PRAXIS

ALTERNATIVE ENDINGS

14

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THEY MADE ME DO IT
ANA MILJACKI

"Design today must find ways to approximate these ecological forces and structures to tap, approximate, borrow, and transform morphogenetic processes from all aspects of wild nature, to invent artificial means of creating living artificial environments." —Sanford Kwinter

For a journal that has focused on built or buildable work, this PRAXIS ventures into new territory. Our call for "Ecologics" submissions explicitly solicited "more radical and visionary solutions" for addressing environmental issues architecturally. The search for more speculative work created a paradoxical question of our own making: can projects be at once buildable and visionary? Moreover, we asked ourselves: is it possible to consider, or rather reconsider, what is currently accepted as sustainable architecture without including anything "green?"

This last question presupposes that contemporary "green" architecture—if we can agree that there is such a thing—inadequately addresses critical environmental issues. Indeed, we would argue that much of what falls under the catchall and often ill-defined term "sustainable" offers an aesthetic solution (i.e., green walls, double skins, and "natural" materials) without asking demanding questions of current building practice. The majority of these buildings in the US today rely on the use of "green" materials or technologies to achieve silver, gold, or platinum awards from a for-profit agency. Plaques sporting certification statuses combine with a few trees and ferns to literally green-brand buildings, and alleviate our collective guilt. The image of green supersedes the actual environmental performance of green— much the same way that the modernists' aspirations for buildings as efficient and hygienic machines became an alibi for adopting the look of the machine; the "machine á habiter" literally transformed into the "machine aesthetic."

In contrast to these now-conventional solutions, we are advocating for a change in approach that steps back from superficial preoccupations to consider a more fundamental question: what if we replace the notion of environment with ecology? While ecological thinking has a history within the architectural discipline, it has typically been framed urbanistically, as in Reyner Banham's *Four Ecologies*, or the more recent *Ecological Urbanism* conference and publication. At the architectural scale, the substitution of ecology for environment transforms our perception of architecture as something distinct from its external conditions to an understanding of architecture in relation to its surroundings and ultimately its environment. Rather than seeing buildings as static elements, set apart from an objectified, scenographic nature, ecological thinking links an object to its environment as a dynamic organism. Understanding our current problems as ecological rather than environmental uncouples the binary opposition of nature—culture (i.e. nature as a distinct and pristine "other" to be protected from the cultural product of architecture.) The logics of ecologies reconstruct these relationships so nature becomes a cultural artifact and culture a natural one. As Bruno Latour has argued against the problematic separation of nature and culture; "if nature is not made by or for human beings, then it remains foreign, forever remote and hostile."[1]

Deploying the "logics" of ecology provides an opportunity for architecture to intervene in a larger system on multiple scales. The use of scale—or rather design that operates through the simultaneous inter-

action of multiple scales—emerges as a critical tool. Even the smallest projects include an awareness of their relation to and within larger ecologies. Joyce Hwang's Bat Tower, for example, questions how the construction of a fifty square foot "house" for bats affects population health over a tri-state area, and, reciprocally, how the bats migratory patterns translate to the scale of the individual structure. Kiel Moe's StackHaus—a 350 square foot solid wood structure in rural Colorado—is a precise study in reducing the geographic range of its source materials. Conversely, urban or regional proposals such as the WPA 2.0 competition entries or Urban-Think Tank's work in Caracas often begin with the smallest scale of interventions such as public toilets and billboard water collectors. The scalar consideration of a project's relation and response to its larger environment moves beyond the green-decorated object in a static environment to an eco "logic."

These multi-scalar projects also embrace the "radical and visionary." Mark Wasiuta and Marcos Sanchez's smog reconstitution project designs a process to accurately reproduce smog conditions documented in the Los Angeles city archives. Weightless City constructs a balloon field in the air-rights space of adjacent property owners to obstruct a third runway at London's Heathrow airport. These projects use rigorous research to adopt an absurd, playful, yet pointedly polemical stance. Philippe Rahm's Meteorological Encyclopedia also questions architectural convention—the presumption that a consistent temperature be maintained across various spaces within a building. Floating bathrooms, smog chambers, and balloon cities: all share a commitment not only to the prophetic but also to the pragmatic. Building on the legacy of last century's experimental environmentalism documented in the EcoRedux archives, these projects test the limits of the discipline. Yet, performance takes precedence over appearance as they are informed by precise and specific attention to R-values, air rights regulations, date-specific particulate content, and pollutant gases. Could we imagine approaching the urgent issues facing our planet through a similar responsible radicality?

In 1968, Robert Smithson prefigured Latour and others, writing: "nature is simply another 18th and 19th century fiction."[2] If nature is indeed a fiction, then perhaps we are now liberated—even obligated— to intervene in what we formerly considered untouchable. Nature becomes something we must design or at least curate. Rather than simply acknowledge nature's artifice, this issue argues for the varied and uncertain condition of nature, its unpredictability, its surprise, its "wildness," —to use Kwinter's term—as something to be "transformed" by design. Such "wild" possibilities are inherently contained within ecologies, systems that operate in and affect fields of multiple scales. We cannot save a pristine nature that no longer exists, but perhaps by embracing its logics we can design the possibility of wildness, or radicality, even as we remain responsive to and responsible for architecture's participation in a scalar ecology.

1 Bruno Latour, We Have Never Been Modern (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1993): 30.
2 Jack Flam, ed. Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996): 85.

NEVERENDING STORY
ASHLEY SCHAFER AND AMANDA REESER LAWRENCE

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Eco-Redux
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All images courtesy of the architect.

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Project Editor: Andrew Colopy
All images courtesy of the architects.

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15 Testing

Architects are always testing the limits—of structure, of materiality, of form, and of the discipline itself.

In the 1980s a faltering economy propelled architects such as Bernard Tschumi, Daniel Libeskind, Thom Mayne, Rem Koolhaas, and Peter Eisenman to challenge disciplinary boundaries and explore their work through alternative methods and as a means to establish new criticality. More recently the question of testing has taken on renewed urgency among many young architectural firms. But testing now means much more than a self-reflexive criticality.

On the one hand, testing applies to a kind of extreme or improbable materiality, projects doing extraordinary things with experimental materials and processes. However, testing also takes on a more philosophical or conceptual approach as architects are unafraid to explore options, more interested in "process" versus "product," and able to grasp multiple scenarios as possible outcomes. Much of this, of course, is enabled by increasing computational power and the notion of testing is deeply embedded within digital processes and outcomes.

Our aim in this issue is to explore the material, structural, conceptual, and intellectual possibilities of "testing" as a new architectural paradigm, and its ramifications at multiple scales.

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Stories of Science
The Milgram Experiment—
Small Worlds

KAZYS VARNELIS & ROBERT SUMRELL
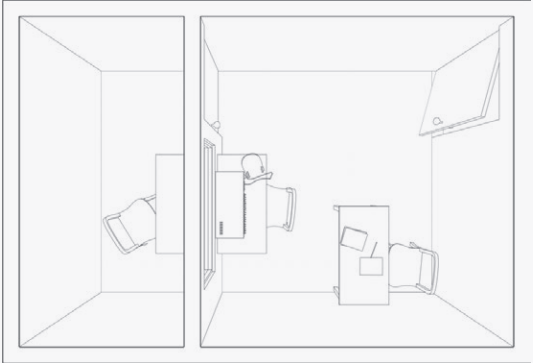
The network is the cultural dominant for our age, much as the machine was under modernism. Networks serve us as organizational models for businesses and universities, friendships and economies. In doing so, networks also stand in as metaphors for the computer. Few people want to understand their lives as a sequence of programs, but most of us don't mind understanding our relationships with others or even our bodies or brains as a matter of networks. As the network has risen to prominence during the last two decades, network science has also developed to explain complex networks, from computers and telecommunication systems to disease vectors and relationships between individuals. In turn, social networking sites sites based on theories developed under network science have become enormously popular, creating a feedback effect in which the more we use these sites, the more our relationships conform to the theories of networking that these sites are based on.

In order to explain the importance of its theories to us, advocates of network science rely on stories to explain or set the stage for its theories. Pick up any introduction on network theory—for example Albert-Lázló Barabási's *Linked: The New Science of Networks*, Duncan Watts's *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age,* or Mark Buchanan's *Nexus: Small Worlds or the Groundbreaking Science of Networks*—and you find that networks are always discussed in terms of stories such as Leopold Euler's description of traversing the bridges of Königsberg, the development of the parlor game of *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon*, the meeting of two friends at a cocktail party, … or even the stories of the researchers and their themselves.

The common of these is Stanley Milgram's famed "Small World Problem." Milgram published his results in the first issue of *Psychology Today,* introducing 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 bottlecap 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 bottlecaps."

"No kidding!" Jones exclaims in amazement.

"Good lord, it's a small world, isn't it?"

Milgram continued by citing Jane Jacobs, who in the *Death and Life of Great American Cities* suggested described 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 head hunter in the Solomon Islands and a cobbler in Rock Island, Illinois…" Each sister would come up with a chain of messengers and the one would the shortest chain would win.

Milgram set out to identify the average number of intermediaries in a real-life game of *Messages*, to answer the question "Given any two people in the world, person x and person z, how many intermediate acquaintance links are needed before x and z are connected?" In doing so, he explained that the real significance of the small world phenomenon is not to provide entertaining stories but rather that it demonstrates mathematical conditions underlying the most human of traits, our ability to build relationships.Research done by Ithiel de Sola Pool, Manfred Kochen, and Michael Gurevich at MIT developed a mathematical model for the phenomena that they verified in a survey to conclude 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.

Milgram set up the Small World experiment with an experimental framework in which he distributed a set of letters to randomly selected individuals in Omaha, Nebraska and Wichita, Kansas, requesting to have packages sent to a specific individual, a stockbroker who worked Boston. If the recipient did not know the individual, they were asked to forward the letter to the next person in the chain. Milgram soon came to the

conclusion 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.

The result, Milgram concluded, is that "while many studies in social science show how the individual is alienated and cut all from the rest of society, this study demonstrates that, in some sense, we are all bound together in a tightly knit social fabric." At the core of network theory, the small world experiment fundamentally shifts us from a modern culture of disconnection and alienation to a more contemporary culture marked by connection and networking.

But 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 cooperation among subjects. More recently, however, Judith Kleinfield observes 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. Kleinfield disagrees with Milgram's conclusion that the high dropout rate was a matter of apathy or disobedience, pointing out that the article to be delivered was "an official-looking document with a heavy blue binding and a gold logo." Kleinfield concludes that "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.'"

Kleinfield is no doubt right that for some people small-world experiences suggest "intelligent design," but few contemporary theorists of network science advocate it. On the contrary, for them the small world phenomenon is evidence of a mathematical harmony underlying society. Much as generative architecture does, network theory suggests that a religion of mathematics gives order and organization to our lives. But as the Small Worlds Experiment demonstrates, Milgram's initial observation is inverted: it isn't mathematics that underlies things, its good stories.

In arguing that obedience was the failure point of the Small Worlds Experiment, Milgram was pointing to his most famous work, the

eponymous "Milgram Experiment." In *Obedience to Authority*, his 1974 book on the experiment, Milgram reverses the relation of theory and experience that he establishes in the Small Worlds Experiment, writing that "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." For Milgram, "obedience is the psychological mechanism that links individual action to political purpose."

The departure point in the Milgram Experiment was the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a lieutenant colonel in the SS who was one of the organizers of the Holocaust. In her book Eichmann in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt concluded that Eichmann wasn't a monster but rather, merely a bureaucrat doing his job. Milgram concluded 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.
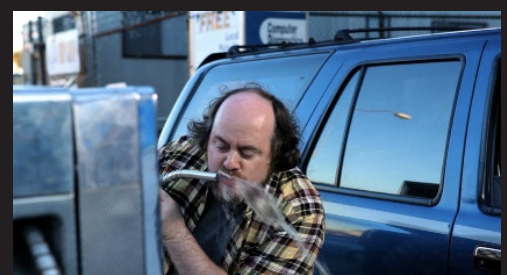
To investigate how individuals reacted to authority, Milgram, then teaching at Yale, approached a spectrum of people in the New Haven area and asked them to volunteer in an experiment purportedly about learning. Each volunteer was paired with an actor who, played the role of another volunteer. After explaining the importance of the study, researchers would appear to randomly assign the volunteer to be the "teacher" and actor to be the "learner" (in fact the randomness was a charade). The learner would be led to a room by an experimenter, and strapped into a chair and have electrodes attached to them while the teacher would sit in an adjoining room where he or she would monitor the learner via a glass window and sound system. The teacher would 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 an apparatus

The network spreads, with complicated inter-connections.
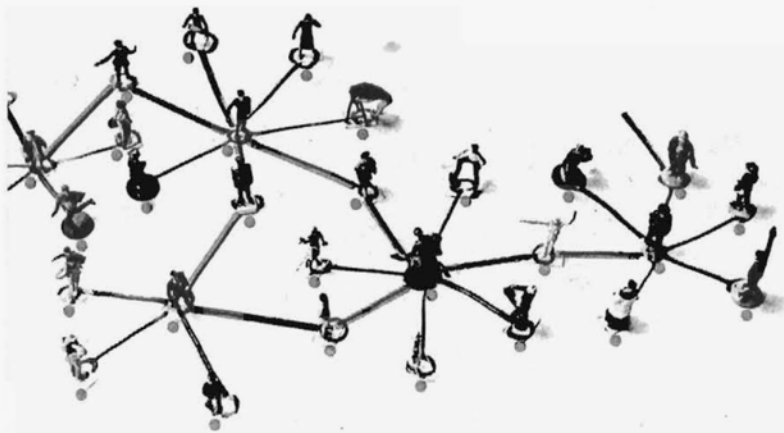
Random dispersement of people in the small world.

that contained a line of 30 switches, each corresponding to an increasing level of voltage and labelled in groups reading "Slight Shock, Moderate Shock, Strong Shock, Very Strong Shock, Intense Shock, Extreme Intensity Shock, and Danger: Severe Shock." As the learner made mistakes, the teacher would deliver ever-increasing levels of shock.

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FILM AND THE MUSEUM

THE USE OF FILM IN THE FORECLOSED EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

A VIRTUAL CONVERSATION WITH BARRY BERGDOLL, REINHOLD MARTIN, AND PRAXIS

THE MOMA FORECLOSED EXHIBITION 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

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 MOSS architects is in direct continuity with their way of working

1: Can you elaborate on your decision to require each participant to make a film, andthe 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 1 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,

for some time. (be specific here) 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 predilections, is clear in any gallery display that includes screens with projections… almost inevitably this is where most gallery visitors gravitate. So just as the received American suburban dream as it has been honed over decades by Hollywood captivates us, so 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 Gang Studio 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 standardly part of many architectural presentations, but which would have been all but impossible in an era of different film-making techniques. WorkAC turned to a completely different format, the television advertisement, even working with an advertising agency and creating a jingle that was as unforgettable as the imagery of their project and the wry humor of the advertisement, their whole presentation set up as something of a model show room for a new place and a new life style. 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 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
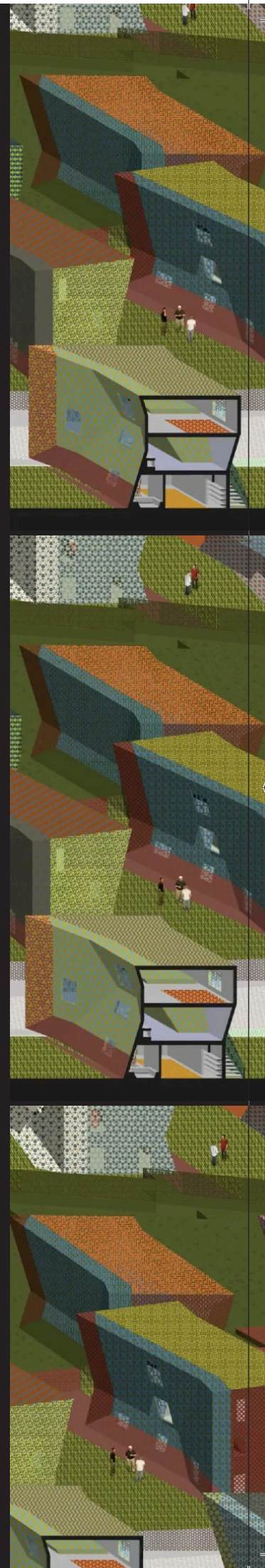
printed document. Among many other things, it's interesting to see how often the show was criticized, directly or indirectly, for being "utopian." Ironically, with respect to the actual history of architectural utopianism, whether we are talking about the fantastical counterprojects of the 1960s or the 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 this 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 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.(interesting…what to ask to flush this out a bit…) 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? (also interesting…how to flush this out more) Then, the tables would truly have turned and the numbers could have served to illustrate or elucidate the movies. (don't quite get this) 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 a reality factor. The careful analysis, numbers, and documentation were as essential to the design methods of the individual practioners as they were to the credibility of the display for the broader public. The two, to me, were the ying and yang of the whole experiment. As I

reiterated over and over again to the team: your projects need to be visionary enough that they can't be forgotten, pragmatic enough that they can't 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 incredibly important in these projections is the capacity of people to see the reality of their world in these projected futures, 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. It is that 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 they 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 are all digital videos. Technologically, the instruments with which they were made differ from cinema at least as much as the iPhone camera
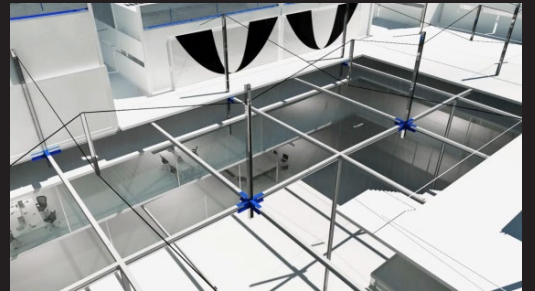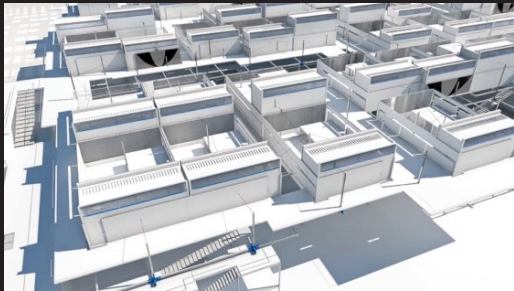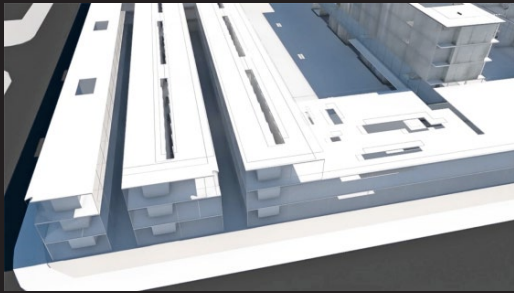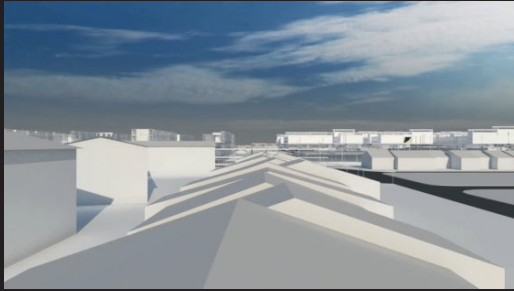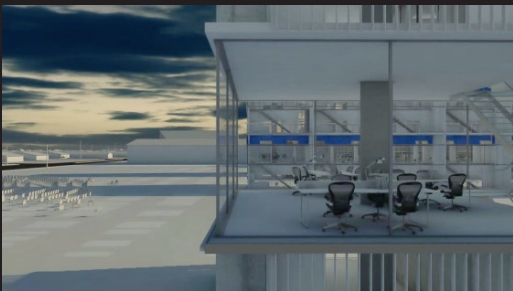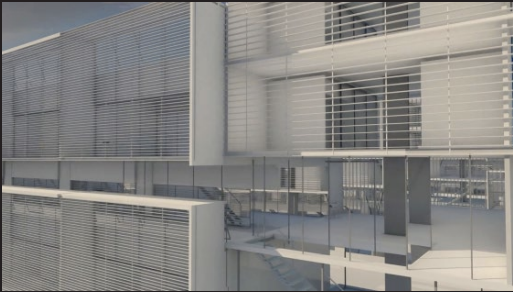
differs from the Leica. To the degree that the history of media is a history of such discontinuities, videos like these are structurally distinct from earlier films, just as the mostly realistic renderings that accompanied them differ from earlier drawings made using filmic techniques like montage. But 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

MICHAEL BELL

demand for photorealism works, in microcosm, on exactly the same ideological register as does the American Dream: it naturalizes decisions that are otherwise contingent, such as the decision to favor, and to represent as natural—real, given, unquestioned—this or that 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 film making, 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 Eames. Almost since its invention film making 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 absract 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: <u>How do these films fit within the larger institutional direction and/or ambition of architectural curation at MoMA?</u>

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 + Design in 2007, I have found that film often is key to my commitment that architectural exhibitions need to 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 of making an architectural exhibition is how to engage the public critically with the work on display. In the 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 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 pre-fabrication of houses. And then for the new

MOS

[5.5] The erotic potential of *transfiguration, hyperbole, twisting, folding, distortion, mannerism, (trans) "operation"... c. turn of the millennium trend is negligible. We have to unlearn how to unlearn things. The anti-semiotic regime of architectural production. Re-grunts and distorted means of (words) tilted prob (etc.) offered no way out. Nowadays either you double down and twist the knob-is that something else... because these eff(?)s are reverted on us. They are full-blown (corporate chromosome...) theirs no way for us to produce architecture through negation of-(see...

3. We drove all night trying to find a way home. Eventually we realized that with the current infrastructure, our methods no longer appeared to be methods at all. We had to walk home. It reminded us of that story from our childhood, after wandering through a dream that allowed us to conjure up all our wildest fantasies in the world, one after another with real abandon, we found that we could no longer maintain those dreams. Unable to conjure our way out of the problem, we changed our methods entirely, thinking only of our bedroom window and what that would look like from the inside, working out. Then we sat at back and pondered our dreams anew.

KIND OF REPRESENTATION

MY HUSBAND IS TRYING TO EARN $160/DAY

DAYS WITH NO FOOD

JEANNE GANG

commissions of pre-fabricated prototypes the web site of the Museum hosted weekly updates on the design, fabrication, and delivery of five pre-fabricated or digitally fabricated houses. The exhibition itself than played out temporally.

Had we had 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. Blandings, 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 design possibilities and 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 Hypneratomachia Polipili of Fra 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 in enters the world. A building once completed and occupied interacts not only with its users but with the changing configurations of its environment, 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 imagine new stories.

Living Machines

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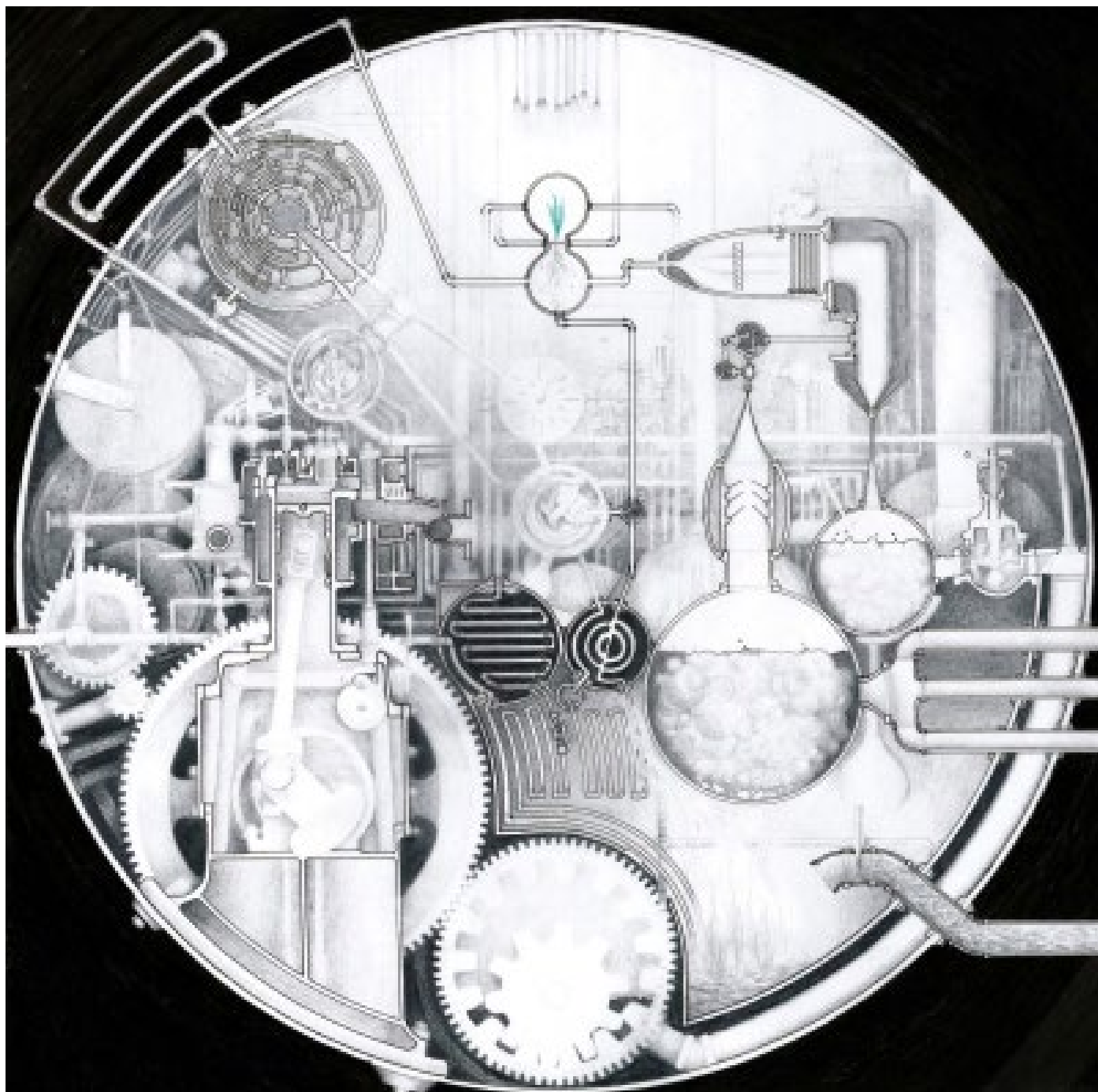
THIS SERIES OF PENCIL AND INK DRAWINGS TELL
the story of a world very similar to our own. Made using
architectural drafting techniques, they explore how using
a system of simple rules (restricting the angles of lines,
repeating components, fractal logic) can yield a seemingly
complex, even chaotic, design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

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.

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.
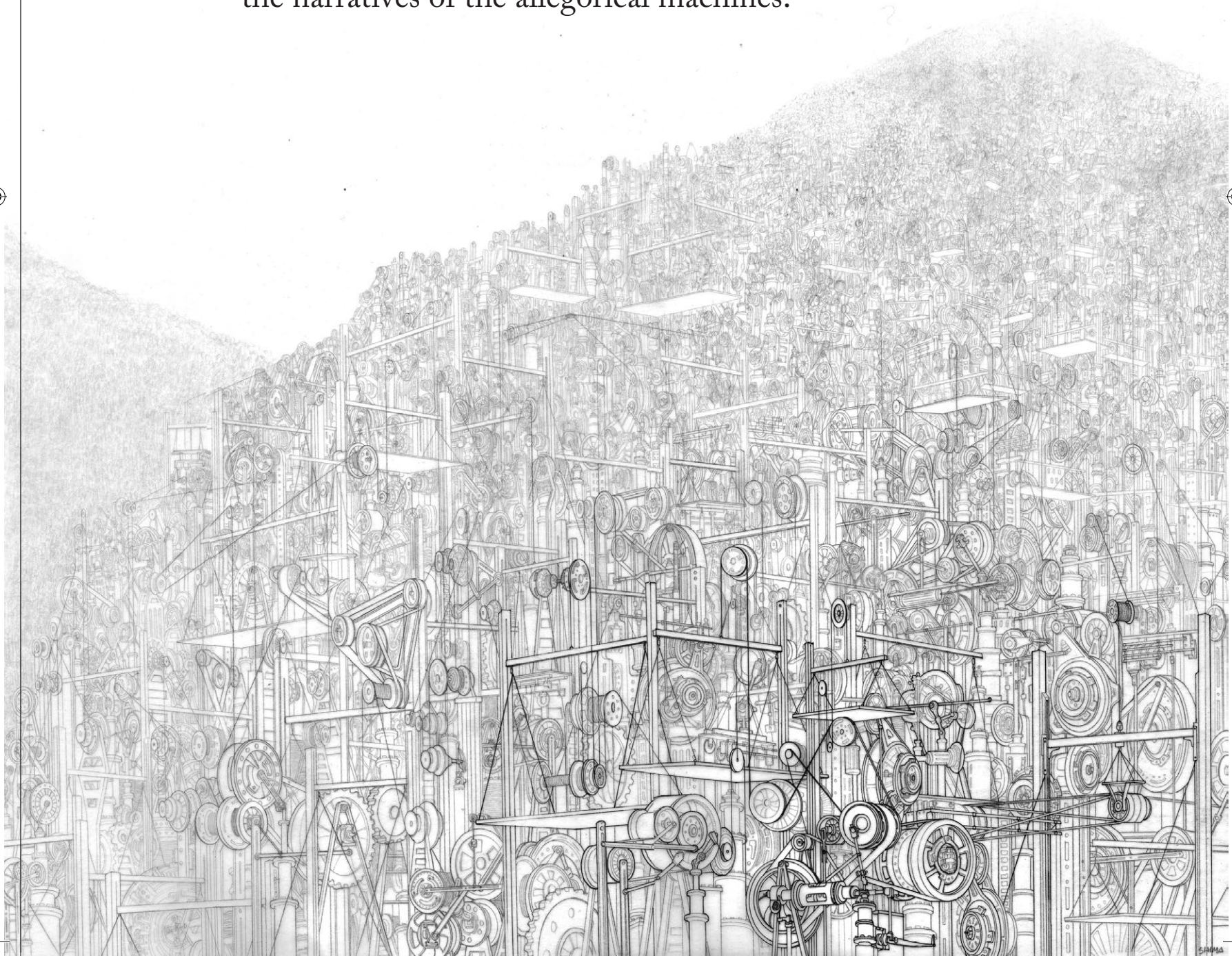
In this world, machines work and produce materials for the sustenance and comfort of its inhabitants. Motors turn gears, belts, and pulleys; pumps extract water from the ground; and minerals are mined, transported, and refined.
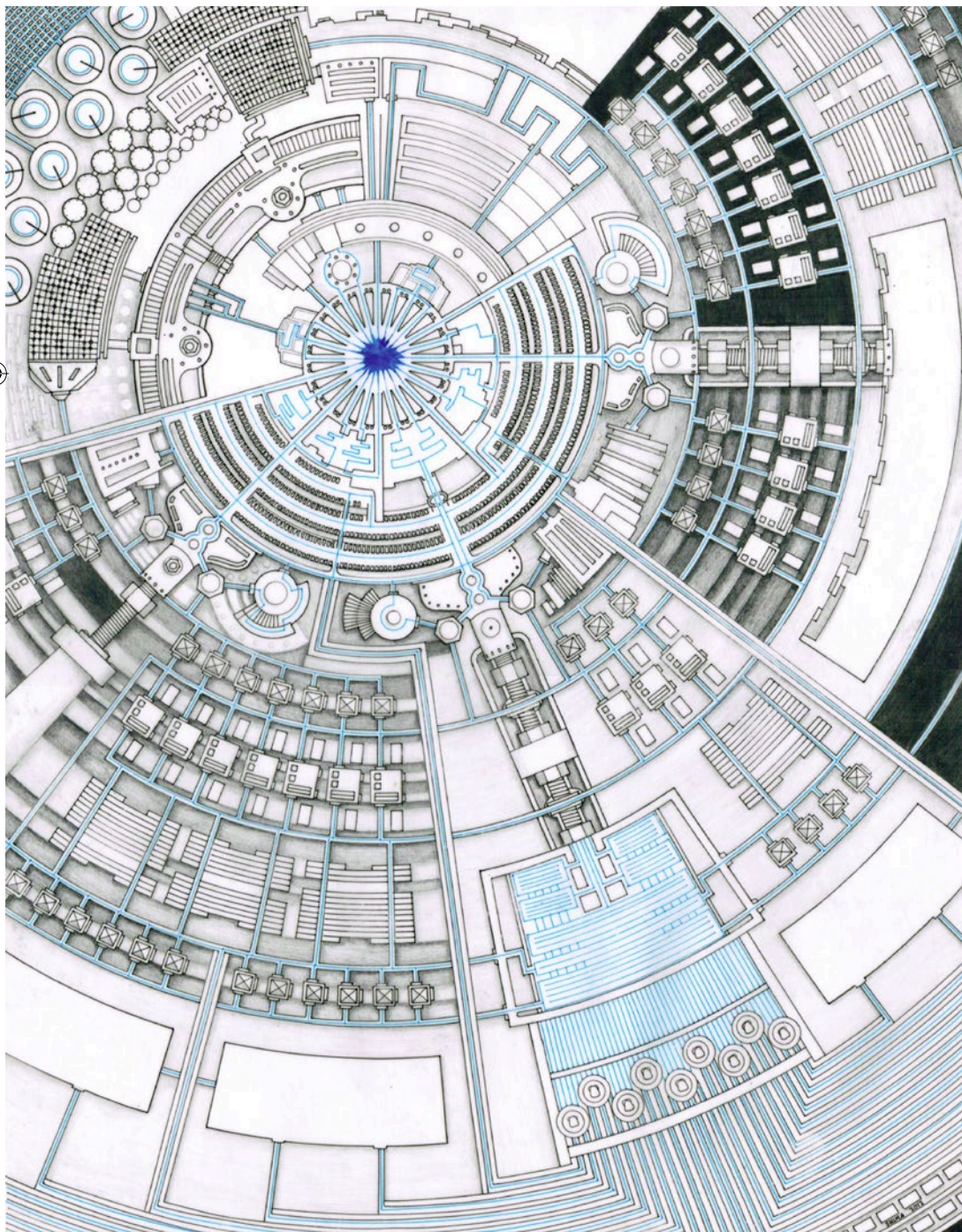
Water Circuit, 2012
ink and graphite on vellum
11"x 14"
Part machine, part city, water lies at the heart of Water Circuit. *Water is pumped through a hydroelectric dam through capillary action, circulated through residences, recycled at a wastewater treatment plant, and pumped back into an urban center 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.*
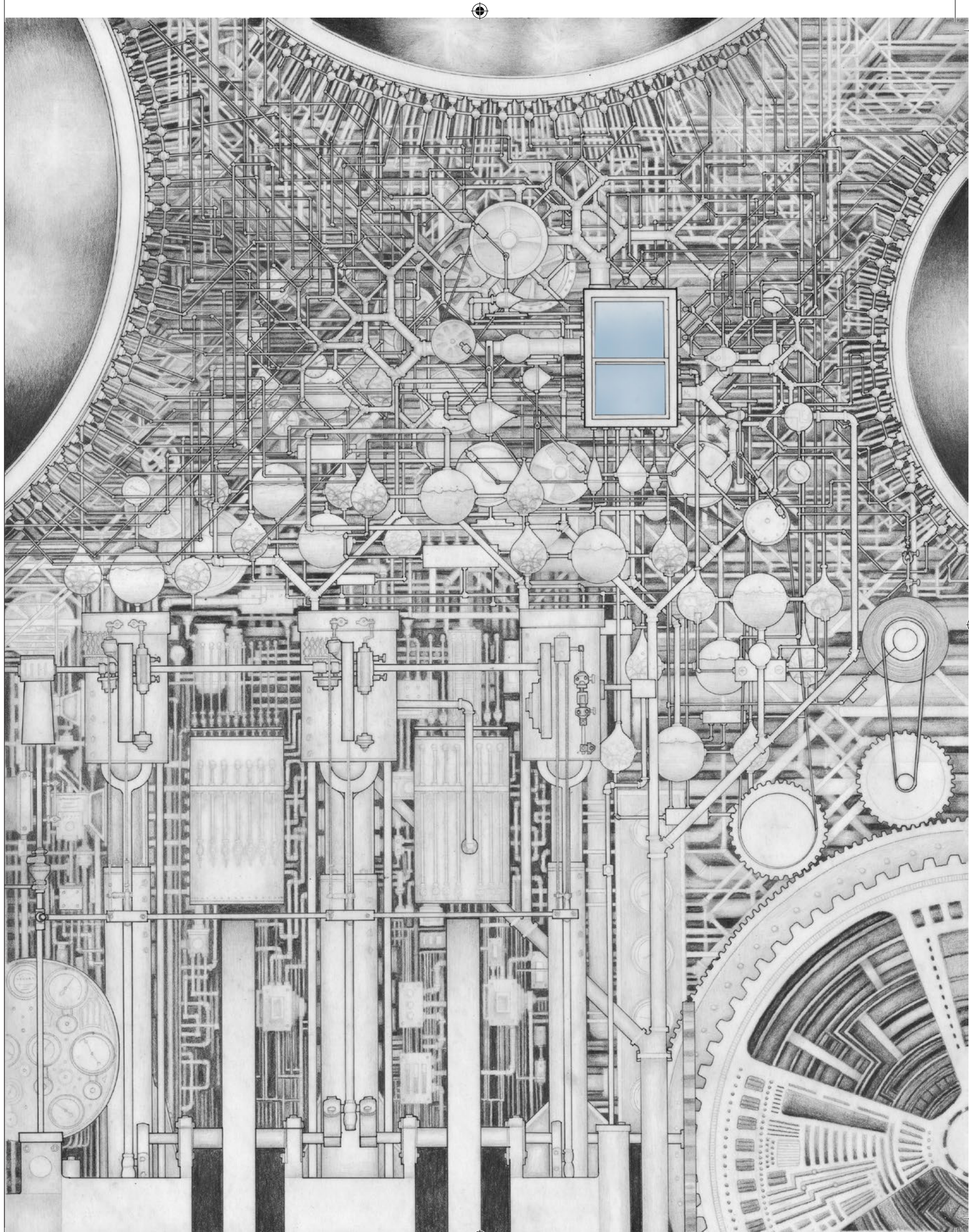
The machines have become so integral to the landscape and atmosphere that they cannot easily be separated or even distinguished. Boilers, beakers, and pipes become the root systems of trees, clouds are shrouded in water vapor by their wind-powered mist-making instruments, and entire landscapes are composed of their constituent mechanical parts.
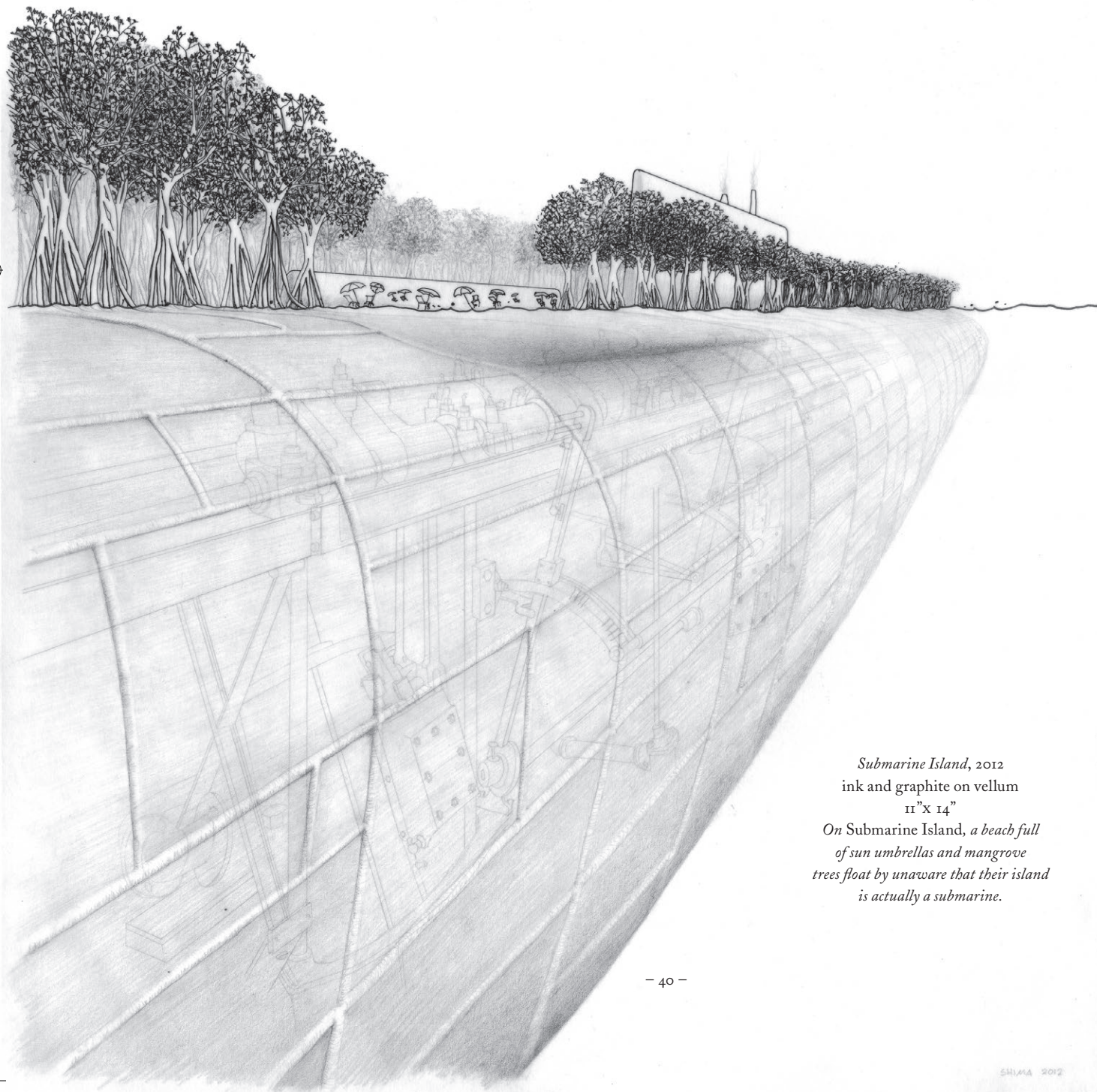
Submarine Island, 2012
ink and graphite on vellum
11"x 14"
On Submarine Island, *a beach full of sun umbrellas and mangrove trees float by unaware that their island is actually a submarine.*

Jimenez Lai

KINDERGARDEN TALES

HAPPY GRADUA

I want to be good at techniques,

good at rules,

push my physical limits,

have skillz that killz,

I want to be a pro-star.

well I think I will live in a tree house when I grow up. Or a club house.

I can invite all you guys,

we can make a mess and play with toys all day,

skip school, read comics, play super-hero,

or anything.

well seeing as I am going to be a famous athlete when I grow up,

I'm probably going to have the biggest house of all y'all.

basically a castle,

so big you can fit an entire village inside the walls to serve me.

probably much bigger than any tree house or clubhouse.

I'm going home.

maybe we'll see each other some other time?

Elegant Strategies for Agonistic Architectural Argumentation

BY CRISTINA GOBERNA AND URTZI GRAU
Fake Industries Architectural Agonism

Architectural Discussion, everybody claims they practice it these days. Yet, how often do we engage in architectural dialogues that end up being monologues, consensual talks, neutral chats or banal agreements? Could we introduce Agonism in an architectural conversation? Could we add enough friction to potentially get advancements in the field? Could we do it without falling in 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 are the good news?*

OPPONENT: *We are going to design the re-tiling of a brownstone's bathroom 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 invited to curate, design, produce, fund-raise and install an exhibition of architecture.*

YOU: *Wow! Will the exhibited work be yours?*

OPPONENT: *No*

YOU: *Is there any honorarium involved?*

OPPONENT: *It is a pro-bono project.*

YOU: *Well, it is certainly remarkable that you are making such a big investment of time, money and talent in exhibiting the work of others. It also shows a big deal of generosity from your part to work that hard for an institution that will not pay you. If you get them to give you credit, you will get some prestige and maybe in the future they will take your work in account somehow.*

Strategy used:
Seed of Doubt

Number 3

OPPONENT: *We have some pretty good news.*

YOU: *Go on!*

OPPONENT: *We have just submitted a competition.*

YOU: *A competition? Great! Let me know: 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 "divers" scallops or is that a misprint?*

WAITER: *I'll check with the kitchen.*

YOU: *(to OPPONENT) Sometimes they fib. Anyway, tell me more about that competition?*

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

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 only the printing was $500...*

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

Strategy used:
Barrage of Interruptions

Number 4

OPPONENT: *We just got some pretty good news.*

YOU: *This I have got to hear about!*

OPPONENT: *I have been invited to be a visiting lecturer fellow in Paris.*

YOU: *You are moving to France! Congratulations!*

OPPONENT: *Paris, Texas.*

YOU: *Oh!..er...I forgot to mention: I have cancer.*

OPPONENT: *What? When did you…I'm really sorry. Is there anything I can do?*

YOU: *I'll let you know. I'm just taking it day by day. I mean, right now it's only a freckle. Oddly shaped, of course—as these things always are. My dermatologist says to just keep an eye on it and come back for another look in twenty-four to twenty-six months. But enough about my dreary travails—you were saying something about France.*

OPPONENT: *Texas, Paris Texas...*

Strategy used:
The C-Bomb

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 lecture series!*

OPPONENT: *Not quite but also in the city: We will be talking in Pecha-Kucha Greenpoint next summer.*

YOU: *For God's sake! (whispering) Don't look, act normally.*

OPPONENT: *What?*

YOU: *Slavoj Žižek has just entered the restaurant and has seated 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 have just run out of battery.*

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 where the girl from The Exorcist movie.*

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 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 relieve 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 edge of it!*

OPPONENT: *We are going to be published.*

YOU: *Don't tell me more then. I knew it! Finally Princeton 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 student's university magazine.*

YOU: *Definitely the kids are coming up from behind— (singing)—"I'm loosing my edge!...I'm losing my edge!...to the art-school Brooklynites...in little jackets...and borrowed nostalgia for the unremembered eighties...."*

OPPONENT: *Why are you 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 a Lcd Soundsysem bootleg from Terminal 5 in New York 28/3/11 in the subway 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 office.*

YOU: *Im really happy for you! How did it happened?*

WAITER: *It is the office of one of my former professors indeed. They called me for a collaboration.*

YOU: *Very good! When are you starting?*

OPPONENT: *Tomorrow.*

YOU: *Tomorrow? I thought you were going upstate with your date.*

OPPONENT: *I'm afraid I won't be able to go. I'm staying in the city at least the next 12 next weekends or so, such a shame that they don't pay the extra working hours.*

YOU: *Working hours...I wonder whether a physician makes more working hours in an hospital that an architect in an office. What would happen if we compare the average working hours made in a Chinese and a New York office? Even if your new job makes you work eighty hours a week that will probably be nothing in comparison, although probably you are not going to get a health insurance or a working visa.*

Strategy used:
Detail-Oriented Side-tracking

Number 9

OPPONENT: *We just got some pretty good news.*

YOU: *Bring it.*

OPPONENT: *We have just moved to our new office space.*

YOU: *That is great news, where is it located?*

OPPONENT: *It is in Chinatown, Pell St 149. It is the base-ment, 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 right now making shifts of 4 hours per day each. It works 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 temporal associa-tions for specific projects...*

OPPONENT: *O.K, I'm done. I don't know why I even bother trying to have a a dialog 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 values in ways I can't even accurately describe later when I try to talk other people about them. Sorry, I am leaving now. (Opponent exits.)*

YOU: *(To Waiter) My friend is not feeling well. So it is just going to be one. How are the scallops prepared?*

WAITER: *They are pan-seared in a—*

YOU: *Do you like Lcd Soundsystem?*

OPPONENT: *Me? Absolutely. Specially the live shows, but not in big arenas, although—*

YOU: *You were there, right? You are James Murphy. Don't lie.*

WAITER: *No. I'm not James Murphy. I'm just a waiter.*

YOU: *But you can sing as good as or better than him.*

WAITER: *No...but I must confess that I am an architect.*

YOU: *I knew it! I could tell by your black outfit.*

WAITER: *Going back to the scallops, do you want them or not?*

YOU: *Maybe, bit first listen, I just got some pretty good news.*

Strategy used:
The Loop Impersonator

NOTE:
The world is full of architectural narratives, 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 New Yorker*'s section "Shouts & Murmurs", on September 3, 2012. We thank Mr. Simms and his editors for having produced such a valuable source of copy and inspiration.

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.

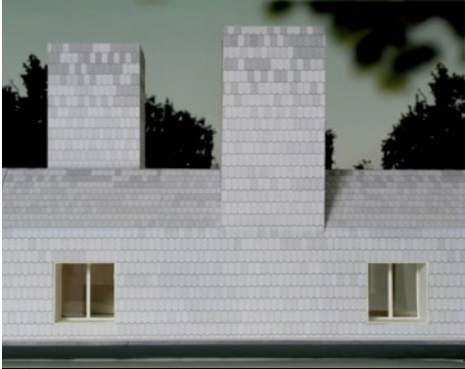AT THE MOMENT, HE WAS SHOUTING AT NO ONE IN PARTICULAR.
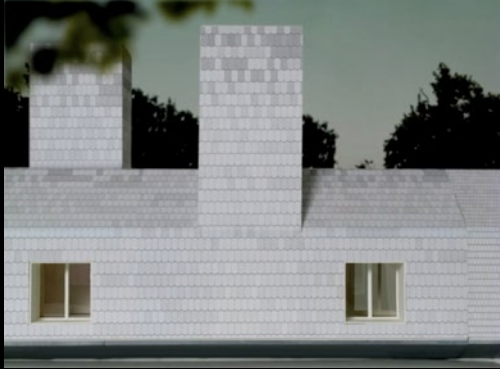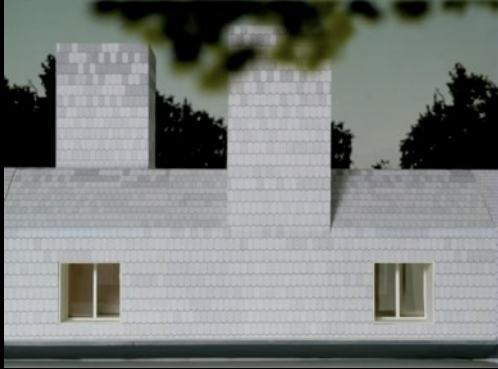
TS WERE INFECTIOUS.

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
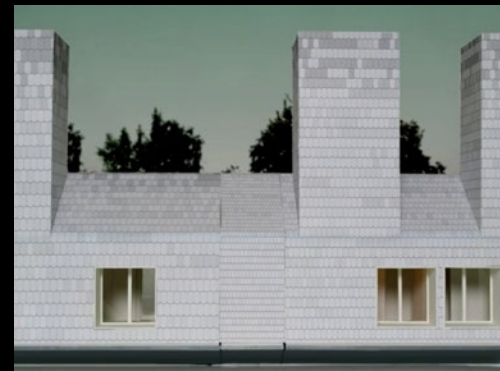
CE SIGHED.

ALL THIS CAJOLING, SHE THOUGHT, ITS PASSE.

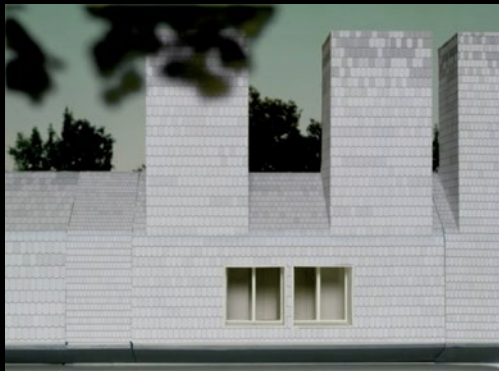FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, SHE MIGHT HAVE RUN OFF, UNABLE TO

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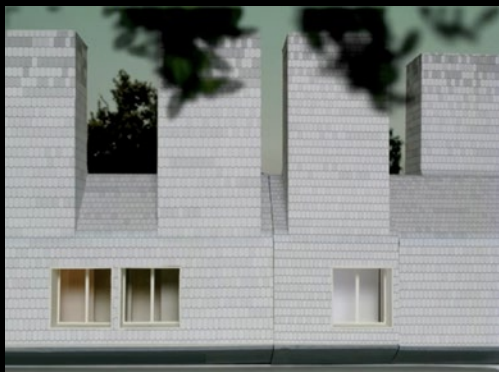
SHE KEPT HER DISTANCE, EVEN THOUGH SHE KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING ENDEARING ABOUT HIS DELIRIUM. IT

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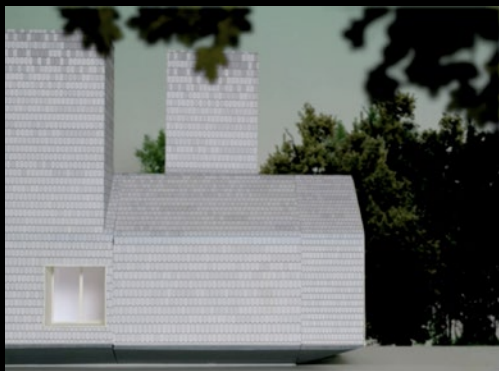
CRINGE. IT WAS ONLY RECENTLY THAT SHE HAD BEGUN TO APPRECIATE THE INHERENT BEAUTY OF GEOMETRIC SYSTEMS, THE STRANGE SUBJECTIVITY THAT

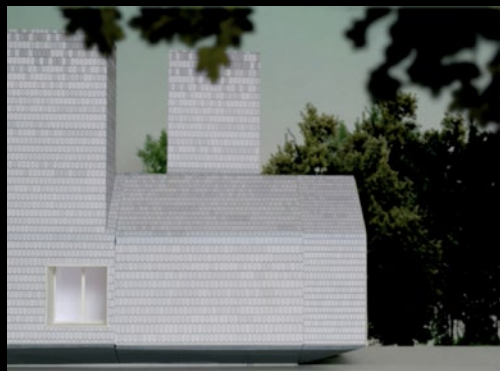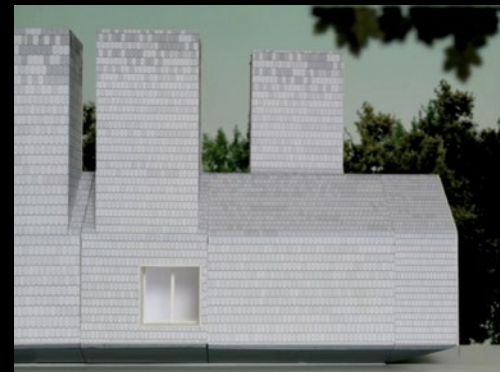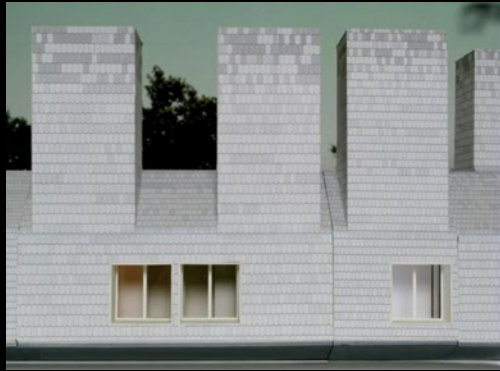CE APPRECIATED THE NOVEL USE OF NATURAL LIGHT, ITS EFFECTS PROMISCUOUS.   FRANK BEGAN GESTURING WILDLY AND SKETCHING DIAGRAMS.

IT WAS GETTING LATE.   ALICE DECIDED TO CALL A CAB. SHE WAS TIRED OF PRETENDING. THERE IS NO MORE DISCIPLINE,
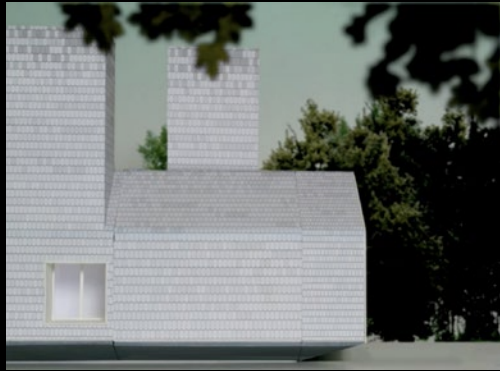
ES. SHE KNEW THAT HIS ELABORATE GESTURES COULD NOT BRING IT BACK.   THE NIGHT ENDED. THE SUN WAS RISING. HALF-AWAKE AND
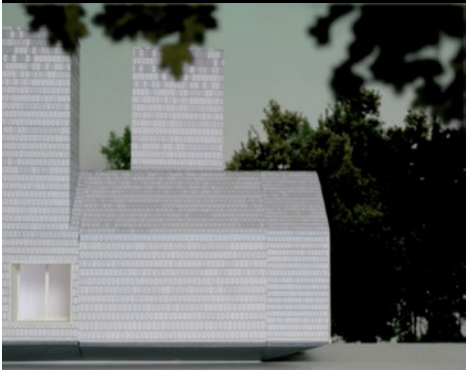
SYMMETRY. CHOLESTEROL, SHE THOUGHT.   HE BEGAN TO CONSTRUCT THE FARNSWORTH HOUSE OUT OF TOAST, NEXT TO AN INTRICATE PARAMETRIC DOME OF

POTATOES. SHE WONDERED IF HE HAD THOUGHT ANYMORE ABOUT THEIR UPCOMING DEADLINE.
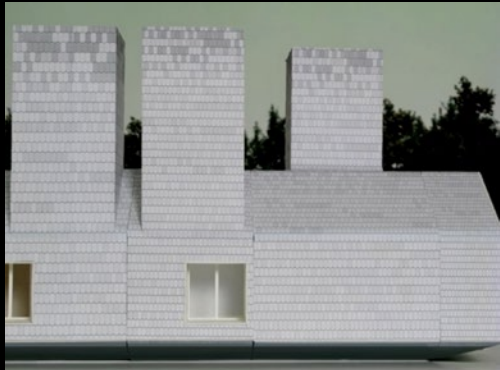
FRANK AND ALICE BOTH WORKED IN THE ARCHITECTURE PRAC
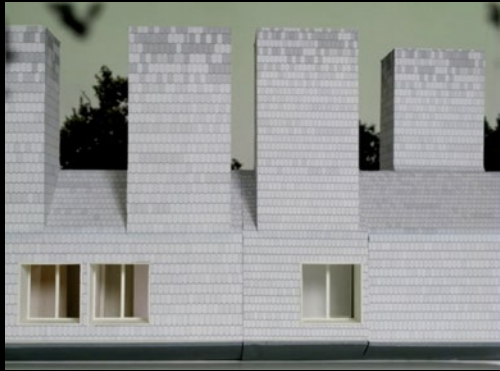
IT LACKS SPECIFICITY.
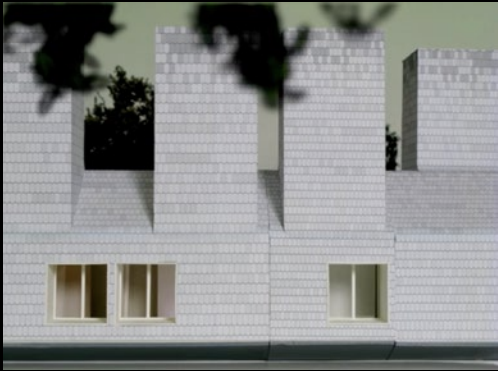
A: I DON'T MIND THE GENERIC, BUT THAT'S THE LEAST OF OUR PROBLEMS. IT DOESN'T FUNCTION. TO START,

SYSTEMATICITY, ALICE.

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

ARCHITE

IN THE MARGINS OF THE NEWSPAPER.

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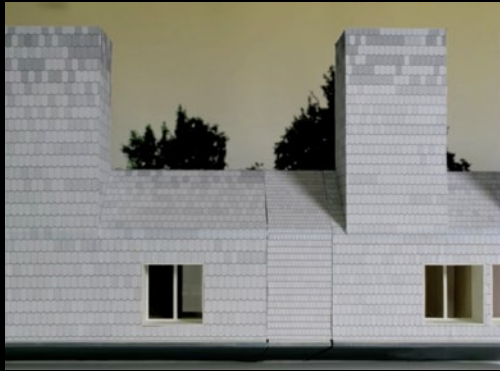
F: THEY

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.

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

HITECTURE 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.
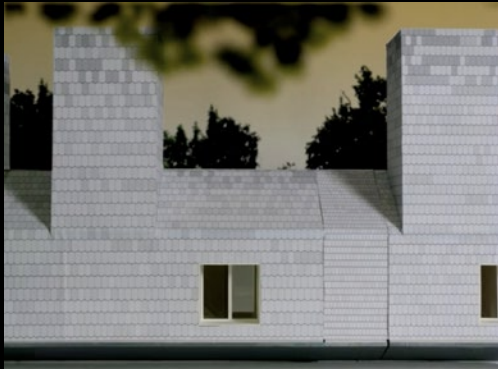
HAD NO IDEA HOW PEOPLE REALLY LIVED.   ALICE PREFERRED WANDERING AIMLESSLY THROUGH THE CITY. SHE WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO CONVINCE HIM THAT

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

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

GLOBAL WARMING CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY THE BANHAM CORPORATION.

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.

Freedomland: Speculations on Another America

KEITH KRUMWEIDE
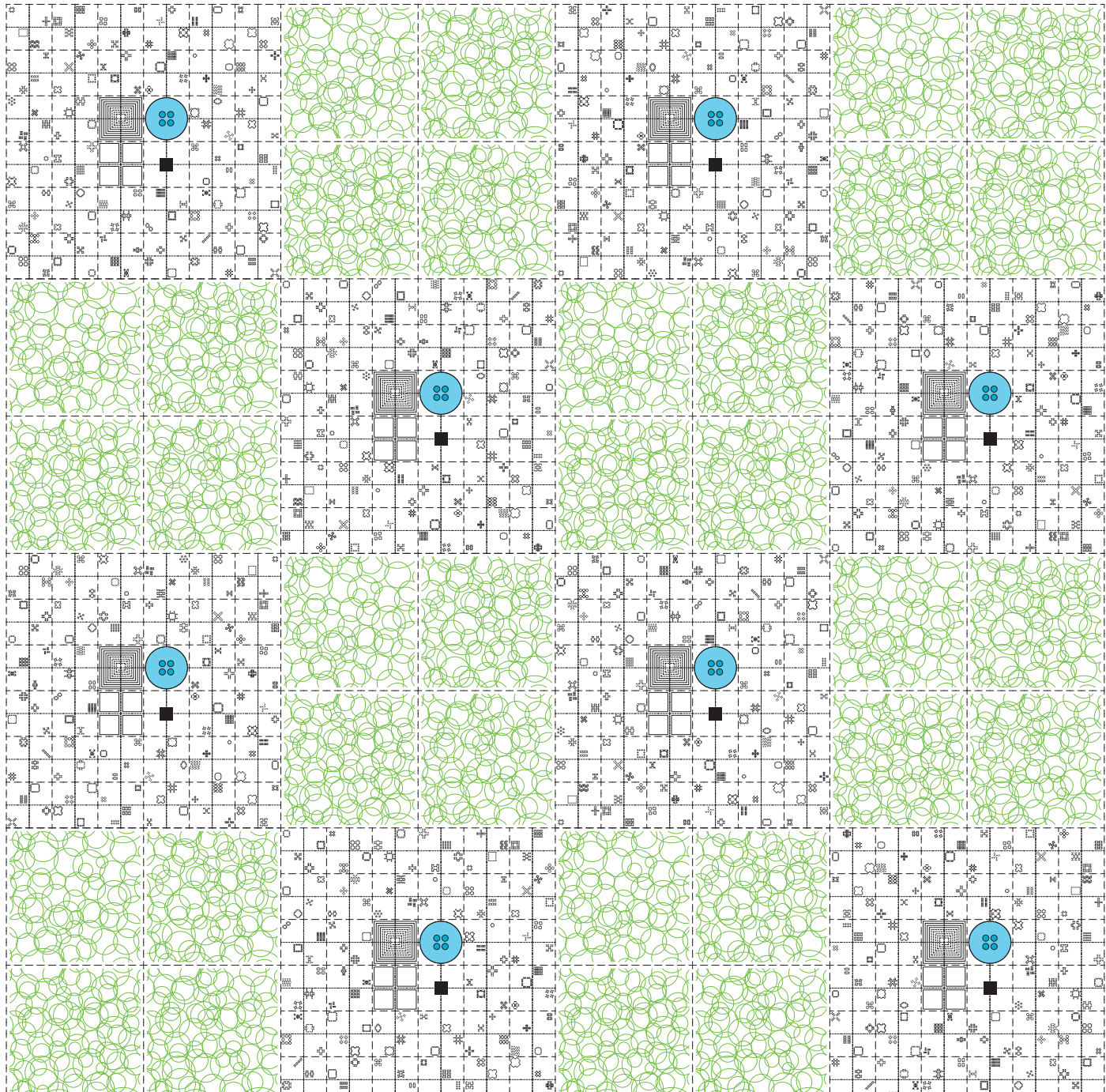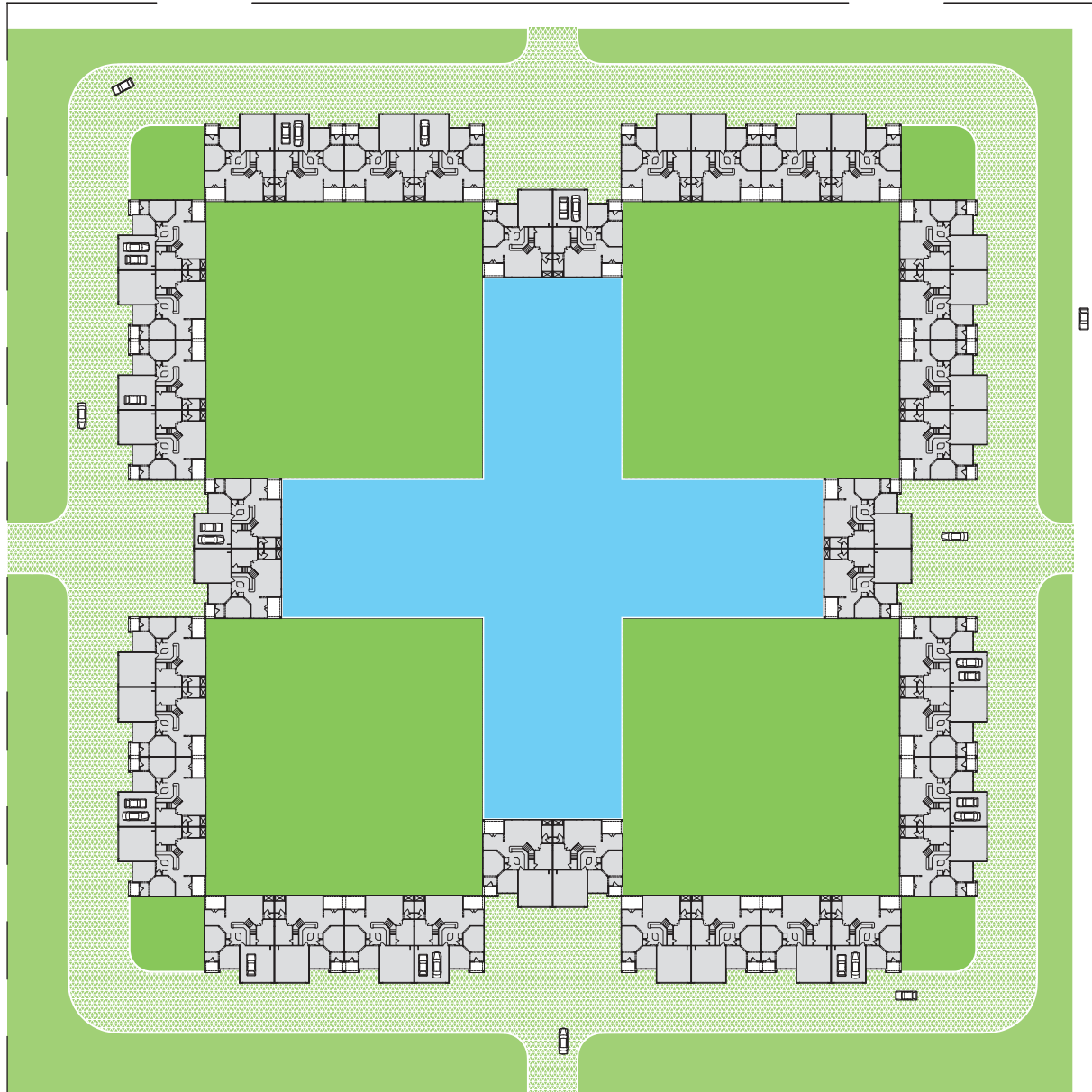
Terrace Squares, NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 1
40 Houses
120,600 Square Feet
120 - 160 Bedrooms
120 Full Bathrooms
0 Half Bathrooms

0   .0625 miles

Beazer Homes, Terrace, 3015 sq. ft., Nevada
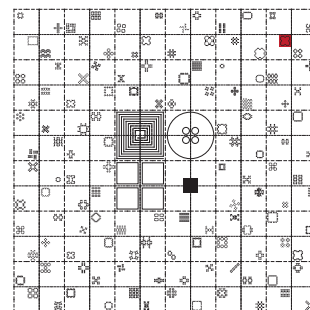
Freedomland seeks to accommodate every wish, every desire, no matter
how contradictory and to combine them in a master plan that sets out a
beautiful, if seemingly naïve, vision for a better, more harmonious world.
Both Jefferson and Hamilton (founding fathers of our collective split
personality); both open and closed; both centralized and decentralized;
both individualistic and collectivist; both farm and market; both local
and global; both village and villa, and, ultimately, both city and country.
Freedomland is a utopia of houses in which collective needs square up
with individual desires. It is both perfectly rational and patently absurd.
But itsabsurdity is its opportunity.

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.*

0 ——————————————————————————————————— .0625 miles

Monet Mews, NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 1
20 Houses
38,752 Square Feet
80 Bedrooms
60 Full Bathrooms
20 Half Bathrooms

Pulte Homes, Monet, 3641 sq. ft., Texas

0   *.0625 miles*
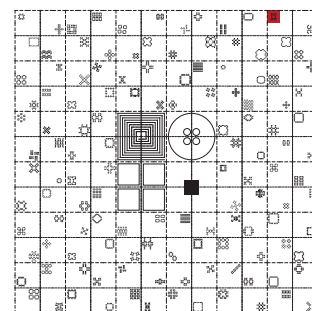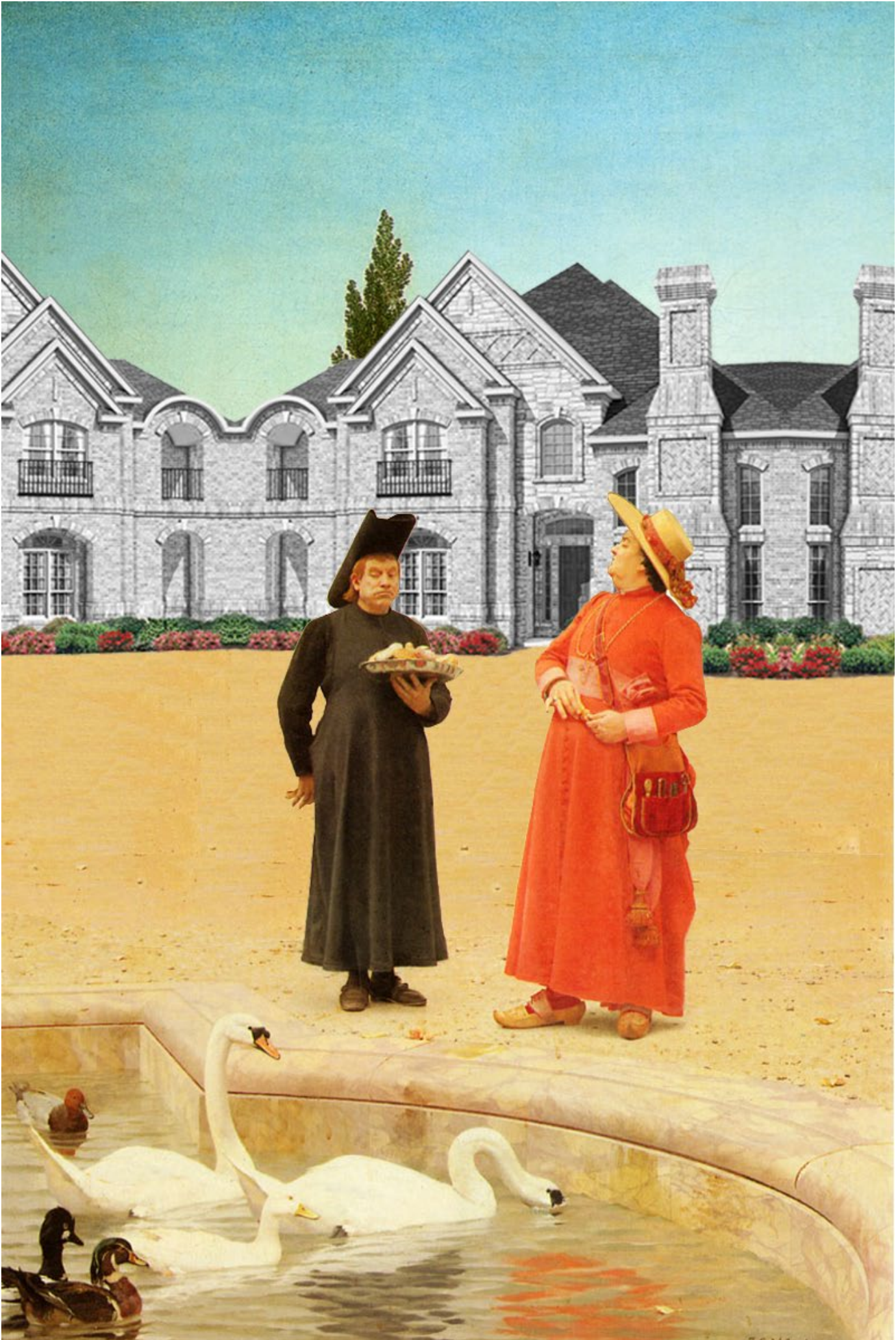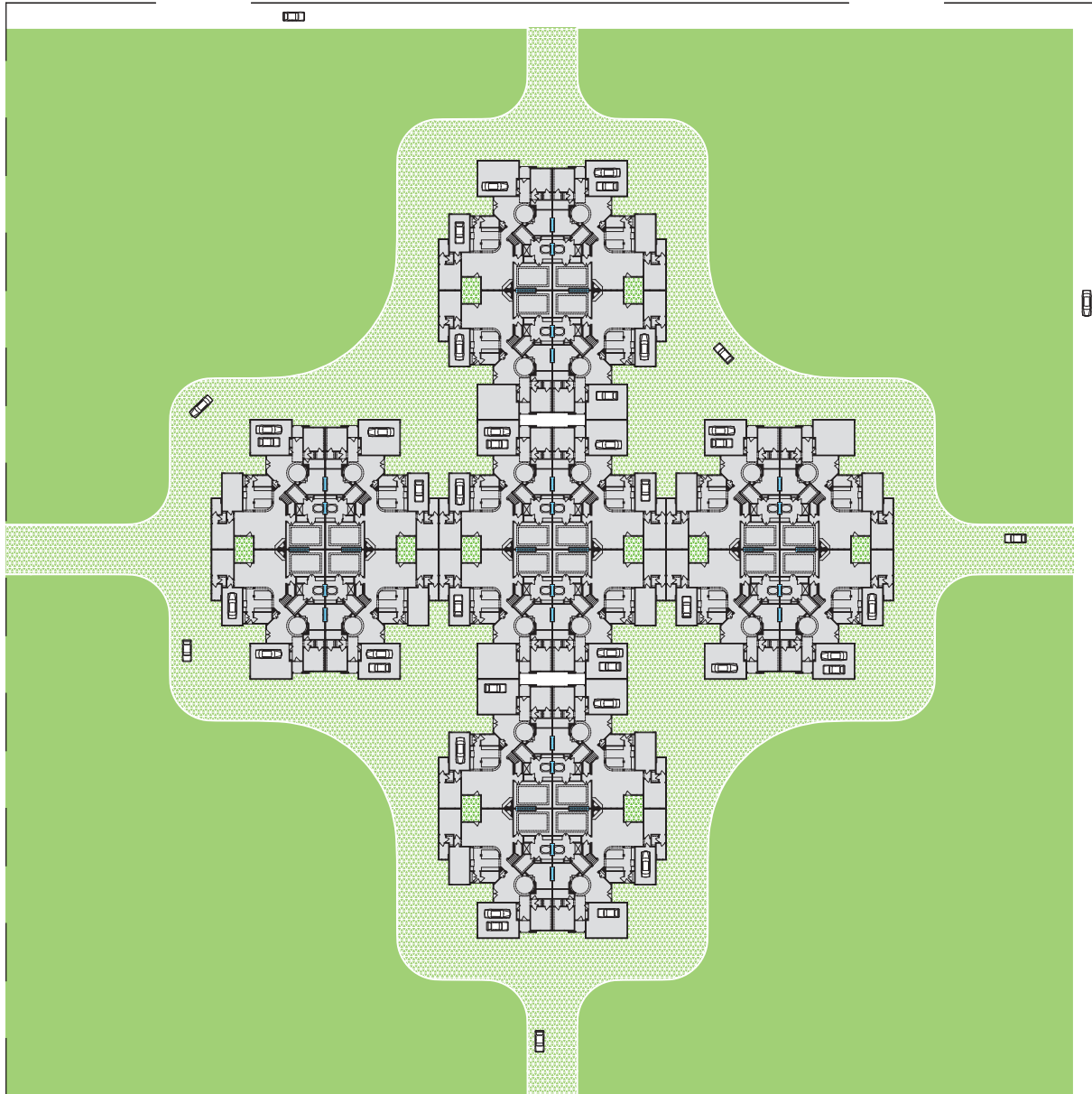
Bellevue Cross, NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 11
20 Houses
60,860 Square Feet
80 Bedrooms
80 Full Bathrooms
0 Half Bathrooms
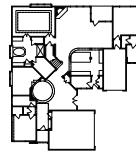
K. Hovnanian Homes, Bellvue VIII, 3043 sq. ft., Texas
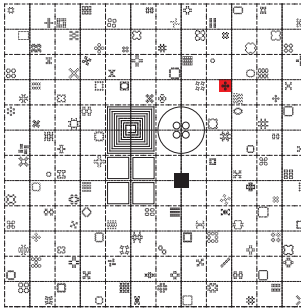
Spring, 2012
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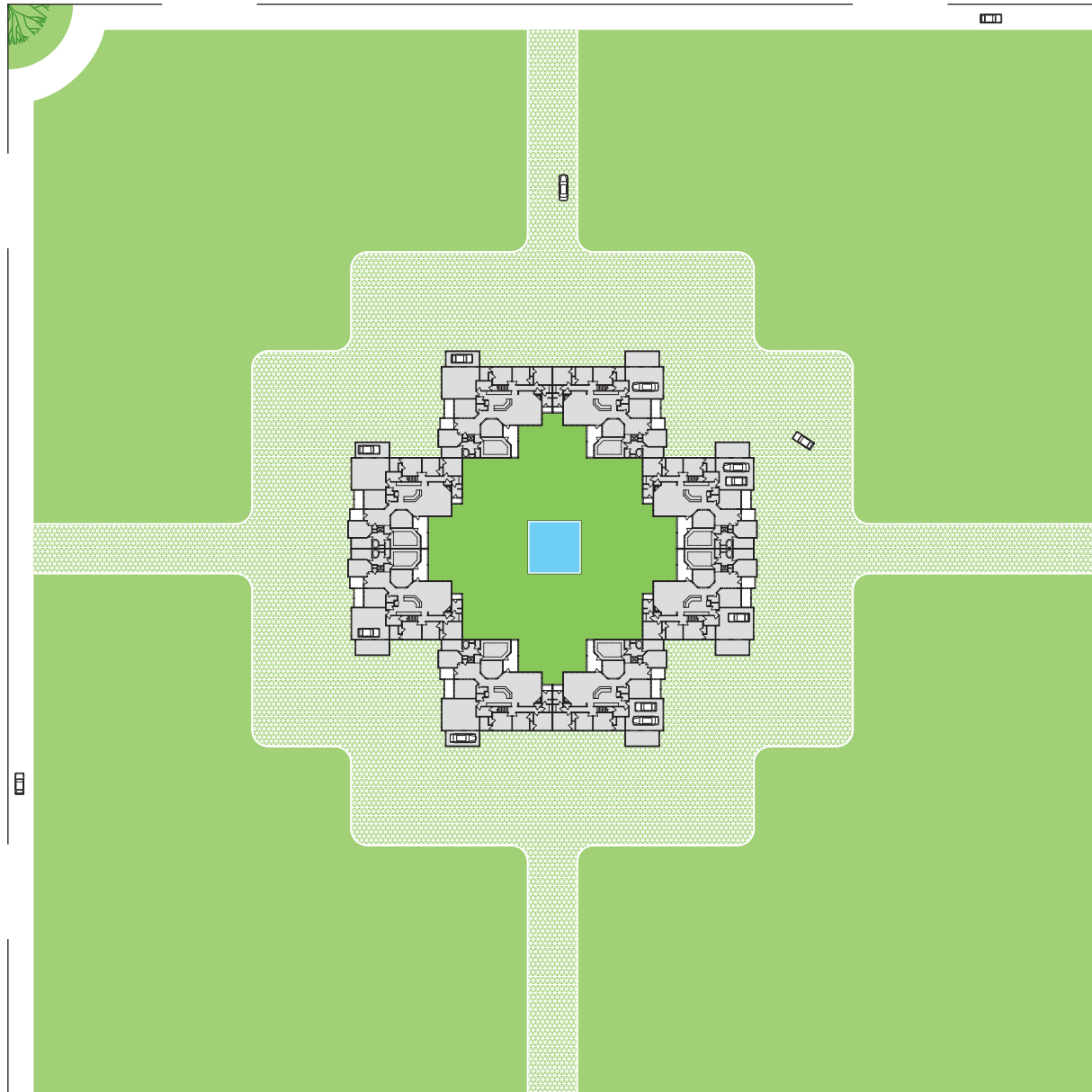
0 .0625 *miles*

Monet Square
NW 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 11

8 Houses
28,928 Square Feet
32 Bedrooms
24 Full Bathrooms
8 Half Bathrooms
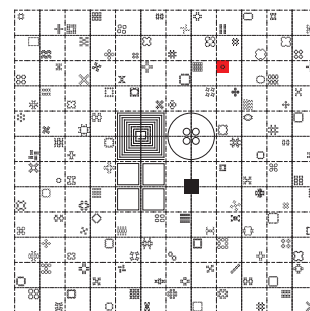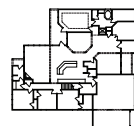
Pulte Homes, The Monet, 3616 sq. ft., Texas

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
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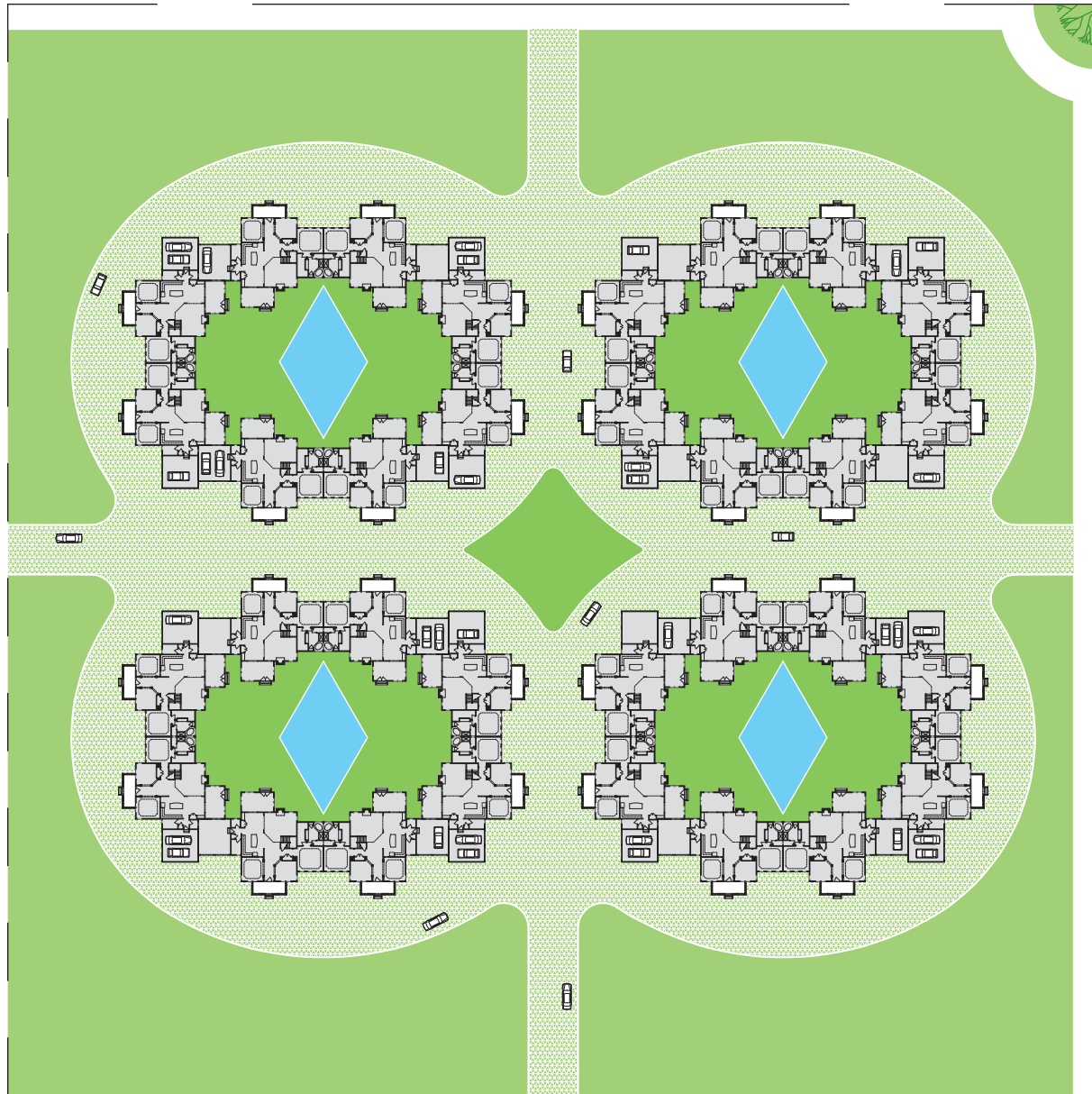
Parson Place, NE 1/4 NE 1/4 Section 28
32 Houses
114,688 Square Feet
160 Bedrooms
128 Full Bathrooms
32 Half Bathrooms
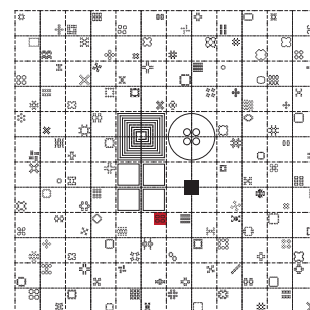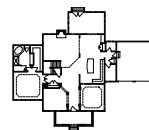
Ryland Homes, The Parson, 3584 sq. ft., Delaware
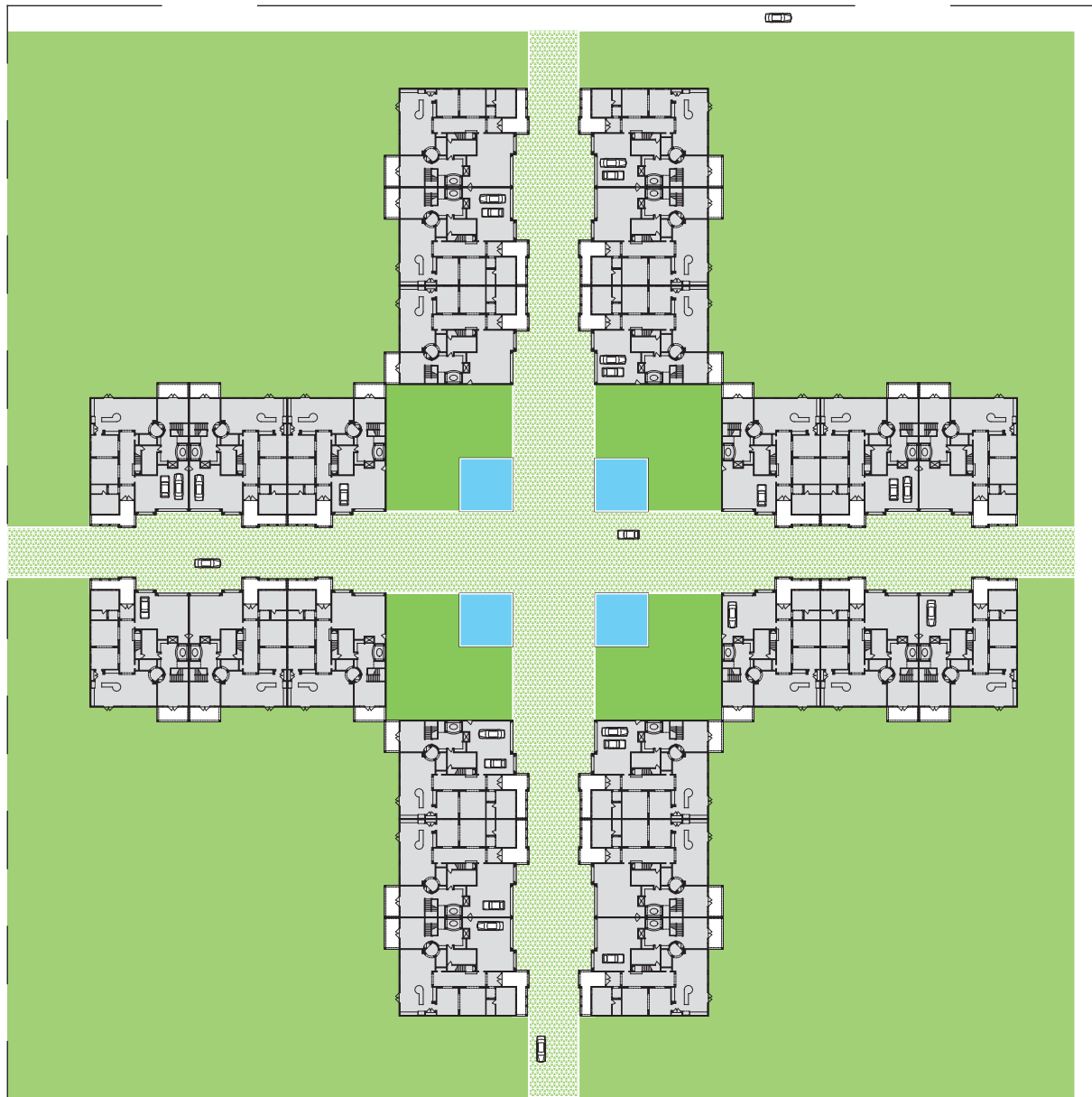
Spring, 2012
ink and graphite on vellum
11"x 14"
Spring *is a field of what appear from above ground*
to be crocuses. Below ground, the hinged roots
extend and contract via a system of motors and gears,
collecting nutrients from the soil. The nutrients
are then conveyed upwards via elevators to the
stems of the plants.

Picasso Crossing, NE 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 32
24 Houses
87,384 Square Feet
144 -168 Bedrooms
96 Full Bathrooms
24 Half Bathrooms

0   .0625 miles
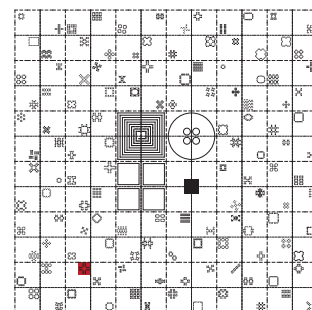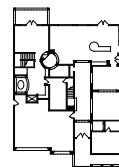
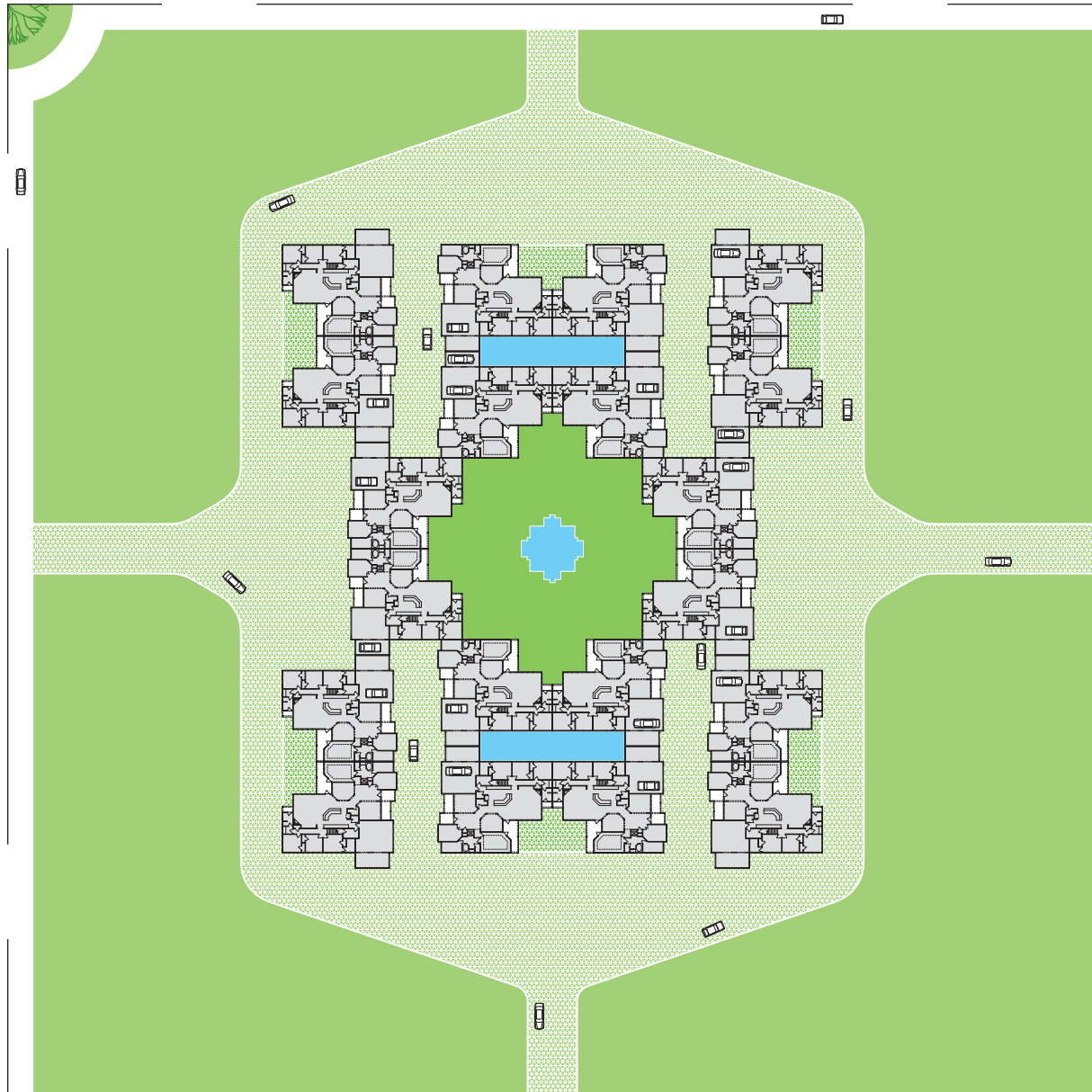Richmond American Homes, Picasso, 4750 sq. ft., Arizona
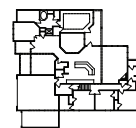
Spring, 2012
ink and graphite on vellum
11"x 14"
Spring *is a field of what appear from above ground
to be crocuses. Below ground, the hinged roots
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collecting nutrients from the soil. The nutrients
are then conveyed upwards via elevators to the
stems of the plants.*

0   *.0625 miles*
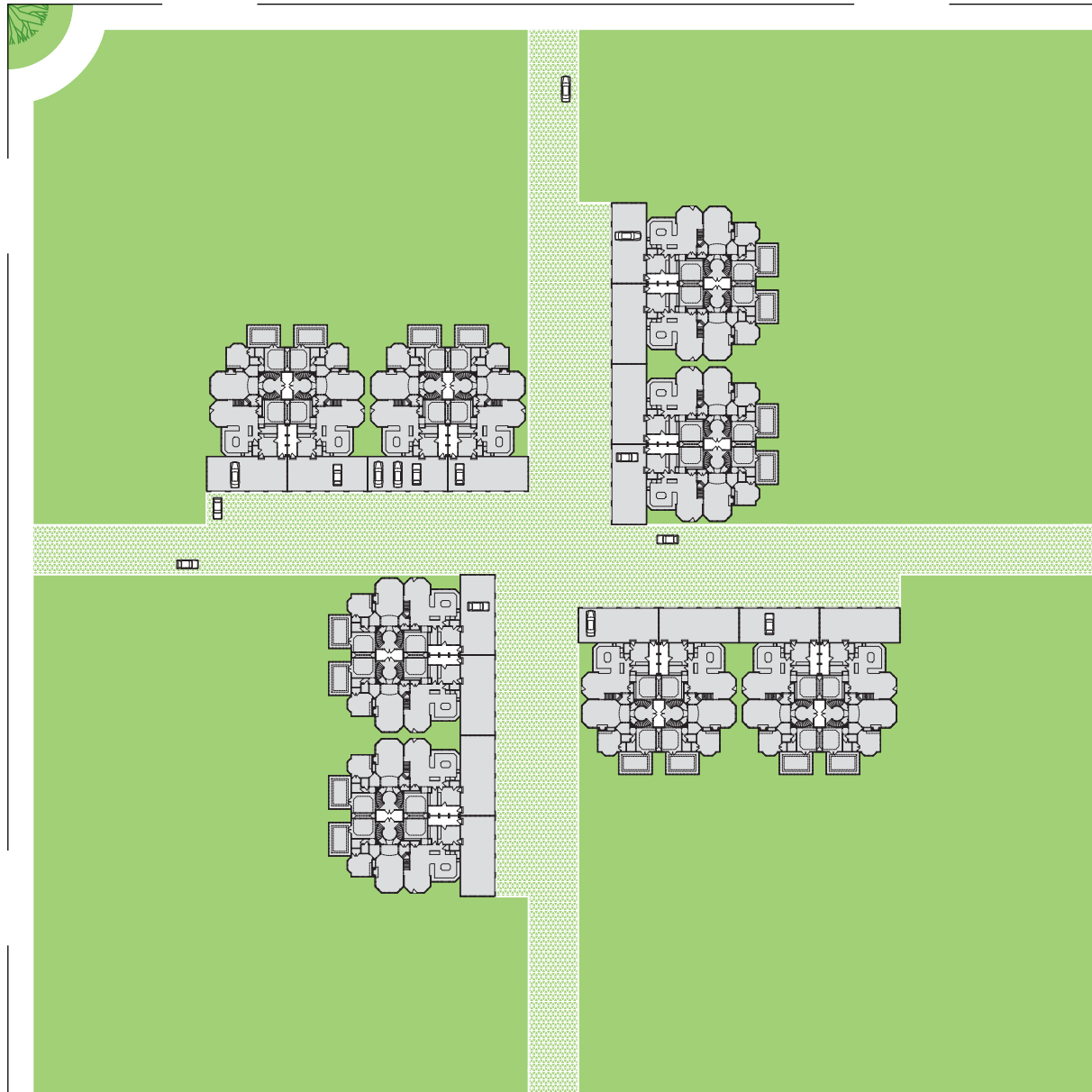
Kramer Square
NE 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 35
16 Houses
85,200 Square Feet
64 Bedrooms
64 Full Bathrooms
32 Half Bathrooms

K. Hovnanian Homes, The Tara, 5325 sq. ft., Maryland
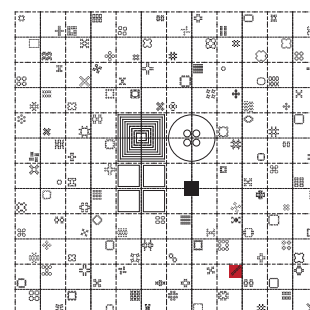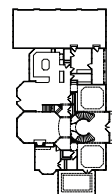
A DISCOURSE CONCERNING
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FREEDOMLAND

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 36 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 36 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. As in the original survey townships, these sections are numbered "beginning with the number one in the northeast section and proceeding west and east alternately through the township with progressive numbers, until the thirty-six be completed." The two remaining quadrants are preserved in, or if necessary restored to, their natural state as unencumbered retreats for the pleasure of the townspeople.

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 36 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.

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 16, at the center of every township, for the use of education, in Freedomland, it being recognized that the choices in means and methods of education are best left to individual families, the central squares are rightly devoted to more pressing and universal needs: The waste square, an ever-growing, manicured pyramid of refuse, rises slowly in section 16; the water square, a circular reservoir nearly one-half mile in diameter,

occupies section 15; the energy square, a forest of 20-by-20 foot solar panels, powers the town from section 21; and the market square, anchored in section 22 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.

The 32 remaining sections are quartered by roads secondary to those above mentioned to form four equal parcels of 40 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 10-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.

Each neighborhood estate in Freedomland is comprised of between 8 and 64 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. Depending upon the number of houses and the particular manner in which they are arranged, a neighborhood of houses may take on the character of either a large villa or a small village. Families are thus able to select the estate that most closely matches their spatial, stylistic and, consequently, social preferences, thereby affording them a life among like-minded neighbors with a shared sense of duty and purpose.

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. 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.

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.

RAINY SEA

by Keith Mitnick

nuage

fasil

horizon

fauteuil

cheval

Mother

Me

Agnes

Paula

Father
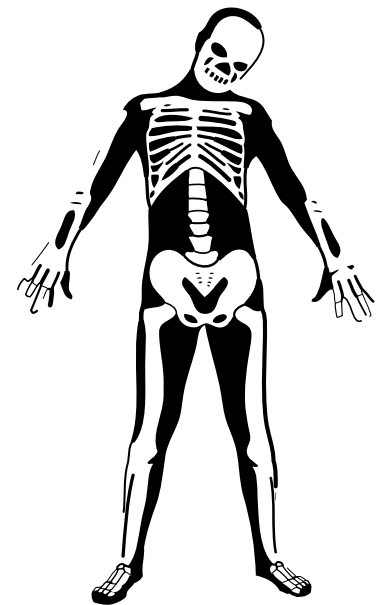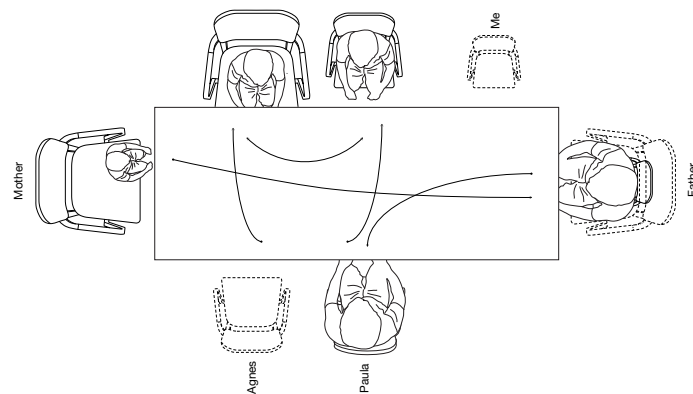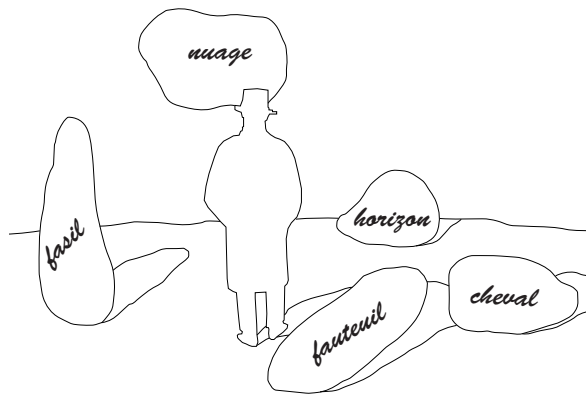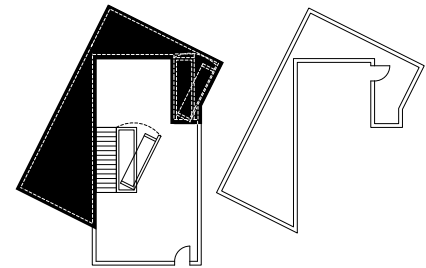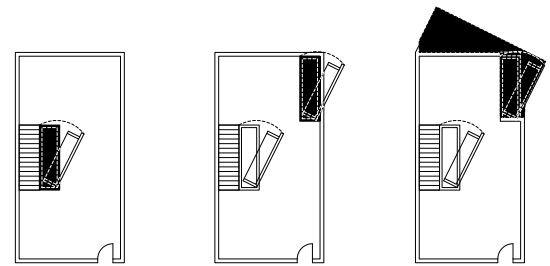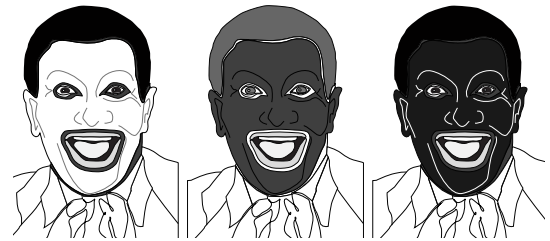
PROLOGUE

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 hidden in the wall. Contemplating the contents of the suitcase, a view of his and the island's history emerges that calls into question everything he thought he knew about the past.

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 interviews with famous actors on TV who portray characters much smarter than they are in their films. Listening to them speak as themselves is like hearing a dumber version of the people they play in the movies.

What if someone were to write a history of unnoticed things? It would be comprised of descriptions of all of the stuff that no one has bothered to think about, and the actions of people that no one has cared to remember. Unlike the historical figures and events that have managed, in one way or another, to appear in or after their time—the trail of the unnoticed would lead into unknown areas of deceptively familiar circumstances. Like an embossed atlas for the blind, in which the raised contours used to map the topography of rivers and mountains are indistinguishable from those that describe time-lines and international borders, the history of the unnoticed would overlay the things we have failed to observe with the techniques by which our attention to them has been diverted, in ways that allowed us to experience ourselves not seeing them.

And what if this history was written from the perspective of a person whose participation in the events described required them to erase their involvement in them? The author's invisibility would need to be constructed to convey their point of view without compromising the effect of their own un-see-ability. Such a narrator would need to 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 or she couldn't really speak as themselves either, for their manner of doing so would reveal too much. They would need instead to communicate like a mannequin on the lap of an unseen ventriloquist.

I have countless collections of 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 and sofas, and people and their 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 the names, shapes and position of things have been scrambled to show how spatial relations define what they are. In "Apparition" a "cloud" hangs appropriately in the sky, and the "horizon" is predictably

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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 amassed a collection of pictures called "impossible views" that included a time lapse photo of a young French girl looking in opposite directions simultaneously, as though about to do something she shouldn't, and a blurred picture of a condemned man in an electric chair—where the sudden jerk of his head made two faces out of one, without indicating which was which. My all time favorite among this type was one I had 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 categories through which we look for things, they are difficult to account for. Secret tunnels and camouflaged ships are not unnoticeable—they are hidden, while nameless colors, amorphous spaces, and generic buildings are hard to identify.

In the same way that a person with a drinking problem believes they need just one more drink to get up the courage to quit drinking forever, or a workaholic tells herself that she will stop working so much 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 someone else's view of the world might make more sense to them than mine did to me, and since I couldn't change my own—I looked for ways to discredit theirs.

While my preoccupation with conflicted images was for a time all-consuming, my interests soon switched from space relations depicted in pictures, to the spaces themselves—such as the gardens in Paris designed to resemble paintings of empty pastures with grass that you could look at, but not walk on. My favorites of this sort included: a three-story house comprised of a single room, reconstructed multiple times on each floor, that required one to enter the room they had just left in order to leave; an apartment building in Manhattan whose greedy owner had exploited loopholes in laws limiting the number of tenants per unit by constructing each apartment at ¾ scale in order to fit twelve apartments in a nine unit building; 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. As the number of police searches eventually decreased, the desire for the secret compartments grew. Because the rooms had provided a means of hiding things from sight, they came to symbolize an "invisible realm" where people could do things without worrying about their consequences. As the need for the functions they performed increased, so too did their size—and the hidden rooms that had once been concealed within people's homes began to appear on their outsides until, eventually, hidden room properties were extended to entire buildings.

The day I read about the Ise Shrine, a Japanese Shrine where the same building was constructed twice on opposite sides of a single site, was the day I decided to become an architect. On one half it was put together and on the other it was taken a part, and every twenty years the process was reversed. I read all about the shrine's history, and what it meant to those who maintained it, but all I really cared about was how the same thing could exist in two places at once.

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, that is—the failure of words and images to capture the complexity of life, 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 them—like the black performers who were forced to "impersonate" themselves on stage 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 irrational behavior made sense.

I used to wear a glow-in-the-dark skeleton suit everyday 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 the 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 them that the blacked out areas of my body were as much "me" as the image sewn upon it. When I felt truly afraid, overwhelmed or anxious, 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 actual 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 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 stood empty the next morning after the members of the Amish community had torn it down in the middle of 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. Using similar techniques, but with opposite intentions, the administrators at Kent State University constructed a large featureless building on the spot where the Ohio National Guard had shot and killed four unarmed student protestors in 1970. The presence of the building not only prevented people from commemorating the event, but also made it difficult to even visualize the place where it had occurred.

I used to imagine myself suspended in the air, dropping from an airplane, or slipping from a tightrope. My falling fantasies sent rushes of adrenaline up into my head and released thoughts from my brain like un-tethered balloons on a windy day. As my dependence on this experience increased, so too did my ability to intersperse the actual sensory effects from the outside world with those I created in my head—to the point where my inner life was far more vivid than anything actually happening around me.

I'm no longer the fake-sensation addict that I once was, though I sometimes use my old techniques to augment the reality-effects of whatever I'm doing—like when I watch movies of Italian bike races from the Fifties on my stationary bike. As I pedal in place, I move along with the pack of long-dead cyclists fighting their way up the inclines of Italian hillsides. When the pack accelerates, my leg 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 that hung over the toilet in our bathroom every time I urinated. Even now I cannot unzip my pants without her horrific expression appearing 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 became obsessed with the experience of having missed the other eighty. Over time I came to realize that my sense of diminished awareness was as much a consequence of the things I observed, as it was my manner of observing them. Similar to the black parts of my skeleton suit that were colored black to represent their invisibility, the physical form of the blankness I perceived all around me was what allowed entire buildings and landscapes to disappear right before my eyes. Like billboards with the words "nothing here" inscribed upon them, they needed to be seen before I understood not to, and once I did—I had to forget that I had.

In *The Book of Disquiet,* Fernando Pessoa writes: "fields are greener in their description than in their actual greenness." In J.G. Ballard's story "The Overloaded Man," the main character spends his days 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 toasters and tv's, then to entire rooms and buildings before, eventually 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 her inert body lay in a heap on the floor. Pessoa uses fiction to increase the vitality of perception, and Ballard's character drains it out, though in either case the writing vivifies our perception of the world by explicating our experience of it. On the first pages of the Invisible Man, written by Ralph Ellison, the narrator states: "I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who 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 twin 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 important 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 at all, and though I dressed myself up in the skeleton suit to express on the outside the different people I felt myself to be inside, I was more like a cloud in the shape of a rifle, or a horizon buried in the ground than a skeleton or a hidden room.

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 serves the small town in which it exists as a repository for all sorts of male fantasies that, in a sense, make the boredom of their daily lives bearable. By providing a symbolic space with a real location—the black house creates a middle-zone in which the stories the men project upon it have the possibility of being true, despite the fact that everyone knows they are not. When an out-of-towner threatens to destroy the unknowable in-between-ness of the house by literally entering into it—the men kill him to protect their fantasies and the psychological structures of their lives.

 In John Cheever's short story "The Swimmer" the protagonist constructs a conceptual river out of the many swimming pools separating his house and his past from his current location at a friend's house on the opposite side of the valley. In the story, the redacted space between the pools that the swimmer has configured into the "River Lucia" represent the denied areas of his increasingly fragmented life. Thus the discontinuous space of his neighborhood is reconstituted in his mind both conceptually and physically (as an in-between world)—his journey takes him from one pool to another as he swims back in time to the source of his breakdown.

In Raymond Carver's short story "Cathedral," a blind man teaches a seeing man to observe a Cathedral, as though for the first time, by asking him to describe the building presented on the television to him in the form of a drawing. As the seeing man sketches, the blind man places his hand over his and, as the first moves the pencil across the paper, shows him what he himself had never seen.

My mother was the captain of a ferryboat that crossed back and forth between the island and the nearby city. She worked long hours, which 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. It fascinated me to learn that the negotiation of local waterways had nothing to do with what one could see 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 inside.

My father was a librarian who was more interested in books than life. I often believed that I would have received more attention from him were I a character in a story than I did as his son. 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, looking for the ones he liked by concealing my childish desire for his attention in the voice of different literary characters. "It's so BRIGHT in here," I would scream in what I imagined to be the voice of the Invisible Man, "why can't you SEE me???"

The house we lived in was located between the edges of a forest and the river on the north end of Rainy Sea Island. Its windows were positioned in a way that, standing inside 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 merely 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 at the time. 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, like a face with two noses and one 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.

I had a biology teacher in junior high school tell 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. The only thing they had in common was 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 of reality 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, frizzy hair and skinny face, as though making myself ugly would allow me to better appreciate how I really looked. I took the drawing of my bad self-image to school the next day, expecting everyone to be confused, but was devastated instead when the teacher praised the likeness I had captured. As she bragged to my classmates about what a talented artist I was, she criticized my inability to take a compliment.

As teenager I spent many sleepless nights in a second version of our home that I built in a tree house over-looking the real house. I emptied each room of its furnishings and functions until all that was left was space, and then arranged them like the pieces of a model airplane divided to fit neatly inside a box: a bedroom without a bed, a kitchen without counters, and a bathroom that made you feel clean without having to wash. I painted the plans of each room on the floor of the tree house, one over the other at ¼ scale in dashed white lines, and, looking at the real house from my diagram house, imagined a perfect life for myself.

When I think of architecture, I think of conflicted relationships, irrational representations, and impossible places. I imagine poorly built copies of other buildings, like the impersonation of smart people by dumb actors, and views out from world to another that, similar to the wedding photo of my Uncle Norman, make their dif-ferences more distinct by the ways they try to hide them. I wonder about symbolic abstractions with tangible locations—like black houses, missing schools, and sites filled in to block views of the past, and ways to infer multiple identities upon a single location, like the doubled-faces of a single prisoner, or the confusion between the last breath and the bullet hole, where it's hard to tell a real void from a fake one. I imagine blurry dream-like walks through repetitive corridors to unreachable destinations that, like black face, try to hide what they are by resembling themselves, on the way to fake hidden rooms that distract from real ones hidden elsewhere. But mostly, I just obsess over the blankness I sense all around—and hope for the possibility of observing what I have already decided not to see it at the very moment it is presented to me.
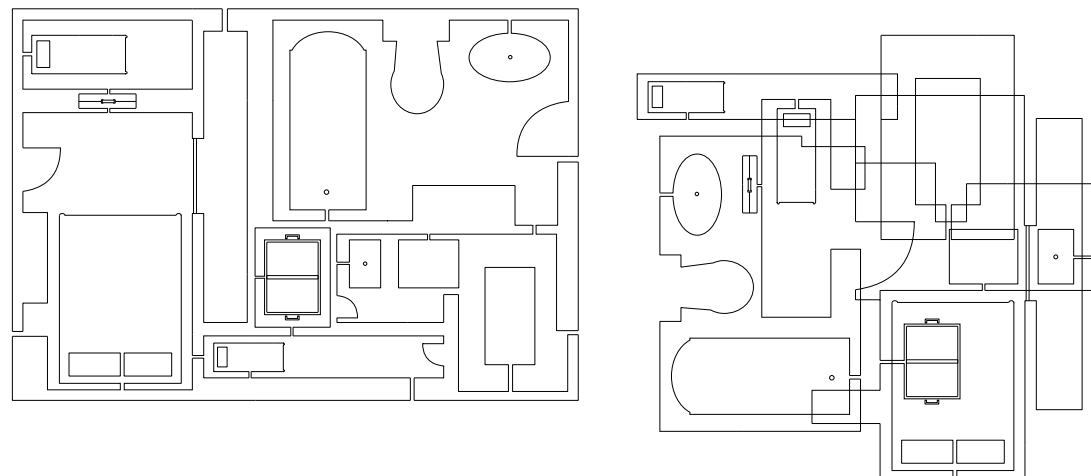
Platform for Architecture: *Makin' It…* A Situation Comedy

by studioAPT (Julia & John McMorrough)

MAKIN' IT
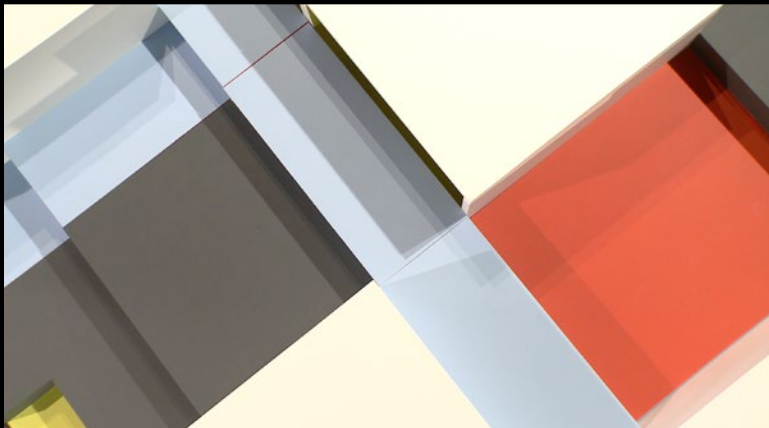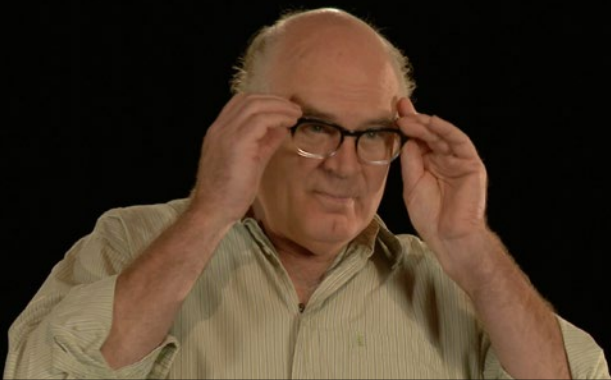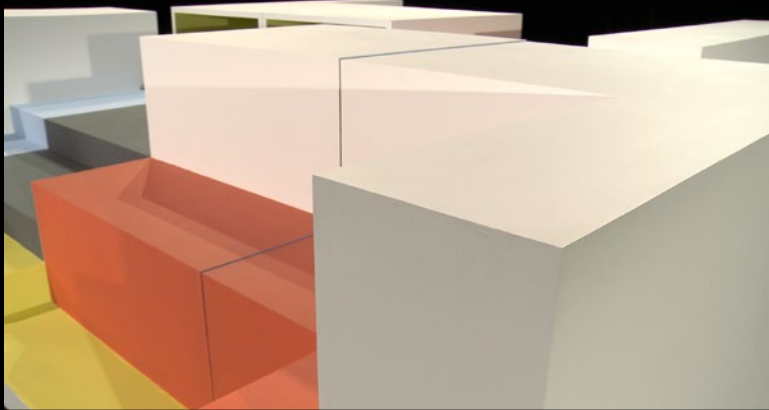
OPENING CREDITS

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 up) What was that?

> RUTH
> I got some new ring tones!

> 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 stream-lined 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 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
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.
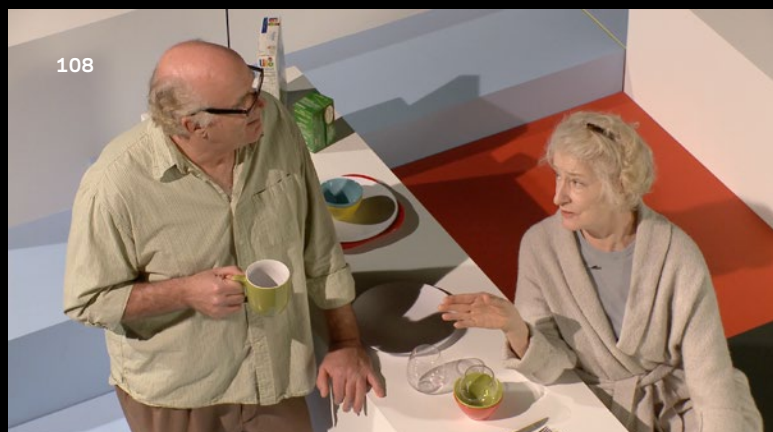
                    HUGH
Alright, fine. But what do we get out of it? Hypothetically?

                    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 proj-
          ect 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.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

-COMMERCIAL (*VersaBlock*)-
[In the style of 1950s toy ads like Wham-o and Hasbro]

LOUD MALE ANNOUNCER
Kids! Do you ever find yourselves sitting
around, overwhelmed by boredom?
Staring aimlessly out the window?
So bored time seems to stand still?
Bored enough you actually start twiddling your thumbs?
Well never fear, *VersaBlock* is here!
What do you say, Billy? Give them a try!
VersaBlocks are expertly designed to allow for hun-
dreds, even thousands of possible configurations.
You will never be bored again.
Let's have a look...not bad.
How about a tower?
Look at him go.
Better pay attention.
Awww...that's OK, Billy.
VersaBlocks are not afraid to fall.
Let's see how high you can go.
Now, that's a beauty.
Nice job, Billy!
Versatile, Colorful, Fun.
It's *VersaBlock*. Give them a spin.
Buy the starter kit today.
Forget the Clock. *VersaBlock*.

FADE OUT:

ACT TWO (Office)
FADE IN:
INT. "TABLE" - DAY

*HUGH and RUTH are sitting at the table working on lap-
tops 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 presenta-
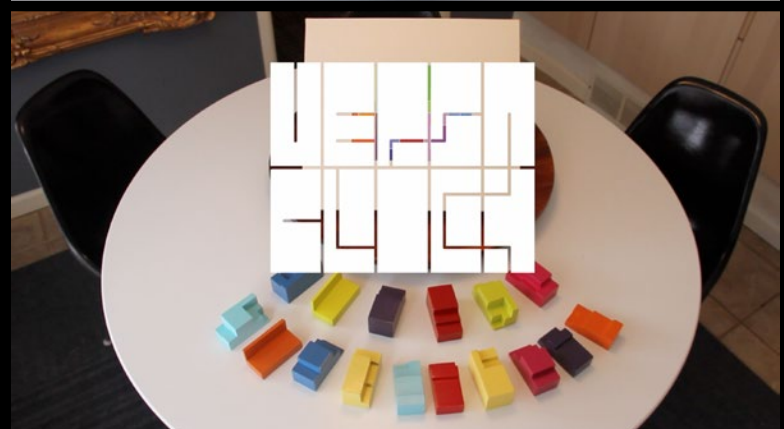tion. I did not bring up *The Three Little Pigs*.

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 recogni-
tion) 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!

                    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 com-
modity, firmness and delight. But what is the ACTUAL project?

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?

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
Rown 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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The Absolute Skyscraper

A MAGICAL-REALIST EPIC
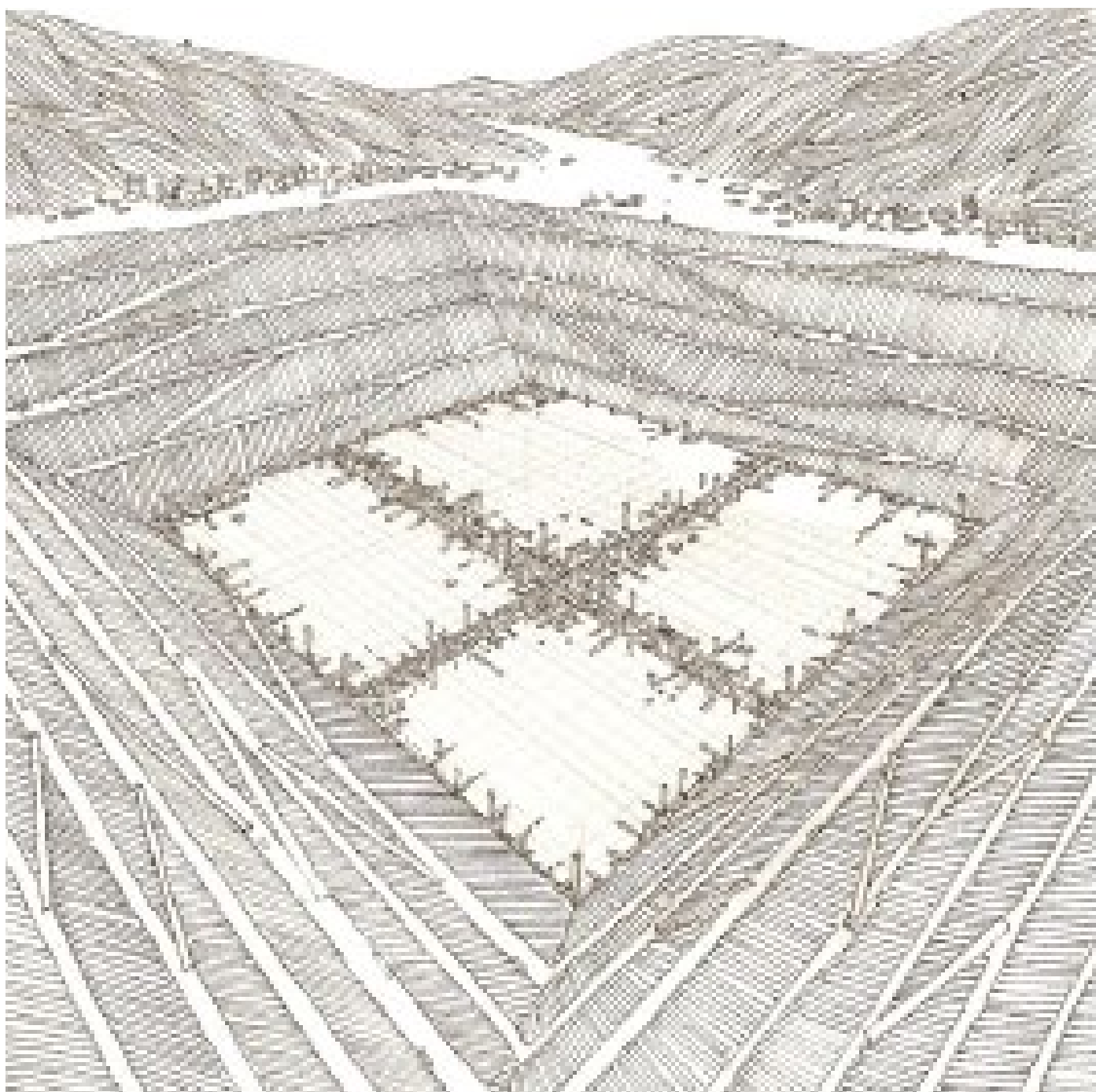
IN 1999, THE BEATLES' FORMER GURU Yogi Maharishi and Brazilian entrepreneur Mario Garnero set forth the construction of Maharishi SP Tower, eventually the highest worldwide. For political reasons it didn't come true. "The Absolute Skyscraper," a real-fantastic epic, narrates an imaginary unfolding of the would-be tallest building in the world.

1. The guru Yogi Maharishi or "the great wise man and scientist of the conscience" idealized the highest building in the world, São Paulo Maharashi Tower. The Dravidian-style building was meant to be a compliment to the science of the Vedas and to Hindu teachings and would have a total built area 20 times bigger than its existing counterpart. It would be backed up on scientific research based in neuro-physiology, in psychology-expanding techniques, and on every field of knowledge directly or indirectly related to architecture and urbanism.

2. Out of all of the construction phases, the longest was the foundation: it lasted **5 YEARS** and reached **140 METERS** undergroud! Built in a 60-block area (circa **600.000 M²**), the pilings occasioned the removal of mountains and mountains of earth that were taken to the construction of a huge landfill over the park that was supposed to integrate the project. Announced benefits were two museums, sixteen malls, four convention centers, five hotels, seven spas, three universities, five religious temples, and one million square meters distributed among offices, shops, apartments and everything else that a city may have.
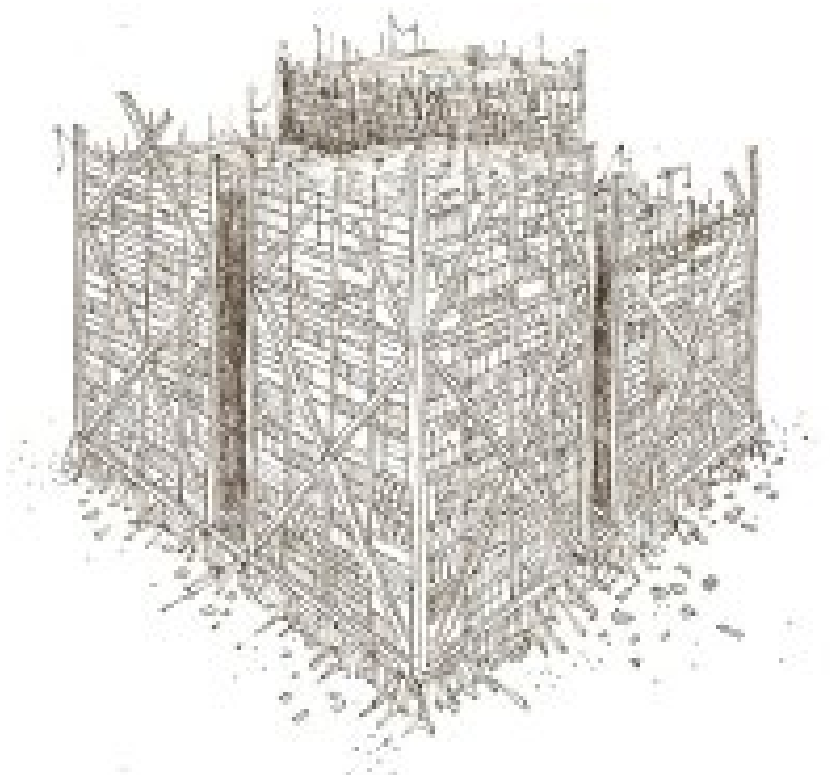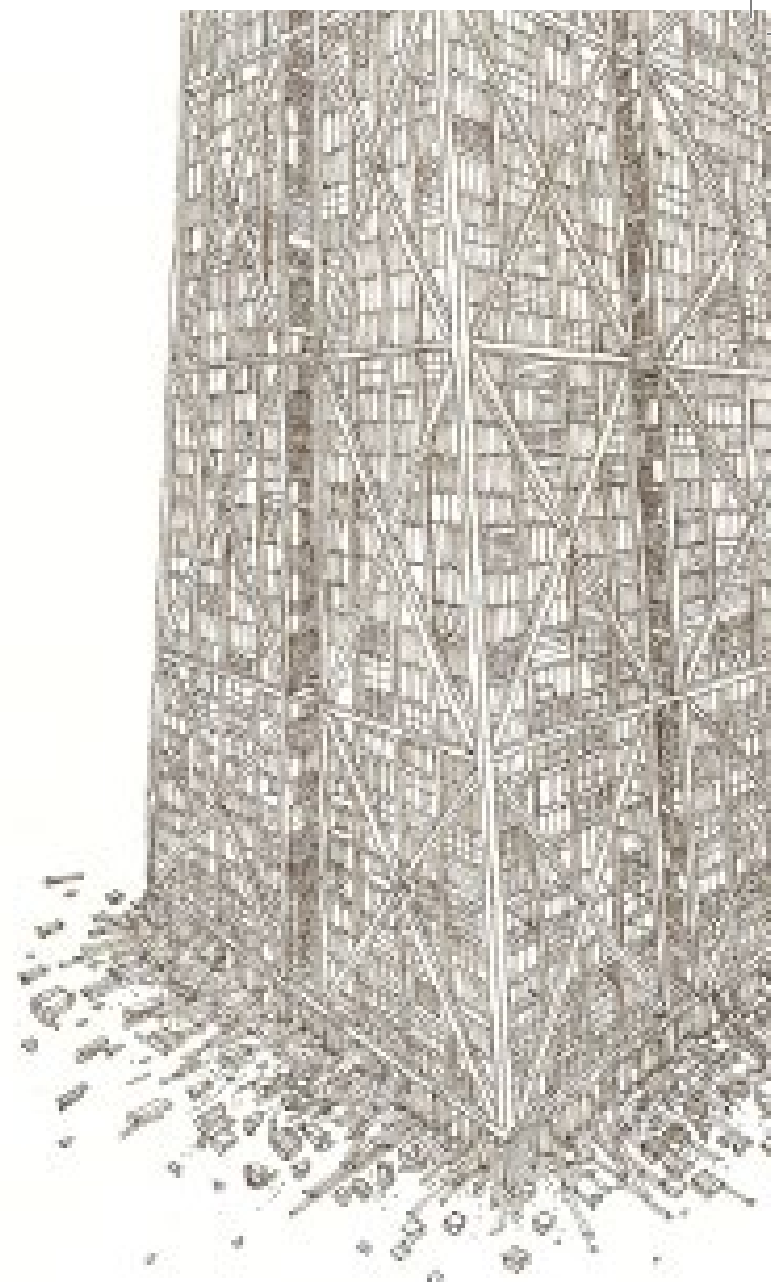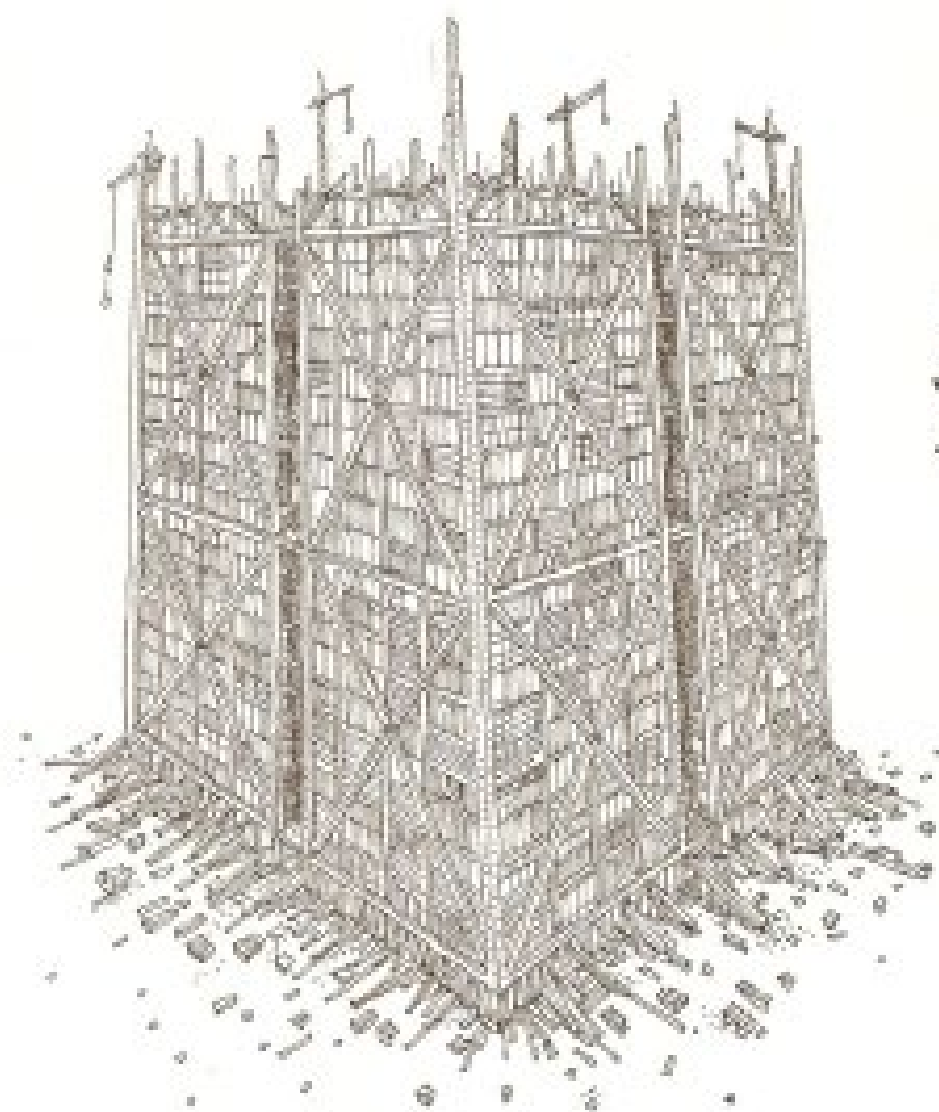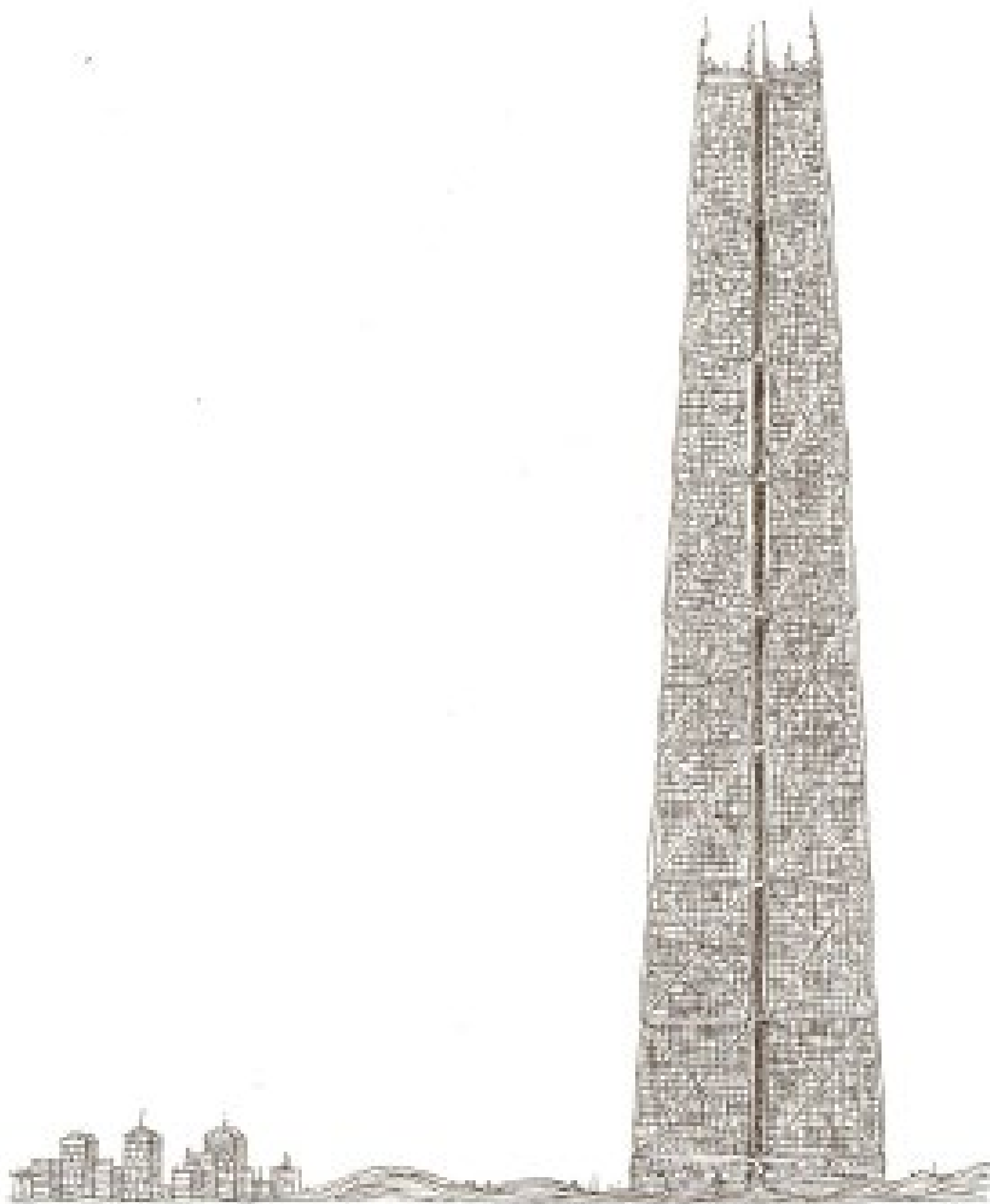
3. There would be **4 TOWERS** in fact: one at each corner of a square, the space in-between them to be suspended public areas in each of its **108 FLOORS**. Its pyramid-log shape, typical of Hindu architecture, would bring to São Paulo the inherent power of the divine forces, the supernatural energies capable of fighting evil and human sorrows, and would put an end to violence, greed, jealousy, covetousness, and every sin and vices of mankind.

4. And so, when the foundations were completed, the time came for the superstructure, which would be inspired by the John Hancock's Center in Chicago, built in 1969. Inserted in the building's perimeter, all strengths of the structure would be reflected in the drawing of its tubular matrix, excusing the use of internal columns. The thrusts, reactions, settings and torsions would be sorted out and reflected on the facade of the building. The architect chosen to develop the project was the famous Nipo-American Minoru Yamasaki. The reaction from the city against the monster was prompt: local architects, intellectuals, artists, etc. were definitely against the project and voiced their harmless opinions in newspapers and television networks—but the first vertical signs of the pyramid had already been risen up in the horizon....
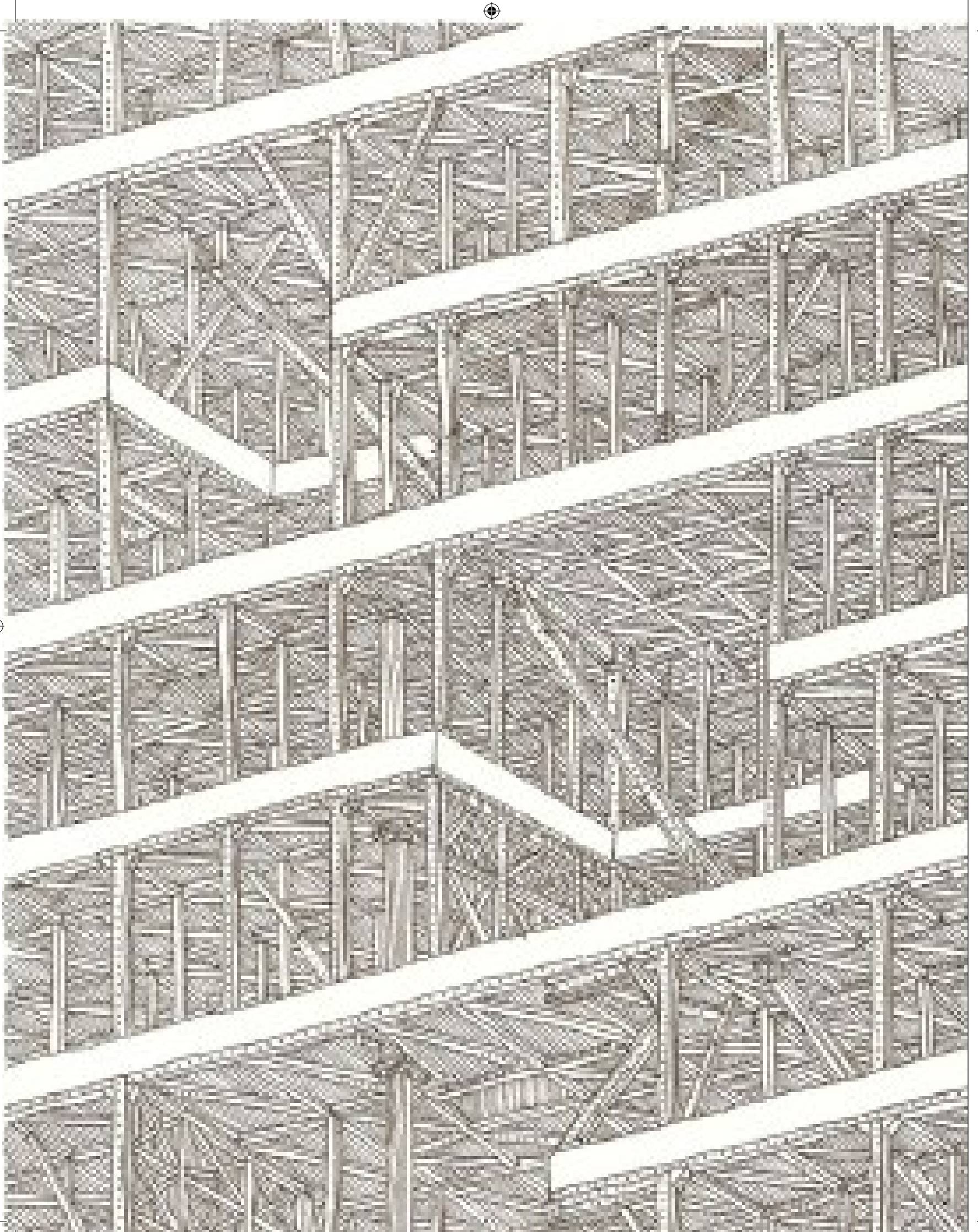
5. The construction pace was overwhelming. Works have already reached the eightieth floor when the first disagreements arose among the project's developers, the Maharishi Global Development Fund (or "the endless treasure of the world for peace and happiness") and Brasilinvest, the Brazilian partner. The latter proved that the foundations were overestimated and would support a load three times higher than the original project, which would justify an increase in number of floors to **324**. The controversy continued throughout the project, up to its last floor.

6. During conversations at the works' inauguration party, it was decided that the Brasilinvest group would be responsible for the construction of the new **216 FLOORS**. The civil liability would be solely taken by Brasilinvest, which would be also responsible for the rest of the construction, including the insurance of the first 108 floors. Yamasaki was consulted, but aware of the frightening destiny of two of its well known buildings (the Pruitt Igoe residential complex in St. Louis and the World Trade Center in New York) his office declined to design the colossus' extension.

7. Nevertheless, the new structure could not be just a mere continuation of its original project: it would have to be adjusted in its perimeter so that the new loads would not damage the structure already erected, calculated to receive only **108 FLOORS**. Specialists were consulted and came to the conclusion that the best solution would really be to adopt another type of structure, which would alter the concept of the original structure of the building.

8. The guru's protests did not hamper the disturbance of the blessed pyramid. An engineer specialized in reinforced concrete—Brazilian modern architecture's typical structure—decided to insert a mesh with orthogonal pillars and beams to reinforce the structure according to practices prevailing in the country. Huge transitional beams would then support a mesh of **124 PILLARS** located in the core of the building and no longer on the facade.

9. One day, up to the **147TH FLOOR**, the developers themselves started to fear the height reached by the construction. Three-meter swaying from side to side on the last floors made workers descend desperately to levels less vulnerable to the wind forces. Frightened, the developers consulted architects and engineers of famous American skyscrapers and came up with the idea to revert to a metallic structure by the insertion of huge cylindrical pillars into the middle of the building, which would reinforce the structure of the skyscraper and make possible the maximum, effective use of its foundations.

10. That was the way the construction, up to **FLOOR NUMBER 184**, had gone.

11. Suddenly, the developers ran out of funds. Oscillations in the always unpredictable Brazilian economy, rumors about the building's destiny, and the reluctance from São Paulo's mayor to save the venture with public funds led to the announcement of the end of the construction, at least temporarily. Works had stopped for more than **3 MONTHS**.

12. But then the workers of the **4 BUILDINGS**—proud of that **HUNDREDS OF FLOORS** already built—saw that incomplete work unbearable to their eyes and decided to carry on the project themselves. "We want to continue the job by ourselves", they said. With no experience and no salaries, foremen and workers substituted metal trusses for wooden overlays onto the concrete, executing their own ideas whereas they were previously subordinated to engineers.
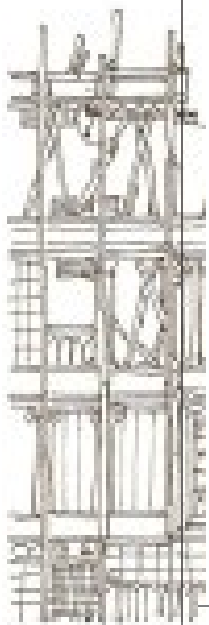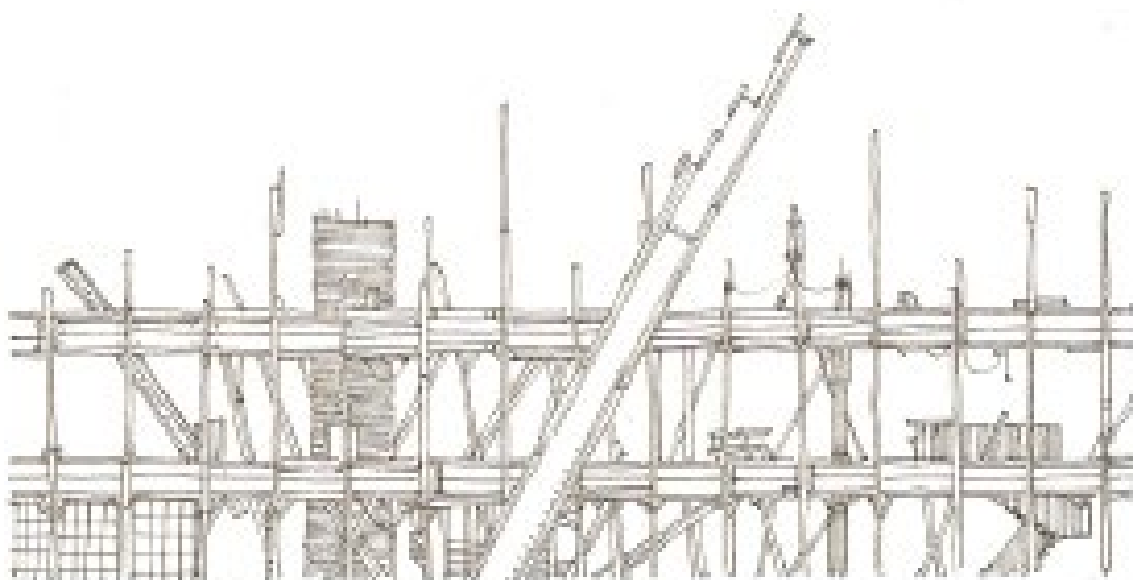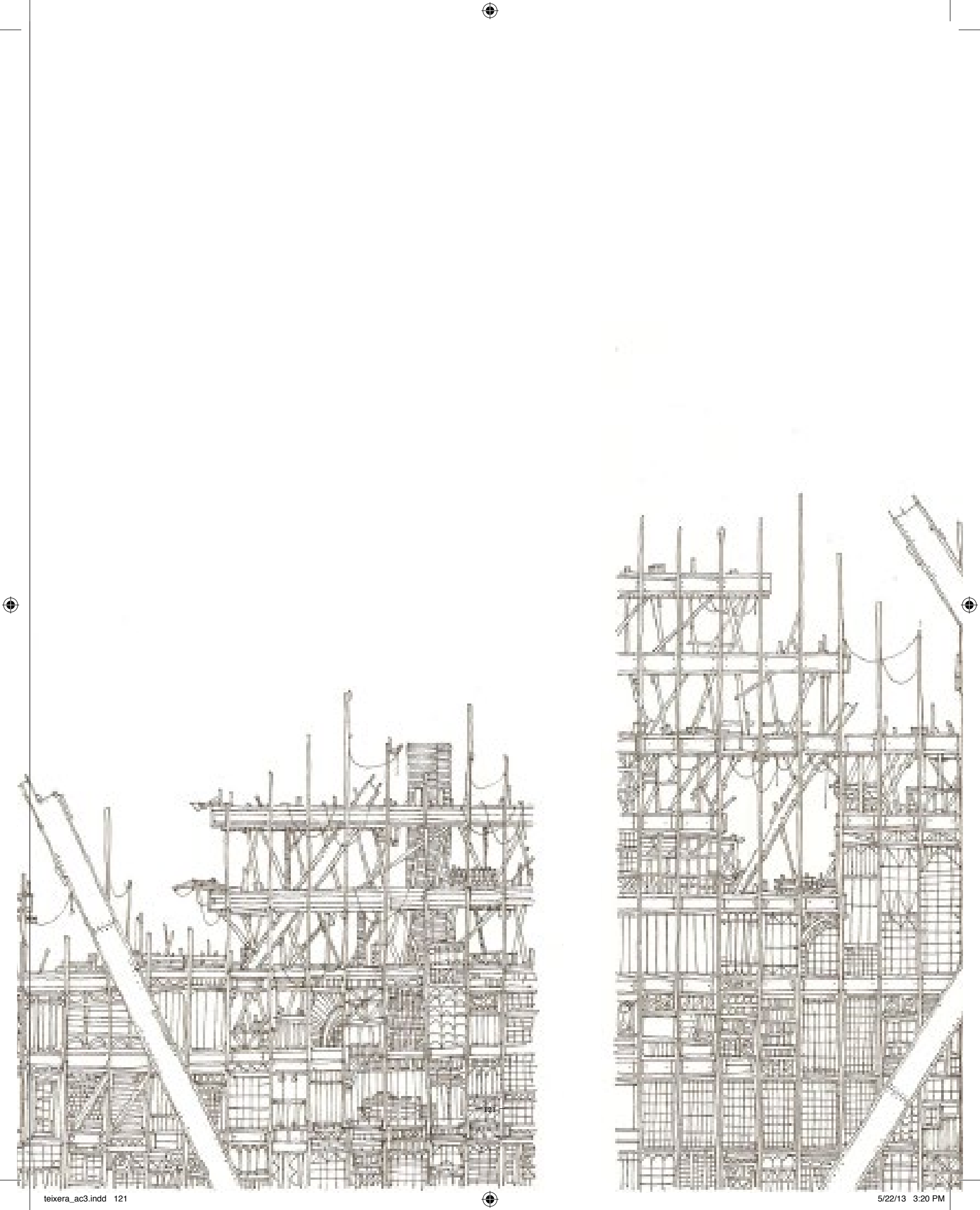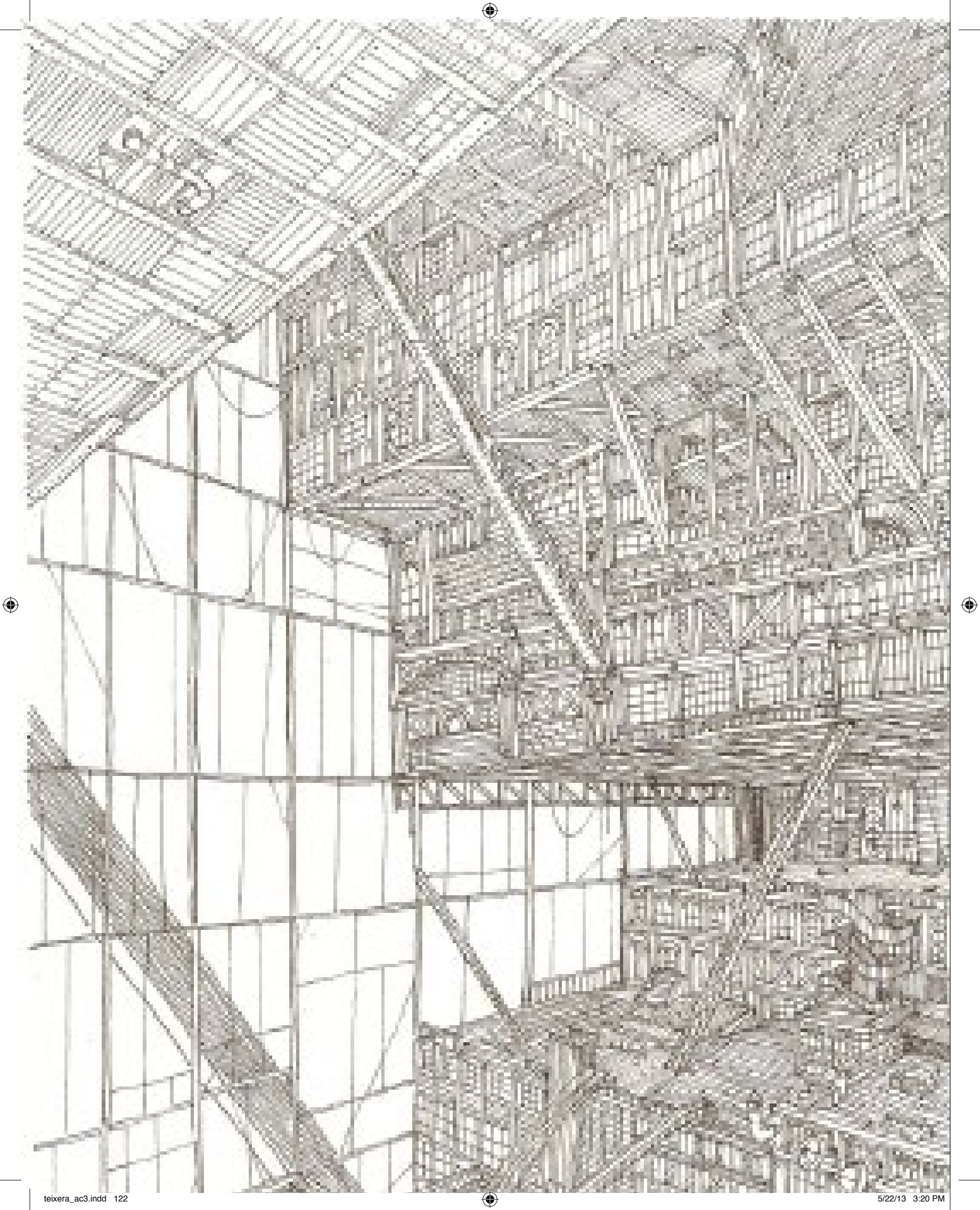
13. Meantime engineers and interns kept on with an insane confidence, the tireless businessman Mario Garnero (Brasilinvest Group) got new loans via direct contacts with the public banks. All delayed salaries were paid off. All the precariousness and improvisation on the last floors were substituted by metal pillars, which followed the initial structural logic of the facade. And **143 NEW FLOORS**—now according to the John Hancock´s building construction system—were erected without any unusual occurrences, overlaying two structural systems.

14. Over **40 FLOORS** were built with only a single work-related accident and a fatal fall (**FROM THE 217TH FLOOR**). The workers continued on with the building intensively and constantly, during holidays, weekends, from dawn to dusk, ever.
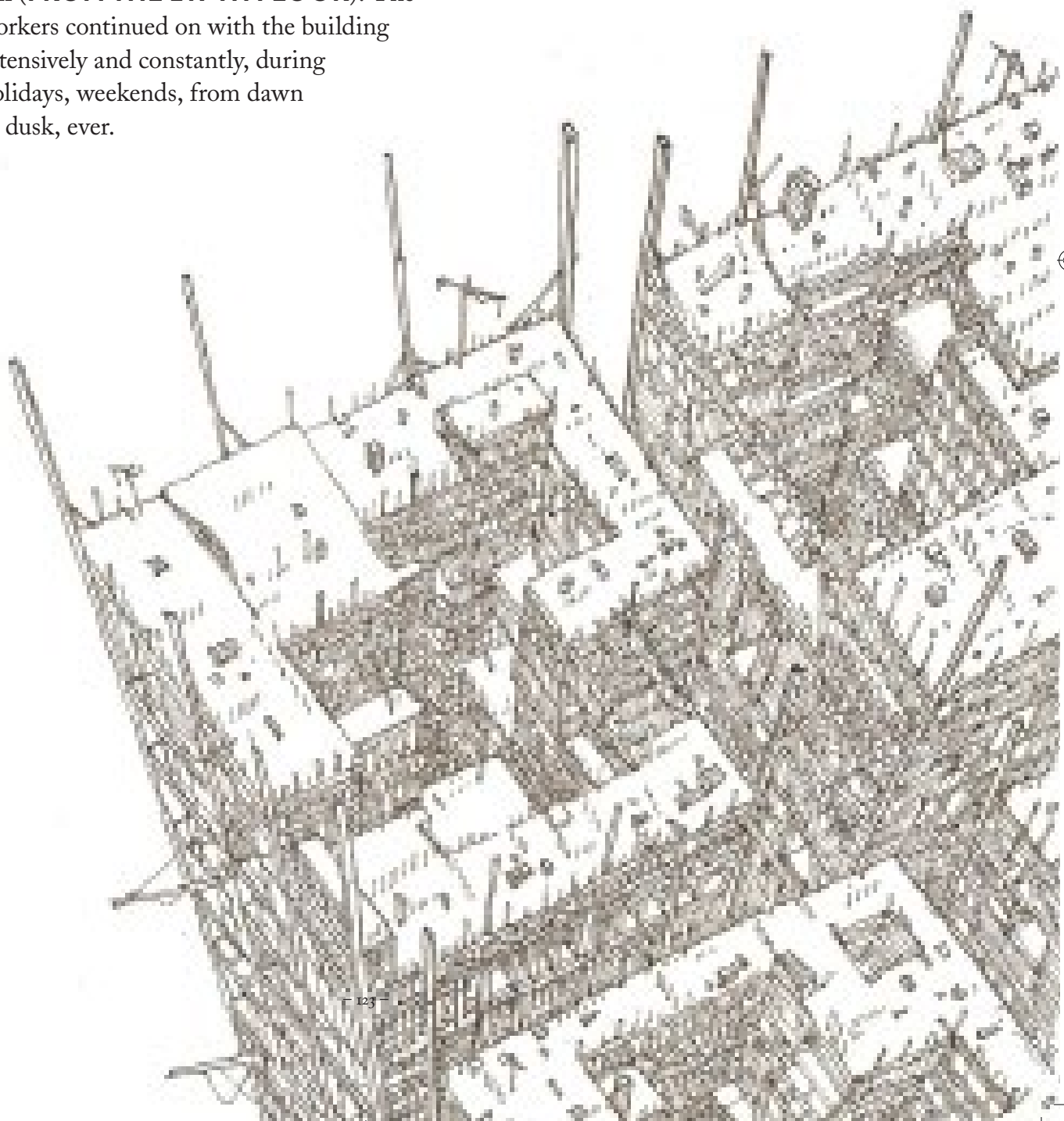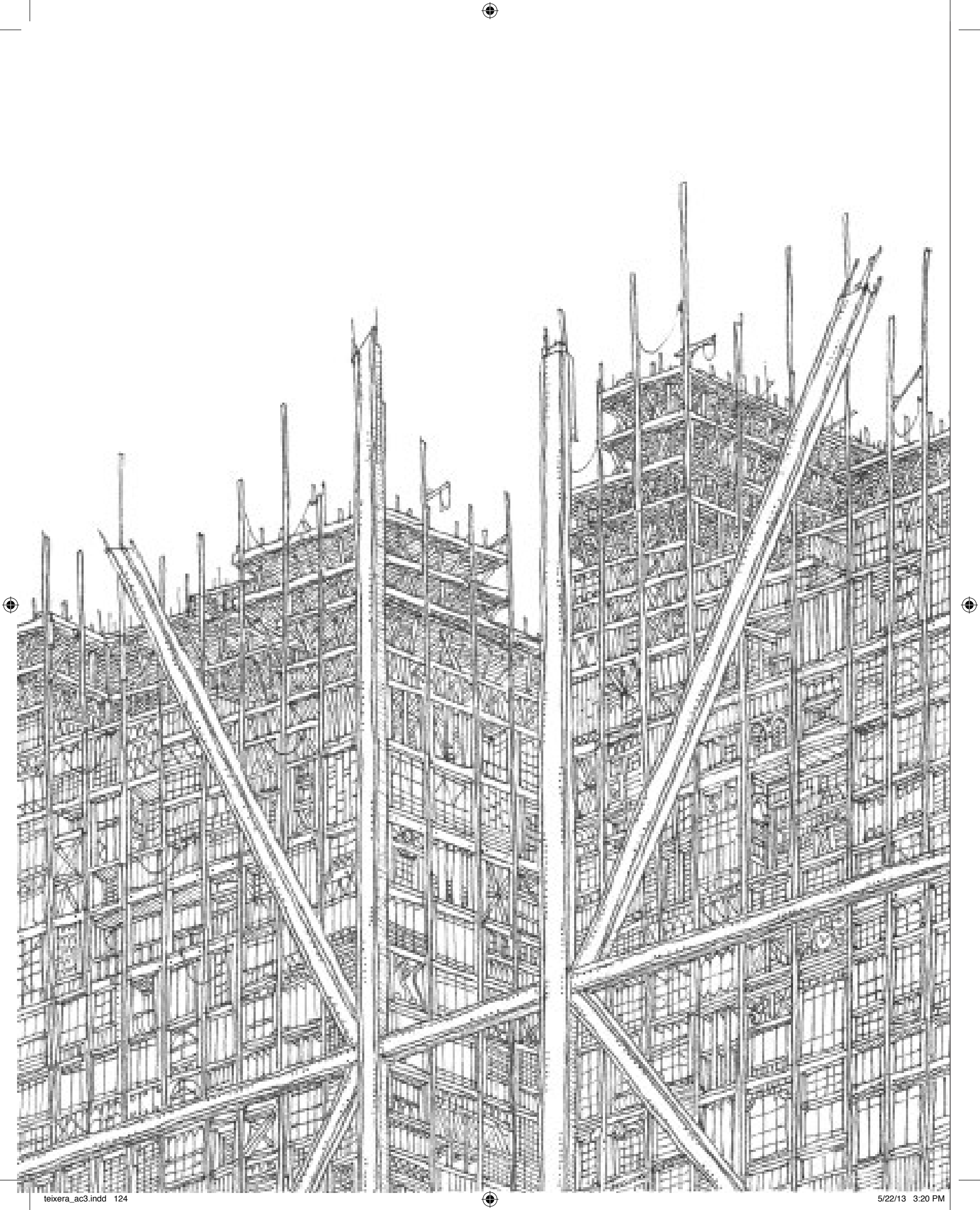
15. The venture's cash flow no longer seems to show strain: the demand for apartments and offices has become greater than their supply, **INCREASING PRICES PER SQUARE METER**, skyrocketing the premium in the real state market, and augmenting the anxiety for the end of the construction.

16. 33 MORE FLOORS. **12 MORE FLOORS**. **81 MORE FLOORS**. No accidents, no disagreements, no problems.

17. 23 MORE FLOORS. Everything under control. Now, not just construction workers but engineers, architects and brokers, prouder and prouder of the gigantic monument underneath their feet, have also decided to work on Saturdays and Sundays, regardless of overtime payment. They started to complete the last details of the towers' first **100 FLOORS**, promptly occupied by the first buyers. At the inaugural ceremony, an unexpected reaction: the total support from the population, compliments from the media, and articles in newspapers that enthusiastically described the mixture of programs and shapes of the building that had been implanted (**ONLY UP TO THE 108TH FLOOR**) according with the original project of Maharishi.
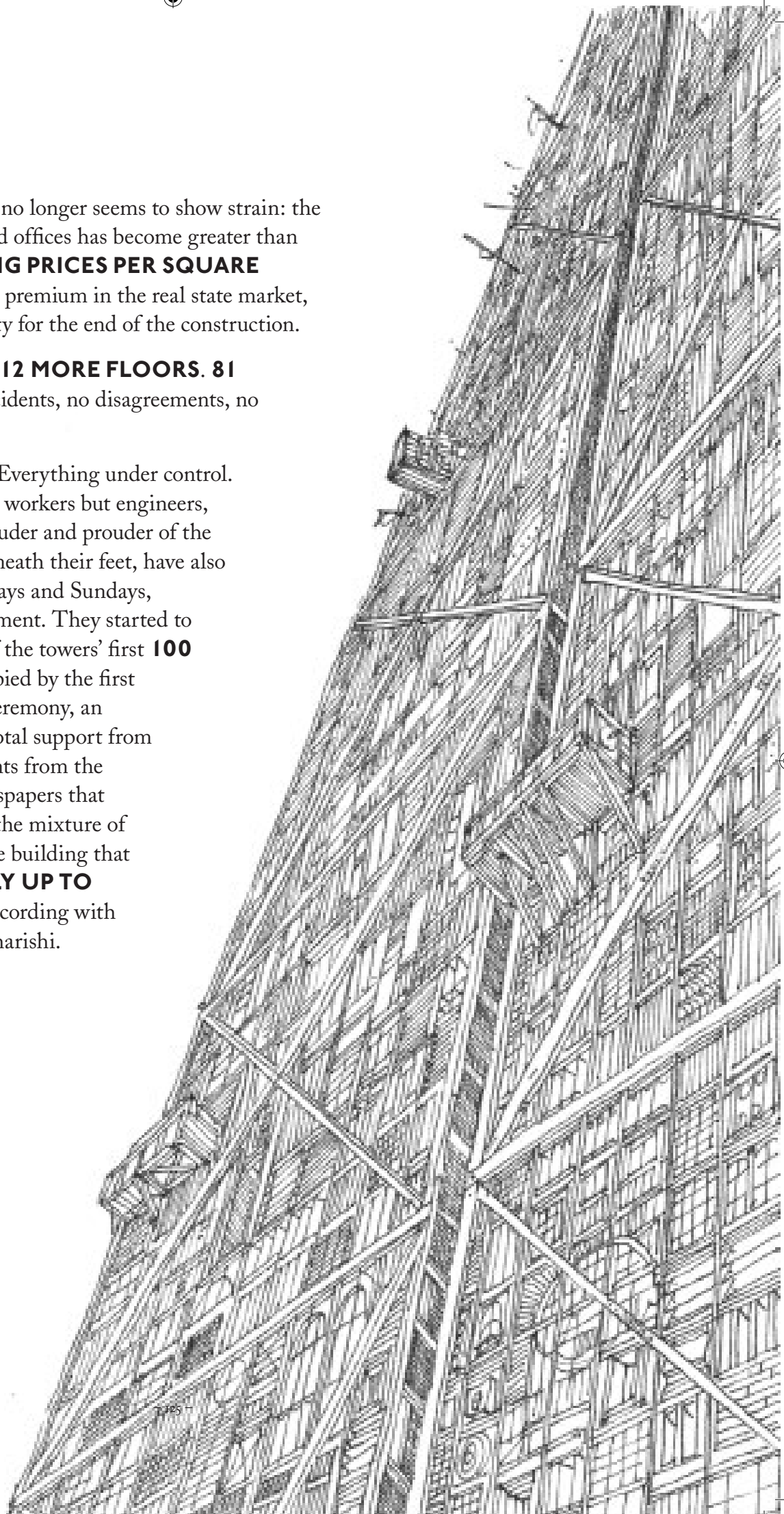
18. **78 MORE FLOORS**. Current days. The building keeps growing at a dizzying speed, at a rate of **20 FLOORS A MONTH**. The image of the building, previously criticized by Brazilian architects ("that stateless architecture that does not add much our solid, modernist traditions"), has become a daring national symbol. Floors from **1 TO 209** have already been occupied and there has been a long list of buyers for the areas that will be available through the **NEXT 100 FLOORS**—all of them sold long ago and resold at a premium several times over and with almost the same liquidity of paper currency.

19. By means of a real state fund, Maharishi SP Tower begins to be negotiated at São Paulo Stock Exchange, an unprecedented fact in history of Brazil´s real state market. Rumors that the Tower is approaching its maximum height make the shares' price go up; gossips that the structure is working far beyond its maximum allowed performance reduce the papers to symbolic numbers; news about **SKYROCKETING ASSAULTS**, **MURDERERS** and **KIDNAPPINGS** in the rest of the city re-raise the value of the fund's capital, and so on.
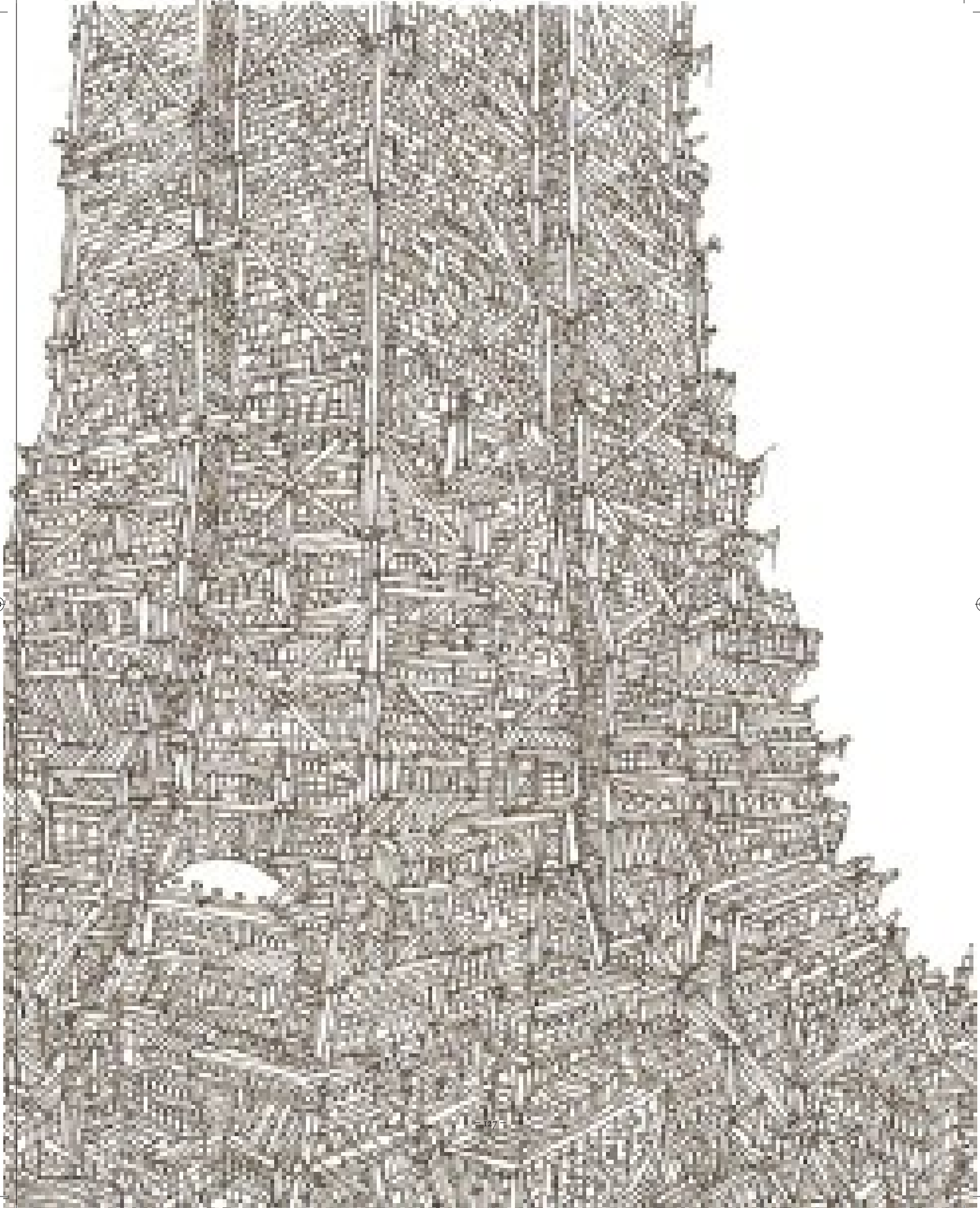
20. Initially a cacophony of buildings over buildings, now the spaces of the tower are extremely complex: provisional shacks fight for room with modernist fantasies, radical formalisms trespass with incredibly aggressiveness the **X-SHAPED FAÇADE**, and structural experimentations make it possible unusual occupations of the humungus voids in-between the **FOUR TOWERS**. Rooftops become terraces that become bridges that become houses that become buildings that become something else, and so on.

21. 55 MORE FLOORS. Now every single inhabitant of Sao Paulo struggles for a place in the tower; whereas the entire city starts to empty. Suburbs, downtown areas, houses, schools, hospitals, malls—all the buildings in every borough are being abandoned. And then the Tower begins—in an amazing horizontal growth at the base of the colossus—to hold the main downtown buildings. The Copan Building, the Oca, the MASP—in short, nearly no of the city's architectural icon is saved, not much being left to celebrate the **450TH ANNIVERSARY** of the city...

22. Somebody remember the total floors (how many there are so far?) has overrun the maximum number permitted by the foundations. But no one cares, and **EVERYONE KEEPS ON BUILDING**, buying, and moving to the Tower.
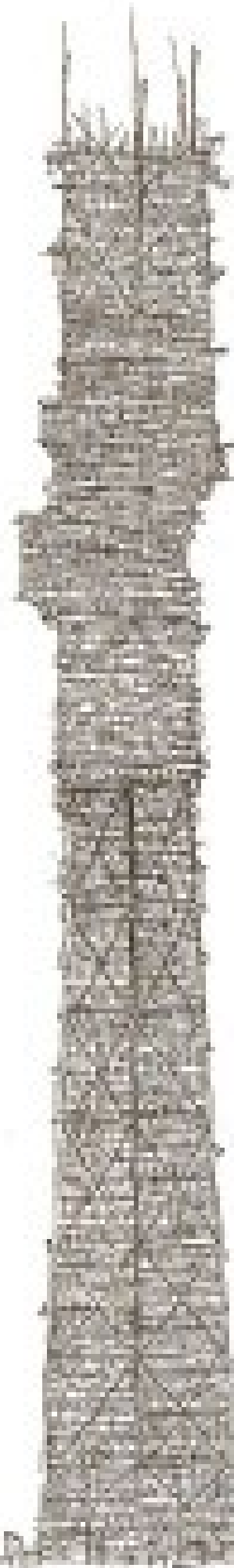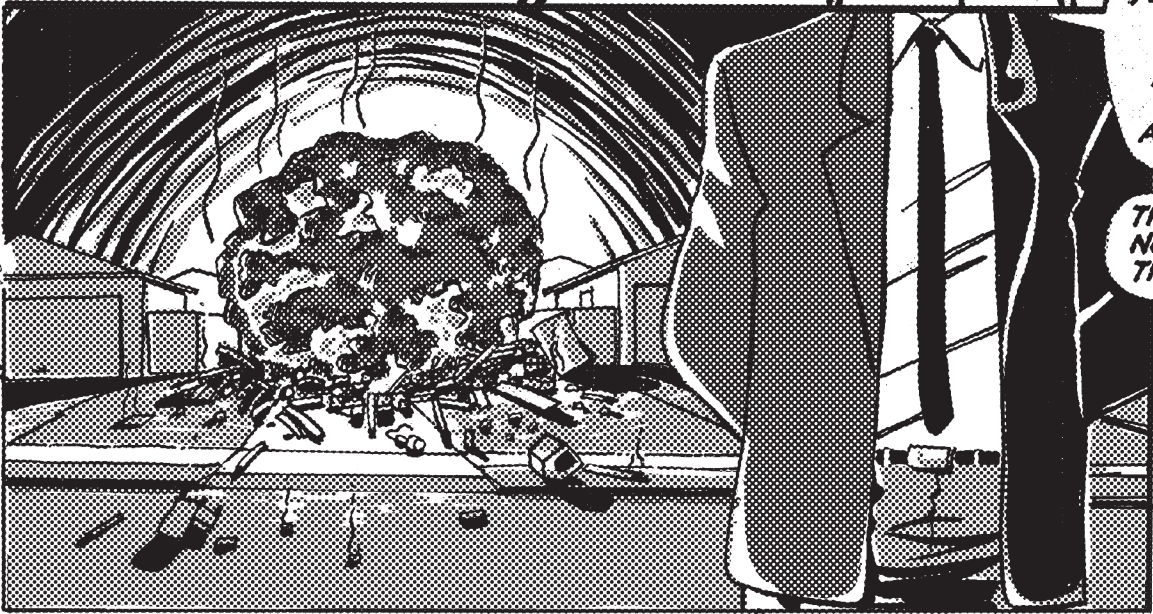
REMEMBER THE NELSONS?

*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

TIME PASSES. . .

STILL TURNING, BUT GOING NOWHERE

I'M GOING IN. TOO HOT OUT HERE

I CAN'T THINK WITH ALL THAT BUZZING

FINALLY:

. . . 42?
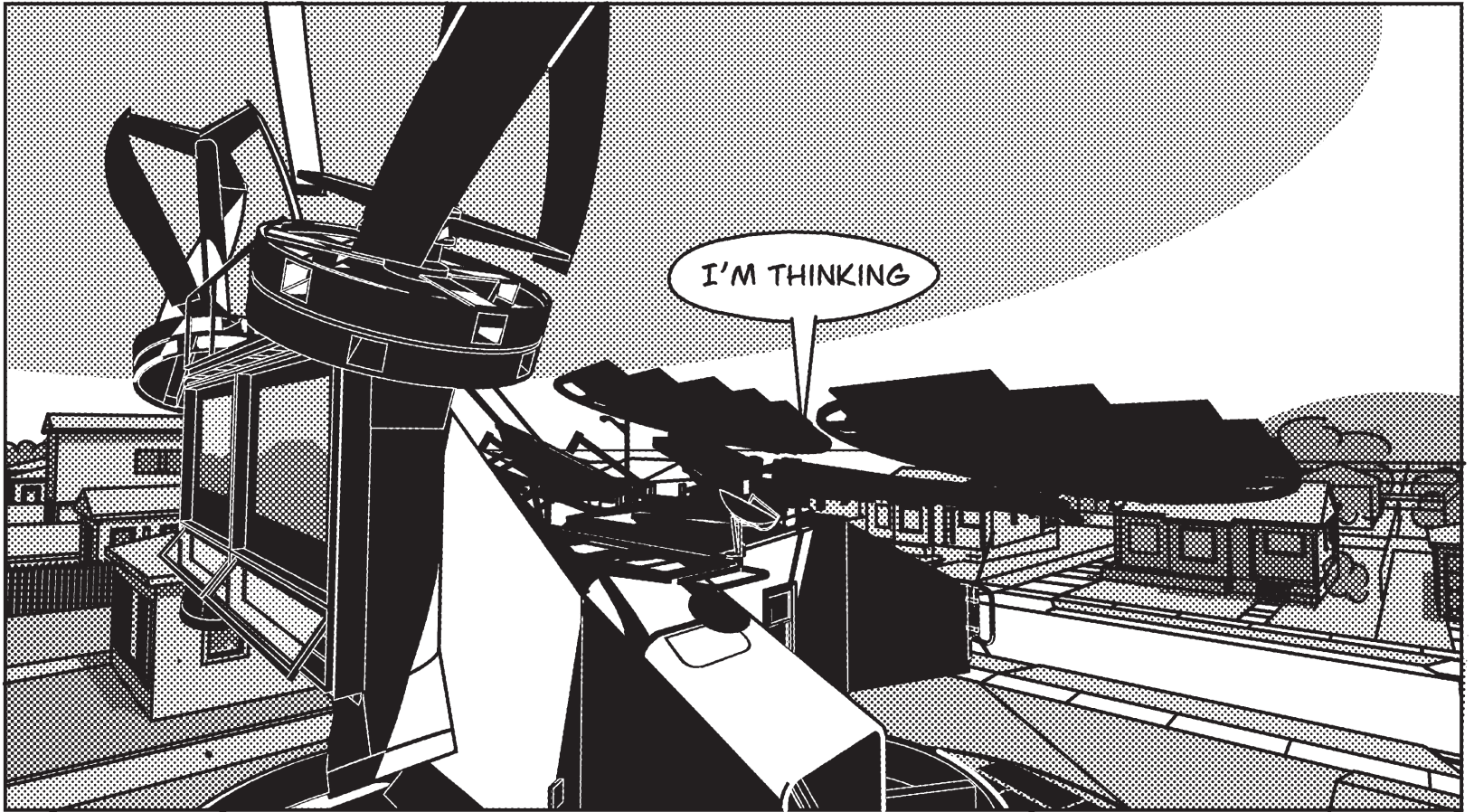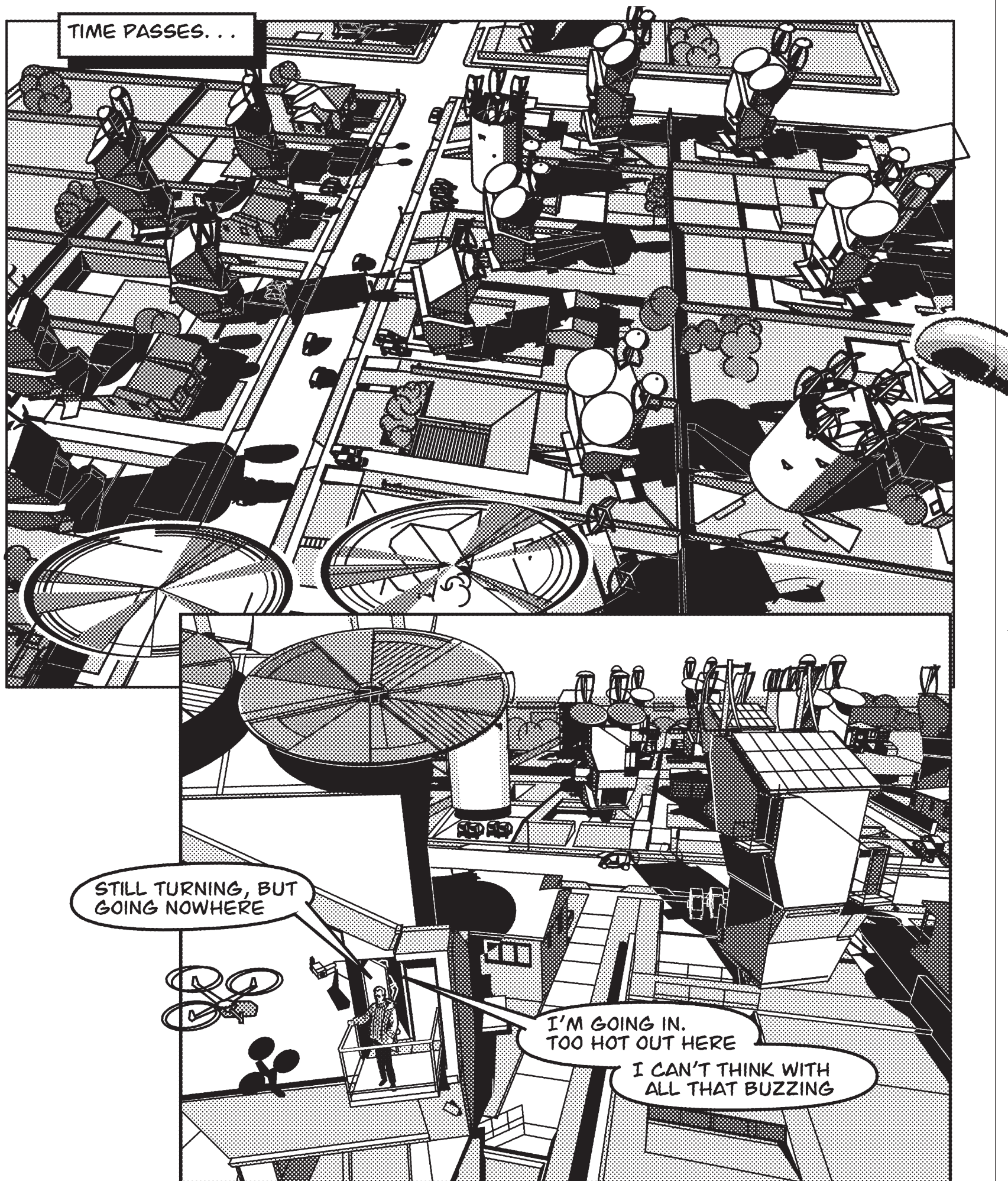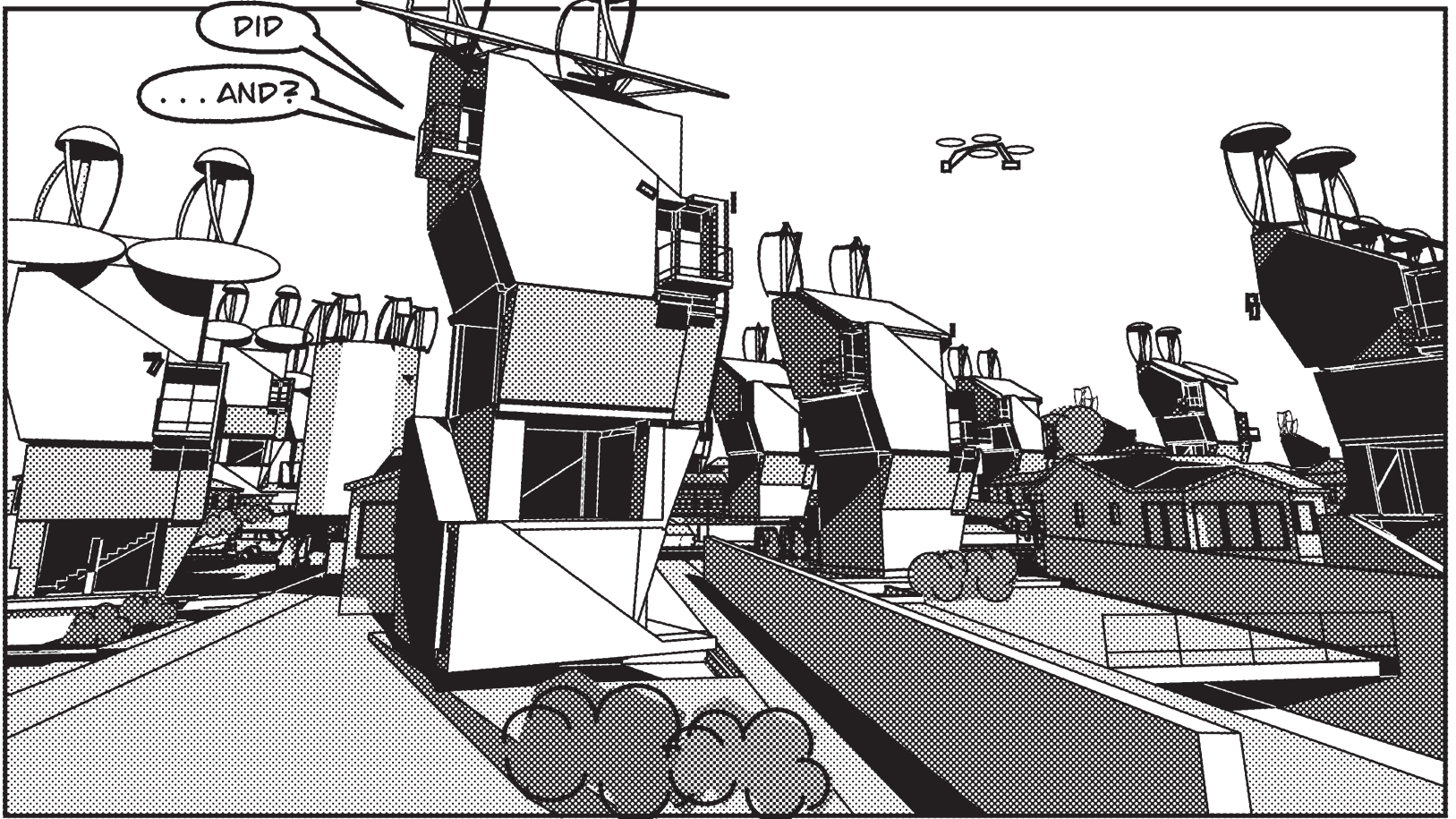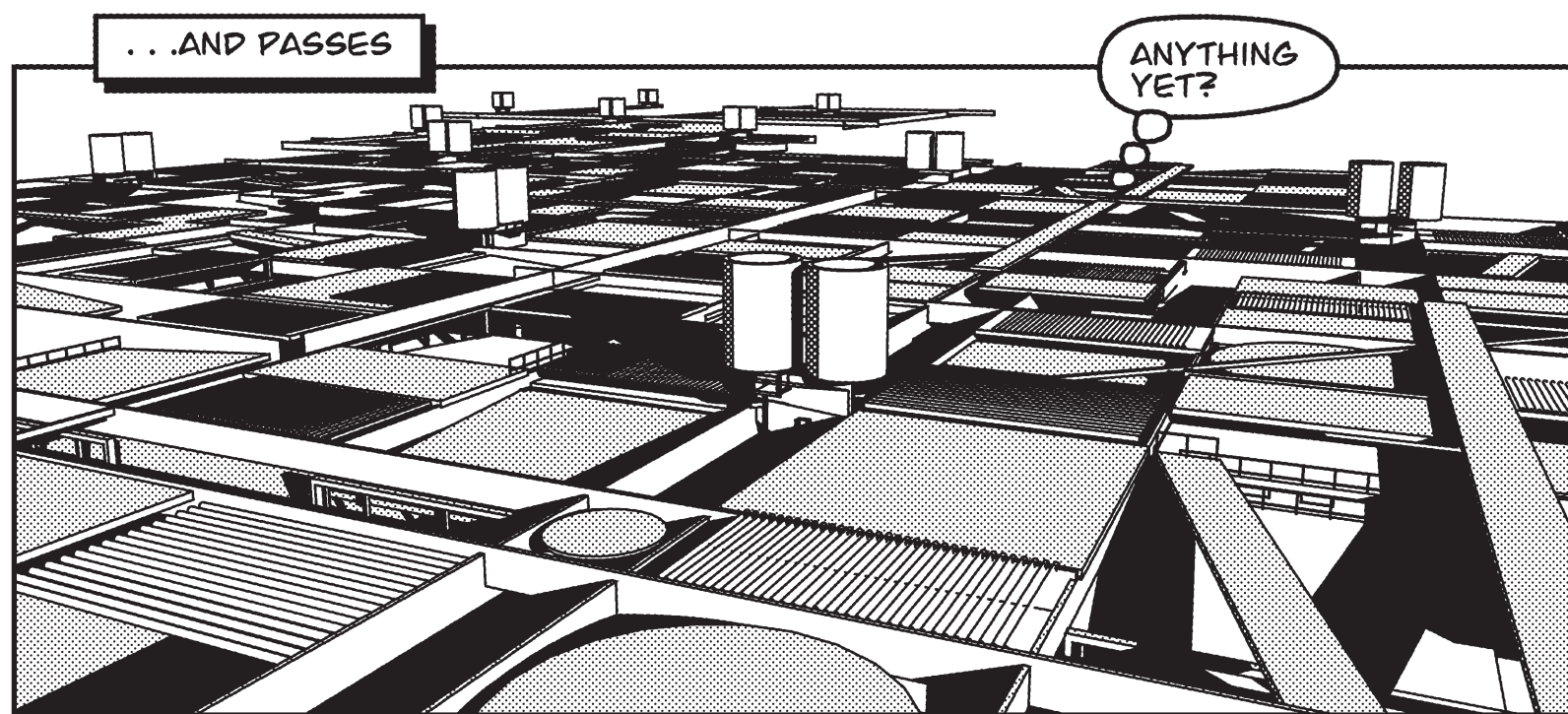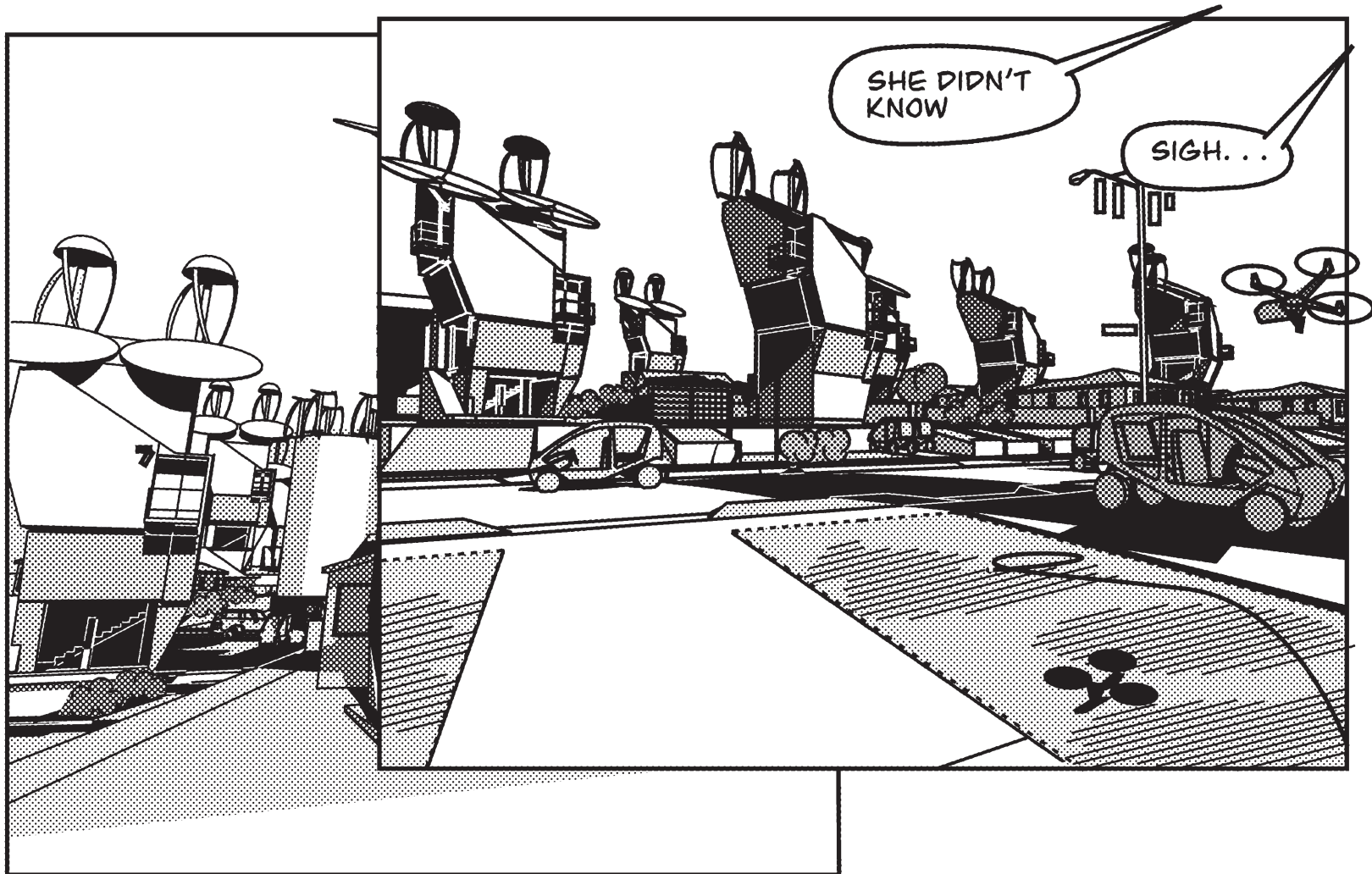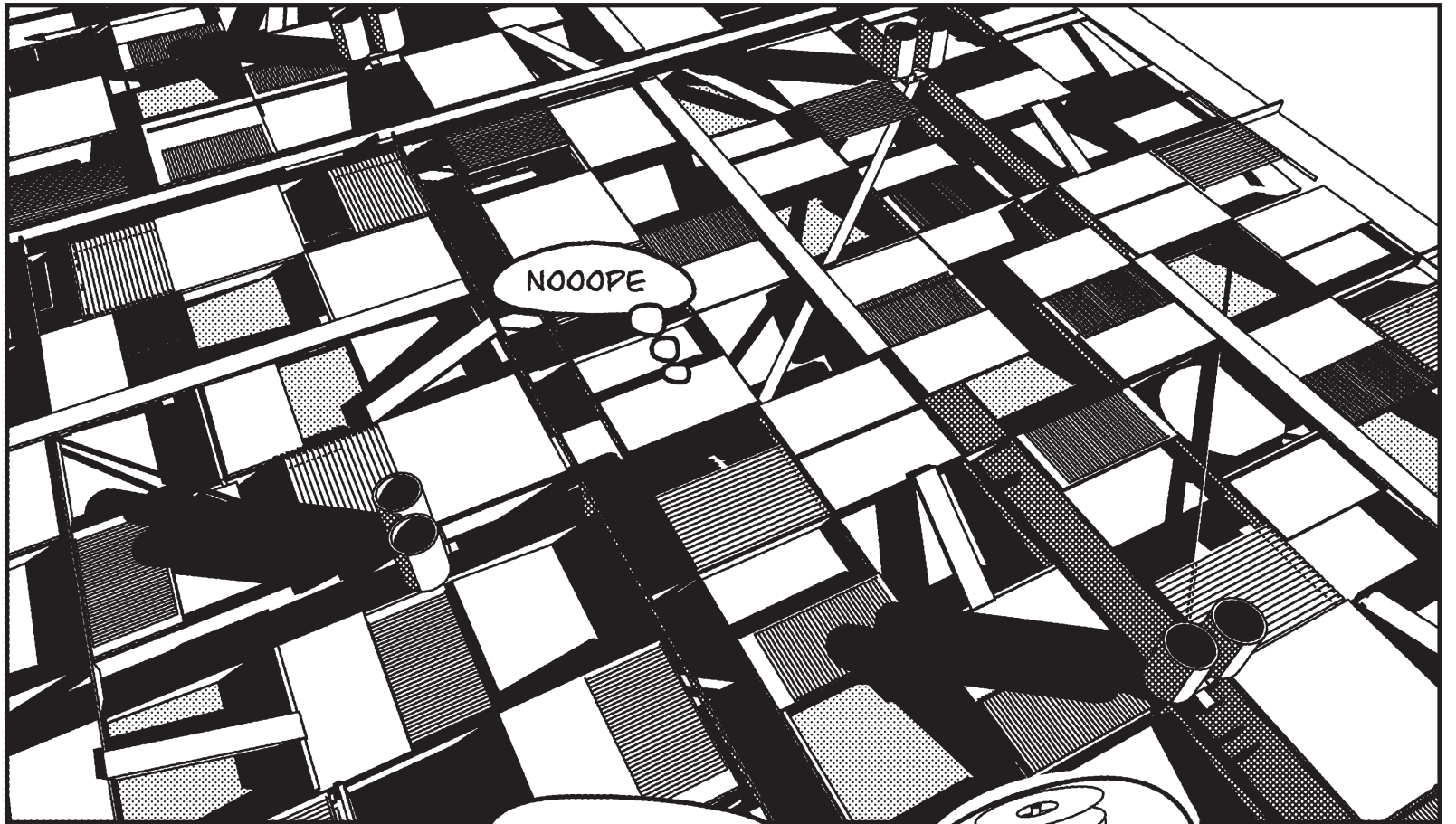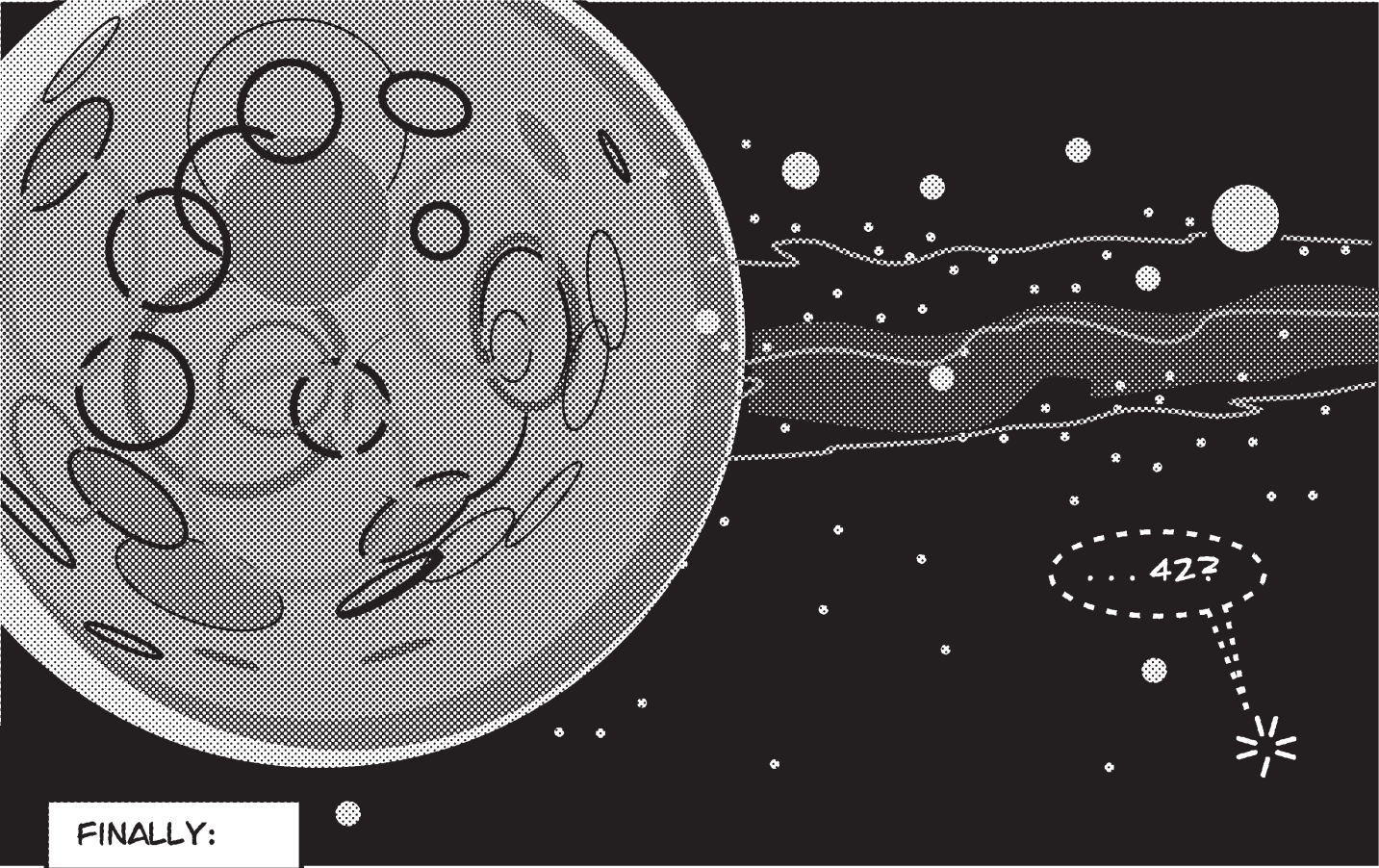
IN UNWORTHY HOMAGE TO ASIMOV AND HIS "LAST QUESTION"

ZOOUPSKZ!!

HA HA AH HA HA HA