

# BEING: AT THE THRESHOLD

by

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## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions as accepted by my examiners.

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Joel Michael Di Giacomo  
May 20, 2015



# Abstract

What does it mean to have a transcendent experience, and what does architecture have to do with it? What is ineffable space?

Philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Gaston Bachelard would argue that a true, meaningful human existence can only be found at the threshold between the known, ordered, limited world, and the unknown, chaotic, unlimited world, where the two worlds are one, connected and indistinguishable.

The question this thesis poses is what role architecture might play in activating this threshold, in engaging the unknown, in experiencing the sublime.

It will investigate this by examining a series of sublime encounters and attempting to express them in architectural form.

“Works of art always spring from those who have faced the danger, gone to the very end of an experience, to the point beyond which no human being can go. The further one dares to go, the more decent, the more personal, the more unique a life becomes.”

—*Gaston Bachelard*

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A good explanation:  
never explain  
everything.

—Koan Saying <sup>1</sup>

“A great building must begin with the immeasurable, must go through measurable means when it is being designed, and in the end must be immeasurable.” <sup>2</sup>

—*Louis Kahn*

“In a complete and successful work there are hidden masses of implications, a veritable world which reveals itself to those whom it may concern, which means : to those who deserve it. [...] Then a boundless depth opens up, effaces the walls, drives away contingent presences, accomplishes the miracle of ineffable space. [...] I am not conscious of the miracle of faith, but I often live that of ineffable space, the consummation of plastic emotion.” <sup>3</sup>

—*Le Corbusier (A New World of Space)*

“And then I lost my balance, and I’m propped up against the wall. And I look down at my arm and I realize that I can no longer define the boundaries of my body. I can’t define where I begin and where I end, because the atoms and the molecules of my arm blended with the atoms and molecules of the wall. And all I could detect was this energy -- energy.

“Because I could not identify the position of my body in space, I felt enormous and expansive, like a genie just liberated from her bottle. And my spirit soared free, like a great whale gliding through the sea of silent euphoria. Nirvana. I found Nirvana. And I remember thinking, there’s no way I would ever be able to squeeze the enormousness of myself back inside this tiny little body.” <sup>4</sup>

—*Jill Bolte Taylor, TED Talk*

# Preface

What is ineffable space? What does it mean to have a transcendent experience, and what does architecture have to do with it? Why do some “deserve” this experience, while others not? Is faith not an essential component to experiencing “the miracle of ineffable space”?

Ineffable experiences are often not merely visual, or beautiful, but sensuous, and sublime. A building can sound good, feel good, or smell good, and it can be deeply poetic and meaningful without necessarily looking good. Indeed, it may be downright ugly, even terrifying, and it will still resonate deeply and strongly with people on a universal level.

Eero Saarinen’s MIT chapel, Peter Zumthor’s Bruder Klaus Chapel, or the Pantheon in Rome all have this quality, including in those who don’t share the faith represented by the building. But even non-religious architecture, such as Étienne-Louis Boullée’s Cenotaph for Newton, or the Teshima Art Museum by Ryue Nishizawa seem to have this quality. What is it about a great church or temple that is so deeply moving as to encourage one who experiences it to believe that they’ve connected with God? How can an art gallery, a library, or a school do this?

# The Sublime

Why this quest for infinity, for transcendence?  
Is it driven by a desire for infinite knowledge or understanding? For power? Freedom? Why is this connection to the absolute so important to us?

As living beings, we want our lives to be meaningful. As architects, we want to create meaningful work.

A sublime experience has the power to transform, to subvert, and to help shape meaningful realities. It can spark a revolution.

What makes an experience transcendental is more than just “intense effects”. It must be meaningful. But what does meaningful *mean*? It is much more than symbolic association and reference, validation or confirmation of what one has thought, or been taught.

## Rudolf Otto

in his 1911 book, *The Idea of the Holy*, calls the transcendental experience “numinous”, and treats it separately from the moralistic and rational aspects normally associated with the religious experience.

“In the arts nearly everywhere the most effective means of representing the numinous is ‘**the sublime**’. This is especially true of architecture, in which it would appear to have first been realized.” <sup>5</sup>

The discussion of the sublime in art and architecture is tremendously vast and rich, and seems an obvious path to follow if there is to be any hope of answering the question this thesis poses. However, as soon as one engages this discussion in an attempt to understand a sublime experience, one thing becomes almost immediately apparent: the sublime cannot ever be fully explained or understood, in an academic sense.

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[The numinous] **cannot, strictly speaking, be taught**, it can only be evoked, awakened in the mind; as everything that comes of the spirit must be awakened." <sup>6</sup>

—*Rudolf Otto*

"The sublime... **cannot be taught**, and didactics are thus powerless in this respect; the sublime is not linked to rules that can be determined through poetics; the sublime only requires that the reader or listener have conceptual range, taste and the ability 'to sense what everyone senses first'. <sup>7</sup>

—*Jean-François Lyotard*

The idea of infinity **cannot be expressed in words or even described**, but it can be apprehended through art, which makes infinity tangible. The absolute is only attainable through faith and in the creative act." <sup>8</sup>

—*Andrei Tarkovsky*

"As soon as you start talking about it, **representing it**, making statues of it, or idolizing it, you **lose your connection with the absolute**, because you've turned it into something that's understandable and concrete" <sup>9</sup>

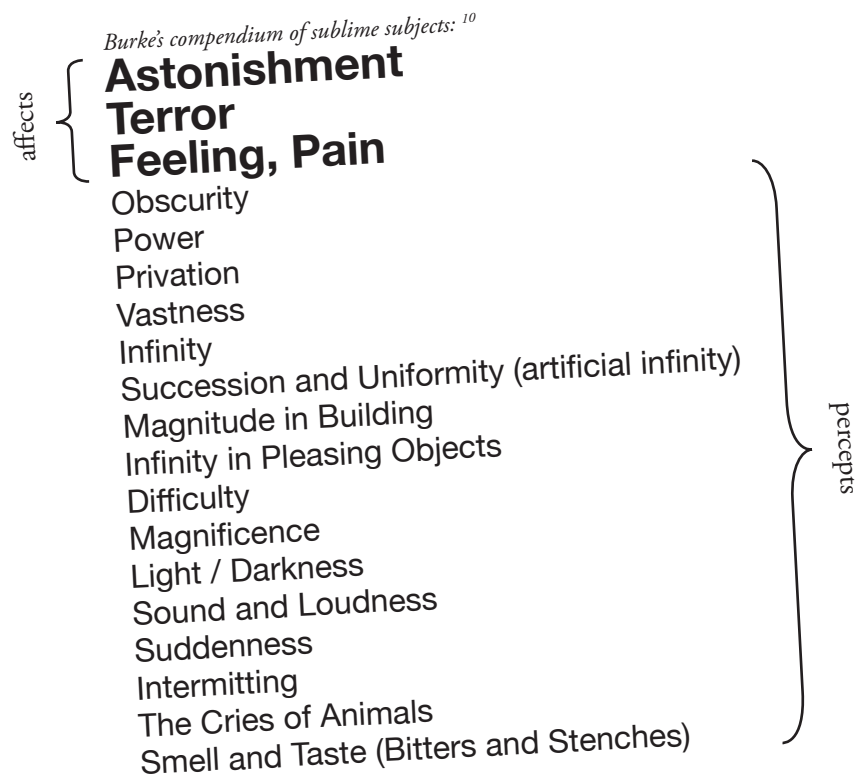
—*Jordan Peterson*

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While we may not ever be able to fully define or understand a sublime experience, we still can—and should—discuss it, and identify its effects. Here are some notable examples of when this task has been undertaken:

## Edmund Burke

made an effort to discern the effects of the sublime. In his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1756), he compiled a list of sublime subjects in an attempt to map out and categorize the experiences. Importantly, he makes the distinction between beautiful and sublime, and begins to analyze the sublime in terms of the witness' experience, rather than as a sublime object.



Up until that point, the sublime had been primarily understood as an experience of perfection, pleasurable and exalted. Burke, however, identifies pain as an element of the sublime. He observes that sublime delight is often accompanied by fear, at once shocking, disruptive, and transformative.

# Immanuel Kant

*Critique of Judgment (1790)*

expanded the discussion of the sublime into two key aspects. First, he introduces the idea of the *mathematical sublime* to describe what happens when we encounter an object that cannot be taken in whole by our senses, bringing us to the limit of our faculties of perception and understanding. This provokes an awareness of the existence of something beyond our senses, and of “the notion of absolute greatness not inhibited with ideas of limitations.”

Second, the *dynamic sublime*, which results from beholding an object whose force is far beyond resisting, prompting an awareness of one’s physical limitations, and mortality. It is an aesthetic experience of terror or danger, that can only occur if the subject isn’t in actual physical danger.

In both cases, the negative experience of limitation becomes a positive experience of awareness:

“The feeling of the sublime is at once a feeling of displeasure, arising from the inadequacy of imagination in the aesthetic estimation of magnitude to attain to its estimation of reason, and a simultaneous awakened pleasure, arising from this very judgement of the inadequacy of sense of being in accord with ideas of reason, so far as the effort to attain to these is for us a law.” <sup>11</sup>

# Jean-François Lyotard

*The Sublime and the Avant-Garde (1984)*

“Here then is a breakdown of the sublime sensation: a very big, very powerful object threatens to deprive the soul of any and all “happenings,” stuns it (at lower intensities, the soul is at this point seized with admiration, veneration, respect). The soul is dumb, immobilized, as good as dead. Art, by distancing this menace, procures a pleasure of relief, of delight. Thanks to art, the soul is returned to the agitated zone between life and death, and this agitation is its health and its life.” <sup>12</sup>



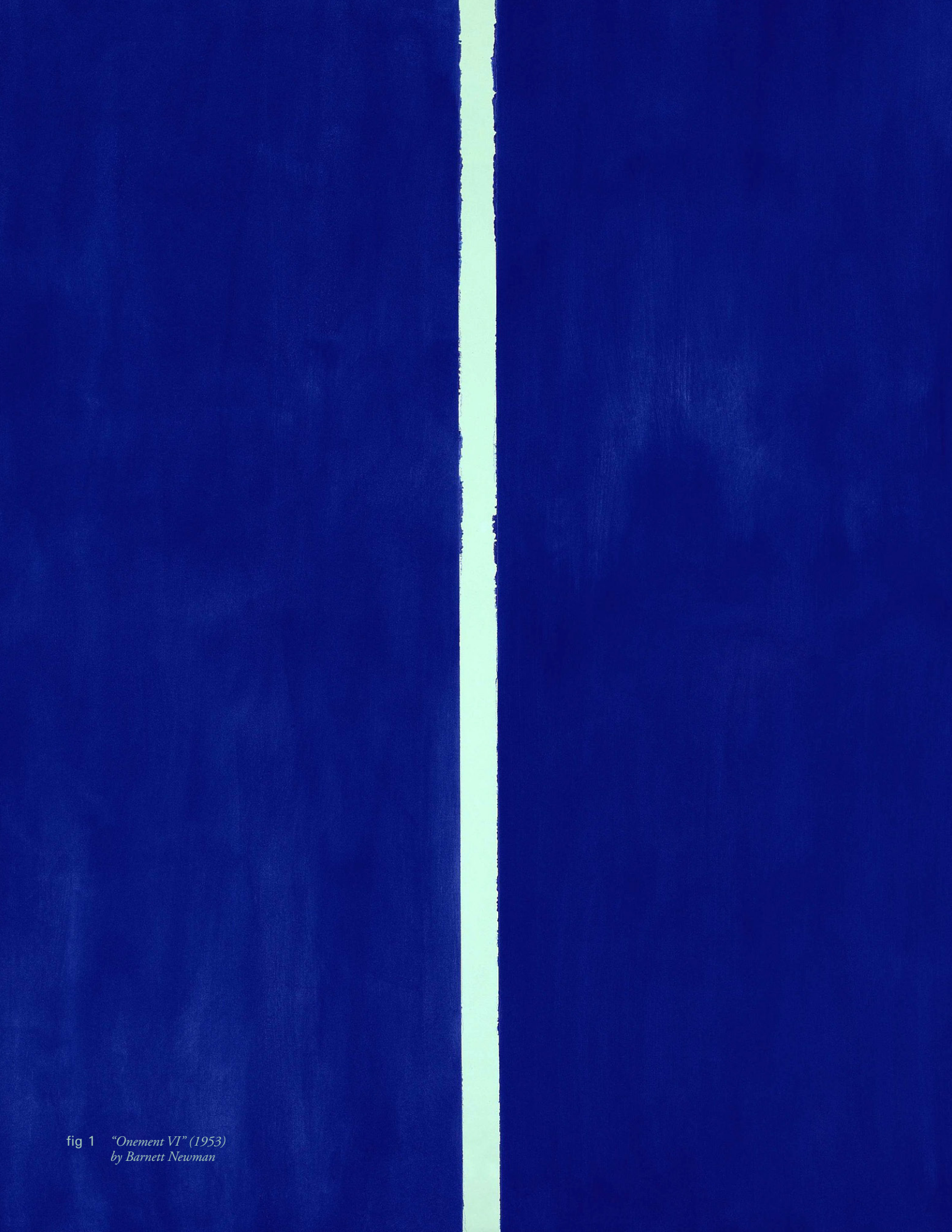


fig 1 *“Onement VI” (1953)*  
*by Barnett Newman*



In several more texts related  
to the subject of the sublime,  
another chorus seems to emerge:

“The struggle with chaos is only  
the instrument of a more profound  
struggle against opinion, for the  
misfortune of people comes from  
opinion.”<sup>13</sup>

—Gilles Deleuze

“My life is limited, but knowledge  
is unlimited. If I pursue unlimited  
knowledge with my own limited life,  
the result must be dangerous. If one  
has realized this, but still does so, the  
result must be even more dangerous.”  
<sup>16</sup>

—Zhuangzi

“Thought works over what is received,  
it seeks to reflect on it and overcome  
it. It seeks to determine what has  
already been thought, written, painted  
or socialized in order to determine what  
hasn’t been.”

**“That which we call thought  
must be disarmed.”**

—Jean-François Lyotard<sup>18</sup>

‘Abandon [appolonian] reason,  
embrace [dionysian] intoxication!’<sup>14</sup>

—Nietzsche (*Birth of Tragedy*, crudely  
paraphrased and misappropriated)

“... we reach ecstasy by a  
contestation of knowledge.”<sup>15</sup>

—Georges Bataille

“I want to produce a ‘mental  
jump’, want to lead people to  
a point where rational thinking  
fails, where the brain has to give  
up...”<sup>17</sup>

—Marina Abramovic

# Order and Frames of Perception

“**Chaos** is all those things you don’t understand, ... that exist outside your of perceptual preconditions. **Order** is all the things you do understand, and all the places you go, where the things that you do produce the results that you intend.” <sup>19</sup>

—*Jordan Peterson*

Reality consists of what we know (“order”) and what we don’t know (“chaos”). Much of what is, and what is happening around us, is beyond our modes of perception. Our perceptions are limited and heavily filtered by what we think matters. What we think matters is governed entirely by our frames of perception.

Imagination and perception are intertwined, if not one-in-the-same. When we encounter the world, the mind filters and attempts to cohere the clamour of sensory inputs in order for us to make sense of the world, based on whatever frame of perception, or order, it has built up to that point. What we ultimately perceive, or what we think we see, is the result of this unconscious computation. It is a product of our imagination just as much as it is of our perception.

“A fool sees not  
the same tree  
that a wise man  
sees.” <sup>20</sup>

—*William Blake*

This order—the sum of our expectations, preconceptions, familiarities, memories, emotional associations, instincts, opinions—is the mental structure through which we perceive everything and make sense of everything, that shapes our perceptions and our idea of what is, and is built up throughout a person’s lifetime, through every experience we have, on top of a basic human framework inherited through evolution.

This, broadly speaking, is what Lyotard meant by “thought” when he called for it to be “disarmed.” It is also the “opinion” denounced by Deleuze, and it is the “knowledge” that the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty means when he says “to return to things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks.” <sup>21</sup>

"You're always applying a frame like that to the world in order to simplify it enough so that you can understand it, and you're aided in this process by all sorts of processes you really don't notice. Because when you look at the world, you say 'well there are the objects', but there's a thousand things going on before you make that judgment. So, when you walk in here, the room tells you what to do..."<sup>22</sup>

—*Jordan Peterson*

Most people accept what they perceive as self-evident, and entirely independent of their subjective view. They are caged by the frames of order they employ, that they do not realize exist, and which persist in governing their encountering of the world. And they remain oblivious and vulnerable to any affect that their frame does not account for.

Architecture has a crucial and active role in shaping that frame, whether architects are aware of this or not.

But why has this frame—this “knowledge”—been so vigorously challenged by artists and philosophers in its various forms? What’s wrong with beauty and reason? And to what degree should “thought” be disarmed? If taken to the extreme, would this not result in either total loss of sanity, or suicide? Is the only way of freeing oneself from “thought” and transcending one’s limited self to destroy it?

# Martin Heidegger and “Enframing”

Behind many of these dissenting voices is Heidegger, who identified an eminently modern frame of perception—a preconception as insidious as it is dangerous—that poses a problem central to human existence.

According to Heidegger, the self really exists, on a fundamental level, in a continuous and unbroken unity with its world. This unity is broken by a modern “subjectivist” world view that presents reality in terms of subjects (e.g. people, living things) and objects (e.g. “nature”), and that only ascribes meaning and value to the subjects. Eventually, this gives rise to an “enframing” world view wherein the subject itself is objectified. This view sees the unknown (“chaos”) as a threat, otherness as something to be controlled or eliminated, rather than accepted. Hence the pursuit of objective, rational perfection and beauty, of total harmony of proportion, of complete order.<sup>23</sup>

When we only value what is “real”, that which we can calculate and measure, (and which we believe to be “truth”), then we undervalue that whole realm of being which exists outside our perceptual framework. When we do not realize the richness and value of the other, of that which we do not perceive or understand, or of the true connectedness that exists between us and this other, then we tend to reduce it to a series of objects that we then deem either as useful—resources to be optimized—or as obstacles. This engenders an excessive imposition of order, which in turn leads to an alienation of being and stifling of vital expression. Existence itself loses all value and meaning, and indiscriminate exploitation runs rampant in a hubristic effort to consolidate mastery and control over everything.

Having a **meaningful** experience, according to Heidegger, is a matter of returning to a natural state of engaged existence where the self and the world are united rather than divided. This is a mode of living that accepts that there is a world of being beyond the conscious, knowable self.

So the sublime, as Kant and Lyotard understand it, would be an essential component of this endeavor. This is the strength of Burke’s observation: that the most meaningful experiences—sublime experiences—go beyond mere beauty, or perfection. Beauty and perfection are ideals of order and knowledge, of a “subjectivist” world. A truer, more meaningful ideal embraces the unknown, chaotic world.

But how exactly can we do this? Being aware of the problem is insufficient to the cause of resolving it. What, if anything, can we, as architects, artists, and human beings, do about subverting such a deeply engrained cultural attitude?

The deeper problem, as Heidegger puts it, is that once the “subject-object relation is coupled with the conceptual pair form-matter,” and this frame of perception is combined with the “rational/irrational” and “logical/illogical” dichotomies, “then representation has at its command a conceptual machinery which **nothing** can stand against.”<sup>24</sup>

## (the) Nothing

This, astoundingly, is also Heidegger’s suggested solution: only nothing can stand against the problem of modern “enframing.” (As an aside, this is a large part of what makes Heidegger so difficult to read—one must pay close attention to the meaning of every word.)

Only that which is *not a thing* can stand against the problem of modern “enframing.”

“To experience this “noth-ing” is to become attuned to something which is not a thing (hence “nothing”) but which conditions all our experiences of things, something which fundamentally informs our worlds but which we experience primarily as what escapes and so



fig 2 “A Pair of Shoes” by Vincent Van Gogh (1886)

defies our “subjectivistic” impulse to extend our conceptual mastery over everything.”<sup>25</sup>

In his essay *The Origin of the Work of Art*, Heidegger demonstrates how Van Gogh’s painting of shoes transcends objective aesthetic representation. This is properly summarized by Iain Thomson in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

“Van Gogh’s painting does more than just represent a pair of shoes: Van Gogh’s painting “really, properly, or authentically” (eigentlich) represents (the) nothing. Indeed, it represents (the) nothing in a way that ultimately allows us to transcend aesthetic representation from within—by getting us back in touch with a more basic level of human existence which the order of objective representations presupposes but cannot fully recapture.”<sup>26</sup>

**“Surrounding this pair of farmer’s shoes there is nothing, in which and to which they can belong.”<sup>27</sup>**

“The inconspicuous background... continues to offer up other inchoate shapes which resist being firmly gestalted themselves.”<sup>28</sup>

Here then is the challenge, for architects: “the artist must be able to see something beginning to take shape where others see nothing at all. All great creators must be able to discern the inchoate contours of something previously unseen and, as if thus playing midwife to being, help draw it into the light of the world.”<sup>29</sup>

“Van Gogh and these farmers lived the same struggle in different ways, and so do all of us meaning farmers, that is, all of us who genuinely create by discerning inchoate contours and struggling to give shape to something that previously was only partly glimpsed at best and thus remained hidden in darkness. Art thus teaches us not to try to banish the darkness that surrounds the light of intelligibility, but to learn to see into that ubiquitous “noth-ing” so as to discern therein the enigmatic “earth” which nurtures all the genuine meanings that have yet to see the light of day. Insofar as we can learn from Van Gogh (or other similarly great artists) to see in this poetic way ourselves, Heidegger suggests, we will find ourselves dwelling in a postmodern world permeated by genuinely meaningful possibilities.”<sup>30</sup>

" 'What is painting?' Essentially what is at stake in the work is the demonstration of the existence of the invisible in the visual. "<sup>31</sup>

—*Lyotard*

"The task of painting is... to render visible forces that are not themselves visible" <sup>32</sup>

—*Deleuze*  
(*The Logic of Sensation*)

In order to create a sublime architecture,  
we need to be able to see and express  
these invisible forces.

In order to see these invisible forces—  
to discern the nothing—we need to  
“thought” to be disarmed.

“ ‘Knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge. This is the price that must be paid for an oeuvre to be, at all times, a sort of pure beginning, which makes its creation an exercise in freedom. ” <sup>33</sup>

—*Gaston Bachelard*

How can we forget knowing?  
How can thought be disarmed?



# Koans

A Koan is a saying, used in Zen buddism specifically to “disarm” thought, as Lyotard would put it. Simple, pithy, and often absurd, they are a form of intentional cognitive short-circuiting in an attempt to relax the rigid intellect. They help us to see the nothing. Here are some salient examples:

**Teaching  
beyond teaching;  
No leaning  
on words and letters.** <sup>34</sup>

**Words  
fail.  
Mind  
fails.** <sup>37</sup>

**A phrase completely to  
the point:  
The eternal donkey  
hitching post.** <sup>35</sup>

**The man who’s  
drunk water  
Knows if it’s  
cool or warm.** <sup>36</sup>

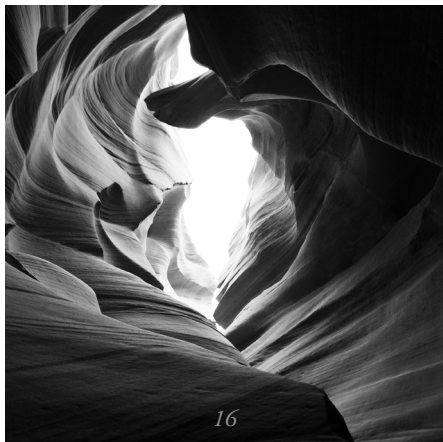
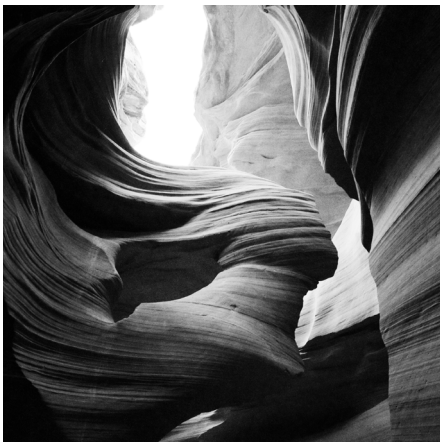
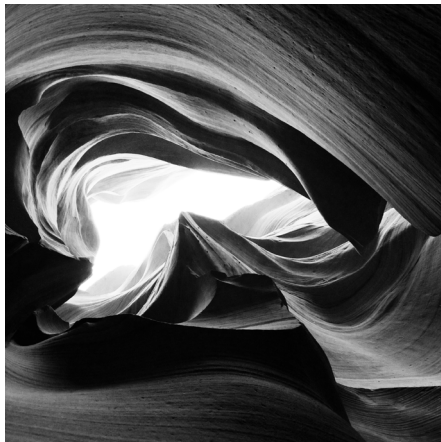
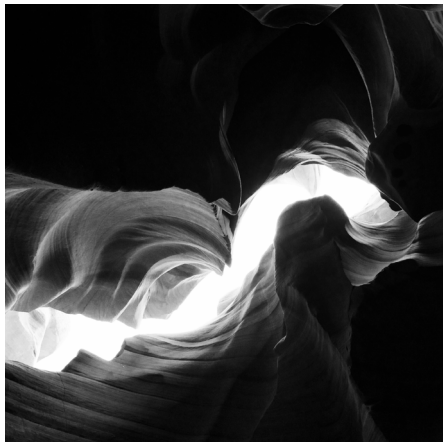
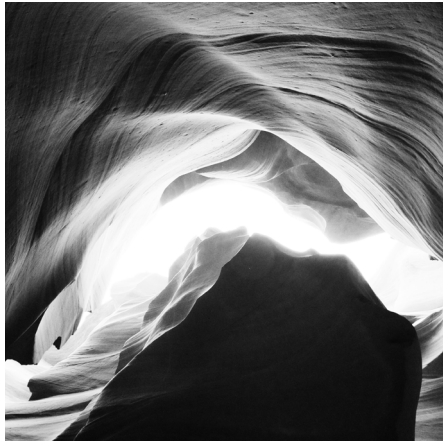
“Words fail. Nevertheless (indeed nevertheless!), many masters have left voluminous records. Why? Why did they leave so many “words” even against their own principles? This is certainly a contradiction. Indeed, Zen is paradoxical in every respect.

...  
however wonderful an expression it may be, it will be a stake that binds you unless you keep yourself always free from it.

...  
Once this fact is fully understood, words and letters are not to be given up as good for nothing. On the contrary, they are quite important in that they help us know what to avoid and what to do to attain the true satori. At the same time, no one can deny the fact that they are [an] indispensable way to universalize and eternalize human experiences.” <sup>38</sup>

—*Zen forest (Shigematsu)*

Architecture’s failings are the same as these words, but its function is the same: to “universalize and eternalize human experiences.” Just as koans are an exercise in presenting limitlessness through limited means, so would sublime architecture have to operate. The question is how.





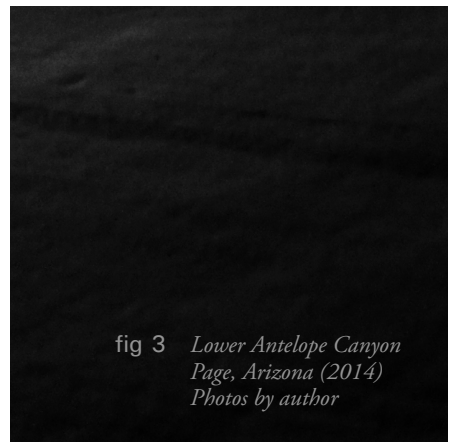
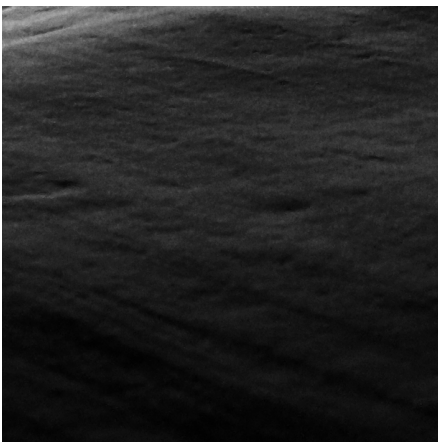
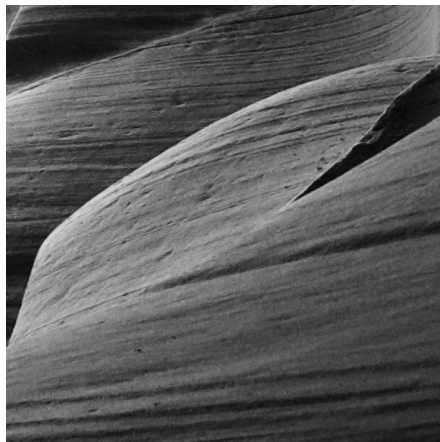
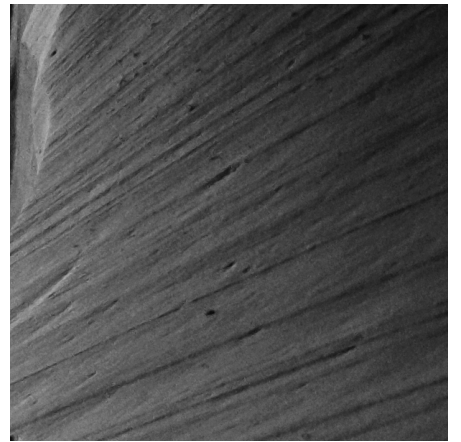
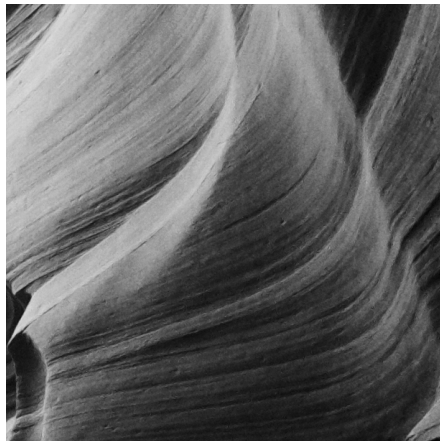
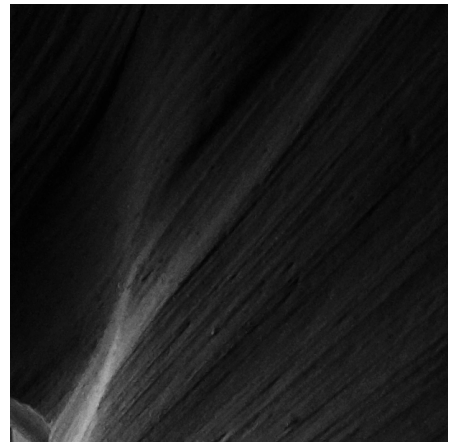
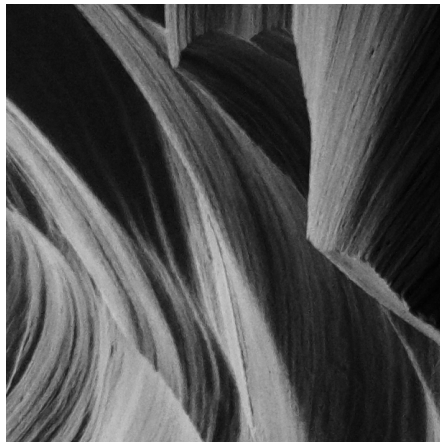


fig 3 *Lower Antelope Canyon*  
*Page, Arizona (2014)*  
*Photos by author*

# Semblance

In her book, *Feeling and Form*, Susanne Langer suggests that architecture operates as the background in Van Gogh's painting of the shoes:

**"Architecture creates the semblance of that World which is the counterpart of a Self. It is a total environment made visible."** <sup>39</sup>

Like the composition in a painting, architecture is the environment in which individual elements are given force of expression. In a sense, it is the background, the "nothing."

To illustrate the point, Langer quotes Kandinsky, who compares an abstract line and a fish in painting:

**"The isolated line and the isolated fish alike are living beings with forces peculiar to them, though latent. They are forces of expression for these beings and of impression on human beings, because each has an impressive 'look' which manifests itself by its expression... But the voice of these latent forces is faint and limited. It is the environment of the line and the fish that brings about a miracle: the latent forces awaken, the expression becomes radiant, the impression profound... The environment is the composition."** <sup>40</sup>

In slightly different words, it is the environment of the self—architecture—that brings about a miracle.

This is not to say that simply providing a space within which to exist is enough for architecture to be meaningful, let alone "miraculous." On the contrary, it seems architecture is often overbearing and can be particularly adept at stifling forces of vital expression. A common and salient example of this can be seen in Alain de Botton's documentary film "The Perfect

Home," when he asks residents of a certain set of modern, utilitarian buildings in Bobigny, France to describe their homes: "These buildings are ugly. They're grey, they're drab, you don't want to live in them... It breaks your spirit." <sup>41</sup>

This brings in to question Burke's reduction of the importance of beauty in the sublime experience, and its association with subjectivist order. Should beauty be abandoned in the quest for the sublime?

Architecture is necessarily limited in its measure. But because it is the background, and the context in which we choose to live, it is unlimited in its affect—its power to influence the human spirit, its potential to create a semblance. In this, architecture must take great care to ensure this affect is not also an enframing one, either oppressive or apathetic. The creation of limits should not be an imposition.

The role of any successful architecture should be to nurture the unity of self that Heidegger expounded, rather than sever it. This can only happen if architecture, in the act of establishing order—of creating a frame—accepts the chaos, allowing it to emerge from the nothing and be given form—to become life.

Beauty, as a matter of order, must also, somehow, accept the chaos. It should remain open to uncertainty as it resists it. Beauty lies in the frame's ability to withstand the agitation and disruption of the sublime experience, rather than its capacity to negate it.

This thesis seeks to explore the nature of this disruption, and how much—or little—order might be needed to withstand it.

“A meaningful life is to be found  
on the border between

## Chaos and Order”<sup>42</sup>

—Jordan Peterson, *drawing heavily  
from Daoist philosophy*

“We require just a little order  
to protect us from chaos... ...it  
is always a matter of defeating  
chaos by a secant plane that  
crosses it.”<sup>43</sup>

—Gilles Deleuze (*“What is Philosophy”*)

“Innovative systems have a tendency to  
gravitate toward the “edge of chaos”: the  
fertile zone between too much order and  
too much anarchy.

[...]

Think of the behavior of molecules in each  
of these three conditions [of gas, liquid,  
and solid]. In a gas, chaos rules; new  
configurations are possible, but they are  
constantly being disrupted and torn apart  
by the volatile nature of the environment.  
In a solid, the opposite happens: the  
patterns have stability, but they are  
incapable of change. But a liquid network  
creates a more promising environment  
for the system to explore the adjacent  
possible. New configurations can emerge  
through random connections formed  
between molecules, but the system isn’t  
so wildly unstable that it instantly destroys  
its new creations.”<sup>44</sup>

—Steven Johnson (*“Where Good Ideas Come  
From”*)

## Surprise, Metaphor

“The arts, with whatever their materials, pressed forward by the esthetics of the sublime in a quest for intense effects, can and must overlook mimetic models that are merely beautiful, and must test their limits through surprising, difficult, shocking combinations. Shock is, par excellence, the evidence of (something) happening, rather than nothing at all. It is suspended privation.”<sup>45</sup>

—Lyotard

In his essay “Myth and Education”, Poet Ted Hughes provides a powerful example of shocking combination in poetry. He begins by explaining that “a well-learned story becomes a word (Christ, Hitler)... Imagine hearing, somewhere in the middle of a poem being recited, the phrase ‘**The Crucifixion of Hitler**’. ...[T]he collision of those two words, in that phrase, cannot fail to detonate a psychic depth-charge. Whether we like it or not, a huge inner working starts up. How can Hitler and Crucifixion exist together in that way? Can they or can’t they? The struggle to sort it out throws up ethical and philosophical implications which could absorb our attention for a very long time. All our static and maybe dormant understanding of good and evil and what opens beyond good and evil is shocked into activity. Many unconscious assumptions and intuitions come up into the light to declare themselves and explain themselves and reassess each other. For some temperaments, those two words twinned in that way might well point to wholly fresh appraisals of good and evil and the underground psychological or even actual connections between them. Yet the visible combatants here are two stories.”<sup>46</sup>

The sensation that “The Crucifixion of Hitler” engenders is powerful, almost indescribable (sublime). Part of this comes about from the quintessential surrealist impulse of forcing together two familiar things that don’t normally belong, and

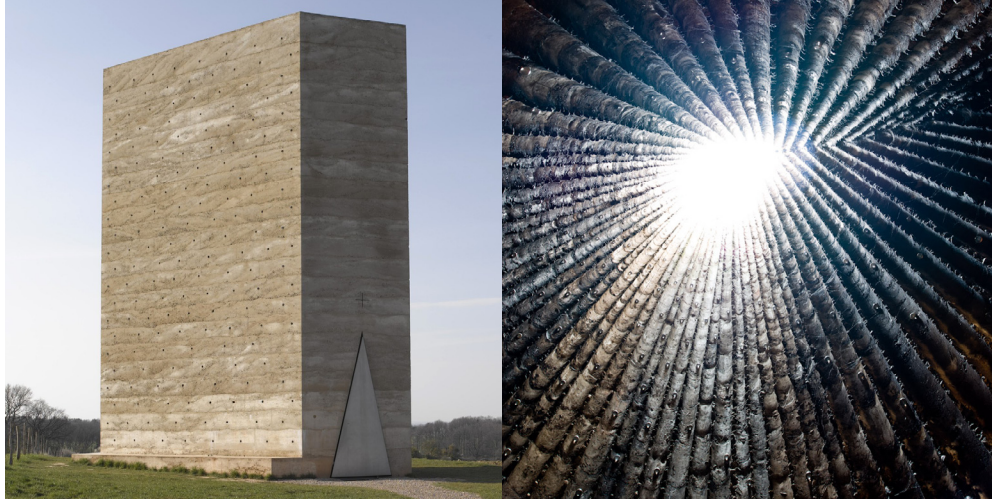


fig 4 *Bruder Klaus Field Chapel (2007), by Peter Zumthor*

there is certain devastation the moment the safety of one's accepted narratives is violated. A combination of contrary images exposes a whole new realm of possibilities of meaning. As Bachelard puts it:

"When two strange images meet, two images that are the work of two poets pursuing separate dreams, they apparently strengthen each other. In fact, this convergence of two exceptional images furnishes as it were a countercheck for phenomenological analysis. The image loses its gratuitousness; the free play of the imagination ceases to be a form of anarchy."<sup>47</sup>

But in a metaphor such as "the crucifixion of hitler," the two images are entirely dependent on associative, pre-established, meanings. Architecture cannot operate at this level and still be architecture.

"...a metaphor gives concrete substance to an impression that is difficult to express. Metaphor is related to a psychic being from which it differs. An image, on the contrary, product of absolute imagination, owes its entire being to the imagination.

[A metaphor] has no phenomenological value."<sup>48</sup>

—Bachelard

So how else might it achieve a co-existence of opposites? How can architecture achieve the poetic affect of metaphor without recourse to semiotic symbolic devices? Perhaps architecture's inherent inability to operate metaphorically, in this sense, is also its greatest strength.

Using the words 'symbol' and 'metaphor' presents a few difficulties. As Susanne Langer puts it, "art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling."<sup>49</sup> And Juhani Pallasmaa uses the word "metaphor" when describing the "timeless task of architecture," which is "to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world."<sup>50</sup> But what seems true either way, is that architecture can operate through suggestion of feeling, through a phenomenological affect. As Pallasmaa wrote,

"...the architecture of Michelangelo does not present symbols of melancholy; his buildings actually mourn. When experiencing a work of art, a curious exchange takes place; the work projects its aura, and we project our own emotions and percepts on the work. The melancholy in Michelangelo's architecture is fundamentally the viewer's sense of his/her own melancholy enticed by the authority of the work. Enigmatically, we encounter ourselves in the work."<sup>51</sup>



Poetry is central to the sublime experience. Understanding how architecture can be poetic is crucial in creating an architecture that is meaningful, transcendent, and sublime. Unlike with metaphor, an architect does not need to rely on preconceived ideas to create a poetic image. As Gaston Bachelard writes,

“The poetic image is not subject to an inner thrust. It is not an echo of the past. On the contrary: through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away.”<sup>52</sup>

When a person encounters a poetic image or poetic experience—often a product of someone else’s imagination—her frame cannot cohere it, cannot explain it. Yet it affects her anyway. Her imagination is activated and called upon to modify the frame accordingly, to account for this new encounter with the unknown. If this process is successful, it creates an awareness that did not exist in her prior to receiving the image, directly informing and shaping her being in the world. The perceiver makes it her own, and in-so-doing her frame of perception is transformed, along with her sense of being. This is sublime.

In this way, experiencing and creating the sublime image are linked.

“In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own. The reverberations bring about a change of being. It is as though the poet’s being were our being.”<sup>53</sup>

[...]

[T]he image has touched the depths before it stirs the surface. And this is also true of a simple experience of reading. The image offered us by reading the poem now becomes really our own. It takes root in us. It has been given us by another, but we begin to have the impression that we could have created it, that we should have created it. It becomes a new being in our language, expressing us by making us what it expresses; in other words, it is at once a becoming of expression, and a becoming of our being. Here expression creates being.”<sup>54</sup>

“In this reverberation, the poetic image will have a sonority of being. **The poet speaks on the threshold of being.**”<sup>55</sup>

—*Bachelard*

# Encounter and Semblance

“[A phenomenologist] takes the image just as it is, just as the poet created it, and tries to make it his own, to feed on this rare fruit. He brings the image to the very limit of what he is able to imagine. However far from being a poet he himself may be, he tries to repeat its creation for himself and, if possible, continue its exaggeration. Here association ceases to be fortuitous, but is sought after, willed. It is a poetic, specifically poetic, constitution. It is sublimation that is entirely rid of the organic or psychic weights from which one wanted to be free. In other words, it corresponds to pure sublimation.”<sup>56</sup>

‘If, for instance, I want to paint horses taking the water hurdle at the Auteuil race-course, I expect my painting to give me as much that is unexpected, although of another kind, as the actual race I witnessed gave me. Not for a second can there be any question of reproducing exactly a spectacle that is already in the past. But I have to re-live it entirely, in a manner that is new and, this time, from the standpoint of painting. By doing this, I create for myself the possibility of a fresh impact.’ ”<sup>57</sup>

—*Lapicque, via Lescure, via Bachelard*

If we were to have an encounter, say, with a work of art, one which, when we encountered it, affected us in a sublime, meaningful way, how could we make of it a correspondingly reverberant architecture? How could we make an architectural semblance of a sublime encounter?

First, we need to somehow see the invisible forces: what is really happening in the encounter, how it is really operating on a fundamental level of engaged existence and bringing about a transformation of self. What is really causing it to resonate, poetically, at the threshold of being.

In order to do this, we have to forget what we know, to disarm thought. Heidegger writes:

“restrain from all usual doing and prizing, knowing and looking, in order to linger within the truth that is happening in the work. Only the restraint of this lingering allows what is created to first be the work that it is.”<sup>58</sup>

Finally, we need to find a way of expressing these forces. As an architect, I must make the encounter my own and “create for myself the possibility of a fresh impact.”

One of the first lessons one might receive in a life drawing class would be to ‘draw what you see, not what you *think* you see’. An even more difficult task would be ‘paint what you feel, not what you think you see.’ But perhaps hardest of all: ‘can you build what you experienced?’

This is a big challenge. Without having attempted it before, failure seems almost certain. But we must try. The absolute is only attainable through faith and in the creative act.

3 projects follow—each an architectural semblance of an encounter with an artwork that affected me personally in a way I would describe as sublime. Each semblance is set in a context established by a separate encounter with a site—either in real life or by proxy, through readings or otherwise.

## 1

The first artwork, a sculpture of a young boy, is probably the most shocking and disturbing work of art I've encountered. If, as Burke wrote, "astonishment... is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree," then this piece is purely sublime. It is the sculptural equivalent of Ted Hughes' "crucifixion of Hitler," visual poetry that depends primarily on associative meaning, on metaphor the way Hughes describes it. The challenge would be to achieve the same effect architecturally, without relying on cultural associations.

The setting for the architectural semblance is the top of a cliff, overlooking the point where sky meets water, but where any attempt to reach out and touch it would risk that a man meets earth. It is a place of both expansive contemplation and imminent danger. The particular encounter I had also informed an approach to the architecture.

## 2

The second, a solo saxophone performance by Colin Stetson, also defies expectations, but does so in a manner more in line with Kant's idea of the mathematical sublime—how can just one person single-handedly and spontaneously produce such an immense flood of sound!? Otherworldly as the sound is though, a familiar but tenuous structure manages to hold it all together. Here, only the slightest amount of order seems needed to withstand the chaos of dyonisian intoxication.

It is the kind of fervent performance, at once terrifying and ecstatic, that could have been held in caves in prehistoric times. Naturally, the limited confines of an underground cave structure provide the perfect setting—and impetus—for such an outburst. Humanity's experience of caves goes back to a pre-cognitive era, reflecting a primal condition. There was no science, nor religion—no preconceptions to be shed. Only natural, meaningful, engaged existence with the world. Quite possibly the birthplace of human art, the cave is often a confined and limited space. Yet through light privation and the resonance of its chambers, they offer a visceral, powerful connection to the infinite.



### 3

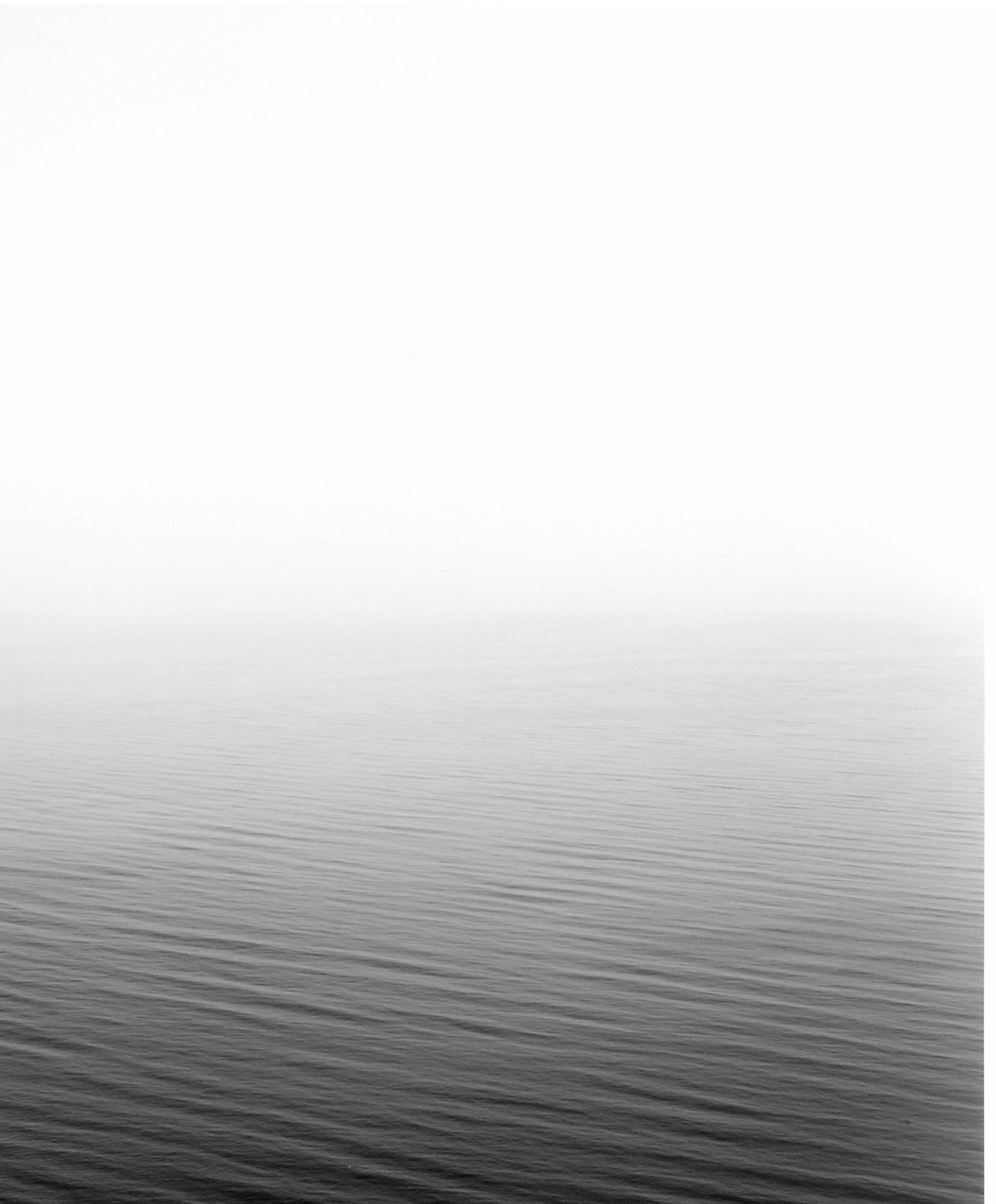
The third, Bill Viola's video piece, "The Messenger," shows the slowly emerging, barely discernable, inchoate form of a person, deeply immersed in the boundless realm of the unconscious. A threshold to a place of consciousness is only clear once it is crossed. It is a piece of obscurity, privation, and difference, that elicits an acute awareness of limitation.

As the figure in the video is suspended in a dark world of broken light, so the semblance is set in the multifarious landscape of a forest—a quintessential world of the unknown, of chaos. It is also a setting in which heidegger reveals how the nothing can come to light: "the encounter with a "clearing" in a forest from which all the trees have been removed—that is, an encounter with nothing, initially—makes it possible for us to notice the light through which we ordinarily see the forest." <sup>59</sup>

Unlike a cave, the forest is completely transparent to action, to movement.



fig 5 *Sea of Japan, 1997*  
*Photo by Hiroshi Sugimoto, from the Seascapes series*



1

# Plummeting Stillness

To tread the sharp edge of a sword  
To run on smooth-frozen ice,  
One needs no footsteps to follow.  
Walk over the cliffs with hands free. <sup>60</sup>

—*Koan Saying*

## Encounter (Site)

### The Scarborough Bluffs

A few years ago, on a chilly, grey, cloudy day in March, I visited the Scarborough Bluffs for the first time with a close friend of mine, Mike. At the time, I had no idea what to expect of the place. All I knew was that they were by the lake. I didn't know what the word bluff meant. We didn't really know the best way to approach them, so it took us a while to find an access point that was public, open, and offered a view of these famous bluffs. Finally, we did. And as we walked toward the lake, it felt like we were approaching the edge of the world. My eagerness countered a slight shivering wind. We ignored the fence warning us not to go further. A little further up, the ground plane seemed to suddenly come to an end, and beyond it seemed to be faint white noise and nothing but sky. At a certain point, having come close enough, Mike stopped, but I kept going. He urged me not to, but a reckless sense of adventure got the better of me. I went right up to the edge, and looked right over. What a drop! What a view! All the way down the waves crashed into the shore below. How high was I?? How far could I see down the shoreline in both directions?



fig 6 *Scarborough Bluffs Park*

Being on the edge of the world was surely just as exhilarating, and just as terrifying. To be but a couple feet from sure death. My instincts revolted at the thought, warning me, sounding the alarms of distress, but I held steady. Which is more exhilarating? The rare sight of such a height from such a vantage point, or ignoring the threat of death and facing the danger straight on? Still at the edge, I pulled out my phone, held it out pointing down, and snapped a couple photos. At this point, Mike is livid at how careless and stupid I was being, lingering so precariously on the precipice of disaster. After a few more {captured} moments, I retreated back to where he was standing, giddy as a child. I had survived. Mike wasn't impressed. Mostly just angry. We continued along the edge, and I repeated my earlier escapade a couple more times, much to his dismay. I had a thrilling day. Three weeks later, we visited the same spot again. It was earlier in the day, the weather warmer, and the sun was shining. But something else had changed. The very spot I had taken the first photographs from, hanging over the edge, had vanished. It had crumbled to the lake below, perhaps only just moments after I had been there.









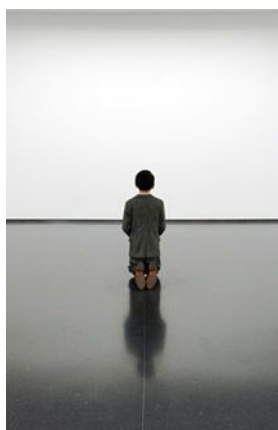


fig 8 *HIM (2001) by Maurizio Cattelan*

# Encounter (Art)

HIM

by Maurizio Cattelan  
at the MCA Chicago, 2006

I have to traverse three empty, white, evenly-lit rooms before seeing this diminutive figure of a boy, kneeling in prayer, facing the end wall of the last room, his back turned to me. He is wearing early 20th-Century schoolboy clothing, and needless to say, seems a little out of place. My sense of intrigue deepens, and I feel a level of sympathy for the boy's loneliness, vulnerability, and innocence. Eager to "meet" the boy—his face, surely, at the very least, will give me some insight on his disposition—I walk right up to him and around him to face him. Then I see HIM.

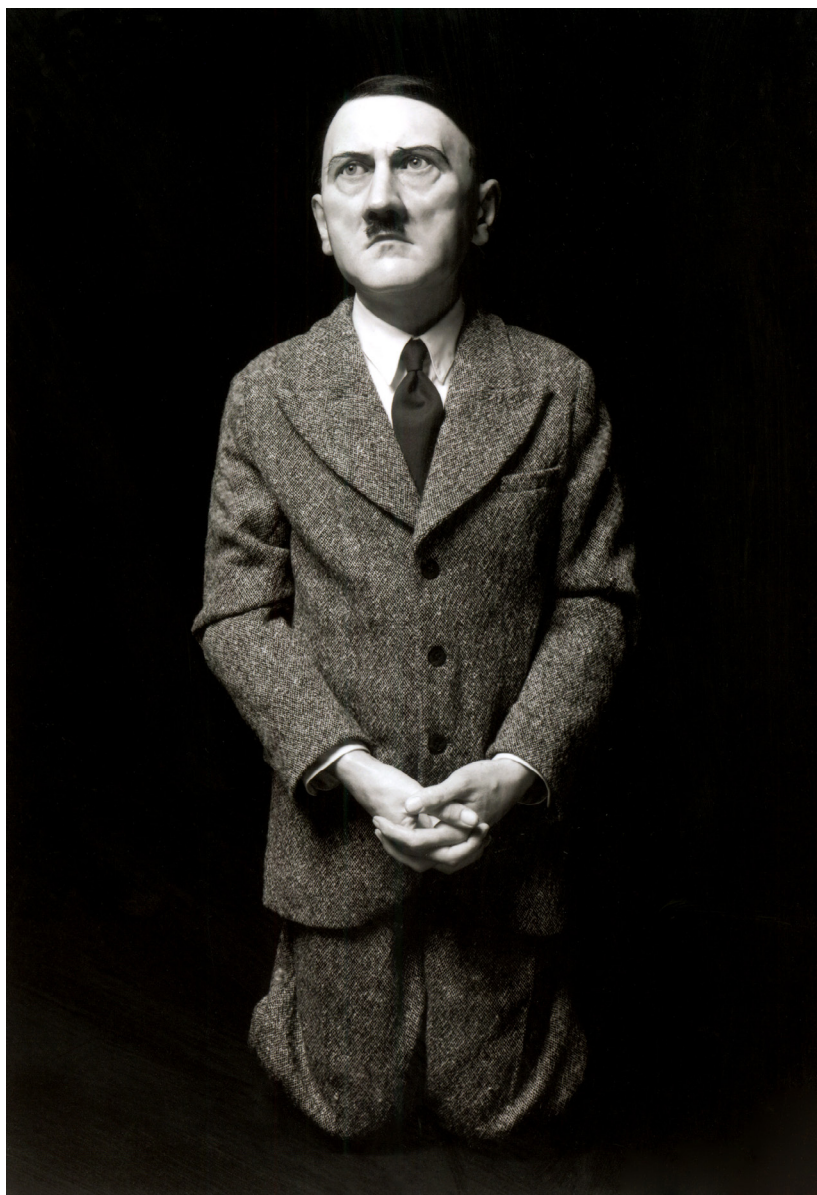


fig 9 *HIM* (2001) by Maurizio Cattelan

The boy's face is that of an adult Adolf Hitler. A brutal and sudden rush of horror and disbelief overwhelm me, as I realize who the object of my sympathy and wonder had been all along. Being so close to HIM as to be able to touch him, and to be above HIM in his vulnerable and reverent stance in a way as that completely shift the power relationship one normally has with HIM, are so completely opposite of what I normally associate with HIM that a deep chasm opens in my mind, like a sudden and violent drop from a place of safety, innocence, familiarity, and mild intrigue, to one of violence, evil, and utter human destruction.



# Semblance

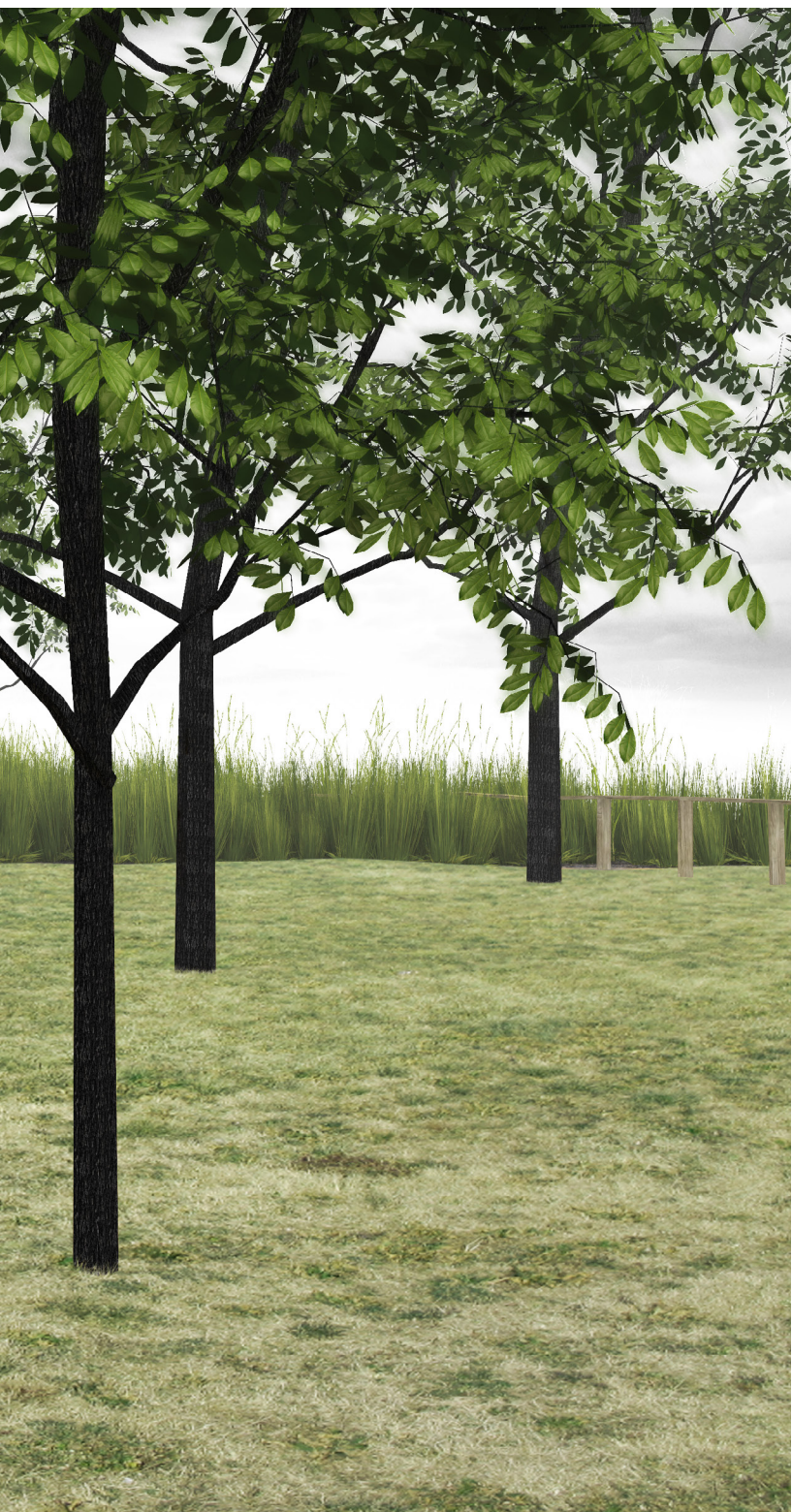
Plummeting Stillness





fig 10







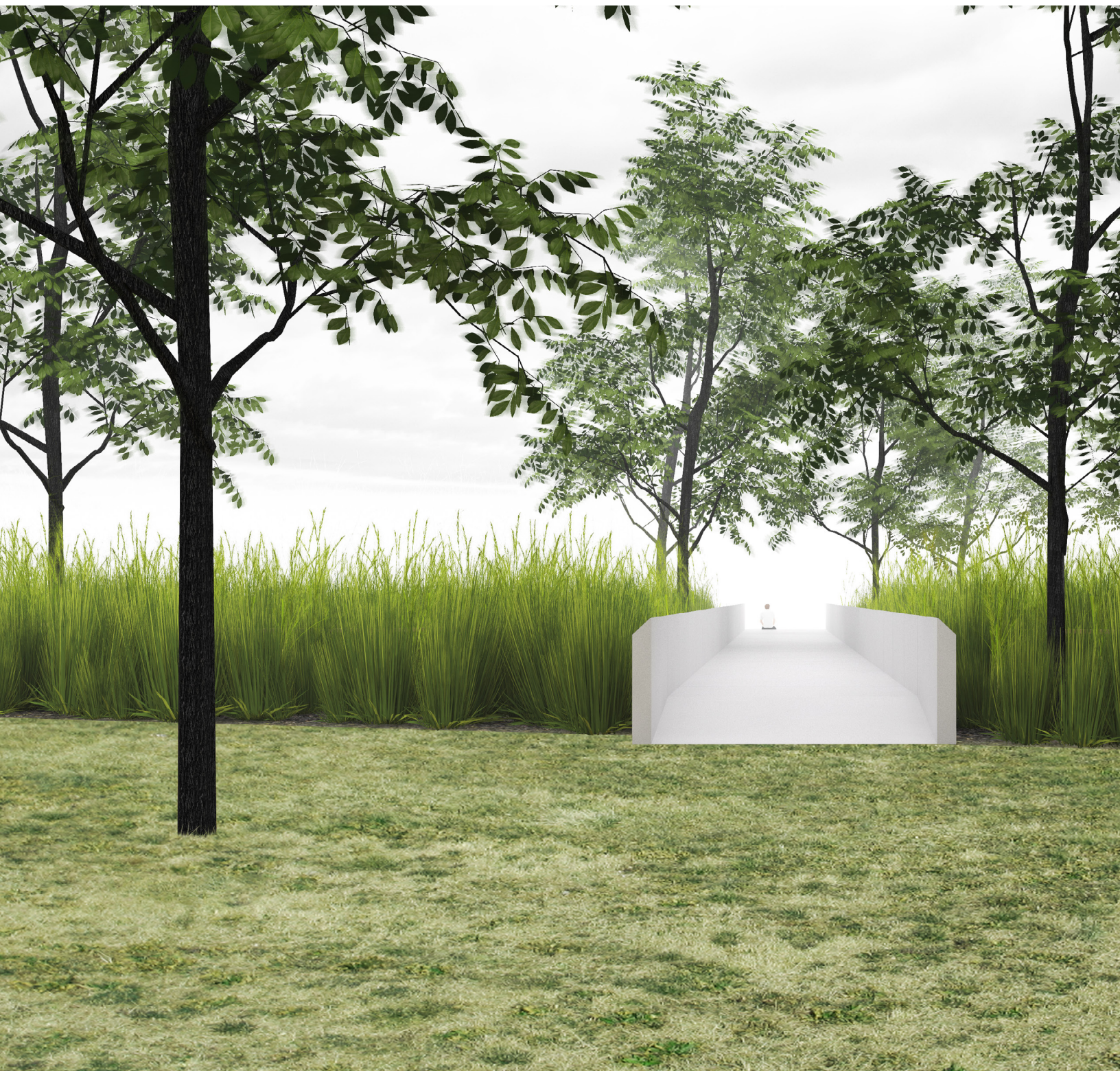


fig 11









fig 12







fig 13







fig 14







fig 15









fig 16





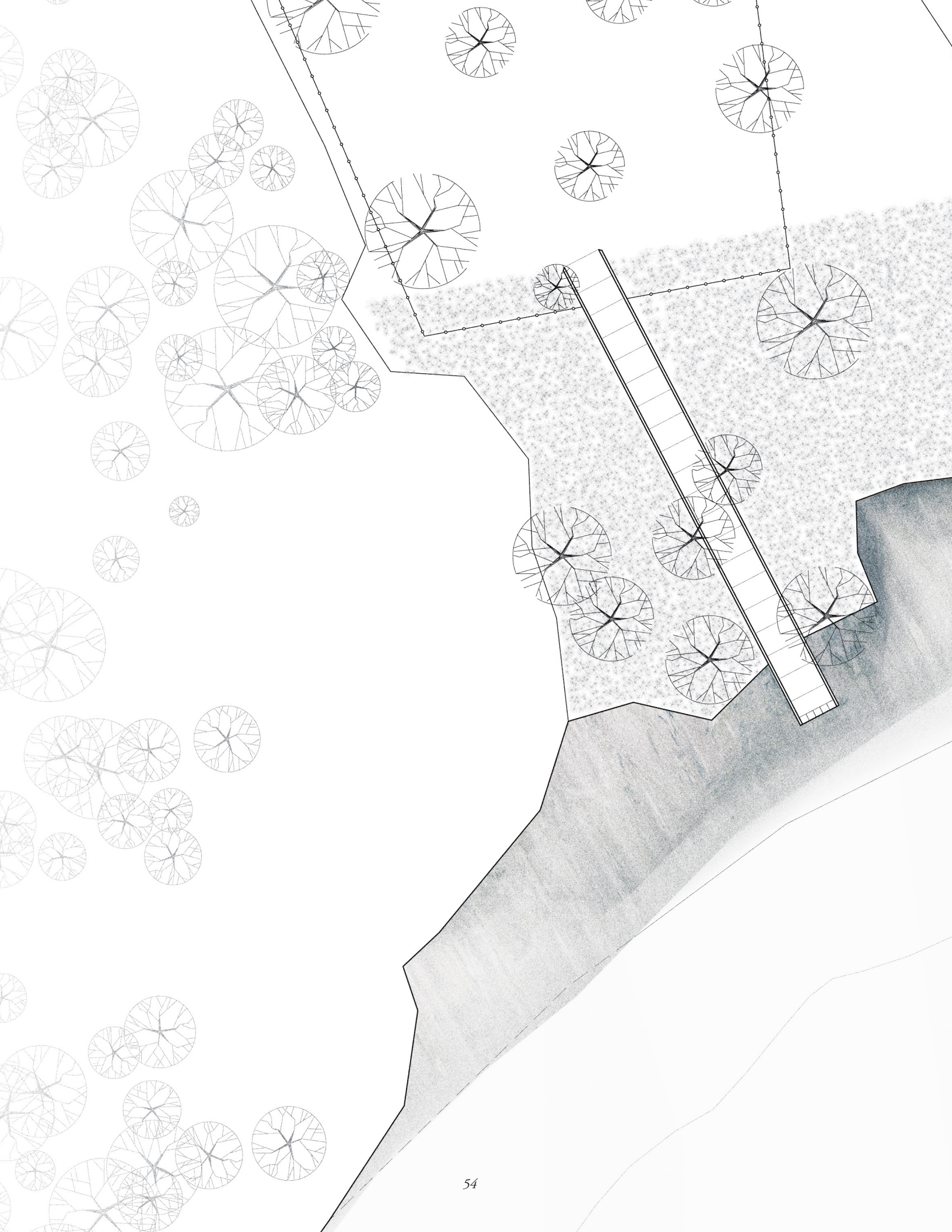




fig 17

“When you look upon the Medusa, you turn to stone... When you’re in the presence of something that violates your assumptions of safety, you’ll freeze. You freeze so that the thing that might eat you can’t see you. And that’s what turns you to stone. That’s nature in its terrible aspect.”<sup>61</sup>

“The Christian story [of Gethsemane] is predicated on the idea that if you voluntarily accept your suffering you can simultaneously transcend it.”

“People have evolved two modes for dealing with the unknown; one is voluntary approach, and the other is panic-stricken paralysis and flight.”

“Physiologically, if I force you to accept a certain kind of challenge, your body will go into emergency-preparation mode and you’ll become stressed, and that stress will cause you physiological damage, including brain damage if it’s sustained for long enough. But if I present you with the same challenge and you accept it voluntarily, your brain doesn’t produce stress hormones and completely different physiological systems kick in.”<sup>62</sup>

—*Jordan Peterson*

“In a letter to Clara Rilke, Rilke wrote: ‘Works of art always spring from those who have faced the danger, gone to the very end of an experience, to the point beyond which no human being can go. The further one dares to go, the more decent, the more personal, the more unique a life becomes.’ ”<sup>65</sup>

—*Gaston Bachelard*

“ ‘But where danger is, grows The saving power also’ [Hölderlin] ... The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become. For questioning is the piety of thought.”<sup>63</sup>

—*Martin Heidegger*

“Burke wrote that for this terror to mingle with pleasure and with it produce a sublime sensation, it is also necessary that the terror-causing threat be suspended, kept at bay, held back. This suspense, this lessening of threat or danger, provokes a kind of pleasure which is hardly positive satisfaction, but is rather more like relief. This still qualifies as privation, but it is privation in the second degree: the spirit is deprived of the threat of being deprived of light, language, life.”<sup>64</sup>

—*Jean-François Lyotard*



## Reflection

The long white walkway softly blends in with the horizon.

Tall grasses visually and aurally conceal the cliff drop beyond. As one walks over the edge of the cliff, one is suddenly taken from a place of serene contemplation, to one of violent destruction. At this point, two opposites are forced to co-exist: boundless horizontal and vertical brink—a mix of mathematical and dynamic sublime (Kant).

Although it would be easy to jump off the end, the walkway makes experiencing the edge much safer than it would be without it. The walkway would not suddenly give out from underneath a person, like the ground easily could.

One would have to choose to jump.

2

# Bellowing Silence

No one is seen  
deep in the mountain:  
Only voices  
resounding. ...<sup>66</sup>

—*Koan Saying*

# Encounter (Site)

## The Cave

“Suppose... as an adult [50,000 years ago] searching for food, you came upon an opening into a mountain that led into a vast cavern. Standing at the entrance, you would have heard it speak to you in the same way that a conch shell speaks. Sound entering a cavern is changed sufficiently that, when it reradiates back through the opening, it seems as though it is coming from within. The cavern would not be quiet: as you passed by its opening, you would have heard the cavern speak to you. The voice of a resonant cave is more than a literary metaphor. You would have felt the cave was alive when it acknowledged your presence by responding to your footsteps with a voice of its own. From an experiential perspective, a cave is something that has a voice and sounds alive. Only from a modern, scientific perspective is it simply a natural hollow with sonic reflections and resonances.

[...]

If we suspend our modern understanding of voice, hearing can be understood as listening to the voice of the spirit of a thing or space. The reverberating sound of a cavern then becomes the voice of the cave *spirit*. Voice becomes the means by which a spirit, whether near or far, talks to us, gets into our heads. For our ancestors, voices included those of powerful spirits, the sounds from large acoustic structures and objects like caves and mountains, from thunder, and from wind itself.”

—*Blessner and Salter, Spaces Speak*

“At Lascaux, gazing at these pictures, we sense that something is stirring, something is moving. That something touches us, we are stirred by it, as though in sympathy with the rhythms of a dance; from this passionate movement emanates the beauty of the paintings. They are, we recognize, the individual’s free communication with the world around him, they are man’s reaching out to touch his kind whose inner wealth he is just discovering.

This intoxicating emotion of dance was always strong enough to lift art above the subordinated tasks which man accepted to perform at the behest of religion or magic. Conversely, the harmony of the individual with the world around him invites him to undertake the transfigurations of art—and they are the transfigurations of genius.”

—*George Bataille*



fig 18 *The Main Hall at the Lascaux Caves, France*

Struggling in vain, impatient of her load,  
 And lab'ring underneath the pond'rous god,  
 The more she strove to shake him from her breast,  
 With more and far superior force he press'd;  
 Commands his entrance, and, without control,  
 Usurps her organs and inspires her soul.  
 Now, with a furious blast, the hundred doors  
 Ope of themselves; a rushing whirlwind roars  
 Within the cave, and Sibyl's voice restores

—*Virgil*  
*The Aeneid, Book VI*



fig 19 *Still from Colin Stetson's performance of "Among the Sef"*

## Encounter (Art)

“Among the Sef”  
performance by Colin Stetson

A man stands alone with his instrument at the end of a dark concrete tunnel shaft. He calls us to attention with a short, simple piece, mysterious and alluring, and then pauses. He is ready. A single bright light directly behind him outlines his silhouette, as if to highlight the shadow self he is poised to unleash.

Then, out of a dusty calm, sounds emerge in wild, relentless flow, jagged and wondrous.

In an instant, they have filled the entire space and beyond. How could this possibly be coming from a single person? It is as if he has summoned the many turbulent spirits within him to do his bidding, all in a single, mad frenzy.

Propelled by a singular will, the fast, regular, pulsing rhythm rumbles down the reverberant tunnel. Thick echoes dissipate into darkness. Relentless, seemingly untamed arpeggios still remain within a range, but jump out of that range haphazardly. Residual, in-between notes are hard to make out exactly, but labour to cohere as a whole. The amplitude is flowing, dynamic, shifting up and down like calm breathing.

This is a rough-around-the-edges saxophone sound, that is made even more rough by the wildness of its patterns. The piece's structure is ordered, familiar at first, but loosens along the way in many ways: the bars are compressed and extended more and more as the piece moves along, until it seems to collapse entirely, vanishing, only to reappear in new form.

Finally reaching a boiling point, the music blasts forth—beautiful, violent, enthralling—and we can do nothing but go along with it. Torrid waves of sound come roaring down the tunnel, the man wailing from the depths of his being to the next world with the resolve of a storm, the light behind him propelling his spirits even further than his herculean effort already allows.

We are in a narrow, dark space, but at this moment, it feels infinite.





# Semblance

Bellowing Silence



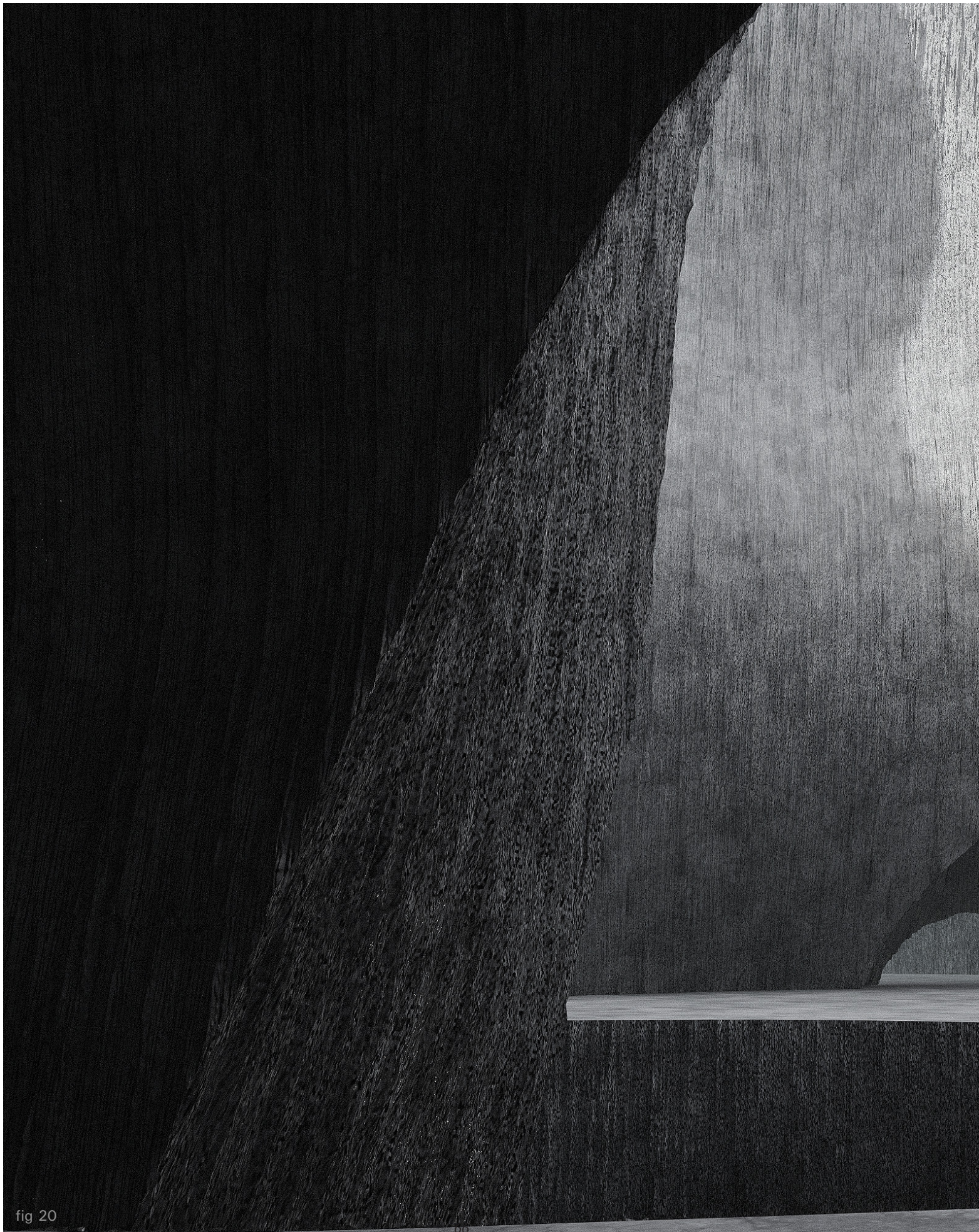


fig 20









fig 21









fig 22



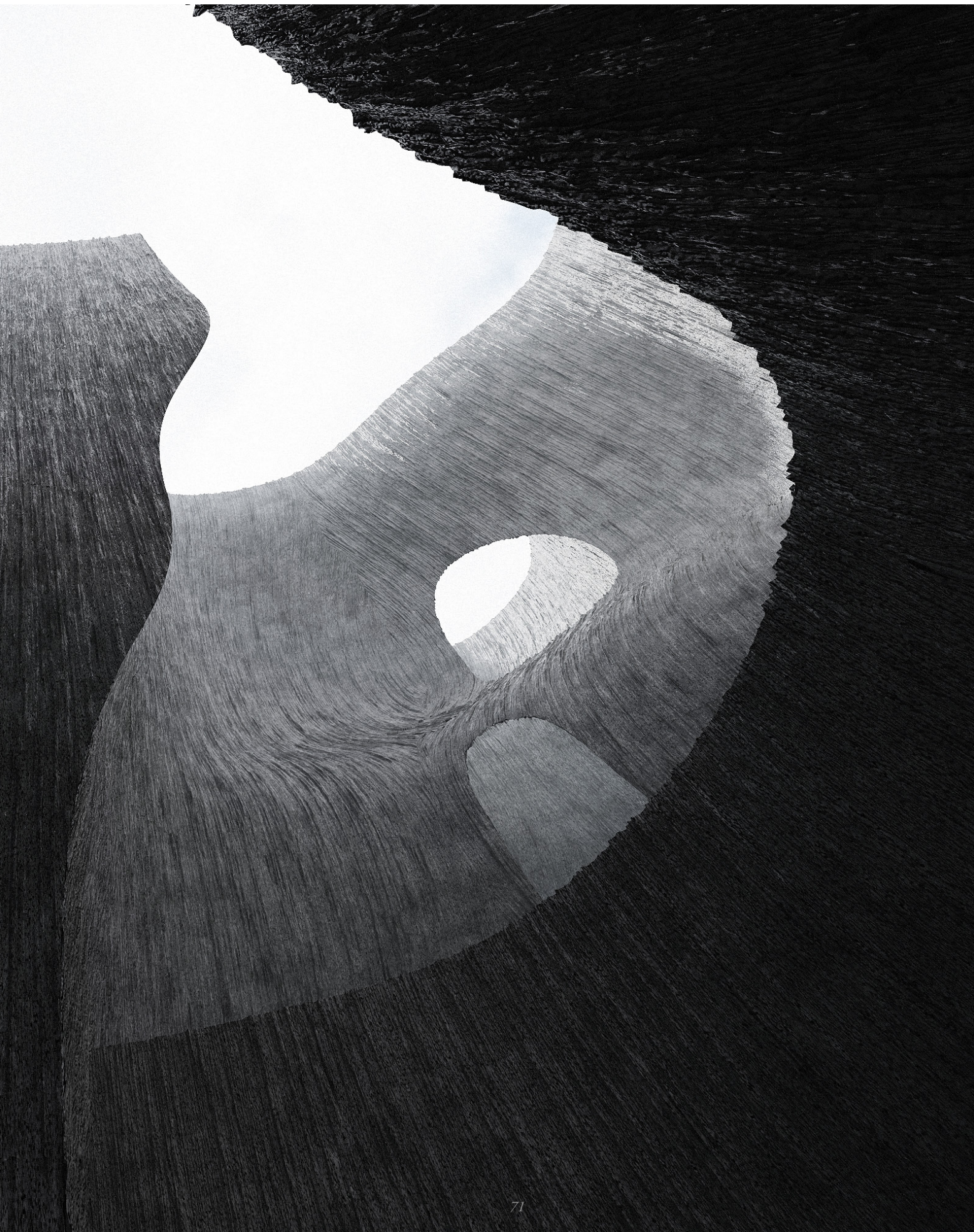






fig 23











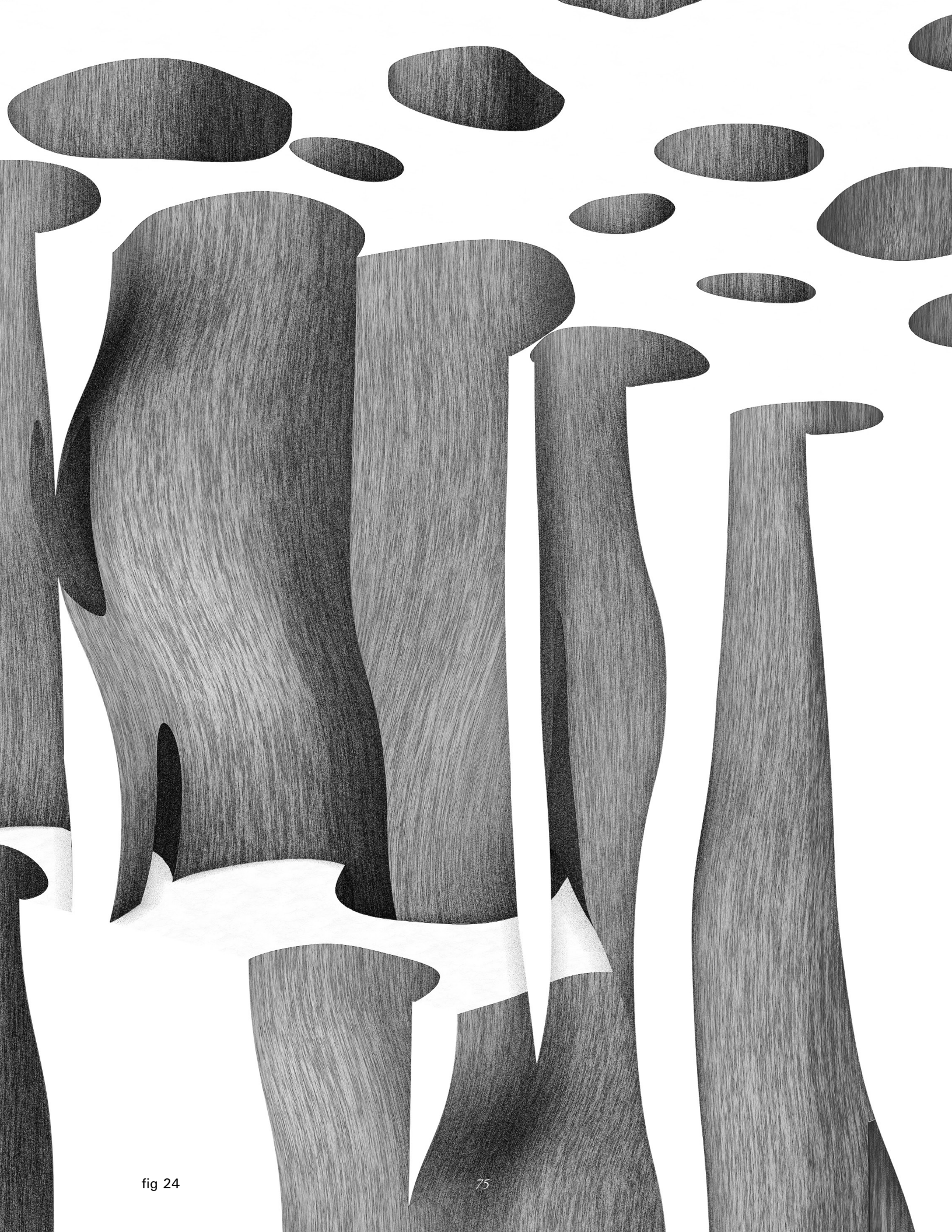


fig 24



“We reach ecstasy by a contestation of knowledge. Were I to stop at ecstasy and grasp it, in the end I would define it. But nothing resists the contestation of knowledge and I have seen at the end that the idea of communication itself leaves naked—not knowing anything ... I remain in intolerable non-knowledge, which has no other way out than ecstasy.”<sup>70</sup>

—*George Bataille*

## Reflection

The confined, limited underground setting of the cave is here opened to a chaotic, seemingly endless network, allowing for movement between a variety of spaces—tall, open, closed, small, large. Each space is dynamic, flowing, and overwhelming, and most are perillous, with nothing at the edge of a narrowing floor to prevent a fall into the abyss.

3

# Ascending Depths



From the origins  
nothing exists.<sup>71</sup>

—*Koan Saying*



fig 25 *Image from "Forest Series" (2000-2005)*  
*by Jitka Hanzlova*

# Encounter (Site)

## The Forest

“We do not have to be long in the woods to experience the always rather anxious impression of “going deeper and deeper” into a limitless world. Soon, if we do not know where we are going, we no longer know where we are. ... ‘Forests, especially, with the mystery of their space prolonged indefinitely beyond the veil of tree-trunks and leaves, space that is veiled for our eyes, but transparent to action, are veritable psychological transcendents.’ ”

—*Gaston Bachelard*

“As a whole, the environment seems to make a mutable and rather incomprehensible world manifest, where surprises belong to the order of the day.”

—*Christian Norberg-Schultz*

“A forest is what exists between its trees, between its dense undergrowth and its clearings, between all its life cycles and their different timescales, ranging from solar energy to insects that live for a day. A forest is also a meeting place between those who enter it and something unnameable and attendant, waiting behind a tree or in the undergrowth. Something intangible and within touching distance. Neither silent nor audible. It is not only visitors who feel this attendant something: hunters and foresters who can read unwritten signs are even more keenly aware of it.”

“Throughout history and prehistory forests have offered shelter, a hiding-place, whilst also being places in which a wanderer can be ultimately lost. They oblige us to recognize how much is hidden.”

“In the silence of the forest certain events are unaccommodated and cannot be placed in time. Being like this they both disconcert and entice the observer’s imagination: for they are like another creature’s experience of duration, We feel them occurring, we feel their presence, yet we cannot confront them, for they are occurring for us, somewhere between past, present and future.”

—*John Berger (“Into the Woods”)*





fig 26 Still from *"The Messenger"* (1996), Bill Viola

## Encounter (Art)

“The Messenger”

Video art by Bill Viola

The barely perceptible threshold separating us from the indistinct figure of a man beyond, softly immersed and brightly lit against a deep blue darkness, is evident only from the surfacing bubbles of his breath. Completely still, floating, the figure slowly moves toward the surface, emerging into view. No gravity, no sound, and no light besides the bright blue that caresses his body from an unknown source off to the side. The water is as cold as we are to the image. Naked and with eyes closed, the man seems to be calmly sleeping, basking in a world of dreams—innocent, vulnerable, and oblivious as a pre-born child in his mother’s womb. Slowly, the man seems to be approaching, becoming ever clearer and more defined.



fig 27 Still from *"The Messenger"* (1996), Bill Viola



Finally, and suddenly, he breaches the surface of the water and opens his eyes, breaking the silence with his breathing—deep, slow, arduous, and reverberant. The portion of his body below the water plane continues to be gently bathed in soft, rippling, blue light, while his body above is lit in searing red from an opposing angle. The threshold between water and air is now clearly visible, and emphasized. The man stares straight ahead, perhaps at nothing, stunned. After a short, uneasy moment, he inhales deeply, closes his eyes, and retreats beneath the surface of the water, beginning the slow descent that will bring him back deep into to the realm of the unconscious and the unknown.



# Semblance

Ascending Depths



fig 28











fig 29









fig 30





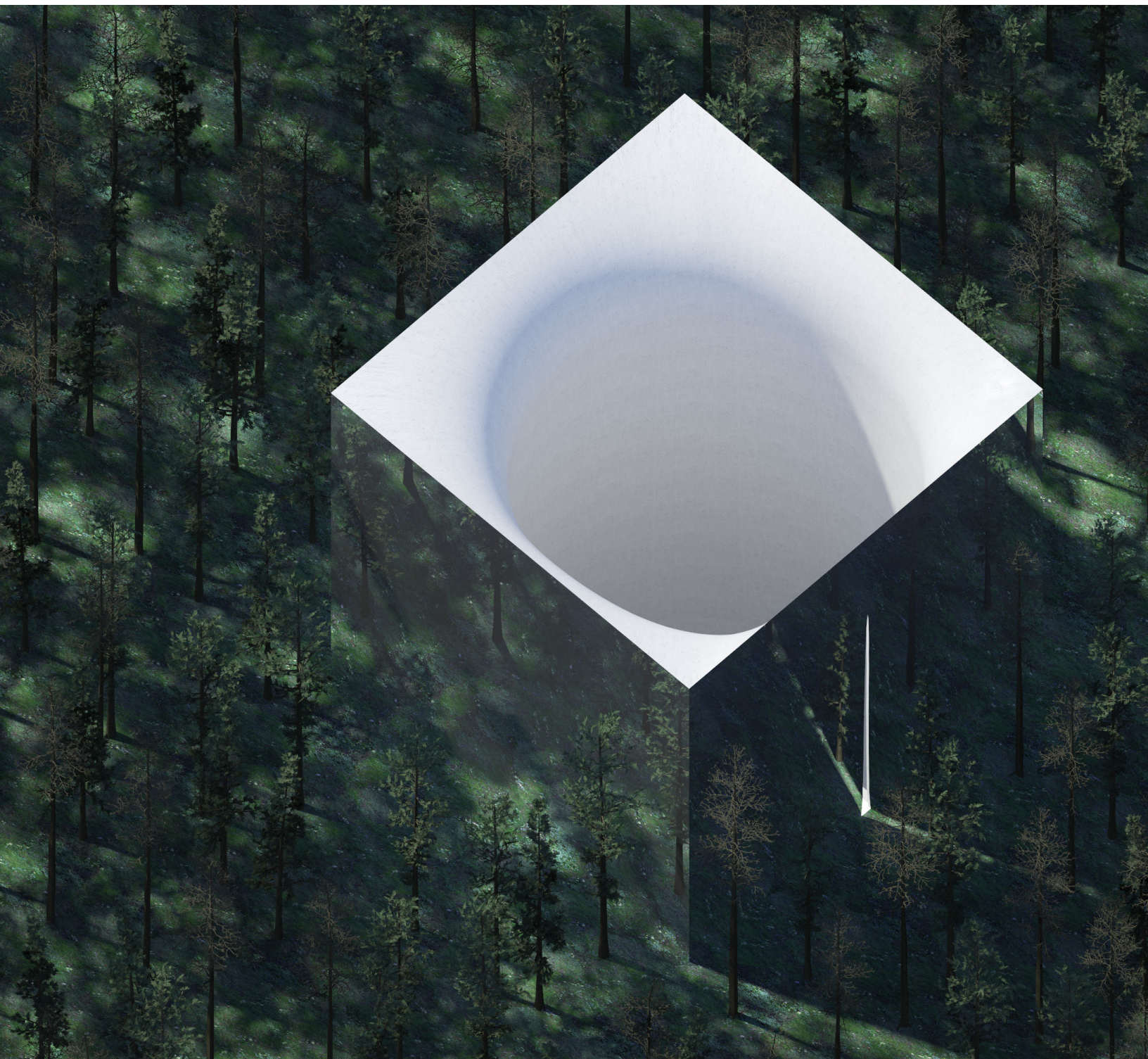






fig 31

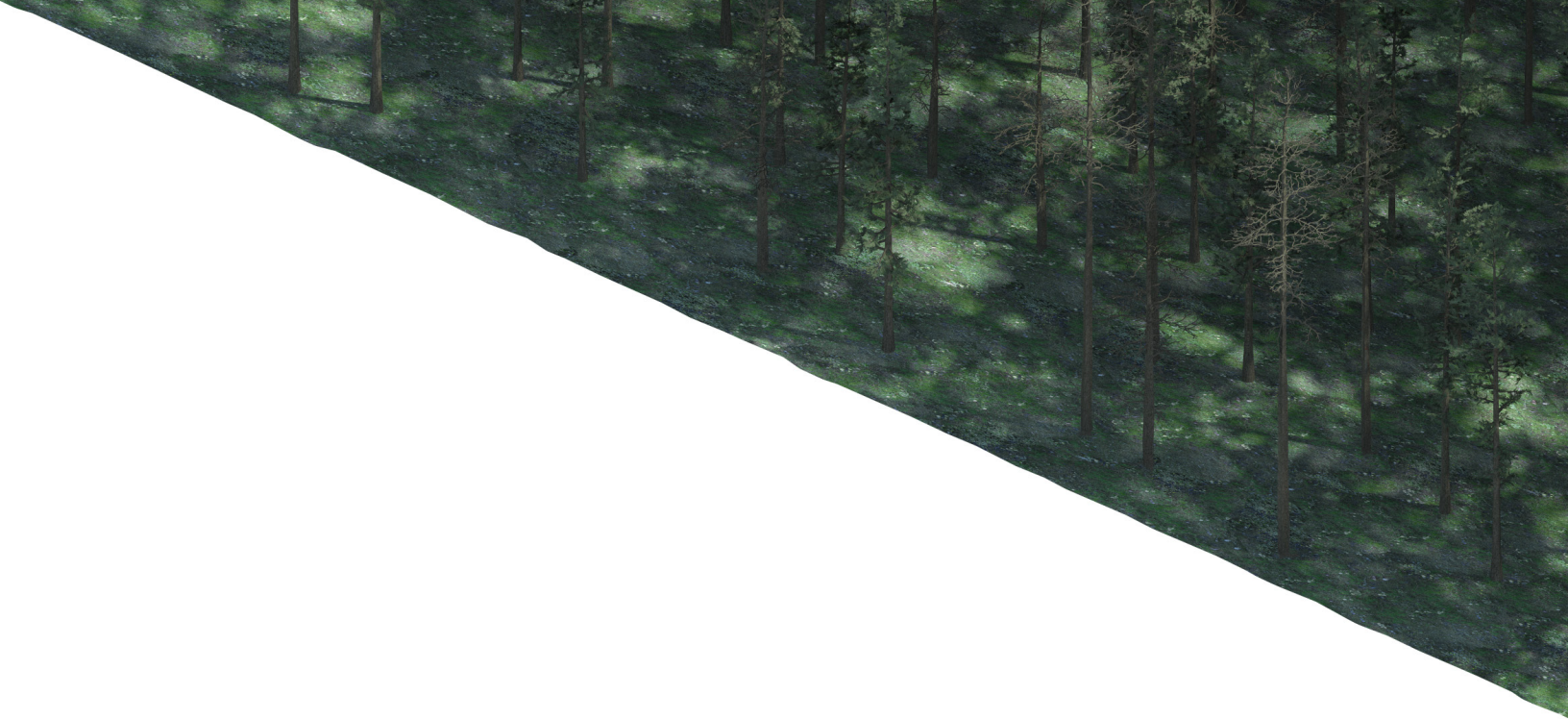
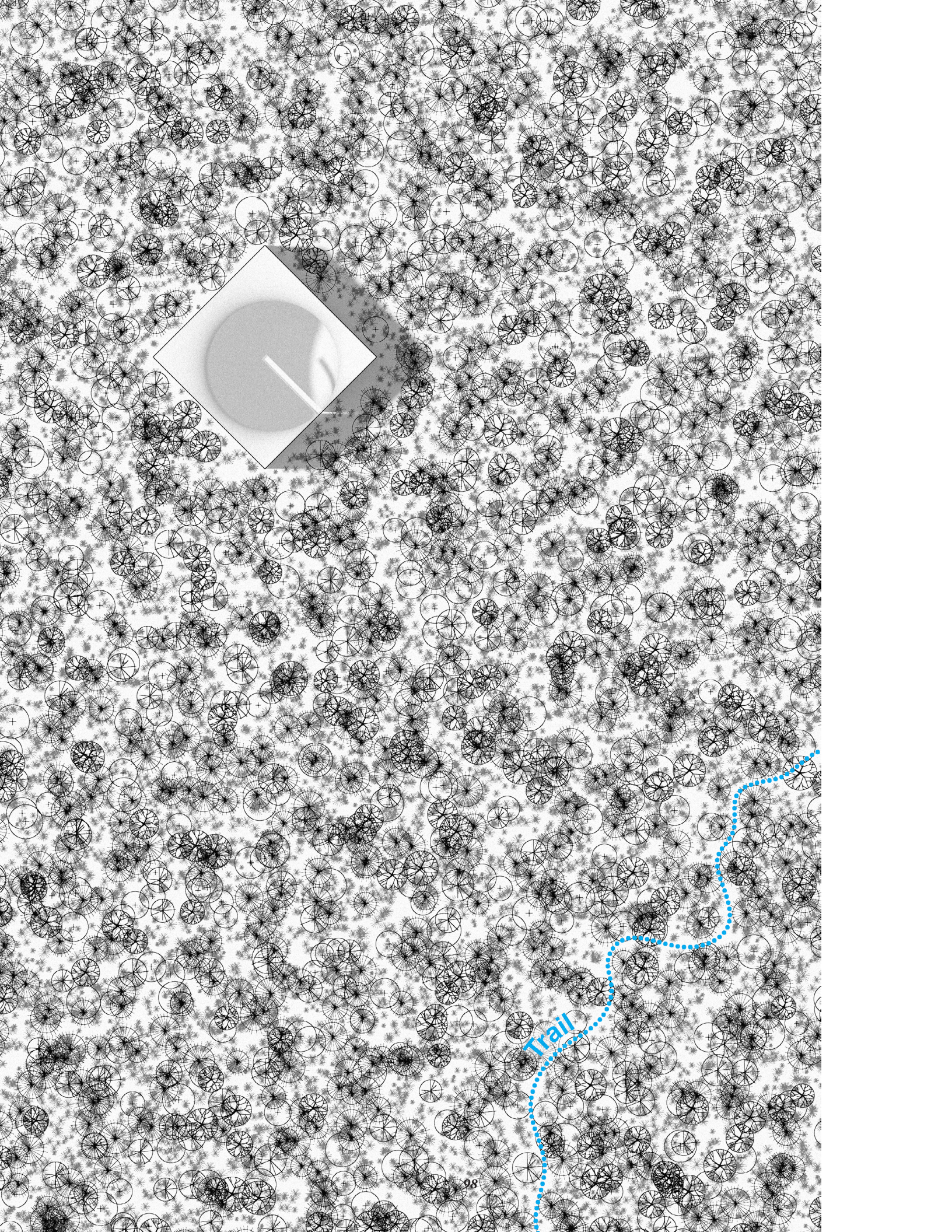


fig 32









Trail



## Reflection

Deep in the woods, soft, filtered light through the canopy of trees gently caresses a wanderer on her journey. Near the farthest reaches of the trail, she notices a slight shift in the forest light, a small distance away. One tree trunk seems to be lit up, but surrounded by shadow. Drawn to this phenomenon, she leaves the path.

As she approaches, it becomes more and more apparent to her that the lit tree trunk is an opening, barely wide enough for her to fit through. Intrigued, she goes through.

Inside is a bright, vast, almost formless space. A small, suspended walkway leads towards the centre, where there is nothing to do but contemplate the difference of light and space, the opening to the sky above, and the depth below.

For a few moments, the traveller stares at the open sky, stunned. She then turns back, beginning the slow journey that will bring her back, deep into to the forest.







# Endnotes

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- 2 Louis Kahn
- 3 Le Corbusier, *New World of Space* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1948), 8.
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- 6 Ibid, 7.
- 7 Jean-François Lyotard and Lisa Liebmann, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” *Artforum* 22, no. 8, April 1984, 38.
- 8 Andrey Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986), 39.
- 9 Jordan Peterson, “Reality and The Sacred,” Lecture video, 44:38, *TVO Big Ideas*, 14 May, 2010, <<http://tvo.org/video/163256/jordan-peterson-reality-and-sacred>>, 9:40.
- 10 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: George Bell, 1889), 40-65.
- 11 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Eric Matthews (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 141.
- 12 Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” 40.
- 13 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 206.
- 14 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, and Ian C. Johnston, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (Arlington, VA: Richer Resources Publications, 2009).
- 15 Georges Bataille, *Inner experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt-Irons (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), quoted in *The Sublime: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Simon Morley, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 90.
- 16 Zhuangzi, quoted in Stephen West, *Philosophize This! Episode #007 Daoism*, Podcast audio, 46:08, 10 Aug. 2013, <<http://traffic.libsyn.com/philosophizethis/Daoism.mp3>>, 32:18.
- 17 Marina Abramovic, *Statements*, quoted in *The Sublime: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Simon Morley, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 212.
- 18 Lyotard, “The Sublime and the Avant-Garde,” 37.
- 19 Peterson, “Reality and The Sacred,” 15:00.
- 20 William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793; Project Gutenberg, 2014), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/45315/45315-h/45315-h.htm>>.
- 21 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Colin Smith, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 8.impr. ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), ix.
- 22 Peterson, “Reality and The Sacred,” 12:00.
- 23 Iain Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heidegger-aesthetics>>.
- 24 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), quoted in Iain Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2011 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/heidegger-aesthetics>>, section 3.4.
- 25 Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” section 3.4.
- 26 Ibid, section 3.6.
- 27 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, quoted in Iain Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” section 3.4.
- 28 Thomson, “Heidegger’s Aesthetics,” section 3.4.
- 29 Ibid, section 3.7.
- 30 Ibid, section 4.



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- 32 Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2003), 56.
- 33 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), xxxii-xxxiii.
- 34 Shigematsu, *A Zen Forest, Sayings of the Masters*, 51.
- 35 Ibid, 36.
- 36 Ibid, 99.
- 37 Ibid, 56.
- 38 Ibid, 4.
- 39 Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art* (New York: Scribner, 1953) 98,
- 40 Ibid, 80.
- 41 Alain de Botton, *The Perfect Home*, Television series, (London: Channel 4, 2006), Episode 2, 32:16.
- 42 Peterson, "Reality and The Sacred," 16:00.
- 43 Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy*, 206.
- 44 Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From: The Natural History of Innovation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), chap. 2.
- 45 Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," 40.
- 46 Ted Hughes, "Myth and Education," in *Winter Pollen: Occasional Prose*, ed. William Scammell (New York: Picador USA, 1995), 140.
- 47 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 59.
- 48 Ibid, 74.
- 49 Langer, *Feeling and Form*, 40.
- 50 Juhani Pallasmaa, *Eyes of the skin : Architecture and the Senses*, (New York: John Wiley, 2005), 71.
- 51 Ibid, 68.
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- 53 Ibid, xxii.
- 54 Ibid, xxiii.
- 55 Ibid, xvi.
- 56 Ibid, 227.
- 57 Ibid, xxxiii.
- 58 Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, quoted in Iain Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics," section 3.2.
- 59 Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics," section 3.3.
- 60 Shigematsu, *A Zen Forest, Sayings of the Masters*, 51.
- 61 Peterson, "Reality and The Sacred," 21:47.
- 62 Ibid, 25:13.
- 63 Martin Heidegger, *The Question concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 35.
- 64 Lyotard, "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," 40.
- 65 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 220.
- 66 Shigematsu, *A Zen Forest, Sayings of the Masters*, 54.
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- 68 Georges Bataille, *Lascaux; Or, The Birth of Art: Prehistoric Painting* (Lausanne: Skira, 1955), 130.
- 69 Virgil, *The Aeneid* (19 BCE; Project Gutenberg, 2008), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/228/228-h/228-h.htm>>, Book VI.
- 70 Georges Bataille, *Inner experience*, 90.
- 71 Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, 185.
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- 73 John Berger, "Into the Woods," in *The Sublime: Documents of Contemporary Art*, ed. Simon Morley, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2010), 212.

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fig 34 *Lower Antelope Canyon*  
*Page, Arizona (2014)*  
*Collage by author*