

DIALOGUES: Between Citizens and Strangers

There are seminal texts by singular architects who also teach through their own paradigmatic projects and not-so gentle manifestos. This project is not one of them. These dialectical essays are rather speculations though a collaborative set of dialogues of students and educators, who find themselves as Kenan Fellows at Mr. Jefferson's University. This Piedmont setting has always been clearly off the beaten path of American urbanism, somewhere between the permeable membranes of Atlantic flows and the first folds of the Appalachian Mountain range. None of these voices are from here; rather, we all come from very far away. We find ourselves for distinct tenures as both citizens and strangers here and now, as we learn the lessons of surveyors, nomads, and lunatics. And we all take pride in being slow learners and ask without irony: "What could be more Modern than the Archaic?"⁶

This is collection of tales of being somewhere between lost & found through the lens of the lawn. As Mason and Dixon gave measure to the World from Greenwich to Capetown, South Africa, before they inscribed the Mason-Dixon line between Pennsylvania and Maryland, so Jefferson gave measure to his house on the hill as well as plat the entire Louisiana purchase, before he returned to fallow ground seven miles from his childhood playground to give form to the space of the Academical Village. Architecture as a covenant with the world, again is the ethical touchstone for meanders and metaphors, which yield national aspiration one step, one heartbeat at a time. This collection of tales is perhaps modeled after Homer's *Iliad*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Twain's *Huckleberry Finn/Tom Sawyer*, or was it A *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court?* We will bear witness to an Irishman's sojourn to a brownfield site, onto a centerfold framed by two distinct Himalayan flood plains, bounded by both Roman hallucinations and the dream of Native American territories, all traced by an adolescent sensibility for a recurrent Arcadia located somewhere between Richmond and Paris and always grounded back home within Virginia's topographic imagination.

This is not another treatise on the heroic nature of the Jeffersonian imagination. It is rather weaving fictions, constructing dialogues, (Rashomon) again and again on Jefferson as boy/man, as adolescent, as dreamer and instrumental explorer of here and there, close at hand and worlds long, long ago and far, far away. This is a collection of meanders, speculations, fog-bound as well as iridescent. Joseph Brodsky, in *Watermark* (1992), would say of such consequential yet circumstantial descriptions (of Venice) that they were visions not based on principles rather than the sensibilities of a very nervous man. The fact may be that Jefferson was a farmer and politician, but what we illuminate here was that at 13 he was an adolescent first orphaned as was common at the edge of the Arcadian wild, like Romulus and Remus, but custodian of terrains, knowledge, and human energy. He was a surveyor, nomad and given his penchant for oculi and mirrors, a certifiable lunatic.

In recent years, generative texts by John Heyduk, *The Education of an Architect* (1989); Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), and Le Corbusier, *Vers Une Architecture* (1921) have become resources beyond their

own educational institutions or national cultures, benchmarks for the debates within each zeitgeist. These three texts are read as providing generative frictional assumptions inherent in the assumption that architecture serves to advance the debate on the new ways of building within a changing world. *Both Sides Now*, by Joni Mitchell, was published in the same year of Venturi's Gentle Manifesto in the Yale *Perspecta*. This was a time (1967-69) of American cultural upheaval and longing for an architecture radically engaged with an enduring sense of time and place in the face of Walter Lippmann's *Preface to Morals: America as Barren Ground*; as place and promise of Frampton's appreciation of critical regionalism⁷, perhaps the cultural idiosyncratic lessons of Aalto's Finnish work to the north and Siza's Portuguese work to the south. Few seem to build upon an architecture as culture on the edge away from center but still anchored optimistically, not critically between in the frictional moment itself, as a lingering infected blister if not a scar, as an instrumental discourse, never a clean slate.

What makes this collection of essays different is that it is generated from one paradigmatic World Heritage Site, however far from the currency of urban pathways. The Academical Village was conceived at the time of Thoreau's retreat to Walden Pond, of the emergence of American Transcendentalism and Whitman's "Leaves of Grass". In the current global, yet culturally adrift mindset, this set of essays offers an affinity to Pynchon's *A Slow Learner*, to find the regenerative spirit within the small project, the village or nomadic oasis rather than envisioning ever more extensive global networks.

This is a book about a pause, about making the most out of materials at hand, keeping the canvas wet, about pentimento, mark and erasure, and, above all, about those who might just imagine the value of Hopscotch played between citizens and strangers. The essential fact is that the setting of an education of an architect might just matter. Heyduk ironically makes a case of New York and Prague through amnesiac abstraction; Venturi references a scenographic repository in the City of Brotherly Love inscribed with tattoos from Las Vegas and Rome; and Le Corbusier's message has been lost in translation, by Anglo-Saxon offshore repositionists, abandoning the endurance of Rome on the book's journey from Paris to London. Rome, Paris, and the promise of terra incognita are all bound up in this project molded from Virginia red clay, river run sand, and endless Arcadian forests of hard and soft woods. This is a book on American Pragmatism and self-evident truths in a new culture of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, rooted in the promise of Eden and the enduring resistance of Jerusalem.⁸

We aligned ourselves with contemporary philosophical debates which posit what was previously called Ancient if not Archaic belief systems might hold self-evident truths coincidental with contemporary survival systems of Sustainability, once called common sense, grounded in the recurrent dualities of Architecture. "Lessons of the Lawn" is a philosophical work framed on epistemological and ethical questions. Not only is this a philosophical work, it also seeks to identify the contemporary vitality of American cultural history. If the Lawn is the tabula

rasa for citizenship, is Monticello the endearing place for the familiar and the strange? Perhaps, the roots of a topology found in generative settings.

The Critical Context of this Late Jeffersonian Project

The Academical Village (1814-26) came late in the life of Jefferson's imagination and can be read as an extension directly from his Monticello (1770-1826) as well as the little evoked penultimate Forest (1808-26). He had one head but two hands, two hands and time on his hands as both instruments of the art of the agents of a love of knowledge - philosophy. Moreover, his time to render the world accountable as well; each of them distinct on a theme; a planter, a harvester, a scriptor, a musician, a dialogue with Robinson Crusoe and Thoreau and corresponding Hudson River School sequence on *The Course of the Empire*.

Monticello commenced as a one-room dwelling and survived as cosmopolitan theater of the enlightenment. Before dawn for Thomas Jefferson plunged his two hands with ten digits ritually into a cold basin of water to start his circulation and to take measured time to inaugurate his day's work. He then looked up to the two hands connected time to place through ten *mirrors for the moon*, bivalved which faceted eastern light from the interior of the entry hall to his south-west facing bedroom. He exited 100 paces directly over a 1,000-foot-long garden where he planted a seed with an iron and would repeat this action 10 or 12 times, then scooped up sand and formed a brick to be fired in the ashes of kilns lining Mulberry Hill and there daily it is now rumored that he knelt down to wash scrubbed his ten digits and then rewarded himself cupping his hands to relish sweet clear waters from a not-so-secret spring. He was the maker, in syncopation as farmer and scriptorist being a maker of recurrent dualities of the word made flesh. Now, on the first under a full moon students and faculty first go out to the Lawns and paces: first the incremental bricks, one hand width, the Tuscan Colonades, the meter of one individual's outstretched hands and paces: the meter of the columnar orders in girth and spacing onto the trees from the slimmest to the vast girth of centennial oaks. Such measures be referenced by one digitally extended hand, others such as require two. The waists of most 18-year-old adolescents approach numerous Tuscan columns, it is rumored there are ancient proportions resembling the measure of the Corinthian columns of the Rotunda. Hands, digits, tools, inventories of materials close at hand, and what it means "to read" architecture through a design primer, the study of linguistics, the discipline of sign and symbol, syntax first explored in "A Primer of Easy Pieces and Difficult Whole" (1981) brings the first chapter, the first terrace of Jefferson's complex to an argument founded on recurrent dualities as a position of accountability as well as speculative.

or national cultures, benchmarks for the debates three texts are read as providing generative frictional assumption that architecture serves to advance the building within a changing world. *Both Sides Now*, in the same year of Venturi's Gentle Manifesto was a time (1967-69) of American cultural upheaval radically engaged with an enduring sense of time and Hopmann's *Preface to Morals: America as Barren* case of Frampton's appreciation of critical regionalism⁷, critical lessons of Aalto's Finnish work to the north and the south. Few seem to build upon an architecture as a center but still anchored optimistically, not critically itself, as a lingering infected blister if not a scar, never a clean slate.

essays different is that it is generated from one Site, however far from the currency of urban village was conceived at the time of Thoreau's retreat of American Transcendentalism and Whitman's current global, yet culturally adrift mindset, this set of Nishon's *A Slow Learner*, to find the regenerative spirit village or nomadic oasis rather than envisioning ever eks.

, about making the most out of materials at hand, but pentimento, mark and erasure, and, above all, imagine the value of Hopscotch played between essential fact is that the setting of an education center. Heyduk ironically makes a case of New York abstraction; Venturi references a scenographic early Love inscribed with tattoos from Las Vegas message has been lost in translation, by Anglo abandoning the endurance of Rome on the book's Rome, Paris, and the promise of terra incognita it molded from Virginia red clay, river run sand, and hard and soft woods. This is a book on American truths in a new culture of life, liberty, and the pursuit of Eden and the enduring resistance of

contemporary philosophical debates which posit ancient if not Archaic belief systems might hold self with contemporary survival systems of Sustainability, grounded in the recurrent dualities of Architecture. Philosophical work framed on epistemological and his a philosophical work, it also seeks to identify American cultural history. If the Lawn is the tabula

rasa for citizenship, is Monticello the endearing place for the engagement of both the familiar and the strange? Perhaps, the roots of a topographic imagination are found in generative settings.

The Critical Context of this Late Jeffersonian Project

The Academical Village (1814-26) came late in the life of Jefferson's spatial imagination and can be read as an extension directly from his projects at Monticello (1770-1826) as well as the little evoked penultimate project at Poplar Forest (1808-26). He had one head but two hands, two homes, two libraries, and time on his hands as both instruments of the art of the city: politics as well as agents of a love of knowledge - philosophy. Moreover, his ten digits allowed him to render the world accountable as well; each of them distinctly jointed variations on a theme; a planter, a harvester, a scriptor, a musician, a homo faber, all were in dialogue with Robinson Crusoe and Thoreau and corresponded to Thomas Cole's Hudson River School sequence on *The Course of the Empire*.

Monticello commenced as a one-room dwelling and survives today as a cosmopolitan theater of the enlightenment. Before dawn for at least eight decades Thomas Jefferson plunged his two hands with ten digits ritually and routinely into a cold basin of water to start his circulation and to take measure of his heart beat to inaugurate his day's work. He then looked up to the two hands of his clock and connected time to place through ten *mirrors for the moon*, by way from France, which faceted eastern light from the interior of the entry hall 180 degrees back to his south-west facing bedroom. He exited 100 paces directly south to his 1,000-foot-long garden where he planted a seed with an index finger and covered it over as with the joy of cupping and then clapping of his hands. Most likely he would repeat this action 10 or 12 times, then scooped up some rich, red clay and formed a brick to be fired in the ashes of kilns lining Mulberry Row. Only then and there daily it is now rumored that he knelt down to wash his two hands and scrubbed his ten digits and then rewarded himself cupping both hands tightly now to relish sweet clear waters from a not-so-secret spring. He was homo-faber, man the maker, in syncopation as farmer and scriptorist being agent and instrument of recurrent dualities of the word made flesh. Now, on the first day of lessons under a full moon students and faculty first go out to the Lawn to measure with hands and paces: first the incremental bricks, one hand width, the spacing of the Tuscan Colonades, the meter of one individual's outstretched hands, the measures of the columnar orders in girth and spacing onto the native American trees from the slimmest to the vast girth of centennial oaks. Some measures can be referenced by one digitally extended hand, others such as wood framing require two. The waists of most 18-year-old adolescents approximate the most numerous Tuscan columns, it is rumored there are ancient professors whose girth resembles the measure of the Corinthian columns of the Rotunda's temple front. Hands, digits, tools, inventories of materials close at hand, and finally summing up what it means "to read" architecture through a design primer based on language, the study of linguistics, the discipline of sign and symbol, syntax and semantics, first explored in "A Primer of Easy Pieces and Difficult Whole" (Princeton JAE, 1981) brings the first chapter, the first terrace of Jefferson's constructed site back to an argument founded on recurrent dualities as a position of architecture as accountable as well as speculative.

Robinson Crusoe & Friday

When Thomas Jefferson was 13, at that moment between boyhood dreams and manhood instrumentalities, his father, Peter Jefferson left him innumerable tracts of land, 365 slaves, and 256 books. The boy/man would retreat alone to Mt. Alto to survey his lands and read a few books as he looked down onto his beloved playground, Monticello, the place of his fantasy/amusement and the reconstruction of his world, again and again. Four decades before Jefferson commenced the spatial project of the Academical Village, an idealization of inter-generational citizenship for this new Republic in Arcadia, he was to lay the foundation stones for a "good" one-room dwelling on an already reconstructed site in Virginia's Piedmont. The Enlightenment project of encyclopedic knowledge was often tested in the accounts of civilized man's reconstruction of the world, again in the face of the wilderness. Rousseau's noble savage, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, and Thoreau's *Walden Pond* all recount the step-by-step acts of dwelling by knowledgeable man in Arcadia. Dwelling is used as a gerund here and will be a pivotal notion of architecture in dialogue as a covenant with the world, *again*. This covenant assumes that architects write specifications for construction implying ethical maintenance by future generations as well as acknowledging the marks, stains, and scars of weathering. This is an archaic, not Renaissance, not modern notion, perhaps most important to multiple generations, never singular, finding ourselves in our New World condition.

We will begin the "Lessons from the Lawn" with the lessons gleaned from this exercise of Jefferson's honeymoon cottage of 1770. As he was leveling the mountaintop of his beloved Monticello to terrace orchards, vineyards, a 1,000-foot-long garden and a future house site with extensive and extending dependencies, he made a home in a small shelter at the southwest corner of the future plantation precinct. This good one-room house was sited to face east to the rising of the sun, as was the future vestibule of Monticello, but at the far western corner of the leveled lawn, with a chimney/hearth to the west to ignite as the sun was setting, flanked by two windows, one to the north and one to the south. Behind and beneath the fireplace there was a stair to the fieldstone basement built into and buttressing the natural slope, where Sally Hemmings tended the hearth and prepared water heated for cooking and bathing. This primal half-excavated basement provided a model for the later Monticello great kitchen, where the cook probably dwelt within that space as well. Above, the one good room was constructed of brick fabricated from the local if not immediately subtracted red-clay soil, the framing materials derived from the nearby forests, the roof shingles from trailside red cedar later replaced by local Buckingham slate quarried just across the James River a stone's throw from the Scottsville Landing, which connected Jefferson's extensive terrains to Richmond and eventually the Atlantic and back to the Old World. Beneath the roof but above the ceiling, there was an accessible dry space, an attic, and a tent like maze of framing where clothing, maps, and surveying equipment could be stored in dry sheltered safety. One good room with pre-requisite basement and attic; these are the elements of Jefferson's later urban project, the Academical Village, down the hill from Jefferson's Olympian dwelling.

We begin here with a leveled site to the east and a natural sloped pre-condition always tumbling away to the west, with reliable light to the north and dynamic and long enduring light from the south. It is speculated that Jefferson, even in his

youthful marriage, found time to read within the space of a stick laced Windsor chair whose back was adjacent to the indirect light of the north window, but framing a view to the evolving cultivations to the south. Later, his singular cells for students of his Academical Village would be similar if not recurrent models of juxtaposed dualities, e.g., good rooms with one aperture to the east and another to the west. Here the fireplace would alternate between the south and the north. All had roofs that were for the gathering of rainwater and served as promenade decking providing different perspectives from distinct points of view. All these varied sequences of student cells sat upon common basements used as latrines, water closets, bathing halls, and dwelling space for personal servants. There was an upstairs-downstairs community of citizens and strangers in this Jefferson version of a new societal contract in Arcadia.

CAST OF CHARACTERS: Surveyors, Nomads & Lunatics

On interdisciplinary teamwork on the frontier of a new world

Ever since the sandbox and the sandcastle we have all been good architects. The "Lessons of the Lawn" reveal for all of us as global citizens an appreciation of the synthetic capacities of surveyors, nomads and lunatics creating the Academical Village in collaboration and not in isolation.

- The good architect assigns measure to the world as a systematic thinker with the tools of a rod and a compass understood as geometry (think pyramid).
- The good architect also appreciates the circumstantial oasis, that which is figuratively outside the field conditions of the coordinates (think sphinx).
- The good architect, while basking in the clear rational light of day, also demands equal time for the nocturnal imagination when and where architecture serves as *mirrors for the moon*, (think Jefferson's Rotunda).
- The good architect first develops a capacity to describe and then to design the world at the scales of cities, buildings and landscapes with the collaborative capacities of surveyors, nomads and lunatics with essential rigor and the generosity of joy contained in the glossary herein: Peter Jefferson, father of Thomas, was a surveyor, and willed his instruments to his son.

SURVEYOR

- A surveyor comes from the south to remark with instrumental baggage the two solstices.
- A surveyor encounters a site and renders it accountable.
- A surveyor with the use of a compass first finds true north.
- A surveyor then determines the cornerstone locations by rod and compass.
- A surveyor determines precise perimeter boundaries and calculates the total gross area.

At times the surveyor transcribes zoning code regulations such as set back lines onto the survey as a map with pre-conditions for construction.

Both a site plan and a site section are mutually interdependent and often indicate both the paths of the sun and the moon bracketing a leap year condition. It is rumored that some urbane surveyors include the location of both existing infrastructure as well as the markings of previous occupations of the site in question.

NOMAD

- A nomad comes from the north under a new moon to reconfirm the location of secret oases at least once a calendar year.
- A nomad arrives at sunset and has time to build a substantial fire for kit and kin.
- A nomad takes note of lofty palms and deep wells, of burning bushes and recent footprints and senses he is never alone.
- A nomad will weave a story of other strange oases that trace a meander of hierophanies in the homogeneous culture of 21st-century landscapes of familiarity.
- A nomad never reveals the whole truth, nothing but the truth, rather keeps the place strange to himself or herself, his tribe, and others who are nourished by secrets, oracles, and sustained enigmas.

LUNATIC

- A lunatic operates in the darkness of night and is not concerned with the systems referenced by the surveyor or the scattered self-evident truths of the nomad.
- A lunatic works with the precise permutations of the moon adjusting once in four years for the leap of faith where these sensitivities appear to witness a blue moon paired with a solar eclipse.

Sectional calculations are imperative to the lunatic as one who controls the tides and human fecundity.

A lunatic is often mistaken as a magician knowing all too well that the swiftest magician is an encyclopedic scientist and moves more swiftly than those with little faith in the power of spatial tales of origin.



o remark with instrumental baggage the two

renders it accountable.

ass first finds true north.

cornerstone locations by rod and compass.

meter boundaries and calculates the total

ning code regulations such as set back lines
conditions for construction.

are mutually interdependent and often indicate
upon bracketing a leap year condition.
yours include the location of both existing
of previous occupations of the site in

ler a new moon to reconfirm the location of
ar year.

time to build a substantial fire for kit and kin.
and deep wells, of burning bushes and recent
one.

strange oases that trace a meander of
culture of 21st-century landscapes of

uth, nothing but the truth, rather keeps
elf, his tribe, and others who are nourished
enigmas.

night and is not concerned with the
or the scattered self-evident truths of the

mutations of the moon adjusting once in four
e sensitivities appear to witness a blue

o the lunatic as one who controls the tides

an knowing all too well that the swiftest
and moves more swiftly than those with little
gin.

