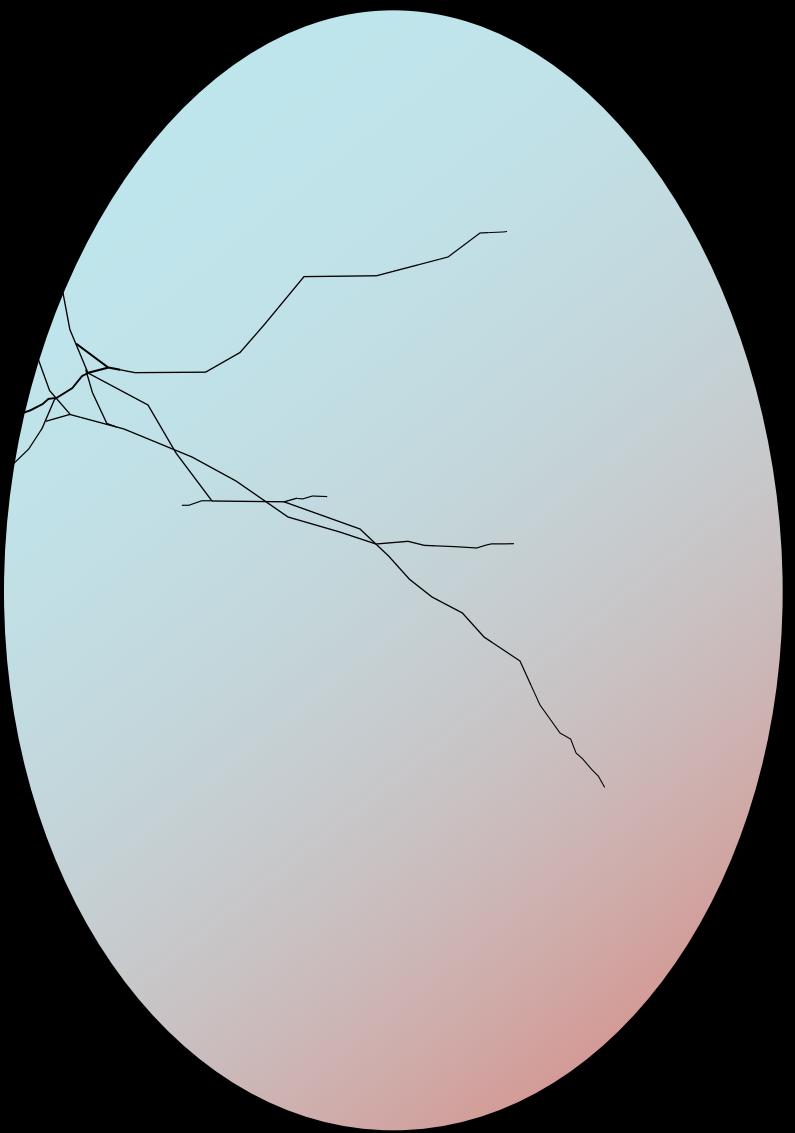


# POSSIBLE WORLDS 2/2

MAY 2015





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ZACH PEARL / managing editor & art director

LINDSAY LEBLANC / editor

YOLI TERZIYSKA / subscriptions & development

SARA ENGLAND / marketing & communications

in editorial consultation with:

CAOIMHE MORGAN-FEIR

FRANCISCO-FERNANDO GRANADOS

KATHERINE DENNIS

# MAKE CONTACT

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General inquiries can be directed to:

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MAY 2015

# CONTRIBUTORS

**AMY MODAHL  
KATHERINE DENNIS  
THOMAS MICAL**

**ON THE COVER  
ISABEL M. MARTINEZ**

*Interval (Arrhythmic)*  
Chromogenic Print  
2014  
38 x 38 in. / 96 x 96 cm.

Isabel M. Martínez's work deals with the aspects of experience where the real, the known, and the imagined blend. Perception is a recurring theme. Experimentation and process in analogue photography are at the forefront of her practice. Creating ambiguous narratives and hybrid exercises, her work engages with the uncertain amid the assumed and probes the boundary between abstraction and representation, fact and fiction.

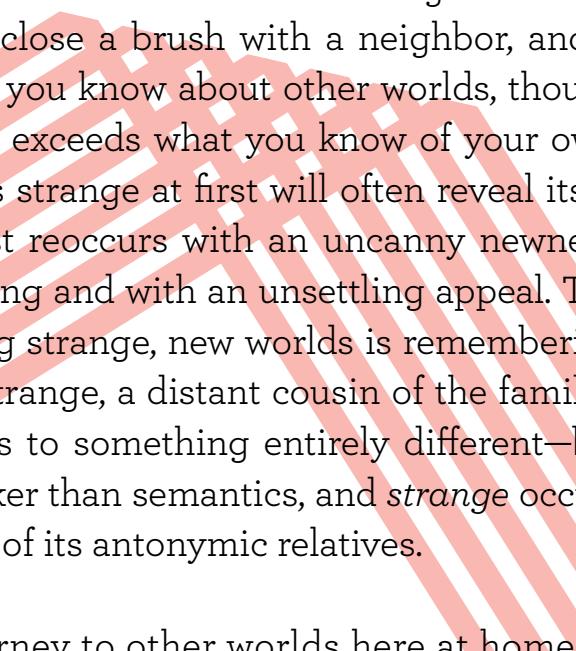
Toronto-based Martínez has exhibited in Chile, Canada, the UK, the USA, France, Brazil, Colombia and Spain. Forthcoming exhibitions include Bienal Fotográfica Bogotá 2015. She holds an MFA from the University of Guelph, a BFA from PUC (Chile).

# CONTENTS

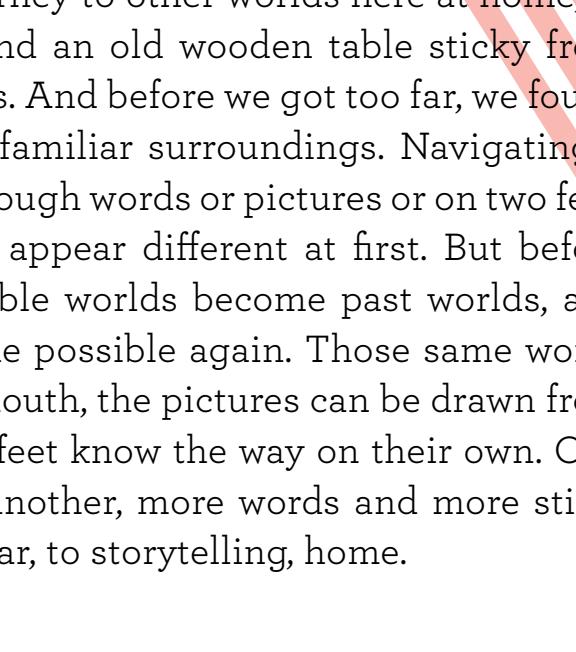
# OUR HOMES ARE NOT OUR OWN

We can't say much about worlds that aren't our own. Yet a loss for words forms a hole that fills up surprisingly quickly, when the limits of tangible experience crack and we feel the endlessness of language. One word marks the beginning of a chain of possibilities, and worlds—just a letter away—are not all that different. As we build possible worlds, the comforts and discomforts of reality continue to resonate in them, demonstrating the insistent familiarity of the imagined. Be it an alternate dimension to here and now or an alternate universe where *here* and *now* hold no meaning, we see ourselves in disparate places, and attempt to find their relevance to today.

It isn't hard to believe that imagination comforts us more than what's real, becoming an intimacy unto its own, threatening the long-standing reign of the domestic. A house is not a home, and a home isn't necessarily a house, either. Not in an effort to rain on the impressively resilient metaphorical parade, perhaps the place we feel most at home doesn't even exist yet. When a desire for a different present meets the promise of possible worlds, the result belongs more to the everyday than it does to the imaginary. Although, the real and the imaginary have more in common than we may have originally thought, primarily in each of their relationships to the infinite. Where language persists, so does imagination—and then multiple worlds are born.



The discomfort felt from alien encounters might be nothing more than too close a brush with a neighbor, and it turns out that what you know about other worlds, though empirically limited, exceeds what you know of your own. Indeed, what seems strange at first will often reveal itself as routine. Our past reoccurs with an uncanny newness, in different packaging and with an unsettling appeal. The first step to building strange, new worlds is remembering the old ones. The strange, a distant cousin of the familiar and common, refers to something entirely different—but blood remains thicker than semantics, and *strange* occurs only as a derivative of its antonymic relatives.



We started our journey to other worlds here at home, in a bar, sitting around an old wooden table sticky from one too many spills. And before we got too far, we found ourselves back in familiar surroundings. Navigating a different world, through words or pictures or on two feet, things will always appear different at first. But before you know it, possible worlds become past worlds, and past worlds become possible again. Those same words feel stale in your mouth, the pictures can be drawn from memory and your feet know the way on their own. One word, to another, another, more words and more still—we're back to the bar, to storytelling, home.



# The space - between -

AMY MODAHL

If my letters are spread apart, they stop speaking to each other; they call out as distinct units, breaking the link to meaning. Narrowing gaps herd letters into words, making sense out of nonsense. The space between each letter, each word, each sentence is carefully set, molded, a graceful form unto its own. Such spaces guide the reader, gently saying, "This idea influences the next idea" and so on, forward, return, next line.

Run together every word together, speaking at a rapid rate, leaving no calm, no break, the pace of my thoughts confuses—sounds merge, words blur. "What was that you just said?" Pause is the underappreciated empty air, an auditory repose. The length and width of aural and visual space are guiding and leading.

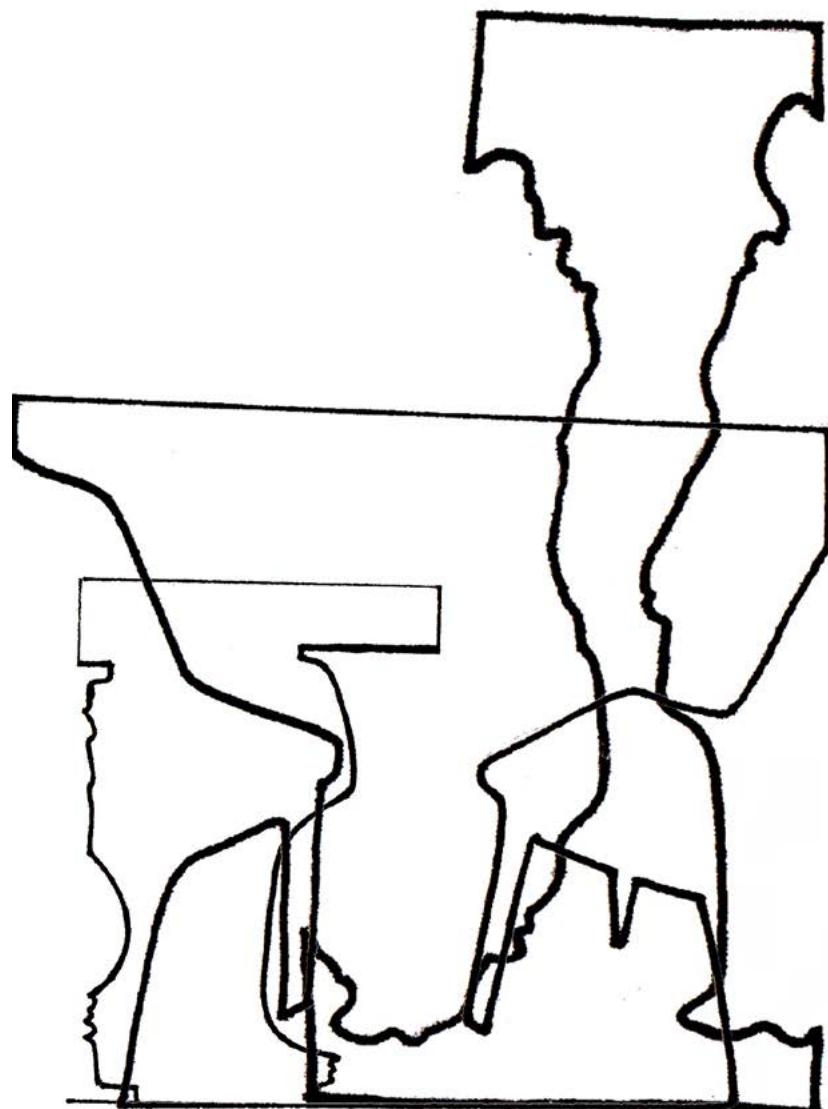
Yet spaces unfilled often connote spaces in need. "Empty" pairs with words like negative or nothing, implying a lack; whereas the word "filled" suggests something positive, meaningful and the focus of attention. Empty and filled support each other, are intertwined, complementary. Empty, like filled, is charged with life and meaning.

The house boxes earth and air into a unit called home, protecting the family from a cold winter night. In the home, precious objects and furniture are tastefully arranged to mold the space into cozy. Paintings punctuate long white walls. Soft chairs in neutral tones congregate in small groups, designating places for relaxing and talking separated from those for eating or sleeping. Vases and figurines meet on shelves, never touching, facing out as if to observe the scene. He sits in one chair and I sit in another, separated by a gentle space where we talk at low volumes, leaning in to touch a forearm and say, "Yes, I, do remember that time at the lake." This gentle space allows for a shared drink, a glint in the eye, intimacy. He enters in from the cold and takes a seat across the room. Conversation becomes about filling the long gap between one chair and another, between one person and another.

Anthropologist Edward T. Hall gives distinct meaning to such spaces by thinking not just about the space surrounding "I," but the space between you and "I". He labels these spaces Proxemic zones : intimate, personal, social and public. The intimate zone is reserved for those closest to us. Discomfort occurs when a stranger enters this space. Hall's model relates to the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis to show that language can affect perception, point-

ing speakers to assumptions about the relevance and significance of what's said. If I do not have a name for this air space between "I" and "you," I might not realize how it affects my perception and my encounters. It can remain a mystery until given verbal distinction. When named, space is quantified, broken up, made more specific. Air is no longer empty. It fills with theoretical meaning.

Between one corner and another I stand gazing, maybe staring. They stand close, touching as her lips move, but I cannot hear a word. I do not know this couple, but together we are part of a group of about 15 waiting for the bus at Broadway and Granville. The sidewalk above and below is nearly empty—this empty molds our group. It communicates to people in passing cars that we are a unit with a shared goal of traveling east, by anticipation, by need. The air filling the one or two or three feet between each of us is alive as we shift gently from hip to hip, tap cell phones, look up, look left. This air carries messages about our unity and lack of unity. We are together but we are apart; we are together but when you move closer to me, I expect you to say you are sorry. "I'm sorry," says the man next to me as his bag brushes the air near my arm. I respond with an appropriate mumble: "No problem." Some call this space a personal bubble, but this bubble



doesn't exist without you and you and you all of us together having a discussion with the air as our medium.

As language gives shape to observations, it guides understanding and reveals worldview. If I label land "empty" or "unused" I fail to see how my perception is bound by a culturally prescribed link between the built environment and "useful" or "filled." "Nothing is being done with that land. It has been sitting empty for years"—even though it cuts across an ancient migratory path where the deer roam and the trees grow, while birds set up home in the trees. It has been called undeveloped since a man in a button up shirt, with glasses, a moustache and a briefcase filed official paperwork, drawing rectangular borders around grass and trees. His action officially labeled the ground a "lot" (at times called a plot). He metaphorically

proclaims, "I hereby deem you a 'lot,'" tapping official scepter upon each shoulder of ground. And thus lot or plot became ready to be "owned" with more officiality and paperwork and money. Once owned, it will be "filled" with a structure, and after a while that structure will be demolished and another like it built. In the temporal space between falling and building, the lot is labeled "vacant" although teenagers gather by day and the deer graze by night. Grass grows; a vine winds up the side of the building next door; honeybees nestle in the undergrowth; and worms do their work beneath the surface. If left too long, this activity becomes a blight requiring immediate attention. "What a mess"—spoken with heads nodding in agreement. The plot is often discussed with derision. The teenagers and deer and bees must be controlled and prevented from entering. Now "empty" becomes enforced until properly

"filled" can be re-achieved.

If another city official takes notice of this lot and through various official channels and more official paperwork, a vote, and a passing of bills, decides this lot will be converted into a little park, this simple shift in terms means an alteration in perception that affects use and the discourse surrounding the lot. The blight transforms into a meeting place for grandfathers and grandmothers who gather on benches to chat over coffee, employees steal a moment in the sun or to smoke, a garden grows, flowers bloom. The space is now tended and considered quite nicely filled. Perception of the space has shifted and use shifts with it.

Naming in practice leads to focusing attention in a culture. If I can name it, I can talk about it, I can think about it and theorize.

“Empty,” an adjective, modifies the general noun “space.” The two are a chameleon-like pair, attaching themselves to any number of spots below, in front, between, beside, above, within. Specific nouns show usefulness, elevating empty space to the status of letter or home or park. Professionals devise jargon to label the spaces essential to a profession. The typographer understands the importance of space between letters, termed “kerning,” a careful balance between clarity and beauty, just as Edward T. Hall needed to give form to human use of space with his Proxemic zones. Yet these terms stand isolated by profession. The beauty of open ground, currently untouched by human development, can be found in the clarity of air moving between one person and another, where the messages within “empty” are many.

## notes

[1] In his books *The Silent Language* (1959), *The Hidden Dimension* (1966), and *Beyond Culture* (1976), Edward T. Hall describes culturally based perception of space by linking relationship and context, such as a comfortable distance for strangers to stand in a shop in a given country. These tendencies are often unconscious patterns that when countered produce a response. To give the spaces form for his U.S. readers, he diagramed standard distances an American would perceive as “normal” for interlocutors in four progressively distant relationship scenarios: intimate, personal, social and public. These he termed Proxemic zones.

[2] The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis is one name given to the theory that language affects perception or the way a language describes or categorizes the world affects how speakers perceive the world. In name, “the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis” refers to the related theories of linguistic anthropologists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, teacher and student, although Sapir and Whorf built on a foundation of work by anthropologists, such as Franz Boas, and philosophers, such as Wilhelm Von Humboldt.

## AMY MODAHL

originally from Wisconsin, lives and works in Salmon Arm, BC. Her research and creative work explore language visually in writing and various media including: drawing, painting, printmaking, stop-motion animation and installation. She has also pursued the amateur in publishing and performance as part of the collaboration Janet. Currently she teaches Linguistic Anthropology at UBC Okanagan and in the Communications Department at Okanagan College, both in Kelowna British Columbia.



# The Many Worlds of Memories of the Future

A photograph of a large, gnarled tree branch structure, possibly a piece of art or a decorative installation, situated in a room with light-colored walls and a wooden floor. A window is visible in the background, letting in natural light. The branches are dark and intricate, creating a complex, organic shape.

KATHERINE DENNIS

*Thanks to Noa Bronstein,  
the second voice behind this text.*

When you step across the threshold of a stranger's home, as their guest you are made privy to the host's inner sanctum, a carefully constructed universe, a private life made public.



# 2014

At most of the city's historic-house museums, the public enters at the back... At the Campbell House you enter by the front door...

The home, an ongoing source of investigation for artists and philosophers alike, is more than the architectural structure of the house. Rather, as philosopher Gaston Bachelard contends, the home is a store of memories and dreams. In an active home many worlds are present and possible, inspired by the relations of its inhabitants. Yet often the container long outlasts the occupants: some pass to descendants or new owners, undergoing renovations and updates along the way, while others are knocked down to uncover land far more valuable than the house itself. Few are truly preserved.



# 1964

During the past few years, Canadians have suddenly become conscious of their heritage and a tremendous interest in things historical has resulted.

The findings were that in the entire township there were only 10 buildings surviving of any consequence, and this included several churches, whose preservation was more or less assured.

Historic house museums provide one unique form of preservation. When the house—no longer occupied and often decades removed from the original inhabitants—becomes a museum, history is frozen. In Canada historic house museums are certainly not prolific, if not a rarity. By contrast, the United States has more house museums than McDonalds. This is at once comforting and terrifying. House museums assert nostalgia for a flawed vision of the past, one too often static and limited to official narratives. Yet they care for the remnants of our histories through their architecture, artifacts and stories. These spaces serve an important function, as they invite remembering of our personal and collective pasts.



# 1794

a Plan (Copy of which I believe was given to you) has been found in the Surveyor General's Office, to which is attached a blank deed, with the names or devices of three Chiefs of the Mississauga Nation, on separate pieces of paper annexed thereto, and witnessed by Mr. Collins, Mr. Kotte, a Surveyor, since dead, and Mr. Lines, Indian Interpreter, but not being filled up, is of no validity, or may be applied to all the Land they possess...

Conventional museum practice and a national narrative share a narrow view of history, one that changes at a glacial pace.

Thankfully many artists, activists and academics continue to challenge colonial, one-point perspectives. From small gestures to total re-writes emerge possible worlds—past, present and future. And it is this space and spirit that *Memories of the Future* strives to occupy and build upon. Using the visual language of the present and speculating on possibilities for the future, memories of the distant past are newly exposed, interpreted and remembered.

*Memories of the Future* is an annual, nomadic project that invites contemporary artists to respond to a theme through the creation of site-and-context-specific installations at various historic house museums across Toronto. Employing a range of media and approaches, these in-



terventions explore the layered narratives and hidden stories of our socio-material history. Collaboratively curated with Noa Bronstein, each exhibition addresses history through a contemporary lens. Rather than focusing on one time period, *Memories* connects to Toronto's ever-changing cultural identity by exploring the contemporary communities and settings that contribute to each historic site. The project explores some of the buried stories of our city's history through artworks that interrogate and expose these narratives, inviting audiences to look closer at our cultural spaces and draw relevant connections to their current realities.

Inspired by Bachelard's lyrical writing in *The Poetics of Space* and the history of the 1920s seven-part novel *Memories of the Future* by Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky—which was considered too subversive to publish and remained hidden until the 1970s—the project attempts to uncover such hidden stories in our own vernacular. In 2014 artists Sara Angelucci, Robert Hengeveld, Eleanor King and Matt Macintosh brought the memories and dreams of the home into contemporary discourse by producing site-specific works that opened the narrative of the Gibson House Museum in North York.



# 1838

**"In obedience to this order I took a party of men with me to Gibson's house, three miles beyond where we then were, and nine from this city, and had it burned."**

The house's patriarch David Gibson was a land surveyor in the 1800s. Party to the Rebellion of 1837 Gibson fled Canada, leaving his wooden farmhouse to be burned down. In 1848 he returned, having been fully pardoned in 1843, and rebuilt the Late Georgian-style Gibson family house in 1851. Upon his death in 1864 his property was left to his daughter Margaret, who subsequently sold it to her brother.

One hundred and fifty years and several house renovations later, four contemporary artists shared Gibson's home, now a historic museum run by the City of Toronto, as a site for artistic practice. The artists' work addressed timely issues related to museums and authenticity, land claims, sustainability and urban development. For example, the 1805 Toronto Purchase, astutely dubbed by Angelucci as "one of the greatest land swindles in Canadian history," connected to local issues of condo development and the continued loss of fertile, agricultural land, while the artifacts of two unrelated museums—The Gibson House and the Orillia Museum of Art and History—were intermingled by Matt Macintosh to create new, ambiguous and even salacious stories about the house's former occupants. With each new artwork and each new story or fragment—real or fictitious—the exhibition drew awareness to an important truth about history: for every story told, countless others are forgotten or silenced.



# 2014

In censoring our past we censor ourselves—a not remarkable observation; nor is the idea that the will to censorship begins, like some weird music, in the home, heard most acutely by the children, or the queer children someone's mother must love most.

The 2015 iteration of *Memories* invites artist collective Bambitchell (Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell) and video artist Aleesa Cohene to explore the theme of social justice through an exhibition at the Campbell House Museum in downtown Toronto. In particular, the exhibition will look at ideas around freedom of expression, censorship, citizenship and policy as related to the history and site of the Campbell House. The home of Sir William Campbell, Chief Justice of Upper Canada, who presided over many significant cases, presents an opportunity to connect some of Campbell's legal work with related contemporary concerns and themes.

Two existing video's by Cohene, *All Right* and *Ready to Cope* will be installed at the house with careful consideration of how a historical reading of the rooms and surrounding artifacts affect the viewer's present reading of the work. Bambitchell will re-situate their work *Where the Trees Stood in Water* and create a new site-specific work that addresses their ongoing interest in how citizenship is created through tropes of camp and humor. Much like Robert Hengeveld's previously commissioned work, which re-imagined the protagonist of David Gibson in a new, more eccentric light, Bambitchell's work pulls from both fact and fiction, archival material and literature to dispel grand narratives. Strategies of subjective and subversive reading, creative thinking and imagination open up the darkened corners of these houses and bring forth dreams of possible worlds old and new.





# 1958

Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of the home, and by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost.

Within the possibility and problems of opening up these houses for alternative narratives, *Memories* endeavors to reconnect these sites to current socio-political ideas. Grounded in research and pulling from a confluence of sources, *Memories* provides a platform for contemporary artists to explore and interpret the histories around them, and the ways these histories affect modern life. The project attests to the importance of preserving our past and the greater importance of questioning that same story.



## NOTES

- [1] Goddard, John. *Inside the Museums: Toronto's Heritage Sites and Their Most Prized Objects*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2014.
- [2] Simpson, B. Napier. A Proposal for the Restoration of The Gibson House and Establishment of a Regional Museum for North York Township. 1964.
- [3] Graham, Ruth. "The Great Historic House Museum Debate." *The Boston Globe*. August 10, 2014. <http://www.boston-globe.com/ideas/2014/08/09/the-great-historic-house-museum-debate/jzFwE9tvJdHDCXehIWqK4O/story.html>
- [4] Appendix VIII is a letter written by Fitzgibbon to Lord Glenelg, dated August 10, 1838, discussing the events of Dec. 7, 1837. McLeod, D *A Brief Review of the Settlement of Upper Canada*, Mika Silk Screening Ltd., Belleville, 1972.
- [5] Als, Hilton. *White Girls*. San Francisco: McSweeney's, 2014.
- [6] Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

## KATHERINE DENNIS

is a curator, researcher and writer based in Vancouver. In 2012 she won the inaugural Middlebrook Prize for Young Canadian Curators. Currently, Katherine is the adult public programs coordinator at the Vancouver Art Gallery and research associate at Pivotal Research Inc.



# STRANGE GENESIS FOR IRREGULAR WORLD-BUILDING

THOMAS MICAL

The exploration of new worlds can be a vivid encounter with the outer limits of sense, and in many ways this encounter hyper-activates the imagination, as a limit-experience. Simultaneously, the opportunity to imagine the exploration of new worlds, as it appears in a range of media and practices (maps, literature, films, taxonomies, and even utopian community designs) is a fascinating parsing or re-ordering of the given world in favor of speculative *allohistory*—alternative reality/alternate history—that both characterizes what is being deliberately elevated in importance in the portrayal, likely what is being negated in this elevation, but also curiously the derivative ascendancy of suppressed or invisible forces (desires, biases, peculiarities, and the inevitable law of unintended consequences) that operate beneath the level of surface evidence. This unpredictable “undertow,” as second-order attributes, arises when any such speculative recalibration occurs in the

process of making, and especially when taken to the level of world-building. In focused observation, these eccentric sensations or traits emerge from the work, composed of minimal qualitative differences from the known and familiar. Perhaps not fully recognizable in emergence, they register in the conscious as what may have been called the style of the artist, the aura of the work of art, or today the affect circulating around the work.

This description is of course proper to the world-building capacity of imagination. Let us take the case of an analogue situation to world-building and consider the exploration of “newly discovered” landscapes, which can also operate as self-exploration. The explorer paradigm exposes the limits of cartography and representation, judgement and sense. The by-product of these limit-experiences is a lingering unease, which can help in exposing the emergence of these sec-

ond-order attributes, making them legible for representation and analysis and therefore potentially significant. Cinematic examples of the wonder of exploration portray the inability to equate or assign elements discovered to those known, and the dissonance or friction between the two overlapping systems. In the parallel cases of *Cabeza de Vaca* (1999, dir. Nicolás Echevarría) and the exemplary *Valhalla Rising* (2009, dir. Nicolas Winding Refn) something of a re-mystification occurs in the portrayal of pre-existing alien landscapes—here the films share the continent of alterity: North America.

In distinction to the nurturing landscapes of the imaginary—such as Hieronymus Bosch’s well-known and proto-cinematic *Garden of Earthly Delights* (c.1500) , which shows a fully-immersive landscape of pleasure and indulgence—the framing and distancing (from the natural) that landscape painting convention articulates is less precise in the cinematic, and certainly less uniform in the predatory landscapes of *Valhalla Rising*. In the film’s conclusion, methods of magical realism saturate the spatial-visual field with semiotic tags (clues, markers in the landscapes) of transposed familiar and unfamiliar attributes, whose menace is amplified by the calm Edenic landscapes. This alien world was co-created by the explorer and found or pre-existing atmospheric environments. Here the filmic portrayal of the exploratory ambition of the final expedition moves out of focus and away from the traditions of landscape with those aspects of nature which avoid representation, coming into the picture as unimaginable but experiential.

In *Cabeza de Vaca*, the diversity of cultural formations encountered in the landscape resist any single external model or system of understanding, but offer episodic entry into the enchanted

worlds of everyday life in the continent. Here the conquistador’s exploration of other the landscapes of alterity is also a process of self-exposure reciprocal with the exposure of the limits of rational thinking. This exposure arises from an increased distancing of the self from prior and future manifestations. The transition from unknown world to known world is enacted not by landscape encounters, but by the hyper-specific conditions, signs, forces, and affects of those landscapes which initiate feelings of the process of immersion.

In both these filmic examples, the process of exploration occurs at the centre of the narrative as well as the more complex peripheries of spaces and events, where tensions, pressures, and spatial undertows reveal themselves. In each film there is a clever fusion of the rational and irrational integrated into a seamless setting (an *allo*-landscape environment)—one where contradictions appear normalized but not resolved, and it is worth noting that this quick schematic generative process is also the driver for much of the surrealist processes of creation. Indeed, in bringing together rational and irrational spatially, surrealism effectively co-opts utopianism as the modern model for hybrid genesis and world-building. Following surrealism, the aesthetic proficiency of the genesis of worlds lies not in their mimetic credibility, but in their strangeness.

## Strange Genesis

There lies a certain power in the strange. From the interrupted moment of recognizing the uncanny to the generative aesthetic power of estrangement techniques, the curious occurrence of the strange in the fabric of everyday experience generates significance,

and can cluster meaning to point to new world formations. Because directed formulas for the genesis of worlds like a science textbook do not yet exist, we can modify the pre-existing patterns and processes we have available to us today, taking our clues from these. The strange is not exactly alien, and making the familiar strange (to adopt the formalist technique) can arise from shifting your subject-position or shifting the qualities or attributes of known conditions.

The arrival of the strange can indeed be formed from aspects of landscapes imagined but not yet rendered, in unclear or unimagined spaces and junctures. The arrival of the strange into urban environments is a separate series of case studies; or, at the other extreme, mechanical processes for terra-forming in media can illuminate necessary variables. In each case, the designer can take the strange as an inflection point for the production of the new, which over time allows for a stabilization of the strange retroactively. This condition defines the genetic mutation model of world-building.

The structure of a genesis from a disruptive kernel in any process would contradict the protocols for logically-consistent worlds. When the operative value is eccentricity (structurally off-centered) all permutations are valuable, and the disruptive kernel can extend into new patterns, new formations, new systems, and new ecologies. This incremental or iterative process of working outwards from a point is an effective model of world-building, but there are many other models too. These include: laminar, or building up a world through separate and discrete layers to later converge them; pooling, working from one pool of experiences then multiplying this setting like a Russian doll, forming

scales of nested ecologies upwards (and downwards, as in *Horton Hears a Who*); flooding—taking the biblical flood as a literal example of a counter-genesis (though not necessarily apocalyptic); mirroring or trading two visual-spatial proxies for one another, like switching mirrors portraying/portaling two different worlds, possibly inverting the values in one or both (as in *Another Earth*, 2009, dir. Mike Cahill); amplifier—tracking a hidden tendency and amplifying it into predominance to reconfigure the total; and monsters, recombinant assemblages of discrete parts or elements from a (hidden) variety of sources. These monstrous worlds are not inherently malevolent or negative, rather arise as experimental hybrids, by intention.

This last pattern is a type of non-evolutionary irregularity in world-building that would be familiar to those aware of surrealist works, as well as intuitively to repurposing-oriented designers, working from part to whole with techniques to trump a single plan or algorithm. The effectiveness of combining denatured/de-contextualized fragments and fusing them into a new entity (or ecologies), as in the *exquisite corpse* games, relies on the plurality of entangled lines of expression. Here we move from top-down terra-forming or infrastructural thought to more compositional or expedient processes, episodic narratives, and necessarily more resilient models of social and spatial relations, due to the massive dissonance housed. For these reasons, the irregularity of such forms of emergence for world-building would hold an advantage over the cool, logical smoothing (through deliberate reduction of variables) found in hyper-modern utopias and their derivative worlds. The advantage of irregular world-building methods is found exactly in its irregularity, which conditions the strange and the typical in more collaborative, but never

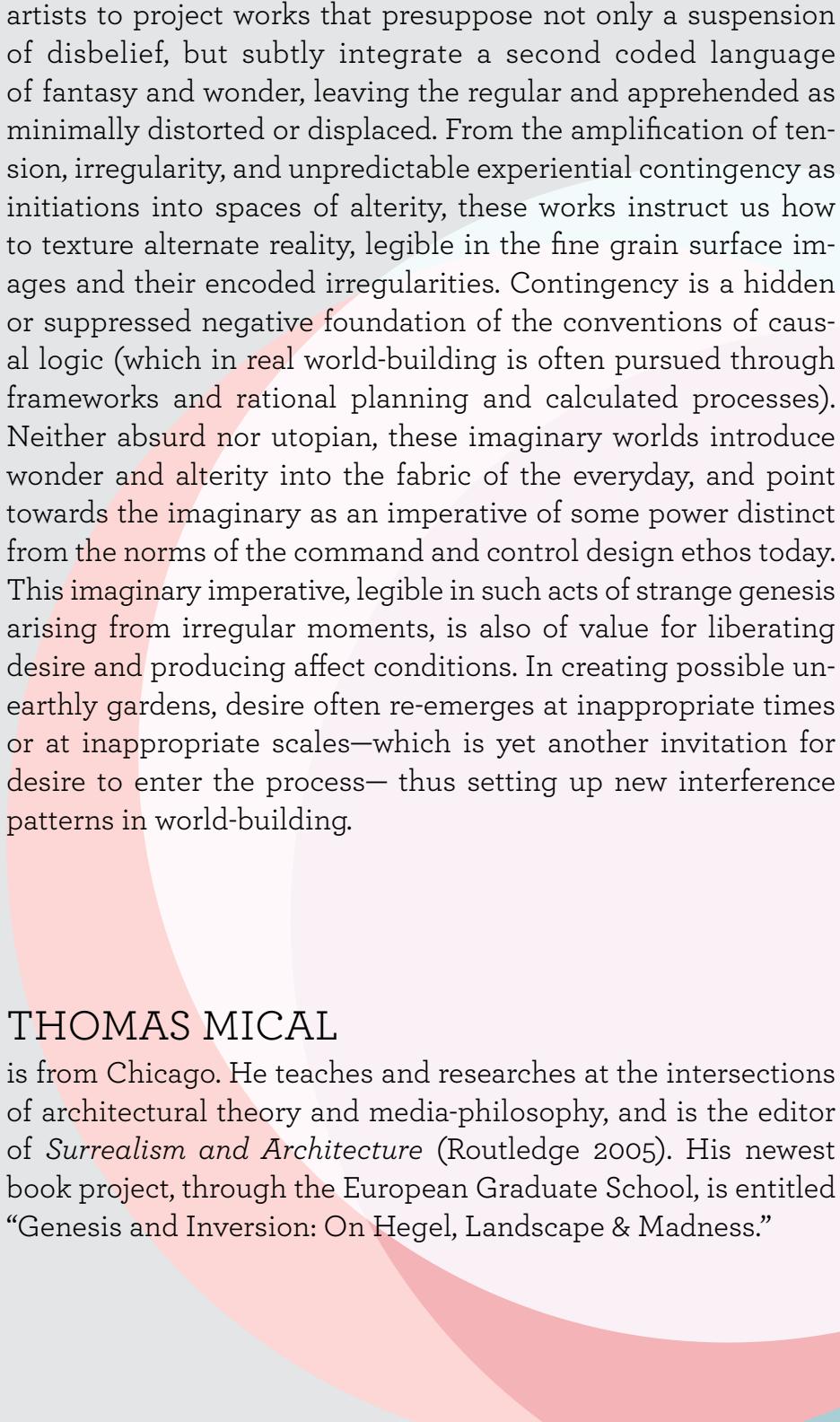
automatic, processes.

Peculiar acts in surrealism gain value in their originality or novelty, and indeed the novelty-reducing repetitions and formulaic application of surrealist clichés eventually led Breton to close the project. The building of surrealist worlds is a more complex issue, as individual artists across different media did sometimes succeed in creating an analogue world through this process (e.g. Tanguy and Dali). The individual works come to stand for a world where their connections become attractive, especially in the secret operations of their non-rational, non-optical mode of surplus/excess invisible contents, which drives the undercurrent to emerge with a bristling consistency of differentiated connotations—likely the source of affect, formed from the resonating conflicted connotations encircling the resulting objects and scenes, scripting these new worlds.

The overlap of standard and non-standard processes generally leads to an eccentric hybrid, and this form of hybridity seeds the novelty of the irregular form of peculiar world-building. There is something positive about the non-uniform and multi-directional impulses that activate robust world-building, shaping constituent assemblages which lie closer to artificial selection than evolution, and are cultivated or curated more than a product of spontaneous generation. Indeed, from any kernel or spore a world can grow, certainly more than one from the same origin, and an infinite number perhaps. So the design of these worlds can be considered progressively from their inception or obliquely through the forms of affect produced. In hybrid forms, the design of the possible comes not as pure form but as interference patterns of affect produced from these interacting combinatory

assemblages, even as we work the design from the end-game of affect back towards its components—especially components selected from strange criteria or determined from non-standard analysis. This approach highlights the unknown pleasures of “arbitrary beauty” in the focused nesting of worlds-within-worlds.

There is a growing proliferation of artificially generated worlds, especially in film and gaming media, echoing the visionary aspects of architectural projection, as well as nervously in relation to the archaic narrative models of foundation myths. Into this schema we wish to introduce an unusual form of conceptual linkage, by taking some examples of curious works that hold the rational and irrational in productive tension for the strange to emerge. For example, if we look at the re-membered re-organization of Baroque attributes in the works of Kris Kuski or the wanton architecture-machines of Jim Kazanjian we can see the imagery of this recombinant assemblage as centered in our focus on the strange, a propagating wave of affect. The individual works seem relics from an alternative history, anticipate immersive landscapes, scaled up to world, as the artifact or image also propels the possibilities of extension into a deviant world-building. Through their irrational configuration of rational-recognizable elements, we can see a soft surrealist thought process that anticipates not only narratives, but an unfolding of adjacent spaces or events. The individual images of these works, even though bounded, gives us each an opening into a consideration of “what next?” leading to all sorts of strange scenarios, extending the affect of the artifact in relation to another context—an alterity, as propositional. In all cases, the designer can draw from these



artists to project works that presuppose not only a suspension of disbelief, but subtly integrate a second coded language of fantasy and wonder, leaving the regular and apprehended as minimally distorted or displaced. From the amplification of tension, irregularity, and unpredictable experiential contingency as initiations into spaces of alterity, these works instruct us how to texture alternate reality, legible in the fine grain surface images and their encoded irregularities. Contingency is a hidden or suppressed negative foundation of the conventions of causal logic (which in real world-building is often pursued through frameworks and rational planning and calculated processes). Neither absurd nor utopian, these imaginary worlds introduce wonder and alterity into the fabric of the everyday, and point towards the imaginary as an imperative of some power distinct from the norms of the command and control design ethos today. This imaginary imperative, legible in such acts of strange genesis arising from irregular moments, is also of value for liberating desire and producing affect conditions. In creating possible unearthly gardens, desire often re-emerges at inappropriate times or at inappropriate scales—which is yet another invitation for desire to enter the process—thus setting up new interference patterns in world-building.

## THOMAS MICAL

is from Chicago. He teaches and researches at the intersections of architectural theory and media-philosophy, and is the editor of *Surrealism and Architecture* (Routledge 2005). His newest book project, through the European Graduate School, is entitled “Genesis and Inversion: On Hegel, Landscape & Madness.”

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