

PERPETUAL MEMORY BANK: INVESTING IN URBAN LEGACY



'Cornfield' paper and glue, 53.90 m2, Ryuji Nakamura, Tokyo 2010

The Perpetual Memory Bank is a public repository, reflecting and projecting personal and civic value. It is an inconstant, non-denominational space of temporary storage, exchange and collective commemoration, imprinted by human life and supporting a future of your critical vision. Both memory and finance slip between material and immaterial significance--physical, worldly substances and ephemeral, shifting impressions of value.

Investments in these banks deal with traces and legacy. This is not the virtual repository of memory in your computer. It is a tangible, spatial, and physical place, which like human memory, is fragmentary, incomplete and continually being re-written. Its holdings act as a barometer, measuring and celebrating urban life, projecting forward and glancing backward at the same time.

In Perpetual Memory Banks, definitions of value, duration and yield will be re-prioritized and defined by the constituents rather than by the consumer price index or the IMF. Projects will be simultaneously personal and public in nature, crafting physical, social, and psychological terrains constituted by civic sanctuary, accessible archive, ceremony and contemplation. Choreographing delicate transactions across private memory and public space, while negotiating realms both sacred and profane, your proposals will provide territories enabling both poised collection and indeterminant spontaneous urban activity.

Transcending inert monuments to capital, we will design tangible archives that celebrate life and reclaim public space to both honor the deceased and enhance the existence of the living. Embedded in the public flux of the metropolis, strategies will navigate and re-shape the present with an awareness of remembered pasts and a persistent drive for anticipated futures.

*The Archive then is something that...can become
Memory's potential space, one of the few realms of the
modern imagination where a hard-won and carefully
constructed place, can return to boundless, limitless space.*

-Carolyn Steedman, Dust: The Archive and Cultural History, 2002. p.83

Impermanent Archive

The exactitude of the archive's organizational logics will be balanced with the imprecision of selective cognitive memory. Structure and access to the collection is a manifestation of its politics and agenda. Students will articulate *clear positions on the archive as a form of banking, as a system of recording and sorting, a method of deposit and retrieval, and a place of occasional alchemic transformation*. Lucid reasoning exists within the veils of poetry.

Reactivation and retrieval induce change. Exploring potential forms and purposes of remembrance, projects will choreograph space, procession, spectacle, display, and exhibition/event through the *conceptualization and definition of your Perpetual Memory Bank*. What do we value? How is commodity re-defined? Who or what, in what transformed state, is archived here? What are the details of display, sorting, notation and system? How quickly does memory fade? What endures and accrues? What dissipates or is re-distributed? What is forgotten? and how, by whom, and with what effects?

Students will take positions on the permanent vs. ephemeral nature of the archive. Curatorial decisions require critical thought with respect to constructs of organization, affiliation, juxtaposition, hierarchy and audience. Cultural change takes time. The radical viability of these perpetual memory banks will be affirmed by the exquisite space and urban rituals you will envision, test, detail, and make palpable.

The loss of the Towers triggered a phantom limb phenomenon: the more people recognized the lack, the more they felt the presence of the absence.—Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, 2003. p.247

Research

To surmount preconceptions, unfold material logics, and assess spatial consequence, the studio will pursue vigorously iterative, open-ended yet highly constrained material experiments. You will also collect, analyze, and diagram precedents of monetary banks, academic archives, and memorials.

Re-qualification of the Core studio-wide programme will be tailored by each student and re-presented in conceptual scalar diagrams. Individual concepts, strategies and performance measures relative to time and socio-cultural impact will inform program density, range and content.

The work of the studio will explore fluctuating boundaries—zones in which physiological and phenomenal effects are enabled—calibrating the intervals and margins that accommodate changing states, conditions, or actions. Through intertwining scales, types, and durations of exchange, innovative potential emerges.



'Beethoven-Moonlight Sonata' vibrating through milk, Sara Naim, 2009

Haiku are tiny seventeen syllable poems that seek to convey a sudden awareness of beauty by a mating of opposite or incongruous terms. Thus the classical haiku characteristically fuses motion and stillness.

—Edward Seidenstickler's Introduction to Yasunari Kawabata's *Snow Country*, 1956

Discipline

Critical work is shaped and held together by serious thinking informing action. Explicit conceptual drivers support a clarifying sense of purpose, and facilitate productively self-defined constraints. Be prepared to work hard, think rigorously, balance conviction with constructive doubt, and get a little dirty en route to exquisite spatial development.

Students must possess the courage for unorthodoxy and risk-taking, and simultaneously demonstrate the capacity to take a stance and construct a compelling argument for their position. We will work intensively and prolifically through diverse material and digital exploration; iteratively drawing and diagramming for clarity, translation and development.

Projects will transcend the visual, engaging logic, experience, scale, proportion and material to manifest your ideas and instigate innovative modes of representation. Ultimately, the immediacy of the proposal should be palpable, provoking thought in both its experience and its architectural resonance.

References

In addition to the studio-wide Bibliography, the following suggested Readings / References / Resources may be useful to your research and the critical positioning of your work.

Allen, Stan. *Notations and diagrams: Mapping the Intangible in Practice: Architecture, Technique and Representation*, 2009

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen*, 2010

Balmond, Cecil. *Informal*, 2002

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Burdett, Ricky and Deyan Sudjic, eds. *The Endless City: The Urban Age Project by the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society*, 2008

Cadwell, Michael. *Strange Details*, 2007

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Corner, James, ed. *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Architecture*, 1999

Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 1981

Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever*, 1998

Dickinson, Greg, et.al. *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*, 2010

Deutsche, Rosalyn. *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, 1998

Foucault, Michel. *Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias*. <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>

Harvey, David. *Spaces of Hope*, 2000

Johnson, Steven. *Emergence: the Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software*, 2001

Kubler, George. *The Shape of Time: Remarks on the History of Things*, 1962

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Sorkin, Michael. *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, 1992

Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, 2002

Sturken, Marita. *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*, 2007

Tanizaki, Jun'ichiro. *In Praise of Shadows*, 1977

Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, 1994

KARLA MARIA ROTHSTEIN, critic

Karla Rothstein has taught design studios at all levels in the GSAPP for the past 16 years and is also the director of GSAPP's transdisciplinary Deathlab (www.deathlab.org). She is a registered architect and the Design Director at Latent Productions, an architectural practice operating at the nexus of design, real estate, and research (<http://latentnyc.com/capacities/>). In 2011, based on her professional and academic work related to spaces of death and memory, Karla was appointed as a member of the Columbia University Seminar on Death. Content she presented at the seminar's 2012 Conference, addressing the contentious and evolving environment of death studies in the 21st century served as the basis for her chapter in Our Changing Journey to the End: Reshaping Death, Dying, and Grief in America, a two volume anthology of academic writings which was released by Praeger in 2013. In addition to a recently completed bakery-bar-restaurant and apartments in Gowanus, her architecture firm is currently completing a 10,000 SF techno dance music venue in Williamsburg, a second carwash on Long Island, new mixed use buildings in Crown Heights and Park Slope, and exploring the feasibility of building a 21st century monastery in RedHook. Rothstein's first single-family house is included in Kenneth Frampton's American Masterworks 2nd edition, Rizzoli 2008. (<http://latentnyc.com/projects/>)

AYA MACEDA, ta

Aya is an architect with extensive professional experience from Australia and South East Asia specializing in residential architecture and projects dedicated to the enhancement of the public domain (www.ayamaceda.com). An MS AAD graduate from GSAPP and a former student of Karla Rothstein, Aya was the recipient of the Percival and Naomi Goodman Fellowship, Award for Excellence in Design and the Lucille Smyser Lowenfish Memorial Prize. Aya is currently focused on two design-research projects -- post-disaster school rebuilding in the Philippines and a communal housing model for NYC, while continuing to design single houses and contributing to the Australian publication *Habitus*. (www.actlabnyc.com)