

condia + ornelas traveling prize

Vance Romeo Muaj Koob Lor

vance8@ksu.edu | 918 851 3977

The domain of Architecture could be understood with concerns to the tangible—things built, constructed, or realized into physical form. However, Architecture is not an autonomous discipline. The creative process is interdependent to multiple Art forms, such as poetry, drawing, and cinema. In contrast, Art exists in the realm of the intangible—things not directly experienced through our senses and beyond human perception. Architecture is to the tangible as Art is to the intangible. From this given point, we will use the word 'Architist' for the individual who views Architecture and Art as a harmonious entity, and we will use the word '[in]tangible' for the two terms that we respond to.

When we take on the attitude of the *Architist* to address the [in]tangibles, we can hypothesize the ability to answer deep and complex questions—such as, what is spirit? *Spirit* entails the intrinsic character that influences our sense of being. The character of the *Architist* can be sought after by investigating their roots. Questions along the lines of "Who am I? Where am I from? Why do I love this? What does this language make me see of the world? How can I discover others like me?" are the interests of the *Architist* and some to many of what must be answered to uncover *spirit*-uniqueness.

To answer these questions on *spirit*, the *Architist* must explore the notions of 'place'. *Place* is a foundational term in the realm of Architecture and is an integral part of existence. All places possess narratives of *spirit*, implying the complexity of [in]tangibles.¹ The term is concerned with tangible things of the people, flowers, trees, water, and stones, but also with intangible things of memory, language, and atmosphere. *Places* are made distinct by these unique constituent parts, interconnected to one another, forming a harmonious whole. By this frame of reference, we can suggest the notion that no *place* is ever the same as another or as itself-unique.

Adopting the *Architist's* approach to address the [in]tangibles in the profession of Architecture is an attitude to engage the complexities that the domain presents. Philosophy, Literature, and Art have always been inherent principles to my design process. Engagement with philosophy determines the lens to which I see the lived world. Paul Valery puts it, "seeing is forgetting the name of things one sees".² Manuel Delanda's *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, describes the theory of assemblages as "variety of wholes constructed from heterogeneous parts" derived from the philosopher, Gilles Deleuze.³ Art is the expansion of the human consciousness and has always succeeded the desire to make



'Family Photos', provided by the Architist's Father.

1. A synthesis of Christian Norberg-Schulz's concepts about 'place'. Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980). *Genius loci : towards a phenomenology of architecture*. Academy Editions.

2. Paul Valery's quote is derived from the excerpt. Evans, R. (1997). *Translations from drawing to building*. MIT Press. pp. 3-18

3. De Landa, M. (2006). *A new philosophy of society : assemblage theory and social complexity*. Continuum.

sense of nature with the mind. All things around us involve parts coming together to make a new whole.

This foundation of parts to construct a whole questions the existing narrative of representing Architecture. According to Robin Evans' *Translations from Drawing to Building*, Architecture is derived from the act of drawing, then conception of a building follows. The drawing and building is seen as mutually dependent. By this frame of reference, I hypothesize that the conception of such building is then limited to its medium and suggests the question, "can the nature of the piece of work be described and communicated with conventional representations"?

Evans continues that the Architect exists in the realm of translation, and the responsibility is to transport information without alterations. However, translation of the parts of the whole is seen almost impossible to retain continuity as supported by language, memory, and construction. Because of this daunting task of translation, I see Architecture as a highly imaginative act. Evans prescribes that only when the Architect sees "outside the drawing technique" can the imagination "soar above the confines of the medium".⁴

I wish to impact the profession of Architecture by investigating the counter-narratives which oppose the dominant perspective—revealing the wholes and not the parts. By speculative composite drawings and film making, I can assist in revealing the manifestations of a community. With my experience of solo travel and spiritual engagement while in Italy, the task of trekking alone with a playful and spontaneous nature in this serious objective is crucial towards a making a meaningful impact and discovery.

...the idea of art can be expanded to embrace the whole range of man-made things, including all tools and writing in addition to the useless, beautiful, and poetic things of the world. By this view, the universe of man-made things simply coincides with the history of art. It then becomes an urgent requirement to devise better ways of considering everything man has made.

- George Kubler, in *The Shape of Time*⁵

4. Evans, R. (1997). *Translations from drawing to building*. MIT Press. pp. 3-18

5. Kubler, G. (1962). *The shape of time ; remarks on the history of things*. Yale University Press.

What is it about the poetics of the word "purpose" and its relationship to the realm of Architecture and Art? We can reframe the idea of purpose to the idea of 'spirit'. Then, how does this notion of 'spirit' apply to Architecture and Art? How does the individual seek to reveal the answers of 'spirit' by the means of his or her uniqueness?

research proposal

Formally Speaking

The Vietnam war was seen as one of the most complex and controversial conflicts of the 20th century. Communist influence began to propagate and divide the country of Laos creating the Laos Civil War, fought between Pathet Communist Laos with support from North Vietnam and the Lao Royal Government under United States aid. The proxy war increased complexity to extreme heights. In order to maintain a single common narrative, the information of the Laos Civil War was kept to a minimum due to the decades of fighting that was heightened by anti-war movements, televised actions, and presidential complexities back in the United States. However, the dominant narrative is incomplete and disregards a marginalized community that were used as soldiers and taken advantaged of to fight in the proxy war. With the United States and Lao Royal Government troops being overwhelmed, the CIA began training an indigenous group of people tucked in the highlands of Laos. We must acknowledge that war efforts were assisted by a group of unknown people, the Hmong.



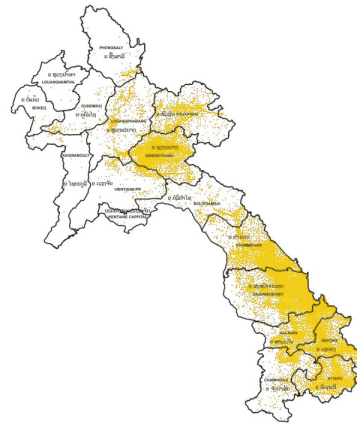
'President Kennedy speaks on Communist Rebel Areas; Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Plain of Jars in Phonsavan is mentioned', borrowed from Hmong Story Legacy.⁶

Counter-Narrative

The CIA began training the first Hmong soldiers in 1963 with the construction of a secret base in the area of Long Cheng, where informal Hmong soldiers rose from 1,000 to 18,000 to fight in guerrilla warfare. Within two years, the United States began to supply some 40,000 Hmong soldiers in the secret bases of Laos. The Vietnam War continues to escalate synchronously to the Laos Civil War fought directly adjacent. More secret bases begin to emerge such as Phou Pha Thi and Sam Thong in the *Xieng Khouang province*. In 1968, the United States began bombing agendas with over 450,000 tons of

6. Noah Vang, and David Lee. "Brief History of the Secret War in Laos 1960-1975." Hmongstorylegacy.com. <https://www.hmongstorylegacy.com/secret-war-timeline>.

bombs dropped on Laos, later becoming the most bombed country in history. The bombing was executed in waves with each session forcing the Hmong community further away from their homes.



'Map Plotting Bombing Missions', borrowed from Jerry Redfern, [Asiasociety.org](https://www.asiasociety.org)⁷

Between 1961 and 1971, upwards of 20,00 Hmong soldiers were killed and 120,000 were internally displaced. The war ends with only 1,600 Hmong Soldiers and their families airlifted safely to refugee camps in Thailand.

In Memories

After United States departure from Laos, the Hmong were left behind and persecuted by Pathet Laos and North Vietnam. The Hmong were hunted down with thousands of family fleeing southwards to Thailand to seek refugee camps. Escaping from communist forces involved planned and dangerous crossings across the Mekong River, the natural border between Laos and Thailand. The seminal moment defined the turning point for the displacement of the Hmong people with some left behind in Laos until the cease-fire agreement signed in *Vientiane*. The Hmong that successfully crossed the Mekong River were scattered across refugee camps in Thailand.

Dialogues with my father are shared in the context of his home in *Ban Len, Xieng Khouang, Laos*. The town of *Ban Len* resides near the larger town of *Phonsavan*, where he describes the community as swidden subsistence farmers. Although the province was heavily damaged by the bombings, the town has succeeded to be well known for its prominent thriving Hmong community. Here, there

7. Jerry Redfern. "Legacies of War in Laos." [Asiasociety.org](https://www.asiasociety.org/northern-california/legacies-war-laos). [Asiasociety.org](https://www.asiasociety.org/northern-california/legacies-war-laos), <https://www.asiasociety.org/northern-california/legacies-war-laos>.



'Child soldiers standing next to an American Jeep in Sam Thong', Steven Schofield Collection, 1972.⁸

are possibilities to engage with the Hmong community in dialogues about the impact of the War. *Phonsavan* presents opportunities to investigate the reclaiming of place in a successful manner.

The city of *Luang Prabang* is an additional place of heavy bombings in central Laos. The city also possess remaining Hmong communities with some retaining the traditional lifestyle pre-war further north that is accessible from this location. The character of this place presents possibilities to measure the integration of the Hmong into Lao communities.

The capital city of *Vientiane* will pose as the orienting city in the investigations of lost history and counter-narratives. The city situates along the edges of the Mekong River where the spirit of the river crossings potentially remain. Not only does the place hold another major population of the Hmong, the research will excavate traces of the war through dialogues with the locals and environment.



'Traditional Hmong Storytelling Cloth', borrowed from Vincent Her and Mary Louise.⁹

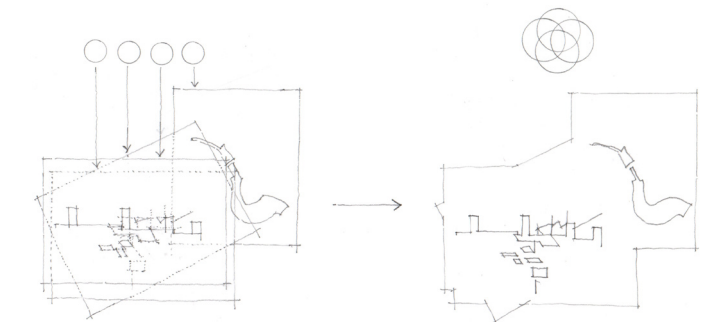
The Prospect

Adopting the attitude of the Architect and responding to the *[in]tangibles*, I will seek to uncover the counter-narratives of the Hmong community and reclaimed place. With the secret bases and camps in Laos inaccessible, the cities of *Vientiane, Luang Prabang, and Phonsavan* become the primary source to investigate traces of war and untold history. I will explore where the last of the Hmong people are situated in Laos in attempt to unveil the spirit of the Hmong, understanding the displacement of the displaced. I will do this in the strategy of *Speculative Composite Drawing* and *Film Making*.

8. Noah Vang, and David Lee. "Brief History of the Secret War in Laos 1960-1975." Hmongstorylegacy.com. <https://www.hmongstorylegacy.com/secret-war-timeline>.

Speculative Composite Drawing desires to depict the intangibles of place. This method is concerned with the many representations of Architecture configured into a single drawing. The learned experience of this mode of drawing is to reveal the many relationships of the parts involved that define the place in congruence to underlying social and personal truths. The drawing is a synthesis to represent agendas too complex for the conventional architectural drawing method. My evaluation of this medium is that it will prove effective in direct moments of exchange between people and sites.

Film Making seeks to capture the tangibles of place. Film has the power to explore narratives in a harmoniously composed and emotional manner. I am assessing that the medium has the potential to emerge in the case of reflection and establishment of place.



'Speculative Composite Drawing Diagram', the Architect.

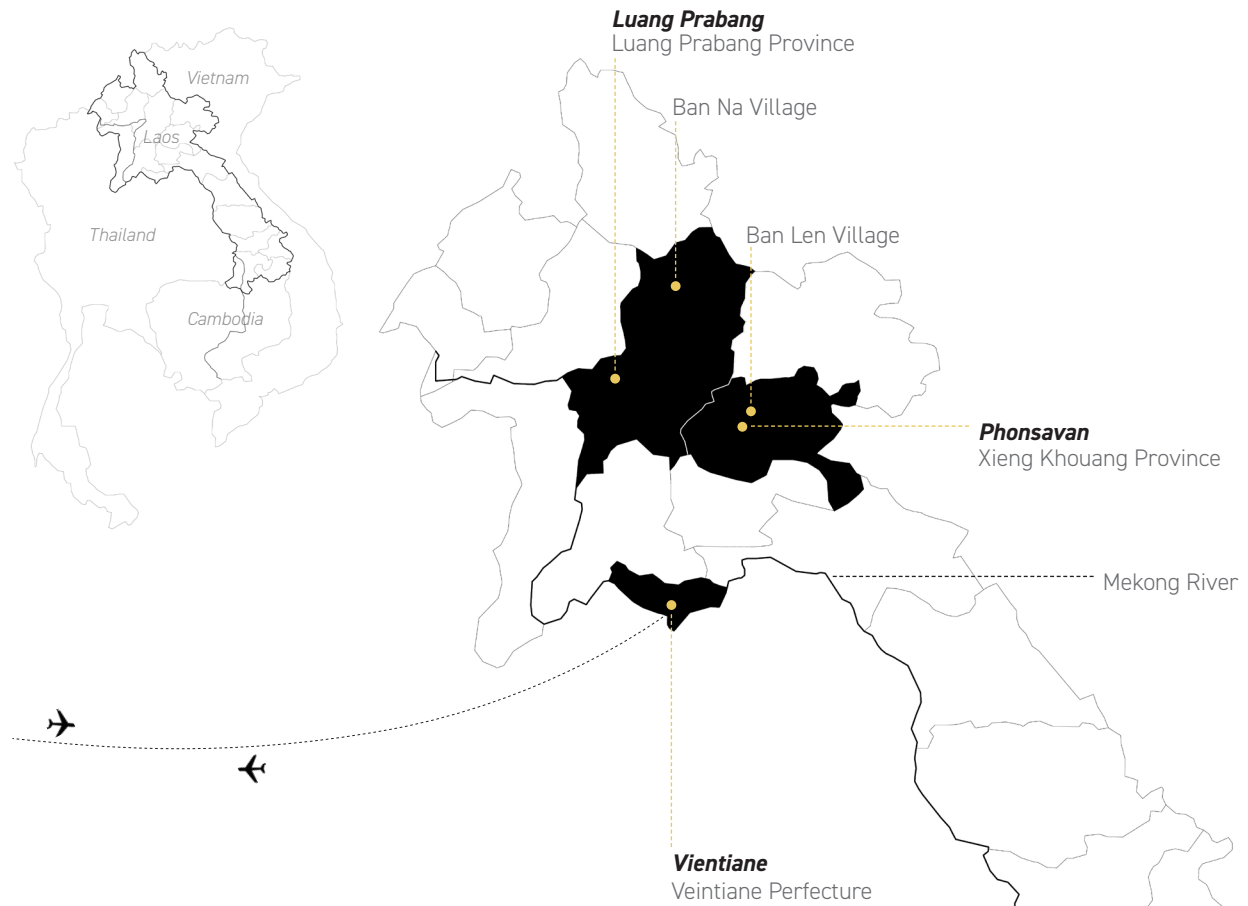
The combination of the two mediums will inform investigations on the traces of war and the current displacement of the Hmong community, apparent in the selected locations. With my parents being the direct and last of the *[in]tangible* truths to my lineage and the tragedy of the Hmong, my spirit asks of me to adopt the Architect's attitude to see the canvas to which my Architecture and Art emerges.



'Family Photos [2]', provided by the Architect's Father.

9. Vincent Her, and Mary Louise Buley-Meissner. "The Fabric of Memory: Story Cloth as Art and History for Hmong in USA." [Garlandmag.Org](https://www.garlandmag.com/article/hmong-in-usa/). *Garland Magazine: The Stories Behind What We Make*, December 2, 2019. <https://www.garlandmag.com/article/hmong-in-usa/>.

itinerary



- 1 - Vientiane Prefecture**
 7 Days Vientiane
 Lao National Museum
 Vientiane Art Museum
 Lao People Army Museum
 Revolution Memorial Tower
 Patxuai Monument
 Ho Phrakeo Museum
 That Dam Stupa
 Buddha Park
 Buddhist Temples
 Mekong River

- 4 - Vientiane Prefecture**
 3 Days Vientiane

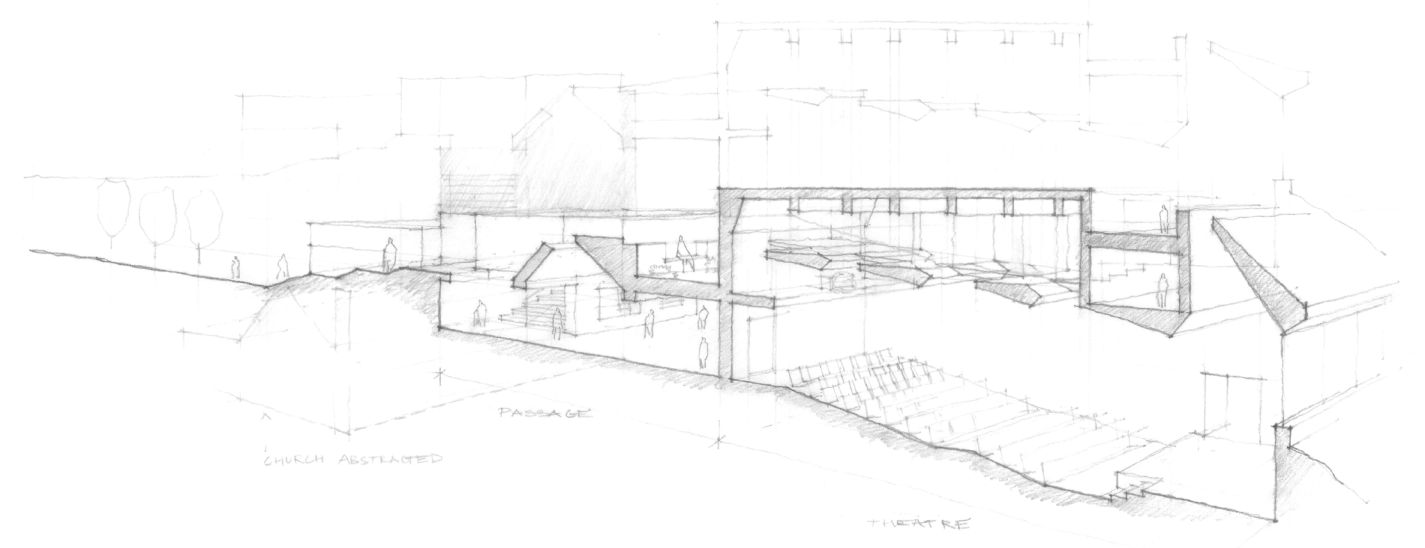
- 2 - Luang Prabang Province**
 5 Days Luang Prabang
 Traditional Arts & Ethnology Center
 Royal Palace & Museum
 Buddhist Temples
 Mekong River
 2 Day Ban Na Village
- 3 - Xieng Khouang Province**
 5 Days Phonsavan
 Plain of Jars
 Vietnamese War Monument
 Laos War Memorial
 Xieng Khouang Museum
 Hmong Celebration Area
 Buddhist Temples
 2 Days Ban Len Village

budget

- \$2,000 Airfare Round Trip**
 Kansas City International Airport [MCI]
 Chicago O'Hare International Airport [ORD]
 Doha Hamad International Airport [DOH]
 Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport [BKK]
 Veintiane Wattay International Airport [VTE]
- \$1,150 Lodging**
 Vientiane Hotels at \$40 a night
 \$360
 Luang Prabang Hotels at \$60 a night
 \$420
 Phonsavan Hotels at \$50 a night
 \$350
- \$500 Local Flights, Train, Taxi, & Buses**
 Taxi from Vientiane Airport to Vientiane City Center
 \$15
 Train from Vientiane to Luang Prabang
 \$35
 Bus from Luang Prabang to Ban Na Village
 \$50
 Bus from Luang Prabang to Phonsavan
 \$30
 Taxi from Phonsavan to Vientiane
 \$300

- \$720 Food**
 \$30 a day for 24 days trip
- \$630 Miscellaneous Materials**
 Laos eVisa, Entrance Fees, Amenities, Additional Transportation, Equipment, Activities, and Adobe Suite
- \$5,000 Total Trip Cost**
 The trip will converse on December 1st during the dry season of Laos.

1 US Dollar = 21,510 Lao Kip



'Speculative Composite Drawing of Section', the Architect.

travel experience

United States

The start of my academic travel experience began with my second year studio to *Des Moines, Iowa*. Following into my third year studio, I traveled to the most dynamic city in the country, *Manhattan, New York*. That summer, I traveled with one Architecture Faculty and four Students to *St. Louis, Missouri* to engage in public/community led seminars and lectures. In fall my fourth year, I took the leadership opportunity for the national student competition held by NOMA in *Baltimore, Maryland*. To end my fourth academic year, I received an internship in Dallas, Texas.



'Portico di San Luca', Bologna.



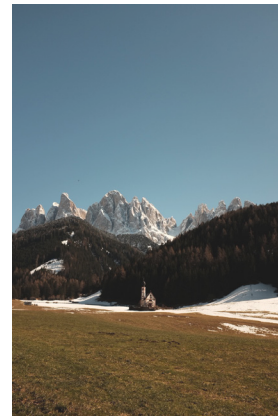
'Riola Parish Church', Riola.



'San Cataldo Cemetery', Modena.



'Piazza Della Loggia', Brescia.



'Church of San Giovanni', Val di Funes.



'Seceda Peaks', Ortisei.



'Alpine Air', Ortisei.



'Bicycle Paths', Bolzano.

International

In the spring semester of my fourth academic year, I traveled abroad to *Italy*. The course experience involved travels to *Orvieto, Civita Di Bagnoregio, Assisi, Siena, Florence, Rome, Verona, Vicenza, Venice, Tivoli, Turin, Milan, Caprarola, Bagnaia, Paestum, Pompeii, Sorrento, Capri, Bologna, Brescia, Bolzano, Ortisei, and Val di Funes*. I will be traveling to *Norway* to finish off my academic career Kansas State University.

curriculum vitae

Education

2021-26	Masters of Architecture Kansas State University
2025-26	APDesign Sponsored Graduate Travel Studio Stavanger, Norway Projected March 2026
2025	Italian Studies Abroad Orvieto, Italy

Awards

2025	Architizer Vision Awards 2025 Hand Drawing Sketch Category Finalist 'Piazza Duomo, Orvieto'
2025	Goss International Study Abroad Scholarship Italian Studies Abroad Program
2025-26	Ed & Susan Thompson Scholarship College of Architecture, Planning and Design
2025-26	Donald & Susie Wilson Fifth Year Fellowship College of Architecture, Planning and Design
2024	Award of Distinction Design Communication Association Exhibition 'Discovery of Tension Collage'
2024	Kansas State Student Photography Award 50th Annual Photo Contest, People's Choice 'Light at the Market'

Experience

2025	Student Intern Merriman Anderson Architects
2024	2024 NOMA National Student Competition Kansas State University, 'Student Lead' Baltimore, Maryland
2024	Design Futures Forum Student Washington University in St. Louis Faculty Advisor and Professor Gabby Coleman

Services

2025	APDesign ENVD Teaching Assistant Collaboration with ENVD Program Director Professor Otto Chanyakorn
2025	Kansas State University 'AIAS Tips & Twix' Presentation Student Led Presentation to college of APDesign 'Drawing the Idea'
2024-26	APDesign Digital Information & Media Team Photography Committee
2024-26	APDesign Professor Invited Student Critic Kansas State University First and Second Year Final Presentations
2023-26	APDesign Peer Educator Kansas State University
2024-25	Kansas State University AIAS 4th & 5th Year Representative

selected works

Frame Extractions from Film

The film attempts to study sovereignty and freedom. The agenda is to investigate lost history and untold truths. The technique of the composition is extractions, remixes, and personal recordings into a harmonious composition.



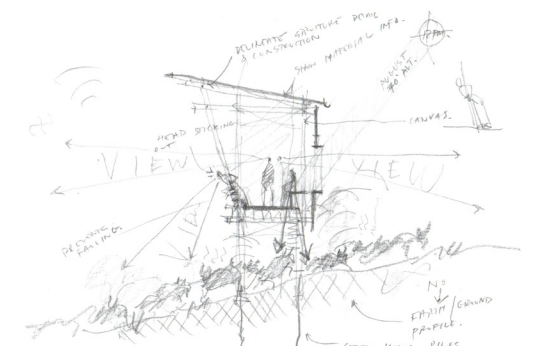
See the full film here, <https://vimeo.com/1134260500?share=copy&ft=sv&fe=c1>

'The Wildebeest Outpost' Drawings

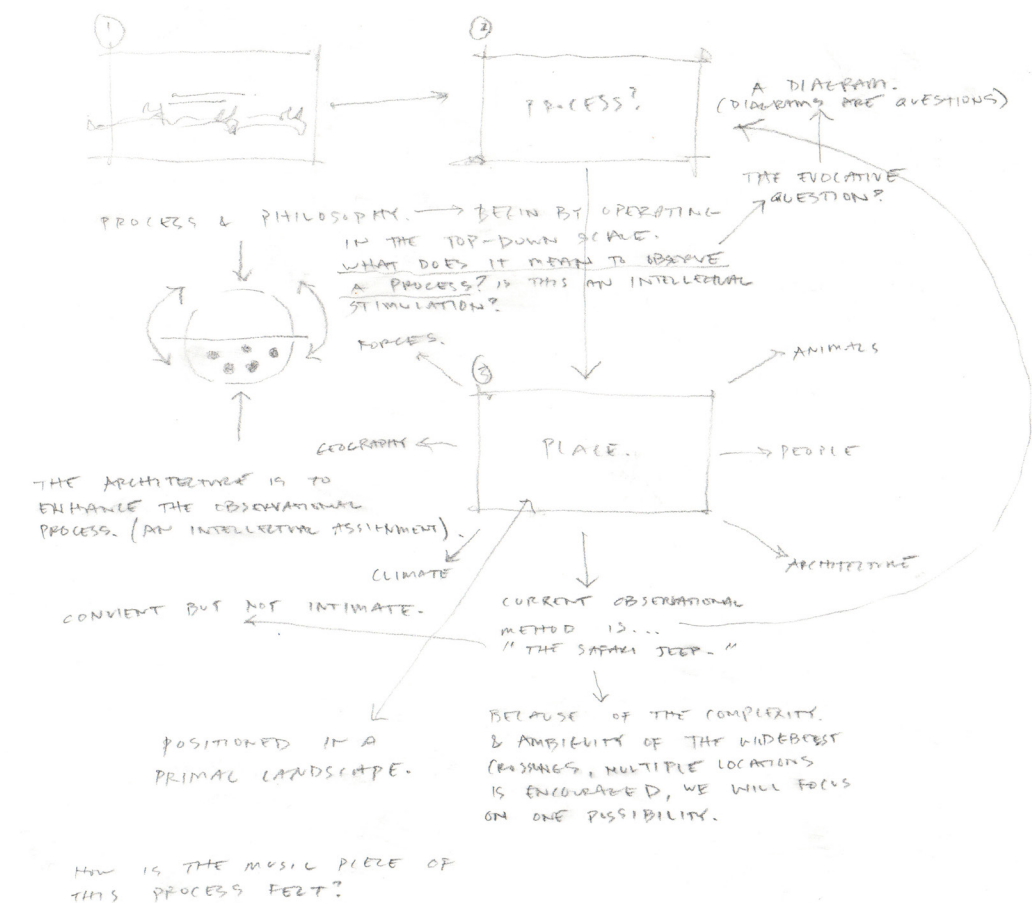
Speculating the theatrical nature of the Wildebeest river crossings in the Serengeti, the process of navigating throughout the migration and dance through the river is reinterpreted into architectural space. Foundations of music is applied to enhance the experiential qualities of observing the process.



'The Scene at the River Crossing', conceptual sketch.



'The Moment of Observation', conceptual sketch.



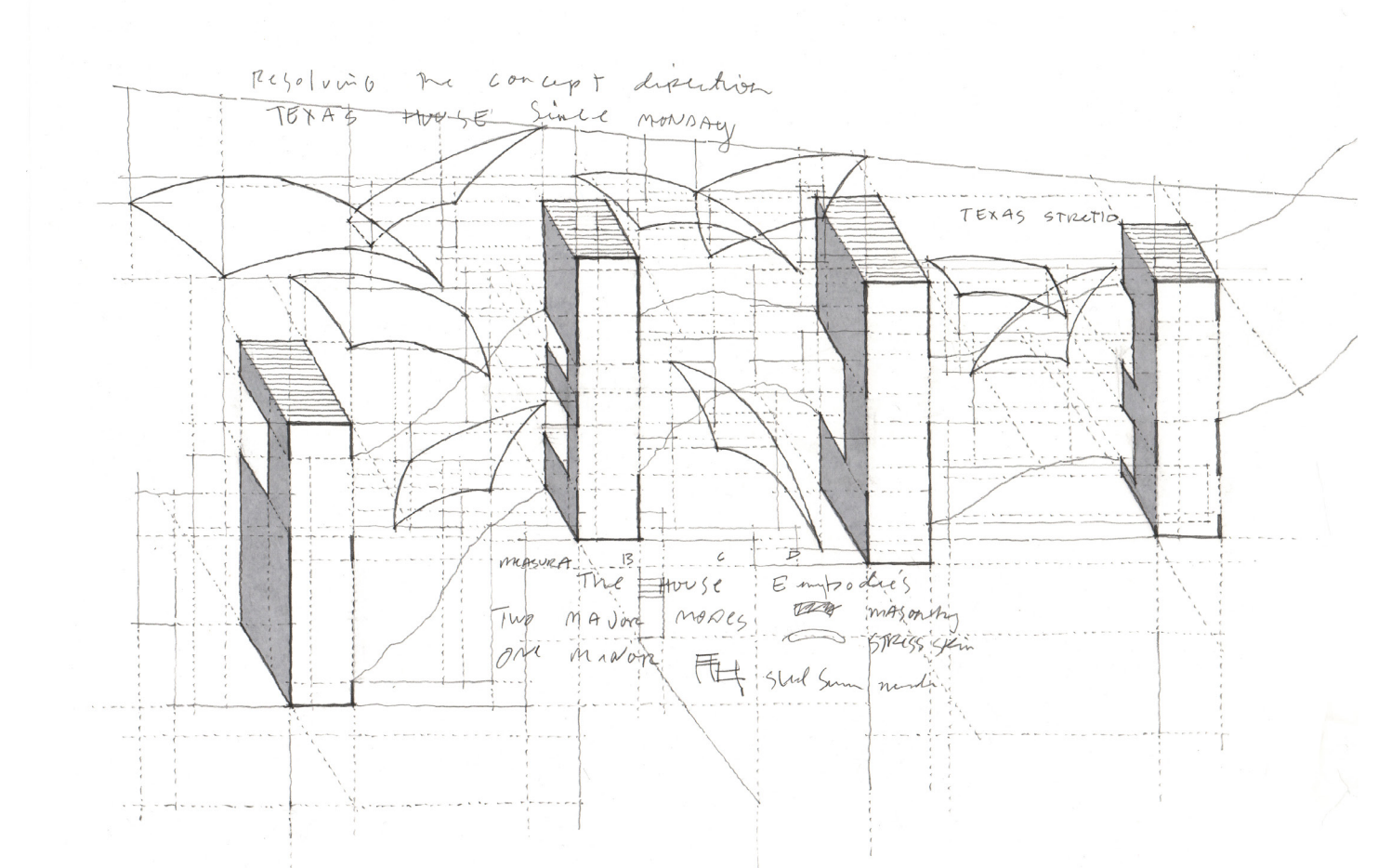
'Concept Drifting', thinking process.

A Mapping Game

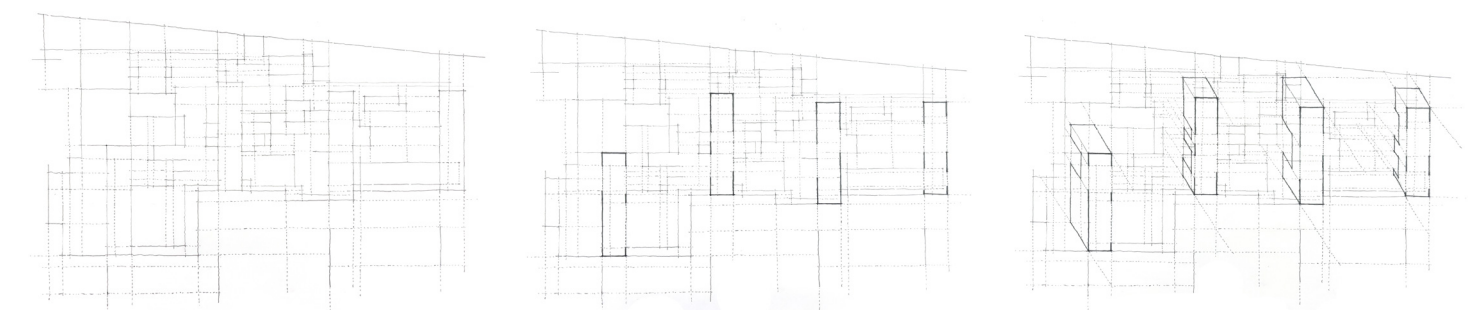
Speculation of "Architecture has spirit", meaning some thing to do with emotions, memories, and truths. The playful game involves the composing of these *[in]tangibles* in a process of assemblage, re-assemblage, and dis-assemblage into a harmonious composition. The result is the revealing of map making.



'Mapping the Konza', composite drawing, mixed media, ink, acetate sheets, and photo prints.



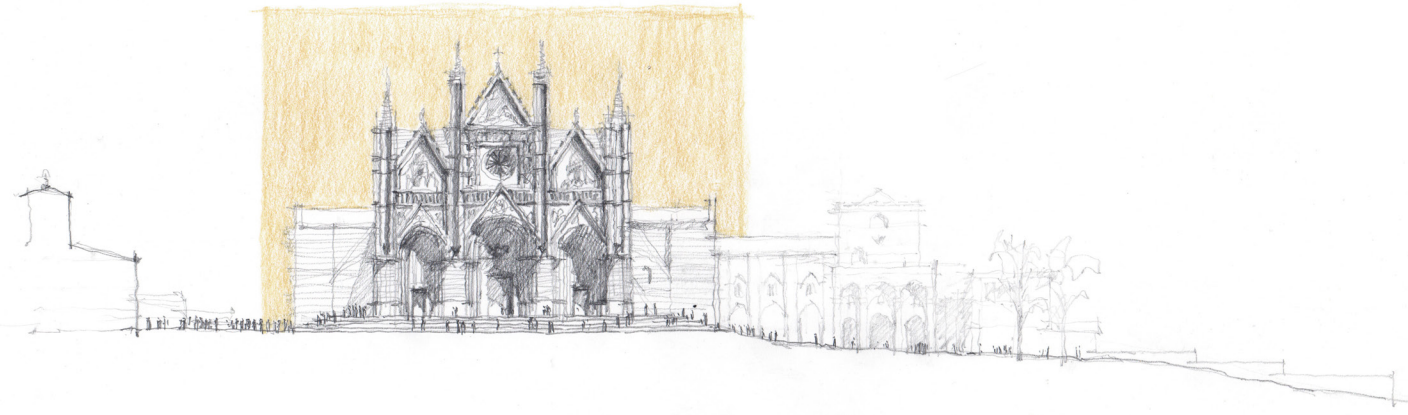
'A Delineation of the Stretto House', composite drawing, graphite on vellum.



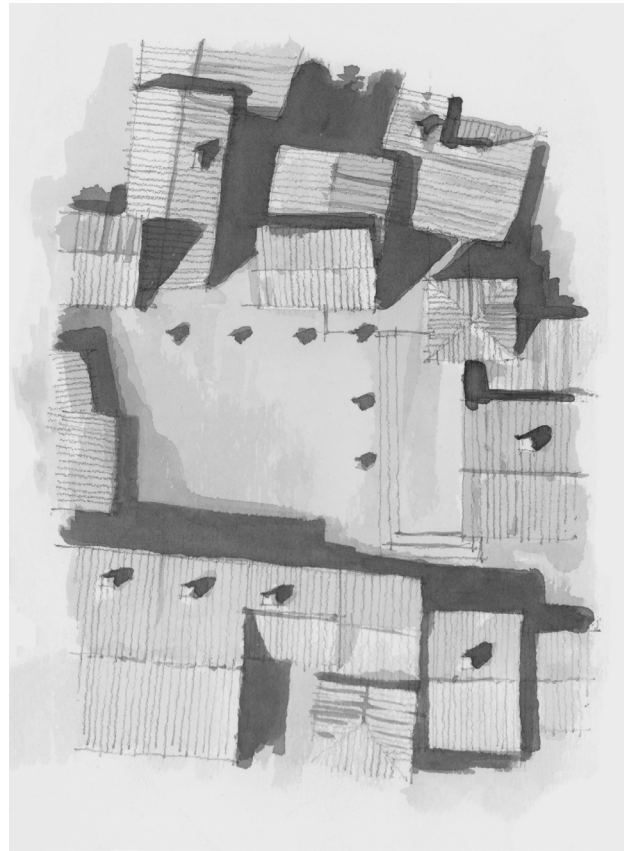
01

02

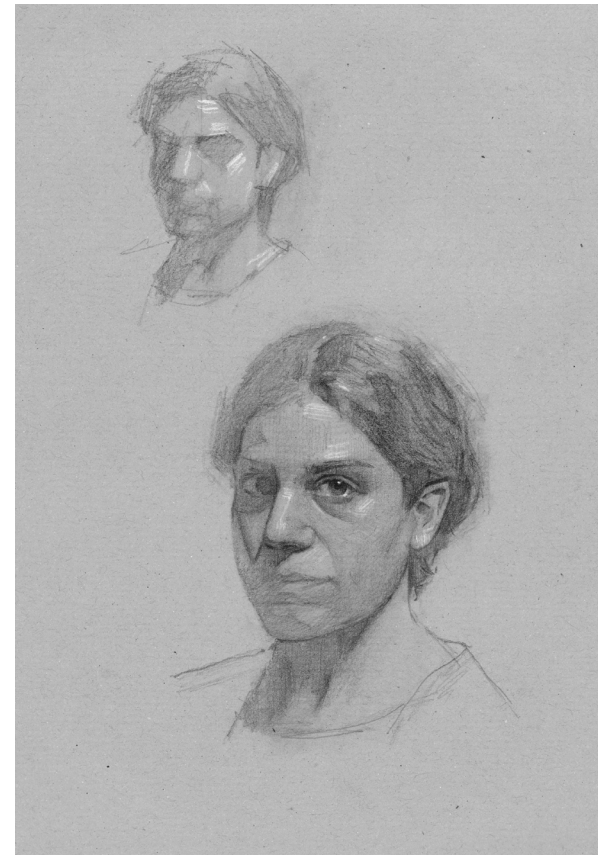
03



'Piazza Duomo, Orvieto', graphite on paper.



'Civita Di Bagnoregio', watercolor on paper.



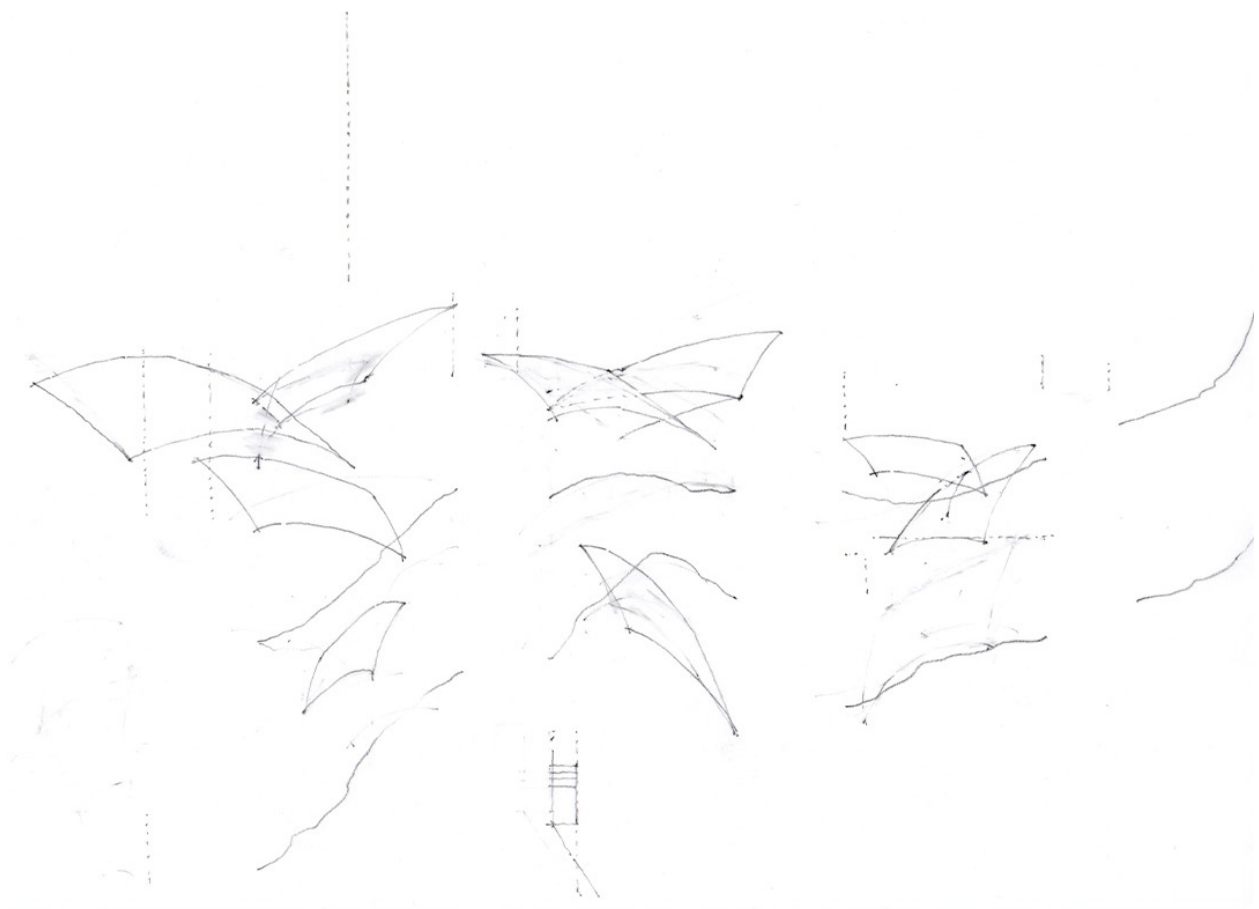
'Head Study', graphite and charcoal on toned paper.



'Discovery of Tension', collage/mapping.



'A Gathering Place in West Baltimore', collage/mapping.



thank you.