

BUILDING / UNBUILDING

by

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Master of Landscape Architecture
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Submitted to the
Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT /

Waves of recent protests across the United States confronting structural racism demand a reckoning with colonial and confederate histories which, far from being relegated to a distant past, continue to influence material and social formations in the present. A growing awareness of unstable environments destabilizes past collective memory-making while received mythologies are losing their power to define national narratives for the masses. The not-so-distant future is clouded with apocalyptic visions and existential threats. The present is haunted by both the past and future.

Reciprocal networks of memory building and unbuilding are inscribed upon the surface of the land, or buried below, out of sight and out of mind. National monuments and parkland infrastructures stand as attractor points in these networks, reifying hegemony and reaching simultaneously into the past and future to both define and control relationships between water, land, humans and non-humans.

ω

This project traces the wake of the westward expansion of the United States through three of these sites and the watersheds they were constructed from. First, the Washington Monument which sits at the center of the National Mall, constructed from the wetlands of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Second, the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, also known as the Gateway Arch, which sits on ground stabilized by a levee at the meeting of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. Third, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, also known as the Shrine to Democracy, blasted and carved into ancient granite formations in the headwaters of the Missouri River.

The apparent inevitability and permanence of these monumental sites are challenged through a kind of counter-tourism that builds the unbuilding left in the wake of progress. Tools of the design disciplines are used to reveal inconsistencies that lie at the foundations of these monuments and the larger project of nation building, opening up space to engage with both the terror and beauty overwritten by the ongoing and incomplete project of settler colonialism. The project is here translated from a short film into text and still images.

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*American history is longer, larger, more various,
more beautiful and more terrible
than anything anyone has ever said about it.*

/ James Baldwin

/ Introduction



/ Unbuilding Sequence 1 / Postcommodity / Do You Remember When?

/ Figure 1



/ Unbuilding Sequence 2

/ Figure 2



/ Building / Unbuilding

/ Figure 3

/ Introduction

/ Monuments and Watersheds

A watershed's boundary is not defined by lines on a map, but by a relationship, a dance between water and land. Their boundaries are porous and unsettled. The dynamism of the relationship becomes more pronounced at the margins where water and land meet and the continual processes of making and unmaking unfold over days, weeks, and millennia.

Watersheds are processes of becoming, not fixed things. It is in this unstable nature, this state of always becoming and unbecoming, this ongoing agonism - that watersheds persist.

Monuments, on the other hand, typically appear solid and want to remain static, to last forever.

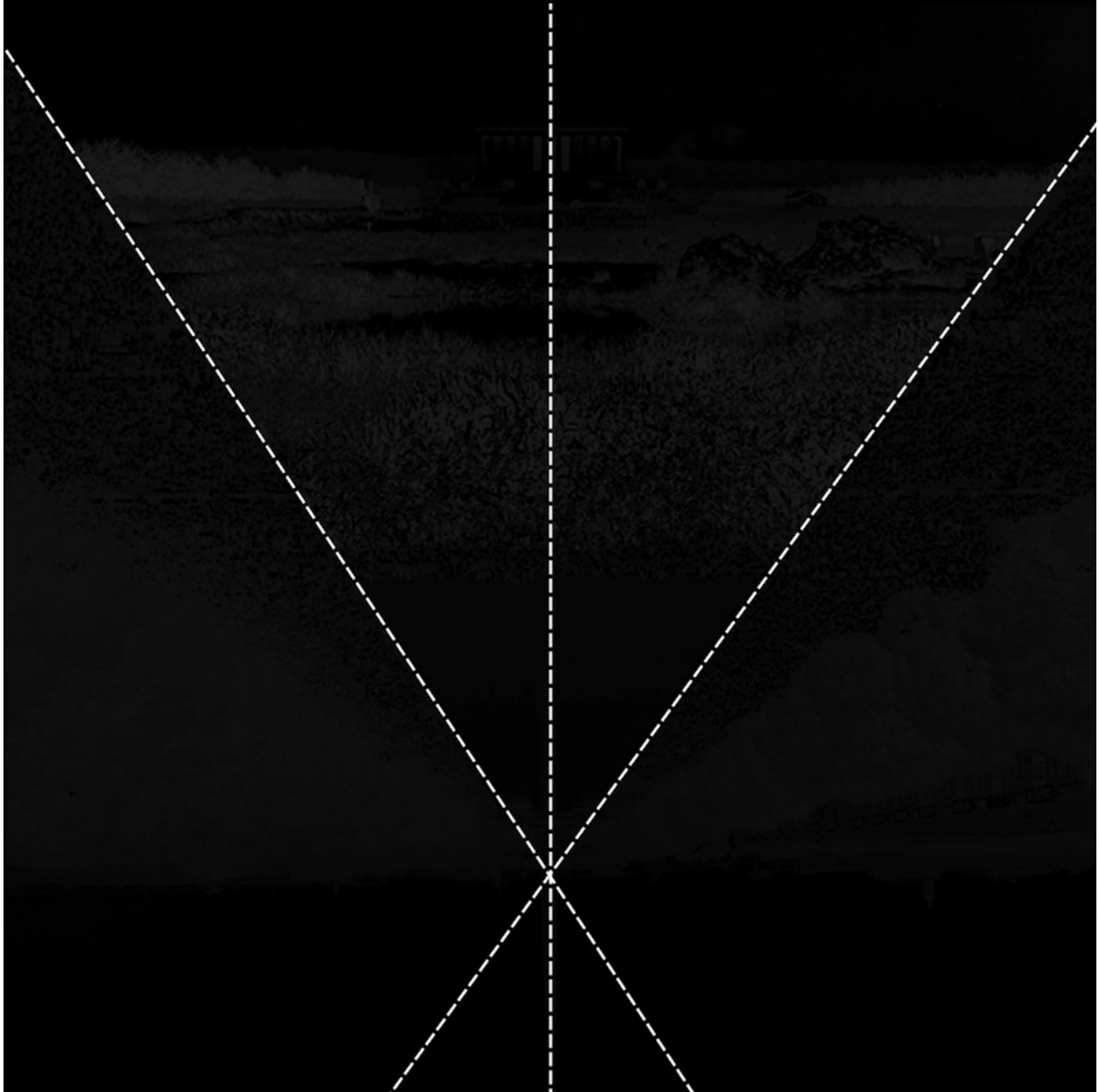
They have messages and things to say, histories they want you to know - and many they don't. Their entanglement in ongoing cultural practices reinforce their importance and assures their future existence. Many make appearances yearly in events marked on the national calendar. Some of them are even movie stars. And like many movie stars, they prefer to appear as if they never age.

Like watersheds, they too persist in time through repeated processes - through maintenance regimes and the labor of cleaning crews. Their relationship to hegemonic culture is their survival strategy.

The watershed and the monument both play major roles in the production and reproduction of the United States. One seeks control through its position within the landscape, the other appears to be controlled through the imposition of monumental constructions.

Using three national monuments as markers of collective memory building we re-retrace the westward expansion of the United States across the landscape.

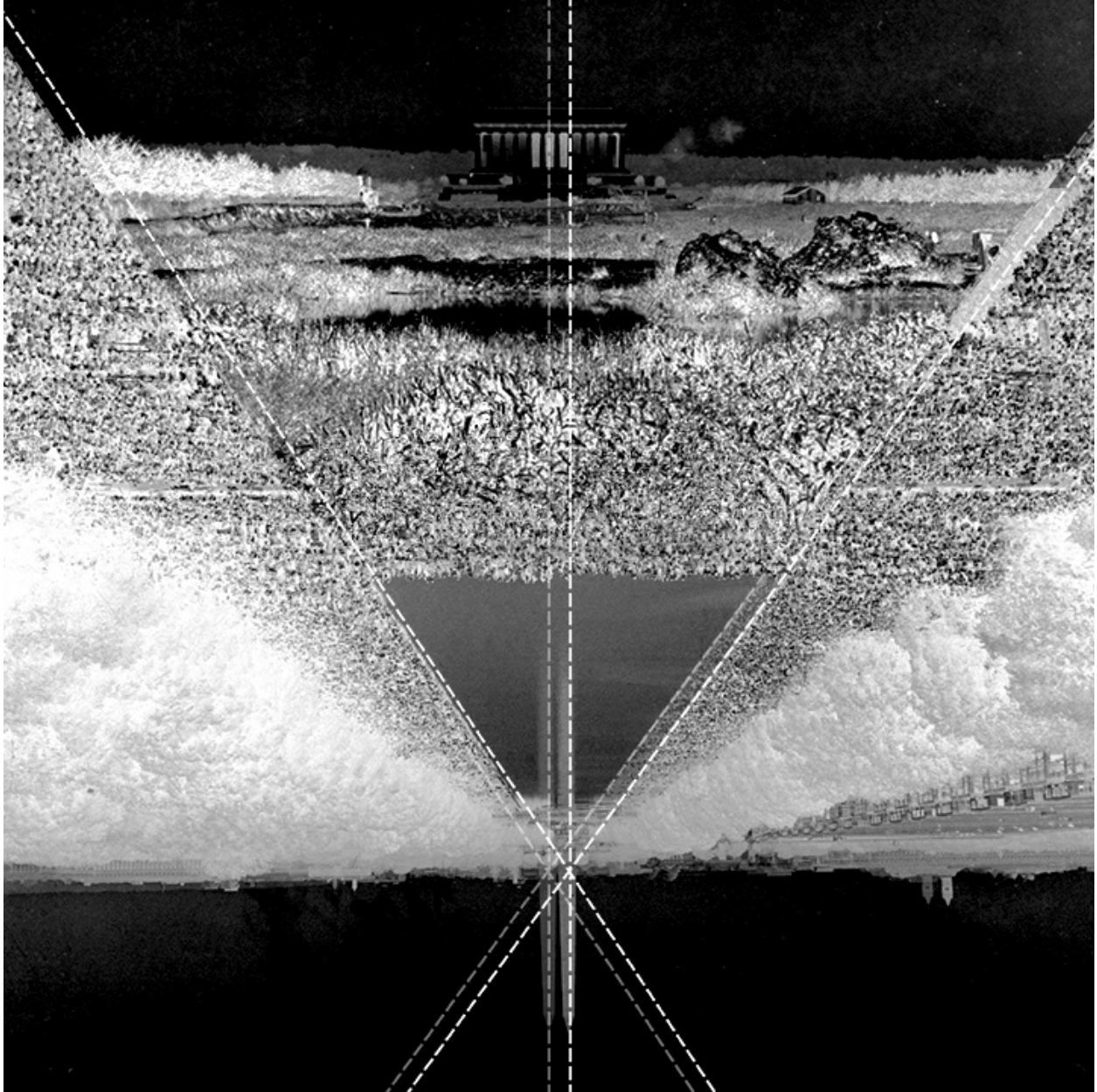
|
/ Washington Monument
/ drawing lines



/ Dislocating Lines Sequence 1

/ Figure 4

I / Washington Monument



/ Dislocating Lines Sequence 2

/ Figure 5

/ drawing lines



Three Objects Sequence / Jefferson Stone Pier / Manhole Cover / Washington Monument

/ Figure 6

I / Washington Monument

/ The Starting Point

This journey of counter-tourism starts here in Washington, D.C. with three objects - two unassuming, and one very large.

A small granite marker, offset at the base of the Washington monument is called the Jefferson Stone Pier, yet it is actually the product of a hurried attempt in 1804 to mark the location of what was once a larger masonry construction, the original Jefferson Stone, which was itself a marker for what was once a stick, stuck into the alluvial soil on the marshy edge of Tiber Creek.

The stick was located at the intersection of a north-south line running through the president's house and an east-west line running through the center of the Capitol building, to be later marked with a permanent monument.

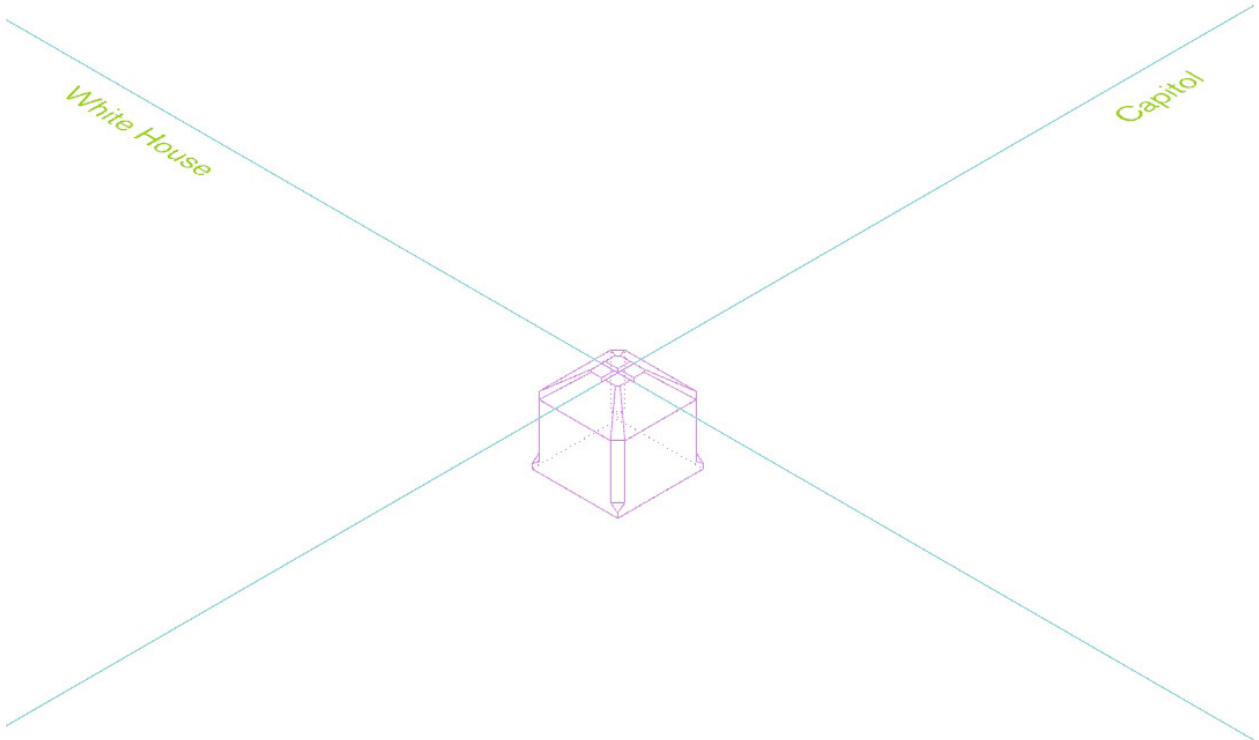
This was to be the nation's new Prime Meridian, the starting point from which all time and distance would be calculated.

This control of time and space was close to the heart of Jefferson and Washington, both land speculators with vested interest in the acquisition of new territory and agents of power in this new expanding state formation.

L'Enfant's early design work drew lines of geometric control over the landscape and their inscription of straight angled lines and symbolic points of intersection marked with permanent symbols of power.

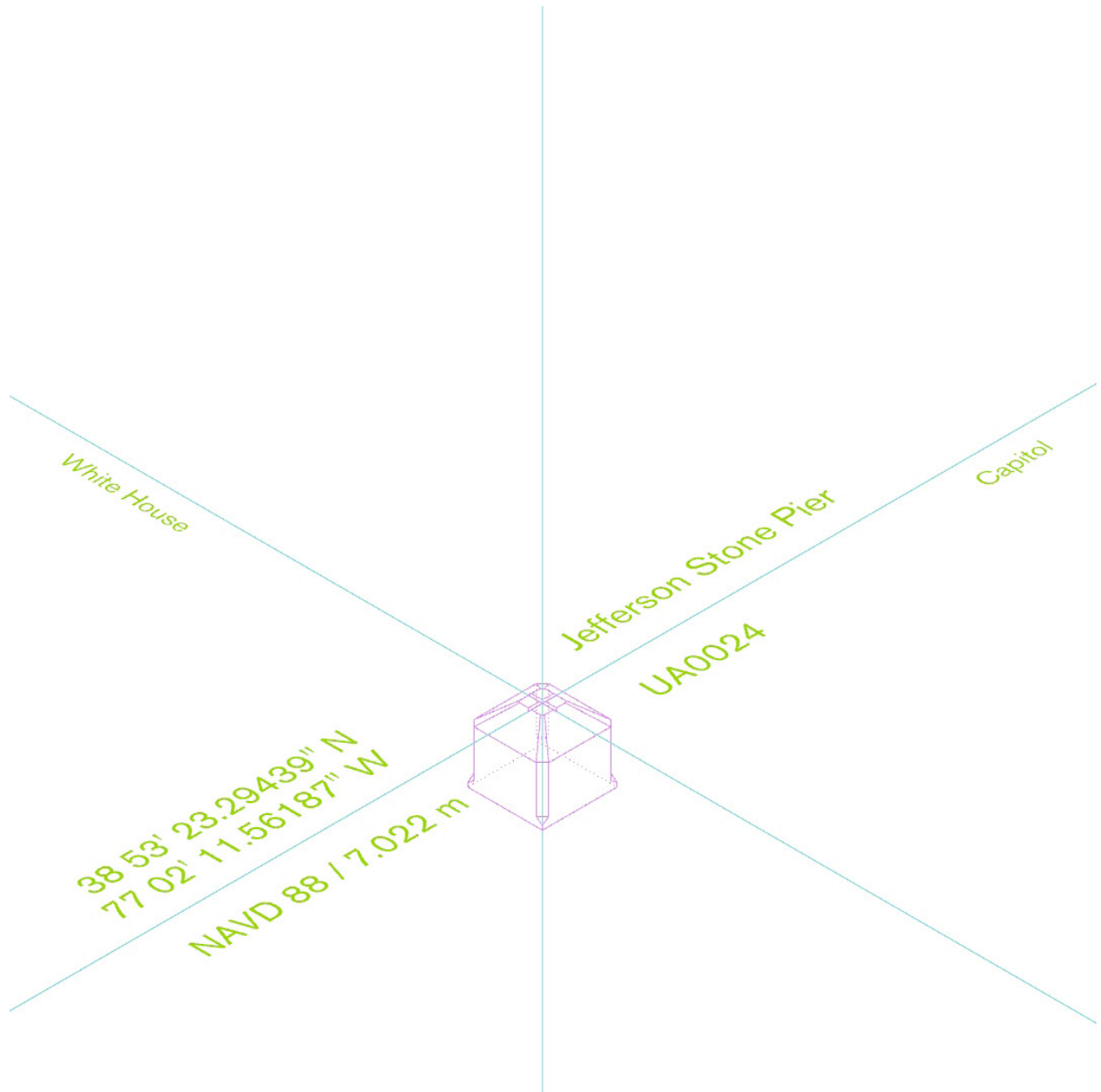
The Washington Monument was to be this symbol, but the ground proved to be too unstable to support the weight of a large monument and its location was shifted to what was thought to be more stable ground. Neither the monument, nor the Prime Meridian ever materialized at this location. The ideological starting point dislocated from the very beginning.

Silvio A. Bedini, *The Jefferson Stone: Demarcation of the First Meridian of the United States*, Frederick, MD: Professional Surveyors Publishing, 1999.



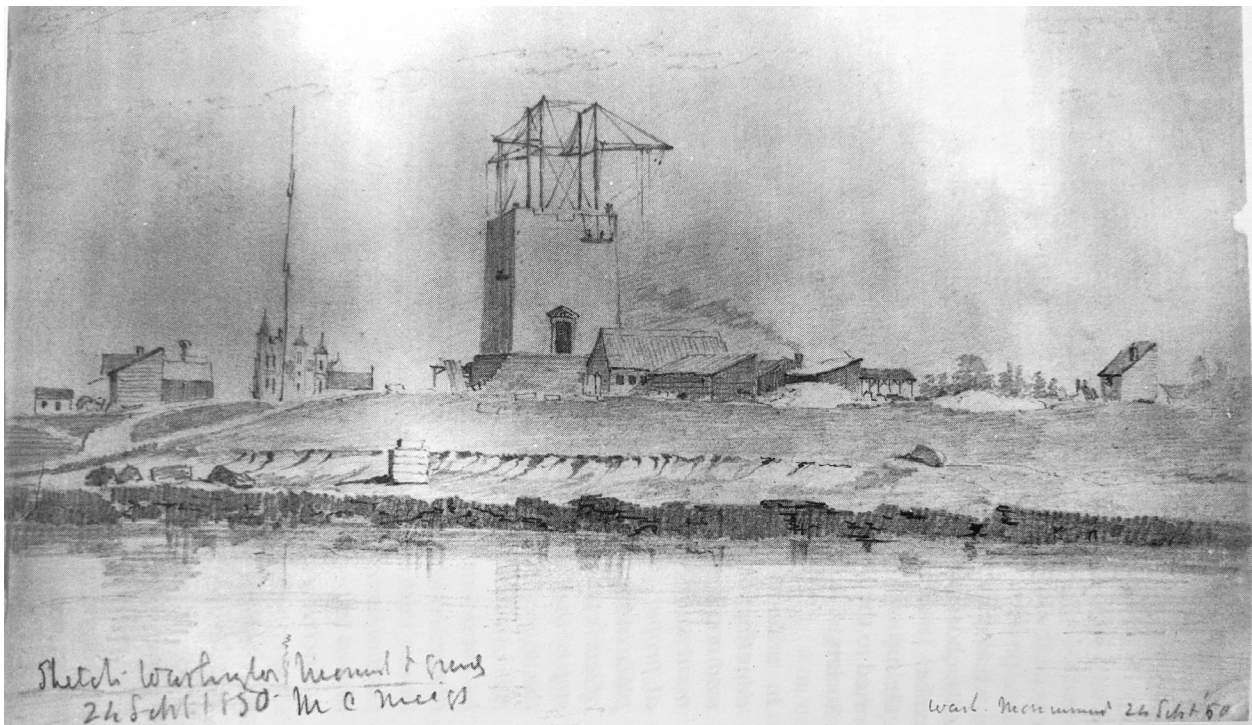
/ Locating Jefferson Stone Pier Sequence

I / Washington Monument



/ Figure 7

/ drawing lines



The Washington Monument / Pencil sketch by Montgomery C. Meigs, September 24, 1850 National Museum of American History, Smithsonian

/ Figure 8

I / Washington Monument



/ View of Washington / Drawn on stone by E. Sachse, c 1852 Library of Congress

/ Figure 9

/ drawing lines



/ Washington Monument in Scaffolding / View from the southeast, image by Ben Schumin

/ Figure 10

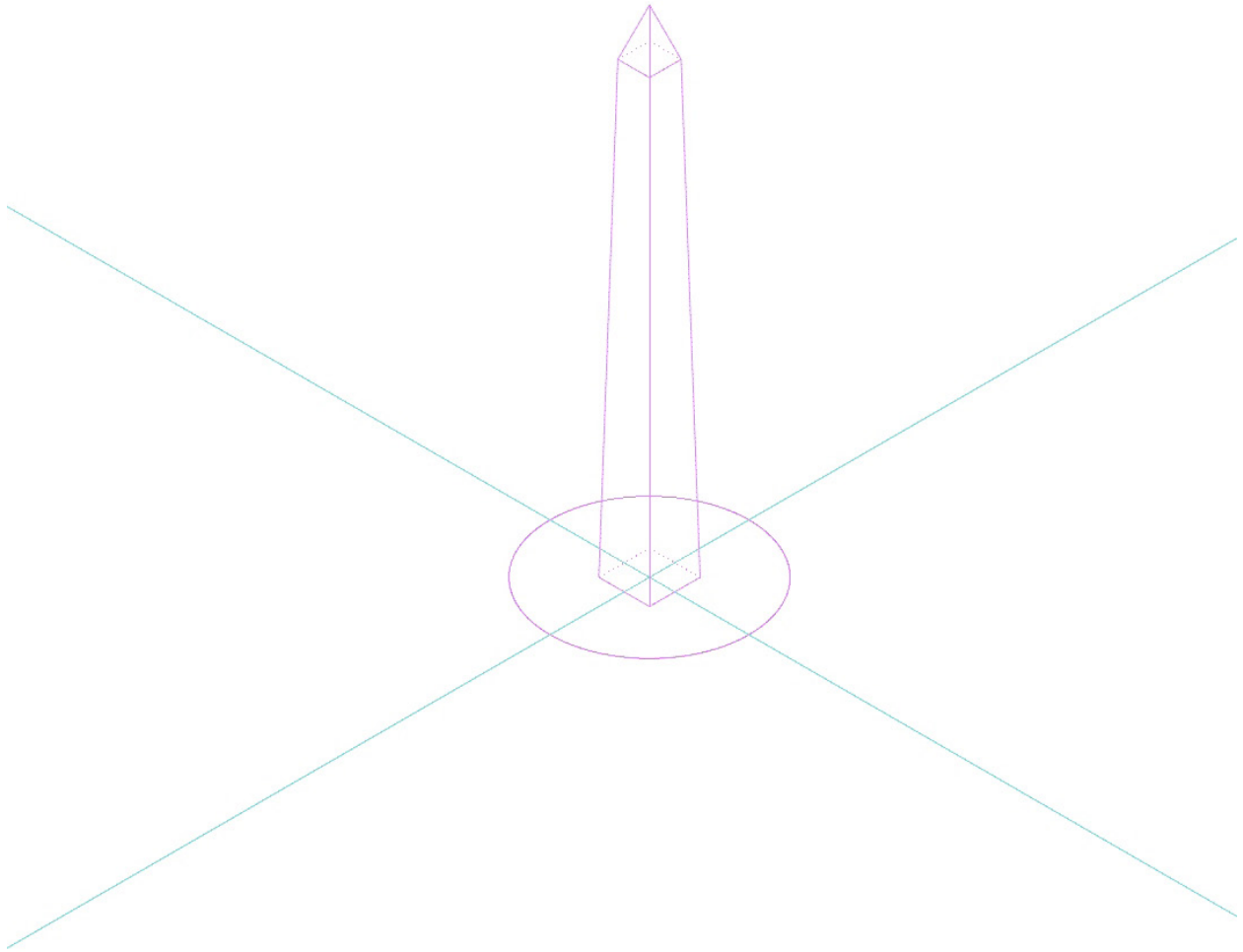
I / Washington Monument



/ The City of Washington Birds-Eye View from the Potomac-Looking North / Currier & Ives, c 1892 Library of Congress

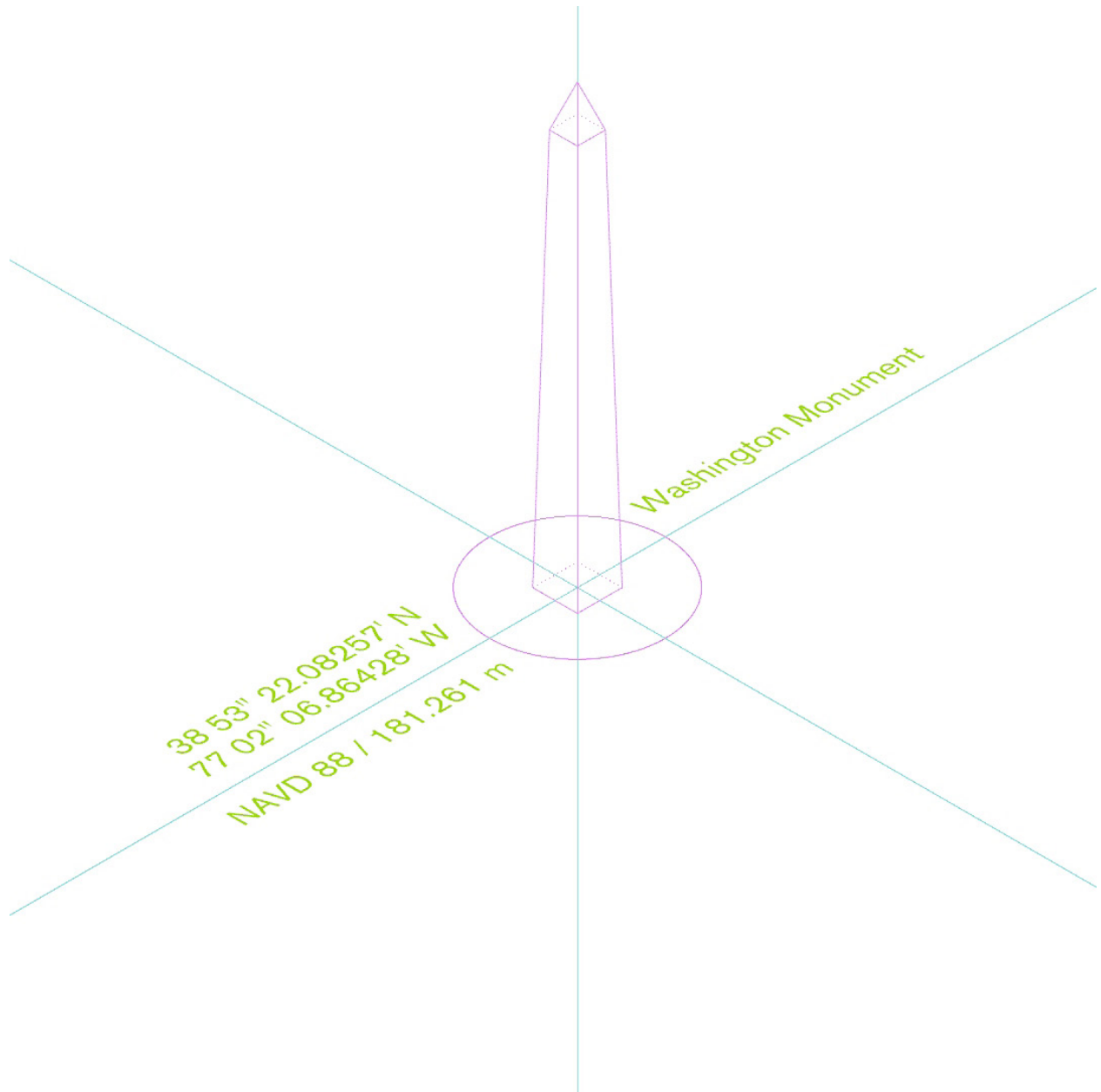
/ Figure 11

/ drawing lines



1 Locating the Washington Monument Sequence

1 / Washington Monument



/ Figure 12

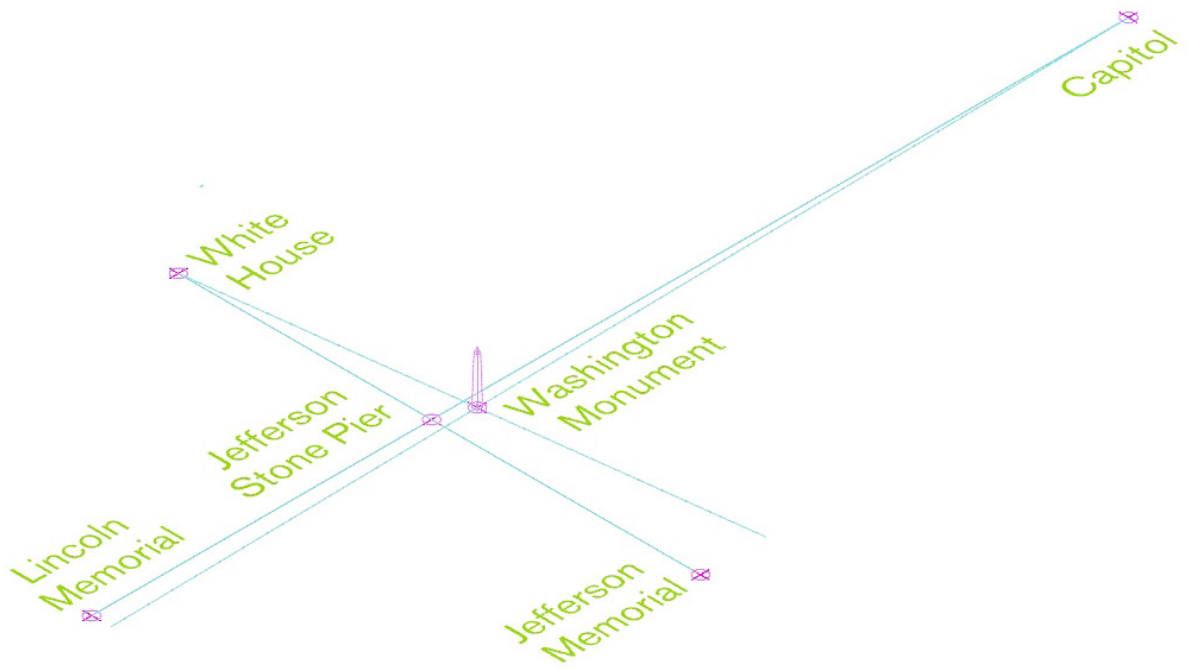
/ drawing lines



/ Plan of Washington DC / L'Enfant, c1791

/ Figure 13

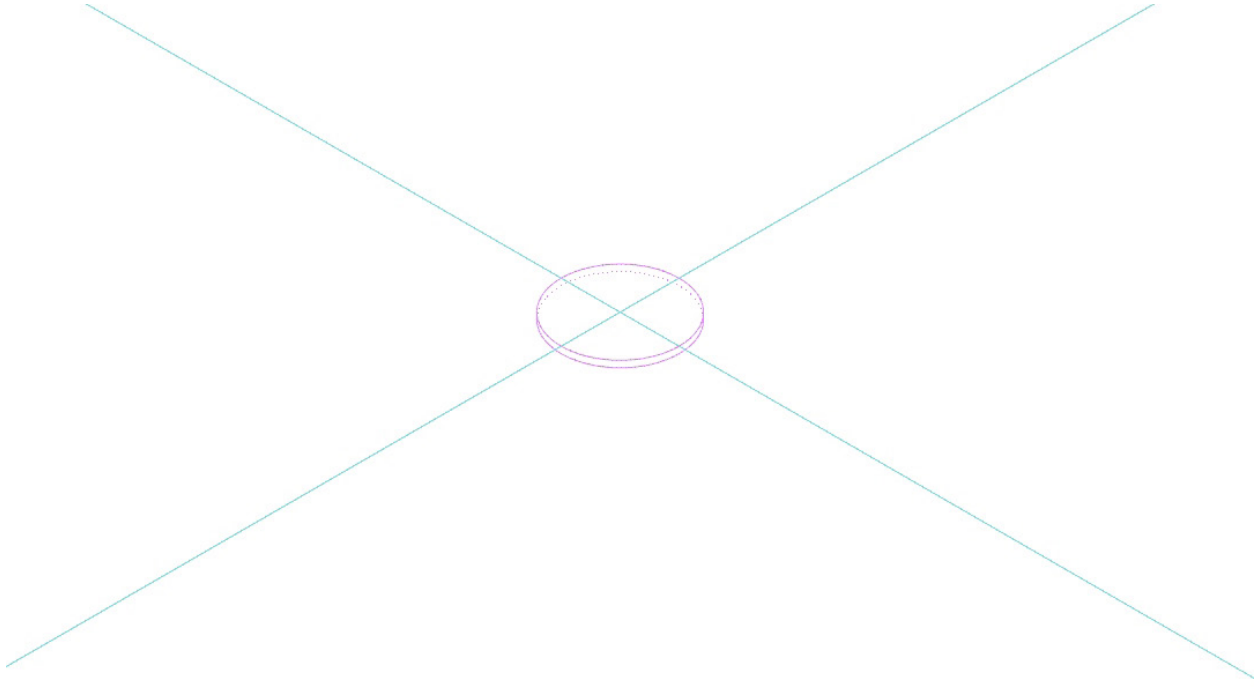
I / Washington Monument



/ Dislocation

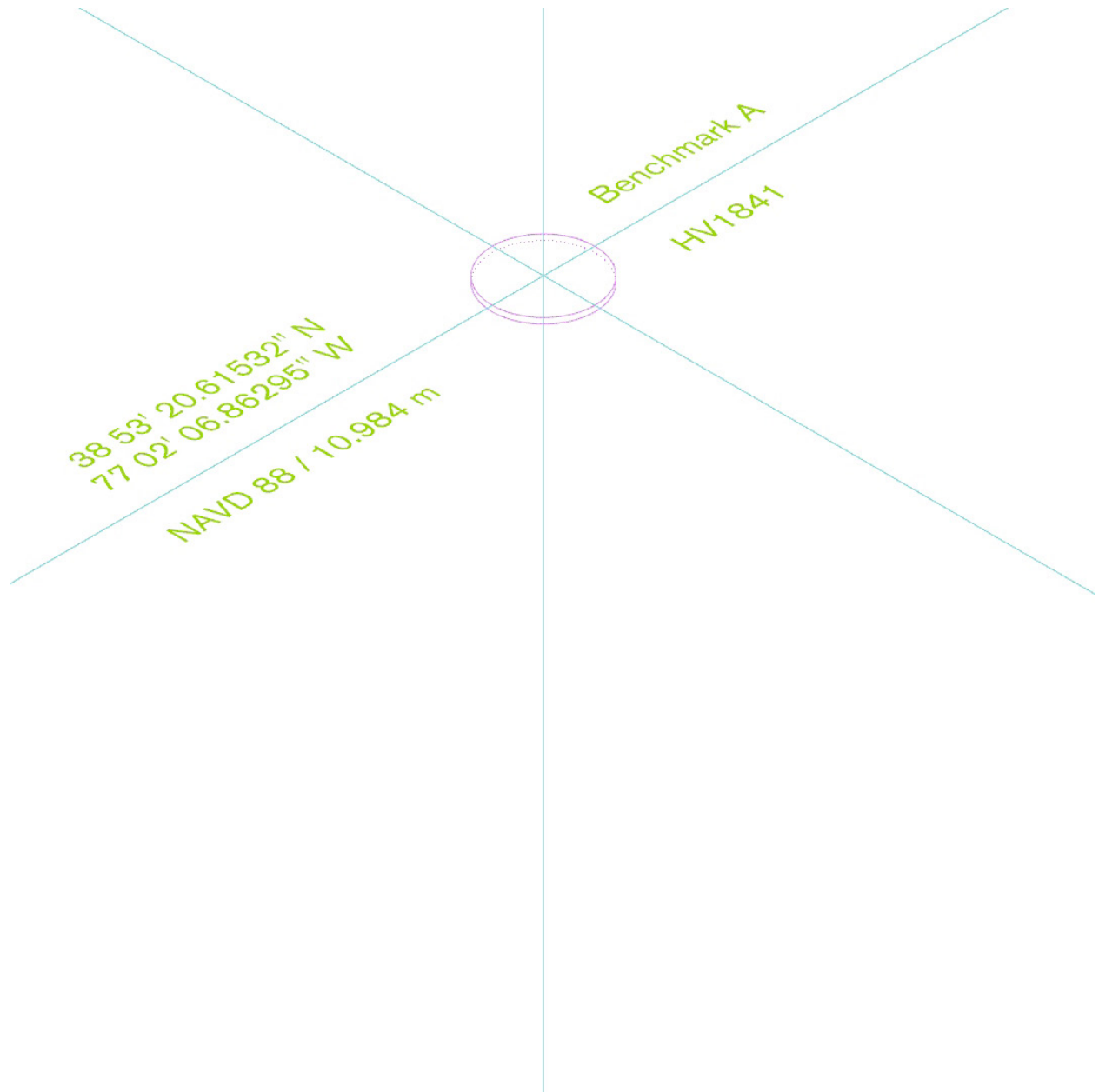
/ Figure 14

/ drawing lines



1 Locating the Manhole Cover Sequence

1 / Washington Monument



/ Figure 15

/ drawing lines



/ Excavating the Manhole Cover Sequence 2

/ Figure 16

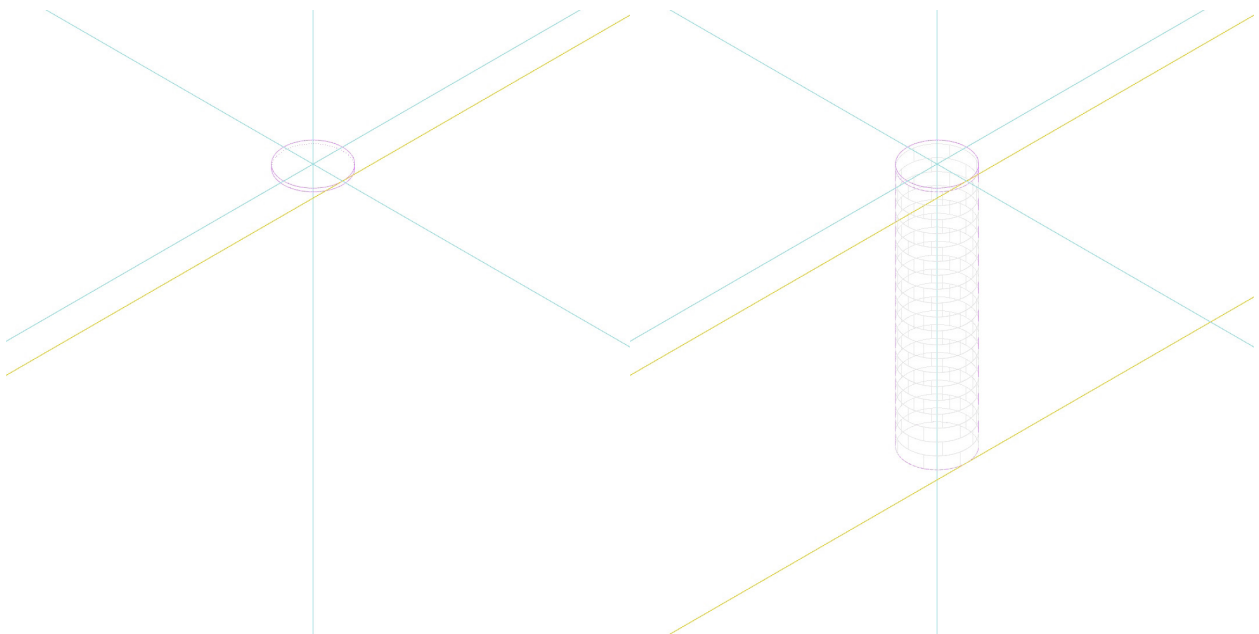
/ Underneath a Pile of Unbuilding

The manhole cover conceals another replica. A 12' 5" stone copy of the Washington Monument, approximately 44 times smaller than its larger counterpart, referred to most commonly as the mini-monument.

As the marsh was unbuilt to build stable ground for the National Mall, and to fill in the base of the Washington Monument in the late 1880's, the mini-monument was buried by soil dredged from the river.

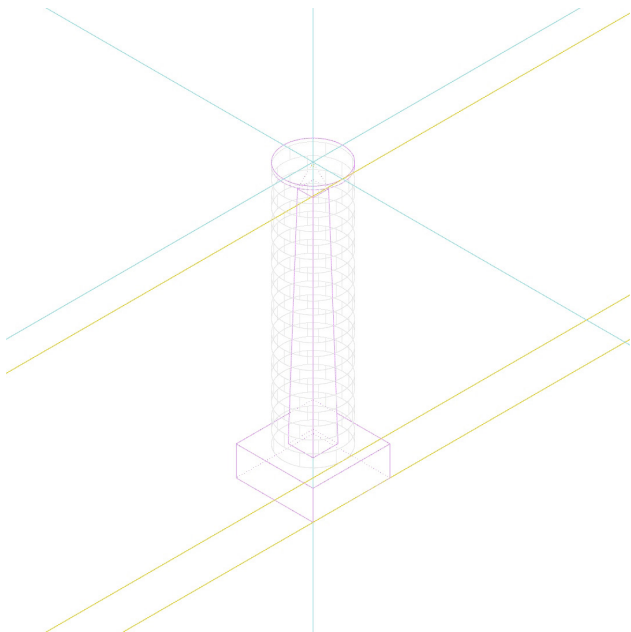
The marshy swamp now transformed to manicured lawns and still pools of water with a clear boundary between them. The dynamism of the changing tide converted to a static and clear division between two stable categories. Order out of chaos.

Silvio A. Bedini, *The Jefferson Stone: Demarcation of the First Meridian of the United States*, Frederick, MD: Professional Surveyors Publishing, 1999.



1 Excavating the Manhole Cover Sequence 1

1 / Washington Monument



/ Figure 17

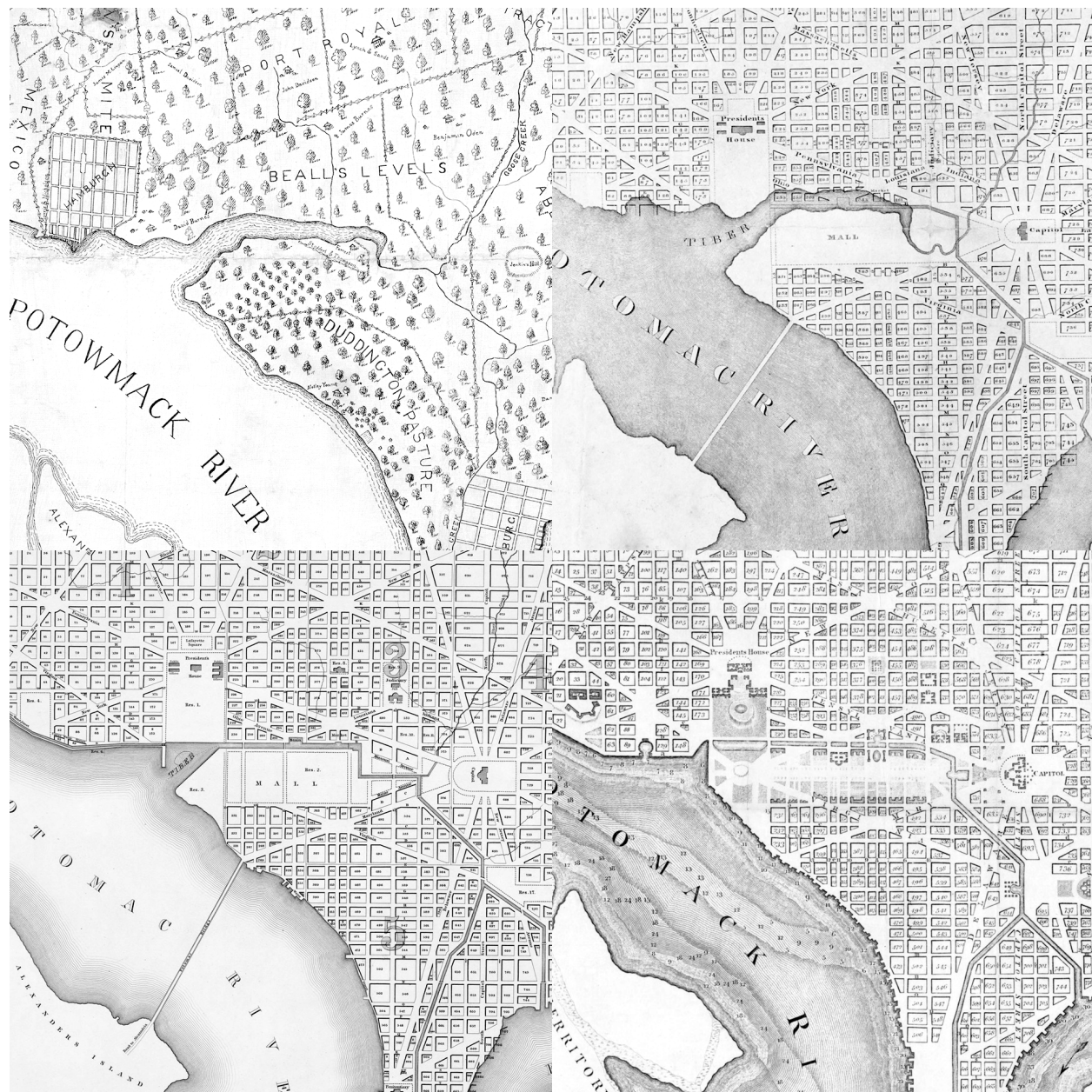
/ drawing lines



*/ Marshland in front of the Lincoln Memorial / Near the Potomac River,
c 1917 Library of Congress*

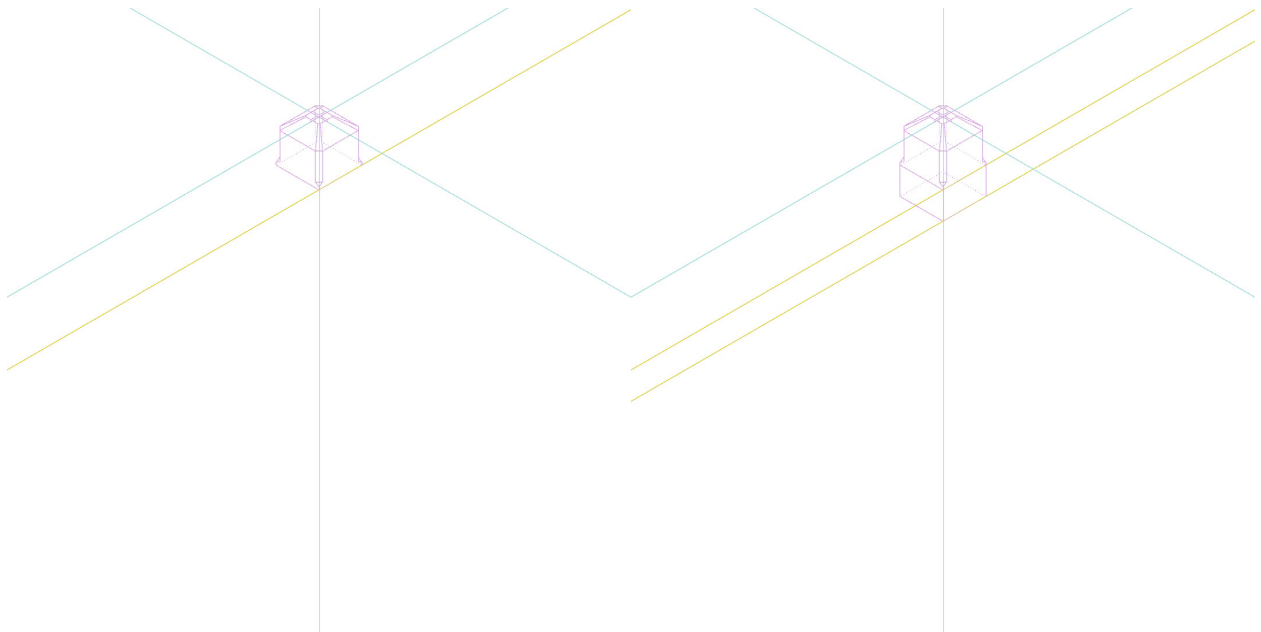
/ Figure 18

I / Washington Monument



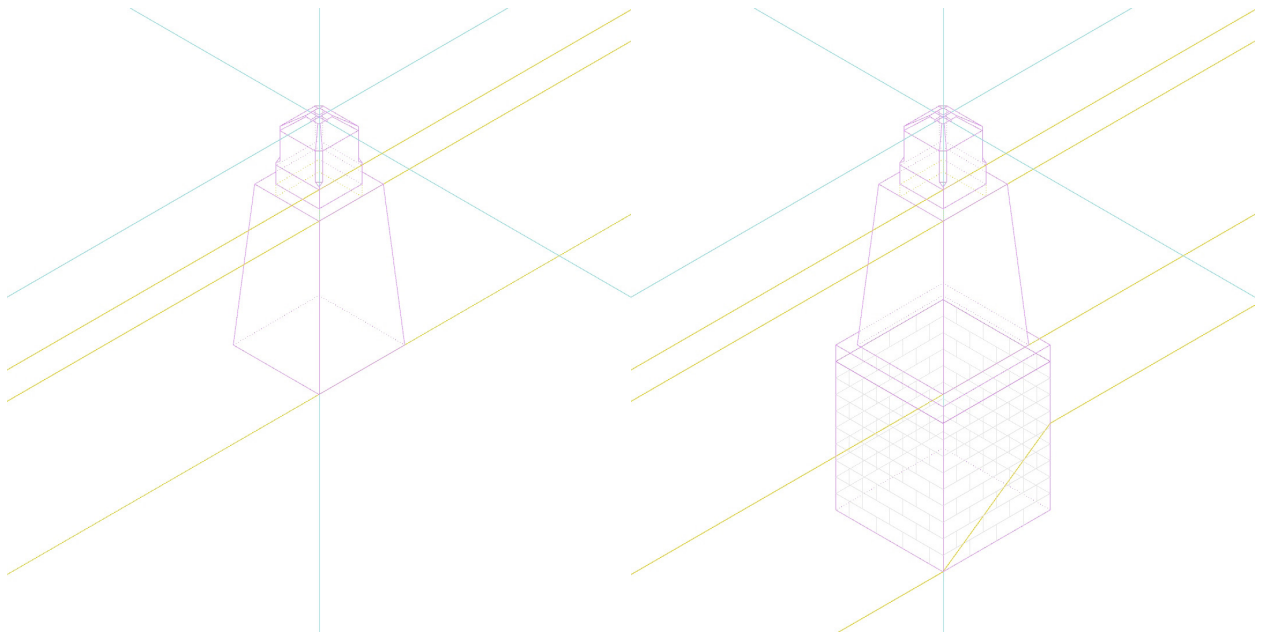
/ Unbuilding the Swamp Sequence

/ Figure 19



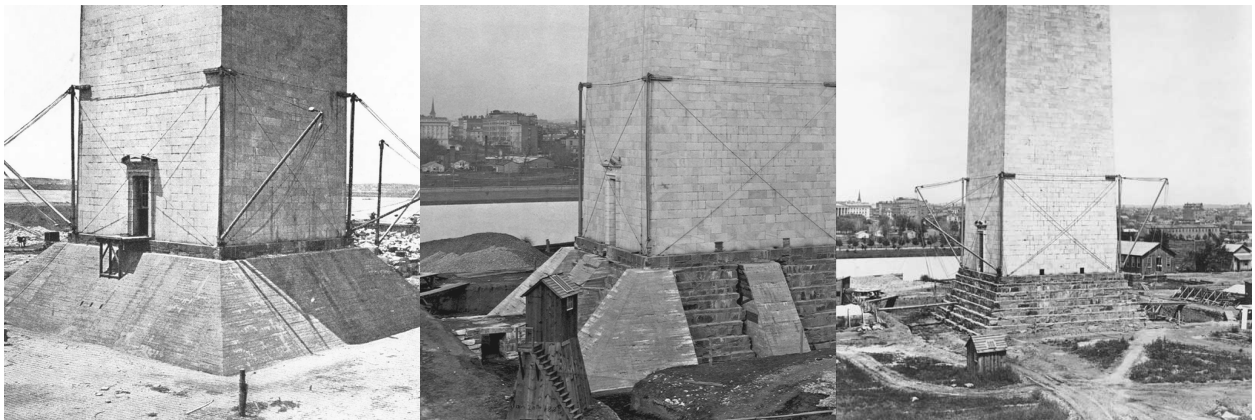
1 Excavating the Jefferson Stone Pier Sequence 1

1 / Washington Monument



/ Figure 20

/ drawing lines



/ Excavating the Washington Monument Sequence 2 / Concrete Foundation, c 1880 / Buttress Under Foundation, c 1880 / Original Stone Foundation, c

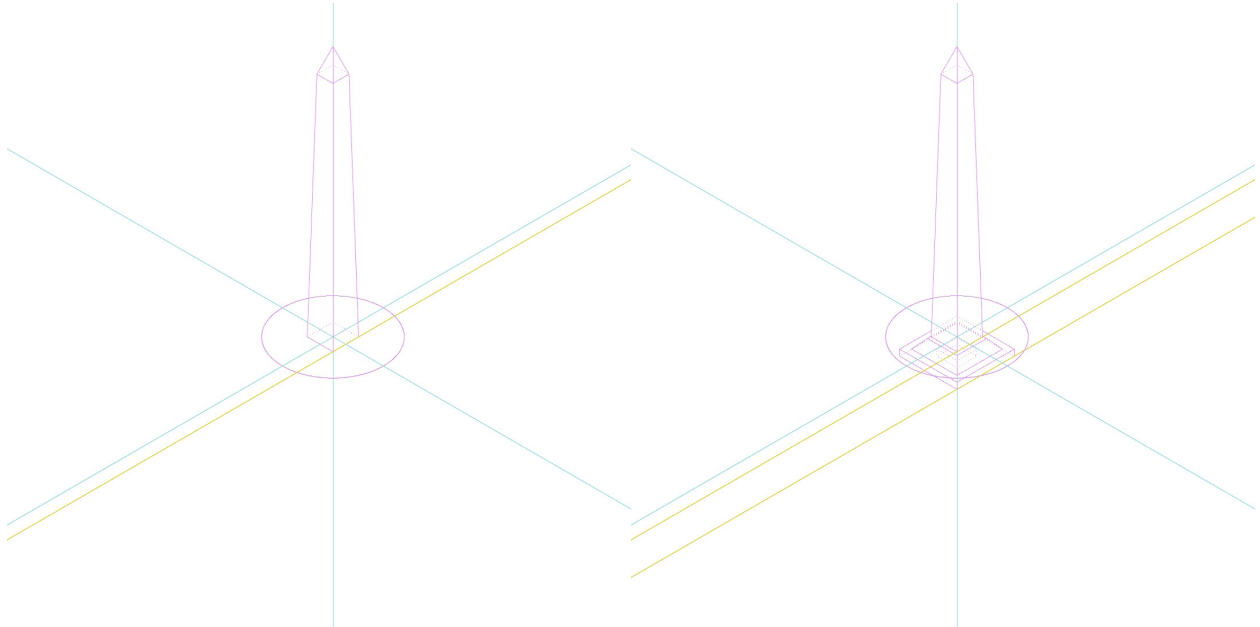
/ Figure 21

/ Missing Memories

These two unassuming objects - a stone copy of a masonry copy of a stick, and a miniature version of the much larger Washington Monument, displaced vertically or buried by the unbuilding of the swamp reveal some of the complexities, contingencies, and dislocations that lie at the base of this monument, both materially and ideologically.

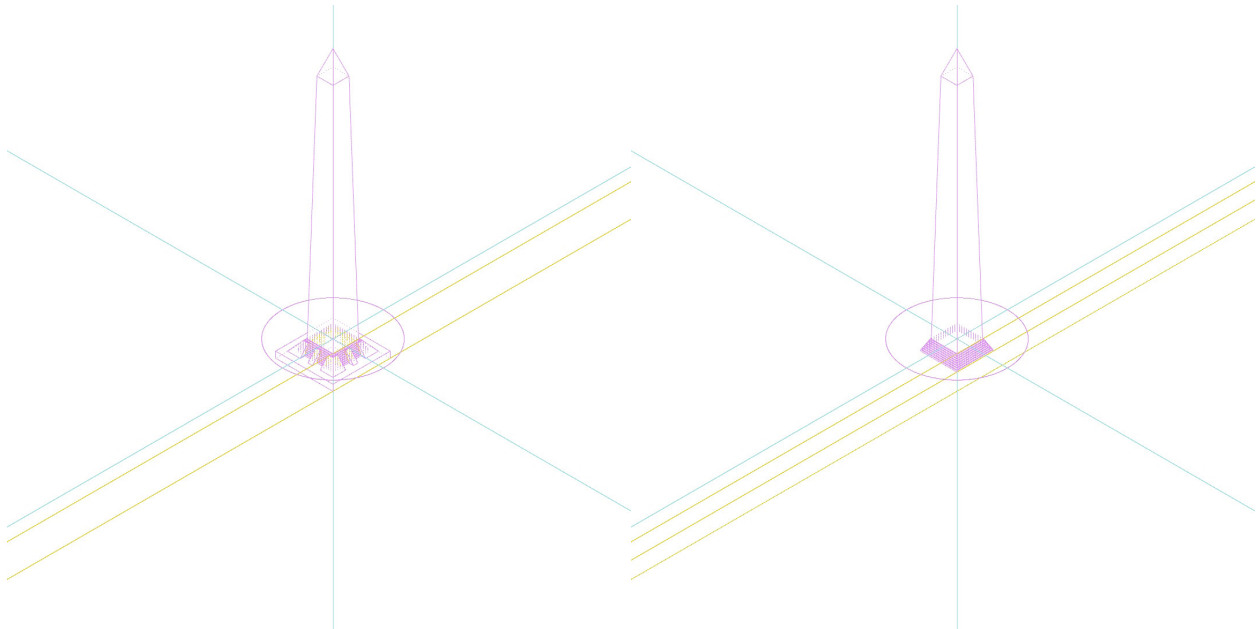
The monument is as much a symbol of its inconsistencies and duplications as its power and permanence. It's ability to define and control time and space, extending its power across the vast landscape challenged by the negotiations at its foundation.

There is barely a presence of these memories on the site today, it prefers to look pristine.



1 Excavating the Washington Monument Sequence 1

1 / Washington Monument



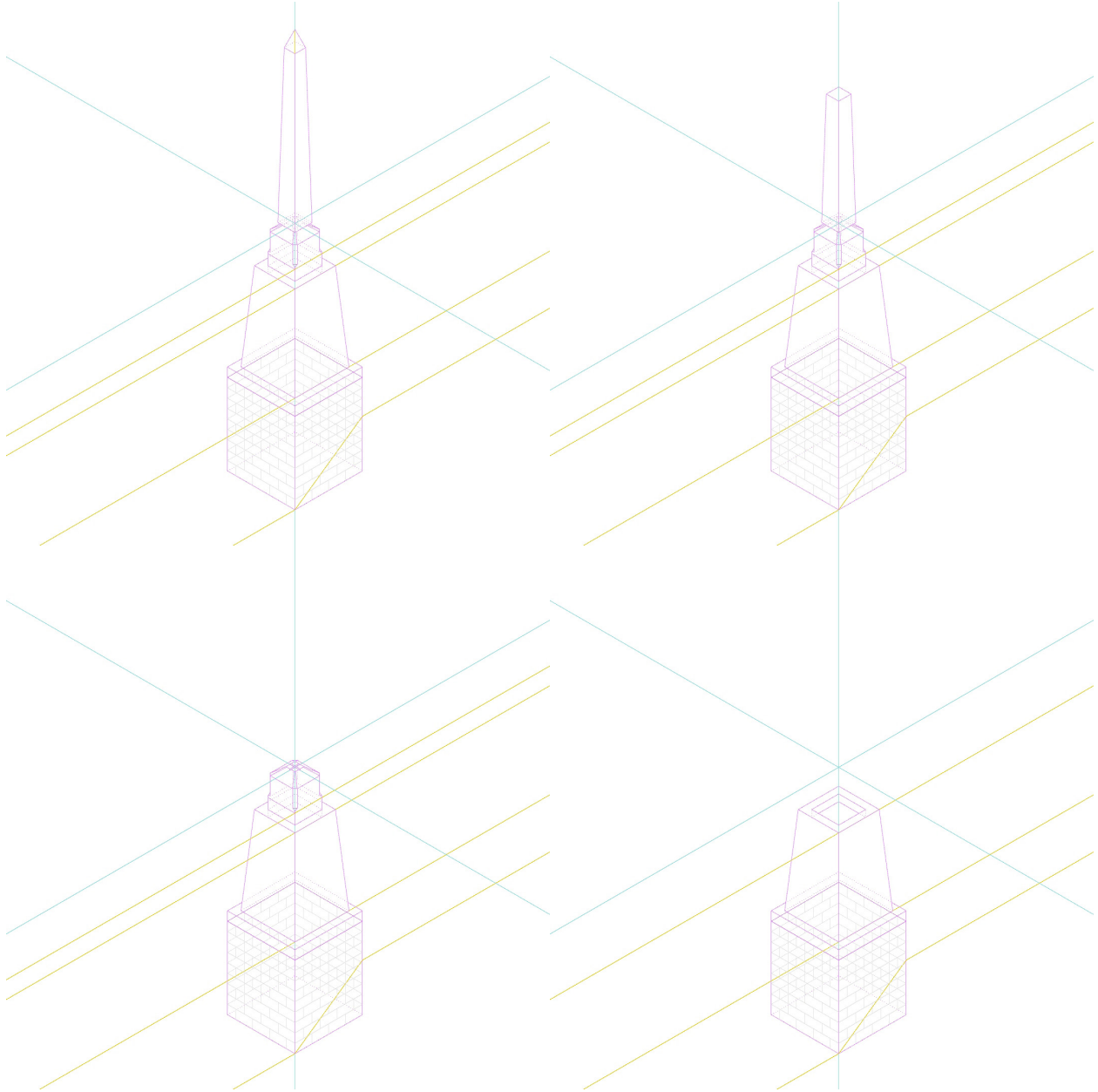
/ Figure 22

/ drawing lines

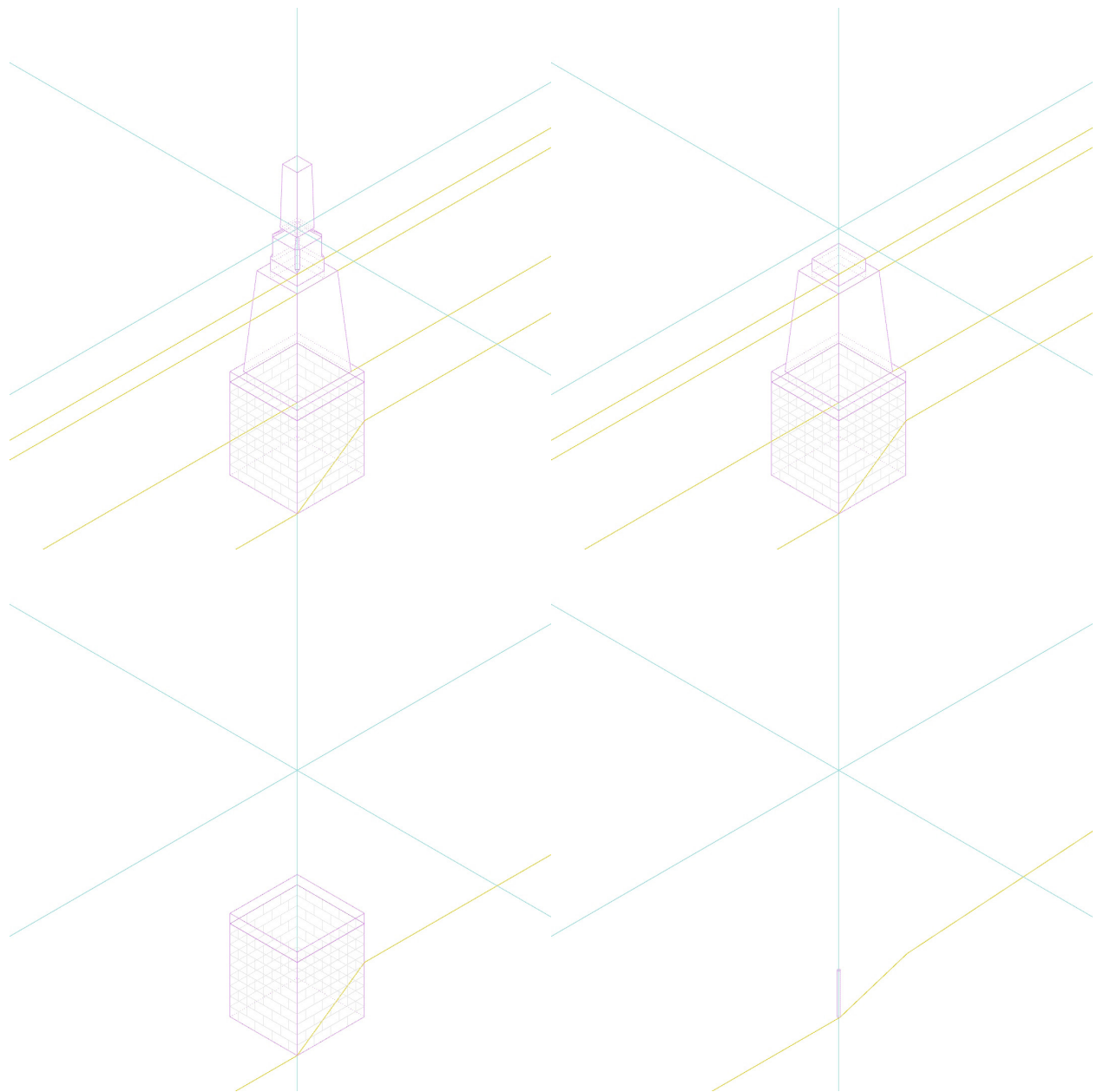
/ Mini-Monument

But what about projects that build the unbuilding? Insisting upon a richer history, a palimpsest, a stitching together of pasts and futures separated from the now.

What about a duplication of the mini-monument? Translated to ice and placed at the ideological starting point of settler colonial expansion, slowly disappearing in the heat.



1 Mini-Monument Sequence



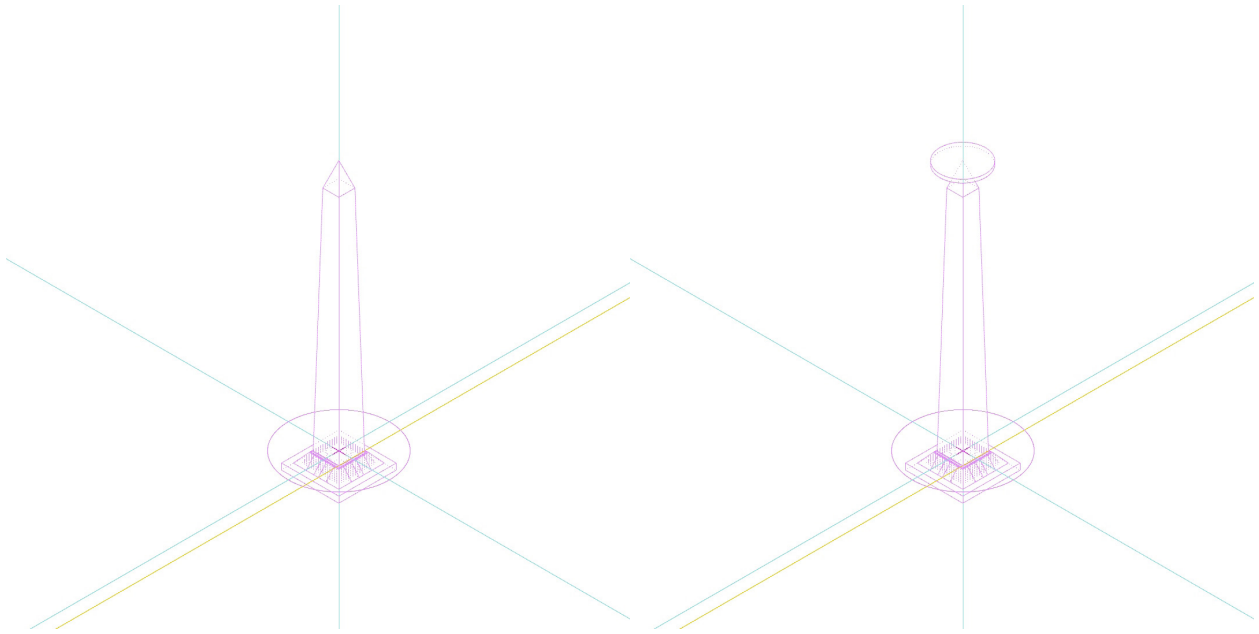
/ Figure 23

/ drawing lines

/ Manhole Cover

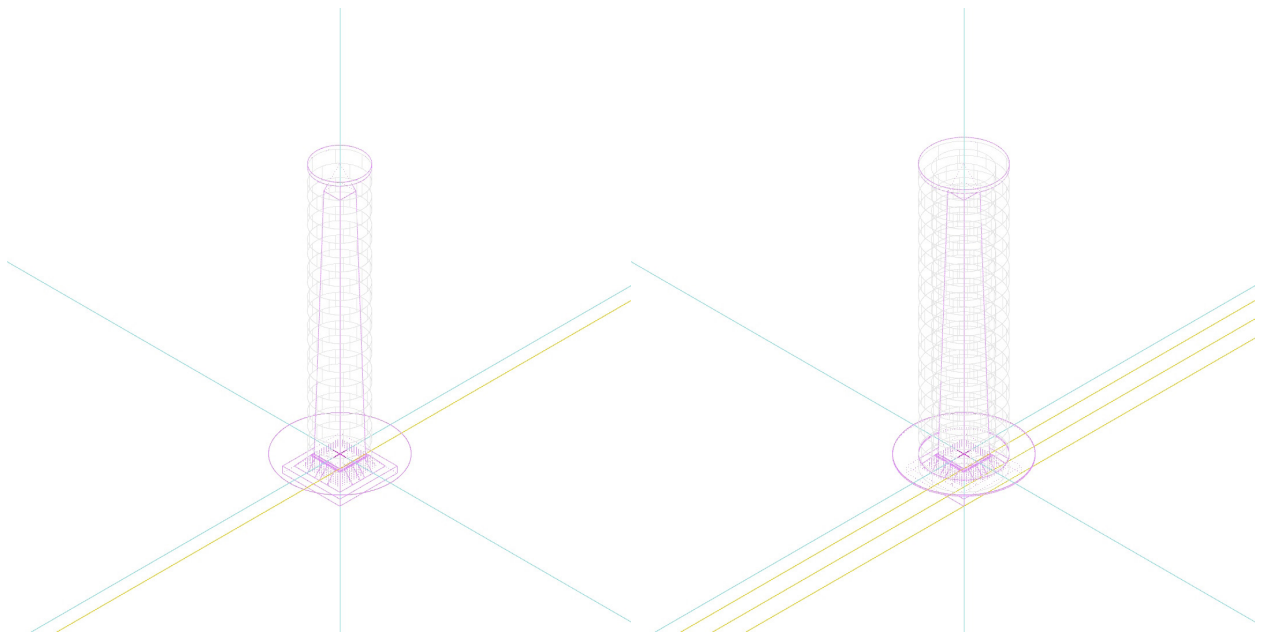
What if the manhole cover is duplicated and scaled up 44 times to create a 90' manhole cover?

What if the brick casing the mini-monument sits in is scaled up as well, reminiscent of the scaffolding Michael Graves built years ago and an acknowledgment of the perpetual construction and deconstruction site?



1 / Manhole Cover Sequence

1 / Washington Monument



/ Figure 24

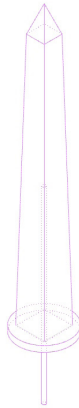
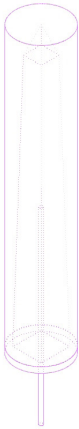
/ drawing lines

/ Mini-Mini-Monument

Or what if these objects in the landscape are scaled down 44 times to create a mini-mini-monument?

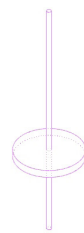
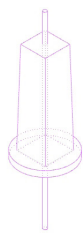
What if they are combined and transformed into a popsicle?

The stick, the monument, the manhole cover, the brick sleeve - consuming the monument in another form.



I / Mini-Monument Sequence

I / Washington Monument



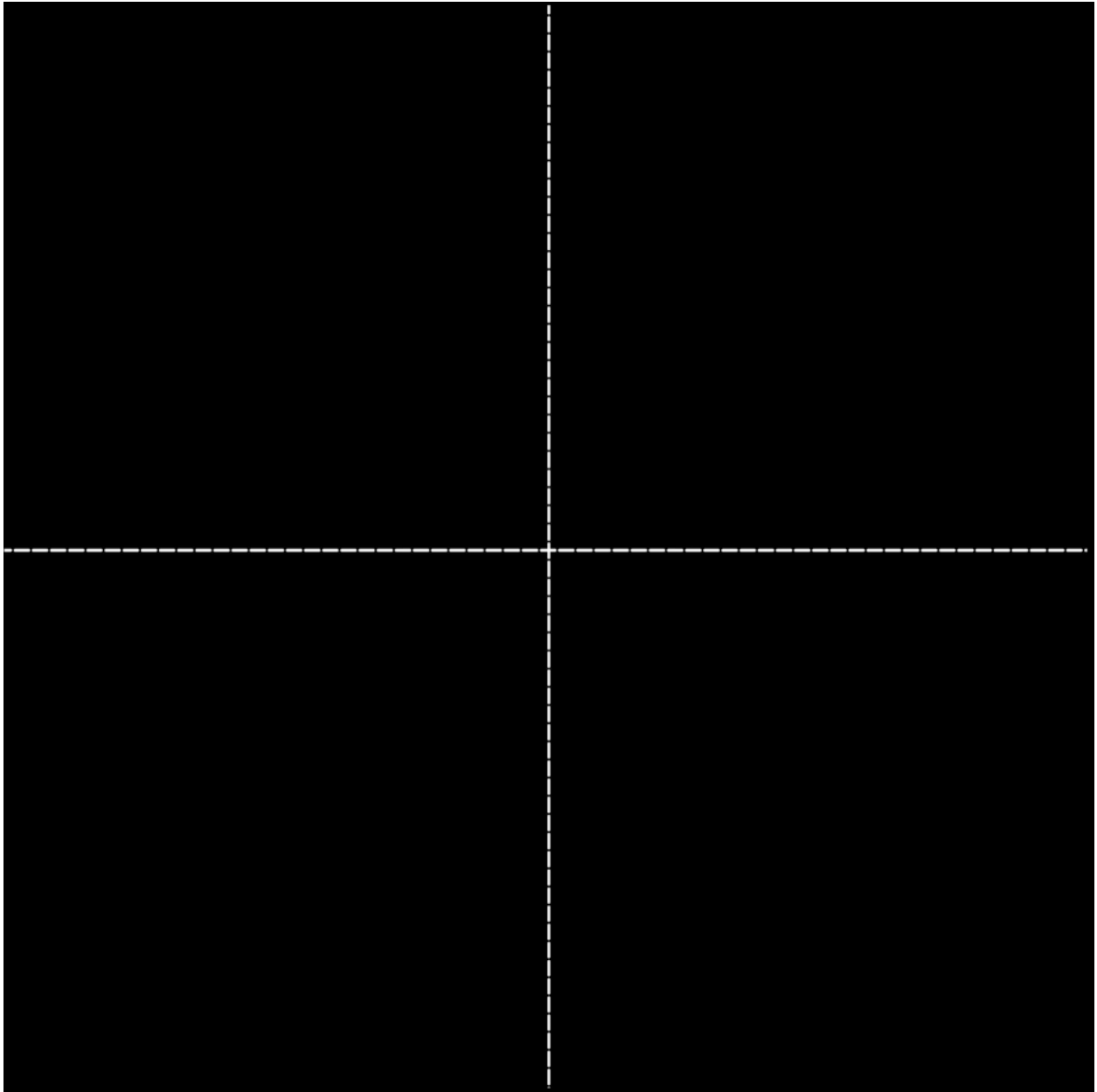
/ Figure 25

/ drawing lines

II

/ Gateway Arch

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Tabula Rasa Sequence 1

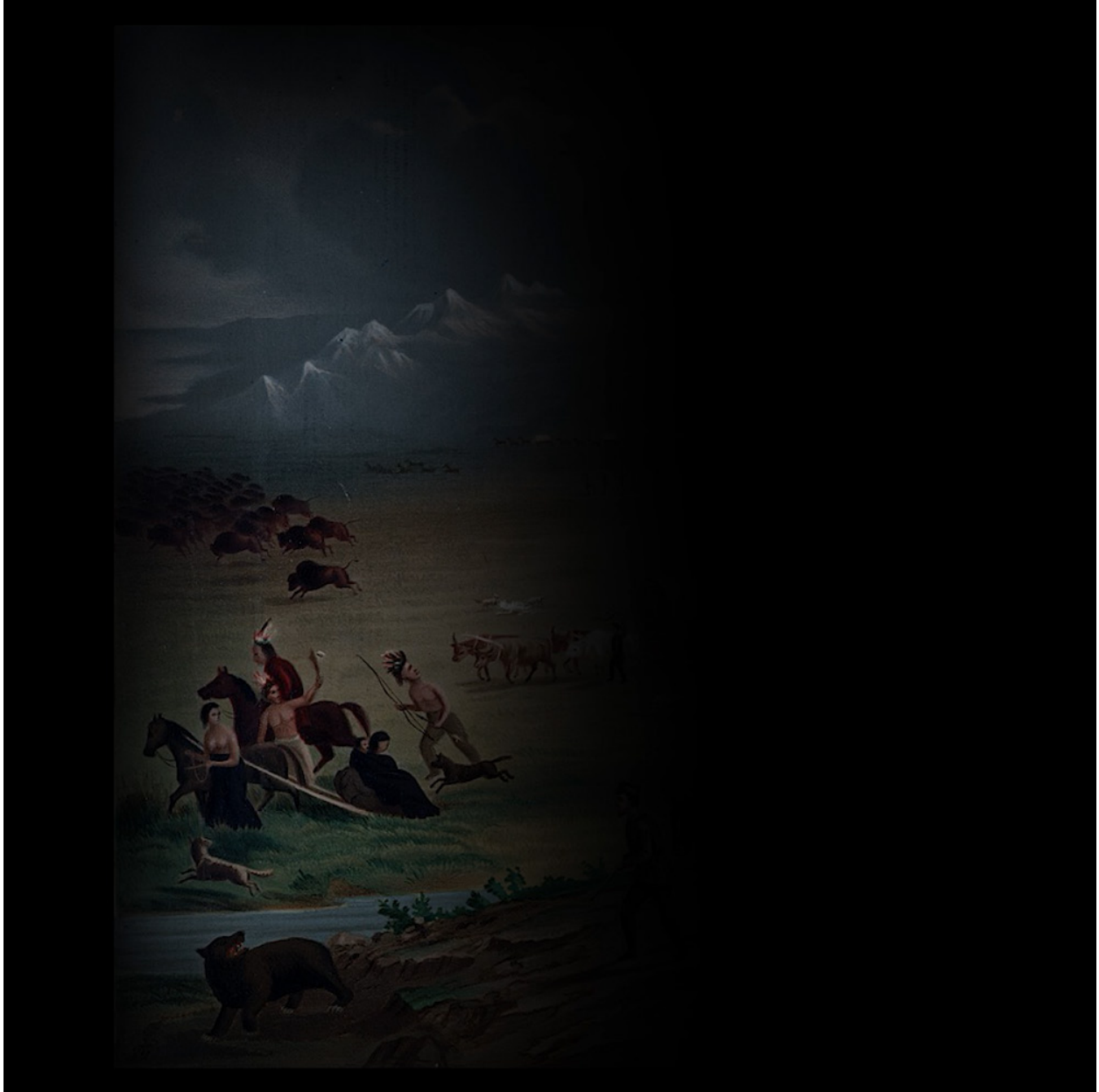
/ Figure 26

II / Gateway Arch



/ Tabula Rasa Sequence 2

/ Figure 27



In the Shadows of Progress / John Gast, American Progress, 1872.
Library of Congress.

/ Figure 28

/ 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition

From the ideological starting point of westward expansion, now to the symbolic gateway to the west, or the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial, where we look at the unbuilding required by the building - or what is darkened by the shadow-side of John Gast's iconic 1872 painting, American Progress.

The 1904 World's Fair, also known as the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, one of the high points of St. Louis' history, was part of a succession of world's fairs that contributed to the construction of the ideology of civilization and progress. These concepts, and their power to mobilize action necessitated the construction of their others and involved the contrasting display of savages and their uncivilized ways of life in Human Zoos.

Architecture and landscape architecture played a key role in this public argument. Villages and indigenous infrastructures were curated to create stark contrast to the civilized, technologically advanced, classical buildings and tastefully arranged landscapes.

These temporary constructions were built for \$15 million, the same price paid to France for the entire Louisiana Purchase Territory, 100 years earlier.

The buildings and landscape formations were quickly unbuilt after their public consumption, buried in three large landfills around the city.

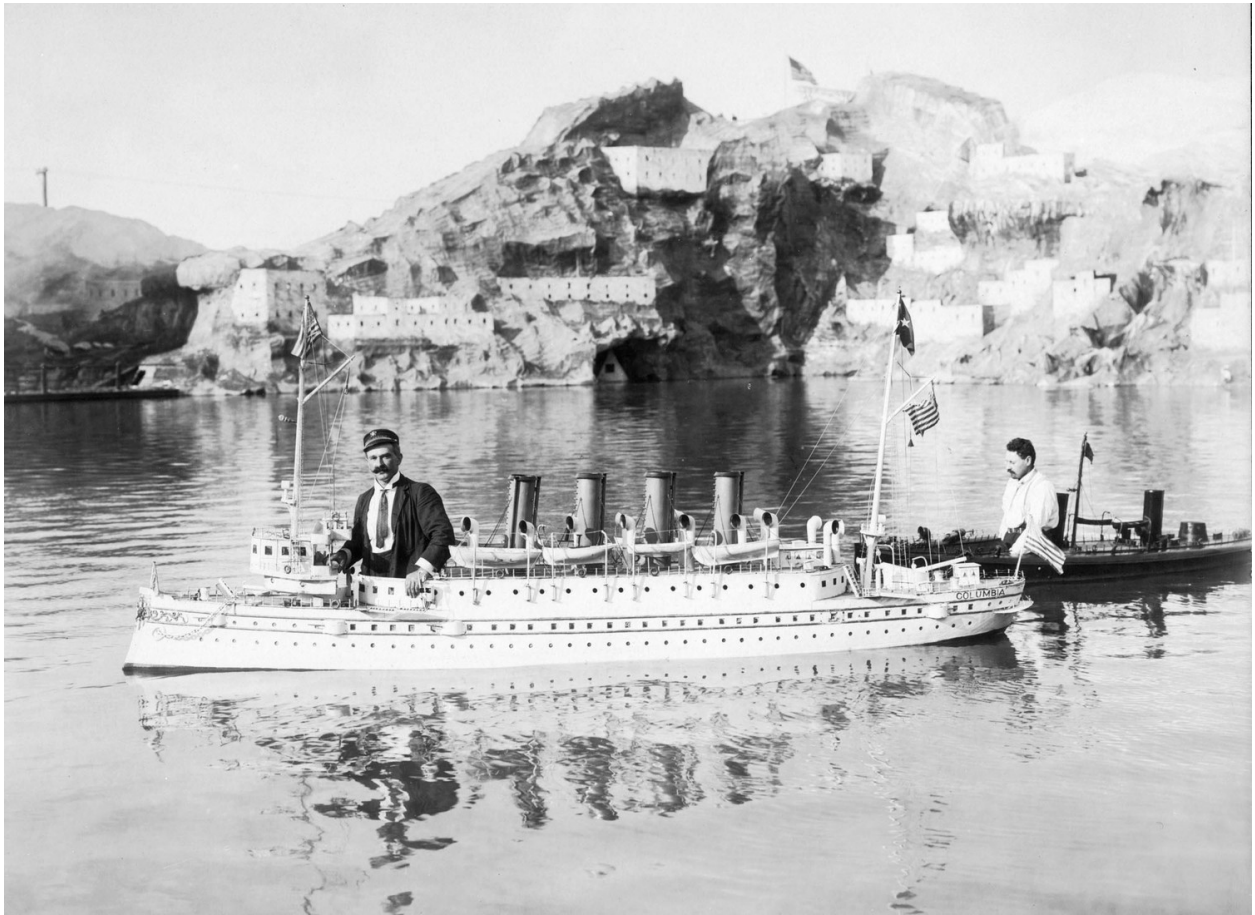
James Gilbert, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.



/ Poster for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition / Alphonse Mucha, 1904 Library of St. Louis

/ Figure 29



Two model American warships and operators / Missouri Historical Society

/ Figure 30

/ constructing exhibitions



Bust of President Roosevelt Sculpted in Butter, Louisiana Purchase Exposition / C.H. Graves, c 1904 Library of Congress

/ Figure 31



/ A craftsman stands by a bust of Thomas Jefferson / St. Louis Library Digital Collections

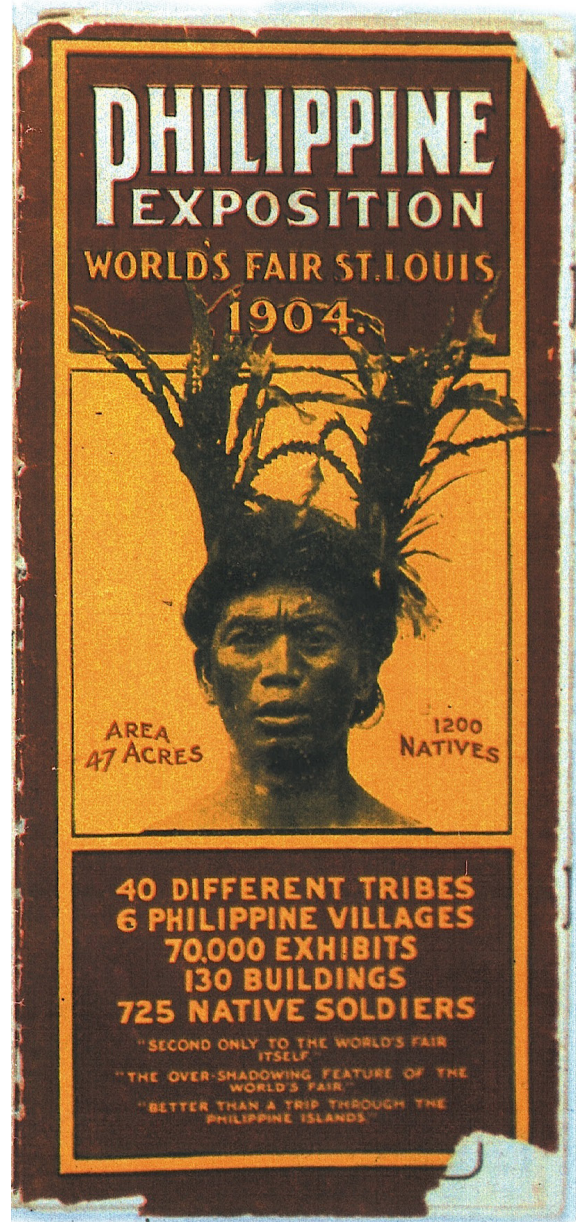
/ Figure 32



/ Night view of the illuminated Festival Hall and Cascades / Missouri Historical Society

/ Figure 33

II / Gateway Arch



/ Brochure of the Philippine Exposition / Jonathan Best and John Silva Collection

/ Figure 34



/ Double Vision Sequence 1

/ Figure 35

II / Gateway Arch



/ Double Vision Sequence 2

/ Figure 36

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Double Vision Sequence 3

/ Figure 37



/ Double Vision Sequence 4

/ Figure 38

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Double Vision Sequence 5

/ Figure 39

II / Gateway Arch



/ Mound City / c 1873 Missouri History Museum

/ Figure 40

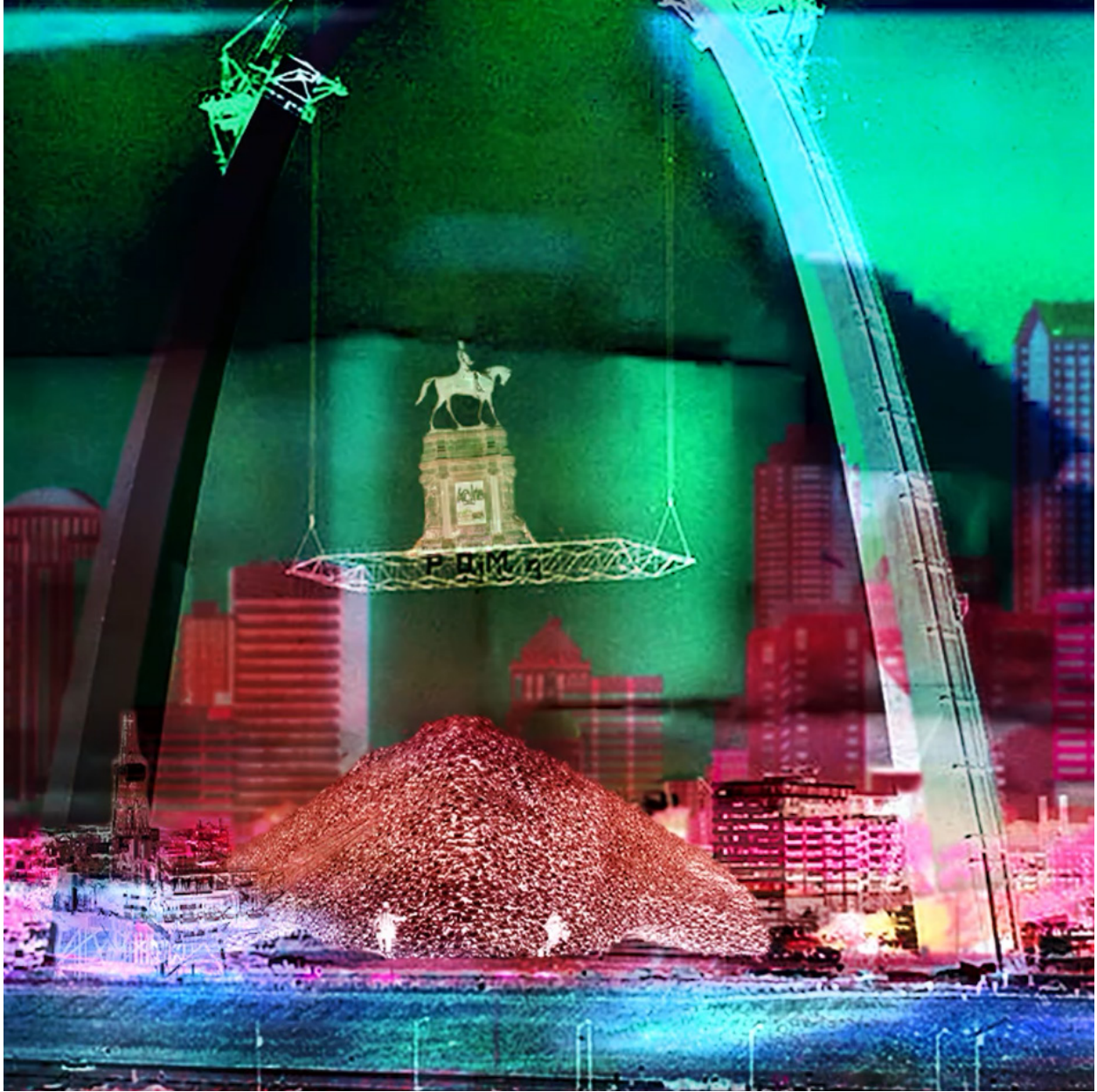
II / Gateway Arch

/ Mound City Exposition

What might an exhibition today look like? One that accounts for the unbuilding work of the frontier.

Maybe its called Mound City Exposition?

Perhaps it also has a miniature railroad, but the circuit weaves spectators through piles of unbuilding?



/ Pile of Rubble

/ Figure 41

II / Gateway Arch

/ Pile of Rubble

Building on unbuilding has a rich history at the site of the monument, the growth of the city of St Louis, and the westward march of progress through a constructed frontier.

In 1939, 37 blocks of a neighborhood housing approximately 10,000 predominately black residents and 290 businesses at the levee were razed through slum clearance. Intended to raise nearby property value and clearing the way for future progress, this was a construction, through deconstruction, of tabula rasa.

That progress came in the form of a massive monument, the predominant national symbol of settler colonial expansion and the ideology of Manifest Destiny.

Walter Johnson, *The Broken Heart of America: St. Louis and the Violent History of the United States*, New York: Basic Books, 2020.



Thirty-Nine blocks of buildings were demolished to make way for the Gateway Arch / April 9, 1941 National Park Service

/ Figure 42



/ Scene of demolition at the future Gateway Arch site / National Park Service

/ Figure 43

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Aerial Photograph of St. Louis Riverfront / 1933 Post-Dispatch

/ Figure 44

II / Gateway Arch



/ Clearing the ground for the memorial to Thomas Jefferson / c 1942
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Archives

/ Figure 45

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Pile of Mounds

/ Figure 46

II / Gateway Arch

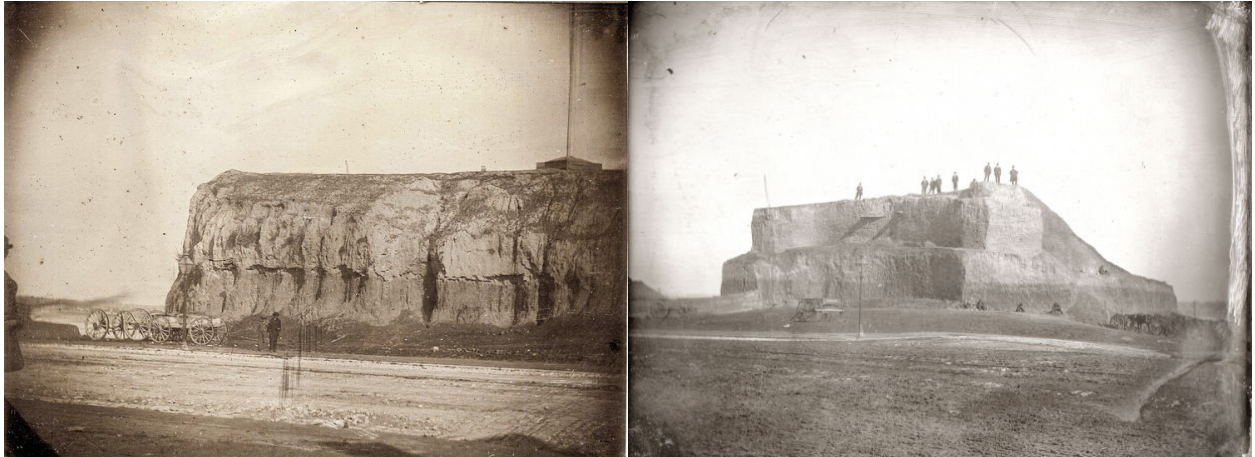
/ Pile of Mounds

Ground for the railway, space for an expanding population, and bricks to build its buildings were provided by the unbuilding of mounds previously built by a vast Mississippian culture.

Bones and cultural artifacts now lie embedded in the ground and built into the walls of the material fabric of the daily life of Mound City.

A single, solitary rock marks the location of what was known as the Great Mound, once thirty feet high and 150 feet long. Recently it too was displaced again and moved to a new location, fittingly by a highway project.

Timothy R. Pauketat, *Cahokia: Ancient America's Great City on the Mississippi*, New York: Viking, 2009.



Big Mound Unbuilding Sequence / Thomas Easterly, Missouri Historical Society

II / Gateway Arch



/ Figure 47

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Dislocating Lines

/ Figure 48

II / Gateway Arch

/ Pile of Skin and Bones

At the time of the 1904 Exposition, the traditional frontier had essentially closed, perhaps most forcefully marked by the Massacre at Wounded Knee, the end of indigenous resistance by war.

Following behind in the wake of westward expansion, bones were making their way to St Louis for processing. Following their near elimination in what many refer to as an act of genocide, bison carcasses scattered the landscape and a bone processing business transformed them into fertilizer and material for the use of sugar refinement.

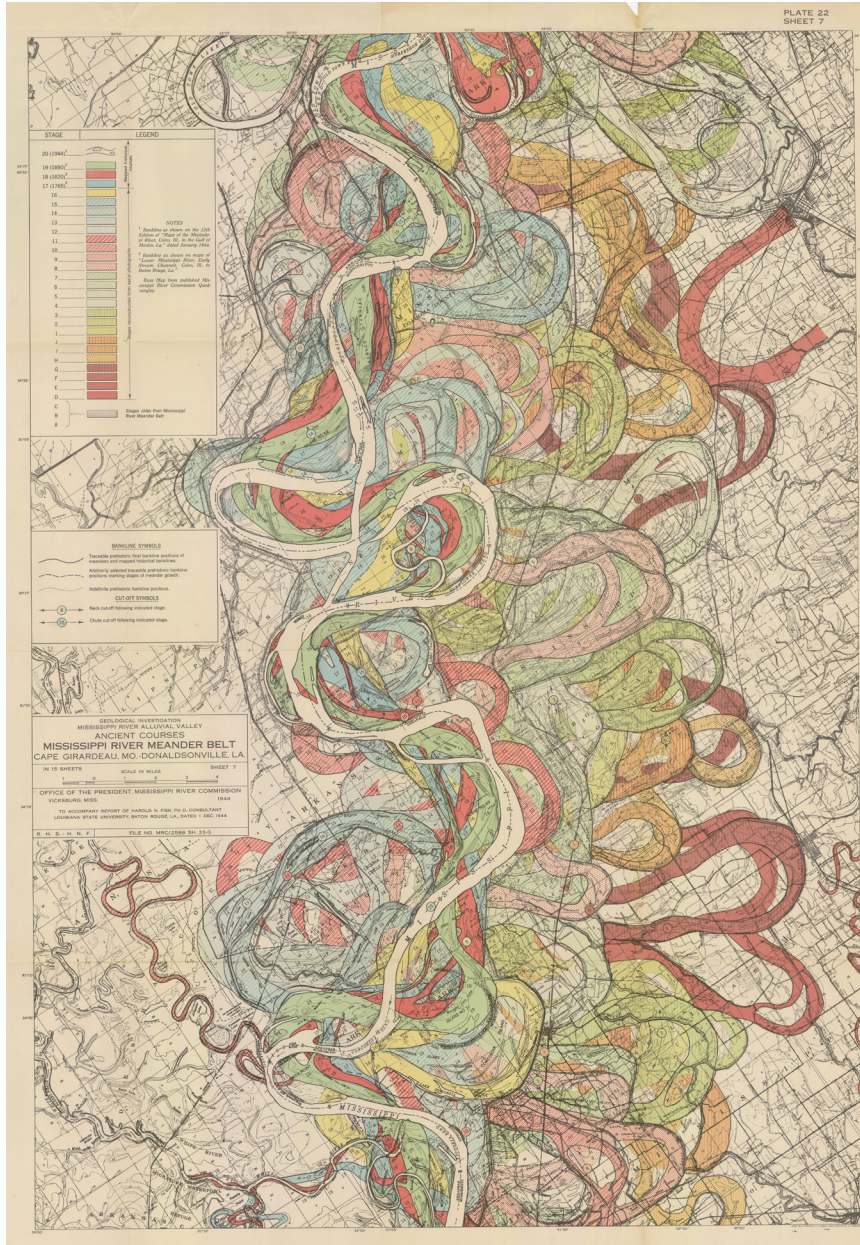
Empire Carbon Works, located a few blocks from the Gateway site, collected and processed 1.25 million tons of these bones.¹

Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.

Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015.

¹ Steven Rinella, *American Buffalo: In Search of a Lost Icon*, New York: Random House, 2008, p 181.



/ Geological Investigation Mississippi River Alluvial Valley Ancient Courses - Plate 22 Sheet 7 / Harold Fisk, 1944 US Army Corps of Engineers

/ Figure 49



/ Partial Overview of the Mississippi River Basin Model / Eugene Reybold, in operation from 1949-1973 US Army Corps of Engineers

/ Figure 50



/ Steamboats lining the St. Louis Levee / c 1856 Missouri History Museum

/ Figure 51

II / Gateway Arch



/ St Louis Levee before Gateway unbuiding / c 1938 Post-Dispatch

/ Figure 52

/ constructing exhibitions



/ Pile of Bison Hides / National Park Service

/ Figure 53



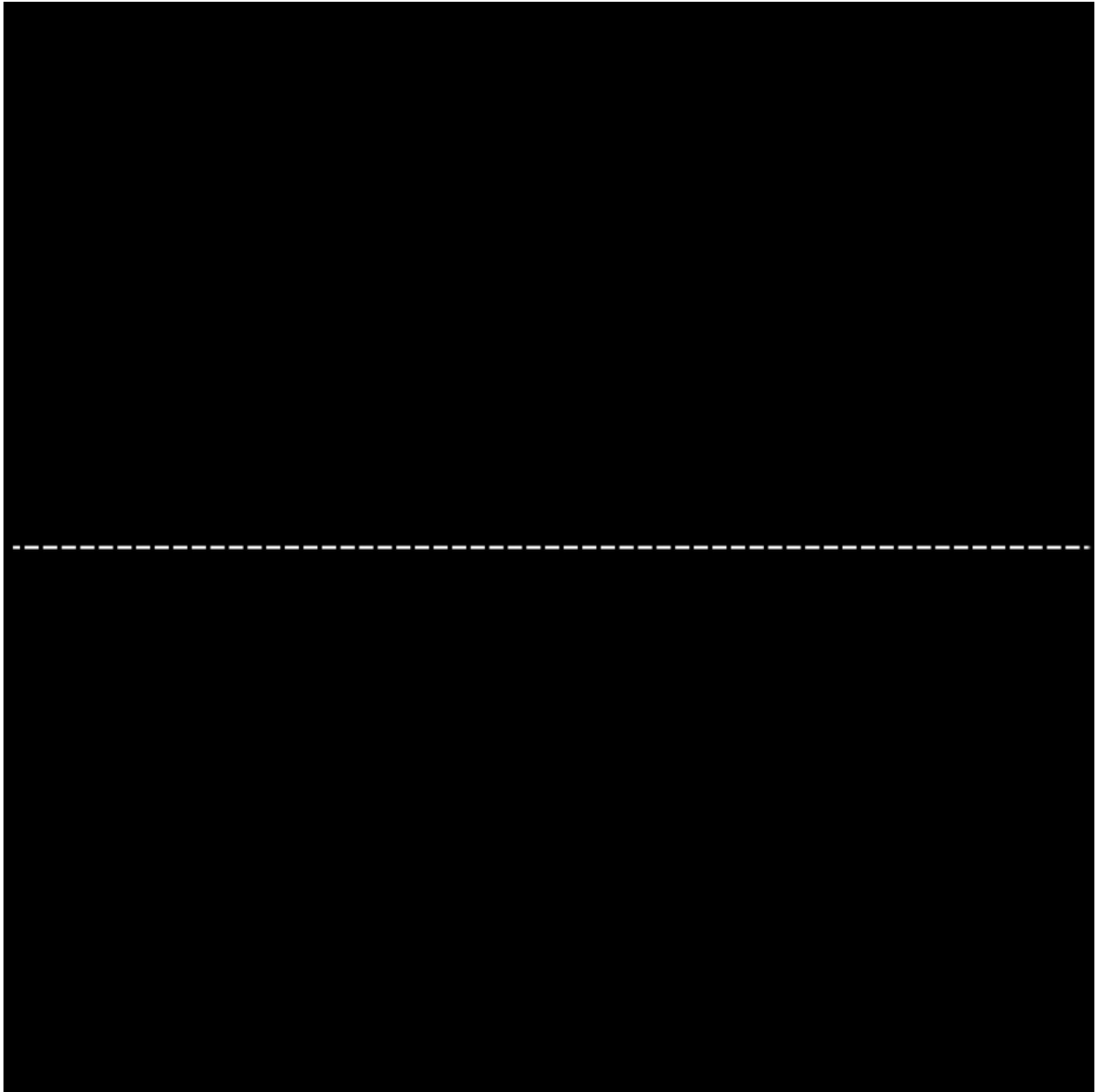
*/ Men standing with a pile of buffalo skins / Michigan Carbon Works,
Rougeville, MI, c 1892 Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library*

/ Figure 54

III

/ Mount Rushmore

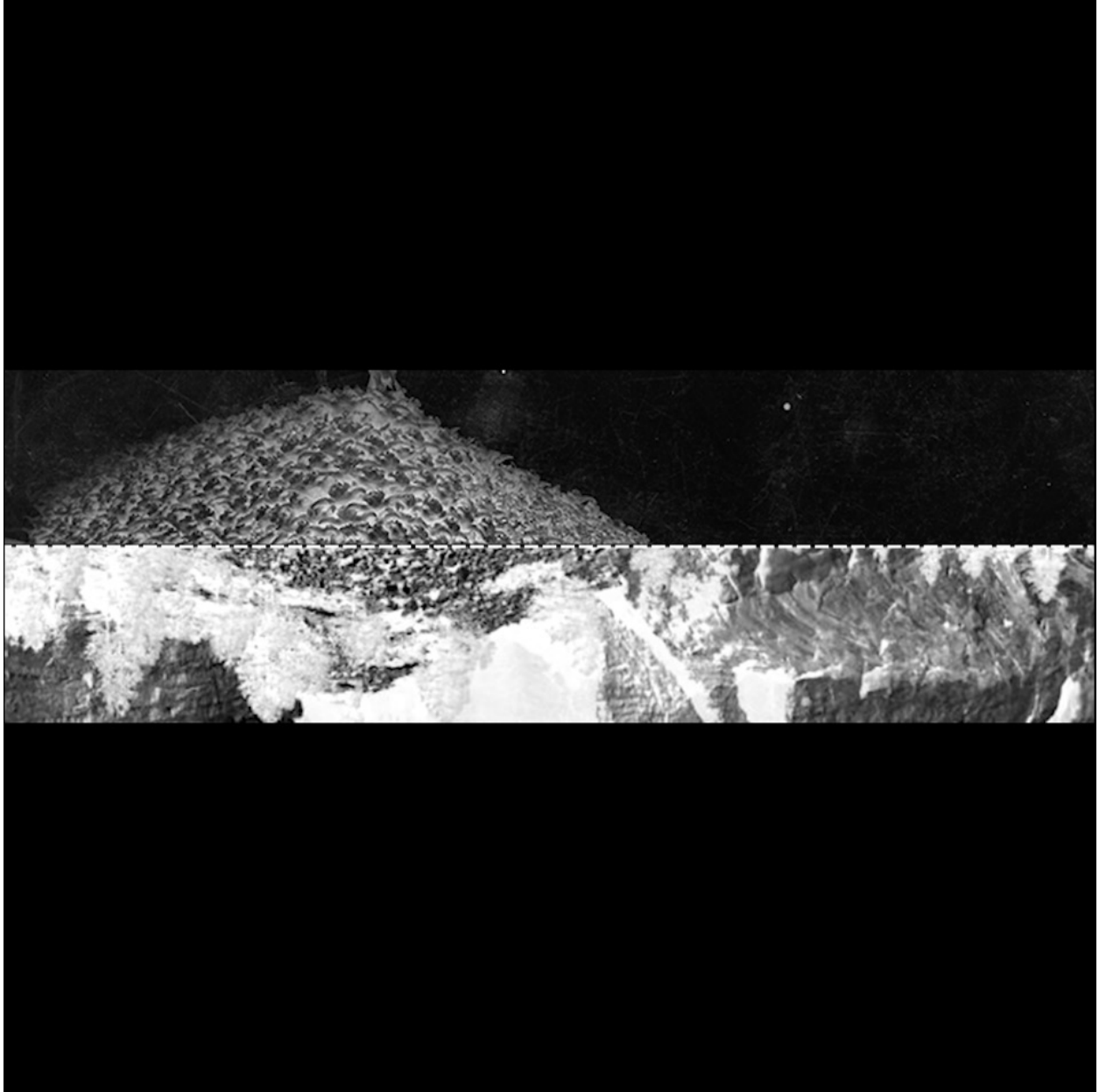
/ making models



/ Pile of Stones / Pile of Bones Sequence 1

/ Figure 55

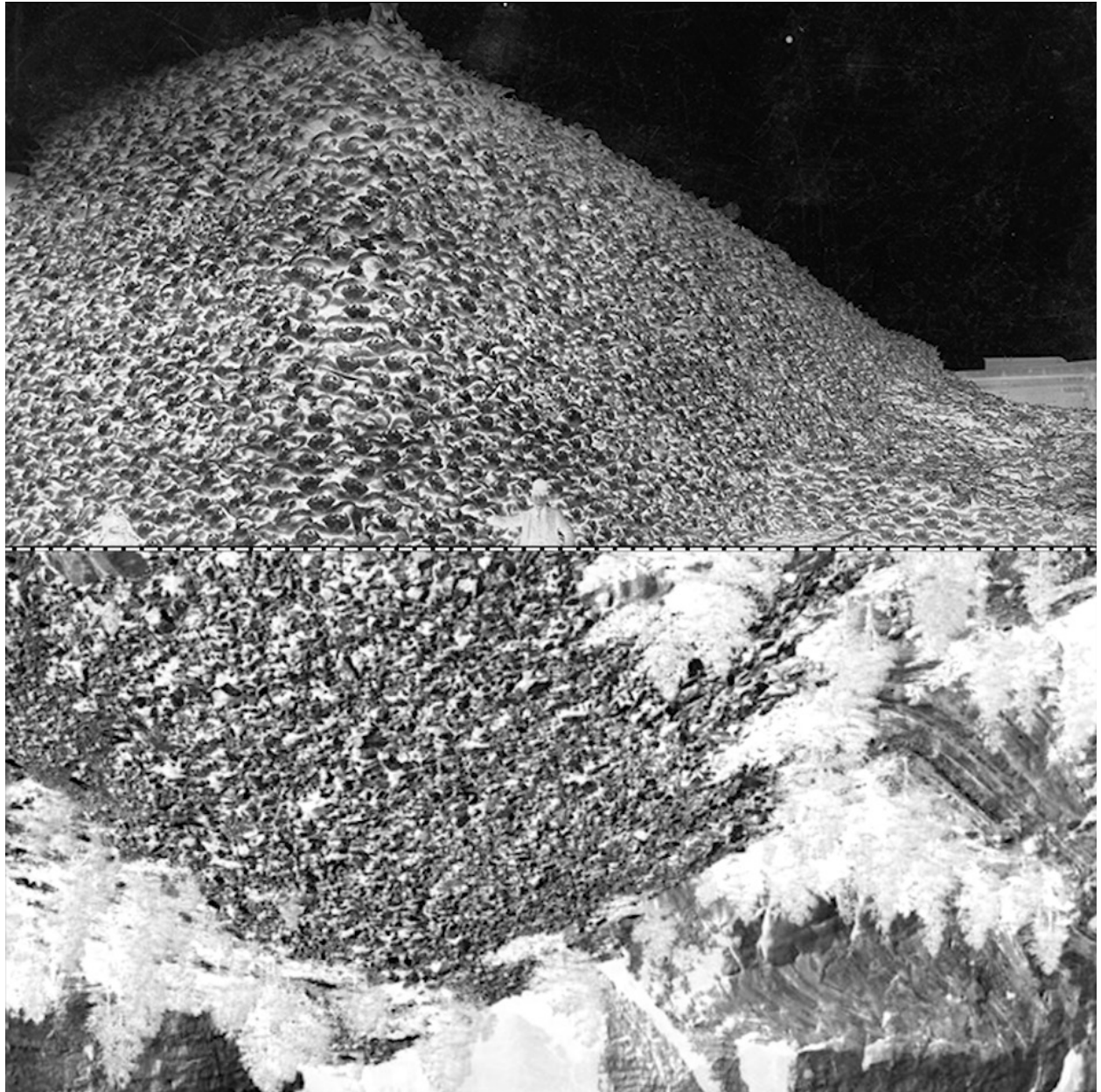
III / Mount Rushmore



/ Pile of Stones / Pile of Bones Sequence 2

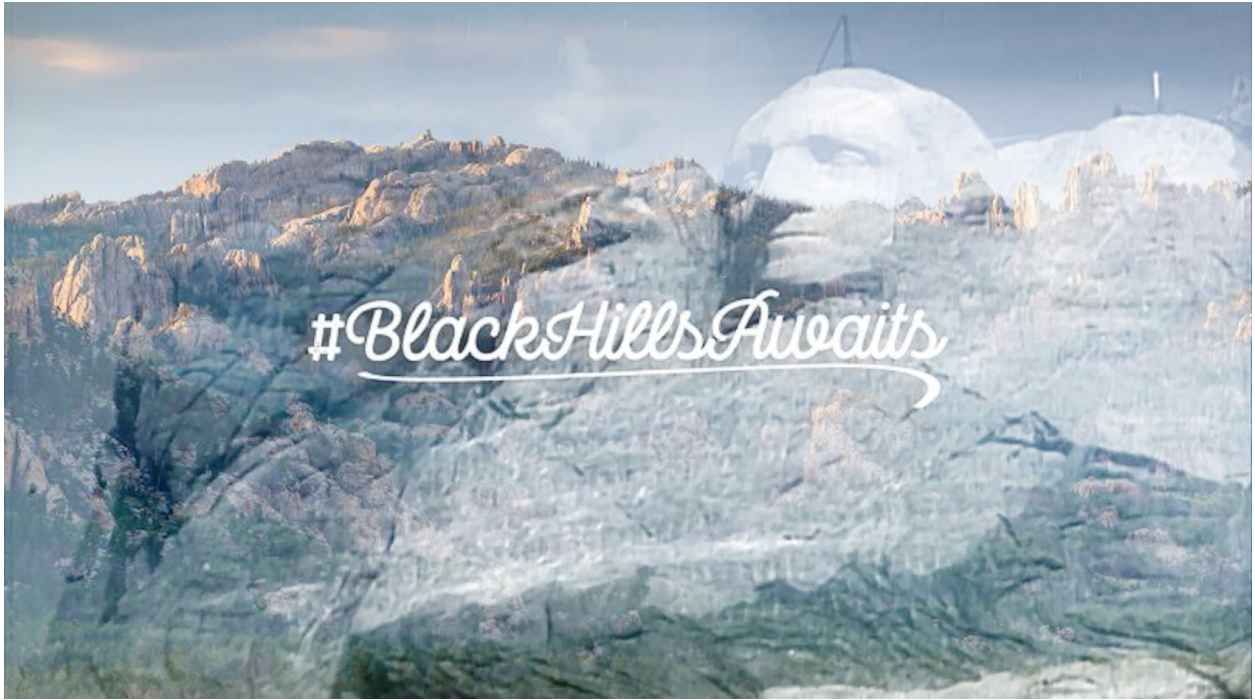
/ Figure 56

/ making models



/ Pile of Stones / Pile of Bones Sequence 3

/ Figure 57



/ Fireworks Sequence 1

/ Figure 58



I Fireworks Sequence 2

III / Mount Rushmore



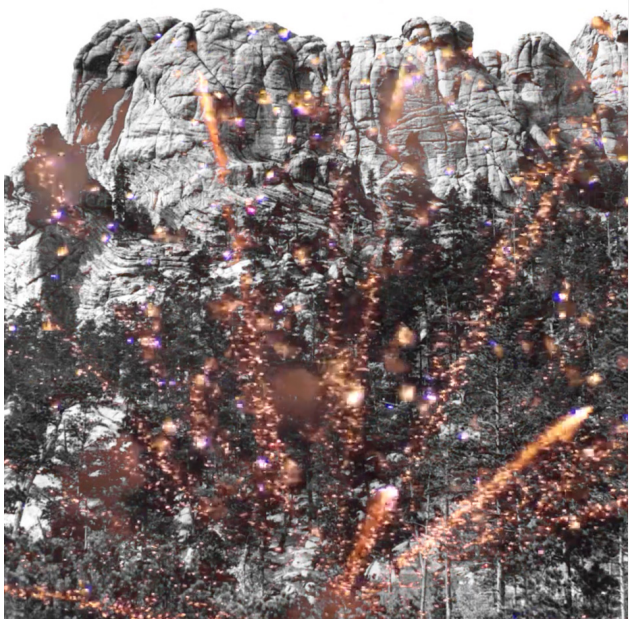
/ Figure 59

/ making models



I Fireworks Sequence 3

III / Mount Rushmore



/ Figure 60

/ making models



I Fireworks Sequence 4

III / Mount Rushmore




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/ Figure 61



I Fireworks Sequence 5

III / Mount Rushmore



/ Figure 62

/ making models



/ Dislocating Platforms

/ Figure 63

/ Pile of Bones

Here the pile of bones accumulated in the wake of expansion are perhaps most tangible. The bodies of many humans and non-humans are buried beneath the surface of the land or have since been displaced and translated into different forms for profit.

They were required for the making of the pile of stones that lie at the base of Mount Rushmore, itself an unbuilding of what many Indigenous nations related to as a sacred site.

This monument sits at the center of a centuries old territorial dispute over land, resources and racialized violence. Treaties were signed, then quickly broken. Wars were fought over water, food and gold. The largest mass execution in US history was ordered by Abraham Lincoln. Two people were mistakenly executed, but it hardly mattered.

Some apologies have been made for what has happened, and some of that guilt has taken on monetary form, where well over \$1 billion dollars sits an account, yet some of the poorest communities in the country refuse to be paid off, hoping instead that their land will be returned someday.

Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, London: Verso, 2019.

Craig Howe, and Lydia Whirlwind Soldier, and Lanniko L. Lee, *He Sapa Whoihanble: Black Hills Dream*, St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2011.

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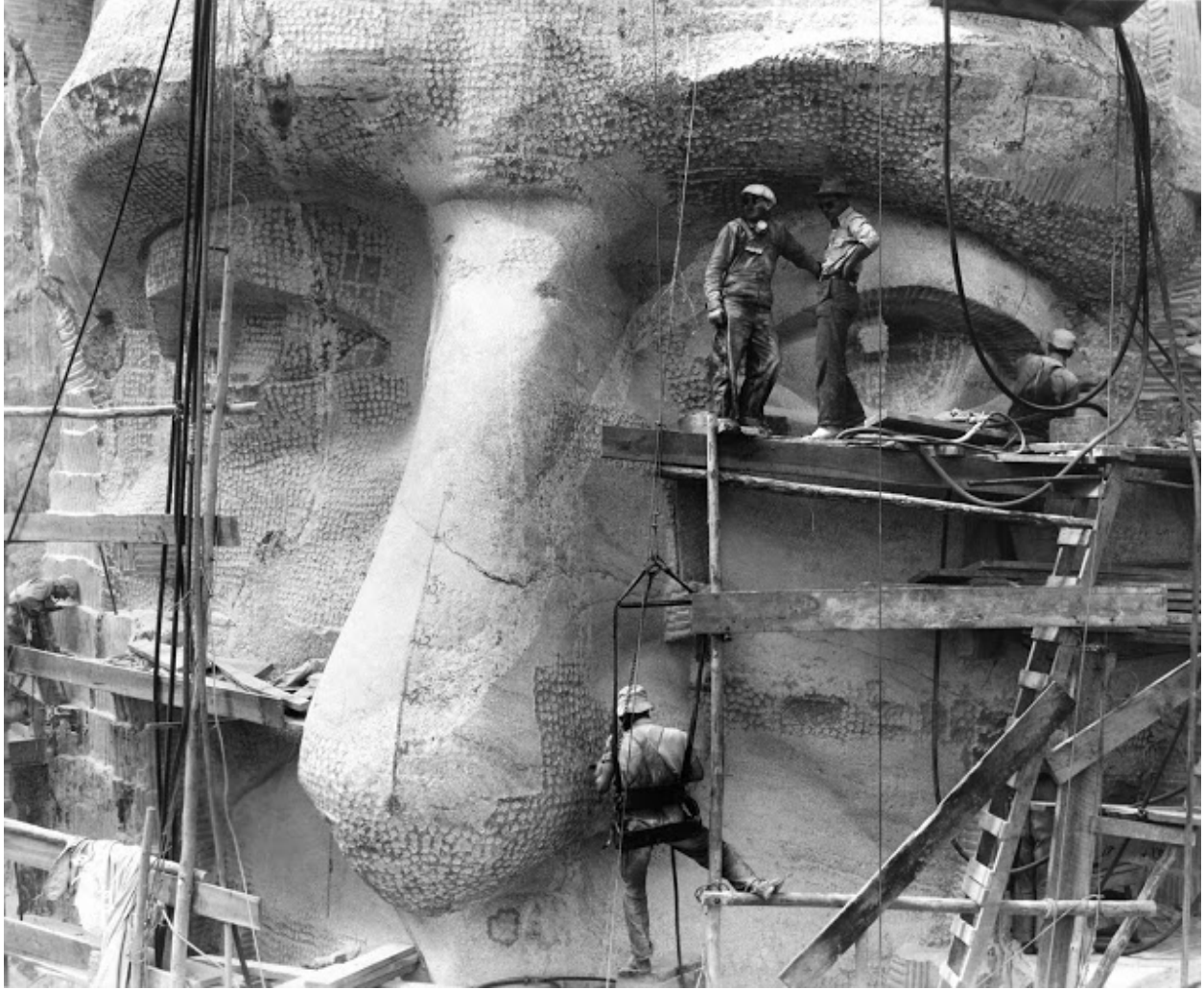
/ Modeling Stones Sequence 1

/ Figure 64



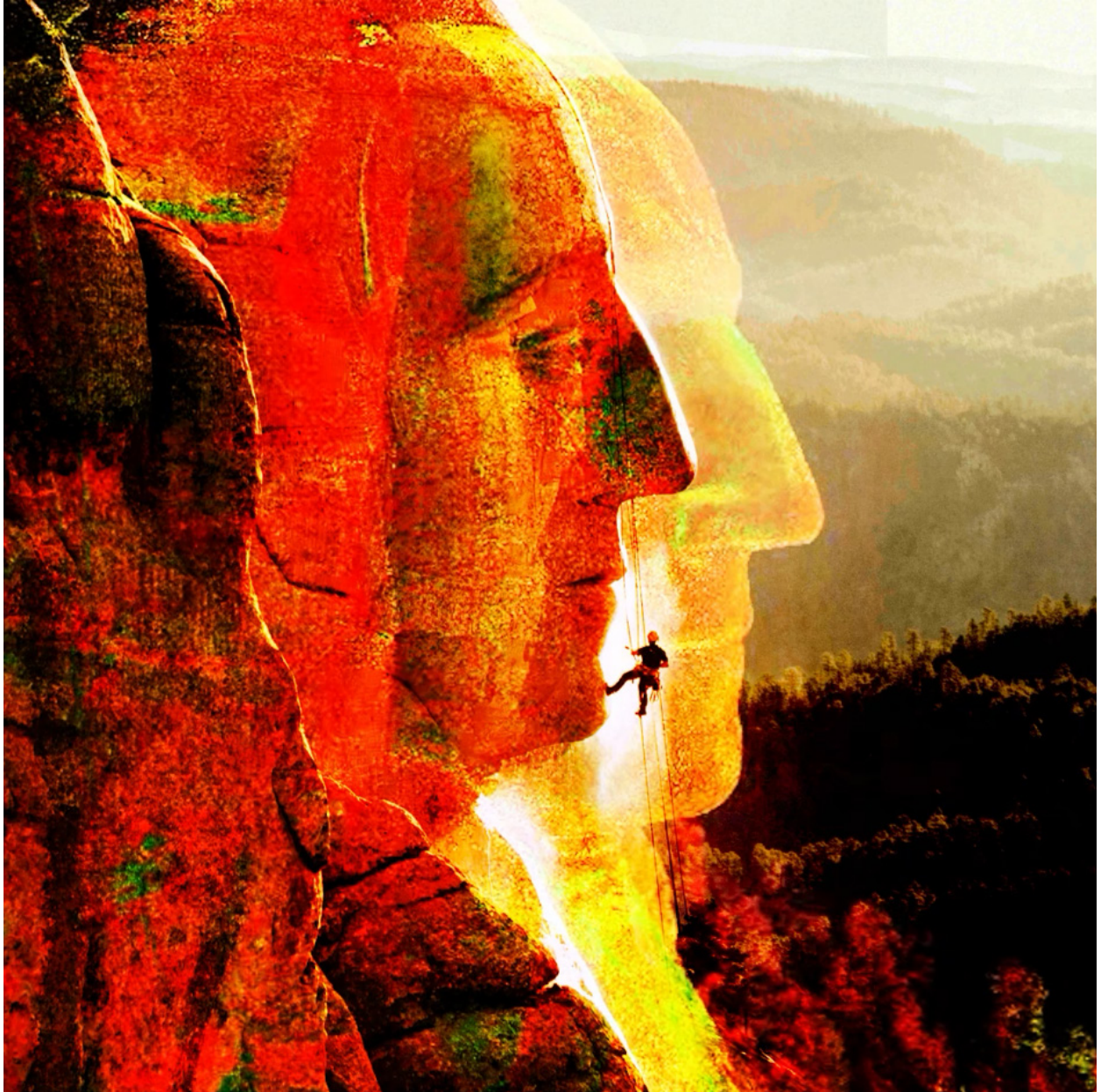
/ Modeling Stones Sequence 2

/ Figure 65



/ Washington's nose / Rapid City Chamber of Commerce

/ Figure 66



/ Modeling Stones Sequence 3

/ Figure 67



/ Gutzon Borglum supervising two workers as they carve an eye /
National Parks Service Archives

/ Figure 68



/ Modeling Stones Sequence 4

/ Figure 69



Gutzon Borglum's Model of Mt. Rushmore / Rise Studio c 1936
Library of Congress

/ Figure 70



/ Modeling Stones Sequence 5

/ Figure 71



/ Modeling Stones Sequence 6

/ Figure 72

/ Pile of Stones

But like the waves of dispossession and unbuilding in St Louis, the frontier really didn't end here, it has rather shifted forms, replicating itself in different material formations at different scales like the markers at the National Mall.

Articulated from an indigenous viewpoint by Nick Estes in his recent book, *Our History is the Future*², these invasions and occupations take many forms through time and space. From the fur trading posts closely followed by the military forts offering their protection, to railroad infrastructure, to homesteads and settlements, many communities were forced onto reservations.

In more recent times, the imposition of energy infrastructure in the New Deal Era with the building of six large dams that flooded indigenous lands, destroying subsistence economies and forcing further displacements. Emerging from what Timothy Mitchell calls the *Carbon Democracy*³, oil pipelines routed intentionally away from white towns through indigenous water and lands, gathering wealth and producing energy, not for the tribes but for other places, and offloading all of the risk.

But just as the Wounded Knee Massacre was not really the end of settler colonial expansion, indigenous resistance, too, did not end. Continuing today in different forms, adapting, evolving unbuilding and rebuilding itself. From the American Indian Movement, to international diplomacy, to the ongoing fight of Water Protectors against pipelines, and the continuing call for LandBack, the unbuilding work of Manifest Destiny remains incomplete, just as the carving of Mount Rushmore remains incomplete.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz. *An Indigenous People's History of the United States*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2014. Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.

Nick Estes, and Jaskiran Dhillon, eds, *Standing with Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

² Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance*, London: Verso, 2019.

Manu Karuka, *Empire's Tracks: Indigenous Nations, Chinese Workers, and the Transcontinental Railroad*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.

Michael L. Lawson, *Dammed Indians Revisited: The Continuing History of the Pick-Sloan Plan and the Missouri River Sioux*, Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2009.

³Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, New York: Verso, 2011.



/ View of Dakota concentration camp on the river flats below Fort Snelling /
Benjamin Franklin Upton, c 1862-1863 Minnesota Historical Society

/ Figure 73

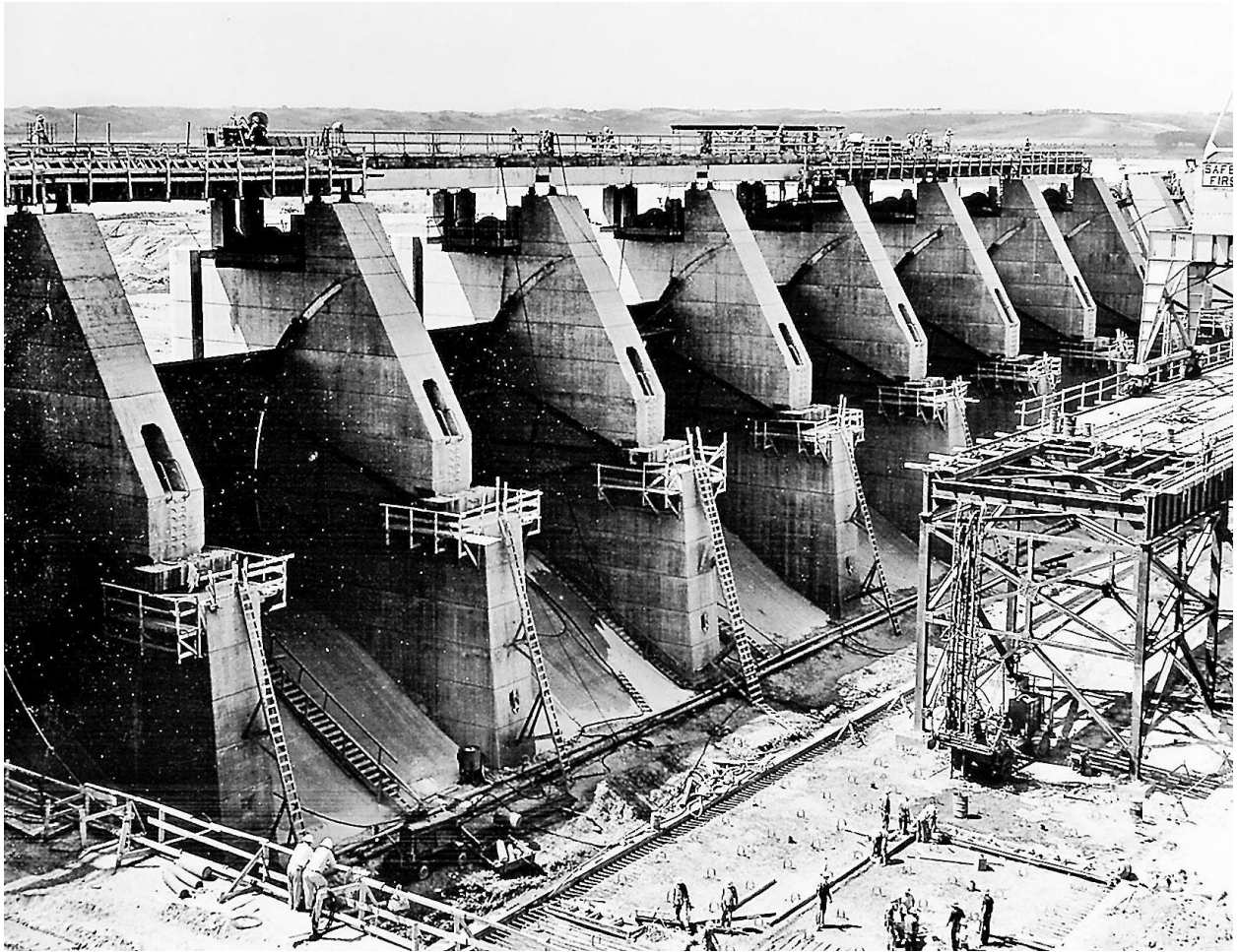


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/ Custer monument surrounded by fence / National Park Service

/ Figure 74

/ making models



/ Gavins Point Dam Spillway / c 1955 Army Corps of Engineers

/ Figure 75

III / Mount Rushmore



/ George Gillette [left], chairman of the Fort Berthold Indian Tribal Council, weeps as Secretary of Interior J. A. Krug signs a contract whereby the tribe sells 155,00 acres for the Pick Sloan Plan / 1948

/ Figure 76

/ making models



/ American Indian Movement tipi on the grounds of the Washington Monument / Warren K. Leffler, 1978 Library of Congress

/ Figure 77



/ Land Defenders block the highway on July 3, 2020 / Willi White

/ Figure 78

/ making models



/ Open Construction Site

/ Figure 79

/ Open Construction Site

An open construction site.

An exposed pile of material considered worthless.

But also a stitching together of webs of resistance, forming and reforming, themselves engaged in dynamic and reciprocal processes of building and unbuilding, like the watersheds that have sustained life on this land for millennia.

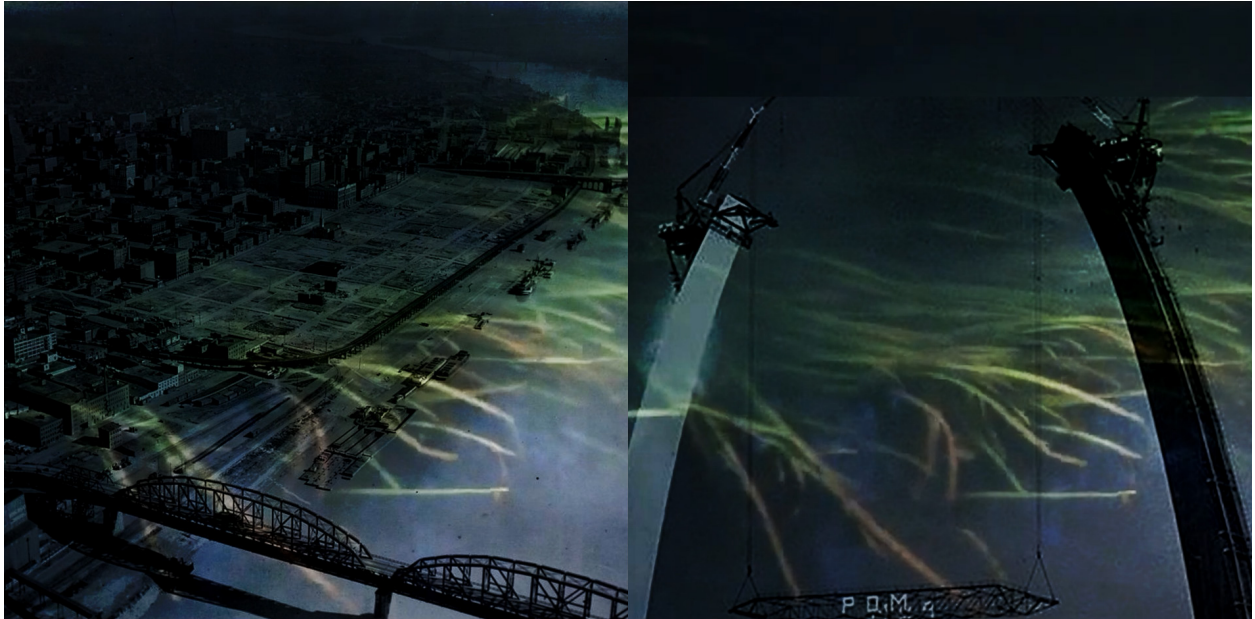
/ Conclusion



/ Monuments and Watersheds Sequence 1

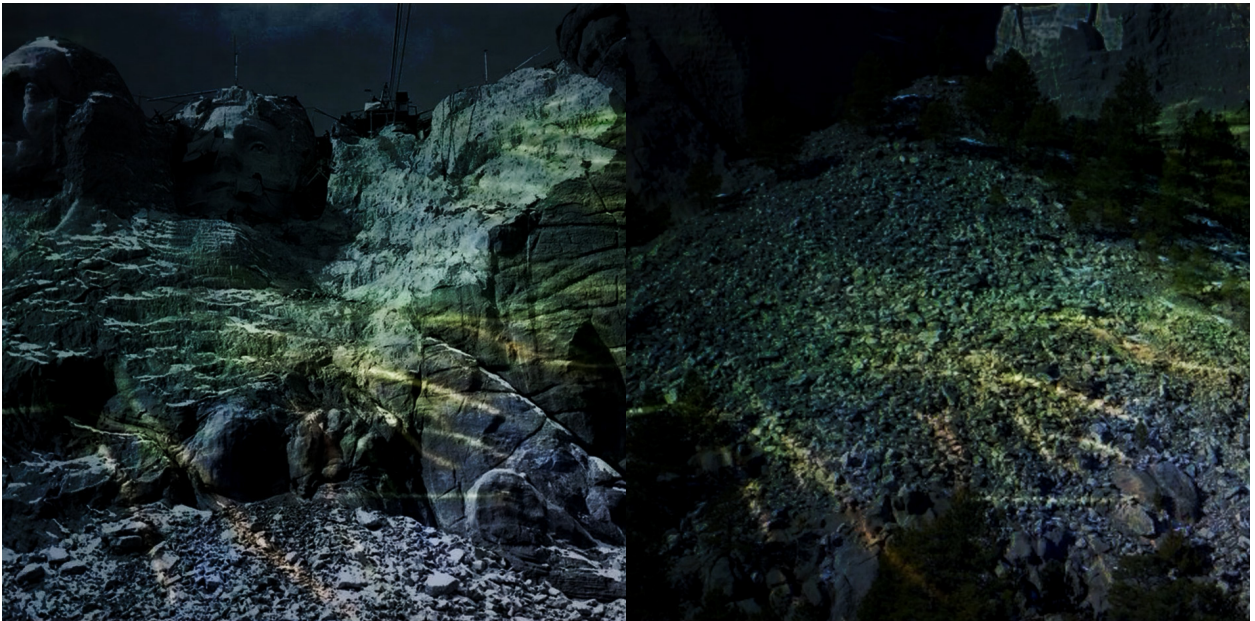
/ Figure 80

/ Conclusion



/ Monuments and Watersheds Sequence 1

/ Figure 81



/ Monuments and Watersheds Sequence 1

/ Figure 82

/ Conclusion

/ Beneath the Monument, the Watershed

These three, and many other monuments, are sites of settler colonial expansion and imperial control, capital accumulation of wealth and maintenance of hegemony, which through tourism and diffusion are built into the fabric of everyday life.

They seek to define space and time, and even control what counts as violence.

These and other monuments should be recognized as such, but that is not the whole story. They have been, and will continue to be sites of counter-tourism, sites of counter hegemony, and acts against the maintenance of one-sided memories.

They are also sites where space and time might be stitched together again.

Design has played a role in their construction.

Can it find ways to extract itself from its embeddedness in these ongoing colonial projects, and find a place instead within ongoing projects that build and unbuild different ways of relating to the world?

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