

# Radical P/revisions:

Heritage Metaphors, Discourses,  
Becomings

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*This is our inheritance.  
On the dim landscape / On the desolate mountain /  
On the parched earth. / On the barren field /  
On the burnt desert. / On the dusty ground. /  
On the garbage dump. / On the dung heap. /  
On the blasted heath. / On the empty plain. /  
This is our inheritance.*

Robert Smithson<sup>1</sup>

Forethought:  
Inheriting Futures

*Two Attitudes toward the City* is an unpublished annotated typescript by Robert Smithson [Fig. 1].<sup>2</sup> Under the *urban* title – with the

handwritten footnote *In terms of art* – the text proposes to interpret the *old city*, “the city as an organism,” through the metaphors of biology and the *new city*, the “city as a crystalline structure,” via the metaphors of physical science. Despite its binary heading, the document features a triad. A third city, sketched at the end of it, integrates the initial binomial of apparent opposites with the perspective of a “technological apparatus” corresponding to “kinetic art”. In the *old city* the metaphors of biology outline criticism to the idea of “natural architecture,” meant as a nostalgia for an “idyllic past,” linked to the “myth of the Renaissance as Humanism (in terms of space).” A further footnote clarifies such passage through an uncanny metaphor: “Frank L. Wright called N.Y. a peptic ulcer.” The later annotation may find an explanation in Smithson’s *Quasi-Infinites and the Waning of Space*, in which he recognizes a fundamental “misunderstanding” of the biological metaphor, whose origin in the temporal order has been extended into the spatial dimension. Such a shift, he argues, lies “at the bottom of all ‘formalist’ criticism,” projecting manifestations of nostalgia into space itself and thus putting forward a substantial “anti-urban attitude.”<sup>3</sup> Opposed to this model is the *new city*, the “city as a crystalline structure [...] defined in terms of time,” which finds its spatial counterpart in the everyday structures of suburban territories.<sup>4</sup> Monumentalizing bridges, pipes, pumping equipment, sandboxes, and other unexceptional assets, the temporal arrow inverts its path and produces *ruins in reverse*.<sup>5</sup> While the first two models appear to be in mutual opposition, the third descriptive possibility – namely “[t]he technological apparatus” –

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TWO ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CITY

I. The Old City

- a. The City as an organism.
- b. The metaphors of biology. (natural architecture)<sup>2</sup>
- c. The nostalgia for the country or nature. (the pastoral--the rustic life among shepherds and dairymaids--the simple, the peaceful, the innocent.
- d. Idyllic past.
- e. Life creates art.
- f. The myth of the Renaissance as Humanism.  
(defined in terms of space)

II. The New City

- a. the city as a crystalline structure.
- b. The metaphors of physical science.
- c. Interest in facades, the abstract, monuments, idea architecture, highly structured parks, with labrinths and mazes.
- d. The Future as artifice (science-fiction).
- e. Art fabricates life. *as a style*
- f. Grandeur and emptiness. (the sublime)  
(defined in terms of time)

III. The technological apparatus  
a. Faith in the mechanical or electrical technology - kinetic art  
b. automobile centered  
c. technology at best is only a tool  
d. technology is not art, (confusion of space and time)

1. In terms of art

2. Frank L. Wright: called N.Y. a peptic ulcer

introduces a fruitful ambiguity by envisioning a “confusion of space and time” based on “[f]aith in the mechanical or electrical technology.”<sup>6</sup> In Smithson’s document, “hidden affinities” – Reinhold Martin argues – emerge between “the first two models as indexed in the third, which is, the organicism of the crystalline city of ‘blank after blank’: a city of new monuments.”<sup>7</sup> Drawing on Martin’s interpretation of *new* (or even *anti-*) monuments, Smithson’s scheme seems to echo Joseph Kosuth’s use of the triptych to showcase different forms of representation that end up producing the same sign. Subverting the linearity of the initially unmarked draft of *Two Attitudes* through the crucial cues offered by the subsequent annotations to the text, a spiral of cross-references unfolds. Engaging with these short circuits, Smithson’s metaphors will be manipulated to shape a tentative counterdiscourse on heritage as the locus for anti-monuments to discover their “equivalent in physics as the consumption of matter.”<sup>8</sup> Learning from the *ramshackle, unmonumental* monuments entail forgetting, decaying, eroding, becoming worn with age, or to put it all another way: *de-architecturizing* heritage to return it to the realm of geology, minerals, caves, and vapors.<sup>9</sup>

## Metaphors for a Heritage Counterdiscourse in Three Acts

The etymology of the term *metaphor* – from Greek *metapherein*, meaning *to transfer* – suggests a passage, a change in state or position, a transference of matter and meaning. Transposed to the heritage realm, the act of *carrying (phora) beyond (meta)* recalls the transmission of a legacy across spatiotemporal dimensions, projecting any form of inheritance above its current state. Metaphors can thus be meant in their ability to encapsulate reality – not only as interpretative tools but with the belief that they might indeed trigger a change in the reality itself. Basing on this assumption, the medium to translate Smithson’s attitudes/metaphors into potential *practices of inheritance* is found in the archival legacy of the *Radical Architecture* of the Sixties and Seventies. A reason for approaching heritage through the *Radicals* is grounded in the “logical extrapolation of ‘oriented history’” that the countercultural movements of that time experimented via the “recognizable architecture” of historic landmarks as a prelude to a “reappropriation of the city.”<sup>10</sup> Enabling such a *reappropriation* implies accepting a partial *destruction of the object* – to echo the title of two paradigmatic issues of the countercultural magazine *IN*.<sup>11</sup> Paradoxical proposals remained on paper or enacted in the ephemerality of performative events are thus reconsidered with the intention of detangling heritage from the constraints of dominant narratives, parallelly re-entangling it with the multiple agencies that inhabit its surviving matter. Against this background, a set of discourses – intended in their etymological meaning as the action of *running in different directions* – is introduced against the reduction of heritage histories to a single story. The aim is to liberate the built legacy from the risks of remaining trapped in a *still-life* status, that is – as John Hejduk suggests through the Italian translation of the syntagma borrowed from the realm of painting – also a *dead nature*;<sup>12</sup> or

from the *embalmmment* of cities, warned by Rayner Banham's plea to "preserve us from paranoid preservers;"<sup>13</sup> or, again, from what Donna Haraway defines as the deception of *taxidermy*.<sup>14</sup> The reconsideration of dead natures, paranoid forms of embalmmment, and deceptive taxidermies challenges heritage from within, exceeding the organic/inorganic divide and projecting radical acts of (counter)preservation towards the uncertain territories where built bodies meet unorthodox matter and entangled temporalities. Metaphors are thus entrusted with the role of salvage strategies, healing devices that aim to rebuild broken bonds. Between broken bonds to heal and bonds yet to be broken down, heritage unfolds potential futures in perpetual becoming.

## Act I. Beyond the Pristine: Heritage as Time Landscape

The first act of this narrative takes its cue from Robert Smithson's *attitude* toward the *old city*. A provocative anti-celebration of the archetypal, primordial nature – the *idyllic* criticized

by Smithson – may be found in the micro-environments encapsulated by Haus-Rucker-Co. for the *Stück Natur* sequence produced between 1971 and 1973. With a gesture that evokes snow globes or preserving tins, the Austrian collective enshrined fragments of a miniaturized pasture under a sealed glass jar. What these portable landscapes of dirt, moss, miniature trees, and scale huts seem to suggest for the heritage realm is the urgency of rethinking the paradoxes and risks of embalming preservation as well as the relationship between decaying forces and illusions of permanence. The *piece of nature* preserved by the collective freezes time and fixes an allegedly *original* state in the provocative image of nature as a *shut-in*. In such an encapsulating *imago* – to borrow once again from the biological lexicon – Smithson's assumption about the dangerous misunderstanding of the arrow of time into a spatial dimension seems to echo.

An incorporation of the temporal dimension through natures that renounce to any deterministic, preordained view – while still acting through a definite design decision – takes place in Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape*. Conceived in 1965 and planted in 1978, Sonfist's environmental installation inserted a primordial landscape in midtown Manhattan: a 17<sup>th</sup>-century forest fragment reappearing in a rectangular plot on the grounds of a former natural marshland. Seeded with pre-colonial plants, it was designed to simultaneously show and preserve the three basic stages of a historical forest. Later, those strata have blurred under low growth, and post-colonial plants have constantly been attempting to intrude into the landscape. While the New York Department of Parks and Recreation periodically weeds out invaders, the project challenges the divide between the transplanted native flora and Sonfist's initial intention – although unrealized – to replicate similar interventions throughout the city, intruding a series of spaces for unprecedented natures that would spread like pioneering species. As for today, the only accomplished portion of the project has become part of the urban fabric; the functioning oasis is a living monument to a lost place that was once beneath and, at the same time, a



layered environment whose spatialized temporal depth questions any myth of *natural nature*. Interrogating heritage about the possibility of a fragment to represent an absent whole, *Time Landscape* might enable a reconsideration of the notion of *authenticity*, subverting the idea of an aesthetic bridge to an alleged primordial state.

The transition from preserving a forest fragment within a densely built environment to an all-encompassing invasion of untamed natures attacking urban heritage may be recounted through a 1972 project by the Italian radical group Zziggurat that bears the title *La città di foglie* [Fig. 2]. In it, a *city of leaves* spreads across the historic center of Florence, colonizing its stony spaces and historically charged artifacts with vegetal matter. Recognizing in the “naturalization of the city” the “most artificial product,” apparently polarized distinctions such as natural/artificial blur and collapse. “If there are no longer reasons for a contrast between an anthropocentric, artificial, recognizable environment and its ‘outside’, neither does the city exist.”<sup>15</sup> Far from paralyzing, such an understanding becomes for the Florentine collective the source for a paradoxical strategy that acts through the built heritage:

“The total city, the jungle city, incomprehensible and indifferent, can be excavated, disassembled, and used to build *architectures*; it can be utilized as a hunting ground, as happened to Babylon; forgotten or unfolded in the neat buildings that will devour it.”<sup>16</sup> In doing so, the city of leaves act utilizing an *infesting* attitude. The idea of an incursion, an attack, a siege perpetrated by *out-of-place* forms of life and environment entails a transition from the apparent fragility of nature – provocatively preserved under a glass jar – towards the acceptance of all the alleged *intruders* that constantly reshape and challenge another canonical notion for the heritage realm: *integrity*. The upheaval envisioned by Ziggurat – triggering a revolution that ousts the human from the center of the city – may suggest rereading Smithson’s reference to the urban “peptic ulcer” as a recognition of real or imagined pathologies as able to subvert any idea of pristine nature and any illusion of pristine heritage. The *ill* body of the city thus emerges as a biological realm that – embracing its *imperfect health* and *de-medicalizing* its built heritage – is far from unspoiled and sheltering.<sup>17</sup>

## Act II. Beyond Things Past: Heritage as Time Warp

Consider the crystal. Its thwarted history as a spatial and material metaphor symbolizes a plethora of analogous terrains, from the micro to the cosmic. It embodies polar opposites of organic and inorganic, unity and fractures, and various conditions in between.<sup>18</sup> In its kaleidoscopic meanings, the crystal is also a metaphor for *metaphor*. Taking the “structure as a metaphor,”<sup>19</sup> Smithson’s *new city* involves physical science to construe “[t]he future as artifice: science fiction.” In the opening to *Entropy and the New Monuments* Smithson attributes to “[m]any architectural concepts found in science-fiction” the potentiality to “suggest a new kind of monumentality.”<sup>20</sup> New monuments are thus to be found amidst the layers of the earth, in the *strata* of geologic accumulations or, by transposition, in the overlapping temporalities that build up the material legacy of the past.<sup>21</sup> This may suggest the existence of a temporal and spatial entanglement of pasts and futures, in which inherited matter enters into dialogue with the cosmic openness of uncertain tomorrows. In the *warped space* envisioned by Anthony Vidler’s interpretation of Smithson’s “tactical and disruptive introduction of ‘extreme past and future’ [that] potentially destabilizes both historicism and its complement, posthistoricism,”<sup>22</sup> fruitful *mise-en-scènes* of science fiction environments unfold at the “intersection between the galactic and the prehistoric.”<sup>23</sup>

*Allegorical Time Warp* is the title of manifesto No. 853 by the U.S. collectives Ant Farm and Southcoast.<sup>24</sup> Conceived around the Apollo 11 moon landing, it reflected upon the contradictions of the NASA’s mission – with its “temporality of the countdown” – and its problematic relation to the “latent socio-technological dreams” it pointed to.<sup>25</sup> In the same year, mining the “entropic temporality and uncertain spatiality” of the lunar mission, Ant Farm and Southcoast realized, under the same label, a series of workshops on the beach of Freeport, Texas.<sup>26</sup> Captured in a sequence of photographic negatives, the experimental practice using surplus cargo parachutes for ritualized experiments in pedagogy was titled *Beyond Things Past* [Fig. 3]. In it, under the agency of wind, the steady presence of architectural heritage becomes the background for reconsidering entangled temporalities. *Vis-à-vis* plastic inflatables, the neoclassical structure that appears in the slide projections documenting the process seem to speak of time as:

“indeed ‘out of joint’, dis-jointed, heterogeneous, with past and future collapsed, a condition at once calling into question assumptions of technological determinism and enlightenment ideals of progress [...] and potentially opening fissures through which the architect might *continue* to imagine alternative forms of life, a future yet to come [...]”<sup>27</sup>

In the work of the U.S. collectives, the *warp* becomes a metaphoric crystallization of the distortion of space in relation to time, an imaginary environment in which people and objects of one period can be moved to another, carrying the future *beyond things past*.<sup>28</sup>

A literal reference to the process of crystallization appears in Allan Kaprow’s *Fluids*, the 1967 *Happening* that took place in different locations throughout Los Angeles. During a three-day



event, participants constructed about twenty rectangular stacks of ice blocks and left them to melt, revealing, through their “gradual disappearance,” the temporal dependence of crystallization.<sup>29</sup> If Kaprow’s multi-site, ephemeral gesture seems to prefigure *vanishing* architecture as *aesthetics of disappearance*,<sup>30</sup> the act of building a melting ice structure on the front lawn of the properties threatened to demolition by real estate speculation performed a double aim: to reveal uneven development patterns and support preservation efforts.

A similar entanglement of abandonment and icy matter shaped Gianni Pettena’s 1971 critical experiment for *Ice House I*. Acting “on the urban fringes, where the architecture had lost its identity and begun to come undone at the seams, and where nature has been contaminated by urban expansion,”<sup>31</sup> Pettena’s paradoxical preservation intervened on a former school building in Minneapolis, waiting for its destiny of either conversion or demolition. Pouring water over the walls of the neglected asset and exploiting the exceptionally low temperatures of the Minnesota winter until it froze, a coat of ice enveloped the dormant architecture underneath and made it alive again.<sup>32</sup>

Under a layer of shiny whiteness that enhanced its masses, the building maintained its typical typological appearance by introducing a new matter, which dematerialized its substance, insufflating new life into it. Such process reminds what Daniela Sandler has labeled as *counter-preservation*, defining acts that challenge the borders of material conservation through an open-ended form of architectural intervention, with embraces deterioration as an aesthetic and social practice.<sup>33</sup> In Bergsonian terms, this can be understood as the necessity “to insert some indeterminacy into matter,”<sup>34</sup> for a heritage that “makes or remakes itself, but it is never something made.”<sup>35</sup>

### Act III. Beyond Earth: Heritage as Time Capsule

The spatiotemporal intermingling that Smithsonian’s last city associates with “kinetic art” enables the introduction of a third type of inheritance, entangled with the paradoxes of technology.

In a series of miniature collages printed on photographic negatives, the Florentine collective 9999 depicted *Progetto Apollo*, an interplanetary time capsule conceived in 1970 to preserve – and displace – what is endangered on Earth [ Fig. 4 ]. Inspired by the contradictions of the moon-landing event, 9999’s project included the design of a triangular lunar module to be used as a cargo transport to uprooting and transplanting – as a sort of portable *terrarium* – a few cataloged objects outside of the planetary cradle.<sup>36</sup> Drawing on some passages from *Genesis*, this floating device would save some “celestial pieces of architecture” from the flood of waters in the cosmos, where architecture can expand in space or find shelter in the emptiness.<sup>37</sup>

↑ Fig. 3  
Beyond Things  
Past [Temple Lust],  
slide projection,  
1971–1972,  
Ant Farm and  
Southcoast



↑ Fig. 4  
Progetto Apollo,  
1970, 9999

The selection of “objects of affection,” to be transported “to the moon before it’s too late,”<sup>38</sup> included organic and non-organic matter, ungraspable like “life,” “air,” and the oxymoronic, intangible geometry of “two sky cubes,” or concrete like a whole “green strip” of Italian-style gardens and even “a historic temple.”<sup>39</sup> In the negative representing the latter, the Second Temple of Hera in Paestum appears as one of the legacies exported off-world. Born out of exile beyond undiscovered frontiers or of exodus from the land of the Great Flood, its intergalactic becomings turn heritage itself into an orbiting ark of salvation. Incorporating mutable, dissonant entities and fixed archetypal memories, the speculative futures envisioned by the planetary legacy sent into outer space may entail constellations of new heritages or anti-heritages that would populate unprecedented grounds. If Sonfist’s *Time Landscape* could represent a future template for retrieving an endangered heritage, 9999 apocalyptic futures might imply alternative forms of survival, one of which is the survival of a paradigm of monumentality.<sup>40</sup> In “the homology between temple and cosmos,”<sup>41</sup> time is annihilated, suspended as if placed in a time capsule. Through the irony and criticism towards a miniature world under control that the architect could control, what *Progetto Apollo* may signify for the heritage realm is the possible extension of the kinetic dimension – mentioned by Smithson in the third city – from a building capable of moving to the idea of salvages and sacrifices that incorporate motion itself. The exiled legacies become sites of navigation, gateways to unprecedented grounds, heritage revisions that inherently challenge and potentially subvert the premises of the 1964 Venice Charter.<sup>42</sup> Blurring boundaries between science and fiction, *Progetto Apollo* may be reread as a revision of the metaphor of the *apergon*, led ad absurdum. Drawing from the Propylaea at the Acropolis, Jorge Otero-Pailos speaks of the *apergon*, which “protected the stones during transport and construction and was meant to be struck from the work in a future that has yet to come.”<sup>43</sup> Hence the idea of a purposeful, *post facto* alteration that is aimed at influencing the perception of historical buildings shapes Otero-Pailos’ neologism “monumentaries:” a discursive operation through which monuments exceed their role of mere „documents of the past“ to incorporate an “editorial point of view.”<sup>44</sup>

Beyond the literal reference to science fictions and technological apparatuses, the time capsule metaphor allows this three-part progression to integrate the first *two attitudes toward the city* and explore the potentialities for heritage to act as a vessel towards uncertain futures. The editorial point of view highlighted by the *apergon* metaphor and the time capsule’s selective instance find a paradigmatic example in the paradox of wilderness that turns a retail building into a heritage asset. This was the destiny of *Forest Building* designed by SITE-founder James Wines in in Richmond, Virginia in 1978: of all the series of structures designed by the studio for the Best Products Company, the only one still standing. The building, realized as a big brick box *invaded* by trees and vegetation that lurks in through an intentional gaping breach in its volume, overcomes any sharp dividing line between living and nonliving matter. Wines’ intervention unwittingly prefigures the survival of a built asset

that is nourished by what at first glance seemed to have attacked its solidity, subverted its integrity, threatened its unity: it is the trees that saved architecture and turned it into a form of inheritance from a recent past. In this symbolic design act, heritage and other species are called to re-negotiate new alliances, in which reappropriation acts as a presidium for fragile legacies, being such fragility a quality of matter or, as in this case, of the durability of forms and uses. While untamed natures physically intrude the intentional or unintentional cracks of architecture, what Wines' project entails for rethinking and possibly exceeding Smithson's aversion for organicism lies in the unbreakable bind that *Forest Building* builds between the inert and the mutable, subverting the hierarchy between what *is preserved* and what actively *preserves*. The fertile duplicity of SITE's vegetal intruders, at the same time indifferent to architecture's presence and able to save it from the wrecking ball, may thus act as a reminder of an architecture that, while seemingly altered by the improper, indeed reveals itself as the *out of place*. What emerges from the metaphorical reference that links integrity to invasive plants is a redefinition of heritage as a botanical field itself, perhaps an *ill* heritage that paradoxically can be healed by opening up its wounds to envision non-natural natures and non-artificial legacies. Alternative practices of inheritance may thus emerge from the undergrowth of cities and spaces, from that penumbra that dwells in the weedy roots of what we inherit from the past, that we can reread integrity as a paradigmatically never accomplished whole.

The inverted ratio between what is to be preserved and what acts as a preserver described through the *Forest Building* entails a conceptual subversion, in which the return (or even *revenge*) of unorthodox natures might translate in a *return of the repressed*.<sup>45</sup> When the repressed returns, it can trigger forms of *forgiveness*, such as those envisioned by Gianni Pettena in his *Architecture Forgiven by Nature*. The site-specific installation – conceived for the park of Brufa near Perugia in 2017 and still standing – expresses a metamorphic idea by acting on an old water tower. Encapsulated by a staircase and a metal net scaffolding that envelops it, the tower allows vegetation to cling and stay, changing its appearance with the alternance of seasons. Through the attack of unexpected natures, heritage turns into a *reconcealing* device. This recalls what Caitlin DeSilvey has defined as projecting *heritage beyond saving*.<sup>46</sup> DeSilvey's idea of a *curated decay* aims at shifting the focus from material protection to practices of inheritance meant as a fluid understanding of materiality in its "intimate relations with other entities – plants, stones, dust,"<sup>47</sup> Through a sequence of questions, DeSilvey wonders what would happen "if we choose not to intervene," uncoupling "the work of memory from the burden of material stasis," and what possibilities can emerge "when change is embraced rather than resisted."<sup>48</sup> Her answers entail reconsidering "erosion, weathering, decay, and decomposition,"<sup>49</sup> beyond the requirement of restoring or maintaining "the physical integrity of the threatened object and ensure its survival."<sup>50</sup> Peripheral forms of nature become the new legitimate inhabitants of the heritages of abandonment, requiring, once again, "alternatives to material conservation."<sup>51</sup> Envisioning a heritage that intentionally

accommodates transience and decay, the infesting herbs that colonize and *curate* it may entail the rediscovery of subdued materialities. Heritage thus becomes a different kind of time capsule, engaging with conflicted temporalities: “[o]riented to the future,” and “intended to erupt the transparency of the present through the image of the past.”<sup>52</sup>

## Afterthought: The Wall and the Valley

“Want to look at the wall? Or do you want to look at the valley?” With this double question Ettore Sottsass titled a pair of pictures from his *Design Metaphors*, a series of installations built and photographed in the 1970s.<sup>53</sup> In the twinned scene, the subject is the void, the subtraction of matter, the absence of any tangible wholeness in the face of the survival of scattered, ephemeral fragments in the landscape. In Sottsass’ photographic work, by juxtaposing enigmatic scenes labeled with idiosyncratic captions, the linguistic figure of the metaphor turns into a medium between humans and the *ambiente* they inherit, between the alteration triggered by man-made manipulations and the cities’ as-found objects: that is, between heritage and its *becomings*.<sup>54</sup> If the wall is a crucial archetypal *construction*,<sup>55</sup> like the tower or the bridge, the valley might be understood as a reminder of the necessary compromise that *the built* has to constantly re-negotiate with *the outside*.

Presented under the title *Design for the Destiny of Man*, some of Sottsass’ photographic pairs shaped his contribution to the re-opening show of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York City, conceived by Hans Hollein, together with Lisa Taylor, in 1976.<sup>56</sup> Later renamed *MAN TransFORMS: Aspects of Design*, the exhibition bore the original title *Metamorphoses and Metaphors*.<sup>57</sup> Referring through the *meta*-prefix to a spatial or temporal zone of both alteration and alternation, the variations of basic items displayed in the exhibit may induce, for the heritage realm, a radical reconsideration of any idea of the uniqueness of (preservation) *solutions*. Moreover, the higher level of abstraction, inherent in the prefix itself, might allow heritage objects to renounce to the totality of their surviving masses in order to materialize the intangible or, in other words, to preserve and transmit their processes of transposition into new statuses, forms, or positions. Hollein’s sequence of juxtapositions that framed the exhibit’s content is, thus, relevant to a heritage counterdiscourse as it questions the significance of any design act “beyond the finished object.”<sup>58</sup> Any single, fixed viewpoint was indeed rejected even in the representation of the installation itself. After its opening, the curatorial project was rendered in print through a set of three sectional, axonometric drawings in which Hollein depicted a simultaneous range of possible experiences or perceptions of the whole exhibition environment. Such representation reflected the curators’ approach to the building that housed it. Far from showcasing a series of enshrined objects, the installation altered the very substance of its own container, turning an apparently fixed landmark building into a total environment.<sup>59</sup> On the occasion of the Cooper-Hewitt opening, the 1902 Carnegie Mansion – partly protected as a historical landmark – had just been remodeled after what

Ada Louise Huxtable defined as “a 13-year saga of abandonment and rescue.”<sup>60</sup> Intervening inside a heritage building, Hollein’s metamorphic concept subverted the museum through a spatial installation that *attacked* it from within. The entanglement of metaphors and metamorphoses thus finds its heritage-related significance also on such further interpretative level, concretized in the subversive act with which the exhibition was installed into the pre-existing architecture, overturning its Neo-Georgian interior. While the reception of the (deliberately) controversial installation saw a number of reviews remarking on the way it masked, concealed, or violently clashed with the built asset,<sup>61</sup> such an approach towards the protected landmark mirrored a paradigmatic take on “[d]esign [...] as an attitude towards action, towards shaping life and environment.”<sup>62</sup> At the Carnegie Mansion, the untamable, joint forces of life and environment triggered a revision of the apparent divide between permanence and change, suggesting the staging of heritage transformations that may take place – in all their transience – by means of sequences of infesting “incursions.”<sup>63</sup> Enabling the continuous reassembling of individual elements into different, meaningful relationships,<sup>64</sup> the model of the metaphor here seems to enact what Umberto Eco – in his account on Emanuele Tesaurò’s *Aristotelian Telescope* – proposes “as a way to discover hitherto unknown relationships between the known data. Hence it is a question of constituting a repertory of known things, on running through which the metaphoric imagination can discover new relationships.”<sup>65</sup> According to Sanford Kwinter, this entails an *inflection*, an untamable *torrential force*,<sup>66</sup> in which “[t]ime always expresses itself by producing, or more precisely, by drawing matter into a process of becoming-ever-different, and to the product of this becoming-ever-different – to this inbuilt wildness – we have given the name *novelty*.”<sup>67</sup> And, therefore, “[t]he problematization of time entails a challenge to the primacy of the role of space, and the reintroduction of the classical problem of becoming in opposition to that of Being.”<sup>68</sup>

Rereading *disaster as experiment*<sup>69</sup> and *preservation as prologue*,<sup>70</sup> the notions of time, eternity, resistance, the thickness of stone or other matter, as well as desire, fear, and the unknown, have intervened in the reconsideration of heritage as oscillating between the opposite poles of an ungraspable entity and all-encompassing notion. Projected towards ambiguous hereafters, the built legacy embodies the twofold vision of a double-headed Janus that looks simultaneously at the wall and beyond the valley, for a heritage that undoes *itself*, engendering sequences of perpetual *becomings*, becoming itself otherwise.

- 1 Smithson, undated (ca. 1961).
- 2 Smithson, undated (ca. 1960s–1973).
- 3 Robert Smithson, 1966a, pp. 29–30.
- 4 Smithson undated (ca. 1960s–1973). Cf. Smithson 1966b, pp. 72–73.
- 5 Cf. Smithson 1967.
- 6 Smithson undated (ca. 1960s–1973).
- 7 Martin 2001, p. 48.
- 8 Marini 2017, p. 25.
- 9 Smithson 1995, pp. 117–132.
- 10 Superstudio 1969, p. 131.
- 11 The magazine *IN. Argomenti e immagini di Design* released issue 2–3 (1971) under the title *La distruzione dell'oggetto* (The Destruction of the Object) and issue 7 (1972) as *Distruzione e riappropriazione della città* (Destruction and Reappropriation of the City). Cf. Archizoom 1971; Superstudio 1971.
- 12 Cf. Hejduk 1995, pp. 48–57.
- 13 “[W]e shall bring the normal life-process of decay and replacement to a halt, we shall straitjacket ourselves in embalmed cities of the past.” Banham 1973, p. 15. About Banham notion of “embalmmnt” see also Banham 1963, pp. 528–530.
- 14 Haraway 1984/1985, p. 40.
- 15 Breschi/Pecchioli 1978, p. 138.
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 This may recall Beatriz Colomina’s mention of her “intoxication” with New York itself when writing about her arrival to the delirious metropolis quoting Susan Sontag’s *Illness as Metaphor*, Colomina 2018, p. 7.
- 18 Isobel Armstrong observes the significance of crystals to the architectural imaginary: “[T]he ‘tremulous scintillations’ of crystal facets, glass against glass, declare crystal’s apparent nearness to the natural world of cave and grotto.” Armstrong 2008, p. 151.
- 19 Forty 2000, p. 277.
- 20 Smithson 1966c, p. 36.
- 21 Smithson’s *Strata*, a Geophotographic Fiction features a geologic timeline in which bands of all-caps text alternate photographic bands of earth layers with fossils and rocks, one atop of another in a progressive accumulation. Cf. Smithson 1970.
- 22 Vidler 2000, p. 250.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 248.
- 24 Scott 2008, p. 11.
- 25 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–12.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 28 Stevenson 2010, pp. 18–63.
- 29 Wines 2017, pp. 18–33.
- 30 Cf. Virilio 1989.
- 31 Pettena 2017, p. 201.
- 32 Harvey/Perry 2015, pp. 3–22.
- 33 Cf. Sandler 2016.
- 34 Bergson quoted in Kwinter 2001, p. 103.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 36 After 1972, the project was renamed Apollo 9999. Cf. 9999 1972. See also Ornella 2015, pp. 114–120.
- 37 9999 1970, p. 156.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 Cf. Berger 1999.
- 41 Hollier 1998, p. 194.
- 42 “A monument is inseparable from the history to which it bears witness and from the setting in which it occurs. The moving of all or part of a monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument demands it or where it is justified by national or international interest of paramount importance.” A reference to the subversion of the Venice Charter’s principles by means of a radical act of preservation features in Martino Stierli’s account about the vicissitudes of Venturi’s Lieb House, Stierli 2010, pp. 44–58.
- 43 Otero-Pailos 2015, p. 9.
- 44 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 45 Agrest 1996, pp. 49–68.
- 46 Cf. DeSilvey 2017.
- 47 *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 48 *Ibid.*, pp. 4–5.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 Cf. Lowenthal 1989.
- 52 Lee 2007, p. 30.
- 53 Ettore Sottsass’ photographed installations recollected under the title *Design Metaphors (1971–1978)* include forty-three scenes displaying the “most elementary actions”, evoking “primordial forms of living” through ancestral materials as “a study of the architectural language” (Carboni/Radice 2002, p. 11).
- 54 Such dialectical approach echoes Oswald Mathias Ungers’ 1982 *City Metaphors*, in which a series of double spreads collected, categorized, and compared (real and imaginary) city morphologies to everyday objects. Ungers 1982.
- 55 Radice/Sottsass 1988, p. 9. As John Hejduk reminds us, “walls are something we encounter throughout our lives”. The quotation is taken from the introduction by Franz Schulze to the exhibition catalogue *Masques*, Hejduk 1981, unpagged.
- 56 Haverkamp 1983, p. 6. About Hollein’s exhibition, see also Stadler/Korn 2020, pp. 181–184.
- 57 *Ibid.* The two terms would later come back to give title to another exhibition curated by Hollein, *Métaphores et Métamorphoses*, a retrospective of works on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1987, then exhibited also at the Museum of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Vienna in the same year and the National Gallery Berlin in 1988.
- 58 Hollein 2015, p. 9.
- 59 “When we were given this building, we had a lot of trouble raising money for the renovation because it wasn’t a nice, new, modern building. So many people said, ‘Oh, we can never make a museum here,’ and ‘It’s such a dog,’ was the word used by more than one person. But somehow, when we opened in ‘76, people were concerned about historic preservation, and we were right in the mainstream. So we were very, very fortunate.” Taylor 1986, p. 85.
- 60 Huxtable 1976, p. 31.
- 61 “The result, meant to be intriguing, bordered on the perverse. A group of international architects (for the most part) celebrates the opening of an American museum, which owns an astonishing collection of significant decorative objects, with a series of exhibits that have almost nothing to do with the collection, in a house restored and renovated for the occasion by the architects Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, which can’t be seen because of the installation.” Stephens 1977, p. 44, emphasis added.
- 62 Hollein 1974, unpagged.
- 63 Stephens 1977, p. 47.

- 64 Cf. Stadler/Korn 2020, pp. 182–183, *La Pietra* 1978, pp. 37–42, Hollein 1989, pp. 160–162.  
 65 Eco 2009, p. 213.  
 66 Cf. Kwinter 2010.  
 67 Kwinter 2001, pp. 4–5.  
 68 *Ibid.*, p. 11.  
 69 Cf. Allais 2011.  
 70 “Preservation is not action or epilogue; it is only prologue.” Lowenthal 1989, p. 77.

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## TABLE OF FIGURES

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Virilio, P.: <i>Esthétique de la disparition</i> , Paris 1989.	Fig. 2	Archivio Alberto Breschi.
Wines 2017	Fig. 3	San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
Wines, J.: <i>Peripatetic Pettena. Notes on a Wandering Visionary</i> , in: Pettena, G.: <i>The Curious Mr. Pettena. Rambling around the USA 1971–73</i> , Milan 2017, pp. 18–33.	Fig. 4	Archivio 9999, image courtesy Elettra Fiumi.