

# **The Realm of Representation**

Tanisha Bhavvesh Sheth

May 2019

## Copyright

All materials contained on this document (including text, content, photographs) are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published, broadcast or modified in any way without the prior written consent of Tanisha Bhavesh Sheth, or in the case of third party materials, the owner of that content. You may not alter or remove any trademark, copyright or other notice from copies of this content.

## **Abstract**

Through my territory of investigation, Architecture and Representation at Cornell'19, I explored various ways of representation that convey the narrative behind every concept studied, analyzed and designed. Ranging from visual montages to physical objects, I learned that representation goes beyond just a drawing. I discovered four different methodologies and theories of representation through my design studios and electives. Often we misuse the term representation with aesthetics, disregarding its explanatory potential for understanding the designer's intention. My essay and its complementing content in this document, provide a glimpse of four techniques of representation, their relationship with one another and their distinction from one another.

## Contents

### **Representation as a vision**

- Semester I (Design studio) - Ecology
- Semester I (Design studio) - Discourse
- Semester I (Design studio) - Urbanism

### **Representation as a tool**

- Semester II (elective) - Drawing the Invisible
- Semester III (elective) - Multivalent Drawings

### **Representation as materiality**

- Semester II (design studio) - Interpretative Center for the Catskills

### **Representation as an artifact**

- Semester III (design studio) - Design 5.0, Industry of the Fall

Representation as a vision

The representation of architecture is important in the absence of tangible space. Throughout a lifetime, even the most devoted, well-traveled design enthusiast will experience only a small percentage of architectural works with their own eyes. Considering that we exist in only one era of architectural history, and the percentage reduces even further. Many architectural works go unbuilt, and the buildings we experience in person amount to a grain of sand in a vast desert.

For buildings not yet built, representation is not a luxury, but a necessity to test, communicate and enhance an idea. Fortunately, today's designers have unprecedented means to deliver ideas, with an explosion in technology giving us computer-aided drafting, photo-realistic rendering, and virtual reality. Despite these vast strides, however, the tools of representation are a blend of old and new, from techniques which have existed for centuries, to the technology of our century alone. The architectural sketch may be the first tool that everyone comes into contact with in school, and possibly the most practical of them all. Fast and expressive, the sketch not only conveys the basic idea of spatial composition but also contains the individual style of the architect.

of the architect. We are taught that producing plans, cuttings, facades and axonometric projections is a large part of the process of a representation project.

As representations that escape the two-dimensionality of the sheet of paper, models offer the possibility of observing, in general, the volumetric composition of the project from various points of view. In addition, because it is subject to the same laws of physics to which the constructed work will be subject, the models can serve as an important tool for the structural understanding and conceptualization of the work.

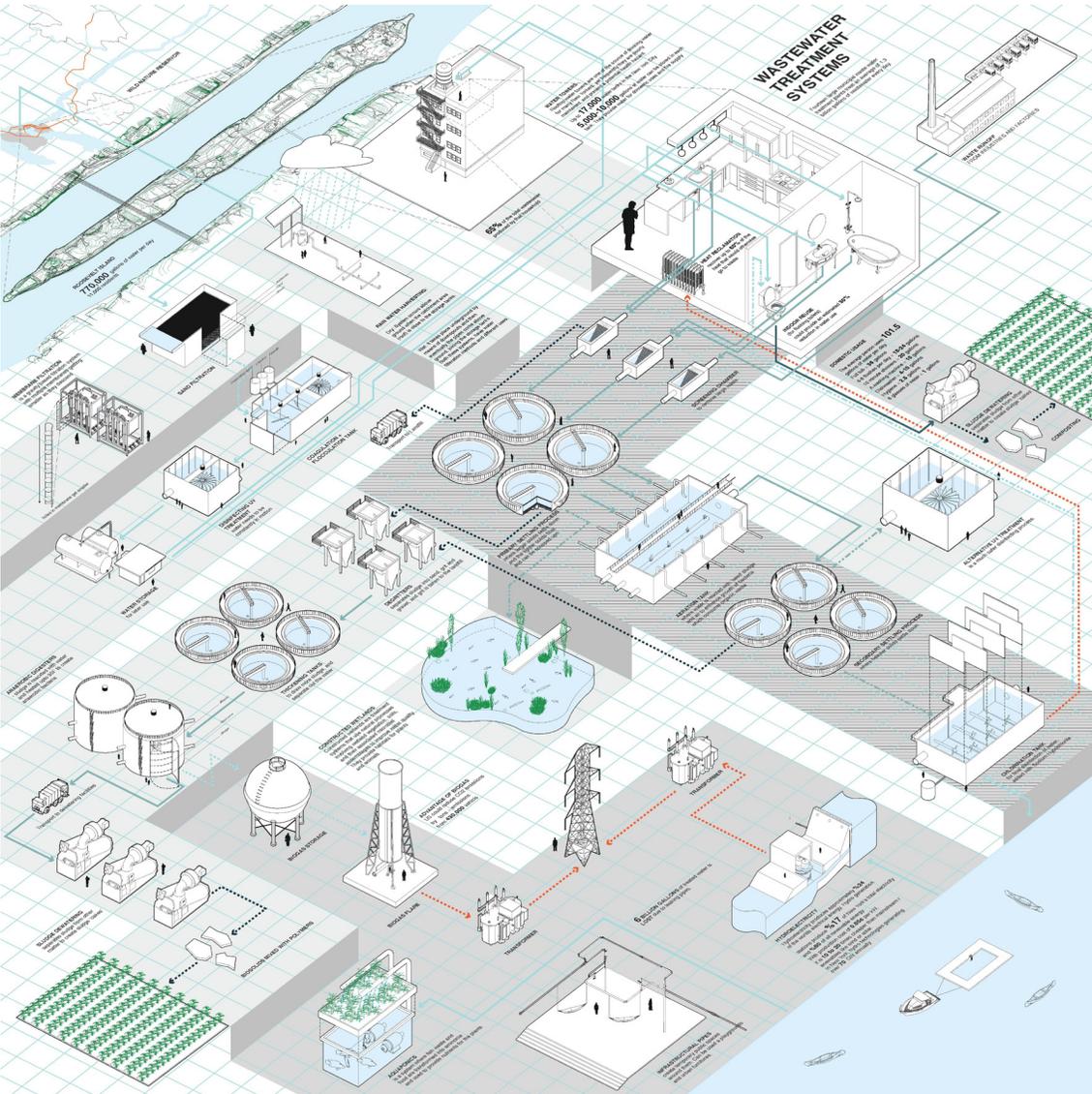
Renders being two-dimensional compositions usually conceived from three-dimensional digital models and often in a realistic style. This makes it possible to estimate the future of the work constructed within its context. By offering us the possibility of manipulating the image, this tool is not only used to create realistic environments but also for fantastic and impossibly grand scenarios.

**Data Diagram**

Raw, unorganized facts of data are bundles of bulk entries gathered and stored without context. Once the context has been attributed to the data by stringing two or more pieces together in a meaningful way, it becomes information.

To represent information is important but to edit down information is equally required. How much information is required in a pre-concept phase and how can one put it all together as an architectural drawing?

Fig 1.1 is a cohesive drawing of data and information depicted graphically to get an idea of



1.1 - Waste Water Treatment - Architecture + Ecology

## A poetry

There has been much debate over the years as to whether the two disciplines of architecture and poetry have any real connection. A nascent outsider might assume that the two have an intrinsic connection as they are both artistic forms of expression, albeit in two very different practices, but many professionals in the field still claim that there is either no connection at all or at the very least a tentative one.

While it may not be argued that great architecture breeds great poetry, it does, at the very least, has a keen sense of place in the world of poetry, and has been the inspiration for many great works by many great poets.

Fig 1.1 is ideally a section from the studio, Architecture + Ecology. The idea was to give the drawing a poetic ambiance based on its site, Roosevelt Island.

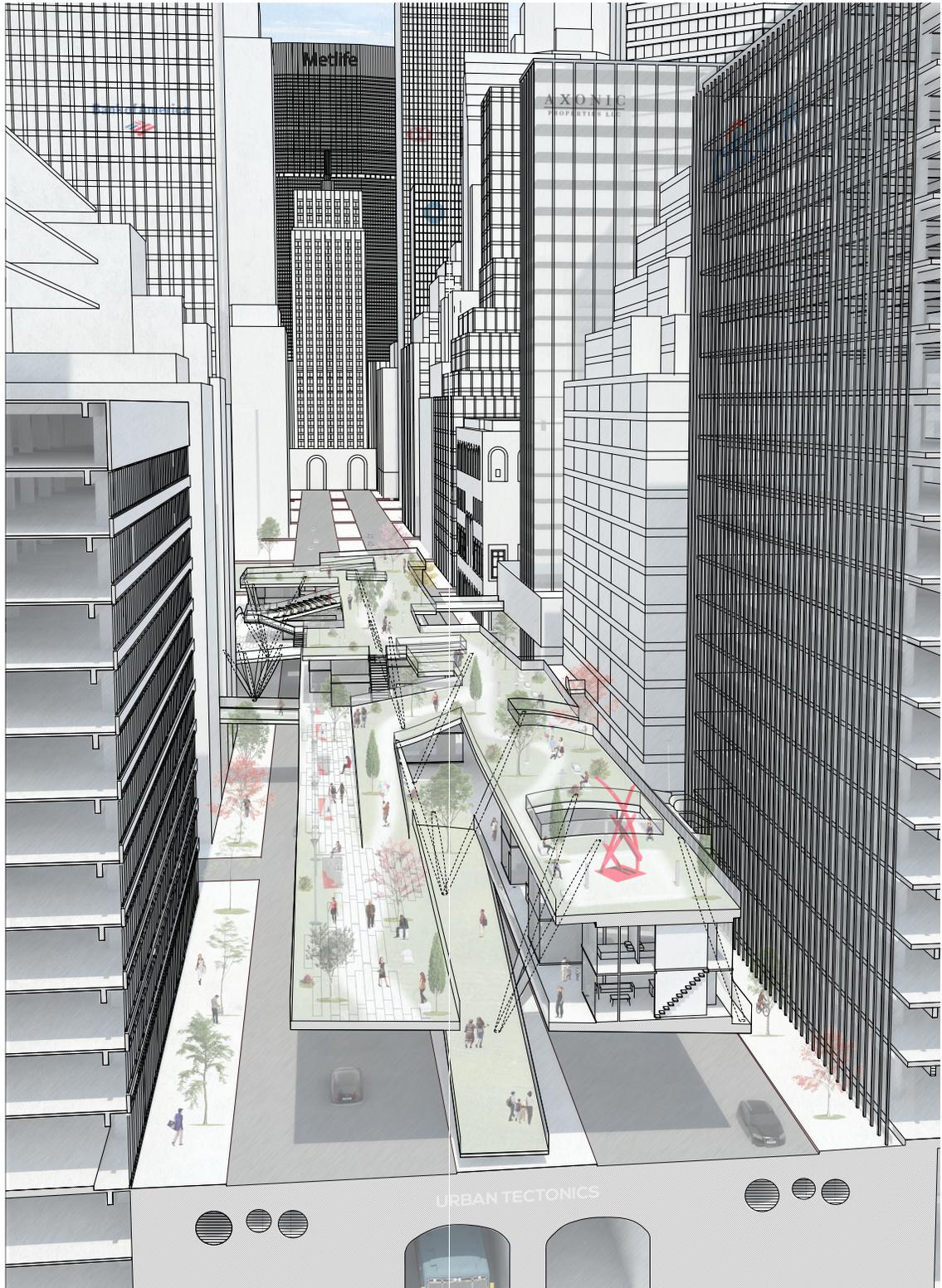
The context and background of the drawing have been altered, multiplied, montaged to create an environment, while the section remains as a white poshe.

Representation by overlaying multiple information in either the context or content is a powerful visionary that suggests a condition. One can read both of them distinctively but also together as a verse from a new poem.



1.1 - Section - *Architecture + Ecology*

The Image



I.1 - Park Aene Horizontal Tower - Architecture + Urbanism

## The Image

The graphic of the project has looked for a new repertoire to reassess the static image of drawing with the proposal of visual references more consistent with contemporary tools, redefining the concept of rendering, in the balance between image and design.

The deep dissatisfaction of the “digital migrant” generation with the photo-realistic rendering was born from the aversion to the misleading simulation, which is instinctively traced back to the relationship between the “good drawing” and the “bad project”.

But actually, the realistic representation has a semantic reason in the first meaning of the word image, which is more suited to describe the representation of the virtual model.

This term expresses first of all the recognisability of an object through the appearance: “the connotations connected to the exterior appearance underlines the risk of the false evidence and the superficiality of judgment, already emphasized by Platone in the myth of the cave substance of form”

On the contrary, those related to representation emphasize the need for us to describe reality through depictions and models that help us to better understand the essence through visible manifestations that express the substance of form”

Fig 1.1 is an image of my project from the studio, Architecture + Urbanism. The image is as real as the buildings in Park Avenue but also completely conceptual in its idea. It represents duality in vision, engaging the viewer to the image a little longer than usual.

The prominence of details in the image to get to the reality of being in Park Avenue can be encompassing to the topic of a real problem.

## Architectural Discourse

The aim of the studio was to develop a discourse based on hybridizing three conditions of plans, a labyrinth, a box inside a box, a series of spaces. While doing so, the result is a fourth drawing that ultimately is perceived as a plan. The plan is analyzed by a series of thoughts of what its potential can be, developing a narrative in one's mind. The narrative is then translated into an image of this perception.

The plan, the narrative, and the image, together, give us an architectural discourse.

The difference between mediations should not be based on tool or technique, but instead, on the difference in genre, in rhetoric, in the audience, in aesthetics. It becomes more important for an architect to understand this genre of mediation than it is to rehearse the historical techniques for creating them. It is in the exploration of the changing relations.



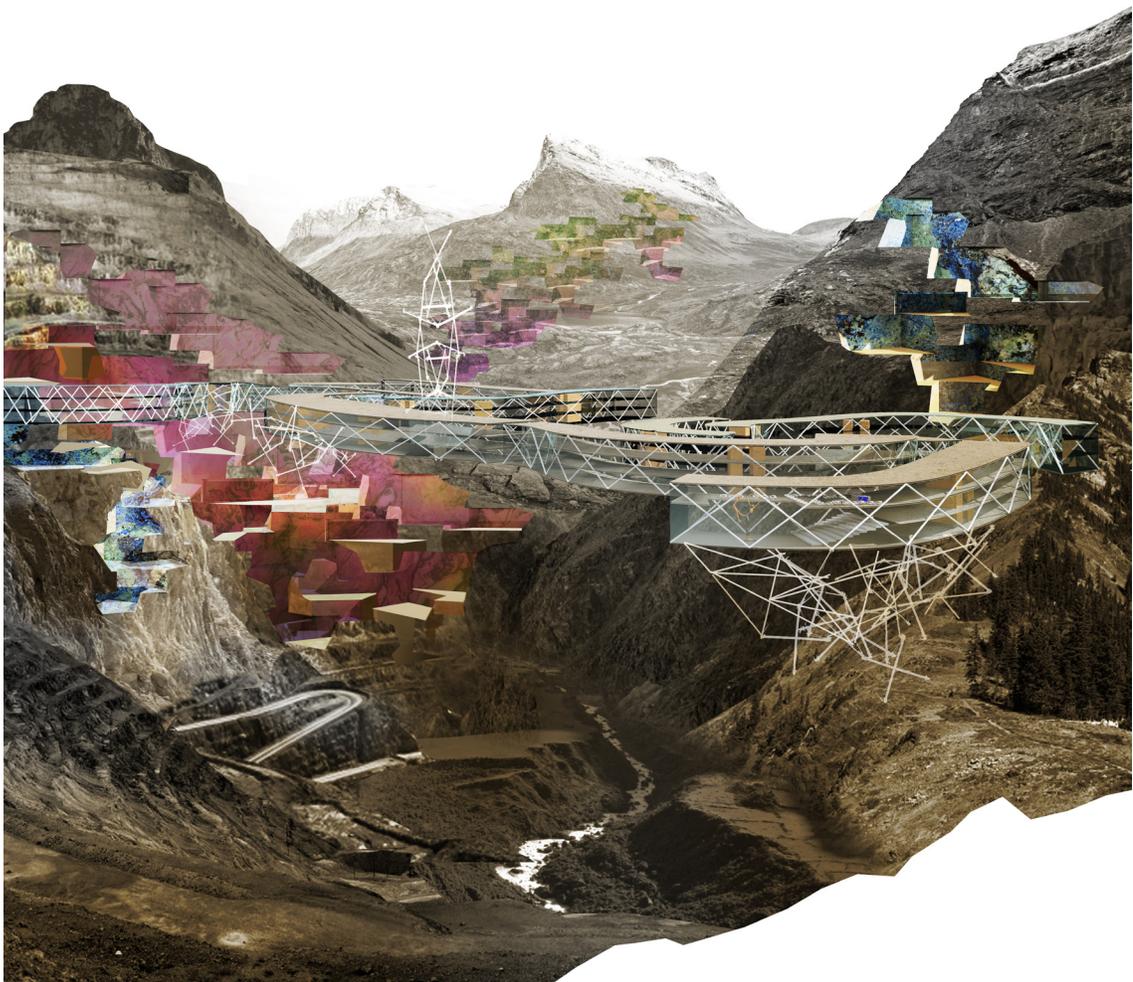
*If you stare at it closely, you might find it beautiful.*

The beauty of a site is not its location or terrain, but the change it undergoes to reveal unimaginable elements. A vision, unknown, uncommon, is an appreciated image.

It's a resultant, utopian definition of the ongoing dilemma between humans and Earth to extract, study, alter and shift.

*The image is almost sublime generating a feeling of imbalance while staring at the Earth's intimidating entrails, naked, angry and disturbed.*

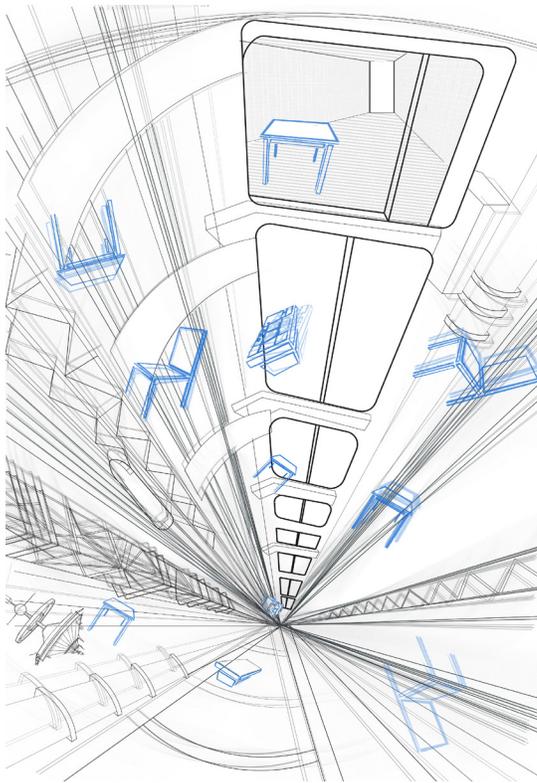
An artist would urge to capture this moment in a painting, a photographer would zoom into details of buoyancy of the fluid lava overlaid by shades of different hues, a regular trespasser would stroll through and halt at points when he notices some strangeness.



Representation as a tool

## Drawing: A Narrative

Words are very effective when describing ambiances, feelings or evoking multi-sensory experiences beyond the solely visual: temperature, sound, aging and the even the passing of time. By exploring different modes of architectural representation, ways of depicting ideas or conditions that avoid the visual, I learned to communicate beyond the visible into the unseen. Using drawings and models, the seminar explored the role of architecture in literature and the way in which architecture can become a character in itself. Ultimately I achieved representation of objects to the depiction of spatial and atmospheric qualities.



1.1 - The open elevator - *Drawing the Invisible*

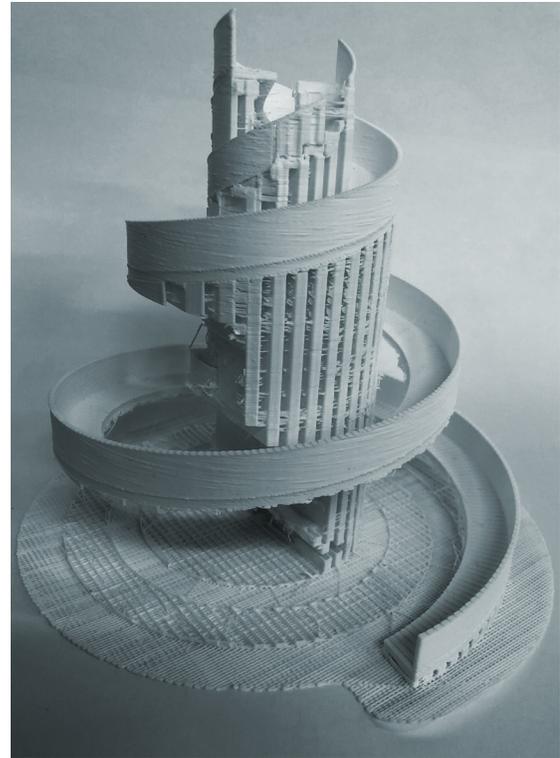
By selecting (cutting and pasting) phrases or paragraphs from a specific book, which describes a memorable space or situation, I recomposed a new paragraph, to later work on its visual representation. I worked using (and perhaps subverting) already established standards for architectural drawing.

The following set of three drawings complement each other's graphic style with a common theme of time. Fig 1.1 represents furniture falling down an elevator shaft in a space station. The idea was to draw an unusual instance from the text "A report on an unidentified space station." The drawing ultimately becomes its own theme provoking tangential narratives that could have been a better way of imagining spaces. Representation acts as a trigger to generate a bank of ideas in one's mind through multiple narratives.

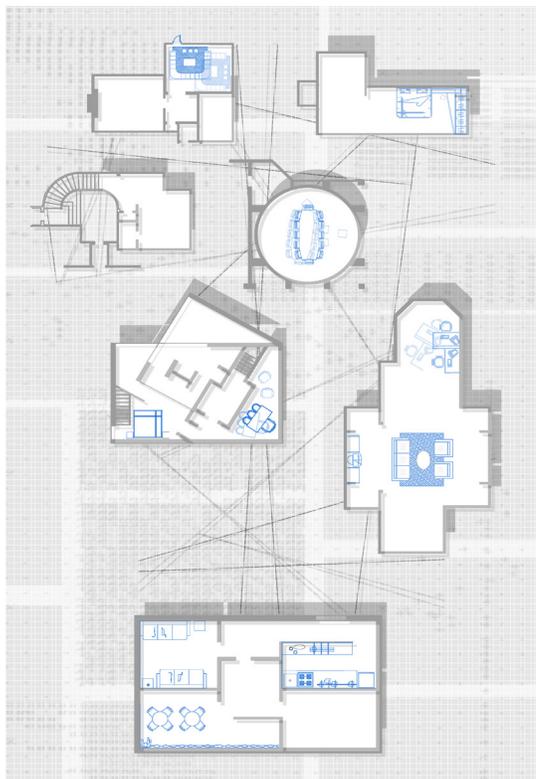
Fig 2.2 and Fig 2.3 follow the same aspects of time showcasing quick stills of nature and circulation respectively. The first one is drawn from the text "correction" and the second one is a representation of the text "The gourmet club."



1.2 - Over the years - *Drawing the Invisible*



2.1 - Over the years - *Drawing the Invisible*



1.3 - A night walk - *Drawing the Invisible*

Fig 2.1 above is a conceptual model study that corresponds to the drawing, over the years. It is a statement of a spatial condition that weaves together the narrative, the drawing, and physical space.

The elective expanded my capacity of architectural visual representation, focusing on qualities commonly not depicted, but which are central in the perception of space.

I understood the importance of how a specific technique and medium of representation supports a certain narrative or concept they want to communicate.

### **Drawing: A composition**

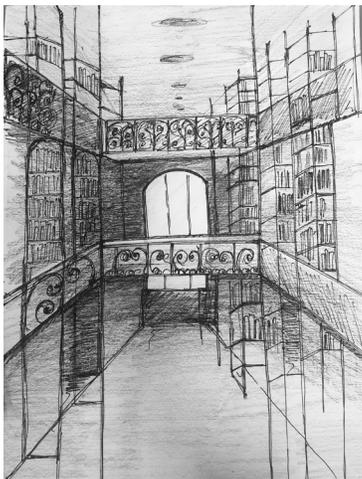
Through the seminar of “multivalent drawings”, I explored methods of recording meaningful architectural space and its many defining aspects as those might relate to our perception and experience of it, our subjective memory, willful deletion, and ultimately the ability to reimagine it.

Drawing is the medium to explore ideas, visions, and concepts. Through a series of perspective sketches of an interior space within a larger landscape of the site, I was able to perceive the space, beyond what is visible. A set of perceptible drawings gave me a sense of what makes space quiet, loud, ambient or terrifying. To understand architectural elements of design beyond the physical is was successful, analytical study.

I achieved a different way of establishing relationships with the architecture of the inside to the outside. Fig 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, display initial moment sketches of motion and time frames in a library space.

The question of composition followed after a series of perspective sketches of a space. How can we perceive space with its objects, materiality, movement, and stillness in one frame?

We often question the sequence of spaces when we are shown just one perspective of a room. The idea of montaging was to include conditions beyond what is visible in a final drawing.



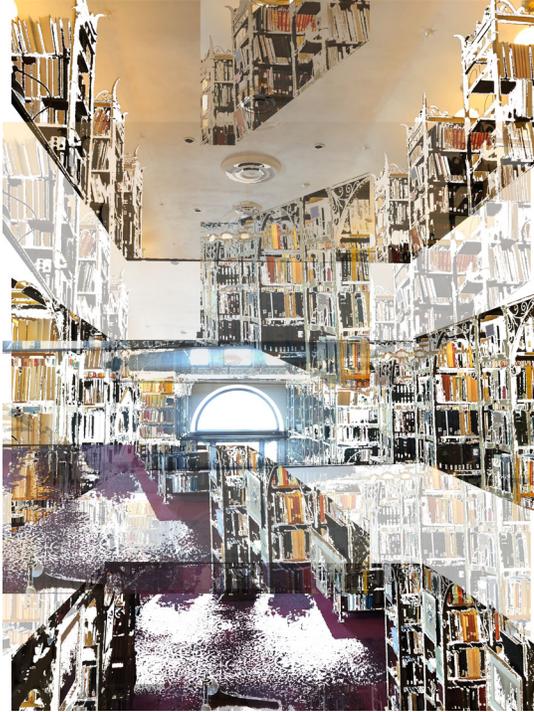
3.1- Uris Library - *Multivalent drawings*



3.2- Circulation - *Multivalent drawings*



3.2- Perspective - *Multivalent drawings*



4.1- Initial Composition - *Multivalent drawings*

Fig 4.1 was the next step of digital montaging which included a process of reduction and exaggeration. The physical existence of light was highlighted throughout the drawings, that blurs the boundaries of walls and the floors, giving an essence of a singular space with all its elements. The process continued until the viewer could see just the light eliminating from objects and its source.

The physical and laborious production of the the final composed drawing itself prioritized this very notion of amplification, informed by the obvious and the mundane, as well as the phenomenal, the material and immaterial, the measurable and the undefined, the static and the temporal. The perspectives were understood as artifacts and were simultaneously unfolded as cinematic narratives, ready to be occupied and to be mined, each one a leap towards new projected architecture.

Fig 4.2, the final montage was a composition used by a technique of image transfer and overlays of drawings done over the semester to show a final image of unfolded library space. The colors were predominant and the light condition was moved around in the whole image to enable dynamism of the space. Representation of the final drawing was a sequential process starting from basic hand sketching.



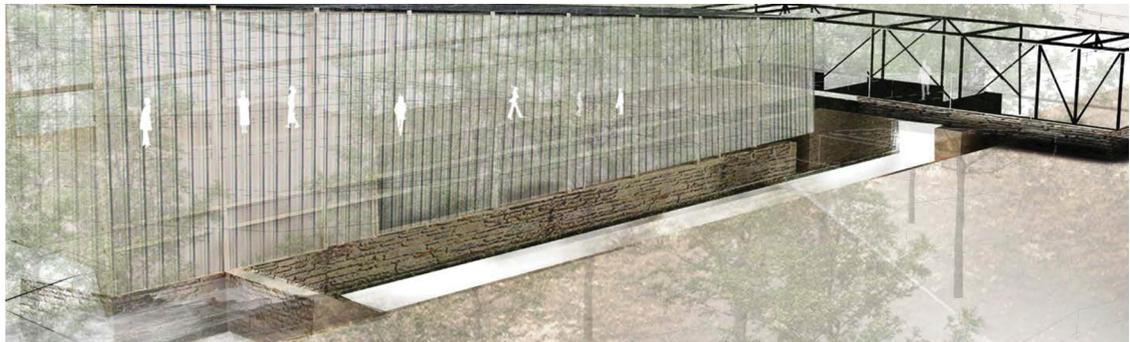
4.2- Final Montage - *Multivalent Drawings*

Representation as materiality

## Material Landscape

The studio explored landscape as a site and industry as an element of architecture. Catskills has been subjected to a series of changes in terms of topography. The High Falls area is located between New York City and the Catskills along with the major aqueduct system. There are remnants of existing aqueducts and a vast forest that overtook residential units.

My intervention, an interpretative center, is located at a crucial point as one can see both sides of the canal from there. Right across the slip is the Delaware and Hudson museum which has the whole history of Catskills and all its transformations because of New York City. My building is a dialogue with the already existing museum, where the whole site is the display and its contents reflect the site in a sequence.



I.1- Industry - *Interpretative Center for the Catskills*



I.2- Landscape - *Interpretative Center for the Catskills*



I.3- Transparency - *Interpretative Center for the Catskills*

Fig 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 are an interactive display of material understanding, made manifest, through a collection of individually constructed material portraits, which represent distinct yet interwoven voices: material as a metaphor; material as action, to be layered over a host - seen as a marked landscape canvas. This project attempts to define a dialogue around the material landscape of design, questioning the process and understanding of the material specification, representation, and use.

As a creator of our built environment, our selection process relies on an innate understanding of the products and materials we choose, alongside an intuitive response to the fabric of existing buildings, representing the complex layering of materials within Interior construction; articulating definitions conceived to demonstrate our material understanding and use. How we use materials is in part, based on how we perceive them, and the choices we make are based on not only the physical properties and capabilities but also their symbolic meanings and social dimensions.

Each set of linguistic samples acts as a portrait of a given material to analyze and critique the obvious, perceived, and coincidental properties of each individual (construction) material.

This investigation discusses the role of representation in the material transformations conducted. The aim of the project was to give life to a new museum, seen as an activity detached from Catskills routines, but also, the arrival of landscape and materiality understood as an opportunity to alter, through the use of technologies, the meanings of popular dwellings, contemporary art, local communities, and domesticities.

Transparency, Landscape, and Industry are reviewed as elements of material and are represented as carefully positioned views with a tone of serenity.

Representation as an artifact

**Object:A translation**

In fig 1.1, 1.2, the object study was reminiscent of Armenian culture in the '90s. There is a long history of abstract objects that one way or the other bear very specific significance to their users in relation to a specific set of circumstances. In this case, we were asked to produce an object, this can mean physical object, a focus of study, a building, an abstract entity, and an industrial site (i.e. industrial obyek), that relates both to our impression of our site outside of Yerevan its underlying past.

Throughout the model, some parts are hidden and some are exposed. The exposed part of the model signifies people that came and went in history but made their presence important and beneficial. The whole object is generated as a sequence of layers.

The candle artifact is a representation of a layer that hides an eminent object from Armenian history. The intent of this object to mention a statement of the genocide that wiped away most of the population in Armenia. With the population reduction, history was also lost in the process.

The hidden object signifies a rich historical background, the layer over it is a metaphor for the loss in history.



1.1 - Object Image - Design 5.0, Industry of the Fall



1.2 - Object Image - Design 5.0, Industry of the Fall



I.3- Object Image - Design 5.0, Industry of the Fall

## Conclusion

My thoughts on the realms of representation go beyond what this paper explains. Although I see an overlap between these topics that I briefly touched upon. I learned that there is no correct way of representing an idea. It has been subjective for years for a reason for its ambiguity. What one form of representation portrays, is what the other form lacks.

The four topics that I wrote about, each has its own strengths and they all fill up for each other's weaknesses. There are noticeable overlaps in ways of representation to an extent that one might get confused about what the architect is trying to narrate. It is extremely important to understand the modes of representation and its purpose in architecture.

## **Bibliography**

-A report on an unidentified space station - J.G. Ballard

-The Correction - Thomas Bernhard

-The Gourmet Club - Paul Mccarthy

-Architecture and the Lost Art of Drawing

-<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13602360802453327>

-<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13602365.2017.1351671>

-How architectural drawings work — and what that implies for the role of representation in architecture

## Credits

<b>Page no.</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Professors</b>
7-8	Architecture + Ecology (Sem I) <i>Studio</i>	Jesse LeCavalier, Tei Carpenter
9-10	Architecture + Urbanism (Sem I) <i>Studio</i>	David Moon, Nahyun Hwang
11-12	Architecture + Discourse (Sem I) <i>Studio</i>	Michael Young, Kutan Ayata
14-15	Drawing the Invisible (Sem II) <i>Elective</i>	Alejandro Beals, Lorento Lyon
16-17	Multivalent Drawings (Sem III) <i>Elective</i>	Luben Dimcheff
19-20	Interpretative Center for the Catskills (Sem II) <i>Option Studio</i>	Jeremy Foster
22-23	Design 5.0, Industry of the Fall (Sem III) <i>Option Studio</i>	Aleksandr Mergold