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# FORD BOSTWICK

SHAPES OF G R A Y : CONCEPTS IN C O N C R E T E

## SHAPES OF G R A Y : CONCEPTS IN C N C R E T

FORD BOSTWICK

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CONCRETE BLOCKS

INTRODUCTION 1 A HISTORY OF 30 - 32 RELEVANT ARTWORK WHAT CON-2 – 10 PROPOSITIONS 33 - 46 CRETE IS FOR FUTURE CONCRETE A HISTORY OF 11 - 16 RESEARCH AND 47 - 58 CONCRETE DEVELOPMENT 17 – 21 END NOTES 59 – 62 A HISTORY OF CHAIR DESIGN A HISTORY OF 22 - 25 ΡΝΕυΜΑΤΙΟ STRUCTURES A HISTORY OF 26 - 29

Concrete is plastic and highly manipulatable. Its characteristics and the forms it takes are vastly diverse and its history as a building material is broken and nonlinear. By charting the trajectory of its manifestations and uses over time, as well as the trajectories of constituent things (chairs, pneumatic structures, blocks, and relevant artwork), I've reached an understanding of what some possible valuable futures for concrete might look like. I have proposed three of these possible futures in doodle form. The doodles appear later in this book. W H A T C O N C R E T E I S

Concrete is the most abundant man-made substance on earth and is the most widely used building material. It is the definition of material and physical form as well as the definition of real. However, it remains a highly elusive building material with properties so varied that it is difficult to classify or describe its real architectural character. Its rapid and radical evolution, especially in contemporary practice, has broadened its horizons, giving each architect who uses it the power to define what it really is.<sup>1</sup>

#### WHAT CONCRETE IS: THE PRODUCTS



FIGURE 1





FIGURE 3







FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7



FIGURE 8









FIGURE 11



FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13





FIGURE 16



FIGURE 17



FIGURE 18





#### WHAT CONCRETE IS: THE PRODUCTS

| FIGURE 1                   | FIGURE 2              | FIGURE 3         | FIGURE 4            | FIGURE 5     |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| MORSE AND<br>EZRA STILES   | FUNDAÇÃO<br>I B E R Ê | ERIE CANAL       | H O U S E           | VILLA SAVOYE |
| COLLEGES                   | ALVARO SIZA           | CANVASS<br>WHITE | RACHEL<br>WHITEREAD | LE CORBUSIER |
| E E R O<br>S A A R I N E N | 1 9 9 8               | 1 8 1 7          | 1 9 9 3             | 1 9 3 1      |

1 9 6 2

| FIGURE 6     | FIGURE 7      | FIGURE 8    | FIGURE 9 | FIGURE 10   |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| DEITINGEN    | A CAST OF THE | TRUFA HOUSE | INGALLS  | EBERSWALDE  |
| SERVICE STA- | SPACE UNDER   |             | BUILDING | LIBRARY     |
| T I O N      | MY CHAIR      | ANTON GAR-  |          |             |
|              |               | CIA–ABRIL   | ELZNER & | HERZOG & DE |
| HEINZ ISLER  | BRUCE NAUMAN  |             | ANDERSON | MEURON      |
|              |               | 2 0 0 6     |          |             |
| 1 9 6 8      | 1 9 6 5       |             | 1 9 0 3  | 1 9 9 8     |

| FIGURE 11               | FIGURE 12                   | FIGURE 13                      | FIGURE 14        | FIGURE 15                |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| TRANSLUCENT<br>CONCRETE | R O W B O A T               | R I C O L A<br>B U I L D I N G | CAST HOUSE       | TENERIFE<br>CONCERT HALL |
| LICATRON                | JOSEPH-LOUIS<br>L A M B O T | HERZOG & DE                    | THOMAS<br>EDISON | SANTIAGO                 |
| 2 0 0 5                 | 1 8 4 8                     | MEURON<br>1998                 | 1 9 0 8          |                          |

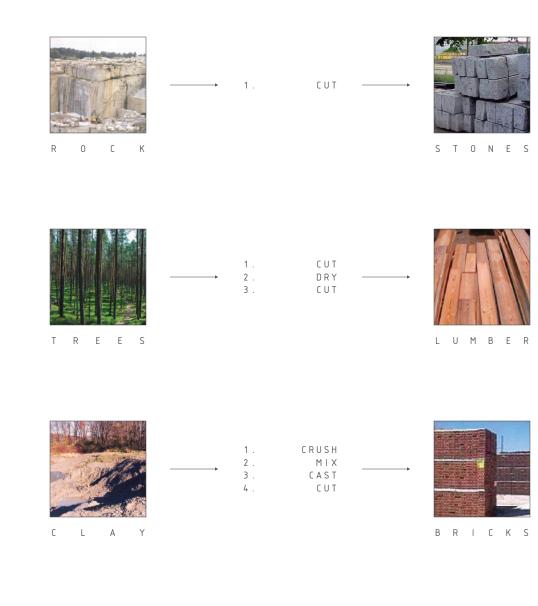
| FIGURE 16           | FIGURE 17    | FIGURE 18   | FIGURE 19             | FIGURE 20 |
|---------------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| TWA TERMINAL        | CHANDIGARH   | WARD HOUSE  | 4 0 B 0 N D           | COLUMNS   |
| E E R O<br>SAARINEN | LE CORBUSIER | ROBERT MOOK | HERZOG & DE<br>MEURON | MARK WEST |
| 1 9 6 2             | 1 9 6 2      | 1 8 7 5     | 2 0 0 5               | 2 0 0 8   |

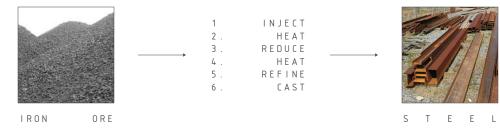
Concrete's basic ingredients are water, aggregate, and cement. Aggregate is usually sand and gravel, but can be any inert material with compressive strength. Cement is a combination of lime, ash, and small amounts of many other chemicals. When water is added to the mixture of cement and aggregate, it triggers a chemical reaction that causes the cement to bond the aggregate together. The final, essential, and often overlooked ingredient to concrete is its formwork. Concrete has no inherent formal qualities. It takes on the form of whatever vessel it is poured into and adopts the surface treatment of its mold. This directly opposes Adolf Loos' statement in The Principle of Cladding that "Every material possesses a formal language which belongs to it alone and no material can take on the forms proper to another."<sup>2</sup> Concrete has no formal language and depends completely on the formal logic of the materials of its formwork.<sup>3</sup>

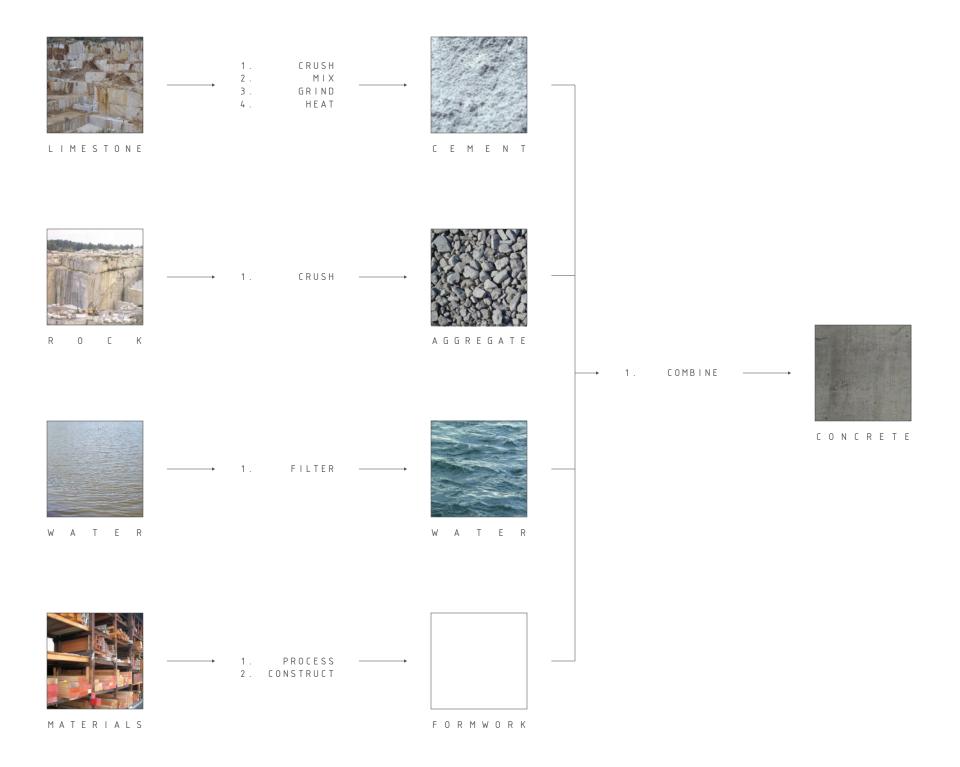


All building materials require some level of processing before they can be used. Lumber has to be cut from trees, stones are cut from larger rocks, and steel has to be made from iron ore and forged into desired shapes.<sup>4</sup> Concrete requires more processing than other building materials as each element of its mixture has to be processed and then added together in precise proportions to yield a desired concrete. Also, though aggregate is usually sand and gravel, nearly anything can be added to the cement and water mixture to create many diverse forms of concrete.<sup>5</sup>

#### WHAT CONCRETE IS: MATERIAL PROCESSING





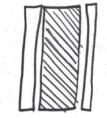


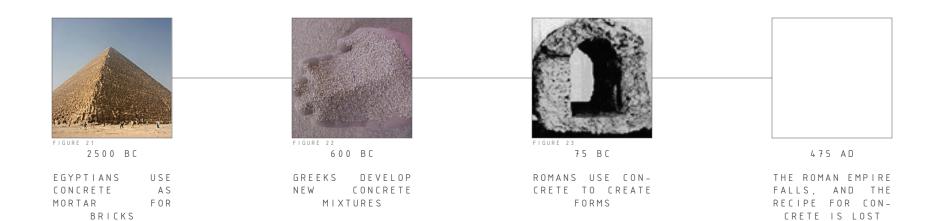


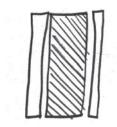
A H I S T O R Y O V F F

Adding to its enigmatic quality, concrete has a broken and nonlinear history. The ancient Egyptians used crude forms of it to build the pyramids, and it was an essential part of Ancient Roman architecture. When the Roman Empire fell, their recipe for concrete was lost, and it disappeared from building practice until around the early 19th century. Upon resurfacing as a building material, concrete was used to form canals, sewer systems, and boats. During the latter half of the 19th century, engineers and architects began to reinforce concrete with steel rebar. The tensile strength of the steel complimented the compressive strength of the concrete to create a more structurally sound and versatile material. In the 20th century, modern architects generally praised concrete for its neutrality and ability to make "abstract," un-ornamented surfaces, complicated curves, and uniform floor slabs. In the 1930's, German architects were able to achieve wafer thin shell structures by reinforcing concrete with fiberglass.<sup>6</sup> In contemporary architecture, concrete's properties are even more widely varied. By impregnating the mix with steel fibers, concrete can be made incredibly strong without the need for reinforcing rods. Architects and engineers are now experimenting with processes to make concrete lighter, change its color, and even change its opacity.<sup>7</sup>

A HISTORY OF CONCRETE













1756 AD

JOHN SMEATON REDISCOVERS CON-CRETE



1848 AD

J O S E P H – L O U I S LAMBOT DEVELOPS S T E E L – R E I N – FORCED CONCRETE

**S** 

an



1911 AD

CARL AKELEY DEVELOPS SHOT-CRETE

0.5



1927 AD

E U G E N E F R E Y S S I -N E T D E V E L O P S P R E - S T R E S S S E D C O N C R E T E

#### A HISTORY OF CONCRETE



1931 AD

LE CORBUSIER DEVELOPS A NEW ARCHITECTURE USING CONCRETE



1962 AD

EERO SAARINEN DEVELOPS NEW FORMS IN CON-CRETE



1968 AD

HEINZ ISLER DESIGNS THIN CONCRETE SHELLS



2001 AD

MASSIE ARCHITEC-TURE USES JIG-SAW-PUZZLE PIECESASFORM-WORK





1



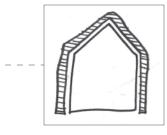


2008 AD MARK WEST DEVEL-OPS FAB-RIC-FORMED CON-CRETE



FUTURE

BUILDINGS ARE PRINTED BY ROBOTS



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FUTURE

EXISTING FORMS SERVE AS FORM-WORK FOR NEW CONCRETE ARCHI-TECTURE



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Chairs, besides them being seating objects, often serve as microcosms of architecture. They can express architectural ideas on a small and intimate scale. Early man most likely sat on rocks and logs, and later, these materials were processed to better serve the function of seating. In the 19th century, some chair designs were standardized and mass-produced. In the 20th century, chairs became lighter and their structures became more efficient. At the Bauhaus, Marcel Breuer predicted that the structure of the chair would be reduced so much so that in the future, we would be sitting on columns of air. Though this hasn't happened, there are inflatable chairs that are very light with minimal structure. Concrete chairs have also been made that are very light and strong.<sup>8</sup> A HISTORY OF CHAIR DESIGN





120,000 BC

EARLY MAN SITS ON STONES



2500 BC

EGYPTIANS CREATE ORNATE CHAIRS

ff



1000 BC

ROMANS BEDS WERE ALL PURPOSE SEATING



1859 AD

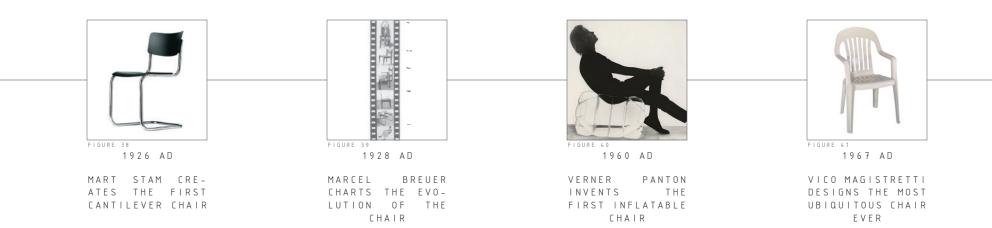
MICHAEL THONET CREATES THE FIRST MASS PRO-DUCED CHAIR



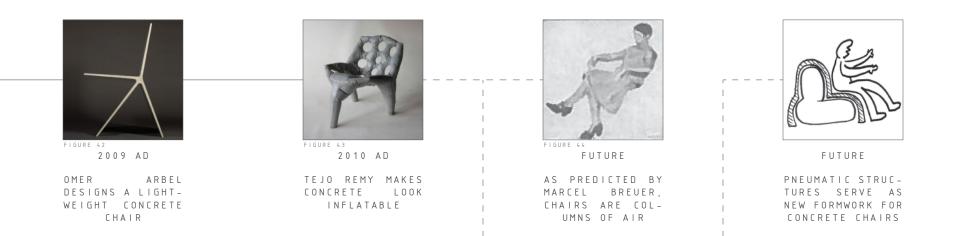














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Using air as the structure for a membranous wrapper is a lightweight and efficient way to create forms. The ancient Chinese began developing small hot air balloons made of paper for military purposes. Later, these hot air balloons were scaled up, and made big enough to transport people in. In the mid-20th century, Walter Bird began experimenting with using pneumatic structures as enclosures ranging in scale from houses to airplane hangars. This idea sparked much interest in the 1960's.9 Buckminster Fuller experimented a lot with pneumatic structures not only as enclosures, but as lightweight structural supports too, with the membrane made of aluminum alloys. NASA was also interested in the efficiency of these structures, and began making Mylar balloons for satellites. The difficulty was that the membranes of these balloons could not be made strong enough to hold up against impacts from small meteorites. In the 1970's, pneumatic structures were used often as enclosures for pavilions and temporary exposition spaces. Though pneumatic structures are still used today, the craze that surrounded them in the 60's and 70's eventually died away.<sup>10</sup>







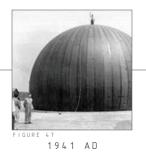
220 AD

CHINESE DEVELOP HOT AIR BALLOONS



1783 AD

THE MONTGOLFIER BROTHERS FLY A PASSENGER IN A HOT AIR BALLOON



WALTER BIRD DEVELOPS PNEU-MATIC STRUCTURES



1960 AD

NASA DEVELOPS NEW PNEUMATIC STRUCTURES







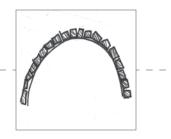
1970 AD

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURES ARE FOR PAVILIONS



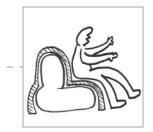
2000 AD

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURES BECOME A NOVELTY



FUTURE

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURE SERVE AS ARMATURE FOR CONCRETE BLOCK CONSTRUCTION



FUTURE

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURES SERVE AS NEW FORMWORK FOR CONCRETE



A H I S T O R Y O F C O N C R E T E B L O C K S

The ancient Egyptians used a crude form of concrete to adhere clay bricks together. Then the romans perfected a concrete recipe, and began building forms with concrete alone. It wasn't until the 1830's, however, that blocks of concrete were cast and used in building construction. In the early 20th century, Frank Lloyd Wright made his own custom concrete blocks for use in several houses he designed. Recently, 3-d printing with concrete has become possible, and custom concrete bricks can be printed that, when aggregated, can create a diverse array of forms.<sup>11</sup>





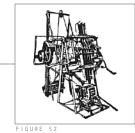
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1830 AD

FIRST CONCRETE BLOCKS ARE USED



1900 AD

HARMON S. PALMER DEVELOPS A NEW BLOCK – MAKING MACHINE



 F R A N K
 L L O Y D

 WR I G H T
 D E S I G N S

 C U S T O M
 C O N C R E T E

 B L O C K S



1955 AD

S U P E R L I T E MASS-PRODUCES CONCRETE BLOCKS







A H I S T O R Y O F R E L E V A N T A R T W O R K



In the 20th century, art began to overlap with and directly comment on architecture in thought-provoking ways. In 1965, Bruce Nauman cast the space under a chair to demonstrate the possibility of solidifying a perceived volume.<sup>12</sup> In the 1970's, Gordon Matta Clark began directly affecting and altering architecture by splitting and cutting holes through buildings, revealing new and unique spatial connections.<sup>13</sup> Rachel Whiteread, launching off of Bruce Nauman's piece, began casting the interior volumes enclosed by cabinets and houses. One of her most famous works, House, was made by filling the interior of a condemned house with concrete and then removing the house, revealing an exact cast of its interior volume.<sup>14</sup>





1965 AD

BRUCE NAUMAN SOLIDIFIES THE SPACE UNDER A CHAIR



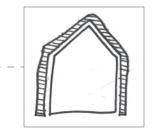
1974 AD

GORDON MATTA CLARK SPLITS A HOUSE



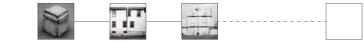
1993 AD

R A C H E L WH I T E R E A D S O L I D I F I E S T H E E N C L O S E D V O L U M E O F A H O U S E



FUTURE

THE EXTERIOR VOLUME OF A HOUSE IS SOLIDI-FIED IN A CON-CRETE SHELL



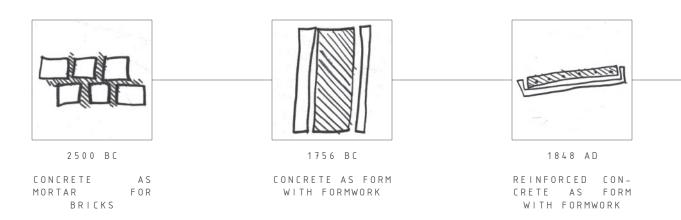
## PROPOSITIONS

F 0 R F U T U R E C O N C R E T E With such a rich and diverse history, the future of concrete is broad. In understanding where concrete fits into the histories of constituent things (chairs, pneumatic structures, artwork), I contend that three valuable and very plausible futures of concrete are:

I. Pneumatic-formed concrete, using new concrete with added tensile strength so as to enable more diverse form making

II. Lo-tech, fabric-formed, pneumatically supported concrete modules that can aggregate into different shell structures

III. Cast-in-place concrete shells over forms that no longer serve their function and can be removed from the cast to yield useful architectural void spaces



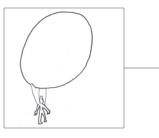


120,000 AD STONE AS SEAT



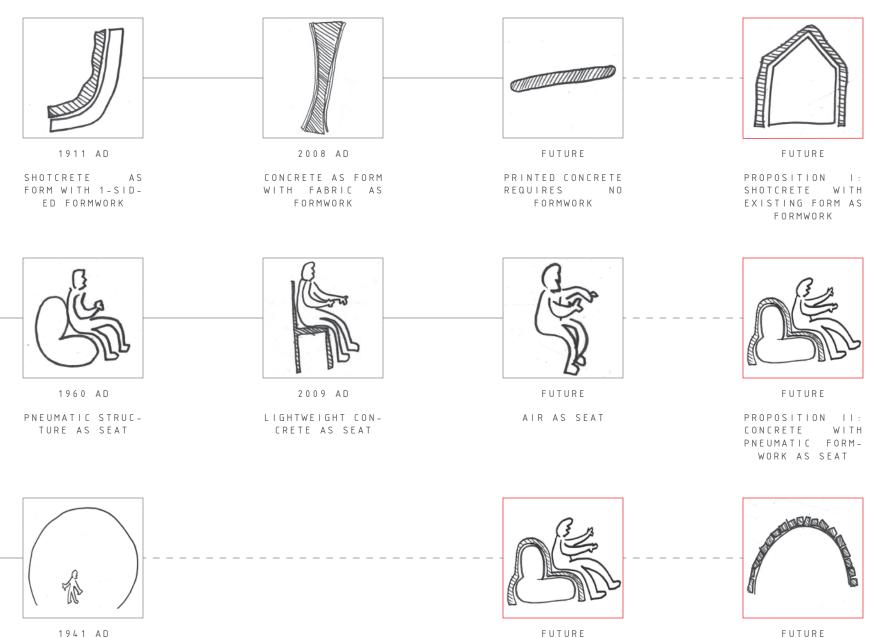
1926 AD

OPTIMIZED STRUC-TURE AS SEAT



1783 AD

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURE AS CARRIER



1941 AD

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURE AS ENCLO-SURE

PROPOSITION II: CONCRETE WITH PNEUMATIC FORM-WORK AS SEAT



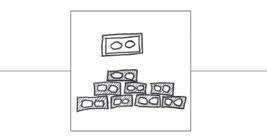
FUTURE

PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURE AS TEMPO-RARY STRUCTURE FOR CONCRETE BLOCKS



1830 AD

CAST CONCRETE BRICKS



1955 AD

MASS-PRODUCED CAST CONCRETE BRICKS



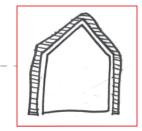
2011 AD

PRINTED CONCRETE BRICKS



FUTURE

PROPOSITION III: PNEUMATIC STRUC-TURE AS TEMPO-RARY STRUCTURE FOR CONCRETE BLOCKS



FUTURE

HOUSE AS FORM-WORK FOR CON-CRETE SHELL



1993 AD

HOUSE AS FORM-WORK FOR VOLUME OF INTERIOR



Pneumatic-formed concrete chair:

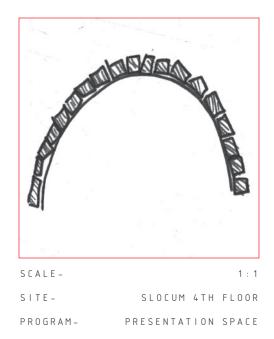
Air is the structure of an inflatable chair. I will demonstrate the ability to use pneumatic structures as formwork for cast-in-place concrete architecture by casting fiberglass-reinforced concrete over an inflatable chair and then deflating the chair, leaving a concrete shell bearing the form of the chair.



PNEUMATIC FORMWORK

CAST-IN-PLACE

FIBERGLASS REINFORCED CONCRETE

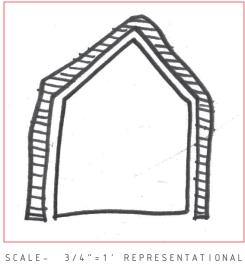


fabric-formed concrete modules:

Since concrete is highly manipulatable, it can be very expressive. By handcrafting concrete modules that key together and aggregate into various shell forms, I can create a façade system that shows its handedness, and can be implemented architecturally on a large scale. Pneumatic structures can be used as temporary structure for this cladding system.



FIBER REINFORCED CON-CRETE



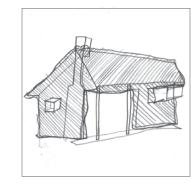
| SITE-           | HUDSON RIVER VALLEY |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| P R 0 G R A M - | LIVE/WORK DWELLING  |

lost-house shotcrete shell cast:

Things that no longer serve their function, but still have valuable architectural forms can be used as formwork for concrete shell casts. A condemned house can be covered in concrete, and the house could be removed from the inside after the concrete sets. This will yield a concrete shell with an interior volume that is the exact form of a house.



EXISTING HOUSE AS FORMWORK



LOST-HOUSE, CAST-IN-PLACE



FIBERGLASS REINFORCED GUNITE



NORTH AMERICA



NEW ENGLAND



NEW YORK



HUDSON RIVER VALLEY

I propose designing a house in the Hudson River Valley that can support a self-sufficient, pastoral/artisanal lifestyle for a contemporary couple. William is a writer and editor, as well as a beekeeper, whisky distiller, and cheese maker. Jessi designs graphics, websites, and apps, and is an avid home-brewer, pickler, and reader.

Their house will include facilities for farming, beekeeping, cheese making, beer brewing, whisky distilling, and bread making, and will have studios for writing and design. The house's character will be derived from serving these food and drink production functions. Situated in the Hudson River Valley, William and Jessi will be close enough to New York City to support their careers as a writer and designer, but will still be able to live autonomously and lightly off of the land. R E S E A R C H

DEVELOPMENT

Most of the research I've done has been in the form of directly testing concrete's properties and characteristics. From the beginning of the semester, I've been exploring the relationship between concrete and its formwork. In addition to experimenting with different concrete mixtures, I started by painting with concrete (page 51) and making concrete forms that express concrete's uniformity and homogeneous makeup (pages 52-53). I tried casting concrete without using external formwork (page 49), and started experimenting with using pneumatic structures as the formwork for concrete (pages 56-58). Through researching by doing, I got a good, hands-on grasp on what concrete is capable of.

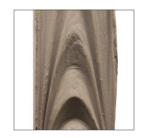


I MADE THESE WORKS BY SATU-RATING FABRIC WITH CONCRETE AND HANGING IT TO DRY



THEY DEMONSTRATE A WAY TO CON-STRUCT CONCRETE FORMS WITHOUT USING EXTERNAL PHYSICAL FORM-WORK







I ADDED GRAPHITE TO A CONCRETE MOLD AND IT IMPRINTED ON THE CONCRETE WHEN IT SET



I USED FABRIC DYE TO COLOR THE SAND IN CONCRETE TO MAKE IT PINK



I USED SAWDUST AS AN AGGREGATE TO YIELD A CON-CRETE PANEL 20% LIGHTER THAN TYPICAL CONCRETE



I USED FOAM BLOCKS AS AN AGGREGATE TO YIELD A CONCRETE PANEL 30% LIGHT-ER THAN TYPICAL CONCRETE



THIS PAINTING IS BLACK UNTITLED (1948) BY WILLEM DE KOONING



THIS IS A REPLI-CATION OF WILLEM DE KOONING'S PAINTING THAT I MADE USING BLACK AND WHITE QUICK-SETTING CONCRETE



I APPLIED PINK CONCRETE TO THIS CANVAS USING A PAINT ROLLER. THE FORM OF THE CONCRETE WAS DETERMINED BY THE PROPERTIES OF THE ROLLER



I APPLIED CON-CRETE TO THIS CANVAS USING A PAINTBRUSH. THE FORM OF THE CON-CRETE WAS DETER-MINED BY THE BRUSHSTROKES USED



THING



THING 2



THING

3



THING 4



THING



THING 6



THING



THING 8



9

THING



THING 10



1 1

THING



12

13



THING



THING 14



THING 15



THING 16



THING



THING 18



THING

19

23



THING 20



2 1

THING



THING 22



THING



THING

24



REBARMESHISADDEDOVERTHECONTOURSOFEXISTINGDIRTMOUNDS



A MIX OF SAND, GRAVEL, CEMENT, WATER, AND BLUE DYE IS POURED OVER THE DIRT



THE DIRT IS EXCAVATED FROM WITHIN THE SHELL



A HABITABLE CON-CRETE SHELL BEARING THE FORM OF THE DIRT MOUND REMAINS



LIGHT TUBES AND DOOR FRAMES ARE ADDED TO AN EXISTING SAND DUNE



A MIX OF SAND, CEMENT, WATER, AND RED DYE IS POURED OVER TOP OF THE SAND DUNE



THE SAND IS EXCAVATED FROM WITHIN THE SHELL



A HABITABLE CON-CRETE SHELL BEARING THE FORM OF A NATURALLY EXISTING SAND DUNE REMAINS



A PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS INFLATED



A MIX OF CEMENT, SAND, AND DYE IS POURED OVER TOP



THE PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS DEFLATED YIELD-ING A HABITABLE INTERIOR





A PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS INFLATED



A MIX OF CEMENT, SAND, AND DYE IS POURED OVER TOP



THE PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS DEFLATED YIELD-ING A HABITABLE INTERIOR





A PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS INFLATED



A MIX OF CEMENT, SAND, AND DYE IS POURED OVER TOP



THE PNEUMATIC STRUCTURE IS DEFLATED YIELD-ING A HABITABLE INTERIOR



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Figure 39: "A Bauhaus movie lasting five years," Marcel Breuer, 1926; rpt. In Herbert Bayer, ed. Bauhaus 1919-1928 (Boston: Charles T. Banford Company, 1952) 130.

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