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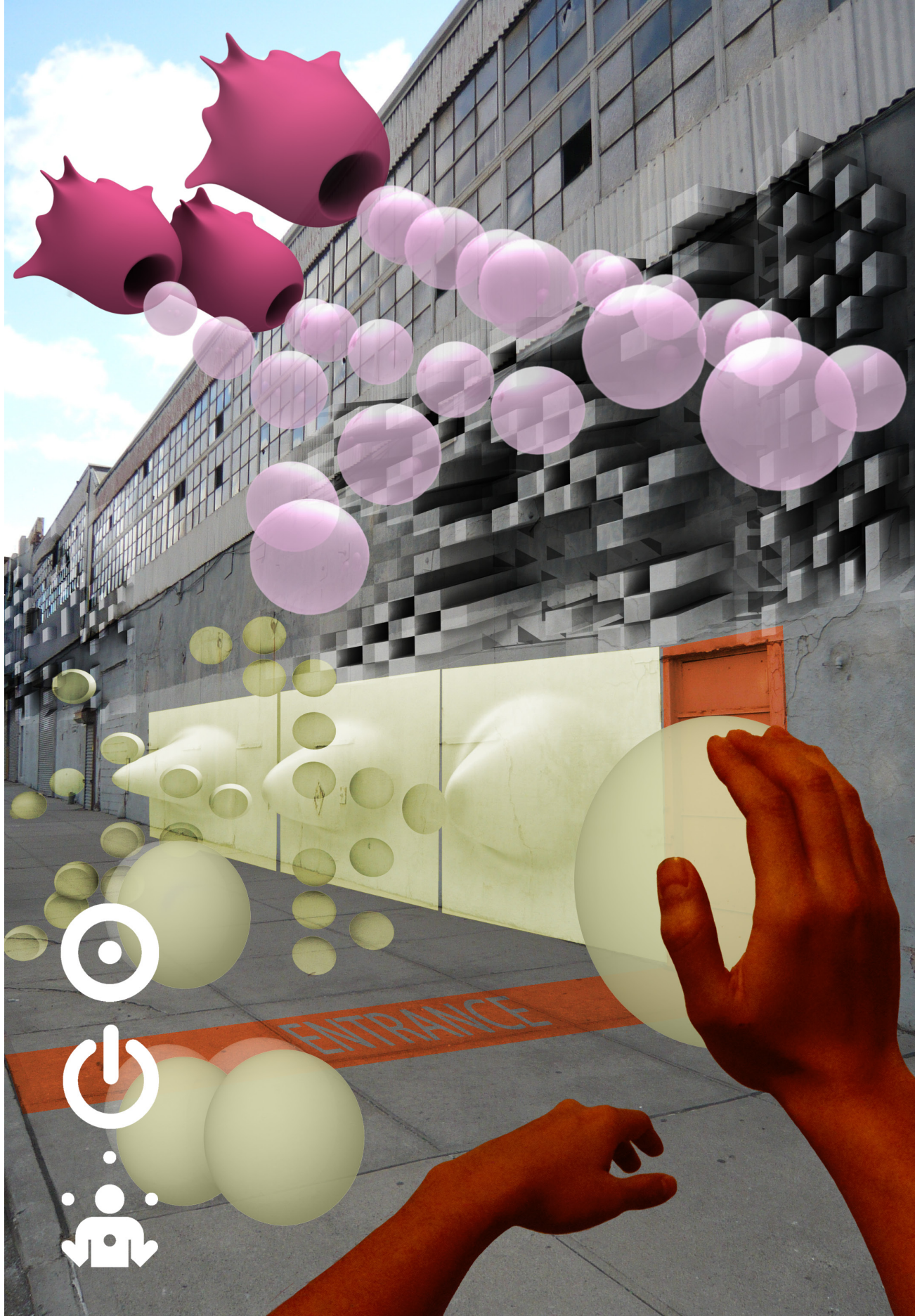
NO.2
Alternate Ecologies

Neil Spiller
Simone Ferracina
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ALTERNATE ECOLOGIES



NON-METAPHORIC ANIMATION: STILLS FROM THE AUGMENTED CITY

Simone Ferracina

Traditionally, buildings were the most static of all inanimate objects: their foundations sunk deep into the ground, their massive weight pulled by gravity, their lifeblood tied to public utilities. Only human beings, through their own liveliness, could activate architecture and bestow motion upon it. In the last twenty years, with the advent of computer-aided design and sophisticated animation software, architects of the digital avant-garde have challenged the classical oppositions of animate/inanimate, alive/inert and attempted to transfer movement and temporal action from the occupant to architectural form itself. The result of this shift—animate form—is generated not in the classical static and undifferentiated ether of Cartesian coordinates, but in a dynamic field that embeds it with motion and forces.¹ Of course, as Catherine Ingraham remarks, at the end of the form-finding process, the dynamic is once again hardened into stasis:

Once the mantis stops moving and imparting movement—when the eggcase is frozen into its final form—life and architecture separate, once again, into their classical mode of animate versus inanimate. Architecture recovers what seems to be an unavoidable stasis, and the power of the oppositions inside/outside, alive/inert reassert themselves. The nest joins the mesh as a ground, the mantis and her offspring, the figures.²

The future city, a mixed assemblage of technologically dense materiality and immersive virtual space perceived by augmented subjects, will constitute a fantastic medium for the reformulation of these long-standing oppositions.

Fittingness of Medium

The technologically equipped inhabitants of the Augmented City will experience space as fun-

damentally mixed—a fabric woven with strands both virtual and real; understood as ontologically divided, and yet perceived as a whole. Material and digital realities will coexist and negotiate their respective positions in accordance with the logic of their medium: inertia, materiality and structure for the physical world; animation, virtuality and magic for the digital one.

Design will reorganize its own objectives based on the tools available to each medium. Complex forms, ornamentation and multimedia, for instance, may be more sustainably and economically projected as digital/holographic entities than manufactured or assembled, while load-bearing walls, roofs and windows can achieve their functional purpose only if constructed with real-world materials. A new architectural ethics based on *fittingness of medium* will arise, one that separates the stability, pragmatism and discreteness of the material building from the mobility, flexibility and continuity of its electronic skin. The superficial, the superfluous, the temporary, the exuberant and the interactive will belong to the digital; the solid, the functional, the permanent, the grounded and the sensual will belong to the physical. The discriminatory effects of this duality will pervade the components and intents that make up architectural design at all scales ranging from city blocks to door handles, and architecture will become a truly mixed undertaking. The architect of the Augmented City will design all three: bricks, bits and their interaction.

It is interesting to note that while this ethics doesn't preclude the translation of animate form into real-world buildings, it frees digital architecture from the ghost of material realization and provides it with much deserved phenomenological autonomy.

Contextual Hinges

Each building in the Augmented City will ex-

ist as a symbiotic entity composed of both inert physical structures and virtual envelopes in a state of becoming: *metabuildings*. However, the latter will not be simply “mapped” onto the former. Metabuildings will continually negotiate their boundaries according to changeable and movable *contextual hinges* found both inside and outside the immediate contiguity with “host” architectural objects. These electronic envelopes will grow, evolve and transmogrify in response to data flows and to the input of individual users. They will be sensitive to culture, responsive to environmental fluctuations and transform according to the actions/selections of individual users.

Architectural Remix

One of the roles of future architects will be that of facilitating and choreographing the mediated interactions between buildings and subjects. Kas Oosterhuis once wrote that architecture will “transform into the art of the game.”³ In a broader sense, we might predict that the architecture of the future will engender time-sensitive structures that enable and channel technology-mediated play. “Games” may be either embedded top-down (architect/owner) or installed bottom-up (hacker/inhabitant). This latter modality, analogous to the idea of ‘extreme customization’ explored in the first issue of *CE*, opens up the possibility of on-site *architectural remix*.

As explained and championed by Creative Commons founder Lawrence Lessig, remix and read-write (RW) are practices characterized by the participation of consumers in the creation and re-creation of the culture they consume. As Lessig explains referring to read-write experiments in homemade YouTube videos, technology has de facto democratized technique:

This remix gives anyone with access to a 1500 dollar computer the power to say things differently, to express ideas in a form which people connect to much more than they connect with words. This is writing in the 21st century. It is literacy for a new generation, it is building a different democracy,

it is building a different culture.⁴

Whereas architecture traditionally endorsed a read-only (RO) approach, one that excluded inhabitants from the creative processes that generate buildings, augmenting and immersive technologies will soon endow citizens with the capacity to re-invent themselves and their cities.

The challenge for designers and owners of the Augmented City will be that of learning to forgo control and deliver/commission not definitive architectural objects, but rather “object fields,”⁵ frameworks for creative engagement and remix. Not architectural masterpieces, but architectural opportunities.

Literal Motion

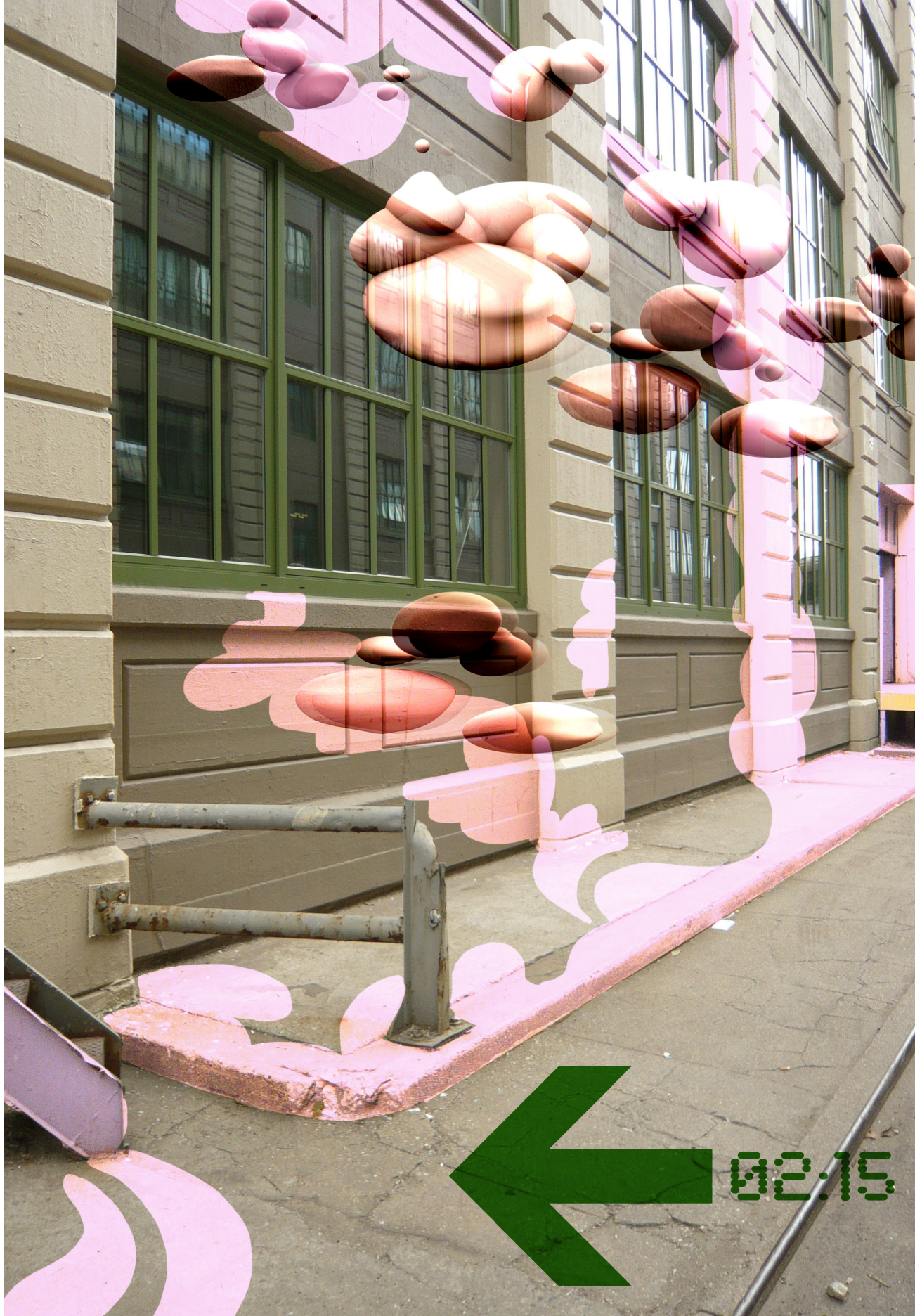
Despite Gregg Lynn’s indication that “an ethics of motion neither implies nor precludes literal motion,”⁶ most digital designers have either stuck with metaphoric animation or struggled to promote kinetic buildings beyond the limited scope of experimental pavilions and art installations. On the contrary, metabuildings could be easily imparted *literal motion* and programmed to grow, aggregate, morph and unfold in time.

Their liquid skins will not merely imply vectors and forces: they will *be* vectors and forces. They will be change, becoming, potentiality, action, emergence, trope and deformation. They will be assembled with neither mortar and bricks nor splines and meshes, but with what Sanford Kwinter calls “the plastic medium of duration.”⁷

Exceeding Form

Since the Vitruvian appeal for *firmitas*, western culture has privileged solid and permanent structures over ephemeral and transitional ones. It has valued endurance as a mark of quality and promoted an architectural ethics geared toward the construction of lasting buildings. Because the existence and influence of buildings spanned across generations and trends, their appearance was to bear testimony to the cultural sensibility, ambitions and achievements of their time. We could therefore contend that the primacy of form in





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architectural discourse was both contingent upon the inertia of buildings and driven by the aspiration for lasting quality and beauty. In a future where architecture can embody motion and imitate life, however, the importance of form may wither. The architect's focus may shift from the design of discrete formal instances to the programming of their continuous underlying structures.

Design approaches based on topological transformations and algorithms have come to similar conclusions. While Brian Massumi coined the term "superfigure" to identify continuous transformations that exceed each of their discrete formal emergences,⁸ more recently Antoine Picon reflects upon the fact that design processes based on parameters, algorithms and scripting fundamentally question the primacy of the architectural object and may suggest its substitution with abstract machines: sets of relations and instructions that produce families of possible objects.⁹ Today, translating rule-based design processes into real-world architecture entails freezing these processes into a "final output," restricting the continuous superfigure into the discrete boundaries of the figure.

In the future, generative processes may be allowed to continue, thus *exceeding form*.

Narrative Dimensions

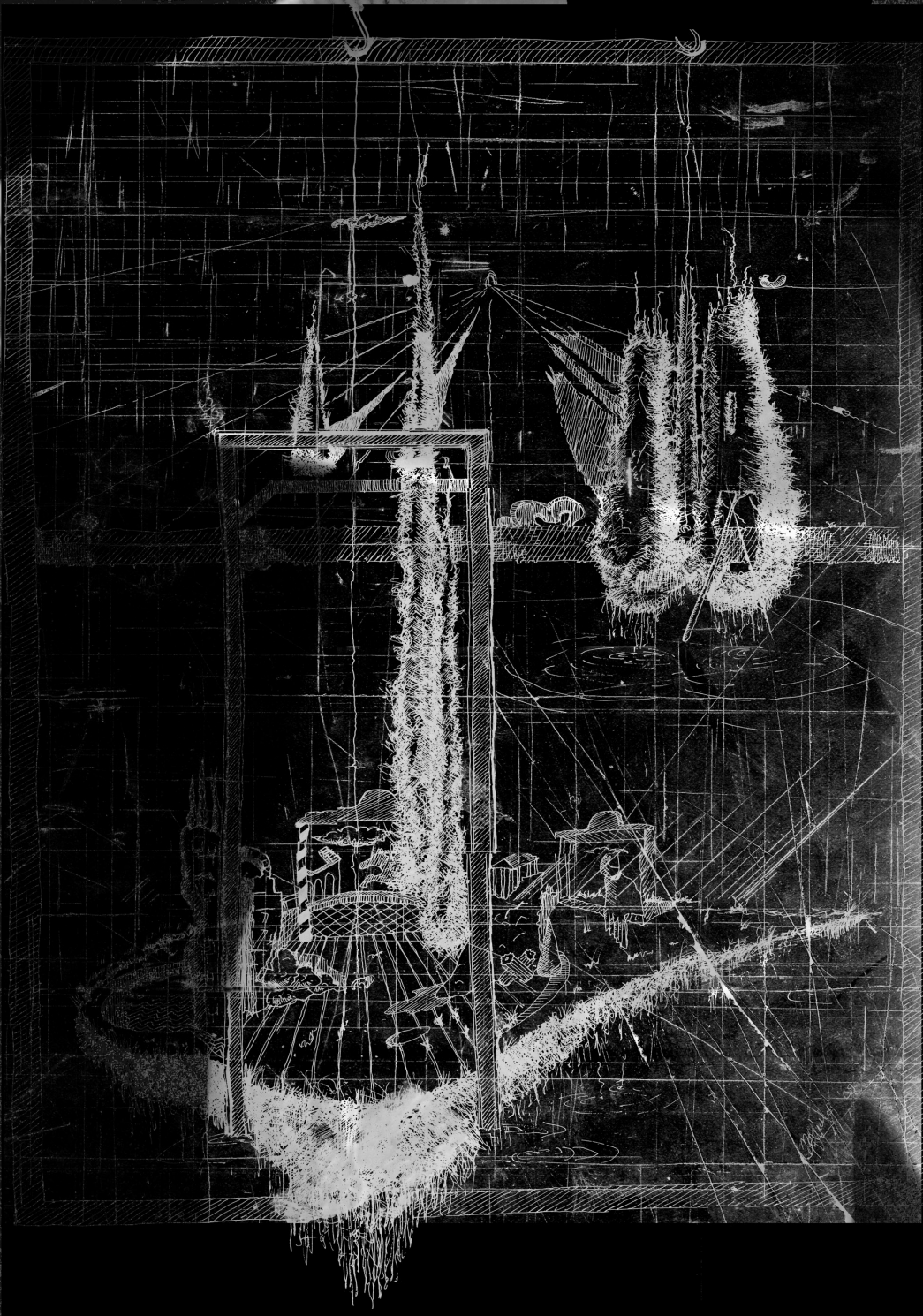
In feature animations the modeling of a character's 3D body conveys only a small portion of that character's role or personality. It is its voice, words, postures, facial expressions and various actions/interactions that allow viewers to determine who that character is. Similarly, the lively architecture of the Augmented City will be described less by morphology than by its permeability to customized *narrative dimensions*. What a building will look like, represent or convey will partially depend on the curatorial channel selected by its inhabitants: the digital lens employed to view it and connect its parts. Operating like newspapers or feeds, blogs or social networks, memories, novels, scientific reports or belief systems, these filters will drive our cities into becoming at once an extension of who we are and the "interfaces through

which we will work out our understanding of the world."¹⁰

Notes:

1. See Greg Lynn, *Animate Form* (New York: Princeton Architectural, 1998).
2. Catherine Ingraham, *Architecture, Animal, Human: The Asymmetrical Condition* (London: Routledge, 2006) 205.
3. Kas Oosterhuis, "Smart Skins for Hyperbodies," in *Architecture Goes Wild* (Rotterdam: 010, 2002) 76.
4. Lawrence Lessig, "Remix," New York University, November 9th 2008, <http://vodpod.com/watch/1595888-lawrence-lessig-remix> (accessed December 26th 2010).
5. See Neil Spiller, "Vacillating Objects," in *AD: Architecture and Science*, ed. Giuseppa di Cristina (Chichester: Wiley-Academy, 2001) 125.
6. Greg Lynn, op. cit., 10.
7. Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001) 4.
8. Brian Massumi, "Strange Horizon," in *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 2002) 185.
9. Antoine Picon, "Digital Culture in Architecture," Harvard University Graduate School of Design, April 20th 2010, http://harvard.vo.llnwd.net/o18/gsd/04202010_picon.mp4 (accessed December 26th 2010).
10. Sanford Kwinter, SMArchS Colloquium, October 13th 2010, <http://techtv.mit.edu/videos/8880-sanford-kwinter-smarchs-colloquium> (accessed December 26th 2010).

All images by Simone Ferracina.



THE GEOMORPHOLOGY OF CYBORGIAN GEOGRAPHY

Neil Spiller

If you have a smart phone, and let's face it, you probably do, you will be familiar with small "alerts" interrupting your surfing or emailing. When it does this, the virtual machine of the phone, which usually pretends to be a word processor, a laptop, a camera, a gaming engine or a photo album and a million things between, suddenly becomes a virtual geography teacher opening your mind up to a machine augmented perception of a changing morphology of space and its fluctuating strata. This is *cyborgian geography*. This is our environmental context as much as any physical geography or transport infrastructure. There is a whole gamut of morphologies based on the electromagnetic spectrum and a whole raft of cyborgian geomorphological archeologists armed with many machines—some vintage, some state of the art—who can reveal their depths of spaces to us, as well as their fluctuating nature.

Architects have witnessed the growing fecundity of these types of spaces and have noted their destabilising influence on the monopoly of traditional planned and designed space. However, few have speculated on what architecture might be or mean when partially immersed in these new digitised terrains. I am one of these architects who has sensed a need to develop new ideas, tactics and strategies to save the architectural profession from navel gazing itself into extinction. Why have architects lost their way? Architects are obsessed with form, they like the way their buildings look at the expense of everything else. Whilst this is not a crime in itself, it can leave them myopic to the great boon of the virtual: interconnectivity, expediency and enabling of delight. Also the global construction industry is fixed into series of simple economic relationships predicated on a very limited palette of materials, some of which have been around for millennia. The fast-evolving dynamics of software and hardware and the flying freehold and leaseholds of the virtual world have yet to have any meaningful impact on the ubiqui-

tous economics of the built environment.

Vacillating Objects

In 1997 I could feel this tsunami gaining strength in the great deep oceans of architectural education, my own work and the work of others. This lead me to write an essay entitled "Vacillating Objects."

"The city is populated by limp and soft bags of liquid, mostly water, crowded between and within towers of metal, stone and glass. Some towers are tall and thin, some are very stubby indeed. These soggy, leaky bodies spend much of their day mumbling to each other through an invisible meta-skin. This skin, a skin of communication, is forever becoming more hyper-sensitive and more able to trace itself. [...] Man-made constructions, the products of hard engineering, are starting to vacillate. The object is loosing its pathetic impartiality. Objects have for too long floated in a sea of objectivity. Our technologies have developed a series of interlinked spatial fields, each with differing qualities with blurred boundaries. The objects that inhabit those fields are becoming schizophrenic. One of the tasks of the 'cyber-' or 'bio-tect' will be to design ecologies of what I shall call 'object fields', not just to define the definite object that operates in a uniform spatial field. An object will have many selves, many simultaneous forms. Technology is forcing the object to become a subject, partial and anamorphic. The anamorphic object changes form when viewed from certain viewpoints, in different fields. The new objects will have formal qualities that are determined by the virtual or physical terrain in which they are viewed or manipulated. [...] The viscosity of a spatial domain can fluctuate. [...] The new spatial fields consist of a series of variable component fields: gravity, viscosity, spatial jump-cutting being but three simple ones. These optional spatial parameters will become ever more dexter-

ously manipulable as our technologies become advanced and less confined to the virtual. One must also not forget the morphological potential of biotechnological objects and nanotechnological objects and their ability to unconventionally chemically compute.

The traditional non-virtually augmented object has had an inability to respond to most spatial fields and changing an object by force, whether heat or hammer, has normally resulted in the object ceasing to function. The new objects will suffer from none of this crippling inertia or pathetic entropy. They will work in mysterious ways. They will change their topologies not just across spatial boundaries but often within the same spatial field.”¹

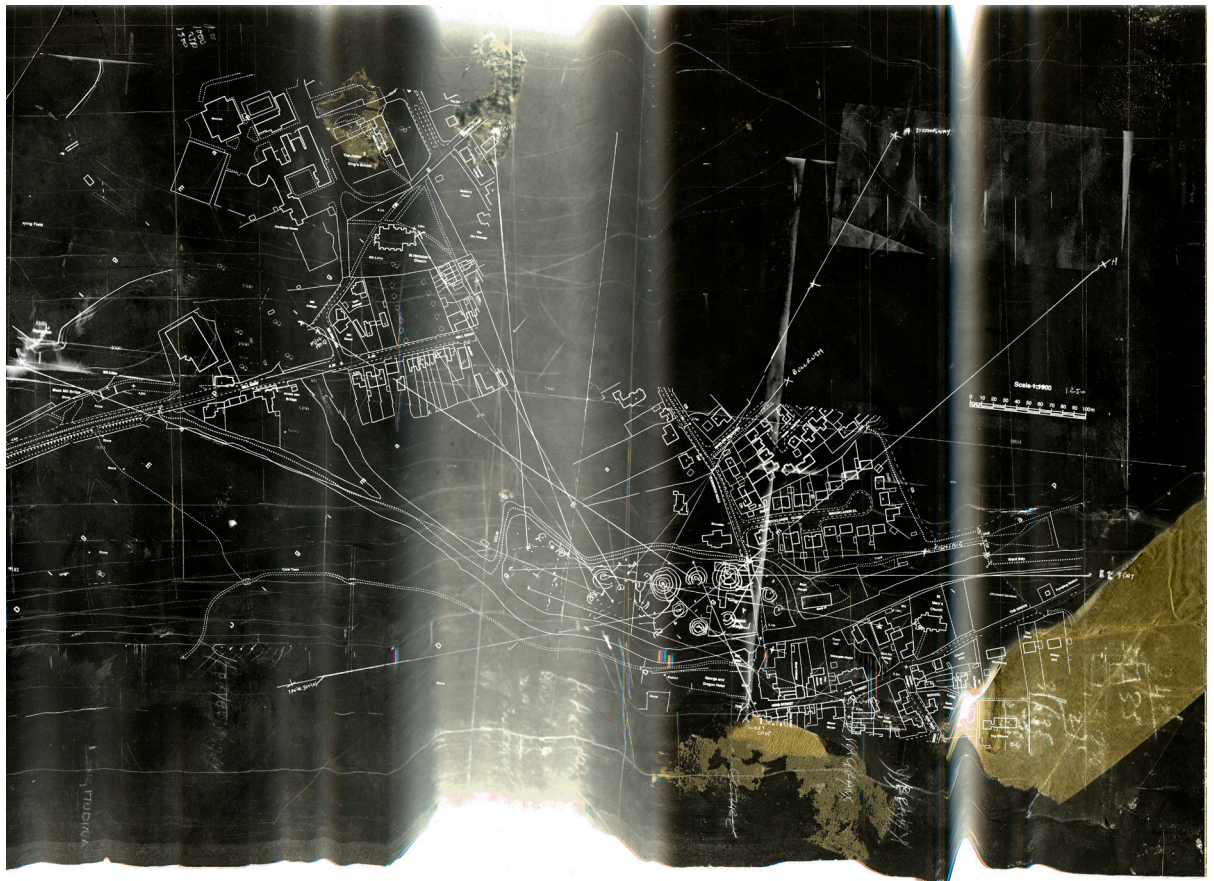
The Seven Continua of Post-Digital Architecture

Contemporary architects have no choice but to

couch their work within the epistemologies and connectivity of virtuality’s hyper-links, geo-tags, nested cartography and its hybrid ecologies of cyber fauna and flora. This is a world mostly invisible to us, a world on top of our anthropocentric reality. This is a “sur-real” architectural topology which slips beyond the merely invisible world of the electromagnetic spectrum to the yet-to-be-seen world of dark matter.

The experience of contemporary architectural designers is one of positioning their work in relation to seven continua. These are:

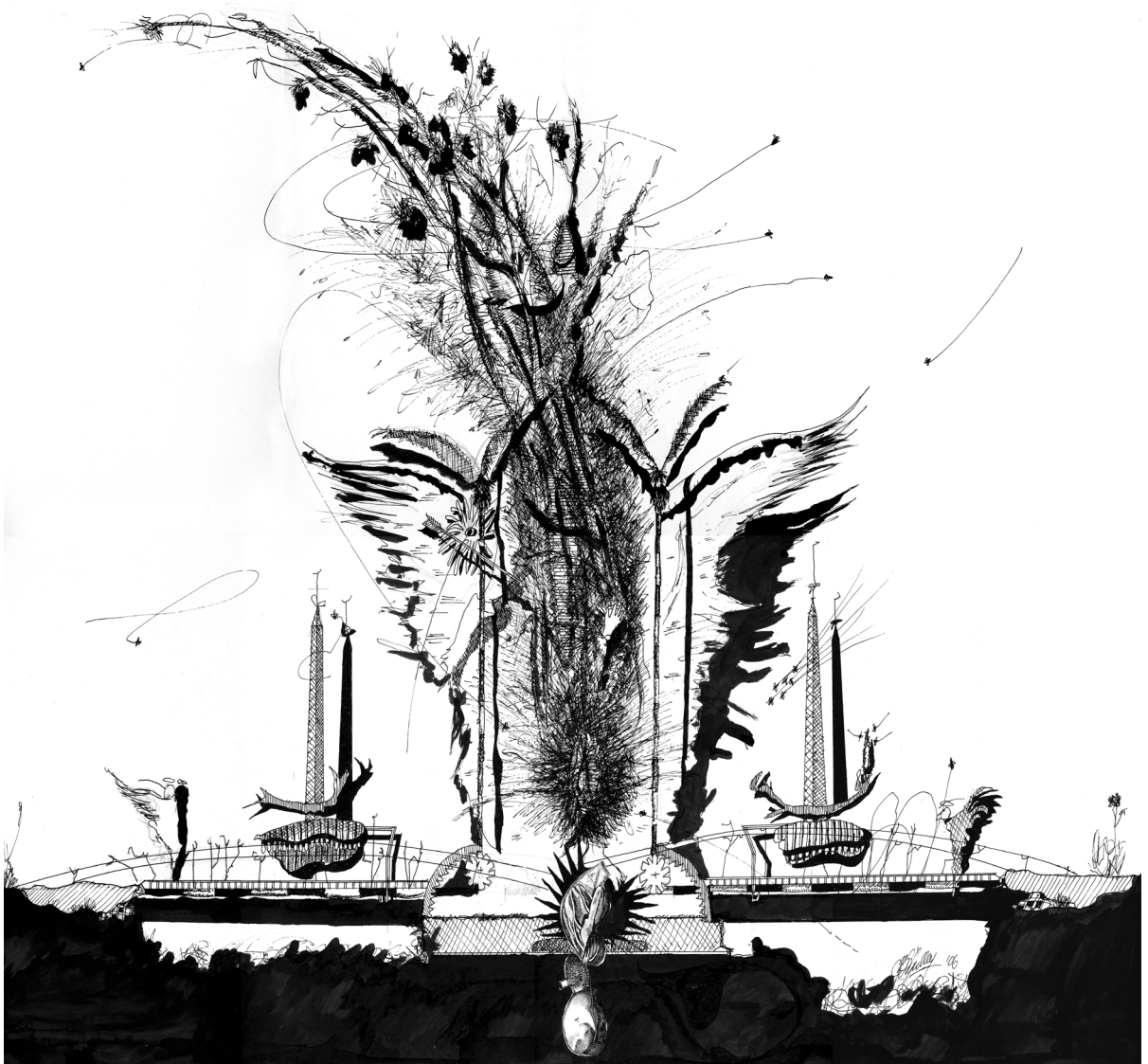
1. *Space* - Is there to be defined. A continuum of space that stretches from ‘treacle’ space—standing in a field, no computer, no mobile phone, no connectivity whatsoever—to full bodily immersion in cyberspace. Along the way between these two extremes are all manner of mixed and augmented spaces.





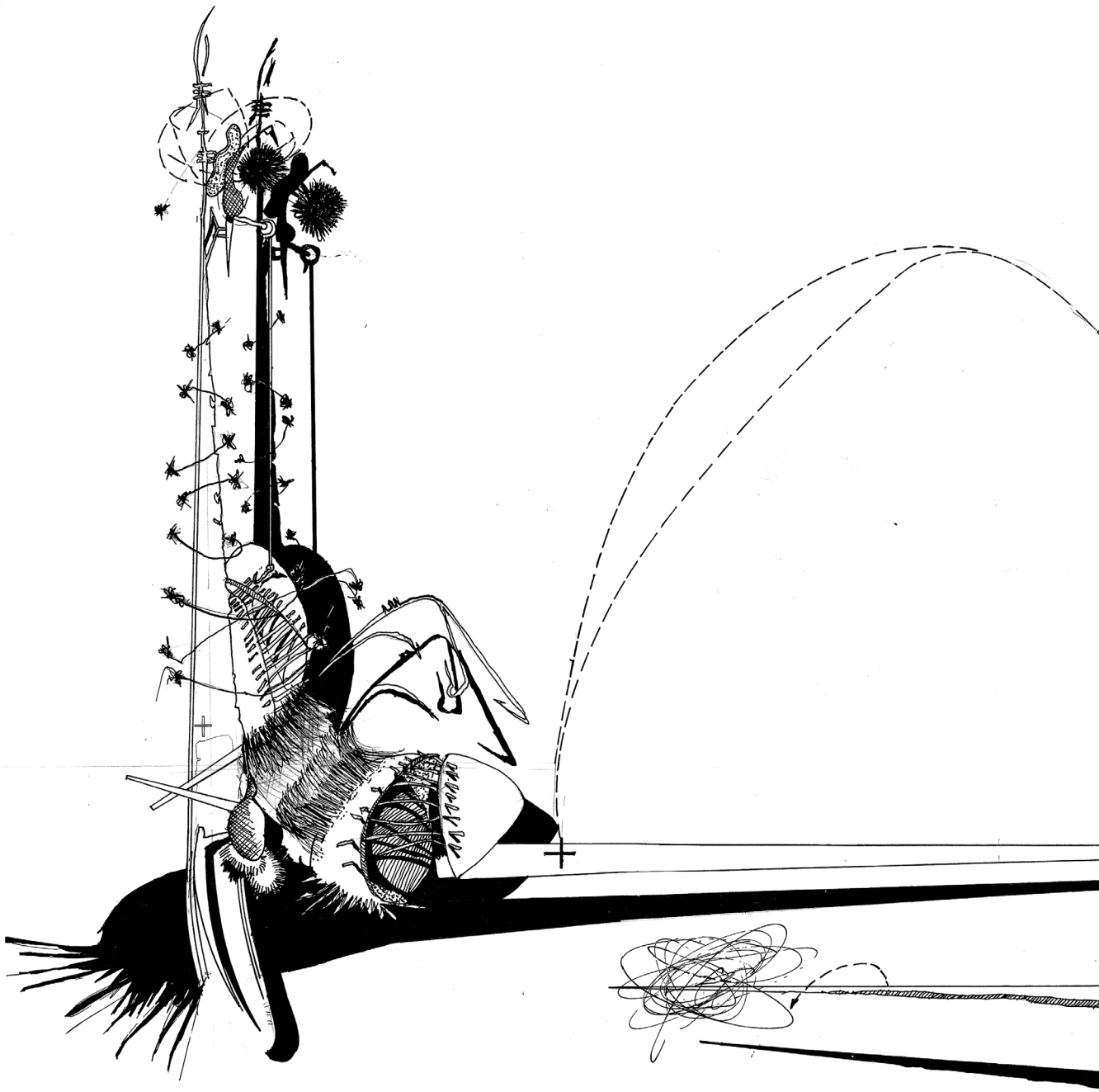
2. *Technology* - Is means, not meaning. Like space, technology ranges from simple prosthetics (the stone axe) via the Victorian cog and cam, to the valve, capacitor, logic gate, the integrated circuit, the central processing unit, the quantum computer, the stem cell, the monocoque and a million states and applications between and beyond.
3. *Narrative, Semiotics and Performance* - Is myth. An architect, designer, explorer can choose whether their work operates along

a continuum that ranges from minimal engagement in quotation or mnemonic nuance in relation to the history of culture and the contemporary world to embracing the multiplicity of the complex and emergent universes of discourse that we inhabit and engage with daily. A design might conjure up new conjunctions of semiotics as a way of re-reading them. It also might integrate itself with human and cultural memory and it might be reflexive and performative (in real time or retrospectively).



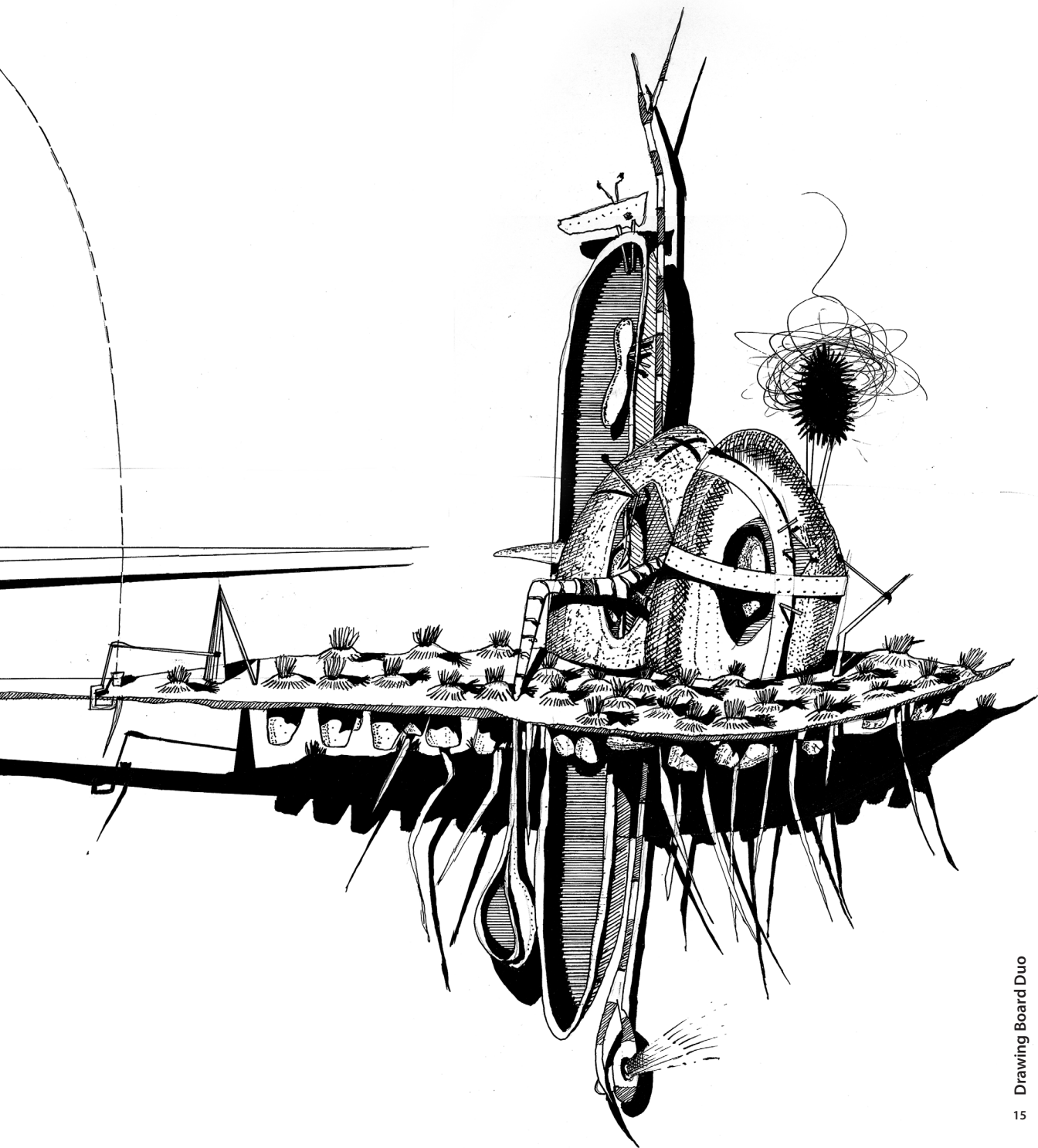
4. *Cyborgian Geography* - An architect, designer, explorer can now posit work that operates in all manner of mixed and augmented terrains that are subject to all manner of geomorphic and cybermorphic factors and drivers.
5. *Scopic Regimes* - Architecture can exist at all scales—it all depends on the resolution of the scope that one chooses to use. Continents, oceans, cities, streets, rooms, carpets, micro-landscapes and medico-landscapes are all part of this continuum of weight and measure.
6. *Sensitivity* - An architect, designer, explorer might decide to make objects, spaces or buildings whose parts are sensitive and can pick up environmental variations or receive information. These sensors can therefore make objects and buildings that are influenced by events elsewhere or indeed are influential elsewhere.





7. *Time* - The central ingredient to this heady elixir. All the above six continua can be time dependent. Therefore our new protagonists, architects, designers, explorers can 'mix' the movement of their spaces, buildings and objects up and down the other six continua. So a design might oscillate the spaces within itself with varying elements of vitality over time. A design might use different technologies at different times in its existence. A design might perform complex mnemonic tableaux

at certain points in its life cycle. A design might demand of its occupants the use of a different lens with which to see other-than-anthropocentric phenomena or spaces. A design might coerce the occupant to be aware of environmental conditions in other locations that change. A design might change the sensitivity of objects over time, dulling them sometimes, making them hypersensitive other times.



Communicating Vessels

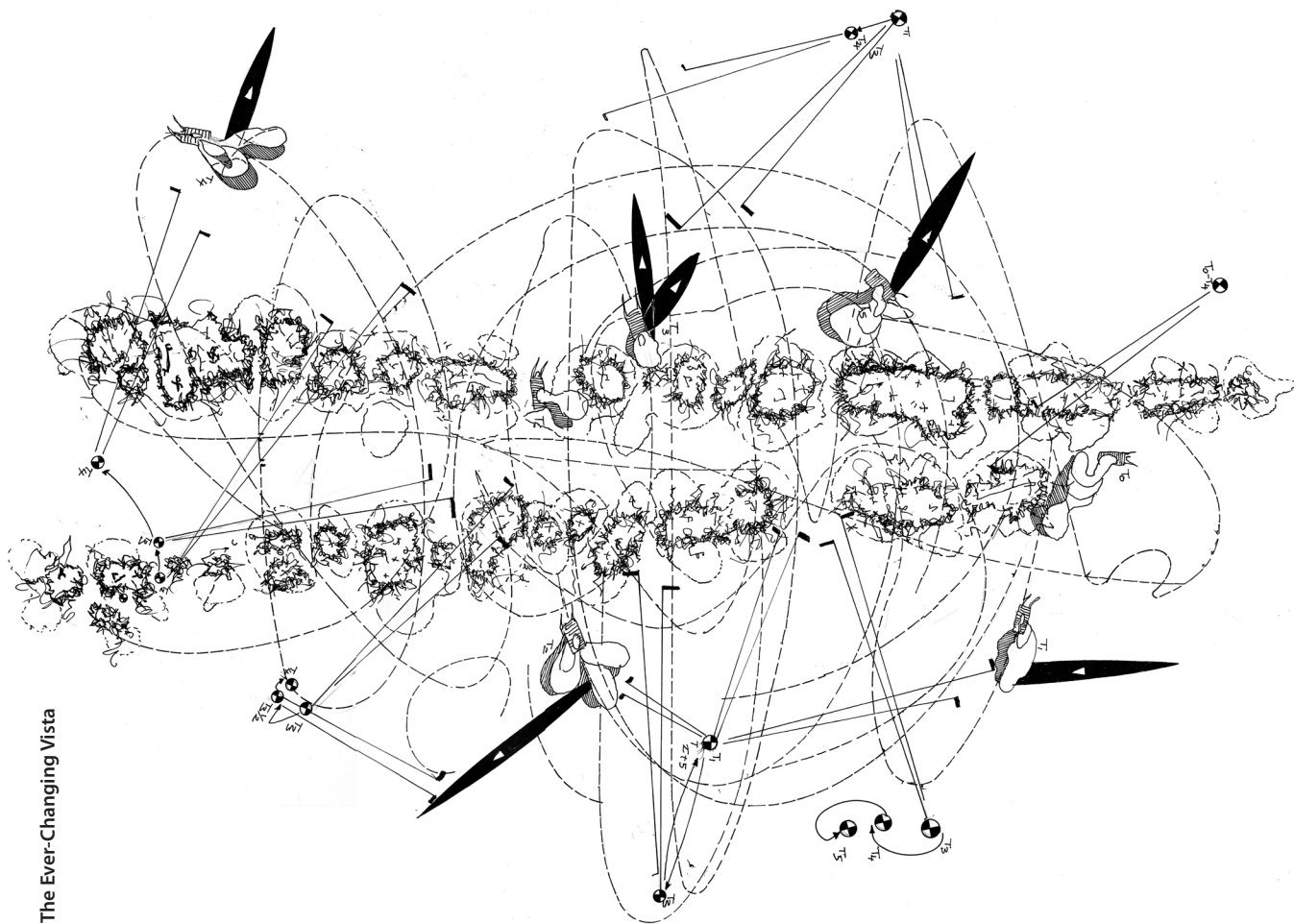
During the last ten years, I have been developing a large and dense theoretical project that addresses some of the surreal possibilities of the new technologies in response to ideas of individuality, mnemonics, poetics, machinery and the history of art and architecture. It is called “Communicating Vessels.”

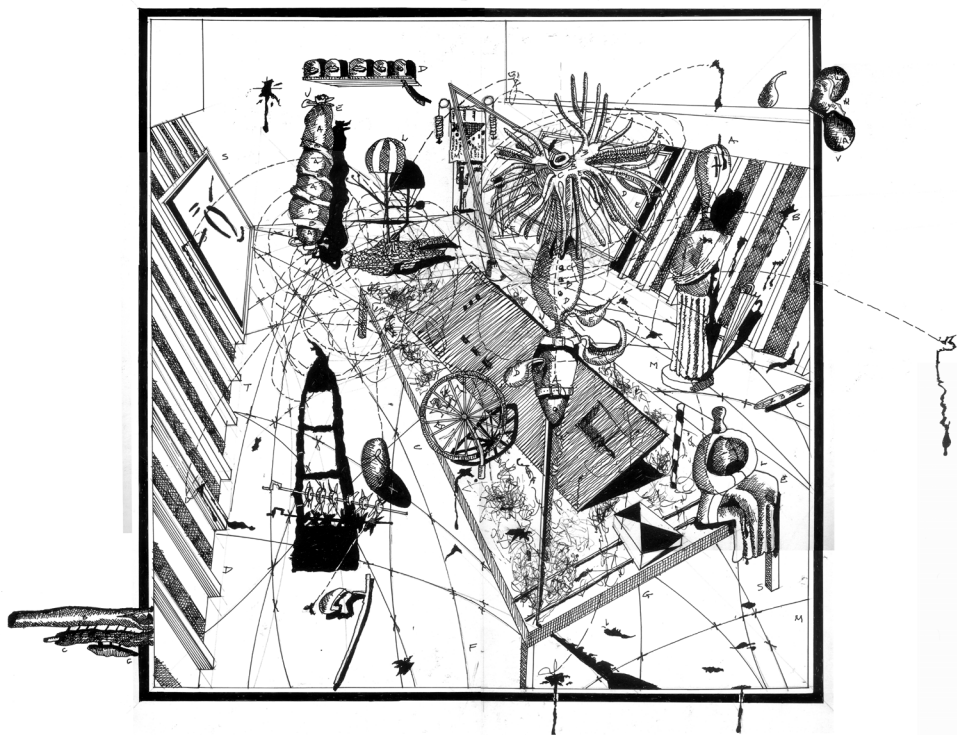
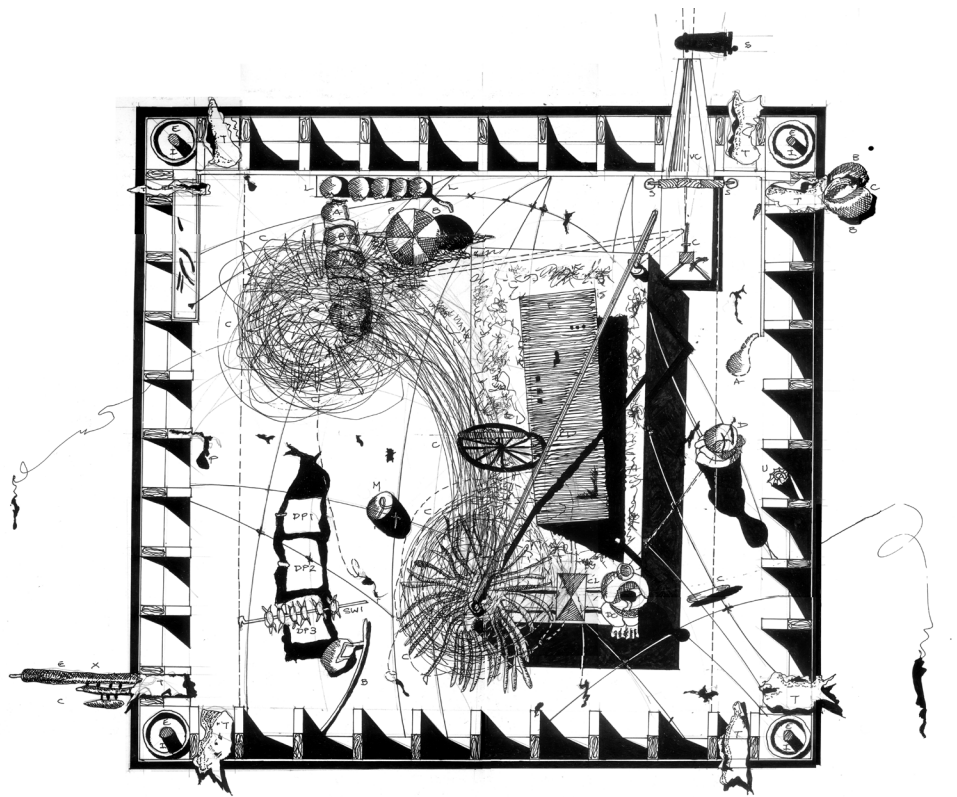
The “Communicating Vessels” project is a mecha-norgyistic ‘Pataphysical Chunking Engine’ constructed out of desire, chance, poetry and Surrealist history. It is conceived as an alternative to contemporary digital architecture, yet it is digitally contemporary. It rejoices in fundamental natural imperatives and living technologies. Its teetering dynamics oscillate around a mythical is-

land, half there, half not. It rides its metaphorical bicycle through the pantheon of art history and tosses itself happily into the dark crevices that are between and across poetic architectural desire.

The objects in the project occupy a vectorial space that is always shifting and unstable. Relationships change and symbolisms vacillate.

This is the English country garden of a heavy-metal Mad Hatter with dark Baroque sympathies. The epistemological distinction of plants, animals and machines is eroded. The conscious and the subconscious worlds are dallied with to create a psychosexual landscape that flirts with good and bad taste yet makes important observations and precedents for architecture and its systematic future.

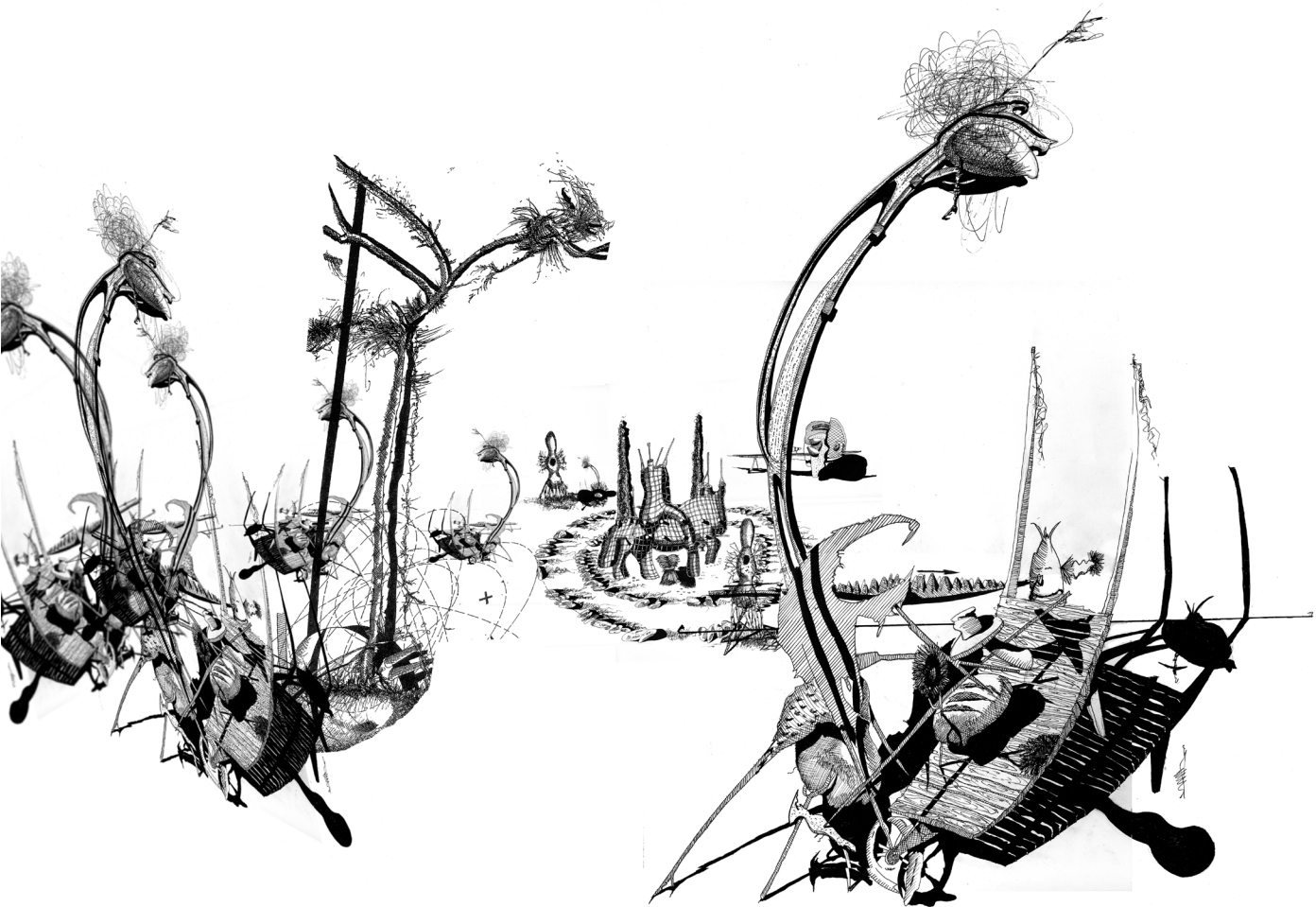




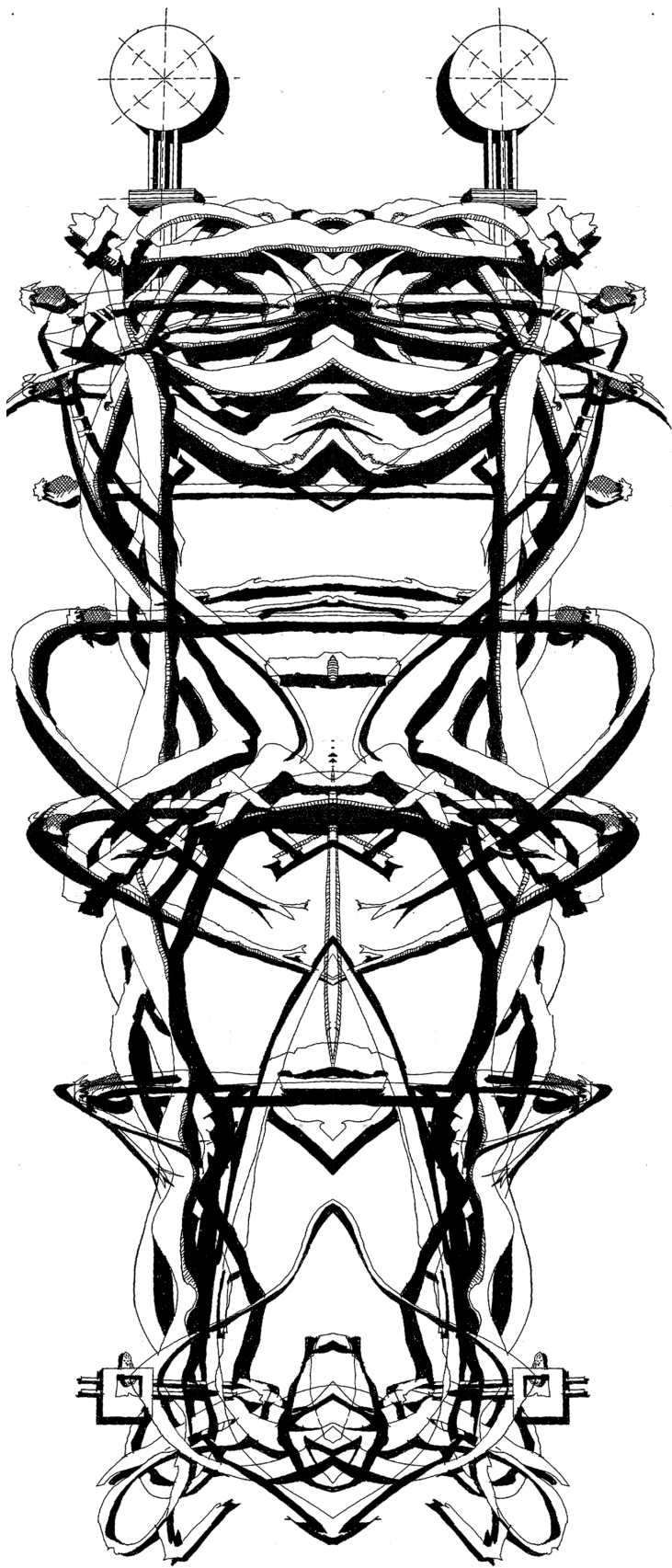
"Communicating Vessels" operates in spatial fields that are numerous, complex and susceptible to chance and change. These include ideas about how to re-boot torn natural ecologies with artificial catalytic ones, how we might harness the growth imperative of plants and be able to grow some of our products in a clean and sustainable way, how we might create twenty-first century memorials as well as other mnemonic spaces, how we might tell stories to bring the power of our architecture alive, how we might create locative, performing architecture and how we might embroider space at micro and macro scales. Elements can take as initial points of departure ideas from the history of art, or the history of ideas or the

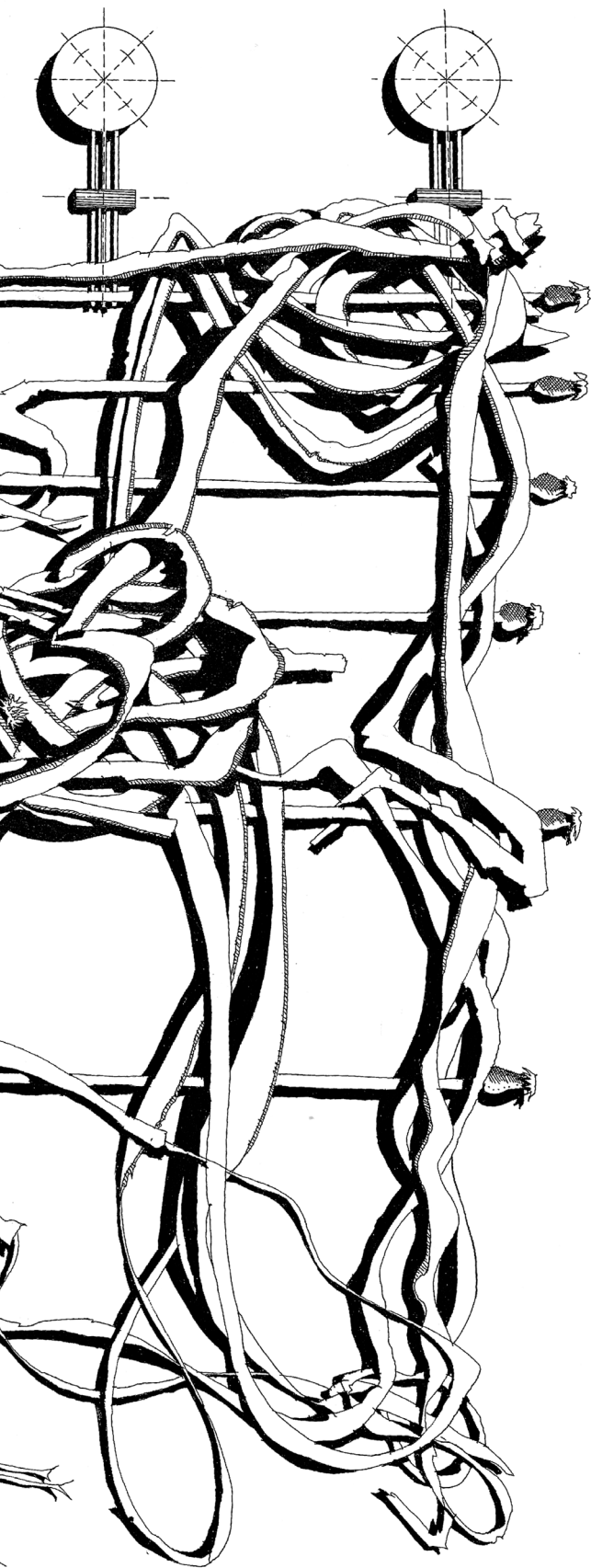
arcane and hermetic history of architecture. But all pieces shown here are conscious of their role in the continuity of radical architectural thought. We make marks in the future and carve out territories for further exploration.

Points of view cascade, epistemologies are anamorphically distorted to reveal architectures that prove that Surrealism invigorated by advanced technology is a useful paradigm for architects to research augmented architectures in the early twenty-first century. The work goes further than this and speculates on the convergence of all our technologies, virtual and biotechnological.









Protocells - The Universal Solvent

“... ‘Here hold out your hand.’ He had the test tube poised over her hand. ‘Palm up, stupid.’

‘Is it safe?’

‘It’s better than safe.’

Jazir opened the tube and poured out a large globule.

‘It’s horrible.’

‘A slight burning sensation. It soon passes.’

‘No, I mean it’s greasy. And... oh...’

‘Yes?’

‘It tickles!’ ...”²

Wetware, Architecture and Bespoke Constructions

For centuries the simple rule for making highly finished architecture and products has been to make it somewhere other than from its point of use—the medieval masons’ yard, the baroque sculptors’ studio, the nineteenth and twentieth century factory being a few examples. As the distance between use and manufacture becomes greater and greater and as skills become replaced by mechanisation, building skills have become undervalued and consequently mostly lost. Coupled with notions such as “fast track” construction techniques, (where the imperative is to limit “wet” trades as much as possible and build with “dry” prefabricated elements that “click” together), the skill set of site operatives has been emaciated to almost nothing. This denudation is now at the point where no one really expects anyone on a building site to have any skills apart from the most simple. Prefabrication brings with it an obsession with “tolerance” (This means how far a product’s actual dimension differs from the idealised dimension due to inaccuracies in the factory process, to the inherent qualities of a material or to the inexactitudes of site setting out and measurement, and how we can “cover” these variations). Much technological innovation has been aimed at reducing these margins of error in the fabrication and construction process to achieve cheap, easily quantifiable outcomes that are quickly and easily erected. These ideas also predicate a view of the world and the sites of architecture as mostly ocular-centric, anthropocentric, ubiquitous, non

site specific, lacking in difference and fighting against nature.

I wish to put forward the opposite paradigm. This paradigm fosters a view of the world that is bottom-up, wet, microscopic, chemically computational, maximalist and ecological. It also changes the economics and procurement dynamics that we are so used to within the realms of traditional construction. Further, it is a “recant” technology: it takes less than it gives back in relation to carbon, energy and contextual damage. It is not inert, or finely honed and is also fecund, highly sensitive and safe.

Living Technology

“... ‘Allow me.’ Jazir picked up a syringe, which he

filled with the blurb juice off Daisy’s palm. ‘Now, watch...’ He dragged Daisy over to his bedroom door. ‘You wanted me to open the door, right? OK, try the door.’

‘It’s locked. You locked it...’

‘Good.’

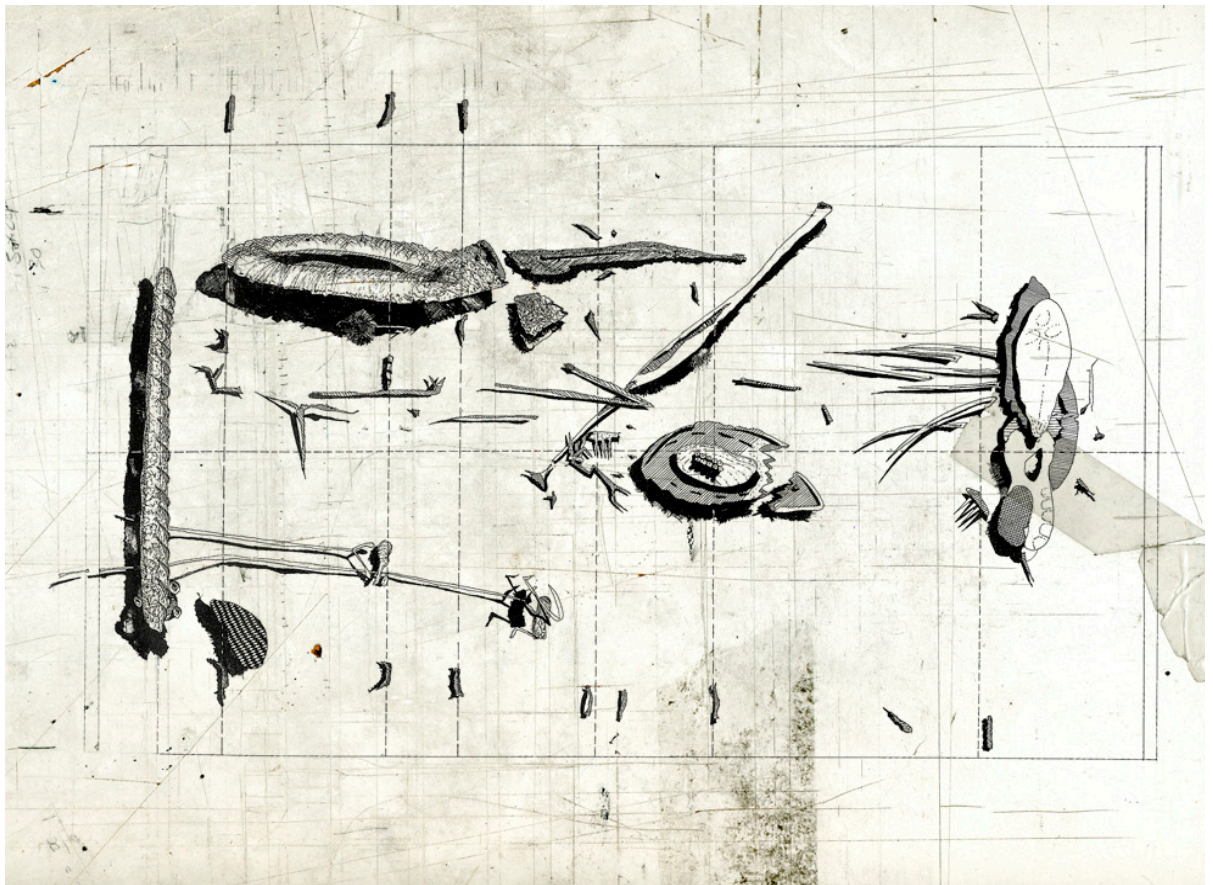
Jazir shoved the syringe into the keyhole. He pressed the plunger. ‘Give it ten seconds...’

‘And?’

‘Try it, Go on.’

Daisy looked at Jazir like he’d gone mad, a clear possibility. Then she turned the doorknob. It swung open, nice and easy...”³

A new group of materials is emerging that exist in a realm between the living and inert. Whilst displaying some of the properties of living systems such as growth, movement, sensitivity and



complex behaviour, they are not truly 'alive'. One example of a living technology is a protocell, a chemically programmable agent based on the chemistry of oil and water. It is able to move around its environment, sense it, modify it and construct materials. Protocells are symbiotic with, rather than competing against, existing systems and materials and in particular, share a common physical language with natural systems called a 'metabolism'. This is the dynamic process through which one material becomes another by the absorption and production of energy. Through an engagement with the language of metabolism, the twilight zone of existence of protocells may initially seem inexplicable but on further examination at the molecular scale, these extraordinary new materials may be understood very simply as being driven by the laws of physics and chemis-

try. Ultimately protocells and other forms of living technology can be manipulated through the canons of scientific and technological experiment though, through their similarity to living systems, they promise to become agents of transmutation that are more familiar to the practice of alchemy. We are already au fait with applying substances to restore the holistic functioning of the human body and living technology offers the potential to deploy this technique in order to restore the harmony in irretrievably damaged architecturally micro-environments.

To ease the intellectual transition from the provision of hard engineered products to the chemical mixing of solutions, one must investigate the paradigms of alchemy. Alchemy is not just similar to architecture but it has become one and the same with our current and future technologies. The al-



chemic analogy is useful in pointing the way to possible spatial chemistries that exist as living technology that just might free us from architectural deadlock. Living technologies are alchemic in their ability to reconfigure matter. The more science progresses, the more we become architecturally, alchemically adept.

Alchemy almost disappeared nearly three centuries ago, but there has always been an interest in its literature and art. More recently, the Surrealists used alchemic and other occult literature to inspire some of their most memorable works. We are reminded of Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, Ernst's *Of This Man Shall Know Nothing* and *The Robing of the Bride*, amongst others. Living technologies and protocells are also Surrealist technologies of softness, growth, swarm and scaffold.

The initial step in the alchemic work is to discover the transmutable *prima materia*. In the context of living technology the *prima materia* in protocells is the self-curvature and bottom-up formation of the spherical lipid membrane. Contemporary developments in the scientific understanding of matter suggest that essentially all matter is space at various interacting curvatures. It is here, at the outset of the alchemic opus, that it can be seen that alchemy and architecture share a fundamental basis: the manipulation of space in all its varied forms, philosophical and physical. Once the *prima materia* is established, a process of considerable complexity is undertaken.

The *prima materia* of the protocell transforms the non-living into the living, the simple into the complex, the predictable into the mysterious. Various stages and transformations occur, producing a taxonomy of forms that are created by the system for the architectural observer to read, explore and use. Their origins remain mysterious and are most comprehensively read through mythological lenses, as the not live becomes a living agent with apparent anthropomorphic desires and ambitions capable of behaving at a population scale. As a colony, the protocells interact and gather information about their surroundings displaying these as complex behaviours, signaling and trans-

forming their surroundings so that their environment eventually becomes changed. They have an ability to arrange themselves into a community of bubbles, and then chemically negotiate these boundaries to make movement, garner "food/fuel," precipitate skins and be sensitive to light. All these phenomena will have a huge impact on the construction site of the near future. Construction processes could be instigated and sculpted by sharp pulses of light, for example.

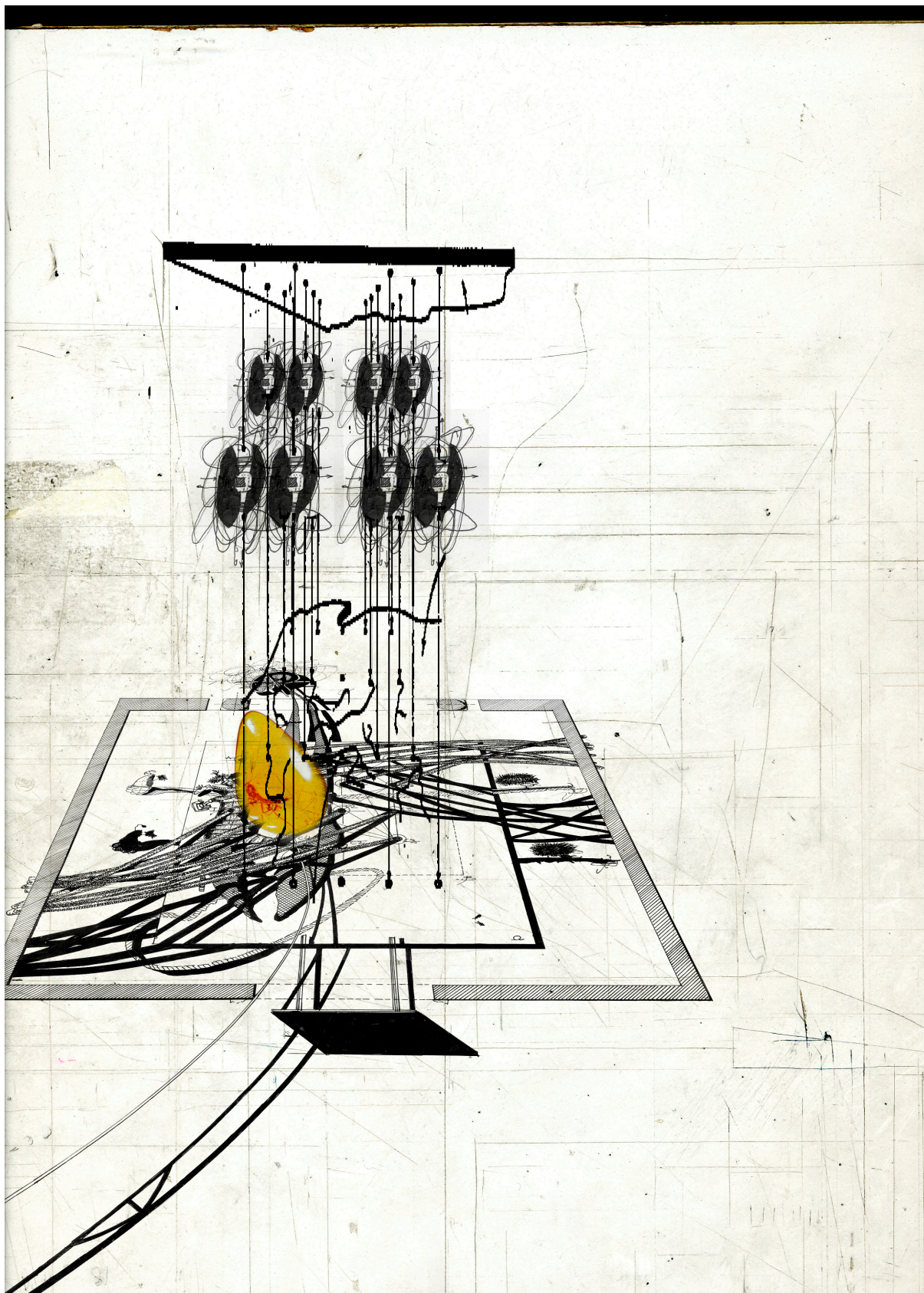
"All I need is a name for it. The stuff that opens anything! The universal lubricant. The oil of the world! Puts Vaseline and KY in their place, don't you think? Jaz Vaz!..."⁴

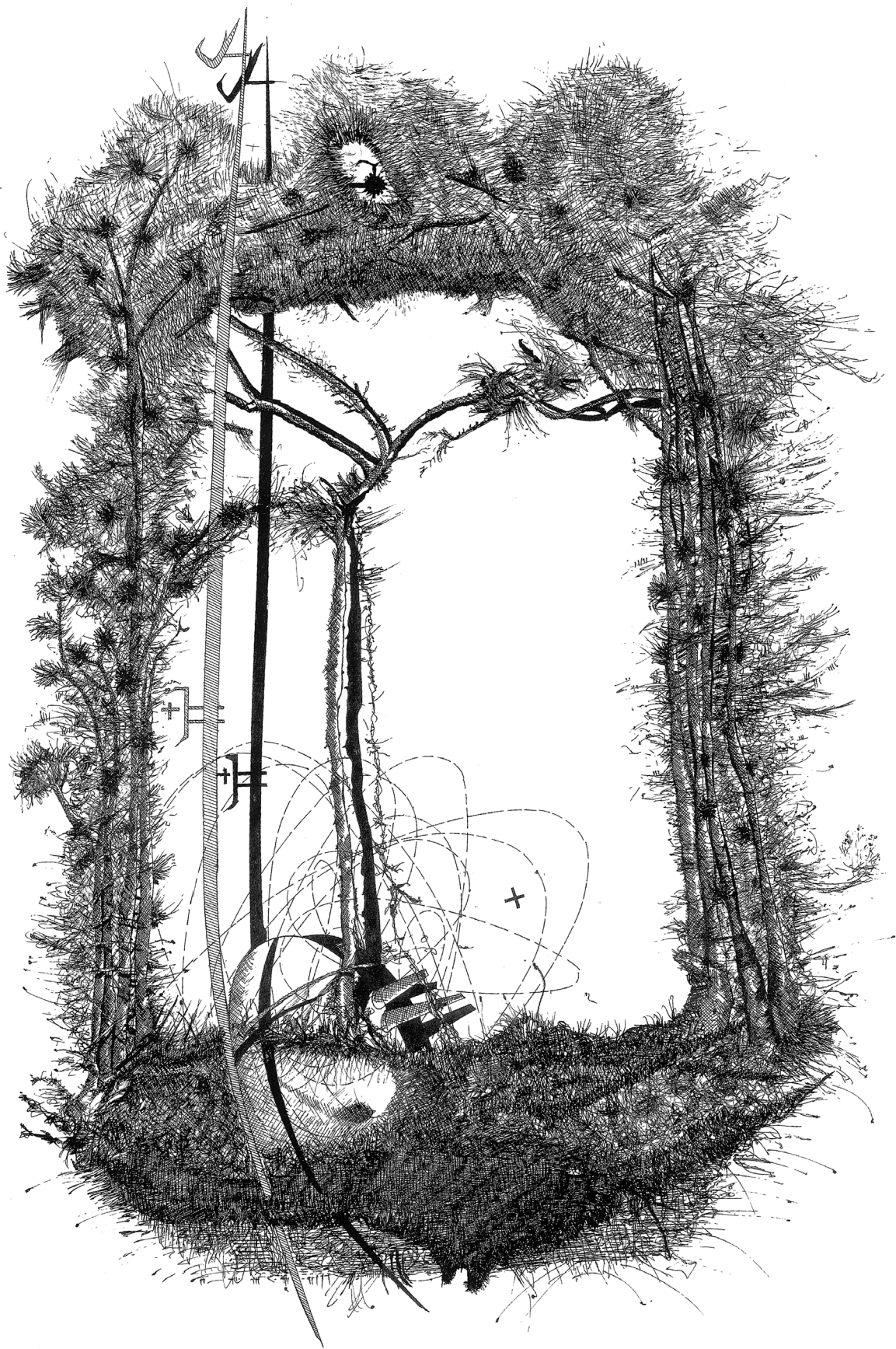
"Nymphomation: Sexy Knowledge."⁵

What is interesting to me as a surrealist is the connection that can be made between the exchange of information in wet unconventional computers and the sexual act or desire and the mixing of information. There is much precedent for such notions. Marcel Duchamp was very adept at these sorts of analogies and epistemologies. His *Large Glass* is conceptually activated by gas, water and electromagnetic forces to create tableaux of desire, autoeroticism and barely maintained equilibrium. His addition to Maria Martins' (his lover) version of his *Boîte-en-valise, Paysage Fautif* (Wayward or Faulty Landscape), was a spurt of seminal fluid on Astralon backed with black satin.

Jeff Noon is much more explicit about this connection. "I've found of these masses"—he calls them 'vaz' but they could equally be protocells—"floating around. Sometimes they fight each other, like galleons. They steal supplies off each other. They eat each other. They fuck each other. They give birth. The cycle goes on."⁶

The "Communicating Vessels" project also speculates on the protocell and other forms of synthetic biological structures. Here they are called the "grease" and are created by a bio-technological factory called "Little Soft Machinery." Little Soft Machinery isn't very smart, just smart enough to desire. This desire provokes his biomechanical glands to produce the grease, the vaz or the holy gasoline (this substance is called many things, it





changes lives, it mixes chance). It is a synthetic biological elixir, smart but highly explosive. The grease lubricates the project and is always present when human or machine information desire is present—which is most of the time. The grease eases things, it is lustfully combustible, it is sought after and it is autonomous until it is caught. It is used by many of the structures that inhabit and interact in the site, which is a garden. This is indeed a Duchampian “faulty landscape” teeming with desire, the exchange of information and the probabilities of chance.

Let’s undo the locks that have constrained architecture for centuries and rejoice in hearing the chains drop to the ground. Our new architecture is an architecture of bespoke, wet and invisible solutions.

Marvel and enjoy this work, take it for what it is: sublime vignettes of a world that is already here. A world so many architects are blind to.

Notes:

1. Neil Spiller, “Vacillating Objects” in *AD: Architects in Cyberspace II*, guest ed. Neil Spiller (London: Academy Editions, 1999).
2. Jeff Noon, *Nymphomation* (London: Doubleday, 1997) 142.
3. Ibid., 143.
4. Ibid., 143.
5. Ibid., 146.
6. Ibid., 147.

All images by Neil Spiller.

