I, Kory A Beighle, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
Actualizing Movements_ Exposing Time in the Everyday Through Systems of Reaction

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This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Aarati Kanekar, PhD
Committee chair: Michael McInturf, MARCH
Actualizing Movements
Exposing Time in the Everyday Through Systems of Reaction

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

In the School of Architecture and Interior Design of the College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning

by Kory A. Beighle
Bachelor of Science in Architecture, University of Cincinnati, 2009

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**Abstract**

“What would it change in our arts, our sciences, and our technics if time were conceived of as something real?”

With these words Sanford Kwinter begins his work *Architectures of Time*, an exposition of contemporary western society and its superstructure. Kwinter illustrates how this structure methodically abstracts reality in a futile attempt to control and know it. Marc Augé expands upon this idea in *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, suggesting that non-places (where the place becomes absent form itself and individualism is lost to the system) have emerged from this structure of abstractions. Together these works define one cause of anxiety in modern society.

Assuming that a “real” or experiential conception of time as a fluid “becoming-ever-different” might help remedy these societal anxieties, my work expands upon Kwinter and Augé’s theories to question the role of architecture in non-places.

This study suggests one method of expressing “real time” in an architectural medium by tapping into perceptual experience (opposed to formalized theories of experience), the nature of making as a systemic process (in contrast to taxonomy of objects in typologies), and the concept of reactionary design (juxtaposed to ideas of movement as prescriptive and ordered). This proposed methodology falls somewhere between daydreaming (the loss of time) and the act of meditation, participating in the system of abstractions subtly to discover a way of working in such an environment.

To approach the questions raised above, an interdisciplinary exploration of the limits of architecture and film is undertaken, both of which are media whose products engage the space-time continuum. This study evolves into the identification of a series of operations, refined through the development of documentation techniques and a constructed system. The built system is distilled further, transformed into a tool of reaction (contrasting the prescriptive systems articulated by those who see architecture as consumable goods). These processes become tools of marking and exposing the actuality of temporal flux while emphasizing the experience of the passage of time; they work to suggest that an intentional pause at everyday life’s in-between might encourage a heightened awareness of place, context and experience.
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Each of you have challenged me to think critically about my work and my life. It has helped me to grow.
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Abstract

“What would it change in our arts, our sciences, and our technics if time were conceived of as something real?”

With these words Sanford Kwinter begins his work Architectures of Time, an exposition of contemporary western society and its superstructure. Kwinter illustrates how this structure methodically abstracts reality in a futile attempt to control and know it. Marc Augé expands upon this idea in Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity, suggesting that non-places (where the place becomes absent from itself and individualism is lost to the system) have emerged from this structure of abstractions. Together these works define one cause of anxiety in modern society.

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This study suggests one method of expressing “real time” in an architectural medium by tapping into perceptual experience (opposed to formalized theories of experience), the nature of making as a systemic process (in contrast to taxonomy of objects in typologies), and the concept of reactionary design (juxtaposed to ideas of movement as prescriptive and ordered). This proposed methodology falls somewhere between daydreaming (the loss of time) and the act of meditation, participating in the system of abstractions subtly to discover a way of working in such an environment.

To approach the questions raised above, an interdisciplinary exploration of the limits of architecture and film is undertaken, both of which are media whose products engage the space-time continuum. This study evolves into the identification of a series of operations, refined through the development of documentation techniques and a constructed system. The built system is distilled further, transformed into a tool of reaction (contrasting the prescriptive systems articulated by those who see architecture as consumable goods). These processes become tools of marking and exposing the actuality of temporal flux while emphasizing the experience of the passage of time; they work to suggest that an intentional pause at everyday life’s in-between might encourage a heightened awareness of place, context and experience.
Prologue
Prologue

It’s hot as hell in my apartment right now and I can’t sleep. A soft breeze is filtering in through the lowered blinds, but it’s more of a taunt than a blessing at this point. It’s mid-spring and my landlord still has the boiler on in the basement so the damn radiators are still constantly breathing their dull heat at us, even when it’s 84 degrees outside. I sit awake thinking about my work and about how I got to this point.

A memory comes to the front of my mind. It was about a year ago, and I am meeting with Vincent, telling him this story. “So I am having this conversation with Nicole yesterday right...and she is telling me she hates it when I always repeat myself. She says, when I talk to her I go on these monologues, which is probably true, I tend to talk a lot in situations like that...I guess I am opinionated or something, but that sort of doesn’t matter right now...anyway, so she tells me the thing that bugs her the most about these monologues is that I say one thing and then I just say it over and over and over again...I beat it like a dead horse or something...and I get what she means, but I sort of see it a different way...for me, it is this cycling through process, you know, like refining what I am saying and as I say it out loud, I hear flaws in it...it’s just not quite right or something, so I say it again correcting what I saw wrong with it...and this is like my process of communicating apparently...”

Vincent is just sort of looking at me and smiling the whole time. He doesn’t really say anything. He seems to understand what I am talking about, at least I think those are nods of approval or I don’t know anymore. This is sort of a daydream - a memory - and for all I know I am just remembering things the way I want.

I do distinctly remember blathering on about this
for a while longer, probably participating in the very act so
appropriately impugned by my wife. Maybe that small
hypocrisy is why he was smiling...though I like to think he is
always thinking of something completely random when he has
those smiles on his face. Anyway, eventually I stop and we
have this wonderful conversation about it and he tells me to
read Correction by Thomas Bernhard and I tell him he should
read Desolation Angels by Jack Kerouac.

I did read through Correction and it wasn’t the best book
I ever read, but I got Vincent’s point. Sometimes its not about
the work itself, but its about the process of creating the work.
Sometimes its about asking the question. Sometimes its about
the conversation.

I was reading from a book the other day structured like
a conversation with Joseph Beuys and this writer was talking
with Beuys and asking him questions about his life and work. It
was another book Vince had suggested at some point along
the road. Anyway, at one point the author starts asking Beuys
specifically about his philosophy on art or something and Beuys
tells him, and I am paraphrasing¹, that in his mind, a work of
art is really just a snapshot of a line of thinking and that each
piece that a maker creates, Beuys in this case, is not so much
about the object but its relationship to that creator. What it
seemed like Beuys was getting at, was that the piece spoke
to its creator’s way of thinking and to the “knowledge" that
is contained in the maker’s being. This “knowledge" is a very
abstract and elusive thing to grab hold of. It is a personal thing,
but by looking at the work, someone who is not the maker,
can begin to get inside his head and understand. In this way,
any work created, is a product of the makers mind-set and

¹ Why is Art? Joseph Beuys pg. 20-21. My way of wording the discussion is the
idea I took away from it...Beuys may never intended this and I may be putting
words in his mouth
thinking. I am in no way an art historian, but I have gathered
that this is a common discourse amongst artists. I see no reason
why such an idea cannot be apart of an architect’s process of
actualizing a work.

As a student in architecture school, you hear a lot of
different ideas about what architecture is and what it is not.
This seems to be a raging debate, one that I have always been
interested in from a distance, but also, a discussion I never
really could wrap my head around until recently. It always
bugged me that no one seemed to think of things like I did,
or at least not more than a few people. I felt like maybe I
would be more at home doing something else. But, at some
point, the thought dawned on me that maybe, the reason that
everyone has such different and equally valid ideas of how
to define architecture was that there was no singular defining
characteristic or factor that made architecture. This thought
has opened things up quite a bit.

My work has embodied the pursuit of my own answer to
the questions “How do I work and think?” as well as “How do
you define architecture and the role of the architect?” This
is a process of perpetual exploration and refinement. I have
learned to embrace the questions instead of holding on to
tightly to the answers.

In the world beyond the four walls of this room it begins
to rain and I hope to myself that it will cool things off a bit. I
open the screen door to my porch and let the refreshing air
flow through my home.

The clock next to my work desk reads 6 AM in a neon
blue that’s enough to burn my eyes out at this point. I feel
myself falling asleep but it’s a Monday and if I go to bed now
I won’t wake up until noon, which won’t work. I rub my eyes
and even though I hate coffee I start a pot because I have a
long day ahead of me. While the coffee brews, I jot down a few notes and schedule my time for the day ahead of me...

TO DO LIST...
6:00 AM – Plan the day...
6:15 AM – Get ready...(shower/clothes) make sure Nicole is awake...
6:30 AM – Make something for breakfast...you need to be eating better and Nicole will appreciate it
7:00 AM – Try to read something that has nothing to do with work or you thesis or any of that...just for your enjoyment...take your time and enjoy it
8:30 AM – Out the door and off to school
9:00 AM – Structures VI class...
10:00 AM – Head up to studio and talk with my group about Structures HWK 2
11:30 AM – Start another casting...
12:00 PM – Work on you portfolio
1:00 PM – Studio...meet with Aarati and write for thesis document(make sure to discuss the blind contour drawings and maybe the site work)
3:00 PM – Try to get out of studio and up to the site if time allows
6:00 PM – Head toward home if I am at the site and if not, get one more casting in before I head out from DAAP for the day
7:00 PM – Cook dinner with my wife and spend some time with her
9:00 PM – Get back to studio and cast/write for a while (try to get two castings done before you call it a night)
10:30 PM – Meet with Vince about GA work and to talk about thesis stuff
11:30 PM – Head home...finish writing work there and try to relax
I have lot to do...

I make these lists each day as a means of offering a bit of sanity to a hectic schedule and to make sure I can get it all done. I assume it is not that uncommon of a practice, because I see it all around me – my class schedule, a TV guide, the calendar attached to my e-mail account or any other form of
To Do List:

1. Hair - Runny - Coffee
   - Get ready (shower)
   - Get dressed (pack bag)
2. Video - Finish up to 3pm
3. Get to studio and start casting (3pm 3pm)

Programming Code
- Start another film
- Start script (come soon)
- Start film
- Start
- Start of another

4. More Over - Dinner T.G.

5. Start another cast

6. More Dinner - Casting Presentation Today

7. Get back to studio

8. More by Venus

9. More Heavy Home - Finish
   More if try to sleep / nothing
programed time. For a long while, I have assumed these little devices – notes scrawled on scraps of paper – were keeping me sane, but as the weeks and months pass, I feel myself growing anxious with stress. At the end of any given week, I find that I can’t actually remember what I have done; I’ve lost complete track of myself. And yet, I keep on scheduling, regimenting and ordering my time for each day.

I get ready for the day and as 8:30 AM rolls around I am sweeping my way out the door and off to school. I hop in my car and turn over the key. Siting in the driver’s seat and staring out through the windshield, my tired eyes pass over a blank landscape of random buildings that are not part of my life and which I have no particular reason to care about. My mind is lulled into a trance and I begin to daydream. The fifteen minutes between my home and school pass and all of the sudden my thoughts snap back to reality. I find myself in a parking stall of some nondescript garage. I have arrived and now it is time to go inside and learn for several hours about various things, and maybe make something.

I go about my day moving from thing to thing, each hour passes and I find that my memories of what has come and gone are a bit blurry, but I have notes, so nothing to worry about. Sixteen hours will pass and my day will wind down. I think I have finished everything I set out to do for the day, but I will have to consult the list to make sure. Frankly, right now I am tired and I am heading home. I will worry about what I accomplished later. I head back to my car and fifteen more minutes of transit time pass with my mind absent from my body. The moments between school and my home are lost.

My life has slowly become reduced to a series of important moments written down in a notebook or napkin or somewhere. I feel stuck. I wish that I could do something to
break myself out of this rut; I wish I could be more aware of my presence in my own life, but the world isn't about to wait up for me, so each day I find myself sacrificing my mental health in order to keep up. Survival of the fittest... right? This seems to be the nature of our world and, in many ways, the nature of the environments we create for ourselves. But, does life have to be this way?
Introduction_
**Introduction**

“Only nature is truly continuous...Man is finite and so are his works.”

- Reiser + Umemoto

“What would it change in our arts, our sciences, and our technics if time were conceived of as something real?”

By extension, what would it change in our conception of architecture if we conceived of time as real? Everywhere we look within our social realm time is a controlled and regimented thing. Seemingly, every conception of time in the mainstream of Western society is static. The fact that one can conceive of a singular moment as something called a second, millisecond, nanosecond and so on illustrates our mental capacity to make time still and, thus, spatial; for Sanford Kwinter, this is a major problem. “What is it about time’s relentless fluidity, its irreducible materiality that the modern mind finds so impossible – or repellent – to think?”

Kwinter posits that the most important reason our society has such a hard time conceiving of time as a living, evolving thing is that the very foundations of “modern” thinking are abstractions. He highlights basic practices, such as rationalized accounting practices, universal laws and constants, systematic techniques for governing populations, humanistic disciplines and the Cartesian or modern “self,” as prime examples of these abstractions, which rule the life’s of those in Western

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2. Architectures of Time pg. 4. Kwinter goes on to discuss how this is not so much his question, but one that has existed for almost 100 years.
3. Architectures of Time pg. 4. Western society is in denial about the reality of time, because it does not fit with our other expectations. Time thus becomes yet another, to use Kwinter’s words, abstraction.
4. Architectures of Time pg. 4. Here “modern” is referring primarily to Western thinking, as has been developed over the past 500 years, or so.
society, whether consciously or subconsciously.\textsuperscript{5} These abstractions are deliberate unrealities, or as Kwinter calls them “ingenious tools,”\textsuperscript{6} which are intended to be devices of conquest and control, wielded by mankind in its endless pursuit of knowledge. For whatever reason, humanity feels the need to control everything it touches, but unfortunately, these apparatuses only provide an imagined dominion. Nature remains in constant flux, a perpetual becoming or remaking of itself; nature is reality and reality is change.\textsuperscript{7}

Extending from a similar line of thinking, the anthropologist Marc Augé argues that a new form of place has evolved from this societal system of abstraction, which Kwinter details. These non-places occur at moments where the place is absent from itself; these places however are not fixed in space, but rather, fluidly shift across space over time.\textsuperscript{8} Generally associated with acts of passage or transit (such as motor ways, airports, sidewalks, etc.), the non-place is a unique phenomenon of contemporary society and it offers a strikingly different method for humanity to interface with its physical environment. The new interface magnifies the existing lack of presence individuals have in the here and now of everyday life. Within the non-place individually is all but lost to the social machine in order to reinforce efficiency and convenience for everyone involved. Consider the vast network of highways, which have developed

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{Architectures of Time} pg. 4. He calls each of things chimeras referring to there dual nature.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Architectures of Time} pg. 4. The purpose of these tools is to make nature measurable and more manageable.
\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Architectures of Time} pg. 4. This is a paraphrasing of Kwinter’s argument as I understand it. There seems to be a relationship between his ideas and those of Sigmund Freud in Civilization and Its Discontents as it relates to the nature of our world as wild and unpredictable. The choice man has to make is between security of freedom. One could put Kwinter’s discourse in this context as well, where Kwinter would be arguing that humanities choice to form civilizations is denying it from accepting the reality that is the ever changing world.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity} pg. 69. Definition effectively take from an interpretation of the work of Michel de Certeau in L’Invention du quotidien (1990)
over the course of the past 50-60 years in the United States. These
motor ways blatantly avoid direct contact with the destinations
they are supposed to connect, for practical reasons, and yet
they appropriate some small piece of each place they pass by,
posting its name for all to see. Such signs observe the place’s
existence and, in a way, claim part of its space.9 For hundreds
of thousands of passers-by, the small towns that stand, out in
the distance, away from these roadways are reduced to shells
of themselves – to non-places. Time goes on and the places
are removed further and further from themselves.

These motor ways have become packed transit corridors
full of cars – make, model, and license plate numbers – all fluidly
moving toward some undefined destination. This network
has been structured by a series of rules and regulations that
attempt to maintain orderly and effective operations. While
one is on the road, the self is lost and the flow of the system
takes over. Sure, one may try to hold onto some small piece
of personal identity by driving a car around that speaks of their
character and their values, but at a certain point, all of this is
null and void; all that remains is the system – the network of
superhighways going nowhere and everywhere at the same
time.10

Interestingly, at the same moment that one’s sense
of individuality is lost, it is also heightened in another way –
equilibrium. In such a situation, the external world is blurred
and the individual retreats within the self. Non-places become
remarkably introspective spaces. The shared identity of the
masses, which results from such a space produces a sense of
resemblance (we are all just cars on the road) and allows a
distance for one to contemplate the worries and concerns of
elsewhere. Each persona is alone and in solitude, but one of

9  Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 79
10  Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 79
Figure 1.3_ The image above is a still taken from a film made by Brad Butler and Karen Mirza. As part of the project they also write:

We are ever increasingly in transit through ‘non places’. Corners that lurk at the edge of activity. Passageways where activity occurs but the relationship between use and place remains unnamed. Places where names are incidental, meaningless because the need for communication – or the passage of time spent – is already deemed to be transient, insignificant, minimal, empty. Figure 1.3

Figure 1.3www.mirza-butler.net
many in the crowded stream of flowing bodies. Contradiction abounds and the place, context and experience are lost to the system as each individual’s presence is reduced to the act of passing through.\textsuperscript{11}

If one looks, not even with any particular high level of scrutiny, such spaces can be found in abundance across the landscape of our everyday lives, and yet, in large part, they are ignored.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, Augé suggests “the possibility of non-place is not absent from any place.”\textsuperscript{13} But what is the impact of this methodical abstraction on the place (which is having its character and identity removed from itself) and the broader physical landscape? Both Kwinter and Augé suggest that the systems of abstraction and non-places, which result from them are one reason for the growing anxiety within the everyday existence of societies where they are so prevalent (such as in the West). The reasons for this are vast and complex, but assuming Kwinter and Augé’s individual assessments are accurate, how can problems like this, caused by humanities desire to abstract, control and know its world, be solved? Further, what would it look like for an architect to work is such an environment?

Kwinter suggests that a conception of time as something “real”\textsuperscript{14} would effectively liberate Western society from these systems of abstraction, but what is “real” time and what tools can architecture utilize to express it in within the context of Western societies contemporary landscape?

The following study is an attempt to understand the theoretical framework which underpins this question and to

\textsuperscript{11} Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 79-84. The ideas discussed in the preceding paragraphs were inspired by Augé’s work in the designated pages, but was framed within a different context and example which applies more directly to my own work.
\textsuperscript{12} In a way, it is this ignorance that breeds the non-place in the first place.
\textsuperscript{13} Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 86
\textsuperscript{14} Architectures of Time pg. 4. The idea of real time comes from Kwinter and its definition as it relates to this study will be explained later.
turn that framework into a strategy for operating within an architectural medium. This work is not intended to identify a silver bullet for incorporating the ideas of “real” time into the architecture of non-places, but rather, it offers one suggestion of expressing “real” time by utilizing the subtle alteration of mainstream architectural thoughts.

The study begins by suggesting that a “real” conception of time will change the way those who create think about perception, the nature of objects and the idea of movement. Perception will be explored in the work of Robert Irwin, and will be shown to be the most fundamental mode of experience. An argument will be made that “real” time is concerned with the experience of change and difference as opposed to formalized and static theories of experience, which suggest inherent, imbedded meaning within form. The concept of the object as a typology will also be challenged. In its place, an argument will be made for a conception of object classification on the basis of modes of production. Objects will be understood in the context of the way they come to be as opposed to what they mean once they exist. Finally, the idea of movement as a reactionary endeavour will be juxtaposed to ideas of movement as prescriptive and ordered. An argument will be put forward, which suggests that the role of the architect is not that of the place-maker, but rather, that of marker of space. Finally, the argument will be made that such a role is placed in an even more relevant position when the architect is working within the non-places of our everyday landscape.

The methodology used to study and form arguments around the issues of perception, the nature of objects and movement falls somewhere between the daydream (the loss of time), a state of reverie and the act of meditation,
participating in the system of abstractions subtly, with the aim of discovering the most appropriate way of working in such environments. This methodology initially takes the form of an interdisciplinary exploration of the limits of architecture and film, with the intention of taking advantage of the possibilities both media forms offer, given that both mediums produce works which engage the space-time continuum. This study evolves into the identification of a series of strategies. The three strategies are explored and refined through a series of works developed together in the mediums of film, drawing and a constructed system (the latter two being established as forms of architectural expression).

As the definitions of these operations, created out of the study of architecture and filmic techniques, become polished, more significant focus is placed on the incorporation of all three techniques into a single, more developed version of the constructed system. The focus of this endeavor is to create a system (which will be shown to be one of the fundamental tools of contemporary architecture) that reacts to the place it is used in, as opposed to imposing itself on the place. The argument is made that the utilization of such a system will allow the architect to create space that reacts to a preexisting sense of place (or lack there of), while emphasizing personal experience and understanding of what is.

These processes and the products that result become tools for marking and exposing the actuality of temporal flux while emphasizing the experience of the passage of time. This work is merely a suggestion of an intentional pause within the fluid stream of life; it occurs at the in-between of everyday life. The intent is to encourage a heightened awareness of place, context and experience, but ultimately, this work goes no further than the creation of an ambiguous doorway. The
maker of the door has no power to force the interaction or the experience; they cannot make anyone pass through it. However, once the door is actualized into the flow of existence individual perception is liberated to be present at, within and beyond the door. This doorway is free to all and yet, few shall pass through it. The question is, once one is aware of the door, will they take the time to open it and experience what is beyond?
Exposing the Non-Place
Exposing the Non-Place

“Fuck the Context!”¹ - Rem Koolhaas

This slogan, so eloquently espoused by Rem Koolhaas has, in many ways, become the anthem of contemporary architecture. Some architects argue to the contrary (men like Jean Nouvel) but at the end of the day, the dominant flows of the practice prevent a counter argument from being heard. Contemporary architecture, which revolves around the singularities designed by those endearingly labeled “starchitects,” demands an ignorance of context and local color. In a post-Bilbao world,² where a small town in the middle of nowhere can get itself on the map by hiring men like Koolhaas, Nouvel, or Gehry to design a museum or library or civic such-and-such, ripe for global consumption, the context and the place become almost irrelevant. The push toward globalization over locality, compounded with a progression toward “the pre-eminence of system over history…” deny architecture the footing to truly be of a place, and thus, the human interface with works of architecture becomes nothing more than a commodity for consumption.³

In his introduction to UN Studio’s catalogue entitled UN Fold, Aaron Betsky, a former director of the Netherlands Architecture Institute, describes the recent adaptation of architecture in the marketplace. He writes:

¹ Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. XVI. No citation provided by Augé.
² Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. XVI. Augé references the impact of the building of Bilbao and the impression is given that it was a watershed moment in architectural history. The reference to “post-Bilbao” is in reference to the construction of Frank O. Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.
³ Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. XVI. Augé is basically making the point that globalization is creating a situation where architecture is generally understood as a consumable image instead of a spatial experience.
For a long time, it has not been fashionable in architecture to make things that stand by themselves and are well-formed...now, UN Studios, along with a few other firms, is designing things that are iconic...fashion designers of this new century...In an economy in which every object – and subject – is subjected to he corrosive criticism of capital, the value of architecture has undergone a re-evaluation.  

Betsky goes on to explain that this re-evaluation has led to the effective commodification of “sexy” images and forms. These unique forms, in a way, become branding images for companies looking to be fashionable and current. Similar words could be attached to many of the discussions about the sustainability movement in the past decade. In both circumstances, the ideas of the movement place systems over the identity of the place and emphasis the global nature of our world in an attempt to turn built form into a saleable identity. This, being the condition of the architectural profession, has a substantial impact on how both places and non-places are developed. As history and locality are de-emphasized, the unique nature and color of many places erodes and is appropriated into oblivion. The places located in space don’t physically go away, but rather they become part of the system of non-places, which have been discussed in part but must be uncovered further.

To answer the question raised in the introduction to this study, more explanation of what a non-place is, how it comes to be and it’s relationship to architecture must be discussed. Once these questions have been addressed, we can explore the expression and exposure of “real time” within them.

4 UN Studios – UN Fold pg. 7-8  
5 This is a paraphrasing of Betsky’s ideas and the word sexy is one used by the author to summarize those ideas.  
6 UN Studios – UN Fold pg. 7-8  
7 Architectures of Time pg. 4. The idea of real time comes from Kwinter and its definition as it relates to this study will be explained later.
Figure 2.2_ Union Station, 1975. Merriewold West, Far Hills, New Jersey. Temporary installation for the exhibition *Projects in Nature* by George Trakas.
When considering how to define the non-place, it might seem logical to position it in a binary relationship, opposing place. So if we consider place to be “relational, historical and concerned with identity” as defined by Marc Augé, then naturally, the non-place would be places that cannot be defined in this way. But this is perhaps overly simplistic, because, as has been discussed, non-places exist within places and they don’t ever really have pure form. Augé puts it in an interesting way writing, “Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally complete…”

This idea places the relationship of place and non-place, less in opposition to one another, but rather, in a fluid dance – ebbing and flowing. Augé writes, “The same things apply to the non-place as to the place.” As place grows more distant from itself, non-place fills the void and holds the position until place returns. In such a scenario, because non-place is always flowing both with and within place, the two cannot be described as being in an antagonistic relationship, but rather, something more like symbiosis. As one begins to try and expose the non-place, keeping this relationship and its intricate complexities in mind will be vital.

The act of exposing or marking the non-place could evolve in any of three directions. First, exposing the non-place could further remove the place from itself, by imposing external values and processes upon it. Second, the exposure of non-place could return the place to itself, by dissolution of the forms of appropriation, which was the initial cause of the place having been removed from it. This process would largely occur outside of the place itself and would require restoration.

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8 Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 64. Augé is describes his take on the relationship of place and non-place.
9 Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 64
of the past – a historical elsewhere – and it is debatable if such thing is achievable; what’s done is done. Finally, somewhere between these two possibilities is the subtle intervention. Such an intervention would serve as a marker of both the physical place and its various contexts, while exposing its nature without fundamentally altering the character and identity. But what form should such an intervention take and how can it be actualized? To answer that question this study has suggested that a “real” concept of time and the various implications that follow from it can help form such an intervention. In order to determine an appropriate strategy for expressing this concept an examination of the complexities of “real time” must be undertaken.
Defining the Complexities of “Real Time”
Defining the Complexities of “Real Time”

“Reality… is a perceptual becoming. It makes or remakes itself but it is never something made.”\(^1\) - Henri Bergson

Once again, returning to the assumption that “real time” might offer some remedy for the non-place, as an understanding of the meaning of non-place emerges, the next question that must be addressed is the meaning of “real time.” So, what is it to conceive of time in it natural state of reality? How is time expressed in this state and what are its products? Further, how would such a conception of time be expressed in the medium of architecture?

It seems that the most appropriate conception of time is through juxtaposition or difference. If time is a fluid medium, it must be expressed in a similarly fluid or plastic medium. Kwinter writes:

> Time always expresses itself by producing, or more precisely, by drawing matter into a process of becoming-ever-different, and to the product of this becoming…we have given the name novelty.\(^2\)

So that which is new – that which is created – becomes that which is expressed by time. Time expresses difference. If difference or transformation is accepted to be the expression of time, than it is important to note that time’s expression is an experiential phenomena.

This revelation offers one of the first paradigm shifts in our conception of architecture. Architecture, traditionally, is a medium of translation and communication. Its genesis

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1. Architectures of Time pg. 3. No citation provided by Kwinter.
2. Architectures of Time pg. 4-5. Novelty will become interchangeable with “the new.”
exists in abstract ideation represented in gesture, word, image and concept, while architectural making (poiesis) exists in a reality of sensual perception. In his book, *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation*, Dalibor Vesley discusses this division as a product of centuries of development. After chronicling this development he claims that we now exist in a world where humanity has no other direct access to reality outside of representation, and thus a “unity of representation and what is represented” becomes vital to how a work of art (or architecture) is experienced.\(^3\)

So, Architects translate abstract ideas and/or images, which exist in a sort of intangible way, and attempt to represent these ideas in architectural drawings, which are intended to become real, built objects. This process (representation) is a process of similarity. Kwinter highlights this as he explains that the relationship of representation and reality “may be understood according to the classical morphogenetic model that is determined by the relationship of the possible and the real.”\(^4\) This model forces reality to become nothing more than an image of something possible. The possibility, which came before the real, was not itself real, existing neither in space or time, and so reality becomes a representation of a non-reality. This is problematic because reality by definition is not a representation and so the model inherently is flipped from what it should be; it is an adversarial relationship. This model does not allow for the notion of difference, thus time is not present, at least not in a fluid way.

The new morphogenetic model described by Kwinter to correct the problem inherent in the possible-real model is the virtual-actual model. Kwinter writes, “…unlike the previous schema where the ‘possible’ had no reality, here the virtual,\(^3\) *Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation* pg. 15
\(^4\) *Architectures of Time* pg. 6. *This model is called a fallacy by Henri Bergson in “The Possible and the Real,”* an section in *The Creative Mind.*
though it may yet have no actuality, is nonetheless already fully real."\(^5\) This model effectively flips the flow in the possible-real model, allowing the virtual to exist first unto itself, what Kwinter calls a “singularity,”\(^6\) and then in becoming actualized; the singularity is placed into the stream of constantly changing reality. “Clearly, if time is real, then the principle of morphogenesis (novelty) must be sought in time, within a mobile and dynamic reality riddled with creative instabilities and discontinuities.”\(^7\) The model of virtual-actual allows difference, and thus, the expression of time, back into the equation, giving us a more balanced model.

Kwinter’s model, placing such heavy emphasis upon differentiation, implies a need for a position of reaction to be taken. If one is to conceive of time as a fluid stream of difference, any given moment is unable to be anything but a reaction to that which preceded it and a building block to be used by that which is to come. This idea also has significant implications into the act of creating as well. The actualization of a built object must acknowledge the building blocks of place and context before moving forward with even the most basic design activities. Reaction and other such principles will help add a methodology that can work within the model and reinforce the balance of the model.

The presence of real time in Kwinter’s proposal also infuses an experiential component into the creation process and to what is ultimately, the human interface with the world around them. Architecture, by virtue of its intent, creates a positive and a negative. One could think of the built object

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5 Architectures of Time pg. 8. He goes on to explain that the virtual would be considered a free difference or singularity, not yet combined with other differences into a complex ensemble or salient form.
6 Architectures of Time pg. 8.
7 Architectures of Time pg. 10. Novelty and Morphogenesis can be understood as interchangeable in that morphogenesis inherently leads to “the new.”
as the positive and the space formed by this object as the negative. The human experience of architecture occurs directly between this positive and negative and our perception thereof. This in-between is constantly changing along with humanity and, more interestingly for this discussion, time. So there is an inherent experiential dimension to “real time.” This dimension becomes another radical point of contention in the way we think or conceive of architecture.

Kwinter summarizes this innovative approach to creation in four requirements of “the new”: a new definition of object, a new theory of time (as real or experiential), a new conception of movement as a first principle, and finally a codification of these three principles into what he calls “the event.” These four requirements indict our understanding of time/space, perception, the object, movement, the event and novelty.

The question of space and time is a complex one; how can one work toward balance. Making time more vital will inherently challenge the hegemony of space and will force the reemergence of our previous discussion of the act of creation—what Kwinter calls “becoming in opposition to that of Being.” As we explore the question of time and space, there must also be recognition of the ever evolving conception of this dichotomy through the past few hundred years. This does not require an in depth study, but simply a cursory overview. With each new conception of time/space, reciprocating new potentials materialize, which might offer insight into new modes of creation and perception.

8 Architectures of Time pg. 4. From here forward, the notion of real time will be understood as an expression of difference, something which is experiential in nature and builds upon the preceding flow of change.
9 Architectures of Time pg. 11-12. Kwinter outlines his path here, which this study have refined and built upon so that it more closely meets the needs of this study.
10 Architectures of Time pg. 11. As we try to problematize time, Kwinter argues, this classical problem is reintroduced. There is a relationship here to the discussion of morphogenesis.
As the presence of real time comes into view and balance is found in the existing asymmetry of time/space, the primacy of space will fade, but something new will come to the forefront: perception. With a real concept of time, the interface between humans and the environmental “becoming-ever-different” is vital. Perception is that interface, but how does it function. A connection will need to be clearly drawn between perception and experience as the study moves forward. Understanding perception and developing it into a usable principle of creation will both reinforce the reality of time and help us to begin to see all of the usable ledges and footholds within the indistinguishable fluidity of time. Perception will only be found to be usable when it is directly tied to human experience. These subtle moments provide moments for reaction or response, leading to two new design paths: a re-visioning of object and an attempt to conceive of reaction as the first principle of movement.

Before one can undertake a re-visioning of object, one must first understand what constitutes the nature of being object: what relationships, forces and external actions are inherent within object-hood and those they develop. These questions of physical theory, when applied to architecture, demand a reconception of object within a taxonomy, not of styles or typologies, but of processes of making. In the same way, reconception of movement as a primary driver in design requires an understanding of the nature of dynamic phenomena. Time will return to the forefront of the discussion here, as a dynamic phenomena occurring in time and through the complexity of space (a completely unstable and rich

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11 Architectures of Time pg. 4. Kwinter's way of explaining how real time expresses itself.

12 Architectures of Time pg. 12-3. These represent two strategies for subtly. Kwinter's hope for these strategies is that they can restore architecture to an active role in shaping culture and social life.
background for any and all relevant pressures). As movement shifts toward the forefront, time is freed from its static state. Subtle reactions and “soft” interventions\(^\text{13}\) become the tools of design and creation and the architecture returns to a neutral status.

This new and blossoming neutrality of building places the event, the actions and movements of the everyday, in new light. Within the event, perception is king. The architect, in as much as is possible, will no longer be in a position to prescribe actions on the space. The architect’s role will be far more subtle, boiled down to the fundamental task of marking place. By virtue of this new lack on the part of the designer, the user becomes implicated within the events of everyday life. A building no longer exists as a home to only certain possibilities, but to all potential. Every conceivable potential is allowed to exist, and yet not everything is actualized.

We have come back to the question of novelty. What makes something new? How does the singularity find itself placed within a milieu of “real time?” The reactionary, “soft” interventions within processes of making, allow for perception and personal awareness become the methods of operation. The narrative function, which the architects have played, breaks down as the user becomes the story teller, through his own presence in time/space.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{13}\) *Architectures of Time* pg. 28. Kwinter likens such an approach to surfing.

\(^{14}\) *Architectures of Time* pg. 4-31. The various references in this paragraph are taken from various places in Kwinter’s essay *The Complex and The Singular.*
Corporeal Actualizations: An Overview of the Time/Space Question
Corporeal Actualizations: An Overview of the Time/Space Question

"...the aim of science is not the things themselves - as the dogmatists in their simplicity imagine - but the relations between things; outside those relations there is no knowable reality..."¹

- Henri Poincaré

Conceptually, the ideas of space and time are intrinsically linked because time is something that can only be seen through space. Space is ground on which difference is expressed. Traditionally, space is understood as the three self-evident dimensions of length, width and depth. Since the birth of the Renaissance and of the perspective (arguably prior), geometry and three-dimensional space, because they were seen as divinely inspired, have found themselves as the focus of art, architecture and design. Over time, these developments, evolving along the way, came to define the way architects designed and what they designed.

Coalescing with this development was the birth of modern philosophy in the words of Rene Descartes' Meditations on First Philosophy. Descartes begins with the decision to cast away all pre-conceptions, he begins to rebuild from the ground up. To do this, he must set a good foundation, a foundation based upon his existence and his perception of it. Through a methodological process of doubting Descartes comes to the conclusion that he cannot rely upon his own senses. Considering the possible ramifications of this conclusion he also decides that he cannot go so far as to doubt his own existence. So, Descartes decides if he thinks, this is enough to logically claim he exists, because there is something doing the thinking – the mind. Descartes'¹

¹ For the blind man in the dark room looking for the black cat that isn’t there, pg. 25. This quote comes from Poincaré’s work Science and Hypothesis (1905)
own existence comes to him as a pure, clear perception, but it is a dual existence where the mind and body are separated.\textsuperscript{2} Despite these developments, as early as the 19th century, the short-comings of Euclidian and Cartesian space were visible and were discussed by thinkers like Carl Friedrich Gauss, who is thought to be one of the first to explore non-Euclidian space.\textsuperscript{3}

The classical models of Euclid and Descartes are the way we have traditionally understood the static universality of both object (the filling in of space; the positive) and void (emptiness as defined by its relationship to objects; the negative). As western society has advanced, space has been upheld, most likely because of its constancy and its stability, specifically juxtaposed to time, which is the opposing force to space. As has been established, western society has quite the fetish for control and stability, so it is only natural that space be held up over time. In the process of upholding the hegemony of space, western society has slowly come to an understanding of time as being more and more static (a reading which places this society squarely out of balance). How can balance be achieved? The only way balance can be found within the time/space continuum is to accept and become aware of the reality of both sides of this continuum. Time must be understood as constant flux; it must be understood clearly as the opposing force to space; it must be understood as real.

Making time more vital will inherently challenge the hegemony of space and will force the reemergence of our previous discussion of the act of creation – what Kwinter calls “becoming in opposition to that of Being.”\textsuperscript{4} As we explore the question of time and space, there must also be at least a brief

\textsuperscript{2} Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies pg. 4-15
\textsuperscript{3} Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation pg. 113
\textsuperscript{4} Architectures of Time pg. 11. As we try to problematize time, Kwinter argues, this classical problem is reintroduced. There is a relationship here to the discussion of morphogenesis.
Figure 4.2_ Cover Art of “Back From the Future.”
How do you visually express time? This work is an interesting take on the problem, emphasizing movement and change.
recognition of the ever evolving conception of this dichotomy through the past few hundred years, now and going forward. With each new conception of time/space, reciprocating new potentials materialize, which might offer insight into new modes of creation and perception.

Historically, space has been understood as the container of reality through which time was expressed. Time is compacted into a linear, pre-determined equation with a known outcome. Space is simplified down into a neat package of discrete dimensions where objects have specific sizes, shapes, and locations with relation to one another. This understanding of space (and time) was loosely understood and accepted almost a thousand years ago, but was not a universal ideal until it was codified around the year 1500, during the early Renaissance, in the form of the perspective. For the purposes of this discussion it is not important who did the codifying, but that it was done at all. From then on, space was hailed as the unifying principle of the world. Some even saw it as the proof of a higher power.

Despite the codification of the perspective, there was still considerable lack of understanding from a scientific perspective. Alberti once wrote:

Indeed among the ancients, there was considerable dispute as to whether these rays emerge from the surface of the eye. This is a truly difficult question, which is quite without value for our purposes, may here be set aside.5

Writers in this time may not have understood everything about the human body’s relationship to the perspective, specifically how we experienced the phenomena through vision, but they

5 Architecture in the Age of Divided Representation pg. 117
played it off in a lot of ways. They failed to see the potential in an accurate understanding of the science. In some ways, this is a potential western society in general still fails to fully comprehend today, though many new layers of understanding have been placed into the discussion.

One of the most important new layers that have been built up on the classical understanding of space was Einstein’s special theory of relativity, which was the first theory that attempted to unify space and time into a single continuum. Einstein’s theory not only made time a vital factor in the understanding of reality, but it also turned space into a conceptual framework, rather than an entity unto itself. In addition to the new theory of a unified space/time, many of his peers were making equally earth-shattering discoveries. In the early 1900s Max Planck outlined quantum mechanics, Einstein described special and general relativity, Werner Heisenberg defined his uncertainty principle and Kurt Gödel established his incompleteness theorem.6

Einstein and his peers opened up the flood gates to a new era in science with their innovations in thought. Not only did these innovations introduce ideas that scientists still are exploring today, but they established a completely different way of thinking about these ideas. Their precedents established a tradition where the human mind was not understood as an engine of logic, but rather one of learning, hypothesizing, and guessing, with the incredible ability to self-correct and evolve. With this new world of possibility open for exploration, more radical ideas about space and time continued to emerge.7

Perhaps the most contemporary notion of space and time, at least in science, can be seen in the theory of strings.

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6 For the Blind Man in the Dark Room Looking for the Black Cat that isn’t There pg. 15-17
7 For the Blind Man in the Dark Room Looking for the Black Cat that isn’t There pg. 17-21
Figure 4.4_ The movement of an atom, as first understood in the late 19th century and the early 20th century, is constant and chaotic. The atom is in a permanent state of “becoming-ever-different.” Humanity understands that at these imperceptible scales, the world is uncontrollable and random. Why is it that we can’t seem to accept such reality at the scale of our everyday lives?
String theory came to be as a result of the work of Einstein and his peers, and has the potential to revolutionize our understanding of the space/time continuum once again. In his documentary film “The Elegant Universe,” Brain Greene, a noted physicist and theorist, describes the development of string theory as a body of work attempting to unify the two completely valid and yet incompatible theories of general relativity (which is extremely effective in explaining the universe on a large scale) and quantum mechanics (which is very effective in explaining the universe at the atomic scale). As string theory has evolved, it has come to predict eleven dimensions in the universe. Though it may not be proven anytime soon, a universal theory predicting eleven dimensions would inevitably challenge the conception of space and time (understood in four dimensions) that western society has established.  

Ironically, the field of architecture, which claims to revolve around the creation of space and objects that form space, has arguably been the last to respond to the innovations that have occurred with respect to these new sciences (or perhaps more appropriately labeled philosophies). In many ways, the architect’s notion of the reality of space and time has progressed little since the Renaissance, especially in its representational tools. Architecture has ignored the reality of time for a variety of reasons throughout its history, but one might speculate how far architecture could have evolved, given that its language and, albeit more generally, its superstructure does not really offer the opportunity to consider time. The moment has come for architecture to evolve and to respond to the past hundred years of scientific and philosophical development. This response must first occur at a structural level, through the reconception of the object of architecture and the human

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8 Information taken from the documentary film “The Elegant Universe.”
The Primacy of Perception
The Primacy of Perception

“The taste of the apple...lies in the contact of the fruit with the palate, not in the fruit itself; in a similar way...poetry lies in the meeting of poem and reader, not in the lines of symbols printed on the pages of a book.” - Jorge Luis Borges

Perception has been, is, and will continue to be the interface between humans and the external world; this is certain. What this perception is or how we understand it is perhaps less certain. For perception to remain the vital boundary it has been, a precise notion of perception and its role must exist. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on the role of perception in architecture.

The relationship between man and his environment is certainly one of the preeminent issues of the architect. In Freidrick Kiesler’s article, “On Correalism and Biotechnique: A Definition and Test of a New Approach to Building Design,” he is discussing the environment that humanity exists within and the three facets of this environment. He positions the nature of architecture as a tool that meets a fundamental need of humans in a broad sense. With this in mind, we can see architecture as a tool which meets needs, the primary need of humanity being life or health. In 1939, when Kiesler was writing, the issue of health had been on the table for many years. Also, Kiesler argues that since man’s needs are ever evolving, the criterion of health is the only one which makes sense in a lasting way. For the purposes of this study, health finds a place with respect to the anxiety of modern culture.
referred to by Sanford Kwinter. The anxiety Kwinter discusses is a signal or form of an unhealthy mental state.

Kiesler explains that up to that point architecture had been judged from four viewpoints: 1) beauty, 2) durability 3) practicability and 4) low cost, but “…architecture, in the future, will not be judged chiefly by its beauty of rhythm, juxtaposition of materials, contemporary style and so on.” Keisler goes on to suggest that this “…can only be changed by its power to maintain and enhance man’s well being…” So the tool of architecture is not just a tool to protect us physically, it is also a tool meant to reinforce our mental and spiritual well-being. Kiesler’s statement that the technological environment (including architecture) is meant to benefit man’s health should be understood as benefiting man in all ways possible (physical, mental, spiritual, etc.).

As an extension of Kiesler’s argument, Le Corbusier discusses the notion of health as a criterion for design in his essay titled “Engineer’s Aesthetic and Architecture,” from his book, Towards a New Architecture. He begins by defining the architect as one who:

...by his arrangement of forms, realizes an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; but forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree, and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationships he creates he wakes in us profound echoes, he gives us the measure of an order which we feel to be in accordance with that of our world, he determines the various movements of our heart and of our understanding; it is then that we experience the sense of beauty.  

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3 Architectures of Time pg. 4. Kwinter is specifically discussing the anxiety associated with humanities lack of control. Kwinter discusses how the act of abstraction is one tool modern culture has developed in an attempt to control nature, though it is ultimately a futile attempt.
4 “On Correalism and Biotechnique” pg. 67-74
5 “On Correalism and Biotechnique” pg. 72-74
6 “Engineer’s Aesthetic and Architecture” pg. 33-36
Figure 5.2_ This film is an exploration of time and attempts to suggest that architecture is really nothing more than a blank canvas upon which time and difference are expressed. The suggestion is that architecture might be neutral in at least some ways.
This definition is juxtaposed to that of the engineer who “inspired by the laws of economy and governed by mathematical calculation, puts us in accord with the laws of the universe. He achieves harmony.”

While Le Corbusier certainly was concerned with health in the physical sense (he was writing in 1923, prior to Kiesler when the problem was far worse), this statement places the architect in a position as mediator of the mental and spiritual health of humanity. Le Corbusier’s words later in the essay seem to imply that architects can achieve the creation of a healthy environment for the spirit and mind by tapping into human perception. He highlights three reminders for architects, which, with respect to contemporary work, may not seem enlightening, but at the time were an important challenge to the way buildings were designed. The three reminders were that of MASS: the element by which our senses are most fully affected, SURFACE: which is the envelope of the mass and which can diminish or enlarge the sensations the latter gives us, and PLAN: which is the generator both of mass and surface and is that by which the whole is irrevocably fixed. These three reminders, as he defines them all have important implications with the way we perceive the built environment. The question of perception Le Corbusier highlights can also understand the interaction of the human environment and the human experience to the way architectural objects are made.7

In the work of Kiesler and Le Corbusier, we see the role of perception in the experience of architecture. Perception is undoubtedly the interface, but these two theorists help define what it is an interface with. Perception is humanities link to their environment and architecture is a tool to amplify

7 “Engineer’s Aesthetic and Architecture” pg. 33-36
that experience, with creating a healthy environment being a definite goal, but not merely an environment of physical wellness, but also one of mental and spiritual health. Defining the role of perception in this way goes a long way toward defining its place, but perhaps other ideas can help reinforce these ideas.

Another notion of perceiving was defined by Rene Descartes, whose work we have discussed previously. He discusses perception in his essay, *Meditations on First Philosophy* after discovering the knowledge of his own existence. He seems to distinctly perceive the primary attribute of body to be extension and that the primary qualities of body to be dimensional (things like size, shape, breadth, etc). So, Descartes comes to the thought that the essence of body is extension and the essence of mind is thought; the two are completely distinct. Another conclusion that follows from here is that he can also distinctly perceive the primary qualities of material things, as he can perceive himself. He also discusses another category, a secondary level of quality, which he can only perceive in a confused and obscure way. An example that he gives of this is a piece of wax.8

Descartes considers what he can know about the piece of wax, determining that he of its flexibility and fluidity. He claims that this knowledge does not come to him through his senses, but rather, his intellect. Within his mental perception the wax can only be imperfect and confused or clear and distinct. These are the two levels of material qualities, those determined through his intellect (primary) and those understood through his senses (secondary). His final conclusion is that the distinction between primary and secondary perception exists because the senses are meant to help him get around in the world, not

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8 *Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies* pg. 15-21
Figure 5.4-6. Scrim Veil - Black Rectangle - Natural Light by Robert Irwin; The Whitney Exhibit 1977
to lead him to the truth.⁹

In Descartes model, perception is vital to his knowledge of his own existence, but it is a particular type of intellectual perception. This fundamental moment of origin exists at the level of cognition. Descartes wrote, “Cogito ergo sum.”¹⁰ I think therefore I am. Thinking becomes the defining characteristic of being and of experience. Many since Descartes have made strong arguments for and against the primacy of perception, but one in particular sticks out, because his work is not so much intellectualizing the problem, but exploring the physicality of the problem.

Robert Irwin, a prominent artist of the mid- to late twentieth-century, whose work innocently and quietly argues against this Cartesian mode of intellectual perception, began piecing together a framework to make manifest his thoughts in the middle of the 1950s. He was trained as an artist, but he was not interested in what art had been. Irwin was evolving his thinking during the era of abstract expressionism. He saw the movement as a critical break from pictorial representation, but for Irwin, that was not enough. The next twenty years of his life became a slow process of experimenting and searching for presence, and ultimately, the primacy of perception.¹¹

Irwin’s work from the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s had been slowly pin-pointing perception as something other than Descartes description, though Irwin most probably could not have told you who Descartes was. His art education and his carrier were not overly intellectual. That was the culture of the Los Angeles art scene. In the mid-1970s however, Irwin, who

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⁹ Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies pg. 20-21
¹⁰ Meditations on First Philosophy With Selections from the Objections and Replies pg. 5
¹¹ Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: A Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin pg. 121
Figure 5.7_ Diagrams by Robert Irwin describing the progression of experience from Perception to Formalization

Figure 5.8_ Untitled (Disc) by Robert Irwin, 1969
had worked off of intuition and experimentation up to that point, began to read and write. A written explanation (and nearly his only one) of his theoretical position can be found in an essay he wrote for his exhibition at the Whitney in New York in 1977. Here, Irwin traces a six step progression of perception, conception, form, formful, formal, and formalized. Within his progression perception is first and foremost. Irwin defines perception as...

...the individual's originary, direct interface with the phenomenally given...the over-brimming synesthesia of undifferentiated sensations...
not even defined as sounds versus colors...the plenum of experience.12

In the context of Descartes discussion, this field of perception exists as an underplayed fabric that cognition happens upon. It is the pre-cogito.

Irwin referred to the six stages he laid out as a process of compounding abstraction. At any given point in time, all six steps in the process were working for an individual observer, yet the process is more phenomenal in nature than temporal, though both play a role. Irwin claimed that his objective was the deletion of the final step in the process, the formalized (defined as the standardized measures that begin to dictate our behavior and direct our perceptual experience), and the emphasis of the primacy of perception. Irwin describes his work as exploring the movement from an immediate perception of chaotic sensations through their conception and formation without the formalized process of making a work static.13 Perception must occur in time. In art, formalization took the form of expectations of a canvas hanging on the wall, but

12 Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees, pg. 180. These thoughts come from the middle section of Irwin's exhibit essay “The Process of Compound Abstraction.”
13 Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees, pg. 181. His ideas here are the entire foundation of his work.
this act was one of making static reality. Irwin was seeking something else and he claims he honed in on it at his 1977 exhibit at the Whitney.

The Whitney Exhibit was Irwin’s “point infinity.”14 The exhibit can be described in a multitude of ways, but the essence of it is summed up well by Lawrence Weschler when he writes:

As the elevator doors eased open onto the vast, empty room on the fourth floor of the Whitney, you were immediately in the thick of it, the thin of it. For a fragile moment, all your expectations were suspended, and the world itself seeped in. Already as you walked out of the elevator, you were triangulating, calibrating, trying to get a fix, to mend the tear in the fabric of your mundane anticipations. But even as you were doing so, you were newly aware of the way in which that is something you do all the time. 15

At this point, Irwin’s work had shifted from painter to something entirely different. The exhibit was nothing more than a scrim of fabric hung down to eye level, bisecting the room longitudinally, a black line skirting the walls and a peculiar window that was allowing in the only illumination in the room.16 The exhibit is hard to describe beyond this, because it was meant to be experienced. Much of Irwin’s work is like this; it is a work of immediacy in perception, and as such words will never properly capture it. The seven years of work preceding this exhibit, Irwin traveled around lecturing at various places and staying for a time, to put together a piece.

14 Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees, pg. 181-2. The author refers to it as “point zero” but acknowledges Irwin would prefer to call it “point infinity.”
15 Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees, pg. 182. These words are upon reflection on his first visit to the exhibit.
16 Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees, pg. 182
Re-visioning Object_
Re-visioning Object

“The natural world is amazingly complex. Life is created and sustained by linked systems. Light, air, water, minerals; nested structures; moving fluids; chemicals reacting.” - Meg Webster

Re-visioning the concept of object requires understanding what constitutes the nature of being object. The architectural object in particular, is by nature a technological object. “If architectural thought and practice is to break out of narrow academicism on one hand, and aestheticism on the other, it must conceive of itself as belonging to a different series of developments – to what recent parlance sometimes calls the “history of practices.” Kwinter is not the first to suggest such a strategy for rethinking the architectural object.

In “On Correalism and Biotechnique: A Definition and Test of a New Approach to Building Design,” a work that we have discussed previously, Fredrick Kiesler discusses the environment that humanity dwells within, describing three facets of this environment, which are the natural environment, the human environment and the technological environment. The interaction and overlapping of these three realms creates the total environment. Kiesler argues that architecture is a product of the technological environment. With this in mind, what is the most appropriate criterion of understanding the relationship of the human environment and the object of architecture, a tool of the technological environment? What is the importance of understanding the interaction of the human environment, and his experience of that environment, and the theories of production, which create objects within this environment?

1 The Cranbrook Monographs pg. 7. Meg Webster in discussing Peter Lynch’s work and some of the background for his explorations.
2 Architectures of Time pg. 13.
3 “On Correalism and Biotechnique” pg. 72-74
In his article, “Some Characteristics of a New Concept of Technology,” Peter McCleary discusses a new way of thinking about technology where the way of producing and the experience of the built object are tied together. He takes up the question of experience through an analysis of the built landscape and phenomena of this landscape, situating architecture as a mediating force between the human environment and the total environment. He concludes by stating that, based upon his analysis, perception and production are “mutually dependant experiences.” Keeping this in mind, it seems that the way architecture is produced matters a great deal in making an environment that moves us emotionally or spiritually. But what is the proper way of making? What types of objects can be created and which ones should be created?

In Kenneth Frampton’s essay, “The Case for the Tectonic,” he discusses the work of Gottfried Semper and Semper’s notion of the tectonic. The tectonic concept is one embedded within the nature of architecture, and yet it is a somewhat muddled idea. Many have attempted to express its complexity, but Frampton is one of the best. He describes two different ways tectonic can be understood, which are ontological and representational. He relates these to Semper’s description of “structural-technical” and “structural-symbolic” respectively. In Frampton’s essay, the notion of tectonic as ontological has to do with constructional factor, where the form that is made creates an emphasis on how it was made and the cultural implications thereof. This is the same principle that Kwinter highlighted in his argument for a sort of taxonomy of “practices.”

4 “Some Characteristics of a New Concept of Technology” pg. 336
5 “Rappel a l’Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic” pg. 21
6 Architectures of Time pg. 13
Figure 6.2_ Stills from the film “Making a Wall” by Kory A. Beighle
other hand, involves the more romantic side of tectonics, where there is a representation of a construction element, which is present, but hidden somehow. This more idealizing concept of tectonic begins to border that of the symbolic or scenographic. These two definitions of tectonic set up a critical dichotomy that can be seen within the discussion of how modern forms of production should be used in architecture and architectural objects.\(^7\)

Two architects that can help us understand these different types of objects are Le Corbusier and Mies Van der Rohe. Both of these men are widely considered to be fathers of modernism in architecture, but both men had differing views of how architecture should manifest itself. While it is not completely accurate to tie either of these men and their work to only one of the tectonic object types that Frampton describes, their work can help us better understand how these object typologies can work in architecture. Having previously identified the issues of perception and production as keys to understanding the interaction of man and architecture, these are the ideal frames to explain both men’s work.

Toward the end of his article “Organisms and Mechanisms, Metaphors of Architecture,” L.F. Galiano discusses the work of Le Corbusier. Galiano uses Le Corbusier as an example of an architect who uses the machine as an analogy to architecture, but Galiano critiques Le Corbusier’s work claiming, implying that it is somehow out of balance because it uses the idea and the imagery of the machine as his focus, juxtaposed to Frank Lloyd Wright (who he uses as an architect’s work using biology as an analogy) who only uses the machine analogy in a functional sense. Galiano writes, “Le Corbusier deemed the industrial assembly line to be the contemporary equivalent of

\(^7\) “Rappel a l’Ordre: The Case for the Tectonic” pg. 21
Figure 6.3_ The Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier

Figure 6.4_ The Barcelona Pavilion by Mies van der Rohe

Figure 6.5_ The Palace Versailles
the building of medieval cathedrals.”8 He once said, “In the Ford factory, everything is collaboration, unity of purpose, a perfect convergence of the totality of gestures and ideas.”9 For Le Corbusier industrialization, symbolized in the assembly line, was modernity and by extension architectural modernity was symbolic.10

Mies van der Rohe, in contrast to Le Corbusier’s ideas, rejected aesthetic and formal doctrines, in order to restore architecture “to what it should exclusively be: building.”11 Mies sought to rethink the components of construction, stripping them of imposed style or symbolic theme. One example of this in his work can be seen at the Barcelona pavilion. The function of the pavilion was a royal meeting place where various diplomats and individuals could meet the King and Queen. The design of the experience was quite unique in relation to the standard experience of royal buildings. Typical royal palaces of the era, for example, were still designed under the rules of renaissance hierarchy and form. Perhaps the most well known example of this typology can be seen at Versailles, where the lines of force from the throne extend through the plan and out, into the expanse of gardens, another attempt of man to claim dominion over nature. The processions to the throne room was rigid and direct, but in the Barcelona Pavilion, the procession meanders, formed by a series of gradual detachments from the world around; first from below (the building is elevated on a platform and must be entered by a set of stairs), then from above (the roof detaches you from the heavens) and finally from exterior to interior (as the path winds through the court

8 “Organisms and Mechanisms, Metaphors of Architecture” pg. 280
9 “Organisms and Mechanisms, Metaphors of Architecture” pg. 281
10 “Organisms and Mechanisms, Metaphors of Architecture” pg. 281
11 “Mies van der Rohe: The Genealogy of the Column and Wall” pg. 72. While it can be argued that in many ways, Mies did aestheticize his work, it does not seem to have been with any thought given to symbolism, but rather, visual appeal.
Figure 6.6_ The Kunsthaus Bregenz by Peter Zumthor. Its glass scale exterior curtain is an expression of the joint and an expression of the making process.
and into the enclosed area).\textsuperscript{12}

The Barcelona Pavilion is also important because of the discussion of column and wall that Mies sets up. Again, looking at the renaissance ideal, the primary structural system of the renaissance was the bearing wall. The column was present, but was only used as ornament. Mies wanted to use the column to dissolve the wall and open space, but their was still a function for a wall to delineate space. This was not a structural requirement however, so in the Barcelona Pavilion, the walls stop just short of the roof, so we know they are not structural. By understanding Mies’ approach at the Barcelona pavilion, we see an attempt to blur the object (matter) and subject (meaning), denying scenography.\textsuperscript{13}

Both of these examples illustrate ways of tapping into the human experience through design, but in the case of Le Corbusier the effect is intended to be more abstract. With Mies, the intention is to bring the phenomena of modernity into the building process and the experiential character of the space. The modern experience becomes the process of making becomes the experience of the building. Going back to McCleary’s article, we understand how important his words are; our methods of production must change to meet the new demands of the human experience. McCleary quotes from Walter Benjamin’s The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, where Benjamin is quoting Paul Valery. Valery writes:

\begin{quote}
Our fine arts were developed, their types and uses were established, in times very different from the present by men whose power of action upon things was insignificant in comparison with ours...we must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} “Mies van der Rohe: The Genealogy of the Column and Wall” pg. 72
\textsuperscript{13} “Mies van der Rohe: The Genealogy of the Column and Wall” pg. 73
Figure 6.7. Garden Court Elevation, apartment building proposal for Menilmontant, Paris by Peter Lynch

Figure 6.8. Full-Scale prototype of a pre-cast wall unit, apartment building proposal for Menilmontant, Paris by Peter Lynch
affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.¹⁴

One contemporary example of an architect working in the ontological mode of tectonics can be seen in Peter Zumthor. Zumthor’s works display an acute awareness of both their context and own existence. The works are constructions, composed of single parts articulated as such. These individual parts are then joined, and it is in the joints that the projects come alive. This process can be seen clearly in many of his projects. For instance, in the Kunsthal Bregenz, the exterior skin of the building is comprised of hundreds of frosted glass panels. These panels are then joined to one another and to the structure behind with a metal clip, specifically designed for the project. This metal joint allows for the glass panels to float unto themselves, and yet, the material contrast between the metal and glass also makes the eye aware of the joint. It is as if each individual object and every joint is there to underpin the quiet presence of the work and to lead to an awareness of the unity of the whole.

Zumthor, at a lecture given at the Southern California Institute of Architecture, in Santa Monica, CA once said:

Postmodern life could be described as a state in which everything beyond our own personal biography seems vague, blurred, and somehow unreal. The world is full of signs and information, which stand for things that no one fully understands because they, too, turn out to be mere signs for other things. Yet the real thing remains hidden.¹⁵

Zumthor’s buildings are part of this hidden world of the real. They do not stand for anything, but are simply buildings, each

¹⁴ “Some Characteristics of a New Concept of Technology” pg. 336
¹⁵ Thinking Architecture pg. 16
designed for a purpose and a place. They are ontological objects, derived from a careful process of reaction to the resistant flows of the project.

This notion is reinforced further by Kiesler’s words when he discusses how the technological environment is a product of human needs, whether they been actual needs or needs man has made up for himself. Every technology is then co-real because it is reliant upon man, who is constantly in flux with his total environment. If man is in flux then so must technology, and by extension the architectural object.\(^{16}\)

Another interesting example of an architectural system, functioning in an ontological mode of tectonics, can be seen in the work of Peter Lynch on his completion proposal for an apartment building in Menilmontant, Paris. Lynch’s system, like Zumthor’s project, is composed of a single unit and a joint (when necessary). The interesting departure from the norm in Lynch’s work is the idea of the imperfection or glitch. Lynch builds an intentional glitch into his system and a complex series of possibilities ensues. A simple differentiation between the two primary vertical supports and the addition of a small notch in the base, makes, what is effectively a masonry unit and opens up its potential.\(^{17}\) The act of forming the wall becomes flexible and the maker is forced to react to the results the interaction of each new unit and those that came before. The glitch allows openings to be created without having to add any outside element into the system. A shift is made away from the global and systematic nature of architecture and the specific place and context become important for the system to react against. Lynch’s idea offers an interesting jumping off point to explore the potentials of a constructed system to speak of both its process of being made and the place it is situated within once

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16 “On Correalism and Biotechnique” pg. 70
formed. By shifting the architectural object toward a process focus, our notion of architecture is able to move with the flux of the human environment and the creation of objects can be a reactionary process. The idea of reaction is also introduced here and it becomes the basis for the final key area of focus, that of movement.
The First Principle of Movement
The First Principle of Movement

“...the most drawing I ever did was with stakes and string out in space. The ground plane was the piece of paper...it was all done by stringing and moving lines closer and further apart.”

- Richard Fleischner

Along with a re-visioning of the object of architecture, there must be a reconception of movement as a first principle in design, but what does this mean? This requires an understanding of the nature of dynamic phenomena, in which time is at the forefront of the discussion. A dynamic phenomena occurring in time and through the complexity of space, movement is the expression of the corporeal world. In his book, Architectures of Time, Sanford Kwinter explains how time is already becoming a first principle in fields like physics and mathematics – fields proposing new types of geometry (phase space, fractals, attractor dynamics, scaling), algebra (nonlinear equations, recursion, genetic algorithms) and modeling tools (the desktop micro-computer, the interactive cathode ray tube). Each of these new and emerging tools share a mutual concept of time as something real, to the point where they are attempting to factor in the change that occurs as systems evolve.

One of the most important lessons each of these tools have for our study is the concept of the “singularity.” The singularity in these examples exists as a unique moment of change in the system – a watershed moment. Kwinter refers to the singularity as a “critical point(s) or moment(s) within a system when its qualities and not just its quantities undergo a fundamental change.” In order to acknowledge the singularity

1 Sittings pg. 105
2 Architectures of Time pg. 13
3 Architectures of Time pg. 13
within the system equations must not only be time sensitive, but they must also account for qualities in a quantifiable, numeric way, particularly with Kwinter’s definition in mind. The singularity offers an opportunity to incorporate movement and change in time, highlighting the event (individual singularities) as the new catalyst of both historic and physical change.

Attempting to account for temporal phenomena and qualities within scientific experiments is problematic, but it is not unprecedented. In an April 2010 edition of Discover magazine, an article written by Zeeya Merali chronicles recent scientific developments in the work of Jeff Tollaksen, a quantum physicist, who has been looking into the idea that time might flow backward, as well as forward. Tollaksen was exposed to this thought while attending a lecture of Yakir Aharonov (now one of his colleagues), and has been researching the idea ever since. The implications of Tollaksen’s work may be up for debate, but for the purposes of this discourse, his experiments seem far more interesting. In order to test his hypothesis Tollaksen and his team are working with effecting and then measuring the response of individual particles, which due to the Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle, cannot be measured with complete accuracy.4

Heisenberg’s principle claims that you can never know all of the properties of a particle at the same time. For instance, the more precise a measurement one takes of the speed of a particular atom, the less certain one can be of the position; one can never test for both at the same time in a deductive way. Tollaksen’s study side-steps this principle in a clever way. His scientists have been taking what they call “weak measurements”5 of these particles. These measurements, though individually lacking some information, when run millions

4 “Back From the Future” pg. 38
5 “Back From the Future” pg. 39-40
Figure 7.2_ “Woman Walking Down Stairs” by Eadweard Muybridge, 1887

Figure 7.3_ “Woman Using Skipping Rope” by Eadweard Muybridge, 1887

Figure 7.4_ “Getting into Bed” by Eadweard Muybridge, 1887
of times allow the team to get enough information to come to a conclusion. Tollaksen and his colleagues have been working for more than twenty years developing a process for running these tests and they run them thousands of times a day. As Tollaksen explains, these experiments consist of a “pre-selection” measurement on a group of particles, an intermediate measurement and finally a “post-selection step” where the researchers take another reading on a random sampling of the particles. Over the course of thousands and thousands of these experiments being executed all over the world, a knowledge base builds up, allowing an intuitive, inductive process to make a well reasoned argument. The results have shown a notable increase in the intermediate readings of the particles randomly re-tested during the “post-selection” phase of the experiment, suggesting that the team’s hypothesis, that time has more than one directional flow, may be correct.7

Tollaksen’s work gives us one way of understanding how to account for the dynamics of testing and measuring the “immeasurable” aspects of temporal phenomena. Tollaksen’s “weak measurements,” by virtue of their slight touch, allow a system of uncertainty and “chaos” to be quantified. Another approach to making temporal phenomena and quality measurable can be seen in how forms are actualized. Kwinter offers us the example of the ice cube vs. the snowflake.8 In this example we see real time as something different for the ice cube and the snowflake. The ice cube, by virtue of its production, is not a unique thing; every ice cube is meant to be the same. The mould, which forms the ice cubes, mandates a pre-determined outcome. In this system, almost nothing is

6 “Back From the Future” pg. 39-40
7 “Back From the Future” pg. 40-41
8 Architectures of Time pg. 26-28
able to flow and so time is not real as it has been defined here. In the case of the snowflake, on the other hand, its creation is fluid. The making of the snow flake is a constant action-reaction process with a variety of criteria affecting the birth of the snowflake; this dynamic process seems to exist in real time. Unlike the ice cube, the snow flake is a singularity. No two are ever alike, and this is exclusively because its genesis is left open to the flows of time – it remains sensitive. This illustrates how vital the ability to remain fluid is in temporal phenomena. The qualities that are under inspection here are in a constant state of flux as they impact the formation of a singularity and its placement into the flow of reality.⁹

Also, implicated in this discussion is the role of the site, for it is the specific locale that contains a majority of the characteristics that act on the creation of dynamic flow. In the case of the snowflake, as it falls it absorbs each of the moments it passes through, each and every changing condition: gravity’s downward force, the biting cold of the night air, the winds gust and speed, and so on. The snowflake utilizes each moment, with its myriad factors to bring itself into being. Kwinter writes, “This analytic model – based on developmental pathways, dynamical interactions, singular points, and qualitative movements in the abstract, sometimes multidimensional space – arguably furnishes a far richer theory of “site” than most currently employed in orthodox aesthetic or architectural practice.”¹⁰

In many ways this approach mirrors Tollaksen’s experiments and his “weak measurements” that were designed to allow for the particles to remain in an uninterrupted state, while still allowing for a measurement. Another appropriate metaphor for this new theory of “site” can be found in a variety

⁹ Architectures of Time pg. 28  
¹⁰ Architectures of Time pg. 27-28
of individual sports that exist as a fluid back and forth of man and nature. One great example of this is the surfer, who uses his board to glide across the ever-changing wave. As the surfer rides, he must constantly read the subtle changes in the surface of the water, and even some of the flows below it. This read and react methodology of “soft” interventions could provide a method of tracking the constant and overlapping flows by apprehending and reacting to singularities.\(^\text{11}\)

Another sport that provides and even more interesting example than surfing is that of rock climbing. In more recent forms of free climbing, there are no tools in the process, like the board in surfing. It is just man and nature, the later, nature, is ever changing and the former, man, is placed in a pure state of reaction. What is most intriguing about rock climbing is the disparity in relationships in time. The mineral flows of the sheer rock exist in a nearly eternal time flow, while the climber’s muscular reactions exist in almost immeasurably short durations – mere nanoseconds – and yet singularities exist at every turn, allowing the climber to reach into small gaps in the rock, only big enough for a few fingers, yet still strong enough to hold a man for a short time.

This reactionary approach to design provides a more active way of creating that unifies the conception and making within architecture. The “site” – either the wave or the rock face – abounds with singularities to the point that neither the surfer nor the climber can fathom mastering anything but himself. One can only ever hope to engage the flux of nature, becoming as nature, plastic, supple, and ever-changing.

Applied to an architectural framework – site, program, available materials and building techniques, budget and project schedule – this approach of reaction allows the

\(^{11}\) Architectures of Time pg. 28. Kwinter juxtaposes surfing and similar sports to typical “hunter-gatherer” sport forms where the individuals are the prime motors.
Figure 7.5-7_ Sod Maze by Richard Fleischner
resistant flows (the framework) to redirect the initial intentions of a given project to blossom from abstraction, into something truly novel...a work that speaks truthfully of the context and the reality which flows from the buildings existence.\textsuperscript{12}

But what does it really mean to react? How can this idea be used? One interesting idea of reaction can be seen in the work of Richard Fleischner. A great deal of his work is specifically dealing with the question of how one interacts with a specific site, but a particularly useful project to explore is the Sod Maze of 1974. The project is a permanent installation in Newport, Rhode Island. The work was part of an exhibition entitled “Monumenta” in 1974. The exhibition was a series of large outdoor sculptures on the grounds of Château-sur-Mer. The piece was composed of four concentric rings of subtly mounded earth covered by sod. The rings form a maze in plan, but the phenomena of the experience is what the work is specifically trying to emphasize. To express this emphasis even further, Fleischner designed the piece by going out to the site and drawing on the site itself. Once the center point of the rings was decided upon, Fleischner and a helper or two used a length of rope, one person standing in the middle and the other making the rings. The distance between the mounds and the size of the mounds and so forth was all determined based upon these experiences. This work is considered to be the first of three such drawings that Fleischner worked on.\textsuperscript{13}

Another interesting idea found in this work is the fact that they form space, but they are not restraining. These pieces lead the individual through a pre-determined path, but the path is simply one way of experiencing the space. Deviation is allowed because of the openness and, perhaps, even encouraged to a point. The concentric rings barely ripple the

\textsuperscript{12} Idea inspired in part my Peter Lynch in \textit{The Cranbrook Monographs} pg. 12
\textsuperscript{13} Richard Fleischner pg. 7-8
Figure 7.8_ Landscape, 1973; Landscape, 1973; Study for a Pyramid III, 1970; Study for a Pyramid V, 1970 by Richard Fleischner
Figure 7.9_ Pin Box, 1970 by Richard Fleischner; View 1

Figure 7.10_ Pin Box, 1970 by Richard Fleischner; View 2
Figure 7.11: La Jolla Grove Proposal Drawing, 1982 by Richard Fleischner
lawn’s surface as they gently slope up and down.\textsuperscript{14} It is not clear that this was expressly Fleischner’s intent, but it is a reality of the work.

Together, these issues form Fleischner’s very interesting way of understanding and exposing a site’s nature. Fleischner’s process offers a method of tracking the actuality of a place and the experience there of. In some ways, his work, the physical interventions and sometimes objects, becomes the document or the drawing. It is a radically different way of thinking about how to present space and place. For these reasons, paired with its potential to express a more experiential “real time,” Fleischner’s methodology will become the starting point for answering the question of how to work on and in a non-place, a site and a physical landscape (the place, its context and an experience thereof).

At this point, we have established what is meant by “real time” and we have explored how it can be expressed in the medium of architecture through perception, processes of making and reactionary movements. The questions going forward are: how can these three factors come together to create novelty – the new? Also, how can these original architectural works be used to expose and mark the non-place to emphasize the place, context and experience?

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Sittings} pg. 56
Figure 7.12
Novelty in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
Novelty in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction

“What form or forms will a new architecture take? Today we must acknowledge that any new form of architecture will not only have to rethink the specific forms it produces, but, as a condition for doing so, will have to rethink the form, shape and articulation of its practice of architecture.”

- Michael Speaks

Western society has certainly undergone a great deal of change in its mode of operation in the past century or so. Its techniques of production, specifically artistic production, both in their flexibility and their precision, inspire new ways of thinking, and more importantly perceiving. As far back as 1931, Paul Valery, a noted art historian and theorist, was taking note of such changes. It stands to reason that in the almost 80 years since Valery took note of the paradigm shift in western society, far more has changed, but the key thought in his analysis seems to stand, that being the effect of techniques of production upon perception. Valery claims that one should assume that new ideas and innovations will certainly alter, not only future technique, but also our forthcoming notion of art.

This is the thought that Walter Benjamin opens his theses The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, a piece that tries to break down exactly how novelty alters perception.

The problem with a piece such as The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction is that it’s attempting to project a superstructure, which is not fully formed, from a substructure that is in a constant state of flux. Benjamin acknowledges this in the preface of his work, when he

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2 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction. Benjamin uses a quotation by Valery to open his discussion. The quote comes from Valery’s 1931 Pieces sur L’Art.
discusses the work of Marx; Benjamin’s preface is an abstract, explaining how his methodology is the same as that of Marx’s work studying capitalism and projecting how it would exploit the proletariat. Benjamin writes:

The transformation of the superstructure has taken (and could take) more than a half century to manifest in all areas of culture…

Benjamin is referring to Marx’s work when he makes this statement, but it applies just as much to his writing, because modes of production are constantly shifting in artistic production as well. Benjamin’s work will provide many valuable insights, but just as was the case with the quote from Valery above, Benjamin’s work exists as one of the first moments in a long series of interrogations of the full potential of mechanical reproduction. Benjamin’s work does indeed form a framework, but it must be taken in its context.

To begin setting up his framework, Benjamin establishes how mechanical reproduction has developed over history, even considering artistic production technique that may not have been thought of as reproduction in its day. He goes on to explain how reproducibility, by definition, destroys the “aura” or authenticity of art works. For Benjamin, this marks an adjustment in the thinking and perception of the masses with respect to reality. He writes, “To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose ‘sense of universal equity of things’ has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of production.”

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3 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 9. Benjamin compares his work to Marx in their relationship to production. In both, production is key to the superstructure, but production’s impact is slow moving and thus, in many ways, can not be fully understood until the superstructure begins to change again.

4 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 18
attempt to make everything alike in an attempt to draw it closer to man, to make it more controllable. It seems that two significant changes should follow for art: 1) the work of art is freed from its dependence on ritual (who gives art value based on its uniqueness) and 2) art becomes open to new value systems or meanings (it is also open to mean nothing at all). This openness offers great potential for understanding both production methodology and perception.

Benjamin claims that with each new epoch comes a new mode of human sense perception; he goes on to say that both the manner and medium of human perception shift according to nature and context of the collective society. So, what is our epoch’s mode of perception? Within what media forms define Western society’s experience?

Two media that Benjamin identifies as being able to present objects for the collective simultaneous experience are that of architecture and film, which both act upon and exist in reality. Though he does not fully explore it, Benjamin creates an argument for an interdisciplinary study of architecture and film, on the basis of reality (balanced time/space existence), which offers an opportunity to address both issues of making and perception.

One of the ways that film, as a process, expresses its existence in reality is the relationship between the subject and the apparatus that captures the event before it. This relationship is a complex one, simultaneously drawing art closer to reality and farther away at the same time. On the one hand, in film, the subject exists before the camera as itself, and not as a representation of something else (which is the tradition of

5 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 17
6 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 37. This is in juxtaposition to painting, which is meant more for individual experience or for the experience of only a few. Epic poetry is also highlighted as having been able to project for simultaneous experience in the past.
Within the evolution of the western film tradition and its narrative structure, this is less so, but the discussion here is not of Hollywood film making, but rather, the potential of film as a production media. In this way, on the other hand, the subject of the film is in a state of exhibition. This state is not wholly good, nor bad. The subject is placed in a state of exile from his uniqueness, his corporeal self. At the same time, the subject is given infinite mobility and is placed in a state of heightened perception, for the film has the power to expose that which the eye can not.

This introduces way film imposes itself in reality. The apparatus of film, the camera, allows the operator to penetrate reality, at least as it had been perceived; in this way, the cameraman is like a surgeon. The painter, juxtaposed to the cameraman, can only get so close to his subject. This natural distance allows a more complete picture, but forces perception into a static state. The camera on the other hand will obtain an image constructed of fragments. The camera is able to manipulate reality by slowing it down, speeding it up, zooming in on it, or dividing it into individual moments of the whole. So, while the camera is still producing only a representation of reality, it is also reconstructing the human perception of reality.

In the process of the apparatus capturing the subject, the moments are locked into a mechanical eternity. This divorcing of the subject from reality enables the subject to be simultaneously consumed by the collective whole. According to Benjamin, the filmic media has a tendency to lead to a distracted simultaneous consumption experience. He writes:

Clearly, this is at bottom the same ancient lament that the masses seek.

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7 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 29
Figure 8.2_ *Untitled*, 1973 by Mary Miss; Battery Park City Landfill, New York, temporary installation.

Figure 8.3_ “Snowflake” Architectures of Time pg. 27
distraction while art demands concentration from the spectator.\(^8\)

In many ways, film does allow the masses to seek distraction, but not in all instances. In a 2003 Interview with Iranian film professor Jamsheed Akrami, Abbas Kiarostami, an Iranian director who will be discussed at length later said:

I don’t like to engage in telling stories. I don’t like to arouse the viewer emotionally or give him advice. I don’t like to belittle him or burden him with a sense of guilt. Those are the things I don’t like in the movies. I think a good film is one that has a lasting power and you start to reconstruct it right after you leave the theater. There are a lot of films that seem to be boring, but they are decent films. On the other hand, there are films that nail you to the seat and overwhelm you to the point that you forget everything, but you feel cheated later. These are the films that take you hostage. I absolutely don’t like the films in which the filmmakers take their viewers hostage and provoke them. I prefer the films that put their audience to sleep in the theater. I think those films are kind enough to allow you a nice nap and not leave you disturbed when you leave the theater. Some films have made me doze off in the theater, but the same films have made me stay up at night, wake up thinking about them in the morning, and keep on thinking about them for weeks. Those are the kind of films I like.\(^9\)

This quote illustrates a more contemporary view of this dichotomy in art. While it seems that film does allow for a distracted perceptual experience, as film has evolved, it has discovered how it can still demand concentration.

For Benjamin art, free of ritual, was open to basing itself in politics, which is one possibility, particularly as the

\(^8\) The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 43
\(^9\) “A Walk with Kiarostami.” This quote is taken from a film interview with Abbas Kiarostami.
superstructure of production technique was forming new ways of perceiving, but it is certainly not the only possibility. In many ways perception has come to present itself as the true foundation of art. Benjamin discusses how difficult it was for artists and critics to give up the ritual in art. He writes, “The primary question – whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised.” In the years since Benjamin’s work, the tone of film theorists has changed and such questions have been asked.

10 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 20
11 The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction pg. 25. Benjamin discusses a variety of early film theorists who were more concerned with finding the ritual in film as opposed to questioning how film was altering the nature of art and perception.
Film and Architecture: A Critical Comparison_
Film and Architecture: A Critical Comparison

“Thinking in images when designing is always directed towards the whole. By its very nature, the image is always the whole of the imagined reality: wall and floor, ceiling and materials, the moods of light and color of a room, for example. And we also see all the details of the transitions from floor to the wall to the window, as if we were watching a film.”1 - Peter Zumthor

Using Benjamin’s argument as a jumping off point, a study of the relationships between film and architecture seems an appropriate way of approaching the question of real time in the translation process of making. Before a serious study of these two forms of expression can be done, ground rules must be established. First, it is important to note that this study is not meant to blur the lines between film and architecture, but rather, to make the similarities and differences explicit. In this study, architecture will be considered architecture -- the art of building -- and film will be considered film -- the art of the moving image.2 That being said, as Benjamin illuminated and as this study will explore further, the two media -- architecture and film -- have inherent relationships and overlaps, which when understood thoroughly, may offer insights into how each media could expand its possibilities, without altering its fundamental composition.

In his book Architecture and Disjunction, Bernard Tschumi, undertaking a similar study, though with somewhat different aims, writes:

In the work of remarkable writers, artists, or composers one sometimes finds disconcerting elements located at the edge of their production.

1 Thinking Architecture pg. 67. Zumthor writes this thought in an essay written in September of 1996 entitled “Teaching Architecture, Learning Architecture.”
2 These terms will be defined more clearly in a moment.
at its limit. These elements, disturbing and out of character, are misfits within the artist’s activity. Yet often such works reveal hidden codes and excesses hinting at other definitions, other interpretations...The same can be said for whole fields of endeavor: there are productions at the limits of literature, at the limit of music, at the limit of theater. Such extreme positions inform us about the state of art, its paradoxes and its contradictions.3

Tschumi’s words identify the importance of understanding the fringes of any given field of study and by extension, the overlapping grey areas. The goal of understanding these limits is not to fundamentally alter the defining characteristics of the field of study, but to clarify and reinforce the existing definitions. This study will utilize Tschumi’s methodology to examine the fields of architecture and film.

The second ground rule to make clear is the limits of the study itself. This study is not intended to be a comprehensive theoretical look at the two fields of study. In order to make the study more feasible, the scope will be limited. There are a lot of different notions of what architecture or film are, but this research considers only the notions of the architect or filmmaker as Translator, Communicator, and/or Maker. Beyond this, the study also aims to focus on techniques used in both fields, which are tools for making and executing work. These techniques also become helpful in that they can be categorized somewhat broadly in order to apply to both fields, allowing clarification of overlaps.4

With this in place, we begin by attempting to define both architecture and film. In the past, architecture wove time into its fabric, explicitly embodying the various ratios, proportions, cycles and rhythms of nature, but in the recent past, spatial laws of geometry and formal fetishes have come to dominate

3 Architecture and Disjunction pg. 101-102
4 Agencies of the Frame pg. 1-2
Figure 9.2_ Corner relief made of sheet metal, glass and wire by Vladimír Tatlin. That was intended to hang right in the same corner of honor where the icon hangs in a traditional Russian household.
the built landscape. Despite the incorporation of temporal aspects into the built landscape, architects do not have control over the ordering of time as film makers do; a builder can’t alter time’s duration or the velocity of its passing. Architecture can however manipulate the apartment of felt experience of time through plays of light, environmental conditioning or even perspectival manipulation.5

Another vital similarity, which we discussed in the context of Walter Benjamin’s writing, is that both architecture and film posses corporeal natures, which is to say they require both space and time as part of their existence, though the nature of these requirements are different. For instance, film is essentially time-based. Though it can’t exist without spatial conditions, time is the primary driver of the filmic experience. The primary work of the film-maker is the ordering and sequencing of events in time, to portray the narrative. The fundamental gestures of architecture, on the other hand, are spatial movements. Architecture creates spaces, which are then experienced by its users in time. In many ways, architecture’s most basic existence inherently exists in rules of geometry, spatiality, composition and technique, yet ironically, architecture cannot exist without the implementation of another, who we call the builder.6

In the past, these roles were somewhat blurred and the architect was often the one building, but in recent years architecture has become a somewhat faceted profession. The specific rift being referred to hear is one between builder and designer. Especially in the United States, albeit generally speaking, the architect’s role has been relegated to that of conceiver and drawer. After the architect’s work is done, these drawings are handed off to a construction crew to make. They might ask a question or two of the designer, but

5 Agencies of the Frame pg. 2-3
6 Agencies of the Frame pg. 1-3
Figure 9.3-4  _Lofted Mesh_; Image from the Journal of Architectural Education V.58 Issue 1 pg. 38; project by Aaron Bruno, Alejandro Delgado and Nic Hamilton
after the drawings are handed off, the architect’s role is quite minimal. This phenomenon has even been codified within the standard AIA contract used at least as a template by almost all architectural firms. In this standard document, there is no standard line item for Construction Administration. All of that said, this study is not interested in examining the politics of architectural contracts and the system they exist within, but rather, this line of discussion is meant only to establish the current environment the definition of architect as maker resides within.

Despite the contemporary systemic notion of the architect as drawer, the discussion will take on a definition, perhaps closer to the limits of architecture where the architect is maker. To clarify this further, the words of Peter Zumthor come to mind. The following is a back and forth between a student, only know as Nick H., and Zumthor in 2010, shortly after he was awarded the Pritzker Prize.

NH So your way is more of a process, rather than a means of representation?

PZ The model is part of the work, its process but it’s not abstract. We do the buildings! Then we look at them, how high is it? What could it be and so on, our models always have to do with the building, you see you are surrounded by models (laughs…)

NH Which comes first the model or the drawing? I know from my own experience, I have an idea I tend to build a model first, it’s not to say that I don’t draw, I draw whilst modeling. But it’s usually an idea I have in my head and I build the model to articulate the idea. What is your design process?

7 Based on the standard AIA contract document B105 - 2007
PZ The model comes soon, the drawing...you know...in order to explain the thing, you sketch, you make a sketch, you talk about this, it is to do words, sometimes it is to do with sketches. We always talk. And then we start to build. The model comes early, very early.

NH And is the model the final way of representing the building?

PZ It’s not representing it. It’s not representing. This is not representation (PZ points to a model in the room). This is it for me. It’s for me to look at and imagine, and see and read. To see how the light comes. It’s not representation, it’s like Giacometti making a sculpture. He is not representing something with the first sculpture, it is the work, it just gets bigger and bigger and bigger! It’s physical that’s what it’s about.

NH Do you view the Bruder Klaus Chapel as an architectural model in its own right, or is it a building or more appropriately (as I believe) the culmination of a series of experimental processes?

PZ The Bruder Klaus Chapel?

NH Yes

PZ It’s a chapel for Bruder Klaus, a building obviously. (laughs)

NH But the end of a process of experimentation with ways of building?

PZ These questions are very academic, and I’m sorry to have to tell you I am not interested in this. I’m interested in buildings. I only do buildings. Everything I do is a building. I’m like a craftsman’s I do buildings. So… obviously the building is the end of a process… not the beginning (PZ laughs...)\(^8\)

For Zumthor, the architect is nothing more than a builder. The architect is still a translator of idea into built form, but the process of translating is not about representation. Zumthor implies that the work that goes into a design is all aimed at finding the built form, and not at representing it. After all, as we have discussed before, how can one really represent something which is not

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8 Thinking/Making Architecture: An Interview with Peter Zumthor by Nick H. Nick is a 26 year old student currently studying at the University of Greenwich. http://thinkingmakingarchitecture.blogspot.com/2010/04/interview-with-peter-zumthor.html
already in existence.

Film on the other hand does not have quite the same rift in its theoretical discourse, if for no other reason than its short life, to this point. One of the key conditions of film that has been played with is how time works. Film-makers have tried a variety of tricks, such as montage to unsettle the chronological sequencing of space and time, yet these attempts always fall short because in order to be projected there is a necessity to put some pre-defined order in place. Attempts such as this beg a much broader question, which places itself at the heart of the filmic discourse, which is what is reality? What is fantasy? What is the most appropriate way of representing these? These questions have been, and remain a central question in the development of the cinematic.

In his essay, The Ontology of the Photographic Image, Andre Bazin, one of the principal film theorists and critics of the twenty-first century, discusses the development of the plastic arts. He claims that the invention of the photographic image, and its development into the cinematic, radically altered art because they have freed the other plastic arts from reality and toward expression. For instance, the painter no longer must seek reality in his work. It gets no more “real” than a photograph, and so painting can become more expressive. This is seen in the work of men such as Cézanne and Picasso. Bazin writes:

Production by automatic means has radically affected our psychology of the image. The objective nature of photography confers on it a quality of credibility absent from all other picture-making. In spite of any objections our critical spirit may offer, we are forced to accept as real the existence of the objective reproduced, actually re-presented set

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9 Agencies of the Frame pg. 3-5
10 What is Cinema? pg. 10-12
before us, that is to say, in time and space...viewed in this perspective, cinema is objectivity in time. 11

So, according to Bazin, the ability of the moving image to bring us objectivity or reality is one of the primary achievements of film. But, is reality what film is about?

One of the most effective ways of understanding contemporary film theory is in the products of that theory. An interesting example of this can be seen in the relationship of the theory of filmic reality, as discussed by Andre Bazin in the work of Abbas Kiarostami, an Iranian independent film-maker, considered broadly as one of the leaders of avant-garde film in the 21st century.

11 What is Cinema? pg. 10-12
Reality and the Cinematic: A Review of Abbas Kiarostami’s Taste of Cherry
“Lies carry a kind of truth.”¹ - Abbas Kiarostami

Exploring the notion of the “real” is one of the key ideas of Abbas Kiarostami’s cinema and particularly his 1997 film “Taste of Cherry.” This questioning of reality is really just the beginning though; Kiarostami’s questions inevitably lead to questions of narrative: linearity of experience, the presence of the audience within the film and by extension the audience’s awareness of reality in what they are watching. It is important to note the difference between the use of the word narrative as something different that plot. Western film has traditionally taken a position heavy on plot, with a standard 3 act sequence of beginning, middle and end. This is not the case in more recent filmic strategies, especially in non-western film, where Kiarostami has come from. For the purposes of this study we will define the narrative as the series of event while the plot will be defined as the plan or scheme of the narrative; another way to define plot might be the direction of the narrative that takes the audience somewhere. The reason for defining these two issues of narrative and plot is that Kiarostami’s work has a distinct narrative, but blatantly and quite intentionally lacks a plot.

With this in mind, it is important to understand how Kiarostami approaches his subject matter. In his book, Displaced Allegories, Negar Mottahedeh writes, “His films are only movies, and though imbued with an air or realism, they are also movies...his films are about the processes of making movies.”² Kiarostami’s simple film, in its form, structure and

¹ Contemporary Film Directors: Abbas Kiarostami pg. 66
² Displaced Allegories pg. 139
content blatantly question what “real” actually means to cinema and to humanity. On of the ways Kiarostami achieves this is through his narrative, or more accurately lack there of. The lack of a plot is important because upon contemplation one might realize that the narratives of everyday life are in a constant evolution and as such, have no discernible plot.

“Taste of Cherry,” though one may be able to summarize a series of events, has a surprisingly ambiguous narrative thread. In The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami, Alberto Elena writes:

A film turned in on itself, with a strong meditative dimension, Taste of Cherry thereby avoids – following a director’s usual line, which has very few exceptions – any possible identification with the protagonist.3

This is the first attempt of Kiarostami to break away from a prescriptive plot line. The main character, Mr. Badii (played by a non-professional actor named Homayun Ershadi), is never really introduced to the audience, at least not in a traditional way and his story doesn’t really end. All we see are in-between moments. It is everyday life in many ways.

Instead of a plot, the audience is only given a sequence of events, but they are not just any sequence of events. Kiarostami uses a series of intriguing techniques to question the reality of his filmic world. The three key operations at play in his work are the long take, the non-linear sequence and finally the aperture/the frame. Each technique can be seen throughout the film and in a variety of ways with the intention of creating a sense of immediacy and presence for the audience.

The film opens with a long sequence of a man coming toward us in a vehicle. The shot of an ambiguous man, driving in a car through the outskirts of Tehran, Kiarostami makes the

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3 The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami pg. 124
Figure 10.2_ Stills from “Taste of Cherry” Emphasis is on the act of Framing and the Aperture as techniques used by Abbas Kiarostami.
audience acutely aware of the frame, and of the distance between his protagonist and you, the viewer. The first 20 minutes or so of the film are shot in or around the car, but always with a certain distance. This, along with the ambiguity of the protagonist, places the audience in an atmosphere of uncertainty that carries throughout the film. One film critic, Laura Mulvey, in her essay “Kiarostami’s Uncertainty Principle”\(^4\) chronicles the use of a highly developed concept, which she refers to as the uncertainty principle, highlights the ambiguity of the opening scene as an attempt to use Mr. Badii as a medium for questioning “rather than a character within a coherent fiction dressed in the trappings of verisimilitude.”\(^5\) So, from the outset, as a reader of the film, you know nothing about where he comes from or what is motivating him. You eventually find out that he is trying to find someone to aid him in committing suicide, but you have no idea why he wants to end his life or why he wants to end it in such a strange way (he wants someone to bury him after he digs a hole and dies in it). This ambiguity is a literary way for Kiarostami to use the cinematographic technique of the long take as a story-telling mechanism.

The long take is a cinematographic technique used to create stillness in the space of the film. It is often used as an introductory shot to give a visual overview of a whole, before the film-maker cuts up the space into segments for his own devices. The long take is also used to create space for contemplation. In a narrative, the audience often needs space to step away and breathe or to wrap their mind around the intensity of the events. This second approach to the technique is more in line with what Kiarostami is trying to do, but instead of only showing

\(^4\) The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami, pg. 125. Elena is referencing a work Mulvey had published in Sight and Sound, June 1998, pg. 24-7

Figure 10.3_ Stills from “Taste of Cherry” Emphasis is on the use of the Long Take as a technique used by Abbas Kiarostami.
long takes (which he does do often) he creates ambiguity in the narrative, which also lulls us into a state of contemplation, similar to someone sitting on a bench and people-watching. Kiarostami’s approach is quite similar to everyday life in this respect. One rarely has insight into the thinking processes or motivations of others.

So the ambiguity is seemingly all by design; there was never a script for Taste of Cherry and as such, the film is able to have a realistic ambiguity. In Contemporary Film Directors: Abbas Kiarostami, Jonathan Rosenbaum explains Kiarostami’s process:

> Because Kiarostami’s recent cinema continues to be a handcrafted one, some sense of how it is generated is important: without a script and with dialogue usually generated by him working alone with his non-professional actors...The technique likely means that Kiarostami is filming each of the actors in separate shooting sessions and then editing the results together by eliminating his own lines.\(^6\)

Everything was formed in the director’s mind and for all intensive purposes, Kiarostami himself doesn’t have an answer to many of the films ambiguities; there is no need to know whom Badii really is to make the film. All Kiarostami needs is a feel for where he is going and the ability to react to what is happening. The rest can be edited together afterwards. In an interview with Jonathan Rosenbaum, Kiarostami describes as along the lines of jazz where each note simply reacts to that which came before...even though your following certain notes, you’re also following the feeling of the piece, so the performance you give tonight will be different from the performance tomorrow.\(^7\)

The hand-crafted style that Rosenbaum describes is the

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\(^6\) Contemporary Film Directors: Abbas Kiarostami pg. 30
\(^7\) Contemporary Film Directors: Abbas Kiarostami pg. 109
Figure 10.4_ Stills from “Taste of Cherry” Emphasis is on the use of the Non-Linear Sequence as a technique used by Abbas Kiarostami.
primary tool that allows Kiarostami to elevate his work beyond the narrative and into a sort of anti-narrative form, and it is what creates the second technique discussed above: the non-linear sequence. One of the limitations of film is that it must order a sequence to be shown, but that does not mean that this sequence must be linear or that it must be a primary driver. By utilizing the uncertainty principle highlighted by Mulvey, a sense of ambiguity, Kiarostami is able to deconstruct the experience of a story into a mere series of moments. Kiarostami’s work mirrors everyday life in these ways. These techniques also allow Kiarostami to transcend the typical linearity in his work, another moment for his questioning of reality.

In *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami*, Alberto Elena describes Kiarostami’s non-linearity. He describes *Taste of Cherry* as a “road movie,” but unlike the standard prototype “any kind of lineal progression soon disappears, as Badii drives obsessively around and round the dusky tracks on the outskirts of Tehran, sometimes making progress but, as often as not, going backwards, ending up where was a while before, or simply meandering, losing himself on roads that lead nowhere.”8 The entire story never really goes anywhere. Badii wanders through the hills in his car, back and forth, and no where; all the while the audience is given space for meditation. Over the course of the film, Badii has long conversations with several people he comes across, each trying to talk him out of his decision to end his life, but nothing ever really comes of these conversations. These interactions are always flanked by empty space of long, panning shots of Badii driving from moment to moment, space given to the viewer to contemplate. Elena describes the non-linearity well when he explains how the remote spaces Badii passes through are abstractions, representations of circularity.

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8 *The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami* pg. 126
Figure 10.5_ Still from “Taste of Cherry”  Mr. Badii travels in his jeep through the wilderness, looking for an assistant to complete his plans
that read as “literally, going nowhere,” moving without purpose and without reason.⁹

Eventually one of the men he speaks with agrees to aid him in his final act, but then, the audience is denied the knowledge of whether or not Badii carried out his plan. After getting the man’s agreement to help, Badii returns to his home and the audience assumes he is getting something to help him kill himself, perhaps some pills. You never know because of the intentional distance and obscurity of the shot. Badii returns to the hole, off in the hills and lies looking up at the moon. The camera lingers on his face for a time and then fades to black. From the black, the film then cuts into a series of grainy pieces of footage form the shooting process. Badii and Kiarostami stand together in the frame, apparently discussing something for a shot. We also see the car driving through the landscape. The presence of both the protagonist and the filmmaker in these moments is almost unsettling for a traditional reading of the film. This creates a perfect example of Kiarostami’s final operation, that of the aperture or the frame. The differentiation between the films visual treatment before and after the scene with Badii in the grave and the night sky indicate two different types of film. The grainy nature of the final sequence brings to mind documentary footage from the past and creates a distinctly different mood from the rest of the film. It is in the final sequence that Kiarostami most heavily questions the reality of his film.

Another technique that raises this complex feeling is his use of music in these last moments. Throughout the film there is only diagetic sound (sound within the story. i.e. a slamming door), but in this final sequence of grainy footage, Louis Armstrong’s “St. James Infirmary” is playing in the background.

⁹ The Cinema of Abbas Kiarostami, pg. 126
Figure 10.6_ Still from “Taste of Cherry”  The main narrative thread of the film ends with this ambiguous image. As an audience, we are unsure of what has happened, why it happened or what might come next, but this is the point. The ambiguity is a mirror of life, which goes on regardless of whether or not Mr. Badii lives or dies.
This non-diagetic sound heightens the awareness of the audience that they are interacting with a film, and not reality. It is an interesting paradox that Kiarostami creates, between the body of the film, which through his anti-narrative approach, seem to make the film more life like, while the closing segment impugns the whole act. It is, however, not a paradox Kiarostami is afraid to confront. Making the audience a part of the film in this way is his goal.

I don’t like to engage in telling stories. I don’t like to arouse the viewer emotionally or give him advice. I don’t like to belittle him or burden him with a sense of guilt.  

From beginning to end, there is no apparent progression in the character or the plot, and if there is any dynamism in the mind of this films creator, it is not shared with the audience. Viewing this movie from the perspective of a typical Western audience, the film seems pointless. There is no traditional beginning, middle and end. The film simply exists, looping back and forth on itself for a while and then washing out into reality. But then, that pointlessness, is the point in many ways. What does it matter why this man, Badii, wants to kill himself? What does it matter if he actually does go through with it? The journey is the focus; it is analogous to reality in this way. It is about the process of moving through time; the object, the man, is no longer a typology, but a process of being in existence, so how he got to these moments and where he goes from them, is beyond the scope of this moment and not of concern. The moment is a singularity. One does not generally differentiate these things so clearly, but as an audience, we seem to understand. This is the same kind of blurred line we

10 “A Walk with Kiarostami.” This quote is taken from a film interview with Abbas Kiarostami.
deal with when considering “reality.”

So it seems that cinematic reality is no more objective, or real, than the other plastic arts discussed in the introduction, but it can offer some insight into the modern construct of the real. Kiarostami’s work and his questioning of “real” seem to be appropriate, despite some dishonesty in the process. What lies he does propagate are no more of a detachment from reality than the media of cinema itself. Film is perhaps not so clearly honest and objective as Bazin puts forth. The director, in the act of editing, or choosing a subject, removes film from pure reality; the lines become blurred. In “Taste of Cherry,” Kiarostami uses the form of the film, to reinforce the idea that reality is not so cut and dry, while still offering insight into what reality truly is. The layers of movement between “real” and “fiction” that exist in the film deconstruct reality and call into question the “real” beyond just cinematic reality and into the realism of everyday human life.
The In-Between: Designing within Non-Place
The In-Between: Designing within Non-Place

“There is power in the ordinary things of everyday life...we have only to look at them long enough to see it.” - Peter Zumthor

Just as the film-maker, by virtue of the nature of his media, must inevitably play a part in the deconstruction of reality as he forms the viewer’s experience, so to is the architect ultimately involved in some form of control. At the very least, the architect takes part in the framing of a place. By selecting a site and organizing spaces within it, however this is achieved, the architect takes on the role of marker and exposers of place, but this role does not mandate that the architect mark these spaces in such a way that prescribes certain value system or action. The role of architect as marker of place, is a role which can extend to even the most overlooked and seemingly insignificant non-places of our societies landscape.

One could say that Kiarostami’s way of making movies is one expression of these ideas in the medium of film. As has been pointed out, his work is quiet subtle in its touch, marking the narrative just enough to express the reality of the characters and the setting, as time slowly flows through them and with them. His work captures the essence of reaction in making, while focusing on the process of creating his narrative’s thread. As an audience, through a variety of filmic techniques, which generally relay on the most basic forms of perception (though the filmic media does restrict perception to visual and auditory), we are made aware of ourselves and our role in the narrative. Studying Kiarostami’s film and the process of its creation, one might be able to glean a few operative techniques that might be able to translate into the medium of architecture (i.e.

1 Thinking Architecture pg. 17
As was discussed in the analysis of “Taste of Cherry,” Kiarostami takes advantage of three important filmic techniques. First, Kiarostami uses the aperture and the act of framing as a means of making the viewer aware of their own act of viewing and the director’s act of filming. A distinction is drawn between reality and the film. An example of this can be seen in shots such as the one looking down through the windshield of the car that the protagonist drives around in. This perspective puts the viewer in a position unattainable in the course of everyday life.

Next, Kiarostami uses a technique somewhat frowned upon in typical western film – the long take. By setting up long (both in duration and distance from the subject), panning shots, which follow the meandering protagonist and his jeep, the film maker creates a space in the film for the viewer’s contemplation of the activities occurring in the film space. The viewer becomes a part of the narrative as his/her mind fills in gaps that Kiarostami builds into his tale.

Finally, Kiarostami takes advantage of the nondescript landscape to confuse the viewer’s understanding of the linearity of his character’s journey. The narrative loops back on itself and never really comes to a satisfying ending for the viewer. One can relate the narrative, and its lack of a defined plot, to everyday life, which is never a linear progression, but rather a non-linear and perpetual reoccurrence. Time marches on regardless of what happens in the story of a singular man.

By highlighting these three filmic strategies, the intent is not to suggest these are the only tools that Kiarostami uses in his process, but rather what is interesting about each of these techniques is their reactionary nature. As we have discussed, Kiarostami’s work is centered around the idea of reacting to
APERTURE

LONG TAKE

NON-LINEAR SEQUENCE
the actors, environment and the narrative thread. This study would illustrate how each of the highlighted strategies is used in the pursuit of Kiarostami’s reaction.

So, with these three techniques Kiarostami weaves his narrative; from here forward we will refer to the three techniques as the Aperture, the Long Take and the Non-linear Sequence. Each of these, though they have been used by Kiarostami in the filmic medium, all have a more basic implications to one’s understand of space, time and a unified space/time continuum. The following study will take advantage of this and attempt to use it in order to refine Kiarostami’s techniques (or more broadly techniques of the filmic medium) into a series of operations that can also be applied to the architectural medium. It is the intent of this study to highlight

While it is important to note that these operations are used individually at times and together at others within Kiarostami’s work, this study attempts to separate them to a certain extent, while acknowledging that there is a connection between each of these procedures that can never be fully isolated.

In order to clarify what these processes are and how they can be used a series of films, drawings and constructions were developed. The hope was that by engaging in the act of creating works in all three of these ways, a knowledge base of non-knowledge or working knowledge would be compiled to give definition and direction to the study. Over time, the meaning of each of the three operations slowly evolved and new ways of articulating the processes began to emerge. Given that the meaning of each operation is subtly evolving constantly through the incorporation of new “non-knowledge” derived from the works, it is extremely difficult to pin down a finalized definition. So, instead of misrepresenting my understanding of the operations or making them appear as a
Figure 11.2_ Non-Places Map of Cincinnati 6 by Kory A. Beighle
completed thing, what is offered here is a summary defining the operations as they have evolved over time. The hope is that a pattern might be expressed and that a future course understanding may be projected.

The following are notes from a sketchbook that was kept over the course of several months of working and developing my understanding of these words and their architectural implications. The dates selected here coincide with predetermined presentation dates, where this information was discussed.
Figure 11.4_ Stills from (4) films by Kory A. Beighle. The films explore a neutral canvas, as well an expression of the 3 operations. The top left is neural or the constant; the top right is the Long Take; the bottom left is the Non-Linear Sequence; the bottom right is the Aperture.
October 25, 2010

The Aperture/Framing, the act of framing is an act of highlighting both what is framed and what is beyond while the aperture is the device to achieve framing.

The Long Take, the act of being still and observing change over time. This observation occurs through multiple senses.

The Non-Linear Sequence, the act of placing various moments together to be experienced at once in the hopes of breaking down the necessity of prescribing a linear sequence of experience...intentionally causing subtle visual confusion to blur the significance of space and emphasize the experience of time.
Figure 11.5_ Reaction Drawing Series 8 by Kory A. Beighle. The goal of these drawings is to explore how reaction can manifest itself in various media. This Drawing is a collage. The top left is neural or the constant; the top right is the Long Take; the bottom left is the Non-Linear Sequence; the bottom right is the Aperture.
November 29, 2010

The Aperture_ ones awareness of the process of making as occurs through the act of framing…the device fundamentally alters “the norm” while highlighting perception. Time is a constant flow, but we are not always aware of our movement through the flow of time…the systematic abstractions of our society have conditioned us to lose time in the everyday, ordinary moments of life…The aperture offers a frame, which not only differentiates the framed from the unframed, but also allows us to focus upon the process of “becoming-ever-different.”

The Long Take_ as the primacy of space is replaced with a balanced conception of the space/time continuum, perception and presence become the driver of the interface between humanity and it’s environment. Perception of the here and now positions the user in a state of heightened awareness of themselves in relation to the created/built object. Space is formed as a reaction to the place and neutrality ensues…the authority of the maker is subverted in favor of the authority of the user and the events they create.

The Non-Linear Sequence_ movement is the dissolution of the singular moment celebrated in the traditional perspectival experience. Movement in architecture must be considered as something of the user and his interaction with the built environment…movement is the in-between that film and photography can’t ultimately capture. The multiplicity of the singular creates a sort of synchronic experience where the user’s gaze is allowed to shift between the moments…between the fragments…the user makes their own way, but the parts still form the whole…a portion of the narrative power is given over to the users of a given space…eventually this leads to a denial of positivist thinking and allows the body to perceive instead of suggesting a formalized experience.
Figure 11.6_ The goal in developing the constructed system was to explore what it means to truly react to a site with a system. The system was conceived of as using all three of the operations in balance. The system’s purpose is to be in a state of reaction, so taking from the work of Peter Lynch, a glitch is built in, denying the system from a predetermined form or joint.
January 10, 2011

The Aperture, they are ultimately objects; they both mark and expose, but in this action, the subject is subordinate, if only subtly, to the frame.

The Long Take, similar to the act of meditation; being still in space to observe temporal flux in a subject, where the subject itself is not so important; emphasis is placed on pure perception and personal experience of place and context is heightened.

The Non-Linear Sequence, the equal juxtaposition of various moments within one singular moment; the utilization of a multiplied unit (generally within a system), subtly differentiated through an imperfection or a glitch, in order to highlight the act of movement between the subtly differentiated.
Over time, my way of defining these operations has become more and less complex, but eventually, some sense is made of what each operation is and what it is attempting to accomplish. It eventually became evident that the development of a constructed system incorporating each of the operations could become a tool for lightly marking non-places with architectural interventions. Specific focus was given to the development of the imperfection or glitch within the system, which was meant to allow the system to be reactionary in nature as opposed to prescriptive. The system and its glitch became a way of exposing the place and context of non-places as the systemic imperfection responded to the unique character and property of the landscape. This system would become the tool of expressing “real time” in the formation of space and the marking of place.
Conclusions
Conclusions

“We must accept our reality as vastly as we possibly can; everything, even the unprecedented...this is in the end the only kind of courage that is required of us: the courage to face the strangest, most unusual, most inexplicable experiences that can meet us.”¹ - Rainer Maria Rilke

So what has this work accomplished? What does it propose?

Architectural genesis, which exists in abstract ideation represented in gesture, word, image and concept has been divided from architectural making (poiesis) in a reality of sensual perception. The fragmentation in the process of creating built form is one symptom of a bigger problem in the social structure of western civilization. This problem is not a simple issue to be fixed by procedural alterations, but rather, it is a fundamental flaw in the superstructure. A conception of time as real offers one method of approaching this problem. In the past several hundred years, Western societal notions of time have been in a constant state of being made static, through in a society-wide, subconscious system of abstraction of real things in order to make them more controllable. This system as had a significant impact on all aspects of society, but particularly the way humans interface with the world around them. An overwhelming number of non-places have come to be in the past decades as the physical world is compressed into a world of technology, where presence and individuality are blurred toward irrelevance.

By establishing a new way of approaching time, we can begin to see that thought; representation and built form

¹ Letters to A Young Poet pg. 88-89
exist unto themselves and yet flow through one another. The process of architecture will become as water, able to flow from one state into another without losing itself in the process. No meaning will be lost because there is no meaning to translate outside of the things themselves. There will be only the works and our perception thereof. Ideally, this transition will lead to a saner world, but who really knows. It may seem counterintuitive, but it seems that the only way humanity will be able to be free from its anxiety is to acknowledge its own limitations and to accept that nature cannot be controlled.

What I hope has been accomplished is the suggestion of one possible way of expressing “real time” through architecture and its processes. The work of Kwinter and Augé tied together implies that this infusion of “real time” into society’s superstructure of thinking might help cure societies anxiety and all of the problems that stem from it. I am not suggesting that my work does this, but perhaps, if by marking these non-places, a few people see beyond the mundane nature of trying to control the untameable world, and accept the beauty of observing the passing of time, then maybe that is enough. Architecture will not and cannot cure the ills of all humanity, but it can enrich the experience of our lives. Despite the commonly accepted way of thinking seen in the words of men like Aaron Betsky, Rem Koolhaas or Frank Gehry, architectural practice can go beyond the simple creation of sexy images and forms to be consumed. Architecture does not need to be a commodity in order to exist.

My proposition is that through a critical analysis of the processes and ambitions of architecture, one can express “real time” to whatever end. I would suggest that if more attention is given to human perception in experience, the making of object through processes and the act of reacting, a heightened sense
Epilogue
Epilogue

It is 7 AM on a Thursday morning and I have been working on this thesis now for four or five months. I had considered for some time that this epilogue would be a moment to discuss how I have changed as I have worked on this project. I had intended to say something like..."I have begun to see how I can free myself from the system of abstractions we all live in..." but then, that simply would not ring true and frankly, it would be a lie.

The truth is, I have changed, but it is in so many ways not something that can be put into words. I will still try.

Over the past several months I have learned quite a bit. I have learned that architecture has no pre-defined ends. I have learned that a drawing is just as real as a building, but that the drawing is not the building. I have learned that the relationship between plaster and its mold is intimate and complex. I have learned that working slowly is not always a bad thing. I have found great value in the act of meditation. I have found meditation to be a valid design method. I have learned that thinking and doing exist within a thinking-doing continuum. I have learned that my mind is in a perpetual state of restating that which has come before. I have learned that my mind casts a shadow upon that which is to come. I have learned that nature is an untameable force in a constant state of change. I have come to embrace all of these things, but still, they are not all that I have learned. There is something else, the part I would ever be able to describe, but the part which is partially embodied within my work, and yet, is only within me.

So if I can’t really express how I have changed, the question arises, what was the point? Maybe there is no point. Why does there need to be a point? It’s about the means, not the end.
On that note, I will bring this discourse to a threshold (this is not a close....there is no close to a work such as this) with a work that has begun to open another line of thought for me. The following was an exercise that a close friend of mine and I developed together. Our works have been in a conversation for the past couple of years and it feel very appropriate to close here.

The following is a conversation in the form of a script for a performance piece we presented before the freshman class of architecture and interior design students at the University of Cincinnati. The presentation was for a lecture discussing the search for a working process.

Dan: Good Morning
Kory: Good Morning
Dan: We are two thesis students who have come to discuss a method of working...
Kory: We are two thesis students who have come to discuss living in a state of inquiry...
Dan: We are two human beings who have come to discuss living in a state of inquiry...
Kory: We are two human beings who are learning the art of architectural experimentation...
Dan: I am a human being who are learning the art of architectural experimentation...
Kory: I am a human being who is learning the art of patient meditation...
Dan: I am a human being making pretty things on a fairly consistent basis...
Kory: I am a human being making things using tools which I have also made...
Dan: I am an inconstant student making things using tools which I
have also made...
Kory: I am an inconstant mind making things...
Dan: I have an inconstant mind making me do things...
Kory: I have a mind which participates in the thinking-doing continuum...
Dan: I have a mind obsessed with beautiful stuffness and not-stuffness...
Kory: Beautiful stuffness and not-stuffness has been made as a result of my minds obsessions...
Dan: I have realized I’m always seeking the same thing as a result of my mind’s obsessions...
Kory: As a result of my mind’s obsessions I have begun to see the reality of time in my work...
Dan: As a result of my mind’s obsessions I have begun to see there is no reality in my work...
Kory: As a result of my mind’s obsessions I have learned that reality is the work...
Dan: My obsessions have learned that reality is the work...
Kory: Reality is the work because the work is an embodiment of its process of coming into being...
Dan: Realities do and don’t exist because the work is an embodiment of its process coming into being...
Kory: The work is an embodiment of my learning and of the knowledge gained through its process of being made...
Dan: The work is a collection of beautiful things, nothing else...
Kory: The embodiment of knowledge does not mean that the work means anything...
Dan: The embodiment of knowledge sometimes is sanding a hole in anything nearby...
Kory: Knowledge sometimes is non-knowledge...
Dan: That lack of reasoning behind the pretty thing is non-knowledge...
Kory: Behind the pretty thing is always non-knowledge...
Dan: Behind the pretty thing is the good thing...
Kory: The good thing is not the object, the process or the letter grade used to designate success...
Dan: The good thing and the pretty thing are each other at cross corners, like boxers...
Kory: Like boxers, we dance and perform but perhaps not for your amusement...
Dan: We perform, and it is amusing...
Kory: We perform to illustrate a point...
Dan: We perform and you enjoy it...
Kory: We perform and we enjoy it because the performance is the point...
Dan: There is no point because the performance is the point...
Kory: There is no point because the performance is the work, just as a pretty thing is the work...
Dan: There is no point, just as a pretty thing is the work...
Kory: There is no point, it’s all just a process of restating a thought over and over again searching for a way of working...
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Appendix A
Developing a Constructed System
My work begins with the assumption that an interdisciplinary study at the limits of architecture and film will lead to the development of a method of working that will allow me to exist in a state of reaction as I work.

I wasn’t trying to develop a construction system, but within every work, there is a system, or perhaps more accurately, an organizational structure. My work began as a series of films. I became interested in the films ability to capture the flux of time. I had no predetermined structure, but I was confident that one would emerge. It did in a way, but it was somewhat incomplete. Keep in mind, the goal in all of this is to find a way to infuse the reality of time into the fabric of an architectural process.
I began to simultaneously work on a series of compositions. The idea was that I could capture some of the moments that were missing from the films within the relatively static compositions. The intent also was to bring the discussion closer to the “architectural medium.” In hindsight, this was an unnecessary distinction. All of the work is “architectural,” at least in the way I define architecture.

By the time the compositions had emerged, I had already begun to define what was happening more clearly. These works, were to be experiments that would help me refine my understanding of the techniques being used. Within my thesis, an argument is made for the defining of techniques from one medium (film) and their application in another medium (architecture). I would need to define what those operations were.
The compositions did produce a lot of interesting material for the conversation that was emerging, but something was still missing and so a third media was introduced for experimentation. The construction system brought a fundamental physicality to the table and also made a stronger connection to the traditional ideas of what architecture is.

The process was documented closely and as the wall began to materialize, a great deal of potential became evident. In total, 100 6” cubes were cast with a 5”x 5” section removed from the center. In essence, the piece was a tube. This was the first time I had ever worked with plaster and unfortunately, I had chosen one of the most difficult forms to work with. I went through seven molds before I found one that was able to survive the casting process over time.

The idea behind this system was that it was itself in a state of reaction and thus, it would allow me to be in a state of reaction as I used it.
Unfortunately, the system did not have any real glitch within it. I had made the argument that the system was able to react because the aperture was not fixed and because, in part, it lacked a real joint. This would need to be addressed.

Also, from this point, it seemed that a more in depth study of the system would be the most appropriate further study. All of the operations that were being defined seemed to be present in the constructed system. With a little refinement, the system could become the tool of reaction I was seeking, but further development was needed.
I began to draw other constructed units. I began to try and embody the three operations I had settled upon (the aperture, the long take, and the non-linear sequence) through my series of experiments. It proved more difficult than I had anticipated. I was forced to seriously question what it meant to react and what role the system played within such reaction.

Eventually, I settled on the form of the “X.” In many ways, this was a response to the previous work. The cubes, as a system, placed too much emphasis on the object of the cube. This was problematic because I had already established one of the criteria of the system was to blur the lines behind the positive and negative within the view. As the operations lay out, I was searching for an in-between state were the movement of the individual was emphasized. By approaching the wall and peering through it, the wall faded and the view becomes prominent. It flips between the two an implicates the role of the viewer. I tried to draw this.
I also tried to build it. I maintained the scale of the previous units, which I found to be too small. Another criteria I had established, which the initial system did embrace, was that the build for must engage the scale of the human body. So these two problems would have to be considered.

The system was, however, beginning to “react” at least to itself. I was able to stack them in a variety of different ways and they formed a beautiful composition. The wall itself also began to blur as the units came together, which was a major step forward from the cubes. In principle, everything worked quite nicely with these piece.

The only real problem that still lingered and was not an easy fix was the fact that the system was still able to be stacked regularly. This meant that the more messy organizations I was seeing, were a result of my construction of them, and the state of reaction I was seeking was not inherent in the system itself. The reacting was external to the system.
The final major change came out of that criticism. A slight manipulation in the form, offsetting one of the crossing segments of the “X” from the other and tapering the section from one end of each leg to the other became the critical glitch within the system, which made it unable to stack regularly. Also, for added manipulation, the arm-pit moments in each unit, which receive the legs of another unit, were all made different from one another in order to add another level of complexity. So, each leg of the system and each arm-pit are unique from one another. This creates a minimum of sixteen different joints within the single system, with more joints possible depending upon how joints form between three or more units.
A variety of studies were explored after the system was defined in order to more specifically define what the system was and what the potentials of it were.

The system was defined as plan which could be scaled up or down. The height of the system was defined by the process of its being made, which was by laser-cutting the complex mold out of 1/2" MDF sheets. These MDF molds could be stacked as high as possible to form the mold for a cast unit. This enable the potential for the units to be deployed as columns, ground cover, a wall system or even a piece of furniture.
I began to cast the pieces at a larger scale as well, this time the diagonal dimension of each piece was doubled to 1' across. I initially cast 25 units at this scale with a depth of 3.5". The idea was that at this scale I could use the units as a variety of things. I implemented the system on the site and found that it was in fact operating as I desired. It became a tool of reaction in that it forced me, the builder, into a state of reaction as I made the work as well as forcing the viewer to take a position in reacting to its existence.
Another important aspect of the work became how it is drawn. I attempted to draw with a variety of techniques. I produced overlay drawings and drawings of the negative space formed by the flux of the system. Both techniques, as well as others I used blurred the lines of the positive and negative aspects of the system.
The development of the system described above is not complete. Just as I have said before, it is an ever-changing and evolving process. As it exists this moment, it is many things, but most importantly, it is a response to criteria I have established for it. As these criteria continue to evolve, as they certainly will, then the system must also change to meet the new requirements of a system of reaction.

Another important note, which I have come to see as very important, is that the unit or the object of the system is not itself the system. It may be strange to say, but I have come to believe that I am the system as much a the block is. We work together to exist in a state of reaction. The block contains a piece of me and I contain all of the information which are embodied within it.
Appendix B
Operating on a Non-Place: Developing Documentation Techniques
As I have discussed earlier in this work, the anthropologist Marc Augé, in his book *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, makes the argument that a new form of place has evolved from this societal system of abstraction described by Sanford Kwinter in his essay entitled *The Complex and the Singular*. Augé attempts to define this new phenomena, which he has identified as a non-place within an anthropological context. He makes the point that these non-places occur at moments where the place is absent from itself; such places however are not fixed in space, but rather, fluidly shift across
space over time.\textsuperscript{1} Generally associated with acts of passage or transit (such as motor ways, airports, sidewalks, etc.), the non-place is a unique phenomenon of contemporary society and it offers a strikingly different method for humanity to interface with its physical environment. In many ways, this definition defines the non-place as a way of interacting with or thinking about a place. For this reason, it does not seem to directly address the spatial character of the non-place. So, in order to work on or in a non-place with an “architectural” agenda, the non-place must be defined within this “architectural” context.

\textsuperscript{1} Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity pg. 69. Definition effectively take from an interpretation of the work of Michel de Certeau in L’Invention du quotidien (1990)
In order to approach this issue in my work, I began to overlay spatial information of various types and a series of maps emerged, which are aimed at addressing the spatial character of a non-place. One definition emerges from these studies which positions the non-place as the in-between of everyday life. A non-place is a physical space whose sense of place has been relegated by society and seemingly, has been declared irrelevant. It is the opposing force to the singular moments of our lives and our culture, which are held up as important (things like museums, hospitals, schools, etc.)
The next step became the identification of non-places and perhaps a typology, which would lend itself to the definition of non-place I was in search of. The Rest stop was identified as a non-place of particular interest. I set out driving all of the major and minor transit corridors of my general region, identifying possible sites until I finally settled upon a site, approximately 1.5 - 2 acres in size about one hour outside of Cincinnati, OH. I have described it very appropriately as a place which is everywhere and nowhere.
Once the Site was identified, the question became, how does one operate upon a non-place. The unique nature and character of the place seemed to necessitate a more intimate and delicate way of working. Three possible approaches were defined.

1) Do nothing...perhaps write about the place and bring it to the attention of others as interesting, but refrain from interfering with it.

2) The in-between, which is to find a way of lightly marking the place and forming a spatial character to expose it as a non-place and set up an opportunity for others to interact with the place. It is the creation of a key for the threshold that was previously locked. The act does not open the door, but makes it possible.

3) Establish a spatial system and fabricate a sense of place for the site, irrespective of that which came before. Make it a functional place.

As these three potentials became evident, it was clear to me that the most appropriate path to take, given my previous works and the position my thesis had taken up to that point, was the second option of the light touch. With this approach in mind, I began to search for tools of working.
The construction system I had been developing became the first tool, but I also needed to find ways of expressing the design proposal. These “drawings” required a certain level of ambiguity as the desire was to capture the flux of time even if the medium was somewhat static.

The overlay drawing, an idea taken from the work of Richard Fleischner, mixed with the act of stamping was one of the approaches I explored.
While this was relatively effective, the overlay drawings, at least the first interactions of them, fell short in capturing the flux of time. I began to create a series of stop-animation films, which I felt captured the in-between I was after.

These films worked as a triptych, exploring the idea of drawing on a site, the movement of an individual’s shadow, and the implementation of the construction system on site.
The final strategy that was to be explored was another form of drawing. In each of the previous methods of working, there was an attempt to make the eye of camera objective, but inevitably my eye was ever present. This opened up the opportunity to embrace the presence of my own perception.

A series of studies using the drawing technique of the blind contour forced perception to the forefront. By drawing on three level (first the site, then the site with the actual pieces on it, and finally the site with the full proposed work present) I was able to document the shift in perception and awareness of the place I had set out to create.

Over time, each of these three approaches to documenting the work were refined through a series of iterations. The strategies achieved the intention of the work by creating the suggestion of one way of working within a non-place, where the work acknowledged the reality of time and the reality of the places becoming-ever-changed.