URBAN IDEOGRAMS
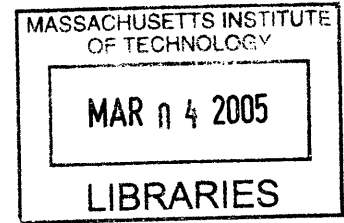
by

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers the concept of **Urban Ideograms.** It is developed and crystallized through a strategic gathering and selection of specific textual and contextual information from various sources, such as the drawings of Henri Michaux, his poetry and literary commentaries, various architectural examples of park design, psychoanalytical texts that aim towards an understanding of traumatic experience, and a physical site that is the Boston Artery Strip.

A central notion of this thesis is that of **Ideogram,** as understood in the work of Henri Michaux. The Ideogram is seen as a *graphic condition* that signifies and embodies the **Interstitial,** those qualities that are absent in the diagram as it is commonly understood and used in architectural practice, such as *movement, animation,* the poetry of *incompletion,* the *accidental,* and what is more important, the mental anticipation of the *new, the strange, the future* and the *unknown.* Thus, some of the questions that are investigated in this thesis are:

What can the notion of Ideogram, as understood in Michaux's work, offer to the architectural process of form, spatial and programmatic investigation and conception?

How can the notion of Ideogram serve as a conceptual tool of material translation and transference across the stages of the design process?

How can the Ideogram constitute a generative design process?

What does it mean to *think ideogrammatically* in architecture?

Another central notion in my thesis is that of **Trauma** as it is understood in the writings of Sigmund Freud, Sandor Ferenczi, Maurice Blanchot, Cathy Caruth, and the balletic practice of William Forsythe and their commentaries. The notion of trauma is seen from the perspective of *Traumatic Experience,* and how this *experience* as a pathological condition gives rise to the cultural problems of the representation of the *past, present* and *future*, reference and perception, and performative potential of the *body* in general.

How is the problem of reference related to the *body* in architecture and the *body* of architecture?

One part of this thesis treats the physical site as a *pretext* and explores the concept of the **urban folly**. The other part treats the site as a context from where we notate, gather and select graphic information that provides a generative platform of design. **The intention is to design or generate urban *things* that act as *ideograms, interstitial zones* and/or *lineages* between the disparate urban functions of the site.**

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Fig. 1

Henri Michaux

Untitled, 1961
Private Collection

URBAN IDEOGRAMS

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis advisors Mark Goulthorpe, Arindam Dutta and Mark Jarzombek for their invaluable feedbacks and insights during my thesis development and completion.

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CONTENTS

Prologue

The Ideogram versus the Diagram

Diagram has an ambiguous reputation in the architectural composition be it an urban plan or a floor plan. It is often associated as much with the incapacity to communicate as with cleverness and the capacity of decision making. There have been, and still are, architects with seemingly unlimited faith in the power of diagram. In architectural practice, it is at the level of diagram that the architectural, social, political and economic agendas meet and intersect. The diagram becomes form and space, and space and form becomes diagram. We live in diagrams, we consume them, become them. Diagram becomes the body-image…. It is the great tool of space making, of territorialization and stabilization of habit; it is the paranoia of the architect and his consultants. It is Habit extruded in 3D….

Apparently the diagram presumes a *scientific,* efficient, functional and a rationalistic approach to different problems. It is conceived as a machine that operates according to different variables. It is seen as the main tool through which the architects can solve the complex and interrelated problems of an individual building and provide an urban structure and infrastructure complex enough to accommodate the functions and processes of contemporary city. However, a closer look at the urban diagrams of Twentieth Century architects would reveal that the diagram also displays the attributes of a product of aesthetic, formal and cultural agendas of the time. The cubist urban collages of Le Corbusier are just but one of many examples of a painting composition enlarged into a city scale. Therefore, we can ask weather Diagram embodies a foundation role in architecture and urban planning or is it an ornamental device applied onto a "real" building or a "real" city.

At first sight modern diagram is a step further from Euclidian geometry. It appears so because modern diagram does not necessarily operate with platonic shapes and primitive geometrical figures. It primarily deals with the projections of objects and events on an inherently archival space, that is, the architectural construction documents. However, once the assumed movement is strangled into the diagram, it apparently becomes a dead movement. Therefore the diagram is conceptualized as something that does not move. That is because the agencies that produce the diagram imagine themselves as static in space and time. While in the concept of Euclidian geometry objects are imagined as rigid, in the diagram this rigidity of objects is transferred to the medium of their transmission, which can most easily be imagined as gaze. One can say that Euclidian geometry is the study of primitives, and the diagram that of gaze. The architectural construction document both of a building or city is the by-product of the symbiotic relationship between Euclidian Geometry and *modern* diagram.

We can imagine however that diagram does not always stabilize architecture; that the diagram in architecture is not always dead in the time of its employment, and that in architecture diagram can gain a life after death. In reality, the diagram is suddenly revealed, animated and subverted, when it is rather *misused* through different urban processes, such as protests, uncontrolled accumulation of people in urban spaces, material and physical degradation of whole city blocks, occupation of interstitial urban zones by *illegitimate* constructions and squatter housings and destructions and reconstructions of any kind. On the other hand, we can certainly imagine diagrams that move *silently* and inadvertently, especially at night.... It is surely a horrific thought to imagine diagrams like dreams floating freely and infecting whole empty cities and buildings: a nightmare of **disfigured diagrams**.

The first place one looks for diagram in architecture is the shape of buildings, distribution of spaces and programs. These are locations where the diagram has been static and dormant. But the diagram has been active in the spaces between

and spaces at either end. What connects thinking to imagination, imagination to drawing, drawing to building, buildings to cities and cities to our eyes is diagrammatic projection in one guise or another or processes that we have chosen to diagram. All are zones of instability. My claim is that the engaging questions of architecture's relation with diagram occur in these zones. The architectural composition, where the presence of the diagram is usually sought, is not significant in and of itself. It obtains all its value via several types of projections, spatial projections, graphic translations into space and form, and folding of information that surround it. **It is only through and during these "intermediate" acts or *interstitial* moments that the composition is made available to perception**. This is the claim on which my thesis is based and developed.

Central to this thesis is the notion of **Ideogram**, a notion borrowed from the work of Henri Michaux and its commentaries. **To put it simply, Ideogram, as understood through the work of Michaux, is a diagram that *moves...*; it is an *incomplete* and open-ended diagram**. As it is traditionally understood and used in science, economics, politics as well as architecture, the diagram implies two procedures, *cutting* and *projection*. First, it is a *cutting* tool that dissects through the complex flux of *moving matter, bodies and events*. It interrupts and divides the temporal *fluid* of bodies and events; it isolates and analyzes the differences, and incorporates these differences within a logical and recognizable operating system, machine or pattern. Second, it projects this system or pattern of behavior, which is constructed on relations between *frozen* or solid bodies, into the future. Therefore, by its very nature, in its very conception and beginning, this kind of diagram provides a closure for the future, for the divergent, for the accident, the unthought and the interstitial. **On the other hand, the ideogram, as it is embodied in Michaux's drawings, seems to anticipate the *future* and the *new* rather than determine it beforehand. It invites the mental arrival of the *impossible*, it suggest the presence of a yet invisible thought or event. It is an**

anterior to what might happen. The ideogram anticipates that *thing* that cannot be diagrammatized in advance.

Another central notion of my thesis is that of **trauma**. Both in the occurrence and the attempt to understand trauma, we can see a potential for a *different* outlook towards design and creative process in general. This outlook consists of a critical investigation, analysis and revision of representational and signification processes of design in relation to history, typology, text, context, narrative and what is traditionally called composition. Through the notion of Trauma I will argue and show through my design that a rethinking of the referential "sign" or "image" in the design process, rather than eliminating, can resituate and reinstate a particular context, history and sight/site for our "contemporary eye", understanding and psyche, precisely by permitting them to arise where immediate understanding through typological representation may not (Caruth).

This thesis and its book consist of three parts. The first part is a preamble of notions and concepts, where I will sketch out the notions of **Trauma** and **Ideogram**, by trying to explore and find what possible textual potential might these notions offer to us in conceiving and developing *new* and *challenging* design approaches and perspectives. The second and third part consist of developing some general and particular architectural *fields* and *contexts* of investigation and design, in which the notions mentioned above are put into action or *actualized*. Boston Artery Strip is the physical site for my design thesis. The second part treats the site as a *pretext* for formal experimentation. It draws certain design notions from previous examples of urban park designs and interrogates and reinterprets these notions in the context of the *folly* as an urban construct that historically goes beyond sustaining a particular use or function, and embodies and suggests an **excess of form**, non-practicality and non-usefulness, and a luxurious excess of ornamentation and signifiers. The third part of the thesis treats the site as a *context*, a *body* of material and graphic information that is notated,

manipulated, selected and transformed into **urban things** or **ideograms** that mediate and provide linkages between disparate urban processes in the site.

Part One

Sketching out some *notions*...

1. Trauma and signification

In the quotes below, Sandor Ferenczi defines trauma as a pathological condition first detected at the soldiers who had participated in the First World War. Cathy Caruth, through a powerful reading of Freud's "Moses and Monotheism" advances the thesis of trauma as a cultural phenomenon and an epistemological notion that helps us read and construct history in terms of the present. She does so by pointing out how Freud extends the pathological condition of trauma towards an historical reading of the significance of Hebrew's ancient and its relation to the present Jewish history, thus proposing an example of the possibility of a history and our present relation to it:

"What is traumatic is the unforeseen, the unfathomable, the incalculable.... Unexpected, external threat, the sense of which one cannot grasp, is unbearable". There are two related elements here. The first is that trauma is incomprehensible. The other is that it comes without warning.[1]

"...emotional life vanishes into unconsciousness and regresses to pure body-sensations...[2]

"The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would thus seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known; but in an inherent latency within the experience itself. The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all.... If return is displaced by trauma, then, this is significant in so far as its leaving – the space of unconsciousness – is paradoxically what precisely preserves in its literality. For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence.[3]"

In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic event in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. Trauma began to be observed as a psychic phenomenon at the beginning of the last century. People, for example soldiers, that were under extreme unforeseen and unexpected physical and mental conditions became subject to hallucinations that consisted in the involuntary repetition and reoccurrence of the "original" event. As Cathy Caruth suggests in her analysis of Freud's "Moses and Monotheism", trauma is experienced as precisely the inability to perceptually relate to the "original" referent, the inability to remember the place and the circumstances of this "original" occurrence. There is an enigmatic deferral of the referent or inherent latency within the traumatic experience itself. What distinguishes shock from trauma is precisely the emergence of this temporal gap, along which the inverse path towards the "original" event is diffused and becomes inaccessible, while a repetitive desire of return paradoxically is generated and intensified in the sub consciousness of the subject. During a traumatic experience the motor that synchronizes action and perception is broken and time cannot be contained any longer within the linear charts of perception, action and representation. Time becomes divorced from movement or a specific place; it cannot be contained within the motor schema. Time is spilled out....

In her reading of Paul de Man's text "The resistance to Theory" Cathy Caruth claims that reference emerges not in its accessibility to perception, but in the resistance of language to perceptual analogies; that the impact of reference is felt, not in the search for an external referent, but in the necessity, and failure, of theory.[4] A relationship is thus established between trauma and the phenomenon of the **mutilation, falling** and **failure** of the philosophical body. The falling, mutilation and disarticulation of the unified organic body, or the synchronized machine into an assemblage of limbs or members and disarticulated parts signifies the reassertion of a *latent* referential moment, a paradoxical *referentiality*

however, that cannot be conceived by empirical or transcendental discourse; a referentiality that cannot be perceived and narrated by direct reference, nor formalized into a theoretical abstraction.

In her analysis of Forsythe's ballet, Heidi Gilpin provides an etymological reading of the term "*to fail*". Failure contains within it notions of absence, lack and distortion, incapacity to complete something. *To fail* comes from the Latin *fallere*, which means to deceive, to disappoint. To fail is to lose strength, to fade or die away, to stop functioning, to fall short, to be or become absent or inadequate, or to be unsuccessful. A *failing* is "a usually slight or insignificant defect in character, conduct or ability." *Failure* addresses an absence or lack: "an omission of occurrence or performance; a state of inability to perform a normal condition: a fracturing or giving way under stress; a lack of success; a falling short, or deficiency; deterioration, decay;" and finally, "one that has failed."[5]

Sigmund Freud articulates the issues of absence or lack in relation to failure in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), where he discusses errors and slippages in action, thought and speech. These errors are failed performances and/or movements. They are characterized as displacements of reference and singular meaning opening up breaches in our perception and cognition. As displacements of this kind they enact and generate a mental state of aberrant performance and movement inaccessible to our immediate consciousness, powerful enough to make us aware of the bodily senses and our perception suspending and lingering in an absent space.

This model of **falling, failure** and mutilation of the body has a tremendous impact on the way the *body* of the architecture and the *body* in architecture is imagined and constructed. Since the *body* is mutilated and exploded *as it falls...*, the virtual classical center of gravity of *any body* disappears from its place, and feverishly and ephemerally reappears as an unstable presence at the other *members* or limbs of the *body*. This questions the *upright* model of the enlightenment man, which in

turn implies a total revision and investigation of architectural notions and binary opposition such as horizon line, above-below, inside-outside, center-periphery, solid-void and skin-structure. [6]

Traumatic experience remains insistent and repetitious as a hallucination precisely to the extent that can never be fully understood, comprehended or assimilated by our consciousness. It causes a drift and disappearance of referentiality in our attempt to read a *positive* source or origin of reference. In a similar fashion, we can imagine an architecture that escapes our consciousness and full vision, architecture as an abyss, a condition of **falling** or **failure,** a vertiginous disappearing movement that we are unable to grasp, an **interstitial condition** of becoming. Of course these conditions are *mental* in the context of our relationship with a particular spatial/architectural *game* and *performance*. What is traumatic is not the architecture itself, but our *position* as designers, participants and bodies in relation to this spatial unfolding. This is not an external perspectival position, but one of falling and vortex-like. We shall see in the following analysis, how the **Vortex** and **Falling** appear and make themselves present in the mescaline graphic journeys of Henry Michaux.

2. Henry Michaux and The Ideogram

The Alphabet
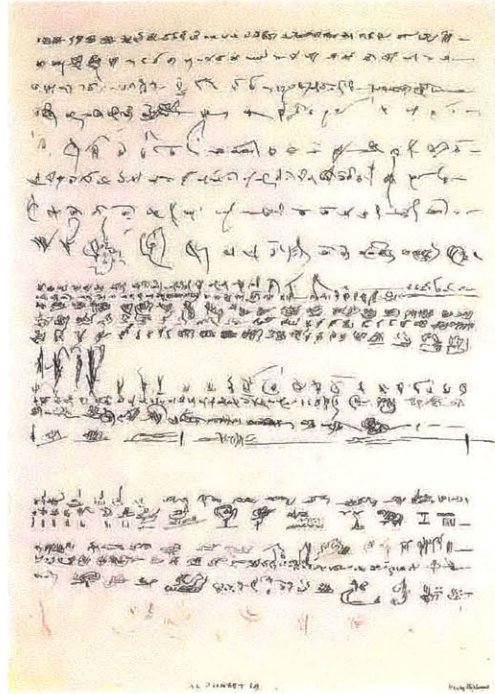
Fig. 2

Henri Michaux

Alphabet, verso, 1927
Private Collection

"Apparently we read only because what is written is already there, laying itself out before our eyes. Apparently. But the first one to write, the one who cut into stone and wood under ancient skies, was hardly responding to the demands of a view requiring a reference point and giving it a meaning; rather, he was changing all relations between seeing and the visible. What he left behind was not something more, something added to other things; it was not even something less – a subtraction of matter, a hollow in relation to a relief. Then what was it? A gap in the universe: nothing that was visible, nothing invisible. I suppose the first reader was engulfed by this non-absent absence, but without knowing anything about it. And there was no second reader because reading, from now on understood as the vision of a presence immediately visible, that is to say intelligible, was affirmed precisely in order to make this disappearance into *the absence of the book* impossible."[7]

Maurice Blanchot

The Absence of the Book

I think that there is a close affinity between Michaux's *Alphabet* and Balnchot's *The Absence of the book* shown and cited above. In *The Absence of the book* Blanchot implies that the *first* attempt to *write* was an act *suspended* between the paradigm of seeing and that of language; an act trapped between the *impossible* desire to both *possess* and *know* that act or the meaning of that act. It is almost an act of *failure* and *vertigo*, a blind act in the sense of its inaccessibility towards known linguistic norms and our vision and consciousness, and yet it relentlessly aims towards a *future* and *awakens* our consciousness and expands our vision. Perhaps it is anterior to a *new* and *future* language. Paradoxically, the possibility of the emergence of a *new* vision or language that this first act of writing offers to us, determines the intelligibility of the act itself, that is, the impossibility for the existence of a second reader.... It is also significant (especially in the context of Michaux's work) that Blanchot envisions this first attempt to *write* as a spatial play that the hand stages on the immediate environment.

The ideogram

Michaux's ideograms embody precisely this *non-absent absence*. His ideographs or graphic signs are something more than signs and something less than words. There is a relentless *becoming* of signs towards something that we cannot encapsulate and frame in our imagination and vision. There is a relentless unraveling of gestural lines, curvilinear tracings and distorted articulations that defy any analysis or normative linguistic system. Michaux's drawings are not mimetic, representational or narrative. Instead they are attempts or leaps towards signification. "Devoting his whole mind to the concept and his whole soul to the image, he tries to reconcile their contradictory impulses into an impossible synthesis: "the image cannot give matter to the concept; the concept, by giving stability to the image, would stifle its existence."[8]

To think about Michaux's Ideograms, it might be helpful to refer to someone like Fenollosa, Ezra Pound or Joyce's Finnegans Wake and their respective discourses. Theirs are utopian discourses. They are utopian because they aim

towards a *totality*, a totality in the sense of a *total writing*. Theirs is *writing* between *writings* full of gaps, breaches and bridges, a writing of languages. The languages they create are like silent utterances, silent infinite murmurs, and silent gurgles. And we simply are not quite sure weather these utterances, murmurs or gurgles are those of a river, trees of the forest blown by the wind or people that are fighting in a battle. What is important however is that their work does not represent or symbolizes, instead it *signifies things*

Let's proceed with two quotes, the first being a description of the ideogram by Fenollosa and the other one an actual *ideogram*, that is, the *action* poem "In a Station of the Metro" by Ezra Pound", a poem constructed in haiku form through the Ideogramatic Method, that is, through the juxtaposition and relation of signs:

"The ideograph "to speak" is a mouth with two words and a flame coming out of it. The sign meaning "to grow up with difficulty" is grass with a twisted root.... In this process of compounding, two things added together do not produce a third thing but suggest some fundamental relation between them" [9]

| The apparition | of these faces | in a crowd |
| Petals | on a wet, black | bough |

The ideograph is a graphic sign, a hieroglyph used in Chinese language. The ideograph is not a word, but rather a sign *in action* that signifies different events or actions. From the perspective of the western linguistic system we may say (perhaps simplistically) that the ideograph can be both a word and a sentence at the same time. A particular act or event that is depicted in the ideograph or in one of its components is suggested not only through a particular symbolic geometry, but also through a calligraphic-gestural intensity as well that signifies the particular physicality or corporeality of that act or event. The ideogram is an ensemble of ideographs.

Fig. 3

Henri Michaux

Mescaline Drawing, 1957
Private Collection

What Fenollosa and Pound derive from the Chinese ideogram is the notion of the *Ideogrammatic Method,* a method that operates through the *juxtaposition* and *relation* between *signs.* The key term in Fenollosa's quote cited above is the term *relation,* for as Fenollosa writes elsewhere: "Relations are more real and more important than the things they relate." The ideogram is seen as an *interstitial* or *in-between* condition of signification, a pre-phonetic and pre-linguistic gesture that indicates and institutes relations between entities and a *blurring* of these entities.

The *action poem, ideogrammatic method, juxtaposition* and *relation* are key notions in Michaux's work. Scholars of Michaux concur in emphasizing the centrality of *le geste* to his entire work – weather it be the onomatopoetic vocal gesticulations of Michaux's "nonsense" verse or the calligraphic pantomime that is a trademark of his drawings.[10] Michaux describes as follows the process recorded in *Mouvements,* a series of some twelve hundred sheets of ideogrammic signs enacted in Indian ink over the course of 1950-51: "It involved gestures, interiors, for which we have no limbs at our disposal but only the desire of limbs, tensions, elans, all made up of living cords, never thick, never swollen with flesh or enclosed in skin."[11] These are incarnation of gestures, dramatizing something beyond and before the word and the body, *animated* gestures that yield to signs that are excessively generated and proliferated into other signs; signs that go beyond any linguistic system of mimesis or representation. A sheer and excessive production of signs without signifiers.... Here are two passages from Michaux's retrospective account of his *Alphabets* or *Narrations* that he drew/wrote in 1927:

"On the contrary, it is through having freed me from words, those tenacious partners, that the drawings are frisky and almost joyous, that their movements came buoyantly to me even in exasperation. And so I see in them a new language, spurning the verbal, and so I see them as liberators... a writing unhoped for, affording relief, in which [one] will be able at last to express [one]self far from words, words, the words of others."[12]

And

"Later, the signs, certain signs. Signs speak to me. I would gladly draw them, but a sign is also a stop sign. And at this juncture there is still something I desire above all else. A continuum. A murmur without end, like life itself, the thing that keeps us going…I want my markings to be the very phrasing of life, but supple, deformable, sinuous."[13]

Michaux's Generative Drawing Machine

To put it simply, the generative technique that Michaux employs in his ideograms consists of *throwing* and *flunging* ink blots on the piece of paper, not unlike the *dripping* technique that Pollock used in his action paintings. This in part derives from the medium itself, that is, ink and watercolor. Michaux was more interested in transformation and movement than in the finished product. He was obsessed with the fluidity of the medium, its uncertainty, its freedom, and its gestural physicality. "Could it really be that I draw because I see so clearly this thing or that thing? Not at all. Quite the contrary. I do it to be perplexed again. And I am delighted if there are traps. I look for surprises."[14] The relentless effect of indeterminacy is produced through the *blind* physical interaction of a gestural graphic trace on paper and the coagulation of the ink blot in the paper. We can identify three generative processes in Michux's ideograms:

Tracing

Repelling

Revealing[15]

Tracing

The trace in Michaux's drawings does not "draw". It projects or translates a primary impulse to act. "In action I come [Agir je viens]," Michaux writes in one of his poems:[16] this act-taking consisting of a dynamic *throwing* and *tracing* of a line that does not have an objective at the end of its completion (or incompletion). Here the verb "to trace [tracer]' must also be understood in its contemporary slang meaning in French. "Tracer" in this sense means to move so quickly that one can only be apprehended by the traces of one's disappearance. Tracing leaves a line in place: a cinematic thread beyond which the motion "follows itself" in the hope of never catching up to itself. We witness the presence of this active, drifting,

Fig. 4

Henri Michaux

Mescaline Drawing, 1960
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

promenading and intransitive line in the works of Klee and Pollock, two figures that were profoundly influential in Michaux's work. In Michaux's drawing we can identify the presence of this "intransitive" line, the line that *acts* and yet does not *arrive* to its destination, but instead proliferates into thousands of alterations, distortions and aberrations; a special kind of *vertiginous* line that attempts to communicate and yet, enacts its own *failure* and *falling*, the impossibility of its referentiality towards something known:

"Like me, the line is seeking without knowing what is seeking, it rejects what comes too easily, solutions offered, first temptations. Preventing itself from "arriving", line of blind investigation. Without leading to anything, without attempting to be beautiful or interesting, criss-crossing itself without turning away, without turning itself in knots or knotting itself to something, without perceiving object, landscape, figure.

Colliding with nothing, somnambulant line.

Curved in places, yet not enlacing

Encircling nothing and never encircled

A line that has not yet made its choice, not ready to be finalized. Without preference, without accentuation, without completely giving in to appearances.

…Watchful, wandering. Celibate line, it intends to remain so, does not submit, blind to the material world.

It neither dominates, nor accompanies, and is certainly not subordinate."[17]

Repelling

As we mentioned above, the effect of indeterminacy in Michaux's drawings is produced by the blind interaction of the tracing of a line and the physical interaction of the ink blot with the paper. In many instances, however, Michaux abandoned the brush and poured ink directly on paper. What is significant here is the random way the ink spreads. A graphic condition, in which it is the drawing that conditions us, and not us that condition the drawing. An urgent situation is created that demands our attentiveness and response. This practice brings a reversal into play. The representation does not emerge from a positive movement that constructs its negativity along the way. It is rather conditioned and

constructed as a response towards the ink flow that must become positive again. This means that from now on the form is generated as a negative, as a hollow.

Revealing

"The mirror is not the place to observe yourself. Men,
Look at yourselves in the paper."[18]

The phenomenon of *revealing* happens as a result of the two previous processes that we mentioned above, *tracing* and *repelling*. The *figuration* or *Gestalt* is not applied or drawn deterministically on the background; it rather emerges from the background. The background does not act as a negative space on which positive figures are drawn. The relationship between the background and the figure is reversed. The background becomes the space of/for the emergence of figuration.

The black background, before the ink, thus acts as a kind of developer, revealing latent images. It transforms each figure into an image that has arisen from a latency. The flow of watercolor and ink on paper transforms the paper background into a mirror, a rather black mirror that mimics the subject's inner life, mysterious and unfathomable to himself.[19] The figuration or the image emerges out of the negativity of the ink background in the form of a *non-absent absence* (Blanchot).
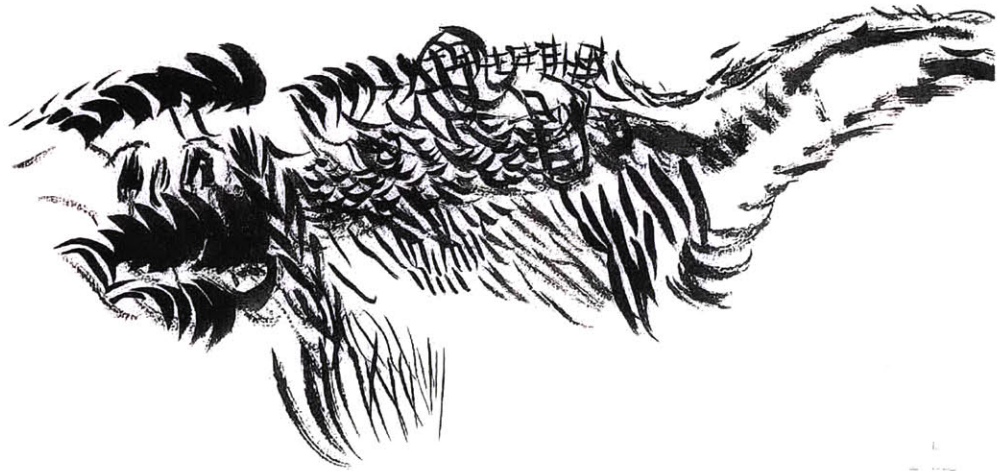
Fig. 5

Henri Michaux

Untitled, 1925
Collection of Claude Berri, Paris

Part Two

The Diagram and the In-between

1. Tracing some lineages in the development of the concept of Urban Park
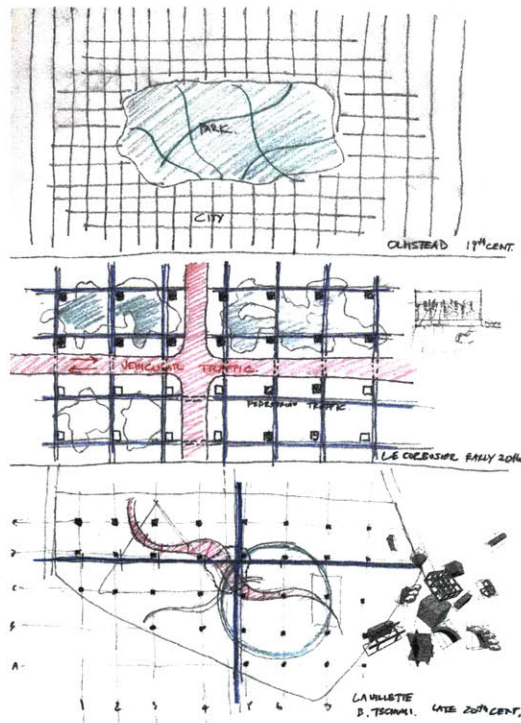
Fig. 6

Diagrams of three urban parks:

-Central Park

-*Plan Voisin*

-*La Villette*
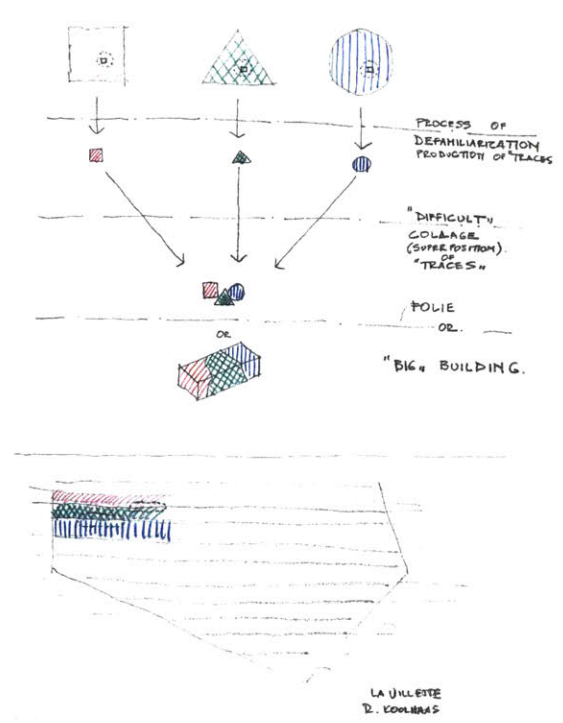
Fig. 7

Conceptual Diagrams of *La Villette*

Let's have a look at the diagrams shown above. They are diagrams of three urban parks. New York Central Park designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, *Plan Voisin* designed by Le Corbusier, and two designs of *Parc La Villete* designed By Bernard Tschumi and Rem Koolhas respectively. They have one thing in common: They all conceive the modern and contemporary city as made of disjunctive and disparate processes and elements. The difference lies in their approach towards the organization of these disparate processes.

Olmsted's concept consists in distinguishing the modern city and nature as two completely separate entities. We have to go outside one of these entities in order to participate in the other. The design of the park is such that it appears as the other of a rationalistic grid. The pathways, the roads, the location and the choice of vegetation are intentionally designed to suggest the *randomness* and uniqueness of natural processes, in opposition with the functional and grid-like layout of the city. The design is such as there is no disjunction between the signifier (of nature) and signified (nature), between form and content. In Olmsted plan there is no indication of an interstitial reading between the city and nature. Nature is seen as the opposite of culture and civilization, as something *other* from the perspective of modern city itself.

It is at the urban plans of Le Corbusier that we first sense the possibility of a disjunction between the signifier and the signified. The urban elements and the *natural* elements come together in the form of collage in a composition which is apparently built in functionalist terms, but which is nonetheless guided by a cubist sensibility. It is at these plans that urban processes and artifacts be it the pedestrian passages, vehicular streets, vegetation or the historic monuments of Paris are studied and analyzed as possible cubist painting graphics or signs, and then magnified and projected into a metropolitan scale. It is at Le Corbusier plans that the diagram comes closer to the definition that we gave it in the paragraphs above, i.e. the diagram as the study and embodiment of gaze. The city becomes the drawing board. Urban processes and elements are not seen as fluxes of bodies

or matter and organized according to their attributes and properties, but rather as fixed entities subordinated to the elevated gaze of the *man looking* from the picture window of the skyscraper. Urban space does not emerge from the interaction and movement of these urban bodies, processes and elements, but rather conceived from above. It is through the axial elevated voyeuristic gaze that the synthesis of opposites, such as city and nature, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, building and vegetation, is achieved. The interstitial space as a space of production of local differences and local intensities between the urban bodies is not addressed.

At *Parc La Villete* the interstitial space is addressed through the *folies*. The Folly is the place where fragments of the dislocated reality are gathered and manipulated towards a *difficult* architectural assembly (Tschumi). We can map this procedure through this diagram (fig. 7). The procedure consists of a process of defamiliarization of contextual and textual elements. This depository site from where the material is gathered and manipulated is not only the immediate context, i.e. the physical site, but also other texts derived from both the inside of architectural discourse and outside it, such as constructivist architectural compositions, psychoanalytical notions of madness, shock and schizophrenia , cinematic texts, literary texts and programmatic texts. This defamiliarization process yields to an accumulation of fragments or signs that are detached from the signified or meaning and dispersed in an abstract grid of points and lines. These disjuncted signs are then gathered and composed in the folly through several translational procedures such as combination, permutation, derivation and transformation. Thus, according to Tschumi, folly becomes the site of shock and disjunction, the site where *meaning* is impossible. It becomes the site of *no-meaning* (Tschumi).

2. The Interstitial
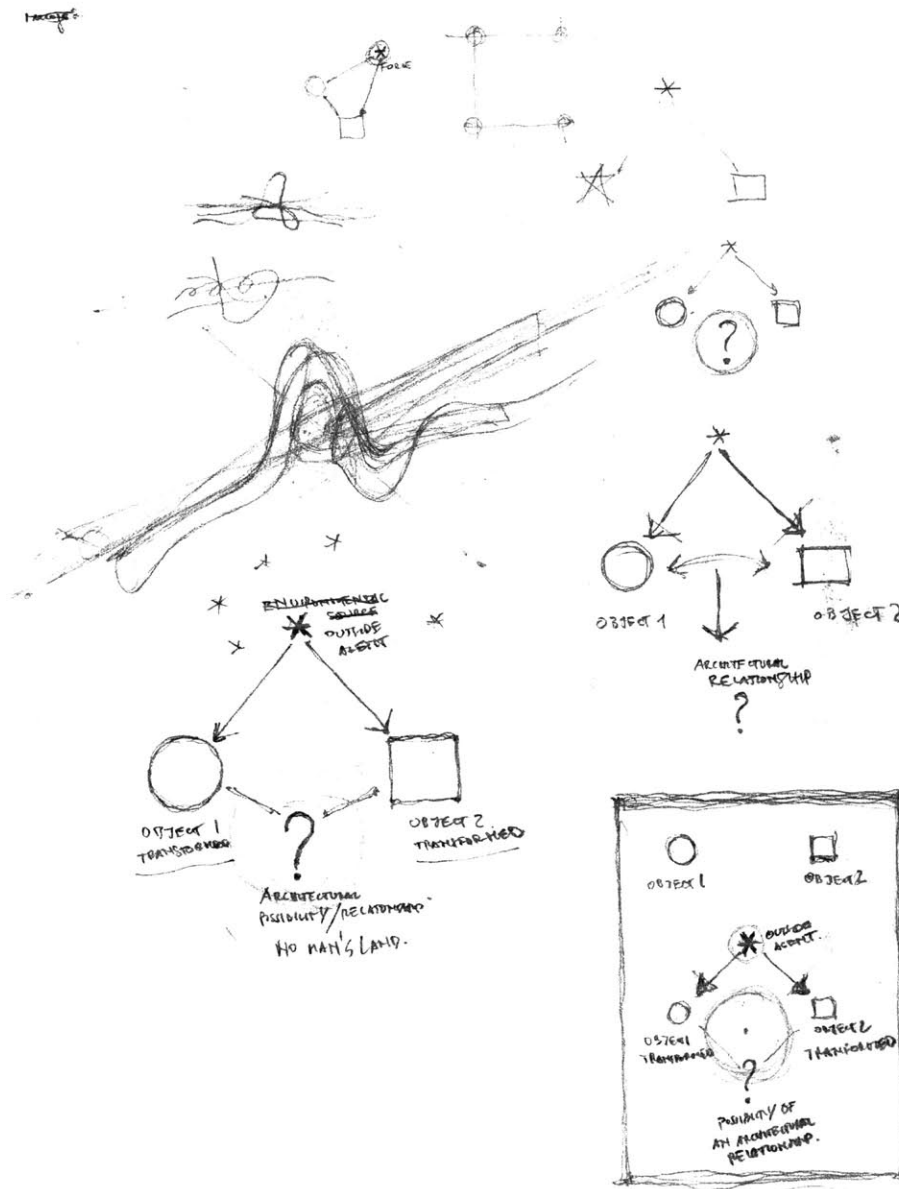
Fig. 8

Conceptual Diagram

The procedure of my thesis consists of a modification and extension of the procedural diagram shown in fig. 7. The environment is not seen just as a repository of signs but primarily as a force and a field in a perpetual state of becoming and transformation. **If two or more disparate objects or processes undergo transformation under the influence of external forces or fields, then we can anticipate the possibility of an interstitial condition or relationship among these disparate objects or processes**, fig. 8.

We may claim that the Interstitial is a particular kind of state or condition. We can certainly imagine the Interstitial as spatial, temporal, material, graphic or mental. The interstitial as such it is related to other conditions, places or spaces, but it does not have a place of its own. One of the first descriptions of the interstitial as such is made by Plato in Timaeus. The Interstitial or the In-between is conceived as a receptacle with no characteristics or place of its own, but rather as an in-between condition between being and becoming, the eternal and the ephemeral, the form and their copies. Even Plato claims that the interstitial or the in-between is something obscured and hard to grasp, something that can be conceived only through a "bastard reasoning" that may perhaps be called a "poetic reasoning", or an "interstitial reasoning." In Timaeus, in the paragraph following the description of the receptacle, Plato identifies this receptacle with the space of chaos, "a kind of shaking implement" that separates the four basic elements out of itself, so to speak, to constitute the world as we know it. Linked etymologically to the Indo-European *chasho*, chaos maintains its connotations as a primordial gap, opening, abyss, as well as a primordial substance. Perhaps it is appropriate to think the interstitial as something that shakes things up...; as an interval or gap in and during which relationships, identity's limits and forms are unsettled, transformed, reconstituted and subverted. In Bergsonian terms we can think of the interstitial or the in-between as a relentless condition of *becoming* and/or *difference*.

3. Constructing a Drawing Machine
An Urban Folly

The "design" process of my thesis consists of conceiving and setting up *different series* of drawings and sketches, both in a digital and analog format. As it was implied above in the analysis of Michaux's drawings, the ideogram is basically a highly constrained conceptual graphic device that swallows matter or information, and while "blindly" restructuring it, it ejects matter and information. It is not an optical or later-to-be realized form but rather an informational visualization technique that places itself at the interior of the process instead of the exterior or sensed form. Form, spatial densities and programmatic possibilities begin to become visible not from the start but later, precisely at those moments, when the ideogram, *disfigured* through endless reworkings and restructurings, *yields* or *ejects* a *different* and *unexpected* pattern of organization. These different levels of ideogrammatic projection embody in fact shifts in the logic of the gathered graphic material at any moment of the process. They are interstitial conditions between different logics of pattern organization. They are virtual states of the future form.

The Drawing Machine consists of several points of intensity, or sources of forces that have a certain sphere of influence in the environment surrounding them. Then we place several geometric objects in the site that visually connect different points of the site and/or different points of the grid. Their placement is both *arbitrary* and *intuitive*, and they do not have to be otherwise, simply because they do not represent an architectural *form* or programmatic logic yet. They are simply marks on the site, graphic information that provides a necessary initial platform of investigation and manipulation of information. The only architectural notion present is that of a preliminary virtual grid whose nodes are endowed with particular modifying attributes. In the software we build an inverse kinematik model in which we experimentally and intuitively establish several series of

Frame I

Frame II

Frame III

Frame IV

Frame V

Frame VI

Frame VII

Frame VIII

Frame IX
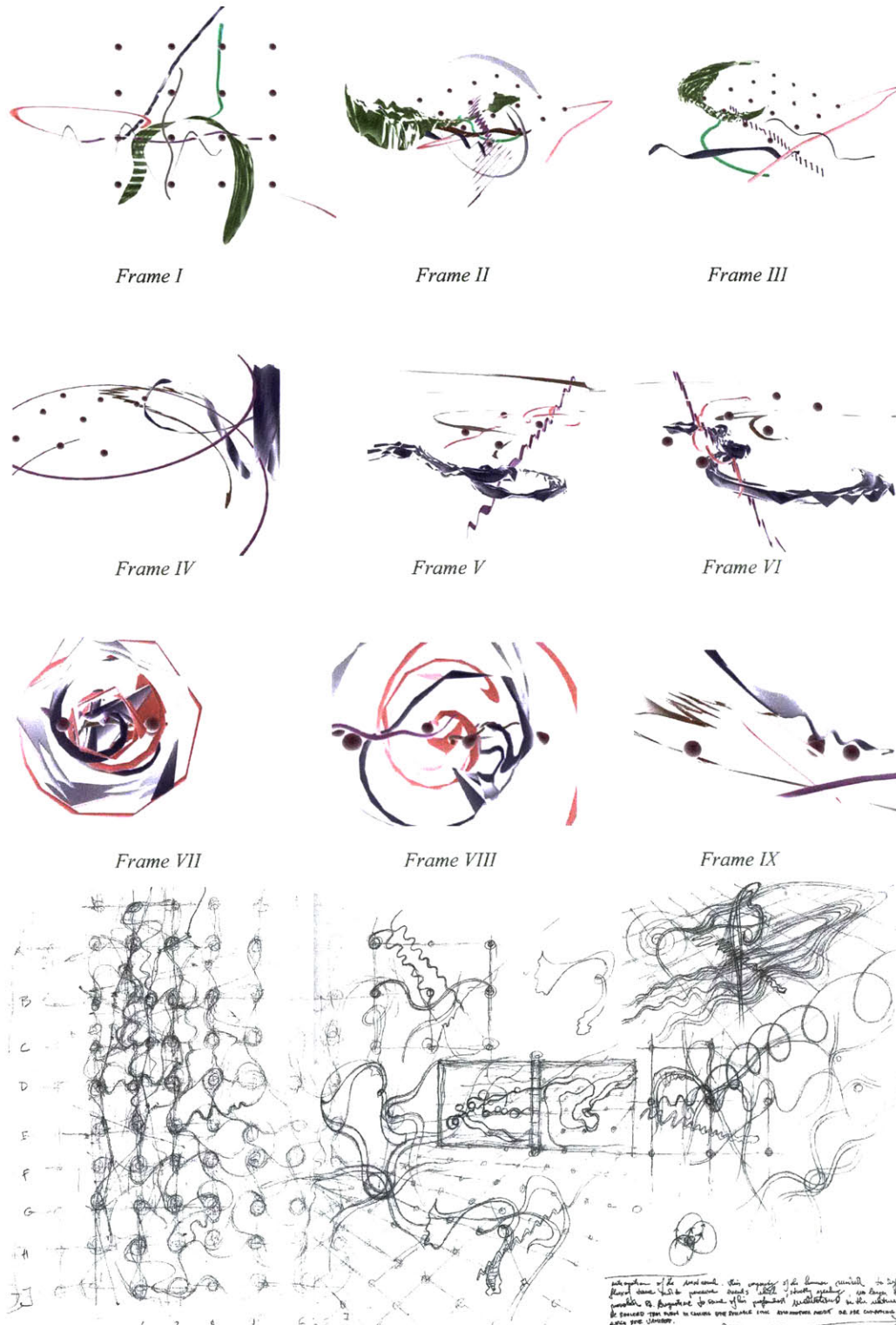
Fig. 9

Drawing Machine

connections between the objects and the nodes of the grid and between the objects themselves utilizing all X, Y and Z axis. And we let the machine run....

Despite the fact that it is us who build the machine, our expectation and anticipation is that the machine will yield *something different, something other* than what we have expected in the beginning. We are looking to grasp an interstitial graphic condition, or graphic excess that establishes a rich platform, from where an architectonic form may emerge. We repeat these graphic exercises several times varying the attributes and relationships of both the objects and the influence of the nodes of the grid. Despite the fact that the drawing in the machine is extremely determined or constrained, or precisely because of it, there is a tremendous *spilling* of unexpected visual information, motifs and patterns that exhibit *intense* organizational qualities, such as repetition, variation within the repetition, resonance and transference of deforming influence from one object to another and especially the quality of the counterpoint: the unexpected birth, unfolding, intensification, rhythmic development and disappearance of a motif in an interval of time during which another motif undergoes an opposite or a completely different path of transformation. We are dealing with a self-ideogramming machine. It is important to recognize that these ideograms do not belong to an architectonic field yet. They act as a deferral of the arrival of the architectonic form. They are virtual states of pure transformational graphic information that only later will be actualized into architectonic motifs or relationships.

The main quality of these graphic productions however is the movement and transformation of things from one state to another, in time. How do we project this quality of movement to the making of architectural space? Or to pose the question more precisely: If we agree that the architectural product is static, how do we maintain and transfer a *resonance* rather than an *expression* of movement all the way towards the end product?

Frame I   *Frame II*   *Frame III*

Frame IV   *Frame V*   *Frame VI*

Frame VII   *Frame VIII*   *Frame IX*
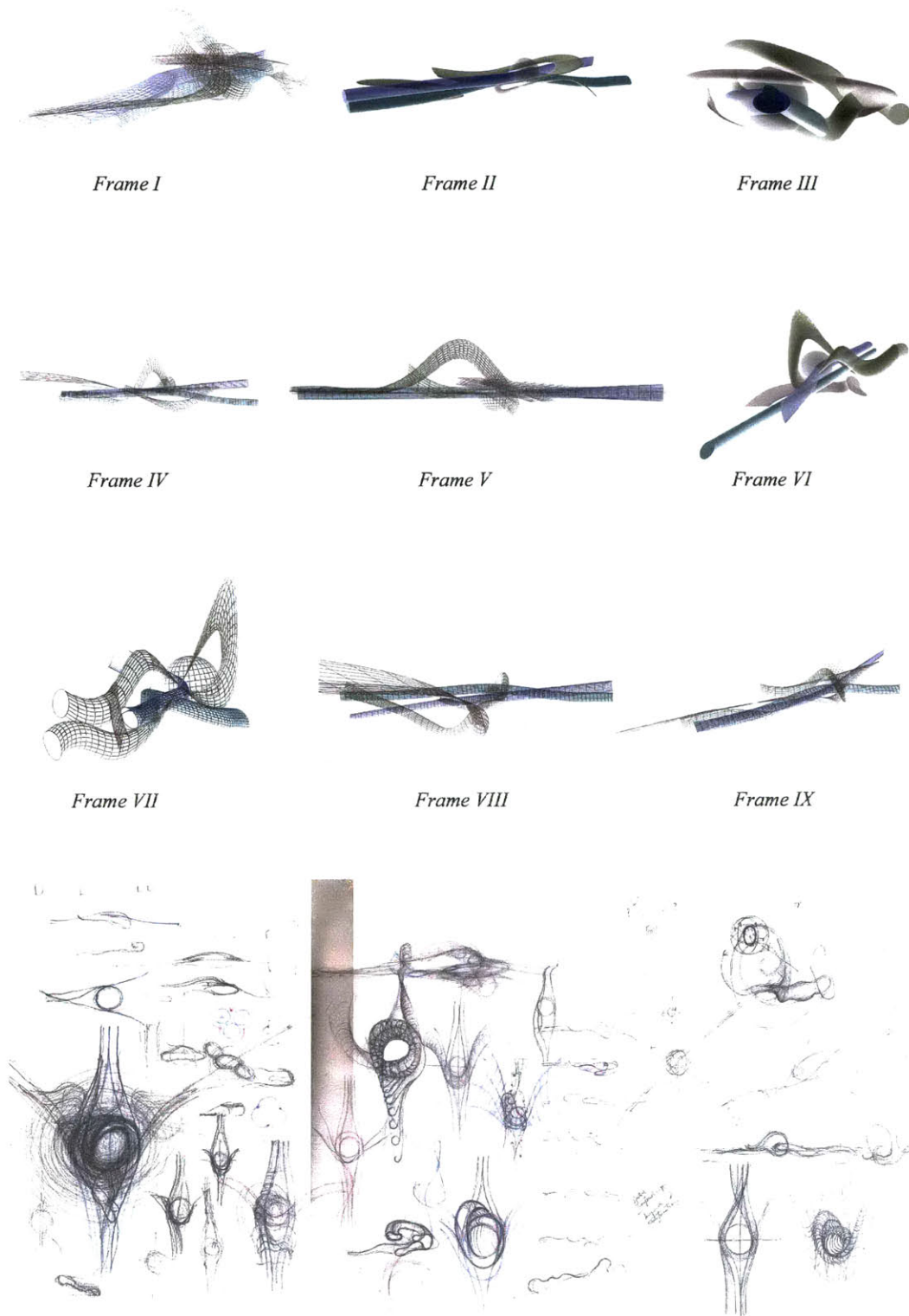
Fig. 10

Contracting/trapping deformation into form

In his writings Bergson implies that movement or action of the body is heterogeneous and indivisible in time. This in turn implies that the space is not something externally perceived and homogeneous in relation to the movement of the body, but an inherent condition and production of that movement. Therefore we do not perceive space (or movement) as exterior to the body, but rather as something urgently contracted (in our memory) as we move in time.

We continue *playing* with the graphic machine, and we witness our consciousness, which until this moment has been relatively numbed and subordinated to a large degree to our instinct, start making itself present.... We begin by selecting, extracting, decomposing and manipulating different *chunks* of information from the graphic environment that we and the machine have produced. We utilize both the digital format and the analog format of sketching and drawing. Utilizing the analog format of drawing is particularly interesting and important. The alternation, dispersion and *circulation* of images between the digital and analog catalyze *shifts* and *gaps* of logic from one virtual graphic state to the other. It is a zigzag kind of thinking and acting, much like Plato's "bastard reasoning" of *chora*. This shift in logic happens simply because the logic of the machine (that we set up) in creating the image is different from our logic of the analog interpretation mostly dictated by the *image* itself, in conjunction with the architectural, i.e. programmatic, formal and structural attributes that we want to fold in the *image*. And in fact, this is precisely what this process consists of, that is, the alternation between emerging orders and projected orders. Thus, each time, the ideogram jumps towards another level of organization and actualization.

In this stage of the process that we have arrived after several stages of informational input and output, we select several states of deformation of the graphic elements, and use them as a new platform of investigation and translation.
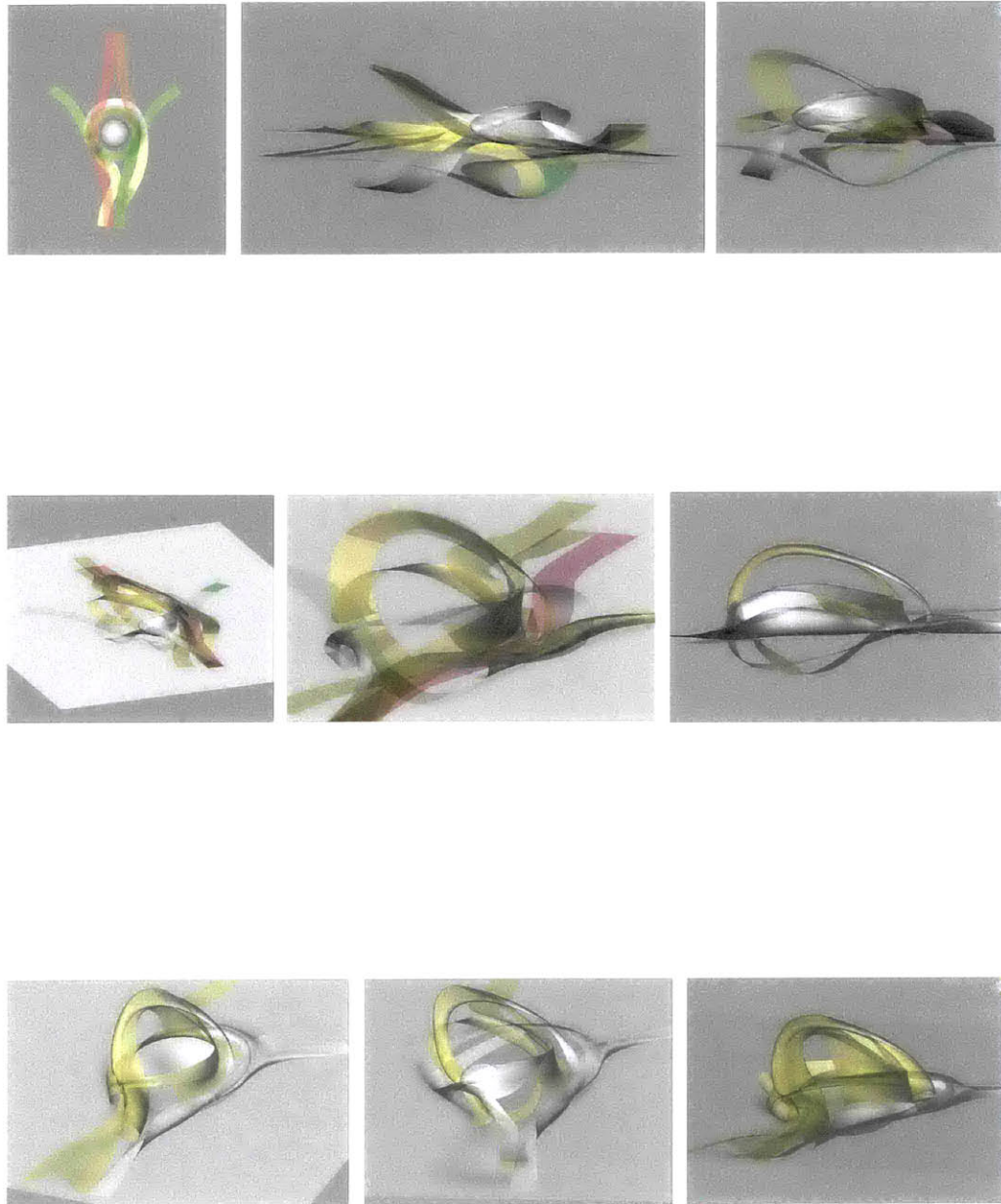
Fig. 11

Contracting/trapping deformation into form using strategies such as wrapping, lining, folding and unfolding

We interpret structural deformation into perception and action.... The emerging architectonic pattern, order or relationships are realized by contracting and materializing these structural deformations of the visually independent elements into lines, surface/skin/wall and mass, those ideogrammatic deformations that were never immaterial anyway, but rather in a liquid, pyrotechnical and visually (but not internally) chaotic state. These contractions and crystallizations of form are carried out through strategies such as folding, wrapping, lining and unfolding of lines and surfaces. Architectonic presences such as space, mass, program in the emerging folly are not determined from outside the process, but they rather emerge and resonate through the contraction of the deformations into another form of material. The folly becomes an urban device that is not identifiable or recognizable with any specific urban function or attribute; instead it is a *thing*, a *receptacle*, an *interstitial* urban device, whose architectonic order is crystallized through some kind of spectral dispersal and fusion of the urban functions' attributes. Because of the structural complexity of the folly, unexpected and complex programmatic conditions emerge, such as relentless spatial splitting, divergence and convergence of possible programs.

We embarked on a process of revealing and developing complex architectonic orders and patterns that are embodied in the folly, patterns, whose origins are almost impossible to trace back in a linear fashion. In the end, it is this mental condition of deferral and inaccessibility to the process of becoming that *resonates* a mental state of dislocation, suspension, movement and disappearance.
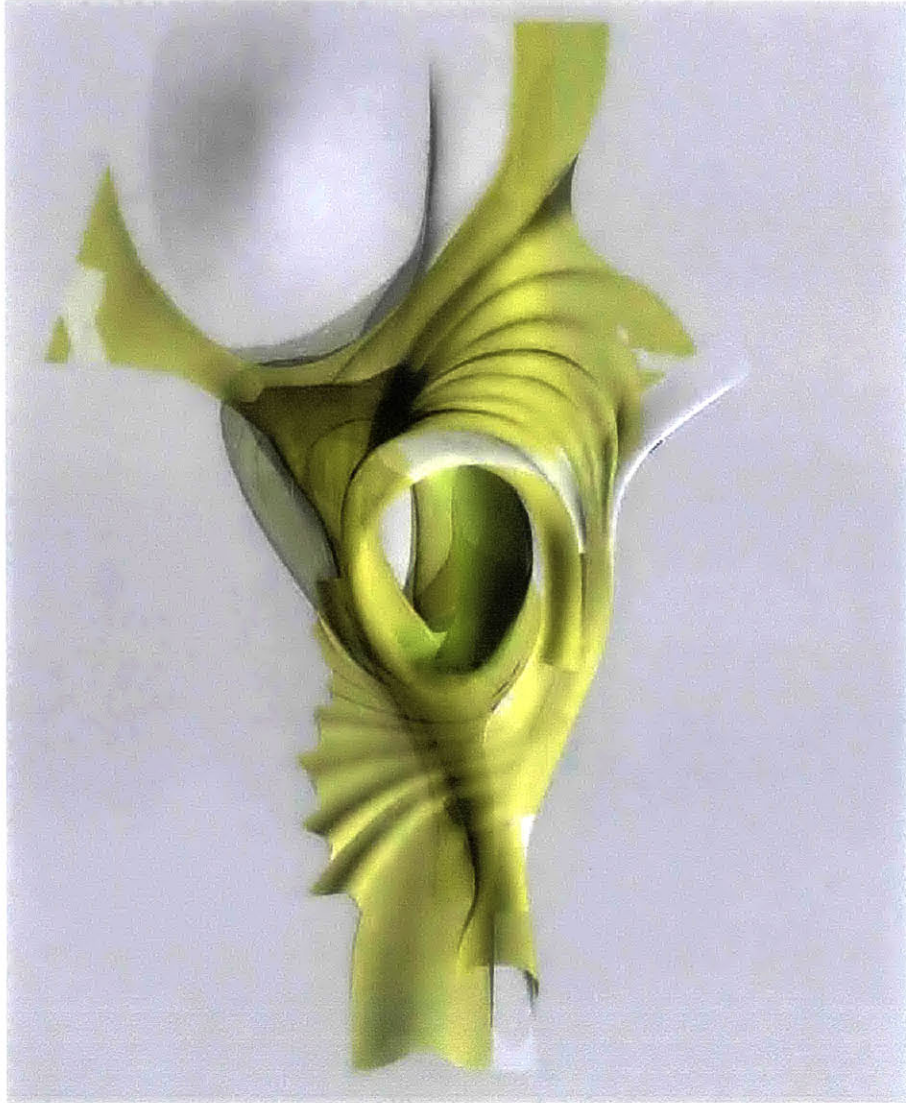
Fig. 12

The Folly
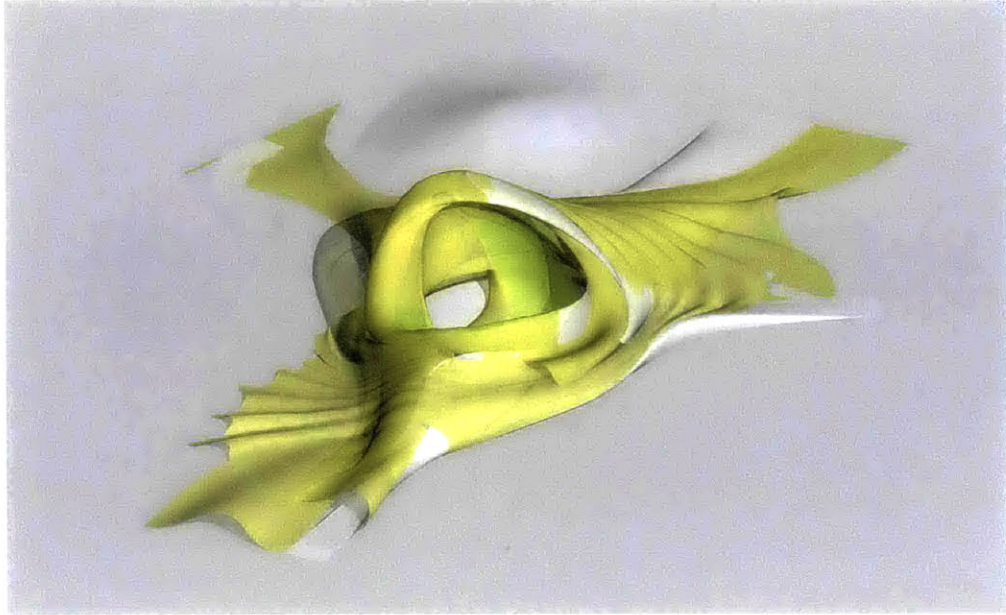
Fig. 13
The Folly
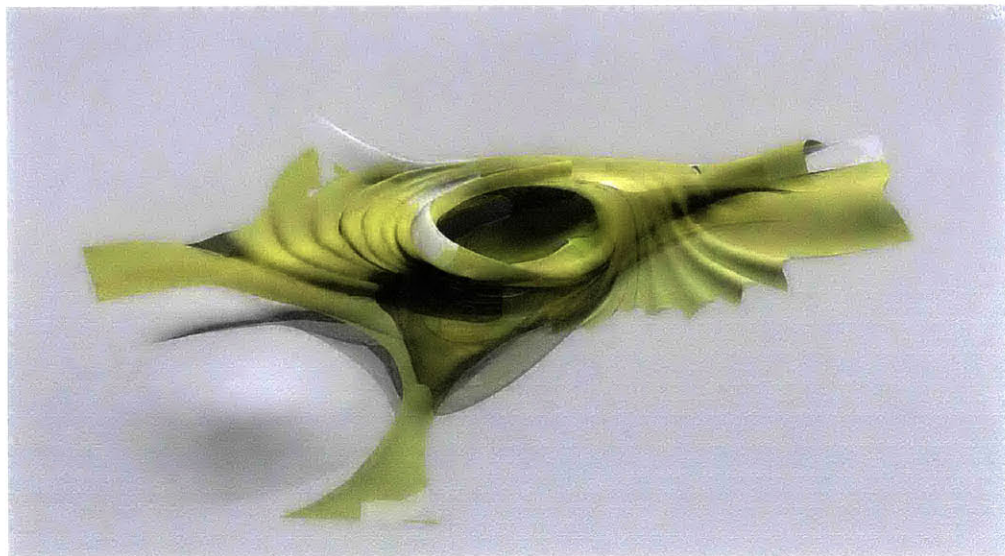
Fig. 14
The Folly
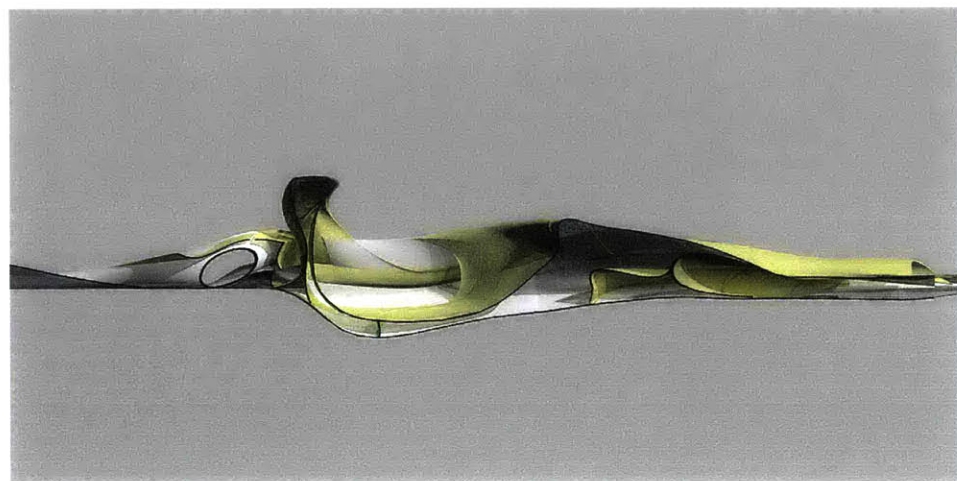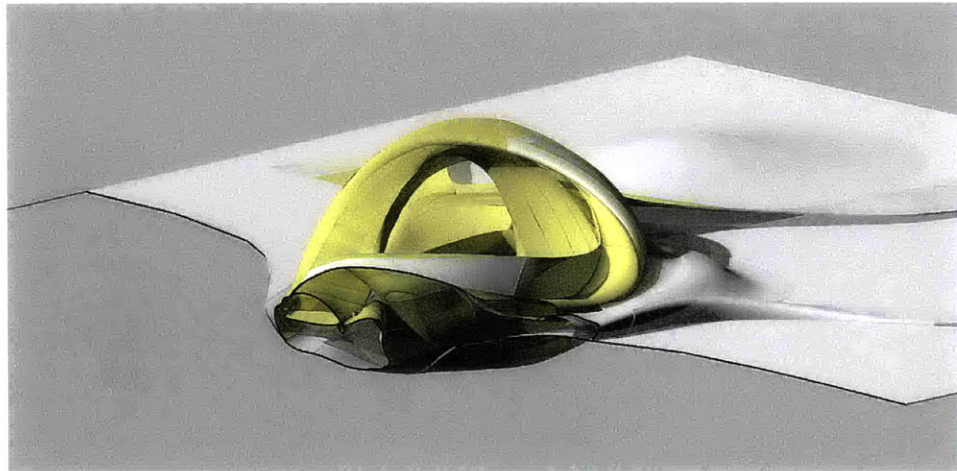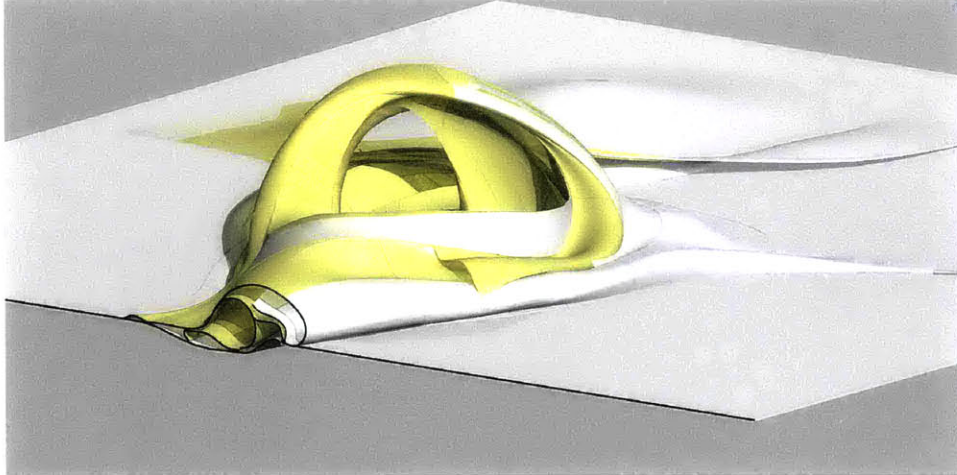
Fig. 15
The Folly, Sections

Part Three

The site/sight

Recent Urban Proposals

Existing Conditions
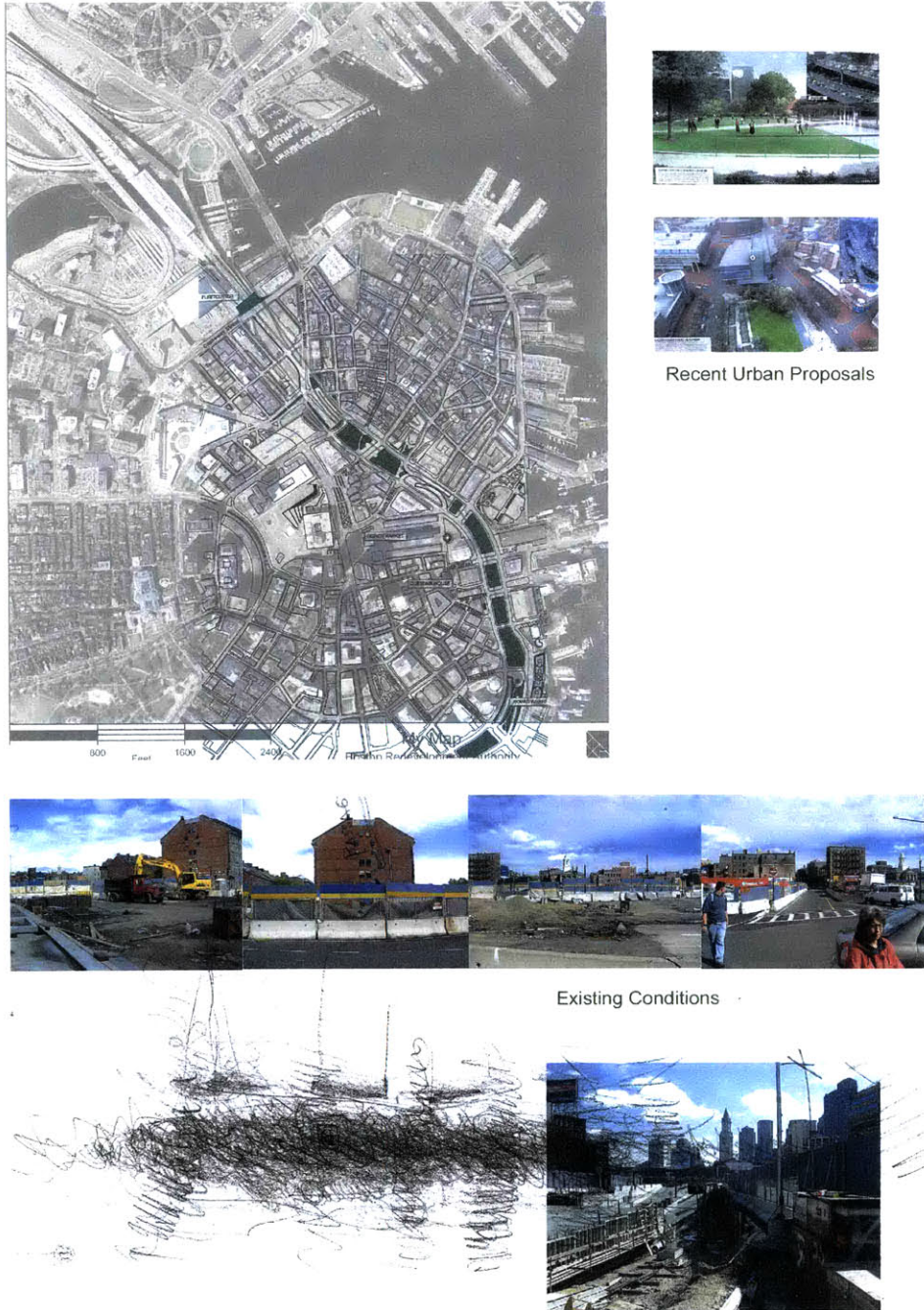
Fig. 16
Existing Site Conditions

"It was night itself. Images which constituted its darkness inundated him. He saw nothing and, far from being distressed, he made this absence of vision the culmination of his sight.... Not only did this eye which saw nothing apprehend something, it apprehended the cause of its vision. It saw as object that which prevented it from seeing".

<div align="right">

Maurice Blanchot

"Thomas the Obscure"

</div>

The site (sight) is the Central Boston Artery. The site underwent fundamental transformations in the early fifties, when whole existing city blocks of North End and West End were demolished to the ground to allow for the construction of Interstate-93 and the residential high-rises. *Apparently*, the intention was to improve the traffic in the center and greater Boston area, and *revitalize* the inner city districts. Urbanistically this intention was carried out by projecting some kind of a Plan *Voisin* onto the city of Boston. This urban realization was a typical embodiment of a utopic thought, that is, the framing of the city into a diagram, and the projection of this diagram into the future. With the passing of time, it was observed that this chirurgical operation was not that functional as it was thought in the beginning, and could not revitalize the inner city; instead it produced expensive gated communities, completely dysfunctional vehicular and pedestrian systems, and eyesore and inhuman spaces under the highway structures. The diagram had proved itself to be dysfunctional, that is, incapable of anticipating and allowing the future development of the city to take place. In the last decade, it was decided to remove the highway structure, and relocate it underground, apparently in order to improve the same urban aspects for which the highway structures were constructed fifty years ago, that is, the improvement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic and the revitalization of the center of the city. This other diagram was projected into the city; and *surprisingly* the site is still dysfunctional. There are still insoluble traffic jams and unpleasant pedestrian passages. What is significant is that the project for the future of this site, for now, seems to retain

EDITING THE SILHOUETTE

1   ERASURE
2   BLURRING

3   COLOR STRIATIONS

4   GRAPHIC NOTATION

TRANSLATIONAL MACHINE

HEIGHTFIELD FROM IMAGE

NUMBER OF SAMPLE POINTS IN X AND Y
(VALUE 1 & VALUE 2)

HEIGHT (VALUE 3)

CONTROL POINTS AT SAMPLE LOCATIONS

GENERATION OF "SOFT GRID"
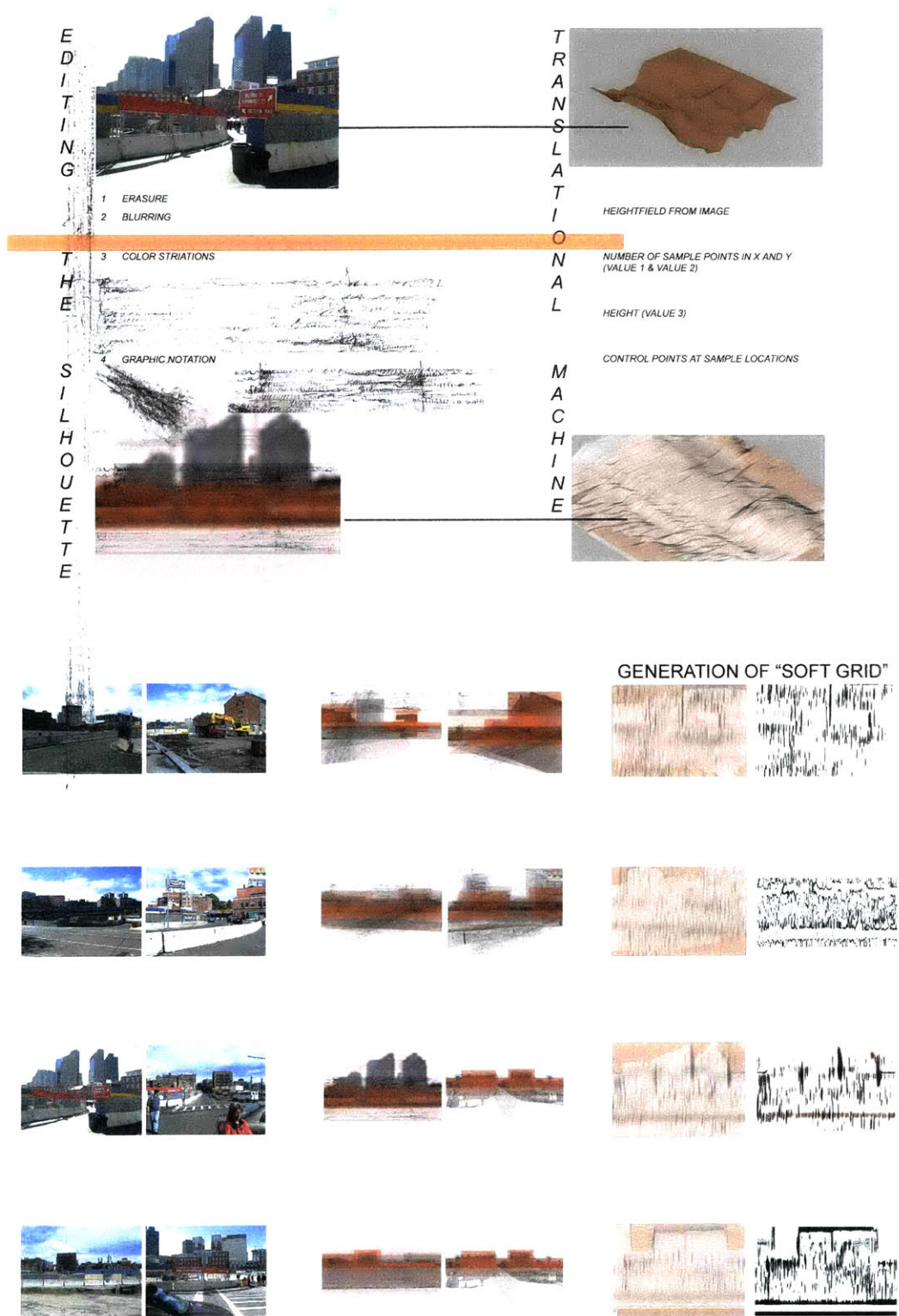
Fig. 17

Editing and Translating the Silhouette into Graphic Fields

only the *park/greenery* element from the early *Plan Voisin* diagram. This thesis includes this *park/greenery* element as a programmatic *notion*.

The main characteristic of the site is its disrupted silhouette on both sides. This silhouette is the negative result of the diagrams of destruction, construction and erasure. We may call this site traumatic in the sense that it signifies a site of denial of active recollection of the past and a blankness of active projection to the future. This condition makes it impossible to use design procedures such as "contextual filling in" or "palimpsest composition". **The intention of this thesis is to design or generate urban things or ideograms that act as interstitial zones and/or lineages between the disparate urban functions of the site.**

We introduce the computer as a digital translating device between the site/sight, and ourselves as subjects, and embark on a series of graphic exercises, through which we gather and manipulate the *visual* information of the silhouette of the site. The expectation from this exercise is to arrive at a *nonrepresentational graphic state*, where the site/sight's visual and material referents have been defamiliarized from their context, yet maintaining and signifying a decorative *graphic* potential. The intention is to extract a *general* architectural condition/motif/refrain from the site's environment and then deploy this *general* condition towards specific physical conditions of the site itself.

We begin by selecting several series of photographic information from both sides of the site, and determining two strategies or methods for the production of context: t*he editing of the silhouette* and the t*ranslational machine*. The editing of the silhouette consists of a series of graphic manipulations of the site's information through both Photoshop and analog methods. These processes consist of erasing and blurring the site's images, that is, reducing the pixilated information of the photos, introducing brick/color striations into the blurred photos, thus indicating the material qualities of the site, and introducing graphic
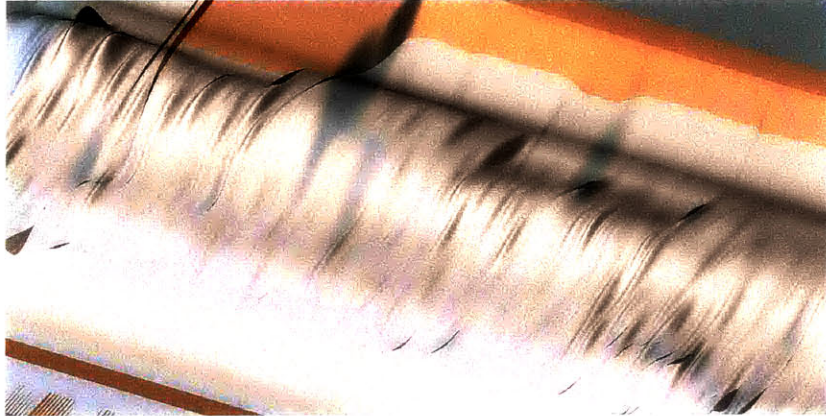
Sequence I
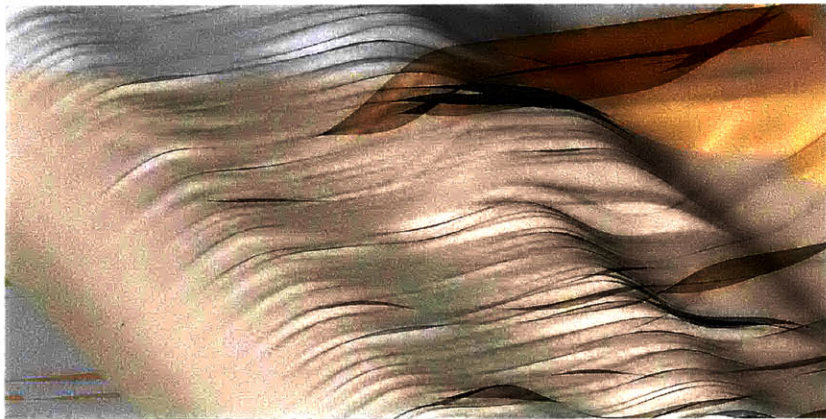
Sequence II
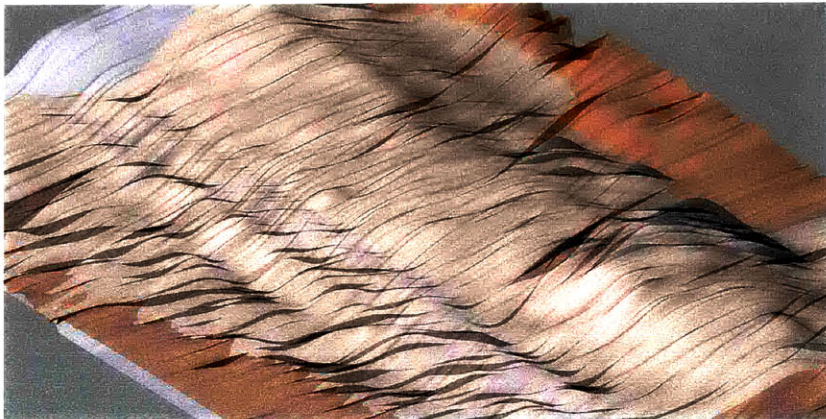
Sequence III

Fig. 18

Field Maps

notations that indicate particular existing passages across the site. On the other hand we set up a translational machine in the computer that can generate *heightfield* from image. We use the edited silhouettes as input information that we feed into this translational machine in order to receive a particular graphic output in the form of a heightfield image. We work back and forth between the editing of the silhouette and varying the x, y & z variables of the heightfield translational machine, until we establish a series of heighfield images that display certain richness in terms of graphic qualities, such as multiple repetition and variation, counterpoint motifs and different densities of color and shadow (fig# 17, 18, 19).

We interpret these heightfield images as a **soft grid** that is deployed and dispersed in the site. The difference between this kind of *soft/ideogrammatic grid* and a rectangular grid lies in their capacity to respond to the various and idiosyncratic conditions of the site and urban functions. The ideogrammatic grid has a greater capacity to respond to these conditions, because it displays a high level of *graphic indeterminacy*. It embodies a high degree of *adjustability* and *pliancy* within its graphic/ornamental structure, and a *latency* of several organizational patterns of **repetition, variation, graphic intensifications** and **densities, counterpoint graphic rhythms, animation** and **figuration** (fig# 20).

We embark on another series of analog interpretations, where we manipulate the graphics of the *soft grid*. These series embody shifts in the logic of the organizational pattern of the graphic. In essence, they are different states of virtualities and/or actualizations that aim towards the unraveling of a **crystal image** (Deleuze), a **minimum architectural** image or **motif** that is parametric in its nature, and can be proliferated, elaborated, added, combined and transformed according to particular programmatic functions of the site, such as public balconies, pedestrian bridges, parking structures, vegetation areas, facade skins, benches, lights and traffic signs (fig# 21 - 25).
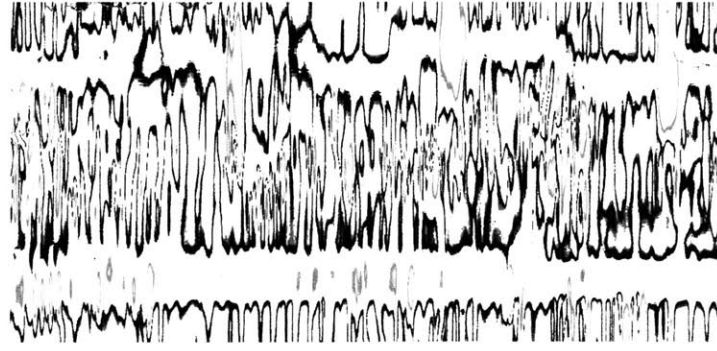
Sequence I
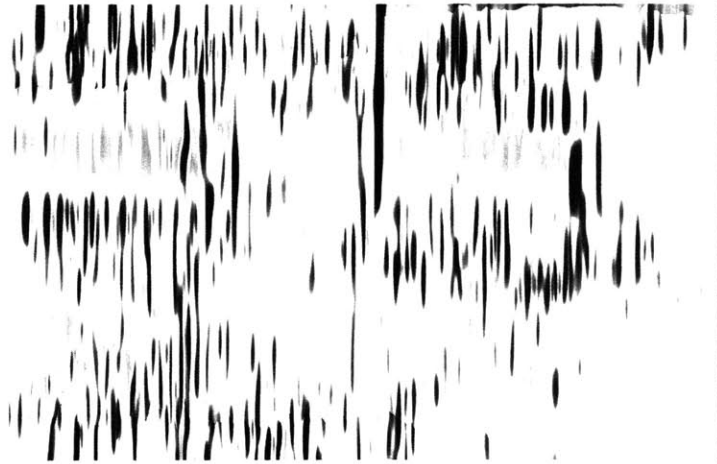
Sequence II
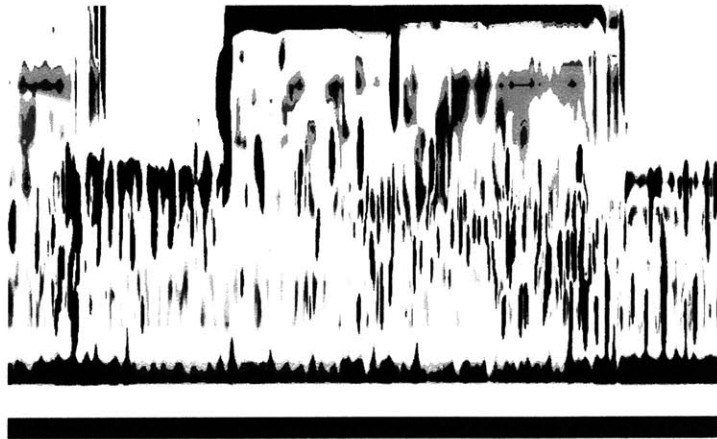
Sequence III

Fig. 19

Graphic Maps, Ideograms

The *elemental* architectural motif/order consists of a series of *excavated* furrows or *agricultural* striations and a series of *arch-like* structures that span between these furrows. The architectonic and geometric nature of these furrows is suggested as a ground excavated by the bulldozer. The *arch-like* structures consist of several complex parametric facets that can be parametrically controlled through the variation of the module of the furrow-like striations. Indeed, on a conceptual and parametric level, it is the arch-like structure that depends from the parametric intelligence embedded in the geometry of the facets and not vise-versa. This means that the arch-like structure is one actualized form out of many virtual possibilities that are conditioned at different moments by the variation of the facets and furrows according to different urban programmatic conditions. The architectural effect is sustained precisely through the perception of these *as yet to be* virtual states of the arch-like structures that undergo repetition, variation, transformation and animation (fig# 26).

These structures operate as *interstitial* urban constructions that act as passages and linkages between the two disrupted sides of the site, and among other disparate functions of the site, such as vehicular spaces, pedestrian passages and infrastructural spaces. They also act as *receptacles* of both small scale individual activities and large scale temporary public and commercial gatherings (the massive Haymarket activity is but one of these activities). We could see the programmatic logic that these urban structures suggest as *ideogrammatic* in contradistinction with the logic of diagrammatic zoning. Diagrammatic zoning, as it is often practiced in architecture or urban planning, tends to classify, segregate and categorize functions and programs according and in conjunction with a typological categorization of architectural or urban forms, thus suggesting a one to one representational relationship between form and content. The *ideogrammatic* programmatic logic that is suggested here is seen as one embedded and emerging from the logic of repetition, variation and transformation, that is, parametric transformative potential of the *elemental ideogrammatic image*. Usages such as pedestrian passages, and bridges, sitting

areas, green areas, water basins, individual or massive gatherings are suggested through the individuation or grouping of these structures, their inflections and morphing at specific moments. To be more exact, the consequence of *ideogrammatic* programmatic method comes to be precisely to undercut the naming of a particular usage, or the deterministic correlation between one kind of use with a particular kind of architectonic form. This ideogrammatic programmatic distribution seems to suggest a *programmatic indeterminacy*, one in which a particular use is *found* (to use a term that Louis Kahn used in the same context) in the process of engagement of the subject with the architecture, rather than one that is determined through a typological naming.

The materiality of these urban structures is heterogeneous. Its deployment is realized according to the logic of these structures as being *interstitial* urban constructions, and the notion of *ideogrammatic* projection and translation. The site materials such as brick, concrete, rubble, dirt and grass are redistributed, warped and folded into these structures, according to their particular geometry and function (fig# 27 - 38).

Boston was one of the first agricultural sites of the settlers and the point where they arrived and departed towards other parts of the country. Historically, it is understood as a point of arrival and departure. The project attempts to signify this historical context, through the deployment of the agricultural furrows and the archeological-like structures that emerge out of the furrows. Their functional ambiguity, material heterogeneity, structural variation, formal malleability, repetition and transformation across the site, suggests a nonfixity of form, dispersion, movement, transformation and a sense of *ideogrammatic* incompleteness. These *ideogrammatic* structures attempt to establish a link between the past, present and the future, without being typological representations of the past or the present, but rather products of ideogrammatic projections and translations of the immediate *ideographic* material of the site. Their referentiality

operates through their *strangeness* and their impossibility to be framed within a site/contextual and typological narrative.
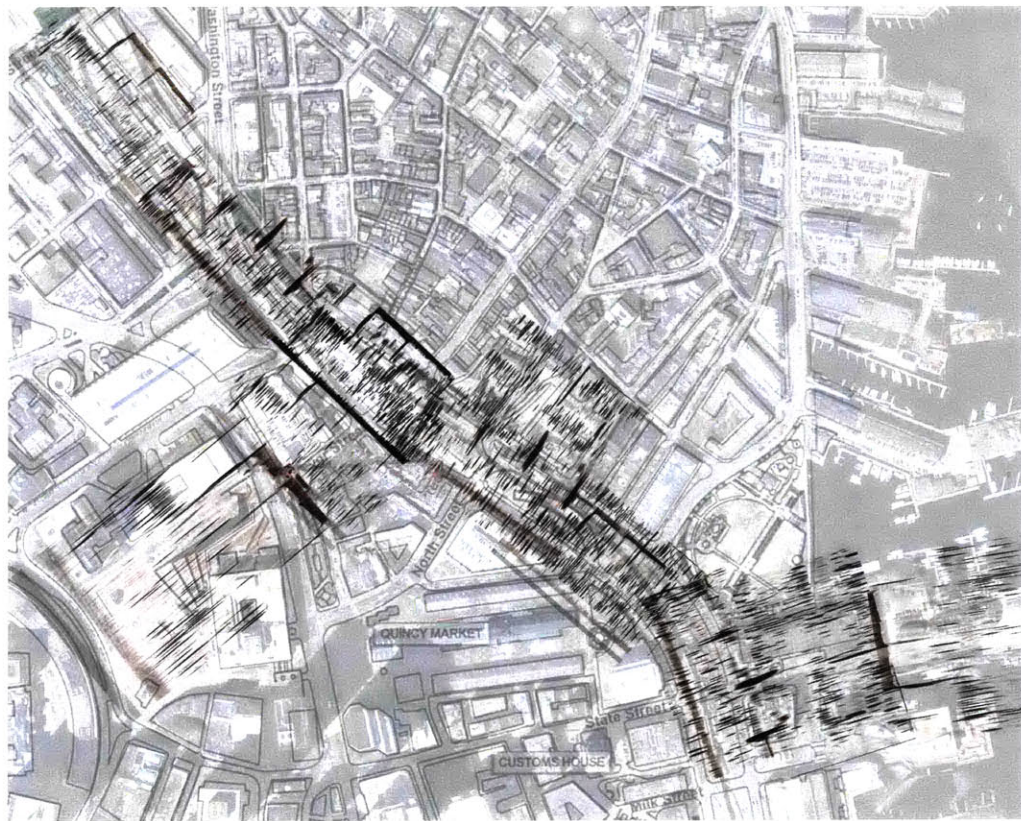
Fig. 20

Generation of the **Soft Grid**
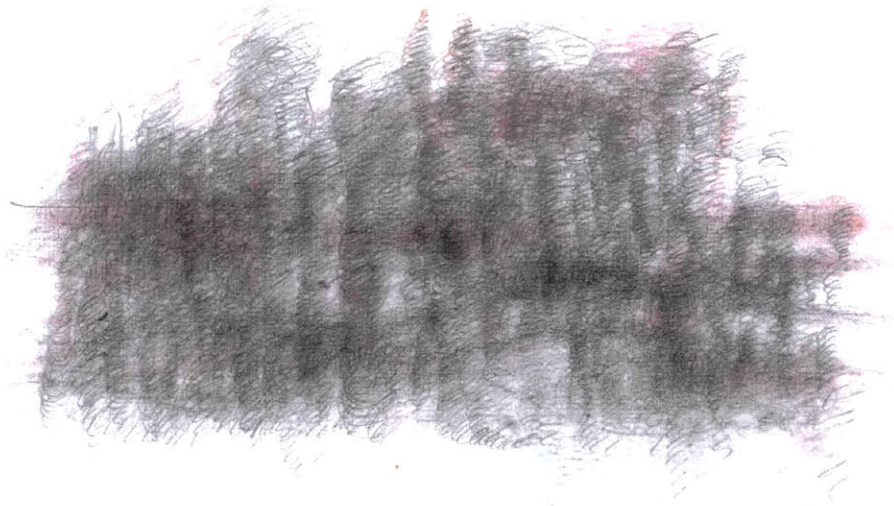
Ideogrammatic Sequence I
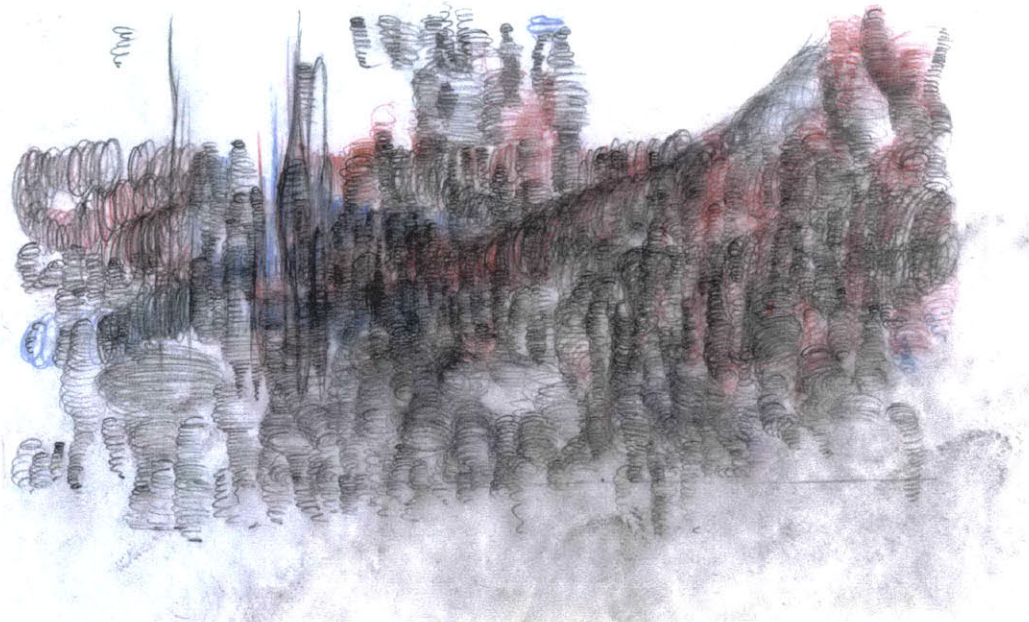
Ideogrammatic Sequence II

Fig. 21

Ideogrammatic Translations
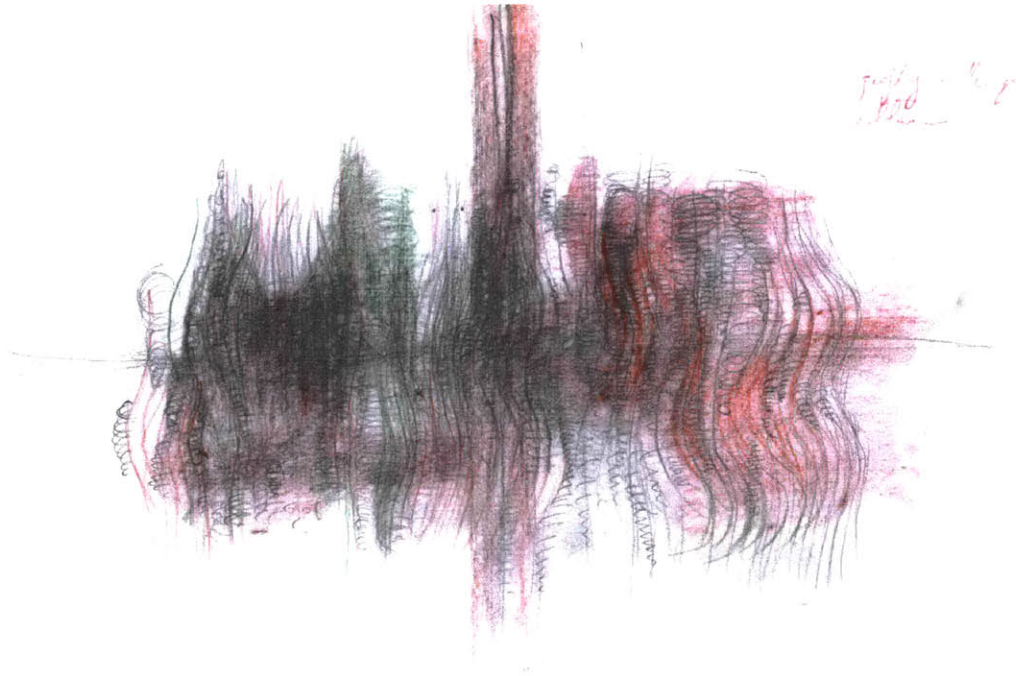
Ideogrammatic Sequence IV
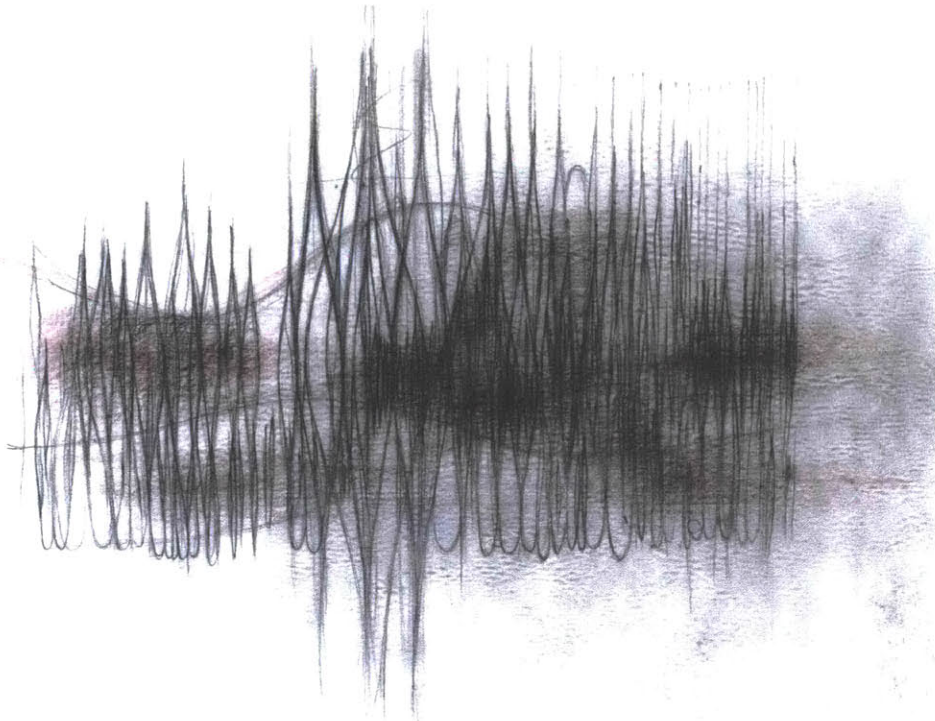
Ideogrammatic Sequence V

Fig. 22

Ideogrammatic Translations
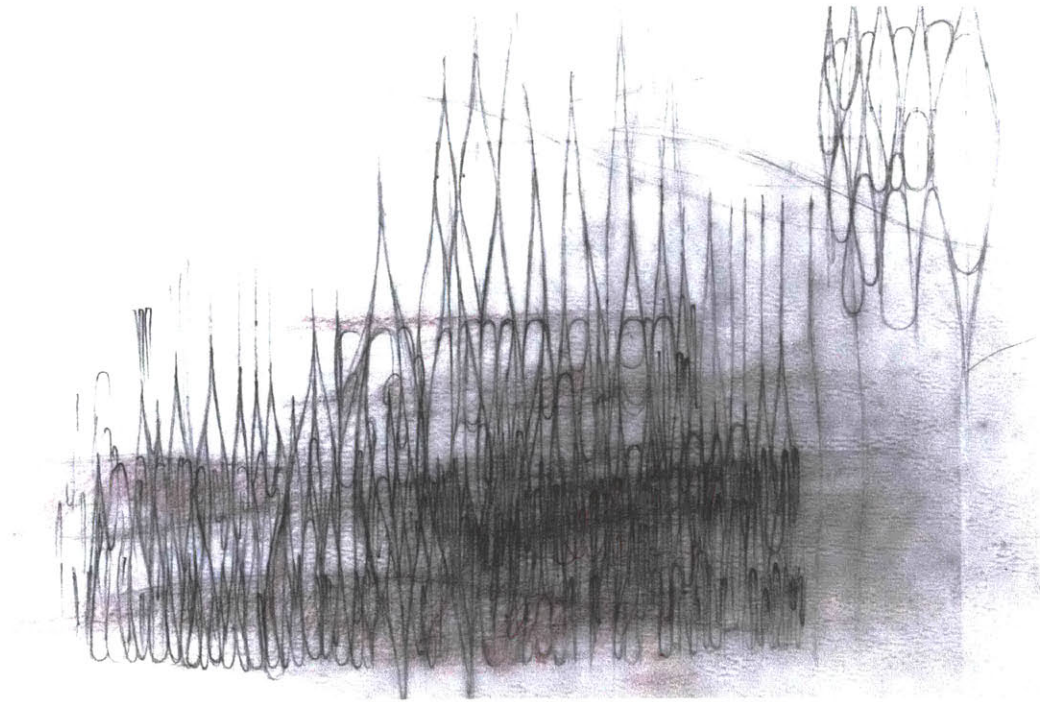
Ideogrammatic Sequence VI

Ideogrammatic SequenceVII

Fig. 23

Ideogrammatic Translations
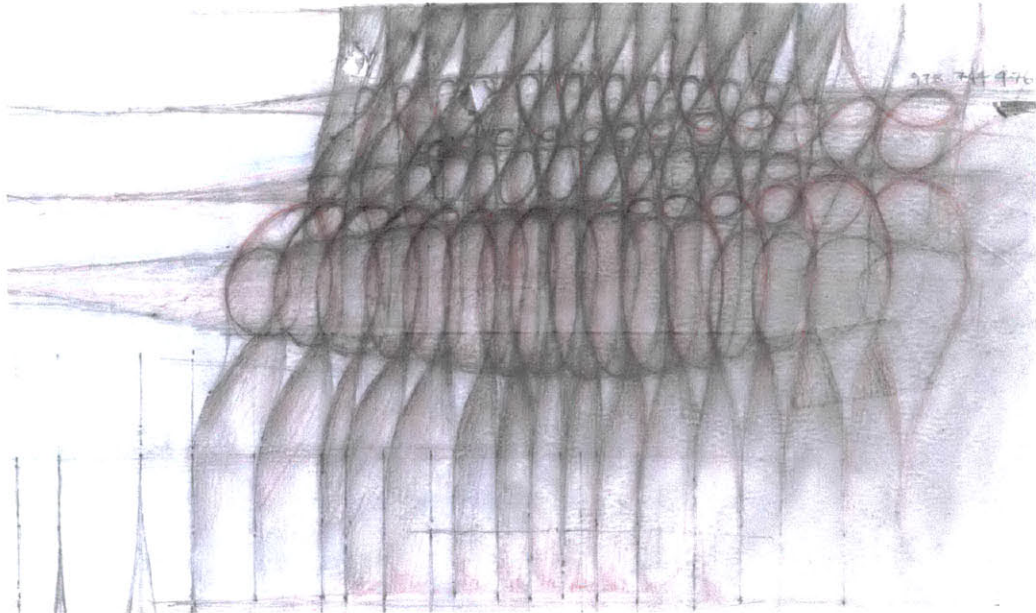
Ideogrammatic Sequence VIII
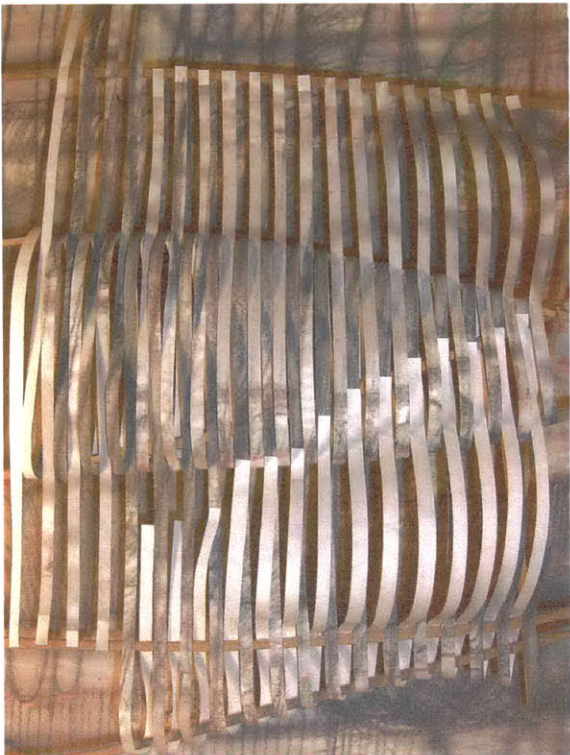
Ideogrammatic Sequence IX

Fig. 24

Ideogrammatic Translations
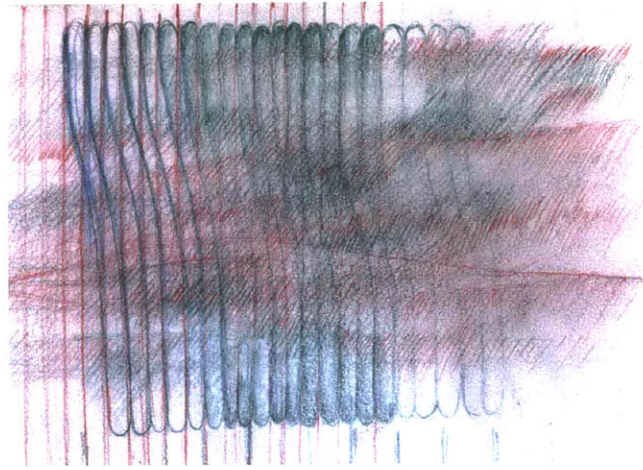
Ideogrammatic Sequence X
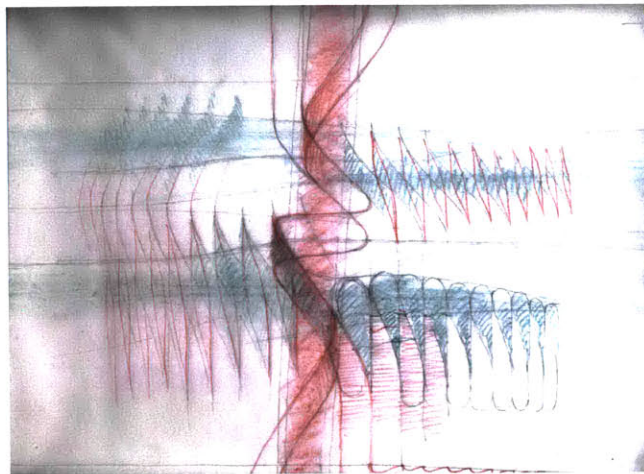
Ideogrammatic Sequence XI
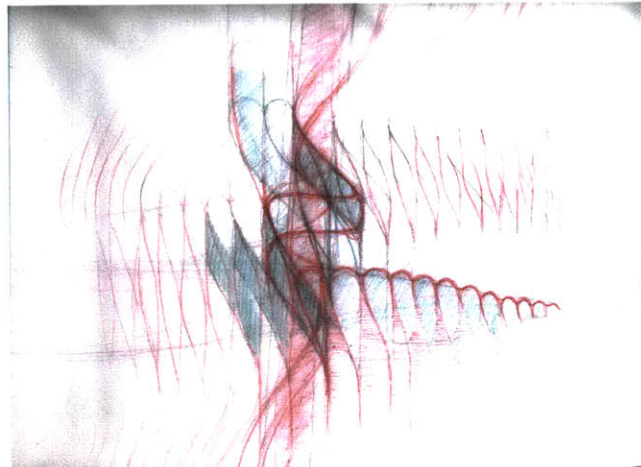
Ideogrammatic Sequence XIII

Fig. 25

Ideogrammatic Translations

The Bulldozer
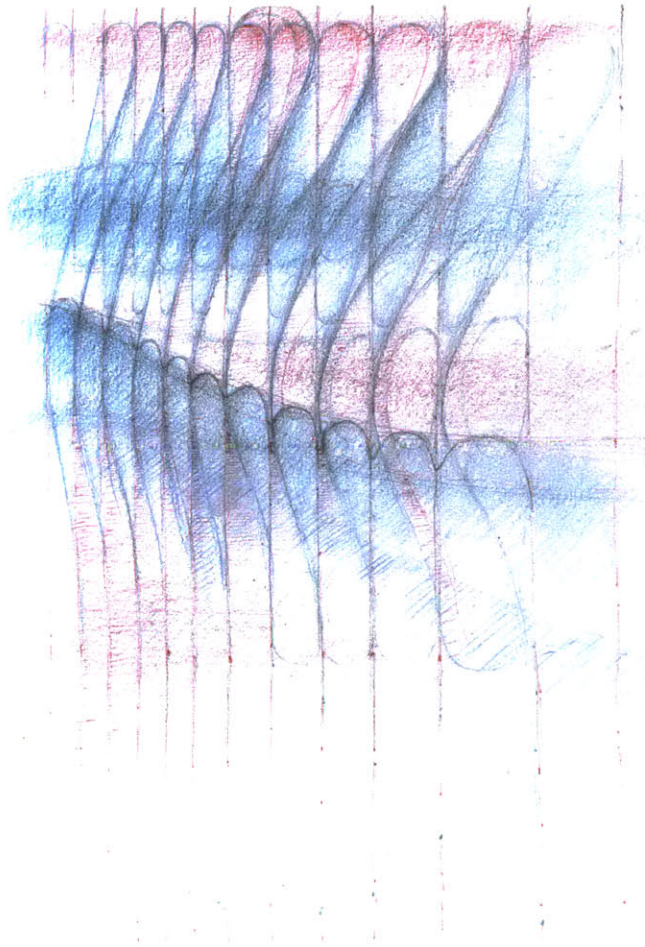
Urban Ideogram – Motif/Elemental Image
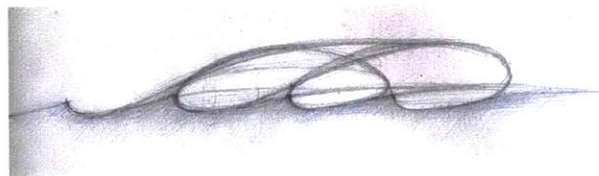
Fig. 26

Urban Ideogram - Motif
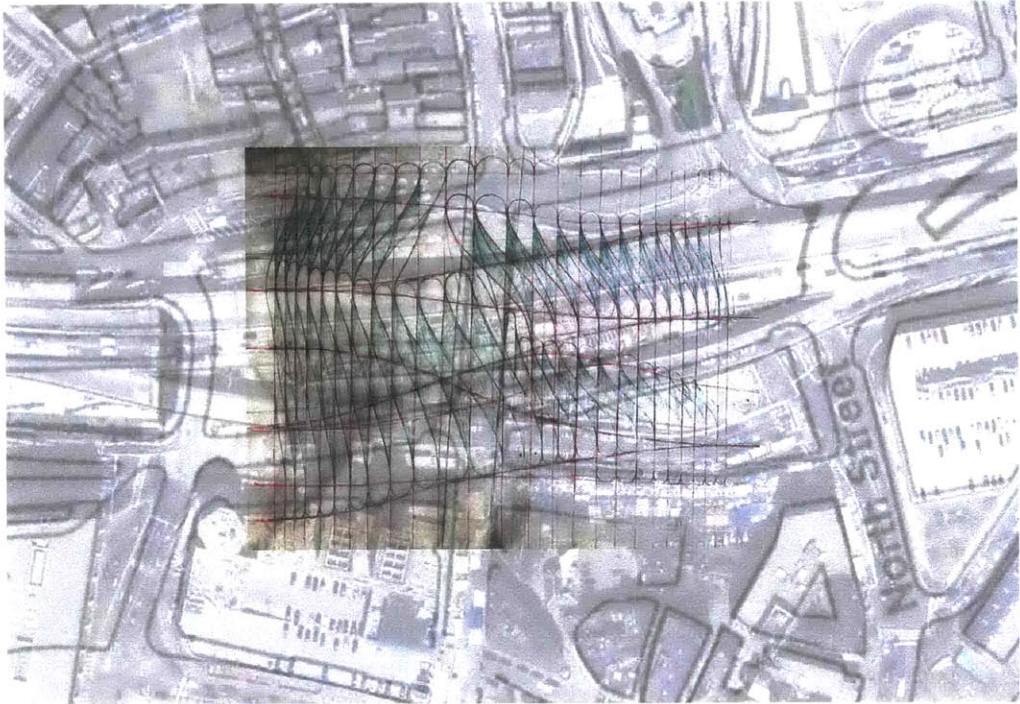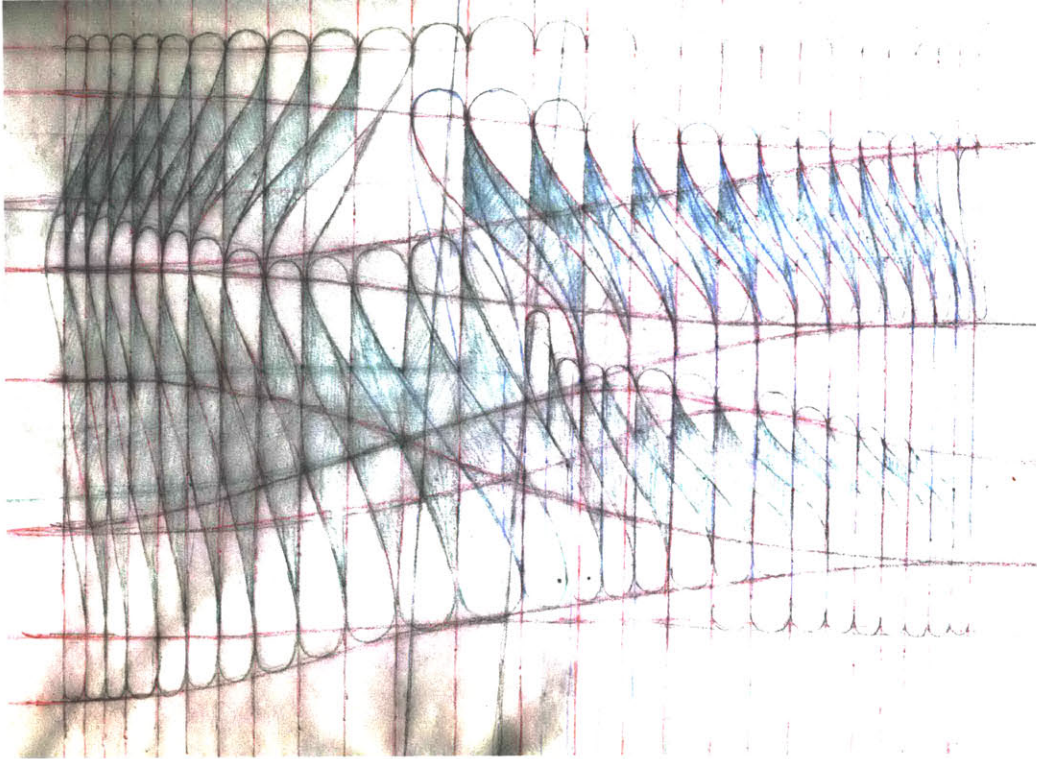
Fig, 27

Urban Ideogram - Map
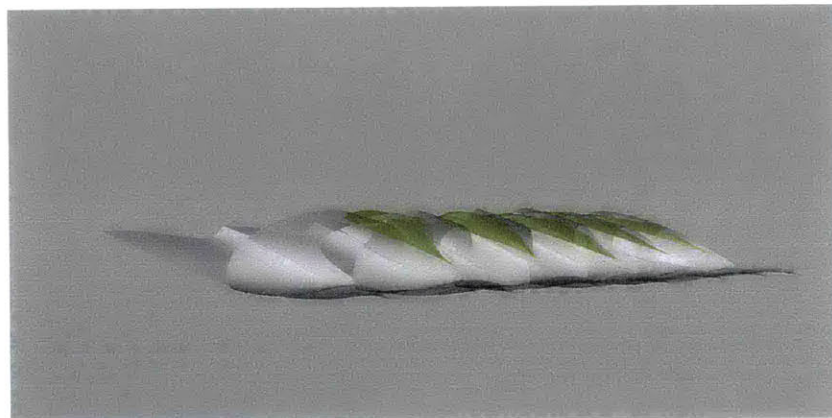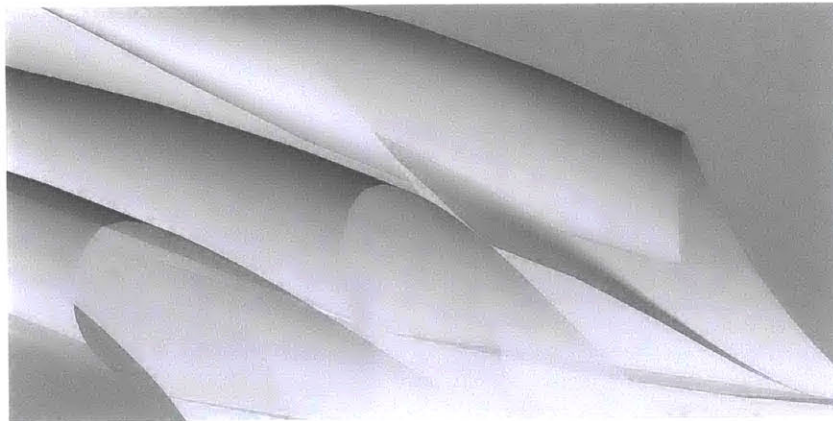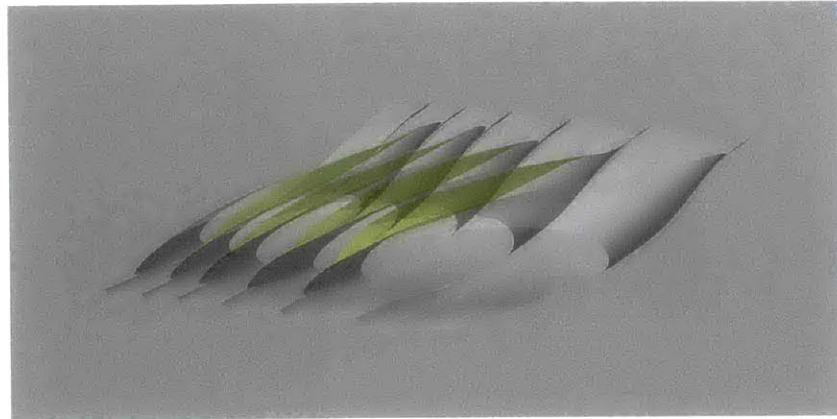
Fig. 28

The site motif: the agricultural-like striations and archeological like structures
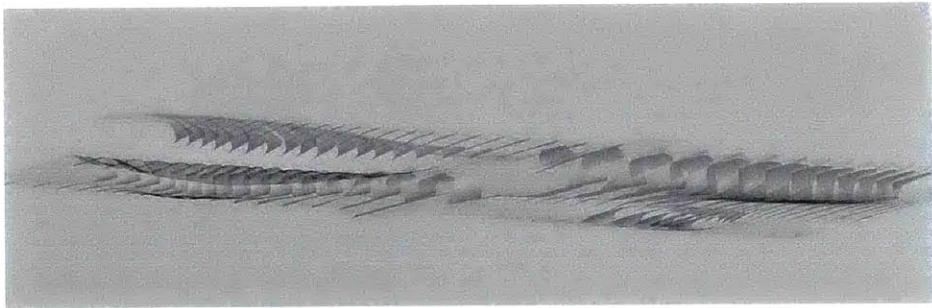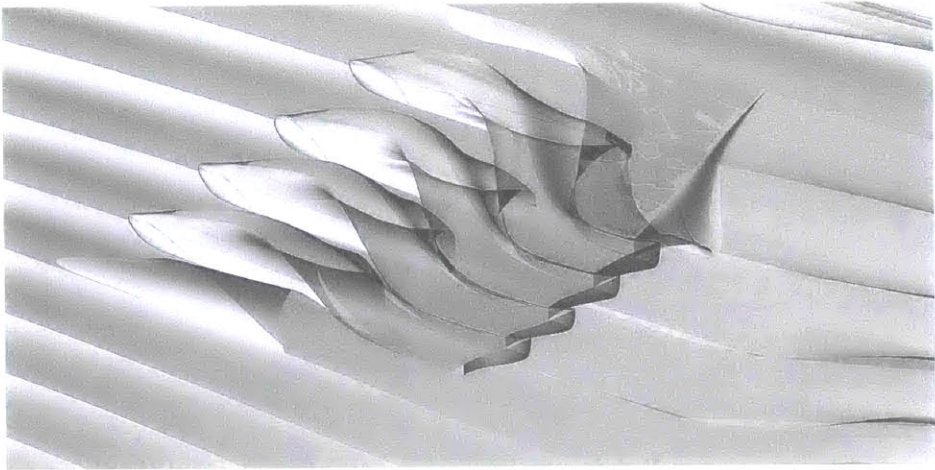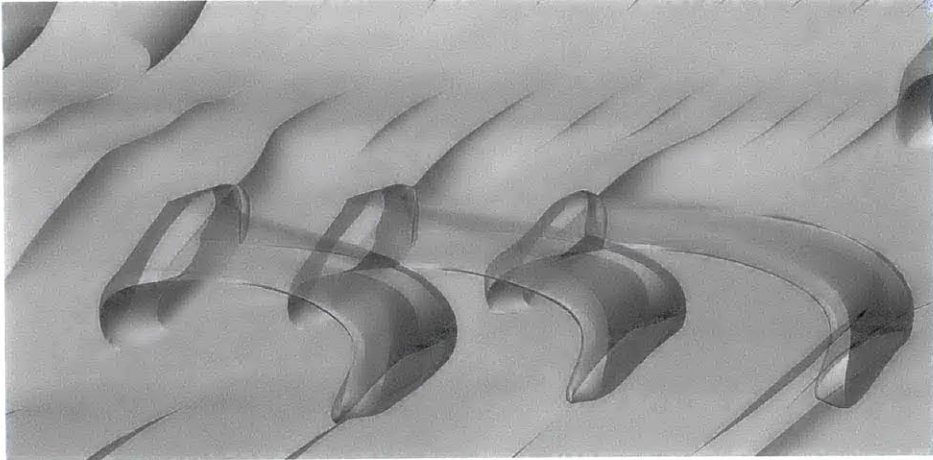
Fig. 29

The site motif: the agricultural-like striations and archeological like structures
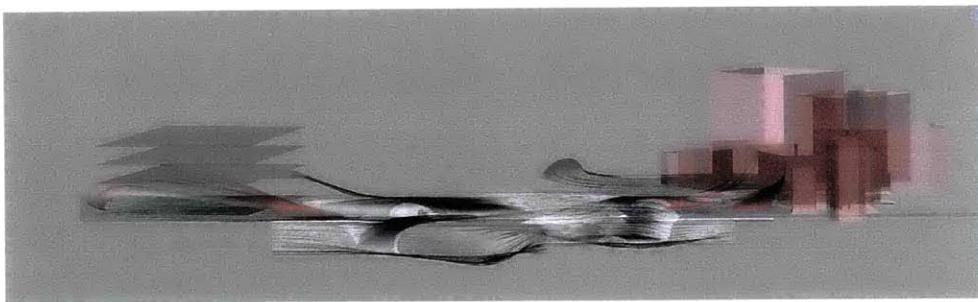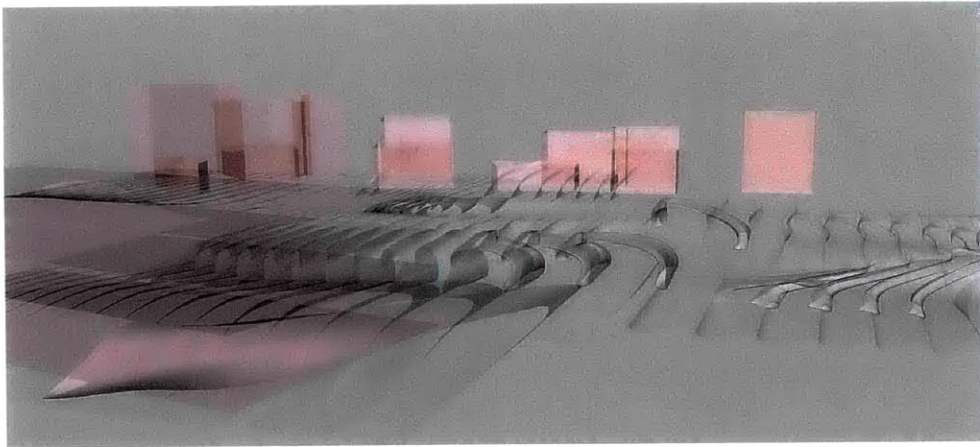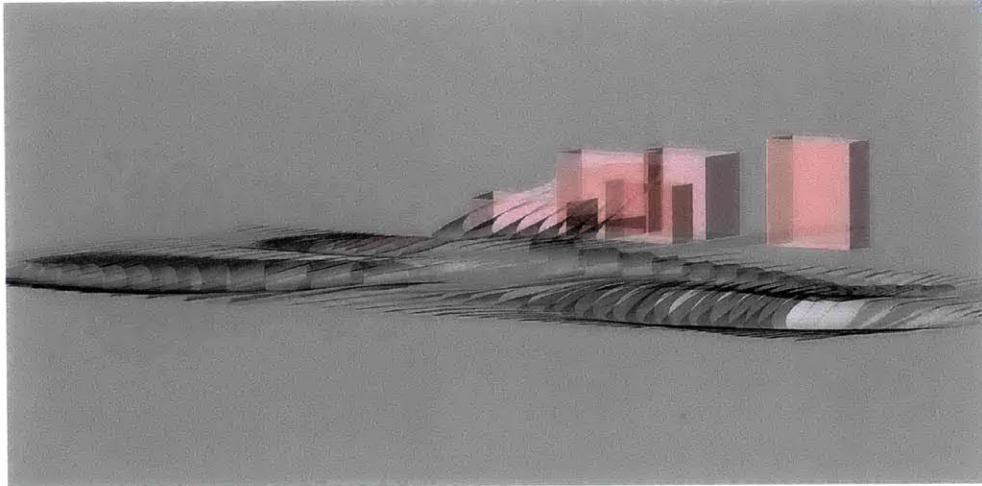
Fig. 30

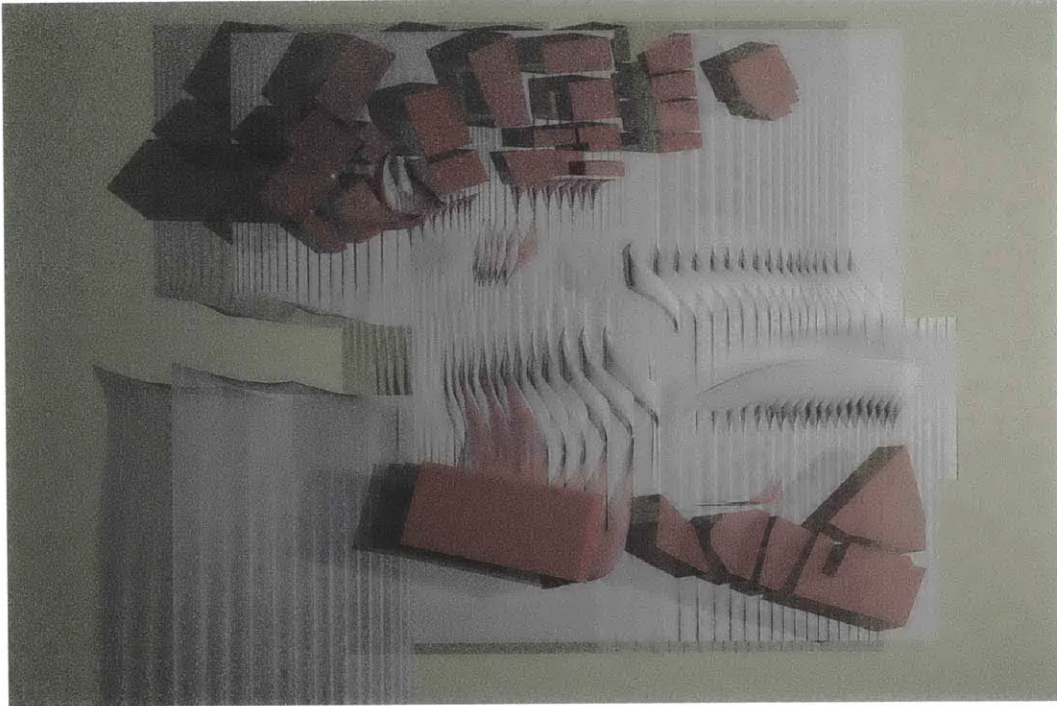The site motif: the agricultural-like striations and archeological-like structures

Fig. 31

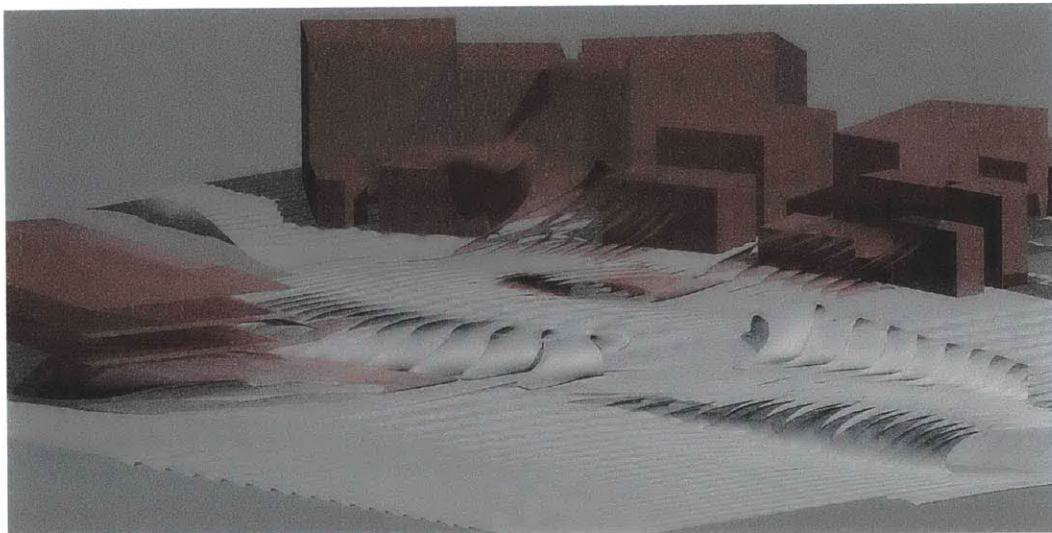Plan of the site, Hanover Street Passage

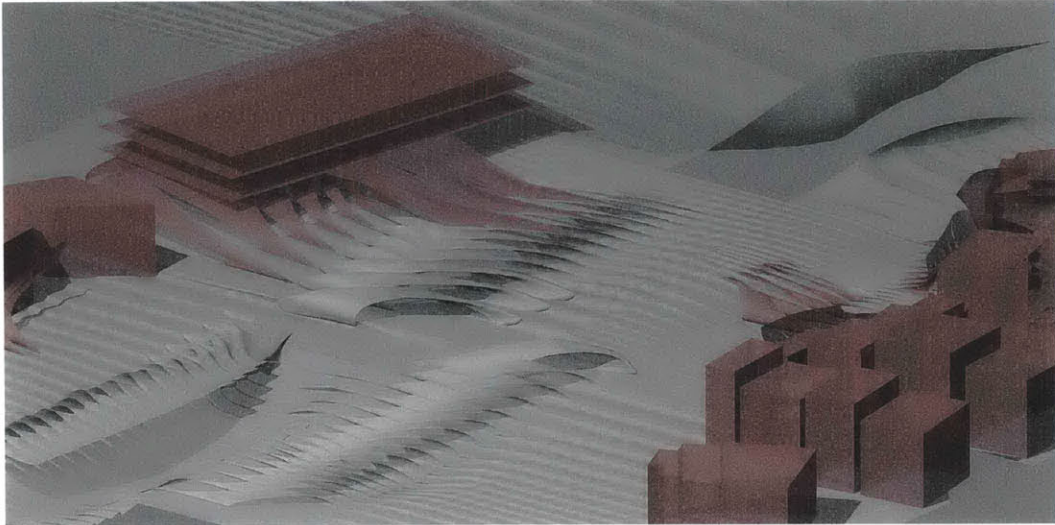

Fig. 32

Aerial view, Hanover Street Passage

Fig. 33

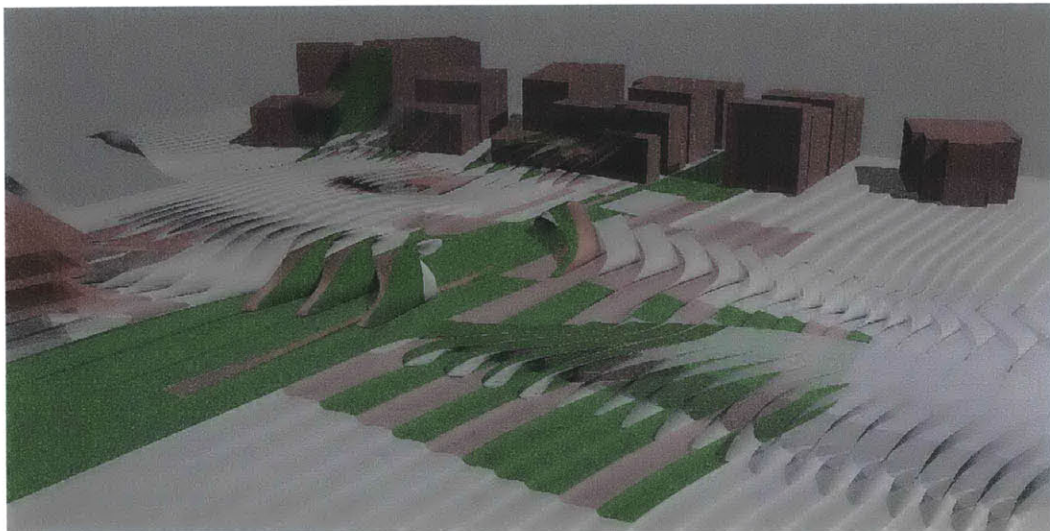Aerial view, Hanover Street Passage

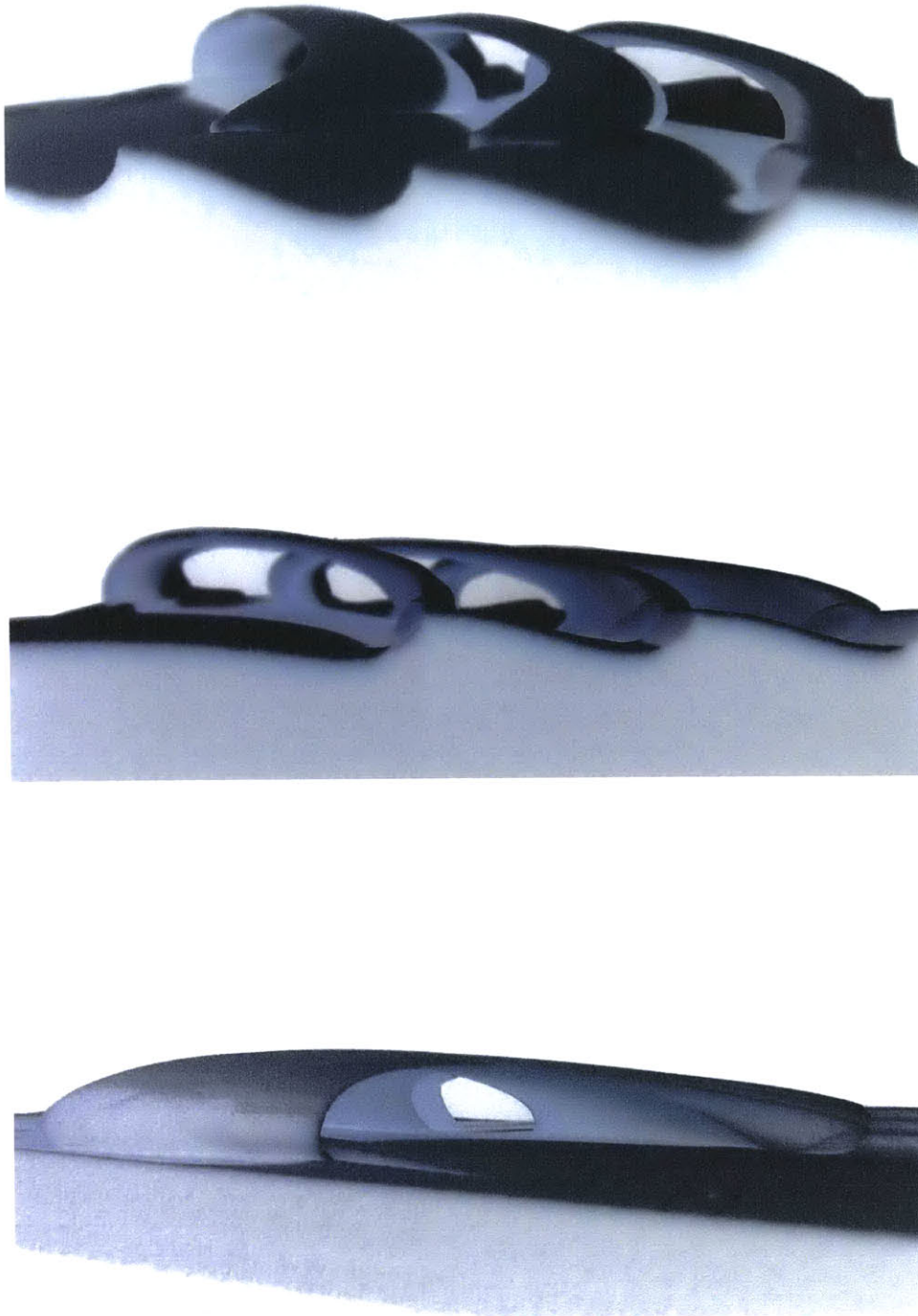Fig. 34

Aerial view, Hanover Street Passage, material distribution
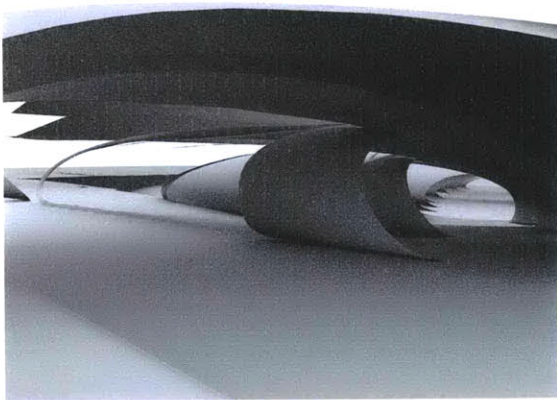
Fig. 35

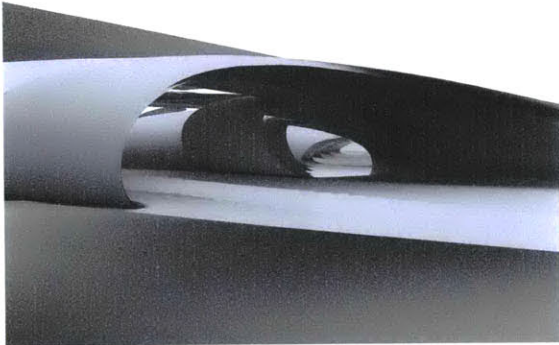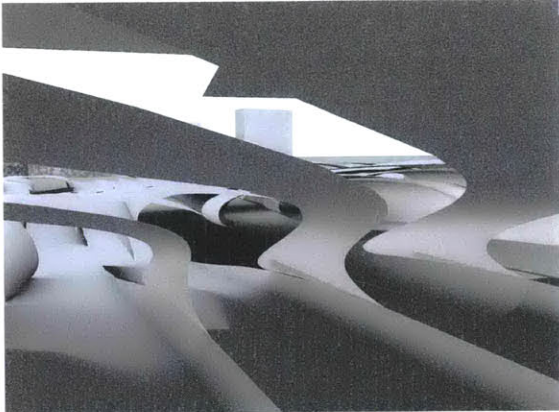Hanover Street Passage, ZCorp Model

Fig. 36
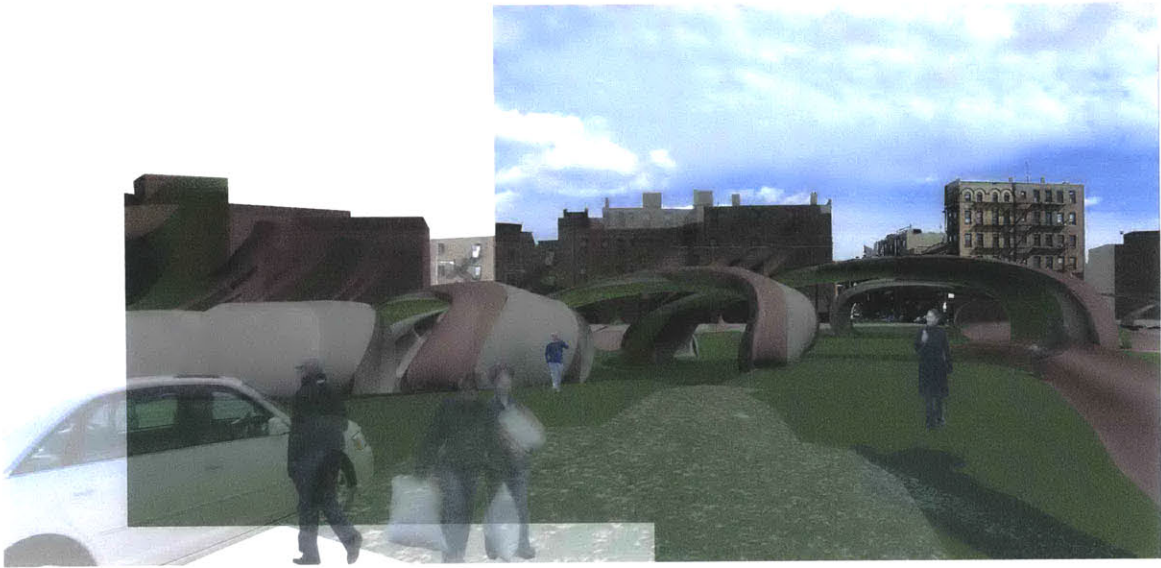
Vignettes of the archeological-like structures

Fig. 37
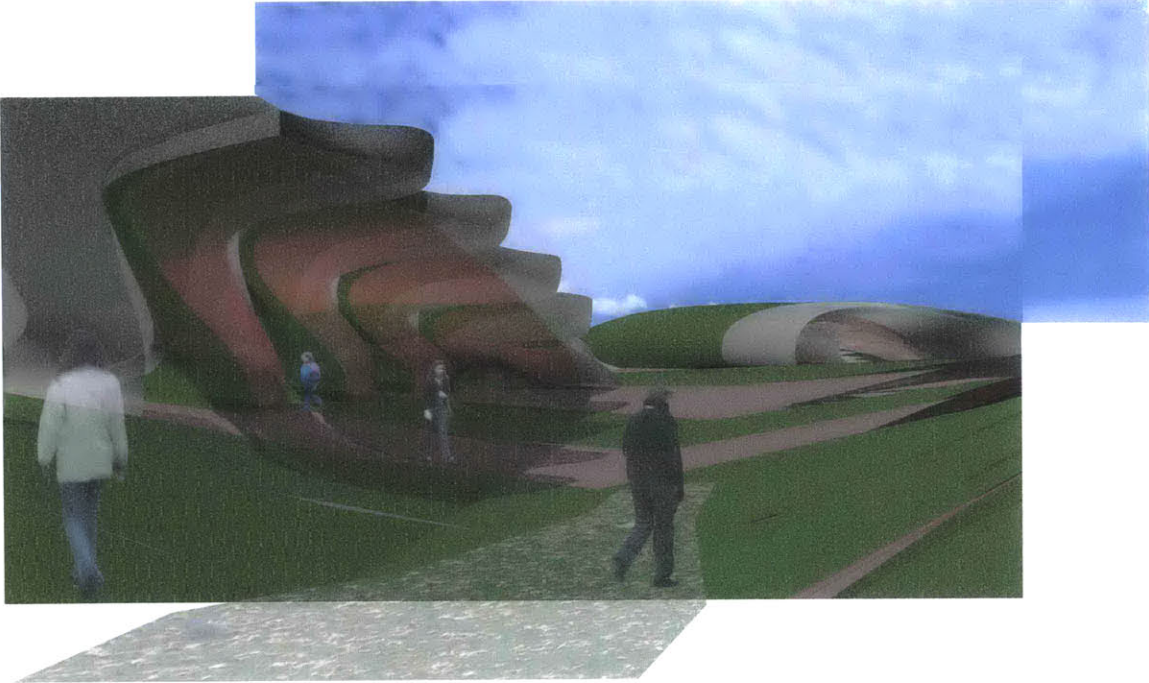
View towards Hanover Street, North End

Fig. 38

View towards Hanover Street and the balcony

Epilogue

Keeping The Interstitial Alive

Blanchot and The Thought (of) the Impossible: The Other Relation

In his *Infinite Conversation* Blanchot talks about the thought of the impossible. An impossibility that cannot and should not be measured through the *familiar* and the *possible*. An impossibility that cannot be brought under the rule of the representational familiar by providing it with a reference. The source of this experience of impossibility is in the *other* space into which we cannot exercise our power. It is the most common suffering, the immediate One that simply cannot be put under our grasp or comprehension. It is neither a unique suffering, nor a heroic or romantic suffering. It is an ongoing one, out there.… A suffering that one cannot longer suffer. It is through this other, this non-thought, through its incomprehensible immediacy, that we can accomplish *our* thought.

> "*Thus we can begin to surmise that "impossibility" – that which escapes, without there being any means of escaping it – would be not the privilege of some exceptional experience, but behind each one and as though its other dimension. And we can surmise as well that if possibility has its source in our very end – which it brings to light as the power most proper to us, according to Holderlin's demand: "For what I want is to die, and it s for man a right" – it is from this same source that "impossibility" originates, though now sealed originarily and refusing itself to all our resources: there where dying means losing the time in which one can still come to an end and entering into the infinite "present" of a death impossible to die; a present toward which the experience of suffering is manifestly oriented, the suffering that no longer allows us the time to put a limit to it – even by dying – since we will also have lost death as a limit.[20]*"

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The books presented herein represent the theoretical body that has sustained the development and elaboration of my thesis concepts and ideas. Not all of them are directly quoted in my thesis book, but they have all been essential and inspirational in my thesis.

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[5] Heidi Gilpin, Aberrations of Gravity, *Anyhow,* 1996

[6] Heidi Gilpin approaches the idea of the falling body from the perspective of Forsythe's Ballet and the deconstruction of Labanotation in her essay "Aberrations of Gravity"

The essential notion behind Labanotation is the idea of the *kinesphere* – a virtual spherical space that denotes the *maximum* space/boundary towards which the limbs and body parts can be extended in order to maintain the center of gravity in a particular static position. The extension of the body parts beyond this spherical space implies transporting the kinesphere to a new position. In order to represent the kinesphere Laban likens it to a cube that surrounds the body to the front and back, right and left, top and bottom. This virtual cube is constructed around a virtual central point of the human body around which all movement emanates.

This assumption about this virtual source of movement or central kinesphere is exactly what is deconstructed in Forsythe's ballet. This deconstruction of Laban's kinesphere model consists is dispersing this virtual center of the body towards an array of centers of virtually *every* member of the body. This causes the possibility of the release of unpredictable tropes of movements of the body. An aesthetic of *disappearance* emerges; the body of the dancer or the ensemble of dancers becomes the site of falling, of disappearance and absence of a referentiality that is forever deferred and at the same time made present precisely through this deferral, through a relentless virtual mutilation of the body as a unified whole.

As we have noted above traumatic experience remains insistent and repetitious as a hallucination precisely to the extent that can never be fully understood, comprehended or assimilated by our consciousness. It causes a drift and disappearance of referentiality in our attempt to read a *positive* source or origin of reference. In a similar fashion, Forsythe's performances escape from full consciousness – from full vision, full perception – for both performer and spectator. Performance, then, and our relation to it, positions itself as a traumatic event.

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[20] Maurice Blanchot, The Infinite Conversation, *University of Minnesota, Minneapolis*, 1993, p. 45