

“Memory for Forgetfulness”:
REGISTERING/EFFACING THE MEMORY OF THE LEBANESE WAR

"Forgetting is not simply a kind of inertia... but rather the active faculty to... provide some silence, a 'clean slate' for the unconscious, to make place for the new..."

"If something is to stay in the memory it must be burned in: only that which never ceases to hurt stays in the memory."

"In the conscious act of forgetting, one cannot but remember."

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*

"Just as expecting is possible only on the basis of awaiting, remembering is possible only on that of forgetting."

Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*



"Springing up like weeds among ruins, like melancholy flowers of forgetting."

"My memory, sir, is like a heap of garbage."

"In the conscious act of forgetting, one cannot but remember."

"Destruction and construction can be understood, in a certain context, as two aspects of the same process."

"Down to the acts of forgetting in the earth, even the indifference that they are part and parcel of a larger project of remembering."

"Memory is a sort of anti-museum: it is not localizable."

"What would an 'anti-museum' be like?"

"What is possible to construct a history?"



precious paradox it does possess a center, but this center is empty."

Beirut is dead long live Beirut



Beirut is dead long live Beirut

There's No Forgetting (S O N A T A)

Ask me where I have been
and I'll tell you: "Things keep on happening."
I must talk of the rubble that darkens the stones;
of the river's duration, destroying itself;
I know only the things that the birds have abandoned,
or the sea behind me, or my sorrowing sister.
Why the distinctions of place? Why should day
follow day? Why must the blackness
of nighttime collect in our mouths? Why the dead?

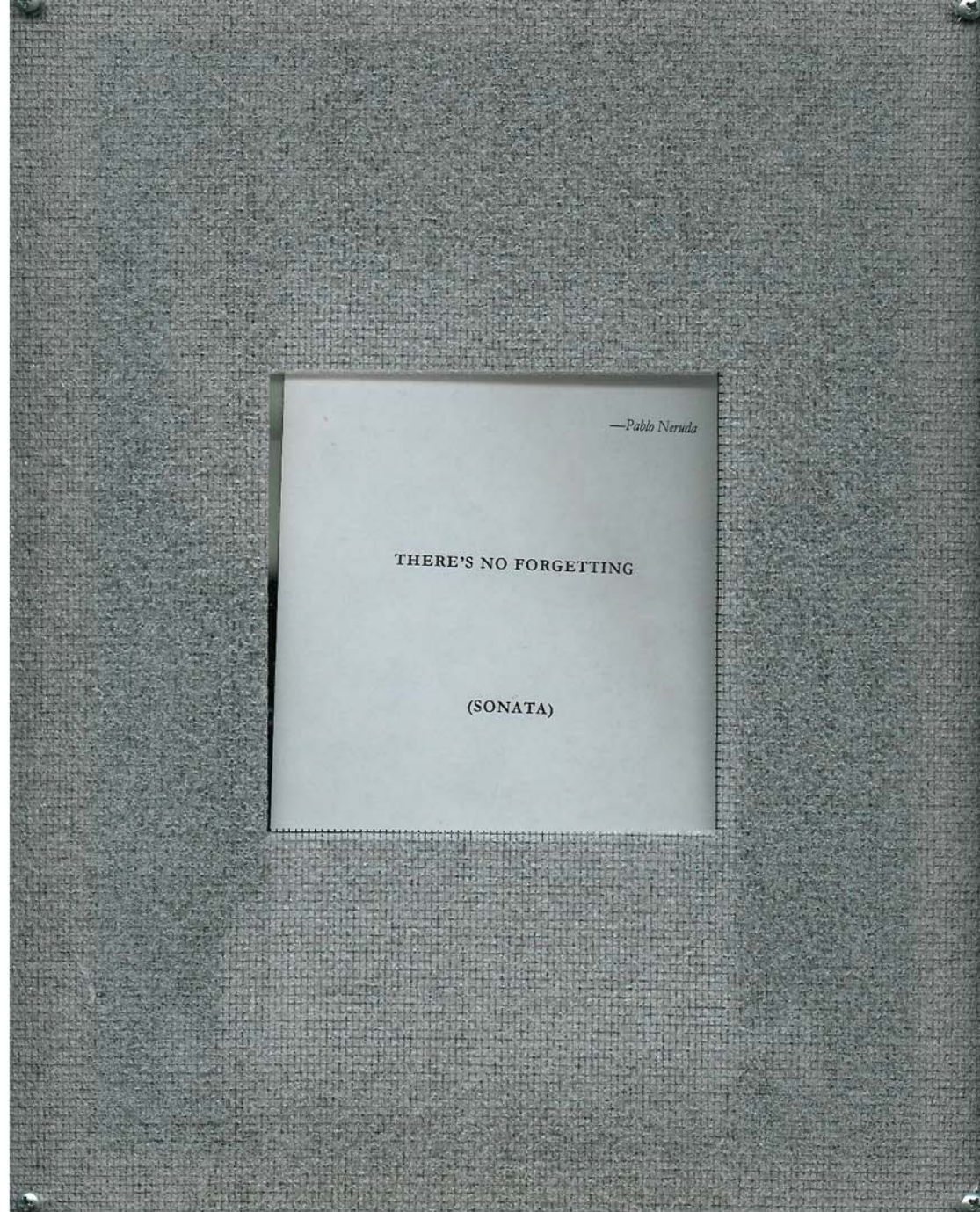
If you question me: where have you come from, I must talk
with things falling away,
artifacts tart to the taste,
great, cankering beasts, as often as not,
and my own inconsolable heart.

Those who cross over with us are no keepsakes,
nor the yellowing pigeon that sleeps in forgetfulness:
only the face with its tears,
the hands at our throats,
whatever the leafage dissevers:
the dark of an obsolete day,
a day that has tasted the grief in our blood.

Here are the violets, swallows—
all the things that delight us, the delicate tallies
that show in the lengthening train
through which pleasure and transiency pass.

Here let us halt, in the teeth of a barrier:
useless to gnaw on the husks that the silence assembles.
For I come without answers:
see: the dying are legion,
legion, the breakwaters breached by the red of the sun,
the headpieces knocking the ship's side,
the hands closing over their kisses,
and legion the things I would give to oblivion.

— P a b l o N e r u d a



Based on a poem by Pablo Neruda after which it is titled, **"There's No Forgetting"** is an attempt to explore the complex antagonistic relationship between memory and forgetting. The result is an electrically operated "Poem Reading/Shredding Machine" by which the only way to read the poem is by shredding it. The machine is operated by a control knob on the side of the box. The knob controls a paper shredder that rolls the poem up the screen by shredding it. The roll of paper, however, contains multiple copies of the poem, thus creating a repetitive cycle of presenting/destroying. As such the only way that the reader can come to know the poem is by destroying it, and the poem can only be presented through its own annihilation. Hence the work recreates a highly tangled and inherently tense relationship analogous to that of memory and forgetting.

Wood, Plexiglas, composite screen, toilet paper dispenser & an electric paper shredder. 9 x 12 x 4 inches.

RE/PRODUCTIONS

An Unauthorized Installation

Reproductions of 3 works of Jochen Gerz:

"329 The Book of Gestures"

"Alternatives to Memories"

"The Event is Taking Place Somewhere else"

Directed and Produced by
Adrian Chan

The event is taking place somewhere else.

Reproduction is perhaps one of the most influential and defining attributes of industrialization, and consequentially modernity. The reproduction of art in particular was one of the issues that haunted and radically transformed art in the twentieth century. One

of the byproducts of this complex process of transformation was conceptual art and installation as a medium and art form. **Re/Productions** is an installation that attempts to explore reproducibility in the context of conceptual art through the "re-production" of three of

German conceptual artist Jochen Gerz's works. The selection of the particular works aimed to explore issues of absence, presence and their signifiers, ranging from physical absence and presence (hiding, presence elsewhere, discarding) and signifiers of such presence and absence (a photograph, a statement, remnants) to the absence/presence of such abstract concepts as authenticity and art. The installation invited the public to be an active/passive participant in the work (doing the action/unknowingly) by becoming an agent of absence, creating signifiers of it through the act of tearing the flyers and announcement (thus artwork), hence inadvertently becoming part of the installation.

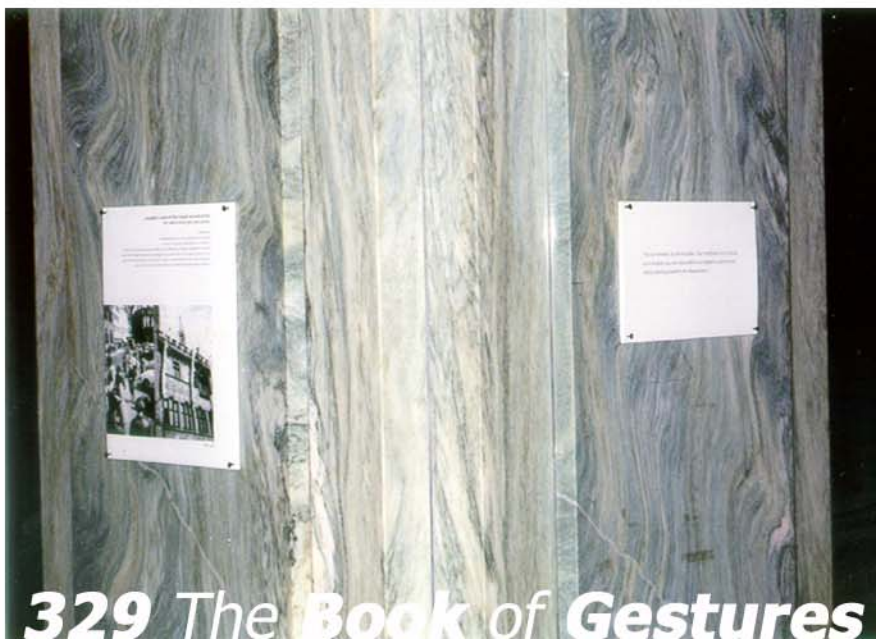
This is an artwork; you are its author. Your contribution is to continue to do whatever you were doing before you stopped to read this text, without allowing yourself to be influenced by it.



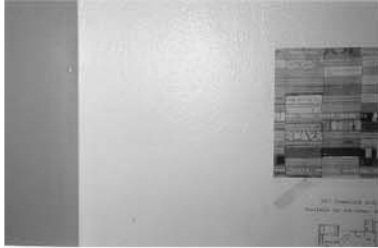
ReProductions



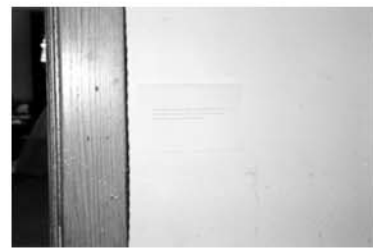
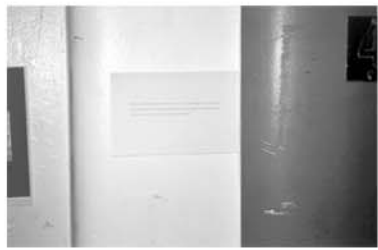
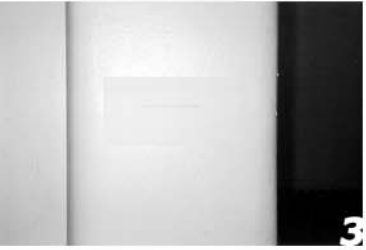
The Event is Taking Place Somewhere else



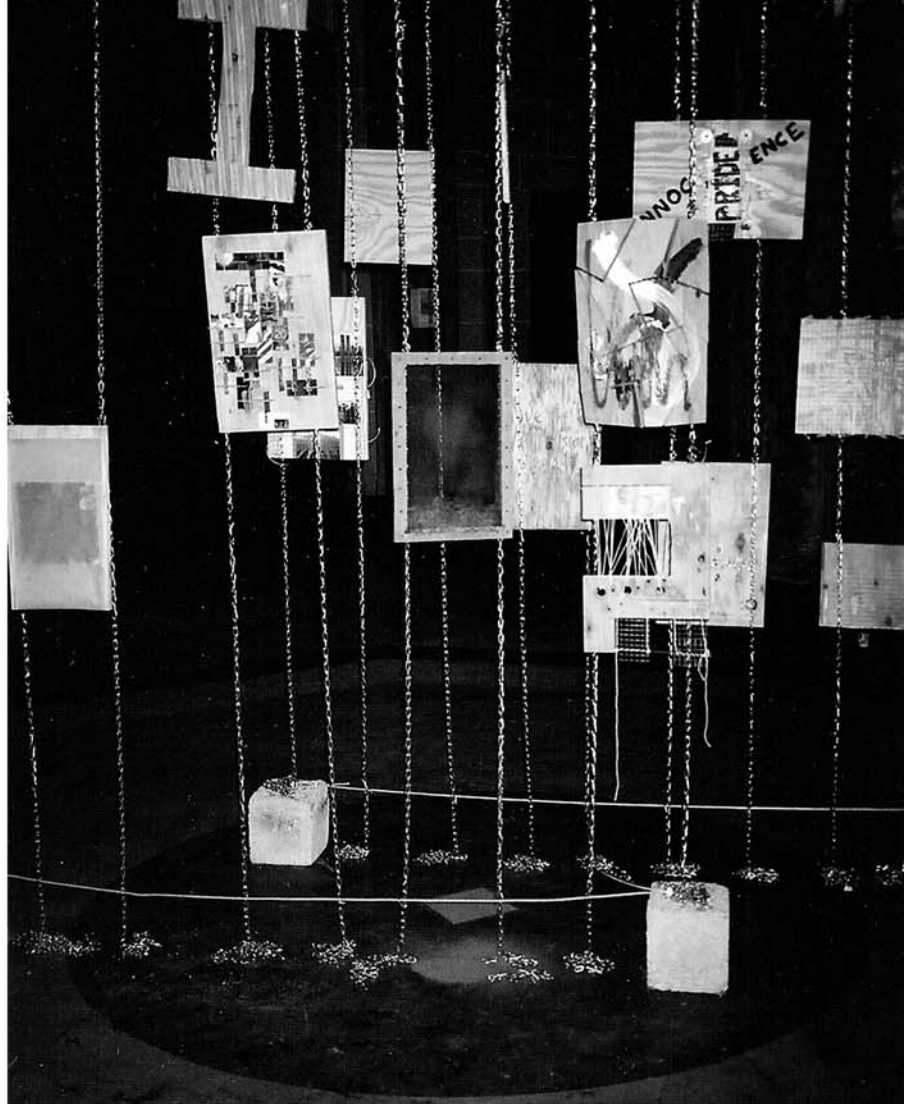
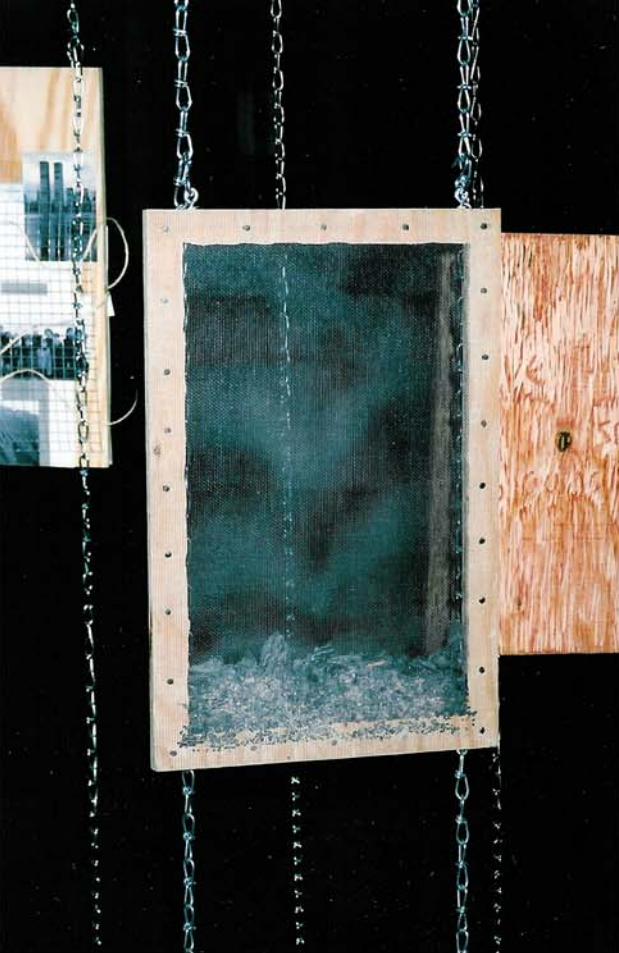
329 The Book of Gestures



Rows 1-3:
 329 *The Book of Gestures,
 The Event...*
 Row 4: Modifications
 Row 5: Absences



Alternatives to Memories



re CONSTITUTION

On Feb. 15 and 16, 2002, Syracuse University's School of Architecture hosted an interdisciplinary symposium and charette titled *Re/Constructing Memory* that featured keynote speakers Mary Miss, one of the leading environmental artists in the United States and a pioneer of architectural sculpture; and M. Christine Boyer, the William R. McKean Jr. Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at Princeton University.

The symposium, which began with a panel discussion, focused on constructing memory and employed the events of September 11 as a vehicle for discussion. The panel discussion was followed by an overnight charette, where teams of students developed designs in response to the ideas and issues that were presented during the panel discussion. Participants were issued a kit of parts to create their designs with. The kit included a piece of plywood, wire mesh, and hooks. The charette concluded with a discussion and critique of the proposals led by Miss and Boyer. The completed designs were exhibited in Slocum Hall and elsewhere on campus.

My entry, titled *Re/Constitution*, aimed at creating absence, an essential prerequisite of memory, through cutting a large rectangular piece out of the panel of wood. What remained was a frame that framed the absence of that cut piece. I then burned that piece and replaced its ashes in the frame, holding them in place with two pieces of fine mesh stretched over both faces of the frame. Hence, the absence was replaced with a remnant, a transformed, reconstituted relic of what was. The process of loss proposed by this entry, however, is not a linear one. The ashes continued to sift through the mesh, falling onto the floor of the rotunda, eventually being swept away by the janitors, transforming them into an unsuspecting agent of absence.

On another level, the process of absencing employed, namely that of burning, was a direct-too direct, perhaps-reference to the events of September 11th. That, along with the pun of the title, amounted to a commentary on the reinterpretation of the American Constitution that followed the events of September 11th. The state of emergency created was employed to renegotiate such fundamental concepts to the Constitution as civil rights and liberties. Thus, in a sense, amongst what was reconstituted in the wake of the events of September 11th was the Constitution itself.



"My memory, sir, is like



a heap of garbage."



Jorge Luis Borges, Funes the Memorious



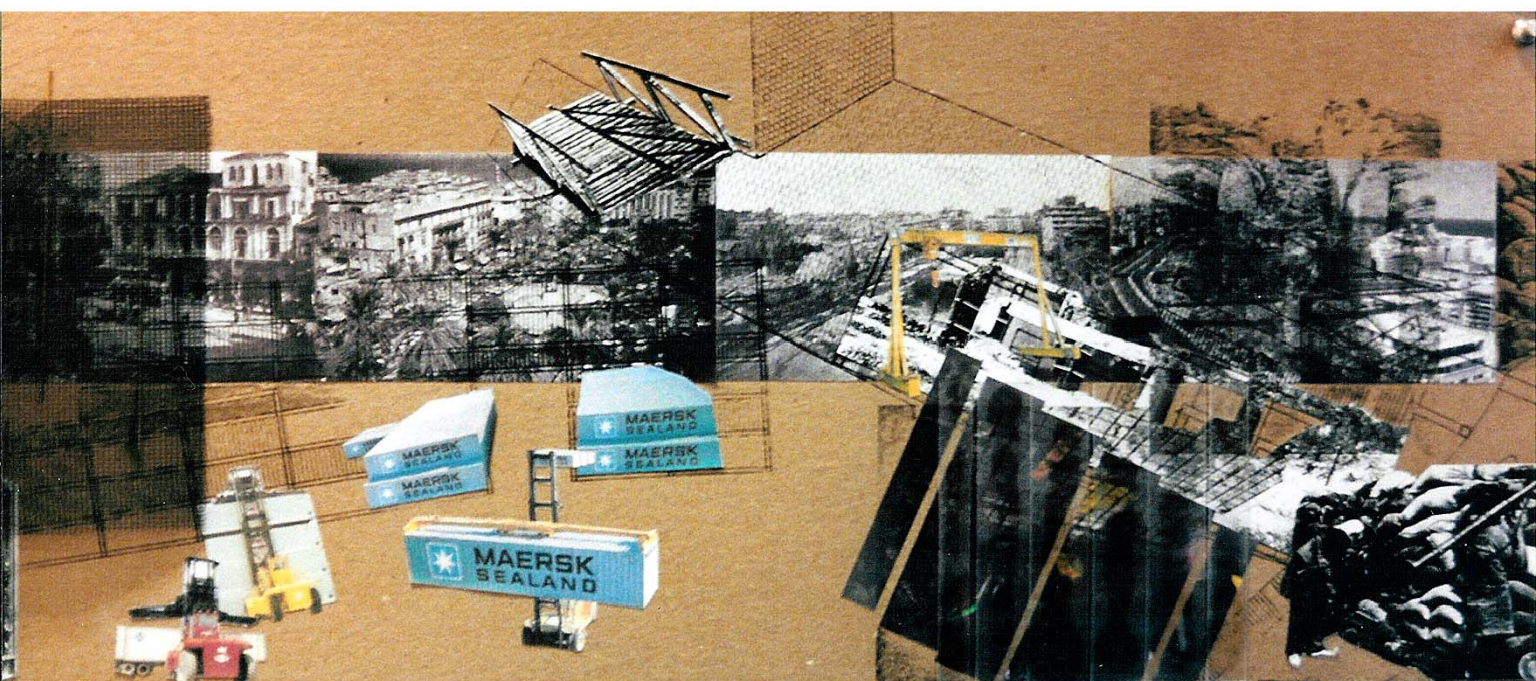


PartiDiagram

SALT, SOIL & WAX



"How can I write about Beirut? How can I collect it into one volume:
the years of pain; of watching a world collapse while trying to stave off that collapse;
the layers of memories and hopes, of tragedy and even sometimes comedy,
of violence and kindness, of courage and fear?
Above all, how can I express my strange love for this mutilated city;
how to explain, both to myself and to others, the lingering magic of the place
that has kept me and so many others clinging to its wreckage,
refusing to let go, refusing to abandon it?"



"The streets of Beirut, even those that are relatively intact,
provide a shifting landscape of memories and sorrow . . .
Each of these physical landmarks, and so many others like them,
are milestones in my inner journey of pain.
Memories wash over the map, and layers of time alter its shadings."

Jean Said Makdisi, "Beirut Fragments"

Beirut Mapping

PAPER SHREDS

Two mapping collages of Beirut showing the 'Green Line', the zone that divided Beirut in two for the most part of the war, with its 3 major crossings. The mappings also show the 'location history' of the *B018*, a precedent and a programmatic element of the thesis. The first mapping (*below, and detail to the right*) uses for the Green Line shreds of the poem "There's No Forgetting" generated by the eponymous conceptual model/poem-reading/shredding machine. The crossings are made of shreds of Lebanese newspaper clippings, which are part of the programmatic elements of the thesis.



The second mapping (*above, and detail to the left*) employs misaligned shreds of xeroxes of photographs of the Green Line. The slight misalignment renders the images unintelligible, thus transforming the reading to one of two contrasting zones, a dark zone and a lighter one. The dark zone is one where the ruins of damaged buildings remain, thus retaining the density of the urban fabric, albeit in mutilated form. The lighter zone at the top of the Line lies within the *Beirut Central District*, and was accordingly all but cleared of damaged building skeletons. As a result, it now stands as a gaping void at the center of the city.

FROM BACKGROUND TO FOREGROUND:

Black & white war photograph

"Map of Beirut with pins"

on vellum, sawn at corners

A layer of yellow wax

Unwoven canvas threads

A layer of red wax

A few drops of blood

A transparency of the "War layer"

of Beirut, landfill "erased" with

whiteout, green line cut out

A transparency of the archeological

finds in central Beirut

A layer of red wax

Metal wire mesh

Several burnt and bent metal rods

Two bolts

Many "negro" nails

"The city I am talking about offers this

**precious paradox:
it does possess a center,
but this center is empty."**

R o l a n d B a r t h e s

**„Beirut is dead,
long live Beirut."**

Rudolphe El-Khoury, *Beirut Sublime*

Beirut Mapping
WAX COLLAGE, "RED"



Beirut Mapping

WAX COLLAGE, "BLUE"



Transparencies of the historical layers of Beirut, Plexiglas, Band-Aid®,

"The combined effects of thoroughly destructive warfare and equally uprooting reformulations of property law and zoning ordinances-namely the forces of capital-have created a *t a b u l a r a s a* at the very heart of the city. This cleared ground has no discernible physical differentiation: all traces of streets and building masses are now erased. Also obliterated are the property lines, zoning envelopes, and other invisible but no less 'real' demarcations which customarily determine or inflect urban morphologies. The homogeneity and superficial neutrality of this clear slate may have been compromised when the archeological strata were exposed in the recent surveys. But the excavations finally participated, perhaps most effectively, in the systematic erasure of modern Beirut by challenging the primacy of the surface, eventually replacing one ground with several others: by the time the survey is complete, the valuable artifacts collected, and the trenches filled up, the new ground will be artificial, and therefore arbitrary, abstract, and more vacant still."

Rudolphe El-Khoury, *Beirut Sublime*

wax, wood frame, nails, nuts & bolts. (8 x 12 inches)



OPPOSITE PAGE:
Lower Left, Front
Right, Detail

THIS PAGE:
Below, Back
Left, Detail
Above, "The Negative"



“Beirut has survived a twenty-two years without its downtown and its centrifugal energy and is not about to waste its momentum, despite the efforts of planners, legislators, and investors. So no matter what we build on the site, be it the developer’s fantasy of a miniature Manhattan where enclaves of wired office buildings will rival the inscrutability of Tokyo’s walled precinct, or the nostalgic reconstruction of a vanished historical district where simulation can only hasten cultural degradation, losses will linger on and indifference will grow. But as long as this terrain vague persists in its vagueness, vacancy, and vagrancy . . . we may see in the emptiness of the evacuated center the possibility of difference, of mutation, of a revolution in the propriety of symbolic systems. At the site of Beirut’s sacrificial immolation, we may recognize an opportunity for the remorseless detournement of a negative yet liberating violence.”

Rodolphe el-Khoury, *Beirut Sublime*

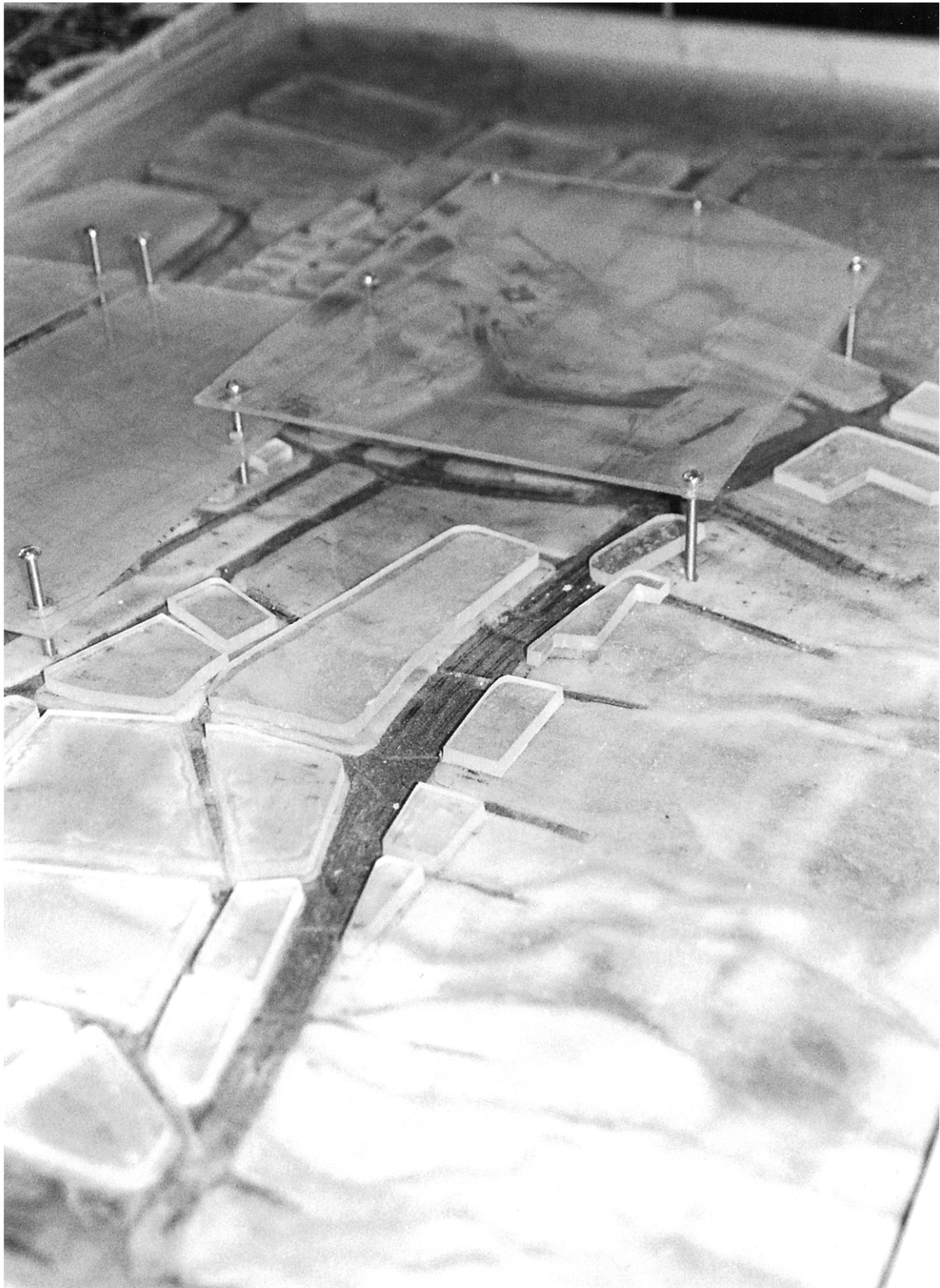
Beirut Modelling



Composite Map

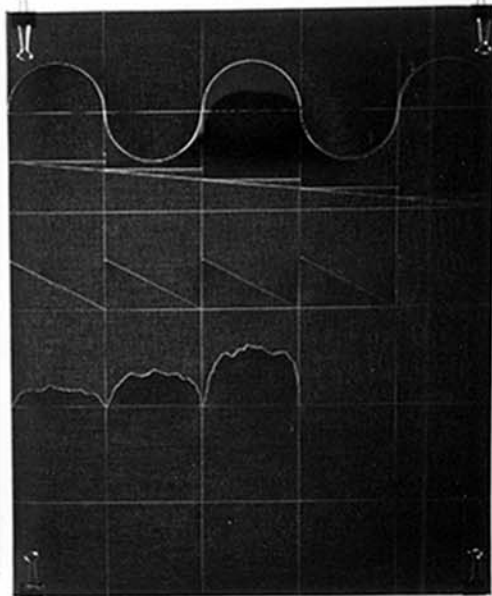


Composite Site Model

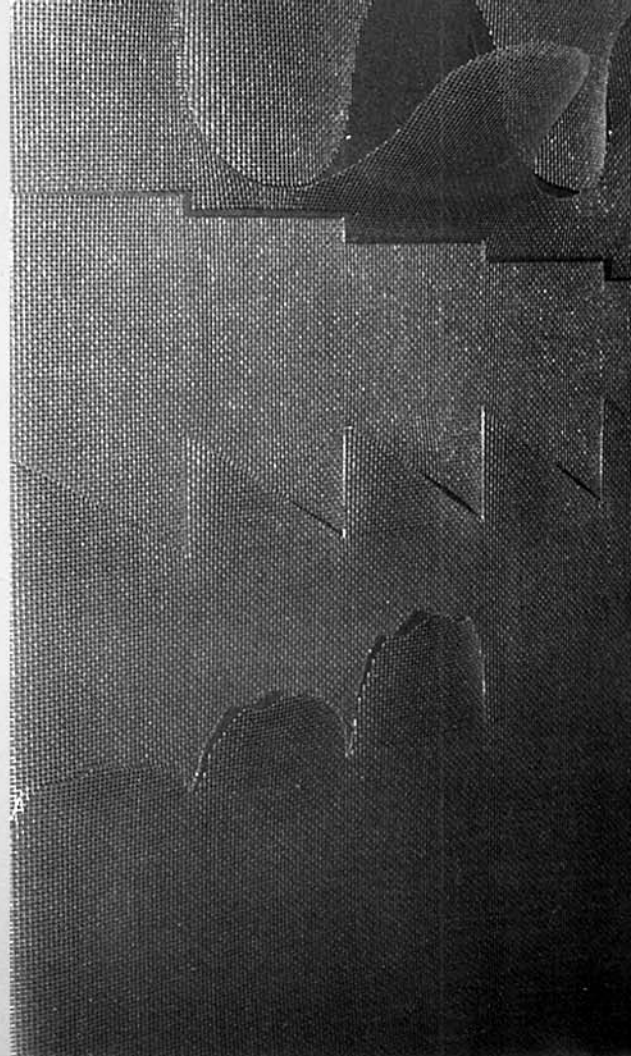


**"Springing up like weeds among ruins,
like melancholy flowers of forgetting."
Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting***

+ and -
Monument against Fascism...
"There's No Forgetting"
B018
The War



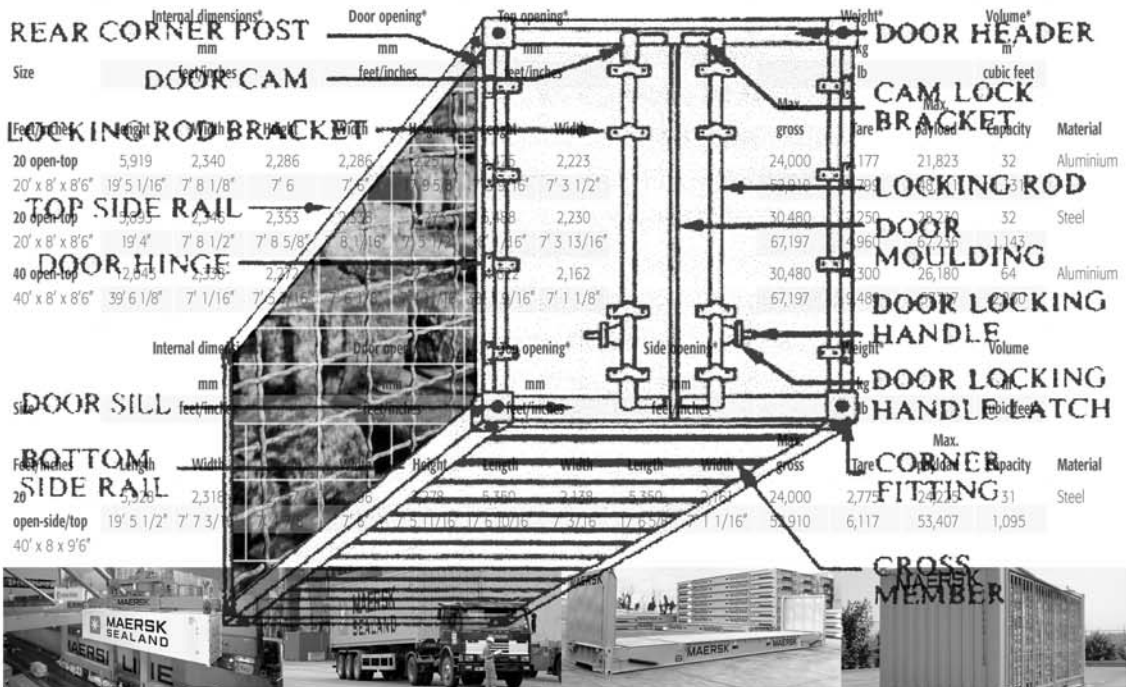
MODES of ABSENCE
CYCLES of ERASURE



Modes of Absence **CYCLES OF ERASURE**

Modes of Absence/Cycles of Erasure is a mapping of the temporal cycles of erasure/modes of absence of three of the precedents ("**+ and -**" by Mona Hatoum, "**Monument against Fascism...**" by Jochen Gerz, and "**B018**" by Bernard Khoury); the conceptual model, "**There's No Forgetting**"; and the Lebanese War, as reflected through accounts of the 'Green Line' in Edgar O'Ballances history, ***Civil War in Lebanon, 1975-92***. The technique itself, that of incision/cutting, was an attempt at "presencing through absence" that I thought appropriate given the contention of this thesis.

(15"x18", charcoal plastic mesh mounted on black board)



Containers & Cranes

Reefer containers ... **Dry-bright containers** ... **Flat racks and artificial terminals** ... **Open-top and open-side/top containers**

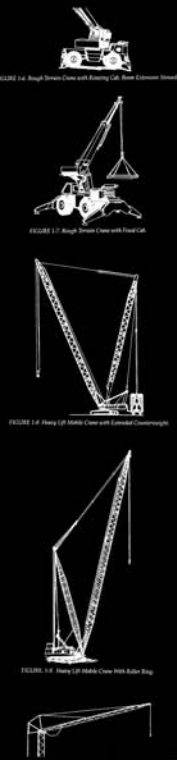
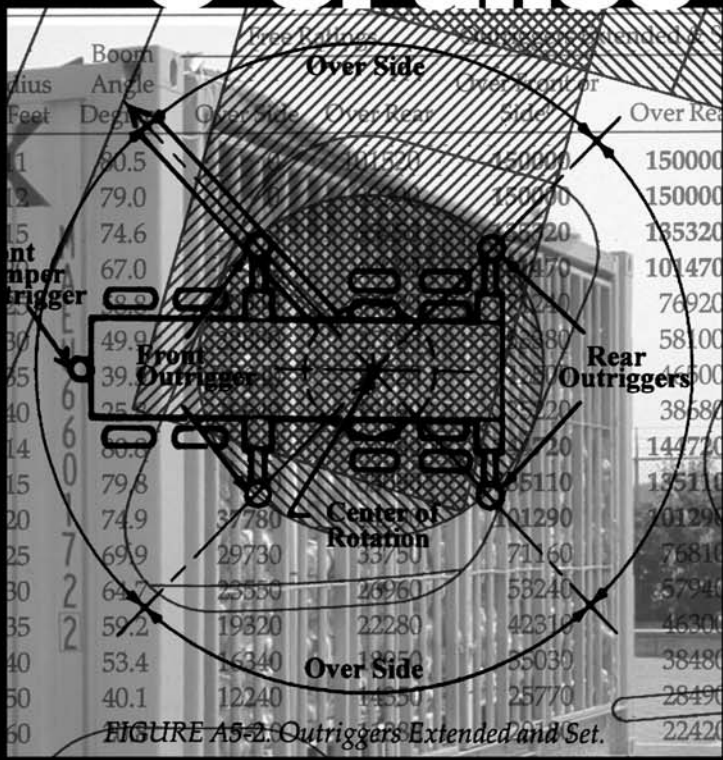
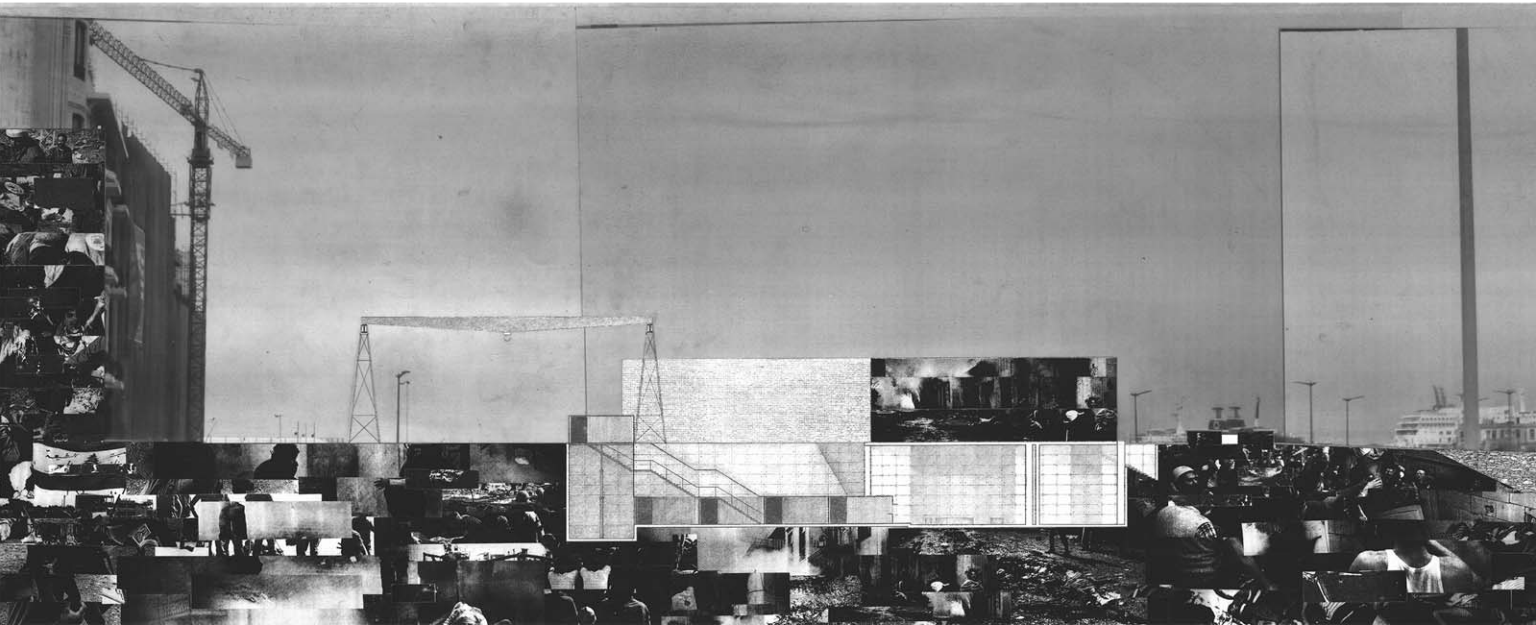


FIGURE A5-2: Outriggers Extended and Set.



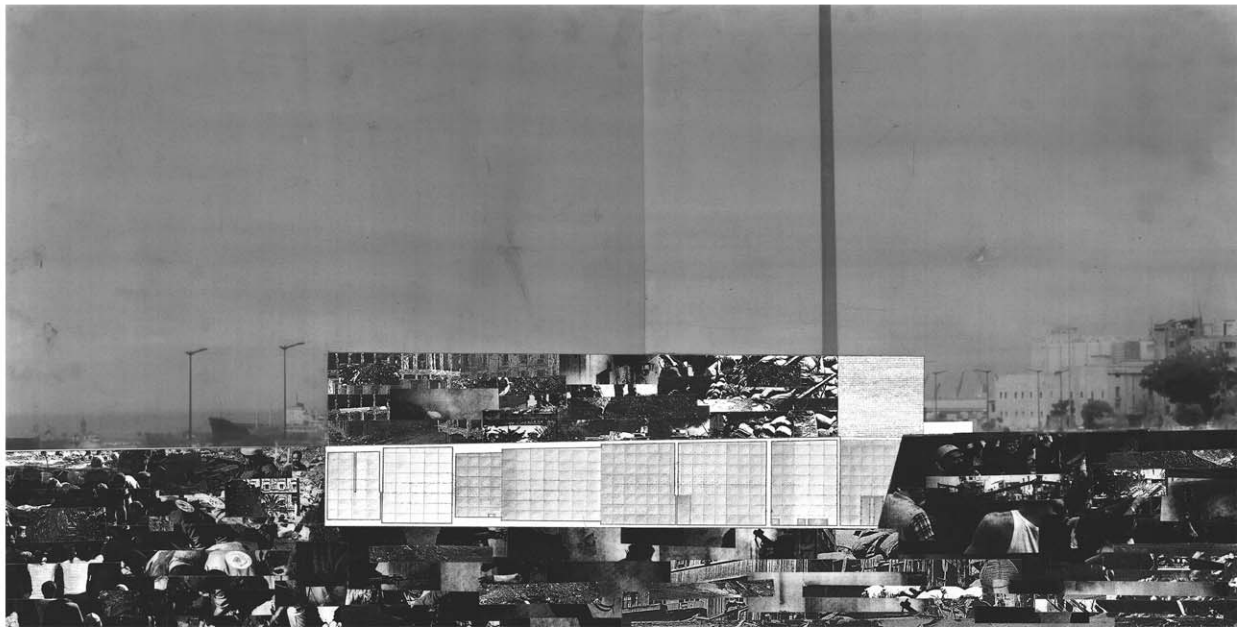
**"Memory is a sort of anti-museum:
it is not localizable."**
Michel de Certeau





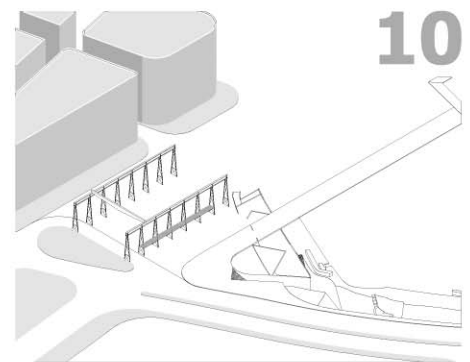
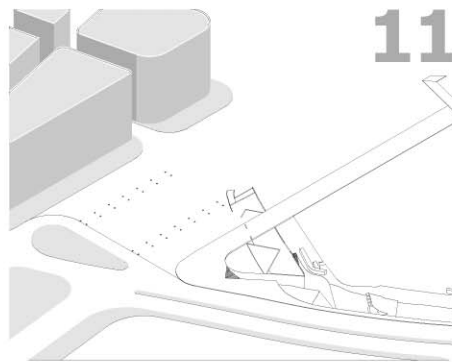
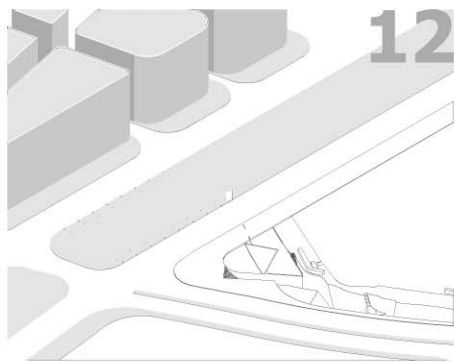
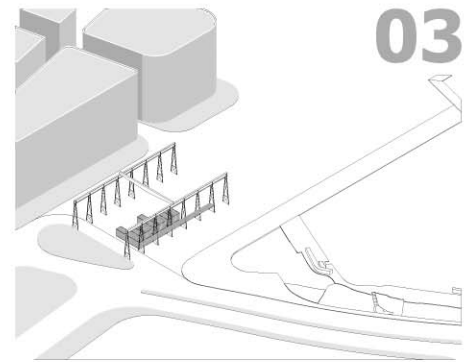
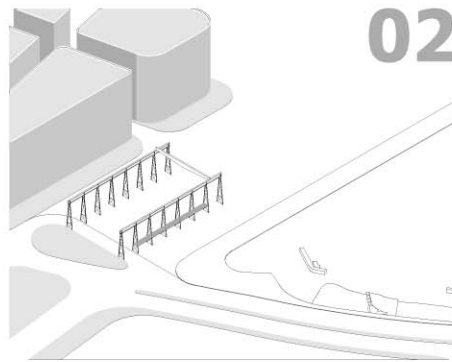
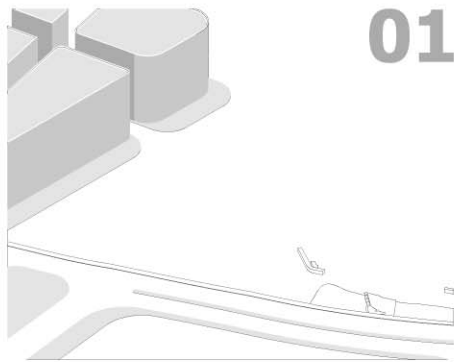
"What would an 'anti-museum' be like?"
"Might it be possible to construct a history
not of **memorials, but of **amnesiacs**?"**

A d r i a n F o r t y



**"Common to the *acts of forgetting*
that they are part and parcel of a large**

D a v i d L o

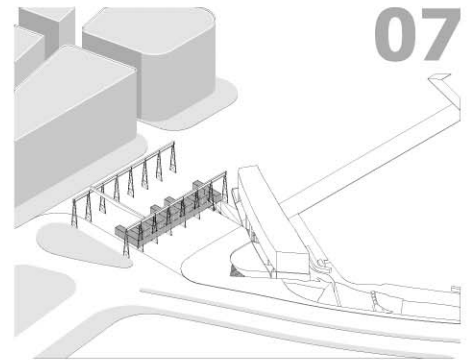
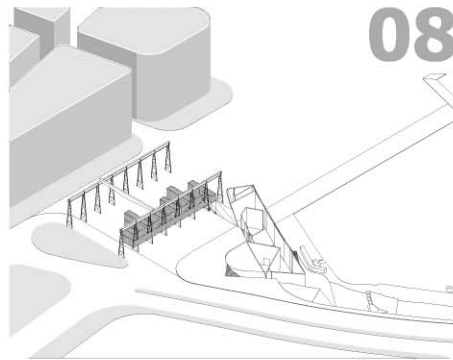
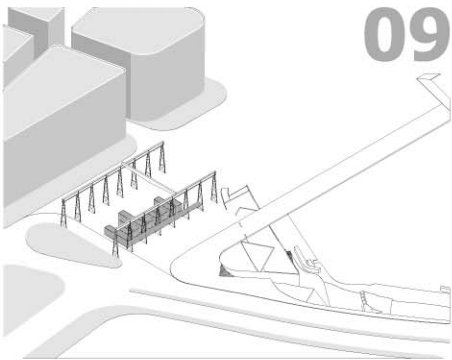
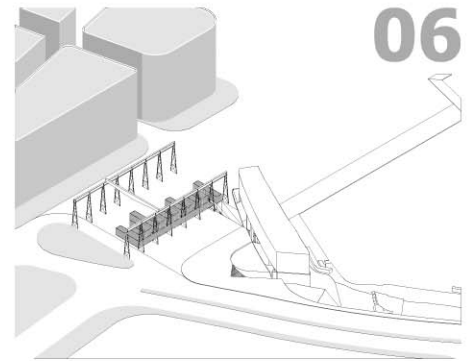
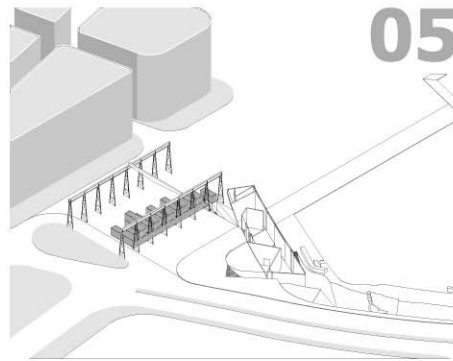
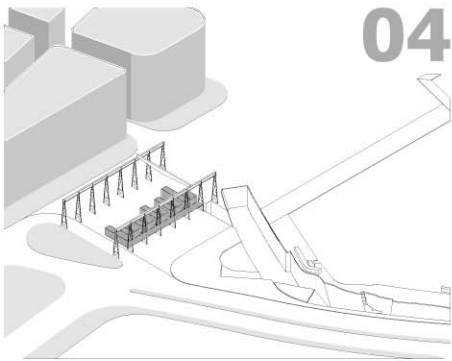


**"Destruction and const
certain context, as two equally valid f**

M i k h a i l Y

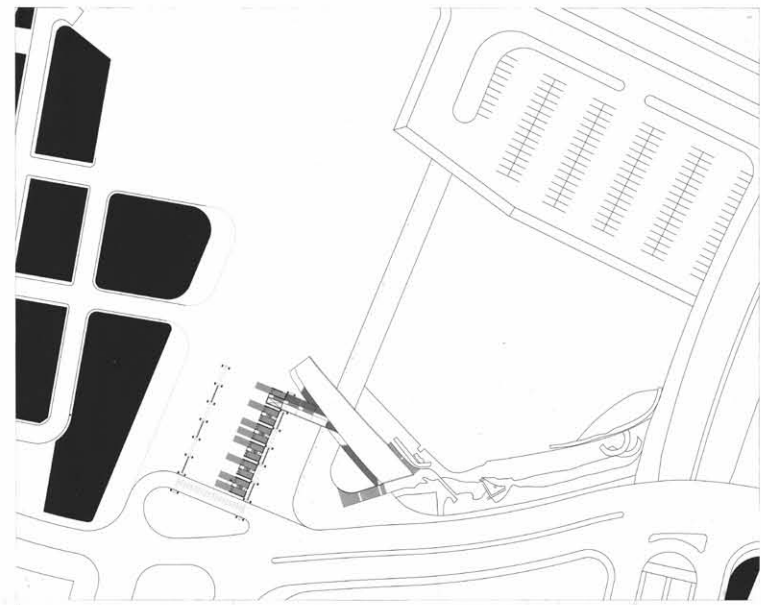
ting is the sense, even the insistence,
per project of remembering."

w e n t h a l



ruction can be understood, in a
features of **immortalisation.**"

a m p o l s k y



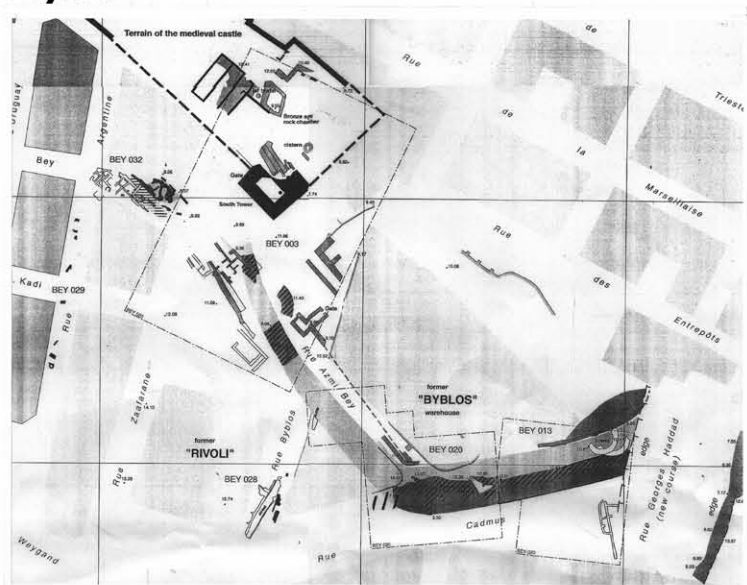
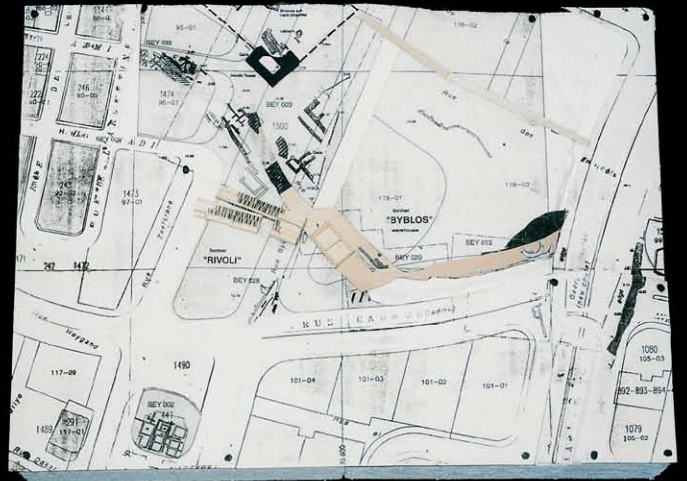
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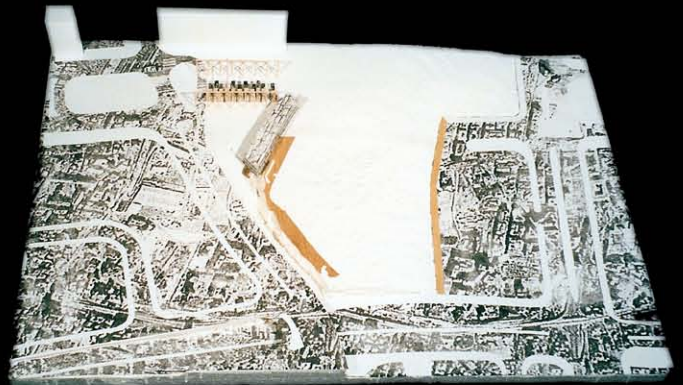
StudyModels

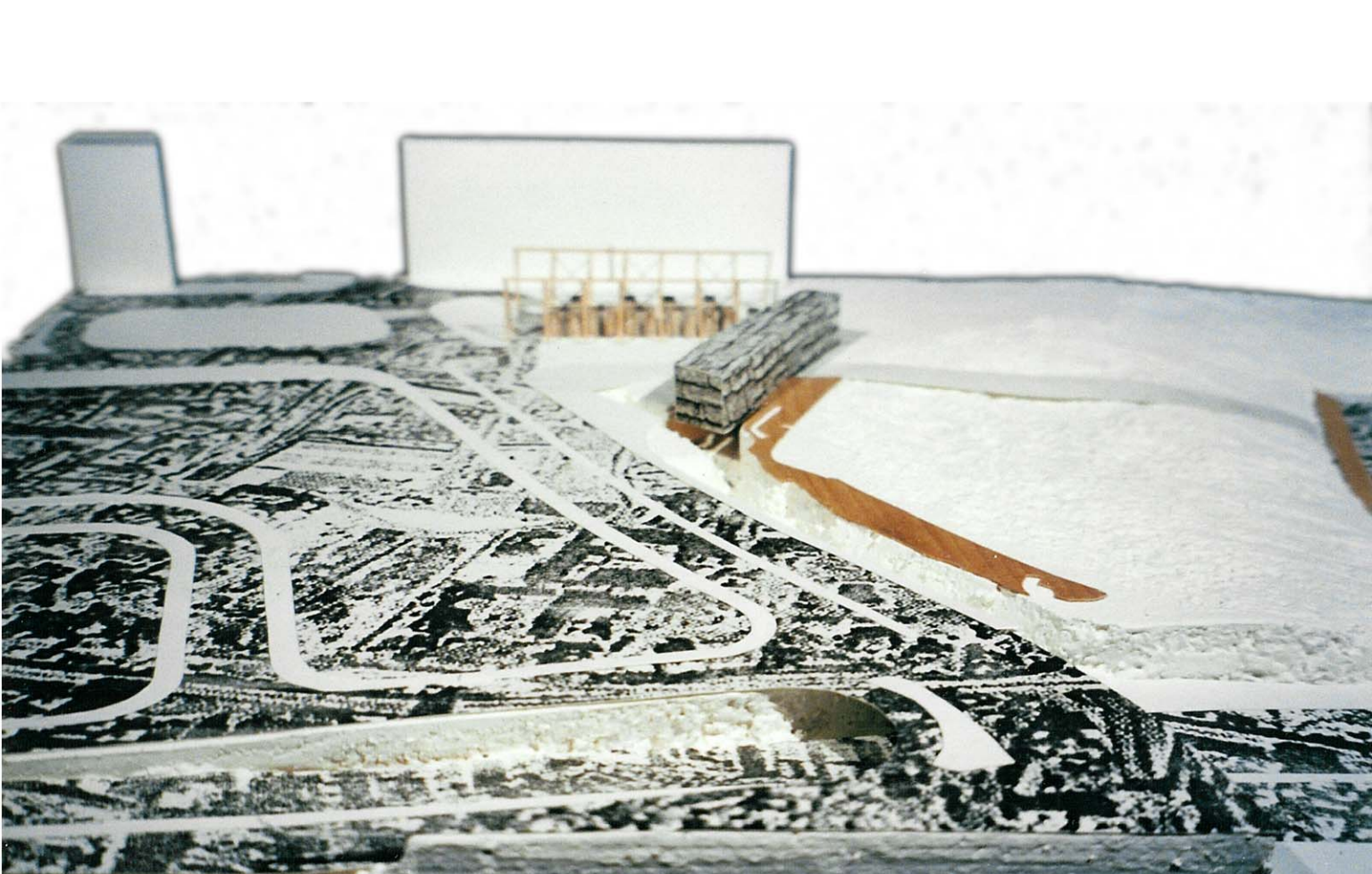


Layer-1



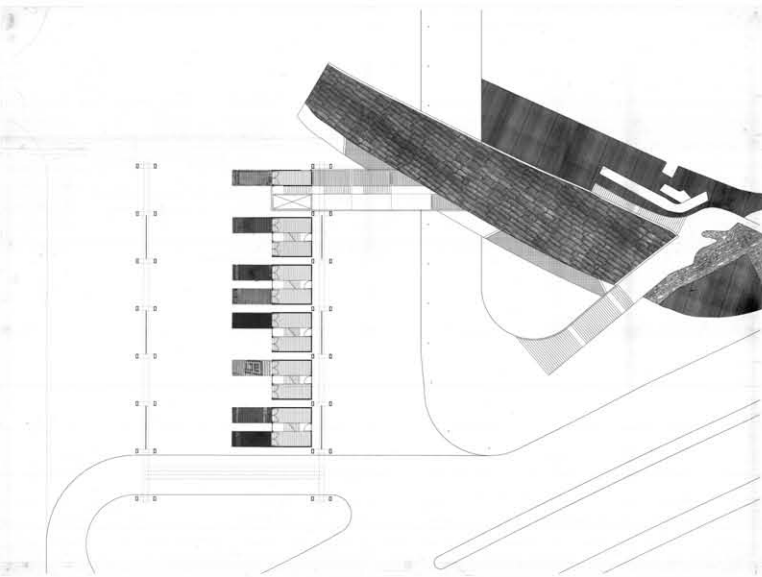
ArcheologicalPlan



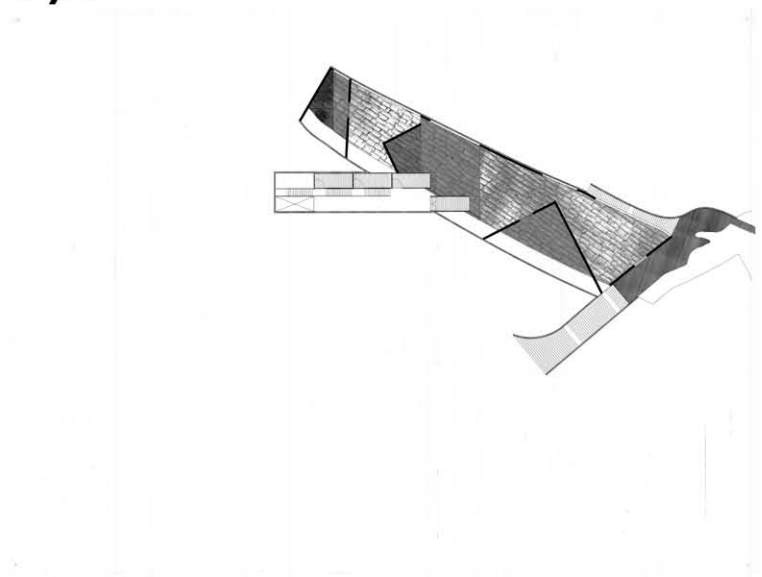
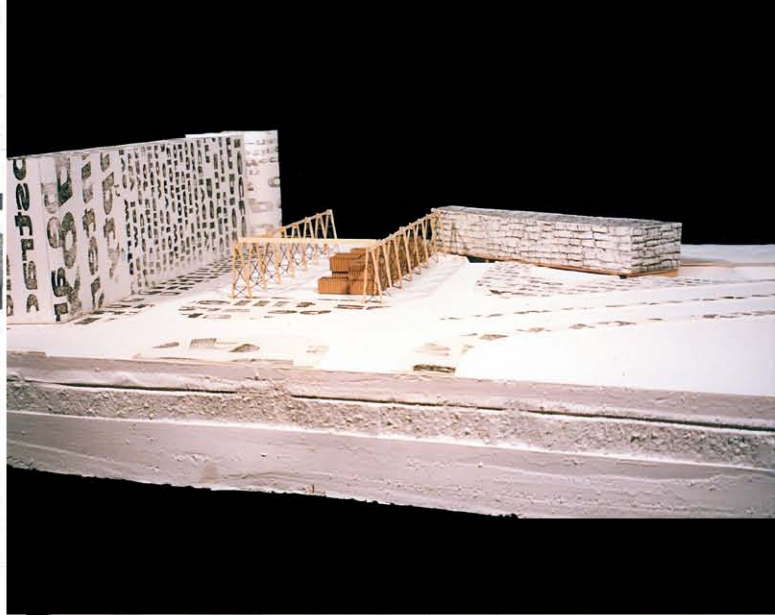


SiteModel
SitePlan

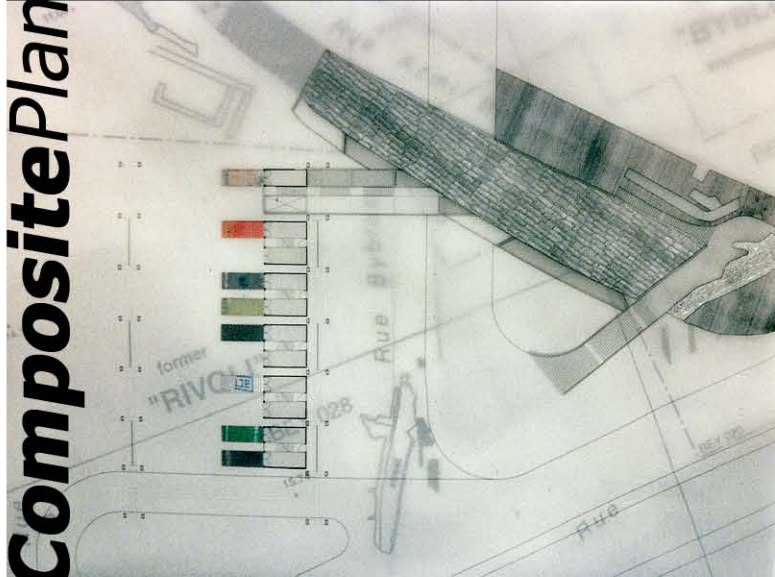




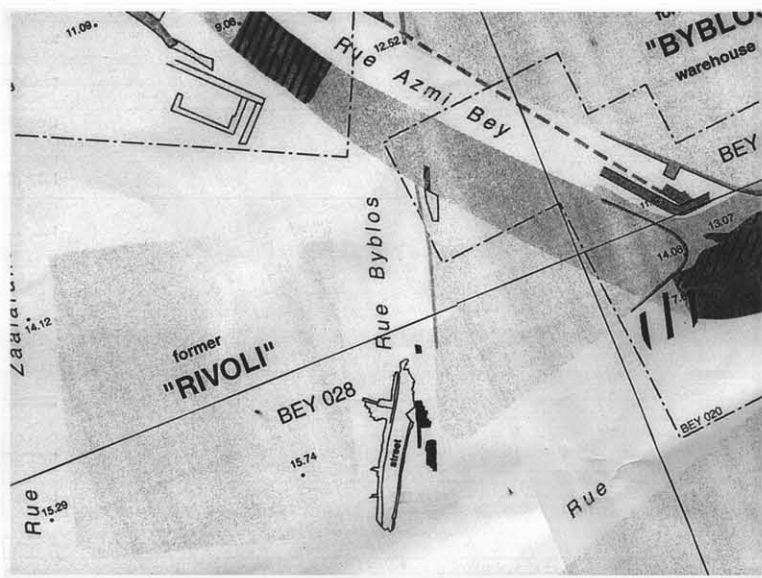
Layer0



Layer-1



Composite Plan



Archeological Plan

