Cyclical tales, chapter 2:

DOMESTIC FOUNTAIN

Studio Truant + Rodet +
SS24, Atelier for Continuous Research
This spring semester, we will start with buildings fountains. The invented objects will have the necessary scale to function as containers of liquid. This first exercise will be an exploration of fluid dynamics, gravity, flow, erosion, porosity and velocity. We will create waves, infiltrate and flow.

The fountains at the Palladian Villa Barbaro were part of a complex hydraulic system that irrigated the gardens and fields. The water was collected behind the house, uphill, in a large circular reservoir. Flowing down into the first basin, it would later run in the canalization under the house to cool down the space and supply the kitchen with water. The residual water would be finally spread in the garden fountains.

Palladio’s villa are extremely close related to the landscape and learning from the roman centuriation irrigation system was crucial for Palladio’s understanding of the potential of water. It took another 400 years for water to reach every home to ensure hygiene. In the meantime, fountains were used as a place for bathing or as a fresh water supply, functioning simultaneous as social communal spaces. And in some cases, they still function today as a gathering space.

And although water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource, it has become invisible in our homes. Can water be re-enter into our domestic spaces and provide an opportunity to create new social spaces?
Isamu Noguchi, Gardens for IBM Headquarters, New York, 1964
Indian Steppwell

Mereth Oppenheim, The Spiral Column, CH-Bern 1985
Aldo Rossi, Monument in Segrate, 1965
DOMESTIC

This semester, we will be focusing on the potential of dwelling: Living differently by reintroducing water into our domestic space. Can we use water as more than a resource to wash our dishes, our clothes, our hands, our bodies and hydrate ourselves?

Can a home be humid and porous? Can access to water be flexible? Can water become a new center in our houses around we can organize new communal spaces?

Jean Nouvel, Anselme-L’Hermet housing, Fr-Saint Ouen, 1983-1987
Basel always played through its history an important role in the Rhein region as a military control station for the roman and later other. It is also the gate to Switzerland for the transport of good, culture and industry highly tied to harbor's activities.

In 2009, 10% of Switzerland’s total foreign trade by volume passed through the three Rhine ports in and around the city of Basel, and 30 to 40% of Switzerland’s annual mineral oil consumption is covered by deliveries via the Rhine ports.

Basel is the last port on the Rhine, linking Switzerland with Rotterdam and Antwerp and therefore to the northern sea. Freedom of navigation on the Rhine, is guaranteed by the Mannheim Act of October 17, 1868. As a result, Switzerland has access to the sea under international law, and since 1992 has been able to reach Hungary and southern Europe via the Main-Danube Canal. The port was located in St Johann before being moved to Klein Huningen in 1914. Digging of the first harbor basin began in 1919, and the first towing train docked in August 1922.

The silo building, now a listed monument, was built in 1923 by architect Hans Bernoulli in collaboration with engineer Oskar Bosshardt for the Swiss Shipowners’ Association, was commissioned in 1926. It is located in the port of Basel, and is one of hundreds of buildings that could accommodate mixed functions and housing as the port develops.
Basel Landestelle, Fireboat for intermediate use
While there are more bridges in Berlin than in Venice, together with Brandenburg, the capital has the largest inland waterway network in Europe. Nevertheless Berlin's main artery, the Spree, is facing periods of extreme drought, with up to 75 per cent less water in the coming summer months. One of the reasons for this is the inevitable end of the coal mining in its surrounding Hinterland, which currently accounts for over three quarters of the water supply of the metropole. To counter these imminent extremes, the city will have to expand existing lakes to water reservoirs and implement new urban strategies such as the “Sponge City.”

At the same time, Berlin is facing a major housing crisis for which, according to the city government and the housing market lobby, there seems to be only one solution: “Build, build, build!” Rising rents, higher sales profits and a booming property market have turned Berlin into a goldmine for capital-seeking investors. It therefore comes as no surprise that tenant associations are advocating a socialization of housing provision and practitioners of the architectural practice are investigating unfamiliar domesticities and even leaks within the legal framework.

Decades of countless transformations, ranging from rapid growth and destruction, revitalisation as a twin city to stagnation and even shrinkage, ultimately lead to an unusual polycentric form with a multitude of aberrations, an archipelago of spatial peculiarities. It is on the transect from rivers, through swamps, to clubs, to fountains in which we will encounter these peculiarities. Over the four days of our seminar trip, we will engage with various actors and spaces inhabiting the cities archipelago – from hedonistic aquatic devices to tropical microcosms, from floating universities to magenta ductworks, from exorbitant dwelling to domestic commons.
Wolfgang Tillmans, No Photos on the Dance Floor, C/O Berlin, 2001

Wolfgang Tillmans, Resolute Rave, 2020
Brandlhuber+ Emde, Burlon and Muck Petzet Architekten, Terrassenhaus, DE-Berlin
Iconology (n.) ethym. derived from the Greek word for image and with the word for reason and thought.

Def. Iconology is the science of links and relationships. It is a method of interpretation in cultural history and the history of the visual arts used by Aby Warburg, Erwin Panofsky and their followers that uncovers the cultural, social, and historical background of themes and subjects in the visual arts (Wikipedia).

In an interview the Swiss artist Batia Suter, refers to her work as an iconology, borrowed form Aby Warbug. Since the end of the 1990s, Batia Suter has been collecting books—second hand for the most part—that she acquires for their iconography, in such a way as to build up an image database, sitting on the shelves of her personal library. All of this has become the basic material for an artwork that consists of presenting the images, according to a logic of visual editing, providing them with new modalities of appearance and thus new possibilities of interpretation.

In the studio, we propose to create a narrative that encompasses the images, texts, fictions and drawings the students have brought together on a table and later composed on single spreads. The method involves associating words, images, objects or texts with each other, until the initial objectives are forgotten, only to gradually return to them to formulate a proposition. The associative mechanism can be based on logical, visual, formal, social, political theoretical or historical patterns. Each document will be contextualized and tie a set of patterns and notions that will later be mapped into a tale.

We deliberately leave room for links that might occur subconsciously, or arise by accident, when two documents are placed in proximity, but those should stay exceptions. The aim, however, is not to create a mood-board, but to identify motifs that articulate themselves together. The aim is to build a not necessarily linear narrative, it may be anachronistic, contradictory, or absurd, while remaining an inherent conceptual coherence.
MODEL

In the studio, model-making is a continuous process that doesn't necessarily start at the territorial scale and end at the detailed level. The back-and-forth is much more opportunistic, as the aim is often to generate curiosity, to invent, to break with standards. The model is an evolving object, not a finished product at the end of the semester, but a working tool that evolves over time.
FICTIONS

Fiction (n.) etymology early 15c., fictioun, "that which is invented or imagined in the mind," from Old French fiction"disimulation, ruse; invention, fabrication" (13c.) and from Latin past participle stem of fingere "to shape, form, devise, feign," originally "to knead, form out of clay," from PIE root *dheigh- "to form, build."

The problem with today’s ecological crisis is that we no longer know how to react. We’re in a state of shock, so we don’t know how to act. When you’re aware of the carbon impact of the construction industry, it’s hard not to become schizophrenic when you’re involved in building. Yet without wishing to legitimize the needs of our profession, we can’t abolish it either. We can’t stop it altogether. We can certainly reduce its impact, make efforts, go on a diet. But we must avoid falling into the trap of ultra-efficiency, the absence of pleasure.

On the contrary, we need even more pleasure. To project ourselves into the future. The fictions proposed in the project are a tool for projecting possible uses, enabling us to apprehend our daily lives differently, revealing the opportunities that exist, that are right in front of us but that we don’t see. These fictions allow us to imagine how to live differently, how to share our uses, how to make everyday places exceptional.

Daniel Kwan, Daniel Scheinert, Everything Everywhere All At once, 2022
Wong Kar Wai, Chungking Express, 1994
In Western architecture, buildings have been considered primarily as rigid objects. However, in today's unpredictable environment, where even our immediate future has become uncertain, we believe this idea is obsolete and can no longer be used to address our contemporary situation, namely a complex urban, political, social and ecological structure where boundaries between fields are no longer clearly defined.

Uncertainty is the only certainty.

If we instead shift our attention to a valley, and the water running though and recognize its ability to meander, adapt to changing geological formation, we can begin to see the potential of these changing conditions. The question then arises whether architecture, like nature, can be conducive to transformation over time.

Instead of resisting uncertainty, we embrace it as the driving force of our research project. Within the studio, we propose to continue this investigation under the title of Proposal for Uncertain Conditions. In times where the necessity of every new build form must be questioned, the reinterpretation of the existing becomes crucial. Rather than trying to come up with overly simplistic solutions to "wicked problems," we will explore with the students how to work with, interpret, transform, subtract the existing context we work within.