NATØ:

Exploring architecture as a narrative medium in postmodern London

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For James – who kept me sane.

And for Ian and Anne, whose support made it possible.

Copyright Statement

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the way that architecture, (that is space, buildings, cities and urban environments), has been and continues to be speculated upon through a rich palette of narrative methods. Taking NATØ, the group of young architects led by Nigel Coates that emerged from the Architectural Association in the early 1980s as its subject matter, the thesis questions how architectural production is able to narrate and the modes and methods it employs. The research reveals echoes and resemblances between NATØ projects and a wider artistic, filmic and literary culture that emerged from the specific political, social and physical conditions of 1980s London.

Personal archives of original NATØ material – including drawings, photographs, magazines, ephemera and writings – are exposed for the first time. Combined with personal interviews with NATØ members and other significant individuals, the narrative traces the group's evolution and development at the AA in Unit 10 in the late 1970s, to their active period between 1983-1987. The thesis also examines the key influences of Coates and his early work: exploring his relationship with Bernard Tschumi, the influence of a period spent in New York and his association with diverse artists and filmmakers in London. As such, the research presents the first detailed examination of NATØ and produces original insight into the territory of architectural narrativity.

The thesis contextualises this moment of narrative architecture with the evolution of narratology over the same period – a discipline whose changing consideration of narrative in the 1980s expanded from a literary basis to take in a broad range of media. Engaging with contemporary narratology, the thesis employs concepts and terms from narrative studies to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of how narrative functions in architectural production. The thesis also constitutes a history of postmodernism that represents an alternative to the dominant architectural mode, considering NATØ's output as a subcultural form of architectural production that drew on techniques of bricolage, montage, fragmentation, polyvocality and defamiliarisation.

Framing NATØ's work through an understanding of the way in which their use of medium evolved alongside their conceptual ideas, the thesis considers the material in relation to four distinct areas, each constituting a chapter: performance and video, the drawing, the magazine and the exhibition. Chapter 1 on performance and video exposes the influence of both Tschumi and a pivotal year spent in New York on Coates, and the development of his ideas from student to co-tutor at the AA in the late 1970s. The chapter proposes a move from the highly cerebral and literary approach of Tschumi, to one concerned with the presentness of direct experience via video. Chapter 2 takes the architectural drawing as its subject, showing how Coates evolved the drawing in his unit at the AA in the early 1980s, and how in turn NATØ employed the drawing as an

expressive narrative medium. Chapter 3 considers the group's self-published magazine, *NATØ*, produced between 1983-85, drawing parallels with street style publications *i-D* and *The Face*, of the same era. The chapter proposes the graphic design of the magazine as a medium through which NATØ developed the explorations of the drawings into a more complex form – positing the idea of the mise-en-scène of the magazine. Finally, Chapter 4 examines the apotheosis of NATØ's output: the exhibitions *Gamma City* at the Air Gallery (London, 1985), and *Heathrow* part of 'The British Edge' at the Institute of Contemporary Art, (Boston, 1987). Taking the ideas established in the previous chapter into three dimensions, the chapter proposes the installation as a microcosm of the narrative experience of the city that NATØ sought – evoked through an embodied drift through space, and the replacement of the architectural scale model with the auratic object or stimulator artefact.

Concluding, the framework of narrative architecture set out in the thesis is proposed as both a period preoccupation and a way of thinking about spatial narrativity more broadly. It critical assesses the potential for such architectural narrativity to be designed and built, finding the truest form of narrative architecture emerging from the city condition itself. Finally, the conclusion proposes a lineage of projects and ideas that have evolved since the late 1980s whose concepts represent a continuation of NATØ's preoccupations.

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Author's Declaration

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature_____

Date_____

Introduction

24 Feb '84

Natø Brief ⟶ For Internal consumption only!

Here we stand... remember we are to be brazen, this is propaganda.

We now have the chance to stab at the heart of the Festival, which appears to be purely aimed at why architects should get more work and bollocks to any artifice.

Politicaally we aim to destroy the notion of profession and emanate forth to some vision of the 'public' as an exciting option, hence the role of the fasion features is not so much one of aesthetic choice rather that of subliminal doctrine.

1 Festival

2 Social investigation

3 Production

These are the catogories that the Nato stamp of Hysteria will springboard from.

The danger, as always, is not to get bogged down in defining ourselves as a style, move fast-keep them guessing.

We chose not to critisise but to use.

Remember society in London is like the docklands- decayed, so use it.

Architect is a redundent business.

Raw wits and e lusive self delusion will work,

The three main 'products' in this issue: Slag city, office, Star RIBA

We travel over the frontier and join the rest outside architecture.

Collapse of education, what do we teach? apprentice to albion

Appreciation of skill?

Do stop beiing student, profession of albion a manual for disiples

Slogan.

Excite and offend

Nato produces beyond the womb of Albion

And remekxxmber - Autorship is un..........

Witness the albion process around us - its manifestations as products

Theory of Fashion, is it relevant to participate enjoy it

Smell the lust of something new

Fear of analysis and explanation

Figure 1: Note from Mark Prizeman to NATØ members, 24 February (1984).

Excite and Offend

In February 1984, a little under a year after the formation of architectural group Narrative Architecture Today (NATØ), Mark Prizeman issued a memo outlining the aims and themes of the second issue of *NATØ* magazine (fig.1) The note proposed the ways in which NATØ would 'stab at the heart' of the RIBA Festival of Architecture – the year-long event celebrating 150 years of the Institute – urging his fellow members to 'Excite and offend' and 'smell the lust of something new'. Prizeman's diatribe began with a call to arms: 'Here we stand...remember we are to be brazen, this is propaganda', expressed in a strident 'us' and 'them' tone – NATØ versus Architecture. Performing the rhetorical language of the avant-garde, Prizeman announced NATØ's plan to 'destroy the notion of profession' and 'travel over the frontier and join the rest outside architecture'.

A year earlier, the group had been marked out as *les enfants terribles* of the architectural profession by Architectural Association external examiners James Stirling and Edward Jones, who had considered Nigel Coates's Unit 10 cohort of 1982-83 not worthy of their AA Diploma. Saved by the head of the school, Alvin Boyarsky, tutor Coates selected eight students (Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Carlos Villanueva Brant, Robert Mull, Catrina Beevor, Christina Norton, Peter Fleissig, and Martin Benson) to join him in forming a collective that would demonstrate a new mode of architectural thought – narrative architecture. This is a founding myth that has been much repeated. However the story of NATØ has been little documented beyond this initial rupture, and focus has been trained primarily on Coates – spawning the alternative moniker 'Nigel and the Others' – whose career has been considered the development of NATØ's initial aims.[1] This thesis thus sets out a more detailed, contextual history of NATØ, told through original and unpublished archival material including photographs, drawings, and ephemera, restoring a truer polyvocal narrative of the group's ethos and development. Tracing the formation of the group at the AA, the thesis examines the evolution of Coates's unit, including his formative years alongside Bernard Tschumi between 1974-80, before investigating NATØ's short period of activity between 1983-87 across the media of drawing, publishing, and exhibiting.

Prizeman's memo sets out a number of key themes and questions that shape this thesis; he claimed that NATØ stand apart from the architectural profession, in conscious defiance of the mainstream architects' drive to 'get more work', moving outside what they perceived to be a closed and hermetic field which excluded other cultural forms ('the rest outside architecture'). This thesis assesses the group's claim to autonomy from the profession by examining its place within and relation to architectural culture in Britain in the 1980s. Disengaged from contemporaneous architectural discourse as expressed in the

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[1] Jonathan Glancey, Nigel Coates: Body Buildings and City Scapes, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); Rick Poynor, *Nigel Coates : The City in Motion* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989).

pages of the specialist press, NATØ aligned themselves instead with a broader spectrum of emergent popular cultural modes: the fanzine and the lifestyle magazine, club culture, street style, the pop video, film, fashion design and product design – identifying with a particular stream of post-punk expression: a celebration of the abject, an aesthetic of entropy, and a do-it-yourself (DIY) provisionality. NATØ expressed a strong desire to be part of the 1980s subcultural expression of identity that converged in London, choosing to subvert the conventions of architectural production in ways that this thesis reveals as postmodern. Indeed, postmodernity is a current running throughout this study, one which presents a contemporary re-reading of postmodernism that moves beyond the conventional analysis which stresses the co-option of postmodernist architecture as a corporate style and aesthetic of mainstream orthodoxy. This reassessment of postmodernism centres on London in the 1980s, and proposes that NATØ were part of a broader cultural impulse that emerged from a particular urban milieu. As such, the research examines NATØ's connection to their specific temporal and geographic moment, asking to what extent their ideas were a specific period preoccupation.

Implicit in NATØ's name is a foregrounding of the narrative potential of architecture, and as such, this thesis engages and questions the potential for architectural production to be narrative, developing an original contribution to the conceptualisation of narrative architecture.[2] NATØ's preoccupation with narrative permeated every aspect of their work – their methods, the content of their designs and their modes of representation. In a manifesto-like statement of intent published in the 1980-81 AA Prospectus, two years before the formation of NATØ, Coates set out a series of principles which would be carried throughout both his own and NATØ's work, and constitute an approach to narrative architecture:

> Simultaneously, architecture will be engendered as art, as passion, as sensation. Articulating a dedication of experiment, programmes will explore an attitude to design in parallel with the most intense of contemporary urban issues, its crises, its fads and transgressions. The city (London) will generate metaphoric propositions which expand beyond their given topography. Embracing the widest aspects of style and life, they will instate architecture as an aggregate expressionism for now [...] By exploring the neurotic edge between action and deliberate style, fundamental issues will be cast into architectural roles.[3]

Though predating NATØ, this quote contains all the key elements of NATØ's conceptualisation of narrative architecture, ideas that will be explored and tested in this thesis: architecture as sensation, design as attitude, urban issues, London, style and

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[2] Narrative architecture has begun to be theorised as an explicit mode of architecture by Sophia Psarra in *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning in Buildings* (Routledge, 2009), and by Nigel Coates in *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012).

[3] 1980-81 *Prospectus Architectural Association School of Architecture* (London: Architectural Association (Great Britain), 1980), p.41.

lifestyle, expressionism, action, and is also a vigorous piece of writing in a tone that anticipates the voice of *NATØ* magazine. The thesis interrogates the techniques and methods NATØ used to express these themes, and the extent to which they succeeded in producing architectural narrativity. Proposing narrative as a contested term, the research frames a consideration of the narrative function of NATØ's media and methods through contemporary narratology. Narrative studies have thus far failed to take architectural narrativity into account, and so a core aim of this thesis is to take existing concepts and terms from narratology into architecture – challenging the narrowness of narratology and casting new light on narrative modes of architectural production. The thesis explores the key techniques that NATØ used to develop narrative architecture and evaluates their success, asking how they differ to models of narrative in other media. The thesis will also consider how architectural concepts can be produced without building, reflecting on the legacy of a group whose output was limited to three magazines and a small number of exhibitions, and who never built as a group. Following on, the thesis asks what the implications of NATØ's ideas are for built architecture – how was architecture reconsidered in the light of NATØ?

London 1974-1987

The 1970s are widely acknowledged by historians as being the period of greatest instability in Britain since the Second World War, and a decade of extreme economic and political turbulence resulting in major social unrest. A number of recent texts have documented the period, including Andy Beckett's *When the Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies,* and Dominic Sandbrook's *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979*, which both present detailed analyses of the 1970s that characterise it as a decade of contradiction and contrasts – far from the simplistic picture of pure decline that is often described.[4] Sandbrook explains that though inflation and unemployment were extremely high, this was a period of relative wealth, when people spent money on entertainment, holidays abroad, eating out, colour televisions and central heating – and that although there were pockets of extreme poverty, most people were better off financially in 1979 than they had been in 1970.[5] Beckett also highlights that though the decade is remembered for its unstable politics and failing Labour government, it also saw the rise of environmentalism, feminism, Gay Liberation and action against racism in the form of the Rock Against Racism concerts; as Beckett describes: 'the seventies, for all the gothic prose it usually prompts, was about moments of possibility as well as periods of entropy; about stretches of calm as well as sudden

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[4] Andy Beckett, *When the Lights Went out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (London: Faber, 2010); Dominic Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun: The Battle for Britain, 1974-1979* (London, England; New York: Penguin, 2013).
[5] Sandbrook, p.xix.

calamity.'[6] Though NATØ did not form until 1983, the 1970s form an important part of the frame within which the group and its emergence must be viewed, particularly as the decade laid the ground for the dramatic changes to British life that were brought by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. As Beckett describes, Thatcher's 'policies and ways of operating politically were, in a substantial sense, products of the previous decade. They were reactions against the "failures" of the seventies, a counter-revolution against its consensuses, a determination not to repeat its 'mistakes.'[7] Sandbrook designates 1974-79 as a 'decisive moment' which shaped an important change from 'an old collective working-class culture' to the 'emergence of individualism as the dominant force in our political, economic and social life.'[8]

As Graham Stewart describes in his recent volume on the decade – *Bang!: A History of Britain in the 1980s* – the 1980s were defined by Thatcher in all areas: 'politics, economics, the arts and society', shaped either by 'attraction or repulsion...to and from the guiding spirit of the age.'[9] The monetarist policies introduced by Thatcher, characterised by Stewart as 'classical liberalism and minimal state inference', saw public spending cut by £4 billion, tax cuts for higher earners, privatisation of large public sector companies including British Aerospace, British Gas, Jaguar, British Telecom, British Steel, British Petroleum and Rolls Royce, and deregulation which included lifting foreign exchange controls – paving the way for the total deregulation of the stock market in 1986 (the 'Big Bang').[10] In the first two years of Thatcher's government, these reforms devastated British industry, sending unemployment soaring (it hit 3 million in January 1982) and contributing to a deep recession.[11]

In his text on Britain in the 1980s, historian Alwyn W. Turner explains that 'Britain, the first industrial nation in the world, was now being told that it could enter a new age of prosperity if it would only abandon the tired old tradition of manufacturing and instead, cast against type, take up a role as a service-based economy.'[12] Indeed, the 1980s saw the birth of not only many new technologies such as the personal computer, the Walkman, the mobile phone and the VCR, but also a profusion of new professions – the video game designer, the music video producer, the telecommunications salesman, and so on. Historian Robert Hewison describes technology during this period as a 'new form of perception', with devices such as the VDU and the television the new source of information that 'offer invisible connections to a network that holds the total sum of

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[6] Beckett, p.5.

[7] Ibid., p.3.

[8] Sandbrook, p.xxi.

[9] Graham Stewart, *Bang!: A History of Britain in the 1980s* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p.1.

[10] Ibid., p.49.

[11] Ibid. p.59.

[12] Alwyn W Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s*, PB Reissue edition (Aurum Press Ltd, 2013), p.xi.

human knowledge, past and present.'[13] This thesis will show how NATØ were captivated by these technological changes, and as Coates wrote in 1988, how they had fundamental implications for every aspect of life:

> As a result, we think, work, play differently now. The floppy disc has replaced the book; the telephone has barred the visitor; the credit card has done away with money; video has recorded the movie; taped music has become more real than live performance; advertising has sublimated the product; and as Baudrillard has shown, the television is the new measure of our perceptions.[14]

The 1970s and 1980s also witnessed major changes in British cities, with the pressure of the emerging post-industrial society shaping the physical fabric of buildings and space. Much housing stock built in the post-war period began to enter a state of disrepair, lacking the investment required for maintenance, while older Victorian buildings were 'veiled in a thick layer of funereal cinders' – the remnants of the industrial economy.[15] The result was a large number of people moving out of cities, including a loss of three quarters of a million from Greater London, where shops were boarded up and large swathes of land lay empty, derelict and undeveloped.[16] Indeed, London in particular was physically transformed during this period, a change architectural historian Joe Kerr describes as 'dramatic and traumatic', and 'unprecedented in character and scope.'[17] Perhaps the centre of this metamorphosis, and the subject of NATØ's imagination, was east London, and the docklands in particular. The collapse of British manufacturing that had begun in the 1960s driven by changes in technology and patterns of world trade, and the shock of the oil crisis in 1973, continued rapidly through the 1970s, impacting directly on London's docks, which were an integral part of British industry. Fuelled further by containerisation which required deeper docks than the Thames could provide, by 1981 all of London's docks had closed – leaving just Tilbury in Essex, at the mouth of the Thames. The closing of the ports went hand-in-hand with the decline of manufacturing industries in the surrounding areas of east London – which had been home to numerous 'obnoxious industries' not tolerated elsewhere in London since the 19th century.[18] Shipbuilding, engineering and refining factories all closed down, leaving

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[13] Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.42.
[14] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.97.
[15] Ibid., p.80.
[16] Ibid., p80.
[17] Joe Kerr 'Introduction to the First Edition' in Joe Kerr and Andrew Gibson, *London from Punk to Blair*, 2nd edition, (London: Reaktion, 2012), p.20
[18] Tim Brindley, Yvonne Rydin and Gerry Stoker, *Remaking Planning: The Politics of Urban Change* (Routledge, 2005), p.78

behind large warehouse buildings and yards, which very quickly fell into a state of decrepitude, alongside the docks.[19] This scene of desolation was completed by the departure of large numbers of residents, attracted by better housing and employment in other parts of London, leaving the east not only derelict, but also empty.[20] Access to the area was poor, as the main road, the A13/East India Dock Road, was over-capacity and frequently congested, and public transportation consisted of one just bus route – contributing to its isolation and un-inhabitation.[21]

As a direct response, the government set up the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) in 1981, a quasi-governmental agency which was designated control of eight and a half square miles of land in the Docklands area, north and south of the river. The aim was rapid development, and as such, major deregulation was put into place in the form of an Enterprise Zone at the Isle of Dogs, with no planning restrictions, a ten-year tax break for businesses willing to invest in the area, as well as 100% tax-deductible capital allowances.[22] Though proposals claimed that development would bring employment to the area, in the first six years between 1981-87, unemployment rose, with 13,000 jobs lost as remaining industries were closed to make way for new building projects.[23] The market-led housing schemes built in the area ignored the serious housing crisis and instead produced small flats for private sale to primarily single people and childless couples – 85% of the housing built between 1981-90 was for sale.[24] As Hewison explained, the Docklands project was an opportunity for the government to present their 'preferred image of the future', or as Stewart put it, to 'showcase an entirely different vision for Britain's future prosperity' – either way, a firm message that Britain was back on its feet.[25] After an initial test of 600 homes in Beckton in 1981, work began on new schemes at the former Surrey Docks in Southwark and then in Wapping in 1982, accompanied by permission for the Docklands Light Railway which began construction in 1984, to be opened in 1987 – the year that the contract to build the centrepiece development at Canary Wharf was signed.[26]

This characterisation of east London, with its sharply contrasting condition of severe dereliction and fast, market-led development, is the context framing NATØ's work – which was driven by the desire to provide some counter or alternative to state-led visions of the future that excluded the vitality and disorder of the city proper. This thesis thus explores the relationship between NATØ and London, investigating to what extent

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[19] Ibid., p.78.
[20] Ibid., p.79.
[21] 'What the area was like in 1981', http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/ [accessed 6 August, 2014]
[22] Hewison, (1990), p.80.
[23] Ibid., p.80.
[24] Ibid., p.80-81.
[25] Hewison, (1990), p.81; Stewart, p.372.
[26] 'Housing in the Renewed London Docklands', English Partnerships, http://www.lddc-history.org.uk/housing/index.html

the urban condition of the city was the catalyst for their work, and whether this was a creative impulse shared by other artists and designers.

A reappraisal of postmodernism

In *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (1986), Andreas Huyssen explained that it was possible to salvage postmodernism from both its 'detractors' and its 'champions', by discussing it as a 'historical condition' rather than as a style, and as such it would be possible to 'unlock the critical moment in postmodernism itself and to sharpen its cutting edge'.[27] Huyssen's description of postmodernism thus resists producing a definition or any simplification, and instead establishes the 'historical contingencies and pressures' that shaped 'aesthetic and cultural' debates from the mid 1970s through to the mid 1980s, when he was writing.[28] This thesis, written almost thirty years later in a more retrospective and reflective mode, takes the same position, and seeks to recover a contemporary re-reading of postmodernism through NATØ's work that avoids the simplifying definitions of postmodernism in architecture that have focused on the stylised, two-dimensional modes of pastiche historicism that rapidly came to dominate architectural postmodernist discourse. NATØ offers a case study of postmodernism that does not fit the picture of 1980s corporatised architecture, and thus recoups a more generous conceptualisation of architectural postmodernism.

Mary McLeod's analysis of architecture and postmodernism, published in *Assemblage* in 1989, presented a view that sought to reclaim characteristics of architectural postmodernism that had been lost or ignored, and distilled the impulse shared by postmodern architects down to the 'search for architectural communication, the desire to make architecture a vehicle of cultural expression', where instead of seeking an architectural language through function or structure, it is found in meaning.[29] McLeod describes how this communicative act was achieved through a rediscovery of history, treated in very different ways – from the subversive, discursive and ironic Vanna Venturi house (1961) by Venturi, to the 'cartooned exaggeration' and 'randomly scavenged' facades of works such as Philip Johnson's AT&T building (1984) and Robert A.M. Stern's pastiche-styled houses, which eventually became the mass produced language of the corporation: 'Mauve and gray, falling keystones, giant pilasters, and temple fronts had all become ubiquitous clichés'.[30]

The 1980s saw postmodernist architecture as a set of concepts move from a position of 'critical outsider' to a mode that was 'derivative and caustic' and lacked the

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[27] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indiana University Press, 1986), p.182.
[28] Ibid., p.183.
[29] Mary McLeod, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism', Assemblage, 1989, pp.23–59.
[30] Ibid., p.37.

'expansive and liberating qualities' of the previous decade; indeed, as Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt point out, one of the lasting legacies of this decade was a skewed understanding of postmodernism in the present day.[31] Not only critics, but practitioners themselves – including Hans Hollein, Ettore Sottsass, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Frank Gehry – denounced or renounced postmodernism, as it became the international style of the corporation.[32] Charles Jencks saw the co-option of the postmodernist values of communicative historical referencing and double coding by the Disney Corporation, and arch-Modernist Philip Johnson's turn to postmodern pastiche in his AT&T building, as 'the kiss of death' that debased the whole agenda.[33] For Disney, respected postmodernists who had been integral to the founding of postmodernism such as Aldo Rossi, Robert A.M. Stern, Arata Isozaki, Gehry and Michael Graves produced buildings that, at their worst, were hyper-scaled, spectacularised entertainment architecture – moving critical parody into pastiche, and replacing irony with cliché. In Britain, postmodernism was also simplified and transformed into a digestible commodity through its alliance with historicism, in particular through the work of neo-classicists including Leon Krier, John Simpson and Quinlan Terry, promoted by the Prince of Wales.[34] This smothering of the original tenets of the highly plural and multivalent postmodernist mode into one that appeared singular, retrograde, imitative and at times grotesquely over the top, had the effect of closing down critical discourse on the topic – sealing postmodernism's fate as 'the pantomime villain' of architecture that could be summarily denigrated in terms that failed to acknowledge its more complex roots.[35]

A number of recent publications have sought to produce re-readings of postmodernism from a contemporary perspective to reassert a more complex constellation of ideas. The major exhibition at The Victoria and Albert Museum, *Style and Subversion, 1970-1990* (2011), retold the story of postmodernity across the visual arts and music in a broad-sweep of a twenty-year period that characterised the many sub-categories and sub-genres – from the seminal early writings and built works of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, the product design of Memphis, hip-hop music and style, to the later corporatisation of architectural style and star-architects, taking in not only the dominant streams of American and European artists and designers, but also revealing postmodernity in other regions of the world including Delhi, Spain and Japan. In the

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[31] Jane Pavitt and Glenn Adamson, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90* (London: V&A, 2011), p.88.
[32] Ibid., p.88.
[33] Charles Jencks, *The New Paradigm in Architecture*, (New Haven and London;Yale University Press, 2002), p.157.
[34] Léa-Catherine Szacka, 'Historicism versus communication: The basic debate of the 1980 biennale' in Charles Jencks, Sean Griffiths, Charles Holland, Sam Jacob, 'Radical Post-Modernism', *Architectural Design*, (Hoboken, N.J.; Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p.98-105. (p.99)
[35] Kester Rattenbury, 'Too Good to be True: The Survival of English Everyday Pomo' in Charles Jencks and others, (2011), pp.106-113. (p.107).

accompanying publication, edited by Adamson and Pavitt, an eclectic range of essays by designers and theorists are assembled that reflects the interdisciplinary nature of postmodernism design put forward by the exhibition, resisting a singular mode or definition and emphasising the erosion of disciplinary boundaries that characterise the condition. In their foreword to the publication, Adamson and Pavitt explain how the composition of the volume reflects the impossibility of reducing postmodernist approaches to a distinct set of values, setting out attributes that at a fundamental level chime with the mode of postmodernism put forward in this thesis:

> The kaleidoscopic structure of this book – our own single narrative, accompanied by a 'heap of fragments', essays that are multi-vocal and wide-ranging, addressing the particular, episodic and personal – is the means by which we have sought to accommodate this complexity.[36]

Indeed, singular and all-encompassing definitions of postmodernism lose the plurality which is at the core of postmodern approaches. The notion of polyvocalilty – the presence of numerous voices, interlinked, overlapping or contradictory – is thus central to the way this thesis treats both the period and NATØ as a group.

Another recent publication, a volume of *AD* edited by Charles Jencks and the architectural practice FAT titled 'Radical Post-Modernism' (2011) focuses on reclaiming postmodernism through the work of a number of contemporary practitioners, including FAT, muf, Foreign Office Architects, and Atelier Bow-Wow.[37] Like Adamson and Pavitt's volume, the collected essays seek to expose the plurality and richness that can be found in earlier works of postmodernist architecture such as Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates *Guild House* (1964), Charles Moore's *Santa Barbara Faculty Club* (1968), and paper works including Arata Isozaki's *Tsukuba Centre Building* (1979-83) and Hans Hollein's *Aircraft Carrier City* (1964), relating their ideas to the work of contemporary practitioners. In her contribution, Kester Rattenbury characterises the early mode of postmodernism – as located in the work of Terry Farrell, Aldo van Eyck and Piers Gough, and the writings of Venturi and Scott Brown, and Bernard Rudofsky – as 'intelligent, eclectic, witty, profoundly humanistic, and keen to debunk an inflexible, elitist and dangerously authoritarian Modernism.'[38] Rattenbury then attributes a shift from this preferred mode of postmodernism to one driven by commercial interests, identifying Farrell's *Embankment Place* (1990) and Venturi Scott Brown Architect's *Sainsbury Wing* (1991), both of which begun in the mid 1980s, as markers of the assimilation of

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[36] Jane Pavitt and Glenn Adamson, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90* (London: V&A, 2011); Charles Jencks and others, 'Radical Post-Modernism', *Architectural Design*, (Hoboken, N.J.; Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), p.10.
[37] Charles Jencks, Sean Griffiths, Charles Holland, Sam Jacob, 'Radical Post-Modernism', *Architectural Design*, (Hoboken, N.J.; Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).
[38] Kester Rattenbury, 'Too Good to be True: The Survival of English Everyday Pomo' in Charles Jencks and others, (2011), pp.106-113.

postmodernism into the establishment and the language of the commercial developer. For Rattenbury, both schemes reduced the wit, satire and often modest and community-minded nature of postmodernism to a style that was co-opted by big business (in the case of *Embankment Place*) or the institution (in the case of the *Sainsbury Wing*, which also represented corporate sponsorship of the arts); as Rattenbury explains, postmodernism up to this point had been the 'secret weapon of the architectural left', an alternative to commercialised Modernism that could be cheap, self-built and highly contextual.[39]

A number of other recent texts also propose significant contributions to the theorisation of postmodern architecture from a contemporary perspective. Jorge Otero-Pailos' *Architecture's Historical Turn* (2010) foregrounds a phenomenological approach to architecture as an unexamined element, or 'intellectual contour', of postmodernism, centring on the work and writings of Jean Labatut, Charles Moore, Christian Norberg-Schulz and Kenneth Frampton from the 1960s, until the 1980s.[40] The text describes the phenomenological approach, which prioritised the direct, transhistorical sensory experience of architecture, as an 'early phase in the intellectual development of postmodernism' from which the more dominant modes can be considered to have evolved.[41] Otero-Pailos positions the work of Moore in particular as representative of an approach to historical architecture that sought to understand it through personal experience and memory, rather than style and form – legitimising 'fantasy, daydreams, and reveries as sources of creativity and as vehicles for accessing and interpreting historic buildings'.[42] In this way, the architects and theorists employed by Otero-Pailos demonstrate a postmodern approach that sought 'surplus experience', an excess of sensation that offers the visitor a heightened engagement with the present moment of the building.[43] Though the phenomenologists of Otero-Pailos' text were highly influenced by phenomenological philosophers, and sought an integration of theory to intellectualise architecture, there are more basic parallels between the proposition of their work as effect, and NATØ's ideas, as this thesis will go on to show.

Michelangelo Sabatino traces another alternate genealogy in *Pride in Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy* (2011), through the work of Ernesto Rogers, Carlo Scarpa, and Eero Saarinen, locating the use of historical reference in what has conventionally been considered Modernist work, much earlier than the period

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[39] Ibid., p.110.
[40] Jorge Otero-Pailos, *Architecture's Historical Turn: Phenomenology and the Rise of the Postmodern* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
[41] Ibid., p.xv.
[42] Ibid., p.105.
[43] 'Surplus Experience: Kenneth Frampton and the Subterfuges of Bourgeois Taste' in Otero-Pailos, pp.183-250.

of postmodernism.[44] The text thus posits a convincing argument for the history of postmodernism as a collection of phases and tendencies that solidified only much later on, rather than as a dramatic rupture as characterised by Charles Jencks' famous declaration in *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* of the death of Modernism on the day the Pruitt-Igoe housing scheme was demolished in 1972.[45] Other texts which reappraise postmodernism in architecture include Reinhold Martin's *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (2010), which is primarily concerned with the ways in which architecture has shaped late capitalism and the connections between space and power, the social and the market, and Emmanuel Petit's *Irony, or, The Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (2013), which presents a detailed analysis of the ways in which Stanley Tigerman, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenmann, Arata Isozaki and Robert Venturi used irony in complex ways hitherto ignored by stylistic assessments of their works.[46] Though conceptually distant from NATØ and the ideas of this thesis, these texts share an approach to a historical period that seeks to look anew at projects, architects and buildings from the postmodern period, and gain fresh insight that can be brought to bear on current theory and practice. The texts mentioned here attempt a fundamental unravelling of the epistemological foundation of postmodern architecture, by contrast, this thesis uses a single case study to formulate an alternate trajectory from the mid 1970s to the present –a new genealogy of the postmodern.

Both McLeod and the more contemporary writings described above share the notion that architectural postmodernism was in its truer, or perhaps 'best', form before it became a commodified, institutionalised style stripped of its complexities, and these texts all present readings of different strands of what can be considered architectural postmodernism. Drawing on the notion of the subculture, the thesis describes NATØ's position within the conditions of late capitalisation and commercialisation that is distinct from other architects during the period. McLeod's emphasis on the communicative potential of architecture as a cultural object being at the heart of postmodern approaches to architecture resonates strongly with NATØ's oeuvre, and this thesis will examine the ways in which such a connotative architectural language was created and expressed. Further, the thesis explores how NATØ's treatment of historical reference differed from more dominant modes of postmodern architecture, and though prioritised experience and sensuality, did so in a way that was different to the phenomenologists described by Otero-Pailos – seeking a form of presentness, rather than temporal transcendence. The narrative

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[44] Michelangelo Sabatino, *Pride in Modesty: Modernist Architecture and the Vernacular Tradition in Italy*, Reprint edition (University of Toronto Press, 2011).

[45] Charles Jencks, The Language of Post-Modern Architecture (New York: Rizzoli, 1977), pp. 9-10.

[46] Reinhold Martin, *Utopia's Ghost Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Emmanuel Petit, *Irony; Or, the Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

of postmodernism presented in this thesis is also highly contextually situated, tied inextricably to NATØ's context in 1980s London which shapes a mode of postmodern architecture that is particularly visceral and material, with a psychogeographic relation to the city.

A subcultural architecture

In issue one of *NATØ* magazine (1983), Coates recounts the story of NATØ's formation in sensational terms that emphasised the subversive position of the group; Stirling's and Jones' reaction to the unit's work was described as 'scenes of anger, horror, dismissal', and Boyarsky's rescue as a 'succès de scandale'.[47] At the end of the article, Coates explains that 'the label of "avant-garde"' had been used to describe the group, 'sometimes as a term of abuse and sometimes as an excited acknowledgement'.[48] Indeed, most accounts of NATØ cite the Stirling incident as proof of the radical nature of the group; Rick Poynor's chapter on NATØ in *The City in Motion* (1989) makes frequent parallels between the group and the Italian Futurists of the 1910s, and attributes NATØ with 'all the characteristics of an avant-garde art movement in miniature. The manifestos, slogans and shock tactics, the strong sense of group identity'.[49] As Poynor points out, it was certainly in part the fact that NATØ was born through 'media controversy' that gave them the air of a radical group, however, this thesis will contend otherwise, aligning them not with the avant-garde but with the more apposite mode of the 'subcultural'.

In his classic text *Theory of the Avant Garde (*1974), Peter Bürger posited the notion that the failure of the early twentieth century avant-gardes to supersede art resulted in repetitions of that failure by subsequent avant-garde movements:

> In a changed context, the resumption of avant-gardiste intentions with the means of avant-gardism can no longer even have the limited effectiveness the historical avant-gardes achieved [...] To formulate more pointedly: the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the avant-garde as art and thus negates genuinely avant-garde intentions.[50]

Writing a decade later, Hal Foster concurs that the American avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s – artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Ellsworth Kelly, Yves Klein, Ad Reinhardt, Dan Flavin, and Donald Judd – merely 'reprised and revised' the devices of the historical-avant-garde, suggesting that techniques such as 'collage and assemblage, the readymade and the grid, mono-chrome painting and constructed sculpture' had lost their critical power due to their assimilation into the very culture that the historical-avant-garde

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[47] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ*, 1, (1983), pp.8-11 (p.9).
[48] Ibid., p.11.
[49] Rick Poynor, *Nigel Coates : The City in Motion* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989), p.37.
[50] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), translated by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), p.58.

sought to subvert.[51] Similarly, Simon Sadler explains that the architectural neo-avant-garde of the same period 'traded radical forms as an artistic rather than social challenge', and suggests that groups such as Archigram used the language of the avant-garde to 'reassert the importance of dissent from the worldwide Modernist "orthodoxy"'.[52]

In this respect it is possible to understand NATØ as yet another neo-avant-garde wave, conceivably the last, in that they employed the language and modes of the avant-garde – as Poynor described – however this is not a satisfactory way to characterise NATØ. It seems as though the label neo-avant-garde is used merely to describe the latest or most progressive stream, implying a sense of derivation and distance from the truer, supposedly more authentic, historical-avant-garde. The term neo-avant-garde is also applied to groups and artists that are in any way new or shocking, with often very little relationship to the radical social aims that the historic term 'avant-garde' refers to. It is also simplistic to suggest that because NATØ bore the 'manifestos, slogans and shock tactics' of the avant-garde that this therefore made them avant-garde themselves, indeed, as this thesis shows, NATØ's strategies and methods bear a stronger resemblance to the subcultures of street style, fashion and lifestyle magazines than to the historical-avant-garde. In the late 1970s, punk momentarily offered what appeared to be a real threat to order in a way that art, or the avant-garde, no longer seemed capable of. This thesis asks – what did punk lend to NATØ? And can the term subcultural in a broader sociological sense, and its associated term bricolage, be applied effectively to their work and approach?

NATØ's point of reference throughout their output are not the Futurists or the Surrealists, nor any other mode of historical or neo-avant-garde, instead they frequently reference fashion designers such as Vivienne Westwood, post-punk new-wave bands such as Bow Wow Wow and Heaven 17, and the ideas of 'cultural terrorists' such as Malcolm McLaren, as well as the youth street style they saw in *i-D* (1980-) and *The Face* (1980-2004).[53] Although by the start of the 1980s the punk phenomenon of 1976-77 had long since passed (the disbanding of *The Sex Pistols* at the start of 1978 cited as the 'death' of punk by John Savage[54]), the music scene had exploded into a rampant proliferation of sub-genres and collaged styles at the end of the decade – as Savage describes in *England's Dreaming*: 'pop's linear time was shattered forever, there would be no more unified 'movements', but tribes, as pop time became forever multiple, Postmodern.'[55] The postmodernisation of subculture – post-punk – saw the techniques of styling through bricolage, visual montage and DIY take on a new-found freedom, the

[51] Hal Foster, 'What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?', *October*, 70 (1994), p.5–32

[52] Simon Sadler, 'An Avant-garde Academy', in Ballantyne Andrew, ed., *Architectures: Modernism and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.44.

[53] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ*, 1, (1983), pp.8-11 (p.9).

[54] See chapter 32, Jon Savage, *England's Dreaming* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005), pp.473-489.

[55] Ibid., p.478.

music itself enriched by the birth of the synthesiser, and its dissemination transformed by the pop video and the compact disc.[56] The New Romantics were characteristic of this new blending of styles, taking on elements of the punk aesthetic and mixing them with historical costumes – a mode of dressing up that begun at Covent Garden's *Blitz* club. Stewart explains the look as resembling 'punks who had somehow either been invited to a 1920s party thrown by the Bright Young Things or wandered into the Weimar cabaret of a Christopher Isherwood novel.'[57]

Dick Hebdige deconstructed the punk subculture as a ritualised mode of consumption that pieced together an image through a process of bricolage (a term Hebdige borrowed from Claude Lévi-Strauss) to produce distinctive identities – challenging conventional order through the 'explosive junction' of objects and symbols into new assemblages that created altered meanings.[58] Importantly, Hebdige argued that subcultures of style did not seek to create new realities, but drew their critical power and pleasure from the repossession of existing symbols, never altering the 'oppressive mode' in which the subculture existed. Instead, as Hebdige described: 'subcultural styles are more usefully regarded as mutations and extensions of existing codes rather than as the "pure" expression of creative drives'.[59] Employing the similar procedures, NATØ transfer this exaggeration and 'facetious quotation' into architecture, their bricolage material the city itself; Coates described their process as one that 'welded all kinds of contradictory functions', assembled from 'pieces pirated from a local but deliberately inappropriate source' and then combined with contrasting elements 'from as far away as possible, from the jungle or childhood or anatomy or even recent events'.[60]

The term bricolage figures strongly in this thesis, conceptualised (as Hebdige had) through Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (La Pensée Sauvage, 1966), which explains a method of production that combines found fragments in new forms – both the physical creation of objects, or the metaphorical creation of myth – establishing the figure of the bricoleur, who works with what they have at hand, against the engineer who creates from scratch.[61] In this thesis, bricolage is used alongside montage – with both terms explaining an approach to design that centres on combining elements to create a whole. This thesis follows Coates in understanding montage through Soviet film theory, including Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov and Sergei Eisenstein, whose writing on film editing and the stimulating power of montage was referenced in the development of a

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[56] Stewart, p.276.
[57] Ibid., p.284.
[58] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979), p.130.
[59] Ibid., p.130-131.
[60] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', p.10.
[61] Levi-strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1968).

distinctive design process at the AA (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2).[62] The thesis thus interrogates NATØ's use of montage as both process and outcome – exploring it through each of their media, and tracing it back to the disjunctive theories of Tschumi.

Presentness

Related to the aesthetic of 1980s subcultural style is the concept of presentness, which emerges through this thesis as a core element of NATØ's work. The idea of presentness evoked in this thesis is two fold: it contains both a sense of contemporaneity, and also of immersion, which combine to produce a specific version of narrativity. The concept unfolds across each chapter, initially through Coates's visceral response to the energetic nightclub and art scene in New York City at the start of the 1980s – the experience of which was key to his departure from Tschumi's more scholarly and literary approach to narrative. What Coates experienced in the video works of Nam June Paik, the installations of Judy Pfaff and the expressive paintings of the transavantgarde, was a focus on sensation that mirrored the sensorial nature of the contemporary city. As this thesis will show, between 1980-82, Coates and his students developed Tschumi's idea of the 'event' into a more directly expressive, less contrived notion of 'action', where physically enacting space in theatrical workshops led to more intensive architecture.

An important part of this expressive turn was an engagement with the street and style culture described above, which in their exaggerated, often extreme aesthetic that folded diverse references and symbols into new contexts, had the effect of contemporaneity, or what Sylvia Lavin has called 'todayness'.[63] Lavin evokes Baudelaire's conceptualisation of presentness he observed in the mannerisms of the everyday and fashion to explain how architecture could produce the same 'enticingly contemporary duration' and 'flicker of provisionality' through the creation of moods and atmospherics.[64] In a similar way, NATØ sought to 'pinch the urban nerve that was most sensitive at the time' and to stress 'the sense of what's going on now, in 1984', rather than to project a new vision of the present or the future – as the previous avant-gardes and neo-avant-gardes had.[65] NATØ drew heavily on contemporary popular cultural to exaggerate the present moment and to make it more stimulating – to make architecture that was culturally and temporally specific, and more 'modern' in the terms set out by Baudelaire: 'By modernity I mean the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent which make

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[62] Sergei M. Eisenstein, Yve-Alain Bois and Michael Glenny, 'Montage and Architecture', *Assemblage*, 1989, pp.111–31 (originally written in 1937), Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986). Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (Harcourt, Brace, 1949).
[63] Sylvia Lavin, 'What Color Is It Now?', *Perspecta*, 35 (2004), pp.98–111.
[64] Ibid., p.100.
[65] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', p.9.

up one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable.'[66] Indeed, in their interest in presentness, NATØ eschewed any concern for timelessness or endurance, producing a concept of architecture that was mutable, modifiable, temporary and subject to the whims, tastes and changing needs of its users.

Other architects have employed the term presentness for very different ends, in particular Peter Eisenman, who uses the word to describe a condition he considers unique to architecture, that surpassed Derrida's presence/absence duality to create a third concept.[67] For Eisenman presentness is inherently about subversion, and the particular 'being-only-once' that architecture with conflicting or deconstructed form and function can evoke – describing this as a form of excess that is not related to plenitude but to the 'possibility of a presentness of something else'.[68] The 'something else' is what Eisenman's architecture thus seeks to produce. Interestingly, Eisenman is at pains to explain that his concept of presentness differs from the use of the same term by art critic Michael Fried – who wrote on presentness in relation to Minimalist sculpture in the late 1960s.[69] Fried explained presentness as a moment when time collapsed and the difference between thinking and experience was negated in a sensation of instantaneousness in which the entirety of the artwork could be perceived.[70] Fried identified this as a quality of viewing Modernist painting and sculpture, which exist in an idealised space outside of time, an experience not possible in Minimal sculptures by artists such as Donald Judd or Dan Flavin – which require the viewer to locate themselves in space, moving around the work and experiencing it temporally, a phenomena he considered theatrical in nature.[71] Countering Fried, Rosalind Krauss employed the terms 'passage' and 'duration' to describe the reciprocal interaction between the viewer and the sculpture, reprieving the notion of theatricality from Fried to explore modes of embodied experience, 'decentreing', and discovery of the self in works by artists such as Robert Smithson and Bruce Nauman.[72]

It is thus clear that presentness as an idea is a highly contested one that fails to manifest in the same terms across discourse. This thesis proposes a version of presentness that most closely resembles a mode of narrative presentness espoused by literary theorist Gary Saul Morson. Writing in 2003, Morson explains that presentness is the condition of possibility inherent in the present moment when the future is undetermined.[73] In this

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[66] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life" in *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, edited and translated by Jonathan Mayne. (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), p.13.

[67] Peter Eisenman, 'Presentness and the Being-Only-Once of Architecture' in *Written Into the Void: Selected Writings, 1990-2004* (Yale University Press, 2007), pp.42-49.

[68] Ibid., p.4.

[69] Ibid., p.46.

[70] Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum,* 5 June, (1967),

[71] James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (Yale University Press, 2004), p.33.

[72] Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (MIT Press, 1981), pp.201-242.

[73] Gary Saul Morson, 'Narrativeness', *New Literary History*, 34 (2003), pp.59–73.

respect, presentness is linked to choice and suspense, and is most heightened in real-life experience – everyday life – than in finished products such as novels and films. There is in this way a connection to NATØ's desire for communicative spaces and places that are chaotic and unpredictable, that do not predetermine experience through a contrived sequence of spaces, but instead provide an open framework for multiple possibilities and interpretations. This thesis will thus show how the types of narratives that NATØ sought, were those that heightened the presentness of experience.

Examining how NATØ expressed presentness through the drawing, the magazine and the exhibition, this thesis employs the concept of immersion from both narratology and installation art – a mode of active engagement that is conducive to the production of narrative worlds. In this respect, presentness in NATØ's work is not related to phenomenological conceptualisations, but relates to experience and emotion in a more direct way, a spatial immediacy and stimulation. In furnishing their visions with the rich visual vocabulary of 1980s London and the subcultural aesthetics of fashion, music and style, NATØ provide a framework of cues within which to become immersed, but critically, employ the technique of defamiliarisation to destabilise and thus enhance the communicative power of their assemblages. This research takes apart the components of NATØ's presentness to understand a mode of narrativity that is at once familiar and strange, contemporary and primitive, dream-like and real.

The narrativist decade

In the field of narrative studies – narratology – the 1980s were significant, termed the 'narrativist decade' by literary theorist Martin Kreiswirth.[74] Often described as the 'narrative turn', the 1980s marked a sustained preoccupation across disciplines with 'storied forms of knowledge'.[75] This period was also the first time that narrative was examined as a central idea – as the focal point for research in its own right, rather than just an element of textual analysis – and the last time that it was confined to the analytical provinces of literary and philosophical studies, undergoing what could be considered a 'cultural turn'. Though NATØ were not engaged with theories of narratology, and indeed, narratology has had very little to say about architecture, this research identifies a parallel in the thinking about narrative within narratology and NATØ's work, which coincided historically, and were both part of the phenomenon of postmodernism. Through an examination of changes in narratology in the 1980s, the definition of narrative that functions in this thesis – in NATØ's work – can be elucidated. The narrative theorists

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[74] Martin Kreiswirth, 'Trusting the Tale: The Narrativist Turn in the Human Sciences', *New Literary History*, 23 (1992), p631.

[75] Martin Kreiswirth, 'Narrative Turn in the Humanities' in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie--Laure Ryan, *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p380.

selected in this thesis – David Herman, Marie-Laure Ryan and Werner Wolf primarily – are leading contemporary post-classical narratologists, who have theorised the move away from structuralist positions in the last three decades, and who in particular have developed concepts of narrative that resonate with non-literary and non-textual media, and are thus most apposite for transferral into architectural theory.

The expansion of narratology in the 1980s can be traced along three key paths outlined by David Herman in his influential edited volume of essays *Narratologies* (1999): the increase in 'new technologies' and associated 'emergent methodologies' of narrative, the progression of narrative 'beyond [the] literary', and the growth of narratology into new 'narrative logics'.[76] Collating essays by individual narratologists, Herman theorised the move from classical to post-classical narratology, highlighting new narrative perspectives from queer, ethnic, postcolonial and feminist, as well as the expansion of narrative theory into new media such as the performing arts, computer games and film. Developing this expansion, Marie-Laure Ryan argues that the emancipation of media studies from the discourses of 'aesthetics, philosophy, and poetics' paved the way for the analytic study of both elite and popular media.[77] The developments in technology and birth of new media, and the breakdown of the hierarchy between high and low-brow media celebrated by postmodernism in the mid to late 1970s, gave rise to a wholly new outlook in narratology, which for the first time embraced the full spectrum of media – from the higher realms of the literary text, experimental cinema and video, to the mass-market media of the magazine, pulp fiction, advertisements and television – the realisation of a cultural studies approach put forward by Roland Barthes' structuralist thinking on myth-making and narrative across broad cultural forms in *Mythologies* (1957). The worlds of media studies and narratology collided, and new branches of 'transmedial storytelling', or 'narrative media studies' emerged which focused on the ways in which different media convey narrative, how they work together in multimedia narratives, and how narratives are remediated in different ways.[78] Definitions of narrative thus moved from the classical 'telling somebody else that something happened', to what Herman defined as a 'global mental representation' or 'storyworld' which is evoked by a text, film, object or performance, providing 'blueprints for the creation and modification of such mentally configured storyworlds'.[79] Key to this definition is that the storyworld or representation is something to be evoked, not necessarily minutely detailed or prescribed, but suggested – providing space for interpretation. This definition brought narrative into a realm of discourse with a far more generous conception of what could constitute a

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[76] David Herman, *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, 1st edn (Ohio State University Press, 1999), p.14-16.
[77] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across media : the languages of storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p27
[78] Ibid., p35.
[79] David Herman, (1999) p11.

narrative, and gave rise to the idea that narrative could be a scalar quality – narrativity – which allows a much greater palette of media to be explored for varying degrees of narrativity.[80]

Narrativisation

Marie-Laure Ryan extends Herman's definition by defining narrative as 'a cognitive construct or mental image, built by the interpreter in response to the text' – and it is thus possible to imagine the word 'text' to be substituted for a range of semiotic objects and constructs, including architecture.[81] This definition posits narrative as an active process on the part of the reader or viewer, an action that narratologist Werner Wolf has described as 'narrativization'.[82] Writing in 2003, Wolf describes narrativisation as the application of a 'narrative frame', a cognitive construct, culturally acquired, which describes the way that we use narrative to organise and structure information.[83] Applying the narrative frame to information – be it a text, a moving image, a painting, an object, a situation etc. – causes us to 'narrativise' the information and is an active process which is an essential part of human thinking:

> The application of this frame by the receiver or experiencer is hence in part a constructive, and (within certain limits) a historically and individually variable activity, which has been called narrativization. As far as artefacts are concerned, the identification and application of the frame narrative is the outcome of an interaction between decoding features of an artefact encoded by an author [...] Frames are not gratuitous mental constructs but cognitive phenomena which have been developed and are transmitted to serve certain purposes or functions.[84]

Understanding narrative across media is essentially a project in dissecting how different media evoke a narrative frame and the difference the medium makes to the type and form of narrative that can be evoked, or as Ryan puts it, to understand the different 'modes' of narrative.[85] She describes the criteria for a medium to be considered a narrative medium as the following: firstly, the media must make a difference to the type of narrative messages than can be communicated by it, and secondly the medium must have a unique set of characteristics, including the sensory channels they use, their spatio-temporality, the technology and material with which they are constituted and their role culturally in terms of production, dissemination and use.[86] In this respect it is possible to start to

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[80] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–97.
[81] Marie-Laure Ryan, (2004), p8.
[82] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–197.
[83] Ibid., p.182.
[84] Ibid., p.184.
[85] Marie-Laure Ryan, (2004), p13.
[86] Ibid, p19.

separate out media which may share some key characteristics but are inherently different, such as opera from drama, or sculpture from architecture, as well as cultural divisions such as the children's comic from political cartoon satire, or the fine art sculpture from the architectural model – each may share similar mediality, but their production, dissemination and use in a cultural sense is very different, and thus an entirely different type of narrativity is evoked. Ryan's list of modal pairs aims to simplify and categorise the inherent differences between the narratives evoked by different media, contrasting the classical textual narrative script with its opposite or alternative which is represented by other more visual or performance media and a-typical textual narratives. The pairings provide a solid grounding for a transmedial understanding of narrativity to evolve, and establishes a framework for further discussion in this thesis of architectural narrativity: 'diegetic/mimetic', separating media that tell, from media that show; 'autonomous/illustrative', the former containing a brand-new story and the later retelling an existing one; 'receptive/participatory', contrasting media which require participation from the reader or viewer to complete it; 'determinate/indeterminate', distinguishing between media that provide the entire story arc, and those that leave gaps; and 'literal/metaphorical', dividing modes that contain all the elements of conventional narratives from those that contain ideas that contain narrative dimensions.[87] Pertinently, Ryan suggests architecture as an area where narrative is stretched to its most metaphorical, as an 'art form deprived of semantic content' and therefore unable to convey any true sense of narrative other than that which may be derived from the experience of walking through a series of spaces contrived to convey or re-enact a specific narrative in an illustrative mode (she gives the example of a Baroque church evoking the stages of the Passion).[88] This narrow view of what an architectural narrative could be reveals the inadequacy of the discourse at present to fully take into account and understand the complexity of spatial narrativity, with a truer interdisciplinary approach needed. Despite the expansion of narratology to take in diverse media, and the conceptualisation of narrativity as a scalar quality, it is obvious that in discussing a specialist field, such as architecture, the specific nuances of how narrativity functions has not yet been fully explored. NATØ provide an ideal vehicle through which to test the narrative potential of architectural production, presenting a clear moment when narrative concerns were brought to the forefront of architectural thinking.

Structure and methodology
The history of NATØ produced through this research is one constructed through a collage of both physical and immaterial fragments – through the magazines, drawings,

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[87] Ibid., pp.13-14.
[88] Ibid, p15.

photographs and ephemera that have been kept in informal, private collections, combined with the oral histories of NATØ members. The analysis of such primary material resists definitiveness and is suitably polyvocal, reflecting the nature of NATØ as a group and the indeterminate nature of their output which purposefully refused fixed readings. Though the production of oral history through interviewing performs the polyvocality required to narrativise a group such as NATØ, it inevitably also allows emotion to enter and has thus produced conflicts between recollections, contradictions and retellings that are highly subjective and personalised. In remembering the younger self it is highly likely that a certain romanticism enters, and a tendency to over-invest experiences with significance is a factor that has been taken into account – in particular as NATØ's story begins in such a sensational manner. The dominance of Coates is an issue that has been at the fore of the research from the beginning – both in terms of his position as a tutor to the other group members, and his subsequent career that has eclipsed NATØ's group narrative. Efforts have been made to interview each member of the group equally, but the residual tensions that have endured in the 30 years since NATØ were active, combined with geographical constraints, have meant that certain members have been more responsive than others – and some have not participated at all. Coates, Mark Prizeman, Robert Mull, Christina Norton, and Carlos Villanueva-Brandt, have all participated, and in particular, Coates and Prizeman have allowed unlimited access to their personal archives. Catrina Beevor accepted an invitation to be interviewed with her partner Mull, but in the end did not participate; similarly, Melanie Sainsbury agreed to email correspondence and interview from her home in France, but did not respond when prompted, neither did Peter Fleissig who is based in the United States. Martin Benson was the only member who could not be contacted. The form that interviews have taken have also varied, and resulted in different types of data that is used in different ways in the thesis. Interviews with Mull, Norton, and Villanueva-Brandt were semi-structured and produced legible transcripts that were readily quotable; a similar extended length interview was conducted with Coates. However in addition, a substantial part of the research process consisted of numerous informal conversations with both Coates and Prizeman, conducted while examining archival material, and during more social occasions – tea breaks, exhibition openings, and chance encounters. Most often during these moments conversations were not recorded, and notes are incomplete – resulting in fragmented but relevant material that has entered the narrative of the thesis without the formality of the quoted remark.

These factors have not been treated as a problem in the research, but as part of the eventual narrative – the contradictions, omissions, and emotions reveal additional layers and nuances. Indeed, despite these shortcomings, the process of piecing together the history of NATØ in this way is one that has avoided the risk of creating a singular, mono-narrative, a common risk of oral history that can, in Linda Sandino's words,

'sustain the aura of the grand practitioner' – an outcome that would be entirely inappropriate for the history of NATØ.[89] The approach to oral history of a group, particularly one such as NATØ with pronounced internal politics and tensions, has been one that balances a hermeneutics of 'restoration' with one of 'demystification' – positioning the subject as the expert on their own experience and history with meanings taken to be relatively transparent, but maintaining an eye for the 'untold story'.[90] This is particularly important when balancing different memories and recollections of the same period and events; in particular for this study, Coates has rehearsed and written his own narrative of NATØ numerous times, and in recent years this has been the loudest (and perhaps only) narrative of the group – moulded to a certain extent to fit his personal biography and trajectory since the 1980s. What came through clearly in interviews with other members was that this dominant narrative was not necessarily shared, and so the research process has been partly to 'demystify' existing accounts of NATØ's story. This however does not mean to say that the narrative presented in this thesis is definitive or all encompassing, but that it has sought to avoid merely replicating a simplified, singular version of the group's history.

To support these core interviews, a number of supplementary interviews have been conducted with significant peripheral individuals. Most importantly from this group is Brian Hatton, (who was interviewed twice), NATØ's most supportive critic who wrote prolifically both in the architectural and art press about the group in the 1980s, and who produced texts for *NATØ* magazine. Hatton is the only person to have written critically and in-depth about NATØ, and so his articles from the period also form an important part of the secondary material used in the thesis. In addition, interviews were conducted with Iwona Blazwick, now director of the Whitechapel Gallery, who commissioned NATØ's first major show *Gamma City* (1985); publisher and journalist Peter Murray, who has an intimate knowledge of architectural publishing during the period of the thesis and set up *Blueprint* (1984-) in the same year as *NATØ*; artist and filmmaker Nick Turvey who was a member of Coates's Unit 10 at the AA and later collaborated with Prizeman on the short film *Radio Dog* (1987); and Ricky Burdett, now head of the Cities Programme at the LSE, and architect Wilfried Wang, both of whom set up *9H* (1980-95), a contemporaneous self-published architectural magazine that emerged from the Bartlett School of Architecture at UCL. The interview material gathered has thus been considered and evaluated critically, and is used in this thesis as a supplement to the object analysis of NATØ's archive – drawings, photographs and ephemera, primarily from Coates's and

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[89] Linda Sandino, 'Speaking of Memory...', *AA Files*, 61 (2010), pp.126–127.
[90] Ruthellen Josselson, 'The Hermeneutics of Faith and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion', *Narrative Inquiry*, 14 (1) (2004) pp.1–28.

Prizeman's collections, as well as a small amount of material from the AA Photo Library and the AA Archive.

Primary research has been integrated with a broad range of secondary sources that includes academic sources, but also extends to the lifestyle magazines, films, exhibitions and general histories of the period, to build a picture of the context within which NATØ produced and to develop correspondences outside architectural discourse. Contemporaneous reviews of NATØ exhibitions and articles about the group are also an important source, particularly given that very little has been written about the group since the 1980s.

Chapter 1, entitled 'From object to action: Performing architecture – 1973-81', traces Coates's formative years through his teaching of Unit 10 at the AA with Bernard Tschumi – where Tschumi's ideas of the inseparability of space and programme were explored through a number of significant design briefs, most notably the *Soho Institutions* of 1978-79. The chapter also explores a two-year hiatus from teaching at the AA, where both Tschumi and Coates experimented with modes drawn from performance art, in particular influenced by curator RoseLee Goldberg, with whom Tschumi co-curated *Space: A Thousand Words* at the Royal College of Art in 1975. After graduating from Tschumi's unit at the AA in 1974, Coates also produced a number of installation and performance works, including a piece in *Space: A Thousand Words*, as well as numerous works with Portuguese set designer Antonio Lagarto. These are discussed with original archival photographs and sketchbooks, identifying an early preoccupation with dramatising space. The chapter then moves to New York, chronicling a seminal period Coates spent teaching at Bennington College between 1980-81, where his exposure to the nightclubs and new art of the late 1970s 'downtown' scene marked the beginning of a new phase in his work. Coates's *Ski Station* project of 1981 shows a stylistic change in drawing and a move towards the an energetic and sensual mode that he brought back to Unit 10 at the start of the 1980s, the beginning of a trajectory that would lead to NATØ. The chapter shows the development from Tschumi's conceptual explorations and theoretically grounded notions of space, to more a direct and theatrical enacting of space that at the beginning of the new decade began to draw on the culture and technology of the period to shape architectural meaning – in particular, video.

Chapter 2 picks up from where the previous chapter left off, examining Coates's teaching at the AA in the early 1980s, now leading the unit without Tschumi who had left for the United States. Titled, 'A new expressionism: Drawing architecture – 1982-84', the chapter focuses on Unit 10's explorations with the drawing, moving from Tschumi's emphasis on notation to a more freely expressive, sketch-like mode. The chapter considers the potential for the architectural drawing to convey a spatial experience, arguing that the drawing is a primary mode of architectural production, where meaning

can be created and located. Through Coates's *Muse Britannia* (1982) and *Ark Albion* (1984) drawings, and the 1981-82 cohort's *Giant Sized Baby Town*, the chapter considers the breadth of drawing techniques – utilising concepts from narratology to understand how the unit extended the possibility of the narrative drawing. In *Giant Sized Baby Town* the invention of a method of design using the video camera and the drawing introduces montage theory, via Sergei Eisenstein, a crucial tool that would also form the basis of the following year's project *Albion* (1983) – the work that triggered the formation of NATØ. The chapter shows how NATØ's narrative architecture was generated through the drawing as both a process and an end result, explaining how both the drawing style and technique, as well as the drawings' structure, were analogous to the city condition they sought to evoke.

Chapter 3, 'The mise-en-scene of the magazine: 1983-84', focuses on the first two issues of NATØ's self-published magazine, exploring how their drawings were translated onto the page and how graphic design was employed to develop the narrative qualities of the drawing. The chapter proposes the magazines as a direct development of the techniques established in the previous chapter through NATØ's drawings, considering the page of the magazine as a more complex, layered, narrative spatial condition. *NATØ* magazine is compared in both design and style, as well as content, with contemporaneous publications *i-D* and *The Face*, arguing that *NATØ* had more in common with them than architectural magazines. Exploring a festishisation of the street shared by *NATØ* and these street style magazines, the chapter examines how the page was used to express the spatial condition of the city, and the particular ways that the navigation of the magazine was designed to simulate the movement of the body through the city – drawing on Situationist concepts and Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'smooth' and 'striated' space.[91] Through analysis of the second issue of *NATØ,* the chapter uses Claude Lévi-Strauss's character of the bricoleur and Dick Hebdige's writing on style and subcultures, to understand NATØ's 'apprentice' and the relationship between the subcultures of fashion and style, and NATØ's vision of a narrative city.[92]

The final chapter reaches NATØ's most complex output, their exhibitions, taking in *Gamma City* at the Air Gallery (London, 1985), and *Heathrow*, part of *The British Edge* at the Institute of Contemporary Art, (Boston, 1987). 'Dreaming the city: Exhibiting architecture 1985-87', posits NATØ's exhibitions as the three-dimensional extrapolation of the ideas and techniques developed first through the drawing and expanded in the magazine. Drawing on Claire Bishop's writing on the experience of the art installation, the chapter defines NATØ's exhibitions as installations – immersive environments in

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[91] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001).
[92] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (University of Chicago Press, 1968); Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979).

which an active viewer moves to animate a mise-en-cadre of narrative associations.[93] Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* triggers a series of analogies between NATØ's installations and the space of the dream.[94] As in the previous chapters, the experience of the installation is compared to the experience of the city, and it is argued that NATØ's installations can be aligned with other experimental modes of exhibiting which produced rather than represented architecture. The chapter also focuses on NATØ's objects and props, and proposes parallels between them and the work of the 'Creative Salvage' designers of the 1980s – positing the real-scale object as 'stimulator artefacts', or totems, that acted as narrative fragments in the immersive world of the installation. These objects are also the site for complex weaving of past, present and future, a hallmark of all of NATØ's output made most vivid in this chapter. By examining other cultural producers such as Derek Jarman, and novelists including Iain Sinclair and Peter Ackroyd, the chapter proposes NATØ to be part of a particularly British cultural imagination that coalesced in London in the 1980s – where the decaying fabric of the city and a preoccupation with reviving the unique, layered character of London, gave rise to experimentations with psychogeographic narratives in text, film, and architecture.

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This thesis raises the question: what is the significance and consequence of a group of nine young architects, whose production was limited to three magazines and two exhibitions, who never built and whose lifespan was four years? It exposes a moment when narrative was a primary concern in the production of spatial concepts, and thus employs a set of theoretical tools from outside the discipline to write an architectural history that can acknowledge NATØ's divergence from existing architectural frameworks. The history written in this thesis is an architectural history without building – a history of architecture that produces a genealogy of postmodernism via drawing, publishing, education, and the sociology of the group. NATØ's strategies of urban bricolage, perpetual meshing, splicing and weaving, temporal fusion, and exaggeration of presentness, make a demand: WAKE UP AND DREAM FOR THE EIGHTIES.[95]

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[93] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publ., 2010).
[94] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Hertfordshire, England: Wordsworth Editions, 1997).
[95] Nigel Coates *1980-81 Prospectus Architectural Association School of Architecture* (London: Architectural Association (Great Britain), 1980), p.41.

Chapter 1:

From object to action: Performing architecture – 1973-81

Introduction

An important part of understanding the evolution of NATØ's ideas, and where they emerged from, is an examination of Nigel Coates's early influences. As the instigator of NATØ, and tutor of the NATØ cohort of students, Coates had been developing his ideas for almost a decade, having graduated from Bernard Tschumi's Unit 2 at the Architectural Association (AA) in 1974. Although this thesis seeks to avoid producing a narrative of NATØ via one individual, this first chapter foregrounds Coates as a vital part of the group's history, identifying the influence of Tschumi and a pivotal trip to New York as fundamental to the ideas that NATØ would later expand.

The chapter traces how Coates explored Tschumi's notion of the inseparability of spaces and events, through a number of installation and performance works he conducted between 1974-77 with colleagues from the AA, and in particular with Portuguese set-designer Antonio Lagarto. A number of spatial themes emerge – the temporal recording of space, duration, and dramatisation – as well as a strongly queer element, through which it is possible to observe the development of Coates's own sexual identity.

Though these works are to a certain extent juvenilia, they set the tone for two years of teaching at the AA between 1977-79, when Tschumi and Coates, via their students, explored more thoroughly the potential for the architectural programme to be manipulated to produce stimulating ruptures and contrasting effects. However, for Coates, this work was still lacking in sensation – a quality he experienced first-hand in a revelatory period spent in New York City, in 1980-81. This important trip is crucial to NATØ's narrative, and as this chapter shows, was the moment that Coates's creative vocabulary radically expanded to take in street and club culture, video, and painting. This chapter charts Coates's move from thinking and conceptualising space, to enacting and experiencing it.

Bernard Tschumi 1973-79

The Dematerialisation of Architecture

Tschumi and Coates taught together at the AA between 1974-80. Graduating from Tschumi's Unit 2 in 1974, Coates returned to the AA to teach alongside his former tutor in 1974-75, before the pair took a two-year hiatus, establishing Unit 10 in 1977-78. After teaching two academic cycles together (1977-78 and 1978-79), Tschumi left London for Princeton and Cooper Union in 1980, and Coates took over as tutor. This was a period of intense activity at the AA under the dynamic leadership of Alvin Boyarsky, who was elected to the school in 1971, and a moment when architects around the world were seeking alternatives to modernism. An edition of *Architectural Review* dedicated to the school that was published in 1983 describes the character of the AA during this decade as a reflection of the ideologies promulgated by its tutors:

> It is possible to identify a certain congruence between the characteristics of the AA as an institution and the content of the teaching within it. The preoccupation of teachers like Bernard Tschumi, Elia Zenghelis, Dalibor Vesely and Peter Cook – with the rich potential of city life, with urbane and exploratory conversation and catalytic encounter, with intensity and autonomy, experiment and invention – are reflected in the collective enterprise to which they contribute. One might even say that the school is a practical demonstration of their theories. It is this intensity, optimism and urbanity that is the antithesis of the defeatism, dull specialisation and narrow parochiality of other architectural schools. The AA is a pocket of resistance to the general suburbanisation of Britain.[96]

It was within this context that Tschumi first set out a radical agenda for a unit in 1973. Bernard Tschumi studied architecture at Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule (ETH) in Zurich, graduating in 1969, before moving to London to teach at the AA in 1971. Before his arrival at the AA, Tschumi had spent time in Paris in the late 1960s, working for architectural practice Candilis-Josic-Woods (each of whom were part of Team X), and had witnessed first-hand *les événements* of May 1968. The events had the effect of radicalising the young architect, who began writing polemical articles for journals such as *Architectural Design* and *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, in which he explored what he perceived to be the homogenisation of the city – drawing on the writings of Guy Debord and the Situationist International to invoke strategies of resistance and subversion.[97] In 1973, Tschumi initiated Unit 2 at the AA, with a politicised ethos that sought to redefine

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[96] Colin Davis, 'Place and Purpose: The AA as an Urban and Educational Institution', *Architectural Review*, Vol. CLXXIV (1983), pp.24–26. (p.26)

[97] Bernard Tschumi and Martin Pawley, 'The Beaux-Arts Since 1968', *Architectural Design*, 41 (1971), pp.536–66; Bernard Tschumi, 'Henri Lefebvre's 'Le droit a la ville.'', *Architectural Design, 42,* (1972) pp.581-582; Bernard Tschumi, 'Sanctuaries', *Architectural Design, 43* (1973), pp.75–90; Bernard Tschumi, 'La Strategie De L'autruche', *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui*, 176 (1974), pp.71–72.

the role of architecture against the optimistic, utopian backdrop of 1960s ideology promulgated by Archigram that had dominated the school for almost a decade.

The unit was concerned with a critical analysis of the city, setting a programme for the students entitled 'Theory, Language, Attitudes' which examined consumerism, artificiality, and representationalism – playing on 'an opposition between political and theoretical concerns about the city, informed by Jean Baudrillard, Henri Lefebvre, Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin.[98] In *A Chronicle of Urban Politics*, a small book published by the unit in 1973, Tschumi and his students used text to formulate critiques on the prevailing urban condition; the volume was one of the first publications produced by the school, and represents the start of a rich lineage of AA publications (discussed in Chapter 3).[99] The small publication featured primarily short texts produced by Tschumi and the students, and supplemented the films, storyboards, photographs, tapes and manifestos that lined the walls at the AA end of year show. Importantly, the publication marked the start of what would become a core idea of Tschumi over the following decade – that 'the words of architecture become the work of architecture'.[100] Reflecting on this early teaching in his text *Architecture and Disjunction* (1996), he explains how the student projects were a way to consider architecture as a trigger for social and political change, to avoid being a neutral backdrop, if not causing change directly, then 'accelerating' it.[101]

Tschumi was also attempting to provide an alternative to what he saw as an obsession with form in architectural culture, striving to move away from discussions happening elsewhere at the AA which centred on a Structuralist interpretation of architecture – reducing buildings to a series of symbols and signs. Charles Jencks, a leading proponent of this school of thought during the 1970s, was lecturing regularly on aspects of the semiotics of architecture, following his seminal 1969 essay 'Semiology in Architecture', which would form the basis of his later *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (1977).[102] Based on the assumption that language is the primary sign system, a semiotic understanding of architecture sought to reduce architectural form into units or elements to be analysed. As Tschumi described, such theories:

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[98] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press, 1996), p.142.
[99] Architectural Association (Great Britain), *A Chronicle in Urban Politics* (London Architectural Association 1973).
[100] Bernard Tschumi, (1996), p.143
[101] Bernard Tschumi 'Introduction', *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.6.
[102] The 'AA Events List' (London: Architectural Association School of Architecture, 1973), lists regular lectures by Jencks on architecture and semiotics in the 1970s; Charles Jencks, 'Semiology in Architecture' in *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. by Charles Jencks and George Baird, illustrated edition (Barrie & Jenkins, 1969); Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, 4th ed. (New York: Rizzoli, 1984)

> […] Borrowed from semiotics the ability to 'read' layers of interpretation but reduced architecture to a system of surface signs at the expense of the reciprocal, indifferent, or even conflictive relationship of spaces and events.[103]

To Tschumi, this approach was distinctly lacking in any consideration of programmatic concerns, a matter he was becoming increasingly preoccupied with by his second year of teaching in 1974. Disillusioned with the potential for architecture to provide an ameliorative for the inherent failings of society, he shifted emphasis from that first politicised year, stating that: 'rather than analyzing the variables of architectural activities,' the unit would begin to 'deliberately concentrate on one constant, space'.[104] Significantly, this was the year that Coates began teaching alongside Tschumi, marking the start of their reciprocal relationship. It was also during this time, in 1973, that Tschumi formed a relationship with RoseLee Goldberg, a curator preoccupied with changes in contemporary art and in particular with performance art and the dematerialisation of the art object. During this period Goldberg was running the Royal College of Art gallery, a space that had originally been conceived to show staff and student work, transforming it into an 'experimental venue' that exhibited work by performance and conceptual artists including Christo, Vito Acconci, Brian Eno, Agnes Martin, The Kipper Kids, and Guilio Paolini.[105] Her influence on Tschumi during this time played an important role in the evolution of both his and Coates's thinking.

In their first year teaching together, Tschumi and Coates developed what they called the 'literary projects', wherein students read texts such as Franz Kafka's unfinished short story 'The Burrow'and Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, and were set a brief to turn events or programmes from the novels into architectural designs.[106] At the same time, Tschumi was also teaching at Princeton University; here he set the students the site of London's Covent Garden and tasked them with deriving architecture 'by analogy or opposition' with extracts from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*.[107] In his essay 'Space and Events' (1983) Tschumi explained that during these projects the text provided a 'framework for the analysis of the relations' between the programme and the site.[108] Beyond being a source of inspiration in a poetic way, the novels thus provided the

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[103] Bernard Tschumi, (1996), p.141.

[104] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.28.

[105] Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43–51.

[106] The 'literary projects' are described in Bernard Tschumi, 'Space and Events', in *Architecture and Disjunction*, (London: The MIT Press, 1996) pp.141-152; Franz Kafka, 'The Burrow', published posthumously in *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer* (Berlin: 1931). The first English translation, by Willa and Edwin Muir, was published by Martin Secker in London in 1933; Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, (Italy: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1972). The first English translation, by William Weaver, was published in New York and London by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in 1974.

[107] Bernard Tschumi, 'Space and Events', *Architecture and Disjunction,* (2006) p.146; James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*, 1939.

[108] Bernard Tschumi, (2006), p.146.

progamme or events against which the design of architecture could contrast or complement. By using an event or episode from a literary text as programme for an architectural design, the resulting projects avoided the deterministic nature of the more traditional architectural brief, enabling students to focus on the ways in which space and programme could be manipulated in relation to each other, rather than the solving of an imaginary problem. The text provided a dialectic between the content of architecture – what happens in the space – and the design of the space itself, setting up a range of different relations from complementing each other, to contrasting disjunctive relations. This signalled the start of the unit's core focus: 'the relationship between spaces and the events that occur within them' – an ethos which would continue to evolve over the lifespan of the pair's teaching together. [109]

Alongside teaching at the AA, Tschumi and Coates were both active outside the school – in particular working with artists and architects whose strategies of performance resonated with their own evolving notions of space, primarily enabled by the network that Goldberg introduced them to. Tschumi regularly invited Goldberg to give talks at the school, and she invited diverse artists including John Stezaker, Victor Burgin, Vito Acconci, Marina Abramovic and Christo to his students – a significant move considering the insularity of much architectural education at the time.[110] Goldberg's own work as a curator was increasingly interested preoccupied with the artist's evolving use of space, and during these years she was preparing her 1979 text – *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* – a seminal piece of research on the history and development of performance art in the twentieth century.[111] In 1973, writer and critic Lucy Lippard had described how the dematerialisation of the art object, that had evolved from Minimalism, came to shape Conceptual art between 1966 and 1972, a type of work 'in which the idea is paramount and the material form is secondary, lightweight, ephemeral, cheap, unpretentious and/or "dematerialized"'.[112] In her text *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972,* Lippard loosely defined and began cataloguing such Conceptual artists, including Daniel Buren, Lawrence Weiner, Bruce Nauman, Dennis Oppenheim, Seth Sieglaub, Dan Graham, Sol LeWitt and many others, whose works defied the 'sacrosanct ivory walls' of the 1960s gallery.[113]

It is from within this framework of Conceptual practice that Goldberg's ideas on performance began to emerge, considering it as a mode of Conceptual art that, like

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[109] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.28.
[110] Elena Cripa, Tom Vandeputte, 'Space as Praxis', Log, 21 (2011), pp.33–37.
[111] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979).
[112] Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, Reprint edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p.vii,
[113] Ibid., p.vii.

Lippard's artists, was driven partly by the desire to circumvent the increasingly commoditised art scene and the gallery system. Goldberg observed a growing number of artists whose work was beginning to overlap with that of dancers, musicians and performers, artists including Bruce Nauman, Klaus Rinke, Dan Graham, Trisha Brown, and Lucinda Childs, as well as British artists such as Gilbert and George, Susan Hiller, Bruce McLean and the Kipper Kids.[114] The work of these artists implied a sense that space and its relation to the body was a now key part of Conceptual art. Writing in *Studio International* in 1975, Goldberg articulated the idea that via the dematerialisation of the art object that had taken place in Conceptual art, these new performance works used space as a 'materialization of theory'.[115] This was a new way of engaging with the ideas and concepts of art, and furthermore enabled contemporary artists to contest the conventions of gallery art – as Goldberg pointed out, 'live gestures' had historically been used as 'a weapon against the conventions of the established art'.[116] The reduction of the 'alienation between performer and viewer' was also a key principle of performance art, with the performer and the viewer both experiencing the artwork at the same time.[117] This was a form of art that was not purely about the artwork and the artist, but where the viewer played an important role and experience was key. These were ideas that Tschumi and Coates were also grappling with in their teaching at the AA, trying to move discourse on architecture away from the architect as author towards an approach which centred on the user or occupant of space.

Influenced by Goldberg's notion of the materialisation of theory through performance art, Tschumi began to speak about the dematerialisation of the object of architecture – conceptualising a move away from an architecture concerned with the formal, materialised qualities of space, to one constituted by concepts, proposing that architecture is made as much by writing and drawing as it is by built outcomes. In 1975, Tschumi claimed that the 'distinction between the talk about space and the creation of space vanishes' and 'ultimately, the words of architecture become the work of architecture'.[118]

Tschumi and Goldberg's reciprocal relationship was borne out in the exhibition *A Space: A Thousand Words*, which they co-curated at the Royal College of Art in 1975. The exhibition featured 28 architects and artists whose work focused on spatial concepts, including contributions from Dan Graham, John Stezaker, Leon van Schaik, Paul Shepheard, Will Alsop, Peter Wilson, Zoe and Elia Zenghelis, Jeanne Sillett, Jenny

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[114] RoseLee Goldberg, (1979).
[115] Roselee Goldberg, 'Space as praxis', *Studio International,* 190 (1975), pp.130–135.
[116] RoseLee Goldberg, (1979), p.6.
[117] Ibid., p.
[118] Bernard Tschumi, 'A Space is Worth a Thousand Words', in Bernard Tschumi, RoseLee Goldberg and Royal College of Art (Great Britain), *A Space, a Thousand Words* (Dieci Libri, 1975), p.2.

Lowe, Bill Beckley, Braco Dimitriejvic, Christian de Portzamparc, Franco Vaccari, and Gianni Pettena, as well as Coates.[119] Goldberg and Tschumi set out specific criteria for inclusion in the exhibition which constituted an unpublished photograph or drawing combined with a text of no more than 1000 words. This format, which proposed the text as having equal importance to the visual, was significant in Tschumi's evolving conception of what should or could constitute architecture. The exhibition marked a clear desire to shift discourse on space to reflect what Tschumi and Goldberg were observing in the practice of performance artists, and an attempt to draw architectural discourse along the same lines:

> Rather than illustrating the highlights of fragmented debates on technological utopias, design for alternative lifestyles, counter political analysis, metaphorical tales, local participation, minimalist technology or rational architecture, the RCA documentation sets out to reveal the existence of new attitudes towards space.[120]

Tschumi's description of what the exhibition specifically was not, could have easily been confused with a list of the activities occupying other units at the AA at the time, and it is significant that Peter Cook of Archigram dubbed the group of artists and architects Tschumi assembled 'a little group of freaks', watched over by a 'suspicious mainstream'– an indication of the extent to which their ideas and concepts contrasted with the mainstream of architectural thought.[121] Cook's use of the word freak also captures a contrary approach to mainstream culture, best represented by Frank Zappa who was central to the 'freak scene' in 1960s. In his words:

> Freaking out is a process whereby an individual casts off outmoded and restricted standards of thinking, dress and social etiquette in order to express creatively his relationship to his environment and the social structure as a whole.[122]

Cook would have been familiar with the idea of the freak, and indeed his own group Archigram from the early 1960s represented a moment of freakishness in architectural culture. But by the mid 1970s, Cook's agenda had very much become part of the mainstream; an exhibition he curated in 1976 at the 'Artnet' gallery space on London's Dover Street and accompanying publication gathered architects Yona Friedman, Hans Hollein, Adolfo Natalini, Alison and Peter Smithson, and Cedric Price whose importance

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[119] Bernard Tschumi, RoseLee Goldberg and Royal College of Art (Great Britain), *A Space, a Thousand Words* (Dieci Libri, 1975).
[120] Ibid., p3.
[121] Peter Cook describes Tschumi and the group of architects and artists who assembled around him as distinctly European, intellectual and cliquish in, "Unbuilt England – Its Structural Background," *Architecture and Urbanism*, 83 (1977), pp.4-21. (p.20).
[122] Frank Zappa quoted in Nik Cohn, *Awopbopaloobop Alopbamboom: Pop from the Beginning* (Minerva, 1969), p.223.
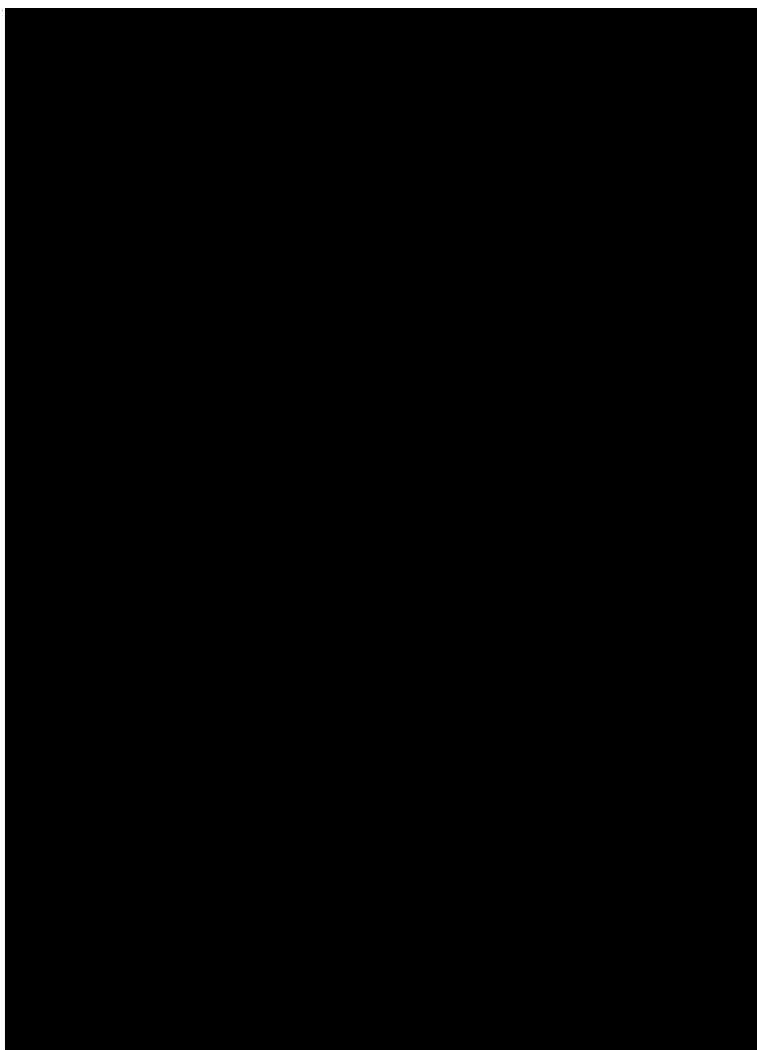
Figure 1: Catalogue page – Dan Graham, *A Space: A Thousand Words*, Royal College of Art (1975)

to Cook centred around many of the preoccupations which Tschumi now discarded as irrelevant or outmoded.[123]

In *A Space: A Thousand Words* many exhibitors, though not permitted to construct anything physical, produced works that either described or documented performances and installations. A number, including Dan Graham, created works that included instructions or procedures that could be installed or performed by others – in this way, describing a spatial arrangement through text and image in a manner that echoes the 'event scores' of music and performance art.[124] In Graham's piece (fig. 1), a three-dimensional drawing of a room shows a setup featuring mirrors and video cameras reflecting each other on an eight second time delay, creating what Goldberg referred to as 'future time'.[125] The individual would be drawn into a complex sequence of acting, watching the action in the mirror, waiting for the action to be replayed and the subsequent recording of that playback in a seemingly endless loop. Rosalind Krauss has identified a degree of schizophrenia in these types of arrangements: 'The medium of video art is the psychological condition of the self split and doubled by the mirror reflection of synchronous feedback.'[126] In this respect, the work is indicative of a mode of thinking that eschewed the modernist drive to improve, enhance and extend the individual, and instead presented the self as split and conflicted. This anticipates the fragment, which will become an important idea later in this thesis. The specific and constructed nature of Graham's proposal also highlights its spatiality, drawing attention to the individual's relationship to the space and their actions within it, and a discord between private and public, and abstract and experiential space.

Coates's contribution to the exhibition contained similar themes, describing through a photograph of an installation, the potential for distorted perception and fragmentation that a mirrored space can produce. Positioning four mirrors reflecting each other in a circular position on a beach, Coates contrasts the constructed space of the mirrors with the expanse of the landscape (fig.2). Upon entering the space between the mirrors he observes that though he is able to mentally construct the space represented in the mirrors, the space itself 'has no imagination'.[127]

Architects Jenny Lowe and Derek Revington, both former students of Tschumi's unit and contemporaries of Coates, drew on ideas of imagined architecture with accounts of dreams or memories enhanced by first person narrative. Revington's

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[123] Peter Cook, Forty London Architects (London: ArtNet, 1976), No.3, pp.2-5.

[124] The notation of performance art and experimental music since the 1950s is discussed in-depth in John Lely, *Word Events* (London ; New York: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2001).

[125] RoseLee Goldberg, 'Space as praxis', *Studio International*, 190 (1975), pp.130–135.

[126] Rosalind Krauss, 'The Post-medium Condition' in *Perpetual Inventory* (Boston MA: MIT Press, 2010) p.10

[127] Nigel Coates quoted in Bernard Tschumi, RoseLee Goldberg and Royal College of Art (Great Britain), *A Space, a Thousand Words* (Dieci Libri, 1975), p.46.
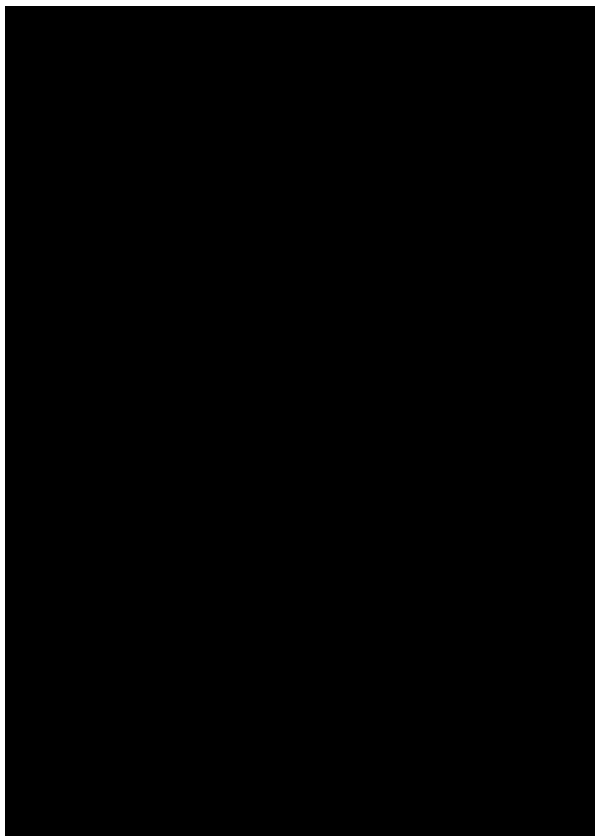
Figure 2: Catalogue page – Nigel Coates, *A Space: A Thousand Words*, Royal College of Art (1975)
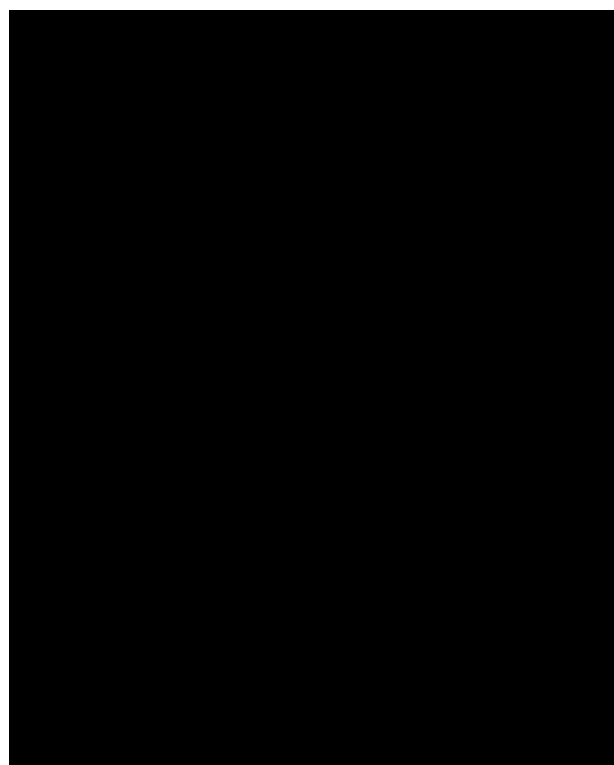
Figure 3: Daniel Buren, *Peinture-Sculpture*, Guggenheim New York, (1971).

work consisted of a series of letters he had written to friends describing a collection of thoughts relating to the production of his piece for the exhibition, including his experimentation with snow and fire. The text blurs the boundaries between reality and the imagined, inserting Revington's experienced space into the constructed space of the gallery. In her piece, Lowe recounts a similarly imagined dream sequence, exploring the idea of a living room which transcends the boundaries of the room – illustrated by a photomontage of a living room in a city scene.

In artist Daniel Buren's piece, a photograph of an installation, *Peinture-Sculpture*, he had made at the Guggenheim in New York in 1971, is accompanied by explanatory text (fig.3). His installation, which consisted of a large, striped canvas placed in the central void of the Guggenheim and a second canvas placed on the street outside forced a re-examination of the gallery. For Buren, artwork is inherently connected to the space in which it is situated, and thus forms a relationship with it that exposes something of the space – enhancing it or changing our perception of it in some way.[128] The original piece represented directly addressed Frank Lloyd Wright's imposing Guggenheim Museum, which Buren felt took dominated the exhibited work, and transformed the way the space was designed to function. Buren's contribution to *A Space: A Thousand Words* highlighted the nature of institutional space and the ways in which it could be enforced, mediated or contested.

At its core, A *Space: A Thousand Words* made the point that space could be made by words, concepts and performances as much as by constructed buildings – proposing that architecture becomes the 'encounter between physical spaces and actions or discourse'.[129] Displaying such a range of different works on the idea of space, the exhibition also avoided presenting a single notion of contemporary spatial theory, instead proffering a range of thinking about space which emphasised the imaginative, the political and the conceptual – moving away from neutral or functional theories of space promulgated from modernist perspectives. However, as Kaji-O'grady reports, the reviews of the exhibition were not positive, and there was a sense that critics from *The Architects' Journal*, *Art News*, and *Art International* failed to fully understand the proposition made by the show, indeed Kaji-O'grady describes the exhibition as 'fragmentary and enigmatic', lacking in 'an explicit or coherent ambition'.[130]

Despite the perceived failure of the exhibition to its audience, for Tschumi, the idea that space was not objective but was congealed by events, experiences and perceptions was key to escaping the more typical architectural notion of space as

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[128] Daniel Buren, 'Notes on Work in Connection with the Place Where it is Installed, Taken between 1967-1975', *Studio International*, 190 (1975), p.124.
[129] Elena Cripa, Tom Vandeputte, 'Space as Praxis', *Log*, 21 (2011), pp.33–37.
[130] Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43-51. (p.48).

'uniformly extended material to be modelled in various ways', a way of approaching space that owed to his readings of Lefebvre in particular.[131] He began to speak not only of the relationship between spaces and events, but of their total inseparability.

The Manhattan Transcripts: architecture of notation

The year after *A Space: A Thousand Words*, Tschumi embarked on *The Manhattan Transcripts* project, a work which materialised the ideas he had developed with Goldberg. Key to the unfolding of the project was an understanding of performance which centred on the body – the ways in which the body could become a measure of space and subsequently the way that performance could be represented through drawing: notation. Goldberg had already identified that part of the shift towards performance art was a reappraisal of the body as a material, describing the numerous ways that artists were approaching and using their bodies in the 1970s:

> Whilst some body artists used their own persons as art material, others positioned themselves against walls, in corners, or in open fields, making human sculptural forms in space. Others constructed spaces in which both they and the viewer's sensation of space would be determined by the particular environment.[132]

Many performance artists during this period referred to social scientist Kurt Lewin's concept of 'powerfields', which described human behaviour as an interaction between the individual and their surroundings, and the ways in which these 'fields' of interaction can be affected.[133] Dan Graham, Vito Acconci and Dennis Oppenheim all created works which used the body in space to affect the viewer's 'powerfield' by connecting the space of the performance with the space of the viewer, altering or imposing sensation. For example, in Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), the artist masturbated hidden underneath a ramp in the gallery space upon which visitors walked – able to hear the sounds from below. This purposefully uncomfortable situation of proximity, involving the gallery visitors in the 'field' of his act, had the effect of disturbing their own experience of the space.

As performances became more complex during the 1970s, moving away from the dance-like expressionism of early works by Yvonne Rainer and Trisha Brown to more intricate and precise concerns, Goldberg observed the evolution of notation used by artists as a way not only to communicate their idea to performers, but also as a tool with which to develop their ideas. In an article for *Studio International* in 1976, Goldberg evoked the Bauhaus sculptor, painter and choreographer Oskar Schlemmer whose

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[131] Bernard Tschumi, 'Questions of Space: The Pyramid and the Labyrinth (or the Architectural Paradox)', *Studio international,* 190 (1975), 136–142.
[132] RoseLee Goldberg, (1979), p.98.
[133] Kurt Lewin, *Principles of Topological Psychology* (S.l.: Munshi Press, 2007).

'stereometry of space' attempted to depict the movement of bodies in space through two-dimensional drawing:

> If one were to imagine space filled with a soft pliable substance in which the figures of the sequence of the dancer's movement were to harden as a negative form, this would demonstrate the relationship of the geometry of the plane to the stereometry of the space.[134]

In a similar way, Goldberg described the complex notation systems used by artists such as Trisha Brown in the mid 1970s, who would often use two or three different modes of notation to design one performance – using strings of numbers, geometric diagrams and modified musical scores.[135] In Brown's work *Locus* (1975), a numerical score based on biographical information is combined with a diagram of a three-dimensional cube which features corresponding numbers, while numerous verbal notes and sketches help to explain the implied movements (figs. 4 and 5). But crucially, artists such as Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton and Lucinda Childs did not consider their event scores to be art objects or to have any aesthetic quality, they were purely functional documents for either the generation of a performance or the communication of a set of instructions.

Tschumi's own interest in the body and the act of notation went a step further. For him, the ideas of notation produced by Schlemmer were a way for the body itself to become an element of architecture. In 1976 he had experienced Philip Glass and Robert Wilson's opera: *Einstein on the Beach*, featuring, among others, the artist Lucinda Childs, whose performance he likened to architecture:

> I was struck, in the Bob Wilson show Einstein on the Beach, by the fact that Lucinda Childs, at the beginning, crossed the stage diagonally. Ten times, twenty times, thirty times, for practically a quarter of an hour. And all at once this extraordinary thing happened when you looked at her cutting across this space diagonally, her body became the wall, the space of the stage was cut in two, diagonally.[136]

So for Tschumi, architecture was literally 'space, movement, action', a notion which forces the consideration of architecture to move beyond form to something that is more dynamic – wherein space is sculpted by the movement and flow of the body or bodies

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[134] Oskar Schlemmer quoted in Roselee Goldberg, 'Performance: the art of notation', *Studio International*, 192 (1976), pp.54–58. (p.55).

[135] Roselee Goldberg, Ibid., pp.56-57.

[136] Yves Dessuant, 'The Interspace : Concerning the Space for the Event and the Event in the Space: Interview with Bernard Tschumi', in *The place, the stage, the hall, the town: Dramatic art, scenography and architecture at the end of the XXth century in Europe* (Theatre studies centre – Catholic University of Louvain, 1997), pp. 46–54. (p.50)
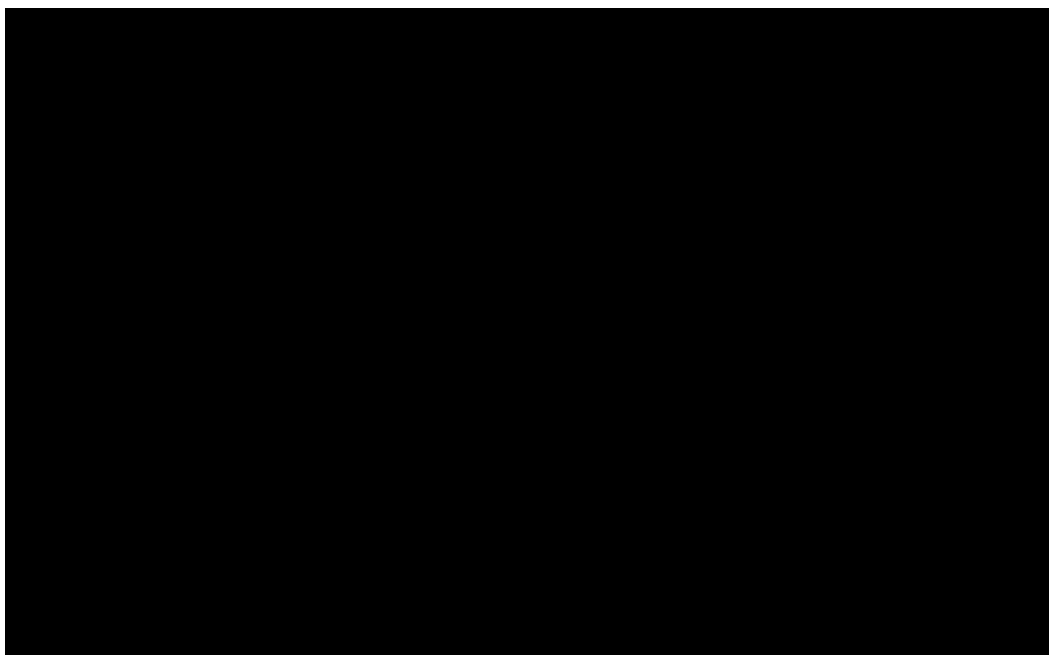
Figures 4 and 5: Trisha Brown, notation for *Locus* (1975 – combining numerical scores, diagrams and biographical notes.
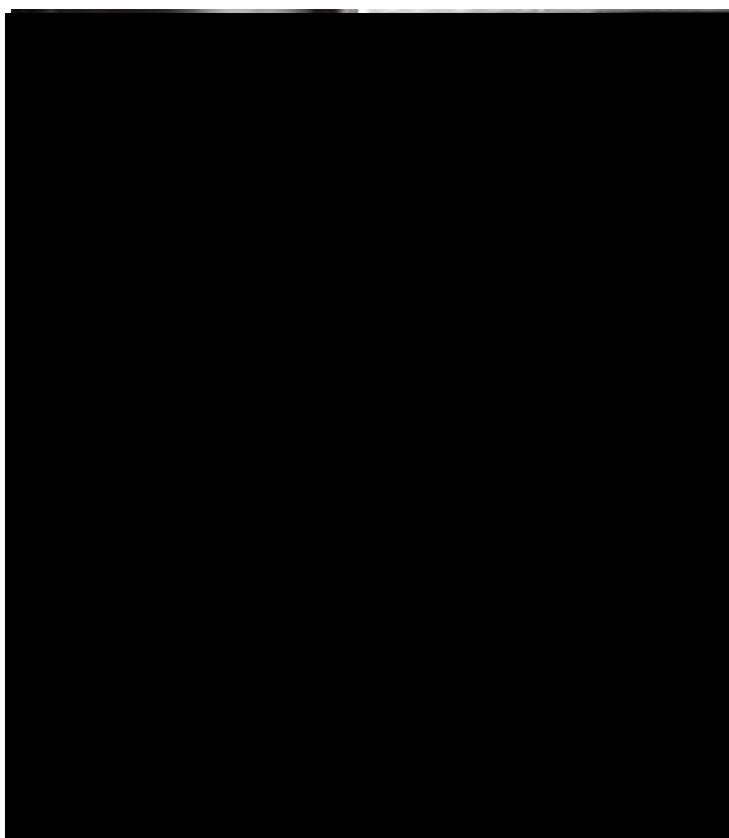
Figure 6: Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov's experiment in montage – perception of the face on the left is altered according to which shot accompanies it.

within it. [137] Tschumi drew on aspects of film theory to further illustrate his point, referencing Russian film director Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov in particular, who experimented with the effects of montage in the 1920s, influencing Sergei Eisenstein's later writing and films. He discovered that the perception of the same face can change according to the frame that came before or after it – stating that the assembly of shots was more important than the content each frame contained individually. [138] In a well-known experiment, Kuleshov juxtaposed a still shot of an actor's face with shots that included of a bowl of soup, a child playing with a toy and a woman lying in a coffin. [139] The effect, known as the 'Kuleshov effect' was that the actor's un-changing expression appeared to alter according to the accompanying shot (fig. 6). Tschumi related this phenomena to architecture:

> It is exactly the same in the case of architecture between a programme and a space: a given programme, according to the space in which it is situated, is not at all the same. Whether it is a space full of ruptures, accidents, or a neo-classical space with its series of colonnades, the programme will read very differently. The notion of a relationship between the programme and its space is fundamental without being reduced to a direct cause and effect relationship (nor excluding it). This can be a contradictory relationship, a relationship of conflict, this can also be a relationship of reinforcement, that is to say a tautology where the programme is reinforced by the image of the space. [140]

In *The Manhattan Transcripts* (1976-81) Tschumi explored this idea further, proposing a sequence of spaces in which events take place which establish a conflict between the two. In particular, he evoked a park, a street, a tower and a block – all drawn from real places in Manhattan – to form the backdrop for the depiction of events based around the dramatic archetype of a murder. He described these spaces and events through a tripartite notation system (figs. 7 and 8), which aimed to escape what he perceived as the reductive nature of standard architectural representations such as the plan, section, axonometric etc., introducing the hitherto missing 'order of experience' and the 'order of time – moments, intervals, sequences'. [141] Inspired by, but essentially avoiding the complex numerical and diagrammatic notation systems of performance artists, Tschumi's notation of movement focuses on the path of the body and the shapes that the body is able to 'carve' out of space:

> Rather than merely indicating directional arrows on a neutral surface, the logic of movement notation ultimately suggests real corridors of space, as if the dancer had been 'carving space out of a pliable substance'; or the reverse, shaping

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[137] Ibid., p.53.
[138] Lev Vladimirovich Kuleshov, *Kuleshov on Film: Writings* (University of California Press, 1974), p.7
[139] Ibid., p.6.
[140] Bernard Tschumi quoted in Yves Dessuant, (1997), pp. 46–54. (p.48)
[141] Bernard Tschumi, T*he Manhattan Transcripts*, 2nd ed. (London;New York NY: Academy Editions , 1994), p.9.

Figure 7: Tripartite system of notation, combining spatial and temporal elements to be narrativised by the reader. Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, (1976-81)

Figure 8: Deconstructed notation, emphasising the disjunction between space and event. Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts*, (1976-81)

continuous volumes, as if a whole movement had been literally solidified, 'frozen' into a permanent and massive vector.[142]

Importantly, Tschumi used a range of different ways of representing his notation, using different types of drawing and diagram, as well as photography. The juxtaposition of these varying layers of representation were key to the evocation of a necessarily conflicted architecture. Presented in a frame by frame manner, each of Tschumi's four events and four spaces are experienced in a manner akin to a film – a sequence of action whose eventual meaning relies on the context of all the other frames: one frame alone reveals very little. The way these frames are arranged into sequences are affected by what Tschumi calls 'devices' or 'rules of transformation', with the influence of film theorists such as Kuleshov and Eisenstein evident in his description of techniques: 'frames can be mixed, superimposed, faded in, or cut up [...] formal strategies such as repetition, superimposition, distortion, "dissolve", and insertion'.[143] Though deconstructed, these sequences are inherently narrative in their depiction of characters, settings and events, and force the reader to narrativise the content presented. It would be these ideas relating to the body in space that Coates would begin to explore in a very different manner at the start of the 1980s, breaking away from Tschumi's contrived, storyboarded narrative to produce more freely associative, unbounded models of narrativity.

In 1977, Tschumi and Coates returned to teaching – this time taking on Unit 10 – bringing to the AA an even stronger focus on the 'event' of architecture through a reconsideration of the importance of programme – emphatically stating that 'there is no space without event, no architecture without programme'.[144] During the first two academic cycles, 1977-78 and 1978-79, Tschumi and Coates moved the unit away from the self-consciously literary projects which had taken texts as a starting point, towards an engagement with the city that surrounded them. This move from an imaginative literary world to city as found reflected the performance art that Goldberg had characterised, but was also essential to the culturally rooted approach that Coates would later advocate.

In the *River Notations* briefs of 1977-78 and the *Soho Institutions* briefs of 1978-79, the pair developed a new approach to representing architecture, heavily influenced by Tschumi's ideas of notation explored through *The Manhattan Transcripts*. For if architecture was concerned primarily with what happens within it, then a mode of representation which could illustrate movements and events needed to be developed. Tschumi thus introduced the term 'notation' to the unit and students carried out experiments with the drawing and recording of programmatic elements. Inspiration was

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[142] Ibid., p.10.

[143] Bernard Tschumi, 'Illustrated Index. Themes from the Manhattan Transcripts', *AA files*, No.4 (1983), 65–74.

[144] Bernard Tschumi, 'Spaces and Events' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, The Discourse of Events (Architectural Association, 1983), pp.6-11. (p.6)
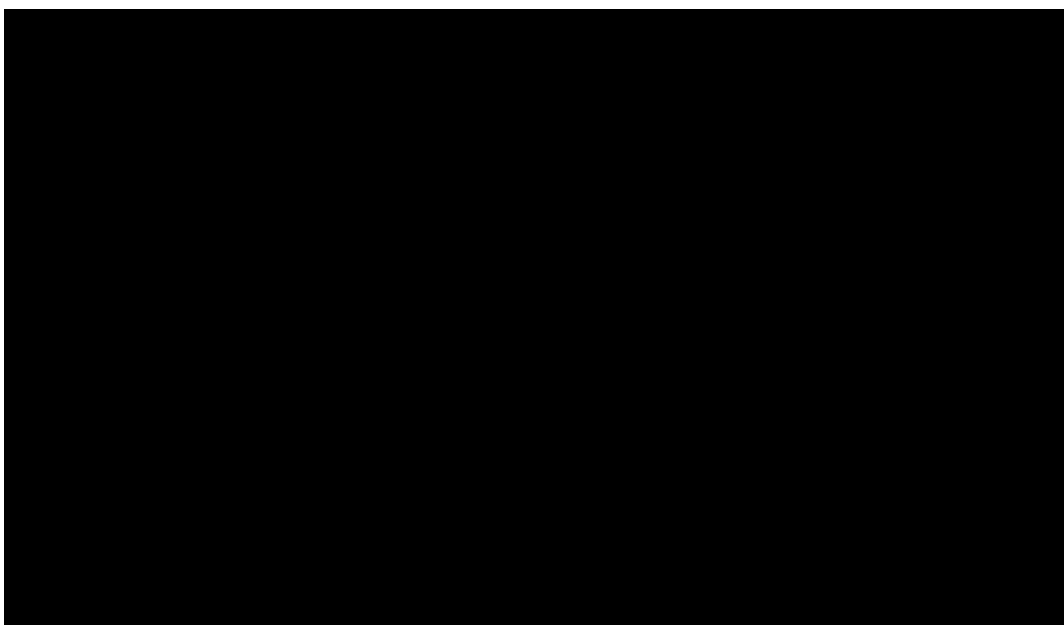
Figure 9: Architectural notation influenced by musical and choreographic scores. John Perver, *The Theatre of Restriction*, (1978)

taken from musical scores and choreography in particular, primarily in the way that they separated out individual instruments or dancers, depicting more than one element at the same time.[145] In a similar way to Tschumi's experiments in the *Manhattan Transcripts*, the elements of architecture were separated and layered upon each other in increasingly complex visual constructions:

> The insertion of programmatic elements, movements or events implied breaking down some of the traditional components of architecture. Scores [...] indicated that such deconstruction permitted an independent manipulation of each part to any narrative or formal considerations (just as the violin could be made independent from the piano in a concerto). They also suggested that juxtaposition of spaces and events could lead to their drawn superimposition – to a layering of multiple interpretations against a layering of representational codes (text, drawings, photographs).[146]

In student John Perver's project *The Theatre of Restriction* (fig.9), the influence of the conventional musical score, as well as the layered notation of Performance artists, is obvious – written word, orchestration, spatial arrangement and the depiction of views and movement are drawn to correspond with each other. In the text accompanying the drawing, Perver describes the approach as 'syncretic' and in 'direct opposition to the architectural drawing', which he considered 'compartmentalised and broken'.[147] However, Perver's drawing is cold and technical in its portrayal of the experience of space – with the actual drawing techniques displaying all the conventions of hard-line architectural representation. A truly syncretic approach would assimilate each element into one image that was able to describe space in an integrated way. Though the drawings from this period of unit represented a move away from conventional considerations of space, the drawings were very literal in their depiction of the layers of experience – and in themselves were not able to convey the feeling of that experience.

These four years between 1975-79 were a period when Coates's thinking was very much aligned with Tschumi's, when Coates was to a large extent Tschumi's junior, despite the relatively small five-year age gap. Tschumi's ideas were more developed than Coates's and his experience much greater, indeed, he was only a few years away from his first important, and subsequently award winning, built commission – *La Parc de la Villette*, Paris – which he won an international competition for in 1982. Coates absorbed and assimilated Tschumi's ideas on performance and the event to a considerable extent, and they would come to colour his work throughout his career, in particular in the build up to NATØ. To fully understand how Coates developed the conceptual ideas of Tschumi

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[145] Though Tschumi is not explicit in his allusions to musical scores, it is clear from the drawings produced by students during these years that both conventional and experimental scores (such as those by John Cag, Brian Eno and Steve Reich) were sources
[146] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, (1983), p.43.
[147] Ibid., p46

during this period, it is necessary to trace his own journey through the late 1970s, and a pivotal trip to America.

Nigel Coates 1975-1981

The performance of making space

Between graduating from the AA in 1974, and returning with Tschumi to teach in 1977, Coates spent time experimenting with performance and installation, and was associated with a group of architects who had recently emerged from the AA: The London Conceptualists. The group included Lowe, Shepheard, Peter Wilson, Will Alsop, Leon van Schaik, Revington, and Jeanne Sillett, and congregated around Goldberg and Tschumi, producing works individually and collaboratively.[148] The group present an interesting counterpoint to Tschumi, because although they were heavily influenced by him, they gradually moved away from what they perceived as his highly theoretical approach towards one that involved directly performing and acting on the fabric of the city.[149] After all, although Tschumi spoke about the body in space, his ideas were only ever concepts – they were never physically enacted.

Coates conducted a number of works – which are not attributed to The London Conceptualists, but were probably loosely connected to them – which explored ways to enact architectural concepts through performance and installation. His relationship with Antonio Lagarto, who had recently graduated from sculpture at Central St Martins and environmental media at the Royal College of Art (and would later go on to become a prominent set designer and theatre director), led Coates further into the realm of art practice, and the pair developed many collaborative installations together. Shortly after taking part in *A Space: A Thousand Words*, Coates spent three days in Blythburgh Lodge, an empty house in Sussex, with fellow AA graduate (and *A Space: A Thousand Words* exhibitor) Jenny Lowe, and Lagarto:

> Chance found us excited by an empty farmhouse, hidden behind trees in a deserted corner of the heath-land near the sea. For three days, three people used the house as a context in which to apply action to found space, and to exploit the links between ourselves as we worked side by side, but separated by walls.[150]

In a small portfolio documenting the work (figs. 10-12), a series of six double-page spreads shows text next to photographs arranged on graph paper. Initially, using

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[148] For a fuller survey of The London Conceptualists and a number of individual works, see Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43–51.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Nigel Coates, Antonio Lagarto, Jenny Lower, *Blythburgh Lodge*, Suffolk, (August 1975).
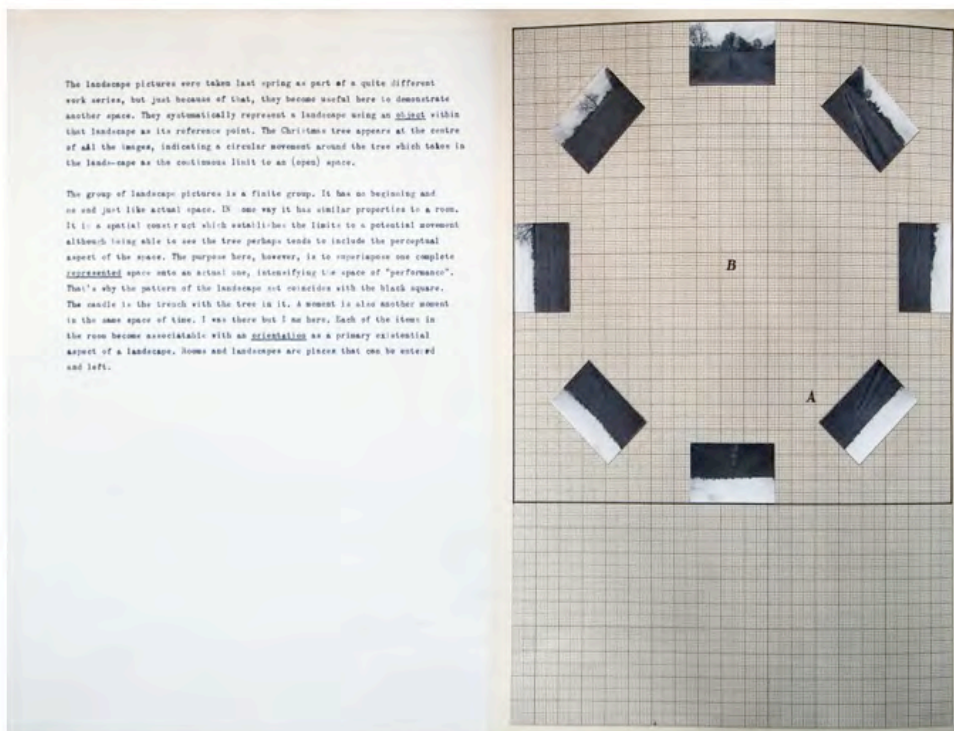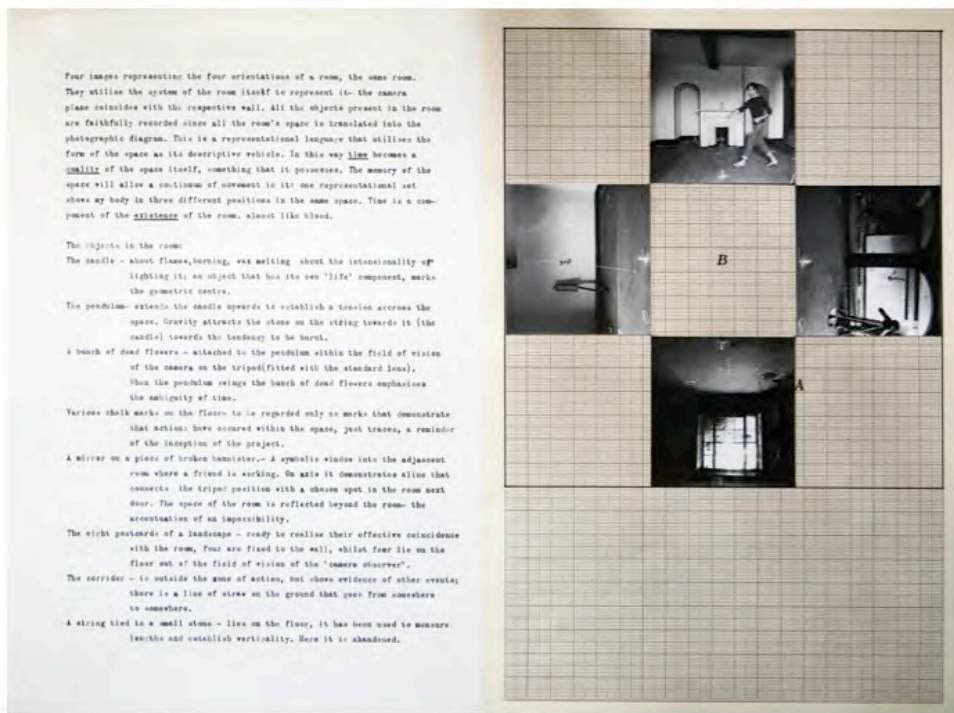
Figures 10 and 11: Sheets from a portfolio of a project titled *Blythburgh Lodge* – the inhabitation of a house in Suffolk by Nigel Coates, Jenny Lowe and Antonio Lagarto. Nigel Coates, (1975)
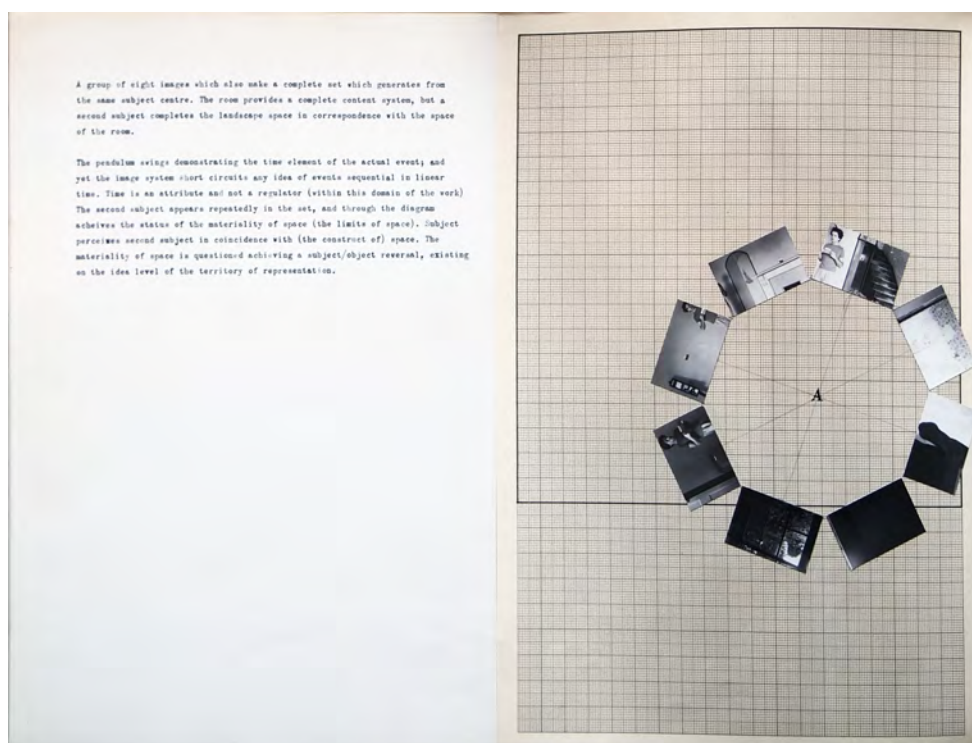
Figure 12: Nigel Coates, *Blythburgh Lodge*, (1975)

photographs to methodically document a room in the house, Coates develops methods with which to explore space through photographic representation – mirroring the orientation of the walls with the position of the camera, and then laying the photographs onto the page so that they corresponded to each surface of the room. He then introduced his body into the photographs, inserting a temporal dimension through the changing form of the body between frames. In the next set, a series of photographs taken in a landscape centred on a fir tree are placed in the room, photographed again, and arranged on the page. By arranging the landscape photographs in a circular formation, which imitated the manner in which they were taken, Coates described one space inside another. This referencing of another space, another moment in time and another situation which he himself inhabited, was a strategy he would use frequently during this period – providing conceptual markers within a space to heighten the experience of it – emphasising what he described as the 'performance' of the space.[151] Here, Coates was taking the first steps towards reducing the autonomous nature of a space, reaching outwards to another space in order to fill the first with some perceptual content.

Later in 1975, Coates, Lowe and Lagarto, carried out *Housework: a continuous performance in making space*, in which the trio occupied a three-story house on the corner of Theobalds Road and Red Lion Street in London's Clerkenwell, loaned to them by Camden Council for two weeks.[152] Taking up his space in the living room, Coates's portfolio from the event diarises his stay through a description of 16 'actions' (and one 'post action'), with accompanying diagrams and photographs (figs. 13-16). Using the same set of landscape photographs as at *Blythburgh Lodge*, a real fir tree, (mirroring the fir tree in the photographs), a strip light and his own body, Coates constructed a series of installations which again manipulated the relationship between the space in the house and the photographed space outside. He also moves from room to room, superimposing the 'sensibility' of one room onto the next through the arrangement of props, echoing the ideas initiated in *Blythburgh Lodge*.[153] His description of 'actions' are reminiscent of event scores used by performance artists described earlier in this chapter – blurring the distinction between the artist, the performer and the audience.[154] This work was also Coates's first attempt at forming a collective, drawing together artists and ex-students from the AA to participate and observe.

In 1976, Coates and Lagarto performed *A Marat*; in it, Coates hid behind a folding mirrored screen in the centre of a room, passing photographs of himself and Lagarto taking a bath together to Lagarto, who laid the images on the floor in radiating

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[151] Recorded in Coates's portfolio of the *Blythburgh Lodge* (1975) project.
[152] Nigel Coates, Antonio Lagarto, Jenny Lower, *Housework*, London, (December 1975).
[153] Ibid.
[154] K. Friedman, *The Fluxus Reader* (Academy Editions, 1998).
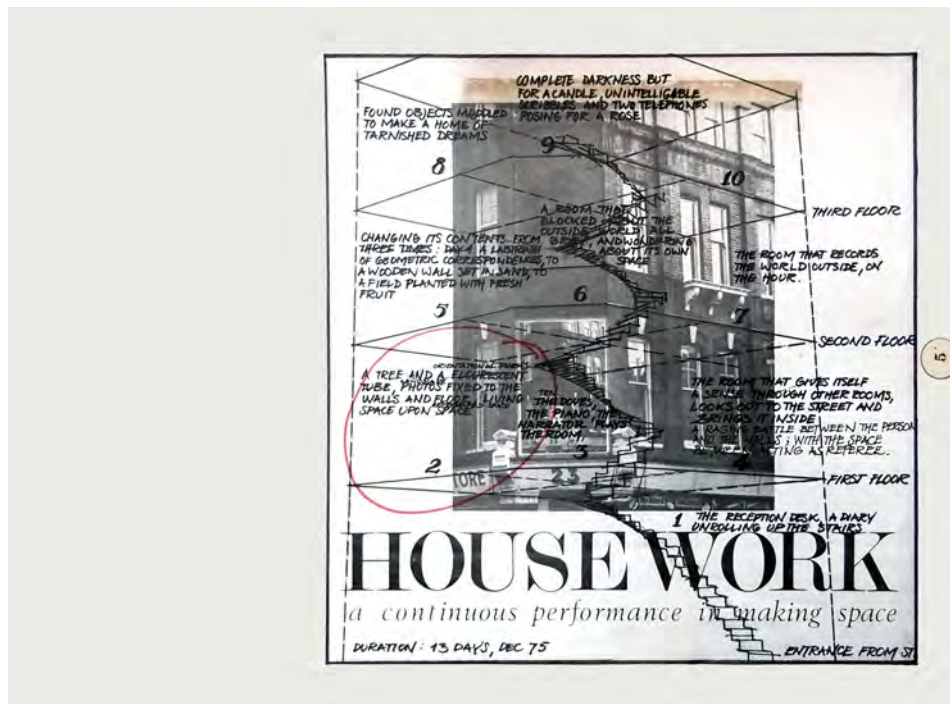
Figure 13: Front cover for *Housework* portfolio, showing the house in Camden inhabited by the group. Nigel Coates, *Housework*, (1975)

Figure 14: Nigel Coates occupying a room for a performance work, *Housework*, (1975)
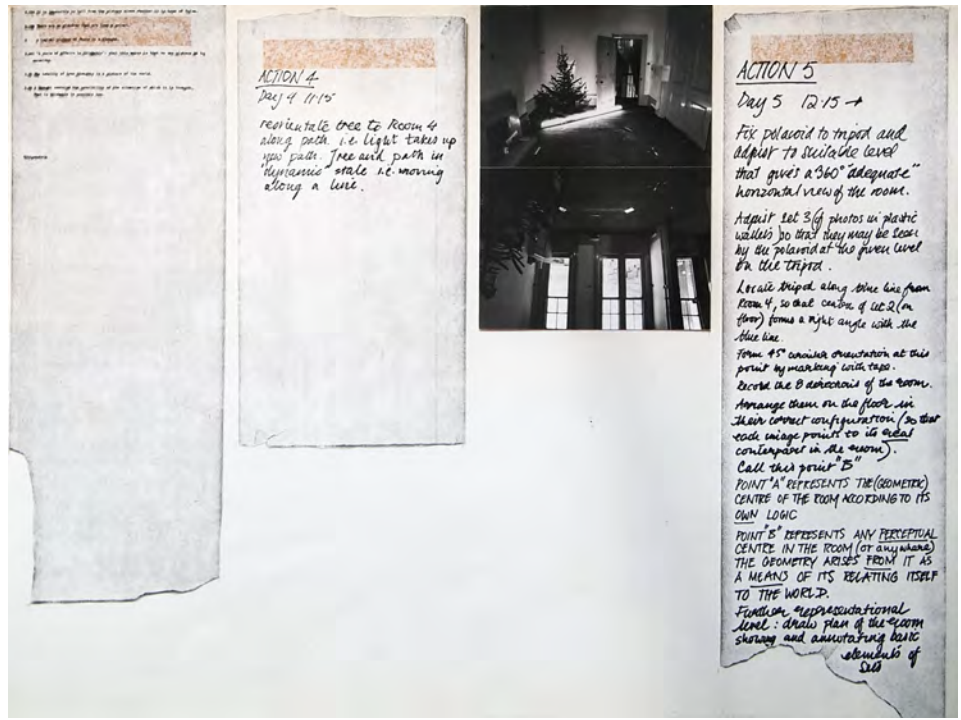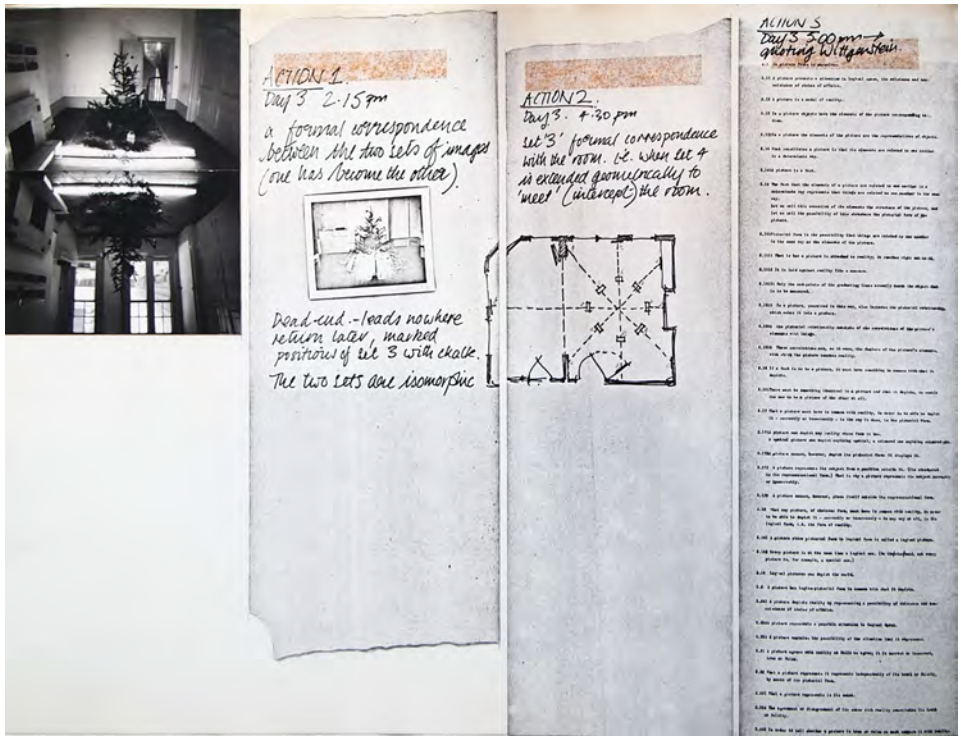
Figures 15 and 16: Pages from portfolio showing notation and instructions for performance and installation works. Nigel Coates, *Housework*, (1975)

lines so that they were reflected infinitely in the mirror (figs. 17- 20).[155] The posed photographs of the couple in the bath imitated the painting *Death of Marat* by Jacques–Louis David (1793), with the text inscribed on the back of the mirror held by Coates was a copy of the words: 'A Marat, David', which were written on the original painting. *Death of Marat* is a deeply political painting that depicts the murder of Jean-Paul Marat, a prominent figure in the French Revolution, by Charlotte Corday – portraying him as a martyr in a form of art-as-propaganda.[156] The re-enactment and staging by Coates and Lagarto, drawing the context and connotations of the original painting into a new scene, had the effect of dramatising the space it was performed in, providing a field of references and associations. The use of the mirror also recalled Coates's earlier piece for *A Space: A Thousand Words*, attempting to evoke a surreal space within a space – and a space that was un-enterable: the endless mirror space. In this respect the work recalls the mise-en-abyme – the artwork that contains an infinite copy of itself, often evoked through the use or depiction of mirrors.[157] This deconstructive tactic of creating such an 'abyss' not only destablises meaning, but extends the space of the room infinitely, creating depth and extension.

The work can also be viewed in terms of Michel Foucault's concept of the heterotopia – and indeed, all these early works create heterotopic spaces in the way that they draw in other places and other times, creating connections that complicate the site of the work.[158] In *A Marat* and Coates's work for *A Space: A Thousand Words*, the presence of the mirror enhances the heterotopian reading, as Foucault describes: the space of the mirror is both physically present – it exists in our hands – but at the same time presents a space that is a 'placeless place':

> The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.[159]

The complexity of the mirror space is the archetypal heterotopia, and in *A Marat* exaggerates the juxtaposition of time and space that is already present through the photographs – which refer not only to the time and space of the original painting, but of

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[155] Nigel Coates and Antonio Lagarto, *A Marat*, London, (1976).

[156] Visual analysis: 'Death or Assassination of Marat by Jacques–Louis David, 1793', Warwick University Blog, http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/giulialasen/entry/visual_analysis/, accessed May 2014.

[157] S. Whatling, 'Putting Mise-En-Abyme in Its (Medieval) Place' in *Medieval "Mise en Abyme": The Object Depicted within Itself* (2009), Conference proceedings, (16 February 2009).

[158] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol.16 (1986), pp.22–27.

[159] Ibid., p.24.
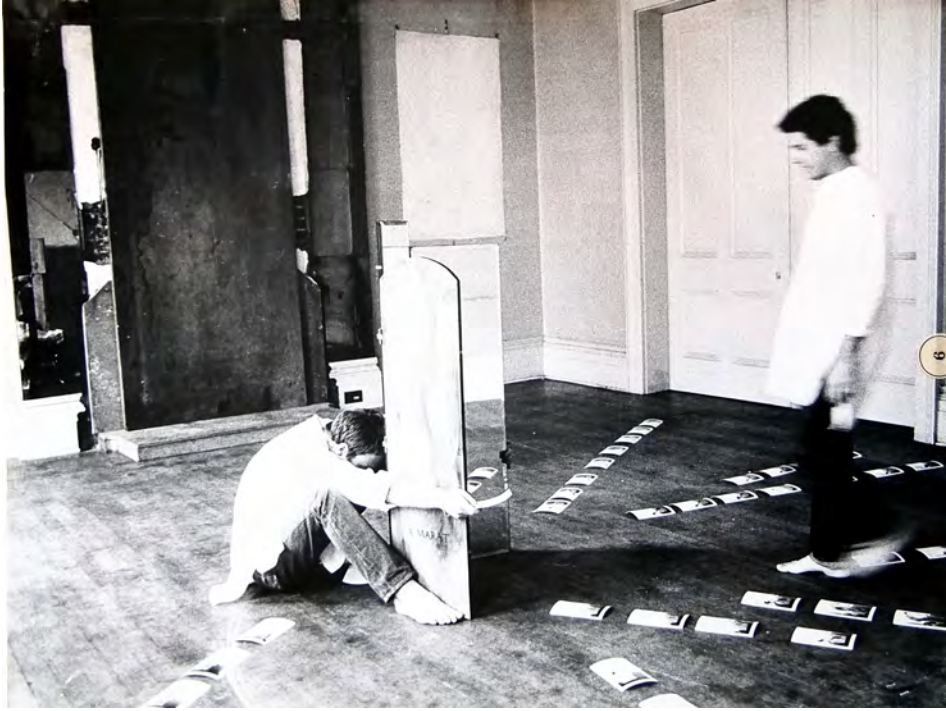
Figure 17: Nigel Coates and Antonio Lagarto performing *A Marat* (1976)
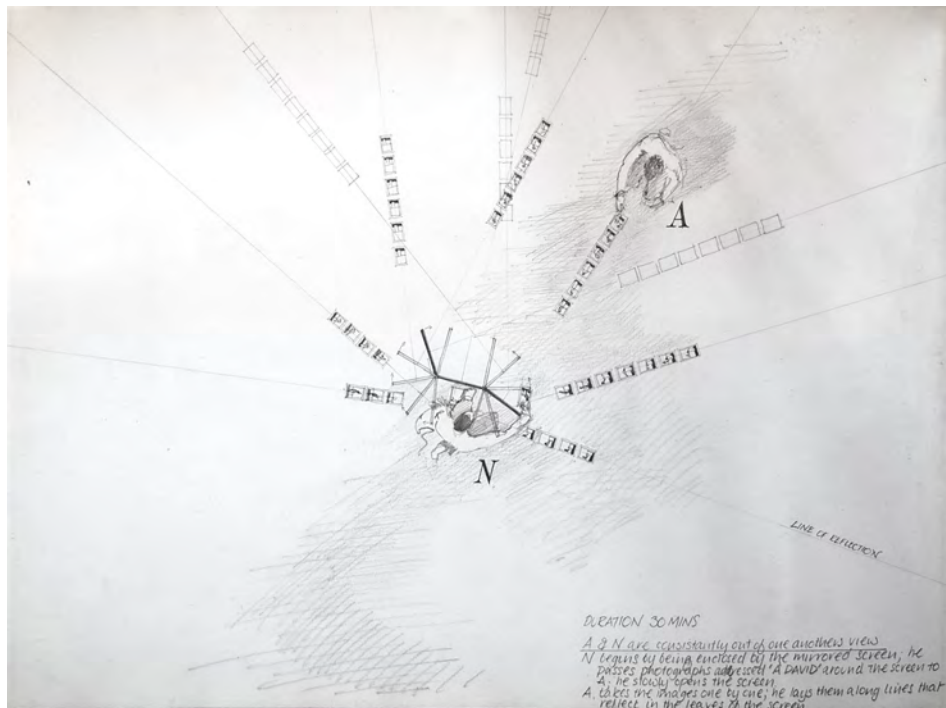
Figure 18: Diagram showing the arrangement of *A Marat* – Coates sits behind a folding mirror, while Lagarto arranges lines of photographs that reflect infinitely.

Figure 19: Photographs showing Coates and Lagarto performing the bath scene used in their performance *A Marat*.
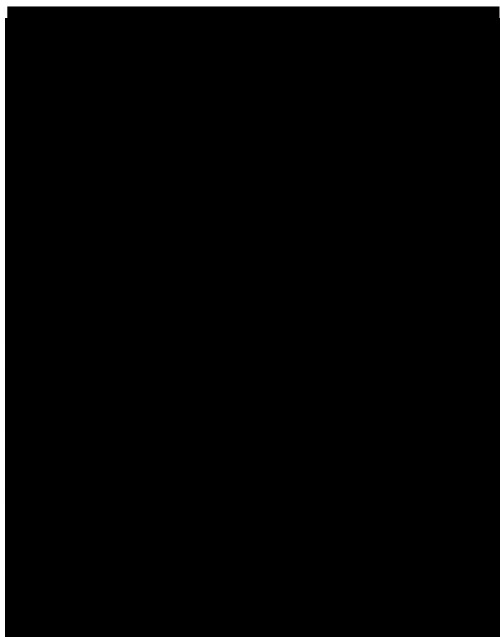
Figure 20: *Death of Marat* by Jacques–Louis David (1793)

the time and space of the Coates and Lagarto's bathing – against the backdrop of the room the work is situated in. The effect is of a time and a space within a time and a space, *ad infinitum*.

The mirror also carries with it a strong homoerotic symbolism – a theme that runs throughout Coates's work and coloured much of NATØ's work too, despite Coates being the only homosexual member of the group. In their use of mirrors, Coates and Lagarto evoke the concept of the mirrored body implicit in homosexuality, an effect amplified by the endless mirroring of photographs of the pair's erotic bath scene. Indeed, critic and curator Aaron Betsky draws on the trope of the mirror in his 1997 text *Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire* to explain both the nature of homosexuality and the way space is occupied in so-called 'queer spaces' such as the nightclub.[160] The mirror is symbolic of homosexual love because it represents the inherent mirroring of the body:

> Same-sex love is, after all, about the love of the same, a kind of idealized (or perverted, if you will) mirroring of the self in the other. The essence of queer love is that it loves itself in another form, or loves another form that is wishes were itself. [161]

Betsky goes on to relate this mirroring of the body to a Foucauldian understanding of the heterotopic mirror space, describing that the formation of 'queer space' is through the 'shifting and ephemeral' mirror space that allows the body to dissolve into 'orgasmic space' – another unreal, real heterotopia.[162] In this respect, the mirror space allows the confines and restrictions of society to be removed and the space between bodies to dissolve – the gesture of sexual intercourse allowing the body to extend into space.[163] Thus it is possible to understand the eroticism of Coates's works with Lagarto – his romantic partner as well as collaborator – and his preoccupation with the body. As this chapter will go on to describe, these themes came to a head in Coates's thinking about the nightclub in the 1980s, and in particular the club scene he experienced in New York in 1981.

Though at this point Coates's ideas were still far removed from his later conception of narrative with NATØ, and the works could be considered juvenilia, there are elements in these works of a growing notion of space that reaches outside itself, in a similar manner to Tschumi, striving to escape neutral conceptions of space. This was an idea that would become central to the young architect's work in the following years, as he discovered exciting content for architecture in the rapidly changing city and street scene. Indeed, what unites all these works, and those of The London Conceptualists more broadly, was the occupation of disused and derelict spaces in the city and a blurring of the

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[160] Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York: Morrow, 1997).
[161] Ibid., p.20.
[162] Ibid., p.17.
[163] Ibid., p.21.

distinction between performer and viewer, the public and private, revealing 'architecture as simultaneously the product of larger economic forces and of individual action and perception'.[164]

Spatial theatricality

Later in 1976, Coates won a grant from the Italian Government to spend a period of six months travelling around Italy, specifically to study theatre and dance of the early Baroque period – an endeavour inspired by Tschumi's thinking about the garden.[165] In a lecture given at the AA, 'The Garden of Don Juan', later published in *L'Architeture d'aujourd'hui*, Tschumi discussed the classical garden – claiming that the opposition of order and disorder found in planned classical gardens represented the eternal dualism of the mind and the body.[166] He used the garden as an architectural example of how the complexity of a literary space could be built, with gardens able to express more than one idea simultaneously through layers of events, devices and frames. Tschumi's Don Juan figure, the architect, is thus able to seek sensuality in excess – an idea from which flowed Tschumi's theories of eroticism in architecture.[167] But for Coates, his interest in the classical Italian gardens was for their inherent spatial complexity, and their ability to contain separate 'episodes' while at the same time express a united whole.[168] The garden was also one of Foucault's heterotopias, a place of 'superimposed meanings' where endless other sites can be juxtaposed: 'The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world.'[169]

The period spent in Italy was key to developing an understanding of how space could possess narrative qualities; reflecting on his experience of the garden in 1981 he describes their particular mode narrativity:

> As for the garden, it had already mastered the techniques of the theatre, leading its visitors – or audience – through a progression of scenes, unfolding a kind of

[164] Sandra Kaji-O'grady, 'The London Conceptualists', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61 (2008), pp.43–51. (p.50)

[165] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.

[166] Bernard Tschumi, 'Le Jardin De Don Juan u La Ville Masquee', *L'Archtiecture d'aujourd'hui*, 187 (1976), pp.82–83.

[167] Through a reading of Georges Bataille's *Eroticism* (1957), Tschumi developed his concept of transgressive architecture which grew from the argument that architecture is fundamentally disjoined and dissociated because there is a chasm between space and its use, or the intention of the design and the experience of space once complete. For Tschumi this transgressive core of architecture meant that it had the potential to transgress social and political order. Bernard Tschumi, 'Architecture and Transgression', in *Architecture and Disjunction*, (London: The MIT Press, 1996). The development of Tschumi's literary architecture as a comparison to Coates's narrative architecture is discussed by the author of this thesis in a journal article: Claire Jamieson, Rebecca Roberts-Hughes, 'Two Modes of Literary Architecture: Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates', *Architectural Research Quarterly*, (forthcoming).

[168] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, The Discourse of Events (Architectural Association, 1983).

[169] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, Vol.16 (1986), pp.22–27.

narrative in which the audience's participation was essential [...] with their habits of paradox and counterpoint, gardens celebrate deliberate contrivance. Still able to grasp hold of their visitors, centuries after they were built, they display their expansive architectural experiment with an evocativeness which cities or ordinary buildings could never permit. Visiting a garden can do more than create images of controlled perfection; by mixing the primitive and the artificial, their devices evade any single reading.[170]

Key to Coates's appreciation of the theatricality of the garden was its ability to unfold spaces in a sequence, exposing and hiding elements, and mixing open expanses with smaller intimate spaces – essentially narrative in space. Employing Tschumi's ideas on the body in space and the sequential nature of space, Coates saw the garden as a space which 'nurtured the figure that moves, feels, pursues his desires' and where chains of spaces were thus linked in a sequence animated by the body.[171] The use of perspective, drawn from Baroque theatre, established links between the physical space of the garden and a kind of excess which reached into imaginary space. Critically for Coates, unlike the theatre which conventionally demanded the viewer sit still and be presented a narrative, the garden required the visitor to explore the space – taking an active role in creating the narrative. This active participation, which echoes a Situationist position – drawing on Guy Debord's notion of the dérive, a moving exploration of the city – reflected the sense of choice and action also found in the city, and would come to form a key part of defining narrative for NATØ. The participatory narratives Coates found in the garden, unlike a receptive mode, would not be complete until the visitor had provided their own content, in the form of a decision or a movement.

As well as structural ideas relating to the layout of the garden, the aesthetic sensibility he found in Italy would also become an important aspect of Coates's architectural visual vocabulary. In the ruins of ancient Rome, the sensuality and romance of abandoned buildings and gardens evoked a heightened connection to the past – a feeling that could not be matched by the more rigid designs at Versailles or Hampton Court. Coates joined the many artists over the centuries who were fascinated by the seductive ruin, often referred to by the German term *Ruinelust* – ruin lust – that has been prevalent since the 18th century.[172] Artists such as Piranesi, JMW Turner, John Constable, John Soane and many others since, saw in the ruin an aesthetic quality that was able to speak not only of the past but of the present and the possible future – as Coates would later describe in NATØ's work, the effect is of an 'archaeology-projected and a futurology-reversed into the present'.[173] A similar manipulation of what Coates called the

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[170] Nigel Coates, 'Between the Axes: The Theatrical Garden', *Harpers and Queen,* (1981), pp.74-78. (p.75).

[171] Ibid., p.77.

[172] Brian Dillon, *Ruin Lust* (Tate Publishing, 2014).

[173] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.110.

'temporal bowstring' was articulated by Robert Smithson in 1967, who described the not-yet-built construction sites of the period as constituting 'ruins in reverse', 'the buildings don't fall into ruin *after* they are built but rise into ruin *before* they are built', which in turn echoed Walter Benjamin's writings.[174] Coates's interest in form, references and tropes from other periods and cultures lay in his desire to layer the present with visual material in a palimpsestic way – so the current condition is enhanced and adorned by new additions which do not obliterate the present but enhance it through contrast and association. In 1988, Coates described this approach as architectural design that:

> […] Adds on (or lances through) new elements which are deliberately chosen to advance rhetorically the spectrum of meaning. It treats new architecture as a kind of 'clothing (or surgery?), so that the old architecture shows through.[175]

This is a quality that will be revisited throughout this thesis, as a core part of NATØ's work, but also as indicative of an approach to history and time that can be observed in other creative practitioners of the 1980s and represents a counter stream of postmodernism.

The dishevelled, decaying aesthetic of the ruin was a sensation that Coates would later see echoed in the derelict industrial parts of London that became the focus for NATØ's work, and a parallel can be made here between the strewn fragments of temples, tombs and statues he saw on his travels, and the ways in which NATØ would later use diverse visual references to adorn and inhabit their imaginary spaces – often inserting fragments of antiquity into a city where there was none. Indicating a sensibility akin to the picturesque, Coates would from this point onwards express a desire to evoke something of the sublime nature of ruins – even if the subject of those evocations were a post-industrial landscape rather than an ancient civilisation (discussed in Chapter 4).

Coates and Lagarto collaborated again in 1976 for an exhibition entitled *Alternativa Zero*, at the Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna in Lisbon.[176] In their piece, 'Dialogue du Sphinx', the pair were photographed lying on a beach, each assuming the position of a sphinx, facing each other; the situation was photographed from both sides (from the sea and from the land) and the two photographs were then installed in the gallery on opposite walls facing each other (figs.21 and 22).[177] In using the 'half sculptural and half architectural' symbol of the sphinx, the pair infused the work with a plethora of referential content, evoking the many places and situations associated with the image of the sphinx, and the myths and legends such an image contains – as Coates described in an essay on the piece published in *Artscribe*:

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[174] Nigel Coates, (1988), p.110; Robert Smithson, 'A tour of the monuments of Passaic, New Jersey', in Collected Writings, ed. Jack Flam (Berkley, 1996), pp.68-74.
[175] Nigel Coates, (1988), p.110.
[176] 'Alternativa Zero', Galeria Nacional de Arte Moderna, (Lisbon 1976).
[177] Nigel Coates and Antonio Lagarto, *Dialogue du Sphinx*, (Lisbon 1976).

> She [the sphinx] has ranked highly in the pantheon of evocative classical images, chosen to guard avenues and rooms with her chilly seduction. If I see her in a lump of stone, she is the mythical figure made real, solid in front of me, to be seen, touched, walked around or passed. I may remember Oedipus, or just be affected by a sense of archaic grandeur. Despite her role in the history of aesthetic expression, she is part of the world of permanent objects, to be moved towards or left behind, noticed or ignored.[178]

The use of the image of the Sphinx also carries with it a specific homoerotic undertone, reflecting Sir Richard Francis Burton's notion of the 'sotadic zone', which described a geographical area that included Egypt, associated with relations between men and boys.[179] Jarman's *Garden of Luxor* features similar imagery of the pyramids and the Sphinx, recalling the history of 'Western homoerotic fantasy', and it is difficult to ignore the word association of Sphinx with sphincter.[180]

In the work, Coates's and Lagarto's bodies are understood as sculptural objects, existing in a spatial relationship with each other and their surroundings. As conceptual markers in the landscape they amplify the spatial experience of the scene, as Coates described:

> Together they not only exist as a pair of identical objects, but as a gap towards which I can focus my path. They do not order the landscape, but vigilate it; whatever my path, they give it reference. If I pass between the columns, I have mixed my presence with theirs, and if I pass by them, my path coincides with the one they offer. Their visibility in open space suggests a horizontal line and a perpendicular axis. In so doing, they idealize my movement and intensify my sensations.[181]

When the photographs of the performance were placed into the gallery, a new space between the photographic viewpoints was created. As in the original performance, the sphinx-like bodies heighten the spatiality of the gallery by providing reference points around and between which the viewing body forms a dynamic path – constantly changing its relation to the sphinxes. In this respect there are traces of Tschumi's ideas around the effect of the body on space, with Coates's and Lagarto's sculptural bodies reminiscent of Lucinda Childs's body as a wall in *Einstein on the Beach* – the body becoming architecture.

From theory to action
By the time that Coates returned to teach Unit 10 at the AA in 1977, the parallel influences of Tschumi's thinking on performance, the body and the event, alongside his

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[178] Nigel Coates, 'L'Art, Le Sphinx', *Artscribe*, no.3 (Summer 1976), pp.11-12. (p.11)
[179] Jim Ellis, *Derek Jarman's Angelic Conversations* (U of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.27.
[180] Ibid., p.27.
[181] Nigel Coates, *Artscribe* (1976), p.11.
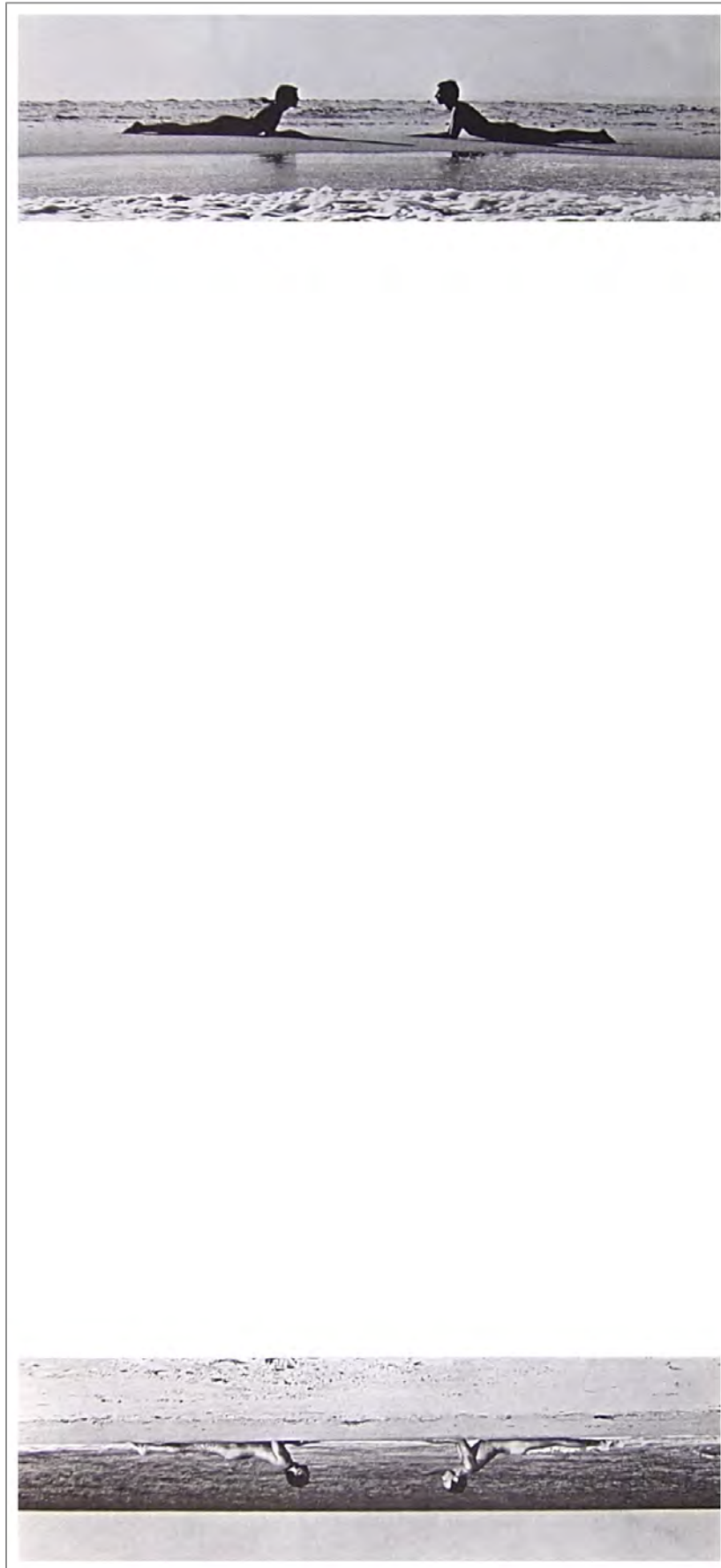
Figure 21: Nigel Coates and Antonio Lagarto, photograph for *Dialogue du Sphinx* installation, Lisbon (1976).
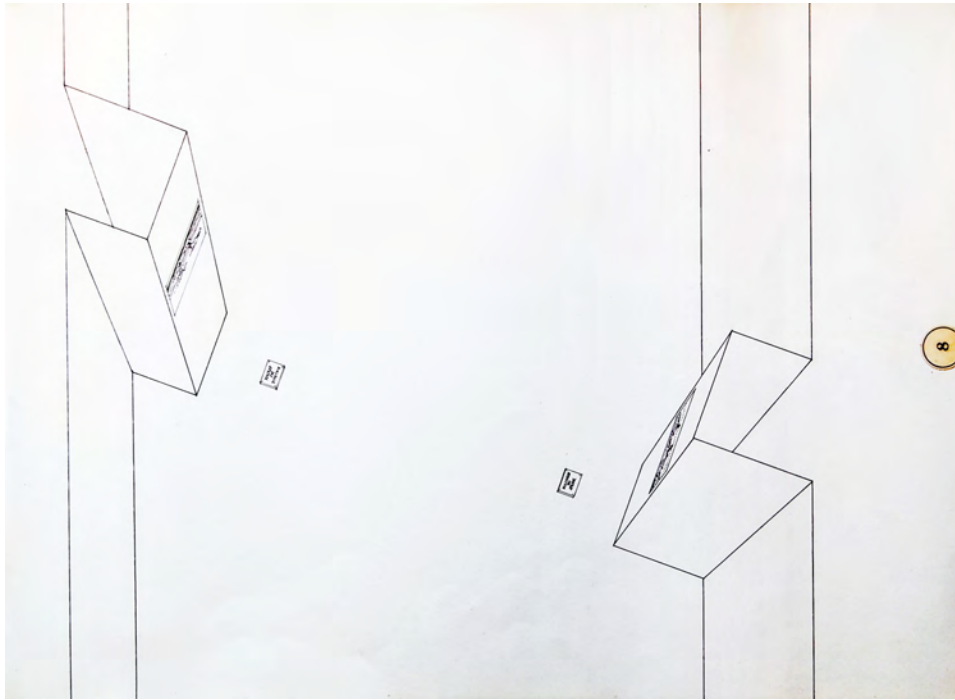
Figure 22: Diagram showing arrangement of photographs for *Dialogue du Sphinx* installation, Nigel Coates and Antonio Lagarto, Lisbon (1976).

work with, notably, a sculptor and set designer – Lagarto – and his travels abroad, conspired to push Coates towards a position on the boundaries of art practice and architecture. Back in the unit, he was able to superimpose his ideas that had focused on the somewhat prosaic conditions of a single room in a house, or a tidy installation in a gallery, onto the messy reality of the city. As discussed, in 1978-79 after a year of thinking about issues of drawing and notation in the *River Notations* briefs, the unit began focusing its projects in a much smaller area of London, taking Soho as their point of departure in the *Soho Institutions* briefs (fig.23). The year was spent designing an institution that 'represented an extreme within its (functional) type'; this 'extreme' was represented either by the institution's function– a prison or an asylum – or because of their incongruity with the site – a ballroom or a stadium.[182] This continued Tschumi's preoccupation with programmatic content, with the students focusing on the design of architecture that contained sharp juxtapositions of programme with space (figs. 22, 23). Defined as 'aberrations' by Tschumi, these institutions were departures from the world around them and their immediate physical environment. Tschumi wanted students to push the relationship to its limit, and to consider how spaces can accommodate events that are at odds with their design and structure. He illustrated this thinking with examples: 'Pole vaulting in the chapel […] sky diving in the elevator shaft […] Or vice versa: the most intricate and perverse organization of spaces could accommodate the everyday life on an average suburban family.'[183]

Destabilising the conventional use of the building, this collision of events and spaces had the effect of amplifying situations and actions, overlaying the meaning and content of the existing architecture with the signs and patterns of the new programme. For Coates, this was an important shift from the 'sphere of the author to architecture in use', in that architecture only really became truly realised once it was inhabited.[184] This echoed Barthes' contrast between the readerly text, where meaning is defined and controlled by the author, to the writerly text which contains fragmentary meanings, and thus shifts greater interpretive agency to the reader, contributing to the 'Death of the Author'.[185] Most of the drawings from this year however, adhered to architectural conventions, and very few featured people or action. Ron Arad's 'Soho Stadium' drawings (fig. 24) did show the beginnings of a move towards a more dynamic drawing style, with a layered and messy approach evoking something of the dynamism and movement of sport – but

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[182] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events*, Themes (Architectural Association, 1983), p.52.
[183] Bernard Tschumi, 'Space and Events', in *Architecture and Disjunction,* (London: The MIT Press, 1996) pp.146-147.
[184] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Break up' in *The Discourse of Events*, Themes (Architectural Association, 1983), p.13.
[185] Roland Barthes developed the notion of reading fiction in a writerly, creative way in three key texts: "The Death of the Author" in *Image, Music, Text* (1968), *S/Z: An Essay* (1970); *The Pleasure of the Text* (1975).
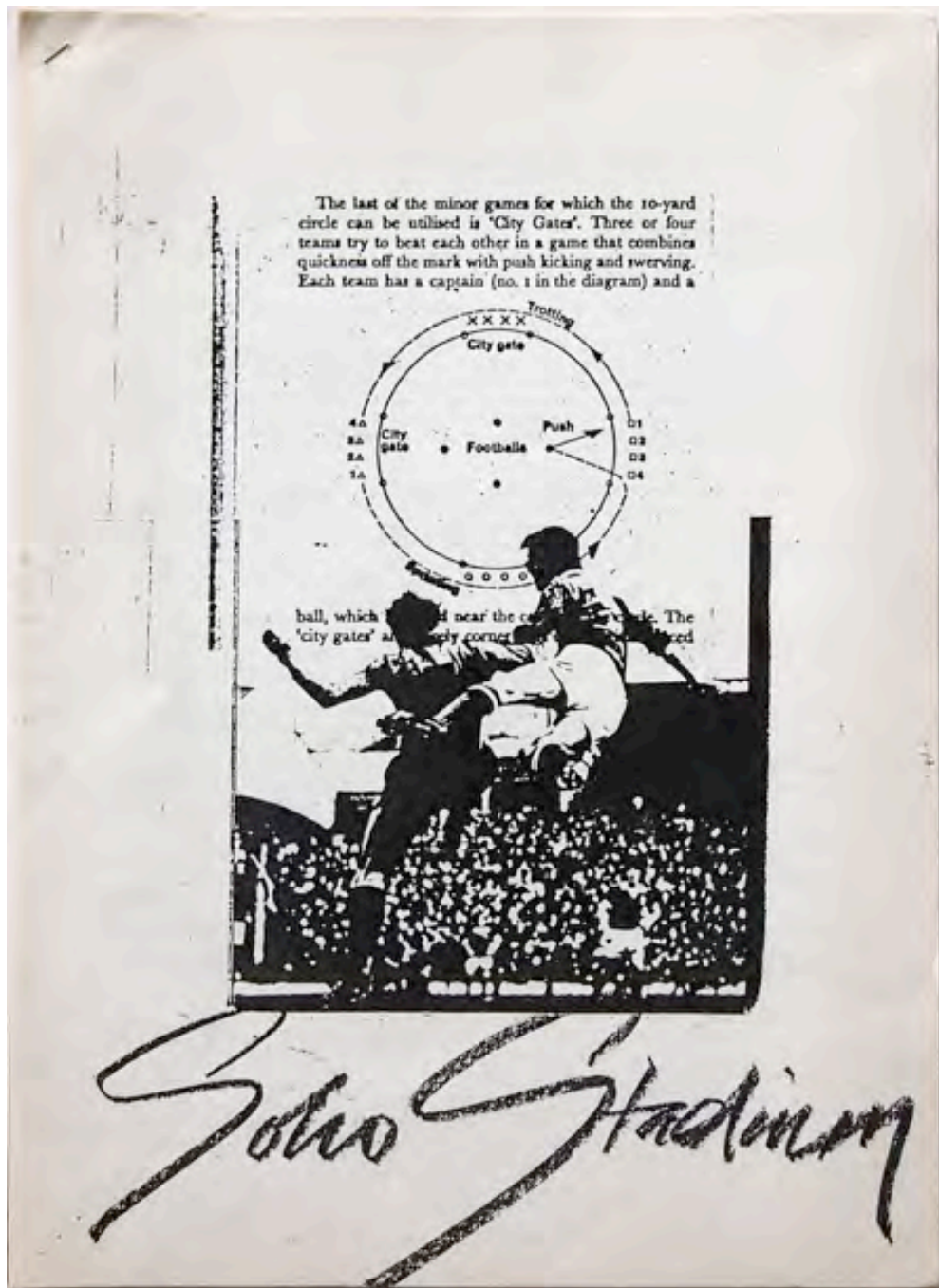
Figure 23: *Soho Stadium* project brief, Unit 10, (1978)
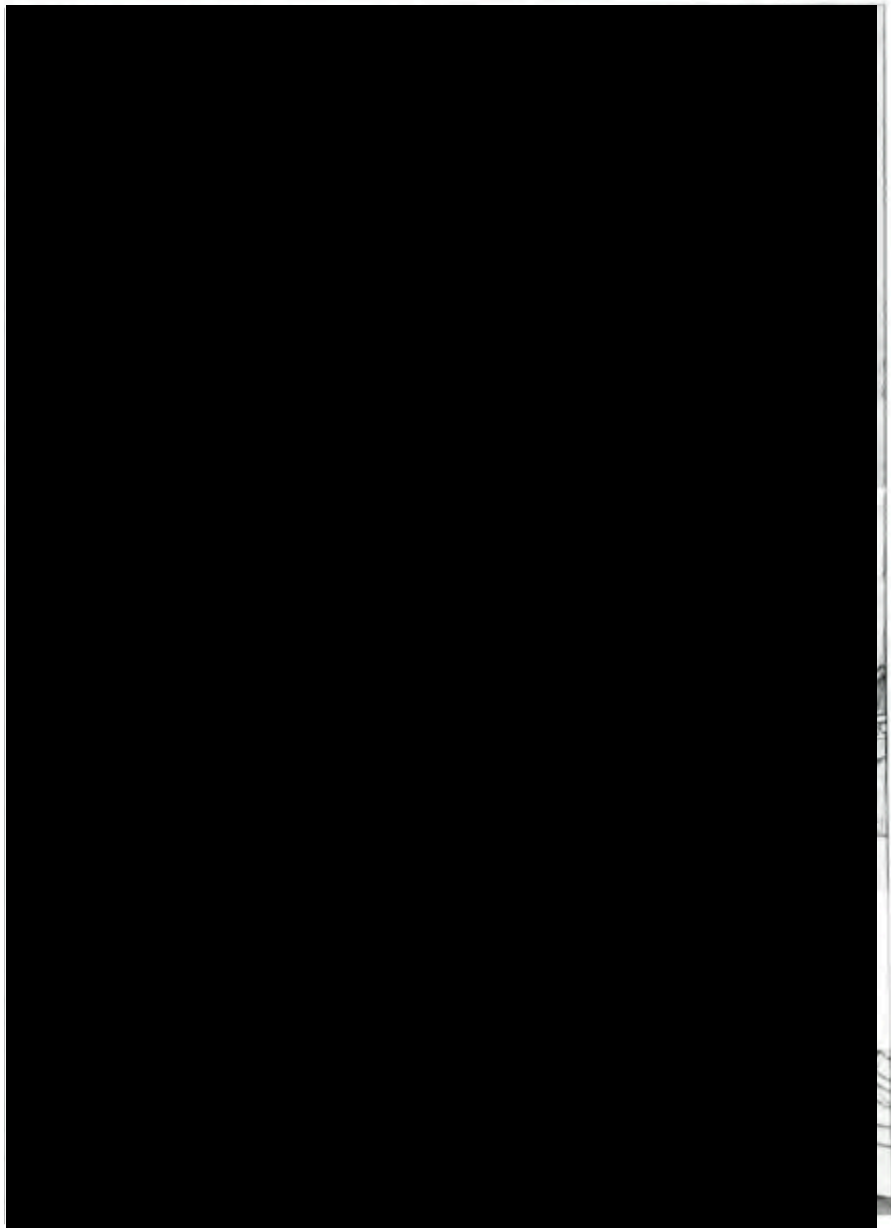
Figure 24: Ron Arad, *Soho Stadium* (1978), showing the beginnings of a new mode of expression in Unit 10.

the images are noticeably lacking in the inhabitants which feature so heavily in the rhetoric for this year.

Though somewhat detached from the actual output of the unit, and perhaps the maturity of the students and their capabilities, Coates developed his thinking in an important direction during this academic cycle, and began to be increasingly interested in not only the programme, but also the people who inhabited these spaces, and their lifestyles, actions and emotions. Locating the project brief in Soho was for Coates not just a site with a compelling urban fabric and situation, but one that had a rich social life with multitudinous associations of bohemia, a history of underground music and illicit sexuality. If for Tschumi the consideration of programme in opposition to formal space was a strategy to create a conceptual sense of disjunction or eroticism, for Coates, the event or programme contained by architecture was a way to understand architecture in relation to life itself. As Coates reflected in 1983:

> Tschumi asked, 'if space is neither an external object nor an internal experience (made of impressions, sensations and feelings) are man and space inseparable?' We decided to single out the contents of the brackets; it was the effect that needed to be worked on.[186]

In the year following the 'Soho Institutions' projects, 1979-80, Coates introduced theatre director Ricardo Pais to the unit – inviting him to run theatre-based workshops in a series of briefs based in Mayfair. For Coates it was integral that the unit begin literally enacting space, rather than merely discussing it – as a way to access 'internal experience' of architecture which Tschumi had described. Though this sounds distinctly phenomenological, there is little evidence that Coates or the students were reading post-existential writers such as Martin Heidegger or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and their notion of the experience of space came from a less poetic and more direct idea of space. Ideas of 'staging' and 'mise-en-scène' were added to the unit's growing vocabulary – with strategies focused on producing effect rather than 'logical constructs'.[187] Coates was beginning to draw back from the more theoretical notions of space advocated by Tschumi. Though both were concerned with the content of architecture, Coates felt that Tschumi's discussion of the 'event' of architecture described action that was too predetermined or planned, and strove to move the unit's discourse further towards notions of action, reaction, perception and experience.[188] He described how architecture should be: 'forthright and expressive, for the distortions of the mind to be thrown onto the building so that once built, they would throw some of the same feeling back.'[189]

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[186] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Break-up' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, The Discourse of Events (Architectural Association, 1983), p15.
[187] Ibid., p. 15, p.62.
[188] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.
[189] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Break-up' (1983), p.15.

In order to generate such an expressive architecture, Pais conducted a theatre workshop with the aim of discovering the potential of a simple studio room at the AA – using movement and the body to explore the space (figs. 25-28). The performance piece that resulted focused on the essentially mundane process of checking in at an airport, but added moments of tension around four distinct phases of the night: 'expectation, excitement, deception and tedium'.[190] The design projects that followed the workshop saw students insert unexpected programmes into Mayfair squares – 'The Fashion Institute' for example, consisted of new editorial offices for Harper's & Queen inserted into Hanover Square and the ensuing spillage of fashion events and gestures into a new type of public space. In the 'Vatican Embassy' project, Grosvenor Square was terraced to accommodate large crowds outside a new embassy building where the pope makes regular appearances.

There was a continuing focus throughout these projects on modes of notation, as the students struggled to express the purely performative actions of the theatre workshops onto the two-dimensional surface of the drawing. Though Tschumi spoke of escaping the confines of architectural expression during these years, it is clear from drawings of this period that students were still restricted to using pencil and ink on paper, despite the introduction of more unusual formats such as scores and diagrams (figs. 29, 30). Many of the drawings still looked extremely similar to those coming from other units at the time, in particular the cloud of smoky charcoal that were becoming a signature of Dalibor Vesely's students, which Coates recalls his own students emulating with eyeshadow.[191] It took a period spent in the United States for Coates to bring something to the unit which would break these confines.

New York 1980-81

Taking two periods of six weeks away from the AA in 1980 and 1981 to teach at Bennington College, Vermont, Coates was able to spend some time in New York – a three-hour drive from the college. Filling in for his AA colleague Grahame Shane who was taking a break from his teaching at Bennington, Coates stayed in New York City, spending four nights a week there before making the commute to Bennington every Sunday. The New York City that welcomed Coates inspired the young architect with its frenetic art and club scene, providing the stimulus needed to take his work to the next stage.

The Downtown scene in the late 1970s and early1980s, as it was referred to, centred around the East Village, what was called 'Alphabet City' – a reference to the Avenues A, B, C and D where most of the galleries and alternative spaces showing new

[190] Ibid., p.63
[191] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.

Figure 25 and 26: Photographs of Ricardo Pais theatrical workshop at the AA with Unit 10, (1979).

Figure 27 and 28: Photographs of Ricardo Pais theatrical workshop at the AA with Unit 10, (1979).
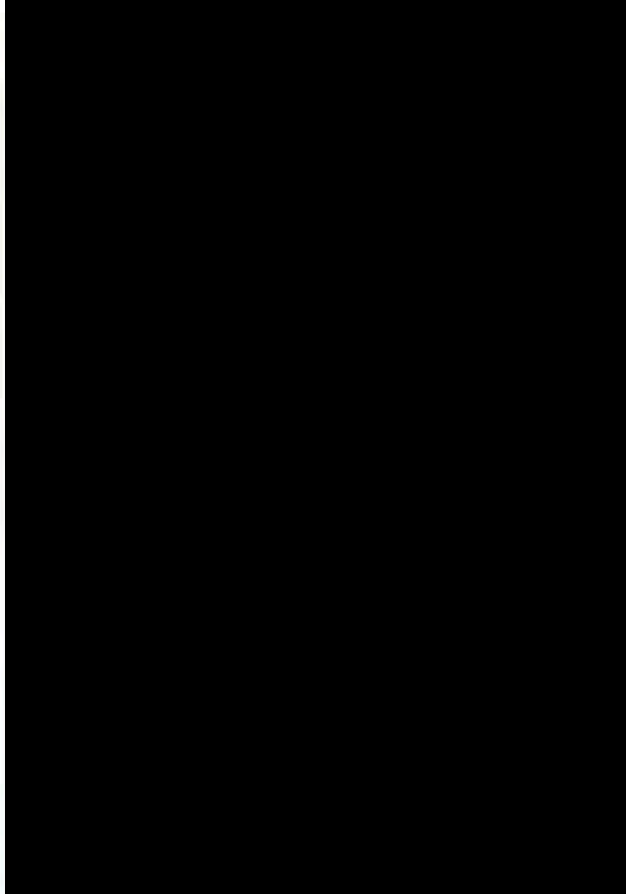
Figure 29: Jeremy Barnes, *The Vatican Embassy*, (1980) –
the influence of notational forms of drawings was still
prevalent during 1979-80 in Unit 10.
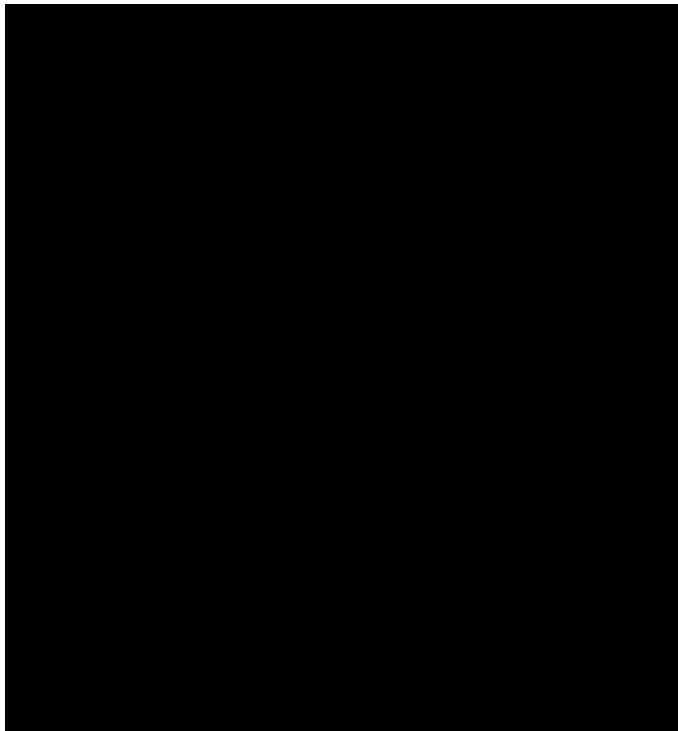
Figure 30: Lisette Khalastchi, *Singles Housing*, (1980).

art were located, away from SoHo, where the 1970s scene had been focused.[192] The term 'Downtown' had evolved in the late 1950s to refer to artists living and working south of Fourteenth Street, and specifically to John Cage, whose work differentiated so strongly from the work by 'traditional' composers at Columbia, in Uptown Manhattan.[193] The 1974 Tenant Protection Act had regulated rents and made it legal and affordable for artists, filmmakers, performer, and writers to live and work in disused industrial spaces throughout Lower Manhattan. Alongside them, musicians were drawn to the area for the same reasons, and it was here that the American strain of punk emerged – including bands such as Television and the Ramones. It was this combination of creative practices that came to characterise the scene, not as a unified movement, but as a heterogeneous blending of practices and mediums, as critic and curator Carlo McCormick describes:

> A polyglot that simply cannot be parsed, the vernacular of Downtown was a disjunctive language of profound ambivalence, broken narratives, subversive signs, ironic inversions, proliferate amusements, criminal interventions, material surrogates, improvised impersonations, and immersive experientiality. It was the argot of the streets, suffused with the strategies of late modernist art, inflected by the vestigial ethnicities of two centuries of immigration, cross-references across the regionalisms of geographic and generational subculture, and built from the detritus of history on the skids as a kind of cut-up of endless quotation marks.[194]

Though resisting definition or categorisation, the Downtown scene was distinctively postmodern in its continuous flux, fluid boundaries of creative practice and the way that its participants revelled in mixing of high and low-culture. As outlined earlier in this chapter, conceptual and performance art had moved the locus of the art scene out of the gallery – and the Downtown scene exemplified this, using the spaces of the city to stage or site their work. In particular, artists such as Robert Longo, Eric Bogosian, Ann Magnuson, John Jesurun, and Michael Smith sought nightclubs and cafes to perform in, featuring on the same bill as musical acts and often taking on the guise of cabaret or burlesque.[195] Clubs such as the Danceteria, Pyramid Cocktail Lounge, Mudd Club, Club 57, Performance Space 122, WOW Cafe, Limbo Lounge and Plaza Culturelle opened in the late 1970s and early 1980s with themed parties, all-night performances, film screenings and bands – attracting artists, writers, designers, graffiti writers and so on.[196]

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[192] Marvin J. Taylor eds., *The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974-1984* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[193] Marvin J. Taylor, 'Playing the Field: The Downtown Scene and Cultural Production, an Introduction' in Ibid, p.18.
[194] Carlo McCormick, 'A Crack in Time', in *The Downtown Book: The New York Art Scene 1974-1984* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.69.
[195] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art Since the 60s* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), p.26.
[196] U. Parnes, 'Pop Performance in East Village Clubs', *The Drama Review*, 29 (1985), pp.5–16

There was a constant cycle of performance in the city, with many clubs presenting up to four different acts a night, involving the audience in their shows.[197]

Coates describes his experience visiting these sorts of clubs for the first time as eye-opening, with an 'anything-goes' aesthetic that eschewed a sense of contrived design in favour of a 'decorated-in-an-afternoon [...] no design elegance'.[198] What appealed most to Coates about these clubs was their focus on experience and sensation, emphasising the present rather than creating a nostalgia for another time, whether past or future:

> Some would describe the place [the Danceteria] as post-modern, with its reference to post-war living-rooms, its undisguised warehouse carcass, its mixture of art gestures, musical experiment, and all that. But I wouldn't: it's modern because it doesn't line up behind any breed of modernism – post past or whatever. If anything, its investment is in a 'no future' kind of present, maximising the moment with straightforward sensation.[199]

This maximised present would be one of the enduring legacies of Coates's trip to New York, an idea that shaped NATØ relation to the past and the future – instead of historicising or envisioning the future, they wove elements of both into a hyper-stimulating presentness.

Inspired by these clubs, and also the ones he frequented in London, Coates wrote an article for the first edition of *AA Files* in 1981 titled 'New Clubs at Large', in which he described the particular architectural and sensory quality of the contemporary nightclub.[200] Key to his analysis was the comparison of the nightclub to the theatre, and the inherent difference between the two forms: in the theatre the spectator and the performer are divided, whereas in the nightclub there is a blurring of this boundary – everyone is a performer and everyone is a spectator. This creates a continuous condition of delirious bodies, a state emphasised by lighting that constitutes the architectural qualities more than the form of the space. Indeed, the nightclub, as Coates admits, has often very few formal architectural qualities, with sensation instead produced by the effect of light on bodies, the movement of those bodies to music and the delirium enhanced by alcohol and drugs. Strongly connected to the nightclub scene during this period in both London and New York was the gay scene, and many of the ideas that Coates evoked in his *AA Files* article are echoed by Betsky. Betsky describes the 1980s nightclub as a 'gesemtkunstwerk' (total work of art), and explains the qualities of this dematerialised spatial condition:

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[197] Ibid.
[198] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.; Nigel Coates, 'Spiculations for Tomorrow', *Harpers & Queen*, (1981), pp.31-34.
[199] Ibid., p.32.
[200] Nigel Coates, 'New Clubs at Large', *AA Files*, vol. 1, no. 1, (1981), pp.4–8.

> Instead of walls, floors, and ceilings, here was a space that appeared and disappeared continually. Instead of places of privacy where design was unwanted, and public spaces where architecture had to appear in a correct guise, here was a place where the most intimate acts, whether real or acted out in dance, occurred in full view through a structure of lights, sounds, and arrangements that made it all seem natural. Instead of references to building or paintings, instead of a grammar of ornament and a syntax of facades, here was only rhythm and light.[201]

Essential to both Betsky's and Coates's description of the nightclub, and to Betsky's theory of queer space more broadly, is the prominence of the body. For Betsky, homosexuality is at its core about the body, and a mirroring of that body in the object of love.[202] He explains that queer space at its most extreme is seeking to dissolve 'the structures and strictures of society and obliterate the space between the self and the other'– in the nightclub the body and the architecture are seemingly discontinuous, dissolving into each other.[203] This sense is repeated by Coates in the following quote, and would come to have strong resonances with NATØ's conception of the city and the form of their exhibition *Gamma City* (to be explored in Chapter 4):

> Clubs are therefore concentric organisations, more dependent on the resonant qualities of a finite enclosure than on the extending monumental axial of the stage [...] any club combines the container and the action it contains into one system in which stillness and motion can evoke one another.[204]

As this thesis will show, in NATØ's drawings, magazines and installation, this concentric structure of space in which architecture becomes the instigator of action was borne out – establishing a rhizomatic space through which the body can drift.

But before this could happen, Coates would need to be exposed to a number of artworks in New York that would suggest to him how these sensations could be represented. In the work of one of his Bennington Students, Kim Jennings, he saw the same spirit in the design for a cocktail lounge – where the exaggerated scale of a symbolic panther riffs off the shed-like structures of the interior spaces which reuse a textile factory. Coates points out the way that Jennings enhanced rather than hid the decaying warehouse buildings, exposing their original use and amplifying the experience of moving through them with scaled up entrances and stairways.[205] It was not only the design that captured Coates's imagination, but Jennings' mode of drawing (figs. 31, 32, 33). Her brightly coloured, mixed media constructions reconsidered traditional architectural representational modes, using them in new ways and in combination with

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[201] Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: Architecture and Same Sex Desire* (New York: Morrow, 1997). p.5.
[202] Ibid., p20.
[203] Ibid., p21.
[204] Nigel Coates, *New Clubs at Large* (London: Architectural Association, 1981).
[205] Nigel Coates, 'Spiculations for Tomorrow', *Harpers & Queen,* (1981), pp.31-34.
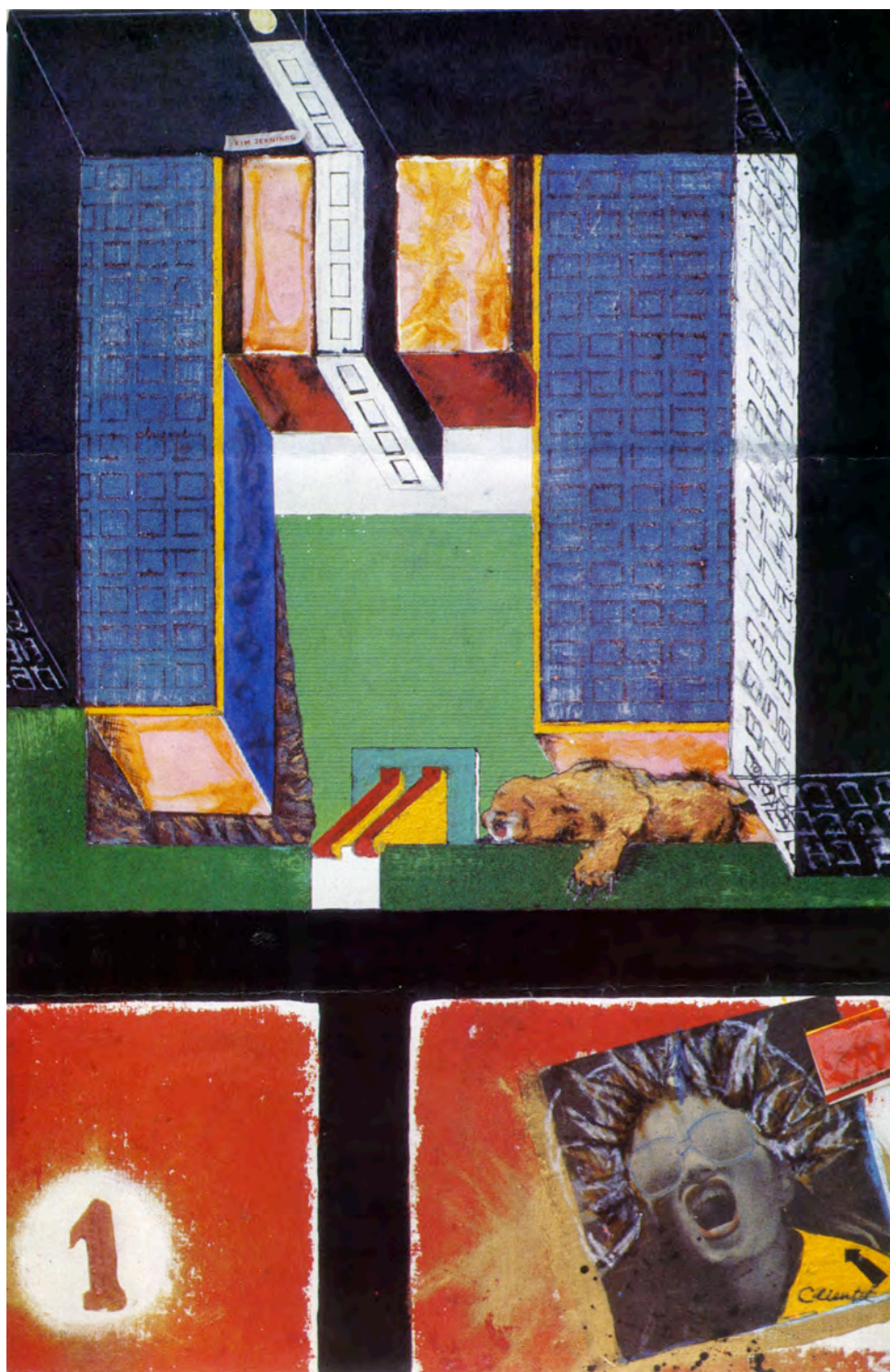
Figure 31: Kim Jennings, painting for *Cocktail Lounge*, (1980)
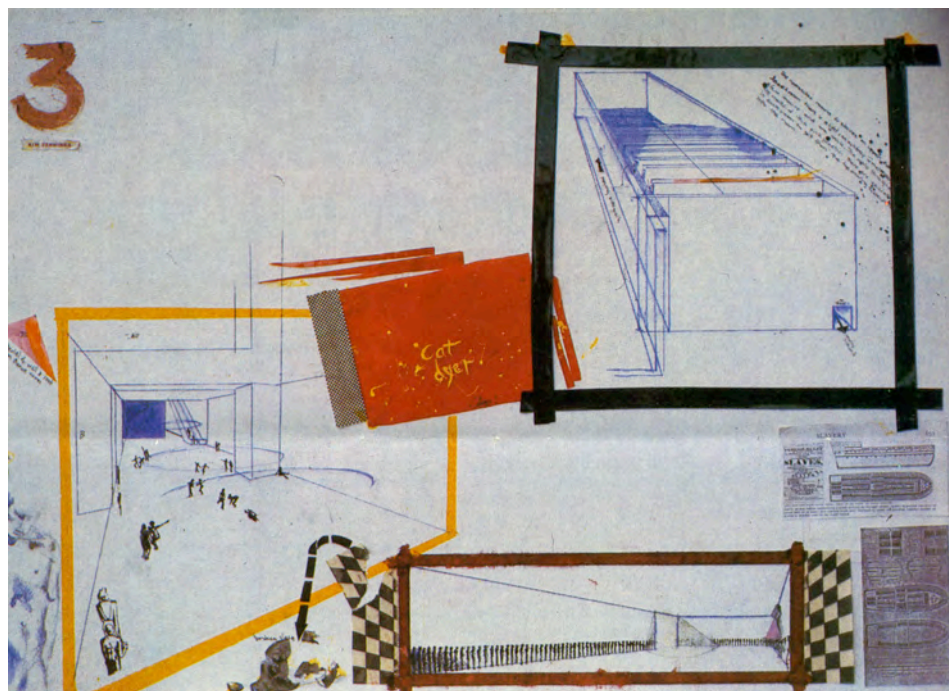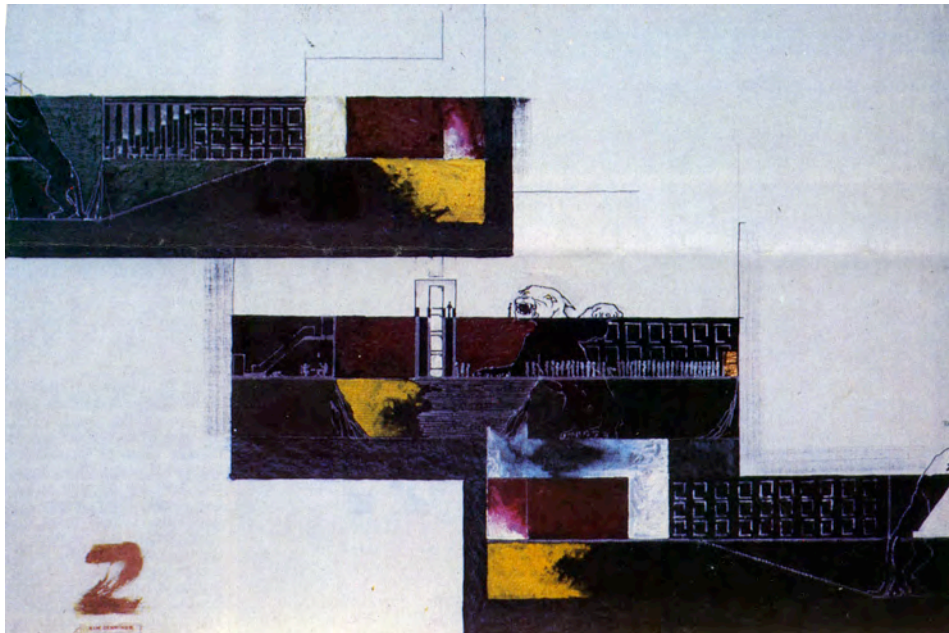
Figures 32 and 33: Kim Jennings, drawing for *Cocktail Lounge*, (1980) – Jennings employed colour, paint and montage to enliven conventional architectural projections.

other forms of drawing, focusing on representing something of the experience of the place she has imagined:

> Energetic accumulations of paint, bits of iridescent plastic and photographic scraps make use of a visual surface of canvas rather than paper. Ordinary drafting techniques like plans, sections and views are given new vitality by adding fragments from other sources, like her own feelings and longings. These drawings join the overall and the detailed into one another, making the design reflect the territory of her own impulses.[206]

For the first time, Coates could see how architecture, and architectural representation, could start to evoke sensation in a way that captured real experience – the type of hedonism he had seen in New York City's nightclubs. Jennings work was much closer to the idea of an architecture based on action, reaction and the event, than the work of students at the AA had managed to achieve so far.

The fact that some of Jennings' 'drawings' were in fact paintings, done on canvas, was also an important discovery for Coates because although architects had used paint before (and in particular, Aldo Rossi, whose paintings were widely known at the time), Jennings' style was bolder and more expressive. Combined with a renewed interest in painting within art more broadly, Coates was drawn to the medium during this period. In particular, he was exposed to a number of new painters at the Holly Solomon Gallery who together formed the transavantgarde – an Italian neo-expressionist movement. In the works of Sandro Chia, Francesco Clemente and Enzo Cucchi, as well as the American Julian Schnabel, Coates saw a form of painting which, in challenging the reductivism of earlier forms of conceptual art, bore a new energy. Though the various painters of the transavantgarde produced works which were very different to each other, they shared a wild and erotic form of imagery which was eclectic in its pillaging of history, references and styles – as transavantgarde theorist Achille Bonito Oliva described it, the artists were 'nomadic' in their approach.[207] It was this wild expressionism which attracted Coates, and he began to understand how the movement of paint on a surface could bring the sense of animation and gesture that both he and his students at the AA had so far failed to express.

In many respects the Holly Solomon Gallery was an important influence on Coates during his time in New York – with its focus on diverse emerging contemporary art, including performances by artists such as Laurie Anderson, video pieces by Nam June Paik and installations like Judy Pfaff's. The gallery, located in SoHo, had been established in 1975 by Holly and Horace Solomon – a couple whose passion for Pop Art

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[206] Ibid., p.33
[207] Achille Bonito Oliva, *The International Transavantgarde* (Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1982).
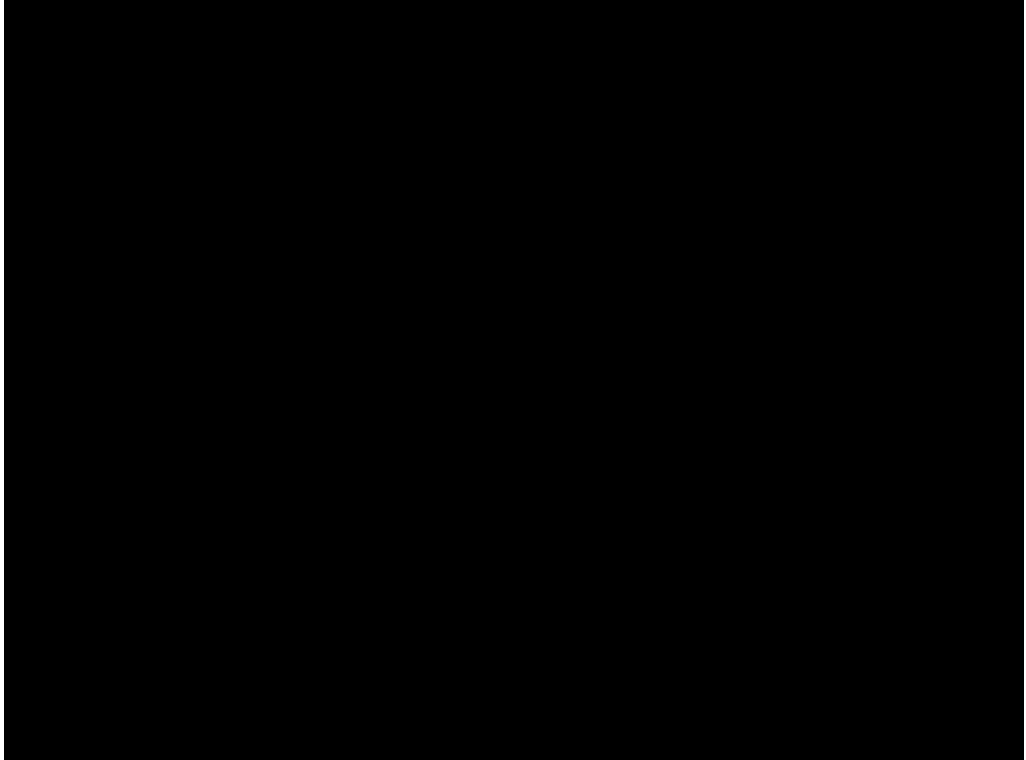
Figure 34: Judy Pfaff, *Deep Water*, (1980)

initiated a life-long interest in American contemporary art.[208] It would be another show at gallery that would further enrich Coates's evolving approach –Pfaff's 'Deep Water' (1980) (fig. 34). Pfaff's installation, exhibited at the gallery in 1980, created an environment, or a sensation, merging sculpture, painting, and object into one experienceable whole. This was a piece of art that required the viewer to move through space, demanding 'visual navigation', transforming what Pfaff describes as 'the gestural energy of painting into the language of sculpture'.[209] In a manner akin to the Italian gardens, Pfaff's installation was participatory, with narrativity generated through the interaction of her work with the experience and references of the viewer. The layering of three-dimensional and two-dimensional material of varying levels of detail and scale had the effect of immersion, with no single element more or less prominent than another. For Coates, the interaction of Pfaff's work with the sterile conditions of the gallery set up a dynamic relationship which had something in common with his Bennington student's designs:

> To gain this sense of infinity, the work made use of the very exactness of the room. Although Judy did not build the room, the role which it plays in the whole piece must not be overlooked [...] Essentially the two works are the same in their exaggerated exchange between building and contents. Both imply action inside them by making spatial maps which chart the conflicts in experiencing space. Kim and Judy use conflict, disorder, motion, trying to maintain a raw subjectivity in their final pieces. But there is more to their madness. They hint at ways to achieve a new dynamism in architectural space.[210]

Coates coined the word 'spiculation' to describe the effect that Pfaff had created, referring to the small needles found in sponges or particles of ices – explaining how the bright

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[208] In 1969, the pair set up a performance space named 98 Greene Street Loft in a space alongside what would become Gordon Matta-Clark's 112 Greene Street – featuring a range of works by poets, performers and artists over the proceeding four years before its closure in 1973. As one of the earliest alternative performance spaces, the Solomon's gave exposure to unknown artists who would go on to successful careers, including Anderson, Robert Mapplethrope, and Matta-Clark, who later built the Soloman's permanent gallery at 392 West Broadway. It was Holly Solomon's ability to move between the different emerging fields of contemporary art, from the conceptual, to performance and pop, that made her gallery stand out at the epicentre of the New York scene. She describes her gallery as a response to artists needing an 'avant-garde gallery', with Matta-Clark, Dennis Oppenheim, Bruce Nauman and Peter Hutchinson the individuals who helped her to launch in 1975. 'Holly Solomon Gallery', *Archives of American Art*, http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/holly-solomon-gallery-records-15859/more, [accessed 6 March 2013]; Bethsheba Goldstein, 'Guest Post Series (Part I): SoHo Assemblage--Remembering 98 Greene Street', T*he SoHo Memory Project*, http://sohomemory.com [accessed 6 March 2013]; Grace Glueck, 'Holly Solomon, Adventurous Art Dealer, Is Dead at 68 - New York Times', *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/10/arts/holly-solomon-adventurous-art-dealer-is-dead-at-68.html, 10 June 2002, [accessed 6 March 2013]; Interview with Holly Solomon. 'Holly Solomon: Soho Story', *Christie's,* (New York: Christie's, 2001) <http://www.christies.com/features/videos/interviews/holly-solomon-soho-story.aspx>, [accessed 6 March 2013].
[209] Linda R. James, 'Judy Pfaff: The Elvehjem Museum, University of Wisconsin-Madison', *New Art Examiner*, 29 (2001), pp.91–92.
[210] Nigel Coates, 'Spiculations for Tomorrow', in Harpers & Queen, (1981), pp.31-34. (p.34)

colours, forms and materials in 'Deep Water' clashed to create an energetic 'sea of ephemeral darts'.[211]

However Pfaff's work also had a particular urban quality that aligned with Coates's, and later NATØ's, response to the post-industrial city. Though an American, Pfaff was born and grew up in post-war London and recalls playing in the decaying rubble of the Blitz and the sense of liberation this brought: 'My experience in post-war London was that I was free'.[212] She has referred to the street as her 'cornucopia', suggesting something of the abundance and plenitude of the street as a source of inventive and creative materials, but it was also the way that the city was navigated and understood that she sought to introduce into her work.[213] She said she wanted to create: 'sculpture that would act on you [...] the way the city acts on you, a kind of very active and kinetic space [...] that keeps you spinning and surprised', and that she sought 'dramatic and sensual environments' that 'edit' and 'splice' the urban environment she saw around her.[214] In this respect, although Coates and Pfaff were creating works in different cities – Pfaff in New York and Coates in London – they both sensed the same dynamic, exciting and unstable creativity emanating from the urban condition that was so specific to this period in time.[215] This sensibility became key to NATØ's approach later in the 1980s, and in particular their installation works share many qualities with Pfaff's (discussed in Chapter 4). The paintings of his Bennington students and the transavantgarde artists, and Pfaff's spectacular installation, as well as the New York club scene, underpinned a new way of thinking for Coates, but one more discovery would complete the new palette of references he brought back to London and form the basis for one of Coates's own projects that became the turning point in the young architect's trajectory.

Korean American video artist Nam June Paik had been working in New York since the 1960s, pioneering video art through a huge output of installations, performances and films. During Coates's stay in the city, Paik exhibited in a number of shows which included a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art and a number of appearances at The Kitchen.[216] The impact of Paik's work on Coates was profound, as the young architect experienced the potential for video to capture the dynamism and speed inherent in new technologies, and the growing visual culture of the television, the cinema

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[211] Ibid.

[212] Brooke Kamin Rapaport, 'Judy Pfaff: Evolution of an Innovator', *Sculpture*, (March 2013), pp.25–31. (p.26)

[213] Irving Sandler, *Judy Pfaff* (Hudson Hills, 2003), p.7.

[214] Ibid., p.14.

[215] Though both cities experienced decline and physical decay in other period, particularly following WW1 and WW2, the de-industrialisation that took place during this period created a very specific physical landscape.

[216] 'Nam June Paik', *Artnet.com* <http://www.artnet.com/artists/nam%20june-paik/, [accessed 6 March 2013].

and advertising. However, one piece struck Coates more directly – *Lake Placid,* a short colour film collage commissioned for the National Fine Arts Committee of the 1980 Winter Olympic Games.[217] The fast flowing video in lurid colours mixed sporting events with some of Paik's recurring visual tropes and characters – dancers, Allen Ginsberg, and the song 'Devil With a Blue Dress On' – in a montage which strongly reflected the movement and frenetic pace of the sports it represented.[218] Fragments of sportsmen and women are sped up, layered and edited into visual patterns of rhythmic movement and fast flowing action – with no particular thread or narrative linking them together, only a sensation. The video expressed a live-action version of Pfaff's installation, with a similar seemingly random mixture of layered elements, colours, textures and energy – and for Coates it represented a feeling that he wanted to capture: 'In his video he captured the sense of rushing: the trees rushing past, the blurring almost impressionistic affect of being a skier – and I wanted to translate that into architecture.'[219]

For Coates, Paik's video exaggerated the sensation of skiing – the movement and the visual affect of that movement on the environment. *Lake Placid* was an exciting and energising piece which created a tangible experience for the viewer, and much like the New York night clubs and the work of Jennings, the transavantgarde and Pfaff, concentrated on the presentness of experience – an antidote to what Coates perceived as the leaden and staidness of much prevailing Postmodernist and Rationalist architecture.[220] But it also provided an alternative to the cerebral, often contrived sense of the 'event' that Tschumi had promoted – and found of way of bringing architecture closer to the culture of the city, the urban and pop.

Ski Station

While still in New York, Coates experimented with the creation of images featuring expressive strokes, streaks and marks which began to evoke the velocity of the skier he saw in Paik's video. An etching, titled *Avant Snow* (1981), shows a building surrounded by trees and skiers – both represented in a state of movement with dashed lines and smudged markings (fig. 35). Through the relatively restrictive medium of the etching, Coates manages to create an image alive with staccato markings and wild streaks from the overlaying of oil pastel after the print had been made. Dissatisfied with the unworkability of the etching, he moved his experiments onto paper, choosing pastels as a more workable and colourful medium.

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[217] 'Lake Placid '80 - Nam June Paik', *Electronic Arts Intermix,*
http://www.eai.org/title.htm?id=3645, [accessed 6 March 2013].
[218] Ibid.
[219] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.
[220] Ibid.
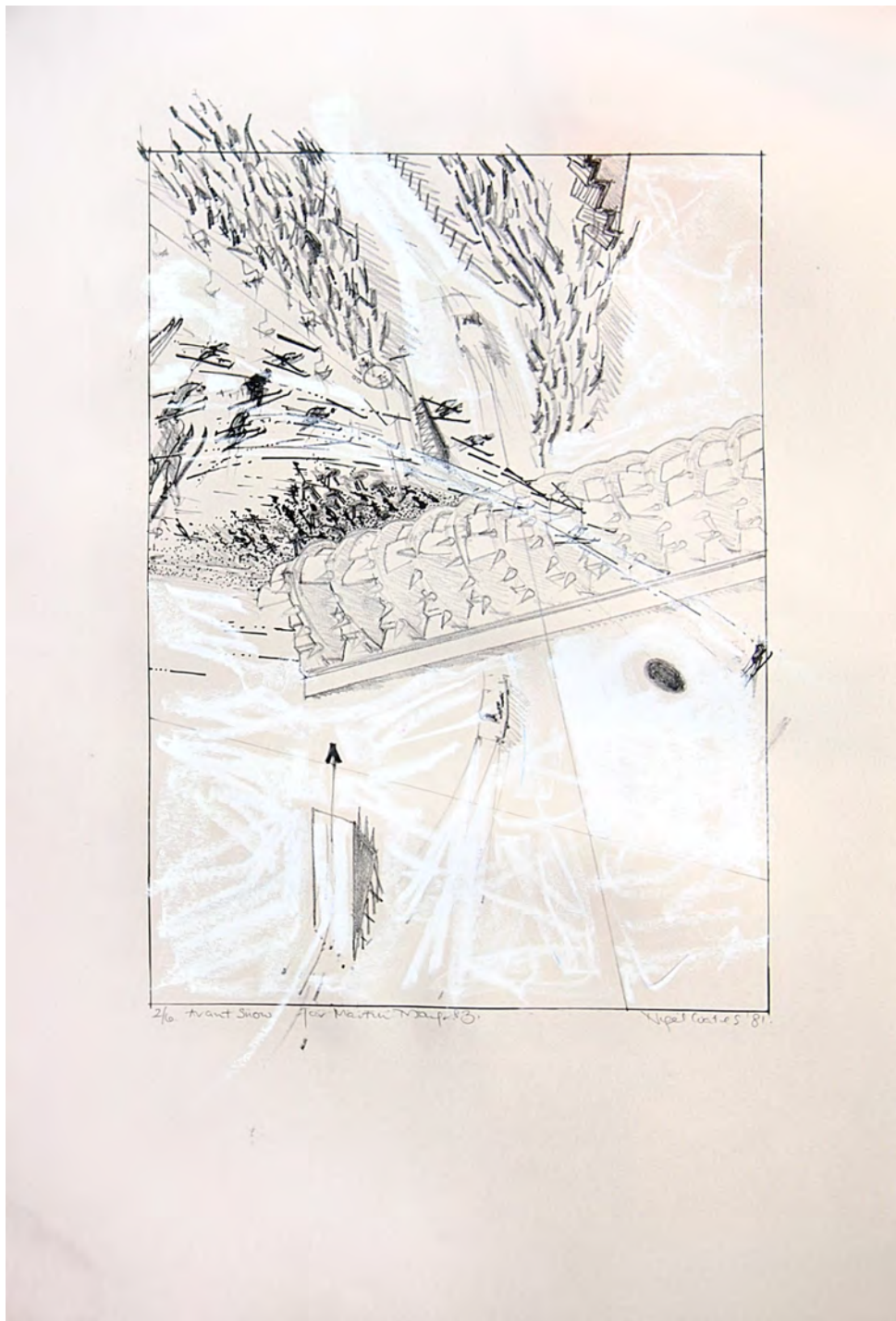
Figure 35: Nigel Coates, *Avant Snow*, (1981) – etching overlaid with pastel markings.

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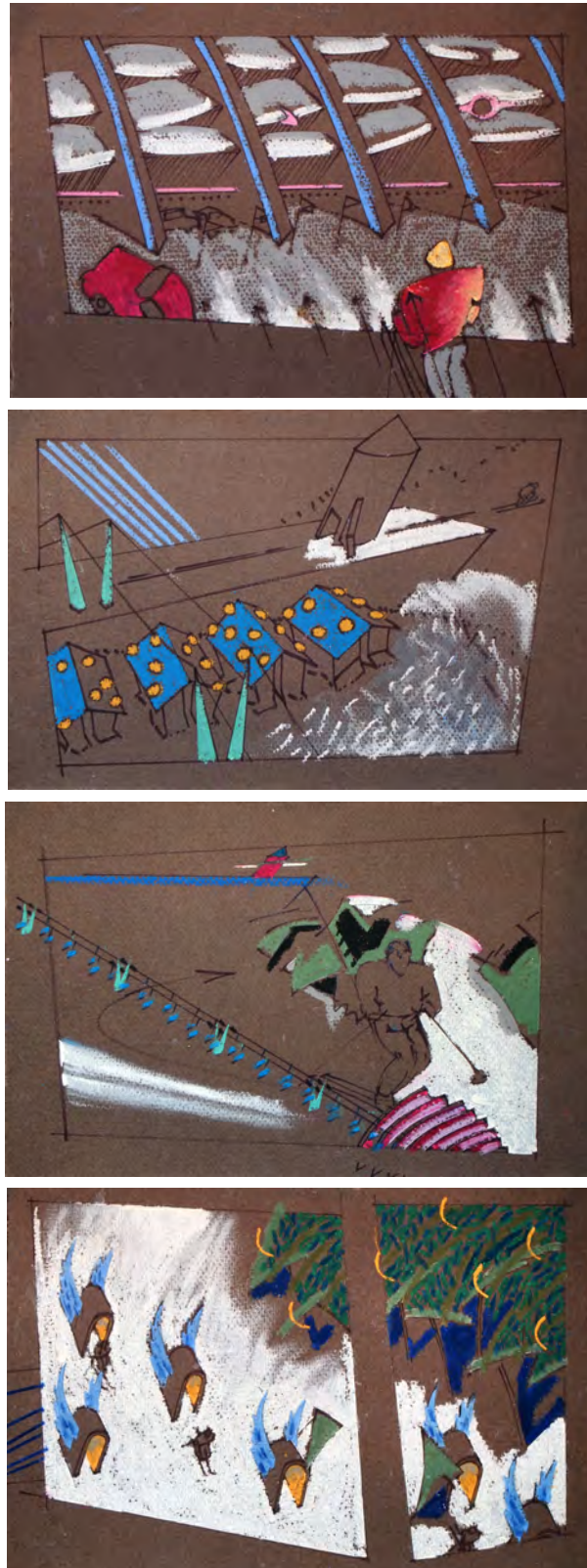
Figure 36: Nigel Coates, oil pastel studies for *Ski Station* (1981)

Four small oil pastel vignettes made on dark brown paper each feature a skier and an aspect of the ski slope, using diagonal framing, projected lines and strong colours to create highly graphic images (fig.36). Another set of two studies within the same body of work feature a more fragmented approach to drawing – mixing pen, pencil and pastel in layered, almost diagrammatic sketches which also use small amounts of text (figs. 37 and 38). These two pieces stimulate a much more energetic sense of movement than the previous studies, with their less complete, more layered and superimposed skiers. Their effect starts to approach Paik's video or Pfaff's installation, with a confused intermingling of bodies, and a stronger sense of the rhythm of the body in relation to the slope.

The final drawings produced for the project, titled *Ski Station* (1981), are a set of six oil pastel and pencil drawings on paper which combine the techniques of the study sketches (figs. 39-44). Each drawing features a key architectural element, as well as a sense of the landscape and skiers, in complex compositions. The architectural parts are more detailed than the previous studies, working on the repetitive and rhythmic aspects of the roof and facade, as well as smaller details of interior spaces. In each case, fragments of conventional architectural drawing – plan, section, and perspective – are combined with elements that inject sensation. Indeed, throughout the set of drawings Coates relegates architectural detail in favour of evoking the experience of the space. The mountains, snow and sky are drawn with a large spectrum of different types of markings: from long sweeping curves, to short repetitive dashes and dots, cross hatching, blocks of colour, scribbles, shaded areas and delicate outlines – combined to create a collage effect which mimics the blurred impression of moving past something very quickly. Though depicting an environment that in many ways could not be further from the city, the strategy of juxtaposing scale and drawing formats (plan and perspective) would be key tools for Coates's representation of the city once back in London.

This set of drawings, in contrast to the highly conceptual pieces made at *Blythburgh Lodge*, *Housework* and *A Marat*, show how Coates's approach to architecture and to drawing had developed. He provides more content in these highly pregnant images, though retains a level of indeterminancy – never providing all the elements of a narrative, just enough information for the viewer to complete a fragmented narrativity. The drawings provide the perceptual cues necessary to construct a storyworld: a mental image of the experience of skiing, and the dramatic scenery and architecture to complement such a feeling. Displayed together, the collection of final drawings present different moments and scales of narrative, some evoking a particular interior scene, and others focusing on a broader representation– with each image referring to each other to create a conjoined sense of the spatial and temporal. Some of the tropes from his earlier pieces are carried into these works, in particular a fixation on the male body, however the

Figures 37 and 38: Nigel Coates, studies for *Ski Station* (1981)
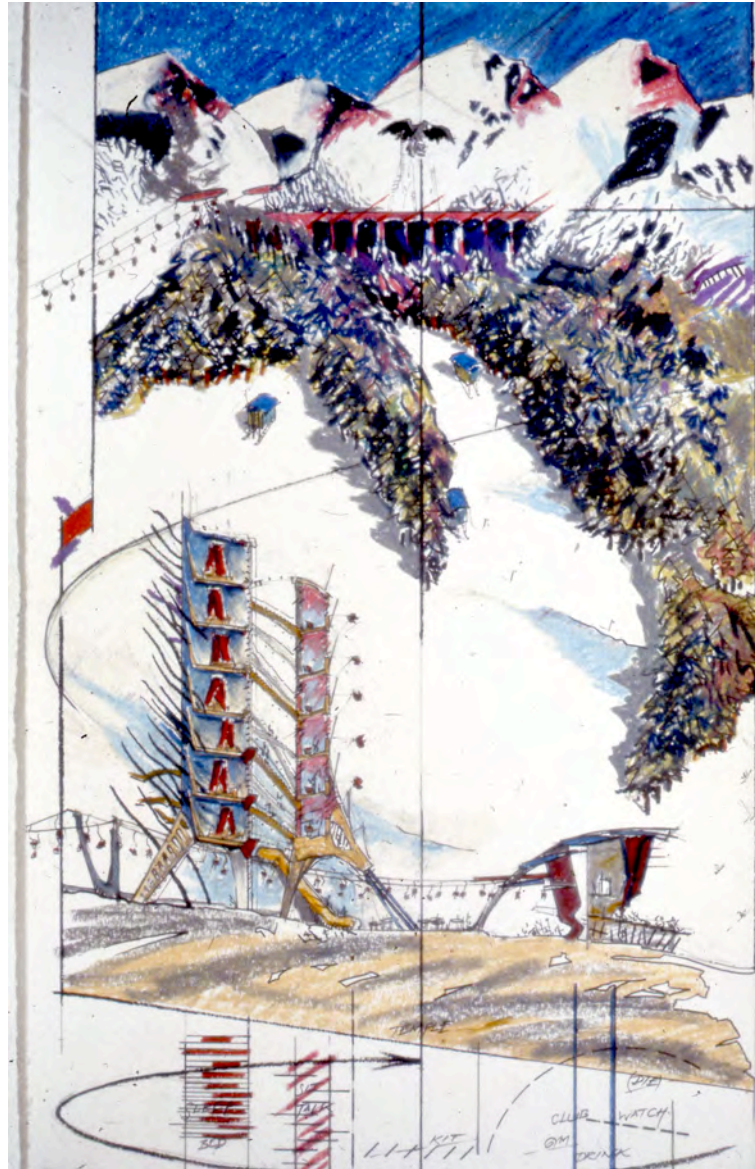
Figure 39: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – section with context
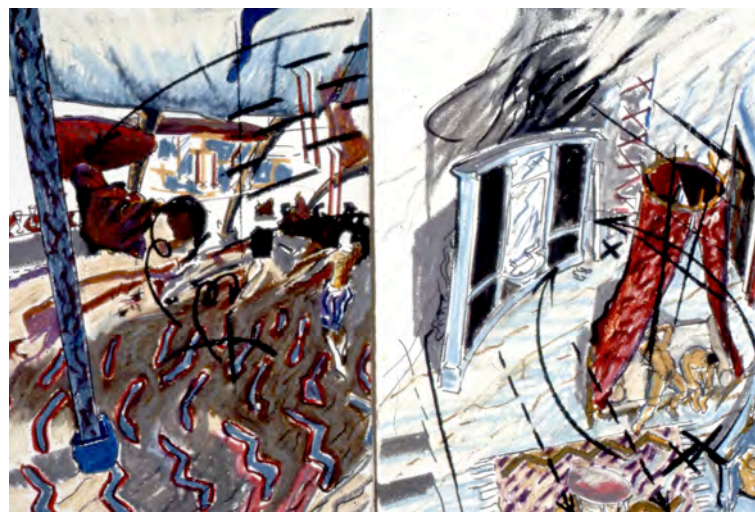
Figure 40: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – interior vignettes

Figure 41: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – exterior and vignettes
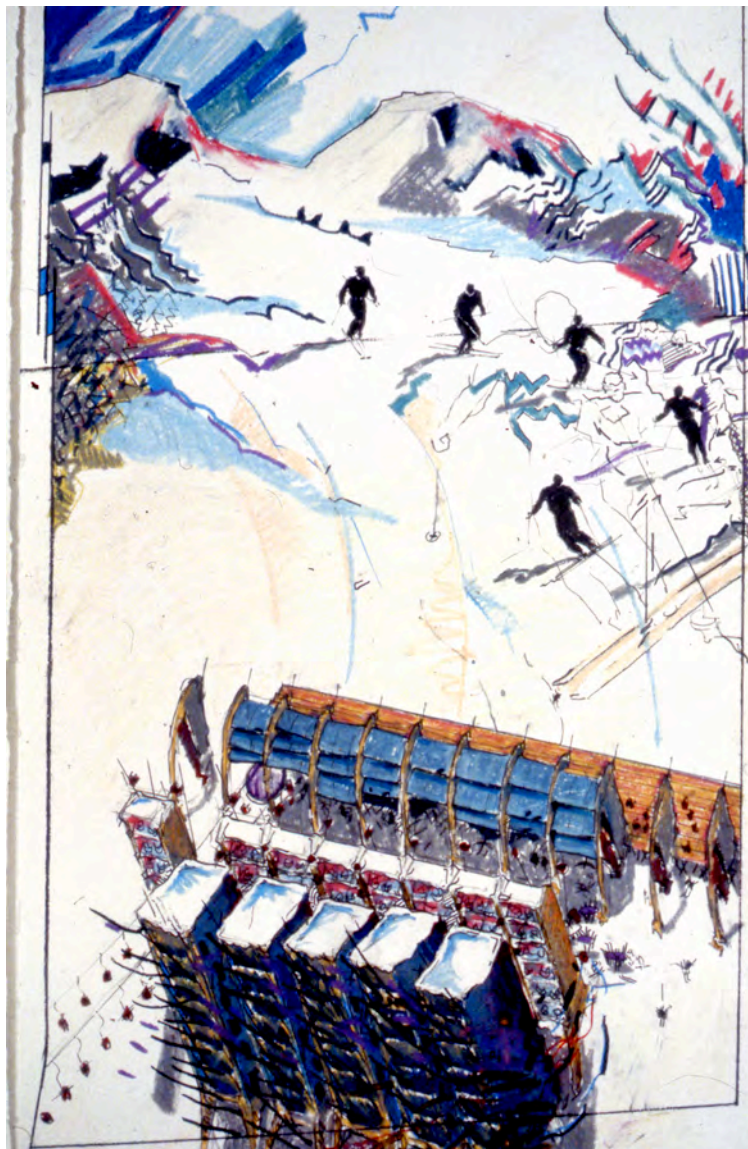
Figure 42: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – exterior perspective with focus on skiers and landscape.
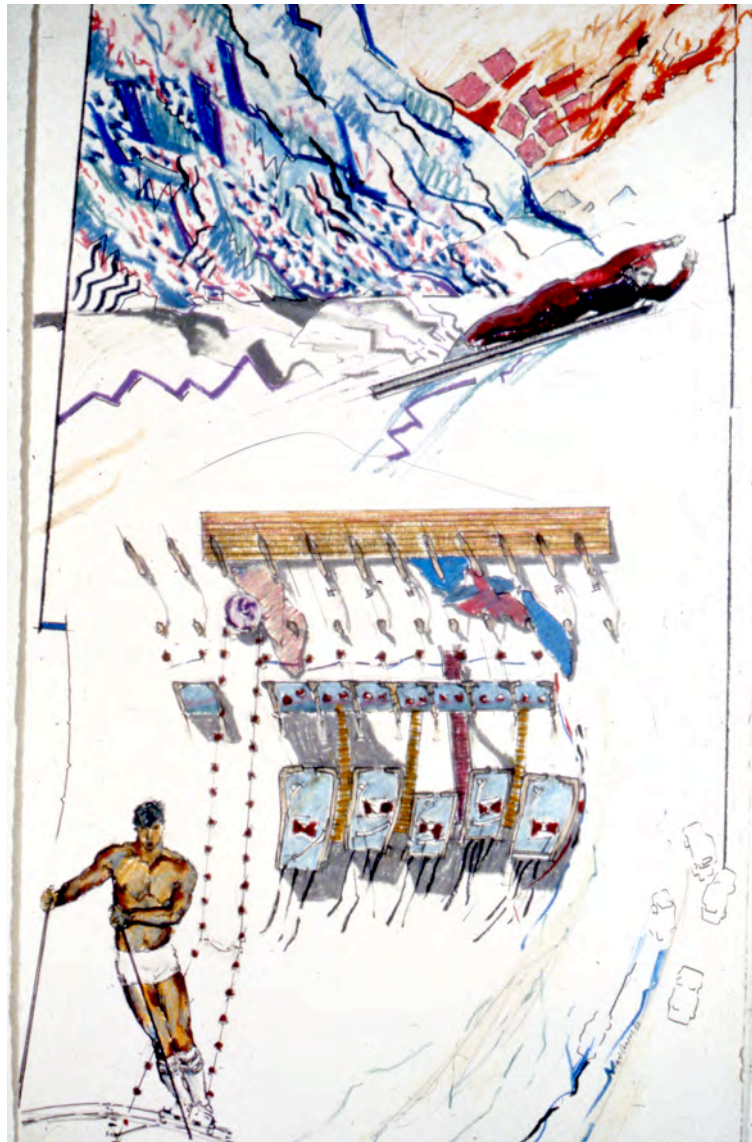
Figure 43: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – exploded bird's eye view, with perspectival figures

Figure 44: Nigel Coates, *Ski Station* (1981) – exterior vignettes.

project does not take sexuality as its subject matter. At their most basic level, the drawings represented Coates's move away from theorising and conceptualising spatial concepts, to enacting them on paper. Taking this set of drawings back to the AA in 1981, as well as the influences of new painting and video art, Coates began what would be a seminal two years of teaching – equipping his students with the representational tools and references to create architecture which was stimulated by the prevailing city condition.

Towards a subcultural architecture

Bringing sensation to architecture

Back at the AA, balancing his trips to New York with teaching Unit 10, Coates continued the trajectory established by Tschumi – though Tschumi himself left the AA at the end of 1980, leaving Coates to lead the unit alone. Once Tschumi had departed, Coates was able to push the unit further in a direction away from Tschumi's more scholarly approach, and during the academic year 1980-81 influences from New York begin to enter into his teaching. A comparison of the outline for that year, against the one for the previous year led by Tschumi, reveals a noticeable shift (fig. 45). In 1980-81, Coates replaces a set of dark, blurred student drawings done in a rather conventional and restrained manner, with a pop-influenced illustration featuring a man leaping towards the viewer – full of energy, screaming, with dramatic motion lines in the background. Contrasting with the uniform blocks of text of 1979-80's prospectus, Coates slashes a headline across the page, interrupting both the text and the image with a call to arms: 'WAKE UP AND DREAM FOR THE EIGHTIES' – an indication of the content of the year's work.[221] Indeed, 1980-81 saw the unit changing focus: 'Instead of looking at hallowed models, we worked with the down-and-out side of cities'.[222] Coates was very clear that though he was still building upon ideas of performance, and the inseparability of the programme of architecture from space, there would be a new concentration on the presentness of the city, street life and street culture, sensation and style:

> Simultaneously, architecture will be engendered as art, as passion, as sensation. Articulating a dedication of experiment, programmes will explore an attitude to design in parallel with the most intense of contemporary urban issues, its crises, its fads and transgressions. The city (London) will generate metaphoric propositions which expand beyond their given topography. Embracing the widest aspects of style and life, they will instate architecture as an aggregate

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[221] *1980-81 Prospectus Architectural Association School of Architecture* (London: Architectural Association (Great Britain), 1980), p.41.
[222] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, 'Modern Life' in *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.70.

Figure 45: Comparison of Unit 10 prospectus from 1979-80 with 1980-81, showing the shift in emphasis when Coates took control of teaching.

expressionism for now [...] By exploring the neurotic edge between action and deliberate style, fundamental issues will be cast into architectural role.[223]

The vitality of the street culture Coates had experienced in New York, and the emphasis on the present moment, clearly began to influence the unit during this academic year, and the resulting student projects showed a changing approach to representation.

Pais was invited to conduct another workshop as part of the 1980-81 'Modern Life' project; here, the live workshop was directly translated into the design of a public space. Each student was asked to imagine and enact a 'modern situation', specifically exploiting the 'clash between the performance (as a score) and the inherent meanings of the site that had been chosen'.[224] Coates was trying to imbue a designed space with all the rich perceptual qualities intrinsic to being in that space – believing that though buildings and spaces do not themselves move, they can be the 'instigators of movement'.[225] Importantly, this was a period when Coates encouraged the students to work at two scales – the individual and the city – striving to understand large pieces of the city's terrain, but also to imagine what they felt like.[226] Students took on Lansbury, a large site in East London, extending the scope of the unit's work to a more urban scale. Individual projects took fragments of daily life to generate larger architectural schemes based around housing and unemployment – both social and political themes which were drawn very much from the decaying and depressed London of the early 1980s. A number of the student's drawings from this year show the influence of Coates's *Ski Station* project, with both Martin Benson's and Giles Prince's *Exhibition of Architecture* project employing expressive drawings techniques using oil pastel and pencil (figs. 46 and 47). But as the more profound changes in drawing style were yet to come, these years are most interesting for the evolving content of the projects – which increasingly mirrored other cultural preoccupations.

Though influenced by New York, London's subcultural street scene also shaped Coates's thinking during these years. Central to that scene was the remnants of punk and its new-wave subsidiaries, and although Coates and his students did not show a particular affinity with the musical aspects of the scene (aside from one member, Mark Prizeman), there were a number of shared tenets which were representative of the creative and cultural energy of the period. These fundamentals included a DIY approach to style, which used strategies of cutting and montaging as both a technique of bricolage and an aesthetic of subversion. As Dick Hebdige has explained, punk sought to invert or subvert

[223] 1980-81 *Prospectus Architectural Association School of Architecture* (London: Architectural Association (Great Britain), 1980), p.41.
[224] Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, 'Modern Life' in *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.71.
[225] Ibid.
[226] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Breakup' in *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.16.
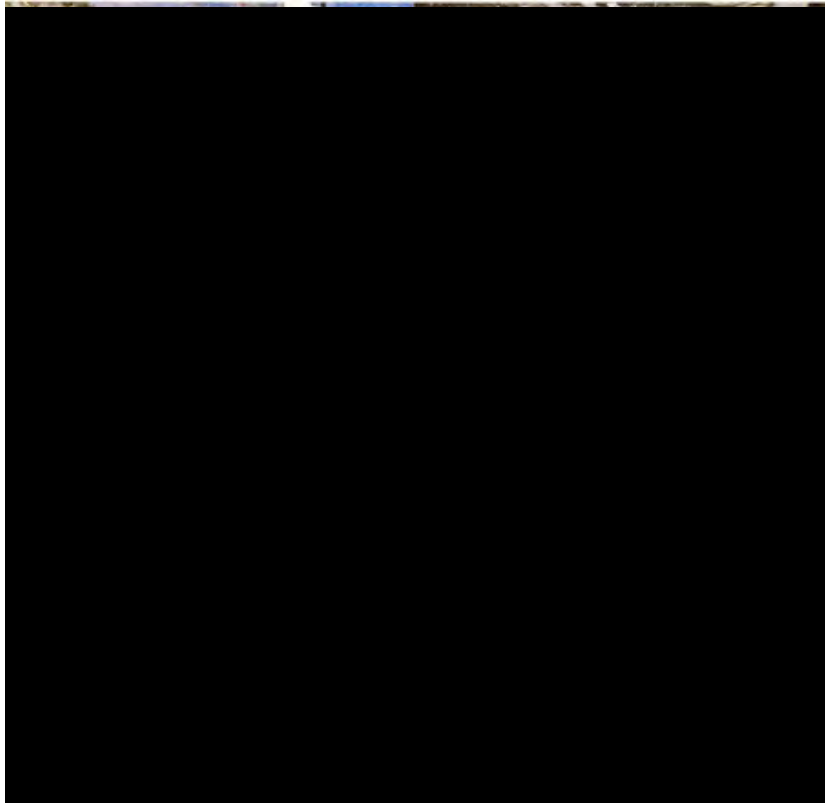
Figure 46: Giles Prince, *The Exhibition of Architecture*, (1981) – clearly influenced by Coates's *Ski Station* project, Unit 10 began experimenting with pastels and a more painterly approach to drawing.
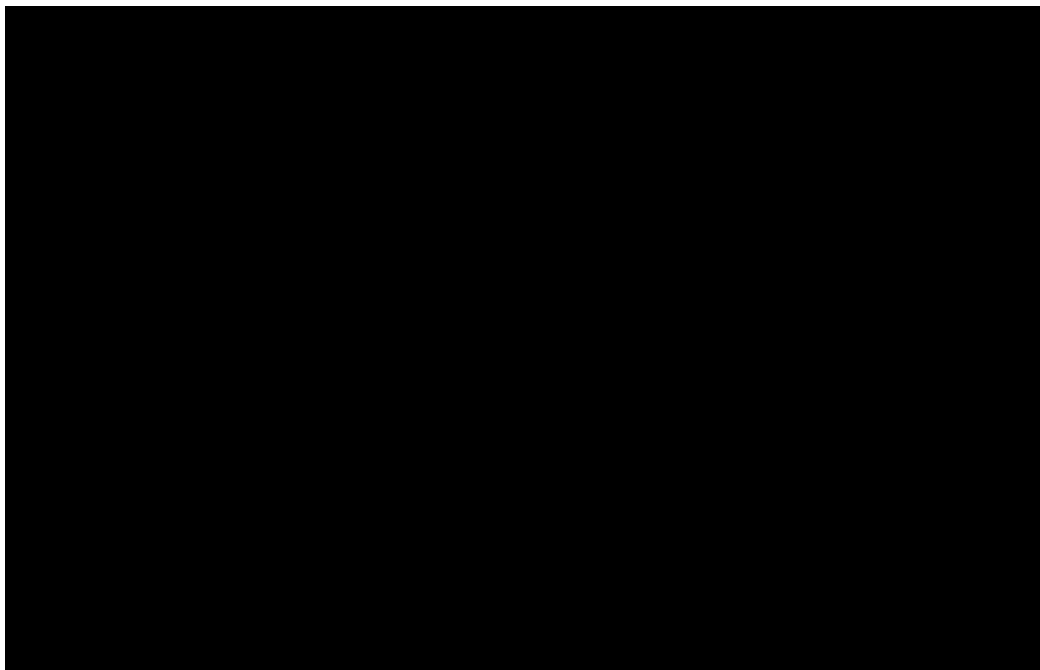
Figure 47: Martin Benson, *The Exhibition of Architecture*, (1981) – Benson would go on to become a member of NATØ.

the 'oppressive mode' in which consumer products were made through their reappropriation.[227] In this respect their strategies were a ritualised mode of consumption that was an act of rebellion as well as a way to exert an identity that ran counter to the mainstream. Hebdige identified in punk the approach of Claude Levi Strauss's bricoleur, one who does not seek to make the world anew, but remodels and reconfigures the existing condition in a process of impoverished invention.[228] This process of reconfiguration is aligned by Levi Strauss with 'mythical reflection', which works in the same way to create new meanings – 'brilliant unforeseen results on the intellectual plane' from a limited repertoire (language).[229] This thesis will revisit Levi-Strauss's bricoleur throughout its exploration of NATØ's work, but is highlighted here to support a reading of Coates's introduction of video to Unit 10 in 1981-2, and how video provided the basis for a way to design that shared qualities with the punk bricoleur.

In the styling, music and design of the 1980s subculture, Coates identified an echo of his own desires for architecture, he described how: 'street culture always looked up and down, forwards and backwards – it amplified the present by exposing a slippage between the origin and the goal'.[230] In this respect, new meaning is created from existing elements, which are rearranged and deconstructed but retain a visible presence of their original form. The use of video, as will be explained next, provided a medium with which to capture their found material – the city fabric – and the means to cut, edit, splice and rearrange it to create a new urban condition.

The arrival of video

Derek Jarman's *Jubilee*, released the year after the celebration of the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1978, was a film that had struck Coates in its ability to evoke street culture and the city in ruins through its unconventional yet recognisable styling. In *Jubilee* Jarman framed the present as though it were the future, by taking the perspective of Queen Elizabeth I seeing a vision of the future – the present day. That vision was a critical depiction of a crumbling city taken over by punks, a renegade police force and a megalomaniac music industry. His portrayal of the city, littered with burning cars, derelict warehouses and run down streets had a rawness that appealed to Coates, reflecting as it did an enhanced and exaggerated version of reality rather than the perfected ones typically drawn by architects and planners.[231] The squats of the main characters displayed the DIY approach of cobbled together furniture and homemade

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[227] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979).p.130.
[228] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind: (la Pensée Sauvage)*, 1989.
[229] Ibid., p.17.
[230] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in John Thackara ed., *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.104.
[231] Coates explains the appeal of Jubilee in Nigel Coates, *Narrative architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.49.

appliances, that mixed styles and aesthetics to create a collaged affect. Coates described the attraction of the film:

> The sets revelled in the unlikely union of the traditional and the provisional: a mattress on the floor next to a Louis-something armchair, a motorbike, a manifesto hurriedly daubed in black paint on the wall. It needed to avoid bourgeois connotation at all costs. Jarman reflected back with added intensity the entropic rawness of 1970s' London, and found a way of attacking the status quo with newly found irony, artistry and delight.[232]

Inspired by the video art he had seen in the states and Jarman's *Jubilee*, Coates made use of the recently established AA video-editing suite, and the school's newly appointed video tutor, the architecturally trained video artist Tony Carruthers, who became heavily involved in the unit (figs. 48, 49). During this period, though video as a medium had been accessible to artists since the mid 1960s, the technology had only reached the mainstream a decade later, and was certainly rarely used in architecture. For Coates, video was a more expressive medium than theatrical performance alone, with the possibility for camera angles and editing enabling a more sophisticated recording of the experience of space. In Paik's work he had seen how video had the potential to capture the relationship between the body and space, and the expressive potential the medium had in conveying the sensation of experience. Critically, filmic narrativity allowed Coates 'perceptual access to space and characters', so that emotions and experience could be felt in a more direct and tangible manner.[233]

The year's project, entitled *Giant Sized Baby Town* after a song by pop band *Bow Wow Wow*, song called Giant Sized Baby *Thing* a new-wave band manufactured by Malcolm McLaren which mixed punk riffs with tribal beats and lyrical references to biblical Psalms (itself an exercise in bricolage), took over a large chunk of the derelict Isle of Dogs to explore the connected themes of home and work – in particular imagining a future for the now defunct factories and docks that littered the area.[234] 1981 was a significant year in this history of the area, and thus a prescient time for Unit 10 to take it on as a site, as the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) formed, taking control of 55 miles of land along the Thames and eight and a half square miles either side of the river, from the Surrey Docks to Wapping and the Isle of Dogs in the north, and to the Royal Docks and the Thames Barrier in the south.[235] With the area on the cusp of transformation in 1981, *Giant Sized Baby Town* took the opportunity to imagine an

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[232] Ibid., p.49.
[233] Torben Grodal, 'Film Narrative' in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie--Laure Ryan, *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008) p168–72.
[234] Bow Wow Wow, 'Giant Sized Baby Thing', (1980).
[235] Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.80.

Figure 48: Architectural Association editing suite, establishing at the start of the 1980s.

Figure 49: Melanie Sainsbury (NATØ) and video artist and tutor Tony Carruthers in the AA video editing suite (1981/2).

alternative future for the Isle of Dogs – a sharp contrast to the Canary Wharf that would be constructed in the late 1980s.

Together, Coates and Carruthers devised a method wherein students produced short films in small groups, then after completion, deconstructed those films into a storyboard format. Coates's instructions to the students outline the method:

> You are now asked to redraw your video in a manner which is compatible with the (city) section and its details. Naturally it will be a strip - but rather than being rigidly organised as a series of "windows", it may include other representational devices to clarify the flow of things, or the dominance of one particular set of narrative relations. This implies representing the key qualities of the video's form, its space and its effect – not just its bare recipe. If you like, see it as a kind of reversed notation – not a statement of intent, but an emotive response to something which you have already done, or are in the process of doing.[236]

The focus then moved to the geographical site, with the map divided into parts and each student allocated a linear strip of land, which was then both photographed and explored on foot. Back in the studio, each element was combined – the film storyboard, the photographs of the site and the experiences they had encountered while there – in a complex and subjective process of collage and montage: layering, juxtaposing and overlapping. The technique specifically involved overlaying the linear storyboard with the path through the site – creating new associations and correspondences between the two. In breaking apart the perfection of the video image, separating it into fragments and distorting the order, there was a suggestion of a complex set of distorted and deconstructed movement and transition. The process also enabled a much more complex cross fertilisation of programmatic content than the Tschumi years, as actions and experiences captured on video crashed into one another and with the existing context of the site.

Only one of the actual videos produced by the students remains, and it is clear from this that they were provocative and expressive explorations – involving bizarre juxtapositions and seemingly random associations of people and objects helped to create a certain mood or atmosphere, rather than advancing a linear narrative (figs. 50 and 51 hint at the playful atmosphere these films were produced in). In *Ou Abandon du Habitudes Quotidiens* (roughly translated as 'Or Abandonment of Daily Habits', though the French is distinctly slapdash and grammatically incorrect) by Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Thomas Schregenberger, Nick Turvey and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, a television screen shows a textile factory, and panning out we see the television is being watched by a male character sitting at home smoking a cigarette (figs. 52-54). In the ensuing scenes the character goes about domestic tasks – eating drinking and taking a telephone call – eventually clearing the table and preparing for an elaborate meal,

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[236] Nigel Coates, *Albion : The Art and Science City, Newsletter*, February 1983.

Figure 50: Robert Mull (L), and Melanie Sainsbury (R) between scenes, producing a video at the AA.

Figure 51: Nigel Coates and students set up for a video project at the AA.

Figure 52-54: Mark Prizeman stars in …*Ou Abandon du Habitudes Quotidiens*…, a video produced for the *Giant Sized Baby Town* project (1981-82).

complete with candelabras, a plate of feathery bird-like creatures and an erotically suggestive lettuce.[237] In the background, a nude man paces up and down, and there is a distinctly surreal atmosphere as the main character fondles the animal on the table. The piece is a fragmented representation of a person's daily life, with erotic undertones and a suggestion of some connection between the monotonous repetition of the factory, and the domestic interior.

Tracing the link to the final design propositions that developed from this method is difficult without the intervening sketches and design development, with only a small number from one student's project surviving (this will be discussed in depth in the following chapter that explores NATØ's drawings). The finished drawings do evoke the contrasting and overlapping relationship between work and home that the video sought to express. In Mark Prizeman's 'Chemical Works', a factory pumping liquid sulphur at the dockside spawns a number of smaller, subsidiary industrial spaces which are mixed in with housing – shambled structures wedged underneath energy pylons and butted up against bridges (figs. 55-57). Prizeman describes the clash of functions as something productive and essential to the city:

> Taking a walk across these wastes one views the hives of activity as a warren for the creative senses. For work here is not treated as a means to an endless supply of Cortinas and Sandy Shaw records but as a trigger to enable minds to fester. Traversing the pharmaceutical factory is a large canteen. Industrial cooking facilities are provided, prams pass dinner parties, the factory hooter sounds, donating a note to a moment in to start work or go to bed. The workers by the magazine stall, trying to stay awake on dawn aides, pick their noses and gaze at the aircraft dismantling yard across the road. Lorries swoosh past in the drizzle, the argon cutter faintly illuminates the storage tanks casting long shadows on the depot hotels, someone changes a record over and a few notes change hands.[238]

Prizeman's description is also notably filmic, describing a walk through the place that he had created, painting a picture of views and sensations to create a mise-en-scène of action – focusing very little on the appearance, construction or materiality of the architecture in the way Coates had done in his ski project (this would become a key strategy of NATØ's, to be discussed throughout this thesis). The combination and collision of programmatic content which is present in every student's project for *Giant Sized Baby Town*, and the additional juxtaposition of individual students' programmes next to each other on the site established a sensibility reminiscent of the city itself, and in this respect, the effect desired was strictly anti-planning, seeking to evoke the natural evolution of the city fabric (the notion of anti-planning and its relation to Non-Plan and other similar approaches will be developed in Chapter 2). It is possible thus to align the strategy of Levi-Strauss's

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[237] Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Thomas Schregenberger, Nick Turvey and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, *Ou Abandon de Habitudes Quotidiens*, (1980).
[238] Mark Prizeman, 'The Chemical Works' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, The Discourse of Events (Architectural Association, 1983), p.92.
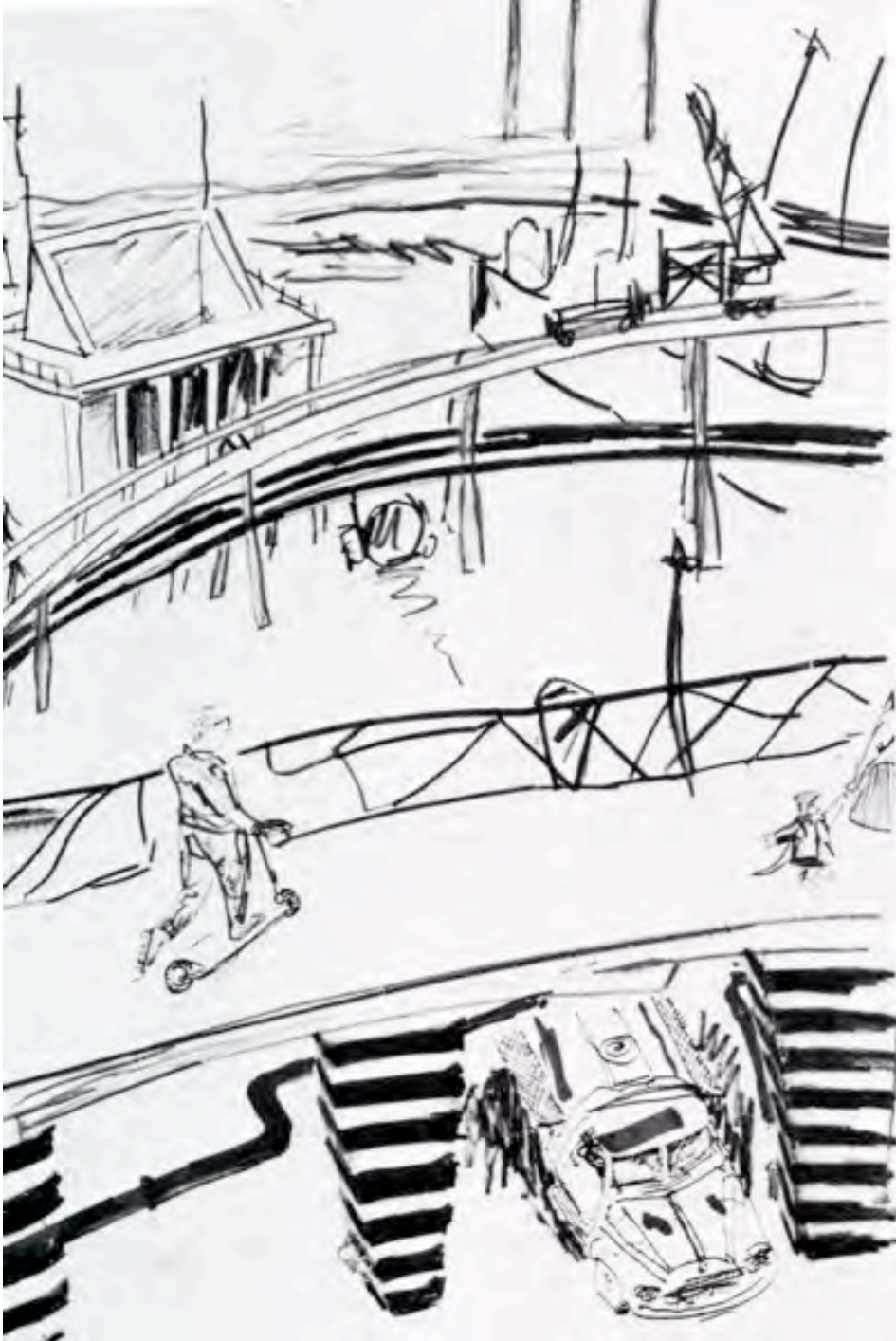
Figure 55: Mark Prizeman, *Chemical Works*, (1982) –the messy and montaged nature of the video process is engendered in Prizeman's design for a part of *Giant Sized Baby Town*, with functions and structures overlapping in a chaotic manner.

Figure 56 and 57: Mark Prizeman, *Chemical Works*, (1982)

Figure 58: Christina Norton, *The Fabric Factory* (1982) – the mode of drawing in this year moved to a sketch-like and informal mode.
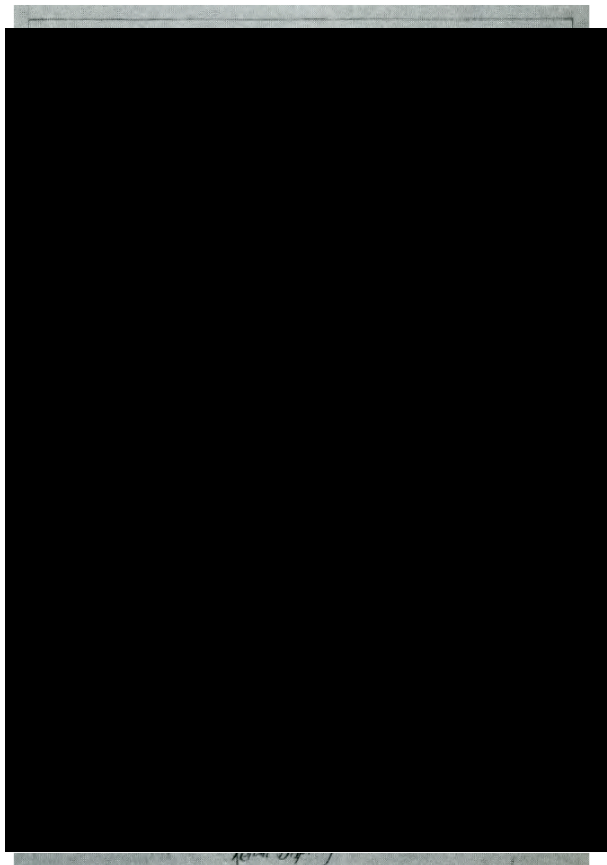
Figure 59: Martin Benson, *The Mannequin Project* (1982)

bricoleur with this approach, against the scientific precision and tabula rasa of the engineer, whose approach can be likened to the contemporary planner – and in particular, the planner who starts from scratch. Instead of rigid planning and the construction of new urban forms, Unit 10's method deconstructed and reassembled the city as they found it, introducing chance, subjectivity and montage to create effects that were purposefully disordered and unexpected.

The drawings and descriptions of *Giant Sized Baby Town* reflect the rawness of *Jubilee*, moving towards a sense of intensity and 'primitive freshness', for the first time creating an architecture defined by its experience.[239] For Coates, this method of presenting architecture, or rather an urban terrain, as inhabited and in-use was a filmic idea – or as he puts it 'the director's method':

> […] Before he starts filming, he must visualise his film as real, but more than this he must know how to dissemble his vision into constituent parts, how to use his medium, that of film, to convey his total intention...The drawing has to contain a filmic hypothesis and at the same time bring this back into the moment of the creative process. Sometimes this means drawing key pictures of the action even bigger than the building – in other words manipulating the content of the drawing dialectically, critically and synthetically...They must grasp the feeling of being in and moving through the building, so scale is more phenomenological than actual.[240]

Coates's use of the word phenomenological here, in reference to the scale of the drawing, reflects the preoccupation with the experiential qualities rather than the technicalities of space. In Lynch's *The Image of the City* (1960), Coates finds resonance in the notion of a 'kinaesthetic' encounter with the city fabric, and the way that architecture is able to exaggerate, modify, and sculpt the way the body and the mind perceive space – the visual, the inertial and the tactile.[241] In relation to the drawing then, Coates sought to prioritise expressing that kinaesthetic, sensorial movement of the body through space.

The set of ideas expanded from Tschumi, that were rooted in performance, had for Coates evolved into a consideration of the film as a more suitable medium to describe the inhabitation of space required for a expressive form of architecture. The drawings that represent these messy and chaotic propositions were much looser, frenetic sketches which often focused on small vignettes of action – using the perspective as the format of choice over the more conventional plan or section (figs. 55-59). They look a lot less like architectural drawings than any from the previous years, and set the unit, and subsequently NATØ, on the path towards a much more liberal form of visual expression (discussed in Chapter 2). Interestingly, comparing the *Giant Sized Baby Town* drawings

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[239] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Breakup' in *The Discourse of Events* (Architectural Association, 1983), p.16.
[240] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in John Thackara ed., Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object (Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp.100-101.
[241] Coates in Ibid.; Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (MIT Press, 1960), pp.97-98

to Coates's Bennington student's drawings, the AA students had developed a much rougher, more free-flowing, almost sketch style of drawing – with images appearing unfinished and raw. This was a rather bleak aesthetic, which was often monochrome, contrasted with the brightly coloured installations of Pfaff and Paik's videos.

Almost a decade after Coates had graduated from the unit in 1974, by 1982 its preoccupations and outputs had changed dramatically – but they were not unrecognisable from the key principles Tschumi had set out in those early years. Essentially, although both Tschumi and Coates were concerned with the content and programme of architecture and its inseparability from the building itself, Coates took this idea in a direction which he described as a 'cultural stocktaking stance', with references drawn from fashion, television, music, nightclubs and gay culture, using the strategy of bricolage to piece together a subcultural architecture – their found object the crumbling fabric of the city itself.[242] The influence of Tschumi's preoccupation with performance and the related idea of notation were essential to the evolution of Coates's approach, as it was the idea of a body acting in space which can be traced throughout. In New York, he saw new ways to express that collision of the body with space – through video, painting and immersive installation. In those early performance pieces of his own, there was the beginning of a desire to reach out beyond the space he was in, to another space, and to bring something of that space into the former. In doing so he was attempting to bring content to the space, to furnish it with some mental and temporal dimension – or narrative. This seed was planted very early on, though it seems hard to reconcile this conceptual work with later developments. At its core, though it seems as if Coates's preoccupations had shifted dramatically, they had not – he just became far more concerned with the content – the mental and temporal dimension – and how exactly he would express it. What he found in New York, and on the streets of London, was a rich and provocative cultural moment which he was personally captivated by, but also which represented the cultural context of architecture – the city – and thus an appropriate material for architectural narrativity.

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[242] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.100.

Chapter 2:

A new expressionism: Drawing architecture – 1982-84

Introduction

For a group of architects who never constructed a building, at least not together, the drawing was at the centre of NATØ's mode of expression. Indeed, it was the set of drawings prepared for graduation project *Albion* that provoked AA examiners James Stirling and Edwards Jones to renounce the 1982-83 cohort. For Stirling, there was something particular about the students' method of representation, the quality of their line, which he considered so problematic – as Coates quotes in the first issue of *NATØ*, Stirling said: '"each portfolio seems to be little more than a bunch of sketches with a few cartoons at the end."'[1] It was these drawings which would form the basis for the first magazine, and the platform from which they projected their identity and agenda for narrative architecture.

Contextualising the moment of NATØ's formation within the AA, the chapter charts a series of exhibitions at the school entitled 'Themes', that ran from 1982-83 and featured student work from four representative units selected by Alvin Boyarsky. Using the 'Themes' exhibitions as a counterpoint with which to compare Unit 10's approach, this chapter explores the sketch-like nature of the unit's drawings, examining how the sketched line contained not only the potential for ambiguity and looseness, but also the drawing body. As well as drawing with pen and pencil, a consideration of Coates's development from pastel in his *Ski Station* project (1981), to the paintings of his *Muse Britannia* project (1982) will be considered as another mode of sketch.

The graduation project, *Albion* (1983), represents the culmination of the unit's experiments with performance and their video explorations – refining and honing the process initiated in 1981-82's *Giant Sized Baby Town*. This chapter picks up where Chapter One finished, exploring how the technique of deconstructing the video into a storyboard and combining it with elements of the site formed the basis for the group's architectural creativity, borne out through the drawing. This process of fragmentation and montage is the backbone to the chapter – with the conceptualisation of montage and its potential effects key to understanding how NATØ's drawings function. By examining how both Bernard Tschumi and Daniel Libeskind also produced architectural drawings based on processes of fragmentation and montage during this period, the chapter makes a comparative analysis – positioning the works as part of a larger, postmodern approach to space and drawing. By focusing on the group project *Albion* and Coates's solo-project *ArkAlbion* from 1984, the chapter investigates how these techniques produced architectural narrativity.

An intrinsic part of this exploration will be the theorisation of the drawing as architecture, as the instigator of a particular interpretative act that constitutes spatial

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[1] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ,* 1 (1984) pp.8-11. (p.8).

experience. The chapter draws on theories of narrative framing and narrativisation from narratologist Werner Wolf, as well as ways of 'reading' the drawing from art and architectural theorists Robin Evans, Richard Wollheim, and Marco Frascari, to argue for a particular mode of architectural representation that goes beyond denotational conventions.

Architectural drawing

Drawing as architecture

'Architecture does not exist without drawing' – declared Bernard Tschumi at the start of the 1980s.[2] Indeed, since the Renaissance the architect's main tool and means with which to communicate has been the drawing – a point which theorist Robin Evans emphasises when, in 1997, he described the unique position of the architect in relation to the product of their labour (the building):

> I was soon struck by what seemed at the time the peculiar disadvantage under which architects labour, never working directly with the object of their thought, always working at it through some intervening medium, almost always the drawing, while painters and sculptors, who might spend some time on preliminary sketches and maquettes, all ended up working on the thing itself, which, naturally, absorbed most of their attention and effort.[3]

The position of the architect in relation to their output (the building) is unique when considered against most other forms of cultural production – which at some stage or other directly manipulate the end product. However, as Evans goes on to elaborate, the drawing is indeed 'the real repository of architectural art'.[4] The act of drawing for an architect goes beyond that of many other arts – a drawing or a sketch may be a preparatory study for a finalised object, painting, installation etc., where the meaning will eventually be embedded. For the architect, the drawing can contain a deeper correspondence or parallel with the building, as Alberto Péréz-Gómez and Louise Pelletier describe 'one drawing may indeed embody the full intentionality of a building.'[5] Evans supports this notion by his observation that historically architects have accomplished most of their imaginative work almost exclusively through the medium of the drawing.[6] That is to say that though the practicing architect uses the drawing to convey the geometrical and compositional nature of the building – denotational drawings that fulfil pragmatic functions – in fact, another type of drawing has the ability to communicate on a second, symbolic and connotational level, encapsulating the invisible aspects of architecture – the conceptual and the experiential:

> The real architectural drawing does not result from a vision of the absent, but instead provokes one. Rather than resulting from the gaze aimed at it, the

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[2] Bernard Tschumi, 'Architecture and Limits' in *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press, 1996), p102.
[3] Robin Evans, Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays, *AA Documents 2* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), p156.
[4] Ibid, p157.
[5] Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, 'Architectural Representation Beyond Perspectivism', *Perspecta*, 27 (1992), pp.21–39. (p.34)
[6] Robin Evans, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', *AA files,* No.6 (1984), pp.89–96.

> drawing summons insight by allowing the invisible to saturate the visible, but without any attempt or claim of reducing the invisible to the visible lines of the drawing [...] It teaches the gaze to proceed beyond the visible image into an infinity whereby something new of the invisible is encountered.[7]

Here, architectural theorist Marco Frascari describes a special mode of attention that is generated by the symbolic drawing, suggesting that the drawing provokes an interpretive act that goes beyond the lines on paper. In an article describing Daniel Libeskind's *Chamber Works* (1983) drawings, Evan's goes so far as to describe the constructed building as an 'unfortunate aftermath' of the drawing process, believing that 'all the properties, values and attributes worth keeping are held in the drawing, they retract back into the drawing'.[8] Certainly, many architectural ideas have only ever been expressed through the drawing; Étienne-Louis Boullée *Cenotaph for Isaac Newton* (1748), Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri* (1749-50, 1761), Claude-Nicholas Ledoux's *Eye Reflecting the Theatre of Besançon* (1784), Antonio Sant'Elia's *Città Nuova* (1914), and El Lissitzky's *Proun* series (1921), to name just a few historical works whose ideas residing on paper are generally considered as important as those found in constructed buildings. These, and others like them, are not works that are then translated into built form, but exist as autonomous architectural productions – as Evans reflects, drawings are not a 'a form of haulage' that exist only to transport 'incorporeal ideas into corporeal expressions'.[9] The architectural drawing is thus a work of architecture, a medium through which architects directly engage and may 'spill their imagination onto', the methods, techniques, style and materials of which are intrinsically connected to their meaning.[10]

The drawing's shadow

Both Evans and Pérez-Gómez put forward the notion that the drawing – across any discipline – can never be a neutral mode of representation, and is inherently a 'value laden' tool.[11] For Evans, 'the assumption that there is a uniform space through which meaning may glide without modulation is more than just a naïve delusion'.[12] Though at particular moments in architectural history, most clearly in the Modernist project, the aim was to reduce architectural drawing down to its most functionalist form, even this mode

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[7] Marco Frascari, 'Models and Drawings – the invisible nature of architecture' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, F*rom*
[8] Robin Evans, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', *AA files*, No.6 (1984), pp.89–96, reproduced in K. Michael Hays, *Architecture Theory Since 1968* (MIT Press, 2000), pp.480-489. (p.488)
[9] Robin Evans, (1997), p.181.
[10] Ibid., p.172.
[11] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'Questions of representation - The poetic origin of architecture' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture, Critiques* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p11.
[12] Robin Evans, Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays, *AA Documents 2* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), p154.

of representation contributes conceptual content. The form of drawing that grew from Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris at the end of the 18th century sought to rationalise communications between the architect, the client, the engineer and the builder, and prioritised geometry and rational functionalism – often considered the first moment of 'modern' architecture.[13] These Enlightenment ideas gained traction again at the start of the 20th century – when Modernist architects began to take particular pleasure in the abstraction of the axonometric drawing, which presented the building as an object floating in a horizonless, infinite space. Architects such as Le Corbusier and Theo Van Doesburg used the axonometric to strip their drawings down to structural arrangements of surfaces and elements that were inherently flat despite the three-dimensional expression. These drawings, alongside other orthographic projections such as the plan and section were also devoid of materiality and depiction of the effects of light, reducing the drawing to a seemingly purely functional representation ready to be transferred directly into built form. However, the conceptual ideals that formed the basis for this way of thinking about design are inseparable from their mode of representation – clearly expressing Modernist principles of 'transparency, infinity, ineffability, liminality' through their composition, austerity of line and abstracted viewpoints.[14] In this sense the division between the denotational and the connotational or symbolic drawing is often a false one, with every drawing revealing additional meaning to a greater or lesser extent.

Borrowing a term from philosopher of aesthetic theory Nelson Goodman, architectural drawings have 'repleteness' – that is, every aspect of the drawing affects the way it communicates.[15] Stan Allen describes this characteristic of drawing as its 'shadow':

> The means of representation are never neutral, never without their own shadows. In the case of architecture, it is the ephemeral shadow of geometry cast on the obstinate ground of reality that marks the work of architecture as such.[16]

Allen's account of reality somehow tainting or disturbing the purity of geometric projection resonates with approaches to drawing which favour the expression of experience or posses a criticality that is necessarily embedded its context. Building upon the drawing's relationship with the its context, Pérez Gómez describes the drawing as a mediating device between the architect's idea and experience, referring to drawing as a

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[13] Anthony Vidler, 'Diagrams of Diagrams: Architectural Abstraction and Modern Representation', *Representations*, 1 October, (2000), pp.1–20.
[14] Ibid., p.12.
[15] Nelson Goodman, Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1976).
[16] Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2008).

'hyphen' between the two.[17] In a similar vein, Allen refers to drawing as a means to negotiate the 'gap between ideas and material'.[18] Both theorists suggest the 'in-between' nature of the architectural drawing, and how it is impossible to conceive of a drawing that is able to be entirely autonomous from the architect's idea, their experiences, the context within which they are designing, the material and physical reality of the site and so on. This has relevance for understanding NATØ's drawings, which as the chapter will go on to explore, were fundamentally embedded within their conceptual framework and their cultural context. Indeed, the principles of NATØ's drawings elaborated in this chapter will reoccur in both their magazine layouts and their exhibitions; the drawing is not only a process, a generative tool and a presentation device, but produces spatial experience, attitude and effect.

This conceptualisation of the architectural drawing as a container for some form of spatial or architectural experience can be contested – how can one medium provide perceptual access to the effects of another? If one looks to other arts such as music or painting, the experience of listening to music is not equal to reading the score, and neither is a verbal description of a painting equivalent to viewing the work itself. However, as has been discussed so far, the architectural drawing can project inherently architectural concepts – so would it therefore be correct to deduce that two separate media are both capable of expressing architectural experiences? Bafna addresses some of these questions in his analysis of a pair of drawings by Mies van der Rohe for an unbuilt scheme, the *Brick Country House (1924)*.[19] The drawings consist of an external perspective view and a plan, both rendered in graphite pencil on a white background with very few details, focusing on representing the arrangement of walls, the expression of surface through solidity and shadows, and the horizontal, overlapping sense of the overall form (fig.1). Banfa observes that in writing and criticism about the drawings (of which there has been much) the house is discussed as if it were a significant architectural work – compared to and aligned with built architecture. This therefore suggests that there is an aesthetic, architectural experience being derived from the drawings – calling into question the assumption that the spatial experience of a building must be via direct contact with built form. Bafna points out that the experience of the drawings must be architectural as they have not gained acclaim as 'works of paintings or instances of artistic draughtsmanship', and thus 'critical attention directed to them refers actually to the building depicted, and

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[17] Alberto Pérez-Gómez, 'Questions of representation - The poetic origin of architecture' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture, Critiques* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p.12.
[18] Stan Allen, (2008), p.2.
[19] Sonit Bafna, 'How Architectural Drawings Work - and What That Implies for the Role of Representation in Architecture', *Journal of Architecture*, Vol. 13 (2008), pp.535–564.
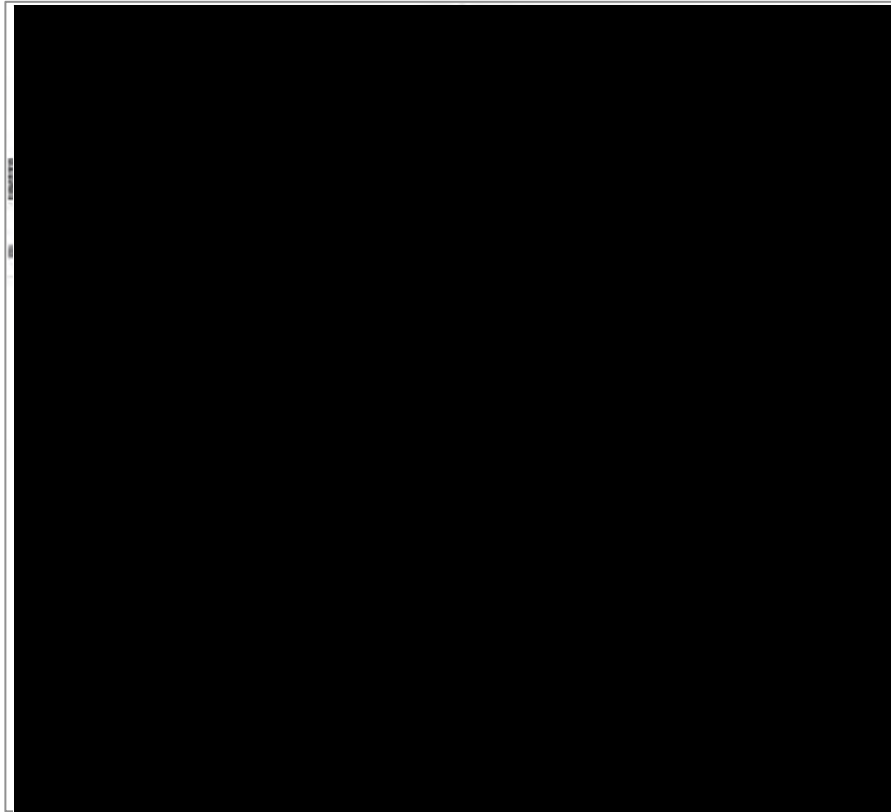
Figure 1: Mies van der Rohe, *Brick Country House*, (1924)

Figure 2: Mies van der Rohe, *Lange House*, (1928-30)

Figure 3: Mies van der Rohe, *Wolf House*, (1925-27)

not to the drawings themselves as works of graphic art.'[20] This reading of architectural drawings distinguishes it from the way the map or the diagram is read, which instead of playing to our 'natural perceptive capacity' demands to be deciphered according to rules, conventions, logic etc., with typically fixed information to be conveyed – Bafna describes this as the difference between drawings that 'specify' and those that 'depict'.[21] In the case of Mies's *Brick Country House* drawings, part of this heightened perceptive reading comes from the combination of both drawings, and the mental interplay between the two modes in the mind of the viewer. The richness of the spatial understanding of the project is severely diminished if only one of the drawings is present. The combination of representational drawings modes and views forms an essential part of conveying architectural experience, and will be shown to be an important part of NATØ's output. However, this heightened reading of the Mies's project also depends to certain extent on the existence of a number of built works by Mies that share similar features, for example the *Lange Haus* in Krefeld, Germany (1928-30) and the *Wolf House* in Gubin, Poland (1925-27) (figs. 2 and 3). The knowledge of these buildings would close down the possibilities of the drawings in the viewer who knows them, providing direct built referential content. NATØ's lack of built reference leaves their drawings open to a much stronger interpretative act, though it can be argued that their heavy dependence on existing buildings and industrial forms imbues a strong sense of familiarity – these are not designs for schemes without precedent.

So far, this discussion has remained focused on whether the experience of reading an architectural drawing, or a number of drawings together, can be an architectural one. However for NATØ the aim was not only to produce architectural effect through drawing, but to create an experience that was narrative and that expressed the complexity of the city. Interestingly, the city is the subject of architect and theorist Stan Allen's critique of what the architectural drawing cannot do:

> The contemporary city is not reducible to an artifact. The city today is a place where visible and invisible steams of information, capital and subjects interact in complex formations. They form a dispersed field, a network of flows. In order to describe or to intervene in this new field architects need representational techniques that engage time and change, shifting scales, mobile point of view, multiple programs. In order to map this complexity, some measure of control may have to be relinquished.[22]

Allen specifically lists the qualities of the city which he believes are not able to be, or at least have not been so far, represented in the architectural drawing. It is significant for the

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[20] Ibid., p.544.
[21] Ibid., p.546.
[22] Stan Allen, *Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation*, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2008), p.40.

discussion of NATØ that central to Allen's list of the deficiencies of the drawing are qualities associated with narrative – in particular aspects of time and action or movement. Though Allen does not mention narrative, he has described accurately many of the qualities that narratologists such as Werner Wolf, Wendy Steiner, and Marie-Laure Ryan have argued both for and against in discussions of the narrative potential of the static image.[23] There is therefore the suggestion that there is something inherently narrative about the experience of the city, and thus a narrative medium is required to represent it. Crucially, Allen's identification of the relinquishment of control as a potential avenue towards narrativity in the drawing strongly evokes NATØ's oeuvre, which sought to break down many of the conventions of architectural drawings in favour of a far looser, messier and more chaotic form of drawing that was able to more easily jump between scales, views and times.

The possibility of narrative architectural drawing

Viewing narratively

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Laocoon* written in 1766 was the first text to examine the potential for a static image to suggest elements of narrative – concluding that while poetry is a temporal art, painting is limited to expressing only the spatial.[24] For Lessing, the only way that a painting could express time was through what he called a 'pregnant moment'.[25] Lessing described the way that painting is able to extend back into the past and forward into the future by choosing the most evocative and suggestive moment (the pregnant moment) in the sequence of some action – thus he describes the folds in fabric depicted in Baroque art as evoking the movement of the limbs underneath.[26] The result of Lessing's contribution to the consideration of visual narrativity has been a culturally conditioned rejection of the image as a narrative medium, and so breaking these

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[23] Discussions of visual narrativity within narratology have examined issues of temporality and point of view: Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–97; Steiner, Wendy, 'Pictorial Narrativity' in Marie-Laure Ryan (ed). *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2004 [1988]), pp.145–77; Ryan, Marie-Laure 'Toward a Definition of Narrative', in David Herman (ed). *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), pp.22–35.
; Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Narration in various media', *Living Handbook of Narratology*, http://www.icn.uni-hamburg.de/
[24] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry* (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853).
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., p.92.

expectations has been critical in developing theories of pictorial narrativity.[27] The assumption on the part of classical narratologists between the 1960s and early 1980s was that narrative resides in its most pure or archetypal form in the text. Key to poststructural explorations of pictorial narrativity, including those by Steiner, Wolf, Ryan, David Bordwell, Mieke Bal and others, was the emancipation of the conception of narrative from the text, and an acceptance of the idea that the way a narrative is expressed and also 'read' in an image could be entirely different to the textual model.[28]

To dislocate the concept of narrative from the dominance of the text it is necessary to establish the ways in which narrative can operate in the static image. Wolf puts forward a strong framework for thinking about pictorial narrativity which starts with the way that we 'see' narratively – narrativisation (outlined in the introduction to this thesis).[29] Other theorists have also described a similar process which has strong parallels to narrativisation: Richard Wollheim describes a process of 'seeing in', an innate mechanism that causes us to identify figures and other forms of recognisable representation in images even though the viewer is aware that the drawing is only marks on a page.[30] Both narrativisation and seeing in help to explain the way that architectural drawings such as Mies's pair are synthesised into a heightened architectural experience. Ernst Gombrich's description of the way that we read an image suggests that the process is involved and constructive:

> [...] The reading of a picture [...] happens in time, in fact it needs a very long time [...] We do it, it seems, more or less as we read a page, by scanning it with our eyes [...] We build it up in time and hold the bits and pieces we scan in readiness till they fall into place as an imaginable object or event, and it is this totality we perceive and check against the picture in front of us.[31]

This process of reading is important when considering the narrative image because it allows for an additional element of movement, as the eye is able to animate the image – creating a temporal effect. Indeed the temporality of the viewing process is likened to a

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[27] Margriet Hoogvliet, 'How to Tell a Fairy Tale with Images: Narrative Theories and French Painting from the Early Nineteenth Century', *Relief*, Vol.4, No.2 (2010), pp.198-212

[28] Key texts include: Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across Media : The Languages of Storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Bal, Mieke, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition*. (New York: Cambridge UP, 1991); Bordwell, David, *Narrative in the Fiction Film*. (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Steiner, Wendy ([1988] 2004). "Pictorial Narrativity." Marie-Laure Ryan (ed.). *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*. (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, [1988] 2004), pp.145–77; Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–97.

[29] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–197.

[30] Richard Wollhein, 'What the spectator sees' in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith P. F. Moxey, *Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation* (Polity [in association with Blackwell], 1991), p.119.

[31] Ernst Gombrich, 'Moment and Movement in Art', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), pp.293–306. (p.302)

journey by Frascari, who evokes the term 'transitus' to describe the 'viewer's mental journey across an image in the act of interpretation'.[32] Each of these descriptions of the way an image is read points to an individualised process, where no two readings or journeys across the image produces the same meaning. In this respect the image is much like Roland Barthes' 'writerly text', where the reader takes active control of the creation of meaning which is thus mutable and unstable.[33] The idea that the pictorial narrative is one that allows for multiple interpretations is key to NATØ narrative drawings, and will be returned to later in this chapter.

Pictorial narrativity

Inextricably linked to the way that the eye moves around the image is the structure of the image. Wolf's explorations in pictorial narrativity centre on the discussion of three broad pictorial structures, each of which convey temporality in different ways. The first, and most simplistic, is the single image which presents one moment in time –the 'pregnant moment' after Lessing, termed the 'monophase' work by Wolf – where one moment is represented within a larger scheme of action, and a longer sequence of action is inferred.[34] The potential in these images lies in their inherent incompleteness, or indeterminancy, that can be a 'powerful generator of curiosity' – compelling the viewer to fill in the gaps.[35] This type of image therefore frequently relies on the viewer's general knowledge and experience of the world, forcing them to fill in gaps in the narrative by referring to archetypal stories, symbols, common experiences, customs etc. In this respect, and indeed this is a criticism that orthodox narratologists apply to all pictorial narratives, the image refers to narratives that are outside the picture frame.[36] This could be interpreted as the inability for the picture to evoke a narrative, having to rely in a parasitic way on other existing narratives – that are no doubt most often textual: 'In sum, a single picture can never actually represent a narrative but at best metonymically point to a story.'[37] *The Death of Marat* (1793) (fig.4) by Jacques-Louis David discussed in the last chapter in relation to Coates's installation with Lagarto is a good example of an image that presents a single moment, and yet temporally extends back in time via the presence of clues about

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[32] Marco Frascari, 'From models to drawings: imagination and representation in architecture' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture, Critiques (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p.28.
[33] Roland Barthes, *S/Z: An Essay*, trans. by Richard Miller (Hill and Wang, 1975).
[34] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–197. (p.190)
[35] Marie-Laure Ryan, 'Narration in various media', *Living Handbook of Narratology*, http://www.icn.uni-hamburg.de/
[36] Werner Wolf, (2003), p.190-191.
[37] Werner Wolf, 'Pictorial Narrativity' in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p.433.
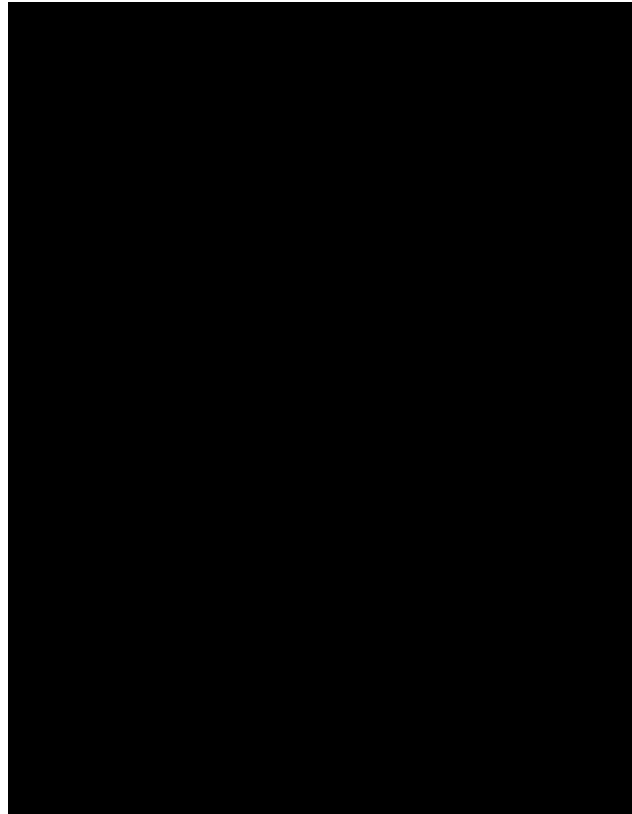
Figure 4: Jacques-Louis David, *The Death of Marat* (1793) – a monophase pictorial narrative employing the pregnant moment.
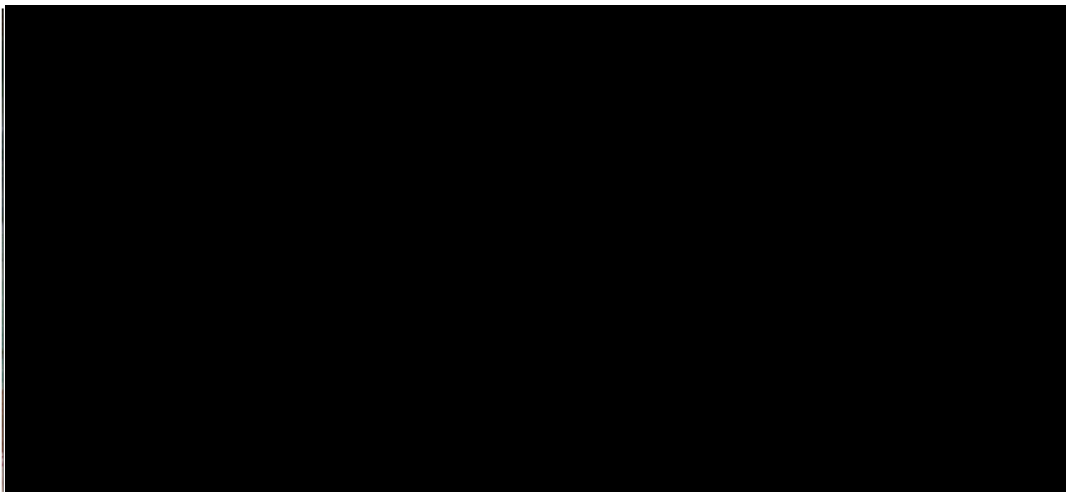

Figure 5: Masaccio, *The Tribute Money*, (1425) – polyphase narrative, more than one scene of action depicted in a single frame.

what has just happened (the knife, blood etc.) and also refers to a broader story of the French Revolution and the murderess Charlotte Corday.

The second type is the single image that contains more than one scene or moment in the narrative, a 'multiphase', or polyphase, image.[38] These types of images can typically be found in religious paintings, for example the Renaissance work *The Tribute Money* by Masaccio (1425) (fig.5) – where three distinct scenes within a story arc are depicted in one 'unified landscape'.[39] In these works, the space of the image may or may not be used to indicate temporal sequence. This form of pictorial narrative plays a central role in NATØ's output, often using wide drawings that pan across space, pleating and folding time to present more than one moment.

The third and final mode of pictorial narrativity is the 'serial' image, a narrative made from the combination of more than one individual monophase image, providing what narratologists consider to be the most determinate pictorial narrative.[40] The four paintings which make up William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1733) (fig.6) is often cited as a case of a cogent narrative which invites the viewer to apply a frame narrative quite clearly.[41] Effectively, Hogarth applied the textual norms of reading to his series of paintings, which are intended to be read in a linear manner to create a story with a defined beginning, middle and an end – establishing a clear teleology.

In each of these modes, it is the act of contemplation by the viewer – Wollheim's 'seeing-in', Gombrich's 'scanning', Wolf's 'narrativisation' – that activates the temporal aspects of the image. French philosopher of aesthetics Etienne Souriau's 'Time in the Plastic Arts' (1949) explains this need for contemplation as akin to the time required to move around the sculptural object or move through the spaces of a building – both of which require movement by the body, which is mirrored in the movement of the eye across the picture.[42] He develops this further by describing the temporality imbedded within the marks of the image: 'artistic time inherent in the texture itself of a picture or a statue, in their composition, in their aesthetic arrangement', making a claim for 'the intrinsic time of the work of art.'[43] By this, Souriau is referring to the temporal extension or expansion beyond the moment of the image that is created through more deeply embedded references to time – the age of characters, the cultural and historical association of place or setting, the symbolism of objects and so on: thus, 'The time of the

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[38] Ibid., p.190.

[39] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative across media : the languages of storytelling* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), p.141.

[40] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity', p.190.

[41] Werner Wolf, 'Pictorial Narrativity' in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p.433.

[42] Etienne Souriau, 'Time in the Plastic Arts', *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 7 (1949), pp.294–307.
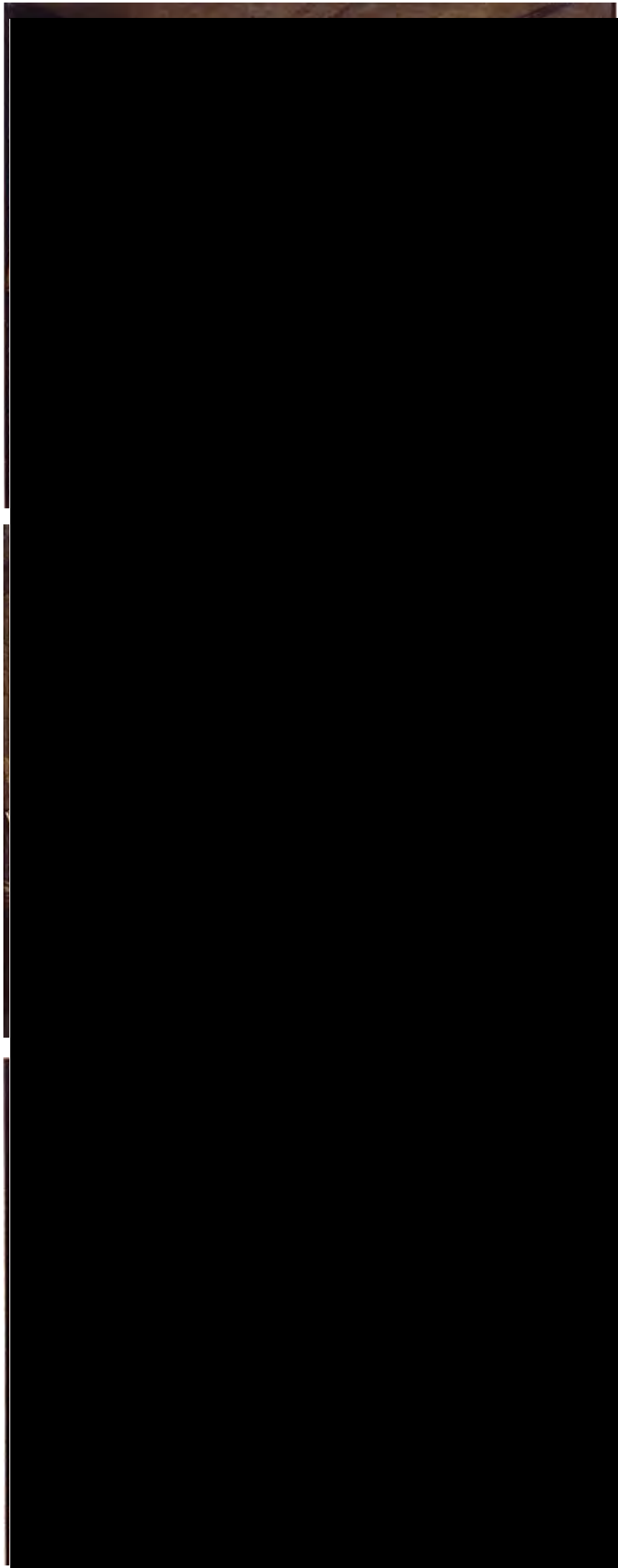
[43] Ibid., p. 296-97.

Figure 6: William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress* (1733) – a serial narrative, produced via three monophase works.
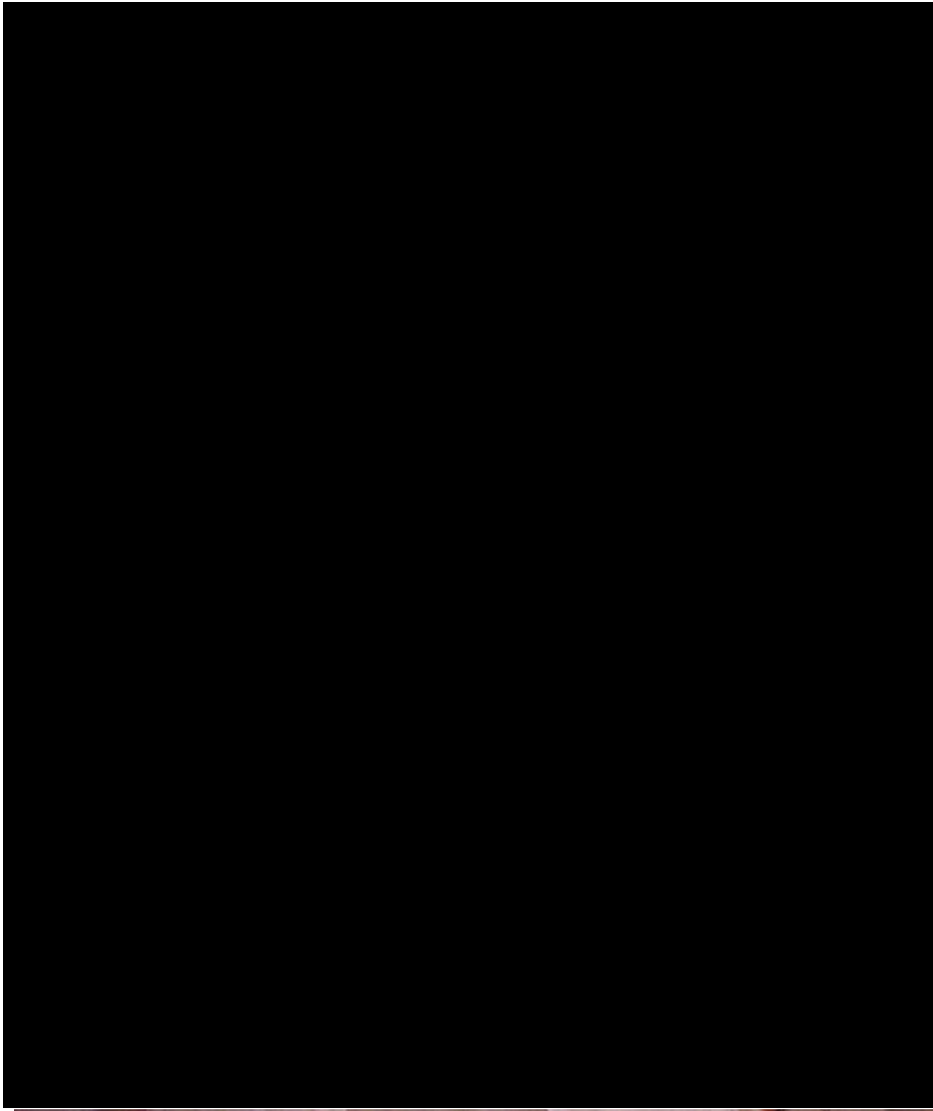
Figure 7: Jan Steen, *The Feast of St Nicholas* (1665-8) – a monophase narrative which refers to action outside the frame.

work radiates'.[44] This suggests that the way that the image portrays temporal aspects is different to the way that a textual narrative does, indeed, the image is able to convey more than one 'time' simultaneously – allowing analepsis and prolepsis (flashbacks and flash forwards) to occur in the same image.[45]

This way of thinking about the narrative working of the image begins to breakdown the core problematic at the centre of narratological analyses of such work – that pictorial narratives are evaluated within the framework of textual narratives, with the text representing the paradigmatic narrative. This is the cornerstone of multimedia narratology, which accepts that pictures convey different types of narrative in different ways, and thus require different critical constructs.

Wolf develops a framework for analysing multimedia narrativity that can be used to examine the qualities of the image that induce narrativisation, describing three fundamental attributes that anchor the process – 'experientiality', 'representationality' and 'meaningfulness'.[46] These are loosely defined as the ability for the image to produce an experience with intelligible meaning, above the effect of a description or report, and the depiction of a world where the individual elements make sense in their cohesion. These effects are induced through 'narratemes' – 'content narrratemes' consisting of elements such as character, setting and action, and 'syntactic narratemes' that hold the content together through chronology, causality and teleology.[47] For Wolf, an image may possess narrativity to greater or lesser extent depending on the presence or absence of these narratemes, and thus he does not preclude pictorial narratives with seemingly little teleology. He goes on to test his framework through an analysis of painting, concluding that though the painting can possess narrativity, it does so with much greater difficulty than the text, and is often limited to referential or derivative narrativity – pointing to action or plot outside the frame.[48] However, Wolf's examples are limited to post-Renaissance paintings, in particular focusing his analysis on *The Feast of Saint Nicholas* by Jan Steen (1665-8) (fig.7), a monophase work depicting a highly pregnant moment from which a narrative can be inferred. Wolf does acknowledge serial works such as William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (1832-33), but fails to take in anything more contemporary or expressive – limiting his analysis to realist works. As this chapter will show, Wolf's framework can be productively applied to NATØ's drawings to expand his concept of pictorial narrativity, moving a step further away from the restrictions of textual definitions of narrative.

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[44] Ibid., p.301.

[45] Gyöngyvér Horváth, 'From Sequence to Scenario: The Historiography and Theory of Visual Narration', PhD thesis, (University of East Anglia, 2011), p.92.

[46] Werner Wolf, (2003), p.185.

[47] Werner Wolf, '"Cross the Border - Close That Gap": Towards an Intermedial Narratology', *European Journal of English Studies*, 8 (2004), pp.81–103, (p.88)

[48] Werner Wolf, (2003), pp.189-192.

Drawing at the Architectural Association – 1970-83

Emancipating the architectural drawing

> In recent years, a certain stream has evolved that is very particular to the AA.
> Emerging from the stable of Bernard Tschumi, it cross-fertilised with the talents
> of two Zenghelis students. Inspired also by fellow sensitivities Austrian and
> Italian, it remains essentially Anglo-Saxon in its tendency to become episodic.
> Nigel Coates has described it as being 'Narrative' architecture. I have already
> described it as being scenographic [...] There was a touch of sensitive symbolism,
> soft-shaded enclosures, mystery and graceful innuendo rather than harsh rhetoric
> to be carried. In time, they have become synonymous with a certain AA mood:
> concerned with atmospheric drawing. Circumstance rather than function. The
> free will of the person, the private trajectory, the psychological effect: these seem
> to have more importance to this group than the systems of building or the
> mathematics of order.[49]

This quote from Peter Cook, taken from a special edition of *Architectural Review* which
presented a survey of the AA in 1983, describes evocatively the preoccupation with a
type of drawing that was particular to the school during the early 1980s, an oeuvre from
which NATØ emerged. Two key words from this quote thematise well the concerns of
this chapter and the drive towards the narrative drawing discussed in the previous section
– 'episodic' and 'scenographic'. Both terms suggestive of the drawing as a temporal
medium, alluding to events and connected sequences. In particular, the term
'scenographic', which scenographers consider notoriously difficult to define, evokes a
concept of architecture as an 'all-encompassing visual-spatial construct', inextricably
linked to ideas of performance and each of the sensory domains – an approach to
architecture and thus to architectural representation that goes broader than the building.[50]
It is significant that this was a mode detected by Cook – a protagonist of the Archigram
group whose output had dominated the radical edge of architectural representation for the
previous generation. The 'stream' that Cook describes in this quote is the product of
generation who had missed the 1960s preoccupation with the megastructure and its
rejection of high Modernism by groups such as Archigram, the Metabolists from Japan,
Utopie in France, the Italian group Archizoom, Austrian's Coop Himmelblau and Haus
Rücker Co, as well as individuals such as Yoda Friedman and Paolo Soleri, and had
instead been educated or begun teaching in the early 1970s when the perceived
'relentlessly optimistic and ultimately innocent' tone of these works was being

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[49] Peter Cook, 'Cook's Grand Tour', Architectural Review, 1040 (1983), pp.32–43. (p.43)
[50] Pamela Howard's *What Is Scenography?* (Psychology Press, 2002). discusses the difficulty in
defining scenography, and gathers definitions from 50 scenographers from across the world to
illustrate the lack of consensus, pp.xiii-xvi; Arnold Aronson, *Looking Into the Abyss: Essays on
Scenography* (University of Michigan Press, 2005), p.7.

challenged.[51] As described in the previous chapter, Tschumi, came to the AA at the start of the decade from Paris, with an agenda for architecture that sought radical social and political change; Simon Sadler has described a 'fault line' that 'emerged between those who believed in a Pop consumer revolution, and those demanding a more politically grounded response.'[52] This was also the moment that Rem Koolhaas was graduating from the AA, having witnessed les événements de Mai; his graduation project *Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* completed in 1972 with tutor Elia Zenghelis presented a critique of the megastructure, an homage to Superstudio, who at the end of the 1960s also renounced their megastructuralist roots through a number of critical projects.[53] Indeed, the 1970s marked a new era within the AA – not least due to the leadership of Boyarsky – where although the presence of Archigram was still felt through the teachings of its members, a number of new modes of thought entered the school, bolstered by the unit system.

As Cook's quote suggests, the combination of influences at the AA during this period form the context from which a new mode of expression was borne out through the drawing. In the same article, he describes the early 1970s as notable for three distinct 'waves' that entered the school - 'politicism', 'historicism', and the 'scenographic', and explains that they had very little to do with one another.[54] Ascribing the historicist wing to Dalibor Vesely, whose preoccupation was with the paradigms of archetypes of historical form, Cook goes on to posit Tschumi as the 'intellectual leader of the scenographic wing'.[55] He identifies a visit to the school by Viennese architects Coop Himmelb(l)au in 1973 as marking Tschumi's turning point.[56] A group of students, led by Coop Himmelb(l)au's Wolf D. Prix took over an empty house in Camden Town to 'present architecture as an action and as a process', cutting and reassembling the building before installing an inflatable sphere on the roof which appeared to lift off.[57] Cook explains that the 'stylised and symbolist' nature of the active and intense intervention was a compelling prospect for Tschumi, and recalled that 'Almost immediately afterwards [...] atmospheric values, narrative instincts, architecture as calm, reposeful political symbol

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[51] Rem Koolhaas, "Sixteen Years of OMA", in OMA-Rem Koolhaas: Architecture 1970–1990, ed. Jacques Lucan (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991), p. 162.
[52] Simon Sadler, 'An Avant-garde Academy' in Andrew Ballantyne, ed., *Architectures: Modernism and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.45.
[53] Superstudio projects from this era include 'The Continuous Monument' (1969), 'Twelve Idea Cities' (1971), 'Reflected Architecture (1971-72), 'Utopia', 'Antiutopia', 'Topia' (1972), together described as 'didactic essays' by co-founder Adolfo Natalini. Sarah Deyong, 'Memories of the Urban Future: The Rise and Fall of the Megastructure' in *The Changing of the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection*, ed. by Terence Riley (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2002).
[54] Peter Cook, (1983), p.40.
[55] Ibid., p.42.
[56] Ibid., p.42.
[57] 'The House with the Flying Roof', http://www.coop-himmelblau.at, accessed June 2013.

and, more simply the art component of architecture became the lingua franca'.[58] Before continuing the story from the previous chapter, and considering the significance of Cook's insights, it is important to consider briefly a number of other units that came to prominence during the 1970s and early 1980s, a point of comparison which reveals the extent of NATØ's invention.

Themes

Between 1982-83, Alvin Boyarsky put on a series of four exhibitions at the AA, with accompanying books, entitled *Themes,* which aimed to 'document the diverse body of work produced within the Diploma school since the advent of the unit system in the mid-seventies'.[59] Each exhibition focused on one unit, chronicling its development and current preoccupations, they were: Dalibor Vesely and Mohsen Mostafavi; Peter Cook, Christine Hawley and Ron Herron; Michael Gold; and Bernard Tschumi and Nigel Coates. Notable for its absence is the unit led by Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, so this will also be included in the survey.

The first of the *Themes* exhibitions was titled *Architecture and Continuity*, focusing on the work of Unit 1 led by Vesely and Mostafavi.[60] The work presented explored Vesely's concern for tradition and of creating a 'culturally specific symbolism' relevant to the contemporary city.[61] Taking an approach which echoed the Rationalist strategy of composing historical forms and types, the projects had the common goal of establishing 'continuity of the urban tradition' through small-scale building complexes embedded strongly within their spatial context.[62] The resulting drawings were delicately shaded, back and white pencil and charcoal drawings consisting of conventional plans, sections and perspectives depicting schemes worked out in significant detail (Figs. 8, 9,10,11, 12). Though typically illustrating some context, the drawings say very little beyond the description of the architecture – with no people and no indication of a social, cultural or geographic context, typically fading into blurred and misty backgrounds. Certainly, any sense of a narrative is limited to ideas related specifically to the architecture – symbolic references that may bring to mind ancient architectural concepts such as the public forum or the courtyard, and cosmological forms. Indeed, though the drawings are atmospheric, this is due to deep shadowing and blurred textures which serve to highlight simple and monumental forms, rather than the detail of spaces. The drawing

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[58] Peter Cook, (1983), p.40.
[59] Alvin Boyarsky, 'Introduction', in Peter Cook, Christine Hawley, Ron Herron, *Spirit and Invention*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1982).
[60] *Architecture and Continuity*, Architectural Association, 1982.
[61] Peter Carl, 'Preface' in Dalibor Vesely and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Architecture and Continuity*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1982).
[62] Dalibor Vesely and Mohsen Mostafavi, *Architecture and Continuity*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1982).

Figure 8: Athanasios Spanomaridis, *Urban Forum Block*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

Figure 9: Eric Parry, *Axonometric*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

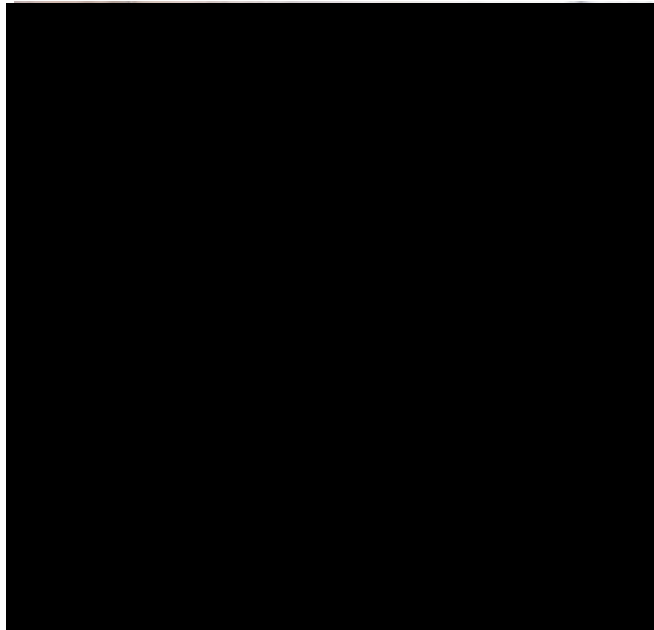Figure 10: Eric Parry, *Urban Forum*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

Figure 11: Kaveh Mehrabani, *Brown Hart Gardens*, 'Themes' (1982-3).
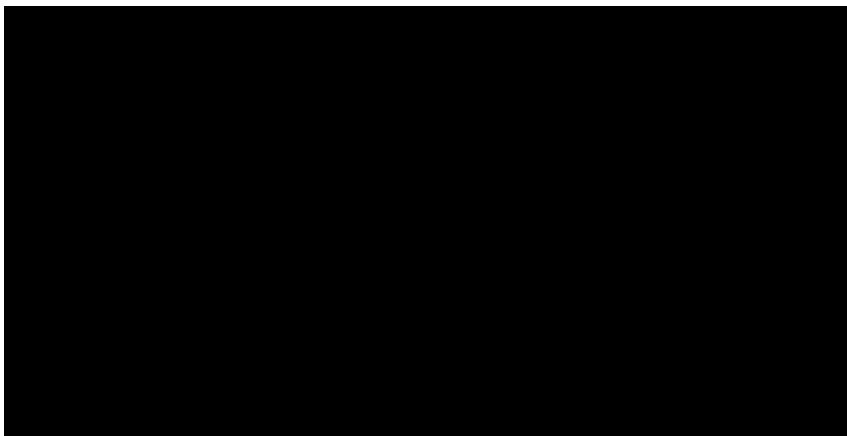

Figure 12: Kaveh Mehrabani, *Brown Hart Gardens*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

style represents well a prevalent mode of drawing during this period – the finely crafted, conventional pencil drawing which shared much in common with the revival of classical and historical forms evident in both the Rationalist and dominant Postmodern mode. For Coates, this was the norm against which his own ideas reacted:

> The drawing in a sense needed to be re-examined, because drawings had become incredibly self conscious[...]And I think that often it is the case that a lot of the techniques that came to be consolidated in NATØ were reactions to what architecture did not have and could not offer. It seemed outmoded and elaborate to do almost craft-like drawings, our drawings were much more vital.[63]

The laboured, intensely detailed nature of Unit 1's drawings were in direct opposition to the evocation of movement or action, creating instead a sense of stillness and permanence suggested through densely rendered surfaces, thickened walls and purposeful form. The lack of people in the drawings, combined with the style of their representation gives the effect of desolate and ruined places, but also a sense of timelessness, as though the forms represented have resisted the passing of time.

The second *Themes* exhibition featured Cook, Hawley and Herron, and was titled *Spirit and Invention*.[64] For Cook, the title synopsised the mantra of the unit, suggesting that through 'spirit' they escaped 'good manners' and with 'invention' they avoided historicism – two criticisms he levelled at the rest of the AA (and characteristics perhaps most clearly displayed in Vesely's unit).[65] The unit was also vehemently against 'academicism' and the 'gloss' of much architectural representation occurring elsewhere in the school, instead continuing the agenda of optimism, playfulness and the search for a technological utopia set out by Archigram.[66] The projects took pleasure in producing designs which rallied against Minimalism and Rationalism, valuing individualism and, as a result, drawings which varied considerably between authors. However, despite the delight in drawing that is evident in the resulting work, there is recourse to some aspects of functionalist Modernism – with highly detailed, often axonometric drawings that verge on the diagrammatic (Figs. 13, 14, 15). The drawings also adhere to many conventions, with the section, elevation and axonometric common modes, and line-work conventionally architectural in its ruled, crosshatched presentation. The forms represented imply a degree of energy, but the lack of people and contextual setting negate any idea of action that could result from the architecture. And, though the work shows a vitality lacking in Vesely and Mostafavi's unit, the focus remains the building as a functional object, not of evoking broader social, cultural or political narratives. Hawley describes

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[63] Nigel Coates, personal interview September 2012.
[64] *Spirit and Invention*, Architectural Association, 1982.
[65] Peter Cook, 'Art has Returned' in Peter Cook, Christine Hawley, Ron Herron, *Spirit and Invention*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1982).
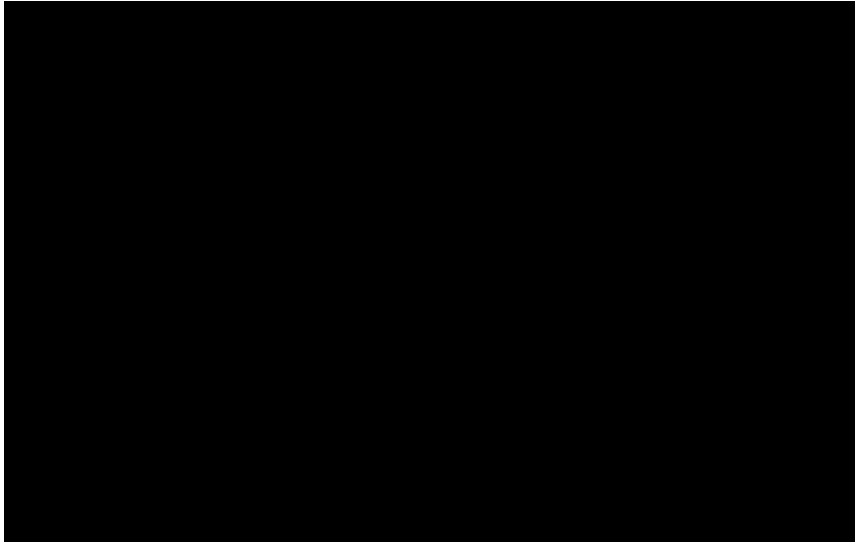[66] Ibid.

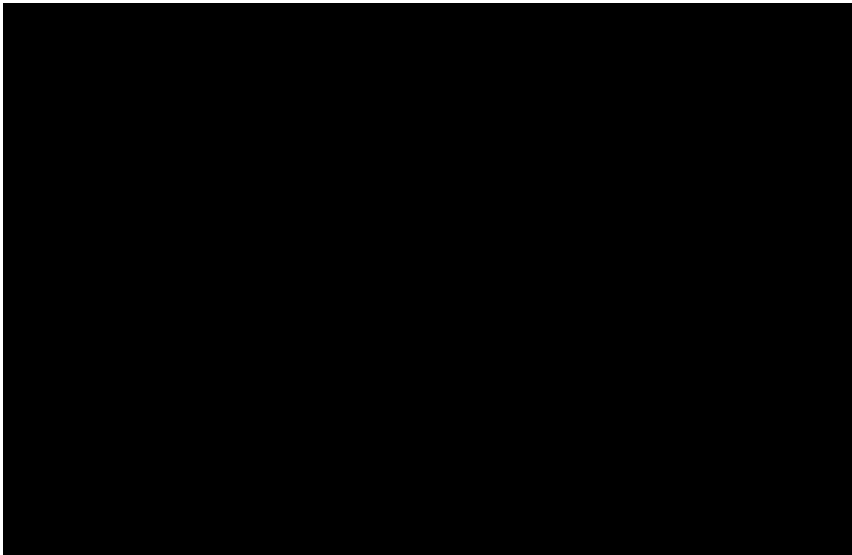Figure 13: Amajit Kalsi, *Porchester Baths*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

Figure 14: Anette Lecuyer, *Porchester Baths*, 'Themes' (1982-3).
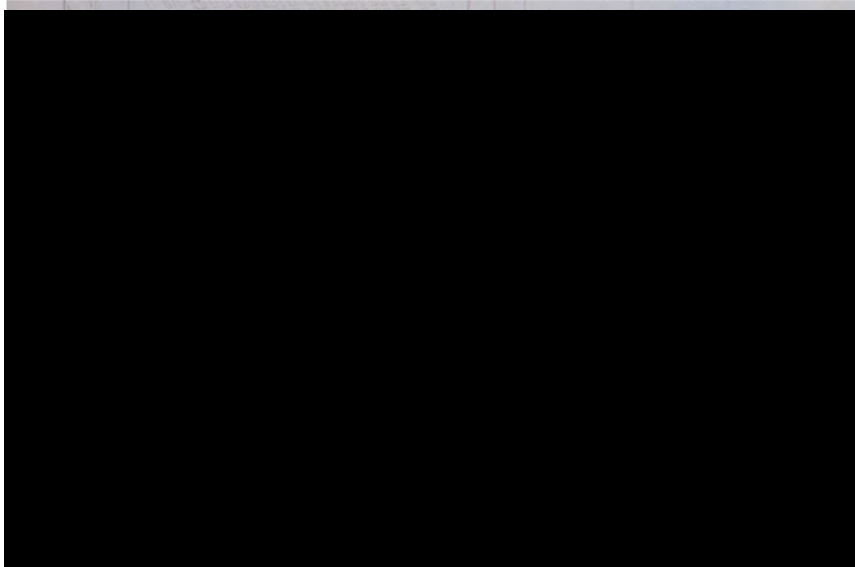

Figure 15: Peter Heywood, *Porchester Baths*, 'Themes' (1982-3).

the ultimate aim of the work as creating a 'memorable individualism' and the 'projection of a personal ethos though architecture'.[67] The memorability of work however resides purely in the aesthetic – as many of the drawings are indeed highly individualised, stunning displays of skill and imagination, which aim to dazzle or shock either through form, colour, or typology.

The third exhibition in the series featured Tschumi and Coates's Unit 10, tracing its evolution from the period of Coates as student, to the pre-NATØ year of *Giant Sized Baby Town*, in 1982-3. The trajectory of the unit and its drawing procedures have been described in the previous chapter, the threads of which are picked up later in this chapter as the unit proceeds through 1983 and the formation of NATØ.

The final exhibition of the *Themes* series chronicled the unit led by Michael Gold, whose approach represents a departure from many of the prevailing trends at the AA. Gold's modus operandi seemingly escaped nearly all typical architectural concerns, avoiding as Boyarsky outlined in his introduction to the catalogue for Gold's *People in Architecture*: 'the usual rational and moral approaches towards the programme, the context, the typological enquiry, the historical reference'.[68] The process developed by Gold and represented through the work of his students was one that focused almost entirely on the act of drawing – setting out a series of ten specific drawing stages, expanding from the human figure, to furniture, architecture and finally the city.[69] In beginning with the body, *People in Architecture* aimed to set up expectations of an embodied architecture which focused on the experience of space (Figs.16-19. In this sense, the work of the unit could be considered close to Tschumi and Coates's unit, as they both share an interest in 'sensibility', 'atmosphere and narrative'; however, the finished projects, once past the initial drawing or painting of a figure, bare little trace of embodiment – presenting desolate images as Boyarsky hints:

> The figures and objects are placed in relationships which are unexpected and perhaps shocking, divorced as they are from their natural functions. An overall stillness and vagueness of settings prevails, occasionally challenged by wild animal-like expressions etc.[70]

Taking the human figure as the subject of the first drawing, Gold asked the students to remove the background, at once stripping the body of any relation to space or context. The inanimate architecture that results from such a process is highly abstract, proposing 'ephemeral and purely scenographic' spaces, but these are not scenographic in the fullest

[67] Christine Hawley, 'The Avoidance of Mimicry', in Ibid.
[68] Alvin Boyarsky, 'Introduction', in Michael Gold, *People in Architecture*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1983), p.6.
[69] Michael Gold, *People in Architecture*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1983).
[70] Alvin Boyarsky, 'Introduction', in Michael Gold, *People in Architecture*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1983), p.6.

Figure 16: Ada Wilson, *Crap Nightclub,* (1981)

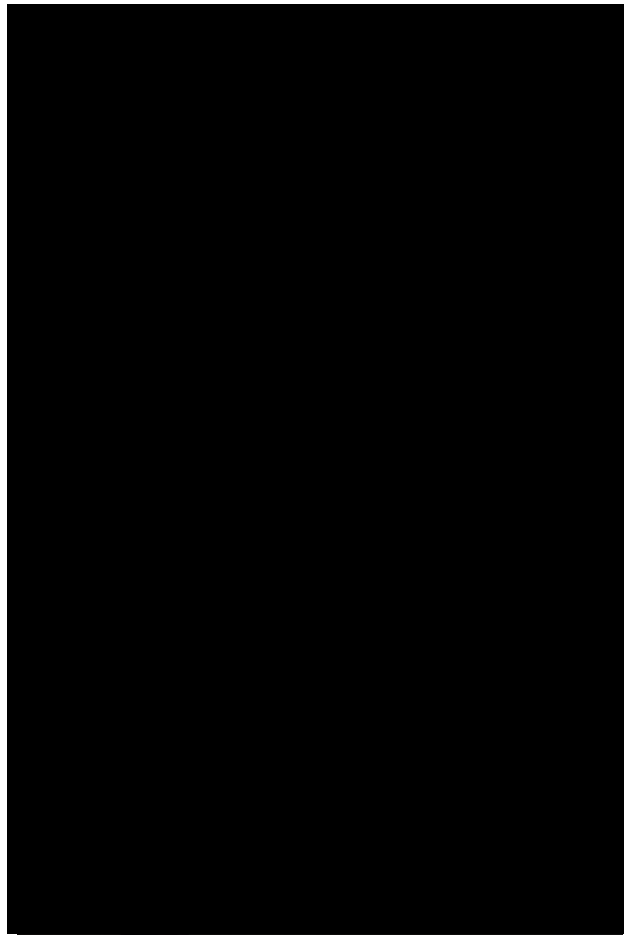Figure 17: Ada Wilson, *Crap Nightclub,* (1981)

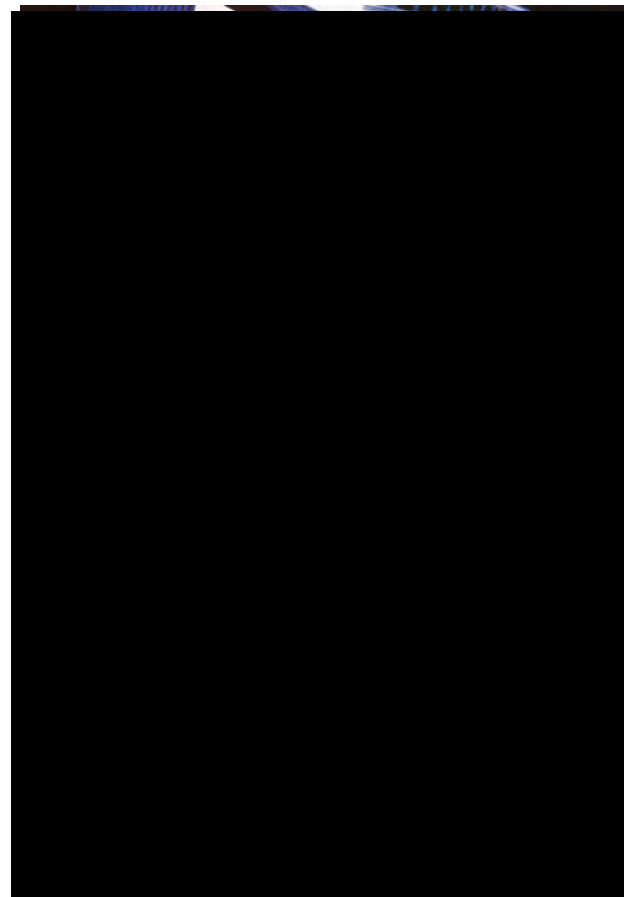Figure 18: Ada Wilson, *Crap Nightclub*, (1981)

Figure 19: Ada Wilson, *Crap Nightclub*, (1981)

sense – they set an empty scene, a stage with no action.[71] The effect is one that favours the imaginative dimension of space, tending towards the fantastical and paying little attention to the details of architecture. Though in this respect Gold's unit departs from Vesely and Cook's more intricate drawings, the pastel, paint and pencil representations still fall foul to Coates's criticism of being heavily laborious, overwrought and contrived. It appears as if the use of paint and other materials untypical of architectural representation were not used in ways that fundamentally differ from the way that a pen or a pencil might. By contrast, for Coates, introducing the oil pastel to his repertoire during his time at Bennington College was a way to escape the confines of the drawing board, and immediately the resulting drawings showed a freer mode of expression which exploited the qualities of the pastel through energetic strokes, markings and scribbles.

Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis

Unit 9, led by Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis from the mid-1970s, until Zaha Hadid took over in 1980, sought to critically understand the contemporary city condition, exploring themes such as congestion and the 'metropolitan lifestyle'.[72] The aim was to provoke and manipulate 'new and exciting activities and forms of social intercourse' through architecture, like Tschumi and Coates considering that architecture and culture are inextricably linked.[73] Though the drawn output of the unit purposefully resisted falling into a style, there was a tendency towards the hard-line drawing, with no shading, commonly featuring floating axonometrics that were sometimes exploded, and three-dimensional plans (fig. 20-22) As in the *Themes* exhibitions, none of the drawings showed inhabitation or any sense of action – these were drawings that focused on form and the complexity of programme displayed through detailed but empty spaces.

Of more impact on the development of architectural representation than Unit 9's drawings was Koolhaas's and Zenghelis's work of their own. Though too early to impact directly upon the majority of the NATØ members, Koolhaas's graduation project *Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture* (produced with Elia Zenghelis) (figs.23-26), was an important influence for Coates, who described the revelation of the work: 'It is a total vision closer to the ambitions of a novel or a movie spanning scales, from the broad sweep of London to the intensity of rock concerts and observation towers.'[74] The project inserted an idealised city into the centre of London, divided from the rest of the existing

[71] Dalibor Vesely, 'The Dialogue of Representation' in Michael Gold, *People in Architecture*, Themes (London: Architectural Association, 1983), p.7.
[72] Rem Koolhaas, quoted in Peter Buchanan 'Elia Zenghelis, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid', in Architectural Review, 1040 (1983), pp.64.
[73] Peter Buchanan, 'Elia Zenghelis, Rem Koolhaas, Zaha Hadid', in Architectural Review, 1040 (1983), pp.64.
[74] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), pp.41-42.

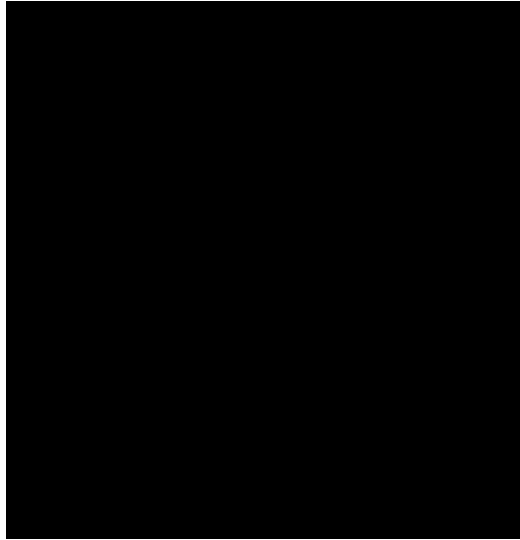Figure 20: Alex Wall, *Tektonik Tower*, (1976)

Figure 21: Alastair Standing, *Twentieth Century Street Prevention*, (1983)
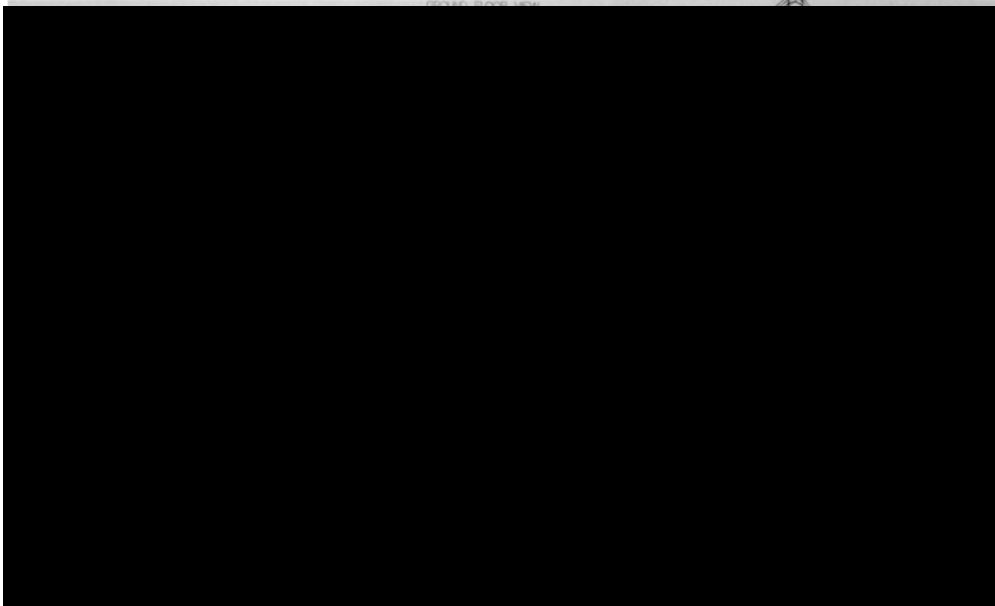

Figure 22: Robin Walsh, *Private House in Royal Docks*, (1980)

fabric by monumental walls that spoke of Koolhaas's preoccupation with the Berlin Wall, producing a critique through the inversion of the wall as a supposed positive force.[75]

The 18 project drawings focused little on the details of architecture or form, reducing space to planar surfaces filled in with block colour or collage material and constructed with sharply convergent perspective that created a false depth and inherent flatness. In this respect the images appear as stage sets, with the focus on the relation between spaces, and between people and space, described by curator of architecture at MoMA Terrence Riley as resembling a 'pictographic storyboard' – revealing Koolhaas's past as a screenwriter and journalist.[76] As a series, the images convey a strong narrative, a visual parable – though they are also accompanied by a lengthy text that serves to explain the images. The 'voluntary prisoners' are depicted along a literal a metaphorical journey, moving from outside the walls, arriving at 'The Reception Area', preceding through a series of spaces – 'The Ceremonial Square' and 'The Temporary Housing', and finally arriving in 'The Allotments', where they live-out their lives between the 'University', 'The Complex of Scientific Research', 'The Park of Four Elements', 'The Baths' and 'The Square of Culture'. The narrativity of each image is also furthered by the collaged elements, many of which are directly cut from films and paintings, or are photographs of real, recognisable places including the Berlin Wall, stills from Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927), and figures from Jean-François Millet's painting *The Angelus* (1858-59) – the later in turn referring to Salvador Dali's representations of the same painting. Each image is layered with references that further the critique of the work and demand closer reading; in fig.25 the white figures of Koolhaas and Zenghelis themselves are depicted floating between the old and the new walled city, in a no-man's-land, where they appear like angels – perhaps victims of this precarious space between.

Contributing to images of *Exodus or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture*, and many subsequent Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis projects under the guise of OMA, were Zoe Zenghelis, and Madelon Vriesendorp. Notably, both Zoe Zenghelis and Vriesendorp were not architects but artists with a deep interest in the city and architecture. Coming from outside the discipline both artists were able to work without the restraints of architectural conventions, and instead focussed on the imaginative aspects of Koolhaas's and Elia Zenghelis's ideas. Zoe Zenghelis, using mainly oil and acrylic paints, worked in a language of solid shapes with varying degrees of architectural specificity, and a strong theatrical feel. Her paintings were often abstract and surreal, playing on Koolhaas's own experiments in subverting geometric elements, and creating the abstracted ground upon which many of OMA's works were assembled (fig.27). By contrast, Vriesendorp's

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[75] Roberto Gargiani, *OMA* (EPFL Press, 2008), p.6.
[76] Terrence Riley in Matilda McQuaid ads. *Envisioning Architecture: Drawings from the Museum of Modern Art* (The Museum of Modern Art, 2002), p.166.
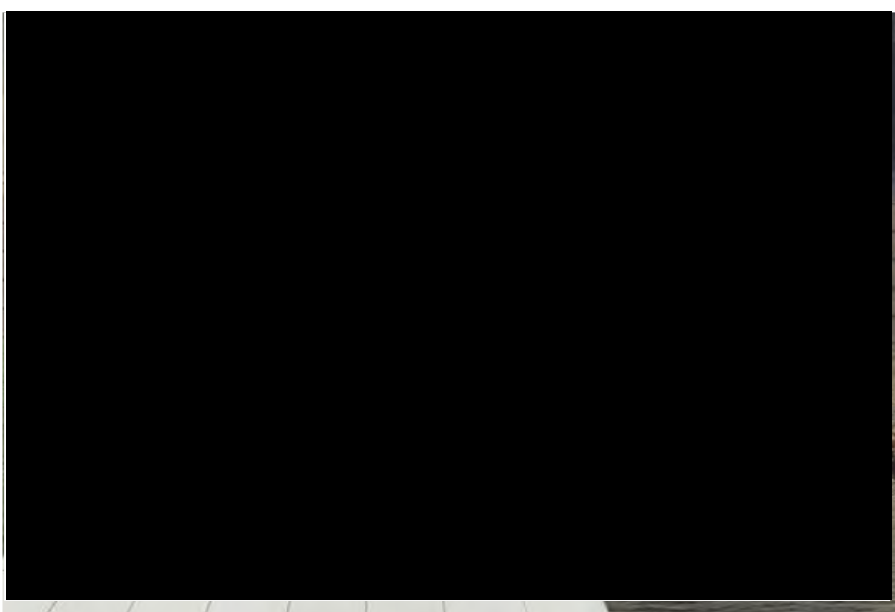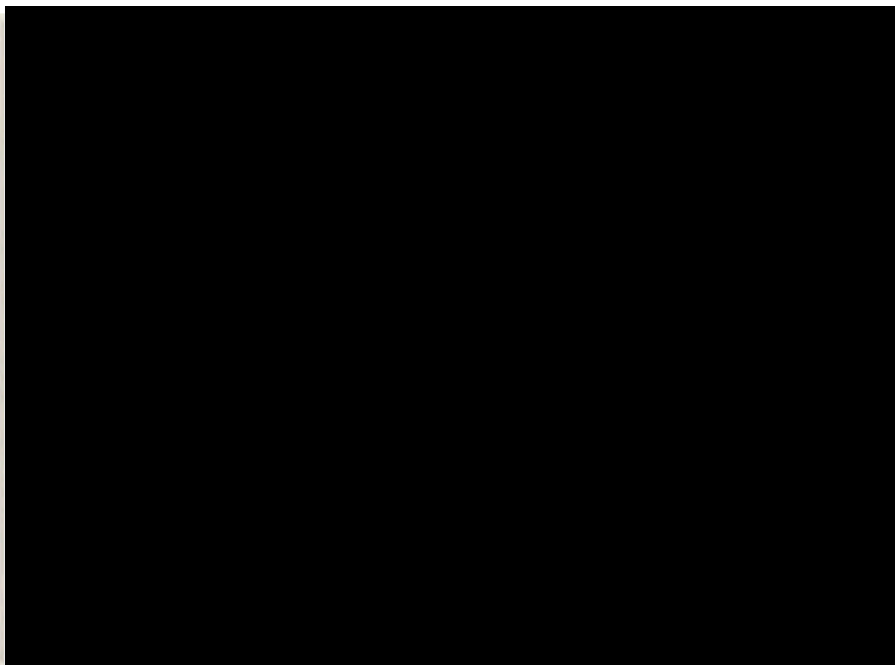
Figure 23 and 24: Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis *Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture*, (1972).
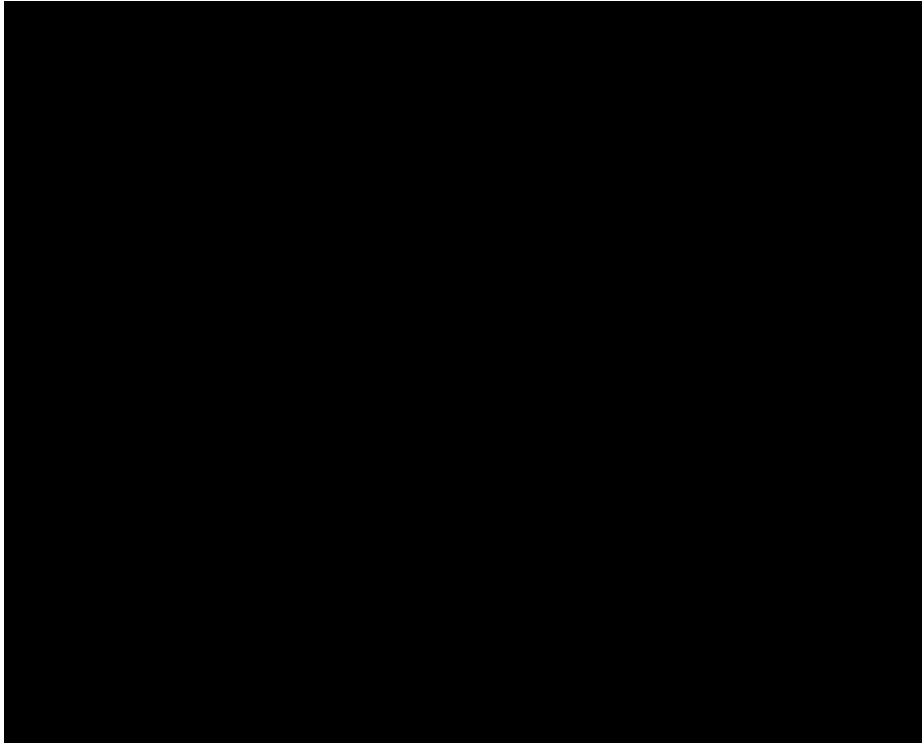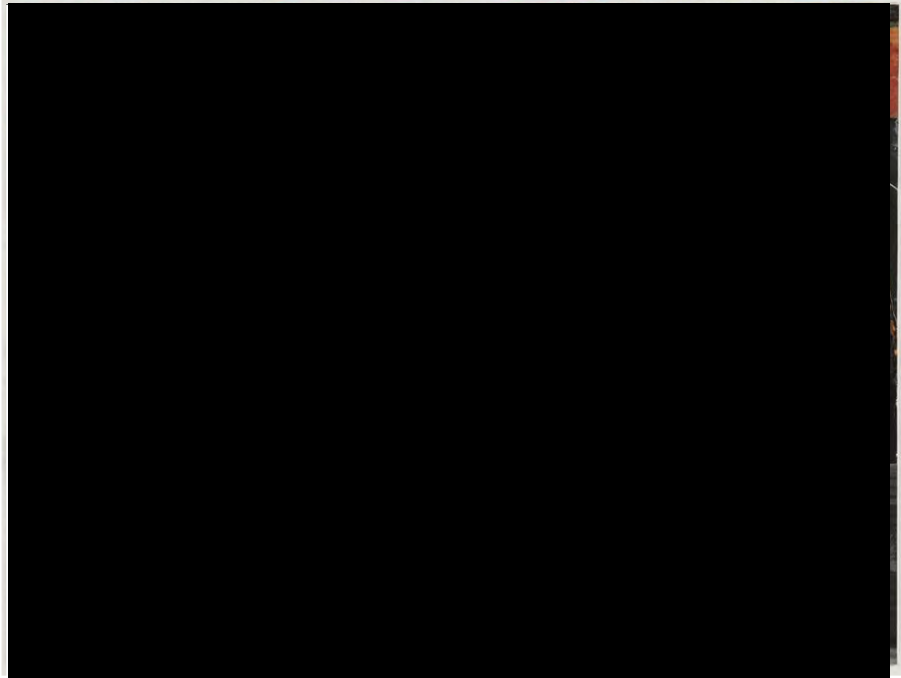
Figure 25 and 26: Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis *Exodus, or the voluntary prisoners of architecture*, (1972).

paintings were more figurative, depicting imaginary characters (often as buildings) and using a language of references, irony and wit to narrativise vignettes of architecture. In her painting 'Dreamland: caught in the act', Vriesendorp depicts the Empire State Building in bed with the Chrysler Building, caught by the Rockefeller Center which is show entering the room - an image that contains implications for the gendered skyscraper figure and the secret double-life of modern architecture (fig.28). Both Zoe Zenghelis and Vriesendorp painted fantastical and imaginative images which revealed relatively little about the detail of the architecture, focusing on the broader critique and associative allusions. Their work is also noticeably still, using solid forms and opaque walls which contribute a smoothness to the images quite opposite to the fragmented language of the city, as Jasia Reichardt explains:

> Partly because of the collaboration of the two artists and their visual presentations of OMA's work, the office has been associated with mythical, unlikely or impossible buildings which are more like monuments or sculptures than the throbbing, bustling conglomeration of disparate elements which make up the city as we know it. Their personal metropolis is a monolith, subject to an internal order and unchanged by use or intrusion. It functions by itself, like an organism, with an emphasis on the surreal.[77]

Indeed, Surrealism was a major influence on Vriesendorp, and her images are clearly indebted to artists such as Giorgio de Chirico, who depicted similar scenes of stillness furnished with curious dream-like figures of sculptures and buildings.

Though both the content and techniques of OMA's images were to a large extent at odds with the messy, vital approach taken by NATØ, they shared a way of thinking about architecture which was interested in the development of architectural ideas which did not revolve around the creation of a singular, static vision of one building, or the building as an object. As opposed to the works represented in the *Themes* exhibitions, in their storyboard approach that focused on the depiction of spatial scenarios from multiple viewpoints and with collaged, referential content, OMA's drawings displayed some of the 'episodic' and 'scenographic' qualities that Cook described. The *Exodus* project in particular sought to explore an architectural intervention through time, with each monophase image describing another 'episode' to produce a longer serial narrative, showing not the details of construction or form but instead the social and political implications of space. Indeed, OMA's images from this period contain each of Wolf's elements of pictorial narrativity – experientiality, representationality and meaningfulness – strongly, a world is depicted that has coherence and intelligible meaning, and there are discernable characters, setting and action, combined with moments of causality and chronology when the images are seen as a set.

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[77] Jasia Reichardt, 'An Artist in an Architectural Context', *AA files,* No.10 (1985), pp.62–65.

Figure 27: Zoe Zenghelis, *Boompjes Tower Slab*, (1981).

Figure 28: Madelon Vriesondorp, *Dreamland: caught in the act*, for *Delirious New York*, (1978).

However, OMA's projects were highly theoretical and conceptual, designed largely as part of a broader rhetoric on the contemporary city, rather than a design proposal. By contrast, though NATØ oeuvre was part of a particular idea about architecture and the city, the purpose of their drawings was to evoke a particular spatial condition and atmosphere. As such, the focus of the proceeding sections is on the qualities of their line and composition – the factors that distinguished their work from other architectural modes of representation during this period, and the core of their architectural narrativity.

The possibility of the sketch

'Funny drawings'

Central to an examination of NATØ's drawings is a discussion of the quality of their line, which can best be described as *sketched*. As recounted in the previous chapter, Coates's *Ski Station* project, influenced by the gestural installations of Judy Pfaff and the energetic movement of Nam June Paik's videos, began a move towards a way of drawing architecture that was informal, immediate and physical. In the intense markings of this set of pastel drawings, Coates, and subsequently Unit 10, discovered the possibility of the sketch and sought to reinvigorate the architectural drawing with the very basic qualities of the drawn line. Experimentation with the sketch began during 1980-81, after Coates's return from New York, on the *Giant Sized Baby Town* project, but came to fruition in the following year with *Albion* – the project that would be the turning point for Coates and the unit.

The *Albion* project, based in Bermondsey, was represented in the AA end of year show primarily through drawings (though objects and models were also present), and became the basis for the first issue of *NATØ* magazine. For Coates, *Albion's* 'furioso' drawings were a purposeful move away from the laborious and contrived conventional architectural drawing:

> Albion is presented with the kind of funny drawings that implant the feel through the pencil. A scribble, an attack, a transfer from factual form and back again. Drawing, but still real [...] To some custodians of architectural taste this view of architecture apparently is unjudgeable, offensive or downright awful, while to those who pick up on the messages it seems to represent an exit from an impasse familiar to architects and public alike.[78]

NATØ's use of the sketched mode of representation for final drawings rather than preparatory studies was unorthodox and unexpected when considered against the

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[78] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ,* 1, (1984), pp.8-11. (p.11)

backdrop of the more established modes of drawing prevailing at the AA at the time, as documented in the 'Themes' exhibitions described above. However, the provocative and seemingly shocking nature of the *Albion* drawings obscures the intentionality of the work, which did not seek as a primary objective to agitate (though this is not an entirely inadvertent) but set out to propose the uninhibited and vigorous sketched line as an appropriate mode to represent space.

Indeed, when architectural historian Adrian Forty discusses the architectural drawing, he contrasts it with written language's ability to present vagueness, ambiguity and indefiniteness – qualities that he believes the drawing cannot express: either a mark on the page is there or it is not.[79] This is a narrow consideration of the potential array of different drawings, so it is reasonable to assume that he is describing the denotational architectural drawing rather than the rendered perspective or any other more symbolic, connotational forms. However, Forty makes a concession for the architectural sketch, accepting that it has the potential to express in ways that extend far beyond the conventional drawing, and comes closer to the subtleties of language.[80] Forty proposes that the quality of line in the architectural sketch is able to be tentative, exploratory and hesitant in ways that the hard and ruled line of the denotational architectural drawing is not.

Writing on contemporary drawing, curator Emma Dexter characterises the medium as one of the most basic, 'primal' modes of expression – in part due to its historical presence, but primarily due to the relationship between the drawn line and its creator.[81] As a medium that 'betokens honesty and transparency' in the way that it reveals the 'marks and tracks' of its production, Dexter highlights its inherently 'tautologous nature' that is both a display of process and a finished result.[82] Through a drawing, the viewer is able to re-enact or re-experience to a certain extent the movements and gestures of the drawing's production, evoking the drawing body. Connected to this is Dexter's conceptualisation of the drawing as possessing 'presentness', a term raised in the previous chapter in relation to Coates's experience of nightclubs and video art in New York City. For Dexter, presentness is related to directness, and is allied to the phenomenology of Minimalist sculpture found in the writings of Rosalind Krauss – which considers the act of viewing the artwork as an active embodied experience with duration, that involves the viewer in the space of the work, as opposed to a more distanced, instrumental viewing.[83] For Dexter the presentness and immediacy of the drawing is due to the direct relationship

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[79] Adrian Forty, Words and Buildings: a Vocabulary of Modern Architecture (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004)
[80] Ibid., pp.37-38.
[81] Emma Dexter, 'Introduction' in *Vitamin D: New Perspectives in Drawing* (London; New York: Phaidon Press, 2005), pp.6-10.
[82] Ibid., p.6
[83] Rosalind E. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (MIT Press, 1981).

between the body and the marks on the page, 'an unmediated record of an act', which made it a popular medium with Minimalist artists such as Sol LeWitt and Richard Serra; as such she describes drawing as 'pure, uncontaminated, lowly, direct, anti-monumental.'[84] In recording the direct movement of the body across the page, via the pen, pencil or other medium, the drawing describes a temporal process – 'a map of time' – a line cannot be drawn at once, it has a beginning point that extends outwards.[85] Dexter explores the notion that in this respect the line is intrinsically unfinished, and thus connects with 'infinity and eternity' in the way that a painted surface does not.[86]

Despite the fact that Dexter positions the drawing against the painting, arguing that the painting possesses 'closure' and 'ponderousness' that the drawing circumvents, Coates's experimentation with the drawing led him to produce drawings that were distinctly painterly in technique and appearance, filling the whole page in dense markings.[87] In particular, *Muse Britannia* (1982), completed after the *Ski Station* project which it stylistically and technically builds upon, consisted of a series of highly expressive oil pastel drawings that on first impression appear to be painted (figs.29 and 30). *Muse Britannia* was Coates's own response to a brief to design a museum of the Falklands War he set for Unit 10 at the start of the 1982-3 academic year – indeed, his co-working on unit briefs was one of his defining and effective strategies as a teacher. The project was to explore the 'odd mixture of the war as gruesome reality and as myth', using HMS Active (a battleship from the Falklands War) moored on the Thames as the starting point for a design.[88] Coates's vision was dominated by an array of walkways and bridges designed to look like an explosion bursting out of the ship, the more conventional parts of the museum hidden beneath:

> From distance once can see what this might mean within the larger context on the city...the ship burns amidst the docklands from which the merchant ships have long since set sail. Harriers and helicopters are poised on steel tripods in a perpetual state of action.[89]

Using the same materials as the *Ski Station* project, Coates stripped away any last vestiges of his architectural sensibilities, all hints of technical description was eschewed in favour of colour, texture, atmosphere and motion – the experience and effect of the

[84] Emma Dexter, p.7.
[85] Ibid.,p.10.
[86] Ibid., p.10.
[87] Ibid., p.6.
[88] Nigel Coates, *Ark Albion*, (London: Architectural Association Publications, 1984), p.39.
[89] Ibid., p.39.

Figure 29: Nigel Coates, *Muse Britannia*, (1982) – oil pastel used in a painterly manner.

Figure 30: Nigel Coates, *Muse Britannia*, (1982).

place. As Coates observed, 'To build such a thing you would need to work backwards from the drawings'.[90] The images show a progression from the *Ski Station*, the drawing technique considerably loosened; in the first drawing (fig.29), centred around the Thames, an impressionistic view from Tower Bridge shows only the vaguest suggestion of the city – with dark streaks and scribbles around the edges of the drawing hinting at what the viewer knows to be there. The focus is on the river itself, which is represented through energetic squiggles which curl and writhe to suggest the texture of moving water –emphasised and stylised for an effect which is rhythmic and gestural. The action in the scene is focused around Coates's representation of the HMS Active, the stairways drawn to exaggerate the 'exploding' effect – a re-enactment of the destruction of the General Belgrano, May 1982 – an Argentine warship and one of the first major casualties of the Falklands War. A shock of orange flames rises from the ship, enhanced by repetition of the same colour throughout the image. The second drawing is even more expressive (fig.30), with the vision of a sacrificed sailor sculpture frozen in a roar of flames and smoke, represented by wild and frenzied pastel markings which blend sky with water. The action is channelled in an upward motion by the bright orange flames which build from the bottom of the image, Coates's stairway to the museum gallery. The stairs, ship and indeed the whole museum is abstracted far more than Coates's previous drawings, in part due to the scale of the image in relation to the pastel marks – which are conducive to broad strokes rather than detail – but clearly the intention with both these images is not to show a particular spatial idea of architecture, but a bursting sensation of animation: the experiential qualities of the imagined Museum.

The drawings are painterly in the way that they fill the page, leaving little or no white space behind and filling in blocks of colour, smudging and blending. However they display all the qualities of the drawing that Dexter describes, producing patterns and markings that vibrate with movement and embodiment, and though some areas are layered, the traces of each remain visible. Coates recalls one of the aims of the project was to develop a way of working very quickly, and it is clear from the furious nature of the images that these were not meticulously planned out or laboured over – the markings bear an improvisatory, immediate quality.[91] The overall effect of the both these images is that the eye is pulled in numerous directions, following different vectors of activity around the page, animating the scene depicted in a heightened process of seeing-in and narrativisation – a frenetic transitus. Moving between the pair of drawings – two episodes of one larger narrative – double the effect, while recognisable elements such as the shape of the Thames, landmarks like Tower Bridge, the figure of the warship, the sailor's attire and his wing adorned with the Union Jack, all have the effect of Souriau's radiating time

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[90] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.58
[91] Ibid., p.58.

– associations that develop intertextual meanings. Although there are no people in the scenes depicted and no specific event being chronicled, narrativity (albeit at a low level) is established by the evocation of events outside the frame of the picture – the Falklands War, and more specifically, the highly controversial attack on the General Belgrano by the British military, forming an illustrative narrative, albeit one with indeterminancy. The exaggerated depiction, which appears to be in perpetual motion, also implies a critique of the perceived absurdity of the war. Compared to later works by Coates and NATØ, *Muse Britannia* focuses strongly on developing emotional and sensual effect rather than sequences of experience, and thus has lower narrativity than the works that this chapter will go on to discuss. However, these drawings, alongside those for *Ski Station*, are significant for the impact that they had on Coates's students – who were directly moved to develop similarly expressive drawing styles.

The influence of Coates's experimentations are most pronounced in the work of Carlos Villanueva Brandt, who cites the *Ski Station* project in particular as the reason he moved from hard-line drawing and watercolour into wax crayon and paint in his final year at the AA.[92] His graduation drawings for *Giant Sized Baby Tow*n (a year earlier than the rest of the NATØ cohort), though still comparatively architectural, show the beginnings of a more expressive drawing concerned with colour and texture. The hallmarks of Coates's painterly use of the oil pastel is recognisable in Villanueva Brandt's own scribbled, pock-marked and streaked renderings (figs. 31-42). In the years to follow, Villanueva-Brandt would discard the drawing altogether in favour of painting, coming even closer to Coates's mode. Indeed, both Villanueva-Brandt and Coates used painting during the NATØ period (figs. 43-46), exploiting qualities of the brush on canvas which were simply not obtainable through pencil on paper – pushing further the effects achieved through the oil pastel. Brian Hatton describes the nuance both architects found in paint:

> It is sensitive to pressure, endowing both line and area simultaneously with modulations of transparency, layeredness, and presence-absence alien to the positivistic doxa of the draughting line. The hand moves lightly across swathes and glazes, which in turn engender the liquid transferences of metamorphosis.[93]

This description of the painting is in stark contrast to Dexter's, who describes the oil painting as hiding its layers of working and engendering a far slower, strained approach. The way that Coates and Villanueva Brandt approached the painting was in the manner of a sketch, indeed, it is possible to talk of the painterly-drawing and the sketched-painting with regard to the exchange of qualities between the drawing and the painting across these works – both modes able to convey more subtle expression. However the quality of

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[92] Carlos Villaneuva Brandt, personal interview March 2013.
[93] Brian Hatton, 'Brush Strokes', *Building Design*, February 24 1989, p. 35.

Figures 31-34: Carlos Villanueva Brandt, vignettes for *The Timber Fibre Factory*, (1982).

Figures 35-38: Carlos Villanueva Brandt, vignettes for *The Timber Fibre Factory*, (1982).

Figures 39-42: Carlos Villanueva Brandt, vignettes for *The Timber Fibre Factory*, (1982).
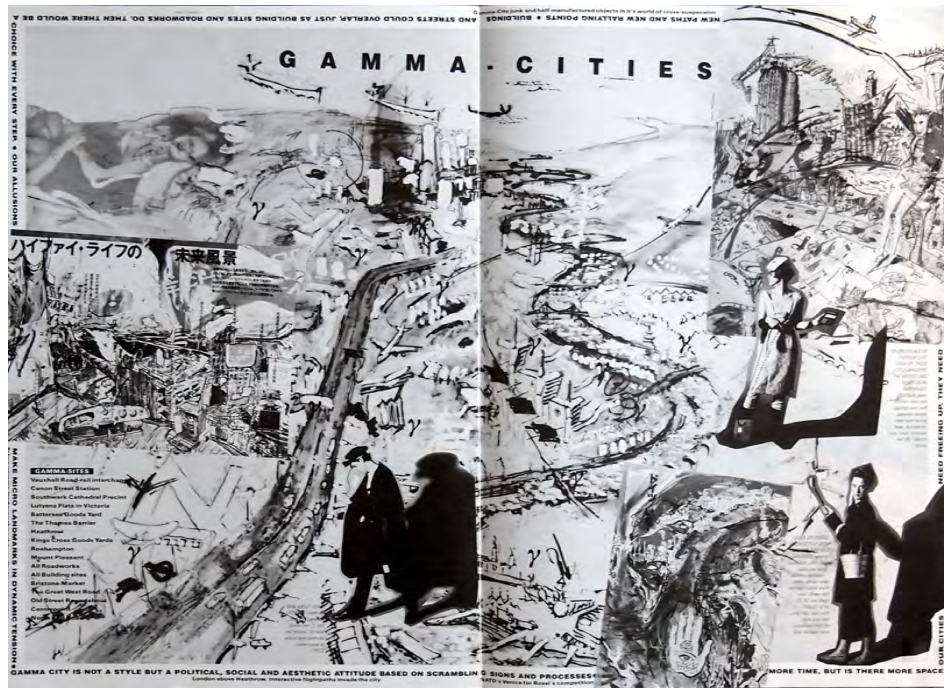
Figure 43: Page from issue 3 of *NATØ* magazine, painted background by Coates (1985)

Figure 44: Nigel Coates, painting for *Gamma Venice* (1985)

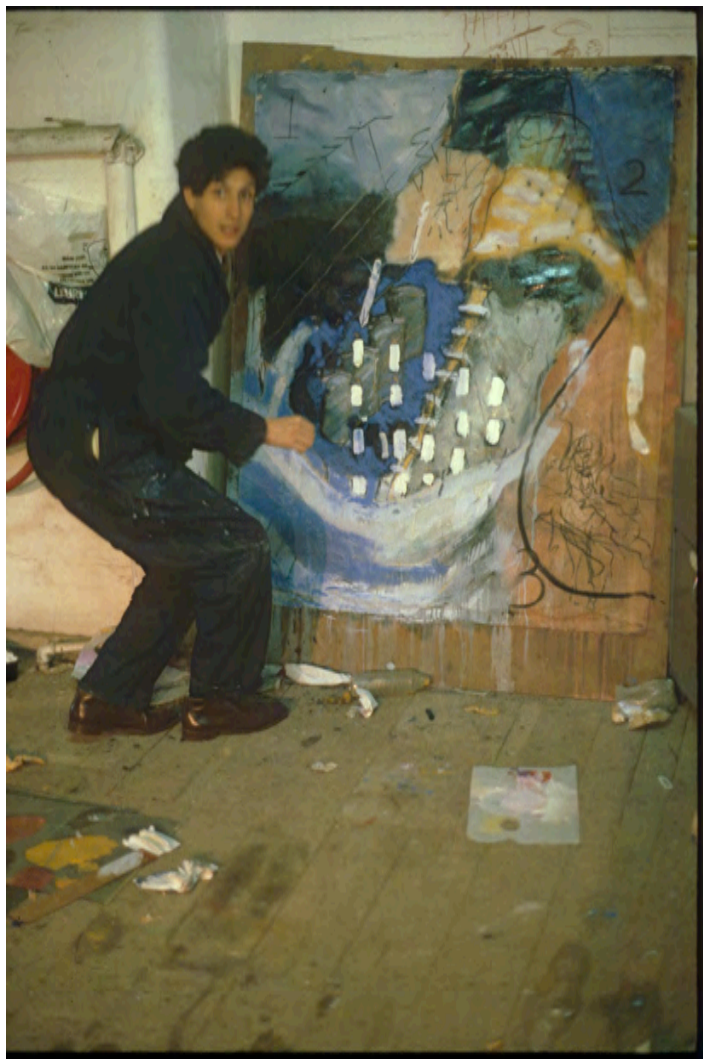Figure 45: Nigel Coates painting *Gamma Venice*, date unknown.

Figure 46: Carlos Villanueva Brandt painting, date unknown.

the brush and paint most emphatically displayed in both Coates and Villanueva-Brandt's paintings is the bodily nature of the markings, a heaviness and weight not obtained in the more neurotic tendencies of the pencil line. A later photograph of Villanueva-Brandt working on a painting in NATØ's Jacob Street studios shows him crouching, poised in a moment of action reaching over the expanse of a large painting with a brush – physically using the body as part of the painting process (fig. 46). There is a sensation in these works of the body moving over the surface at the expense of the detail present in their pencil and pen counterparts. As a result, the content and context of these images are much less clear, with fewer characters and references, and therefore less of the ironic wit characteristic of other NATØ works. As Coates points out, the paintings and oil pastel drawings did often lack the 'descriptive complexity' of the drawn panoramas and sections for *ArkAlbion* for example (discussed later in this chapter).[94] Therefore, although the paintings/painted drawings had a level of autonomy as individual works that were able to command 'pictorial contemplation', really their effect was amplified by their juxtaposition with drawing and models in other media, which could layer different types and scales of expression onto the painting.[95]

Albion

Following the Falklands Museum brief, the unit moved onto the main project for the year – *Albion* – following the same process of video and deconstructed storyboard as in the previous year's *Giant Sized Baby Town* (the implications of this process for the drawing will be discussed in the next part of this chapter), using the subject of 'art and science' as a generative theme. This manifests itself in investigations of the technology of video games, the Walkman and personal computers alongside the subcultures of new music and fashion, working with the architectural typologies of work and home, office and institution, all against the backdrop of the 'worn-out and run-down' site (Bermondsey to the Surrey Docks) selected by Coates.[96] During the 1970s, Bermondsey's disused warehouses and docks had become a haven for artists, filmmakers and designers, who were able to cheaply rent spaces to use as studios in areas such as Butler's Wharf – which attracted artists such as Andrew Logan and Derek Jarman.[97] By 1979, a fire prompted the owners of Butler's Wharf to vacate the occupants, who were illegally living and working in spaces intended for light industrial use.[98] The areas was subsequently made part of the LDDC's Urban Development Area (UDA) in 1981, the moment when Unit 10 took it as

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[94] Nigel Coates, personal interview April 2013.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.58.
[97] Royal College of Art (Great Britain) and Critical Writing in Art & Design Programme, *After Butler's Wharf: Essays on a Working Building*. (2013).
[98] Sarah Jury, 'Tracing Labour Through Bricks', in Ibid., pp.57-66. (p.63)

their subject – and thus their speculations can be seen as alternative vision of the future than the 'official' one that was beginning to take shape.

Taking a strip of the site to work on individually, the students also worked together to overlap their projects, cross-fertilising functions and forms – as Coates recalls, 'we competed to see who could come up with the most bizarre scenarios'.[99] The drawings produced for *Albion* were predominantly perspectives and views onto scenes of action and parts of the building – in much the same way that Coates's *Ski Station* project had shown glimpses into parts of the building or overall views which described the context and 'feel' of the scheme rather than the detail:

> Plans and sections had mostly disappeared in favour of a lurid form of illustration that accompanied the elaborate 'stories' which manifested the workings of each particular part of the city under scrutiny by each student [...] it was full of imaginary content, character and portraiture of the people who would live as in it.[100]

Individual projects by NATØ members – Mark Prizeman's *Wolf Housing*, Christina Norton's *Marriage Lines*, Robert Mull's *Parliament* – as well as Martin Benson's aerial view of *Albion* in the first issue of *NATØ* magazine (1984), exemplify the new sketched, informal mode of drawing that finally broke away from the restrained experiments with notation overseen by Tschumi.

The *Albion* overview drawing by Benson, showing the relation of each student's project to the next, demonstrates well the movement and pace that the fluid, sketched line was able to imbue (fig.47). At first glance, the drawing appears to be moving, with an intrinsic energy created by the numerous lines, dashes, strokes and flourishes. Design theorist Clive Ashwin describes breaks in the outline of a drawn form as 'escapements', and suggests that it is this break that creates the sensation of movement.[101] By contrast, a closed line reduces the ability to express indeterminancy and vagueness, providing a clearer, more definite outline of a form. Arrows sweeping across Benson's drawing, pointing in different directions, further the impression of action – acting as vectors for the eye and suggesting the infiltration of one thing with another. The sinuous curves and undulating line also enhances the effect of embodied movement, bearing with it the latent energy of the body as described in the previous section, and in this manner accentuates the viewer's projection into the space of the picture.

Of particular feral energy are the drawings by Mark Prizeman for *Albion* (figs. 48-51). His *Wolf Housing* is encircled by a dog racing track, mixing home, leisure and other work functions in one strip of *Albion*, while part of the scheme is traversed by a large roof housing a family of wolves. Referred to by other members of the group as the

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[99] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.58.
[100] Nigel Coates, (2012), p58-60.
[101] Clive Ashwin, 'Drawing, Design and Semiotics', *Design Issues*, 1 (1984), pp.42–52.

Figure 47: Martin Benson, *Albion*, aerial view – as published in issue one of *NATØ*.
(1984)

Figure 48: Mark Prizeman, *Albion*, (1984) – a powerfully evocative monophase narrative scene, where action precedes architecture.

Figure 49: Mark Prizeman, *Albion*, (1984)

Figure 50: Mark Prizeman, *Albion*, (1984)

Figure 51: Mark Prizeman, *Albion*, (1984)

only real punk among them, Prizeman's highly energetic and vital drawings reveal most clearly the potency of the sketch, in a spirit that reflects the rawness of punk.[102] One of his key drawings, a perspectival vignette, depicting a ragged courtyard with housing in the background, a dog track and numerous individuals, is characteristic of Prizeman's work (fig. 48). In a manner which comes across in places as naive, the drawing appears at first to be simplistic – two-dimensional almost. But on closer inspection, the layers of action and urban fabric that are manipulated animate the scene into one of perpetual motion – albeit with far more specificity and narrative content than the frenzy of Coates's *Muse Britannia*. To the left of the image, a group of greyhounds are drawn streaking across the page in pursuit of the electric hare, the sensation of dashing emphasised by a dog straining on a leash on the right of the image. The eye is then drawn to the dog's owner, a boiler-suit wearing punk wearing a Walkman, who is talking to a large man in welding gear and a suit – and the viewer is immediately persuaded to ponder their conversation, filling in the gaps between the cues provided by Prizeman; (it could perhaps relate to the overturned car in the background, or the mechanic drawn faintly next to it). In the background of this scene, the housing block is rendered with very little detail, a casually drawn cross-hatch suggesting no material in particular, with other surfaces more roughly filled it evoking the detritus of the city and a distinctly D.I.Y. approach to construction. Small details reveal the makeshift alterations of its tenants: a ramshackle bar of some description and what appears to be a baroque balustrade balancing a television and a toaster precariously on the edge.[103] Above, a pair of characters engage in a domestic fight on a bridge between buildings; underneath, a large video screen shows a menacing face watching; and below, a priest emerges from his doorway, a mobile confessional waiting outside. In the centre of the courtyard a man lies flat on the ground, perhaps the only still element in the frame, and though not in the centre, somehow creating a point around which the action revolves. Such a reading of Prizeman's drawing confirms the presence of Wolf's experientiality, representationality and meaningfulness – there are actions occurring in the scene that are intelligible and involve human interaction and the composition of a world through character and setting, while indeterminancy is maintained through ambiguous chronology, causality and teleology. Literary theorist Gary Saul Morson has explained that narratives that contain such suspense and possibility can be described as having presentness – a heightened sense of the present moment that pertains to the multiplicity of possible, yet unwritten, futures.[104]

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[102] Carlos Villaneuva Brandt, personal interview March 2013.
[103] Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, No.13 (1985).
[104] Gary Saul Morson, 'Narrativeness', *New Literary History*, 34 (2003), pp.59–73.

Critic Brian Hatton's interpretation of the same image is indicative of the sorts of varied references and subnarratives that such a rich, yet only obliquely defined, drawing produces in its viewers:

> Take one more look at Prizeman's drawing – What's the ghost behind it? I would suggest the dreary workers' tenement of proletarian cells in Lang's Metropolis – but humanised – taken over the proles themselves after unfreezing themselves from the fixed urban frieze of their zone.[105]

Hatton's interpretation clearly indicates a process of narrativisation that the drawing has induced, producing meanings that have expanded beyond the frame of the work.

In other sketches by Prizeman, a far less richly furnished scheme is presented, providing more gaps for the imagination to fill, though in cases such as figure 49 this does not necessarily detract from its narrative capabilities. In this drawing a man whose face has been erased by Prizeman stands menacingly at the entrance to what we can assume is an abattoir or some other place related to animals – knowing what we do about the subject of the project. Two small details, the telephone dangling 'off the hook' on the wall in the background, and the figure pulling on a pair of thick black gloves provide us with a strong and evocative sense of what might be about to happen. Action is not directly shown, but the loosely drawn, blank nature of the setting forces the viewer's attention to the parts which are rendered in more detail – the gloves and the telephone. It is through these explicit markers, Wolf's content narratemes, that we can deduce the implicit narrative of the space. Added subtleties made possible by the medium of pencil on paper such as the erased face, help to bolster the threatening atmosphere.

A similar mode of narrativity is present throughout Prizeman's provocative sketched drawings, for example figure 50, which focuses on a scene of what appears to be brutal dentistry – with the chaotic world of *Albion* glimpsed through the jagged windows in the background. Similarly, figure 51 explodes a view onto *Albion* exposing the interior life of its inhabitants and their relationship to the urban cityscape. The emphasis here is not in depicting a complete picture of a building, but of suggesting fragments that describe the connection and correspondence between spaces; in figure 51, the juxtaposition of the interior, the space containing the wolves, and the walkway through *Albion*, is intensified.

Each of these drawings, when considered as an individual images, compress a highly pregnant moment – a monophase work – which enables the viewer to flash forward and flash backwards in time, radiating from the moment depicted. It is possible to imagine connections between each character and vignette in the drawing, for example in the first drawing (fig.48) – what will happen when the racing dogs catch the rabbit or

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[105] Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, No.13 (1985).

when the conversation between the punk and the man in the suit reaches its climax, or the pair fighting on the bridge strike the final blow; these details provide the potential for 'before' and 'after'. The drawing is also a strong example of the way that a pictorial narrative is able to depict an entire scene, with multiple sub-scenes with in it, at once – something that the textual narrative cannot achieve. The sensation is of a bustling, chaotic urban scene, established through the content depicted and the sketched, frenetic line. The lack of clear teleology and chronology in this drawing in fact is typical of NATØ's narrativity, which emphatically does not seek to present closed plots, but instead seeks to evoke the continuous, cyclical and open ended nature of experience in the city. For Wolf this would suggest lower narrativity than more concrete, resolved narratives, but this is a conservative view that does not take into account the tendency for postmodern narratives to be fragmented and lacking in formal structures of causality, chronology and teleology.

Wolf's conceptualisation of pictorial narrative also fails to account for a quality of Prizeman's, and NATØ's work that is an important element of their oeuvre – attitude. This is a hard to define quality, perhaps best described as an outlook or an approach, which in NATØ's case affects their work stylistically but also theoretically. The character of this attitude is developed throughout this thesis and will be aligned with the specificities of the period and London, but within the context of this discussion of the sketch, it can be described as impulsive, physical, jagged and sensual, full of flux and indeterminacy. The mode of the sketch and the broken line contributes to this effect, presenting a condition where nothing is fixed or determinate. In this respect, the drawing, like many others for *Albion* by Prizeman and the rest of the group, poses more questions than it answers – this is drawing which intends to confound, not to resolve. For Coates, this was not only a strategy for drawing, but one that could be applied to design and planning too:

> As opposed to the programmatic bulldozings performed by planning departments, this technique would bridge what was, what is, and what could be. But in addition it would be a 'loose fit' kind of place. Each building assembles pieces pirated either from a local but deliberately inappropriate source, like a crane or church tower, or from as far away as possible, from the jumble or childhood or anatomy or even recent events.[106]

This 'loose fit' is perhaps one of the crucial strategies for creating narrativity in architectural drawings – placing the viewer 'inside' the drawing, inciting them to participate rather than passively absorb. This active construction of narrative is analogous to the ways in which Coates observed that the garden invited the experiencer to create narratives by moving through space, and has echoes of the Situationist dérive –

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[106] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', in *NATØ 1: Albion, Straight from the heart*, (London: Architectural Association, 1984), pp.8-11.

experiencing the city via a highly subjective process of drifting through it. Indeed, Guy Debord characterised the dérive as a 'playful-constructive behaviour', not merely a journey or a stroll but a more productive mode.[107] The active nature of the construction of meaning in NATØ's work is an idea that will be repeated throughout this thesis as a central concept from which the notion of narrative architecture unfolds.

The madness is the method

Montage

The significance of the drawing to NATØ's oeuvre goes beyond their sketched drawing technique and extends to the use of the drawing in the design process and the structure of the drawing as a network of fragments. The linearity and self-consciously constructed nature of Tschumi's version of narrative, and of the 'event' as opposed to the more naturalistic 'action', had already driven Coates to seek new methods and techniques for teaching Unit 10 on his return to London from New York. Critical to the way that this unfolded was Coates's absorption, via Tschumi, of both Kulsehov and Sergei Eisenstein's ideas on montage, and the ways in which other forms of cultural production were using similar strategies. Eisenstein described the filmic device of montage as a constructive process to create new meaning through the juxtaposition of parts, whose effect was 'not only a narrative that is logically connected, but one that contains a maximum of emotion and stimulating power.'[108] This was the elusive quality that Coates saw lacking in architectural design; indeed, in Eisenstein's description of the 'portmanteau' word (the combination of two words to make a new one), Coates found a device which would become one of his trademarks throughout NATØ and his career.[109] In Malcolm McLaren's contemporaneous album cover for *Duck* Rock (fig.52), painted by New York graffiti artist Dondi in 1983, Coates saw the effect of montage produced by a bricolage of elements:

> [...] He add horns, lots of extra aerials, a fake fur tail and 'possession' graffiti, so that like the record [...] it is a pioneering statement based on the piracy of technology. It pulls together all the right associations and welds them into one powerful image.[110]

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[107] Guy Debord quoted in Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (MIT Press, 1998), p.77-78.
[108] Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.14.
[109] 'Portmanteau' in Ibid., p.15.; Coates coined the terms 'Ecstacity' (a portmanteau of the word ecstasy and city), 'Mixtacity' (mixed and city), 'Cloudelier' (cloud and chandelier), 'Baroccabilly' (Baroque and rockabilly) and 'Babylon:don' (Babylon and London).
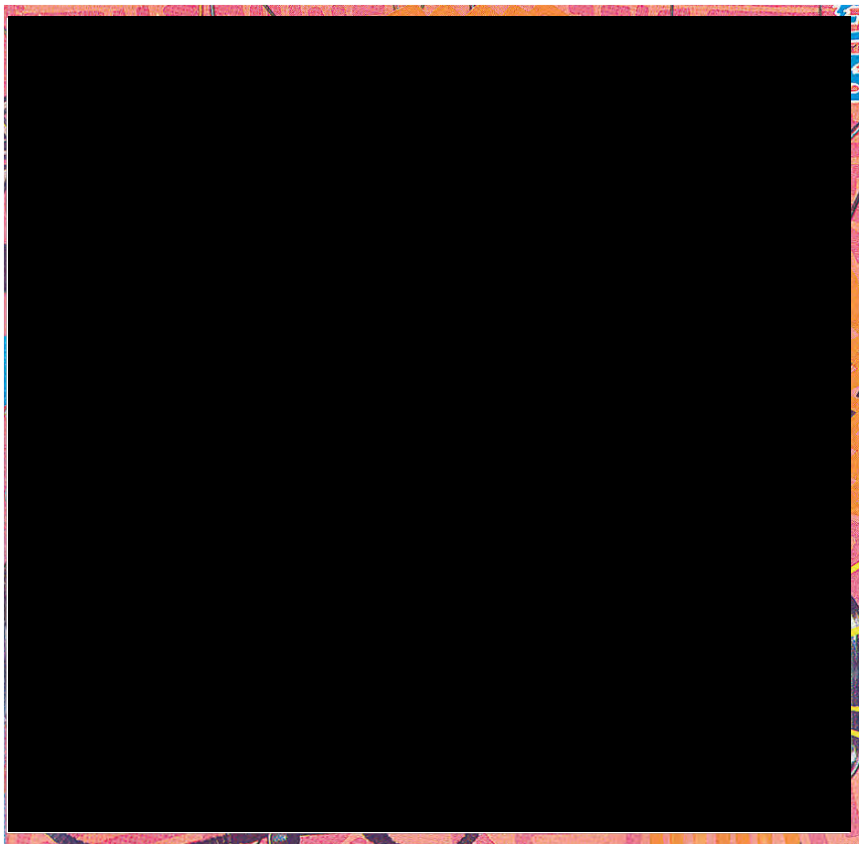[110] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ*, 1 (1984), pp.8-11.

Figure 52: *Duck Rock*, an album by Malcon McLaren with a cover designed by graffiti artist Dondi, (1983).
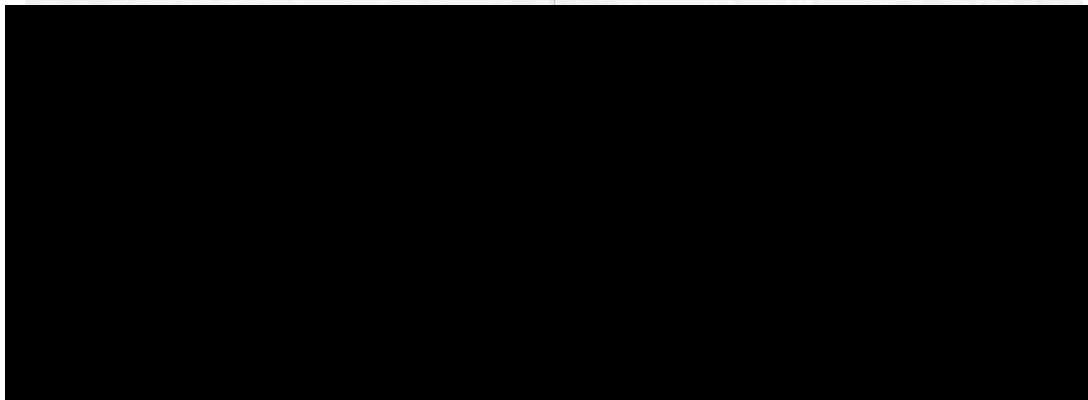

Figure 53: Sergei Eisenstein, storyboard showing each element of *Ivan the Terrible* overlaid. From *The Film Sense* (1943)

This welding of juxtaposed fragments into one image was articulated by Eisenstein as a 'collision', and he emphasised this process as one containing conflict, as Manfredo Tafuri described it 'extreme aggravation of each of the juxtaposed terms, forced to "impale each other" and to carry to an extreme their destructive dynamism'.[111] Indeed, both Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin – filmmakers who first theorised montage in Russia in the 1920s – considered that the essence of film lay not in the single shot but in the editing. Eisenstein proposed five different types of montage in his text *Film Form* (1977), 'metric montage' where shots are combined according to a predetermined rhythm or pace; 'rhythmic montage' which combined shots according to patterns of movement taking place within them; 'tonal montage' where editing is contrived to maximise emotional qualities – the classic mode; 'over tonal montage' where shots are juxtaposed with one another as well as whole sequences of montage played against each other; and finally 'intellectual' or 'ideological montage' where juxtapositions are made to convey ideas of concepts rather than emotional response.[112]

Listing *The Film Sense* (1943) as key reading material on a number of project briefs between 1981-83, Coates asked the students to study the way that Eisenstein connected the structure of the film (*Ivan the Terrible*), with the structure of each frame and to the score – and the complex ways that storyboard and notation was used to align and overlay each part.[113] (fig.53). What interested Coates was the way that Eisenstein was able to draw correspondences between every element of the film, using montage as not only a visual technique but as a methodology which imparted meaning to the whole. Coates also saw a connection between the complex storyboard drawing and the architectural section, and developed a technique which would blend the two – merging the temporality of the film and the storyboard with the spatiality of the section.

As outlined in the previous chapter, Coates devised a method wherein students produced short videos in small groups, taking as their theme home and work for 1981-82 (*Giant Sized Baby Town*), and art and science for 1982-83 (*Albion*); after completion, the films were deconstructed into a storyboard format. The act of storyboarding enabled a clearer sense of the effect different strategies of montage could have, and like Eisenstein, he encouraged the students to consider every element of their films:

> The storyboards helped to emphasize the particular language of 'filmic' discourse, setting out the dependence of sound, camera framing and movement, action, dialogue, montage. From the material shot so far it has become obvious that complex meanings can arrive through simple juxtapositions either within the space of the scene, or by the implication of the particular way in which sound and

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[111] Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Mit Press, 1990), p.62.
[112] Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory* (Harcourt, Brace, 1949).
[113] Carlos Villaneuva Brandt, personal interview March 2013.

image are glued together. We saw various narrative techniques that ranged from the 'room' containing many simultaneous actions [...] through to carefully structured stories within which irrational changes could hypothesize on an imaginary reality.[114]

Once deconstructed into the linear format of the storyboard, a new working drawing combined the video with explorations of the site – merging the storyboard with drawn details of the landscape and existing buildings, photographs and recollections of the experience of wandering around the place. The aim was to overlay the video narrative with a section through the site, overlapping these two distinct narratives and their constituent frames or fragments, to produce the basis for an architectural intervention. NATØ member Robert Mull describes in the first issue of the group's magazine how this process not only played out on paper, but was also a strategy for architectural design:

> Our process centres on the deconstruction of multiple sources into usable fragments. The site, then a narrative explored through video, texts, observations. They are all exploited to be given a comparable representation which allows their manipulation within a single medium. This turns the drawings into a two-dimensional strategy board. Many sources, when given representation, become marks on paper. (Their implicit origins are capable of easy association within the confines of the drawing.) It is these deconstructed elements which when translated into objects, become the totems of Brookside. Like their drawn counterparts, they are capable of causing lateral movement through the strata of Albion, totems greased with meaning. We look for a hierarchy of built signs, focuses and objects, which are free to represent only themselves running on the spot, figurative yet unambiguous three-dimensional slogans.[115]

The crucial notion of setting up fields of recognisable sources capable of generating meaning, but meaning that is slippery and subject to shifts, is central to NATØ's open drawings. Canadian artist David Merritt has described a way of drawing which echoes NATØ's approach, articulating a structure that acts as 'a barrier of braided links that leaks like a wicker basket but can still function as a dam.'[116] In this respect, the drawing (or the urban environment) provides enough markers and content to anchor recognition and intelligibility, but provides gaps for active, interpretative meanings; Coates describes the effect: '*Albion* is therefore a continuous condition in which varying narratives increase the slippage of meaning over and above mere flux between form and function.'[117] Critically, the slippery content of their work always started from the world at hand – 'the making is

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[114] Nigel Coates, 'Albion : The Art and Science City, Newsletter', December 1982.
[115] Robert Mull, 'Spanner in the Works', in *NATØ*, 1, (1984).pp.16-19.
[116] Michel Serres quoted in David Merritt *Just My Imagination* (Museum London, 2005), p.11.
[117] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ,* 1 (1984), pp.8-11.

the remaking'– drawing on the urban environment and the cultural context in the manner of a bricoleur, to embed the narrative into the world of the viewer.[118]

In the few remaining drawings that show this working method (for the year 1981-2, none remain for 1982-3), the complexity engendered to the design process is revealed. Prizeman's drawing for *Giant Sized Baby Town* (fig.54) depicts a simple section through the terrain of the Isle of Dogs at the top of the page, showing the ground plane and existing structures; in the bottom half of the page, running along the same length, is a linear description of the group film *Ou Abandon du Habitudes Quotidiens*.[119] The film is described through a selection of sketched frames presenting the key moments of action in a linear manner – starting with a static shot of the lead character watching a television screen, moving through phases labelled by Prizeman 'eat', 'get up', 'prepare', 'drink', 'hair comb', 'table cloth, 'telephone, 'laying' and 'stroking'. These distinct phases are each represented by small vignettes which describe the composition of a frame, with an indication of colour and a suggestion of movement with arrows and curving lines. The description of the film is not concerned with presenting the specific timings of the film in the way that a storyboard would, but focuses on representing significant changes in composition and elements that attracted Prizeman. In the middle of the page, and corresponding to both the Isle of Dogs section and the filmic timeline is another section which shows the beginning of the design process, composed of small sketches elements, photographs and collaged fragments, small written labels and arrows. The central section combines physical elements of the existing Isle of Dogs topography, with motifs and extrapolated elements from the film, as well as other ideas gathered from visiting the site. An accompanying strip of photographs shows another part of this working process (Fig. 55), connecting a series of ten photographs taken at the site into one long storyboard-like image. Each photograph zooms in on details of the site – textures, materials etc. – exploring individual moments rather than attempting to document the place comprehensively. To each site photograph Prizeman has then attached small stills from the film, selecting two stills which are placed in the top left and right corner of each photograph. The film stills do not appear to be in narrative sequence, but instead are placed according to a different logic which relates the moment in the film to the site photograph.

Piecing together the site photographs, with the drawing, a sense of the types of correspondences that were made during this process are hinted at, but not made explicit. This suggests that the process of montage was highly subjective and relied largely on the

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[118] Marco Frascari, 'Introduction' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture, Critiques (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p4.
[119] Mark Prizeman, Melanie Sainsbury, Thomas Schregenberger, Nick Turvey and Carlos Villanueva Brandt, 'Ou Abandon de Habitudes Quotidiens', (1980).

Figure 54: Mark Prizeman, Process drawing for *Giant Sized Baby Town*, linking the video work with the site in a process of deconstruction and montage.
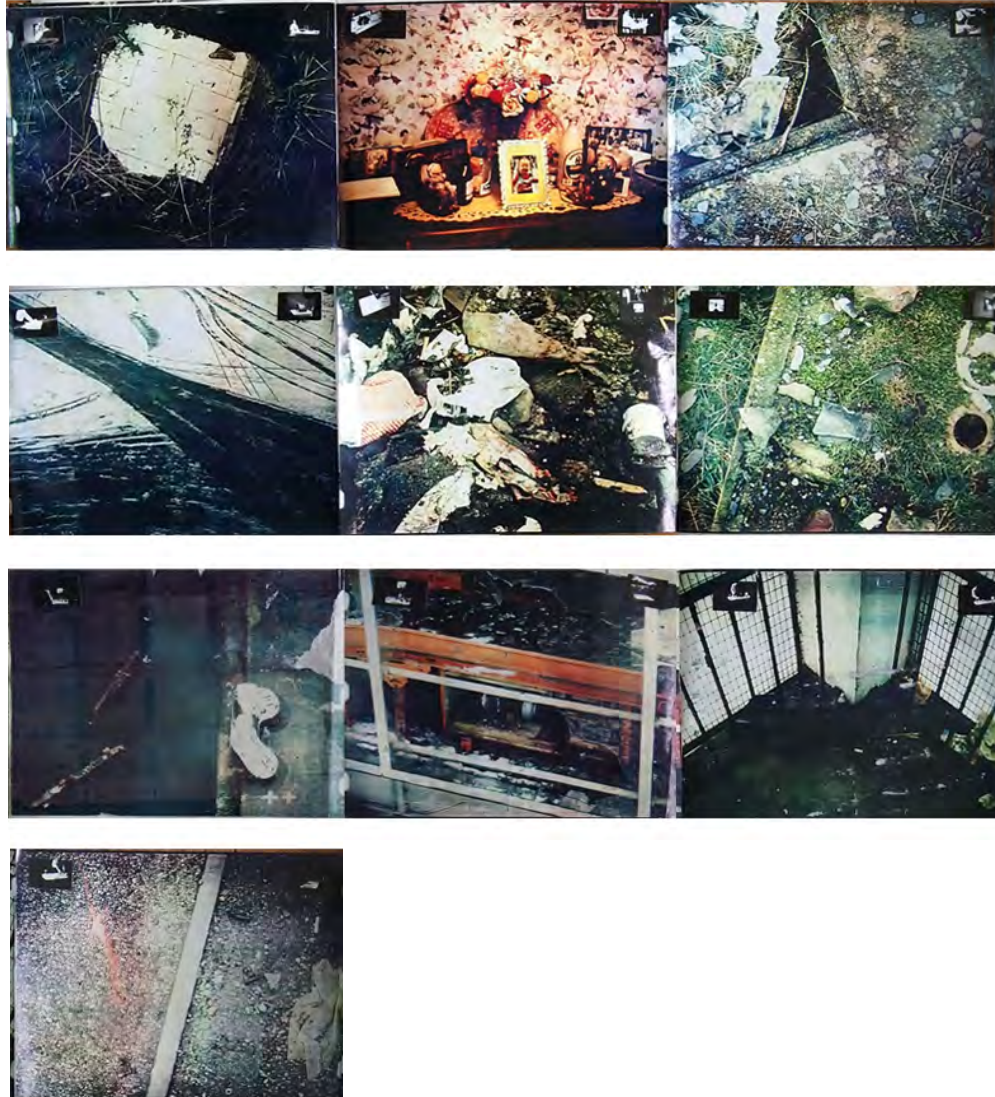
Figure 55: Mark Prizeman, photographs of site explorations for *Giant Sized Baby Town*, with stills from the video project placed in the corners of each photograph – making correspondences and beginning the process of montage.

imagination of the author and the ways in which they personally connected the film sequence to the site; indeed, neither Prizeman nor Villanueva Brandt are able to reconstruct in retrospect how each particular drawn element was derived. This process was emphatically not about a single conceptual architectural idea expanded into a design for a scheme, but was about multiple small decisions, connections and montaged effects, combining the rhythmic, tonal, over-tonal and intellectual modes of montage that Eisenstein set out – the likes of which are difficult to recall in retrospect from a distance of 30 years.

Speculating more broadly, for Villanueva Brandt, his 'Timber Fibre Factory', a structure for *Giant Sized Baby Town,* originated from one key episode experienced during his exploration of the Isle of Dogs, which then initiated a series of further connections:

> My whole diploma project came from a visit to this housing estate with Mark. When we walked in there was a fire in the hallway – somebody had just piled-up all their furniture and it was it on fire. So I took some photographs and that led to my timber-drying factory. In my drawings there was also a lot about the movements of cranes, and again that was part of what was discovered on site. From the video, I took mainly the idea of repetition, I did a whole office building which was just like that woman on the sewing machine repeating repeating...[120]

The furniture burning episode became translated into the main programme for the site, the timber factory, which contained a continual process of 'heating, burning and stacking'; but it also suggested a conflict between two opposing ideas – the repetitious process and the one off, unrepeatable action. For Villanueva Brandt, the fire represented something inherently irreversible – a tension he manipulated in a series of dualities embedded in the form and programme of the scheme, subsequently echoed in the drawings (Figs. 31-42, 56-59). In a series of four tall perspectives, Villanueva Brandt cuts and montages views into different spaces – suggesting correspondences, and both visual and metaphorical connections (figs 56-59).

Villanueva Brandt transforms the dichotomy of work/home, the theme set by Coates, into work/desire – reading desire into the slow, repetitious atmosphere of the film which builds up a suspense of expectation and waiting. His project is thus based around the continual tension between work and desire, action and waiting, repetition and the unrepeatable. These pressures are displayed most evocatively in a series of twelve small oil pastel drawings, each representing a moment within the larger scheme or route through the site – akin to film stills. Each image represents a moment of montage combining elements of private and public space, repetition and desire; for example in figure 31 the connection between timber and the architecture of the tower is revealed,

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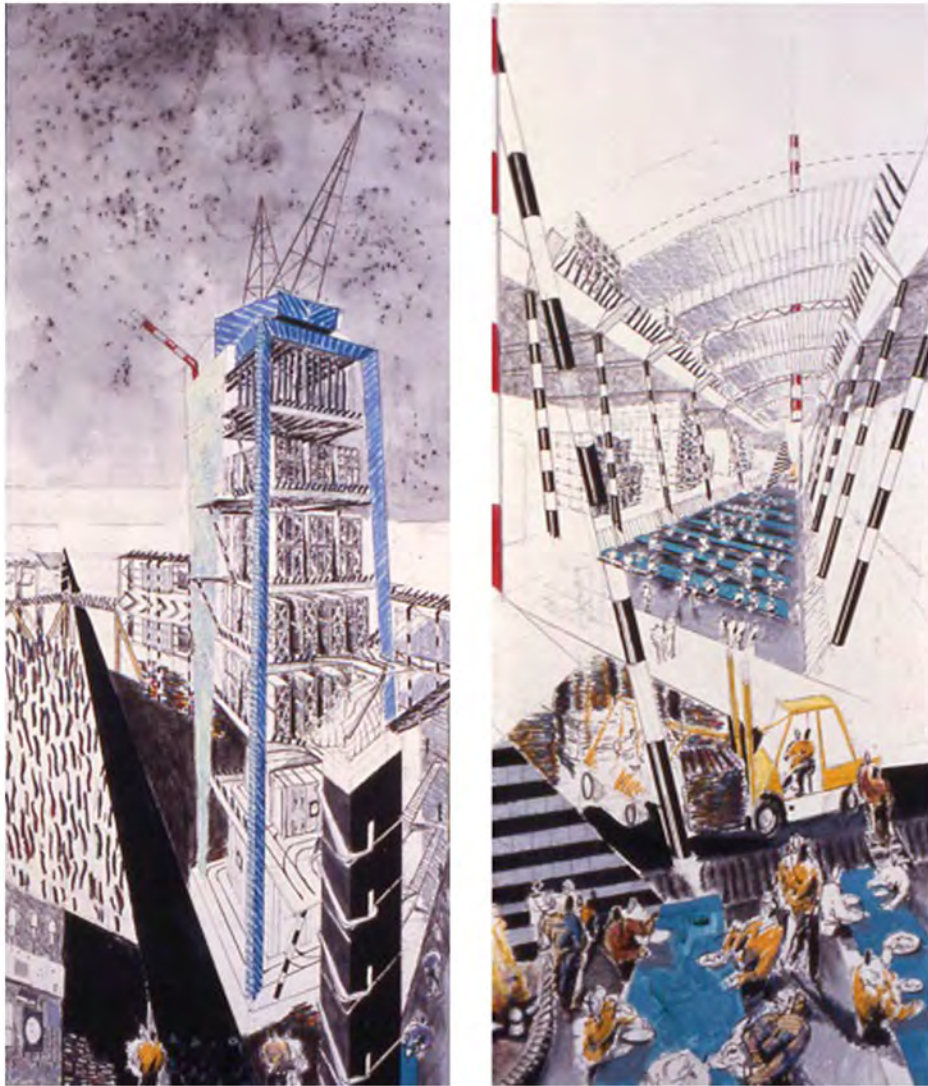[120] Carlos Villaneuva Brandt, personal interview March 2013.

Figure 56, 57: Carlos Villanueva Brandt – composite drawings for *Timber Fibre Factory*, showing contrasting scenes montaged against each other. (1982).
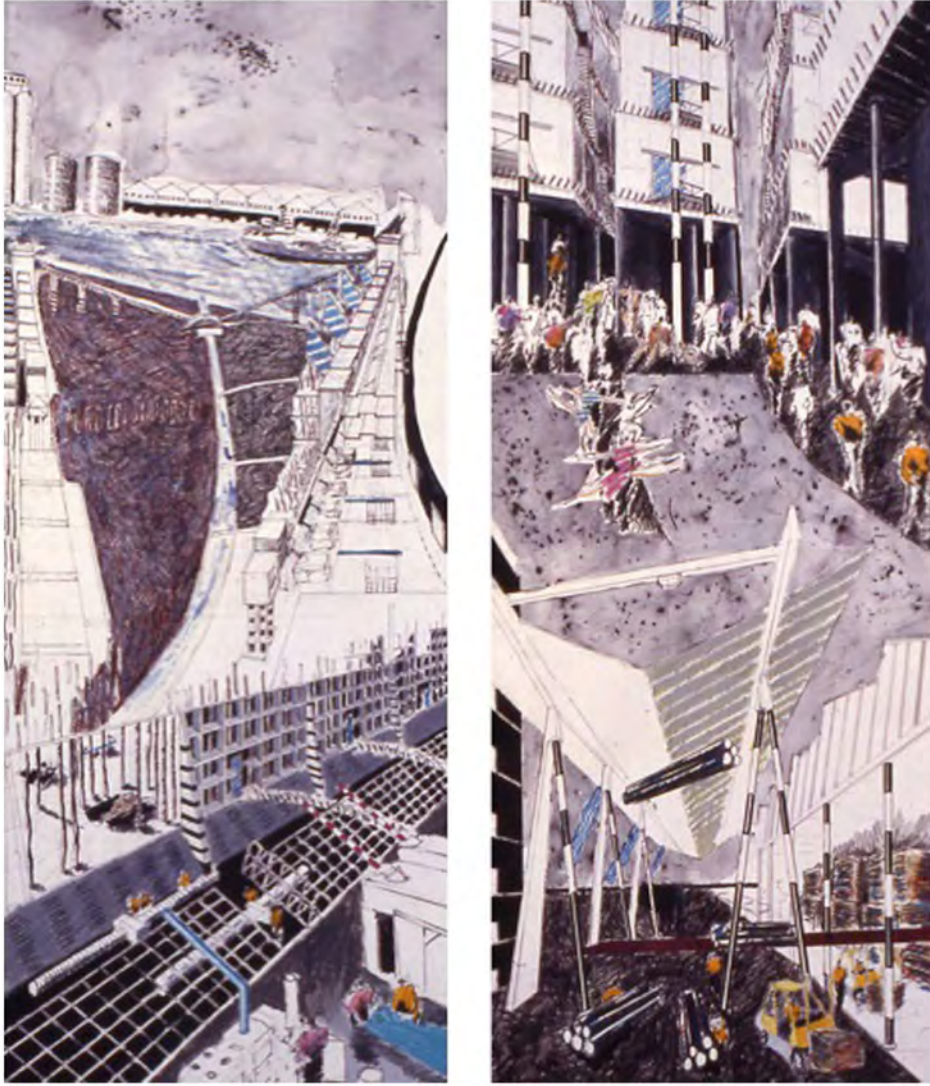
Figure 58, 59: Carlos Villanueva Brandt – composite drawings for *Timber Fibre Factory* (1982).

with a pink cross marking the room at the top of the tower as a place of desire, and the lower levels places of work.

As Villaneuva Brandt's method drawings no longer exist it is difficult to understand any further the process that took place between the making of *Ou Abandon de Habitudes Quotidiens*, and the resultant 'Timber Fibre Factory' drawings – with presumably numerous decisions resulting in the more detailed aspects of the project. What is clear is that three key ideas – burning, the movement of cranes, and repetition – each derived from the film or the site, were essential in generating the project and that the procedure of montage was applied at the level of the drawing, the programme and the design. Indeed, Coates's own description of the methodology emphasises the result over the specifics of the process, implying a degree of randomness in the method which seeks to echo the complexity of the city and tries to avoid the imposition of strategic spatial ideas and planning. This was a methodology designed primarily to mimic chaos:

> Taken as a microcosm of the city, each area already has a mix and match quality. When you start to impose functions, therefore, you can plan the differentials off against devices which tie all the parts together. The (video) narrative or the development proposals, or even the existing character of the place itself, can do either of these things. By using one set of criteria to do the joining, another will do the segregating, the pulling apart. Extremes of this might produce one area which mixes up living quarters with computer operators beneath an overall narrative of say meat, while another area could dovetail a whole range of activities into one another under a technology based narrative that implies various changes to each of them. The possibilities are endless. Then the way the territory itself is treated also has endless variations, some aspects of your brief will no doubt implant particular territorial boundaries, others will be extendable, or multipliable. The way ideas are tested on the site can be fiddled with like space-invader on the screen...press a button and they move to the left, another they 'advance' and yet another, they EXPLODE.'[121]

Describing this chaotic anti-planning strategy in *ZG* magazine in 1981, Brian Hatton transforms Marshall McLuhan's dictum 'the medium is the message' into the Shakespearean: 'the madness is the method' – summarising well the essential characteristic of the approach.[122] Robert Venturi's concept of 'complexity and contradiction' put forward a similar position – an approach to architecture that became a cornerstone of postmodernism in its acceptance of hybridity, ambiguity, 'both/and' rather than 'either/or', and the juxtaposition of function and form in ways that both accepts and embraces the messy reality of modern life.[123] However for Hatton, NATØ's madness goes beyond Venturi's conceptualisation to absorb the 'contradictions of modern life in ways

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[121] Nigel Coates, 'Albion : The Art and Science City, Newsletter', February 1983.
[122] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media : the Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001); Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, 13 (1985), pp. 12–13, William Shakespeare, 'Though this be madness, yet there is method in't!', says Polonius in *Hamlet*, Act 2, Scene 2.
[123] Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, 2nd Revised edition edition (New York : Boston: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1984).

far more fundamental', and is thus an antidote to what Hatton perceives as the dominance of market-led development, planning and 'wilfully misunderstood modernism'.[124] This 'madness', derived from montaging the three elements of the film, the site and experience, is what differentiates the resulting work from the linearity and rigidity of the unit's earlier work, or indeed Tschumi's *The Manhattan Transcripts* – creating far looser drawings and in turn a much more fragmented, multivalent narrativity. In this respect, the result is not a single story in space, but a flexible structure which disturbs and layers the existing reality of the city with parallel subnarratives that act to amplify its narrative possibilities – triggering users and viewers to insert their own imagination into the gaps. For Coates, one of the significant effects that this had was that it could induce what Victor Shklovsky called 'defamiliarisation' – a way of representing the ordinary and habitual as if it was new or unusual.[125] Indeed, in Mull's description of his project for *Albion* a strong sense of defamiliarisation can be found:

> Giant hat stands, tables, pets: these crudely drawn domestic landmarks become the toys for five civic playpens. Eating under huge tables, signing-on at the hat stands or walking your dog through the cut-out trees in the tin park, you become the player.[126]

There is nothing impossible or fantastical about these projects, though they are often implausible, their aim is not to 'invent a new order of things' and as such they are 'imaginative, not imaginary'.[127] Mull suggests peculiar events such as 'signing-on at the hat stands' etc., to disrupt reality in a way the accentuates the action – taking the existing and layering it with narrative content that could reassemble its meaning into more vivid or contrasting. Defamiliarisation would become a central component of NATØ's oeuvre that culminated in their installations, where the defamiliarised three-dimensional object or prop contributed to narrative immersion (to be disused in Chapter 4).

Drawing time

The perpetual drawing

The previous section described the ways in which montage was used by Coates and NATØ as a fundamental part of their design methodology, through the drawing, as a process for layering narrative content for maximum effect. Developing the concept of

[124] Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, 13 (1985), pp. 12–13.
[125] Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in Lee Thomas Lemon and Marion J. Reis, *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), pp. 3-25.
[126] Robert Mull, 'Spanner in the Works', in *NATØ*, 1, (1984).pp.16-19.
[127] Jeffrey Wechsler, 'Magic Realism: Defining the Indefinite', *Art Journal,* 45 (1985), pp. 293–298.

Figure 60: Daniel Libeskind, 'The Garden', *Micromegas* (1979).
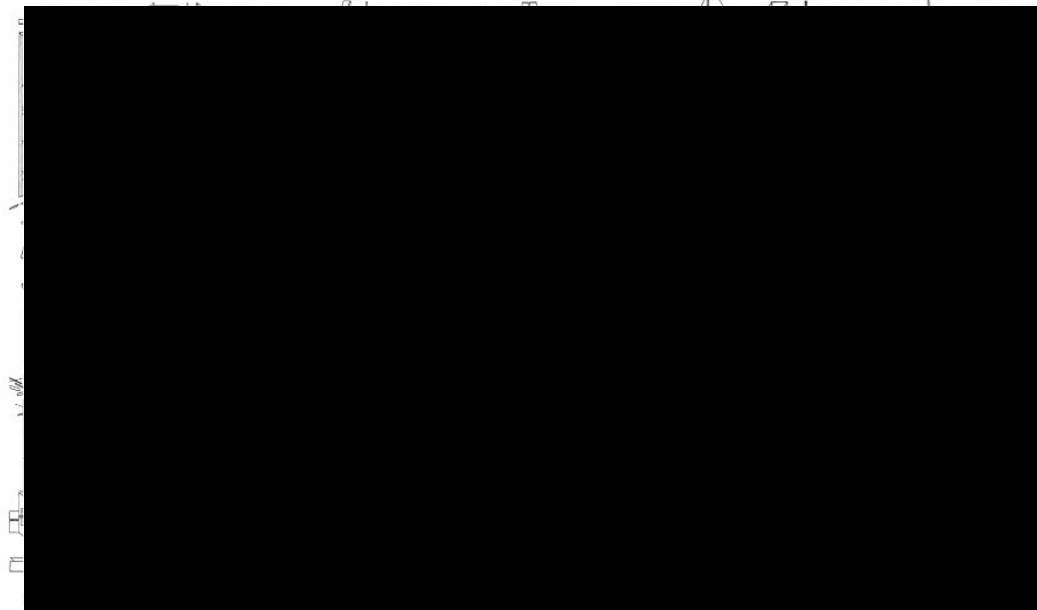

Figure 61: Daniel Libeskind, 'Dance Sounds', *Micromegas* (1979).

fragmentation further, this section examines how movement and temporality were achieved through the montage drawing, exploring the potential for the fragmentation of viewpoints and scale to affect the way the drawing is read.

Coates was not the first or the only architect who found resonance in the techniques of fragmentation and montage, indeed two contemporary collections of drawings by Daniel Libeskind, *Micromegas* (1979) and *Chamber Works* (1983), offered a way of drawing which used fragmentation to evoke movement and multiple perspectives, and provides an interesting counterpoint to NATØ's work. In *Micromegas*, architecture and space are alluded to without depicting whole buildings; instead, fragments of recognisable elements such as walls, doors, beams, windows etc. are scattered on the page in technically deconstructive assemblages that purposefully disrupt 'the homogenous, continuous space of axonometry and isometry',[128] (Figs. 60 and 61). The effect is visually overwhelming, as if the fragments are suspended in a moment of intense energy and movement. Though at a surface reading the drawings can be considered as abstract and almost entirely non-figurative, Dalibor Vesely describes the potential for meaning to be read *into* Libeskind's forms:

> Traditional geometry with muted historical references is gradually transformed into less intuitive forms in a repeated movement of projections creating a sequence of geometrical nodes that form and dissolve before us. Not only do some projections create new meanings, they create new contexts in which meaning may occur. The result is a bizarre interplay of forms, which can be identified, and meaning, which can only be anticipated.[129]

In this respect *Micromegas* offers only low levels of Wolf's experientiality, representationality and meaningfulness – some fragments are recognisable but their composition on the page is unexpected and thus it is difficult for the reader to make sense of them. However the structure of the drawing encourages a way of reading the image that generates narrativity in a different way, Vesely suggests that this is in a manner akin to the circular literary structure of the *Nouveau Roman*. Instead of looking for linear, mono-readings, the drawings demand the viewer retrace the shapes on the page over and over, in a continuous process which only through repetition generates meaning:

> [...] It could be suggested that instead of a linear, literary structure, drawings such as these emulate a paradigmatic form which is circular, the same moment of thought is repeated, recovering similar ground but rendering the movement richer and fuller with every passing.[130]

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[128] Robin Evans, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', AA files, No.6 (1984), pp.89–96.
[129] Dalibor Vesely, 'The Drama of the Endgame', in *Symbol and Interpretation/Micromegas* (Zurich, Eidgenossischen Technischen Hochschule, 1981), p.62.
[130] Ibid., p.61.

Certainly *Micromegas* does not feature a linear structure or possess narrative qualities that induce a linear narrative, but the notion of a circular structure fails to express the deeper complexity of the drawings, or of the *Nouveau Roman* novel on which Vesely draws. The *Nouveau Roman* entailed a thorough rejection of realist narrative conventions by authors such as Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Claude Simon, Michel Butor and Marguerite Duras in France in the late 1950s and 1960s, and typically presented fragmented and multi-faceted texts with no single, unified plot, shifting points of view and self-conscious characters.[131] Circularity does not explain the structure of these texts adequately, proposing as it does a single route through – albeit repeated. Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome proposes a more complex structure which is non-linear and non-hierarchical, and critically is interconnected: 'any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order.'[132] The rhizome thus expresses better the way that Libeskind's *Micromegas* contains no beginning or end, and creates an experience of space that is dynamic and layered, that Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'smooth' space: 'The smooth is the continuous variation, continuous development of form'.[133]

This way of reading a narrative into a drawing is one that relies more on multiple individual fragments than on a single perceivable whole, and is a strong example of Wollheim's 'seeing-in'.[134] Admittedly the level of abstraction and limited figuration in *Micromegas* limits the narrativity of the drawings, and the viewer is left struggling to establish any sense of teleology. However, the drawings propose ways for architecture to evoke action, chronology and causality – derived from the imposed movement of the eye around the picture-space demanded by fragmentation, and the resulting narratives and micro-narratives imagined by the viewer.

Chamber Works takes the concept of *Micromegas* a step further, with virtually no recognisable elements – certainly no architectural ones – and a purposeful striving towards what Libeskind calls 'remoteness' and a 'disengagement from signification of any kind'.[135] (Figs. 62 and 63) However, Evans's interpretation of *Chamber Works* suggests a more advanced reading:

> Without representing space, any of the Chamber Works can be fantasized into three dimensions, given sufficient volition in the observer, for the space is

[131] Ed Smyth, 'Narratology and the Nouveau Roman', conference paper, *International Conference on Narrative*, Manchester Metropolitan University, June 2013.

[132] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001), p.7.

[133] Ibid., p.478.

[134] Richard Wollhein, 'What the spectator sees' in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith P. F. Moxey, Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation (Polity [in association with Blackwell], 1991), p.119.

[135] Robin Evans, 'In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind', AA files, No.6 (1984), pp.89–96.
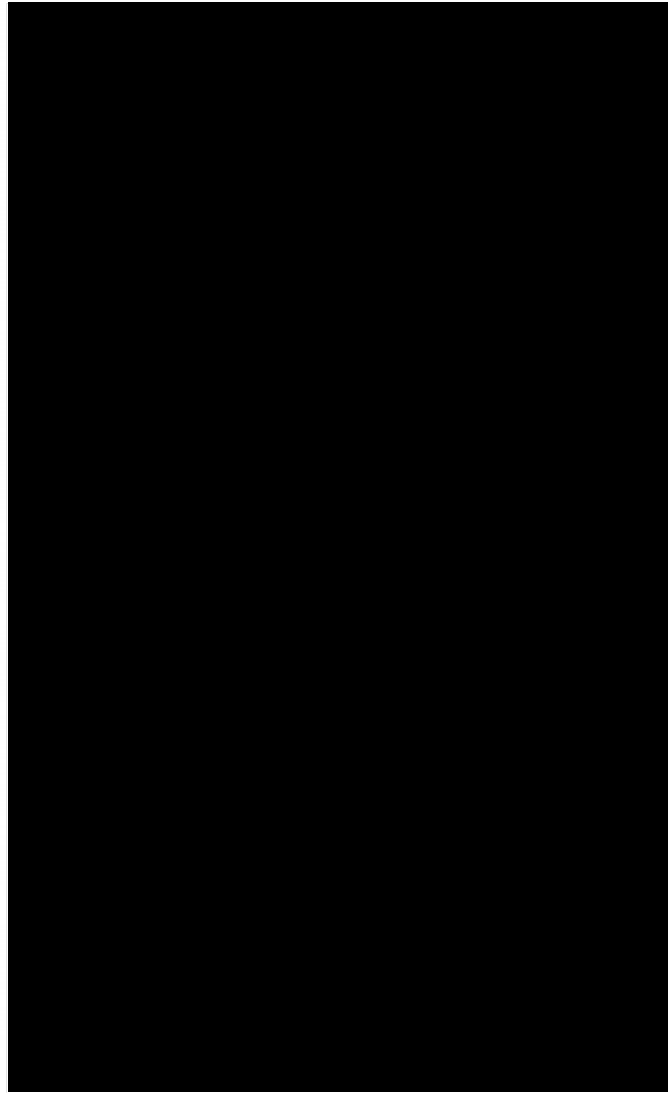
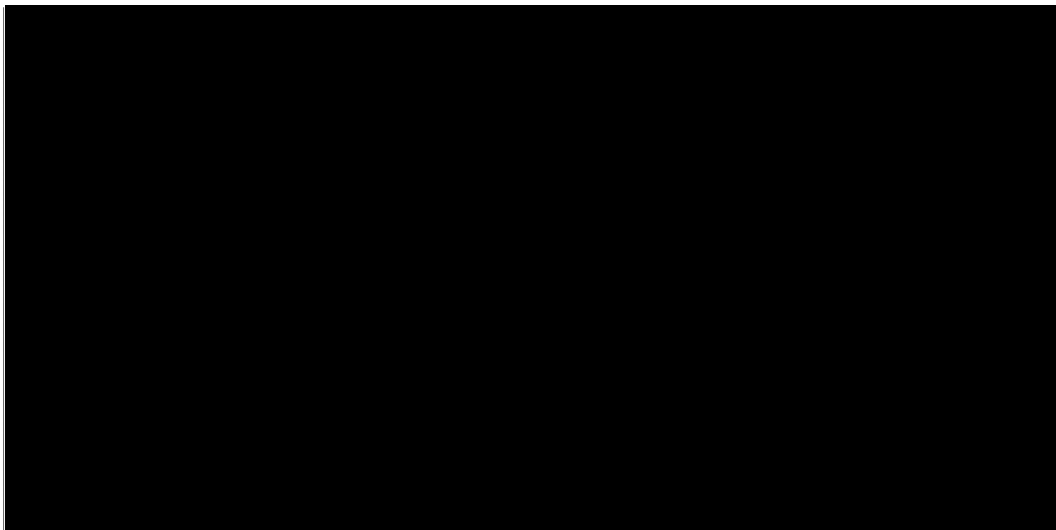Figure 62: Daniel Libeskind, 'I-V', *Chamber Works* (1983).

Figure 63: Daniel Libeskind, 'II-H', *Chamber Works* (1983).

thought into them by him, not projected out of them by the draughtsman [...] if we cannot look behind them, we must look in front for the things that the drawing might yet suggest, might lead to, might provoke; in short, for what is potent in them rather than what is latent.[136]

The concept of potency' in the work, extending into a space in front of the drawing to imagine possibilities, is an idea that enables the architectural drawing to possess a much stronger narrativity. The concept relates strongly to Coates's own call for a writerly architecture, one where meaning is not determined by the architect – or the draughtsman – but is constructed by the viewer.[137] In this respect, the drawing provides enough fragments of content for the viewer or reader to construct meaning through filling in gaps. Architectural theorist Jonathan Hill describes this gap as an integral part of the way montage creates meaning, evoking montage in a manner that recalls Kuleshov:

A gap is an opening, possibility for a period of time, between seemingly more substantial conditions, known in montage as fragments. A gap indicates that something is either unnoticed or missing. Signifying incompletion, a gap invites the viewer or user to attempt to complete the montage.[138]

Libeskind's fragmented and non-figurative language provides a way of enhancing this by avoiding the prescription of literal forms and meaning, leaving the figuration open ended. As Evans comments: 'In the uncompleted there is always possibility'.[139] In this respect, Libeskind's drawing is open and provisional, providing the structure of looseness and 'braided links' evoked in Unit 10's drawings – the key difference being the intelligibility of the links provided, Libeskind provides far more gaps than links.[140]

For Bernard Tschumi too, the fragment and the filmic montage were important structural features of the drawing. Though *The Manhattan Transcripts* (1976-81) underlines that it is not merely the presence of fragmented content which evokes the open ended interpretation of *Micromegas* and *Chamber Works*, but the structure too. Unlike Libeskind, Tschumi structures his fragments of drawing, photograph and diagram in the linear form of the storyboard – producing a sequential reading process much closer to a classical textual narrative. In its original exhibited form (New York, 1978), *The Manhattan Transcripts* was shown as one 30-feet long drawing along which the viewer walked, encouraging a linear motion forward or backwards, but with little potential for jumps or alternate ordering. In this sense, although *The Manhattan Transcripts* offers a multitude of readings and interpretations due to its combination of disjunctive elements,

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[136] Ibid.

[137] Nigel Coates, 'Narrative Break-up' in Nigel Coates and Bernard Tschumi, *The Discourse of Events*, Themes (Architectural Association, 1983), p.13.

[138] Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[139] Ibid.

[140] Michel Serres quoted in David Merritt *Just My Imagination* (Museum London, 2005), p.11.

the linearity built into its sequential, numbered format is against the notion of unrestricted reading evoked in Libeskind's works. For NATØ, it was the disordered, perpetually changing reality of the city with multiple routes, readings and interpretations that inspired the mode of narrativity they sought – a structure closer to Libeskind's isochronous configurations.[141]

The drawing body

Micromegas, *Chamber Works*, and *The Manhattan Transcripts* all present multiple viewpoints, forcing the viewer to move across the image, shifting perspective and position in a manner that resembles cutting between frames and the changing point of view of the camera in film. Architectural theorist Sam Spurr describes the effect these strategies have in *The Manhattan Transcripts*:

> One is continually jolted into a sudden perspective, or a sectional cut. Instead of the distanced, bird's eye view of the map reader, one is taken abruptly inside the buildings, between the two lovers, on the street. In this way The Transcripts are not only images of spaces, but propose embodied interaction.[142]

Indeed, Giuliana Bruno describes the inherent connection between architecture and film as the embodied nature of each – both being grounded 'on the inscription of an observer in the field...a physical entity, a moving spectator, a body making journeys in space.[143] Forcing the viewer of a drawing to constantly adjust to changing perspectives and angles has the effect of moving through space – in much the way that Gordon Cullen described the sensation of walking through a tightly knit urban environment, one experiences 'serial

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[141] These comparisons with Libeskind and Tschumi imply a relationship between the so-called Deconstructivist architects (who were gathered at the *Deconstructivist Architecture* exhibition MoMA in New York, 1988) and NATØ. Though as Mary McLeod reported as early as a year later, the architects involved did not associate with the term – discrediting the notion of a Deconstructivist movement in architecture. (Mary McLeod, 'Architecture and Politics in the Reagan Era: From Postmodernism to Deconstructivism', *Assemblage*, 1989, pp.23–59). The notion of deconstruction that Tschumi and Eisenmann brought into architecture via Derrida bares little relation to NATØ's oeuvre, in both its philosophical conceptualisation and its aesthetic form. For Eisenmann, a deconstructive architecture dislocates meaning and symbolic form, seeking architecture that is 'free of external value – classical or any other; that is, the intersection of the meaning-free, the arbitrary, and the timeless in the artificial.' Similarly, Tschumi has described his aim for 'architecture that means nothing' – with both architects eventually producing highly self-reflexive, formally hermetic architecture. The highly expressive, referential, content heavy, narrative architecture of NATØ bares little resemblance to these concepts. It is possible to use the term deconstruction, not as a philosophical position but as a physical process of taking-apart, in relation to NATØ – in the sense that their process of storyboarding and the structure of their drawings often sought to deconstruct and recompose content in a way that produced unexpected and stimulating collisions. (Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," *Perspecta* 21 (1984), pp.154-173. (p.166); Bernard Tschumi, *Cinegramme Folie: Le Parc de la Villette* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), p.7.

[142] Sam Spurr, 'Drawing the Body in Architecture', *Architectural Theory Review*, 14 (2009), pp.322–332.

[143] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007), p.56.
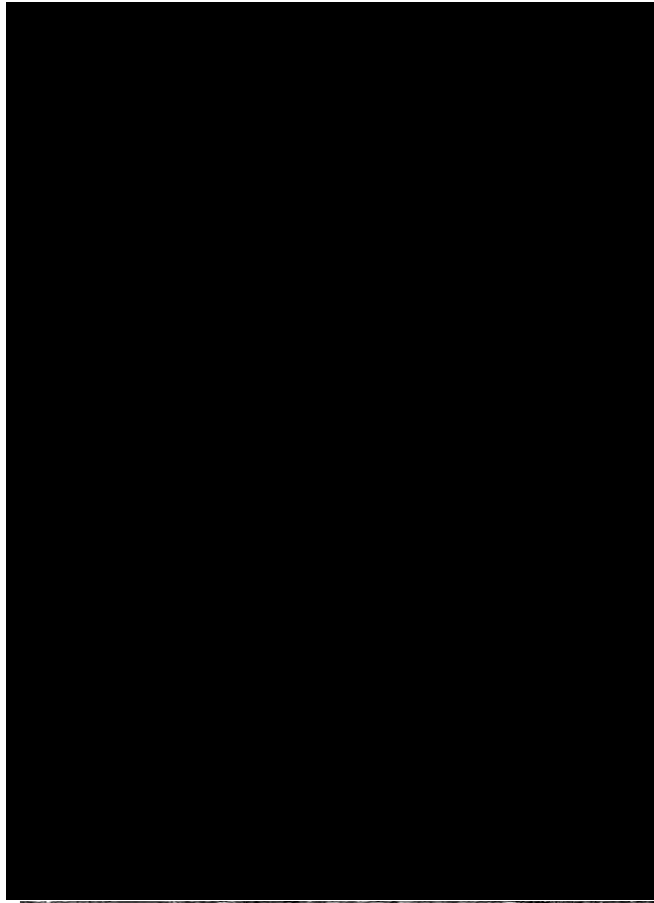
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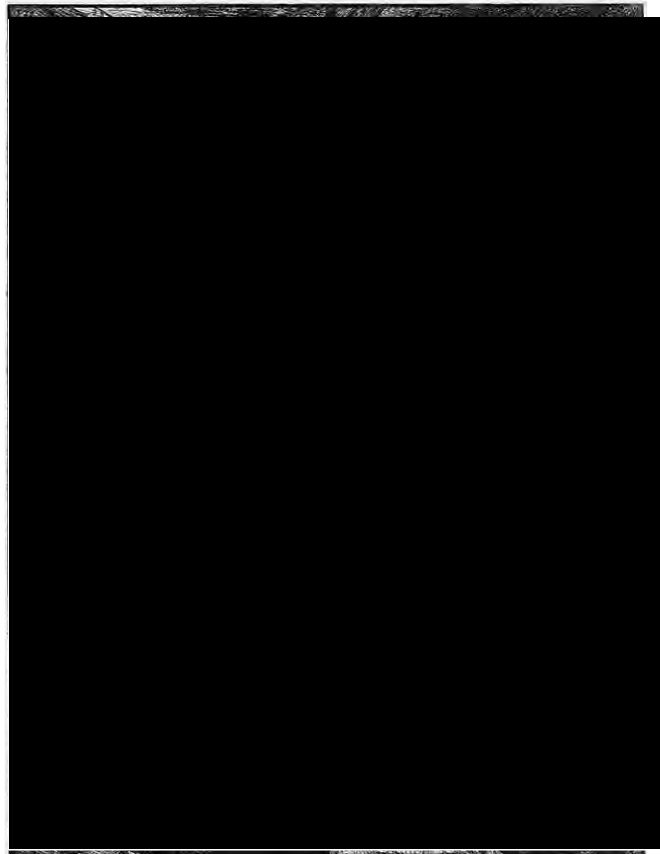Figure 64: Piranesi, 'Plate VI The Smoking Fire', *Carceri* (1761)

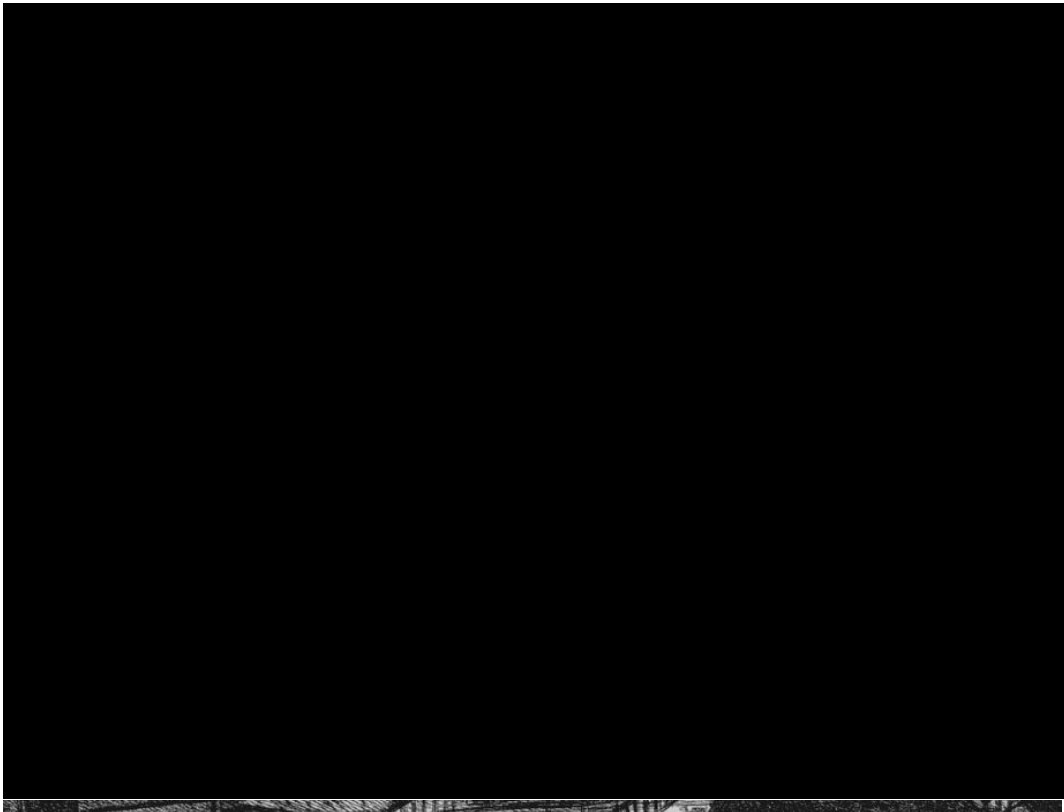Figure 65: Piranesi, 'Plate VI I The Drawbridge', *Carceri* (1761)

Figure 66: Piranesi, 'Plate XIV The Gothic Arch', *Carceri* (1761)

vision'– a continually changing view.[144] Tschumi simulates this effect with his strips of photographs and drawings, each from a different perspective, demanding the viewer change their point of view upon reading each image. Libeskind on the other hand condenses multiple perspectives within one image – in *Micromegas,* fragments flying in the air at wildly varying angles create a multitude of perspectives which are virtually impossible to comprehend as one entity. The viewer's eye is forced to continually move between fragments, circling around the image in a manner more dynamic than in the linear *Manhattan Transcripts*. However, though the fragmentation of perspective appears stronger in Libeskind's drawings, Tschumi's manipulation of scale is more dramatic. *Micromegas* features innumerable tiny elements, of varying sizes and scales, but most are evocative of the building scale; *The Manhattan Transcripts* on the other hand mixes the scale of the city, the building, and the small detail – creating a much greater sense of motion, an almost swooping effect.

This type of architectural drawing has its earliest roots in Piranesi's etchings, the most famous of which, the *Vedute di Roma* (1760) and *Le Carceri d'Invenzione* (1750, 1761), depicted only partial views rather than the more common global view of the entire building. The *Carceri* focused less on replicating Rome as he saw it, and instead created a theatrical, imaginary depiction of the city Rome whose fragmentation had a deep psychological effect (figs. 64-66). Subverting nearly all the conventions of drawing up until this point, the works were explorations of how perspective could be manipulated to evoke an entirely new notion of space – one which was 'open, infinite, changing, smooth, dynamic'.[145] Critical to the effect of these drawings was the doing-away with the single vanishing point of perspectival vision; instead Piranesi drew scenes with multiple vanishing points, each of them receding to a different point to create false or impossible perspectives that evoke the moving spectator. Libeskind takes this principle to its extreme – an explosion of perspective.

Both Piranesi's and Libeskind's drawings can be considered polyphase pictorial narratives, but not in the sense that narratologists such as Wolf typically define them. Wolf's conception of the polyphase image is one where distinct scenes of action are depicted in one place; in his example of Benozzo Gozzoli's *The Dance of Salome and the Beheading of St John the Baptist* (1461-62) the narrative unfolds as if in one scene, with individual moments represented in a manner that appears simultaneous – indeed, it is primarily the title of the work that compels the viewer to narrativise the action and move

[144] Gordon Cullen, *Concise Townscape*, New Ed (Architectural Press, 1961).
[145] Teresa Stoppani, 'Piranesi's Impossible Plan' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture, Critiques* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), p.101.

between each event.[146] The entire painting is depicted from one perspective, and thus it does not induce the complex spectatorial journey through space and duration that Piranesi or Libeskind evoke. The significance of the embodied drawing, with its fragmented, shifting perspectives is crucial to the depiction of architectural narrativity.

ArkAlbion

NATØ's drawings employ a method which combines the techniques of Piranesi, Libeskind, and Tschumi's works – creating polyphase single images, which are also part of broader series of mixed-scale images – creating two levels of movement. In Coates's drawings for *ArkAlbion* produced in 1984 when it was exhibited at the AA, and published in the second issue of *NATØ* magazine, he creates wide, dynamic scenes of action with shifting perspective to describe large sections of the cityscape (figs. 67-71). The project re-imagines the South Bank of London's River Thames, exploding the major landmarks of County Hall, Waterloo Station and St Thomas' Hospital in a marauding landscape that fuses 'office, factory, shop, home, into one volatile city fibre'.[147]

The use of the name 'Albion', which had also been used as the title of the 1982-3 graduation project that formed the basis for the first issue of *NATØ* magazine, was a significant one that NATØ would continually use throughout their projects. As Peter Ackroyd explains in his text on the origins of the English imagination, also titled *Albion*, the word is the ancient term for England, and has been said to relate to the whiteness of the cliffs of Dover that greeted travellers from overseas, and a sense of 'pristine purity or blankness.'[148] Another reading is of the white cliffs at Dover, which are said to represent the guardians of the land, and Albion is the mythical name of a primeval giant who lived on the island – whose white horses are carved in chalk on the hills in the south of England.[149] Ackroyd explains that the Druids believed that Albion was the 'spirit of embodiment of the England', and the idea or figure has remained a part of the myth of the country in the writings of individuals such as John Milton and William Blake.[150] Coates's use of the myth goes beyond the title of his project, as large human figures – the giant of Albion – are depicted throughout the drawings for *ArkAlbion*. There is a sense that in both *Albion* and *ArkAlbion*, and indeed the whole of NATØ's oeuvre, that the group sought to reclaim a spirit of Englishness that revelled in mythology and history –

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[146] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and Narrativity: A Narratological Reconceptualization and Its Applicability to the Visual Arts', *Word & Image*, 19 (2003), pp.180–97
[147] Nigel Coates, 'ARKALBION', in NATØ 2: Albion, Straight from the heart, (London: Architectural Association, 1984), pp. 20-21.
[148] Peter Ackroyd, *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination*, New Ed edition (London: Vintage, 2004), p.xix.
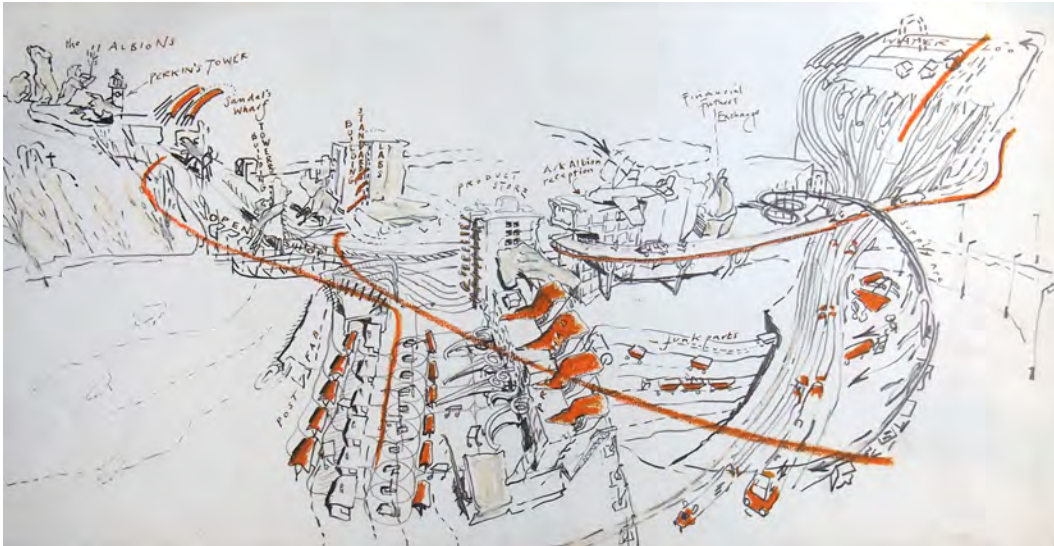[149] Ibid, p.xix.
[150] Ibid., p.107.

Figure 67, 68, 69: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, panoramic drawings showing broad vistas of the city with multiple vanishing points. (1984)

Figure 70 and 71: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, panoramic drawings (1984). The 6th drawing is missing.

reinvesting the present with fragments from the past to create a shared national consciousness. In *ArkAlbion* however, Albion appears almost as a salve to the city, combined with the idea of the biblical Ark into a architectural renaissance – as Coates described:

> If the Bible's Ark was a sort of floating zoo destined to remake the animal kingdom, ArkAlbion's intent is to catch and nourish the parts of city life other architecture seems to squash […] ArkAlbion promises a new kind of city in which the life that's in it see itself enlarged into a new architectural species.[151]

Though the project was presented primarily in an exhibition, mixing drawing with large models and installation pieces, the drawings alone are paradigmatic of NATØ's expression of movement. A set of images describes the project from numerous viewpoints and scale: comprising of six section drawings each representing a major condition of the project (figs. 72-74), rendered in pen and paint; six pencil and pastel panoramas (figs. 67-71, 75); six diagrammatic sketch panoramas in pen and paint; a set of black and white photographs (figs. 76, 77); and finally one large aerial view painting (Fig.78). The scheme produces six different trajectories through the site, each one concurrent and overlapping:

> Like the Festival of Britain, its architecture is public, episodic and persuasive; unlike it, the last thing it wants it one story, one building. It does this with six new function bands that forge their way through the site, each one mutating along its length.[152]

The style of all but the painted aerial view show a method of drawing much closer to that of the other NATØ members than Coates's earlier *Ski Station* and *Muse Britannia* projects – using the sketch as a way to create more diagrammatic, but more freely flowing drawings. The technique employed in all the drawings for *ArkAlbion* (apart from the painting) is that of the long section or perspective, which acts like a tracking shot in a film – moving horizontally across a scene. In this respect the 'pregnant moment' is extended into a polyphase image, portraying one moment but across a large area, so the viewer sees multiple scenes of action. The horizontality of the drawings encourage the viewer to physically move while reading the drawing, in a way similar to *The Manhattan Transcripts,* though the comparatively shorter (in length) images retain the potential for non-linear readings. Motion is emphasised by the minimal introduction of colour in these

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[151] Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion and Six Other Projects,* (London: Architectural Association, 1984), p.11.
[152] Nigel Coates, 'ARKALBION', in NATØ 2: Albion, Straight from the heart, (London: Architectural Association, 1984), pp. 20-21.
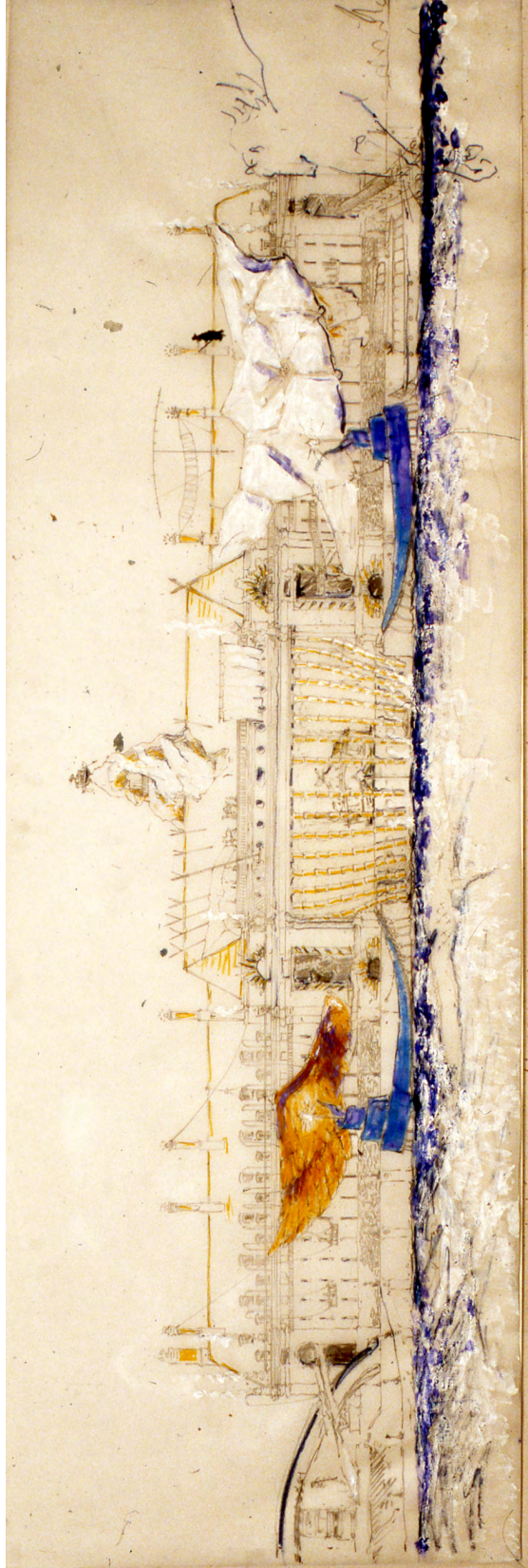
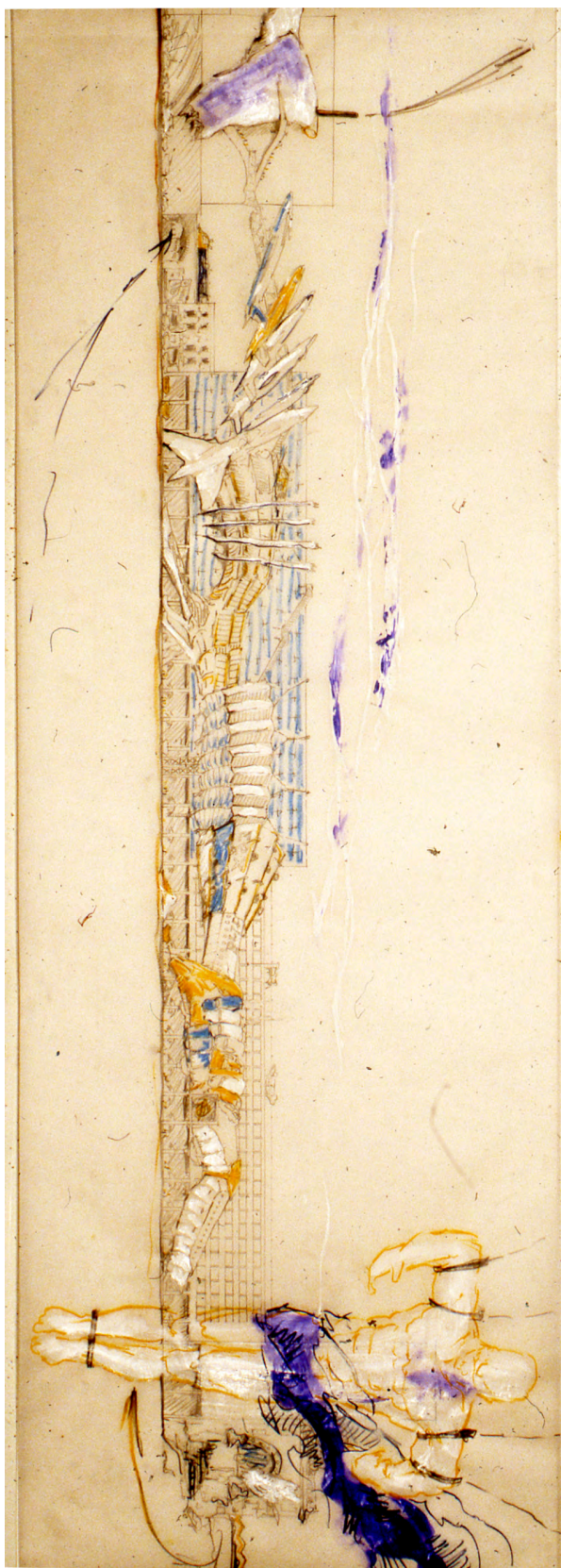Figure 72: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, section drawing. (1984)

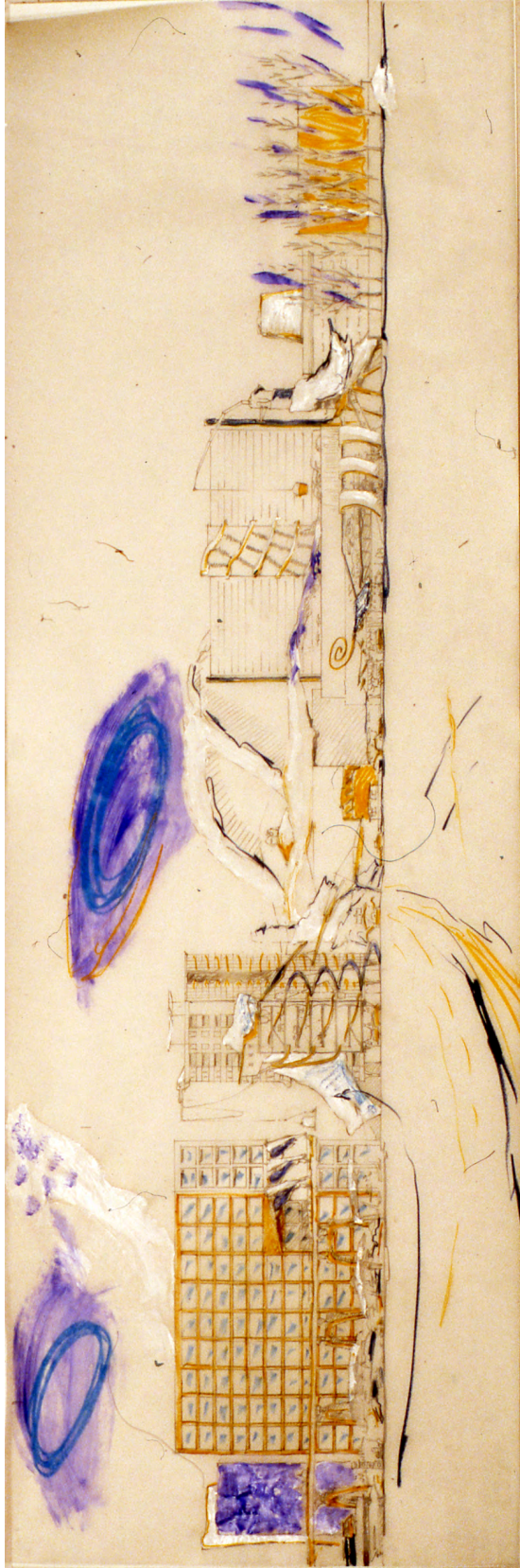Figure 73: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, section drawing. (1984)

Figure 74: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, section drawing. (1984)

largely monochrome line drawings, with streaks and stripes of pastel drawing the eye in different directions both inline with or against the horizontality of the page. The physical moving of the body in space in front of the drawing, combined with the movement of the eye over the drawing – which is led in numerous different directions from shifting perspective and arrows – doubles the perceived motion of the drawing.

Jane Rendell observes that the conventional architectural plan and section show space as a vertical or horizontal slice in one moment in time – they are static and typically drawn to show the arrangement of space rather than its use of inhabitation; by contrast, in *ArkAlbion,* Coates presents many 'times' at once within one drawing.[153] This is a time which is pleated, or folded, as parts of the drawing are rendered sparsely – producing the effect of skipping across them quickly – and others are drawn in greater detail, with exploding elements and dramatic vectors – creating, or even demanding, a pause in contemplation. In this respect the drawing creates structures of significance in a manner akin to the literary narrative, which is able to summarise parts of the narrative that are less important to the reader, and focus on the real-time detail of an event that is of greater significance. Similarly, the viewer's eye is invited to spend more time reading important moments of action, and moving more quickly over less important areas. Notably, this is a pattern that Delueze and Guattari evoke in their description of the city condition as containing a mixture of 'smooth' and 'striated' spaces which contribute to an effect of 'differentials of speed, delays and accelerations, changes in orientation, continuous variations'.[154] It is exactly this experience of moving through the city, that ebbs and flows between open and narrow spaces, crowded and empty, gridded and free-flowing, that NATØ evoke through their composite drawings.

ArkAlbion's sections (figs. 72-74), though more conventional in their form than the other drawings, are interfered with by oversized bodies and animals – playing games with the viewer's perspective as he or she is forced to question whether this is part of the architecture or a feature of the image. Similarly horizontal in their form as the drawings described above, in the sections the eye is also drawn across, outwards, up and down by the sparse use of coloured paint, streaking in different directions. Alongside these horizontal drawings, the viewer is also presented with a set of black and white photographs – a storyboard of a television programme where a fictional reporter describes the six locations represented in the drawings prior to its transformation into *ArkAlbion* (figs. 76, 77). The written captions accompanying each photograph parody the sound-

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[153] Jane Rendel, 'Seeing time/Writing place' in Marco Frascari, Jonathan Hale and Bradley Starkey, *From Models to Drawings: Imagination and Representation in Architecture*, Critiques (London ; New York: Routledge, 2007), pp.183-192.
[154] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2001), quoted in Ibid., p.104.

Figure 75: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, (1984) exhibition installation – showing juxtaposition of different drawings.

Figure 76: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, (1984) exhibition installation.

bites of a news article, outlining the future of each place; the serious tone of the captions provide a witty counterpoint to the provocative and unrestrained proposals:

> To the south, ArkAlbion will extend to Lambeth Palace, and to the north to this gate, the main entrance to Waterloo [...] Right here, the arch is planned to have a nightclub feel about it, with a giant baroque cloud being sucked in just above the clock.[155]

These photographs and accompanying text tell a linear narrative through the site, explaining the significance of each building and location. Referencing the buildings reinvented in the surrounding drawings, the photographic narrative adds another layer of referential content and another physical trajectory through the site – the static quality of each photograph overcome by the storyboard format. Finally, the large painted aerial view anchors and situates the entire project – enabling the viewer to constantly place themselves in relation to the broader whole, getting lost and finding themselves again in moments of confusion and identification analogous to the experience of the city (Fig.78). The combined set of drawings (and the three-dimensional parts of the exhibition) together provide a montage of elements on two levels – within each individual image, and across the body of images as a whole (Fig. 75-77). The photographs represent a moment in the past, while the surrounding drawings represent fragments of future possibilities – both fixed into the moment of the present where they collide. Comprehended as a whole, the structure is, like Libeskind's individual drawings, rhizomatic – each part in some way linked to another, reflecting, referencing and sharing each others content and form, without a predetermined structure or trajectory. The line, derived from film and the storyboard and represented as the section and the horizontal panning drawing, is thus distorted and disrupted. This is emphasised by the fluid nature of the drawings, which unlike a conventional set of architectural drawings do not present a comprehensive and measured final entity, establishing the cityscape as dynamic and layered, never resolved or flat but instead composed of pieces and views. In contrast to the building represented as an object, *ArkAlbion* describes a field of objects – the images representing a constellation of parallel moments which are then shuffled and overlaid by the viewer moving between drawings.

Indeed, it becomes clear from the work discussed in this chapter that the effect of NATØ's drawings was not contained in the single image, but is strongest when multiple drawings are considered as one multivalent narrative, and numerous individual projects are seen together as one whole – a method that grew from the very nature of the

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[155] Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion and six other project*, (London: AA Publications, 1984), p.14.

Figure 77: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, (1984) exhibition installation, showing display of drawings and photographs with three dimensional elements.

Figure 78: Nigel Coates, *ArkAlbion*, (1984) painted aerial view photographed in exhibition setting.

education 'unit', itself described by Coates as 'an organism with its own cross-currents'.[156] This thesis will go on to develop the collaborative, multi-authored nature of NATØ's worlds, and the inherently tangled, multi-route mode of narrative that this approach generates. Critically, the elements of NATØ's drawings described in this chapter become an attitude towards urbanism and a design strategy for the city – creating narrative as cityscape:

> Architecturally, the effective dislocation of any single incident, whilst remaining intact as a single 'frame' in the overall narrative, reforms when it is brought to bear on its city context. Only parts of the story can them be glimpsed in the clearings between existing buildings. Individual scenes should be available for hijacking by the 'audience', as the starting point for an ever renewing plot.[157]

The fragmentation of NATØ's worlds – *Giant Sized Baby Town, Albion, ArkAlbion, Gamma City* – into scenes of action, recognisable as moments in the larger whole, provides junctures where the viewer is able to intrude, initiating their own mental journey through the narrative. Thus, NATØ's method of drawing is tied inextricably to the sort of narrative they wished to convey, and in turn, this narrativity echoed their approach towards design and the re-imagination of the city in a mode that is constructive, but anti-planning: 'the city arises not so much as a result of planning, but via the collation of incidents and processes.'[158]

Such an anti-planning approach has echoes of Non-Plan, the proposition set out by Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall and Cedric Price in 1969.[159] The premise was that through deregulation of the planning system the types of places and buildings people really wanted would emerge, as opposed to the forms imposed upon them by the professional elite, based on 'value judgments or prejudices' out of their control.[160] Through a set of four case studies which were proposed as test sites for Non-Plan, the authors suggested that by removing the stranglehold of the plan, more spontaneous and flexible places would be created, that would evolve more naturally as populations grew, fashions and tastes changed, and technology developed. These ideals certainly mirror those of Unit 10, and later NATØ, however, as political theorist Ben Franks points out, Non-Plan was a distinctly New Right proposal (though from a New Left milieu) that saw the revival of entrepreneurial spirit and the free rein of big business as the main drivers of

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[156] Nigel Coates, 'Albion : The Art and Science City, Newsletter', February 1983.
[157] Nigel Coates, ArkAlbion, (London: AA Publications, 1984), p.14.
[158] Nigel Coates, 'Albion : The Art and Science City, Newsletter', February 1983.
[159] Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall and Cedric Price, 'Non-Plan: An experiment in freedom', *New Society*, 13, no.338, 20 March 1969, pp.435-443.
[160] Ibid., p.442.

development.[161] Indeed, Hall's suggestion of enterprise zones made in a paper given to the Royal Town Planning Institute in 1977, became the legislation that created the Docklands development that NATØ sought to counter.[162]

Though their principles echoed Non-Plan, NATØ's vision of how they should or could be implemented were more left-leaning, focusing on the citizen and the community, rather than on the corporation or institution. In this respect, NATØ's anti-planning approach owed more to the squatting movement of the later 1960s and 1970s – who sought to subvert private enterprise by taking up residence in empty private buildings, in turn disrupting the planned use of these spaces, mixing multiple functions and blurring social divisions.[163] Squatters also frequently built their own spaces, further thwarting the built environment professional, which Non-Plan retained in their vision – a vision that was really only subversive in removing the control of the state in favour of the corporation. In this way, it is possible to describe both the squatters approach and NATØ's as *anti*-planning, rather than non-planning, as they both endeavoured to destabilise the conventions of planning in a more fundamental way than Non-Plan and its offshoots did. As this thesis contests, at their core, these strategies were an essential part of the rejection of Modernism that characterised Postmodernism; indeed, as Jonathan Hughes points out in his essay *After Non-Plan*, the AA journal's issue on postmodern architecture published in 1975 focused primarily on 'the basic issues of self-determination, self-build and participation' which were then considered hallmarks of the break with Modernism.[164]

By way of conclusion to this chapter it is thus possible to see NATØ's use of drawing as more than a medium through which to 'think through', or a set of instructions for producing a built outcome. Indeed, NATØ often hinted that the city they imagined was not one that could be built, at least not from scratch or through planned design: 'Albion will inevitably be built a little more quietly over a much greater area'.[165] Their drawings were a means to an end in the sense that they produced an architectural experience and an attitude, which, when viewed alongside the group's three-dimensional works, contained within them the full intentionality of their vision.

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[161] Ben Franks, 'New Right/New Left: An alternative experiment in freedom' in Simon Sadler and Jonathan Hughes eds, *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism* (Oxford: Architectural, 1999), pp.32-43.

[162] Peter Hall, 'Greenfields and grey areas' (paper presented at RTPI annual conference, Chester, 15 June, 1977), reprinted in Peter Hall, *The Enterprise Zone: British origins, American adaptations*, (Berkley: Institute of Urban and Regional Development, 1981).

[163] Ben Franks, 'New Right/New Left: An alternative experiment in freedom', p.41.

[164] Jonathan Hughes, 'After Non-Plan', in Simon Sadler and Jonathan Hughes eds, *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism* (Oxford: Architectural, 1999), p.181, talking about 'The menopause: beyond postmodern architecture', *AAQ*, 7, no.4. October/December (1975).

[165] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', in *NATØ*, 1 (1984), pp.8-11.

Chapter 3:

The mise-en-scène of the magazine –1983-84

Introduction

The relative 'slowness' of built architecture has meant that varying forms of publication have taken a prominent position in both the production and consumption of architecture throughout history. It is through treaties, manifestos, journals and magazines that architecture has been created and validated, and thus publications form an important medium through which the unbuilt and unbuildable concerns of architecture can be located. Architecture, like the other arts, has exploited the qualities of the magazine during particular moments of radicalisation – driving the dissemination of avant-garde ideas. The interwar period saw an exceptional growth of these 'little magazines', with architects joining the fine arts in using the magazine as a platform for their struggle against ingrained institutions and practices. Publications such as the Swiss *ABC* (1924–1928), Dutch magazines *Wendingen* (1918–32) and *de 8 en OPBOUW* (1932–56), the French magazine *L'Architecture Vivante* (1923–32), the German *Die Form* (1922–35) that came out of the Werkbund, the Danish journal *Kritisk Revy* (1926–1929), Amédée Ozenfant and Le Corbusier's *L'Esprit Nouveau* (1920–26), set a precedent for the architectural magazine as a site of opposition. Subsequently, the radical architects of the 1960s and 1970s also looked to the magazine as a tool with which to transform architecture. As Beatriz Colomina points out, magazines such as these did not merely represent or describe architecture, but were a part of architectural production in their own right – 'challenging building as the primary locus of experimentation and debate'.[1]

Influenced by the radical publications of previous generations, for NATØ, the magazine was the recognised mode for expressing thought that ran counter to the establishment, but more importantly the magazine was a culturally significant medium for the subcultural movements in music, fashion and design of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As this chapter will describe, NATØ used the magazine format to escape the boundaries of architectural publishing – pushing towards a format that related more closely lifestyle to magazines such as *i-D* (1980–) and *The Face* (1980–2004), than journals or trade press. The chapter will explore *NATØ* magazine through an understanding of the magazine as a format, and the unique context of architectural publishing at the AA promulgated by Alvin Boyarsky.

The chapter will then move on to discuss in detail a number of spreads from issues one and two of *NATØ* (leaving issue 3 to be discussed with the exhibition it accompanied in the next chapter). The idea of the magazine establishing a mise-en-scène, and of graphic design *as* architecture will be advanced with an analysis of the complex space created by the *NATØ* magazine – that encourages a particular mode of viewing, akin to the experience of the city. As such, the chapter suggest the magazine as a

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[1] Beatriz Colomina, Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196x -197x, ed. by Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley (Actar, 2010), p.8.

development of the ideas embodied in the group's drawings, discussed in the previous chapter. The final part will elaborate the strategy of bricolage employed by NATØ, exemplified by articles from the second issue of the magazine, aligning their approach to subcultural modes of style as a form of resistance. Drawing particular attention to a project for an imaginary house for filmmaker Derek Jarman, the chapter will take the opportunity to develop correspondences between his work and NATØ's approach.

NATØ magazine

The subversion of the magazine

The first issue of NATØ magazine, subtitled 'ALBION, STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART' was published in 1983 by the Architectural Association, edited by Coates, and contained the end of year project – *Albion* – that had caused such outrage among the external examiners. The magazine was initiated in parallel to the group's formation – individual members were called upon by Coates with a personal invitation attached to a globe key-ring to attend the first official NATØ meeting in the summer of 1983 (fig.1). Alvin Boyarsky had offered Coates the opportunity to produce a book with the students – a volume which would expand upon the ideas developed by the unit and feature the *Albion* project. The book as a medium was quickly rejected by the group, who felt strongly that a magazine more properly reflected the spirit of their work – which was not interested in the sort of publication that the architectural mainstream were producing and that might be relegated to the dusty shelves of a library. For the same reasons as the artists who used the 'little magazine' to 'enter into a heightened relationship with the present moment' and to create an 'alternative space for art', or the punks who self–published zines in order to escape the confines of mainstream culture and articulate a voice of resistance – so NATØ harnessed the magazine format.[2] In this respect, the magazine as a medium carries with it the myth of the avant-garde, and for NATØ the appeal of such connotations cannot be overlooked.

The particular qualities of the magazine have made it fertile ground for experimentation across a range of cultural and artistic practices. Indeed, Coates cites these magazines as influential to his own conception of how to disturb the prevailing view: 'Sometimes the rift between what is built and what is right for the time is so broad that effort must be concentrated into the gallery and the magazine, as the Futurists, Dadaists and Suprematists understood'.[3] For Coates theses publications were 'iconoclastic disruptions' that sent tremors through the 'homogenous compound of mainstream thought'.[4] Magazines such as *Cabaret Voltaire* (1916) and *Dada* (1917–22) were part–manifesto part–journal, featuring literary works and reproductions of artworks alongside proclamations of Dadaist ideology. *Dada* magazine in particular experimented with the conventions of typography and layout, embodying Dadaist ideas through typefaces that were bold and often subverted through mixed sizes, capitalisation and spacing, as well as

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[2] Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2011), p.1.
[3] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object (*Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.99.
[4] Ibid., p.100.

Figure 1: Invitation to the first NATØ meeting from Nigel Coates to Mark Prizeman, (1983)

and jumbled layouts (figs. 2 and 3).[5] In the 1918 *Dada Manifesto*, poet Tristan Tzara proclaimed: 'Every page should explode, either because of its deep seriousness, or because of its vortex, vertigo, newness, timelessness, crushing humour, enthusiasm of its principles, or the way it is printed.'[6] Other publications such as the Surrealist *La Révolution Surréaliste* (1924–1929) played less with visual form and concentrated on textual experimentation and provocation – described as 'incessantly scandalous and revolutionary'.[7]

These publications join the tradition of 'little magazines', a phenomenon in creative publishing wherein the exploration of ideas takes precedence over financial return. Researchers at Nottingham Trent University define the 'little magazine' as:

> [...] Those which publish creative work in literature and the other arts, with little or no regard for commercial gain. They often provide an outlet for work that might be seen as exploring or pushing at the boundaries of its given medium. In many cases such work may be regarded as 'innovative' or simply too singular for more mainstream or commercially oriented journals. At the same time, work published in little magazines represents a wide spectrum of literary and artistic activity.[8]

Writer Malcolm Bradbury describes how the 'little magazine' of the early twentieth century was pivotal in 'the growth of new movements and intellectual themes, lines of influence and critical judgements on past and present'.[9] Importantly, these were magazines at the frontier of writing and literary culture, where writer and reader were able to engage each other in dialogue – they were magazines produced and written by those who read and consumed the material in the first place.

Writing about a particular genre of 'little magazine', the artists' magazine, Gwen Allen describes ephemerality as one of the intrinsic characteristics that enables this form of printed matter to engage so vigorously with marginal and vanguard practices.[10] For Allen it is the physicality of the magazine which suggests impermanence; in contrast to the slowness of the conventional book a magazine is printed on cheap paper with insubstantial covers, and its seriality necessarily implies the redundancy that follows with every new issue.[11] Indeed, 'little magazines' are often unreliable and subject to rapid

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[5] Irene E. Hofmann, 'Documents of Dada and Surrealism: Dada and Surrealist Journals in the Mary Reynolds Collection', Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, The Art Institute of Chicago <http://www.artic.edu/reynolds/essays/hofmann.php> [accessed 15 August 2013].
[6] Tristan Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos and Lampisteries*, trans. by Barbara Wright, New edition (Richmond, U.K.: Calder Publications Ltd, 2011), p.7-8
[7] Ibid.
[8] 'The Little Magazines Project', Nottingham Trent University, http://www2.ntu.ac.uk/littlemagazines/ [accessed 23 September 2013]
[9] Malcolm Bradbury, 'Modernism and the Magazines', http://www.malcolmbradbury.com/criticism_little_magazines.html, [accessed 24 September 2013].
[10] Gwen Allen, (2011), p1.
[11] Ibid., p.1

Figure 2: *Dada* magazine, issue 3 front cover, ed. Tristan Tzara (1918)

Figure 3: *Dada* magazine, issue 3 spread showing deconstructed page layout and manipulation of typography, ed. Tristan Tzara (1918)

demise – as Allen explains 'they court failure', which though perhaps unplanned, is part of the appeal of the format.[12] Allen's subject are the artists' magazines of the 1960s and 1970s, a period of particular rampancy during which time the magazine became an important site for conceptual art practice – moving the focus away from the gallery setting to disseminate work more broadly. Artists such as Vito Acconci and Bernadette Meyer, who founded poetry magazine *0 to 9* (1967–1969), and Canadian collective General Idea who produced *FILE* (1972–1989), saw the 'inexpensive and accessible' format of the magazine not only as a convenient medium, but also one that enabled an exploration of the very concepts at the heart of producing art in an 'advanced spectacular media culture'.[13] Artists used the magazine in varying formats to 'radicalize the reception of art', exploiting the 'volatile and mutable' qualities of the medium which thrived on 'change and impermanence, favour process over product, and risk being thrown away'.[14]

These were also the qualities of the magazine that encouraged architects to begin self–publishing 'little magazines' during the same period. Beatriz Colomina's *Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196x–197x* gathers together magazines and other ephemera produced during the 1960s and 1970s by architects outside mainstream publishing.[15] These were publications in the large part reacting against Modernism, laying ground for new directions in architecture, planning and lifestyle. Publications in Colomina's collection range from the early *Polygon* magazine founded in 1956 by architecture students at the Regent Street Polytechnic – considered by Reyner Banham as the first 'underground architectural protest magazine'[16] – to better known publications such as *Archigram* (1961–74), and *Oppositions* (1973–84), as well as those with only 'moments of littleness' (periods of instability and alternative methods of publishing or content) such as *Architectural Design* (1946–), *Casabella* (1928–) and *Domus* (1928-).[17]

One of the key developments that triggered the creation of both the magazines in Colomina's collection and Allen's artists' magazines was the birth of lower-cost, accessible printing technologies – in particular web offset lithography, which took over from the more labour intensive letterpress process. This technology meant that it was possible to physically design and set out a magazine on the kitchen table, before sending paste-up-boards to printers – allowing the producers of content to also be the editors and the designers. The process of creating paste-up boards for offset lithography offered

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[12] Ibid., p2.
[13] Ibid., p.1, p.6.
[14] Ibid., p.2.
[15] Beatriz Colomina, Clip, Stamp, Fold: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines, 196x -197x, ed. by Beatriz Colomina and Craig Buckley (Actar, 2010).
[16] Reyner Banham quoted in: Polygon No. 7 England, www.clipstampfold.org [accessed 24 September 2013].
[17] Colomina, p.8.

editors the freedom to collage different sorts of images with text, both handwritten and word-processed, as well as to manipulate the composition and layout seemingly endlessly. As will be discussed later, the technique involved in producing offset lithography paste-up boards nurtured a graphic aesthetic that drew on contemporary ideas of bricolage, collage and deconstruction.

This wave of publishing in the 1960s and 1970s, which extended beyond the discipline of architecture, can be seen as part of a broader cultural climate – a period when mechanical forms of reproduction were pushing the image to the forefront of almost all forms of cultural production. As Simon Sadler's account of *Archigram* highlights, these works were produced at a time when the proliferation of the image had come to shape the very bones of society, reflected in a significant number of key publications: Daniel Boorstin's *The Image* (1963) and Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* (1964) and *The Medium Is the Massage* (1967) – signalling that representation was now the 'key mechanism of Western society'.[18] What Andreas Huyssen referred to as the 'great divide' between high and mass culture that had characterised Modernism, was being eroded, to the point that theorists John Albert Walker describes mass culture became the 'authentic culture', in his text on the 1970s.[19] The post-modernisation of culture that began in the 1960s and developed fully in the 1970s, brought forth a mode of artistic production that was 'designed with their own mediation in mind, and circulated rapidly through magazine covers, music videos and mainstream feature film.'[20]

The wave of publishing that Colomina describes in her collection of magazines can also be characterised as part of what Peter Bürger called the 'neo-avant-garde', as outlined in the introduction to this thesis – a second wave of activity that drew on the forms and modes of the so-called 'historical avant-garde' of the earlier twentieth century.[21] Hal Foster describes neo-avant-garde works as those that 'reprised and revised such avant-garde devices of the 1910s and '20s as collage and assemblage, the readymade and the grid, mono-chrome painting and constructed sculpture', and it would be reasonable to add to this list the format of the self-published magazine.[22] Though neither Bürger or Foster specifically discuss architects, it is possible to expand this way of thinking to include architects and Colomina's magazines – which used the form of the radical, little

[18] Daniel Boorstin, *The Image*, (1963); Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media : the Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001); Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Penguin Classics, 2008); Simon Sadler, *Archigram: Architecture Without Architecture*, MIT, 2005, p143.
[19] Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Indiana University Press, 1986); John Albert Walker, Left Shift: Radical Art in 1970s Britain (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), p.76.
[20] Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90* (London: V&A, 2011), p.9.
[21] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Manchester University Press, 1984).
[22] Hal Foster, 'What's Neo about the Neo-Avant-Garde?', October, 70 (1994), pp.5–32. (p.5)

magazine as a way to evoke the myth of the avant-garde. None of these publications attempted to remake society anew or challenge the institutions of capitalism, instead many embraced the forms and modes of popular mass culture – of which the image-laden magazine, that used the bold typography of advertising and formats reaching the size of the television screen, can be considered a part. Those titles from Colomina's collection with the most enduring legacy indeed became highly institutionalised (in different ways) throughout their lifespan – in particular *Archigram*, the members of which become enduring figures in the academy and whose projects were republished by mainstream newspapers such as *The Daily Express* and *The Sunday Times Colour Magazine*; and *Oppositions,* which came to be dominated by leading voices of the academy and the profession such as Kenneth Frampton, Peter Eisenman and Anthony Vidler, more likely setting the agenda for architecture than subverting it. Indeed, Sadler points out that the neo-avant-garde's natural home was the institution, the school of architecture, and attributes much supposedly radical architectural output during this period to the AA.[23]

This brings the story back to NATØ, and it is significant that the group chose to produce their own subversive counter to the mainstream by employing the same mode as the previous generation – the magazine. However, as this chapter will show, NATØ's magazine aligned itself more closely with pop-culture magazine, culture-tabs and self-published fanzines, than it did to the architectural press, but it is relevant to discuss the history of publications at the AA driven by Boyarsky, which is notable for its plurality and abundance.

Publishing at the AA
Boyarsky's extensive programme of publishing, which complemented exhibitions and open lectures, were inextricably linked to his longer-term project of changing architectural pedagogy, and as architectural historian Andrew Higgot has remarked, to the project of remaking architectural culture more broadly.[24] Often described through Boyarsky's own metaphor of the 'well–laid table', Boyarsky pioneered an educational system based on a local autonomy wherein each member of staff ran their own course of teaching within individual studio 'units' – an offering that was purposefully pluralistic.[25] This was a model he had rehearsed during three summer schools in London between 1970-72 known as the 'International Institute of Design Summer Sessions'. Here, Boyarsky offered architecture students the opportunity to gather during the summer break to take part in workshops, listen to lectures and have tutorials – marking it out as an

[23] Simon Sadler, 'An Avant-garde Academy' in Ballantyne Andrew, ed., *Architectures: Modernism and after* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p.44.
[24] Andrew Higgott, 'Boyarsky at the AA', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 14 (2010), p.189.
[25] Irene Sunwoo, 'From the "Well-Laid Table" to the "Market Place:" The Architectural Association Unit System', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 65 (2012), pp.24–41.

offering that contrasted with term-time education, describing it as 'a workshop and a platform; a market place and a forum; a well–laid table and a banquet for free ranging souls as opposed to your local cafeteria's battery fare.[26] The nature of the 'Summer Sessions', which had no physical home, no fixed agenda, outcomes or commitments, presented a very different prospect to the deeply historical and mostly conventional figure of the AA in the early 1970s. In taking on the role of Chairman in 1971, Boyarsky was faced with the challenge of how to translate the concept of the 'well–laid table' to an institutional setting. Historian Irene Sunwoo articulates the problem as an architectural one:

> As a physical environment, the AA therefore posed an architectural problem. In its very materiality the school was anathema to the IID [International Institute of Design], which through the Summer Sessions had been constructed out of ongoing conversations, interactions, and experiences—not studio spaces and lecture halls. 'Architects without buildings, and students without a school. This is surely the import of the International Institute of Design,' Cook had contended.[27]

The unit system was in large part the answer to this conundrum, a structure which although already existed in the school in some areas (implemented initially by AA Principal John Lloyd – later Michael Lloyd – in the 1960s) and furthered by Boyarsky; however it was the programme of publications, exhibitions and lectures, and the synergies between them, that really brought the spirit of the Summer Sessions alive at the AA.[28]

Boyarsky had a particular personal fascination with books and was a rampant collector of various different publications and ephemera, (a fact well documented);[29] John Hedjuk went as far as to describe the 'fabrication of books' as Boyarsky's 'first architectural love'.[30] His fondness for collecting, and for collecting diverse sorts of objects, has also been said to encompass 'people and ideas', and is reflected in a pedagogical approach which was based on a similar strategy of collecting, picking and choosing.[31] The metaphors of consumption and food used in this section so far shed considerable light on the way Boyarsky used publications, exhibitions and lectures to establish a veritable market place of architectural education from which students could forge their own path, or rather, select their own menu. Focusing on the publications

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[26] Alvin Boyarsky quoted in Igor Marjanović, 'Lines and Words on Display: Alvin Boyarsky as a Collector, Curator and Publisher', arq: Architectural Research Quarterly, 14 (2010), pp.165–174.
[27] Irene Sunwoo, 'Pedagogy's Progress: Alvin Boyarsky's International Institute of Design', *Grey Room*, 34 Winter (2009), pp.28–57. (p.51)
[28] Ibid., p.57, footnote 80.
[29] See in particular: 'Alvin Boyarsky's Delicatessen' by Igor Marjanovicc in Jane Rendell, Critical Architecture (London; New York: Routledge, 2007); Igor Marjanović, 'Lines and Words on Display: Alvin Boyarsky as a Collector, Curator and Publisher', arq: Architectural Research Quarterly, 14 (2010), pp.165–174; John Hedjuk, 'A Sense of Spirit: Alvin Boyarsky 1928-1990', AA Files, 1990, pp.3–4.
[30] John Hedjuk, 'A Sense of Spirit: Alvin Boyarsky 1928-1990', AA Files, 1990, pp.3–4.
[31] Igor Marjanović, 'Lines and Words on Display: Alvin Boyarsky as a Collector, Curator and Publisher', arq: Architectural Research Quarterly, 14 (2010), pp.165–174.

specifically, it is possible to observe the way Boyarsky developed different formats and styles, reflecting and refracting each other and the broader programme of the AA.

Almost immediately upon entering the AA as Chairman, Boyarsky set up the Information Centre – a small room squeezed into an odd space behind the lecture theatre – and established it as the heart of the AA: 'An architectural filter where messages were received, collaged and disseminated, it was a space dedicated to the circulation of both bodies and information', indicative of the growing cybernetic view of communication and the era of the media lab.[32] The Information Centre would be the hub from which key AA publications were edited and produced, as well as the centre from which AATV would later broadcast. The first publication that Boyarsky set to work on was an existing newsletter, the *Events List* – the core of communications within the school and to the broader world outside. In 1973 Boyarsky redesigned and reinvigorated the sheet using the latest IBM Golfball typewriter for typesetting and offset lithography for printing; the result was a single A3 folded sheet printed in black on coloured paper, incorporating multiple columns of text with illustrations (figs. 4 and 5). Clearly conventional in its layout and design, the interest in the *Events List* lies in its content and the way it was read. Quite literally listing out the events taking place in the school on a weekly basis, the sheet presented the huge number of activities and lectures available to students, 'mapping' them by location and time to facilitate what Sunwoo describes as an 'ad lib navigation of the programme'.[33] Both these spatial metaphors, mapping and navigation, imply the distinctly postmodern mode of education enacted by Boyarsky, one that was predicated on 'selection rather than prescription'.[34] The sheet also encouraged a 'pick and mix' approach to assembling a personalised programme of education, subject to the whims and desires of the individual with 'seemingly limitless plots and denouements'.[35]

The emphatically throwaway quality of the *Events List* reflects the same transient and changeable principle embodied in mainstream publications such as *Time Out* (figs. 6 and 7), which was launched in 1968 and functioned in much the same way, both publications shared the sense of implied expendability, printed on cheap, folded paper which crumpled and tore easily, and contained time sensitive information that become defunct as soon as the next issue was released. The *Events List* contributed to the transformation of architectural education into a commodity – presented in a menu-like format and subject to consumption. It is has been recorded that Jean-Francois Lyotard described Boyarsky's approach as one that produced the effect of 'scanning', a mode of consumption reminiscent of flicking through television channels, implying the short

[32] Irene Sunwoo, 'The Static Age', AA Files, 2010, pp.118–129.
[33] Ibid., p.122.
[34] Ibid., p.122.
[35] Ibid., p.120.

Figures 4 and 5: Front and inside spread of AA *Events List*, (1973)

New Cinema Club   National Film Theatre

Figures 6 and 7: Pages from *Time Out*, first edition printed on double sided A2 sheet and folded. (1968)

attention span associated with late capitalism and the postmodernist turn.[36] Indeed, this idea of 'scanning' can be considered analogous to Dick Hebdige's notion of 'cruising' identified in the way that contemporaneous magazine *The Face,* was consumed by a reader who was: 'invited to wander through this environment picking up whatever s/he finds attractive, useful or appealing', Hebdige describes this mode of reading as a symptom of what Walter Benjamin called the 'distracted gaze' of the perpetual consumer.[37] There is a restless quality about this way of reading, which constantly moves between media in a manner that Hebdige describes with the terms 'glissage' and 'sliding' – a sensation that was inevitably heightened during this period of rapid mediatisation.[38] This was an effect that would become an important part of NATØ's graphic design, which saw parallels between the movement of the body through the city and the spectatorial voyage across the page, which they also evoked through drawing as described in the previous chapter.

Within the AA, Boyarsky intensified this effect with the creation of numerous other publications, which when seen together against the backdrop of events and exhibitions, produced a network of stimuli to be wandered through. Though already established before Boyarsky's chairmanship, the school's *Prospectus* (1918–) (figs. 8 and 9), which laid out the vision for the year ahead, became a key publication redesigned by Boyarsky as a 'public relations exercise' filled with images and showcasing the school's provocative ideas – a natural partner to the new *Projects Review* he established in 1975.[39] Though unassuming and conventional in both appearance and title, these two publications played an important role in the 'local autonomy' of the school, providing an arena within which tutors outlined and defended their programme.[40] The student voice was also briefly represented by the appearance of an AA newspaper titled *Ghost Dance Times* (1974–75), a fleeting yet significant production that took the form of a broadsheet newspaper, and was edited by former student Martin Pawley (fig.10). Initially described as a sister to the *Events List*, the *Ghost Dance Times* was charged with critical reflection on the lectures, events and exhibitions that went on at the AA, and evolved into a highly satirical and often controversial newspaper driven by Pawley's outspoken and candid voice. Whether Pawley's ferocious critiques of AA lectures and goings-on was the reason for Boyarsky closing the paper at the end of only one year is somewhat shrouded in myth, however it

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[36] Jean-Francois Lyotard quoted in ibid., p.123.

[37] Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988), p.162.

[38] Ibid., p170.

[39] Andrew Higgott, 'Boyarsky at the AA', arq: Architectural Research Quarterly, 14 (2010), pp.189–189.

[40] Ibid., p161.

Figures 8 and 9: Front and inside spread of AA *Prospectus*, (1979-80)

Figure 10: Martin Pawley's notoriously provocative AA newspaper *Ghost Dance Times*, Friday 6th June (1975)

atmosphere it created at the AA that is worth drawing out. As a quote from the special issue *Architectural Review* cited earlier in Chapter 1 of this thesis stated, the school was unique in its 'intensity, optimism and urbanity', and as such was 'the antithesis of the defeatism, dull specialisation and narrow parochiality of other architectural schools. The AA is a pocket of resistance to the general suburbanisation of Britain.'[47] The AA under Boyarsky had become more than a school of architecture and could be considered an urban institution in its own right, independent not only from the established University system, but also from the mainstream of professional architectural discourse. In this way the AA existed as its own domain, staking out a territory through its unique system of education, which in turn nurtured radical streams of discourse, which in turn again were promulgated through its extensive programme of publications. The array and range of publications also nurtured multiple voices and multiple strands of discourse, preventing any single idea from dominating, and thus fostering unpredictability and experimentation – a polyvocality that was a central tenant of NATØ's work.

It is within this context that Boyarsky encouraged the group that would become NATØ to produce a publication that would put forward and extend their ideas, elevating their student proposal into a form that could be circulated outside the school. The significance of Boyarsky's programme of publishing for NATØ was not with respect to individual publications, but in the creation of the multi-stranded, multi-voice and multimedia approach to architectural discourse as a whole. As this chapter will show, NATØ's own magazine bore little relation or resemblance to any publications produced by the school – and can be seen in part as a frustration with the conventions of architectural publishing. However, it is likely that teaching and learning in an environment where the publication – in varying formats – was fetishised to the extent that it was at the AA, would have shaped the way that NATØ conceived of and manipulated printed media.

The creation of an architectural fanzine

The first issue of *NATØ* (fig.11) could best be described as a hybrid manifesto-magazine, the main content setting out core principles alongside their 'example city', the *Albion* project.[48] A call-to-arms style statement opens the issue on the inside cover, explaining NATØ's position between 'two strong currents' – on the one hand the increasing sophistication of consumer technology: 'in the office with word processors, in the banks with time-tills, in the home with video, Teletext and the double disc drive...in the street with Walkmen and city paging', and on the other the 'hard-times lifestyle excess', a

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[47] Colin Davis, 'Place and Purpose: The AA as an Urban and Educational Institution', *Architectural Review*, Vol. CLXXIV (1983), pp.24–26.
[48] NATØ 1, *ALBION* STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART, (Architectural Association, 1983), p3.

creative striving as a result of economic decline that had been described by Peter York in *Style Wars*.[49] From this position, NATØ set themselves up as architects working outside the mainstream, driven by the pulsing subculture, the 'new spirit': 'Most architects seem only to fix on square footage and marble curtain walls. No wonder we'd rather live in old factories'.[50] The lyrical, pithy, polyvocal and almost conversational style of this introduction sets the tone for the rest of the magazine, in sharp contrast to writing on architecture both academic and popular – a tone reminiscent of *i-D* magazine – an informal voice that evokes youth and an air of 'cool'. As Hebdidge had described *The Face* magazine, the voice found at the start of NATØ is highly quotable, littered with 'the witty one-liner, the keyword, the aphorism, the extractable'.[51] This voice recurs through almost every article on cut-out black bars that intrude into the body of text and images – with bold white text in capital letters making statements and observations about *Albion* (fig.12). The result is a thread that runs throughout the issue, a polyvocal editorial voice that guides you through articles, or perhaps extracts the key sound-bites for a skim-read that captures the spirit of *Albion* in a tone that sounds remarkably like advertising copy:

> MONOPLANS OR MONOFUNCTION – THE BASIS OF THE 20TH CENTURY NEEDS THROWING TO THE DOGS. IF YOU LIKE LIFE'S VIDEO SCREEN AS GAUDY AS POSSIBLE, LIKE SOHO MORE THAN SURREY, BUILDINGS CAN HAVE THE SAME DISTORTIONS, THE SAME CHARGE. JUST LEAN FORWARD AND TURN UP ALL THE CONTROLS.[52]

Though they were in this first issue responding to the institution from which they had emerged and defending themselves against the rest of the profession, they were also attempting to reach an audience who read lifestyle magazines and were interested in music, art, nightclubbing and street culture – reflected in the tone of this opening statement. NATØ sought to position themselves as the architectural branch of that scene – a scene that typically did not attract or involve architects. The magazine was a means to engage this audience, moving away from the confines of the architectural profession and the concept of the architectural journal, to instead sit alongside the 'culturetabs' and the lifestyle magazines.[53]

Over 23 black and white A3 sized pages, the group mixed text, photographs and drawings in collaged layouts which range from the essay-form 'Ghetto & Globe' authored

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[49] Ibid., p.2; Peter York, *Style Wars* (Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1983).
[50] Ibid., p2.
[51] Dick Hebdige, Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things (London; New York: Routledge, 1988), p172.
[52] *NATØ*, 1, 1983, p6.
[53] 'Culture tab' – the name given to large format magazines dedicated to a range of cultural forms including art, architecture and design, influenced by Andy Warhol's *Interview* (1970), including *Hard Werken* (1978-81), *Fetish* (1979-81), *Émigré* (1984-2005), *Blueprint* (1983-), *Metropolis* (1981-). (William Owen, *Magazine Design* (London: Calmann, 1991), p.120-122.)
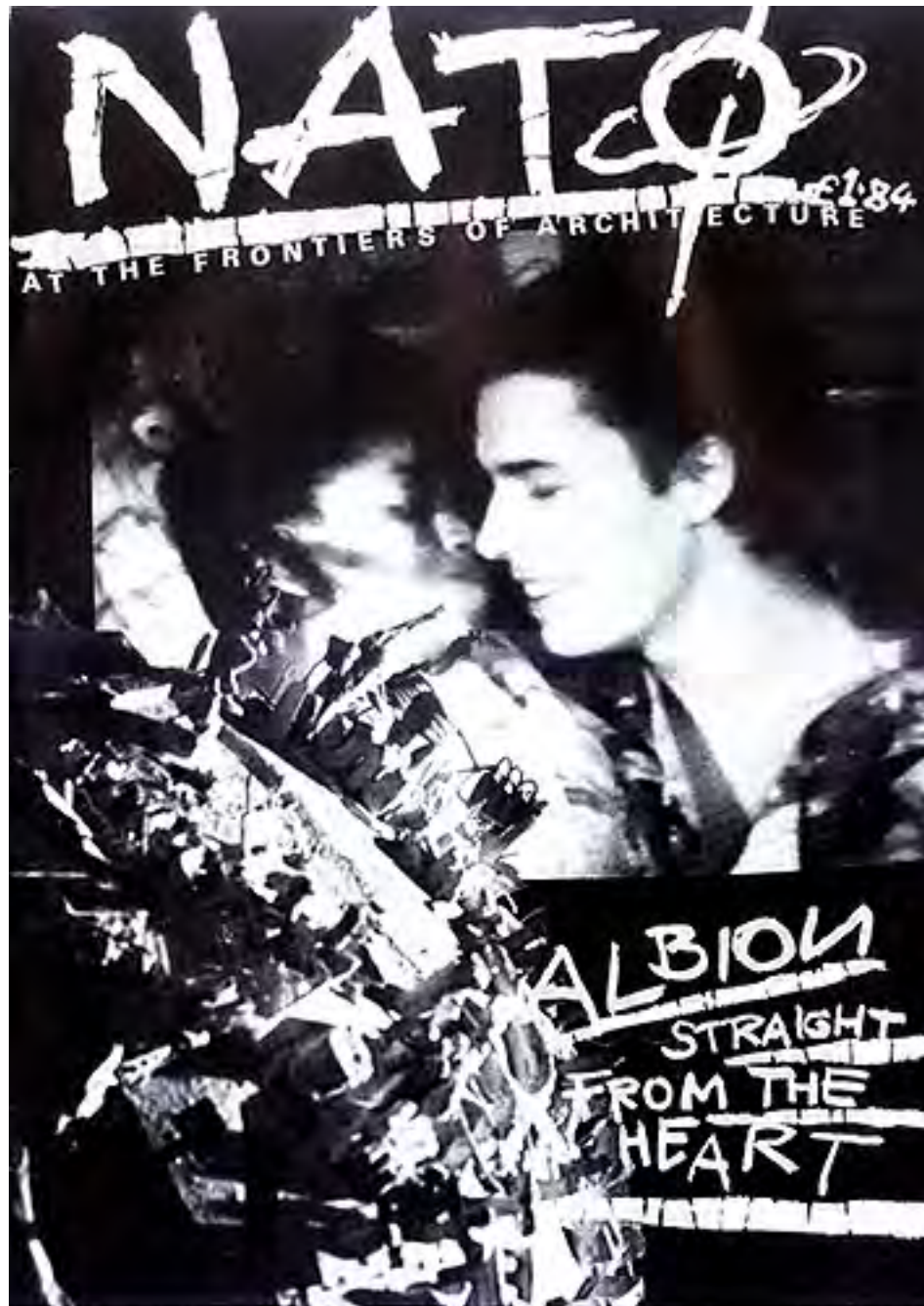
Figure 11: Front cover, Issue 1, *NATØ,* (1983)
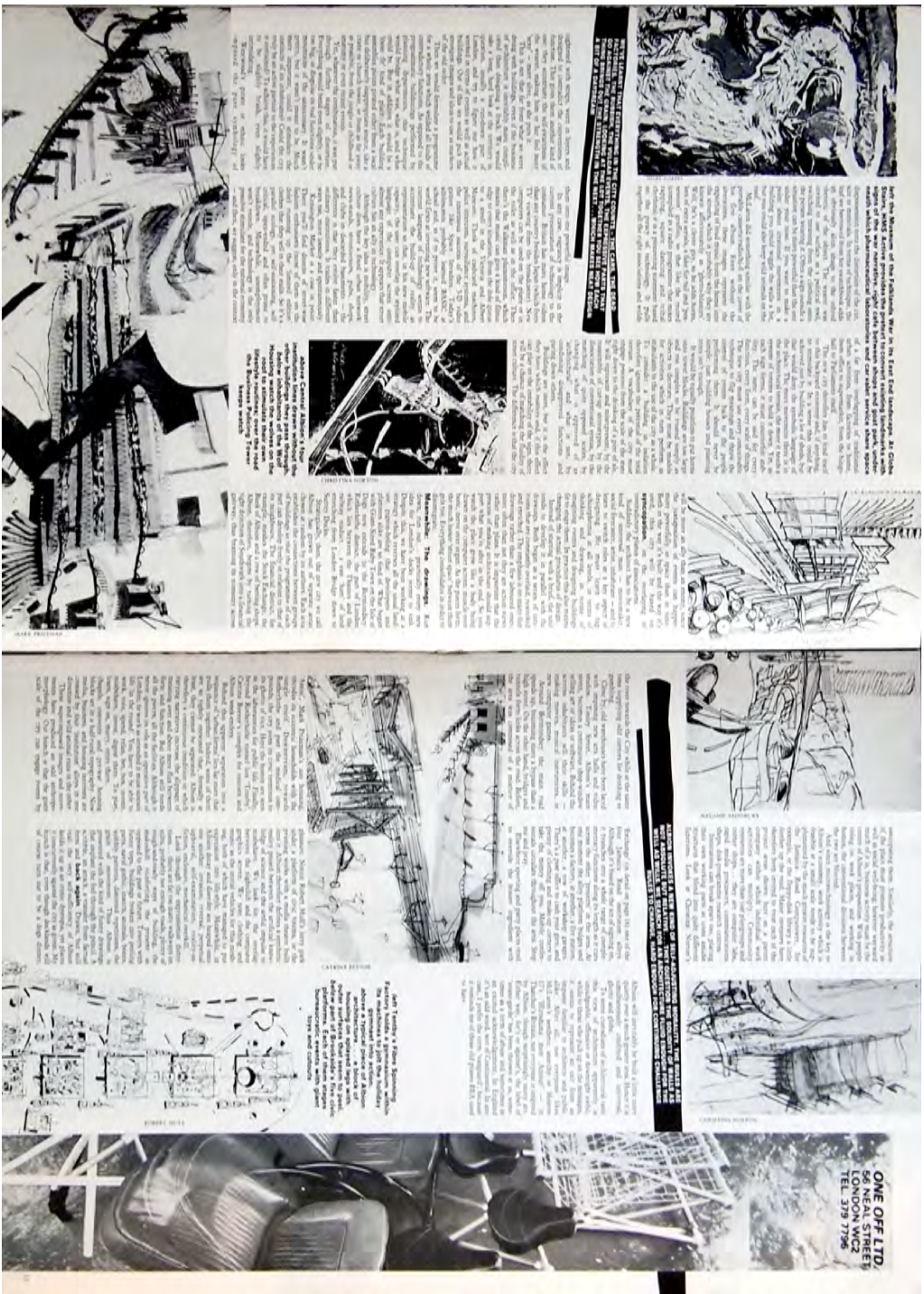
Figure 12: Spread from *NATØ*, issue one, showing continuous narration on black bars that intrude into pages throughout the magazine, pp.11-12 (1983).

by Coates, to Christina Norton's 'On the Boardwalk' – a walk through *Albion* with equal parts text and image overlaid, and a double-page spread drawing titled 'Above Albion', by Martin Benson, describing *Albion* from the air.[54] Every article is either specifically about *Albion*, describing the project at different scales or from different perspectives, or is a written piece that draws on more peripheral issues relating to the project; for example Catrina Beever's 'Between Here and Now' explores the virtues of science fiction writing for architects as a way to look 'towards the outer limits', explaining an approach to design taken by NATØ that uses fiction to reach new architectural ideas.[55] Similarly, Melanie Sainsbury's 'Primitive Desk' explains how the primitive can enhance experience, depicting *Albion* as a place that 'provokes this breed of action'.[56] The magazine assembled a number of parts, by different authors, into a fragmented entity – an unfinished whole that compiled a changing, tangled image subject to individual interpretation.

Summarising the trajectory of the three issues of *NATØ* magazine, the second issue published in 1984, subtitled the 'Apprentice Issue' (fig.13) shifted from *Albion's* city-scale, to the scale of the individual, characterising the 'apprentice' as an inhabitant of *Albion* (or perhaps any contemporary city) whose 'city is the workshop'.[57] The issue was published to coincide with the RIBA's Festival of Architecture, (a whole year of events and programming to celebrate 150 years of the institute), and sought to present an alternative to this highly institutionalised view of the profession. Consequently the key concept that the issue reinforces is the apprentice character, who somewhat ambiguously both discredits the professional and becomes the professional: 'From now on none of us, and yet all of us, will be professionals', the emphasis being that the street-savvy, creative individual is able to make or alter their spatial surroundings in the same way that they are able to modify or customise their clothing, self-publish or record their fanzine or punk demo, and weld furniture from found materials.[58] The comparison of NATØ's apprentice to Levi–Strauss' bricoleur is made clear in this issue, a parallel that will be explored later in this chapter. The issue focuses on design at the scale of the product, furniture and fashion – drawing a parallel between the ways these items are designed and NATØ's approach to architecture and the city:

> So the magazine you are holding exchanges some city sized ideas and applies them to the production of everyday objects of the sort we could all deal with. We take a chair maker and show how this work method is not so radically different from our way of designing (sic) a cliff edge retreat for a film maker and his feast of friends.[59]

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[54] Ghetto & Globe', pp.8-11; 'On the Boardwalk', pp.16-19; 'Above Albion', pp.12-13.
[55] 'Between Here and Now', p.6.
[56] 'Primitive Desk, p.7.
[57] *NATØ*, 2, (1984), p.2.
[58] Ibid., p.2.
[59] Ibid., p.2.

The issue features contributions and content from designers and writers outside NATØ, expanding the ground covered by the first issue and moving away from a manifesto-like voice – validating their ideas instead by drawing on others whose approach is similar. An interview with radical performance artist Joe 'The Rev. King Rat Mutant God O.B.E' joins works by artist Julia Wood, designers Jasper Morrison and Daniel Weil, and an essay by critic Brian Hatton. All these contributions sit against a selection of articles by the NATØ group themselves, including a photo shoot depicting how to 'Dress Apprentice', and a double page spread explaining how to 'Albionise Your Living Room' – both of which draw heavily on the themes and graphic design of street style magazine *i-D* (to be discussed in this chapter).[60] The reduction of scale from the city to the individual and the object successfully embeds NATØ's approach within a broader subcultural field of designers and artists. Selectively drawing in works by a range of practitioners, but notably never another architect, NATØ is aligns its own approach more strongly disciplines outside architecture – suggesting that the way NATØ design a city is closer to the methods of an industrial designer or performance artist.

The third and final issue of NATØ magazine published in 1985 (fig.14), the 'Gamma City Issue', can be considered as the apotheosis of the group's work – drawing together their ideas in the most comprehensive and mature explication so far. This is in part due to the fact that the issue was produced as an accompaniment to the *Gamma City* (1985) show held at Iwona Blazwick's Air Gallery, and as such the magazine can only properly be considered alongside this physical manifestation. It is the combination of written articles and drawings in print, with the physical objects, props, videos, paintings and drawings of the exhibition that constitute most fully the thesis of NATØ's position. The word 'Gamma', explained succinctly in the magazine, expresses NATØ's approach: 'gamma rays emit spontaneously. They radiate strong short radio waves, effecting built mutation', a metaphor for a sense of design that is not predetermined but intuitive, gestural, unrestrained and contains the element of 'madness' in their design method detected by Hatton (as explained in Chapter 2).[61] The magazine itself is divided into three parts, 'Gammascope', 'Gamma-Features' and 'Gamma-City' – the first presenting very short articles often combined on one page, presenting a montage of ideas from filmmaker Nick Turvey's description of short film 'Radio Dog', to Hatton's imaginary 'NATØ Building Regs'.[62] The second part includes longer articles and features including three polemical short essays by NATØ members Mark Prizeman, Carlos Villanueva-Brandt and Peter Fleissig, an article by curator Iwona Blazwick and a piece on artist Krzysztof Wodiczko. Finally, the 'Gamma-City' section is conceived as a direct accompaniment to

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[60] Ibid., 'Dress Apprentice', pp.8-11; 'Albionise Your Living Room', pp.12-13.
[61] Nigel Coates, *NATØ* 3, (1985), p13; Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, 13 (1985), pp. 12–13.
[62] Nick Turvey, 'Dog lines', p.4; Brian Hatton, 'NATO'S BUILDING REGS', p.7.
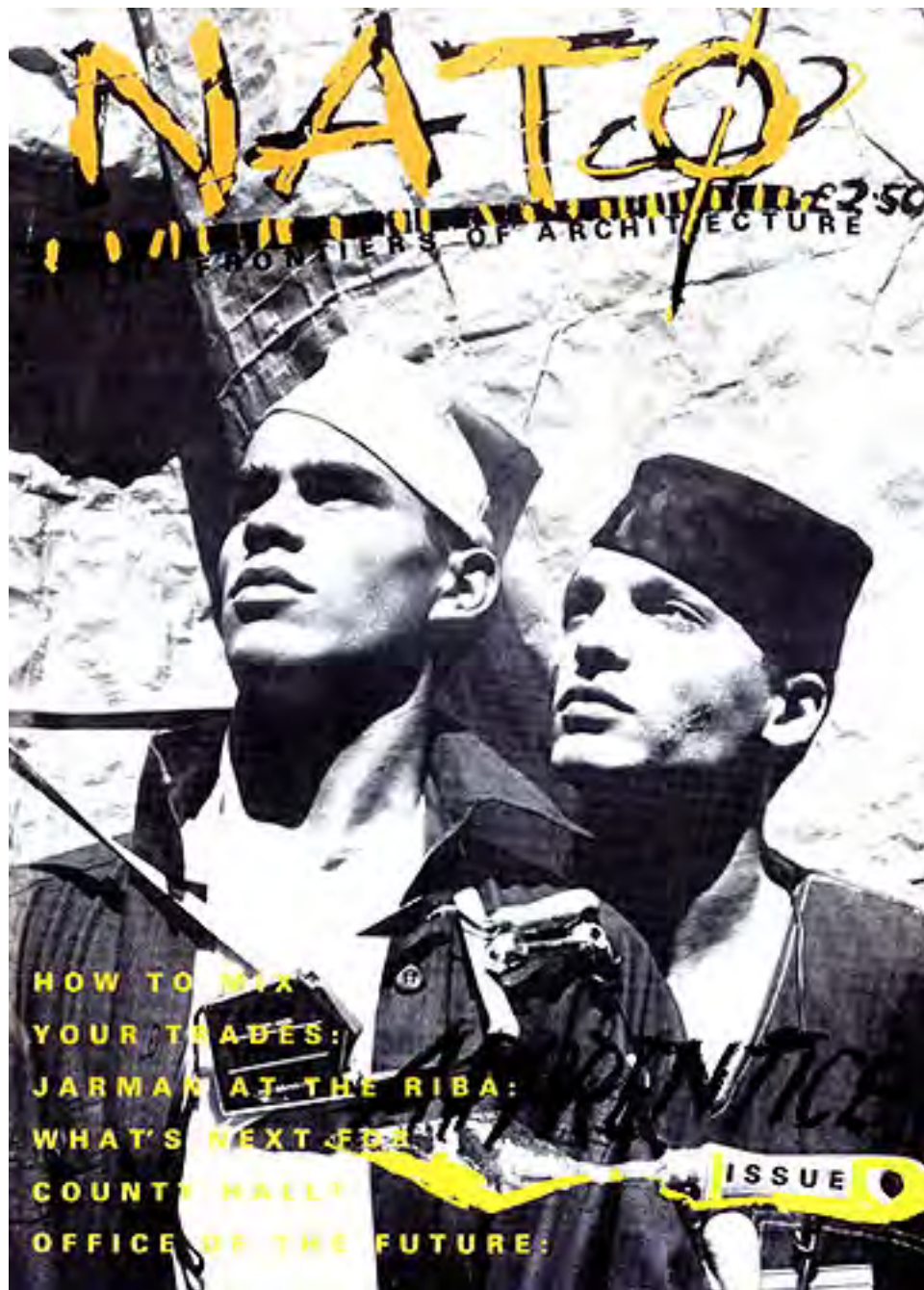
Figure 13: Front cover, Issue 2, *NATØ*, (1984)

Figure 14: Front cover, Issue 3, *NATØ*, produced to be read alongside the *Gamma City* show at the Air Gallery, London. (1985)

the exhibition, with a double page spread corresponding to each distinct part of the show, an introductory piece by Coates and a response by critic John Thackara. Throughout the issue cut out photographs of styled 'Gammaset people' intrude into page layouts, in much the same way as the commentary in the first issue – providing a thread that can be traced throughout, reinforcing the idea that the *Gamma City*, much like *Albion*, is created by the combination of individual voices. The inclusion of critics such as Hatton, Blazwick and Thackara provide an element of validation, where the first issue acts as a proclamation and statement of provocation, the final issue incorporates response and critique.

Before embarking on a closer analysis of individual articles from each of the three issues, it is pertinent to examine the pragmatics of the way that the magazine was funded, produced and distributed – and how this impacted upon the resulting magazine. It has already been stated that *NATØ* magazine was published by AA Publications, and this covered the majority of costs associated with production, however minutes from a meeting between Coates and Boyarsky records the latter requesting that the second edition of the magazine increase in price to £2.84 (the first issue had been £1.80), to which Coates responds that advertising revenue would make up the shortfall.[63] In the end the second issue was priced at £1.84 – as a note on the plans for the issue point out, this was the price of a gallon of petrol, the sort of cultural observation that NATØ revelled in. The advertisers sought by NATØ were brands and galleries that fitted the lifestyle and street culture image they were promoting; fashion labels such as WilliWear by Willi Smith featured alongside Harpers and Queen magazine and Becks beer, and a range of art and culture establishments such as The Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh, The Corner House cinema and exhibition centre in Manchester, The Barbican, and the ICA, advertisements for independent designers were also placed, as well as companies offering architectural products and services. The advertisements on the whole were quite different to the sort found in an architectural journal at the time (which were typically for building materials and products), and although were primarily placed to generate income, also contributed to the positioning of the magazine as a lifestyle publication rather than a strictly professional one. They also had the effect of giving the magazine the appearance of a 'real' commercial magazine, as opposed to a student publication or a fanzine – this was not just a personal venture, but one that warranted advertisement by major brands and other designers.

NATØ magazine was produced using offset lithography technology, a method which involved the creation of paste-up boards by hand, where elements of the page were cut and pasted at 1:1 scale and graphic effects and overlays were marked out (figs.15, 16). These boards, called 'mechanicals' in the printing trade, were then photographed to

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[63] Minutes of a meeting between NATØ and Boyarsky, dated 18/17/1984, Mark Prizeman's private collection.

produce negatives that were subsequently transposed onto metal plates for the printing process. What was important was the ability to physically manipulate these paste-up boards themselves, without the need to rely on the skills of a professional lay-out artist. NATØ let the cut and paste process of laying out the pages influence the design aesthetic, emphasising the effect of montage and collage to create a language of bricolage and 'adhocism' – concepts which are central to the detailed exploration of *NATØ* spreads in this chapter.[64] Importantly this was also a process that was conducive to group working, with numerous members of NATØ gathered around one table to produce layouts. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, the collaborative aspect of the group was of critical importance to the creative impulse NATØ generated, not only did they stimulate and motivate each other by working together, but their very approach to design was that the combination of multiple voices produced a more interesting, dynamic whole. This can clearly be seen in the magazine layouts, which though display a certain level of coherence, are markedly different page-to-page and issue-to-issue – with different typefaces, techniques and compositions used throughout. This was obviously the very nature of their aesthetic, but when compared to the absolute homogeneity of contemporaneous architecture magazines, both professional ones such as *Architects' Journal*, *Architectural Review* and *Architectural Design*, and self-published titles such as the *9H*, where each page is identical and all covers are made uniform, the diverse, ranging appearance of *NATØ* magazine appears as a purposeful strategy for design. The next two sections of this chapter will take spreads from the first two issues of *NATØ* to explore how the group used the magazine format to evoke the mise-en-scène of the city and a derive across the page, as well as the use of style as an oppositional strategy that mirrored *i-D*'s fetishisation of the street and street culture; issue 3 of *NATØ* will be discussed in conjunction with the *Gamma City* show at the Air Gallery in the final chapter.

NATØ 1: Navigating the page

'On the Boardwalk'
NATØ magazine was produced by the group to promote and defend their challenging position within architectural culture at the time – it was a response to their critics, in particular Stirling and Jones, and a 'coming out' that enabled them to gain a presence outside the institution from which they formed. However the magazine was not only a medium through which to communicate, but became, like their drawings, a realisation of their principles. In these two ways, *NATØ* magazine can be seen as both centrifugal and

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[64] Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013, first published 1972).
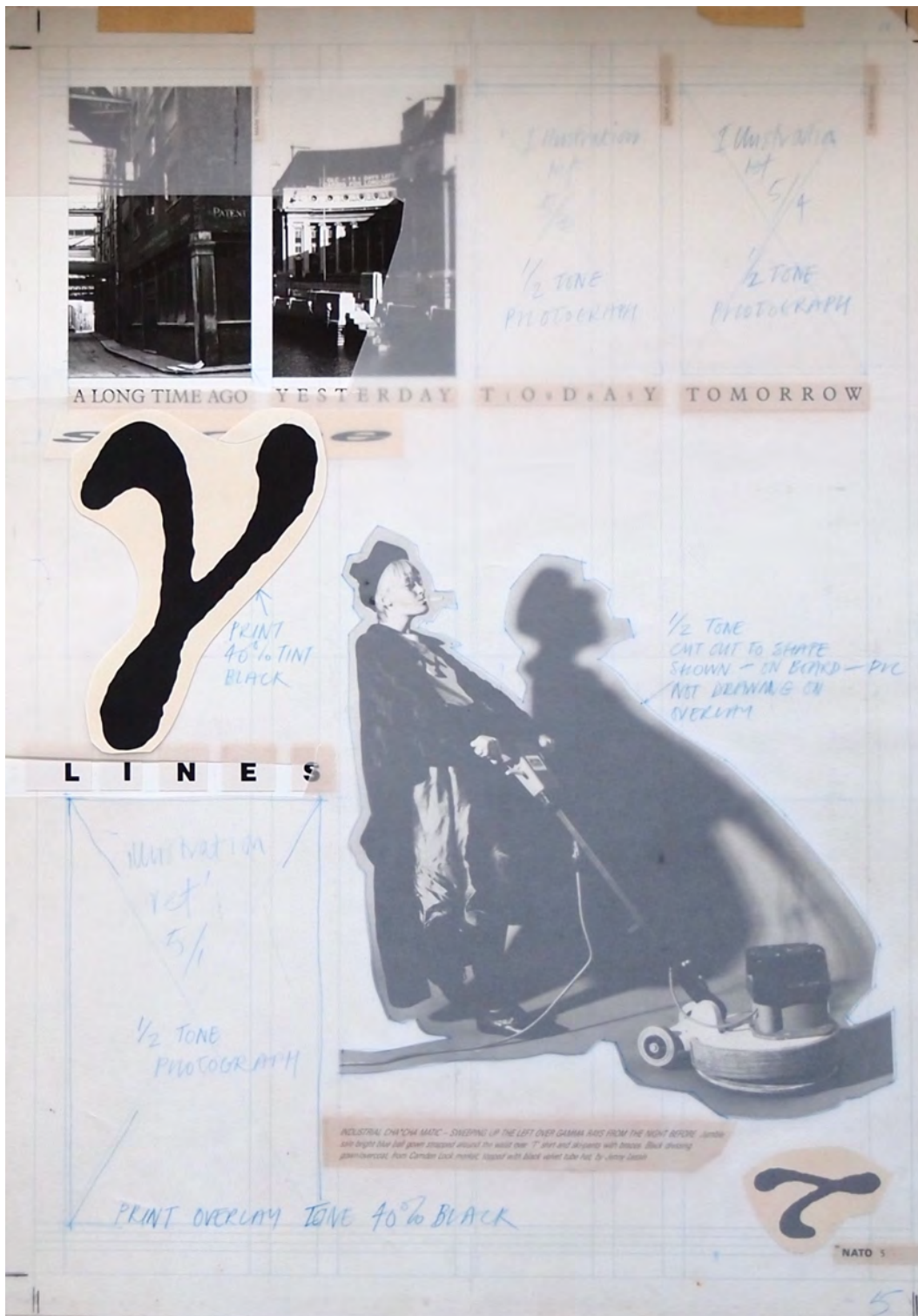
Figure 15: Paste-up board for issue 3 of *NATØ* magazine, showing process of layering, cutting and pasting. (1985).

Figure 16: Paste-up board for issue 3 of *NATØ* magazine, (1985).

centripetal – spiralling outwards as their primary means of communication and presence in the world, and simultaneously, a working site in which they developed and refined their ideas and concepts together. Through the pages of the first issue, the group established a mode of graphic design *as* architectural experience – one that bore multiple itineraries and paths to be navigated by the reader to produce a polyphase narrative of *Albion*. Through the topography of the magazine, NATØ carved out 'tours and detours, turns and re-turns' in a manner that resembled the polyvalent structure of the post-industrial city within which it was situated and produced.[65] As the previous chapter described, NATØ's drawing technique was specifically developed to enhance aspects of temporality, movement and indeterminacy, similarly, the magazine sought to recast graphic design as a narrative technique that would magnify the effect of the drawing.

Two double page spreads make up Christina Norton's 'On the Boardwalk' feature (figs. 17, 18), a journey through her section of *Albion*, four jetties that contain 'ordinary functions' that overlap and weave through the fabric of the city, including 'the school, the social security office, the church, the registry office' which are mixed with more 'exotic functions' such as 'the laser factory, the open stage pop opera or the shoe "magazine"'.[66] In layering the existing structures of Bermondsey and the buildings designed by other NATØ members, Norton creates an architectural scene of hybridity:

> WHAT'S ALREADY THERE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN SETTING UP REVERBERATIONS AND GIVING DEFINITION. TO THIS END WHAT USED TO BE IS ENCOMPASSED WITHIN THE WHOLE SCHEMA, TENDING TO BLOAT THESE JETTIES AS IN THE LASER FACTORY, OR TO SPLINTER THEM AS WITH THE DISPLAY FRONTS. THE PROGRAMME OF EACH PART FLOWS INTO THE OTHER AND VICE VERSA.[67]

The evocative verbs 'bloating' and 'splintering' are suggestive of spatial moves that are echoed through the visuals on the page, which are a combination of painted sketches overlaid with both free-flowing text and text in boxes – some following the flow of the images, and other countering them. Six small cut-out boxes of text produced on a type-writer are arranged haphazardly at skewed angles horizontally across the two spreads, forming the first layer of narrative that summarises the passage across the site, and drawing the reader in a journey through *Albion* and across the pages:

> As you walk through the controlled 'break up' of *Albion*, you come across four jetties, passageways between rail viaduct and river.

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[65] Giuliana Bruno, Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film (New York: Verso, 2007), p.15;

[66] Christina Norton, 'On the Boardwalk' , *NATØ*, 1, (1983), pp.16-19.

[67] Ibid., p.18.

Figure 17: 'On the Boardwalk' and 'Spanner in the Works', *NATØ*, issue one, showing two articles running in different directions across a spread. (1983).

Figure 18: 'On the Boardwalk' and 'Spanner in the Works', *NATØ*, issue one. (1983).

Each has its own personality, it's own form of conduct, but all share the common tendency to form hybrid institutions based on economic conditions and local myth.

It's not strange then to find one of these jetties canonizing the act of signing on.

The alley marks out 3 series of act, from chasing your giro to fresh claims.

Laced into this is a distorting pattern of suggestive bits and pieces.

And ordering tends to...disorder [68]

For some readers, this might be the only part they read, promoting as it does a skimming of the article which might take in the scribbled, black and white images in the background alongside the short statements which help to make sense of it.

The images themselves are painted, and appear to be greatly reduced from their original size – thick brushwork creates crude and smudged lines which are nonetheless clear due to their high contrast and lack of any detail. Norton has focused on the massive structural elements of her design, depicting the jetties while only hinting at the frenzied activities taking place within and below through illegible markings which contain a sense of frenetic energy. The overall effect is dynamic and somewhat crazed – spaces seem to overlap and the buildings themselves appear to vibrate as though barely containing the action occurring inside. The second layer of text, laid directly onto the images in a contrasting-coloured bold typeface, adds detail to the narrative. Arranged to draw the eye through the channels of the images, and thus the structure of the architecture, the text is carved and moulded into shape – in places proceeding in regular columns and in others stepping downwards at angles which reflect the depicted form. The relation between the different layers of text and the images is complicated, with neither taking the lead over the other, but each interfering with one another to create meanings which slip and shift. This can be described as 'discursivity', a key attribute of postmodern art practice according to theorist Craig Owens.[69] Discursivity in this context is redolent of a digressionary discourse that moves from subject to subject in a mode that is wandering and diffuse; Nigel Wheale also describes the effect of discursivity as introducing articulation and argumentation to formerly mute artworks.[70] A discursive magazine layout such as NATØ's produces 'interference patterns' between the textual and the visual, complicating both and preventing singular readings.[71] In this respect there is an element of deconstruction within NATØ's magazines, Norton does not provide a clear and easy reading of her vision of *Albion*, and purposefully produces distorted imagery that creates

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[68] Ibid, pp.16-19.
[69] Craig Owens, 'The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism', October, 12 (1980), pp.67–86.
[70] Nigel Wheale, *The Postmodern Arts: An Introductory Reader* (Routledge, 1995), p.120.
[71] Ibid., p.120.

unstable meanings which are not fixed by the text. Norton's two layers of text do add some specificity to the drawings, providing moments of detail and descriptions of materials, but the effect is still indeterminate; the reader is forced to work at making sense and building a mental image in a process of 'seeing in' (discussed in Chapter 2).[72]

Employing the first person perspective in her text, Norton forces the reader to take the position of the wanderer discovering an urban landscape which is evocatively described as a place of overlapping, mixed-up functions – emulating the imagery presented alongside the text:

> When you cut across Albion, maybe making your way from greyhound track to betting ship, from your place to the town hall they lie like snares in the way, the bait up above. Basically it's the same pattern cut up with decoys slotted in between parts extended, exaggerated, and scattered, as the programme of signing on stretches along the jetty it frays, progressively new circuits move in and join in begging for excursions into a broader lifestyle...[73]

> Rough and ready concrete and corrugated iron; permanence versus temporality, fine wrangled steel and sprung timber give a sense of sinuous instability. Forms moulded in a primitive manner deal with obtusely technical parts; figurative supporting structures are played against explosions of wires.[74]

The prose is rich in adjectives which help to furnish the depicted imagery with detail – so the viewer reads scratchy brush marks as metallic and wiry, or broad smudges as heavier concrete surfaces. A sense of spatial weaving and layering is enhanced by more specific descriptions of functions and objects:

> The programme of each part flows into the other and vice versa, as 'Computa work' infiltrates the home with cables and enlarged consoles cutting through and lacing over the old blocks of flats, so ironing boards, lounging seats, make-up corners and personal bricabrac begin to cluster and thereby invade the onerous institution of work domestic swapover...[75]

There is also a focus on the experience of moving through these complicated and disordered spaces in the manner of a journey. This use of the journey paradigm or trope is an effective way to aid narrativisation, and relates to one of the ways that Kevin Lynch described the mental structuring of the city.[76] Lynch explained the way that we create a mental construct of the environment which incorporates both our immediate sensations with our memories and experiences, describing five elements that aid this process. One of these elements is the 'path', a channel along which the observer moves, and is, according

[72] Richard Wollhein, 'What the spectator sees' in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith P. F. Moxey,
Visual Theory: Painting and Interpretation (Polity [in association with Blackwell], 1991), p.119.
[73] Ibid., p18.
[74] Ibid., p19.
[75] Ibid., p19.
[76] Kevin Lynch, The Image of the City (MIT Press, 1960).

to Lynch, often the predominant structuring device in most people's image of complex spatial arrangements.[77] It is in this way that the structuring device of the journey is used in Norton's 'Boardwalk', as the reader is able to mentally construct a pathway through *Albion* pieced together from the fragments of text and image that is provided. The visual channelling depicted by the arrangement and shape of the image on the page, echoed by the shape of the text, heightens this effect. Cognitive psychologists Barbara Tversky and Holly Taylor explain this further through their description of the three perspectives from which people comprehend and describe spatial environments: the 'gaze', the 'route' and the 'survey', concluding from their research that the route or 'tour' is the most adopted perspective when mentally organising or articulating space.[78] The route is distinguishable from other perspectives by that fact that it is moving and active, containing an exploratory aspect driven entirely by a bodily experience – opposed to the static point of view of the gaze or survey. In the same way that the drawing, as discussed in the previous chapter, fragmented scales and viewpoints to produce the effect of a moving spectator, so the layering of two streams of text – written from different perspectives – with the third moving perspective of the image, creates an even more fragmented, multivalent narrativity.

The techniques and attitude of Norton's 'Boardwalk' article, and indeed *NATØ* magazine more broadly, bear strong parallels to the contemporaneous street-style magazine *i-D* established in 1980 and designed by Terry Jones. Moving the focus away from brands and labels, *i-D* set out to document the myriad ways in which youth culture was adapting and modifying fashion, calling itself a 'do-it-yourself manual of style'. Perhaps Jones' most ingenious idea was to send his photographers to the streets, pioneering what *i-D* called 'The Straight-Up' – full length photographs of young people accompanied by a description of their outfit, which Jones would then cut out and collage across double page spreads. (Figs.19, 20) A strong graphic language emerged immediately in the first few issues, with photocopies and polaroids mixed with cut-out photographs, typewritten and hand-written text, textual overlays and stencils (Figs.21-23). The resulting spreads were clearly influenced by punk, but represented a move on – Jones' compositions were more considered, with the eye of a designer, bringing together varied elements in chaotic but clear graphic arrangements. The language of anarchy and cut-out ransom lettering is replaced by a tribal feel which employed block colours and patterns, and bold typefaces:

> Every choice, whether large or small, adds up to our sensory perception of the world. Catching all the sensory fragments is what makes life worth living, that

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[77] 'The City and its Elements', 'Paths' in Ibid.,pp.46-61
[78] Holly A. Taylor and Barbara Tversky, 'Perspective in Spatial Descriptions', Journal of Memory and Language, 35 (1996), pp.371–391.
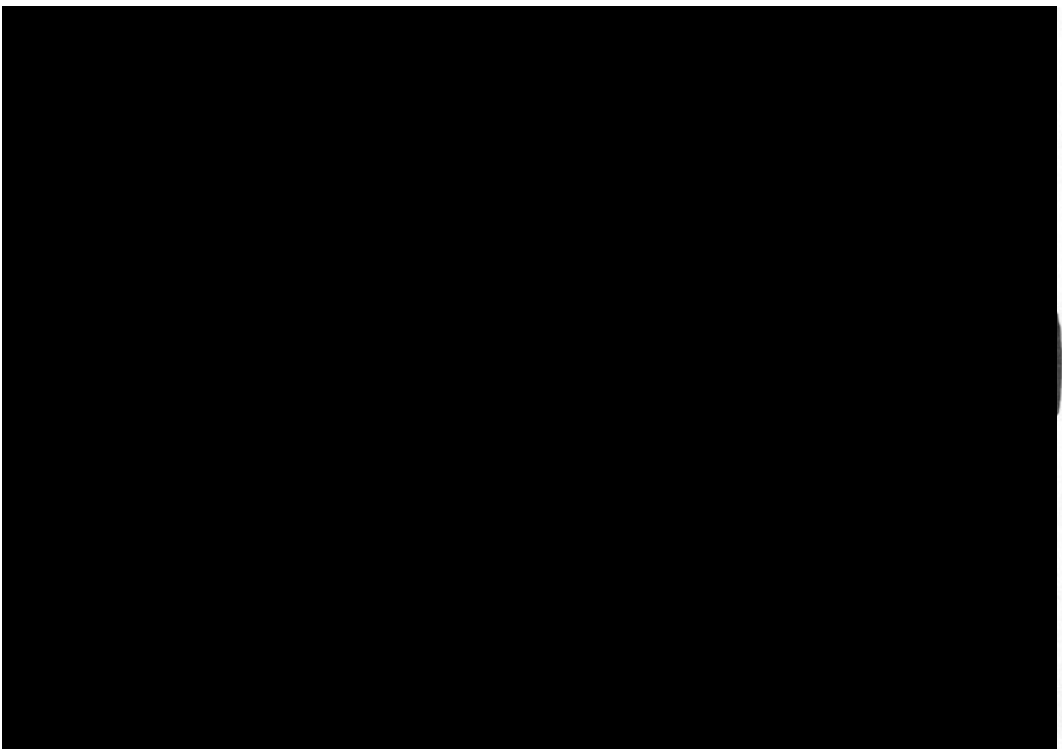
Figures 19 and 20: Terry Jones' 'Straight Up' feature in *i-D* magazine, issue 3 (1981).
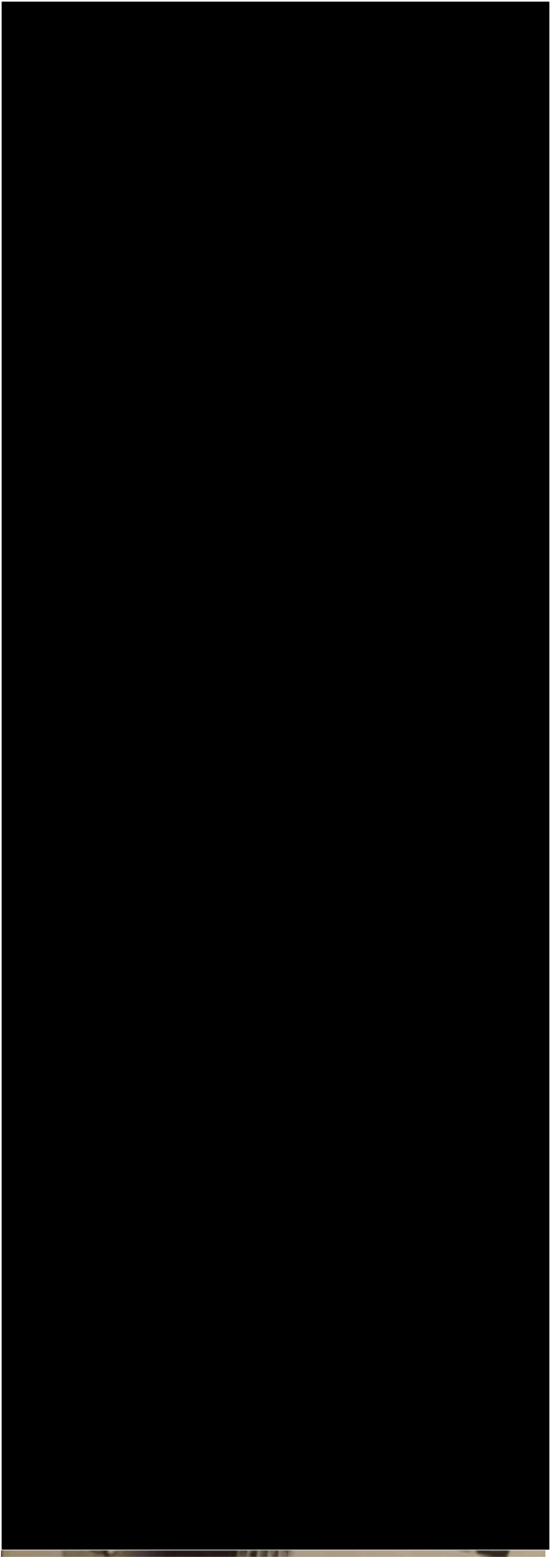
Figure 21: i-*D* magazine, no.4 (1981) – The width of the double page spread contributed to the sensation of a street scene from which characters emerged.
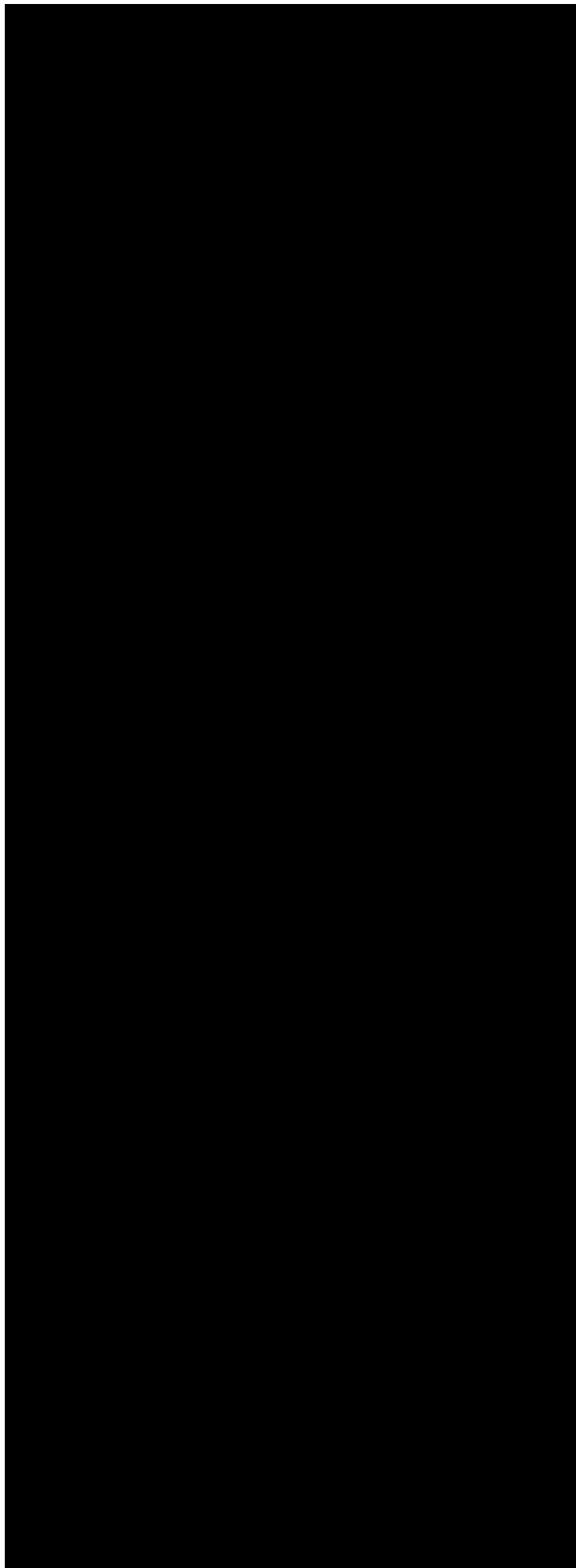
Figure 22: *i-D* magazine, no.5 (1981) – Colour and overlays were used by Terry Jones to create playful, textural effects.
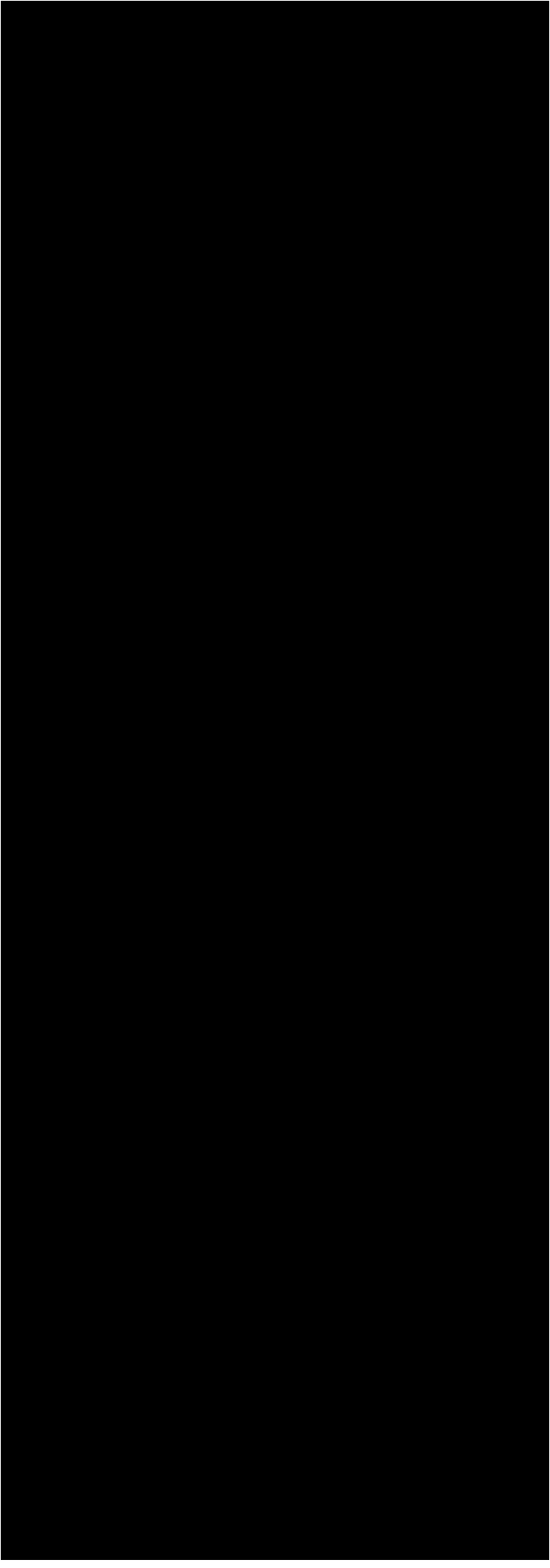
Figure 23: i-D magazine, no.4 (1981) – Dynamic layouts, photocopied photographs and bold lettering came together to create a tribal effect.

accumulation of touch, taste, smell, sound and, of course, visuals. Graphic design is about arranging marks or images and the effect of one in relation to another, through size, colour and position.[79]

The result of these highly textural, layered pages is that the reader is forced to slow down, and to take in the page perhaps more than once. This effect is further enhanced in the early issues by the landscape format, which created an unusually wide panorama – suggestive of the street scene from which the 'straight-ups' were plucked. Norton's 'Boardwalk' piece, across two double-spreads and cut off along the bottom third of the pages with another article, creates the same, horizontal composition – contributing to a panning effect. In both magazines, graphic design thus produces effects that are analogous to the street: wide panoramas composed from collaged fragments, with a multitude of elements that slow down perception.

It is possible to observe a similar sensibility, albeit with different techniques, in the graphic design of *The Face*, by Neville Brody, a publication that explored similar themes of style and music (figs. 24-27). The methods that Brody honed in *The Face*, shared *i-D*'s disregard for the conventions of graphic design, but was considerably more restrained and contemplative. Jones made a feature of making it up as he went along, improvising and experimenting literally with the processes of production and printing, whereas Brody imaginatively but carefully rethought the subtleties of the ways that design and layout could affect the perception of a magazine article without disturbing the purity of photographs, or using a photomontage approach. A key principle on *The Face* was that the content and the design presented the reader with two separate narratives from which they could navigate their own path through the magazine – as Brody put it 'we wanted people to be their own editors'.[80]

Brody considered the page to be anchored by the key elements of the photographs, the text and the page size – the structure or foundation within which he could experiment.[81] The function of the design was thus to guide the reader around the page and through the magazine in a manner which Brody likens to a three-dimensional spatial, even architectural, experience:

> There needed to be directional symbols, and open space at a particular point – always at the beginning of a piece, where I would use white space to articulate an entrance: you don't put a doorway to a large building in a small alley-way [...] You must articulate the idea that a stairway leads up to the next floor, and you put your walls in once you have a relationship between the design elements that doesn't weaken the structure of the building.[82]

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[79] Terry Jones, *Catching the Moment* (Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2002). p.126.
[80] Neville Brody quoted in Jon Wozencroft, *The Graphic Language of Neville Brody* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988). p.96.
[81] Ibid., p.98.
[82] Ibid., p.98.
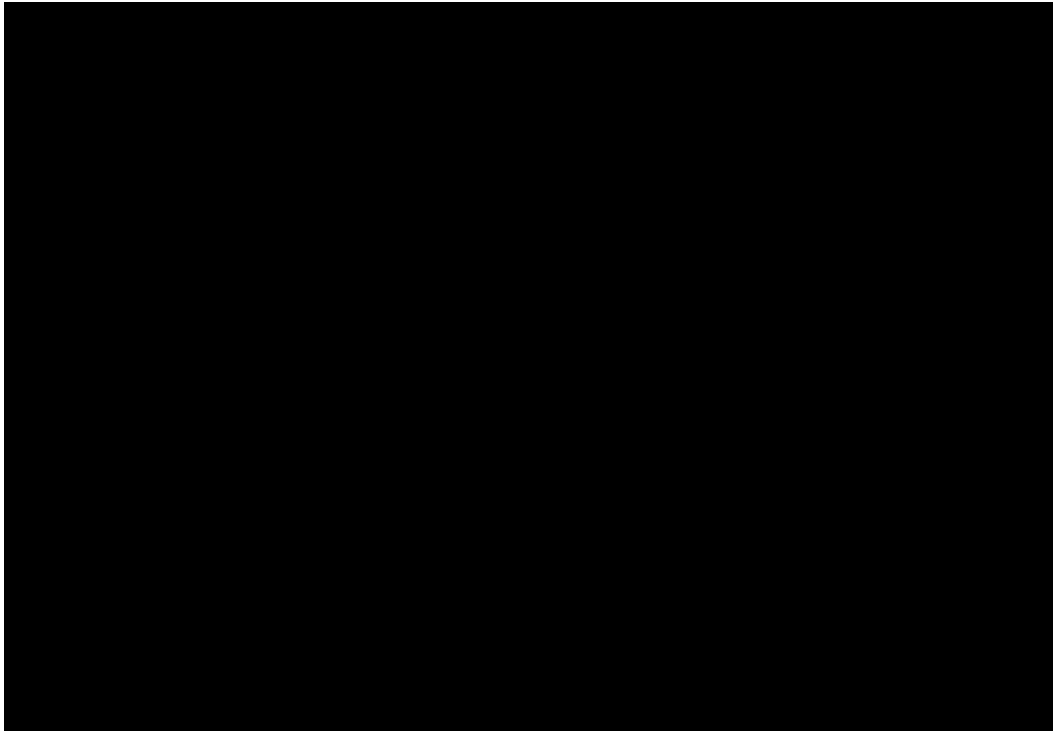
Figure 24: Spread from *The Face*, (1982) - The design of typefaces suited to each article, often transformed into a graphic, was a hallmark of Neville Brody's work on *The Face*.
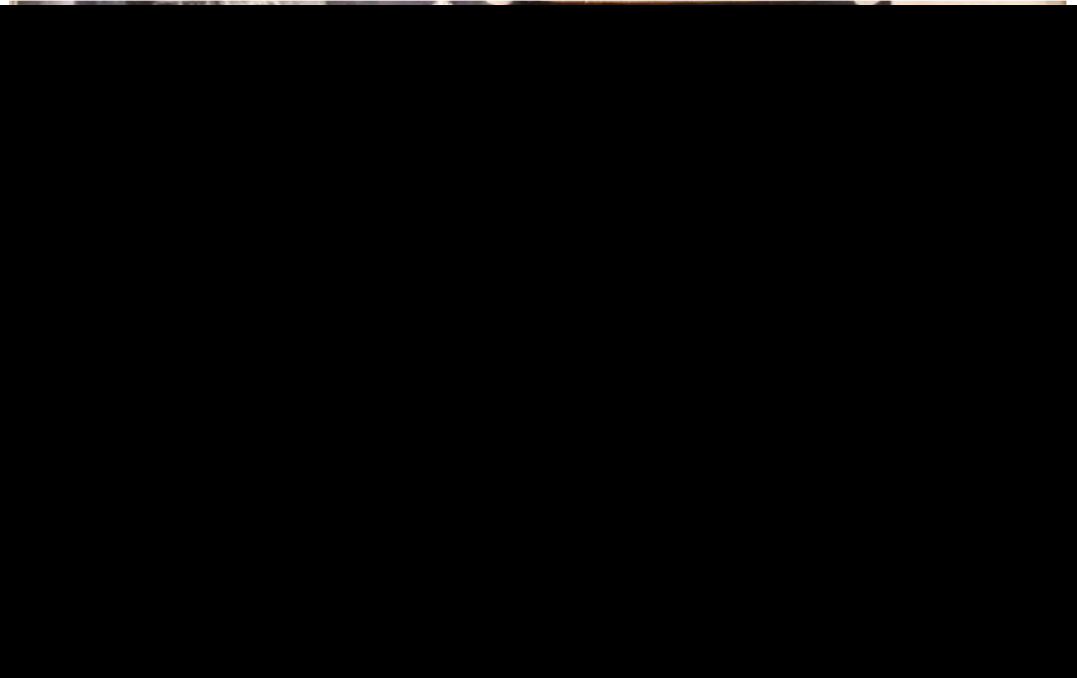
Figure 25: Spread from *The Face*, June (1980) - Headers bled off the edge of the page, in this case separating the word and reversing it, forcing a slower process of recognition.

Figure 26: Spread from *The Face*, (1982)

Figure 27: Spread from *The Face*, (1980) - Brody used blank space in The Face to push and pull the reader's eye across the page, creating numerous places to enter and exit.

Though their strategies were different, both Brody and Jones wanted the reader to spend longer on the page and to work at understanding everything that was presented to them – revealing hidden parts and meanings through a process of discovery. Though Hebdige finds traction in Roland Barthes notion of 'cruising' in the way that *The Face* is navigated, and attributes this to the Benjaminian 'distracted gaze' of the perpetual consumer, this fails to acknowledge the active process of creating meaning that this mode of design engenders. Benjamin's 'distracted gaze' flows from the movement of the *flâneur*, who experiences the city in a detached way that uses chance as a guide; by contrast, the *The Face, i-D* and *NATØ* complicate and disorder the page so that it take more, not less, effort to untangle the content. In this respect 'cruising' is better substituted by the concept of the Situationist *dérive*, an active, constructive process that exposes these magazines as 'cool' mediums in Marshall McLuhan's categorisation.[83] As Brody describes, this was design that sought not to fade into the background but to amplify the experience of reading:

> The basic structure of *The Face* was one of manoeuvring the eye and the intellect – the signposting was doing the passive work for the reader, but what those signs looked like was creating a reaction; I was laying open questions, pointing out the manipulative nature of how signposting works [...] An editorial exists on many levels – it does not consist only of words. And any design colours the way in which you read the content. The typeface you use, its size, the way you space it, the position you choose – all these affect the way in which you read a piece.[84]

In the same way, Norton's 'Boardwalk' spread activates the architecture depicted – elevating it from a serious of images and accompanying textual description, to a spatial expression of being in that place.

The magazine as polyphase narrative

The examination of Norton's 'Boardwalk' as a single article is to a certain extent a flawed exercise, as it should be considered within the context of the rest of the magazine. Certainly Norton's piece possesses lower narrativity than other more explicitly 'storied' articles in the magazine – for example Mark Prizeman's 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse', which will be discussed next.[85] One of the primary functions of Norton's article is to contribute to the general mise-en-scene of *Albion* produced by the magazine as a whole. In the same way that an issue of *i-D* magazine could be viewed as a collage of London's street scene pieced together through numerous articles and fragments that built-up a picture of a milieu and its inhabitants, so *NATØ* builds up a layered mental image of

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[83] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media : The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2001).
[84] Neville Brody quoted in Jon Wozencroft,*The Graphic Language of Neville Brody* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988). p.12.
[85] Mark Prizeman, 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse', *NATØ* 1, pp.20-21.

Albion through its different articles. Brody also describes this as a conscious effect of
graphic design in *The Face:*

> [...]There's a connection between page 5 and pages 56 and 57, a continuum. A
> magazine doesn't have to divide up space on a page like a newspaper, and the
> information it carries has more time to make connections between different ideas
> that might be present. Why be inhibited by the edge of the page? [86]

Indeed, running along the bottom third of Norton's 'Boardwalk' spreads is an
article by Robert Mull, which is laid out in the opposite orientation, so it is necessary to
turn the magazine 90 degrees in order to read it (figs.17, 18). This physical turning of the
page, combined with the movement of the eye up and down the page that characterises
Norton's visual arrangement of text and drawing in her part, doubles the sensation of
layered movement, and contributes to a drift through the individual articles. In the centre
of the magazine, Benson's aerial view provides what Tversky and Taylor describe as a
'survey' of *Albion*, from a fixed, external position that shows the static arrangement of
parts – the narrative potential of this drawing on its own is limited to a quite broad,
sensual reading of overlapping, intermingling spaces and of a disordered place (as
described in Chapter 2).[87] Peter Fleissig's opening article 'Do Walls Have Ears', a
primarily textual affair with illustrative photographs provides the social and political
background to the place (fig.28), while Coates builds the description of *Albion* in more
detail with a tour through each project and an elaboration of the design method in 'Ghetto
and Globe' (fig.29, 30).[88] Coates also intersperses his text with transmedial references –
providing in one instance a soundtrack to *Albion* in the form of a description of a music
video by band Heaven 17, a popular track at the time that would trigger an audio element
to the narrative:

> Switch over to video. Heaven 17 promotional tape (pirated from 'Top of the
> Pops', the BBC's longest–running programme). *A newspaper with the sensational
> headline ENGLISH ELECTRIC FOUNDATION CRASHES blows across ground
> close up.*
> Figure runs, as if fleeing, past the Bank of England. The best years of our lives/
> The hope of it survives/ The facts of life unspoken/ The only game in town/ I'll
> turn the last card down/ And now the bank is broken. (Let Me Go, 1982)
> *Camera (remote control) skims the ground in a long tracking shot over debris,
> past a litter bin, veers upwards to portray singer standing alone. Camera rises to
> the roof and pulls back, revealing deserted railway station.*

The song depicts life in an abandoned city, a narrative that Coates co-opts to build the
image of NATØ, drawing in other extra-compositional content with references to

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[86] Neville Brody quoted in Jon Wozencroft,*The Graphic Language of Neville Brody* (London:
Thames and Hudson, 1988). p.12.
[87] Holly A. Taylor and Barbara Tversky, 'Perspective in Spatial Descriptions', Journal of Memory
and Language, 35 (1996), pp.371–391.
[88] 'Do Walls Have Ears', *NATØ* 1, pp.4-5; 'Ghetto & Globe', pp.8-11.

Figure 28: 'Do Walls Have Ears?', Peter Fleissig, *NATØ* 1, (1983) - Fleissig's primarily textural article provides the political background to Albion.

Figure 29: 'Ghetto & Globe', Nigel Coates, *NATØ* 1, (1983) - Coates's article provides transmedial references that contribute audio and visual elements to the mise-en-scène of the magazine.

Figure 30: 'Ghetto & Globe', Nigel Coates, *NATØ* 1, (1983)

Malcom McLaren's *Duck Rock* album cover and Vivienne Westwood's clothing, further furnishing the aesthetic and ideology of *Albion*. Moving further through the magazine, Carlos Villanueva Brandt's 'Marriage Lines' zooms in to the scale of one event, describing in second person fictional prose the wedding of two characters (fig.31).[89] Villaneuva Brandt's text focuses on a physical description of a part of *Albion*, which is bolstered by the narrative of a wedding and the photographic depiction of two fictional characters in truly 'Albionised' attire. The description of the event that allows Villanueva-Brandt to characterise the buildings and spaces narrativises the piece in a similar way to Norton's journey trope – elevating it from description by framing it with a real-life scenario.

By the time the reader reaches Prizeman's 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse' (figs. 32, 33) towards the end of the magazine, the mise-en-scène of *Albion* has been richly furnished from different perspectives and scales by the preceding articles. Both content and syntactic narratemes come in and out of focus to create varying states of experientiality, representationality and meaningfulness across the magazine. Prizeman's piece contains the most traditional textual narrative, a first person story illustrated with small sketches showing vignettes of spaces and events – however it is made all the more evocative by the connections and relations made between the article and the rest of the magazine's content. This is exemplary of NATØ's approach to narrative more broadly, they did not seek to create straightforward storylines enacted in space, or space determined by a plot-line, but the evocation of a place overlaid with multiple threads and fragments of narrative.

Prizeman tells the story of a character traversing *Albion* in search of an elusive secondary character 'Felix', along the way other characters are mentioned in diversions which relate to the sketched images. The stream of consciousness is confusing and complicated, resisting easy summary or breakdown into a clear plot, however there is still a strong sense of teleology – the main character is looking for Felix, and the search draws us through the various inhabited spaces of *Albion*. Prizeman also diverts to other characters who may or may not be related to the present story. The plot is thus indicative of NATØ's approach to narrative as a whole, presented through the magazine: a series of crossing and intersecting currents and tracks which contributes to a 'smooth' Deleuzian narrative structure open to exploration.

The 'smoothness' of NATØ's narrative space was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the drawing, which produced non-linear and non-hierarchical rhizomatic structures for the eye to navigate in a free-flowing and continuous way. Similarly, *NATØ* magazine subverts the inherent linearity of the magazine format – indicated through its conventional front and back covers, contents page and numbered pages – by the interlinked nature of the articles, which through referencing and describing

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[89] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, 'Marriage Lines', *NATØ*, 1, pp. 14-15.

Figure 31: 'Marriage Lines', Carlos Villanueva Brandt, *NATØ* 1, (1983) – individual characters and an event embedded within the broader mise-en-scène of the magazine.

Figure 32: 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse, Mark Prizeman, *NATØ* 1, (1983)

Figure 33: 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse, Mark Prizeman, *NATØ* 1, (1983)

the same place (Albion) and idea (narrative architecture) from different perspectives and different modes, encourages a reading that moves back and forward through the magazine. In effect, the individual articles are fragments of the whole impression of the magazine, which are montaged through an active process of reading. In certain articles, in particular the 'On the Boardwalk' spreads, this smoothness is exaggerated by Mull's article running along the bottom third, which the reader is either forced to flip backwards to read once they have finished Norton's piece, or must read in combination with Norton's pieces, flicking the eye between the two articles, turning the page to capture fragments of each. In the second edition of the magazine, (which will be discussed in detail in the next section of this chapter), this effect is exaggerated with numerous articles that start halfway along a page, adverts placed vertically between articles on a page, and articles spilling elements into the space of others. The effect is that the reader is drawn through the magazine, constantly having to turn the page to finish articles, but also linkages between articles are be made more easily – frequently there is more than one article on a page or across a spread. The physical rotation required to read articles in all three magazines – at its more heightened in the third magazine – develops the smooth structure of the magazine further.

However, the magazine is not entirely smooth, the strategies employed above do not entirely subvert the strong linearity – striation – that the format provides, and clearly the group's decision to use page numbers and a contents pages suggests that they were not opposed to a conventional reading. However just as Deleuze and Guattari describe the city as a combination of smooth and striated space, and that even striated space may be experienced in a smooth way – in the manner of the nomad – so the reading of the magazine is a similar combination of experiences.[90] As in Coates's panning drawings for *ArkAlbion* which pleated time through structures of significance that caused the eye to move at different speeds across different parts of the drawing, so too the magazine drifts between the close and slow reading of tight-set, columned text, and faster flows and skimming around pages that are dominated by images, or unmoored from the structuring grid. The move from Coates's 'Ghetto & Globe' article to the following spread that shows Benson's aerial drawing of *Albion* exemplifies this effect; the eye thus flows between points of stability. It is also subject to reversals, as another reader might skim through the textually dense 'Ghetto & Globe' to spend more time visually navigating Benson's drawing, turning the page to produce different orientations and effects, as Deleuze and Guattari describe: 'Nothing is ever done with: smooth space allows itself to be striated, and striated space re-imparts a smooth space, with potentially very different values,

[90] Gilles Deleuze, Brian Massumi and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2008)
<http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=310185> [accessed 1 October 2013].

scope, and signs.'[91] In this way, each issue of *NATØ* magazine constitutes a tangle of individual parts that produce differing montaged effects and readings, against the single, coherent whole.

By the end of the first edition of *NATØ,* the reader approaches Prizeman's 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse', enhanced by the accompanying images, and still holds in their mind the mental image depicted by Benson in the aerial view, the soundtrack offered by Coates, Villanueva-Brandt's characters, the urban scene decried by Norton, as well as infinite other details, fragments and themes that adorn the pages of the magazine. The reader must act like a bricoleur, or a nomad, to piece together what they find on the pages to produce a complex, layered and mutable narrative of the experience of *Albion*.

NATØ 2: Bricolage as oppositional strategy

House for Jarman

As outlined in the introduction to this section, the second issue of *NATØ* magazine, 'Apprentice Issue', shifts to the scale of the individual – characterising the inhabitant of the NATØ city through product design, fashion and interior design.[92] Though the first issue touches on all these themes, the second issue moves one step further away from architecture to find ways of designing and thinking in other areas that share the same spirit. The issue is also notable for featuring numerous other designers and artists such as Joe 'The Rev. King Rat Mutant God' O.B.E, Julia Wood, Jasper Morrison and Daniel Weil, whose work NATØ were influenced by, and as a result the issue's approach to content is more like a conventional magazine than the manifesto-like first issue. Of all three issues, the second is most closely aligned to the content of street style magazines *i-D* and *The Face*, and makes the greatest effort to appeal to an audience outside architecture. The first sign of this is the cover, which features two male models posed to display clothing from the 'Dress Apprentice' feature inside (fig.34).[93] Certainly this is not the sort of imagery that would ever have appeared on the front of an architecture magazine, either during this period or any other, and the effect is more like a contemporary fashion or lifestyle magazine. This was a bold and provocative statement, particularly as the male models depicted bore a distinctly homoerotic styling: open shirts displaying bare chests, Navy inspired headwear, and shot in a light that emphasised the sculptural, feline quality of the face – a look reminiscent of David Bowie and other gay icons. There is also a strong visual connection to the iconic gay film by Rainer Werner

[91] Ibid., p.486
[92] NATØ 2, APPRENTICE ISSUE, (Architectural Association, 1984).
[93] 'Dress Apprentice', NATØ 2, pp.8-11.
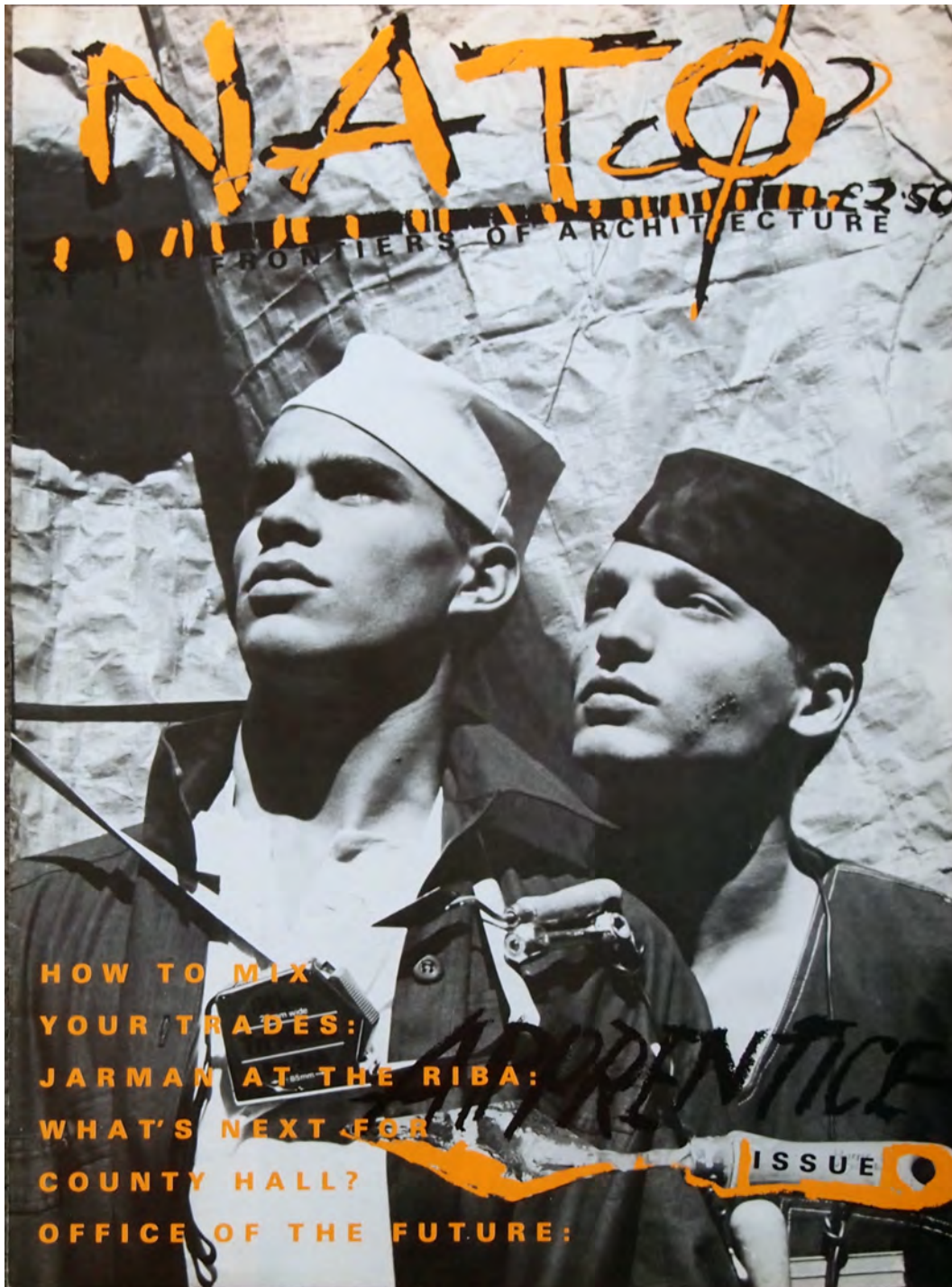
Figure 34: Cover of issue 2, *NATØ* (1984)

Fassbinder, *Querelle,* released two years earlier in 1982.[94] The connection to the gay scene through Coates as discussed in Chapter 1, comes into sharpest focus in this issue of the magazine.

One of the most interesting articles in the magazine, announced on the cover – 'JARMAN AT THE RIBA' – is 'NATO for Jarman', a single page showing the group's design for an imaginary house for the filmmaker that was produced for an exhibition – *Star Choice* – at the RIBA in 1984.[95] The project illustrated reveals a number of important themes and draws attention to the connection between Jarman and his work, and NATØ. Jarman is introduced on the previous page in an article in which NATØ select four artists and designers that have influenced their work. (fig.35). A paragraph about Jasper Morrison is written by the designer himself, describing a day in the life of a product designer who uses found objects to invent new objects with a different use, similarly Daniel Weil is included for his *Radio in a Bag* (1981; the components of a radio contained in a see-through, printed plastic bag), and thirdly artist Julia Wood is described as having synthesised her training in both painting and sculpture, creating works of art with plasticine directly on the gallery wall. The page is foregrounded by a short piece of editorial by Catrina Beevor, 'Patents Bending', in which she elaborates the idea that although many designed objects may be protected by patents, the way they are used or appropriated is not – the premise that unites NATØ with Morrison, Weil and Wood.

The fourth individual presented on the page is Jarman, who is not profiled in the same way as the previous designers, but instead is explored through the design for a house at Winspit on the Isle of Purbeck, where Jarman had spent time as a child.[96] (fig.36). The group's choice of Jarman as the subject of their entry to the *Star Choice* exhibition was a purposefully provocative one that spoke of their motivations as architects:

> As part of its Festival of Architecture last May, the RIBA hyped an exhibition called STARCHOICE as mainline advertising for the benefits of the architectural profession – Mansard Manser met the masses in 24 archi-designed interiors of media PERSONALITIES from David Hockney's shower to Lord Carrington's sofa....Since NATO draws more than it builds, the 'Starchoice' was ours; we chose Derek Jarman, the savoury avant-garde film-maker, as our client. At least with us he could generate more than a 20" x 16" colour photo and ink-abuse drawing as held up by the other stars featured.[97]

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[94] The film centres on the title character, a sailor, who wears a similar homoerotic, navy styled, camp outfit to the models on the cover of *NATØ,* and was one the earlier mainstream films with an overtly homoerotic theme.

[95] 'NATO for Jarman', *NATØ*, 2, pp.5-6; *Star Choice*, Royal Institute of British Architects, London, May (1984).

[96] Jonathan Hill, *Weather Architecture* (Routledge, 2013), p.296.

[97] 'NATO for Jarman', *NATØ* 2, p5.

Figure 35: 'Apprentice Says', *NATØ* 2, (1984)

Figure 36: 'House for Jarman', *NATØ* 2, (1984)

The RIBA represented the establishment of the profession, and indeed, the body which perpetuated the conventional image of the architect that NATØ sought to subvert.[98] As such, NATØ's contribution to the exhibition was an act of defiance on two levels – consisting of a characteristically sketchy, messy collection of drawings, the physical presentation was in the vein of a mise-en-scène of drawings that appeared unfinished, in contrast to the conventional architectural drawing. But secondly, the choice of Jarman, a gay film-maker whose work dealt with what were controversial themes, such as homosexuality, with often explicit sexual content in films such as *Sebastiane* (1976), and anti-establishment, political and social critiques in the form of *Jubilee* (1978) and the later *The Last of England* (1987), was in itself a way to bring a disruptive and potentially objectionable element to a highly institutionalised setting.

Far more than a moment of rebellion, Jarman and his body of work had a greater significance to NATØ, and the inclusion of this project the magazine enabled the group to align their own approach and work with the broader range of Jarman's huge artistic output and the culture surrounding him in London. Coates met Jarman through his social network involved in film and theatre projects and the London club scene, of which both Coates and Jarman were frequent participants – Coates also regularly invited Jarman to join end of term jury panels in the early 1980s. Though they were not close, Jarman's interests were very similar to Coates and he represented a model of a creative, homosexual artist that Coates would look up to throughout his career.

Between 1975-79 Jarman made three important films, *Sebastiane*, *Jubilee* and *The Tempest*, which influenced Coates and subsequently the rest of the NATØ group, becoming key references in their house for the film-maker.[99] *Sebastiane* was an intensely homoerotic film which was highly significant to the increasingly emancipated gay community by virtue of its celebration of sexuality and the male form – the likes of which had not been seen in a feature film before.[100] The film portrayed the martyrdom of the Christian Saint Sebastian, a figure often depicted pinned to a tree shot with arrows in religious paintings and imagery, and was thus considered highly controversial by mainstream film critics and viewers for its depiction of homoeroticism between the characters. For Coates it was the appeal of the 'raw Roman landscape' of the film that fed into his appreciation of romantic decay and classical references – a picturesque sensuality

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[98] The RIBA was responsible for the prescriptively narrow educational guidelines which schools including the AA had to fit their teaching programmes into, and was also a body who promoted the relatively reserved work of conventional practices whose work was the mainstay of the profession, as well as the big-names of the British architecture scene such as James Stirling, Norman Foster and Richard Rogers – each of whom received the RIBA Gold Medal during this period and were further canonised by a retrospective at the Royal Academy in 1986 (*New Architecture: Foster, Rogers, Stirling*).

[99] *Sebastiane*, dir. by Derek Jarman, (1976); *Jubilee*, dir. by Derek Jarman, (1978), *The Tempest*, dir. by Derek Jarman (1979).

[100] Michael O'Pray, Dreams of England (London: British Film Institute, 1996).

that had been a theme of his work since the late 1970s (discussed in Chapter 1).[101]
However it was *Jubilee* (that Coates and his boyfriend Antonia Lagarto were extras in)
that resonated the strongest with NATØ for not only its content, which described an
England in decline through the language of subcultural music and style, but also for its
sprawling, immersive structure and its technique of mixing fact and fiction, and past,
present and future.[102]

 Jubilee presents a loose narrative that revolves around a depiction of England in
some near future run by the music and media industry, where every aspect of life has
been commodified, and where anarchy and gangs rule the streets; the film is also rife with
explicit sex, violence, murder, causing it to be severely edited for its US release in
1979.[103] These scenes are interrupted by flashbacks to conversations between Queen
Elizabeth I and her advisor John Dee, who summon the angel Aerial to project a vision of
the future – a juxtaposition and play with temporality that enhances the violence and
apocalyptic atmosphere of both the contemporary condition and Jarman's imagined
future, as well as providing a critique of the contemporary nationalistic overtones and the
Queen's Jubilee. Describing *The Last of England*, in which an even greater blending of
temporality is presented, Jarman proclaimed: 'Here the present dreams the past future', a
mantra that bears a strong resemblance to Coates's description of NATØ's *Gamma City* as
an 'archeology-projected and a futurology-reversed into the present' – a sophisticated
blending of temporality that will be explored in the next chapter.[104] For Jarman, *Jubilee*
was also partly autobiographical, acted by his friends and filmed in the warehouses and
empty sites around Shad Thames and Butlers Wharf, where Jarman lived.[105] The film was
an homage to punk music and style, and a critique of capitalist systems, the media, and
the rise of bourgeois values, and thus was, in Jarman's words, a 'fantasy documentary
fabricated so that the documentary and fictional forms are confused and coalesce'.[106] This
blending of reality and the imagination, that also montages different time periods, would
become a characteristic of Jarman's work from *Jubilee* onwards, and was exaggerated by
a narrative structure that was loose and episodic – avoiding the depiction of a clearly
identifiable dramatic plot, as friend and critic Michael O'Pray has described:

 Jubilee is the film in which Jarman found his voice and style. With the exception
 of the first scene, no attempt is made to reproduce a historical or contemporary

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[101] 'NATO for Jarman', *NATØ,* 2, (1984) p.6.

[102] Nigel Coates, personal interview, September 2012.

[103] Michael O'Pray, *Dreams of England* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p.110.

[104] Derek Jarman and David L. Hirst, The Last of England, 1st edition (London: Constable, 1987),
p.188; Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in John Thackara ed. *Design After Modernism: Beyond the
Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.111.

[105] O'Pray, p.99.

[106] Derek Jarman, *Dancing Ledge*, Reprint edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,
2010).

reality; instead the bricolage methods of nearly all the feature films are given full rein.[107]

 In this sense Jarman preferred to display the inner workings of a character through costume, props, setting and music rather than through acting or dialogue; in a similar way, NATØ sought sensual, visual richness in their approach to design, using an accumulation of symbolic and literal references to imbue meaning and narrative.

Jubilee's juxtaposition of Edwardian England with a contemporary London can thus be seen as an apparently incompatible juxtaposition that results in a new, disruptive image – bricolage. In Lévi-Strauss's conceptualisation, bricolage goes beyond a simple process of montage and is associated with a poetical 'mythical reflection', a form of 'intellectual bricolage' which works with the existing signs of language to produce new mythological worlds.[108] In this respect, Lévi-Strauss explains how the materials of the bricoleur and the myth-maker are defined by two criteria 'they have had a use' and 'can be used again', drawing an analogy between the 'cogwheels of an old alarm clock' and 'words in a piece of discourse' which can both be 'detached' to create new meanings or objects.[109] Hebdige joins these two modes of thinking and making in his discourse on subcultures, explaining that the central values – the mythology – of a subculture is projected through a bricolage of elements detached from the prevailing culture into a new vocabulary of forms.[110] The bricolage techniques of the punks and post-punks of the early 1980s, that include Jarman and NATØ, thus produced subversions and critiques of the culture of consumerism, media saturation, and the dominant politic. For NATØ in particular, this was not an out and out rejection or a proposition for a new society, but a way to draw attention to the contemporary cultural condition – at different moments exaggerating, critiquing, parodying, or embracing it. Christopher Johnson has described bricolage as a process of deconstruction and reconstruction which acts as a form of reassignment, breaking up complicated structure and forcing them into new relationships with differing ordering principles.[111] His characterisation of the process evokes a sense of play or experimentation – describing the 'disparate, ill-assorted, sundry' elements of bricolage as odd and uneven, combined in a process of trial and error.[112] In this way, the bricolage enacted by NATØ is similarly exploratory and adhoc, with unexpected and unpredictable results that are not overt critiques, but instead re-workings that produce defamiliarised junctures.

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[107] O'Pray, p.99.

[108] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind: (la Pensée Sauvage)*, 1989, p.17.

[109] Ibid., p.35.

[110] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979),

[111] Christopher Johnson, 'Bricoleur and Bricolage: From Metaphor to Universal Concept', *Paragraph*, 35.3 (2012), pp. 355-372.

[112] Ibid., p.359.

In *Jubilee*, Jarman performs bricolage on a number of levels – in the styling of the punk characters, who display the typical pillaging of nationalistic symbols such as the Union Jack flag and the crown, and their living quarters which display the cobbled together remnants of decaying warehouses and salvaged furniture, and also in the intellectual bricolage of the Elizabethan past, the myth of Aerial, and the contemporary (or future) moment, using contemporaneous cultural references such as the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* and Myra Hindley, and purposefully provocative 'cameos' by recognisable figures such as Adolf Hitler.[113]

In NATØ's design for Jarman's imaginary house, Coates, Villanueva Brandt and Prizeman employ similar methods to transform a derelict building, once an engine room, on the edge of quarry above Dancing Ledge (a particular stretch of coastline where the tides create a visual illusion that the cliff side is dancing). The original structure of the engine room remains in the form of a series of walls that define the arrangement of internal spaces, and are exaggerated through the addition of enlarged classic scrolls that are suggestive of 'buried classic ruins'.[114] In between these scrolls the roof is designed to curve downwards to meet the ground, 'like giant tongues' as Coates described, that are covered in grass.[115] The scrolls are further bricolaged through their construction in torch-cut, rusted metal, filled with stones from the adjacent quarry – a strategy by Villanueva Brandt and Prizeman designed to bring a contemporary, punk edge to Coates's overwhelmingly classical language, that truly blends temporal associations and styles. In a characteristically messy sketch by Prizeman published in the *NATØ* article, further elements can be ascertained, including a pineapple shaped domed roof and two giant feet borrowed from the Colossi of Memnon statues of Pharaoh Amenhotep III in Egypt – elements that induce the defamiliarisation NATØ were so fond of. These touches achieve the brief set out by Jarman himself, quoted in the magazine: 'It'll have to be infinitely serious', 'but with shots of grandeur and absurdity' – a request that could pass as an accurate description of his filmmaking, and spoke of both NATØ's and Jarman's love of the anachronism.[116]

In the drawings for the project, reproduced at reduced size in black and white in the magazine, it is also possible to identify an atmosphere and attitude, that though avowedly NATØ in character, also bears a striking resemblance to Jarman's filmic sensibility. In nearly all of Jarman's film, in particular in *Jubilee* and *The Last of England*, the filmmaker's obsession with England and its 'cultural arcadia' is developed, a tradition to be found in the work of other contemporaneous British artists, including NATØ, which

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[113] Amyl Nitrate instructs 'don't dream it, be it' a direct quote from the Rocky Horror Picture Show first staged in 1975, and cites Myra Hindley as an artist who had followed such instructions; at the end of the film Adolf Hitler appears claiming to be a great painter.
[114] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.67.
[115] Ibid. p.67.
[116] Derek Jarman quoted in 'NATO for Jarman', *NATØ*, 2, p.6.

portrays a culture always referring to a dream-like past which is picturesque, romantic and sublime.[117] The 'House for Jarman' displays some of these qualities in its mystical setting on a windswept cliff in a vast natural stone amphitheatre, and the drawings serve to emphasise this – with ghostly figures in smudged, dream-like depictions. In Coates's sketches for the project from his notebooks, it is possible to see the very lightly sketched image of Jarman's face blending into the drawing of the house in the background in one image, and what looks like a transfer of Jarman's face superimposed onto the house in another (figs. 37, 38). Both of these are reminiscent of Jarman's own technique of transferring different film mediums, from Super 8 to 16mm to 35mm in *The Last of England*, which created a purposeful scratchy image 'saturated with coloured, blurred contours and grainy texture, effects that impart a thick and decaying material patina.'[118] In one of the finished drawing for the project, a worked-up version of Coates's sketch in pencil and pastel on tracing paper, a comparable smudgy and textural effect is achieved (fig. 39).

In a similar way it is also possible to draw parallels between the structure of Jarman's films and NATØ's drawings and magazines – as both possessed a mode of narrativity that was concerned less with the depiction of a defined plot, and more with the evocation of mise-en-scène. Curator Oliver Winchester describes *The Last of England* in terms reminiscent of NATØ's narrativity as described so far in this thesis:

> Eschewing traditional narrative coherence or the linear progression of a story line, the film instead works at the level of an immersive cinematic experience; meaning is suggested through an accumulation of sequences, forming what Jarman described as a 'dream allegory'. It is the visceral experience of watching *The Last of England* and the way in which Jarman actively prompts psychological effects in the viewer through suggestive juxtapositions that give the work its power.[119]

Winchester's description bears a strong resemblance to the structuring the *NATØ* magazine, wherein a mise-en-scène of the magazine is constructed through the accumulation of numerous fragments of articles, and fragments within articles, that build into a complex whole. In addition, in the text published at the same time as *The Last of England* (later retitled *Kicking the Pricks*), Jarman describes the way he wanted to audience to read their own subjective reading into the film:

> Apart from being stuck with my film for 85 minutes, my audience have much greater freedom to interpret what they are seeing, and because of the pace, think about it. I have my own ideas but they are not the beginning or the end [...] For

[117] Derek Jarman quoted in Michael O'Pray, p113.
[118] Oliver Winchester, 'Tomorrow's Been Cancelled Due to Lack of Interest' in Jane Pavitt and Glenn Adamson, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90* (London: V&A, 2011), p.170-173. (p.171)
[119] Ibid., p.171

Figure 37: Nigel Coates, sketch for 'House for Jarman',
showing the ghostly image of Jarman's face. (1984).
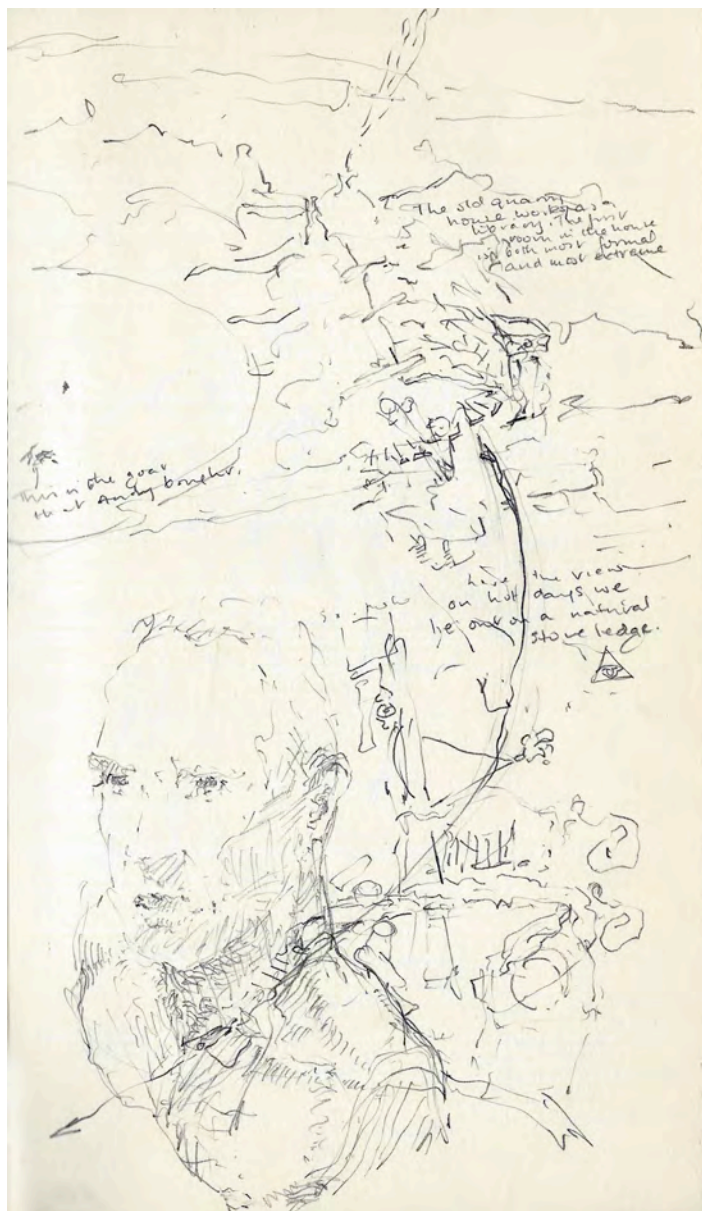
Figure 38: Nigel Coates, sketch for 'House for Jarman' (1984).
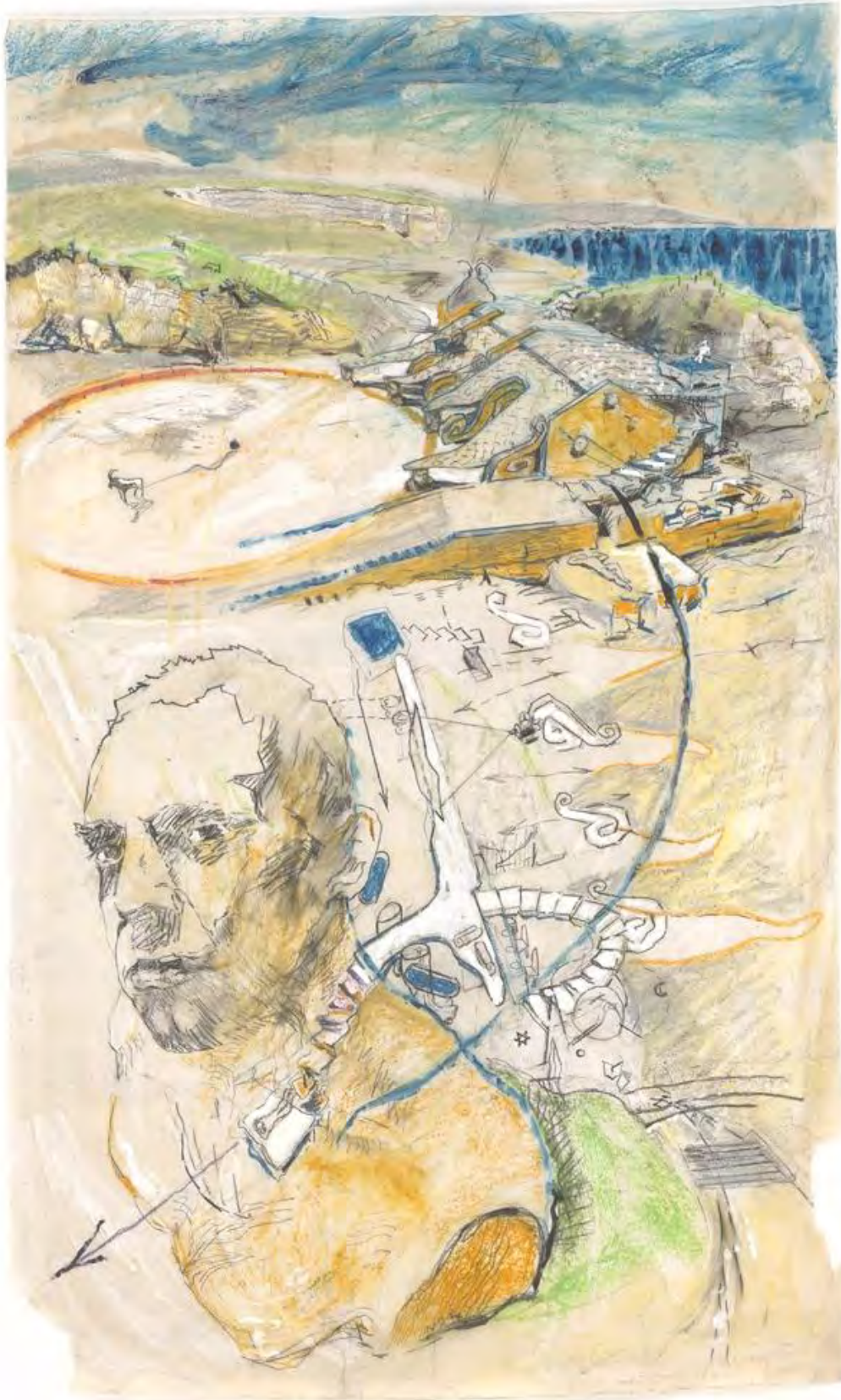
Figure 39: 'House for Jarman', NATØ, pastel and acrylic on tracing paper. (1984).

me the voice of the audience is interpretive, teaching me what I have done. I don't work for a passive audience, I want an active audience.[120]

The active audience, or reader, or user of space, was what NATØ strove for through their complicated narrativity that refused simplistic or singular readings and that provided the reader with some agency in interpreting and creating meaning. In their installations, this active reader would come to the fore, as the static body is forced into a state of activation through the process of entering and physically moving through space – establishing narrative immersion (discussed in the next chapter).

Jarman's mention of the pace of his film is also significant, as he frequently slowed down film for visual effect, but also as the quote suggests, to provide more time for interpretation. In the same way, NATØ's magazine layouts force the reader's eye to slow down, with fractured compositions that required multiple sweeps across the page to take in every element, differing orientations that required turning of the page, and a cut-out, hand-wrought aesthetic that creates layers of text and image to be dissected. As described earlier in this chapter, this was a strategy employed by Brody in *The Face* and Jones in *i-D* – all three magazines seeking to slow the reader down, in the same way the Jarman physically slowed film down – providing numerous, layered sensory fragments that forced the viewer, or the reader, to become the editor. In *The Last of England* sections of the film are played at different speeds, creating differentials of pace in a similar way to the pleating of time described in NATØ's drawings and magazine – the reader or viewer spends different amounts of time dissecting different parts, skipping over some rapidly, and dwelling on others.

'Dress Apprentice'

In the context of the magazine, though the Jarman piece is on the surface a presentation of an architectural project, the reference to Jarman was one that was echoed throughout the issue in terms of a centrifugal reaching-out beyond the culture of architecture, to the subculture of fashion, art, clubbing, music, and homosexuality that Coates in particular was immersed in. The article 'Dress Apprentice' feeds into this theme, depicting a street-style fashion shoot over two spreads that depicts the inhabitant of a NATØ city (Albion, or a version of it) wearing accessories made of DIY objects and tools, designed by the group – displaying a bricolaged approach to design.[121] (figs.40, 41) The apprentice as a character gives out mixed messages in NATØ's context; it was probably conceived as a counterpoint to the professional, a theme that ran through much of the issue and was embodied in the opening statement that encouraged the reader to 'start building'

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[120] Derek Jarman, *Kicking the Pricks*, New edition (London: Vintage, 1996), pp.193-194.
[121] 'Dress Apprentice', *NATØ* 2, pp.8-11.

Figure 40: 'Dress Apprentice', *NATØ* 2, (1984) – a fashion spread that extends NATØ's remit, applying their architectural design principles to fashion and lifestyle.

Figure 41: 'Dress Apprentice', *NATØ* 2, (1984)

themselves, against the antiquated professionalism of the RIBA card-holders.[122] However, the term apprentice inherently implies learning a particular skill or trade from somebody with more experience and knowledge, in a strictly hierarchical manner – surely against NATØ's ethos. The NATØ apprentice is perhaps learning from other apprentices, or from other makers, or perhaps from the city as found. The concept of the anti-professional is an interesting one that permeates much of the group's work; in an article on NATØ, Brian Hatton uses the term 'dilettantes', a term that design historians Gerry Beegan and Paul Atkinson characterise as an 'ability to dabble, combine and cross disciplines, without attachment to an institution or professional viewpoint' that nurtures hybridity, which aligns more closely with NATØ's description of the apprentice.[123] Indeed, as they explain in the opening to the issue: 'No slaves and master here, but self-styled workmates of creative disorder', going on to explain that part of the apprentice's vocation was personal style: 'Now, if you don't style yourself you don't survive', setting the scene for the street style spread inside.

In 'Dress Apprentice', although the reader is asked to imagine the models presented as fictional inhabitants of a fictional world, there is a close relation to the real subculture of dressing up that was prevalent in London's clubbing scene in the early 1980s. Part of the same subculture described *The Face* and *i-D* magazine , the London club scene was the physical manifestation of these ideas – where people went to display their personality and distinctive individuality. Establishing *i-D* as a fashion fanzine in 1980 with designer Terry Jones, editor Perry Haines set the tone with the following mantra: 'It isn't what, but how you wear the clothes that counts'.[124] Across the pages of early issues of *i-D*, what Hebdige called 'the politics of youth culture' is unapologetically played out, exposing the precariousness of a moment in time when style had become a strategy of opposition.[125] This was a period when the increasing commoditisation and commercialisation of culture made people want 'things' more than ever before, but when the economic climate meant that most people could not afford them – a destabilising condition. Cultural commentator Peter York articulates the harshness of this reality:

> We're now in a time when some of the real conflicts are becoming awfully clear. With the potential of three million unemployed, it isn't shadow play any more, and the situation has come smack up against certain realities. The 'smack' is about everyone wanting everything, on the one hand, and the possibility, for the first time in living memory, of reduced horizons, real zero growth, real constraints.[126]

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[122] *NATØ 2*, p.1.
[123] Brian Hatton, 'Radical Dilettantes and Bookworms', *Building Design*, Feb 29, (1984), pp.30-31; Gerry Beegan and Paul Atkinson, 'Professionalism, Amateurism and the Boundaries of Design', *Journal of Design History*, 21 (2008), pp.305–313.
[124] Perry Haines quoted in Terry Jones, *Catching the Moment* (Booth-Clibborn Editions, 2002), p.8
[125] Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988).
[126] Peter York, 'Style Wars', *AA Files*, 1 (1981), pp.25-28.

Importantly, the body remained one of the few domains not controlled by corporations or the state, and thus became an important site for both expression and resistance; as cultural theorist Robert Hewison explains:

> Confronted by an architecture of domination, something as apparently trivial as a hairstyle becomes an urgent matter...unlike the city, it [the body] remains open to the control of the individual. It is still possible to make a choice [127]

A perhaps exaggerated comment, but one that speaks of the period nonetheless. In his 1980 text *Style Wars*, York explained the way that personal styling had evolved as a response to this economic decline combined with the need to re-invent and re-state personal identity and individuality – the choice to dress as one wanted was one of the few choices left to be made freely.[128] People no longer wanted to be dictated to in terms of fashion, and so the uniformity of stylistic movements of previous generations began to fragment into what York termed a 'repertoire' of choices:

> [...] That enormous, pluralist, eclectic vocabulary of lifestyle and poses and ideologies and products and experiences that are, or look to be, available to those people...Now there's no longer any general perception of what 'fashion' is or who it's for. It's all too fragmented – everything could be fashionable, there's a fashion in everything, one for every lifestyle of group, and for all those fragmented little groups bubbling at the margins and having their own little fashions.[129]

This fragmentation of styles was what *i-D* magazine so keenly documented, scrambling together 'straight-ups' of punks, Bowie fanatics, mods and 'Blitz kids'. Those pictured in *i-D* proudly showed their allegiance to these tribes, but were also experimenting with mixing and blending different styles to create thoroughly eclectic looks – a strategy of bricolage that is mirrored in Jones' graphic style and approach to the magazine.

Fashion theorist Janice Miller has identified the bond between fashion and music and the ways in which both can shape and maintain cultural identity, a testament that the 1980s club scene in London exemplified, where artists, fashion designers, filmmakers, musicians and designers mingled with stylish individuals all united in a specific attitude.[130] Patrizia Calefato explores similar ground, explaining the way that both fashion and music cultures represent 'intimately connected forms of worldliness' which pillage 'citations, experiences, influences and suggestions' to establish a common ground that equates to taste.[131] It is this shared cultural sphere that NATØ strove to connect with,

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[127] Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.142-3.
[128] Peter York, *Style Wars* (Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1983).
[129] Peter York, 'Style Wars', *AA Files* (1981), pp.25-28. (p.25, p.28)
[130] Janice Miller, *Fashion and Music* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2011).
[131] Patrizia Calefato, The Clothed Body (Berg, 2004), p117, p.121.

drawing on the same sorts of references from the same 'world'. The models in 'Dress Apprentice', styled by Coates, are wearing a range of clothing borrowed from designer-clothing shops, mixed with utilitarian items and accessories – creating a look that not only referenced gay culture but also a strong work-wear aesthetic. As described by Christina Norton, these were the inhabitants of a city prepared to tinker and remake their environment at will:

> New apprentices take to the scaffolding tower and mix up their dress, ready to work with all skills at once. Their look is part protective, part slave, part smart...part distorted, part exposed (winter may be near, but work keeps you warm). Mental expertise and the tools of the trade, in-hand or bejewelled: it's a design for lifting.[132]

Shown either wearing or wielding a range of tools and devices such as drills, spanners and calculators, the somewhat tongue-in-cheek image is of the consummate DIY bricoleur, ready to modify or build – naturally, bare-chested! Though it is in part a joke, the article is bookended at the start with a real piece of advertising for the fashion brand WilliWear, which would have provided some revenue for the magazine, but also adds an air of authenticity to the proceeding 'Dress Apprentice' shoot. The design of the spread itself echoes the DIY nature of its content, with hand drawn lettering used as a header repeated across each individual page – but the full bleed photographs of highly posed models owe more to glossy fashion magazines than the cut out, real-life, 'straight-up' of *i-D*. The page design also owes considerably to Brody's early editions of *The Face*, where fashion spreads contained full page photographs, allowing headings and descriptions to go over the image, as well as smaller boxed images that cut into the main photograph (fig.42).

The peculiarity of this article to the context of an architectural magazine cannot be understated, even to the extent that Villanueva Brandt himself expresses doubt about the content, considering the weakest of the three issues, and it is possible that this element was driven strongly by Coates.[133] For Coates, the cultural scene of the street and the nightclub, which included artists, filmmakers, and designers of all sorts apart from architects, was a far more creative and energetic zone than the AA, and unlike other architects he did not feel constrained by architecture's boundaries. Coates explains that the allure of the scene was in part due to the way it contained a stronger connection to the city than the more detached, formal practices of architecture could:

> There were people in every field who were doing incredibly exciting things, there was a new confidence born in that decade, not because there was tons of money – there was the Arts Council, we all got bits of money out of the Arts Council, but

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[132] Christina Norton, 'Dress Apprentice', *NATØ*, 2, p8.
[133] Carlos Villanueva-Brandt, personal interview, March 2013.
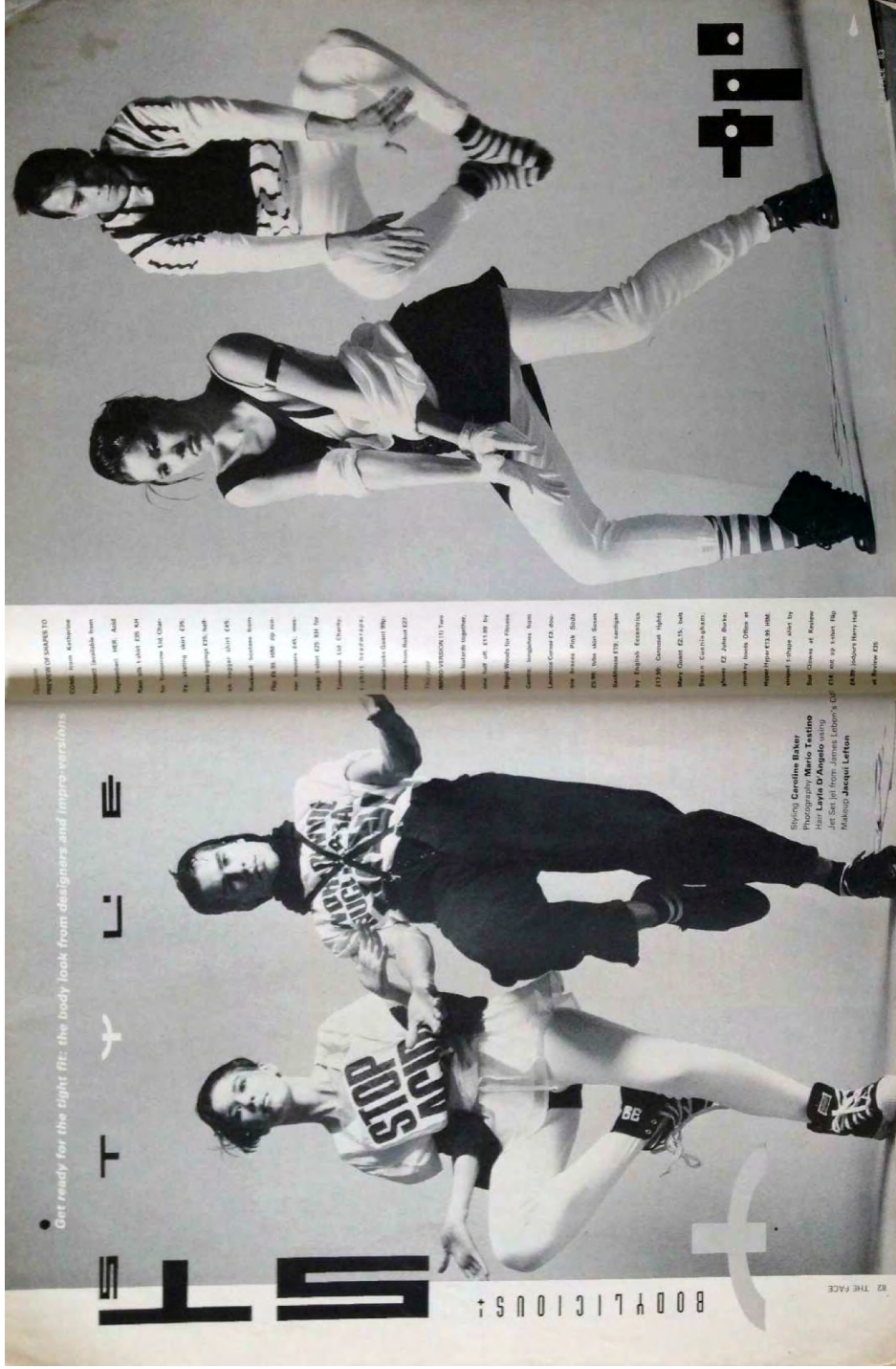
Figure 42: 'Fashion spread from *The Face*, June 1984 - NATØ's own 'Dress Apprentice' was reminiscent of Neville Brody's fashion spreads in *The Face*.

there was a feeling that it was Thatcher's Britain. Thatcher was so harsh, it was so much about clearing out what no longer worked, which we all thought was dreadful, but it created this vacuum – what was the future really going to be like? [...] it wasn't just about the architecture, it was about what you wore, what music you listened to, what drink you had, the people you met from other fields [...] there was another parallel life going on with AA stuff, where the AA was like a sort of household where architecture was sort of the be all and end all. But there were other places – emerging nightclubs, there was a whole group of them that started to pop up in odd places in the city which in themselves were telling us something about how the city could be – because there were all these empty spaces where you could have nightclubs and fantastic music.[134]

Coates characterises the scene as a 'crucible' and a 'ferment', emphasising the intensity and heat of a creativity that was created not only from the fusion of personalities and their respective creative outlets, but through the nature of the spaces they occupied, which were make-shift, decaying and decrepit. In these spaces was possibility, 'they could be what you wanted them to be' and thus 'decay meant lack of control, lack of status quo' – the opportunity to fill the void left behind by unwanted industries and trades with a mode of creativity that began with the individual.[135]

'Albionize Your Living Room'

'Albionize Your Living Room' directly follows 'Dress Apprentice', applying the same ethos to a more conventionally architectural subject – the home – and features some of the most dynamic graphic design of the three issues (figs. 43, 44).[136] The article takes on NATØ's Albion motif (explored in the previous chapter) but expands it further, extending it into a verb that describes a process of the same punk-inspired process of style as bricolage and DIY, but applied to interior design. Indeed, the original myth of Albion is detached and bricolaged into NATØ's own mythology of the city as a 'workshop', and the term brings with it the connotations of a nationalistic historical memory, a shared cultural past – what Patrick Wright might call a 'national essence', which flows from a mythical conception of history that remains intact as an 'enduring and essential fragment' from the past.[137] The sense that Coates, and by extension NATØ, and a number of other British designers were part of a mode of 'English empiricism' has been put forward by Hebidge, (and will be discussed in detail in the next chapter), and NATØ's sustained use of the word Albion foregrounds this issue – marking out their work as self-consciously and emphatically rooted in a national imagination.[138]

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[134] Nigel Coates, personal interview, September 2012.
[135] Ibid.
[136] 'Albionize Your Living Room', *NATØ*, 2, pp.12-13.
[137] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.160.
[138] Dick Hebdige, 'Digging for Britain: An Excavation in 7 Parts' in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge* (Boston Mass.: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987).

Figure 43: 'Albionize Your Living Room', *NATØ*, 2, (1984) – a heavily collaged page with layers of content to be navigated.

Figure 44: 'Albionize Your Living Room', *NATØ*, 2, (1984)

The main double page spread of 'Albionize Your Living Room' extends onto half of the following page, which is split vertically and contains an advertisement on the other half, creating an unusual layout that fragments the article (fig.44). This was a technique that NATØ used elsewhere in the magazines, as discussed, destabilising the page structure and contributing to the sensation of the magazine as a complicated whole rather than a series of articles; it also had the effect of drawing the reader through the magazine, as they had to turn the page to finish reading the article. The main spread has no discernible structure, roughly split in half lengthways by an elaborate hand-drawn heading, full of embellishments and individual letters transformed into shapes and symbols; the effect is scratchy and scrawled, as though the it had been doodled roughly and quickly. Eight small photographs are scattered along the top half of the page, oriented at 90 degrees to the page, with individual images positioned at angles to each other. As in the first issue of *NATØ*, the reader is forced to physically rotate the page to read this section, twisting to orientate specific photographs which are skewed off axis, squinting or leaning in closer to read the very small text. Much like 'On the Boardwalk' this double movement of page turning and the movement of the eye across the page establishes the sense of glissage and sliding that enhances the spatiality of the magazine. Handwritten text weaves around these photographs, again at 90 degrees to the page, and tells a sub-narrative to the main captions of the article – the individual stories of the inhabitants. The handwriting gives the feel of a diary of scrapbook, and the tone of the narrative is akin to song lyrics, which though feature NATØ's designed objects in the background, focus on the actions of two characters.

The bottom half of the article features three larger photographs in regular orientation depicting interior scenes captioned with paragraphs of text that describe the objects on view. Unlike a caption that one might expect to find in a typical design magazine, these captions are not straightforward descriptions but are also witty, containing extra information to amuse the reader:

> BELOW bathroom assembled by Coates – wishy while you washy – contemplate, surrounded by deep sea blue, the world at your feet (painted), a kick towards a head from Paolozzi (presented) and taps from Thomas Crapper Ltd (resurrected) and camel bridle with tassel (imported). And last week's washing (soiled).
>
> ABOVE The telephone closet by our man Mr Coates; receiver by Casio; wombat soundproofing is where all grandad's dressing gowns went.[139]

There is an element in these captions of parody, a mocking of the serious captions found in magazine like *Blueprint*; the captions also emphasise the way the object in question has been in some way appropriated or modified, using brackets and a single word to snappily

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[139] 'Albionize Your Living Room', *NATØ*, 2, pp.12-13. (p.12)

explain: 'found', 'imported', 'soiled', 'dead', 'alive' etc. The content of the photographs is an exercise in bricolage – strange pieces of furniture have been made out of unusual materials and discarded objects which have been welded or hung together to make metal bookcases, fabric wardrobes and seats from inner tubes. Among these DIY experiments lie a number of objects by Tom Dixon, a furniture designer contemporary to NATØ who shared the salvage approach to material. Indeed the welding that Prizeman used abundantly in these projects would soon become Dixon's calling card – an aesthetic that grew from his experimentation in the early 1980s among other designers such as Ron Arad and Mark Brazier–Jones (this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). The processes by which these objects have been made, literally welded, tied, sewn and nailed, emphasise the distinctly hands-on approach of the 'apprentice'.

In focusing so much on styling and a DIY, bricolaged approach to design, issue 2 of *NATØ* magazine promoted a very similar ideology to both the punk zine and *i-D* magazine – which as discussed, encouraged readers to mobilise personal control over style as a strategy of opposition and defiance against the oppressive reality of unemployment and right wing politics. Similarly, *NATØ* showed how the contemporary designer could dress themselves and their personal spaces to better suit the way they wanted to live:

> Be not a dummy in an aspic of bought aspiration. Select instead and adapt and resurrect and rearrange so that you may move the way you want. Even if penniless, revel in the available alter-splendour. Exploitation of the landlord, the granny, the friend, excavation of the garage, the tip, the skip and the market, the farmyard even, these will readily furnish your space with the excreta of your own condition. And now use the clever weld, the stupid contrast to make it all that much more peculiar.[140]

As the quote suggests, NATØ wanted to stimulate people to design for themselves, eschewing the notion of the professional architect or designer whose goods or services could be merely selected from a shelf – the aim was to create highly personalised, bespoke places. Hand in hand with this idea of the smart consumer who makes their own things was also a sense of the absurd – 'the stupid contrast' – highlighting that this was not high-brow design to be looked at in the pages of a rarefied magazine like *Blueprint*, but amateurish or strange, perhaps witty, made by eccentric dilettantes.[141] Indeed, though *Blueprint* has been written about in conjunction with *NATØ*, the differences between the two publications outweigh any similarities.[142] *Blueprint* was a direct contemporary to NATØ, taking on the same A3 format and launching its first issue in the same year

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[140] Ibid.

[141] Ibid.

[142] William Owen, *Magazine Design* (London: Calmann, 1991), p.121; Rick Poynor, 'Big Magazines: Design as the Message' in Victoria and Albert Museum (London). and Glenn Adamson, Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90 (London: V&A, 2011), pp.214-218.
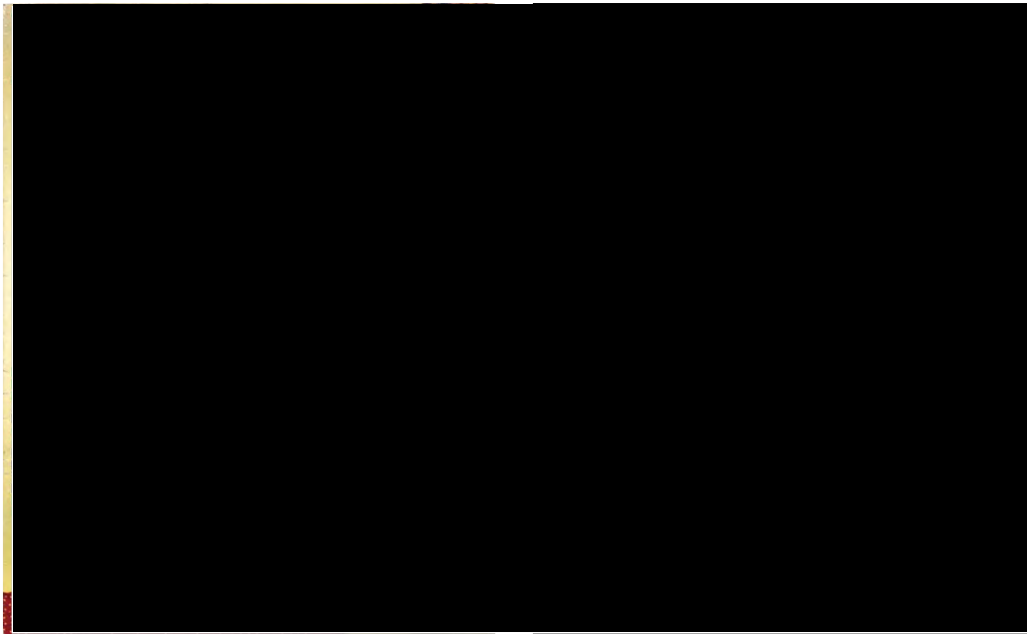
Figure 45: *Nova*, May (1971) - A typically provocative cover by art director Harry Peccinotti

Figure 46: t*wen*, cover, issue 3, (1961) - *twen's* bold graphic designer was an early influence on Blueprint's founder Peter Murray

Figure 47: *twen*, issue 3, (1961)

(1983), and represents an interesting counterpoint in terms of both design and content which helps to reveal NATØ's differentiation from the mainstream.

Founded by publisher and journalist Peter Murray to fill a gap he perceived in the market for an architecture and design magazine aimed at a popular audience, *Blueprint* was aimed at both the interested public who read the *Sunday Times* colour supplement and took an interest in design, and design professionals.[143] Having spent the previous three years editing the *RIBA Journal*, Murray was seeking a way out of what he considered an overly institutionalised publication, and so with Deyan Sudjic established a publishing company, *Wordsearch*, that could produce *Blueprint*.[144] Murray and his editor Sudjic were inspired by magazines such as Harri Peccinotti's lifestyle magazine *Nova* (1965-75), and German magazine *twen* (1959-70), which both used large scale photography at full bleed, that revelled in colour, typography was large and bold, strongly influenced by Swiss formalism in its rigid grid layouts and clear, simple typography – making a statement through juxtaposition of text and image, unusual page layouts and cropping (figs. 45-47). They took these principles into the design of *Blueprint*, placing large portraits of designers on its cover and establishing a high image-to-text ratio inside. Designed by Simon Esterson, *Blueprint*'s A3 format permitted large photographs, illustrations and oversized headings which created an effect best described by Poynor as 'tabloid Modernism' (figs.48-51).[145] The spreads of *Blueprint* presented a sharp counterpoint to the scrawled, collaged and highly detailed pages of the punk zine and contemporary lifestyle magazines *i-D* and *The Face*, publications that Murray purposefully distanced *Blueprint* from:

> We were very much against that [the collaged aesthetic of i-D and The Face], we were into graphic clarity and we believed that we had good writers and good photographers and illustrators and we could then use the medium to display that in the way that they would want it done. So you don't crop people's photographs without permission, or ever put type over photographs.[146]

Photographers were instructed to make eye contact with their subjects, in a tactic Murray had heard increased revenue at Vogue, and almost every article featured portraiture.[147] Phil Sayer was one of *Blueprint*'s favoured photographers, who produced covers and editorial shots which frequently depicted the lone designer either in their studio or in one of their buildings, highly dramatised with lighting and constructed composition (figs.47-48). *Blueprint* sought to foreground the personality behind design and architecture – aside

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[143] Peter Murray, personal interview, September 2013.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Rick Poynor, 'Big Magazines: Design as the Message' in Victoria and Albert Museum (London) Jane Pavitt and Glenn Adamson, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90*, (London: V&A, 2011), p216.
[146] Peter Murray, personal interview, September 2013.
[147] Ibid.
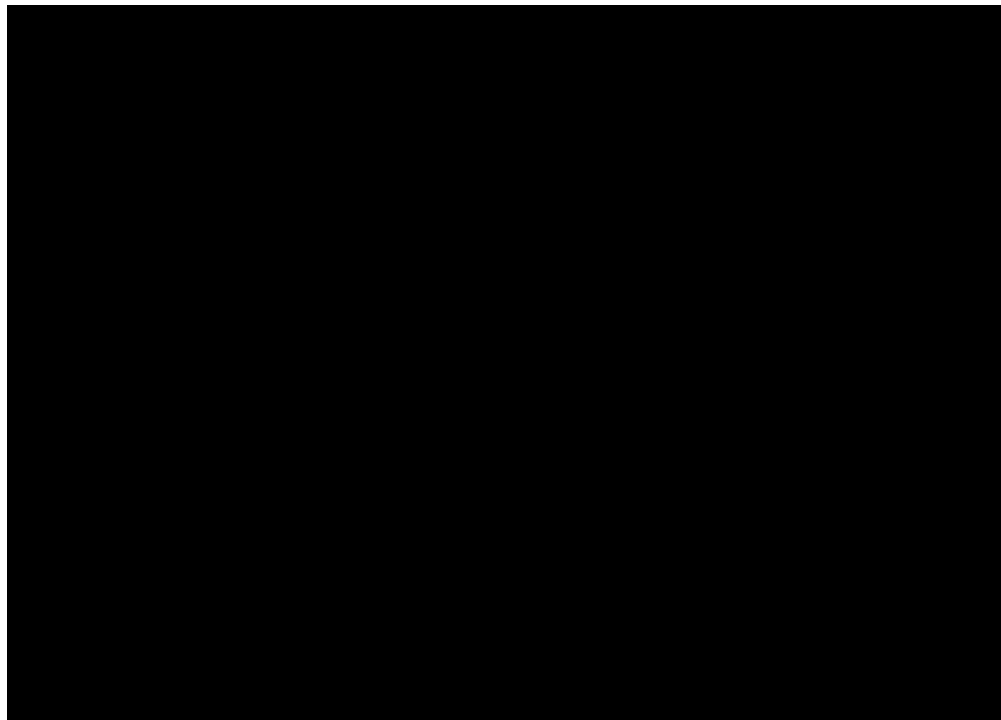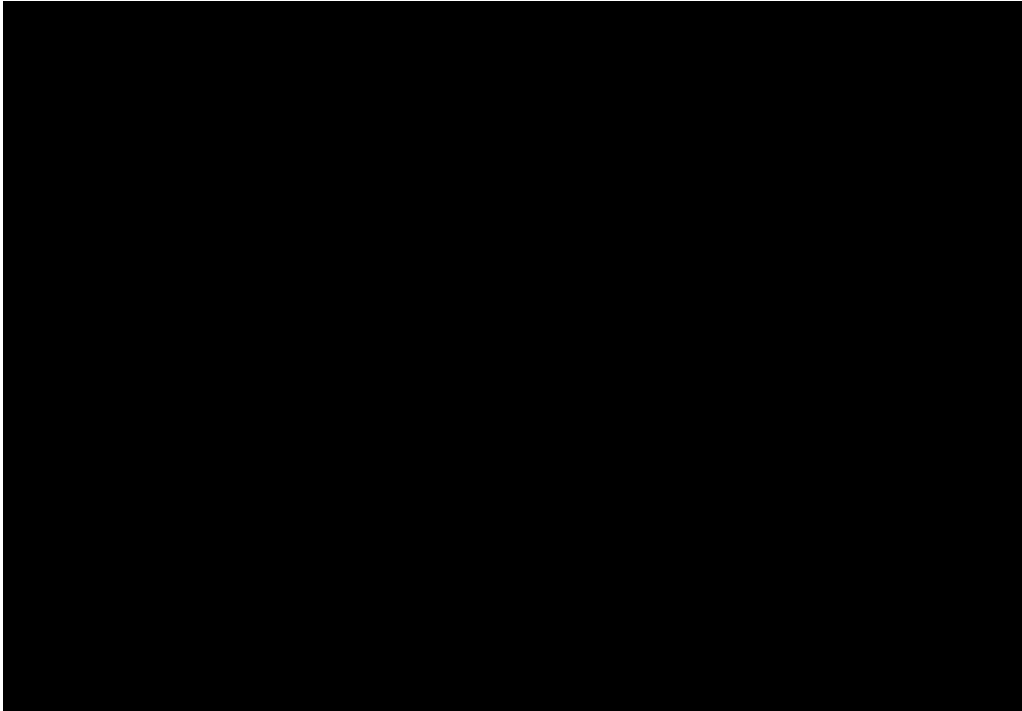
Figures 48 and 49: Spreads from *Blueprint*, November (1989) and May (1988) - Large, full colour photography and clear, bold headings for maximum impact.
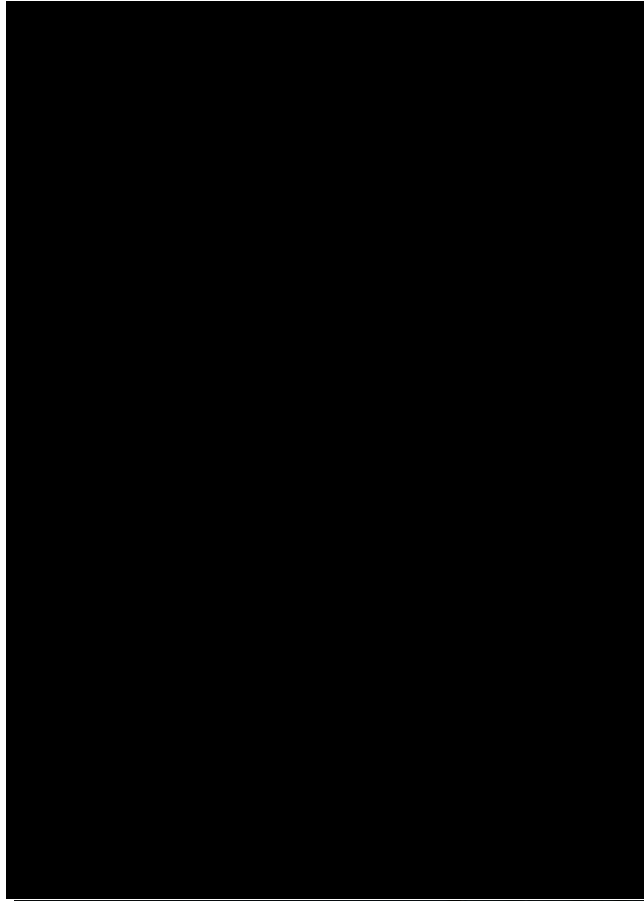
Figures 50 and 51: Covers of *Blueprint*, February (1988) and May (1988) - Covers always featured a portrait of the designer against the backdrop of either their work or their studio - promulgating the cult of the personality.

from the clearly contrasting graphic design, here is where *NATØ* and *Blueprint* most clearly divert: where NATØ was concerned with unfinished, self-authored, DIY architecture, and design as process, *Blueprint* emphasised the final product and a perfected, fetishised image of the genius designer. The comparison between the two magazines in this respect is interesting, as both were large format publications which sought to reach an audience beyond the confines of the design professions, mixing architecture with product design, graphic design, fashion and people – but with entirely different outcomes. *Blueprint* could be considered as reflecting the cult of the personality, promoting postmodernism and the star-architect phenomena, whereas NATØ harked back towards a lineage of radical publishing and to the sensibility of punk, forming a much closer resemblance to the underground 'scene' than the popular mainstream.

Critical bricolage

The witty, tongue-in-cheek editorial voice of articles such as 'Albionize Your Living Room' and 'Dress Apprentice' were in stark contrast to the rhetoric of rest of the architectural profession, particularly the Rationalists who thrived on a rigour and seriousness totally alien to the NATØ approach. Contemporaneous magazine *9H* which emerged in 1980 initiated by Wilfried Wang and Nadir Tharani from the Bartlett School of Architecture, and was similarly self-published as *NATØ*, represents this more serious tone – symbolised by their name:

> *9H* is based on the grades of pencil leads. I chose the name to underline a) the constructive aspect of the thin, grey line made by *9H* leads, but also, in those days, b) the fact that once applied to tracing paper, the line would not be easily erased, not easily fudged. In other words, *9H* was intended to represent a hard, but constructive line.[148]

In response to what the editors considered as 'archi-cultural deprivation', much of *9H*'s content was drawn from architects and theorists practicing in other parts of continental Europe, particularly focusing on Spain, Portugal, Germany, Italy, Scandinavian and Eastern Europe – representing the nationalities of the editorial board, which came to include Bartlett graduates Ricky Burdett, Elias Constantopoulos, Rosamund Diamond, Helena Tsoskounoglou, and from the Royal College of Art, José Paulo dos Santos.[149] A key part of the journal was the translation of theoretical texts into English, sometimes for the first time, and the publication of projects not seen in England before. Architects such as Hans Sharoun, Valerio Olgiati, Alvaro Siza, Sigurd Lewerentz, Jože Plečnik and Adolf Loos joined texts by theorists such as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Jürgen Habermas on the page – all translated and analysed by the editorial group – as wells as occasional

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[148] Wilfried Wang, email correspondence, 2013.
[149] Ros Diamond, 'Tracing 9H', Architectural Research Quarterly, Vol 9 (2005).

contributions from architectural writers such as Kenneth Frampton and Peter Blundell Jones, as well as academics from the Bartlett Robert Maxwell and Bill Hillier. *9H* presented a Modernist approach that was strongly inflected by Frampton's Critical Regionalism, taking on aspects of vernacular design and a strong consideration of context.[150]

Despite this almost earnest approach to content, *9H* was, like most self–published magazines of the time, put together on a kitchen table late at night on a tiny budget – the whole editorial team contributing to design and layout. However, the cut–up process of laying out spreads that for other publications discussed in this chapter contributed to a montaged aesthetic, did not have such an effect on the appearance of *9H*, whose design and graphics showed little trace of its production process. *9H* covers were boldly coloured and monotone, and typically featured a highly detailed line drawing of a plan, section or elevation floating in space – giving the appearance of abstraction and a play of lines rather than an architectural reality (figs. 52, 53). For Hatton, *9H*'s graphic appearance contributed to its 'cryptographic' nature, with 'columns of minuscule print and plans that call for a magnifying glass' (figs. 54, 55).[151] The somewhat impenetrable nature of the journal led Hatton to consider *9H* as the 'opposite' of NATØ in his *Building Design* review 'Radical Dilettantes and Bookworms' – wittily titled to sum up the difference. His analysis reveals *9H* as primarily concerned with words rather than the 'real thing' (architecture), and 'severe intellection' through 'studious devotion', as opposed to NATØ's 'avowedly activist' approach, focusing on 'sensations and conjectures of present experience'.[152] Hatton also draws attention to *9H*'s strategy which in beginning with 'form and structure' before moving towards 'images, scenes and situations' was in effect the reverse of NATØ. Interestingly, Burdett does not see such a sharp contrast between the two publications, acknowledging that both were a response to the blandness of postmodernism, and describes neatly the difference between the two figured in an analogy of the street:

> I think what NATØ and Nigel, and what we were doing, in very different ways were craving for something more meaningful. Ours probably both more political and more cultural, Nigel and NATØ much more of the time – so we were looking back and they were looking forward you might say. Nigel has always been somebody who knew what was going on in the backstreets of Kings Cross before anybody else knew, and that was certainly not the case in our group. We knew what was going on in certain back streets, or maybe main streets would be more

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[150] Critical regionalism was introduced as an architectural concept in the early 1980s in essays by Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre and, later, Kenneth Frampton. It sought to reinvest qualities of humanism and contextualism that were perceived to have been lost in Modernism. Frampton, Kenneth, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', H. Foster (ed) *The Anti Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, (Port Townsend:Bay Press. 1983).

[151] Brian Hatton, 'Radical Dilettantes and Bookworms', Building Design, (1984), pp.30-31.

[152] Ibid., pp.30-31.
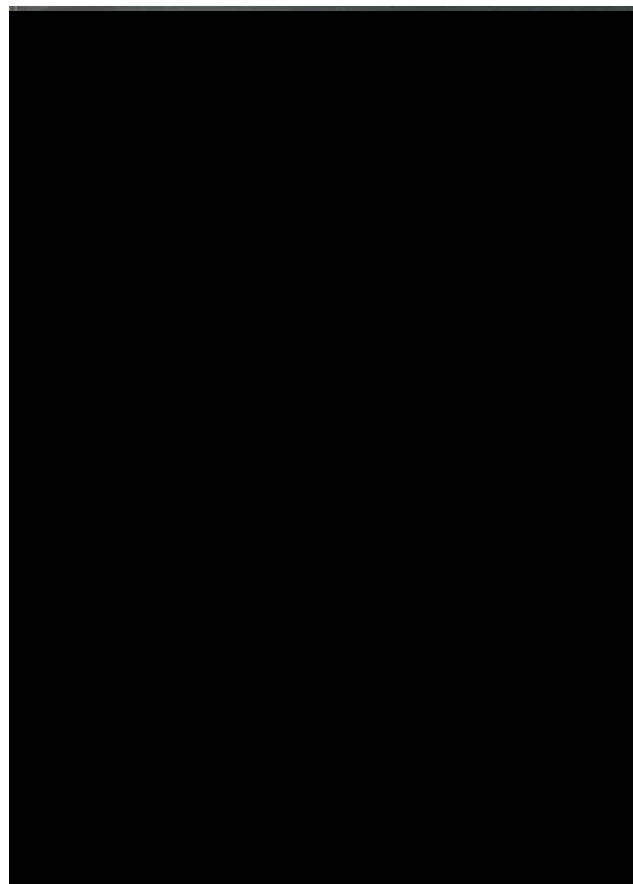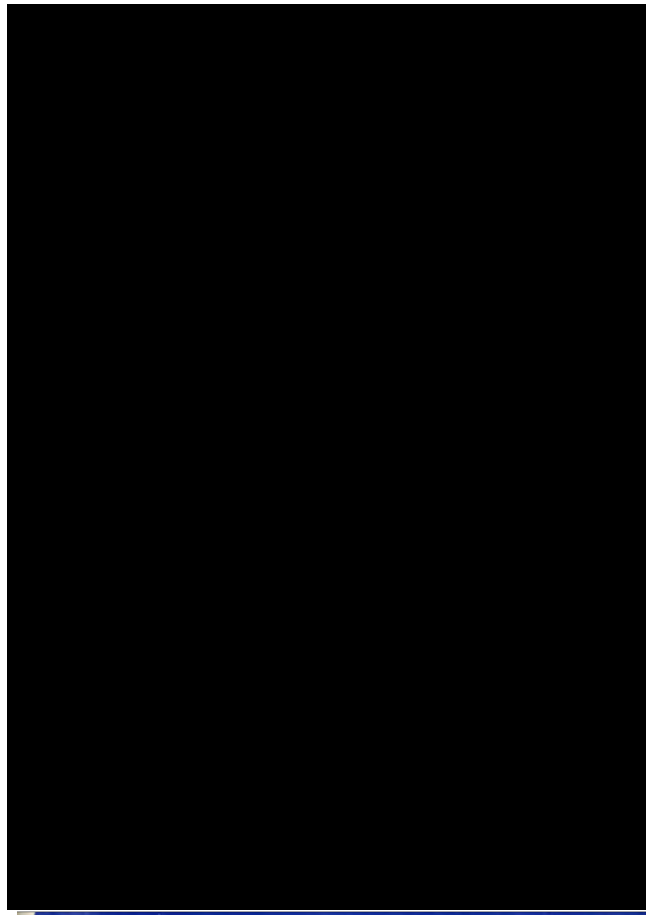
Figures 52 and 53: Covers of *9H*, No.1 (1980), No.5 (1983) – Minimalist and rational graphic design that related to the type of architecture explored inside.
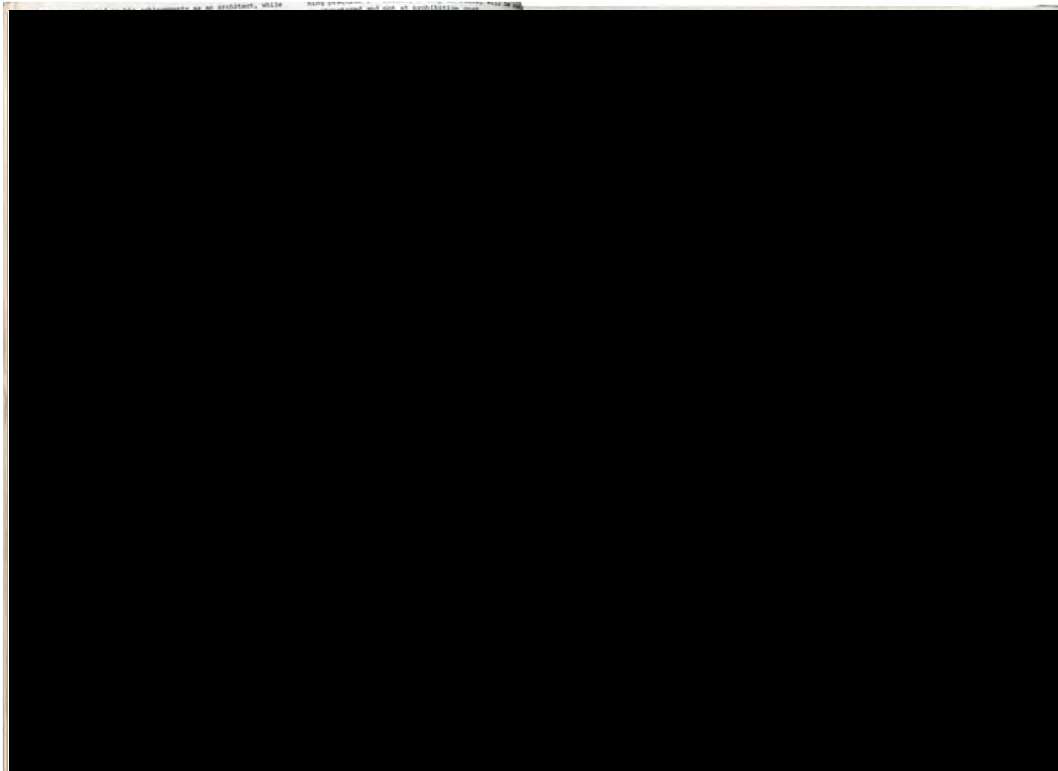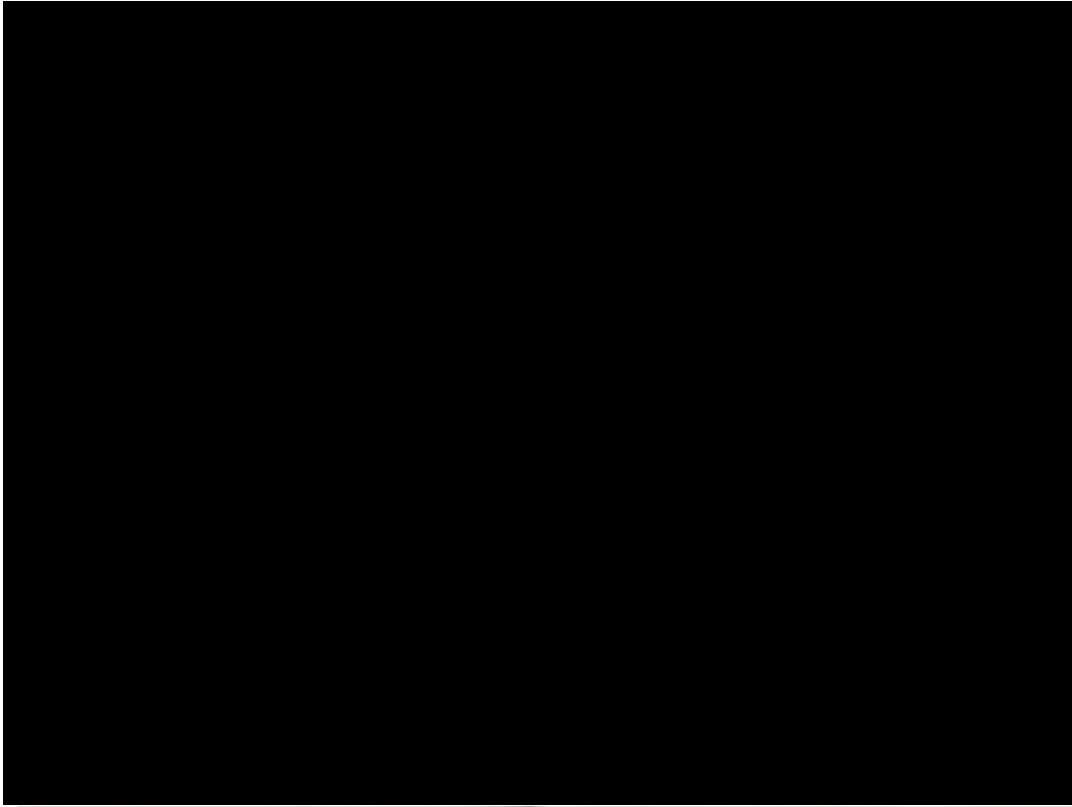
Figures 54 and 55: Spreads from *9H*, No.7 (1985) – Dense, text-dominated spreads in a manner closer to a conventional book than a magazine.

appropriate, in Rome, Berlin, Porto, Madrid –so our connections were very much European.[153]

The idea that NATØ resided in the backstreet, whereas *9H* were interested in the main street is a significant comparison which helps to distil the ideological differences between the two groups. *9H* were concerned with reaching a more strictly architectural audience, and made particular efforts to get the journal distributed beyond Britain. Also, where NATØ were uninterested in academic architectural discourse and sought to bring architecture to the realms of art and fashion, and vice versa, *9H* were seeking to influence architectural discourse and theory – and it is possible to argue that they did.[154]

By contrast, NATØ's often playful and witty tone, and preoccupation with what appeared to be stylistic and lifestyle concerns, belied a critical apparatus that sought to disrupt the prevailing cultural system:

> The fashion stereotype is an object of production that fits smoothly into commercial praxis and abides by the rules of industry, technology and economics. The antagonistic stereotype [NATØ] is not itself a consumable product, it is a catalyst in a cultural system that demands constant change. Its intention is not to replace the old with the new, but to influence the creative process directly, to radicalise the initial concepts and to encourage the development of experimental phases.[155]

Architectural theorists Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, whose 1978 book *Collage City* explored the notion of bricolage in urban form, described a similar principle of the architect-bricoleur as a critical practitioner who worked counter to modernity in that they accumulated and collided parts, rather than imposed a singularly structured, totalised whole.[156] Importantly, Rowe and Koetter also introduced the idea of bricolage as a temporally extended activity, 'built by several people and different times'.[157] In the same way, NATØ's approach to design, embodied in the magazines, sought to proliferate voices and narratives through both the content and the design and layout – no single article could represent them or their idea, and each article was not meant to be read in isolation but against the backdrop of the rest of the issue, the other issues and their entire

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[153] Ricky Burdett, personal interview, September 2013.

[154] The impact of *9H* can be traced in part to the establishment of the *9H* gallery in London in 1986, which continued the *9H* agenda until the 1990s, when it became the Architecture Foundation and subsequently developed a much broader architectural remit. But during the years of the journal and the gallery, *9H* were responsible for nurturing a particular strand of European modernism, and bringing it to the attention of practitioners in Britain for the first time. Individuals such as Alvaro Siza, Rafael Moneo, Pierre de Meuron and Jacques Herzog were brought by *9H* to present what was in many cases their first lecture in London; as a result, a generation of practitioners emerged during this period whose principles can be traced back in part to the ground that *9H* prepared, including Caruso St John, Tim Ronalds, Florian Beigel, Eric Parry, David Chipperfield, Tony Fretton and others.

[155] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, "Activism.Architecture.Antagonism', in *NATØ,* 2, 1985, p.22.

[156] Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, Collage City (MIT Press, 1978).

[157] Ibid., p93.

output. This was not bricolage used as a strategy purely to create entertaining, 'zeitgeist' imagery or a tongue-in-cheek, collaged aesthetic, but bricolage used as a productive, experimental and critical strategy and as a form of agency to contest the dominant architectural culture through its own material debris.

It is however important to distinguish NATØ's bricolage from the dominant modes of similar practices within postmodernism, that can most clearly be traced back to Charles Jencks' and Nathan Silver's *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation* (1972), which defined a method of making that was based on 'using an available system in a new way to solve a problem quickly and efficiently'.[158] Adhocism was aligned with political direct action and a 'democratic mode and style', where parts are assembled by the user to fulfil an urgent and specific need or purpose – a conceptualisation that strongly resembled Lèvi-Strauss's bricoleur.[159] Despite the principles of Jencks' and Silver's approach sharing much with NATØ's – advocating 'creative pluralism', customisation to counter mass production, displaying the old and new together, exposing the joins between fragments – its evolution in architectural terms was often reduced to applied style – no longer fulfilling a need, but producing sleek and highly designed decorative effects.[160] In Jencks' foreword to the 2013 edition of *Adhocism*, he quotes a number of James Stirling's buildings as characterising the ad hoc mode:

> In his important buildings as Leicester and Cambridge, Stirling elevated high-tech equipment into high-end jewelry, and at Stuttgart a few years later, he created the first convincing hybrid of postmodernism. This museum combined contextual languages of the site – its classicism, modernism, and vernacular – and inverted high-tech elements 'out of context.' The utilitarian tubes were used not functionally, but ironically, for symbolic and visual reasons.[161]

As Jencks' described, Stirling incorporated a number of architectural quotations in the design – ranging from a U-shaped layout similar to the neo-classical Alte Staatsgalerie (the original museum on the site), a rotunda in the centre of the gallery copied from Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Alte Mueseum in Berlin, and collage of 'columns, gables, architraves and stone facings' that are surface decoration, hiding the concrete construction behind.[162] In addition, Stirling pasted on overtly contemporary hi-tech embellishments such as brightly coloured steel canopies, balustrades, mullions, and coloured rubber interior floor surfaces. For NATØ these sorts of buildings were merely 'cardboard cutouts of the way things used to be', and failed on a number of levels – firstly the vocabulary of signs was limited to the purely architectural and the 'high' arts, and secondly they were put together

[158] Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver, *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation*, expanded and updated ed edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013), p.vii.
[159] Ibid., p.15.
[160] Ibid., p.viii.
[161] Ibid., p.ix.
[162] 'Neue Stattsgalerie', http://www.staatsgalerie.de, [accessed June, 2014].

in uncritical ways that reduced them to decorative effect, negating the disruptive potential of bricolage.[163] As Coates explained: 'The bricolage process of assembly entails a deliberate aberration, to release an originality from the use of utterly ordinary material', and as such, NATØ's version of adhocism sought out the detritus of everyday life and the city, to reorder, disorder, cross-fertilise and combine it in ways that detabilised meaning and dramatised effect.[164]

A crucial element of NATØ's narrative architecture was the creation of a sensory and experiential pleasurable effect – and this sets them apart from a decorative postmodernism that sought out 'architectural whimsy and visual puns' and 'repetition with critical distance'.[165] Hewison has identified this difference in NATØ's approach, and considers them an example of a way to overcome 'the loss and fragmentation' of postmodernity, and way to recover a 'consciousness of a new epoch' – he describes NATØ's inherent positivity:

> What is striking about NATO's attitude to city life is its optimism. The totality of the city's surroundings, 'from the city's moment of exquisite high culture to its backyards of decay,' are recognised as being in a state of constant flux that is a source of creative potential, not menace or uncontrolled disorder. The wildness, the distortion, the deliberately rough edges and freestyle drawings of NATO schemes have an elements of parody and the grotesque in them that is to be found in the spirit of the carnival.[166]

In this 'carnival' spirit, Hewison recognises elements of what Robert Stam has described as 'more than a party or a festival' but the 'oppositional culture of the oppressed, the official world as seen from below' in an atmosphere of 'ecstatic collectivity, the joyful affirmation of change'.[167] This defines well NATØ's approach to taking pleasure in the chaos of urban experience, celebrating and exaggerating it rather than resisting or ordering it, and their desire to encourage a self-styled reassembly and re-contextualisation of the existing system that sublimates, but does not eliminate, the source. As Hewison summarised: 'Critically deployed, the post-Modern devices of fragmentation, sampling, collage, of pastiche and parody can be turned against the commodified culture of style to take apart its imagery and reclaim its elements.'[168]

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[163] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in John Thackara ed. *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.96.
[164] Ibid., p.105.
[165] Patricia A. Morton, 'Kitsch and Postmodern Architecture: Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia' in Jane Pavitt and Glenn Adamson, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion, 1970-90* (London: V&A, 2011), p.116-119; Linda Hutcheon, 'The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History', *Cultural Critique 5*, (Winter 1986-7), p.185.
[166] Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.135.
[167] Robert Stam quoted in Ibid., p.135.
[168] Robert Hewison, (1990), p.171.

Chapter 4:

Dreaming the city: Exhibiting architecture – 1985-87

Introduction

After the graduation show of the NATØ cohort in 1983, the group's output was focused on the magazine, however each member remained occupied with three-dimensional production in various forms. For Coates this was through a number of exhibitions staged at the AA, most notably *ArkAlbion* (1984), an installation of drawings and sprawling models, described in Chapter 2. Meanwhile Prizeman and Villaneuva Brandt spent their free time roaming London collecting junk and scrap with which to make projects; Villaneuva Brandt recalls, 'Mark and I were all about welding and oil and motorbikes'.[1] Indeed, though the magazines explored the confines of two-dimensional representation, many of the print-features involved three-dimensional installations and creations which were then photographed for publication; articles such as 'Marriage Lines', 'Albionise Your Living Room', and 'Dress Apprentice' each involved the creation of props, objects, sets and installations.[2] Even in two dimensions, the effect that NATØ sought through their drawings and magazines was of a city in three-dimensions, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, their assemblages on the page revealed layers to be navigated analogous to the city itself.

If the drawing was exploded onto the page of the magazine, collaged and collided with text, photographs and other fragments, then the page was similarly exploded into the space of the gallery, into three-dimensions. NATØ's installations can be seen as the climax of their work, where their ideas and concepts reach their apotheosis and were explored in their fullest range. This thesis has moved from the three-dimensional explorations of video and performance enacted with Tschumi in the mid to late 1970s, to their translation into the drawing, and the expansion of those drawings onto the collaged page of the magazine, and returns in this chapter to three-dimensions in an examination of NATØ's exhibitions. The exhibitions, and in particular *Gamma City* (1985) as will be shown in this chapter, were more than just static installations with fixed meanings, but instead were destabilising assemblages – constantly changing, ad-hoc and improvised sets for action.

As has been done throughout this thesis, the final chapter will continue to argue that NATØ's output, despite not including buildings, constitutes architecture. Beatriz Colomina describes the interpretative, 'reproduction' of a building that is required to elevate it to architecture in her introduction to *ArchitectureProduction* in 1988:

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[1] Personal interview, Carlos Villaneuva Brandt, March 2013.
[2] Carlos Villenueva Brandt, 'Marriage Lines', *NATØ* ,1, (1983), p.14-15.; 'Albionise Your Living Room', *NATØ*, 2, (Architectural Association, 1984), p12-14; 'Dress Apprentice', *NATØ*, 2, (1984) pp.8-11.

> [...]Architecture, as distinct from building, is an interpretative, critical act. It has a linguistic condition different from the practical one of building. A building is interpreted when its rhetorical mechanism and principle are revealed.[3]

This is the function of the exhibition *as* architecture – the provision of a critical interpretation, found in exhibitions that go beyond the conventions of merely displaying work through photographs, drawings and models to instead create propositional installations. The first section of this chapter will describe the changes that occurred to transform the architectural exhibition from *showing* to *producing* architecture.

These developments move architectural exhibiting closer to that of installation art, and indeed, as will be described, Claire Bishop's analysis of installation art can be used to productively explore the functioning of NATØ's exhibitions – drawing parallels with Freud's dream analysis to describe the way the installation is experienced. In particular, this chapter will explore the concept of 'immersion' in discourse around the art installation and its parallel use in narrative theory, unravelling the exhibition as a narrative architectural medium. Through an exploration of NATØ's two main exhibitions, *Gamma City* (1985) and *Heathrow* (1987), the chapter will explore the interaction between object, drawing, magazine and installation.

The chapter will consider how NATØ replaced the conventional architectural scale model with the creation of full-sized (1:1 scale) props and objects, and how this evolved from earlier experimentations with video – drawing on Dick Hebdige's notion of the 'auratic object', and making parallels with the 'Creative Salvage' designers of the same period. This lineage of British DIY, amateurism and industrial craft will be invoked to establish NATØ's approach as part of a broader cultural strategy, but will also conceive the idea of the narrative object – an idea connected to Freud's concept of the totem.

Finally, the chapter will examine the cultural heritage that NATØ's exhibitions evoke and were part of. The *Heathrow* exhibit was part of a group show titled *The British Edge* (1987) staged at the Boston ICA, and suggests a connection to British artists working during the 1980s – with shared themes of identity, both cultural and personal. This connection, though prevalent throughout their work and touched upon throughout this thesis, comes to the fore when the group installed physical installations within the very walls of the city they dreamt of.

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[3] Beatriz Colomina, *Architectureproduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), p7.

Exhibiting architecture

Architectural exhibiting in the twentieth century

The proposition that architecture can be exhibited is one that contains within it an inherent paradox, that the subject of such exhibitions (architecture) is typically not present in the exhibition itself and must be represented by other media – a point articulated clearly by Robin Evans in his investigation of the architectural drawing (explored in Chapter 2): 'I was soon struck by what seemed at the time the peculiar disadvantage under which architects labour, never working directly with the object of their thought, always working at it through some intervening medium'.[4] As Barry Bergdoll has documented, although architects have been displaying their work in galleries since before the advent of the public museum at the end of the 18th century, architectural exhibitions only emerged fully as a phenomenon in the late twentieth century.[5] Prior to this later stage of development, which might be marked by the important milestone of the first dedicated architecture Biennale in Venice (discussed later in this section), architectural exhibitions had followed a fairly rigid model. One of the most significant of these early architectural exhibitions, Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock's *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (1932) at MoMA, established a mode of architectural exhibiting that would come to dominate most major institutions. Models and photographs from a range of modern architects were 'sublimated to conventions of exhibiting art' – photographs were hung like paintings and architectural models sat on plinths like sculptures.[6] Bergdoll confirms that since this seminal exhibition, rarely did architectural exhibiting break from the 'salon like presentation' standards it established (though the example of Mies van der Rohe's 1929 *Barcelona Pavilion*, and other examples in the same vein somewhat disrupts this neat history).[7] This mode of exhibiting produced exhibitions that recorded and documented work, viewing the architect through the 'master' lens, with a formal and academic curatorial strategy that is often accompanied by a lengthy catalogue where further essays can be reproduced.

Adrian Forty proposes a more detailed documentation of architectural exhibiting which takes this 'representational' approach as one arm of two broad types of exhibition. He describes the following taxonomy: 'one-to-one' or 'real-scale' exhibitions, which could be either temporary or permanent, most typically pavilions; and 'representational'

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[4] Robin Evans, Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays, *AA Documents 2* (London: Architectural Association, 1997), p156.
[5] Barry Bergdoll, 'Curating History' in Eve Blau and Barry Bergdoll, 'Reviewing Architectural Exhibitions', *Society of Architectural Historians Journal*, Vol.57 (1998), pp.256–366.
[6] Henry Urbach, 'Exhibition as Atmosphere', *LOG*, 20, (2010), pp.11–17. (p.13)
[7] Barry Bergdoll, 'At Home in the Museum', *LOG*, 15 (2009), pp. 35–48. (p.37)

exhibitions consisting of media such as drawings, photographs and models.[8] Of the latter, Forty explains that exhibitions can be 'polemical', 'designed to shift perceptions and change paradigms', or 'encyclopaedic' – cataloguing a particular period, building typology etc.; the encyclopaedic can be further split into 'monographic' exhibitions of one architect or practice, or 'thematic' showings of a group of architects.

Though Forty's taxonomy holds true for the majority of architectural exhibitions, it fails to properly take into account exhibitions of architecture taking place on the margins, in particular by radical and avant-garde architects. As Felicity Scott points out in a special issue of the journal *LOG* on 'Curating Architecture', exhibitions have often been the site of 'critical and experimental' architectural practice – marking the 'forefront of the discipline's attempt to forge new paradigms'.[9] She cites, for example, the explorations of 'architecture's engagement with electronic technology' in exhibitions such as Arata Isozaki's *Electric Labyrinth* at the 14th Milan Triennale in 1968, *Expo 67* in Montreal, the Osaka *Expo 70*, and Nicholas Negroponte and the Architecture Machine Group's 1970 *Seek* installation at New York's Jewish Museum.[10] Indeed, exhibiting has been one of the primary mediums for the architectural avant-garde throughout the twentieth century, providing a place where the ideas of architecture could be experimented with without the need to fit the complex requirements of construction. Scott also points to this '"suspension" of utility' inherent in the exhibiting of architecture as an essential requirement for the 'opening of disciplinary boundaries and conventions, facilitating further permeability to new technologies and avenues of research'.[11] As such, exhibitions have provided the conditions for advancing new ideas in architecture, and therefore were themselves 'constitutive sites of architectural expertise and practice' – exhibitions *as* architecture.[12]

From exhibition to installation

The previous chapter discussed the ephemerality of the magazine as a medium, made from flimsy materials and conceived to be superseded by each new issue. In a different way, exhibitions have a momentary existence, as curator Jeffrey Kipnis describes:

> We visit them once; our stay is brief; our attention light – distracted by the dance of other people and the lure of other things; and though they may travel for a while, once they close, they never seem to return.[13]

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[8] Adrian Forty, 'Ways of Knowing, Ways of Showing: A Short History of Architectural Exhibitions' in *Representing Architecture: New Discussions: Ideologies, Techniques* (London: Design Museum, 2008), pp.42-61.

[9] Felicity D. Scott, 'Operating Platforms', *LOG*, 20, (2010), pp.65-69. (p.66)

[10] Ibid., p.66.

[11] Ibid., p.67.

[12] Ibid., p.68.

[13] Jeffrey Kipnis, in Aaron Betsky and Et al, 'Exhibiting Architecture: The Praxis Questionnaire for Architectural Curators', *Praxis: Journal of Writing + Building*, 2005, pp.106–119 (p.110).

Kipnis considers that the 'urge to comprehensiveness' of exhibitions that seek to document in detail an entire oeuvre through models, photographs and drawings, accompanied by bulky catalogues containing lengthy essays, is an attempt to counteract this ephemerality – a quality which he sees as the 'pleasure' and 'power' of the exhibition as an architectural medium.[14] As such, Kipnis considers the best use of the architectural exhibition as the physical staging of architecture, which allows the 'irreducible, irreproducible effects, the pleasures, the powers, the possibilities' of architecture to be experienced.[15] Looking to Kipnis' body of work, it is possible to infer that exhibitions such as *Mood River* (2002) at the Wexner Center for the Arts, which contained thousands of objects (from fashion, sports, technology, the office and the home) in elaborate spatial installations that included chairs hung in cascades across ceilings and skateboards in a vortex-like basin, are indicative of such an approach. However, there are works of architecture in the form of an exhibition that move a step further, and can be considered closer to the idea of the art installation. Before identifying such practices and their lineage, within which NATØ fit, an elaboration of what constitutes an installation, and the way its experience differs from a conventional exhibition, is pertinent.

Claire Bishop defines the art installation as 'the type of art into which the viewer physically enters, and which is often described as "theatrical", "immersive" or "experiential"', and importantly, where the objects on display are perceived as a 'singular entity' and 'situation'.[16] Moreover, these are works that require a viewer to complete them; Bishop quotes theorist of installation art Julie Reis: 'the spectator is in some way regarded as integral to the completion of the "work"'.[17] Bishop points out that the need for a viewer to enter the work and engage through moving, looking, smelling etc., means that the viewer is 'activated' as opposed to the potentially 'passive' act of viewing static art objects such as paintings.[18] In turn, the active viewer is 'decentred', instead of the subject being depicted as the centre of the world represented, the viewer is 'intrinsically dislocated and divided', guided by their own particular relationship to the work and the world.[19]

The architectural installation as seen in the exhibitions of NATØ offers these qualities, providing an immersive viewing experience that does not only *show* architecture, but *creates* architectural experience. In this respect, the architectural installation can be considered a medium in the same mode as other immersive media such as the novel, theatre or the film. Immersion is inherently connected to all mimetic art, and

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[14] Ibid., p.110.
[15] Ibid., p.110.
[16] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publ., 2010), p.7.
[17] Julie Reis quoted in Ibid., p.7.
[18] Claire Bishop, Ibid., p.11.
[19] Ibid., p.13.

refers to a state of absorption in some 'action, condition or interest'.[20] Immersion is often used in narratology in relation to the evocation of worlds, wherein a world is successfully created if it induces immersion. Indeed, there is an inherently narrative aspect to the concept of immersion in the installation, and it is useful to understand further how narratologists use the term.

Immersion is used to describe any sort of absorption in an activity, but narrative immersion is more specific – it must 'create a space to which the reader, spectator, or user can relate, and it must populate this space with individuated objects'; in this respect, you cannot be narratively immersed in abstract games such as chess, or philosophical writings. In narratology, immersion is strongly aligned with feeling as though the object, action or situation is real – but only up to a point.[21] Writing in the 1990s, narratologist Kendall Walton proposed that being immersed in a narrative is akin to a 'game of make believe', and that the viewer is aware of the difference between the real and the imagined.[22] In more recent discourse, immersion is used in discussions of the narrative potential of video games and virtual reality – a mode similar to the installation in the respect that it involves a bodily move into space (albeit a virtual one).[23] Marie-Laure Ryan points out the limitation of the text that is negated in these new media: 'the visibility of language acted as a barrier that prevented readers from losing themselves in the story-world' – the same can be said for the installation.[24] In the physical space of the installation, like the computer game or virtual reality, the viewer controls the narratives through their own experience in time and space; Ryan explains: 'immersion requires an active engagement with the text and a demanding act of imagining'.[25] Ryan describes this process as one where the subject being immersed is 'split', imaginatively involved but also partially in reality – drawing on the experience of the latter to further enrich and interpret the former.[26] This echoes Bishop's description of 'decentring', and is an important component in activating the passive exhibition viewer.

The architectural installation
The lineage of exhibition as installation by architects that NATØ belongs to can be traced at least to Frederick Kiesler's experiments, from his early mechanical stage sets in Berlin, to the design of Peggy Guggenheim's *Art of this Century* collection in Venice 1942 (figs.

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[20] Jean-Marie Schaeffer and Ioana Vulter, 'Immersion' in David Herman, Manfred Jahn and Marie-Laure Ryan, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), pp.237-239 (p238).
[21] Ibid., p238.
[22] Kendall L Walton, 'Metaphor and Prop Orientated Make-Believe', *European Journal of Philosophy*, 1:1 (1993), pp.39–56.
[23] Ryan, Marie-Laure, *Narrative as virtual reality: Immersion and interactivity in literature and electronic media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
[24] Ibid., p.4.
[25] Ibid., p.15.
[26] Ibid., p.98.
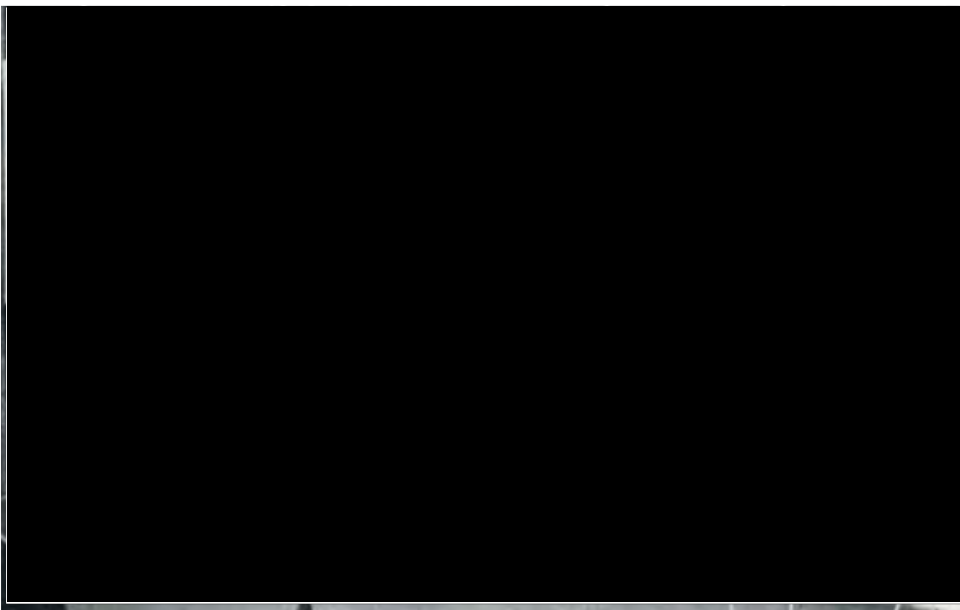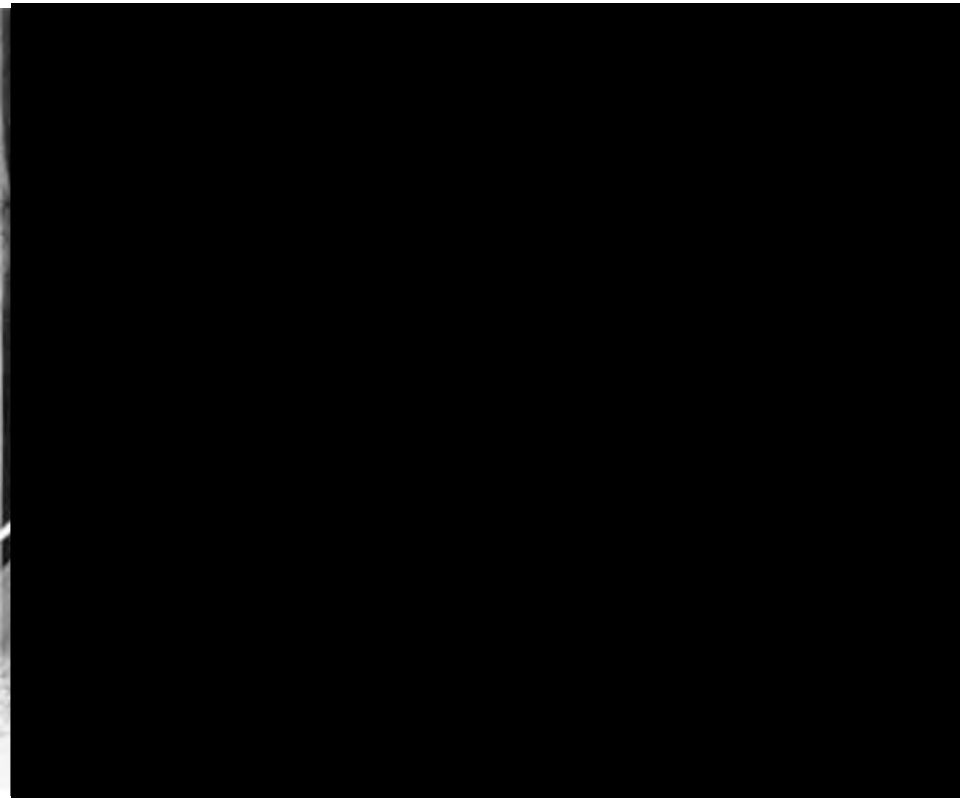
Figures 1 and 2: Frederick Kiesler's design for *Art of this Century*, at the Peggy Guggenheim, Venice (1942).

1, 2).[27] Kiesler drew upon the kinetic installations of artists including the Russian Constructivists as well as the Surrealists, and displayed works in unexpected ways – where the installation itself played as much of a part as the works presented. Indeed, curation and the exhibition as a medium was used by the historic avant-garde throughout the first part of the twentieth century as a means to 'supplement the radical polemics of their artistic practice and to announce their distance from current aesthetic conventions', and were a major influence of the development of installation art.[28] Both the Dadaists and the Surrealists produced exhibitions in the first half of the twentieth century that exemplify the notion of an 'ideological hang', where the form of the exhibition itself is used to disturb and disrupt the act of exhibiting – as Bishop points out, these exhibitions are remembered more for their innovative form than the work they displayed.[29]

However, a more direct relationship can be made between NATØ and the installation works of neo-avant-garde architects of the late 1960s and 1970s – including Coop Himmelb(l)au, Haus-Rucker-Co, Ant Farm, and Gianni Pettena, as well as the group of New York artists who were associated with Gordon Matta-Clark's '112 Green Street' studio – Alice Ayock, Vito Acconci, Nancy Holt, Dennis Oppenheim, Alan Saret, Mary Miss, Alan Sonfist and Willoughby Sharp. In an essay exploring the work of these architects and artists, James Wines describes the mode of their works as 'event structures':

> […] Temporary installations – sometimes motivated by political agendas – and frequently used to take advantage of the inherent symbolic value of public spaces, civic buildings and environmentally threatened terrains.[30]

Austrian radical architects Coop Himmelb(l)au pushed the architectural exhibit towards performance in their work *Hard Space* (1968), which consisted of a series of explosions across Vienna that were triggered by heartbeats, and a whole street filled with soap bubbles in *Soft Space* (1970) (fig.3). Fellow Austrians Haus-Rucker-Co experimented with installations of inflatable structures, most memorably in *Oase No. 7* (1972), which saw a bubble emerge from the Museum Fridericianums facade during the *Documenta* festival (fig.4). Both groups were heavily influenced by Archigram, and used the installation to consider similar themes – environments mediated by technology, disposable and temporary architecture, and utopian cities – using pneumatic and

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[27] Frederick Kiesler stage Design for W.U.R. (R.U.R.), (Berlin, 1923); Frederick Kiesler, *Art of This Century Gallery*, (New York, 1942).
[28] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publ., 2010), p.20.
[29] Ibid., p20.
[30] James Wines, 'Arch-Art: Architecture as Subject Matter', in Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt eds, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion*, 1970-90 (London: V&A, 2011), p.100.
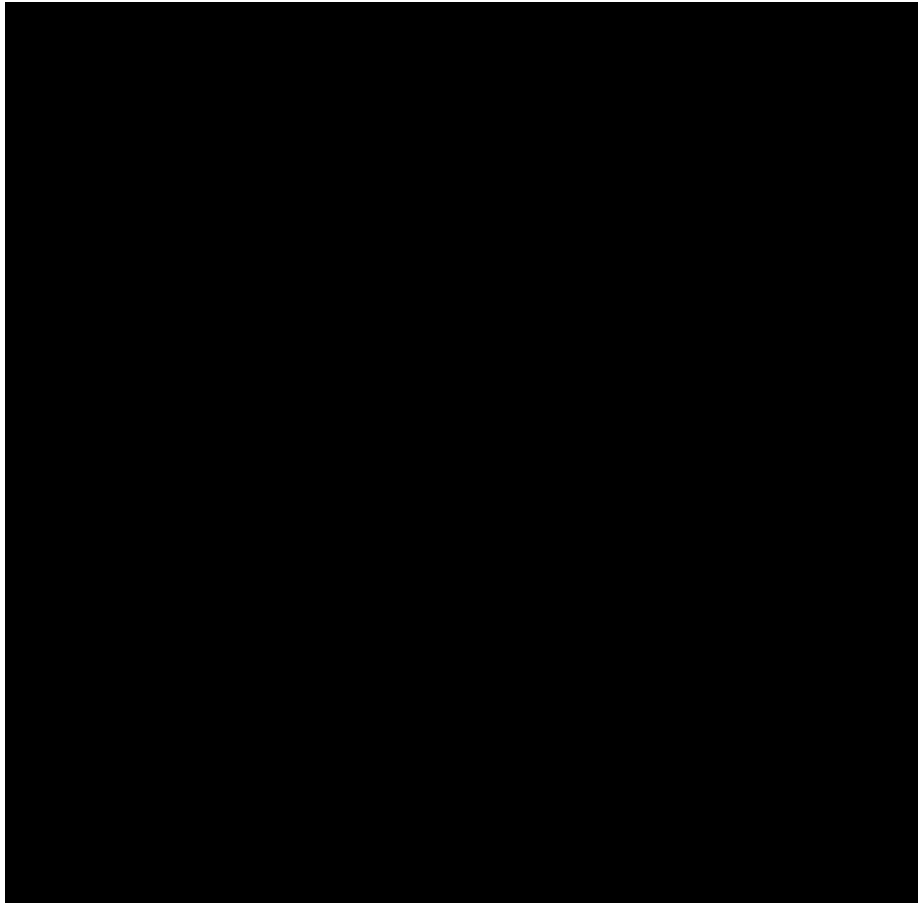
Figure 3: Coop Himmelb(l)au fills a Viennese street with bubbles in *Soft Space*, (1970).
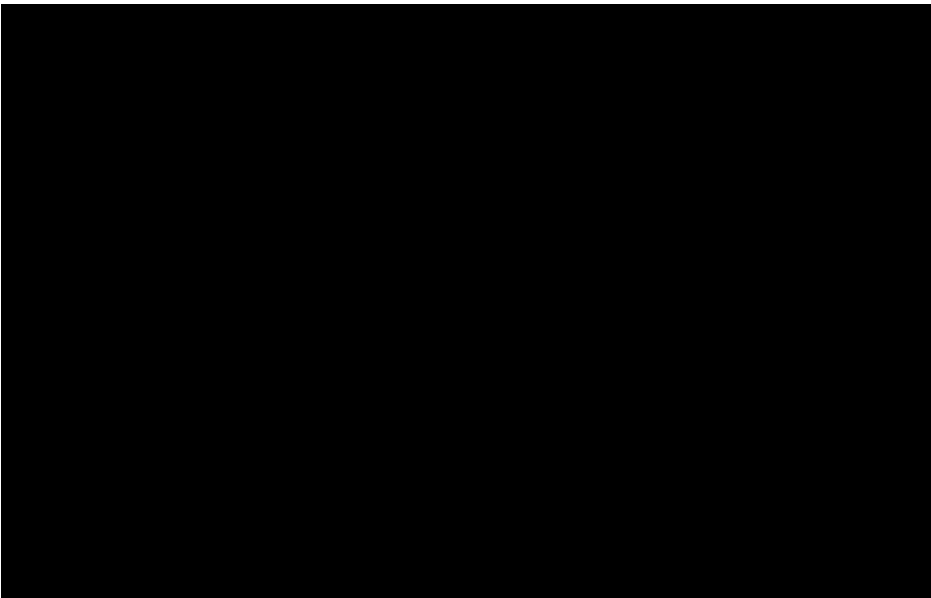
Figure 4: – Hans-Rucker-Co's inflatable structure emerging from the Fridericianums façade, (1972).

inflatable structures to physically explore the relationship between the specator's body and a 'responding, breathing architectural surround.'[31] These works also engaged with Situationist ideas of play, and the potential for a 'constructed situation' to interfere with the conventional habits of daily life in the city; indeed, Guy Debord underlined the importance of ephemerality, 'poetic subjects and objects', aligning such interventions with 'real life' as oppose to the 'permanence of art'.[32]

Another group practicing in the same period, Ant Farm, though also interested in the potential of pneumatic structures, utilised video and the spectacle of the event as a performative exhibitionary architectural practice. Founded in 1968, the Californian group sought to 'question how to operate within a new type of public domain' – in particular, a domain dominated by the television which had disturbed conventional spatio-temporal relations.[33] In 1974 they half-buried ten Cadillacs along Route 66 in Texas – *Cadillac Ranch* – a work that critiqued mass industrial manufacturing, obsolescence and environmental degradation (fig.5). In perhaps their most well known work, *Media Burn* (1975), the group drove a Cadillac into a pyramid of televisions that had been set on fire, constructing a media event with an elaborate set-up of cameras and an invited audience of journalists and reporters (fig.6). In creating a spectacle, reported widely on television at the time, Ant Farm succeeded in subverting the media with their own 'alternative cultural vision', a theme that ran throughout their work. In his reflections on the subject, Wines unites all these works by describing them in opposition to the dominant modes of postmodern architecture which he considered to be 'adaptive, referential and objectified', where 'Arch-Art' was 'subversive, absorptive and contextual'.[34] This characterisation bears a strong resemblance to Villanueva Brandt's explanation of NATØ as an 'antagonistic stereotype', which seeks to influence the creative process and encourage experimentation in a radical mode (quoted in the previous chapter).[35] Aside from the fact that these works were subversive and critical, they sought to materialise their critique through the construction of events, situations and enterable spaces that could experienced, and indeed had to be experienced in order to fully realise them as works.

Though the themes and subjects of these works were considered overly utopian and optimistic by Coates's generation, an awareness of these 'event structures', in particular the direct experience of Coop-Himmelb(l)au's visit to London in 1973 and the

[31] Chris Salter, *Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance* (MIT Press, 2010), p.95.

[32] Guy Debord, Ken Knabb (trans), 'Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action', (June, 1957).http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/report.html [accessed June 2014]

[33] Thomas G. Beischer, 'Review of Ant Farm 1968-1978 by Ant Farm', Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 64 (2005), pp.367–69.

[34] James Wines, 'Arch-Art: Architecture as Subject Matter', in Glenn Adamson and Jane Pavitt eds, *Postmodernism : Style and Subversion*, 1970-90 (London: V&A, 2011), p.100.

[35] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, "Activism.Architecture.Antagonism', in *NATØ,* 2, 1985, p.22.
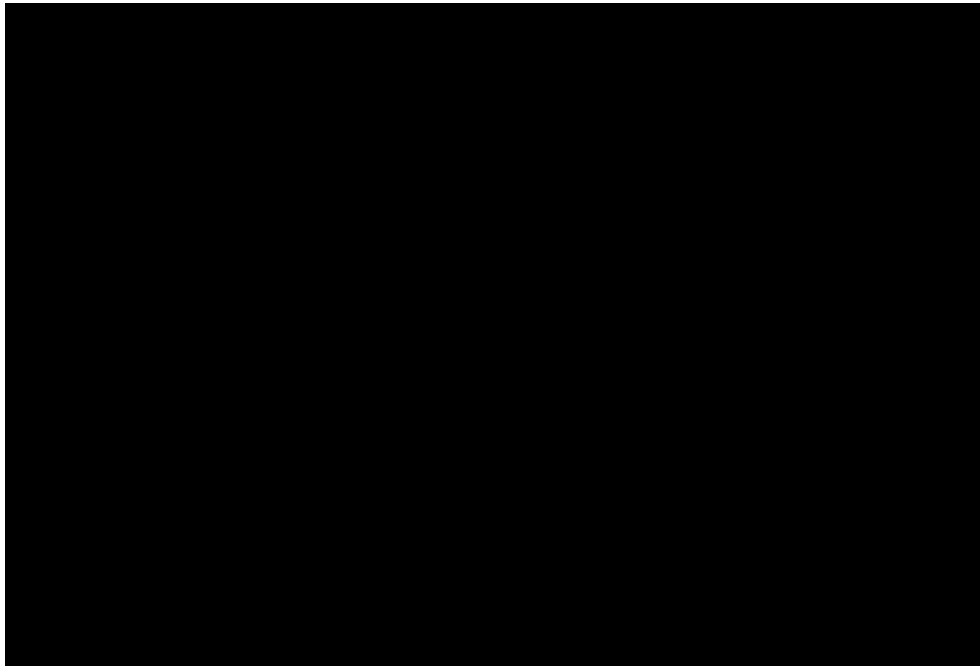
Figure 5: – Ant Farm, *Cadillac Ranch*, (1974)
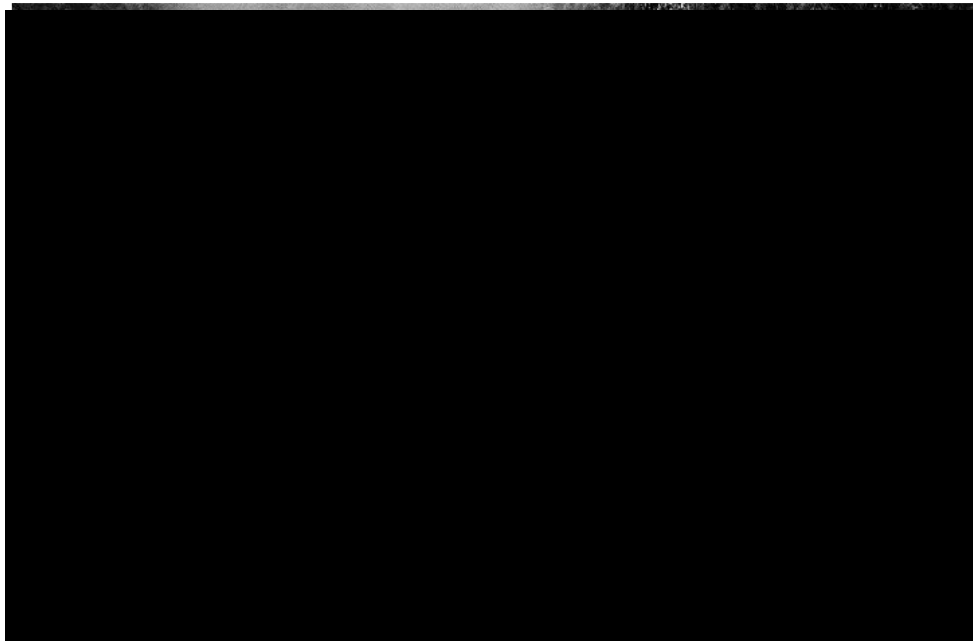
Figure 6: – Ant Farm, *Media Burn*, (1975) – Performance as exhibition.

construction of their *The House with the Flying Roof* (1973) in Camden, shaped
Tschumi's conception of the inseparability of space and event, subsequently evolved by
Coates. As Chapter 1 showed, the notion of actively intervening into the fabric of the city,
which took theorising about space into the physical realm of experiementation, was an
idea that captured the imagination of Coates and The London Conceptualists, and was
carried through NATØ's work. Indeed, NATØ's mode of exhibiting shared the situational
quality of these works, and although they did not consist of spectacular events, nor did
they produce works that intervened with disused or derelict spaces in a public way
(though they used these types of places as their studio), they did use the installation as a
medium through which to create spatio-temporal effect, rather than the conventional
display of representational works.

Jennifer Carter explains the expanded potential for architectural exhibiting that
'draws reflexively upon its own principles to communicate a curatorial message', as
'exhibiting architecture architecturally' – a conceptualisation that helps to frame the
exhibitionary practices described above.[36] Carter goes on to describe the way that
conventional exhibitions that rely on fine art conventions of display fail to embody the
inherent spatiality of architectural practice and 'the potential for transforming
environments into embodiments of architectural thinking and experience'.[37] In this
respect, the architectural exhibition can surpass purely exhibitionary practice to become a
form of spatial practice in its own right – exhibition *as* architecture. The result of such an
approach to exhibiting architecture are installations that reveal multiple layers of meaning
and encourage an active viewing experience that does not present one single, didactic and
fixed exhibitionary narrative, but as the examples above suggest, much more open-ended,
exploratory narratives. Carter's analysis focuses on exhibitions and installations produced
since the year 2000, though she acknowledges that a number of new institutions dedicated
to exhibiting architecture that opened in the late 1970s and 80s (Canadian Centre for
Architecture in Montréal founded in 1979, the Deutsches Architeckturmuseum in
Frankfurt in 1979, the Architeckturmuseum in Basel in 1984, and the Netherlands
Architecture Institute in Rotterdam in 1988) precipitated a renewed interest in expanding
the potential of architectural exhibitions.[38] The events, exhibitions and installations by
neo-avant-garde architects of the 1960s and 1970s represent a more radical and less
institutionalised earlier stream of such practices, however a significant milestone in the
evolution of architectural exhibiting is bypassed by Carter – the first architecture
Biennale in Venice, *The Presence of the Past*, curated by Paolo Portoghesi in 1980. As
architectural historian Léa-Catherine Szacka points out, this was a new type of exhibition

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[36] Jennifer Carter, 'Architecture by Design: Exhibiting Architecture Architecturally', *MediaTropes*,
Vol. III, No.2 (2012), p.28–51. (p.28)
[37] Ibid., p.28.
[38] Ibid., p.29.

that also does not fit neatly into Forty's categories, producing neither 'real-scale' nor 'representational' exhibition types, and instead exposed mainstream architectural audiences to an experience of exhibition *as* architecture.[39] As a major European event, and one taking place during the period of NATØ's formative years, a reflection on this exhibition provides a more directly contemporaneous example of the exhibition as a site of spatial practice.

The Presence of the Past

The Presence of the Past, which sought to explore the emergent postmodernist architectural discourse, centred on the creation of a street, the 'Strada Novissima', erected in the centre of the Corderie dell'Arsenale, with 20 sections of facade (at full scale) designed by 20 individual architects including Ricardo Bofill, Rem Koolhaas, Stanley Tigerman, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, John Rauch, Frank O. Gehry, Arata Isozaki, Franco Purini, Charles Moore and Christian de Portzamparc (fig.7). The exhibition was a celebration of the plurality of postmodernism against the perceived dogma of Modernism, as Portoghesi's essay in the accompanying catalogue was titled, this was 'The End of Prohibition'.[40] But importantly for the evolution of architectural exhibitions, it marked a moment in the mainstream of architectural culture where exhibiting moved from merely reproducing or representing content, to producing it. As such, Portoghesi described the conception of the 'Strada Novissima' as a 'concrete operation offering the public the chance for direct tactile and spatial contact with architecture [...] a gallery of architectural self-portraits made for play, for rediscovering the very serious game of architecture'.[41]

Szacka explains that the originality of the 'Strada Novissima' as an exhibition method lies in the fact that it was both a real-scale exhibition and a representational one (to use Forty's classifications).[42] These assemblages were not models, since they were not representations of an architecture that already existed or was to be built; 'they were, rather, pure acts of imagination, extracted from the architect's dream world'.[43] The fact that the various facades of the 'Strada Novissima' were constructed by Italian set designers Cinecittà further enhances an analysis of the installation as a 'form of

[39] Léa-Catherine Szacka, 'Showing Architecture Through Exhibitions: A Taxonomical Analysis of the First Venice Architecture Biennale (1980)' in Grace Lees-Maffei, *Writing Design: Words and Objects* (Berg, 2012), pp.191-203 (p.197).
[40] Biennale di Venezia Ed. Gabriella Borsano, *The Presence of the Past: First International Exhibition of Architecture : The Corderia of the Arsenale : La Biennale Di Venezia 1980 Architectural Section*. (Electra Editrice, 1980).
[41] Paolo Portoghesi, 'The End of Prohibitionism', in Ibid., p.12.
[42] Léa-Catherine Szacka, (2012), pp.191-203. (p.197).
[43] Ibid., p.197.
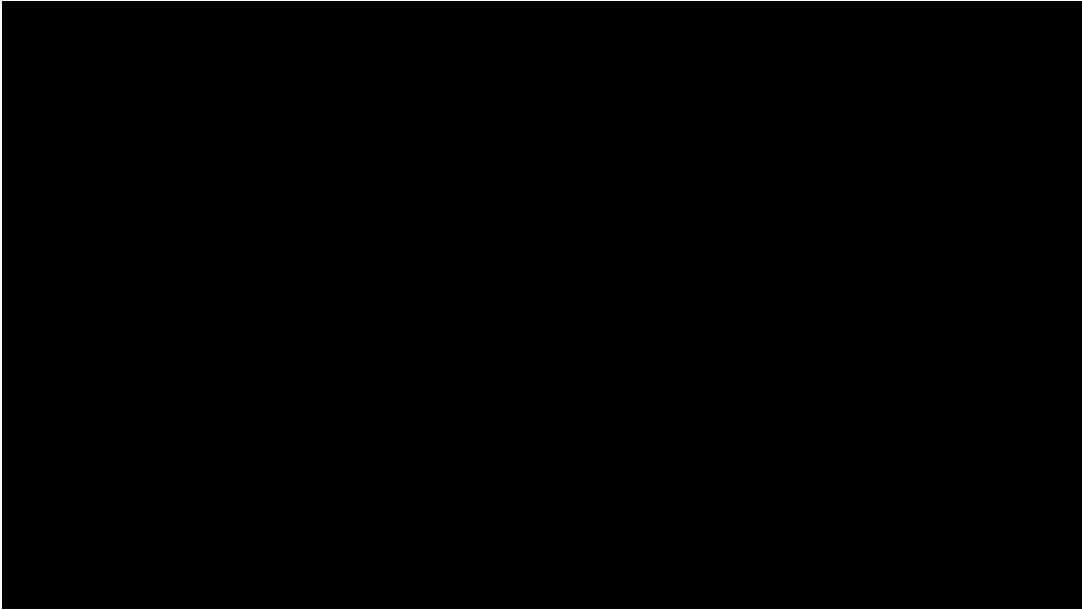
Figure 7: – *The Presence of the Past*, 'Strada Novissima' (1980) – The first architecture Biennale at Venice, using full-scale architectural installation as exhibitionary tactic.

simulation', and suggests the exhibition as a stage or backdrop for theatrical immersion.[44] The overall effect of the 'Strada Novissima' combined with the more conventional, representational parts of the exhibition was polemical – it presented to its audience a group of architects who though distinct from each other, posited a clear movement away from late-modern architecture in their pillaging of historical styles, decorative elements, emphasis on the facade and ubiquitous double coding. Instead of conveying this in a conventional representational manner, a mode exemplified by two other memorable polemical exhibitions, *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (1932) and *Deconstructivist Architecture* (1988) both at MoMA, the 'Strada Novissima' instead enabled the viewer to experience the spatial and ideological concerns of postmodernism in real space, with their bodies. Numerous themes and concepts were evoked by wandering up and down the exhibition space, becoming immersed in the place, and exploring each individual facade and the space behind it (occupied by each individual architect): shopping, consumerism, the street, the decorative facade, double coding, two dimensionality, individualism, a return to history, and so on. The installation also highlighted the theatrical nature of postmodern architecture, as Szacka puts it: 'the idea of recreating, inside the exhibition space, a set that seems true but is, in reality, false'.[45] In enacting these elements of postmodern architecture rather than merely hinting or representing them through drawings, models and text, the exhibition can be considered an installation, in the terms set out by Bishop. Like the radical experiments of the 1960s and 70s, the architectural exhibition becomes a piece of architecture that encourages the viewer to actively take part in the exhibition, rather than to passively observe.

Although the 1980 Venice Biennale opened up new possibilities for architectural exhibiting, the mainstream of architectural exhibitions throughout the 1980s adhered to more conventional representational modes – with major shows in London consisting of monographic collections of drawings, models and photographs. The vast majority of architectural exhibitions in London during this period were organised by the Royal Institute of British Architects, either at their headquarters on Portland Place or at their Heinz Gallery in Portman Square that existed between 1972-2004. Exhibitions typically featured collections from the RIBA's archive of historical drawings such as *Neo-classical Architectural Drawings* (1980), *Theatre Designs and Other Drawings from the Drummond Stewart Collection* (1981), *Architects of the Art Workers Guild 1884-1984* (1984) and so on. They also mounted exhibitions on contemporary practitioners such as solo shows of Terry Farrell (1987), Edward Cullinan (1984), Ron Herron (1989), Ahrends Burton & Koralek (1980) etc. RIBA also held a regular *40 Under 40* exhibition, featuring younger architects – however these, as the others mentioned, were very

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[44] Ibid., p.197.
[45] Ibid., p.201.

conservative displays of framed drawings and photographs, and models on plinths. The same curatorial tactic was taken at other major institutions exhibiting architecture at the time, namely the Royal Academy's *New Architecture: Foster, Rogers, Stirling* (1986); the V&A's exhibition on Aalto (1987) and *Architectural Drawings of Soane, Pugin and Seddon* (1985); and the Hayward Gallery's two seminal architecture exhibitions of the decade *Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century* (1987), and *The Work of Sir Edwin Lutyens 1869-1944* (1982). More variety was to be found at the Architectural Association, which staged between two and three exhibitions a year in addition to its programme of student shows, however in the main, they too were confined to the display of framed images and models – marking the Venice Biennale out as an experiment that failed to penetrate the culture of architectural exhibiting in the mainstream during this decade.

This demonstrates that the exhibitionary precedents available to NATØ were mixed and contradictory – from the radical explorations of the 1960s and 70s that posed the event and temporary urban intervention as an exhibitionary practice, to the highly conventional exhibitions at major institutions in London. The 1980 Venice Biennale proposed a third way, a combination of representational and experiential modes – and though it was clouded in the dominant postmodernist discourse that NATØ sought to distance itself from, employed strategies that NATØ's own installations in some ways mirrored. The rest of this chapter sets out to establish the ways in which NATØ's exhibitions became installations, pushing at the boundaries of architectural exhibiting to create a narrative medium. It will also explore how NATØ used the exhibition as more than a display of work, but as a testing ground for their ideas, shifting the object-like notion of an exhibition into what Daniel Libeskind has described as: 'an investigative process whose results are just as original and as precise as those some call 'real' architecture.'[46]

The installation as narrative medium: *Gamma City* (1985)

Installation as event

In 1985, NATØ were invited by the then director of London's Air Gallery, Iwona Blazwick, to stage a major solo show: *Gamma City* (1985). The gallery, which occupied a warehouse (Northcote House) on Roseberry Avenue, was one of only a few independent galleries in London promoting contemporary art, design and architecture. A conventional 'white cube' gallery, Blazwick showed a number of both emerging and established

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[46] Daniel Libeskind, 'Beyond the Walls', in Nederlands Architectuurinstituut, *The Art of Architecture Exhibitions* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001), p.66.

contemporary artists, including photographer Eric Bainbridge, painter Peter Doig, and conceptual artist Lawrence Weiner. Blazwick was keen that the gallery not only show art, and made an effort to broaden the programme, hosting a series of talks and events in the gallery basement, which included a popular series on fashion. Fuelled by her interest in the groups of the early twentieth century avant-garde, Blazwick was excited by the premise of NATØ – a radical architecture group under such a provocative name was an interesting and 'surprising' concept.[47] She allowed the group free reign to develop an installation, overseeing the project but not interfering. As it happened, although the group developed working models and produced some sketches for the show (figs.8, 9), the installation itself was not meticulously planned, and evolved through an elongated installation process that saw most members (apart from Coates) eat, sleep and work in the gallery over a number of days. Blazwick describes the process as a 'happening', evoking the language of performance art; indeed *Gamma City* from installation, to opening and throughout its three and a half week run, was in numerous ways an 'event'.[48]

As well as the installation process, Blazwick points to the opening of *Gamma City* as a noteworthy element of the show, and one that also marks an interesting moment in the history of contemporary art exhibition openings. Blazwick was approached in 1985 by Anthony Fawcett and Jane Withers, both art writers and critics who had set up a consultancy upon being appointed by major beer brand Beck's. In a move that would define Becks' corporate identity for the decades to come, Fawcett advised the brand – which had very little marketing budget – to donate free beer to art institutions for openings, and fund the placement of an advert for the show in *Time Out*, *The Times* etc., in return for advertising space in exhibition programmes. Prior to 1985, art openings were, according to Blazwick, 'discreet' and 'exclusive' affairs for the 'tiny few', but with the injection of vast quantities of free alcohol, these events were transformed.[49] Blazwick recalls the opening for NATØ's *Gamma City* as one of the first Beck's sponsored events, indicated by the full-page Beck's advertisement on the back of issue 3 of *NATØ* (fig.10), that accompanied the show. As a result, the opening attracted a huge audience – the 'wildest opening view ever' according to Blazwick– attended by students from art and architecture schools as well as the art and architecture scene more broadly.[50] Though perhaps an aside to the content of the exhibition that will be discussed next, the installation and opening of *Gamma City* set the scene for the type of exhibition NATØ produced. This was not the staid, conservative and conventional shows of the Royal Academy or the Royal Institute of British Architects, it was a dynamic installation in an

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[47] Iwona Blazwick, personal interview, February 2014.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
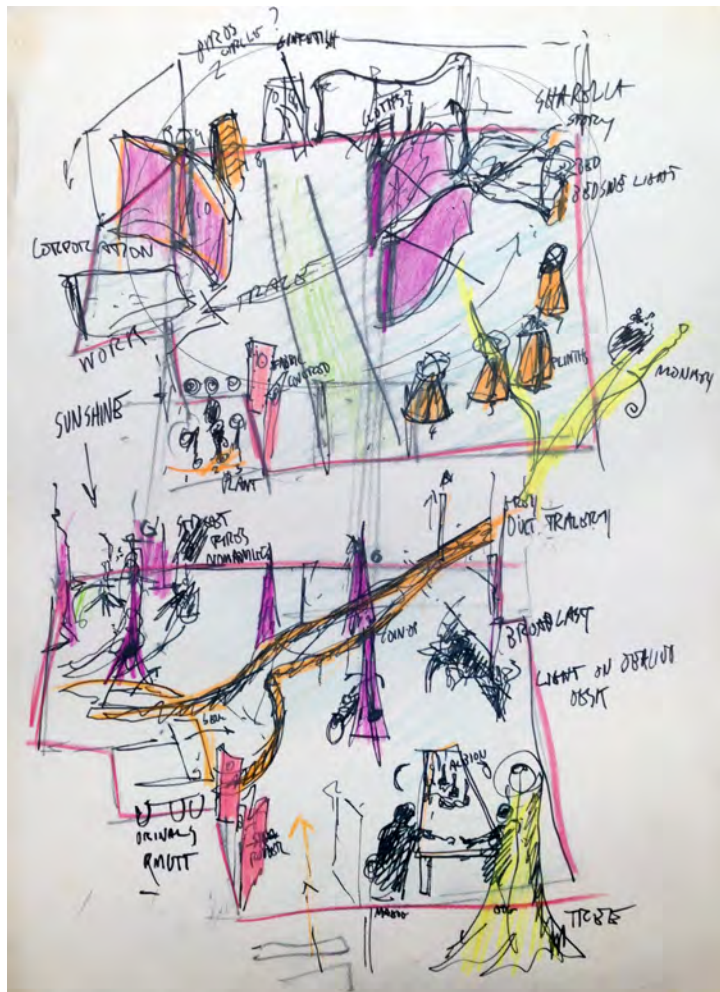
Figure 8: – Development sketch for *Gamma City*, showing a very loose arrangement of exhibits and a sense of the free-flowing relations between them. (1985)

Figure 9: – Development model for *Gamma City*, (1985).
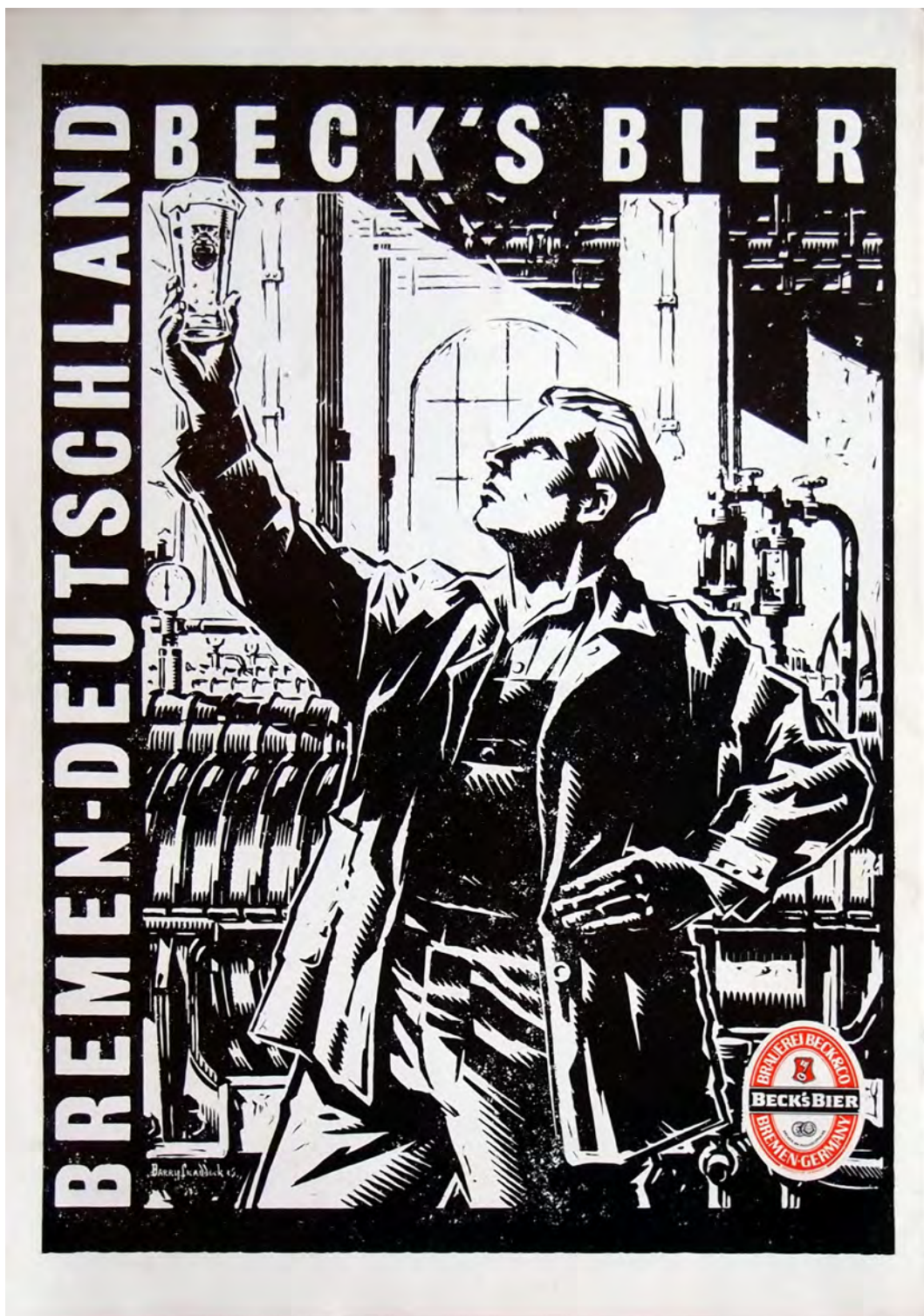
Figure 10: – Beck's advert on the back of issue 3 of *NATØ* (1985)

independent gallery in the heart of London – where the movement of bodies interacted with a stage-set installation to create narrativised space.

The navigable space of the installation

In *Gamma City*, NATØ transformed their ideas on design, architecture and the city into three-dimensional form – exploding the pages of the magazine onto the walls and floors of the Air Gallery. The third issue of the magazine was produced to accompany the show in the manner of a catalogue of sorts, and like the previous two issues, it set out a manifesto-like call to arms at the start – outlining the aim of the show:

> NATO 3 coincides with the joining of idea and commodities in the exhibition Gamma City held at the AIR Gallery in London. Here we retain the 'think-tank' position but shape it three-dimensionally, working with representation as the means but turned up full scale. The gallery itself is special here, first because any gallery is a regenerative space within the city, by definition; second because this gallery in particularly is surrounded by the kind of urban obsolescence that is typically of our cities at large. With Gamma City, we hold up a mirror, but suggest how the parts inside the reflected image can be re-assembled to make the present a little stronger. No Soothsaying here. No crystal balls.[51]

Indeed, the 'reflected' and 're-assembled' image of the city was core idea at the centre of *Gamma City*, as young critic Elizabeth Farrelly emphasised in her review of the show published in *Architectural Review*, 'Gamma City does for the city what airline catering has done for chicken: pull it all to bits and reconstitute it, or not' – her analogy alluding to a less than favourable opinion of the work.[52] NATØ sought to do what they had done in the pages of the magazine and in their drawings and design process: layer the complex reality of the city with the signs and symbols of everyday life, past present and future – to exaggerate, amplify and contort the 'cultivated chaos' of the city.[53] Indeed, Hatton's review of the show in *Building Design* vividly captured what other critics like Farrelly and Peter Dormer considered so unappealing:

> Imagine nine architects on a pilgrimage to Gunnersbury. On the way they start to tell each other stories around themes of architecture. Call them "divisible cities", because instead of each telling separate stories, they keep interrupting each other, adding extra characters, altering plots, mixing up narrative structure and idioms, changing functions and settings, swapping tropes, transposing genres, subverting, interacting, downright interfering, or just going their own sweet way. Not "Once upon a time", but "Once across/through (add your own preposition) a space".[54]

[51] *NATØ*, 3, (1985), p.2.
[52] E.M. Farrelly, 'NATØ: WELL-BRED STREET CRED', *Architectural Review*, No. 1069, March (1986), p.75-77, (p.75).
[53] Nigel Coates, *NATØ*, 3, (1985), p.13.
[54] Brian Hatton, 'The Gunnersbury tales', *Building Design*, no. 782, April 11 (1986), pp. 30-39. (p.30)

Gamma City began on the street outside the Air Gallery, on a zebra crossing directly in front of the entrance that the group extended into the ground floor of the gallery. From the outside, the 'guts' of the building appeared to spill out, with six rubbish chutes typically found on construction sites sprouting from the upper floor windows – a 'conveying fringe' (fig.11).[55] Moving into the gallery the zebra crossing unrolled, taking with it a 'flotsam of Belisha beacons, wheel clamps, slot machines, barricades and warning lights', the detritus of the street, visually emphasising the literal bringing-in of the city into the gallery space. The ground floor was conceived as the 'market place', the place for the masses (figs. 12-20), while the upper floor contained the 'boudoir', the personal space (figs. 21, 22). The 'market place' was conceived as 'part piazza, part scrapyard', which 'infiltrates the urban in-betweens', and contained within it pieces of work produced primarily by Prizeman and Villanueva Brandt – in their characteristic palette of welded scrap and junkyard composite objects (the nature of the objects themselves and the way they perform will be examined in more detail in the next section).[56] What is clear from the photographs and sketches of the exhibition, and from its representation in the magazine (figs. 23-25), is that the installation was purposefully unstructured and free-flowing – consisting of an array of objects at varying sizes, drawings and paintings in different media affixed onto objects and walls, and things hanging from the ceiling and draped across the floor. The show's poster features a layered hand drawing that collages faces, figures and objects onto a fragmentary and chaotic urban scene, evoking a scattered, free-flowing spatiality that echoes both the magazine spreads and the physical installation (fig.26). Coates described *Gamma City* as a 'patchwork of events', and indeed, the elements of the exhibition convey a sense of individual moments, or vignettes, pieced together to form a whole.[57]

Deciphering the 'marketplace', the magazine describes the scene: 'market stalls and "weir walls"', 'techno-barrows...selling books or fruit or GAMMA PRODUCTS', 'power lines and "media ducts"', and photographs show a motorcycle with sidecar (fig.18), a large pile of radio transmitting equipment – 'a mobile radio station' (fig.19), an industrial salvage totem pole (fig.20), a table-like contraption holding a city model hanging from the ceiling (figs.13), and a tray of reflective black oil (fig.14); there is no single focal point nor predetermined route through the space.[58] Journalist and editor John Thackara, who was a prominent design critic in the 1980s, described the fragmented quality of *Gamma City* in an article written for the accompanying *NATØ* magazine:

> We are confronted with the proposition that there is no central 'point' to Gamma City, more a series of discrete, not necessarily related ideas; a directory of tricks,

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[55] Robert Mull, 'Gammalogue' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985), p.15.
[56] 'The Marketplace', *NATØ,* 3, (1985), p.18.
[57] Nigel Coates, NATØ 3, GAMMA CITY, (Architectural Association, 1985), p13.
[58] 'The Market Place' in *NATØ,* 3, (1985), pp.18-19.
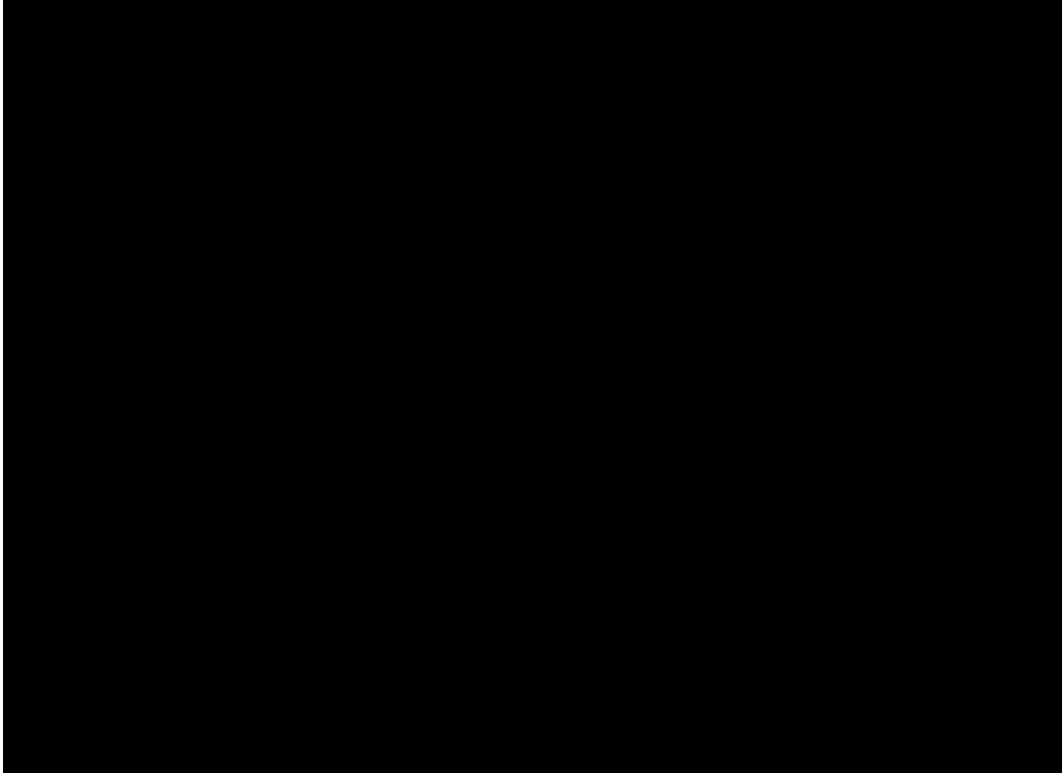
Figure 11: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – A fringe of scaffolding and rubbish shoots start the exhibition outside the building.

Figure 12: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place
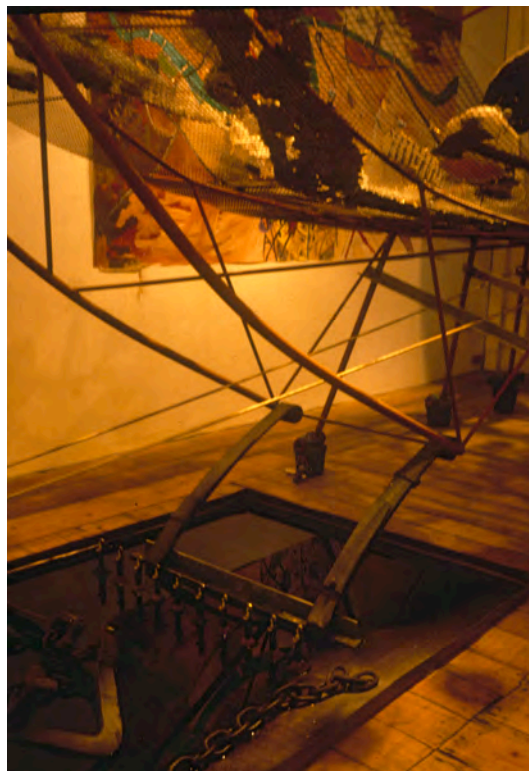
Figure 13 and 14: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place, showing Mark Prizeman's exploded model of London.

Figure 15: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place

Figure 16: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place, combination of drawings and objects.

Figure 17: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place, view through the window.

Figure 18: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place, modified motorcycle and side car.

Figure 19: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Ground floor market place, radio broadcasting equipment.
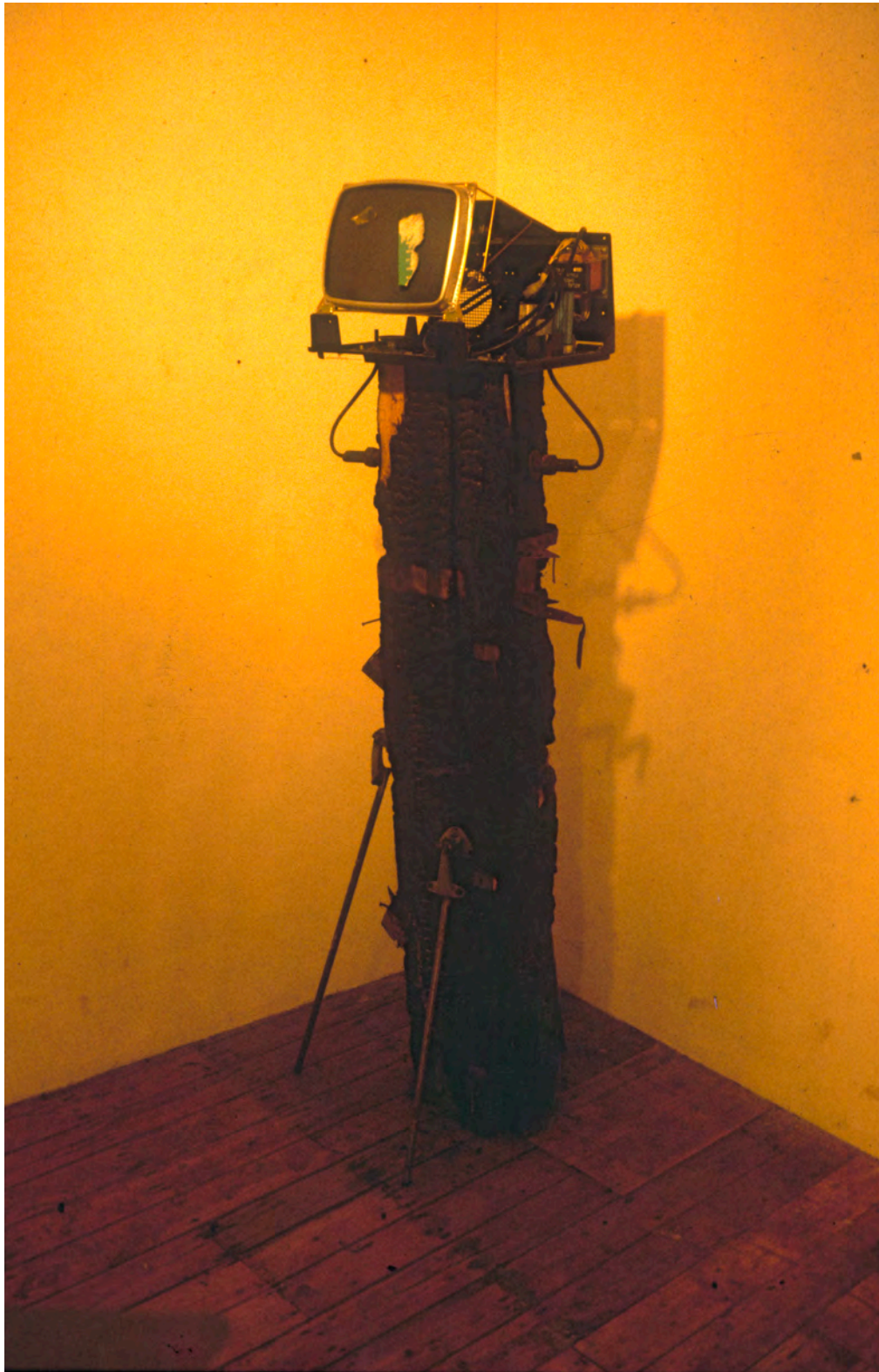
Figure 20: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – Carlos Villanueva Brandt, *Totem*.

Figure 21: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – First floor 'Boudoir'

Figure 22: – *Gamma City*, Air Gallery, London (1985) – First floor 'Boudoir'

someone calls it. There's no dotted line (or yellow brick road) guiding you through the exhibition: you have to make your own connections from your own local area networks. You confront no history, no heroes, no checklists, rather a bombardment of messages, the white noise of things, places and sensations that go to make up cityness.[59]

This description suggests that navigating the space of NATØ's installation was akin to traversing the space of an unknown city – searching for clues, for recognisable signs and symbols, and moving through and around space and the objects in it to orientate and make sense of it. This suggests a mode akin to a Situationist dérive, a freely associative drift through space – as has been evoked throughout the chapters of this thesis. The installation set up a framework to be navigated by the individual: 'NATO does not create the creativity but, like the Cages and Enos in music, set out to create the conditions and preconditions by which everyone may participate'.[60] The installation is not 'about' anything, it does not have a prescribed polemic or single narrative, nor is there a focus on any particular object or piece of work – mirroring Bishop's description of the art installation, the individual objects are instead perceived as a 'singular entity' or 'situation'.[61] This also evokes Tschumi's assertion that 'the route is more important the any one place along it' – the installation is designed to be moved through and only then is it fully realised.[62]

Bishop elaborates this mode of experiencing via installation art, where instead of a pair of disembodied eyes viewing the work from a static position – as might be the case in the conventional viewing of a painting – the installation assumes an embodied viewer with a full range of senses.[63] She cites the analogy of 'dreaming' as the closest to the experience of the 'total installation', drawing on Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) – summarising three relevant features of Freud's dream analysis: 'the sensory immediacy of conscious perception, a composite structure, and the elucidation of meaning through free-association'.[64] Similarly, the space of the installation is experienced as a scene into which the viewer physically steps, confronted with an assemblage of elements which are understood individually, in turn, but also as metonymic parts along the route of a larger narrative put together as a mental image by the viewer. In this sense, the narrative cannot be seen at once (as in the case of the singular pictorial narrative) and is constantly shifting as the installation presents innumerable viewpoints. The active interpretation and engagement that this way of viewing and experiencing demands

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[59] John Thackara, 'Mad Methods' in Ibid., p14-15. (p.14)
[60] Ibid., p.15.
[61] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (London: Tate Publ., 2010), p.7.
[62] Bernard Tschumi, *Architecture and Disjunction* (MIT Press, 1996), p.163.
[63] Claire Bishop, (2010), p.7.
[64] Ibid., p16.

enhances the sense of presentness – suspense is inherent in the way the experience of the installation unfolds, with a multiplicity of choices made to navigate the space.

The term 'ensemble sensibility' used by installation artist Judy Pfaff to describe her approach recognises the same condition of arranged parts conceived to evoke a sensation or larger whole.[65] As explored in Chapter 1, Coates had been exposed to Pfaff's *Deepwater* installation in New York in 1981 – the work that would elevate her to international prominence – and the experience shaped the development of his approach back in the studio at the AA. He described the way that in *Deepwater*: 'all the parts must orchestrate themselves simultaneously to underscore the intensity of the present'.[66] In an interview in the journal *BOMB*, Pfaff refers to her 'ensemble sensibility', citing Japan as a place where she first observed such an effect: 'There would be a beautiful meal in incredible ceramics, the view out of the window with the mountain in the distance and the perfectly placed tree in the foreground' – it is the combination of each of these elements that heightens a sense of being in that moment.[67] In Pfaff's work, layers of different materials – organic, found objects, industrial detritus, paint etc. – are collaged in a chaotic and gestural manner to set up an immersive environment of views and experiences. She describes the way her installations are intended to be experienced as being filmic: 'I structure my work more the way films are put together; it's like quick splices and dissolves in films [...] You don't know exactly why, but when you're in the work you get excited, even panicked by the structuring of the scene.'[68] From this it is possible to infer that a process akin to editing takes places when Pfaff assembles the disparate elements of her installations. Thus, in the manner that Tschumi described, the installation is experienced in motion, in a similar manner to the moving scene of the film, by a moving spectator.

In employing such an approach, both Pfaff and NATØ overcome the preconception of architecture or the city as static, instead emphasising the way that space, like film, is 'shaped by the montage of spectatorial movements'.[69] This was a view espoused by Eisenstein, discussed earlier in this thesis, and which has relevance to the embodied experience of NATØ's installations. In 'Montage and Architecture', Eisenstein describes the mobile dynamics involved in watching a film, despite the apparently static viewer, and likens it to the experience of moving through architecture.[70] It is the act of 'sequential juxtaposition' through montage that links the scenes, views and fragments of

[65] Mimi Thompson, 'Judy Pfaff', *BOMB*, No.69 (1999), pp.76–82.
[66] Nigel Coates, 'Spiculations for Tomorrow', in *Harpers & Queen*, 1981, pp.31-34.
[67] Judy Pfaff quoted in Mimi Thompson, 'Judy Pfaff', *BOMB*, No.69 (1999), pp.76–82.
[68] Judy Pfaff quoted in Irving Sandler, *Judy Pfaff* (Hudson Hills, 2003), p.13.
[69] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture, and Film* (New York: Verso, 2007), p.56.
[70] Sergei M. Eisenstein, Yve-Alain Bois and Michael Glenny, 'Montage and Architecture', *Assemblage*, (1989), pp.111–131.

the film or the architectural promenade – in the same way that the scenes of NATØ's *Gamma City* are linked to produce a whole narrative.[71] Eisenstein finishes the article with the conclusion that the *mise-en-cadre* (the montage of frames – cadres – into a sequence) and the *mise-en-scene* (the contents of the frame, the setting, action and characters) are inherently linked – the movement of the body is required to enact the montage of the sequence.[72]

Architecturally, the concept of the *mise-en-cadre* resonates strongly with NATØ's approach to urbanism, which rejects the overarching design and the predetermined, planned city in favour of an urban condition made from smaller parts and moments. This is an approach to design and urbanism described through minutiae, unfolding from the individual moments of the inhabitants rather than the top-down imposition of the planner or architect. Hatton describes the approach as one that sought to discover 'the programme of a city immanent in the tools and sacraments of its subjects, the triggers and table-settings of their meetings, the gear and equipment of their acts'.[73]

In *Gamma City*, the individual objects, drawings, paintings etc. on the ground floor make up the narrative of the 'market place', and so on for the 'boudoir' upstairs; but together, when also combined with the approach of the zebra crossing and the rubbish chutes, the whole exhibition conveys the narrative of *Gamma City*. A third metonymic layer relates *Gamma City* to its physical situation, in a reclaimed warehouse in the centre of London – the city fabric that exemplifies NATØ's urban narrative. The installation is an extension of the city; conversely, the city is an extension of the installation. The final layer of narrative content is provided by the viewer themselves – 'the wheel of association' – consisting of the memories, experiences, knowledge and nuances of the individual, which produces an entirely unique narrative.[74] In this respect the individual is the protagonist of the narrative, not identifying with specific characters presented by the installation, but becoming the centre around which the narrative revolves themselves – 'the main motor of the total installation'.[75] Coates has described narrative architecture as 'a kind of crucible', an evocative word that conjures the idea of a melting-pot – where the contents are heated until they change or morph.[76] The heat of the crucible can be thus likened to the layers of information inside the installation colliding to create 'hot' narrative sensation, but a heat that requires activation by the moving body.

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Brian Hatton, 'From Neurosis to Narrative' in *Metropolis: New British Architecture and the City*, (London: ICA, 1988), pp.12-19. (p.12)

[74] Ilya Kabakov quoted in Claire Bishop, (2010), p.16.

[75] Ibid., p16.

[76] Nigel Coates quoted in Andreas Papadakis, *Theory + Experimentation: An Intellectual Extravaganza* (London: Academy Editions, 1993), p.131.

One might look to the accompanying magazine for a structured plot, an explanation or a guide in the manner of a catalogue, but instead it exaggerates the fragmentary, drifting sensation. A double-page spread in the magazine is dedicated to each physical space of the gallery, laid out as one continuous space on the page occupied by collaged and overlaid sketches, photographs, cut-outs and text (figs.23-25). These fragments do not explain the physical installation, but they provide a simulacrum – a two-dimensional evocation of the same experience. A continuous line of text circles the edge of the page, requiring the reading to turn the magazine four times to read it, exaggerating the dual-navigation of the page by the eye and the body that was established in the earlier magazines (discussed in the previous chapter). The space of the page is analogous to the space of the exhibition – it is Deleuzian 'smooth', rhizomatic space of continuous variation and continuous linkage, with no grid or structuring devices. In this space, the figure and ground are blurred into a seamless field or milieu, with no beginning or end, no edges or rigid structure. It is this form that creates the drifting eye across the page, which is brought into three dimensions in *Gamma City*; here the whole body drifts through the space of the installation in a Situationist dérive. In this respect the experience is dream-like – freely associative and constituted by sensory perception.

The two-dimensional representations of the installation space in the magazine can be likened to a cartography of sorts, and it is possible to make parallels between these pages and Guy Debord's *The Naked City* (1957) – a psychogeographic map of Paris. Both NATØ and Debord sought to subvert conventional mapping that creates totalising, disengaged and voyeuristic representations of the city, and 'homogeneous' and 'dominant' narratives.[77] Instead, *The Naked City* is predicated on a model of movement, in particular the 'spatializing action' of the dérive: 'from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.'[78] These vortexes and flows are represented by the curved arrows and scattered arrangement of map fragments in *The Naked City*, and can also be felt through the unstructured pages of *NATØ* magazine, where pieces of photograph and parts of drawing collide to create a continuous space. The unstructured nature of both Debord's and NATØ's images evoke the 'spontaneous inclinations of orientation' that characterises the drift through the city, being drawn into and out of varying 'hubs' of activity or atmosphere, and is thus oriented around the perspective of a moving body who experiences a series of events in the city fabric.[79] The element of time that is denied by the totalising view of conventional maps of the city is thus reinstated, as the movements of the body necessarily entail a diachronic mapping; as

[77] Thomas F. McDonough, 'Situationist Space', *October*, 67 (1994), pp.59–77. (p.69)
[78] Guy Debord, 'Theory of the Dérive', *Internationale Situationniste*, 2, (1958) http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/314 [accessed July 2014].
[79] Thomas F. McDonough, (1994), pp.59–77. (p.64).

Figure 23: 'Gamma Cities', *NATØ*, 3 (1985) – First of three spreads in issue 3 of the magazine to accompany the installation, its layout and design emulating the spatial condition of the gallery.

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Figure 24: 'Market Place', *NATØ*, 3 (1985) - Magazine spread corresponding to the ground floor of the *Gamma City* installation.

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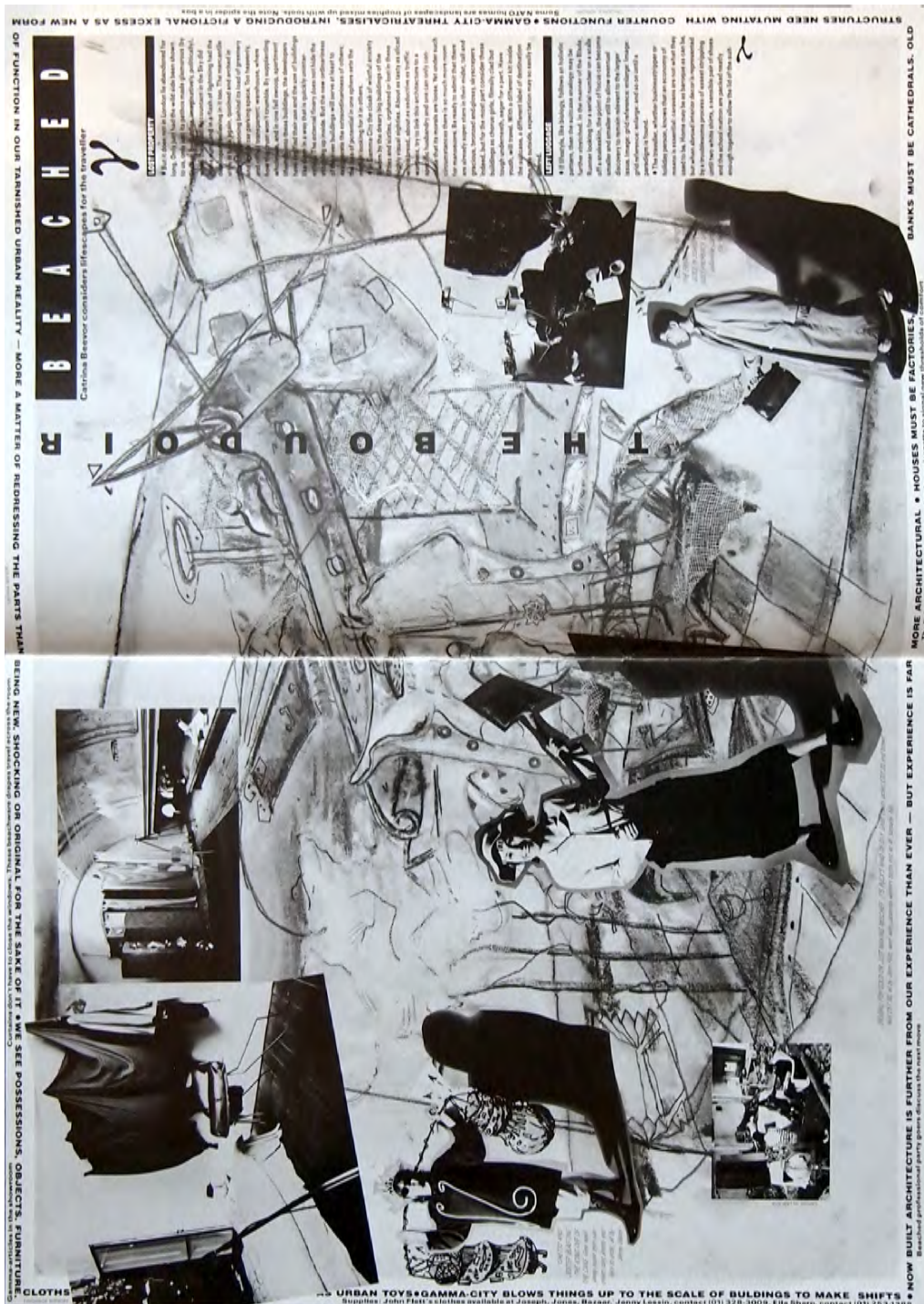
Figure 25: 'The Boudoir', *NATØ*, 3 (1985) – Magazine spread corresponding to the upper floor of the *Gamma City* installation.

Figure.26: Poster for *Gamma City* at the Air Gallery, London (1985) – the drawing suggests the layered and fragmentary nature of the installation.

Thomas McDonough explains, this mode of mapping thus 'openly acknowledges itself as the traces of practices of inhabiting rather than as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions.'[80] NATØ's magazine spreads for *Gamma City* depict a city condition that it is even more open that Debord's, with the smudged line suggesting indeterminate and overlapping paths; in addition, the changing orientation of the page required to read the text around the edge of the page encourages different readings of the drawn parts and the discovery of new elements.

Replacing the architectural model

The 'stimulator artefact'

An important element of NATØ's approach to exhibiting, and indeed the design process itself, was the eschewal of conventional architectural models in favour of full-sized, 'real-scale' objects. This had first evolved in the Unit at the AA as props for the video workshops of the early 1980s, and progressed into elaborate objects designed for fictional inhabitants of the places NATØ imagined (figs.27-32). By the time of the crucial *Albion* project in 1982-83, the props had become more elaborate strategies with which to situate an event in space, with each prop designed with some activity or action in mind. One of the most memorable was Christina Norton's 'Mobile Confessional' (fig.32) designed for *Albion*, which also cropped up in Prizeman's drawings of his own part of *Albion* (fig.33). A project brief from December 1982 (fig.34) describes the way that each student chose an object from London's Science Museum on which to base their own creation, distorting the original item through a process of 'bending it towards a new Zeitgeist urban function'.[81] The objects were then positioned around the AA, in either 'appropriate (or inappropriate)' positions for demonstrations. The effect was described thus:

> Some of them eclipsed their use with poetic precision, some already implied the reshaping of particular urban contexts, like the street of the living room. But more important, they imposed a particular expressive attitude on carefully selected situations located between the conventional categories of events.[82]

It is this imposition of an attitude, evoked through the collision of event and space, that for NATØ began to exaggerate and enhance the city context – producing narrativity through activated space.

Though NATØ's earlier exhibitions such as the graduation show for *Albion* at the AA in 1983 (figs.35,36) and their project for the RIBA's *Starchoice* exhibition in 1984

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[80] Ibid.
[81] Art and Science project brief, Nigel Coates, (1982), see fig.34.
[82] Ibid.

Figures 27-30: Props produced in Unit 10 at the AA in the early 1980s (exact dates and authors unknown).

Figures 31-32: Props produced in Unit 10 at the AA in the early 1980s – right, 'Mobile Confessional' by Christina Norton.

Figure 33: Mark Prizeman, *Albion*, (1984) – Featuring Christina Norton's 'Mobile Confessional, middle-right.

ARCHITECTURAL ASSOCIATION SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Chairman: Alvin Boyarsky, B.Arch (McGill), M.R.P. (Cornell), M.R.A.I.C.

34-36 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3ES. Tel. 01-636 0974

ART AND SCIENCE   13th December 1982

Dear *Mark*

I'll recap on the project so far like this -
The Object made reference to simple technologies in the Science Museum. By
touring the building, hot examples of machines, bodies, processes, were fixed
as drawings. But ideas we've not really clarified until work began on build-
ing the full size objects. Each piece successfully distorted the original
model, bending it towards a new Zeitgeist urban function. In fact most of
them supported an elaborate internal narrative anticipating a mix of delib-
erately naive images with the spatial implications of the set of actions
implicit in their use.

Object demonstration
Each object found an appropriate (or inappropriate) spot in the school, so
that a roving jury could ask for demonstrations. We found that the original
reference had been overtaken by the power of the objects themselves. The
ones that caused highest entertainment value were those that malfunctioned.
Some of them eclipsed their use with poetic precision, some already implied
the reshaping of particular urban contexts, like the street or the living
room. But more important, they imposed a particular expressive attitude
on carefully selected situations located between the conventional categories
of events. Thematic actions were obviously more significant than the
territory of their use.

A Drawing Sequence
By turning the autonomous qualities of the object into a narrative related
to time (sequence) or space (form) a lot could certainly be found out about
the lessons of the original impulse. First we made a set of drawings which
developed this theme in a specific series of frames.

1. The object with a second object and a building
2. A diagram of how the object works
3. The mise-en-scene (a possible narrative setting) of the object, showing
    a fragment of the continuous present.
4. A storyboard for a four or five minute video sequence built around the
    object as a catalyst or metaphor.

Then Bernard Tschumi's 36 house project delved further into the role of drawing
as a device for translating form and motion into a language of imagery
that could be compatable with an architectonic scale of expression. Amongst
a series of formal devices, we noted how deformation could release unexpected
(subjective; artful) propositions that simultaneously build on and overturn
initial premises. Yet even under such subjective mood, a rationality of
proceedure seemed essential. One investigated how irrationality was indi-
visible from controlled strategy.

Figure 34: 'Art and Science' – a note to students written by tutor Nigel Coates outlining the use of objects as part of a design task. (1982).

featured a substantial number of drawings on paper, complemented by a smaller array of three-dimensional objects and models, *Gamma City* and *Heathrow* both relied heavily on the real-scale object. Indeed, an early press release and scribbled notes describing preparations for *Gamma City* refer to the show under a different title: *City Furniture*. Notes for the show reveal a preoccupation with the object over any other exhibition device:

> Beyond either drawings or the printed page, City Furniture will be pitched between these two levels, between objects and buildings yet further understanding both. As such it will be the first show in which NATO uses full scale rather than miniaturisations. City Furniture will take the principle of the stimulator artefact up to the city scale, suggesting that a new architectural species could be used to bring new life to old buildings by adaption rather than demolition. The gallery, itself a converted warehouse, will be a 3D manifesto for the NATO city, with NATO's range of building modifiers built and clamped on to the gallery building to suggest new orders (or disorders) of inhabitations.[83]

Strictly speaking this was not the first time the group would use 'full scale', as issue 2 of *NATØ* magazine had focused almost entirely on objects, props and accessories for the 'apprentice'.[84] However this was a unique opportunity to create a three-dimensional space across two floors, and provided the chance to design a number of objects and pieces of furniture to exemplify the NATØ approach.

The use of the full-sized object had the particular effect of suggesting use and action; indeed, perhaps a more suitable term of reference than *object* might indeed be *prop*, having with it the connotations of theatre, performance and the creation of a scene, situation or scenario. The word prop does however imply a sense of secondary importance, as if the object were merely supporting the real action; the term 'stimulator artefact' from the quote above better describes the active nature of the objects without relegating them to a supporting role. Given NATØ's preoccupation with event, action and architecture as *mise-en-scene*, documented in this thesis, it is clear that these artefacts were used in part to suggest movement and action, in opposition to the static architectural model. The artefacts in *Gamma City* encouraged the viewer to project a scenario onto them, casting their own body into the space of the artefact to activate it in a way that the miniaturised, birds-eye-view architectural model makes very difficult. The effect is a more engaged viewing experience, and one that acts to animate the space of the gallery with the activity of daily life. In this respect, NATØ's installations, instead of the architectural model used as a 'surrogate' for a particular building or part of the city not yet built, the object is used to represent the urban condition they wished to evoke – within

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[83] NATØ, miscellaneous note, (1985)
[84] *NATØ*, 2, (1984).

Figure 35 and 36: Unit 10 end of year show at the AA, *Albion* project, featuring primarily drawings. (1983)

each NATØ object it is possible to observe a microcosm of the qualities and character inherent in the NATØ city.[85]

Further to this, NATØ artefacts differ fundamentally from architectural models in their conception of time. An architectural model nearly always projects into the future and figures a reality not yet realised, whereas NATØ's 'stimulator artefacts' are realised in the present moment, and yet present a conflicted fusion of past and future simultaneously. This was a key quality of NATØ work more broadly and is figured directly through the installation artefacts; Coates describes the effect as stressing a supple temporal blending: 'it stresses the becoming or dematerializing of the object, as ruin, as yet to be built, as makeshift'.[86]

Street vernacular

Through photographs, notes and reviews of the show the various objects designed can be pieced together, though it is difficult to examine them in detail. Among the items of the ground floor 'marketplace' were 'Fishfin columns' – screens made from corrugated iron and leather hinges, by Robert Mull (fig.15); 'BSA Sidecar Orion Vendor' – a motorcycle with sidecar, by Mark Prizeman (fig.18); and 'Totem' – a VDU mounted on a railway sleeper, by Carlos Villanueva Brandt (fig.20). Upstairs in the 'Boudoir' were 'Starlamps' by Catrina Beevor and Mull; the 'Boardroom Table' – made from assorted scrap metal by Prizeman with place settings by Melanie Sainsbury (fig.21); the dream catcher-like 'Soft Chandeliers' by Beevor, made from hair curlers, metal shavings and polystyrene balls (fig.21); Coates's 'Wombat hung wardrobe' – constructed from spiked security bars welded into wall brackets and draped in cloth (fig.25); and a range of other indecipherable objects including a shower (fig.22). Though a diverse collection of items, in varying styles from different materials and made using a range of techniques, all the objects have in common a sensibility of Jencks' and Silver's 'adhocism', made through improvisation and material salvage. They mix raw materials like plastics and metal, with ready-made elements such as the motorcycle, and radio and video equipment. This mix of raw and often decaying materials with more contemporary bits of electronics and technology creates a specific binary condition reflective of the particular combination of urban decline and rapidly progressing communication technology that characterised London in the 1980s – when the decaying urban fabric of the post-industrial city occurred at the same moment as innovations such as the Walkman and the personal computer. There is a strong sense of palimpsest in these objects and the way they became part of the

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[85] Kenneth Frampton and Silvia Kolbowski, *Idea as Model* (Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies : Rizzoli International Publications, 1981), p17.
[86] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in John Thackara eds. *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp.95-114. (p.103)

gallery fabric, layering and overlaying existing architecture with found and foraged materials, eroding them and contorting them into new shapes and uses.

This effect is doubled by references from elsewhere – either in time or place; for example Mull's corrugated iron screens are titled 'Persiani della fabbrica' and feature a pitted grid of irregular holes and decorative metal scales – suggestive of elaborate Italian shuttering, but also the aesthetic of the factory (fabbrica). The objects all feature a similar combination of primitivism combined with somewhat futuristic elements; writing in 1988 Coates evocatively described the effect as:

> [...]An archeology-projected and a futurology-reversed into the present. This drawing back of the temporal bowstring corresponds exactly to the way narrative architecture performs on buildings. It adds on (or lances through) new elements which are deliberately chosen to advance rhetorically the spectrum of meaning. It treats new architecture as a kind of 'clothing' (or surgery?), so that the old architecture shows through.[87]

In using materials salvaged from the street, and creating objects that are recognisable parts of everyday life, NATØ established a sense of the city condition past, present and future; and though it was very much rooted in London, there is also a more overarching, universal, contemporary metropolis being evoked. The range of objects across both gallery spaces – public and private realms – also represent a blurring of these two territories, and an approach to designing the city that takes in even the smallest detail. In a review of the show, Hatton highlights that NATØ's approach was also noticeable for its lack of a universal method of design: 'Rather, simply drawn together, free-style, from the street vernacular of errant initiatives and locally creative misuses.'[88] Indeed, part of what made NATØ's approach appear so authentic was that they took a position within the street and pop culture they designed for – Blazwick elaborates this point:

> With all the tools of the mass media at their disposal, artists need do little to activate our recognition of a pre-digested lexicon of signs and symbols; the emphasis has shifted from the producer to the receiver or consumer. It is the 'hands on' appropriation of information technology and mass communication – characterised by Jenny Holzer's spectacolor board messages; Barbara Kruger's giant photomontages; or NATØ's low tech and computer hybrids – that differentiates and defines this diverse array of practitioners from any other movement tacking technology and the mass media: from Dada, Futurism and Surrealism to British pop art. Neither escapist, nostalgic or confrontational, these producers are the consumers, they operate from the centre of an urban culture, and not as outside observers.[89]

Here Blazwick points to the particular quality of certain artists and designers working in the 1980s who were not only infatuated by urban street culture, but who were part of it –

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[87] Ibid., p.110.
[88] Ibid., p.110.
[89] Iwona Blazwick, 'Pop Life' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985), p.11.

consumers as well as producers. This had of course developed from the punk DIY phenomena, and was a central theme throughout NATØ's work. In the second issue of NATØ magazine, the 'apprentice' was the protagonist who built and adapted their own environment, clothing and accessories, bricolaging a new aesthetic from the detritus of the street and the new technology of Walkmans and personal computers. Blazwick's quote also points to the familiarity of the 'pre-digested lexicon of signs and symbols' used by NATØ and other artists, which is an important strategy in creating immersion.[90] In Ryan's analysis of narrative immersion, she asserts that immersion increases with familiarity, as the recognisable elements help to more easily furnish a narrative world.[91] NATØ's artefacts tread a fine line between familiarity and defamiliarisation – using materials and objects from the street but combining them in unusual ways, and with elements from other places and cultures, that require a longer gaze (to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

The material language of NATØ's work, most clear in *Gamma City*, is paralleled in a number of product designers and artists working in the same period, who combined salvaged material from the street and the post-industrial ruin into bricolaged objects and works. This is a tradition that can be traced at least as far back as the 1950s in the work of Richard Stankiewicz and Robert Rauschenberg, but gained a new relevance in the context of 1970s urban decline. Indeed, Pfaff, who had a major impact on Coates, has been described as creating artworks that 'only an urban person could' – underlining an essential quality that NATØ shared.[92] Though the materials that Pfaff uses are less recognisably salvaged materials than NATØ's, they do often contain what she called 'street stuff': metals such as tin and aluminium, chicken wire, plastic etc., which she welds and pastes together (figs. 37-39).[93] Pfaff has referred to the street as her 'cornucopia', suggesting the abundance and plenitude of the street as a source of inventive and creative materials.

It seems that although they were creating works in different cities – Pfaff in New York and NATØ in London – they both sensed the same dynamic, exciting and unstable creativity emanating from the urban condition that was so particular to this period, or the modern city more broadly as Marshal Berman argued.[94] Critics in *Flash Art* referred to Pfaff's work as 'visual punk', and though perhaps unintentionally, it fitted into the same aesthetic approach as many cultural producers working with the bricolaged cut-and-paste

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Marie-Laure Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality: Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p.96.

[92] Mimi Thompson, 'Judy Pfaff', *BOMB*, No.69 (1999), pp.76–82.

[93] Irving Sandler, *Judy Pfaff* (Hudson Hills, 2003), p.7.

[94] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Third Edition (London: Verso, 2010, first published 1982).

Figure 37: Judy Pfaff, *Five Decades*, (2010)
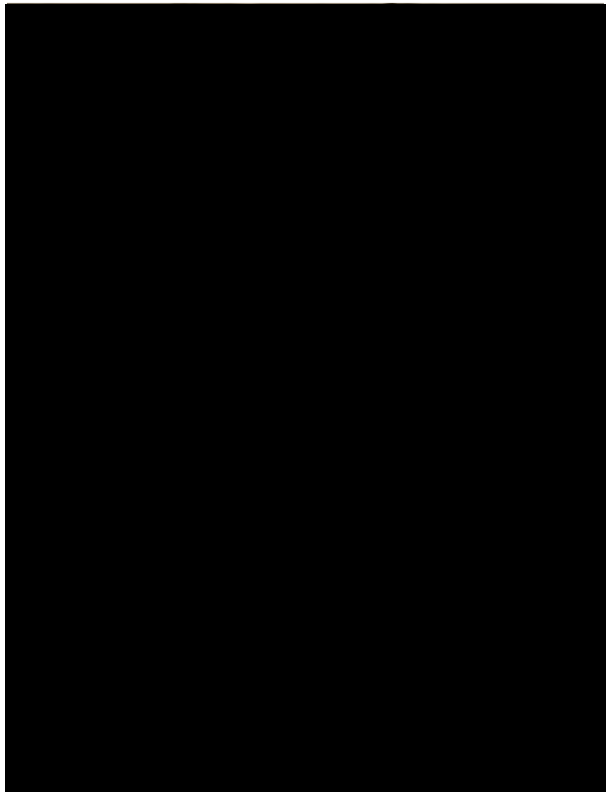
Figure 38: Judy Pfaff, *Nothing But Blue Skies*, (2010)

Figure 39: Judy Pfaff, *Nothing But Blue Skies*, (2010)

aesthetic approach at the time.[95] Thackara hints at the quality of the run-down city that evoked such a response:

> I recall a quotation by Marshall Berman, from Thomas Berger's Crazy in Berlin, in which ex-GI wanders around the war-torn city asking 'why, when things are broken, do they seem like more than when they were together'. It is because the structured, expropriated city is indigestible, like processed food? You know it's not your will that created these patterns, buildings, traffic, uses; in the ruins, you imagine how you might fix it differently.[96]

It is this sense of the disordered structure of the city that Pfaff, NATØ and others sought to evoke in the 1980s. Feminist art historian Linda Nochlin suggests that Pfaff's installations were 'paradigmatic of a new and inventive kind of ordering', one that was 'on the brink of chaos', and it is clear that the same applied for a generation of artists engrossed in the urban culture of the 1980s.[97]

In his text on the culture of regeneration in Britain, historian Ben Campkin suggests that there are qualities of disordered and chaotic urban landscapes that spur creativity, and that the rigid, controlled nature of much official regeneration stifles such urban complexity:

> Present-day strategies strive towards an unattainable idealised and sanitised city of steel, glass and granite, in denial of the need for the ordinary and the informal, suffocating diversity, and displacing degradation to the periphery.[98]

This is a view that Richard Sennett put forward in his 1970 text *The Uses of Disorder*; in it, Sennett described the richness of city life against the controlled and orderly suburb.[99] In his description of the way that cities were changing in the 1960s, Sennett suggests that attempts to 'purify' the city through planning, in order to make it more predictable and remove conflict, denied the 'essence of urban life – its diversity and possibilities for complex experience.'[100] Geographer Tim Edensor develops this further, with an analysis of the sensuality of disorder, and more specifically the 'debris of industrial ruins'.[101] Edensor positions the organised, categorised and displayed nature of objects in shops, galleries and museums against the destabilised disarray of decaying and disintegrating ruined buildings and the objects they contain; like Campkin, the appeal of the ruin is in

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[95] Irving Sandler, *Judy Pfaff* (Hudson Hills, 2003), p.16.
[96] John Thackara, 'Mad Methods' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985), pp.14-15.
[97] Linda Nochlin, 'Judy Pfaff, or the Persistence of Chaos' in *Judy Pfaff*, (Washington DC: The National Museum of Women in Arts and Holly Solomon Gallery, 1988), pp.6-7.
[98] Ben Campkin, *Remaking London: Decline and Regeneration in Urban Culture* (London ; New York: I.B.Tauris, 2013), p.168.
[99] R. Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life* (New York : Knopf, 1970; repr. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2008).
[100] Ibid., p.82.
[101] Tim Edensor, 'Waste Matter - The Debris of Industrial Ruins and the Disordering of the Material World', *Journal of Material Culture*, 10 (2005), pp.311–332.

direct opposition to the structuring efficiency of global capitalism. Pertinent to the period of this thesis, Edensor points to the mass de-industrialisation of the late 1970s as significant moment in the creation of a ruinous British landscape, and argues that this moment produced a very different mode of *Ruinenlust* than the Renaissance had:

> The aesthetic charge of ruined industrial space is of a very different sort to the esteemed qualities of the rural tumbledowns, classical sites or medieval vestiges that have been the object of the romantic gaze. Such 'picturesque' ruins have been celebrated for their melancholic associations with time's passage, their coincidence with the sense of loss and nostalgia engendered by rapid industrialization, and as a rebuke to attendant optimistic notions of 'progress' and the futile gathering of wealth and power when inevitably all must go the way of the ruin… Neither the elicitation of preferred sentiments and moral lessons nor the contemplative, romantic impulse can be stimulated by contemporary industrial ruins. Instead, there is an unpredictable immanence of impression and sensation. In their unfamiliarity, the changing material artefacts of industrial ruins escape easy identification and provide material for speculative interpretation.[102]

This lack of fixed meaning is the quality that Thackara described, and it is clear from these texts that disorder is inextricably linked with a creative impulse. Edensor describes the way that the body moves through the spaces of ruin, which forces an active engagement through unfamiliar forms, fragile surfaces and obstacles evading clear passage – he explains that this necessarily intrudes upon the 'controlled body.'[103] The destabilised nature of urban ruin presents objects, fragments and relics in strange and foreign ways, contributing a sense of defamiliarisation – a quality that incites creative readings. Ruins bear the traces of previous uses, but in their disordered and decaying state appear reassembled, out of context, in new forms, with unfamiliarity suggesting new meanings:

> For the ad hoc montages of objects and other scraps found in ruins are not deliberately organised assembles devised to strike chords and meanings through associations, but are fortuitous combinations which interrupt normative meanings.[104]

Edensor suggests in this quote that the accidental assemblages of a ruin cannot be recreated purposefully, arguing that the artistic montage cannot create the same 'remarkable associations' or 'sensations of dissonance'. NATØ and artists such as Pfaff certainly strove to evoke the sensation of the urban ruin, though the mirroring of the condition was not the aim in either's work – instead, the terrain provided the starting point for artistic interpretations that were based on the same principles of defamiliarisation, instability, montage and assemblage, heightened sensation, and repleteness. The

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[102] Ibid., pp.323-324.
[103] Ibid., p.325.
[104] Ibid., p.325.

condition of decay also provided a realm where experimentation was possible, away from the confines and restrictions of a more ordered landscape – here it is possible to carry out directly engage with the material fabric, to perform destructive behaviours such as cutting, smashing, burning and so on, imbuing debris with new forms and functions. Importantly, even when reassembled anew, the decayed fabric retains traces of its former use, context and time; as such, only complex, contradictory and divergent narratives emerge.

Radio Dog

One particular object in the *Gamma City* installation is noticeable as a recurring motif or trope with NATØ's work, and is worthy of further discussion: the radio station. The theme was first raised by Coates in his presentation to the unit in the autumn term of 1981 – introducing the first design brief for the Isle of Dogs:

> SOUND RUNNING - HELLO UNIT TEN - YOU'RE ON THE AIR
> [...] a short project for a local Radio Station. Radio Dog is to be sited on the southern tip of the Isle of Dogs, across the river form the Royal Naval Hospital in Greenwich. Not only will it have to look like a radio station but must also signal an era of change on the island.[105]

At this moment in 1981, the LDDC had recently been formed and plans for the Docklands Enterprise Zone were being put into place – formally designated in April of 1982. The project sparked a preoccupation with radio that can be seen in a number of projects since this – a motif that represented the related themes of communication and technology, but also of DIY, subculture and the anti-establishment. The proposed station for the Isle of Dogs was a pirate radio station that would represent the inhabitants and lifestyles of *Giant Sized Baby Town*, echoing the massive proliferation of pirate radio stations in the UK during the 1980s.[106] As broadcasting equipment became cheaper and easier to access, pirate stations set up in most major UK cities, typically broadcasting for the top of tower blocks or offshore on anti-aircraft platforms.[107] These stations, such as *Radio City* and *Radio Invicta*, were strongly associated with subcultural musical genres such as punk, and were in the spirit of independent, anarchic DIY. In this respect the radio station was the ideal typology for NATØ, expressing the street culture they thrived on in a physical form that was ad-hoc, potentially temporary, moveable and parasitical to the existing fabric of the city. In *Gamma City,* the radio station is a jumbled pile of

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[105] Nigel Coates, Radio Dog brief, (1981)
[106] Dick Hebdige, *Cut 'n' Mix* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 154 - 156.
[107] Vanessa Bastian, 'Pirate Radio' in John Shepherd and John Horn eds., *Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World: Performance and Production. Volume II* (A&C Black, 2003), pp.447-448.

broadcasting equipment – it appears as though frantically cobbled together, ready to move on at a moment's notice – illicit and primitive (fig,19).

Radio was also a theme taken up by a NATØ side project, a short film by Nick Turvey titled *Radio Dog* (1987), that stared NATØ's Prizeman and Villanueva Brandt.[108] Turvey was a former student of Coates' unit at the AA, who dropped out at the end of 1982 – the year of the 'Radio Dog' project brief and the year before the NATØ cohort were failed. Turvey and Prizeman were perhaps the most radical of the cohort – post-punk eccentrics who frequented the underground art and music scene; 'Radio Dog' was a post-apocalyptic, fragmented narrative set in the near future (2004) on 'Albion' with a distinctly punk flavour. Centring around Prizeman's 'Felix' character – whom he had used in a story published in the first issue of *NATØ*– the film conveys a number of daydreams in which Felix shaves off a large beard in stages, shaping the facial hair into different personas and characters, (a 'Lenin' moustache and goatee, etc.), as seen in a production sketch by Prizeman (fig.40).[109] The sequences are tied together by a continuous radio narration, which sets the scene with evocative description and emotes the spirit of a revolutionary, anarchic state:

> [...] If you've got the style and the inclination to bend the rules this is your station fifty megawatts of pure provocation this is Chantal, sculptress of the sine wave with audio stimulation that won't behave rap art truth poetry science and the blues in glorious mono on two nine five FM from Albion's heart twenty four hours per diem turn it up loud – this is Radio Dog.[110]

Though not strictly part of NATØ's output, the film clearly explores many of the same themes – filmed in the decaying post-industrial docklands, featuring bizarre nightclubs, DIY fashion and objects, and strongly evoking a future that appears visually as a mix of past, present and future. The radio station is a significant part of this, suggesting territoriality and an independent spirit against the conventions of institutionalised broadcasting and cultural production.. Radio also represents an immaterial mode of production, away from the traditions of the vinyl format and thus very difficult to regulate or control – its ephemerality adds to its sense of immediacy and the 'live' rather than the recorded voice imbues vitality. This is the same tendency that could be observed in other cultural producers of the time – such as Vivienne Westwood's 'Appalachian Buffalo Girl' fashion, her characterisation of the outlaw, pirate and witch, Jarman's films, and the product designers associated with 'creative salvage' – a 'Mad Max' spirit.[111] Indeed, Hebdige attributes the combination of 'piracy and jungloid roots' in the production of

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[108] 'Radio Dog', dir. Nick Turvey, (IKON, 1987).
[109] Mark Prizeman, 'Inverse, Reverse and Perverse', NATØ 1, pp.20-21.
[110] 'Radio Dog', dir. Nick Turvey, (IKON, 1987).
[111] Dick Hebdige, 'Digging for Britain: An Excavation in 7 Parts' in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge,* (Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.35-69. (p.56)

Figure 40: Sketch by Mark Prizeman for *Radio Dog*, dir. Nick Turvey (IKON, 1987)

British design and culture during this period as what made it so unique, and what helps to characterise the music-makers, artists, fashion and product designers as part of a definable cultural shift.[112]

Creative salvage

NATØ's full-scale artefacts and furniture, that were so integral to installations such as *Gamma City*, have strong correspondences to other product designers working in London during the same period. Often loosely grouped under the auspice of 'Creative Salvage', designers such as Tom Dixon, Ron Arad, Daniel Weil, Nick Jones, Mark Brazier-Jones, Joe Rush and Andre Dubreuil all shared an 'antipathy to mass-modernism', and an aesthetic that drew on industrial materials and urban decline – much like NATØ.[113] The term 'Creative Salvage' was coined by Dixon, Jones and Brazier-Jones, who formed a trio to produce work and put on exhibitions – most notably the *Creative Salvage* show that took place in an empty shop unit on Kensington Church Street in 1985. The trio famously picked up a tonne of scrap metal, and set to work transforming it into furniture and objects, using a simple gas welder. Alongside this evolving product and furniture design, the trio also put on parties in abandoned buildings, fusing performance art with music – they had a band, *Funkapolitan* – and sculpture, in all-night raves. A recent survey of the scene describes the parties and how they related to the ethos of 'Creative Salvage':

> Illegal parties reclaimed London's industrial deadlands by blag and piracy and the scrap furniture which ensued was just as subversive. Seating made from bits of barbed wire was designed to unsettle. Chairs 'illuminated'. Lamps didn't.[114]

As in NATØ's 'Radio Dog' project, the term 'piracy' arises, and indeed, one of Weil's most famous works from this period was yet another radio – 'Radio in a Bag' from 1981, which placed all the components of a radio into a plastic bag. Weil had studied at the Royal College of Art at the start of the 1980s, and in 1982 joined Coates in Unit 10 at the AA, where he taught for four years. Both Coates and the other NATØ members were in various ways friends or acquaintances of many of these young designers, but the direct contact of Weil with the unit and Coates is suggestive of a strong influence and can perhaps be attributed to NATØ's preoccupation with objects and furniture over architectural models.

The 'Creative Salvage' designers and NATØ share many common themes and materials, motivated and inspired by the post-industrial decline of London and the opportunities that provided. One particular characteristic is the notion of the accident as a

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[112] Ibid.

[113] Gareth Williams and Nick Wright, *Cut & Shut: Eleven Chapters : The History of Creative Salvage*, (Williams and Wright,2012), p177.

[114] Ibid., p.155.

design method. This was not a new idea in the mid 1980s, and indeed can be traced back to artists such as Kurt Schwitters – cited by the likes of Dixon as an influence – as well as to punk and musicians such as Keith Levene of The Clash, who exploited 'wrong' notes to discover new sounds that broke conventions.[115] Cage and Eno, whose approach Thackara had compared to NATØ's creation of the 'conditions and preconditions' for participatory creativity, also used methods of chance and improvisation to produce music.[116] Similarly, the broken, rusted and decaying material from the scrapyard provided an original, accidental aesthetic for the 'Creative Salvage' designers. This was not only a fresh and exciting way to produce furniture and objects, but one that contrasted sharply to the likes of Memphis and other more slick postmodern product designers who 'elevated' and 'redeemed' their creations with tasteful colour schemes and combinations of materials.[117] Hebdige considers this approach as a distinctly 'English' method, that places emphasis on 'intuition, serendipity, obsession' – using the material to generate the design, rather than imposing a predetermined logic.[118] In the same way, NATØ shunned the conventionally perfected, clean, miniaturised architectural model in favour of messy contraptions of jagged metal, dirty oil and torn plastics.

NATØ were criticised for this approach and for their aesthetic of what *Architecture Review* critic Farrelly called 'Mad Max-land' – an approach that revelled in decay with 'glee', an 'Homage to Entropy'.[119] For Farrelly the problem seemed to be that the job of an architect has conventionally been to fix or remedy a place, and to imagine a positive, perfected future. The outspoken and outwardly right wing design critic Peter Dormer, who wrote prolifically on the importance of craft in the 1980s, reviewed *Gamma City* in *The Face,* concurring with Farrelly, revealing his Modernist point of view:

> Accepting obsolescence by making a live-in collage of the slums that are our cities looks OK only on paper. Living in a slum is in a sense 'more real' that living in genteel refurbishment, but it is like refusing the treat an abscess on the tooth on the grounds that the pain is a reminder that you are still alive. NATO romantically opposes the belief that began in the 18th century with the Enlightenment an developed in the 19th century with the growth of science – the belief in national profess, rebuilding and the creation of a liberal establishment making a barricade against chaos.[120]

That NATØ's approach was rooted in an appreciation of the present, its details and visceral qualities, and not necessarily in recasting a new image of the city, meant that for

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[115] Gareth Williams and Nick Wright, *Cut & Shut: Eleven Chapters : The History of Creative Salvage*, (Williams and Wright, 2012), p.155; Simon Reynolds, *Rip It up and Start Again: Post-Punk 1978-84* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p8.
[116] John Thackara, 'Mad Methods' in *NATØ*, 3, pp.14-15.
[117] Dick Hebdige, (1987), p.54.
[118] Ibid., p.53.
[119] E.M. Farrelly, 'NATØ: WELL-BRED STREET CRED', *Architectural Review*, Vol. 179, No. 1069 (1986), pp. 75–77.
[120] Peter Dormer, 'These Dog Turd Days', *The Face*, No.79 (1986), p.104, p.107 (p.107).

Farrelly and Dormer, it could not be considered architecture, as it lacked the requisite 'constructiveness'.[121] However the issue of 'constructiveness' is somewhat of a misleading and distracting issue, as NATØ's visions were never intended as buildable propositions, but more as a disruptive mode or attitude of design – Coates said of their *Albion* project in issue one of the magazine: 'My hunch is that, even though the Docklands will of course turn out to be a dog's dinner, Albion will inevitably be built a little more quietly over a much greater area.'[122] The implication was that these were not proposals that could be put into place by a team of architects and planners, but depicted a constructive vision that suggested an alternative to such top-down impositions of design – a provocation that sought antagonise the prevailing mode. It seems likely that the superficial aesthetic of NATØ's work and the associations with punk and other subcultures put critics such as Farrelly and Dormer off a deeper reading of the projects. The group's output was entirely alien to the rest of architectural production going on in the mid 1980s, and for critics who could not look beyond the appearance, it seemed like a dystopian vision that took pleasure in poverty and degradation. However, like the designers involved in 'Creative Salvage', NATØ provided a powerful antidote to the rationalism of modernism and a formal approach to making cities and buildings. As Thackara points out 'Once you stop trying to tidy up NATOscapes, forget about perspective and balance and so on, the other senses begin to take over...NATO is one way of getting "near" again'.[123]

Rather than smoothing out the city to create polished spaces for homogenous inhabitants – or indeed the Canary Wharf that would soon 'ameliorate' London's Docklands – NATØ proposed to intensify and enrich the existing qualities of the city, as Hatton expresses:

> Only by metamorphosing the madness of life into the magic of architecture are we going to get real cities, and not the mono-functionally-zoned, zombie-and-gnomescapes that an unholy alliance of the market and misunderstood modernism has produced in our midst.[124]

Hatton's quote reveals the political implications of NATØ's project, a theme that underlies all their work from the very first edition of *NATØ* that opened with an article by Peter Fleissig describing the imposition of top-down planning on the Docklands, and asked:

> How do you integrate the features that would transform this planned (sic) mono compound into a very passionate reality – a place in the city with feeling, light and shadow – an interpretation rather than a representation of docklands? How do you control the uncontrollable? [125]

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[121] E.M. Farrelly, 'NATØ: WELL-BRED STREET CRED', *Architectural Review*, Vol. 179, No. 1069 (1986), pp. 75–77.
[122] Nigel Coates, 'Ghetto & Globe', *NATØ*, 1, (1983), p.11.
[123] John Thackara, 'Mad Methods' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985), pp.14-15. (p.14)
[124] Brian Hatton, 'Who Is Sylvia? What Is NATO?', *ZG*, 13 (1985), pp.12–13. (p.13)
[125] Peter Fleissig,'Do Walls Have Ears?', *NATØ*, 1, (1983), pp.14-15. (p.14)

Indeed, NATØ's period of activity coincided with the formation and early years of the LDDC. At the centre of the plans was the creation of an Enterprise Zone, which removed all planning restrictions and enticed potential developers with a 10-year tax holiday and 100 percent tax-deductible capital allowances; as Hewison describes it, this was an 'adventure playground for market forces'.[126] Fleissig's article was a critique of the LDDC, using visuals from its marketing material – aerial photography and photographs of disused industrial structures – as a backdrop for his text which highlighted the flaws in development approach. The piece continually places the inhabitants of the Docklands – 'Islanders' – in opposition to the plans that projected a 'modern, go-ahead, brighter style of Barratt houses alongside ASDA hyper-marketed communities of middle class commuters on a forlorn stretch of Dock 6.'[127] Part of the impetus behind the development of the Docklands, was not only the creation of jobs and investment, but also the removal of behaviours such as squatting, which was considered a nuisance and associated with disruptive, negative behaviour by the media and government – put into legislation in the 1977 'Criminal Trespass Law', which described the act of squatting as against 'civilised' society.

Though NATØ were not socialists or overtly political in their agenda, they fundamentally opposed the mode of massive redevelopment that the Docklands represented in spatial terms, and the impact it would have on the people and places that were already there; Hewison sums up well conflict that the Docklands proposals aroused:

> The object of the rationalised commercial architecture of Docklands is to neutralise and compartmentalise the life of the city into work, leisure, shopping and the closed interior of the home, but the very process by which this compartmentalisation is achieved seem to heighten tension. The resulting disjointedness and fragmentation creates a climate of conflict as social groups battle for space in an increasingly unsocialised city, where the only answer to rising selfishness and brutality is closer surveillance for the disadvantaged and more sophisticated security for the privileged.[128]

Though they were themselves architects, their proposition was imagined as a product of personalised DIY and amateurism which resisted the homogenising forces of mass consumption and the commodification of lifestyle. Within this vision, as architects, they proposed to produce the framework for the individual to perform such operations, giving agency to the user; as Hatton stated in point no.7 of his 'NATO'S BUILDING REGS': 'Many gaps are left, awaiting creative misuse by their coloniser, anticipating errant

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[126] Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.80.
[127] Peter Fleissig,'Do Walls Have Ears?', *NATØ,* 1, (1983), pp.14-15. (p.15)
[128] Robert Hewison, (1990), p.91.

autonomies and local takeovers.'[129] In focusing on the elements of DIY and the aesthetic of creative salvage, NATØ's critics ignore the complex set of design principles the group put forward under the guise of narrative architecture. They do not purport to solve problems or improve circumstances, but seek to stimulate a reclamation of the city – as architects and as inhabitants – in a direct critique of privatisation and market-led development that quashes agency and refuses to acknowledge the existing city fabric.

The totem and the dreamscape

A set of connected, recurring terms that appear both in NATØ's writings, and in the writings of and about other artists and designers from the same period can shed further light on the functioning of the object in the place of the architectural model: *tribalism*, *primitivism* and the *totem*. NATØ appear to first encounter a contemporary concept of the tribe via Peter York, whom Coates invited to speak to the Unit at the AA in 1981. In his influential text *Style Wars*, York described the way that social fragmentation and economic decline had caused people to strive harder to differentiate themselves, enthusiastically restating personal identity and individuality through clothing, music, accessories, hair styling etc.[130] The resulting 'tribes' were new social groupings with strong identifying characteristics that instead of being dictated to by producers – shops, fashion designers etc. – generated their own style, as consumer-producers. The term 'tribe' and 'tribalism' in this context thus suggests elements of self-sufficiency, the proclamation of identity and independence, but also the identification of shared ideals and similar values to an in-group. The tribalism of London in the 1980s was a reclaiming of style as politic – 'a question of opposite, of each group stressing its differences'.[131]

Inextricably linked to the idea of the tribe was that of the totem – as Freud had explained in *Totem and Taboo*.[132] In the text, the totem is described as the way in which individual tribe members identified themselves in relation – and opposition – to others; typically a totem would represent an animal or plant, and the identification of the individual with said object would unite man and totem. In this respect, the ancient totem can be likened to the safety pin touted by the punks, or the billowing faux 18th century blouses of the New Romantics – each evoking a catalogue of references that marks out the tribe. Rosalind Krauss develops the idea further by explaining how the totem relates to the notion of the fetish – the elevation or 'transfiguration' of a commonplace object or motif to a higher representational level:

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[129] Brian Hatton, 'NATO'S BUILDING REGS' in *NATØ*, 3, (1985), p.7.
[130] Peter York, *Style Wars* (Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1983).
[131] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp.95-114.
[132] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. by Abraham Arden Brill, 2012 <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41214> [accessed 25 February 2014].

The fetish, somewhat similarly [to the totem], is an object of irrational fascination, something whose power, desirability, or significance a person passionately overvalues, even though that same person may well know intellectually that such feelings are unjustifiably excessive.[133]

This image of the fetish, like the totem, is one that emphasises a quality that goes beyond function into the realm of indefinable qualities, and lends an impression of magic. Indeed, Hebdige identifies this sense in the work of designers associated with 'Creative Salvage', raising a series of linked ideas that play on the universality of the dream, and which resonate with the notion of reaching a more primitive consciousness:

Logic only figures as a half-remembered ghost in the soft machine of British avant-garde design – the connections for the most part are somatic. Everyday objects suffer a sea-change as contraries are merged, forms and functions transposed to produce the kinds of thing we encounter during sleep: a classless class of impractical, impossible objects: deflated plastic chairs, a hi-fi system encased in block of broken concrete (Arad), spindly 50s bent-wood furniture upholstered in wet suit rubber (Baier), a Radio Bag comprised of functioning components suspended in a transparent plastic bag with flexible PVC speakers (Weill).[134]

Like the fetish and the totem, these designers produced objects whose most interesting and unique qualities were not functional but transcendental and symbolic. The ghostly, dream-like aura Hedbige evokes is certainly redolent of a Surrealist sense, and though these were all designers very much using the materials, symbols and imagery of the present moment, Hebidge highlights an additional layer of interpretation that delves into a deeper subconscious. The effect of using familiar objects and materials, and combining and altering them in unusual ways, is of defamiliarisation – a term that Coates drew from Victor Shklovsky's 'Art as Technique' (a text he set for students in Unit 10 at the AA).[135] Coates found resonance in Shklovsky's concept that art breaks the banality of everyday by slowing down perception and making familiar objects more difficult to interpret. This is the strategy employed by NATØ (and the others mentioned in Hebdige's quote), making the familiar appear strange or curious, as Coates put it: 'complexity born from simplicity, almost banality'.[136]

In a series of photographs of such objects produced in by Unit 10 in 1982 (figs.27-32), this principle is born out in bizarre, almost unfathomable, bricolaged constructions – a television given an oversized, heavily adorned satellite dish, a

[133] David Carrier, Rosalind Krauss and American Philosophical Art Criticism: *From Formalism to Beyond Postmodernism* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002), p75.
[134] Dick Hebdige, (1987), p.54.
[135] Victor Shklovsky, 'Art as Technique' in David H Richter, *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), pp.774-784.
[136] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), p.102.

supermarket trolley sits on a sculpted base on wheels and air vent-like structures explode out of it, with rubber teats on the ends, a third object resembles a tent but is adorned with masses of wire and a pair of shoes. These objects require figuring out, they cannot be explained in a glance and further looking reveals details and nuances – indeed, perhaps they could never be deciphered fully, and were not intended to be. Without this aspect of defamiliarisation NATØ's artefacts would not generate such vivid narrative worlds, as their mundanity would prevent the slow gaze required of active engagement and imaginative immersion.

The evocation of the dream state in Hebdige's writing is also significant in relation to Bishop's suggestion that the installation itself is experienced and interpreted in much the same way as a dream – as discussed earlier in this chapter. The creation of dream-like objects, which teeter between reality, fiction and fantasy, have the effect of doubling the dream sensation of NATØ's installation experience. These 'stimulator artefacts' provided signs, symbols and sensation with which to freely associate a narrative world. In the same article, Hebdige also describes these sorts of objects as possessing 'ghostly presences', and depicting a 'séance', 'convened of auratic objects which bear with them the traces of their earlier contexts and uses, their other former lives'.[137] Here the idea of an 'auratic' object is another term with which to think about NATØ's installation pieces – these are not straightforward, functional objects to be read on a single level, but possess emotive qualities that transmit atmosphere and character that reside in layers of material and symbolic history. Hebdige's 'auratic' object parallels the totem, indeed, the totem could be described as fundamentally 'auratic' – a level of perception that extends beyond the purely visual or functional.

For NATØ, the drive toward the primitive could also be considered as a way to counter the purely surface-level vocabulary of forms that contemporary architects were taking from the past – a form of looking back in time that refused meaning and poetics in favour of form. Historian Stephen Polcari has described the totemic as ''part figure, part architecture, part nature; part past, part present, part future; part entombment, part subconscious, and part emotion' – 'ideographic' in its very nature.[138] In *Gamma City*, Villanueva Brandt's piece titled 'Totem' was:

> [...]A VDU (guts exposed and on the blink) posted on top of a column made from a charred railway sleeper, taken from the site for a twenty-four-hour secondhand goods market on a lorry park beneath a flyover, warmed by a heat pump which scavenged calories from overhead traffic.[139]

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[137] Ibid.

[138] Stephen Polcari, 'Mark Rothko: Heritage, Environment, and Tradition', *Smithsonian Studies in American Art*, 2 (1988), pp.33–63.

[139] Brian Hatton, 'Industial Capriccio', *Artscribe*, 1986, pp.50–53. (p.50)

The object is indeed ideographic in Polcari's terms, operating literally, symbolically and as a sculpture. That Villanueva Brandt called the object a totem reveals much about the dual functioning of all the NATØ artefacts; they were spatial and formal inferences into the gallery, they suggested functions, actions and uses, and they exemplified the iconography of a culture rooted in the confusion of rapidly developing technology and obsolescence, urban decay, political unrest and economic turmoil. In a similar way to the 'Creative Salvage' designers, NATØ produced works such as 'Savage Furniture' by Peter Fleissig, and 'Primitive Table' a group project that subtly mixed pre-cultural, pre-industrial associations with symbols of a late-capitalist, post-industrial present. NATØ's mixing of the primitive and archaeological with the contemporary was a way to recover meaning that though was not nostalgic or restorative, sought to transcend the uncertainty and fragility of the present by appealing to universal values.

In manipulating such extremes and opposites, NATØ succeed in creating complex and contradictory atmospheres – a peculiarly postmodern condition that Hedbige defines as particularly prevalent in the work of a certain breed of British designers at the time:

> [...] The designs that shape the British 'street' styles (rather than the out and out designer avant-garde) are the product of a strange encounter between the wild and the coded, tradition and the new, the bewildered and the overwhelmed[...]Like a Rasta high on ganja on a tour of the Vatican, there is in the zanier British design work a sense of prophecy and memory and challenge, a thirst, perhaps, for vengeance and redress, a desire for retribution, a tendency to giggle, to dissolve into belly laughter. Hysteria is in the air.[140]

All the qualities described in this section resonate with the strand of British design from the 1980s that NATØ were a part of – from the 'Creative Salvage' designers, to the street style magazines *i-D* and *The Face*, both DIY fashion and Westwood's designs, pop-videos and music production. York has termed this 'anti-design', an aesthetic that is appealing foremost because it does not appear to have been 'designed', or at least not designed by a professional:

> Call it culture, lifestyle, the past, the future. Britain as a theme park, a 'Fantasy Island' of new primitives – anything in fact that doesn't suggest it was conceived by a rational being called a designer, or still worse a design team working at a drawing board in an air-conditioned office with pure Stuttgart windows, Dieter Rams-type fittings, grey carpets, those French nylon door handles, Tizio lamps, or any of that stuff.[141]

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[140] Dick Hebdige, (1987), p.55.
[141] Peter York, 'Culture as commodity: style wars, punk and pageant' in *Design After Modernism: Beyond the Object* (Thames and Hudson, 1988), pp.160-168. (p.160).

The objects in *Gamma City*, far removed from the white card scale-models of the architectural office, could have been cobbled together by any savvy 'apprentice'; in this respect the primitive can be placed in direct opposition to the professional. NATØ's city was 'designed' to look as if it had not been designed, as if it had developed ad hoc, piecemeal, from and onto the existing city fabric. York furthers this sentiment by describing the attraction of this cult of British design (which he describes broadly, alluding to those such as 'Creative Salvage' but not naming them) as giving the impression that it was 'produced by craftsmen in workshops or servants in kitchens, or that they were suggested by aristocrats who'd been keen on a Grand Tour. They just *grew*.'[142] This is one of the ways in which NATØ departs from architects working in the 1980s such as Graves, Moore, Hollein, Farrell or Stirling, whose postmodernist designs also claimed historical references and pop influences, but did so in a manner that favoured abstraction, flattening into two dimensions and procedures such as enlargement or exaggeration – and thus highly 'designed'. Habermas described the strand of postmodernism that worked with the 'deprofessionalized' vernacular as 'simplified' and 'anonymous'– words that expose the attitude towards any sense of the vernacular in architecture, but equally do not resonate with NATØ's approach.[143] Though NATØ and the other designers mentioned in this section worked with found materials, in the familiar language of the post-industrial city – a vernacular of sorts – the work cannot be considered conventionally vernacular as it was not predicated on function and simplicity. As described above, their primitivism was not reductive but drove towards a heightened symbolism, sensation and ultimately, narrativity.

A Festival of Britain

The British Edge

In 1987, after taking *Gamma City* to Edinburgh's Fruitmarket Gallery in 1986, NATØ were invited to exhibit at the Boston Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA) as part of a collective show titled *The British Edge*. The show featured NATØ alongside the work of six artists – Tim Head, Hannah Collins, David Mach, Mary Kelly, Victor Burgin and Edward Allington – and aimed to represent a particular moment in the London creative scene: 'a view (through American curators' eyes) of London'.[144] The show also featured a number of events, film screenings and concerts, including a fashion show that featured

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[142] Ibid.

[143] Jurgen Habermas, 'Modern and Postmodern Architecture' in John Forester, *Critical Theory and Public Life* (MIT Press, 1987), pp.317-330 (p319)

[144] Elisabeth Sussman, 'An Introduction to the British Edge' in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge* (Boston Mass.: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.3-4 (p3).

the work of Jasper Conran, Georgina Godley and Rifat Ozbek, concerts at local club The Paradise by British bands, a screening of the Channel 4 documentary series *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980s* (1987), a film about choreographer Michael Clark, lectures by Simon Frith and Dick Hebdige, and a retrospective of the work of Derek Jarman, including screenings of *The Tempest* (1979), *Jubilee* (1978) and a series of his super-8 'home movies'.[145]

On the surface, the exhibiting artists share little in common with each other – ranging from sculptors Allington and Mach, to the photography of Collins, the conceptual work of Burgin and Kelly, the multimedia installations of Head, and the architectural work of NATØ. For the curators of the show, an important link between the exhibitors was that their work was intimately connected to the context within which it had been produced, a context they observed as having evolved in 1970s London to produce a range of creative practitioners whose worked connected with issues 'of gender, of class, of the construction of ideology in popular cultural forms, and of the politics and economics of the consumer society'.[146] An examination of what remains of the exhibition – only a very small number of photographs, reviews and the catalogue (figs.41-45) – hints at the correspondences and differences between NATØ's installation and those of the other artists, characterising further the context within which they all emerged, but also pointing to a more specific oeuvre to which NATØ belonged that was not represented at the ICA.

In both Mach and Head's work, the inherent contradiction which arose from the simultaneous growth of electronic technology and economic depression experienced in 1980s London – a theme this thesis has already established in NATØ's work – are explored in different ways. Mach's sculptural installation *Fuel for the Fire: Tidal Wave* consisted of piles of unsold books, leftover magazines and seconds – 'manufactured objects that would otherwise not have found a use' – built into in the form of waves, littered on top with office furniture (fig.46).[147] The work suggested a surreal natural disaster, evoking themes of waste and mass production, mirroring Head's installation, *Plenty*, which consisted of walls covered in wallpaper depicting photocopied stacks of second-hand car tyres, adorned with light fittings intended to evoke 'the anonymous hotel lobby or office reception'.[148] As curator David Joselit describes, both Head and Mach 'refer to a condition where the physical architectural city has been insidiously encroached upon by a landscape composed of consumer products'; both pieces are thought-provoking and disturbing, but also moralistic to a degree – highlighting the negative results of

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[145] *State of the Art: Ideas and Images in the 1980s*, Illuminations Television Limited (1987).
[146] Elisabeth Sussman, 'An Introduction to the British Edge' in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge* (Boston Mass.: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.3-4 (p4).
[147] David Mach quoted in David Joselit 'The British Edge: In the Galleries' in Ibid., pp.5-10 (p5).
[148] David Joselit, Ibid., p6.
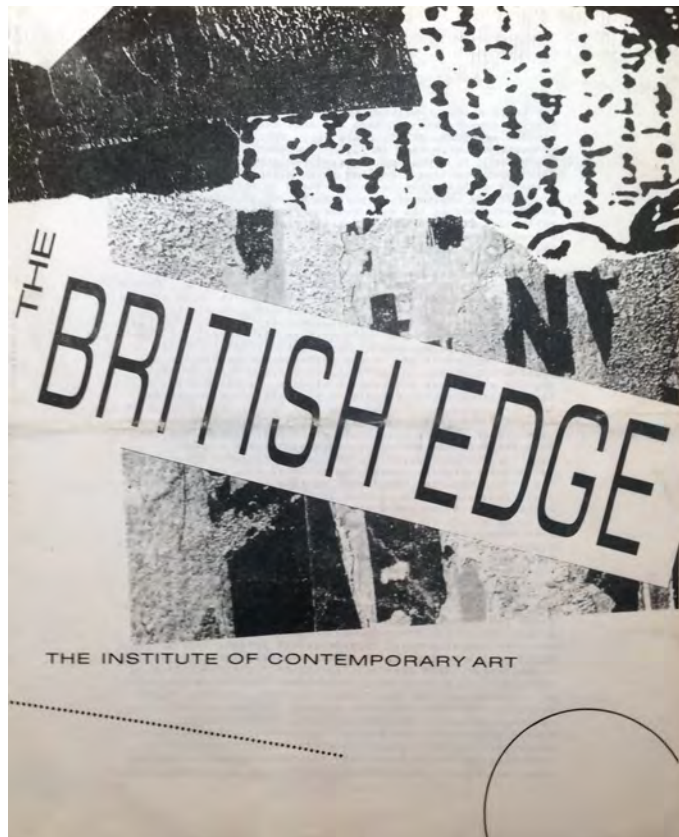
Figure. 41: *The British Edge*, ICA Boston (1987) - Catalogue

Figure. 42: *The British Edge*, ICA Boston (1987) – Entrance to NATØ's *Heathrow* installation.

Figure. 43 and 44: *The British Edge*, ICA Boston (1987) – NATØ's *Heathrow* installation.

Figure 45: *The British Edge*, ICA Boston (1987) – NATØ's *Heathrow* installation.
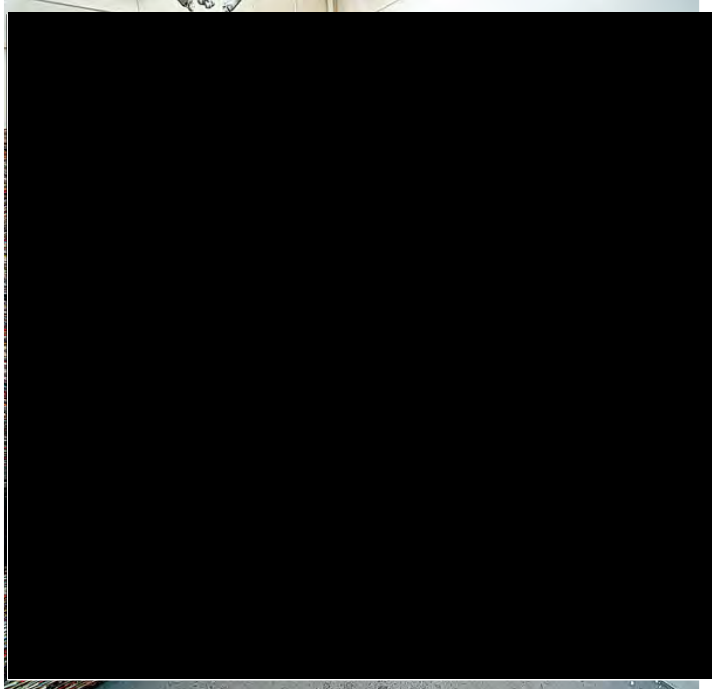
Figure 46: *The British Edge*, ICA Boston (1987) – David Mach, *Fuel for the Fire: Tidal Wave*

rapidly commoditising culture.[149] This is in contrast to NATØ's approach, which in their installation *Heathrow*, as in all their work, does not seek to design-out or cover-up the desolation of the post-industrial city, or to even highlight the bleakness of banal contemporary architecture, but instead finds ways to enrich, celebrate, and recontextualise the city as found. In a similar way to the *Albion* project, *Heathrow* took an urban site in transition and remodelled it according to NATØ rules – relishing the airport's 'congestion and uncompletability...as the condition of, rather than obstacle to, a new urban sensibility.'[150]

Another artist in *The British Edge*, Hannah Collins, combines archival photographs with her own to create works that expose the complex pasts and present of particular sites and places.[151] In *Eclipse in the City and in the Desert* for the ICA, she juxtaposed archival photographs of British industrial 'black country' in the west midlands, with photographs of the Egyptian desert; the effect is that 'Egypt becomes the "dream" of industrial England and vice versa. Each place, each image, appears both alien and familiar'.[152] The work destabilises notions of place and the viewer's position within it, drawing correspondences that suggest myth and memory and are open to symbolic interpretation in part due to their large scale and simple presentation. Collins' subject matter has echoes in NATØ's work, in particular her concern with exploring the archaeological and mythological layers of place, and the rapidly changing city condition. Indeed, NATØ describe *Heathrow* as 'a true 20th century cultural archaeology based on the mythology of air travel', and as set out in the earlier discussion of *Gamma City*, embed historical and contemporary cultural references in their installation that explore the idea of global travel from multidimensional perspective.[153] David Bonetti, reviewing the show in *The Boston Phoenix* in 1987, described the result as reaching a 'dreamlike state', suggesting NATØ might be 'surreal architects' – repeating this chapter's earlier assertions.[154]

'English empiricism'

The title of the ICA show, *The British Edge*, is useful in its suggestion of a uniquely British condition or context that surrounds a corpus of creative work during this period, though the group of artists assembled at the ICA do not demonstrate this as well as an alternative grouping can. It is possible to describe a more convincing characterisation of a

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[149] Ibid., p6.
[150] Brian Hatton, 'Combined Operations', *Building Design*, (1987), pp.16–17. (p.16)
[151] David Joselit 'The British Edge: In the Galleries' in in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge* (Boston Mass.: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.5-10 (p7).
[152] Ibid., p7.
[153] NATØ quoted in Brian Hatton, 'Combined Operations', *Building Design*, (1987), pp.16–17. (p.16)
[154] David Bonetti, 'Rile Britannia: The ICA Stays on the British Edge', *The Boston Phoenix*, 1987, pp.4–7.

mode of 1980s British creativity that NATØ belong to by referring to Patrick Wright's *On Living in an Old Country*, which explores the various ways in which 'the past has been secured as a cultural presence in modern Britain', writing specifically about the 1980s.[155] Wright's view that there is a uniqueness about the way in which all aspects of life in Britain are affected in some way by the imposition of a mythical history that goes beyond the idea of a shared past to create a 'sense of historical existence' that 'pervades everyday life', sheds some light on the conditions that unite NATØ with other creative practitioners.[156] Wright evokes the junk shop as described by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Fou*r to describe the 'beautiful rubbish' which contains within it the fragments of a mystical past and 'ancestral memories':

> The tiny interior of the shop was in fact uncomfortably full, but there was almost nothing in it of the slightest value. The floor space was very restricted, because all round the walls were stacked innumerable dusty picture-frames. In the window there were trays of nuts and bolts, worn-out chisels, penknives with broken blades, tarnished watches that did not even pretend to be in going order, and other miscellaneous rubbish. Only on a small table in the corner was there a litter of odds and ends – lacquered snuffboxes, agate brooches, and the like – which looked as though they might include something interesting.[157]

Wright aligns this sentiment with the DIY phenomena in the 1980s, which he evokes through a description of Stoke Newington and the incoming middle classes charmed by its dilapidated architecture. Through DIY, those middle class inhabitants attempted to evoke the same qualities that Orwell described in the junk shop, a Romanticism that takes intense pleasure in the moment of transformation and the resonance of a mythic, national past.

In this respect it is possible to draw deeper correspondences between NATØ, the 'Creative Salvage' designers and those in fashion, graphic design and music-videos that Hebdige grouped together as working on a particular 'edge' of British design. These are all artists and designers who sought to evoke the ambience of the junk shop that Orwell portrayed, but with a particular language of the urban that is redolent of 1980s London. In their volume on the 'Creative Salvage' designers, Williams and Wright suggest that this shared preoccupation can be aligned less with a postmodern approach than with a 'tradition of hand-wrought British design originating with William Morris'.[158] They identify a continuous striving since Morris for the hand-made, customised approach to design that directly connects the designer with production; as Brian Hatton put it, NATØ's approach 'urbanizes William Morris's ideal by embracing DIY, industrial, and

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[155] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p.3.
[156] Ibid., p.151.
[157] George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Fou*r, (New York: Harcourt, 1949), p.54.
[158] Gareth Williams and Nick Wright, *Cut & Shut: Eleven Chapters : The History of Creative Salvage*, (2012), p.177.

leisure skills'.[159] This is not a nostalgic longing for the past or a copy of a particular craft style or aesthetic, nor is it in the spirit of the punk slogan 'no future'; instead it is a folding of the past, present and future into an industrial archaeology of the contemporary moment – a shuffled polytemporality. Hebdige locates a particular Englishness in such an approach, describing it as a parody of an 'English empirical method', quipping: 'Britannia here appears as a psychotic bag lady shuffling through a ruined city muttering to herself, her bags stuffed with old books, rusting heirlooms, priceless paintings'.[160] He characterises a method of making based on bricolage and the will to 'recycle and recast', which must be generated in part by the unique cultural condition described by Wright.[161]

A set of similar preoccupations and sensibilities can be found in both filmmakers and novelists during the same period, extending this distinctly British approach beyond the realm of design. Jarman's films mixed the past and present to create curiously familiar futures tinged with nostalgia. His approach was intrinsically embedded in the English landscape and consciousness, citing William Blake and William Morris as sources of inspiration – 'all of them look backward over their shoulders'.[162] In both *Jubilee* (1978) and *The Last of England* (1987), Jarman mixes locations, characters and imagery from contemporary punk Britain, with pastoral scenes, in particular *The Last of England* has been described as using the 'night blues, mauves and burning orange' of J.M.W Turner's paintings.[163] He also mixes in his own personal narratives with footage of himself as a child (in *The Last of England)*, mixing fragments of time and place in a sensation of that can be described in the same way that Hebdige describes Coates' approach to design: a state of 'personalized reverie and remembrance'.[164] O'Pray identifies the way that Jarman, and contemporary filmmakers such as John Maybury, as well as musicians such as Morrissey, 'assimilated punk into a form of Romanticism', and shared an interest in the social and political state of Britain 'explored through a Romanticism tinged with hard hitting realism'.[165] In this respect it is possible to describe these works as part of a Picturesque tradition – one that favours the sublime expression of frightening contemporary themes through a poetic and imagistic lens. Indeed, in Will Self's analysis of Jarman's *The Last of England* he finds: 'a set of discursive and yet plangent images of our own divided nature: its beauty and brutality, its sensuality and its darkness.'[166]

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[159] Brian Hatton, 'Industial Capriccio', *Artscribe*, 1986, pp.50–53. (p.52)
[160] Dick Hebdige, 'Digging for Britain: An Excavation in 7 Parts' in Institute of Contemporary Art, *The British Edge*, (Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.35-69 (p.56)
[161] Ibid., p.51.
[162] Derek Jarman, *Modern Nature: The Journals of Derek Jarman* (London: Vintage, 1992), p25.
[163] Michael O'Pray, *Dreams of England* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p.156; Jonathan Hill, Weather Architecture (Routledge, 2013), p.296.
[164] Dick Hebdige, 'Digging for Britain: An Excavation in 7 Parts', p.54.
[165] Michael O'Pray, *Dreams of England* (London: British Film Institute, 1996), p.154.
[166] Will Self, 'Birth of the Cool', *Guardian Weekend*, 6 August (1994), pp.26-30.

This can be elucidated further by considering the body of work produced by novelists including Peter Ackroyd, Michael Bracewell, Ian McEwan, Geoff Dyer, Michael Moorcock, J.G. Ballard and Iain Sinclair, all of whom produced fiction about London which contained the shared motifs. What unites these writers, and indeed what can link them to NATØ, Jarman and others, is what Laura Colombino describes as a 'strong psychic-phenomenological grounding [...] where the awareness of the physical reality of buildings and landscape conditions shapes the concept of the subject traversing the city.'[167] This heightened awareness was triggered by the 'assault' on the fabric of the city by mass de-industrialisation and subsequent redevelopment under Thatcher that left swathes of the city derelict and decaying. As Colombino points out, this exaggerated physical condition 'mirrored' the political and social context, and created a new 'London psychogeographer [...] journeying through the ruins of a changing landscape'.[168] In the works of these novelists it is possible to observe a fetishisation of 'personal, idiosyncratic mappings of the city' that help to recover the cultural memory being threatened.[169] Phil Baker makes the same contention in *London: From Punk to Blair:* 'People want to inscribe marks and find traces in the city [...] in order to feel more at home in an indifferent universe', and observes that the strategies of psychogeography had become increasingly popular by the 1990s as a result, coinciding with a major retrospective of the Situationist Internationale at the ICA in 1989, from whom it is widely acknowledged that psychogeography developed.[170]

The connection that both NATØ, the 'Creative Salvage' designers, Jarman, and these novelists had with the London during this period is expressed through the development of counter-narratives that resisted the dominant recoding of the city being imposed by private development and market-led regeneration. The particularity of London has been evoked by a number of these writers, who describe the 'spirit' of London as constantly remerging against the forces that seek to smooth it or order it through planning; Ackroyd claims: 'the city itself remains magical; it is a mysterious, chaotic and irrational place which can be organised and controlled only by means of private ritual or public superstition.'[171] Part of London's resistance and its attraction for authors and artists is what Ackroyd describes as the 'mysterious' nature of time in the city, which as Roger Luckhurst explains, causes linear time to 'crumple', creating 'repeating cycles or

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[167] Laura Colombino, *Spatial Politics in Contemporary London Literature : Writing Architecture and the Body*, (New York: Routledge, 2013). p18.
[168] Ibid., p66.
[169] Ibid., p86.
[170] Phil Baker, 'Secret City: Psychogeography and the End of London' in Joe Kerr and Andrew Gibson, *London from Punk to Blair (*London: Reaktion, 2003), p281; It is worth noting that the design of this ICA exhibition was produced by Coates's studio – a partnership with architect Doug Branson, 'Branson-Coates' – and featured an issue of *NATØ* magazine amongst its exhibits. (Robert Hewison, *Future Tense: A New Art for the Nineties* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd, 1990), p.133.)
[171] Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, New Ed edition (Vintage: Vintage, 2001), p.216.

unpredictable arabesques.'[172] Luckhurst and Ackroyd point to the way that certain areas of London retain their function or inhabitation over the centuries, despite major physical changes – 'the homeless of St Giles, or the occultists of Seven Dials', and the sense that London continually re-emerges from major disasters such as fire.[173]

This resurgence of a psychogeographic awareness of the city, in particular of London, can be considered a contemporary strand of an English picturesque, in a number of ways that counter more mainstream discussions of the picturesque in architecture that took place in the 1980s and 1990s. The picturesque tradition can be identified in the paintings of late 17th century and 18th century artists such as Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain, and landscape gardeners such as William Kent and Lancelot 'Capability' Brown, who sought to counter Enlightenment thought that considered nature as something to be dominated and organised.[174] The new aesthetic was a combination of Edmund Burke's categories of the 'Sublime' and the 'Beautiful', where the terror and magnitude of the former was balanced by the appreciation of beauty, and was to be found in landscapes that conveyed 'Variety, movement, irregularity, roughness and intricacy'.[175] However at its core was the notion of 'genius loci' – the specificity and character of place – and the idea of working with what already existed, adding, removing and exaggerating elements to enhance the effect and sensation of that place – identical to the aim that NATØ had for the city.

In his text *The Anxious City: English Urbanism in the Late Twentieth Century*, Richard J. Williams describes a consideration of the picturesque that was espoused by *Architectural Review* in a regular series of articles between 1949-1971, mainly by Hubert de Cronin Hastings, based on the idea of 'Townscape' by Gordon Cullen.[176] 'Townscape' was predicated on the idea of the spaces of the city unfolding in a naturalistic manner before a moving observer, and the pleasing visual – picturesque – effect of contrasting spatial conditions (enclosure and openness etc.). As Sadler points outs, the concept of the picturesque that figured in Cullen's and the *Architectural Review's* texts was 'a byword for the lyrical and the pleasant', and as Williams goes on to elaborate, developed into the historicist approach of traditionalist architects such as Leon Krier – exemplified by the pastiche town of Poundbury that was developed by HRH Prince of Wales on Duchy land

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[172] Roger Luckhurst, 'The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the "Spectral Turn"'in Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2013), p.79.

[173] Ibid., p.79; Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, New Ed edition (Vintage: Vintage, 2001), p.580.

[174] Stephen Siddall, *Landscape and Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2009) pp.26-27.

[175] Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (1757); David Watkin, *The English Vision: The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape, and Garden Design* (Harper & Row, 1982) p.ix.

[176] Richard J. Williams, *The Anxious City: English Urbanism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Psychology Press, 2004).

in 1989.[177] Both the 'Townscape' approach, and projects such as Poundbury drew on aspects of the original eighteenth century ideas of the picturesque, concepts such as the changing vista and a lack of uniformity, an appreciation of nature and landscape, a striving towards an appearance of 'natural' form even if this had been purposefully constructed, and a concern with the 'genius loci'. However, this conceptualisation of the picturesque tradition, as Sadler remarks, avoided its more complex 'troubled' dimension – the 'meditative, exotic, expressive'.[178]

A truer expression of the picturesque, that balanced the sublime with the beautiful, is expressed in the novelists and artists described in this chapter. In a similar way to the countering of Enlightenment aesthetics with landscapes and gardens of the picturesque, so psychogeograpic approaches sought to counter the anonymous glass surfaces of 1980s corporate architecture and privatised, anaesthetised public space. In this respect, the work of the writers described above sought to expose those psychic elements of the street, to rethink the city in terms that revealed the texture of urban experience – 'anxiety mingles with nostalgia'.[179] The version of picturesque present in the 'Townscape' model of urbanism was defiantly ordered, Poundbury was designed through a strict architectural coding; by contrast, the picturesque of NATØ, Jarman and the psychogeographic writers were motivated by disorder, and the sublimity that produced. The heterogeneous, ruined urban landscape of London in the 1980s was thus figured as a sublime object that evoked Piranesi's: 'Out of terror pleasure springs', or Burke's 'a sort of delight full of horror, a sort of tranquillity tinged with terror'.[180]

Heathrow

There are even fewer records of *Heathrow* than of *Gamma City*, and it is only through a small set of photographs, the catalogue and a number of reviews of the show that it is possible to get sense of the work. For NATØ, Heathrow airport already possessed some of the narrative qualities they sought to inject through their own designs, in the catalogue for the show they explain:

> Capitalizing on the airport's ambiguous status as a 'factory in suburbia' the project reads the terrains as a citadel with global metropolitan dimensions […]

[177] Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (MIT Press, 1998), p.73; Richard J. Williams, *The Anxious City: English Urbanism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Psychology Press, 2004).
[178] Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City* (MIT Press, 1998), p.73.
[179] Laura Colombino, *Spatial Politics in Contemporary London Literature : Writing Architecture and the Body*, (New York: Routledge, 2013). Ibid., p77.
[180] Giovanni Battista Piranesi, 'Diverse Manners of Ornamenting Chimneys' in *The Polemical Works*, ed. John Wilton-Ely, (England: Gregg International Publishers Limited, 1972) p.10; Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, (1757), p.136.

Unlike most later airports, it has been constantly adapted and built on top of – it portrays a true twentieth century cultural archeology…[181]

The installation thus takes the complex situation of Heathrow airport as a 'trigger to generate' a vision of the airport as a city, taking the diamond shaped central area of the existing airport as their subject. All the existing functions of the airport are thus built upon with a range of new ones, in a characteristically cross-programmed, hybrid and contradictory fashion. Indeed, the layered and sprawling nature of the airport is a context that NATØ relish, where space is formed from communicative flows, 'congestion and uncompletability', and where as Hatton describes: 'one never "sees" an airport, one swim-reads one's way through it, emerging blinking from the underground or overground into a milieu'.[182]

The exhibition space itself was filled primarily with objects – a combination of props such as rows of aeroplane seats, television screens playing videos and a mannequin of an airhostess, and more auratic, bricolage objects such as sombreros turned into runway lights and aeroplane service trolleys welded together from found materials (figs.43-45). One review sums up the installation as resembling 'an explosion in a second-hand shop' – an echo of Orwell – a make-do, bricolage aesthetic.[183] As in *Gamma City*, the experiential quality of the exhibit is paramount, which was in a number of reviews, described alongside Mach's installation, as the standout part of the show.[184]

What both Mach and NATØ achieve is a transformation of the banal into the sensual, both taking everyday objects and detritus from the city and presenting them in a defamiliarised way. The different way that NATØ treats similar themes to Mach, Collins and Head reveal the inherent difference in the work of an architect to that of an artist – despite the *Heathrow* installation being presented very much in an art context here. Farrelly had criticised *Gamma City* for being art rather than architecture, however the constructive – yet critical – position they take in *Heathrow* differentiates them from Mach's and Head's work.[185] In comparison to the other exhibitors in *The British Edge*, NATØ create a spatial situation in which to physically step, which in turn makes spatial propositions. The effect is that NATØ's critique is less overt than for example Mach's or Head's, where the critical proposition is at the forefront of both works. In *Heathrow* is it only through the experience of the space and an appreciation of the numerous details that the critical position is developed – it is embedded more deeply into the installation's

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[181] NATØ, 'Heathrow', *The British Edge* catalogue, (Institute of Contemporary Art, 1987), pp.21-23. (p.22).
[182] Brian Hatton, 'Combined Operations', *Building Design*, 1987, pp.16–17. (p.16)
[183] David Bonetti, 'Rile Britannia: The ICA Stays on the British Edge', *The Boston Phoenix*, (1987), pp.4–7. (p.4)
[184] David Bonetti, (1987); Paul Sherman, 'ICA series looks for edge in British art', *The Weekender and Supplement to Watertown Chronicle and Somerville Journal*, Thursday, May 14 (1987).
[185] E.M. Farrelly, (1986), pp. 75–77.

objects and spatial arrangement. It is possible to stand and look at Mach's and Head's work, and to quite quickly ascertain the concept of the works, whereas *Heathrow* elicits a slowing-down of perception that forces a more sustained engagement.

Hatton's review of the show reveals some of the complexity of the individual objects and ensembles, describing Mull's proposal to transform the airport's car park into a "navigation' floor for travellers to act out their prospective journeys among 'geographical soft furnishings and international icons on wheels' and 'weather-conditioned climate booths' – essentially a theme park in which to preview their destination.[186] Beevor's scheme visualises the airport as a 'suburb empire' approached by an 'English country lane', and Coates re-imagines the control tower as the 'Arc of Decontrol'– a stage set for a performance of 'Rigoletto at the Heathrow Opera', 'with taxiway batmen and pilots as leads and stewards and stewardesses as chorus'.[187] Evidently there is an irony and wit present in NATØ's installation that does not figure as strongly in the works of Mach or Head (nor in any of the other artists in the show, though arguably Mach's broader oeuvre does); a review of the show in a local Massachusetts journal describes *Heathrow* as 'a hilarious antithesis to staid British tastefulness.'[188] A distinctly celebratory atmosphere produces ambiguous connotations – these are spaces typically reviled, yet in the hands of NATØ and are given a carnival atmosphere, a delight in disorder and confusion that permeates their entire oeuvre.

NATØ's image of the airport resembles that of a World's Fair, a reference point though not written about extensively by the group, was significant in their conception of the architectural exhibition. Coates refers to a remaindered book, *A Tonic to the Nation: Festival of Britain 1951* (1976), which he listed reading material for Unit 10 at the AA.[189] He describes how the event had the exuberance, and the blend of past and future, that NATØ were interested in:

> [...]We were all excited about it because it was in the past but it was about the future, and it was full of courage and wacky juxtaposition: bits of building made of boats, and sculpture and storytelling...it sort of reflected the quirky 'finding cheer in drabness' that the British are very good at[...]it was science fiction but at a very accessible level.[190]

The World's Fair also presented a spatial condition quite unlike a conventional exhibition, with set-pieces by different artists, designers, architects and craftsmen, crossing all media, as well as temporary buildings and structures demonstrating the latest in

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[186] Brian Hatton, 'Combined Operations', *Building Design*, (1987), pp.16–17. (p.17)
[187] Ibid.
[188] Paul Sherman, 'ICA series looks for edge in British art', *The Weekender and Supplement to Watertown Chronicle and Somerville Journal*, Thursday, May 14 (1987).
[189] Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, eds., *Tonic to the Nation: Festival of Britain*, 1951, First edition (Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1976); Nigel Coates, personal interview, (September 2013).
[190] Nigel Coates, personal interview, (September 2013).

engineering and technology. As Paul Greenhalgh describes, the typical World's Fair from the mid 19th century resembled a small city, with the largest featuring an array of facilities from restaurants to theatres and sports stadiums, 'reconstructions of ancient and exotic streets', 'miraculous pieces of engineering', and millions of visitors.[191] For NATØ it was not necessarily the vastness or the all-encompassing nature that made the World's Fair resemble the city, but a more specific quality of almost motley diversity:

> [...] I found them [World's Fairs] so exciting because they were unrestrained, comparatively speaking, they were competitive[...]they would try to make architecture which said something. They could be wilder because they were there for a short time, they didn't have to justify themselves to the same extent; it's pluralistic, anything goes, and it doesn't matter if you've got this thing over here and that thing over there. In a sense the more different they are the more complementary they are, and that's a view of the city which is totally the opposite to the idea of the homogenous city, which was what planners and architects had strived for. We were excited by the heterogeneous city.[192]

Both *Gamma City* and *Heathrow* can be described as having parallels to the World's Fair in that they were composed of many disparate parts put together to create one broader narrative which was navigable spatially. NATØ also shared a preoccupation with technology, industry and science, and thus co-opting the World's Fair model to explore the inherent tensions involved in the rampant development in electronics and communication seems apt.

A further quality of the World's Fair also has resonance in NATØ's work, found in the title of that remaindered book: *Tonic to the Nation: Festival of Britain, 1951*.[193] The World's Fair was a matter of patriotic pride, and particularly after the War, was an 'act of faith' – or 'tonic – reassuring the public that all was well and thriving once again'.[194] NATØ display a strong patriotism within their work, and though were often mistaken for being dystopian in their visions, had a positive – though not utopian – perspective. Their particular brand of patriotism was perhaps not of the mainstream, and was tinged with a punk anarchism, but they thrived upon and revelled in a particular British perspective that shaped their work. This may seem surprisingly, however the position can be aligned with other artists such as Jarman, who represented a move on from the 'no future' mantra of the more pessimistic punk outlook. This was not a position to be confused with the darker faces of patriotism and post-colonial nationalism that surrounded Thatcher's leadership and centred on the Falklands/Malvinas War, where a 'jingoistic patriotic fervour'

[191] Paul Greenhalgh, *Fair World: A History of World's Fairs and Exposition from London to Shanghai 1851-2010*,(Windsor: Papadakis, 2011), p11.
[192] Nigel Coates, personal interview, (September 2013).
[193] Mary Banham and Bevis Hillier, eds., *Tonic to the Nation: Festival of Britain, 1951*, First edition (Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1976).
[194] F. M. Leventhal, '"A Tonic to the Nation": The Festival of Britain, 1951', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 27 (1995), pp.445-453.

contributed to the sense of a 'revitalised guilt-free nationalism'.[195] Indeed, much of what both Jarman and NATØ cherished about Britain was being eroded by the right-wing government, whose monetarist policies of privatisation, free-enterprise, public expenditure cuts, and deregulation intensified social inequality and sought to transform the city into a 'clean hermetic world' sealed from the realities of the decaying fabric beyond.[196] For Jarman, films such as *The Last of England* were not to be read purely as critiques but contained a mourning for the qualities of British life that were threatened or lost, a sentiment that holds for NATØ' oeuvre:

> It's a love story with England. It's not an attack. It's an attack on those things that I perceive personally as things without value. Things that have invaded the mainstream of British life. That's not an attack on England. It's the opposite.[197]

……….

In the first issue of NATØ magazine, Coates had asked: 'Could the city truly by an active partner to the experiences it contained?', suggesting through their body of incomplete, unbuilt, unbuildable and open-ended work how such a city would manifest. In NATØ's work, the city is enhanced and exaggerated through the inscription of marks and traces that are layered in their use of history folded into the present – the pastoral picturesque is refigured as an urban picturesque. The dream-like, auratic objects described in this chapter evoke a complex narrative reverie – they are ugly and raw, yet bear the nuance and patina of the city in ways that are magical and mystical. As the novelists described layered the city with histories, futures, subplots and narratives of the 'other', so NATØ described an embodied urban experience of sensation and impression – constituted of 'the psychological schisms, signs and patterns – the social narratives – of the times.'[198] NATØ proposed a dramatisation of change, action and shifting identity, a celebration of disorder and flux rather than a vision of fulfilment and completion:

> Start from the way things work, what they feel like. Instead of using plans, Albion builds on incidents, sometimes pulled from the underculture of the city as it stands, sometimes culled from the mind…the city grows outwards from the action that fires it. [199]

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[195] Anna Marie Smith, *New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.14.
[196] Murray Fraser, (2012) p.226.
[197] Derek Jarman quoted in Jonathan Hill, *Weather Architecture* (Routledge, 2013), p.296.
[198] Nigel Coates, 'Street Signs', p.103.
[199] *NATØ*, 1, (1984) p.5.

Conclusion

The end of the story

By the time of *The British Edge* (1987) exhibition at the ICA Boston, NATØ was already showing signs of fragmentation, with only seven of the original nine members listed in the catalogue, and in reality, only four members contributing significantly to the show (Mull, Beevor, Villanueva Brandt and Prizeman). Indeed, both Villanueva Brandt and Prizeman report that as early as 1985, the *Gamma City* show, Coates was far less actively involved, having set up an architectural practice that superseded Nigel Coates Architecture – Branson Coates – with Doug Branson the same year.[1] Following *Gamma City*, Sainsbury, Benson and Norton were asked to leave the group – for reasons that are still unclear and contested.[2]

The dissolution of the group in these years can be primarily attributed to Coates's growing success. In 1984, the Kensington flat that he lived in, the interior of which he had designed, was published in Japanese design magazine *Brutus*.[3] The issue was seen by Chinese entrepreneur Shi Yu Chen, who subsequently commissioned the design of the Metropole, a restaurant in Tokyo which opened in 1985.[4] This led to two more projects in Tokyo, the Bohemia Jazz Club (1986) and Café Bongo (1986) – which were published in numerous design and architecture magazines, launching Coates's career seemingly overnight.[5] As a result, following *Gamma City*, when NATØ were arguably at the height of their success and media attention, the focus shifted to Coates, whose vivid, charming personality and ease with the press begun to outshine the broader NATØ story. Though Villanueva Brandt, Prizeman, Beevor and Mull all worked on different aspects of the Tokyo projects with Branson Coates, a sense of discontentment very quickly mounted – the NATØ name and reputation seemingly co-opted by the practice to charm new clients and garner more media attention. As Villanueva Brandt recalls: 'he [Coates] used NATØ to promote himself, and he started taking the contacts towards him and his practice. Someone like Iwona, who had given us the Air Gallery Show all of sudden didn't talk to us, only Nigel.'[6] Prizeman points out that correspondence addressed to NATØ was sent to the Branson Coates studio, and in particular, following the Boston show there was a sense that the rest of the group were often unaware of invitations or opportunities that may have arisen.[7]

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[1] Personal interviews, September 2012, March, April 2013; Branson studied alongside Coates at the AA in the 1970s.

[2] A fact reported in Rick Poynor, *Nigel Coates : The City in Motion* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989), p.84, and mentioned by Norton in personal interview. Prizeman suggests that they were not asked to leave but became less engaged and active, eventually ceasing to take part altogether.

[3] Rick Poynor, *Nigel Coates : The City in Motion* (London: Fourth Estate, 1989), pp.46-47.

[4] Ibid., pp.46-47.

[5] The trio of projects were published in magazines which included: *Architects' Journal, Architectural Review, Blueprint, Designers' Journal, The World of Interiors, AA Files, A&U, L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, Architectural Record,*

[6] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, personal interview, March 2013.

[7] Mark Prizeman, email correspondence with author, August 2014.

In an article in *Designers' Journal* published in 1990, the NATØ members were each interviewed about the demise of the group and their work since, with a number of comments revealing the tension between Coates and the rest of the group that this difficult period engendered.[8] In the piece, Villanueva Brandt describes disappointment that the Boston ICA show had not produced more opportunities, citing the art and architecture community's comprehension of NATØ as 'Nigel and the others', a large part of the problem.[9] Prizeman is even more 'affronted by Coates's exploitation of the group idea', resenting the fact that, eventually, the group was reduced to 'nine little NATO-ettes, all down our separate paths.'[10] In the article, Mull and Beevor, who subsequently married and set up a practice together, are less nostalgic about NATØ, and explain that the group had been overly optimistic and become too much of a 'publicity machine' than about building anything – which was their main focus. Mull criticizes Coates's early work most overtly, deriding it for not 'dealing with a human need' and thus failing to make a contribution in the terms that NATØ sought.[11] It is certainly true that Branson Coates' projects in these years were all restaurants, clubs, cafes and shops – architectural types that were not at the heart of NATØ's vision of *Albion*, which most often focused on housing, the workplace and community facilities such as the dole office. Places of leisure, uncontaminated by the more volatile and messy functions of everyday life, were not present in NATØ's work, which although embraced and thrived within contemporary consumer culture, did so with one eye firmly focused on the more fundamental elements of living and working in a dense metropolis.

When compared to the comments of the same individuals reflecting on the break-up of the group now, the sentiment of each has remained relatively consistent over time. Prizeman is by far the most nostalgic of the group, and as Villanueva Brandt – Prizeman's closest friend from the group – explains, suffered most from the demise of NATØ.[12] All the NATØ members interviewed for this research describe Prizeman as the most strongly embodying the NATØ character, the most eccentric, the one closest to being a punk, and the one with the most vivid and unusual imagination – illustrated by his strange and compelling fictional stories published in *NATØ*. When NATØ split, Prizeman initially worked for his father, the successful but conventional architect John Prizeman, before joining Colefax and Fowler, a traditional interior design firm, for several years before setting up as a sole practitioner working on small domestic projects and shops that bear little resemblance to his NATØ visions. He describes the group aspect of NATØ as central to its creative energy, and maintains that given the right 'mutually acceptable

[8] Jose Manser, 'Building Bloc', *Designers' Journal*, no.58, June 1990, pp.33-38.
[9] Ibid., p. 34.
[10] Ibid., p.34.
[11] Ibid., p.35.
[12] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, personal interview, March 2013.

environment', NATØ could still come back together to produce a project or show – pointing out that he still pays for gas rental should his welding skills be required, a joke perhaps, but with very serious intentions.[13]

Mull's reflection on the period now is, much as it was in the *Designers' Journal* article, far more critical, explaining that in 'exporting' NATØ's spirit to Japan, Coates effectively reduced it to a style to be consumed, disconnecting it from any claim it might have on authenticity:

> As soon as what it looked like became the only thing that people were interested in, and you could export it to Japan – you could it export it anywhere – it became internationalised, it became spectacularised, commodified. It was there, fundamentally, the opposite to what it was doing here – absolutely, diametrically, the opposite.[14]

In this respect, Mull reinforces NATØ's absolute connection to London as the site of their work – it would have been an entirely different prospect had they focused on another place. As a response to the projects in Japan, Mull and Beevor were quick to distance themselves from the group and Branson Coates, and sought opportunities to build through Mull's father's practice – Mull Associates – and with Norton, who had been disengaged with NATØ since *Gamma City*, feeling very strongly that it was critical to build in order to develop the ideas of the group.

Villanueva Brandt is similarly ruthless when reflecting on Branson Coates' work during this period, but he also cites a growing confusion over NATØ's position as either artists or architects, particularly as the group were exhibited alongside prominent artists at the Boston ICA and had not built – indeed, Villanueva Brandt himself was occupied increasingly with painting after NATØ, his work featuring in *Art Forum*.[15] It seems that though the momentum stalled because of Coates's diverted energies, there was also a feeling that NATØ needed to do something else – to build or to produce another substantial provocation. Hatton's view is that the group needed a few more issues of *NATØ* and a project to 'reality-test' their proposition – suggesting that the then undeveloped King Cross site in London would have been the perfect setting.[16]

Inevitably, NATØ's position as a subcultural stream of architecture was impossible to sustain in much the same way that Hebdige described youth style subcultures gradual and unavoidable assimilation and recuperation by the dominant culture it had sought to subvert.[17] NATØ's initial formation was a rebellious moment that

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[13] Mark Prizman, email correspondence with author, August 2014.

[14] Robert Mull, personal interview, February 2013.

[15] Brian Hatton, 'Carlos Villanueva Brandt - Albemarle Gallery', *Artforum International*, May (1989), p.170

[16] Brian Hatton, 'NATØ's London' in Carlos Villanueva Brandt ed. *London +10* (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2010), p.264.

[17] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (Routledge, 1979), pp.90-99.

appeared to be truly shocking to the architectural establishment, but as they continued to produce the magazines and exhibitions, the impact was lessened. In Hebdige's terms, one mode of assimilation was via the proclamations of the dominant culture and its press. In this sense, NATØ was ideologically incorporated the moment the press and the AA examiners labeled their deviant behaviour as either a spectacle of 'meaningless exotica' or 'trivialized, naturalized, domesticated' – minimising their otherness.[18] However, Hebdige's second form of assimilation rings truer to NATØ's ending – the transformation of NATØ into a commodifiable form – which, once produced through Branson Coates, marked the end of their subcultural position. Interestingly, the relation here to commodity culture is complicated: subcultures embed themselves within the dominant modes of 'production, publicity and packaging', and subvert it through the distortion and reclamation of those symbols, as has been shown in this thesis.[19] As a result, the moment that this position changes to one of incorporation rather than resistance is difficult to define, it takes a more significant codification, profitability and mass production to thoroughly strip away the original subculture's antagonism. In the case of NATØ, exportation of the work's aesthetic approach to the other side of the world (Japan), in forms that bore no attempt to critique or complicate the commercial activities of leisure, marked the group's assimilation.

In addition to these factors, it is also possible to attribute NATØ's end to the change in context from London in 1983, when the group formed, and London in 1987 when they last worked together – with the fundamental difference in these two conditions indicative of a shift that made NATØ a less appealing, and perhaps less necessary, prospect. As this thesis showed, the late 1970s and the early 1980s were a period when the fabric of London was in decline, and the ruinous condition of the city contained the creative potential for a re-imagination of the city, and indeed was the trigger for much artistic practice. The economic and political situation, and the resulting social unrest, provided the impetus for both youth culture and artists and designers to reassert their cultural identity in ways that can be described as highly narrative. In the first years of the 1980s, Thatcher's programme of deregulation and privatisation began to shape the city in new ways – exemplified by the London Docklands development – and as such, the narrative preoccupation of NATØ can also be seen as a form of symbolic resistance. In particular, the freedom and informality of disused warehouses and factories, that spurred creative reuse and reappropriation, was replaced with an ordered, commercialised vision of the future. In the face of this, narrative architecture emerged as a counterpoint.

However, as the 1980s progressed, the British economy experienced a sustained period of growth, and a particular period of 'boom' between 1985-88 where growth was

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[18] Ibid., pp.94-99.
[19] Ibid., p.95.

well above long-term trends.[20] Even more significant than these changes, was what historian Alwyn W. Turner has described as a 'definite cultural shift' that occurred throughout the 1980s.[21] As he explains, Thatcher's policy changes gave rise to 'a new feeling that almost anything and everything was for sale, from state-owned industries downwards' – a culture of conspicuous consumption embraced and encouraged by the media became rampant.[22] A new breed of wealthy urban bankers, created by the deregulation of the financial markets – the Big Bang of 1986 – nicknamed 'yuppies', represented the 'ostentatious flaunting of newly-made wealth', which when combined with the growing affluence of a substantial proportion of the population created a new national identity.[23] The spirit of post-punk, and of struggle and crisis, that NATØ had engaged with at the start of the 1980s faded, and the creeping commercialisation of culture, began to pervade the very subcultures that had engaged in resistance through their symbolic codes and activities. In architecture, a version of narrativity was commodified by coffee shops, restaurants, shops and hotel lobbies, producing environments that sought an aura of authenticity in caricatures of faux-histories and cultures – what Coates calls 'pseudo-narratives'.[24]

Construction also increased during the boom years, with growth in particular focused on offices, shopping complexes and private housing, particularly as demand for better serviced office buildings for the financial sector dramatically increased.[25] As such, prospects for architects to build improved, and it is therefore possible to speculate that the recessionary conditions that had in part precipitated NATØ's paper architecture, begun to reverse – marked by Coates's rapid succession of built works from 1985. Indeed, all the NATØ members were able to build during this period, either collaboratively in the case of Mull, Beevor and Norton, or as sole practitioners. And, as Sainsbury had pointed out in the 1990 *Designers' Journal* interview, 'It's difficult to do NATØ for clients.'[26]

This is not to simplify NATØ's ending, nor to suggest that they could not have continued – it seems clear that a combination of factors contributed, and interviews with the members now confirm that it was a slow fizzling out, 'a process of evaporation', rather than a defined end point.[27] It is also unfair to suggest that there was no continuation or development of NATØ ideas beyond 1987 – indeed, in different ways, Coates, Villanueva Brandt, Mull and Norton, have each taken different trajectories in either their

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[20] www.ons.gov.uk
[21] Alwyn W Turner, *Rejoice! Rejoice!: Britain in the 1980s*, PB Reissue edition (Aurum Press Ltd, 2013), p.230.
[22] Ibid., p.234.
[23] Ibid., p.230.
[24] Nigel Coates, *Narrative Architecture* (London: Wiley-Academy, 2012), p.159.
[25] M. Ball, 'The 1980s Property Boom', *Environment and Planning A*, 26 (1994), pp.671–695.
[26] Melanie Sainsbury quoted in Jose Manser, 'Building Bloc', *Designers' Journal*, no.58, June 1990, pp.33-38. (p.35).
[27] Mark Prizeman, email correspondence, August 2014.

teaching or practice that can be clearly traced back to NATØ (the legacies of NATØ will be discussed later in this conclusion). The narrative preoccupations that emerged in the 1980s were a period preoccupation in their direct response to the social, political, economic and physical condition of the city, but the form of narrative that developed has strong resonances with contemporary urban practice

Narrative architecture

A significant part of this thesis has been concerned with the investigation of narrative techniques in NATØ's work, and the interrogation of how the group's conceptualisation of narrative became part of their design process and principles. Through the drawing, the magazine and the installation, NATØ developed a method and approach to architectural design that was predicated on complexity and communicative content – from the two dimensional explorations of the drawing, to the multi-page magazine spread, to its three-dimensional realisation in objects and their arrangement in installations. At the start of this thesis, narrative was defined via Marie-Laure Ryan as a mental construct or image produced by the interpreter in response to a narrative object – the narrative object being the architecture or space. The thesis also proposed architectural *narrativity*, as opposed to an architectural *narrative*, and thus the scalar nature of narrative experience – an experience of a space can be more or less narrative. In this way, architectural narrativity is considered as a condition, a concept that has been related strongly to the plural, polyvocal and polyphase nature of narrative experience that invokes the moving body. Through NATØ's work it has been possible to understand this construction of narrative as an active process of narrativisation, where the interpreter or experiencer has a degree of agency over the determination of meaning, and the construction of the experience. As the body and the mind move through space, narrative experience is created through the interaction between that space and the associations, experiences and interpretations of the interpreter. Through these explorations, a framework of terms with which to understand and analyse spatial narratives has been proposed.

This framework is a generous conceptualisation that considers spatial experience as an inherently narrative one. It thus proposes that architecture and the design of space has the potential to enhance or resist that narrativity. In the case of NATØ, their raison d'etre was to heighten the narrativity of the city, to overlay it with stimulating content, in the form of architecture that would intensify its experientiality, representationality and meaningfulness. In this respect it is possible to understand all encounters with space in the narrative terms set out in this thesis; though the thesis does not propose a comprehensive theory of narrative architecture, a style or a set of tools for design, it extrapolates an approach to space and a vocabulary with which to analyse it. Rather than proposing formal or morphological conceptions which might produce more rigid

definitions and descriptions of architectural narrativity, this framework allows a broader range of examples to be parsed, containing different approaches and focusing on different aspects of spatial narrativity. The idea of narrative architecture in this thesis also extends the narrative possibilities of the drawing, graphic design through the magazine, and exhibition or installation design – using spatial terms to provide a conceptualisation of how spatial narrativity can be expressed in these media that is more far-reaching that narratological studies have thus far provided.

The ideas of narrative architecture explored in this thesis are inherently connected to the city, the authorship of space as a polyvocal activity, and the experience of narrative space as polyphase. As a result, the ability for narrative architecture to be designed in a predetermined way must be called into question. The only individual building that NATØ designed was their house for Derek Jarman in 1984, which as this thesis described in Chapter 3, contained a plethora of narrative content – weaving history and mythical reference, the archeology of the site, Jarman's own personality and preoccupations, and an industrial, bricolaged materiality and construction. The analysis of this project, as with all of NATØ's non-exhibitionary works, is through the drawing, the style of which enhances the narrativity of the proposed house – portraying it in dream-like imagery that extends and spatialises the content of the design. However, when the design for the house is hypothetically projected into its built form, and its narrativity it then assessed in relation to NATØ's city-scale visions, it becomes a less convincing and less complex proposition. At its core, the house for Jarman is a conventional house in programmatic terms – there are conventional domestic spaces, a library, and a private balcony overlooking the sea. What makes the space narrative in design terms is the aesthetic formal and material choices, which are extremely rich in their pillaging of referential content. But this reduces narrative architecture to aesthetic appearance, exactly the critique that Mull laid on Branson Coates' 1980s built work. The fullest narrative expression of the house for Jarman is only achieved through its occupation and usage over time, through the changes that might be wrought upon it by inhabitation: the extensions, modifications, and adjacencies, the misuse and re-use, reapproriation and additions. As such, the narrativity explored in this thesis is often an after effect, one that most typically emerges in and from the city condition itself: the overlapping of functions, public space and private space, interim use and informality, and the experience of that as a sequence of movement. In this respect, narrativity must be considered as a terrain or a scape, where an individual building might present a microcosm of such a condition, but cannot realise the full potential of narrativised space.

Two examples of places in contemporary London can focus these conclusions, and expose narrativity as a spectrum. Trafalgar Square embodies a number of principles of narrative architecture – having transformed from its original form as a public square in

the 19th century, to a busy traffic thoroughfare over the 20th century, to a lively, activated space of overlapping cultural functions, informal and formal gathering, public art and performance, protest and celebration now. A redevelopment project commissioned by the Westminster Council in 1996, completed in 2003 by Foster and Partners, diverted away some of the road traffic and inserted a large new stairway linking the square to the National Gallery, creating a space with better pedestrian access and thus encouraging its use (fig.1 and 2). The square is layered with contemporary elements such as the Fourth Plinth art project (1998-), new surfaces, temporary structures and a rolling cycle of events that are not only the planned processions of official celebrations, but include impromptu and informal re-appropriations (flash mobs, political protests, artistic and musical performances). A number of overlapping historical narratives reside in both the physical monuments of the square, and its presence in the cultural consciousness: conceived as a symbol of British Imperialism – the narrative that shaped it – the square is also figured as a site for political resistance, first by the Chartists who protested in the square in the 1840s, followed by the trade union protests of the 1880s, and Women's Suffrage rallies in the early 20th century – setting the course for Vietnam war demonstrations in the late 1960s, the infamous poll-tax riot in 1990, and contemporary protests against everything from government cuts, gay rights, university fees, and police stop-and-search laws. It is a space that also embraces the full spectrum of cultural activity and identity of London, as the site for religious celebrations, sporting events, food festivals and an array of other activities – retaining its original Victorian purpose as a public space for all parts of society. The physical presence of Trafalgar square is thus one that is constantly shifting, where no two visits are exactly the same – shaped by its changing inhabitation and use, but yet architecturally fixed, dominated by the Victorian framework and form of the square and the statuesque buildings that line its edge: the institutions of the National Gallery, St Martins in the Field, Canada House and South Africa House, and the monumental presence of Nelson's Column. The architecture represents a controlling, authoritative display of the state and the monarchy, a monumentality further enhanced by Foster's widened stair and broad terrace – clad in the smooth and majestic materials of York stone, granite and bronze. The informal kiosks of the 1990s have been swept away in a cleaning-up of the space that has resulted in a more perfected space (figs. 4 and 5) – making the narrative drift through the square less tangled, more clearly striated and determinate.

In 1992, Coates reimagined this area of London in his *Ecstacity* project – a speculative vision exhibited at the AA through video footage, drawings, photographs and

Figure 1: Trafalgar Square, redevelopment by Foster and Partners (completed in 2003) – the smoothed and perfected public square.
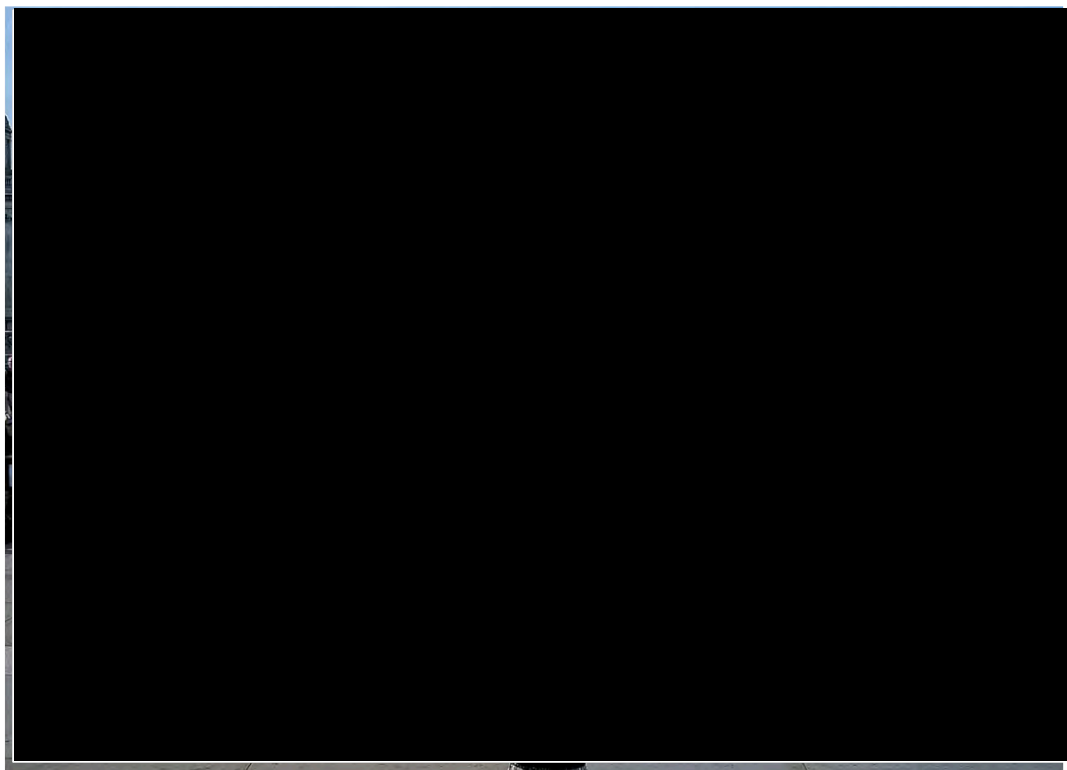
Figure 2: Trafalgar Square, inhabited by a large dance performance event.
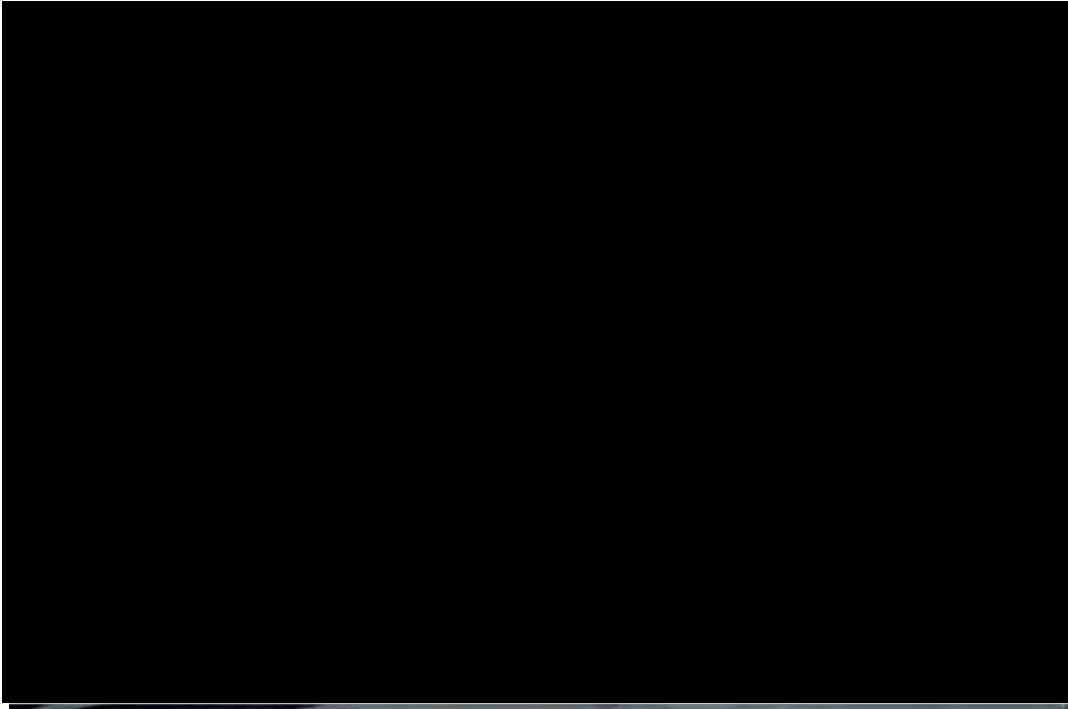
Figure 4: Trafalgar Square before the redevelopment, inhabited by messy and informal kiosks and mobile shops.
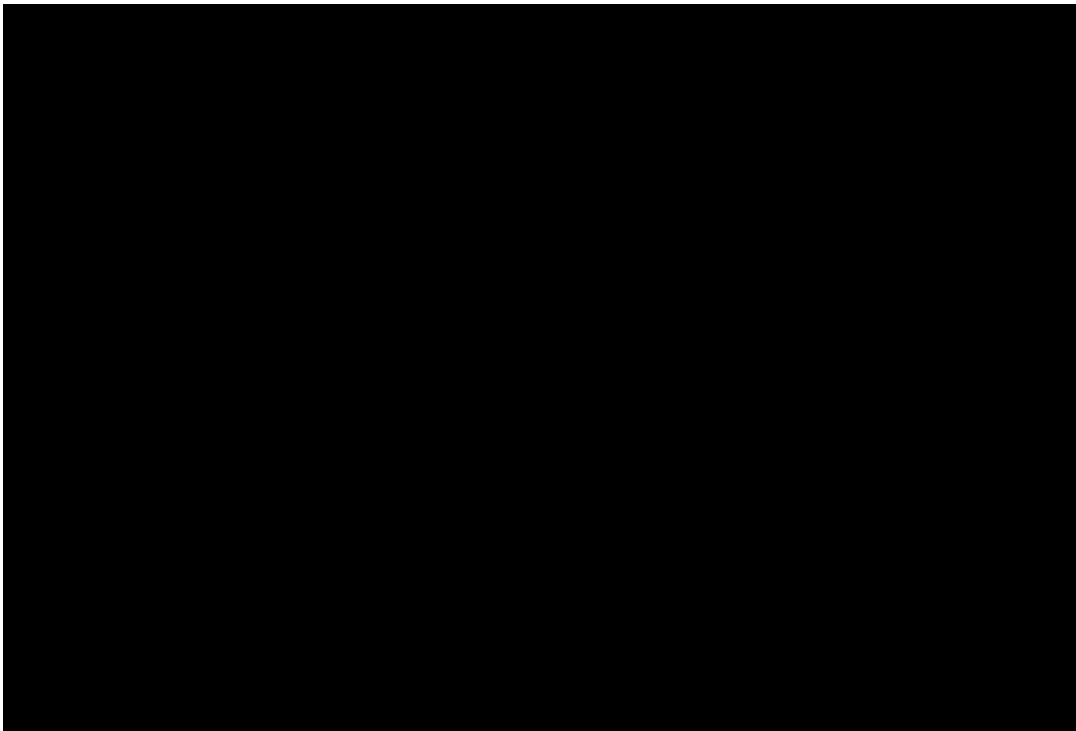
Figure 5: Trafalgar Square, before redevelopment was overrun by pigeons, spawning a micro-economy of pigeon food kiosks

a large painted canvas (fig.5).[28] This central painted image depicted a hyper dynamic cityscape of fragments that were split, softened, and shattered – 'Ecstacised' – an updated version of NATØ's approach, with an emphasis on hedonism and 'pumped up' planning, 'pumplanning'. Here, the rigidity of Trafalgar Square and its environs was exploded apart, creating a more bodily and sensual depiction of the place that though does not propose to remove any of what is already there, imagines the city as responsive body to be stroked and teased. In this respect Foster's redevelopment of the space resists Coates's vision of an enhanced, more stimulating and formally relaxed place, and instead consists of interventions designed to fit seamlessly into the existing fabric – purposefully playing down the juxtaposition between new and old – a muted, less fragmented, rationalised space.

By contrast, contemporary Soho produces a richer experience of narrative space, with a juxtaposition of uses – from offices for media companies and digital agencies, to bars and pubs, nightclubs and brothels, alongside shops, apartments and a vivid street life of buskers, markets, street food, al fresco dining and performance. This clash of programmatic functions and people creates defamiliarised junctures, an extremely strong polyvocal authorship and a constantly changing experience as the body passes through narrow streets that are densely packed with content narratemes. Contemporary Soho is a more finely grained, nuanced and real-life version of Tschumi's Soho aberrations. As at Trafalgar Square, no single journey through Soho is the same, however in Soho, greater fragmentation and a smoother, rhizomatic and unexpected structure creates a more strongly stimulating journey; the individual creates their own path, and thus their own polyphase narrative – with shifting characters and action. Time and culture is pleated in buildings that have been reused and reappropriated, often showing their previous use explicitly – a former windmill-shaped cinema converted into a strip joint, a historic tailors turned into a Chinese supermarket. One street alone, Berwick Street, bares marks of its history of the rag trade, the music industry and a famous street market – the traces of which are present in its contemporary incarnation, evoking a rich storyworld of parallel references and representationality. There is a chaotic and adhoc assembly of parts in Soho that is not present in the more controlled space of Trafalgar Square. Each day in Soho looks and feels different, new businesses come and go, street art is painted or painted over, scaffolding goes up or comes down to reveal a new alteration or an addition to a building – the place is constantly evolving in a pulsating rhizomatic way that shows directly impact of bodies, inhabitants and users on space in a way that resists the cleaned up, perfected space of Trafalgar Square. Presentness as defined in this thesis is

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[28] Nigel Coates, *Ecstacity*, Architectural Association, London (1992). This project was developed and expanded a decade later into a book of the same name: Nigel Coates, *Guide to Ecstacity* (Laurence King Publishing, 2003).

Figure 5: Nigel Coates, *Ecstacity* (1992) – Painting showing an 'ecstacised' central London, where forms are relaxed and exploded to create a more sensuous cityscape.

heightened – there is suspense inherent in the instability of the place; every sense is vividly stimulated moving through the streets, unexpected people or objects block pathways and it is very possible to get lost.

But like Trafalgar Square, there is a gradual encroachment that risks reducing the rich narrativity of Soho – a process that begun in the 1990s when the familiar presence of prostitutes openly working the streets was eradicated, and continues as preparations for a major Crossrail station at Tottenham Court Road has involved demolishing culturally historic buildings such as the Astoria. Overall, the place is being gradually gentrified, the streets widened and tidied up, with the aim of increasing rental levels and encouraging investment; in the process, lowering narrativity.

Neither of these examples are places that have been *designed* to contain a narrative experience in the ways set out in this thesis, instead Trafalgar Square becomes narrative through its use and Soho gains narrativity primarily by its development and change over time. No single building or plan generates the narrativity. This does not deny the agency of the architect or designer entirely, as the way that new developments are inserted can strongly influence the narrative potential of a place. The latent narrativity of a place is a complex set of relations and interactions between its history, inhabitation and use, and approach to new insertions – where an attitude that reflects, refracts. destablises and lances through the existing fabric, can produce a more strongly stimulating, polyvocal experience. The final part of this conclusion will explore a number of trajectories that take on aspects of narrative architecture, examining how the ideas figured on paper in this thesis find their built form.

After NATØ

When NATØ initially formed, they attracted considerable attention within the profession, but their relatively short lifespan (when compared to groups such as Archigram who produced work together for over a decade – 1961-74) combined with their legacy dominated by Coates, who became one of the most prominent British architects of the 1990s, meant that their impact as a group has been less easy to discern. This must in part be attributed to the difficulty in understanding NATØ's aims, for on the surface their work appeared to be apocalyptic and pessimistic. When compared to the optimistic and fantastic imagery of Archigram's works such as Underwater City (1964), Instant City (1968), Living Pod (1966-67) that projected a future of technological utopia, NATØ's work did not depict an idealised vision, but instead one where destruction and chaos was presented in a seductive way – as an aesthetic experience. As the conservative critic Peter Dormer had pointed out in his scathing review of NATØ's *Gamma City* in *The Face* (1986), theirs was not a vision that spoke of progress in the manner of previous British

designers, declaring that 'the NATØ city would be like Beirut in a ceasefire'.[29] This displays only a surface reading, or a literal interpretation, as this thesis has shown, but also fails to understand the exaggeration implicit in such paper works – NATØ's designs were not intended to be blueprints for realisation, but indicative of a new approach to architecture and the city. This is perhaps why for NATØ members Mull and Villanueva Brandt in particular, Coates's work following NATØ was received so badly – because it did simply reproduce that highly dramatised aesthetic, failing to resonate in more fundamental NATØ terms with regards to context, material, programme, and its approach to the city. In Coates's perhaps best known interiors project from this period, Caffè Bongo (1985), a highly exuberant visual collage of elements as disparate as an aircraft wing, Corinthian columns and industrial detritus displays the pillaging and meshing of referential content from past, present and future that NATØ sought, but it is used primarily as decoration for a programmatically straightforward café and restaurant. It is as though one layer of narrative content is present, but without the complexity engendered by more complicated, overlapping and informal usage, that narrative content is not activated – and such works risk slipping back into the space of postmodernism dominated by complexity as stylistic device. As such, underneath the aesthetic surface of NATØ's work lies a series of fundamental architectural principles, a lineage and development of which can be traced through the work of a number of architects and theorists in the years since 1987.

The period directly following NATØ can be characterised as architecturally pluralist, and indeed writers and theorists including Charles Jencks, Andreas Papadakis, Geoffrey Broadbent, James Steele Peter Cook, and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones all reflected on the 1980s at the start of the new decade, describing the growing abundance of styles and approaches including pre-Modernism, Neo-Modernism, Post-Modernism, High Tech, and Deconstruction.[30] This proliferation in part contributed to the beginning of what would become known as the 'Starchitect', the image of the celebrity architect who produced individually-authored buildings in a signature style. Names such as Libeskind, Foster, Eisenman, Gehry, Rogers, Stirling, Koolhaas, Nouvel, Piano – dominated the architectural scene as documented in the media, and represented a contrast to the ideas of bricolage, receding authorship and polyvocality that NATØ set out. The 'Starchitect' presented the building as an object, a visual icon with a strong style that could be replicated at will – its author instantly identifiable. However, alongside this more

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[29] Peter Dormer, 'These Dog Turd Days', *The Face*, No.79 (1986), p.104, p.107 (p.107).
[30] Jencks, Papadakis, Broadbent essays in *AD Modern Pluralism: Just Exactly What Is Going On?*, ed. Andreas Papadakis, (London; New York: Academy Editions ; St. Martin's Press, 1992), Jencks and Padadakis in *AD Post-Modernism on Trial*, ed. Andreas Papadakis (London; New York: Academy Editions ; St. Martin's Press, 1990) Papadakis and Steele in James Steele and Andreas Papadakis, *A Decade of Architectural Design* (London: Academy Editions, 1991); Peter Cook and Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *New Spirit in Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991)

prominent and dominant culture of architecture emerged a number of counter positions, particularly in London. Murray Fraser touches on this dualism in his 2012 essay 'Architecture's Urban Shine and Brutal Reality', which pits an architecture of glass office buildings and smooth skins against one of 'solidity and ordinariness' – the latter identified in the existing historic fabric of the city, and buildings that did not resist that context, including complex urban projects such as Alsop Architects' Peckham Library (2000), or the modest and functional Peabody Trust Housing in Murray Grove (1998-2000).[31] Developing Fraser's characterisation of 'solidity and ordinariness', it is also possible to observe an approach to the city that challenged the cult of the individual architect and the perfected architectural object in favour of more contextual, often temporary or flexible buildings and a collaborative, collective, polyvocal way of practicing.

DIY had been an important part of subculture since punk, and as this thesis has described, the techniques and approaches of self-publishing, style as bricolage and creative salvage became strategies employed by a range of subcultural artists, product, furniture and fashion designers. However by the 1990s, DIY culture expanded further, in terms that can be seen as strongly resembling NATØ in their notion of the drama of the event and the possession of the street. *Reclaim the Streets* is perhaps the most prominent of such developments, formed in 1995 as a creative protest group that used public events, parties, raves and carnivals to temporarily take over streets and public spaces.[32] Though far more overtly politicised that NATØ ever were, and eventually becoming part of a strongly anti-capitalist movement in the late 1990s (Carnival Against Capital), they shared with NATØ a belief in the importance of the street, the shared use and inhabitation of public spaces and the potential for individuals to actively shape and influence the city. Protests were of course common occurrences in the 1980s, but one of the key differences in the 1990s was a change in focus from protest in the workplace – union-led stoppages and strikes – to a colonisation of public space and streets.[33] *Reclaim the Streets* used creative spatial interventions that dramatically altered the use of streets and roads in acts of defamiliarisation, including erecting a large carnival tent over a motorway and depositing a ton of sand in the middle of a street to create a sand box (figs.6-8).[34] Importantly, these tactics were chaotic and wild: in McKay's words 'vortexed, whirling…an uncontrollable state of creative chaos', much less controlled than 'official'

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[31] Murray Fraser, 'Architecture's Urban Shine and Brutal Reality' in *London from Punk to Blair*, ed. by Joe Kerr and Andrew Gibson, 2nd edition (London: Reaktion, 2012), pp.225-235 (p.225).
[32] John Jordan 'The art of necessity: the subversive imagination of anti-road protest and Reclaim the Streets' in George McKay, *DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (Verso, 1998), pp.129-151.
[33] George McKay, (1998), p.3
[34] John Jordan 'The art of necessity: the subversive imagination of anti-road protest and Reclaim the Streets' in George McKay, (1998), pp.129-151.
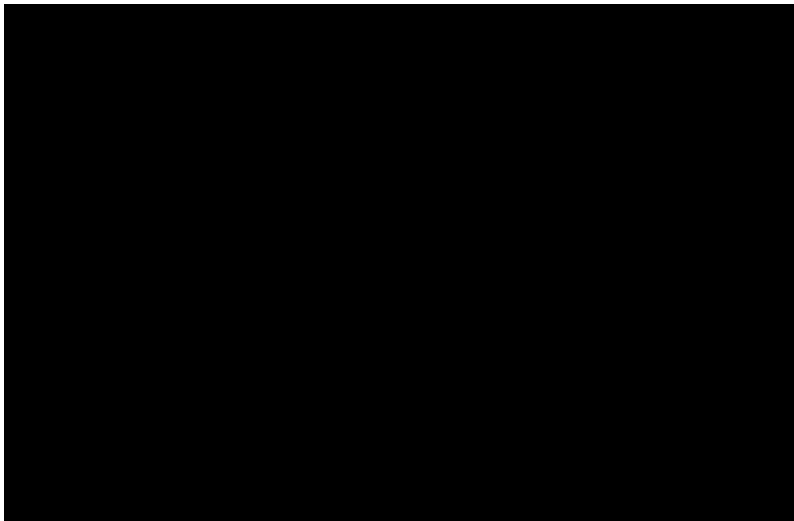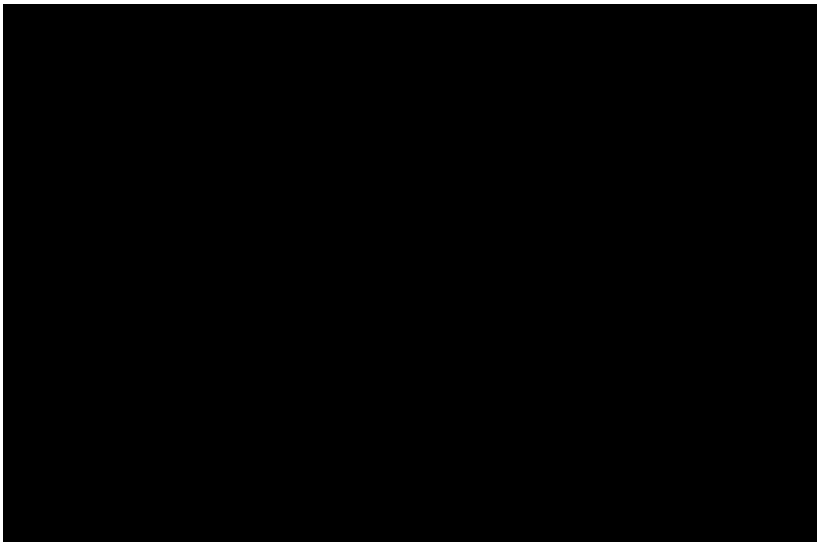
Figures 6, 7, 8: *Reclaim the Streets* – Sandpit at Shepherds Bush (1996), the M41 (1996), Camden High Street (1995).

festivals and displays which were highly policed, cordoned and contained.[35] Like NATØ, *Reclaim the Streets* also engaged with music subcultures – acid house and rave – and was an important part of the evolution of the rave scene in the 1990s, inhabiting disused spaces as well as streets to hold spontaneous mass parties. These types of events built in momentum around the period of the early 1991-92 recession, which came after a period of boom in the late 1980s – and in this respect, the conditions of unrest and dissent can be compared to the recession of the early 1980s that NATØ's work was in part a reaction to.

Many of these principles, though clearly evident in NATØ's work, were developed further by Mull and Villanueva Brandt when they took over teaching Unit 10 at the AA, after Coates left to focus on his building projects in 1989. Anxious to avoid any association with the work that Coates was doing, Mull and Villanueva Brandt stripped back Unit 10 to the core principles of urbanism and action, treating London as a 'live city' onto which students experimented, often going to live, work or socialise in the areas they were designing for.[36] In the ten years that they taught the unit together (Villanueva Brandt continued to teach on his own after 1999, and still teaches it today) the engagement with popular culture and subcultural aesthetics was dropped in favour of a strongly Situationist grounding based on techniques of the dérive, détournement, the 'constructed situation', psychogeography, and 'unitary urbanism', developing into what Villanueva Brandt calls 'direct urbanism'.[37] Though building on the idea of agency that NATØ's 'apprentice' character had initiated, the major step-change was the interrogation of real places and real situations, conducting experiments directly onto the fabric of the city – rather than imagining scenarios and projecting critiques. Techniques such as the video works and theatrical workshops were replaced by encounters and exercises with local communities and institutions.

The use of action and event to stimulate change and to discover spatial relations also grew beyond the bounds of Unit 10 in the 1990s. Cross-disciplinary architectural collective FAT (Fashion Architecture Taste), who formed in the mid 1990s (and whose co-founder Clive Sall taught at the RCA under Coates's leadership), produced 'urban art events' to subvert familiar sites in the city, inviting active participation. Works such as *Mod Cons* (1996) which placed familiar domestic objects into unfamiliar settings (defamiliarising them), such as shower equipment in a public square, a bedside table in a bus stop and a light switch on a lamppost (fig.9), and *Brunel Rooms* (1994-95) which combined a nightclub with a garden, a swimming pool and a living room (fig.10), sought to a generate what they described as 'disassociated, but recognizable storylines', avoiding

[35] Ibid., p.142.
[36] Villanueva Brandt ed. *London +10* (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2010)
[37] Carlos Villanueva Brandt, 'Methods of Engagement' in Villanueva Brandt ed. *London +10* (London: Architectural Association Publications, 2010), pp.227-287.
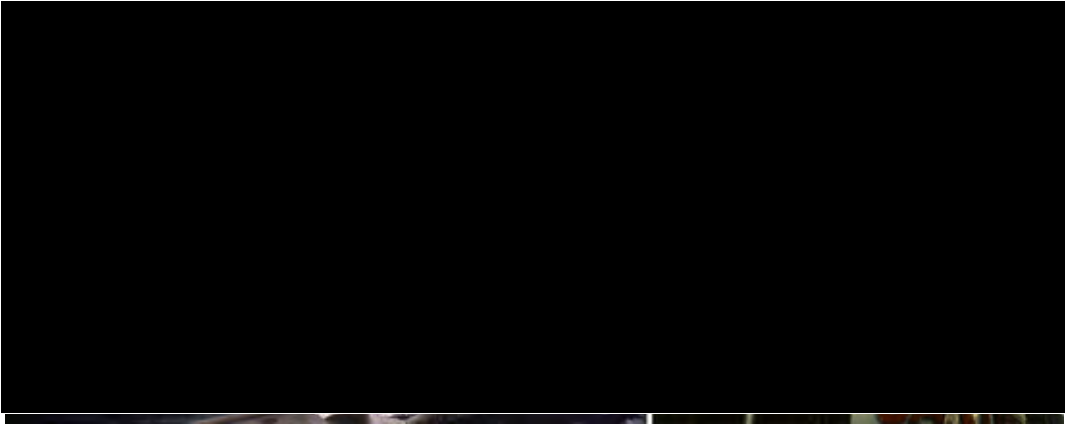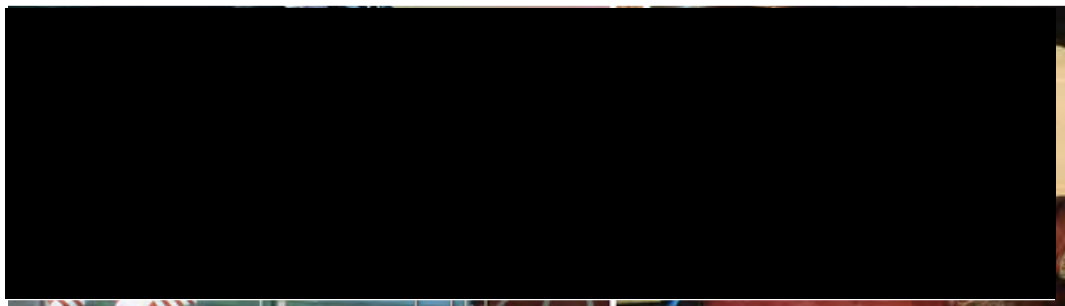
Figure 9: *Mod Cons*, FAT (1996)

Figure 10: *Brunel Rooms*, FAT (1994-95)

one single thread in favour of multiple readings.[38] This was an approach shared by a growing number of practitioners, including Public Works (1999-) and muf (1994-) – an event-urbanism that cultivated the use of derelict and disused spaces in the city to temporarily readjust perceptions and usage. It was also a move towards a more authentic mode of community consultation, resisting the tokenistic gestures made by commercial development, aiming instead to engage more deeply with the forces shaping a particular area or site. Indeed, NATØ member Christina Norton set up the architecture practice Fluid in 1996, with fellow AA graduate Steve McAdam that took a specific interest in the participatory processes of design – eventually developing into a sister practice Soundings in 2007, to develop innovative approaches to such work.[39]

A part of this approach was the growing notion of the city, and in particular London, as an object of study. NATØ had been captivated by London in a state of decay and flux, on the cusp of major developments such as the Docklands, but in its decrepitude revealing the myriad layers of historical usage and occupation. Acknowledging the architect's role in exposing and enhancing such complex narratives of place was a preoccupation that grew in the 1990s, and in particular can be identified though the work of a group of theorists who came together in a collective named Strangely Familiar in 1994. Initially consisting of Alicia Pivaro, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr and Iain Borden, the group mounted an exhibition at the RIBA in 1996 (*Strangely Familiar,* 1995-6) that sought to produce an alternative mode of architectural history. Their position was strongly narrative, and focused on the social experience and use of buildings, proposing that architecture 'is made not just once, but is made and remade over and over again' through representation, contextual change, and experience.[40] The text that accompanied the exhibition, designed in collaboration with Studio Myerscough, broadened the network of writers, theorist and practitioners to include those from disciplines outside architecture who together formed a multivalent approach to the city. Later in 2000, the group published a book *The Unknown City* extending this network further, including an interview with Coates who in his description of the development of NATØ's conceptualisation of the city as a juxtaposition of fragments and experiences, establishes

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[38] FAT, 'It's Not Unusual: Projects and Tactics' in Alicia Pivaro and others, *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2002), p.346.

[39] Fluid was founded by Christina Norton and Steve McAdam as an architecture practice specifically concerned with participatory urbanism. In 2007, they set up Soundings, which employs sociologists, anthropologists, architects, planners and designers to produce research into participation and consultation, providing those services to architects, developers and planners. Other practices such as AOC – Architects of Change, and muf art + architecture, are also architects who have developed specialized interests in community consultation and participation, changing the way that these processes are carried out across a number of key developments in London.

[40] *Strangely Familiar: Narratives of Architecture in the City*, ed. by Iain Borden, Joe Kerr, Alicia Pivaro, Jane Rendell(London ; New York: Routledge, 1996), p.5.

a direct link to the approach and thinking of Strangely Familiar. Also included in this volume were FAT, artists Cornford & Cross who developed site specific works that exposed critiques of urban conditions, Richard Wentworth whose explorations of Caledonian Road in the 1990s were indicative of a preoccupation with the mundanity of the everyday and the potential richness in fragments of the city, and architecturally trained filmmaker Patrick Keiller whose films *London* (1994) and *Robinson in Space* (1997) chronicled explorations of urban space and deindustrialised landscapes in a distinctly psychogeographic mode. These works, artists, architects and writers all represent part of a postmodern rediscovery of the city and the street that NATØ were an early part of, and a fascination with the complexity of London in particular. Their aims were (and still are) in many ways exactly the same as NATØ's, to reclaim the city against the homogenising forces of anonymous, privatised and highly controlled development that was gradually erasing large chunks of London in the 1990s.

NATØ's ideas on authorship and agency are linked to this growing approach to the city as one constituted by multiple voices, experiences and authors. *Occupying Architecture*, a volume of essays edited by architect and educator Jonathan Hill was published in 1998 and represents a stream of British architecture concerned with the agency of users and the undermining of the image of the individual, authorial voice of the architect.[41] Architects who contributed to this book include Jeremy Till, FAT, and muf art/architecture, as well as educators and theorists Mark Cousins, Iain Borden, and Jane Rendell, and NATØ member Villanueva Brandt, all of whom came to have a considerable influence in different ways on the profession over the following decades. The way of thinking about architecture and agency proposed by these practices and individuals is one that shares key principles with NATØ: that architects are not the only producers of space, that buildings are not the only objects of architecture, that architecture is only realised once it is inhabited, and that architecture can and should be subject to creative use and misuse.

From this text, and these architects and authors, flows an understated but consistent succession of architects, spatial designers and theorists whose work has represented an alternative to the mainstream of big-name architects and major public buildings of the 1990s and 2000s, and who sought to rexamine the relationship between architect and user –challenging agency and authorship. muf architecture/art, formed in 1994 as a collaborative, all-female group of architects, artists, and theorists – driven by a desire to change the way public spaces were conceived and design. One of their earliest projects for improvements to Southwark Street commissioned by the local Borough in 1996, began the process of transforming the architect into a mediator, negotiator and

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[41] *Occupying Architecture: Between the Architect and the User*, ed. by Jonathan Hill (London ; New York: Routledge, 1998).

interloper, breaking the boundaries of 'community consultation' to engage more deeply with the social networks that defined the context of the project. In this respect their work sought to resist and critique the growing number of public spaces in London that were only the by-product of private investment. Founder Liza Fior (who taught at the RCA under Coates's leadership) has described such spaces as 'anodyne', with little room for complexity: 'Public spaces should serve more than one purpose. We have to make more undetermined spaces' – words that echo NATØ's.[42] In their design for *Barking Town Square* (2010) these ideas are realised in a multi-functional public space which unites the town hall, library, university building, a local authority 'one-stop-shop', a health centre, 500 new homes, retail units and cafes in a space that features numerous different types of furniture and surfaces, including a chequer board terrazzo and chandeliers defamiliarised in their urban setting, a Secret Garden containing a folly made from reclaimed bricks evoking an imaginary history of Barking and thus a pleating of time, and an arboretum set in a landscape of strewn, objects and planting (fig.11-13). The design of the place was intimately connected to an extensive programme of community events, research and engagement that sought to embedd a plurality of voices into the finished square. Furthermore, the complex array of functions in such a dense location, all spilling into the same public area, hints at a strongly NATØ-like vision of the city, where uses can be layered upon each other and gaps are left for others to emerge.

Implicit in these texts and projects is a sense of the non-heroic architect, whose authorship retreats, and a notion of modesty that does not seek to create architecture or spaces that are primarily visual displays. As such, another thread that can be traced from NATØ is a renewed idea of the vernacular, which avoids the reproduction of architectural styles and the direct emulation of context, but instead seeks materials that possess different qualities of integrity – whether for budgetary constraints, environmental properties, or to enhance narrative content. This is an approach that can be seen in recent work by young collaborative practices such as Assemble and Practice Architecture who use salvaged, donated and unusual materials to produce public projects in disused spaces. An essential part of their material choice lies in the ability for buildings to be constructed by the designers themselves, a semi-professional form of self-build. At 'Folly for a Flyover' (2011), Assemble constructed a temporary cinema along a canal side, made from wood and clay bricks, supported by scaffolding (fig.14). The activation of a disused, unappealing site underneath a motorway flyover by a new and unexpected function bears a strong resemblance to NATØ, and the unprecious, salvaged materiality and construction brings a distinctly urban, adhoc attitude. Similarly, at the 'Cinerolium' pop-up in 2010, the group co-opted a vacant petrol station on a busy road in east London

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[42] Liza Fior, 'muf architecture/art' interview by Florian Heilmeyer, www.baunetz.de [accessed August 2014].
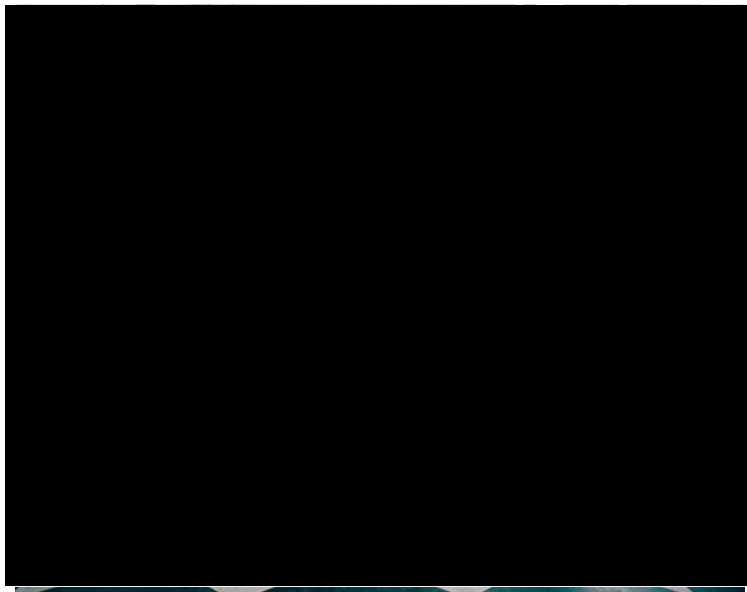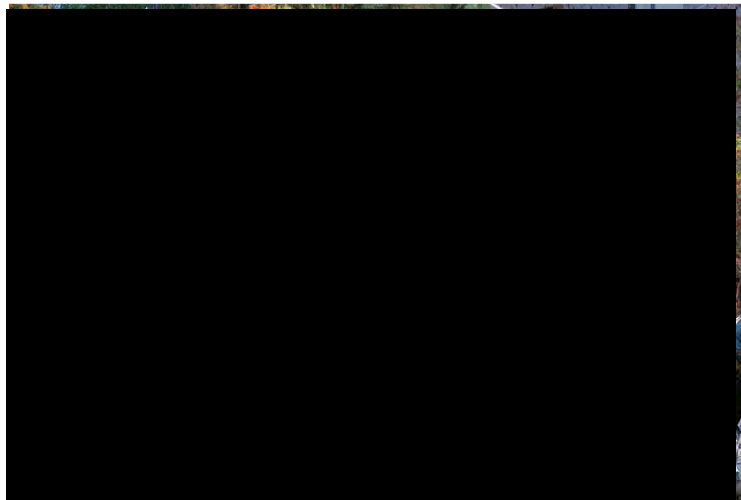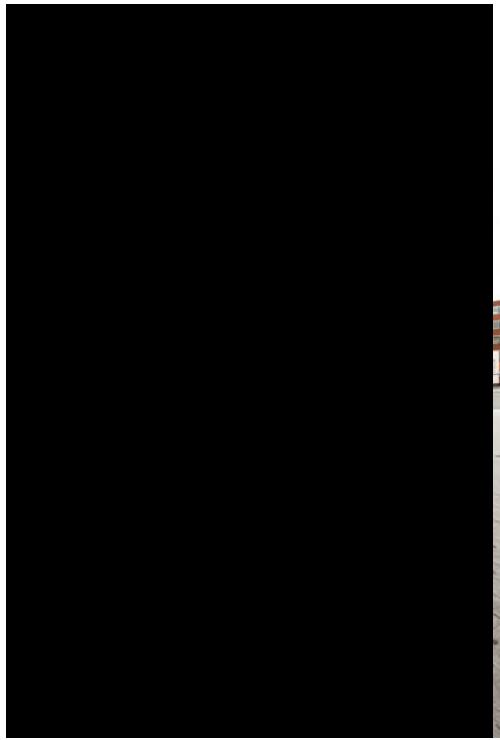
Figures 11, 12, 13: Barking Town Square, muf architecture and art (2010)
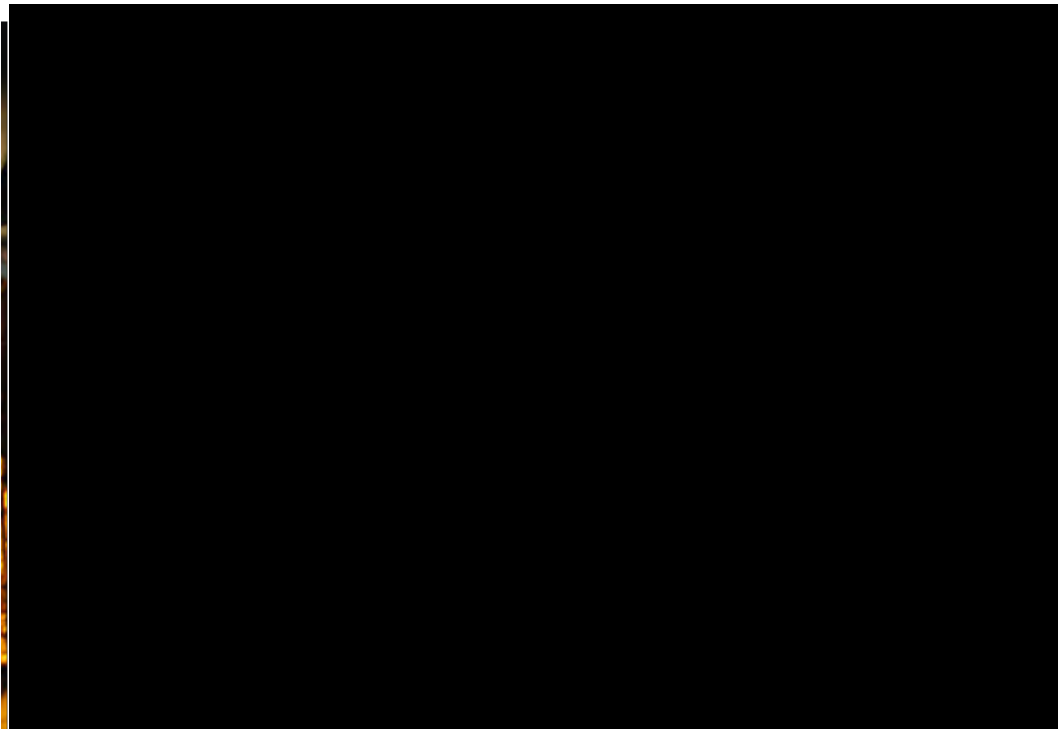
Figure 14: 'Folly for a Flyover', Assemble (2011)
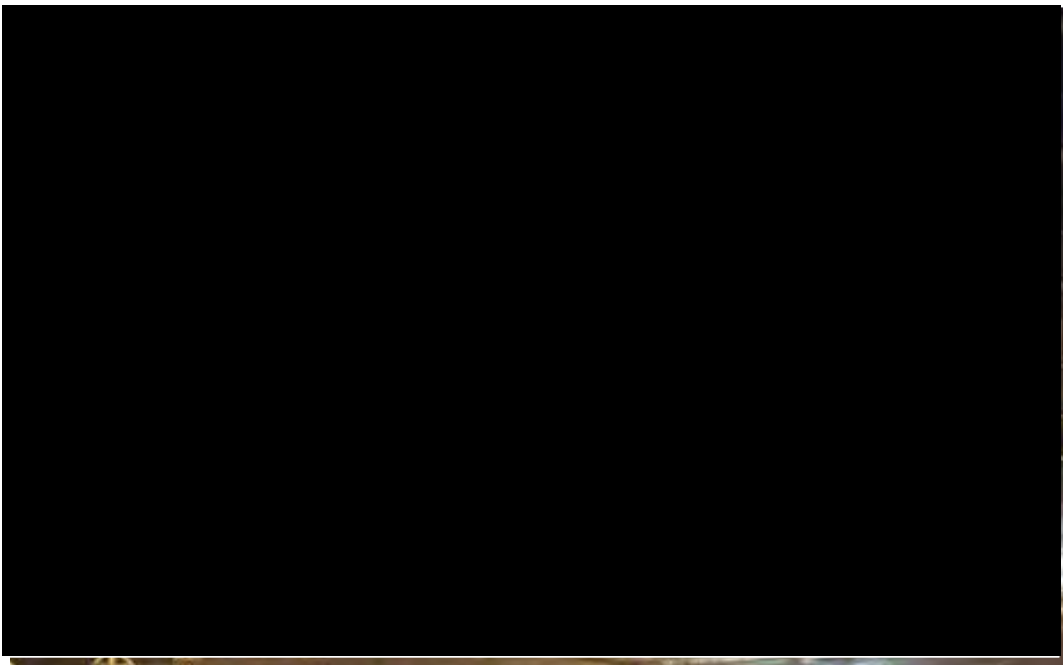
Figure 15: 'Cineroleum', Assemble (2010)
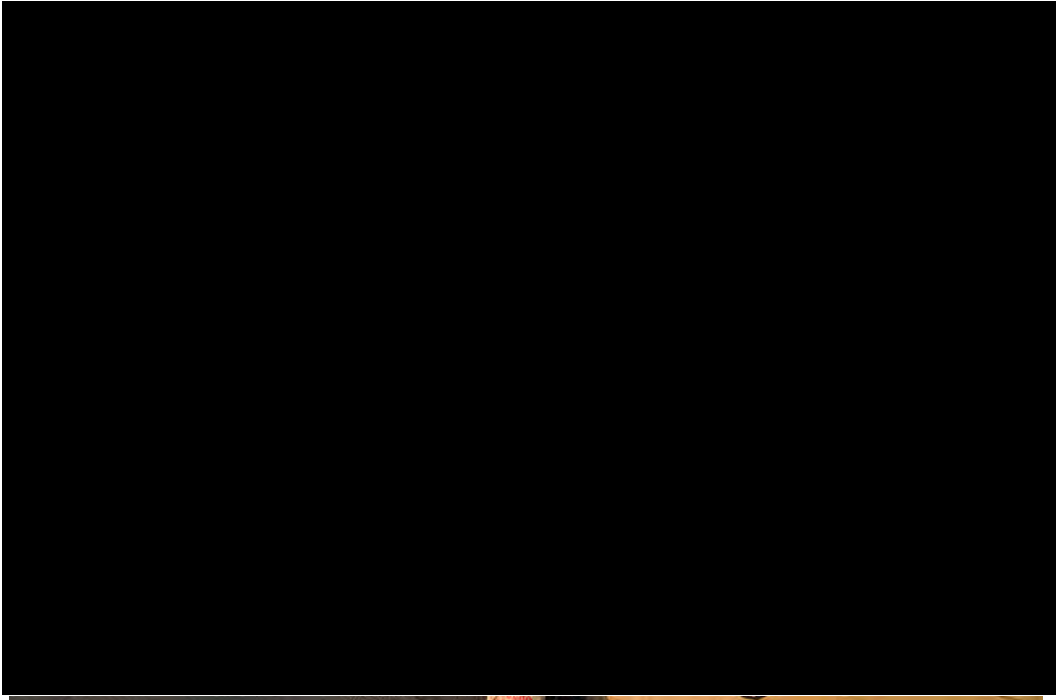
Figure 16: 'Frank's Café', Practice Architecture (2009)
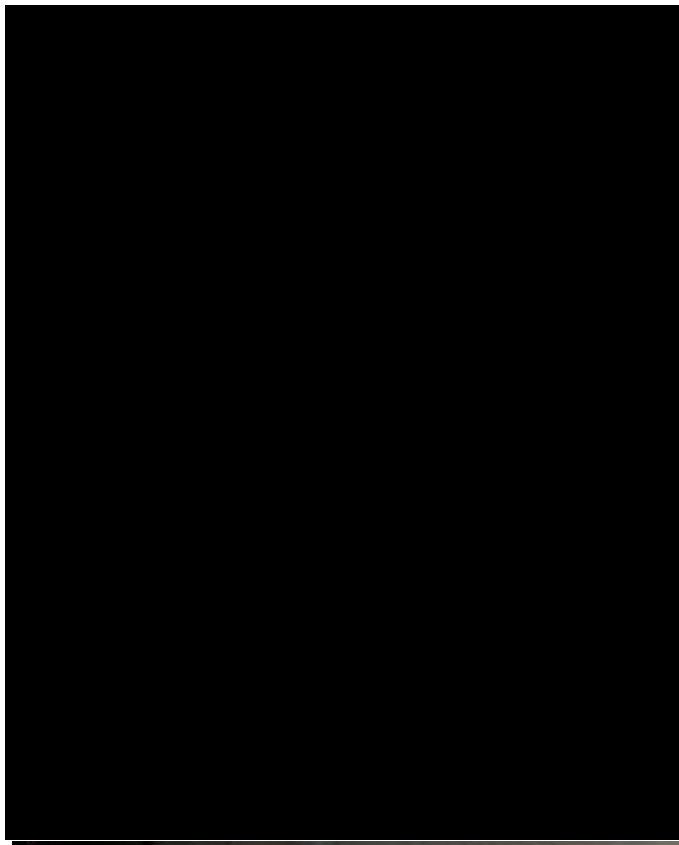
Figure 17: 'Yard Theatre', Practice Architecture (2009).

and installed a temporary cinema made from scaffolding and roofing material, creating a spectacle for a short summer of public film screenings (fig.15). Practice Architecture employ similar tactics, constructing a bar on the roof of a car park in Peckham, 'Franks Café' (fig.16), which has been dissembled and rebuilt slightly different every summer since 2009. Their 'Yard Theatre' (2009) was made with scaffolding planks, lino, plasterboard and polyurethane foam, an exercise in adhocist 'making-do' that was self-constructed (figs.17). All these works insert unexpected, disjunctive functions into the existing fabric of the city, building on top of what is already there – enhancing it in a way that makes these places more narrative, a presentness evoked through defamiliarised materiality and intense activity. The practices themselves are loose, collectives of designers and makers whose designs negate the requirement for complex, construction processes and skills, with very few bespoke elements – the buildings are thus affordable and modifiable, connecting architects more directly to the fabric of the city, and have the potential to provide agency to their users.

NATØ were early instigators of an approach that resisted the cult of the individual architect, and sought to expose the complex realities of living, working and socialising in the city, making it a more vivid, stimulating experience. Their approach was for adhoc, improvised, reversible and constantly adjusting spaces that bore the traces of their use, and were shaped and reorganised according to patterns of inhabitation. In this respect they represent a postmodern approach to architecture and the city that prioritised the pleasure and creative potential of the complex and chaotic, avoiding the simplification and reduction to surface decoration that pervaded the mainstream of postmodernist architecture built in the 1980s. They represent the beginning of a counter-flow of architects and theorists who consider the city as a territory of overlapping experiences, voices, relationships, histories and narratives that should be exposed and researched – a postmodern condition to be embraced rather than smoothed. Rather than succumbing to the grand narratives of the masterplan and the enduring Modernist desire to control and regulate, NATØ proposed a way of building the city that was gradual and piecemeal, an approach to urbanism conceived as micro-projects and small interventions that are incomplete and imperfect. In issue one of *NATØ* magazine, the group explained that 'Albion will inevitably be built a little more quietly over a much greater area', and their legacy is the body of small practices, theorists, individuals and collectives whose work is slowly building the city of which NATØ dreamt.

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