

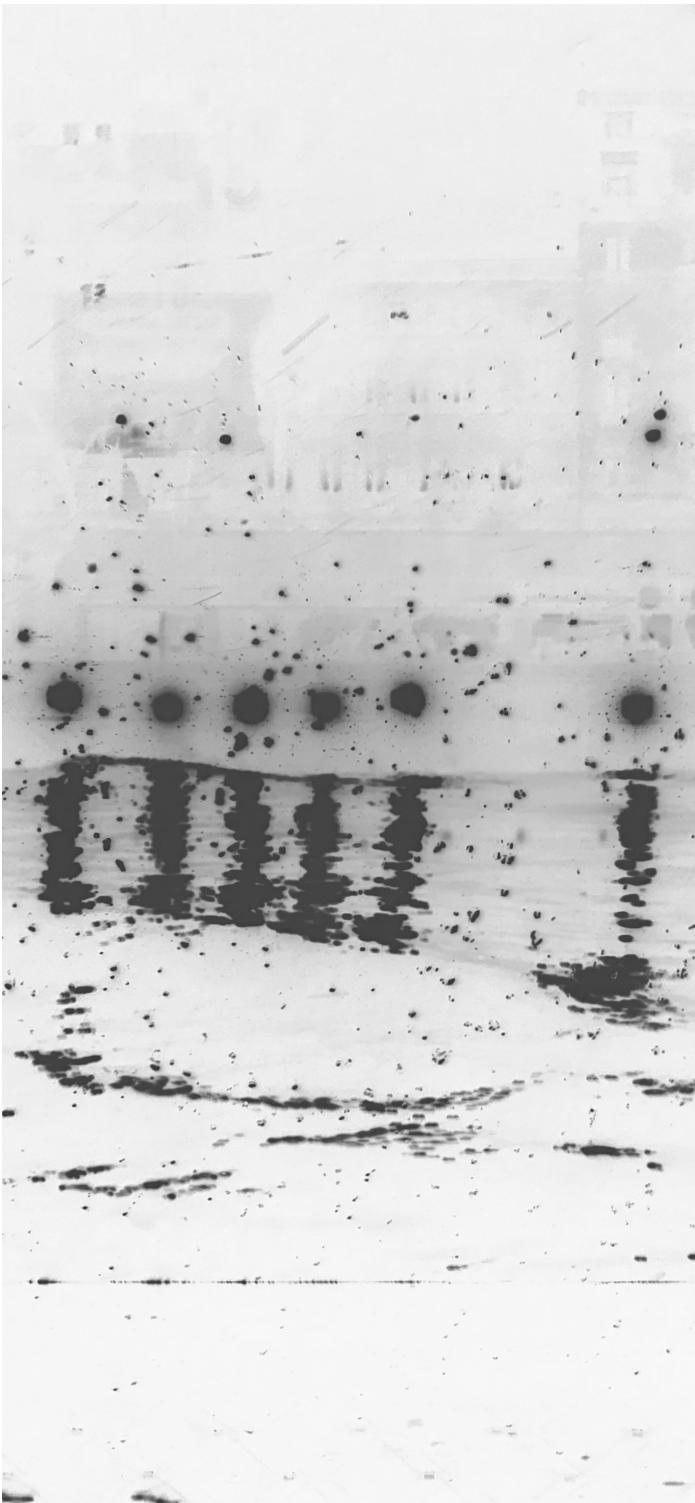
The background of the image is a dark, abstract geometric pattern. It consists of numerous overlapping triangles and rectangles, creating a sense of depth and texture. The colors are monochromatic, ranging from black to dark gray.

## **Condia + Ornelas Traveling Prize**

Matthew Murphy

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# PURPOSE



*"In architecture, such productions of the limit are not only historically frequent but indispensable: architecture simply does not exist without them."*

*Bernard Tschumi, Architecture and Limits, 1980*

**MY APPROACH** has been to inhabit the external perspectives of art, literature, and philosophy, not as distant reference points but as active sites of architectural speculation. These external lenses uncover latent possibilities that are otherwise difficult to access, shifting the internal logic of the discipline. Through the translation of concepts across fields, ideas which challenge architecture's fundamental assumptions about space, form, and experience can be developed. My work is not about reinforcing disciplinary borders but redrawing them, working at the peripheries where definitions become unstable and new modes of thinking can emerge.

In my capstone project *Collapse / Coalesce* I engage with architecture through the lens of art, drawing from Rosalind Krauss' *Expanded Field* and Georges Bataille's notion of the *Informe*. I investigate the space between minimalist and postminimalist sculptural traditions, questioning how architecture navigates these conceptual and material shifts. Much like post minimalist artists engaged with the material traces of process and entropy, my research focuses on indexicality through physics simulation and fragmentation, tracing the imprint of past movements and processes within built form. By working within these liminal zones, I explore how architecture can operate beyond fixed definitions, embracing instability as a generative condition.

My minor in French has opened up unique opportunities to explore theories of language, narrative, and structure that have shaped my methods for reading architecture through storytelling, symbolism, and layered meaning. It has made me aware of the capacity for text to produce unique spatial knowledge and experience. Through the Modern Languages Department, I received funding to hike the Camino de Santiago. I was concerned with applying Gilles Deleuze's spatial philosophy to the fluctuating pilgrimage route as a living city in motion, where tradition and contemporary tourism intertwine. Over thirty days, I walked toward Santiago, examining how Deleuze's concept of the *milieu* helped to articulate the Camino's emergent urbanism, shaped by contingency, adaptation, and collective use.

Literature offers a means to interrogate architecture's spatial and ideological frameworks. Deleuze describes Franz Kafka's writing as an exploration of bureaucratic spatiality, where power structures are embedded in architectural form. In my project on *The Castle*, I translated these narrative structures into architectural diagrams, seeking to make visible the oppressive spatial logics of ideological systems. The novel's shifting thresholds, inaccessible spaces, and endless deferrals became generative tools for rethinking how architecture mediates control and uncertainty.

These concerns continued in my independent research project *Urbanisms and Ideologies*, which examined how urban form is shaped by technological and disciplinary narratives, from early 20th-century avant-garde movements to contemporary critique. I took a particular interest in the utopian and counter utopian experiments of the 1960s and 1970s. The explicitly narrative structure of these projects led me to question whether architecture's internal discourse was always the best tool for understanding urban complexity or if literature, at times, offered sharper analytical frameworks.

At the time, I left myself a footnote:

*"Even postmodern literature of the time investigates the multiplicity of the cityscape in an arguably more successful analytical and critical fashion, as with Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* (1972)."*

Over the past two years, I have been revisiting the unique analytical qualities of Calvino's writing, and I now believe this opportunity offers the moment to fully explore how this narrative framework can enrich our understanding of urbanism and architectural form.

<sup>2</sup> *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, Rosalind Krauss, 1979

<sup>2</sup> *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1975

# PROPOSAL

"Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else."

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, 1972

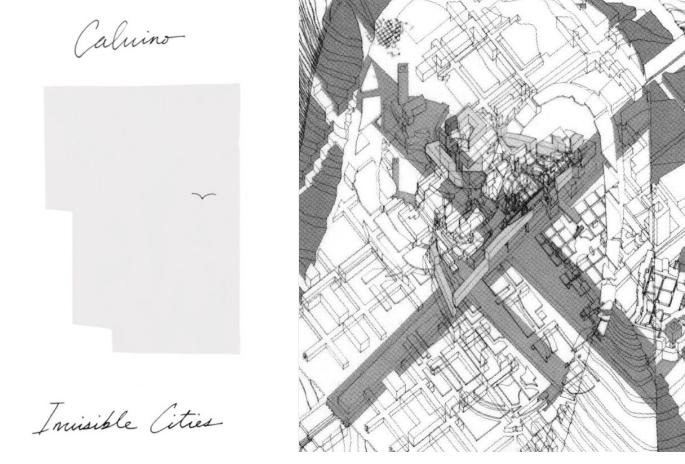
In 1972 the Italian writer Italo Calvino attempted to depict the essence of the city. In lieu of a traditional plot, his novel *Invisible Cities* would unfold through a series of dialogues as the explorer Marco Polo describes to Kublai Khan the cities of his vast and rapidly expanding empire. Across 55 descriptions of surreal cities each organized by 11 themes, such as memory, desire, signs, trading and even thinness, Polo describes impossible micro utopias. Cities set on stilts in the clouds, made of threads tracing the interactions of its inhabitants, or hovering like a mirage between the ocean and the desert. As the novel unfolds, it is gradually revealed that these varied descriptions are actually all facets of the same city: Marco Polo's home, Venice. Through this layered narrative Calvino invites readers to perceive cities not as fixed realities but as a mosaic of spaces shaped by perception, memory, and imagination.

The novel took shape during a period of radical urban speculation in Italy, when the late 1960s and early 1970s saw architects and theorists reimagining discourse on the city.<sup>1</sup> Avant-garde collectives like Superstudio used narrative works such as *Twelve Cautionary Tales for Christmas* (1971) to critique modernist urban theory through ironic, speculative visions of ideal cities that parallel Calvino's utopian vignettes described to the Kahn. At the same time, thinkers like Aldo Rossi, in *The Architecture of the City* (1966), examined the city as a physical and cultural entity shaped by history, collective memory, and political forces, echoing the vision of Venice Polo leaves us with.



4

1. Narrative Architecture: A Kynical Manifesto, WAI Think Tank, 2020



2

*Invisible Cities*



3



4



5



6

## VENICE

This project will begin in Venice to engage directly with the referent of *Invisible Cities*, interrogating the methodology of Calvino's writing within the context it was conceived. Venice was more than just a city for Calvino. It was an archetype, the model city from which all others are drawn, embodying the potential of urban experience. From an archipelago of islands, the mercantile city of Venice evolved into one of the most influential centers of the Renaissance, yet it remains a city in perpetual tension, sinking under the weight of its history, while floating in a liminal space between land and water, past and present.

My approach will involve an immersive, analytical exploration of the city, guided by the novel's method of layered narrative. Over the first two weeks, I will engage with the city's living, material, and cultural context, seeking traces of Marco Polo's imaginative stories within Venice's sestieri. My aim is to identify intensities, moments where Calvino's themes most articulately emerge within the city's neighborhoods. These intensities are not isolated, but rather interwoven, forming a web of layered urban experiences.

For example, the theme of *Cities & Eyes* may manifest in the bustling districts of Santa Croce and San Marco, where the act of seeing Venice becomes inseparable from the performance of observing and being observed. The theme of *Cities & the Dead* might be found on the island of San Michele, Venice's cemetery, where the proximity of death to everyday life creates a profound sense of memory and legacy. *Thin Cities* may be embodied in Giudecca or Cannaregio, where the slender buildings echo the city's fragile relationship with its sinking foundations.

These intensities will form the literal mosaic of images for the project, mirroring the fragmented yet deeply interconnected nature of Calvino's descriptions. Just as his cities emerge through layered narratives rather than direct representation, my images will reconstruct Venice's urban fabric as a collage of impressions. By immersing myself in Venice's rich and complex narrative, I aim to refine a methodology for interpreting urban landscapes, which will then be applied to Amsterdam to examine how the city both aligns with and deviates from the archetypes Calvino envisioned.

## AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam, like Venice, is a city shaped by water, commerce, and exchange, yet its urban narrative is one of continual adaptation. If Venice is suspended between past and present, Amsterdam moves fluidly through time, negotiating its history not as a static monument but as a foundation for reinvention. It is a city of transformation, where history is not only preserved but reinterpreted through cycles of renewal. In this way, Amsterdam provides an ideal contemporary counterpart to Venice, both cities existing at the intersection of history and modernity, tradition and transformation.

Following the methodology developed in Venice, I will explore Amsterdam through Calvino's themes, tracing the ways in which its urban fabric both aligns with and deviates from the archetypes of *Invisible Cities*.

*Thin Cities* may materialize in the slender canal houses of the Grachtengordel, their narrow facades leaning imperceptibly, caught between resilience and impermanence. *Trading Cities* could emerge in Dam Square, where centuries of commerce have layered the urban core with shifting meanings, from the Dutch Golden Age to contemporary global tourism. *Cities & the Dead* may surface in Jordaan, where intimate courtyards and quiet streets retain the spectral presence of Amsterdam's layered past, memories of workers, artists, and the displaced communities that once defined its social fabric.

Amsterdam, in this reading, is not a city of fixed images but of shifting perspectives, a contemporary *Invisible City* where the past is continually rewritten within the present.

## OUTPUT

Calvino was fascinated by the ambiguous nature of photographs, which simultaneously reveal and conceal. For him, a photograph isolates a moment from the flow of experience, transforming it into an autonomous fragment, rich with visual information yet incomplete and open to imagination.<sup>2</sup> The photographs in this project embrace that ambiguity, using the film negative to expose the raw, abstract materiality of the medium. This technique will capture the delicate, surreal imprint of the city, mirroring the way Calvino presents Venice, which emerges not through direct description but through suggestion, evoking the essence of a place in its fleeting moments.<sup>3</sup>

This project will be realized through two 32"x48" compositions of pinned inverted black-and-white photographs with separate panels of text. The first composition will juxtapose images of Venice with excerpts from *Invisible Cities*, while the second will pair photographs of Amsterdam with my own descriptions, written in the spirit of Calvino's prose. Together, these boards form a layered, poetic dialogue, reflecting Marco Polo's conversation with the Khan where multiple cities and their descriptions converge into a single, evocative vision.

In the face of evolving challenges in urban environments, the narrative structure of *Invisible Cities* provides a way to see cities not as static entities, but as dynamic narratives shaped by history, commerce, nature, and human imagination. By applying the lens of postmodern literature to contemporary urbanism, this project seeks to uncover new ways of reading, interpreting, and experiencing the city, recognizing it not as a singular object but as a living palimpsest of memories, desires, and possibilities.

1. *Narrative Architecture: A Kynical Manifesto*, WAI Think Tank, 2020

2. *The Written Word and the Unwritten Word*, Italo Calvino, 1983

3. *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes, 1980

### Images

1. *Suite Vénitienne*, Sophie Calle, 1980

2. *Invisible Cities*, Italo Calvino, 1972

3. *Moving Arrows, Eros, and Other Arrows*, Peter Eisenman, 1986

4. *Reflection - Venice*, Alfred Stieglitz, 1897, Inversion by Author

5. *Sign o'Times - Venice*, Arnaud Bathiard, 2018, Inversion by Author

6. *Untitled (Venice)*, Unidentified Artist, Harvard Art Museum c. 1900, Inversion by Author

# VENICE

DAY	SESTIERI NEIGHBORHOODS
00	Arrival Continuous Cities
01	Mestre Continuous Cities
02	Santa Croce Cities and Signs / Trading Cities Fondazione Querini Stampalia
03	San Polo Cities and Memory / Trading Cities
04	San Marco Cities & Eyes / Continuous Cities Palazzo Olivetti
05	Carnarregio Cities & Names / Hidden Cities Arsenale, Giardini della Biennale
06	Carnarregio Cities & Signs / Cities & Desire
07	Castello Thin Cities / Cities & the Sky
08	Castello Cities & Desire / Cities & Memory
09	Dorsoduro Cities & Desire / Cities & Memory
10	Dorsoduro Cities & Eyes / Continuous Cities
11	Giudecca Thin Cities / Cities & the Dead
12	San Michele Cities & the Dead / Cities & the Sky
13	Murano Cities & Names / Trading Cities
14	Day Trip Castelvecchio or Tomba Brion



## BUDGET

Kansas City (MCI) to Venice (VCE) : \$900
Hostel Accommodation: \$700
Breakfast: \$6–\$8 per day: \$110
Lunch: \$12–\$18 per day: \$200
Groceries for Dinner: \$8 per day: \$140
Vaporetto Pass: \$80
Entry Fees: \$100
Photography Expenses: \$50
Miscellaneous: \$100
Venice (VCE) to Amsterdam (AMS): \$120
Total: \$2,500

# AMSTERDAM

DAY	WIJKS DISTRICTS
15	Venice to Amsterdam Amsterdam Noord, EYE Museum
16	De Wallen Cities & Desire / Cities & Memory
17	De Wallen Cities & the Dead / Continuous Cities
18	Nieuwmarkt and Jewish Quarter Trading Cities / Cities & Names
19	Grachtengordel Oost Cities & Eyes / Continuous Cities
20	Jordaan Cities & Desire / Hidden Cities
21	Jordaan Cities & the Dead / Continuous Cities
22	Grachtengordel Zuid Thin Cities / Cities & the Sky
23	Weesperbuurt en Plantage Cities & Memory / Cities & Signs
24	Oostelijke Eilanden en Kadijken Trading Cities / Continuous Cities Contemporary Housing Typologies
25	De Pijp Cities & Desire / Cities & the Sky
26	Oud Zuid Cities & the Dead / Continuous Cities
27	Oud Zuid Cities & the Dead / Continuous Cities
28	Oud West Cities & the Dead / Continuous Cities
29	Day Trip Den Haag
30	Departure



## BUDGET

Hostel Accommodation: \$800
Breakfast: \$7–\$9 per day: \$120
Lunch: \$14–\$18 per day: \$220
Groceries for Dinners: \$12 per day: \$175
GVB Pass: \$75
Entry Fees: \$160
Photography Expenses: \$50
Miscellaneous: \$100
Amsterdam(AMS) to Kansas City (MCI) : \$800
Total: \$2,500
Grand Total: \$5,000

# CV

## Education

**Masters of Architecture** KSU  
aug. 2020 - may 2025

**Minor in French** KSU  
aug. 2020 - dec 2023

## Experience

**Oz Architectural Journal** Editor  
aug. 2024 - present, Kansas State University

**Contemporary Architectural History** Graduate Teaching Assistant  
dec. 2024 - present, Kansas State University

**Architectural Theory** Graduate Teaching Assistant  
aug. 2024 - dec. 2024, Kansas State University

**Modes of Architectural Production** Research Assistant  
jan. 2024 - may 2024, DIS Copenhagen

## Awards

Fulbright Semi-Finalist Switzerland  
feb 2025

DCA Drawing Award of Distinction  
oct 2024

Arts and Sciences Research Award  
may 2022

OURCI Summer Research Award  
may 2021

Kirmser Undergraduate Research  
dec. 2020

## Research

**Milieux Misalignments**  
dec. 2021 - jan. 2023

Funded by the OURCI Summer Research Award and the A&S Research Award.  
Research was conducted across Spain over 31 days on the Camino de Santiago and critiques Eisenman's  
Ciudad de Cultura through the rhizomatic potential of the albergue.

**Urbanisms and Ideologies: Toward an Escape Trajectory**

aug. 2023 - dec. 2023  
Explores the history of modernist urbanism over the 20th century, its reactionary cynical movements and later  
critical and analytical periods with a focus on the shifting means of production.

**Rousseau's Émile: Pedagogy, Voluntariness, Independence**

dec. 2020 - may 2021  
Funded by the Kirmser Undergraduate Research Award, Originally written and presented in French.  
Investigates the totalitarian underpinnings of Émile and student-mentor relationships.

**Digital Effects, A Triangle of Influence**

jan. 2024 - may 2024  
Archival research on the Danish journal Arkitekten exploring a triangle of influence between Sweden, US, and  
Denmark on labor in the architectural office through the rise of the personal computer in 1983.

## Service

**Dean's Student Advisory Council** President  
dec. 2020 - may. 2022

Planning college-wide Club Fairs, Open House events and Festivals.  
Regular communication with Dean and APD faculty.  
Member of Dean's Selection Committee for new APD Dean.

**Modern Languages** Ambassador  
aug. 2021 - may 2023

Facilitating outreach to students entering the program.  
Regular lectures on my experience with language at K-State and abroad.

**Weigel Architectural Library** Peer Research Consultant  
dec. 2021 - dec. 2023

Assisted students in developing their research topics and finding relevant resources.

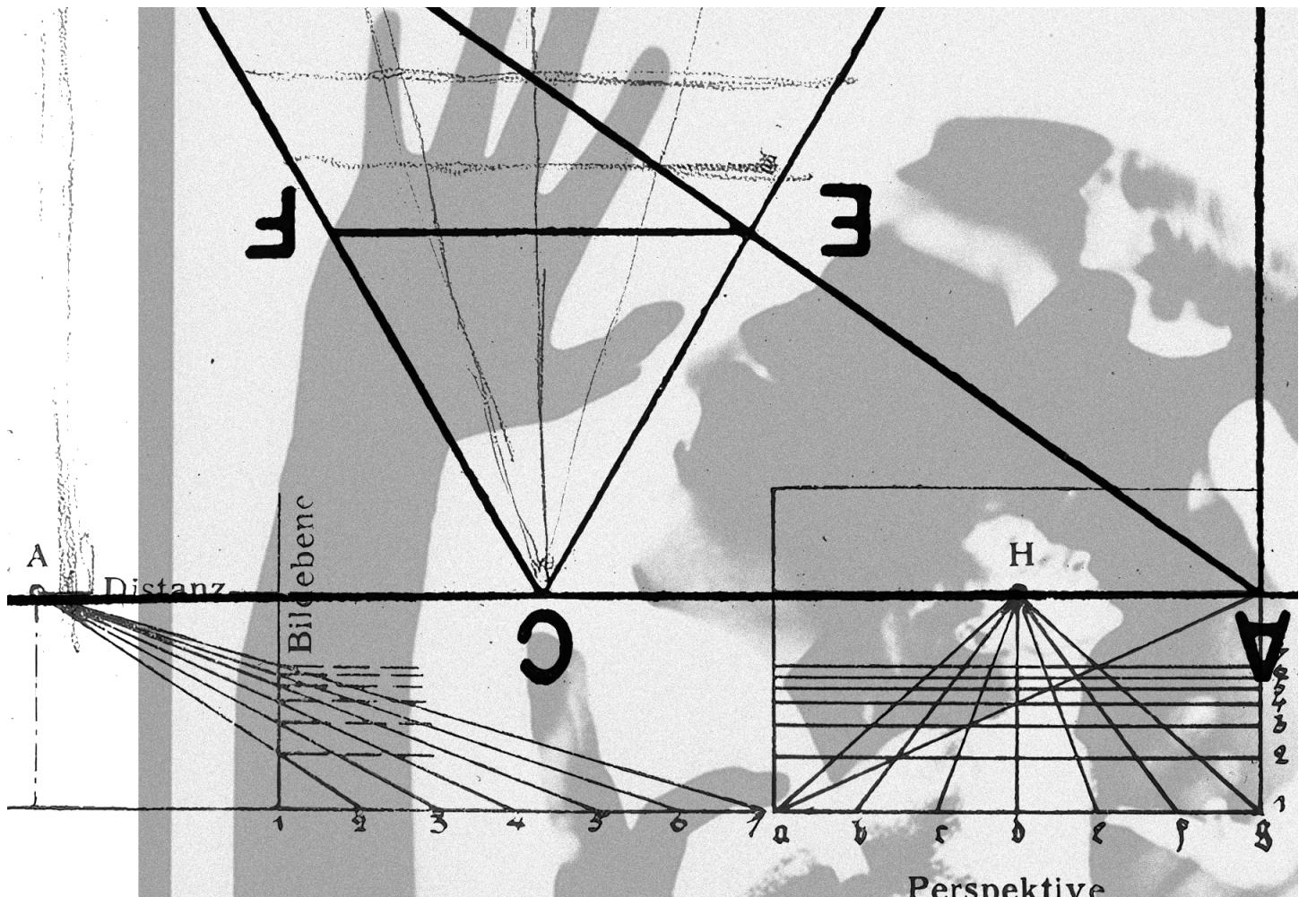
## Skillsets

C1 Proficiency in French

Rhino  
Adobe Suite  
Grasshopper  
Photography  
Videography  
3D Printing  
VRay  
Revit

# EXPERIENCE

Spain / France	6 Weeks	2018	Highschool Study Abroad
France / Belgium	10 Months	2019	Institut de Genech Senior Year
Utah / Nevada / Colorado / New Mexico	4 Weeks	2021	10 National Parks Road Trip
France / Spain	4 Weeks	2022	Camino de Santiago Research
Alaska	3 Months	2023	Seasonal Work at Denali
Denmark / Netherlands / Sweden	4 Months	2024	DIS Study Abroad
Norway / France / Germany / Portugal			



+

# kafka's castle

1ST YEAR  
2ND YEAR  
3RD YEAR  
4TH YEAR  
5TH YEAR

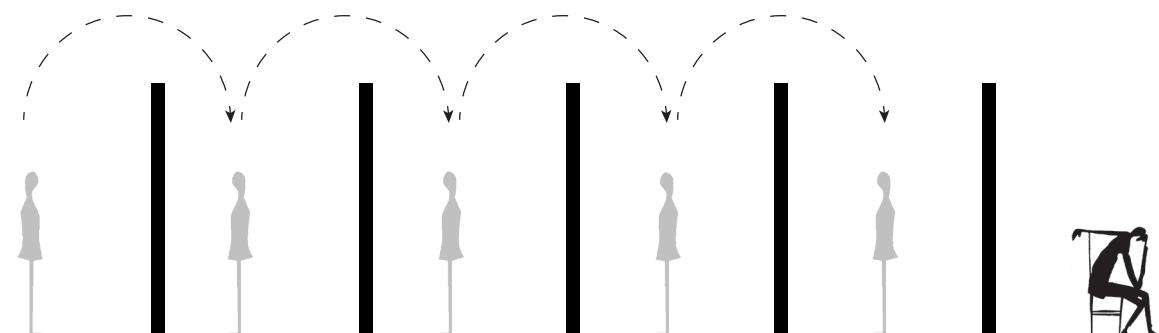
theories of  
translation

spatializing  
the text

IN TOWARDS A MINOR LITERATURE, DELEUZE AND GUATTARI ILLUSTRATE HOW THREE OF FRANZ KAFKA'S MAJOR NOVELS, THE CASTLE, THE TRIAL, AND AMERIKA, CAN BE SEEN TO REPRESENT FASCIST, TOTALITARIAN, AND NEOLIBERAL IDEOLOGICAL SPACES.

THIS PROJECT EXPLORES THE EXCLUSIVE SPACES OF THE CASTLE, UNIQUELY POSSIBLE THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF TEXT, TRANSLATING WORDS INTO AN ARCHITECTURAL DYSTOPIA OF THE FASCIST MACHINE.

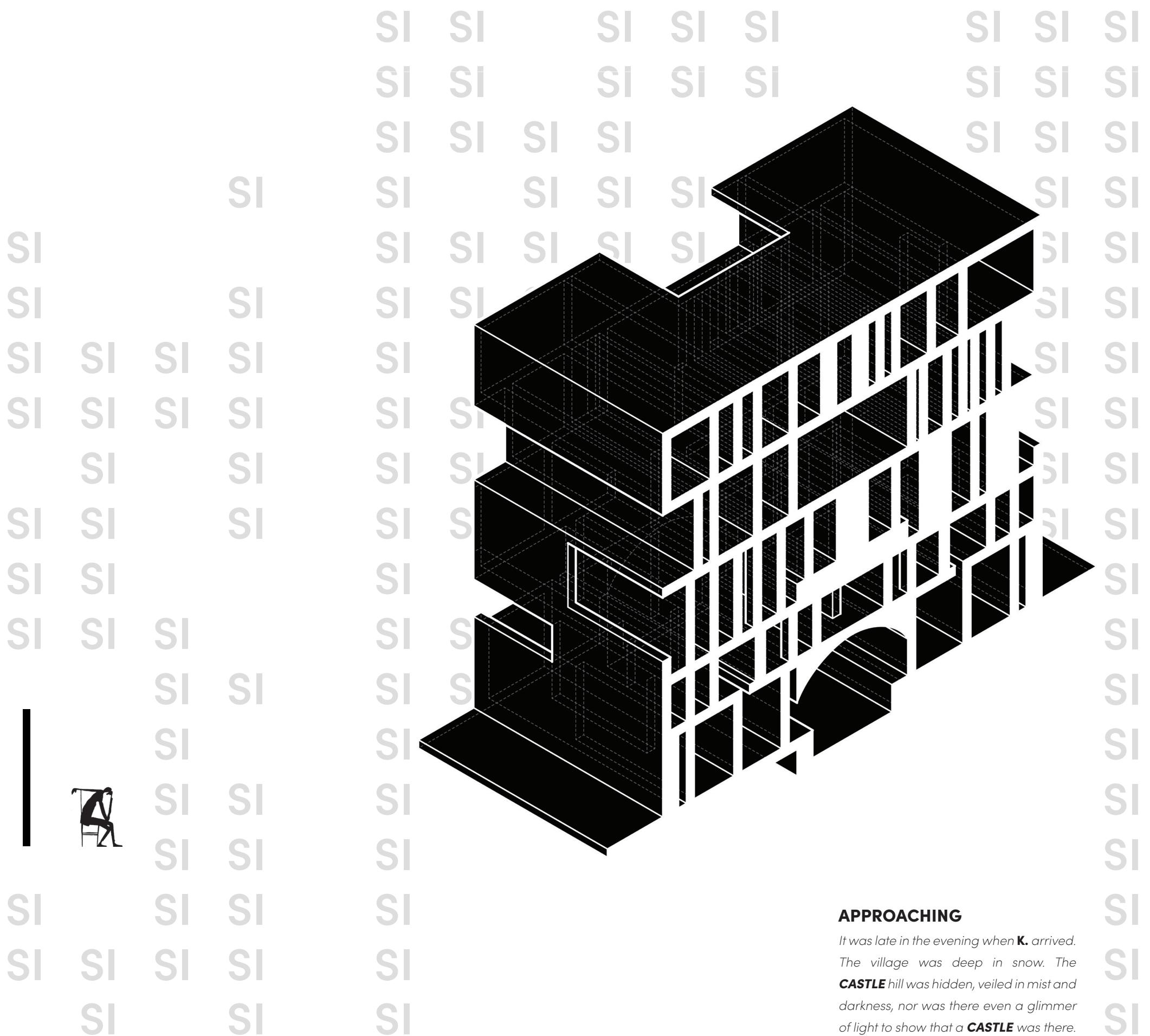
*This village belongs to the CASTLE and whoever lives here or passes the night here does so, in a manner of speaking, in the CASTLE itself.*



## REPEATING

The CASTLE is endless inside, it seems to shift each day. Any room could hold your fate.

## THRESHOLDS



## APPROACHING

*It was late in the evening when K. arrived. The village was deep in snow. The CASTLE hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that a CASTLE was there.*

+

# collapse // coalesce

1ST YEAR  
2ND YEAR  
3RD YEAR  
4TH YEAR  
5TH YEAR

capstone preparation

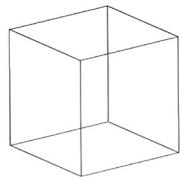
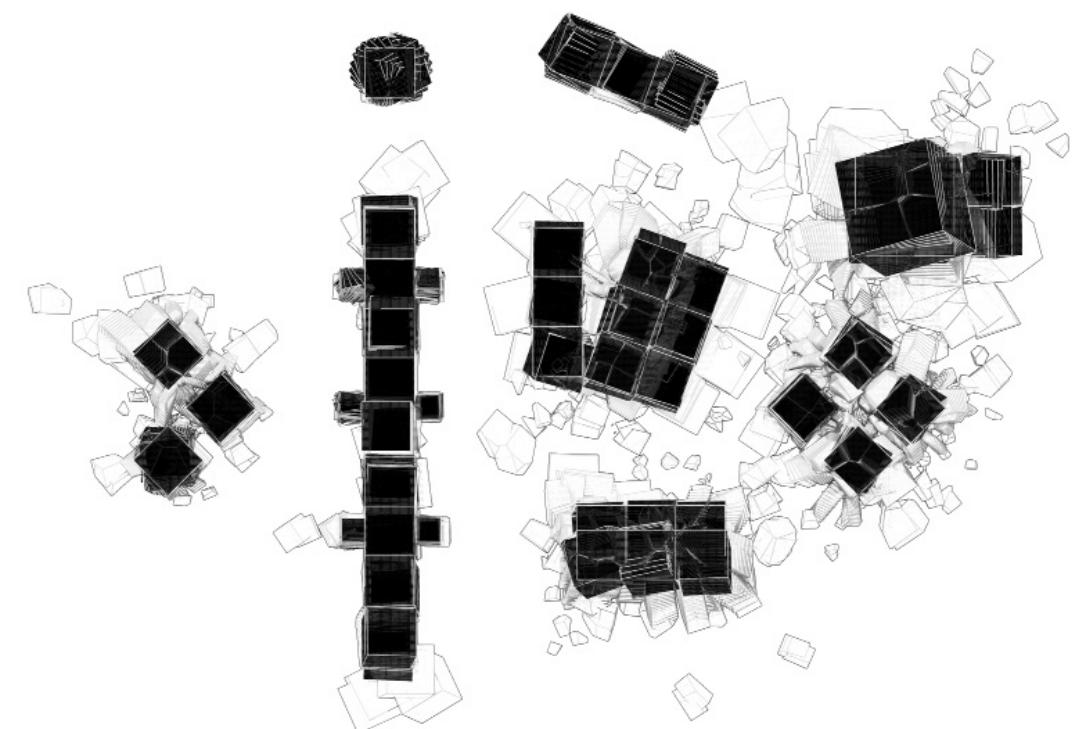
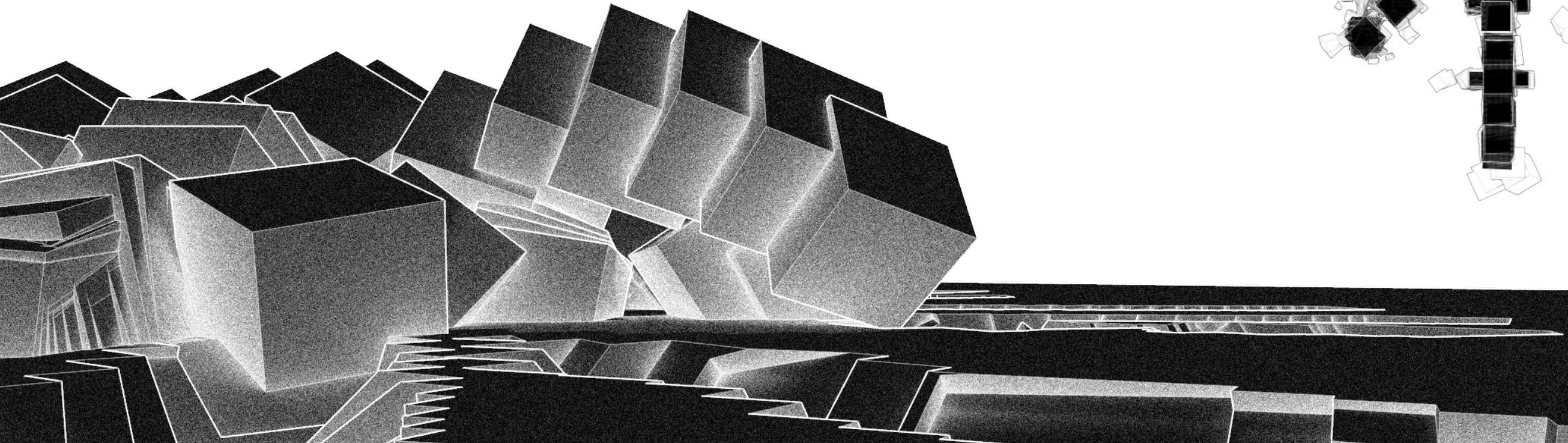
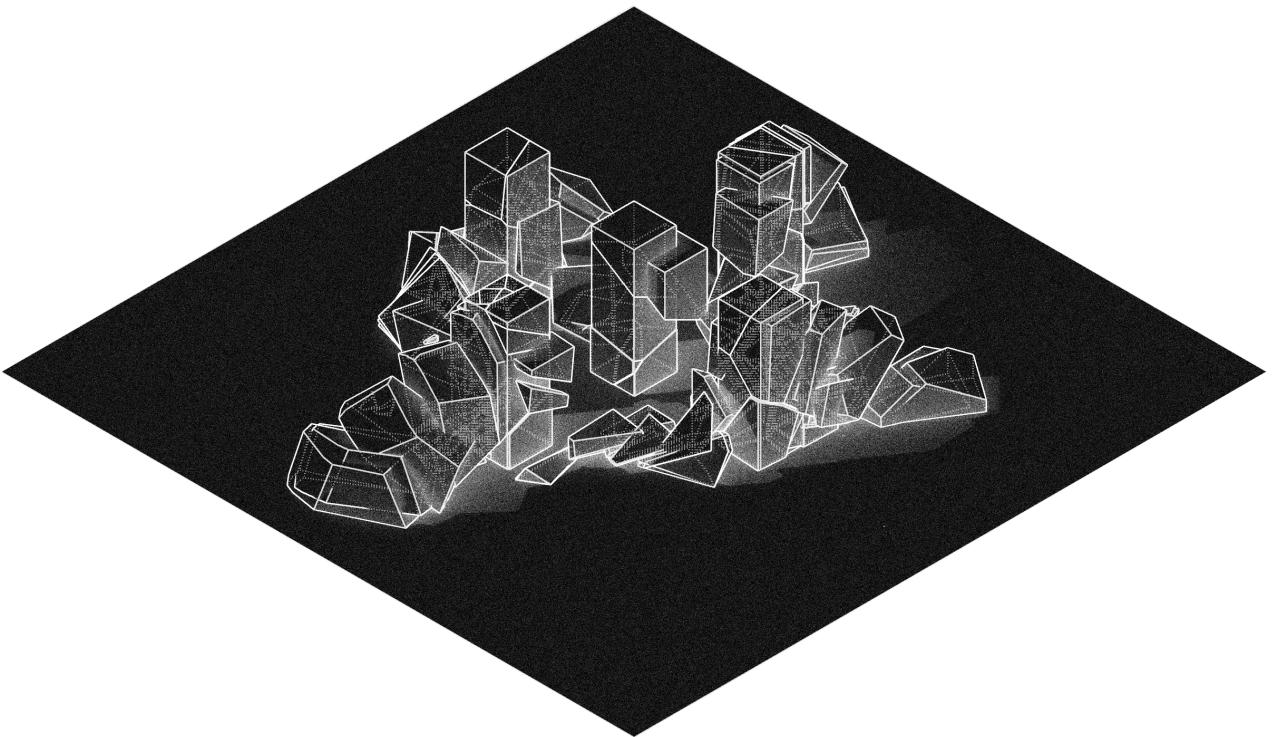
limits of drawing

WHEN THESE CUBES COLLIDE, ACCUMULATE, AND SETTLE, THEY UNDERMINE THE CLARITY OF THEIR ORIGINAL GEOMETRY.

THE FRAME-BY-FRAME SUPERIMPOSITION OF THEIR TRAJECTORIES LEADS TO AN EMERGENT, STROBOSCOPIC STRUCTURE.

THE RESULTING FORM IS NOT THE CONSEQUENCE OF A CLEAR PLATONIC IDEA BUT RATHER THE PRODUCT OF MOVEMENT, TIME, AND SIMULATED MATERIAL INTERACTION.

FORM UNDERMINED BY PROCESS.





Arles

*Author, March 2019*



Serra

*Author, March 2024*