The Architecture of Decay

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Villa Savoye Before Restoration.
Victor Gubbins.

Imagined Villa Savoye with Graffiti.
Xavier Delory.

Villa Savoye after Restoration.
Montse Zamorano.
“Those **memorial layers**, often thick and difficult to decode, reward the explorer with an opportunity for a **visceral reading**— a **bodily interpretation** of the **material and immaterial histories of places**— where ‘decay implies not just evanescence but the **accretion of experience’** (Lowenthal 1985, 179)” (Orange, 72).
Decay

The decay of buildings is an occurrence that is uncertain. A series of cause and effects that occur over time as nature works against the built environment. This submission to the reign of natural law provides a sense of architecture in time.

"The very thing that brought it [his art] to life, will bring about its death." - Andy Goldsworthy

_Tides_ by Andy Goldsworthy, 1996
According to Stewart Brand the decay of a building occurs at different rates which means a building is always tearing itself apart.
Age Value

Art historian and philosopher Alois Reigl developed the concept of age-value to describe the value that a building accrues over time which is made visible by patina among other things. This concept is based on an understanding of the contribution of decay.

Diagram of Reigl’s Values.
ERA Architects. 2011.
Challenging Modern Preservation

By forecasting the process of decay through the influences of weathering, human interaction, and the progression of the context surrounding it, this thesis seeks to challenge the way architecture is preserved.

*Imaginary View of the Grand Gallery of the Louvre in Ruins.*
Hubert Robert. 1796.
Role of the Architecture in Preservation

Through the idea of preservation architecture can play many different roles.

- **Hedmark Museum**
  - Location: Hamar, Norway
  - Architect: Sverre Fehn
  - Completed: 2005
  - Program: Museum

- **Castelvecchio Museum**
  - Location: Verona, Italy
  - Architect: Carlo Scarpa
  - Completed: 1974
  - Program: Museum
  - Source: archiobjects.org

- **MFO Park**
  - Location: Zurich, Switzerland
  - Architect: Radarschall
  - Designed: 2002
  - Program: Public Park

- **FRAC**
  - Location: Nord Pas-De-Calais, Dunkerque, France
  - Architect: Lacaton & Vassal
  - Completed: 2013
  - Program: Gallery and Museum

**Found Object/Ruin**

**Site Specific Remediation**

**New vs Old**
3 Potential Sites

**Found Object**

Birdseye of Carrie Furnaces. whereandwhen.com

**Deliberate Debris**

Petrified Forest State Park. wikipedia.com

**Growth from Decline**
Navajo Code Talkers Museum Competition Proposal

In 2011 the National Navajo Code Talkers Museum and Veterans Center, which is currently located in Tuba City, Arizona had a Nationwide competition for a Museum and Veterans' Center to be located on Navajo Code Talker land a few miles east of Window Rock, Arizona.
The Navajo Indians are a tribe that have centered their culture around their connection with nature. To them the Earth itself is a relic that contains not only the present but also all the past and potential future.

“In the traditional Navajo view, life is a constant cycle of growth, death and new life, that flows in a circular motion - all things must begin and end at the same point” (Bitsuie).
Methods of Inquiry

Digital and physical model studies of material relationships. Study/experiment with traditional building methods, natural resources, and the effects of weathering over time.
Methods of Inquiry

Timeline studies of different scales of time. Highlight different scales in regards to program elements, users, the site, and the history of the Navajo Code Talkers. Use the method of collage to knit different scales of time.

A Temporary (but not Instant) City for 2 Million

Site Analysis Collage.
Conclusion

Through the study of the Navajo Indian Code Talkers and their cultural heritage this thesis seeks to develop a museum that challenges the concepts of modern preservation. This study of preservation is rooted in forecasting the inevitable changes of decay. It suggests that by forecasting these inevitable changes a greater sense of memory, time, and place can be created and an even greater appreciation of the past existing as part of the present.

Bibliography and Selected Sources


+Orange, Hilary, Editor. Reanimating Industrial Spaces: Conducting Memory Work in Post-industrial Societies. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast, 2015.

