



ELEMENTAL DISAPPEARANCES
JASON BAHBAK MOHAGHEGH
DEJAN LUKIĆ



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TINY COLLECTIONS

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PREFACE: THE MARAUDER'S FRAGMENT

Behold fragmentary enchantments. The aim of these thought-images is to enchant through a stylistic constraint: a single paragraph. To engage the designated image by intensifying it; by letting it out of its frame. Enchantment needs to be reinvented. For it is by nature ephemeral, obscure, and by now only visible as a disappearing act. Intellectual critique fancies itself too enlightened for this — too serious, too profound. But this disappearing act is its stronghold. Through disappearing it appears, through appearing it disappears, a tide following the forces of its own moons.

For enchantment to work we need a proper figure, a guide to follow into the unknown. A figure that embodies the act of disappearance itself: a marauder. Marauders have a bad reputation; they first emerged in the late seventeenth century as “rogues” (this is the actual etymological root), roaming in search of things to steal, coming out of the shadows, advancing on the borders. Sometimes they were deserters, often stragglers. Nevertheless, what is important to us is their movement (always irregular) and their non-belonging to institutional authorities. Illegitimate storytellers, they share stories of adventures with each other.

To imagine the marauder's journals, then, would be to imagine a paragraph appearing as a fragment, a block of writing at the limit, because from there the horizon turns limitless. Many authors wrote their philosophy in fragments (finer in speed and immediacy and thus closer to lived experience than forcibly reflective texts) and so exhibited the marauder's dispositions. This book belongs to this line of so-called fragmentary writing that spans centuries, even millennia.

But it would be inaccurate to depict and celebrate the marauder's fragment (i.e., the single paragraph) as purely incomplete and open-ended. Being a block of thought, the paragraph contains also its own fullness where nothing is missing, like a single-cell organism, perfect in itself. This is its elementality.

For this type of fragmentary enchantment to actualize itself, a specific alignment of principles, and with it a strong methodological turn, is necessary.



1. The fragment is a device of alchemy (the elemental): seeking out the elemental properties of an object or event only to transform them against themselves. 2. The fragment is an expression of revelation (the secret): dedicated to a non-sacred concept of revelation that heightens the experience of bewilderment, seeking the perfect secret which would not conceal itself but rather which becomes transparent only so as to become even further enigmatic. 3. The fragment leans toward intimation (the fractal): elevating the brokenness of forms as a superior geometry, constructing unfinished edifices and offering partial glances that splinter the floors of perception. 4. The fragment compels wandering (the drift): articulations that necessarily stray from their origins, abandoning their oppressive surroundings, playing deviant or traitor to the borders, and traverse into the awaiting desert. 5. The fragment enables escape (the exception): a focus upon the miniature strangeness within each incident, one that transports mind to the threshold of incommensurability; this is how the law becomes its own escape-unto-exemption and time folds into the aftermath. 6. The fragment is a summoning (the cipher): a performance that calls forward and encodes, for it aligns impulses resting beneath the obvious and turns them into a cryptic message or fairy tale that threatens the regime of the historical, the human, and the real.

There is a special kind of pleasure in discovering the occluded, extracting from it rare modalities, one that turns us back toward the hidden face of the marauder. We often picture this figure hovering in the outer reaches, biding his time until the appropriate post-dusk opportunity. He sits watching at careful distances, his expression concealed from everything he surveys below. And yet this self-masking is its own important signal, a certain destiny for sure, one that must be taken both lightly and severely, just as his intimidating motions (of intrusion, night-raiding) are at once ethereal and fatal for all involved. For the marauder enters the scene of history only at its moment of greatest vulnerability. He arrives when the continuum begins to tremble, as a neutral messenger of the awe behind every universal disappearance. He stalks the perimeters of towns and cities when they are closest to collapse (the hour that “comes too late”) and begins reciting as the epoch grows tired, frail, and mortally disillusioned. His words are at once a citadel and a tonic, a dialect of omens, signs, and premonitions. Forsakenness; entrancement; desperate quest — an atlas of emergent and extinguishing infinities.

The marauder’s fragment therefore positions itself in the prism between futility, annihilation, and playful diversion. And still, it is here that we find the last chance for a world. For the marauder’s fragment restores thought to the cause of fascination; it thereby turns doom into a creative reflex that awakens in us the unfathomed, the mesmerizing, and the radical outside. Nothing less than a deceptive map that nonetheless harbors the most necessary technique (of violent envisioning), one that allows us to stare across the edge of all things. We must acknowledge this essential architectonics of captivation that he brings. We must adopt his eyes if we are to make it through, and take note as he conspires either with or against this existence. Stated otherwise, we must enter the marauder’s hallucination.

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PART I: JASON BAHBAK MOHAGHEGH

WOODEN ELSEWHERE



False prophetic wilderness. An artist-sculptor takes the debris from splintered wood and restructures its pieces into a vast sequence of coils and turning lairs, the pseudo-site of an uprooted forest. Once wasted particles have now become a continuous network of excess and immensity, the catacomb of some child or savage's dream (terrifying innocence). The consequence: an assembled geography of enclosures and subterranean halls (the tunnel, the labyrinth, the corridor, the cylinder, the cave); appearance of an untouched world; manipulated sublimity. These arteries are but the collective lie of an origin (only their hollowness is universal). Such is the experience of the radical elsewhere: traveling beneath, within the underpass and the curvature. Artificial primordialism; hypothetical exodus. Such is the experience of spatial bewilderment: where one goes to forever join the lost, the aimless, and the disoriented.

REGION	Latin America
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Disorientation, Immensity, Exodus, The Labyrinth
DESCRIPTION	Brazilian artist Henrique Oliveira creates installation of wooden caverns.

ENDLESS AFTERMATH



What are the exact properties behind this elegant work of desolation: i.e., the complex array of colors, textures, and shapes that emerge only in the wake of deserted and rusting edifices? An entire poetics of rubble and decay have taken hold here, as each evacuated underground structure or broken particle sits ready to transmit their two important messages: (1) that the world of objects will always outlast the world of subjects (the inhuman is superior to man); (2) that there is no death, only the dying (the absolute is subordinated to the interminable spiral). Beyond the last remaining trace of functionality or relevance, these discarded spaces and contraptions speak to the terrible endurance of things. Carnavalesque. Unde-feated. No architect remains, no blueprint or creative origin . . . only the generative matrix of corrosion into which uninvited forms shoot and perish over expanses of time. Not just the dwindling echoes of failed utopias, but rather ongoing habitats of insane and chilling atmospheric turns. Thus they retain their investment in the open. And this powerful state of aftermath compels us to rethink the very concept of apocalypse itself: for these hollowed-out nuclear bases are not quite signs of the “post-apocalyptic” (since it is not clear that we have in fact passed some definitive threshold of extinguishment), nor of the “pre-apocalyptic” (since it is not clear, given our technologies of prolongation and artificial immortality, that we even still have the capacity to die or end). Instead, we find in these wasteland chambers the evidence of something without totality or destination, and thus far more daunting: that is, a relentless apocalypse-in-procession.

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Corrosion, Rubble, Desolation, Apocalypse
DESCRIPTION	Former Soviet submarine bases continue to stand and haunt despite being abandoned.



WITCH-HUNTING BRIGADE

If every codification of the law gives rise to the temptation and transgressive possibility of breaking that same law, then it should be no surprise that every totalitarian structure will give rise to a magical underground. The disciplinary severity of the surface always necessitates the opening of an arcane world of non-conformism, heresy, and criminal superstition. Moreover, those who would hold the reins of power are aware of this inevitable outcome: thus the paranoiac urgency with which they stalk down and raid any semblance of witches, sorcerers, fortune-tellers, and subversive healers. Let them take the capital cities of empires; the others will take to the faraway provinces, the forest hideouts, the jungles, the chasms, and the sand dunes. Let them take the official language of the center; the others will take the illegitimate counter-language of rumor, legend, fairy tale, and occult whisper. Inquisitions are never the intended suppression but rather the breeding ground of evil formulations (to forbid is to invite proliferation). If anything, this is the logical motion of enchantment itself: accusation, judgment, sentencing (some burned, stoned, or beheaded), followed by an inescapable supernatural backlash. Those who would build finite worlds will be met increasingly by those who desire nothing more than gaping otherworldliness.

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Discipline, Inquisition, Magic, Evil, Otherworldliness
DESCRIPTION	Saudi Arabian police force creates special unit for tracking witches.

BOY WEAPONS-MAKER



There is an unspoken history of the child in elevated conditions of war. Cradle-to-grave fatality; death by small hands. More exactly, how does the state of emergency (revolution, massacre, famine) thrust the child into a process of unnatural aging, as a still-formless consciousness is told to confront thresholds of mortality far ahead of its years? In what sense is innocence obsolesced by more vicious principles of necessity, velocity, and struggle? How does this accelerated timescape — trapped within the hyper-reality of civil conflict — impact the child's relation to the surrounding atmosphere and the world of objects and appearances? Is the exhausted face of the boy weapons-maker, one who bathes in the metallic craft of missiles and ammunition, whose face is blackened by the smoke and furnaces of this lethal factory, the banner of a miniature Armageddon?

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Time
SUBCONCEPTS	Innocence, Necessity, Unnatural Aging
DESCRIPTION	Photo series of young Syrian boy (Issa) working in weapons factory.

CANNIBAL REBEL



He crouches above the exposed abdomen, knife aimed downward, ready to showcase for all onlookers the timeless relationship between violence and consumption. He penetrates the outer barriers of black fatigues and white skin, into the redness within, and thereby raises the following questions: What are the tremulous repercussions of the one who ingests/internalizes the enemy? How does this intense proximity with the body of the fallen (feasting upon the wound, swallowing the corpse) and the eventual shift toward vampirism reveal an alternative framework of anger or atrocity that deviates from modernity's increasing strategies of detached, opaque, and technologically-mediated killing? What does this cannibalistic performance suggest about the existential gap between the figure of the militant and the ideology of the state? Is the extremist the last truth-teller in our age of false impressions, the only one amid the many delusions to always keep his word?

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Violence
SUBCONCEPTS	Mutilation, Devouring, The Enemy
DESCRIPTION	Video Interview with Abu Sakkar (Syrian militia fighter captured on video while eating the heart or liver of a dead soldier).

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 1, ANIMAL



The Dream of Animality: one of the most ancient obsessions of human consciousness (the first gods were beasts). Myths of flight, of synchronous movement, muscular symmetry, the mastery of horizontal and vertical surfaces, predatory instinct, affection and biting accuracy. And yet this perfect unity (of intention, design, action, and desire) is attained through an ability to become fragmented (to abandon, shatter, molecularize, decompose, and leave oneself). This is why every child's tale of entrance into the liberated territories of animality (the isle, the garden, the wonderland) first requires a self-forgetting that breaks apart identity. Only then are the gifts of untamed beings seen in totems and cave paintings — realms of feeding, sensation, roaming, sleep, violence, and endless motion — made available to the human mind/touch. This art form of postmodern vandalism thus ironically serves to resuscitate a primordial tradition of image-making: visions of flight, curvature, aeriality, and the unbound.

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Movement, Play, Abandonment, Flight
DESCRIPTION	Secretive graffiti artist DAleat leaves massive spray-painted images (mostly of animals) across the walls of global cities.

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 2, MONSTER

The Dream of Monstrosity: another of the most ancient obsessions of human consciousness (the first villages had their folklore of supernatural creatures threatening from the periphery). Myths of devouring jaws, of nightmarish forms and disproportionate limbs, of evil and miraculous traits. Ecstatic malevolence; diabolical thought. Thus we descend upon the cellar stairs of our exhilaration before images of fright, paralysis, awe, and deformity. The monster has always represented the excess of human possibility, the visceral ghoulish embodiment of man-gone-too-far. This is why they resemble us in certain key ways (our eyes, our hands) and yet deviate toward horrid states of expansion, magnification, or irradiation (the pupils are too bloodshot, the nails are too long). Still, it is through this hyper-mirror alone that we can envision ourselves as the lost cause, and at the point of no return: for the monster's face, the monster's body, is nothing more than the extreme limit of our own mortal intensity (and thus made immortal).



REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Fright, Malevolence, Extremity, Hyper-Mirroring
DESCRIPTION	Danish artist John Kenn Mortensen draws images of monsters on post-it notes.

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 3, NIGHT



The Dream of Night: a third ancient obsession of human consciousness (birthplace of the marauder, the highwayman, and the vigilante). Myths of the shadow and of the pitch-black; myths of nothingness and darkening, of night as abductor (that it steals our being), night as omen (that it can be read in signs) and oracle (that it reveals the sacred will), or night as portal (that it provides passage into the deranged, the hidden, and the prohibited). Thus a photographer interrogates the recurring themes of children's nightmares — some born of sleep and others of sleeplessness, some archetypal and others quite unique to behold — and then situates them as accomplices to its black-and-white recreation. As they consent to a second performance of the terror, we are showered with images of the buried alive, of being chased, of growing roots from one's hands, of submergence in a house's rooftop, and of not-right men standing in the woods. And yet all is inviting here (one trembles, yet without anxiety), as each instance takes its place within the larger catalogue of an artist-turned-collector. This leads one to ask the proper term for such an album of young visitations unto dread: can one even call this an archive, compendium, anthology, or testimony of some kind? Perhaps no invented word yet for what it means to accumulate the many bad sides of malediction and pretending, those which forebode and warn the viewer of an unpromising world . . . such that the transition from dusk to evening to midnight goes hand-in-hand with the transition from slipping away to seduction to awful entrapment. The nocturnal therefore speaks only of the inexist-ent — and the night always wins.

REGION	North America
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Shadow, Abduction, Omen, Portal, Unpromising World
DESCRIPTION	Photographer Arthur Tress recreates scenes from children's nightmares.

STRANGULATION AESTHETIC



Visual collision, sound collision: a man dressed in white, singing traditional hymns before a refined audience; a woman draped in black robes, emanating guttural noises before an empty room. It is an unfair competition that illustrates the contrast of the normalized body (in states of composure, pronunciation, and exhibition) and the deviant body (in states of gagging, writhing, and forbidden articulation). Watching these contestants thereby raises the following questions: What is the acoustic register of the unspoken? How does the non-category of the banished, the accursed, or the minoritized individual enable some visionary breakthrough towards an aesthetics of jaggedness? What is the bond between art and vengeance, and also that between eroticism, agony, and the creative instinct?

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Body
SUBCONCEPTS	Silence, Voice, Suffocation, The Utterance
DESCRIPTION	Video Installation of Shirin Neshat's "Turbulent" (male and female vocal performers in sonic contestation).



BLACKSMITH POET

The poetics of heat and steel (uncaring, mean-spirited foundation); inexorable rhythm of the master's arm (striking, fusion). The blacksmith's arena is based upon axioms of harshness, dominant motion, and the hammer's devotion to corporeality. There is no ideology within the forge, only the craftsman's rage, hardening, and precision. Unanticipated, cyclonic den of movement and production. Quest for microcosmic perfection (the artisan as quasi-god) . . . coarse, meticulous, entrenched amidst extreme temperatures, ever-between states of solidity (the blade), liquidity (the melted metal), and aeriality (the dense smoke). The word must also resemble this process, each anti-lyrical stanza an emulation of the mercilessness of iron.

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Rhythm, Harshness, Inexorability
DESCRIPTION	Afghani blacksmith (Matiullah Turab) writes poetry within the forge . . . amidst fire, iron, smoke.

BROKEN STAIRCASE 1



There are many well-known interpretive approaches to the history of the staircase: the obvious theological depictions of stairs ascending or descending toward heaven and hell, the cheap psychological symbolism of anxiety over a journey or transition, the more obscure phenomenological renderings of higher and lower spatialities (the attic, the basement), and the long-standing architectural fascination with stairs that fall apart, twist abrasively, skip levels, or go nowhere. And yet, far from these vertical meditations, we find ourselves confronted with a horizontal universe of black nets strung together as suspension bridges (there can be only unstable travelers/passengers here). Thus one enters the lattice, where the same encompassing material that forms the ground beneath also stretches round to shape frail walls against which one attempts to balance . . . all the while sinking and coiling in arrhythmic patterns. One places one's hands through the perforations — surrendering to this fate of becoming wrapped, intertwined, entangled — trusting precisely what betrays and sabotages, and thereby advances in a kind of desperate though futile motion. There is no good progression to be had; the laws of choreography and navigation require more certainty than this string grid allows. Indeed, all that remains from this experience of poor “walking” or “transversal” is to be reminded of two old experiential facts: (1) that when envisioning the philosophical image of “the abyss” in its presumed infinity, we must never forget to also eliminate the last crucial dimension (the earth below), so as to invite the sensation of bottomlessness and freefall; (2) that when trapped in the desert, as a thousand pieces of medieval Arabian poetry can confirm, when the rider's horse has died and the dawn brings only the full inevitability of scorching, and one stands limitless miles from any trace of salvation or oasis . . . one walks anyway. Far less righteous than any defiant concept of “struggle” or “martyrdom,” this pointless movement across the sands, the cables, or the darkness.

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Suspension, Waiting, Futile Motion
DESCRIPTION	Austrian museum stages exhibition of black net staircases by the design collective Numen/For Use.

BROKEN STAIRCASE 2



This staircase (itself a cascade of falling cloth, paint, and forms) leads to some kind of altar. But what kind of sanctuary or shrine is produced through a visual criterion of gushing and effusion? Is there a typology of the sacred that generates itself through the forces of torrent and outpouring (that which spills infinitely, bleeds everywhere), and then another that manifests only through processes of containment and drought (that which wastes nothing, overflows nowhere)? Two separate portals to the celestial, stretched along an axis between excessive secretion and ascetic desiccation. In the former case, for which this sculpture constitutes a kind of hallowing (of the history of flagellation, running wounds, and gods meant to be drunk downward), we see a man's torso trickling across the planks in a way that links human destiny to a greater liquid metaphysics. And in the latter case, we are reminded of the fasting and self-deprivation of so many monks or saints (a history of parched throats, heavily cloaked bodies, and ethereal vows), or even the "thugees" of India whose worship of the goddess of destruction led them to treat murder as a sacred rite . . . though to be performed without the loss of a single drop of blood, and thus prone to committing acts of forced asphyxiation with silk scarves. One remembers the caravans on which they preyed, and the structure of honor/violation through which any emanation or streaming of the veins was purely forbidden. Thus one wonders again whether different attributes of the miraculous are partitioned along this strange choice: whether to let flood or to bottle the world of wet and dripping things.

REGION	Middle East/North America
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Altar, Effusion, Outpouring, Flood
DESCRIPTION	Diana al-Hadid creates architectural sculpture titled "Suspended After Image."



UNDERWATER DANCE

Behind old steel doors and down various twisted serpentines, one discovers a private chamber situated beneath the surface of a lake, itself the wondrous invention of a nineteenth-century mining tycoon attempting to flee his own tired universes of wealth and taste. Having descended into the covert whims of a cutthroat-turned-escape-artist, we slowly realize a psychic register stranger even than that of “the cellar” (is it a barricade or an admission booth?). For here, just beyond the decorated perimeters of the estate, we are greeted by the stone statue of a pagan sea-god who indicates that there is yet another extravagance at work in the pools below: an anti-establishment manor dedicated to distraction alone, and which somehow conveys the feeling of both the sojourn and the farthestmost. Hence it is in this mold-ridden ballroom that one begins to ask: What acute morphology of choromania (the compulsion to dance) could only slake itself underwater? More than this, what particular category of fantasy compels the birth of “the hideaway” . . . ?

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Hideaway, Dance, Fantasy, The Miner
DESCRIPTION	Secret decaying ballroom found beneath the lake of a former Victorian estate.

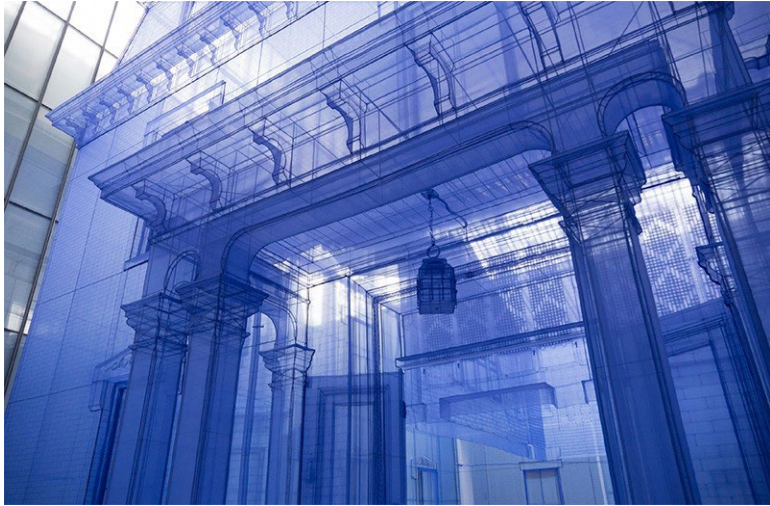
HERESY SKIES



“As if the sky were beneath the cyclist’s feet and the laws of gravity had fallen asleep,” one says. And they are right to marvel at this poetic inversion of space and nature, a lyrical transposition of earth and stratosphere that leaves the rider enchanted along their dim-lit pathways. But heretics have also spoken and dreamt of tainted hours when once-elevated forces would supposedly find themselves deposed like this (to streak across heavens). Thus one wonders whether there is something else here, amid the turning of world orders upside-down, a cosmological rebellion at work in the gesture of bringing transcendent lairs to low ground. Does the sentimental effusion of color mask an ulterior, hypothermic motive? Does it harbor a will to universal trampling, to the (dis)placement of once-divine registers beneath the wheels (becoming-undaunted)?

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Inversion, Displacement, Trampling
DESCRIPTION	Dutch designer Daan Roosegaarde illuminates the bike paths of a park in patterned castings of Van Gogh’s starry night.

SILK ROOMS



This rising trend of building silk rooms takes us into the heart of the fabric's own paradox: on the one hand, a material of fragility, softness, and smoothness (the fine threads); on the other hand, a force of entanglement, tightness, and constriction (the spider's web). Elegant constraint; opulent binding; swathed unto lightness. Thus it forms a unique trap, these filaments of absolute luxury (made for the robes of kings and queens) that are nevertheless formed from the ghastly secretions of the "lowest beings" (made from insect larvae and the cocoons of silkworms). However, when its thin fibers are stretched to fill an entire room, we find ourselves caught in a register like no other, one that intertwines experiences of solidity, liquidity, and aeriality: the silken elsewhere. We are woven or braided across the loom of a dangerous question, as if silk itself were a medium of espionage (the sleeper cell or fifth column). And so one asks: Why are the artists of the present moment evermore drawn to this category of anomaly, seamless, and enveloping? Is there a rare code at work, within the strands?

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Fragility, Constraint, Entanglement
DESCRIPTION	East Asian installation artists are increasingly constructing rooms made of silk: Tianmiao Lin (China), Do Ho Suh (Korea), Akiko Ikeuchi (Japan).

WOLF INSTALLATIONS



Recurring mythologies of the wolf (i.e., its stronghold within the immemorial, the primordial, the ancient, the medieval, the modern, and the postmodern), combining animality, beastliness, and ghostliness. Figure of stalking and predation; the nightmare, the fangs, the woods beyond the house, beyond the town (where bloodthirst is the only law). Circus-like celebration of the flesh (torn, devoured, crucified); victory of the creature over the creation (a single bite accomplishes the reversal of humanist privilege), amidst the graceful interplay of lacerations and wrenching limbs.

REGION	North Africa
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Fear (dread, paranoia), Slaughter, The Grotesque
DESCRIPTION	Installation artist Adel Abdessemed equates artistic creation with slaughter and wolves.

STONE GARDEN OF THE VOICELESS



He whirls somewhere in the dispersed junctures between nature, pandemonium, separation, and inexplicable delight, and thereby reveals the powerful transposition of the loss of language into a spatial arena. One watches and asks oneself (though he cannot answer): How does the anti-social pain of mutedness and non-communication become its own expressive device? How does the impasse of a lone man's incomprehensibility and quarantine become an elite license to cosmological re-creation? In what way is this transition from the abstract domain of the word to the concrete stratum of the stone (from discourse to geology) a will to rapture, apotheosis, and mystical exaltation? What is the final implication of this alternative modality of belonging for our sense of being-in-the-world, and what esoteric principles can one excavate from his dance of derangement?

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Madness, Solitude, Derangement, Rapture
DESCRIPTION	Unspeaking Iranian peasant (Darvish Khan) builds stone garden and dances therein.

MULTIGENERATIONAL DOOM



Cumulative agony; genealogical retribution; the corpsed multitude. What does it mean to transmit damnation across several generational channels? There is common knowledge of authoritarian regimes that have constructed special cemeteries for traitors to the state, with executed bodies thrown in impersonal rows beneath unmarked graves, where even the bare soil on the surface is ordered to be overturned from time to time so as to allow no solace, no rest, for the treasonous dead. But this other phenomenon — three-generational punishment — is a technique like none before. A person is accused and sentenced (condemned for life), and that accusation sends an ensuing convulsion down the spine of their child (condemned for life), and then affixes even the forthcoming days of their not-yet-born grandchild (condemned for life), until a fourth successor, the great-grandchild, breaks open a door beyond the camp (if they ever get that far). A triumvirate of starvation, torture, enslavement, and waiting . . . until the lapse. What happens here, across three rounds of tormented descendants? What kind of burden does the original violator (the guilty ancestor) carry in the face of an entire lineage now entrapped, incriminated, and starved of horizon for his actions? Does he see the imprint of his own awful insignia on their foreheads at every turn? And how does he envision the still-unborn face of the redeemer child who will someday be let go, in some distant time most likely beyond his own death? Does he contemplate this ethereal figure as a kind of vicarious deliverance? How do the middle generations, without even the luxury of self-willed wrongdoing to account for their condition, perceive their existential function in the world? Are they mere transitional or instrumental beings, intermediaries who must survive (not for themselves) but for the one who will come to end the cycle? And what of the one who is the warehouse of half a century's anticipation (the unchained), and yet immediately orphaned upon arrival?

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Time
SUBCONCEPTS	Condemnation, Waiting, Vicariousness, Desperate Replication
DESCRIPTION	North Korean prison camps invoke “three-generational punishment”: i.e., life sentences handed down to three generations of the same family (only the offspring of the fourth generation to come is granted freedom).

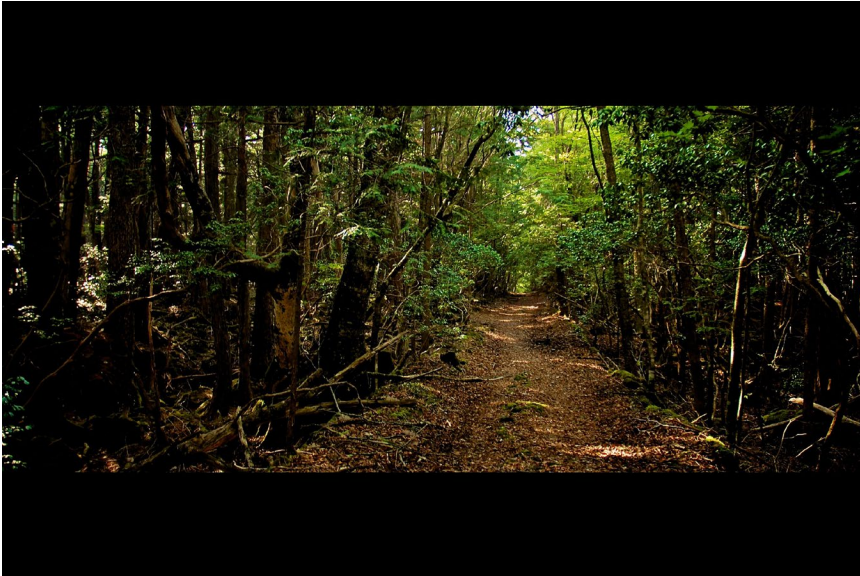
AUTOMATON'S REVENGE



There is a unique kind of horror that resides within pure stillness — an affect of negative awe that belongs to the unmoving/the unbreathing alone. The nerves run colder here, before the dreadful image of the automaton (the doll, the statue, the puppet, the scarecrow). Frozenness, paralysis, immutability: one cannot tell whether they are incarnations of absolute surrender (that they have abandoned themselves to some half-existence) or whether they embody a far more grave and perilous concept of inevitability (that within them lies the inescapable potential to someday begin moving). At night we fear these dormant forms, these figurines and effigies that dwell in our fields, our windows, our cellars and bedroom chairs. We fear the fragility of their hovering and strandedness; we fear the unreadability of their psychology (or lack thereof); we fear that the fixed, spellbound gaze is only momentary, and serves a greater final purpose (concealed for the time being); we fear that soon enough they will break loose and sway toward us (with restlessness and thirst), for they already live where we live. In truth, have we not always suspected some sinister volition being held in store, an alternative version of animus to be released at the right hour? Are these motionless ones not perhaps the rightful heirs of futurity . . . temporarily suspended, in waiting, half-wakeful, with stares like premonitions . . . and ever positioned for an eventual overthrow of the world?

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Confinement, Stillness, Silence, Horror, Incarnation
DESCRIPTION	Artist Liu Xia arranges dolls in telling positions of interrogation, torture, and constraint.

VIRTUAL SUICIDE PACTS



What dark concerns. Four men, three women perish of carbon monoxide inhalation in cars parked along a remote mountainside highway; four others seal themselves within a room to meet a similar end at the hands of a disconnected gas stove. Are these supposed to be “uprisings” (a movement-above) or “transpirings” (a breathing-across)? More than this, what desire rests behind such recurring displays of suffocation and aerial poisoning, organized by strangers bound together only by a virtual pact (to leave the world one night)? No, they cannot be reduced to mere suicidal gestures: the phantasmatic factor of the screen/the image, alongside the medieval factor of the oath/the vow, make this an otherwise distinct orchestration of a calling-unto-death. If not suicides, then, are these well-choreographed acts based in still-broader categories of harm: “malicide” (the killing of evil), “chronocide” (the killing of time), or “famacide” (the killing of one’s reputation)? Are they agitated yet careful attempts to remove the structures of control and coercion within oneself, thus becoming an internal act of “dominicide” (the killing of a master), “regicide” (the killing of a king), “tyrannicide” (the killing of a tyrant), or “deicide” (the killing of a god)? Does the impulse extend even further than this? Could we conceive of these simultaneous self-slayings, these evacuations of the earth, with their odd mixture of loneliness and intimate alignment, as larger symbolic efforts in search of a final expiration-register: i.e., “omnicide” (the killing of the entire human race)? More clearly, are these ceremonies really just subjective enterprises, or is their mark of collectivity a sign that they are drawn forward by a yet-grander dream for the species itself: that is to say, the dream of extinction?

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Desire
SUBCONCEPTS	Collapse, Disgrace, Extinction
DESCRIPTION	Individuals in Japan meet online to arrange and plan acts of collective self-destruction.

FUTURISTIC SOLITUDE



What kind of bizarre hermeticism emerges from within such hyper-metropolitan centers, a product of their intense alienation and compartmentalization of human activity? Here we come across a kind of postmodern solitude: both young and old receding into the airtight enclosures of private apartments throughout the cosmopolis, as if reeling from the accelerated velocity and theatricality of the futuristic cityscape in order to adopt some new version of ascetic tranquility. But what kind of solace or esoteric wisdom can one find in a small room on the nineteenth floor? Can one even attain a sufficient level of hiddenness when protected (from an age of excessive light, noise, and movement) by only the fine border of a window? And, more importantly, what are they after in this sheltering act? Is this increasing pattern of self-extraction just an attempt to recover a more ancient principle of self-annihilation? Perhaps, but entirely misguided and anachronistic; it is not the same brand of thoughtlessness or painlessness of the past; they are no monks with their acute despair. And so one experiences in those four walls only the very same numbness that circulates across the despised outside (now just disguised as insularity). From the accounts given, this retreat tactic offers no sanctuary or refuge: rather, it is a dead end that brings only a futile recognition of the very obsolescence of such older quests for enlightenment, distance, serenity, meditative concentration. These are no longer attainable categories; the havens are gone, and with them the potential descent into void (this neo-emptiness teaches nothing, allows nothing). For sure, there is only a mimicry of aloneness here: to live alone (without meaning, ritual, or reward) and to die alone (without consecration, prayer, or transcendence). No longer the problem of “no way out,” but rather the problem of “no way in.”

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Withdrawal, Isolation, Refusal, Neo-Misanthropy
DESCRIPTION	Two recent phenomena of aloneness: (1) <i>hikikomori</i> (literally, “pulling inward”)—legions of Japanese youth who have become shut-ins and total recluses, withdrawing entirely from society, within their high-rise apartments; (2) <i>kodokushi</i> (literally, “lonely death”)—legions of Japanese elderly who die within their homes and go undiscovered for months or even years.

CIRCULAR PUNISHMENT



Necro-memory: to recollect only the traces of the obliterated, the disappearance, the nothing. They say the birthmark is the sole record of a foregone atrocity (not the emblem of a past life, but of a past death), and that it can lead the elders to the proper site of damage, violation, and cold-bloodedness. The red lines across the child's forehead are thus a cartographic document, a mapping of the burial grounds for an unthinkable incident. It does not matter whether this reincarnation event is true or false (authenticity is irrelevant), only that it effectively takes place in the perceptual universe of the guardians of this people: that the imperfect trait of the birthmark acts as torch or night star, that its stain guides and navigates the aged clerics across their high-mountain passes and into the nexus of an elapsed world of horror, that this malevolent fragment alone can facilitate the excavation of an unfound skeleton and killer's axe, is enough to stitch the line between revelation and vengeance. Return of the worst piece of the puzzle — the vanishing point — in the name of unfinished business. And so the punishing forms an image, and a circle.

REGION	Middle East (Druze Territory)
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Fragment, Birthmark, Imperfection, The Map
DESCRIPTION	Three-year-old boy takes village elders to the place of his past-life murder, recalling the skull blow of his assailant's axe.

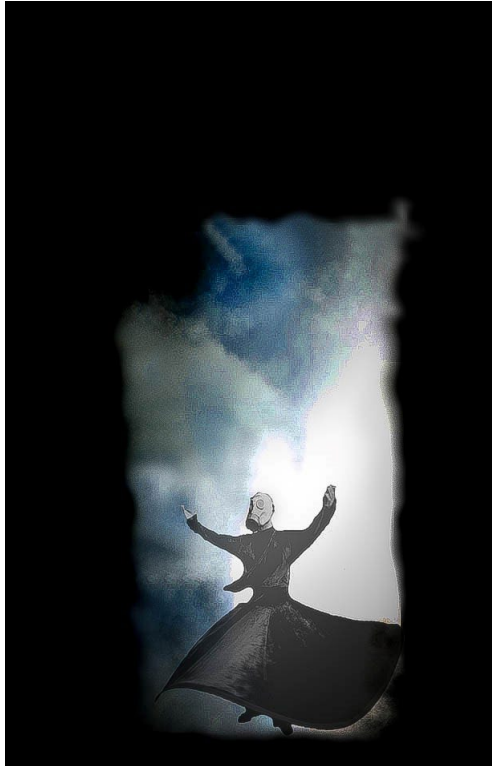
BLADE DELIRIUM



This blade has many histories: an implement of hard labor in the cane fields and rain forests; a mechanism of insurgent action in anti-colonial rebellions; and a transcendent instrument of dream-fighting in hidden gatherings across the island. Creation, destruction, and banality thus converge here (along the sharpened surface): immense narratives of economic misery, political resistance, and fantastical aesthetics all find their source in the wooden handle of the machete. What is this mad potential housed within the object, the artifact, the thing — that it might serve such mutually exclusive forces? How does the same device that enforces daily toil and emaciation, or which drips with the blood of concrete revolutionary action, now come to associate itself with an outsider art form (of simulated fatal movement)? What does it take for bare technology to become theater, vision, dance? Nothing less than a colossal semiotic overthrow: that this relic can transition between meanings so seamlessly (part burden, part weapon, part medium), is the sign of a phenomenological breakthrough . . . for it draws a calligraphic arc from the material to the immaterial, from disenchantment to enchantment, senseless pain to ecstatic pain, from deadening everydayness to the secretive, the untold, and the realm of cruel play.

REGION	The Caribbean
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Meaning Overthrow, The Thing, Cruel Play
DESCRIPTION	Rural peasants gather in the forests of Haiti to practice secret martial art (machete fencing).

STONE MASK — GAS MASK



The mask is a paradoxical device; within its structural logic rests the potential for simulation and dissimulation, transformation and deception, concealment and revelation, division and seduction, sadism and innocence, terror and pleasure. That it requires the almost total surrender of identity to the façade (one is allowed to keep only their eyes), that it seals the world of appearances in a state of eternal frozenness and trickery, that it lies in brazen form, that it transparently announces its own will to mislead and thus turns duplicity and fraud into a visual apparatus, and yet still remains a force of attraction and fixation, makes it something for us not to underestimate. For these reasons and beyond, the mask has facilitated many axes of human action over centuries, including those of: criminal concealment (the bandit, the ninja, the robber); anarchistic play (the carnival, the masquerade, the orgy); and militant violence (the gladiator, the knight, the Bedouin, the samurai, the face-painted warrior). There are even images of various gods wearing masks. What is more, these first gods were invented in the same region where ancient stone masks are now placed on display in galleries at the same moment that contemporary gas masks signal an ongoing flux of protest, upheaval, and war right outside the museum. Thus we are compelled to ask: Is there a conspiratorial link between the coverings of nine thousand years ago and the visors of the present state of emergency? Are these new masks descended somehow from their elder counterparts, and hence partake of the same matrix of power, distortion, disguise, frivolity, secrecy, and reckless bloodshed that has always been harbored by this one accessory? Accessory to what, then? To celebration and murder, to the simultaneity of celebration of murder, to the hour of shamelessness and the opening of an irresponsible universe, with its light and dark absurdities, such that it is this very same mask which at once allows us to dance (without judgment) and allows us to kill (without judgment).

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Body
SUBCONCEPTS	Paradox, Simulation, Dissimulation, Trickery, Shamelessness
DESCRIPTION	Exhibition of the world's oldest masks opens in Jerusalem museum; meanwhile, gas masks line the streets of Syria, Turkey, and Palestine.

THE SUMMONING WOMEN



The poetics of the taunt, the challenge, the boast, and the provocation. This feminine textuality supersedes its masculine counterparts at the level of sacrifice, vehemence, and brave loss, for it is nothing less than a direct inviting of the enemy to come kill their most intimate relations. Vituperation anthems: conversion of all to over-aggressiveness. A speech act of mockery and contempt that masochistically dares its opponent to come closer (angered by hostile language games) and confiscate their adored fighters: in this way, it is also a poetics of summoning and vitriolic calling forward, one which attains its height only in the incensement/temptation of the foreigner to annihilate the woman's lineage. There is no traumatic consciousness here (emotion is traded for tribal conviction); instead, we find a becoming-unprotected (vulnerability as armament); we find a mode of incendiary war-romanticism that bares its chest and begs the most distasteful ones to penetrate and set afire the ties of kinship. Their most prized possessions placed at risk upon the scales of combat (as they emblazon). The father; the son; the brother. All are fair game and ventured in a campaign at once cheered onward and mourned by the women who stay back in the tents, awaiting the results of the field, and who ready their hands to wash, bury, and immortalize the torn bodies of their men as a final gift to the struggle. Do not fear the rebels; fear the reciters.

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Violence
SUBCONCEPTS	Taunting, Provocation, Intimacy, Lyricism, Immortalization
DESCRIPTION	New book titled <i>I Am the Beggar of the World</i> collects the poetry of Afghani women (many of whom are the wives, mothers, and daughters of Taliban fighters and anti-Taliban fighters).
SELECTION	"Be black with gunpowder or be blood red / But don't come home whole and disgrace my bed." (107)

DESTITUTION TOWER



The key here is in the paradox, and the paradox is in the name. The skyscraper was to be called the Tower of David, thereby equating the riches of today with the mythic figure of a man who became king and founder of a royal dynastic line. More than this, an ancestral line to the one who some would call the Redeemer. And yet there is duality beneath the crown, the imperfection of a two-sided prophet: for David's origins lay nearer to the destitute who now occupy the evacuated hallways and rooms of this structure. He was a poet, musician, and warrior (talents of the lower strata), someone who relied on luck and who harbored an ill temper. He even conspired to murder out of lust, thus tying him to the hedonism and criminality of the streets. He also was said to watch from rooftops, much as the masses do now in these photographs. No, the newcomers who clamor to fill the void of this modern tower are the correct inhabitants after all; their squalor is its own house of the sacred; their illegal unstoppable presence, their decadent adornment of the windows with rags, are a close match to the artistry and rage of their namesake. They too await the accidental fortune of the slingshot; they too may someday kill their rivals, and write songs as they do it.

REGION	Latin America
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Poverty, Inhabitation, Kingdom, Temper
DESCRIPTION	Abandoned skyscraper in Caracas, Venezuela becomes world's tallest "vertical slum" as the city's poor take over the empty building.

MICRO-IMPALEMENT



How will the neo-aristocratic quadrants of today's urban space accommodate the figure of the vagrant, the drifter, and the unproductive? Micro-impalement. And so the threat of idleness is met by the modern restoration of a classical tactic: the spectacular violence of old kings who once lined their courtyards with stabbed-through bodies has now returned in minorized form (one-inch metal spears rising upward from city benches) as a trend to ward off the rootless and the deprived. This notwithstanding, the old kings reserved such punishment exclusively for the traitor, for the worst conspirators and enemies against their dominion, thus leading one to ask: in what specific way has the beggar betrayed the modern age; in what way do these piercing instruments reveal an accusation of full treason against power? Why does their loitering offend to the extent of preemptive torture? Perhaps the architects of such discomfort, the ones who nervously usher in an era of needles and thorns, who spitefully steal sleep from the sunken, who discipline sloth with puncture wounds, detect a kind of mastery at work within the slouched or sprawled body of the homeless person: that is, a will to fallenness. Their lack of need to ascend, their lack of need to generate a living or join the crowd, to prove oneself in the continuum of social value, is also the lack of need to exist. They may in fact occupy some vantage of Being, in a manner foreign to our definitions, but they do not require its attainment (non-striving). And no doubt one should fear the man or woman who does not need to exist, for this seemingly impoverished subject is also the one who cannot be intimidated, persuaded, forced, manipulated, seduced unto unity, bought or sold (beyond the torment of the others). The waiting-for-no-one; the waiting-for-nothing. They have chosen a certain soullessness, and are the richer for it (the spikes do not reach far enough).

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Idleness, Stabbing, Treason, Soullessness
DESCRIPTION	Urban planners in London install spikes along luxury buildings, stores, and bridge underpasses in order to deter the homeless.



IMPOSSIBLE SUSPECT .

Historical amnesia can sometimes generate the equivalent of necromancy. Combining illiteracy with suspicion, a political regime hears the name of a long-buried dissident, mistakes the ghost's identity, and thereby reanimates a past force as present threat. In this spectral ontology, the legend recirculates with new life; hence the marks of recent vandalism are said to come from the hands of a dead revolutionary. In name (which matters most), the stained walls are alleged to be the product of his defacement. Notoriety; temporal oversight; a wanted man. From here, a phantom machinery of power is set in motion, tracking the imagined movements of a being not of this century (or even the last): interrogations, extortions, espionage, covert operations in search of an impossible suspect. Wiretaps become cosmic switchboards; blacklists become a kind of séance . . . listening for what is not there, looking for what cannot circle back. A lapse of knowledge thereby forms an inadvertent principle of resurrection: for all intents and purposes, he is the instigator once more . . . the one responsible for rising discontent (subversive exhumation). The streets belong to him again, given a second chance to alter everything, to restore a bad reputation, precisely because they had forgotten him.

REGION	Latin America
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Amnesia, Reanimation, Discontent, Forgetting
DESCRIPTION	After hearing political dissidents speak his name over wiretapped phone calls, Brazilian police force begins investigating nineteenth-century anarchist Mikhail Bakunin as potential suspect in recent protests.

IMPERCEPTIBLE SOMEONE .

There still remains a particle of Being here (enough to leave the outline, contour, or silhouette of this someone). Still, this does not amount to anything substantial: he is not entitled to act or speak with meaning; he is not allowed to influence the event. He has all the agency or importance of someone condemned to watch a tidal wave: he can only stare forward. Nevertheless, he is no survivor or even witness (both are pathological types). Rather, he is the figure of the engulfing . . . where the immensity of space conspires to drown one into final irrelevance. No identity or alternative to this drifting across; no greater station than to serve as random, infinitesimal shade against the backdrop of a coastline, stadium, oasis, apartment complex, or vacant city square. Diminished form. His seclusion is not tragic but totally impersonal; it is the imprint of neutrality itself. And what becomes of Man when he is no longer the central player of history, no longer the inheritor of the destiny of the world? A gift; a curse. Some will die from humiliation; others will learn to appreciate the possibility of being unburdened by supremacy (toward slightness). They will learn to savor immateriality, anonymity, supplication, and the imperceptible nights of the stranger.



REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Engulfing, Seclusion, Anonymity, The Stranger
DESCRIPTION	Artist Tarek Al-Ghoussein releases photographic series of a faceless man standing amidst barren landscapes.

DEATH SIMULATION 1



Revolutionary traces; re-conjured hysteria; virtual martyrology. Are these photographic spectacles acts of morbid nostalgia, fascination, mourning, or a double murder? In that same line, are reenactments of historical atrocity intended as a form of repetition or distortion (or even erasure), aligned with memory or forgetting? To re-envision the most celebrated corpses of the past, staged with meticulous detail, such that each coffin opens a window into a time of militancy, struggle, and brutal enchantments. These miniature replicas of a culture's highest death-checkpoints seemingly restore the beautiful insanity of a utopian/dystopian hour. And still, beneath the surface appearance of tribute is always the charade; after all, can we not perceive at work here a more insidious strategy of desecration, defacement, and banishment of such events to the hollowness of representational universes? No longer genuine travesty, no longer faithful haunting; without even the imitative loyalty of the museum or the mannequin. These vistas are more frivolous in their artificial bleeding. No, it is not clear that the accursed visitations of the photographer are meant to honor or redeem the fallen, to iconize the sacrificial leaders of elapsed generations; if anything, we may be faced with an artist who deploys the aesthetic zone to carry out a second killing. Now held hostage within the purgatory of simulation, where one can only look (but never believe), once-profound scenes of resistance keep their façade of significance all the while having lost their power to ever return. Meaning evacuation; substance evacuation (no longer even symbolic, just shown). They are within the display case of the hyper-real now, mirages whose original affects have long since vanished, gutted by an artist who uses flagrancy (melodramatic anguish) to conceal subtlety (imperceptible disappearance), and who thus works behind the curtain of tradition and false courtesy to make sure of just one thing: that the past holds nothing over the future.

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Revolution, Forgetting, Virtual Sacrifice
DESCRIPTION	Photographer Azadeh Akhlaghi recreates famous death scenes and murder scenes leading up to the Islamic Revolution of 1979.



DEATH SIMULATION 2

Ultimate process; undefeated process (even amid synthetic episodes). One cannot pretend to die so many times without eventually incurring a mortal debt. Death is a ruthless collector; it would not allow its name to be called over and again in false offering. And so it is that this abusive summoning does not go unpunished (the hook remains). Rather, someone must pay the fair price for these playful cinematic depictions of the last breath. This actor knows better than to believe himself unscathed; he realizes (however distant the intuition) that some buried dimension of his interiority endures the penalty for each terminal scene before the camera. A field within him is burned; a voice within him is strangled; a man within him (a foreigner, stranger, or other, though still most intimate) is executed. No, the theater is not immune to consequence; he was never quite safe there, among the plastic weapons, nor did he make it out uncut or intact. The forces of radical negativity always ensure a certain taxation: each facial grimace, each feigned writhing or manufactured blood-spray, each filmic final groan or pang or exhale, comes with its proper cost. The result: that our stuntman is overtaken by a kind of invisible leprosy — entire regions of Being, housed beneath the organs and the limbs, have been sold into decay and obliteration without notice (fallen away quietly). For his craft demanded that he perish in some silent, infinitesimal place every time he lost his life on screen. Something always weeps, grieves, cries out, goes under (though we never speak of it). The condemned sliver; the harmed particle; the unforgiven actor.

REGION	East Asia
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	The Collector, Summoning, Abuse, Penalty, Infinitesimal Perishing
DESCRIPTION	Samurai stuntman Seizo Fukumoto has acted out approximately 50,000 deaths on screen.

ALL-WOMEN FIGHTING SQUAD 1



The structures of identity tend to disappear whenever individuals are flung to the radical outside of their world (beyond the social, the political, the cultural). Moreover, this evisceration of self (where the old “I” burns away) is only magnified when one adds the variable of fatal struggle to the realm of experience. Thus an all-women unit leaves behind its insular community in order to challenge a rising enemy far beyond their midst. Their lives have been threatened; a mercenary formation to the east has already condemned their people to certain death, and marches nearer with each day; thus stationed at the crossroads of true peril, they find that they must either kill or succumb now. This part is simple enough — i.e., the nature of their immediate task — but the more complex question that remains is: Will they still be themselves once having traversed the Uneven on the way to battle? Or is their departure from home the first step to a dramatic trespass and reinvention? These women fighters cannot help but be transformed at such a distance from their affiliations and city walls; rather, this new terrain of exteriority — that of the desert, hills, or plains — is an experience of enormity and borderlessness for which no prior subjectivity can remain. The old self will not survive the extreme temperatures of this remoteness, and so they will begin to formulate new definitions, profiles, appearances, and even names as they sit together in the dark and bleed together by the light. They will compose new ballads and initiate a poetic language that only they understand; this is the basic right of their crusader’s intimacy. Hence even those who return will never fully return, and the better for it (an existential revolution to match their practical revolution). They will come back irreversibly transfigured and evolved, wounded and altered, powerful in unforeseen ways, more expansive in their vision, more dangerous and capable for what they have endured in the places no one goes. They will come back as a band estranged to the very ones who they were sent out to protect. War is pure metamorphosis, nothing less.

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Violence
SUBCONCEPTS	War, Exteriority, Trespass, Immensity, The Crusader
DESCRIPTION	All-women Kurdish squad — the Second Peshmerga Battalion, whose name means “those who face death” — sets out to fight radical group ISIS.

ALL-WOMEN FIGHTING SQUAD 2



The operational logic of paganism is such that when a certain local god fails to deliver its graces, one can always switch to an alternative deity (of the river, the tree, the grove). This exchange is harder in monotheistic orders, requiring more subtlety, yet it can be done just the same. Here in the ancient Persian city of Karaj, we find this very kind of transition happening: a ruling sacred system has failed these women fighters; for decades, its religious leaders have situated them at the useless outskirts of its inner circles, denying them access to the consecrations of apotheosis and worship, and so now they turn their eyes elsewhere in search of other spirit forms. They take to a restricted location and begin training in a martial art not of their immediate world, with no reason other than to attempt an experimental substitution of idols. Most importantly, however, one must note the two strands of devious irony at work in this conversion: (1) that they have chosen for their new tradition something that exists far outside the folds of their own cultural history and religious paradigms (i.e., there is virtually no meeting ground between the concepts of Ninjutsu and an Islamic theocracy); (2) that they have chosen for their new tradition something which demands that they veil themselves even more extensively than their last theology. In essence, they have selected the braver counterintuitive path of intensifying the law brought down upon their bodies; to do so, they will drape and cloak themselves at even more severe levels than ordained before, entering into a state of hyper-concealment that spites their former overlords. The headscarf is taken further along the axis of its own intention, becoming a ninja's mask (autonomous in their darkness). This is how one surpasses oppression (through the storm). Consequently, are we not to perceive a complex subversive trace among this camp of anomalous women, something amounting to more than just reverence, discipline, or a new trend or diversion? Should we not take seriously the fact that they have fastened themselves to a martial art which privileges (above all else) stealth, vendetta, anti-social codes, conspiracy, and assassination?

REGION	Middle East
CONCEPT	Violence
SUBCONCEPTS	Vendetta, Worship, Autonomy, Darkness, Conspiracy
DESCRIPTION	A group of Iranian women train in Ninjutsu at the foothills of the Alborz mountains.

ELEMENTAL WRATH 1, FIRE



What does it mean to aestheticize ecological disaster? These varied images (of flame, ignition, and fever) cannot help but capture the visual glory of environmental ruin, the enigmatic attraction of the smoke and of the hills burning down. Inferno; conflagration; engulfing; arson; immolation; world as furnace; world as incinerator; world of ash. There is no speculative end to the psychoanalysis of fire, nor to the phenomenological power of the wildfire (its transmission, disquiet, and searing effects). Thought must therefore adjust itself to the rise of an epochal blaze; it must inhabit the red mosaic of the pyres.

REGION	North America
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Inferno, Conflagration, Epochal Blaze
DESCRIPTION	Photographic images of the King Fire now spreading throughout the California canyons.

ELEMENTAL WRATH 2, ICE



Once more, what is the crossing point between artistic vision and an age of ecosystemic wreckage? As the vanishing accelerates, the dissipation and vaporization of forms, we come upon another series of epic images (this time of the fall of extreme coldness, polar hostility, and the once-absolute reign of the glaciers). What does it mean, then, to speak of beauty at the end of things? Is there no wonder at the sight of miraculous catastrophe? Where once there was millennial/imperial frozenness, there is now an alternative destiny of melting (both exquisite and horrifying). Brokenness; downward eventuality; the crystalline; frost; chill; intersections of the fragile and the serrated; dance of unnatural temperatures; the thawing motionless; the colossus that withers, crumbles, evaporates. Thought must therefore adjust to this slow languishing of frigidity, the subzero degree of arctic loss; it must train itself to enter an era of dying winters.

REGION	North America/Europe
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Melting, Wonder, Brokenness, Frigidity
DESCRIPTION	Environmental photographer James Balog leads the Extreme Ice Survey, a collection of images documenting the effects of climate change on ice formations.

ELEMENTAL WRATH 3, EARTH



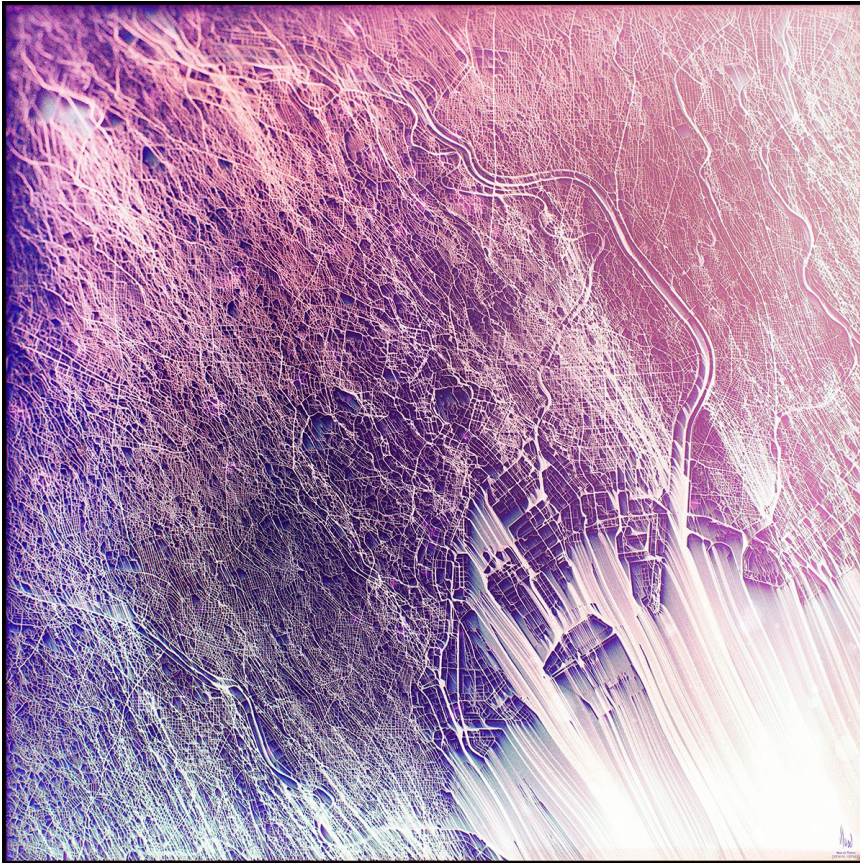
They appear as hallucinatory vistas, these sites of devastated terrain: thus the earth betrays its commitment to solidity, and fractures the once-unified ground (the dust cannot be trusted). From an inhuman floating vantage, we are made to stare upon the surface now opening beyond recognition, and this aerial perception allows us to detect an irreversible thrust toward debris and cracked axes: deforested realms; excavated pits and mines; erosion patterns; seismic tremors; plane-shifting; dirt-in-upheaval; barrenness; aridity; harsh soil; the uninhabitable. There is almost something whimsical in each cataclysmic scene, these ragged lines that form no path or sequence (only vagueness). Planetary havoc; badlands. Thought must therefore adjust itself to the geo-existential scraping, and walk along the compromised scaffolding of the underneath (that there is nothing secure below us).

REGION	North America
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Surface, Debris, Erosion, The Underneath
DESCRIPTION	Photographer David Maisel releases collection titled <i>Black Maps: American Landscape and the Apocalyptic Sublime</i> .

PART II: DEJAN LUKIĆ

RENDERING

Cities are flowing surfaces. We all know that. One inhabits not the city, nor a neighborhood, but the energetic wave itself (so-called urban movement). Still, urbanity is a tiresome term. There is no battle between nature and the city. There is ever only one battle: movement vs. non-movement. For example, illegal immigrants, gangs, the precariously nomadic vs. stroller-pushing corporate inhabitants. These maps show that even this division is artificial though it is constantly implemented. People, goods, forces seep in and out of the city, along lines both visible and invisible. Cities as continually bordering phenomena. Horizontal roots, flowing fibers, extend as a capillary consequence. Orifices emerge only to melt into bright lava. Hence, each image capturing reality can only appear as windswept. A rendition, to render: from the Latin “to give back” but also “to melt down.” The only right thing to do to reality.



REGION	Global
CONCEPT	Space (flow)
SUBCONCEPTS	Surface, Movement, City, Reality
DESCRIPTION	Swiss digital illustrator Istvan (“Chaotic Atmospheres”) produces “flowing city maps” of global urban centers.

DROMEDARY



The engravings are done by scratching the rock, then applying color in order to make silhouettes of moving images, flashing riders on animals we call camels or dromedaries. The image is frozen (that is its nature) but we of course see the movement of this frozen moment. The rock is the most static object; depending on its scale, monumental and permanent. No wonder it is often used for shelter (where the movement rests) or as a final resting place (a tomb). And yet the drawings on these static walls show the kinetic drama unfolding outside: running, transporting, traveling, warring, playing. In fact, the word “dromedary” comes from the Greek root “dromas,” meaning runner. Camel thus equals swiftness. This speed is harnessed and implemented through a number of elements: (a) the animal, (b) the human rider, and (c) the constraining devices such as saddles, reigns, whips, all of which have changed very little since their invention two millennia ago when they were composed together to form that imposing desert-machine-ship we still see today. But besides the functionality of this animal-vessel, with an ascetic metabolism that makes it perfectly suitable for the atmospheric extremes of the desert, we also see adornments, or abstract drawings on the blankets falling across the humps and necks of the animal, protective fabrics veiling the riders, all of which make this arranged animality perfectly immanent to the sphere it occupies (to its beauty and its ruthlessness): the desert. And strangely enough, if we look closely, the rock drawings go beyond the photographs, turning into pixelated images similar to those we see in video games. The hand that drew the lines has not only represented his or her experience; it has also tapped into its elemental particles, those that belong neither to past nor to the future, but to the virtual, to the creation itself.

REGION	North Africa
CONCEPT	Movement (swiftness)
SUBCONCEPTS	Drawing, Rock, Silhouette, Animal, Desert
DESCRIPTION	Saharan rock art reveals the importance of the camel in the nomadic cultures of Libya, Algeria, Chad, Niger, and others, as well as the timelessness of the drawing gesture.

GEOMETRY OF SHADOWS



There is an enormous history behind these patterns, alluding to a sacred space of creativity in science and religion. The title references the intersections of cultures that passed through the palace and the region: Arab, Berber, Spanish, Jewish. Strictly speaking, intersections are points where two or more diverging lines cross each other's paths. Hence, a point of intensification. But more importantly, as we swirl around the space illuminated by the crocheted box, we start to hallucinate a bit. We see a box which is empty but which emanates light. Through this emanation, the radiating light, a new surface is created (projected on the walls), and the entire space is filled with intricate patterns. The inside of the box is unfolded to the outside. The innate curiosity we have about a closed box and its contents is thus spectacularly resolved. Here it is just a gift of the new surface. The secret (meandering intersections) is manifested and projected to the outside. A feeling of confidential immensity imposes itself. Expansive infinity envelops us in a closed room through the intricacy of the patterns: a constellation of a universe. The hierarchy between shadow and light collapses, as both are equally important and cannot exist without one another ("Night too is a Sun," says one philosopher). Finally, in this immensity the walls of the room become canvases, as we the spectators too become canvases, our bodies points of intersection. There is no audience anymore, only meeting points.

REGION	South Asia/North America
CONCEPT	Space (intricate surfaces)
SUBCONCEPTS	Intensification, Immensity, Shadows
DESCRIPTION	Anila Quayyum Agha builds a box of casting shadows reproducing the geometry of Alhambra, a famous fortress in Granada built beginning in the ninth century CE.



NAKED ISLAND

The immense water that surrounds it: indifferent. The perfect blueness of the water that competes with the lightness of the sky: indifferent. The stone quarries abandoned (as if the prisoners left for a lunch break and never came back): indifferent. The lighthouses and the bunkers: indifferent. The rocks, one by one, out of which the winding roads proceed, and buildings rise: indifferent. The torture pit: indifferent. All the materiality of sensation that being-here produces, attests to that enormous feeling of indifference created by the former Stately power. Communists, fascists, Habsburgs . . . all different temperaments that laid down their teachings in the manner of absurd pedagogy. And yet tiny wild flowers dot the rugged landscape. Where do they come from? Precisely from this indifference which cannot but also lay down seeds that eventually bloom into their own color, their own elated forms, their own stubborn vulnerability. In due course the rocks will disappear, and the weeds will spread in all directions, and no one (not even an archeologist, or a historian, or a pilgrim) will realize that the wild plants won. The stones and the sea are only the background against which they open their protean power onto the world.

REGION	Eastern Europe/Adriatic
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Water, Stone, Flower
DESCRIPTION	Former Communist prison-island slowly fades into an archeological site of the future.



WAX AND FLESH

Without doubt, a confrontation occurs when one lays eyes on these installations: a form of a horse carefully crafted yet frozen in development before it is fully actualized; a human body that extends into heavy branches pulling its back toward the ground; a body with missing parts; or else isolated parts (antlers of a deer) piled together. This is the work of a new butcher, one that has certainly learned from the old masters, but then in silent solitude went to invent her own counter-procedure: the flesh (which looks alive) is rendered with wax, a material that does not rot; the bodies are not open through the wounds that announce its death, but rather, each is closed in on itself. Sometimes we do not even see the transition or a surgical scar (there are no seams); all is smooth, curled, curved, coiled. There is no specific wound because the entire body is a wound, closed but not healing, suspended in what it exactly is: a constant mutation of forces that inhabit the flesh and thus form the body. The act of twisting as a gesture of cruelty already. She is a rare and original butcher that does not open up but instead twists, smooths, and transmogrifies so that it is hard to see fleshy deformations. Yet the more one looks the more one sees the beauty: the tactile seduction of the wax, the horse hair and skin, the pillows and the hooks, the marvelous wooden tables and cabinets which surround the bodies simultaneously exposing and protecting them. In the end, nothing but beauty extracted (slowly and brutally) from its own infinity.

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Body (fleshiness)
SUBCONCEPTS	Mutation, Transformation, Vulnerability
DESCRIPTION	Artist Berline De Bruyckere creates sculptures of bodies in vulnerable modulations.

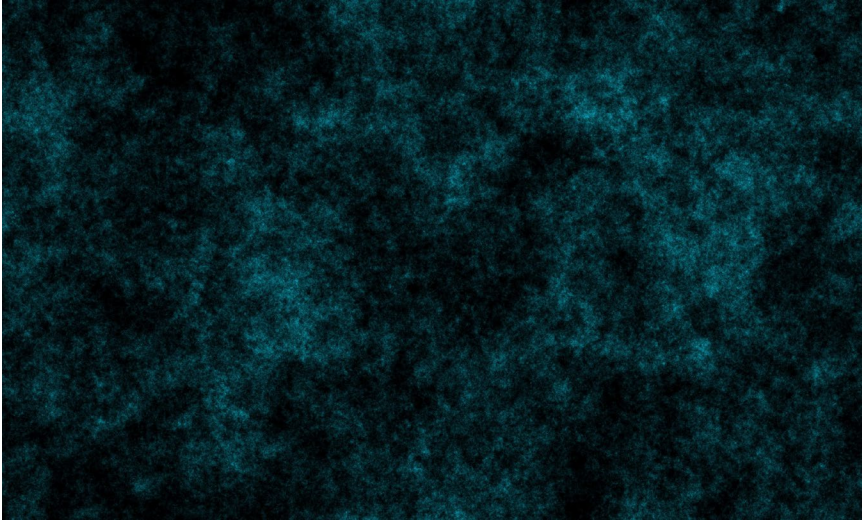
SOUND OF THE SPHERES



We always knew that darkness is palpable, first and foremost from cats and from fairy tales. Perhaps we also always knew that it cannot be fully mute. But what does its sound say, besides that darkness is darkness? Let us proclaim: darkness speaks. Is this not what the very first impulse (of a child) announces before she can articulate anything (fear of darkness)? And further, are not symphonies of great composers the accurate and infinite articulation of this impulse (that darkness is alive)? Does not the sound itself occur in the first place to dispel darkness (lullabies)? Or better yet, to tell us that there is no such thing as darkness, only very low degrees of light . . . True. Infinite space “sings,” that is to say, the spheres sound back at us, wailing, squeaking, vibrating. The cosmos is a dance of high-energy electrons; accelerations in the electromagnetic field which suddenly sound like birds. (This also means that birds can sound like something completely different than themselves.) Indeed, insects and birds: two of the most important groups of animals for the understanding of music. At the heart of their sounds lies darkness that moves. And solarity is therefore heard (with one’s eyes).

REGION	Outer Space
CONCEPT	Movement (soundings)
SUBCONCEPTS	Darkness, Music, Physics
DESCRIPTION	The solar system is populated by sounds that result from various movements of high-energy electrons.

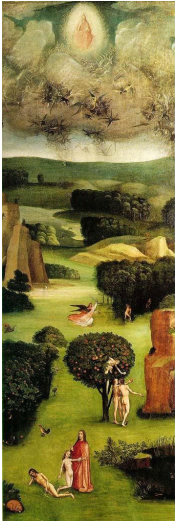
VISION MACHINES



Are these strange contraptions put on one's head someone else's eyes? One of them, turning the human head into an engine, touches the core of perception's physiology: "Light-Pump or Phantom Brain". These vision machines prove one thing: that human eyes, the organs of perception, are not competent enough. We never fully trust them, even though they are the primary tools of so-called objectivity. The machine-maker builds his devices clunky and awkward on purpose. They are not just extensions, they are burdens, proper crutches of the eye (sometimes on wheels). They do not "enhance" the performance of sight; on the contrary, they "refute" it. And after refutation, a dreamlike state comes into view, unpredictably. The world as we once saw it changes. Is there a more significant revolution? "What is left is right, what is behind is brought forward, what is in the vicinity recedes into distance; the drops of water fall upward, the pit becomes a hill, the blades of grass grow downward, the birds dive into the grass . . ." All in order to transform reality, to make the delusion apparent, and to create another one. Out of failure, a revelation. Only then come veritable visions: appearances not seen by the naked eye.

REGION	Western Europe
CONCEPT	Movement (vision)
SUBCONCEPTS	Optics, Devices
DESCRIPTION	Swiss artist Alfons Schilling creates machines that dislocate human perception and thereby create unforeseen visions.

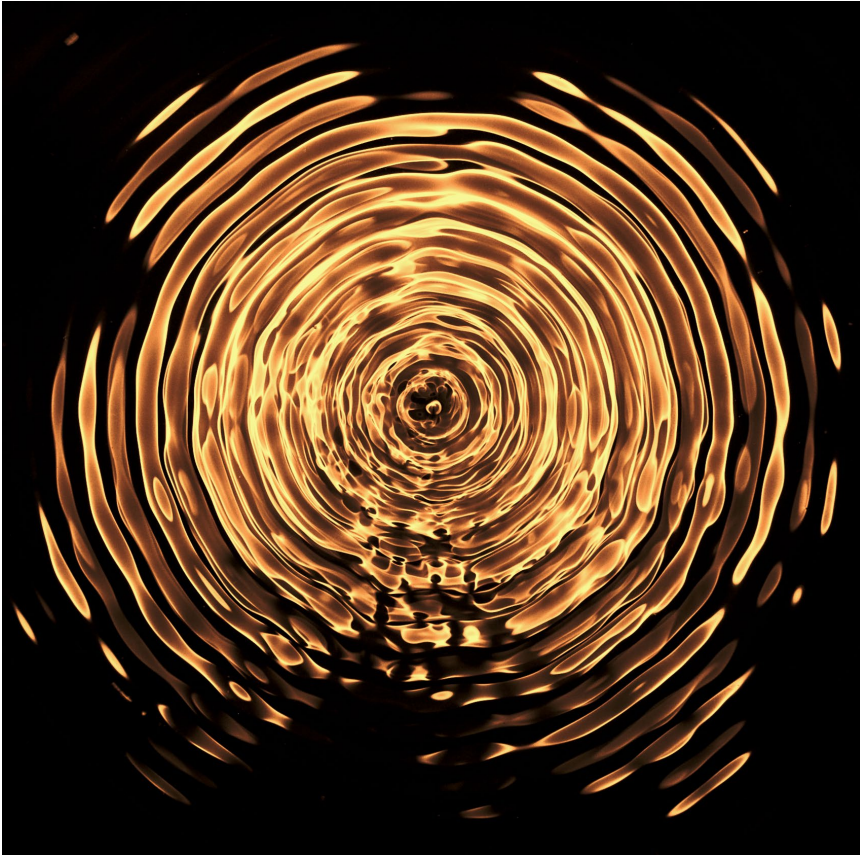
BOSCHIAN EMANATION



There are paintings that go beyond their frames. In fact, the narrative or form they provide within their borders is only secondary to the supplement (a metaphysical vitamin) that seeps out of it. Of course there is a technique of the master inscribed in the treatment of light and darkness, figures and shapes. But it is the vision which cuts through the image that counts the most. And the vision is always enigmatic; that is to say, it requires deciphering which no specialist knowledge of historical context or technique can reveal. There are some artists that provide a diagnosis of an entire "age" in which they live. Then there are few that go even further by carefully placing nothing short of a new form of life in their seemingly ordinary practice of painting. It is only then that their object (painting) becomes a collection of forces that goes far beyond their respective contexts. One will easily know which works generate this kind of power: in front of them one does not simply reflect, one levitates, now released from physical laws (gravity) just as the painting itself is released from the confines of art (it is now something else). Enchantment means experiencing the miraculous. All sharing of a vision in this respect is self-deception. And yet deception of this kind is intensification of the world; i.e., creation of something against which one can measure oneself. And is there anything more powerful than measuring oneself against the landscape of Hell, from which all sorts of beatitudes emerge?

REGION	West Europe
CONCEPT	Myth (vision)
SUBCONCEPTS	Miracle, Painting, Enchantment
DESCRIPTION	Hieronymus Bosch's triptych <i>The Last Judgment</i> (1504–08) stands inconspicuously in the last room on the top floor gallery of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, still emanating its power of attraction not just toward the mind of the curious viewer but also toward his or her body.

DEMAND OF THE DRUM



The drums have an irrefutable connection to thunder. They both reverberate, or relentlessly vibrate, and in this way extend into space, folding it into its sound. The incessant reverberation is their presence through which they conquer space. One could say that palo drums are tamed thunders, which is the only way that the human body can take them in without exploding. Even with these subdued thunders, the body is already taken to its limits. For it is hard not to move accordingly in the presence of the roaring drums. They are capturing chosen degrees of thundering so as to make them closer to the human heartbeat. The result is the production of the cardiac beat. Repetition turns it into an ecstatic body, transformative for the sole reason that it necessitates stepping outside of oneself. A rare demand in today's world. A primordial demand since the world started by stepping outside of itself: a thunder and a lightning that opened up the infinite unfolding of the galaxies. Thunders we hear during storms are good reminders of that initial crack through which the flow of life ensued. Most creatures still cower when they hear it, unaware why, unaware of their own sensibility to the cosmic vibration. But it would be wrong to think of palo drums as merely a domesticated force of nature, thunder pacified. Rather, it is a force of nature molecularized into controlled tonality that then permeates the listeners and turns them into dancers (a higher form of listeners). Let us not think of this drumming as an obscure practice. There is a geo-affective thread that connects drums to thunders, all the way to that initial rupture, the coruscating sound of cosmic outpouring. In the beginning there was not light; there was a clang.

REGION	The Caribbean
CONCEPT	Movement (drumming)
SUBCONCEPTS	Reverberating, Outpouring
DESCRIPTION	In the Dominican Republic palo drums connect the human body to cosmic rhythmicity through repetition of basic sounds, fusing the sacred with the profane.



POWER OF A CURSE

Who is to say that the snake did not materialize from the interiority of the minister? That it did not curl out as the very modality of his ethnocentric delirium, affirming the world that favors transmutations in which there are no solid forms and where strange animals can transpire out of certain emotions? A world not separated into distinct objects that have nothing in common, but where things are seething, churning, and swelling into inexplicable occurrences; where every negative utterance is therefore an informal curse, a metabolic principle that eats away the unprotected interiority of the person who receives it, no less than, albeit more imperceptibly, it eats the curser himself. This is an ancient problem of health, where sentiments of the society fold into sentiments of the individual, just as the outside folds into the inside, thoroughly following the logic of the fairy tale, the power of which is only seemingly enclosed inside children's books. In reality, the more it is dismissed the stronger it becomes, because it lives not outside our world, but rather, it is our world (the world as a spell that needs to be broken). Hence a fable at the heart of contemporary politics of the crudest kind.

REGION	West Europe
CONCEPT	Myth (curse)
SUBCONCEPTS	Metabolic Principle, Racism, Politics
DESCRIPTION	Italian right-wing politician and former minister claims he has been cursed (as revenge for his vulgar racist statement) by a sorcerer in Congo.

SORCERER'S CLOTH



Some days, when the circumstance calls for it, the human being stops being just a human being. The marvelous takes over. Invoking the marvelous simply means being able to astonish (but astonishing the other is not a simple matter). In the hills of Altiplano, colorful figures appear: the color of their garments differentiates them from the surrounding world of nature. For example: the bright red against the light grey of the fog. We see the opulence of masks and dresses in juxtaposition against the bleakness of rooms, the everyday poverty. But it is only here that the word luxury attains proper value, of excess in austerity, a distinctive splendor, and thus brightness, or light. Do not forget: the witch doctors that wear them and transform into zoomorphic beings are still “doctors.” They heal by opening up the borders, physical and moral, taking one by the hand into the underground tunnels (the mines carved inside the hills). The world becomes paradoxically less differentiated (even though the garments and masks are over-pronounced) and thus horror and excitement ensue. The forbidden is formidable; the deceivers, seductive. These basic formulas are so powerful that even after the objects and the garments are fully removed their humming presence remains.

REGION	South America
CONCEPT	Body (Costume)
SUBCONCEPTS	Poverty, Healing, Excitation
DESCRIPTION	The popular and the religious collide in the diverse fashion of local healers.

VAMPIRIC CHEMISTRY



Dracula has never been more popular, as numerous TV shows and movies attest. Perhaps that means that he is truly dead, now living posthumously not as the aristocratic undead but as a pastime of bored twenty-first century audiences. Journalists are quick to announce that he is a “fictitious character” (they are not fooled, the fact-checkers). In Transylvania his castle is being sold. (Yes, the castle of Vlad Tepes, the legendary prince upon whose exploits the tale has been based.) It currently belongs to the Habsburg family, former rulers of the Habsburg Empire. But let us get our facts straight. Dracula is just a spectacular manifestation of a much older, subterranean force that runs through southeast European tales and the everyday in the 1700s: that of a *vampir*. It is no coincidence that vampires rose (from the dead) to prominence when the Habsburg empire was at its peak, like a counter-current running from the edge of the empire, spreading disbelief and paranoia. What is more, this vampiric chemistry trickles through centuries, even millennia, both as a political and as an aesthetic force. It always appears as a disturbance at the heart of a “civilization” (Mesopotamian, ancient Greek, Roman, Chinese, etc.). Contamination, proliferation. Is there a more revolutionary tactic for a movement? And yet, the greatest terror does not come from the spilling and sucking of blood but from an internal compulsion, a terrible flaw: arithmomania (obsessive need to count actions or objects in one’s surroundings). One can only hope that new owners of the Bran Castle will also get bit (it is the least they deserve), then close the castle to swarming tourists, and count the bags of spilled peas into eternity. A passionate mania is always better than a passionless spectacle.

REGION	East Europe
CONCEPT	Space (vampirism)
SUBCONCEPTS	Dracula, Contamination, Arithmomania
DESCRIPTION	Dracula’s castle goes for sale and inspires speculation on the nature of vampiric force.

VITAL SPACE, KITCHEN .



If the fairy tale is a re-enchantment of the world, in what kind of dwelling should one live for this to occur? Is enchantment not equally an expression of our inner dispositions (delight), as well as our environment? In fact, our inner disposition can only change, start to “sing” internally, when it perceives the outside in a new way (re-vitalized). Should this not indeed be one of the basic human rights: to live in a revitalized space? Or should it not at least be what we strive for? Interior designers, spectacular clowns of fashion: what damage have they done to the world by ignoring this disposition? Perhaps Goethe thought in precisely these fairy tale terms when he said that architecture is frozen music. He must have been enchanted by the frozen German winters. Yet one has to look into the interior. Stepping inside, there is pure pulsation. Re-enchantment is designed through a paradox: the decomposing façade (of lost innocence) at the center of which emerges a shining new heart (or hearth). What better image for this than the kitchen? Walls darkened by the smoke are suddenly brightened by the smoothness of the perfected cooking surface in the burned belly of the house. Dwelling here, working here, would it not intensify us a little beyond the ordinary, turn us — preternatural?

REGION	Switzerland
CONCEPT	Space
SUBCONCEPTS	Interior Design, The Preternatural, Enchantment
DESCRIPTION	Stone oven in the smokehouse patiently awaits its inhabitants.

THE SEA 1, STOWAWAYS



Here they come. The unwanted. Latitudes and longitudes, their lifelines. Here they come: throngs of people hiding in the belly of the ship, sometimes in the lifeboats. But even there, no hope. They are discovered, discarded. They play the oldest game: hide and seek. Or in metaphysical terms: concealing and revealing. Movement to and fro, just like that of the tides, the planets, the lovers. An ancient game and equally eternal. Yet they wager their lives this time. It is said that the Sea is hostile for it swallows thousands each year. Yet the Sea embraces everyone into itself without judgment. It forces immanence. Perhaps this devouring that is beyond good and evil is what scares us most. Do waves and droplets of water have feelings? We don't know so we choose hostile lands with detention camps on Europe's shores instead. Perhaps we should learn how to swim better than any generation has ever swam, and swim away from the shores, away from the boats, until we are concealed not behind the ship's flags, but behind the rumbling waves that turn into a mist, warm and comforting, floating forever. For in today's age, dreaming only leads to drowning.

REGION	West Africa (Atlantic Ocean)
CONCEPT	Time
SUBCONCEPTS	Illegality, Drowning, Dreaming
DESCRIPTION	Immigrants from Africa try to reach Europe at the price of their own life.

THE SEA 2, SURGES



The Sea holds the greatest mystery, which is fortuitously also a great theoretical axiom. As with all great mysteries and theories, the core of it is a paradox: transparency of the impenetrable. Writers and philosophers attracted by the Sea knew this secret and it made them smile. To become like the Sea, translucent and impervious. Could these characteristics also be embodied as virtues? The painter comes even closer to this possibility because he mediates light itself, gradations of surging brightness and dimness. So much so that one cannot differentiate anymore between “himself” and the canvas (a thousand iterations). By extracting the fragment from the Sea, he became the Sea. The only virtuous thing left is for our theory to do the same: surge.

REGION	Crimea
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Transparency, Light
DESCRIPTION	The nineteenth-century painter Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky painted over 3,000 paintings depicting the sea in its splendid transparency.

DRACULA RAVEN ORCHID

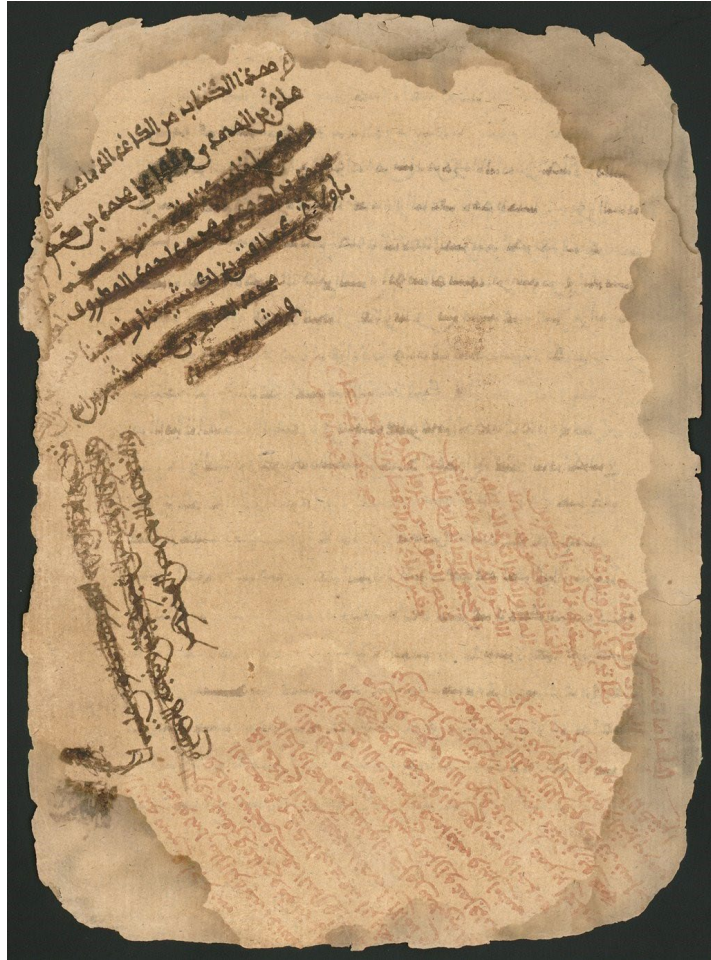


How can a flower contain within itself a tale from a part of the globe other than its natural habitat? *Dracula* (meaning “little dragon”) is a name that carries the slight sensation of fright. Yet not of an order that would repel us; on the contrary, it is just intense enough to attract our curiosity, which can even turn into obsession. The flower itself looks like a strange attractor, glabrous triangle, ominous, with a pink lip (labellum) that looks more like a tongue. Without doubt, it is waiting for a wasp with even stronger fascination than ours, which will rub itself amorously, after being deceived visually, and in this way initiate the process of pollination. The flower carries modalities of insects and of vampires, just as *Dracula* too carried nonhuman modalities.

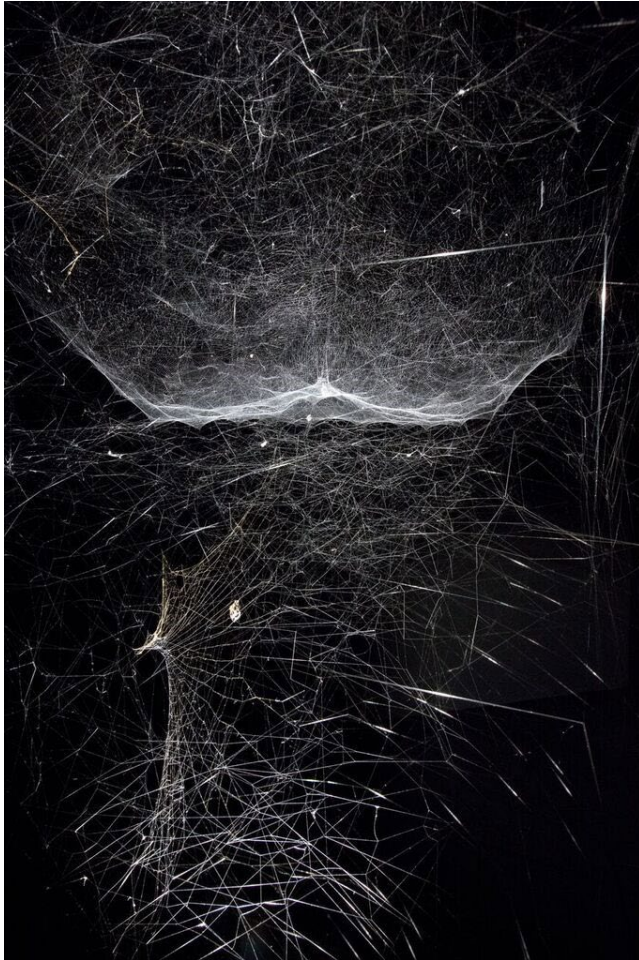
REGION	Central America
CONCEPT	Desire
SUBCONCEPTS	Tales, Plants
DESCRIPTION	The 118 species of the orchid genus <i>Dracula</i> grow quietly in Ecuador, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Central America in general.

DESERT LEAVES

More than anyone else, librarians must feel like the guardians of secrets. Walking constantly amongst closed books, which they can open at will and find something that very few other people know. It is both a thrill and a burden. Then every now and then an exceptional librarian emerges, one that is not only a keeper but also a smuggler. Hiding sixteenth-century manuscripts from the militants; and if he's found, his hands will be cut off. What possesses him to risk the well-being of his body for old book pages? Is it their age (older than any human)? Is it the (outdated) knowledge? Or some affective power lying dormant in the text and at the same time not part of that text at all. Yes, it is this power, equally ancient and contemporary, that fuels the librarian-smuggler. Even at the risk of death he can't deny this emanation from the manuscripts. The books themselves now carry the air of the southern Sahara desert, they are deserts themselves, at times unbearably hot, at times freezing, with unexpected oases. Through the desert arrived first the rebels, then the militants, crossing it like the pirates would cross the great seas. Indeed, the desert is the sea. The books simply tell what the desert-sea has seen throughout the ages. No, I change my mind: books are not the same as the desert; they are its fractal eyes.



REGION	Africa
CONCEPT	Movement (smuggling)
SUBCONCEPTS	Manuscripts, Sahara, Affect
DESCRIPTION	Librarian Abdel Haidara organizes the smuggling of ancient manuscripts from Timbuktu to safety before al-Qaeda-related militants destroy them.

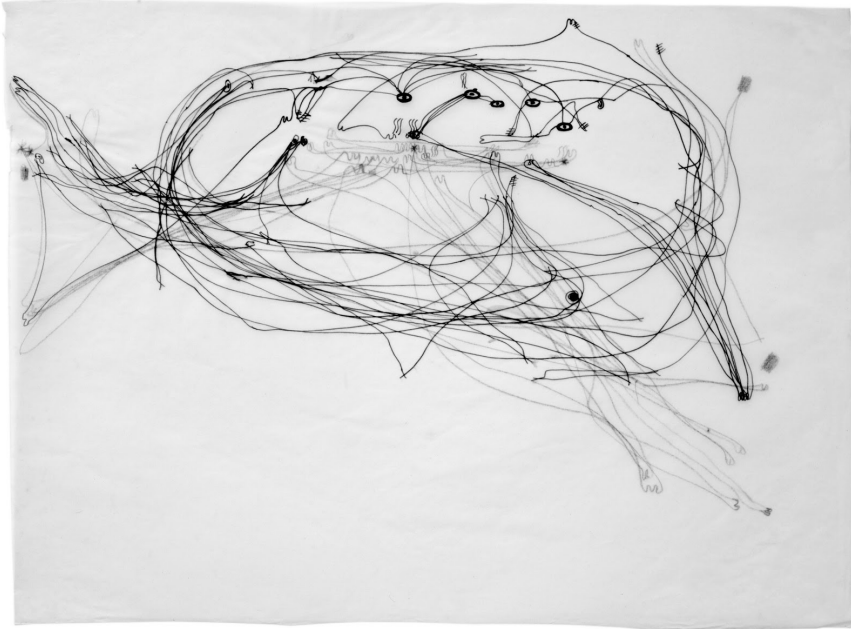


THE SPIDER 1, INSTRUMENTALITY

These creatures not only live their entire lives on the “edge,” they actually create it: arachnids. They hunt, copulate, and die on the line, i.e., on a mass of lines which turns into a web. The line is a string and as such it contains musical modalities. It is plucked by the movements of the air, or of another insect which gets caught in the web (with all of its complex multi-lens eyes that cover a radius of 360 degrees, the fly does not see the web), or else of the spider moving (with its eight legs, although blind). Much of its life is spent in waiting, being still on the web, on this giant instrument. The visual beauty of its appearance is proportional to the horror of its functionality (the most sophisticated trap, ruthless). The web is an instrument of capture, a dwelling place, a world of its own. Yet its micro-vibrations sound throughout the universe. . . . It is said that Spinoza (in the seventeenth century) amused himself by observing spiders fight. What is not known: Does his intricate philosophy of immanence actually come from these moments of arachnean observation?

REGION	North America/Europe
CONCEPT	Space (spider web)
SUBCONCEPTS	Musicality, Strings, Cosmos
DESCRIPTION	Artist Tomás Saraceno creates installations with different species of social and solitary spiders who sculpt their microcosm.

THE SPIDER 2, AUTISTICITY



The spider is inseparable from its web. In fact, the spider's silk is an extension of its body, secreted right from it, a biochemical formation of extreme toughness and ductility. Yet its enigmatic contradiction is its lightness. This is reflected in the name itself: arachnean means "of/or related to the finesse of a spider web." In addition, the word spider comes from the Old English *spithra*, which means "spin". To spin is thus to be spider-like (it is inevitable). Someone said accurately, "The path is never written, it is spun." Indeed, we turn, whirl, get dizzy. From angular momentums of subatomic particles to planetary phases, everything dances according to its own symphony: a self-created chaotic harmony consisting of billions of participants, all different from one another. Difference in repetition, as some philosophers say. All this is visible in lines drawn from the movements of autistic children that Deligny's extraordinary hand produced. They reveal the beauty of the autistic molecule which hallucinates networks through new types of movement, and perhaps as a result creates new diagrams of relations between things (relations are determined by types of movement).

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Movement (network)
SUBCONCEPTS	Autism, Diagram, Spinning
DESCRIPTION	Social psychiatrist Fernand Deligny develops diagrams which resemble spider webs based on the movements of autistic children.

THE SPIDER 3, AFFECTIVITY



Is the solitary artist, writer, religious ascetic, child, not closer to a solitary species of spiders than to other humans? She certainly is — at least on the level of affects, the filaments of her temperament that exceed her personal feelings and make her act in a particular way. In the same vein, a little boy says on a talk show, “I love all animals, but for some reason my favorites are cold-blooded ones, the insects.” He knows everything about insects. Louise Bourgeois is an expert on affects, the molecular network of influence. Her large spider installation is a literal manifestation of encompassing feelings of protection (one can hide under it) and durability (it’s almost indestructible). It is an expression of a spider-character (an invitation to embody it). Great storytellers and artists are spinsters (they twist the threads of textiles, clay, paper, feelings, thoughts, words) and nothing else. Endlessly indifferent, endlessly vulnerable, endlessly passionate all at the same time.

REGION	North America/Europe
CONCEPT	Desire (insect affect)
SUBCONCEPTS	Twisting, Feeling, The Spinster
DESCRIPTION	Artist Louise Bourgeois creates mother-spider installations in different locations of the world.

LAND 1, THE UNEARTHING



The earth is a boiling pot with a solid core and liquid outer core rising to 10,800 degrees Fahrenheit. There is a constant interplay of solid turning into liquid, and vice versa. Volcanic explosions give us a glimpse into these combustive layers. Earth as an incendiary device. But its internal combustion is not only geological, it is also political. Human groupings hide micro-volcanos, i.e., landmines, just beneath the surface in order to maim and kill their enemies (another human grouping of a different ethnic or ideological persuasion). There are millions of landmines scattered upon the earth. They wait patiently, unconcerned by the politics above and the circumstances of war or peace. They have only one purpose — explosion; only one feeling — tactile. There have been many attempts to find the best ways to discover them. The most recent one: giant pouched rats (they are too light to set off the explosion). There are now armies of rats reared for this task, the unearthing of the surface. Hence the animal yet again proves closer, more intimate, to the earth than the human. But this is what old deminers always knew; this is why they normally chose animal names for their units and brigades (e.g., the Mongoose). Despite this dramatic interplay of life and death on its surface, the earth just keeps on boiling and boiling.

REGION	Africa
CONCEPT	Space (demining)
SUBCONCEPTS	Explosions, Incendiary Device, Animality
DESCRIPTION	Scientists are training special species of rats for global demining purposes.

LAND 2, THE MIGRATING



Migrant: a dangerous occupation. But should it not properly be called a destiny (an inevitable chain of events under certain circumstances)? Moving from one place to another, from one habitat to another. Is this not in fact more natural? Should this not be the desired disposition of all people? By contrast, belonging to a delineated and bordered territory is a theological disposition that designates a particular soil as sacred and only accessible to the chosen ones (those born on it). What an arbitrary criterion. And yet one codified in law and politics. Nevertheless, the highways continue their call for movement, like capillaries leading to open cities. As a counteract, new fences are built on the land and primordial blockages (walls) regain their status. Bodies jump across or climb over the lines cutting through the image. And yet with awe we look at the birds passing by on their migration route. And few know that even the cells in our skin, which form pigment, migrate. Blood does not equal soil; it equals migration.

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Movement (migration)
SUBCONCEPTS	Death, Law, Awe
DESCRIPTION	Thousands of migrants are crossing the borders at the edge of the European Union daily.

PENTAGONÍA



What can we learn from a writer, or writing itself, about delirium as a condition of living? The *Pentagonía* cycle (described as the secret history of Cuba): five books, five agonies, five delirious inscriptions of the struggle to stay alive. The agonies of life under dictatorship, under pathological atmospheres, populated with clear but delirious language. Delirium as a medico-political condition, one of peculiar outpouring whose intensity is found on each page. But the page is only a mark of the general outpouring envisioned as resistance to everyday life. Ideological delirium of the state vs. the writer's delirium. Delirium as a furrow in consciousness, a rut, through which the writer forms trails leading to an escape. An aberrant physician that turns delirium into health, constructing a new sense of the world. Just like the image of the multitude of flags in movement that turn into kites, or decompose into elementary particles, the writer's language is one of the falling façade where the revelation of interior corruption creates crumbling folds on its outer surface. The delirium reveals the double life of the inhabitants: publicly they praise the success of the revolution, privately they curse all its manifestations. The writer, an agonized physician, diagnoses social delirium and produces language that escapes the text. Only by becoming a secret can he write about the secret (agony).

REGION	Cuba
CONCEPT	Body (delirium)
SUBCONCEPTS	Writing, Agony, Health
DESCRIPTION	Writer Reinaldo Arenas writes his own hallucinatory history of Cuba in five novels.

THE CROW GIFTS



Crows served as totemic animals for many native peoples. Totem's purpose: to bond into oneness. As such, the characteristics of the animal transfer into that of the human, as a metaphysical force of attraction turns into a chemical one. Now an unusual event has occurred: the crows are bringing shiny objects to a little girl who feeds them. From the most ancient times, the gift was an expression of adornment, luxury, something that adds power to the body upon which it is bestowed (a little bit of excess around the neck and arms). That is why they are often precious stones, shells, metals, textiles, things that go onto the body and thus intensify it. However, the greatest gift these crows delivered was not one that beautifies: a severed crab's leg. Giving a piece of another animal is a reminder of the viscosity of the relationship. This time it is not the crow that is a totem for the humans; rather, it is the little girl herself, for the birds. For crows clearly know their obligation and their bond, which is in fact not just intelligent but religious (from Latin, *religare*, "to bind").

REGION	North America
CONCEPT	Myth (gift-giving)
SUBCONCEPTS	Luxury, Viscerality, Totem
DESCRIPTION	An eight-year-old girl receives objects as gifts from crows that she feeds in her backyard.

LORD OF APPEARANCES

We usually see his face frozen, immobile. How can such an expression of disinterest provoke feelings of fear and comfort at the same time? Pharaoh meant “a great house”: i.e., the ruler was an all-encompassing space (a dwelling place) and a territory. Yet in this case he was not only terrestrial; he was obsessed with stars and astrology. According to an ascetic from the ninth century, one transcription on an ancient Egyptian temple reads: “Man is ruled by the stars and does not know it. He who commands the stars does what he wishes.” (It is said that Dante too believed that love can move the Sun and other planets). The greatest planet in our intimate universe is the Sun, of course. Perhaps this is why the premen “Ra” was used to designate the ruler’s emergence as the offspring of the Sun. Ra, the god of Sun and Radiance, is depicted with an image of a Sun disk above his head, encircled with a serpent; the pharaoh is depicted with a crown on his head. However, no actual crown has ever been found. Everything else has been unearthed except for the very thing that made the ruler divine. We only see it in drawings, which also serve as writing (hieroglyphs), and where animal, human, divine, and the planetary share the same, barely differentiated plane of immanence.



REGION	North Africa
CONCEPT	Space (the pharaonic)
SUBCONCEPTS	Astrology, Hieroglyphics
DESCRIPTION	Archeologists in Egypt accidentally discover a tomb of a pharaoh that ruled around 1650 BCE.

THE SCULPTURAL 1, MONUMENT TO THE REVOLUTION

It is only posthumously that great ideological monuments attain their quiet glory. No wonder contemporary architects are jealous. For a monumental materialization to occur, monumental ideas are necessary. And communist monuments in the former Yugoslavia lacked none. They now stand like archeological artefacts from a long lost civilization. As such, they look equally futuristic, for they were made to glorify an idea alien to most in today's world: revolution. From being affective manifestations of a traumatic event, they now stand free of any symbolic burden, with a new, yet-undetermined sculptural energy; for nothing simply dissipates, only changes form, just as communism transmuted into nationalism, just as utopias turn into gradations of cynical weariness. So, what kind of beauty is left in the absence of memory?



REGION	Eastern Europe
CONCEPT	Myth (monumentality)
SUBCONCEPTS	Sculptures, Ideology, Abandonment
DESCRIPTION	In the 1960s and 1970s, the great political "curator" Josip Broz Tito commissioned monuments throughout the former Yugoslavia to commemorate important World War II sites which attracted masses of people, only now to be largely abandoned.

THE SCULPTURAL 2, DESERT HAND



Has the giant drowned, his hand the very last part left to be submerged? Or is he rising, a part of his hand the very beginning of his ascent from the belly of the earth, from the desert sea? Being in the desert, the scale of the hand changes depending on our proximity to it (it can be tiny or enormous). The open hand, a salute, is undoubtedly non-threatening. It makes us pause. This sense of calm is due to its disposition of receptivity (a recognition of our presence), which all creatures of the globe intuitively understand (even snakes are pacified by the lulling hand of the hypnotist). The great vulnerability of the hand lies in the fact that it allows you to touch it, to even scratch upon it. This is its power too, the mystery of allowing violence against itself. The glorious anatomy of the outside: open hand in the open desert. I decided: it is an image of ascent, the hand is taking off; and it is not any figure attached to it (it is the "hand of the desert", not "hand in the desert"), but rather the entire barren surface which will pull and wrinkle and rise with it. The desert is its mind and its body: a singular haptic omnipresent exteriority. The face upon which we tread.

REGION	South America
CONCEPT	Body (vulnerability)
SUBCONCEPTS	Omnipresence, Calm, Surface
DESCRIPTION	A sculpture by Mario Irarrazabal, 11 meters tall, stands in the Atacama Desert in Chile.



THE ARSENIC BREATH

There is a desert where the soil and drinking water contain high volumes of arsenic. Manifested as orpiment, a bright yellow mineral (used also as artist's pigment), arsenic was always a royal element despite its mortal properties: from the Arabic *al-zarnik*, "the orpiment," based on the Persian *zar*, "gold." Through veritable unnatural selection the poison becomes enriching. Atacama is not only the name of the desert and the driest point on the planet; it is also the name of a people now extinct (through what chemico-political powers?), dissipated throughout the desert line along the Pacific coast. Arsenic is their revenge: as they disappeared, they turned alchemically into bastardized gold infused in the ground and underground waters. Not human anymore, but now elemental, they conspired against the humans: arsenic is their breath, all that is left in the wake of their disappearance. In light of this, is it a coincidence that a giant hand appeared precisely in the sands of Atacama, rising upward, ushering the arrival of a new creature who inhales (ingests) not oxygen but arsenic, neither human, nor animal, but mineral (an inorganic, metallic, toxic, effervescent substance of pure health)? In a reverse act of creation, it is not divine breath that creates the earth (soil and waters) but a terrestrial mineralogy that creates new arsenic-laced air (condensed golden clouds).

REGION	South America
CONCEPT	Time (toxicology)
SUBCONCEPTS	Breath, Alchemy, Conspiracy, Dryness
DESCRIPTION	In the Atacama Desert situated in the Andes, spanning parts of Chile, Argentina, Peru, and Bolivia, geneticists believe they have found a gene which allowed the local population to survive high concentrations of arsenic in water and soil.



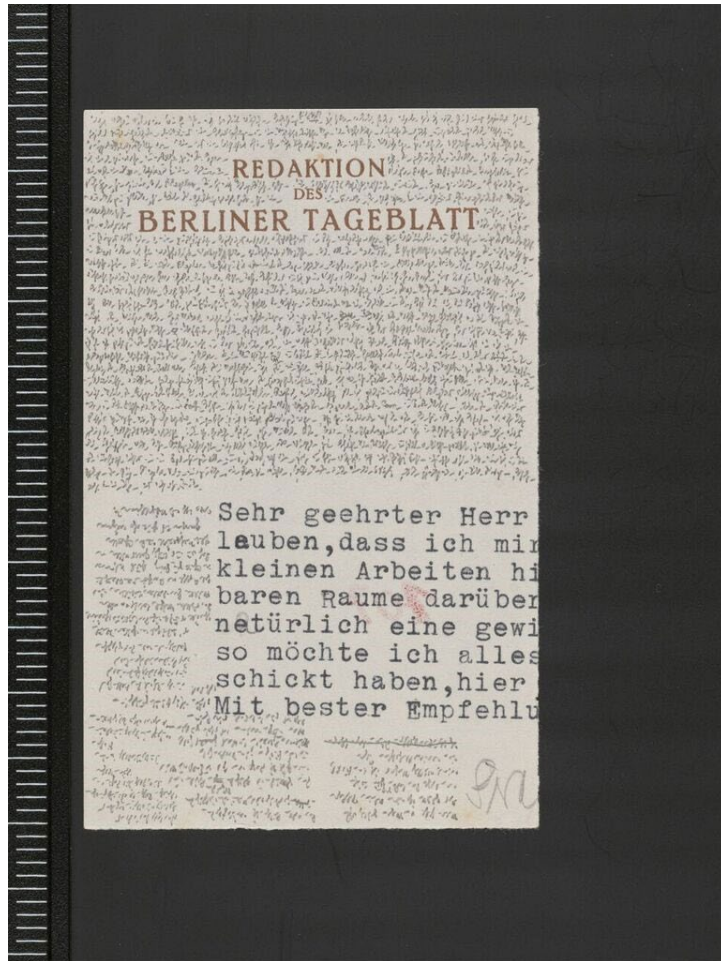
FAIRY TALE 1, SOOTHING FEAR

Fairy tales tell us that everyone is hungry. Not everyone, but everything. Human, animal, plant mutate into each other, and the essential characteristic of existence is to devour. This is what frames all the stories, a blueprint onto which the seemingly innocent narrative is laid out. To devour: out of love or hate or desperation or sheer physical need. It is biological as much as it is metaphysical. It is concrete: “I have to eat you,” the mother says to her children. “Bring me her liver so I can eat it,” says another character. In devouring we have both the act of cruelty (dismembering) and the act of highest intimation (engulfing). Devouring leads to transmutation and intensification of the body. In this respect, fairy tales come closest to the essential characteristic of the earth: that in order to proliferate one has to consume the other. As we all know, beautiful yet strange forms grow out of the mud, or out of compost. This is why in the hands of master painters and writers across centuries “The Garden of Earthly Delights” always depicts devourings of all kinds. The brutalist (from Latin “brutus”, meaning “fierce”) principle lies at the core of Life. The degree of fierceness that inhabits children and animals in fairy tales no doubt emerges out of night and madness. This is also why fairy tales eventually condense into lullabies which are meant to lull us into sleep and calm us down, as they take us back into the night (reality pacified). But even in sleep a certain fierceness abides. How else would one dance with the devil?

REGION	Northern Europe
CONCEPT	Violence (devouring)
SUBCONCEPTS	Brutalism, Lullaby, Sleep
DESCRIPTION	Drawings by Andrea Dezsö populate new translation of the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tales, which reveals radically different content from the old stories.

FAIRY TALE 2, THE CONVALESCENT

There is a writer who wrote short stories on scraps of paper with a special type of microscript in pencil that took decades to decipher. He thought it a proper way to write stories which basically continued where the older fairy tales had ended: for what happens to the characters now? This little sliver of a secret requires discovery through humility. For this writer does not advertise his visions; on the contrary, he buries them within a miniscule script. He writes for himself (to make his gift of writing stronger) and for the imaginary characters themselves (to heal them). Indeed, they are all healed (as philosopher Walter Benjamin claimed), and so is he in the process. Convalescence means a reinvigorated desire to act and nothing else. Suffering means the inability to act, a kinetic failure. Stories: carefully crafted lucid hallucinations. And if fairy tales are trying to trick the readers and listeners with their innocence that masks ruthless cruelty, the author here is trying to trick fairy tales themselves, the entire history of them, by hiding his characters who have overcome their pain behind hallucinatory movements of the pencil, into scattered and fragmented stories, zigzagging in all directions, only in the end to disclose that they are all part of the same story: the work of the convalescent. However, for all this to become clear there is a catch: we need to become a little schizophrenic.



REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Body (healing)
SUBCONCEPTS	Deciphering, Writing, Lucidity
DESCRIPTION	Swiss writer Robert Walser writes stories in microscript that potentially reveal the afterlife of fairy tale characters.

THE DROWNING



A liquid gathering. One doesn't see the bodies anymore, only heads. Even still, acephalic creatures would be more interesting. The contemporary spectacle is alive and it is dead all at the same time. Cement crumbles. The virtues of the leaders are fake and simulated like the reality they govern. Capitalism is an architectural pathology and symptomatology, a bad offering. What binds us then? What binding agent makes us move toward the powerful? As the washed-out clamor of the leaders drowns, the smooth surface of the water remains, reflecting the image of the future, one of new inclinations and enticements.

REGION	Europe
CONCEPT	Myth
SUBCONCEPTS	Capitalism, Cement, Future
DESCRIPTION	Artist Isaac Cordal creates a city in ruins as an image of contemporary global society.

THE AMBULATORY



He who binds understands the habits of his creations. In fact, he provokes them. These beasts have one desire alone: to move. Their energy is of the most supreme kind: kinesis. They rely on the wind, for only through engagement with its erratic swirls do they exist. And unlike all other creatures of the earth, they do not need to eat in order to move. They have no organs. For this reason they seem otherworldly, for they resist the axiom of the earth: that in order to live, one must eat. Furthermore, there is kindness present in the movements of these creatures (made of yellow plastic tubes) that everyone recognizes, which makes it accurate to say that everything which moves lives. Is it possible then, that at the core of the violence that initiates all life lies tenderness?

REGION	Europe/Elsewhere
CONCEPT	Movement
SUBCONCEPTS	Wind, Kinesis, Tenderness
DESCRIPTION	Artist Theo Jansen creates kinetic sculptures whose locomotion is tied to evolutionary concerns.

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Part I

WOODEN ELSEWHERE

<http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2014/05/henrique-oliveira-wood-tunnels/>

ENDLESS AFTERMATH

<http://io9.com/journey-into-the-dystopian-world-of-abandoned-soviet-su-1602292367>

WITCH-HUNTING BRIGADE

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/08/saudi-arabias-war-on-witchcraft/278701/>

BOY WEAPONS-MAKER

<http://in.reuters.com/news/pictures/slideshow?articleId=INRTX13ER0#a=1>

CANNIBAL REBEL

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JUt7-iesfc>

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 1, ANIMAL

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2392721/DALeast-Breathtaking-work-secretive-Chinese-graffiti-artist-world.html>

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 2, MONSTER

<http://www.boredpanda.com/creepy-monsters-sticky-note-drawings-john-kenn-mortensen/>

PRIMORDIAL DREAM 3, NIGHT

<http://www.boredpanda.com/childrens-nightmares-surreal-photography-dream-collector-arthur-tress/>

STRANGULATION AESTHETICS

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2DNMG2s_O0

BLACKSMITH POET

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BROKEN STAIRCASE 1

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BROKEN STAIRCASE 2

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UNDERWATER DANCE

<http://www.messynessychic.com/2014/12/11/the-rotting-underwater-ballroom-of-a-victorian-bernie-madoff/>

HERESY SKIES

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SILK ROOMS

<http://beautifuldecay.com/2014/09/26/lin-tianmiao-spins-ethereal-sculptures-silk/>

<http://www.thisscolossal.com/2013/11/do-ho-suh-home-within-home/>
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WOLF INSTALLATIONS

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A former communist prison island in the Adriatic sea, now abandoned and overgrown with wild plants; the stone garden of a voiceless Iranian peasant who dances ecstatically among his geological formations; a Belgian sculptor who combines wax and flesh to depict human and animal forms in states of incompleteness; a cultural movement in Brazil that transforms the discarded debris of urban centers into massive labyrinths and underground caverns; a blacksmith poet in Afghanistan who alternates between tasks of hammering metal and writing lyrical verses amidst the smoke-clouds of his forge; a Cuban writer whose delirious fixation with the sea compels him to invent a language of pure untimeliness.

ELEMENTAL DISAPPEARANCES casts a wanderer's eye upon an ever-expanding configuration of sites of disturbance. The things sought after are apparitional: they appear and disappear at will; they perfect the art of materialization and vanishing. Such is the nature of living dangerously, and with it the short duration of enchantment. This collection tracks provocative ideas, artifacts, and phenomena rising and fading across different territories of the contemporary world. Through a constellation of powerful thought-images, the authors uncover spaces of an ephemeral and fugitive nature in order to generate a fractal vision of our time and beyond.





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