OPEN: 108th ACSA Annual Meeting 299

Perforated Horizon: Volumetric Capacities

PETER P. GOCHÉ

Iowa State University

Air occupies the dimension between the earth and sky. When considering the nature of our astrological domain, we might recall its make-up - the troposphere, the stratosphere, the mesosphere, the thermosphere and the exosphere. Within each of these regions of the atmosphere, there ceases to be properties of a continuous medium. It is this specific reductive aspect that prompts us, like our great ancestors, to imagine this as the arena for speculation and meaningful labor.

Astill line where the earth meets the sky is present everywhere at the same time. This line contains a series of defunct farmsteads born out of utilitarian labor ethics. This set of weathered referents, and surrounding rural landscape, remains the cultural center of Iowa. It is a convergent condition of interiority whereby a rigorously systemic Jeffersonian grid facilitates a uniform distribution of space and boundary. Within, we find a specific volumetric condition of measure of capacity rather than form amidst an architectural set of containers that serve as condensers – silos, cribs and bins – whereby acres of harvested

seed are dried and stored. Such conditions of cultivation and labor ethic have conspired in the development of an architectural typology that has no figure ground; it is a product of its environment and practices. This set of buildings have been engineered to resist or work with the wind and gravity within a precise spatial politic that, when developed, from 1910-1930, supported 217,044 farm units owned operated by the resident family. The consequent mise-en-scene has gone through an entire stage shift whereby more successful farmers bought out less successful farms yielding an organization referred to today as corporate farming. This type of farming has resulted in the family farm unit and all its antiquated facilities vacant due to a shift in the scales of economy.

Built in 1929, the metal granary manufactured by The Martin Steel Products in Mansfield, Ohio, is located ¼ mile west of Napier, Iowa. Diffuse in structural order and array of apertures, the space is unpredictable in its sensorial effects. The climatic conditions of this service-less facility offered a potent site for

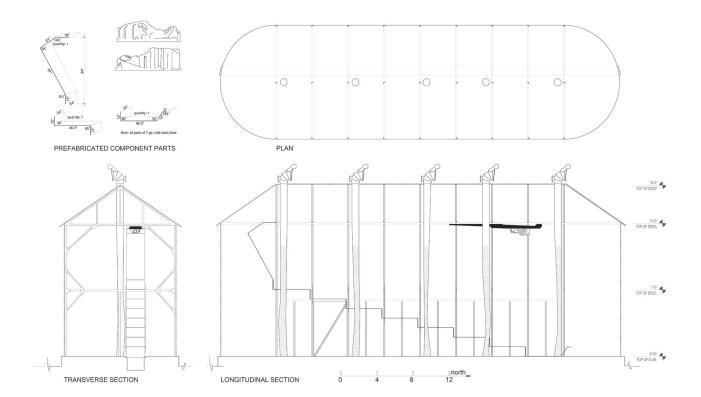


Figure 1. Image caption. Image credit.

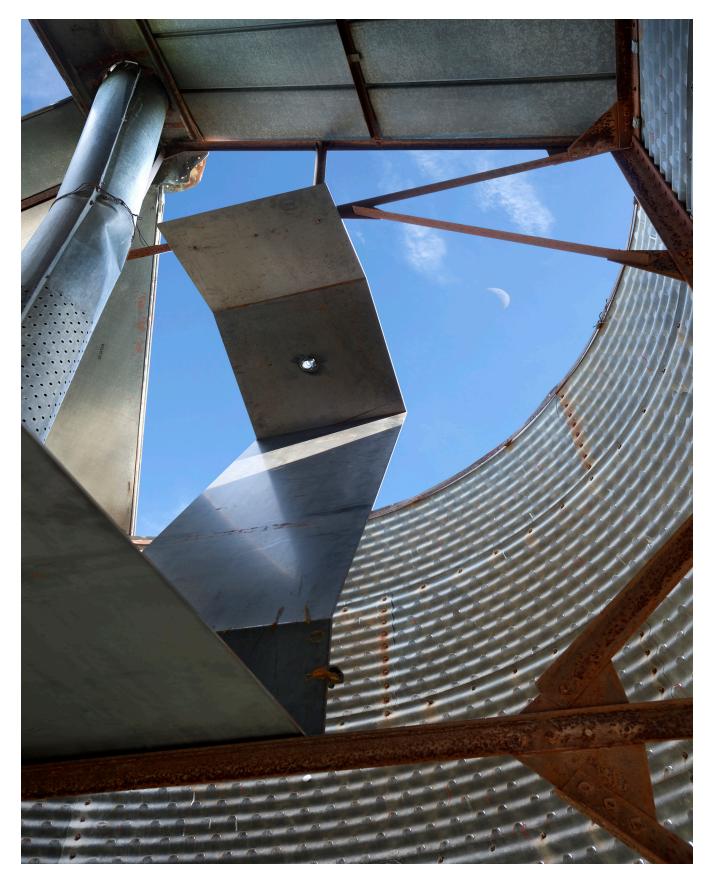


Figure 2. Top of ascent beneath celestial scene. Photo by Assassi Productions.

OPEN: 108th ACSA Annual Meeting 301

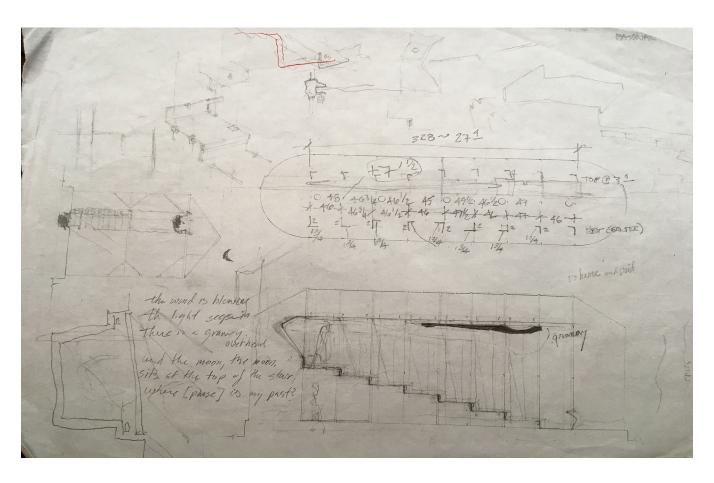


Figure 3. Design Drawing by Peter P. Goché.

the creation of atmospheres and affects. The goal here is to act on such circumstances with sincere sensitivity and in collaboration with the extant building's past and material presence in effort to conceive of a new occupation by which we might intensify its environmental scale and complexity and thereby re-occupy and meticulously inter-connect it and ourselves with its contemporary cultural context.

The architectural intent is to preserve the historic building envelope and maintain the authenticity and atmospheric quality of this particular space by retaining its typological features – concrete auger trench and floors, mono-skin perforated corrugated galvanized steel walls, and exposed structural steel. Into this configuration was installed a tabernacle and ascent. The tabernacle is situated overhead the lower landing of the stair assembly and consists of a shaped cedar wood mantel, piano tuning pins and cast aluminum bladder in which to store grain. The ascent is a suspended 24 inch, wide 7-gauge steel plate stair assembly aligned with the concrete auger trench and the existing structural steel framing leading to a single aperture through which to obtain a discrete view of the moon and outer space.

In addition to serving as an elevated observation platform by which to view the celestial scene, the ascent provides an elevated set of seats by which one might position one's self in effort to attain a view the horizon through the perforated metal skin. Constructed in the same vain as the host building, the stair consists of a series of parts which are self-structuring and suspended from the existing steel frame and truss system. The dimensional relationship of the body to the building skin changes as a matter of ascending or descending the precarious stair assembly.

The nature of this particular atmospheric condition shares logic with aspects of Gernot Böhme's "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics" in that the condition of a particular space is contingent on that which emanates from that which has been added (tabernacle and ascent) and intercourses with the entire ingredient material ensemble. Time is, thus, made present through a calibrated fiddling with material and space in effort to bring about awareness of a potent envelope of densely arranged apertures that provoke an experience of mystic self-transcendence.

The work developed here is a conscious insertion intended to provide full access to the volumetric conditions of the granary. The metaphysical dimension of the space is embodied by the occupant and thus calibrated as a measure of light, air and acoustic dynamics made present by the perforated envelope

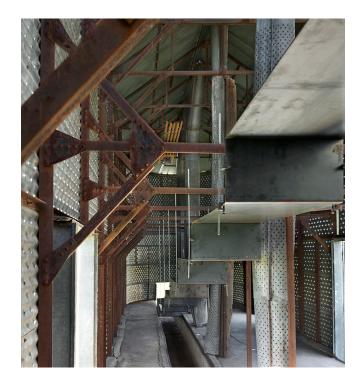




Figure 4. Along ascent. Photo by Assassi Productions

Figure 5. Tabernacle. Photo by Assassi Productions



Figure 6. Tabernacle. Photo by Assassi Productions.

OPEN: 108th ACSA Annual Meeting 303



Figure 7. Along ascent. Photo by Assassi Productions

and seasonal changes. With each subsequent visit the occupant enters the world anew as a meditative being. Through such perceptual observations was provided acute awareness of the buildings ethical, ecological and political context through a highly focused encounter with the associated atmospheric changes. In this momentary realization we are given cause to wonder about the earth, the sky and outer space. The commonplace aspects of the contemporary landscape can teach us a great deal not only about American history and American society but about ourselves and how we relate to the world. It is a matter of perception – learning how to see.

Despite its relative size and autonomy, the volumetric capacity of this granary exceeds the 80 acres of corn yield it initially contained. The geographic vastness to which this granary belongs might more directly be perceived as that which belongs to the granary. The project is an exploration of material and immaterial practices specific to preservation via installation and performance as fundamental means of knowing and occupying the post-industrial context of lowa's agricultural scene. Pursuant this focus, a performance (Guardian Spectacular: A Peaceable Kingdom) was developed in situ at a granary site by Daniel T. Gaitor-Lomack in collaboration with the author. The production featured Gaitor-Lomack performing the interior and exterior



Figure 8. Top of ascent. Photo by Assassi Productions

space while the author atones the tabernacle and ascent with the incessant ringing of a cow bell.

ENDNOTES

- Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics," (Thesis Eleven, No 36, 1993)
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception (London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
- John Brinckerhoff Jackson, Discovering the Vernacular Landscape (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).
- Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "The Ethical Image of an Architecture," in Built upon Love (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
- James Corner, "Operations of Eidetics: Forging New Landscapes," (Harward Design Magazine, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1998)



Figure 9. Guardian Scpetacular performance with Daniel T. Gaitor-Lomack. Photo by Integrated Studios.



Figure 10. Guardian Scpetacular performance with Daniel T. Gaitor-Lomack. Photo by Integrated Studios.