



***Metaphysics of Architecture***  
*Experiences of an Architecture Student*

*Alexander Johannes Heil*

*Exhibition Catalogue  
Bachelor Thesis  
(B.Sc. Architecture)*

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*english translation of the german original*  
*by Alexander Johannes Heil*



Alexander Johannes Heil  
Metaphysics of Architecture  
Experiences of an Architecture Student  
at povvera, Berlin  
16th February 2017 bis 18th February 2017

photography: Alexander Johannes Heil

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## Prologue

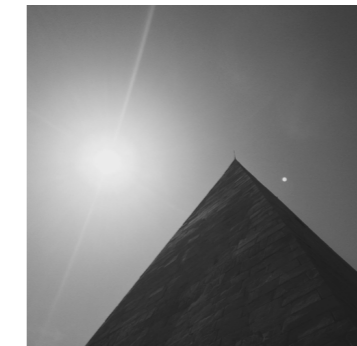
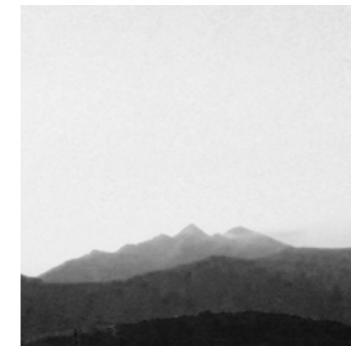
*Ainsi toute la Philosophie est comme un arbre, dont les racines sont la Métaphysique, le tronc est la Physique, et les branches qui sortent de ce tronc sont toutes les autres sciences.*<sup>1</sup>

René Descartes  
*From a letter to Abbé Claude Picot*

I wonder if this parable can be applied on architecture? Would the trunk of this tree represent the nature? And would the branches represent the entirety of the architecture, with all its different formal phenomena and stylistic expressions? If so, nature would not be the last link in this chain. There would exist something even deeper: the root, the metaphysic fundament inherent in nature, as well as in architecture and which nourishes the architecture by permeating nature.

*If thinking sets out to experience the basis of metaphysics, to the extent that such thinking tries to think the truth of be[ing] itself instead of only formulating be-ing as be-ing, it has in a certain way abandoned metaphysics.*<sup>2</sup>

Martin Heidegger  
*What is Metaphysics*



• excerpts from the libretti  
metafisici (25 series of self-  
shot photographs, 2016)

left page: heap of lime,  
Schleswig-Holstein  
Germany

## Exhibition Space and Concept



The exhibition took place at povvera an exhibition space in Berlin Charlottenburg (Germany). The Space is situated in an extraordinary location, at the banks of the city freeway. The traffic passes by with continuous roar. Like water in a torrential river. The steep facades of the buildings are rising dramatically on both sides like a canyon. The french philosopher once write about the city noises:

*When insomnia, which is the philosopher's ailment, is increased through irritation caused by city noises; or when, late at night, the hum of automobiles and trucks rumbling through the Place Maubert causes me to curse my city-dweller's fate, I can recover my calm by living the metaphors of the ocean. [ . . . ] In fact, everything corroborates my view that the image of the city's ocean roar is in the very „nature*

*of things,“ and that it is a true image. It is also a salutary thing to naturalize sound in order to make it less hostile.<sup>3</sup>*

The visitor of the exhibition reached came out of that scenery into my work. In an exhibition space whose walls hold so many stories. But by saying „stories“ I don't intend to refer to historical traces. I don't intend to refer to the history of the space which can empirically be proven, by the traces the time had left on its walls. I refer to stories which we can invent by ourself - with our own imagination. Stories were told of how Leonardo Da Vinci advised his students to seek for inspiration in the stains and cracks of an old wall, with an eye of a dreamer. This kind of narration is what I want to refer to while I am telling stories of the *naturalisation*

left page: surrounding area of the exhibition space, view towards the city freeway

• panoramic shot of the exhibition at the exhibition space povvera



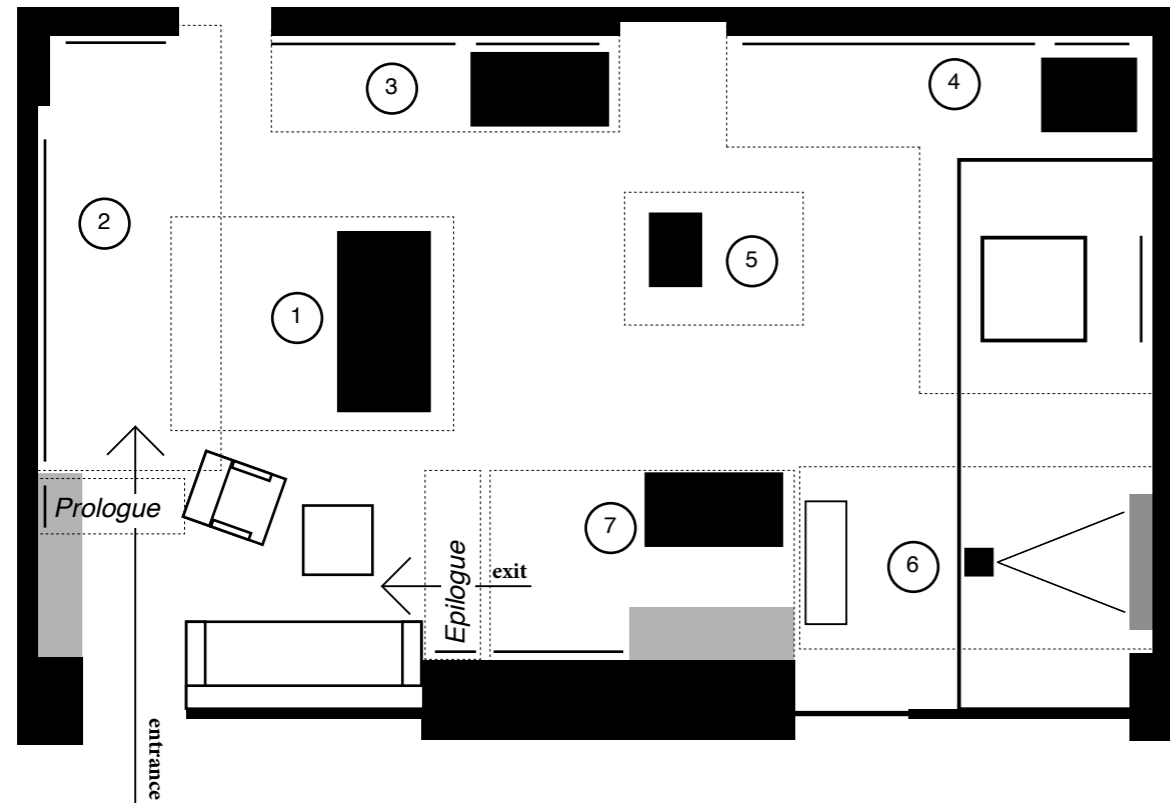
*of architecture* and the *architecturalisation of nature*. This, as well as the narratives which result from that process, is what my work is about. The work includes objects which attempt to communicate with us by addressing our awareness of our body. Wether they are developed based on sole personal experiences they still tell every body something; but maybe something else.

The exhibition transports its messages through various media: Text, photography, collages, models, sculptural objects (which may can be classified somewhere between sculpture and architectural model) and movie scenes of renown film makers, as well as self shot videos. The exhibition is organised in chapters which are arranged clockwise along the walls of the cuboid space.

The chapters are not directly linked to each other and the visitor is free to either follow the chapters one by one or browse around the exhibition space. Each chapter consists of an experience in form of written text, and a group of physical works. All together they build concluded Werkgruppen (groups of works) which are in dialogue with each other.

The single works must not be seen as isolated objects, but in the context of the whole exhibition. The exhibition is a snapshot of an intellectual, artistic process; discussing architecture, nature and their complex effects on our mind and body.

## Exhibition Plan



*Prologue* (entrance to the exhibition) p.4

1 Concept Modell and libretti metafisici p.10

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*Epilogue* (exit towards a seating area for contemplation and exchange) p.58



view from the entrance towards the exhibition •

## 1 Concept Model and libretti metafisici

The *Concept Model* visualises my idea of the direct confrontation of the phenomenas of architecture and nature.



During my journey throughout the world, I have never made an categorisation of what is looked at. I always looked at all buildings, pillars, spaces, vaults, caves, columns, mountains, stumps, and heaps with the same attention and the same sincerity. All these things aroused my interest in the same spontaneous, impulsive way. However, as I looked at things with constant indifference, I did not give them any definitions and no truth about what they are. I just looked and in result I could concentrate on how they were, the things I looked at. I stayed with them in that moment of enduring the being. It is a kind of looking at things which can maybe be described as a mixture of platonic excitement and a

stoicism in the sense of an Democritus, without the amazement about seemingly extraordinary things. A kind of indifferent amazement about the ordinary as well as about the extraordinary.

The libretti metafisici are 25 small booklets which attempt to capture this „being with the things“ - the sole „looking at“. Each of these booklets contains a series of photographs. Many of these series show either natural or architectural phenomenas, others contain images of both. Most of the photographs are taken between May and October 2016 during a journey to Italy. Among others they depict observations made in Rome, Livorno, Como, the Valstorna, the surrounding landscape of Lago Maggiore, San Gimignano, Volterra. Some are made in Berlin where I lived, during my studies at the Technical University.



left page top: Concept Model

left page bottom: libretti metafisici

On the Via della Conciliazione - Thoughts towards an *Architekturnatur*. To my left and my right facades in consistent color tones rising steep like rock faces of a small canyon. The openings are closed with the typical Italian brown or green wooden shutters which you can open like a wing door while the lower part can be flapped outward. In the distance the enormous silhouette of Basilica di San Pietro. The sun is burning mercilessly down on me and a group of pilgrims in neon yellow safety vests. Only the small obelisks along the roadside casting narrow shadows in which people seek shelter from the brutal heat. The scenery almost appears like a desert landscape to me where withered trees represent the last refuge from the piercing beams of sun. At the end of this canyon of buildings I am finding myself in the center of a great glade, surrounded by Berninis gigantic petrified trees.

*The sacred grove was by no means a substitute for the temple: the wood was the temple, its trees the columns and the firmament its roof. The word „templum“ signifies a ... piece of land dedicated to godhead, a holy precinct. Most houses of god betray their vegetable origins by being oriented, and opening up to the sun. Thus what we call a temple is actually an abstraction of a grove, the thicket of columns recalls the thicket of trees.<sup>4</sup>*

Bernard Rudofsky  
*The Prodigious Builders*

On each side of the oval plaza life-giving water wells up from a stone fountain. But to my disappointment they are out of reach behind several fences. In the center of the plaza stands the great obelisk, which was erected under the supervision of Domenico Fontana like a giant dead tree. Some people are seeking shelter from the sun in its not too opulent shadow. St. Peters Cathedral raises in front of me like a sandstone massif. At this moment I urge to reach it as soon as possible, mostly because of the heat. Finally arrived inside the cool walls I see the great vaults which are spanning above my own and the heads of the many people visiting the sight. The interior appears like a enormous cave to me. A cave with painted walls and vaults, an image we know from the very beginning and which had seemingly been stored in our collective memory. A canyon, a glade, a mountain, a cave. Nothing extraordinary in the first place but it is not a piece of land occupied for a particular purpose. All is build by people, as it was cut from one stone, at a location of their choice. And what the sounds are to Bachelard, are the shapes and materials to me.

*When insomnia, which is the philosopher's ailment, is increased through irritation caused by city noises; or when, late at night, the hum of automobiles and trucks rumbling through the Place Maubert causes me to curse my city-dweller's fate, I can recover my calm by living the metaphors of the ocean. [. . .] In*

## 1 Concept Model and libretti metafisici

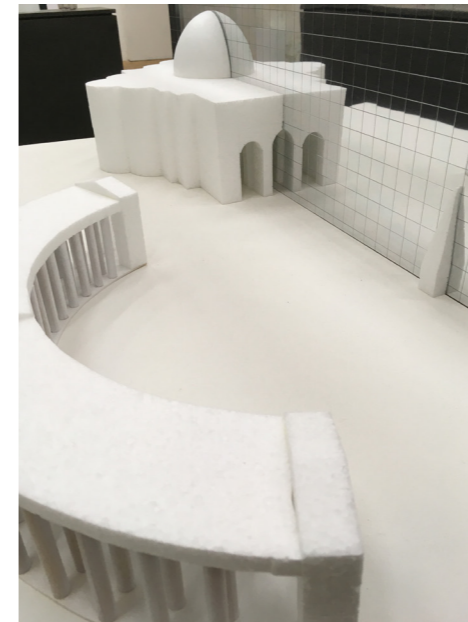
fact, everything corroborates my view that the image of the city's ocean roar is in the very „nature of things,“ and that it is a true image. It is also a salutary thing to naturalize sound in order to make it less hostile.<sup>5</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*Poetik des Raumes*



• libretti metafisici

• excerpts from the libretti metafisici •



• Concept Model and libretti metafisici as presented in the exhibition.

*I looked at all things of nature and architecture with the same attention and the same same attention and the same sincerity*



## 2 White Mountain

*Nature has a very simple way of amazing us - through exaggerated size.<sup>6</sup>*

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

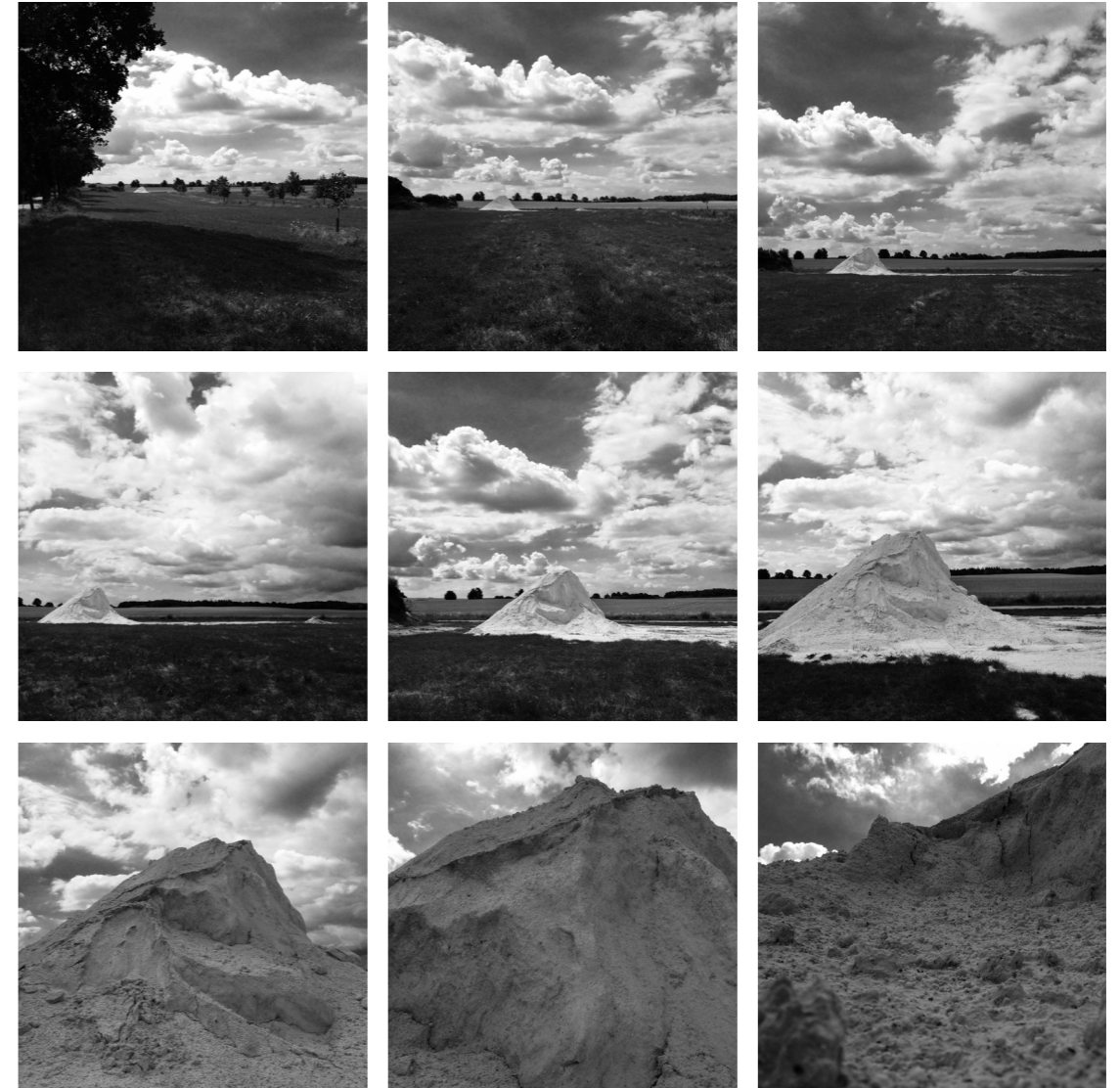
It is an afternoon in late July, and I am on a walk. The fields spread out under an endless sky spanning the Lakeland of Duchy of Lauenburg. The sun is about to break through a dramatically rugged cover of clouds, which slowly drifts above the land, dividing the world in light and shadow. In the distance, I discover a pure white heap of lime and next to it another, but significantly smaller one. They are connected through a trace of lime which results from removing a part of the lime to fertilize the fields. The two heaps seem to form a compositional unit in the midst of the vast green of the grass. The white of the lime is all white. It is almost blinding you, as soon as a sunbeam hits its surface. I am walking towards the two heaps, which serve as context to one another like Duomo and Battistero. They create kind of a center of gravity in the endless expanse of the fields and the sky. While getting closer, it seems to me, as I can feel the presence of the material with my own body. The heap's weight seems to rest in itself. Past rainfalls have transformed the outer layers of the lime into a coherent surface which gave the heap a monolithic appearance. The two „lime bodies” are no bigger than you. I sit down on the grass and watch them.

*Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light.<sup>7</sup>*

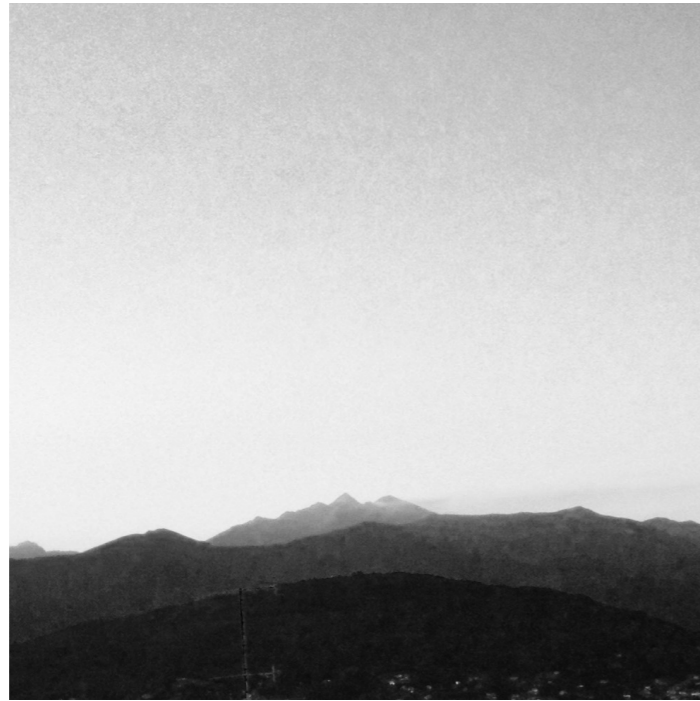
Le Corbusier  
*Vers une architecture (Towards an Architecture)*

From this angle, I see the clouds dramatically burst above the greater heap. As if clouds overflow a mountain's peak they stream above the little massif. The natural forces produce a show of light and shadow on the surface of this massive body, by shoving the clouds against the sun, which is breaking through the clouds. It almost appears to me as I could inhabit this mountain and I get very close to it and I take perspectives which intensify this impression. From this close, little lumps leached out from the surface appear like huge rocks. One area with a rough terrain expands to a large boulder field, and the clouds stream above the mountain and me. I am on a completely white mountain amidst the Lakeland of Duchy of Lauenburg.

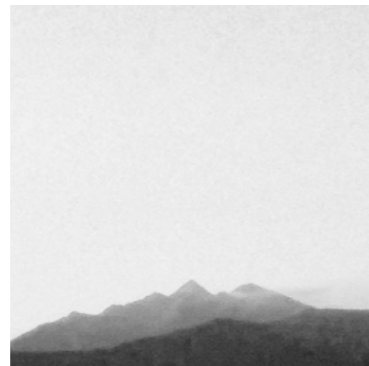
### • libretti metafisici #1, (excerpts for the exhibition)



**2 White Mountain**



Vertigo-Effect applied •  
to a mountains peak



**Werkgruppe of White Mountain •  
as presented in the exhibition.**

*the borders of scale, transformation  
and abstraction become blurred*

### 3 Clockwise and Counterclockwise Twirling Trees

*Actually, however, life begins less by reaching upward, than by turning upon itself. But what a marvelously insidious, subtle image of life a coiling vital principle would be!*<sup>8</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

If you go for walk in the park of the Charlottenburg Palace (Fußnote2), then you can experience the nature in various levels. different states of organization. Starting at the Palace and moving northward from there you experience a continuum of a slowly dissolving grade of organization of the parks space towards a seemingly untouched natural area. Most likely you will run into a squirrel, heron or sometimes even a fox. Alongside the initially orthogonal and slowly more and more meandering paths the trees are standing, as it was the most usual thing.

*Es ist ein Vorurteil der einseitig constructiven Auffassung der Architektur, wenn man Dach und Decke für die Hauptsache nimmt, statt die Umwandlung schon als Raumgestaltung anzuerkennen.*<sup>9</sup>

August Schmarsow  
*Der Werth der Dimensionen im Menschlichen Raumgebilde*

At first they are simple trees to you. Mostly defining the area in which you are supposed to walk. Focused

on the point at the very end of the trail where all lines meet, you perceive the trees only as a peripheral phenomenon. But its almost certain that because of a singularity, a particular phenomenon one of these innocent bystanders will attract your attention at some point. You begin to look for this phenomenon also at the other trees. What you do not notice while investigating this one phenomenon is that you compare it with a lot of others at the same time. And while you compare this one with others you incorporate them all. Maybe you are impressed by the massive trunk, or the way it is joined together with the ground. You survey its surface - the bark. You discover that it is elaborately structured by following some kind of principle. You discover that the trunk is not uniform, not an ordinary pillar in a shopping mall, a differentiated body part, evolving in thick strands from the ground, which seem to pull on something. And as you look at the whole tree again, you are not so sure anymore, if it weigh on the ground or if its clinging to the ground in order to not be ripped off.

*Die Materie ist schwer, sie drängt abwärts, will formlos am Boden sich ausbreiten. Wir kennen die Gewalt der Schwere von unserem eigenen Körper. Was hält uns aufrecht, hemmt ein formloses Zusammenfallen? Die gegenwirkende Kraft, die wir als Wille, Leben oder wie immer bezeichnen mögen. Ich nenne sie Formkraft. Der Gegensatz von Stoff und Formkraft, der die gesamte organische*



• libretti metafisici #2,  
(excerpts for the exhibition)

### 3 Clockwise and Counterclockwise Twirling Trees

*Welt bewegt, ist das Grundthema der Architektur [. . .] In jedem Ding nehmen wir einen Willen an, der zur Form sich durchzuringen versucht und den Widerstand eines formlosen Stoffes zu überwinden hat.<sup>10</sup> [. . .] Überall der Zug nach oben, der der Schwere sich entgegenstemmt und in einer konoiden Form gewöhnlich seinen Abschluss sucht.<sup>11</sup>*

Heinrich Wölfflin

*Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*

And now you see that even if the trunk of the tree is almost vertical it is not growing straight upward. Using all its strength, pulling on the inner matter of the wood while pushing against the forces of gravity it winds itself towards the sky. And while looking at the other trees around, you realize that it is only one tree among many clockwise and counterclockwise twirling trees.



• 7 photographs of tree-feet

**3 Clockwise and Counterclockwise Twirling Trees**



left page: 7 Sculptures of  
Plaster and Sand



**Werkgruppe of Clockwise and  
Counterclockwise Twirling Trees as  
presented in the exhibition**

*Überall der Zug nach oben, der der Schwere  
sich entgegenstemmt und in einer konoiden  
Form gewöhnlich seinen Abschluss sucht*

## 4 Grotta delle Streghe

I am in northern Italy. Its summertime. Traveling by car heading to Valstrona close to Lago d'Orta. On my way to Omegna, a city at the northern tip of the lake, I first pass through another relatively vast valley, driving on a broad highway. The road finally leads right through the small city. In the center I turn right and cross a bridge in the west of the city, which takes me beyond the Strona and out of Omegna again. Right after crossing the bridge I have the feeling that this bridge was kind of the eye of the needle for the thin thread on which all the villages of valstrona are strung one after another. While driving further into the valley the mountain ridges seem to sneak up to the road until it gets pushed upwards under the enormous pressure. The weather in this valley is different to the one down by the lake. While looking through the rear window where the sun is dancing on the lakes surface, thick, wet clouds are sinking down the mountain ridges in front of me, like old men in their armchairs. I have the impression to immerse into a different, mystic world. From time to time the vegetation reaches far above the street and forms natural tunnels. I pass some seemingly abandoned sawmills, pass through tiny villages which never consist of more than ten houses. I am meeting Nobody. Sometimes, alongside the narrow road, rusty electricity pylons appear from the depths of the valley and dive down the slope again, right at the next curve to a ground I am not able to see. Along the roadside, in front of a shed rests a wooden boat on wooden trestles. It seems strangely out of context in front of the backdrop of the valley. It gives a surreal touch to

the hole scenery. The Valstrona is an enchanted valley.

[. . .], and by changing the space, by leaving the space of one's usual sensibilities, one enters into communication with a space that is psychically innovating.<sup>12</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

I am arriving in the small mountain village of Marmò. Here I am meeting with the geologist Enrico Zanoletti, who will guide me into the Grotta delle Streghe - the cave of witches. After a short introduction about the history of the cave, which was found by incident during the excavation of marble in the 19th century, we walk down a narrow path on the slope down to the bottom of the valley. We cross the Strona on a bridge which convinces through its simple construction of two steel beams and rectangular grating panels. On the other side of the river we walk up a slope again until we are finally standing in front of the break off edge of the marble quarry. The entrance lies behind some high grown grass. Holding on to a rope we descend into the cave on which bottom a small trickle ripples. The cave walls are humpy but very smooth, ground by the water. While descending we have to be careful to not slip on the wet surfaces. In the first chamber I can stand upright, but from here we will have to move

on mostly crawling. We slip through openings which are barely big enough for our bodies. Actually it isn't a really uncomfortable way of locomotion, because the cave - although from marble - gives you the impression one could lie down to sleep anywhere. We arrive a small chamber in which we can sit. The caves ceiling which is vaulting us is covered with fine dust which is sparkling in the light of our headlights. Like a starry sky at a clear night and the cave encloses us soft and save under this peaceful night sky.

*It also has a vaulted ceiling, which is a great principle of the dream of intimacy. For it constantly reflects intimacy at its center.*<sup>13</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

In the pale light of my headlight I am crawling through a narrow tunnel of marble which end I can not see. It is that tight so that movement is only possible in one direction - forward. Finally the rock squeezes me inside another chamber. A frieze of rhythmic waves, formed by water is decorating the upper part of the caves wall.

*Die Töne der Musik hätten keinen Sinn, wenn wir sie nicht als Ausdruck irgend eines fühlenden Wesens betrachteten. Dieses Verhältnis, das bei der ursprünglichen Musik, dem Gesang, ein natürliches*

*war, ist durch die Instrumentalmusik verdunkelt, aber durchaus nicht aufgehoben worden. Wir legen den gehörten Tönen immer ein Subjekt unter, dessen Ausdruck sie sind. Und so in der Körperwelt. Die Formen werden uns bedeutend dadurch allein, daß wir in ihnen den Ausdruck einer fühlenden Seele erkennen. Unwillkürlich beseelen wir jedes Ding.*<sup>14</sup>

Heinrich Wölfflin  
*Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*

We get to the next chamber by moving across some rocky columns, crawling like two giants through a medieval vaulted cellar. After this follows a passage where we can move upright but well enclosed by the marble cave walls. We squeeze our bodies through a tight slit. In comparison to the other chambers this one seems almost banal. It is a circular space with a slightly vaulted ceiling. Its surface is like in the other chambers humpy and very smooth.

*„The exterior of the aforementioned chamber,“ wrote Palissy, „will be of masonry made with large uncut stones, in order that the outside should not seem to have been man-built.“ Inside, on the contrary, he would like it to be as highly polished as the inside of a shell [ . . . ] He wants the walls that protect him to be as smoothly polished and as firm as if his sensitive flesh had to come in direct contact with them. The shell confers a daydream of purely physical intimacy. Bernard Palissy's daydream*

#### 4 Grotta delle Streghe

*expresses the function of inhabiting in terms of touch. [...] , the real home of this man of the earth was subterranean. He wanted to live in the heart of a rock, or, shall we say, in the shell of a rock.*<sup>15</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

We switch of our headlights and is completely dark. This darkness does not acknowledge the existence of light. I lie flat on my stomach on a stony hump. And my idea from before - one could comfortably lie down almost everywhere in this cave - seems to be validated in that moment. In this dark cave with its humpy-smooth surface every positive of ones body seems to find its negative equivalent. In the darkness the space seems to expand endlessly. The echoing drops of water seem to be the only material things in this infinite space, defining fixed positions by the sound of them touching the ground. And in my spirit is hovering backwards along the way we came here. Through the chamber with the frieze, underneath the starry vaulting and up into the light, through the entrance hole, back through the valley which is tight and widens gradually with the increasing distance to the cave. All together one single immense space. It almost seems to me if the whole valley culminates into this cave.

*Often it is from the very fact of concentration in the most restricted intimate space that the dialectics of inside and outside draws its strength. One feels this elasticity in the*

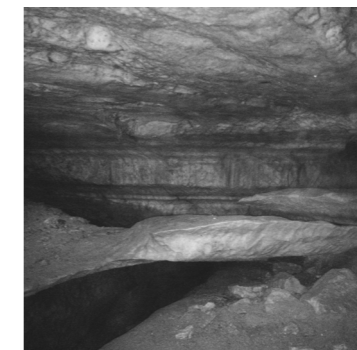
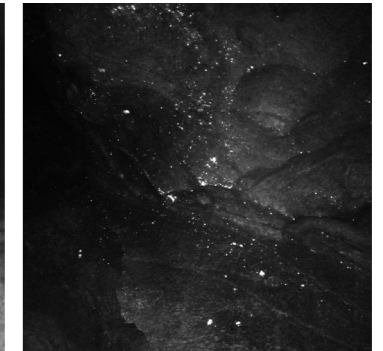
*following passage by [Rainer Maria] Rilke: „And there is almost no space here; and you feel almost calm at the thought that it is impossible for anything very large to hold in this narrowness.“<sup>16</sup>*

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

The light is falling through the entrance of the cave, like through an oculus of a cupola. And when I find myself later that day in Como, inside the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, with its high-rise vaultings, the massive and slick stone-piers, the huge opening of its portal which is only covered by a curtain softly floating loose in the warm winds, directing my eyes into the blinding light, than I find myself back inside the slick, humpy and safe cave.



libretti metafisici #16,  
(excerpts for the  
exhibition) •



4 Grotta delle Streghe



• model from dyed plaster and PET-glitter, *Primatengedicht* (primate-poem) and 4 references

• model from dyed plaster and PET-glitter



• 4 references  
 Arno Schmidt:  
*Schema der Landschaftszeichnungen* (Scheme of landscape drawings)  
 Niki de Saint-Phalle:  
*Elle*  
 Baldassare Peruzzi:  
*Villa Farnesina*  
 Giovanni Battista Piranesi:  
*Ruins of the Temple of Canopo*



#### 4 Grotta delle Streghe



privatsphäre  
die private sphäre

die sphäre, die kugel  
privatkugel ?

die private kugel !

die kugel des privaten  
die sphäre des privaten  
sphäre des primaten  
die kugel des primaten  
die primatenkugel  
die kugel, die sphäre, die blase

die fruchtblase !

die höhle  
die wohnung

• **Primatengedicht  
(primate-poem)**

#### • Collage •

Kaspar David Friedrich:  
*Wanderer über dem  
Nebelmeer*  
(*Wanderer above the Sea  
of Fog*)

Giovanni Battista Piranesi:  
*interior of the Phanteon*

**and 6 Sculptures from  
plaster and PET-glitter**

**6 Sculptures from  
plaster and PET-glitter  
(detail)**



#### 4 Grotta delle Streghe



• **Werkgruppe of Grotta delle Streghe as presented in the exhibition**

*Often it is from the very fact of concentration in the most restricted intimate space that the dialectics of inside and outside draws its strength.<sup>16</sup>*

## 5 Two Steles

The work-group of Two Steles was situated in the center of the exhibition. This position manifests its importance in the context of the entire work. It confronts two basically different design-concepts and demonstrates the difference between the reception of a pure inner logic, and a sensible effect on our body. The things in nature are often rough, raw and repellent from the outside, whereas soft and smooth from the inside.



• work-group of  
**Two Steles** as presented  
in the exhibition

*Proportionen wie 1:1, 1:2, 1:3 sind befriedigend, weil sie die Selbstbestimmung [eines Bauwerks] garantieren. Die Regel, die uns hier sofort entgegenleuchtet, überhebt uns der Frage: warum so? warum nicht anders? Die Form erscheint als eine notwendige. Darin kann aber ein Ausdruck noch nicht liegen.<sup>17</sup>*

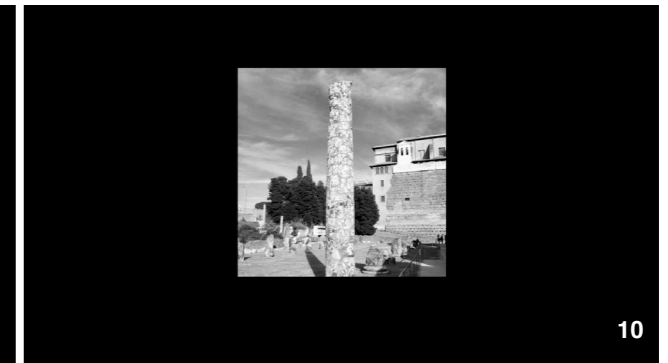
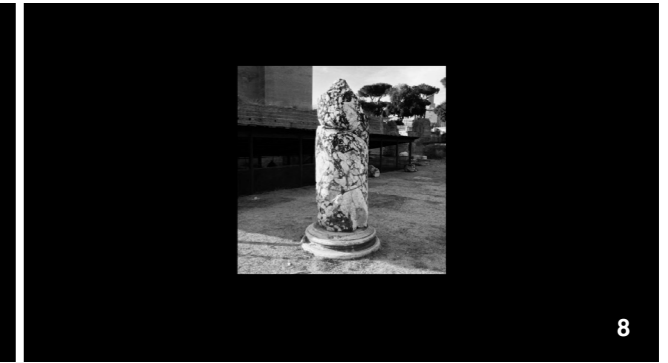
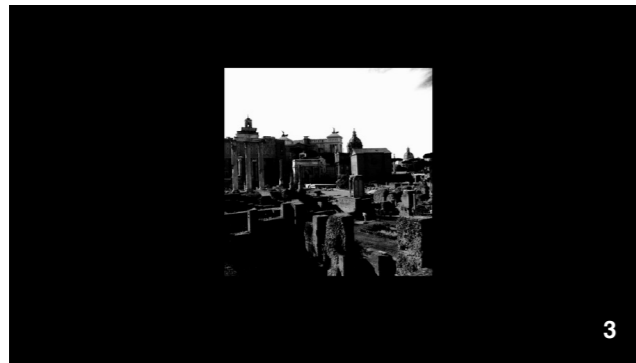
**left page: Stele from plaster and sand (detail); Stele from styrofoam**

## 6 Video Projection

To better communicate the emotional, poetic and contemplative aspects of my work I decided to include movie scenes from known film makers and self made videos in the exhibition. Movies are able to transport emotions very direct through moving images, gestures and facial expressions of the actors, as well as through the combination of movement, sounds, music and spoken language. The media of film brought another important approach to the exhibition.

### Film 1: il momento metafisico Alexander Johannes Heil, 2016

Photographs of natur and architektur, shown for one second, by the sound of a metronome (60 bpm) •



## 6 Video Projection

Kim Novak and James Stewart in front of a Sequoia sempervirens.



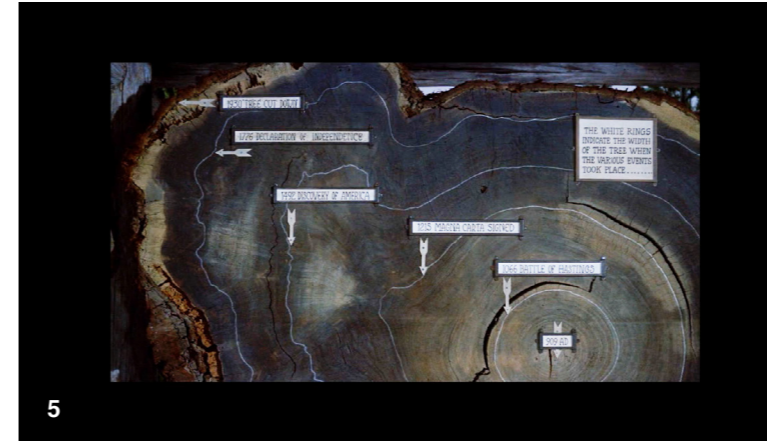
they talk about the great lifespan of the trees (more than 2000 Jahre)



They walk further towards the forest...



... and reach a section of one of the old trees.



Some annual rings are marked with important historical events. She reaches out with her hand and points out an area at the edge of the section, which she defines as her own lifespan and notices, that this was only a moment for the giant tree.



Film 2: movie scene from *Vertigo*  
• Alfred Hitchcock, 1958

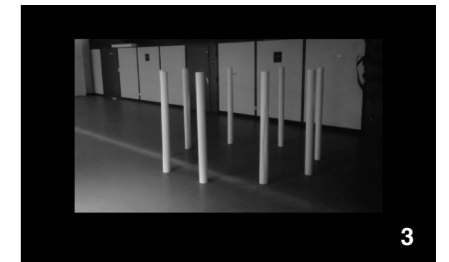
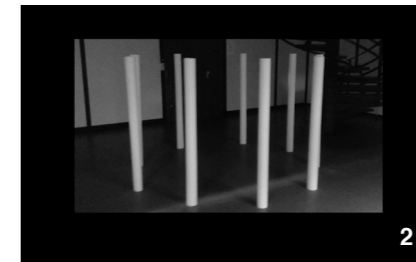
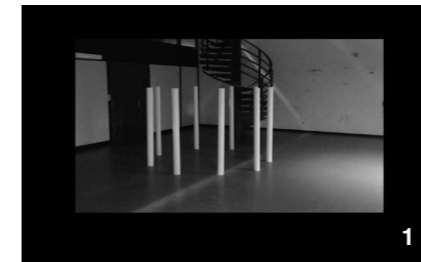
## 6 Video Projection



- **Film 3: Im Winde wiegender Baum**  
(Tree swaying in the winds)  
Alexander Johannes Heil, 2016  
You can hear the groaning creak of the trunk working against the wind.



- **Film 4: Umlaufen einer Baumgruppe**  
(Circulating a tree group)  
Alexander Johannes Heil, 2016  
without sound



- **Film 5: Umlaufen einer Gruppe von Papierrollen**  
(Circulating a group of paper rolls)  
Alexander Johannes Heil, 2017  
without sound  
installation with paper rolls,  
Alexander Johannes Heil

## 6 Video Projection



- **Film 6: movie scene from *the Revenant***

**Alejandro G. Iñárritu 2015**

**Musik: *Church Dream***

**Ryuichi Sakamoto & Alva Noto**

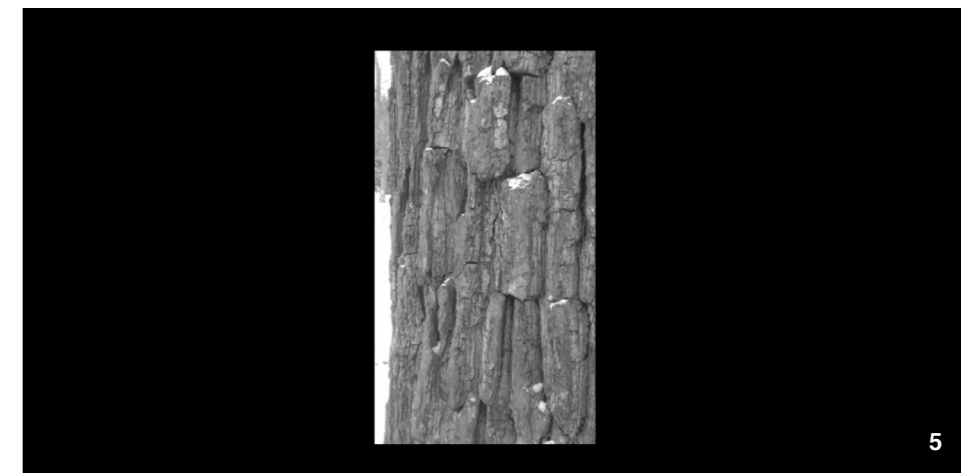
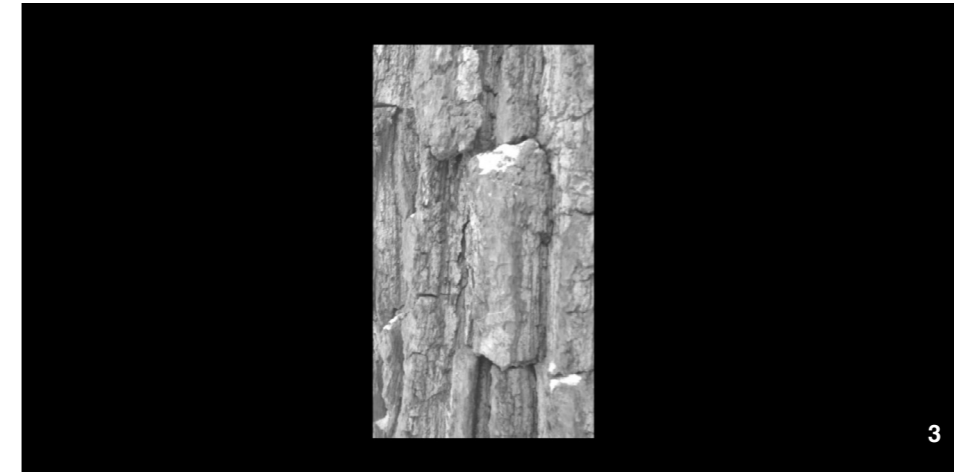
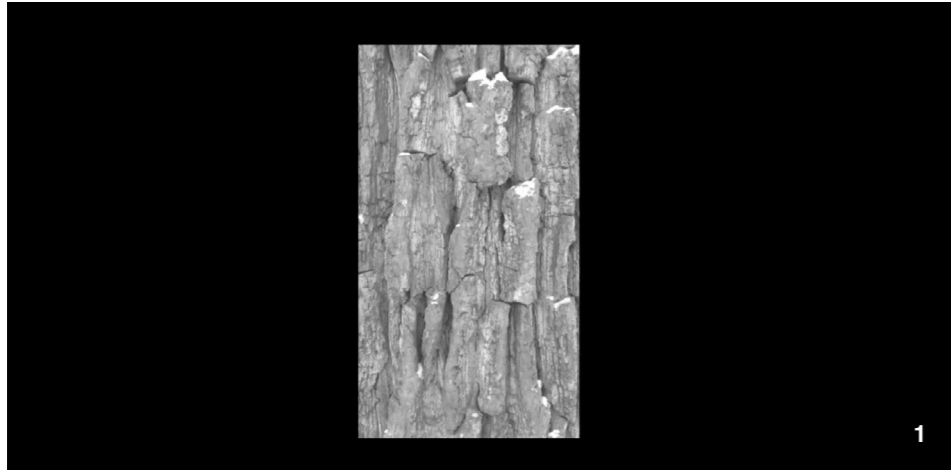
A ruin of a church somewhere in north america.

Nature and Architecture grow together while decaying.

A man meets his murdered son.

The imagined son is embodied by a tree.

6 Video Projection



• Film 7: Borke (bark)  
Alexander Johannes Heil, 2017

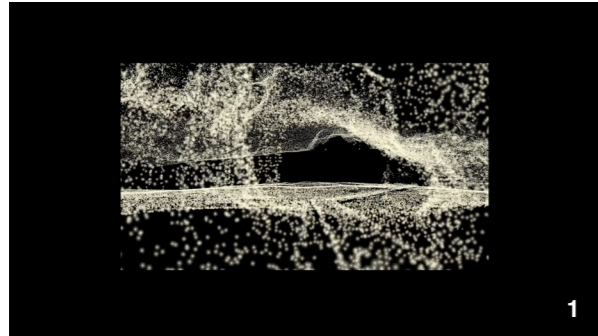


6 Video Projection

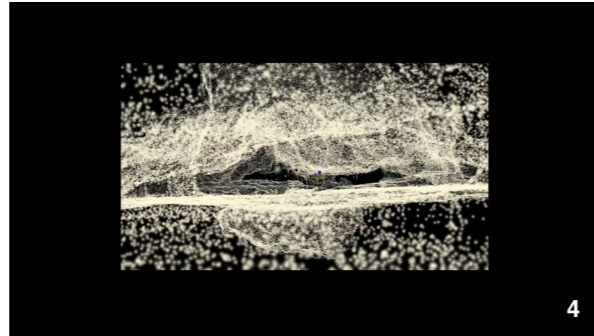


• Film 8: tracking shot into the Valstrona  
Alexander Johannes Heil, 2016

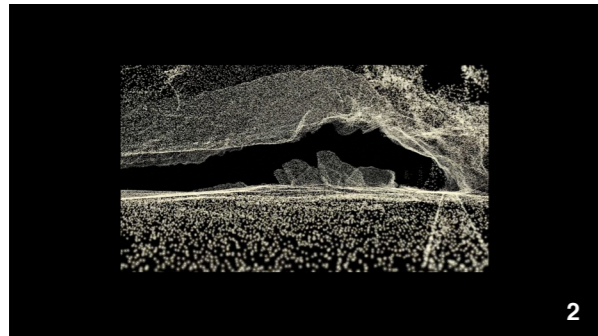
## 6 Video Projection



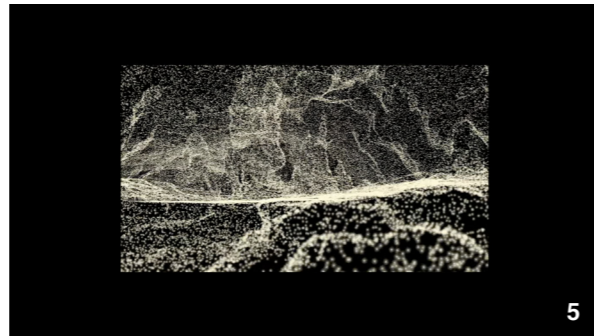
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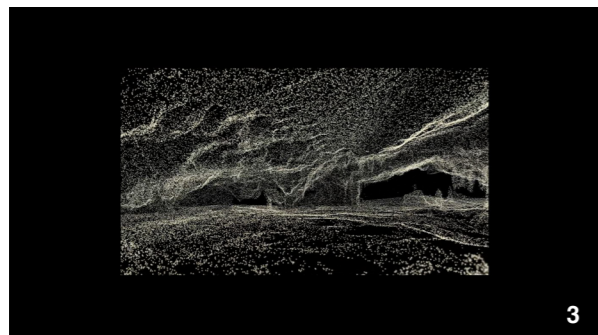
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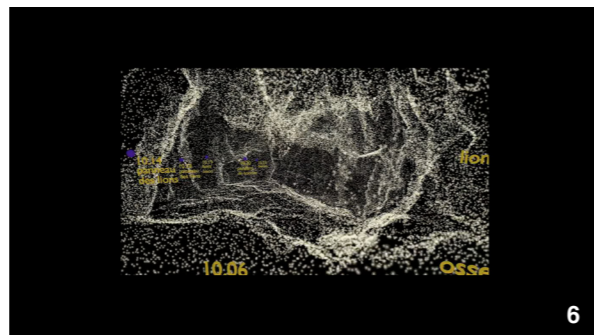
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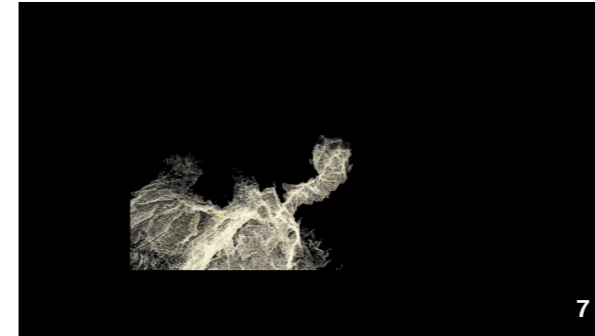
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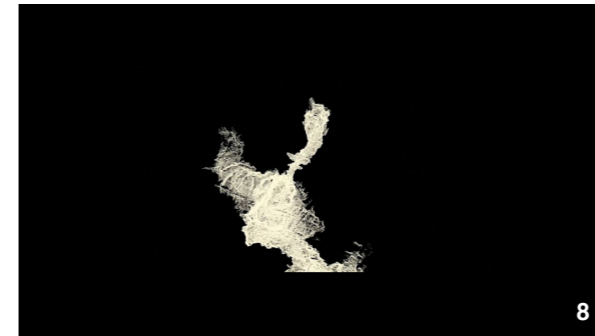
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6



7



8



9

- Film 6: movie scene from *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*  
Werner Herzog 2011  
accompanied with statements from other scenes  
of the same film.

excerpts of the spoken text:

“The cave is a frozen flash of a moment in time”

“The goal is to create stories what could have  
happend in that cave”

“It is like you creating the film directory of Manhat-  
ten, 4 million precise entries, but, do they dream?,  
do they cry at night?, what are their hopes?, what  
are their families?”

6 Video Projection



1  
... mich hat geträumt! ... ja!, es hat mich geträumt!  
(... me has dreamt! ... yes!, it has dreamt me!)



2  
... mich hat vom Kaukasus geträumt!  
(... me has dreamt of Caucasus!)



3  
the next scene: The pictures do not show the  
Caucasus, but rather buildings that look like  
mountains.

• Film 10: movie scene from *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle*  
(*The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*)  
Werner Herzog, 1974  
with excerpts of the spoken text

the english translation here attempts to reproduce the “wrong” apli-  
cation of grammar in the original german version. The film maker  
uses Kaspars difficulties in speaking to create poetic moments.



1  
... ich habe einen Berg gesehen! Und viele Menschen,  
(... I saw a mountain! And many people,)

Film 10: movie scene from *Jeder für sich und Gott gegen alle*  
(*The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser*)  
Werner Herzog, 1974  
with excerpts of the spoken text



2  
... die sind auf den Berg aufgestiegen, wie in einer Prozession.  
(... they went up the mountain, like in a procession.)



3  
Ich konnte es nicht ganz klar sehen  
(I could not see it very clearly)



4  
... und oben,  
(... and above,)



5  
... da war der Tod.  
(... there was death.)

## 6 Video Projection



left page: The setting of  
the video projection  
with bench.



• the Video Projektion in the  
context of the exhibition.

## 7 Switzerland / Morocco

In a valley in Switzerland - called Valle Verzasca - exists a small restaurant. A narrow stone staircase leads the way from the terrace up on a small slope. At the end of the staircase a narrow trail is pushing past a bunch of grapevines. Following the trail you reach a tiny grove. On the left hand the rock falls steeply into a canyon. To the right a forest is covering the mountainside. Down in the canyon runs a cold, blue-green creek nourished by a small waterfall which cuts of the trail. A small mountain village is sitting on a rock on the other side of the canyon. And on the edge of the slope, alongside the trail there is just now a little fragile whim of nature to observe. A little phenomenon, banal but astonishing at the same time. On top of a small boulder a structure has been formed by a tiny landslide and the magnificent creativity of water. The water has washed away parts of the soil and left behind a collection of small clay towers on top of the boulder. If you squat you get the right perspective. A small city all from clay on a boulder. And opposite to it a mountain village all from stone on a rock.

*For with an „exaggerated“ image we are sure to be in the direct line of an autonomous imagination.*<sup>18</sup>

Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

A tiny casual natural phenomenon is able to transport us from one distant country in another even more distant country only through its formal analogy. And because I know that image of that city from clay in Morocco and

because I have to imagine its interior its happening very naturally to me that I also can imagine an interior of this miniature of a city made from clay. And I can almost see me walking in the street of this city which is winding up the hill. I can vividly imagine myself into the miniature and leave Switzerland for a moment without leaving Switzerland.

*It is as though the miniaturist challenged the intuitionist philosopher's lazy contemplation, as though he said to him: „You would not have seen that! Take the time needed to see all these little things that cannot be seen all together.“ In looking at a miniature, unflagging attention is required to integrate all the detail.*<sup>19</sup>

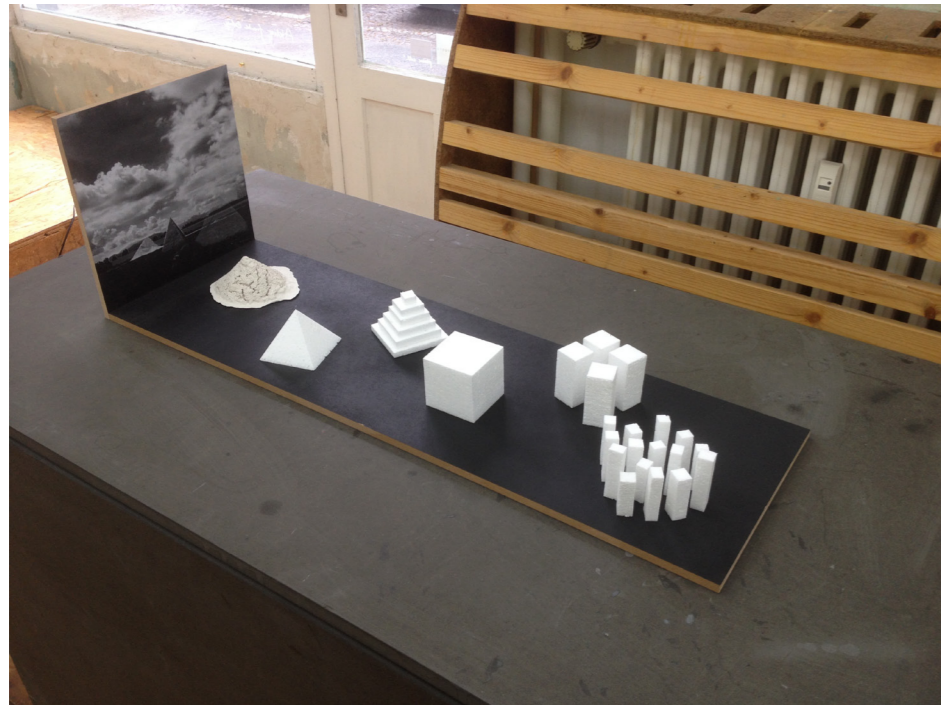
Gaston Bachelard  
*The Poetics of Space*

And so there is, beyond the river, in opposition to the small mountain village in Switzerland a far distant Moroccan city made all of clay and the scale increases the distant.



**Vertigo-Effekt** ·  
moving away from a  
clay-formation

7 Switzerland / Morocco



• Transformation of a platonic solid



Transformation of a platonic solid (detail) •



Werkgruppe of Switzerland / Morocco • as presented in the exhibition

*and the scale increases the distance*

## Epilogue

„Eine Stütze ist eine Säule ist ein Baum ein Bauwerk ist  
ein Berg birgt eine Höhle“

*If thinking sets out to experience the basis of metaphysics, to the extent that such thinking tries to think the truth of be[ing] itself instead of only formulating be-ing as being, it has in a certain way abandoned metaphysics.*<sup>20</sup>

Martin Heidegger  
*Was ist Metaphysik*

During my journey throughout the world, I have never made an categorisation of what is looked at. I always looked at all buildings, pillars, spaces, vaults, caves, columns, mountains, stumps, and heaps with the same attention and the same sincerity. All these things aroused my interest in the same spontaneous, impulsive way. However, as I looked at things with constant indifference, I did not give them any definitions and no truth about what they are. I just looked and in result I could concentrate on how they were, the things I looked at. I stayed with them in that moment of enduring the being. It is a kind of looking at things which can maybe be described as a mixture of platonic excitement and a stoicism in the sense of an Democritus, without the amazement about seemingly extraordinary things. A kind of indifferent amazement about the ordinary as well as about the extraordinary.

*Indifference is when you do not care or do not listen; it is when you avoid paying attention. Indifference is the art of ignoring, of forgetting, of sparing energy. Indifference*

*is the bears response to winter: go to sleep and skip it. Indifference might seem easy or apathetic, but in reality it requires talent and precision. Indeed, like anything else, indifference cannot be universal, so it has to be selective. Indifference is a way of separating what matters from what does not, a way of protecting reason by avoiding suicidal missions: „For those seeking an explanation of all things, destroy explanation“ (Theophrastus of Eresus, *Metaphysics*, VIII.5).<sup>21</sup>*

Editorial Board San Rocco  
*San Rocco Indifference #7 Summer 2013*

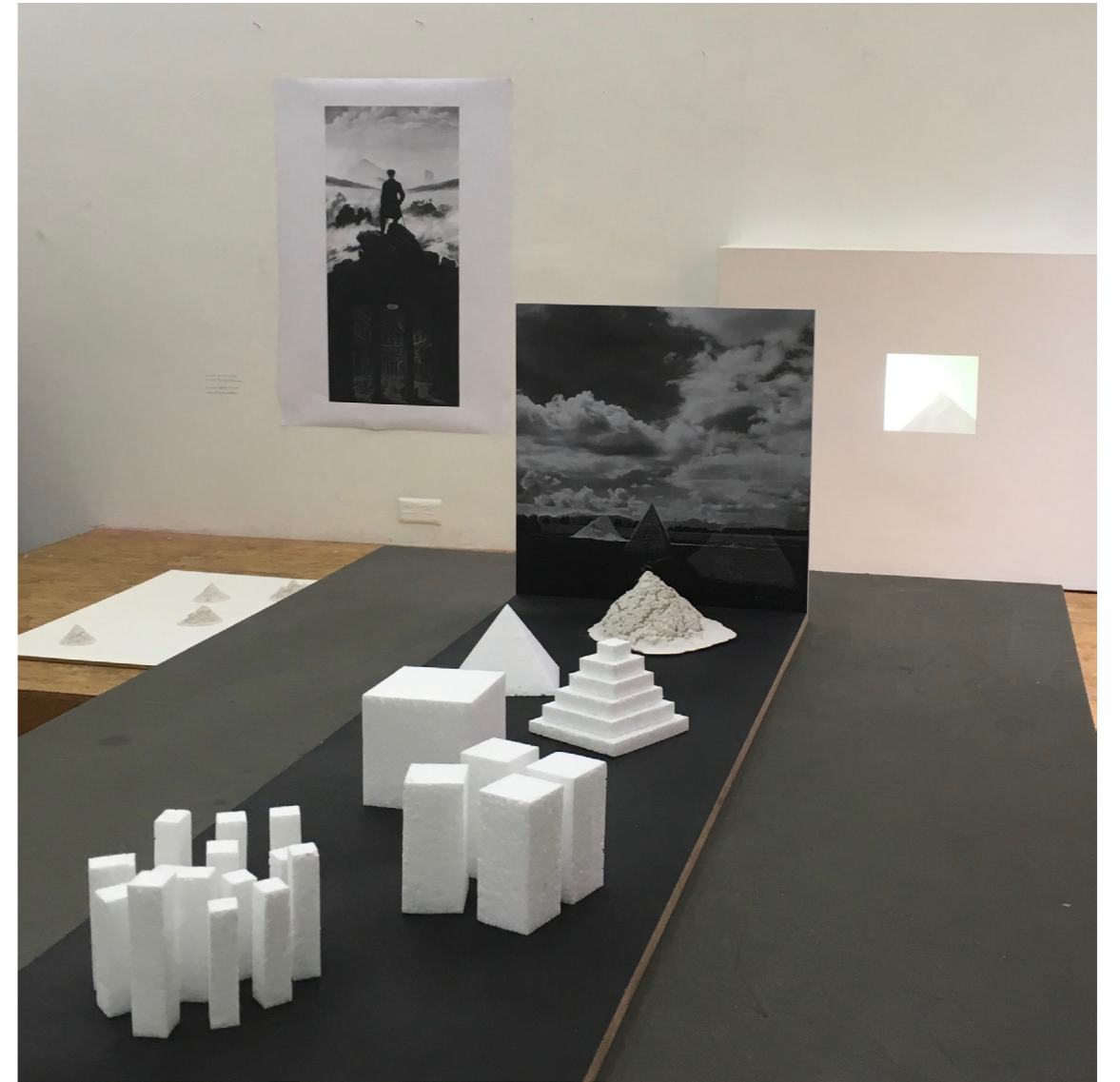
To say a column is a tree is only possible for me, if I accept this as one truth among many others, without questioning it further on. It is a reversed abstraction and in that moment a multiplication of phenomenas. Every time while looking at architecture this idea brings me back to the mountain, the tree and the cave. It brings me back to very original and natural spaces and spacial structures. I think that the natural phenomenas causing very direkt, immediate and original emotions inside us humans. A look on architecture inspired by the tree, the mountain and the cave can have an positive effect on architectural practice, as well as on the reception of architecture and most important of all on the human mind, soul and body. Thats why I consider the natural phenomenas as basis of my designs.

*Ich möchte meinen Mitmenschen zeigen und wiederhohlen, was in mir vorgeht, was mein Vorstellungswille*

*im Objekte tut, Die eigentliche Reaktion des Phantasiewillens beruht also in der Nachahmung.*<sup>22</sup>

Robert Vischer  
*Über das optische Formgefühl*

I consider myself in a metaphysical space.  
This space has no fixed dimensions.  
It exists and it does not exist.  
On the one hand, the sphere of architecture,  
On the other hand, the sphere of nature.  
They conduct a dialogue - they exchange information.  
I listen to them.











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4 Adams (1998), *Columns*, p. 11.

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6 Bachelard (1994), *Poetics of Space*, p. 122.

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- 16 Bachelard (1994), *Poetics of Space*, p. 229.
- 17 Wölfflin (2007), *Prolegomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*, p. 88.
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### ***Filmography***

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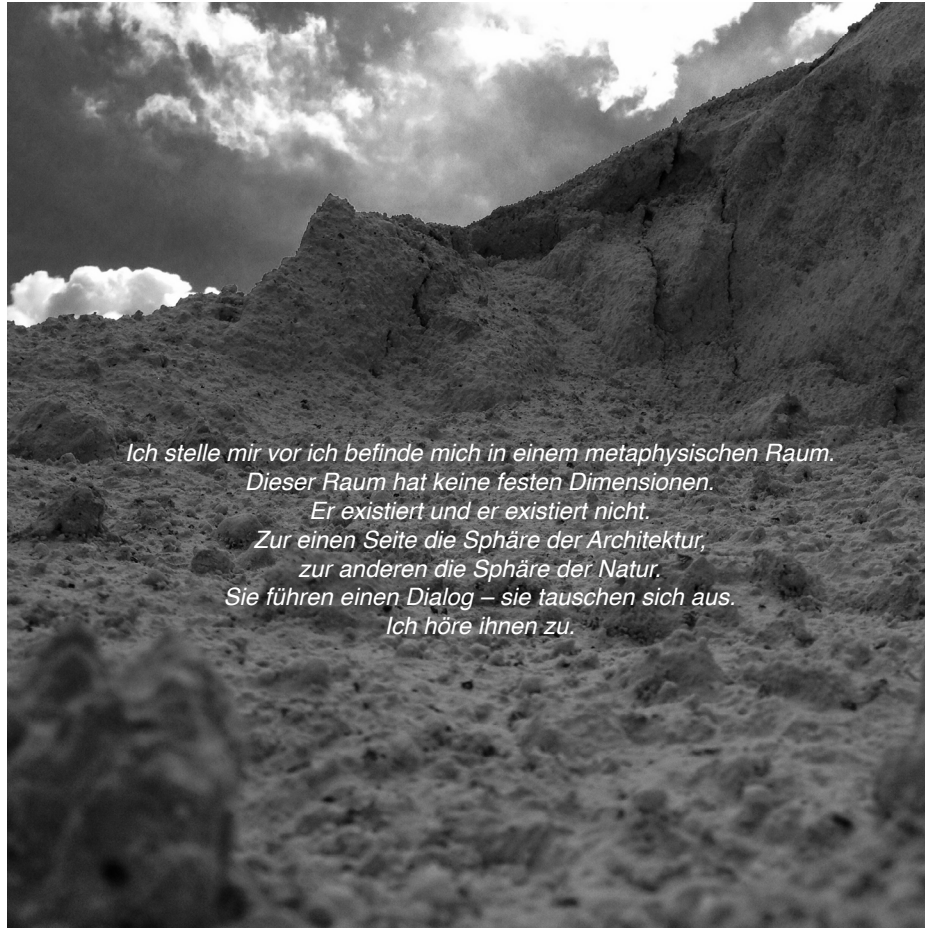
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*The Revenant*. R: Alejandro G. Iñárritu, Drehbuch: Mark L. Smith, Alejandro G. Iñárritu. USA: 20th Century Fox, 2015.

*Vertigo*. R: Alfred Hitchcock, Drehbuch: Samuel A. Taylor, Alec Coppel, Maxwell Anderson. USA: Universal Pictures, 1958.

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*Ich stelle mir vor ich befinde mich in einem metaphysischen Raum.  
Dieser Raum hat keine festen Dimensionen.  
Er existiert und er existiert nicht.  
Zur einen Seite die Sphäre der Architektur,  
zur anderen die Sphäre der Natur.  
Sie führen einen Dialog – sie tauschen sich aus.  
Ich höre ihnen zu.*