

*Dwellings for the Goryan: Re-crafting Bulgarian Post-Soviet
Identity at the Site of the Friendship Monument*

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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.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

My interest begins in present day Bulgaria at the prominent site of a ruined Soviet monument which the country's previous communist regime built in 1979. The monument expressed the communist philosophy through its materiality, location, and architectural form. In Bulgaria's eyes, the monument's physical deterioration symbolized the fall of the communist regime and the values it represented. The country is overspread with Soviet monuments which have been alienated over time by political changes. Their presence is heavily controversial in a time when Bulgaria is trying to forge its post-communist identity by rebuilding its cultural, traditional, and historical values that the communist regime attempted to eradicate. My thesis focuses on the Friendship Monument in Varna, Bulgaria, analyzing its state of decay and the grand narrative told through its architectural ideology. My research and the design followed the guidance of and reference to dissident cinema, art, and literature. I am looking to counter and re-frame the Friendship Monument in its landscape by introducing the antithetical space of communism, the heterotopia that was the Bulgarian Soviet home. In Deleuzian terms I describe the refrain of the home, one of tradition, intimacy, and identity, expressed through the home's materiality from folklore, its micro-narratives, and the rituals occurring in its private spaces during communism. My project captures the refrain of the home through a series of architectural interventions on the site of the Friendship Monument with a focus on the tactile and the sensory rather than the visual. The resulting design re-animates traditions of folk craft and ritual of the Goryan, the local rural movement against Communism, through the formal expression of the primitive Bulgarian yurt-dwelling on a site of horror and oppression that attempted to erase it. The dwelling is re-formed and re-materialized as it recounts different narratives that emerge from the roots of Bulgaria. In the process it challenges the monument's static form and narrative.

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Thesis Statement

This thesis will address the site of the soviet inhabitable monument ruin, 'The Friendship Monument', in Varna, Bulgaria which remains today a visual symbol of eradication of tradition, memory and identity from the communist era. I will develop a design that juxtaposes the antithetical space of communism, the place of rebellion as the home, on the site.

The design will bring the tactile, the sensory, the intimate and the continuation of tradition and ritual, through the formal mediator as the primitive bulgarian yurt dwelling, to a site of horror and oppression.

Law for the Declaration of the Communist Regime in Bulgaria

Art. 1. (1) The Bulgarian Communist Party (then called the Bulgarian Workers' Party / Communists /) came to power on September 9, 1944 with the help of a foreign power that declared war on Bulgaria, and in violation of the current Tarnovo Constitution .

(2) The Bulgarian Communist Party was responsible for the rule of the state from September 9, 1944 to November 10, 1989, which led the country to a national disaster.

Art. 2. (1) The leaderships and executives of the Bulgarian Communist Party shall be responsible for:

- 1. the deliberate and deliberate destruction of the traditional values of European civilization;*
- 2. the deliberate violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms;*
- 3. the unprecedented feud with the MPs of the 21st National Assembly and all innocently convicted by the so-called "People's Court";*
- 4. the moral and economic decline of the state;*
- 5. the establishment of a centralized direct management of the economy that led to its collapse;*
- 6. the extinction and cancellation of traditional principles of property rights;*
- 7. the destruction of the moral values of the people and the encroachment on their religious freedoms;*
- 8. the perpetual terror against those who disagree with the system of government and against entire population groups;*
- 9. abuse of education, education, science and culture for political and ideological purposes, including the motivation and justification of the actions listed above;*
- 10. the careless destruction of nature.*

(2) The Communist regime is responsible for:

- 1. deprived citizens of every opportunity to express their political will freely, forcing them to conceal their judgment of the situation in the country and forcing them to express public agreement about facts and circumstances with full awareness of their infidelity and even that they constitute crimes ; it achieved this through persecution and threats of persecution against the individual, her family and loved ones;*
- 2. systematically violated basic human rights by suppressing entire groups of the population, divided by political, social, religious or ethnic grounds, although in 1970 the People's Republic of Bulgaria acceded to international human rights instruments;*
- 3. violated the fundamental principles of a democratic and rule of law, international treaties and existing laws, thereby placing the interests of the Communist Party and its representatives above the law;*
- 4. in the pursuit of citizens, used all the powers of the authorities, such as:*
 - (a) executions, inhumane detention facilities, forced labor camps, torture, and cruel violence;*
 - (b) certification or placement in psychiatric establishments as a means of political repression;*
 - c) deprivation of ownership;*
 - d) obstruction and prohibition of education and occupation;*
 - e) obstruction of free movement inside and outside the country;*
 - f) deprivation of citizenship;*

5. crimes were committed with impunity and unlawful advantages were granted to persons who participated in crimes and prosecutions of others;

6. subordinate the interests of the country of a foreign country to the degree of depersonalization of national dignity and practical loss of state sovereignty.

Art. 3. (1) The art. 1 and 2 circumstances justify declaring the communist regime in Bulgaria from 9 September 1944 to 10 November 1989 a criminal offense.

(2) The Bulgarian Communist Party was a criminal organization, similar to other organizations based on its ideology, which in their activity were aimed at the promotion of human rights and the democratic system.

Art. 4. All actions by persons who, during the period, were aimed at resisting and rejecting the communist regime and its ideology, are just, morally justified and worthy of respect.

The law was adopted by the XXVIII National Assembly on April 26, 2000 and was stamped with the official seal of the National Assembly.¹

¹ "1." n.d. Lex.bg. <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134920192>.



Context

“They are just buildings. Even the buildings in human history which keep the memory of tragedy, they are monuments and they are kept. If we go around the world and start to demolish everything that was built during [the time of] some tyrant, we are going to erase half of our history and half of the monuments.”²

After the horrors of the WWII, Bulgaria, an Eastern European country bordering the Black Sea, Greece and Turkey, fell under communism during the years of 1946-1991. Within that period, the Bulgarian Communist party erected over 150 monuments across the country’s mountainous landscapes and cities, with the intent of propagating a unifying image of the future to a ravaged nation searching for their identity. These monuments were built with various typologies, the main ones being; sculptural, structurally bold and symbolic.³

Bulgaria has not yet found a way to deal with the post-communist landscape that has been left behind by the previous regime. Beyond the monuments, many buildings constructed during the communist times remain, all a part of a larger city network. The cities’ attempt to occupy these buildings productively since the country is financially unable to demolish them and build structures meeting the population’s current needs. Most of the time, the new program of these buildings is irrelevant or redundant in the city. Some of the communist buildings’ properties are bought, demolished, and new buildings are constructed with the intent of profit. The country does not view many of these buildings as pieces of a past they should theorize and approach in a meaningful manner beyond destruction.⁴ In my thesis I am hoping to theorize effective ways to architecturally approach the communist haunting monument structure that is the Friendship Monument in Varna.

I am particularly interested in dealing with the abandoned monuments spread around post-communist Bulgaria. They are my focus as they occupy city centres, mountains or vast areas at the edge of cities but are being neglected unlike the repurposed communist buildings. While the communist architecture in the city is used, the monuments are empty and odd presences in the landscape. They are being demolished or left to decay in city centres and other prime historically sacred locations of the city. Architect Aldo Rossi suggests in his text “The Architecture of the City” that monuments are urban artifacts shaping the identity of cities and tell its history.⁵ The communist monuments were never an accurate representation of their cities, or a correct version of its history. They are architectural propaganda of an oppressive regime concealed behind the notion of a monument. In the article “Paranoid looking: on de-communization”, authors M. Szcześniak and L. Zaremba discuss the ideas of Austrian philosopher Robert Musil, who points out the invisibility of monuments within the city fabric, explaining the latter blends and

Like the fetish, the public work serves two ends, the one ultimately undermining the other. The monument covers up the crimes against the public in so far as it is able to temporarily ‘smother’ the possibility of remembering specific histories in terms of the violence that engendered them; instead, it commemorates a history or event in terms of a pernicious heroism or nationalism. At the same time, the monument exists as a perpetual marker, a reminder of those very crimes. It waves a red flag, so to speak, on the site of its repressions. And when the symbolic order is thrown into crisis, the public monument’s semantic charge shifts and the work becomes less heroic in form but rather begins to take on the characteristics of a scar.

-Mark Lewis, ‘What is to be done?’, p.5

² Tamila Varshalomidze. “My Soviet Scar: Confronting Architecture of Oppression.” . <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/europe/2018/11/soviet-scar-confronting-architecture-oppression-181108111743171.html>.

³ Gal Kirn and Robert Burghardt. “Yugoslavian Partisan Memorials: Between Memorial Genre, Revolutionary Aesthetics and Ideological Recuperation.” (. <http://www.manifestajournal.org/issues/regret-and-other-back-pages/yugoslavian-partisan-memorials-between-memorial-genre#>).

⁴ Neil Leach, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.ii

⁵ Aldo Rossi, 1931-1997. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982.



Fig. 1.1



Fig. 1.2

fades into the city background rather than be focal points.⁶ Though the communist monuments in Bulgaria appear to be invisible; left behind in the landscape as cities grow and transform, they blare for attention as alienated objects hovering over cities, slowing down the psychological healing of the country and waiting for the day the de-communisation law becomes approved and they become criminals of the state. The question that remains to be answered pervades: *Is there a way to deal with them without destroying them, that would put them back in the background of everyday life and let them disappear into the historical context of the city?*⁷

The concept of destroying the monument seems like the incorrect approach to the issue which is the need to deal with the post-communist landscape that has been left behind. The ideals of the preceding party are ingrained in the roads, the buildings, the squares, the parks and every structure that had been torn down to make way for another in the process of shaping a communist vision of a utopian city. Communism altered the country and erased history by following Stalin's urban planning approach, similar to the dictatorships during WWI and WWII led by Mussolini and Hitler. The communist landscape moves beyond the monument and into the city and so removing it does not solve the over-arching issue. The country must re-adapt their urban context and through the re-shaping of their environment can it then also psychologically help in acknowledging its dark past.⁸ An analysis of the origin of the monuments, the intent of their creator and the architectural style and logic they embody must be conducted in order to fully understand how to confront these sculptural structures.

I am interested in countering the urbanism of the communist regime as a design approach towards the monument and its direct surroundings by first analysing and decoding it. The overarching idea behind the monument's urban approach is one of hierarchy. As an initial response to this powerful urban organization, I am interested in the relation between power and space, and the removal of power.

Throughout my research, I am looking to answer the following question: How can we re-integrate the monuments left from the Communist government around Bulgaria without demolishing them? Instead of demolishing or preserving monuments as is current practice and approach in Bulgaria, which continues to cause controversial discourse and tension within the country, I propose an architecture of reversal. How can we develop a design approach towards a re-integration and re-interpretation that can be applied to all communist monuments and attempt to "free" their space through key interventions? The thesis will focus on bringing new program, renewed function and presence to a site of an inhabitable monument in Bulgaria. I am interested in a particular typology of the communist monument, which would be monument which fuses art and architecture. It had programs such as lecture halls, offices, bookshops, meeting rooms...etc and thus moves beyond being a symbol one admires and cannot interact with, such as the Lenin busts on plinths, to being a symbol one inhabits. This architectural quality creates an opportunity to incorporate a new program and turn this structure into

6 Magda Szcześniak and Łukasz Zaremba. "Paranoid Looking: On De-Communization;" (. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1470412919861398>). p.23

7 Magda Szcześniak and Łukasz Zaremba. "Paranoid Looking: On De-Communization"

8 Magda Szcześniak and Łukasz Zaremba. "Paranoid Looking: On De-Communization"



Fig. 1.3

more than a symbol of the past, but a means to look at a way of finding an identity for Bulgaria after its years under totalitarianism. The idea of order and hierarchy was imposed and it controlled the architecture that was erected during communism. A new identity for Bulgaria requires spontaneity, experimentation, an allowance for rediscovery; a freedom to explore the future without being held back by the past.

This thesis moves between architecture, politics, history, philosophy and psychology. The discussion of the current state of the communist monuments in Bulgaria and the possibilities of their future calls to address iconoclasm, writings on the emergence of soviet realism, Michel Foucault's writings on power and space, Bernard Tschumi's "Architecture of Disjunction", the analysis and deciphering of the allegorical symbols embedded in built space, the writings on the displacement of concepts according to Alan Colquhoun and Sigmund Freud's "Interpretation of Dreams". Furthermore, the thesis topic falls within discussions of the counter monument (J. E Young), the theories of Aldo Rossi and Riegl on the monument's role in the city, as well as refers to essays on post-socialist cities such as the ones by Owen Hatherley and Fredric Jameson.



Fig. 1.4



Fig. 1.5

PART 1

A SERIES OF PERSPECTIVES ON THE MONUMENT

01 The Grand Narrative

The Construction of the Narrative

Stalking the Friendship Monument

The *Refrain* of the Monument

02 Deconstruction of the Monument: Decay Transforms the Site

The Monument as a Material Process

Dissolving the Boundary of the Monument: an In-Between

The Construction of the Narrative

Stalking the Friendship Monument

The *Refrain* of the Monument

THE GRAND NARRATIVE

01

To perceive the political meaning, one has to understand the allegorical system in which it is encoded. Yet this is not the allegorical system that one might identify, for example, with Renaissance painting, where allegory relies on a narrative of fixed symbols with which the painter works. The allegory to which I refer is an allegory of association. A closer comparison, therefore, might be the way in which abstract painting has been read as political, and promoted by the CIA—so the story goes—as a tool of postwar propaganda.

-Fredric Jameson, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.118

The Construction of the Narrative

In November 1974, the construction of the Friendship Monument began on Turna Tepe Hill in Varna, a port city in Bulgaria that was renamed “Stalin” during Communism. The hill was artificially raised, and the monument located at its peak. It was imposing, establishing a sense of hierarchy in the urban environment. The communist party blared its ideological narrative, seen from multiple vantage points in the city and from the Black Sea. The architecture became a marker of a historical time. The monument was an image which was maintained and stayed eternal within the mind of the Bulgarian collective.

The monument straddled the lines of fiction and reality. It moved between being a communist meeting hall to being a sculptural propaganda symbol. Its formal expression fused architecture and art, pulling inspiration from ancient forms such as Mayan temples, pyramids, as well as modern abstract shapes, sci-fi films and avant-garde art. The sculptural elements chiselled into the spaces of the monument used an abstract and cubist reference for simplification of facial features and forms. The architect Robert Burghardt and historian Gal Kirn explain that “*abstraction became the most obvious strategy of representing universalism.*”¹ Abstraction was a tool for homogeneity. The aesthetic thought behind the sculptural work was for it to be clear and simple, and in turn be easily digestible by the masses. It told the narrative of the ideal communist society through simple imagery. *Monuments can be read through the realm of shifting semantic associations. The political aspect is simply allegorical, not physical*²

The political narrative of the monument is reinforced by its context, removed from the city by a topographical separation. The hill was turned into a park. *Stalinist architecture is characterised by ‘withdrawal’ or ‘rejection’, in the form of their enormous dimensions and peculiar disproportionate proportions, which usually give rise to a feeling of fear. Alleys, promenades and parks, created as processional routes which you have to traverse to arrive at buildings, increase this feeling of distance.*³ The park gave the monument importance. It brought the gaze up to the top of the hill, forcing the eye to focus on the concrete object. The Finish architect Juhani Pallasmaa explains that the focused sense of vision, unlike the peripheral vision, distances one from the world.⁴ The hill was a stage, equipped with floodlights lighting the monument at night and with speakers positioned around it, playing Shostakovich’s Seventh Symphony. The citizens below the hill become the monument’s spectators. In order to become an actor in the constructed theatrical narrative of the monument, one must start at the beginning and climb the 301 steps of the axial “Staircase of Victors”.

The stair

... was used to ascend into the monument, creating a linear progression and directing one’s gaze to the entrance. The stair formed a hierarchy, leading one away from the rest of the



Fig. 1.1.1

1 Burghardt and Kirn, “Yugoslavian Partisan Memorials: The Aesthetic Form of the Revolution as a Form of Unfinished Modernism?,” 91.

2 Neil Leich, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.122

3 Maija Rudovska, ‘Expired Monuments’, p.82

4 J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 25

city. It created a feeling of distance in the experience of the visitor. A change of level was typical in the design of the communist monuments, enacting the physical transition of one was entering the realm of a higher being. As I climbed the stairs, I passed a group of youngsters who were sitting at the top of the steps enjoying a cold “Glarus” beer, named after a species of seagulls local to the area, while overlooking the horizon of the city and the sea. Their backs faced the wall.

The wall

... of the monument was imposing and vast, sculpted into abstract forms that instilled a feeling of smallness and fear. It was physically overpowering, constructed using 10 000 tonnes of concrete⁵, the industrial material representative of the new modern society. Mumford wrote in regards to the materiality of monuments, “stone gives a false sense of continuity, and a deceptive assurance of life: the shell seems to pledge continuity by the fact that it continues to exist, outwardly unaffected by the passage of events.”⁶ James Young argues in his writings on the “Counter-Monument”, that this unchanging exterior replaces our remembering and projects mass memories which are taken at face-value by the public. The story imbued in the form of the Friendship Monument was of two nations embracing; the Bulgarians and the Russians. It told a story of union and friendship.⁷ The walls seemed to be reaching upwards to embrace the sky, forming an upside-down triangular form. They built in a radical modern form, rejecting tradition. The intent of the wall was for it to preserve the political narrative through the typology of the monument due to its association to immortality. The art historian Alois Riegl defined a monument’s purpose in *The Modern Cult of Monuments* as “keeping single human deeds or vents (or a combination thereof) alive in the minds of future generations.”⁸

The square

...was used by the Communists to physically manifest the collective oneness, gathering people in a square and creating a single identity, using the bodies to form a crowd while dictating political speeches and gloriously spreading party leaders’ propaganda. The square was an element described in communist architecture as a “social condenser”⁹, erasing the individual. Standing on the square the individual is small and disappears. The public square is dubbed “Spectacle Square”, part of the theatrical narrative of the monument. *Soviet architects invented a new urban typology designed specifically for the new media regime. By treating the city as stage for mass theatre and embedding the use of new media technologies into urban form, a hybrid of architecture and media was created and used throughout the Soviet period.*¹⁰ The square beneath the monument is used for media broadcast gatherings and mass political speeches. The square is a propaganda tool.

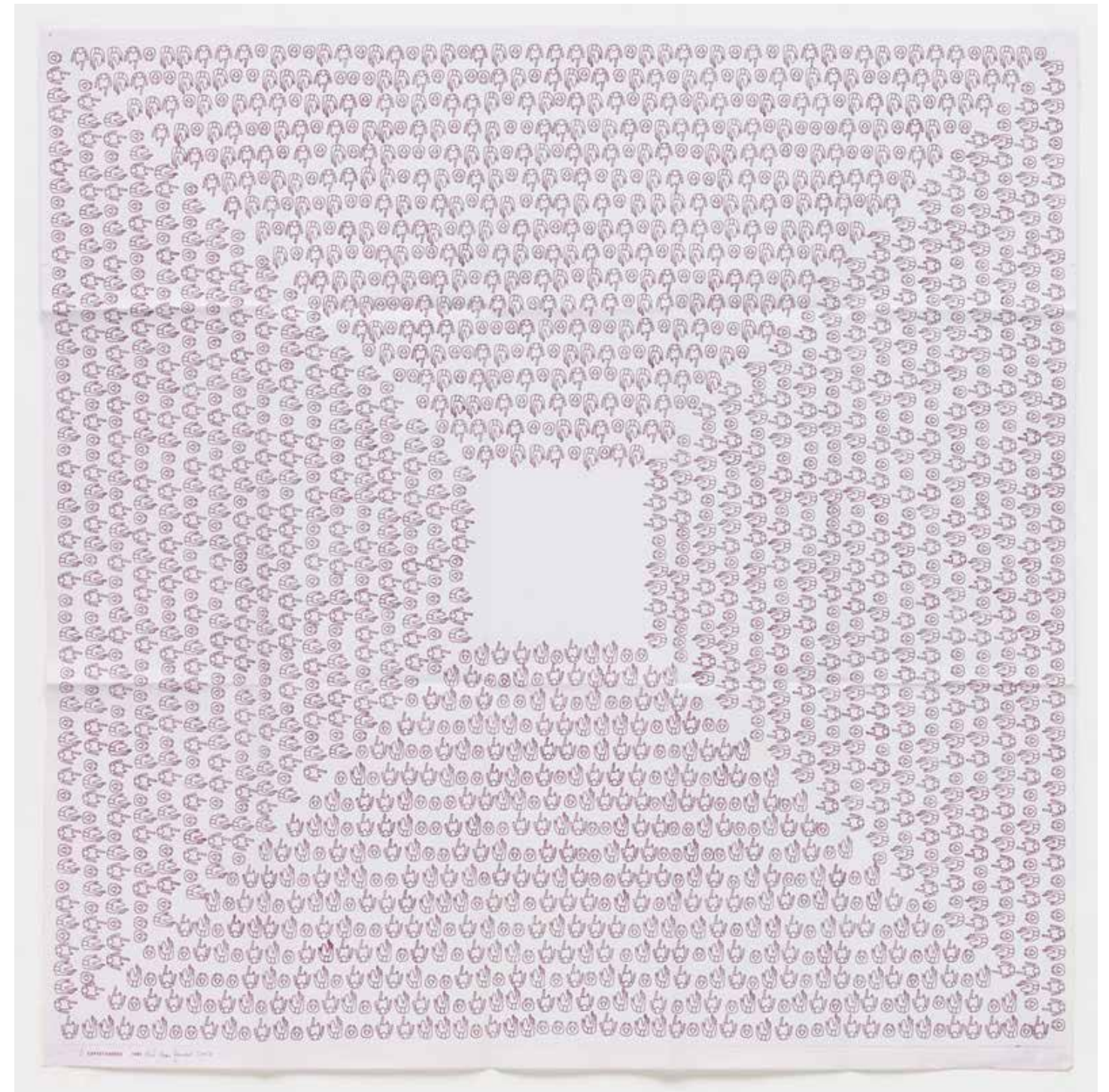
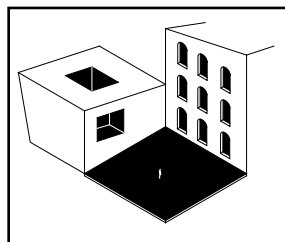
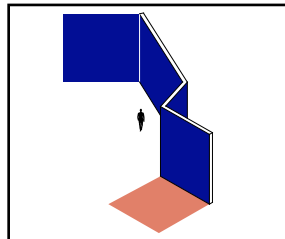
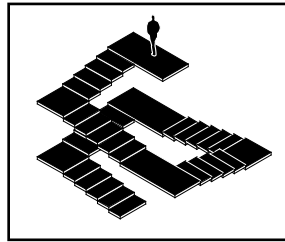


Fig. 1.1.2

5 Mark O’Neill.” Welcome Digitalnoisephotography.co.uk - Justhost.com. <http://digitalnoisephotography.co.uk/2013/04/06/park-monument-of-bulgarian-russian-friendship/>.

6 Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (New York, 1938), p. 435

7 “Monument to the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship.” 2019. Monumentalism. March 18, 2019. <http://monumentalism.net/varna-bulgarian-soviet-friendship/>.

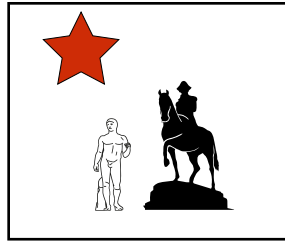
8 Riegl & Forster & Ghirardo, *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, 1982, p.1

9 See the Narkomfin building

10 Magazine, The Site. 2019. “Spectacle Square.” The Site Magazine. The Site Magazine. May 14, 2019. <https://www.thesitemagazine.com/read/spectacle-square>.

The sculptural imagery

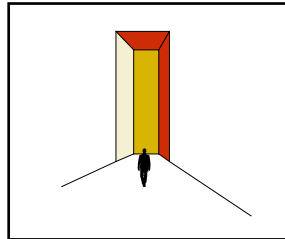
... was incorporated in the monument's facades and interior spaces, telling stories and representing important figures of the communist party. *While Polish artists, poets, scientists, and activists – from Copernicus to Chopin, from Mickiewicz to Dzierżyński – were memorialized individually with the use of a traditional figurative monument structure, Soviet history was commemorated through monuments devoted to collectives (most often Red Army soldiers), as well as abstract ideals (Polish–Soviet friendship, cooperation, and brotherhood in arms) and processes (worldwide peasant and worker revolutionary struggles). Freed from the necessity of resembling a well-known individual, the latter monuments often combined large-scale abstract forms with smaller figurative symbolic elements and inscriptions.*¹¹ At the steps of the Friendship Monument, the figurative sculptures on the facade told the story of three Bulgarian women bearing gifts and looking upwards as if in a prayer to the implied religious figures embodied by the four soviet soldiers, hierarchically located higher on the monument's facade. The soviet soldiers represent the godly figures of the regime the people should be serving and praying to.¹² The scene is reminiscent of rituals and paintings seen in art throughout history. The soldiers conceal skylights beyond, appearing as though they have halos on the top of their heads. The communist star, the hammer and the sickle become the empty mass-produced symbols, the iconography of a new religion, a new prayer. When Communism fell, sculptures of Lenin were pushed to the ground, marking the end of an era along with the fall of the Berlin Wall. *The removal was rendered particularly ritualistic by the presence of young priests who, representing the return of religion while exorcizing the spirit of communism, held up a crucifix to the twelve-ton bronze statue as it swayed on a crane.*¹³



The ideological narrative of Communism was crafted using the architectural elements I walked through; the stair, the hill, the square, the wall, the threshold, the symbols (eternal flame, the figures on the monument). The role of the architect was drastically important to the Communists because they could take the socialist realist art and integrate it into the city fabric in the form of monuments. It became a weapon at the regime's disposal to disperse physical propaganda and structure the lives of the masses. It influenced the way people lived and embedded narratives of a new society in the real world. The goal was for the built environment to encourage the formation of the soviet man, the new man that propelled the communist utopian society. The monument embodied a pilgrimage to utopia and enlightenment.

The threshold

...is an integral part of any architectural project, but especially in the case of the communist monuments. The threshold is always inscribed with large text and communist slogans, to be read as a prayer before entering the space. The text decorating the Friendship Monument read "*Friendship with the Soviet Union is as essential as is the sun, air and water for the living creature.*"¹⁴ The threshold was set in place. It was static and predetermined, part of a carefully curated entry sequence. It implied a separation, a boundary between the communist monument and the rest of the city. It marked a territory, even to this day, 30 years after the fall of the communist government. The threshold resembles an arch, the unifying point between both concrete wings composing the monument. It is tall and grandiose, boasting the progressive structural and architectural ingenuity of the time. The archway marks a point in the journey into the monument, a symbolic acceptance of crossing into conformity and an embrace of the new ideals, leaving the rest outside. In front of the threshold stood the eternal flame, fuelled by propane buried beneath the hill, never to be extinguished. The door to the interior was made of solid bronze.



11 Magda Szcześniak and Łukasz Zaremba. "Paranoid Looking: On De-Communization", p. 217

12 "Monument to the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship." 2019. Monumentalism. March 18, 2019. <http://monumentalism.net/varna-bulgarian-soviet-friendship/>.

13 Laura Mulvey, *Architecture and Revolution*, "Reflections on disgraced monuments", p. 219

14 "Monument to the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship." 2019. Monumentalism. March 18, 2019. <http://monumentalism.net/varna-bulgarian-soviet-friendship/>.



Fig. 1.1.3

Stalking the Friendship Monument

(Walking through the monument at dawn)

The Seagarden spanned as far as my eyes could see along the length of the Black Sea beach coast of Varna. I had heard the garden's story of conception; its creator had imported thousands of plant species to be seeded into a dense heterogeneous garden. The sea breeze mixed with the strong smell of the lush earthy flora immersed me in my afternoon walk. I could hear the children's bubbling laughter as they splashed through the seawater, their parents watching them from under their colourful parasols. The smell of cooking wafted from the beach restaurants, the sweet scent of sunscreen lingered in the air and the dogs barking on their walks added to the dynamic textures of life I was experiencing on this summer day. The further I walked along the beach, the quieter the human noise became, until I reached the edge between the Seagarden and the highway. The loud engines of the cars roared past me as I looked up Turna Tepe Hill. It stood tall overlooking the Black Sea and the garden with its strong gaze. It looked alienated from human life, inhabited by unseen fauna wandering through its wild planting.

I hurried across the street once traffic slowed down and made my way to the bottom of the hill. Nature was slowly reclaiming this site. A large concrete platform and a long stair that sliced through the centre of the hill interrupted the wildness of the growing trees. The image of an unkept Renaissance garden appeared in my mind as I walked ahead. Everything around this axis of stairs and open squares was covered in foliage, unseen to the eye, focusing one to the top of the hill. The flora of the hill had a story, one of the 20 000 trees planted on the site representing the fallen Russian soldiers who allegedly fought in the liberation of Bulgaria.¹⁵

I was fascinated by the monument as I had heard the stories of *stalkers*¹⁶ breaking into its abandoned interior rooms, and into the Cold War nuclear bunker and tunnels known to be buried beneath the hill, unseen to the naked eye. Tarkovsky's film "Stalker" follows the world of the stalker, one of exploring desolate dystopian landscapes, ruins, decayed buildings and wilderness. Stalking of locations became a term used by groups of wanderers who explored radioactive and dangerous sites such as Chernobyl. "*Existing in the shadows of this highly commodified industry is the secretive subculture of the "stalkers": mostly young Ukrainian men who sneak into the Zone illegally to explore the vast wilderness on their own terms.*"¹⁷ This method of exploration of a place was used by a research group in Rome, called *Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade*, which translates to *Nomadic Observatory*. This group conducts urban research for their projects addressing planning and territorial issues by walking through places. They do this to '*actuate territories*', which for them is a process of bringing space into being. *Stalkers carry out their walks in the 'indeterminate' or void spaces of the city, which have long been disregarded or considered a problem in traditional*

¹⁵ "Monument to the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship." 2019. Monumentalism. March 18, 2019. <http://monumentalism.net/varna-bulgarian-soviet-friendship/>.

¹⁶ 'Stalkers', referred by film director Tarkovsky as wanderers through desolate landscapes

¹⁷ Balakjian, Aram. "Into the Zone: 4 Days inside Chernobyl's Secretive 'Stalker' Subculture." *The Calvert Journal*. <https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/10946/into-the-zone-4-days-inside-chernobyls-secretive-stalker-subculture>.

*architectural practice.*¹⁸ Some of the locations they have walked include the edges of the Tiber river in Rome. I would become a stalker on the site of the Friendship Monument, following the footsteps of those before me.

Today, the Friendship Monument is used as a quiet area further away from the city centre to stroll, to enjoy the view of the Black Sea from the top of the stairs. The monument is unsafe to enter as its structure is decaying and it is unlit and difficult to navigate. Looters are constantly breaking into it, in spite of the government's attempts to seal its entrances for the safety of the public using bricks and steel barricades. I wondered what was hiding behind the exterior concrete veil, as there were barely any openings in the wall. The few that were present were narrow slits, welcoming me with only darkness beyond. I wondered if there was anyone inside the abandoned structure, as the place was a known shelter for street wanderers and the homeless. *How ironic*, I thought, that garbage and filth cover the once glorious rooms used for gatherings and exhibits. This beacon of a new society was now an outcast structure attracting the wanderers and vagabonds of society.

Though constructed out of a strong material and exuding an air of permanence, the wall of the monument before me was chipped, ravaged, cracked, flaking and stained. It had not been able to withstand the passage of time unmarked. The concrete wall held two meanings, one representing material industrialization, efficiency, modernity and the abandonment of tradition. Its other meaning was the marking the end of Communism with the fall of the wall¹⁹. The latter was clearly expressed today through people's anger and trauma, marking the wall with the graffiti and vandalism in the hopes of destroying it. At the threshold of the monument I could see the traces of the lettering that once adorned the wall with a slogan, now rusted and dismantled.

Inside the monument is a world to be discovered. Wanderer Darmon Richter ventured into it:

*The darkness is absolute, and at times suffocating – many thousands of tonnes of concrete stand between you and the light of day. Not only that, but even the slightest sound can create long echoes inside this cubist warren of tunnels and stair-wells. It wasn't just my own footsteps that were haunting me; the surrounding park is sometimes frequented by stray dogs and every howl from outside would become trapped inside the monument, distorting as it followed me from room to room.*²⁰

The previous programmatic functions of the monument are unrecognizable. It is a new obscure place. It is a toilet, a temporary sleeping place, a hiding place, a garbage room, a storage, the abject face of society. Below the surface of the hill, where the air is stale and rare, are the tunnels of the Cold War bunker. Accessed from various parts around the hill, nestled between the high grasses and trees, are the tunnel entrances, like scars in the landscape.

18 "180Spatial Agency." Spatial Agency: Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade. <https://www.spatialagency.net/database/stalkerosservatorio.nomade>.

19 Referencing the fall of the Berlin Wall

20 "Exploring an Abandoned Monument to the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship." 2018. The Bohemian Blog. November 14, 2018. <http://www.thebohemianblog.com/2012/04/urban-exploration-soviet-propaganda-centre-bulgaria.html>.



Fig. 1.1.4



Fig. 1.1.5

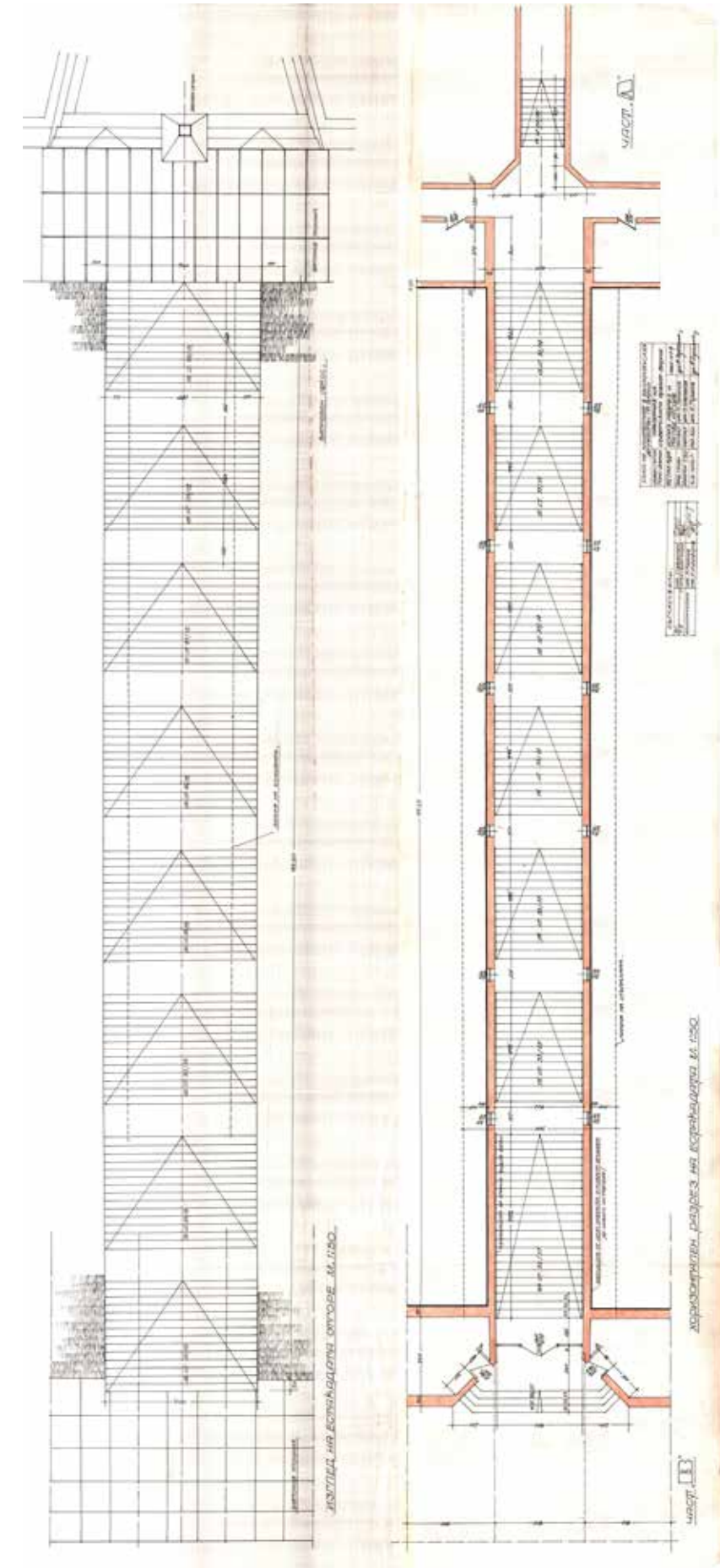
Fig. 1.1.6

*The bunker was bigger than I could have imagined. We soon found ourselves in a vast underground labyrinth, a series of interconnecting corridors and chambers. Broken pipes and sockets, the rusted parts of old boilers, suggested that once, this place had been fitted with water, gas and electricity.*²¹

Beneath the “Staircase of Victories”, the axis of the hill, was a second staircase, which connected the monument to another room beneath one of the “Spectacle squares”. This room was inaccessible but is rumoured to connect to the Seagarden and other points in the city through a different tunnel system.²² The duality on the site, the constructed narrative above ground and the macabre reality below ground was wicked. The stalking of the abandoned monument in present day reveals a very different perspective to the constructed narrative in 1979.

21 “Exploring an Abandoned Cold War Bunker in Bulgaria.” 2018. The Bohemian Blog. November 14, 2018. <http://www.thebohemianblog.com/2012/10/abandoned-cold-war-bunker.html>.

22 Mark O’Neill.” Welcome Digitalnoisephotography.co.uk - Justhost.com. <http://digitalnoisephotography.co.uk/2013/04/06/park-monument-of-bulgarian-russian-friendship/>.



The Refrain of the Monument

Walking through the site of the monument can be compared to a dance, every step pre-determined and designed by the choreographer, every movement pre-anticipated. This performance defining a territory is described by Deleuze and Guattari as the *refrain* (la ritournelle). The refrain is *any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes. (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc. refrains)*²³ In nature, the refrain manifests itself in the bird's song, its mating calls, a person's whistle. The brown stagemaker performs a refrain every day. He collected leaves fallen from the tree and turns them upside down on the ground, revealing their paler side to create a contrast from the ground. The stagemaker creates his territory within the cosmos by performing his repeated refrain of turning leaves. *Territorial marks are readymades.*²⁴ The readymade is understood in this context as something's original function or use being changed or re-invented. The leaf becomes a readymade, being turned from foliage to a landmark for the stagemaker bird.

The refrain of the monument was one of power, propaganda, war, and the utopian future. Through its carefully choreographed ascension to the entrance at the top of the hill to the sculptural imagery on the façade, the monument marks its territory. The visitor dances up the staircase of victors to the 7th symphony of Shostakovich, which plays through large speakers located around the hill of the monument, repeated every day while the communist regime reigned the country. The symphony is the anthem of Communism, dedicated to Lenin. It is composed of four movements, the first filled with intensity entitled "War". It escalates, repeats, becomes louder. It then becomes the second movement, named "Reminiscence", simpler, played by a few instruments and softer in melody. From there the symphony brightens up to the third movement, called "Home Expanses" and ends with the fourth called "Victory".²⁵ One walks through the monument to the sounds of the symphony, to the rhythm of the song, entranced in its power and its ideology. The sun sets as the visitor stands inside the monument, looking at the communist star which becomes illuminated from the warm light penetrating the slits of the façade. The symphony begins again the next day.

The refrain of the monument has changed. The song no longer booms through the hill. The tunnels beneath the surface are exposed and the refrain becomes one of oppression, terror, cruelty and violence. The song no longer organizes the chaos of the monument. Inside, the monument is dark, with angled walls and tight corners. It is difficult to navigate, disorienting and stifling. One feels they cannot find their way out once inside this labyrinth. Sirens and city sounds are heard when inside, adding to the terror of the territory. The corridors are endless, and the stairs bring one deeper below the hill. A new choreography is performed on the site, one driven by one's internal rhythm, the heartbeat. When it gets too quiet in the monument's concrete rooms, one begins to hum or whistle to fill the

23 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Of the Refrain", p. 323

24 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Of the Refrain", p. 316

25 MacKenzie, Amy. 2017. "Watch Shostakovich Playing His Own Symphony No. 7." Classic FM. June 19, 2017. <https://www.classicfm.com/composers/shostakovich/music/shostakovich-symphony-seven/>.

silence and establish one's territory, protecting oneself from the vastness and the unknown that surrounds them. *A housewife sings to herself, or listens to the radio, as she marshals to the anti-chaos forces of her work. A wall of sound.*²⁶

26 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, "Of the Refrain", p. 311



Fig. 1.1.8

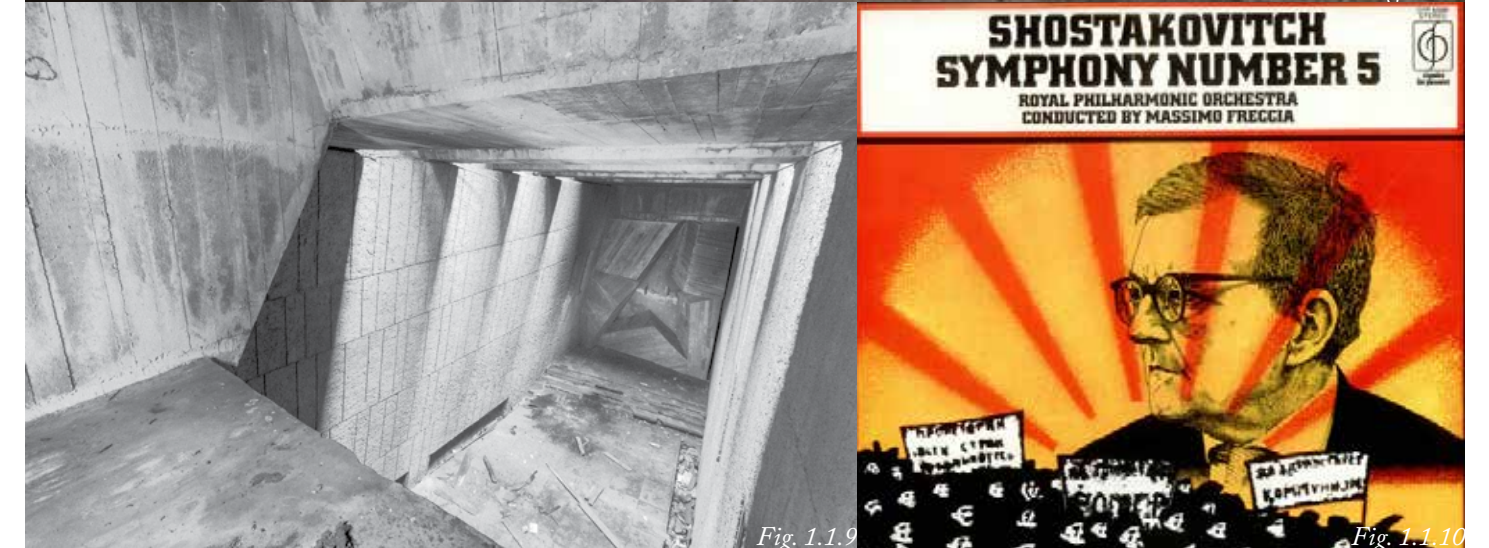


Fig. 1.1.9

Fig. 1.1.10

DECONSTRUCTION OF THE MONUMENT: DECAY TRANSFORMS THE SITE

02



Fig. 1.2.1

The actual consequence of a memorial's unyielding fixedness in space is also its death over time: a fixed image created in one time and carried over into a new time suddenly appears archaic, strange, or irrelevant altogether. For in its linear progression, time drags old meaning into new contexts, estranging a monument's memory from both past and present, holding past truths up to ridicule in present moments. Time mocks the rigidity of monuments, the presumptuous claim that in its materiality, a monument can be regarded as eternally true, a fixed star in the constellation of collective memory

-James E. Young, from "The German Counter-Monument,"
Critical Inquiry, Vol. 18, No. 2. (Winter, 1992), p. 9



Fig. 1.2.2



Fig. 1.2.3



Fig. 1.2.4

The Monument as a Material Process

J. Pallasmaa states, “Abstraction and perfection transport us into the world of ideas, whereas matter, weathering and decay strengthen the experience of time, causality and reality.”

An alienated monument. Stagnant and abandoned stone, once glorious. It wanted to stay eternal and immutable but that goes against the natural way. Its original form has died, shedding its old skin and revealing a new one in the current age. Its carcass decays. It is continuously transforming. Processes are ongoing under the everyday looks of contemplation.

The communist monument on the hill can be **experienced** as an assemblage of materials in process, constantly changing over time. The concrete of the walls is soiled, stained, cracked and splitting apart from the inside out. Mould and plant life spreads inside on the ceilings and the railings. Effervescence is seen on the surface, traces left by a chemical reaction with the concrete. The monument takes a life of its own; it is not the completed static project that it was meant to be. It is not immortal and unchanging, standing on the top of the hill for eternity. It will be slowly deconstructed by animals, natural elements, bodies and plant life. The materials from which the monument has been built are constantly in a state of becoming, their decay and degradation taking new states and shapes. The weathering of the structure is part of the material processes of the monument and the hill. The writings of Leatherbarrow and Mostafavi in “*On Weathering*” explain that weathering is a part of the architectural process of any building, as it is always becoming and will never reach completion. This goes against the notion that the monument’s weathering is negative and must be controlled and stalled from reaching the inevitable ageing of the material. *To consider weathering as anything other than negative, one needs to approach a building in process rather than as a product and end form*²⁷ The monument can be perceived through many lenses throughout its ongoing life. It ages just like a human being, the marks of time are imprinted on the skin, through spots and wrinkles and deformation of bones. It isn’t the same as it used to be, as its creator intended it to be. It has multiple sides to it, multiple identities, depending on how you look at it and the time in history.

The architect Sarah Wigglesworth embraces weathering and material processes and integrates them in her design of the Straw Bale House. The house is meant to evolve over time, never reaching completion. She designs a sandbag wall as an acoustic barrier for the house due to its adjacency to railway tracks. *Made with bags full of sand, cement and lime, the wall is intended to decay gradually into a rippling surface of concrete left with the rough imprint of cloth, and the beautiful local wild plants like herb-Robert and Welsh poppy which will surely seed there.*²⁸

The monument can be observed through the lens of materials in process. Evidence of transformation and decay remove the preserved image of the

²⁷ Kovar Zuzana, *Architecture in Abjection: Bodies, Spaces and their relations*, p.65

²⁸ Davey, Peter. 2020. “Sarah Wigglesworth Architects’ Straw Bale House.” *Architectural Review*. July 21, 2020. <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/sarah-wigglesworth-architects-straw-bale-house/8659813.article>.



Fig. 1.2.5



Fig. 1.2.6

monument in the collective memory, and root it in the realm of reality. It is no longer a constructed narrative and place of fictional ideology. It experiences a natural uncontrollable iconoclasm, performed by time and the bodies that interact with it. The monument cannot escape the course of entropy. *The gerunds of motion inherent in ruining indicate a process of becoming and unbecoming—a jagged building and unbuilding.*²⁹ The land artist Robert Smithson embraces entropy in his exploration of post-industrial sites. He visits dump sites and collects excavated materials from the landscapes. He then displaces them in a container which he calls non-site. The non-site is a preservation of the landscape, contained and unchanging, exhibited in an indoor setting. He calls these pieces monuments. The installations play with the notions of time and place. In Smithson's essay "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic", he walks through and describes pieces of infrastructures such as bridges, parking lots and pipes in a neighborhood as if they were monuments of modern society. The transposition of the term "monument" plays with meaning and perspective.³⁰ Applying this thought process to the site of the Friendship Monument, and seeing it through different lenses, allows for multiple meanings and experiences to flow simultaneously.

29 Miriam Renee Rowntree, "Material Intimacy: Bearing Witness, Listening, and Wandering the Ruins", August 2019, p. 78

30 Robert Smithson, "Theory of Non-Sites, (1968)." 2014. multiplode6.Com. June 14, 2014. <http://www.multiplode6.com/theory-of-non-sites-by-robert-smithson-1968/>.

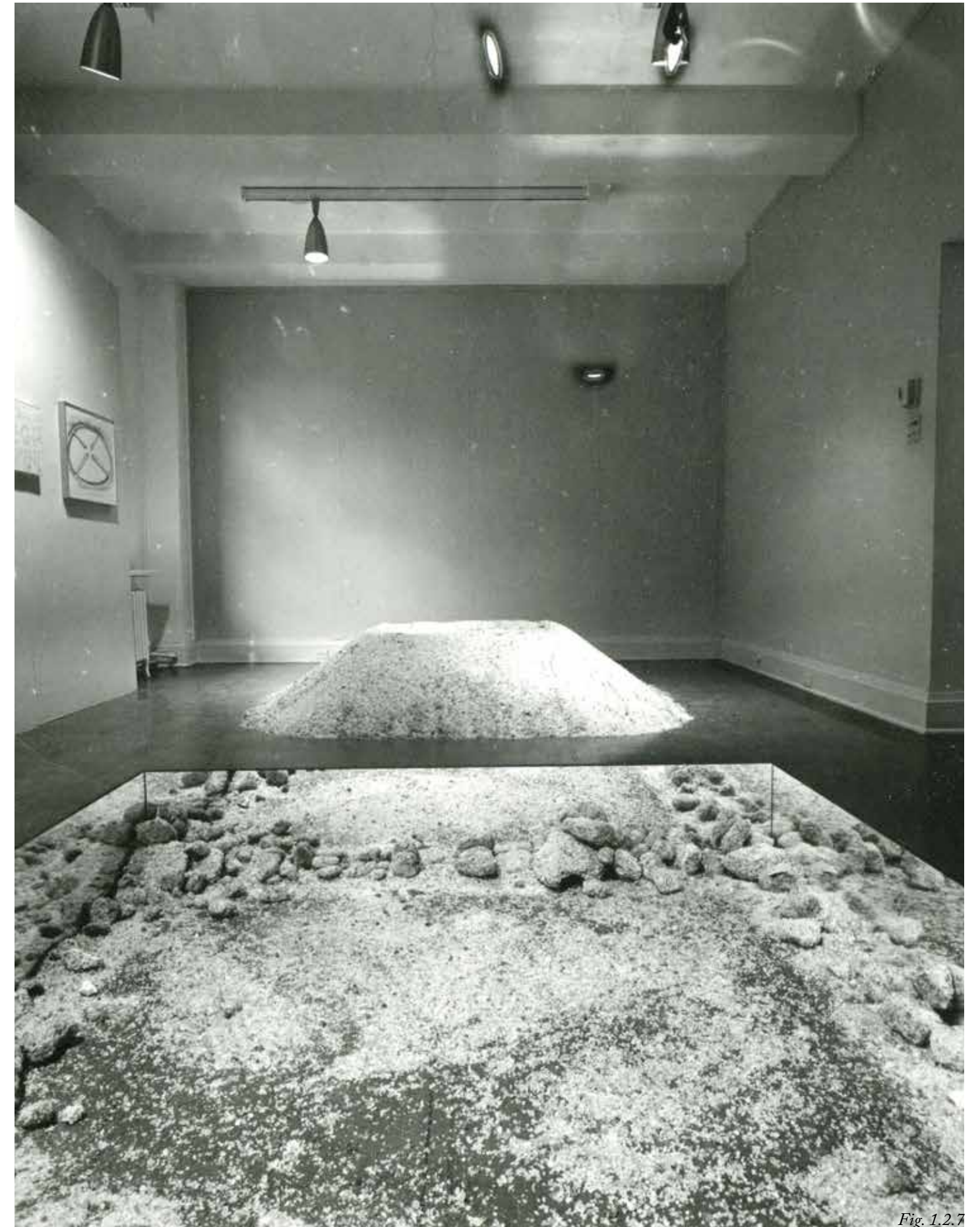


Fig. 1.2.7



Fig 1.2.8

Dissolving the boundary of the monument: an in-between

The frame the architect creates is not continuous, however; it is a fragile boundary. It does not fully contain. It should hence be understood not so much as a rigid structure or outline that imposes a form, but as something porous, indeterminate and perpetually shifting.³¹

In order to diminish the monument's power over one's psyche, one must view it through multiple perspectives. A shifting perspective undermines the finality of the monument's ideological narrative and its architectural form. The monument has transformed into a spatial abject³². It is neither inside or outside but an in-between, its concrete wall has been breached, its territory no longer absolute, and the exterior vermin enter through its compromised boundary. The interaction between the vermin and the monument transform it. Exterior forces leave waste, excrement, destroy and vandalize. No authority cares to re-patch the boundaries and separate exterior and interior again. This infiltration of the abject is described by Christine McCarthy in her writings on the kitchen in "A La Ronde, Exmouth":

Traces of waste, both inside and without the kitchen, stimulate disgust... Fear exists of the consequence- of the possible consumption of these wastes. The entry of rats, vermin and maggots are reminders of the boundary being broken- the vulnerability of the flesh- the perforation of the skin.³³

Photographer Francesca Woodman explores her body and its limits through long exposure photography shot in abandoned houses and decayed settings. She experiments with her images... *her own body becomes ghostlike, strangely insubstantial and partially disembodied, blurring the boundaries between the human body and her setting.³⁴* The merging of her body with walls, textures and objects implies a lack of boundary between body and space. *The softness of her body repeatedly refused to conform to the hardness of the room.³⁵*

The concrete exterior that forms the monument's boundary is disrupted once it comes into contact with natural elements and the human bodies that interact with it and enter its cavities. Time morphs it into a ruin, which inherently heightens the experience of the space. The ruin engages the sense of touch, smell, sound and forms an intimate connection with the human.³⁶ It is temporal and fragile, succumbing to the effects of time, a shared quality to the living body. A deeper relationship between the human body and the architectural space of the monument evolves. *Through abject(ion), boundaries are disrupted; the expulsions leaving our body forge connections with once outside and foreign entities. The gaping body becomes a series of organs that are*

31 Kovar, *Architecture in Abjection*, p. 178

32 Term coined by Bulgarian philosopher Julia Kristeva in her book "Powers of Horror", describing the reaction to encountering something that causes the loss of distinction between subject and object or between self and other. An example would be encountering a corpse, but could also be an open wound, excrement, bodily fluids...etc (p. 3)

33 Christine McCarthy, "Constructions of a Culinary Abject", p. 12

34 Katharine Conley, "A Swimmer Between Two Worlds Francesca Woodman's Maps of Interior Space", *Journal of Surrealism and the Americas*, 2008, p. 237

35 McWilliams, James. 2017. "Ideas and a New Hat." *The Paris Review*. January 22, 2017. <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/01/19/ideas-and-a-new-hat/>.

36 Miriam Renee Rowntree, "Material Intimacy: Bearing Witness, Listening, and Wandering the Ruins", August 2019, p. 58

no longer bound into a coherent whole, but instead available for exchange.³⁷ Indication of the disruption of these boundaries can be seen on the surfaces of the monument. Traces of soiled hands and fingerprints on doors become a part of the material. They instill a deep horror and fear as we can identify part of ourselves left on the wall. Pipes and steel members are rotting away, changing color, hanging dangerously outside of their initial position like broken bones. The monument can be compared to Gordon Matta Clarke's dissected buildings revealing their insides to the gaze. The previous boundaries put in place have fallen apart and the interaction with the space can no longer be controlled. The terror cannot be controlled, and it seeps out of the boundaries put in place by the communist regime to preserve the ideological narrative. *It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite. The traitor, the liar, the criminal with a good conscience, the shameless rapist, the killer who claims he is a savior. . . .*³⁸

Dust coats the once pristine surfaces of the modern monument. The ideals of hygiene and cleanliness of modernist architecture³⁹ rot away with the structure. The monument was conceived with rational thought, establishing order and boundaries in its conception. In "The Pleasure of Architecture", Bernard Tschumi describes sensuality as the opposite of rationality. Sensuality is the product of desire, sensation, chaos. He writes in his series "Advertisements for Architecture": *Sensuality has been known to overcome even the most rational of buildings.* Tschumi is alluding to Le Corbusier's modernist icon, Ville Savoye, which has decayed with time, transforming the rational architecture into a tactile and erotic experience. Similarly, the monument "overcomes a constructed state into another one"⁴⁰, overcomes its rational nature into becoming a sensual experience. In turn the monument becomes an intimate experience to the visiting transient, the disgust and hatred of this place becomes emotionally intensified due to its physical state. Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo precisely explains this phenomenon of deconstruction when he speaks to weak ontology,

*A distinct 'weakening' of the architectural image takes place through the processes of weathering and ruination. Erosion strips away the layers of utility; rational logic, and detail articulation, and pushes the structure into the realm of uselessness, nostalgia and melancholy. The language of matter takes over from the visual and formal effect, and the structure attains a heightened intimacy. The arrogance of perfection is replaced by a humanising vulnerability.*⁴¹

Francis Bacon, the figurative painter known for his feverish provoking paintings, plays with the notion of breaking down boundaries to reveal an overpowering emotion, a sensation in his works. Deleuze and Guattari discuss Bacon's methods of working in "A Thousand Plateaus" and use the term "diagram" to define the point of origin of his artworks. Deleuze and Guattari describe the diagram as the unseen experimental impressions made by the creator to disrupt

37 Kovar, *Architecture in Abjection*, p.140

38 Julia Kristeva, *The Powers of Horror, Approaching Abjection*, p. 4

39 Bernard Tschumi, *The Pleasure of Architecture*, p. 1

40 Sebastian Bernardy, "Tracing Everyday Performances", 2016, p. 92

41 Kovar, *Architecture in Abjection*, p.65-66



Fig. 1.2.9

form; the visual, in order to bring the other; the tactile, the emotional, out. The diagram brings the non-figurative unknown to the ordered and familiar figurative aspect of a work of art. It is spontaneous and chaotic. To create the diagram, one must let oneself be taken over by other forces and sensations and translate them into their work impulsively. The viewer of the work is challenged by the *affect* the diagram brings to the piece and experiences the forces beyond the image they see. Bacon allows the intensity of pain, evil, death and flesh take over his painting "1946". The diagram comes in the form of an explosion of flesh colors and textures. The entire room is flesh and carcass. Deep shadows and grisly purple blue tones make one uneasy, feeling the death and the rotting flesh emanating from the canvas. The carcass seems to come out of the figure depicted, like wings. Bacon captures the blood thirstiness and violence living inside of the man losing his humanity, through the hanging carcass behind him. The dead flesh is the aura of the figure. One can see beyond his body and form, into his dark soul. A white painted boundary attempts to contain the spilling of the flesh, but the pink tones layered onto it reveal it has been broken. The monument in its state of decay can be compared to Bacon's work, its architectural boundary has been broken and has let loose the evil it was attempting to contain.

A sahara, a rhinoceros skin: such is the suddenly outstretched diagram. It is as if, in the midst of the figurative and probabilistic givens, a catastrophe overcame the canvas.

- Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, "The Diagram", p. 100)



Fig. 1.2.10

PART 2

THE HETEROTOPIA OF COMMUNISM

01 A Resistance to an Oppressive Condition

The Soviet Man/The Non-Soviet Self: Making Culture

Hegemony, Abjection and Heterotopias of Communism

Anti-Shows

02 The Soviet Home

The Home as the Antithesis to the Communist City and of the Monument

Material Culture of the Home: A Place of Tradition, Filk Culture and Ritual

Bulgarian Folk Craft, Imperfection and Memory

A RESISTANCE TO AN OPPRESSIVE CONDITION

01



Fig. 2.1.1

The Soviet Man/ The Non-Soviet Self: Making Culture

The communist city was built for the soviet man who would pave the way to utopia. The soviet man was a tool created by the communist party as a means to equalize a diverse heterogeneous country with a long history, strong identity and traditions. The soviet man is a modern man looking to the future. He will leave his tradition and values behind and will live to be obedient, loyal to the state, hard working, exemplary, efficient, and a part of the collective. He must conform. The Bulgarian film, *Viktoria* (2014), directed by Maya Vitkova, depicts the creation of the soviet man. It follows the story of Viktoria, daughter of Boryana, who is born without an umbilical cord. Viktoria has no physical maternal attachment to her mother, to her past, or her roots. She is born the child of the state, the child of the new utopian future, the new Bulgarian man.

The soviet man is an image, a poster, a body, to whom the communist city is tailored to. Everyone is to be the soviet man, there is no diversity, only unity. The communist city must be a reflection of the values and ideals of this man. An alteration of the architecture of the existing cities began as the buildings were too formally diverse, projecting with their individualism the ideals of the capitalist economic model that preceded. A communist architecture was to be one of rationality, unity and logic. It must all appear as one singular system instead of the existing fragmented pieces of the capitalist framework.¹ The communist city derived from the philosophy of neoclassicism, in a socialist realist style which was selected as the leading style of communism because it can “hold a certain popular appeal and therefore prove more meaningful than alienating form of modernism, but it also imposes a sense of order and hierarchy on the urban condition.”² This hierarchy manifests itself in the city through architectural cues such as squares in front of buildings, boulevards as axis dividing and organizing the city, stairs to reach state buildings. Soviet realist buildings “made an elaborate gesture to the people with squares in front of their main elevations for mass gatherings and marches.”³ The architecture follows the classical style, modelled for the ideal body, following the perfect proportions, symmetry and the golden mean. *I think that the dressing and the mask are as old as human civilization... The denial of reality, of material, is necessary if form is to emerge as a meaningful symbol, as an autonomous creation of man.*⁴ The soviet self is fused with the form of the city and the soviet architecture that was built, celebrating the citizen of this new regime through monuments such as the Friendship Monument in Varna.

The term “soviet man” excludes the woman and her values as an important citizen in the new utopia. Though the communist regime preached for equality for all in education and work and women were able to take on roles which were previously not considered “female”, a vilification of the bourgeois and peasant woman’s traditional values, family values and tastes was simultaneously propagated, attempting to force the female to leave behind her entire identity and become a soviet man. Though women’s inequality pervaded in the peasant and bourgeois values, socialist values completely eclipsed the woman’s identity. “Equality” in

1 Catherine Cooke, “Alexei Gan and the Moscow Anarchists” in, *Architecture and Revolution*, p. 20

2 Augustin Ioan, “Interpreting socialist realism” in, *Architecture and Revolution*, p. 65

3 Augustin Ioan, “Interpreting socialist realism” in, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.64

4 Mark Wigley, *Sexuality and Space*, p. 370

Communism did not emerge from a respect and recognition towards the female and towards the celebration of her differences from the male, but from a need of homogeneity.⁵ The condition for equality was for the woman to adopt the man's identity and in turn his societal roles, and abandon her own. The male continues to pervade in communist society, reflected even in the architecture of the state which is associated with masculinity and sterility.

Alexander Zinoviev, a dissident philosopher during communist times, names the soviet man the "*homo-sovieticus*" in 1984. He uses the term satirically, as an alter ego to the state's soviet man, placing focus on the real contradictory outcome of the soviet man advertised by the government. The *homo-sovieticus*' children are called *little communists* ⁶. This man has no motivation in his life or in his work as his work belongs to everyone, as his existence is dictated by the state and he is the same as everyone else. He is the body; they are the head. He is stagnating, unable to travel to Western countries and wander, placed in a box constructed for him to stay put in. He is Pavlov's dog, or Big Brother's Winston⁷. Zinoviev questions this man, who queues in hour long lines at the grocery store, month long lines to get a television, yearlong lines to get a car...He is saddened by this man who is forced to partake in spontaneous mandatory parades, who is brainwashed at school and at home with propaganda, and who prays to empty mass produced symbols, like the home he lives in. ⁸ He is part of an era of over-production but he does not have enough work to do. Vladimir Lenin stated,

*We want to achieve a new and better order of society: in this new and better society there must be neither rich nor poor; all will have to work. Not a handful of rich people, but all the working people must enjoy the fruits of their common labour.*⁹

Factory operator Danuta Nowak states in an interview,

*I worked on the morning shift. I would come to work at 6am, punch in, get a coffee, chat with people for hours and have nothing to do until 1pm or so...People were so bored that they often did terribly stupid pranks that not once or twice had serious consequences.*¹⁰

Communism had an air of magical realism and absurd quality to it, captured by the non-conformist author Mikhail Bulgakov in his novel *The Master of Margarita*. In the novel, the character of Woland, a manifestation of Satan, poses as a magician and makes people disappear throughout the city of Moscow. His presence brings an air of the magical in the city, confusing the residents who cannot seem to understand how these events can be occurring. Woland would switch the heads of the people he snatched away.

5 Austin, Lyudmila, "They throw pebbles in our garden: Women and consumerism in the Soviet Union from Lenin to Khrushchev" (2015). Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. 609

6 Children were part of pioneer groups, to become model citizens of the state

7 Protagonist in George Orwell's classic novel *1984*

8 "Czechs Discover the 'Absurdities' of Communism." 2020. Radio Prague International. May 23, 2020. <https://english.radio.cz/czechs-discover-absurdities-communism-8076219>.

9 "10 Mind-Boggling Oddities of Communist Poland." n.d. Culture.pl. <https://culture.pl/en/article/10-mind-boggling-oddities-of-communist-poland>.

10 "10 Mind-Boggling Oddities of Communist Poland."

The metaphors of the story, based on the secret disappearances the state's police would execute and the transformation of the population into the soviet man through propaganda remodelling their brain, are barefaced.

The typical quest of a soviet hero is a young man's quest for consciousness and joining the collective society. The Master's quest is opposite. He seeks to be isolated, away from society and moves away from the soviet city, through its "periphery".

However, oppressed by the imposition of a cultureless identity, people rebelled inwardly and there was widespread anti-Soviet resistance in private life. The non-Soviet man is born in the home. He is all the parts of himself that are rejected and do not conform with those of the hegemonic state, that must be placed somewhere away from the watchful eye of the state. *The body needs to escape precisely because it has been forcefully organised and confined into a subjective system.*¹¹ The non-Soviet man escapes in the private comfort of his home. He is progress, connected to history, tradition and knowledge, while the rest of him stagnates in the outside world. The non-Soviet man is the abject of Communism; disturbing the soviet identity and communist values established by the government.

The man's self can be viewed as a series of *assemblages*. In Deleuzian terms, an assemblage is *first and foremost what keeps very heterogeneous elements together: e.g. a sound, a gesture, a position, etc., both natural and artificial elements. In assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodes; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs.*¹² A fluidity, a forming and a re-forming of relationships is implied. Memory, identity and the self is informed by these relationships. By attempting to control and form soviet identity, the communist government slips into the assemblages of the self, becoming a part of this dynamic process of self-creation, and introducing false ideologies, purposeful narratives and experiences in this internal weaving. It becomes difficult to distinguish between the purposeful introduced experiences by the state and the authentic self. Today, many struggle with their identity, lost in the assemblages of selves within them, the real ones and the ones created by the state.

*Nostalgic remembrance of socialism could similarly be understood as an attempt of those living in post-socialist chaos to find some stability, a symbolic order that would grant them their identities. But in this remembrance, we encounter also a problem of how one should deal with the relics of the past.*¹³

11 Kovar, *Architecture and Abjection* p. 133-134

12 "Deleuze on Assemblages". 2009. Larval Subjects . October 8, 2009. <https://larvalsubjects.wordpress.com/2009/10/08/deleuze-on-assemblages/>.

13 Leich, *Architecture and Revolution*, p. 116



Fig. 2.1.2

Hegemony, Abjection and Heterotopias of Communism

*You cannot change human nature by re-structuring society. Man will always be the same, nature will be unchanged*¹⁴

The visual propaganda in the image of the pyramid-like landscape with the Friendship Monument at its peak speaks to the hierarchical order within the totalitarian country. The people and the city stand below the state. In this structured society, one's identity is stripped. The suppression through fear and the removal of difference, individuality and multiplicity leads to homogeneity. Social homogeneity is necessary in order for the dictator to propagate the ideology of the collective one. But complete monopoly and power over the individual's thoughts and actions is unnatural. What form of expression of individuality will emerge from this extreme suppression to host what is being repressed?

*Strike the pose or follow the axis, genetic stage or structural destiny—one way or the other, your rhizome will be broken. You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed. Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it's all over, no desire stirs for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death; the rhizome, on the other hand, acts on desire by external, productive outgrowth.*¹⁵

During the years of communism, spaces were surveyed by the communist party, standardised and imposed a way of life to the country in their spatial . People searched for spaces to be themselves, and escape the totalitarian hand. Heterotopias¹⁶ were born in kitchens, parks, abandoned buildings and spaces on the outskirts of the city. *Heterotopias are worlds within worlds, mirroring and yet upsetting what is outside.*¹⁷ Heterotopias emerge from abject spaces. The spaces that held non conformist culture were the abject face of communist society. Abjection, a term defined by French philosopher and writer Julia Kristeva, describes the other, the uncomfortable, the disturbing of conventional culture and society. The home was appropriated into informal spaces of dissidence, with bursts of emotion, spontaneity and experimentation characterising the spaces. Dissident composer Yuliy Kim describes the appropriation of the dissident Russian kitchen: *A tea house, a pie house, a pancake house, a study, a gambling dive, a living room, a parlor, a ballroom. A salon for a passing by drunkard. A home for a visiting bard to crash for a night. This is a Moscow kitchen, ten square meters housing 100 guests.* And, he adds: *"This is how this subversive thought grew and expanded in the Soviet Union, beginning with free discussions in the kitchens.*¹⁸ People began to use art, craft, literature and film amongst others, as a minor language

14 Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, p. 71

15 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Introduction: Rhizome*, p.14

16 Concept developed by philosopher Michel Foucault to describe the "other" in society.

17 Peter Johnson Karen Browning, *50 years on: the heterotopian mirror of enchantment, self-reflection and disruption*, *Heterotopian Studies* (14 March 2017), p.1

18 The Kitchen Sisters, "How Soviet Kitchens Became Hotbeds Of Dissent And Culture", Valley Public Radio. <https://www.kvpr.org/post/how-soviet-kitchens-became-hotbeds-dissent-and-culture>



Fig. 2.1.3

to express themselves within the major language of communism. They assemble and re-invent the major language in order to make it their own. Deleuze and Guattari describe minor language through the literature of Frank Kafka's writings in their text *What is a Minor Language?*. Kafka, who is of Jewish descent and whose family was destroyed during WWII, uses the German language and creates his own way of speaking through it, expressing his narratives of alienation, absurdity and darkness. The minor language speaks to sub-cultures, groups speaking against the dominant culture. *The appropriation and reclamation of the spaces of everyday life is a fourth dimension to the struggle. This concerns the pursuit of autonomous mini republics outside of the camera. Even in the depths of twentieth-century dictatorships, associations of the marginal, deviant by virtue of class, gender, race, ethnicity and subculture, have always mapped different spaces, cutting through the institutional fabric of the city in communes, raves, shebeens, street protests and lock-ins, constructing lives that stand in opposition to the dominant culture.*¹⁹ In the context of the soviet home, through pieces of furniture, spaces used for dissidence, and décor such as curtains meant to obscure light but used to conceal rebellious gatherings, people find a way to preserve their values and convey them through the major language of communist apartments.

Today, social abjection no longer resides in the soviet home, but has found its way on the site of the monument instead. It is alienated from the city. The homeless, stray animals, the outcasts of society currently inhabit the interior cavities of the monument. Satirically the monument is a refuge for the parts of society it stood against and rejected: *The Jew, the gypsy, the 'other' of society provide in some senses the model for the contemporary moment; rootless, international, mobile, deterritorialized. This is in opposition to the rooted, the nationalistic and the static.*²⁰

19 Neil Leich, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.59

20 Neil Leich, "The Dark Side of the Domus, the redomestication of Central and Eastern Europe" in, *Architecture and Revolution*, p.176

Anti-Shows

The communist regime dictated the thought, the expression and the behaviours of people, re-forming the person to their ideology of the new Soviet man. Within this established system, individuality and the progress of knowledge was lost. Knowledge is the encounter with the new, the other, the uncertain. There was no room for spontaneity or newness in the Communist manifesto. People needed to express themselves, to channel their authentic self and thoughts into a medium.

As a result, during the Communist era, people began to turn their apartments into secret art galleries. People held apartment exhibitions that they named “anti-shows”, where they illegally displayed their underground unofficial art. This work could not be exhibited at state galleries as it did not follow the official art style, Soviet realism, of the state. The work had to be concealed from fear of arrest, charges of treason and imprisonment. This type of unofficial micro-experimental space was one of the many spaces born out of the oppression and control over the individual during Communism. It flourished into a heterotopia, and a new kind of space, neither entirely private nor entirely public, emerged.

In the apartments, amongst other unstructured locations such as parks, basements or the metro, non conformist culture was able to thrive. One art collective called APTART based in Moscow held over 10 anti-shows over the duration of socialism. The group started in Nikita Alekseev’s apartment, from where the name APT (apartment) ART originated. Some of the exhibited art pieces included a refrigerator whose surface was being altered over time, plastered with objects and posters with the changing exhibit themes while it was still being used by Alekseev in her day to day life, performing its utilitarian function of preserving her food.²¹

The Mukhomors took over Alekseev’s Север (North) brand refrigerator in its entirety to produce a novel. Its epigraph and title page are painted on the door, while the inside was reserved for plot points and the protagonists’ inner monologues, written and placed in boxes, while objects, colors, and images structure other aspects of the plot. The novel itself centers on an “extraordinarily cozy little apartment” inside a monument to a major battle in the Russo-Turkish War.²²

The dual life of the fridge, one being its utilitarian machine function, and the other, the life-like inner narratives, constantly in process and in a *state of becoming*²³, captures the duality occurring in the way of a person’s life during communism. The person conducts their utilitarian function in society, while inwardly transforming and dreaming, lost in a flowing stream of chaos, memories, narratives and experiences. *Art takes a bit of chaos in a frame in order to form a composed chaos that becomes sensory,*

21 Morris David. “Anti-Shows.” E-Flux no. 81 (April, 2017). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/81/125364/anti-shows/>.

22 Morris, “Anti Shows”

23 Conceptual term used in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari

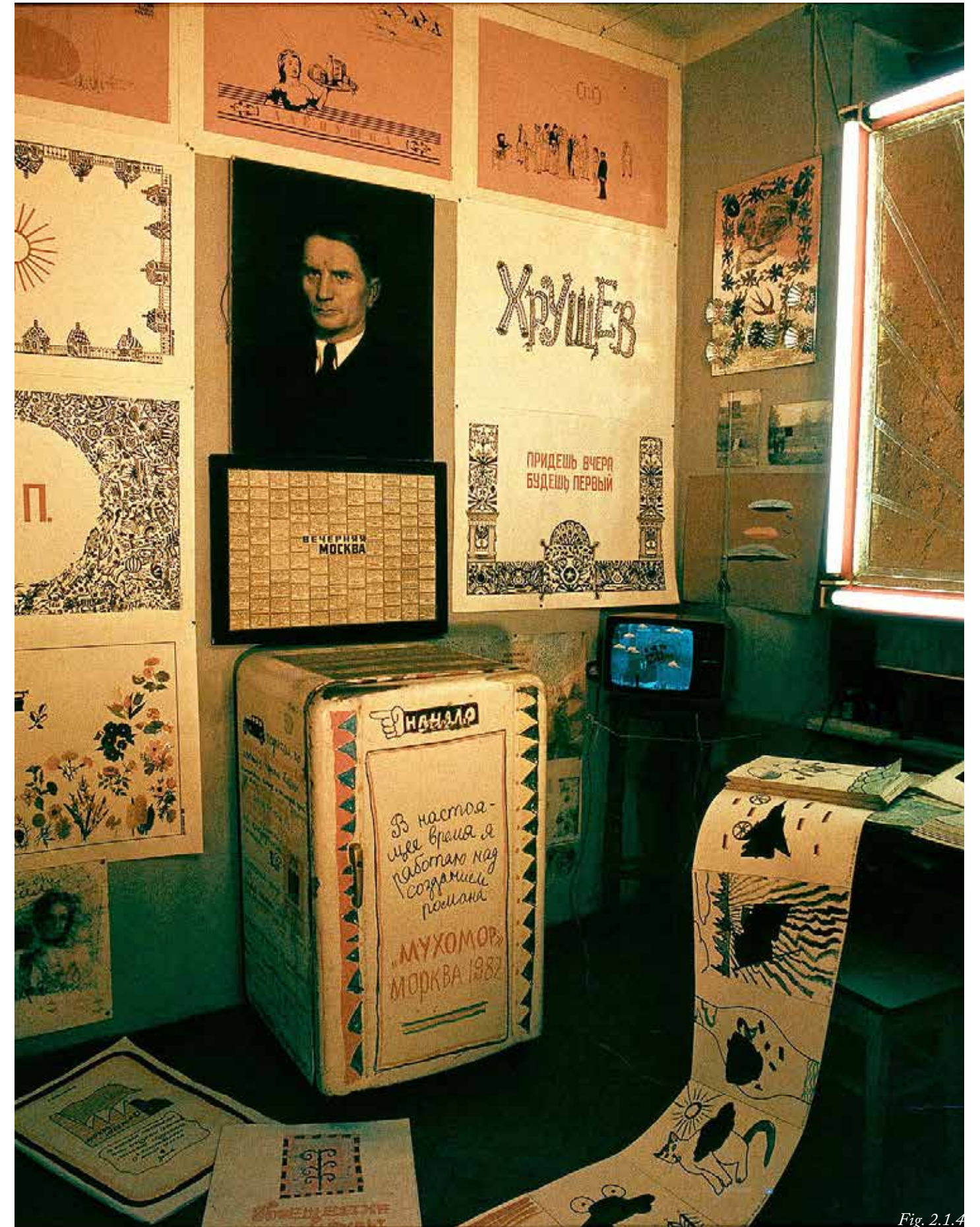


Fig. 2.1.4





Fig. 2.1.6

or from which it extracts a chaotic sensation as variety.²⁴ Each person's Soviet life became a rehearsed performance, completing their given tasks in the workforce and not deviating from their function within the system. Contrarily, the authentic self strives for newness, creativity and self expression, desiring change and transformation as time passes. Stagnation is unnatural. The evolution of the fridge, its physical peeling over time due to the individuals' inhabitation and its inner evolving novel, embraces change and temporality and becomes a testimony to living. The piece goes against the communist celebration of the permanent and the durable by giving the fridge the human quality of being and transmutating.

Always, for as long as I can remember and even when I don't remember (my mother told of this about me as a three-year old), there has been a desire to run, to get away from that place where you are now; to run without looking back, so as never to return; to run so far away that they can't bring you back from there; to run so fast that you can't be caught; to run so suddenly and unexpectedly that no one could anticipate it and interfere; to jump out at the most unexpected moment when no one is expecting it; to jump through the window which is always closed, through the door which is most likely locked ...²⁵

The famous 1985 installation piece by the dissident Russian artist Ilya Kabakov, "The Man who flew into space from his apartment", captures the *refrain*²⁶ of escapism and dissociation during communism. An element of fantasy is also imbued into the installation. The man is missing from his bedroom, his flight into space only indicated by the hole in the roof of his apartment and the slingshot/catapult he used to propel himself into space. The room speaks of impossible dreams during communist times, the feeling of being trapped in one's condition and looking up to the sky as the only place to escape reality. The material reality of the man's *becoming cosmos* is in the plaster debris from the broken ceiling, a cot with undone sheets, two chairs with a wooden plank hanging between them and a pair of shoes placed as though the man who had been wearing them had disappeared, the shoes being traces of the place his feet occupied. The man has become space, has become universe, has broken out of his condition to reach another state; the room being the evidence of

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 206

²⁵ *The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment: Ilya and Emilia Kabakov: Fine Art Biblio*, Fine Art Biblio. Established Artists. Their Comprehensive Works. <https://fineartbiblio.com/artworks/ilya-and-emilia-kabakov/788/the-man-who-flew-into-space-from-his-apartment>

²⁶ Term described in *A Thousand Plateaus* by Deleuze and Guattari



Fig. 2.1.7

the refrain of the communist years. The images of the ideological regime in the form of posters plastered on the walls of the room contrast the material reality of the room. His small room and poor condition stare at us in the face.

Petr Belenok was a Ukrainian non-conformist artist who like Kabakov

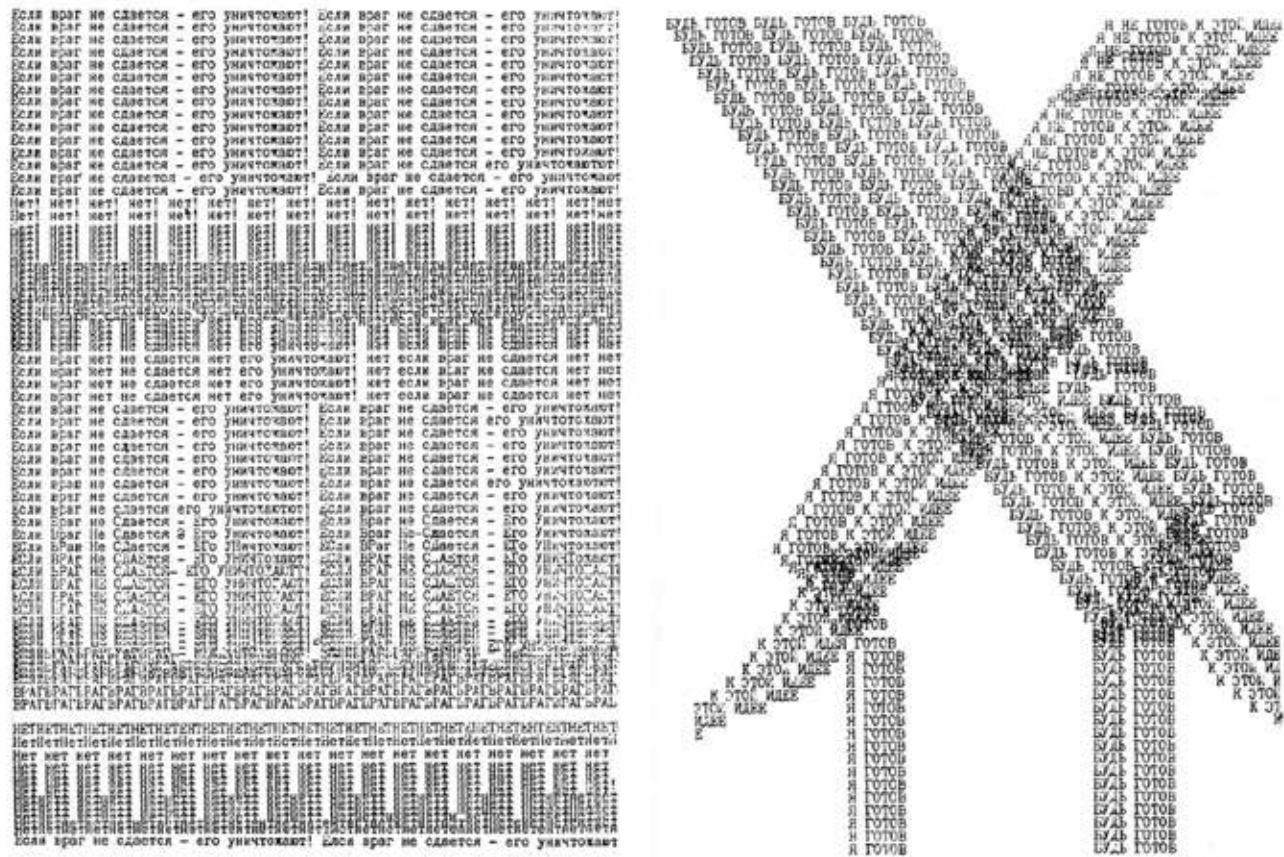


Fig. 2.1.8



Fig. 2.1.9

captured the refrain of escapism and the surreal through his images that depicted people in flight or on other planets. His work typically depicts an individual breaking away from the collective and being pulled by a cosmic force, defying gravity.

During the time Kabakov produced dissident art, Dmitri Prigov, also a Russian Conceptualist artist, produced amongst various artworks, satirical non-conformist paintings capturing his personal reaction to the Communist slogans and ideological imagery.

*At its heart, Russian Conceptualism was self-reflexive, ironic, fixated on verbal and visual “codes” and their subversion. Soviet slogans and imagery would be repeated and twisted until they lost all meaning, recreating for the audience their own experience of living with rules and received wisdom which they knew to be hollow.*²⁷

Prigov overlaid communist slogans onto natural landscapes, worked with repetition, recurring characters based on real people such as soviet police officers, and re-naming of elements in order to expose the fictional empty words and rootless ideological structures that framed the Communist society. The artist deconstructed and re-constructed the Russian alphabet until it lost all meaning²⁸, creating a *minor language* in the process. This distortion of language with repetition, the degradation of the meaning of the word over time and its transformation into something other can be further explored in the piece *AAA-AAA* performed by Marina Abramovic and Ulay in 1978. The two artists face each other and proceed to yell repeatedly, with their mouths open, in a rhythm established by their breathing, while staring at the other. Breathe, yell, breathe. As the event progresses, the cries become shrilly, more guttural, uncontrolled. The voice breaks. The breaths in between the yell fall out of sequence. Chaos ensues. They become anger, heartbreak and pain as their vocal cords are strained. The tension and nature of the performance shifts, spiraling out of control. They yell and get closer to each other with each cry, the territory changes, leaving in-between both of them a shrinking space for the sound. You can see the pain in their eyes and the veins on the neck, as their voices disappear, finally

27 Goff, Samuel. “Dmitri Prigov: How the Soviet Union Produced a Genre-Defying Artistic Mystic.” The Calvert Journal. <https://www.calvertjournal.com/features/show/9042/dmitri-prigov-how-the-soviet-union-produced-a-genre-defying-artistic-mystic>.

28 Goff, Samuel. “Dmitri Prigov: How the Soviet Union Produced a Genre-Defying Artistic Mystic.”

The Home as the Antithesis to the
Communist City and of the Monument

Material Culture of the Home: A Place
of Tradition, Folk Culture, Ritual

Bulgarian Folk Craft, Imperfection and Memory

THE SOVIET HOME

02



The Home as the Antithesis to the Communist City and of the Monument

“On the question of everyday life (byt),” wrote Leon Trotsky in 1923, “it is patently obvious that each individual is the product of his environment rather than his creator.”¹

The soviet man was to live in the modern industrialized city according to the communist government, during the Nikita Khrushchev era (1953-1964). The apartments in which the proletariat resided were cramped due to the shortage of housing, caused by the influx of people pushed out of the rural areas into the working city. To meet the housing demand, a rapid mass construction of ‘panelki’, the name attributed to the prefabricated concrete apartments associated with Communist living, was occurring in each city of Bulgaria. The panelki were standardized, with limited space per apartment, efficient and identical. They were representative of the utilitarian way of living the communist regime celebrated.² A panelka was around 13-20 storeys high, with an average three-bedroom family apartment being 970 square feet³. The bourgeois’ elite homes with exorbitant amounts of space were seized by the state, partitioned, and converted into proletariat residences. The soviet homes and the lives of the families who inhabited them differed greatly from the visual propaganda and speeches the communist regime proliferated. Words and slogans such as “greatness”, “equality”, “everything for the man” were pasted throughout the city, re-affirming the absurdity of the communist regime. People did not have much to eat, their diet consisted mostly of potatoes, pickled vegetables and bread. The party leaders and politically connected individuals were the ones who truly profited during communism, revealing the hypocrisy and corruption of the so-called utopia. The lifestyle imposed on the Bulgarians was clear; everyone is equal, everyone lives in the same apartment, everyone has the same amount of wealth. Everyone is the same. The collective one and the identity of the mass was strengthened.

In contrast, the sculptural Friendship Monument screams excessiveness and power, perched on a vast landscaped hill in a city brimming with housing developments. It is a warning and a statement, that the state dominates the territory, it is powerful and is constantly watching the city from the top of the hill. Suddenly, the public space of the city becomes private, as one needs to act a certain way where they are being watched. People cannot gather at a bar, or on the street to discuss politics. *“A world of visual dominance causes alienation, detachment, solitude, exteriority, and though it creates thought-provoking sculptures, it has not facilitated human rootedness. Where to put our memories, imagination, dreams?”⁴* The city is a *Panopticon*⁵, a construction of surveillance, and the modular rooms of the blocs become the place away from the state’s control. The Soviet home, in contrast to the public realm, becomes the antithesis to the communist regime and the communist city.

¹ Christina E. Crawford. “From the Old Family-to the New.” Harvard Design Magazine no. 41/ Family Planning <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/41/from-the-old-family-to-the-new>.

² Nikolov, Nikolay; (2020) The Panelka Palimpsest: Transformation of Everyday Life in a Prefabricated Neighbourhood in Sofia. Doctoral thesis (Ph.D), UCL (University College London).

³ Square footage of my childhood three bedroom apartment in a panelka block in the Mladost neighbourhood in Sofia, Bulgaria

⁴ ,Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skinn* p. 15

⁵ The Panopticon is an institutional building of surveillance designed by the English theorist Jeremy Bentham



Fig. 2.2.2

Susan E. Reid writes in her article Communist Comfort: “*The womb-like embrace of the Russian home is defined by explicit antithesis to an inhospitable, inhuman public sphere and to the chiliasm and collectivism of official ideology and culture.*”⁶ The home opposes the soviet man with its association to the woman who represents domesticity and ornamentation. The woman purchases fabrics while her husband is at work and sews heavy curtains to cover the windows of the kitchen, the living room and the bedroom, isolating the home from the outside with comforting textiles. She is bombarded with propaganda on the street and at home on the television, aimed at reforming the Soviet woman’s taste.⁷ A magazine on the decorations of the soviet home called “Decorative Art of the USSR” (Dekorativno Iskustvo SSSR), written by Boris Brodskii, attempts to reject and dissuade the notion of the home as separate from the outside or personal, by claiming the concept of personal space emerges from the looked-down upon bourgeoisie.⁸ Characteristics in the home associated with the bourgeoisie of capitalism include “*residue of clutter: ornate furniture, embroidered tablecloths and antimacassars, and silk lampshades.*”⁹ This taste was associated with the messy and the out-of-date,

6 Susan E. Reid. “Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era”. p. 13
 7 Krisztina Fehérvári. “From Socialist Modern to Super- Natural Organicism- Cosmological Transformations through Home Décor”.
 8 Susan E. Reid., “Communist Comfort: Socialist Modernism and the Making of Cosy Homes in the Khrushchev Era”
 9 Susan E. Reid. Communist Comfort, p. 26

creating nooks, grooves and surfaces that capture dust and are harder to clean for the busy working woman.

The state understood the home was a threat to their utopian vision as tradition was ingrained in the way people lived and it was reflected and passed on in the home. Tradition implied a past, which the communist government looked to erase. Common house objects became a menace: *those padded, intimate interiors whose snug warmth is all the more comforting after the raw bleakness of the nation’s public spaces; those tiny flats, steeped in the odour of dust and refried kasha in which every gram of precious space is filled, every scrap of matter – icons, crucifixes, ancient wooden dolls, unmatched teacups preserved since before the Revolution – is stored and gathered against the loss of memory.*¹⁰ A gain of control over the homes by the government is disguised as an education of aesthetics of decor.

We experience the world and understand it more intimately through our tactile senses such as touch, hearing and taste, whereas sight, the sense around which classical architecture was philosophised and built, is one that creates distance between the individual and his environment.¹¹ The communist city and the monuments followed the Stalinist architectural style which was based on classical philosophy. The image, the vision of utopia was celebrated, a vision that could be seen by the collective in the same way. The other senses which were associated with individual and personal experiences, varying from person to person, did not have a place in the communist utopia and its visual culture. The other senses were deemed archaic and beneath the vision, suppressed by society. The experience of space through vision could be controlled by its creator. The space of proportions, precision and mathematics in the form of squares, boulevards, colonnades and axes of symmetry. “*A culture that seeks to control its citizens is likely to promote the opposite direction of interaction, away from intimate individuality and identification towards a public and distant detachment.*”¹² The home, covered in textures and rugs and various materials, becomes the place of intimacy and warmth, grounding the individual in reality, removing him from the absurdity of the world outside. The sounds of pots steaming while people are chattering and laughing, the clinking of porcelain plates being set down on the wooden table, the smell of fresh bread and alcoholic spirits, the soft fur of the chair tangling through fingers. All these events become a singular experience engaging all the senses. They are juxtaposed at once to create the feeling of the home.¹³ “*The feeling of external control and visual effect is replaced by a heightened sense of interiority and tactile intimacy! Sensuous materiality and the sense of tradition evoke a benevolent experience of natural duration and temporal continuum.*”¹⁴

10 Francine du Plessix Gray, *Soviet Women Walking the Tightrope* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), p. 2, **quoted in** “Communist Comfort”, Susan E. Reid, p. 13
 11 Juhani Pallasmaa. *The Eyes of the Skin*
 12 Juhani Pallasmaa. *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 49
 13 Juhani Pallasmaa. *The Eyes of the Skin*
 14 Juhani Pallasmaa. “Hapticity and Time”, p.4



Fig. 2.2.3



Fig. 2.2.4



Fig. 2.2.5



Fig. 2.2.6



Fig. 2.2.7

The values of the home welcomed dissidence, individuality, expression and memory. Kitchens and living rooms became tea rooms, lounges, the bar, the art gallery, the poet's sanctuary, the salon, the laundry room, the place of women's gossip and the workspace.¹⁵ They became a rhizomatic space in a concrete box. Due to its nature, the home was the heterotopia¹⁶ of the communist city. It was the place of rebellion. *"The opposition between the home and the Soviet state's official modernising project, which entailed rupture with the past, is represented in a series of negative/positively ads that map onto the dichotomy public/private: bleak/snug; raw/cooked (or even re-cooked!); loss/gathering and storing; amnesia/memory."*¹⁷ Unlike the visually oriented world outside the home, it was tactile in nature. It is opposite to the city in its physical aspect, not only its function. The essence and expression of the home captures the concept of Deleuze and Guattari's major and minor language¹⁸; the major language being the dominating communist culture, and the minor being a way that individuals have found to live and express themselves by manipulating this major language for personal purpose. *"As much of the population had no choice but to move into such generic environments, a vernacular aesthetic, the term Organicist Modern*

15 The Kitchen Sisters. "How Soviet Kitchens Became Hotbeds of Dissent and Culture." Vpr (May 27, 2014). <https://www.vpr.org/post/how-soviet-kitchens-became-hotbeds-dissent-and-culture#stream/0>.

16 Heterotopia is a term coined by the French philosopher Michel Foucault to describe.....

17 Susan E. Reid. "Communist Comfort", p. 13

18 Deleuze and Guattari's writings on the major and minor language in their article "What is a Minor Language?"

*emerged that was deployed to appropriate and "humanize" them, for example, by putting thick sheepskin coverings over modern, lightweight sofas."*¹⁹

The family changes the meaning of the floor rug they bought from the market near the blocs and hangs it on the wall to act as an acoustic barrier, muffling their private conversations from the ears of the neighbours. It was also soft to the touch, stimulating a tactile experience of the apartment. This reminds one of Duchamp's ready-mades, where the artist takes manufactured objects such as a bicycle wheel or a toilet and changes their meaning and function. He achieves that with the urinal by inverting it, renaming it "The *Fountain*", and inserting it into a new context. He does the same with the bicycle wheel which he alters by mounting it on a stool, rendering its original function useless. The artist Doris Salcedo discusses her creative process using domestic furniture, textiles handmade objects and personal belongings which she places in political installations which capture the feelings of personal loss, tragedy and memory during war: *"The way that an artwork brings materials together is incredibly powerful. Sculpture is its materiality. I work with materials that are already charged with significance, with meaning they have required in the practice of everyday life...then, I work to the point where it becomes something else, where metamorphosis is reached."*²⁰

19 Krisztina Fehervary, "Decor, Home". p. 619

20 Contemporary Art Chicago. "Doris Salcedo: Untitled." Doris Salcedo | Untitled. <https://www3.mcachicago.org/2015/salcedo/works/untitled-concrete/>.



Fig. 2.2.8



Fig. 2.2.9



Fig. 2.2.11



Fig. 2.2.10



Fig. 2.2.12

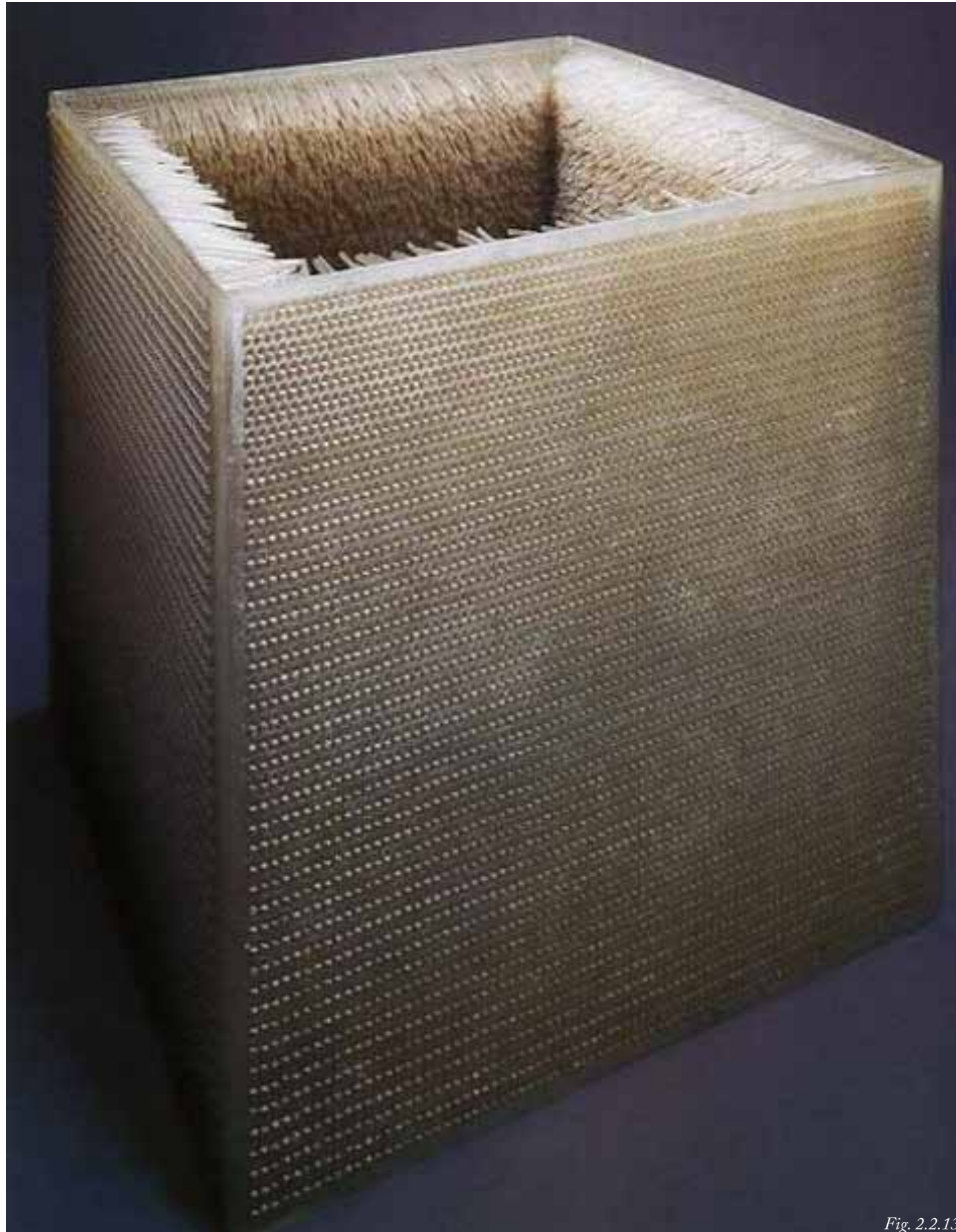


Fig. 2.2.13

The rug during Communism becomes a readymade. The duality within the object is representative of the duality of each person during communism, their self outside of the home and their self on the inside. Another common household item used to create comfort, intimacy and physically separate the non-Soviet self from the outside is the curtain. The curtain is drawn over the window to conceal from the outside, and it is placed in rooms to create privacy in niches of the home, such as a child's nursery. Chairs and sofas were covered in fur or felt-like materials to add softness to the spaces. Wood is used to add warmth, a natural material contrasting the cold hard concrete of the blocs.²¹ Mosaic tiled soviet bathrooms evoke nature through patterning of plants and flowers, and through colour. The smell of the homes is also distinct, and it varies from home to home, embedded over time in the wallpaper, cushions, furniture and nooks in the walls. Analysing the material culture opens a window into the life of the individual during communism. *The social subject, like the body with which it is associated, is a production of decorative surface. The idea of the individual can only emerge within the institutions of domesticity established by the construction of the textured surface that is the house.*²² The treatment of the home does not end in the interior of the apartments but bleeds into the common stairwell and corridors. In front of each door, a colourful mat mark the threshold to the home. Everyone recognizes whose door belongs to which family based on the mats. Beyond the doorway, the stairwells are filled with plants, objects are placed along the windowsills, and posters are hung on the walls.

Each floor is different and becomes a common living room for the residents to exchange stories and pots and pans. A micro-environment is formed within the concrete blocks.²³ The home becomes Eva Hesse's piece *Ascension II* (1968), its outside rigid, structured and masculine, while its inside is soft and textured. *The tendrils evoke natural forms that contrast with the sculpture's industrial exterior, just as Hesse's technique of weaving brings to mind a stereotype of female domesticity that clashes with the hard-edged masculinity of the mass-produced steel.*²⁴

21 Krisztina Fehervary, "Decor, Home", p. 629

22 Mark Wigley, "Untitled: The Housing of Gender." *Sexuality and Space*, p. 369

23 Erik Messori and Nicole Di Ilio. "Life Inside a Kiev Khrushchyovka: Soviet Architecture in Ukraine." *Al Jazeera* (25 February, 2019). <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/life-kiev-khrushchyovka-soviet-architecture-ukraine-190220090918181.html>.

24 Michael Kimmelman. "ART VIEW; Eva Hesse and the Lure of 'Absurd Opposites'." *The New York Times* (May 10, 1992). <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/05/10/arts/art-view-eva-hesse-and-the-lure-of-absurd-opposites.html>.



Fig. 2.2.14

Material Culture of the Home: A Place of Tradition, History and Ritual

'I want something different, unique, that mine shouldn't be the same as the neighbours... breaking out of greyness, of the customary, of the panel-crowds. If I can't do anything about the exterior, then at least I'll magically transform the interior, let my individuality be seen. I don't want mass housing. I want a home, a real one, where not just my body, but my spirit can also rest.' [Kozma 1995: 8]²⁵

The materials that inhabit the interior of the soviet home derive from the traditional Bulgarian dwellings and are rooted in the history, culture and identity of the country. From the softness of the fur, to the antlers hanging off the walls next to the woven rugs, and the clay pots sitting behind the glazed doors of the warm oak cabinet, each piece in the home holds stories and traditions that have transcended centuries. Krisztina Fehervary, a socio-cultural anthropologist, highlights the complex relationship materials have with the political and societal forces at play. The focus on man-made materials fabricated in factories such as plastics and concrete are promoted in architecture and in the interiors of the soviet homes. These materials are unnatural, creating a dissociative experience of the environment, as well as stemming away from the traditional vernacular ways of building. The non-natural material becomes linked to technology and modernism, resistant to impermanence, driving forces of the communist utopia. *"Concrete and plastic are often understood to be "cold" materials that arrest heat and thus interfere with the temporal processes of transformation (cooking, fermenting, decaying, and fertilizing renewed growth; cf. Weiss 1996:76).*²⁶

25 Krisztina Fehervary, "Decor, Home, p.633
26 Krisztina Fehervary, "Decor, Home", p.628

The Bulgarian has a strong relationship with the forest and the mountain. It is in the geography, the land of the country. The Balkan chain crosses the country, abundant with fir, black pine, ash, spruce and beechwood. The material of wood becomes linked to the history, construction and everyday life of the Bulgarian. The wood builds the traditional Bulgarian home. The traditional home manifests itself in the soviet home through the wooden table, the chair, the cabinet, bringing the mountain inside. Inside the traditional home are herbs used in cooking and teas such as rosehip, stinging nettle, wild onion and chestnuts. They used to be foraged from the bounteous land for centuries, recipes being passed down on how to cook each with care. These plants appear in the soviet home's cupboards. Some of the plants are used for medicinal purposes, while others are added to red wine (*pelin*²⁷), infusing it with the aroma of the land. Vegetables that were foraged from the gardens of the traditional home were pickled and stored in cellars for centuries. The traditional appetizer *torshia*, the result of this preservation of vegetables such as carrots, cabbage, cauliflower and tomatoes in a salty vinegar brine, continues to appear on the kitchen table of the soviet home, next to a glass of *Rakia*, a homemade brandy that can be made of various types of fruits such as plums, apricots or grapes. The Bulgarians adapted their homes to keep their cultural traditions alive. The jars of pickled vegetables are stacked on the balcony, next to the homemade jams. The balcony of the soviet home functions as the traditional storage cellar.

27 Pelin wine is a traditional beverage in Bulgaria, made with red and white wine which ferments in wooden barrels, while infused with dried absinthe flowers and absinthe stems to prevent it from turning to vinegar in the barrel.

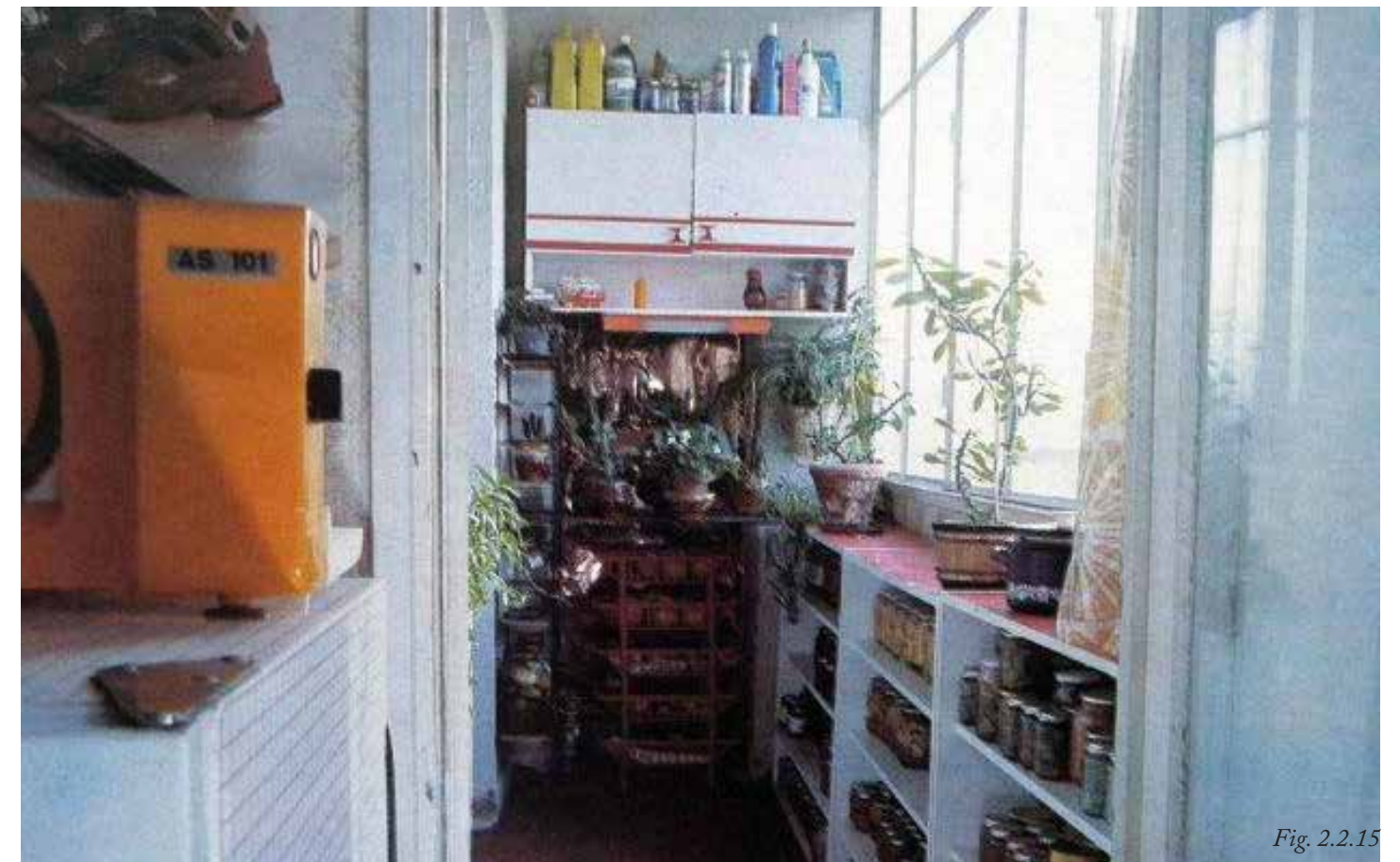


Fig. 2.2.15

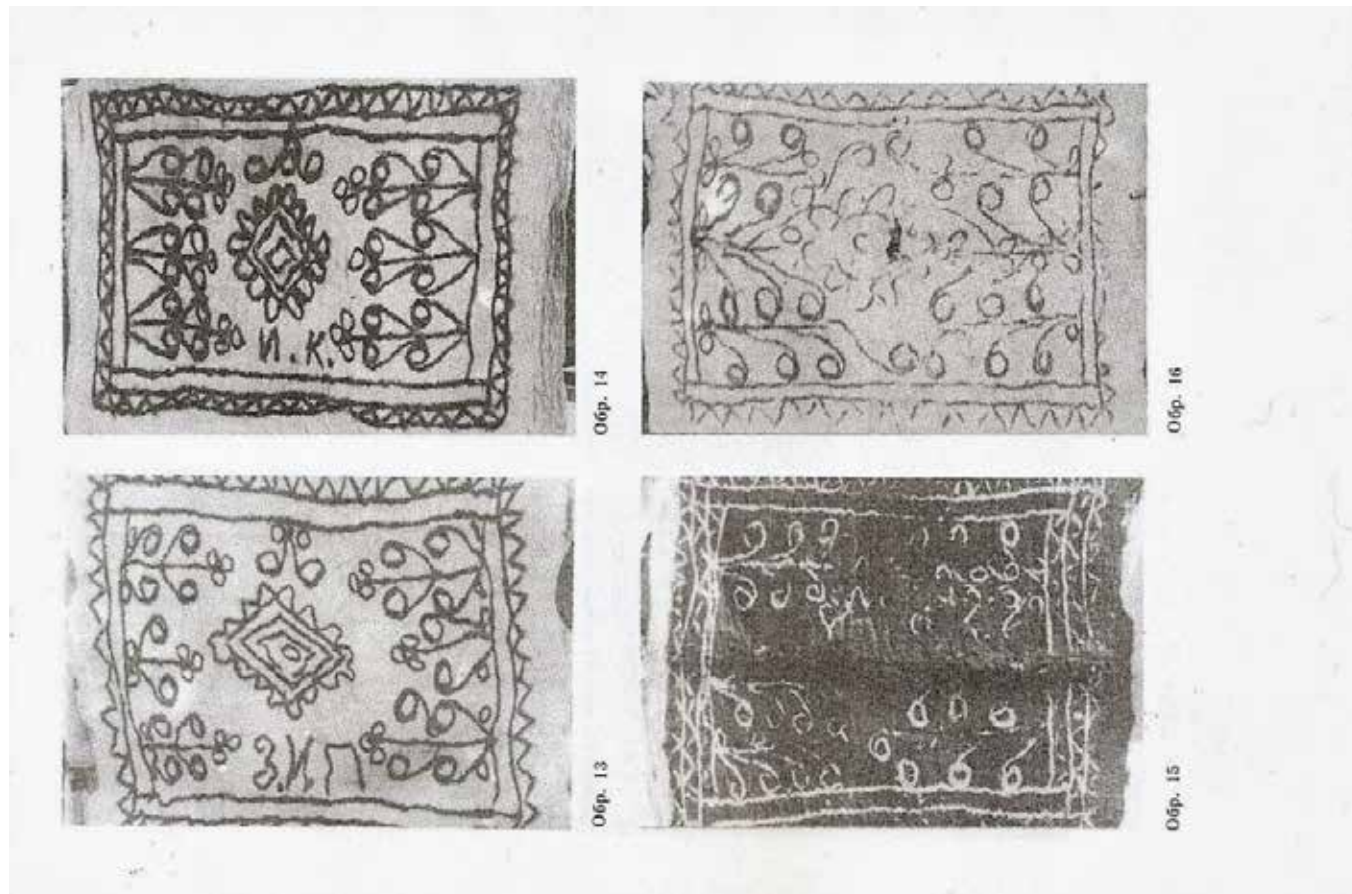


Fig. 2.2.16

The rugs hanging on the walls of the soviet home have a long history, having been made for centuries and occupying an important place in the traditional Bulgarian dwelling. They are called *Chiprovtsi rugs*, named after the region, known best for the craft of making them. “*Chiprovtsi carpets are still made using a technology unchanged by time. The women – no man has ever taken up the craft – use vertical looms, just as the first weavers, in Neolithic times, did. The warp is of pure cotton, and only genuine wool is used for the weft. Weaving is a slow process; a skilled worker produces between two and three square meters of carpet in a month. A finished Chiprovtsi carpet has two identical faces, and each of them can last for at least 30 years.*”²⁸ The rugs were decorated in nature motifs, depicting flowers, trees, leaves, symbolizing the forces of nature present in the world as per Bulgarian beliefs. Stories and rituals were woven into images.²⁹ Traditionally, the vibrant colours of the rugs were achieved through only natural dyes, made from animals, minerals and plants. The organic, traditional, colourful rug emerging from nature, becomes part of the crafted interior organicist world of the soviet home, allowing its inhabitants to escape their condition.³⁰

Once you step into the soviet home, you can't help but notice the array of cups, pots and plates stored in the kitchen and in the wooden cabinets in the living room. The ones that catch your eye are of rich earthy colours such as terracotta brown, with repetitive motifs ornamenting their exterior. These pots are called *gyuvetche* and are traditionally used in Bulgarian cuisine. Sets of the *gyuvetche* are passed down through generations, mothers cooking in their mother's vessels, the pot passing down the meal. The pottery craft of making the traditional *gyuvetche*, by burning the glazed clay in a kiln, is of archaic traditions. History of the country is in the maker of the pot, the cooking of meats, vegetables and herbs over open fire, and the meal, a warm stew of flavours of the land. Everyone gathers in the warm kitchen during dinner time, as the apartment was typically colder. Conversations begin in this social condenser.



Fig. 2.2.17

28 Bozhidara Georgieva. “Chiprovtsi’s Carpets.” Vagabond (25 March, 2015). <https://www.vagabond.bg/travel/high-beam/item/2958-chiprovtsi-s-carpets.html>.

29 Bozhidara Georgieva. “Chiprovtsi’s Carpets.” Vagabond (25 March, 2015).

30 Krisztina Fehervary. “Decor, Home”, p. 626



Fig. 2.2.18



Fig. 2.2.19

Bulgarian Folk Art, Imperfection and Memory

Folk craft is the craft of making objects which are “*indispensable to the daily life of ordinary people, that are used in commonplace settings, that are produced in large numbers, and that are inexpensive.*”³¹ In Bulgaria, folk craft is found in the weaving of the Chiprovski rugs, the pottery craft producing the *gyuvetche*, the *rakia* distillation barrels, the making of fur costumes for the *Kukeri* festivals³², to the simple handmade dwellings built from wood, cotton and other natural materials. These crafts are part of the culture of the place and the people, their making and technique passed down over time from the hand of one maker to the next. Folk craft becomes “*the antithesis of Modernism, a protest against mass production.*”³³ The philosophy of folk craft emerged with Yanagi Soetsu, a Japanese theorist who founded the Mingei Movement, whose philosophy he outlined in his book *The Unknown Craftsman*. The art movement focused on folk craft made by ordinary people. The main philosophical aspects of mingei were; *rejection of the perfect: it has no suggestion of the infinite; see as the core and knowing as the periphery: intuition takes in the whole whereas intellect only takes in part; simplicity; utility; the conceptualization of national identity in terms of the common people rather than elites; musō: the unchanging formlessness behind all phenomena (eternal present, Buddhist term).*³⁴

Folk craft becomes a tool for the preservation of identity, culture, memory and history through the micro-narratives of common people, against the background of the grand narrative of communism. It ties non-material Bulgarian culture; festivals, traditions, rituals, to its material culture; objects and crafts associated with these traditions. The making of the rug is associated with the town of Chiprovtski, and through the act of weaving, the Bulgarian embeds stories in ornamental imagery, passing down narratives and techniques of the folk craft. The traditional pottery passes down the meal, the food cooked in the same pot using the method that our great grandmothers did in its preparation. Old stories are told while gathered around the fire, in the hearth of the home materialized in the kitchen. Knowledge is passed down through the crafts of the maker.

This authentic celebration of history, craftsmanship and culture is turned into “Soviet kitsch” during Communism. *During the 1930s Russian artists were looking for a way to transform the traditions of the Old Masters into Soviet art. Both literary and artistic legacies of previous epochs were now subjected to revision.*³⁵ With industrialization, mass production of goods takes the essence of everyday folk craft and turns it into cheap, machine-made, impersonal and soulless products. Kitsch is

31 Snyder, Michael. “How Two Children Are Keeping Their Father’s Design Legacy Alive.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 16 Mar. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/16/t-magazine/george-nakashima-legacy.html.)

32 Old traditional festival, protected by Unesco Heritage, celebrated by men dressing in fur costumes, embodying spirits of the natural world. They dance on the streets chasing evil spirits away.

33 Snyder, Michael. “How Two Children Are Keeping Their Father’s Design Legacy Alive.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 16 Mar. 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/03/16/t-magazine/george-nakashima-legacy.html.)

34 Shau, Kevin. “Yanagi Soetsu: Philosopher of Folk Art and Imperfection.” *Medium*, Medium, 6 May 2018, medium.com/@kevinshau/yanagi-soetsu-philosopher-of-folk-art-and-imperfection-b6732bfe8966.

35 “Soviet Realism: Later Years.” 2020. *Musings on Art*. April 20, 2020. <https://musings-on-art.org/soviet-realism-1940-1953>.

the art of the masses. This extends towards the fast production of the panelki blocks and the symbols of Communism adorning state buildings. *The buildings are decorated in rich but nevertheless superficial skins. The decorum that enveloped both socialist realist and postmodernist buildings served to dress up an austere expression of power. It was meant to relate to popular culture by making the edifice 'user-friendly' and theatrical, and by apparently sharing with the average citizen the 'secrets of the gods' which reside in the form.*³⁶ In the case of the Friendship Monument, it is enveloped with a superficial layer of symbols and icons which are repeated on each communist monument that was built, exhibiting the mass-produced narrative of the soviet man.

The Soviet kitsch creates identical interior environments and exterior landscapes in all the communist satellite countries, such as Ukraine, Poland and Moldova. The panelki are found in the various countries, forming a mass-produced context and a feeling of déjà vu in each territory. The interior of the apartments also gave a sense of familiarity, despite being located in different countries. The Bulgarian photographer Eugenia Maximova goes to Soviet apartments around Europe and is brought back to her childhood in Bulgaria during Communism. *She recognised the kitschy household items that were mass produced in the Soviet Union as copies of western luxury goods but were common elsewhere in the world.*³⁷ Soviet kitsch can be compared to an early version of pop art, with repetition of an image, similar to Andy Warhol's 1962 "Campbell's Soup Cans".³⁸ The repeated image during Communism was Lenin's head. The head appeared on public plazas as a sculpture, as well as inside the homes in the place of religious icons which were banned, steering away from traditional beliefs. Lenin miniatures came in a set of typical poses, always following the same formula and establishing a stereotype. Once Lenin died, the need to preserve his image which had become part of soviet pop culture was so strong that his body was embalmed.³⁹



Fig. 2.2.20



Fig. 2.2.21



Fig. 2.2.22

36 Augustin Ioan, "Interpreting socialist realism", *Architecture and Revolution*, p.64
 37 Liza Premiyak, Eugenia Maximova. n.d. "A Home from Home: Traces of a Shared Past in Post-Soviet Interiors." *The Calvert Journal*. <https://www.calvertjournal.com/tiles/show/4127/eugenia-maximova-interiors-kitsch-photography>.
 38 "Soviet Realism: Later Years." 2020. *Musings on Art*.
 39 Laura Mulvey, "Reflections on Disgraced Monuments", *Architecture and Revolution*, p.222

PART 3

ANTHOLOGY OF NARRATIVES

01 Methodology

Micro-Narratives/Grand Narrative

Cinematic Montage as a Method of Deconstruction

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Traditional Bulgarian Building Techniques and Indigenous Materials

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The Potter's Workshop

The Alchemist's Workshop

The Balneologist's Baths

The Weaver's Room

The Monument as a Mound

On Iconoclasm and Counter Monumentality

METHODOLOGY

01

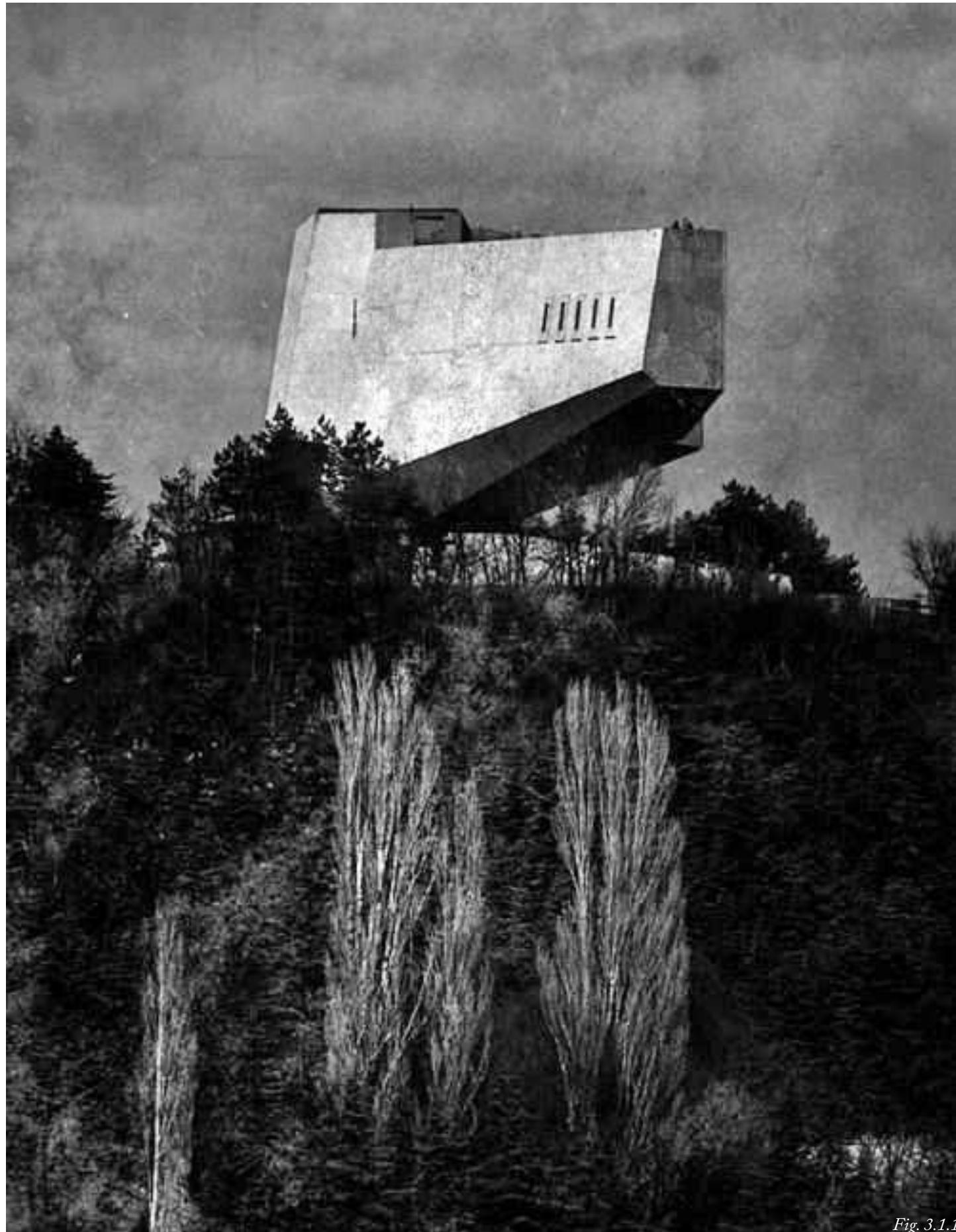


Fig. 3.1.1

Micro-Narratives/Grand Narrative

The design methodology focused on a process of deconstruction of the site and the grand narrative of communism through *detournement*, cinematic montage and micro-narratives; iconoclasm of the monument; and the exploration of indigenous Bulgarian folk practices that are encountered in the Soviet home.

At the beginning of the thesis, I decided that destroying the monument would not be the right design approach as it did not reflect the complexity of the site and its history. Destroying relics of a dark history, erasing them and starting with a clean slate will not address or heal the Bulgarians. It does not give opportunity for self-reflection. Destroying the monument is an immediate and powerful physical act, removing it out of sight, out of the physical world. But the monument will still have a strong hold over the mind of the Bulgarian collective as it is part of very recent history, and its memory will remain after its destruction. Confronting the ideals it stood for and countering them by re-interpreting it becomes a more powerful gesture towards it, it becomes a psychological as well as physical act towards the monument. Memory is a constant reconstruction. The intention of the design will be to give power to the individual's identity.

In order to be able to formulate a design approach that addressed the complexity of re-contextualizing the Friendship Monument, one would begin by understanding the intent and urbanism of the site. The intent of the Communist party in the construction of the monuments was to propagate their ideologies of a utopian society and celebrate the heroic figures of their regime. They preserved these political memories through the typology of the monument due to its association to immortality. Riegl states in *The Modern Cult of Monuments* that “*A monument in its oldest and most original sense is a human creation, erected for the specific purpose of keeping single human deeds or vents (or a combination thereof) alive in the minds of future generations.*”¹ The intent can be read in the architecture of the monument. I started by deconstructing the typology of the monument into its primary architectural elements, and by studying other communist monuments from the time period. My primary research material included classic books addressing monuments and the city, including works by Aldo Rossi, Lewis Mumford, Alois Riegl, and Forster amongst others. Books written on communist monuments and socialist cities were used to interpret the primary research in the particular time period of Communism. I read authors such as Owen Hatherley, Neil Leich and James E. Young. Through this research, I found that the hill, the wall, the stair, the square, the threshold and sculptural imagery were identified as the main elements used with the intent to create hierarchy in the urbanism and to disguise propaganda, a mass-produced story, through architecture. By selecting these elements, I identified the referential architecture, meaning the pieces of the monument that refer to communist symbols and ideologies. By making these elements obsolete, I am moving towards a non-referential architecture. As Zumthor and Olgiati discuss, “*We must make a conscious effort to find the ‘real’ within the ‘hidden’. This means that if we remove all symbols and signs from our work, all metaphorical explanation, and free it from all extra-architectural meaning and associations, we are left with stripped-down, bare, and pure version of*

¹ Riegl & Forster & Ghirardo, *The Modern Cult of Monuments*, 1982, p.1

architecture. This results in an architecture that holds value and speaks truths through its universally valid conditions of material, form.”²

Once I identified the elements and their intent, I analysed the plans, sketches, and site images to study the site’s context and the relationship between the monument’s elements and its present surroundings. My conclusion was to counter the urbanism of the monument in order to re-contextualize the site in the city today, as the hierarchical urbanism of the site, the monument’s political narrative, and intent alienated it from the urban context.

The site of the Friendship Monument stands like an island in the city, a hill fused with the object on top of it. The large central axis on the site organizes the overgrown hill, rationalizing it. The hill recedes below the shadow of the architecture of the monument. My methodology towards the overall site was to deconstruct it as a way to counter it. I looked at the monument beyond its totality, its fixed image and narrative, and towards an experience as an assemblage and of materials changing over time. The approach for the deconstruction of its concept and its physical environment was informed by works by Deleuze and Guattari, Zuzana Kovar, Juhani Pallasmaa and blogs by Darmon Richter amongst others. Archival drawings of the hill, and video walk-throughs I found of the site led to the discovery of a hidden path network, secondary to the main axis stair. These paths will become the basis of my design’s urbanistic approach.

I developed the countering of the monument’s grand narrative through research in dissident cinema, literature, artwork, as well as the heterotopias and abjection of society during those times. I explored works by Andrei Tarkovsky, Ilya Kabakov, Dmitri Prigov and Mikhail Bulghakov amongst others. I also looked at artists whose work opposes the philosophy of communism. Some of these artists were Yanagi Soetsu, Eva Hesse, Magdalena Abakanowicz, Francesca Woodman and Francis Bacon.

The methodology I followed for the interventions on the site was to analyse and capture the territory of the rural Bulgarian dweller in the soviet home and re-territorialize it on the site of the monument. I investigated and mapped the space in the soviet home through photographs, stories from families who lived in the apartment blocks at the time, personal experiences, journals, museum exhibits, articles and miscellaneous publications, as well as art. These research materials were used to unearth the micro-narratives of everyday life of the people living during Communism. I identified common elements of materials, objects and approach to the interior of the home through the analysis and the narratives. I traced these elements to their origins and to their history in traditional Bulgarian homes and craft practices. The process revealed how the Bulgarian constructed a micro-environment within the industrial city blocks, deriving from tradition and Bulgarian folk craft. This material language opposing the communist language was an attempt at the preservation of culture, memory and identity. I took this as the driving approach to the materialization of the design interventions. A contemporary archaeology captures the territory of the Bulgarian’s home.

² Peter Zumthor, *Thinking Architecture* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1999), 16-17. 54 context.

Throughout my research of the home and the monument, I came to the conclusion that tactility and the engagement of sensations is an important focus to my design and the new experience I am curating on the site. I found that tactility was a significant element in the Bulgarian’s conception of the interior of the home, stimulating the senses and opposing the sterile outdoor communist environment. The six primary common materials identified during my research of the Bulgarian home were the textiles for the rugs, wood, clay, stone, fur and copper. Each material was researched in its role in traditional house building in Bulgaria, and its connection in Bulgarian rituals and folk craft practices. I explored the relationships and history between these indigenous natural materials and the site of the monument through investigating archaeological sites and various ancient civilizations that inhabited or passed through the Bulgarian land. I highlighted the primary materials in the design on the site, embracing the memories, history and experiences they evoked and brought to the Bulgarian.

Cinematic montage as a Method of Deconstruction

Throughout the design process, I looked to cinema, film montage and collage as a way to deconstruct the site of the monument and inform the imagery of my design. Juhani Pallasmaa states in “Hapticity and Time”,

Collage and assemblage are favoured techniques of artistic representation in our time, these media enable an archaeological density and a non-linear narrative through the juxtaposition of fragmented images deriving from irreconcilable origins! Collage invigorates the experience of tactility and time! Collage and film are the most characteristic art forms of our century, and have penetrated into all other forms of art, including architecture.³

I selected the technique of collage for its ability to translate the multiple narratives I was working with, the monument’s narrative and the Bulgarian’s rural folk craft narratives. I wanted to intertwine and highlight their contrasting natures as well as integrate references to the art and films I was researching.

The monument’s architecture is highly cinematic. It was constructed to be captured in the media, a stage for the media regime, a piece of architectural propaganda. I used the dissident cinematic reference of Tarkovsky’s films as a secondary layer in my design to create a juxtaposed narrative on the site. I used characters from his films in my perspectives to capture the gazing that Tarkovsky uses in order to “*extend the bounds of cinematic space within that space itself even within an already thoroughly mapped out composition. If the concern of most directors is in how to navigate the space between viewer and characters, Tarkovsky seems concerned more with navigating the space beyond his actors’ purview, making these figures intermediaries between us and that infinite distance.*”⁴ The gaze implying something other in the horizon stirs the imagination of the viewer and allows them to project what they envision on the collaged character. The promenade engages the visitor, framing the landscape through openings in the design interventions, peepholes as skylights and thresholds. The path frames the landscape using winding walls, creating a cinematic sequence of movement, a choreography on the site. The change of scale, from wandering through the large overgrown site, trees towering over the visitor, to finding comfort in the small intimate nooks of the interventions that capture a domestic scale, connects the site from a large to smaller perspective. This reminds one of Piranesi’s works, framing multiple perspectives on a single image. This allows one to see something through various lenses and to uncover something new. A deconstruction and reconstruction of the multiple narratives interweave, and images and experiences are juxtaposed on the site.



Fig. 3.1.2

³ Juhani Pallasmaa, “Hapticity and Time”, p. 4

⁴ Douglas, Nathan. 2017. “Stalker (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979).” Seattle Screen Scene. September 11, 2017. <https://seattlescreenscene.com/2017/09/11/stalker-andrei-tarkovsky-1979/>.

The Primitive Temporal Yurt

Production and Maker

Traditional Bulgarian Building Techniques and Indigenous Materials

Locating the Interventions: A Promenade

DESIGN RATIONALE

02



Fig. 3.2.1

The Primitive Temporal Yurt

The monument is a strong symbol and has power over the city. It still tells its narrative and reminds people of a traumatic past. I wanted to expose the myths and shallowness of the propaganda narrative by overlaying it with real honest old traditions and micro-narratives passed down to Bulgarians. In the design intervention, I wanted to bring a new narrative on the site, to shift the power and focus away from the monument and onto the uniting and community-driven traditions that were preserved during Communism. The survival of these traditions is a powerful resistance against the dominating Soviet culture and takes away from its narrative. I used the typology of the Bulgarian yurt, one of the oldest nomadic traditional dwellings, to become the site onto which the micro-narratives and values of the people unravel.

The grass hut stands in for anything underdeveloped, unadvanced, not extruding itself along the exalted line of progress... The domestic vessel of rotting material, built and rebuilt, is nothing new. It is the old, the original home, the matter, the now useless husk cast off back there at the beginnings, whenever and wherever they might be...¹

The yurt is temporal, constructed from indigenous natural materials such as cotton, fur, wood and textiles, all of the materials that craft the interior layers of the soviet home. The yurt is part of the land, embracing the changes of its environment and the transformation of its construction with weathering and use. The dweller builds his home, forming an intimate connection between maker and place. He leaves a piece of himself in the layers of the assembly. The yurt holds an opposing philosophy to the monument with its acceptance of change, time, and the ephemeral. Deleuze and Guattari describe the nomadic way of life and thought in comparison to the sedentary life in the city.

For among sedentariness, clothes-fabric and tapestry-fabric tend to annex the body and exterior space, respectively, to the immobile house: fabric integrates the body and the outside into a closed space. On the other hand, the weaving of the nomad indexes clothing and the house itself to the space of the outside, to the open smooth space in which the body moves.²

Deleuze and Guattari describe the sedentary's striated treatment of the raw material of felt to turn it into fabric, in comparison to the nomadic approach. The sedentary treat the felt, dye it and use machines to process it and change it into woven textiles. The sedentary's movement is confined *between fixed and identifiable points*,³ such as his home, his place of work amongst others. The nomad on the other hand does not have a fixed place of dwelling. His approach to fabric and weaving demonstrates this. He shears his sheep with simple portable tools and covers his yurt with the felt.

¹ Jennifer Bloomer, "The Matter of the Cutting Edge", *Assemblage*, Aug., 1995, No. 27, Tulane Papers: The Politics of Contemporary Architectural Discourse (Aug., 1995), pp. 106-111, p.109

² *Concept of the smooth and striated*, Deleuze, Gilles, et al. *A Thousand Plateaus*. p. 476

³ Francesbell, 2014. "Wandering across Smooth and Jagged Spaces – Bring a Blanket and Beware the Chief Ants." Francesbell's Blog. February 2, 2014. <https://francesbell.wordpress.com/2014/02/02/wandering-across-smooth-and-jagged-spaces-bring-a-blanket-and-beware-the-chief-ants/>.

This simple treatment of the felt does not interfere with the nomadic lifestyle of constant displacement.⁴

The architectural language of the yurt is biomorphic, soft, with no hard angles or separations. It is about a single inclusive space adapting to the dweller's use. The yurt is the home of the mountain man, the nomad, the rural Bulgarian. The association to the nomad counters the soviet man, as transient culture is a rejected notion for the communist regime and does not belong in the utopian vision. *The smooth spaces arising from the city are not only those of worldwide organisation but also of a counterattack combining smooth and homey and turning back against the town: sprawling, temporary, shifting shantytowns of nomads and cave dwellers, scrap metal and fabric, patchwork, to which the striations of money, work, or housing are no longer even relevant.*⁵ It is simple architecture built by common people using indigenous materials.

The yurt is the dwelling of the folklore wild men. They were inhabited by shamans who engaged in daily rituals.

*"The feelings inside a yurt are unique, because she has her own microcosm and her own soul. An incredible experience in a completely different world. There are no angles and barriers, she creates a positive feeling for a direct connection with the cosmos. Separated from nature with thin, only natural materials, walls, the yurt forms an energy area, while providing comfort and protection of the bosom."*⁶

⁴ Francesbell, 2014. "Wandering across Smooth and Jagged Spaces – Bring a Blanket and Beware the Chief Ants."

⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 481

⁶ David. "How to Build A Traditional Bulgarian Yurt." Off Grid Quest, offgridquest.com/

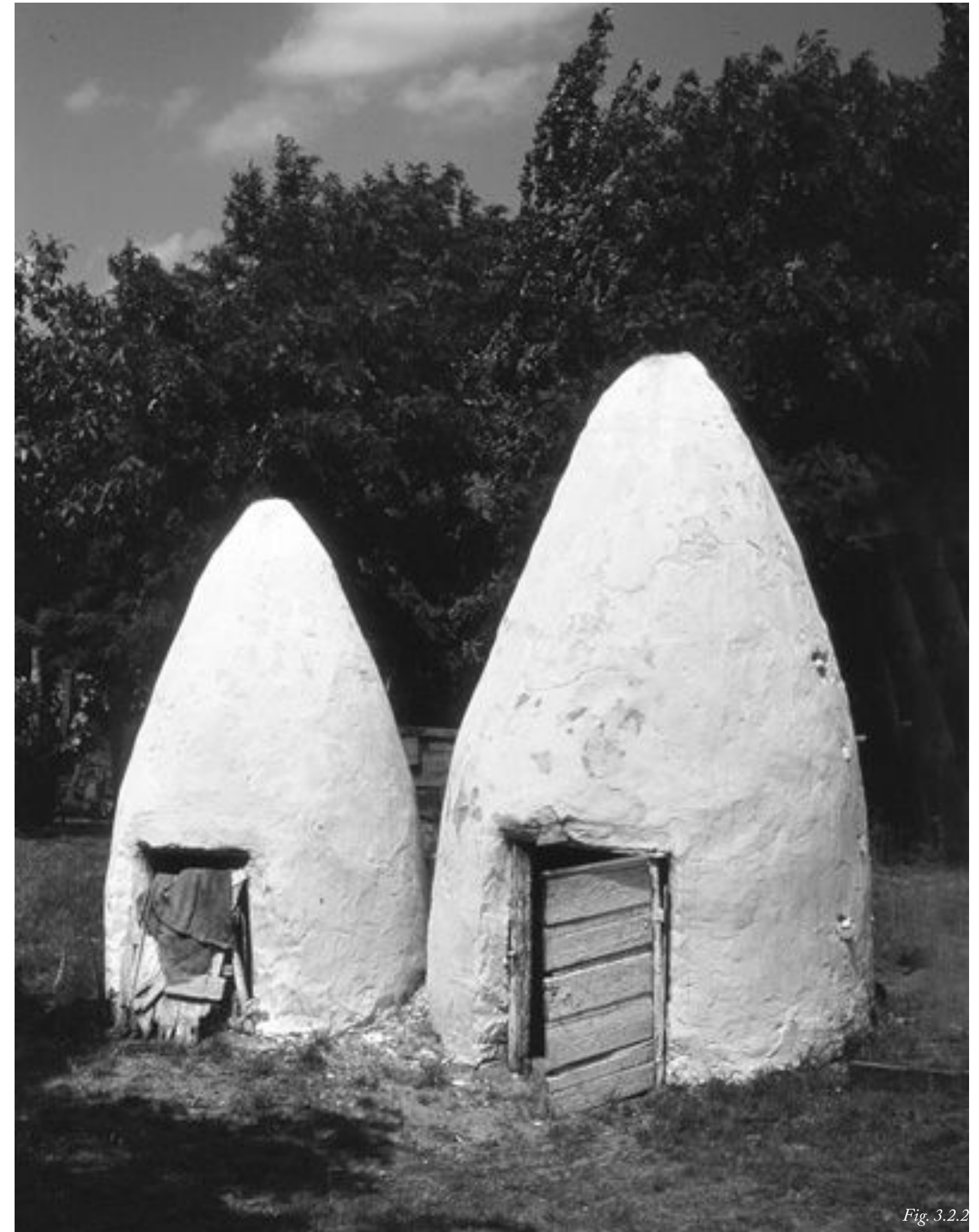


Fig. 3.2.2

The yurt's form is generated from the inside, much like the construction of nests. The spaces on the inside are formed, the outside materials draping over. Historian Jules Michelet describes the construction of bird nests, its shape being "commanded by the inside...the instrument that prescribes the circular form for the nest is nothing else but the body of the bird. It is by constantly turning round and round and pressing back the walls on every side, that it succeeds in forming this circle." *"The female, like a living tower, hollows out the house, while the male brings back from the outside all kinds of materials, sturdy twigs and other bits. By exercising an active pressure, the female makes this into a felt-like padding."*⁷ The nest and the Soviet home become similar, in that their construction and sense of place comes from the inside, and their feeling of domesticity is driven by the female. The family, like the birds, brings in, builds and assembles natural materials and objects to create their home.

In order to highlight the materiality, narrative and craftsmanship of each intervention, I repeated the form of the yurt and its intimate scale. At each intervention, the program, material narrative and experience changes but the building typology of the yurt remains, emphasizing a relationship with temporality and the landscape. The yurt is organic, like a changing body; the temperature of its exterior alters, its skin ages and disappears with time, becoming a part of its environment. The yurt holds memories, its skin thickens around them. Each intervention holds a different piece of the Bulgarian's nostalgic roots of home.

For formal inspiration in the approach towards the yurt-like interventions, contemporary structures such as Mario Merz's works were explored. The form of the yurt embodies domesticity, the feminine space. For Merz, his yurt-like structures which he calls "igloos" have symbolic value. *"The igloo is a womb, and wombs can give birth to things," said Merz.*⁸ The design language is a point of resistance against the masculine socialist realist style which is dominated by logic and rationality. Merz's work explores the relationships between built forms and natural elements, constructing his igloos using found everyday objects, glass, steel...etc.⁹ His work was associated with the Arte Povera movement, which revolved around *exploring a range of unconventional processes and non-traditional everyday materials... Materials used by the artists included soil, rags and twigs. In using such throwaway materials, they aimed to challenge and disrupt the values of the commercialised contemporary gallery system.*¹⁰ The experimental work of Frederick Kiesler's "Endless House", working with natural daily cycles to generate its form and exploring biomorphic non-hierarchical spaces¹¹, was also a point of reference in the interventions' interaction with the site and their philosophical conception.

homes-dwellings/traditional-bulgarian-yurt.

7 Gaston Blanchard, *Poetics of Space*, p.101

8 Maderna, Angela. 2018. "The Igloo Is a Womb, and Wombs Can Give Birth to Things." Mario Merz on Display in Milan." DOMUS. Domusweb. December 12, 2018. <https://www.domusweb.it/en/art/2018/12/12/ligloo--un-ventre-e-dal-ventre-possono-nascere-delle-cose-mario-merz-allhangarbicocca.html>.

9 "Mario Merz and Arte Povera." 2020. Pirelli HangarBicocca. May 28, 2020. <https://pirellihangarbicocca.org/en/exhibition/mario-merz-igloos/#>.

10 Tate. n.d. "Arte Povera – Art Term." Tate. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/arte-povera>.

11 Sveiven, Megan. 2011. "AD Classics: Endless House / Friedrich Kiesler." ArchDaily. ArchDaily. April 11, 2011. <https://www.archdaily.com/126651/ad-classics-endless-house-friedrick-kiesler>.



Fig. 3.2.3



Fig. 3.2.4

Production and Maker

In the exercise of his art and through his “organic” involvement in it, each man has “constructed” himself (Pilkington, 1976: 101).¹²



Fig. 3.2.5

The construction of the Bulgarian yurt reveals its values and outlook on the universe. The Bulgarian yurt originates from the Mongolian yurt, traditionally made from a circular wood frame and covered in a layer of felt. The structure of the central space, called the shangrak, marks the lifetime of the yurt through discoloring, staining and weathering of the material. It also represents the cosmos, the world, the centre. A hearth is located in the middle of the yurt, focusing the space to its centre and used for cooking and gathering.¹³ Johnathan Hale describes the encounter with a primitive hut as a: *boundary at which something ‘begins its presencing’ to use Heidegger’s term – it can also be read as an element of ‘text’: part of a continuously unfolding narrative of the human body’s encounter with the materiality of the world.*¹⁴ The interwoven relationship between the human body and the yurt’s body developed through the act of dwelling is understood in the construction and use of the yurt. Dwelling is inhabiting. It is cooking, sleeping, working, pondering, being. The yurt’s materiality captures the evidence of dwelling. Christine McCarthy describes the traces left on the walls of a kitchen from the act of cooking: *Frying and boiling send culinary-enriched vapours to the walls and ceilings of the kitchen and beyond. Negotiating exits, the culinary waste leaves its traces. It leaves itself within, on its way out.*¹⁵ McCarthy goes on to explain that the house and the kitchen blend together, making it harder to distinguish their separate identities. Scraps of shells, bones of animals and feathers intertwine with the materiality of the house, becoming a part of it. The acts of dwelling become a part of the architecture of the home, altering it over time.

The encounter of the yurts *provides an image of the process of production, that is, the encounter between the building and its makers.... it may also produce a projection of the encounter between the building and its users, visible in the traces left behind by the similarly productive processes of creative inhabitation. It is this emergence of a narrative dimension to the tectonic articulation of materiality and patterns of use which lends a space its sense of temporal richness. All of which suggests a continuation of the past into the future.*¹⁶ A sense of the passage of time, and the material evidence left during the inhabitation of the yurt become informative of the rituals and traditions that occurred in the dwelling. The material registers an archeology of events and connects people from the future to the events of the past.



Fig. 3.2.6

¹² Johnathan Hale. *Gottfried Semper’s primitive hut as an act of self-creation*, p. 1

¹³ “4.1.3.1. The Circular/Radial Model.” 2015. Quadralectic Architecture. December 10, 2015. <https://quadralectics.wordpress.com/4-representation/4-1-form/4-1-3-design-in-city-building/4-1-3-1-the-circular-radial-model/>.

¹⁴ Johnathan Hale. *Gottfried Semper’s primitive hut as an act of self-creation*, p. 4

¹⁵ McCarthy, Christine. 1997. “Constructions of a Culinary Object.” *Space and Culture* 1 (1): 9–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/120633129700100102>.

¹⁶ Johnathan Hale. *Gottfried Semper’s primitive hut as an act of self-creation*, p. 5

Traditional Bulgarian Building Techniques and Indigenous Materials

Vernacular building techniques in Bulgaria have shaped the architectural identity of the rural villages surrounding the larger metropolis. The architecture of houses was adapted based on the geographical conditions in the areas: mountainous region, valleys and fields or seacoast towns. The prevailing building materials were stone, local wood, adobe (sun-dried brick) and wattle and daub. The foundation and ground level of the traditional house is constructed using local stones. The upper level is then typically framed with timber, forming a crossed structural grid visible on the exterior façade.¹⁷ The roof would be constructed using clay tiles, typically red in color, or stone plates. The frame of the upper level of the home would then be filled and clad with layers of material:

*The filling was made of different inert materials, such as mud bricks, fired bricks, broken roof tiles, stone rubble, inserted into the formed triangulated spaces. Instead of making a filling, the wooden posts would also be nailed on both sides with weather-boarding, in-filled inside with cinder; in such cases they could have diagonal members (braces) on top of the boarding to secure stiffness. The filled wall was plastered on both sides with a mixture of clay, lime and straw. This rendering covered the wood skeleton completely.*¹⁸

Depending on the region, the filling or the wattle, would be made with straw, mud and clay plaster. The materials used would depend on the craftsmen in the area, the abundance of material and the particular identities and way of life of the region.

The wattle and daub constructed houses were also called “pletarki”, meaning something that has been woven/knitted. This technique of architectural construction references weaving and fiber arts, creating a type of spatial tapestry. Deleuze and Guattari describe the interweaving between smooth and striated space that occurs in the art of tapestries and textiles. Smooth space has no hierarchy, described to be affective. It is the territory of the nomads. Striated space is the territory of the sedentary. *Their conflict is a confrontation between the State and the War Machine, the logos and the nomos, chess and go, movement and speed, arborescence and rhizome, royal science and nomad science.*¹⁹

The material used in the process of weaving is described as smooth space by Deleuze and Guattari. They use felt as an example, as it frays and has no structure. It is natural, connected to the environment, and without hierarchy. The smooth space of the felt creates history and depth, bringing one to the origins of the material, the animal to whom it belonged, and to the craftsman’s hands who turned it into something new. The felt is given structure and hierarchy through the act of

¹⁷ Raycheva, Regina. (2015). *Wooden Structure Of Historic 19Th C Houses In Bulgarian Lands*
¹⁸ Raycheva, Regina. (2015). *Wooden Structure Of Historic 19Th C Houses In Bulgarian Lands*. p. 441

¹⁹ “# Philosophy /// Processes of Smoothing and Striation of Space in Urban Warfare.” 2015. *The Funambulist Magazine*. July 8, 2015. <https://thefunambulist.net/architectural-projects/philosophy-processes-of-smoothing-and-striation-of-space-in-urban-warfare>.

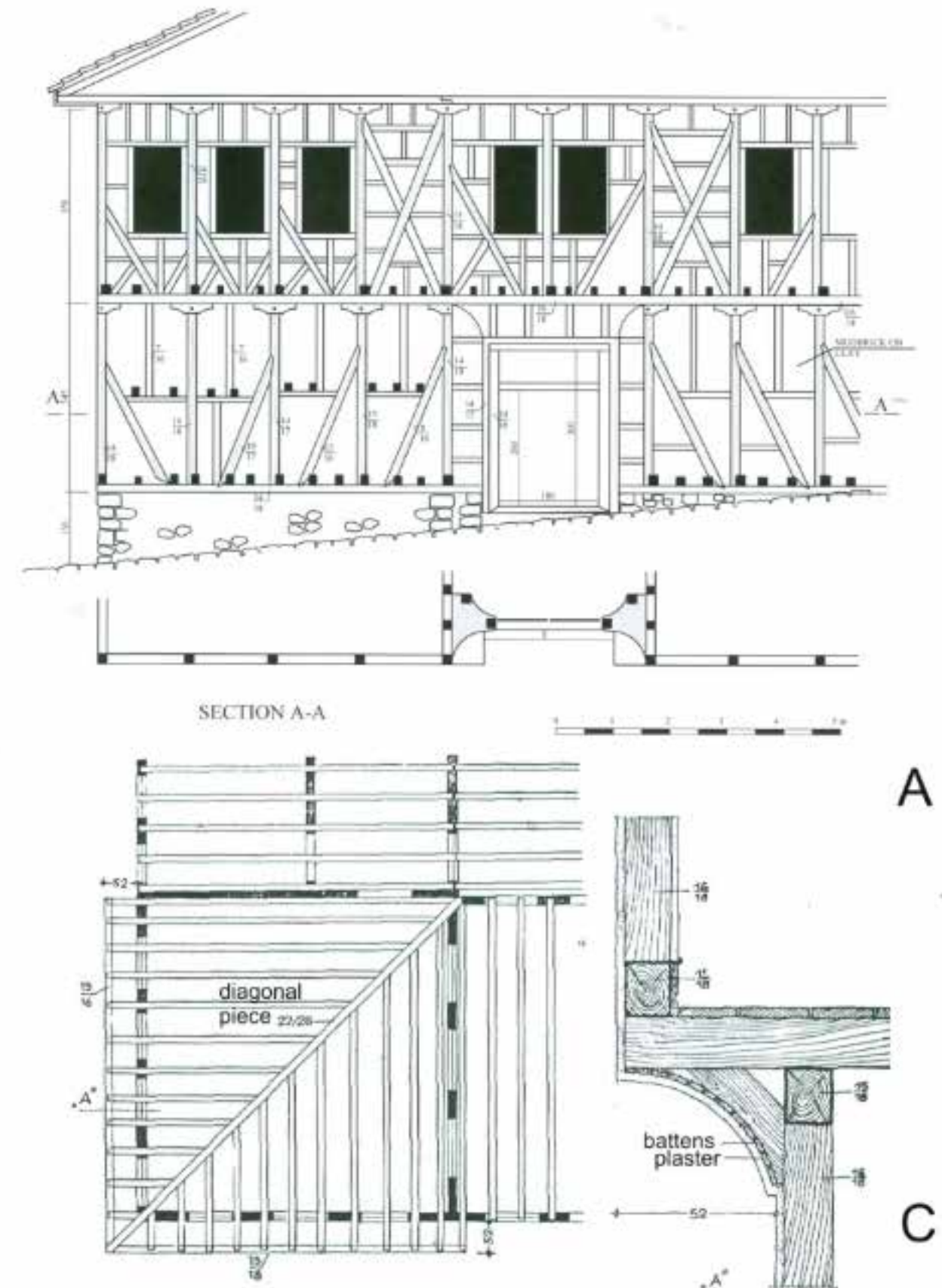


Fig. 3.2.7



Fig. 3.2.8



Fig. 3.2.9

weaving, striating the material, following a set of motions and patterns to create a rigid and strong structure.

In the case of the wooden woven Bulgarian house, wood is associated with smooth space. It is a living material, swelling and contracting based on the temperature and environment it is in. The smooth space of the wood is striated and organized, given structure to take the shape of a house. The boundary defining the exterior from the interior is not absolute, but an in-between, the wood being part of the exterior world and woven into a wall.

For among sedentariness, clothes-fabric and tapestry-fabric tend to annex the body and exterior space, respectively, to the immobile house: fabric integrates the body and the outside into a closed space. On the other hand, the weaving of the nomad indexes clothing and the house itself to the space of the outside, to the open smooth space in which the body moves.²⁰

²⁰ Concept of the smooth and striated, Deleuze, Gilles, et al. *A Thousand Plateaus*. p. 476

Locating the Interventions: A Promenade

On the site of the monument, a pedestrian secondary path network exists within the park. This hidden path is overgrown by the plantings of the hill, bringing the feeling of a desolate remote landscape. In order to retain the post-industrial atmosphere of the site and the air of danger it exudes; the wild nature is left untouched in the design. The introduced design interventions become a separate entity to the monument, and by creating new territories adjacent to the one existing, they allow an immediate tension and other narrative to interact with the alienating one reinforced by the monument. There is a tension between the monument and the interventions, forming a duality on the site through this re-occupation of the territory.

The interventions are located along this promenade, this network consisting of hidden paths and existing narrow staircases on the site. The network is expanded in the design, turning it into a larger promenade that flows and connects the introduced interventions. The new paths are instinctually added to the existing paths and staircases, extending the feeling of wandering through the park, and removing hierarchy in the experience of the site. People's movements and procession through the park is not pre-determined, allowing it to be a free personal exploration. The path's architecture emerges from the landscape, blends with it and guides one to each yurt-like dwelling. The promenade breaks the central axis rationalizing the hill. The design rationale behind the promenade uses as reference Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome in relation to Le Corbusier's Ville de Savoye. The architect uses a promenade to elongate movement and make physical and visual connections with the landscape through a ramp that leads to the entrance.²¹ Views from the ramp build narratives of the site. The architectural language of the promenade differs from the organic one of the yurt-like dwellings. It is rational and simple. The intent behind is to emphasize the organic, uncontrollable nature of the landscape against the simple geometric walls and staircases of the promenade. The promenade curves as it approaches an intervention, deviating from its simple geometry as an indication of what is ahead.

The Greek architect Dimitris Pikionis designed the paths up the Acropolis using local ancient materials and creating vistas, bringing history to the place through materiality. His appreciation of nature and craftsmanship is evident in this project and is a source of inspiration towards the conception of the promenade on the site of the Friendship Monument. Pikionis allows experimentation, values the work of the craftsman and embraces imperfection in his design: *rather than providing fully specified architectural drawings as was expected, Pikionis never specified the design in detail.*²² Instead his drawings established a framework for the makers, guiding them while giving them freedom in their craft and materials.

21 Reference to Ville de Savoye in Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus*

22 Champion, Robert. 2019. "Dimitris Pikionis & the Landscaping of the Acropolis." Tarn. Tarn. September 28, 2019. <https://www.tarn.studio/commentary-blog/2019/3/18/dimitris-pikionis-1>.

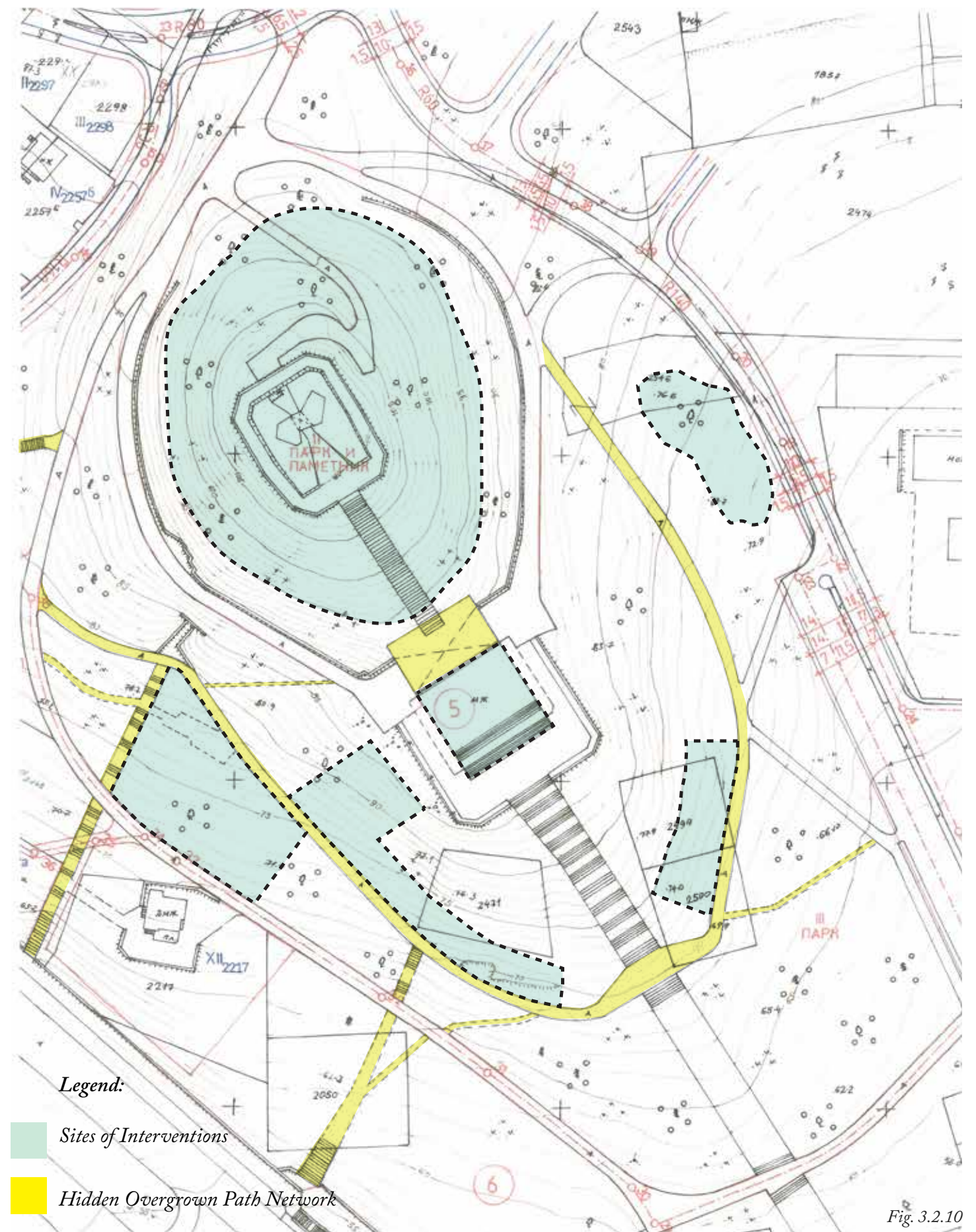


Fig. 3.2.10

The interventions are located in relation to the landscape by reading the natural formations on the site created over time. The design of the interventions emerges from a respect towards the landscape and its history. It is a design approach unlike the communist architecture that destroys and significantly alters the landscape to fulfil its design. It is not about moulding the landscape to fit the architect's vision, but about the design emerging from the land, the history and the traditions present in the land. The promenade becomes beaten over time, the paths becoming more distinct through the imprinting of footsteps left by people walking through it. The more people walk the path to the interventions, the clearer it becomes. This interaction between body and nature is seen in Richard Long's art piece "A Line made by Walking", showing the trace left by the body onto the landscape. He walks a straight path in the grass, trampling it flat to the ground. The sun lightens the line of grass, marking the movement of Long.²³

*Landscape perception and shifts in static and dynamic visibility were important structuring elements in the inhabitation of the landscape. The silhouettes of tells, houses and barrows most probably were incorporated in a consistent and flexible landscape narrative, constructed and (re)conceptualized by the human dwellers.*²⁴

The materials on the site and their relationship to a broader historical context was the guiding point of the conception of each yurt-like dwelling. The indigenous materials used to construct the various huts are clay, brick, stone (flint), textiles, fur, cotton, copper and cedar. The materials are organic, all found in the soviet home, brought inside with the intent of a continuity of cultural identity during communism. These materials are the traditional Bulgarian building materials of the Bulgarian home. Each intervention embraces an ancient practice or ritual associated with a material culture unique to that practice. The design celebrates practices such as pottery making, carpet weaving, healing through balneology, the process of making the traditional fermented fruit brandy *rakia*, communal gathering with coffee drinking, and the ancient ritual of burning houses to renew the life cycle from the Neolithic age in Bulgaria. The clay and brick are made in the kiln of the potter's workshop, the fur and cotton embrace the coffee drinkers, the cedar and copper belong to the *rakia* maker and his barrels, the stone sculpts the balneologist's bath, and the textiles are woven by the weaver for her dwelling. The organic materials transport one closer to tradition and away from the industrial city. They change over time, the temporary organic structures celebrating impermanence, opposing the philosophy of the eternal of the monument.

The interventions capture the intimate feelings of the Bulgarian home through the events of gathering and telling stories. Heidegger describes the dwelling as a place where one preserves and nurtures. The idea of home extends beyond a physical space and is explored in the nostalgic memory of traditions occurring on the site. I have integrated a hearth space at each intervention: the sand pit around which people will gather and drink coffee, the potter's wheel

23 Tate. 1967. "A Line Made by Walking", Richard Long, 1967." Tate. January 1, 1967. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/long-a-line-made-by-walking-p07149>.

24 Gaydarska Bisserka Ivanova (2004), *Landscape, material culture and society in South East Bulgaria*, Durham theses, Durham University. p. 351

and stoked fire for the kiln, the hot bath in the stone cave, the central space of the alchemist where fire heats the barrels for brandy, the cauldrons in the weaver room and the burning of the monument. The fire in the hearth creates smoke and steam, rising upwards above the treetops of the park and signalling the visitors of a presence beyond. The steam is generated by natural processes, in direct contrast to the machine generated steam of the industrial city, chemicals and factory fabrication.



Fig. 3.2.11

Goryani: The Mountain Men

The Coffee Maker's House

The Potter's Workshop

The Alchemist's Workshop

The Balneologist's Baths

The Weaver's Room

The Monument as a Mound

On Iconoclasm and the Counter Monument

MICRO-NARRATIVES OF BULGARIAN FOLK CULTURE ON THE PATH

03

"National identity is always a fantasy structure articulated through various 'myths of the homeland', and made manifest in the built environment."

-Architecture and Revolution, p.122



Fig. 3.3.1

Goryani: The Mountain Men

The protagonist of the monument's narrative was the soviet man. The antagonist is the non-Soviet man who is the leading figure of the narratives introduced in the yurt-like dwellings on the site. The non-Soviet man is manifested in the spirit of the rural Bulgarian, the *Goryan*. The Goryani were an indigenous spontaneous resistance movement in Bulgaria during communism consisting mostly of farmers whose lands were seized by the party. The government established collective farming as a policy, taking larger private farmlands from families to create a single agricultural production group. The farmers with bigger plots of land were labelled "*kulaks*" and were seen as enemies of the state due to their possessions. Once the farmers and rural folk were uprooted from their home and their connection to their land was abruptly severed, they roamed and hid in the mountains. They were concealed and helped by people along the way, growing their number in the underground spaces of the city and mountain. Goryani means "*ones of the forest*" and were referred to as the mountain men movement. They were villagers who lived from the land and fought for it. The driving force of the Goryani was *to get in the way of the bolshevization of Bulgaria and to fight for our country's traditions, to preserve our national folk customs and traditions from depersonalization*. ("да се попречи на болшевизацията на България и да се защити традиционната наша държавност, да се запазят народните ни обичаи и традиции от обезличаване".¹) They resisted the erasure of their identity and their culture.

A metaphorical parallel can be drawn between the mountain men *Goryani* and the old pagan folk ritual of the *Kukeri*, who were also known as the wildmen. The *Kukeri* were men dress in fur costumes embodying forest spirits, who danced in the city street and played music in order to chase evil spirits away. The *Goryani* are reminiscent to the *Kukeri*, working to expel the dark forces of Communism from the country.

The design of the promenade imagines the path of the Goryan, his traces left in the forest through narratives of resistance. The interventions embrace the becoming-Goryan. One finds their inner mountain man on the site by moving through the hill, wandering through the series of paths connected to the dwellings. The nostalgic *affect* of tradition, the resonance of the past, connects the home to the territory of the *Goryan*. The visitor of the site enacts the *Goryan's* narrative and re-tells it against the grand narrative of monument through the mountain men.

1 Dinyu Sharlanov, *The Goryanites - Who Are They*, Space & Form, 1999

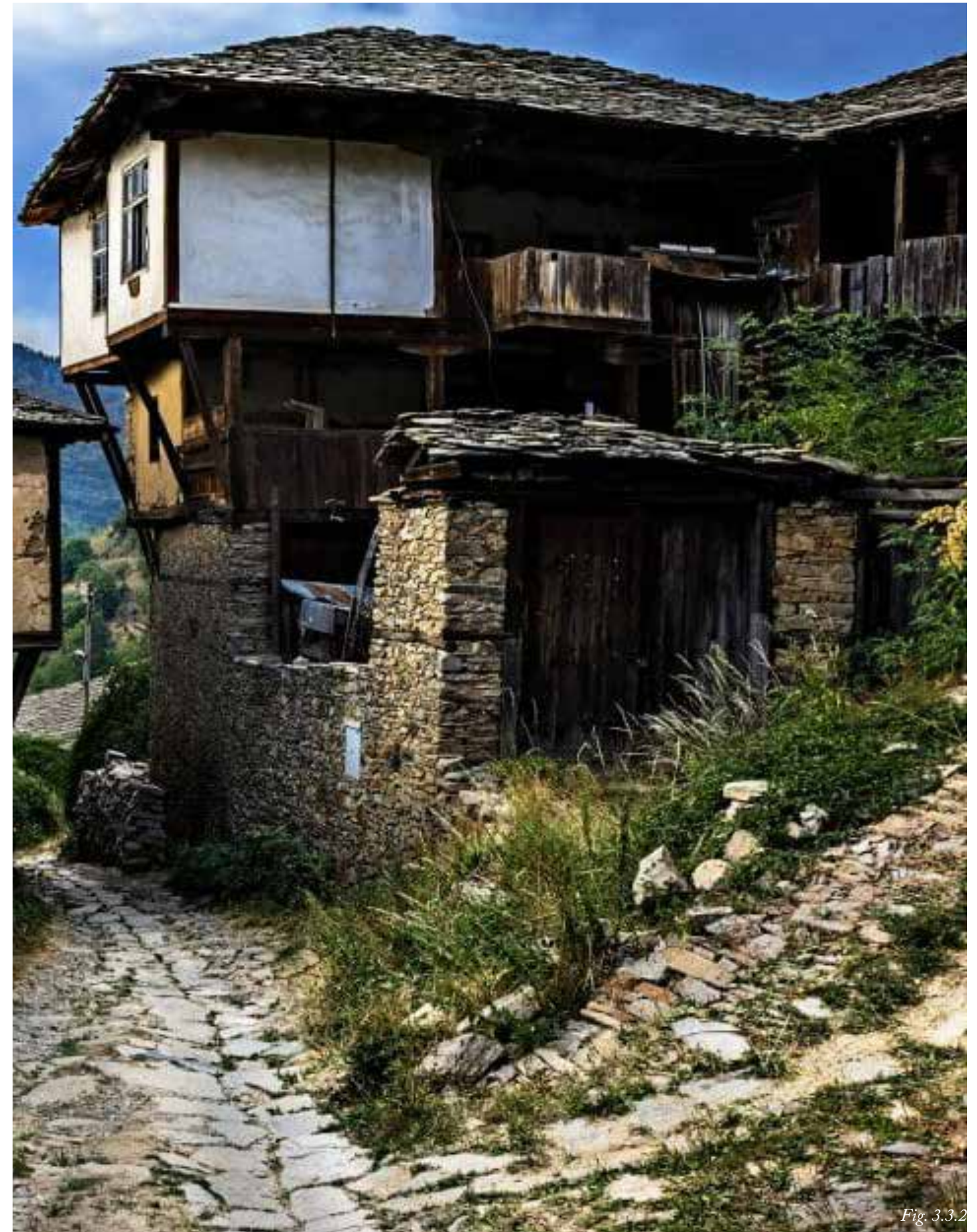


Fig. 3.3.2



Fig. 3.3.3

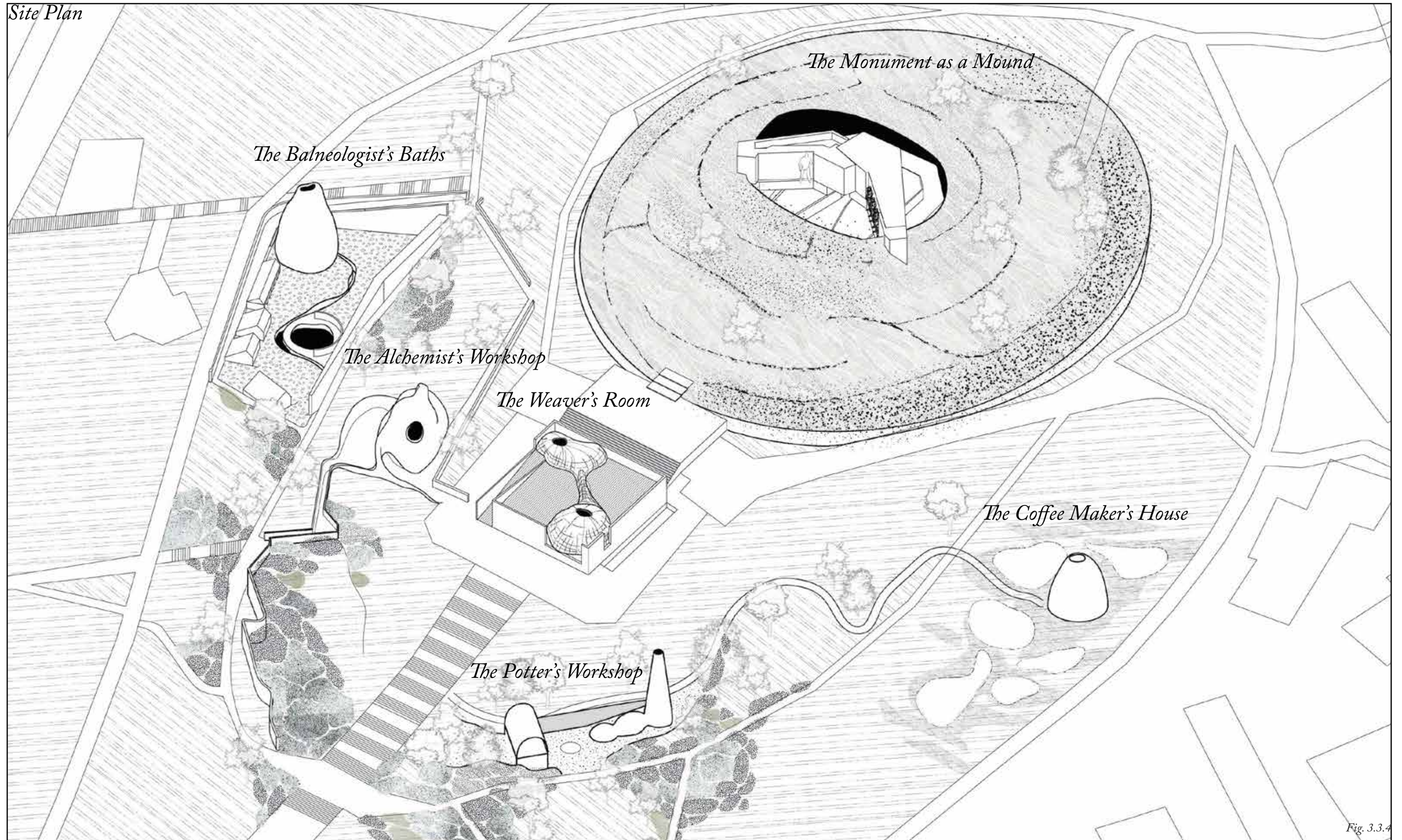


Fig. 3.3.4



Fig. 3.3.5
Site of the Coffee Maker's House

The Coffee Maker's House

...The path is open and light, the landscape is sparse of trees, morphing into overgrown meadow. The colours are saturated, and the grasslands are undulating in the wind. On your right, the landscape turns into mounds. The amalgamation of sand, soil and grass swells and twists into formless matter. It resembles Francis Bacon's *Sand Dune* (1983), a pile of flesh, or an amorphous creature covered in material and sand, boundless. Unlike the hierarchical socialist realist architecture of the monument, this dune-like body "has no rigidity, no internal structure, no tension, no action. It is simply a contour of skin, containing a soft blob. It lies, lolls in itself, it has sinkings and swellings, it rolls in indolence, melding into a single flow. It might be the fattest person in the world, who has lost all parts. Or rather, not quite."² Mounds of this type are spread across the country, indications of a previous ancient time, a burial mound, or a place to store gold during the Bronze Ages. Its formlessness is rhizomatic. What does the dune conceal? A line of smoke appears from the top of one of the mounds, and you realize a yurt-like dwelling has been born from the matter...

² Description of *Sand Dune*, Great works: Sand dune (1983), Francis Bacon



Fig. 3.3.6

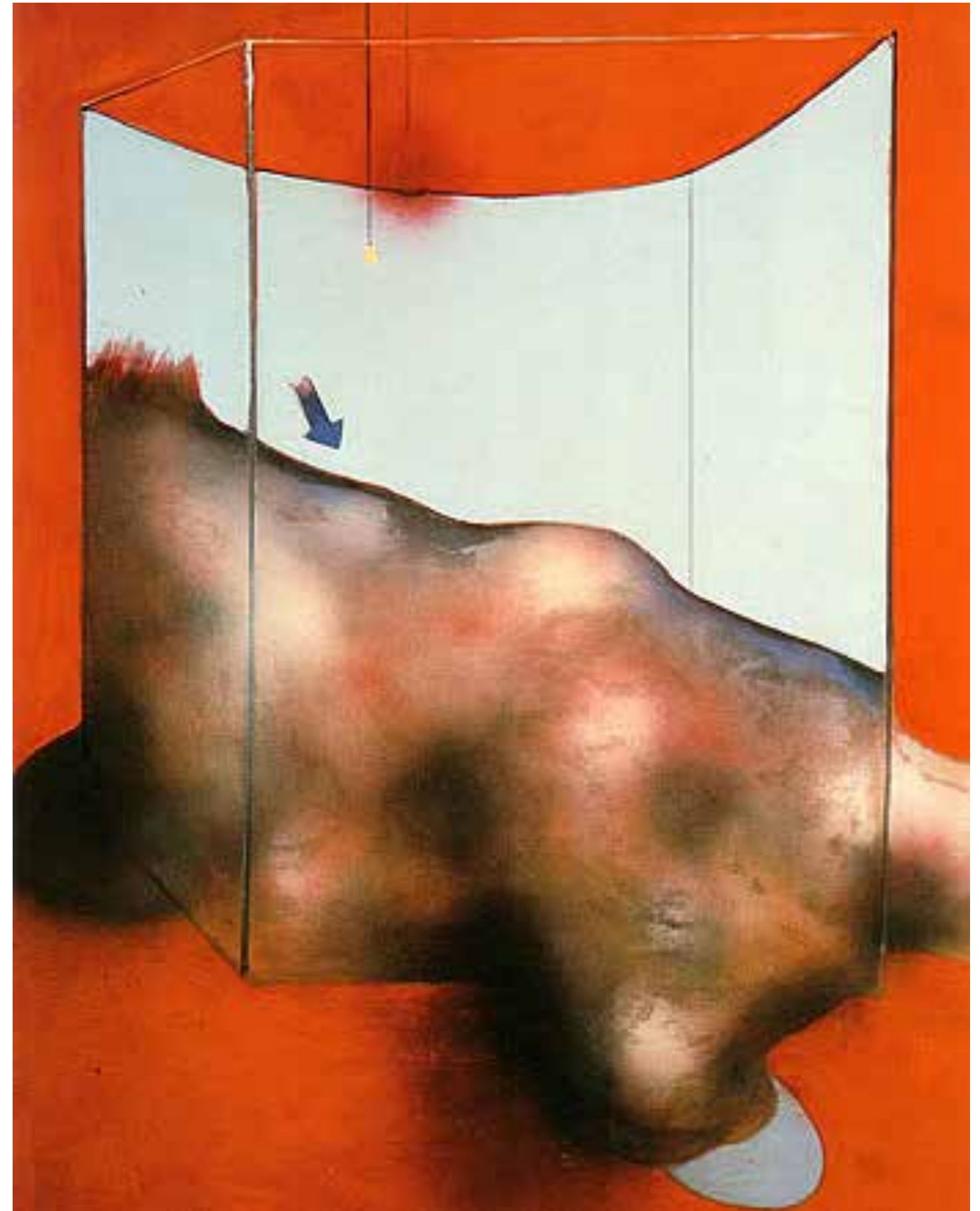


Fig. 3.3.7



Fig. 3.3.8



Fig. 3.3.9



Fig. 3.3.10



Fig. 3.3.11

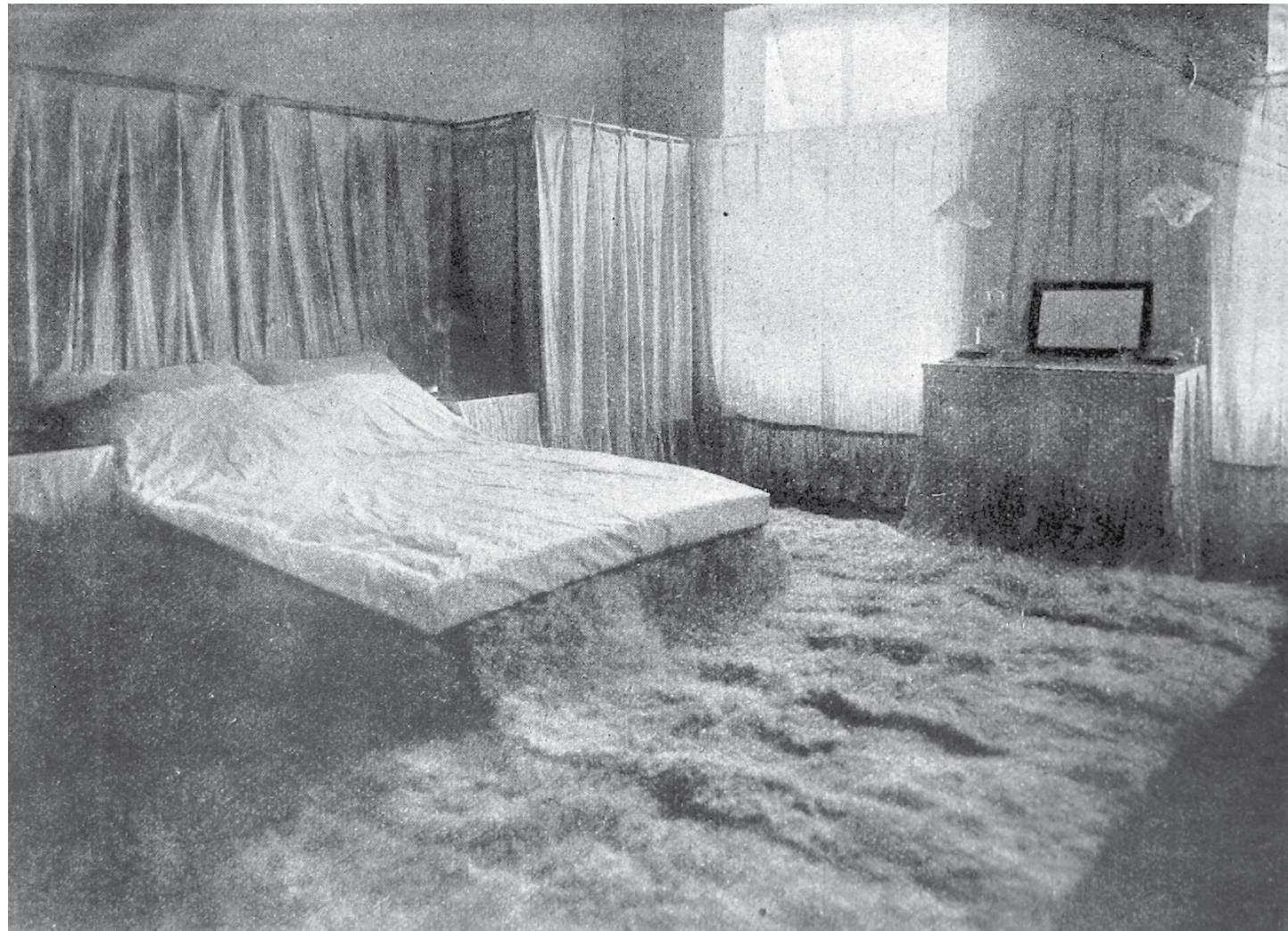


Fig. 3.3.12

Fur becomes room, taking over the bedroom of Adolf Loos' wife in this installation. Fur is more than upholstery or a decorative ornament. It becomes the floor, the wall, the ceiling, the texture.

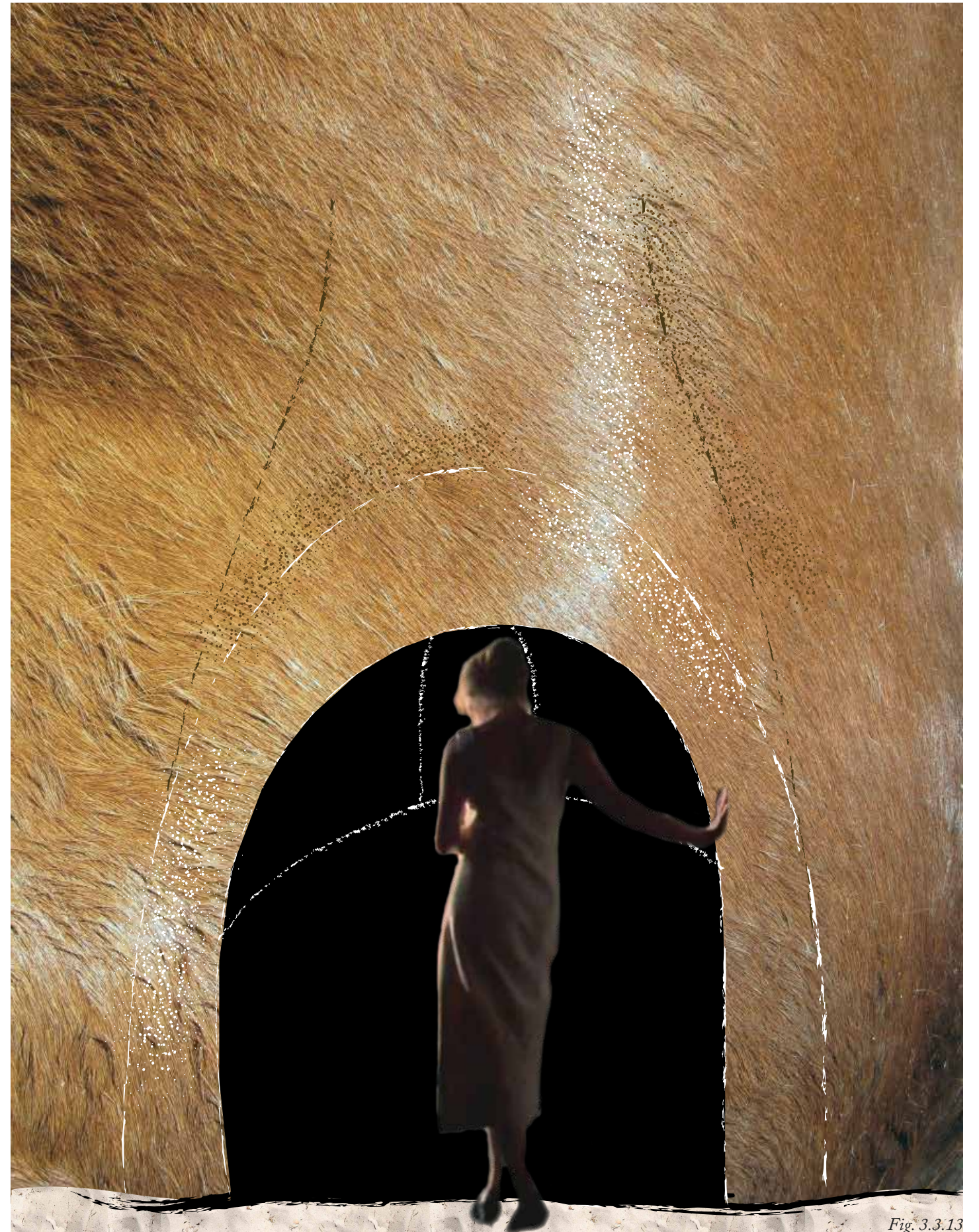


Fig. 3.3.13

Materials of the Envelope:

- Felt (blends of cotton, wool)
- Canvas for waterproofing
- Daub
- Timber frame structure (Wattle)
- Interior lined with fur

Fig. 3.3.15

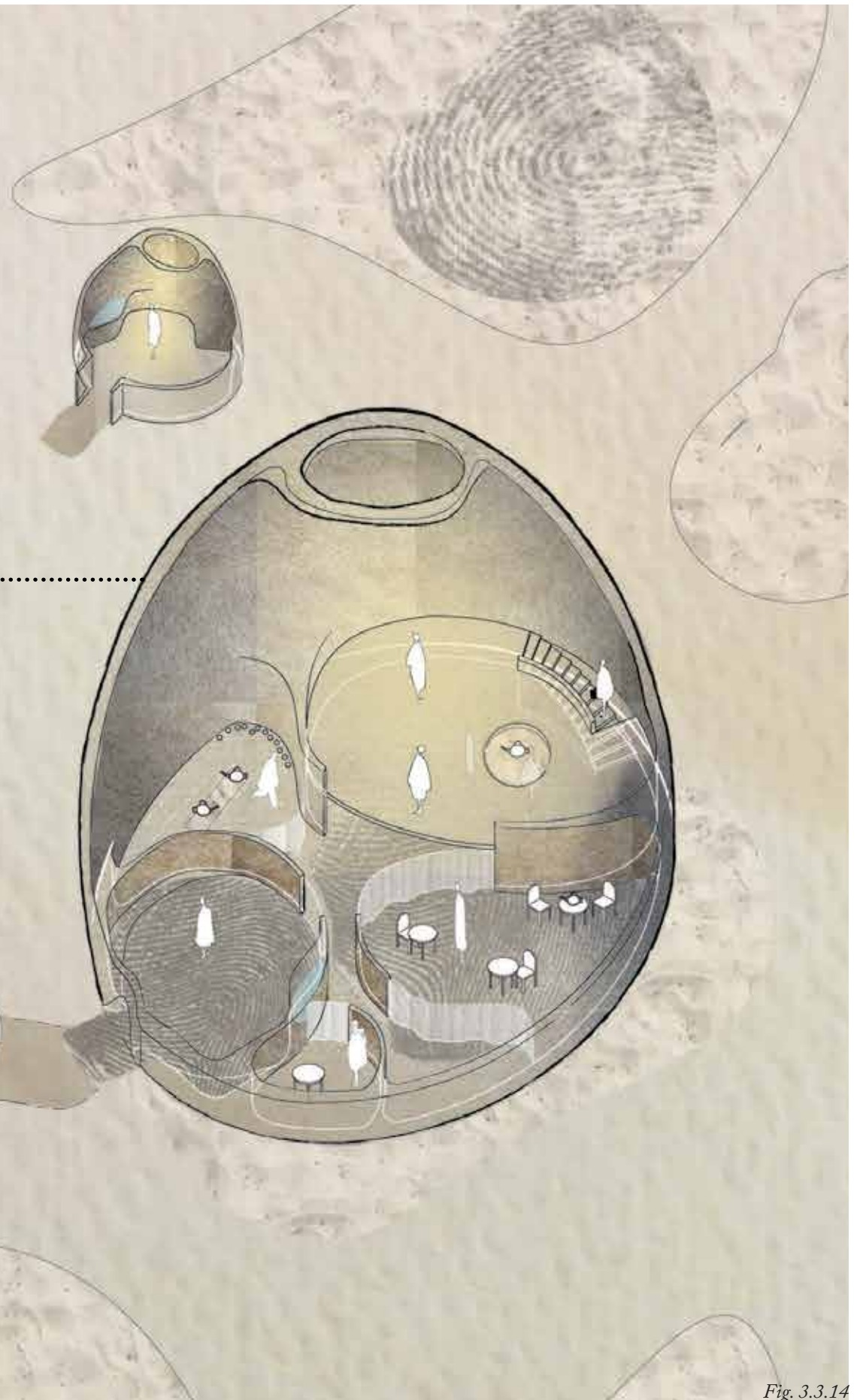
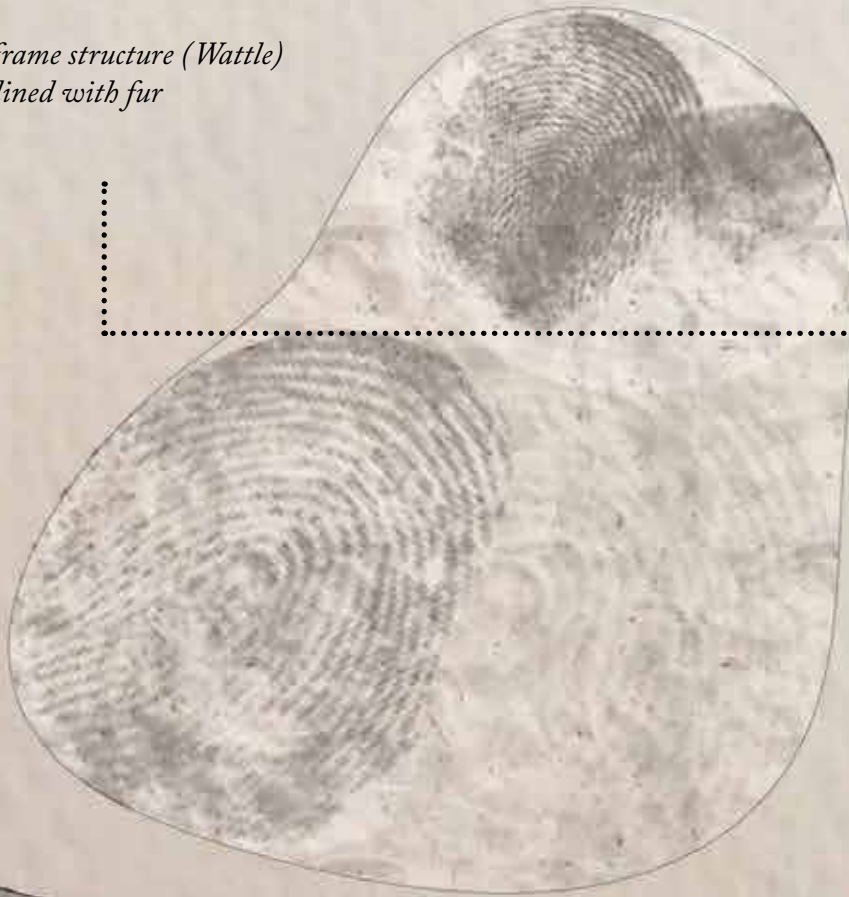


Fig. 3.3.14



Fig. 3.3.16

*The Coffee Maker's House (becoming nomad)*³

The coffee house is assembled from cotton and fur. The entrance of the coffee house is low, forcing your body into a bending position to slip inside. As the Japanese architect Terunobu Fujimori explains, an awkward entry into the space shows one's respect for the ceremony that unfolds inside.⁴ Upon entering you stand upright on soft ground. You remove your shoes, as is done in Bulgarian culture upon entering a home; the act being a removal of residues of the outside, and establishing a focus towards the inside.⁵ Once your shoes have been removed, rinse your skin in the basin and wander deeper into the hut. The yurt-like hut is primitive and archaic, the dwelling of the nomads and the wanderers. You feel as though you are one of the ancient Bulgarian tribes, living with the land. The dwelling is soft and flabby, made of cotton, wool and linen. The interior is lined with fur and animal skin. You are inside its warm belly. You move through the dim spaces, encountering the blurred silhouettes of people drinking coffee behind heavy curtains, in candlelight. The ambiguous atmosphere is overwhelmed by the smells of indigenous dried herbs hanging from the ceiling, steaming boiling coffee and earth. A stair up leads you to a suspended seating area below an open skylight. The curtained nooks in the yurt are described by theorist Gaston Blanchard as *"the point of departure of my reflections...: every corner in a house, every angle in a room, every inch of secluded space in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination; that is to say, it is the germ of a room, or of a house."*⁶ The nooks are intimate spaces instilling a sense of comfort and self-reflection. The curtains' soft texture and undulating fabric plays with light and shadows, creating depth to the space inside the coffee house as well as adding a dynamic, always changing quality to it. It is like you stepped into a Tarkovsky polaroid. *The eye is made for the twilight, the shift to nighttime when things are less focused more blurry. and the senses are heightened.*⁷ The walls cradle your body, evoking the comfort of home. A stair leads you to a light-filled space, at the base of the opening of the yurt. Coffee is boiled in the centre, steam rises up and exits through the top into the night, signalling other wanderers to venture inside and seek comfort.

³ Yurts were traditional dwellings in Bulgaria, becoming common dwellings in the Third century BC.

⁴ Wainwright, Oliver. 2017. "Home Is Where the Art Is: the Visionary Architects Who Shaped Japan." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media. March 3, 2017. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2017/mar/03/home-is-where-the-art-is-the-visionary-architects-who-shaped-japan>.

⁵ Admin. "Българският Килим - Отглас На Свещения Вътрешен Свят На Българката." *Еклектика*, November 25, 2016. <https://eklekti.com/българският-килим-отглас-на-свещения/>.

⁶ Gaston Blanchard, *Poetics of Space*, p.136

⁷ Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 49

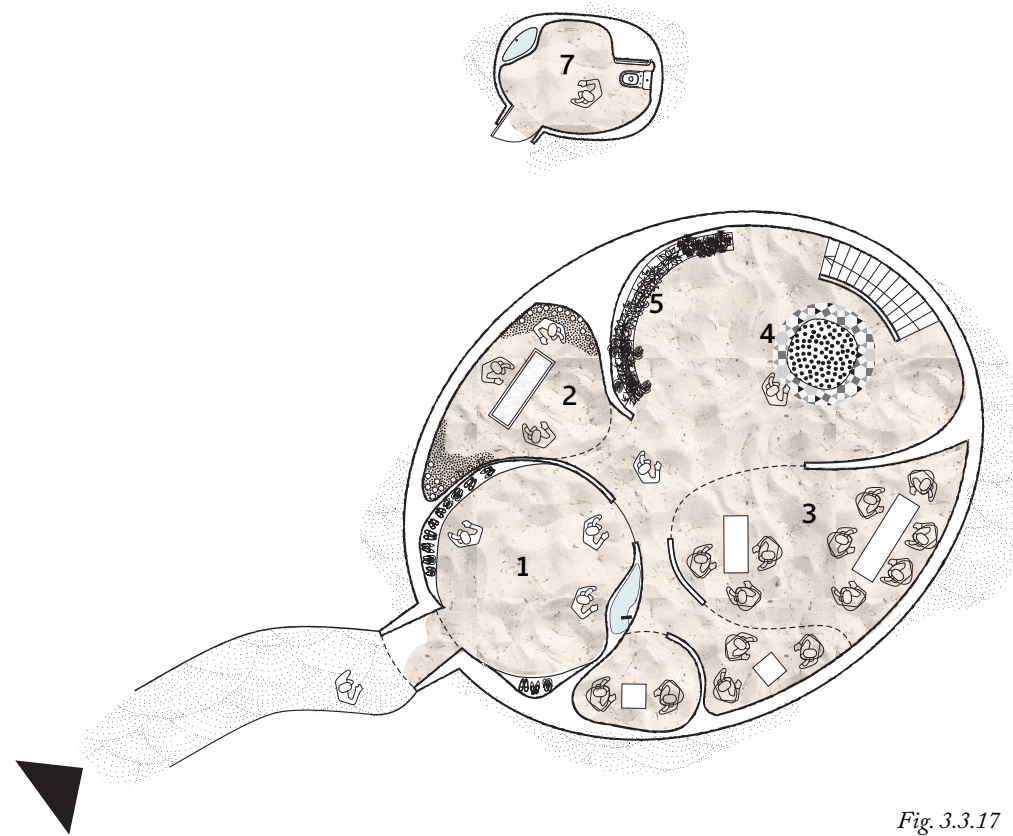


Fig. 3.3.17
Ground Plan

Program of the Coffee Maker's House:

1. Entrance (guest removes shoes and rinses in the water basin)
2. Copper vessels storage room
3. Drinking dens
4. Preparation of the Rodopski(mountain) tea in hot stone pit
5. Herb drying (apple, rose hip, yarrow blossom, wild strawberry, quince and wild thyme)
6. Turkish coffee preparation in hot sand
7. Washroom

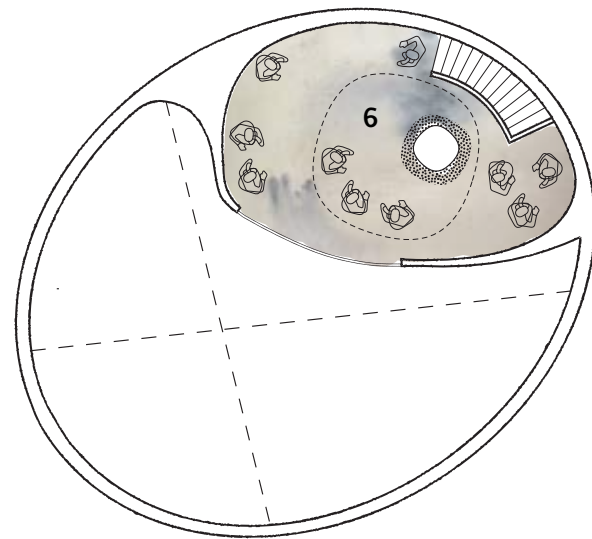


Fig 3.3.18
Second Floor Plan

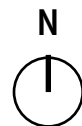


Fig. 3.3.19

Bulgarian Coffee Drinking Rituals Become The Interior Program Of The Coffee House

The traditional method of preparing coffee comes from Turkish influence during the occupation of the Ottoman Empire in Bulgaria. Hot water is placed in a jezve, a copper vessel, which is then heated in hot sand. Once the water boils, ground coffee is added to the copper vessel. The coffee boils, foams, and is then ready to be served.



*Fig. 3.3.20
The Site of the Potter's Workshop*

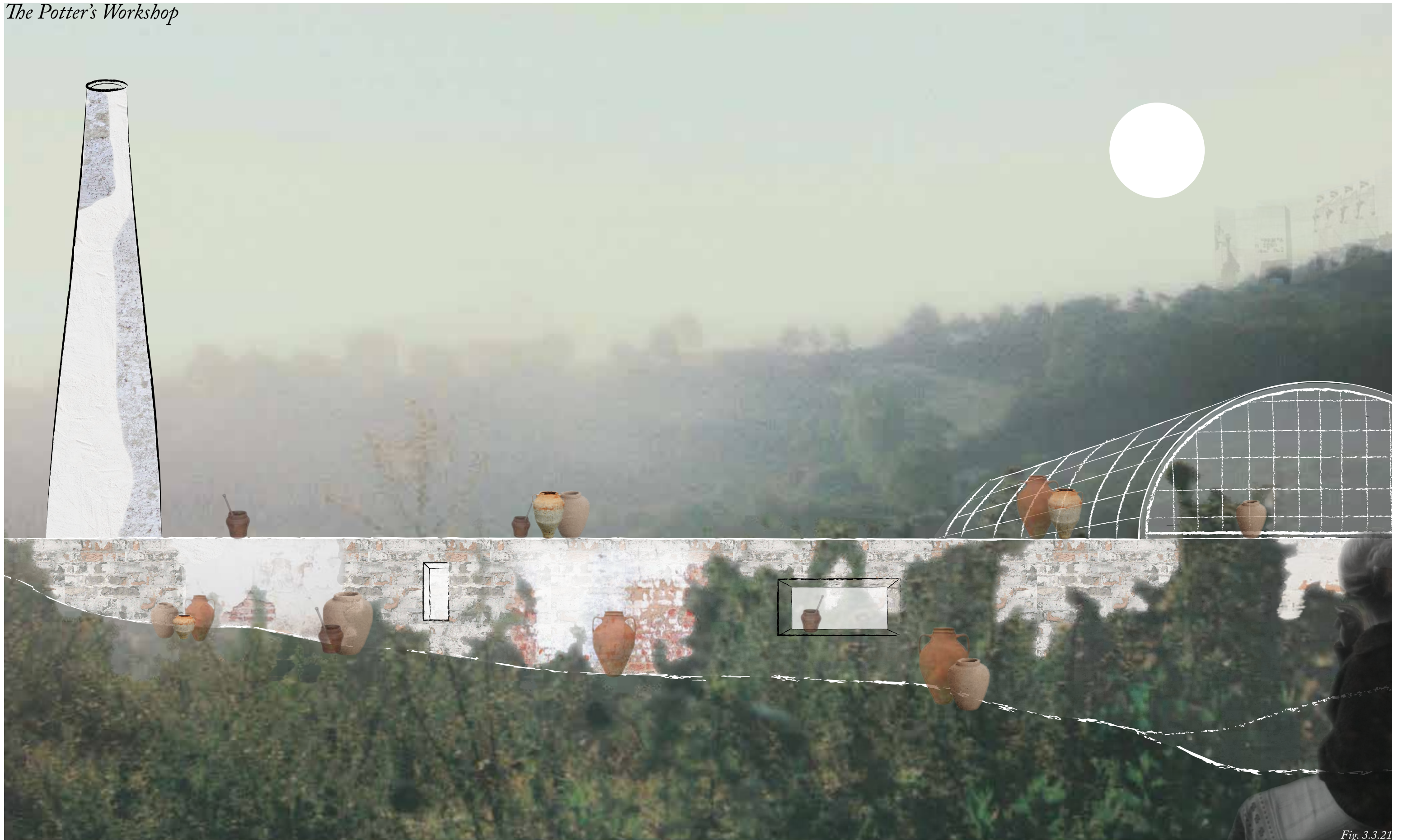


Fig. 3.3.21

The Potter's Workshop (becoming potter)

*This single Tea-bowl is considered to be the finest in the world. When I saw it, my heart fell. ... So simple, no more ordinary thing could be imagined. ... The clay had been dug from the hill at the back of the house; the glaze was made with the ash from the hearth; the potter's wheel had been irregular. The shape revealed no particular thought: it was one of many. The work had been fast; the turning was rough, done with dirty hands... Made for a purpose, made to do work. Sold to be used in everyday life. ...*⁸

The potter's workshop embraces the folk culture of making everyday bowls for drinking, cooking, eating. Troyan pottery is one of the most important crafts for the Bulgarian. The ceramics are traditional red after firing, made from terra cotta clay found in the soil of the land. *This simple pottery with its ornaments mirrors the way average Bulgarians perceived the craft.*⁹ These pots are found in the soviet home and are called *gyuvetche*. They are traditionally used in Bulgarian cuisine, sets of them are passed down through generations, mothers cooking in their mother's vessels, the pot passing down and preserving the memory of the meal.

⁸ Yanagi Soetsu, *The Unknown Craftsman*

⁹ "The Magic of Troyan Ceramics." n.d. Culture. <https://www.bnr.bg/en/post/100173706/the-magic-of-troyan-ceramics>.

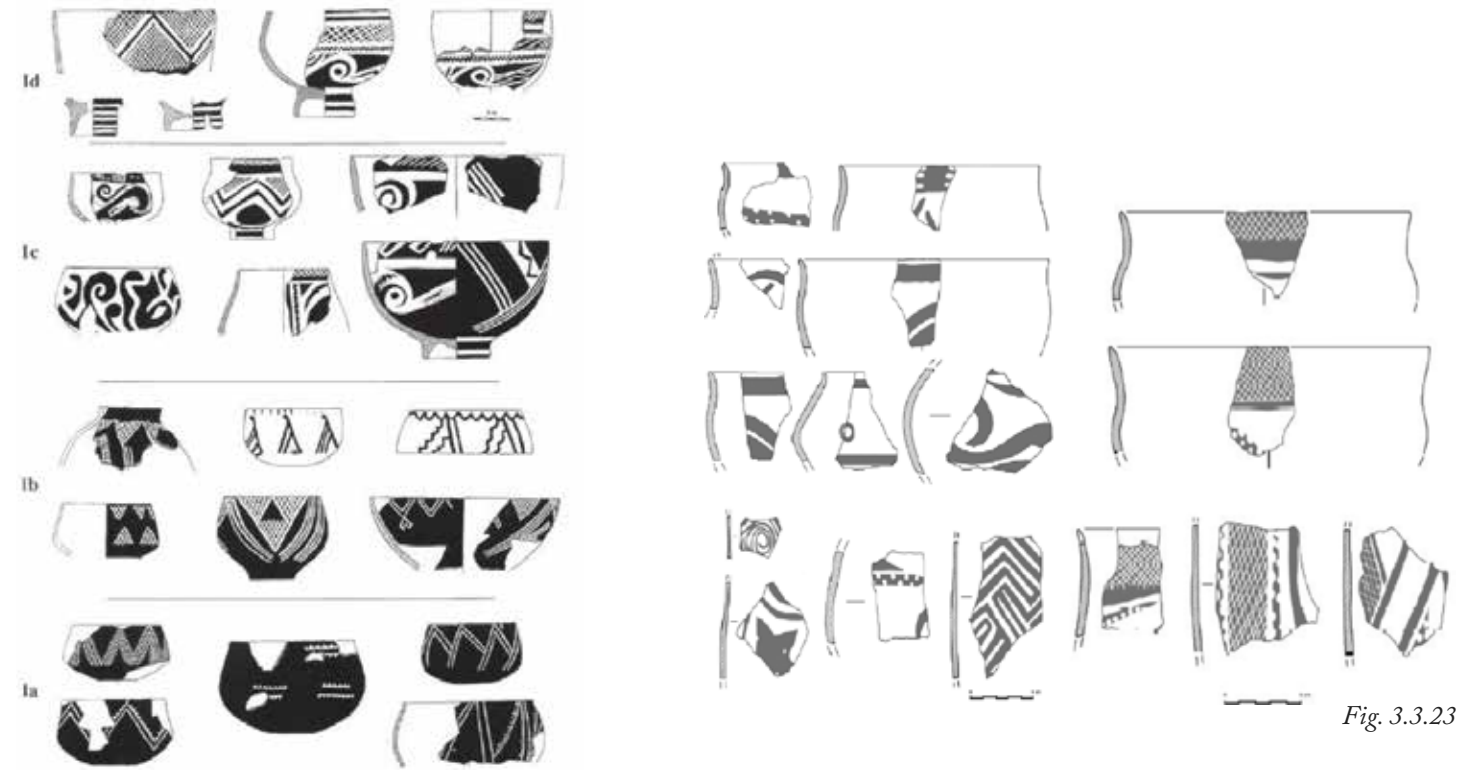


Fig. 3.3.22

Fig. 3.3.23



Fig. 3.3.24



Fig. 3.3.25



Fig. 3.3.26



Fig. 3.3.27

The Potter's Workshop

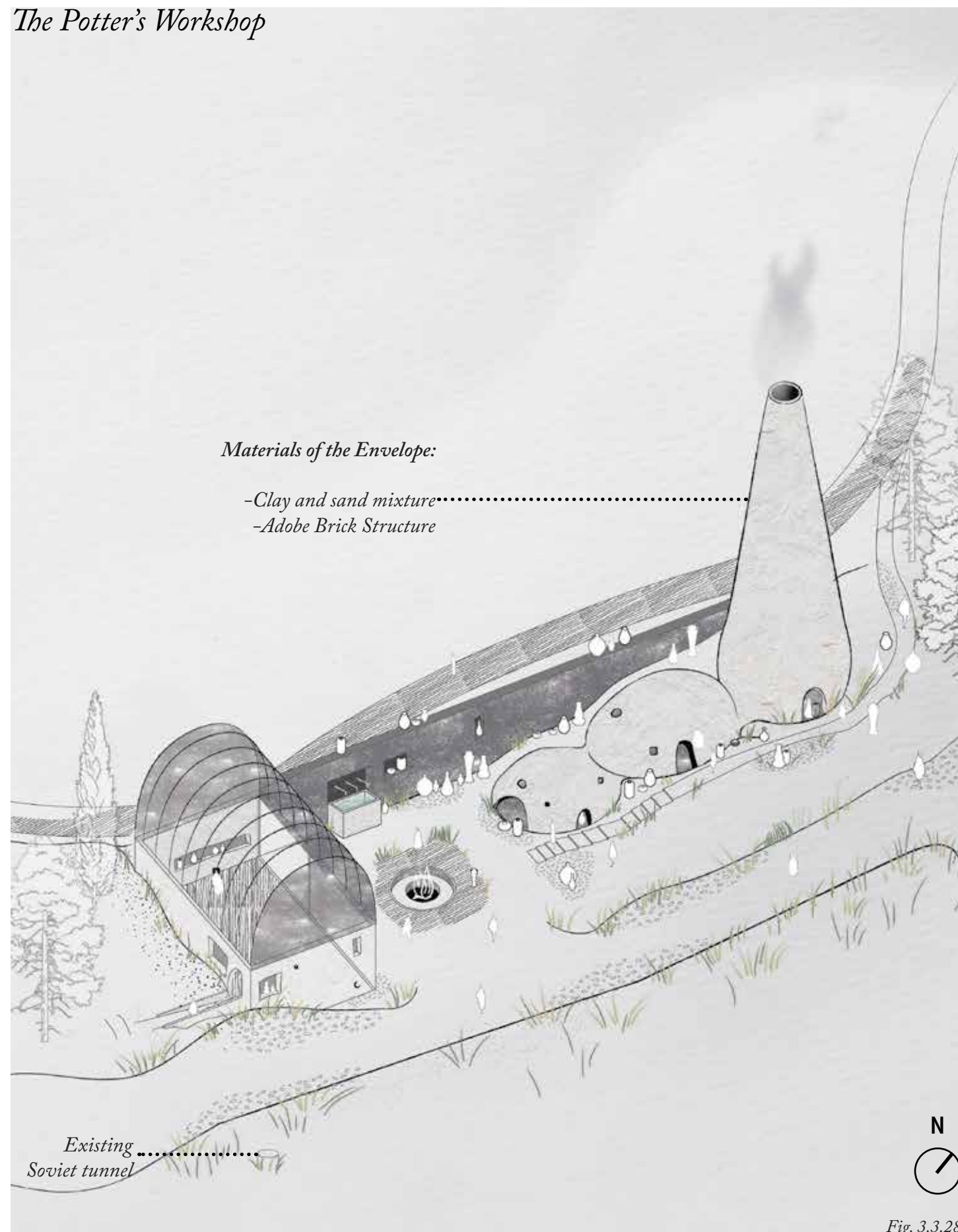


Fig. 3.3.28

The potter's workshop emerges from the landscape. His tools and glazes are arranged in a workshop partially buried in the hill, part of the earth his clay comes from. His climbing kiln winds upwards into a cone-like form overlooking the site. It is a maker's yurt. The landscape funnels you to the centre, into a courtyard framed by the kiln and the warehouse. This space instils a feeling of protection, closed to the outside. This is where the potter throws his material on the wheel and creates. The hill surrounds this place of old burnt brick and clay. The pottery is scattered on the site, its pieces part of the construction of the walls, the kiln, the workshop. There is no boundary between the potter, his pieces and the kiln. The potter and his wheel are one, needing one another to exist. It is all an in-between in the landscape. It is all in process, continuously created and re-invented, contrasting the monument's intent of immutability. A wall running the length of the site engages the natural elements, playing with the shadows and light of the changing sun throughout the day. The workshop is open to the elements, becoming a part of the ecosystem around it, instead of resisting it. "As a defence against the inflexible insignnia of the official style, architecture must be infused with certain speculative concepts: architecture as transition, diffusion, dispersal, nonconformity, transparency, fluidity, organicism, fragmentation, a rhizomatic architecture, a nomadic architecture, an architecture which always resists stratification." ¹⁰

10 Neil Leich, *Architecture and Revolution*, "Utopia 1988, Romania; Post-Utopia 1995, Romania", p. 214

The Potter's Workshop

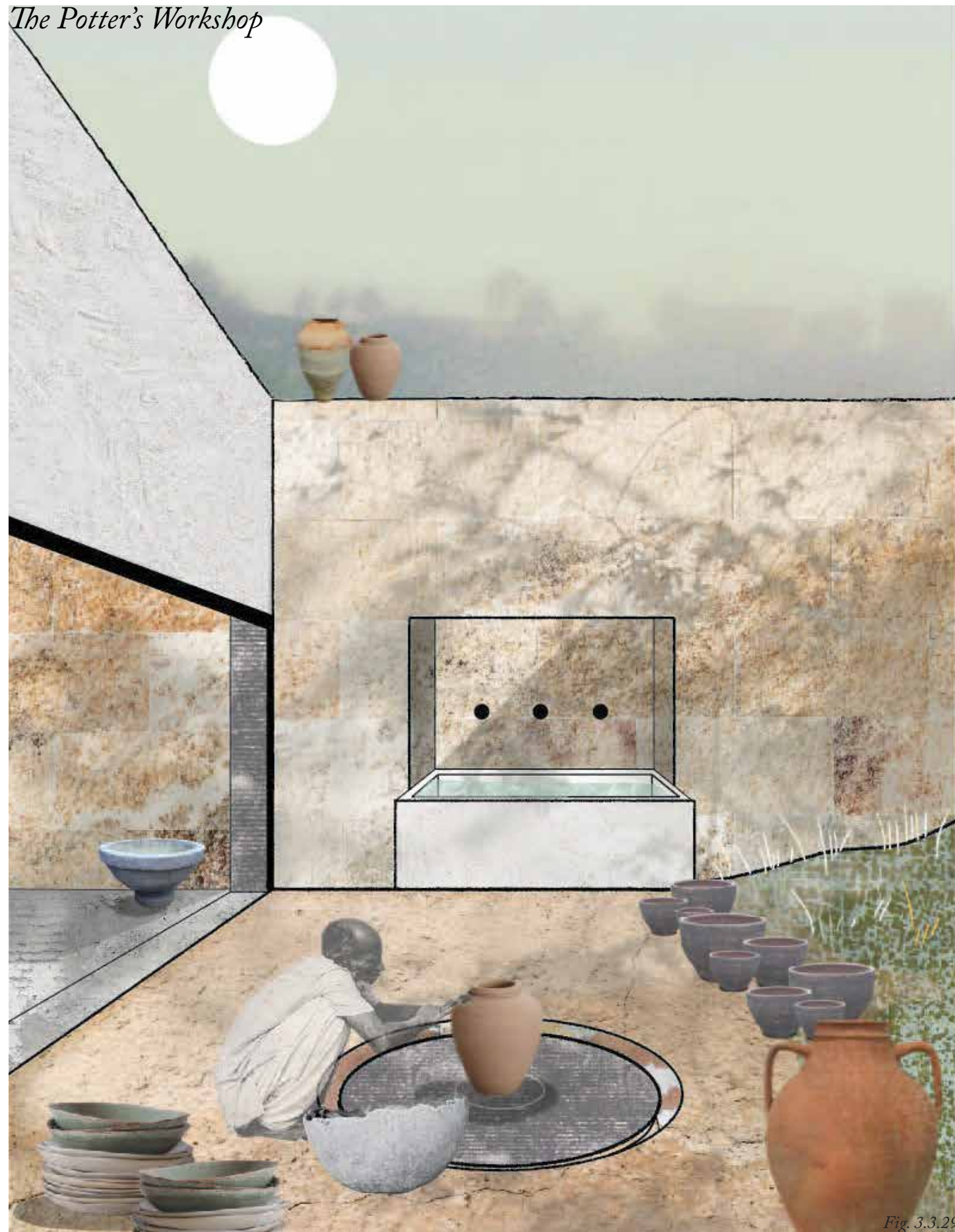


Fig. 3.3.29

The Potter's Workshop Program:

1. Potter's wheel in the courtyard
2. Workspace
3. Landscape filled with pottery
4. Climbing kiln with a fire box, main body, bag wall and chimney
5. Sink

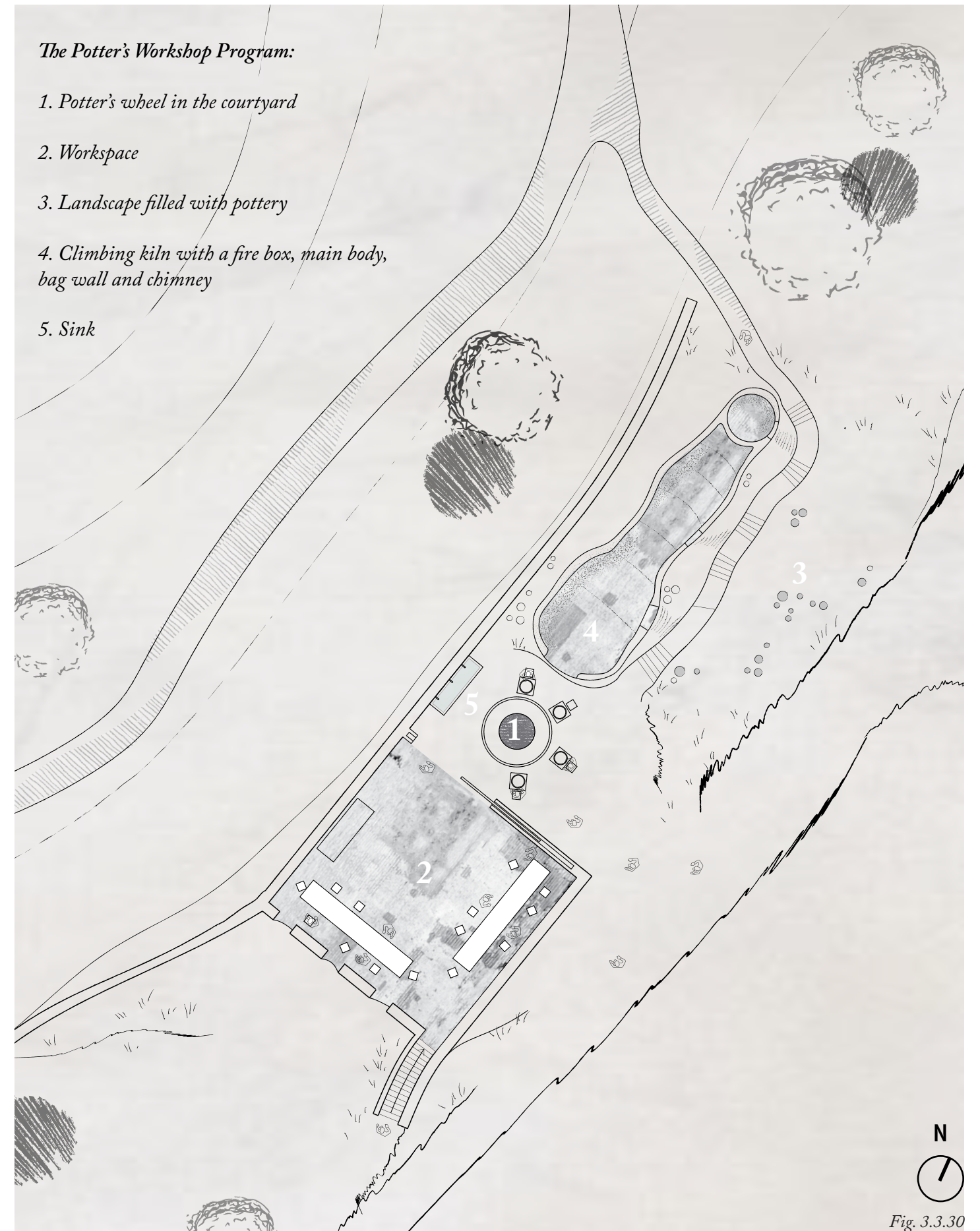


Fig. 3.3.30

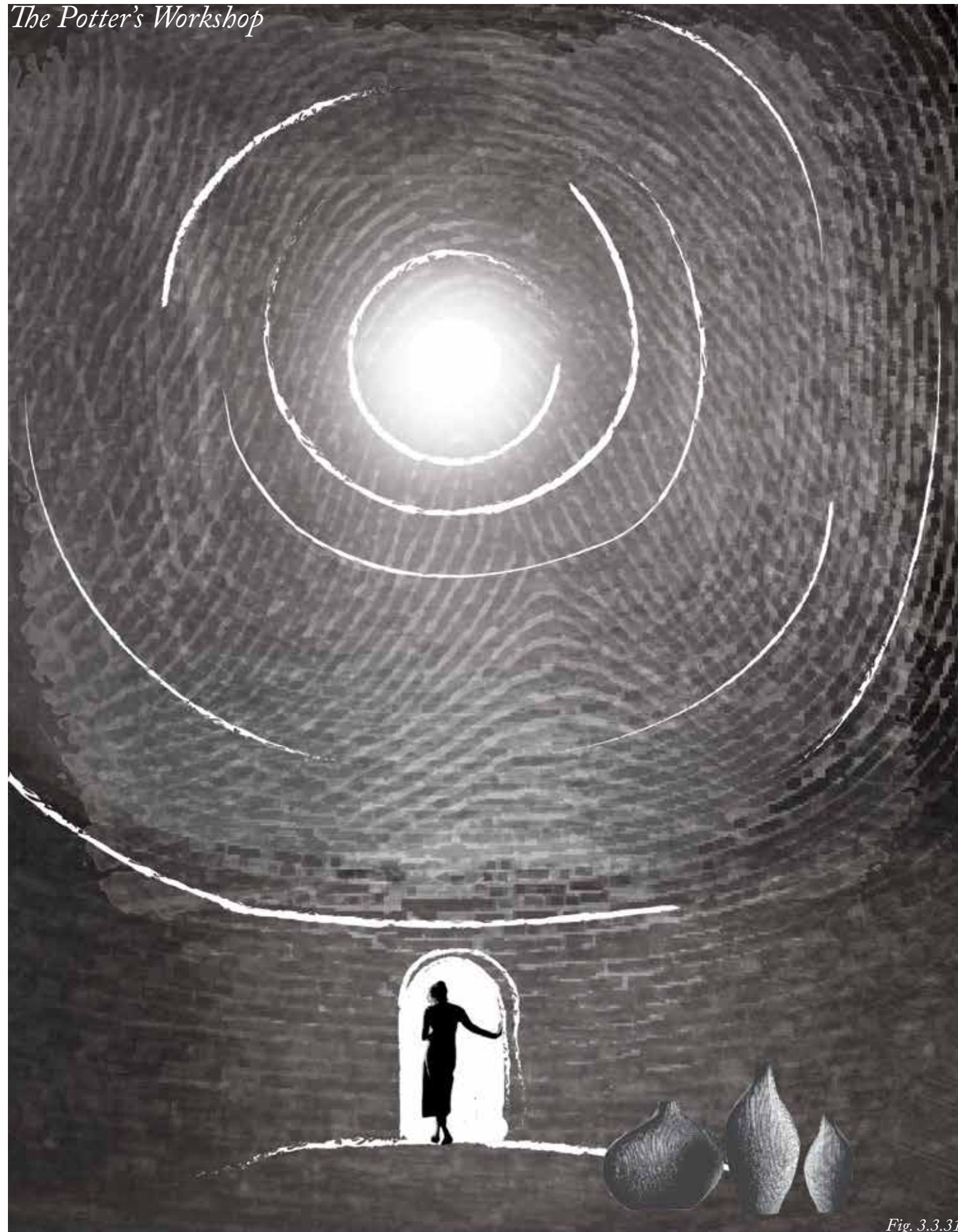


Fig. 3.3.31

The maker moulds the various pots, exerting pressure on the material to bend it in the shape that it will be fired in, the shape the clay will be arrested in. The pressure and touch of the maker's hand is celebrated in this yurt. The kiln's stained interior leaves traces of soot on your fingers, residue from the burning smoke now part of the walls. Looking up the kiln, one sees a pottery wheel or the interior of a vase, and the sky at the end.

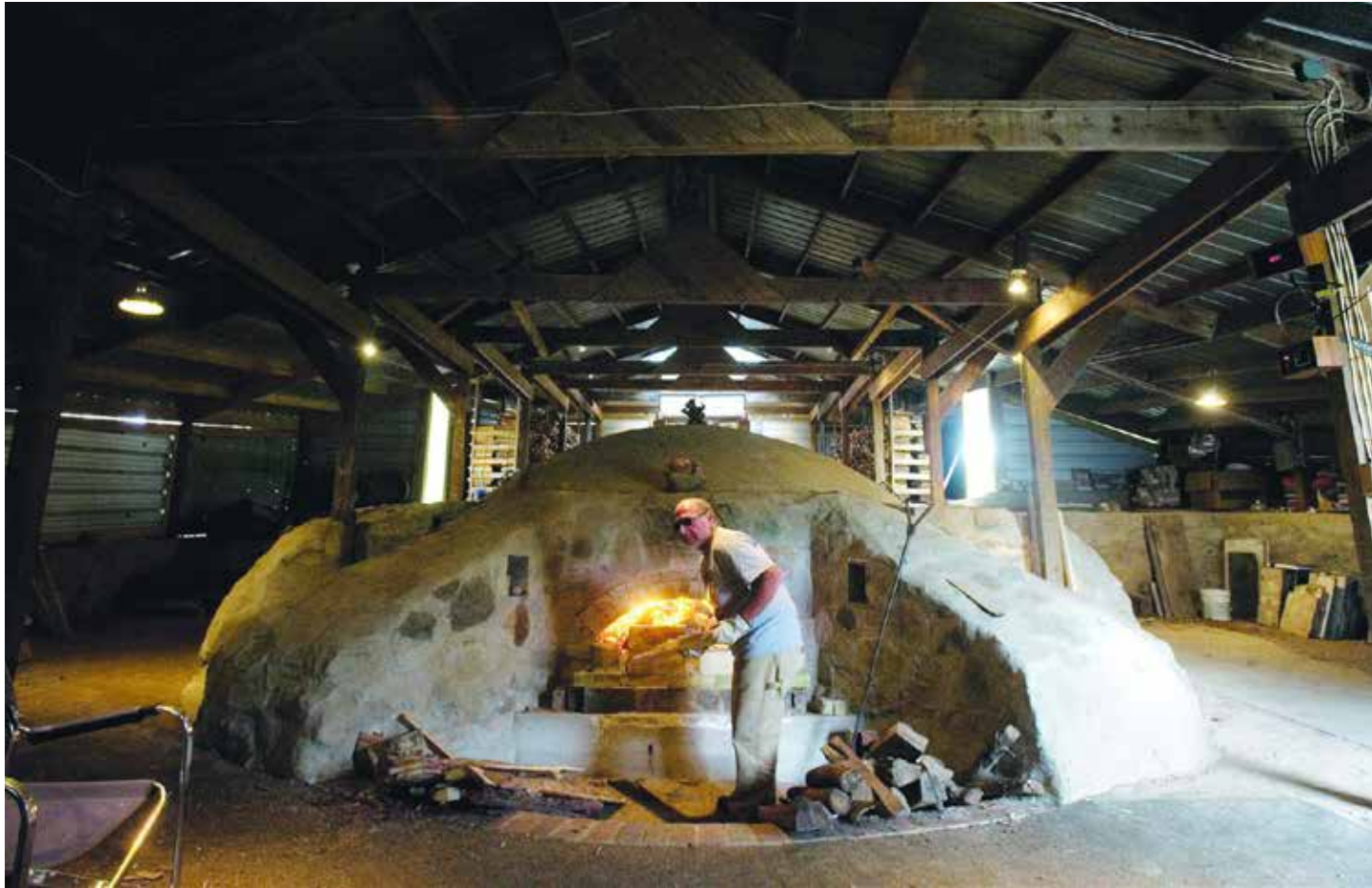


Fig. 3.3.32

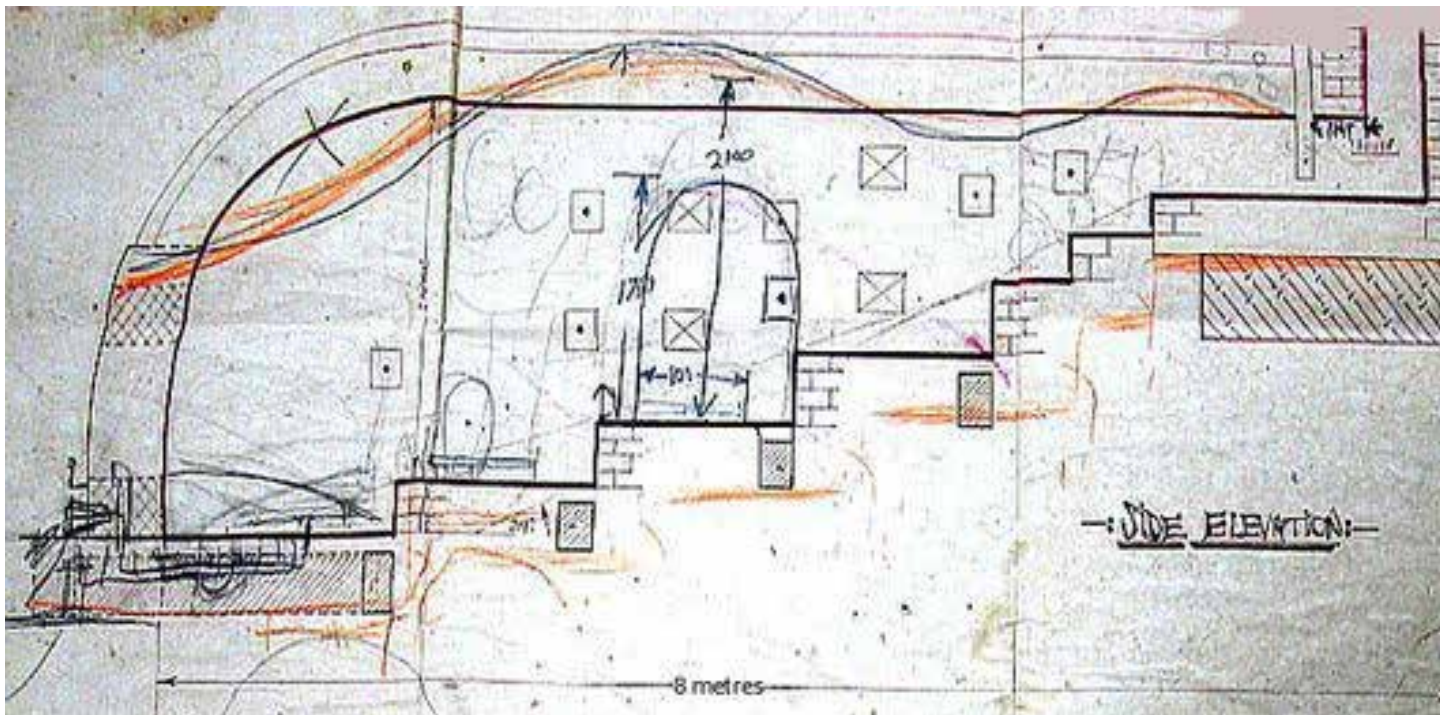


Fig. 3.3.33

The kiln is wood fired, creating unique results on the surface of the ceramics due to the chemical reaction and material processes that are captured onto it, occurring between the natural glazes and the fire.

High-temperature wood firing is still used today by ceramists who value the richness of its wood ash, flashing, and reduction effects. During the firing the ashes of the wood fuel fall naturally upon the ware, and if the firing temperature is high enough the ashes are volatilized and become a glaze.¹¹

The design inspiration for the wood-fired kiln comes from the Japanese climbing kilns, the Noborigama and the Anagama, where the fire chambers climb up using the topography of the landscape to distribute the heat of the fire stoked at the lowest point. The kiln on the site of the potter's workshop highlights and embraces the territory and its characteristics, using them to create rich and textural pottery.

¹¹ "The Ascending Kiln." Discover Tajimi - Tajimi Tourism Association. <https://www.discovertajimi.com/noborigama.html>.

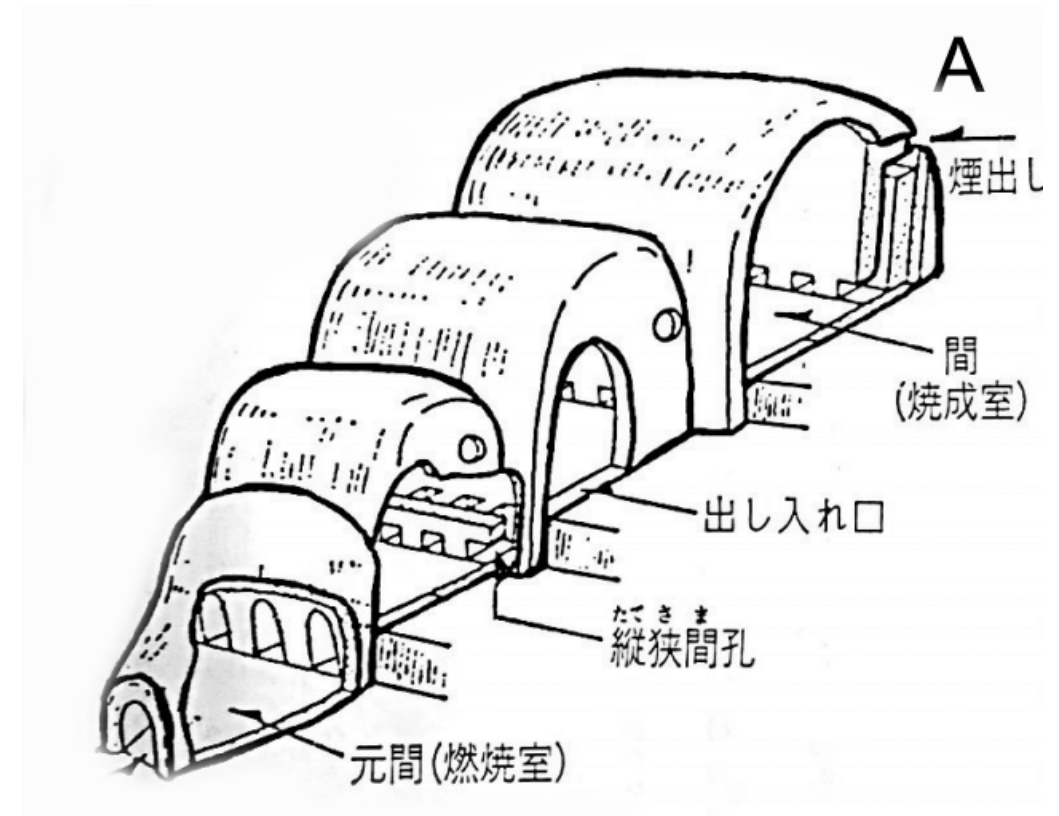


Fig. 3.3.34



*Fig. 3.3.35
Portion of the site of the Alchemist's Workshop*



*Fig. 3.3.36
View up to the site of the Alchemist's Workshop*



Fig. 3.3.37

The Alchemist's Workshop

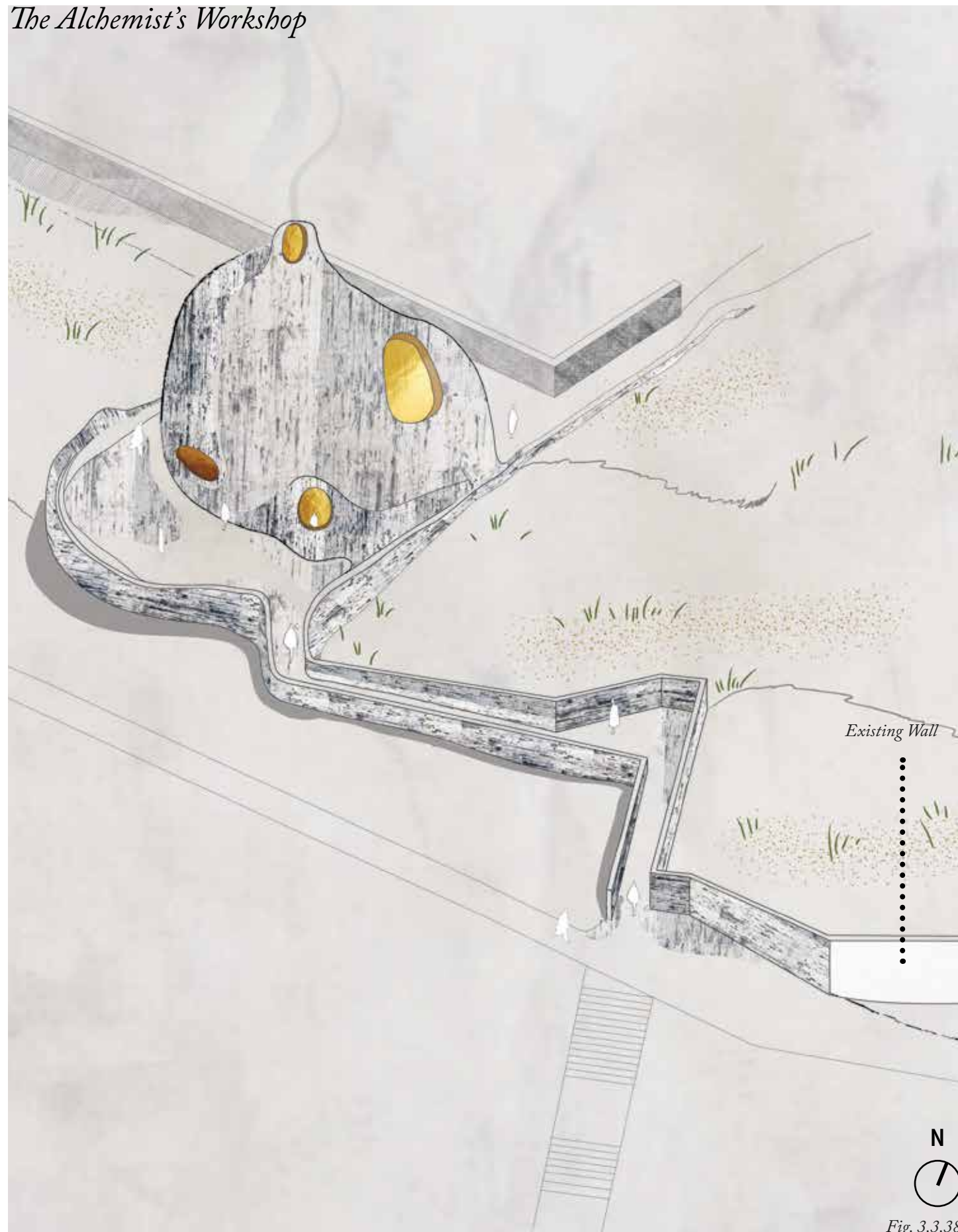


Fig. 3.3.38

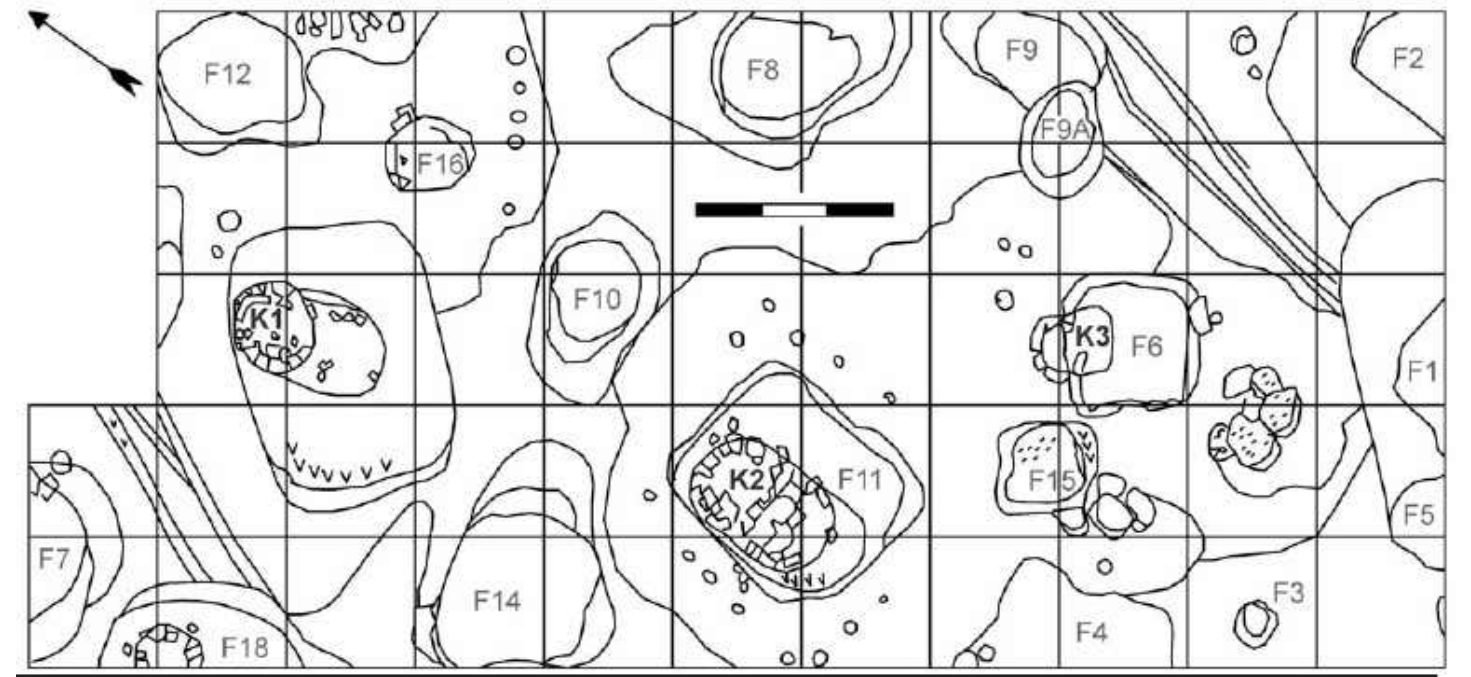


Fig. 3.3.39

The Alchemist's Workshop: A connection between mind, materials and processes

*De-solidifying, de-literalizing and de-constructing their experience in each moment empowered the alchemists to actively participate in their own transformation and evolution.*¹²

The city of Varna, where the site of the monument is located, is known for its archaeological sites that unveiled the ancient Varna culture, a society of skilled metallurgists from the 5th Millennium. They crafted everyday objects out of gold, copper and ceramics. Their craft of metallurgy was highly advanced.¹³ It encompassed the melting down of metal, and their forming of something else with the liquid state of the material. The primary alchemical concept of *solve et coagula* was the foundation of their society. The Latin term *solve et coagula*, meaning to separate then join together, is the alchemical term describing the process of breaking down a material and then re-building it, creating something new in the process.¹⁴ This alchemical concept is one that can be thought about in the context of the Friendship Monument. Though it was meant to be eternal and unchanging, the monument is currently in the process of breaking down, decomposing, soon to mould into the hill and become a part of the history of the land. It is in the process of becoming something new. This method of viewing the monument detaches it from its fixed identity and allows it to transform.

¹² Levy, Paul. 2009. "The Sacred Art of Alchemy." *Awaken in the Dream*. Awaken in the Dream. April 15, 2009. <https://www.awakeninthedream.com/articles/the-sacred-art-of-alchemy>.

¹³ Aprilholloway. 2015. "Varna Man and the Wealthiest Grave of the 5th Millennium BC." *Ancient Origins*. Ancient Origins. March 20, 2015. <https://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-europe/varna-man-and-wealthiest-grave-5th-millennium-bc-002798>.

¹⁴ Current. <http://www.grimmuseum.com/blog-61/blog-19/index.html>.



Fig. 3.3.40



Fig. 3.3.41

The alchemist's workshop celebrates the folk craft tradition of making Bulgarian brandy, *rakia*, from fermented plums that are distilled and boiled in copper and wood cauldrons. The copper in the workshop pays tribute to the Bulgarian metal workers from the Bronze age, and the objects and tools they created. It is perched on a higher point in

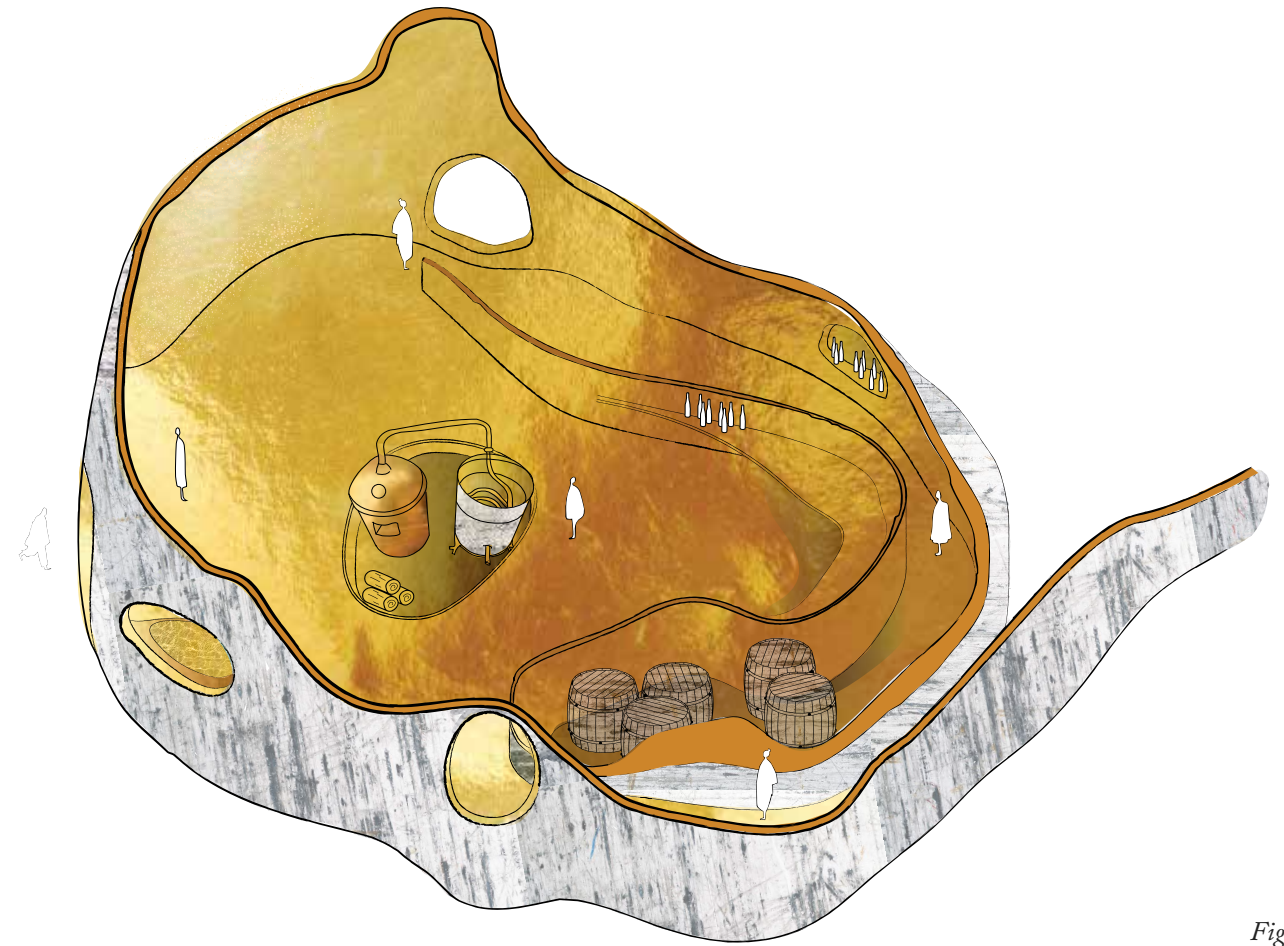


Fig. 3.3.43

the landscape, reminiscent of traditional Bulgarian houses that brace a cantilevering living space, suspended above the street. The design of the alchemist's workshop incorporates an outdoor deck, extending out the interior space. It is inspired by the traditional *chardak*, a term defining the veranda that wraps around the traditional Bulgarian house. The space is continuous, inside outside, the transition announced only through a change of materiality. The interior of the alchemist's workshop is dressed in warm honey copper, while the exterior is clad in cedar, translating the materiality of the cauldrons used for the craft of the brandy. The sharp smell of copper mixed with the wood and the alcoholic spirit immerses the visitor in the experience of the workshop. As one enters the yurt, they notice jars and bottles arranged in the walls that curve and bend to create shelves. The central space reveals the alchemist's cauldrons, fuelled by wood, the liquid boiling and steaming, escaping from the top chimney-like element. A copper half wall wraps inside the yurt, framing the cauldrons. You wonder what is concealed behind it. It leads you down into a dimmer space, jars and bottles surrounding you. As you descend, the smell of fermented plums becomes overwhelming. At the bottom, you reach the fruit barrels, awaiting to be turned into liquid. Inside this workshop, the alchemist works with fermentation of the fruits used for the brandy, altering their state and properties, their taste. He then transforms them into a new liquid form, while preserving their essence and flavour.

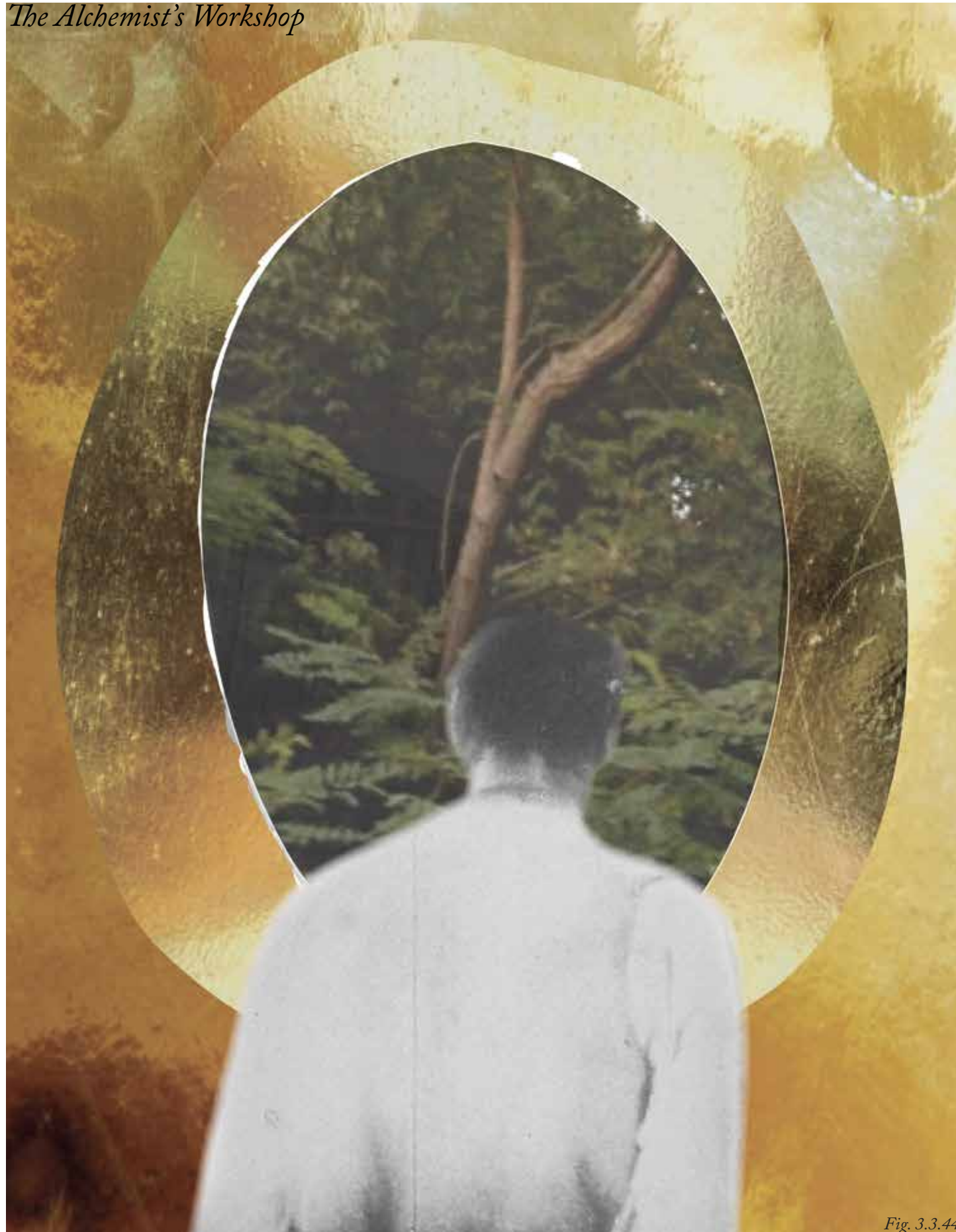


Fig. 3.3.44



Fig. 3.3.45



*Fig. 3.3.46
View up to the site of the balneologist's baths*



*Fig. 3.3.47
View of the path to the balneologist's baths*



The Balneologist's Baths

...the path is steaming. You cannot see what is ahead through the mist. It infiltrates your nostrils, your mouth, your lungs. You become steam. The ground beneath you becomes more solid, as if you are stepping on a mineral rock rather than the soil of the beaten path. A wall on your left appears and you follow it through the blurry forms ahead. As you keep walking, you hear someone breathing. (inhale). (exhale). You see shadows through the steam. Is someone breathing in your ear or is it the landscape releasing its inner vapours? The wall that has been guiding you brings into a sunken courtyard; the source of the steam...

The Balneologist's Baths

The baths are made of the stone of the hill. Dugout and uncovered, they are an archaeological site, part of the history of the land, the mineral baths and hot springs of Bulgaria. Varna in particular, bordering the Black Sea, is a city of water, with a powerful connection to the sea. The Ancient Roman thermae ruins of Odessos is one of the many places where stories of bathing in Varna have unfolded, held in the soil until they bubbled to the surface over time.



Fig. 3.3.49



Fig. 3.3.50

The Balneologist's Baths

The balneologist's baths explore the erosion of stone, and its revelation of form over time. Stone is an important material in the region. Varna was a large flint extraction area in Bulgaria centuries ago. It is also near the site of the *Pobiti Kamani*- The Stone Desert, a site holding fascination in its expressed stone formations resembling organic bodies. Upon the entrance of the baths, a wall made of an amalgamation of stone material leads you to a descending beaten path. As you walk along the wall framing the baths, you notice it disappearing in the landscape bringing you closer to the ground. The design intent for this path finds inspiration in Richard Serra's piece *Shift*:

What I wanted was a dialectic between one's perception of the place in totality and one's relation to the field as walked. The result is a way of measuring oneself against the indeterminacy of the land. As one follows the work farther into the field, one is forced to shift and turn with the work and look back across the elevational drop. From the top of the hill, looking back across the valley, images and thoughts are remembered which were initiated by the consciousness of having experienced them.¹⁵

15 Land Art: In 1973 Serra discussed his sculpture, *Shift*, in *Art in America*



Fig. 3.3.51



Fig. 3.3.52

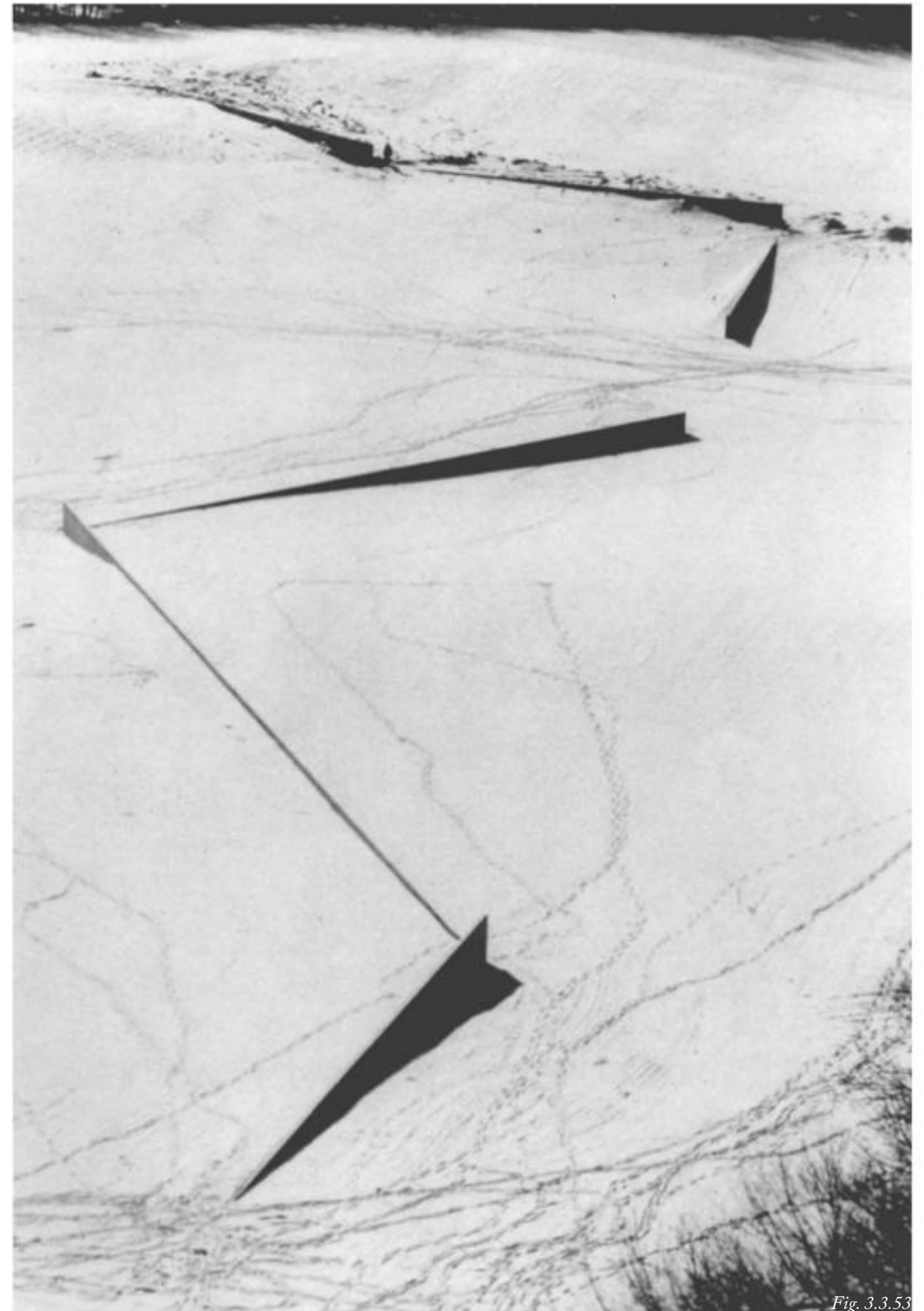


Fig. 3.3.53

A stone cave-like bath emerges from the wall. The path turns, and the wall's rhythm changes, more frequently interrupted with views into the baths' landscape. The stone roofs of saunas and showers become the walls of the path. You reach the lowest point in the landscape, where the wall has fully disappeared. The transition into a union with the steaming landscape occurs. A footbath runs through it, leading you into different pools and inside the stone bath structure you encountered on the path. Steam emerges from the stone baths. One can feel the temperature of its warm rough body. Condensation appears on its surface, creating a different feeling to the stone. The mineral baths smell of the balneologist's dried herb essences that he has mixed in the water to promote a calm atmosphere, focused on the healing of the body immersed in the depths of the land.

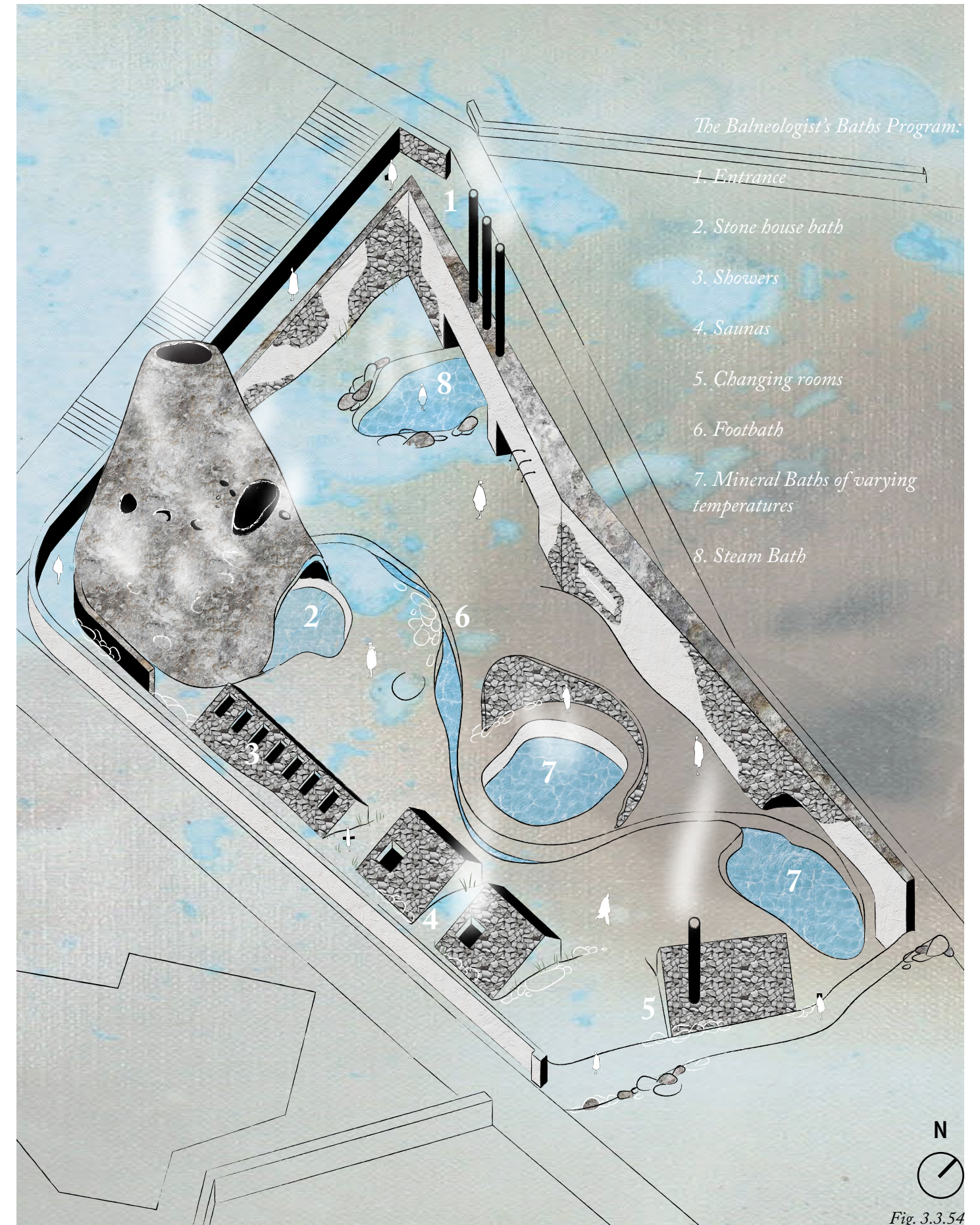


Fig. 3.3.54



Fig. 3.3.55

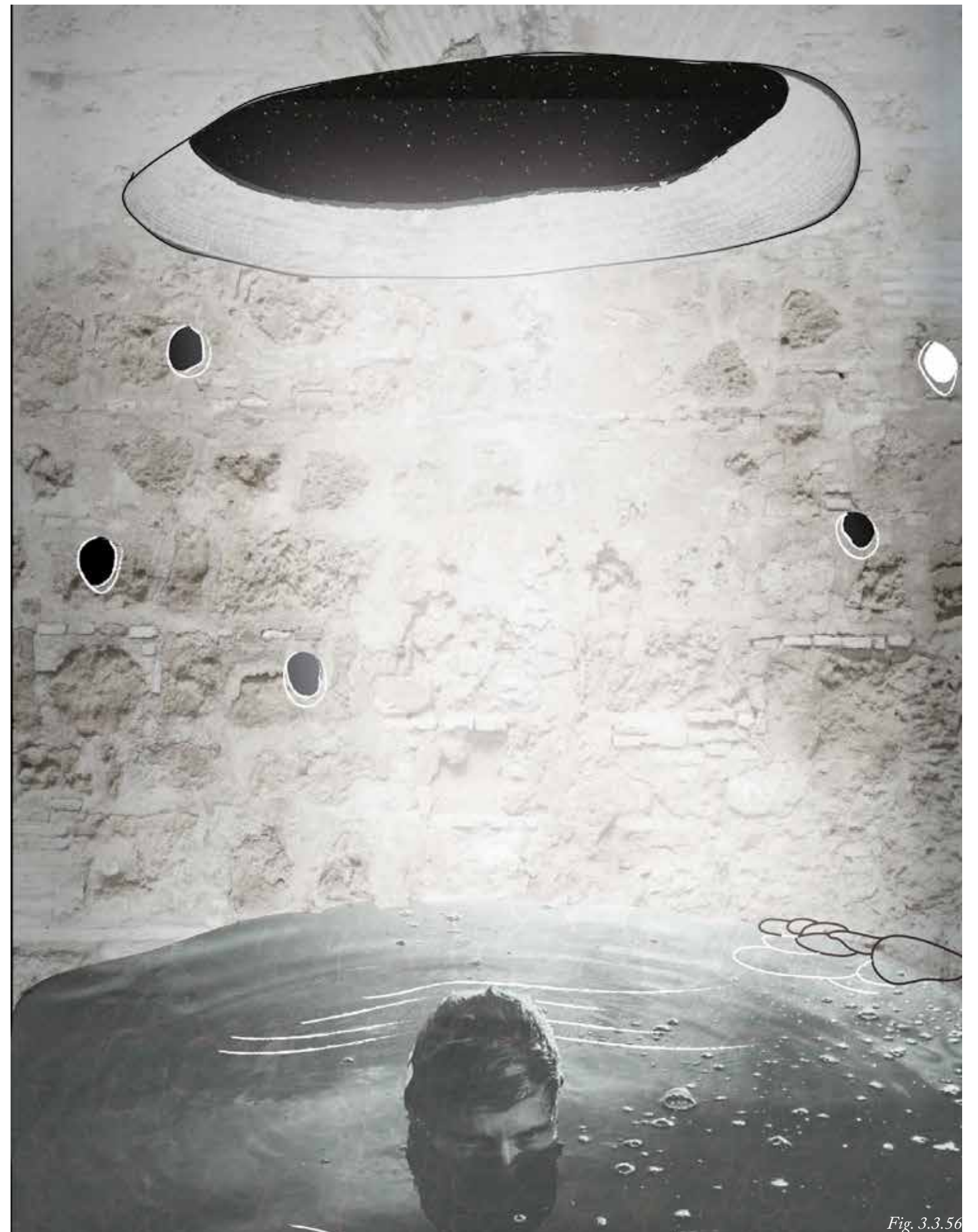


Fig. 3.3.56

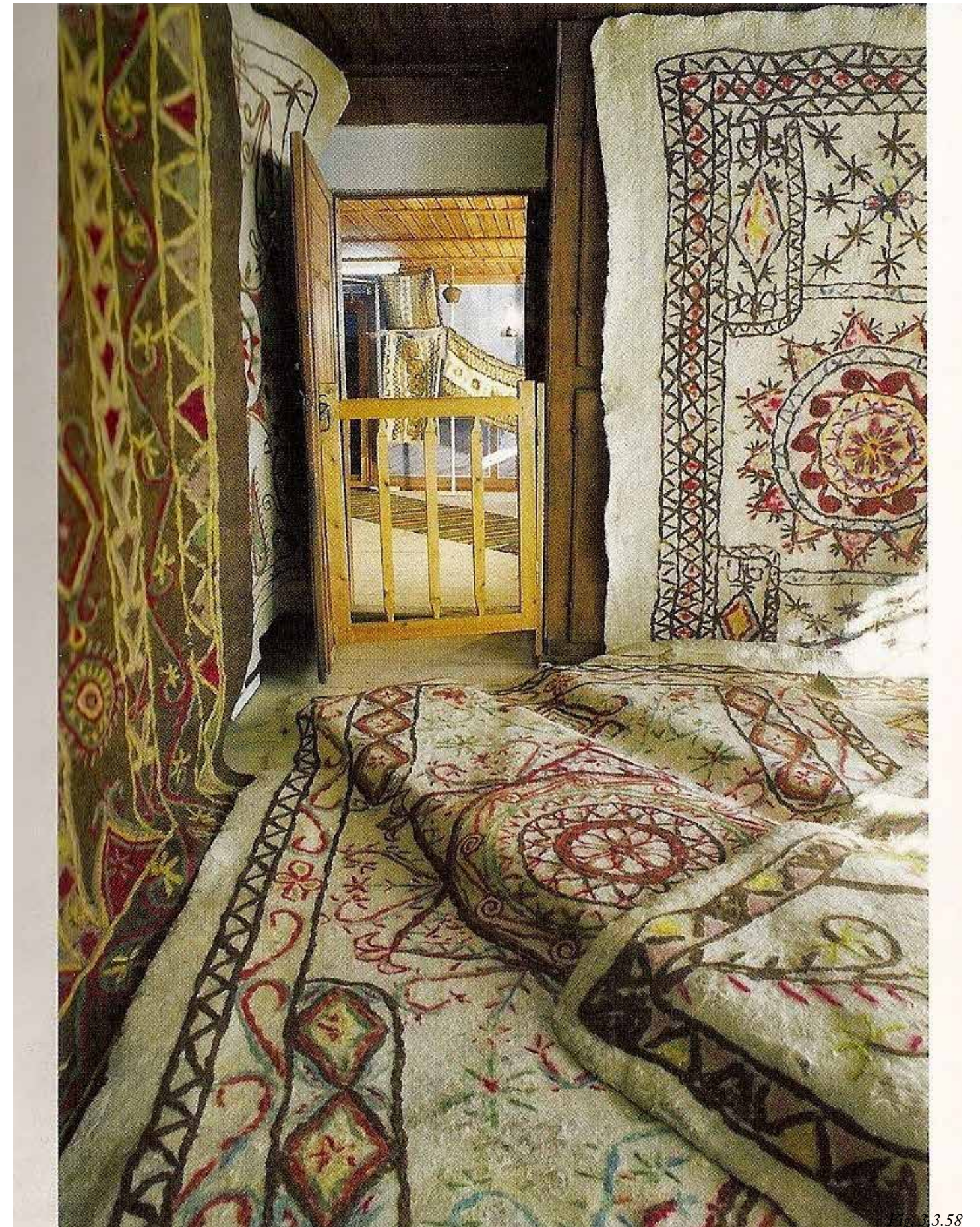


The Weaver's Room

Hanging carpets remained the true walls, the visible boundaries of space. The often-solid walls behind them were necessary for reasons that had nothing to do with the creation of space; they were needed for security, for supporting a load, for their permanence, and so on. Wherever the need for these secondary functions did not arise, the carpets remained the original means of separating space. Even when building solid walls became necessary, the latter were on the inner, invisible structure hidden behind the true and legitimate representatives of the wall, the colourful woven carpets.¹⁶

The weaver's room is a woven space ritualizing the traditional folk craft of weaving *Chiprovtsi carpet* in Bulgaria. It celebrates the woman and the domestic, challenging the modern industrial values of the monument that look down upon the feminine, the ornament and textiles in folk history. My mother told me stories about my grandmother sewing dresses for her, the clothes giving her a sense of individuality in a time when everyone was dressed identical due to lack of variety in the mass-produced clothes sold in stores. Sewing and weaving became a form of expression of individuality.

16 Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture*, p. 104



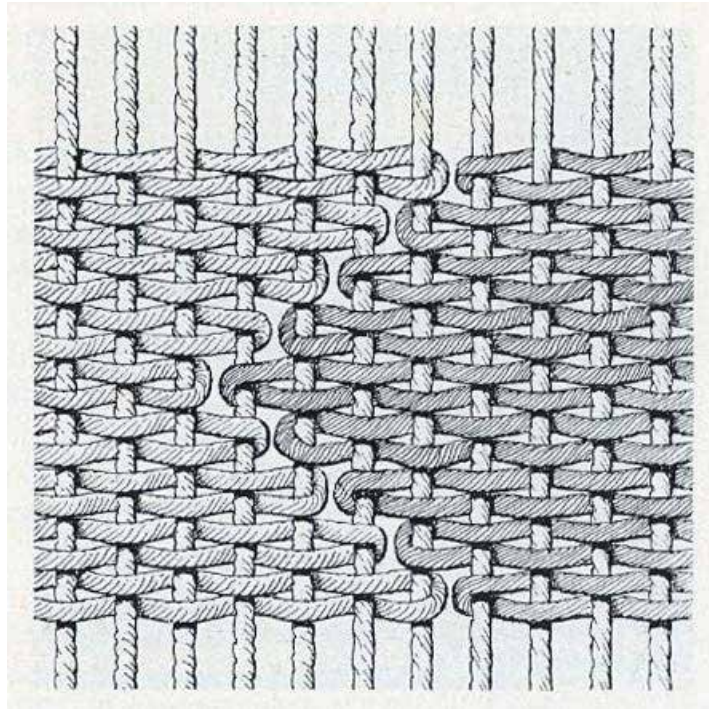


Fig. 3.3.61



Fig. 3.3.62

Materiality Of The Envelope (Wattle Construction):

- 1. Textiles on the interior
- 2. Wooden frame (Wattle)
- 3. Rugs and textiles drying

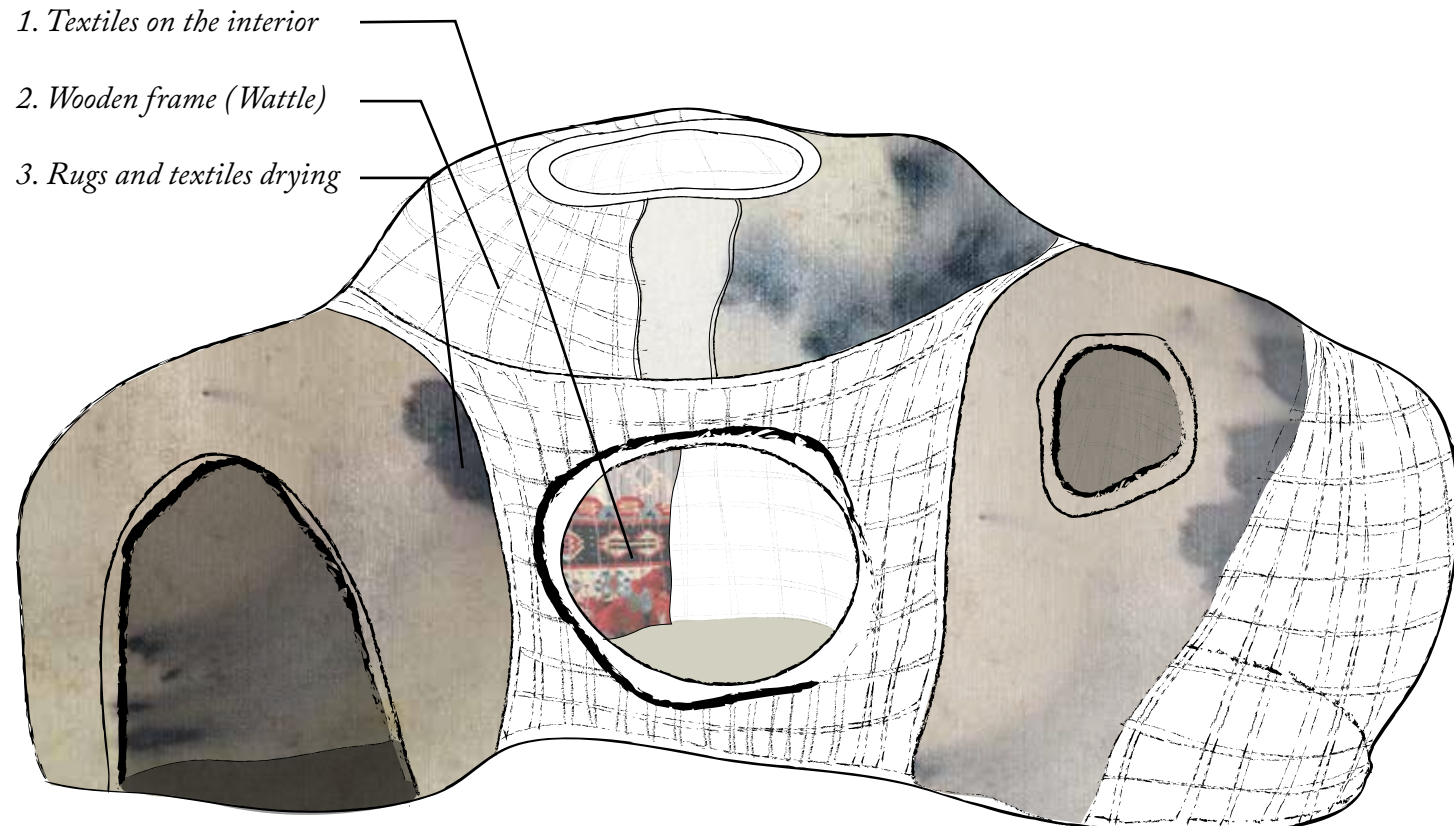


Fig. 3.3.63

According to Gottfried Semper, the first wall was woven, emerging from the ancient craft of weaving in primitive civilizations in the form of screens. The woven wall is held together by a series of knots which create forms and patterns. The weaver creates ornament through the knot which is not added as a layer onto the original wall but is itself the wall. Ornament and wall are one. "The knot or the joint marks the path of an ongoing process of becoming."¹⁷ All architecture was originally fabric. The Bulgarian woman dyes threads in boiling cauldrons and weaves to construct a sense of place in the house using a wooden vertical loom. The weaver's room consists of a wooden frame, a scaffold. Its body becomes a loom, from which the room's woven wall hangs and grows. "The idea that a poetic language of architecture might emerge from the process of its own construction is paralleled in Bergson's later concept of the self as a project of continual self-creation"¹⁸

17 Johnathan Hale. *Gottfried Semper's primitive hut as an act of self-creation*, p. 4

18 Johnathan Hale. *Gottfried Semper's primitive hut as an act of self-creation*, p. 5

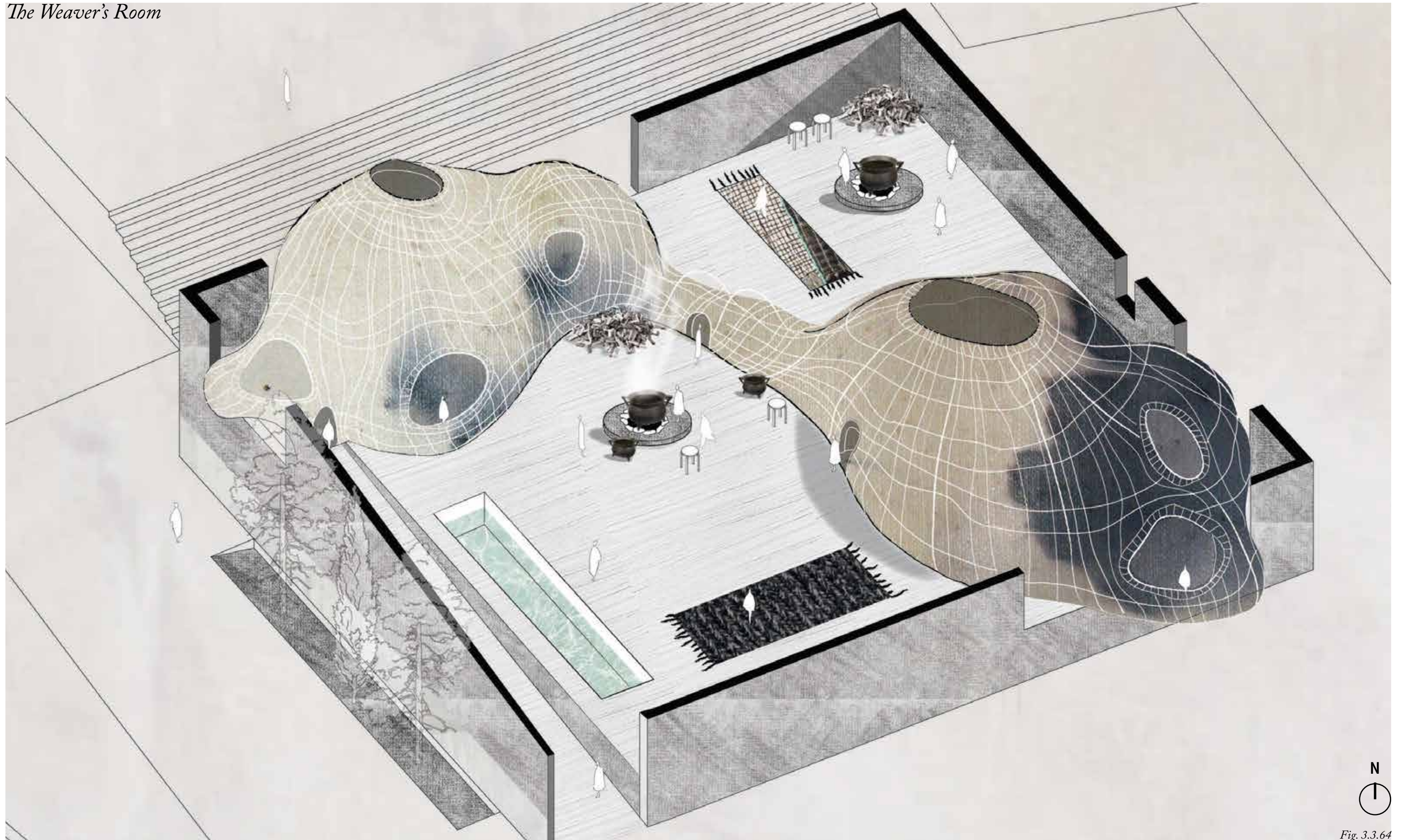


Fig. 3.3.64



Fig. 3.3.65



Fig. 3.3.66



Fig. 3.3.67

Magdalena Abakanowicz, a Polish artist, addresses her experiences and emotions towards the Second World War and the Cold War through her art, textiles, sculpture. She created spatial tapestry which she named after herself, calling them “Abakan”, putting part of herself into the textile. She gives the textiles a human-like quality. Upon entering her abakans,

“...visitors found themselves surrounded by freely hanging garments and body like forms. They were encouraged to enter the Abakans through vertical slits and openings and to pass from one to another. Once inside, they could explore the warmth and suppleness of their lifelike interiors, or even feel as if they were examining their own bodies. The intimate interaction between these works/organisms and the viewers/participants made the Abakans even more animated, turning them into fully “living” sculptures.”¹⁹

The weaver's room focuses on tactility, material and the maker, all intertwined within the thread. Eva Hesse describes the power behind repetition and rhythm of weaving, “*I don't think I always do it, but repetition does enlarge or increase or exaggerate an idea or purpose of a statement.*” Hesse was a post-minimalist artist whose work shared ambitions of the femmage movement started by feminist artist Miriam Shapiro. Femmaage combines the terms “femme” and “collage”, and describes the *composition of paint, fabric, and other materials with deliberate reference to feminine imagery or icons.*²⁰ The artistic movement aimed to preserve and proliferate women's culture and identity through the use of objects and materials associated with the feminine and the domestic. The weaver's room becomes a piece of architectural femmage. A space is formed through the assemblage of feminine craft and tradition. An opening, a door becomes the result of the loosening of the weaving. The weaver's room takes Eva Hesse's piece *Ascension II*, depicting a steel box with a woven interior, and flips it inside-out, exposing the interior of the home and embracing its values. Ornamentation, tradition, craft and the interior are celebrated.

¹⁹ Inglot, Joanna. *The Figurative Sculpture of Magdalena Abakanowicz: Bodies, Environments and Myths*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004, p. 61

²⁰ Barris, Dr. R. n.d. Miriam Schapiro's Feminography. [https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women and art/miriam_schapiro.html](https://www.radford.edu/rbarris/Women%20and%20art/miriam_schapiro.html).



Fig. 3.3.68

The Monument as a Mound

...you descend the stairs of the weaver's room, one hand pressed against the cold smooth wall on the left, leading you to a dim space. The air is damp, and the smell of earth gets stronger the deeper in you go. You realize you are standing in a circular tunnel. You are in a space of horror and evil. You can feel its pulse moving between the walls and through you. You notice your hand still touching the wall, resting near the smears and stains of hands on the walls of the bunker left from previous bodies. The walls are closing in around you and you want to escape. A bright light on your left entices you to walk towards it. The tunnels spit you back out into the landscape of the hill.



The Monument as Mound (becoming mountain):

Mound: a large pile of earth or stones; a small hill; an ancient burial²¹

Ancient civilizations in Bulgaria practiced traditional rituals of burning and burying the remnants of their houses and even entire settlements in pits. This ritual surrounding the killing of their house with fire was about rebuilding settlements and starting a new cycle of being. *Most probably fragmentation, structured deposition and the burning of houses on their own and their dynamic link were daily, annual or once-in-a-lifetime practices in the study area. They served routine quotidian purposes but in the same time they were powerful means for the negotiation of social continuity and social change.*²² These places of deposition cover Bulgaria, leaving mounds of the past buried in the landscape. This old ritual is revived at the site of the monument.

²¹ Definition from Oxford Learner's Dictionaries

²² Gaydarska, Bisserka Ivanova (2004), *Landscape, material culture and society in South East Bulgaria*, Durham theses, Durham University, p. 336

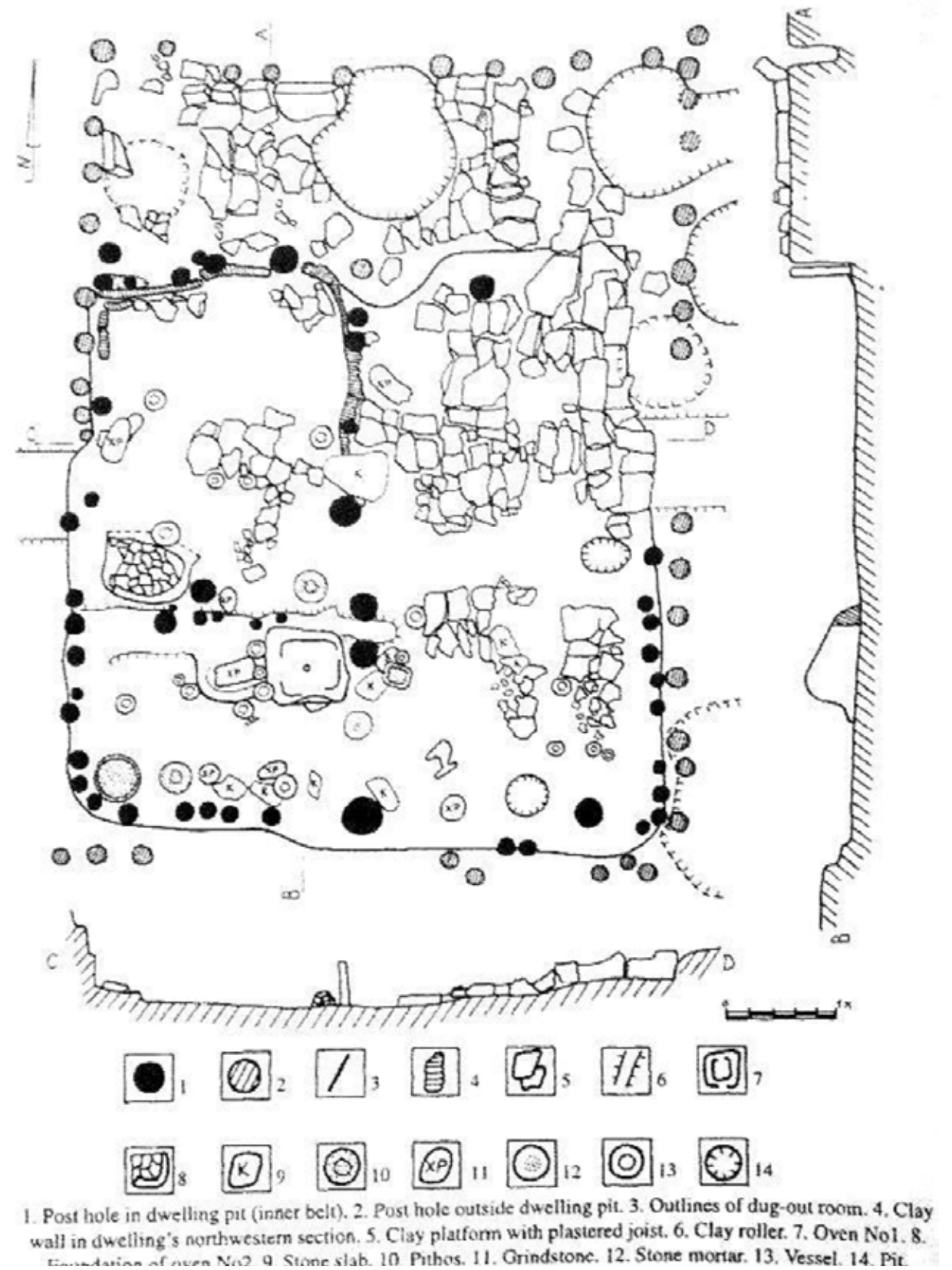


Fig. 3.3.70

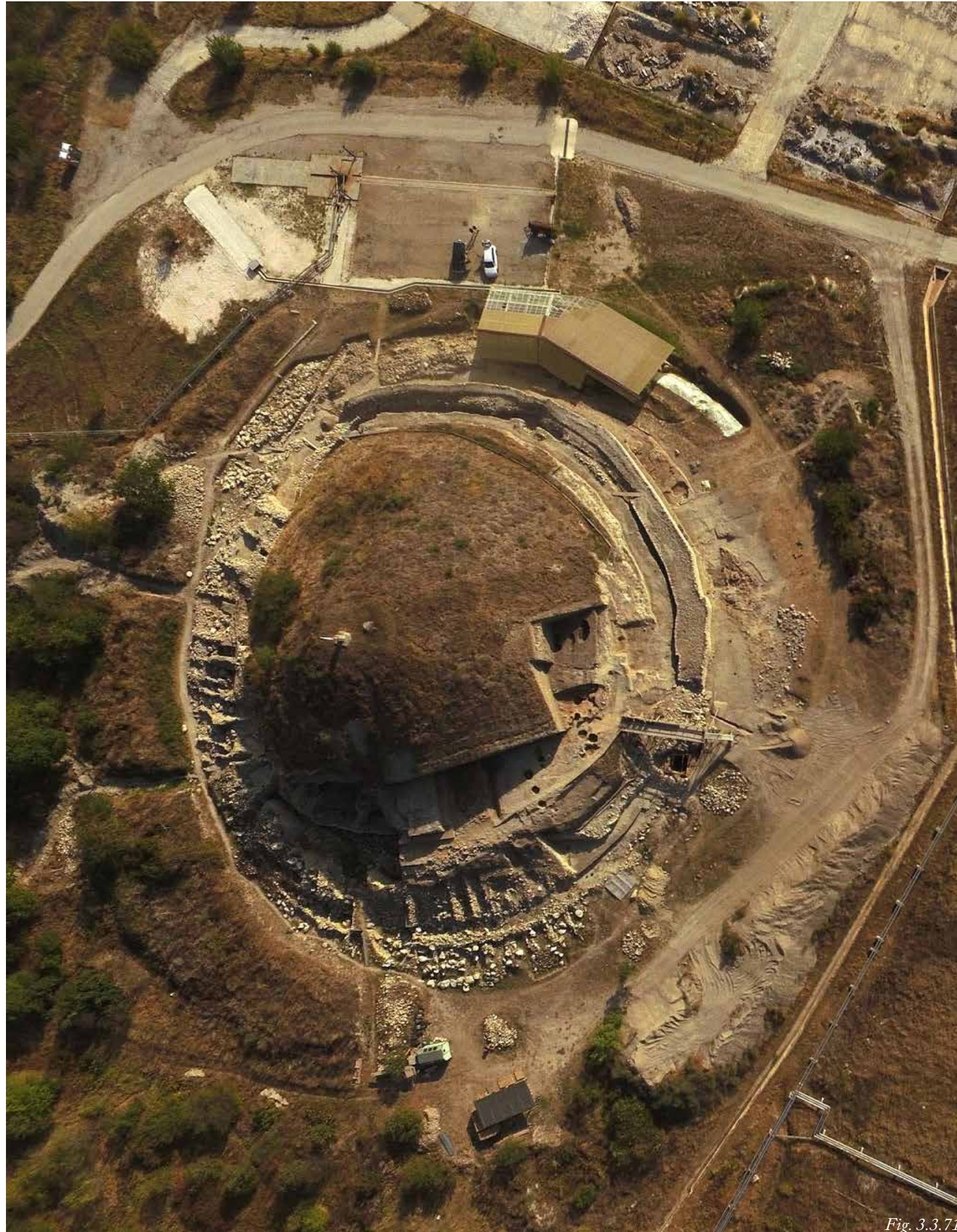


Fig. 3.3.71

Near Varna, approximately 40km away from the monument, is one of the largest mounds in the country belonging to an ancient salt production city. The salt pit is an archaeological site from 4200-4700 BC in Provadia and it is called Solnitsata, meaning “the Saltworks”. The city’s remains consisted of a fortified tell, a complex of ritual pits, a necropolis and a salt production complex filled with large vessels and ceramics.²³ This important city of the time gives a glimpse into a past life and society through the material and architectural study of its remains. The Saltworks were used as a reference in the design of the burying of the monument, strengthening the concept of preserving the memory of a place through material archeology. The monument is not destroyed but physically preserved, while its philosophy decomposes into the landscape and moulds into the past.

²³ Nikolov, Vassil. 2018. “The Prehistoric Salt-Production and Urban Center of Provadia-Solnit...” *Méditerranée. Revue Géographique Des Pays Méditerranéens / Journal of Mediterranean Geography*. Presses Universitaires de Provence. January 1, 2018. <https://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/8246#text>.

The Monument as a Mound

The Bulgarians take part in the ritualistic performance of burning and the cleansing of the monument, ending its original life and marking the beginning of a new one. The monument is burned, its surface charred undergoing transformation, and it is then made into a mound. The burning of the monument becomes an iconoclastic act. In his films, Tarkovsky uses the reoccurring image of the burning house. The pictured stills from his films “*The Sacrifice*” and “*The Mirror*” embody renewal, hope, re-invention and metamorphosis.



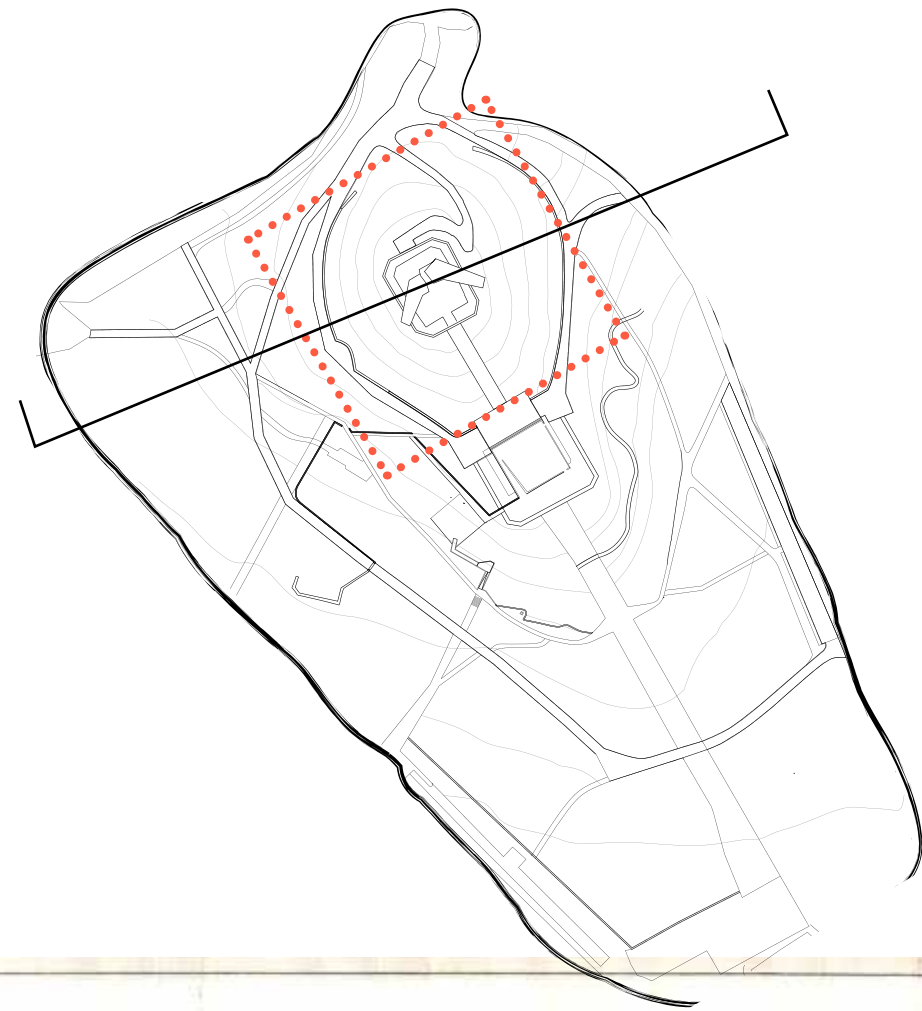
Fig. 3.3.72
The Killing of a House



Fig. 3.3.73
The Killing of a House

The mound becomes the architectural manifestation of *prime matter*. In alchemy, prime matter embodies chaos, darkness and the cosmos. It is formless, the origin of other matter, the starting point of creation. Dirt, flora and earth remove the image created by the monument's form; it negates the visual proportions and hierarchical elements through which the monument was conceived. The earth is the prime matter that turns the site into formlessness. From a distance, the monument is unseen, no longer haunting the city. It is still there but the wanderer's imagination takes control of the image, summoning it when he needs to remember the past. *Gaston Bachelard makes a distinction between formal imagination and material imagination. He considers images arising from matter project deeper and more profound experiences than images of form. Matter evokes unconscious images and emotions, but modernity at large has been primarily concerned with form!*²⁴

²⁴ Pallasmaa, Juhani. "Matter, Hapticity and Time Material Imagination and the Voice of Matter." *Building Material*, no. 20 (2016): 171-89. www.jstor.org/stable/26445108. p. 171-172



Key Plan

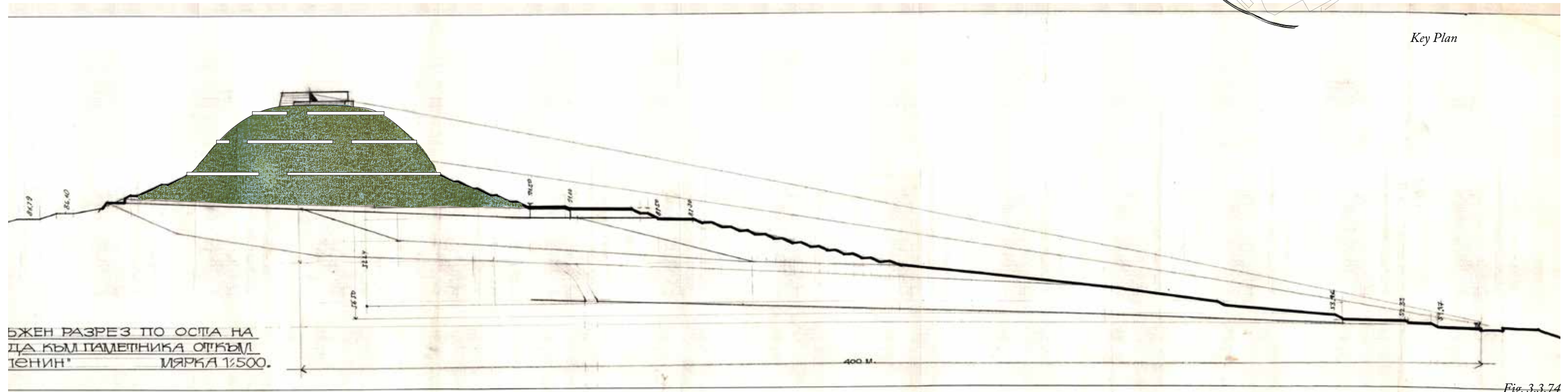
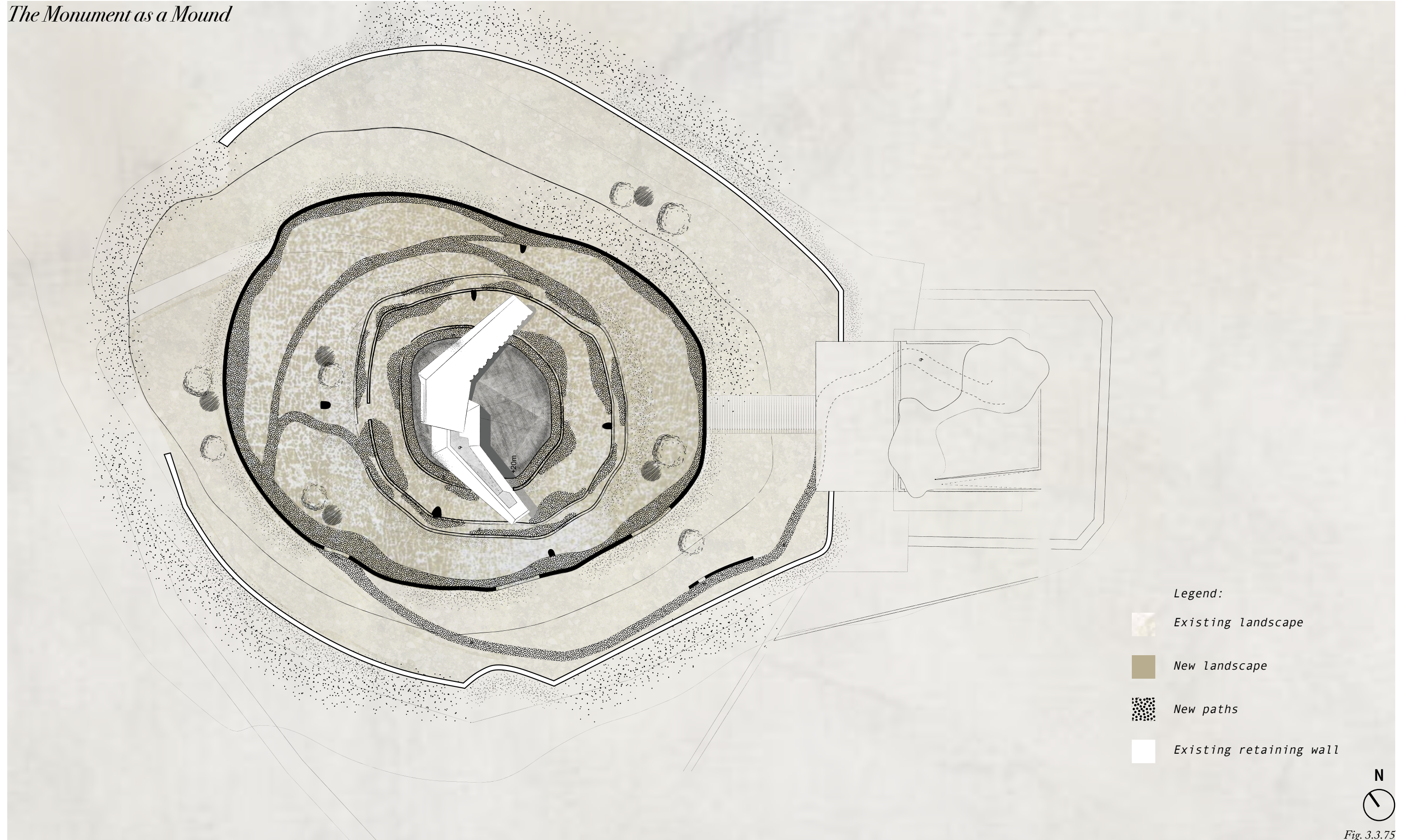


Fig. 3.3.74

The Monument as a Mound



- Legend:
- Existing landscape
 - New landscape
 - New paths
 - Existing retaining wall

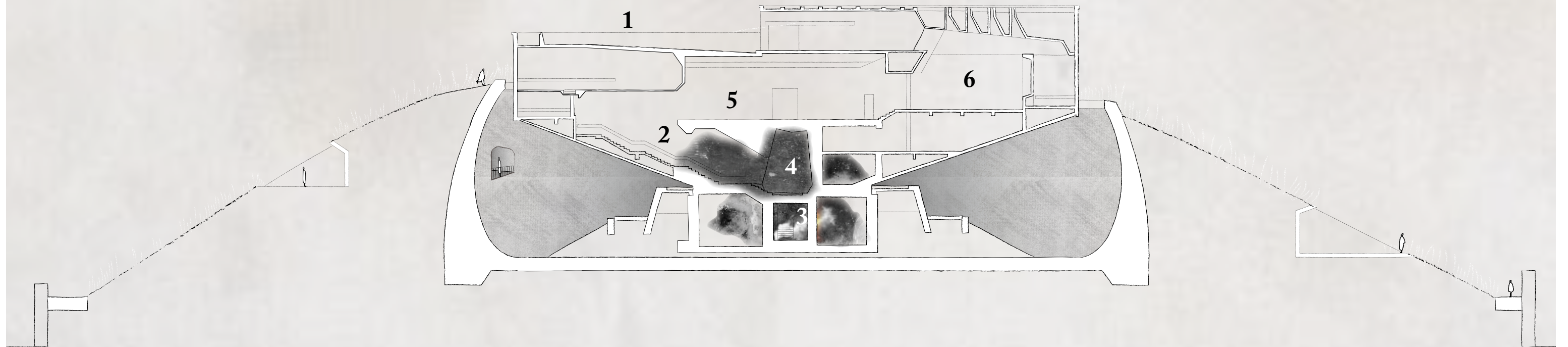


Fig. 3.3.75

Monument's Original Program:

- 1. Exterior Vista*
- 2. Staircase up to the Main Hall*
- 3. Stair leading to the entrance of the underground bunker and buried tunnels*
- 4. Main Entrance to the Monument*
- 5. Bookshop/Main Hall/Propaganda Center*
- 6. Spiritual room, bearing a communist star stamped in the concrete. Multiple levels in the monument look down upon the star in veneration*

■ *Burned surface area of the concrete monument*



The Monument as a Mound

The path the wanderer takes to the top of the mound is made of earth and dirt. As you step into it, it is quiet, earthy and soft, swallowing your foot. It is everything the sterile communist city tried to remove from environments, as it is considered messy and dirty. On this path, "*Dirt is not messy. Dirt is not 'dirty'. Dirt is teeming with life and rich with possibilities. Dirt is less that by which we are repulsed than that which is endlessly giving and fertile. Organisms grow, thrive, and evolve amidst dirt. Dirt is thus the matrix capable of emergent behaviour, nurturing growth, spawning development, and igniting change.*"²⁵ The dirt and earth surround the monument. The patchwork of living landscapes blends together and form multiple patterns and express movement in all directions. There are shrubs sprouting from stones and paths slowly carving themselves through the hills and the soil, constantly changing in texture and form. The many organisms interacting with the landscape become its multiples, splitting, dying and re-forming. Memory is embedded into the landscape with the passage of time, seen through the marks left by the transformations that occur. The landscape is always in a state of becoming, growing in all directions with no start or end. Manmade concrete traces of what once was erodes and amalgamates with the endless formations of the landscape. You cannot predict this living rhizomatic structure, as it is linking and expanding in uncertain ways, endlessly finding new connections. Over time the hill will grow around the monument, leaving it as a concealed ruin. It will reclaim the landscape the monument occupied, the *Goryan's* mountain takes back its power over the hill.

25 Zuzana Kovar, *Abjection in Architecture*, p.67, quoting *Dirt*, 2012

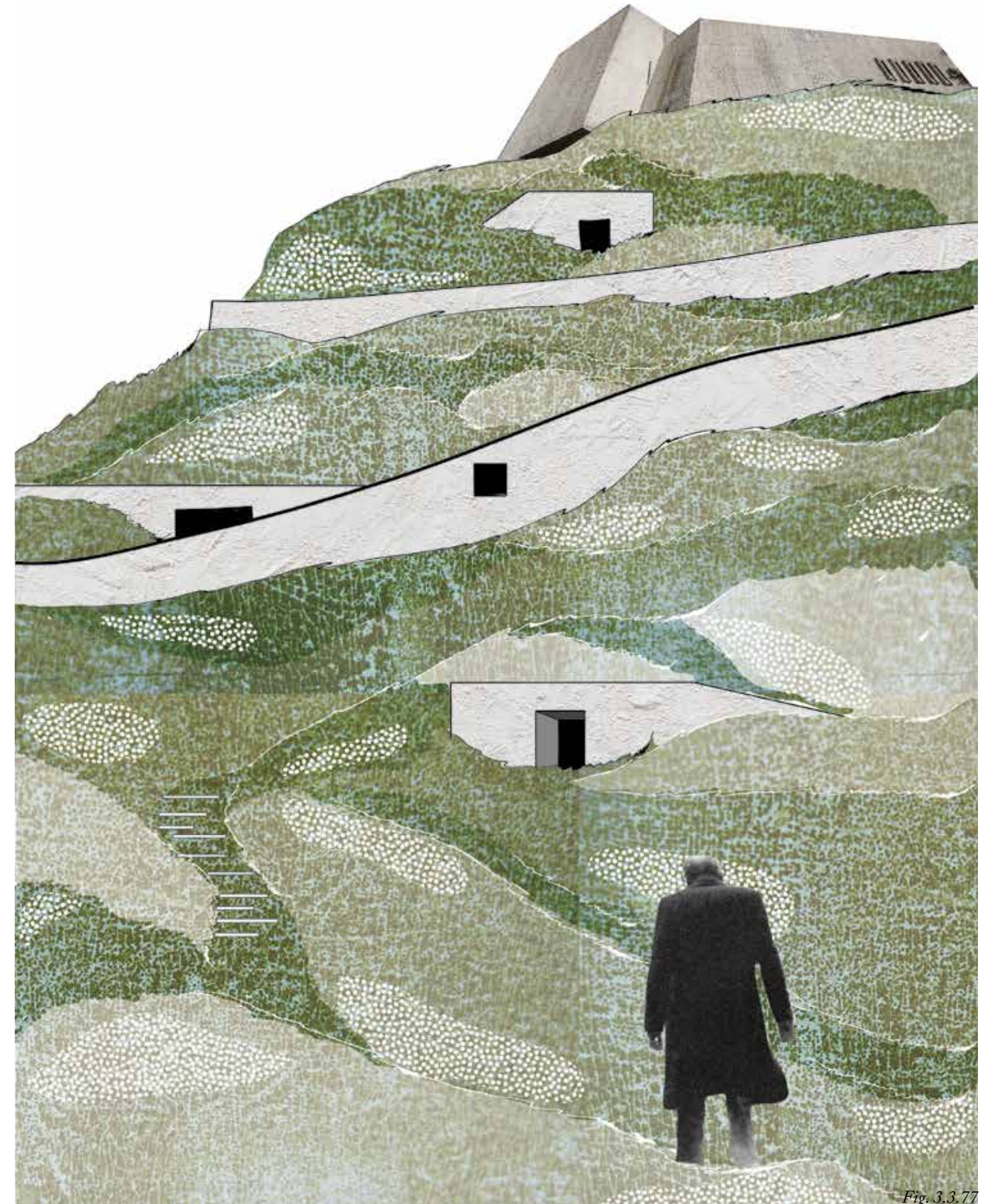




Fig. 3.3.78

Throughout the design, I use visual storytelling techniques such as the foreshadowing to the heat, the fire, indicated through smoke and warmth which is part of the performance leading to the burning of the monument. A passing of time is understood on the site through the growth of the vegetation and the continuously changing material processes. The design preserves the view at the top of the hill which is the destination that currently attracts people to the site. The mound renders the view more accessible and creates new viewpoints, dwarfing the monument and bringing the visitor higher than before, close to its walls. As one walks the paths to the top, one encounters cut-outs in the hill, framed by curving walls accentuating the movement of the hill and the landscape and capturing its changes over time. The cut-outs lead into the hill to viewing platforms overlooking different parts of the carcass of the monument, an ancient tomb.



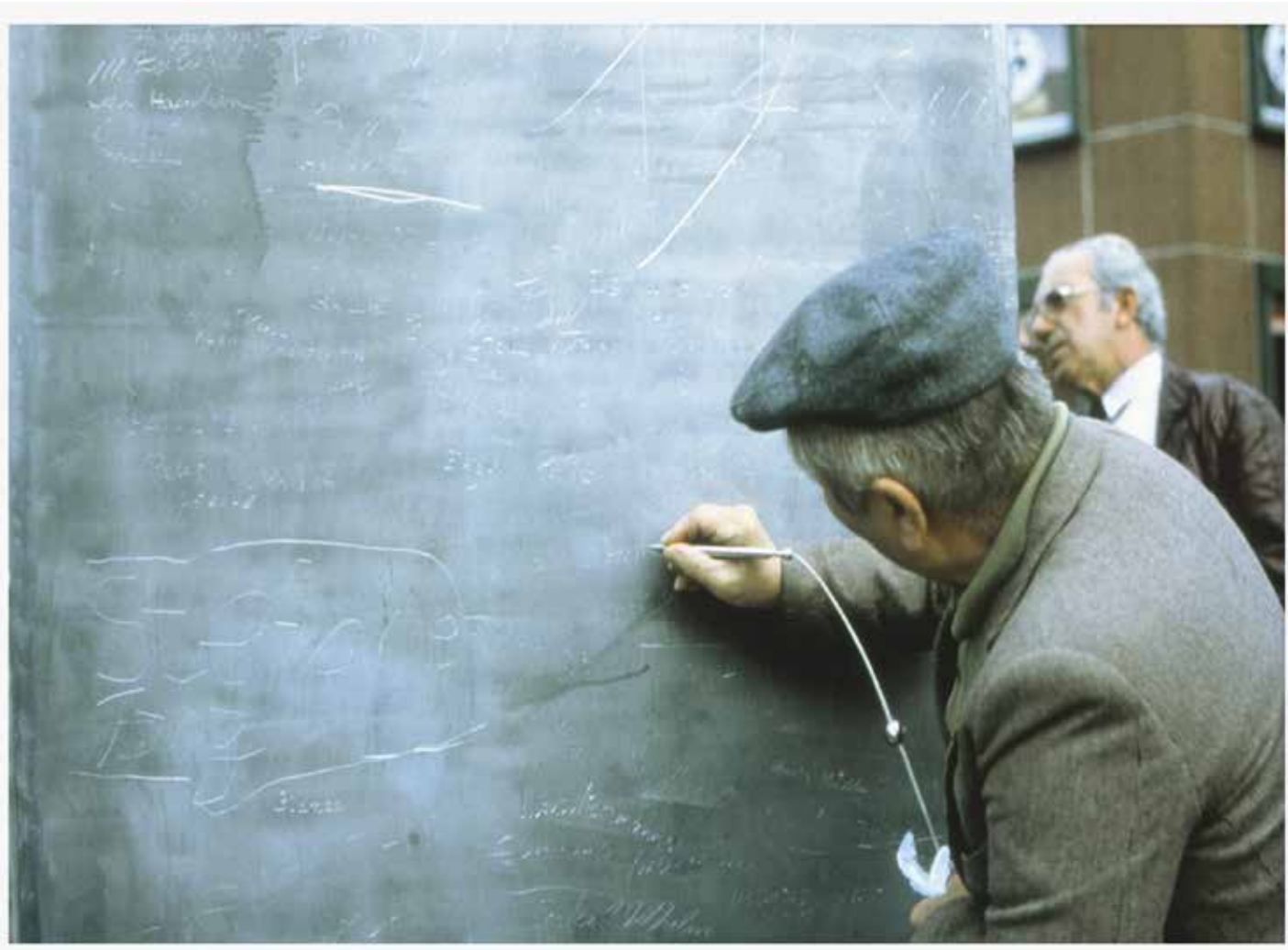


Fig. 3.3.80

On Iconoclasm and the Counter Monument

The monument as a mound becomes a counter monument. It does not impose a new form on the site against the monument but embraces its imminent destruction. A counter monument, described by the author James E. Young, ridicules the traditional monument's unchanging nature. It emerged after WWII in opposition to the monuments left behind by the Nazi regime. They embrace temporality, disappear over time, or encourage interaction between themselves and the public. Artists Jochen and Esther Gerz designed a counter-monument in Hamburg, which is self-vanishing and self-destroying in nature. It was called "Monument against Fascism, War and Violence and for Peace and Human Rights." It was opened to the public in 1986, 12m high, 1 m² pillar made of hollow aluminium, plated with a thin layer of soft, dark lead. People are invited to engrave their name on the lead column sculpture, with the more names inscribed on the surface, the lower it is sunk into the ground, until it disappears. The public is a part of the experience of vanishing. The respect and distance, the veneration of monuments society maintains is broken, the monument becomes equal to the people. The visitor is responsible to remember his past, his history, and remove that burden from the monument. Pierre Nora explains that monuments displace memory rather than embody it. Monumental memory is assigned to memory, in an age of mass memory production and consumption. The monument does the remembering for us.²⁶ Designers are acknowledging the abstraction of the events being memorialized, which the newer generations have not experienced/lived through and so they cannot comprehend them in the same manner. The vanished monument reminds one to remember instead of relying only on the singular perspective the standing monument renders.²⁷

²⁶ Harvard Design Magazine: Memory and Counter-Memory. <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/9/memory-and-counter-memory>.
²⁷ Young, James E. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today." *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 267-96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343784>.

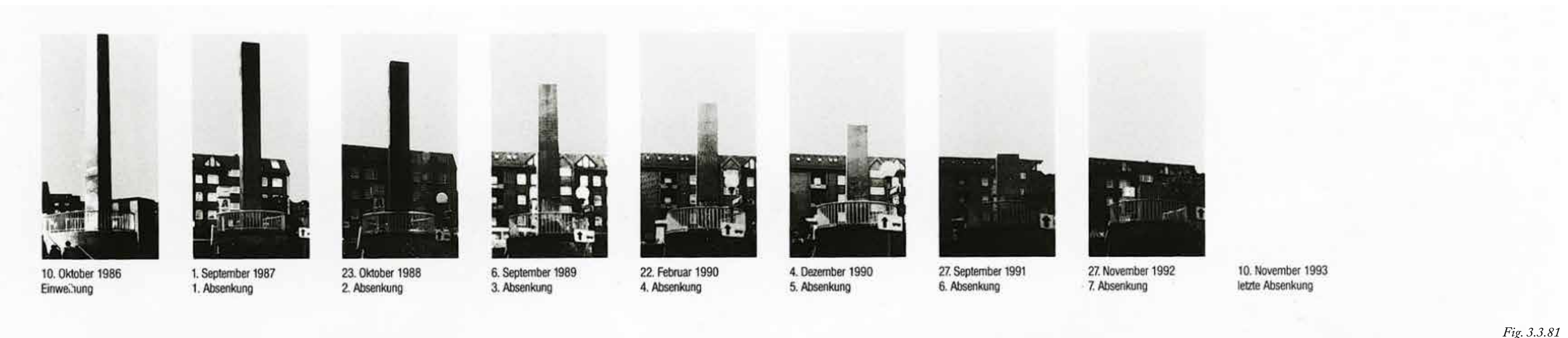


Fig. 3.3.81

Young describes a counter-monument:

With audacious simplicity, the counter-monument thus flouts any number of cherished memorial conventions: its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet. By defining itself in opposition to the traditional memorial's task, the counter-monument illustrates concisely the possibilities and limitations of all memorials everywhere. In this way, it functions as a valuable "counter-index" to the ways time, memory, and current history intersect at any memorial site.²⁸

The counter monument does not need to reject memory, only the idea that the form and the material of the monument must be eternal and never changing. It "mocks the traditional monument's certainty of history." The monument captures an image of history that in its creation and by nature does not capture the whole truth, just a snapshot of it. The creator decides what to include and what to remove, and so he edits and forgets pieces of history.²⁹

The concept of self-destruction in counter monuments is also explored in the world of the sculptor Jean Tinguely who built self-destroying sculptures. They caused their own vanishing as a reaction to the art market and mass consumption of sculptures turned into commodity. Tinguely talks about his piece *Homage* exhibited in New York as:

An ephemeral, fleeting work, like a shooting star, and above all destined not to be recovered by museums. It was not to be "museum". She had to come by, dream about it, talk about it, and that's all, the next day there was nothing left. Everything was going back to the trash. She had a certain complicated sophistication that destined her to destroy herself; she was a machine that committed suicide.³⁰

The machine is purified, cleansed through destruction. This is described as iconoclasm, meaning the creative act of destroying the image. The process of destruction of the monument is meant to liberate the present from the past, and recreate the experience and purpose of the monument, turning it into a piece of art. This way, the monument is able to be re-integrated into the present. This destruction becomes a part of the monument's life, dispersing its memory instead of concentrating it into itself. The counter monument formalizes impermanence, changing form over time and space.

The monument as a mound embraces the stance of the counter monument and iconoclasm, challenging the permanence and the traditional architecture of monuments. It questions the need for monuments in the modern age and asks if there should be a different way in which history can be commemorated in society. According to Fernand Léger, one of the authors of *Nine Points on Monumentality*, *monuments are human landmarks which men have created as symbols for their ideals, for their aims, and for*

28 Young, James E. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today."

29 Young, James E. "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today."

30 Rolez, Anaïs. 1970. *Les Machines Auto-Destructrices De Jean Tinguely, Un Attentat Contre L'ordre Établi*. January 1, 1970. <http://partage-du-sensible.blogspot.com/2011/08/les-machines-auto-destructrices-de-jean.html>.

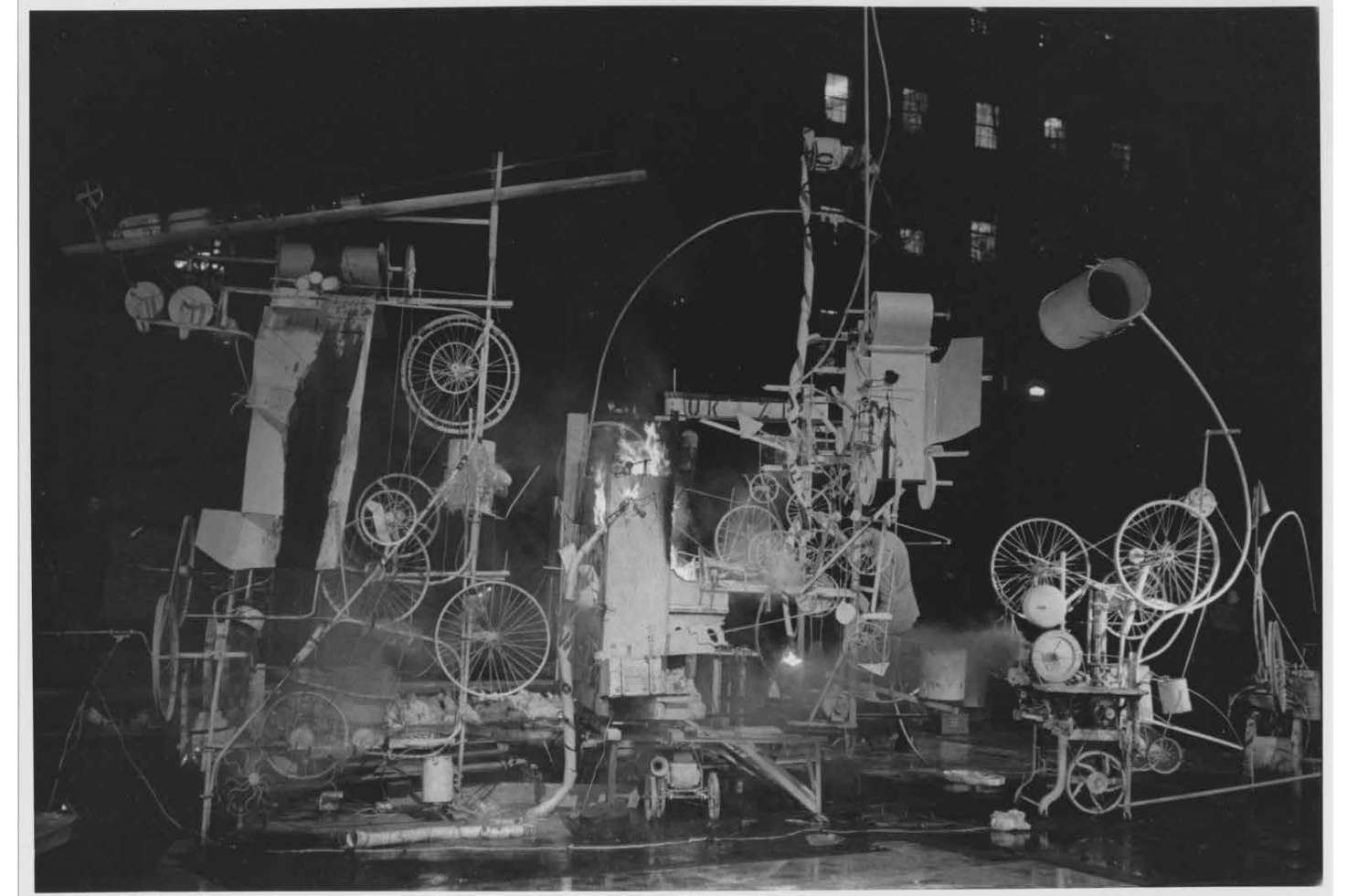


Fig. 3.3.82

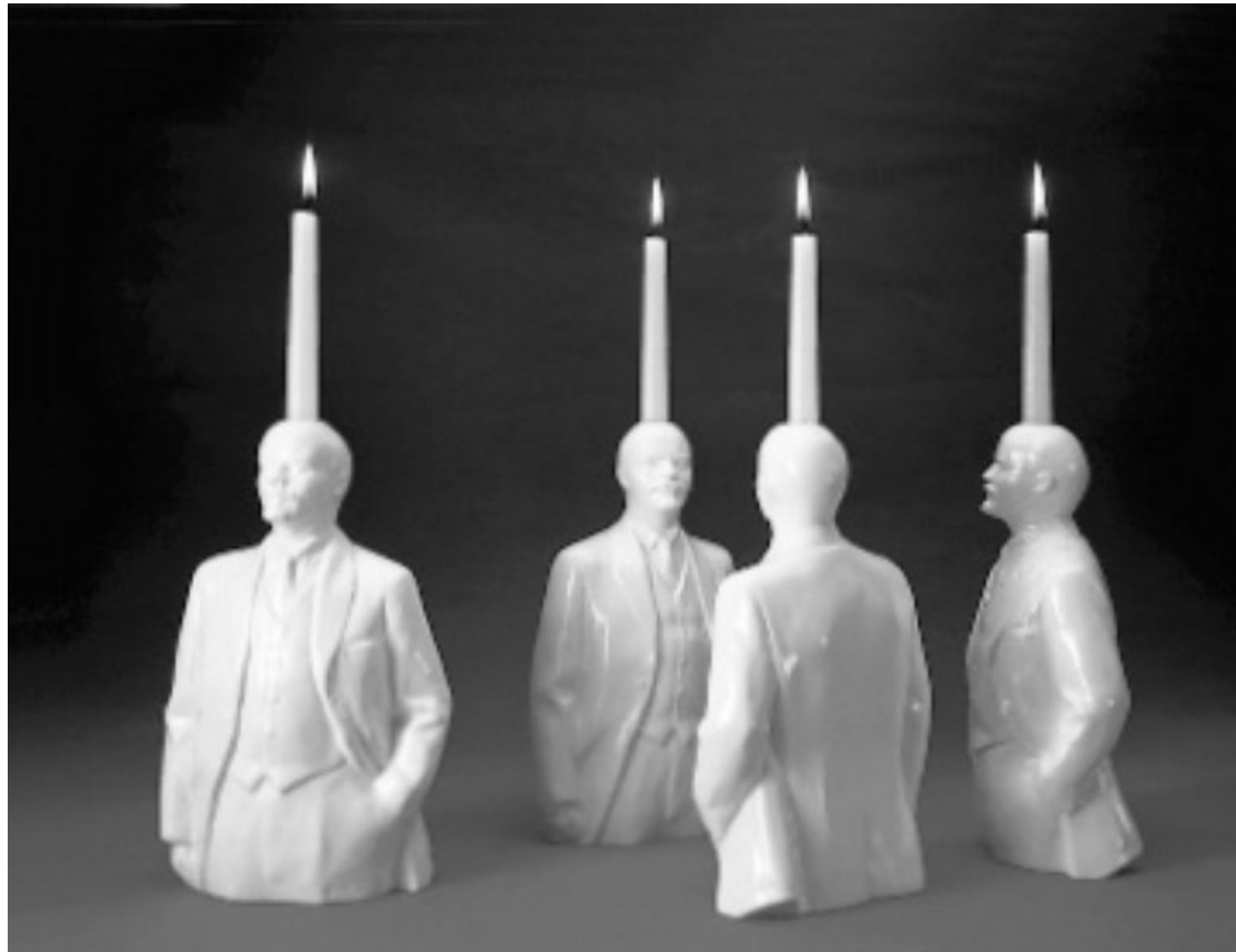


Fig. 3.3.83



Fig. 3.3.84

The sculptures of Lenin as a candle holder are designed by artists Komar and Melamid. In architecture, the plinth is used to describe the lower square slab at the base of a column, as seen in Gerhard Richter's sculptures (Fig 3.3.84). Komar and Melamid created a counter sculpture as a commentary on the Lenin sculptures around Eastern Europe. Komar and Melamid flip the sculpture upside down, turning Lenin into the plinth for the banal object that is the candle. He is undermined.

*their actions. They are intended to outlive the period which originated them and constitute a heritage for future generations. As such, they form a link between the past and the future.*³¹ The idea behind the monument is universal. It is an old architectural representation of a Spirit of the time. This thesis project speculates on experiences, materials, traditions and rituals as ways to connect with history in a personal intimate way and create places that stimulate this connection. It also looks to understand how the past, present and future overlap in a place like the site of the monument and can exist simultaneously. It questions permanence in architecture and explores temporal structures as a way to physically embrace the passage of time. The monument will break down over time, becoming a trace, a fossil beneath the mound. It will become a void, a ruin:

*Anyone who has become entranced by the sound of dripping water in the darkness of a ruin can attest to the extraordinary capacity of the ear to carve a volume into a void of darkness. The space traced by the ear in the darkness becomes a cavity sculpted in the interior of the mind.*³²

The monument will become a memory, a sound, a personal experience, a piece of material. The original architectural forms of the monument become forgotten, and what remains are the strong associations and memories of the place.

Rainer Maria Rilke writes a passage on the memory of the site of a demolished house in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*. He captures the smells and images of its past life:

*There stood the middays and the sicknesses and the exhaled breath and the smoke of years, and the sweat that breaks out under armpits and makes clothes heavy, and the stale breath of mouths, and the fusel odor of sweltering feet. There stood the tang of urine and the burn of soot and the grey reek of potatoes, and the heavy, smooth stench of ageing grease. The sweet, lingering smell of neglected infants was there, and the fearsome smell of children who got to school, and the sultriness out of the beds of nubile youth.*³³

31 "Reference: Nine Points on Monumentality." n.d. RSS. <http://www.terencegower.com/new-monuments-for-new-neighbourhoods/reference-nine-points-on-monumentality/>.

32 Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p.50

33 Rainer Maria Rilke, "The Notebook of Malte Laurids Brigge", trans. M. D. Herter, W.W. Norton & Co. (New York and London), 1992, pp. 47-8, quoted in: Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, p. 293

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