the Freeport, amassing value while the Freeport amasses excess.

However, while the Geneva Freeport was designed to serve a neutral, purely economic function, the condition of 'neutrality' does not exist: Through its entanglement in world economics and its harboring of excess, the Geneva Freeport is complicit in the global market of capital, power, crime.

Perhaps the Freeport is a system of **excessive neutrality**. Neutrality, after all, is a pointed political tool.

SEE ALSO

**Story, Miéville**, p 32

**Detail, Unit 1012**, p 54

**Detail, Drawing**, p 68

**Academic, Bataille**, p 92

**Academic, Steyerl**, p 94

**Academic, Prown**, p 96

**Text, Modigliani**, p 113

The Freeport is a space of exception. It is an offshore location, meaning that the laws affecting its geographical location do not affect its specific parcel because the Freeport is technically not there. Items entering the Freeport simultaneously enter a state of sustained 'transit' as the taxes and tariffs on it are suspended. The Geneva Freeport is unique in its condition that this sustained state of 'transit' can last indefinitely.

Things that enter the Freeport enter a state of placelessness and a state of sustained disappearance.

As a space of exception, the Freeport is a **heterotopia**. It eludes capital and time (delaying the collection of taxes), as well as space and power (like other offshore entities: embassies).

And one we have no access to.

The **unknowable** is a space of fiction.

Is the Freeport truly unknowable? Perhaps not to everyone, but we find ourselves out of that loop.

Does that mean we really don't know what the Freeport houses? This is where plausibility enters. There are few facts and little proof of the happenings within the walls of the units, until a catalyst event reveals a glimpse and we are asked to react. The reaction, however, is usually over the top. (Is tax evasion really that surprising?)

The Freeport is a fascinating architectural condition in the built environment. It is a node in a web of economic, social, and cultural threads that give shape to our current practice of existence.

SEE ALSO

**Article, Pandora Papers**, p 22

**Model, Whiteread**, p 90

**Academic, Easterling**, p 93



**“Everything you see today could be true.”** A statement spoken in our midreview, and enclosed in our final exhibition booklet. It is a provocation for participants and visitors to doubt.

The statement, implies a duality - everything could be true but it could also not be true. In the context of an architectural review (which is already ruled by various fictions), and woven into a project that seems to center fiction, we wanted to plant a thought - maybe these are not fictions after all.

A fine line divides plausibility, possibility, and probability, but all have a level of truth. We are interested in toeing the line between fact and fiction, striving to be on the periphery of truth at all times. Two lies and a half-truth. There is a grain of truth centered in every choice we make.

As we worked on the exhibition, we often debated how much to reveal our intention and explicitly share the threads we carefully laid out. In the end, we decided with an unguided exhibition where visitors were tasked with putting together the pieces and uncovering the meaning themselves. We did not share an overarching statement, a conclusion of an experiment, a set of conditions. We simply said:

“In this project, we were interested in approaching the Geneva Freeport as a network of objects, stories, and characters. As a space at the intersection of many global systems, we were particularly interested in the entangled threads that move through the Freeport and point to other themes and conditions beyond it - like value, access, excess, and neutrality to name a few.

We used different channels of media - film, drawing, model, and text - to follow and represent the entanglement of the stories. As a space that is not entirely knowable or accessible to us, we hope a view of the Freeport emerges at the intersection of all these threads and representations.

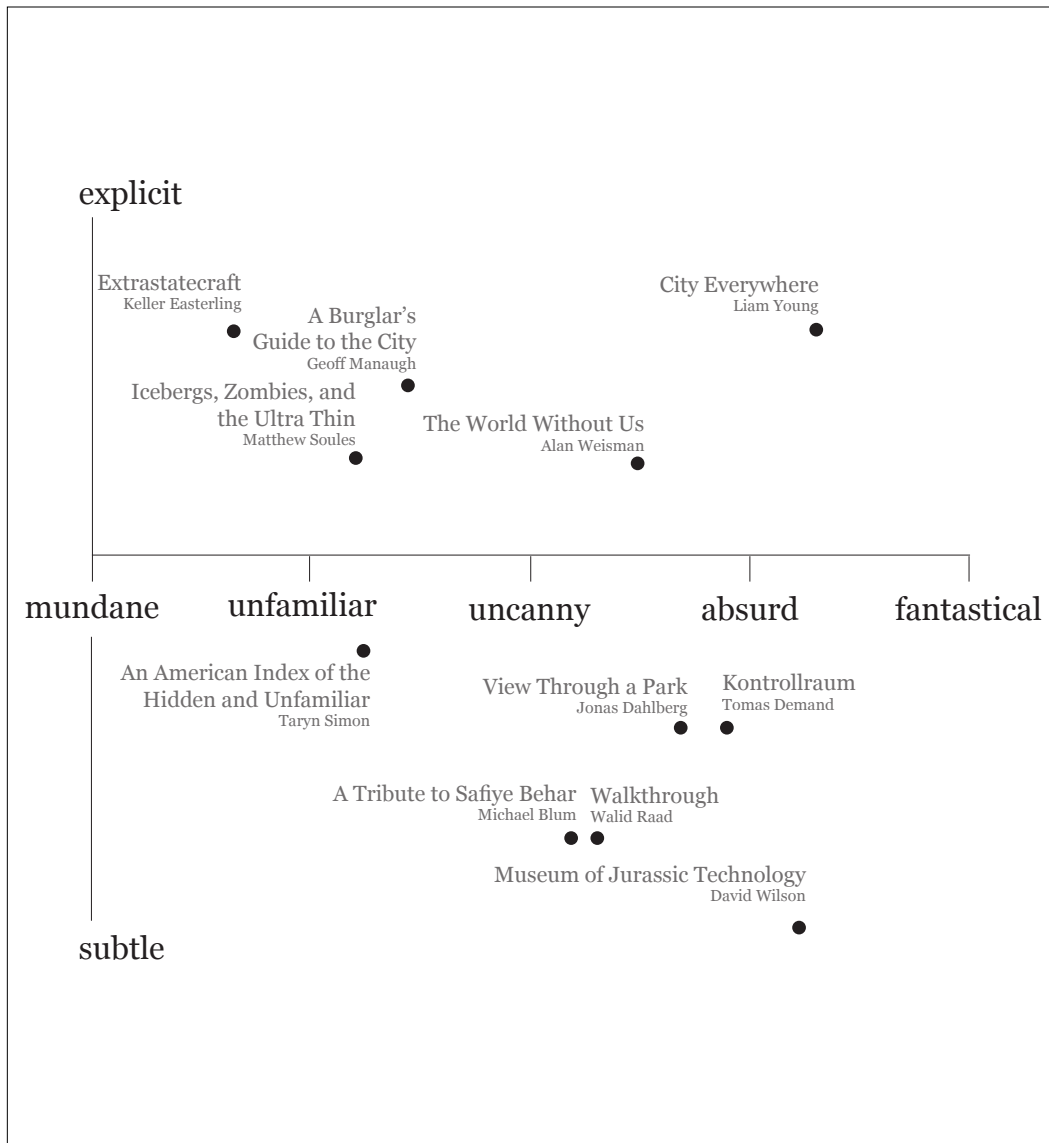
We orchestrated multiple threads to move away from a single narrative about architecture, to hold multiple views of the same space, sometimes crossing over, sometimes separated. Multiple views, accounts, perspectives, mediums. The intersection between them creates tension and also resolution.

But maybe we aren't the most reliable narrators either.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition, p 17**

**Exhibition, Museum of Jurassic Technology, p 26**



**Genre Diagram**, created by the authors, 2021.

In this diagram, the X-axis explores perception and approach to worlding, moving from Mundane to Fantastical. The Y-axis tracks the approach taken to conveying this worlding, whether explicitly stating fictionality or subtly shepherding a viewer from a state of confidence in their reality (or Mundane) to a state of doubt.

We found ourselves most interested in the conditions of Uncanny, conveyed subtly.

SEE ALSO

**Image**, Simmons, p 46

**Model**, Dahlberg, p 88

**Mundane:** an understood norm, routine, or baseline.

**Unfamiliar:** a state that retains the base assumption of the Mundane and still perceives deviations from the known as just that - unknown.

**Uncanny:** a condition that marks a far enough departure from the known baseline that the perception of the world begins to transition into one who's nature we cannot fully know, yet is still under comparison with the known Mundane. This tension is often marked by an unsettling feeling emerging from a loss of trust in one's base assumptions.

**Absurd:** a marked departure from the known baseline with an acceptance of a newfound lack of baseline. In this condition, there is an understanding that the rules of the Mundane have been discarded and the unexpected becomes norm.

**Fantastical:** the proposed opposite of Mundane. A Fantastical perception of the world is marked by a complete departure from the known and familiar without comparison to the Mundane.

SEE ALSO

**Image, Simmons, p 46**

**Model, Dahlberg, p 88**

A button that turns on a light  
A microphone playing sounds from inside the box  
A camera located inside the box, surveilling the visitors who surveil it  
A drawer that can actually be pulled open  
A sandbox with a tiny spade for digging  
A curtain that closes off the room  
A curtain that winds around the room entirely  
A curtain that winds around and through the room  
A projector that projects a film onto a curtain  
A projector that sits inside a box and projects a film onto a curtain  
An audio-guide that tells stories and stories of stories  
A pen-light for each visitor  
A scale model of the exhibition placed inside the exhibition  
An infinite amount of time for each visitor to experience the exhibition

These are all the things this project could have had but ultimately did not have. A series of **outtakes**.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition**, p 17

**Academic, Wharton**, p 97

**Stories** are a framework for design.

Through their nuance, they allow us to explore how an architecture is entangled with systems greater than itself (people, objects, beliefs) and how these systems, in return, shape architecture.

Our title features a small play on words: 'Speculative Friction' is a comment on the presence and potential of speculation in architecture. Like in science fiction, it is a tool for commentary, allowing us to examine the present moment through abstraction. Rather than turning our focus to a far off future, we are interested in thinking about the present. We find that it is absurd and uncomfortable enough.

While fiction in the project emerges through stories and imaginings, friction comes from the entanglement of the content: people/objects and architecture. While people are visually obscured in the project, they leave their marks, a trail of transactions, interventions, life, and death. We also want to bring friction back to the Freeport, a space lauded for its smooth operations and 'frictionless-ness'.

The project explores 7 scenes/events/happenings we imagine could feasibly be within the Freeport.

Each story was selected based on an object that we understood as having value (monetary, personal, cultural, etc.) but we also understand these objects to have value outside of their financial worth.

Each of the stories also points to themes outside of the Freeport: legal system (Modigliani), personal relationships (gold), cultural events (Elvis), resource extractions (sand), climate change (seed), art market (break room), real estate (real estate).

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Exhibition Booklet, p 12**

**Story, Hemingway, p 31**

**Story, Calvino, p 36**

**Uncanny** - The Freeport is both banal and absurd.

From our experience voraciously consuming media relating to the Freeport, as well as sharing our project with others, we noticed that people are naturally drawn to accounts of the Freeport. The intrigue, scandals, and legends. The incessant desire to break into the unknowable box and be shocked by its contents.

From this research, the most common genre associate with this space is one of mystery and sensationalist journalism. Take, for example, Christopher Nolan's 2020 film, *Tenet*, where the Freeport is the site of unparalleled weapons: one against a woman, one against the 'past.'

At first, this dark glamour was blinding and all we could conceive of was the Freeport as the backdrop to stories of mystery, of crime, of riches, of inaccessible spaces. But noticing this as the popular trope, we made an effort to shift our thinking, complication the sensational absurdity of the accounts we were seeing with the banal mundanity of a generic architecture used for storage.

We started writing narratives that we believe could be true to some extent.

The combination of the banal, everyday, lack of architectural interest at the Freeport and the surprising (but not that surprising) accounts of smugglers and tax evaders, led us to gravitate towards the condition of 'uncanny' - the familiar recast, suddenly strange.

SEE ALSO

**Exhibition, Raad**, p 23

**Exhibition, Cardiff**, p 25

**Image, Stålenhag**, p 44

**Image, Simmons**, p 46

A **Freeport** is a special economic zone attached or close to an airport or seaport, where taxes, customs, and regulations are removed or simplified to expedite commercial import and export between countries. While these unique economic zones can be found in many countries around the world, the complex of warehouses in Geneva, Switzerland is the focus of this project.

Unlike many cities sharing land with Freeports, Geneva is not a historic port city. Instead, it sits at the crossroad of several major European routes, a condition that in 1813 gave rise to the first free zone. In the 1850s, Geneva's authorities created a warehouse for the city's grain provisions sited at the Geneva Freeport. Over the years, the need for space grew and new warehouses were built. Between the years of 1888 and 1889, the Geneva Freeport as we know it today was born. In its establishment, the local authorities chose to create a private company to oversee the Freeport, with the State of Geneva as the majority shareholder.

Initially built to store necessities for the population, such as food, wood, and coal, the Geneva Freeport evolved along with the city. In the early 20th century, cars and wine barrels joined the inventory. After the end of WWII, the first "valuable" goods entered the warehouse in the form of gold bars and gems. Other precious merchandise piled up next to these raw commodities, including luxury automobiles. In 1952, the inventory counted 10,000 Vespas inside the Freeport's walls.

Today, the Geneva Freeport holds more than one million artworks, in comparison to MoMA in New York which possesses around 200,000 artworks. There, private collections are not only protected in highly controlled environments for preservation but are also protected from tax and customs regulations for increased profitability. Often held in wooden transport boxes, these objects sit and wait for their valuations to rise or fall, until their next destination, usually another Freeport.

SEE ALSO

**Overview, Geneva Freeport** , p 13

**Article, Panama Papers**, p 21

**Article, Pandora Papers**, p 22

**Film, King**, p 49

**Academic, Easterling**, p 93

2016 was a year of reckoning for the offshore world. A catastrophic leak from Panamanian law firm Mossack and Fonseca revealed to the world something shocking: the richest people in the world were secretly getting richer by hiding their assets in the shadow world they constructed for themselves! The world staggered. No one saw that coming!

Among the leaked documents was a critical piece of information which ignited hope in the heart of Philippe Maestracci, a farmer living in France whose grandfather, Oscar Stettiner, fled Paris in 1939 leaving his assets behind. Among the assets seized by the Nazis was the painting, Seated man with a cane (1918), **Modigliani**. Stettiner was a Jewish art dealer. He fled with his brothers to escape Nazi occupation, and survived the war. Returning to Paris, he fought battle after battle to regain his lost pieces, especially his beloved Modigliani.

The trail of evidence, however, only began in 2010 when Philippe started following the then cold trail. He found that in 1996, the painting sold at Christie's and that in 1944 Jean Van der Klip bought it at a Nazi auction. Stettiner got the rights to retrieve the painting from Van der Klip but before he was able to do so, in 1947, Van der Klip said he had sold the painting to a buyer who then sold it to an unknown American soldier.

Oscar Stettiner died in 1948, unable to retrieve his property.

But it seems Van der Klip was lying, and that the piece was actually passed on to his granddaughter and grandson, who kept it for 50 years before selling it at Christie's thinking the trail to be cold.

It was purchased by International Art Center, an organization whose owner's identity was unknowable until the leak revealed it to belong to David Nahmad. Initially, Nahmad denied having the painting in his possession, but the painting was discovered in a raid on the Geneva Freeport. However, it was ultimately returned. Nahmad seems to have adequate claims of ownership over the painting and the trial is presumably ongoing.

Seated man with cane remains in the Geneva Freeport today.

SEE ALSO

**Article, Panama Papers**, p 21

**Image, Modigliani Collage**, p 43

**Detail, Unit 1012**, p 54

**Detail, Drawing**, p 68



We've been drawn to this story ever since we heard it, of a painting, painted by a Jewish Italian artist living in Paris in 1918. The artist lived a short life - dying of tuberculosis in his late 30s but became hugely successful after his death (as seemed to happen with artists in the olden days). This painting was purchased by a Jewish art collector living in Paris for display in his gallery.

1939. Nazi forces are on the move. The collector flees with his family, leaving his assets behind, the Nazis seizing possession and selling them.

1946, the collector returns to his home and tries to track down his possessions. The painting emerges out of the chaos - it's at his finger tips - but eludes him and he dies shortly after.

His grandson takes it upon himself to find the painting his grandfather loved so much. Without much of a trail, the painting is found - by chance - in the Geneva Freeport, owned by a family who denied all ties to it until evidence from a Panamanian law firm (one of whose eponymous founders is the descendant of a Waffen-SS officer who sought refuge in Panama) was leaked to the world, revealing the connection between the family and the offshore shell company who technically owns the painting. The painting was seized in a raid on the Geneva Freeport, but due to the slow legal battle, was returned to the Freeport again.

Maybe the Freeport is where the Nazis took the painting when they first took it. To the unit where it sits today.

Built in 1888, the Geneva Freeport stood its ground through two World Wars, although it was the second that turned the world's attention to the practice of Swiss neutrality. During the war, Switzerland aided both the ally and the axis powers. For Switzerland, neutrality is self preservation. Still today, Switzerland upholds mandatory military service for all male citizens. In the vein of self-preservation, Switzerland kept the Third Reich at bay in part through beneficial trade relations. Perhaps afraid of retaliation, they did not allow many refugees and even charged them entry taxes.

This makes the following story we found all the more jarring. A little-publicized account we describes a man living in the Geneva Freeport during the war. He was a Jewish conservator, tending to the works the Nazis brought in. His area of expertise was in modern and surreal paintings. During the years of the war, he lived in one of the units, tending to the artwork of another Jew, **Modigliani**, neither of them existing, strictly speaking.

SEE ALSO

**Image, Modigliani Collage**, p 43

**Detail, Unit 1012**, p 54

**Detail, Drawing**, p 68

**Opinion, Excessive Neutrality**, p 103

In 2015, The Geneva Freeport became the center for an art scandal that rocked the art world. **Yves Bouvier**, a Swiss businessman and art dealer was put on trial for suspicion of money laundering and allegedly defrauding his clients and misrepresenting the value of the pieces he was selling them. Something to the tune of a billion dollars.

A bit about Bouvier.

Bouvier's history with the Freeport is deep. His family bought the logistics company Natural Le Coultre, already established within the Freeport, in 1983. In 1989, Bouvier expanded the company to include specialized art transport that boasts storage, packing, and shipping of works of art and other valuable items. The firm's warehouses, storehouses, and headquarters are located in the Geneva Freeport (6 Avenue de Sécheron).

Bouvier himself opened a few additional Freeports: 2010 Le Freeport Singapore. 2014 Le Freeport Luxembourg. And so, it is not for nothing that he is known as the Freeport King, introducing Freeports to the art world and creating its current evolution: the Luxury Freeport, a Freeport specifically intended for the indefinite and tax free storage of art and other high end goods.

While there were a few complainants of the alleged defrauding, the most notable was Russian oligarch Dimitry Rybolovlev, who accused Bouvier of selling him art at an obscene mark up.

Rybolovlev does not emerge from the art world clean either. In the 2016 Panama Papers leak, he was discovered to use an offshore shell company to hide art assets from his former wife during the process of their divorce in 2014. Through some various loopholes, nothing further happened to him.

Nor to Bouvier.

SEE ALSO

**Image, Gold Collage**, p 41

**Detail, Unit 2014**, p 56

**Academic, Easterling**, p 93

It is wild to think that if it wasn't for the tragic car accident that killed Pasquale Camera in August of 1995, the intricate looting ring of Giacomo Medici would not have been discovered and **Marion True** may have been able to keep the job she loved so much at the Getty Museum.

At the scene of the accident, the polizia found images of looted artifacts and a chart detailing the inner workings of Medici's international network of accomplices. A handwritten note, an address, sent the polizia to the Geneva Freeport, where the unassuming company 'Editions Services' held a modest office and warehouse. An address and a name: Giacomo Medici.

In a rare moment of international collaboration, Swiss and Italian police forces raided the warehouse in September of that year. Inside, they found 10,000 stolen artifacts, primarily Roman, Greek, and Etruscan, looted from tombs and smuggled out of Rome.

Robert Hecht, whose name appears in big letters on Camera's chart, was an American antiquities dealer. He acted as a middleman to Medici, selling to renowned museums and collectors in the US and Europe. While he was not the only dealer working in Medici's crime circle, he was the one who eventually took down Marion True alongside him.

True worked as the curator of antiquities at the Getty Museum and recommended the purchasing of antiquities for the museum from Hecht. In 2005, she was charged and tried by the Italian government alongside Hecht for conspiracy to traffic illicit antiquities. The main evidence for the trial was provided by that 1995 raid of Medici's warehouse in the Geneva Freeport. In 2006, she was prosecuted by the Greek government as well, but by 2007, the trial ended without charges.

Working on her book, True explained that she suspected the works may have been looted and conducted research when she could, even pushing for the artifacts' repatriation. She claims her colleagues in the museum industry rarely did even that. As if no one knew these pieces were looted.

SEE ALSO

**Detail, Drawing**, p 65

**Academic, Taussig**, p 91

The **Global Sand Observatory** is a new UNEP/GRID-Geneva initiative that aims to develop knowledge and provide decision making support on sustainable sand extraction and use.

Sand resource governance is one of the greatest sustainability challenges of the 21st century. A number of international institutions, governments, journalists, civil society organizations, research centers, and companies around the world have been placing this topic on the environmental political agenda in recent years. As a result, there is a growing call for improved sustainability practices in sand extraction within major use sectors, like cement production, construction, and land reclamation.

(<https://www.greengrowthknowledge.org/initiatives/global-sand-observatory>)

SEE ALSO

**Image, Sand Collage**, p 37

**Detail, Unit 6171**, p 60

**Detail, Drawing**, p 70

**Academic, Morton**, p 98

The **Seed Vault** inside a mountain on the remote island in the Svalbard archipelago was started in 1996 with the collaboration of 150 countries under the Global Plan of Action (GPA) in order to conserve crop diversity. The vault provides security against any unforeseen disasters, man-made or natural.

The Seed Vault, like historical grain elevators, is a method of reparation for an uncertain speculative future. The Vault currently holds approximately 400,000 seed samples.

(<https://www.croptrust.org/our-work/svalbard-global-seed-vault/>)

SEE ALSO

**Image, Seed Collage**, p 39

**Detail, Unit 4105**, p 58

**Detail, Drawing**, p 72

**Academic, Morton**, p 98

**Replication** at the Geneva Freeport is a newly offered service that allows owners to access their collection while maintaining their security. The original piece would be sealed within environment-protected vaults while the replica would be on display without the burden of possible risks.

Replication in the art and antiquities world is often understood as an action that devalues the original. A copy of one or more destroys the preciousness of the singular object.

The notion of the replica as lesser than the original can be challenged as a means of breaking through the problematic and fictitious construct of value that governs the world today.

SEE ALSO

**Image, Break Room Collage, p 40**

**Detail, Break Room, p 57**

**Detail, Drawing, p 65**

**Academic, Steyerl, p 94**

**Opinion, Gluttonous Architecture, p 101**







# Part 3

## Final Review Conversation

# The Final Conversation—Saturday, December 18th, 2021

## Thematic Excerpts from the Final Review Conversation

### 0 Scene

Reviewers: Germaine Barnes, Eric Höweler, Ang Li, Ann Lui, Anna Neimark, Emmanuel Olunkwa, Martina Tanga, Mark Jarzombek, Nicholas de Monchaux, Caroline A. Jones, J. Jih

### 1 On Speculation and Knowability

Ann Lui

“For most of us, as lay people, learning about the Geneva Freeport, we’re dying to know what’s in all those units. What are the super rich trying to evade taxes on? but I dont really know. I dont even have a sense. It starts to evoke the sense that there are many places like this, of late capitalism, that are totally opaque - data centers, prisons, amazon shipping centers. Sometimes, through leaks, we get a sense of the edge of them. For me, this project is also about the futility of architecture to do investigative journalism. I wish there was a building that gave us glimpses inside, that started to reveal through its materiality the materialty of its contents. And yet, the architecture of these places will never do that because of the systems they are a part of. That kind of tension seems to be a part of your project, which I appreciate. Yet I also feel like there’s a sadness to it, and that is something I take away from walking around your exhibition.”

**Anna Neimark**

"It's almost like when you listen to the news and you know that there is something being said but it isn't being said out loud. It's a kind of signal. And so, if we say something like, "we don't have access to something" there's a kind of withdrawal from the thing, a speculation on the thing. Then the territory begins to be delineated through a philosophical agenda."

**Germaine Barnes**

"The idea of speculation leads itself to you all placing more of yourselves into the project, and as you place more of yourselves into the project, you have to take a stance on something. I think the stance that you all chose is one that stays away from a political lens and allows us to project our own politics into the project. Which is fine. It's a way of you staying neutral in this process."

**2 On Politics**

**Germaine Barnes**

"Another thing regarding the absence of politics, so to speak, is that even the way the objects are rendered within each container is very hollistic. It doesnt show any fragmentation. It doesn't show any difficulty in resourcing. We see all these fantastical movies where someone is trying to get a ruby this big and they have to kill 40 million people. How do we see all the collateral damage that comes into each of these? We just see the final thing at the end. Again, it's the multiple ways you can think of your positionality as opposed to allowing us to mad-lid the project and then saying 'Ha! we did our job. It could be A or B'"

**Ann Lui**

"Just to play devil's advocate though, I think there can be a politics of the unknown [...] Does it matter whether we all believe that these buildings are all filled with human remains or not? The issue is that we live with these things - Freeports - all over the

world, with the assumption that they could be filled with human remains but that's it. That they are in fact unknown, which is what I think this project is getting to, is a political issue [...] We know that the Geneva Freeport exists, that the Singapore Freeport exists, that the Shenzhen Freeport exists. That these all exist but we don't know what is inside them, to me, is a political point of view. And we don't necessarily need to project their interiors to take a stance."

### 3 On Transparency

**Ang Li**

"I wonder if there is a relationship between the opacity of the facade, which is the thing that enables the process of speculation in order to initiate this speculative process. To make it a really public form of speculation that invites the audience in, you need a blank facade [...] And the blankness of the facade is actually something important that upholds the architecture. To a similar point, I am curious about the aesthetic of the project, why it is so sleek and architectural in that way? If you think of the newspaper articles that you read, and you think about the kind of public speculation as a process of creating scandal, I wonder if there are other forms of media that are interesting to engage too."

### 4 On Truths and Parafictions

**Martina Tanga**

"My two cents on 'speculative' is that it is very much in the language of late capitalism - this obscure language that many people glaze over because they don't know the facts. I was looking for you to take that and problem solve, and turn it on it's head. If you were to take 'speculative,' then how do you turn it to problem

solving in some way, of the questions raised here. ”

**Alice Jia Li Song**

“To speak to our position in this project a little bit, we are both in this moment of anxiety. We’re about to graduate into the real world and enter the discipline of architecture, so in a way, we were concerned about what is the reality of the framework that we have to serve as architects? what are we designing to? Maybe for us this is a last moment to look at this space and interrogate how capitalism has obscured so many interesting histories, objects, and stories. We want to recourse that a bit and think about what other ways we can talk about this. So narrative became a framework, or mold, through which we constructed the entire project.”

**Mark Jarzombek**

“Isn’t it really not about fiction but about truth? Couldn’t one really say that its actually ‘truth telling,’ a documentary? It just does what documentaries do, which is to say ‘We learned this and here is, in some sense, the virtual verification of these things.’ And it stands back from both fiction and the obligatory critique of capitalism, which we all hate but we all do. There’s a certain hypocrisy to critiquing capitalism that is also put on exposition here. So I think there’s also a truth-telling capacity that is the other side of the coin to fiction.”

**Anne Lui**

“How do you feel this project changes the value of the objects within? There’s a way that you present this site and these building as a mechanism for generating value, whether it’s things held within rising and falling in value, but is there a different way that you’re defining value. I also loved the way you said

that you would love for these stories to continue. This idea of the trickle effect, that once you release the fictions, facts, truth, whatever you want to call them, into the world, what is the generative function.”

**Caroline A. Jones**

“I’d like to remind you of the artworld term parafiction, because maybe parafiction - para-architecture, para-narrative - I don’t know, maybe that can help. People are a having lot of trouble with ‘speculative,’ so I’m just commenting that there are these other terms. Parafiction is intentionally cycled around truths, and it is encumbent on the interlocuter to navigate what might be true and what might not be true. So maybe that is more useful. Although it leaves the incredible richness of financial speculation and markert speculation. It leaves some of the very rich associations that you’ve been given.”

**Yaara Yacoby**

“Parafiction is a term that we’ve been using very purposefully in our project. Parafictional exhibitions like those of Walid Raad, Janet Cardiff are some of our main collaborators. In the parafictional experience, you enter a world that is presented as truth but may not be truth at all.”

**Anna Neimark**

[responding to parafiction] “It tough, because then it comes full circle and we’re almost in the world of QAnon, because of the terms that you are saying.”

**5 On Architecture**

**Mark Jarzombek**

“‘What is art, what is architecture’ sends you down a dangerous spiral of nonsense. At the end of the day, this is a thesis in an architecture school. Whether

it gets accepted in some sort of museological way or another is a different type of question. The first thing is that it is a thesis in an architecture school, not a thesis in an art school. It's an interrogation of architecture in that small 'a,' all encompassing, wishy washy spongy way because it does ask us about what is on the inside of capitalism. And this is not to do with what is on the inside of architecture. This building [Geneva Freeport] is not so different from that [MIT Media Lab] as far as I'm concerned, in terms of fiction-telling, truth-telling, and para-logical slippage. I think the slippiness is the good part of it.

**Eric Höweler**

"You said you're graduating soon, and there's a certain amount of anxiety about the world..."

This discussion of audience - I do think this project was designed for us, for this moment. And the kind of questions that are coming up are what you tried to provoke with these artifacts and stories. Every thesis has a way to comment on the present moment, and we hit on many things - the obscuring function of architecture, the opacity of the world (which reminds me of the James Birdle book *The New Dark Age*. We've never had more information but we've never been closer to post-truth. The more we know the less we know), and this is asking us to contemplate to what extent does architecture participate in that obscuring.

To Mark's comment that this building [Geneva Freeport] is as obscure as this building [MIT Media Lab] - all of a sudden, your project makes us read this building [MIT Media Lab] differently, and I think that is your intent and that's really fantastic.

I wanted to ask about your specific architectural gestures, your specific design moves, like the way [the fins] turn the corner, the beauty of this facade. I

never see beauty at these storage containers but I see beauty here. Maybe those are architectural habits - You can't help but make even the most sinister building somehow beautiful.

I noticed the forced perspective here and I'm thinking about Palladio. There are beautiful moments here and I think that contributes to the capacity of this project to communicate to this group, or to other groups. The storytelling is not just written. It's not just verbal. It's not just in the movie. You're using architectural tools and skills to tell that story in a more compelling way.

I think what you're telling us is that our jobs aren't just to design spaces and change that world, but also to bring people with us, to tell those stories, and to transform that world through stories not just through specifications and construction drawings. I think it's really optimistic actually. It could be sinister.

But I'm just sort of impressed by this whole conversation that's unfolded, because I started out thinking 'what the hell is going on here' and am ending thinking 'wow, I just experienced something here with this group of people, in this moment.' And maybe it's exactly the way you expected and exactly the way you designed this moment for us. And I think that's really powerful."

## 6 Conclusion

### Nicholas de Monchaux

"We're getting to the end of the session and I just want to make a comment both as an advisor to this project and as a fraternal twin, which is to say that this conversation is, in a really interesting way, focused on the differentiation between speculation and fiction and architectural creation. In my experience as a fraternal twin, people are most anxious to



distinguish things which are very close to each other. And so, I think that the real pleasure for me in the project has been to examine and embrace the space between those and the connection between those distinct and interconnected conceptual ideas, which I think is a very important part of the architectural pedagogy in the times we're living in as well."



The Freeport is too entangled to see directly, too implicated to side with, and we are implicated alongside it too.

If this book left you with more questions than answers, know that we feel the same. Maybe there is solace in that shared experience.