# Research Plan Draft

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*Middle English gardyn, borrowed from Anglo-French gardyn, gardeyn, jardin, from Old French jart, (Picard and French Flanders) gart "garden" (going back to Old Low Franconian \*garda- "enclosure, fence" going back to Germanic \*garđa-, whence Old Saxon gard "garden, dwelling, world," Old High German gart "enclosure," Old English geard "fence, enclosure") + -in, probably adjective suffix (going back to Latin -īnus -INE entry 1), originally in Gallo-Romance \*hortus gardīnus "enclosed garden" ("garden" Merriam-Webster, 2021)*

1. Gainsbrough, T. (1750). Mr and Mrs Andrews.

# Abstract

Project unfolds from the general problem of nature – culture divide but focuses primarily on the practices of architectural production and representation, which potentially perpetuate this paradoxical problem. That is to say, depending on subject/object's position problem might seem less relevant or sometimes even absurd. As human perspective is employed in this research, I am making two observations related to spatial consequences of the aforementioned divide. Firstly, that such results in the widespread spaces of friction; secondly, that those frictions, for the time being, have a rather destructive than a productive role. On one hand, as one of the cultural products, there is practice of structuring, organising and immobilizing the environment; on the other, there are fundamental transformative or entropic processes which endanger such practice, those belong to the realm of nature. Hypothesis behind this research is that current practices of spatialisation and representation, have not yet managed to make the dynamic between those two productive. Consequently, we live in a constant fear for our man-made environment and try to prevent such from the destructive natural processes of fragmentation, disintegration, decay or in short – entropy. Above all, we fear things loosing their form. Facing the formless, the one who thinks is 'in control', is constantly reminded about the tragedy of his own work, it's Sisyphean character.

## Key Words

Nature, culture, entropy, architecture, formless

# Introduction

Their heads are turned towards us – viewers, their eyes fixed on someone who occupies the same position as the one looking at the painting - the painter. Both them and us are engaged in some form of dialog, mediated by the one whose strokes produced the very artwork. The subject of this silent contemplation is what stretches behind them – the landscape, or one might prefer – the land. This is what is so striking about this painting, or rather its implicit relationship with the figures looking at us. Thomas Guisborough's intention, as Berger emphasized, was not to depict them as a couple in nature in the Rousseauian understanding of the word, but as proud landowners whose 'proprietary attitude towards what surrounds them is visible in their stance and their expressions'[1] . Two figures, whose names we shall now reveal as those of Ms and Mr Andrews, were among people who took 'pleasure of seeing themselves depicted as landowners and this pleasure was enhanced by the ability of oil paint to render their land in all its substantiality'[2] .

This 'physical and mental entity called land' [3], as Corboz puts it, can be understood as human transformation of earth, both physical and mental, but also as an indefinite process perpetuated by the cultural and scientific developments and various practices of representation and demarcation. Along this trajectory, human – nature relationship has undergone a significant recalibration. How has nature become the land and land turned into propriety? We are again in front of the Guisborough's painting. It is one of those many representations which seem to confirm the hypothesis that how we depict our environment is never neutral and never without the consequences. It has an impact on how represented spaces are perceived, how we relate ourselves to the natural environment, how such is being managed and eventually constructed. The painting reveals not only the truth behind our attitude towards the natural but the problematics and implications of the representations on our perception of the natural. Hypothesis behind this research is therefore that architectural production and representation seem to further deepen the nature – culture divide.

1. Berger, J. (2008). Ways of seeing. Penguin Classics.

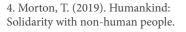2. Berger, J. (2008). Ways of seeing. Penguin Classics.

3. Corboz, A. (1983). The Land as Palimpsest. Diogenes, 31(121), 12-34. doi:

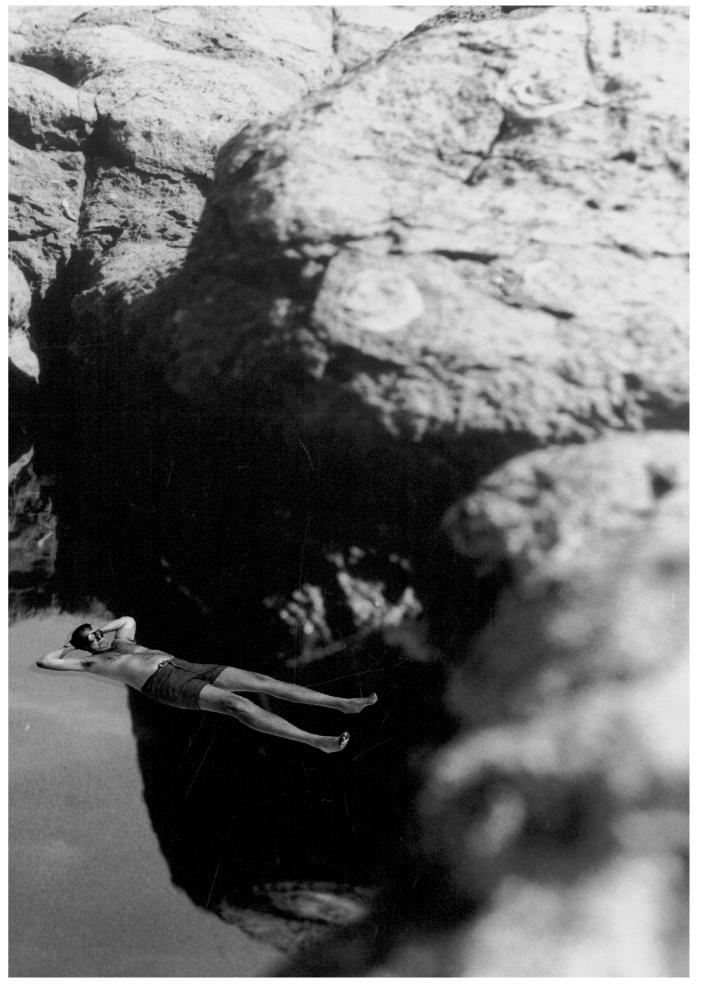## Spatial consequences of nature – culture divide

Nature – culture divide is a problem which transposes itself onto many aspects of human and non -human coexistence. It is also more than relevant to the realm of architecture, through which it conditions the way we shape our environment, curate nature within what can be called man-made and our very relationship to it. Of course, this divide has different forms and probably even intensities, depending on how and where we contextualise it. This research will focus mainly on its Western variant as the project's site and its context, i.e. French city of Marseille, has been pretty much shaped by the western tradition. Respectively, in philosophy of this world region, understanding of human and non-human has, up till now, undergone a significant repositioning. Especially with regards to the emergent scholarships which reject the humanist approach to nature or mind and body dualism. Morton's ecological theory is particularly relevant for this project, but not only with regards to his scholarship which scope largely overlaps with this research, but also due to his use of metaphor and visually charged language. He gives the aforementioned 'divide' a different term – severing, which works much better when we attempt to explain its spatial consequences. Severing is, as he puts it, a foundational, traumatic fissure between reality and the real. Where reality signifies the human – correlated world, while real, the ecological symbiosis of human and non-human parts of the biosphere[4]. In his book 'Humankind' he writes:

'*Since nonhumans compose our very bodies, it's likely that the Severing has produced physical as well as psychic effects, scars of the rip between reality and the real. One thinks of the platonic dichotomy of body and soul: the chariot and the charioteer, the chariot whose horses are always trying to pull in another direction.*' [5]

Severing indeed produced various physical effects and in the context of human constructed environment I name those effects 'spaces of friction'. This is where the phenomenon becomes visible as we fail to embrace and accept the immanent, transformative condition of things. Frictions occur when there is some form of imbalance in what is and what is expected to be. In result, we often face many forms of unwanted and unplanned occurrences, such as various forms of accumulations, depositions, fissures,

4. Morton, T. (2019). Humankind: Solidarity with non-human people.

5. Morton, T. (2019). Humankind: Solidarity with non-human people.



2. Author's image (2018). Man as microbe. Photographic print and photomontage.
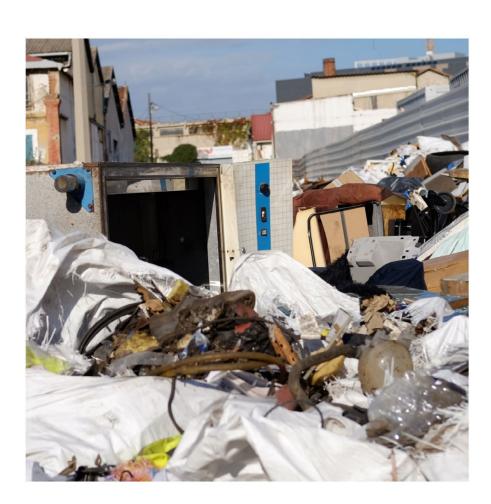
Exploring frictions
in Marseille

cracks, exfoliations, leakages, rust, dust, erosions or decay. As human minds are preoccupied with the 'modern infrastructural/architectural ideal'[6] those elements constitute a group of invaders who destabilize this idea. In result, in an attempt to keep up with the ideal, humanity is involved in the futile practice of constant maintenance. Above all frictions cause discomfort, they put in question our dominion over what can be framed as natural and remind us about a lingering possibility of things being forced out of the proper state by the perverseness and insubordination of matter[7] .

## Problematics of architectural production and representation in the context of instability and uncertainty of matter.

I am proposing that prevailing practices of architectural production and representation are deeply problematic, as they often perpetuate the, so called, 'severing' and condition our attitude towards the inevitable occurrence of frictions in our built environment. Problem is deeply rooted and transposes itself onto many aspects of architectural practice, embracing various scales and reaching far in the history of human – nature relations.

There are spaces where frictions are less and more welcome, visible or disturbing. This might depend on project's materialisation, location or internal and external organisation. Sometimes they are desired, as we, for instance, romanticize the idea of decay or ruination. Often representations and theories paint and engrain certain ideas about those processes and states in the collective apprehension. Take for instance work of Piranesi or Anti-restoration movement, where Ruskin rejects the idea of restoration, labelling it as producing inauthentic objects, while considering natural property of things to age and mature as an essential quality[8]. Yet, as with some buildings we might perceive maturation as aesthetic, many modern ones, due to their construction or materiality, while invaded by frictions, produce rather anti - aesthetic results. We are then required to play the game of constant maintenance and to aggravate severing.

Representation is though far more problematic. The way we draw, the technique, the medium often determines how we expect space to be. Drawing is never innocent. For example, the use of pictorial perspective deeply influenced, not only the depiction/reception of the space, but more importantly its very construction. Consequently, it started taking form of 'infinitely extended lines radiated across the landscape'[9] opening up and redefining the 'inward looking enclosures of the medieval period'[10]. This is well exemplified by renaissance and baroque gardens, where nature is humanised by man, becoming a symbolic representation and reconstruction of the landscape which lays beyond. Similarly, development of cartographic techniques and measuring devices, advanced human ability to extend territorial dominion, colonise, control and appropriate land for humanity's productive use. Here, one of the relevant examples could be maps commissioned by Joan Bleau for Dutch East India Company[11] , or surveying practices over American land undertaken during Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1803 [12]. But mapping reveals its very different side, as it is able to depict and highlight existential interdependence and ecological interrelation between human and natural world. Such is the nature of Ian McHarg's cartographies or Corner's use of satellite imagery, where synoptic vision is not used to utilise and instrumentalise the landscape anew but rather in a discursive manner, to highlight this relationship.

The way we represent and produce architecture have not yet made it universally possible to make the dynamic between nature and culture productive, although there are attempts. Representation often reveals our longing for control, immobilisation and humanisation of nature. It is therefore the aim of this research to look into the possibility of this dynamic becoming productive. To ask the following:

+ How to represent and capture the transformative character and potential of things?
+ How can representational techniques mobilise instead of immobilise?
+ When are the frictions perceived as aesthetic and when are they not?

6. Gillespie, T. (2014). Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society. Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.: MIT Press.

7. Bois, Y. A., Krauss, R. E., & Centre Georges Pompidou. (1997). Formless: A user's guide. New York: Zone Books.

8. Ruskin, J. (2008). The lamp of memory. London: Penguin Books.

9. Corner, J., & S MacLean, A. (2000). Aerial Representation and the Making of Landscape. In Taking Measure Across the American Landscape (pp. 15-21). London: New Haven.

10. Ibid.

11. Schilder, G. (1976). Organization and Evolution of the Dutch East India Company's Hydrographic Office in the Seventeenth Century. Imago Mundi, 28, 61–78.

12. Buckley, Jay H. 2018. Lewis and Clark Expedition. Encyclopedia Britannica.

+ How to include uncertainty in the design?

+ What happens when we take frictions, such as: decay, erosion, breakdown or deposition, as our starting point?

## Architecture, entropy and the fear of formless

There is architecture and entropy, seemingly antagonistic concepts which in fact have a lot in common. Both, if one looks closely, can be understood as productive processes but while one has a rather positive connotation in culture, another is perceived as a destructive force. Definitions of those two seem more than insufficient. In dictionary one might find architecture described as the art of designing and constructing buildings, while entropy is considered a measure of disorder. Yet, if we look into etymology of those two words we might uncover their more flexible and open meaning. Latin word architectura comes from arkhitekton, arkhi meaning 'chief' and tekton meaning 'builder, carpenter', from the PIE root teks-, that is 'to weave' or 'to fabricate'. To weave can also be understood as giving something structure. Arkhi comes from archon which in ancient Greece meant 'ruler, commander, chief or captain' [13]. Culturally word architecture is emotionally charged and implies the possibility of gaining through it some level of control over what is structured. Entropy, on the other hand can be directly understood as 'inside the transformation'; comes from en meaning 'in' and trope 'a turning or a transformation'[14]. Etymology of those two words or concepts puts in question the current degree of differentiation offered by their definition.

Previous paragraph aimed to illustrate how things of which we think as opposites might actually be analogous. At the root, architecture is a transformation of something into something else, as is entropy. We often do not think of architecture as destructive but it can be and often is. We could for instance think of architecture as something being in the constant state of transformation, instead of something being transformed once and assuming a static form.

One might ponder whether this differentiation might come from our fear of things becoming formless, unnameable, unintelligible, where our logic and structure loving mind becomes

confused. Yet, architecture implies formless, as beginning implies an end. Formless reveals the transformative power of nature and serves to break down many of the differences which we culturally constructed. As for Bataille formless is not only an adjective but 'a term that serves to bring things down in the world (...)' [15].

Spaces of frictions remind us about a lingering possibility of facing the formless. Constant maintenance of the environment is an attempt to eradicate this possibility. Any transformation or entropic process, if one prefers, unavoidably leads to it and the sooner we redefine our approach to it, the earlier we will be able to incorporate the productive entropic processes into design practice. The main research question can be therefore formulated as:

+ How could design and representation alleviate the gap between nature and culture, by taking transformative nature of things as a starting point?

## How to incorporate the transformative nature of things?

In order to explore the possibility of addressing the above discussed issues, methodology behind this qualitative research has a twofold nature. Part of it, or its theoretical side, has already been partially discussed in this paper. It focuses on developing grounded theory which justifies incorporation of entropy and the formless into architectural production and representation, or rather taking those as a starting point of the design process. This, as theory suggests, might potentially enable reducing the nature – culture divide, or as Morton puts it, alleviating the negative implications of the 'severing' process. Such is being enforced by the architecture's inability to incorporate transformative nature of matter resulting in the widespread practices of maintenance and spaces of friction. By theorising the problem I hope to achieve some level of credibility with regards to the proposed methods of investigation, representation and eventually design intervention itself.

Other part of the research focuses on representational experimentation with the notions of entropy and formlessness.

13. Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

14. Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

15. Georges Bataille, Documents #1, Paris, 1929, p. 382 (translated by Allan Stoekl with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie Jr., Georges Bataille. Vision of Excess. Selected Writings, 1927-1939, Minneapolis: University

Those are necessary in order to develop and discuss methodologies for developing architectural ideas, which eventually lead to a better situated design. Developed representational techniques will aim to incorporate entropy and formlessness not as destructive forces but as productive agents which ought to be included in the design of our man – made environment. Methodology can be therefore best explained as: theorising and testing, that is imagining how theory could potentially be implemented in the real life scenario.

Mapping, for example, has a potential of including the time – deep meanings of the environment and its ecological complexities. Section opens up a possibility of looking within. Layering techniques can communicate processes and forces which act within and upon. Film, as one of the unconventional methods of architectural production and representation, presents a potential of layering the information in multiple ways - juxtaposing, superimposing, sequencing, all together in one 'space'. Physical and digital modelling offers an opportunity of prototyping and testing the physical embodiment of the theoretical groundwork. These are some of the examples of the techniques which might be relevant to capture the transformative nature of the two.

As in the case of Robert Smithson and mappings which pre – figured his sculptures , or brilliant example of David Gissen's proposal for 'The Mound of Vendome', which was preceded by careful studying of the historical, time deep, context of the site and combined with his systematic development of the theory behind the concept of 'subnature' .

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[Work of Robert Smithson]
[Work of Phil Solomon] cinema
[Work of Richard Long]
[Work of Nancy Holt]
[Power of Ten by Charles and Rey Eams]
[FridayMilk]
[Parliament of things]
[Dutch Sonic Acts]