

American Electric Power:

Surface, Model, & Text

THESIS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Fine Art in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2017

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## Abstract

This thesis examines my work. I am interested in how we encounter and experience architectural representations. I will address how my work explores this through the typology of corporate modernist architecture as represented by the American Electric Power (AEP) building in Columbus, Ohio. I make several types of work including rubbings, laser etchings of photographs of models, text pieces, graphite drawings, and digital 3-D models. In this thesis I will analyse these practices, focusing on the rubbings, laser etchings and text pieces. I am especially interested in exploring how we see, experience and interpret architecture, and how the work complicates this relationship for the viewer. I will describe how and why I have researched and accessed the building, the kinds of work this has produced, and the implications that these different forms of architectural representations possibly might have. I am driven by the question of how I can challenge and reject the notion that there is a singular or correct way of reading architecture. At its core, my project is about how and where architecture, and its experiences, exist. A large part of my practice has been research based, in the form of archival visits and readings. These informed my work in relation to the AEP building, as well as other ideas that have not yet found artistic form. Part of this paper will describe this aspect of my work.

Dedication

For Joan Marland

Hilary Marland

Daniel van Strien

& Sebastian van Strien

## Acknowledgements

I would like to extend a thank you to my thesis committee, George Rush, Laura Lisbon, and Michael Mercil, who have supported, guided and encouraged me throughout their countless studio visits. My committee has always pushed me to be critical and articulate in the work I make.

I am grateful for my classmates whose critical eyes, conversations, and friendships have kept me going.

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Figure 1. American Electric Power Company Building, 1983  
(Source: *The AIA Guide to Columbus*, 2008)

## Context

“Architecture is not only a product of history, a product to be studied, analyzed, and criticized in relation to its context, conditions of appearance, or possibility. Architecture is an essential thread in the fabric of history, most especially in the fabric of “context.” It is an agent, or tool, in the making of history, in the development of new forms not only of dwelling but of production and sociability, of power and exploitation: new modes of historicity.”<sup>1</sup>

A downtown’s architecture – strongly associated with American urban-space – stages political, socio-economic and historical tensions. The downtown, as a designated site for governmental, business and financial institutions, is emblematic of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century zoning of American cities, whereby space in a city became defined and zoned through its intended use. The public and private spaces of downtown architecture are frequently defined through plazas, glass façades, and lobbies. Beyond these, the interior spaces typically remain out of sight. A tension is created between the highly visible buildings that form the downtown skyline and their intensely private interiors. This tension is at the heart of my work.

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<sup>1</sup> Damisch, Hubert, *Noahs Ark: Essays on Architecture*. Ed. Vidler, Anthony. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016. P.283.

## Notes on an American Downtown

“While the large, systematized architecture office offered important advantages, it had clear enough weaknesses. No single, characteristic expression could survive the process of consensual enterprise, and the best analyses and technologies often merged to create products so similar that it became difficult to know which office had designed which building.”<sup>2</sup>

Architecture is a reflection of social, historical, cultural and economic conditions. The best-known symbol of American architecture, the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century high-rise office building, is ubiquitous in cities across America.<sup>3</sup> The downtown is an area of the city where corporate and governmental institutions present power and authority, in part, through their architecture. The buildings, therefore, become repositories of a particular set of political, social and economic values of their time.

The downtown areas of many American cities – in their relative emptiness – contain space and architecture that is neither explicitly public nor private. It is a space I do not inhabit or experience daily, and these areas implicitly exclude those who do not work or reside there. I am struck by the

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<sup>2</sup> Newhouse, Victoria. *Wallace K Harrison, Architect*. New York City: Rizzoli. 1989. PP. 144-145

<sup>3</sup> Martin, Reinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. P.82.

emptiness of the public spaces of the downtown, while the office worker, commuter, security staff, and banker inhabit the private spaces, out of sight. Public spaces remain largely empty. To me, this is at odds with downtown Columbus' status as the economic and governmental centre of both the city and the state of Ohio.

The emptiness I perceive in the downtown of Columbus contrasts with my experiences of living in European urban environments. Historically in many European city centres there is a co-habitation of cultural, economic, governmental and residential spaces.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps being European has impacted my awareness of the conditions I've described in Columbus. In any count, my work is a direct response to what I see as a typically American experience of the city.

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<sup>4</sup> As another distinct different case from Columbus, the business district of the Zuidas, located in Amsterdam's periphery is of interest. Its master plan, from the 1990s, locates this business district outside of the city center. This type of late 20<sup>th</sup>-century commercial zoning is similar to situations in many ancient European cities, including London's Canary Wharf and Paris' La Défense, in response to the need for purpose-built business districts outside of historical centres.

## Notes on Downtown: American Electric Power

I decided to work with the architecture of downtown Columbus – and my experiences of it – to understand the city I live in and to contemplate, what I perceived as, its emptiness and indistinct architecture. I began by making a series of rubbings of every banking institution in the downtown area of the city. This series gave me the opportunity to explore and directly experience how architecture, and the spaces around it, are policed by security forces. I was prevented from completing the rubbings on the bank buildings by the Columbus Police Department and downtown security patrollers. These security forces maintain a constant presence in downtown Columbus. My encounters with security patrols led me to explore areas further afield from the main area of downtown Columbus. This ultimately brought me to the AEP building. Though AEP is not a financial institution, I was struck by its relative physical and visual isolation from the rest of the downtown area of Columbus. As the major supplier of electricity to Columbus I was also interested in AEP's role, like a banking institution's, as a part of our day-to-day lives. This makes apparent the slippery tendrils of power that remain unseen as a result of corporate anonymity.

My enquiry into the AEP building intensified with my research on the AEP architect, Max Abramovitz, who was important in the development of

the architectural typology of American corporate modernism. A typology implies typicality; in this sense the AEP tower could exist in any corporate area of any late 20<sup>th</sup>-century city. The AEP building represents an institutional attempt at being simultaneously present and mute in the skyline of Columbus. Both the anonymity and ubiquity are what drew me to this building.

The symbolism of the name, American Electric Power, is striking, especially considering the contemporary world in which we are living. The company, American Gas & Electric Company, was renamed American Electric Power in 1958 which, to me, reflects a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century mentality of American optimism and post war global strength.

During the 1970s and 1980s, several major firms in New York City, including American Electric Power Company (AEP), relocated their corporate headquarters to Columbus. The lead architect of Abramovitz, Harris & Kingsland was Max Abramovitz. This is the firm that designed the AEP, as well as other corporate modernist buildings and large-scale projects in America, Europe and South America. This was part of the architectural design movement known as the International Style.

Originally known as Harrison & Abramovitz, this firm became, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, “one of the nation’s most successful corporate architecture firms, with a staff of more than 200 at the height of the mid-60’s building boom.”<sup>5</sup> They were known for designing a number of midtown Manhattan

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<sup>5</sup> Goldberger, Paul. “Wallace Harrison Dead At 86; Rockefeller Center Architect.” *The New York Times* December 3 1981. Online. <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/12/03/obituaries/wallace-harrison-dead-at-86-rockefeller-center-architect.html?pagewanted=all>

skyscrapers, including the United Nations Headquarters and the Socony Mobil building. Upon Harrison's retirement from the firm it became Abramovitz, Harris & Kingsland – and it was this group that built the AEP building. American corporations in the 1950s and 1960s were patrons of many progressive architects working in a similar form to Abramovitz's firm, but by the 1980s these same stylistic movements were viewed as emblematic of an architecturally conservative form.

“The origin of the large-scale architectural office can be traced to the last decade of the nineteenth century. Daniel H. Burnham in Chicago was one of the first architects to organize a large firm that employed numerous people and to limit his own activities strictly to those of executive head. Soon most large architectural firms adopted this specialized assignment of responsibilities. About 1905 Albert Kahn developed a method of work in his Detroit architectural office that resembled the new techniques of mass production in the automobile factories he was designing. By 1950, nine-tenths of the 19,000 registered architects in the United States were working in large offices. At mid-century, the firms of Harrison & Abramovitz and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill were the foremost examples of the system.”<sup>6</sup>

The inclusion of Max Abramovitz (alongside the likes of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Eero Saarinen, and Philip Johnson), in the 1952 MOMA exhibition “Built in U.S.A.: Post-War Architecture.: 1932-44” reflects his

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<sup>6</sup> Newhouse, Victoria. *Wallace K Harrison, Architect*. New York City: Rizzoli. 1989. P.144.

significance in the development of the Modern American architectural movement. Financial institutions and businesses commissioned works of modern architecture in an effort to present a corporate and visual identity to the public. This homogenisation of corporate American architecture, emphasising the “primacy of the individual architectural object”<sup>7</sup> over the context of the site created a lack of specificity of place. Consequently, these buildings could – and do – exist anywhere, from Columbus, Ohio to Havana, Cuba. In Columbus, Abramovitz (as ‘Harrison & Abramovitz’ and ‘Abramovitz, Harris & Kingsland’) was involved in the Chase Bank (also known as Bank One or the Columbus Center), 1965, the Borden Building, 1974, One Nationwide Plaza, 1978, the American Electric Power Company Building, 1983 and the Capitol Square Office Building, 1984. These buildings house banking, insurance, business and energy corporations. While some of these buildings have changed their names and corporate ownership, AEP remains the sole owner and occupier of its building.

The AEP building is built from glass, concrete and stone. Its ground level includes a plaza that leads to a glass entrance lobby. In spite of its lack of public activity or function the plaza is open to the public. The shape of the plaza matches the geometry of the building and it can be viewed as both a transition space and a container. The outside remains the only place where the public can experience the physical building. The lobby visually opens up through the use of transparent glass, to become an ambiguous,

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<sup>7</sup> Schulze, Franz. *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1994. P.258.



simultaneously public and private space. However, the public's access to the building is limited to the lobby. This marks the limit of public interface with the building.

The building itself has a steel skeleton structure enclosed by a shell of stone masonry and rough, corrugated concrete panels that close off space and deny either visual or physical access. The building looks and feels like it would be abrasive to touch, as the "raw concrete walls make the strongest demands on our attention, it is their tactile aspect, rather than their optical one, that does so."<sup>8</sup> Despite its neutrality the building pushes back. Its physicality, weight, permanence and tactility becomes omnipresent in the concrete of its exterior walls.

The deeply set, horizontal windows reflect the energy shortages of the time, when high cost of heating and ventilation drew architects away from their use of glass to using concrete or stone.<sup>9</sup> The result, visually, is a building object that appears fortress-like and impenetrable. Self-contained within a city block the building does not relate to adjacent buildings, or indeed to any other building. It resembles a monolith. Like all architecture, the AEP building is a "document of something that happened,"<sup>10</sup> a steel, glass and concrete monument to the history, society, economics and politics of its time.<sup>11</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Damisch, Hubert, *Noahs Ark: Essays on Architecture*. Ed. Vidler, Anthony. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016. P.210.

<sup>9</sup> Schulze, Franz. *Philip Johnson: Life and Work*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1994. P.346.

<sup>10</sup> Bloomer, Jennifer. *The Text: The (S)cripts of Joyce and Piranesi*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1993. P. 22.

<sup>11</sup> The monumental was a heavily contested term in modernist vocabulary, as Lewis Mumford states: "It is by its social intention and not by its abstract form that the monument reveals

building offers itself as an object where we can locate the conditions that created what became the International Style type of architecture.

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itself": see Mumford, Lewis. "Monumentalism, Symbolism and Style." In *Architectural Review*, vol. 1, April 1949. PP.173-180. Therefore the building offers itself as an object where we can locate the conditions that created this type of architecture.

## The Work

My practice is a formal response to the affect of downtown Columbus architecture. My thesis exhibition and associated works explicitly engage my experiences of and with the AEP building. I approached my thesis by using distinctly different modes of representation to make a series of rubbings, photographs and texts. Through these processes, I attempt to articulate the tactile, visual and textual limits of my experience with the AEP building as I encountered it during my time in Columbus.



Figure 2. *AEP: Place & Displacement*, 2016



Figure 3. *AEP: Place & Displacement*, 2016

## Rubbings

The rubbings were made on-site, by taping paper or tyvek to the exterior of the building and burnishing its surface with charcoal. The result is both an impression of the textural information of the surface of the building and a record of the gestures necessary to make the drawing.

Rubbings can be theorised in terms of the dream (the surrealist unconscious), the trace (the mark, the evidence, action or event), the phantom (the elusive and intangible) and the memory (to claim and preserve).<sup>12</sup> Rubbings – (or frottage) were popularised by the surrealists “who in the early twentieth century espoused methods that freed the artistic mind from conscious intention by employing automatic ways of rendering an image.”<sup>13</sup>

The starting point for my interest in rubbings was seeing the exhibition *Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now*, curated by Allegra Pesenti, at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. The works of Anna Barriball, Robery Overby, and Do Ho Suh particularly struck me. This exhibition inspired

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<sup>12</sup> Pesenti, Allegra, *Apparitions: Rubbings and Frottages from 1860 to Now*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Kim, Clara, “Rubbing Is Loving: Do Ho Suh’s Archeology of Memory.” In *Do Ho Suh Drawings*. Ed. Steiner, Rochelle. New York: Prestel, 2014. P.27.

me to use rubbings in my practice, and ultimately to use this process with the AEP building.

Embedded within the form of the rubbing is the time of its making and the material of its making. These together constitute a mediated experience of the AEP building itself. I use rubbings as a way to have contact with the AEP building, to produce a trace or a record. These are tactile or haptic drawings that rely on “touch rather than sight, sensation rather than replication.”<sup>14</sup> Guisepppe Penone describes frottage as a “*shadow of the contact*.”<sup>15</sup> I like this expression because it reminds me of the shadow cast by the building and the reach of the corporation.

The removal of the rubbing from the site makes it both an image and an index of my contact with the building. Again, borrowing from Allegra Pesenti, rubbings oscillate between presence and absence, where an elusiveness and intangibility become part of how we approach the notion of what was an object.<sup>16</sup> Its status therefore becomes the “in between.”<sup>17</sup> This is complicated when looking at the rubbings from various distances. The different textures in the concrete, which was produced by the mould that made the concrete panels, is clearly seen through the rubbings. From further

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<sup>14</sup> Kim, Clara, “Rubbing Is Loving: Do Ho Suh’s Archeology of Memory.” In *Do Ho Suh Drawings*. Ed. Steiner, Rochelle. New York: Prestel, 2014. P. 28.

<sup>15</sup> Pesenti, Allegra, *Apparitions: Rubbings and Frottages from 1860 to Now*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. P.17.

<sup>16</sup> Pesenti, Allegra, *Apparitions: Rubbings and Frottages from 1860 to Now*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. pp.18-19.

<sup>17</sup> Pesenti, Allegra, *Apparitions: Rubbings and Frottages from 1860 to Now*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. pp.23.

away they appear like a building, wall or structure, while upon closer inspection they appear as a formal or abstract drawing.

The rubbings I make of the façade are a strategy to engage directly with the AEP building itself. I have come to feel the AEP building as an affect of domination. For me, the rough materiality of the façade and the scale of the building create this affect. The rubbings one-to-one correspondence to the scale of the actual building makes us aware of its scale. After working with this building, I cannot separate the work from the company's presence in our everyday life.<sup>18</sup>

One of the results of making the rubbings was the interaction with the building's security. During my first attempt at making a rubbing on the exterior surface of the building two security personnel approached me. I was asked what I was doing and why I was there. I replied by telling them that I was making a rubbing and that it was not a form of graffiti. I was then informed that if I had no permission from the building manager I would not be able to continue what I had started; however they would not provide me with a contact. The following few months were an ongoing process of trying to find the building manager's phone number, meeting them, and then explaining the rubbings that I was planning to make. Ultimately I was given permission and the people I engaged with were generally friendly. The frustration of recording this building through a rubbing resulted from the need to acquire permission.

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<sup>18</sup> Friendman, Alice T. "Eero Saarinen: Modern Architecture for the American Century." *Places Journal* June 2010. Online. <https://placesjournal.org/article/modern-architecture-for-the-american-century/>



This mundanity of bureaucracy and the security restrictions, limited the amount of time I had to make the rubbings, as well as their placement. However, the process has illuminated the politics of access when making artwork that involves direct contact with a building.

Once I returned the rubbings to the studio they were mounted onto wooden panels. The design of the wooden panels raises them from the walls of the studio or gallery. This reference is the use of stone veneer in postmodern buildings or the cast concrete panels of the AEP building itself,<sup>19</sup> which in many ways exist not just as cladding, but a mask.<sup>20</sup> Through my research I have learned that the AEP building is made up of concrete panels that are attached to an underlying steel structure.<sup>21</sup> The panels, in my work and the building, offer no-load bearing function or structural support. The floating nature of the panels intensify the experience of their mask-like or surface like presence, as does the relative thinness of the plywood panels themselves – a construction material that is not made to be durable or hold weight.

The concrete panels follow a matrix of huge proportions. The concrete panels of the building are around roughly nine feet wide and at least double that in height. The grid made up of my paper both captures and contrasts with the building's grid. The first series of rubbings I made were rectangular in

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<sup>19</sup> Another reference is the way's casts and wall reliefs are displayed in museums.

<sup>20</sup> Damisch, Hubert, *Noahs Ark: Essays on Architecture*. Ed. Vidler, Anthony. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016. P.150.

<sup>21</sup> Martin, Reinhold. *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. P.242.

shape made up of four sheets of 24 x 36 inch paper. These felt too much like the typical scale of a painting. The works I then went on to produce were irregular shapes derived from the rectangle. The depicted and literal shapes of my rubbing works are intended not to contain, as a rectangle might do, but instead create an imagined or illusionary edge. The edges of the rubbings are not the boundary of what we see, but instead, part of a larger unseen whole. The suggestion is that the rubbing is a fragment. In turn, it gives us a sense of a certain character of the building without attempting to replicate it in its entirety. The base, or what looks like a skirting board, is clearly seen at the bottom of the rubbing; above this section we see the corrugated wall and then a strip of impressed concrete.

In spite of my dedication to the rubbings, I have always been interested in disrupting the singularity of their representation. The laser cutting inscribed into the surface of the rubbings is sourced from a photograph of the surface of the AEP building. This photograph is from the same section that the rubbing is taken from. The raised impression of the building's surface produces the lines of the trace. This photograph of the façade is traced in illustrator to produce a vector file. This is then etched into the rubbings. The laser cut, through its technological mediations, brings another tactile representation of the surface of the AEP building. This work can be experienced as simultaneously abstract and real, detached from and in relation to the building.



Figure 4. *AEP: Model as Prototype*, 2016

## Model & Photograph

A model exists as a likeness made to scale, or a standard to follow: a thing to be imitated and repeated. Although a model is not the physical building itself, it represents what a building might look like, and may inform how we experience the building once it is completed. The scale model educates, informs, inspires, preserves, and sells the work of the designers or architects. Ultimately it is a form to be repeated in the building itself. 3D printing and virtual imaging of Computer Aided Design (CAD), as a current form of representing architecture within the design process, have superseded the model in contemporary architectural production. As James Ewing states: “Before the rise of computer renderings, model photography was a really vital part of the ecosystem of architectural representation.”<sup>22</sup> The model, as a static form that is physically crafted, now exists as an artefact in the history of architectural representations.

The AEP model was built in the early 1980s as part of the design process. It was staged with a background, lighting and miniature figures, and photographed. The photographer was thus a crucial participant in the design process. As the building model itself no longer exists, I documented the photographs of it during my visit to the Avery Library. The photographs are circulated as an *image* to be promoted to the client, to the city of Columbus,

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<sup>22</sup> James Ewing, *Stagecraft: Models and Photos*. New York City: Columbia GSAPP, 2017.

and throughout the architectural community. As James Ewing states: “Like all images they carry the agenda, style, and voice of the creators.”<sup>23</sup>

The architectural model exists as an object arrested by photography. In the photograph it appears before us as stable, immovable, and monumental, suggesting the building’s resistance to the ravages of time, surpassing “the living model or still life in its ability to stand still in front of the camera.”<sup>24</sup> The model produces an image of pure form, from which all instability and disorder have been excluded.

The photographs of the AEP model represent the exterior of the building from multiple perspectives: depicting the building in relation to the streets, the plaza or the overpass. The sky is always present. Most of the photographs show the building from a birds-eye view: a privileged position impossible for the typical urban inhabitant to experience. Strikingly, only one photograph shows the building from a pedestrian’s viewpoint. At first the surroundings seem devoid of people. Upon closer inspection, however, miniature figures and cars appear to give the photographs a sense of scale. Dramatically lit clouds in the photographic background intensify the colossal scale of the building, and create tension between the scale of the human and the scale of the city.

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<sup>23</sup> Ewing, James. *Follow the Sun: A Field Guide to Architectural Photographers in the Digital Age*. Waltham, MA: Focal Press. 2016. P.3.

<sup>24</sup> Damisch, Hubert, *Noahs Ark: Essays on Architecture*. Ed. Vidler, Anthony. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016. P.277.

Through the manner of photographic representation the AEP model distances and manipulates fact. Despite the romanticism of the dramatic, simulated sky in the background the photographic image of the model is blasé, rational and cold. This contrasts with images of the 90s where models were photographed “against a black background so that they seemed to exist in a void.”<sup>25</sup> As photographed, the model of the building appears removed from the context of the city. Indeed, it completely negates its urban context. By distancing us from reality and distorting our experience of the city, the photographed model represents disenchantment with the world surrounding it. The model exists, therefore, to underline the absence of the building itself, and what then emerges “is an awareness of the inadequacy of any kind of portrayal, curiosity about the reality it promises, and perhaps if the promise has the power to move us – a longing for its presence.”<sup>26</sup> Our experience is limited to a distant, ethereal gaze. When such models and photographic representations inform our impression of architectural experience, they point to the dead end of late-twentieth-century modernist architectural production.

During a research trip to Avery Library I documented the photographs of the AEP model. Upon my return to Columbus I used the laser cutter to ‘etch’ these images into the surface of the paper. The image and the support (the paper), through this process, become the same. The model becomes an ephemeral image through the process of etching. The surface of the paper is literally burnt and etched into to produce a sepia ‘effect’ that on initial viewing

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<sup>25</sup> James Ewing, *Stagecraft: Models and Photos*. New York City: Columbia GSAPP, 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Zumthor, Peter. *Thinking Architecture*. Basel, Switzerland: Birkhauser. 2010. P.12.

could be read as nostalgic or 'vintage'. The softness of the image quality, produced through the laser etching into the surface of the paper, makes the images seductive and heightens the romanticism of the model.



American Electric Power Service Corp. (AEP) announced plans Tuesday for a 22-story downtown headquarters tower between Spring and Long Sts. on the west side of Maroon Blvd.

The building, scheduled for completion by 1983, will show a similarity to the Nationwide Plaza to the north with lush, landscaped entrance parks surrounding the eight-sided megalth.

Unlike the Nationwide Plaza, however, it will have few commercial shops and no restaurants, according to AEP senior vice president William G. Loftus.

AEP BEGAN ITS move to Columbus from New York City this summer after acquiring the Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Co. (CSO&S). AEP is a utility holding concern with eight electric companies in seven Midwestern and Southern states as well as supporting coal mines and transport facilities. The company is moving into temporary leased space in the Borden Building, 180 E. Broad St.

Relocation of headquarters and construction of the downtown office tower were among offers made by AEP when the company first bid for CSO&S in the late 1960s.

The 5.3-acre site is being purchased from the Nationwide Development Co., a Nationwide Insurance Co. affiliate, for \$4 million.

As expected, John W. Galbreath & Co. will be the project manager with the contractor to be selected through competitive bidding. Architects are Abramovitz, Harris and Kingsland of New York.

THE EIGHT-SIDED design will reduce exterior wall space to conserve energy in heating and cooling the all-electric building.

The building will have a masonry exterior to harmonize with other area structures and anticipated High Street development to the south.

Loftus said AEP selected the site as the most attractive available, adjacent to the Scioto River with a view of the Downtown.

The entire structure will contain 760,000 square feet, 24,000 square feet per floor. Some of this space may be leased to commercial tenants if not needed for AEP staff, Loftus said.

THE SERVICE corporation has about 1,500 employees in New York with at least 1,000 scheduled for relocation in Columbus. AEP also has offices in Lakewood, Ohio, but Loftus said there are no plans to relocate these in Columbus.

Underground parking will be available at the site for 1,000 cars.

AEP chairman Willis S. White declined Tuesday to estimate building costs.

In the next few weeks, bids will be taken and core drilling completed at the site to determine exact location of the tower. Ground breaking on the project will be next spring, White said.

Announcing the project Tuesday in Gov. James A. Rhodes' office, White said the reason for choosing the Maroon Blvd. site is that it is big enough

to support a second building if future expansion is necessary.

Financing plans have not been completed, he said, although representatives from Columbus, three major banks, were present at the announcement. AEP has no plans, however, to seek any forms of tax abatement from the city on the project.

Figure 5. AEP: Text as Image, 2017



## Texts

“to combat the tyranny of visual perception and to tie meaning to other modes of perception or sensation is... one of the functions of language.”<sup>27</sup>

The last form that I included in my thesis show is a text that announces to the general public the construction of the AEP building. This text contextualises the corporations’ move from New York City referred to earlier in this paper, as well as the site for the building’s construction. In turn it anticipated what the AEP building would look like. The text is sourced from the archive of the *Columbus Dispatch* held at the Columbus Metropolitan Library.

I am interested in how a text opens up architecture outside of the photograph, model, or the building itself, whereby we assemble and produce an imaginary idea of architecture as the reader. In this section I will contemplate text as part of the ecology of architectural representation and the ways texts impact and complicate our analysis of architecture.

Text can exist in relationship to and simultaneously with architecture as a form of criticism during the process of articulating, planning and contemplating a building. Text can serve a purpose for narrating a series of

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<sup>27</sup> Roland Bathes as cited in Forty, Adrian. *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson. 2000. P.37.

visual images, such as drawings and photographs, to help make sense of what we are seeing. This is particularly significant because architecture is a temporal and spatial form: it cannot be experienced in its entirety in one moment or position.

Text articulates the experience of architecture in both a suggested past, a speculative future and the present. Therefore, text can be introduced to locate or complicate internal memory of time in architecture and “aspects of presence, origin, place, scale... [and] confronts ordinary or authorial value”.<sup>28</sup> The text can also exist to assist, or complicate, the process of looking at architecture. It attempts, in spite of its shortcomings, to communicate to us what a visual image alone cannot describe.<sup>29</sup> The attempt at fixing architecture through text provides a tension in relation to how we encounter a work of architecture.

The text in my thesis work dates from the July 29, 1980 issue of the *Columbus Dispatch*. The text announces the plans for the AEP building’s construction with the headline: “AEP To Build Tower on Marconi Blvd.” The article describes the location, the site, the proposed building and the context of how it came into being. This text gives us no critical or analytical reading of the architecture; it merely presents it. The text exists as fact and gives us an idea of what the program of this building is; it does not give us the voice of a

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<sup>28</sup> Eisenman, Peter. “Architecture as a Second Language: The Texts of Between.” In *Restructuring Architectural Theory*, Eds. Diani, Marco & Ingraham, Catherine. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1988. PP.70-71.

<sup>29</sup> Forty, Adrian. *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*. London: Thames & Hudson. 2000. P.34.

firm with the weight of the architects' intentions. It delivers information, through the authoritative voice of a newspaper to its readers. This perceived neutrality of interpretation, however, opens up ways to read the text through the details it provides us.

The *Columbus Dispatch* text existed in the form of microfilm at the archives of Columbus Metropolitan Library. The text was included in a page of the newspaper together with other articles. A rendering depicting what the AEP building would look like appears above the article. The differences between the rendering, the model and the actual appearance of the building is stark, opening up a historical trajectory of how the building was transformed through the design process. The rendering in the newspaper is the only representation of the building whereby it is situated in the context of Columbus as a city, interestingly enough at the point when it was first disseminated to the public.

I scanned this text and made a silkscreen. The text locates us in the 1980s when the text was written. The text highlights the depersonalised labour practices of modernity: "The service corporation has about 1,500 employees in New York with at least 1,000 scheduled for relocation in Columbus". However the actual mechanisms of power, for example, the brokering of deals over land and people, are not described and exist in the "shadows". The AEP building is described in similar numerical terms: "The entire structure will contain 760,000 square feet – 24,000 square feet per floor". The text, through its information and description of the AEP building,

and its workers, reveals something else: it reflects the immense power of corporations over people as well as space.

As I described above, the original text in the article included a rendering of the building. I decided to remove this in my silkscreen in order to test my hypothesis on text: that text, as a read experience, can also be a part of architecture.



Figure 6. *AEP: Place & Displacement*, installation



Figure 7. *AEP: Model as Prototype / AEP: Text as Image*, installation

## Exhibition

I exhibited my rubbings, photographs and text works together at Urban Arts Space, together in the same space, in order to question whether the works exist in autonomy or co-dependence.

How we exhibit architecture speaks to the broader question of whether we strive to preserve its essence, reconstruct it, represent it, or critically analyse it. This choice impacts how we historically, culturally and socially locate that architecture, and in turn the affect of that specific architecture.<sup>30</sup> Architecture, in general, is exhibited by recreating architectural environments, interiors or exteriors; by presenting fragments of a building; or by showing representations of architecture through text, image, drawing or video.

I also wanted my work to respond to the conditions of the gallery, yet not become embedded in the space like so much installation work. Echoes of the space can be seen in the rubbings. For example, their shapes reverberate the steps cut into the walls of the gallery space, while the skirting board at the base of the gallery wall is also reminiscent of the lower portion of the rubbings.

I consider the rubbing's fragments, displacements or removals from the

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<sup>30</sup> Arrhenius, Thordis, *Place & Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture*. Zurich, Switzerland: Lars Müller Publishing, 2014.

AEP building. This informed the decision to install the rubbings floating from the wall. One of the rubbing's edges touches the adjacent gallery wall: this creates a defined negative space around the piece. The corner of the gallery wall, therefore, becomes implicated in the work. The fragmentation of the work in the exhibition is heightened through the two rubbings existing as fractured planes and shapes, rather than integrated wholes.<sup>31</sup>

The photograph of the model and the text are from two different archives. In my thesis exhibition, they exist together to re-contextualise the work. The text is weighted by the power of description, while the photograph of the model exists as a visual representation. Each informed by the other becomes contextualised and sited.

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<sup>31</sup> Kim, Clara, "Rubbing Is Loving: Do Ho Suh's Archeology of Memory." In *Do Ho Suh Drawings*. Ed. Steiner, Rochelle. New York: Prestel, 2014. P.30.



**WEATHER**  
Clear tonight, sunny Wednesday.  
Low tonight in the low 60s.  
High Wednesday in the mid-60s.  
Chilly. (Data on Page 24)

# The Columbus Dispatch

OHIO'S GREATEST HOME NEWSPAPER  
4 Sections  
Columbus, Ohio 43216, Tuesday, July 29, 1980

**HOME**  
FINAL

Vol. 110, No. 29

15 Cents



**AEP BUILDING** - This is an architect's rendering of the American Electric Power Co. building to be built on the east side of the Scioto River between Spring and Long Sts. At far right is the U.S. Courthouse at 85 Marconi Blvd. In the background behind the AEP building and the federal court building is the Ohio Statehouse building. At left is the Natwestwide Plaza.

## AEP To Build Tower On Marconi Blvd.

American Electric Power Service Corp. (AEP) announced plans Tuesday for a 32-story headquarters tower to be built on Marconi Blvd. The building, scheduled for completion by 1983, will show a similarity to the Natwestwide Plaza in the north high rise, landscaped entrance park surrounding the eight-story complex. Unlike the Natwestwide Plaza, however, it will have few commercial shops and no restaurants, according to AEP senior vice president William C. Loftis.

AEP REGAN FS move to Columbus from New York City this summer after acquiring the Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Co. (CSOE). AEP is a utility holding company with eight electric companies in seven Midwestern and Southern states as well as supporting coal mines and transport facilities. The company is moving into temporary leased space in the Belden Building, 100 E. Broad St.

Architectural design and construction of the Marconi office tower were among offers made by AEP when the company first bid for CSOE in the bid.

The 3.2-acre site is being purchased from the Natwestwide Insurance Co., affiliate, for \$4 million.

As expected, John W. Galbreath & Co. will be the project manager with the contractor to be selected through competitive bidding. Architects are Abramson, Harris and Kiplinger of New York.

**THE EIGHT-SIDED DESIGN** will receive exterior wall space to conserve energy in heating and cooling the all-electric building.

The building will have a masonry exterior in harmony with other area structures and anticipated High Street development to the south.

Loftis said AEP selected the site as the most attractive available adjacent to the Scioto River with a view of the downtown.

## Shah Entombed On Egyptian Soil

**CAIRO, Egypt (AP)** - The deposed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran was buried in exile Tuesday with all the pomp and ceremony accorded a ruler, but with only one chief of state present, his old friend Anwar Sadat.

Former U.S. President Richard M. Nixon stood by the Egyptian leader's side.

**THE STATE FUNERAL**, a traditional Islamic ceremony, was presided over by the grand councilor general, but no major incidents were reported.

Pahlavi, who died Sunday at the age of 60 after a year in exile with his wife, was buried in the city of Isfahan, a large Islamic house of prayer where he was interned for 10 days in the 1940s and where members of the shah's wife, former Empress Farah Pahlavi, and their three children attended the funeral.

The shah's wife, former Empress Farah Pahlavi, and their three children attended the funeral.

**AN ISLAMIC WHITE** shroud covered the Shah's body, but the shah's wife, Princess Ashraf, the shah's long-time bodyguard, and other members of the royal family were brought earlier in the day to the Abdou Monsef hospital, where he had spent the last months of his life, to see his final resting place.

The shah's wife, former Empress Farah Pahlavi, and their three children attended the funeral.

**A 2-FOOT** high brass casket, 7 feet long, was placed in the coffin. The shah's wife, former Empress Farah Pahlavi, and their three children attended the funeral.

**IN GOOD SPIRITS** - Jim Michael, 4, and his mother, Sandra K. Michael, gave thanks up to a surprised audience Monday night at the Columbus Convention Center. Jim Michael will have four more years to live.

## 4-Year-Old Boy Faces Last Shot At Staying Alive

**By Robin Yorum**  
LONDON (AP) - A 4-year-old boy, Jim Michael, will have four more years to live with a brain tumor.

However, the outgoing 4-year-old will have to give it his best shot, because it's probably the last one he'll ever get.

For Jim Michael, there'll be no next time. There are no do-overs, but he could live a happy, normal life. If it is not, Jim Michael likely will die within the year.

**BIG THREE YEAR** battle against leukemia will come to an end in late August. Doctors are giving Jim Michael a 70 percent chance of coming through the operation.

Along with his parents, Mike and Sharon, Jim Michael, 4, of Madison Ave., London, and his 3-year-old sister, Jennifer, who will provide the vital bone marrow, Jim Michael will fly to Seattle for the operation. They expect to be gone more than three months.

The two nurses present when Jim Michael's case was diagnosed have been a campaign to raise money for the National Leukemia Foundation. Although Jim Michael's surgery will take care of the medical expenses, the nurses estimate close to \$40,000 for the surgery.

## Immate Who Blinks May Miss Parole Hearing

**By David Lare**  
Columbus Dispatch Staff Writer

Egali Eugene Kimbler, 147-226, clearly remembers his Parole Board hearing two years ago at Ohio maximum-security prison at Leavenworth.

"It was 11 minutes from the table I left the shop area to get to the Parole Board and interviewed and get back to the shop," he recalled. "The hearing itself took maybe a minute and a half."

Kimbler was called parole in 1978 and continued another 30 months. They didn't ask me anything, and I got the impression they had brought that time in with them, but I had another interview in March. Last month, Kimbler went back before the board and was granted.

**OHIO PAROLE** Board hearings

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**NEWS SERVICES**  
The Dispatch is a member of the Associated Press and the Knight-Ridder, Los Angeles Times-Washington Post, Century, Field and Reuters news services.

29 JUL 29

Figure 8. 'AEP To Build Tower On Marconi Blvd.' (Source: Columbus Dispatch, 29 July, 1980)

## Research

I conducted two research trips to the Max Abramovitz archives' held at Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. The archives gave me access to the architects' drawings, plans and photographs of the AEP building, representations of the AEP building that are made by and circulated by the architectural firm. I wanted to visit the archive in order to see the original physical materials, and thus explore their agency. The act of viewing the materials takes time and allows for lingering to engage with the work, and gives an insight into how the architectural firm recorded its own output. While books and articles have previously informed my conceptual and visual practice, an archive has the advantage of containing materials that exist outside of public circulation and is an opportunity to see these materials directly without the mediation of an author. The archive is a site where my research practice became part of my artistic practice through the act of looking, reading and documenting. All this informed what I made in the studio.

The actual architectural projects, aside from the completed building, exist in a liminal space. Once a project has been completed, the work takes on a different role when archived: to be used as a resource for scholarly research or a site to influence contemporary architectural production and thought. The archive, however, is generally not thought of as a site of an architect's material production: it exists as a collection of ideas, thoughts

and representations, and as a historical document and an obsolete artefact from the production of a building.

This was my first experience of viewing the archives of an architect in person. While viewing the Max Abramovitz holdings, I realised how incomplete the archive was. For example, only some of the buildings designed by Max Abramovitz in Columbus are contained in the archive. In turn, only select information on these buildings is held; there are many replica floor plans for the AEP building, yet few section drawings and no perspective drawings of the building itself. As I've discussed corporate modernist architecture is closed to the general public, and our experiences of these buildings are generally rooted in their images. The archive holdings therefore become even more important as a site where I could experience or find representations of the AEP building.

In the archive we are looking at representations of architecture. A representation, as a noun, exists as an image or a likeness. We are not looking at the thing itself: this is particularly pertinent given that modern architecture's development and circulation was through the mediums of photography, film, text and printed matter. As Guiliana Bruno has noted, "Architecture has become of the most influential forms of imaging."<sup>32</sup> What we once experienced directly has now become mere representation: now

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<sup>32</sup> Bruno, Guiliano. "Construction Sites: Fabricating the Architectural Imaginary in Art." In *Automatic Cities: The Architectural Imaginary in Contemporary Art*. San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art. 2009. P.37.

photographs and text envision and communicate what a building looks like and inform us how it is to be experienced.<sup>33</sup>

When I was looking at the AEP building through the archive I became more aware of how representations circulate independently from the building itself. When separated from the context of the building, the photographs constitute a nostalgic and optimistic look at modernist architecture. The plans, in contrast, are much harder to 'read' as they are not written in a visual language, but a graphic language. This graphic language provided the information that was used to construct the building. Drawing, in the plan, is the language of design: this requires a prior knowledge of its rules to read it correctly. It did not serve the function of representation. Therefore the plans and photographs in the archive are of not equivalent in their purpose or their intended audience. One audience is a client or the public, while the other is the builder

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<sup>33</sup> Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. New York: Zone Books, 1992. P.12.

## Closing: Thoughts Moving Forward

“In its final form, architecture has its place in the concrete world. This is where it exists. This is where it makes its statement.”<sup>34</sup>

How and where does architecture exist?

How does my work obscure or reveal the reality of the building?

How would the works function when they are shown independently from one another?

What would happen to the work if they were exhibited with images of the physical building itself?

So far I have only exhibited representations of the exterior of the building; how could interior images be used and what would this do for my project?

How can I further open up the sources of my research and how could these be used in my work?

How could I represent architecture through text alone?

How can speculative projects become part of my work?

In what ways can the speculative be a place for imagination or projection?

In what ways could maps and plans become a part of the project?

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<sup>34</sup> Zumthor, Peter. *Thinking Architecture*. Basel, Switzerland: Birkhauser. 2010. P.12.

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Appendix:  
Practice & Research





Figure 9. AEP: Rubbing, 2016

**ABRAMOVITZ  
HARRIS  
KINGSLAND**  
**ARCHITECTS  
PLANNERS**

630 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10020  
Telephone (212) 265-4884

**AMERICAN ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY - COLUMBUS, OHIO  
NEW HEADQUARTERS BUILDING**

Abramovitz-Harris-Kingsland      Building Architects  
Sasaki Associates, Inc.              Landscape Architects

The site of about 5 acres is bounded by Spring Street, Long Street, Marconi Street and the river.

The headquarters complex consists of an office tower of 32 floors and about 855,000 square feet, and parking facilities for 1000 cars.

The parking facilities are partially below grade and spread over the site to allow landscaping of the roof terraces for minimum visual impact on the site.

The eight sided configuration of the tower is planned to minimize the wall to floor area ratio of the building, thereby reducing heat loss and heat gain and consequent energy usage. The glazing and fenestration systems further enhance energy efficiency. The heating, ventilating and air conditioning systems are computer controlled.

A typical tower floor is about 24,000 square feet in area to accommodate most efficiently the space planning needs of AEP. Orientation of these floors is toward the river and the central core of the City. The side core plan answers the owners requirements of deep spaces for open floor planning.

The building is masonry clad. Apart from energy considerations the stone used is in harmony with the Nationwide complex and the anticipated High Street development to the south which, it is hoped, will one day link these developments to the AEP site.

The site and parking terraces are landscaped, and are joined to the City river front development by a connector across Long Street.

Figure 10. AEP: Document  
(Source: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)



Figure 11: AEP: Photograph of model  
(Source: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)



Figure 12. AEP: Construction, 1982  
(Source: Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University)