

LESSONS AND CAROLS: Facts & Fictions

Identifying Epistemological & Ethical Foundations of the Academical Village: A Project of Enlightenment Curiosity and Mannerist Irreverence

"What could be more Modern than the Archaic?"
— Sanford Kwinter

"The first architectural act is to break the ground."
— Gottfried Semper

Spatial Tales of Origin as Specifications for Construction

Genesis is a story of the creation of the world, first as a garden, in sequential increments of six days, suggesting the necessity of a pause on the seventh. Cast out of Eden, Adam and Eve began the project of the city, again in hunting grounds with Cain and pastoral settings with Abel, followed by the hubris of Babel and the subsequent fiery passions of Sodom and Gomorrah, until the renewal of flood, the parting of sea, the fall of Jericho and Troy and the eventual endurance of Jerusalem as a city of immutable granite. The Academical Village is an iconic reminder that even in this New World Arcadia Jefferson was our first heuristic thinker, as he wove a narrative tale repeating the existential need to articulate a covenant with this world, again and again. His encyclopedic knowledge of the endurance of archaic inaugural acts made him this continent's first modern mind, validating, *no*, advancing past models with the immediate circumstantial resources at hand, transforming rich red clay into brick, glowing in his ruddy complexion in the likeness of God, by way of Michelangelo's authorship of Adam, and subsequently Eve, in the Garden He had provided. Authorship of paradise was the work of an other; the construction of the city is the responsibility, or covenant, of humankind in dialogue with the pre-conditions of nature's orders. Jefferson was experimenting/approximating in the Academical Village Project, with this flawed paradigm for an emerging setting for national citizenship on a continental scale at the sublime edge of the frontier.

Numbers in the Night

In the recurrent darkness of the winter solstice, when the human imagination is stressed to cling onto the few enduring self-evident truths, the prismatic pragmatic mind articulates a primer of spatial and material elements, which guide individuals and groups to analyze, engage, initiate the constructed environment. This analytical method is offered to read architecture at the scales of both the garden and the city with building understood as a verb. More often than not these lessons are chanted first as nursery rhymes, then carols if not complex *chora* around the world to reveal the utility of orientation and the profound effects of gravity. For enlightenment citizens, if not aspirational revolutionary leaders on the other side of the Atlantic in Arcadia, bringing pragmatic instrumentality and accountability to the heart of darkness in America is the goal where the wild serves the chaos of *terra incognita* as a paramount existential necessity. Jefferson kept journals all his life at Monticello and later at Poplar Forest of both natural conditions and human consequences and made plans accordingly of building up and tearing down to make a covenant with the world again. For half a century of teaching and practice I have tried to serve in the assigned role of promoting citizenship as a *field guide* for getting lost as a pre-requisite for a stranger's curiosity. The tales of "The Three Little Pigs," "Humpty Dumpty," and Jack & Jill's mortal disaster all foreground these lessons and carols. Joseph Rykwert, in *The Dancing Column*, prefaces architectural space in the acts of dancing as Kwinter hears the ever-present resonating also in archaic shaman chants, and punctuating congregational carols if not massive *chora*. National anthems and pledges of allegiance are always performed in the spatial and political agora below as well as acropolis above.

Sequence of Pedagogic Intentions

Introduction of an analytical method for surveyors, nomads & lunatics

Step-by-step lessons on priming a deep, deep well to serve as *mirrors for the moon*

Jefferson's Academical Village is an example of heuristic thinking from requisite pre-conditions to eschatological transformation and change

Heuristic thinking requires the imaginative capacity of architects to construct a narrative connecting distinct yet recurrent dualities with the seminal and the instrumental

This narrative is primarily temporal as it always comes and aspires to be in dialogue with the sky. An arch from sunrise to sunset from here and now to there here.

Before we start, we pledge ourselves to the logic of flawed approximations some call facts. This pragmatic not-so-linear process cannot conceive of a beginning a tabula rasa, nor clean slate empty of marks, blithely present echoes, shadows, and heart beats. The world is a cornucopia, and the prism is appreciated as iridescent.

On the first day of this course, we make our own circumstantially resultant paper from lint found in our pockets, around a campfire in the evening, we make our own charcoal. On this collective sheet we sign-in on the stars. On the last day of the course we take off our shoes barefoot on the Lawn to stain our soles and to leave the other side of the first day's pledge of finger prints in the mark upon the ground is to leave a print of identity on the Lawn.

Analytical Primer

Day 1: Preconditions of the Site

With telescope and microscope we now render visible place.

The first lesson for this course in architecture as a craft is to frame a garden; some call pre-conditions, or the circumstances located between Eden and Jerusalem. Preconditions are mindsets imagined as types, and when constructed Only lightning can split Cole's tree, only an axe can fell a cherry sapling. Pre-conditions are remembered as events that bracket these natural events. The primitive hunt and hand are innovations of humankind moving from natural environments constructed, once civic, environments. Each analysis conditions of the site to transformation and change paradigms and make reference to precedents by type.

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This narrative is primarily temporal as it always commences deep within the earth and aspires to be in dialogue with the sky. An architectural promenade is a journey from sunrise to sunset from here and now to there and then, from nowhere to now here.

Before we start, we pledge ourselves to the logic of an analytical method full of flawed approximations some call facts. This pragmatic evidence based on a not-so-linear process cannot conceive of a beginning as a void to be filled, not a tabula rasa, nor clean slate empty of marks, blisters, and scars, but with ever-present echoes, shadows, and heart beats. The world is full from the start, space is a cornucopia, and the prism is appreciated as iridescent.

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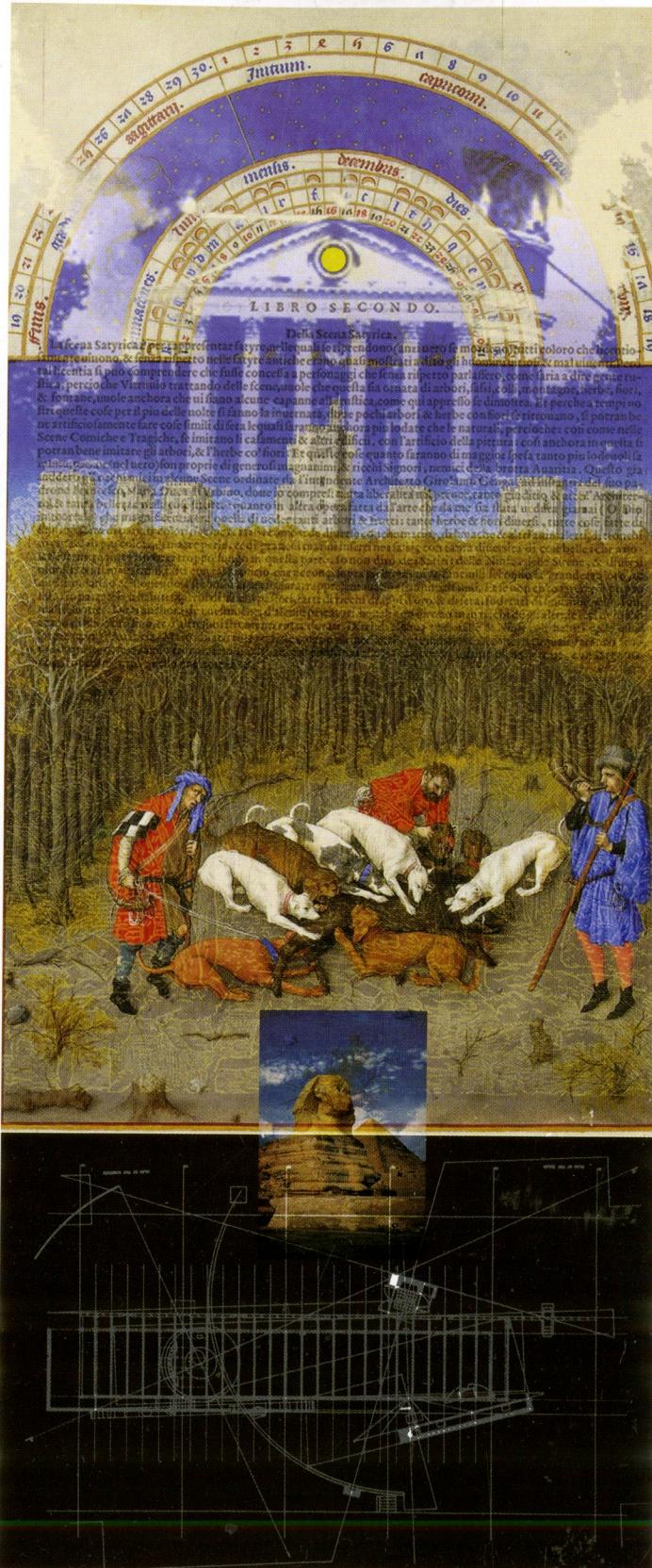
On the first day of this course, we make our own exquisite sheet of circumstantially resultant paper from lint found in our collective pockets, and, around a campfire in the evening, we make our own marking instruments from charcoal. On this collective sheet we sign-in on that first day outside under the stars. On the last day of the course we take off our socks and shoes and walk barefoot on the Lawn to stain our soles and to leave a digital impression on the other side of the first day's pledge of finger prints in the act of making. To make a mark upon the ground is to leave a print of identity and collectivity some call the Lawn.

Analytical Primer

Day 1: Preconditions of the Site

With telescope and microscope we now render visible transects across time and place.

The first lesson for this course in architecture as a covenant with the world is to frame a garden; some call pre-conditions, or the circumstantial here and now, now located between Eden and Jerusalem. Preconditions are natural; precedents are mindsets imagined as types, and when constructed are models of human agency. Only lightning can split Cole's tree, only an axe can cut deep into Washington's cherry sapling. Pre-conditions are remembered as terrific, as wildfires and floods bracket these natural events. The primitive hunt and modern war on the other hand are innovations of humankind moving from nature's wildness to humankind's constructed, once civic, environments. Each analytical component from pre-conditions of the site to transformation and change will reference a few singular paradigms and make reference to precedents by type and model.



The first two images offered to the students are a window of wellbeing:

#1 in the vertical plane and the Maverick plan as a horizontal section

#2 They are both diptychs of edge and center and triptychs in defining the thickened edge as gardens.

The Academical Village even in its inception 200 years ago was a haunted vessel, an Enlightenment version of Noah's Ark, attempting to frame both topographic first and then archeological imaginations second in service of envisioning a new nation of educated leaders.

This last Jefferson project of his old age serves specifically as a mnemonic device to imagine a continental nation as a window framing in its depth the far, far away, with an immeasurable middle ground and the foreground of here and now where fingerprints can be deposited on the chair rail as windowsill. Dr. Steinberg's window of wellbeing contains Rebecca Solnit's *The Blue of Distance*. The parallel image is Maverick's engraved plan of 1821 as the current existing conditions of an on-going construction site.

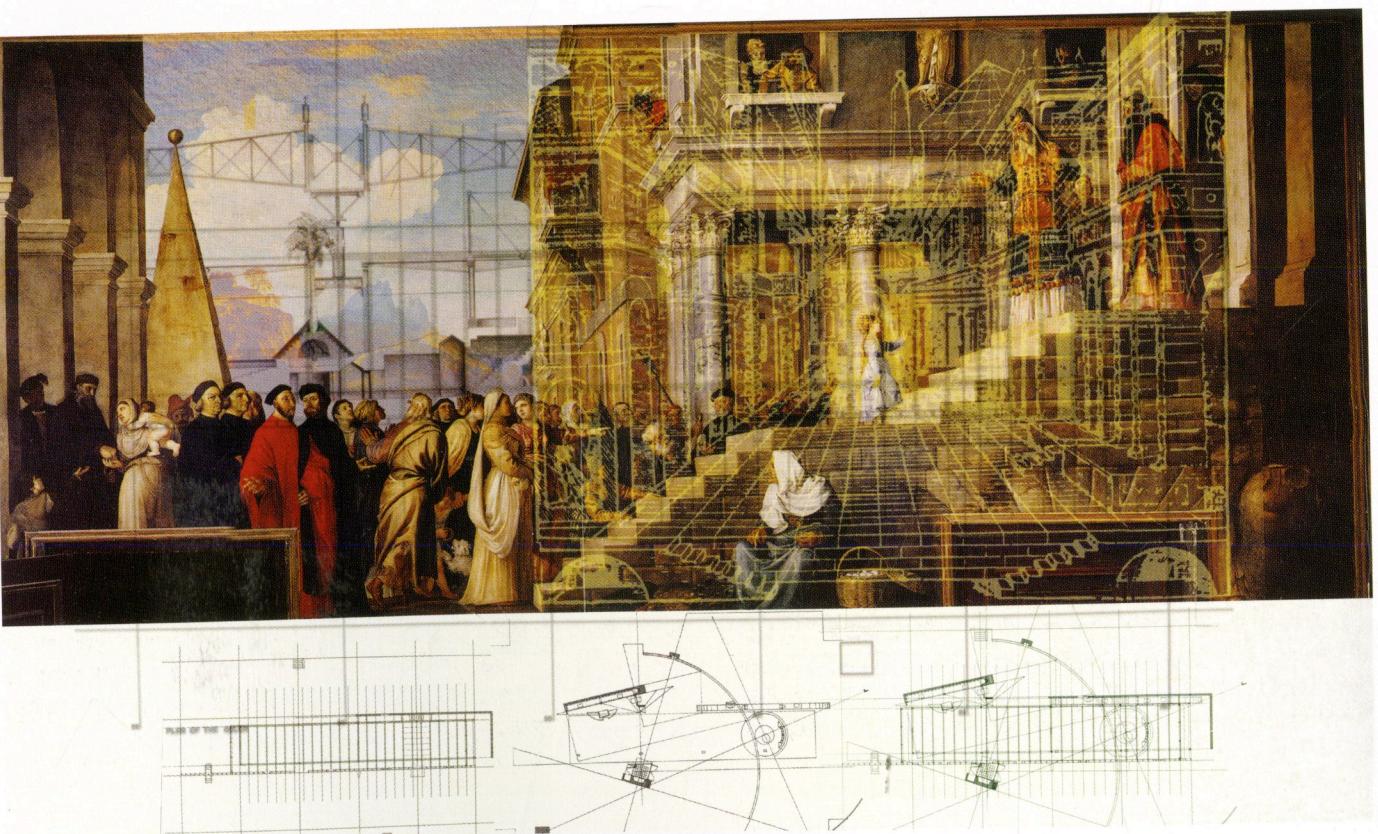
Thomas Jefferson no doubt read Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* early on as he sharpened his bricoleur¹⁰ appetites for local resources and hybridized models, as well as nostalgically maintained fragments of the late Enlightenment, into this eventual archaic scenographic setting for incubating citizens of decorum to give measure to the immensity of this continental watershed. Versailles under Louis XIV

gave measure to the French Empire by the endless vista of the setting sun over waterworks witnessed by Jefferson *in situ* in 1785 and whet Jefferson's appetite for the Louisiana Purchase of even greater immensities. The reliability of the surveyor's grid scaled up from his own drafting tablets made Jefferson's projects of the Academical Village and the Louisiana Purchase accountable as they framed the cardo and decumanus of future cities.¹¹

#3 What does it mean to connect the nascent minds of children with the familiar beginning: long, long ago and far, far away with the immediacy of here and now?

Le Corbusier sailed to the New World for the first time in 1931 on board the ship *Poseidon* and encountered on its southern route first the skyline of Buenos Aires at night with five gleaming towers of glass and steel revealing a cosmopolitan city framed by the southern cross in the Rio de la Plata as *mirrors for the moon*. It was terra incognita, the then black of distance, where endless Arcadian resources could turn night into day. Five iridescent towers held up to the twinkling sky, five fingers and then ten permuted, then permitted LC to grasp a page with one hand and then render first impressions with the tip of a pen with his "other" hand. Paper and pen, the generative agents of *numbers in the night*,¹² marking the beginning of accountability, were discovered on the deck of yet another ark.

This initial oceanic view of tumultuous waters is a Genesis reference followed immediately in this first lecture with a juxtaposed view of a desert landscape of shifting sands and reformational dunes, the construction site of the Pyramid of Cheops.



In September 1961, I had my first introductory class to architecture with professor William Faye Shellman III who presented a photo-discourse between Newton's laws of gravity and Einstein's theory of relativity, between the formal and the informal, between the Cartesian grid and the organic circumstance, between perhaps the discursive potential of surrealism and the architectural lunatics. He asked us why this pyramid was architecture, rather than a sandcastle. He demonstrated by animals as bird nests and anthills that came to understand that architecture was accountable, through memory, each irreducible line segment including the square base, which was visible, was exactly the same length and all six triangular angles with the four square base 90 degrees each.

I made my first mistake when I then asked: "What was the other foreground?" Shellman answered: "It was the Sphinx, but not the pyramid." I asked: "Is it architecture?" The following week, we were more nimble students and showed us a photograph of the Parthenon, and we were quick to respond: "Yes, it was accountable. At that moment I made my second mistake: 'Is the Erechtейон a building?' Shellman responded: "It is the Erechtheion, not the Parthenon." I asked: "Is it architecture?" Since those first lessons in 1961, I have been appreciating that evolving cultures produce frictional if not complementary forms of architecture, which were both accountable as well as speculative and speculative encounter citizens and strangers as the pre-requisite cast of characters in the approximation of an urban middle ground.

It is the second provocation here on this first day that Jefferson's Academical Village is a requisite urban stage set, a theater in a satiric setting, where the scales of both villa as well as the vastness of a transcontinental intention was to transform strangers into new world citizens through a call and response narration called heuristic thinking.

At the age of 33, Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. A century later at 83 he was completing the celestial soffit of the Rotunda, the Encyclopedic library of this New World university.

Two characters now appear side by side to commence this dialogue in different conditions: George Washington and Chief Eagle Feathers-Bear. Wood's painting of Rev. Weems narrates the young boy Washington as a man maturely rendered, confessing that he cannot tell a lie for chopping down his father's cherry tree. The setting is a vast plantation made possible by the institution of slavery where the wilderness is retreating into the stormy distant horizon, the middle ground framing the unnatural pruning of trees, and the ironies of the foregrounded crime scene of a boy, an axe, and a fatal blow to a tree prescient political status quo immediately at hand. The boy grew up to become General of the American Revolutionary war and the first president of the United States assuming the mythic view of America as the dominant leadership projected over landscapes of aggression. In 1961, I am now presented the other kind of leadership paradigm. Side by side, the first introduced second is a representative of the First People, Satwa Pequots, whom I call Chief Eagle Feathers-Bear Claws, celebrating where one can aspire to both soaring in the skies as well as digging in the earth.

French Empire by the endless vista of the setting sun over Jefferson *in situ* in 1785 and whet Jefferson's appetite for even greater immensities. The reliability of the drawings from his own drafting tablets made Jefferson's projects and the Louisiana Purchase accountable as they framed us of future cities.¹¹

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I made my first mistake when I then asked: "What was the other image in the foreground?" Shellman answered: "It was the Sphinx, but not to worry it was not architecture." The following week, we were more nimble students when Shellman showed us a photograph of the Parthenon, and we were quick to count eight frontal columns and consequently 16 on the flanks. We then knew architecture was accountable. At that moment I made my second mistake: "What was that asymmetrical building fragment of a blank wall with circumstantial figures to the North of the Parthenon?" Shellman responded: "It is the Erechtheum, but not to worry; it is not architecture." Since those first lessons in 1961, I have been appreciating that evolving cultures produce frictional if not complex paradigmatic buildings, which were both accountable as well as speculative where we encounter citizens and strangers as the pre-requisite cast of characters in this approximation of an urban middle ground.

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At the age of 33, Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence and a half a century later at 83 he was completing the celestial soffit of the Rotunda as the Encyclopedic library of this New World university.

Two characters now appear side by side to commence this dialogue on pre-conditions: George Washington and Chief Eagle Feathers-Bear Claws. Grant Wood's painting of Rev. Weems narrates the young boy Washington, however maturely rendered, confessing that he cannot tell a lie for chopping down his father's cherry tree. The setting is a vast plantation made possible by the institution of slavery where the wilderness is retreating into the stormy distance, with the middle ground framing the unnatural pruning of trees, and the immediately foregrounded crime scene of a boy, an axe, and a fatal blow to both tree and prescient political *status quo* immediately at hand. The boy grew up to be the General of the American Revolutionary war and the first president of this new Nation of the United States assuming the mythic view of American singularity as dominant leadership projected over landscapes of aggression. However, there is now presented the other kind of leadership paradigm. Side by side, though introduced second is a representative of the First People, Satwatch, chief of the Pequots, whom I call Chief Eagle Feathers-Bear Claws, celebrating a culture where one can aspire to both soaring in the skies as well as digging deep into the

earth. Both are leaders: one producing landscapes of aggression, and the other weaving a tale of co-existence and speculative engagement with both/and rather than either/or.

We come together in Campbell Hall a vertically striated bar-coded, hardwood paneled auditorium and realize it is really the primeval hardwood forest setting, which greeted the First People as they followed the retreating glaciers of the last Ice Age. Rev. Weems pulls back a curtain on this theater setting of the fictional play of both topographic and archeological imaginations. We begin our analytical method of appreciating the Academical Village from the perspective of the forest edge. Found first in the Papyrus Reed marshes of the Nile and transposed onto burial chamber walls of Atreus, the forest edge pre-figures civilization for Vitruvius, Cole, and Schama. We dwell on this darkened grotto for the course of the semester as our grounded meeting place and dream of the rising sun to cast a halo behind the course narrators while the projection equipment marks, not aligns with the setting of the sun for this permanent nocturnal space. In this world of pre-conditions we briefly acknowledge Berlioz's sequence of didactic stage sets for *Troy, Les Troyens* (1930), we introduce #8 Raphael's *Fire in the Borgo* where Aeneas carries his father Anchiasus, and leads his son out of burning Troy, eventually to found Rome, with Romulus and Remus prepped on the nearby shores of Lake Urbano by a she wolf, summed up in Caravaggio's *Narcissus* reflecting and echoing with generational calls and responses. This provocation on speculation on the Garden of Eden and the enduring city ends in Thomas Cole's *The Course of the Empire*, which takes us from the savage state of Arcadia to the eschatological borderline of the city in desolation.

Day 2: Building as a Verb

With hammer and blade now quarry stone and prepare timber frames. "A Syntax of Structure: Caves and Tents," and the megaron after the humbling beginning in giving voice to topographic and archeological preconditions of the site, the first architectural act is to incise foundations deeply or stake lightly into the site. These are achieved by inhabiting caves or surrogate masonry structures, digging deep footings for foundations or to inhabit tree branches or by pounding multiple stakes into the ground for tents. An architecture of caves and tents, or a surrogate inventory of walls and frames, forms a set of ground rules for a syntax of structure. The students realize that caves & tents are paradigms but that Architecture has explored both systems in useful harmony in the early Greek paradigm of the megaron, in the funereal tomb of Atreus. In a slide, "borrowed" in 1969 from Michael Graves for my first teaching presentation, of a megaron,¹³ I note a substantial stone basement, a plinth, with three sun dried brick and stucco coated walls with modest triangulated apertures in the flanks and an open porch of two columnar frames and two hybridized pilasters joining the flanking walls. The roof is made of multiple timber frames, and a large framed orthogonal window is front and center in the attic. We are ready to go onto the easy pieces of elemental and articulate doors and windows, attics and basements to confirm that gravity and orientation matter.

Day 3:

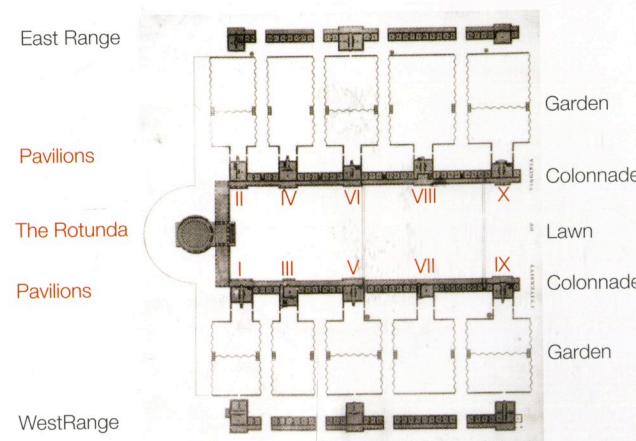
Now invite the three little pigs and the big bad wolf along for this journey.
Easy Pieces: Doors & Windows/Attics & Basements & the Essential Hearth

The elements of architecture need not be difficult. The easy way to appreciate the essential task of architecture is to understand it serves to define the difference between outside and inside and the spaces in between. Coming in from the outside we need to define a threshold, a gate, and then a door between outside and inside. Aldo Van Eyck has introduced with the challenge that the door is more than 1 ¾" between outside and inside, going on to cite the advancing and retreating of the tides as accountable evidence of gravity and orientation. Once inside, a window frames a view to the outside beyond. A basement may claim gravitational precedent because all structures are pulled to the center of the earth where we negotiate ground rules. And finally, the attic responds to the depth of the basement by distinguishing the space between the ceiling and the roof. Interactive software programs permit the students to make permutations of easy pieces at the scale of the Rotunda as well as Pavilions and student dwellings of the Academical Village.

Day 4:

Connective Tissues
Where do we come from? Where do we now find ourselves?
The Difficult Whole: Center & Edge

On the other hand, compositional intentions as to how we put these elements together fall also into two paradigms: establishing the center and marking the edge. Diagraming the Academical Village, from the E-W Ranges as edges to the multiple gardens correspondent to Pavilions in between, these self-reflective zones are connected finally to the expansive center of the Lawn as field and generative Rotunda as figure whose enlightenment shaft of high noon light serves as foundational obelisk for this surveyor's son. Students can diagram the center and edges of the Jefferson project with a sequence of one line then followed by the permutations of 1/2/4/16/256 lines. The final myriad of lines defines for some to be an eschatological moment, a new beginning and new interpretation: 256 standing for the extensive hardwood forest of trees as a pre-condition to the Academical Village.

**Day 5:**

Trespassing, Exodus, and Eschatological Resilience
Stones endure & craft perpetuates as new generations invest in the necessity of ruins
Transformation & Change

Most foundational courses end with reinforcing compositional paradigms as ancient as those found within masonic lodges, the cabalist fascination with the harmony of numerology, Gothic mysticism, classical proportions, formulated Beaux Arts codes and typologies, challenged by Bauhaus alignments and the prism of Cubist permutations, the simultaneity of literal and phenomenal transparencies, linguistic and then semiotic models, and de-constructivist disembodied visitations on *complexity and contradiction* in architecture, understood by current if not cool voices as a vortex in flux. These syntactical sensibilities to erase closure of the period, to insert the possibility of the eschatological new beginnings have always been found in the following revolutionary examples of what some term wicked problems which have always been recurrent dualities, and others call the *human comedy*,¹⁴ a space between *Genesis & Exodus*, in Dante's "Inferno" as well as Saroyan. Sanford Kwinter's voice challenges us this first day of lessons: "What can be more modern than the archaic?"

Jacques Louis David's *Rape of the Sabines* (1789), and *The Tennis Court Oath* (1791) both project very full canvases dealing with the foundation of a new Roman race from the fusion of Sabine and Latin tribes in violent and generative landscapes of aggression in a battle ground outside of the walls of fortified hill towns. *The Tennis Court Oath* takes us inside to the evocation of an indoor tennis court filled with the new citizens of the French Revolutionary republic with representatives of the clergy, military, and civil courts proclaiming the event space of the winds of change blowing into this place of transformation of a kingdom now a republic.

De Chirico, in the midst of the Great War (1916) projected in *Enigma of Arrival*, evokes the abandoned haunted citta, a piazza with only a shadowy figure, a passing train outside the city walls, and a headless statue on a pedestal. In *The Oracle at Delphi*, De Chirico explores again the mysteries of archaic wisdom as reconsideration of the city now as threatened common ground for bellicose 20th century culture. Finally, the first lecture ends with Picasso's *Guernica* (1936) where the mythic and the archaic epitomized in the horse and the bull surrogates for the Sun and the Moon, are challenged by the modern inventions of the electric light bulb and the new battle grounds of city centers as the new theater or event space for war.



Jacques-Louis David. *Rape of the Sabines* (1789); and *The Oath of the Tennis Court* (1791)

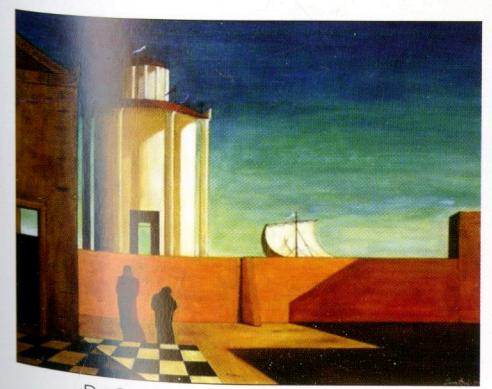
**Day 6:**

Dwell, however Briefly Between Memory and Amnesia, the Modern Archaic.
The Haunted House as Memory Confronts the Ethical Role of Fiction

As the last sequential lesson of this analytical primer, we come of precedent. A regimen of training was the basis of the Age of Beaux Arts introduction to architecture. Compass and rod, and of 30/60/90 and 45-degree triangles were instrumental in approaching the logic of Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian proportions and orders. Spans of palazzo and basilica plans, sections and elevations permitted permutations based on the simplicity of archaic caves and tents. appetite for the hybrid.

Kenneth Frampton in *Critical Regionalism* speculates that agriculture permitted collective culture to be the foundation of civilization, as collective culture is the spatial theater for both securing long-term and staging inaugural events for future harvests. Building on the pedagogy of Peter Carl and the Architectural Association in 1980 constructed a four-year study tracing human life cycle institutions in a London precinct, one a on-going dialogue of call and response. Precedent is a precondition and an architecture lingering in the palimpsests of the city as well as the mythology of paradise lost and found in Solnit's "The Blue of Dis". Academical Village Jefferson plays with memory and amnesia as Arcadia.

The so-called original sin committed in Eden has little to do with innovative, the new is a useful idea given the human condition vis-à-vis that which is already there thus privileging the pre-conditions of little value in a world already full. The first trespass was a set-up of the existing Tree of Knowledge. In a universe-city full of treasure houses and now as clouds of knowledge, so-called miracles and magic abound to be traced by surveyors, nomads and lunatics with a appetite for epistemological roots and a cabalist's delight in peripheral Masonic lodges commenced with the pyramids, were found in the traces of Knossos and were surely guiding the construction of the Secret numbers in the night initiate requisite field guides for getting lost.



De Chirico. *Enigma of Arrival* (1916)



Dore. *Dante and Aeneas* (1861)

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Day 6:
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Archaic.
The Haunted House as Memory Confronts the Ethical Role of Precedent.

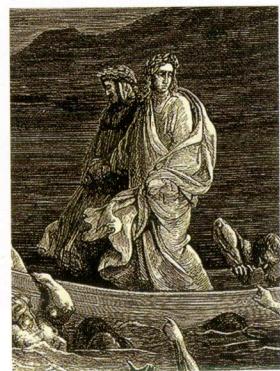
As the last sequential lesson of this analytical primer, we come to the problem of precedent. A regimen of training was the basis of the Age of Enlightenment’s Beaux Arts introduction to architecture. Compass and rod, and the easy shortcuts of 30/60/90 and 45-degree triangles were instrumental in approximating the logic of Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian proportions and orders. Spatial typologies of palazzo and basilica plans, sections and elevations permitted the appetite for permutations based on the simplicity of archaic caves and tents, and the modern appetite for the hybrid.

Kenneth Frampton in *Critical Regionalism* speculates that agricultural surplus permitted collective culture to be the foundation of civilization, and that the city as collective culture is the spatial theater for both securing long-term storage and staging inaugural events for future harvests. Building on that ethical belief, in *Architecture as Continuity*, the pedagogy of Peter Carl and Dalibor Vesely at the Architectural Association in 1980 constructed a four-year studio curriculum tracing human life cycle institutions in a London precinct, one after the other, as an on-going dialogue of call and response. Precedent is a precondition of the mind, and an architecture lingering in the palimpsests of the city as well as the resilient mythology of paradise lost and found in Solnit’s “The Blue of Distance.” In the Academical Village Jefferson plays with memory and amnesia at the threshold to Arcadia.

The so-called original sin committed in Eden has little to do with the belief that the innovative, the new is a useful idea given the human condition where we respond to that which is already there thus privileging the pre-conditions. Originality is of little value in a world already full. The first trespass was a setup with the pre-existing Tree of Knowledge. In a universe-city full of treasure houses as orchards and now as clouds of knowledge, so-called miracles and magic sufficiently abound to be traced by surveyors, nomads and lunatics with a talmudic scholar’s appetite for epistemological roots and a cabalist’s delight in permutations. Masonic lodges commenced with the pyramids, were found in the labyrinthine traces of Knossos and were surely guiding the construction of the Tower of Babel. Secret numbers in the night initiate requisite field guides for getting lost.



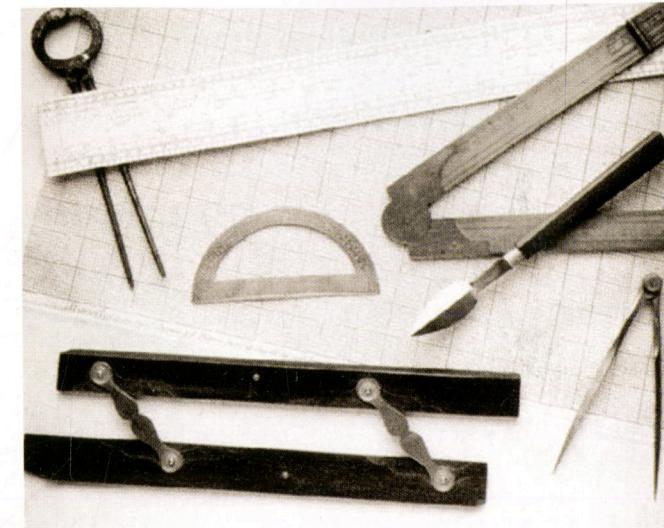
De Chirico. *Enigma of Arrival* (1916)



Dore. *Dante and Aeneas* (1893)



Picasso. *Guernica* (1936)



Jefferson's Drafting Instruments



Michelangelo. Sistine Chapel Frescoes: Adam and Eve in Eden (1512)