

GWY

a dialectical environment of Los Angeles

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I. ENVIRONMENTS

The environment is our physical surroundings, the world as the human perceives it. It is in two parts: the natural and the built. The built is anything made by man. Call this Architecture. Everything else is Nature. These forces are opposite and the human is their intermediate. We are made by Nature, making Architecture.

There is a tendency as humans to consider ourselves separate from Nature. In composing Architecture, we forget our origins. Nature becomes the other, feared reverently. It is isolated [in conservatories], tamed [in garden parks], or conquered [by cities].

The worst of these is the conquest. A barrier is built between humans and Nature. Cities become fortresses of the built. There is no dialogue. Sprawling Los Angeles has become a primary example.



Fourth Street Bridge c. 1931. An architecture is introduced to the Los Angeles River.
A dialogue may be observed



Fourth Street Bridge c. 2015. The Los Angeles River has become Architecture.
Nature is thrust from the city.

II. DIALECTICS

We must be mindful of our urban landscape and remember that the human is the intermediate. We cannot remove ourselves from Nature anymore than we can fully embrace it. Nature, Architecture, humanity. There can be no separation. Call this a dialectic.

A dialectic is, in the words of Robert Smithson, “a way of seeing things in a manifold of relations, not as isolated objects. Nature for the dialectician is *indifferent* to any formal idea.” The human relation to Nature should be dialectical. We may recognize Nature as wild, beautiful, and sublime without removing ourselves from it, without taming it.

Nature and Architecture must be allowed interaction. This is our responsibility as the intermediate: to be agents of their dialogue.



Satellite images of Griffith Park reveal a transition between the natural and the built.
It may be considered proto-dialectical.

III. PROSTHETICS

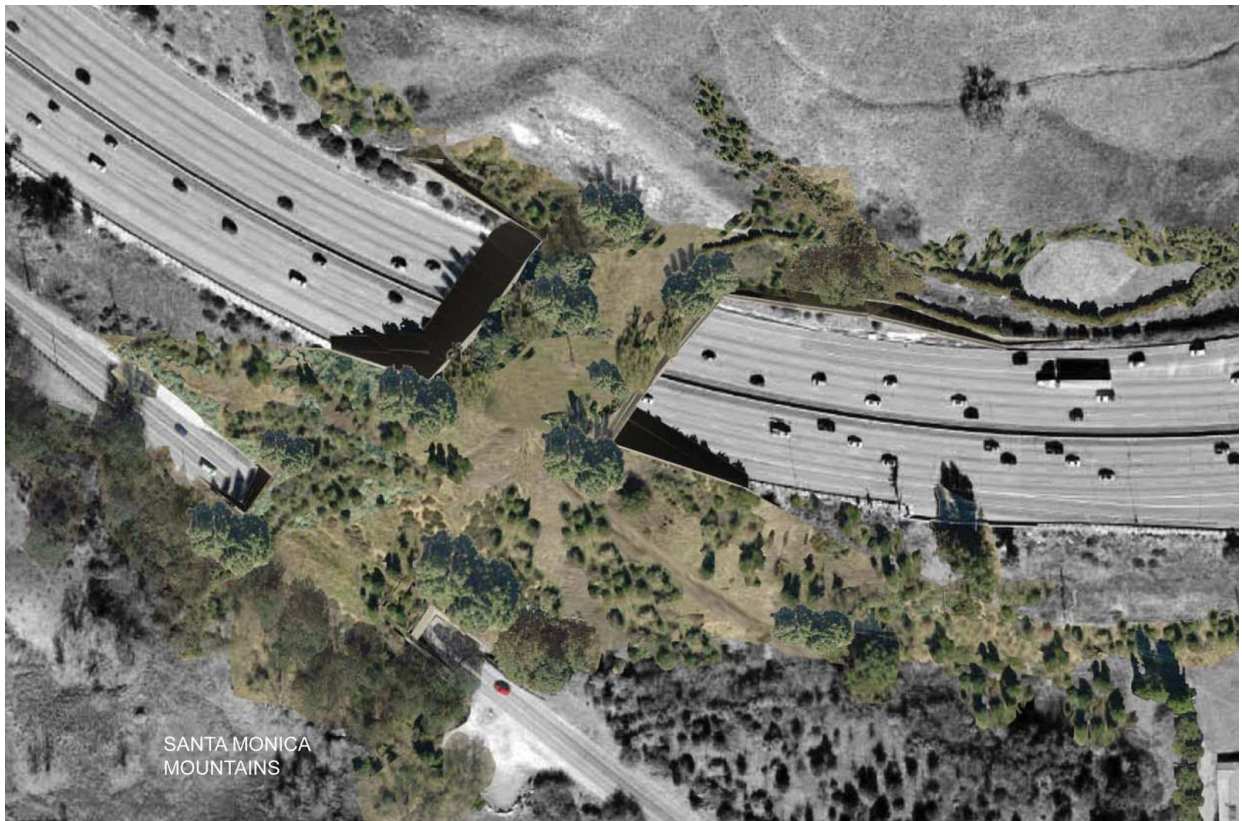
The conquest of the built is all but finished. Nature has been thrust from the city. All its territory has been reclaimed, every inch of it paved in asphalt and concrete. Los Angeles has become a singular Architecture. How can it hope to be made dialectical?

Allow Nature into the city. Give it a path and it will enter. Welcome it. A prosthetic for the natural must be added to the city. This prosthetic would necessarily be an Architecture: an object of the built for the natural. The dialectic is achieved through the prosthetic.

Attention must be given to this Architecture. It is not enough to be dialectical itself—it must create a dialogue with the city, convert it into a dialectical environment.



Dutton Architects propose recycling freeways into greenbelts for public parks and transportation.
This is not dialectical, but does identify a prosthetic use of the freeway. . .



CalTrans has proposed a new overpass over the 101 freeway for the traffic of wildlife.
This is a dialectical infrastructure suitable for Los Angeles.

IV. FACSIMILES

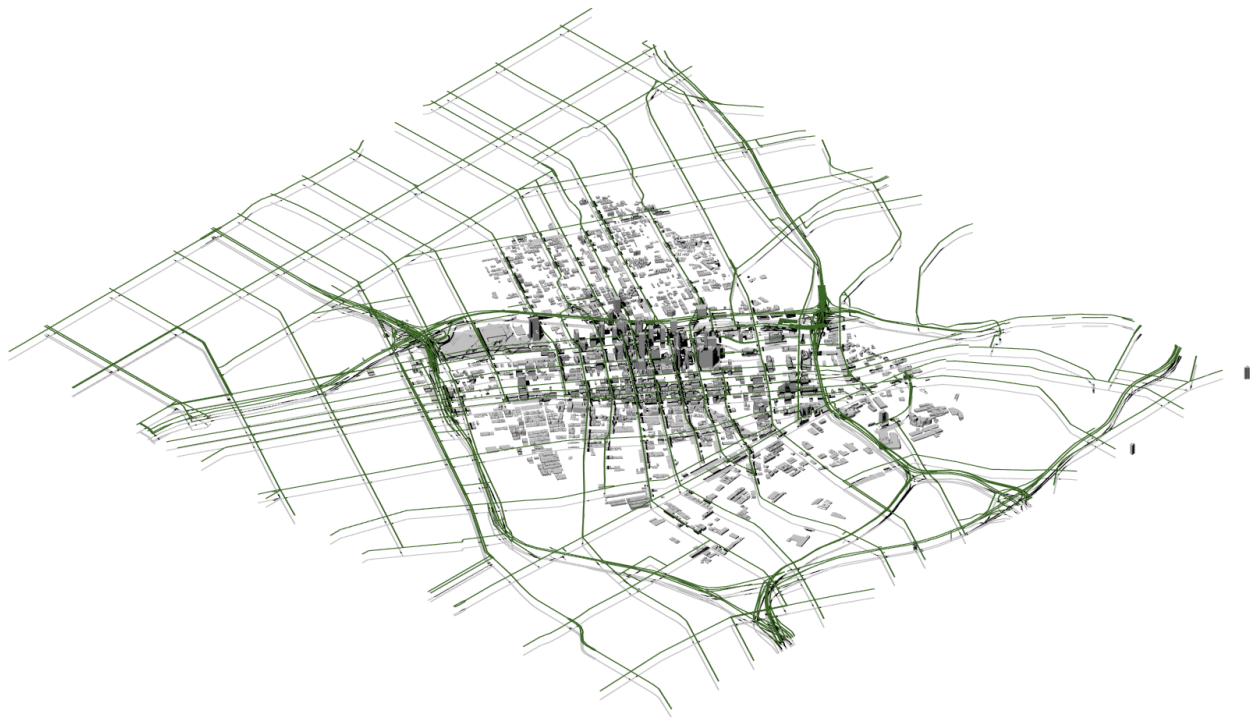
If Los Angeles is to be made dialectical, we must consider the city as it is. A prosthetic of Nature could take any architectural form, but if it is to enable a dialogue dialectically, it must become the Architecture of the city. A facsimile of the built is adapted as a prosthetic of the natural.

The freeway is the most iconic and widespread urban object in Los Angeles. It is the Architecture its inhabitants most identify with and its visitors are most overwhelmed by. It is an *infrastructure*, a system of transmission, extensive and adaptable.

This urban vessel could be appropriated by Nature for a different sort of traffic. The resulting system would be a vessel of the natural environment, a new infrastructure. Call this a *greenway*.



Provide the Architecture, introduce Nature, and the greenway will generate itself



Greenways laid over freeways produce an extensive dialectical system.
The city is redefined.

V. GREENWAYS

The greenway provides the city a means of becoming dialectical. The extensiveness and adaptability of the infrastructure ensure that as the Architecture of Los Angeles develops, so does Nature. It simplifies the role of the human as agent of the dialogue into something that comes naturally to us: all that is required is to build.

These greenways are not parks, for a park would simply be another Architecture. Instead, Nature is left to its own device. Architecture provides the control, the route, but within these boundaries Nature is self-perpetuating.

Nature exists hand in hand with Architecture. Their tensions and harmonies are at once revealed. The dialogue is engaged.

This is the dialectical environment of Los Angeles.