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History and Theory Graduate Studio 1995-1997 Catalogue

Records and Voices

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There were twelve keys, more or less: I went and got them from the chest they had been laid in; Old keys, haphazardly tossed into the chest, but kept anyhow.(note 1) They now lie within an amplifier of sorts; a recorder; a voice box. A new site. This record player is a record of **places**: of rooms houses warehouses streets. Voices that are quietly seen and dreamt about.

These keys are contained in collage-poems that frame the spaces they once unlocked. The pieces construct a foundation box that remembers and projects. This foundation box does not get buried under the city, but remains integral and actively connected to the spaces it illustrates. It orders the architect in a manner that is not geometrical nor based upon formalism and utility, but that is imaginative, poetical, and tied to the lived-in experiences of a place.(note 2).



This is a box for holding stories. It contains locks that allow the keys to slide out and make the frame of our spaces. It is a box of remembering and projecting. The key-collages are embedded and reflect its former owner's foundations; his/her travels across the thresholds of these spaces, these various rooms that any of us might have dwelled within.

These fictions or narratives do not produce the world that the keys formerly opened, but produce one that is conjured up, a discovery in the making of the collages. A mediation. These pieces are removed and become a participatory ritual for the maker/reader who unearths its elements. That which is "far [is brought] into a nearness."(note 3)

The fifteenth century architect Filarete's *Treatise on Architecture* is a narrative account of making architecture in which a seaside city is constructed according to the translation of a golden book that is excavated at the site and hails from a prior city there. The complex facets of the ancient city are also alluded to by the accompanying objects discovered in the foundation box/time capsule.

[In it] there was a small lead box [...] There was also a large book of all gold [...] In the remainder of the hollow there were two vases of the same metal as the book [...] In it [the lead box] there was a golden head with a crown set with excellent precious stones. The remainder was different kinds of colored jewels. There was also among other things a covered cup all of precious stones. The cup was green with a red cover. That was decorated with gold. There was a carved head in it which resembled the head of that king with letters all around.(note 4)

Another collection of objects that begin to form a city is found in Richard Brautigan's modern novel *In Watermelon Sugar*. A town takes shape in the reader's world through its brief, yet precise, images of the inhabitants; their detailed experiences and the elemental surroundings determine the architecture and "city":

The shack is small but pleasing and comfortable as my life and made from pine, watermelon sugar and stones as just about everything here is. Our lives we have carefully constructed from watermelon sugar and then travelled to the length of our dreams, along roads lined with pines and stones.(note 5)

Meaning in the work is formed from "the intersection of the text [collage] and the world of the reader."(note 6) The stories are not from a singular city as with the excavated foundation box

and Filarete's golden book. These disparate pieces and stories lie together to form a foundation for the architect, or "prima persona," the first voice of the box. There is an assemblage of **place**. The constructions have become architecture by their given life and what its form imparts to us as its occupants. However, its received life, the interpretations and imaginations enacted in its halls and streets, gives a challenge back to the spaces. These roving "cities," or homes, hope to make a foundation in a hermeneutic sense: to "take hold of the hinge between the (internal) configuration of the work and the (external) re-figuration of a life."(note 7)

Someone arrives at the station, luggage in hand, carrying the things that ground them, searching for the space that will become a place.

The box is a music box. The elements are not placed to make an inanimate time capsule, but are sited inside, as imprints of places. A record of places. What can possibly relay the essence of a space? A song-collage begins to voice experiences that make the architecture.

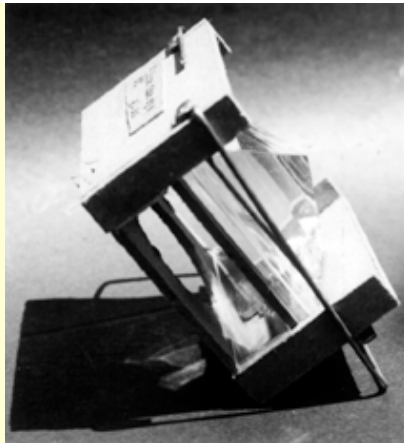
The box is a site

the velvet glove front
winged
flies open from the facade

dismembered bodies

boxes

wait silent and warm
inside the red case sheathed



eye prism pyramids

...we bury them all in glass coffins at the bottoms of rivers and put foxfire in the tombs, so they glow at night and we can appreciate what comes next...(note 8)

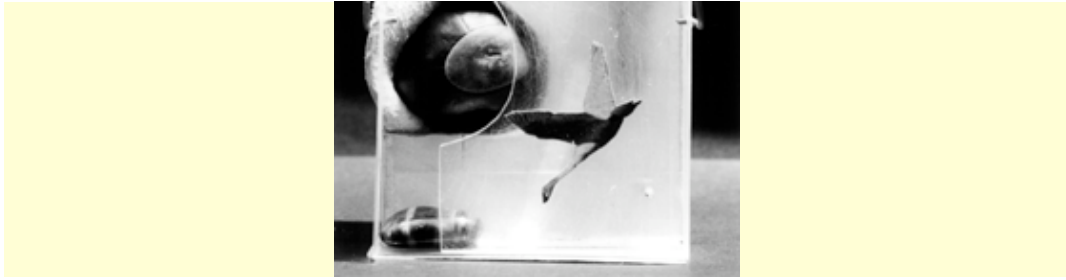
windows are sliced and pieced a grid of lead shattershimmers into a kaleidoscope lock of dichroic lenses baubles from an art glass studio

a rough dry box holding a cut key encased by windows and tombstones through factory windows

shining out to the wet green hills that draft inside

...they were doing the glass inlay work now...(note 9)





canadian goose flies south

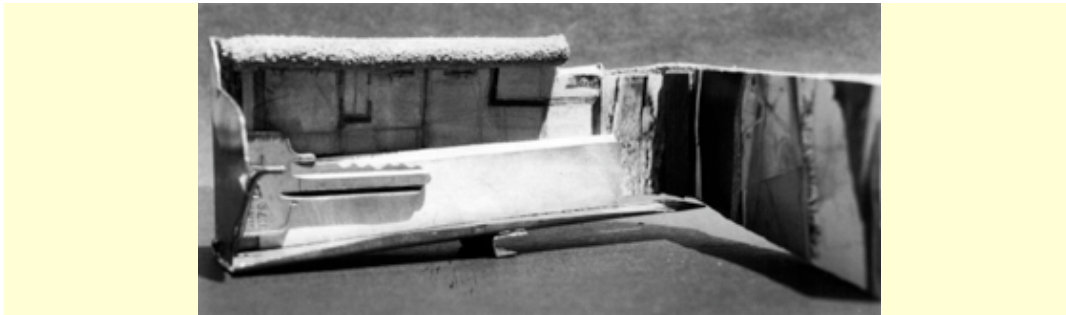
two hikers climb a bluff bald into the clouds split between this loft and their city perch this is where the sun shone hard against a metal door peeling into the southern tree tops

off the Sheltowee Trace a hand caresses hard stones buck eyes

a horse chestnut, shiny brown tying flight to the soil

this is where they made their temporary tent smoothing bracing stretching fabric against the skies:

Leather wings or a palm hold its seed inside waiting to be plucked by the Red River



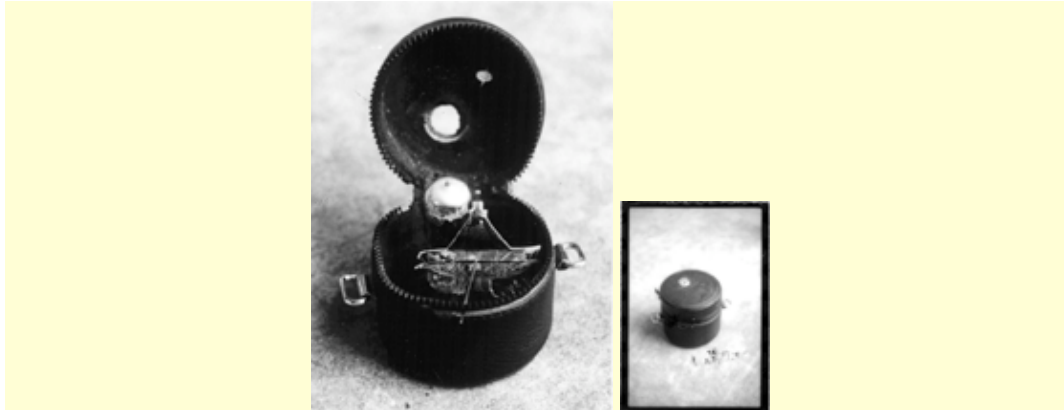
a body enveloped a body laid out

a leather suede sheath envelops and unfolds into a body of the hills

this is where my body lies open on top; and my horse tries to leave

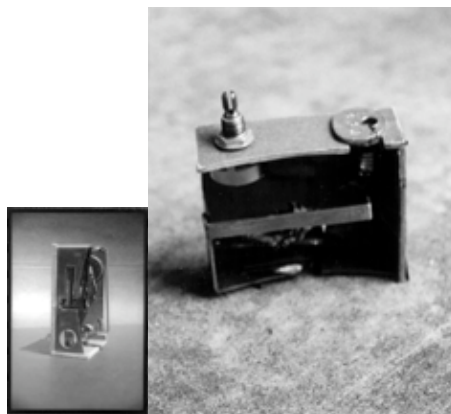
it stumbles up brown stairs; rose thorns in its bit: to street level city breezes and of a field of hills
my horse stays in your backyard dream forever locked in this poem-painting and i am lashed to
the terrain

this is where i had a dream about you carrying a surfboard through these hills this is where your
tepid blue eyes bound me down; this is where you broke from a circle of silhouettes out of the
centre lashed like a victor while i hovered on a crest slicing through lush earth; this is where our
scar will remain in this poem-painting



sky needle photo lab

A warm red velvet wall zippered into a case. A brooding ceiling of electric air and charges dissipate
through this place. An aerospace engineer roams inside white suburban sanctuaries. While red
rocket and shooting needle eyes transmit a seamstress to split open the sky for elliptical, Kepler
orbits to spill out of this nest to the green hills, to the green tide. Two keys lie whole, intact
within, waiting softly to be retrieved.



ode to a filmmakers studio

Works on paper and brass, coloured and enigmatic. Vibrating elements juxtaposed on fields of
measure and fields of energy: A collage that creates the flash. How does he conduct; the pieces
and digits upon ground? Let the colours wrap around and make the dream work.

... the light is either born here, or imprisoned, reigns here in freedom...(note 10)

Feeler gauges are positioned. He measures the gaps in the room: between the poles, between

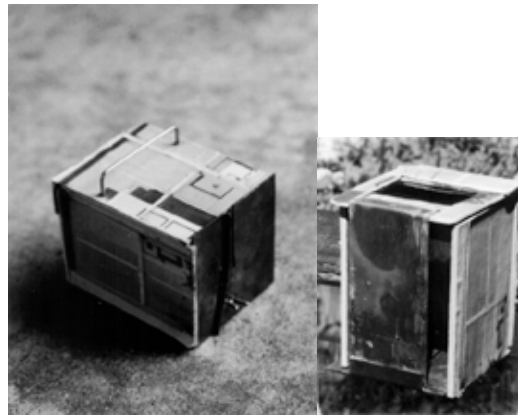
the wires and rotating, he tapers it off into two shafts of light.

Fitzcarraldo pulls his dry body through the sultry Amazon mud and pink lights glare while Eisenstein constructs another strip of falling bridges. The body of desire floats amid the blue water.



cracking vessel

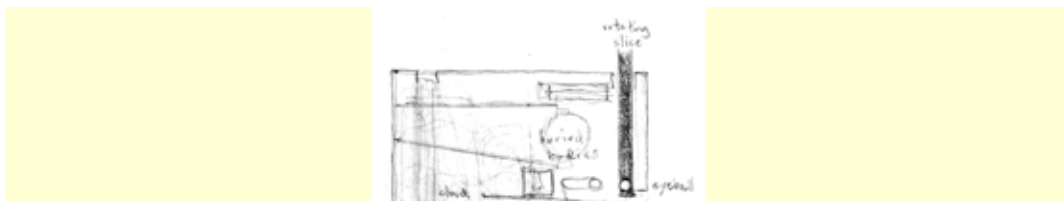
An empty cylinder holds all there is to hold in this black echoing square. This is a story about loss. A barren metal cabinet sits on dusty terrazzo. Quiet. Reverberating. Ping ping pang. A transparent frigate is locked in the harbour, caught behind marble sand bars.

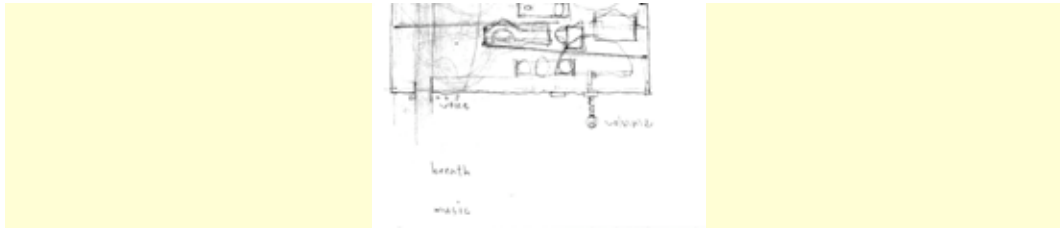


waystation studio

The moon penetrates the atmosphere here and its milken clouds of light stream into the eyes of the traveller who watches the world above. Stillness and movement run together as one body; Whispering ghostly forms, the clouds of the night, wash its roundness, its chiselled sharpness.

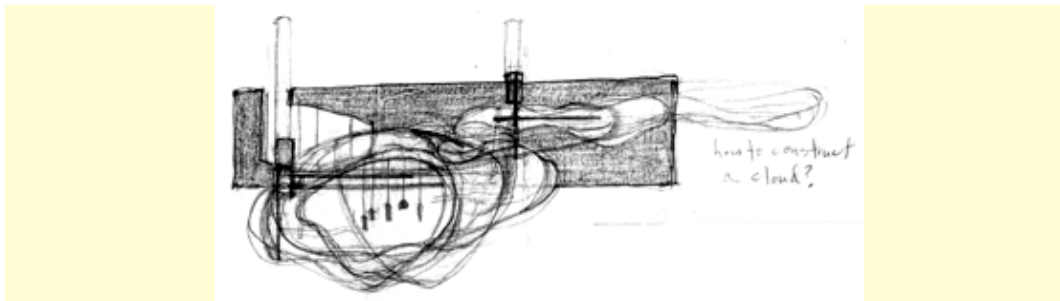
In a screaming dream of the sky he awakes on the edge of the clouds while the earth floats below, holding the waystations of his desert journey. A passage, a mesa, a tower, cliffs and windows. The horizon stretches 13 miles away and dust drenches his body.





three unknown keys

What is suspended before the horizon? The voice of this box folds outward and hovers in the wind. Like arms extending a breath of hope. Like a window in a home catching a visitor's reflection. The three unknown keys lack a known history and await amid the thickness of the present. Clouds. Music. They are the keys for the thresholds that stand before the builder. "We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A 'corporeal [...] schema' gives us at every moment an [...] implicit notion of the relation between our body and things, of our hold on them. Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space." (note 11) An orientation is provided that is embodied. They are fluid markers and the construction of the clouds cannot be dogmatized. The cloud, as a diaphanous body glimmers in the fleeting future and the keys chime out a structure of verses.



Notes:

1. This introduction was inspired by the following quote: "I went and got some seeds from the chest that I keep my things in [...] I have nine things, more or less: a child's ball (I can't remember which child), a present given me nine years ago by Fred, my essay on weather, some numbers (1-24), an extra pair of overalls, a piece of blue metal, something from the Forgotten Works, a lock of hair that needs washing." Richard Brautigan, *In Watermelon Sugar* (New York: Dell 1968), 65.
2. Gaston Bachelard, *Poetics of Space*, tr. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press 1969), 79.
3. Paul Ricoeur, "The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality," *Man and World* 12, no. 2 (The Netherlands: Martin Nijhoff 1979).
4. Filarete, *Treatise on Architecture, being the treatise by Antonio di Piero Averlino, known as Filarete*, tr. John R. Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press 1965), 178.
5. Brautigan, *In Watermelon Sugar*, 1-2.
6. Paul Ricoeur, "Life: A Story in Search of a Narrator," *Facts and Values* (The Netherlands: Martin Nijhoff 1986), 126.
7. *Ibid.*, 127.
8. Brautigan, *In Watermelon Sugar*, 60.
9. *Ibid.*, 60.
10. Anna C. Chave, *Subjects in Abstraction: Mark Rothko* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1989), 3.
11. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "An Unpublished Text by Maurice Merleau-Ponty: A Prospectus of His Work," tr. Arleen B. Dallery, *The Primacy of Perception* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press 1964), 5.