

# PRAXIS

CREATING

TRUE STORIES



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# HERE'S THE STORY

ASHLEY SCHAFER AND AMANDA REESER LAWRENCE

After editing, producing, and at times forcibly coercing every issue of PRAXIS into existence over the last fourteen years, we thought it was time to try a different approach. We invited Ana Miljacki as a guest co-editor to help us break our own mold, partly because of her interest in architectural narratives—a topic which had been floating around our editorial meetings for a few years—and partly to lure her intelligence back into the Praxis fold after a two-issue hiatus from her role as project editor. To this issue, Ana brought not only new perspectives and insights, but also a mandate that the issue be an “unmediated” one. That is, she insisted that the articles stand as autonomous tales: without introductions, without captions, without intensive image editing. The emphasis on storytelling as a particular form of narrative created a radically different kind of Praxis—one without buildings, but which, we would argue emphatically, does not lack architecture.

The “special” issue, then, contains a collection of “True Stories” told by architects. Missing are the conventional architectural representations or tropes that usually fill the pages of Praxis: plans, sections, renderings, detail drawings, photographs. Nor will the reader find our familiar format, with images and or analytical text carefully curated to educe particular aspects of a project or the design process. Instead, we relinquished control to our contributors, allowing them to author their own stories in their own voice. Their stories employ a range of techniques, but in the end we found that they could be categorized into four identifiable types: the novel, the comic, the storybook, and the film. While by no means a definitive or exhaustive taxonomy, these four categorizations resonated with the contemporary, experimental work that we identified and selected for the issue, as well as with familiar extra-disciplinary genres. They also enabled us to conceptualize and graphically distinguish them within the space of this journal

Although conceptually an unmediated issue, the translation of any story into a standardized journal format requires some manipulation. The comics and storybooks—including Wes Jones's *Nelsons*, resurrected after a long absence following their life in the pages of *ANY*, and fantastical worlds created by Jimenez Lai and Katie Shima—combine text and image on the page, and in this sense remain relatively close to a normative architectural journal article, even if the representations themselves are far from traditional architectural conventions. The films posed the greatest challenge to print translation. All are printed on high gloss paper, with a black background, though

they use different approaches to incorporate this non-architectural medium into print. While the videos that accompanied the MoMA *Foreclosed* Exhibition are almost documentary in format, and are therefore represented through select images of the figures interviewed, MOS's film, with its slow-moving pans and subtle lighting shift focused on, fictionalized architecture itself as the protagonist. The stories we categorized as fictions seem farthest from conventional architectural storytelling methodologies, as they conjure images rather than actually employing them. Keith Mitnick appropriates the form of the novel as an architectural trope, while FKAA, in a more blatant act of appropriation, bordering on plagiarism, offers architectural strategies for “argumentation;” the article becomes a fiction about crafting fictions.

Mark Wigley once described not just architectural theory but all architects and ultimately all architecture as telling stories. Students are trained to tell stories about their own buildings, critics tell stories about other architects' buildings, and buildings themselves are “megaphones” telling their own stories. Underlying Wigley's polemic was a desire to legitimize the emergent field of architectural theory as a practice equal to building, and to challenge the burgeoning ossification of the theory/practice (we might say writing/building) divide, calling for a more fluid definition and operation of both. Almost twenty years later, with a re-emergence of architectural narrative in a vastly altered disciplinary landscape, what can these stories tell us? It seems to us that the stories in this issue suggest a new disciplinary moment when the stories no longer need relate to a building proper, when the telling of the story itself has become a legitimate or at least a recognized form of architectural practice. Perhaps we have exceeded, or perhaps circumvented, Wigley's provocation. (need one more sentence)



# NOT EVERYTHING, NOT ALL AT ONCE

## ANA MILJACKI

Recall for a moment the image of Charles Jencks's 1971 evolutionary tree—a hybrid of futurological prediction and trend assessment—one of those sexy images that circulates through architectural discourse via books, lectures, blogs, and, currently, flickr. It is a cognitive map, as Fredric Jameson might have wished for, not just for postmodern life in general, but for navigating the contemporary architectural plurality.

It still “sort of” works, as well as it ever did, its hilarious authority bestowed upon it via graphic connotations. The X axis presents history, and the Y axis a stylistic pulse that Jencks identifies in the projects, all rendered in the ultimate architectural history flowchart. It moves from big words on the left—Logical, Idealist, Self-Conscious, Intuitive, Activist, Unselfconscious—to ever-smaller ones (including some individual architects' names) on the right.

If you look closely at the retouched version (2000) you will find Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin in the category called Unselfconscious, a category that, Jencks will explain, comprises 80% of the environment. You will find Peter Eisenman in a special bubble within the Logical band, together with Norman Foster and Ernesto Rogers in the 1970s (high-tech and cardboard architecture made perversely intimate with one another), and then Eisenman again at a strange junction of Intuitive and Activist in the late 1980s. Around the same time, and hanging to the side of activism, Rem Koolhaas (qualified by Generic Architecture), Mack Scogin, and Zaha Hadid occupy a common (aptly) irregular blotch.

Eisenman's work did indeed change over time, and he has been the first one to try to explain its evolving meaning, so the fact that he occupies different spots in Jencks's flowchart is not totally random (surprising?), but it is hard to escape the feeling that the closer one looks at the chart, the further any sense of historical certainty recedes. What the “Evolutionary Tree” does accomplish, in direct opposition to its promise of rendering speciation visible, is an ultimate evacuation of meaning from the big words on the left.

Words pile up, patches of black unite them, patches of white separate them, and together they spatialize time. This intriguing drawing has to be seen as a symptom of postmodernism rather than as a tool for surviving it. Its contemporary appeal mirrors a collective nostalgia for a cognitive map, while it in fact actively performs (in its own way) the destabilizing destruction of meta-

narratives, not in a spectacular way, just simply by relying on the flow chart's scientificity rather than on any type of verifiable (and often not even conventional) history of twentieth-century architectural production. So then why start here?

Because indeed both the hope that one could map the field for the purposes of navigating (or teaching) it, as well as the dizzying swirl of words in Jencks's attempt to do so, equally haunt the bubble of US contemporary academic architectural discourse. It is hardly Jencks's fault, but his image did capture—indeed it predicted—the plurality of concerns that corresponds to our own (it is only fair to credit him with this). Commensurate with the complexity of issues that define our time, most architects today work on a million different platforms simultaneously—and some even articulate this as their project. But of course, things would be simpler, at least in architecture schools, if someone would finally enumerate, or resuscitate, one or two ideas about our disciplinary core (preferably ontological, but conventional would do as well, as long as it did not sound too much like NAAB).

The loss of certainty is not something to mourn (we are repeatedly told), and yet that momentous time when early postmodern theory was a bloodbath of meta narratives seems sufficiently distant to allow nostalgia for “grand narratives” and even harbor a suspicion about their ultimate disappearance. After all, we realize on a daily basis that gender, race, class, and religion shape the world we live in even if the discourse about them may seem more tentative and pedestrian than at an earlier point in time.

Once nostalgia is on the table, Jencks's flowchart gets reanimated not only as the mirror image of that contemporary want for clarity that was never experienced by those who mourn it (nor perhaps by those who appear to have had it), but indeed, as an allegory of dismantlement, and by the same token of the persistence of narratives, even if atomized, redistributed, repressed, and retooled.

In a more recent, and by many accounts more deadly, blow to modernism than Jencks's, Bruno Latour told us that “certainty” was always a contrivance of sorts. After critiquing modernism's legacy of reductive categorization, rigid binary oppositions, misguided supremacy of the rational, and egotistical supremacy of man (over nature), he concluded that the world was never modern, even as the moderns represented and intervened in it as if it had been. Now as much as one might agree with Latour (and I do)



on a number of points of his critique, here and elsewhere, the final twist of his argument knocks the wind out of modernism indeed, but with it, as inevitable collateral damage, also goes the necessary pairing of representing and intervening in the world. This pairing happens to be constitutive of all creative work, as some version of representation secures the authority (and grounds the hope) with which one intervenes in the world. The idea that modernist scientists, politicians, and architects imagined that some of their intellectual (and aesthetic) prejudices had the status of ontological truths is separable from the fact that the world has to be conceptualized and narrated—simply or complexly—in order for actions within it to have meaning. This is to say that the particular content, or values, of the moderns can be critiqued against our own contemporary concerns, but even if we accept that we are now far more conscious of the entanglements and complexity of relationships between humans and non-humans, things and systems, actions and abstractions then our modern predecessors, without some form of imposed hierarchy onto that complexity, a cognitive map of sorts, or at least a story, no form of intentionality registers.

At a time when the archives are vast and ever expanding—and by this I mean both our general access to information and our disciplinary archives (scholarly, blogged, and leaked)—histories are made and remade instantly, as plausible cuts through those archives. Storytelling then has to be seen as having particularly important navigational and propositional capacities. It might not require a full-fledged position, but it requires a point of view and commitment to produce and, even more, a commitment to produce well. So even when it remains deeply personal, a story comes closer to a position than our contemporary flashes of judgment delivered as “liking,” “pinning,” or “tumbling.”

The ambition of this PRAXIS is far narrower than the general predicament I suggest above. Instead of revisiting postmodernism and thinking about how to reconstitute if not meta- then medium-level legitimating narratives that operate on par with practice (such as activism, optimization, new beginnings) we decided to collect stories that propose alternative endings. We collected architectural stories that more and less comfortably meld fictional, projective, and critical elements with the hope that their synthetic storytelling is key for propelling us beyond the impasses of excessive information, fast recycling, and propositional emptiness. In each of these pieces different lines of criticality and projection coexist. Importantly, storytelling here allows, and demands, style: it is harder to farm out to a renderer; it offers resistance, although at times it might obscure things too (even dangerously.) But that is the point of storytelling. Not everything, not all at once. Even if one cares about many things simultaneously—and today it is hard not to —composing a story imposes order and judgment on all the pieces that went into it in the first place.

The Praxis 14 stories are truly that...true stories. Parts of them are based on real facts and projects, and their effects may be very real as well, though they hardly hold the status of facts. Although some contain research, the findings are not presented didactically.

The most important takeaway from True Stories, is that telling a story requires commitment. Stories that were meant to be told,

that were constructed to be told, like the ones collected in this issue of Praxis, for a moment highlight a position. And finally, the ambiguity of the stories we collected (both gloomy and easy, free and unfree, pleasurable and damning) speaks not only to the impossibility of neatly resolving critique and projection, but also of a particularly contemporary comfort with their dialectical contradiction and coexistence. However retooled, post-produced, and mashed-up contemporary architectural narratives might be, it is in them that fragments of utopia still live, as points of view and as style. So perhaps “liking” and “pinning,” despite my earlier pessimism (regarding these contemporary judgement flashes,) may be the first step towards assembling around and consolidating new arguments. If a story can have a fan it can also have a following and provoke further stories into existence.

#### NOTES

1. This title is in direct conversation with MOS architects’ “Everything, All at Once.” For the record, I more than appreciate their qualification of their project in this way, and find it aptly contemporary. Underpinned by some of the same issues as “Everything All at Once,” its opposite, “Not Everything, Not All At Once” highlights the need to plot a specific path through contemporary complexity, even if momentarily, and for the sake of a clearer, even if affected position.
2. Original map appeared in Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (New York: Praeger, 1971) and the most recent reworked version in Charles Jencks, “The Century is Over, Evolutionary Tree of Twentieth-Century Architecture” *Architectural Review*, July 2000, p. 77. See also the flicker presentation of the 2000 remake at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/archidose/3088862107/> (Last accessed, Sept 22 2013). The map has been recently discussed by Mark Wigley, in “Whatever Happened to Total Design” *Harvard Design Magazine*, Summer 1998, Number 5, and in Reinhold Martin, *Utopia’s Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
3. I am being ironic here.
4. See Bruno Latour, *We have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
5. This view is an impatient simplification of Latour’s entire body of work, in which he is consistently interested in a collective construction or re-construction of values (around various and overlapping matters of concern) and simultaneous preservation of complexities of interconnectedness between all things. At the risk of repeating some of the mistakes of the moderns then I invoke representing an intervening in order to highlight the need for even the most fleeting representational reduction of the real complexities that surround every action, precisely in order to act.



# Contributors/Credits

## BARRY BERGDOLL

Wes Jones is a partner in Jones, Partners: Architecture, an award-winning, California-based architectural practice known for technologically inspired design. Jones' work has been exhibited widely and can be found in the permanent collections of MoMA, SFMoMA, CCA, and FrAC. Princeton Architectural Press recently published their second monograph of his work, titled *El Segundo*. A recipient of the Rome Prize and Arts and Letters Award in Architecture from the American Academy of the Arts and Letters, Jones was recently named one of the Top 30 Educators in the country in the Design Intelligence Survey of Architectural Education.

Fake Industries Architectural Agonism (FKAA) is an entity of variable boundaries and dubious taste that explores the potential of Replicas for the advancement in the field. The ensemble, orchestrated by Cristina Goberna and Urtzi Grau, relentlessly questions the value originality while investigates productive disagreement as engine to open up discussions through architecture. Recent projects include the new National Velodrome in Medellin Colombia, the renovation of the Mining Village of Aldea Moret, Spain and the OE House in Alforja, Spain. Its work has been published widely including the magazines *Scapegoat*, *Studio Magazine*, *Spam*, *Bauwelt*, *Pasajes Arquitectura*, *Domus*, *Plot*, *Future*, *AV Proyectos*, *The New City Reader*, *Le Journal Speciale Z* and it has exhibited in different international venues such as the la Biennale di Venezia, the Buenos Aires Biennial, The Shenzhen-Hong Kong Biennial, the 0047 Gallery in Oslo and the Architectural League of New York, Storefront for Art and Architecture etc.

Keith Krumwiede is Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Architecture Programs at the College of Architecture and Design at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He received his B.A. from the University of California at Berkeley and his M.Arch. from the Southern California Institute of Architecture. Current projects include *Gross Domestic Product*, a book about the recent history of the ultimate American consumer product, the single-family house, and *Freedomland: An Architectural Fiction and Its Histories*, a satirical settlement scheme that examines the competing goals and desires that define contemporary American culture. *Freedomland* has been exhibited at the Woodbury University Hollywood Gallery in Los Angeles and Pinkcomma Gallery in Boston. Recent essays include "The Bauhaus Tweets" in *Log 22: The Absurd* and "(A)Typical Plan(s)" in *Perspecta 43: Taboo*. Prior to teaching at NJIT, he was Assistant Dean at Yale University School of Architecture, where he was awarded the King-Lui Wu Award for Distinguished Teaching.

Jimenez Lai is the Leader of Bureau Spectacular and an Assistant Professor at University of Illinois at Chicago. Previously, Lai lived and worked in a desert shelter at Taliesin and resided in a shipping container at Atelier Van Lieshout on the piers of Rotterdam. Lai's work has been widely exhibited, including the White Elephant, which has been collected by the Museum of Modern Art. His first manifesto, *Citizens of No Place*, was published by Princeton Architectural Press with a grant from the Graham Foundation. In 2012, Lai is an award-winning architect, including the Architectural League Prize for Young Architects (2012) and the inaugural Debut Award at the Lisbon Triennale (2013). Lai will be representing Taiwan to build the National Pavilion at the 14th Venice Architectural Biennale in 2014.

## REINHOLD MARTIN

### MOS

Keith Mitnick works with Mireille Roddier. Favorite projects from their design practice include: a pavilion that joins split views of opposite directions in Tulsa; a garden that reflects itself to infinity in Chaumont-sur-Loire; and most recently- an empty space in Ohio that cast shadows in three directions. Mitnick's first book, *Artificial Light*, was published by Princeton Architectural Press in 2008, and he is currently finishing his second book, *Rainy Sea*, from which the article in this issue has been adapted. He teaches at the University of Michigan.

Katie Shima (MArch Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation) is an artist and designer based in New York City. Katie has had exhibitions, installations, and performances at Bridge Gallery, Mighty Tanaka Gallery, Charles Bank Gallery, and others in New York City as well as D.A.K. in Denmark. Katie is a founding member of the electronic noise art group Loud Objects and currently works as an architectural designer at Situ Studio.

Carlos Teixeira graduated in architecture and has a Masters Degree at the Architectural Association. He founded Vazio S/A in 2002 and published the books "Under construction: history of the void in BH" (Cosac Naify, 1999), "O Condomínio Absoluto" (for The ultimate skyscraper, C/Arte, 2009), and *Entre: Architecture from the Performing Arts* (Artifice Books, 2012). His work was already exhibited at the V&A Museum (London), Sao Paulo Architecture Biennial; Pavillion of l'Arsenal (Paris); IX Architecture International Biennial of Venice; the RIBA (London), Sao Paulo International Art Biennial, among other venues.

studioAPT (Architecture Project Theory): In the pursuit of "aptitude", studioAPT schemes at a variety of scales, combining the expeditious and the unexpected into efforts including architectural design, graphics, residential plans, and a variety of researches, diatribes and instruction sets. Julia McMorrough is Associate Professor of Practice at Taubman College at the University of Michigan, and has worked professionally since 1992 in architecture firms in Kansas City, New York, Boston, and Columbus, Ohio, frequently as lead designer on projects throughout the country. She is a co-founder of the research and design collaborative studio-APT, and is the author of *Materials, Structures, and Standards: All the Details Architects Need to Know But Can Never Find*, for which a second edition is forthcoming. John McMorrough is a cofounder of the design/research practice studio-APT and Chair of the Architecture Program at the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. As an architect John has worked for design offices in Kansas City, New York, Boston and Rotterdam, and has taught theory and design at the Yale School of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Ohio State University, and the Institute of Architecture at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria. His current writings on contemporary design include treatments of supergraphics, pedestrian malls, and the apocalypse.

Robert Sumrell

Kazys Varnelis



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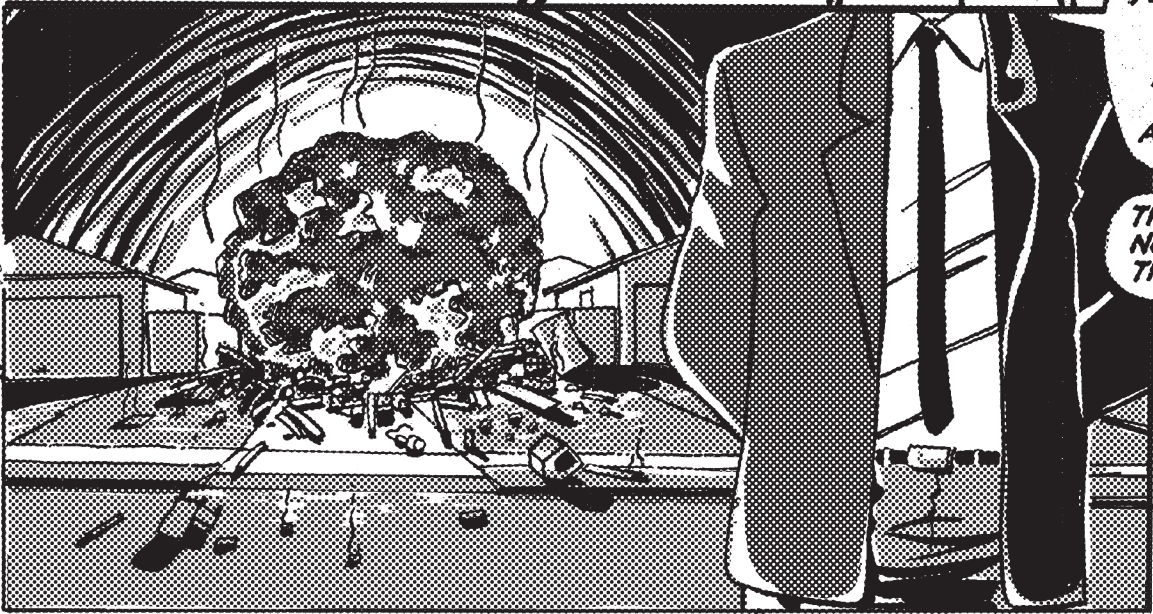




REMEMBER  
THE  
**NELSONS?**

\* AS (LAST) SEEN IN

**ANY** magazine!



YES, THE NELSONS HARBORED  
A LITTLE SECRET. WHAT  
COULD IT HAVE BEEN?  
APPARENTLY IT WAS RIGHT  
BEFORE US ALL THIS TIME,  
AND YET NOW IT LOOKS LIKE  
WE MAY NEVER KNOW.

THEN AGAIN, MAYBE IT WAS  
NOTHING. MAYBE THAT WAS  
THE SECRET.  
YOU DECIDE.

BY WES JONES



ED: FOR THIRTEEN YEARS WE HAVE BEEN HAUNTED BY THIS QUESTION...WHAT WAS THEIR SECRET?

AND THAT METEOR---WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT...?  
WE ARE STILL WAITING FOR ANSWERS. . .

THE STORY  
RESUMES. . .

I DON'T KNOW. I GOT NOTHING.  
DRAWING A BLANK  
NADA, ZILCH

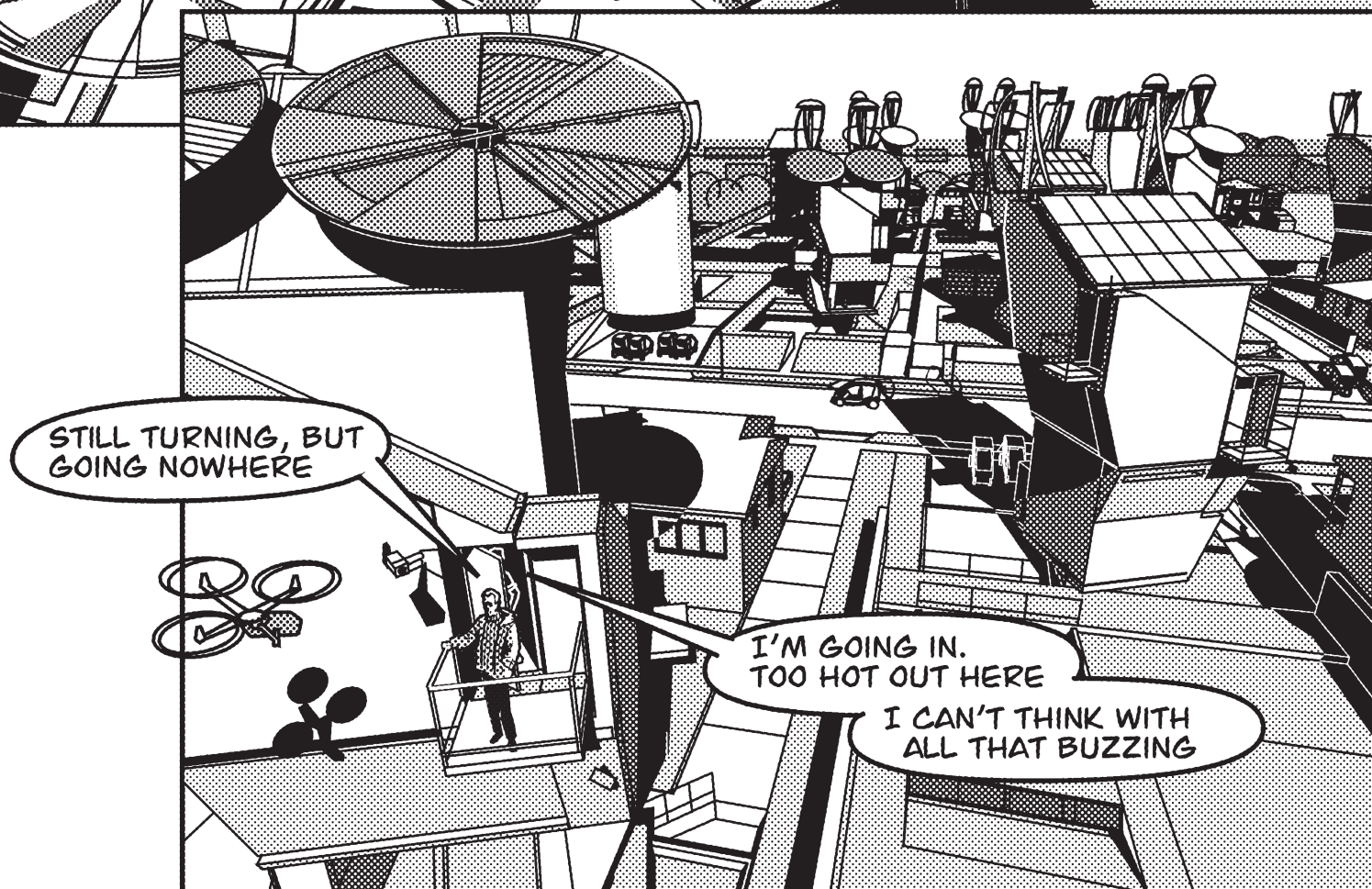
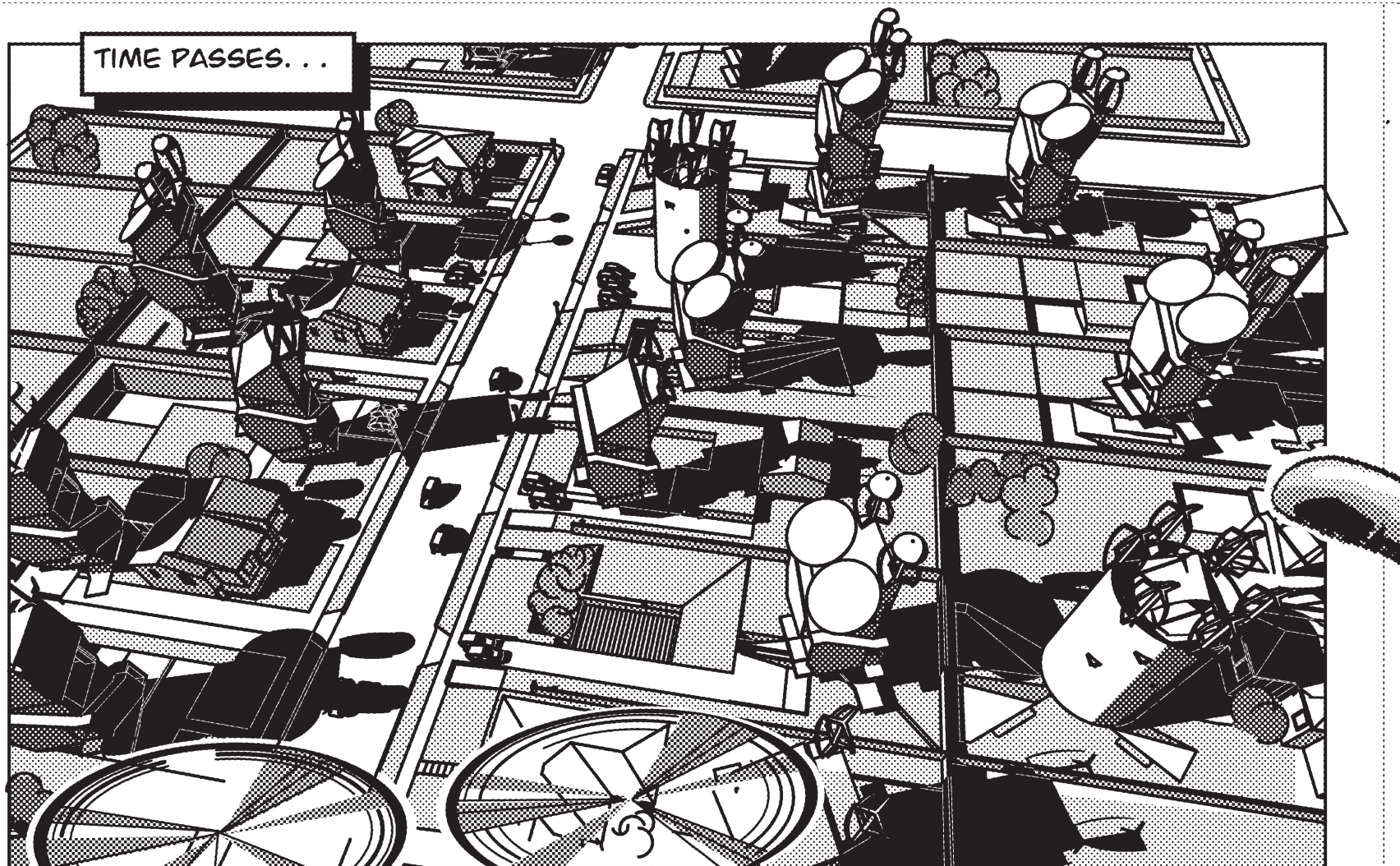
C'MON,  
THINK

THINKING, THINKING.  
WHAT ABOUT YOU?

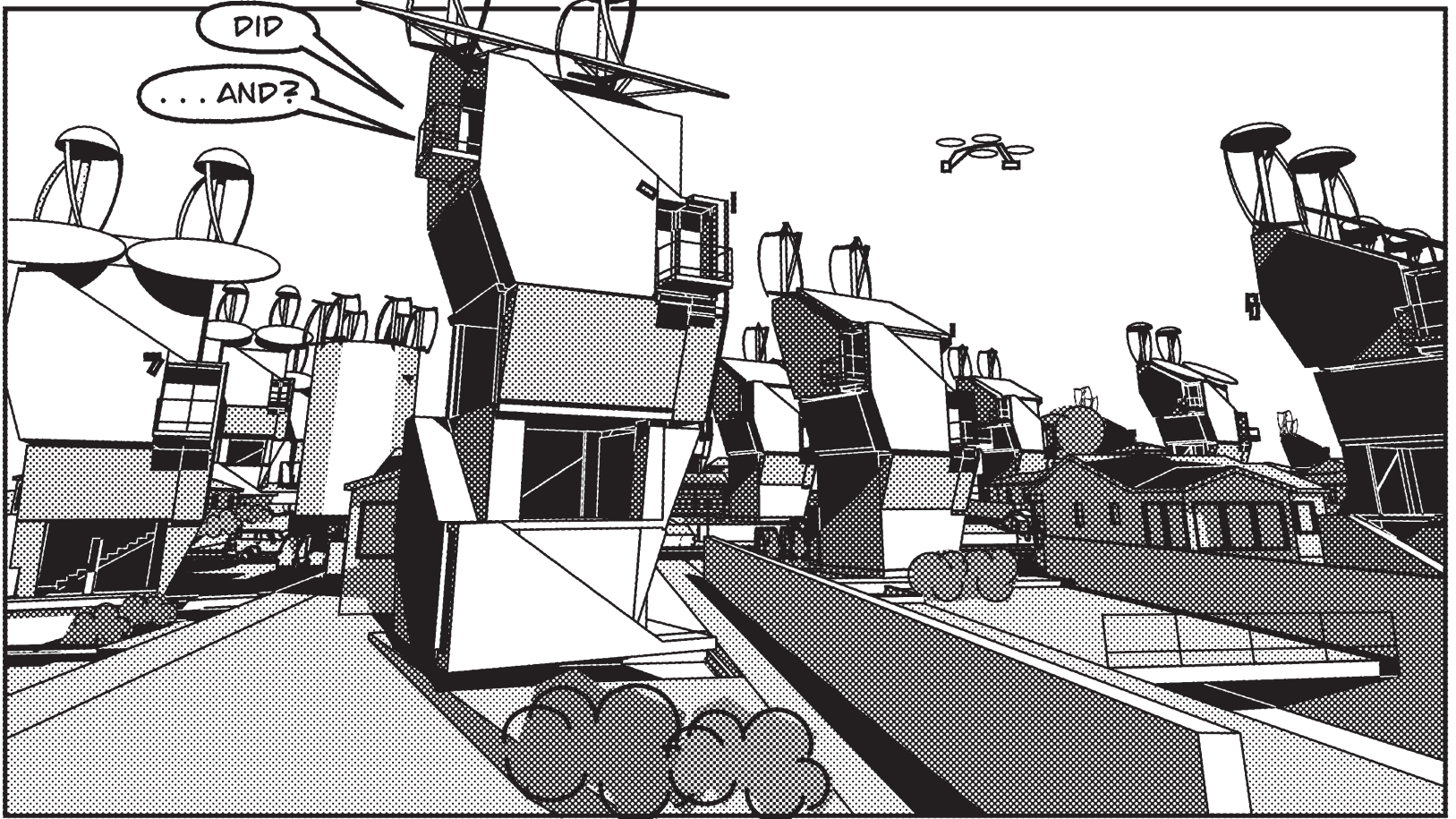




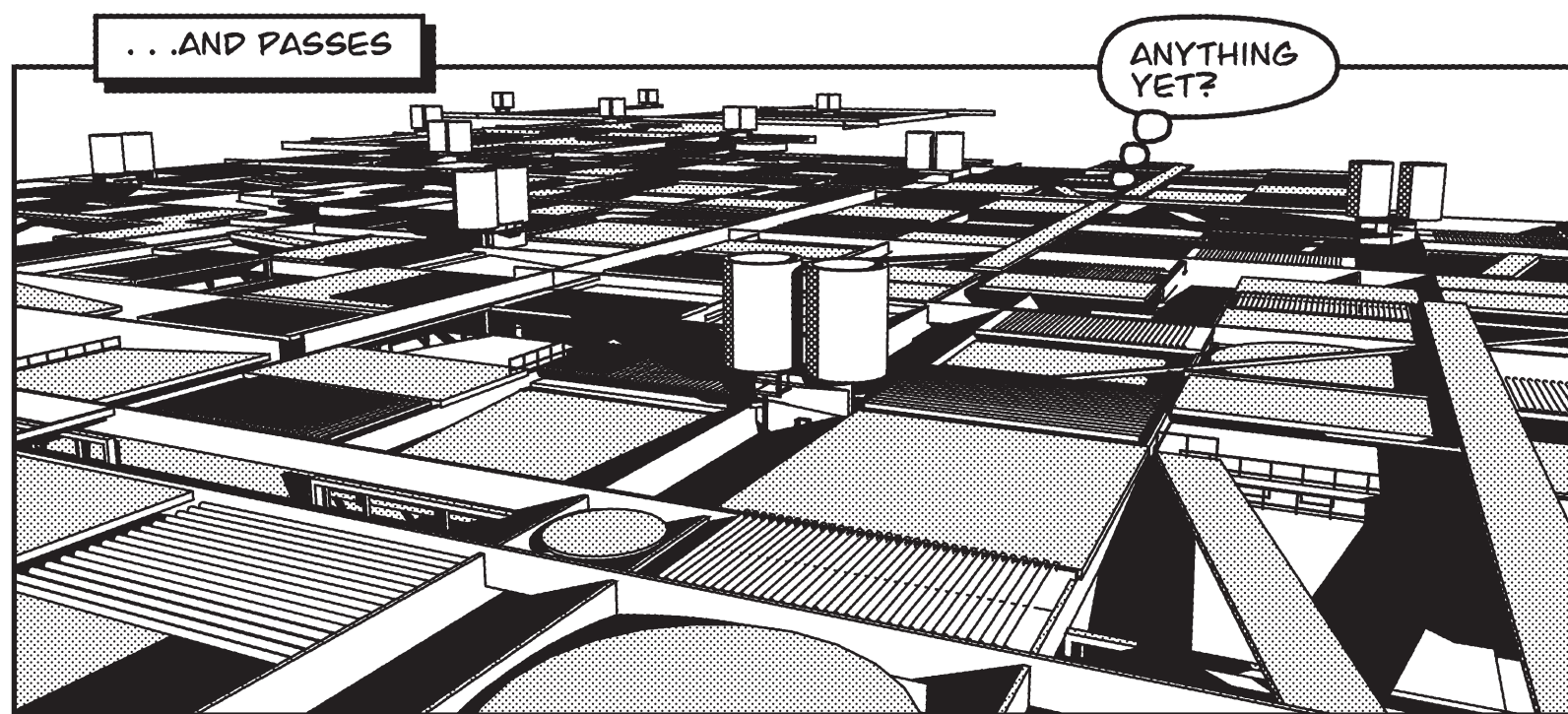
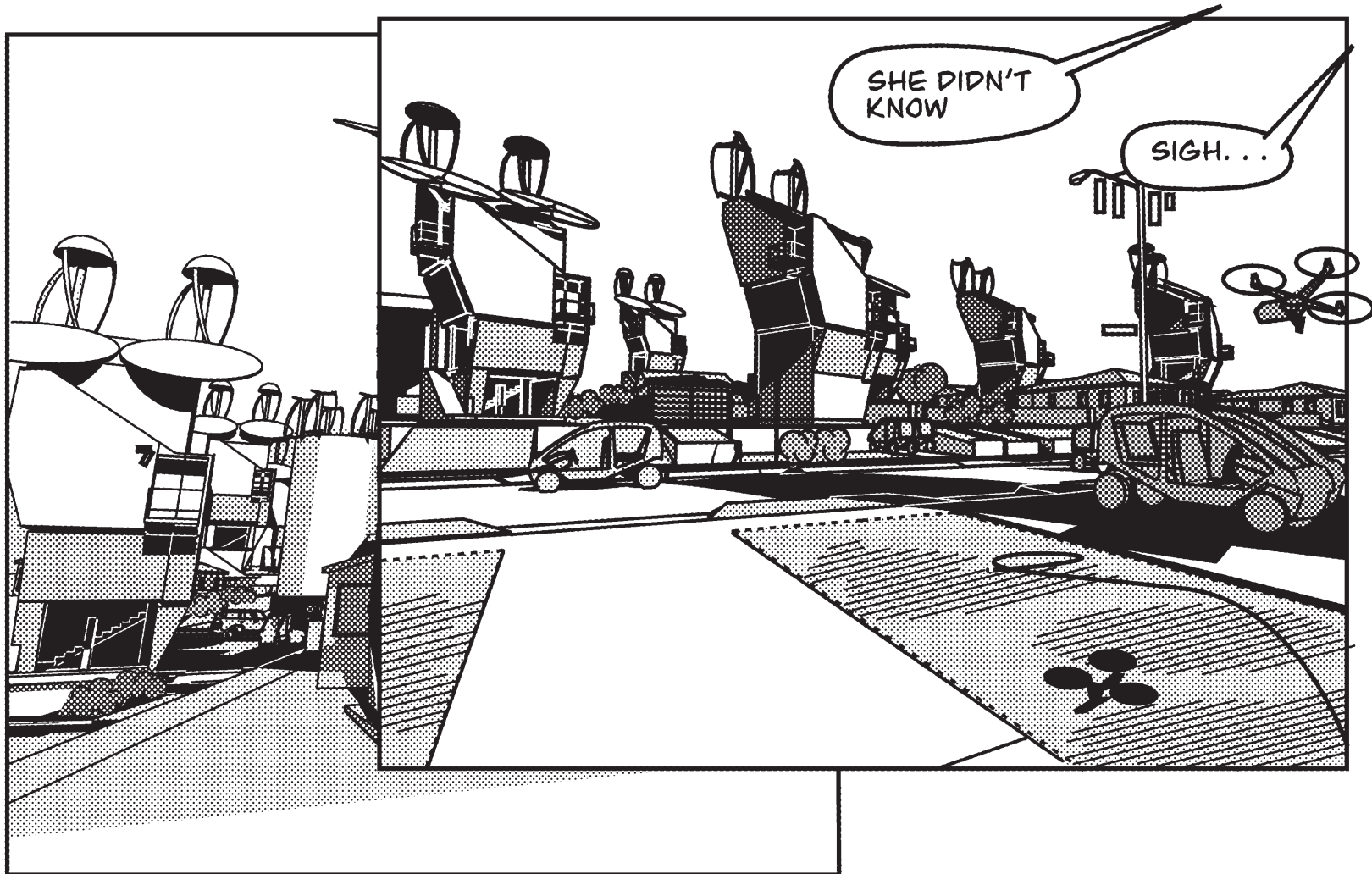


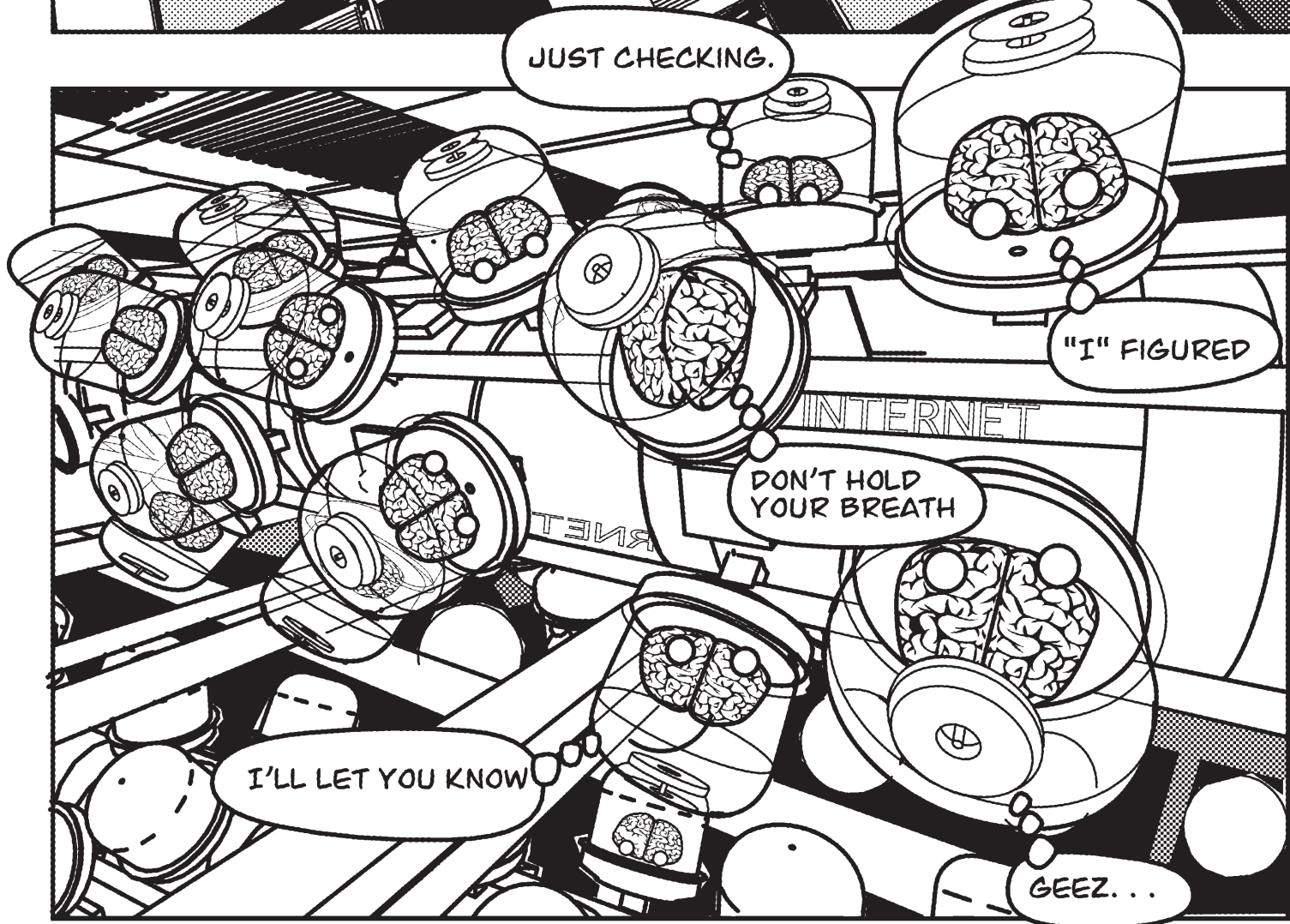
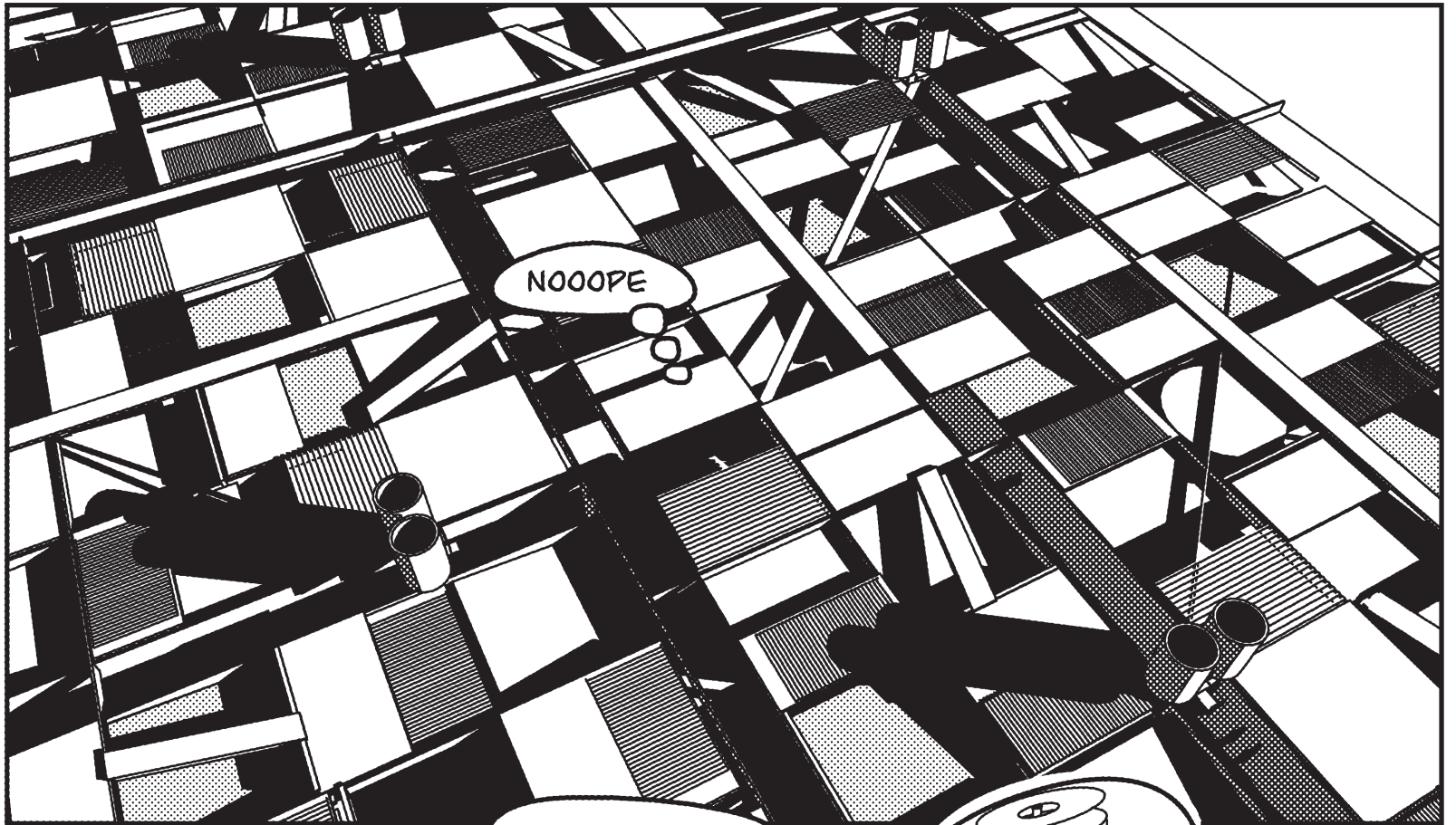




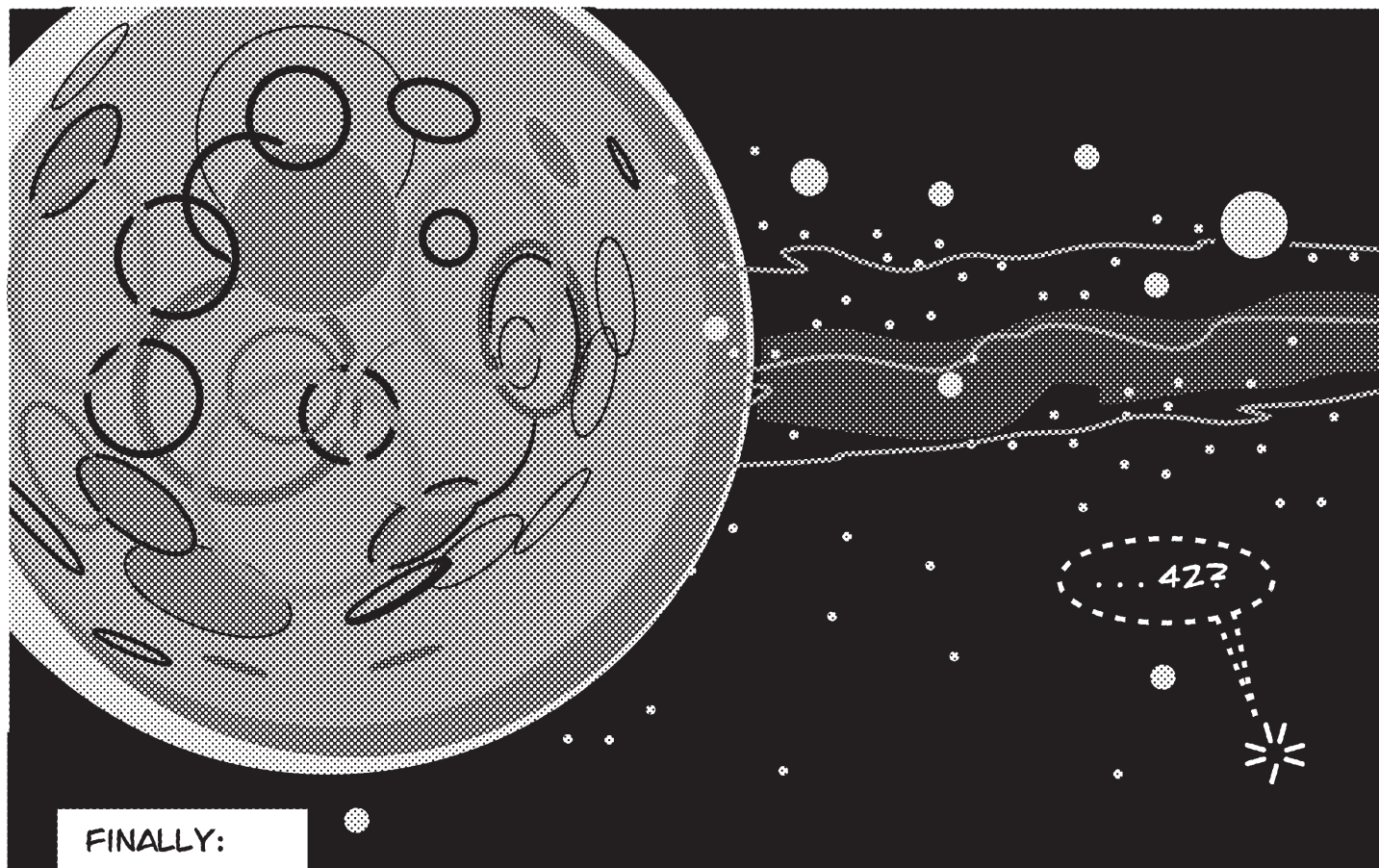












FINALLY:

IN UNWORTHY HOMAGE TO ASIMOV AND HIS "LAST QUESTION"



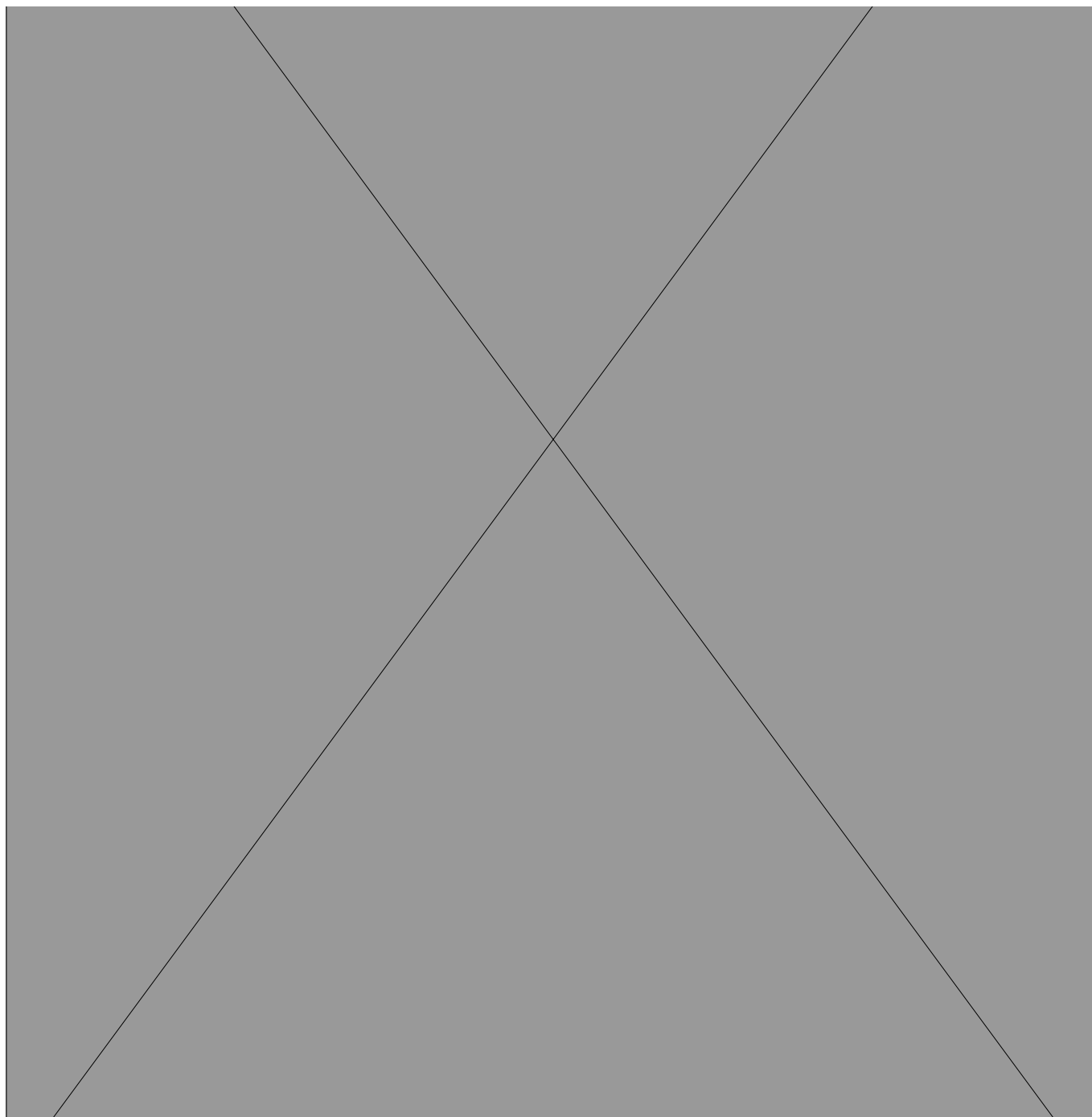
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# *The Absolute Skyscraper*

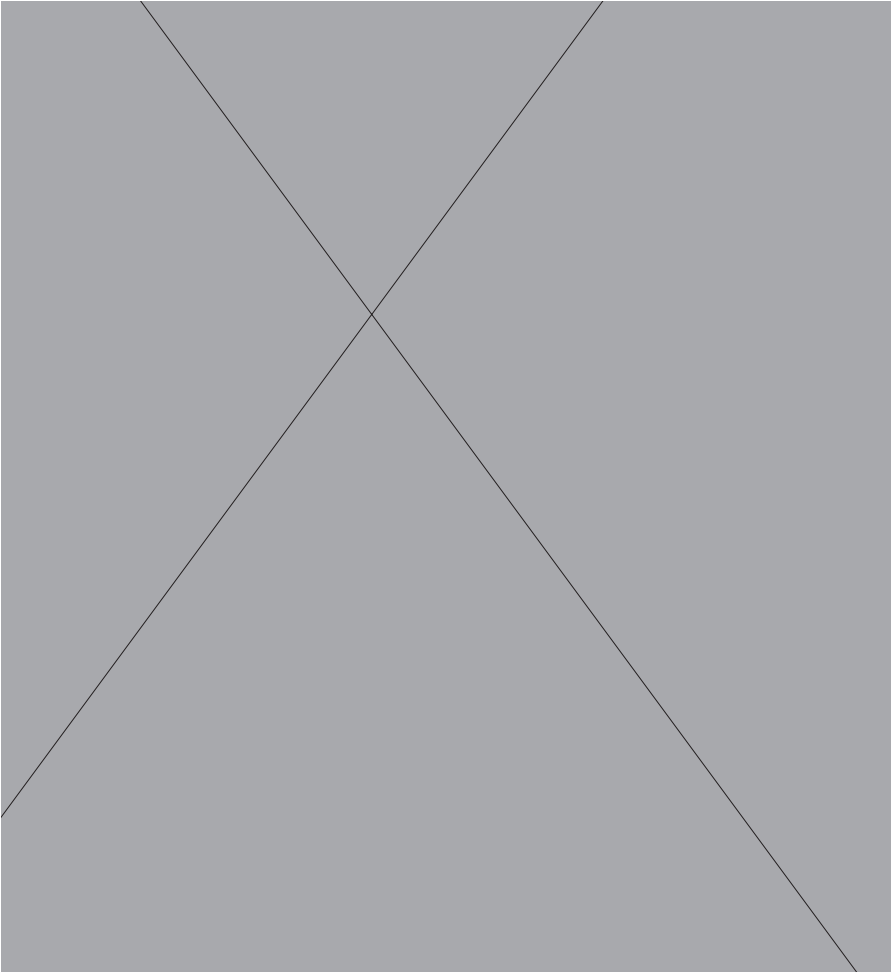
a magical-realist epic

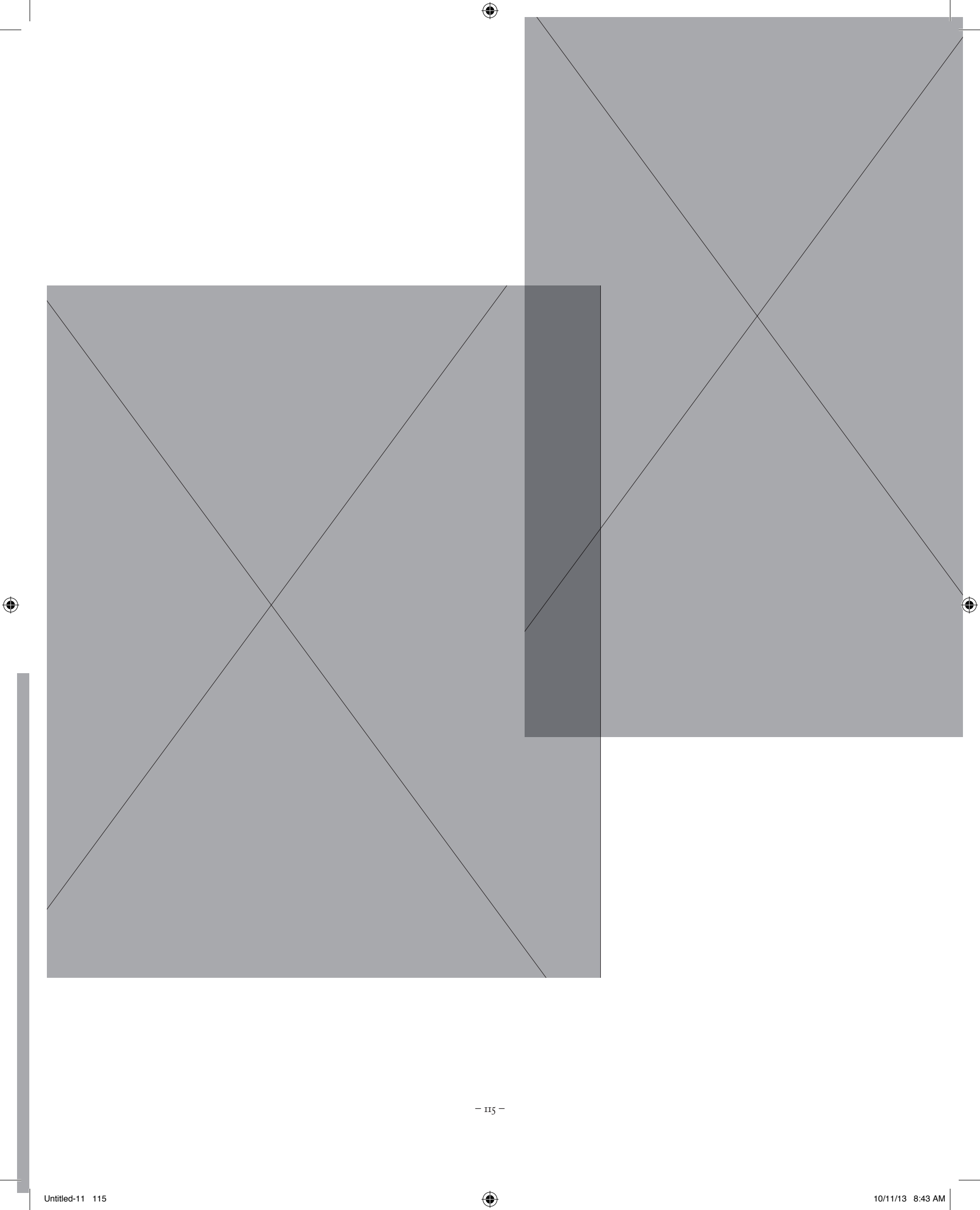
CARLOS TEIXEIRA



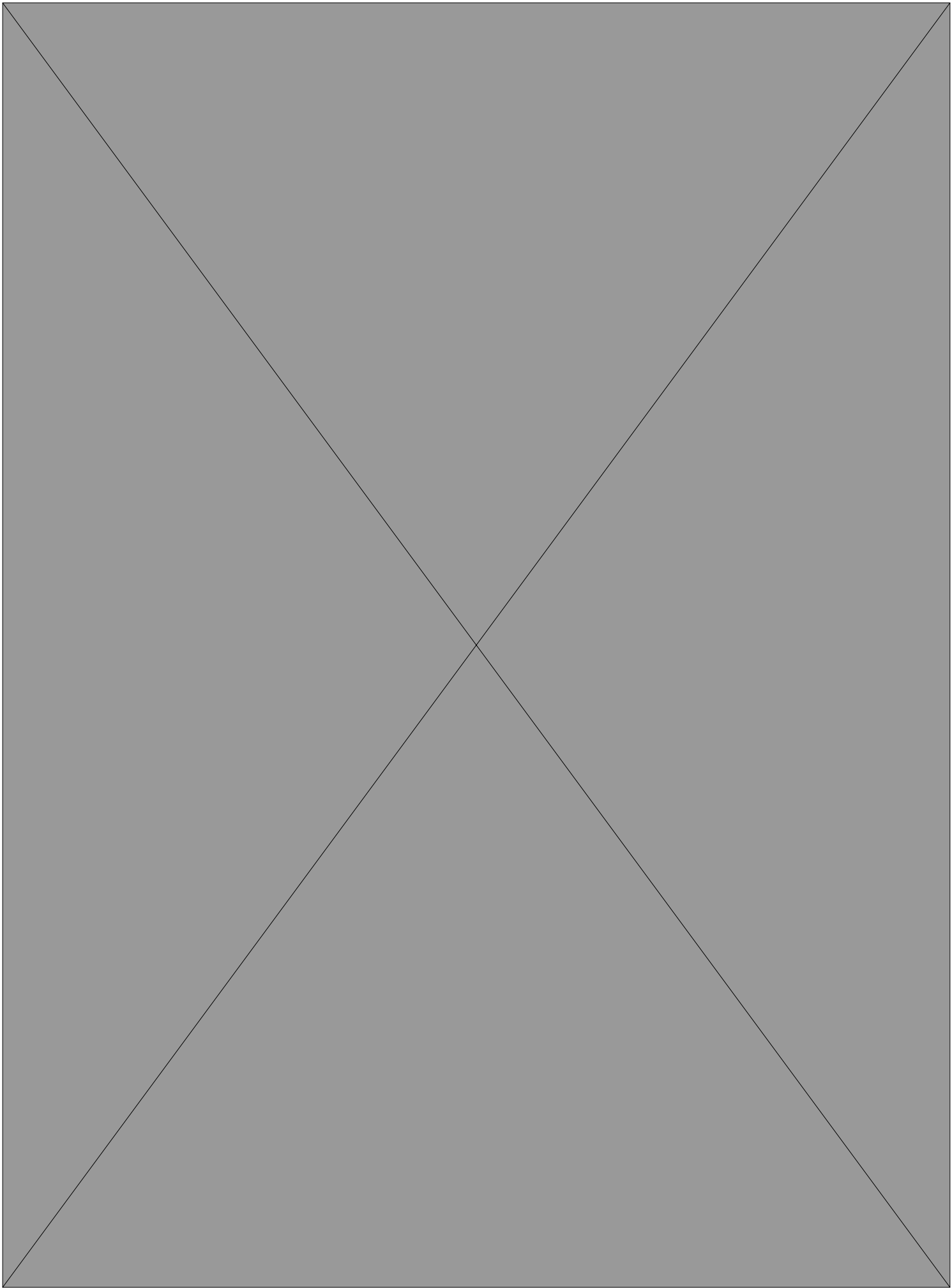


IN 2000, THE SÃO PAULO TOWER PROJECT, WHICH WOULD HAVE become the largest building in the world, was put forward by the onetime Beatles guru Yogi Maharishi, in partnership with Mário Garnero, the Brazilian businessman and developer. Amid protests from journalists, urban planners, and architects against the building, the Municipality of São Paulo did everything so that the colossus could be built—it welcomed the guru with open arms, rewrote laws, and ignored critics. However, due to a lack of funding, the project did not go forward. The “Ultimate Skyscraper,” or “Condomínio Absoluto,” is a magical realist epic that narrates the unfolding of the construction.





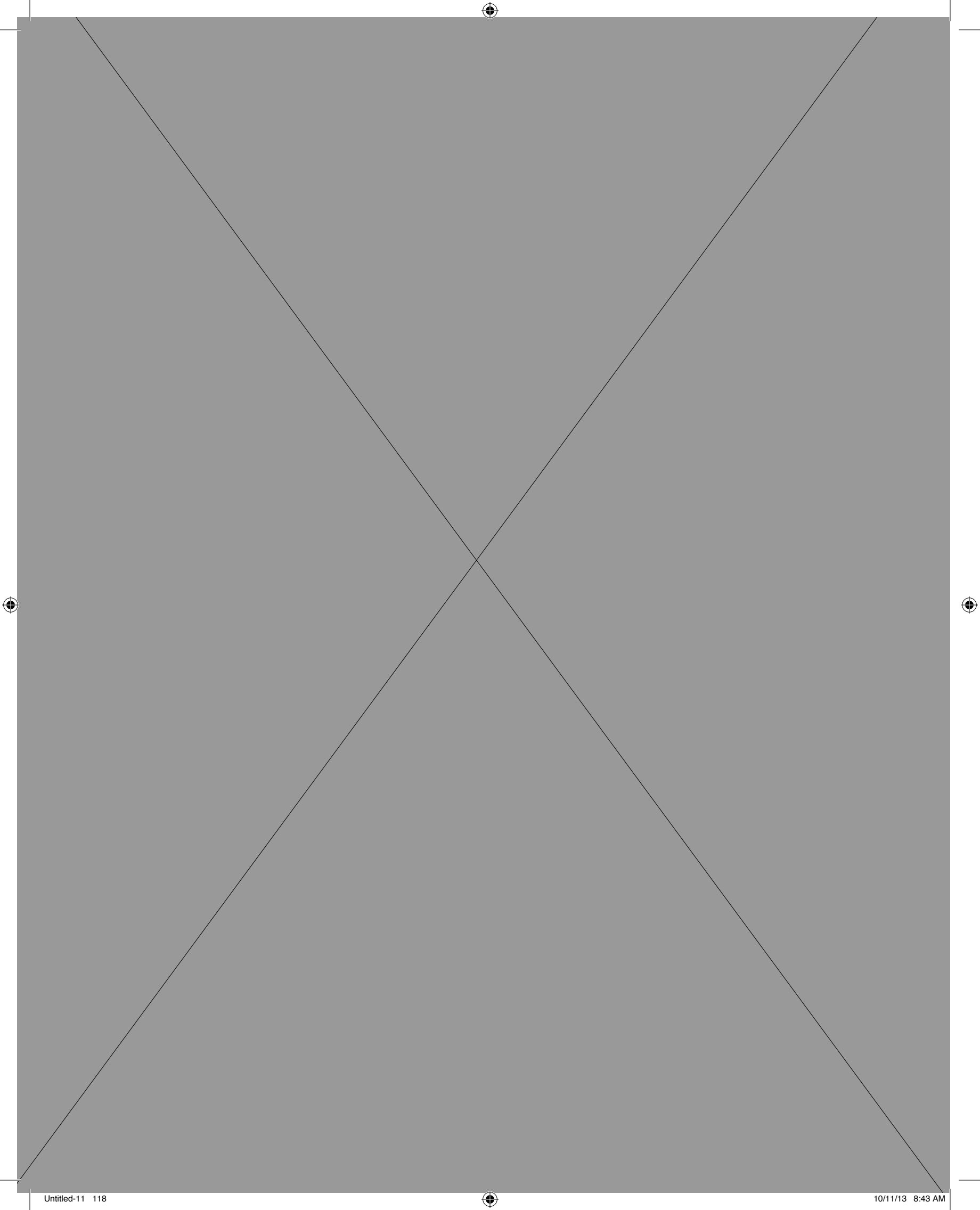




i. The guru Yogi Maharishi, known as “the great wise man and scientist of the conscience,” had the idea for the largest building in the world, the Maharishi São Paulo Tower. The building was intended to be an elegy to Vedic science and Hindu teachings; it was meant to incorporate elements of Vedic architecture and have a total constructed area **85 TIMES LARGER** than the then-largest building in the world.

ii. Of all of the construction phases, the longest involved laying the foundations: it lasted **5 YEARS!** The foundations reached a depth of **80 METERS BELOW** the level of 300 meters, the average level of the area along the shore of the Tamanduateí River. Built in a **60-CITY-BLOCK AREA** over roughly **750,000 SQUARE METERS (8,073,000 SQUARE FEET)**, the pilings required the removal of mountains and mountains of earth that were taken to a huge landfill over a park that was supposed to be a part of the development. Beyond the **50-HECTARE PARK**, other advertised amenities included **TWO MUSEUMS, SIXTEEN SHOPPING MALLS, FOUR CONVENTION CENTERS, FIVE HOTELS, SEVEN SPAS, and 10 MILLION SQUARE FEET OF CONSTRUCTED AREA** distributed among **22,230 OFFICES, 3,400 SHOPS, 65,500 APARTMENTS**, and everything else that a city contains.





III. The Tower would in fact be **FOUR TOWERS**: one at each corner of a square. The space in between would be reserved for public spaces between each of **108 FLOORS**. This pyramid trunk shape, typical of Hindu architecture, would bring to São Paulo the power inherent to the divine forces capable of putting an end to human afflictions such as fighting, avarice, envy, and greed.

IV. So, with the foundation completed, the time came for the superstructure, which was inspired by Chicago's John Hancock Center, built in 1969. Inserted in the building's perimeter, a tubular matrix would absorb all the forces of the fantastic, structure, eliminating the need for internal columns. All the forces pulling, pushing, and bearing down on the building would be borne by its outer skin. The architect chosen to develop the project was the Japanese American Minoru Yamasaki. The reaction from the city against the monstrosity was quick: local architects, intellectuals, and artists strongly opposed the project and incited all the newspapers and television networks against it, but as the polemic dragged on, on the horizon appeared the first signs of the pyramid rising...

V. The construction work proceeded at a thundering pace: in a year and a half they had reached the 80th floor. This is when the first disagreements arose among the developers, the Maharishi Global Development Fund (or "the endless world treasure for peace and happiness on Earth") and Mário Garnero's Brasilinvest. The latter showed that the foundations were overbuilt and could support a load three times greater than originally projected, which allowed the **NUMBER OF FLOORS TO INCREASE TO 324**. The controversy continued throughout the project, up until the last floor of the pyramid was built.



vi. During conversations at the work's inauguration party, it was decided that the Brasilinvest group would be responsible for the construction of **216 NEW FLOORS**. The liability would be solely taken by Brasilinvest, which would be also responsible for the rest of the construction, including the insurance for the first 108 floors. Yamasaki was consulted to continue the planned extension, but aware of the frightening destiny of two of his better-known buildings—the Pruitt-Igoe residential complex—which when demolished marked the end of modern architecture—and the World Trade Center in New York—his office declined.

vii. The new structure could not be just an extension of the original structure: it would have to be adjusted in its perimeter so that the new loads would not damage the structure already erected which was built only to support **108 FLOORS**. Specialists were consulted, and the conclusion was reached that the best solution was to adopt another type of structure, which would alter the original structure of the building.

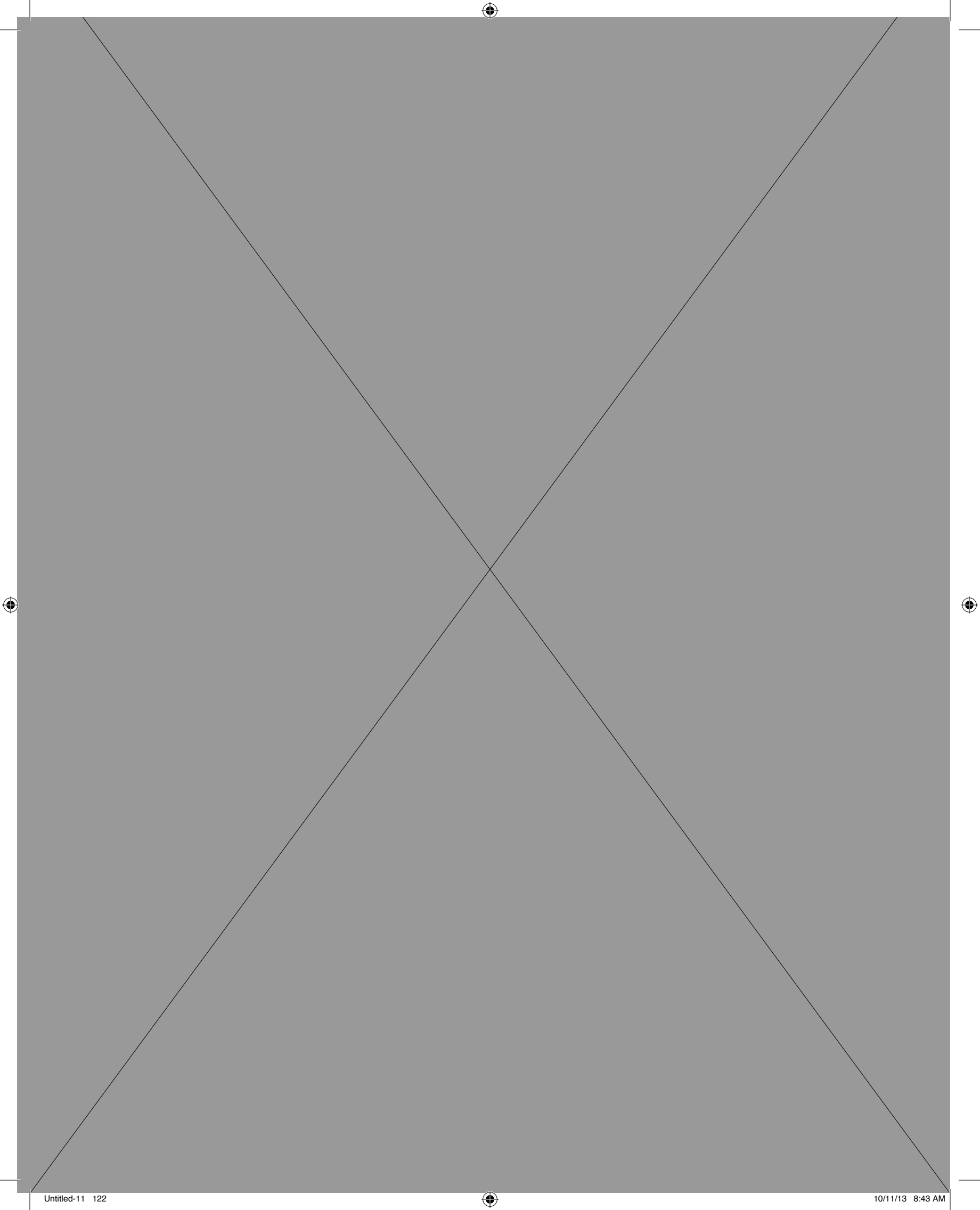
viii. The guru's protests did not prevent the perversion of the original conception of the pyramid. An engineer specializing in reinforced concrete—the mainstay of Brazilian architecture—decided to insert a traditional mesh—with traditional columns and orthogonal supports to reinforce the structure, in keeping with practices prevailing in the country. Huge beams would support a mesh of **124 PILLARS**, now located at the core of the building and no longer on the facade.

ix. Once the construction had reached the 147TH FLOOR, the developers themselves started to fear the height of the building. Swaying of more than three meters from side to side on the top floors made workers descend desperately to levels less vulnerable to the winds. Frightened, the developers consulted architects and engineers of famous skyscrapers and came up with the idea to revert to a metallic structure through the insertion of huge cylindrical pillars in the middle of the building, which would reinforce the structure of the skyscraper and maximize the use of its foundation.

x. That was how the construction proceeded up to the 184TH FLOOR.

xi. Suddenly, the developers ran out of funds. Swings in the Brazilian economy, rumors about the building's uncertain destiny, and the reluctance by the Mayor of São Paulo to bail out the project with government funds—all of these factors led to the announcement that construction would cease, at least temporarily. Everything was halted for over three months.





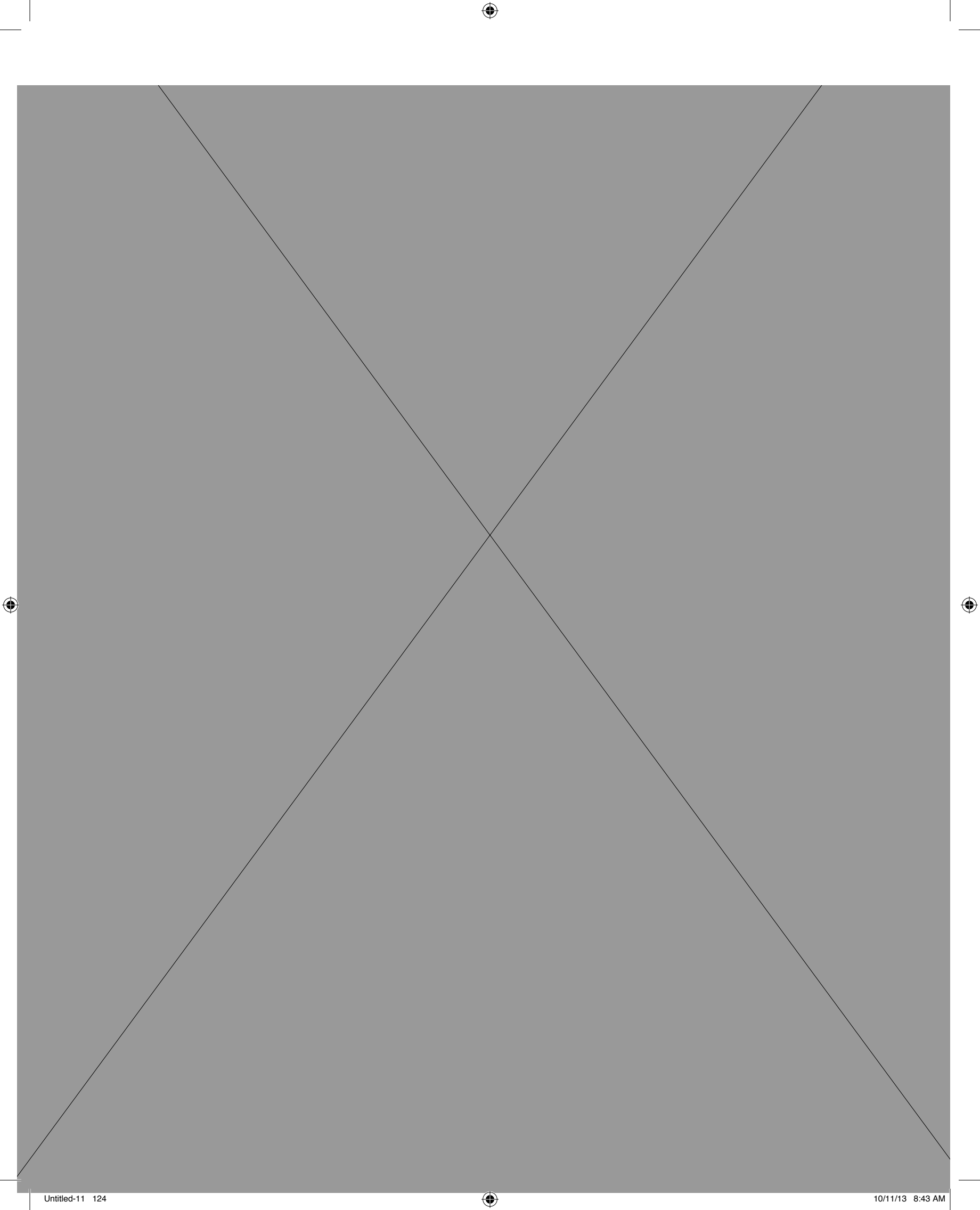
xii. Yet the workers found the sight of the incomplete colossus unbearable; they decided to continue the work on their own. They simply said: “We want to continue the work ourselves.” With no experience and no salaries, foremen and workers substituted metal trusses with wooden overlays and created their own concrete masterpieces—bridges and overpasses linking the four buildings together. The engineers, once subordinate to others, now had the chance to put their ideas into practice.

xiii. While engineers and interns forged on with energy and self-confidence in the herculean project, the tireless developer Mário Garnero secured new loans through connections at state-owned banks. Back salaries were finally paid. The precarious and improvised last floors got metal pillars, following the initial structural design of the facade. And so, another 143 FLOORS—now following the John Hancock Center’s construction system—were erected without any mishaps.

xiv. Over 40 FLOORS were built with only a single work-related accident, a fatal fall (from the 217TH FLOOR). The workers charged on, building at a crazy rate, during holidays, during the week, over the weekends, day and night, endlessly.

xv. The venture’s cash flow no longer seemed to show strain: the demand for apartments and offices became greater than the availability. This drove up prices per square foot, resale spreads, and anxiety over the building’s completion.





xvi. 33 MORE FLOORS.

xvii. 12 MORE FLOORS.

xviii. 81 MORE FLOORS. No accidents, no disagreements, no problems.

xix. 23 MORE FLOORS. Everything was proceeding normally. Now, not only the workers, but also the engineers, architects, and brokers, swelling with pride for the monument under their feet, decided to work on Saturdays and Sundays as well, even if their employers did not pay the overtime. The first 100 FLOORS were about to be completed, and soon to be occupied by the first tenants. At the innauguration ceremony, an unexpected reaction: the complete support of the population, flattery from the media, and newspaper articles that praised the mixture of programs and shapes of the building, which were following the blueprint (though only up to the 108TH FLOOR) of the original project laid out by Maharishi.

xx. 78 MORE FLOORS. Present day. The building keeps growing steeply, at a rate of 20 FLOORS A MONTH. The image of the building, previously criticized by Brazilian architects ("that displaced architecture that does not add much to our solid, modernist traditions"), has become a daring national symbol. Floors from 1 to 209 are already occupied and there is a long wait list of buyers for the space that will be available through the next 100 FLOORS—all of them sold long ago and resold at a premium several times over, with almost the same liquidity as cash.



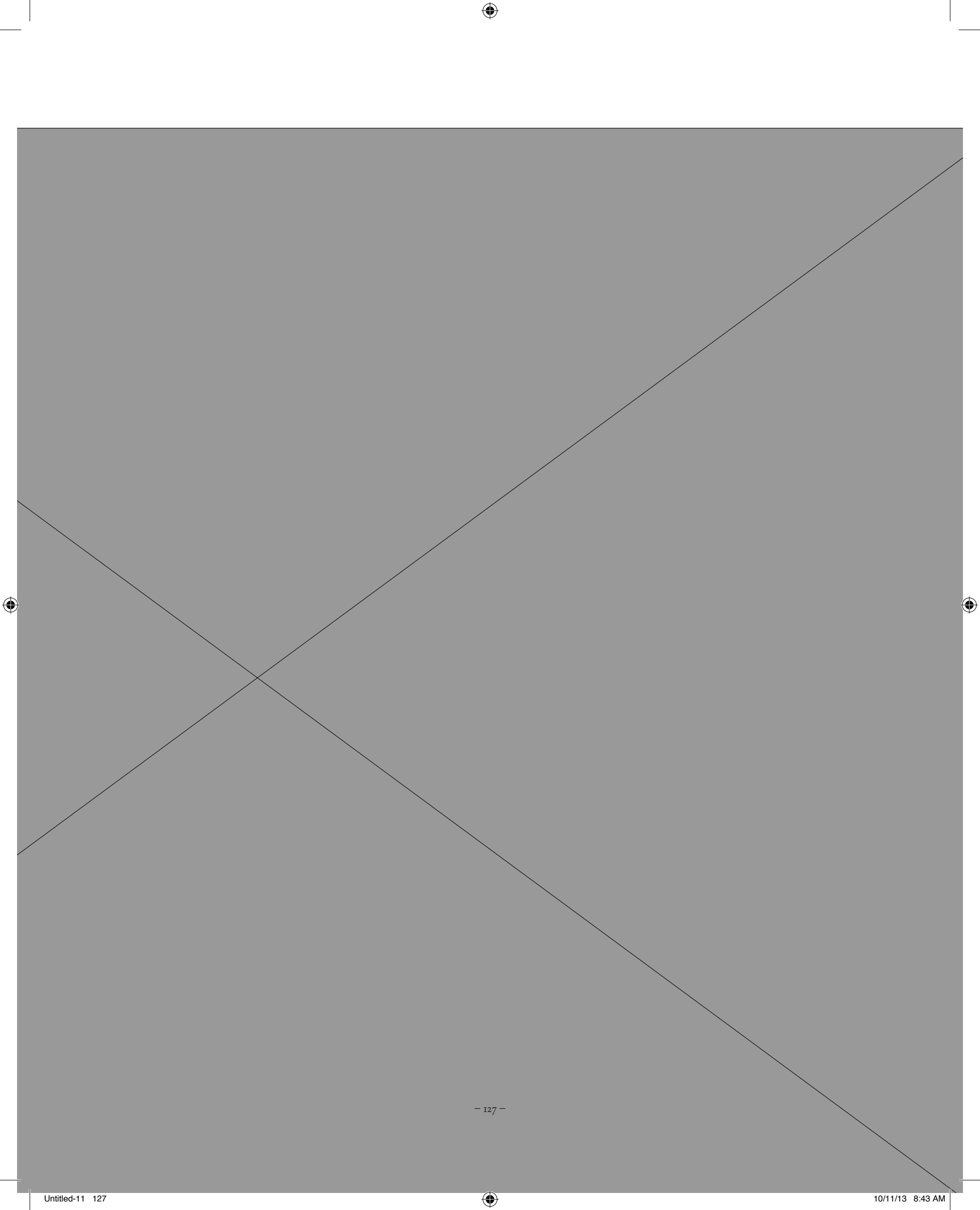
xxi. By means of an open-ended real estate fund, Maharishi Tower's square footage is now traded on the São Paulo Stock Exchange (BOVESPA), a first for the Brazilian real estate market. Rumors that the Tower is approaching its maximum height drive up the share price; whispers that the building has serious structural flaws send the share price crashing down; a rise in robberies, murders, and kidnapping sends the shares back up, and the sharp swings continue.

xxii. Initially a cacophony of buildings on top of buildings, now the internal space between the towers has become complex and surprising: improvised shacks line up against modernist fantasies, radical formalisms aggressively break into the x-shaped façade, and structural fantasies (metal and reinforced concrete) allow for the unexpected use of space between the four towers of the Tower. Rooftops become terraces that become bridges that are taken over by houses that become buildings built upon works of art, and so the building evolves.

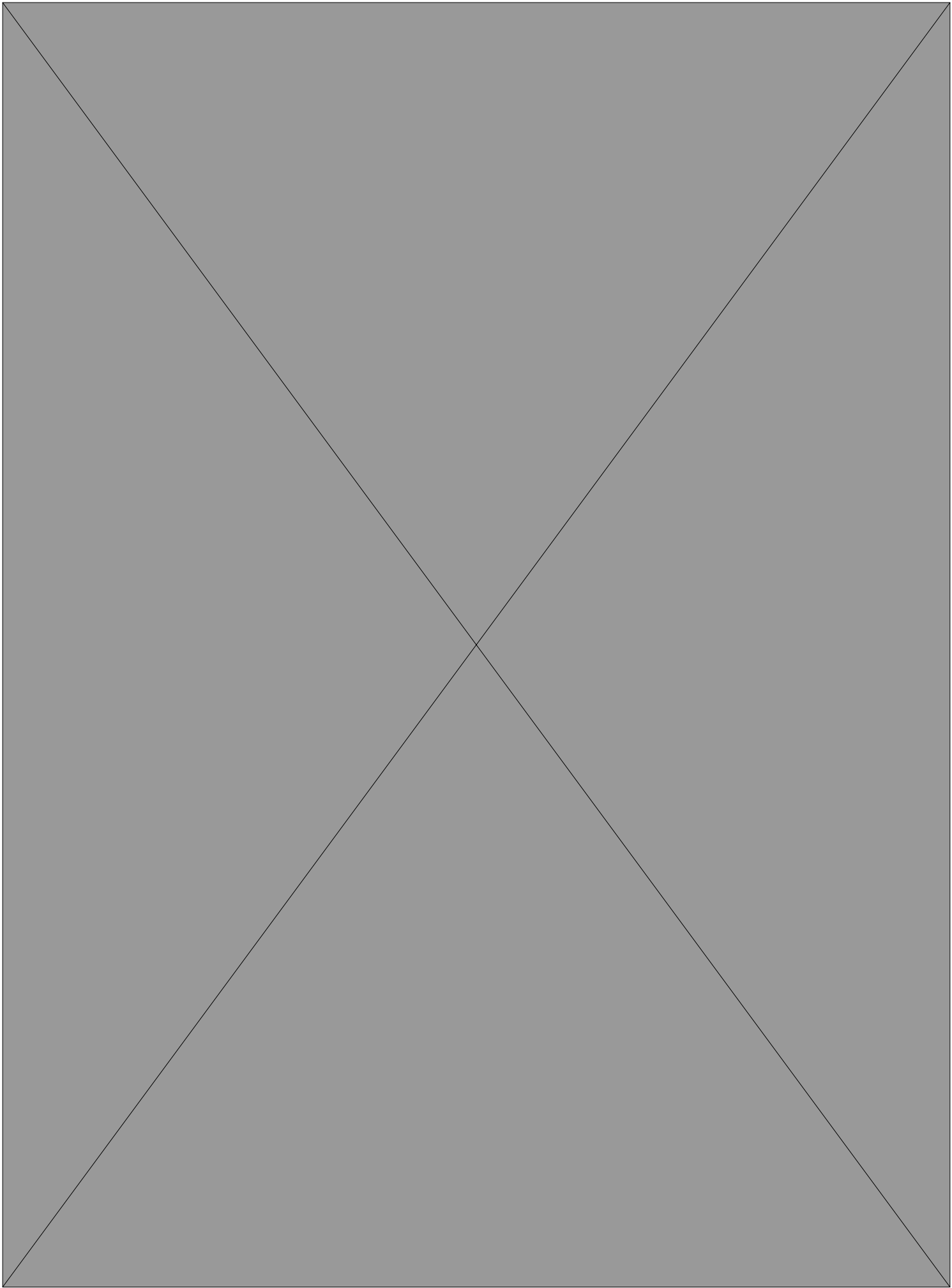
xxiii. **55 MORE FLOORS.** Now everyone fights for a spot in the Tower, and the city of São Paulo starts to empty. In the center of the city and on the outskirts, houses, schools, office buildings, hospitals, malls—virtually, every building in every neighborhood of greater São Paulo is abandoned.

xxiv. The Tower—in an amazing horizontal growth at the base of the colossus—starts to embrace the main buildings of the city: the São Bento Monastery, the Oca, the MASP museum, the Copan Building, the Unique Hotel, and the BANESPA Building—hardly a symbol of the city is spared from the growing amalgamation of the building, leaving the city with little in the way of architectural memory.

xxv. Someone realizes that the total number of floors (how many are there now?) vastly exceeds the number allowed by the foundations. Nobody cares, and they keep building, buying, speculating, and moving to the Tower.







# PLATFORM FOR ARCHI- TECTURE:

MAKIN' IT...

A SITUATION COMEDY

BY STUDIOAPT-

JULIA & JOHN MCMORROUGH

## OPENING CREDITS

MIXTURE OF SHOTS, SOME OF THE "PLATFORM" (FOR ARCHITECTURE) ITSELF, OTHERS OF THE ACTORS INTERACTING IN A VARIETY OF DOMESTIC AND PROFESSIONAL SCENARIOS (EATING, WORKING, RELAXING, ETC.) MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT IS "MAKIN' IT." MUSIC AND LYRICS BY FREDDIE PERREN AND DINO FEKARIS.

## ACT ONE (KITCHEN)

FADE IN:

INT. "COUNTER" - MORNING

"Makin' It" theme song fades out as HUGH stands at the counter preparing breakfast while RUTH sits on nearby step examining her phone and drinking coffee. The unexpected sound of a loud timpani startles HUGH.

HUGH looks skeptical.

HUGH

It sounded like a phone ringing.

RUTH looks at phone and sees that there is a message.

RUTH

Oh, you're right! I always forget that this is a phone!

HUGH rolls his eyes and returns to kitchen work. RUTH holds phone to ear to listen to message and makes a variety of faces while listening. HUGH looks at RUTH for feedback, but gets no indication of who has called, so he goes back to making breakfast. RUTH continues to listen and eventually hangs up the phone, but does not speak.

HUGH

Well?

RUTH

Hmm? Can I ask you a hypothetical question?

HUGH

No! The answer will be no.

RUTH

I didn't ask yet.

HUGH

You don't need to, I can already tell.

RUTH

No...it's not what you think!

HUGH

Let me guess -

A ray-gun sounding alarm goes off. HUGH sighs loudly and continues to work in the kitchen. RUTH looks timidly at the phone, then avoids HUGH's gaze.

HUGH

So, what is this hypothetical question, anyway?

RUTH

You tell me, you seem to know so much.

HUGH

Ok, let me think...someone wants us to design a whole project, in advance of getting the commission. And, if we do a good job and they like the design, they may consider hiring us, but in the meantime, they can only pay us in coupons.

RUTH

BUZZZ! Wrong!

HUGH

Really?

RUTH

There was no mention of coupons.

HUGH

(looks up) What was that?

RUTH

I got some new ringtones!

HUGH

It sounds awful!

RUTH

Well, I'm working on arranging my day by sounds.

Brings phone to show to HUGH.

RUTH

For each thing I need to do, I have a different sound - so I know immediately what it is! I'm working on a streamlined live/work balance - you know, 'meet with client,' 'drawing set due,' 'take out the trash,' and so on.

HUGH examines the phone screen.

HUGH

You have 48 alarms set for today?!

RUTH

Yes, today's an easy day. You should see Thursdays!

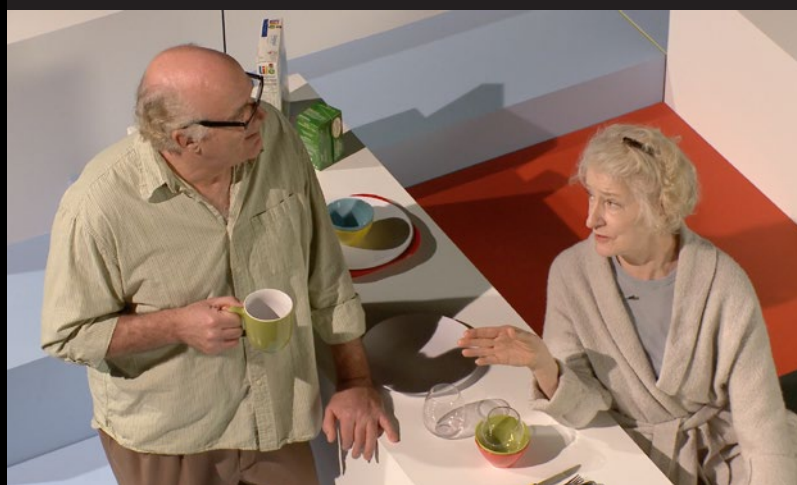
There is the sound of a ringing phone. HUGH looks expectantly at RUTH, who studies her phone quizzically, then goes back to drinking coffee.

HUGH

(curious) What was that one for?

RUTH

Huh? Oh, I'm not sure, I don't recognize that sound.





HUGH  
So why are you happy about that?

RUTH  
Well, I'm not happy about THAT, per se, I just wanted you to know that you were wrong.

HUGH  
Alright, fine. But what do we get out of it? Hypothetically?

RUTH  
Well, hypothetically, it's the same thing we always get - the opportunity to design something.



HUGH  
But, hypothetically speaking, don't you think it would be good to occasionally have the opportunity to pay our bills?

*Sound of a loud drum rim shot.*

HUGH  
What in the world is THAT one?  
  
RUTH looks at phone and turns it off.

RUTH  
It's a reminder.

HUGH  
A reminder to what?

RUTH  
To pay our phone bill.

*A long silence follows. RUTH busies herself with checking e-mails and other things on her phone. HUGH continues to make breakfast.*

HUGH  
Ok, I'll bite. What is so great about this project that you want to do it?

RUTH  
Remember when we did that feasibility study for converting a gas station into a gastro-pub?

HUGH  
Yes, I remember. That was fun.

RUTH  
It was!

HUGH  
They're ready to move forward with the project?

RUTH  
Nooo. No way, much too expensive, as we did such a great job of pointing out in our study. But, they did give our name to another restaurant called "JIB," and they want one of us to come for an interview today.

HUGH  
Well, that doesn't sound so bad, but first let's just find out—  
*Very loud Reveille bugle call is heard.*

HUGH  
(startled) WHAT was that?

RUTH  
Just another reminder.

HUGH  
What now?

RUTH  
That we should have started working hours ago!

HUGH  
Are you sure that wasn't just for you? I mean, I started working half an hour ago. (taps forehead) In my mind.



*Laughter and applause combine with an instrumental version of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal the "kitchen" platform elevation.*

END OF ACT ONE FADE OUT:

COMMERCIAL (VERSABLOCK)-  
[IN THE STYLE OF 1950S TOY ADS LIKE WHAM-O AND HASBRO]  
Kids! Do you ever find yourselves sitting around, overwhelmed by boredom? Staring aimlessly out the window? Well never fear,



What do you say, Billy? Give them a try! VersaBlocks are expertly designed to allow for hundreds, even thousands of possible configurations. Nice job, Billy! Versatile, Colorful, Fun. It's VersaBlock. Buy the starter kit today. Forget the Clock. VersaBlock.





## ACT TWO (OFFICE)

FADE IN:  
INT. "TABLE" - DAY

*HUGH and RUTH are sitting at the table working on laptops across from each other, partner-desk style. Models and drawings are strewn about the table.*

RUTH

What exactly did you say to them?

HUGH

(looks up) Nothing much, just the typical introductory stuff.

RUTH

Like when you explain that low budgets are an opportunity for innovation? What do you call it, an "invitation to innovation"? Or did you use The Three Little Pigs to explain zoning codes?

HUGH

Please, this was a sophisticated presentation. I did not bring up The Three Little Pigs.

RUTH

Then what happened? We just got an e-mail telling us to forget about the project. What did you actually say?

HUGH

(looks mildly confused, then registers recognition) I don't remember exactly, but it's possible that communication broke down at one point.

RUTH

Oh? What did you do?

HUGH

Well, I was trying to let them know that we're interested in traversing the liminal space that seems to separate the architect as self-serving artiste and the client as demanding Philistine.

RUTH

You said those words?!

HUGH

Which ones?

RUTH

"Liminal," "Artiste," "Philistine"?

HUGH

(sheepishly) I may have.

RUTH

You do realize the irony of sounding so pompous while trying to convince someone how down to earth you are? Why didn't you just say that we're interested in common ground?

HUGH

I don't know! I got a little nervous, and the only words that came quickly to mind were either pretentious or profane. I must have panicked - after all, I only had a few minutes to put together a decent proposal.

RUTH

So you made an indecent proposal? Just like the movie!

HUGH

Oh, you know that movie drives me crazy! Especially when Woody Harrelson's architect character sits on his bathroom floor sketching his dream house!

RUTH

Yes, that was pretty bad.

HUGH

Though not as bad as the lecture he gave to students about Louis Kahn.

RUTH

You mean the "what does a brick want" speech?

HUGH

Yes, but I wish they hadn't got it wrong.

RUTH

What's the real quote? Doesn't Kahn say he asked a brick what it wanted, and it wants to be an arch?

HUGH

More or less, specifically meaning that one needs to understand the nature of materials.

RUTH

What does he say in the movie?

HUGH

Something about a common ordinary brick wanting to be MORE than what it is, and that, like the humble brick, we should try to make more of ourselves! But that's not what Kahn meant!

RUTH

I think they were going more for dramatic effect than strict adherence to architectural principles...

HUGH

(becomes increasingly agitated) For God's sake, the brick doesn't suffer from low self esteem - the brick knows what it is. It's a brick, and it CAN be an arch, not by denying itself, but by UNDERSTANDING itself!

RUTH

Well, I guess it's not so easy to portray architecture faithfully in movies. Complex issues tend to come off as extremes - too good or too bad; too ridiculous or too serious, which is what makes it legible to an audience.

HUGH

I guess you're right, but surely there are more subtle depictions of architects out there?

RUTH

Can you name one?

HUGH

(looks triumphant) Yes! *Death Wish!*

RUTH

(snorts) With Charles Bronson as a hard-boiled loner fueled by vengeance and rage?

HUGH

But also an architect, I think it's a uniquely nuanced portrayal.

RUTH

(dismissively) I don't know if blood-thirsty lunatic counts as nuanced.

HUGH

Yes, he was a vigilante, but he was also the architect of some surprisingly sensitive buildings, low slung desert houses with passive solar orientation. Anyway, better architect as maniac than as uptight lothario, like the architect in *Hannah and Her Sisters* who cries at the opera in order to get dates.

RUTH

Ok, you're right, but that movie did give us a few lines about Adolf Loos and organic form.

HUGH

Yes, it did, by playing them for a cheap laugh.

RUTH

Aha! You've proved my point.



HUGH

How?

RUTH

By putting both Adolf Loos and organic form in the context of a lovesick woman trying to impress a narcissistic architect, ipso facto, these are pretentious and laughable issues that architects care about. It's an extreme of being too serious, and as a result, becomes ridiculous to an audience.

HUGH

What about *The Towering Inferno*? That was the best of all worlds: macho architect and exciting disaster movie!

RUTH

Sure, but what if *The Towering Inferno* were all about Paul Newman having meetings with electrical consultants and code officials? Sure, I could watch three hours of Paul Newman doing anything, but most people aren't interested in a movie that might have avoided the inferno in the first place!

HUGH

So you really think people wouldn't want to watch a realistic depiction of architects engaged in actual design efforts, the way they actually happen?



*Both become quiet as they settle back into working. The work is a steady clicking of computer keys, shuffling of papers, sketching, etc., with very little drama.*

*Laughter and applause combine with an instrumental version of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal the "office" platform elevation.*

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

-COMMERCIAL (UNITS)-  
[IN THE STYLE OF IKEA, SUPERSTUDIO'S "SUPERSURFACE",  
AND CHARLES WILP'S AFRI-COLA ADS.]

COMPUTERIZED FEMALE NARRATOR

*Units, Units, Units. Why pay for all the extras?*

*Through our careful analysis of the way people occupy space, we here at studioAPT have developed the UNITS system to maximize the conditions of life within a small area.*



*Each of the UNITS has both character and use. The table, the steps, the bed, the bar, the climber, the landing, the ziggurat, and the utility infielder.*



*In isolation, or in combination, these UNITS provide flexibility, efficiency, and design. UNITS, more than furniture, less than a house...just what you need.*





### ACT THREE (LIVING ROOM)

FADE IN:

INT. "COUCH" - NIGHT

*RUTH comes to sit on couch while HUGH sits reading and enjoying a drink.*

HUGH

Where've you been?

RUTH

Sorry, I was just watching *The Towering Inferno*...again. Why, what's up?

HUGH

We just got a message!

RUTH

Oh, from who?

HUGH

The JIB group.

RUTH

What? I thought we were out of the running.

HUGH

We're back in! Actually, we got the job!

RUTH

You're kidding. What happened?

HUGH

They said they loved what we sent them, and can't wait to work with us.

RUTH

But what about when they e-mailed earlier saying to forget it?

HUGH

It was a mistake. Somebody put the wrong address in. I have a really good feeling about this. The main guy, Steve, said he could tell we'd be a good fit. AND he's interested in seeing what he can do about hooking us up higher in the corporate structure.

RUTH

(looks relieved and excited) That's great! He sounds like he could be our patron!

HUGH

(looks satisfied with himself) Yes! This could be big for us!

RUTH

I'm sorry I got after you for using fancy words. I underestimated Steve and the JIB Group.

HUGH

Well, obviously he's pretty sharp, and incredibly intelligent for liking our work.

RUTH

So what's next?

HUGH

We're meeting tomorrow, on site.

RUTH

Oh! Do you think we get to eat there? I can't believe I've never even heard of this place! It must be very exclusive!

HUGH

Hang on, let me look up the address.

*HUGH pages through computer tablet in search of address on map.*

RUTH

Is it downtown?

HUGH

(confused) No. Wait, I don't think this is right.

RUTH

Where is it?

HUGH

Next to the mattress place on Frontage Road.

RUTH

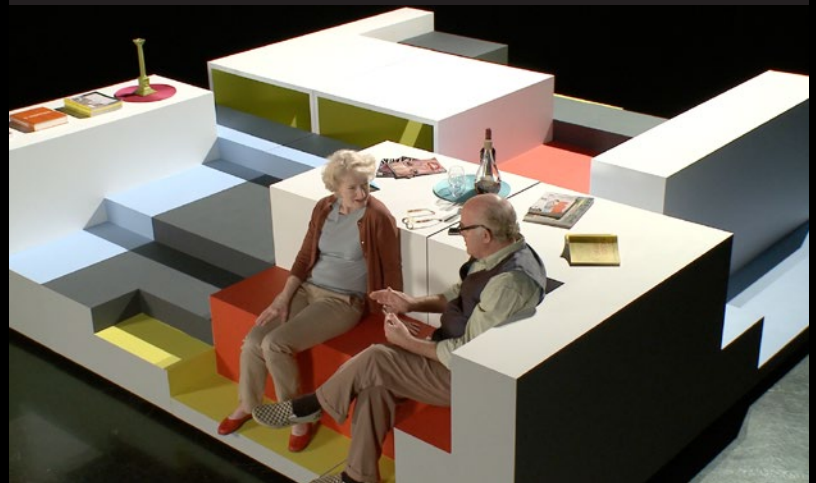
(confused) What's it called again?

HUGH

JIB.

RUTH

Gib? Like giblets? Do you think it's like locally-sourced artisanal chicken?



HUGH

No. It's J.I.B. All caps.

RUTH

Hmmm.

*HUGH continues to consult tablet, looking increasingly distressed.*

HUGH

I think I've been here before.

RUTH

I thought you said you hadn't.

HUGH

Well, when I thought it was a place called JIB, I hadn't.

RUTH

If it's not JIB, what is it?

HUGH

Jack. In. the. Box. J.I.B.

RUTH

You ATE there?

HUGH

That's where the meeting was today.

RUTH

It didn't occur to you that the meeting was there because they are the clients?

HUGH

I thought they were being ironic.

RUTH

Hold on, do you even know what the actual project is?

*HUGH consults tablet again.*

HUGH

Well, the e-mail was titled "A Vision for Universal Design in Dining."

RUTH

I know that. I spent all morning preparing a presentation on culinary advancements in terms of the Vitruvian ideals of commodity, firmness, and delight. But what is the ACTUAL project?

RUTH

Or maybe we should go back to trying to get projects by doing competitions.

HUGH

Don't you think that's a step back?

*RUTH holds up tablet.*

RUTH

A step back from this? From handrail replacements in a fast food restaurant bathroom?

HUGH

Ok, you're right. I guess competitions can be fun - they're like open mic night for architects.

RUTH

Exactly! You get to try out new material while trying to win over an audience.

HUGH

You know, it was my childhood dream to be a comedian.

RUTH

Oh, yeah?

HUGH

I even brought it up with my guidance counselor in high school. I said I wanted to be either an architect or a comedian, and he advised me that I wasn't smart enough.

RUTH

To be an architect?

HUGH

No, a comedian.

RUTH

Ouch. Well, anyway, we should get to bed. After all, we do have that invitation tomorrow.

HUGH

To what?

RUTH

To innovation! Those handrails aren't going to recognize the potentials within their limitations without our help.

*A startling gong alarm sounds. HUGH and RUTH look at RUTH's phone and then each other.*

*Laughter and applause combine with a karaoke version (backing, but no lead vocals) of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal the set elevation and the actors turn to face the camera.*

*FADE OUT:*

END OF ACT THREE

*HUGH thumbs through tablet some more.*

HUGH

Let me just open this attachment.

*HUGH hands computer tablet to RUTH, who sighs heavily.*

RUTH

Handrails to the restrooms? That's it? Replace the handrails?

HUGH

(sheepish) You know, I asked a handrail what it wanted to be, and -

*RUTH glares at him, and a brief silence ensues.*

HUGH

Maybe we should stop answering Requests for Proposals. Or stop answering the phones.



CLOSING CREDITS

CONTINUOUS OVERHEAD JIB SHOT OVER THE  
WIDTH OF THE PLATFORM, ACCOMPANIED BY THE  
INSTRUMENTAL VERSION OF 'MAKIN' IT'

EXECUTIVE PRODUCTION, SCRIPT, AND DIRECTION  
STUDIOAPT

RUTH CRAWFORD  
AS RUTH

HUGH MAGUIRE  
AS HUGH

EDITOR  
WILL MARTIN

MANAGING PRODUCER  
JACQUES MERSEREAU

LIGHTING  
JEFFREY ALDER

AUDIO  
DAVID GREENSPAN

CAMERA OPERATORS  
JACQUES MERSEREAU  
WALTER LIN  
RONN NIEMISTO  
COLIN FULTON  
CHRISTOPHER SCHAUBLIN

SET DESIGN  
JULIA & JOHN MCMORROUGH  
WITH  
JORDAN HICKS

ENGINEERING AND BUILDING  
AL MCWATERS, SKYSHIPS DESIGN

PAINTING  
DAN ERICKSON

FABRICATION FACILITY  
MAKER WORKS, ANN ARBOR

RECORDED AT  
DUDERSTADT CENTER VIDEO STUDIO  
AT THE  
DIGITAL MEDIA COMMONS  
OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

SPONSORED BY  
RESEARCH THROUGH MAKING GRANT  
FROM THE  
TAUBMAN COLLEGE  
OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN PLANNING

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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*Makin' It joins a distinguished lineage  
of workplace sitcoms—extending from WKRP  
in Cincinnati to The Office—that see the  
humor in the anxieties and exasperations  
of gainful employment. It is appointment  
television for anyone who needs an antidote  
to our discipline's contemporary fascination  
with the real.*

—TIMOTHY HYDE



# rainy sea

by Keith Mitnick



prologue

rainy sea is the story of a man who travels back to the island where he grew up for the first time in many years to look for his two sisters, one of whom has suffered a nervous breakdown, and the other who has disappeared completely. As he encounters the various sites, buildings and landscapes that defined his childhood, he is overwhelmed by a recurring sense that not only is the setting different from the way he remembers it, but that the island itself had been constructed to make it difficult to recall anything that happened there.

As his inability to reconcile his own past with the island's geography surmounts, he visits the house where he grew up in where he discovers his mother's long missing secret suitcase

What if someone were to write a history of unnoticed things? It would be comprised of everything no one has bothered to think about and the actions of people no one has cared to remember. Unlike the historical figures and events that have managed to appear, the trail of the unnoticed would lead into unexplored areas of otherwise known circumstances. Like the raised contours used to map topography in an atlas for the blind, the history of the unnoticed would allow us to sense what we have not seen and to experience ourselves not seeing it.

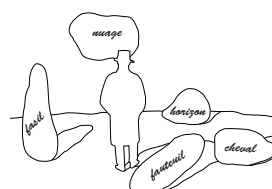
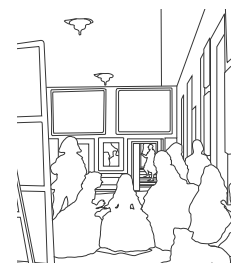
And what if this history was written from the perspective of a man whose participation in the circumstances presented required him to erase his involvement in them? The author's invisibility would need to be constructed to convey his point of view without compromising his un-see-ability. Such a narrator would lack all defining coordinates: no singular achievements, job titles, medical deficiencies, education, criminal record, hair color, unemployment checks, records of divorce, failures, or triumphs. He couldn't really speak as himself either, as his manner of doing so would reveal too much. He would need to communicate like a mannequin on the lap of an unseen ventriloquist.

I was born with two hearts: one that pumps blood through my body and the other that meddles heedlessly in the affairs of my life. I have felt myself doubled and divided, like an actor playing multiple roles simultaneously or two people inhabiting a single body. Growing up, the walls of my room were covered with images of people being drawn and quartered. I was fascinated by the paradoxical expression of agonized calm on the faces of the soon-to-be dismembered victims the moment before the horses to which they were tied ran off in opposite directions.

For as long as I can remember, I have been fascinated by double-meanings, reverse logic, and things disguised to appear other than they are, like party walls that make two buildings out of one and twin cities that allow the same place to exist in two locations at once. I'm fascinated by duplicity in human behavior as well, like funny people who never laugh, and angry people who smile all the time to hide how pissed off they really feel. I love watching tv interviews with famous actors who play characters smarter than themselves in their films. Listening to them speak as themselves is like hearing a dumber version of the people they play in the movies.

I collect images in which the logic of communication is put at odds with what it is used to communicate, like rational diagrams of irrational acts and photographs that make real things

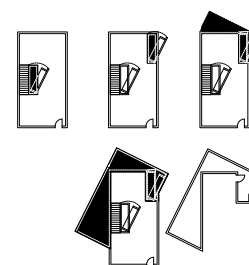
look fake. Among my favorites are ones that take ordinary things like clouds, sofas, people, and pets, and arrange them in unusual ways, like Velasquez's *Las Meninas*, a painting of the Spanish royal family, whose subject was supposed to be the King and the Queen but ended up being Velasquez; or Magritte's *Apparition*, an image in which names, shapes, and positions have been scrambled to show how spatial relations define things. In *Apparition* a "cloud" hangs appropriately in the sky and the "horizon" is predictably horizontal, but a floppy "horse" and a freestanding "rifle" are randomly suspended in the foreground, making sense as words but not as things. In *Las Meninas*, the King and Queen were reflected in a tiny mirror in the middle of the canvas while Velasquez, off to the side, is nevertheless the center of the painting.



As a child, I had a collection of pictures called "impossible views" that included a time lapse photo of a young girl looking in opposite directions simultaneously and a blurred picture that put two faces on a condemned man writhing in an electric chair without indicating which was which. My all-time favorite in this group was one of my Uncle Norman, wasted at a family wedding, trying to not look wasted by acting conspicuously normal, which was far more interesting than any image I had of him sober.

Unnoticeable things are not necessarily harder to see but, because they slip past the usual logic with which we look for things, they are difficult to account for. Secret tunnels and camouflaged ships are not unnoticeable, they are hidden. Nameless colors, amorphous spaces, and generic buildings are instead hard to identify.

In the same way that a person with a drinking problem believes they need one more drink to get up the courage to quit drinking forever or a workaholic tells herself that she will stop working once she accomplishes everything she needs to accomplish, I looked for clarity in my own confused life by collecting distorted representations of the lives of others. It bothered me that other people's view of the world might make more sense to them than mine did to me. Since I couldn't change my own, I looked for ways to discredit theirs.



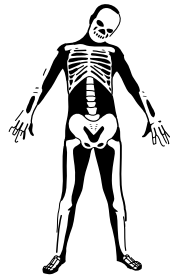
Though my preoccupation with conflicted images was for a time all-consuming, my interests soon switched from pictures to actual space—like the gardens in Paris designed to look like paintings of empty fields, with grass you could look at but not walk on. My favorites included a full-scale apartment building in Manhattan whose greedy owner had built each apartment at  $\frac{3}{4}$  scale in order to fit twelve units in a building sized for nine and the hidden rooms devised by Russian peasants at the turn of the century to hide things from the police, who would regularly search their homes. Because the rooms hid things from sight, they came to symbolize an "invisible realm" where people could do things without worrying about their consequences. Even after the police raids decreased, the desire for more invisible realm increased and the hidden rooms that had once been concealed within people's homes began to appear on their outsides as well until, eventually, hidden room properties were extended to entire

buildings.

The day I read about the Ise Shrine in Japan, where two versions of the same building were constructed on opposite sides of a single site, was the day I decided to become an architect. On one half the structure was put together and on the other it was taken apart. I read all about the shrine's history and how the ritual was repeated every twenty years, but all that really mattered to me was that the same thing existed in two places.

I like it when different types of spatial logic interfere with one another in ways that shouldn't make sense but do—like a child's drawing of a tiny house surrounded by giant flowers with a see-thru mommy and a headless daddy floating off the page, or an exhibit I saw recently at a museum that had Thomas Edison's Last Breath, obtained by Edison's son on his father's deathbed, displayed in a glass test tube next to the black limousine that jfk was assassinated in. The invisible air in the test tube and the bullet holes in the car made the circumstances of the two deaths equally tangible, though the bullet hole was real, and the test tube breath was not.

For a long time I believed that discrepancies between the logic of real and imaginary things were accidental, but more recently I've come to think that we pretend to believe in things that



we don't in order to get what we want without having to admit that we want it—like the black performers who were forced to “impersonate” themselves onstage by wearing blackface in “all-white” theaters or the brown paper bags that make it legal to get drunk in public by hiding the alcohol in a way that lets everyone know what it is. This technique of blocking things out without eliminating them from view is particularly strange when, like the culture of hidden rooms, people behave as though their logic makes sense.

I used to wear a glow-in-the-dark skeleton suit every day until it either wore out or my mother destroyed it because she got tired of seeing it. I loved what it did to my appearance and would stare at myself for hours in the mirror making my body appear and disappear with a

flip of the light switch. I wore the suit so much that people couldn't recognize me without it. Even those who didn't like me went along with the new identity, as though it made my weirdness more comprehensible to them. Beneath the skeleton suit I wore a second suit that was invisible and “bomb proof,” and protected me from what was happening in my life. At first I would take it on and off and leave it behind when I was alone, but eventually it became a permanent part of my body.

My suits allowed me to tune in and tune out of reality like stations on the radio, until my sense of what was going on corresponded to my ability to cope with it. If I needed to be invisible, I would become the skeleton, and if I wanted to reach out to someone, I would show him that the blacked out areas of my body were as much “me” as the image sewn upon it. When I felt anxious, afraid, or overwhelmed, I retreated into the heavy padding of the second suit that made the bad things happening up close feel muffled and far away. After a while, my inability to tell the difference between real things and my distorted views of them made me wonder if I had acquired something of a “reality” problem from too much time in the suits. I filtered my experience of the outside world through the logic of the rules I had created to



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protect myself from it, even when they made absolutely no sense—like the stitching on the black parts of my skeleton suit that contradicted its message of invisibility.

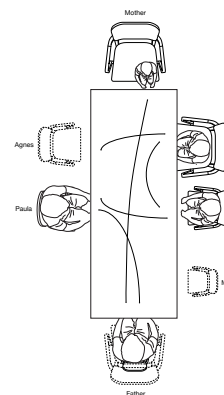
I saw two photographs in the newspaper of a schoolhouse in Pennsylvania where five Amish children had been murdered. The first showed the building boarded up and surrounded by police and the second showed the place where the building had stood the morning after the Amish tore it down in the night. The image of the freshly plowed earth created an eerie erasure-effect that abstracted the event in the very place where it had occurred. In a similar way, but with opposite intentions, the administrators at Kent State University built a large featureless building on the spot where the National Guard had killed four unarmed protestors in 1970. The presence of the building not only prevented people from commemorating what had happened, but made it difficult to even visualize.

I used to imagine myself suspended in the air, dropping from an airplane, and slipping from a tightrope. My falling fantasies sent rushes of adrenaline into my head and released my brain from my body like a lost balloon on a windy day. As my dependence on the sensation increased, so too did my ability to intersperse real impressions with those created in my head to the point where my inner life was more vivid than the world around me. I'm no longer the fake-sensation addict that I once was, though I sometimes use my old techniques to increase my enjoyment of whatever I'm doing, like when I watch movies of Italian bike races from the fifties on my stationary bike. Pedaling in place, I move along with the pack of long-dead cyclists fighting their way up Italian hillsides. When the pack accelerates, my muscles contract, and when we cross the finish line at the end of a long descent, I raise up my arms in victory with tears in my eyes. In a similar way, I used to stare at the scary blue woman's face in a Toulouse Lautrec poster hanging over the toilet in our bathroom every time I urinated. Even now I can't unzip my pants without seeing her horrific expression before me.

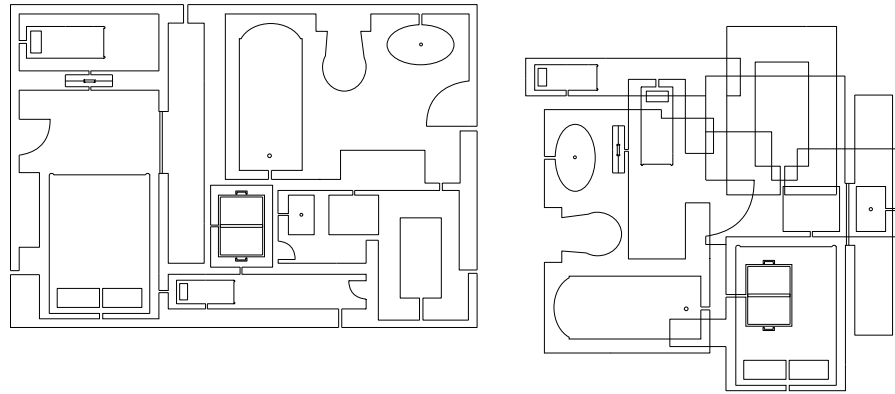
Growing up, I felt as though I noticed less than twenty percent of the world around me, but rather than trying to increase the twenty percent, I was obsessed with having missed the other eighty. Over time, I realized that my sense of diminished awareness was as much a consequence of the things I observed as the way I observed them. In the same way that the dark parts of my skeleton suit were colored black to represent their invisibility, the material form of the blankness I perceived all around me allowed entire buildings to disappear. But, like billboards with the words "nothing here" written on them, they needed to be seen before I understood not to see—and once I did, I had to forget that I had.

In J.G. Ballard's story "The Overloaded Man," the main character spends his time alone in a modern apartment complex learning to "switch off" the significance of everything he sees by reducing it in his mind to abstract geometric forms without names or functions. At first he limits himself to tvs and toasters, then to entire rooms and buildings before, at the climax of the story, he "dismantles" his nagging wife "mentally" into a non-entity by systematically "forgetting" each of her limbs with his hands until she collapses onto the floor.

On the first pages of *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison, the narrator states, "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who



## praxis 14



haunted Edgar Allen Poe; nor am I one of you Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.”

My sisters and I used to sit around the table impersonating one another and switching in and out of the roles of our mother and father. When we did this, we would change positions at the table: mother on one end, father on the other, and each of us in our usual spots. At first we would simply mimic one another’s speech and gestures, but after a while the game grew more complex and the funniest parts came from assuming the perspective of one of us from the table setting of the other, as though the positions themselves conveyed the nature of the person occupying them.

In the same way that the people painted in the middle of *Las Meninas* were not the most significant part of the painting, I was perplexed by the fact that I existed at the center of everything I perceived in a world where I barely existed, and though I dressed myself up in the skeleton suit to show others the different people I was inside, my life was more like a cloud in the shape of a rifle, or a horizon buried in the ground.

As children, my sisters and I each had some identifiable problem with vision. I wore bifocal glasses that quadrupled my view and my sister Agnes had an eye patch that cut hers in half. Paula had astigmatism in her left eye that caused her sight to double and blur. The eye doctor told me that one of my eyes was lazy: it didn’t want to do its job, drifted inward, and left its partner to do all of the work. I liked the idea that there was confusion within my effort to see and politics among my parts. I had to wear thick glasses that made a horizontal line across my eyes where the seams of the differing lenses met. It was strange to me that the intersection of transparent things would produce visible edges. My glasses were frequently dirty, though I seldom noticed it until I was reminded by others to clean them.

In Patricia Highsmith’s short story “Black House,” an abandoned house in a small town symbolizes the different fantasies that make the boredom of people’s lives bearable. By providing a real location for their delusions, the black house creates a middle-zone in which their stories have the possibility of being true, despite the fact that everyone knows they are not. When an out-of-towner threatens to destroy the in-between-ness of the house by walking into it, the men kill him to protect the psychological structures of their lives.

In “The Swimmer,” by John Cheever, a broken down protagonist constructs a conceptual

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river out of the many swimming pools separating his house from others in the neighborhood by eliminating the space between them in his mind. As he “swims” from one pool to another he travels back in time to the source of his breakdown.

In Raymond Carver’s story “Cathedral,” a blind man teaches a seeing man to observe a Cathedral, as though for the first time, by getting him to draw the building he sees on television. As the seeing man’s hand sketches, the blind man places his hand over top, moving the pencil to show what he himself had never seen.

My mother was the captain of a ferryboat that crossed back and forth between the island and nearby city. She worked long hours that required us to ride along on the boat whenever we wanted to spend time with her. My favorite part of these trips involved our conversations about river navigation. I was fascinated to discover that the negotiation of local waterways had nothing to do with what one saw with their eyes and everything to do with their knowledge of the unseen shape of the river bottom below. My mother was like that too. The way she appeared on the surface was different from the person I sensed her to be deep down.

My father was a librarian who was more interested in books than life. I’m sure no matter where he was, he was reading, and he piled books around him throughout our house as though trying to wall himself away from the rest of us. I used to try to get his attention by telling him things about my life as though I was a character in one of his favorite books. I would switch in and out of different voices and disguised my need for his attention in the perspective of different literary characters. “It’s so bright in here,” I would shout as the Invisible Man, “why can’t you see me???”

Our house stood between the edges of a forest and the river on the north end of Rainy Sea. Its windows were arranged in a way that, looking out, one had the impression of being in a large unmoving ship aimed permanently upstream. In my memory, the house is comprised of a series of fragmented hallways and incomplete rooms, each separated by inaccessible pockets of empty space and furnished in half-measures that made it difficult to know how to use the room despite the obvious purposes it was intended to serve. Thinking back, I have trouble reconciling what I know about the location of the house with what I remember seeing out of its windows. It is never clear to me if the house has shaped my memories or if my memories have simply constructed a sympathetic landscape in which to appear.

Among the few pieces of advice my father ever gave me was “make yourself invisible and follow the rules.” My mother’s philosophy was the opposite—she thought rules were for other people and that we should do whatever we wanted. I would have preferred the voice of a single all-knowing authority to the mutually exclusive set of life-lessons I received from them, regardless of what it told me, or so I believed. Our house corroborated the madness of our conflicted parenting perfectly, comprised as it was of a series of maze-like rooms that repeated and divided, concealed some areas and falsified the limits of others. It had everything a house is supposed to have, but in the wrong number and arrangement—like a backwards face with two noses and an eye.

Along with my growing paranoia about things being other than they appeared was an increasing sense that people couldn’t be trusted. It dumbfounded me to see them behaving one way at one moment and differently in the next. Nothing scared me more than the possibility of mistaking unfounded beliefs for truth and yet, to my eyes, most people either

couldn't tell the difference or just didn't care. I became obsessed with a need to establish rules for a verifiable reality. I carried a plumb bob and a tape measure in my pocket and recorded my measurements in a small notebook. I needed to know if straight things were really straight, or if they just appeared to be in relation to the crooked things that surrounded them. I also tracked the inconsistencies of the people around me: the lies they told, if they did what they promised or contradicted something they said. I measured, mapped, and diagrammed everything, though the more I examined the world, the more perplexed I became.

A biology teacher in junior high school told us stories about his students in the early seventies who were constantly high on drugs. He described a terrified young girl on LSD screaming in horror at her hallucinations of a tangled mass of giant snakes that were eating her alive. The teacher's off-hand comment that the hallucinations were "as real to this girl as anything else she experienced because she believed they were real" devastated me. If wrong beliefs could make unreal things appear true, I wondered how I could tell the difference between legitimate facts and fake ones. It didn't help the hallucinating girl any when my teacher informed her that, contrary to her delusions, snakes were not slimy and wet as she had hallucinated them but were, in fact, very dry to the touch.

My mother and father were as different from one another as two people could be, except for their mutual attraction to opposites. If my sisters and I inherited anything from them, it wasn't their best or their worst or even some mixture of their features—it was the tension that the temporary blending of oppositions produced. Our mother loved us but ran away and our father stayed with us but disappeared into forgetfulness. Because my parents had molded me in conflicting ways, I had difficulty aligning the person I understood myself to be with the people they told me I was. I longed to break free of the double standards that defined me at the same time that I depended upon a malleable view to feel in control.

In my fifth grade art class we were asked to make self-portraits, but instead of making a drawing of how I thought I looked, I exaggerated all of the things about my appearance that I didn't like—my big nose, little eyes, bad skin, frizzy hair, and skinny face, as though portraying my ugly self would make me appreciate how I really looked. I took the drawing to school the next day, expecting everyone to be confused, but was devastated instead when the teacher praised the likeness I had captured. I ran off screaming in tears as she bragged about what a talented artist I was.

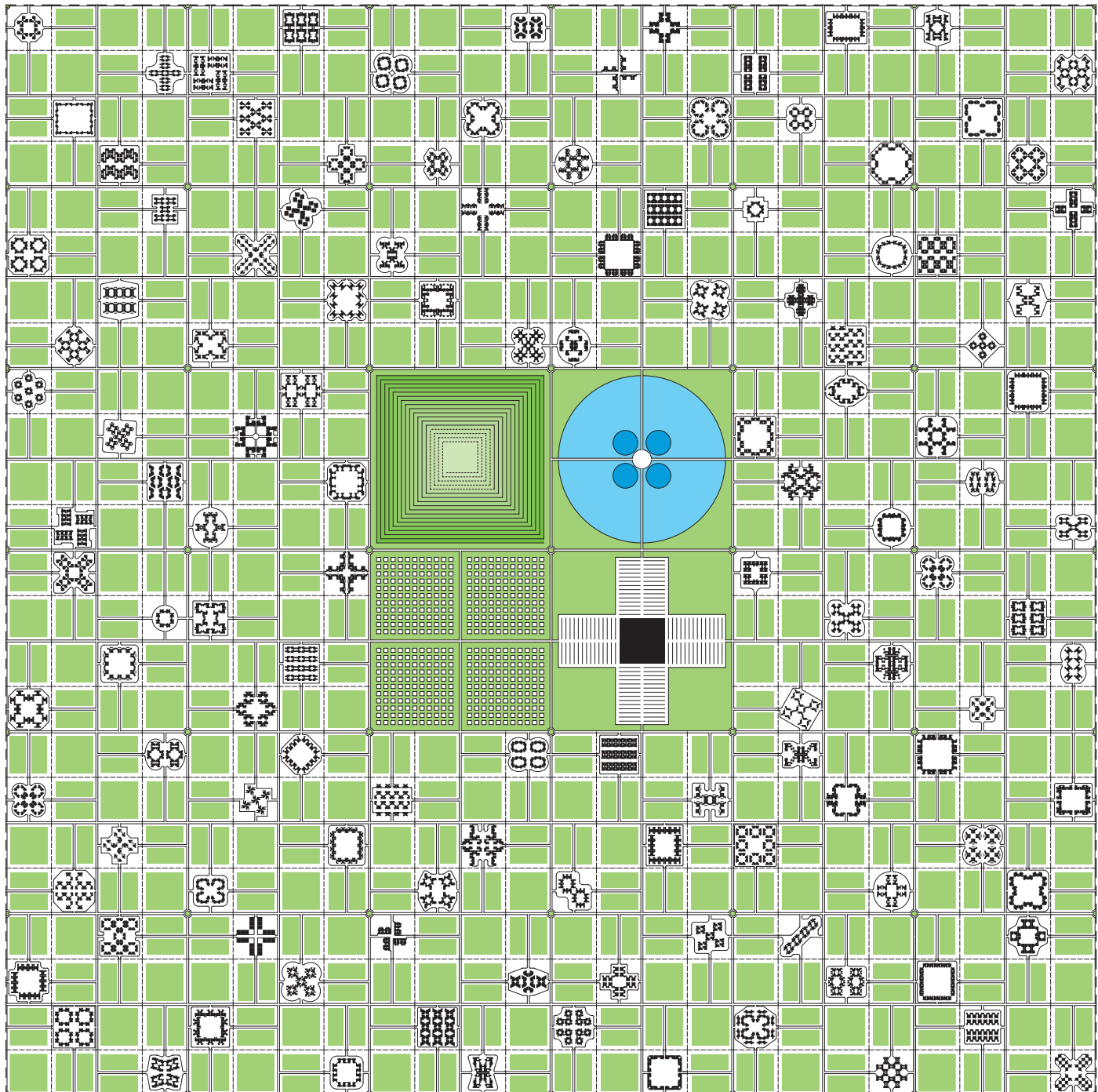
As a teenager I spent many sleepless nights in a miniature version of our home that I built in a tree. I emptied each room of everything but its space: a bedroom without a bed, a kitchen without counters, and a bathroom that made you feel clean without having to wash. I painted the perimeter of each volume on the tree house floor, one over the other at  $\frac{1}{4}$  scale, like pieces in a model set, and imagined a perfect life for myself as I looked back at the real house.

When I think of architecture, I imagine conflicted relationships, irrational representations, and impossible places. I see poorly built copies of other buildings, like the impersonation of smart people by dumb actors, and views from one world to another that, like the wedding photo of my Uncle Norman, make their differences more distinct by trying to conceal them. I wonder about symbolic abstractions with tangible locations like black houses and missing schools, and confusion between last breaths and bullet holes, where it's hard to tell a real void from a fake one. I imagine blurry dream-like walks through repetitive corridors to fake



# *Freedomland: Speculations on Another America*

KEITH KRUMWIEDE



## A DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FREEDOMLAND

*Having been required by the times to draw up a detailed plan for the general improvement of American housing in the aftermath of the great financial crisis and its effect upon our collective confidence in the correctness of our living patterns, I humbly submit the following proposal.*

We begin our description as did Sir Robert Mountgomery in describing his fabled proposal for the Margravate of Azilia: “You must suppose a level, dry, and fruitful Tract of Land, in some fine Plain or Valley” that, having been surveyed as part of the great parceling of America according to the methods set forth in the Land Ordinance of 1785, is continuously gridded into square townships of six miles per side, each containing THIRTY-SIX one mile square sections of 640 acres.

This grid, the framework for Thomas Jefferson’s vision of a rural democratic society of citizen farmers but also a great game board of rampant real estate speculation, provides the underlying structure for Freedomland, a new settlement model that reconciles resurgent dreams for an agrarian urbanism with long-habituated appetites for the domestic. Freedomland is premised on the following irrefutable truths: that local farming is good, being that it provides better food and makes better use of our increasingly limited resources than commercial agriculture; that urban living is also good, improving as it does the health, happiness, and prosperity of the populace; and that the majority of Americans, the veracity of the above notwithstanding, still aspire to the material and spatial luxuries represented by the detached single-family house as it is most resplendently found in suburbia.

The plan of Freedomland results from the sub-division of a typical survey township into four equal squares, three miles to each side. The northwest and southeast quadrants are established as new towns and further subdivided to form THIRTY-SIX square sections of 160 acres each, excepting that area dedicated to the town’s primary roads which divide them at intervals of one half mile.

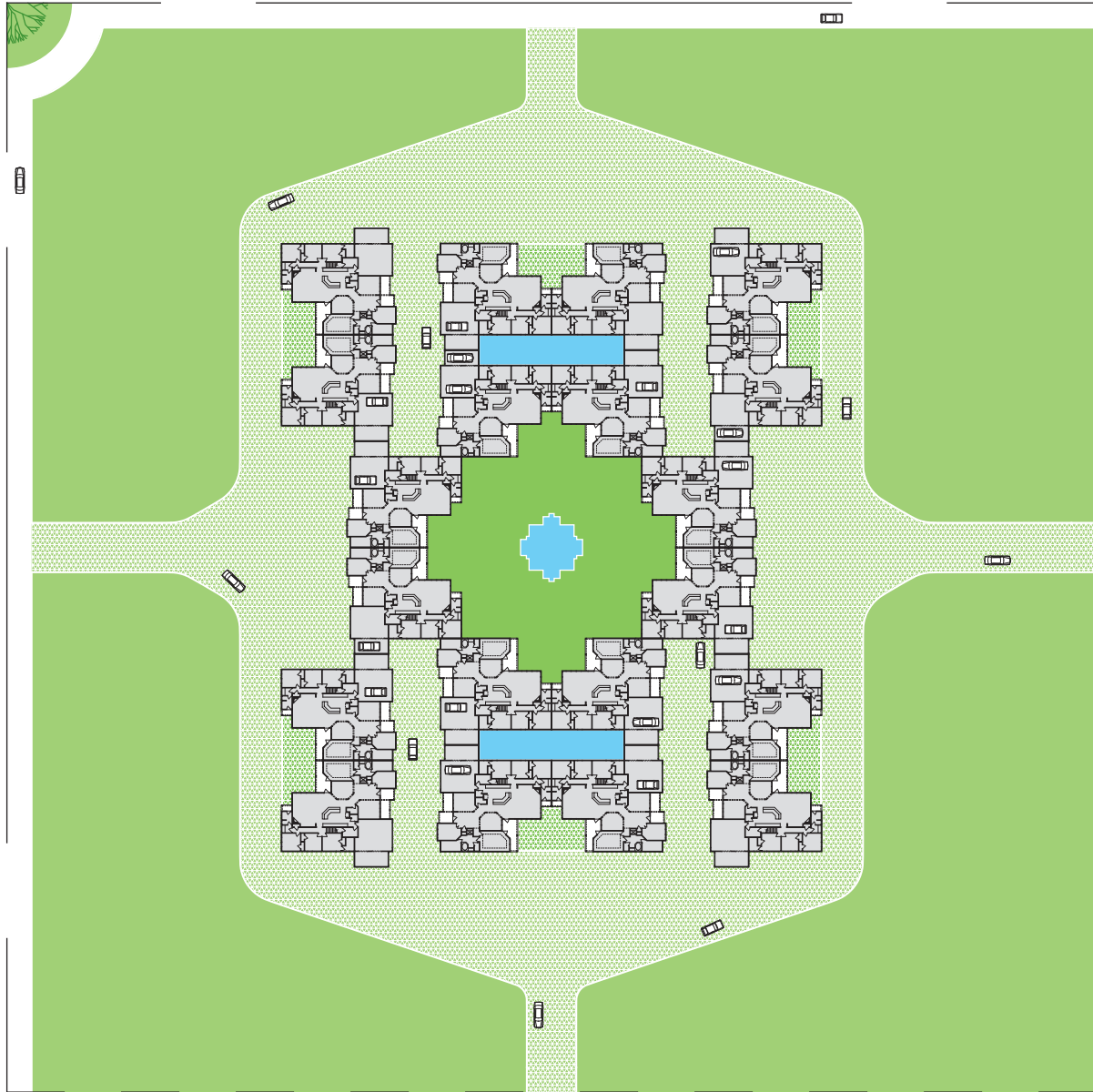
One survey township divided to form two towns and two natural preserves is the absolute minimum area necessary for the establishment of Freedomland. If this plan is aggregated to form a group larger than a single THIRTY-SIX square mile survey township, then a checkerboard layout results, in a like manner to that proposed by Mr. Jefferson, producing, at the grand scale, an alternating arrangement of town and country. There is no maximum limit to such an aggregation except for any geographical or political obstacles that may arise to thwart the just and proper extension of the settlement by the townspeople.



A VIEW OF FREEDOMLAND  
*Meadows near Greifswald, 1822*  
 Caspar David Friedrich

The four sections at the center of each town are occupied by a civic core comprised of the infrastructures necessary to the maintenance and preservation of the community. Whereas the original Land Ordinance reserved section SIXTEEN, at the center of every township, for the use of education, in Freedomland, the waste square, an ever-growing, manicured pyramid of refuse, rises there slowly. The water square, a circular reservoir nearly one half mile in diameter, occupies section FIFTEEN; the energy square, a forest of TWENTY-by-TWENTY ft solar panels, powers the town from section TWENTY-ONE; and the market square, anchored in section TWENTY-TWO by a ten acre big box of community and commerce, provides a venue for public assembly as well as access to those products and services not produced through the prodigious industry of the townspeople.



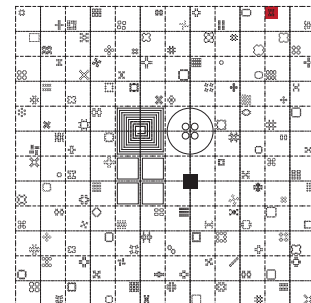
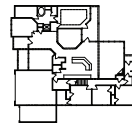


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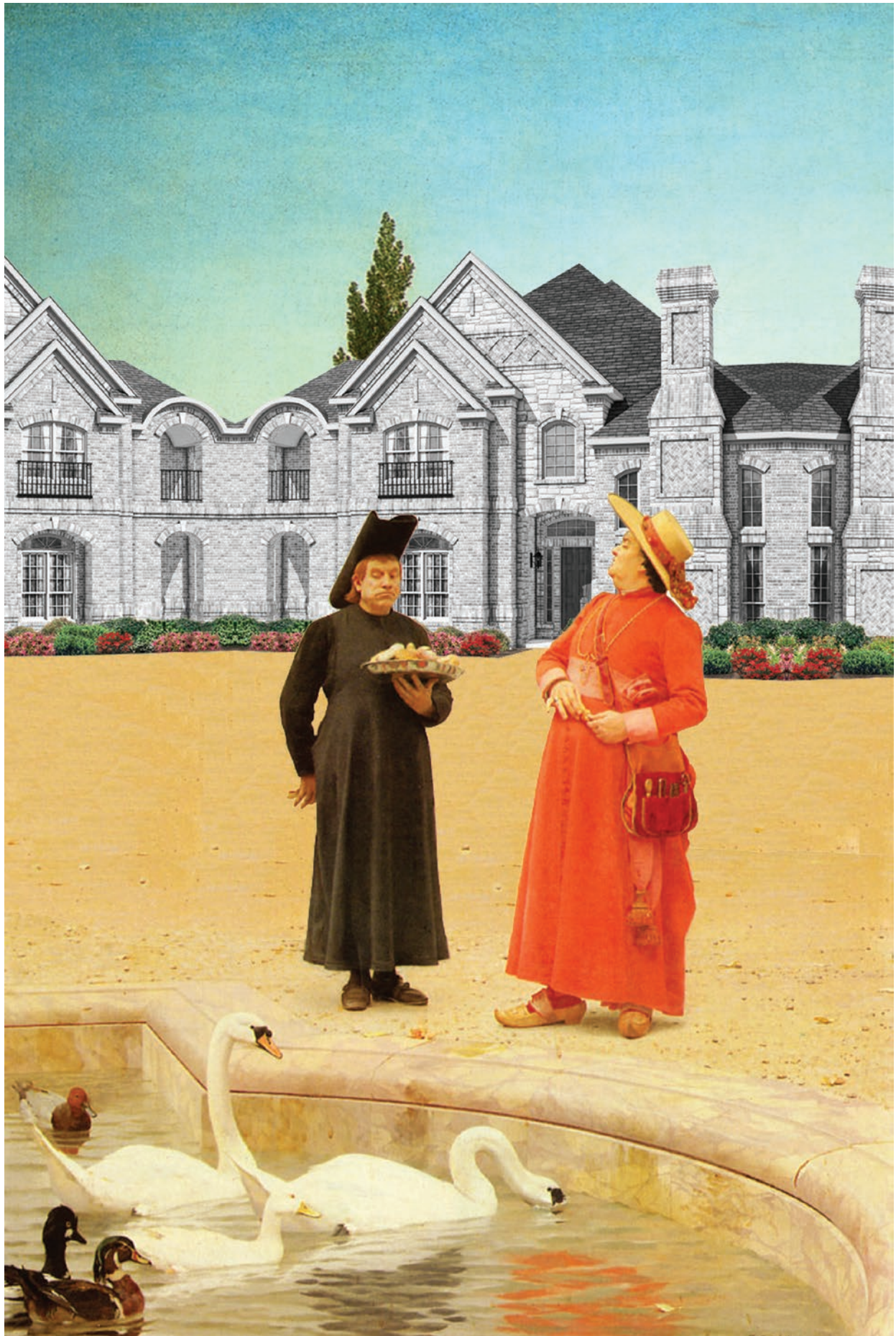
Platz der Pope  
NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 1

20 Houses  
73,320 square feet  
80 Bedrooms  
60 Full Bathrooms  
20 Half Bathrooms

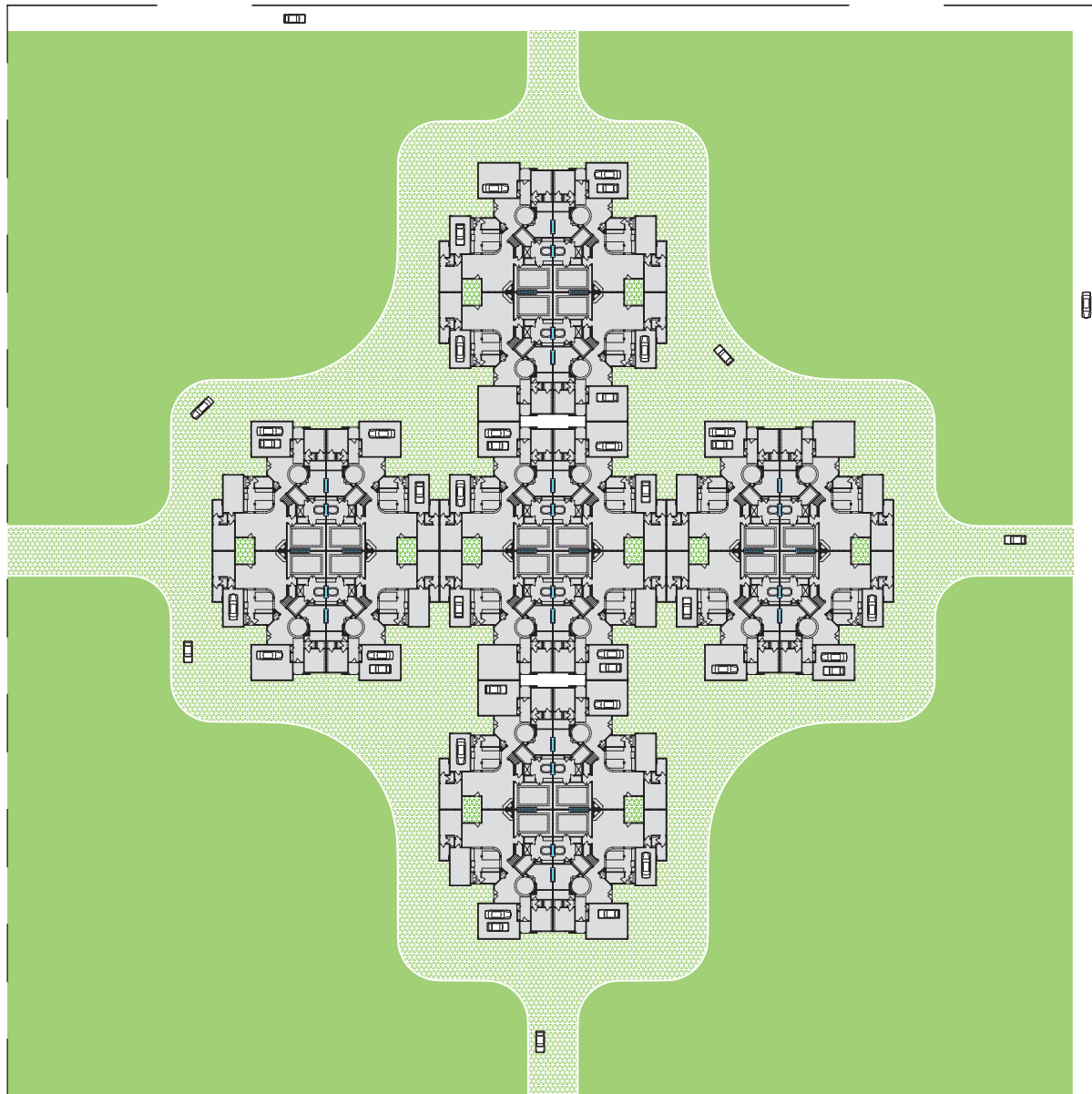
Pulte Homes, Monet, 3,616 square feet, Texas







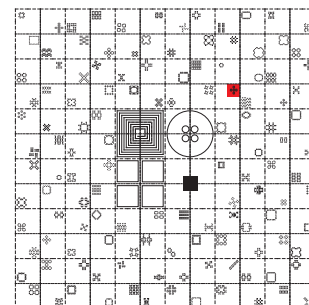
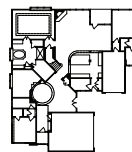
AN AWKWARD MOMENT AT PLATZ DER POPE, FREEDOMLAND  
*A Plate of Cakes*, circa 1890  
Jean Georges Vibert



0 .0625 miles

Exodus Landing  
NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 11

20 Houses  
60,860 square feet  
80 Bedrooms  
80 Full Bathrooms  
0 Half Bathrooms



K. Hovnanian Homes, Bellvue VIII, 3043 square feet, Texas



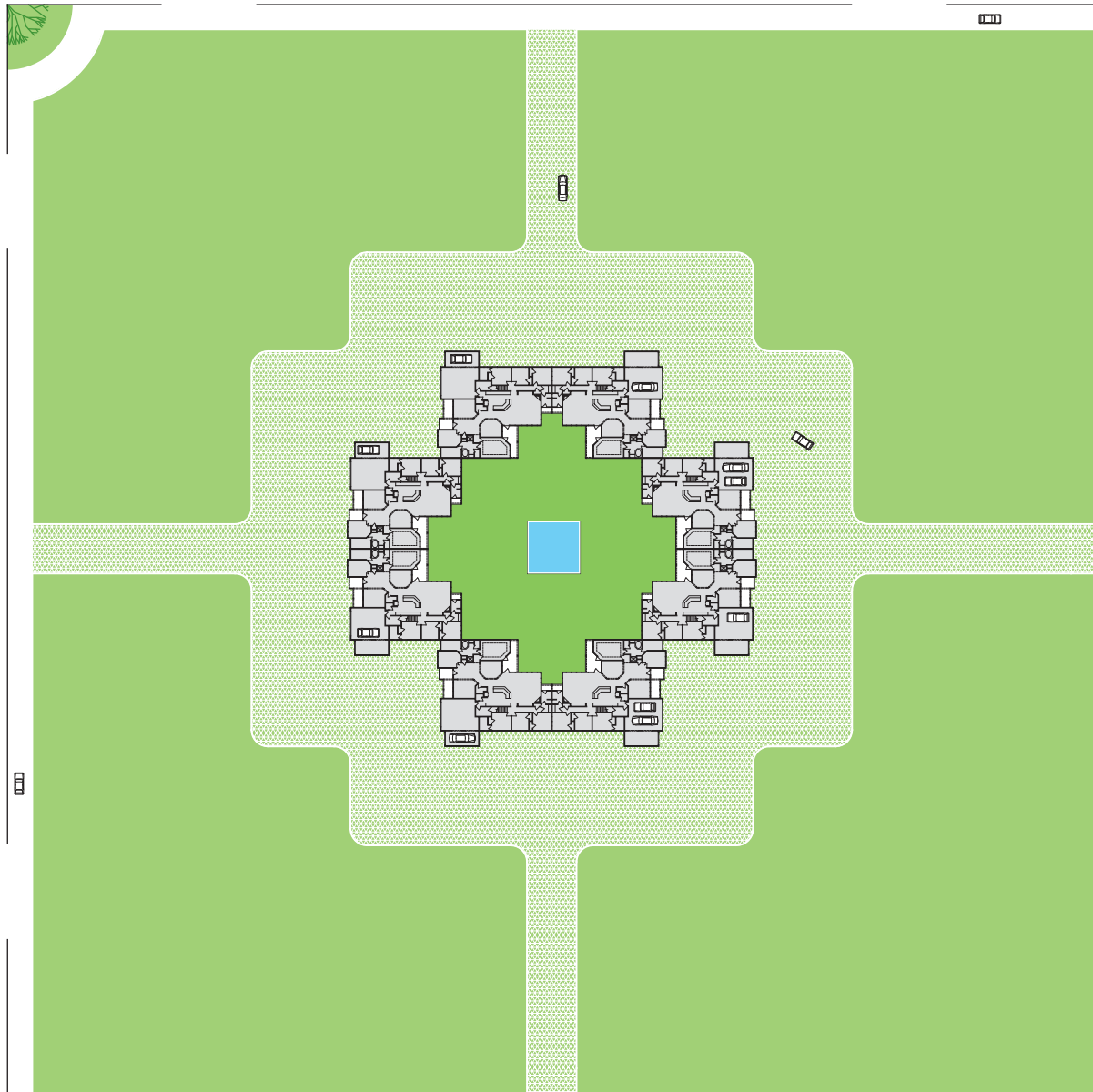


A VOLUNTARY STROLL NEAR EXODUS LANDING, FREEDOMLAND

*A Sunday Stroll*, 1841

Carl Spitzweg

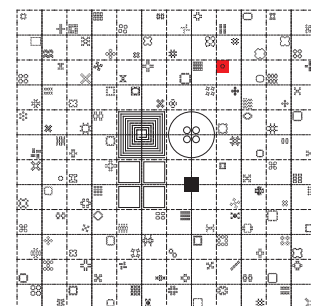
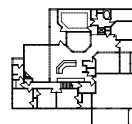
The THIRTY-TWO remaining sections are quartered by roads secondary to those abovementioned to form four equal parcels of FOURTY acres, less the dimension of the roads by which they are divided and served. The 128 individual neighborhood farm estates thus established, each an independent self-governing community, are further divided into four, TEN acre squares of which three are dedicated to agricultural pursuits while the dwellings are located on the fourth. In this manner, fully three quarters of every town in Freedomland shall remain open, green, and free of buildings.



Palais du Kern  
NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 11

8 Houses  
28,928 square feet  
32 Bedrooms  
24 Full Bathrooms  
8 Half Bathrooms

Pulte Homes, The Monet, 3,616 square feet, Texas

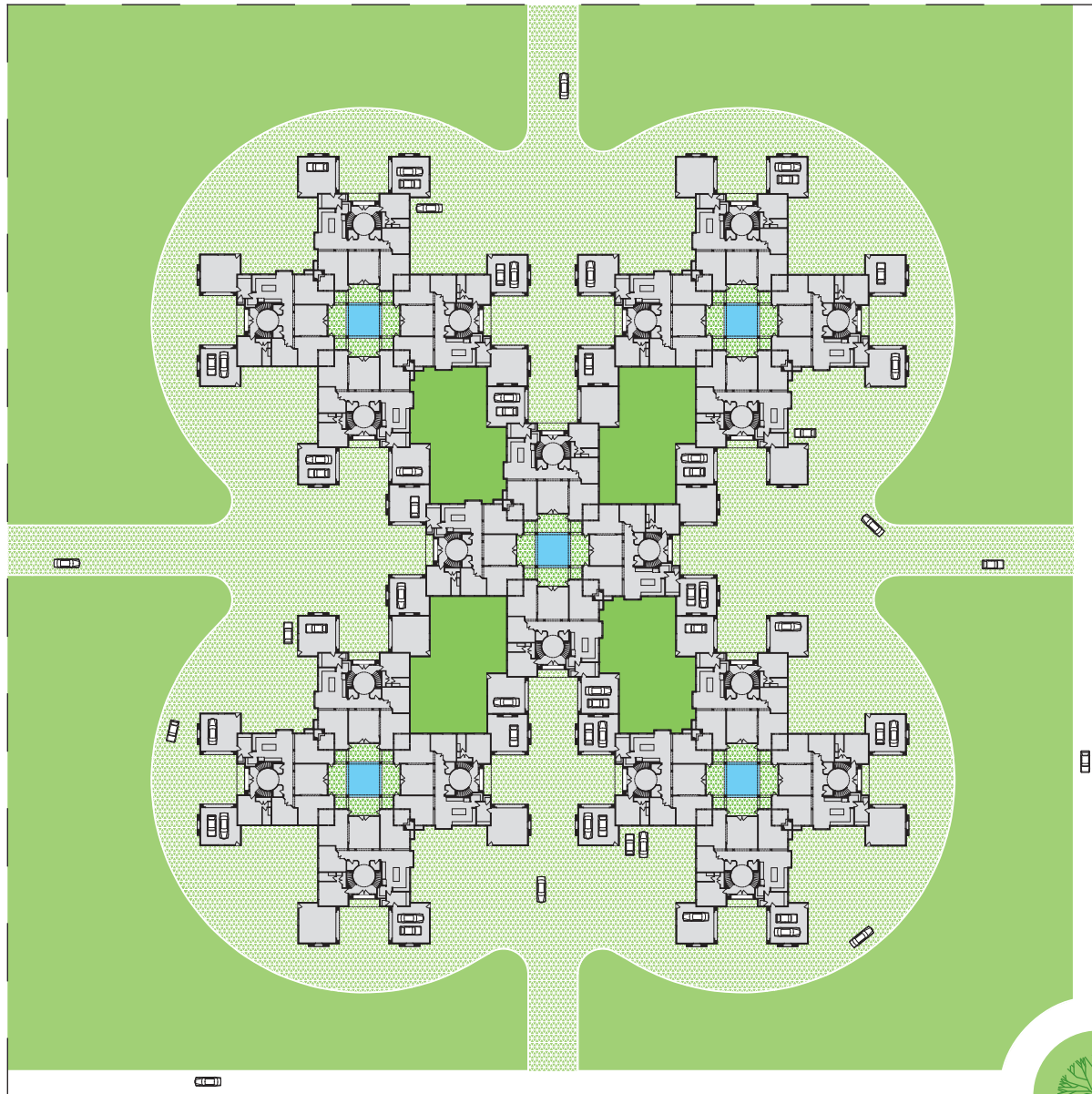






THE JUDGE HONES HIS SCYTHER AT PALAIS DU KERN, FREEDOMLAND  
*The Reaper*, 1878  
 Ferdinand Hodler

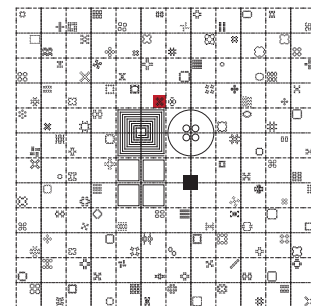
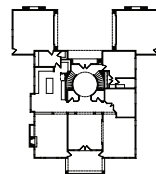
Each neighborhood estate in Freedomland is comprised of between EIGHT and SIXTY-FOUR houses, all those within any particular estate being one just like the next, and in this manner ensuring a cohesiveness of identity and consistency of character such that property values are protected and community values are promoted. Whereas architects have proven themselves disinclined, or perhaps just ill-prepared, to deliver designs desired by a majority of the American people, the houses in Freedomland are built according to designs carefully selected from among the best produced by the country's greatest builders, designs that have proven to be highly popular with persons possessed of the most discriminating taste and therefore certain to attract the finest type of citizen.



0 .0625 miles

Neo-Palladian Acres  
SE 1/4 SE 1/4 Section 9

20 Houses  
102,500 square feet  
80-100 Bedrooms  
80 Full Bathrooms  
20 Half Bathrooms



Toll Brothers, The Mirador, 5125 square feet, Arizona





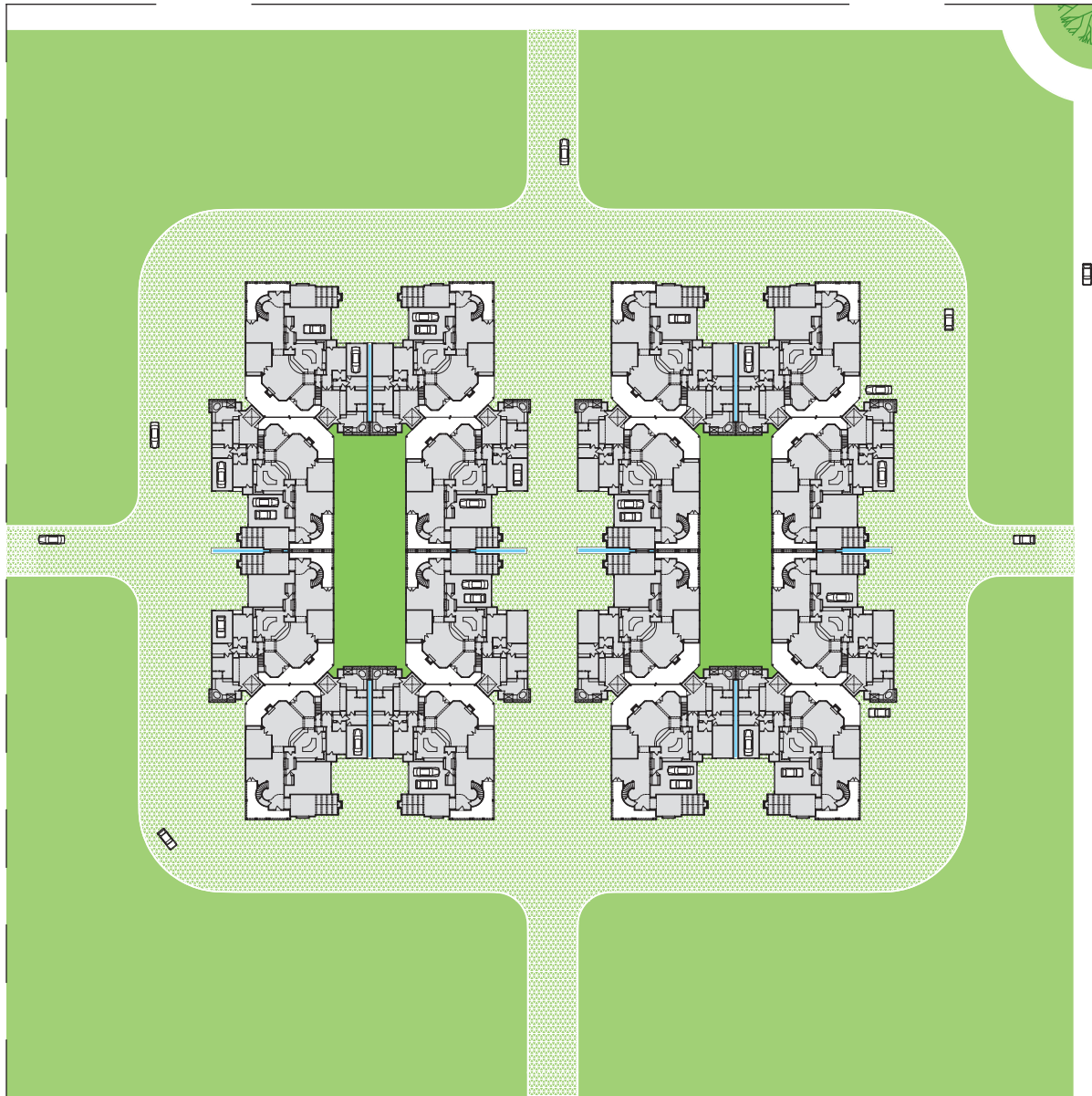
GATHERING FLOWERS NEAR NEO-PALLADIAN ACRES, FREEDOMLAND

*Girl in a Field*, 1857

Ludwig Knaus

It being well known that people, by their very nature, are equally desirous of the pleasures of novelty as they are needful of the comforts of familiarity, Freedomland seeks to offer both in due time. Taking advantage of the increasingly short life span of our houses and in a manner similar to crop rotation, the entire estate, including the dwellings, which are dismantled and rebuilt, rotates counterclockwise every twenty years, completing a full rotation after eighty years. This has the positive effect of providing each resident, at regular intervals, with a new home that is exactly the same as their old home.



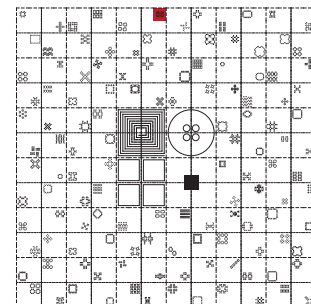
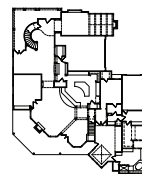


0 .0625 miles

Smiley's Acres  
NE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 4

16 Houses  
96,000 square feet  
80 Bedrooms  
80 Full Bathrooms  
16 Half Bathrooms

Meritage Homes, The Chalet, 6000 square feet, Texas

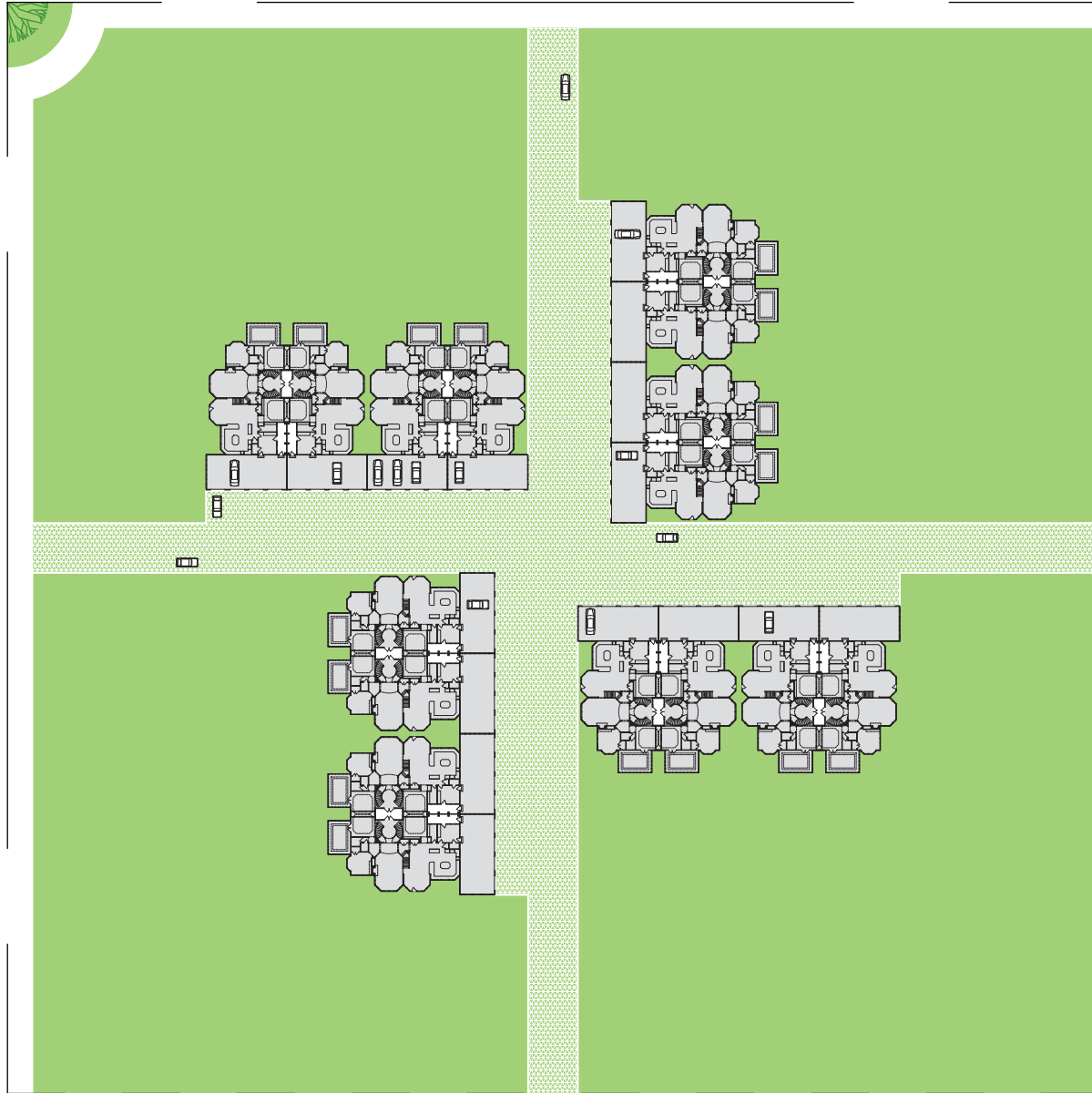




A SOLITARY FARMER WORKS SMILEY'S ACRES, FREEDOMLAND  
*The Veteran in the Field, 1865*  
Winslow Homer

As each estate rotates, this has the further beneficial consequence of producing an ever-changing prospect of built and open space throughout the town. Although the debris produced as a result of the dismantling and rebuilding will, in the early years, likely contribute to the rapid growth of the pyramid of waste at the center of each town, it is expected that the spirit of competition naturally occurring in a free society will, as it has in the past, stimulate advances in home building technology that cause the materials and methods employed in the ongoing re-creation of Freedomland to become ever lighter and more efficient. Such advances will allow each town to more sustainably pursue its cyclical regeneration, signaling to its neighbors its deep commitment to the stability and endurance of our beloved nation.



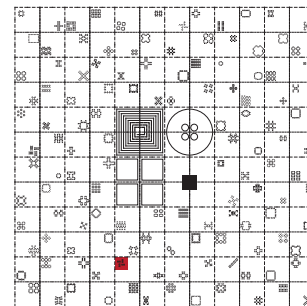
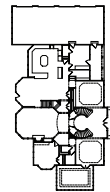


0 .0625 miles

Monticello Manor Homes  
NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 33

16 Houses  
85,200 square feet  
64 Bedrooms  
64 Full Bathrooms  
32 Half Bathrooms

K. Hovnanian Homes, The Tara, 5325 square feet, Maryland







CITIZEN FARMERS AT MONTICELLO MANOR HOMES, FREEDOMLAND  
*The Return of the Reapers*, 1886  
Henry Herbert La Thangue





MR. AND MRS. ANDREWS OF SHADRACH WOODS, FREEDOMLAND

*Mr. and Mrs. Andrews*, 1749

Thomas Gainsborough

It is hoped that this description, concise though it may be, is sufficient to describe the sublime structure of Freedomland, its natural and rightful connection to the foundational principles of our great country, and its superiority to our current modes of settlement.

*Freedomland isn't free. Keith Krumwiede's staged utopian earnestness and Jeffersonian grandeur remind us of the pains and costs of McMansions, ranchburgers, and rampant speculation on the amber waves of grain and fruited plains of our manifest destiny. His proposals are at once beautiful and unnerving—an architectural Americana that sticks in our craw because it seems entirely natural and just as equally absurd.*

—MARK PASNIK

# THE ROMANCE OF SYSTEMS BY MOS



THE ROMANCE OF SYSTEMS.

FRANK HAD FINISHED HIS THIRD MANHATTAN.

SOON HE WOULD BE TALKING ABOUT THE "INVISIBLE GRID"

F: EVERYTHING IS A SYSTEM. ARCHITECTURE IS ABOUT RULES. YOU CAN'T JUST PICK AND CHOOSE.

A CROWD STARTED TO FORM, EAGER TO WATCH. HIS RANTS W

SHE THOUGHT SHE HEARD SOMEONE REFERENCE RANCIERE, BUT COULDN'T BE SURE.

IT WAS GOING TO BE A LONG NIGHT.

F: IT'S

USED, AND SUSPECTED THAT NO ONE ELSE DID EITHER. BEHIND THE HYPERBOLE, SHE KNEW THERE WAS NO RESISTANCE, NO COMPLEXITY.

HE WAS

"FOR" ANYTHING THESE DAYS - ITS SUICIDE.

EVERYONE NODDED THEIR HEADS IN A KIND OF SYNCHRONIZED UNISON.

ALICE S



ID" AGAIN.



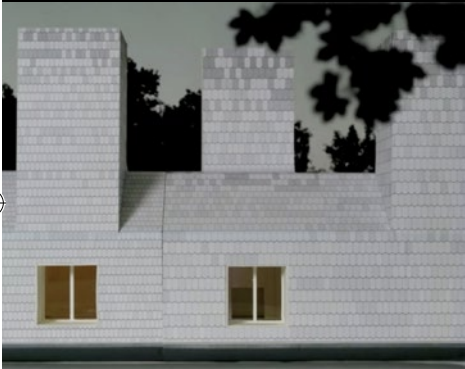
AT THE MOMENT, HE WAS SHOUTING AT NO ONE IN PARTICULAR.



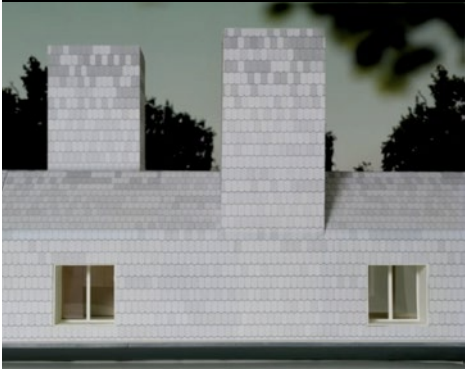
TS WERE INFECTIOUS.



ALICE QUIETLY SIPPED HER TONIC WATER, CLOSING HER EYES, COUNTING...4 MINUTES AND 33 SECONDS.



IT'S TOO CASUAL, TOO IMPRECISE. THE PROBLEM IS THAT IT LACKS, WELL, A KIND OF HYPERGEOMETRICITY. SHE NEVER QUITE UNDERSTOOD THE WORDS HE



WAS AN AGING BOXER STUFFING HIMSELF ON HORS D'OEUVRES TRYING TO RELIVE HIS GLORY.



F: IT'S ANTI-ANTI-FORM I'M AFTER. YOU CAN'T JUST BE



CE SIGHED.



ALL THIS CAJOLING, SHE THOUGHT, ITS PASSE.



FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, SHE MIGHT HAVE RUN OFF, UNABLE TO





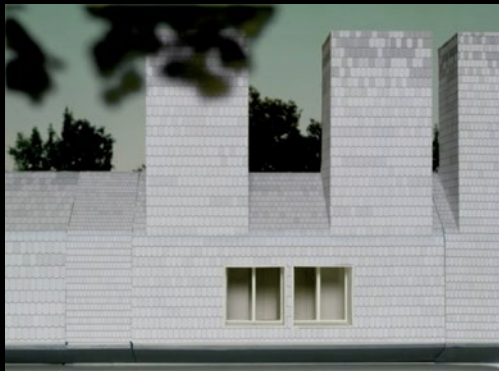
SO MUCH AS FEIGN AN INTEREST IN THE MACHISMO POLITICS OF FORMALISM.



ALL THE TALK OF SO-CALLED ARCHITECTURE MADE HER CRIN



ARCHITECTURE COULD PRODUCE. YET, PART OF IT STILL SEEMED FRIVOLOUS, A STYLISH SILLY EXTRAVAGANCE.



ALICE A



SOON HE WAS LAUGHING AT HIS OWN JOKES.



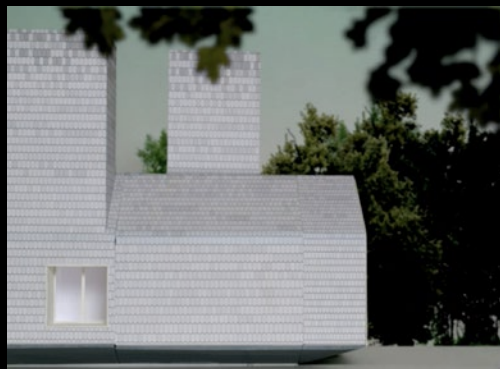
SHE KEPT HER DISTANCE, EVEN THOUGH SHE KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING ENDEARING ABOUT HIS DELIRIUM. IT



SHE THOUGHT.



NO SHARED DISCOURSE, NO CRITERIA, NO METHODS OF EVALUATION, JUST POSTURING AND COMPETING GENRES.



BLEARY-EYED, FRANK SAT AT THE KITCHEN TABLE. HE MARVELED OVER THE WAY HIS EGGS RESEMBLED SHALLOW DOMES, THEIR YOLKS IN PERFECT CRYSTALLINE SYM



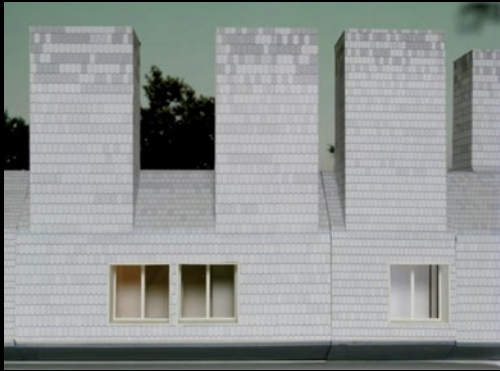




CRINGE. IT WAS ONLY RECENTLY THAT SHE HAD BEGUN TO APPRECIATE THE INHERENT BEAUTY OF GEOMETRIC SYSTEMS, THE STRANGE SUBJECTIVITY THAT



CE APPRECIATED THE NOVEL USE OF NATURAL LIGHT, ITS EFFECTS PROMISCUOUS.



FRANK BEGAN GESTURING WILDLY AND SKETCHING DIAGRAMMS.



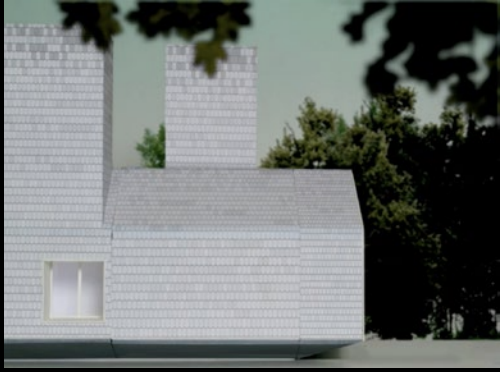
IT WAS GETTING LATE.



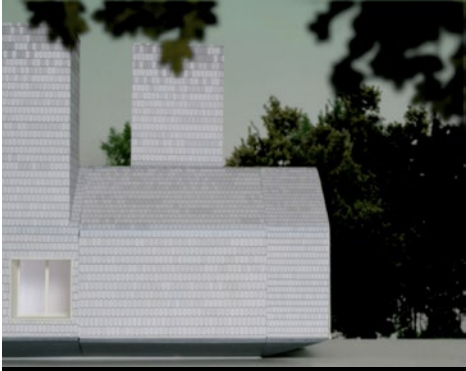
ALICE DECIDED TO CALL A CAB. SHE WAS TIRED OF PRETENDING. THERE IS NO MORE DISCIPLINE,



ES. SHE KNEW THAT HIS ELABORATE GESTURES COULD NOT BRING IT BACK.



THE NIGHT ENDED. THE SUN WAS RISING. HALF-AWAKE AND



SYMMETRY. CHOLESTEROL, SHE THOUGHT.



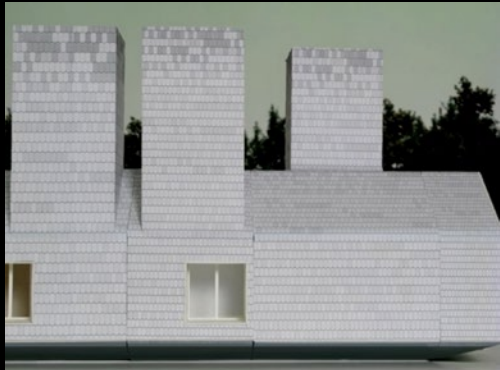
HE BEGAN TO CONSTRUCT THE FARNSWORTH HOUSE OUT OF TOAST, NEXT TO AN INTRICATE PARAMETRIC DOME OF



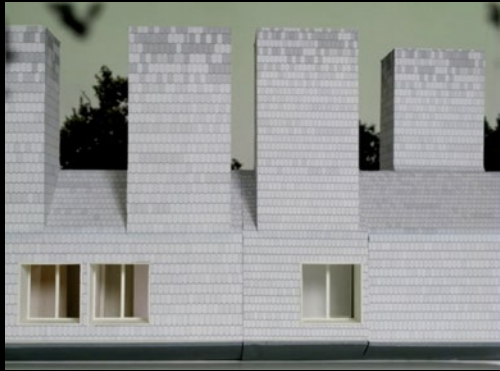




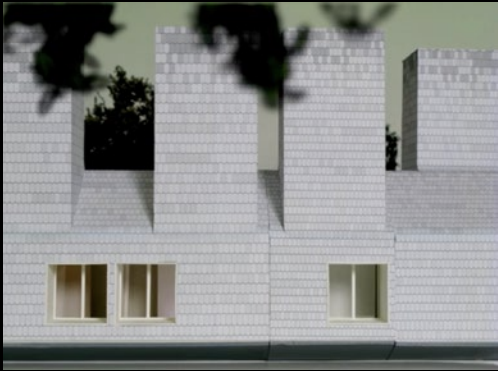
POTATOES. SHE WONDERED IF HE HAD THOUGHT ANYMORE ABOUT THEIR UPCOMING DEADLINE.



FRANK AND ALICE BOTH WORKED IN THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE.



IT LACKS SPECIFICITY.



A: I DON'T MIND THE GENERIC, BUT THAT'S THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS. IT DOESN'T FUNCTION. TO START,



SYSTEMATICITY, ALICE.



A: WE'VE GOT TO THINK MORE ABOUT PERFORMANCE.



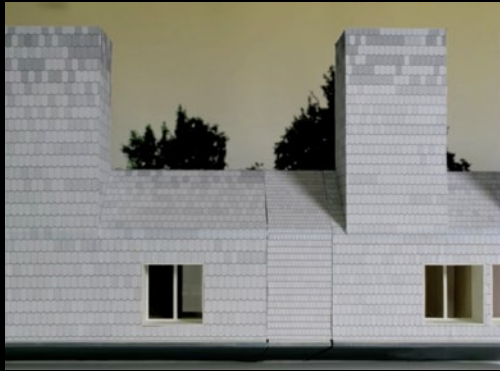
ARCHITECTURE.



IN THE MARGINS OF THE NEWSPAPER.



THEY WERE ODDLY-SHAPED LUMPS, BOTH SEDUCTIVE AND UGLY.



F: THEY



FRANK HAD PRODUCED SOME OF THE MOST BEAUTIFULLY ODD THINGS EVER SEEN BY MANKIND, BUT HE HARDLY EVER LEFT THE OFFICE.



HE HAD





PRACTICE CALLED BOUDOIR.



F: WELL, THE GEOMETRY, THE RELATIONSHIP OF PART TO WHOLE, THE COMPOSITION, IT'S TOO GENERIC.



PART, THE BATHROOMS ARE ALL WRONG.



F: WHO GIVES A DAMN ABOUT THE PLUMBING? THAT'S WHAT UNIONS ARE FOR. I'M TALKING ABOUT



ARCHITECTURE IS THE PRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENT, NOT SOME NOSTALGIC IDEAS OF FORM. FRANK WASN'T LISTENING, AS USUAL. HE BEGAN SKETCHING FURIOUSLY



THEY'VE GOT TO FLOAT ALICE, THINK OF IT, HOW WONDERFULLY COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT IT COULD BE.



A: FRANK, DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.



HAD NO IDEA HOW PEOPLE REALLY LIVED.



ALICE PREFERRED WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE CITY. SHE WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO CONVINCE HIM THAT







THE VERNACULAR WAS INTERESTING.



HER BELIEF WAS IN A RADICAL PRAGMATISM. SHE KNEW THE WORLD WOULDN'T SUSTAIN THAT LEVEL OF



AND THE WORLD WASN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THAT LEVEL OF

EXCESS.

LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW, AT NOTHING IN PARTICULAR, HE REMEMBERED WHEN THEY MET, AT THE



GLOBAL WARMING CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE BANHAM CORPORATION.



AND THE WORLD WASN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN THAT LEVEL OF

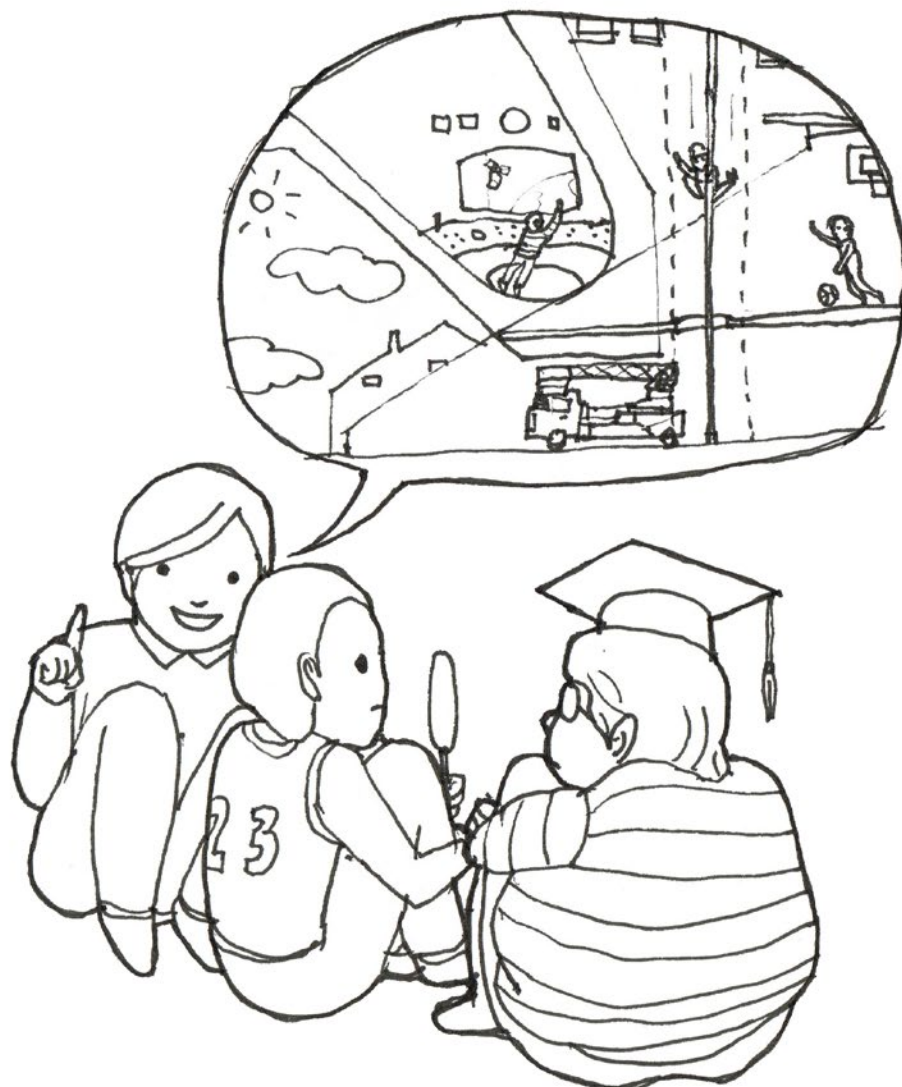
UNDER THE FLUORESCENT LIGHTS, SURROUNDED BY BIODEGRADABLE INSULATION PANELS, HE COULD TELL SHE WAS DIFFERENT.

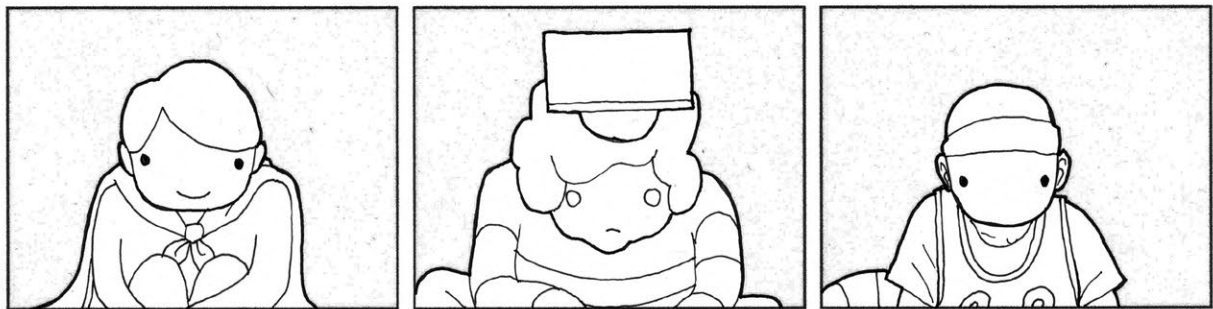
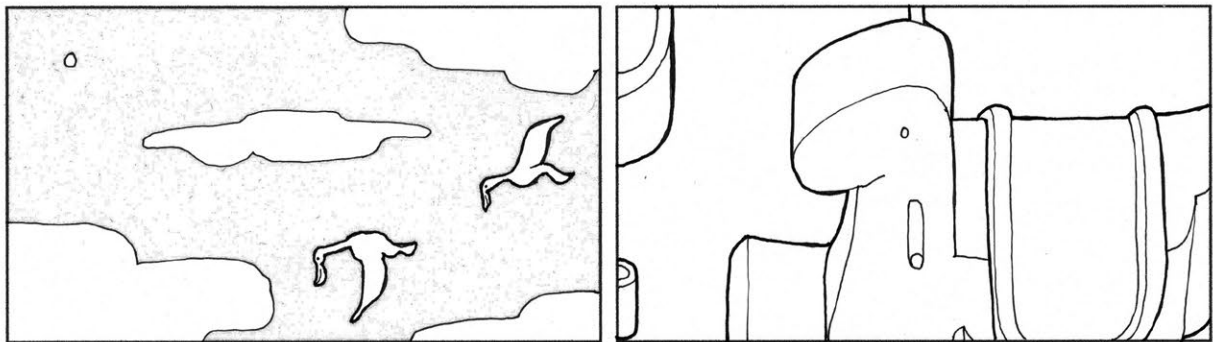
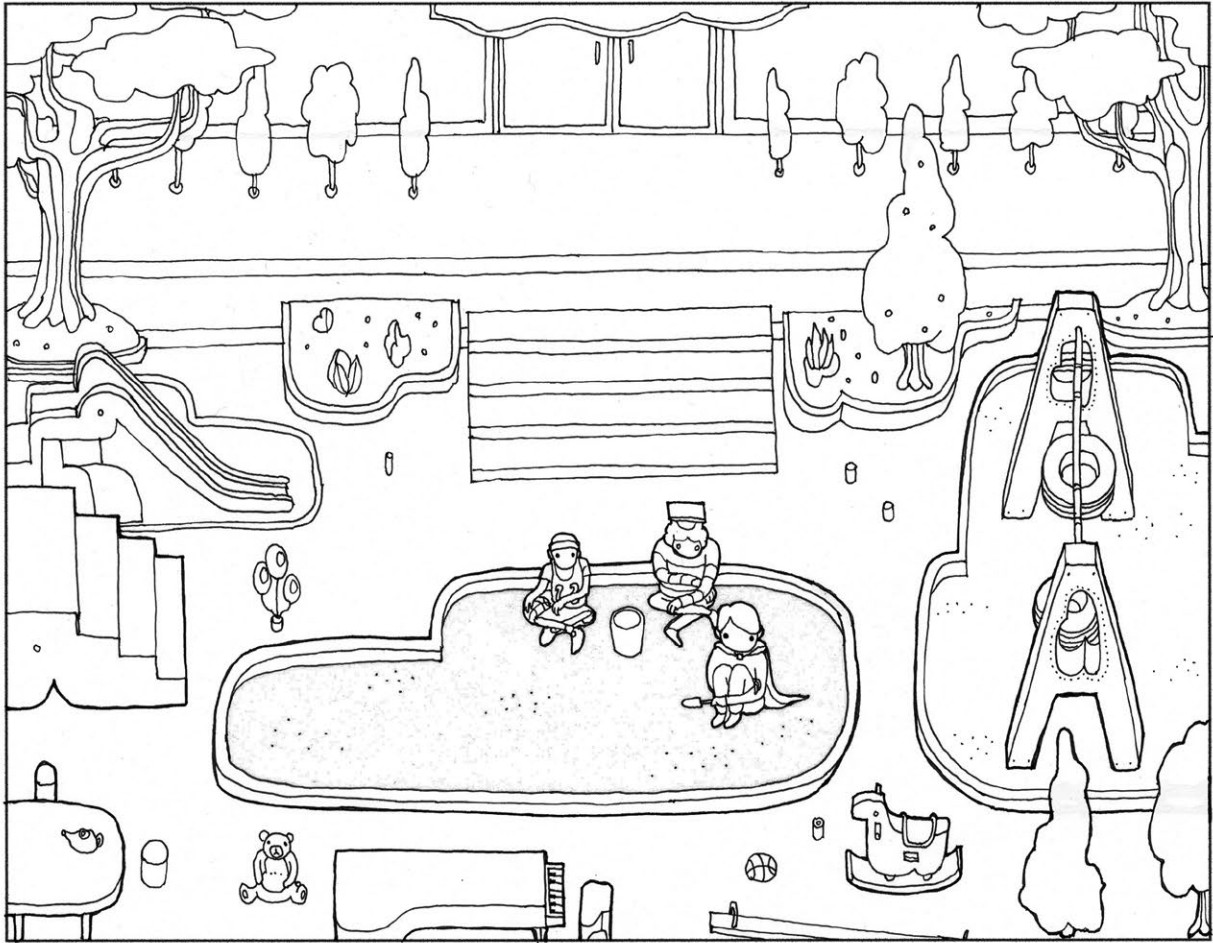


IT WAS FRANK WHO HAD SUGGESTED THAT THEY WORK TOGETHER. HE LOVED HER INSTANTLY.

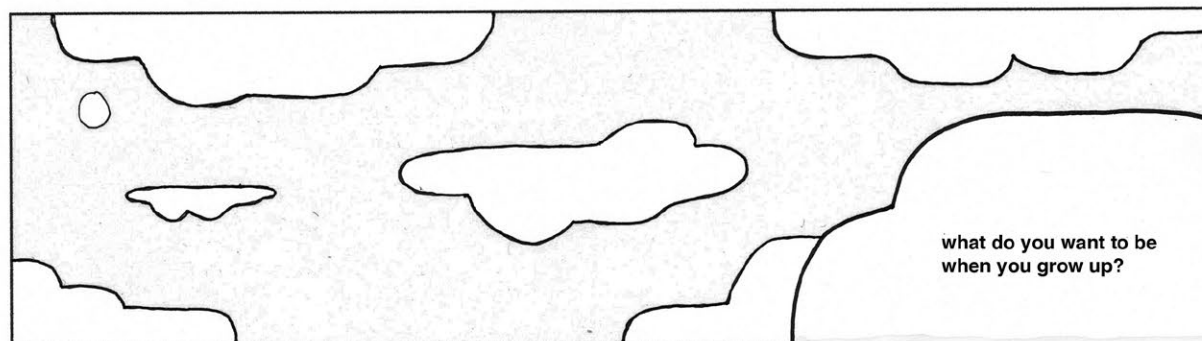
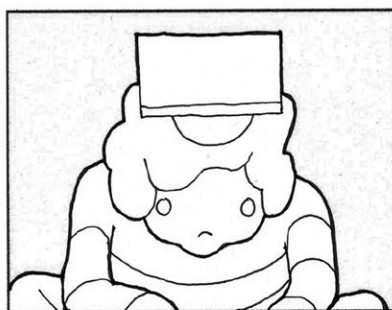
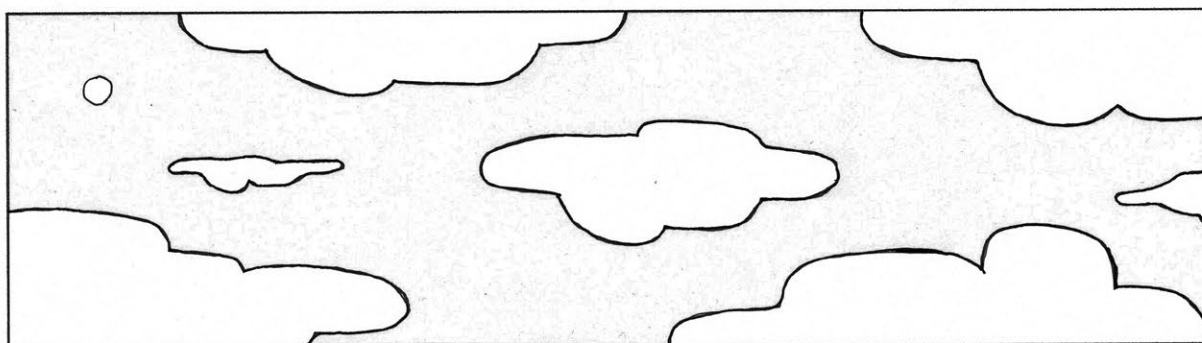
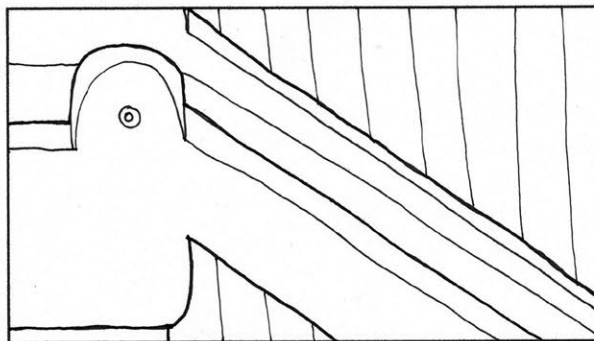
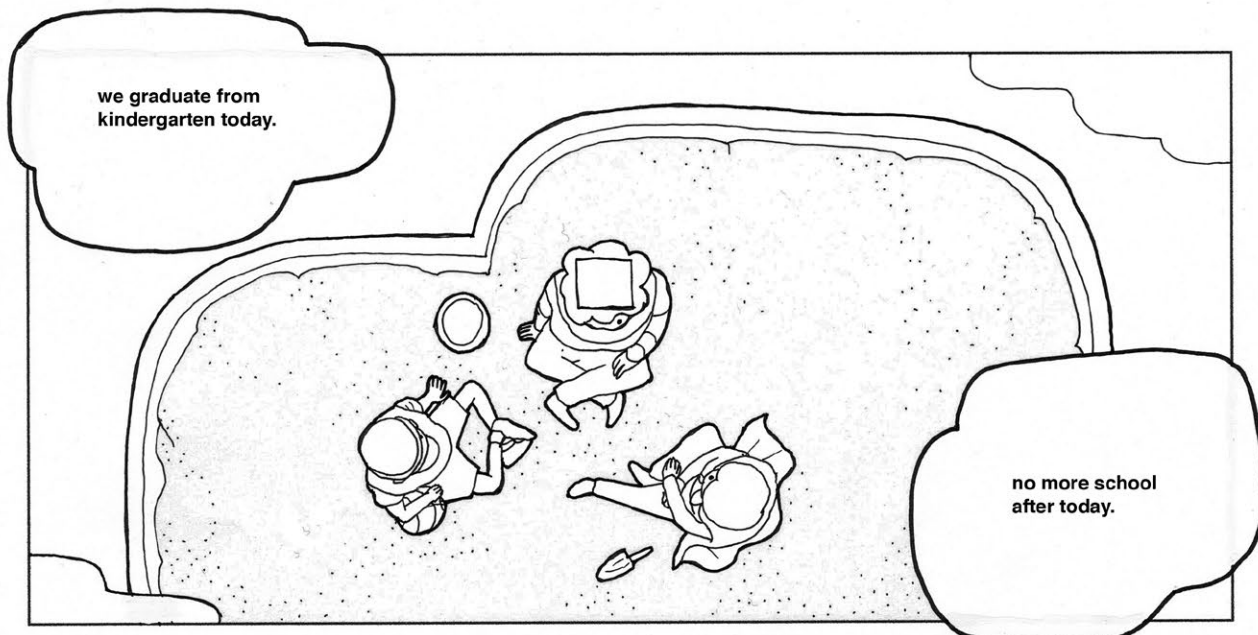
Jimenez Lai

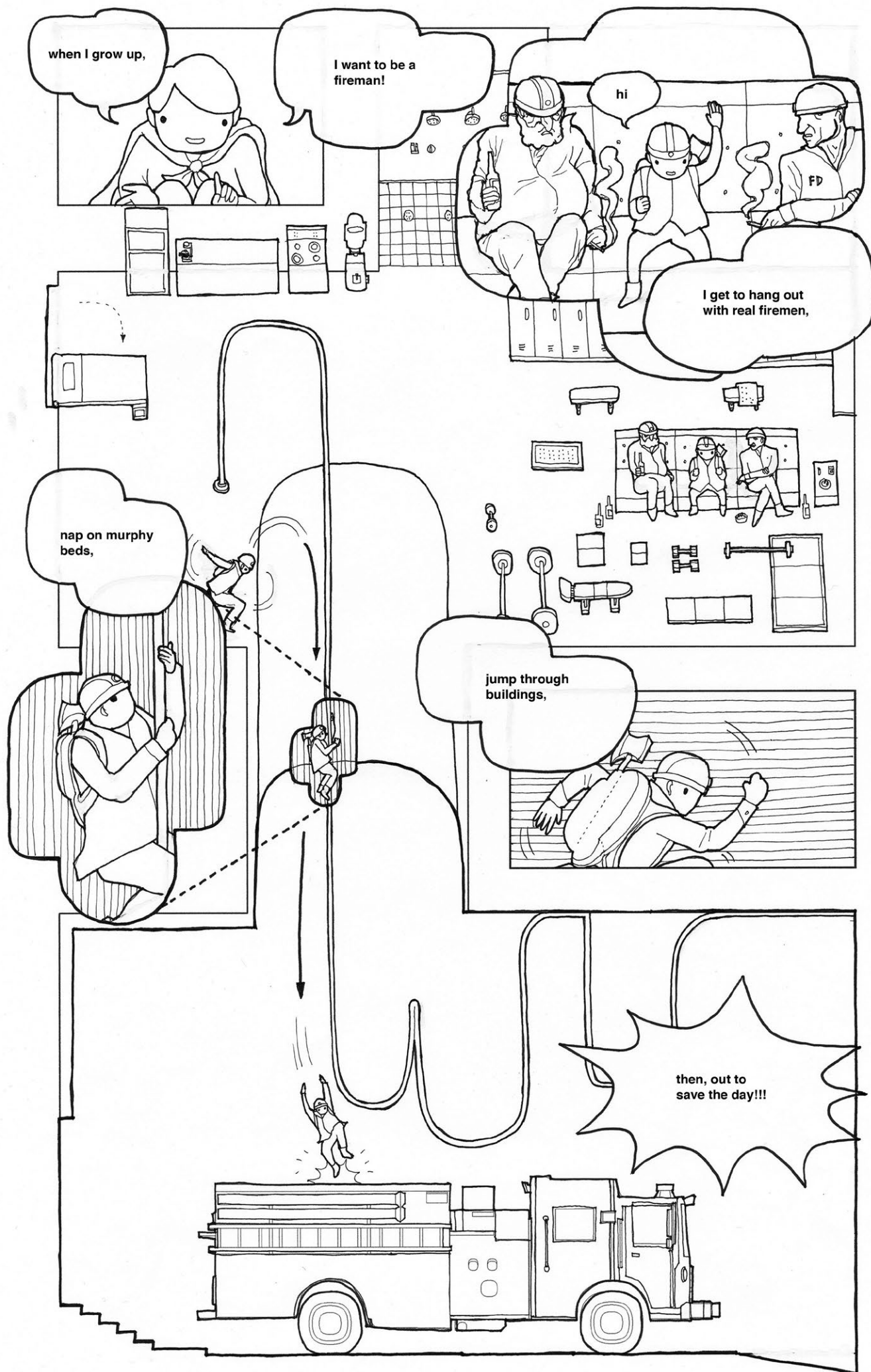
# KINDERGARDEN TALES



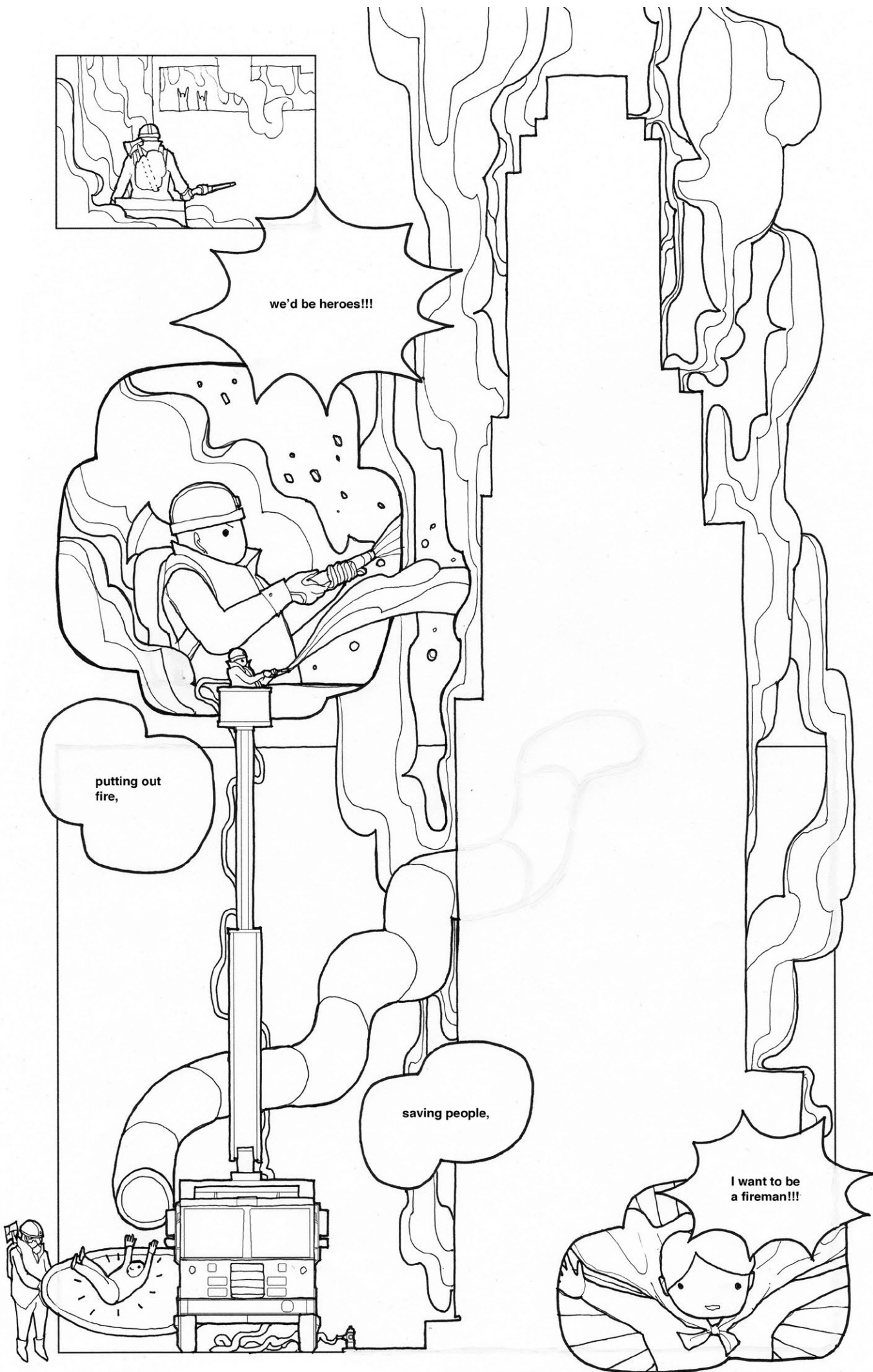




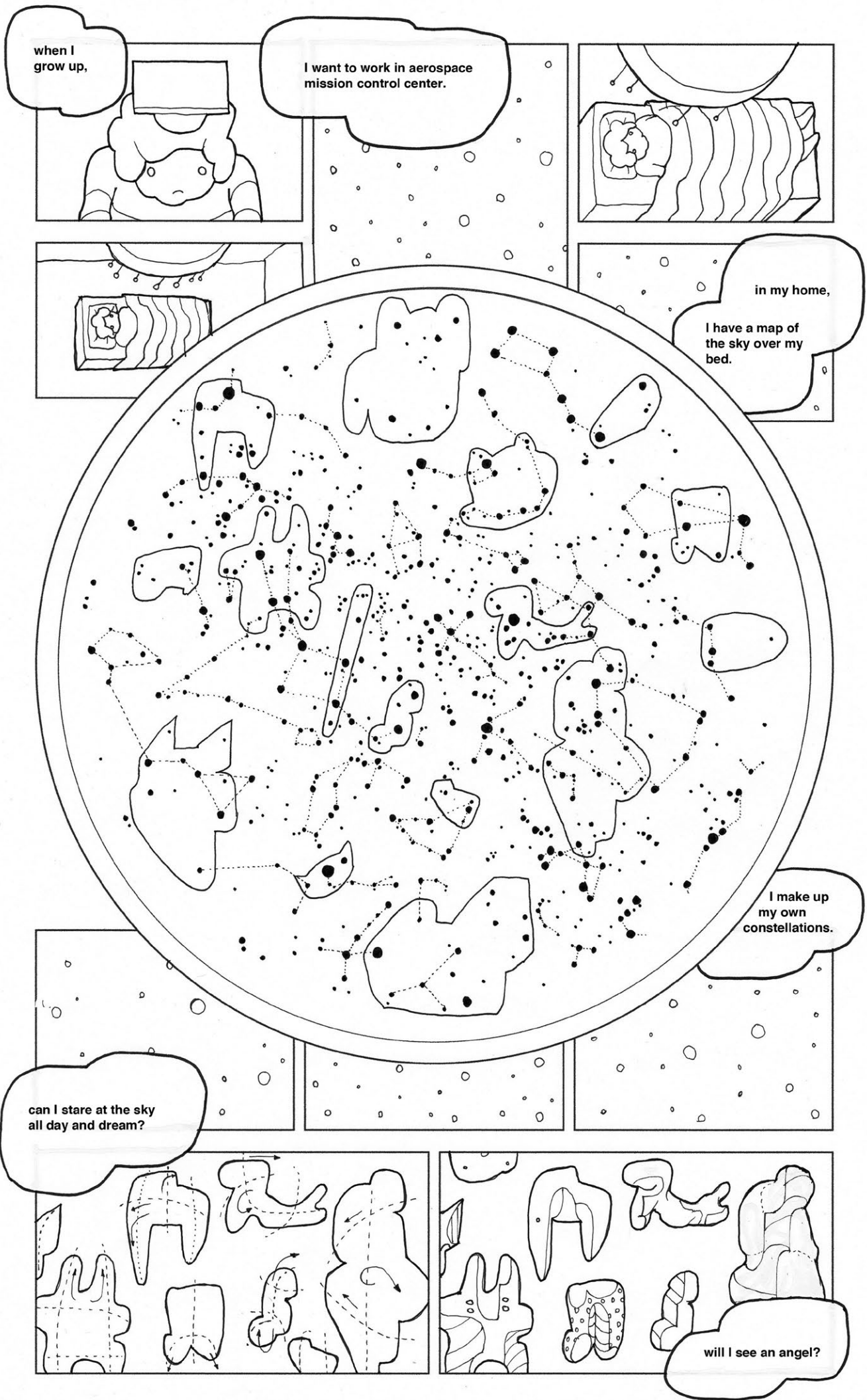












when I  
grow up,

I want to work in aerospace  
mission control center.

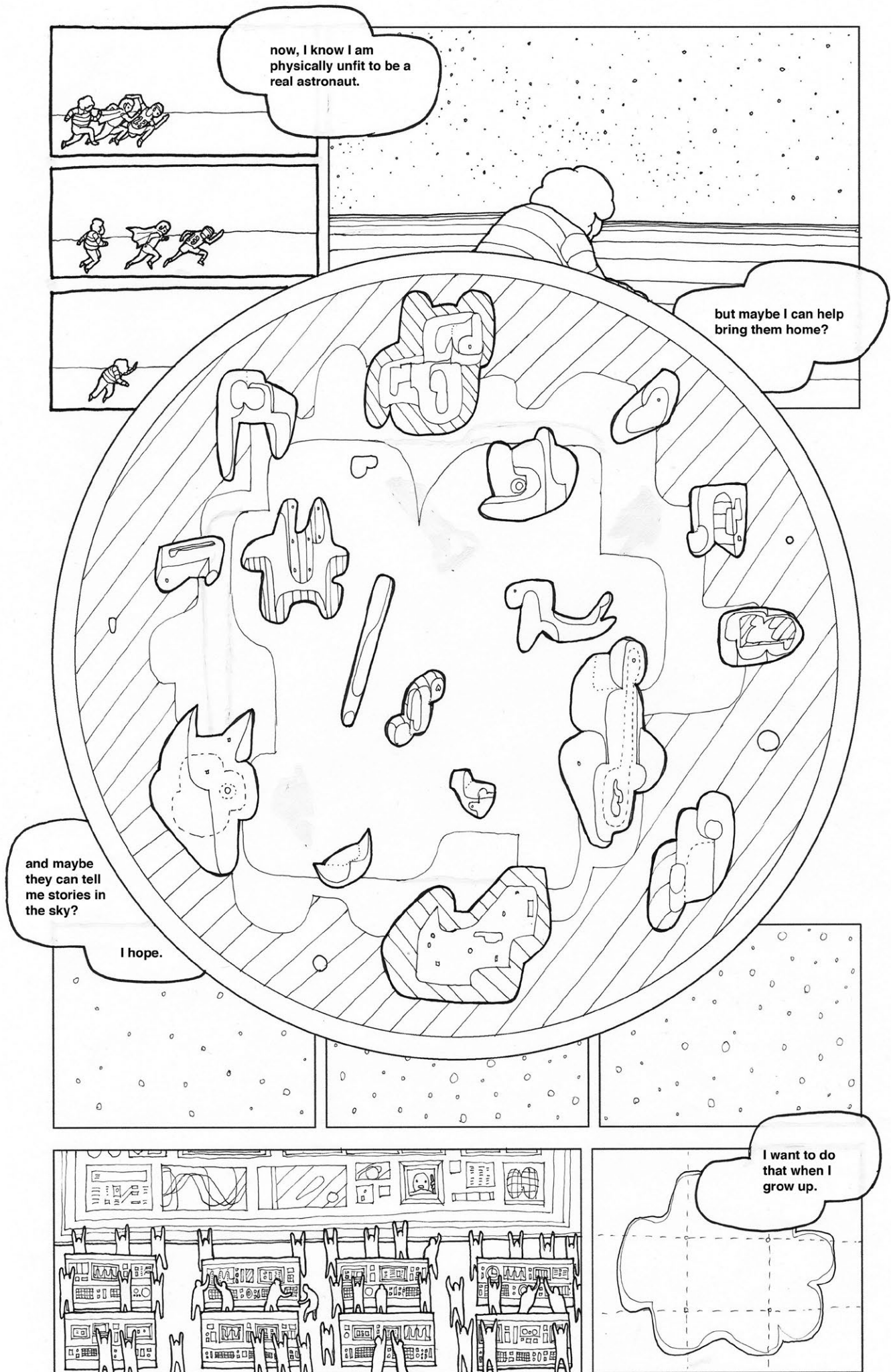
in my home,

I have a map of  
the sky over my  
bed.

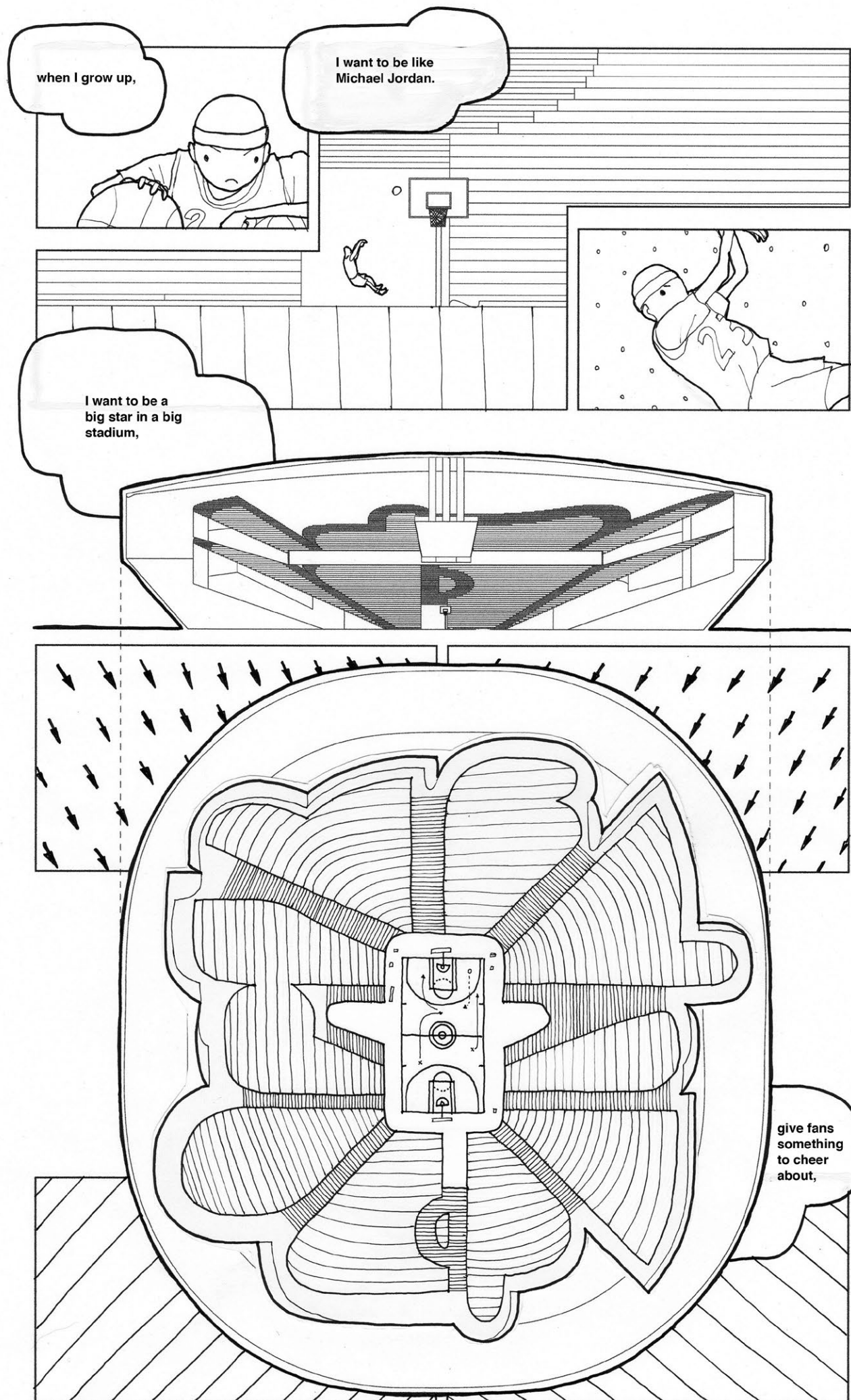
I make up  
my own  
constellations.

can I stare at the sky  
all day and dream?

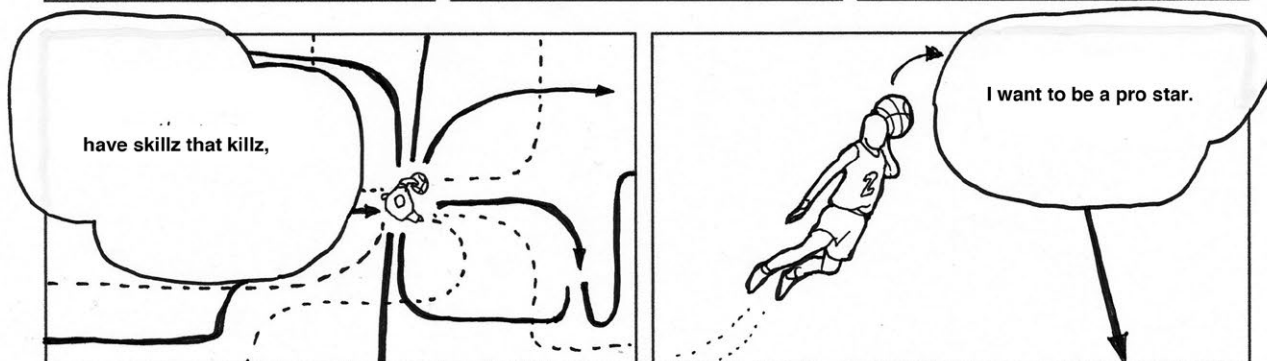
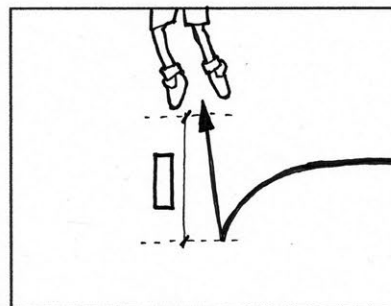
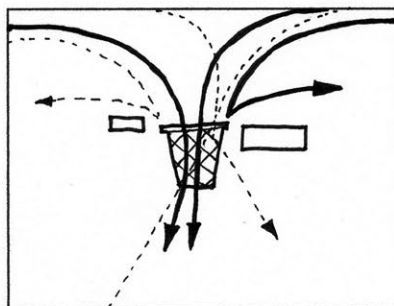
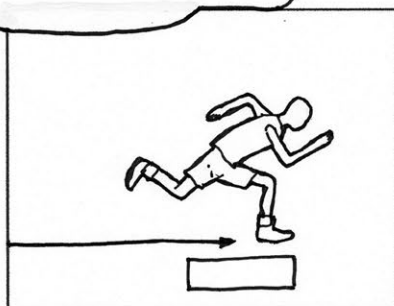
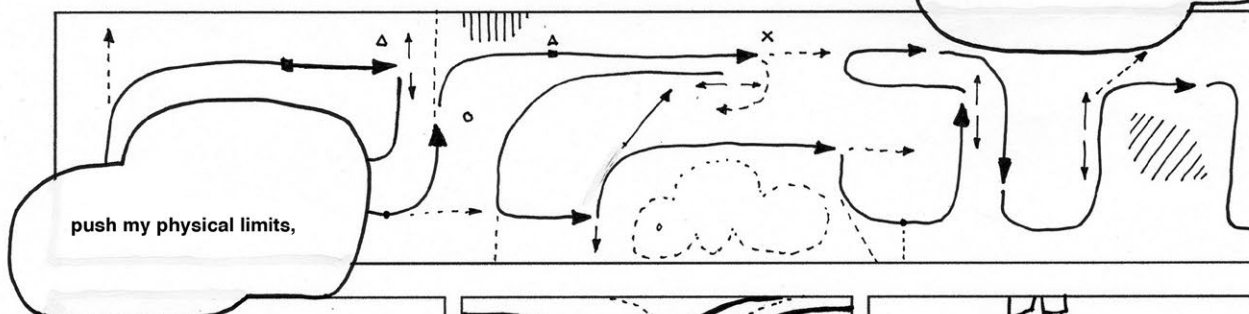
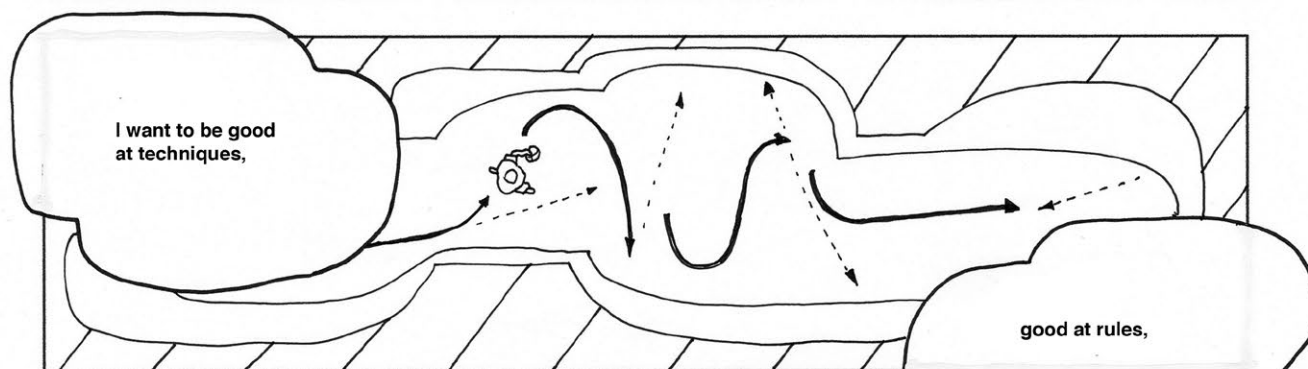
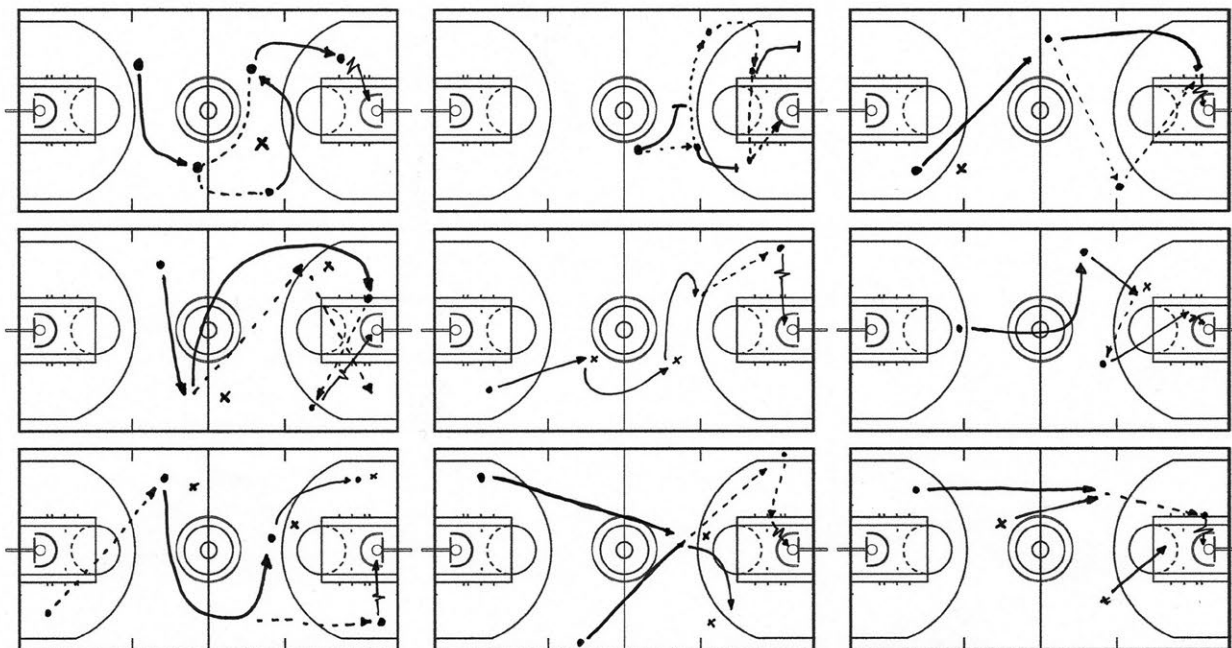
will I see an angel?

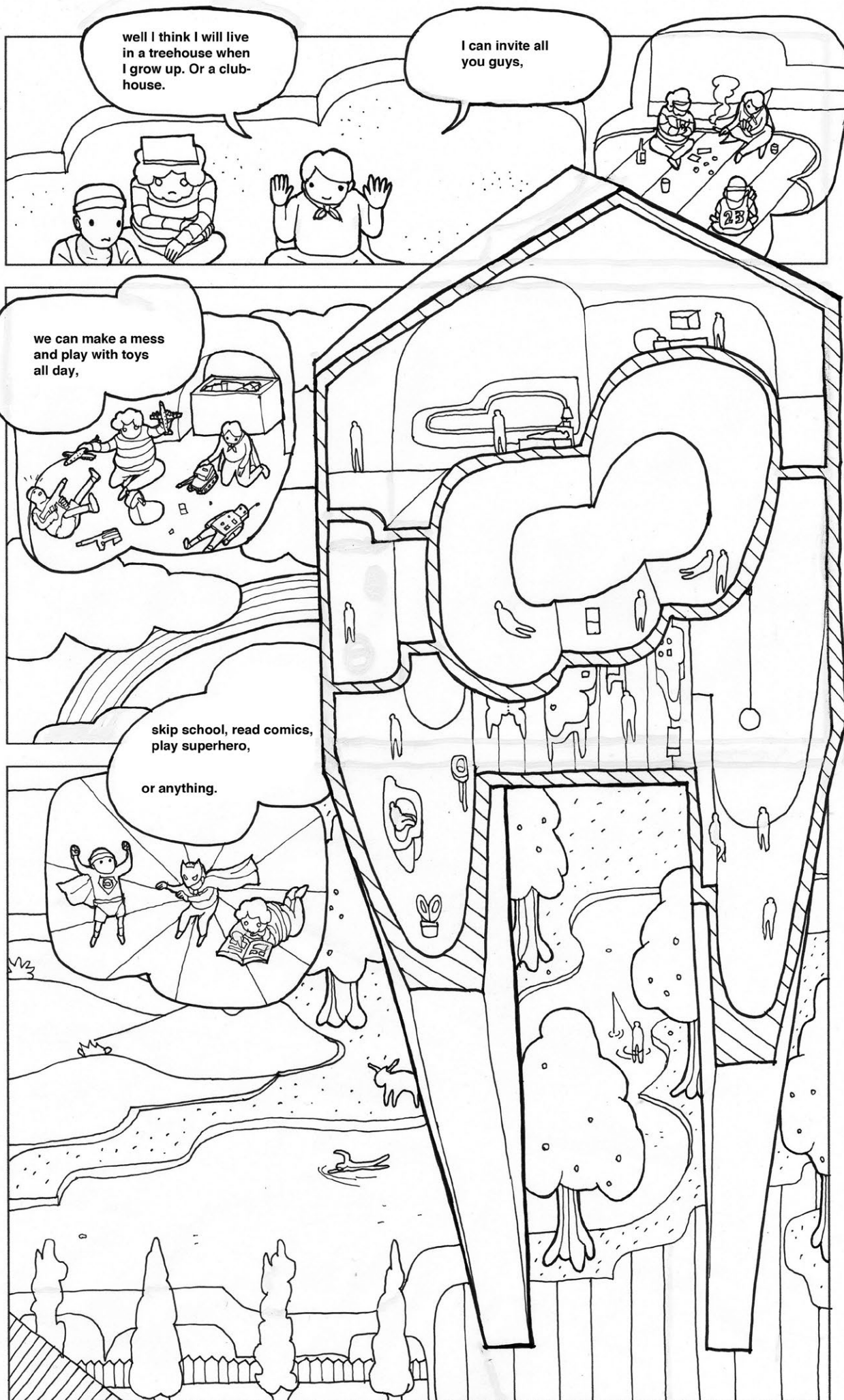




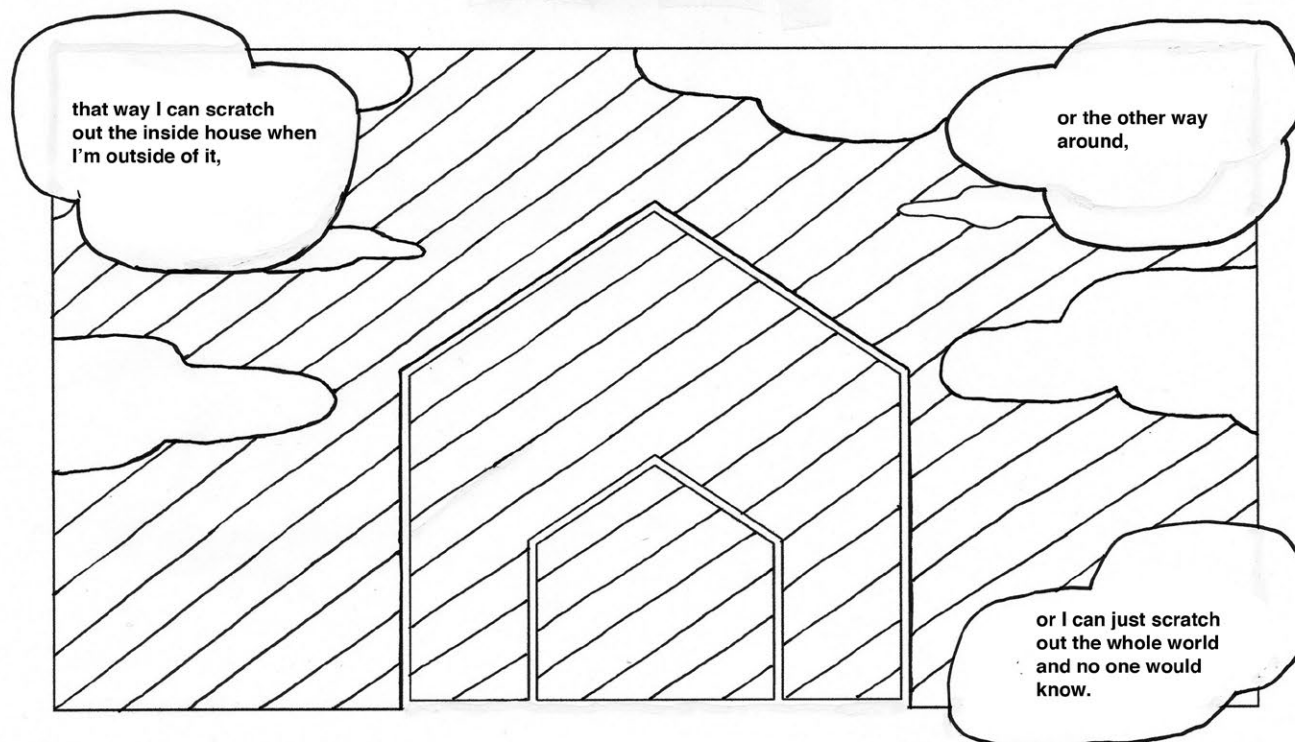
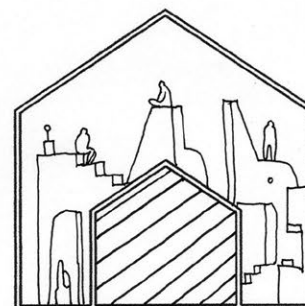
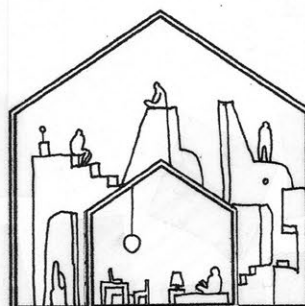
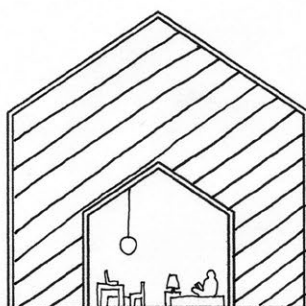
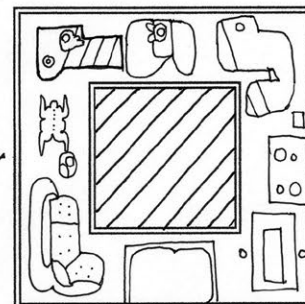
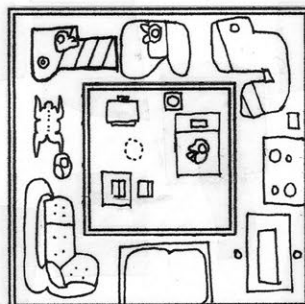
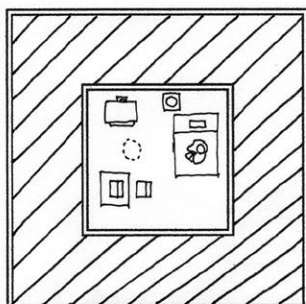
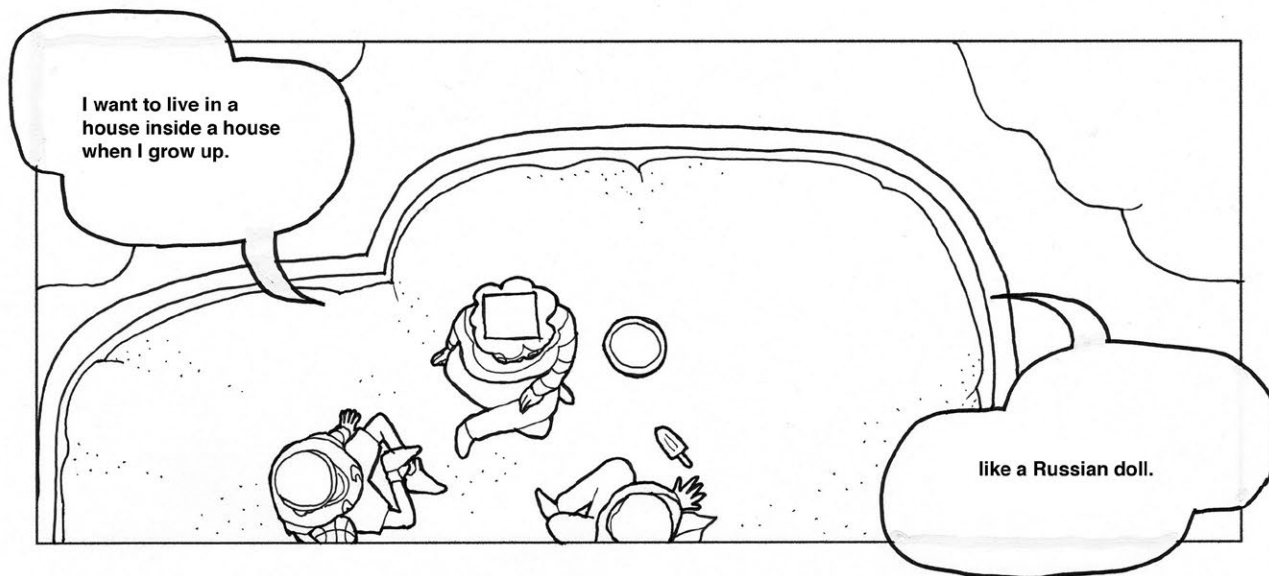




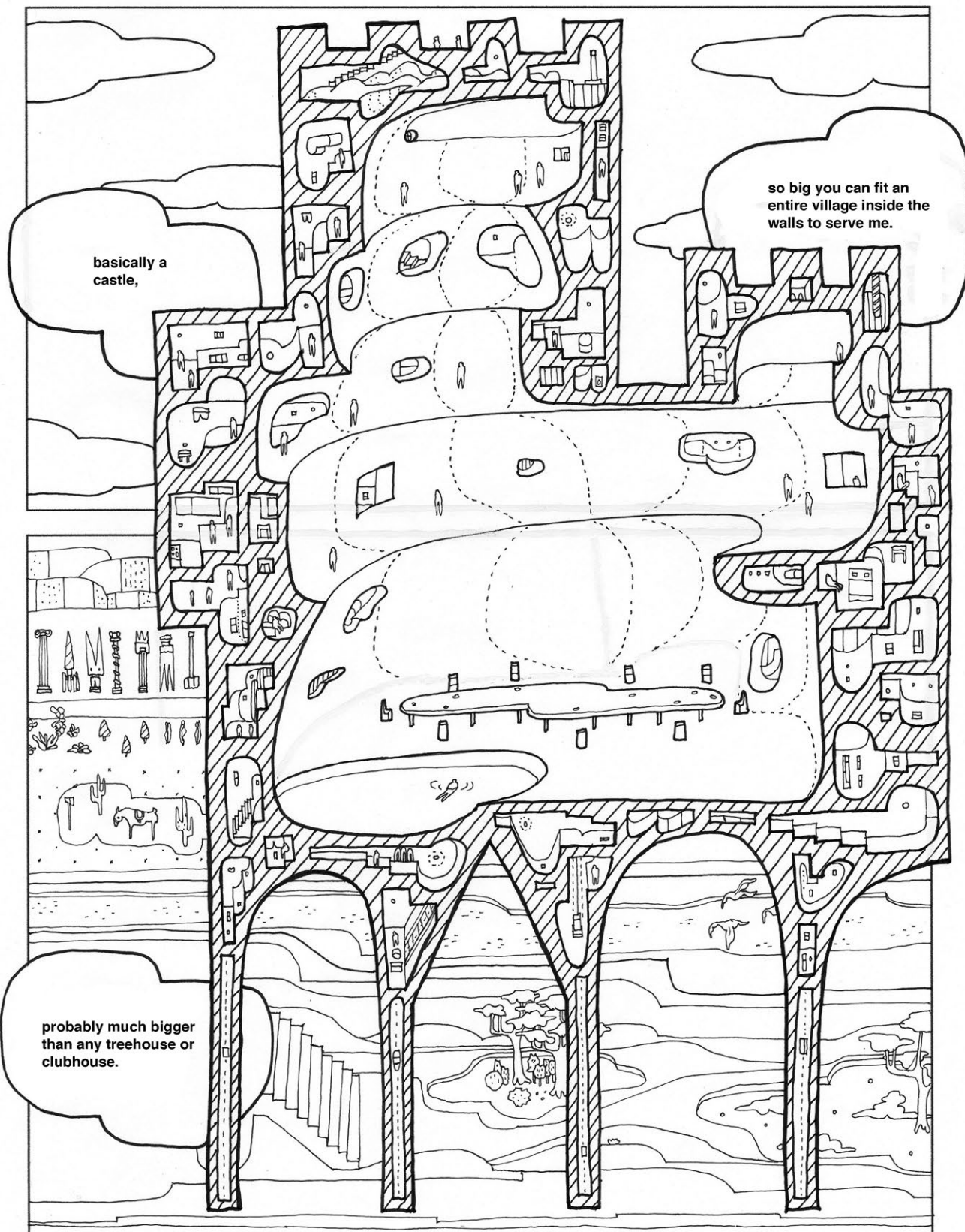




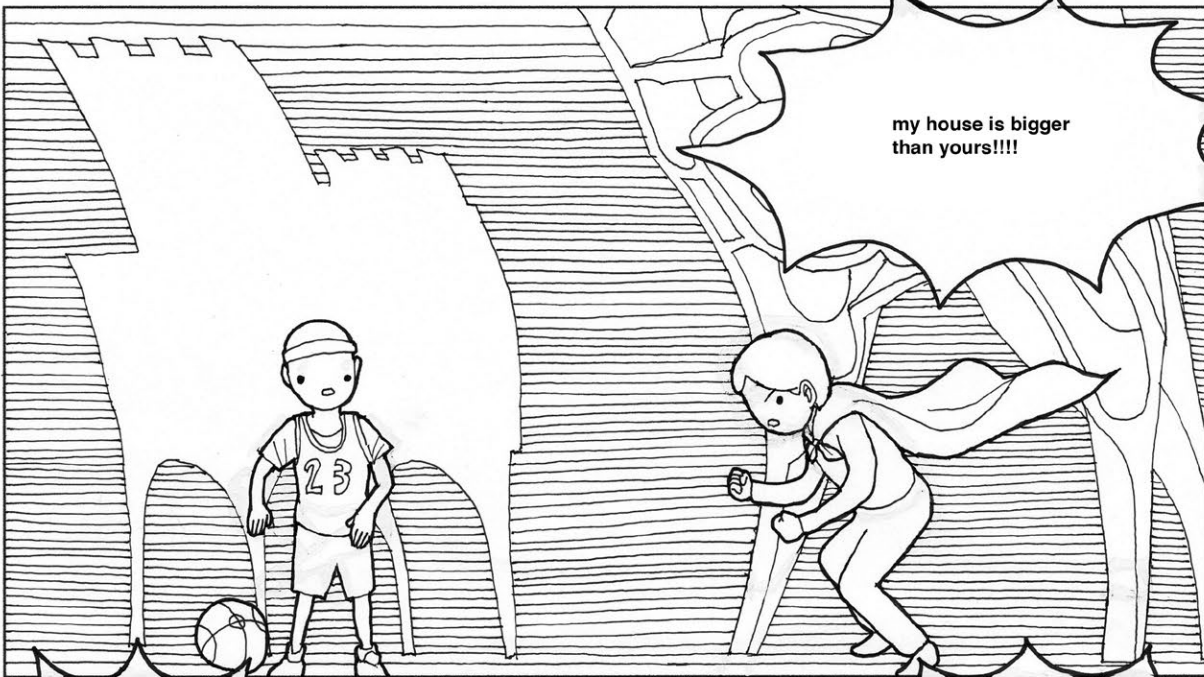
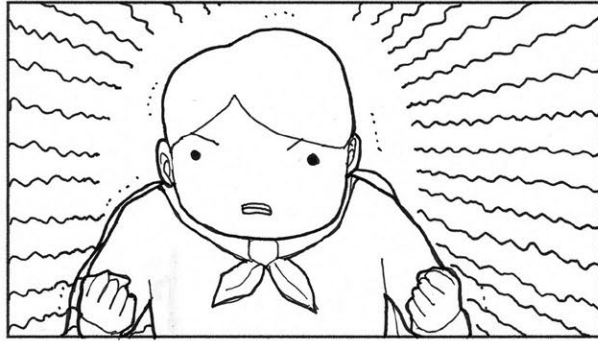
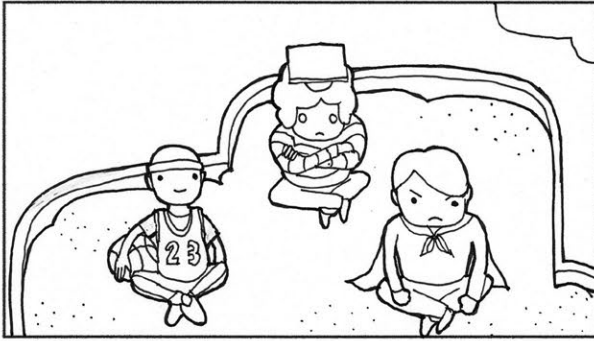








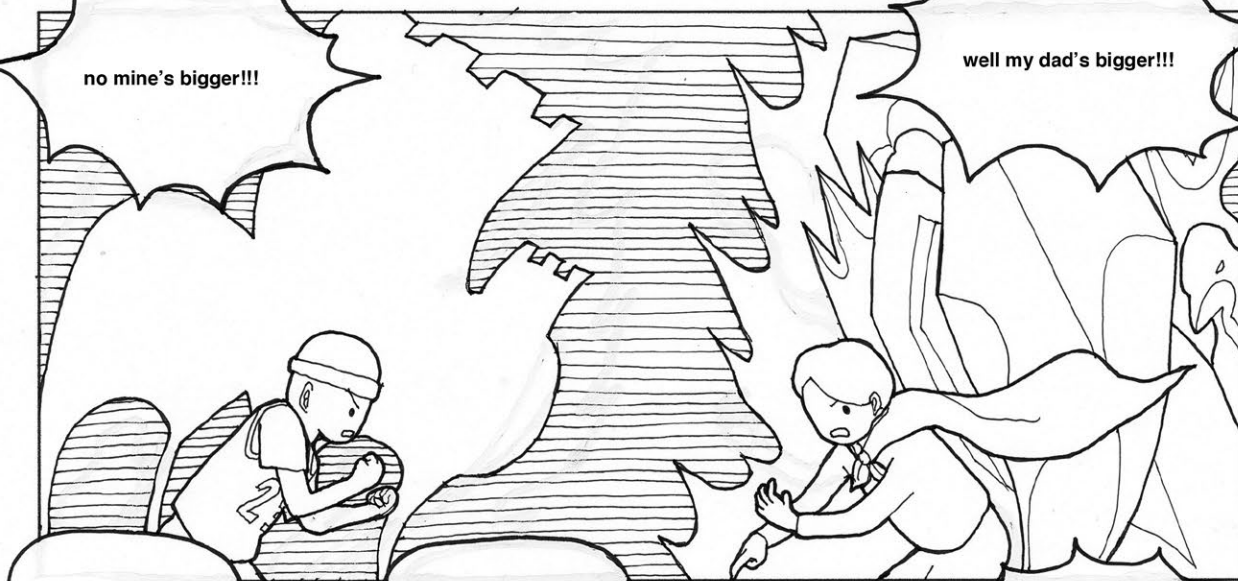




my house is bigger  
than yours!!!!

no mine's bigger!!!

well my dad's bigger!!!



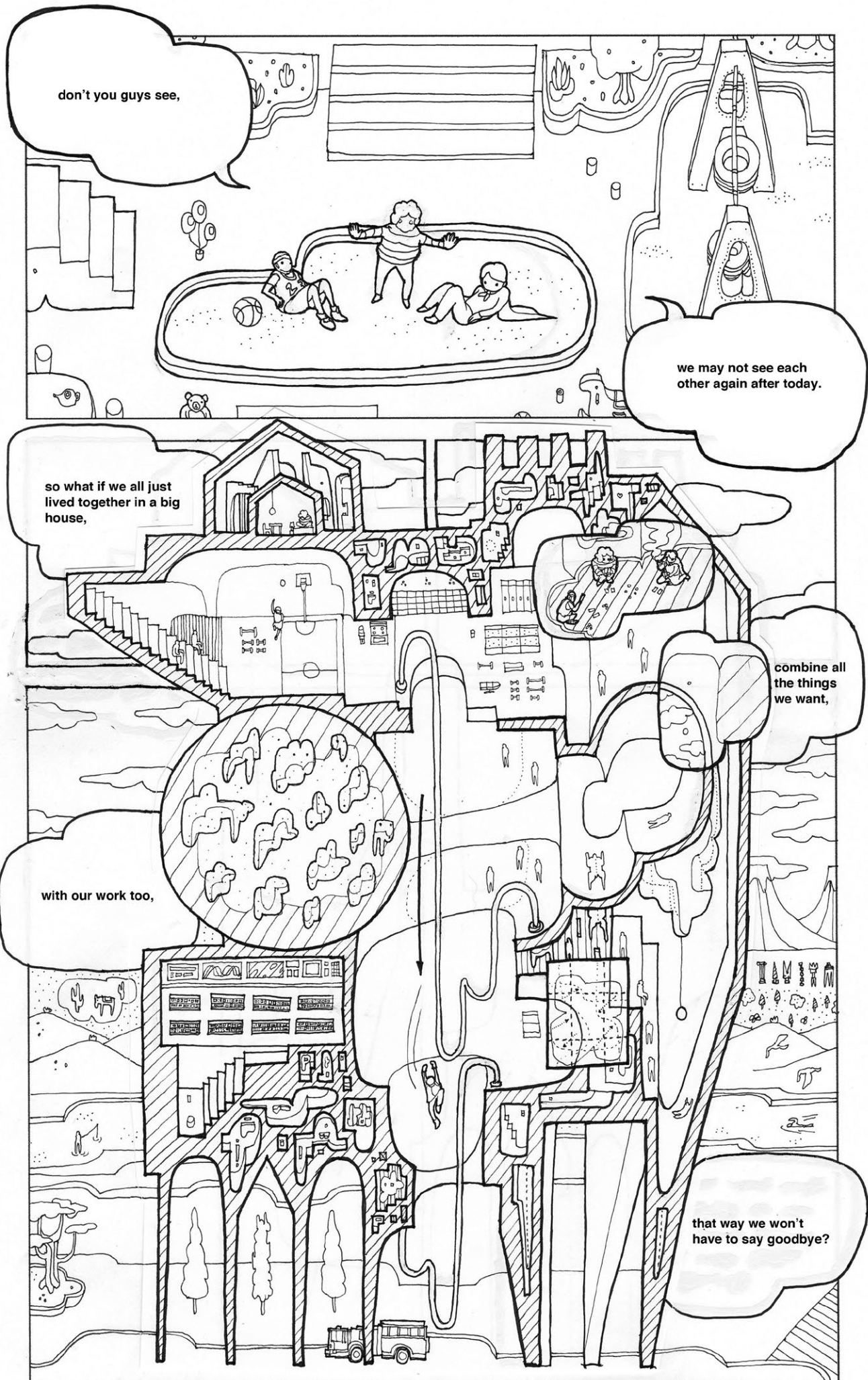
whoa you guys,

stop it!

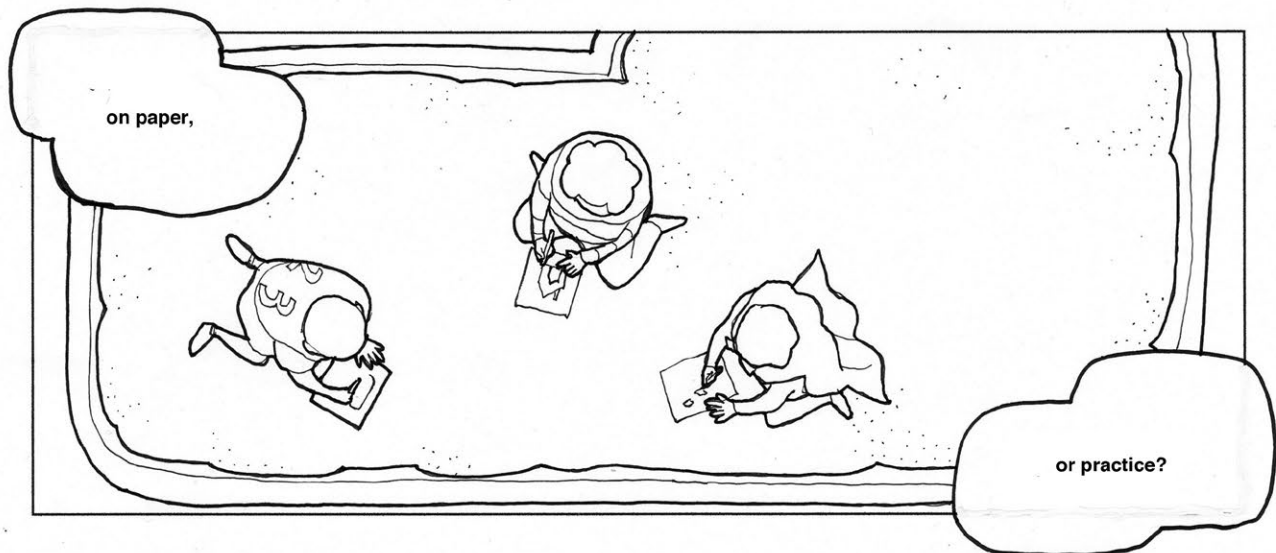
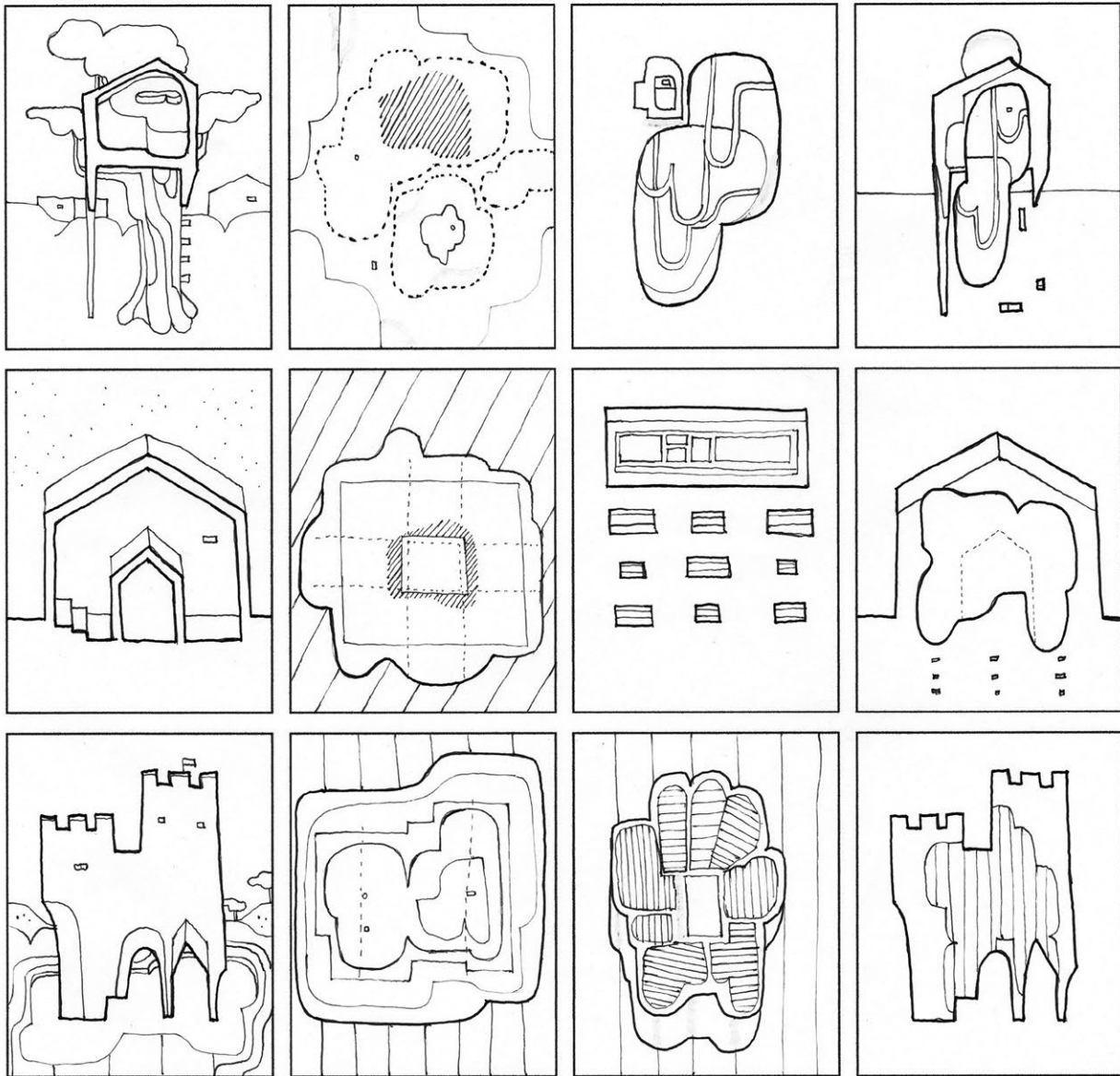
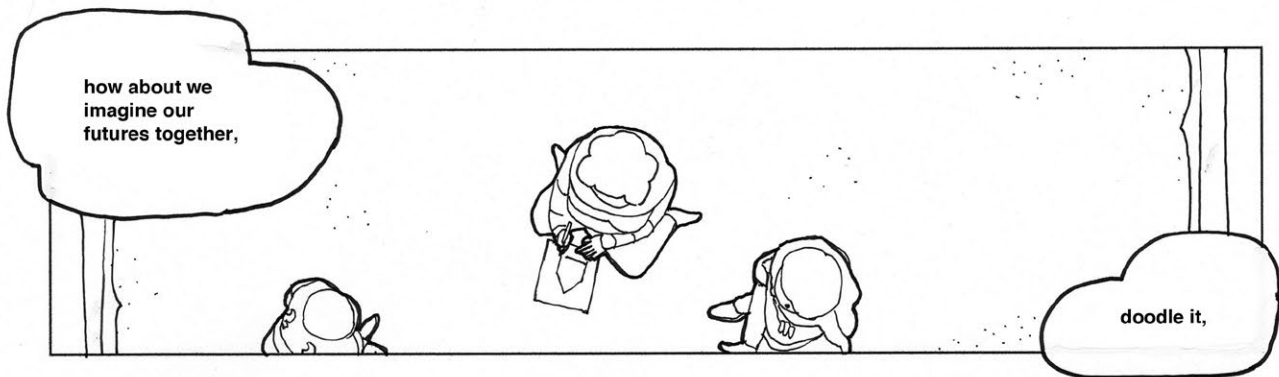
stop it!!!!

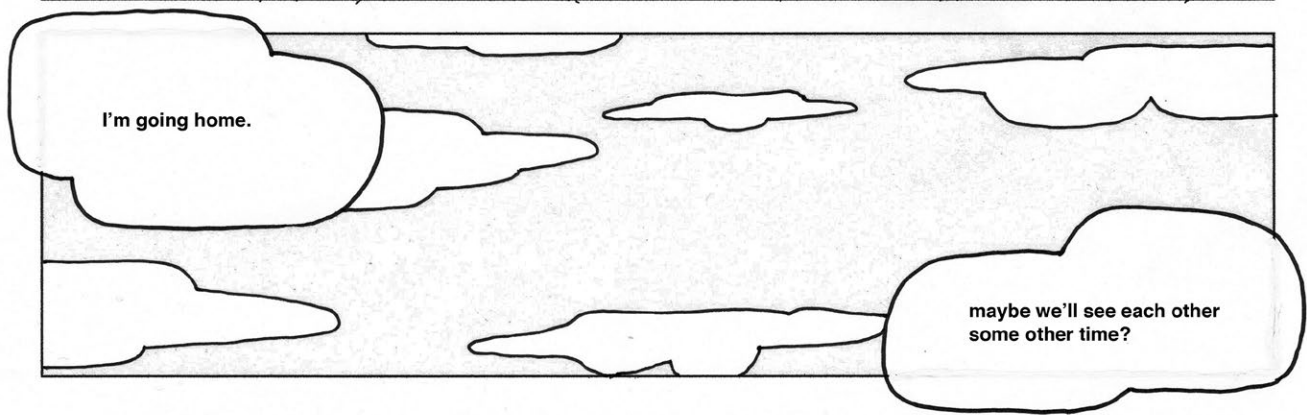
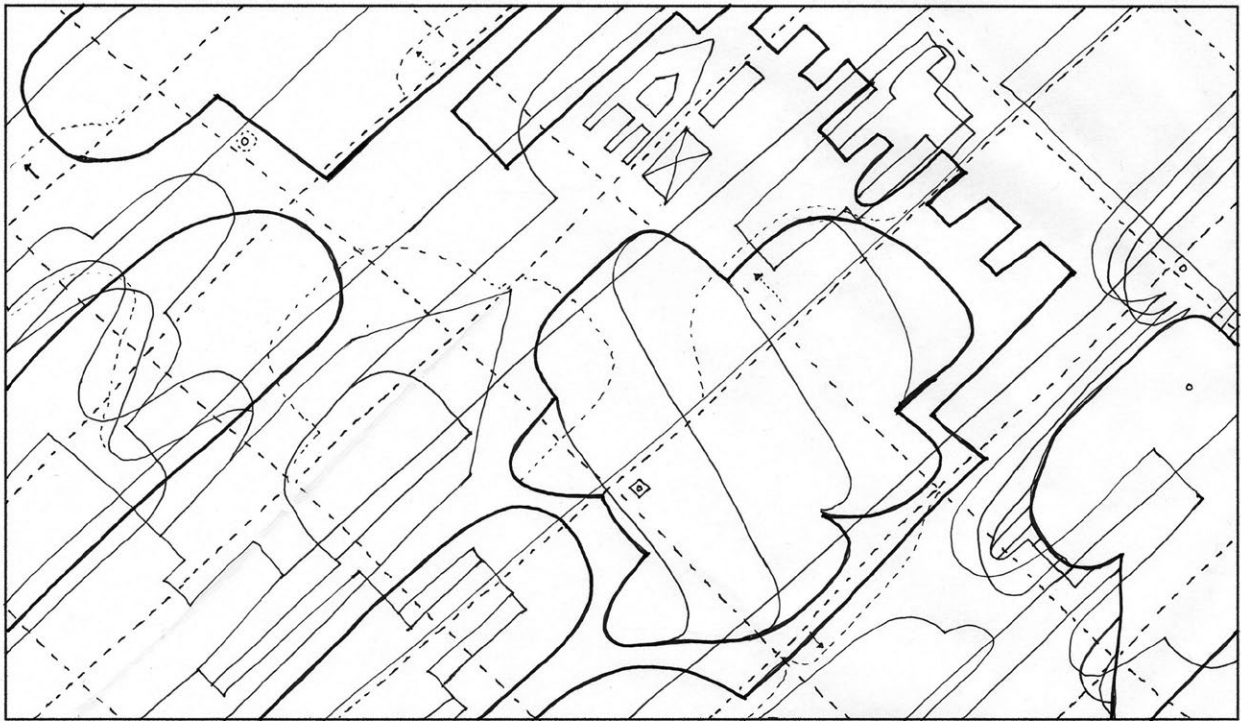
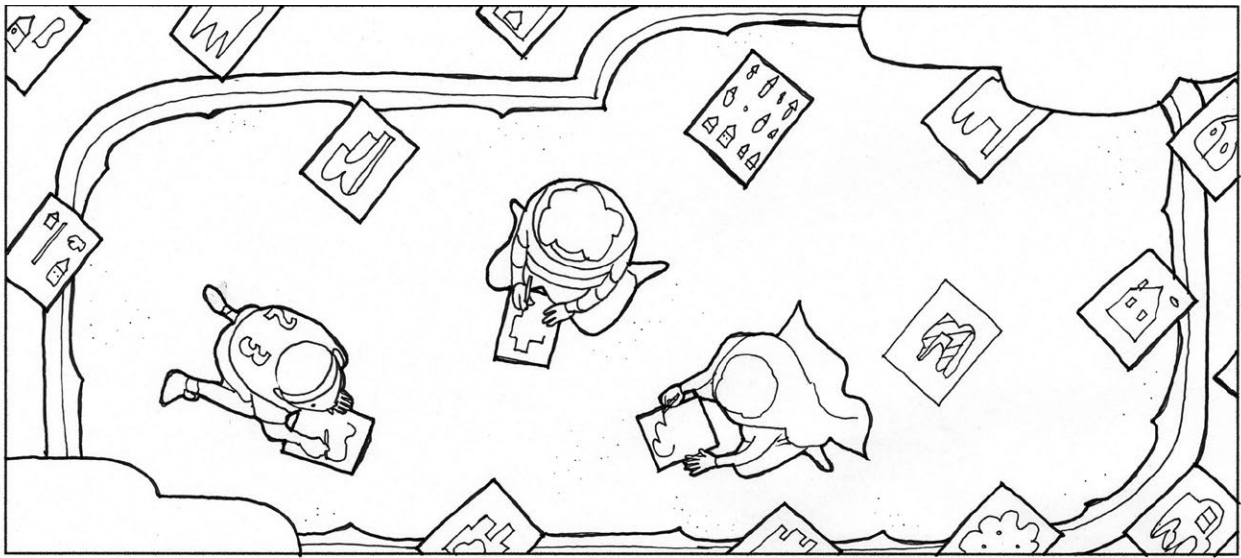












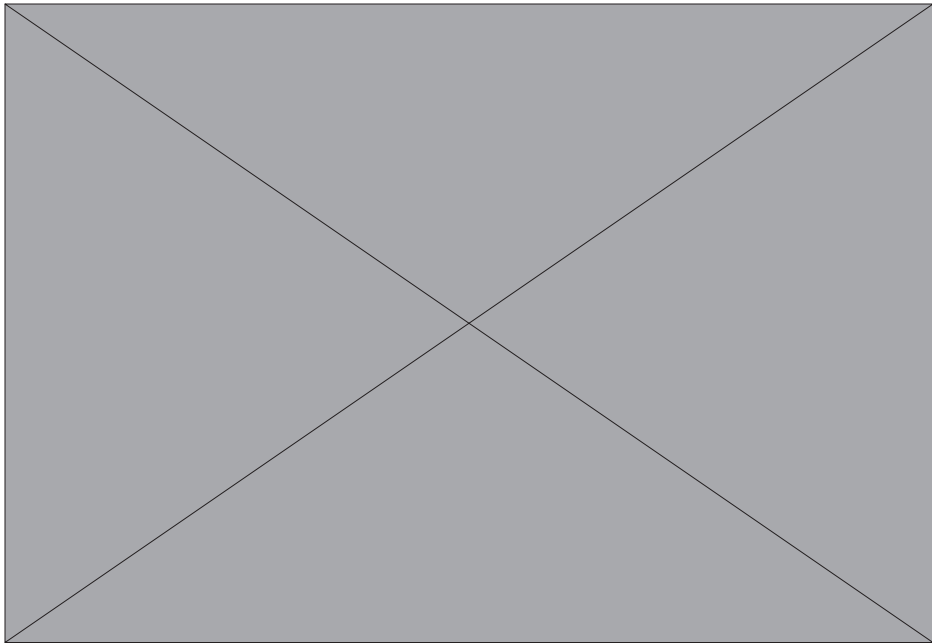
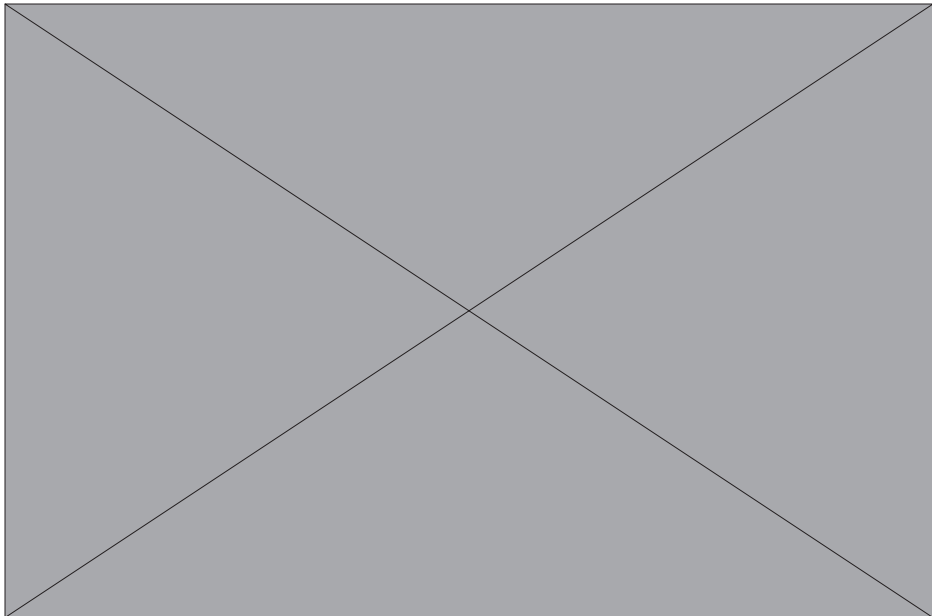
# Stories of Science

## The Milgram Experiment— Small Worlds

kazys varnelis & robert sumrell



praxis 14



architecture, it has often been claimed, is a synthesis of science and art. On the surface, it seems that these are the opposite poles of human intelligence; the former is logical, reproducible, hard, the latter is emotional, unique, and soft. Since Vitruvius, architects have prided themselves on inhabiting both worlds. In perhaps the pinnacle of this topos, in *Space, Time, and Architecture* Sigfried Giedion went so far as to proclaim that modern architecture had a unique, healing role in modernity because of its ability to overcome the increasing split between these two poles. Some architects' infatuation with computation over the last two decades, from blobs to parametricism, replays this script. Yet, it is possible that the dialectic of art and science is only a fiction. After all, many of the best artists are not merely technically adept, but also experiment with materials as part of their practice while the most successful scientists are great storytellers, illustrating their hypotheses with captivating anecdotes to make them accessible to the public. Ask school children about famous scientific experiments and they will tell you about the apple falling on Newton's head or Archimedes yelling "Eureka!" when his tub overflowed. No matter how hard-headed it may seem, when an experiment is written up, it is a story with a plot, a set of characters, a setting, props, and an outcome. More than that, when people are the subjects, for example in medical experimentation, the process itself can skew the results, making the results hard, even impossible to verify.<sup>1</sup> In clinical drug trials, this has become a serious problem; drugs that appear to be effective in the laboratory deliver results comparable to placebos. Frequently, it is not so much that the actual drugs are ineffective, rather they perform as expected. The problem is that sugar pills produce similar results; individuals' faith in drug trials skews the outcomes. Even double-blind trials and methods that can account for the effects of the experimentation process on the participants' behavior and perceptions no longer seem to go far enough. Increasingly, it seems, we live in a world whose laws are not so much determined by science as by fiction.<sup>2</sup>

Some scientists have been keenly aware of the role of fiction in their field and sought to investigate its effects. Perhaps chief among these is social psychologist Stanley Milgram who, in the early 1960s, set out to investigate how these processes of experimentation—in particular the authority individuals invest in scientists, the means by which procedures are followed and instructions are given, and even the architectural setting of an experiment—influence the behavior of human beings. Milgram claimed that his study, which he called the “Obedience to Authority Experiment” but which later also became known as the “Milgram Experiment,” was inspired by Hannah Arendt’s book on the 1961 trial of Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Struck by Arendt’s conclusion that the ss lieutenant colonel and Transportation Administrator of the “Final Solution” wasn’t a monster but rather saw himself as a bureaucrat doing his job, Milgram presumed that “Though such prescriptions as ‘Thou shalt not kill’ occupy a preeminent place in the moral order, they do not occupy a correspondingly intractable position in human psychic structure. A few changes in newspaper headlines, a call from the draft board, orders from a man with epaulets, and men are led to kill with little difficulty.”<sup>3</sup> In drawing this hypothesis, Milgram suggested that obedience to authority could as effectively strip moral principles from individuals in the United States of the 1960s as it had in Nazi Germany two decades earlier.

As a Ph.D. student, Milgram investigated conformity in an experimental setting, editing a book on the results of a series of experiments on conformity by his mentor, psychologist Solomon Asch. In these trials, male college students who volunteered to participate in the study were informed that they would be interacting with a group of other college students although in reality the others were all actors. Meeting with the student and the group together, Asch displayed a card with a drawing of a line, then another card with a drawing of three lines. When asked to identify which line on the card with three lines matched the first card with a single line drawn on it, the actors all offered an incorrect answer. Asch’s results suggested that peer pressure significantly affected the subject’s behavior, with 75% of the subjects answering at least one question incorrectly. When he began his own research, Milgram saw an opportunity to move the exercise beyond mere academic and logical disagreements, making the experience more physical and of greater public interest:

I was trying to think of a way to make Asch’s conformity experiment more humanly significant. I was dissatisfied that the test of conformity was judgments about lines. I wondered whether groups could pressure a person into



performing an act whose human import was more readily apparent, perhaps behaving aggressively toward another person, say by administering increasingly severe shocks to him. But to study the group effect...you'd have to know how the subject performed without any group pressure. At that instant my thought shifted, zeroing in on the experimental control. Just how far would a person go under the experimenter's orders?<sup>4</sup>

The key for Milgram was human experience, "The important task, from the standpoint of a psychological study of obedience, is to be able to take conceptions of authority and translate them into personal experience. It is one thing to talk in abstract terms about the respective rights of the individual and of authority; it is quite another to examine a moral choice in a real situation."<sup>5</sup> Obedience, Milgram observed, is nothing less than "the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose."<sup>6</sup>

Milgram initially sought funding from the Office of Naval Research under the pretext that it would give insight into how the Red Chinese were able to extract information from captured American soldiers, but instead approached the National Science Foundation for funding a study on obedience in the laboratory when he felt his prospects were better there. Milgram received notification that funding was approved for the obedience studies on May 3, 1961, at the end of the academic year when most students were already planning their summer vacations and took the experiments outside of the academic setting by employing local volunteers as subjects.<sup>7</sup>

Milgram solicited subjects through a set of ads in the New Haven Register as well as through phone calls to randomly chosen individuals from the white pages, inviting them to participate in a Yale University sponsored experiment purportedly about learning. Individuals were usually male, between the ages of 20 and 50, but chosen to reflect diverse socioeconomic and professional backgrounds. Subjects were greeted by John "Jack" Williams, a 31-year-old high school biology teacher who played the role of the experimenter, wearing a grey lab coat to distinguish him as a laboratory scientist—not the more common white coat that could have signified a mere medical professional. Williams then paired the volunteer with a purported volunteer named "Mr. Wallace" who was really James McDonough, a 47-year-old head payroll auditor at the New York, New Haven & Hartford railroad. McDonough was employed to play the role of the learner or victim. Milgram would observe: "This man would be perfect as a victim—he is so mild mannered and submissive; not at all academic... Easy to get along with" and described him as "stout

and kind of sloppy... he looked like a cardiac type."<sup>8</sup> After giving each individual \$4.50 for their trouble and explaining the importance of the study, Williams had them choose a piece of folded-up paper to randomly assign one as "teacher" and the other as "learner." In fact, the drawing was rigged with a sleight of hand trick.<sup>9</sup>

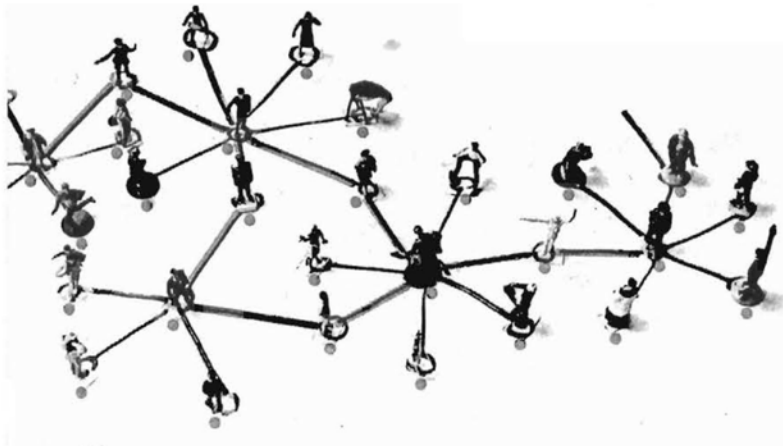
Once teacher and learner accepted their roles, Williams gave instructions to both and the experimenter led the learner to a room. The teacher witnessed Williams attach electrodes to McDonough and strap him into a chair. Sitting in an adjoining room where he monitored the learner via a glass window and sound system, the teacher was instructed to give word pairs to the learner who was to repeat them back. After each incorrect answer, the teacher was instructed to depress a lever on a 3' long, 15.5" high, and 16" deep apparatus that contained a line of thirty switches, each corresponding to an increasing level of voltage and labeled in groups reading "Slight Shock, Moderate Shock, Strong Shock, Very Strong Shock, Intense Shock, Extreme Intensity Shock, and Danger: Severe Shock."<sup>10</sup> As the learner made mistakes, the teacher would deliver ever-increasing levels of shock.

The point of the Obedience to Authority experiment was to examine the reaction of the teacher as the level of voltage increased. The teacher was expected to experience a degree of moral conflict as the mock-voltage levels increased and the learner feigned crying out in pain, complaining that he had a heart condition and begging the teacher to stop. When the teacher hesitated or threatened to quit the experiment, the experimenter would insist that the teacher must continue and that the experiment would be ruined if they quit. The experimenter would use a series of escalating prods to encourage the subject, first saying "Please continue," or, "Please go on," then "The experiment requires that you continue," followed by "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and finally "You have no other choice, you must go on."

Milgram reported that some 65 percent of subjects willingly subjected the learner to the highest voltage levels indicated on the shock machine.<sup>11</sup> In describing the results, Milgram observes "Many subjects will obey the experimenter no matter how vehement the pleading of the person being shocked, no matter how painful the shocks seem to be, and no matter how much the victim pleads to be released. This was seen time and again in our studies and has been observed in several universities where the experiment was repeated. It is the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority that constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation." In doing so, Milgram continues, individuals were often going against the very core of their beliefs about right and wrong, but still "could not bring

varnelis + sumrell

**The network spreads, with complicated inter-connections.**



**Random dispersement of people in the small world.**



themselves to make an open break with authority." Despite protestations, they went on to perform the experimenter's bidding.<sup>12</sup>

This conflict between abstract principles, no matter how fervently held and the actions of individuals in an experimental setting was the very focus of the experiment. However, Milgram argued that the setting was critical to making the role of authority clear. In his six-page-long grant proposal, he introduces the use of a simulated shock generator, explaining another intention of the experiment as an experiment on the influence of the setting of the experiment itself:

The question is not so much the limits of obedience. We know that given certain general circumstances, such as the situation of an army in war, men can be commanded to kill other men and will obey; they may even be commanded to destroy their own lives and will comply. Thus it is by no means the purpose of the study to try to set the absolute limits of obedience. Within a laboratory situation we cannot create the conditions for maximum obedience; only the circumstances of real life will extract the highest measure of compliance from men.

We can, however, approach the question from a somewhat different viewpoint. Given that a person is confronted with a particular set of commands "more or less" appropriate to a laboratory situation, we may ask which conditions increase his compliance, and which make him less likely to comply.<sup>13</sup>

To this end, Milgram carefully developed an experimental environment, presenting a book titled *The Teaching-Learning Process* to the subject as an intellectual pedigree for the experiment. As well, the purported shock machine produced realistic noises of relays clicking and circuits buzzing as the shocks appeared to be administered and delivered a demonstration shock of 45 volts to the teacher at the start of each experiment to prove how it worked while setting a baseline voltage that the teacher could identify with. The contraption itself was sufficiently convincing to pass inspection by two electrical engineers.<sup>14</sup> Before running the experiment, Milgram ran a series of "pre-tests" or early volunteers. Receiving dismal results—few subjects obeyed the experimenter's orders—he tuned the experiment repeatedly until it would generate positive results. He modified the setting repeatedly over the course of the experiment to compare results, for example, putting teachers and learners in the same room, adding a third actor who would simulate the role of the teacher, making the experimental subject merely a bystander, or removing the experiment from the university campus to a nondescript office building in

Bridgeport, Connecticut.<sup>15</sup> Milgram later declared, “Although experiments in chemistry and physics involve shiny equipment, flasks, and electronic gear, an experiment in social psychology smacks much more of dramaturgy or theater.”<sup>16</sup>

Milgram’s allusion to theater and its emphasis on settings, staging, and props recalls both Wagner’s idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as well as the work of Milgram’s contemporary, sociologist Erving Goffman for whom everyday life is essentially an act of theater, with social interactions between participants facilitated through a series of assumed roles established by behavior, speech, props, and sets. An unspoken trust between individuals exists, Goffman concludes: so long as behaviors follow group expectation, the resulting story will be believed.<sup>17</sup>

Having completed Obedience to Authority, Milgram faced the task of explaining the moral conflict produced within the individual at the shock machine and how he or she deferred to the experimenter, thus assuming a role outside of normal behavior. Milgram concludes that since organized social life—and with it a coordinated hierarchical social structure—has clear advantages for survival, “from the standpoint of cybernetics, the most general need in bringing self-regulating automata into a coordinated hierarchy is to suppress individual direction and control in favor of control from higher level of authority.” Curiously, this mention of cybernetics is something of an anomaly in Milgram’s work and does not appear in any of his previous journal articles. Still, Milgram kept abreast of trends in academia, so this reference points less to Milgram’s allegiance to a cybernetic theoretical framework and more to his reliance on the authority of scientific theories then en vogue.<sup>18</sup> But this reliance on cybernetics was not entirely a matter of fashion, for if a system demanded that individuals subordinate themselves to it, obedience to authority would naturally arise in evolution. The key, Milgram explains, is the “agentic shift,” in which the individual makes a transition to acting on behalf of the other: “of course, we do not have toggle switches emerging from our bodies, and the shifts are synaptically effected, but this makes them no less real.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the agentic shift transforms the individual acting according to internal guidance to a node in the network. But if the agentic shift allows us to participate in a social network, it also allows us to commit unspeakable acts of cruelty.

Embedded in Milgram’s experiment was an additional cruelty on the subject. As Milgram recognized from the start, acting against one’s principles could cause emotional damage to the teacher by producing cognitive dissonance. In an effort to ameliorate this, Milgram had Williams explain the nature of the project once the experiment was complete, revealing that McDonough had not been subject to any real shocks and bringing him back on stage to restore an environment of friendly

relations. Milgram then noted the reactions of the “teachers” to the news.<sup>20</sup> In this, the conclusion of the Milgram Experiment—which was recorded in a documentary film—echoed the punch line of the popular television show *Candid Camera*, of which Milgram was a fan—as a student at Cornell producer Allen Funt was an assistant to Kurt Lewin, one of the founders of social psychology—and in which skits were not complete until the subject became fully cognizant of the situation.<sup>21</sup>

But this process of “dehoaxing,” as Milgram describes it was itself a sham. Perhaps to avoid word getting out that the experiment was rigged, most subjects were not told the entire truth, merely reassured that they had not harmed the learner and that the shocks weren’t as bad as they seemed. During the reconciliation, the learner would frequently say only that the shocks had not been painful, that he was merely getting overexcited. The truth of the experiment would only be revealed months later, via a letter.<sup>22</sup>

It was not just the volunteers who were caught up in Milgram’s fiction. Recent research suggests that Milgram’s results indicating 65 percent compliance were limited to one iteration of the experiment. Instead, a close study of the results suggests that some 60 percent of subjects refused to comply.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, although Milgram indicated that Williams, the “experimenter” would only coldly indicate that the success of the experiment depended on the teacher’s continuing, as the experiment wore on, Williams played a greater role, not only pushing subjects to continue, but also downplaying the effect of the shock, saying that it caused no harm.<sup>24</sup>

Not all volunteers were dupes. Many saw through the fiction, often stating that the elaborate staging of the experiment led them to believe it was phony. Only some 56% of subjects fully believed that the experiment was valid. Of subjects who were “obedient,” some 3.8% were convinced it was rigged and there were no shocks whatsoever being given, while 16% believed that the subject was likely not getting any shocks. Thus, a significant portion of teachers willing to give shocks was as much actors as the experimenter and the learner. Those least willing to give the highest lever of shocks were typically those most convinced that the shocks were real.

Milgram downplayed such contradictory information while critics fed the fire by argued that unlike *Candid Camera*, Milgram’s Obedience to Authority experiment produced potentially destructive real-world effects on the participants. For psychologist Diana Baumrind, by leading a subject to commit unethical acts Milgram damaged his or her sense of trust in the profession. Merely revealing the shock as a charade, she argued, would not erase that damage. Further, the revelation of this charade might cause further harm as the subject realized he or she had been



made a fool, thus losing the opportunity to properly working through the trauma. Baumrind called for developing ethical guidelines to prevent future damage to the profession and in 1973, the American Psychological Association published revised ethics guidelines discouraging the use of deception in experimentation.<sup>25</sup>

Although many of the subjects did indeed feel trauma, Baumrind was certainly right when it came to the individuals playing the part of the learner and the experimenter. McDonough, the learner, died in 1965, three years after the experiments were completed while Bob Tracy, who briefly also played the learner, died two years later. Perhaps, then the Milgram experiment had a placebo effect of the worst kind after all.

Other critics saw even greater darkness in the work and, in so doing, gave it ever greater notoriety and prominence. In rejecting Milgram's paper on the experiment for publication in the *Journal of Personality*, editor Edward E. Jones called it a "triumph of social engineering." Psychologist and ethicist Herbert C. Kelman later echoed this sentiment in an article describing the use of deception in such experiments as having an unpleasant parallel to the rising tide of systematic deception and manipulation of humans on a mass scale by political campaigns. Kelman was concerned about the use of computers to process the results of large-scale public opinion polls to determine the response of populations to campaign issues and thus reduce political action to a by-product of marketing. At its most dangerous, it became clear to many that the Milgram Experiment could be a blueprint for mass control. Brune Bettelheim would describe the research as "so vile that nothing these experiments show has any value. They are in line with the human experiments of the Nazis."<sup>26</sup>

In a rare dissent, psychology professor Hank Stam argues that Milgram's most fundamental insight is that the laboratory setting could be adapted to make anyone do anything. In the abstract world that Milgram, any result would be possible once the experimental setting had been fine-tuned. Stam concludes, "He had this other story in mind already. He knew what success would look like."<sup>27</sup>

Milgram was initially reluctant to publicize his research in the popular press, claiming that it would interfere with future research, but once published, the work soon spread through a series of popular press accounts. Milgram reacted by becoming a savvy popularizer of his work, releasing his study as both a mass-market paperback and a documentary film. The experiment captured the imagination of the public in a made-for-tv movie. The lessons of the Obedience to Authority Experiment quickly became part of popular culture and were applied to understanding disturbing events such as the My Lai massacres and Abu Ghraib torture

and abuse scandal. In doing so, the experiment proved that its real significance is that it reveals how everyday life is made up of a series of shared stories in which actors, backgrounds, props, and even architecture are equal influences in our understanding of reality. Instead of living life according to clear ideas of right and wrong, the experiment suggests our context determines our thoughts and actions. In doing so, the Milgram Experiment becomes one of these stories, purporting to account for our inhumanity to each other and thus legitimate it.

Having established that stories organize daily life, Milgram then developed his own role as a storyteller while creating a clearer picture of what a social structure made up of actors simultaneously playing different roles would look like in his other famous experiment, the “Small World Problem.” Having understood the importance of public opinion, he published these results first not in a scientific journal

but in the inaugural issue of *Psychology Today* and introduced the experiment with a story.

Fred Jones of Peoria, sitting in a sidewalk cafe in Tunis, and needing a light for his cigarette, asks the man at the next table for a match. They fall into conversation: the stranger is an Englishman who, it turns out, spent several months in Detroit studying the operation of an interchangeable bottle cap factory. “I know it’s a foolish question,” says Jones, “but did you ever by any chance run into a fellow named Ben Arkadian? He’s an old friend of mine, manages a chain of supermarkets in Detroit.”

“Arkadian, Arkadian,” the Englishman mutters. “Why, upon my soul, I believe I do! Small chap, very energetic, raised merry hell with the factory over a shipment of defective bottle caps.”

“No kidding!” Jones exclaims in amazement.

“Good lord, it’s a small world, isn’t it?”<sup>28</sup>

For Milgram, this anecdote illustrates that regardless of the vast number of individuals in this world, random links within networks make such startling encounters relatively commonplace. Milgram continues, citing Jane Jacobs, who in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* describes a game of “Messages” that she and her sister played after moving to New York in which they imagined how a message might pass by word of mouth between “two wildly dissimilar individuals—say a headhunter in the Solomon Islands and a cobbler in Rock Island, Illinois...” Each sister would come up with a chain of messengers and the one who could provide the shortest chain would win. Jacobs’s point was that to be successful a city district

needed “hop-skip” people, often politicians or public officials, who knew large numbers of individuals and could cut long chains of communication significantly, thus weaving together the district in resilient social patterns.<sup>29</sup>

Where Obedience to Authority was based on Asch’s work, the Small World experiment was based on a mathematical model and subsequent survey developed by MIT researchers Ithiel de Sola Pool, Manfred Kochen, and Michael Gurevich. They concluded that even if there was only a 1 in 200,000 chance that two Americans might know each other, there was a 50% chance that they would be connected by two people that each might know.

To conduct his experiment, Milgram distributed a set of letters to randomly selected “starters,” individuals in Omaha, Nebraska and Wichita, Kansas, each requesting to have a package sent to a specific “target,” a stockbroker living and working in Boston. If the starter did not know the target, they were asked to forward the letter to someone they knew who they thought was likely to know the target or how to reach him; this new person would become the next link in the chain. Milgram soon concluded that five intermediaries—or six degrees of separation—was the average it would take to convey a message from one individual in the “vaguely ‘out there’” to the Boston stockbroker.<sup>30</sup>

But as a storyteller, Milgram is an unreliable narrator. Milgram boasted that he wrote his papers while on drugs and could tell precisely which drug he was under the influence of—marijuana, mescaline, cocaine, or methamphetamine—when he looked at the texts later.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, the results from the Small World experiment are far from conclusive. Milgram himself notes that of 160 chains started in Nebraska, only 44 were completed, attributing it to a lack of obedience among subjects.<sup>32</sup> More recently, however, Judith Kleinfeld points out that in a first, unpublished study only 5 percent of the letters made it through and even in the published studies, the rate of completion was only 30 percent. While Milgram argues that the high dropout rate was a matter of apathy or disobedience, Kleinfeld observes that the article to be delivered was “an official-looking document with a heavy blue binding and a gold logo,” hardly something that should readily be put aside. Likely, she suggests, the chains had hit a dead end. Kleinfeld concludes, “the belief that we live in a small world gives people a sense of security. And small-world experiences that we encounter naturally buttress people’s religious faith as evidence of ‘design.’”<sup>33</sup>

However, religion is based on stories and the Small World experiment is a good story. Indeed, today it seems that we have adopted the network as a faith. Networks and the small worlds they describe serve as organizational models for businesses and universities, friendships and economies. In doing so, they stand in



for our own behavioral process; few people want to believe that their thoughts and actions are determined by a sequence of programmed instructions, but most don't mind understanding their relationships with others or even their bodies or brains as comprised of networks. Milgram understood the consequences of the shift he had uncovered. In his conclusion to the experiment, Milgram phrased it succinctly: "while many studies in social science show the individual is alienated and cut off from the rest of society, this study demonstrates that, in some sense, we are all bound together in a tightly knit social fabric."<sup>34</sup>

The conclusion to Obedience to Authority initially appears to be directly opposed to that of the Small World experiment. In the former individuals lose their sense of empathy and connection with other humans when placed in a bureaucratic condition, in the latter we find ourselves part of a vast, interlinked chain of humanity. But Small World has a darker side as well. Jacobs's game—and Small World—are uncannily similar to Hungarian writer Frigyes Karinthy's 1929 short story "Láncszemek" or "Chain-Links." One of a series of character studies that Karinthy became famous for (Milgram, we should add, was born to a Romanian-Jewish mother and Hungarian-Jewish father), "Láncszemek" appears as stream of consciousness reflection by a somewhat manic narrator sitting in a café. Looking for a sign of direction or evolution in the universe, the narrator finds it in global telecommunications which he concludes has brought the Earth's population closer together than ever before, making it possible to connect any two people in the world to each other through just five intermediate links. This reflection allows the narrator to see the world as simultaneously vast and intimate, and in that dialectic find a new spirituality, the knowledge that "[the] last link leads to me, the source of everything."

Even if the global telecommunications network was still in its infancy when he wrote his story, unlike Jacobs and Milgram, Karinthy understood the inherent narcissism of a network-based existence. Like Facebook, Small World and "Láncszemek" replace God with the individual, putting us at the center of a vast social web enveloping the entirety of humanity. Milgram's insight is the "good news" of a new religion: we can leave behind a modern culture of disconnection and alienation and turn to a world that revolves around us by adopting the network and its culture of interconnection.

In the end, both Obedience to Authority and Small World demonstrate that stories are not merely incidental to science and everyday life but rather are constitutive of it. It is the stories we tell ourselves—and the Milgram Experiment and Small Worlds are prime examples—that create the rules that bind us together in a network and that allow us to act as we do to each other. In this, architecture becomes a

backdrop, the stage set that makes the stories with which we organize our lives possible.

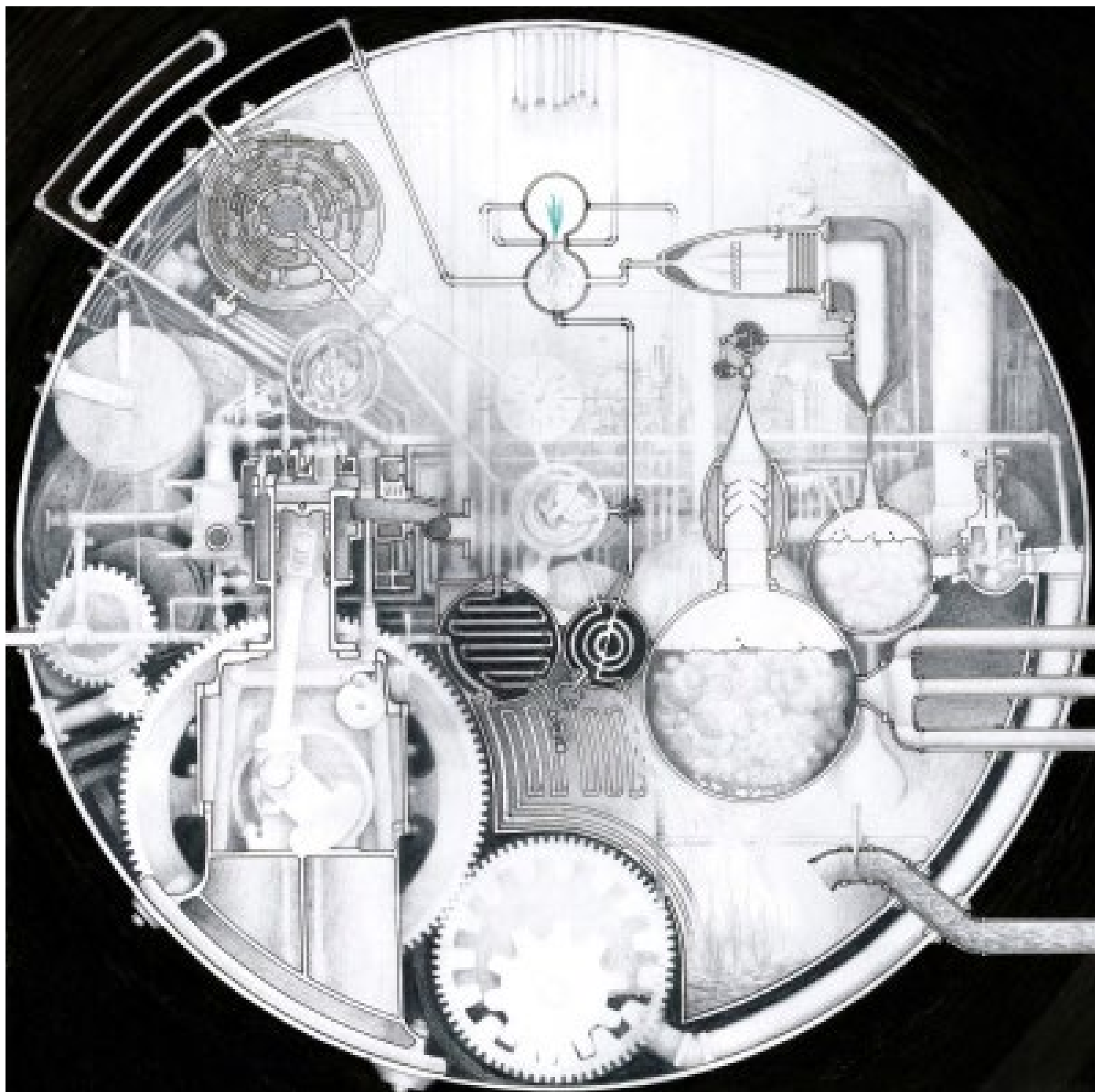
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# *Living Machines*

KATIE SHIMA



THIS SERIES OF PENCIL AND INK DRAWINGS TELLS the story of a world very similar to our own. Made using architectural drafting techniques, they explore how using a system of simple rules (restricting the angles of lines, repeating components, fractal logic) can yield a seemingly complex, even chaotic, design that transcends the sum of its constituent rules.

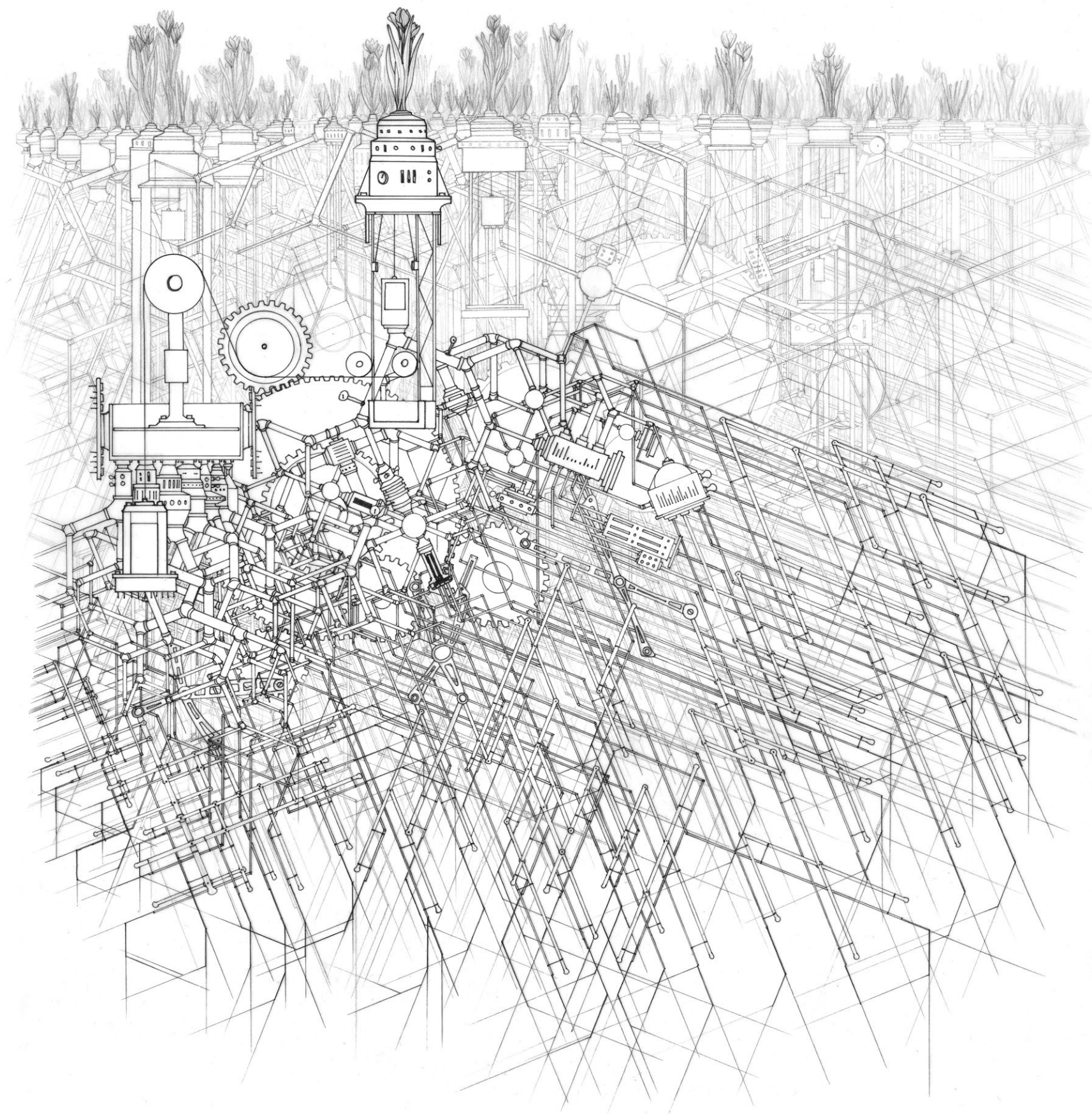
(FRONT COVER)

*Spherical Plant Vessel*, 2012  
ink and graphite on vellum  
11"X 11"

*Spherical Plant Vessel is a sooty, sprawling machine entirely dedicated to keeping a small plant alive in a bubble. Nitrogen and phosphorus are processed from raw materials into fertilizer through a series of heating, cooling, pressurizing, and vaporizing steps; these are based on real industrial practices and simplified for visual clarity. The chemicals are pumped into the plant's vessel along with cooled water harvested from condensation inside the machine. Electric light is produced by a Faraday-type generator. A nineteenth-century oil engine powers the machine.*

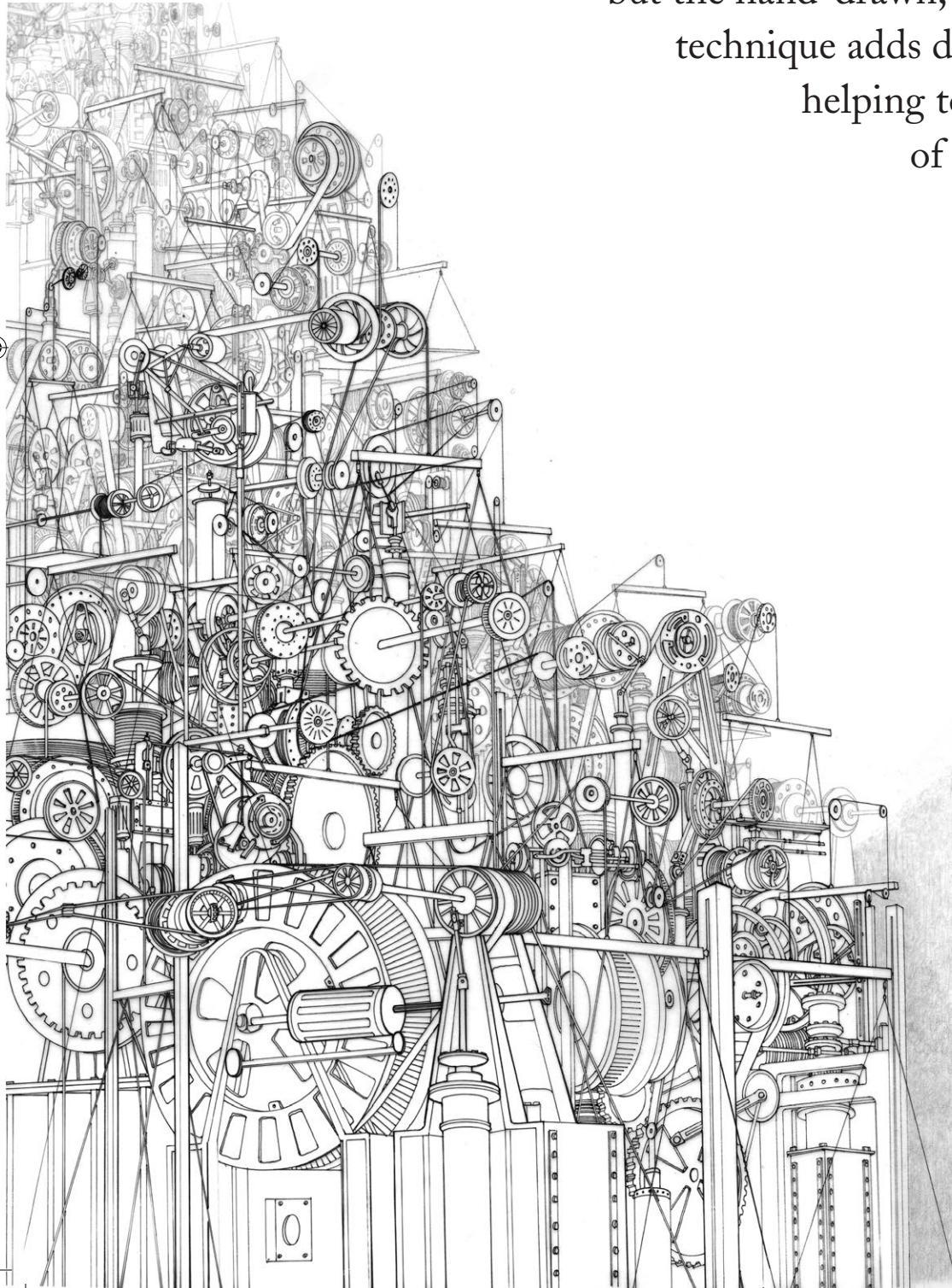
*Spring*, 2012  
ink and graphite on vellum  
11"X 14"

*Spring is a field of what appear from above ground to be crocuses. Below ground, the hinged roots extend and contract via a system of motors and gears, collecting nutrients from the soil. The nutrients are then conveyed upwards via elevators to the stems of the plants.*





The drawings depict a world in which industrialized societies replace natural processes with artificial ones in order to maintain their standard of living, or ways in which they might do so in the future. Parts of these mechanical landscapes are drawn with technical accuracy, in section or elevation, like architectural documentation, but the hand-drawn, illustrative quality of the technique adds depth, nuance, and mood, helping to draw out the narratives of the allegorical machines.



*Elevator Mountain, 2012*  
ink and graphite on vellum  
27" x 13"

*Elevator Mountain consists of antique, oil-driven, pulley-type elevators, piled up so heavily that rather than providing transport to the tops of the mountains, they become mountains themselves.*

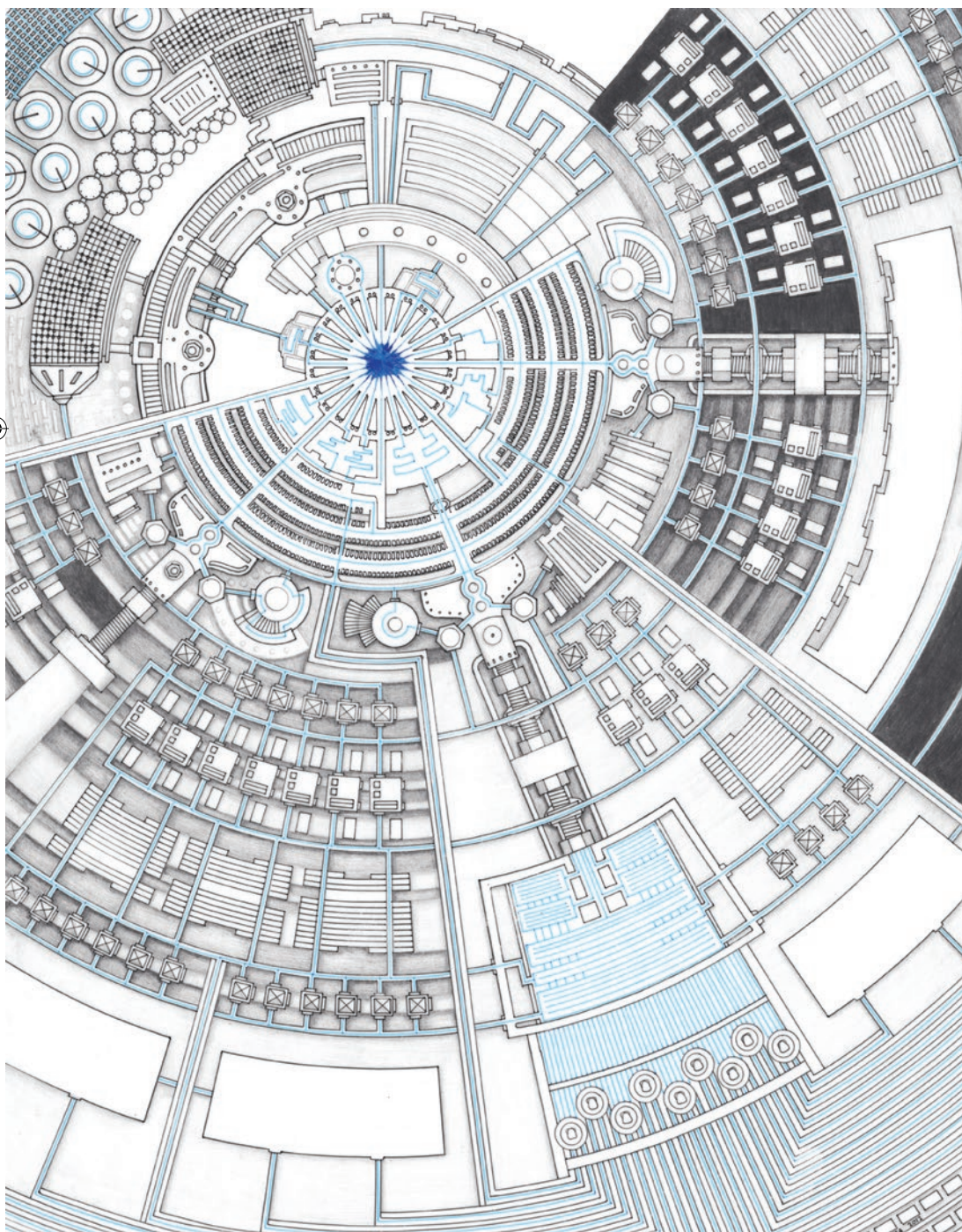


In this world, machines work and produce materials for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants. Motors turn gears, belts, and pulleys; pumps extract water from the ground; and minerals are mined, transported, and refined.





The machines have become so integral to the landscape and atmosphere that they cannot easily be separated or even distinguished. Boilers, beakers, and pipes become the root systems of trees, clouds are shrouded in water vapor by their wind-powered mist-making instruments, and entire landscapes are composed of their constituent mechanical parts.



*Water Circuit*, 2012  
ink and graphite on vellum  
11" x 14"

*Part machine, part city, water lies at the heart of Water Circuit. Water is pumped through a hydroelectric dam through capillary action, circulated through residences, recycled at a wastewater treatment plant, and pumped back into an urban center inspired by Celebration.*

*Window*, 2012  
ink and graphite on vellum  
11" x 14"

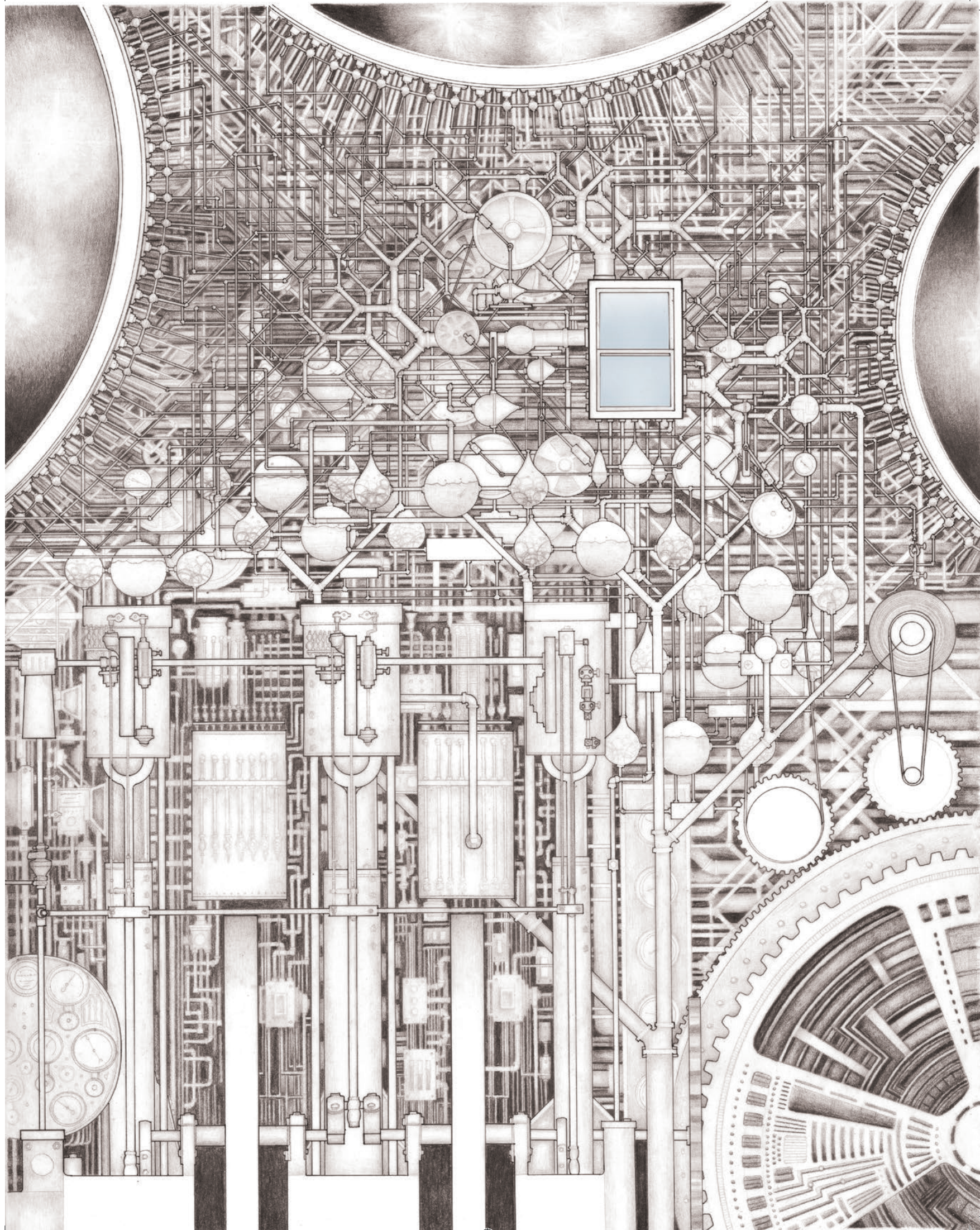
*Window is a complex machine that produces the ingredients for a blue sky – nitrogen, oxygen, water vapor, and light – and pumps them into the window frame. Some of the defining elements of the machine are a nineteenth-century water pump at the lower part of the image, a Faraday-type electricity-producing flywheel at the lower right, and the harvesting of the nitrogen given off by stars through the portals at the upper edges of the drawing.*

(BACK COVER)

*Submarine Island*, 2012  
ink and graphite on vellum  
11" x 14"

*On Submarine Island's beach, sun umbrellas and mangrove trees float by unaware that their island is actually a submarine.*





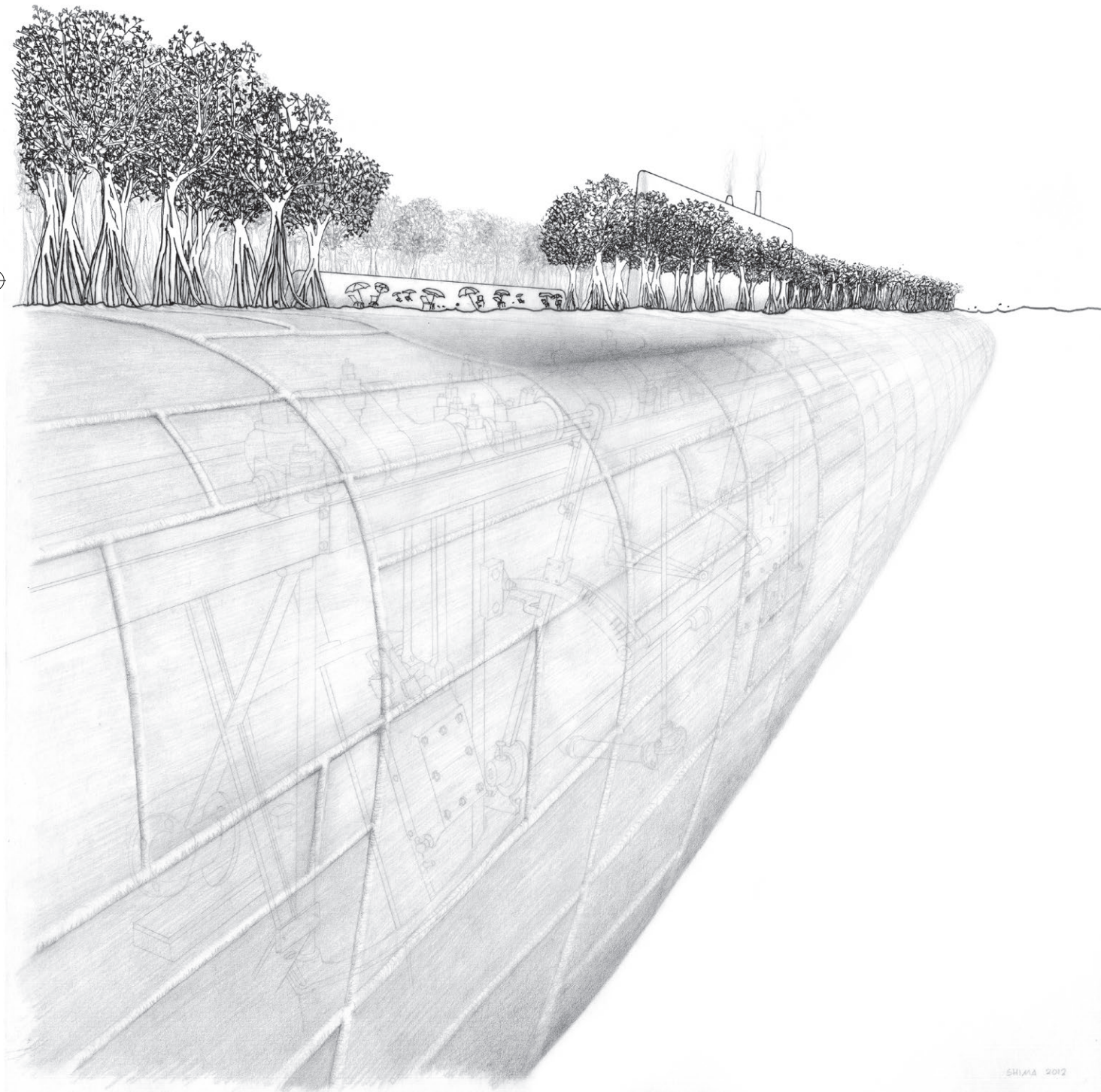


Shima's feather duster hand renders the horrible reality of the Anthropocene, a world wholly made and controlled by legions of Willy Wonkas dancing with the progeny of David Macaulay on top of Burtynsky's Manufactured Landscapes. We shudder. At least someone is keeping tabs on this forced march into oblivion, but beware of becoming an accessory to the brutal murder of Mother Nature. Your prison term and penance might include: a fifty year sentence drawing rust, bacteria and moss, that will inevitably spring up from this mountain of Hubris.

— BEN NICHOLSON

Drawn by a parametric mind with a beautiful hand, Shima's machines in the garden are more than Leo Marx for the steampunk generation. Equal parts wasteland and wilderness, "Living Machines" extends pastoral allegory with critical anachronism—cultivating unnatural adaptations of the inorganic to find new possibilities for the future of environmental activism.

— MICHELLE FORNABI



SHIMA 2012

# FILM AND THE MUSEUM

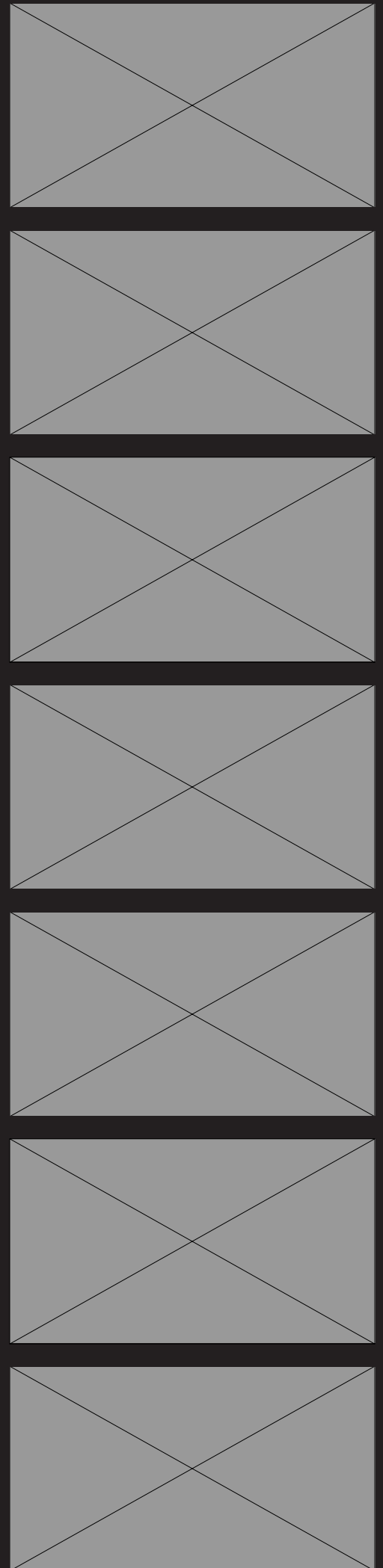
A CONVERSATION  
WITH  
BARRY BERGDOLL,  
REINHOLD MARTIN,  
AND PRAXIS

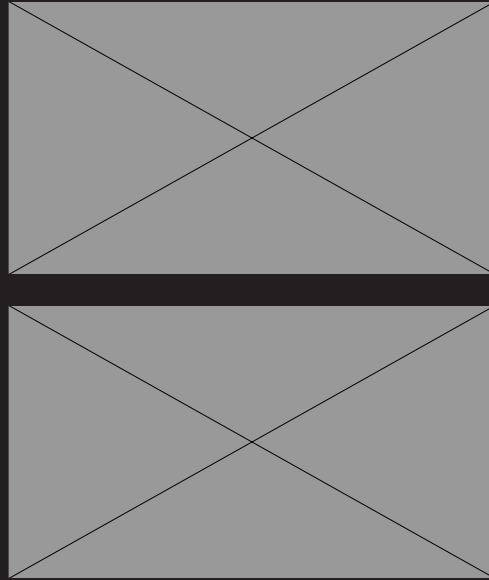
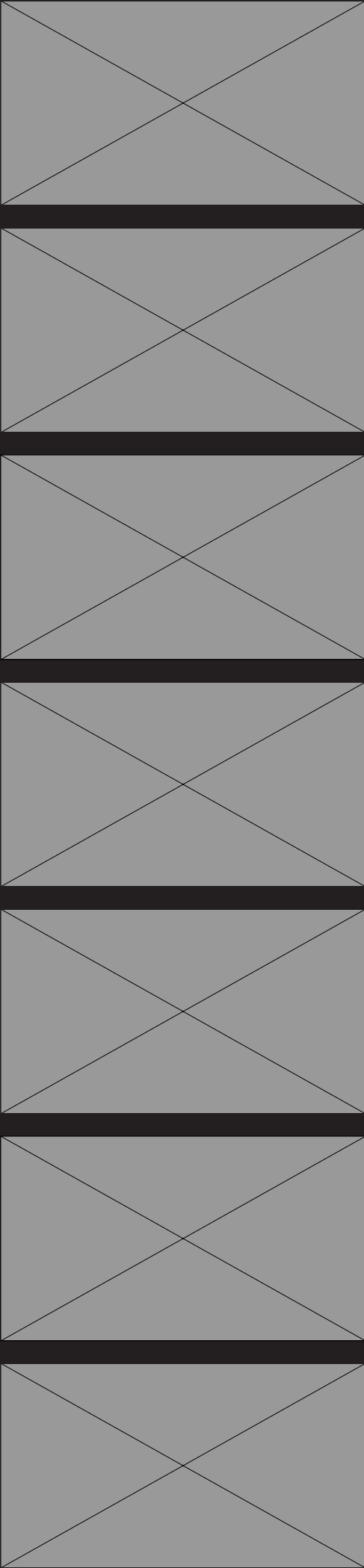


PRAXIS 14  
Narrative/Alternative Endings  
Questions for Barry Bergdoll/Reinhold Martin  
December 3, 2012  
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THE MOMA EXHIBITION  
FORECLOSED: REHOUSING  
THE AMERICAN DREAM  
INCLUDED A COLLECTION  
OF PROPOSALS BASED ON  
"THE BUELL HYPOTHESIS,"  
A RESEARCH REPORT  
DEVELOPED AT THE  
BUELL CENTER. NOT  
INSIGNIFICANTLY, THIS  
DOCUMENT WAS WRITTEN AS  
A SCREENPLAY; YOU THEN  
ASKED PARTICIPANTS TO  
RESPOND WITH THEIR OWN  
FILM, TO BE INCLUDED AS  
ONE OF THE ELEMENTS IN  
THE EXHIBITION.

WORK AC





1: Can you elaborate on your decision to require each participant to make a film, and the relationship of that particular representation to the other requirements—data analysis, architectural plans, etc.?

**RM:** A central argument of "The Buell Hypothesis" is that the American dream of individuality, self-reliance, and social advancement through homeownership is more than mere fantasy. Yes, it is indeed a "dream," a piece of Grade One ideology, but how does it work? It is a deeply entrenched narrative, a story told over and over again for generations, like a movie that continually replays in your head. This story, in its many variations, establishes a practical framework for real world policies and transactions. So the idea was to confront one story with another. Hence the idea of "changing the movie." The actual movies were not required to adopt a narrative style (in the end few did). Because even in punctual or non-narrative

form, a movie can ask both artist and audience to consider the story to which a given project is attached, and not just to attach a story to a given project.

A related point is that policy, economics, and other practical matters are partly rooted in cultural and even aesthetic foundations. Suburban homeownership is not only a matter of rational economic calculation but also of certain widespread desires and affectations. That does not mean that it is merely a cultural choice, but it would be nothing without these desires, which are neither eternal nor universal—they vary historically and culturally. And so what better place to test their parameters and to open other possibilities than an art museum?

**BB:** In addition to the analysis presented in "The Buell Hypothesis," which underscored the role that films and television have played in forming the American imaginary of the suburban home, to such an extent that even immigrants seem already to have these images firmly secured as dreams before arriving on these shores, we wanted to play to the fact that more and more architects work with filmic means of representation in thinking of their own work. For instance the production of a film by MOS Architects is directly continuous with the way they've been

working for some time. In the realm of materials that can be presented in an architectural exhibition—where, famously, everything but built architecture can be included—films and videos are also among the most compelling representations of ideas for non-architectural audiences. The centrality of filmed imagery to our imaginations, assumptions, and predictions is clear in any gallery display that includes screens with projections—almost inevitably, this is where most gallery visitors gravitate. So just as we are captivated by the received American suburban dream as it has been honed over decades by Hollywood, so too any effort to project alternative scenarios is most effectively achieved through similar media.

It is certainly striking, as Reinhold underscores, that film, video, or animated imagery played a markedly different role in each of the five projects, as varied as the other means of representation preferred by each team. Perhaps the most traditional approach was that of the Studio Gang-led team, which used the films to collect interviews in the communities of Cicero, almost the way a sociologist would use field evidence. Michael Bell's Visible Weather team

conceived a type of fly-through of a sort now rather standard in many architectural presentations, but which would have been all but impossible in an era of different filmmaking techniques. WORKac turned to a completely different format, the television advertisement. They worked with an advertising agency and created a jingle that was as unforgettable as the imagery of their project. With the wry humor of the advertisement, their whole presentation set up something of a model showroom for a new place and a new lifestyle. Andrew Zago created a digital environment that was almost dream-like in its rhythms and imageries. So in the end we can say that the role of the filmic was not so much extra-architectural as integral, pointing to the role that different image-making technologies have always played in the practice of architecture and in the communication of its ideas that extend well beyond the dimensions and forms of the projected buildings.

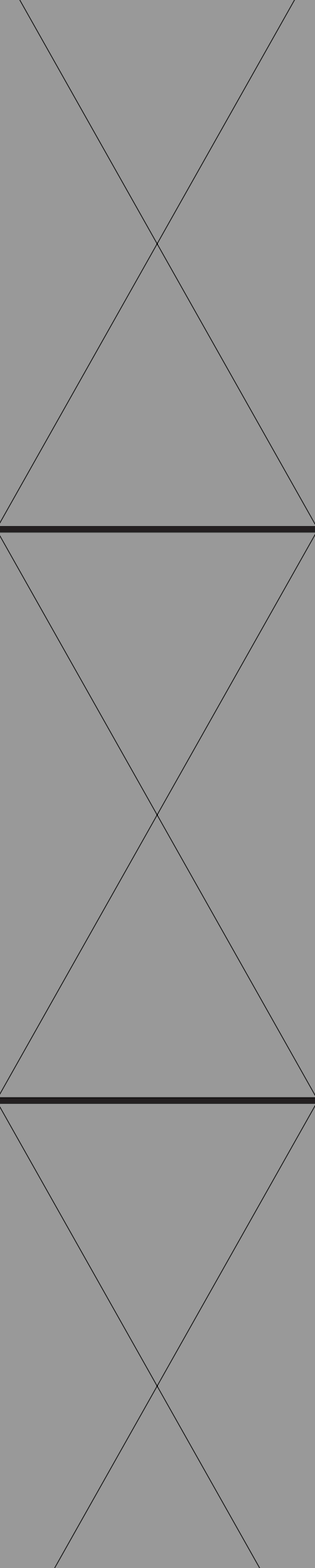
2: How do you think these films contribute to the discourse on utopia and the "American dream?" How do you see them in relationship to other contemporary and historical architectural narratives?

**RM:** At the Buell Center we recently compiled all of the printed and online commentary on the Foreclosed exhibition into a stand-alone website and

# ANDREW ZAGO







printed document. Among many other things, it's interesting to see how often the show was criticized, directly or indirectly, for being utopian. Ironically, with respect to the actual history of architectural utopianism, whether we are talking about the fantastical counterprojects of the 1960s or the wholesale reorganization of housing design and policy earlier in the twentieth century, you would have to say that all of the projects in the Foreclosed exhibition are distinctly non- or even anti-utopian. Rather than propose systemic rearrangement or evoke a parallel world, each inserts itself into existing realities—some more comfortably or “realistically” than others. I assume that it was a deliberate decision on the part of each team to focus attention on how the existing system might be tweaked, modified, or inflected toward more equitable outcomes.

But if you understand the American dream itself as an “unrealistic” story rather than as a self-evidently practical one, the tables turn. What appears as factual, foundational, becomes contingent if not fictional, no matter how many numbers are behind it. I therefore remain unconvinced by the extent of documentary materials that each team felt they had to include alongside the movies and models, as if the projects themselves were not enough. If anything, I think the diagrams and data distract from the main question

to which each project responds: if the American dream is ultimately destructive or at least unsustainable, how can we change the story?

Not do away with all stories in favor of supposedly sober calculation, but rewrite the script. Of course, you do want to show how the whole thing actually works. And you want to show what exactly might change, and how, and you want to measure the consequences. Not surprisingly, much of the criticism lamented the relative subordination, in the museum, of technical materials—the “science” of each project, if you like—to the more “spectacular” models and movies. This sort of criticism came from both the left and the right, so to speak. But what could an art museum collaborating with a small cultural research center possibly contribute to the “normal science” of city planning or housing design and policy? Aren’t such institutions better suited to challenging or changing cultural narratives or norms? Arguably, the most dominant such narrative today boils down to a simple equation: Data = Truth. Witness the fetishization of polls, statistics, and other quantitative “indicators” in American electoral politics. Witness, too, the common tendency, in architecture, to criticize a rendering or a fly-through as a “mere” illustration, which implies that the numbers underlying it are somehow more real. But does not the imaginary world of the developer’s spreadsheet ultimately recite a narrative with unmatched ferocity?

I was immensely engaged by every one of the presentations in the show, but I admit that I would have preferred that each aimed more directly for a movie that elicits the question: how would the facts on the ground have to change for this mise-en-scène to become a reality? In that case, the tables would truly have turned and the numbers could have served to illustrate or elucidate the movies. In the event, the movies—whether documentary, atmospheric, or parodic—generally illustrated the numbers.

**BB:** Here I have to disagree. I remain convinced that for the experiment of the workshop/exhibitions that was initiated at MoMA and MoMA PS1 with Rising Currents and continued with Foreclosed to function, the projects produced need to have at once a powerful set of images that reconfigures the range of the possible, redraws the map of the discourse, as it were, and also has a very high quotient of reality. The careful analysis, numbers, and documentation were as essential to the design methods of the individual practitioners as they were to the credibility of the display for the broader public. The two, to me, were the yin and yang of the whole experiment. I reiterated over and over again to the teams that their projects needed to be visionary enough to not be forgotten, and pragmatic enough

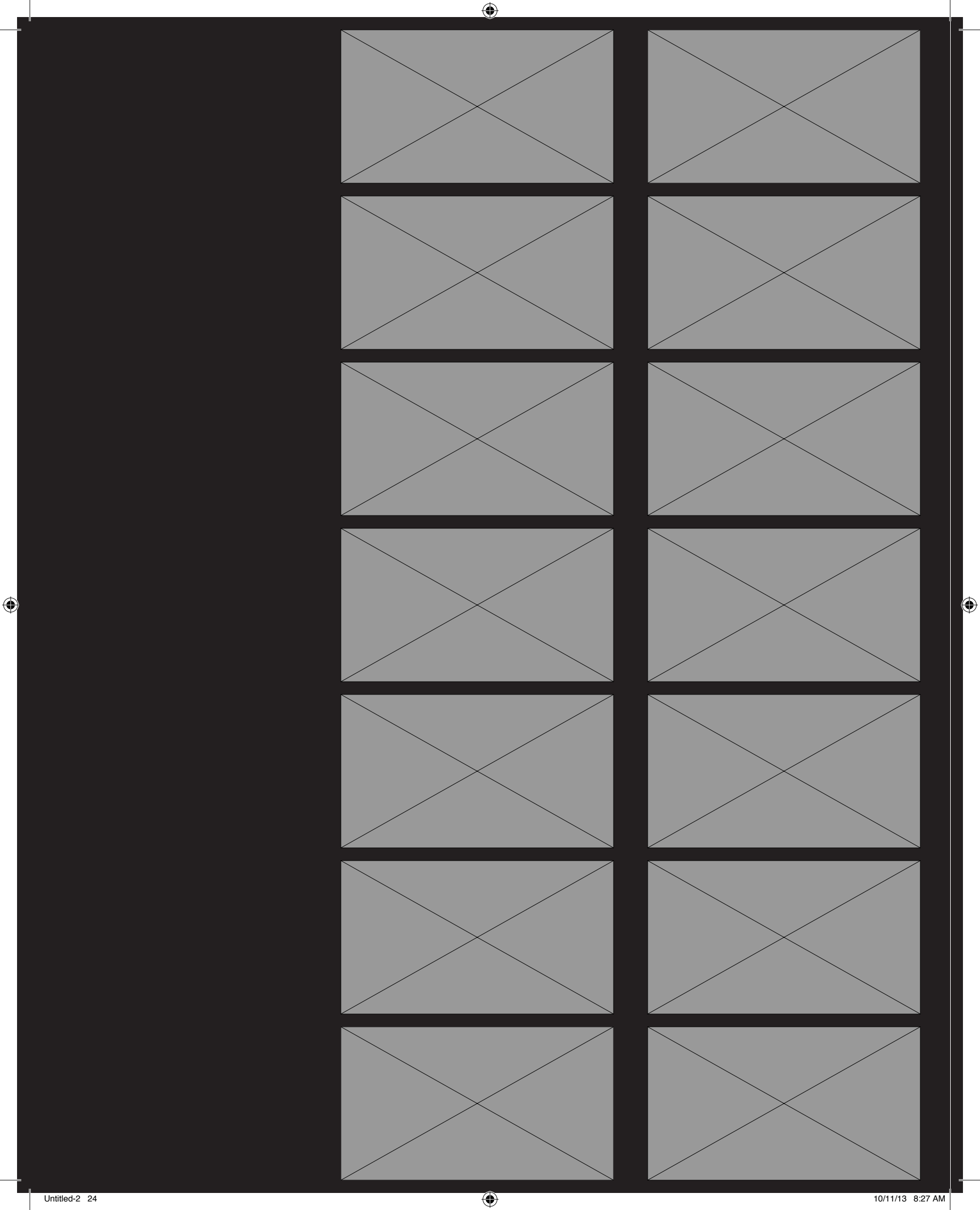
to not be dismissed. “Utopian” has changed valence enormously in recent years, from a term that implied an idealistic belief in the capacity to imagine a wholesale improvement of social, political, and economic relations (often through an ideal urban blueprint), to a connotation of dreamy, unfounded, and in the realm of science fiction.

What becomes important with these projections is the capacity for people to see the reality of their world in them, to be able to see them as carriers for legitimate desires, as embodiments of desirable alternative presents, since none of the projects posited anything that could not be built right now. That can redraw the contour of the discussion, of people’s desires... and also shock people into realizing that received “dream” images and everyday reality are profoundly out of sync with one another.

**3:** Can you comment on how you think these films engage and/or contribute to both the history and also the trajectory of architectural filmmaking?

**RM:** To be specific, there were no films in the show; they were all digital videos. Technologically, the instruments with which they were made differ from cinema at least as much as the iPhone camera differs from the Leica. To the degree that the history of media is a history of such discontinuities, videos like these are structurally distinct





from earlier films, just as the mostly realistic renderings that accompanied them differ from earlier drawings made using filmic techniques like montage. But so-called new media always bear traces of older ones. One striking attribute of the videos and renderings in the show, as well as any number of other contemporary visualizations, is the predominance of perspectival views. Just as the photographic camera internalized certain technical aspects of classical perspective such as the standpoint or viewpoint, computer algorithms have rewritten "photorealistic" perspective as code and made it ubiquitous, built-in.

The reasons for this might seem a bit chicken-and-egg: audiences (i.e. clients, or markets) demand realism, even as those audiences are daily trained by the entertainment industry that writes the software to expect their video games and special effects to be evermore lifelike. Partly in sync with these developments, perspective has returned to architectural representation with a vengeance. After all, the animation software with which architects usually make their movies was designed for Hollywood and is still used there to far more dramatic effect. More importantly, the demand for photorealism works, in microcosm, on exactly the same ideological register as does the American dream: it naturalizes decisions that

# MICHAEL BELL

are otherwise contingent, such as the decision to favor, and to represent as natural-real, given, unquestioned—a way of life.

As the follow-up Buell Center research also showed, the most widely circulated images from the show were the most “realistic” ones, whether they were renderings or photographs of models. The videos were surely seen by a much smaller portion of the audience, since watching videos takes time, and they did not circulate outside the gallery space. A YouTube exhibition might have put them into wider circulation, but that would probably have required a different format!

To your other question: I’m not sure how aware most of the designers were of precedents in architectural filmmaking or videography, since these are not widely known for similar reasons. If anything, the most notable continuity with precedent was in the overall effort to communicate with a general public, to explain the work rather than just present it. Even the most artful of the videos were, in the end, didactic. This was in keeping with earlier multimedia efforts to explain architectural or urban propositions to a broader public, whether at museums like MoMA or in venues like world’s fairs.

**BB:** There is no single history of architectural filmmaking, but the great moments in that diverse history would include films that are as inventive in their techniques of framing, editing, montage, and even title sequences as Le Corbusier’s highly propagandistic films of the 1920s and the amazing film work of the Eameses. Almost since its invention filmmaking has appealed to architects as a medium that is spatial and temporal in a way with fascinating parallels to architecture itself and thus has attracted a great deal of experimentation from architects. One thinks of the incredible resonance between experimental abstract films, such as those by Hans Richter, and the emergence of an architecture of spatial planes and sequences, a relationship solidified for instance by the seminal film issue of the avant-garde review *G* in the 1920s.

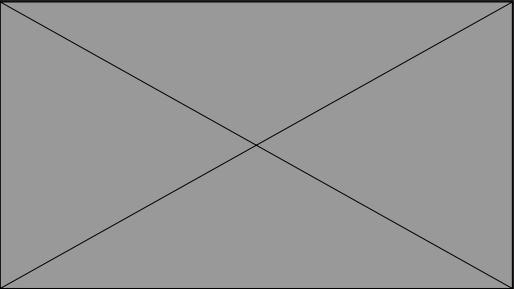
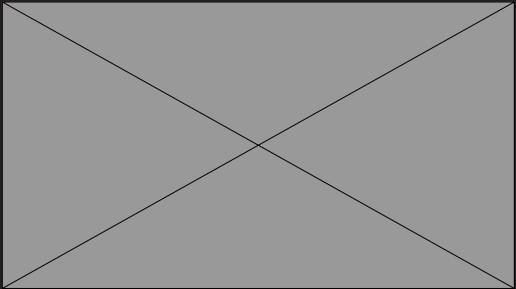
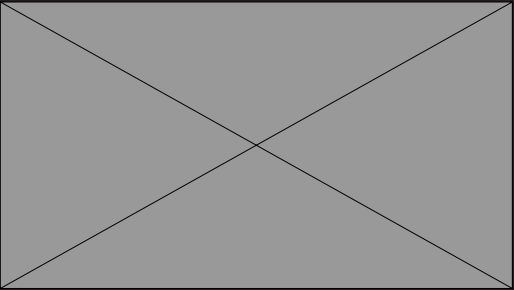
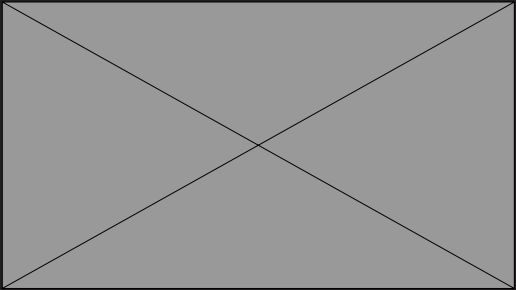
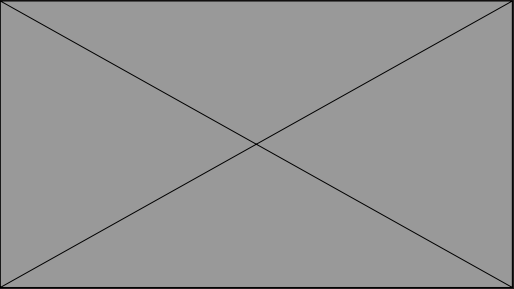
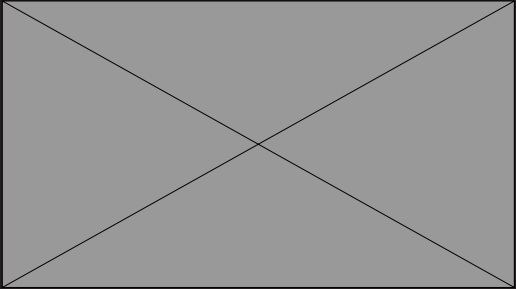
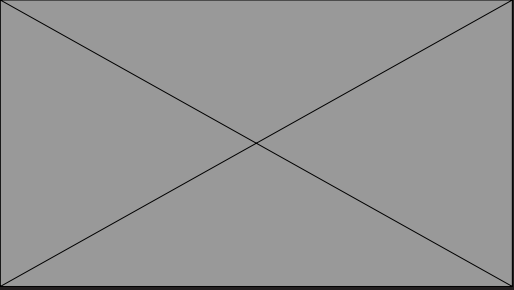
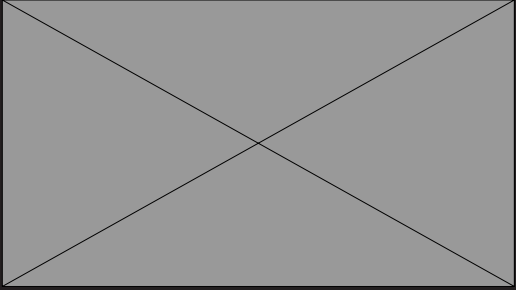
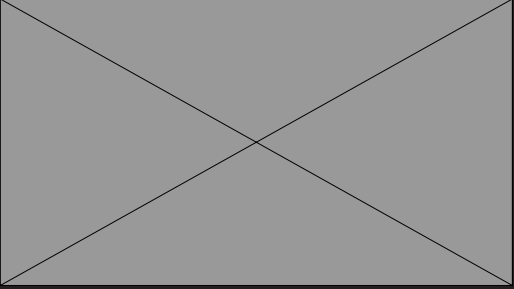
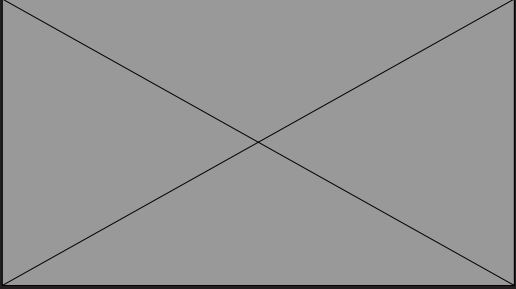
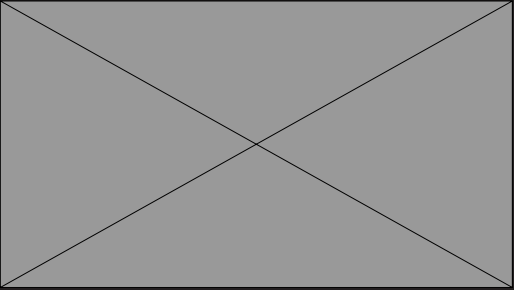
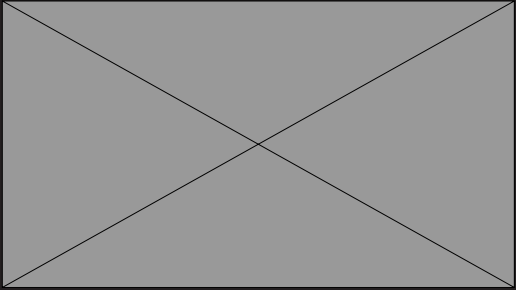
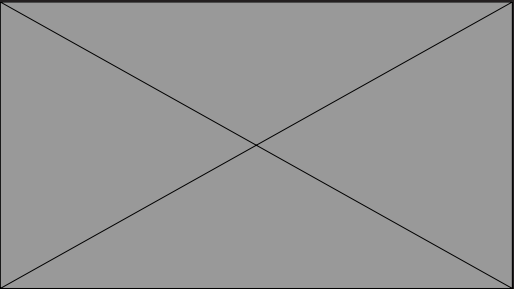
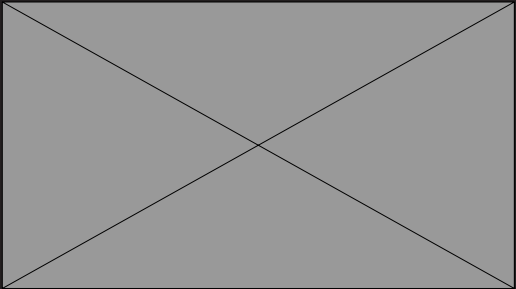
4: How do these films fit within the larger institutional direction and/or ambition of architectural curation at MoMA?

**BB:** MoMA was a pioneer in using film and television in relationship to its architectural and design objectives over the decades, although that history has yet to be written. One thinks, in particular, of the television appearances of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. around the “Good Design” campaigns of the 1940s and early 1950s.

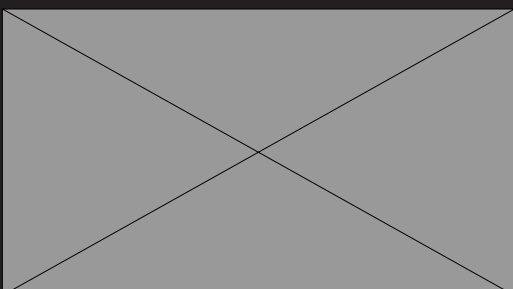
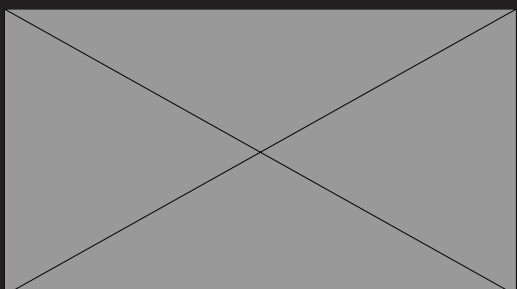
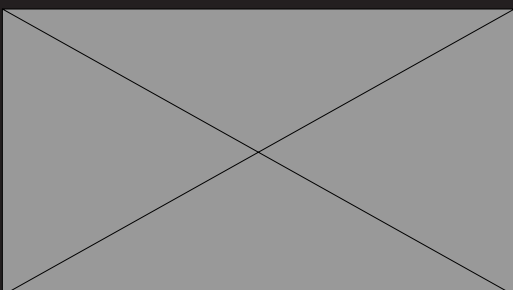
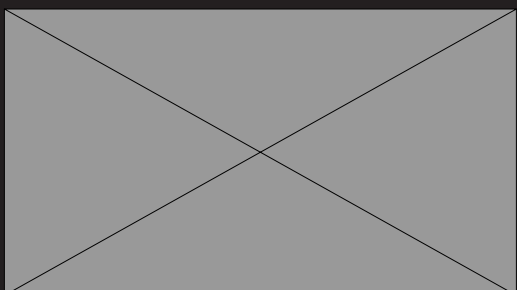
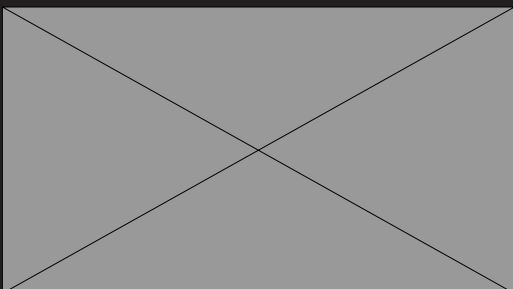
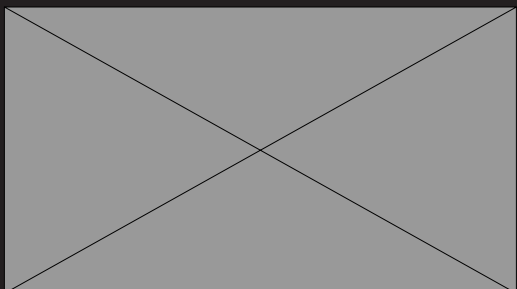
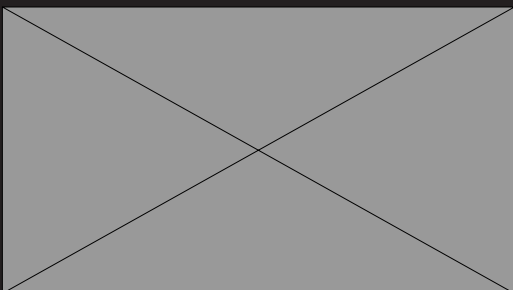
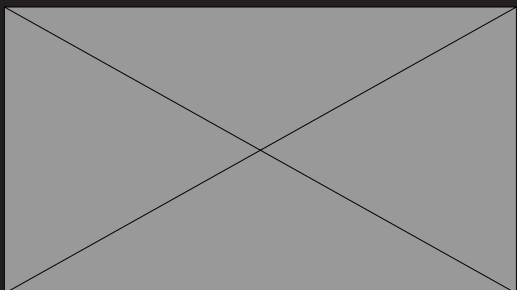
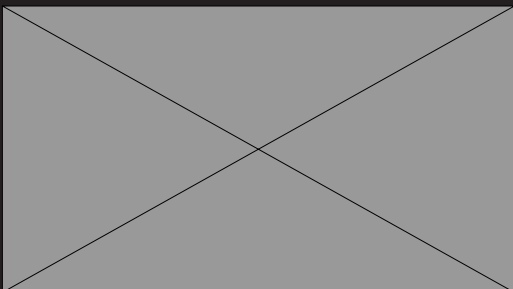
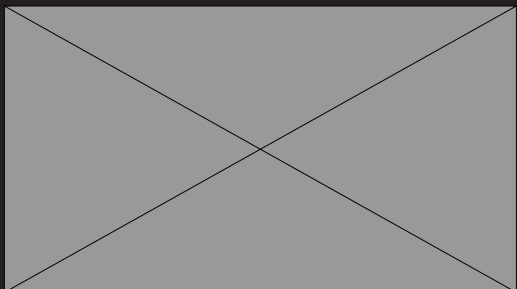
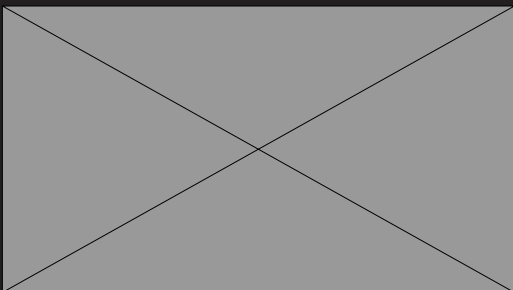
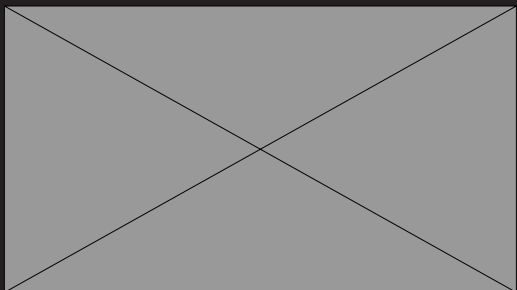
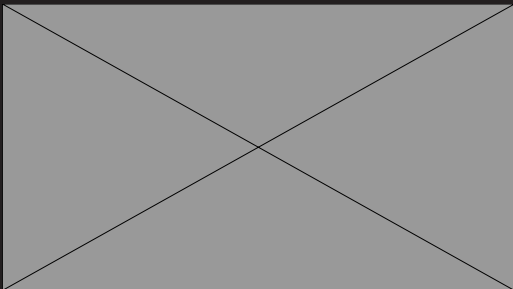
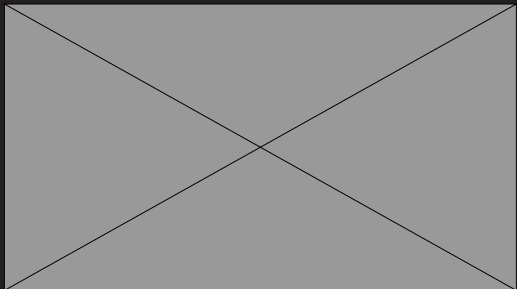
Ever since I arrived at the helm of Architecture 8

Design in 2007, I have found film critical to my commitment to architectural exhibitions that engage audiences in understanding what is at stake in architectural design and decision making. For instance, in the exhibition Home Delivery: Fabricating the Modern Dwelling (2008), film played an essential role in creating an exhibition that was about the design and fabrication process rather than simply about end results. The real challenge in making an architectural exhibition is how to engage the public critically with the work on display. In past decades the means of architectural representation often cultivated a level of complexity that was frankly mystifying to the uninitiated. For me the real challenge of an architectural curator working in a museum that has a mass appeal is to exhibit not simply the results but the very processes and the larger stakes—creative, social, economic, even ethical—of architectural practices in a world that demands radical change. In Home Delivery this took the form of creating anthologies of historical footage—mostly documentary—of house prefabrication. And then for the new commissions of prefabricated prototypes the website of the Museum hosted weekly updates on the design, fabrication, and delivery of five prefabricated or digitally fabricated houses. The exhibition itself played out temporally.





MOS



JEANNE GANG





Given a larger budget it would have been very interesting to precede the presentation of the projects in Foreclosed with a room of projections of films and television programs that had helped build the American dream, from "Mr. Blanding Builds His Dream House" (1948), inevitably, to "Leave it to Beaver." Ever since Beatriz Colomina's pioneering work, we know that media representations of architecture are an integral part of architectural culture, as much building blocks of the horizon of possibilities and desires as any other forms of representation by which architecture is projected or recorded.

5: Bonus and optional question-intentionally if impossibly broad: can you speak to the value of architectural storytelling, in the past and today?

**RM:** That would depend. Stories about what? About technological triumph, about the glorious past, about the heroic future, about the eternal present? Stories about justice or injustice, equity or exploitation, truth or lies? Mythical stories or historical ones? Stories with a beginning, a middle, and an end, or just an end? Or maybe: stories about value itself, about how it is constituted, how it is maintained, and how it may be renegotiated? But even then—as comedy, tragedy, farce, or epic?

The narrow answer to your question, then, is that there has always been a narrative element to architecture. Think of the great friezes that crowned the Parthenon or wrapped the Pergamon Altar. Think of the symbolic rituals staged in such structures, or the liturgical procedures written into the plan of a Gothic cathedral. Think of the scriptural cadences sweeping across the surfaces of a centuries-old mosque, or the symbolic and political differences among imperial palaces planned around symmetrical or asymmetrical spatial sequences. Or think of the innumerable instances where buildings exude national myth or prosaic, archaic custom. Some of these were designed self-consciously to tell, repeat, or stage stories of different sorts. Some were not. It doesn't matter. They do it anyway.

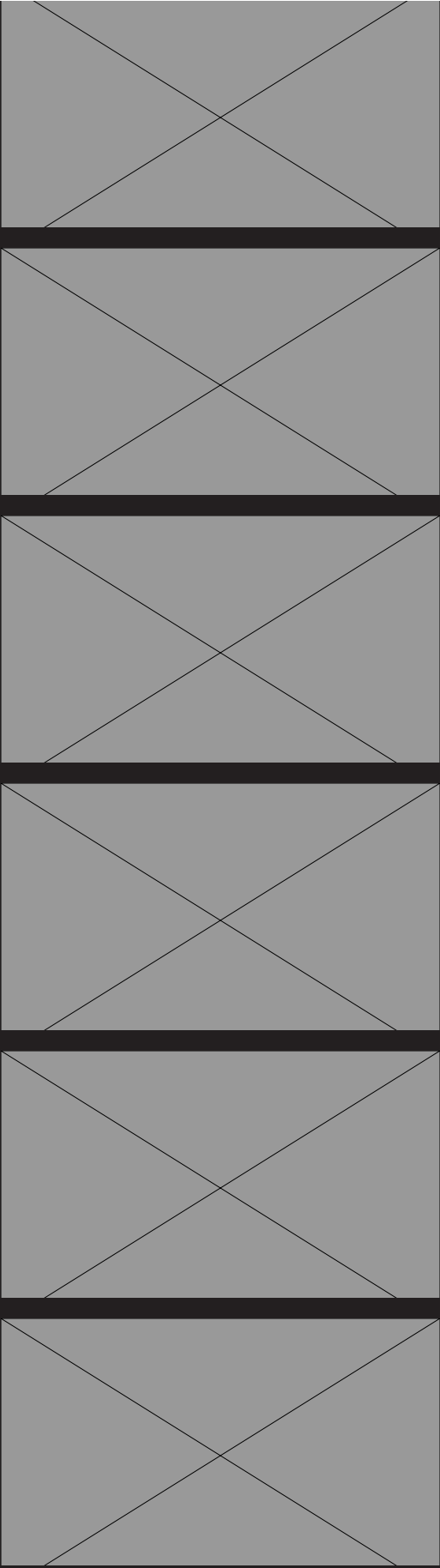
Today many architects and many critics suffer under the delusion that narrative equals figuration. But even the most abstract designs, and the media in which they are rendered, tell stories. El Lissitzky allegorized it cheekily in his lithograph "Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge." Still, some are tempted by all of those stories about the end of stories—stories that speak,

tautologically, of replacing an outmoded literariness with the immediacy of sheer instrumentality. But as I've been saying, there is nothing more instrumental than a story. So we might as well learn.

**BB:** I would only add that the very first printed text on architecture with illustrations is a narrative tale, the famous Hypnerotomachia Poliphili of Francesco Colonna. And I would also add that the relationship between space and memory is so intricately intertwined that the standard technique of the Memory Palace tells us that even without a story per se that space has deep resonances with the very way our minds structure the world, time, and experience.

While architecture is not always narrative in its conception, it generates narratives in the way it enters the world. A building once completed and occupied interacts not only with its users but with the changing configurations of its environment as well. Narrative thus accrues even to architecture which sets out to refute or resist it.

What was distinctive about the invitation to deploy filmic techniques as part of the making of a project in Foreclosed was the notion that those elements that accrue can also be part of the way in which architecture helps us to imagine new stories.



How might architectural history advance if groups of talented film and video makers were charged with telling stories in significant buildings of the past? Just as multiple performances of the repertoire of classical music vastly increase our understanding of the invariant texts of Mozart or Wagner, architectural scholarship stands to gain by encouraging media makers to "perform" works of Schinkel or Le Corbusier, preferably by filling them with human beings and narratives. The pretense of the camera surveying architectural spaces devoid of bodies, as if this provided a gold standard of objectivity, has become threadbare. Anyone concerned with the potential of moving images to illuminate the built environment will want to read this conversation. Two thumbs up!

-EDWARD DIMMENBERG



# Elegant Strategies for Agonistic Architectural Argumentation

by cristina goberna and urtzi grau  
Fake Industries Architectural Agonism

Everyone claims to practice Architectural Discussions these days. Yet, how often do our conversations end up being monologues, consensual talks, neutral chats, or banal agreements? Could we introduce Agonism into an architectural conversation? Could we deliberately inject a friction into our discussions that might serve to advance the field? Could we do it without falling into the rhetorical cliché of the direct attack? Use the following strategies correctly and you will be able to express disappointment, disagreement, and even disapproval with such subtlety and taste that no one will dare to engage in a superficial architectural discussion with you ever again.

## Number 1

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.

you: I can't believe it! Your client finally paid you the five hundred thousand dollars they owe you, didn't they?

opponent: Er...no.

you: Oh. Sorry. So what is the good news?

opponent: We are designing the re-tiling pattern for a bathroom in a brownstone in downtown Brooklyn.

you: Oh! That is certainly good, too!

strategy used:  
Intentional Overstatement  
of Expectations

## Number 2

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.

you: Do tell!

opponent: We have been invited to curate, design, produce, fundraise, and install an architectural exhibit.

you: Wow! Is it an exhibition of your work?

opponent: No.

you: Is there an honorarium involved?

opponent: It is a pro bono project.

you: Well, it is remarkable that you are making such a big investment of time, money, and talent to exhibit the work of others. It also shows a great deal of generosity on your part to work that hard for an institution that will not pay you. If you can convince them to credit you for it, your exhibit might earn you a bit of prestige and maybe in the future they will take your work into account somehow.

strategy used:  
Seed of Doubt



## Number 3

strategy used:  
Barrage of Interruptions

opponent: We have some pretty good news.

you: Go on!

opponent: We have just submitted a competition.

you: A competition? Great! Tell me: is it an open contest? Who is the jury? Will you build your design if you win? Was the submission a crazy amount of work?

opponent: The competition is open, the jury is unknown—

you: (to waiter) Excuse me! Are the scallops on the menu actual “diver” scallops or is that a misprint?

waiter: I’ll check with the kitchen.

you: (to opponent) Sometimes they fib. Anyway, tell me more about the competition.

opponent: I was saying that it is actually an open competition, the jury is unknown, and there is just one symbolic cash prize.

you: Waiter! Forget about the scallops.

waiter: As you wish, sir.

you: Sorry, please continue.

opponent: As I was saying, it was quite a lot of work to come up with the proposal indeed. I left my job for a week and the printing alone cost \$500...

you: I don’t know...do you think that “diver scallops” mean that they were caught by actual scuba divers? Or is it just some old fashioned way of saying “diverse”? I have always wondered about that.

## Number 5

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.  
you: Lay it on me already!  
opponent: We have been invited to give a lecture.  
you: That is really great news! I knew it, finally after all your efforts you are in an Ivy League school's lecture series!  
opponent: Not quite: we will be talking at a Pecha-Kucha in Greenpoint next summer.  
you: For God's sake! (whispering) Don't look, act normally.  
opponent: What?  
you: Slavoj Žižek just entered the restaurant and he's sitting at the bar with Tao Lin. I can't believe it!  
opponent: Who? Where?  
you: And they are carrying a bag full of American Apparel clothes! Do you have a camera? My iPhone's battery just died.  
opponent: Sure, here you are. I can't see them. Why is it striking anyway?  
you: Wait a second; I need to tweet this moment. I will tell you the story if you stop turning your neck as if you were the girl from The Exorcist.

strategy used:  
Unfulfilled Intimations  
of Actual Gossip

## Number 6

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.  
you: Don't leave me hanging here!  
opponent: We are hiring fifteen interns in our office.  
you: That is fantastic news! Tell me everything!  
waiter: Well, we are submitting a big competition in six month or so...  
you: Oh. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!  
opponent: What?  
you: What you said was: "hiring fifteen interns." What I heard was: "hiring fifteen unpaid interns." What a relief to be wrong.  
opponent: Well...  
you: For a moment I thought that you were going to exploit fifteen people. Can you imagine? You! Sympathetic with Occupy Wall Street! You! Sponsor of Amnesty International! You of all people! Ha ha ha ha ha!  
opponent: Well, they are learning, we are going to tutor them...  
you: Waiter! The check please!

strategy used:  
Intentional Mishearing

## Number 7

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.  
 you: Tell me everything! Every detail of it!  
 opponent: Our work is getting published.  
 you: Don't say anything else. I knew it! Finally Princeton Architectural Press is publishing a monograph of your work! Is Beatriz Colomina writing the introduction? Jean-Louis Cohen maybe? Or is it Bedford Press? Actar?  
 opponent: Not exactly.  
 you: What do you mean?  
 opponent: We have been invited to write an article in a great student-run journal.  
 you: Definitely the kids are coming up from behind—(singing)—"I'm losing my edge!... I'm losing my edge!...to the art-school Brooklynites...in little jackets... and borrowed nostalgia for the unremembered eighties..."  
 opponent: What do you mean? Are you really singing?  
 you: "—But I was there!...Yeah! I was there!"  
 opponent: Why are you singing that song?  
 you: I'm sorry. I was just listening to an lcd Soundsystem bootleg from Terminal 5 in New York on the way over. Such a killer song. Such a killer band. Such a loss...

strategy used:  
 Appreciation for the Arts

## Number 8

opponent: I just got some pretty good news.  
 you: I am listening to you.  
 opponent: I got hired by a famous New York architecture office.  
 you: I'm really happy for you! How did it happen?  
 waiter: It is the office of one of my former professors; she invited me to collaborate.  
 you: Very good! When are you starting?  
 opponent: Tomorrow.  
 you: Tomorrow? I thought you had planned to spend this weekend upstate with a date.  
 opponent: I'm afraid I won't be able to go. I'm staying in the city for at least the next twelve weekends or so; such a shame that they don't pay for overtime.  
 you: Overtime?!...I wonder if a physician does more overtime in a hospital than an architect in an office. Or how the average working hours in a Chinese and a New York architecture office compare? Even if your new job requires you to work eighty hours a week, that is probably nothing in comparison to working in China, although you probably aren't getting any health insurance or a working visa out of it...

strategy used:  
 Detail-Oriented Side-Tracking



## Number 9

values in ways I can't even begin to describe to other people. Sorry, I am leaving now. (opponent exits).

opponent: We just got some pretty good news.  
you: Bring it on!  
opponent: We have just moved to our new office space.  
you: That is great news, where is it located?  
opponent: It is in Chinatown, 149 Pell Street. It is in the basement, specifically the first table on your right when you enter the space.  
you: And your three partners?  
opponent: We share the table in groups of two. We are working in shifts of four hours per day each.  
It has been working pretty well so far.  
you: We are trying new models of ad hoc office practice ourselves, where we have almost no infrastructure and only get temporary associates for specific projects...  
opponent: o.k., I'm done. I don't know why I even bother trying to have a meaningful conversation with you over dinner. I mean, yes, we were friends in college, but all you ever do is try to make me feel bad about my architectural

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### note

The world is full of architectural narratives, more or less interesting; we do not want to add any more. The article that you, dear reader, have just read, is a détournement of the piece "How to Win a Conversation," a text by Paul Simms published in the "Shouts & Murmurs" section of The New Yorker on September 3rd, 2012. We thank Mr. Simms and his editors for having produced such a valuable source of copy and inspiration.

“Take Mies’ minimalism: Less is More; take Venturi and  
Scott-Brown’s populism: Less is a Bore; take Philip Johnson’s  
opportunism: I am a Whore; take Bjarke Ingels’ optimism:  
Yes is More; add some left over cynicism from Rem and you  
get Fake Industries Architecture Agonism: yes is no.”  
— eva franch i gilabert