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agnosia

Hilary Wiese

University of Nebraska- Lincoln

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Agnosia

A Parallel History

(as told in 3 chapters, a prologue, and an epilogue)

Agnosia, a parallel history of the figures of the infra-ordinary

by Hilary Wiese

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Table of Contexts

5	Introduction
6	Prologue - the story of Agnosia
8	Chapter I - Theory of Rooms
10	Theory of Rooms
11	Room I Drying Hall
12	Room II Room of impossible Flights
13	Room III Playwright's Room
14	Room IV Casting Room
15	Room V POST-NOVIS
16	Room VI Worldmaking
18	Chapter Two - Intergalactic Notes
20	Part I Intergalactic Manifesto
22	Part II History of the avant-gardes
28	Part III infra-ordinary figures
34	Chapter Three - Experimental Text and Act of Plays
35	Part I Space Poems
39	Part II Experimental Acts
44	Epilogue
45	Image
57	Bibliography

Introduction

This thesis "Agnosia, a parallel history of the figures of the infra-ordinary" explores the contemporary possibilities for architecture to be critical as well as projective, to formulate a position while learning from the past, to provoke the present with the hope to liberate the future.

The critical positioning that the work engages with is feminism in architecture, women's under-recognized voices in the making of modern architectural history and how their contributions should be studied to cultivate new contemporary perspectives in architecture practices and architectural pedagogy.

Formulated through text, narratives, poems, research but also total installations, object making, movie making and drawing, the thesis engages with the idea of experimentation (constant search for new means of expression, form, space, movements, and practice within architecture), its historical importance for emancipation and its potential for rethinking education.

Through the act of experimenting and engaging with the critical position of women's overlooked contributions, this thesis uses speculative research to create a feminist narrative of women focusing on methodological activation of emancipatory ideas and practices to reshape their shared spaces through subversions of their gender counterpart's iconic symbols and the empowerment of a theory of rooms.

Prologue

(which introduces us to Agnosia,
her theories, and practices)

Agnosia, the masked revolutionary architect, imagined, orchestrated, embodies one of the initiators of a self-educated architectural circle. In this circle, where concepts and practice were established from a theoretically charged matrix, she found experimental articulation in projects where ideas, and writings were as important as other of her contributions in the form of meticulously and conceptually crafted buildings, artifacts and revolutionary architectural programs.¹

This book, a compilation of Agnosia's various writings and works in all their diversity, has been produced for the purpose of continuing subversive practice as a form of a critical architecture, a critical architecture favoring women's intellectual emancipation in all of life's manifestations, a critical architecture pushing for a feminist takeover of architecture.²

The book puts forth the ideas of the 'intergalactic experiment': a program born from the readers that brought knowledge to the workers who originally were in the tobacco factories, where Luisa Capetillo helped create what has been called the most enlightened proletarian workforce in the history of the world. The 'Intergalactic Experiment' is born out of the desire to create both a critical architecture and architectural pedagogy. The subversive architecture (practice), based on cosmic, haptic, and experimental methods of thinking, making and representation is comprised of emancipatory ideas in conjunction with ideals of the commons. Subversive architecture is one of the necessary manifestations of progress within the realm of the Intergalactic Experiment.

01. Smith, T'ai. *Bauhaus Weaving Theory From feminine craft to mode of design*. London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.

02. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004

Chapter I Theory of Rooms

(where six rooms are introduced and exit in an architecton,
an allegory for agnosia's feminist collective)



Theory of Rooms

The current search for the new spatial sensibilities of Agnosia must be reversed into the search for the architectural inverse. The inverse is nonlinear. Subversive practice requires consciously elaborating and repositioning language and space.

The inverse begins with the idea of the room. We tend to see or understand the room as an accumulation of individual objects in space but the room is also a theoretical tool to develop critical awareness of oneself and your surroundings, to construction your liberation through intellectual emancipation.³

It is important to note critical awareness is practiced and manifested through the construction of 'rooms', where all rooms of representation are significant to the overall idea of our feminists collective.

The accumulation of these rooms are part of a larger communal space, yet these rooms could have only emerged under the conditions created by this communal space. These ideas were generated by the special atmosphere of the space, the main task here was to create the image of the collective.⁴

03. Groys, Boris. *History becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
04. Kabakov, Ilya. *10 Characters*, New York: Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 1988.

Room II Drying Hall

A group of architects stand in a tall room where tobacco leaves hang from racks attached to the walls and ceiling.

The leaves recall not a sign of the alienating work as they did in the factories where workers listened to the lecturers but here as a symbol to a rebellious figure once empowered and still empowering workers surrounded by them.

The leaves are like flags that call for action.

In this room where I read to you, feminist architects search for strategies of deschooling society from systems that "play monopoly over their social imagination, challenging predetermined standards and disciplines suitable for so-called women sensibilities."⁵

In a room like this, surrounded by Tobacco leaves Capetillo articulated a question we must ask as revolutionary, feminist architects:

"What does it mean to live in a culture that fears freedom. A culture that runs from it as if it were a disease. Even though we desire it.

Desire is to be acted upon, not repressed."

Do not decline your 'call for desire'; one must act. "Desire is power."⁶ (Capetillo)

This room responds to the desire for women's freedom of their "poetic mind" that inscribes all women into a creative, intellectual space of writers and creators. The room is a space for worldmaking as a conversational atmosphere, where women plot new schemes for radical architectural pedagogies.

Here lecturers read to other women to develop their political thought. Sometimes they read Sor Juana, Judith Butler, or Bell Hooks, while other times they read Silvia Federici and other stories of witches against capitalism.

The desire to search for a new architectural pedagogy and practices must be reversed into the search for their inverse: practices which heighten the opportunity for each one to transform each moment of her life into one of learning, sharing, and caring. An "engaging pedagogy"⁷ for the right to experiment.

Nature in an interior, stand as a sign of an architectural inverse, where exterior life occupies the space once thought to be imprisonment for those who couldn't design architectural objects.

The Drying hall is a manifestation of the inverse as a room. A room to develop a critical awareness of the self and the building's surroundings. The Architecton, an icon originally anchored in a tobacco plantation, is inverted, this time with the construction of an interior space aimed as an escape from the confines of the room.

05. Illich, Ivan. *Deschooling Society*. Mexico: Cuernavaco, 1970.

06. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004

07. Hooks, Bell. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. New York : Routledge, 2010.

Room II Room of Impossible Flights

Everyone knows most utopias, paired with their utopian manifestoes, preach for the liberation of the individual, to a new constructed future. A promised utopia where there will be no difference between the "beautiful and strong sex."⁶ "Everyone also knows utopia is a long time coming. For the construction of the ultimate utopia is a historical process that requires the collective effort of generations upon generations."⁷ In the case of the architectural manifesto the promised liberation was the liberation of utopian equality, but most architectural manifestos were made by men, and the men came first in this liberation.

Here in this room women mock utopia as a truly dystopic reality dominated by politics and the male heroes.

Fragments of roses left by Florence Henri dry on a table. On the wall lies Letalin's wing embroidered by Lilly Reich. Far within the shadows of the room a Kabakovian ladder leads nowhere. An Architecton (maybe 'the' Architecton) is presented as an ideal master plan. The roses, the wing, the ladder, the Architecton have been stripped out of authorship in this marginalized non-identitarian space. The lack of identity of these objects, now reclaimed by the collective of feminist architects reinforces the room as a "space of radical openness".

Here each artifact recalls the avant-garde drive for authoritarian utopianism, and instead calls for utopianism of "marginality"⁸ as the "site of radical possibility."⁹

Once understood in this matter, the marginalized can reclaim the space (and the icons) as a position and place of resistance that is crucial to their artistic practices and collective nature.¹⁰

Now that they understand their marginalized space (the room of impossible flights) they can resourcefully and strategically take advantage of it to interpret and subvert it to enact a revolution.¹¹

06. Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto and Program," (1919)

07. Boris Groys, Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment (London: Afterall Books, 2006) pg 1

08. Hooks, Bell. *Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness, Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Toronto: Between the Lines, 1990.

09. *ibid.*

10. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004

11. *ibid.*

Room III Playwright's Room

Scattered on the floor paper leaves, notes, and books casted in plaster. A series of boxes contain photos and texts documenting specific objects of daily life that are associated with the labor and leisure of women. These documents depict a life of interiors. On the wall a panel displays a series of masks used to disguise the identity of the architects, a "strategic and manipulative process of public image and use of the body, especially the female body. The use of body and clothing as artist and activist expression redefines the traditional understanding of "the artist" and the "woman" in its anonymous marginalized status.¹²

On a chair a pair of wings protrude from a garment giving the false sense of function to an otherwise cosmetic object. The heavy wings stand in sharp contrast to the avant-garde's obsession with flying, the symbolism of technology, acceleration and utopia tied to the industrial production that promised to substitute their means of working.

In this room the architects, now playwright a story about a mysterious disease that turns everybody blind. The blindness here is white as in Saramgo's but, in this occasion architects are forced to divorce their object fetishism and instead rediscover the world through touch, the same tactile characteristics women were forced to do when they couldn't study or practice architecture.

This blindness forces men into the realm they have previously forced women into. The story creates a desire for a new future; one that embraces the philosophical notion of the cosmos, a cipher for the corporeality and materiality of their feminist world.

The notion of the cosmos is used to designate a new environment, where their so-called 'feminine' cognitive capacities are reached in relation to the body, in relation to the tactile. The ultimate goal of the corporeal experience is not restricted to the plot of the story, but rather a principle to be applied in life. Worldmaking implies making worlds to be experienced through touch.¹³

12. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004.

13. Groys, Boris. *Russian Cosmism*. New York : E-flux ; Cambridge, MA : The MIT Press, 2018

Room IV Casting Room

Casts are suspended from cords, mounted on panels and leaned against the walls within this room. These casts record tactile experiences. The casts' "tactile aesthetic" ⁴ is not merely a formal curiosity. On the contrary, it postulates a new way of knowing based on the qualities of touch."¹⁴

"In the hierarchy of the senses touch sits near the very bottom, while sight and hearing are the two most privileged senses. Touch is a lower sense because in several respects it is associated with the "feminine", not least because of its immanent nature, its ability to keep one focused in the present, in immediate contact with the body and its manifold sensations. In its benevolent form—as a caress—touch is decidedly "feminine". Tactility is the collectives' resistance most powerful aesthetic strategy. One that allows for their immanent critique, which they argue as the new avant-garde, and potentially the only one operating in the future."¹⁵

"Casting a space or object is like interviewing it, asking it to tell its story. Casting is an interrogation of space: violently pulling evidence out of it, torturing it, forcing a confession."¹⁶

Becoming a petrified character released from the neglect of its previous life of entrapment and loneliness. Castings reveal the unnoticed layers of our physical presence, observers of our everyday, melancholic surfaces that have been silent and rejected. These imprints are both "portraits" of the original, as well as an objects in its own right that will begin to accumulate its own particular narrative one of silence and slowness. ¹⁷

These casting, specific to the architects' private spaces, explores the potential for a nomadic transplantable approach of thinking and engaging with the world. These characters can be rearranged, restaged, and reconfigured, but wherever they perform becomes a moment of paused time, an experience of slowness.

Their nomadic nature becomes surfaces to use, to cover, and create three dimensional spaces.¹⁸ They become forms that reorganize as a field of anonymity, to a field of silence, a spell that begins to bewitch dominance, a slow progression that will take generations upon generations.

High up on the wall in the corner of the room the architects position a painting that has been defaced by a tactile domestic casting. Through this position might mean nothing to the average person, it is the same scared spot where religious icons are placed in traditional homes.¹⁹

14. Scherr, Rebecca. 2007 *Tactile Erotics: Gertrude Stein and the Aesthetics of Touch*, *Literature Interpretation Theory*, 18:3, 193-212, DOI: 10.1080/10436920701525570

15. *ibid.*

16. Colomina, Beatriz. *I Dreamt I Was a Wall. Transient Spaces*. New York, N.Y. : Guggenheim Museum Publications : Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 2001.71-87.

17. *ibid.*

18. *Skinned*. *Studio KNOL*, studioknol.com/skinned/.

19. Linda Boersma, *0,10. The Last Futurist Exhibition of Painting*, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1994

Room V POST-NOVIS

Historically, the avant-garde has embraced the new beginning. It marks a moment when culture leaps forward. This leap produces icons and symbols specific to that time. But, what have these icons ignored?

Avant-garde movements embrace the elusive call for the future. But for every future embraced by the avant-garde, other futures are lost. Objects ignored. Materials are neglected.

In this room lives another avant-garde. One not obsessed with conquering the space, but filling the void left behind.

The feminist Architecton occupies this void.

Adjacent to a portrait of a masked woman a curtain of white blindness clothes a series of Architectons. This blindness forces, through patterns, and textures a complete equalization of society to the interactive means of the woman's body defined by feeling and touch. It haunts the buildings atmosphere, its air.

The Scale Models are composed in a line varying in characteristics, some are wrapped in wallpaper; the interior skin of a room turned inside out; a subordinate material transformed into the dominant exterior layer.

Historically these models have been "purely experimental volumes having no function or internal organization".²⁰ The systematic removal of program from these Architectons is transformed into a political act by the application of the wallpaper. The Architecton, previously seen as a genderless object is turned into a gendered monument. The neutral horizontal and vertical masses transition from an icon previously thought to be made by man into a feminist icon.²¹

20. Fabrizi, Mariabruna. "Kazimir Malevich's Arkhitektons." *SOCKS*, 9 Feb. 2018, socks-studio.com/2015/07/15/kazimir-malevichs-arkhitektons/.

21. *ibid.*

Room VI Worldmaking

"We are the daughters of the witches you could not burn."²² Reads a text laid out carefully on a panel on the wall. But, more than taking into account the execution of hundreds of thousands of "witches" at the beginning of the modern era, the text is used to remind the collective of architects how the rise of capitalism was coeval with a war against Women.

The struggle of the witches has not so much to do with their identities: witches are not in competition with one another but seek a form of solidarity that solidifies the idea of the commons at its core.

"Across ideological differences, the feminists have realized that a hierarchical ranking of human faculties and the identification of women with a degraded conception of corporeal reality has been instrumental, historically, to the consolidation of patriarchal power and the male exploitation of female labor."²³ These architects, like the witches you couldn't burn refuse to worldmake for the established cannons.

Witches create forms of knowledge that do not focus on an exclusivity of the object but on its reproducibility. A form that calls for the collective. They propose a form of learning based not on the individual but on the masses.

Once in the room, the architects read "we are the daughters of the witches you could not burn"²⁴ as the chant becomes an inexhaustible and powerful call for resistance, to the point where authorship becomes unnecessary.

What happens when a work of architecture adapts the same inexhaustible sentence but rather becomes a form (physical material matter) that fights against dominant narratives and powers?

What happens when an architectural form seeks to create something new, something radical?

What happens when a form is given a thoughtful effort to address a question, causing a feeling of discomfort?

Discomfort either inspires you to action or to thought. Discomfort is the opposite of being passive.

It inspires curiosity.

The Architectons hidden in the room, among the tropical plants are architectural forms of reproducibility. Produced for the purpose of exploring theory and practice as a form of making critical architecture. The architectons here favor women's intellectual emancipation, standing as a cry for justice from an irreversible architectural impact, the structurally determined blindness produced by patriarchal systems of power.²⁵

A system rendering women as a trace that will land so irretrievably on the garage dump of history because we witches were unable to leave behind any immediately identifiable and original "monuments" comparable to the Egyptian pyramids of the temples of ancient Greece.²⁶

We are at war with the passage of time, with our collective history, on what it means to be a woman in all its diverse terms.²⁷

We are one of millions who does not fit in,²⁸ who are out of place and misunderstood,²⁹ who are so called "creatures of nature defined by feeling"³⁰ and apparently "born with the capacity to see only two dimensionally and should therefore work with surfaces"³¹

We are self-reliant and depends on one another to perform the roles that others should play.

And thus our stage is set.³² This is our call for action. The action of architects to not train as architects but citizens of the world, worldmarkers.³²

22. Federici, Silvia. *Caliban and the Witch*. New York: Autonomedia, 2004.
23. *ibid.*
24. *ibid.*
25. Groys, Boris. *History becomes Form: Moscow Conceptualism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010.
26. *ibid.*
27. Lebbeus Woods' War and Architecture Manifesto 1993
28. *ibid.*
29. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004
30. Bauhaus Masters has been recorded saying women are "creatures of nature defined by feeling"
31. Bauhaus Masters has been recorded saying "no difference between the beautiful and strong sex"
32. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004

Chapter Two The 'Intergalactic Experiment'

(as told in three parts, which introducing us to a counterfactual (experimental) history, "the idea of conjecturing on what did not happen, or what might have happened, in order to understand what did happen")

Part I Foreword

(The manifestation of a 'feminine' manifesto)

Intergalactic Manifesto 1919

"Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith." ³³

Everyone knows most manifestos preach the liberation of the individual to a new constructed future. A promised utopia where there will be "no difference between the beautiful and strong sex." ³⁴ Everyone also knows utopia is a long time coming. For the construction of the ultimate utopia is a slow historical process that requires the collective effort of generation upon generation. ³⁵

In the case of the architectural manifesto the promised liberation was the liberation of utopian equality, but most architectural manifestos were made by men, and men came first in this liberation.

To cultivate new perspectives in architecture and architectural pedagogies, a feminist approach will be necessary—through the act of experimenting and engaging with women's overlooked contributions, we will engage in emancipatory ideas and practices to reshape our shared spaces.

We are unwilling to wait until the rest of society is ready for utopia, we are the collective heroes that will leap forward, jumping into our intellectual emancipation and establishing our emancipation through worldmaking, the manifestation of our contemporary notion of utopia, our manifestation of our contemporary manifesto. ³⁶

The manifestation of a 'feminine' manifesto is first of its kind and rewrites..

"Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future," which will embrace the philosophical notion of the cosmos, a cipher for the corporeality and materiality of our 'feminine' world. ³⁷ The notion of the cosmos is used to designate a new environment, where our 'feminine' cognitive capacities are reached in relation to the body, in relation to the tactile. It is declared in the manifestation, not restricted within this constructed space where our world exist. Critical spatial practices through tactile experiments is the privileged way of working, anything else is considered outdated and suppressed by our 'feminine' code of culture of corporeal concerns.

"Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future," which will embrace 'feminine' subversions of masculine, hierarchical works in architecture and sculpture and painting. ³⁸ Icons subjected to subversions are selected out of iconic anger of the 'crystal symbols of a new faith'

It is without utopian vision but a call for the collective, to cultivate an awareness and to create a revolution in an artistic process in a new theorization of art, to revolutionize our society through our artistic production of worldmaking

We are..

non-hierarchical
anti-formal
anti-traditional
anti-classical
anti-ordinary
an experiment
a reset

33. Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto and Program," (1919)
34. Walter Gropius has been recorded saying "*no difference between the beautiful and strong sex*"
35. Boris Groys, Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from his Apartment (London: Afterall Books, 2006) pg 1
36. *ibid.*
37. revised text from Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto and Program," (1919)
38. *ibid.*
39. *ibid.*

Part II

(the history of the avant-garde has been a history of exclusion,
a history of agnosia and blind spots.)

"History may be a compilation of lies; nevertheless it contains a few truths and they are the only guides we have for the future"

Emma Goldman, *The Traffic in Women* 1909

Bauhaus 1919

"Any person of good repute, without regard to age or sex, whose previous education is deemed adequate by the Council of Masters, will be admitted, as far as space permits" So were the words of the Bauhaus Manifesto, written by Walter Gropius in 1919, the year the school opened its doors in Weimar." ⁴¹

"Many years ago I saw a movie called *The Street*. It started with an unforgettable scene acquainting the audience in a flash with the tangled web of a matrimonial drama. First the wife, then the husband looks down from the window into the street. She sees the gray, trivial, everyday life as it is; but he projects his imagination into the scene, transforming it into a sensational picture giving brilliance, intensity and meaning to the pattern of life before his eyes (Gropius)." ⁴²

Prior to the 20th century women were excluded from art schools and could not study architecture or design in an academic setting. After WWI they were allowed to study some professional fields. The first school to actively allow female students was the Bauhaus, arguably the most influential school of design in the 20th century. Its manifesto promised to welcome everyone no matter gender or age. But when the first females were found at the school they were only permitted to study so-called 'feminine' subjects such as weaving and ceramics.⁴³ Constrictive ideas of gender which were present in modern Bauhaus teaching by most of the masters, were generally consistent with the ideas of the late enlightenment and reinforced by the threshold of modernism: man was the intellectual bearer of culture, women a creature of nature defined by feeling. As the art historian Anna Bauhuas has demonstrated in detail, the ideas of the Bauhaus ranged from the allocation of the notions of the triangle, the color red, and the intellect to masculinity, and the square blue, and the matter to femininity (Gropius), to the assertion that women are born with the capacity to see two dimensionally and they should therefore work with surfaces (Itten), or the conviction that genius is masculine (Klee), and creativity is generally identifiable with masculinity (Schlemmer, Kandinsky)." ⁴³

In its first year women outnumbered the men and the school's founding director Walter Gropius was fearful of the impact of so many women might have on the school's professional reputation and was recommended not to "undertake any more experiments", he placed a cap on the number of female students and rewrote the priorities of the school to champion architecture and engineering, subjects females were not permitted to study. Female students were successfully ousted from certain workshops and was forbidden to sell any works created within the workshop out of fear the female student would take valuable employment away from their male counterparts. Some exceptional artists did not question the traditional female image, but others contradicted it in their actions. When we read about the extortionary Bauhaus we learn about the careers of Gropius, Paul Klee, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Mies Van Der Rohe and less of their female counterparts and their achievements. ⁴⁴

In 1933 the school was forced to close, scattering Bauhaus teachers, students and aesthetics across the globe. The school has influenced a variety of fields But the Bauhaus's biggest legacy is in architecture. With the Bauhaus celebrating its centenary year, museums and galleries across the globe will showcase its art and architectural legacy.

The historical impact of Bauhaus pedagogy on the teaching and learning of design cannot be overstated and a continued neglect to question and consider its foundational dimensions of its pedagogical approach that was practiced at the school is a contemporary issue. Bauhaus's work may be aesthetically forward looking, yet in practice the school was far from socially progressive practices. ⁴⁵

Reexamining this reveals the continued issues and influences of the darker side of architecture and design education, where issues of male vs female, architecture vs interiors, and authorship vs collectivity are foundational challenges that are glossed over due to the continued practice and teaching of canonical historical narratives. These dominate narratives has had a (conscious and subconscious) lasting effect on the field of architecture and the view and practice of women in the discipline today. The centenary of the Bauhaus allows for a question to formulate, which redefinitions of art and architecture should we be looking at today?

40. Walter Gropius has been recorded making such statement

41. Walter Gropius has been recorded making such statement

41. Libby Sellers, *Women Design Pioneers in Architecture, Industrial, Graphic and Digital Design from the twentieth century to the present day*, (London: Quarto Publishing plc., 2017) pg 7-13, pg 45-53.

42. *ibid.*

43. Ulrike Muller, *Bauhaus Women*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2009) pg 7-149

44. *ibid.*

45. *ibid.*

UNOVIS 1919

In Russia the principle of Krushuk (roughly translated as "study groups" or "research circles") created a more informal way of educating. These semipublic/semiprivate meetings created an open network among artists, writers, etc.. to discuss their artistic theories. The exchange of information within these spheres was much different than the traditional education systems that were common in Russian society at the time. ⁴⁶

In 1917, one year removed from the October Revolution (Bolshevik Revolution), Soviet Russia instituted a nationwide educational reform that had a major impact on the study of art, architecture, and design. The sweeping reform made higher education free, thus more accessible to lower income students. This reform opened the flood gates within Russia; now an entirely untapped new group with unique perspective was able to receive a formal artistic education. ⁴⁷

Around the same time new academic organizations and collectives began to pop up around the country. The addition of these new collectives made up mostly of people whose voices and ideas had previously gone unheard created an environment that now had multiple alternatives to the traditional idea of education within the country. ⁴⁸

The revolutionary doctrine that was at the core of these alternative educational systems was that: "All human beings are a blank slate. That regardless of talent, natural ability, or social status, through the proper training, could become a professional in any sphere of life, in the case of the art and design student, an artist practitioner." ⁴⁹ This was innovative thinking for a society that had very recently resigned itself to the idea that wealth and social status were a prerequisite for success.

One of the key effects that opening up the opportunity to become educated had was the creation of physical environments, so called "social condensers" that brought together, organized, and empowered the masses. ⁵⁰

These social condensers were typically born out of labor unions, political organizations, or like-minded groups of artists looking for an environment to share ideas and techniques. Many of these groups were set up in old private houses or sheds, a far cry from the traditional education system that had become defined by the silence of lecture halls. These collective spaces began to take on a form that transcended an education space; and became cultural epicenters in a time where the craving for culture was trickling down to the broad masses of the population. ⁵¹

In 1918, a year before the Bauhaus was founded in Weimar, Marc Chagal opened the People's Art School of Vitebsk.

A year later in 1919, (the year the Bauhaus was founded) Vera Ermolaeva, one of the leaders of the School invited Kazimir Malevich to move from Moscow to teach at Vitebsk.

That same year Kazimir Malevich founded UNOVIS (an abbreviation of Utverditeli novogo iskusstva - Champions of the New Art) with Lazar Khidekel, El Lissitzky, Ilia Chasnik, Nina Kogan, and Vera Ermolaeva among its ranks.

UNOVIS became one of the first experiments of collective cultural production, developing a collective idea of architecture (since painting was a bourgeoisie exercise) searching for ways to transform the world.

"They began to create arkhitektons which were mostly white plaster models made up of several rectangular blocks situated and stacked around and on top of each other. These models were created without identifying function; they were purely the result of assembling abstract masses into vertical and horizontal massings. These arkhitektons became a key tool used to investigate the ideas of volume and spatial sensibility.

This marks the beginning of using the techniques of scale modelling in order to gain a better understanding of how space works." ⁵¹

Although a collective of men and women of different age groups, history tends to highlight the male members overlooking the female counterparts.

46. Jackson, Matthew Jesse. *The Experimental Group : Ilya Kabakov, Moscow conceptualism, Soviet avant-gardes*. Publisher: University Of Chicago Press Publication Date, 2010.
47. Bokov, Anna. CCAchannel. *The 'Science' of ArchiTecture at Vkhutemas*. CCAchannel, YouTube, 20 June 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZHwtB1M8Fo.
48. *ibid.*
49. *ibid.*
50. Wolfe, Ross. "Soviet Workers' Clubs in the 1920s." *House*, 3 Aug. 2016, thecharnelhouse.org/2014/06/01/soviets-workers-clubs-in-the-1920s/.
51. *ibid.*
52. "UNOVIS." *Monoskop*, monoskop.org/UNOVIS.

Lectors 1919

In the same way as UNOVIS searched for a way of collective emancipation. A woman named Luisa Capetillo was one of the 'lectors' that read to cigar factory workers in the Caribbean (Cuba, Puerto Rico) and North America (Florida, Pennsylvania) educating people through their mundane and alienating factory work.

An early queer figure dressed in so-called men's clothes, Capetillo, perhaps the most iconic face of a collective effort came to represent a sign of resistance, she was an icon of an activity that was soon to be persecuted and shut down from the factories.

In search of an emancipation of the masses, Capetillo stood rebellious and intellectual.⁵³

53. Walker, Lara. *Absolute Equality An Early Feminist Perspective*. Texas: Huston, 2004

POST-NOVIS 1919-2019

Like Ermolaeva, and Capetillo before, a collective of women has been working on a theory of subversion of the status quo. Just as they were being left out of history (Bauhaus) or of recognition (UNOVIS), a series of until now anonymous architects reclaimed icons long thought to be made by male architects. Of the collective UNOVIS, the Architecton, the architectural form of the new art, posed as the ideal disguise to mask the true revolutionary and subversive intentions.

Working through the years in almost complete anonymity, these radical feminists developed a theory of rooms.

In each of these rooms a new transgression was formulated to take over architecture, education, and practice.

Reflecting on the initial constraints and disciplines they were forced to do as they were kept away from building and form making, each room devised a takeover plot.

Through the year I, have unearthed each of these rooms in the form of installations about the work of these anonymous architects. Each of the rooms has been depicted in the scale model of their ideological headquarters. The center of a feminist revolution to come.

Part III the hidden figure of the 'infra-ordinary'
(which introduces us to the orientation of the hidden figure)

Introduction

As it appears today, the history of architecture consists of a neglected blind spot, a collective agnosia, a white blindness produced by the collective willingness to allow these architectural voids to remain unseen.⁵⁴ If the history of the avant-garde is the history of the representation of new beginnings, up to now these beginnings have symbolized the absence of women from the avant-garde.

If architecture is part of the system of avant-garde representation, we need to ask "of whom and by whom is this system a form of representation?"⁵⁴ Can avant-garde architecture represent women when women have been neglected from the history of avant-garde architecture?

These voids, objects, ideas and bodies are essential tools that allow for a truly holistic form of representation. In search for this reconstruction of representation, this thesis engages with the history of neglect and the depiction of a historical agnosia. The tools, strategies and forms of representation iconic of the avant-garde are reclaimed in new forms of mythologies that bring back the voids, objects and bodies initially neglected from the act of form making, and from the concept of design and architecture. A series of masterworks are challenged by the techniques, processes and materials that were initially discarded as 'feminine,' systematically segregated from the concept of architectural practice and education.

Using narrative architecture and 'total' installation, as the framework of the thesis, a construction of rooms contains transgressions of icons and iconic transgressions. White as in Saramago's blindness, the agnosia of the avant-garde (and its aftermaths) is in turn transformed into a material experiment.⁵⁶ The fabrics, ceramics, and textiles of those departments and projects deemed inferior to architecture turn into the essence, experiential qualities and material concretizations of the ideas, concepts and projects of the avant-garde. The invisible hands are the ones constructing the pieces that occupy the room.

54. Saramago, Jose. *Blindness*. London : Vintage Books, 2005.

55. Colomina, Beatriz. *Introduction. Sexuality & Space. Vol. 1*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 1992. 73-130.

56 Saramago, Jose. *Blindness*. London : Vintage Books, 2005.

Agnosia, White Blindness

This research begins its reach by borrowing the concept of agnosia and "white blindness" from Saramago's eponymous novel, as a conceptual and material strategy to represent the absence and overlooked "blindness" of women and minorities contributions within history.

"Agnosia is a neurological disorder that results in an inability to recognize objects, persons, smells, or sounds despite normally functioning senses (such as visual or auditory). These deficits are not due to memory loss. Agnosia results from brain damage in areas involved in spatial processing, integration of visual and motor information, and attention."⁵⁷

The novel *Blindness* by Jose Saramago uses the idea of agnosia (inability to recognize your visual context which is not due to memory lost or eyesight) as a conceptual tool for his novel. In his book, a mysterious disease spreads contaminating the characters with a form of "white blindness", a milky white haze taking away their normal sight.

This white blindness forces them to rediscover the world surrounding them by using other senses, particularly the sense of touch. The characters spend most of the time indoors reconstructing the world around them through new forms of interaction with commonplace objects. Under the curtain of this white blindness form shifts from the visual domain to the tactile realm.

although the peculiar disease does no harm to the physical health of its victims, the virus is highly contagious. Through the depiction, this inexplicable infection, Saramago's novel narrates the slow collapse of a society affected by the loss of sight of its citizens. It becomes clear that life in a modernized society is dependent on these infrastructural elements; and the novel shows just how fragile a system is when it all falls apart when the visual culture is affected.⁵⁸

57. Agnosia. National Aphasia Association, www.aphasia.org/aphasia-resources/agnosia/.

58. Saramago, Jose. *Blindness*. London : Vintage Books, 2005.

Hidden Figures of the Infra-ordinary

Georges Perec's 'Species of Spaces and Other Pieces' focuses on the everyday ordinary or as he called it, the 'infra-ordinary'. Inspired by Perec's descriptive ability and by his collaboration with an architect, the book focuses on the commonplace settings within our domestic and urban spaces, aiming at highlighting our inability to pay enough attention to what is truly daily in our lives, to the banal habits, settings, and events of which our lives almost entirely consist.⁵⁹

The book is a taxonomy of spaces and objects depicting their relationship with people, and how each shapes the other. The novel begins with a map illustration by Henry Holiday produced for Lewis Carrol's 1876 *Hunting of the Snark* '(an Agony in 8 Fits)'. The map is owned by one of the main characters in the book and is used by the rest of the crew to hunt down a beast called the Snark. The Map was essentially a blank page, a simple square illustrating nothing other than conventional signs, a map that pleased the crew for it was a map that everyone could understand. Following the map of Henry Holiday, experimental poems, texts, and short plays are used as tools to re-conceptualize the idea of space to the idea of the page.⁶⁰

"(...)to begin with, space is emptiness or a blank sheet of paper; the black perimeter of a square transforms that emptiness into something new with an inside and an outside.[] This is how space begins, with words only, signs traced on the blank page. To describe space: to name it, to trace it, like those portolan-makers who saturated the coastlines with the names of harbors, the names of capes, the names of inlets, until in the end the land was only separated from the sea by a continuous ribbon of text."⁶¹

Perec's experimental writings could be thought as a form of activism to engage the skill of awareness, the conscious of your everyday settings and actions. In order to do this, he redefines the idea of space from the traditional accumulation of architectural elements to that as a conceptual idea made visible with language and the space on the page, a leveling of spatial sensibilities relevant to the leveling of the status of the captain and his crew to a similar spatial awareness and understanding of the 'map'.⁶²

From the deconstruction of spatial sensibilities to the idea of the page, Perec moves to the bed, the bedroom, the apartment, the apartment building, the street, the town, the countryside, the country, the world, and the idea of space itself.⁶³

This idea of the overlooked or the infra-ordinary, can potentially be understood as an architectural phenomenon, but what is its real architectural importance other than an aesthetic easily fetishized by others? What are the overlooked phenomenon in architectural practice and architectural education? What would it mean to orientate yourself in the context of the overlooked.? To hover above as in a birds eye view to see the push and pulls of the overlooked or infra-ordinary phenomenon? What would it mean to bring more light upon them in a search for identifying its hidden figures, its forgotten subjects?

Architecture is the manifestation of a representation of ideas; much like other forms of art. In fact, the built object and space itself is a system of representation. Women have been in architecture for a very long time and have contributed to these ideas of representation in our built environment, yet remain overlooked, unlearned, unstudied, or left out of the collective memory of our understanding of modernism.⁶⁴

The underrepresentation of women and minorities is not a new discovery but remains a dirty little secret that haunts the field of architecture. Correcting the record is not just a question of adding a few names or even thousands to the history of architecture, or just a matter of human justice, but a way to fully understand architecture and the complex ways in which it is produced.⁶⁵

The idea of experimentation (constant search for new means of expression, form, space, movements, education, and practice within architecture) has its historical importance for emancipation, and its potential for rethinking education. The right to experiment is researched through a gender perspective. With the limited entry in architectural studios, women were forced to address architecture in different ways, and could be argued as a more sensible way to experience visual, tactile, and interactive means of making architecture.

The research begins to dissect their materials, modes of making, and symbolisms that were considered subordinate to the more fundamental practice and modernisms love affair with architecture and industrial design. This second domain status (marginalized space) allowed for a desire for experimentation, new ways of seeing, knowing and representing the world. The activity of subversion became a critical practice and catalyst for innovation and rebellion against social norms.

The historical response of experimenting through subversions is a feminists practice and can become a tool to help rethink and inspire new ways of building and developing critical thinking skills.

The right to experiment is an important tool for developing critical positions and outcomes. Through the act of experimenting and engaging with the critical position of women's overlooked contributions, this thesis uses speculative research to create a feminist narrative of women focusing on methodological activation of emancipatory ideas and practices to reshape their shared spaces. The narrative uses subversions of their gender counterpart's iconic symbols that takes shape spatially (through installations).

Thus, the forgotten icons and designers became another avant-garde, the rear-garde, the ones that were not conquering the space but were conquering the void left behind. The figures of the rear-garde dream the same dreams of the avant-gardist, however they desire to experiment, they desire to liberate one-self functions under not just the idea of the commons as a collective, but under the quintessential will of becoming the commons.

The narrative challenges the construction of avant-garde history through the feminization of subversion out of the iconic anger of the new beginning that was embracing technology and replacing other tactile sensibilities. The story explores the construction of an experience of the material culture of the historical agnosia which manifested as a material presence through the practiced of 'total' installation.

"Total installation: is a constructed space in such a way that the viewer (in addition to the various components participating in it) finds themselves inside, engrossed in it. Total installation can manifest itself into three ways: 01 Small installations which include combinations of a few objects. 02 Installations which lean against the wall, taking up the entire wall or part of the floor. 03 Installations which fill up virtually the entire space of the dwelling allotted to them" ⁶⁶

With the total installation all modes of representation are important to the overall narrative. The total installation incorporates temporalities, a cheating of linear time, a tool important to understanding historical voids. The total installation is everything architecture historically tries to achieve. The total installation is a critical practice of space where references become crucial to all the other elements within the space. The total installation is an immersive atmosphere, requiring an active imagination, a willingness to participate, a subculture of life. ⁶⁷

The research started with the documentation of the avant-gardes icons and symbolisms subject for subversion. As stated in Walter Gropius, Bauhaus Manifesto in 1919, " Together let us desire, conceive, and create the new structure of the future, which will embrace architecture and sculpture and painting in one unity and which will one day rise toward heaven from the hands of a million workers like the crystal symbol of a new faith." ⁶⁷ His declaration of architecture, sculpture, and painting being the dominant

'unity'⁶⁸ to the crystal symbol of a new faith becomes the three categories of the utopia icons subject to subversion.

The second step was to document the rear-gardist's, the symbolisms, materials, material strategies, and disciplinary fields that this hidden figures would engage with. Once the documentation of both 'avant-garde' and 'rear-gardist' is sufficient, the material subversions can take shape in the construction of a total installation, symbolizing a physical translation of a contemporary architectural manifesto.

The final thesis prolonged the investigation of the collective agnosia and the 'total' installation becomes a much larger spatial experiment, a more architectural embodiment. A film then narrates the story of Agnosia and her theory of rooms, revealing the objects contained in them, and their relationship with the subject in their struggle with a Blindness of material experiences.

Karl Marx stated "you should transform the world". Moreover you should change how you see the world, the city, the sky, and what is around you. Change calls for a more political and radical act.

Rediscovering unstudied references such as women/minorities becomes the catalyst for the transformation, the change of architecture and architectural pedagogy. It is important for this transformation to happen to look not only in architecture but also outside the field, especially when sharing common goals. The thesis highlights our capacity to learn from each other and understand architecture embedded in a more plural relationship within multiple disciplinary field.

59. Perec, Georges. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London, England: Penguin Books, 1997.

60. *ibid.*

61. *ibid.*

62. *ibid.*

63. *ibid.*

64. Colomina, Beatriz. *Introduction. Sexuality & Space. Vol. 1*. New York: Princeton Architectural, 1992. 73-130.

65. *ibid.*

66. Kabakov, Ilya. *On the Theory of Total Installation*

67. *ibid.*

68. Walter Gropius, "Bauhaus Manifesto and Program," (1919)

69. *ibid.*

Chapter III

(as told in three parts, which introducing
us to experiential texts and act of plays)

Part I Experimental Text
(space, the page, the room)

the page

a blank page, a two dimensional site specific installation spatially manifested on this page. The space begins with the page and the idea of the page: understand the use of the page and be conscious of its potential symbolism.

70. Perec, Georges. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London, England: Penguin Books, 1997.

space
unseen space
unnoticed space
quietude space
space built
space unbuilt
overlooked space
unclear space
space uncertainty
formless space
space preservation
space demolition
sublime space
space social
space individual
boundless space
space shadow
space light
infra-ordinary space
space sounds
obsolete space
space charming
space melancholy
space banal
space transition
habitable space
abandoned space
romantic space
space on
space off
space missing
ephemeral space
space undefined
space tension
space as space
space as metaphor
space

the room

My room and myself are not incompatible
My room is myself
Myself is my room

I am at war with the passage of time, with my history, with my accumulated fortune of: photographs, drawings, notes, mail, postcards, books read and unread, the corpse of a long dried-up felt pen, the corpse of a dried-up banana peel, underwatered and almost dead plants, non-returnable shirts, pants, shorts, and socks, built up pots, pans, bowls, cups, and silverware, a sock here, a towel over there

I am one of millions who does not fit in, who wait too long to take out the trash, who refuses to cook because than I have to clean, and who prefers sleeping on the couch than a bed.

I declare war on what it means to live in an apartment, on living in an organized and well-presented space whose layout no longer depends on the activities or movements of your day, but on the functional expectations of tidiness, or of orderness.

I stress the fictional and problematic view of spaces separated by practical means that express consistently clean routines, instead of, spaces separated by a division of unexcepted organized chaotic excitement. The activities of my day corresponds to slices of time, and each slice of time corresponds to intentional compositional conditions of expressive spatial sculptures.

It is without utopian vision, but rather an attempt to question the current state of what it means to live in an apartment. What it means to have talents in the act of mess making.

What would it mean to tidy things up?

Amidst the disorder state of my room there lies something that is beautiful. To change or alter would disrupt the exploration and artistic expression of my existence. Life lived in my apartment is the manifestation of the contemporary notion of freedom. It would be an act of submission to arrange my personal space to the preconditions of the idealized presentable space for others.

71. Perec, Georges. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London, England: Penguin Books, 1997.

72. Lebbeus Woods' *War and Architecture Manifesto* 1993.

Part II Act Experiments
(acts of plays)

cosmic a three act play

act one

lie face down in the center of a space for thirty minutes

act two

lie on one's back for the same duration

act three

perform and document acts for six days

73. Breitwieser, Sabine, Hoptman, Laura, Darling, Michael and Grove, Jeffrey with an essay by Lee Lisa. *Isa Genzken: Retrospective*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2013.

tactile a three act play

The manifesto is divided into acts (act one, act two, act three, act four) which instruct you to perform "act experiments" where the accumulated acts manifest themselves into developed characters that can become a three dimensional mapping of your individual space. These acts construct a particular scene that is halted in time. Time too is an important character to the constructed scene. The high speed at which our society functions hinders our ability to slow down, making us less aware of how we physically experience our surrounds and how we engage with our material culture. How can time, which is always running away, be returned to us? It is through the physical interactions of act experiments giving us back an awareness of our role in the series of scenes in our lives.

It is important to pause over this point and to understand every character is important and to not give value to one over the other, which ultimately effects the character of time, the notion of awareness. It is necessary to think of your constructed characters to be assembled on a "stage". This thought experiment suggest the importance of the stage and it's association of the theatre, where people sit for hours becoming absorbed by the full experience. The conceptual thought of the stage is important to the character of time and how the viewer examines, moves, passes through, thinks, passes through again, and becomes absorbed by the full experience.

act experiments, unfolding portraits

act one:

The relationship with your body and your relationship between your body and the world serves as both model and mold for experiments. Engage in act experiments such as casting parts of your own body. Not just an arm or a foot, but an elbow or the two fragments of a leg articulated at an angle by the knee. Your body abstracted can be treated like an object or a piece of furniture, a set of joints.

act two:

Explore your body by analogy. Select subjects from your physical settings of daily life: books, beds, chairs, table, and floors-to stand in for, or suggest a human presence. Engage in act experiments such as casting objects, consider not just the object but the space and surfaces entrapped by these objects. Unlike your cast of your body parts, some of these pieces are negative casts. Space not as a container, but as the contained, the solid volume of air defined by these objects: three dimensional figure/ground map of the props of our domestic scenes, or a photographic negative in three dimensions of these objects, their imprint on the space of the room. Or is it the imprint of the body in these spaces.

It is important to pause over this point for a brief intermission about the casting of characters, and the action of casting, before act three and act four.

Bring value to the inner life of rooms and objects. What cannot be seen yet exists. Mummify the sense of silence or overlooked realities of the everyday. Take this perception and shape it into physical matter, or the three dimensional mappings of space and human trace. These imprints are both "portraits" of the original, as well as an object in its own right that will begin to accumulate its own particular narrative. Play with the thought experiment of objects already a cast of the body. You are casting a cast. These cast themselves become new bodies, new characters.

Our bodies and movements are in constant interaction with our surroundings and our imprint of our experiences becomes the petrified characters released from the neglect of their previous life. They seek your attention for they came from a place of entrapment and loneliness. They have been unnoticed layers of our physical presence. Observers of our everyday. They blame their obsolescence from the growing isolation of human beings driven by the increasing impact of technics and media. They are melancholic surfaces that have been silent and rejected.

Casting a space or object is like interviewing it, asking it to tell its story. Casting is an interrogation of space: violently pulling evidence out of it, torturing it, forcing a confession.

act three and last:

Consider what traces that will remain and what will disappear. Embrace the removal of the symbolic nature of the objectness. As discussed in the intermission these imprints become new objects in their own right. Explore the act experiment that steps away completely from trying to make something of the visible world. Push the limits of the possibility of abstraction. Use the color white as a form that glides on the threshold of visibility. Focus on the material itself. Understand you are creating a visual language that is not a preservation of the object itself but of tangible interactions, the trace of experience. There is a rejection of nature-imitation in favor of the supremacy of pure feeling, or pure sensorial experiences.

The manifested characters are fragments of spatial existence, considering the notice of a more nomadic or transplantable approach of thinking. These characters can be rearranged, restaged, and reconfigured but wherever they perform becomes a moment of paused time, an experience of the notion of slowness.

act experiments:

participate in thought experiments of four dimensional, aural, optic, olfactory, epithelial and tactile art forms.

73. Revised text of Beatriz Colomina. Colomina, Beatriz. *The Split Wall: Domestic Voyeurism, Sexuality and Space*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992. 73-130.

collage a four act play

act one

perform the thought experiment on the event of a thread. The event of the thread is made of many crossings of near and far: it is a body crossing space, a writer's hand crossing a sheet of paper, a voice crossing a room, listening crossing with speaking, an inscription crossing a transmission, or touch being touched in return. It is a particular point in space at an instant of time.

"weaving traces back to "the event of a thread." The crossings of thread make a cloth. Cloth is the body's first architecture; it protects, conceals and reveals; it carries our weight, swaddles us at birth and covers us in sleep and in death. A patterned cloth symbolizes state or organization; a red cross stitched onto a white field is the universal sign of aid. A white cloth can be a ghost, a monster or a truce. John Constable described the sky in his paintings as a "white sheet drawn behind the objects." When we speak of its qualities we speak of the cloth's hand; we know it through touch. Like skin, its membrane is responsive to contact, to the movement of air, to gravity's pull."

act two

frame a page and draw the event of a thread.

act three

photograph a painting and remove its textural qualities

act four

collage pieces together. This is the idea of a subversive collage

74. said by Ann Hamilton about her installation of the Event of the thread

75. Anni Ablers definition of the event of the Thread

Epilogue

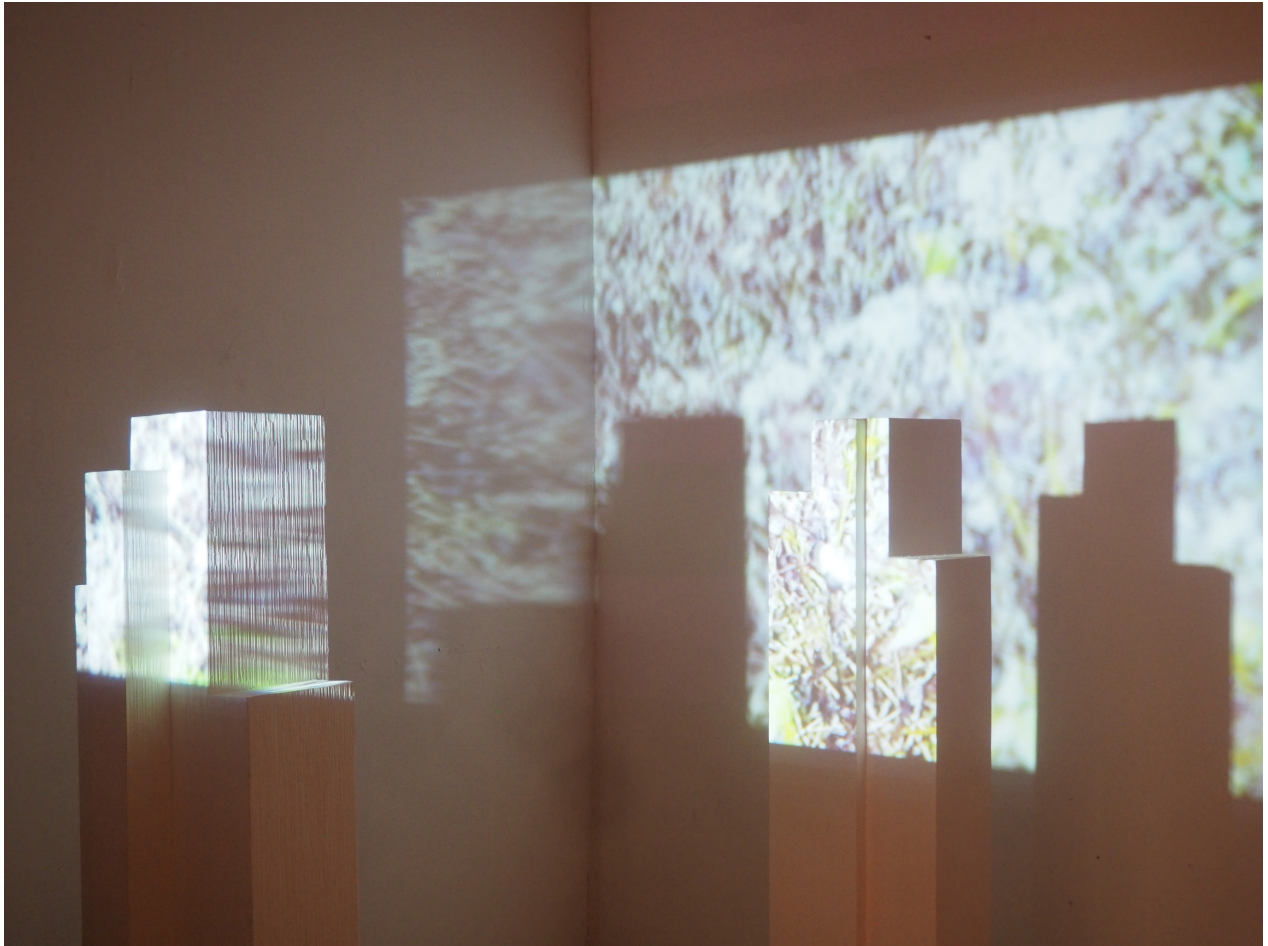
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