

# OTHERWORDLY

*On Travel and Appearance*

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## **PREFACE**

Our world is wide, moving, connected—a world among many other worlds. When we head out for these alien territories, physical or cognitive, what we are doing foremost is throwing ourselves into the unknown.

What is the relationship between the traveler and the unknown?

How does the portrait of the unknown appear to the traveler?

This is the start of a Master of Architecture thesis, and the start of a wandering to find the center of that portrait.



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# 01

## OTHERWORLDLY

A Thesis Paper

### INTRODUCTION

Try to remember the last time you had a meaningful conversation with someone. Maybe you were in a debate, or perhaps asking for advice from a friend. Now try to notice what made this conversation different from the typical, daily chit-chat. For starters, a conversation of substance will have most likely have been engaging for both you and your partner. Next, and more importantly, there was probably a high degree of give-and-take because in a good conversation, both people will be open to criticism and to new ideas. This is an empowering, yet vulnerable position. As we receive what someone else is saying, we take it and hold it up next to what we already know. This previously held knowledge isn't just data we've stored in our mind, but it's our beliefs and our assumptions about the world; it actually constitutes our *Being*. If we deem this new information to be more true, we abandon the

*Being* is another word for existence. ►

old truth and take up a new mode; *we reconstitute our Being*. We use this hybridized mode of Being to communicate back to our partner, who then performs a similar unconscious pollice verso. Dialogue is therefore an affair of reciprocity.



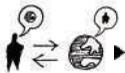
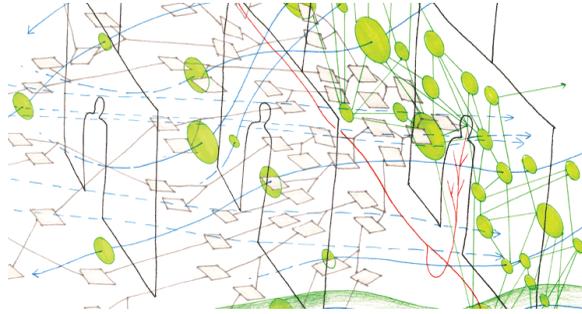
## BEING AND WORLD: A LIFE

During the mid-20th century, German philosopher Martin Heidegger recognized that there was a certain dialogue about everything at the level of experience. Heidegger was a phenomenologist, from the Greek *phainómenon*, which means “that which appears,” and logos, “to study.” The phenomenologists asserted that experience, our “lived world,” was more fundamental than Cartesian abstractions; they focused on descriptions rather than explanations, essences rather than facts [2]. What Heidegger did in *Being and Time* was look at experience as such, and performed a phenomenology of what it means to be. What he came up with was a dizzying lexicon which shook the idea of Being into Being-*there*, a phrase he dubbed *Dasein*. His premise for *Dasein* was that we are defined only by our place in the world, submerged in a context of specific variables which allows the individual to appear as such [1]. The relationship between Being and world is a lot like

◀ In phenomenology, brute existence is the primordial foundation on which scientific, mathematical, or even philosophical suppositions are formulated [2].



Intro Paragraph 16 ►  
M. Ngui [01]



There are certain impoverished ►  
abstractions of this lived dialogue.  
Intellectualism poses man as a con-  
scious agent-author of the world.  
Empiricism asserts man is but a  
billiard ball in universe which is fore-  
most a scientific affair.

These views can have real-world ►  
implications for architects, such as  
when they treat a site like a blank  
canvas, or try to control people  
through design.

Imagine a class with a very ►  
passionate student who is quick  
to think of answers and quicker to  
think of stimulating questions. Now  
imagine how different this class  
would be without her.

Imagine the same class with ►  
someone who sits with his head  
down. Now imagine him absent, no  
longer emitting apathy from the back  
of the class.

No matter how much we participate, ►  
we always have an effect on the  
worlds we inhabit.

two people in dialogue. The world is constituted  
by conscious Beings participating in it, and such  
Beings are made up of the worlds they inhabit.

A world, strictly speaking, is a specific  
architectonic structure of meaning, not just a  
backdrop for Being, but like a dance partner.  
Take the example of the university student:  
what constitutes student-hood? In some sense,  
the student's world is the school, and it should  
be self-evident that students and schools go  
together. However, the school itself is made up  
of many other worlds. Throughout the day the  
student will go to class, work out at the gym, get  
into a good book, and each of these is a world  
which will be meaningful in its own way. The  
classroom becomes his attentiveness, the gym  
his motivation, the book his wonder. He is not  
only a student but a particular student because  
of his immersion in these worlds, and these  
worlds are a particular way by his constituting  
them.



◀ *Arctic Caravan*  
W. Bradford [02]

Now think of a different world, like the great ship at sea. Think of its distinct atmosphere, filled with barked commands and empty, swaying horizons. We can imagine how man would take up this world completely differently from the school. So what happens when a student leaves the school and embarks off on a ship as this? Does he simply become a hardy seaman upon taking up the adventure, or rather does he take his student-hood with him? Man is possessed by the worlds he was once a part, so even if the student completely exits the geo-physical bounds of his world, there is no shedding off that which is soaked into his Being. We take our worlds with us as we go, wearing them, orienting ourselves with them. This is perhaps never more clear as it is when we approach new, alien worlds.

◀ In some sense, this embarking student, having been removed from a sea of academics, can view his world most clearly.

◀ Worlds are also scalable, multiple, changeable, and operate on different levels of socio-individuality.

## TOWARDS THE UNKNOWN



Our world is composed atop an infinity of that which we don't know. We have an laser-narrow window of perception which sails atop a horizon of mystery. This plane is the *unknown*. The unknown is the holy birthplace of myth and of change and creation. It's the unconscious void, the moon, the cave, the cornucopia; the unknown is the place where all things come from, and ultimately the place where everything will one day sink and return. It arrives to us in two forms. The first is the unknown as such, the totality of mystery, an archaic world in itself. The unknown as such is an incorporeal landscape of darkness, like the infinite sea. The second is the unknown manifest, what Heidegger calls the thing, which is like a single jagged wing emerging from beneath the sea [4]. Unknown manifest is an agent of its birthmother, a container of darkness. The confrontation of both forms of the unknown is basically the oldest human story; the unknown is necessary for anything new to happen whatsoever, and so approaching it reaffirms what it means to be human [3].

The unknown is an intrinsic part of Being at many different levels, and so we have a unique

strategy for swimming in it. As we're initiated into strange new worlds, they intersect with the worlds we bring, the ones that we've mastered, and that define us. When we take up the strange, what we are doing foremost is mapping our own world-meaning structures onto the environment in order to make sense of it. This is our natural, first attempt to create order out of chaos. This projection stabilizes us in a sort of personal fiction [5]. Think about the student-sailor once more. It's his first day and he works hard hand-in-hand with a seasoned crew. He's in the same boat as the experienced sailors, but is he really in the same world? As the sheen of newness glares into his eye, he takes up the world as it appears from the void. He is watching, thinking, wondering about the world rather than simply operating within it. The crewmembers, however, have been operating the ship for quite some time, and they've developed a particular shared meaning for its parts which is integrated into how these parts are taken up: the torn foremast from a great storm, a crow's nest to clear your head, the cold, familiar command of the chief. These phenomena are not only coloring, but constituting the world they inhabit. So when the student shows up and sees a broken mast, a lookout, and a grumpy commander, he is not yet part of that world atop the ship. He has

◀ Drawing order from chaos is perhaps the quintessential human endeavor.

◀ Heidegger claims that we have two basic ways in which we take up things in the world: *present-at-hand* and *ready-to-hand*.

Something has presence-at-hand as soon as we think about it in terms of facts, which is to organize it into cognitive order. On the other hand, it becomes ready-to-hand as soon as we stop thinking about it and start using it [1].

(We can also imagine that we treat worlds like this as well.)

World territories are made up of mostly people, and so there's a disconnect if you don't know the game that's played, or where you fit  
◀ in to that game.

from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* [03]



Phenomenology does not negotiate with truth claims, only meaning.

It doesn't necessarily matter that the contents of a dream aren't "true," only that they appear to consciousness; the experience of a dream is still a real experience.

but his eagerness and education to help him navigate, and so by mapping these onto the ship, he creates his own world with polymerized meaning structures. His world isn't fictitious in that it's "untrue," but insofar as it's projected over the columns of the crew's world. It will take time before he can see the world unbrilliantly.



The unknown has a peculiar way of inhabiting phenomena in the world. Heidegger names that which is factual, defined, and static the *object*, and counters it with the relational, irrational, and unstable, the *thing*—a vessel of strange. An object is like a manufactured commodity, or anything that appears to consciousness as a stable form: a car, a chair, a water bottle. Objects are conceptualized, categorized, and concretized, and so we use them and think little of it. Things, on the other hand, are fragmented, alienating, and shadowy.

"This sentence is a thing." ◀

They pluck us out of our world and throw us into



◀ from *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* [04]

theirs [4]. Stories are things, monsters are things, art is a thing. A landscape painting, for instance, is a disjointed perspective cast in a frame, and hung on the wall, where it asks for eyes. Think about where you are when you look at a painting. Of course you're geographically where you are, planted in a chair or on the ground, but soon brush strokes turn to mountaintops, and a world emerges [6]. You might as well be there in that world—and you are! You don't even have to let it happen; art will snap off a branch of your soul and throw it to the scene. What was once a collection of objects (paint, canvas, frame) has somehow culminated into some thing with a meaning which is shrouded like the meaning of a life. Also, thingness is not a quality of art, exclusively; it can be mundane. A hammer, for instance, is static and well-defined—but then it breaks. So what is it now? A handle and a metal bit? A shoe horn and a paper weight? When a hammer breaks, it wakes us up from our world

*The System of All Worlds* ▶  
C. G. Jung [05]

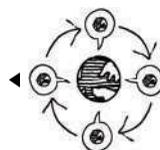


Often times, something is most ▶  
present in our minds when we can't  
find it. The only time we usually  
notice our keys, for instance, is when  
we lose them.

of hammering and we trip momentarily into a puddle of mystery. "What is that?" The unknown descends to reclaim its territory.

The world is in a permanent state of flux between the known and the unknown, order and chaos. Carl Jung was a psychoanalyst who took great interest in these lived human patterns. He claimed that understanding the cycles of order and chaos provided humans with the potential to become a higher magnitude of themselves. These patterns are called myths, or encoded narratives which express concerns of the collective unconscious [5]. Jung was fascinated with the mandala (above) as a profound descriptor of the human game, that is, the path from order, to chaos, and back to order. At its top, the mandala has symbols for truth, art, and science, and at its bottom, symbols for deception and chaos. In the center is a flower—a depiction of the self. Jung noted that

in order to get closer to the center of the self, one must go around the mandala, conquering the unknown and bringing about higher order. This includes overcoming a world of pure unknown and becoming an archetypal hero. He called this process *circumambulation*. Traditionally, to circumambulate is to move around a sacred object or idol, distilling it in order to more deeply connect oneself to it. What Jung sought was to reconstitute religious meaning into the modern world, and so he pointed to the lived experience of heaven- and hell-types. There is a highest version of ourselves, a sum of our greatest potential, and we point ourselves towards it whenever we strive for something more than what we have. And then there's the underworld: an amorphous wave of unknowing chaos. The journey through chaos will serve the hero well to become his highest self because that's how he gets stronger: by learning new things, by facing and overcoming his fears. But beware: the chaos can just as well overwhelm; some never get out. There is a harrowing journey to be had, one where we dance with ghosts and wrestle phantoms. Our dialogue with the unknown will lead us down dreamy new paths, and we must do well not to lose ourselves in the fog.



◀ Circumambulation can be a physical experience in which we take up a literal journey, or else it can be an interior circumambulating, such as a phenomenologist might do to get to the essence of a phenomenon.

## TRAVEL AND BEING-THERE

Man has thoroughly taken note of the self-transformative potential of the journey into the unknown world. This urge manifests itself most fully in *travel*. Travel, at its core, is the escape from the home world, the familiar, the mastered, and into the alien, the strange [1]. Travel can be conceptualized in two ways: as such, and as a means to a destination. When we think about travel as such, traveling is not just a middle ground between worlds, but a world in itself. “Life is about the journey,” they said, and they were right; the Earth is paved with imaginary borders and boundaries, and the traveler flows through them. But travel is also the Being in destinations. The world is made up of an infinite amount of cities playing their own game to be discovered and played. In both cases, the traveler recreates the portrait of the unknown to understand the world and himself.

Traveling turns us into observers and researchers. When we go to new places, we're constantly confronted with dark corners and are practically forced to face each new phenomenon as a thing.

“What is this? Why is this here?”

Travel as such and travel as means flicker between each other. A city is a destination, but can spontaneously turn into a series of travels and destinations once we get there.

Throughout history, the manner in which the traveler has comported himself towards the unknown world has defined the nature of his travels. In the 18th century, it was tradition for wealthy aristocrats to travel Europe before officially becoming a man. This was called the



◀ *Conversation Piece of Rome*  
N. Dance [06]

*Grand Tour*, in which young men would visit the many heights of European culture, soaking up experiences from the environment in order to develop into the proper gentleman [8]. Around this time, advancements in science and philosophy had led to an Age of Reason, the Enlightenment, a movement which focused on rationality and knowledge as a way of operating in the world. This animated the eagerness of men to understand the world intellectually, to be stronger with knowledge. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke argues that knowledge comes from external stimuli from the environment to be received by the subject [7]. The Grand Tour traced this concept thoroughly—aspiring lords would seek out every cultural capital to “extract knowledge from” as they could. Critics at the time would note that the tour was “paltry” and lacked true adventure [9]. The traveler started to seek a deeper connection to the world.

◀ Recall that this is the same manner in which we take up Heideggerian objects.



Wanderer above the Sea of Fog ►  
C. D. Friedrich [07]

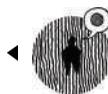


A reaction to predictable Enlightenment sensibility came in the form of Romanticism, which asked us to look at our response to the world, at the irrational, subjective nature of experience. During the mid 19th Century, poets Percy and Mary Shelley ran away together on a tour of Europe. In their diary, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, the Shelleys detail their experience of a raw, post-French Revolution Europe, animated by traveler's hardships, political commentary, and genuine excitement for life. As they approach the Swiss Alps on the sixth week, Percy is physically weary, Mary has run out of money, and the two are ready to turn back home. The diary ends, however, with the description of a transcendent experience of the highest mountain peak, an extended poem which situates the couple starkly within time and space, able to see and breath the world for its ghostly visage [10]. This event is like a numinous experience, in which one foot

In this state, communication between Being and world is perhaps most fruitful, and we can see things as if for the first time. ►

is planted on the ground, and the other in space. This focus on raw, untamed feeling of place is echoed perhaps some hundred years later by Jack Kerouac. In his novel *On the Road*, beat writer Sal Paradise stumbles across America to get to holy San Francisco, only to be abandoned by his friends. He sinks into a metaphysical underworld, finally alone and sad enough to face time and death square in their red eyes [11]. Where the Shelleys catch a glimpse of a higher order, Paradise experiences an anti-numinous descent which eventually draws forth a reflecting pool. In getting back up on his feet, he beats his shadow, absorbs it, and becomes stronger. In both *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* and *On the Road*, transcendent experience lied at the end of some great journey. The authors use poetry to catalyze a numinous event into frame without intellectualizing it. Thereafter, interaction with the art allows us to view a semblance of the original spark. Art acts as a beacon to the dialogue in which we were once enmeshed—a snapshot of Being-there.

◀ Heidegger postulates that facing death makes us authentic, and that this "unhomeliness" grasps as the "totality of being" [1].



◀ A spiritually meaningful experience can happen in both poles of order.



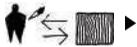
## PHENOMENOLOGY OF A PAINTER

Art has the ability to summon, reach towards, and speak to the appearance of worlds. More specifically, it can help reveal the meaning

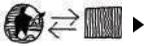
The Artist Sketching ▶  
J. S. Sargent [08]



of the unknown in an alien world. It forces us to conjure up a record of our interaction, regardless of whether it was empirical, emotional, mundane, or otherwise. Painting, specifically watercolor, rests inbetween the exactitude of photography and the pure abstraction of contemporary art. Water has a mind of its own, and it's up to the painter to mostly lead the water with a brush



like a paddle. Once more, notice the dialogue, this time between the painting and its painter. Painting as such is an abstract interpretation of a place, object, or idea, which is like a brief, yet deep conceptual study. There's no way to communicate a totality of information, so we



leave gaps, let the water flow, and engender the unknown. At this moment, the experience of viewing, as well as making, suddenly becomes



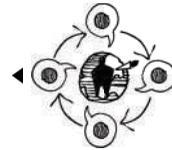
immersive, like a world. Painting distills the fantasy we're in, and then becomes a new one.



The world is a phantasmagoria of non-

static events, and it is one role of the painter to capture those dynamically on the canvas. The painter will often learn this in a studio, from models and photographs. What happens here is that the form becomes the subject rather than the atmosphere. Painting a “living” object or place is a way to intimately involve oneself into a world. The painter feels the cold wind, hears conversations passing by, and is a character in the world he attempts to illustrate. Just like the phenomenologist studies the essences of phenomena and their appearance to consciousness, the painter must also attempt get to the core of the appearance of the study. The way he does this is by navigating the world from every angle until he builds an impression of atmosphere and finds a center of his experience in the world. There is a journey to understanding its form on paper, but also to understanding the variety of ways that it appears to consciousness. This means it’s not just watercolor anymore; the painter must be in the life of the subject and the life of the artwork, and ultimately form a bridge between the two. Aura resonates, brush kisses canvas, and the traveling artist creates dialogue.

◀ What might an artist's paintings say about his relationship to the unknown world, or about his relationship to that world?





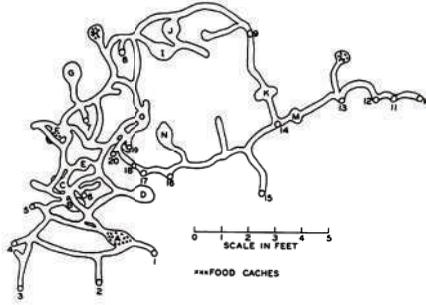


# 02

## THINKING DIAGRAM

### **RHIZOME AS A TOOL**

Everything which is actualized has an organization, an architecture, a form-genesis. The rhizome is an organization which acts as a multiplicity of plateaus and the connections between. Rhizomes allow for a heterogeneous mapping which is breakable, connectable, and changeable like worlds are. In “A Thousand Plateaus,” Deleuze establishes a theory for rhizomes as the true structure of knowledge and culture [12]. This theory is a counter to the typical system of chronology, the subject as cause or effect in a tree-root system of events. He argues that events are like the rhizome-root, part of a continuum which spreads in all directions, tangling at many intervals eventually reaching the surface and creating new shoots. Deleuze asserts that reality itself often takes the form of rhizome, not in its subjects or objects, but in the relationships between them. Not only is the rats’



◀ *Rat's Burrow*  
C. J. Calhoun [09]

burrow a rhizome, but the rats themselves, as an inherent organization, form a rhizome. They gather, scatter, reproduce, communicate, and are constantly becoming something new in form, content, and consistency. The root system of a tree is not a rhizome, but forms a rhizome with the wind and the animal over time.

Language operates as a rhizome. We are a rhizome. This is a structure to build upon, to emulate because of its potential for new ideas, but it also seems that this structure vibrates through the Earth, if only we take notice.

*Importance* ►

“What do I want? Why should I want an education? How do we see ourselves, and how would we like to see ourselves? Are virtues virtuous if you can put them into words? What sort of life is a life lived constantly trying to improve yourself? Do I want to be someone better, or do I want to just do what I love?”

*Improvement* ►

“Why are you trying to improve yourself? How do you know what’s good for you? How do you know what’s good for others? What sorts of ulterior motives do we have when we try to improve a community or place? Do these also exist when we try to improve ourselves? Can anything be objectively “improved?” If subjective, experienced improvement is what matters, is that more focused on the end result or the process of improving? Does wanting to improve imply that one is uncomfortable with who one is?”





◀ *Neighborhood*

"My neighborhood that I grew up in is composed of individual families that want to live next to other families, but more often than not have very little to do with the other homeowners. There's often no other commonality than proximity. Neighborhoods should have some place or force which helps orient the people into a community. In my neighborhood, there is nowhere to express a community, only a neighborhood of neighbors. I relate to my neighborhood by biking and running around houses and schools. Neighbors in the neighborhood grow individually in their houses."

◀ *Communication*

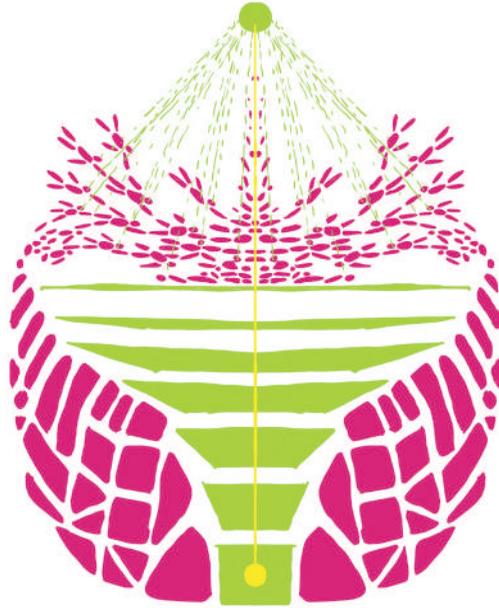
"What drives you? Is it something which you fear, or something which you desire? How is what you communicate with others embodied in this drive? How does this differ from how you think? How does who you are change when you are communicating with others? How do you think of communicating with others? People and places are occurring to the ego, some bad, some kind, and then we become them and ourselves and the world."

## PHENOMENOLOGY AS A TOOL

Phenomenology is the investigation of essential dialogue of our experience within the world. Similar to the rhizome diagrams, phenomenological diagrams ask us to move past our natural attitude of the world, and start to describe our encounters with various phenomena. These diagrams utilize imagery of the body being pulled in different directions and being transformed and connected. Each one is paired with a stream-of-consciousness writing passage which merely attempts to “be with the phenomenon.” Start to notice how phenomena engage our person at a pre-theoretical level of experience, through bodily motility, memory, sociality, emotions, etc.

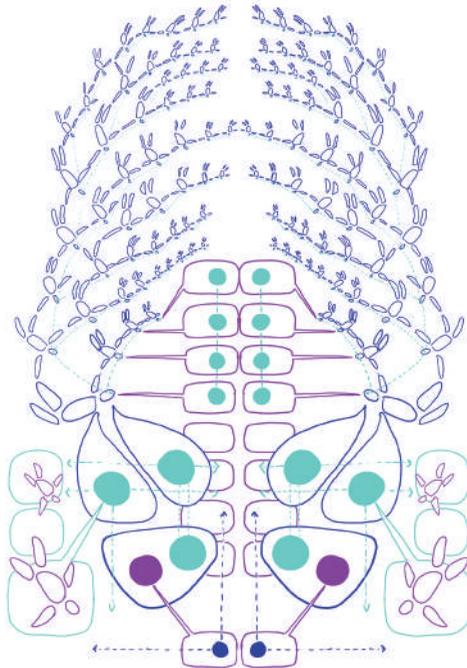
*Phenomenology of Window* ▶

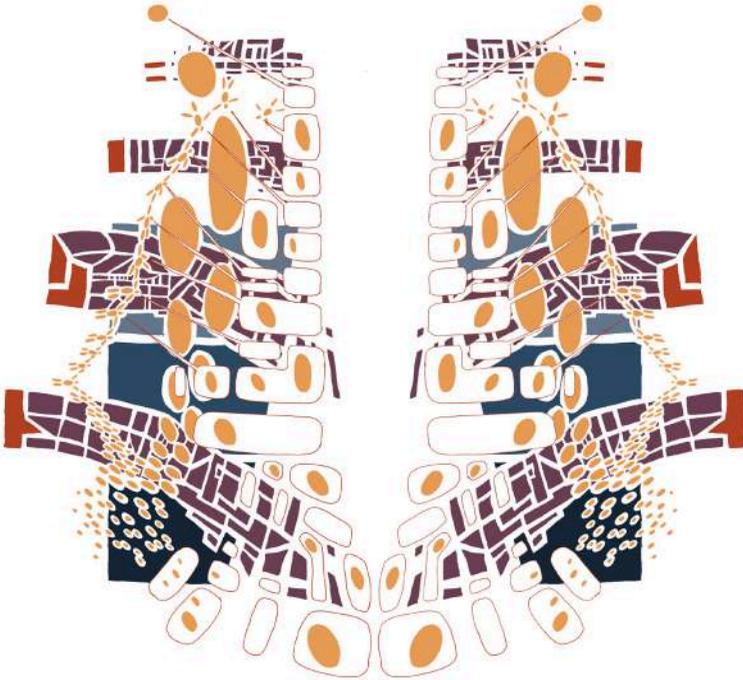
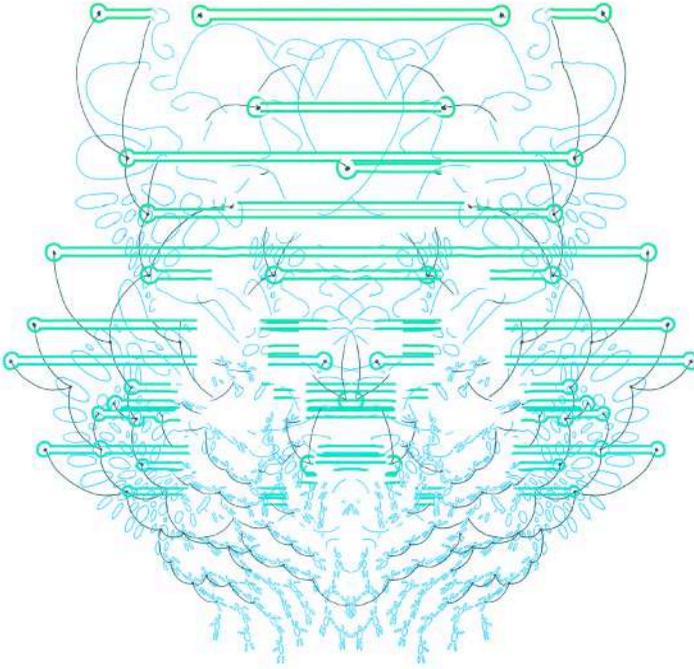
"From my view port I can watch this world like a television screen. Moments and events happen for my viewing pleasure. Opening up a window brings the outside in. The lights and textures from outside come inside, and become ours. A window asks us to come near it and peer out of it. A window is a glimpse into different world. A window makes me calm, alive, awake, excited, analytical, watchful, curious. It is a device which lets me insert another world into this one. It is a connector."



*Phenomenology of Daydream* ▶

"I can see things for what they are in form and structure rather than how they help me achieve my goals, or how they affect me. Things simply affect me. In a stream of unconsciousness, I think of sentences, and feelings, and shapes, and opinions. Often I am looking at something with my eyes, but seeing something completely different. I might hear things, or at be invulnerable to the things I am hearing. For a moment I am missing; I am somewhere else."





◀ *Phenomenology of Inspiration*

"Inspiration is not the facts or the knowledge but that tiny ecstasy that's born between these facts and us. Inspiration is clever, inventive, adventurous, spontaneous, dangerous—and brief. It's a whole new window into a brave new world and then it's gone before we know it. What we're left with is a memory of that inspiration, a memory of that view from the window. We take that image with us as we move forward."

◀ *Phenomenology of Sound*

"Sound is immersive and inclusive. I hear sounds, but also sounds need me to hear them. They exist inside of me. Objects sing and air vibrates, but there is only meaning in our hearing, in our relationship. Sound is never merely "there" if we are hearing it. It might be coming from over there, but when it happens it happens to us, it happens here, perhaps in our head. If I see something that should be making noise and I do not hear it, I feel alienated from it. If I do hear it, it includes me, and I am part of it."



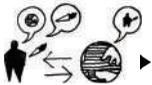
# 03

## PAINTING AND BEING-THERE

### LEARNING FROM PAINTING



At its essence, watercolor painting is like observation, like research. As wet strokes blend and dry, there is a real-life study happening. The researcher takes hold of the unknown and arranges it into a picture, into an abstraction. Heidegger calls this attitude the present-at-hand, where we take a step back from being with and using things in the world, and start thinking about them, theorizing. Research is typically seen as the study of something from high, and so to be a good scientist, one must remember that research (like everything) is an intersubjective exchange between Being and world.



Painting can be a way to look at a friend for a while, or it can be a way to make friends on the street. It can be used to make friends out of inanimate objects, personifying towers and trees just by a matter of Being with them long enough. A miniature fiction opens up between



◀ *Painter's Palette*

the researcher and his subject, and what's on the paper sometimes ends up being merely a tool for that relationship to unfold.

The nature of watercolor is dried water-based paint on paper. Water is so ubiquitous in life that we're used to how water falls and soaks into surfaces, and so we have preconceptions when we view watercolors. For instance, water pools crisply and then dries in the shape of its pool, blending any hues imperfectly, dreamily. It is in this sense that we want our watercolors to look "natural," or effortless. If there is too much detail or if the piece is overworked, there isn't a healthy environment to communicate with the artwork; we get distracted by the apparent disconnect between medium and representation. The following watercolor sketches are meant to loosely capture an impression of a phenomenon. Try to notice how each piece appears to consciousness, and how consciousness uniquely fills in the gaps, turning dried pools into worlds.





*Venetian Alley* ▶

Painting can connect us to worlds of which were once intimately a part.



*View of Meteora* ▶

Painting can connect us to worlds of which we've never been a part.



Sketch of Steel Tower ►

Steel triangles capture and reflect the sky that holds them. Only the minimum amount of detail is given to the buildings below so that they submit to the tower in the middle.



◀ Sketch of Nicole in Light

Painting can connect us to people who we are close to.

◀ Sketch of Lying Nude

Painting can connect us to strangers.





◀ *Still Life 3*

The details are not as important as the impression. The dialogue between the impression and the viewer fills in any missing gaps of information. Speckles of white become reflections, cauliflower bleed becomes natural deformity, and soon enough accident blends with intentionality completely.



*Potted Plant* ▶

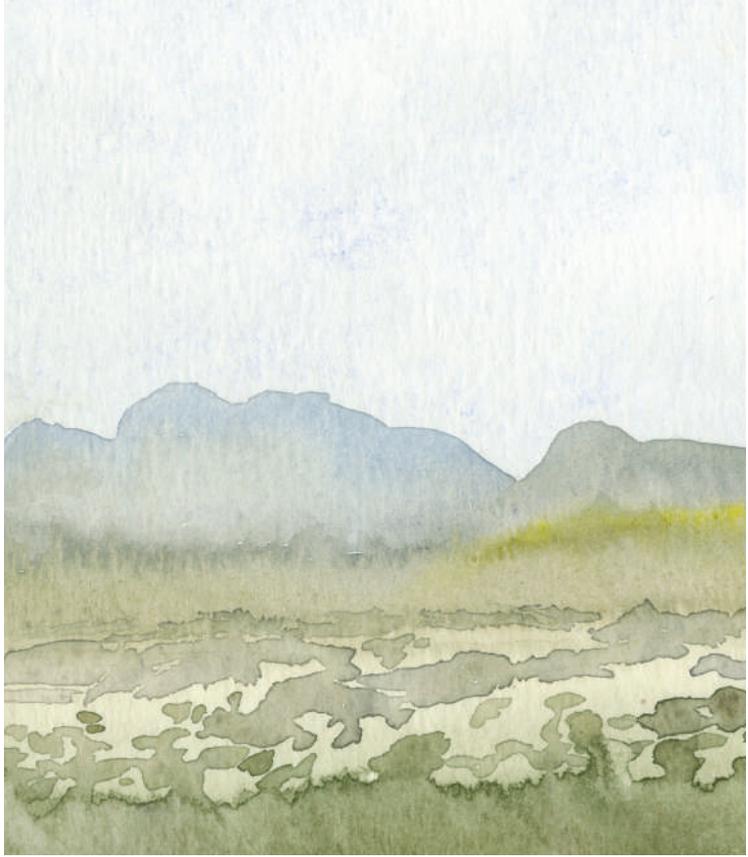
Puddles of still water dry and turn to leaves. Form is crystallized onto paper.



◀ *Boats at Rest*

The colors and tones in a painting can be exaggerated to help turn the depth of the boat interior into a pool of emptiness.

Call it a fiction.



*Mountain Study #1* ▶

Painting photographs of mountains can end up being almost as dreamy as remembering them.



*Mountain Study #2* ▶

Where do we go from here?

## TRAVELING PAINTER

The painter has gathered some skill with regard to using watercolor to learn new things, but it can also help him cope with the unknown. A trip to the east coast (New York, Boston) proves to be enough to learn study a place from many angles, imprinting landmarks into memory, circumambulating a city with hand and body.

To some surprise, the trip elicited the underworld condition, as well as a certain set of higher order. New York, at times, was nothing but dark alleys and careless gods. Boston was and unfolding academic paradise. The following is a documentation of fantastic encounters into the subjective unknown. Prose is used to handle the dialogue without crushing it.

New York City, NY ▶



## NOTES FROM NEW YORK CITY

*An Amtrack train pulls up to a station full of characters. We line up in some scrambled order and ascend to an individual hollow corner of the cart. It's either late at night or early in the morning; in either case I shut my eyes and the station behind us descends into darkness.*

*The earth is lined with leafless trees and church spires like columns. The sun between them cuts into the train car through wide side windows. Rows of heads plug into their own worlds. The train quietly makes its way from city to city, each one a vessel of entire lifetimes—each one anticipated by the polite, jostling voice of an attendant. Most of us are headed to New York City, and after each announcement, the immanence of the east coast ticks a bit louder against the walls of our minds. We enter and then emerge from a tunnel, and then stop. I*

*heave my sack over my shoulder and step off onto American concrete towards an escalator.*

*The train station is filled with faces, each with strange intentions and destinations. Outside these walls is the Everycity, and here it spills in and gets shipped off to other lands. I spill out, darting underneath titans to the underground.*

*I navigate slowly through foreign subways and half-researched roads. The destination is an art studio in an auto repair district of Williamsburg, with a basement that gets rented out to couch surfers, burnouts, and art nerds. It's late, but after claiming my couch and tucking away my valuables, I grab my jacket and head into the abyss.*

*A subway ride takes me to a station somewhere. Meandering through megastreets around closed-shop corners, my childhood searches for ghosts from television broadcastings and old American dreams. It swims through sad, orange glows, scuffling past dark faces and darker alleys. A low roar hangs in the sky between towers. I face forward and walk for hours into the night. I was looking for something, something that would say, "You've made it, THIS is New York." But I'm not sure I found it, perhaps only its*

*Time Square Chaos ►*  
Swallowed up in a landscape of  
anonymity.



*shadow, some tattered cloth speared with dark memory landmarks. And so in a blurry, bitter cold of victory or defeat, I gaze up just as glimmering sheets of glass and steel fold over on top of me, and the air and light and concrete collapse into one and I'm falling and I'm dreaming. Tired eyes see an art studio couch and fall shut.*

*The next day, I take myself down to bright Manhattan and find a crowded place to sit and study the people like one would watch clouds. They roll in from all directions, accumulating in masses, becoming themselves and each other, then dispersing and regrouping again into new shapes and creatures. They all inhabit the same vibrating air, dense with ideas, with absolute creation. They're individuals, they're strangers in the crowd, and they're us. Break lights, and a car horn wails. We're floating in Central Park. We're weeping at Ellis Island. We're dying in Time Square and seven billion people are watching from the sky; New York is vibrating in the Mind's eye.*

*I'm on a train to Boston, ears still ringing with that wet, black cry.*





◀ Boston, MA

## NOTES FROM BOSTON

*I arrive alone at Boston and take up lodge in a backpackers' refuge. It's peppy and anxious, filled with people itching to feel. I leave and try to feel something for myself.*

*Boston is the type of place you long to belong to. Fellows chirp snugly from bar basements. Couples hold hands in the park. Behind old walls, covenants are forged. I drink from my jug, slap it shut and head to my next location. That's what I was doing, after all: going to locations. Boston is forests, mountains, and I hike from peak to peak to look off and see some new perspective of the world.*

*I am a passing stranger in empty harbor lots and academia castles.*

*The glimmer of a tower top calls from another*

*Car-lined Streets* ►

Cars glimmer patiently on the sides of a tall road like boats on the docks.



*world. I pause, and turn back from the middle of a dark bridge.*

*The city is a stern old man and I, his student, gulp down red wisdom. I write postcards in lobbies and coffee shops. I take long walks with gloved hands in pockets. I pause to peek in those windows of bar basements.*

*We're all at the end of some time line which has coalesced, of all things, into right now and still somehow the world has always been full of anxious bartenders, gay hipsters, and suits in hockey caps. Boston is the dreamy waves of the colonial subconscious, of night joggers and China signs; it's across the bridge, your body at the base of Bunker Hill, and your soul peering out the tower window like a lighthouse to the city and then all the way past home to the Great West and then maybe to God but when you look up, Boston is the dim, white walk home from the bar. I walk all the way across the bridge this time, and the visage of Boston is the sea of industry and shoe stores.*

*Chapel at Cambridge* ▶  
A sunny, blustery day. The chapel rest stoically amongst quivering trees.



*View from a Book Store* ▶  
An unextraordinary building and van get some face time.



*Newbury St. Sketch* ▶  
A shadowy world is cast underneath the south side of Newbury Street.



*View from Commons* ▶  
Within a canyon of buildings, the painter rests.





# 04

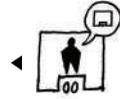
## MODE OF TRAVEL

### GET AROUND, GET AROUND

Or for that matter, what is the journey ►  
into the unknown like when it's taken  
with a social homeland?



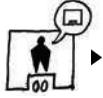
Travel is the shift from home world to alien world; however, what happens when we take a bit of architectural home world with us? that doesn't mean that we don't take some world with us as we go. The mode of travel and its level of immersiveness into the alien landscape determines how the traveler will relate to those new worlds. Which world is the traveler most wrapped up in?



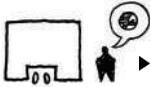
◀ '58 Chevy  
"I am in the car." [10]



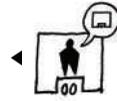
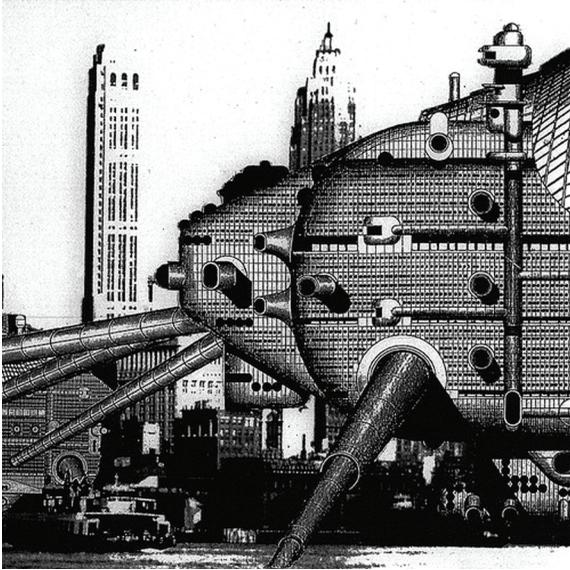
◀ Motorcycle: 66  
"I am on the road" [11]



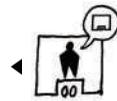
*Teatro del Mondo, Aldo Rossi* ▶  
"I am in church." [12]



*American Trailer* ▶  
"I am up north" [13]



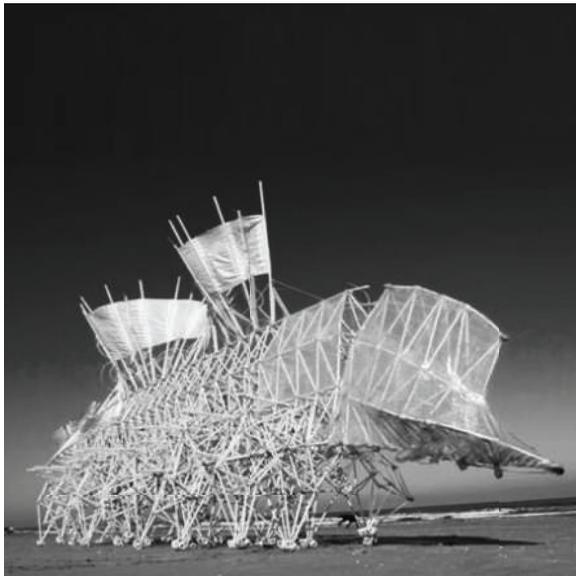
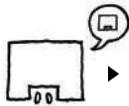
◀ *Walking City*, ARCHIGRAM  
"I am in the city." [14]



◀ *Venetian Cruise Ship*  
"I am on a cruise." [15]



*Freight-Hopping* ▶  
"I'm somewhere in Delaware." [16]



*Strandbeest*, T. Jansen ▶  
"I am." [17]

## NOMADS

A Nomad is a Being, a world, a traveler. They came from some other place and touch down in our world like an alien. When we look out to see what it is, the Nomad stares back at us. They may stay grounded for many years or a few minutes, but either way their color runs deep into the ground. There is no “Just Visiting” without intimately involving yourself in a world. In order to describe the relationship between the self and its context, Heidegger uses the phrase “Being-in-the-world” to emphasize the connectivity between the two.



◀ Recall that encounters in a world are reciprocal.

Each and every Nomad carries with it an unknown appearance which manifests itself uniquely to inhabitants of the worlds it borrows. Meaninglessness quickly dissolves as a strange relationship forms between the inhabitant and the trespasser.



BEING

WORLD





Nomad #2

*“It’s been here for as long as we can remember. We can only guess where it came from, but we can’t quite imagine this place if it ever went back. It’s always been a good place to think, this one. I knew it as a kid, too, but back then words like ‘think’ weren’t so heavy. Clouds move around above my head. I look up at the structure and wonder if it could somehow take me with it back to where it came from, and then I would be able to think like I did back then.”*

◀ Why might it matter where the structure came from?



Nomad #3

Why are we skeptical of unknown things? ►

*“I’ve been there once or twice, just to check it out, and this time I make my way over to give my own version of a ‘goodbye’. It’s times like these that usually remind me of something from forever ago, but in my mind I can’t quite touch on what that is. I approach the figure and stand under its shadow. It actually is beautiful like they say, in its own psychic, tragic sort of way. Sunlight peeks into my eye from behind the figure. I won’t know I’ll miss it until it’s gone.”*



# 05

## STUDIO MODE

### PHENOMENOLOGY AS A DESIGN TOOL

Phenomenology can be used as a tool to find out the structure in which phenomena appear to consciousness, but can it be used to lead a design process.

The objective was to create a livable architecture which would enable research or participation in either rural or urban environments. The Studio Mode is meant to enable self-sufficiency so that the artist could focus on painting or writing. Phenomenological diagrams, as well as case studies, were used to attempt to get to the center of our experience with three architectural elements: workspace, light, and entrance.



## PHENOMENOLOGY OF WORKSPACE

As they get to it, workers think less and less about the facts of what they're doing, they enter into a mindstate of work. Their place, their workspace, is fluid, and takes the shape of their body and mind. What they say, the cognitive ideas about their encounters, fade away as they transform from person to body to part of society. A workspace is an area that allows them to dissolve the mind, dissolve the body, and expertly become a force which melts into the operation. Like constellations, they pause and look up at their work from their workspace and consider it as such if only for a moment. We use workspaces to connect what is happening to what we want to happen. While in place, we ascend from our workspaces and point our energy at the things other than what's there, other than the physical stuff. A workspace not only collects our body in motion, but it collects our hopes and desires. In this way, we create a workspace as much as a workspace creates us.

### *Case Study: Studio* ►

The more we focus, the stronger the workspace. The smaller the space, the better the concentration of energy. Sounds and distractions pull you out of that workspace. Work is the doing for some other purpose, and we each retreat to solitude.

### *Case Study: Studio Couch* ►

We make workspaces whenever we work. Sit on a couch, it becomes a workspace. Productivity undulates, and soon our workspace becomes another space, perhaps a lounge. We must keep working to maintain the upkeep of our workspace.

### *Case Study: Improvising* ►

We can optimize our environment to create a workspace. Things insist that we arrange them in a certain way. We do not get work done just anywhere. We actively search out a particular nest to settle in and get to work.

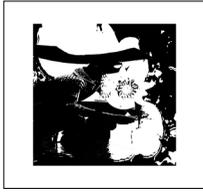
### *Structures of Workspace* ►

The where, what, and who of workspaces.

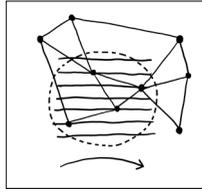
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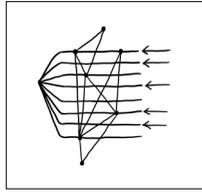
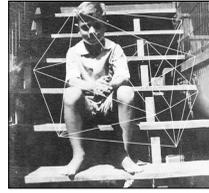
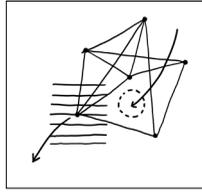
PERCEPTION



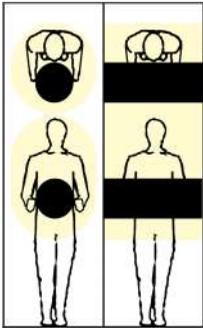
MOTILITY



SOCIO-AFFECTIVE



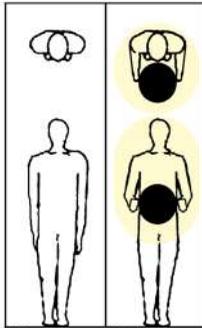
SIZE



Concentrated

Expanded

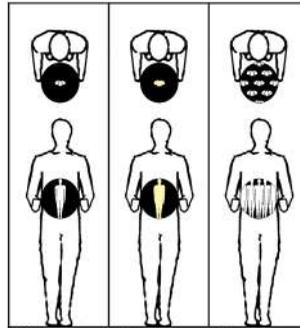
CREATION



Idleness

Business

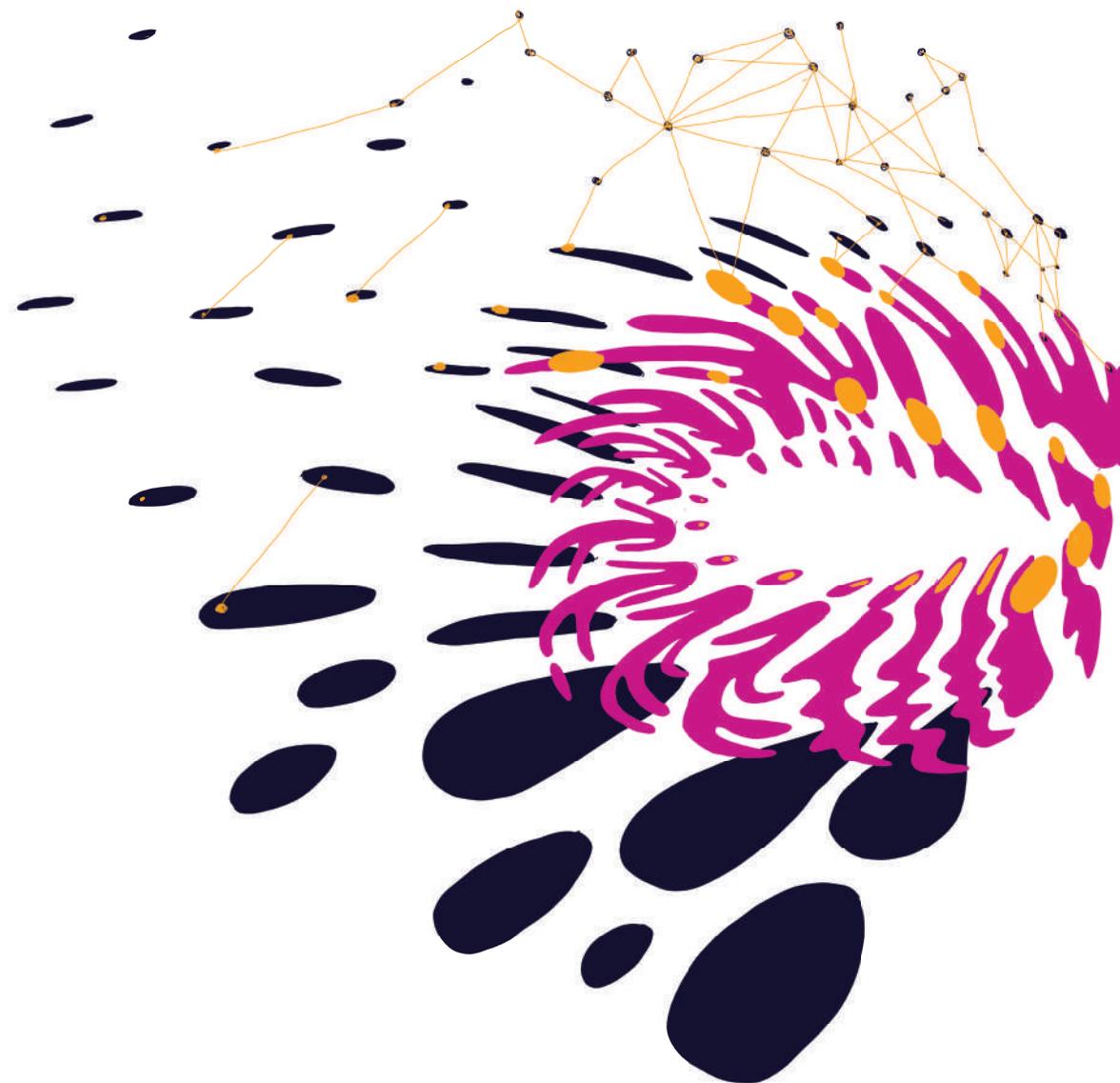
RECIPIENT



Self

Others

Spirit



The workspace is one part body and one part mind.

It is a space which lets you connect present with what you wish to happen.



## PHENOMENOLOGY OF LIGHT

Light defines our spaces, and our spaces help define us. Light touches everything in our life at some point or another, and we rely on to do so in order to help us know these things. Often times, we wander from light to light in life. This diagram shows a body of people seeking out light, finding it, and then soon after forgetting it's there. Once we forget about light, and vision, and rendering, we interact with the world as if it were made up of self-evident forms. The lack of light reminds us that these forms were light-evident, and so a spectrum is produced of varying light-place intensities.

### *Case Study: Candlelight* ►

It's not the sun, nor the lightbulb above. It's a little table torch, my muse. We light it when we're here, and douse it when we're there. Fire power is controlled to a peaceful event.

### *Case Study: Light Installation* ►

The figures projected in the light become walls and panels and free-floating dynamic punctures. My shadow eats through the dancing figures on the wall. Light swims past my face and through all parts of this little space.

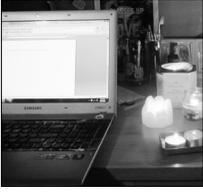
### *Case Study: Task Lights* ►

The different lights in the room are focused downward. It points down at our desk, and it insists that we work. The curtains are shut, and the one-ness of the room is dissolved into a series of centers.

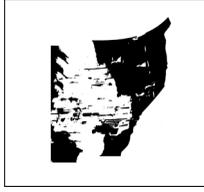
### *Structures of Light* ►

Light constitutes the size of and mastery over a world.

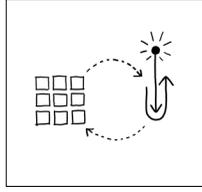
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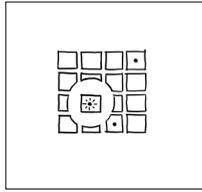
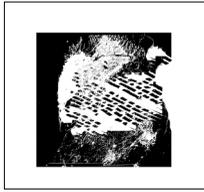
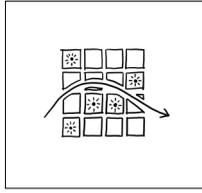
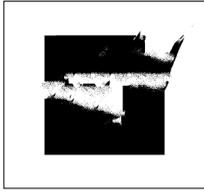
PERCEPTION



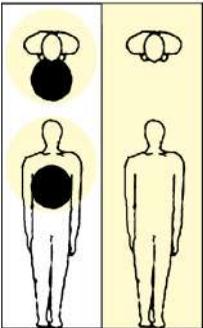
MOTILITY



SOCIO-AFFECTIVE



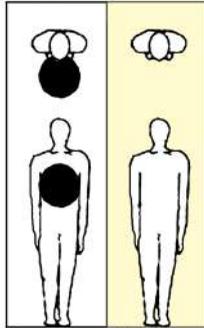
HERENESS



Discrete

Sprawled

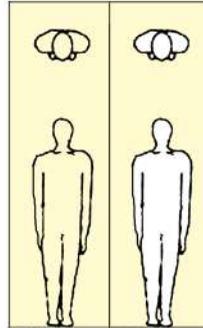
SCOPE



Focus

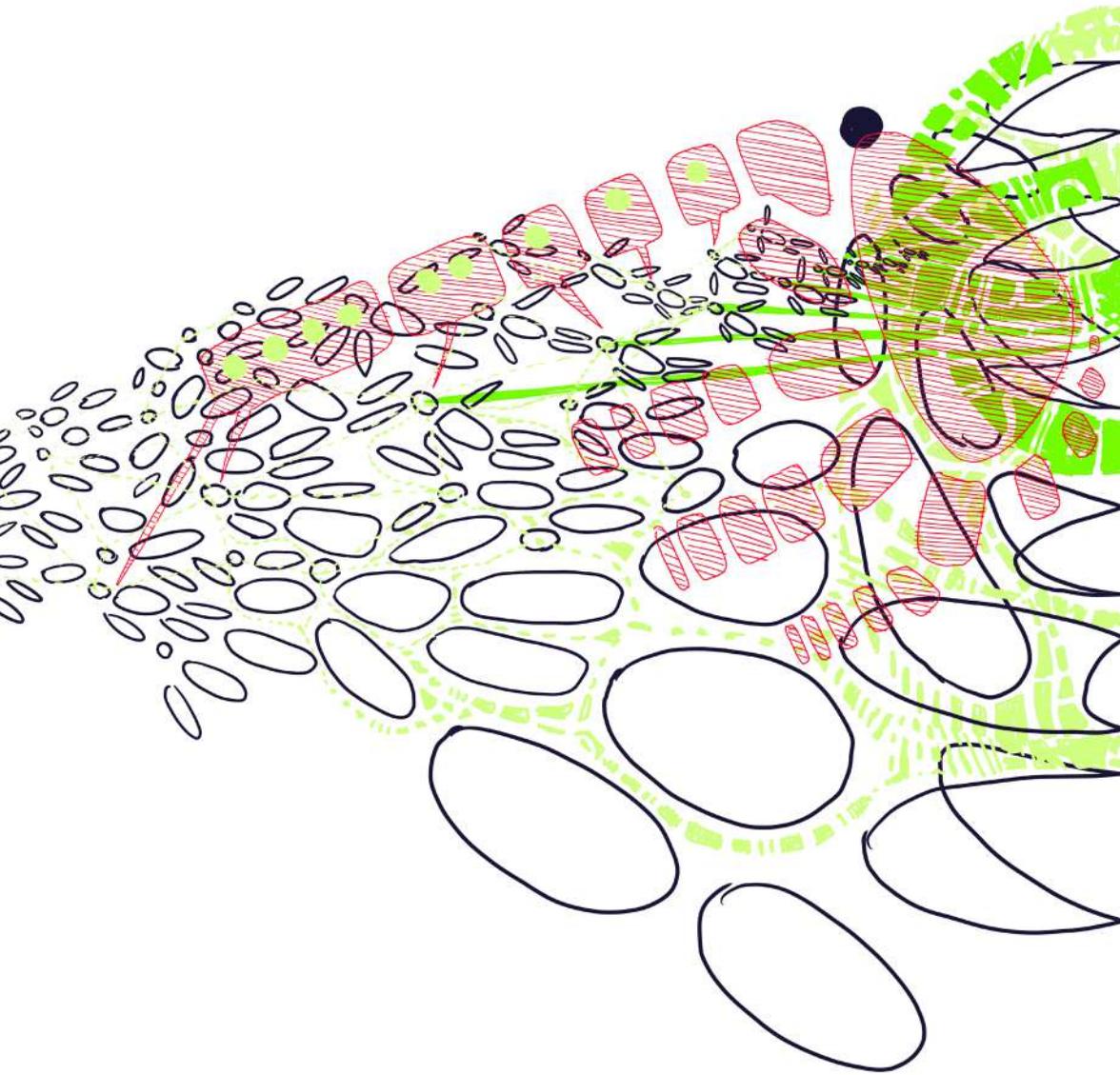
Unfocused

OPERATION



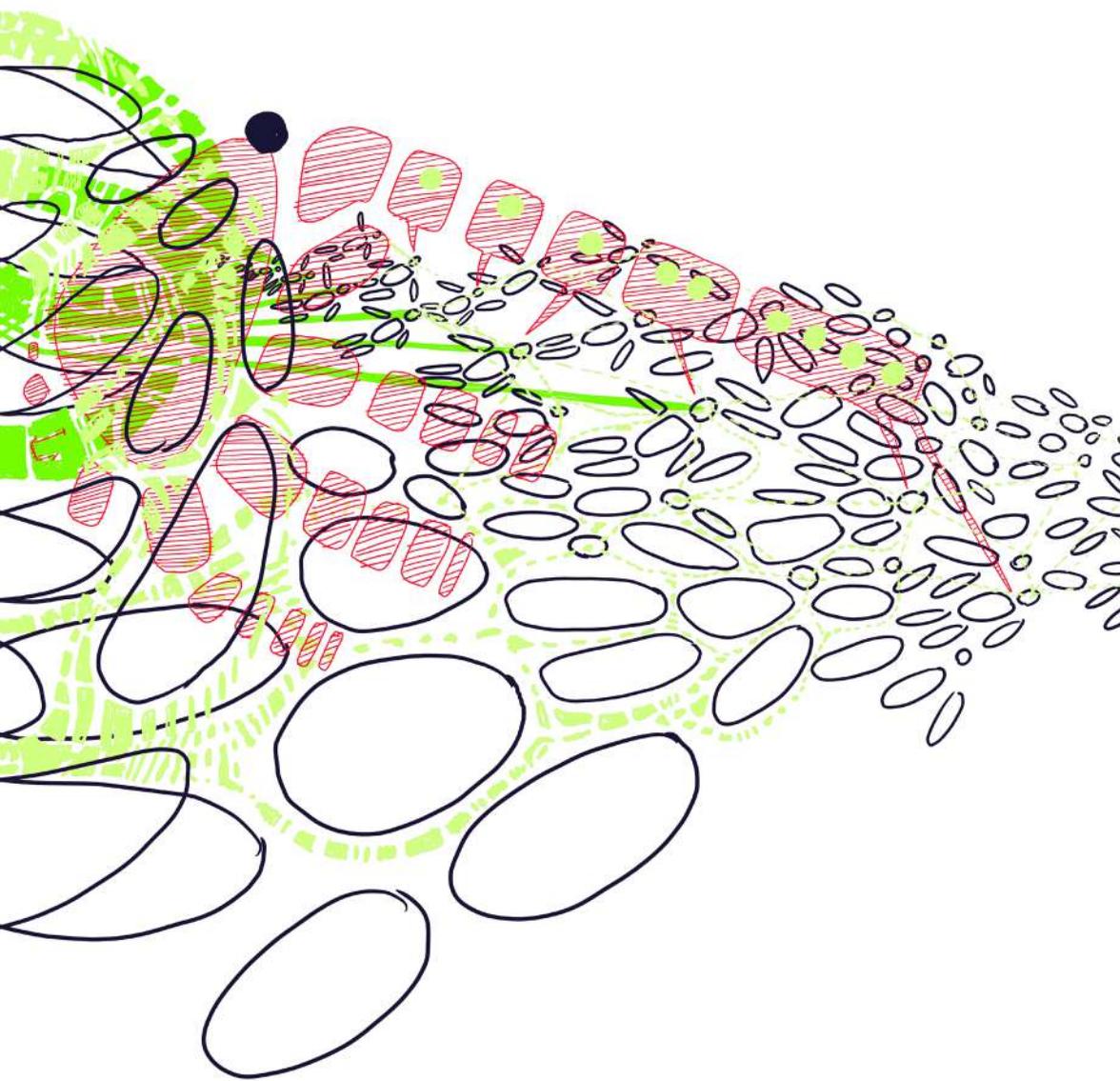
(by) Self

(by) Other



Light is an ultimate source, yet mundane.

It surrounds us, even when we hold it in our hands.



## PHENOMENOLOGY OF ENTRANCE

An entrance is a creature which pulls us out of where we are, and takes us to become part of a new event. We take some of our past with us, but as we enter into a new space, we cannot help but feel like a slightly new person. After all, being is worldly. Once I enter a library or a gym, I start to act either discretely or energetically, and the entrance is the humbling initiation to this next act, the centurion of new worlds, and the void from which all things come.

### *Case Study: Handshake* ►

There is a secret handshake between the door handle and my key. A broken door, touching the handle will lock it, and so everyone in the building goes about with this handshake to the building, but never each other.

### *Case Study: Attic Entrance* ►

There is a door frame to this attic entrance, but this is not really the entrance. The entrance is in the path; it tells us how to move and guides us to the attic. Turn the corner, see the attic floor and we arrive.

### *Case Study: Combination Door* ►

I have the power to open it, but the power is knowledge-based, within me, and I wait outside until I can transfer this knowledge to a hand gesture. I walk in hurriedly, now a part of that room I was seeing contained behind this glass door.

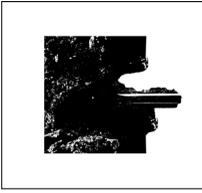
### *Structures of Entrance* ►

Entrances have different sizes and elements of control.

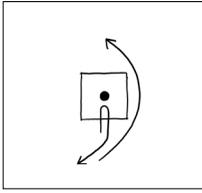
COGNITION



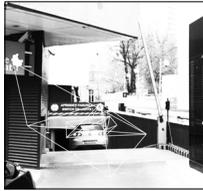
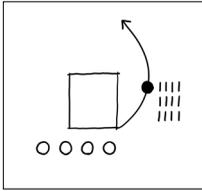
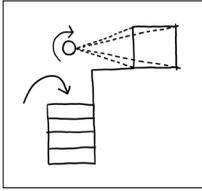
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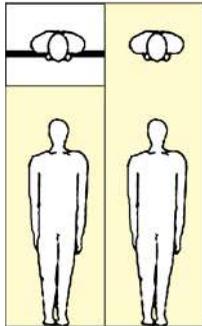
MOTILITY



SOCIO-AFFECTIVE



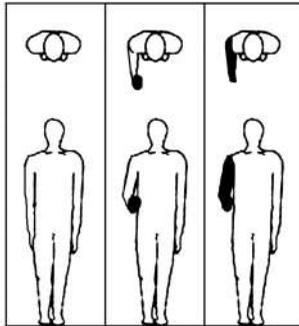
THRESHOLD



Brief

Territorial

TOUCH

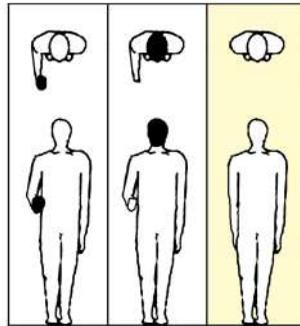


Free

Tool

Contact

POWER



Tool

Knowledge

Environment



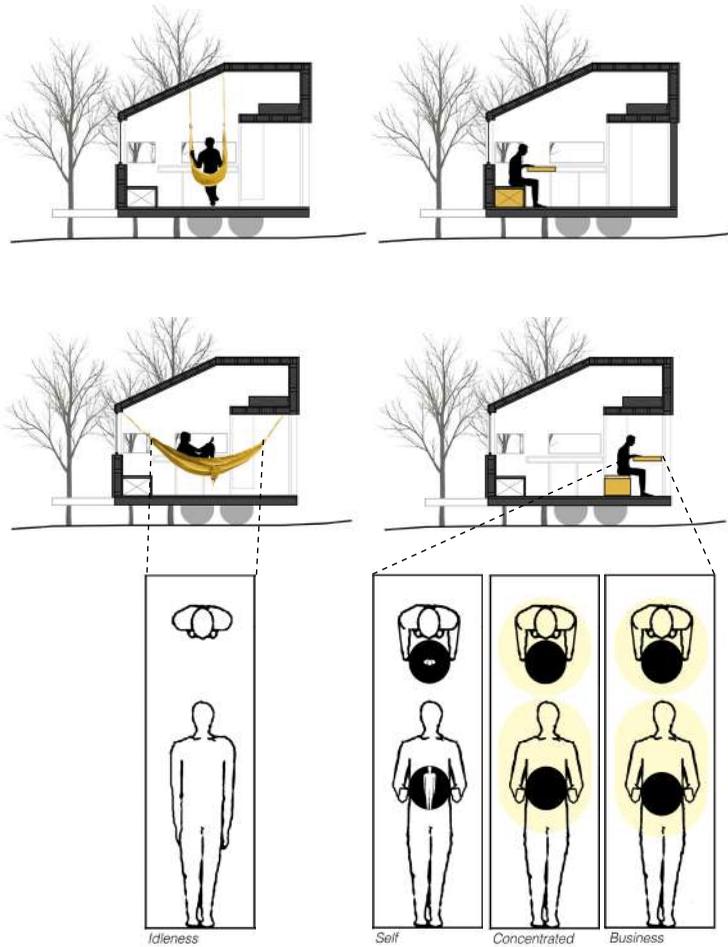
The entrance is the great initiator.

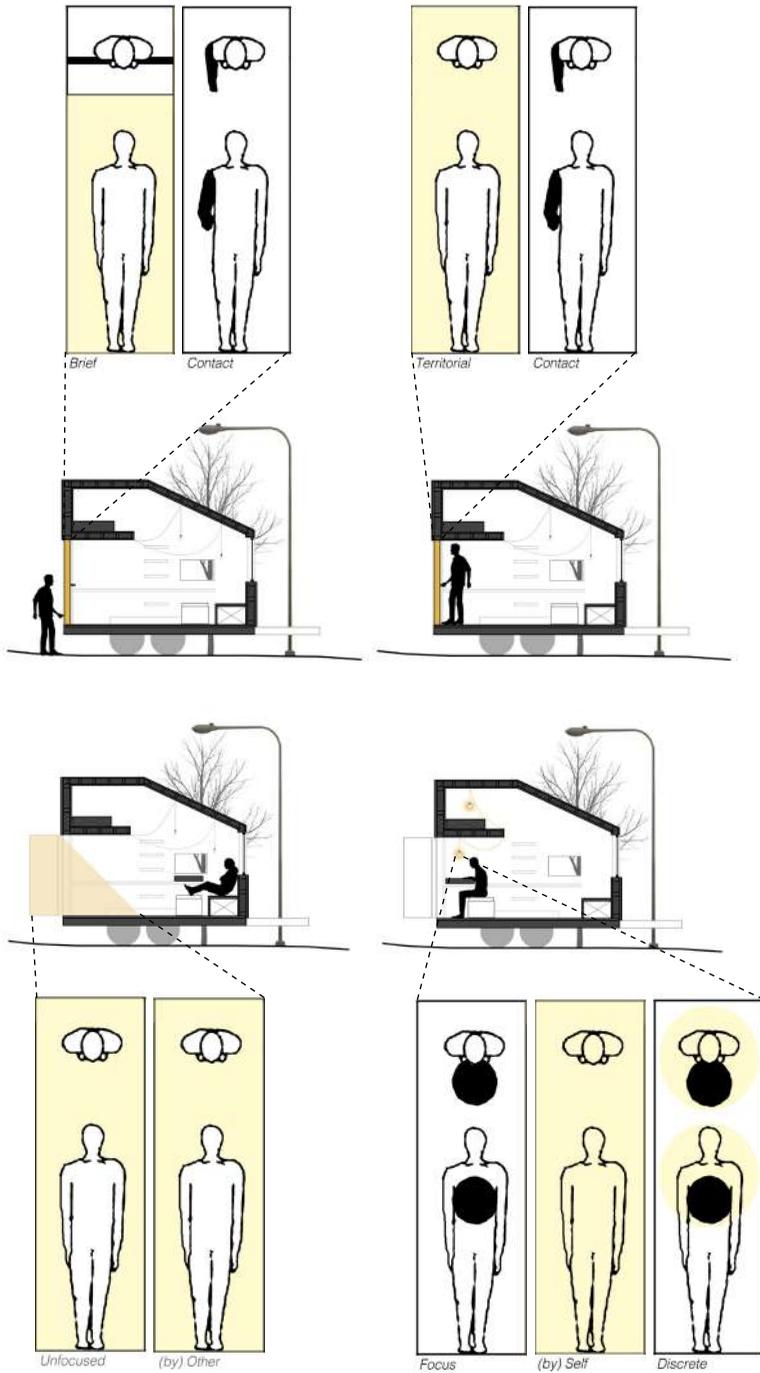
The entrance is that from which all things  
are flug forth.



## STUDIO MODE: TRAVELING RESEARCHER

The lessons from the previous phenomenological studies were distilled into a design for a traveling studio. Studio Mode manifests itself as a workspace which relies on light and entrance to help a researcher perform watercolors of his travels.





Studio Mode Rendering







Studio Mode is a livable studio trailer which combines entrance, light and workspace into one holy moment. The entrance is the portal from which newness arrives, including light from that strange world. The workspace is centered at that moment, but it's also movable throughout the cabin. This is because a workspace naturally appears where ever we take up work, so the design, including task lighting and surface, reflect this.

The Studio Mode is a home world on the go. It is a shell of four protective walls, a vessel which dives into the unknown but still protects its inhabitant from chaos. From inside, the researcher has little to keep him from his personal fictions with regard to the outside world, and so perhaps he remains a hermit so long as his stays.

◀ Safe from harm, safe from interaction?







# 06

## EVERYWORLD

### MODES AND THINGS OF TRAVEL



▶ A mode of travel is a world in itself, a semi-physical world thrown wholly into alien territory. It is a reference point for the wander, a place of meaning within a chaotic new world. However, imagine that mode is moving with no meaning. Does it not also become alien for its inhabitants? It becomes like a force of nature; it becomes unknown manifested, and unto it we create fantasies, personal or interpersonal, in order to orient ourselves around it. This mode



▶ of travel becomes a thing of travel, a vessel of the unknown. In order to get to the center of its mystery, spend some time there, take in the view, and notice the other beings in this world. They're co-authors of this strange moving land, and so are you. The ground is sturdy and its trek steady,



▶ but fall asleep and you should find yourself in a new world.

An unknown world approaches.

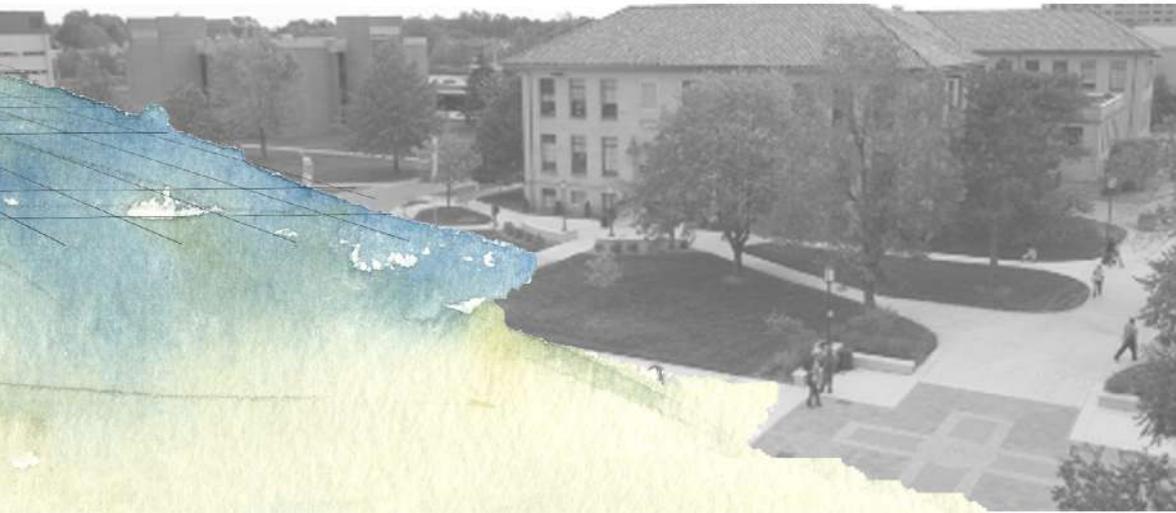
Do you approach it ?







What is this strange group  
of people I'm in?



A world of pure things, and  
yet you find meaning and  
relationships with others.

The shadow of the unknown  
world looms in the sky, and  
you feel it.





## EVERYWORLD

The traveling world-thing is Everyworld. It arrives into our tired homes and shakes them. Its voice is rivers, its footsteps are chords, its flesh—pure potential. So the landscape of Everyworld is unclear, and if we answer its call, we find ourselves perhaps alone with our thoughts, and then alone together with others. The Everyworld is the collective consciousness, a room with walls made out of relationships and floorboards made of meaning; we have to help construct something if we wish to have a footing in this world. Everyworld slowly slithers across the Earth, and as we climb on, maybe we can better see the world we left, but we're also confronted with the brute task of manifesting the world we just subscribed to. We orient ourselves in the world, and use it as a means to interact with the others. If we do this we become something new—its voice, its footsteps, its flesh: a dialogue. Leave now, but the conversation continues. The Everyworld is alive—we all its unknowing co-creators.





We are all its conversationalists.

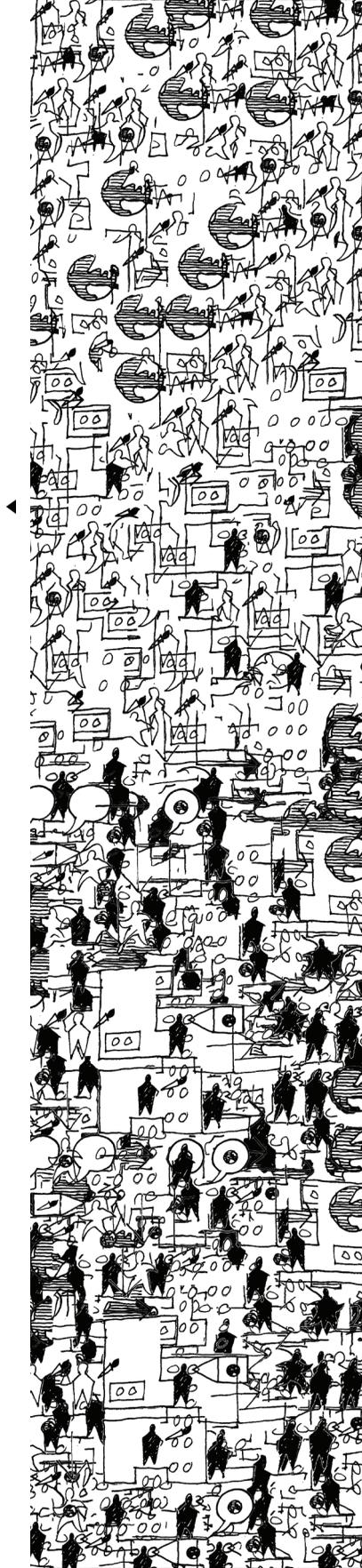
We are all travelers.

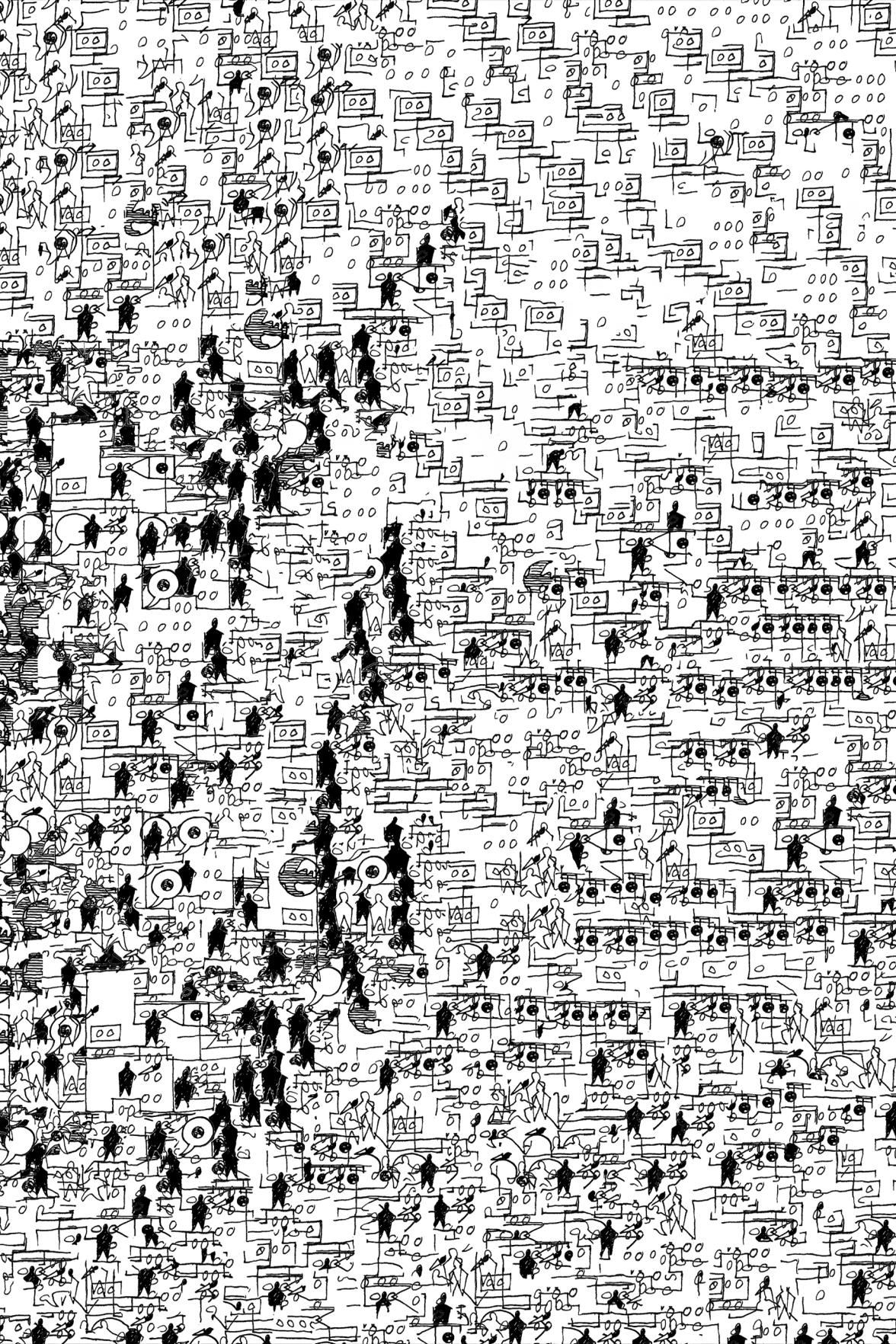
We are all painters.

And we are all circumambulating something to ◀   
get to its center.



Find it.







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