

Beyond Repair: Architecture After Urban Crisis

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Keywords: climate crisis, ecology, environmentality, speculative fiction, urban design.

Beyond Repair: Architecture After Urban Crisis speculates on ecological and technological concepts for architecture after the end, or for a world beyond repair. Culminating in the design of nine videos and short texts featured in an exhibition, the project studies how localized crises are part of larger global catastrophes and will have a significant impact on all Life and Nonlife on the planet in the years to come. Developed in the context of an advanced seminar, students used forensic filmic research and other time-based media to review several spatial phenomena that have changed the shape of landscapes and cities. Each investigation arrived at a fictional narrative that fomented a common understanding of architecture and place that went well beyond geopolitical boundaries and territories. Some of the explorations included: a multi-purpose bridge that mediates climate events and sociopolitical turmoil in Padma, Bangladesh; a restorative sea-wall that protects from toxic emissions and preserves marine biodiversity in Odessa, Ukraine; a genetically-engineered eucalyptus that exacerbated wildfires and moved entire towns underground in Canberra, Australia; a series of mining machinery transformed into seed-proliferating vehicles that restore a damaged ecosystem in Tarkwa, Ghana; and more.

These provocations reimaged architecture's roles and scope in social and cultural production in the years to come and through deep time. To arrive at them, the course was structured in three parts: research, techniques and methodologies, and final production.

1—RESEARCH

The first part of the course emphasized reading discussions and asked students to work collectively in conducting a survey of the Anthropocene. Students found and selected case studies of urban spaces that have gone through extreme change and environmental unrest over the last ten years. The primary references for this portion of the class included Donna Haraway, Elizabeth Kolbert, Bruno Latour, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. Following Haraway's prompt, "Our task [was] to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places."

2—TECHNIQUES AND METHODOLOGIES

The second part of the class consisted of directed exercises through which students developed theses grounded in archival data and research. Students speculated on alternative futures through narrative and storytelling techniques, including writing, video-making, and other methods. Amongst the primary references for this part of the course were writers, scholars, and architects such as Margaret Atwood, Ursula K. LeGuin, Jeff VanderMeer, Andrés Jaque, Rania Ghosn and El Hadi Jazairy, amongst others. This portion also entailed writing and video-making workshops, as well as a number of strategies for archival and data collection, which helped turn substantial bodies of spatial research into imagery ready for public consumption.

3—FINAL PRODUCTION

The final part of the course led to the production of ecological and technological fictions for architecture after the end, which were displayed in an exhibition. While half of the students privileged short films as the final output for the show, the other half combined films with physical models, material prototypes and samples, along with other media that conflated physical and virtual space. The exhibition space activated a transit zone within the School of Architecture building, prompting passersby from within the School and beyond it to stop and reflect on the changing times.

CONCLUSION

Speculative fiction gives students the opportunity to ask complex questions of architecture and other spatial disciplines, taking a moment to understand all sides of a problem and consider possible solutions on a sliding scale. Architectural stories can prompt audiences beyond architecture to consider their own agencies to shape culture and society, asking them to deploy their powers responsibly as the planet faces uncertainty and fluctuation. In this way, *Beyond Repair: Architecture After Urban Crisis* proposes that architecture not be used in fear, but rather that design processes, outputs, agents, and audiences be rethought to help humans and non-humans make stories together, stories that form coalitions, and stories that image new worlds.

BEYOND REPAIR

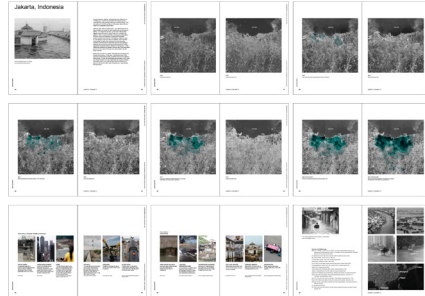
ARCHITECTURE AFTER URBAN CRISIS

Beyond Repair: Architecture After Urban Crisis speculates on ecological and technological concepts for architecture after the end or for a world beyond repair. Culminating in the design of nine videos and short texts, the project studies how localized crises are part of larger global catastrophes and have a significant impact on human, animal, and plant species, as well as on grounds and atmosphere at large. Developed in the context of an advanced seminar, students used forensic filmic research and other time-based media to review several spatial phenomena that have changed the shape of landscapes and cities. Each investigation arrived at a fictional narrative that formed a common understanding of architecture and place that goes well beyond geopolitical boundaries and territories. Some of the explorations include: a multi-purpose bridge that mediates climate events and sociopolitical turmoil in Padma, Bangladesh; a restorative sea wall that protects from toxic emissions and preserves marine biodiversity in Odessa, Ukraine; a genetically-engineered eucalyptus that exacerbates wildfires and moves entire towns underground in Canberra, Australia; a series of mining machinery transformed into seed-producing vehicles that restore a damaged ecosystem in Tarkwa, Ghana; and more. Together, these provocations provide ways to reimagine architecture's role and scope in social and cultural production in the years to come and through deep time.

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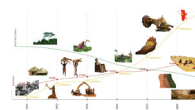
1—RESEARCH

McCaaffery, Eden. *Survey of Jakarta, Indonesia*.

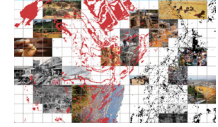
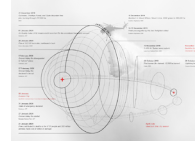


2—TECHNIQUES AND METHODOLOGIES

Fitzsimmons, Nathan. *Speculative Mappings of Tarkwa, Ghana*.



Harrison, Josh; Miller, Tommy. *Speculative Mappings of Canberra, Australia*.



Alam, Rafi; Medina, Luis. *Speculative Mappings of Padma, Bangladesh*.



3—FINAL PRODUCTION

This place is a message... and part of a system of messages... pay attention to it!

Sending this message was important to us. We considered ourselves to be a powerful culture.

What is here is important to us. The message is a warning about danger. The message is also an opportunity to overcome that danger.

The danger is everywhere... it is of no particular size or shape, yet it lies all around us.

The danger is still present, in your time, as it was in ours.

The danger is to the planet, and it can kill.

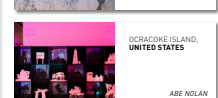
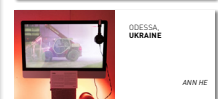
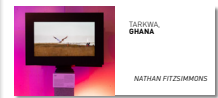
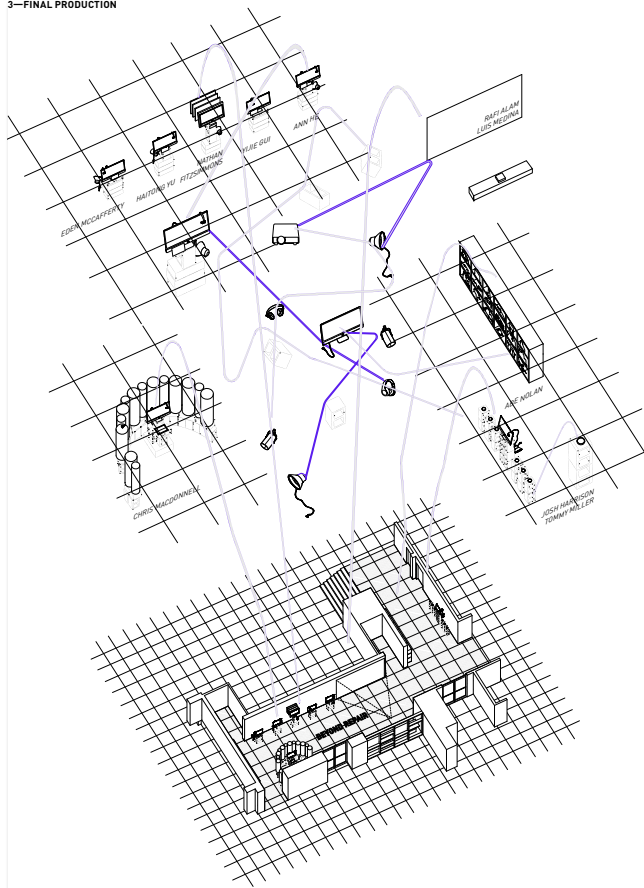
The form of the danger is a drastic change in climate.

The danger is unleashed at all times.

The danger can be stopped if the planet is cared for, if our disciplines and practices are revisited, if our goals change.

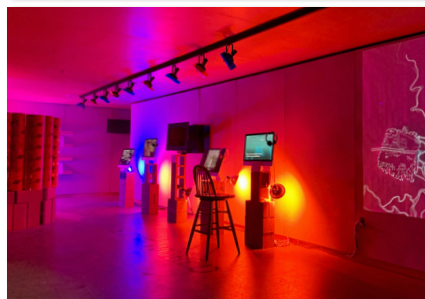


DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY
DRASTIC CHANGES IN CLIMATE ARE EVERYWHERE.
DO NOT CONTINUE WITH "BUSINESS AS USUAL."



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POSTER

Figure 1. Poster for *Beyond Repair: Architecture After Urban Crisis*. José Ibarra.