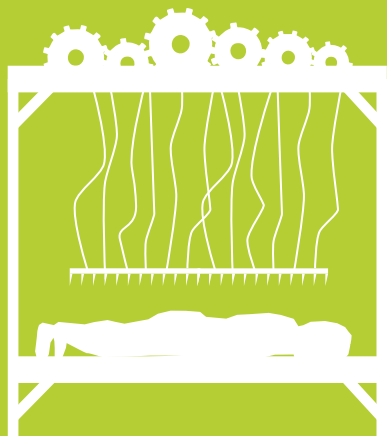


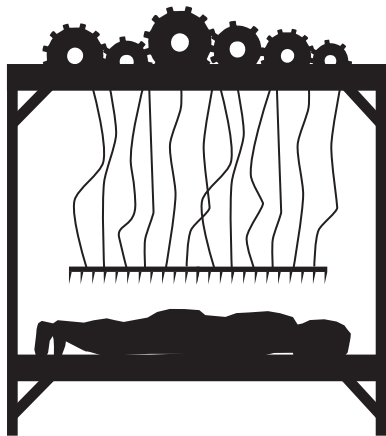
THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS
VOLUME 07



CRUEL DESIGNS

Edited by Léopold Lambert
December 2013

**THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS
VOLUME 7**



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THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS
VOLUME 07: CRUEL DESIGNS
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INTRO

WHAT IS CRUEL DESIGN?

When developing the thesis that architecture is necessarily a political weapon, I usually add “whether it is conceived as such or not.” The violence that architecture carries in itself towards the bodies is the same regardless of the intent, yet the way it is used is not exactly the same when it manifests itself consequently rather than deliberately. Cruel designs are purposely conceived to use this violence in order to assert an absolute power on one or several bodies. Physicians take the Hippocratic Oath when they enter the profession: they promise to treat patients in a way that is not actively detrimental to them. There is not any oath of this kind for designers and one is allowed to design an apparatus that will actively hurt the bodies, whether it is an ‘anti-homeless’ bench or a penitentiary. The Marquis de Sade is quoted a few times in the following texts. I am not interested in the cruel pleasure he dramatizes in his novels as much as in the absoluteness of the power that is exercised by one body over another. Cruel designs constitute the apparatuses through which this power is unfolded and implemented. There is something fascinating in the observation that these designs are often described in a similar manner than designs that attempts to accommodate the bodies. For this reason, we must notice that the violence contained in them is not necessarily explicitly articulated but it might lie within any descriptive mean of a design. Learning to read this violence allows us to resist the power it serves.

01

VIOLENCE ON THE BODY: A MANUAL FOR THE FRENCH POLICE ESCORTING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS

For about a decade, Europe has been experiencing a serious wave of xenophobia modifying our institutions in their very essence. Two current examples could be Hungary modifying its constitution in order to declare Christians “normal citizens” and Italy and France threatening the essence of Schengen space to avoid hosting 20 000 Tunisian migrants who just fled their country.¹

In this context, French investigative press website *Mediapart* just released a manual, the *Manuel de l'Escorteur (Manual for Escorting Policemen)*, created for the French police and containing the procedures for policemen who escort clandestine migrants to the country's border.² In this manual, a dozen of pages describes the procedure of strangulation in order to potentially calm those whom they call “the foreigner.” This denomination reveals this person's only crime: believing that globalization was not just for goods, but also for people. “The

1 This text was written on April 24, 2011, a few months after the regime of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was overthrown by the Tunisian revolution.

2 Carine Fouteau, “Le manuel des policiers de la PAF pour ‘réussir’ une expulsion forcée,” *Mediapart* (October 14, 2009), and “Manuel de l'escorteur / Le contexte sur Mediapart” on scribd.com, originally issued internally by the French Interior Affairs Ministry (Ministère de l'intérieur de la sécurité intérieure et des libertés locales).

foreigner” is categorized as absolute otherness, the one we are taught to fear and to expel.

The pages that describe the strangulation are interesting to look at. Their coldness reveals the banality of violence, and yet two things strike me:

The first is that the photographs present this violence as a sort of choreography that appears terrifying as it maintains the disturbing ambiguity between an embrace and a rape. The fact that the photographs of the manual are likely to have been taken with actors reinforce the calm coldness that emerge from the relationship of these two bodies. Out of context, one could think that these photographs show an intimate moment between two men. When one understands their context however, this feeling of intimacy is betrayed and the violence of the situation reveals itself in an even stronger manner.

The second thing that strikes me is the analytical presentation that recalls the presentation of an architectural project. Diagrams, front and back elevations, perspectives, texts; the architect’s toolbox is used to describe the action on the body in its cruel precision. There is something beyond the cruel description of how to “institutionally” strangle a body that only possesses the minimum of legal rights. It concerns any form of embodied design that carries a physical effect on the body (architecture, furniture, clothing, drugs, etc.). Although these designs are not represented as exercising a power on the body as literally as this manual does, the violence contained in each of them can be seen in filigree of each plan, section, procedure, patent, etc. that describe the physicality of these designs. The degree of violence varies, of course, yet the intrinsic violence unfolded on the bodies that they touch is invariably present.

Following illustrations are part of the *Manuel de l'Escorteur* as released by investigation press website *Mediapart* in 2009. The quality of these illustrations is low, as it has been copied clandestinely. For each page of the manual, I added an English translation.

.....

Originally published on April 2, 2011

**MOYEN DE CONTRAINTE
ET
DE REGULATION PHONIQUE**



MEANS OF CONSTRAINTS
AND
PHONIC REGULATION

“Reconduit”



Escorting person

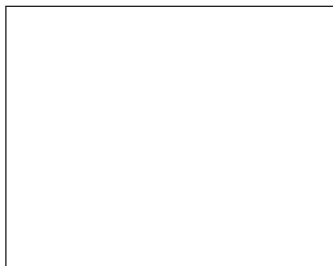




- ☞ L'escorteur entoure le cou du « reconduit », avec son bras en saisissant le vêtement de celui-ci, le plus loin possible
- ☞ Son autre main vient dans un premier temps, en protection entre la tête du « reconduit » et le visage de l'escorteur



- ☞ Dans un deuxième temps, la main de l'escorteur vient ensuite envelopper le triceps de son autre bras
- ☞ Avec sa tête, l'escorteur contrôle celle du reconduit
- ☞ L'escorteur garde un contrôle visuel permanent sur l'individu tout en maintenant le dialogue



- The escorting person put his arm around the neck of the “reconduit” (escorted person) by grabbing his clothes as far as possible.
- The escorting person’s other hand first provides protection between the “reconduit’s” head and the escorting person’s face.



- Second, the escorting person’s hand envelops his other arm’s triceps.
- With his head, the escorting person controls the “reconduit’s” head.
- The escorting person keeps continuous visual control on the individual while maintaining dialogue.



Le contrôle de la tête est renforcé par l'avant bras engagé entre les deux têtes, tout en prenant appui sous le maxillaire inférieur du « reconduit »



☞ Vue latérale de la technique

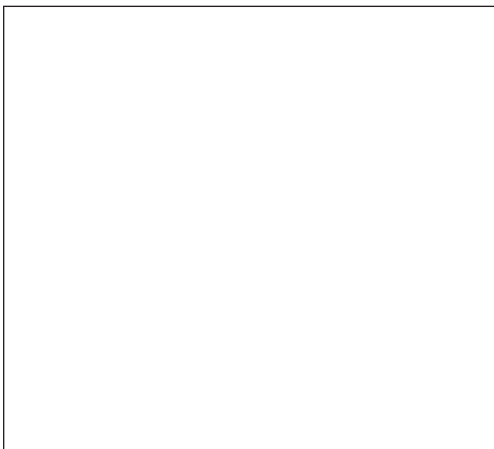
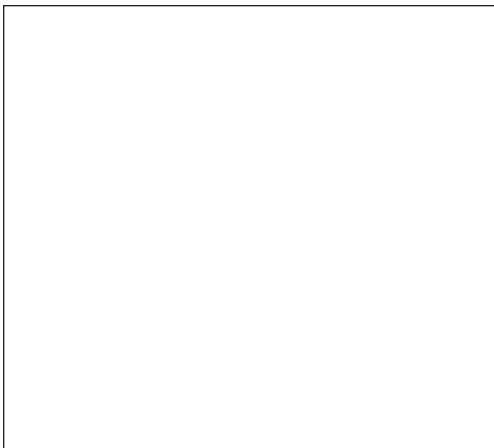


The control of the head is reinforced by the forearm between the two heads, while being supported under the “reconduit’s” lower jaw.



Lateral view of the technique





**ZONE SENSIBLE :
LA GORGE**



COMMENTAIRES TECHNIQUES

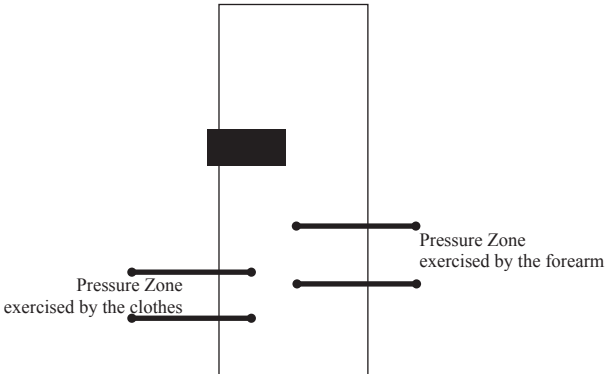
☞ Les effets de cette technique sur l'individu reconduit :

- Ils le déstabilisent physiquement (le contrôle de la tête modifie les repères sensoriels)
- Ils diminuent sa résistance (l'équilibre des forces de l'escorteur exercées sur la tête et le cou)
- Ils diminuent ses capacités à crier (régulation phonique)

☞ Les atteintes traumatiques possibles de la technique selon la fréquence, la puissance et la force utilisée :

- détresse ventilatoire et/ou circulatoire
- défaillance de l'organisme
- risque vital

SENSITIVE ZONE:
THROAT



Technical Commentaries

Effects of this technique on the escorted individual:

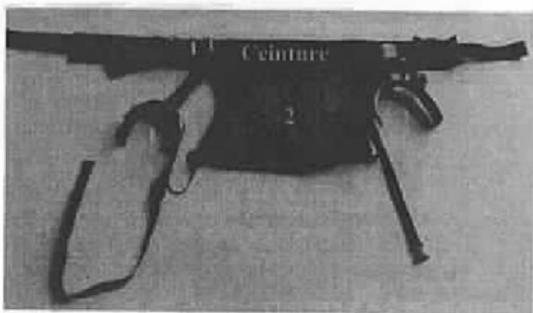
- They physically destabilize him (control on the head modifies his sensorial bearings).
- They diminish his resistance (balance of the escorting person's forces exercised on the head and the neck).
- They diminish his capacity to scream (phonic regulation).

Potential traumatic effects of the technique depending on its frequency, the power, and the strength used on the subject:

- Breathing and/or circulatory distress
- Organ failure
- Fatality risk

LA CEINTURE DE CONTENTION

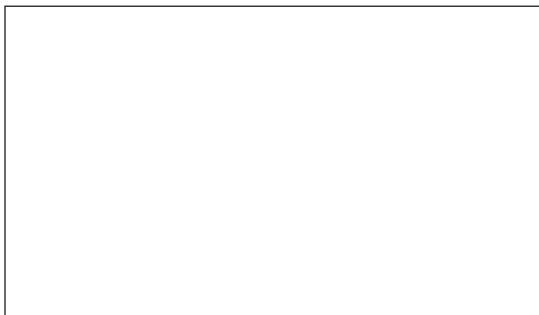
Présentation de la ceinture de contention : Elle est réglable pour être adaptée aux différentes morphologies et modulable en fonction des nécessités de la mission.



- 1 - Système d'oreillettes modulables avec une fermeture « clipable » et velcro.
- 2 - Un filet intégré, recouvrant les mains de l'individu tout en permettant aux policiers escorteurs d'en garder le contrôle visuel.
- 3 - Sangle mobile qui permet à l'individu des mouvements de bras sous le contrôle du policier escorteur.

RESTRAINING BELT

- Introduction to the strain belt: It is adjustable to be adapted to various morphologies and modifiable depending on the mission's need.



- 1- Modifiable auricle system with a Velcro "clipable" closure.
- 2- Integrated net covering the individual's hands while allowing to the escorting policemen to keep a visual control on them.
- 3- Mobile strap that allows the individual to move his arms under the control of the escorting policeman.



- L'individu étant encore menotté dans le dos, placez la ceinture au niveau de sa taille et verrouillez celle-ci sur l'arrière à l'aide du système de fermeture prévu à cet effet.

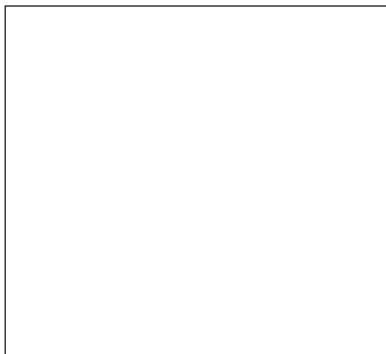
- Pour enlever les menottes, chaque policier escorte gardera le contrôle d'un bras.



- Les menottes enlevées, engagez un après l'autre les poignets dans les oreillettes puis assurez les à l'aide des velcros.



- The individual being still handcuffed in his back, place the belt around his waist and lock it in the back by using the locking device designed for this purpose.
- To withdraw the handcuffs, each escorting policeman will keep the control of one arm.



- Once the handcuffs are off, engage one after the other the wrists in the auricles, then secure them thanks to the Velcros.



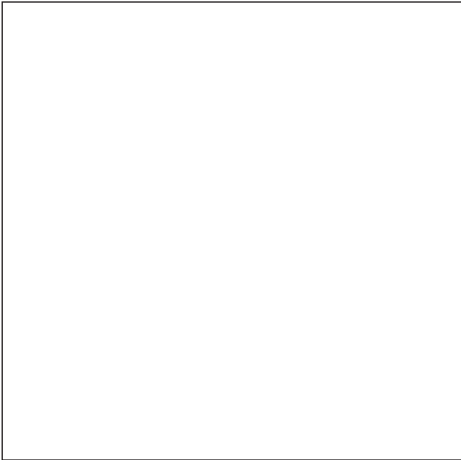
- Recouvrir les mains de l'individu à l'aide du filet puis le fixer au moyen du système d'attache prévu de chaque côté.



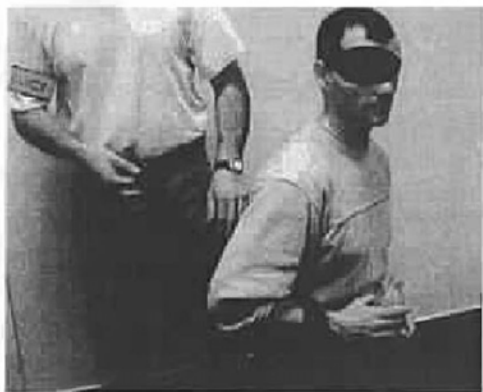
- La ceinture est alors positionnée en mode de contention maximum.



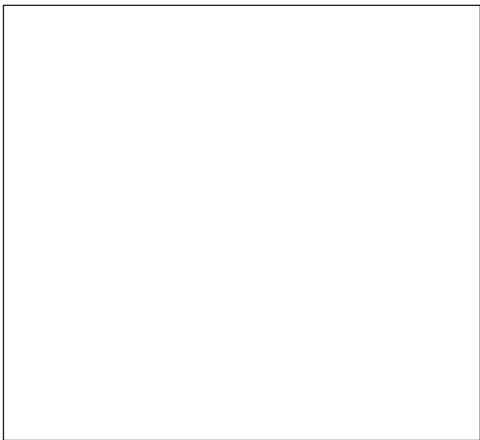
- Cover the individual's hands with the net, then fix it with the attachment system designed for this purpose.



- The belt is then positioned in its maximum strain mode



- Le reconduit peut s'hydrater à tout moment sous le contrôle de l'escorteur qui utilise la sangle mobile.



- The “reconduit” can hydrate himself at any time under the supervision of the escorting person who uses the mobile strap.

02

THE HANDCUFFS OF THE FUTURE

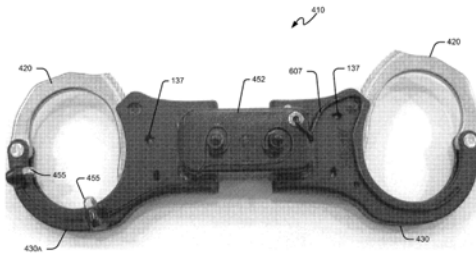


Fig. 4E

Patent Application Publication Nov. 29, 2012 Sheet 9 of 24 US 2012/0289119 A1

"Apparatus and System for Augmented Detainee Restraint" by Corbin Reese, Donald L. Pegg and Lucius L. Lockwood, Scottsdale Inventions LLC

An example of the will to subdue a body in an embrace of the violence of design on the bodies, is given through the patent for a new kind of handcuffs by its inventor company, Scottsdale Inventions LLC, as the website Patent Bolt reports.¹ These handcuffs, called "Apparatus and System for Augmented Detainee Restraint" in the patent filing, enforce the restraint by electroshock and/or drug injection:

2. A restraining device comprising: (a) a restraint for physically constraining movement of at least a portion of a detainee's body; (b) an electric

¹ Jack Purcher, "Shocking Next-Gen Law Enforcement Handcuff System Revealed," patentbolt.com (November 30, 2012).

shock component coupled to the restraint; and (c) a control system coupled to the electric shock component, the control system configured to cause the electric shock component to deliver a shock to the detainee when a predetermined condition occurs.

[...]

17. The restraining device of claim 1, further comprising a substance delivery system in communication with the control system, wherein the control system is configured to cause the substance delivery system to expose the detainee to a substance.

18. The restraining device of claim 17, where the substance includes at least one of a liquid, a gas, a dye, an irritant, a medication, a sedative, a transdermal medication, a chemical restraint, a paralytic, a medication prescribed to the detainee, and combinations thereof. (Corbin Reese, Donald L. Pegg and Lucius L. Lockwood for Scottsdale Inventions LLC, patent for “Apparatus and System for Augmented Detainee Restraint,” November 29, 2012).

Somehow, architecture’s inherent violence developed through its traditional walls, which form the paradigm of the carceral design, is contained within this small apparatus that adapts to the body at its closest. The shock that inevitably occurs when a body encounters a wall is replaced by an electrical signal, which materializes a wall at a given distance from the source emitter. It can also produce the same shock on demand from the owner of the remote control. As for the “medication apparatus,” whether it is used to cruelly balance the violence of the shock with a painkiller, or to sedate the

detainee against his /her will, it confirms Beatriz Preciado's thesis according to which the body is now the new terrain of application for the "pharmaco-pornographic" apparatuses of the society of control. The demonstrative violence of this apparatus can be seen as a contradiction with such a thesis that usually describes more subtle and common processes; however, the invention of a piece of design that fits the body and modifies its internal chemistry can lead us to think that this device can be legitimately considered as anew paradigm in terms of cruel design.

Following is a copy of the patent itself. It is interesting to see the exhaustive description of such an apparatus (about 19,000 words) and to observe the coldness of this description. The scientific 'objectivity' of a design combined with the legal legitimacy (the patent process) can sometimes produce the worst of human inventions.

Patent application title: APPARATUS AND SYSTEM FOR AUGMENTED DETAINEE RESTRAINT ///

Inventors: Corbin Reese (Scottsdale, AZ, US) Donald L. Pegg (Chandler, AZ, US) Lucius L. Lockwood (Phoenix, AZ, US)

Assignees: SCOTTSDALE INVENTIONS, LLC

IPC8 Class: AA61N138F1

USPC Class: 128875

Class name: Garment type (e.g., sleeping bags) vest or shirt type for upper torso harness

Publication date: 2012-11-29

Patent application number: 20120298119

Abstract:

There is provided a device and system for restraining detainees through devices attached to the detainees and

configured to administer electrical shocks when certain pre-determined conditions occur. Restraining devices may be activated by internal control systems or by external controllers that transmit activation signals to the restraining device. External controllers may be actuated by an external controlling entity such as a detention guard or other person or system, or may be controlled by an enabling signal sent by wired or wireless connections to the controller. There is also provided a system for detainee restraint where multiple detainees may be restrained collectively or individually in a controlled environment such as a detention facility, a jail, or a detainee transport vehicle.

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Originally published on December 13, 2012

03

THE STRAIGHTJACKET & THE GUILLOTINE

The article “Practicing Restraint” written by Will Wiles for the last issue of *Cabinet* and dedicated to the notion of punishment is an interesting introduction to the cruel piece of design, the straightjacket (in French = *camisole de force*).¹ The straightjacket ‘wears’ the violence it inflicts to the body in a more demonstrative manner than architecture or other designs. The similarity to a traditional jacket reinforces this violent appearance; as if the game we played as children to cross our sleeves was transformed into a nightmare when we realized that the sleeves could not go back to their normal position.

Wiles points out in the beginning of this article that this invention, along with another famous piece of French design, the guillotine, constitutes the product of a technocratic will to reduce cruelty in comparison with the objects that were previously in charge of the same functions. The guillotine’s operation used to be performed by an executioner with an axe, involving a painful imprecision in the execution process. The guillotine, on the other hand, was invented during the Terror after the French Revolution, and it then constituted a more efficient means of executing someone. It thus remained the official instrument of French death penalty until its abolition in 1981.

¹ Will Wiles, “Practicing Restraint,” in *Cabinet 46 Punishment*, New York, Summer 2012.

Similarly, the straightjacket's function used to be performed by chains, and was therefore considered as a form of progress when it was introduced as a new object of restraint at the Hopital Bicêtre in 1790, only two years before the invention of the guillotine. In his article, Wiles quotes the Scottish physician William Cullen in 1784:

Restraining the anger and violence of madmen is always necessary for preventing their hurting themselves or others: But this restraint is also to be considered as a remedy. [...] Restraint, therefore, is useful, and ought to be complete; but it should be executed in the easiest manner possible for the patient, and the strait waistcoat answers every purpose better than any other that has yet been thought of. (William Cullen, *First Lines of the Practice of Physics*, quoted by Will Wiles in "Practicing Restraint," *Cabinet 46 Punishment*, New York, Summer 2012.)

It is accurate to say that both the guillotine and the straightjacket provide less pain to the body subjected to them than their ancestors. However, it is important to consider the problem through another approach: the "lesser evil" is the recurrent idea upon which all bureaucratic historical tragedies have been based. The choice between "evil" and a "lesser evil" seems easy, but any courageous and imaginative effort for a third non-evil proposition is being forgotten. To a certain extent, the notion of "lesser evil" could arguably be said to be more damaging than "evil" since it is reinforced by an illusory legitimacy given by the choice against "pure evil."²

As designers, should we work on architectures, objects, clothes, books, films, posters, which we know participate to

¹ For more on this topic, see Eyal Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, New York: Verso, 2012.

a system that is in opposition to the system of values that represents our ethics? If so, we might be able to ameliorate things “from the inside,” but we would then be accomplice of such a system. Should we build prisons or whatever the progeny of the straightjacket and the guillotine will be? And if we answer no to that question, what about offices, retail stores, banks, advertising posters, anti-homeless benches, etc.? Of course, no-one truly operates outside of the system one resists. However, if we never think about our role within this system, we will never be able to draw the line that we cannot cross without finding ourselves in serious contradiction with our ethics.

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Originally published on September 28, 2012

04

THE THANATOPOLITICS OF DEATH PENALTY

There is still a political debate about whether or not a given society should adopt/perpetuate death penalty as its ultimate judiciary sentence. It is surprising to often hear people say that they are against death penalty “except for... *place here the most horrifying crime,*” not realizing that this “except for” validates by definition their acceptance of death sentence. In order to go beyond the strictly emotional — or religious — arguments, I would like to ask whether we actually fathom what death penalty really means in a given society.

In the context of premodern society that Michel Foucault describes as a paradigm of sovereignty based on the right of the sovereign to dispose of its subjects' life — to go to war for example — in exchange for protection against the various antagonisms coming ‘from the outside,’ the act to administer death to one of these subjects can be integrated within the logic of the tacit social contract. On the other hand, the modern era is characterized by a *biopolitical* — quoting Foucault again — administration of society, that is an organization of life in its very mechanisms (health, sexuality, reproduction etc.) to optimize the function of society. In order to describe how death penalty inheres within this scheme, I will briefly explain the idea of *thanatopolitics* (politics administrating

death), as I interpret it. This notion emerges from the observation that death is “at work” and that there are therefore only two possible ways of dealing with it: acceleration or deceleration of the death process. Biopolitics therefore involves by definition its counterpart, — one might say that there are the same — thanatopolitics. The administration of toxicity in the context of food production (an important part of biopolitics) or society’s infrastructure (pollution) or its risk factor (nuclear accidents), are included in this thanatopolitics that a given society has to organize to administrate the acceleration or the deceleration of the death process.

What about death penalty in this context? The execution of a member of society, planned and organized by society itself, corresponds to an intense acceleration of the death process, enough to immediately cease the vital functions of this body. Although one can see how biopolitics cannot escape from thanatopolitics, death penalty corresponds to thanatopolitics that escapes from biopolitics, and therefore brings us back to a premodern mode of sovereignty. It would be, however, inaccurate to think that the conditions of the execution are also considered in the logic of the premodern era. The shift toward our era was also marked by the invention of a thanato-technology in order to administrate death in a more efficient way, efficiency being the key notion of this new mode of sovereignty (see previous chapter). In *Les corps vils: Expérimenter sur les êtres humains au XVIIIe et XIXe siècles (Vile Bodies: Experimenting on Human Beings in the 18th and 19th centuries)*, Grégoire Chamayou describes the genesis of the guillotine that remained the technology of the execution in France until 1981, when death penalty was abolished (my translation):

An “incorporeal penalty” is set up. It targets the person to withdraw his/her rights from him/her, to

the point of his/her right of living, rather than targeting the body to make it suffer. What remains is to find a technical means corresponding to this new conception of penalty. How to withdraw life to the person without having his/her body suffer? This implies the invention of a non-cruel punishment, a “humane torture,” a philanthropic execution. Between medicine and philosophy, people have been wondering and debating for a long time about the problem of the good regime of life; the new question became the one of the good regime of death. (Grégoire Chamayou, *Les corps vils: Expérimenter sur les êtres humains au XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Paris: La Découverte, 2008, 35.)

The guillotine had been chosen (after many debates, as the book illustrates) for its systematic capacity to withdraw life in the time lapse of a second: a perfect acceleration of the death process that the subject’s consciousness would not have time to process. Countries that still apply death penalty have all chosen their own thanato-technologies after having developed their effects. The invention of the electric chair and the gas chamber as some of the means of execution in the United States is particularly expressive of this since they do not find their equivalent in the pre-modern era like the guillotine.

The invention of “philanthropic executions” — to use Chamayou’s oxymoron — is an illusory attempt forbiopoli-tics to be present in the context of death penalty. It is illusory because the outcome of an execution corresponds in no way to the administration of “the totality of functions that resists to death” (Xavier Bichat’s definition of life), since death is the outcome. The execution itself can not be part of the same

logic. Quoting Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1797), Chamayou states the following (my translation):

The act of killing the convict is out of the law, it is an extra-judicial act, a pure physical action. An act that is not an act of the law but an act of the police. Through civil death there is a total loss of rights of the convict. (S)he has no more rights, no more juridical personality. We can go as far as saying that (s)he is only a body, an animal body. (Grégoire Chamayou, *Les corps vils: Expérimenter sur les êtres humains au XVIIIe et XIXe siècles*, Paris: La Découverte, 2008, 90.)

One can see the impossibility of integrating death penalty in the societal scheme of biopolitics. There is a deep contradiction between these two regimes of sovereignty that should found a critique of death penalty within the governmentality that we are constructing. At a more emotional level, where this article started, one needs to fathom what it means for a society to definitely and absolutely withdraw one of its members from any regime of life. The reasons for it are self-contradictory: this subject recognized guilty of a crime is not introduced to a regime of life that the law would have introduced in relation to this crime and this crime's conditions; absolute execution — as a subject of right and as a body — is organized as a spectacle supposed to express the allmighty power of the law. Rather, it can only express the absolute failure that death penalty imposes on the law.

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Originally published on November 8, 2013

05

THE PRECISE DESIGN OF TORTURE IN KAFKA'S PENAL COLONY

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 10: LITERATURE*]

The machine invented by Franz Kafka in his short story “In the Penal Colony” (1919) that gives this book its cover, is probably the most famous torturing apparatus of the history of literature. Even Sade (see Chapter 7) does not seem to have created such an elaborated piece of equipment in his meticulous descriptions of cruel acts.

The plot introduces a character visiting a penal colony in which he is invited to attend an execution of a soldier who disobeyed the orders he received. The entire first half of the story involves the executioner officer presenting the dreadful apparatus to the visitor with great enthusiasm, as this machine had been invented by his former master. The device is divided into three parts, the bed below, the inscriber above and, in the middle, the harrow. The latter is composed of multiple needles that draw a pattern on the back of the convict's body. The pattern is specific to the sentence attributed to the condemned person and, for this reason, it needs to be first set up in the inscriber. Once the machine is operating, the pattern is inscribed in the body of the convict for hours. The latter does not know his sentence and has therefore to learn it in his very flesh. When the visitor disapproves of this

execution, the officer frees the prisoner and takes his place on the machine, then dies in horrifying pain when the latter dysfunctions.

Several things are fascinating in this text. One of them consists in the detailed description of the execution apparatus itself. I feel compelled to transcript most of this description here:

The needles are arranged as in a harrow, and the whole thing is driven like a harrow, although it stays in one place and is, in principle, much more artistic. [...] So, here is the Bed, as I said. The whole thing is completely covered with a layer of cotton wool, the purpose of which you'll find out in a moment. The condemned man is laid out on his stomach on this cotton wool—naked, of course. There are straps for the hands here, for the feet here, and for the throat here, to tie him in securely. At the head of the Bed here, where the man, as I have mentioned, first lies face down, is this small protruding lump of felt, which can easily be adjusted so that it presses right into the man's mouth. Its purpose is to prevent him screaming and biting his tongue to pieces. Of course, the man has to let the felt in his mouth—otherwise the straps around his throat will break his neck.

[...]

Both the Bed and the Inscriber have their own electric batteries. The Bed needs them for itself, and the Inscriber for the Harrow. As soon as the man is strapped in securely, the Bed is set in motion. It quivers with tiny, very rapid oscillations from side to side and up and down si-

multaneously. You will have seen similar devices in mental hospitals. Only with our Bed all movements are precisely calibrated, for they must be meticulously coordinated with the movements of the Harrow. But it's the Harrow which has the job of actually carrying out the sentence."

[...]

The law which a condemned man has violated is inscribed on his body with the Harrow. This Condemned Man, for example," and the Officer pointed to the man, "will have inscribed on his body, 'Honour your superiors!'

[...]

As you see, the shape of the Harrow corresponds to the shape of a man. This is the harrow for the upper body, and here are the harrows for the legs. This small cutter is the only one designated for the head.

[...]

When the man is lying on the Bed and it starts quivering, the Harrow sinks onto the body. It positions itself automatically in such a way that it touches the body only lightly with the needle tips. Once the machine is set in position, this steel cable tightens up immediately into a rod. And now the performance begins. Someone who is not an initiate sees no external difference among the punishments. The Harrow seems to do its work uniformly. As it quivers, it sticks the tips of its needles into the body, which is also vibrating from the movement of the bed. Now, to enable someone to check on how the sentence is being carried out, the Harrow is made of glass. That gave rise to certain technical difficulties with fastening the needles in it securely,

but after several attempts we were successful. We didn't spare any efforts. And now, as the inscription is made on the body, everyone can see through the glass.

[...]

...two sorts of needles in a multiple arrangement. Each long needle has a short one next to it. The long one inscribes, and the short one squirts water out to wash away the blood and keep the inscription always clear. The bloody water is then channeled here into small grooves and finally flows into these main gutters, and their outlet pipe takes it to the pit.

[...]

There in the Inscriber is the mechanism which determines the movement of the Harrow, and this mechanism is arranged according to the diagram on which the sentence is set down.

[...]

The Harrow is starting to write. When it's finished with the first part of the script on the man's back, the layer of cotton wool rolls and turns the body slowly onto its side to give the Harrow a new area. Meanwhile those parts lacerated by the inscription are lying on the cotton wool which, because it has been specially treated, immediately stops the bleeding and prepares the script for a further deepening. Here, as the body continues to rotate, prongs on the edge of the Harrow then pull the cotton wool from the wounds, throw it into the pit, and the Harrow goes to work again. In this way it keeps making the inscription deeper for twelve hours. For the first six hours the condemned man goes on living almost as before. He suffers nothing but pain. After two hours, the

felt is removed, for at that point the man has no more energy for screaming. Here at the head of the Bed warm rice pudding is put in this electrically heated bowl. From this the man, if he feels like it, can help himself to what he can lap up with his tongue. No one passes up this opportunity. I don't know of a single one, and I have had a lot of experience. He first loses his pleasure in eating around the sixth hour. I usually kneel down at this point and observe the phenomenon. The man rarely swallows the last bit. He merely turns it around in his mouth and spits it into the pit. When he does that, I have to lean aside or else he'll get me in the face. But how quiet the man becomes around the sixth hour! The most stupid of them begins to understand. It starts around the eyes and spreads out from there. A look that could tempt one to lie down with him under the Harrow. Nothing else happens. The man simply begins to decipher the inscription. He purses his lips, as if he is listening. You've seen that it is not easy to figure out the inscription with your eyes, but our man deciphers it with his wounds. True, it takes a lot of work. It requires six hours to complete. But then the Harrow spits all of him out and throws him into the pit, where he splashes down into the bloody water and cotton wool. Then the judgment is over, and we, the Soldier and I, quickly bury him.

Such a description reveals the subtleties of the design itself. The care that is put in accomplishing the machinist functions of the apparatus and the discourse to introduce them makes us recall those of an architect presenting his/her design. The hurtful characteristics of the design and the ethical issues

generated by them are not considered while the lubricated cogs of a machinist design that precisely accomplish the function that was thought by the designer is the primordial and obsessive object of fascination. The architect creates his diagrams while thinking of the way the latter will affect the bodies it subjugates. Once materialized, he will then observe it obsessively to confront his diagram and its effectuation. The more he will be satisfied by the realization of his plans, the more he will be comparable to Kafka's executioner and the absolute transcendence he embodies. Similarly, if his design is disapproved, he might subjugate his own body to his diagram in a sort of practice in which he is both sadist and masochist simultaneously.

What about this sentence inscribed in our bodies? Isn't it the inscription of the norm that Judith Butler evokes when she quotes *In the Penal Colony* to address the question of gender? Recalling Kafka's *Trial*, which was published later, but was written simultaneously, might be helpful here. In it, K. dies without knowing what he was accused of. Would the penal colony machine have executed him, he would have had the opportunity to "experience his sentence on his own body." Maybe his long slog in the labyrinthine administration of the judiciary institution can be compared to the numerous needles slowly inscribing his sentence in his body, to the final stab that eventually kills him. *The Trial* is indeed highly corporal and we could interpret it this way: the power of institutions captures the bodies through their architecture and does not leave them intact. They somehow inscribe something of the norm in the bodies' flesh, transforming each architecture into penal colony machines.

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Originally published on April 22, 2013

06

WHAT CONSTITUTES “THE ACT OF KILLING”

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 11: CINEMA*]

It took me about a month to digest watching Joshua Oppenheimer’s 2012 documentary *The Act of Killing* that constitutes as much a film about Indonesian history as a historical film about Indonesia, as I will try to illustrate in this chapter. It took me that much time to write about it, because this film explores the dark depths of humanity, as well as those of a system that has been rarely examined in such a way.

The film is a two-hours-long edited version of more than a thousand of hours of footage, which were filmed by Oppenheimer in Indonesia during the nine years preceding the release of the film. What the film shows is the testimony of several Indonesian “gangsters,” — that is how they call themselves — dramatically re-enacting the mass killings that they perpetrated in 1965 during the dictatorship-backed purge of several hundreds of thousands of people that were accurately or not suspected to be communists. Throughout the film, the re-enactment goes from a ‘simple’ reconstitution of the killings on the site where they were committed, to the dramatic reconstitution in various forms of Hollywood and local cinema, orchestrated directly by the perpetrators themselves. Oppenheimer let them choose the form they wanted for such re-enactments. The surreal result of these scenes

oscillates between the surrealism of Bunuel, the aesthetics of Thomas De Quincey's *On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* (1827) and the insupportable procedural precision of the Marquis de Sade (see next chapter).



Oppenheimer's method is interesting in that he regularly shows previous footage to the perpetrator whom he is mainly following in this film, Anwar Congo. He then films him while he is watching himself on the screen. To the viewer's disbelief, the large majority of his comments address the way he appears in the film; the way he dressed, for example. Oppenheimer, in many interviews about the film, says how he is convinced that such triviality, displayed when tackling the tragic question of mass killing, constitutes Congo's self-defense, his means not to fathom the reality that seemed to have left some marks in him. These marks springs back more as the film focuses on his friends with whom he committed these mass murders. Similarly, the scenes that this group of friend plays together — the notion of acting explains the double sense of the film's title — seem to be either a sort of surreal reconstitution of the way they imagined themselves while they were committing murder (policemen, soldiers, knights of some kind, etc.), or it might be a retroactive means to fictionalize their crimes, and therefore to detach them even more from reality.

The way Oppenheimer composes his film is remarkable, as it manages simultaneously to never remove responsibility from the perpetrators and also to make them appear to share in the status of victims of history. This is an extremely sensitive problem. One cannot legitimately claim that all are victims in the same manner. Millions of people have lost members of their family without knowing what happened to them, and without being able to properly mourn them, as the same forces are still in power in Indonesia. The families of those killed — many of them are ethnically Chinese — are still marginalized and bullied within the Indonesian society. One of the perpetrators clearly illustrates that when he explains that he cannot be considered as a criminal: “the law is written by the winners. I am a winner, I can decide what is a crime and what is not.” During interviews, Oppenheimer explains that someone like Anwar Congo “has not been tried, but he has been punished,” since his past haunts him every day, despite his best effort to minimize it. The director insists that he is still in contact with him despite what the viewer might first think: “I don’t like him, but I love him in a certain way.” Again, there is no process of deresponsabilization involved here. Simply, the actual killers of history are often what we could call the proletariat of the system that encourages or orders such killings. They are the ones to who “do the dirty work” for a more or less organized system and its hierarchy. They are also the ones that are the most susceptible to become traumatized within this hierarchy.

In this regard, it is not innocent if the only people who were truly angry at the film are the politicians — some of them are shown in the film. They did not kill anyone in the literal sense, but they are part of a political dynasty that organized the conditions of the political purge in 1965. As Oppenheimer himself says, “if they were not upset, it means that I would have not done my job right.” As I observed at the beginning,

there seems to be a 'before' and an 'after.' *The Act of Killing* broke a taboo in the Indonesian population who did not know how to address its past. Similarly to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (1995), led by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the post-Apartheid South Africa, this film acts as a civilizational 'therapy' where no one is delivered from his/her responsibility, yet the collective project for the nation's future is understood as more important than the desire of revenge for the true victims of the past conflict. Of course, in the case of Indonesia, it cannot be accomplished through a legal and institutional process yet. Nevertheless, Oppenheimer's film led the way to trigger the historical conditions of this process.

Previous photograph is a still from *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012).

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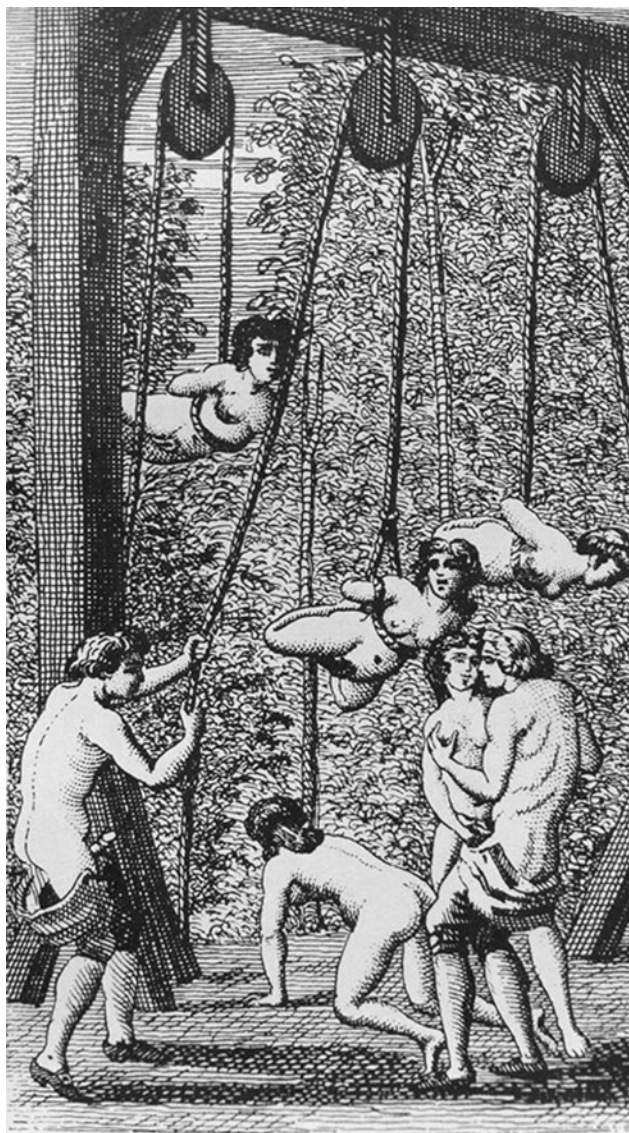
Originally published on August 21, 2013

07

THE ABSOLUTE POWER OF A BODY OVER ANOTHER IN SADE

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 10: LITERATURE*]

Donatien de Sade (1740-1814) is the author of one of the most subversive literary works in history. His name even entered the common vocabulary by being associated with a pathological behavior that takes pleasure in suffering: *sadist*. However, this word has lost a bit of its original inspiration from Sade's work and we will prefer the word *sadian* for the purpose of this text. What Sade describes in his books, does not focus so much on the pleasure of a dominant person who metes out horrifying treatment to others but, rather, on the relationship between two bodies, one of them exercising an absolute power over the other. Here lies the real disturbance in Sade's literature. His descriptions could not be cruder, but different from another author who also involuntarily gave his name to a comparable behavior, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (masochist) the crudeness of Sade's discourse is not the only disturbing aspect of his narratives. Indeed, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch was describing a domination of a body over another that was registered in an explicit contract signed between them. His sexual descriptions, however crude they might be, are therefore a common construction that creates an immanent ethics rather than a transcendental morality.



On the contrary, the violence introduced by Sade, whether it is sexual or other, could not be more transcendental in the absoluteness of the power of one body over another. The quintessential example of such power in Sade's work might be *The 120 Days of Sodom*, which introduces a form of societal embodiment of sadian behaviors. Written on a twelve meters long paper roll when Sade was imprisoned in the Bastille, this narrative describes four wealthy libertine men who seclude themselves in a remote castle along with forty-six young men and women. These men and women suffer all along the story of the worst sexual and physical treatments from these four bodies who embody an absolute transcendence over them. A few decades after having observed the industrialization of such power in the camps created by the Nazis during the Second World War, Pier Paolo Pasolini adapted this novel into a film, *Salò* (1975) that brings these narratives into the visual realm.

Sade's work allows us to observe this absolute power of one body on another and includes "true evil" in our imaginary. By forcing us to be spectator of the exercise of this power, he does not give us the choice but to react to it. Evil is not an essence, it does operate in "others," but rather continuously offers pacts to each of us. The negotiation triggered by these pacts corresponds to our position in the relationships of power in a given society.

The illustration is an engraving from Sade's *Juliette* (1801).

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Originally published on July 3, 2011

08

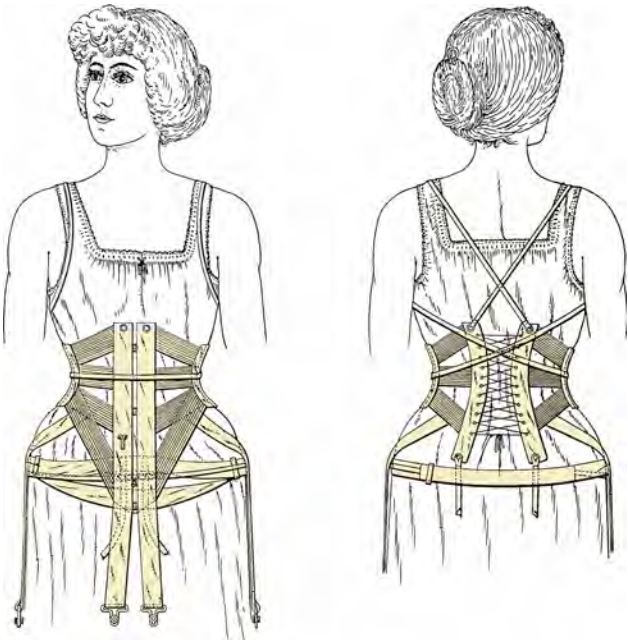
THE CORSET: “A BODY PRESS,” PARADIGM OF THE VIOLENCE OF DESIGN ON THE BODY

The corset was a piece of clothing worn by many women in various European royal courts during the 18th and 19th centuries. Clothes are, by definition, a piece of design that covers the body and therefore, it needs to adapt to the body to serve its purpose. The corset, operates as a specific kind of cloth. It imposes an ideal silhouette to the body that wears it. In this case, it is the body that needs to adapt to it. As always, it is helpful to consider extreme cases such as the one embodied by the corset to understand something broader about design.

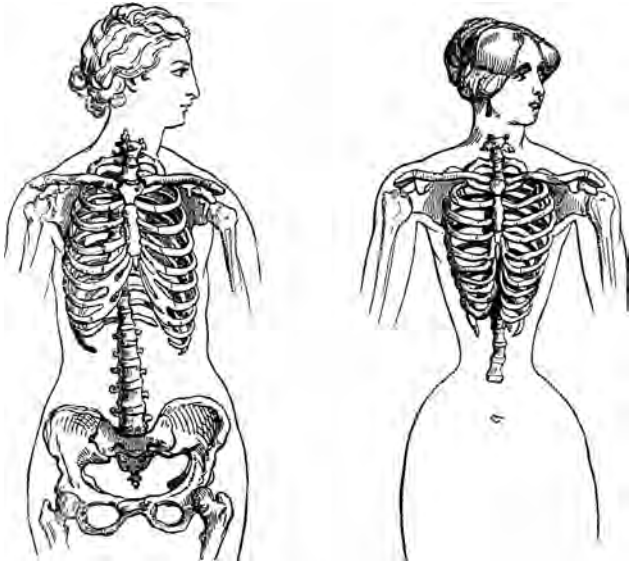
The corset, when worn on a regular basis for several years, modifies the body: muscular atrophy, reduction of the lung and stomach's operability, ptosis and prolapse are among its effects. Jean-Jacques Rousseau described it as a “body press” in the novel *Emile ou de l'éducation* (1785). It is not surprising that this piece of clothing was designed by men for women, as it allowed a literal modification of the female body into an idealized body. For this matter, it is interesting to observe that the 1789 French revolution made it disappear from society for a while — probably less for ‘feminist’



purposes than for its association with the nobility. It then reappeared during the Napoleonic Empire, despite the fact that Napoleon himself called it “the human race assassin.” This last point seems paradoxical, just like the fact that many priests have also contributed to the fight against it. It can nevertheless be explained by the fact that the corset prevented women from carrying children. Part of its criticism therefore did not address so much the violence that it exerted on the female body, but rather criticized the impossibility for women to efficiently accomplish their task in society: giving birth to perpetuate the human species. This argument is a quintessential component of biopolitics: the idea that life, as a material value, needs to be organized administratively and normatively regardless of individual aspirations.



The corset could be seen today as a paradigm of a society in which it is no longer an actual material piece of design exercising violence on the body, but the symbol of the capture of the imaginary related to the body: one that presents a clear image of the ideal body — often the female, but not always — that each body should try to reach despite the thanatopolitics that it effectuates. Anorexia is the self-destructive behavior that is another example of this tendency.



The processes of idealization of the body or its behavior, are directly linked to the processes of normative construction. The notions of *ideal* and *normal*, despite their apparent contradiction, are the two aspects of the same process: one that administer the “civil peace” of a society, and one that favors uniformity rather than difference. Architecture as well has an important role to play in the process. We should simply allow only one difference between a design that surrounds the body (clothing) and one that surrounds it slightly

less immediately yet just as effectively (industrial design and architecture). The only essential difference seems to be that clothing adds to design a dimension of appearance that is directly associated with the body. The idea of “normalized ideal body” corresponds to the paradox where nobody incarnates the normed body. Each body incarnates a different degree of separation from the normed body around which architecture and other pieces of design are usually conceived.

We should consider the paradigm offered by the corset seriously: designs that act on the body and that are conceived with the presupposed idea of what a body is, that means what a body *should* be, will force any body subjected to it into this presupposed form. Like any other species, ours is always embedded within processes of evolution. However, when design forces the body to adapt to a conceptualized form, evolution operates in favor of the weakening of the body. In other words, a table set at the height of the normed body of a given society forces the bodies using it to tend toward this normed body without ever reaching it. The evolution of the species will therefore tend towards what it already considers as the norm and will thus perpetuate the *status quo* of the relationships of power on society’s bodies.

All biological considerations apart, there is also an obvious social violence in how design considers the idea of a given body as a standard. Not only no body actually fits this standard, but for each body there is a graduation in how far from this ideal one really is. The further it will actually be, the more violent design and social apparatuses will surround this body in its struggle to adapt to the ideal, like the corset day after day struggles to act as a prop for the female body that never reaches the material and social ideal imagined by the designer.

Illustrations ///

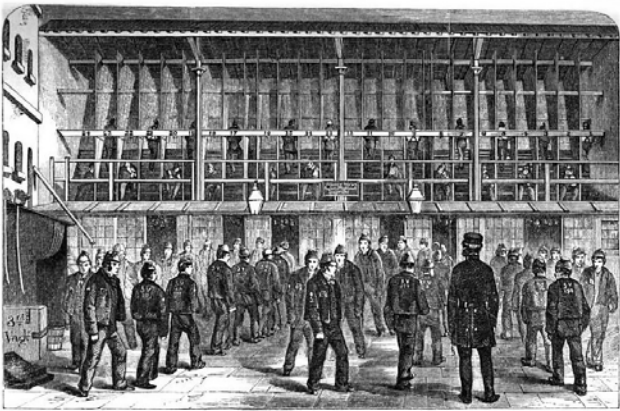
- Page 45: corset from the late 18th century (MoMu Collection T12/123/O11. Jacoba de Jonge Collection in MoMu).
- Page 46: Patent for a corset in 1906 (public domain).
- Page 47: Drawing illustrating the anatomical changes triggered by the daily use of the corset (1788) (public domain).

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Originally published on October 1, 2013

09

CARCERAL TREADMILL



PRISONERS WORKING AT THE TREAD-WHEEL, AND OTHERS EXERCISING, IN THE 2ND YARD OF THE VAGRANTS' PRISON, COLDBATH FIELDS.

(From a Photograph by Herbert Watkins, 119, Regent Street.)

The treadmill for prisoners as a disciplinary apparatus is a carceral invention from the 19th century. This device was first implemented in the prison of Cold Field Baths in London. The principle is as simple as it sounds: a series of wheels requiring a physical effort from the prisoners in order to walk on it and thus perpetuate an 'immobile movement.' We can legitimately doubt that the energy thus produced was used for anything and it can therefore be compared to the traditional penitentiary stone breaking punishment: useless and physically taxing.

With this example, we can interrogate the design status of the treadmill we are more familiar with, the one that populates the gyms of the world's middle/upper social classes. The vision of these treadmills, considered coldly, has something comparable with industrial farming. What can be said of the voluntarily participation of all those bodies found in the common yet individual will of sweating? What is for sure is that such (expensive) systematization of human effort emptied from anything that would possibly characterize sport, requires a piece of design that has been thought for such use. We might want to use a cinematographic example that many will know to illustrate the smallness of difference between Cold Field Baths' prisoners and those happy gym addicts who voluntarily run for miles without actually going anywhere. In Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003), we recall the character played by Bill Murray running on a sort of treadmill — I am missing the proper terminology — that gradually accelerates to the point that his body is soon tortured as it follows the rhythm imposed by the machine. The cry “help” expressed by Bill Murray's character is then both comical and tragic, expressing the complete powerlessness of the character when subjected to the cruel design.

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Originally published on February 9, 2013

10

TO DESIGN A PRISON, OR NOT TO DESIGN A PRISON: WHAT ABOUT A HIPPOCRATIC OATH FOR ARCHITECTS?

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

I recently learned that the French Ministry of Justice, through its research mission — coincidentally entitled G.I.P. like Michel Foucault's *Groupe Information Prison* — is currently calling for research proposals to rethink the relationships between architecture and the prison. The opportunity to work on this topic reactivated in me a complex dilemma for an architect declined here in its most explicit version: should I, as an architect, accept the commission— or even research — to design a prison where I will intend to trigger an improvement in the conditions of incarcerated prisoners, or should I rather refuse to conceive an architecture that is voluntarily cruel to the bodies that it hosts? I wrote above that this is the “most explicit” dilemma, as this question can be asked in many other situations when exercising this profession: not every architects will be asked to participate in the design of a prison in their career, but all of them will face this dilemma or a more or less subtle version of it. This is actually more generalized than only architects; every political strategy is based on the same question: can a set of reforms essentially change a society for the better, or are reforms only a matter of cosmetics that participates in the dissimulation of the real essence of the re-

relationships of power: should we choose reform or revolution?

I would like my readers to believe me when I say that I do not know the answer that I would give to this question. On the one hand, refusing compromise can be a comfortable way to think, as it allows no flexibility, and therefore no effort to adapt principles to a concrete situation; on the other hand, the reason that we elaborate principles when liberated from the specificity of a situation is a good way for them not to be corrupted by processes of self-persuasion that are often motivated by self-centered considerations. What is certain, is that it is important to seriously consider this dilemma each time we find ourselves confronted with one of its declinations. In the case of an architecture commission — a prison, for instance — each categorical refusal forces us to reconsider this question, and each acceptance must be done in the full understanding of what is the actual decision power of the architect, and in which political context (s)he is embedded when conceiving this project.

In the case of this specific call for research by the Ministry of Justice, it is probably important to remark that the current Secretary of Justice, Christiane Taubira, who also carried the legislation to retroactively define slavery as a crime against humanity in 2001 and the one to legalize same-sex marriage in 2013, has been repeatedly asserting something that a vast majority of us know well, but which is not necessarily brought to the governmental scale: prison does not make people “better,” it does not make people more integrated within social interactions. Prison, as thought in many countries of the world — contrary to what is done in Scandinavia — is essentially acting to serve two purposes: punishment and example. Punishment is a form of revenge of the society directed toward the body of the accused, while example constitutes the spectacularity of the punishment that is supposed to discour-

age people in the society from breaking the law. Both of these dimensions require architecture to be voluntarily aggressive and inhospitable to the condemned body. Nothing is done to prepare the future of the body that will one day be liberated from this architecture. Taubira also recognized that an important number of people currently incarcerated could be subjected to another, lighter form of punishment than prison considering their crime.

Of course, these arguments are simply words — non-electoral ones, it is important to state — for the moment and an essential change cannot be accomplished by only one person, even if she is part of a government. However, this ideological background is fundamental to determine whether or not we should accept to participate in the reformist ‘path.’ It is as important as it is difficult to articulate an ethics of dissociative discourse and practice as long as this dissociation is strictly motivated by unselfish reasons, the acceptance of the “lesser evil” while arguing for the “better.” That is how we vote, while denouncing the dysfunction of representative democracy. That is also why Foucault created the *Prison Information Group* mentioned above, which created a system of communication (TV, newspapers, letters) between the prison and the ‘outside,’ while he was discursively unfolding the logic of power activated through the carceral world and that is still operative in spite these small improvements.

There is no Hippocratic Oath for architects — doctors take the oath to always act for the good of their patient. Of course, there is no patient in architecture either, but while the extent is not the same, our bodies are subjected to the power of architecture in a similar way as to the power of the doctors. Nowadays, an oath tends to be more valuable for the self-spectacle of its ceremony than the essence of its ethical positioning; however, it allows to make explicit the negative affect that it

prevents and thus surely it participates in a form of awareness about it. In other words, the equivalent of the Hippocratic Oath for architects, by stating that an architect should not in any way participate in the conception of a design that would be deliberately hurtful to the bodies that it will host would contribute to architects' awareness that their design can indeed be deliberately hurtful to the bodies. Like in medicine, this oath would also embody the base of the professional ethics and thus could potentially make architects face their responsibilities at a judicial level. The sense of responsibility is key here, as it would most certainly help to answer the dilemma enunciated in the title of this article in full understanding of the consequence of its choice, whatever it might be.

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Originally published on July 29, 2013

11

FROM STUDENT DESIGN TO CONSERVATIVE POLICIES: DUTCH POLITICIAN FLEUR AGEMA'S SCHEME AS REVEALED BY JONAS STAAL

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

Closed Architecture is a book created by Jonas Staal. It explores the architecture student thesis project of Fleur Agema, who since became a member of the Dutch Parliament on the list of a party that is unfortunately illustrative of what the right wing looks like in Europe currently (neo-liberal economic policies and conservative immigration policies). Staal simply studied Agema's thesis text and project and re-interpreted them visually according to what this project would actually look like if implemented through governmental policies. The following illustrations are part of the book that can be downloaded on Staal's website.¹

Before analyzing what Agema's project tells us about practicing architecture, I would like to introduce it briefly. As an architecture student, Agema imagines a prison whose prisoner population is spread into four different buildings corresponding each with a phase of incarceration. The following passage is how Staal describes the project:

¹ <http://www.jonasstaal.nl>

The model that Agema has developed focuses on the reconditioning of prisoners by means of four phases. In the first version they are called, “The Bunker – The Habituation – The Wait – The Light,” and in the final version, “The Fort – The Encampment – The Artillery Installation – The Neighborhood.” “The Fort” is modeled after the ancient design of the dungeon, and is meant to break the prisoner’s resistance. “The Encampment” is a camp with vegetable gardens to stimulate independence. “The Artillery Installation” is a type of commune in which the prisoners have to learn to operate collectively. And “the Neighborhood” is essentially a reconstruction of a residential neighborhood filled with hidden cameras, where the prisoners live a simulated life in order to verify whether they are yet fully capable of functioning within society. (Jonas Staal, *Closed Architecture*, Eindhoven: Onomatopoe, 2011.)

The images that follow this article are the images that Staal created to visualize Agema’s ideas. I chose to include three perspectives (outside/inside/room) for each phase, in order to make the comparison easier to observe.

One could write an extensive article about the fact that the system of punishments and rewards thought by Agema, although based on what I can only suppose are “good intentions,” is profoundly problematic. This critique will be only partial in this chapter. First, I would like to address the problematic question that I have been repeatedly asking myself in the Funambulist’s articles: Should I, as an architect, accept to design a prison? And if not, as the easy answer seems to be, what about a bank, a retail store, a shopping mall, a police office, a factory? All these are buildings that I would probably

have ideas to ameliorate to some extent, but that will remain profoundly productive of a model of society that I do not approve. Agema seems to have a clear answer to this question: yes, she would certainly design a prison. This can be partially explained by the fact that she seems to have a bigger problem with the current carceral conditions than with the prisons for what they are intrinsically: an instrument of absolute capture of one's body as a form of punishment and example to the rest of the bodies.

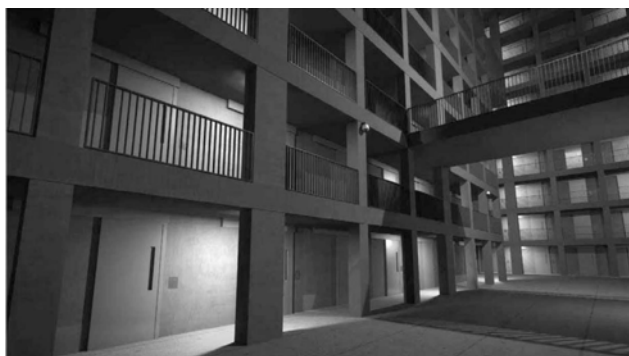
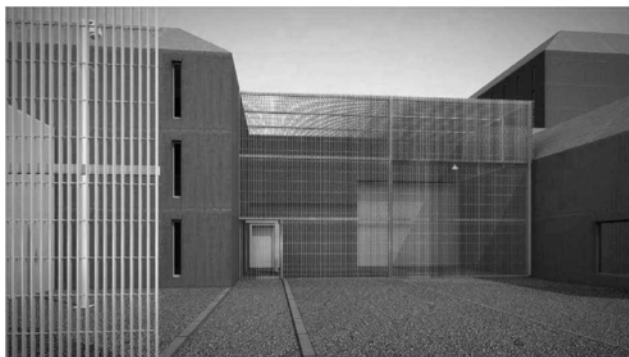
Let us look closer at the model she proposes for the sake of the argument. It is true that phasing — a theoretical popular idea — seems to be potentially helpful for the reconversion of a prisoner into society as current prisons and their conditions of life almost always make people 'worse' than when they entered them. The idea of phasing seems appropriate. However, in this specific case, the phasing is not based on time but on merit. The lowest level of incarceration is even worse than the current carceral conditions, in order to force prisoners to be part of this system. The politics of the carrot and the stick are known to be completely counter-emancipative, as in both cases of the reward and the punishment, the body is 'granted' something from a transcendental entity and therefore never has a chance to inscribe itself in an immanent condition in which it will act for itself and not for what will be given to it 'from above.' Such a societal scheme is symptomatic of the meritocracy valued by the capitalist ideology that always redirects the object of desire in such a long chain that the absurdity of it is lost in the process: "I want to work, because I want to get money, because I want to be able to go on vacation, because I want to rest"

The argument I want to make here is different, however. Oftentimes I attend juries in architecture schools. I must admit that this is an assignment that I usually enjoy, even though I

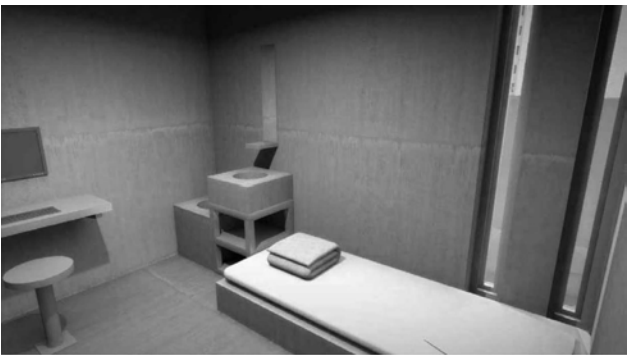
can see how much its traditional performative version needs a serious makeover. Often during these juries, I am compelled by the fact that many students do not seem to quite fathom the subject with which they engage. The problem is not really to know who is to blame students, teachers, schools or the system itself) because it is probably all of them together; rather we should think of ways to make sure that such situation does not happen. The great interest I have for Jonas Staal's book is that it gives a very credible vision of the way passionate, yet naive ideas developed by a student can materialize in reality. In that specific case, these ideas seem to have remained when as she became a politician and more and more conservative. Nevertheless, in other cases, one's ideas, when considered lightly, might manifest in reality in a strongly different way from the one originally intended. I know that I usually mean the notion of "weaponized architecture" in an oppressive or empowering way, but here I would like to stress that this weapon should not be taken lightly. I am not calling for a serious, pure and austere practice of architecture like the moderns used to. On the contrary, I think that the playful and joyful practice of architecture can be deeply rigorous and politically active. My text seems to be addressed to students since Agema's prison project was created in school, but the same applies to all architects and actors of the other creative disciplines: we are responsible for the ideas we 'put on the table' and that includes the unthought consequences that might emerge from them.

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Originally published on April 30, 2013



The Bunker / Renderings by Jonas Staal - *Closed Architecture* (2011)



The Habituation / Rendering by Jonas Staal - *Closed Architecture* (2011)



The Wait / Renderings by Jonas Staal - *Closed Architecture* (2011)



The Light / Rendering by Jonas Staal - *Closed Architecture* (2011)

12

THE OPEN WAREHOUSE AS THE NEW CARCERAL PARADIGM

The overcrowded California prisons give us an idea of the current architectural carceral paradigm. Far from the elaborated 19th century drawings of Jeremy Bentham, entire parts of those prisons are simple warehouses hosting dozens of detainees with no other internal wall than the rough-and-ready three-story beds aligned on a virtual grid. Before the 18th-century, jail was a dark dungeon in which prisoners were forgotten by others. The current one, on the contrary, sinks the detainees in a strong and crude white light — even during the night — in a hall where every act and move are observed. The United States currently counts over 2,3 million incarcerated people — about 3% of the adult population — and the State of California in particular, hosts 140,000 detainees, thus reaching an overcrowded status that the Supreme Court has recently judged unconstitutional.

The question of the design of a prison makes us face the extreme of architecture's power over the bodies. The perpetual question for an architect is whether one might accept to design such a program. But if we do accept such a commission in the hope of making things better from 'the inside,' one has to face a peculiar question when asked to design a prison. Even the most considerate architect has to recognize that the very essence of this program consists in providing life condi-



tions bad enough to constitute an instrument of punishment. There has been some recent discussions about Scandinavian prisons and about Scandinavian punishment system, which were said to be too comfortable. This disturbing logic probably takes California prison gymnasiums as good design, since they effectively serve as punishment.

However, since the change of the paradigm in the 18th-century, pointed out by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage Books, 1975), new forms of incarceration not only include the old purposes of punishment and example, but they also incorporate the goal of repentance and “healing” for each prisoner. For this purpose, punishment should not be excessive, as it might radicalize the detainee against the society that placed him/her at the center of an inclusive exclusion. In this matter, design is considered an important catalyst that probably needs to be more elaborated and humane than the Californian warehouses. Once again, I argue here from the position of somebody who would have accepted to design a prison in the first place. On the opposite side, we might want to argue that the very notion of a punitive architecture is obsolete and that we need to come up with new ways of dealing with crime. It is not impossible that these new ways do not involve design.

The photograph shows Mule Creek State Prison (Californian Department of Justice).

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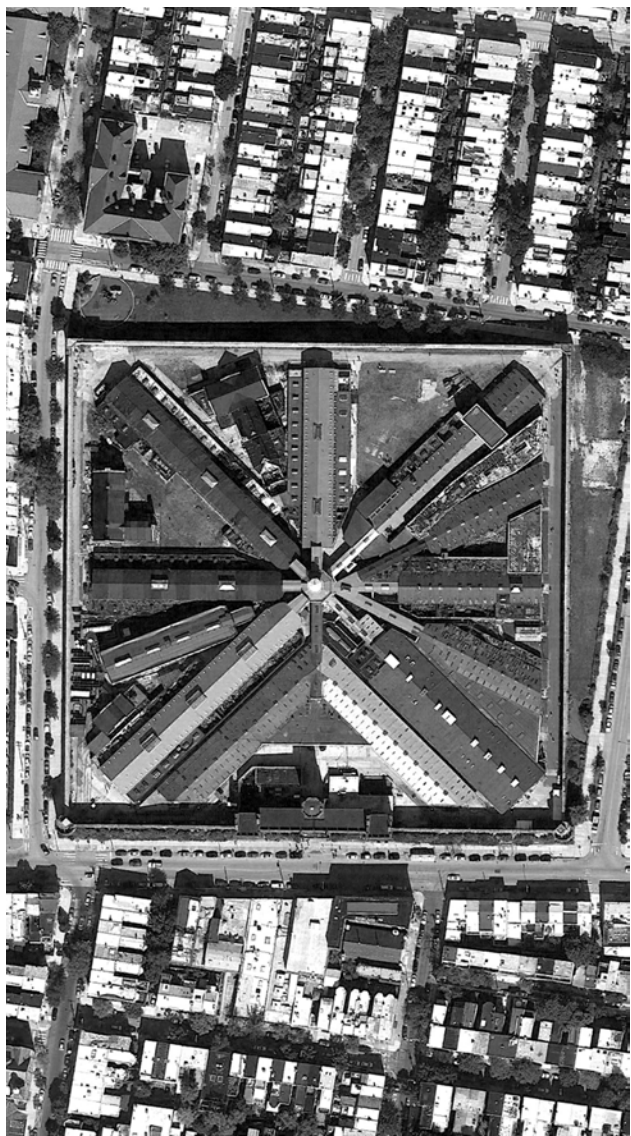
13

THE EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY PANOPTICON: THE MATERIALIZATION OF THE DIAGRAM AND ITS FALLIBILITY

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets*
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]

I recently had the opportunity to visit the former Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. The building is particular, as it was one of the first prisons to implement the panopticon scheme invented by Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th-century. This scheme is not fully applied, since what is actually visible from the center of the building are the ten alleys and not the cells themselves. However, the centralization and totalization of surveillance is manifested here, and they were probably operative to a great extent. The prison was operative between 1829 and 1971. Over the years, additional branches were incorporated in the original layout, thus bringing the amount of visible alleys to twelve — two of them can be watched thanks to mirrors.

I often argue that Michel Foucault, who contributed to make the panopticon so well-known, paradoxically never thought in terms of architecture. When he was writing or talking about architecture, what he was really doing was to speak only of diagrams, that is the architect's plan. What is true, nevertheless, is that such a diagrammatically based architecture as the Eastern State Penitentiary definitely tends to reinforce the



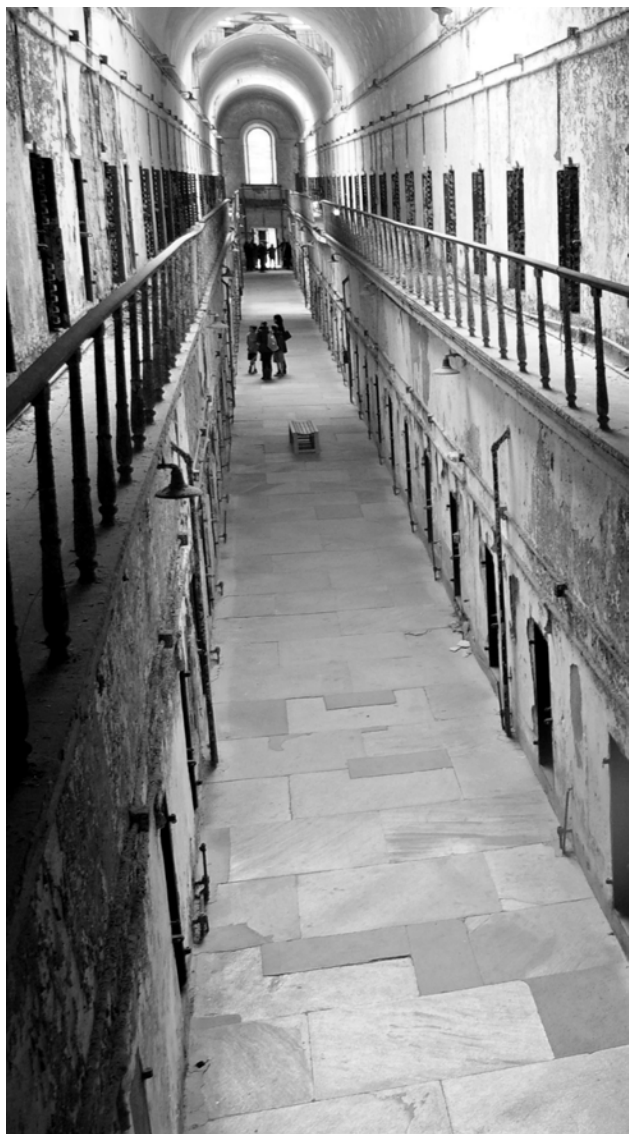
machinic function of this building in the way it absolutely controls the bodies. If we remain at the diagrammatic level, there is absolutely no escape from this systematic operation. If we explore the physicality of architecture, however, the means of escapability correspond to the ability of a body to use the fallibility of architecture in its physicality. There is no fallibility at the diagrammatic level, only at the material level. This is how, in 1945, two inmates of the Eastern State Penitentiary dug a hundred feet long tunnel and escaped from the prison's periphery.

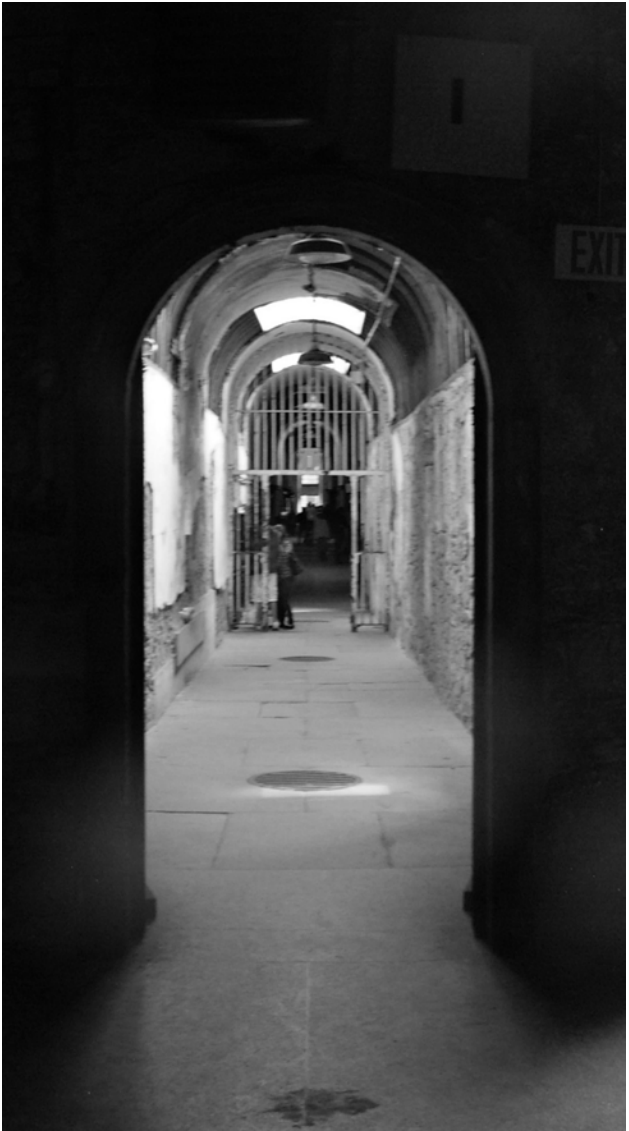
Architecture implements the diagram on the bodies of those who cannot develop enough energy to 'vanquish' the matter, and therefore remain be contained by it. Nevertheless, architecture is also what makes the diagram fallible, as it inscribes the latter within the eroding characteristics of reality. These eroding characteristics make the matter vulnerable to a repetitive, long term force, which ultimately allows its disaggregation, and therefore the obsolescence of its power on the bodies. In this case, the force of the diagram is vanquished by what I like to call the "folds of the matter," that is the characteristics of the material world that the diagram did not integrate in its scheme of control. As architects, we might want to study what voluntarily integrated folds in our diagrams/plans would be in order for the bodies that are subjected to them to find their own escapability from the power of our schemes.

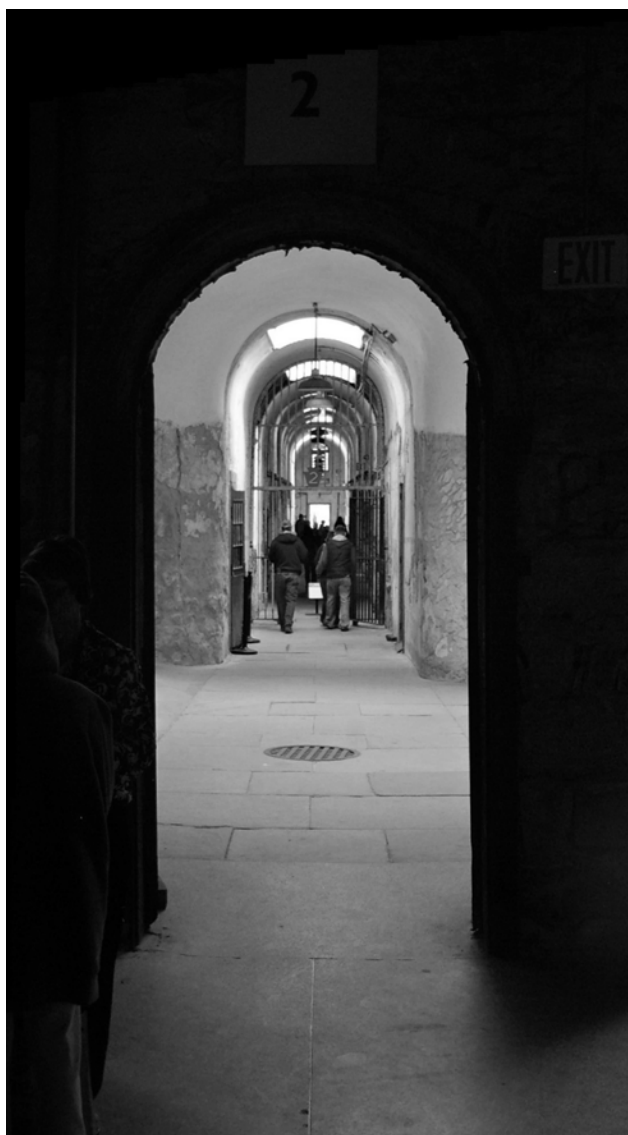
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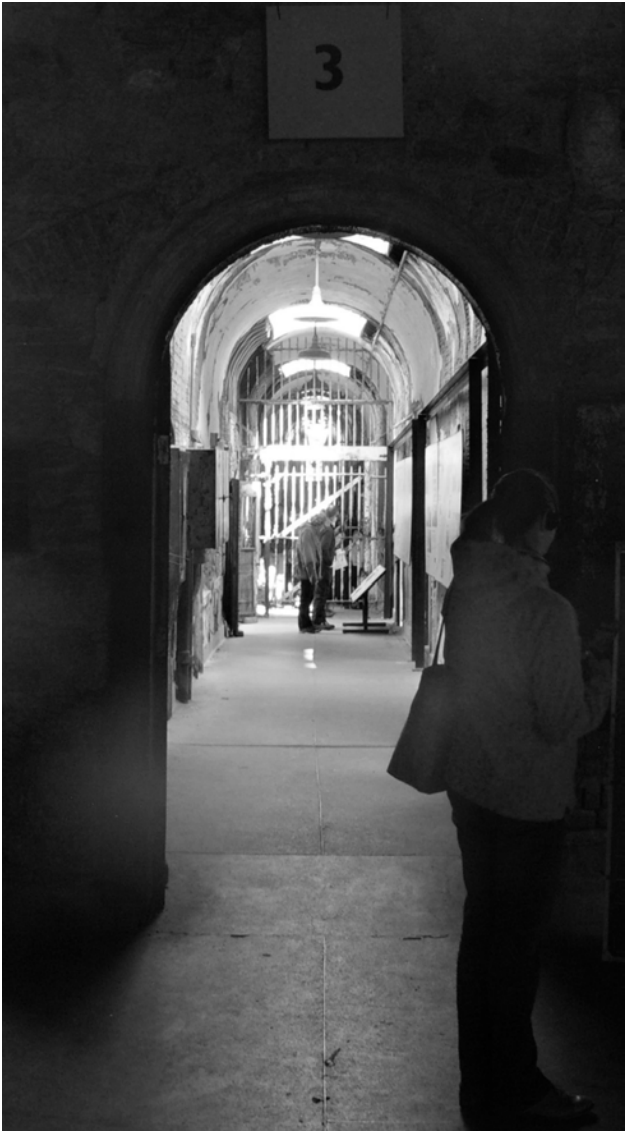
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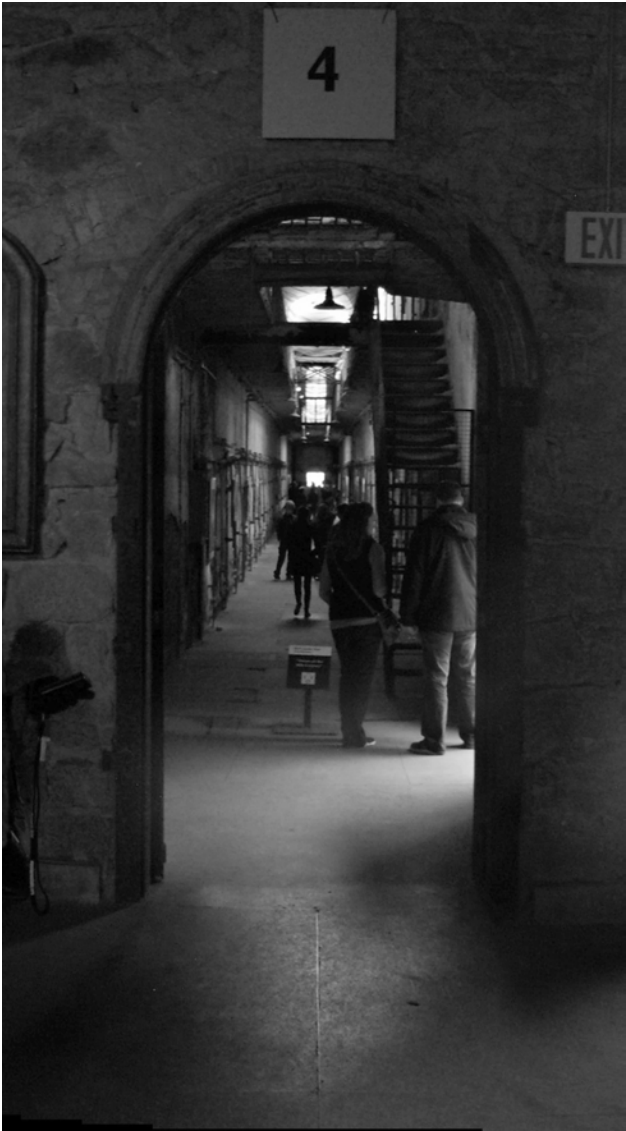
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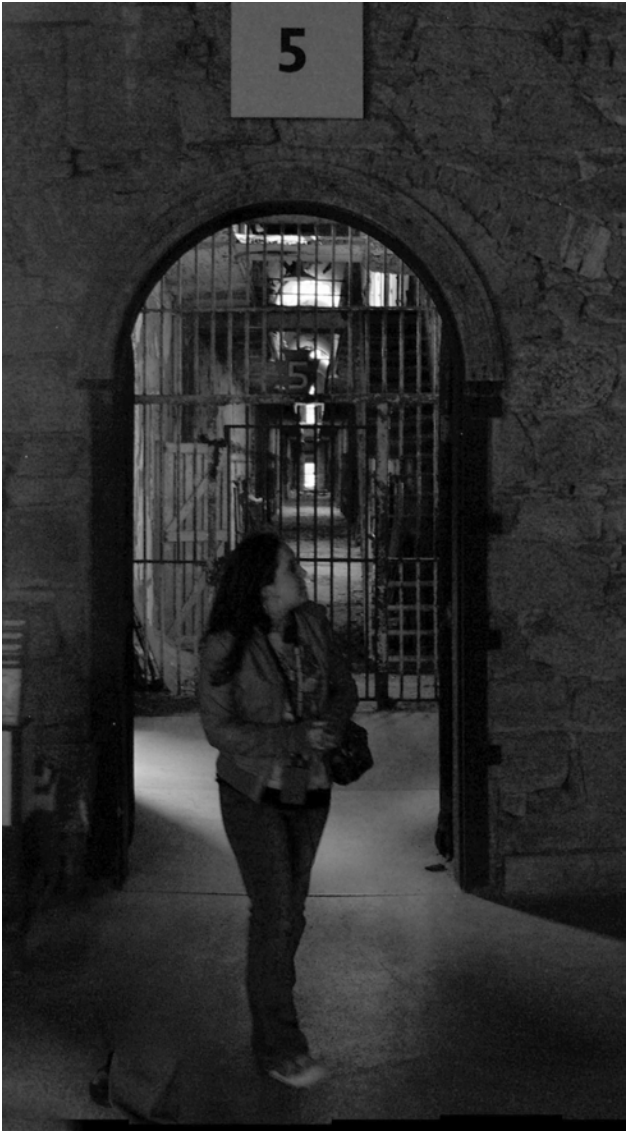




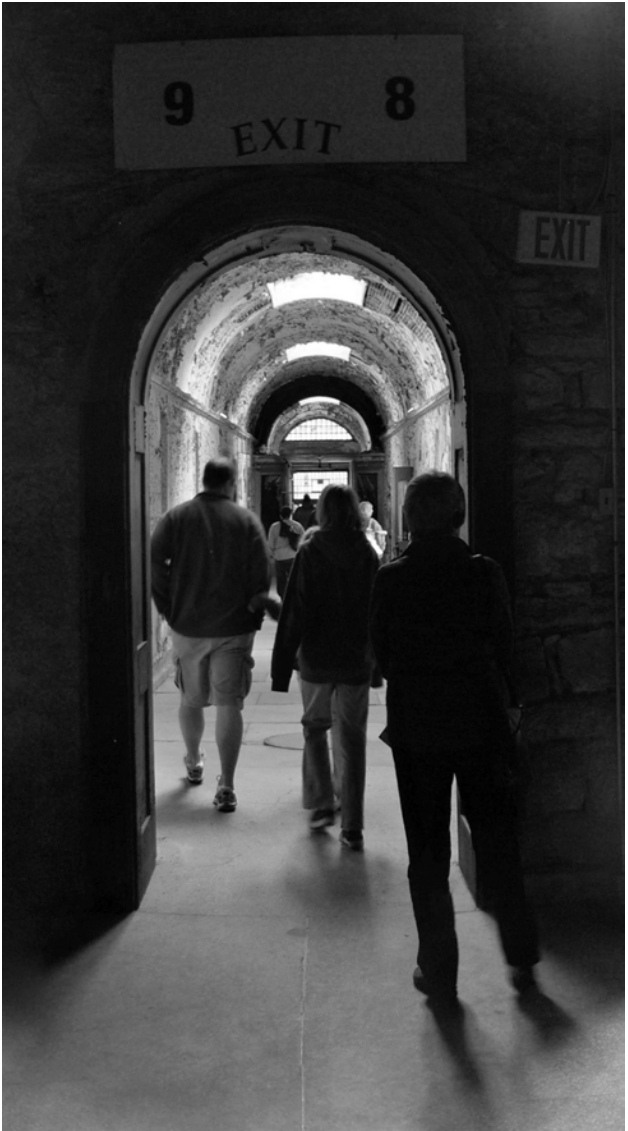












14

THE ORDINARY VIOLENCE OF THE COLONIAL APPARATUSES IN THE WEST BANK

[also in *The Funambulist Pamphlets Volume 6: PALESTINE*]

The Israeli women of *MachsomWatch* perform the work of monitoring, through photographs and videos, the physicality of the Israeli government/army's politics of occupation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Their citizenship allows them to observe the actions of the military more closely, as well as the implementation of various obstacles that have been conceived in order to administrate and disturb Palestinian daily lives. Their presence is also used as a regulator to monitor and report the disrespectful and potentially violent behaviors of soldiers and settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The apparatuses set up at various checkpoints share a common design that filters, controls or simply prevents the Palestinians' movement by imposing a physical violence on their bodies. The wall, in all its forms, is paradigmatic of such violence, but so are the various turnstiles that must be experienced several times at every pedestrian checkpoint. The Israeli soldiers in charge regularly lock their turning characteristics in such a way that a person remains prisoner for few seconds or a few minutes between their metal bars before being able to pass the checkpoint.

These apparatuses have the particularity of not necessarily

looking revolting. People who use the New York subway are used to this kind of turnstiles and many others in the world have to go through various forms of checking on a daily basis. However, one has to understand these apparatuses in their context, where one people organizes the daily life of another in an atmosphere of antagonism from both sides. What that means is that the way these controls and checks are implemented is not optimized in favor of the bodies subjected to it. Often, the turnstiles are actually optimized for the discomfort of these bodies. The result of this systematic effectuation of mechanisms of control lies in an oxymoron: the ordinary violence of colonization.

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15

CRUEL BENCH

If you live in New York, you may be familiar with the series illustrated on next page. Designed in smooth forms and placed over the exhaust grids of the subway station, these benches could have been a great idea to provide homeless people with a place to sleep, the exhaust locally providing some heat, which can be lifesaving during cold winters. Instead, the designer venally accepted what was probably a demand from the local authorities or the MTA subway company: a design solution that prevents homeless people to lie on them. Since they are composed by metallic slices, it was easy for the author to break their smoothness and create excrescences sufficiently uncomfortable condition so that nobody is tempted to sleep on them. Design in whatever form acts on the bodies and can choose to comfort them, challenge them, or hurt them through a more or less assumed sadistic expression. These benches are clearly part of the third proposition and their author should be held as much responsible for their effect as the authority that commissioned them.

The following photograph is by the author (2011).

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Originally published on January 27, 2011



16

INNOCENT STAIRS ? THE KILLING STEPS OF THE MAYANS

[also in The Funambulist Pamphlets
Volume 12: WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE]



Many people know the main characteristic of the Mayan Pyramids, the steepness of their steps. Such steepness is proper to religious architecture in the symbolic effortful approach to transcendence. However, it also has very 'down to earth' killing function in times of peace and war. The sacrificial pyramids' steps were used as a means to finish off the sacrificed bodies by throwing them from the top of the stairs to the bottom of the pyramid. The steepness ensured that the

body would roll all the way down. In times of war, the stairs could also become a veritable defensive apparatus. The Mayans would take refuge upstairs and have soldiers, attached to the top by ropes around their bodies, fighting on the stairs, pushing down the steps the assailants who were likely to be severely wounded, if not killed by the fall.

What I find fascinating in these stories, which should probably be vetted by a legitimate expert on Mayan civilization, is the fact that the killing apparatus invented by the Mayans is nothing else than the stair that we can see in almost every building built by humans. The steepness is merely a way to sharpen the weapon, like one sharpens a knife. What does that mean for architecture that 'innocent' stairs can become such a violent device? Were the stairs innocent in the first place? Considered in the abstract, this quasi-inevitable element of the architectural tool set is rather strange. After all, stairs are nothing else than a series of small pieces of floor assembled in such a way that it successively reaches a certain height. Many elderly and disabled persons are well-aware of this essential reading of the stairs. They know that it requires a certain degree of energy and fitness to bring a body to go from one of these pieces of floor to another. The stair, in its essence, already has a clear impact on the body.

I usually tend to insist on the wall as the paradigmatic architectural element of a weaponized architecture; nevertheless, such a potentiality for an element to become a weapon (intentionally or not) is proper to any of them that impact the body through its inherent characteristics. None of them is absolutely innocent and the idea of domesticity only depends on the political context in which it is understood. Such a context is subjected to change and 'innocent' stairs can have a tremendous impact in the potential antagonism that can emerge from a political crisis in a given society. For example,

the buildings' stairs of many cities, built innocently during a time of peace, carry some vital consequences during a time of civil war. If the stairs go up clockwise, it tends to give a certain advantage to the defenders in societies where a majority of people are right-handed. If they go up counter-clockwise, on the other hand, the right-handed assailants will be advantaged.

Such design decisions used to be primordial in a world that tended to be more often at war than at peace and the notion of domesticity had to emerge adapting to these decisions. The role of design has been forgotten in domestic environments. However, the Syrian civil war, the combats in the Palestinian refugee camps, the siege of the Red Shirts in Thailand remind us that the *statu quo*, just like "the end of history" is only a human illusion based on our understanding of our scale of time. No design is innocent, not even stairs.

Previous illustration is the Mayan pyramid of Kukulcán in Chichen Itza (Mexico).

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Originally published on April 8, 2013

16

SADIAN ARCHITECTURE: AN ARCHITECTURAL NARRATIVE BY EDUARDO MCINTOSH

The project described in this chapter is one of the most problematic I published on the Funambulist. A way to introduce it consists in evoking the Central European tale of Master Manole described by Neil Leach in *Camouflage* (MIT Press, 2006). Manole, a mason in charge of building the most magnificent monastery, enter into a Faustian pact: a person should be immured within the walls of the monastery for him to succeed in his task. This person happens to be Manole's wife and her cries as she find herself immured by her husband express the horror of her situation:

“Manole, Manole, stop your jesting now, for the jest is not good. Manole, Manole, Master Manole! The wall presses me too hard and breaks my little body!” But Manole did not answer her and went on working, the wall rose even higher, burying her, up to the ankles, up to the calves, up to the ribs, up to the breasts. But she –poor thing!– went on weeping and speaking to him”

“Manole, Manole, Master Manole, the wall presses me too hard and crushes my breasts and breaks my child.”

Manole, in a fury, worked on. And the wall rose

and covered her, up to the sides, up to the breasts, up to the lips, up to the eyes. And so the poor thing was seen no more: but they heard her still, speaking from the wall:

“Manole, Manole, the wall presses me too hard, and my life is failing.” (Mircea Eliade, *Zalmoxis: The Vanishing God*, trans. William Trask, Chicago: UNiversity of Chicago Press, 1972, quoted in Neil Leach, *Camouflage*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, 189.)

The architectural narrative created by McIntosh resonates in this legend. McIntosh describes a historical massacre that occurred in 2001 in Afghanistan when the Taliban soldiers fought against the Northern Alliance led by Massoud in order to gain the control of the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, the fourth biggest city in Afghanistan. McIntosh uses this context to describes a disturbing use of architecture by fictitiously describing the construction of a mass grave, in which the 3,000 dead bodies are directly used as bricks. He then describes the chemical reaction between the bodies and the rich soil of Afghanistan from which emerges a “poppy Anthropophagus” producing a high yield of opiate. This opiate that can be used to produce opium or morphine can be interpreted as a disturbing economic loop of contemporary warfare. In this narrative, the horror of war is part of the globalized system of production.

There is something eminently Sadian in this narrative as the bodies, even dead, remain objects of empathy from the spectator who is both fascinated and repulsed by the absolute power expressed by a body (the soldier/mason) on another (the corpse).

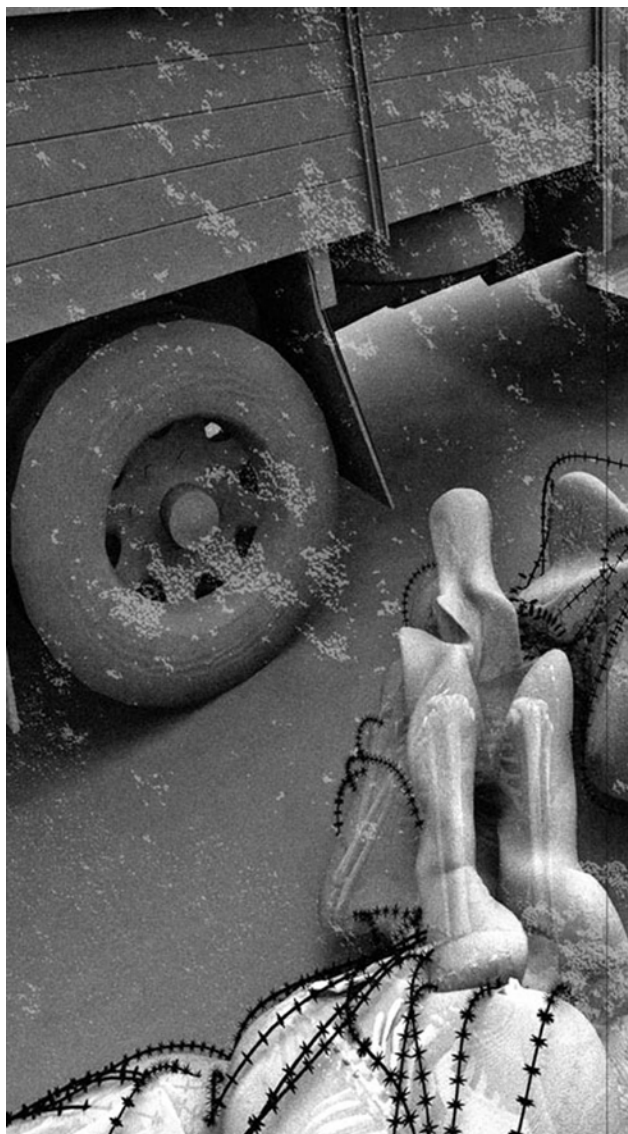
With this narrative, Eduardo expands our imaginary of human


violence and includes us, architects, as potential actors of the darkest side in History. As in Hannah Arendt's work, he forces us to look at pure evil without allowing us to comfortably exclude ourselves from it.

The following documents are courtesy of Eduardo McIntosh.

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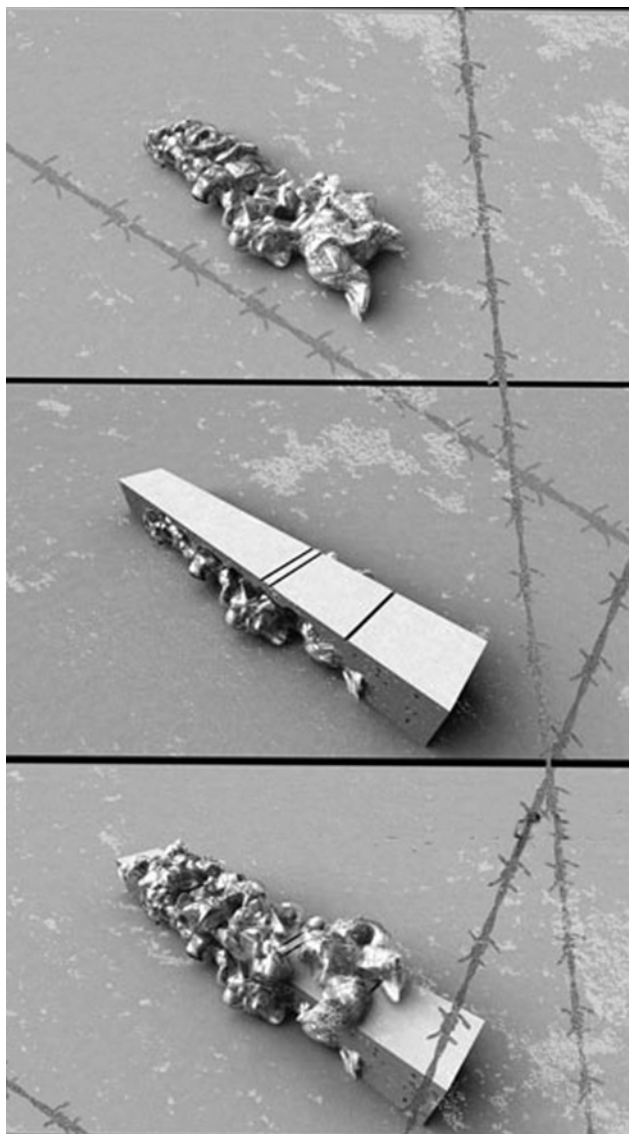


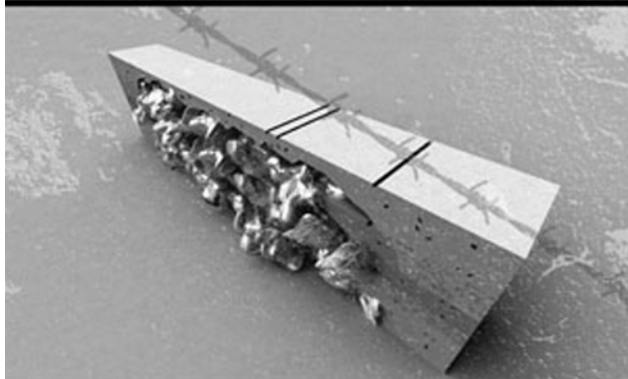
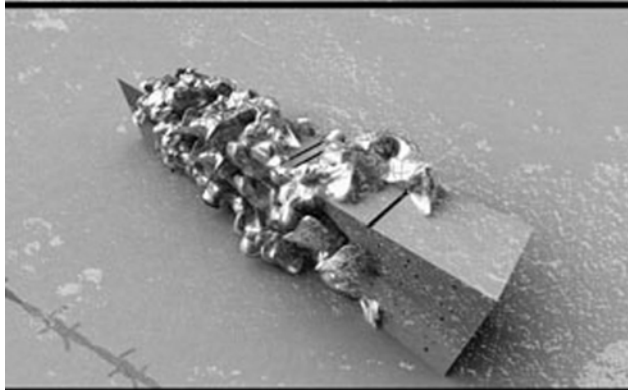
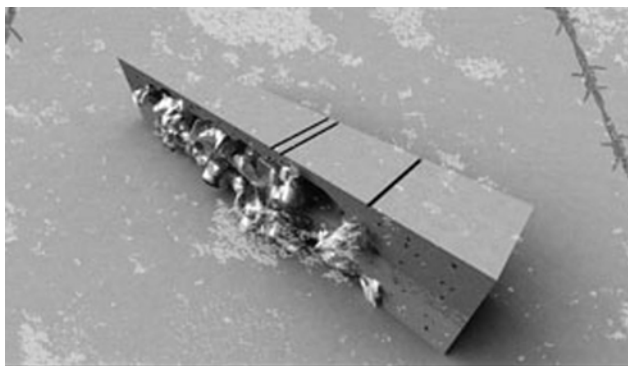


perfect, enough raw material to complete lining of the next level of the new mine. We have discovered vast quantities of lithium in this area. With the boom in the use of personal electronic devices, the demand of lithium has shot to the sky. Fortunately it seems like there is enough lithium in this area to keep the demand satisfied for a couple of years. The only thing we need is a steadier supply of damping material to allow us to perforate new mines.









ABOUT

THE FUNAMBULIST: a blog written and edited by Léopold Lambert. It finds its name in the consideration for architecture's representative medium, the line, and its philosophical and political power when it materializes and subjectivizes bodies. If the white page represents a given milieu — a desert, for example — and one (an architect, for example) comes to trace a line on it, (s)he will virtually split this same milieu into two distinct impermeable parts through its embodiment, the wall. The Funambulist, also known as a tightrope walker, is the character who, somehow, subverts this power by walking on the line.

CENTER FOR TRANSFORMATIVE MEDIA, Parsons The New School for Design: a transdisciplinary media research initiative bridging design and the social sciences, and dedicated to the exploration of the transformative potential of emerging technologies upon the foundational practices of everyday life across a range of settings.

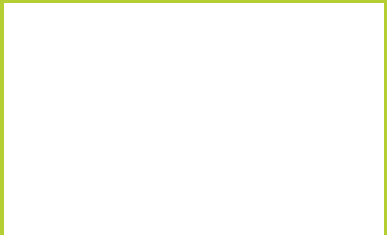
PUNCTUM BOOKS: spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion is an open-access and print-on-demand independent publisher dedicated to radically creative modes of intellectual inquiry and writing across a whimsical para-humanities assemblage. punctum books seeks to curate the open spaces of writing or writing-as-opening, the crucial tiny portals on whose capacious thresholds all writing properly and improperly takes place. Pricking, puncturing, perforating = publishing in the mode of an unconditional hospitality and friendship, making space for what Eve Sedgwick called “queer little gods” – the “ontologically intermediate and teratological figures” of y/our thought. We seek to pierce and disturb the wednesdayish, business-as-usual protocols of both the generic university studium and its individual cells or holding tanks. We also take in strays.



THE FUNAMBULIST PAMPHLETS VOLUME 7: CRUEL DESIGNS

The violence that architecture carries in itself towards the bodies is the same regardless of the intent, yet the way it is used is not exactly the same when it manifests itself consequently rather than deliberately. Cruel designs are purposely conceived to use this violence in order to assert an absolute power on one or several bodies.

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