

Making Through Love

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- I won't say too much about tower since you all know it— I'm mostly going to just say the things i want to talk about, which is going to sound less 'masters degree-y' than I would do in a p4, but not that that stuff isn't there, I just want to be a bit fluufy and melancholic)
- And this is not going to be about the tower itself so much but more about the values and modes of making that can be exhibited, or are performed in some aspects of building the tower. So in a way the larger project of the tower is beyond what is being presented for this graduation degree, which of course you all know— because you all have your own relation to it, your own values and we have our own, and your own, projects within or beside this other project.
- oh and thank you all, not just for being here, but joining the project— all the things I'm going to say are not just my ideas but from my conversations with all of you, maybe especially Alberto. and a lot of the photos and videos are from you all, and you're in all of them, ha

But you could still say that the core of the graduation project is the exploration of the dynamics of building the tower, in real life. And you could say the architectural aspect of this graduation project is the reflection upon the project and the externalization of that to become information which can be entered by others. (and this presentation is not that, this is just a few images and a few things that move me and i am in the mood to say, right now.) And so a part of the project inevitably becomes about how you communicate this story, or design attitude, or design values, of a real subject. So both of those together— the modes of building the tower itself, and the modes of how we talk about that building process— is what the project is about.

Which is to say I'm investigating not only how we build, but how we talk about building (as proposals or as history etc).

(these modes of 'how-to-talk-about' might be evident but I wont get into that so much.)

ABSTRACT —

So in the aspect of the building process itself, I'm focused less on what a building is, or becomes, and more on how we build things. And the critical element which I'm exploring in this 'how' is love. Which is to say I'm also not proposing a specific methodology for how things should be built, but rather exploring more of a fluctuating and volatile field of relationships and bonds in which we can make things. Which is neither contractual nor formally collective, but a working through, by working on, and being attentive to, our never stable projects of friendship. Because that is the reality which we are always already inescapably a part, and we urgently need to keep thinking about how to work from within that, as uncertain and anxiety-giving as that is.

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I want to first speak of my own desire to start this project. Which is undoubtedly a private project, not a project coming from a collective. i initiated it. But it is an open project that I want to co-construct through my relationships with friends in order to make something which is between us and which moves us both closer to the things we care about. and to get closer to each other, in an accumulation of affections. (An idea which I will return to, over and over, because this is the core aspect of what i would say constitutes making through love)

MOURNING

For me personally my interest was always rooted in mourning, even from the beginning, or before that. But mourning in the creative sense. I continually go back to a short essay from Sanford Kwinter responding to the off-hand claims made by Anslem Haverkamp associating memory, and thus remembering, to creation and invention— of which he cites mourning as an "indissociable aspect of memory". "if memory is" as he says "creating links from one place and thing to another— rather than mere reproduction— as more conventional thinking would have it, then it is all the more startling to link it to mourning". It's a sentiment that moves me because it cuts to the core of an understanding that thinking, memory, remembering, even mourning, are acts of creation, of making, of design. And if we extend this understanding to one in which we understand thinking as being tied to a response to the world, then it's all the much more powerful to link thinking to memory, and memory to mourning, and mourning to creation. to mourn is to not to refuse loss but to keep its contents alive and active, constantly constructing with and through them, simply by the act of recalling them each time, which is always different, unique and specific to that moment and presence of joining with those contents— in a present which is hostile towards subjectivity and the unseen.

The kind of mourning I'm talking about however is not only specific things to grieve, but more generally things which are lost— an ambiguous intangible loss, which feels ever present. The things which never were and can no longer be, or could ever even have been. The things I'm talking about are personal to me and my own life and history, but also to the world in which I'm within. A world which I find myself grieving for, as an act of feeling with and attempting to produce new dreams, by making and feeling with this intangible artifact of things which could be. And I want to move closer to that grief, by engaging in it, and the dreams which stir up affections. To me, building towards a past is simultaneously actually producing a day dream and the actual thing I'm touching and building at that moment.

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its something like the desire i have to escape into my dreams. The ones with all my friends. When we were still friends. and All the reconciliations happened; and no one is dead, sick, depressed, poor, addicted, traumatized, abused, exhausted or dying. And I just want to go to that place and stay there for a bit. And see each other, and appreciate the things we care for.

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And I associate this feeling closely with building. Building for me is always a work of mourning. and its been like that my whole life, and maybe its related to the history of my life, i dont know. but making is for me the active component of activating grief. it brings me closer to the sensation of creation, beyond the necessarily real, but to the things i vaguely remember. i mean it creates the feeling, of time traveling, and invention. and i just want to fucking feel things, and build a world in which not only is it possible to build, but that i want to fucking be in. and that moment of feeling that, is for that moment, creating that world. cliché i know I.D.G.A.F.

but i dont want to do it alone, i want to feel those things with my friends. which compounds the act of creation— because we are moving closer, through mutual creative grieving, to the things we care about, and want~ to a place of duration, and love. because i want to go beyond a mere community, i want to share in feeling something. and grieving the world, which is building the world.

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THIRD WAY

which is where i will say that i am interested in this 'third way' of making which is neither the standard architectural practice (of relationships based on contractual and monetary obligations) or the standard architectural practice of dissent against the standard architectural practice (fixed member collectives of 'alternative practice' with relationships based on moral obligations either to a declared set of shared values (more akin to leftist groups) or to fulfill a role, as a Job, within the collective). Alternative Practice might raise funds, apply for grants and municipal budgets, and they may create their own projects and represent a community that otherwise wouldn't have access to design services or so on. But, besides that they may be beholden to some political influence, is pushed to narrowly defining the 'community' they design for, they usually operate still with a distinction between architect, builder and inhabitant. An aspect which I am not necessarily opposed to, but I am more interested in remaining in the instability of real-world relationships and conflicts, navigated not through contracts, codes, set-procedures and obligations, but instead through engagement of love and care. Which is this making from within the center of shifting and undefinable/multi-definable communities— as a participant in those varied communities.

See for me it's also not enough to claim that building together is good enough— that this is inherently positive or productive. Just in the same way as saying that a collective is inherently good. You can have a collective of neo-fascists for example. And this is also what I say when I'm opposed to morality as an organizing principle to build around. For one because I don't believe in this good or evil concept, and I certainly don't agree with statements that presuppose there is an inherently correct way to build or organize, and that this can be the basis of a collective. (It's not enough to identify around subverting Property/State/Capital. ~ e.g. How are you?) I am more interested in the flux of having to continually re-assess values, understandings, relationships, and what it is we want to do together— and who that together is. I think

having to continually work through that is reality, and attempts to fix or set values on who is in and not within a community or collective is to a certain extent avoiding reality. So I want to shift onto thinking about how those collectives happen, not just merely that they do happen. How do we form them, and how we build within them (internally) or from within them (externally).

COLLECTIVES/PRESENCE

my maps are an attempt to draw out the fluctuations of relationships, and knowing things, and touching things (through our knowing and through our relationships), which are always emerging and are never stable. It maps not a linear story of forming a collective, but charts a process of doing, encountering, forming, dissolving, and reforming. A collective forms in the moment in which we are there together responding to our world (to problems, to matters of concern, to shared values), which you could say always leads to another and different and specific collective to address the next moment and the specific concerns of that moment. Problems, matters of concern, values are always shifting, as are our relationships in relation to them. And it is from this that we engage the world and build things, so I attempt to map that out, partially.

But there is a struggle and a need for duration, to stay with each other, and build lasting bonds, in which we can depend and rely on each other, despite the ever dynamic flows of relations, or ruptures. I turn to long-term relationships as an inspiration in this. In which, as anyone who has been in one knows, staticism is a fallacy, and yet, we strive for security and stability. To insist for people to remain as they are, to not change, I would consider to be at war with reality and even become abusive.

What I search for instead is a commitment to care. Which, the way I see it, is always an open ended situational responsibility which is not a fixed obligation but simply a commitment to presence and attention, to the flux of things and situations which are always moving. And each one is different, and is attended to differently. And conflicts will emerge so of course things have to get more carefully attentive, and responded to differently.

But that's part of the trying I think... you only get to know those things by staying in the trouble of them, and spending time. Which is a commitment... to stretching yourselves out... over a duration... And I would say this also constitutes a core value of the project. Which differentiates form from forming. From care being something that has a specific form of engagement, with identifiable behaviors, to a constant process of evaluation, experimentation and responding. It becomes no longer about what you are supposed to do, but how you do it. "Being there" can take on ever-changing forms. I hope it's obvious that I link this directly to design.

"it's strange how slow life is, how much energy it takes to build and sustain relationships. but it's so common you leave your house and town when you go study, to move about looking for jobs. i think this will just increase, that they will keep splintering communities, because it makes us weak, unable to really resist. to resist takes some commitment, but said out loud, amongst each other. and i mean, in living rooms or maybe by a tower. but not in a programmed event at nai, or tu delft or whatever i guess i want people to care for selfish reasons, cause i need others to survive. or i think i do. or i think a world with so many people needs us caring for each other, to be mindful ... otherwise there is no future for anyone"

AFFECTIONS

This sense of moving towards each other is the descriptor of what you could call the encounter, which is one of the key values within this mode of working, of design, of an open ended architecture. It's an encounter which relies on mutual curiosity, generosity and genuine care.

"Why are they building this thing? What do they care about? Because I want to know, because I care about you, and because I care to know what things you care about. And I care to know why those things matter to you. Because I am curious, Because I am interested to know. Because I want to know. Because I care. And I ask because I care." And from that feeling of connection and desire to know each other, I want to find ways to engage so as to extend those things and give them more power (to affect you, and to affect me), and move us closer, in an accumulation of affections, to the things we care about.

These are aspects of a design attitude, if we take design as a mode of engaging in the world. Or even to say that design is to engage, or affect, the world. And I think these things are what create friendship, genuine friendship, which is also in a way a design project.

"And then the focus is shifted to staying in the place. Away from building and towards doing something, for us, our well being. So the focus becomes us, as a group of people more than the tower as a physical structure. A concern about ourselves and that we could enjoy that night. Not so much caught in the anxiety that we finish before sunrise and risk being seen building, but to enjoy the moon, the cold, the sound of the highway. And the darkness, and the mud, and the feeling of being there, in the park, among the bushes, being protected, but exposed to the lake— safe but open, free but afraid of being seen. And you enjoy those feelings."

ENCOUNTER

there was something you said which connected nicely with our conversation throughout about ownership-- and also this question of who is it for. to which at one point i think you responded that the tower is for the people who are building it, and that that group is never the same group

yes, and there was also a point at which our discussion was helping refine the ideas of an open architecture, or a good encounter-- in that what is built or added to is good precisely because it takes account the further potentials of what might come next, and makes space for those 'comings next' to still be possible to happen. which increases our capacity to act because it creates ever more abilities to interact with whats there in order to build more (spinozian joy). so in that sense things are not determined and designed all at once, but neither are they not considered. in fact many many things are considered-- the many what ifs are thought about and worked to remain yet open through the act of adding. even if the adding moves the construction in a particular direction, it doesnt make that a fixed direction

super! i love the formation. How do you negotiate between 'care' (acting with 'love' and therefore prior consideration) and 'freedom' (no fear of making mistakes).....I think it's possible to have both when there is mutual 'trust' Im reminded of a bible verse 'there is no fear in love'

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SO-THAT

And this act of engaging and encountering through love and care is what you could say (continually) produces a design, or simultaneously, an open(ended) architecture. Because, precisely because, it enables.

And the enabling is even a specific differentiation from affording. In that affording can often be used in a way which perhaps implies a 'what happens next', 'what possibilities are newly created', but enabling seems to shift that to the foreground, for me. It would be like if we built a chair, so that we could sit, so that we could stay longer, so that we can become closer in conversation, so that we can rest, so that we can build more chairs, so that we can invite more friends over. And I am very interested in this 'so that'. To afford something could be such that a chair is made, which allows for the possibility to sit, it affords such an action/inhabitation— which maybe can lead to more things. But enabling to me cuts to this 'so that' immediately and integrally. It is never merely to sit, as sitting being an end in of itself, but it's sitting as an enabler of the next thing, in an excessive accumulation. (Not that there is anything wrong with just sitting and being, but I'm particularly interested in growth. Not economic growth and needless destructive growth for the sake of growth, but growth of affections and the ability to move towards the things that move us.) I think we should make things which allow and enable the possibility for that growth. I deeply feel that.

MAKING WITHOUT PLANS/ROLE OF ARCHITECT

A value that has been worked with was to build without plans. And then to engage in a sort of post-research, post-working, post-writing, reflection. In which the drawings act as documentation and remembering rather than a projection. This shift turns us to the present and the immediate, and being engaged in the flux of complex things as they occur. Which one could argue is reality, even when there are blueprints that have attempted to figure it out before hand (incorrectly, or incompletely).

If this premise, that thinking, responding, encountering, affecting, creating, designing, remembering, knowing, and acting are interwoven and co-producing each other, is to be established, then the conclusion must be to embrace this meshwork throughout all that we do. I draw this from Paul Hajian, who in a guide book for architectural drawing described the practice of architecture as "thinking of everything all at once". He makes this claim from the simple observation that "architectural drawing is part of a process that involves large quantities of information. The process of designing is not simple, linear, not (for the most part) hierarchical." In this way as architects we think through drawing and recording complexity— in a manner of form which attempts not merely to reproduce real life in its entirety, but to search and explore connections within the complexity, which can be articulated and communicated, without losing the complexity, or proposing a finite understanding. In other words, an invitation to be able to enter into the complexity, without reduction or overwhelming. Hajian I believe is alluding to a core urgency of the practice of architecture, if the architect is to be saved, to engage in complexity— and i would contend— to engage in the act— and to communicate information as a gift rather than as a diagrammatic contract.

When inhabiting such a role it is however not to say that everything is derived on the spot. Improvisation doesn't mean that things are not thought about before hand. To balance between 'planning' things out and not determining things you could say is actually more work and consideration than if a set of blueprints were produced and strictly adhered to. To be thinking ahead: The design, the collective, the structure, the tools, the materials, the logistics, the soil, the politics of land, the distribution of loads, desires and so on. It's a mess and it's difficult and complex— but thats what architecture is.

The role of the architect, not as a professional, but as a person among persons who takes a bottom lining of thinking-ahead in some things, is to be generous and open in sharing that thinking ahead so that others can join in. and there might be multiple architects, from multiple vantage points, bottom-lining different things, and sharing in this discipline. its not an erasure of specialized knowledge, but approaching a horizon which understands we are always all the time working together through an inequality of knowledge—because we have different knowledge. and its urgent we work together in ways which does not leverage knowledge for coercive power, but instead power to build the things we want to build together.