

# History of failure

by  
Marc-Antoine Pepin

A thesis  
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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## ABSTRACT

The ability to project a virtual vision on the world and give it physical form sets the human apart. By shaping his surroundings at will, the human holds considerable power not only on the environment, but on fellow humans and the world at large. The thesis discusses the different shapes the horror of architecture takes. Told as a loose history of civilization, it constructs a theory of horror from the primal confrontation to nature, lingers on the oppressive walls of contemporary society, and projects a future of labyrinthine sentient buildings. A chimera one part asterochronic<sup>1</sup> collage and four parts picaresque<sup>2</sup> novel, the resulting document recalls the failure of the thesis as building to dwell on the indefinable, uncontainable nature of horror, a dark internalized version of the world with an undertone of settled accounts.

1. “[The asterochronic] establishes connections between events that are heterogeneous in time and space.” Muriel Pic as quoted by Nicolas Bourriaud, ‘The angel of the masses’ in *The exform* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2016), 52.

2. The picaresque is characterized by the absence of a clear plot and a rogue hero living by his wits. Clarence Hugh Holman, “The picaresque novel” in *A handbook to literature: Based on the original edition by William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Education Publications, 1980), 330-331.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my advisor Robert Jan van Pelt, and my committee Anne Bordeleau and Marie-Paule Macdonald, for their unending patience. I thank my external reader Scott Sørli for his generosity. I thank Dereck Revington for his support, my friends Safira and Sneha for entertaining Monster, and all of my colleagues who knowingly or unknowingly added to the discussion. I thank my parents for their trust in my knowing what I was doing.

*to the monster under my bed*

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## LIST OF FIGURES

[3rd professor] Horror is much much much too much.



[The following document is a liberal retelling of the process that led to its existence. It portrays a memory of the conversations that took place, rearranged at will. It represents no opinions other than the author's. The story, all names, characters, and incidents are seen through a nightmarish distortion lens. No identification with actual persons living or deceased is intended or should be inferred.]

DISCLAIMER

## MONOLOGUE

3. Haruki Murakami, *1Q84* (New York: Bond Street Books, 2011), 464.

Haruki Murakami<sup>3</sup> wrote that there is no shadow without light, and no light without shadow. I rather think there is no beauty without horror, and no horror without beauty. Horror isn't always obvious, but it cannot be contained, it is visible to anyone that dares to pay attention to the spills. Horror is the vulnerability of the human form, the confrontation between the body of the human and the body of architecture. The question isn't how architecture achieves horror, but when it does.

[...]

The thesis is a theory of othering in which the human moves into the domain of the other and loses control on their existence. The thesis is the human confronted to the vastness of the world, or emulations of it. The thesis is the human confronted to the other human, and forcing them into a cage. The thesis is the human bringing the machine to life, blindly following its logic.

[...]

For humans, the relationship to the world goes back to the origins in Serengeti. The human needs protection as much as the possibility and freedom to venture into the world without boundaries. But vastness becomes horrifying when the possibility of safety is lost. The first level of horror is the giant, the primal horror the human conquered and started to emulate. The giant deals with the scale of the human body compared to the scale of the body of the Earth. The giant is the surface of the sea swallowing the body. The giant is the mass of the mountain looming over the body. The giant is the cave, the mouth of the Earth, consuming the body.

[...]

The sea is a space so large that the human loses all bearings and is left vulnerable to the elements. It is a surface so wide it isolates from the familiarity of society. As soon as the human sets sight on the ground, they automatically divide, limit, and multiply it... The field is a human-made sea, an attempt to

tame nature by levelling it. The field is the surface beyond society, the surface that feeds the city. The sea is the surface the human crosses while moving from city to city, the surface entered only within the armour of technology.

[...]

As the human roams the surface and conquers it, they encounter obstacles that halt their journey. The mountain is what is infinitely bigger, a mass that cannot be scaled, the obstacle too big to overcome. Mountains dominate them completely, like towers dominate the city in a show of power from modern deities. The tower rivals the wonders of nature itself, a testimony of the advancement of technology, but an environment that is physically out of touch. Gigantic architecture is but a physical manifestation of the ego. The tower removes the human from the surface of the Earth, where they belong. The tower, in order to stand, digs into the Earth, its roots anchored into the cave.

[...]

The cave is the Earth swallowing the body to another dimension, a space disconnected from the surface. The cave is a bunker, cutting the human from the comfort of society, feeling the overwhelming mass of the Earth pressuring them. The cave is where the human ends when they lose the confrontation.

[...]

As soon as nature recedes, as soon as it is tamed, the human turns in on themselves. The human separated themselves from nature by building walls all around. The second level of horror is the other human, when we divide society, when we separate between the other and us. We separate ourselves from the deviants by building walls around them. The other human is the border wall, the divide between us. The other human is the prison, the cage meant for us. The other human is the cell, where there is only us. The human is the camp, where there is no us. The other human is an isolated bubble built by us within society.

[...]

The wall started on the individual scale of the house, its interior the extent of the builder's control on the Earth. As civilization developed, the wall was used to extend that territory from the one house to a group of houses, and eventually to a village or even a city. At its core, the border wall is only an obstacle meant as insurmountable, but it hides what's on the other side, making the neighbour invisible, erasing the world beyond. The wall is the basis of human horror, because it imprisons individuals and communities alike. By taking the border wall and shrinking it, we create prisons, solitary cells, and camps.

[...]

The prison is the space for the excluded, space as punishment. The prison as a building is the physical form given to a system in which we round up individuals and deprive them of their freedom and rights. Any architecture used to retain members of society against their will is a prison. The prison, like the tower, is meant to exercise dominance over others. In the case of the tower, it is the dominance of society on nature, or the dominance of a financial elite on the rest of society. In the case of the prison, it is the dominance of society on a single individual.

[...]

The prison is a grouping of solitary cells, the boxes we build to forget prisoners completely. The wall of the cell is so tight around the prisoner that it cuts them off from their humanity. Other people become a distant memory, a fading dream, and the void eventually swallows their mind. Just as your body gets rid of muscle mass if it isn't used, it also gets rid of faculties if they are not needed. Being trapped in a cell the size of a closet destroys the capacity to focus beyond the walls, and the body learns to restrict its movements. The solitary cell breaks both the mind and the body.

[...]

The camp is a cell for a group of prisoners. Prisons and solitary confinement impose a very rigid structure to the prisoners, while the camp has no structure at all. The prison is total organization, the camp is a total lack of organization. The point of the camp isn't death, but chaos. Ghettos, internment camps, concentration camps, and even refugee camps all function similarly. We exclude a large group of population because of a shared difference and remove them from society. We create a dead zone within the territory of society, and place our so-called deviants in it.

[...]

The third level, the machine, is a metonymic horror that appears when the human pays attention to the invisible forces in society. It is the demise of civilization, the mechanisms we are building to relinquish power over ourselves to something other than ourselves. The machine is a mechanical system, a clockwork we built but that now operates mindlessly on its own. After using the wall to exercise power on the Earth and on each other, we are giving it life and trusting it with our power. The machine is the computer watching over us. The machine is the maze, the city as wide as the sea. The machine is the desert, the residue from society.

[...]

The computer is the pervasiveness of technology within society. The wall isn't necessary anymore, or rather it is useless, because we are under constant surveillance on the virtual plain. Everywhere you look, something looks back at you. It begun with electronic surveillance, the network of cameras and wires spreading through every building. We can now remotely control doors and ovens by connecting them to our cellphones. Our homes are connected to the Internet, that invisible, unpredictable link that joins all of us. As we increasingly develop automated decision-making processes, and connect everything together, we are constructing nervous systems for our buildings. We are the control we carefully built to the machine.

[...]

Parallel to this, the urban sprawl is transforming the Earth into a maze the size of a sea. The maze has to do with the lack of spatial bearings, the impossibility to orient ourselves. The sea and the maze are extremes of a similar idea. While the sea denies bearings by being under-built, the maze denies bearings by being overbuilt. As we travel from the country to the city, the density of the urban fabric slowly intensifies until it completely surrounds you. It is impossible to define the border between the inside and the outside of the urban maze, the wide spaces between cities are disappearing, leaving an endless maze behind. The machine draws the maze, a system we set in motion and can't stop.

[...]

The machine depletes the resources of the Earth, levelling it to the ground, slowly creating deserts where there was abundance, quickly creating dumpsters from over-indulgence. The desert is the death of the field, the pre-historic landscape of civilization, but also the post-historic landscape of civilization. It is where everything has happened and passed, where everything was taken and nothing left. The desert is the desolate landscape we drained of life, the accumulation of the residues of society. The machine will destroy the Earth and leave desolation behind, the most pessimistic projection into the future.

[...]

Horror is a dark subject because it exists in darkness, but also because it is made of darkness, a darkness I swam in for almost two years. It taught me not to fear the dark, but to fear where the mind goes in the dark, when the visible world shrinks. The absence of light erases reality. Because I cannot see the world my thoughts drift inwardly away into the metaphorical darkness. I can't be 'here' in the dark, because I can't see 'here' in the dark. What is scary is not the dark itself, but what happens in the shadows of both the physical world and the mind. It doesn't matter if the

creature is real or not. The creature affects us even if it is a figment of our imagination.

[...]

Architecture is an act of oppression. Sometimes it is necessary violence required for our survival, but it remains oppression. We have imposed our will on the Earth to the extent of submitting nature to its limits. Architecture isn't horrific in itself, it is what we do with it that is horrific, allowing the wall to restrain and hurt.

[...]

By researching architecture that kills, I dwelled in the minds of those who do evil. Architecture is always designed with intent, the thesis was an attempt at understanding the intent of the spaces that harm, the intent of the monster. The thesis was my way of exerting power, my own fiction to exert inner impulses. The thesis is the uncomfortable truth of civilization, the psychopath in each of us. The thesis is about the power we exert over our environment not as individuals, but as a species, the evolution of that power from pride to oppression to forgetting it is there.

[...]

What I failed to notice for over a year and a half is that horror is the emotion of a victim, while architecture is the action of the perpetrator. The architect creates horror but does not feel horror, because he holds the position of the oppressor, not the oppressed. The architecture that renders insane and ultimately kills, is my fiction. I am worried by the power our environment exerts over us. I worry about levelling the Earth, only to replicate its wonders. I worry about our protective walls being used to harm. I worry about our technologies being hijacked to oppress us like the wall was hijacked to oppress each other. We are responsible for the ideas we put into the world, and the world doesn't need more horror.

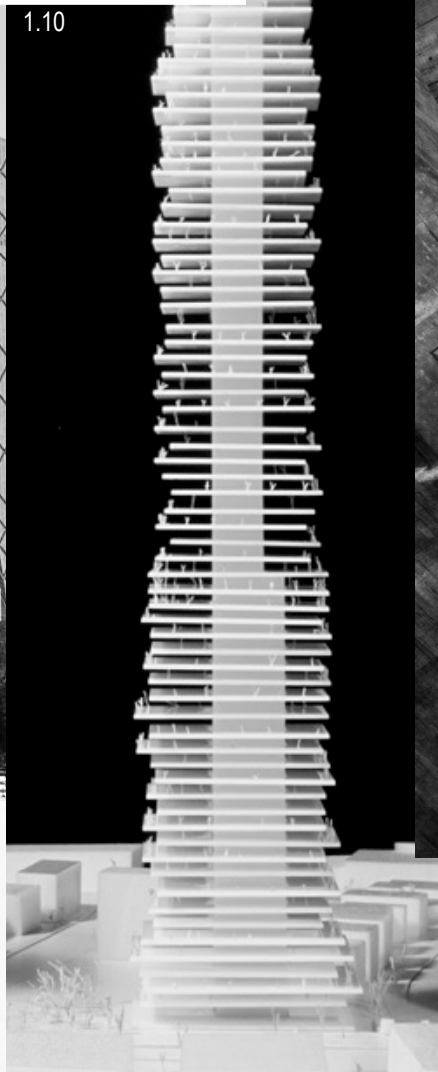
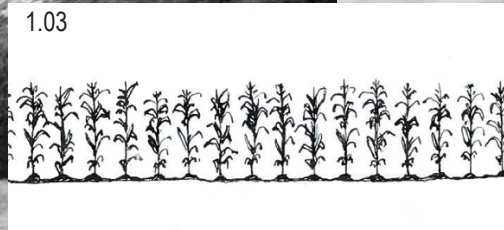
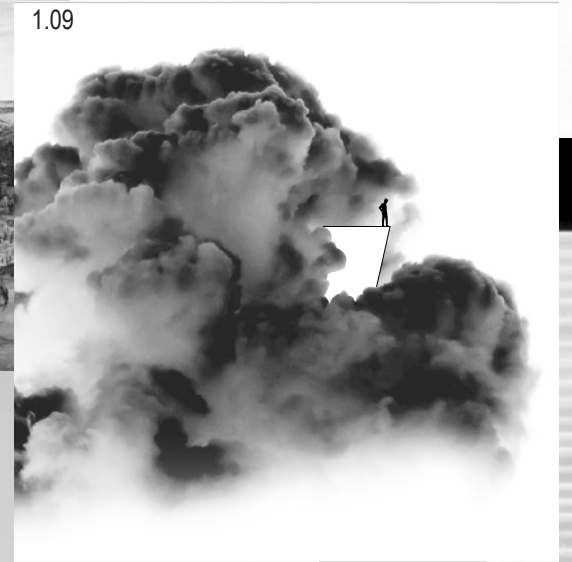
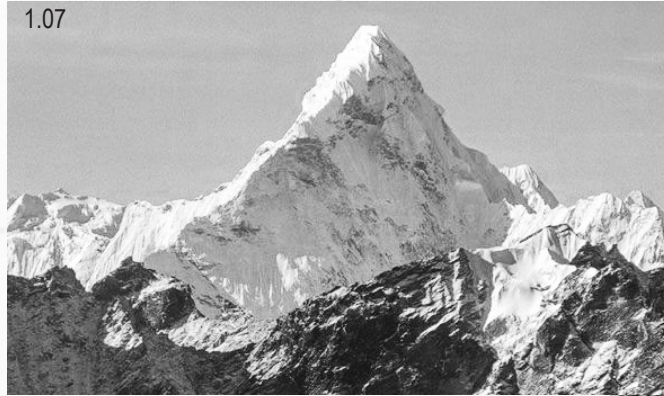
[...]





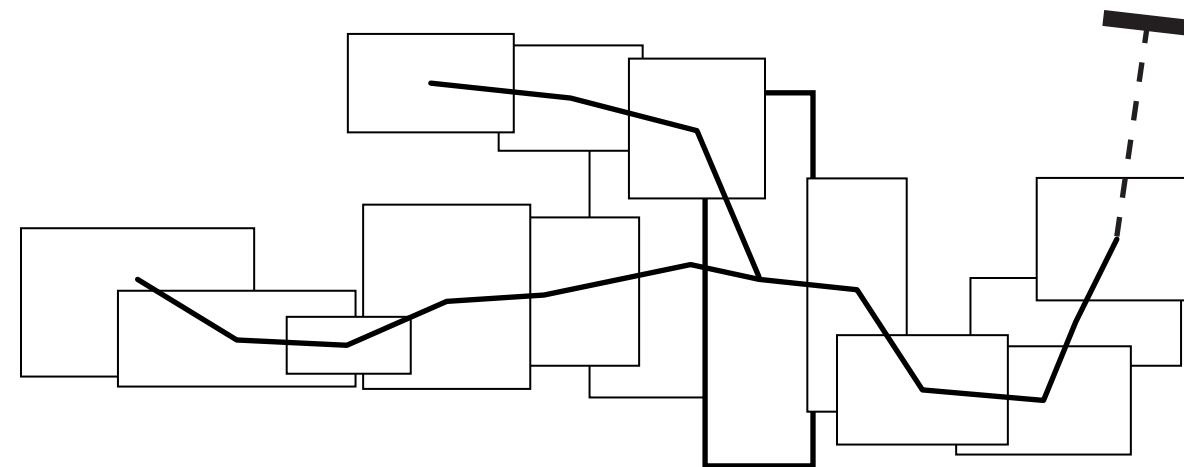
[FIG. 0 THESIS]



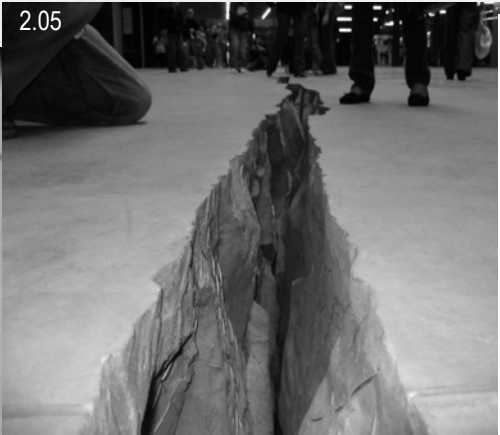




[FIG. 1 FIRST LEVEL  
THE GIANT]



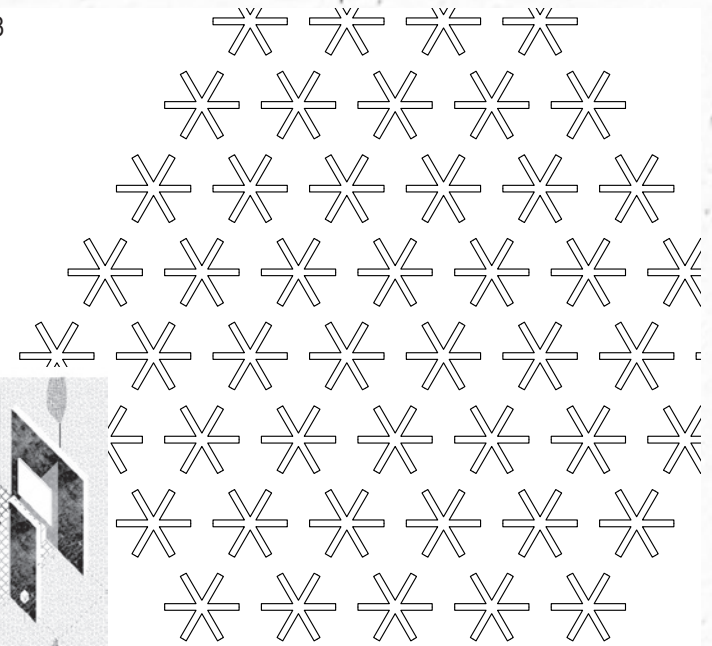
- fig. 1.01 Caspar David Friedrich, *The monk by the sea* (1810)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Monk\\_by\\_the\\_Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Monk_by_the_Sea)
- fig. 1.02 Alex Garland, *Ex machina* (2015)  
screen capture by author
- fig. 1.03 Monster, *The field* (detail, 2016)  
by author
- fig. 1.04 Monster, *The farmer* (2016)  
by author
- fig. 1.05 Monster, *Obstacle* (2015)  
by author
- fig. 1.06 OMA, *CCTV headquarters Beijing* (2012)  
<http://www.archdaily.com/236175/cctv-headquarters-oma>
- fig. 1.07 Nature, *Mount Everest* (~60 000 000 BC)  
<http://freeskies.co/forums/2015/08/06/can-a-drone-fly-on-mount-everest/>
- fig. 1.08 Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The tower of Babel* (1563)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower\\_of\\_Babel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tower_of_Babel)
- fig. 1.09 Monster, *The tower* (2016)  
by author
- fig. 1.10 Platform for Architecture+Research, *Wilshire tower* (2015)  
<http://modelarchitecture.tumblr.com/post/137558887970/fabriciomora-wilshire-tower-par>
- fig. 1.11 Alexander Kindlen, *The maelstrom // The descent* (2014)  
<http://drawingarchitecture.tumblr.com/post/104762101613/alexander-kindlen-the-maelstrom-the-descent>
- fig. 1.12 Nature, *Jam-Up cave* (~100 000 BC)  
[http://currentriver.net/jam\\_up\\_cave.htm](http://currentriver.net/jam_up_cave.htm)
- fig. 1.13 J.K.Rowling, *Harry Potter and the half-blood prince* (2005)  
<http://janvavrusa.deviantart.com/art/The-Cave-355254378>
- fig. 1.14 Christopher Nolan, *The dark knight rises* (2012)  
screen capture by author
- fig. 1.15 Arcop, *Place Bonaventure* (1967)  
Henri Rémillard, *Salon de l'alimentation* (1981), from the BaNQ archives.





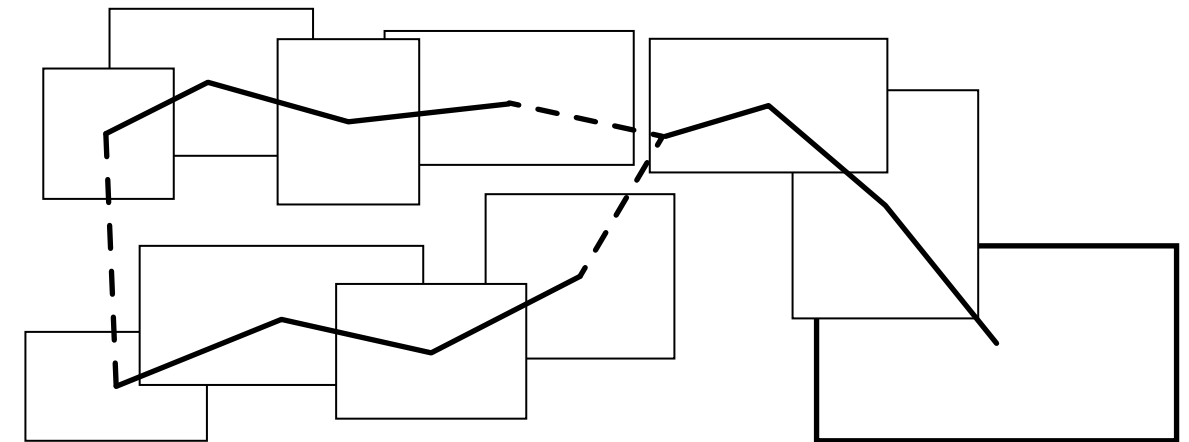


3.08





[FIG. 3 - THIRD LEVEL  
THE MACHINE]

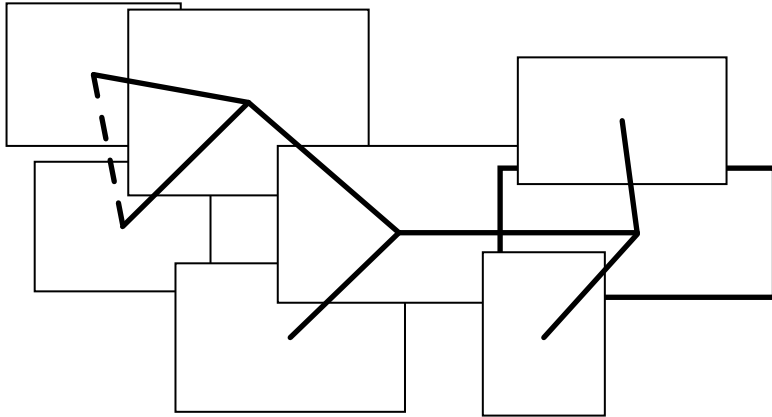


- fig. 3.01 Unknown, *Cameras* (unknown)  
<http://weissesrauschen.tumblr.com/post/141214584819/javier>
- fig. 3.02 Tom Rob Smith, *London Spy* (2015)  
screen capture by author
- fig. 3.03 Valve corporation, *GLaDOS* (2007)  
<https://www.gamespot.com/forums/system-wars-314159282/valve-builds-ai-to-combat-cheaters-33381230/>
- fig. 3.04 Vincenzo Natali, *Cube* (1998)  
screen capture by author
- fig. 3.05 Unknown, *Suburbia* (date unknown)  
<https://favelissues.com/2015/03/22/the-price-tag-for-sprawled-urban-development-1-trillion-usd/>
- fig. 3.06 Roger Dahl, *998* (2017)  
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/cartoons/>
- fig. 3.07 Babel collective, *Pavilions* (2014)  
<http://www.babelcollectif.fr/2014/03/13/pavillons/>
- fig. 3.08 Monster, *Plan of the labyrinth* (2016)  
by author
- fig. 3.09 Unknown, *City's edge: Deonar Dumping Ground* (2011)  
<https://citysedge.wordpress.com/2012/07/31/stills-from-the-film/>
- fig. 3.10 Unknown, *Runit dome* (1989-ongoing)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enewetak\\_Atoll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enewetak_Atoll)
- fig. 3.11 Monster, *The desert* (2016)  
by author

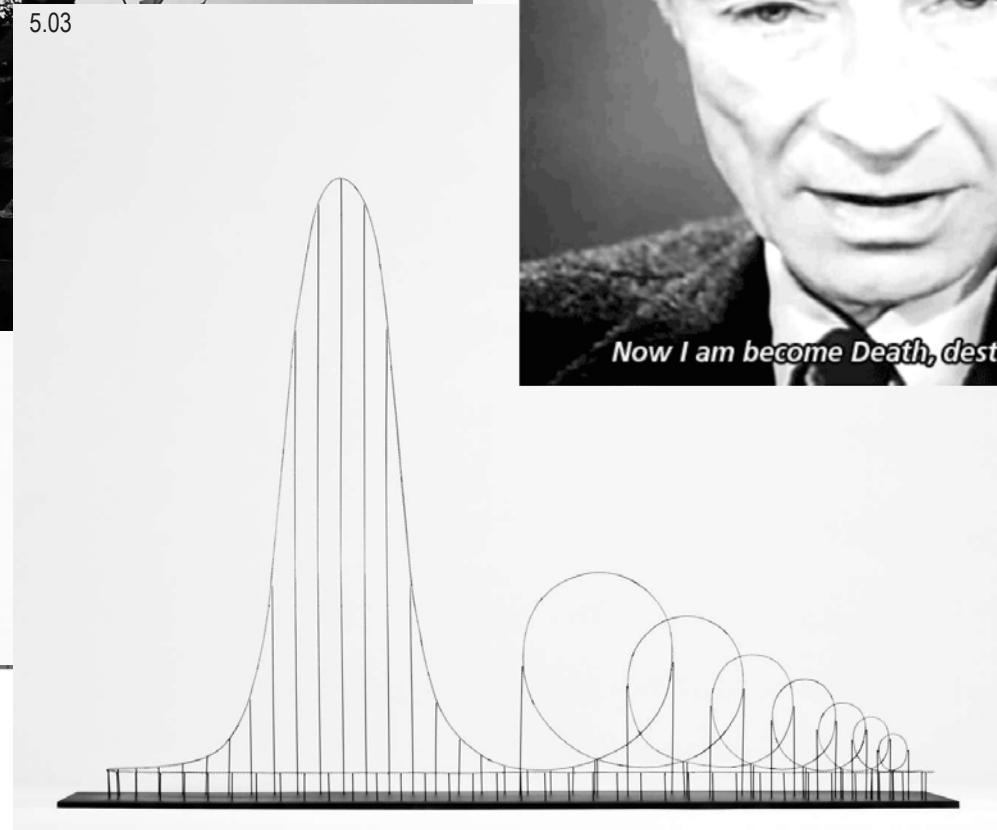
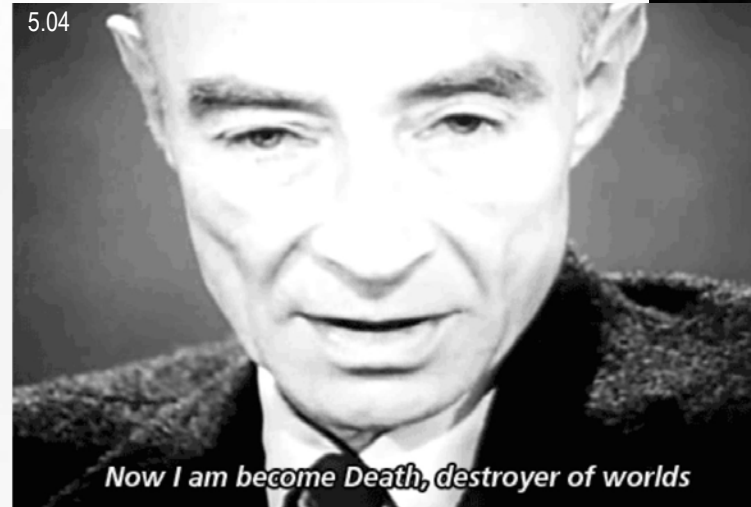




[FIG. 4 ON FORMAT]



- fig. 4.01 Comaroff and Ker-Shing, *Horror in architecture* (2013)  
<http://www.oroeditions.com/book/horror-architecture>
- fig. 4.02 Foreign Office Architects, *Phylogenesis* (2004)  
[http://www.tlu.ee/~priitp/IM\\_32/IM\\_32\\_44\\_Typol\\_kaasus\\_2.htm](http://www.tlu.ee/~priitp/IM_32/IM_32_44_Typol_kaasus_2.htm)
- fig. 4.03 Monster, *Taxonomy* (2015)  
by author
- fig. 4.04 Bruce Mau, *Contents* (1987)  
Michel Feher and Sanford Kwinter, eds., *Zone 1/2* (1987)
- fig. 4.05 Monster, *Table of contents* (2016)  
by author
- fig. 4.06 Aby Warburg, *Atlas mnemosyne* (1927-1929)  
<https://warburg.library.cornell.edu/panel/46>
- fig. 4.07 Monster, *The wall* (2016)  
by author
- fig. 4.08 Mark Z Danielewski, *House of leaves* (2000)  
Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of leaves* (New York, Pantheon, 2000),  
134-135



5.02

 **Nathan Usher** ✓  
@thenatewolf

Me: goodnight kids

Kids: goodnight dad

Me: goodnight monster that eats children who are bad

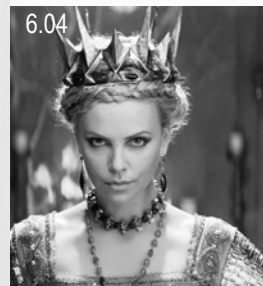
Wife: [through radio under the bed]  
GOODNIGHT

---

RETWEETS 8 404    J'AIME 14 826

15:03 - 15 août 2015

← 69    ↻ 8,4 k    ❤️ 15 k





7.01

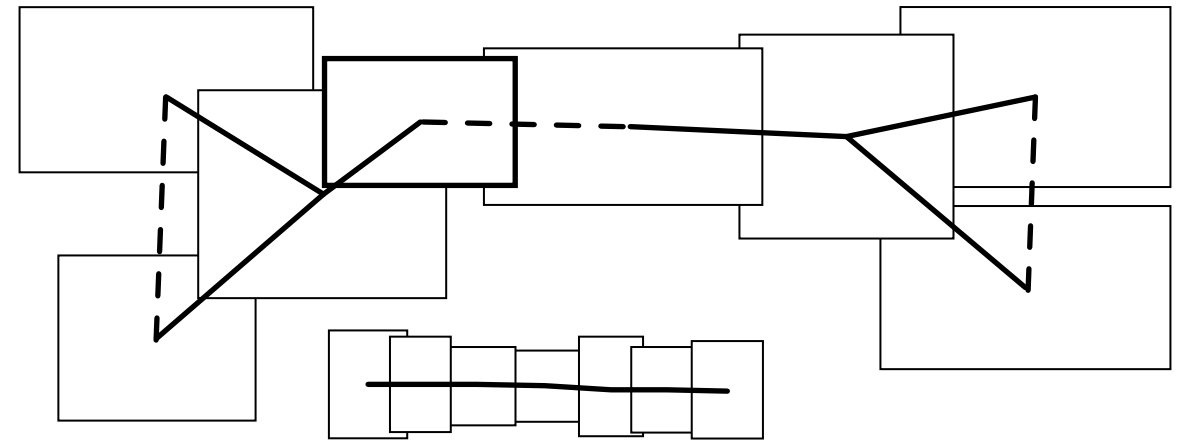


7.02



7.03

[FIG. 5 ON MONSTER]  
 [FIG. 6 THE CROWN]  
 [FIG. 7 ON DARKNESS]



- fig. 5.01 Superb wallpapers, *Joker* (unknown)  
<http://imgur.com/t/batman/SrGqo>
- fig. 5.02 Nathan Usher, *Untitled tweet* (2015)  
 screen capture by author
- fig. 5.03 Julijonas Urbonas, *Euthanasia Coaster* (2010)  
<http://designandviolence.moma.org/euthanasia-coaster-julijonas-urbonas/>
- fig. 5.04 Fred Freed and Len Giovannitti, *The Decision to Drop the Bomb* (1965)  
 screen capture by author
- fig. 5.05 Bryan Fuller, *Hannibal* (2015)  
 screen capture by author
- fig. 6.01 Unknown, *Saxon crown* (date unknown)  
<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/e7/3f/6d/e73f6d2ede6263d8b693e7df7d592c3c.jpg>
- fig. 6.02 Spike Jonze, *Where the wild things are* (2009)  
[http://www.hdtvsolutions.com/Where\\_the\\_Wild\\_Things\\_Are\\_Blu-ray\\_Review.htm](http://www.hdtvsolutions.com/Where_the_Wild_Things_Are_Blu-ray_Review.htm)
- fig. 6.03 Yuri Shwedoff, *King* (2015)  
<http://www.yurishwedoff.com/new-page-2/>
- fig. 6.04 Rupert Sanders, *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012)  
<http://collider.com/snow-white-and-the-huntsman-review/>
- fig. 6.05 Menton3, *Mouth of Sauron* (2014)  
<http://menton3.deviantart.com/art/Mouth-of-Sauron-461228723>
- fig. 6.06 Alexander McQueen, *Al Yashmak* (2000)  
<http://icannotgotobed.blogspot.ca/2012/09/model-in-alexander-mcqueen-chainmail.html?spref=fb>
- fig. 6.07 Imme van der Haak, *Jewelry* (2010)  
<http://funhight.blogspot.ca/2010/10/unusual-but-creative-jewelry.html>
- fig. 7.01 Andrei Tarkovsky, *Stalker* (1979)  
<https://twitter.com/vminkowski>
- fig. 7.02 Kidd Pivot & Electric Company Theatre, *Betroffenheit* (2016)  
<https://www.obipop.com/media/event/FR-22/22278/115419/betroffenheit-1-3.jpg>
- fig. 7.03 Kidd Pivot & Electric Company Theatre, *Betroffenheit* (2016)  
<http://www.seeingdance.com/betroffenheit-probing-the-darkest-recesses-of-the-mind/>

## PROLOGUE

*Can you tell me where we are?*

[THE ROOM]

We're in a small theatre. It's a temporary stage similar to what you find at the back of a pub or a bar. There's a steel column in the centre of the stage, and a chair placed right in front of it. The lights are behind the column and aimed at the back wall. The audience is level with the stage and barely larger than the stage itself. It contains a dozen places or so in three rows.

*What are we doing here?*

I'm sitting on the stage, and you're in the audience.

*Let me rephrase. Why are we here?*

We are here to discuss the thesis

*Is that the collage I see on the wall behind you?*

You can call it that. Some people call it a tableau, but that's just a fancy way of saying bulletin board. I see it more as visual notes or a stream of ideas, a text without words that can be read from left to right.

*What are they notes of?*

They are notes around the ideas of horror and architecture. I came up with a theory in which horror is the result of a confrontation between the human and architecture, and those are the images I compiled around that idea.

[ON THESIS]

*I thought a thesis was a book.*

The way my colleagues and professors discuss the thesis, it sounds like much more than that. The book is the documentation of the thesis, but the thesis itself can be something else.

*So what would you say your thesis is?*

The negative aspect of architecture wasn't part of my education. I didn't know anything about horror, and I felt an urge to learn about it. What I did with

my time here is learn about horror, and the book is a compilation of my notes amassed during that process. The thesis is the construction of a point of view of the environment, coming to an understanding of the world and the profession I am preparing for. The thesis is built around a classification of interactions between human and architecture. I identified types of architectural horror and separated them in families, which together formed a taxonomy.

*How did you come up with the classification?*

I was lost in the material, and I printed images of everything I was looking at. I had photos of buildings, but also illustrations of spaces from novels, and random images that spoke to me for one reason or another. I laid them all on a table, and while looking at them together I noticed similarities between certain examples. A lot of them had to do with the scale of specific spaces, while others were not interesting in themselves, but because of what they referred to. The separation in categories happened naturally.

*Typologies are a common way to classify architecture. That's how Comaroff and Ker-Shing organized their book.<sup>4</sup>*

Now that you mention it, it was probably an unconscious influence of the taxonomy.

*Are you working with the same categories?*

No. In Horror in Architecture, the building typologies are analogous to types of bodily horror. They compare a semi-detached house to conjoined twins, or the Centre Pompidou to an eviscerated prisoner. Horror is seen as a way to inspire new building forms that might look different, but not to make them horrific. The subject is only a pretext to generate new forms. What I am looking at is how architecture, even when it doesn't look ugly, is horrific in itself.

*A taxonomy is a precise, scientific way of classifying entities. What I see on the wall looks disorganized.*

4. Joshua Comaroff and Ong Ker-Shing, *Horror in architecture* (Novato: ORO editions, 2013).

[ON FORMAT]

The taxonomy worked well with a short list of specimens. The classification was superficial and helped me to organize my references during the first term, but it became untouchable. For a long time I didn't dare modify it because I was afraid it would collapse, and I treated it as a rigid frame. It was simple to the point of being limiting, and it couldn't contain an expanding collection of specimens. With a dozen specimens in three categories, it's easy to have a global point of view, because each category contains only four things. But if you have a hundred specimens in three categories, each category contains too many things, and the structure doesn't allow the same clarity.

5. Foreign Office Architects,  
*Phylogenesis: FOA's ark* (Barcelona:  
Actar, 2008).

*In their first monograph, Foreign Office Architects<sup>5</sup> organized their portfolios in a taxonomical way. They developed a classification based on the similarities and differences between their projects, and developed a seemingly infinite system.*

Their system is self-referential and, as far as I know, limited to their portfolio at the time of publication. My taxonomy was based on an external element, the human being, which I theorize as being tripartite, composed of a physical body, a mind, and a soul. Horror comes from a confrontation between the body of space and the human being. Confrontation with each individual part of the human being created one level of horror, each level containing three types with two specimens each.

*Your current system isn't quite that clear.*

I don't call it a taxonomy anymore, but I do think it is still just as clear. It has simply evolved to be less symmetrical. The number three is central to the logic of the system, at least for the levels, and cannot be modified without destroying it. Initially I was happy with each level containing three types, but I had to break the perfection of the taxonomy to move forward. It morphed into three fluxes of images, instead of a rigid classification.

*You are presenting a chaos of images where types*

*blend into one another and specimens overlap.*

Chaos is how I would describe the contemporary condition. We receive information in fragments and consume it as such. We even communicate in fragments by using abbreviations and emojis.

[2nd professor] When space is infinite it is fragmented; when space is fragmented it is infinite. The fragment is the building block of modernity.

“A fragment, like a miniature work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a porcupine.”<sup>6</sup>

The impression of chaos has to do with the distance you keep from what you are looking at. If you look at a beach as a whole, it is an overwhelming mass of grains of sand. But if you zoom in to see the individual grains, you can draw relations from one grain to the other. I see the thesis in that way. If you look at the whole book, it’s just a mass of material coming from many different places. But if you look at one fragment or two at a time, the story appears, and you are able to thread through the entire beach without realizing it.

“Whereas the project is designed to realize a certain goal, the fragment is a remnant of a former whole.”<sup>7</sup>

*How did you go from a taxonomy to a beach of images?*

Organizing my material is what I struggled with the most during the whole course of the thesis, probably because the subject was too broad. I thought that if all my energy and time were going into editing, it might as well be the actual project. I was aiming for a hybrid of The arcades project<sup>8</sup> and the Mnemosyne Atlas<sup>9</sup>.

*Both of those works were unfinished due to the death of the author.*

We consider them as unfinished because both authors passed while actively working on them, but

[ON FRAGMENTS]

6. Friedrich Schlegel as quoted in Otabe Tanehisa, “Friedrich Schlegel and the idea of fragment: A contribution to romantic aesthetics” in *The Japanese society for aesthetics* (no.13, 2009), 61.

7. Otabe Tanehisa, *ibid*, 61.

8. After thirteen years of work, Walter Benjamin entrusted his notes to George Bataille before fleeing in exile and later dying in mysterious circumstances. After the Second World War, the unfinished manuscript was discovered in a closed archive in the National library of France. The fragments, mostly quotes, were assembled around a number of themes and published. The text isn’t continuous, but a stream of thought is formed by juxtaposing Benjamin’s own words with the various quotes he collected. Walter Benjamin and Rolf Tiedemann, *The arcades project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

9. Aby Warburg’s *Atlas* is a series of forty panels on which over a thousand images from various sources are juxtaposed according to fourteen themes. The unfinished project comprised very little text inclusions. Warburg intended the ‘reader’ to respond to relationships between the images themselves.

we could also see them as endless. In both cases, the accumulation of fragments is what constituted the work, and an event forced the end of the project. In my case the wall of images is the actual work, and the need to graduate is putting an end to it.

“This is because the diagram is profoundly unstable or fluid, never ceasing to churn up matter and functions in such a way as to constitute mutations. Finally, every diagram is intersocial and in a state of becoming. It never functions to represent a pre-existing world; it produces a new type of reality, a new model of truth.”<sup>10</sup>

*So your thesis was an editing exercise?*

Yes. All the material was already in my hands, and what I had to do was package it so it made some form of sense, like Mau did with S, M, L, XL.<sup>11</sup>

*In terms of editing, Mau isn't the most straightforward. Why use him as an inspiration and not Manguel<sup>12</sup> or Sullivan?<sup>13</sup> Aren't they more closely related to the horror than Koolhaas' pragmatism?*

What is interesting in S, M, L, XL is how Mau organized the content around the idea of scale. It created a clear organization and logic to the volume while still allowing the media to mix within the categories. The Dictionary of imaginary places and the Encyclopedia of horror and the supernatural are easier to navigate because of the alphabetical order, but they don't create immediate links between the entries.

*You make it difficult for the reader to follow.*

I wanted the book itself to be slightly horrific by making it a maze of sorts. While I aimed at a hybrid between Benjamin and Warburg, I produced a hybrid of Benjamin and Danielewski<sup>14</sup> by removing as many images as I could in the end.

*Why are you presenting your thesis as an interview? Do you have a specific affinity to that type of text?*

10. Gilles Deleuze as quoted in Anthony Vidler, “Diagrams of utopia” in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 90.

11. Bruce Mau's editing of Rem Koolhaas' publications with OMA is meant to reflect the overload of information that is fed to us everyday. *S, M, L, XL* in particular gathers a massive amount of material both visual and textual. The volume organizes the material under the theme of scale, each section containing essays, projects, and images arranged almost randomly. Koolhaas, Hans Werlemann, and Bruce Mau, *S, M, L, XL* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1997).

12. Alberto Manguel was a close collaborator of Jorge Luis Borges. While it is called a dictionary, the extensive articles in his *Dictionary of imaginary places* make it closer to an encyclopedia. Alberto Manguel, *The dictionary of imaginary places* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 2000).

13. Jack Sullivan is the author of the *Penguin encyclopedia of horror and the supernatural*. The volume, which wasn't well received, contains over six hundred entries on artists, books, films, as well as several essays, organized by author. Jack Sullivan, *The penguin encyclopedia of horror and the supernatural* (New York: Viking, 1986).

14. Mark Z. Danielewski's bestseller is a prime example of 'ergodic literature', a term coined by Espen J. Aarseth to describe unconventional literature requiring particular effort from the reader to make sense of the work. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of leaves* (New York: Pantheon, 2000).



It's more fun to write. An interview is an oral exchange, so the language tends to be simpler and straightforward. I noticed that my thought process is most productive when I talk with someone, I am only mimicking the flow of conversation to present the information. If it's good enough for a Nobel laureate,<sup>15</sup> it's good enough for me, right?

*Will anyone else be joining us?*

Everyone I had discussions with while working on the thesis will make an appearance. They come and go as they like, they stop by when they have something to say. You and I are the main characters, and I didn't identify each of our lines to shorten the text. All other contributors are identified, and I use a separate font to separate their interventions from the main action. There's also a third font used when other works add to the conversation.

*That's brilliant in its simplicity.*

I can't take the credit, Tiedemann<sup>16</sup> gave me the idea.

...

There is one memory from my childhood that I find particularly interesting. It's very late at night, and I have a fever. I wake up in bed, extremely uncomfortable, with the impression of having a million fingers and toes. My brain is overwhelmed by the amount of sensation, because I feel all of them at once. I am suffocating under the weight of the million blankets I am feeling, and I get up. The house is completely dark except for the living room where my dad is half asleep in front of the TV. Not wanting to worry him, I tell him that I'm okay, I just need to jog a bit. His mind is only half there, so he doesn't really understand or care about what I am saying, and he doesn't answer. And then I start to 'jog', which consisted of going up and down the stairs. If my dad had been awake, the spectacle would've been troubling and ridiculous, but for my feverish brain, it felt like each round melted one layer of body, and I was slowly returning to my normal size.

15. Imre Kertész, the only Nobel laureate in Literature from Hungary to date, formatted his memoirs as an interview with himself. Imre Kertész, Zoltán Hafner, and Tim Wilkinson, *Dossier K* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2013).

16. Rolf Tiedemann is the editor of the English edition of Benjamin's Arcades Project. He used a different font to differentiate Benjamin's original text from the numerous citations that make up the text. Walter Benjamin and Rolf Tiedemann, *The arcades project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

## DIALOGUE

*It's an interesting memory, but I'm not sure what your point is.*

Lately I've been looking for a comfortable position in which to read. I don't like reading at a table because it reminds me of studying, so instead I either sit on my bed, or on a couch, with the book on my lap. It works well for heavy books, because they remain open, but I need to find another position for smaller books. Every time I read in that position, that memory comes back to me because I get a similar feeling. As I dive into the story, my fingers multiply, and I feel as though I am touching every single page at once. It feels like by reading, I am collapsing myself from a million parallel universes back into one, and receiving the sensory input from all parallel selves at once.

*It sounds like a hallucination. You have the reputation of being a night owl, your brain might be tired from all the late nights.*

[ON DARKNESS]

I tried to keep regular waking hours, but I'm more productive at night. My best work always happens in the wee hours, when everyone is gone.

*There are fewer distractions when the studios are empty.*

Yes, but it's more than that. It bothered me for a while because it can get lonely to live on the opposite schedule of most people, but it turned out to be integral to the thesis.

*To be socially isolated?*

What I mean is that it was necessary to work late hours. There are two aspects of the night that shaped the thesis: the absence of light and a constant weariness.

*The dark is often central to the atmosphere of horror. Is that why it was necessary, to keep you in that atmosphere?*

That's not how I would phrase it. Darkness can mean

the absence of light, which naturally happens at night, and is generally the setting used for horror. But we also use darkness to refer to the worst aspects of life.

[3rd professor] Horror is a dark subject because it exists in darkness, but also because it is made of darkness.

*Are you scared of the dark?*

I am not scared of the dark. I am scared of where I go in the dark, of what might lie there physically or psychologically.

*Can you elaborate?*

What is scary is not what we see, but what we don't see, what happens in the shadows of both the physical world and the mind. It became clear to me as I watched the X-files.<sup>17</sup> In one episode, while driving through a forest, Scully and Mulder encounter a roadblock. The local police are investigating the disappearance of a hunter, and Mulder offers them help to get out of his prior engagement. The creature to blame is a swift and silent humanoid with wooden skin that can camouflage in the forest. While the group of investigators shrinks as more people disappear, none of them gets a good look at the creature until the last day. They end up fearing the shadows, and the two agents eventually decide to leave the area in order to escape the threat.

*But the creature exists, in the show.*

In that episode the monster does exist, and the disappearances prove the threat. But in other episodes, it remains ambiguous. Through the series Mulder's mental health deteriorates multiple times by obsessing over creatures that may only exist in his mind. The show is very effective in making us doubt what we see and how we interpret it. To an extent, it doesn't matter if the creature is real or not. People are affected by it even if it is a figment of their imagination.

*Danny*<sup>18</sup> has a similar breakdown.

17. Brett Dowler, "Detour" in *The X-Files*, season 4, episode 5 (TV, 1997).

18. Danny is the main character in *London Spy*. A promiscuous man with a troubled past, he falls for and dates a businessman, only to find him dead in a wooden chest. He becomes paranoid towards everyone after he is framed for the murder of his boyfriend, who turns out to be a spy whose research threatened all the major intelligence agencies. While one of Danny's friends is a former spy and can attest to their methods, even the viewer doesn't see the organization in action, only their effect on Danny's life. Jakob Verbruggen, *London spy* (TV, 2015).

Yes. Danny realizes he knew very little about his partner, and MI5 takes advantage of that to make him doubt the little that he knew. There is so much darkness surrounding Alex that details have a big impact on the overall picture. And because MI5 itself exists in the dark, Danny can never be entirely sure that it exists.

*The dark is like a deep canvas into which we can paint whatever we fear.*

We cannot see what is in the dark, but we can imagine it. It is so rich because it is absolutely opaque and infinite.

“Eugène Minkowski, distinguishing between ‘light space’ and ‘dark space’, saw dark space as a living entity, experienced, despite its lack of visual depth and visible extension, as deep: ‘an opaque and unlimited sphere wherein all the radii are the same, black and mysterious’.”<sup>19</sup>

19. Anthony Vidler, “Dark space” in *The architectural uncanny : Essays in the modern unhomey* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), 174.

*But what you’re discussing is an abstract concept. How is it linked to the literal darkness of the night?*

The visible world shrinks in the dark. Because I cannot see the world, my thoughts drift inwardly away from it, into the metaphorical darkness. The absence of light erases reality. I can’t be ‘here’ in the dark, because I can’t see ‘here’ in the dark.

*I don’t think that makes things clear.*

The same way Danny is able to project his fear of lies on the metaphorical darkness surrounding Alex, he can project his fear of Alex’s death in the literal darkness of the chest left ajar.<sup>20</sup> It is easier to work on horror when surrounded by darkness, because there is more darkness on which to project fears.

...

The more time I spend in literal darkness, the more time my mind spends in metaphorical darkness.

20. In the first episode, after a period of complete silence from Alex, Danny mysteriously finds the key to his apartment. Alarmed by a drop of blood from the ceiling, he discovers a sexual dungeon in the attic. Upon opening a heavy trunk, a foul smell overwhelms him, and he calls the authorities. It is strongly implied that the trunk contained Alex’s body, but neither Danny nor the audience are given a good look at the contents of the trunk. Jakob Verbruggen, *London spy* (TV, 2015).

*The darkness is your sleep deprivation, enabling you to travel to the underside.*<sup>21</sup>

Yes.

*You mentioned that fatigue was the other characteristic of the night that helped the thesis. I understand how darkness helps with horror, but not fatigue. The mind is weak when we are tired, we are less able to handle difficult subjects.*

When I am tired, my mind is less rigid. Normally I can follow multiple thoughts at once and keep them separate, but when I am tired, the boundaries between the various streams are more fragile. The thoughts spill into each other and they interact in ways that are not possible when everything is in focus. My interest isn't the fatigue as much as the sleepiness, when the mind starts to drift to sleep.

*If you tell me that you write in your sleep...*

Our conscious is in control of the hours we spend awake, and our unconscious is in control of the hours we spend sleeping. We can't be awake and asleep at once. There is a rift between the two, and we only cross it by going from one state to the other. You have to fall asleep in order to enter the unconscious, and you can only wake up by exiting.

*Like Dante crossing the Acheron.*<sup>22</sup>

Max's<sup>23</sup> and Alice's<sup>24</sup> stories are better examples. Dante faints, he doesn't move from one state to the other, but back and forth. He is temporarily unconscious, and his soul crosses over in the meantime. But in the context of this conversation, we could say that in the Divine comedy Dante is dreaming, and when he faints in the dream, he is actually waking up. When he falls asleep again and crosses back to the dream, he finds himself on the other side of the Acheron.

*If the Divine comedy is a dream, it answers to a different logic than reality, just like Wonderland.*

21. In *Stranger things*, Eleven, the daughter of a woman who took part in a series of experiments on psychedelic drugs, has supernatural capabilities. While in sensory deprivation, her consciousness is projected in a parallel reality, which takes the form of a dilapidated and darker version of reality in which an aggressive faceless humanoid plant roams. Her friends are players of *Dungeon & Dragons* and name it the 'underside', in reference to the blank flip side of their game board. Matt Duffer and Ross Duffer, *Stranger things* (TV, 2016).

22. In the *Divine Comedy*, the river Acheron surrounds hell as a whole, and Charon must ferry the deceased souls across for them to reach Hell. He refuses passage to Dante because he is alive. Dante crosses the river through the supernatural event of fainting. Dante Alighieri and Jacqueline Risset, "Chant trois" in *La divine comédie : L'enfer* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992), 45, 318.

23. In Maurice Sendak's *Where the wild things are*, Max, a moody boy, becomes turbulent while wearing a monster costume and is grounded to his room. He sails to the strange land where friendly monsters live, and then comes back. We realize that it was a dream when Max wakes up in his bed after leaving the wild things. Maurice Sendak, *Where the wild things are* (Catlin: HarperCollins, 2012).

24. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, Wonderland is actually a dream. Alice and the reader are unaware of that until she wakes up. Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland and through the looking-glass* (London: Macmillan Collector's Library, 2004).

When we are sleepy, the rift between the conscious and the unconscious becomes narrow and we oscillate between the two states. In those moments, the mind is neither asleep nor awake, and the conscious and the unconscious meet.

*Alice's experience is the better illustration of the gap existing between the two states. Max and Dante travel instantly between the dream world and the physical world, but Alice is suspended between the two while she falls down the rabbit hole.*

The feeling of thoughts spilling into each other is like looking down the rabbit hole: they are freed from their usual gravity, and they float around, and new relationships become visible.

25. *Swann's Way* is the first book constituting *In search of lost time*, Marcel Proust's seven volume magnum opus. He begins the retelling of his souvenirs with his childhood naps at his grandparents' house, describing the moments of falling asleep and waking up as a form of confusion, during which his sense of being was lost and he confused himself with the concepts and spaces he was dreaming of. Marcel Proust, "Première Partie : Combray I" in *Du côté de chez Swann* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

*Proust<sup>25</sup> describes the moment of both drifting to sleep and awakening from it in a less fantastical manner. He describes the space in which he drifts, the gap between his physical bed and the memories he relives in his sleep, which is a non-space between the conscious reality and the unconscious reality of the dream in which both can be observed and overlap.*

[4th professor] The onset of sleep is called hypnagogia.

Those are the moments during which the thesis is the clearest, when the unconscious logic is present and applies to the conscious research material.

*During the awakening, the feeling of the dream lingers on, but the clarity of the image fades quickly into fog.*

The space between consciousness and sleep is a moment of conscious dreaming. But much like fog, the harder one attempts to grasp it, the quicker it dissolves.

*It is a space where the human is alone, a space where we lose footing on concrete reality, where anything is possible.*

Sometimes during the day a detail brings back a short memory of a dream. It is only a short glimpse, but the

feeling lingers like a ghost, a thing from the other side that moves through the gap, and tints reality. The way we perceive our surroundings is linked to our culture and past experiences.

“The asylum is likely not haunted, but rather man is haunted. The ghosts found here man brings himself. For who can escape the weight of such tragedy, what took place within these walls? They are an ever-present thought, a constant escort of decay. And through the chipped paint, and decades of abandonment, we glimpse the human experience.”<sup>26</sup>

26. Selladore films, *Project senium* (web, <https://vimeo.com/127178908>).

“A ghost isn’t just a creature of fiction; a ghost is something that has not been concluded, something that cannot be resolved – unfinished business.”<sup>27</sup>

27. Guillermo del Toro as appearing in John Das, *Horror Europa with Mark Gatiss* (film, 2012).

*Dreams, and to the same extent nightmares, are ephemeral images, half-resolved encounters that disappear as we try to grasp them. They are only fragments.*

The relationships between the images are so fleeting the thesis has no defined shape, which is why it is presented as it is, images juxtaposed and blended...

*...creating a fog of knowledge...*

*...that is only visible as long as the gap between consciousness and unconsciousness is near closed.*

...

...

*You are dealing with two dualities of worlds. There is the light world versus the dark world, and the physical world versus the dream world.*

They are one and the same, but two different entry points. The light world and the physical world are what we call reality, what we observe with a feeling of certainty. The shadow world and the dream world are

what we call the imaginary, what we can't observe and what leaves a feeling of uncertainty.

*On one side there is our conscious, and on the other our unconscious.*

Yes.

“The field is the real, certainty; the counter-field is the imaginary, uncertainty.”<sup>28</sup>

*And literal darkness and a constant state of weariness enable you to cultivate a narrow gap between the two.*

28. Jean-Luc Godard, *Notre musique* (film: 2004).

29. In *Stranger Things*, Will gets kidnapped by the creature and lives in the underside for several days. In the conclusion, we see that the prolonged exposure to the toxic air gives him short flashes of the underside, as if his consciousness wanted to go back. Matt Duffer and Ross Duffer, *Stranger things* (TV, 2016).

The weariness makes me access the unconscious in short flashes, like Will,<sup>29</sup> and I project those flashes of metaphorical darkness on the literal darkness surrounding me. Working on the thesis made me travel to the underside, and my connection to it is now permanent.

[3rd professor] I told you to be careful not to fall into the black hole.

30. Wander is the main character in *Shadow of the Colossus*. In order to bring the maiden Mono back to life, he steals an ancient magical sword and travels to a forbidden land to request assistance from the demon Dormin. Dormin instructs him to defeat sixteen colossi, which each contain part of his essence. With each kill, Wander absorbs the evil essence, his appearance darkening through the game until he becomes the demon. Team Ico, *Shadow of the colossus* (video game, 2005).

I stayed close because I needed the darkness as fertile soil for the thesis, and I tripped. In the beginning of the thesis I went back and forth between the fun and serious aspects of horror. But as I was doing the research, the darkness took over. I was living opposite people, emotionally, mentally, and socially isolating myself. I spent so much time in the dark and with the dark that I started absorbing it, until it took a form of its own.

[ON MONSTER]

*Like Wander,<sup>30</sup> you slowly became a monster.*

Monsters are monstrous because they defy classification, they fall in the gaps of knowledge. The monster is not the inhuman, but the abnormal human. The werewolf is both human and animal, and by being both he is neither. I am neither physical nor virtual, but in between.

“In Greek mythology or in fairy tales, monsters usually guard thresholds, boundaries, or



frontiers. These thresholds, boundaries, of frontiers can separate inhabited places from forests and deserts, ordinary from enchanted kingdoms, or the domain of the living from the realm of the dead.”<sup>31</sup>

*You guard the threshold between reality and the horrific world of the thesis. I remain sane because my experience doesn't include horror, I get it through you.*

“In order to talk about horror, you have to remain an outsider. If you are truly welcome, essentially you lose your mojo.”<sup>32</sup>

“If accepted, the monstrous loses its monstrosity.”<sup>33</sup>

Which is why you can now stand me.

*Your cardboard crown makes you much more likable.*

I started making crowns as a side project. The cardboard was meant as a prototype for a metal crown, which would be sharp and dangerous to wear. The crown is power made visible, I was planning on designing a space that would kill, and I wanted a crown to put myself in character to remind myself of the power I hold and the pain I can produce.

*Why didn't it materialize?*

I had a dream in which I had a crown. It was shiny and beautiful, and I wore it at all times. But then it became really heavy and grew in size. It would fall over my eyes, and I would cut myself on the sharp edges when pushing it up. And then it wasn't shiny anymore, the golden and light, almost white metal was now dark and dull. It absorbed light instead of reflecting it, sucking the energy around me. I took it off, and examined it in confusion. It looked like the gaping mouth of an invisible beast, the sharp points its teeth that wanted to devour me. So I put it down, and left.

...

31. Antoine Picon, “Commentary on *Monsterpieces: Monsters, frontiers, and interiority* “ in *Monsterpieces: Once upon a time... Of the 2000s!* (Pt. Reyes Station: ORO editions, 2010), 53.

32. Guillermo del Toro as appearing in John Das, *Horror Europa with Mark Gatiss* (film, 2012).

33. Aude-Line Dulière and Clara Wong, “Introduction: On monstrosity in our dystopian representation of contemporary architecture “ in *Monsterpieces: Once upon a time... Of the 2000s!* (Pt. Reyes Station: ORO editions, 2010), 15.

I think architecture is our crown, I had to play with one to process the idea of power.

“You cannot end up in hell by accident, anymore than you can learn Portuguese by accident.”<sup>34</sup>

34. Terry Eagleton, “Fictions of evil” in *On evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 54.

By researching architecture that kills, I was dwelling in the minds of those who do evil. Architecture is always designed with intent, the thesis was an attempt at understanding their motives in creating spaces that harm.

*How did it make you feel?*

35. Will Graham is a FBI consultant in the *Hannibal* TV series. He has an unusual level of empathy which enables him to understand the motivations of psychopaths. Hannibal sees the potential to be fully understood in him and manipulates Graham in an attempt to turn him into a psychopath. Bryan Fuller, *Hannibal* (TV, 2013).

Like Graham,<sup>35</sup> I started to crumble. The thesis was my way of exerting power, my own fiction to exert inner impulses. There was a serious research project in it, but the underlying motivation was borderline psychopathic. I was extremely uncomfortable not only of the material I had to consume and digest, but of what I was discovering of myself.

“Now I have become death, destroyer of worlds.”<sup>36</sup>

36. Robert Openheimer quoting the *Bhagavad Gita* in Fred Freed and Len Giovannitti, “The decision to drop the bomb” in *NBC white paper* (TV, 1965).

*Which is why the monster became necessary.*

I felt the beast roaming close, I made up the monster to keep it at a distance.

*Other than Hannibal, which characters did you research?*

37. Donatien A. de Sade, *Les infortunes de la vertu* (Paris: Libro, 2009).

Some colleagues were convinced my thesis was about bondage, and encouraged me to research sadomasochism, so I read Sade’s *Justine*<sup>37</sup> and Sacher-Masoch’s *Venus in furs*.<sup>38</sup>

38. Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in furs* (Kansas City: Digireads, 2009).

*We associate both with sexual depravity. Is there something sexual about horror?*

Killing is intimate. The spaces of death should be intimate, like the spaces of sex. The places I go when I walk alone are intimate spaces, which doesn’t mean they are sexual. Sex doesn’t have to be intimate, and intimacy doesn’t have to be sexual. Ultimately sex

is about power. As a general rule power is difficult to see, but in the context of sex it is generally very straightforward.

“In Sade, the demonic takes the form of the instinctual violence of human passions, which require a space of secrecy in order to be fully unleashed. In psychoanalytic terms, such spaces can be compared to the mechanisms that seal the subject off from the real in order to give full rein to the delirium of sadistic fantasy.”<sup>39</sup>

“As a creative artist Sacher-Masoch was, of course, on the quest for the absolute, and sometimes, when impulses in the human being assume an abnormal or exaggerated form, there is just for a moment a glimpse of the thing in itself.”<sup>40</sup>

The Marquis de Sade gave his name to the genre, which makes him the basis of the concept.

“[Pasolini] illustrates that we need Sade to think of the extreme power applied to a given body.”<sup>41</sup>

In Hannibal, the characters exert power on the victims, the ultimate power, the godly power of death.

“Hannibal is attracted by medicine and psychological fields because they offer power over man.”<sup>42</sup>

When I watch Hannibal, I enjoy the beauty of what we are shown, I enjoy the grandeur of killing, I doubt myself.

“ ‘Evil’ not only likes to ape creation and turn it on its head, but also very much profits from our getting confused about whether what we’re looking at is creation or cruelty.”<sup>43</sup>

*What spurred the urge to engage with horror in the context of the thesis?*

At first I wanted to work on beauty, but I felt it was too

39. David Spurr, “Demonic spaces: Sade, Dickens, Kafka,” in *Architecture and modern literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 75.

40. Fernanda Savage, “Introduction” in *Venus in furs* (Kansas City: Digireads, 2009), 3.

41. Léopold Lambert, “Desexualizing Sade: Relations of absolute power on the bodies from Sodom to Abu Ghraib” in *Literature, The funambulist pamphlets 10* (Brooklyn: Punctum books, 2014), 77.

42. Dr. Frederick Chilton as appearing in Bryan Fuller, *Hannibal* (TV, 2013).

43. Elaine Scarry as quoted in Jennifer L. Geddes, “On evil, pain, and beauty: A conversation with Elaine Scarry” in *The hedgehog review: Evil* (vol. 2, no. 2, summer 2000), 80.

abstract of a concept.

[ON HORROR]

*You researched horror by starting with beauty?*

They are the extremes on the scale of aesthetics. On one end there is beauty and the sublime, and on the other end there is the ugly and the horrific. I like to think of the sublime as a more intense beauty, when it is so beautiful it is terrifying. In a similar way, the horrific is fear caused by extreme ugliness.

[1st professor] We can never be part of beauty, it stands alone on a pedestal, but we keep trying to get ourselves out of horror.

My interest in architecture was always towards spaces that communicate strong emotions, and the best examples I found are the memorials we build to commemorate tragedies. Beauty and ugliness are superficial, but the sublime moves us.<sup>44</sup> The memorials prove that architecture can affect us. If a building can make us understand tragedy, it can also affect us in other ways. If we can design spaces that harm or even kill us, it proves that architecture is a powerful force we should use with caution.

44. Edmund Burke as quoted in Joshua Comaroff and Ong Ker-Shing, "Sublime horror" in *Horror in architecture* (Novato: ORO editions), 12.

"Antonio Rocco, as early as 1635, argued that we should look at problematic subjects because they are instructive. And because their opposite, anodyne beauty, contains a dangerous surfeit of sweetness. Deviance teaches; charm will make you sick."<sup>45</sup>

45. Joshua Comaroff, and Ong Ker-Shing, *ibid.*, 7.

"Pain, fear, and horror. This is not the stuff of ordinary literary discussion. These are the warning signs of human existence."<sup>46</sup>

46. Peter D. Pautz, "Introduction" in *Architecture of fear* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), ix.

*Looking at history teaches us about the present. But I notice that most of your material is taken from fiction. The thesis itself is a fiction, the conversation we are having never took place.*

"Horror fiction can provide insight into nonfictional horrors and, more important perhaps, awaken emotional response through the

mirror of art.”<sup>47</sup>

[2nd professor] A thesis is always a fiction.

You are using the word fiction with a negative undertone. I will concede that nobody witnessed this conversation, but that doesn't mean it didn't take place. Fiction is crucial to human existence. It serves to externalize inner passions, it is how we codify and share our internal worlds. Culturally it serves to express the common unconscious, values, and aspirations. Horror in particular is a means to express fears and warnings, similar to the fairy tales told to children in the Middle Ages. It is important to express what worries us as a society.

“By suggesting that literature is its most privileged signifier, I am trying to point that, far from being a minor margin of our culture, as the general consensus seems to admit, that literature, the literature, is the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and serious apocalypses.”<sup>48</sup>

*The multiplication of horror media recently hints that it is a very lucrative industry. Why is horror so popular?*

People enjoy horror as a genre because it elicits strong emotions. For most people everyday life isn't that exciting, and the exaggeration of conditions in fiction compensates for the lack of intensity in reality.

*Are you saying people would like their life to be more horrific?*

No. Horror movies are popular because people like to feel, and put themselves into situations so that they can feel.

“Works of horror are designed to elicit from audiences. For horror appears to be one of those genres in which the emotive responses of the audience, ideally, run parallel to the emotions of characters.”<sup>49</sup>

47. Kathryn Cramer, “Afterword: Houses of the mind” in *Architecture of fear* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), 275.

48. Julia Kristeva, “Pouvoirs de l'horreur” in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 246, liberal translation.

49. Noel Carroll, “The nature of horror” in *The philosophy of horror: Or, paradoxes of the heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 17.

It's a survival mechanism. If we identify danger before it happens, we can avoid it altogether instead of responding to it.

“Most people throughout their lives respond to a perception of danger and not actual danger.”<sup>50</sup>

50. Chris Hadfield as appearing in National Public Radio, “What we fear” on *TED radio hour* (web, 2016-11-01), <http://www.npr.org/programs/ted-radio-hour/312542881/what-we-fear>.

“Horror fiction should not so much scare the reader as allow the reader to be scared, releasing tensions caused by any number of things in the real world. By invoking the fantastic, horror allows us access to hordes of things that are too painful to perceive directly, things that would only leave us numb rather than evoke an authentic response if represented in the ordinary light of realistic fiction.”<sup>51</sup>

51. Kathryn Cramer, “Afterword: Houses of the mind” in *Architecture of fear* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), 273.

Horror movies and books have a safe distance built-in, the consumer isn't the victim. People aren't subjected to horror, but to fear and adrenaline. They do so in very controlled circumstances, through the mediation of a screen or a setting where people know they go unharmed, like a carnival house. Think of a roller coaster, but for emotions.

*Speaking of roller coasters, I noticed there is one on your collage.*

52. Antonio Damasio, “Euthanasia coaster (Julijonas Urbonas, 2010),” in *Design and violence* (New York, NY: Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 194–97.

It's the Euthanasia coaster.<sup>52</sup>

*Someone designed a roller coaster that kills?*

In the context of his PhD., Urbonas designed a roller coaster intended to kill its passengers, but I don't think Urbonas actually believes in it. Work done at school remains on paper, it's an ideal environment to crank up conditions and see what happens. The thought of the Euthanasia coaster makes us wince, but it's a classic design problem. There was a question, the research was done, and architecture happened. I find it fascinating, because it is such a dark design, but it is so beautiful in its simplicity.

*You think a killing roller coaster is beautiful?*

Not the idea of a roller coaster that kills, but that particular one is executed very elegantly.

[2nd professor] Beauty isn't a question of aesthetics; it is how well we know something. Ugliness is shocking simply because we are unprepared for it. Horror is the unexpected, what creeps upon us. Darkness is conducive to it, because we can't see it coming; very few monsters remain monstrous after a thorough study of them. Suspense throws us off balance because it doesn't allow us to pay attention. What makes beauty become ugly, and vice versa, is spending time to get acquainted with it. Nothing is inherently horrific or evil.

Think of the Marvellous palace. For the interviewer who never heard it before, it is a horrific place. But for the narrator who knows it well, it's a wonder of human production.

“What you need to know is that each detail was studied and the decor carefully designed to dissipate the macabre atmosphere that generally weighs on the final step. That is why, Sir, blades were cut from the purest diamond, powerful and subtle perfumes hid the stench of toxic gases, ropes were woven from rich silk, and electrodes and the mortal bracelets were of pure gold.”<sup>53</sup>

*The interviewer sees the palace with the eyes of the victims, while the narrator sees it from the perspective of the designer proud of his work.*

The story has a horrific quality because of how oblivious the narrator is of the absurdity of what he is saying.

*You say your thesis is on horror, but I can't say it's evident in the collages.*

There are many types of horror. Carroll differentiates between two major types, art horror and natural horror.<sup>54</sup>

[1st professor] The word art comes from artifice. Art horror is designed to be horrific while natural horror is not.

53. Pierre Boule describes an imaginary prison for prisoners sentenced to death, which is the most luxurious space in that kingdom. Pierre Boule, “Le palais merveilleux de la petite ville” in *Histoires perfides* (Paris: Flammarion), 62, liberal translation.

54. Noel Carroll, “The nature of horror” in *The philosophy of horror: Or, paradoxes of the heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 12.

My interest is in implied horror. I find it more intense than textual horror because it all happens in the mind. It's a type of horror that grips you at the core unexpectedly.

[1st friend] Horror might come from the most benign details because of their significance. It isn't what is in front of us that horrifies us, but what it refers to within our experience and knowledge.

[2nd professor] Horror is a gut-wrenching subject.

The point of view I took is that horror isn't obvious, but cannot be contained. Horror appears inside the cracks, it's visible to anyone that dares to pay attention to the spills. It is the underlying reality of the physical in front of us, only available to us in fragments.

[3rd professor] Horror is action out of place, like dirt is matter out of place.

Kristeva states that horror is the necessary twin of beauty, and is made visible by contrast.

55. Julia Kristeva, "Douleur / horreur" in *Pouvoirs de l'horreur: essai sur l'abjection* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 174, liberal translation.

"The excrement found by the woesome father as the flipside of the success of his child." <sup>55</sup>

56. Haruki Murakami, *1Q84* (New York: Bond Street Books, 2011), 464.

"Where there is light, there must be shadow, and where there is shadow there must be light. There is no shadow without light and no light without shadow." <sup>56</sup>

*What about in relation to architecture?*

[2nd guest] Instability, quicksand, is the most frightening. We presume the universe is stable, horror is about uncertainty. Because film is in motion, horror can be included in the editing. How can architecture achieve that?

It's not a question of how architecture achieves that, but when it does. Horror is all around us, we just need to pay attention to it.

57. Peter D. Pautz, "Introduction" in *Architecture of fear* (New York: Avon Books, 1989), x.

"Horror is the sudden awareness of betrayal and death in the inner sanctum of our refuge." <sup>57</sup>



[5th guest] Horror is unsettling, when there is a disconnect between what is happening and what we comprehend. Our response is delayed, we cannot be settled on a surface that we don't perceive as crooked yet.

*Do you have a definition of your own?*

Horror is deviance. In bodily horror, it is deviance of the body or to the body, the vulnerability of the human form. In architecture, it is our environment suddenly appearing hostile. We tend to think that we have control over the world, and horror is that familiarity flipping inside out, the clash between the human body and the body of the other. My understanding of horror was shaped by the making of my own taxonomy, which also illustrates it.

“Scariness is closely related to the feeling of inescapability generated by a situation that cannot be altered.”<sup>58</sup>

58. Martin Zemlicka, “In search of the Ernst Stavro Bloeflds of architecture” in *Scary architects*, San Rocco 5 (Venice: San Rocco, 2012), 155.

*Can you summarize the theory of your thesis in one sentence?*

Horror is a clash between the body of the human and the body of architecture, in which the human moves into the domain of the other and loses control.

*What is your definition of architecture?*

[ON ARCHITECTURE]

In the context of the thesis, I define architecture as any modification to the environment that is done with intent. Architecture began as a means of shelter, but has evolved as a means to control our environment. Even outside of urban areas, our environment is mostly artificial, we generally remain within areas we exert control over. We alter nature to our liking, both out of necessity and to express our dominance.

[1st professor] You are approaching horror as the relationship between bodies, which very few have attempted before.

“[Foucault] places the body as ‘the zero degree of the world’, the centre of each perception and by

extension, the centre of every utopia.”<sup>59</sup>

[ON TAXONOMY]

59. Léopold Lambert, “Episode 3: Mon corps, topie impitoyable” in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 30.

It’s a theory of othering, in which the human, accustomed to being in control, becomes the other, the one controlled. The human being is formed of the physical body, the mind, and the soul, and can be othered on those three levels. The first level is the other body, when the human enters the domain of nature. It creates horror at its purest through a relation of physical scale. The giant includes seas, mountains, and caverns. The sea is the surface so wide it isolates the human completely from society, the mountain is the obstacle too big to overcome, and the cavern swallows the human whole. It is associated with the vastness of the world-in-itself.<sup>60</sup>

60. In the introduction of his series on horror, Thacker begins by distinguishing between three worlds. There is the world-for-us, the world-without-us, and the world-in-itself. “We can even abbreviate these three concepts further: the world-for-us is simply the World, the world-in-itself is simply the Earth, and the world-without-us is simply the Planet.” Eugene Thacker, “Preface ~ Clouds of unknowing” in *In the dust of this planet, Horror of philosophy 1* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011), 6.

...

The other mind is when the human becomes the other human and is forced into the institutions meant to contain those excluded from society. It creates the clearest idea of otherness through a direct human relation. The second level includes walls, prisons, camps, and cells. The wall is the mechanism we build to separate us from nature, and the prison is where we contain individuals within society itself. There are two extreme forms of prisons, the cell for people excluded as individuals, and the camp for people excluded as a group. They are both aimed at people who are deemed dangerous or punished by society. The second level is an isolated bubble built by us within the world-for-us.

...

The other soul is when the human enters the domain of the machine. The third level includes computers, mazes, and deserts. The computer is the pervasiveness of technology within our society, mazes are the networks and mechanical processes that take place parallel to society, and deserts are the desolate landscapes we drained of life or create with the residues of society. The machine is a metonymic horror that appears when the human pays attention to the invisible forces in society. It is the world-without-

us in the sense that it is the demise of civilization, the mechanisms we built to relinquish power over ourselves to something other than ourselves.

“Horror can be understood as being about the limits of the human as it confronts a world that is not just a World, and not just the Earth, but also a Planet (the world-without-us). This also means that horror is not simply about fear, but instead about the enigmatic thought of the unknown.”<sup>61</sup>

61. Ibid., 8.

We aren't always conscious of it, but as human beings we are vulnerable to our surroundings, which is why we have instincts and fears. We instinctively fear what is foreign to us and don't understand, it is a defense mechanism because the unknown could harm us. I like to condense the thesis as a fable of sort, a short history of horror that parallels the history of prisons. In the beginning, the human was directly confronted to nature and could not escape it. That is instinctual horror, the direct confrontation to nature and the animal as the other. Then we started to build by erecting walls. At first we isolated our communities from the rest of the Earth by building the fortification wall, which marks the limit of our power over the world as a whole. At that point it was customary to banish criminals from the community they belonged to, leaving them vulnerable to wilderness.

[HORROR HISTORY]

*That's what happens to Tristan and Iseult,<sup>62</sup> isn't it?*

62. Daniel Mativat, *Ni vous sans moi ni moi sans vous* (Saint-Laurent: Pierre Tisseyre, 1999).

They disobeyed the social contract, and in punishment were excluded from society and sentenced to be left vulnerable to nature. But that's only possible as long as there remains wild nature around human settlements. Eventually villages became cities and nature receded far away from human life. At this point it isn't possible to send individuals outside, because we consider the whole planet as our domain. So we start imprisoning criminals within society itself. If we sent them away, they could find their way to another community, and we would be failing in protecting those communities from them.

*Isn't that an over-simplification?*

As villages become cities and metropolises, the wall expands to such an extent that it seems endless. We forget that there exists a world outside of it because we are not routinely exposed or confronted to it. Human dominance on the environment is established enough that we don't fear nature as much. Horror moves within society itself, and we start to fear each other. The biggest threat to life comes from the unpredictability of the other human. It is horror learned through fiction, like horror movies, which warn us about deviant humans who can unexpectedly turn against us. To control those deviant members of society, we build walls within society itself, and isolate them inside.

*It's like a looping animation, where we build a wall to protect a few houses, and the limit expands until it is so wide we cannot see it anymore. But then it appears in the centre again, enclosing the criminals within the original wall.*

The third horror comes when humans relinquish direct control on their environment to the hands of artificial intelligence. Technology is now of a kind that we are walled in the virtual world, we isolate ourselves in that mental cell where only social networks may reach us. We increasingly fear the derailment of that technology, as evidenced from the focus of horror media turning away from demonized humans towards defective machines created by humans.

*There is pre-wall horror, wall horror, and post-wall horror.*

From the world in itself, the wall creates the opposition between the world for us and the world without us.

[6th friend] What you describe sounds more like alienation.

I would say alienation is the mechanism, but horror is the emotion we have from it.

*Would you mind expanding on each level?*

The first level, the giant, takes us from the sea, up the

[FIRST LEVEL, THE  
GIANT]

mountain and down to the cave. The types are taken from nature because of the poetic power of the words, but they appear in human production of space also. The sea often symbolizes infinity. It is a space so large that we lose all bearings and are left vulnerable to the elements.

*Many people have a fascination for the immensity of the sea.*

[4th professor] I don't think sailors find the sea horrific.

They probably don't because they are familiar with it, and are equipped with the necessary technology to survive it. They are aware of the danger of the sea and confront it knowingly. In relation to the scale of an individual, the sea is definitely sublime. At that scale, the body of water is an extreme threat to the minuscule body of the human, and can easily engulf it.

"Burke identified vastness, grandeur and obscurity as characteristics of his formulation of the sublime."<sup>63</sup>

[4th professor] The sublime isn't really horror, it's more a sense of awe than fear.

"Hitler viewed in monumental architecture a way of creating in the body a disarming state of awe."<sup>64</sup>

For most people, the sea is a distant image, and not a place in itself. We consider the sea as the edge of continents, it is an infinite surface beyond reach.

[2nd professor] The monk by the sea by Caspar David Friedrich is a powerful painting that expresses that.

A more contemporary depiction is a scene in the introduction of Ex machina.<sup>65</sup> Caleb wins a weekend with the CEO of the company, and the meeting is planned to happen at the CEO's remote villa accessible only by helicopter. With the helicopter gone, Caleb is left alone in a wide field of grass, a single lost figure in the expanse of nature. The field

[ON THE SEA]

63. Cabelle Ahn, "The interior of nightmares" on *Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian design museum* (web, accessed 2016-06-01), <http://www.cooperhewitt.org/2014/09/15/the-interior-of-nightmares/>.

64. Gastón Gordillo, "Nazi architecture as affective weapon" on *The funambulist* (web, accessed 2016-11-26), <http://thefunambulist.net/2014/02/02/the-funambulist-papers-47-nazi-architecture-as-affective-weapon-by-gaston-gordillo/>.

65. Alex Garland, *Ex machina* (film, 2015).

is the human-made equivalent of the sea, taking form as we level the Earth. Again, for most members of Western society, the enormous fields are a distant thought that exists on the edge of our cities. They merely pass through them, protected by cars, as they move from city to city.

[1st professor] The division of fields shows our struggle with large spaces. As soon as we set sight on the ground, we automatically divide, limit, multiply it... It shows our struggle with the vastness of the world.

[2nd friend] John Medina, a molecular biologist, says that as 'homo sapiens sapiens,' our relationship to the vastness goes back to the origin of the species in Serengeti in Africa. The human being needs protection, but also the possibility and freedom to venture into the space without boundaries to gather food and else. But vastness becomes terrifying when we lose sight on safety.

*Thomas King wrote a very short chapter in which a couple is found dead in the car on a country road between two fields, seemingly killed by their immensity.*

66. Thomas King, "Chapter nineteen" in *Truth and bright water* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers, 1999), 155.

"The cause of death was listed simply as 'exposure'." <sup>66</sup>

The field was my first obsession during the thesis, but it is the one I documented the least. I produced several very wide drawings that only consisted in a continuous horizontal line, or an endless repetition of blades of grass, or wheat stalks. At one point I designed a space that would trap the occupant in infinity.

*Can you describe it?*

It was an oval-shaped space that took an hour to walk across and a day to walk around. It was completely flat but sunken from its surroundings. The boundary was angled towards the exterior, but too high and steep to allow the occupant to climb up. The bottom and top of the boundary were curved to avoid visible contrast between surfaces from a distance. The drawing was

so wide it was impossible to understand. I wrote a poem about my understanding of the field instead.

*Do you remember it?*

Once upon a farmer failed the jumbo tractor. Wheat no higher than the knee as far as eye could see, he longed for the fall of night hoping for a guiding light. He never came home, the horizon of hay hid the way.

*I like that.*

As we roam the Earth, inevitably we encounter breaks in the vastness, obstacles that halt our journey. The mountain is what is infinitely bigger than us, a mass that cannot be scaled.

[ON THE MOUNTAIN]

*On an individual level, we climb mountains as an attempt to conquer the Earth.*

Mountains dominate us completely, and their human equivalent is the tower.

*What do you mean by tower?*

Skyscrapers. They dominate society in a show of power from contemporary gods, the same way the mountain dominates the Earth.

*Human communities have competed with each other through their buildings for a long time.*

Absolutely. The pyramid of Khufu in Giza was meant as a testament to the grandeur of the pharaoh over his subjects and subsequent pharaohs. In the Middle Ages, adjacent towns would compete with each other by building taller bell towers and cathedrals. Contemporary skyscrapers evolved from that desire to beat our predecessors and our neighbours.

“It has, of course, to do with globalization and with the increased competitions between cities that all aspire to make a difference using architectural highlights as a beacon of their achievements.”<sup>67</sup>

67. Antoine Picon, “Commentary on Monsterpieces: Monsters, frontiers, and interiority” in *Monsterpieces: Once upon a time... Of the 2000s!* (Pt. Reyes Station: ORO editions, 2010), 54.

*We race to see who will reach the heavens first.*

We are not trying to reach the heavens anymore, but rather dominate each other. In the story of the tower of Babel, there is only one society, and everyone collaborates to prove that the human is as mighty as God. After God makes them all speak different languages, they cannot communicate and collaborate anymore, and the project is aborted. With our current technology, we don't even need to speak the same language to collaborate, and yet instead of building a common human project, we compete to see who can waste the most resources the fastest.

68. Gastón Gordillo, "Nazi architecture as affective weapon" on *The funambulist* (web, accessed 2016-11-26), <http://thefunambulist.net/2014/02/02/the-funambulist-papers-47-nazi-architecture-as-affective-weapon-by-gaston-gordillo/>.

69. Antoine Picon, "Commentary on Monsterpieces: Monsters, frontiers, and interiority" in *Monsterpieces: Once upon a time... Of the 2000s!* (Pt. Reyes Station: ORO editions, 2010), 54.

"Isn't the defining goal of monumentality to dwarf 'the human scale' and present the body as minuscule? Haven't skyscrapers surpassed in scale and 'excess' anything Speer ever dreamed of?"<sup>68</sup>

"Rem Koolhaas' CCTV tower is, for instance, playing with the gigantic."<sup>69</sup>

Absolutely. We rival the wonders of nature itself, which is a testimony of the advancement of our technology, but also creates a built environment that we cannot relate to on a physical level. We pretend our gigantic architecture is for the advancement of society, but really it is only a physical manifestation of the ego of the political and financial elites that finance it.

"Speer explains that the idea behind his architecture was straightforward: that people 'would be overwhelmed, or rather stunned, by the urban scene and thus the power of the Reich'. The idea, in short, was to inculcate in the body what Spinoza called negative affects: that is, affects that decrease the body's capacity for action by overwhelming it, stunning it, numbing it, making it malleable and, in short, politically passive."<sup>70</sup>

70. Gastón Gordillo, "Nazi architecture as affective weapon" on *The funambulist* (web, accessed 2016-11-26), <http://thefunambulist.net/2014/02/02/the-funambulist-papers-47-nazi-architecture-as-affective-weapon-by-gaston-gordillo/>.

*The World trade centre wasn't simply a marvel of engineering, but the symbol of the financial dominance of the United States on the rest of the world.*



I wrote a short poem about the tower too. Modern princes crowned of worry, high up in their towers. Doing business, dream of glory, high on such vain power. Their eye winces, the ground, blurry, they do not remember.

*Interesting. Did you also attempt to draw the tower, or design it?*

I was planning on making a one to one hundred scale silhouette of the tallest tower in the world, painted with tar on silk. It was going to be over eight meters tall. I don't remember why I lost interest. I didn't find how I would build a device that confronted the body to a looming structure, but endless stairs came back often in my doodles.

*Why stairs?*

The staircase is a symbol of ascension. It is how we scale mountains, the basic technology that makes towers possible as a building. It's the architectural device that carries us from the ground to the sky. The infinite staircase also digs into the ground, and it leads to the cave.

*The cave is the first human shelter, it predates architecture.*

[ON THE CAVE]

The human evolved to dwell on the surface of the Earth, not under it. We orient ourselves mainly by sight, and there is no light underground. The cave is the Earth swallowing us to another dimension, a space disconnected from the surface. The human-built equivalent is the bunker, which is an architecture that cuts us from the world to protect us from its threats.

*You don't use cave and bunker as literal terms, all your types are meant to convey the impression they leave on us. Is there an everyday building that you would call a cave?*

The main exhibition hall of Place Bonaventure, in Montreal, is a gigantic space without any windows. It's a brutalist building and the ceiling, walls, and

enormous columns are all exposed concrete. Even when it is filled with kiosks, you can feel the sheer mass of concrete all around you. There is no direct access from the street to the exhibition hall either, you have to walk through several concrete corridors to go find it. It's a very cavernous space.

*Did you write a poem about the cave?*

No, but I have a short story. During my last visit in Montreal, I stayed in a studio in an industrial mid-rise. It's an older building that is meant for manufacturing, and from floor to ceiling it's just concrete. After business hours I had to use the back entrance and the service corridors to the elevator, which are basically concrete tunnels twisting and turning between the ground floor businesses. When the door closed behind me, I felt completely cut from the world. There were no windows there, and I could sense the sheer mass of concrete around me, the way it absorbed the sound of my steps. During those moments, the building was erasing me, I was completely swallowed by its mass. The stress didn't come from the building itself, but from the images it inspired in my head. It reminded me of scenes in back alleys, far from civilization and any form of life. If I did meet someone in that corridor, I would be totally vulnerable to them, there was nowhere to go, I could scream or die and it would have no impact, the concrete would not care or react.

*It sounds very similar to the exhibition hall you were talking about.*

On a smaller scale. Because I had been looking at horror, I was more amazed at the feeling than horrified. The stress didn't come from the building itself, but from what it inspired in my mind. The fear was not from what was actually there, but what it alluded to in my memory, the images I associated with massive concrete buildings from my past experiences and the media. Horror is never horrific for the outsider, it is horrific for the victim, which is why architects don't see it.

*How would you build a cave?*

The cave and the bunker are about feeling the overwhelming mass of the Earth. I had thought of a low passageway under a massive slab, but I didn't draw it because it already exists.

*The Ardeatine massacre memorial in Rome.*

The three hundred and thirty-five tombs are laid under a gigantic slab that rests on minimal supports. By entering the memorial, the occupant removes himself from the world and enters the world of the dead.

*Hiding in a bunker is removing oneself from society and effectively being dead temporarily, until you come out.*

I couldn't have said it better. One space I find particularly powerful is the Batcave in The dark knight.<sup>71</sup> Because his manor and original secret cave were destroyed, Batman moved into his city penthouse and used an underground warehouse as a new Batcave. We are never shown how he enters or leaves the space, effectively giving the impression that it is a space removed from reality. It is designed minimally with bare concrete floor and walls, and the ceiling is entirely covered in fluorescent light tiles. The ceiling has a slight crushing effect because of how wide the space is compared to its height.

71. Christopher Nolan, *The dark knight* (film, 2008).

*It sounds like the inversion of the Ardeatine memorial.*

In the memorial, you feel crushed by the slab, but in the Batcave you are crushed by the light.

*To summarize, the first level, the giant, deals with the scale of the human body compared to the scale of the Earth.*

As a species we dwell on the surface of the Earth. Mountains or towers dominate the surface, they loom over it, while caves or bunkers swallow the body whole and cut it completely from it. To continue the story, the human eventually started to build walls to

[SECOND LEVEL, THE  
HUMAN]

separate society from nature, which is the second level. In the original taxonomy, the second level was called 'the institution, domain of the excluded'. It contained prisons, asylums, and orphanages as types. The prison was for the individual who was excluded from society as punishment, the asylum was for the individual deemed unfit mentally or physically, and the orphanage was for those lacking the acceptable social connections.

*The prison is clear, but I don't understand what you mean by asylum and orphanage.*

An asylum is a place of refuge. Asking for asylum is asking for protection from exterior forces. The institutions we called asylums were places of refuge for the mentally ill, somewhere they were cared for in order to go back into society eventually. In many cases, people were sent to asylums unwillingly. I extended that definition to include people whose physical health conditions don't permit to take part in society, those who would be in longer care hospitals today.

*You were using asylum in an antiquated manner.*

Yes, and the same goes for the orphanage, which doesn't exist anymore. Society considers that parents are responsible for raising children to be functioning and productive members of society. When a child doesn't have parents, society takes charge. Today it happens through the foster care system, but in the past it was done through orphanages. I extended that definition for cases where society considered the parents unfit. What I was thinking about was the Indian residence school system, where the Canadian state forcibly sent thousands of Indigenous peoples children in order to assimilate them. Society considered Indigenous peoples unproductive members of society, and therefore unfit to raise their children. In the eyes of society, Indigenous peoples children had no parents.

*You were using both terms to signify the stigma those institutions have in the collective memory.*

Yes, but I realized they all functioned in the same manner. All three are really prisons behind different facades, all three are similar spaces built to contain the excluded members of society for one reason or another.

“In both prisons and hospitals, a number of people are confined in one particular place, although they would prefer not to be, and in both cases constant supervision is necessary.”<sup>72</sup>

During my obsession with the field, I produced drawings for the institution. All three were a repetition of an element I felt represented the type. In the case of prisons, I drew a series of orange jumpsuits in a line, in front of doors. For the asylum, I drew a series of beds, while for the orphanage I drew school chairs. While in the giant, the three types are physically different from each other, there wasn't a distinction as clear for the second level.

*Prisons could function as asylums or as orphanages, and vice versa, because they all serve the same purpose of containing bodies.*

They all use the wall in the same way, to build cells of various sizes. At that point the prison became the main focus of my research because it seemed to summarize every other type I was looking at. I became obsessed with the solitary confinement cell.

[2nd professor] An argument always needs a counterpoint. In the case of solitary confinement, the camp would be the counterpoint.

The individual cell and the camp are both prisons, but they utilize the wall on a different scale. The updated second level, the human, starts with the wall, which evolves into the prison, which splits into the individual cell and the camp. The human wall starts on an individual scale with the construction of primitive houses. The first appearance of the border wall is to protect villages from the exterior, the giant of the first level. We gradually gained control over the ground by building walls. All the other types of the second level

72. Nikolaus Pensner as quoted in Magdalena Milosz, “Ghosts of prisons past” in *Incarceration, Scapegoat 7* (Toronto: Scapegoat Publications, 2014), 60.

[ON THE WALL]

are modulations of the wall.

*In the giant, you used sea, mountain, and cave as figurative names for your types. Are you doing the same here, or are you talking about literal walls?*

“If we define a wall as a thick surface that participates in a scheme of organizing bodies in space, we can see how the wall is the most elemental component of architecture – through this definition, even floors and ceilings can be interpreted as walls.”<sup>73</sup>

73. Léopold Lambert, “Introduction” in *Carceral environments*, The funambulist 4 (March-April 2016), 11.

For Sartre, the wall is a figurative obstacle, something that stops an action from happening.<sup>74</sup> But I am talking about literal walls, mainly border walls. The wall as a type is a vertical obstacle the end of which we can’t see. We only know which side of the wall we stand, the side of the excluding, or the side of the excluded, through prior or external knowledge. The wall is an obstacle operating at the scale of nature.

74. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Le mur* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).

*The border wall is very present in the news lately.*

Trump’s promise to build a wall on the full length of the border of the United States with Mexico gave the issue some prominence, but we can’t give him the credit. There are more border walls standing and being built as we speak than ever in the history of civilization.

*There was a competition online for how to design the wall before Trump got elected.*<sup>75</sup>

75. ArchDaily, “Call for entries: Building the border wall?” on *ArchDaily.com* (web, accessed 2017-05-29), <http://www.archdaily.com/783550/call-for-entries-building-the-border-wall>.

The competition stemmed from the Third mind foundation, a group of architects based in New York, and was not affiliated with any political bodies. It originally spurred significant controversy because it seemed to take the idea lightly, while border walls are a growing concern. Israel has been building a wall along the Palestinian territories for many years now, dividing communities and eating away at the Palestinian territory by diverting from the official boundary to include the Jewish colonies in the West Bank.

“Like many borders around the world, it is artificially imposed and, like those many other borders imposed by external powers, it bears no relationship to the interests or the concerns of the people of the country – and it has a history of horrible conflict and strife.” <sup>76</sup>

The story of the Berlin wall exemplifies the issue of border walls very clearly. Overnight, people were cut off from their relatives and friends, or even their job, because they happened to be on opposite sides of the line that was traced, and the inhabitants had no say in it. A similar thing happened in at the border between the United States and Mexico when Mexico conceded what is now California, Utah, and New Mexico at the end of a war. The ruling elites decided on the outcome, and the populations affected just had to deal with it. The border was not immediately fortified, which allowed communities to continue growing. It became an issue in recent history when the United States fortified the border and separated the populations.

“It is a solid that forcibly channels the movement of bodies.” <sup>77</sup>

It also isn't strictly a human issue. Scientists warn that Trump's wall would endanger animal populations whose territory and migration patterns span both countries. A few days ago I stumbled upon a video online, in which two bucks were stuck together. They had gotten tangled in a barbed wired fence that humans built to delineate their property. While all animals have some form of territory, no species other than humans modify the Earth in a way that restricts other species from moving around.

*The wall in itself isn't evil or restrictive, that all depends on which side of the wall we stand on, what our experience is, the stories that form our culture, the ghosts we live with. For the builder it is shelter, for the city it is a merely a line on a map.*

For the refugee it is death.

“Certainly our understanding of it cannot be

76. Noam Chomsky and Graham Cairns, “Hidden power and built form: The politics behind the architecture” in *Architecture Media Politics Society* (vol.3 no.3, October 2013).

77. Bernard Tschumi, “Violence of architecture,” in *Architecture and disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 126.

divorced from the social and political context surrounding it. It is clearly political architecture – maybe even a symbol – built to send a message to both the Mexican and, importantly, the American public.”<sup>78</sup>

78. Ibid.

“There is no physical barrier we can devise now that some future technology cannot breach. Thus, any ‘barrier’ can only be purely symbolic, not a boundary that actually inhibits trespass.”<sup>79</sup>

79. Michael Brill, “An architecture of peril: Design for a waste isolation pilot plant, Carlsbad, New Mexico” on *Arch. KSU.edu* (web, accessed 2016-06-02), <http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/brill.htm>.

*I understand you did not enter the competition.*

I thought about proposing a trench instead of a wall. The idea came from looking at the border between Canada and the United States. Because both countries get along and respect each other’s claims, it is only protected where the road systems meet and in highly populated areas, but it is marked on its entire length. Every few years all vegetation is cleared a few meters on both side, which creates a linear clearing.

*It doesn’t block anyone from crossing, while still making people aware that they are crossing.*

At its core, a wall is only an obstacle meant as insurmountable. A wall hides what’s on the other side, making the neighbour invisible. A trench makes it inaccessible but still visible, emphasizing the division. I know you like my poems...

*I do love your poems.*

...so I have a short one here too. A wall traces the pieces, it separates them, they drift apart until the puzzle makes no sense. A wall isolates, it cleaves the Earth, a shard of concrete that sinks until the ground is shattered.

*A wall is not just an obstacle, it is a rift in the fabric of the world.*

More than twenty years later, Berlin has not completely healed that rift.



*You mentioned that all of human horror is a modulation of the basic wall.*

The wall itself is the basis of the human horror, because it imprisons individuals and communities alike. If we take the border wall and gradually shrink it, we end up first with prison camps, then prison complexes, and finally with individual cells. The wall is segregation on a national level, the camp is segregation on a community level, and the cell is segregation on an individual level.

*The wall is the divide between us.*

The wall existed first as a small device to protect the individual from the outside. The interior of the house was the extent of the builder's control on the world. As civilization developed, the wall was used to extend that territory from the one house to a group of houses, and eventually to a village or even a small city.

*As you mentioned earlier, excluded members of society would be banished outside the wall and left to fare against nature on their own.*

As society's territory spread, that became impractical. Society internalized the wall and created a space of exclusion within society itself. The space for the excluded became the prison.

[ON PRISON]

"Prisons are zone of exclusion included in the space of society. They are micro-totalitarian societies that cannot be thought without their architectural apparatuses."<sup>80</sup>

*By excluded, you mean criminals.*

There are a number of reasons why someone would be sent to prison, but in theory it is because they violated the social contract.

"Spaces of punishment, in their essence, have been created in a peculiar revanchist way of thinking. Indeed, they have been programmed to suspend the application of the law for people who

80. Léopold Lambert, "Prison information group: Michel Foucault, Jean-Marie Domenach and Pierre Vidal-Naquet" in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 98.

81. Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized architecture: The impossibility of innocence* (New York: Dpr-Barcelona, 2012), 20.

have been suspending the law for themselves.”<sup>81</sup>

The first prisons were meant as holding spaces during trial, and while waiting for the application of sentences. The evolution of human rights led to the disappearance of corporal punishment, and the prison as a space became the punishment in itself.

82. Michel Foucault, “Le corps des condamnés” in *Surveiller et punir, naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 18, liberal translation.

“The punishment went from an art of unbearable sensations to an economy of suspended rights.”<sup>82</sup>

There is increasing discourse against prisons, similar to the discourse on border walls. In the United States, there is a movement gaining traction that advocates for discouraging or forbidding architects to design prisons. Architects/Designers/Planners for social responsibility want architects to take an oath to never design spaces that violate human rights.

*Similar to the Hippocratic oath taken by medical doctors to never harm a life.*

Yes. They are arguing that a refusal to design prisons will force the system to find another solution to the overpopulation of the current institutions, and eventually to re-evaluate how society views criminals.

*Prisons are public buildings and are therefore subjected to the involvement of architects. Without architects, there can be no prisons.*

Others argue that architects are in a privileged position to rethink the prison and make it a more humane place. A prison is meant to punish criminals, but also to rehabilitate them so they can be part of society again.

*A time-out for adults, a pause from society to reflect on their behaviour.*

“Rather, places like where I was detained are designed for control. When you’re a prisoner, your sense of existence is completely destroyed. Prisons are often designed not as a shelter to protect the law or to provide security, but rather

to make the humanity of the prisoner disappear. They do not consider the very basic needs of a human being. It's overwhelmingly powerful. Prisons make sure you understand the treatment of space as a punishment.”<sup>83</sup>

83. Ai Weiwei, “Interview” in *Prisons*, Clog 10 (New York: Clog, 2014), 76.

Research shows that harsh prisons might actually increase the rate of recidivism instead of decreasing it.

“Everybody understands that the whole point about being incarcerated is ‘punishment.’ Perhaps now, there’s a recognition that being deprived of your freedom is pretty good punishment in itself, and we don’t have to make the facility harsher and harsher in order to increase the punishment. In fact, a harsh facility makes for a worse place for staff to go work, and the staff routine has been a huge problem.”<sup>84</sup>

84. Jeff Goodale, “Interview” in *ibid.*, 130.

A prisoner is useless to society, and the incarceration system is expensive to maintain. The point becomes to rehabilitate prisoners completely.

“The inmates’ punishment, then is being deprived of their liberty, and their stay at the prison is intended to serve the purpose of re-socialization.”<sup>85</sup>

85. Hohensinn Architektur, “Detained while observing human dignity” in *ibid.*, 141.

*We are getting side-tracked from discussing the prison as a type.*

Most of the contemporary discourse I found on prisons had an abolitionist perspective. In the context of our story, the prison is an institution that exercises power on its population. But in terms of built horror, prisons prove that buildings can break people mentally and physically.

“Prisons are architecture, villainized.”<sup>86</sup>

86. Katie Macdonald and Kyle Schumann in *Ibid.*, 91.

The prison is central to the thesis. By coincidence it was at the centre of the taxonomy, and it turned out to condense all the types into one. Most contemporary prison complexes are built far from the city, so prisoners cannot get to safety easily if they escape.

They use the wall both as a border wall within the larger environment, and at the level of the individual cell. The prison as a building is the physical form given to a system in which we round up individuals and deprive them of their freedom and rights.

“Sade’s hidden prisons and underground horror chambers are reminiscent of Piranesi’s Carceri: both architectural imaginations destabilize the classical values according to which the construction of a building reflected the ideal nature of human society.”<sup>87</sup>

87. David Spurr, “Demonic spaces: Sade, Dickens, Kafka,” in *Architecture and modern literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 77.

*Did you research any prisons in particular?*

I consume a lot of fiction and that’s where most of my material comes from. The idea of the prison as the domain of the excluded is highly influenced by the Batman universe. While the prisoners are there against their will, Arkham Asylum is always presented as a space as dysfunctional as its occupants. The pit in Nolan’s trilogy<sup>88</sup> is also particularly troubling by being literally a hole within society. The prison is an underground complex and the entrance is a large well. The prisoners are literally thrown away by society like a piece of garbage in the can.

88. Christopher Nolan, *The dark knight rises* (film, 2012).

*It is a cross between the cave and the border wall.*

There is nothing that bars the entrance except for how perilous the climb is. Bane mentions that the absence of bars is the worst characteristic of the pit, because it gives prisoners hope. The exit is right there, unguarded, and the only reason they remain imprisoned is their failure to climb the well.

[5th friend] We entered a competition to design a prison on a retired oil rig, and we decided against putting a barrier around the platform. The prisoners would be at liberty to jump, which we felt made the horrific living conditions even worse. The prisoners would grow to blame themselves for their fate, because they did not have the strength to risk almost certain death for the minute chance they might survive their escape.

*Rowling also wrote a powerful metaphor for the prison system in her magnum opus. The guards of Azkaban<sup>89</sup> are magical creatures that suck happiness out of the prisoners. The setting itself, the prison building and its guardians, tortures the prisoners.*

89. J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban* (Raincoast Books, 1999).

There is a Syrian prison that beats all of those. It is a secret prison not for criminals, but for political prisoners the government wants to silence. It is designed to destroy them mentally.

“As we pieced together the model, we realized the building isn’t only a space where incarceration, surveillance and torture take place, but that the building is, itself, an architectural instrument of torture.”<sup>90</sup>

90. Eyal Weizman as quoted in Oliver Wainwright, “The worst place on earth’: Inside Assad’s brutal Saydnaya prison” on *The Guardian* (web, accessed 2016-09-06), <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/aug/18/saydnaya-prison-syria-assad-amnesty-reconstruction>.

“The prison is really an echo chamber: one person being tortured is like everyone being tortured, because the sound circulates throughout the space, through air vents and water pipes. You cannot escape it.”<sup>91</sup>

91. Abu Hamdan as quoted in *ibid*.

*That sounds like the worst place on Earth.*

It is an extreme example that beats anything I thought about designing for the thesis. Such places are allowed to exist because prisons are what Agamben calls ‘territories of exception’, sovereign land where laws are suspended.<sup>92</sup>

92. Giorgio Agamben as quoted in Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized architecture: The impossibility of innocence* (New York: dpr-barcelona, 2012), 21.

“The U.S. has drawn on this imperial history to argue that Guantánamo is situated between the juridical limits of each state. In this narrative, neither the U.S. nor Cuban courts have jurisdiction over Guantánamo and laws of neither state (including international agreements to which they have signed, like the Geneva Conventions or the UN Refugee Convention) apply there.”<sup>93</sup>

93. A. Naomi Paik, “Guantánamo bay: A palimpsest of carceral violence” in *Carceral environments*, *The funambulist* 4 (March-April 2016), 35.

Both nations consider it to be outside their territory, even though the United States keeps the camp under military control.

94. Jacob Reidel, "Shipping out" in *Prisons*, Clog 10 (New York: Clog, 2014), 17.

"Millions of people around the world currently live in prisons, but the typology exists outside the normal realm of inhabited space, and – like ships – the rules that govern other buildings." <sup>94</sup>

Regular architecture aims at improving the life of its occupant, while prisons aim at diminishing it in front of society.

95. Joe Day, "Minimalism on parole" in *ibid.*, 43.

"Modeled on the asceticism of monastic retreat, the penitentiary is fundamentally an architecture of reduction, and then of repetition." <sup>95</sup>

There is a similarity in the intention behind a prison and a tower, in the sense that they both aim at asserting dominance over the other. In the case of the tower, it is the dominance of society on nature, or the dominance of a financial elite on the rest of society. In the case of prisons, it is the dominance of society on a single individual.

*Could you come back to the specifics of the prison in the context of the thesis?*

Any architecture used to retain members of society against their will is a prison.

96. Léopold Lambert, "Episode 1: The architectural understatement" in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 24.

"That is the very principle of prison: a prisoner is someone who is absolutely subjected by the architecture which surrounds his or her body, and who does not have an access to enough energy – from his body or tools – in order to transform the walls' structure from an impenetrable formation to a porous formation – a hole in the wall, for example." <sup>96</sup>

[ON THE CELL]

If we take the wall of the prison and shrink it further, we get the individual cell. Solitary confinement was a temporary state of exception within the prison for those who misbehaved, but grew into a separate institution within the prison. The prisoner in solitary is put in a box designed to strip his humanity and be forgotten.

“Not touching the body anymore, or as little as possible anyway, and to reach inside it something that is not the body itself.”<sup>97</sup>

“Solitary confinement in a complete vacuum, a room hermetically cut off from the outside world, was intended to create pressure not from without, through violence and the cold, but from within, and to open our lips in the end.”<sup>98</sup>

The wall of the cell is so tight around the prisoner that it cuts them off from their humanity.

“The cell fully expresses the supremacy of the wall on the body and the prison subtly negotiates between hyper-seclusion and hyper-visibility.”<sup>99</sup>

“With nothing to see but a vacant expanse, an inmate’s vision can only turn inward. Staring at himself through the cell’s dull, stainless steel mirrors, he is reminded that, without a vanishing point, even his own eyes are impenetrable.”<sup>100</sup>

“Hell is not other people, as Jean-Paul Sartre claimed. It is exactly the opposite. It is being stuck for all eternity with the most dreary, unspeakably monotonous company of all: oneself.”<sup>101</sup>

Other people become a distant memory, a fading dream, and the void eventually swallows the mind.

“There was nothing to do, nothing to hear, nothing to see, you were surrounded everywhere, all the time, by the void, that entirely spaceless, timeless vacuum.”<sup>102</sup>

It takes fifteen days for mentally healthy individuals to incur irreparable damage, but only a few days for individuals with mental illness who make up the majority of the solitary confinement population.

“Prisoners in solitary begin to lose the ability to initiate behaviour of any kind – to organize their lives around activity and purpose. What results is

97. Michel Foucault, “Le corps des condamnés” in *Surveiller et punir, naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 17, liberal translation.

98. Stefan Zweig, *Chess* (London: Penguin, 2011), 40.

99. Léopold Lambert, “Prison information group: Michel Foucault, Jean-Marie Domenach and Pierre Vidal-Naquet” in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 98.

100. Matthew Storrie, “Untrained eye” in *Prisons, Clog 10* (New York: Clog, 2014), 25.

101. Terry Eagleton, “Fictions of evil” in *On evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 22.

102. Stefan Zweig, *Chess* (London: Penguin, 2011), 41.

103. Craig Haney as quoted in Jason M. Breslow, "What does solitary confinement do to your mind?" on *Frontline* (web, accessed 2016-09-18), <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/what-does-solitary-confinement-do-to-your-mind/>.

104. Ismael Nazario, "What I learned as a kid in jail" on *TED.com* (web, accessed 2016-11-01), [https://www.ted.com/talks/ismael\\_nazario\\_what\\_i\\_learned\\_as\\_a\\_kid\\_in\\_jail?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ismael_nazario_what_i_learned_as_a_kid_in_jail?language=en).

105. Harold W. Nichols, "Prison outside the box" in *Incarceration, Scapegoat 7* (Toronto: Scapegoat Publications, 2014), 251.

106. American civil liberties union as quoted in Jennings Brown, "Here's how many solitary prison cells fit in your apartment" on *Vocativ* (web, accessed 2016-06-02), <http://www.vocativ.com/usa/justice-usa/heres-how-many-solitary-prison-cells-fit-in-your-apartment/>.

chronic apathy, lethargy, depression and despair. In extreme cases, prisoners may literally stop behaving.”<sup>103</sup>

I put myself into voluntary isolation, and could leave whenever I wanted. I had access to technology that enabled me to be social nonetheless by giving me access to people virtually. Prisoners are forced into that isolation and have no control over it, while being psychologically distressed to begin with.

“In solitary confinement, your thoughts become your enemy.”<sup>104</sup>

The human condition is one of vulnerability and social inter-dependence. Very few people aim for or achieve self-sufficiency because it is both very hard work, and counter-intuitive to what it means to be human.

“The reality of prison is that you are locked on the ‘inside’, away from the lives of your family and friends and they are locked on the ‘outside’ of your life as well.”<sup>105</sup>

Ripping the individual from its social ties effectively dehumanizes them.

“In addition to being deprived of human contact and losing sync with circadian rhythms, isolated inmates lose the ability to navigate in the outside world. Another member of the Angola Three, Robert King, spent 29 years in solitary confinement, until 2001 when his conviction was overturned. When King was released, he had trouble moving around. ‘I lost the ability to meet with a broader terrain. I had become acclimated to shorter distances,’ King said. ‘I cannot, even to this day, acclimate myself to broader distance. My geography is really shot.’”<sup>106</sup>

Solitary confinement doesn't just break your mind, but also the body.

“King also said he nearly lost his eyesight during all those years of never being able to focus on



anything more than a few feet away, but his vision has improved.”<sup>107</sup>

107. Ibid.

“Solitary confinement was designed to break a person physically, mentally and emotionally.”<sup>108</sup>

[2nd professor] It is a gut-wrenching subject.

There is no other architecture as horrific as the cell.

[2nd professor] While solitary confinement accentuates the individuality, the camp destroys all hierarchy, everybody becomes part of the same mass. Crowding erases individuality.

108. Ismael Nazario, “What I learned as a kid in jail” on *TED.com* (web, accessed 2016-11-01), [https://www.ted.com/talks/ismael\\_nazario\\_what\\_i\\_learned\\_as\\_a\\_kid\\_in\\_jail?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ismael_nazario_what_i_learned_as_a_kid_in_jail?language=en).

The camp is a cell for a group of people. Prisons and solitary confinement impose a very rigid structure to the prisoners, while the camp has no structure at all. The prison is extreme organization, the camp is a total lack of organization.

[ON THE CAMP]

*You are talking about prison camps.*

Ghettos, internment camps, concentration camps, and even refugee camps all function similarly. We exclude a large group of population because of a shared difference and remove them from society. The most famous ones are the Nazi concentration camps, but the United States also operated camps during the Second World War. After the attack of Pearl Harbour by the Japanese air force, Roosevelt ordered the internment of people of Japanese descent, even those who were American citizens.

*The United States did not murder them.*

The point of the camp isn't death, but chaos and uncertainty. Nemes<sup>109</sup> keeps Saul in the foreground, preventing a general point of view of the action. Saul is constantly moving without a clear aim, feeling uncertainty throughout the movie. In the Nazi concentration camps, the prisoners were given one blanket per three people to induce fights and 'naturally' reduce the number of prisoners. They refused to fight and became a close-knit group in response. The

109. *Son of Saul* follows a Jewish prisoner tasked with burning the bodies of his fellow prisoners as he attempts to give his son a proper burial. Saul is kept in a constant state of fear, as he conspires under direct surveillance. László Nemes, *Son of Saul* (film, 2015).

rejection of a group based on their particularity leads to a strengthening of that identity, an identity that remains when they are released.

“As Giorgio Agamben elucidates, concentration camps theoretically constitute states of exception, which he defines as ‘a no-man’s-land’ between public law and political fact, and between juridical power and life.”<sup>110</sup>

110. Lynne Horiuchi, “Dislocations and relocations: Designing for prison cities” in *Incarceration, Scapegoat 7* (Toronto: Scapegoat Publications, 2014), 57.

The border wall regards the other side as non-existent. In prisons and solitary confinement, we exclude people but continue to keep them alive for them to suffer the punishment. In camps, we also cut access to their necessities.

*At times, the Gaza strip is operated as a camp by Israel.*

“As its name suggests, the State of exception is supposed to represent a temporary political regime in a society – we could call it a heterochronia – however, it is noticeable that every State of exception never completely disappears after having been established and that the current society reflects the ensemble of exceptional measures that have been taken during the past.”<sup>111</sup>

111. Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized architecture: The impossibility of innocence* (New York: Dpr-Barcelona, 2012), 22.

While the refugee camp appears from a different problematic, the refugees remain confined to a set chaotic territory. They are painfully aware of which side of the wall they stand on, and carry the uncertainty of their fate.

“There’s a very clear definition of what a prisoner is. You’re being controlled, and you’re vulnerable. You’re being watched. Your activities are being carefully monitored, and they can get to you at any time. This situation can be experienced in a small physical space like a cell or in a much larger environment as a so-called free person.”<sup>112</sup>

112. Ai Weiwei, “Interview” in *Prisons, Clog 10* (New York: Clog, 2014), 77.

There’s one final variation of the wall I want to mention but don’t know where to fit, the gated community.

*The inhabitants of a gated community enter it voluntarily, they are not forced to do so.*

But the defining characteristic of the gated community is its surrounding wall. While the wall as a type is protection against the exterior of civilization, for the gated community it is protection against civilization itself. In that respect, it is a bubble within society, a wall within the wall, to the same extent as the prison and the camp.

*Aren't all private properties an example of that?*

Generally speaking society protects the property of others. But a gated community is a group of people that recuse themselves from society, they do not trust the social contract.

*During her childhood, my mother lived in a gated community. It was a common thing for expatriates to live in compounds forbidden to locals.*

It is a paradoxical reaction to a society you willingly entered, a clear statement of one's judgement.

“Gated communities can thus be said to be conceptualized on a medieval scheme that implies a state of continuous war against exteriority.”<sup>113</sup>

It is the evolution of the wall towards the third level. The control of private entities on the broader society reflects a shift of surveillance from institutions to each individual through an extensive use of technology. The gated community warns that it is watching. The technology that has grown so vital to our everyday life is tracking us constantly, every movement a possible proof of guilt. Technology could turn any of our lives into K.,<sup>114</sup> having to defend ourselves of an unknown crime.

*You made a big jump in logic, I'm not following anymore.*

The prison and the camp and the cell aim at controlling members of society that society deemed

113. Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (New York: Dpr-Barcelona, 2012), 29.

114. Franz Kafka, *The trial* (New York: Schocken Books, 1998).

guilty. That control is exercised through surveillance, power breathing down your neck incessantly.

“Living in a prison is not about the walls, the bars, the windows, or the security guards, but rather how closely you are being watched by authority.”<sup>115</sup>

115. Ai Weiwei, “Interview” in *Prisons*, Clog 10 (New York: Clog, 2014), 77.

We don’t need to lock people up to watch over them anymore. We’ve developed electronic bracelets that can track people to ensure they only move within a certain distance. On a more subtle level, we now carry pieces of technology around with us that record the same information and can be retroactively used in that manner.

“One central tool in prison design is the use of surveillance. The most famous prison design in history, Jeremy Betham’s Panopticon, was intended to subject prisoners in solitary cells to perpetual surveillance until their psychology internalized the idea of always being watched.”<sup>116</sup>

116. Raphael Sperry as quoted in “Torture by Design | Dissident Voice” on *Angola 3 news* (web, accessed 2016-06-02), <http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/08/torture-by-design/>.

It doesn’t appear anywhere on the collages, but I think the human should also include hotels.

[ON HOTELS]

*What about hotels?*

The way one feels in a hotel expresses both the computer and the maze, which are the types in the third level. A hotel is a place that we use as a home, but that isn’t ours. With our increasing use of technology, we are moving towards being prisoners in our own homes.

*Contrary to your other types, hotels are a common setting for horror, it was even the theme of an entire season of American Horror Story.<sup>117</sup> What makes hotels an adequate setting for horror?*

117. Ryan Murphy and Brad Flachuk, *American horror story: Hotel* (TV, 2015).

Hotels make us vulnerable. They are an unfamiliar place, a kind of public space even, where we engage in intimate affairs. But in order for us to feel intimacy so close to other intimacies, hotels are hush spaces that separate us from each other. Hotel rooms are

designed to make us forget that there are other people around. In order to do that, hotels cut us from the world and place us in small bubbles that exist very close together.

*I need you to elaborate on this.*

Hotel rooms are impersonal and used by multiple people closely in time. From the lobby to the room, the guest suspends his presence in the world to inhabit the temporary home of the room. The elevator doors act like your eyelids when going to sleep, they cut you from the physical world so you can travel towards the fictional home of the room. Walking through the corridor, the guest leaves society to become a detached individual.

*Can't that be said about condominiums or apartments buildings in general, or anywhere else with a high density of occupation?*

I would classify them both as hotels because of the way they dehumanize us. I would say suburban houses do the same thing but with an exaggerated form. The difference is that in those cases, we are home, which is a space we are familiar with and feel secure in.

*Our homes dehumanize us?*

Hotels exemplify a very strange characteristic of Western society. Humans are social creatures, and we evolved because we exchange with each other. But the Western modes of living are increasingly individualistic. In all those examples, we design spaces in close proximity that are meant to separate us, and in which we want to forget the existence of others.

*That's an interesting comment on society, but it is hardly horrific.*

I am looking at horror as architecture that works against the human. Creating individual domains, spaces that separate us from one another, creates

a situation that opposes the occupant to others. The way western society dwells weakens societal bonds between individuals.

*I still don't understand the horror.*

The architecture creates situations in which we are isolated and therefore vulnerable. In both cases, in the case of a threat, we are unlikely to be heard by neighbours or get help from neighbours who are forbidden to enter what is another person's domain.

...

[THIRD LEVEL, THE MACHINE]

This brings us to the third level. In the machine, the story continues in two parallel lines.

*Are they direct continuations from the cell and the camp?*

Not directly, but they are relatable. The point of the cell is to keep the prisoner under constant surveillance and control. Coincidentally, technology has evolved in a way that allows that. In the camp the individual gets lost in the mass, which is the case as individual communities start to merge because of globalization.

*In both cases we are talking about the increasing use of technology.*

A clear example is the cell phone, which allows wireless communication with anyone on the planet at all times, but also records our every move.

“Power is no more effected by an imprisonment of the bodies, but rather by their delegated control. One thing that is regularly observed about the transcendental Panopticon is that discipline is actually being more applied by the fact that the prisoner knows that (s)he is being monitored, therefore, the prisoner self-censors his or her behaviour, and the actual centralized supervision whose embodiment is not visible to him or her becomes secondary to the scheme.”<sup>118</sup>

118. Léopold Lambert, “The architectural paradigm of society of control: the immanent panopticon” in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 02* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 71.

*It's a form of electronic bracelet we carry around willingly.*

The wall isn't necessary anymore, or rather it is useless, because we are under constant surveillance on the virtual plane. We live in an inverted Panopticon where everywhere you look something looks at you. Bjarke Ingels Group designed a neighbourhood in Stockholm that can be interpreted as an illustration of that. The centre of the development is a gigantic sphere meant to harvest wind and solar energy, as well as reflect the surrounding landscape as vista for everyone. It also reflects the activities of everyone in the vicinity, making it visible to everyone else in the vicinity.

*Is the design on purpose?*

It's an ironic design to anyone with an interest in surveillance. Like most technology, the artwork is intended for one thing but allows another. Technology is also becoming necessary to navigate the world. Civilization is becoming infinitely complex, with our institutions becoming 'the place that sends you mad'.<sup>119</sup> As individuals, we cannot fully comprehend our system, and we use technology to manage it. At the same time, our institutions also use technology to navigate the sheer mass of individuals, and we become numbers on a page.

*You are mixing so many things at once it is dizzying.*

I admit that the third level is vague. The machine is a blur, it is not clear, because it is invisible. Schuiten and Peeters' tower<sup>120</sup> illustrate it well. The story revolves around an elaborate tower of gigantic proportions inhabited by an equally complex society. Nobody remembers the purpose of the tower, and while it is visibly starting to crumble, nobody has the overall comprehension necessary to do anything about it. It is an allegory of civilization, our contemporary institutions, and what is waiting for us.

*I was surprised you did not mention it as an example of your mountain type, especially since they hint at*

119. Julius Caesar tasks the Gauls to complete twelve tasks to attest whether they are gods or not. One of them is to obtain a specific document from a clerical organization, which sends the heroes through a bureaucratic nightmare. René Goscinny et al., *Les douze travaux d'Astérix* (film, 1976).

120. François Schuiten and Benoît Peeters, *La tour*, Les cités obscures 3 (Bruxelles: Casterman, 2008).

121. Ibid., 50.

*Bruegel the Elder's half-built Tower of Babel<sup>121</sup> that you included in the collage.*

It works for both, but I find it more useful in the context of the machine.

*Let's go back to the individual types. You talked broadly about the state of civilization, can you give concrete examples of how it is embodied in architecture?*

[ON THE COMPUTER]

What I relate to the cell I call the computer. In architecture it started as electronic surveillance, the network of cameras and wires spreading through every building.

“Surveillance and security-based design are now more prevalent than ever outside of prisons, with the vast multiplication of security cameras, gated communities, and access control at building entries, among other technologies. This system is more subtle than in prisons, and it is often corporate rather than governmental, but it also tends to eliminate truly public spaces where dissent can be organized.”<sup>122</sup>

122. Raphael Sperry as quoted in “Torture by Design | Dissident Voice” on *Angola 3 news* (web, accessed 2016-06-02), <http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/08/torture-by-design/>.

The computer in the building is now commonly used to centralize the control of environmental systems. As long as we use the computer to help in the design and maintenance of buildings, there is no slippage possible. But as we increasingly develop automated decision-making processes, and connect everything together, it is easy to imagine a future in which we lose control of our buildings.

*The classic rogue robot that kills us all.*

We are at a point where we can remotely control doors and ovens by connecting them to our cellphones. While it can be extremely practical, it means that our homes are connected to the Internet, which is in itself an unpredictable thing.

*It's been used to spread viruses to our computers, and now it could spread viruses to our homes.*



We are constructing nervous systems for our buildings. On the collage, the evolution goes from a government surveillance, to a mechanical house, to rogue artificial intelligence, and finally a mechanical killing game. In London Spy,<sup>123</sup> Danny receives the key to his boyfriend's house in a package sent to him by hacking the system of the delivery company he works for. In Thir13en ghosts,<sup>124</sup> the occupants of the house unknowingly set off a mechanical process that locks them inside and rearranges the doors and walls to control their movements.

*That's not really a computer, it's a human-made machine.*

It is, but it illustrates our buildings working against us. In Portal<sup>125</sup> and Portal 2,<sup>126</sup> we play a character forced to undergo trials in a facility controlled by the main computer of a laboratory, a rogue artificial intelligence that killed all the employees. In Cube,<sup>127</sup> the main characters attempt to survive a mechanical building filled with traps that constantly rearranges itself.

*You are projecting a dystopian future.*

“Modern literature brings us to the final stage of this evolution: demons no longer inhabit or possess human beings; they are human, and the spaces of demonic habitation is the world as constructed by human beings.”<sup>128</sup>

...

Parallel to this, the urban sprawl is transforming the Earth into a maze the size of a sea.

[1st professor] What is the essence of the maze?

The maze has to do with the lack of spatial bearings, the impossibility to orient oneself.

“The interesting thing with the labyrinth is indeed the experience of losing our references; it means the experience of losing ourselves, the loss of our own reality, or so-called reality.”<sup>129</sup>

123. Jakob Verbruggen, *London spy* (TV, 2015).

124. Steve Beck, *Thir13en ghosts* (film, 2001).

125. Valve Corporation, *Portal* (video game, 2007).

126. Valve Corporation, *Portal 2* (video game, 2011).

127. Vincenzo Natali, *Cube* (film, 1998).

128. David Spurr, “Demonic Spaces: Sade, Dickens, Kafka,” in *Architecture and Modern Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 74.

[ON THE MAZE]

129. Marc-Antoine Mathieu as quoted in Léopold Lambert, “Labyrinths and other metaphysical constructions: Interview with Marc-Antoine Mathieu” in *Science fiction, The funambulist pamphlets 9* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2014), 81.

*That is how you described the sea also.*

130. Jorge Luis Borges, "Les deux rois et les deux labyrinthes" in *L'aleph* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 171–72.

The sea and the maze are extremes of a similar idea. The sea denies bearings by being under-built, while the maze denies bearings by being overbuilt. In The two kings and the two labyrinths,<sup>130</sup> a Babylonian king tasks his architects to build an intricate maze into which he sends a visiting Arab king. The Babylonian king rejoices in the failure of the Arab king to find the exit, considering it a proof of his superiority.

"The labyrinth, in its classical representation, is the quintessence of the architect's absolute control. The line is traced from above, its author has a total vision of the space, and he is amused to see bodies below subjected to his architecture."<sup>131</sup>

131. Léopold Lambert, *Weaponized Architecture: The Impossibility of Innocence* (New York: Dpr-barcelona, 2012), 37.

The Arab king's answer is to invite the Babylonian king to see his own maze, which turns out to be the desert. The Arab king recognized that nothing he could build would ever compare to nature itself, and he leaves the Babylonian king in the middle of the desert to die.

*With our current technology, the Babylonian king would not die.*

Another great maze described by Borges is the Library of Babel, an endless repetition of identical spaces.

132. Jorge Luis Borges, "The library of Babel" in *Labyrinths: Selected stories & other writings* (New York: New Directions, 2007), 52.

"The library is a sphere whose exact centre is any one of its hexagons and whose circumference is inaccessible."<sup>132</sup>

The central image on the collage is an attempt to design a Library of Babel, a maze in which every room would be identical. I could not find a solution for the border rooms to also be identical unless the building was a sphere.

*Like Borges describes it. With the border rooms different, they would stand out and the occupant would realize he is at border and follow it to the exit.*

In the Library of Babel, the only exit is death. I had thought of drawing a regular grid, and an irregular grid, and overlapping them in order to create a series of winding passageways, none of which would be identical.

*That is the exact opposite of your other idea.*

But again, I did not know what to do with the exterior.

[3rd friend] The first characteristic of labyrinths is their outside face, their boundary or enclosure which separates them from the rest of the world. This face may not be a wall, and the pattern may not be understandable as an ‘object’ in itself: labyrinths are primarily interior, or negative, forms. They carve out space from what is already present. The exterior of a labyrinth may be the whole normative world beyond itself, or the mass from which it is carved.

That is how cities work as mazes. As we travel from the country to the city, the density of the urban fabric slowly intensifies. It’s impossible to define the border between the inside and the outside of the urban maze. With the rapid growth of urban centres, the wide spaces between cities are disappearing, leaving an endless maze behind.

“At another level, the labyrinthine spaces of the modern city have been construed as the sources of modern anxiety, from revolution and epidemic to phobia and alienation; the genre of the detective novel owes its existence to such fears – ‘the unsolved murder is uncanny’, wrote the psychoanalyst Theodor Reik.”<sup>133</sup>

*You gave up after a single design?*

I drew another design resembling a forest, which was simply a sprawl of identical columns. But that is taken from nature, like the Arab king’s maze.

“This work was a scandal, for confusion and wonder, operations reserved to God, are not suitable for man.”<sup>134</sup>

133. Anthony Vidler, “Preface” in *The architectural uncanny : Essays in the modern unhomely* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992), ix.

134. Jorge Luis Borges, “Les deux rois et les deux labyrinthes,” in *L’Aleph* (Paris: Gallimard. 1967), 171, liberal translation.

Architects are not the ones drawing the maze anymore. The machine is, the system we set in place and cannot stop.

*I see the horror in what you are saying, but I don't understand why you call the third level the machine.*

I see it as a mechanical system, a clockwork that we built and that now operates mindlessly on its own. After using the wall to exercise power on the Earth and on each other, we are now giving it away to the machine we built.

[1st professor] The system is about feeling powerless.

*And what do you think will happen?*

Science-fiction and horror films tell us what will happen. We will destroy the Earth and leave desolation behind. As the sprawl increases, we are depleting the resources of the Earth, levelling it to the ground, slowly creating deserts on one end and dumpsters at the other end.

[ON THE DESERT]

*Which can be seen as a type of desert.*

135. Brill got interested in the problem of burying nuclear waste safely by expressing the danger of the waste through the architecture. One of his designs resembles the Runit dome, an existing structure at a United States nuclear test site in the Pacific. It implies digging a crater, filling it with the debris, and covering it in several thick layers of concrete. Michael Brill, "An architecture of peril: Design for a waste isolation pilot plant, Carlsbad, New Mexico" on *Arch.KSU.edu* (web, accessed 2016-06-02), <http://www.arch.ksu.edu/seamon/brill.htm>.

[1st professor] Dumpsters turned into parks are like the thin white sheets on corpses.

"A dark masonry slab, evoking an enormous 'black hole'; an immense no-thing; a void; land removed from use; worthless. Uninhabitable, and often exceedingly hot because its blackness absorbs the sun's heat and re-radiates it."<sup>135</sup>

*It mirrors the state of the planet when we will be done with it.*

"It was proposed that the site should be retained as a visible 'open wound' within the city to provoke reflection on history."<sup>136</sup>

136. Claudio Leoni, "Peter Zumthor's 'Topography of terror'" in *ARQ* vol.18 no. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 112.

The desert is the death of the field. It is the pre-historic landscape of civilization, but also the post-historic landscape. It is where everything has happened and

passed, where everything was taken and nothing left.

“The American desert seems to be the place where past and future collapse into the present; it is also the place where the primitive and the futurist inhabit monumentality.”<sup>137</sup>

The desert is where the wild beast roamed before it was human, where the wild beast roams after it was human. It is the Earth starting over again after humanity is gone, the ‘tabula rasa’ of civilization.

*The thesis is a fiction of impending doom, the drought after civilization has ended.*

[1st guest] Your system functions at two scales. There is the whole of the machine, and its individual parts. A system that bifurcates creates relationships and gives new meaning to each of its parts.

In the first level, the types exist simultaneously. In the second level, the types exist in succession, coming one after the other. In the third level, they evolve parallel to each before merging.

[1st guest] There is no such thing as an objective selection. Why was each precedent chosen, what spurred their choice over other buildings or situations?

I started with a pile of specimens, and the families emerged from them. After that first classification, some specimens were replaced for others that were a better fit. Most of the specimens I knew previously, and the new ones were chosen to prove the already existing system. Eventually it became a problem, because new specimens did not fit the pre-existing structure. That is why the current thesis isn't in the form of a taxonomy. By fleshing it out I destroyed it.

[1st professor] What is the bigger idea behind the project, what groups everything together? There seems to be big words unspoken, technocracy, instrumentality... The giant is dominance, the view from above. The institution is how we manage the excluded, as a society. The system is anonymity, being part of a cycle.

137. Alessandra Ponte, “The house of light and entropy: Inhabiting the American desert” in *Landscape and art: the invention of nature, the evolution of the eye* (São Paulo: Comitê Brasileiro de História da Arte, 2000), 218.

## EPILOGUE

[2nd guest] Artists shouldn't psychoanalyze themselves, it kills their production.

[2nd professor] What you are dwelling on seems to have to do with the profound situation of space as chaos.

[3rd professor] The thesis is about horror, the confrontation to the emptiness after death, being stuck in front of an infinite void.

[1st guest] The thesis isn't really about horror, but about something deeper. The concept of the other and their architectures is more crucial than the concept of horror.

[1st professor] Your work constantly feels like an allegory, as though you are speaking of one thing through another. The word 'horror' is used as a name for something more complex that you need to ponder on and define. Are you really interested in horror, or by its monsters?

[4th guest] You are working on an internalized vision of the world.

[1st professor] It is a tongue-in-cheek critique of society. You are looking at the underbelly of society, the abrasive nature of what we surround ourselves with. The thesis contains three interlocking stories. There is the internal world and the dreams, the societal question that opposes the human with the animal and the human with the machine, and the relationship between contemporaneity and technology.

I think the thesis is about the power we exert over our environment not as individuals, but as a species. My experience of horror has to do with loneliness and anxiety, the vulnerability of a single human body confronted to the other. That confrontation might be from another body, a wild creature, a monumental building... The horror happens when suddenly, the perception of the other body moves from tolerance or indifference to hostility. Horror is when the human body realizes it is in a position of danger, when the hostility hits them right in the face.

[2nd guest] As a subject horror is almost as attractive as

sexuality.

They are both central to the human experience. While sexuality is a connection between bodies, architecture is a will to separate them. Architecture is by definition an act of oppression. Sometimes it is necessary, or natural, oppression, in the sense that it is required for our survival and safe being, but it remains oppression. We have imposed our will on the Earth to the extent of submitting nature to its limits.

“Architecture is scary because in order to build, one must destroy.”<sup>138</sup>

*Is architecture inherently horrific?*

It is what we do with architecture that is horrific, that we allow the wall to restrain and hurt. One of the first documented serial killers in the United States was a man named H.H. Holmes, who allegedly built a ‘murder castle’, a hotel with rooms designed as torture chambers.<sup>139</sup> Each one worked differently, some were soundproof and could only be opened from the outside, while others were gas chambers. It wasn’t the rooms themselves that were problematic, but the way they were used, the specific manner in which the architecture was modified in order to trap the occupants.

“This also suggests that actions qualify spaces as much as spaces qualify actions; that space and action are inseparable and that no proper interpretation of architecture, drawing, or notation can refuse to consider this fact.”<sup>140</sup>

The thesis started as a tongue-in-cheek idea until I realized it was all too real, we already draw lines on paper that end up oppressing people.

“The Panopticon, as an architecture, is indeed ‘only a prison’; however, no diagram will ever prevent a body from its freedom of movement, whereas any architecture in its physicality, will.”<sup>141</sup>

[ON VIOLENCE]

138. “Editorial” in *Scary architects*, San Rocco 5 (Venice: San Rocco, 2012), 3.

139. Holly Carden, “Making the H. H. Holmes murder castle” on *Carden illustration* (web, accessed 2017-04-20), <http://hollycarden.com/blog/2016/11/11/making-the-h-h-holmes-murder-castle>.

140. Bernard Tschumi, “Violence of architecture,” in *Architecture and disjunction* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 122.

141. Léopold Lambert, “Foucault and architecture: The encounter that never was” in *Foucault, The funambulist pamphlets 2* (Brooklyn: Punctum Books, 2013), 19.

The world doesn't need more horror and violence. We already have a constant desire for increasingly shocking images.

*Because of how desensitized we are.*

[ON RESPONSIBILITY]

As the discourse on prisons increases, the presence of prison life in media increases. While some depictions are true to the conditions, it normalizes the idea of the prisoner. As a hobby I collect LEGO bricks, and in the context of the thesis I considered purchasing a play set depicting a prison on an island. In such toys, prisoners are depicted as mischievous individuals, and police officers as heroes for saving the city from them. This teaches to our children, from a very young age, that some individuals are evil, and that the system is good.

*There is growing evidence that this is false and the justice system is heavily biased.*

Designing a prison would partake in that normalization, and I do not want the responsibility of that. Nothomb<sup>142</sup> wrote a contemporary take on Bluebeard, in which the forbidden room itself is designed to kill the intruder in order to protect its contents. The owner has no intention of using the room, but in the end he gets trapped and dies.

142. Amélie Nothomb, *Barbe bleue: roman* (Paris: Le livre de poche, 2014).

“If you design a weapon, you must acknowledge that the weapon, even if created for defense, could easily be used for offense. And while you are not responsible for actions of everyone in the world, you did provide further means to violence that formerly did not exist. I also think if a product is successful and used as intended, it's likely that designers are happy to take responsibility for the impact on the world – and, crucially, vice versa.”<sup>143</sup>

143. Harry Rhoades as quoted in China Keitetsi, “AK-47 (Mikhail Kalashnikov, 1947)” in *Design and violence* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2015), 218.

*We are responsible for the ideas we put into the world.*

The thesis made me realize the complexity and intricacy of the system I am stuck in against my will, which alienates part of the population and prevents it



from de-alienating itself.

...

There's a dream I had while working on the thesis that I would like to share with you. I was standing in a field of grass. It was day but it was dark, the kind of daytime darkness that announces a storm. I wanted to find shelter before it started to pour, so I looked around for anything that might provide cover. Where I was standing the grass barely reached my ankles, but I could see leaves as tall as my waist just a little farther, and others as tall as myself behind those. I looked for any signs of a building or a way out, but I could not see any. It looked like I was standing in a clearing, in the middle of a planted field of some sort. Every direction looked the same. The crops hid the horizon and there was nothing, as far as I could see, reaching higher than me. I was surrounded by an infinity of ways out but also an infinity of ways deeper in. I was surrounded by exits but also by dead ends. The uncertainty made me dizzy, I was afraid of going the wrong way and it froze me so I just stood still. I did not know which way to go, but I knew that if I did not move I would never get anywhere. I walked away from the centre of the clearing and the grass grew taller. I could not see my feet, the tips of the leaves brushed against my knees and soon swallowed me up to the waist. The tall grass took on a yellowish tint, and the density made it difficult to walk. I was almost swimming between the leaves. I was deep in grass up to my chin when the growth slowed down. The plants were less dense and it became easier to move forward. A few green bushes peaked on top of the leaves, the grass receded towards the ground and I made my way between the bushes. The shrubs got denser and then shrunk, thin branches emerged and I could see frail trees here and there. I continued walking straight ahead. The shrubs disappeared and the trees got taller. Then I was walking in a light forest of thin trees that reached over my head. The trunks were sparse but grew wider, and the canopy of leaves thickened. I was walking between the trees and the lower branches were so high it was difficult to distinguish between them. The trunks were wide

[THE DREAM]

enough that I had to walk around them instead of between them, the paths became narrower and the bark became smooth and turned from brown to gray. Then I was no longer in a forest, but walking through short corridors. At each intersection I had to choose between three paths, two identical ways forward or going back where I came from. Each intersection was wider than the one before, I was alternating between the path to the right and the path to the left, moving between identical circular rooms. The rooms got larger as I continued to zigzag through the archways. Then there was a door between the pathways, and a circular stairwell behind it. I could not see where the stairs were coming from, because it was too dark. The steps ran along the exterior well, surrounding a central well. I didn't know where the stairs were leading to, it was too far to see. I climbed slowly, one step at a time. I got excited and skipped steps but I tripped, I caught my fall with my hands and they ached on the hard surface. I couldn't see where I was coming from, I didn't remember how I got here. I climbed a bit faster and I tripped again. The steps were smooth and used, I didn't know where I was going. The steps were uneven, each one shorter than the next. I concentrated on the climb. It was getting darker, the steps were getting higher, and then I saw a room just a little further. I emerged in a small rectangular room. I could touch both walls at once, but there was no door. There was a window in front of me that let a small amount of light in. I got as close as possible and leaned in the slit but there wasn't much to see, only rows of grey blocks and no sign of life. My hands pressed against the rough wall, it felt grainy and dust fell to the ground. Then the walls started to crumble, sand accumulated on the floor, chunks of ceiling fell down, and I got swallowed by a cloud of dust. When it settled down the room was gone, the ground was flat and there was nothing to see for miles around. It was still day but it felt dark, the kind of darkness that came before a storm. Dark clouds were moving fast in the sky, I needed to find cover before the rain started but my surroundings were perfectly flat. I was ankle-deep in gray dust, and around me it spread farther than I could see. I was standing in the middle of a desert, the horizon was uniform, and I had nowhere to go, so I sat

on the ground and waited for the storm.

*You are trained as a visual artist and an architect, why write the spaces instead of drawing them?*

“I consider it useless and tedious to represent what exists, because nothing that exists satisfies me.”<sup>144</sup>

I tried and struggled, and I realized that we cannot design horror from a god-like point of view. Horror happens when we are in the space, when we don't know what is going to happen. Drawing those spaces freezes them in place and they stop working. What I wanted to do already exists. The cheesiness of gore isn't that interesting, and the other end of the spectrum is too real. I kept collecting horror, it became an endless hoarding process. At times I felt like Kafka trying to get to the castle,<sup>145</sup> turning round and round trying to find something that is impossible to attain.

[3rd guest] Error comes from errand, it is not research if there is no failure.

*You didn't write an essay, and you didn't really do a project. How does it qualify as a thesis?*

It's a thesis because it follows the same process as other theses.

[4th friend] The process of a thesis is like a scientific experiment. First there is a hypothesis, which we'll call the myth of the thesis. Then there's the proof, which consists of the research and its organization. And finally comes the design, which in some cases embodies the myth, or remediates it.

*How does it apply in this case?*

[4th friend] Here the myth is that horror is a lack of control, a feeling of otherness towards architecture. The taxonomy is the proof that the lack of control has an architectural form. But the design, I just don't see it. Is there a design? I don't understand what your position is.

144. Charles Baudelaire, as quoted in Aude-Line Dulière and Clara Wong, “Introduction: On monstrosity in our dystopian representation of contemporary architecture “ in *Monsterpieces: Once upon a time... Of the 2000s!* (Pt. Reyes Station: ORO editions, 2010), 11.

[ON FAILURE]

145. Franz Kafka, *The Castle* (New York: Schocken, 1998).

I think in this case I can argue that there shouldn't be one. I chose the subject as a joke to rebel against the school, but through the research I realized that we build horror every day. I couldn't see it as a joke anymore, and decided it was best not to design.

[3rd professor] You kept putting a screen between yourself and the subject. Horror is a serious matter, and you undermine it with humour. You have to really let your monsters out, instead of putting them in a box and keeping them hidden.

I think my three obsessions express well how I felt during the entire process.

*Remind me of what they were.*

There was the field, then the maze, and finally the desert. At first there was infinite possibility, then infinite avenues, and finally infinite dead ends. In all three cases the infinity ended up being a wall, and all three became cells.

*Your narrative that goes from the field to the prison to the desert is the making and unmaking of civilization.*

The thesis is not about my monsters, but about the power of architecture. Proving that we can design spaces that make us go insane or even kills us proves that architecture has power over us and isn't a trivial matter. I wanted to do an anti-project for a long time, and the thesis was my last opportunity to do so. I felt restrained by architecture school, and that made me want to go out with a bang.

*A desire to shock and leave your mark.*

Maybe I was trying to make a joke of myself, or make a joke of the school, I'm not certain, but the thesis started as a joke. I came to architecture school in reaction to the frivolity of art school. It stopped making sense to me when I realized I was studying with people who were studying to teach others who would study to teach... I did not want to be part of an endless, self-contained circle. Architecture, because

of its scale, is more public, but there is a bloated seriousness to the education and the profession, it's maddening.

"It is, after all, a familiar fact that those who cling neurotically to order do so often enough to keep some inner turmoil at bay."<sup>146</sup>

*So you don't have a real affinity with horror.*

I do now. Even if I didn't start on this subject with a passion for it, I think there is merit in studying horror.

*You established that architecture is horrific when it clashes with the human body, when it subdues and dominates it. What is architecture when it does the opposite?*

I could argue that beauty is the opposite of horror, but beauty is a one-directional relationship where one body is beautiful and the other body witnesses the beauty. If horror is a clash of bodies, it is violence, and its opposite is harmony, tenderness, or love, where the bodies don't clash but complement each other. I would say that architecture of harmony is just nature, the environment that provides all that we need.

"However, it is well to remember that nature is neither good nor bad, neither altruistic nor egoistic, and that it operates through the human psyche as well as through crystals and plants and animals with the same inexorable laws."<sup>147</sup>

The thesis, the architecture that renders insane and ultimately kills, is my fiction. I am worried by the power our environment exerts over us, the way our governments design to control us.

"The world is human and non-human, anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric, sometimes even misanthropic."<sup>148</sup>

*What will you do now? Where does this leave you?*

146. Terry Eagleton, "Fictions of evil" in *On evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 74.

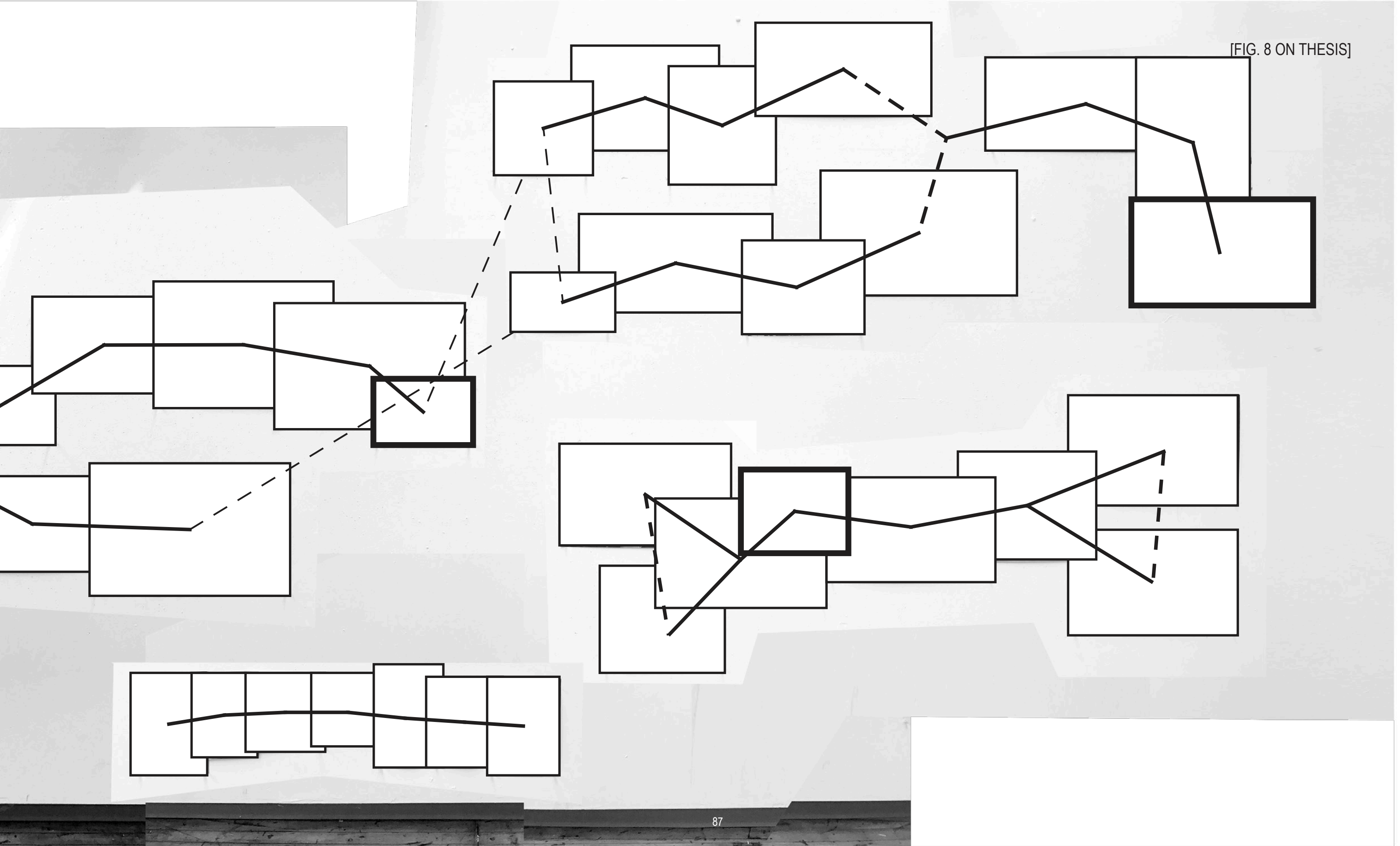
[ON LOVE]

147. Fernanda Savage, "Introduction" in *Venus in furs* (Kansas City: Digireads, 2009), 3.

148. Eugene Thacker, "Preface ~ Clouds of unknowing" in *In the dust of this planet*, *Horror of philosophy 1* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2011), 2.



[FIG. 8 ON THESIS]



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