“the question of architecture is ... the taking place in space. The establishing of a place which didn't exist until then and is in keeping with what will take place there one day, that is a place.

The setting up is always something technical. It invents something which didn't exist beforehand and yet at the same time there is the inhabitant, man or God, who requires the place prior to its invention or causing it. Therefore, one doesn't quite know where to pin down the origin of the place.”

-Jacques Derrida

Architecture is a desire where its origins are at once imagined but remain elusive.
“Men reside between heaven and earth,  
Like travelers parting from their places of birth.”

-Anonymous Chinese Poet

“We are unknown to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever find ourselves? It has rightly been said: “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” [Matthew 6:21]; our treasure is where the beehives of our knowledge are. We are constantly making for them, being by nature winged creatures and honey-gatherers of the spirit; there is one thing alone we really care about from the heart—“bringing something home.” Whatever else there is in life, so-called “experiences”—which of us has sufficient earnestness for them? Or sufficient time? Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us “absent-minded”: we cannot give our hearts to it—not even our ears!...

—So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves, we have to misunderstand ourselves, for us the law “Each is furthest from himself” applies to all eternity—we are not “men of knowledge” with respect to ourselves.”

-Friedrich Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals
Home

Between Nostalgia and Uncanny

What is Home?
What does it mean to be at home?
to be sick of home?
to leave home?
to be homesick?
to return home?

The permanent and stable house, as a property and symbol, constructs its inhabitants’ subjectivity and anchors one’s identity. These houses are so reassuring and comforting that many would call it a “home.” But “Home is where the heart is,” a space in the mind, in memory, a fabric that is beyond the built, physical, finite house, and as Gaston Bachelard aptly put, “a place that shelters daydreaming and protects its dreamer.” Because of the transient qualities of home, this thesis uses a different way to approach architecture through tracing emotions, memories, thoughts and dreams.

Synonymous with home, Architecture is a desire which seems to always express itself as missing or a lack. Similar to the search of oneself, the desire for “being at home” is never fulfilled. Home is always on the move, oscillating between nostalgia and uncanny. Nostalgia is an accumulation of memories into a place; uncanny is the doubts towards that place.
Separated from its productive tasks and economic values as a property, architecture can reveal another understanding of habitation, one that is temporal, transient and mobile, fragmented and even fragile, one that is made of scattered parts, activities and encounters. Perhaps, this understanding can change altogether the existing societal narratives that is based on the permanence and ownership of structures.

A home does not offer reassuring familiarity, nor does it regulate or limit its inhabitant. It provides the everyday needs but departs from the norms, giving a fresh look on banal things. It contains memories but asks for a different way of remembering.

**This home is completely incomplete. It is a starting point of departure. An architecture that liberates.**

A fiction combines memories, dreams, thoughts and emotions of domestic spaces, temporal stays, traveling, migrating into episodes of stays and several different abodes. It questions the notions of boundary, property, home ownership, the self, and of the singular archetypal home.

**Home**

**Architecture that Liberates**

fig.5 Max Ernst, the Master Bedroom. 1920

fig.6 Adolf Loos, Lina Loos' bedroom. 1951
Nine Homes of the Land Surveyor

A Story
Prelude

A Story

The story records the strange life of a Land Surveyor.

Although the documentation of the beginning of his journey is lost, we know from a fragmented biography that residences in eight different landscapes are attributed to his:

- in the metropolis, ¹
- betwee rowhouses, ²
- in a parking lot, ³
- on the road, ⁴
- on the water, ⁵
- in a forest, ⁶
- in the hill, ⁷
- in the desert. ⁸

The ninth home is never found. It is said that it orients towards the sky.⁹ His fellow surveyor exhausted atlases and catalogues but their efforts were in vain. No one than the Land Surveyor himself has been in those places.

He stays for different lengths at each place, surveying, observing or simply admiring the landscapes, while occupying it with his accumulated everyday objects and incremental memories. His home grows as he lingers, and because of his loneliness, his home becomes his companion thus acquired a similitude to human or other creatures.
Yet, always propelled by the desire to find his mysterious commission, the Land Surveyor disembarks for the next location. Often in a hurry, he leaves behind everything that he called home.

Then, he is suddenly in an unfathomable nostalgia. Right away, he starts assembling his new abode with vague resemblance of the last one (he simply could not remember clearly).

Creation eases his pain and as the surrounding landscape takes more of a hold of his, memory would soon descent into a blurry distant background. So then, for a little while, he is content with the fresh start and the new looks of his banal and familiar things. Although at times, dusty memories resurface, they appear to be dream-like. In fact, it is plausible that he did not really remember, but rather dreamt of them.

He repeats this process for another seven times, leaving behind eight empty shells along his route. To the question, where are you going? He always answers, “away from here, away from here.” Some said that the Commissioner resides ‘elsewhere.’ It is most likely that the Land Surveyor never got there.
* The Land Surveyor may have lived in more places. It is speculated that his abodes are practically infinite.

* His journey through the landscapes is not successive in time but continuous in space.

* Site exists in the intensity of senses and memories towards a place, more real than any geographical location.

* No structures were found. No specific dates or coordinates were documented.

* Events and encounters were meticulously recorded on film.

* Architectural drawings are extrapolated accordingly yet spaces depicted appear to be bizarre and absurd.

* Models were made.

* Original films were damaged. Digital remakes stand in for the original.
The Land Surveyor

The Land Surveyor is a person who roams, roves and wanders around to determine the distribution and allotment of land. Prior to its division and demarcation by borders and boundaries, the land remains a smooth space, vast unknown mass. The Land Surveyor’s homes precede properties and ownership; his movements across landscapes are free from the concept of paths and roads. No matter how long he stays, the Land Surveyor is never indifferent to his immediate landscapes, nor do specific places determine his identity. He is the precedent of the nomadic subject, whose identity remains floating, shifting, overlapping or multiplying with his surroundings and belongings. He is always becoming.

The land surveyor is to measure and to record. For things beyond measurements, he simply records.
Home of Lightness

In the Metropolis
Home of Lightness
In the Metropolis

It was perhaps the banality of his tightly packed apartment that prompted him to flee, or maybe it is the tedious and rather unrewarding land surveying work for his clients who just wanted to settle a property dispute with their neighbors. Or he was simply on the way to the station for a short business trip. Whatever it is, he ended up living on a scission lift with a suitcase.

We could be quite certain about the heaviness of his life before he found his new abode. His back hunched over, always looking at the ground, perhaps an occupational habit. When he encountered the scission lift, it was idling on the sidewalk. No one seems to notice it, passing by with a slightly annoyed look. But he suddenly had an idea: an airy home striped of all heaviness in his life.

The scissor lift when expanded is measured 3800mm and 1300mm, small and nimble. The metropolis has almost everything, so it was easy to begin living atop the scissor lift. He did little adjustments, only installing four curtains on each sides and a large ceiling fan with a diameter of 750mm.
fig. 11. Home of Lightness In The Circle Theatre, Edward Hopper. 1936.
Summer is almost shadowless. It was the perpetual fluttering of the curtain and blowing of the hot air that reminded him of childhood. He used to be extremely bored in the summer, with nothing to do, running from buildings to buildings until he was exhausted. And then he would go home to stare at the spinning fan until his eyes hurt. When he then closes his eyes, they left an imprint of a swirling maze. He now enjoys the time of doing nothing; with his eyes closed, the distant noises of busy streets are indistinguishable from kids chattering or birds chirping.

Despite his high up position, no body seems to notice him. They pushed the lift around to move through the busy streets. Rather like a ghost, he floated through the city. He extended his survey of land into the city’s windows and the inhabitants of the metropolis. Looking from a distant, he records but never interacts. At night, he heard bored piano playing, or nervous footsteps down on

Fig.12 Edward Hopper, Night Shadows. 1921
Fig.13 Edward Hopper, Room in New York. 1932

*All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm * 50cm
In From Williamsburg Bridge (1928) featuring female figure from City Sunlight (1954), Edward Hopper.
the streets. He would let his imagination run a little, of what’s happening behind closed doors, where are the lonely passenger going or what’s on their mind. He found an odd console in other people’s loneliness.

Throughout his little journey, he met some of its kind and became friends. There is a nomadic girl’s house from Tokyo. She is light and thin like air, gliding through the glamorous city nights. Always in such a hurry to catch a party. Another group of small containers from the same city with one large round window like an eye, embracing their inhabitants but always looking at the skyline. There is also an Israeli born nomadic artist. Like our protagonist, he lived a rather secluded life. But because of their nature, it is difficult to be as thick as thieves. When they occasionally run into each other, they would nod slightly.

Fig.14 PAO, Toyo Ito
Fig.15 The Inhabitation Cells, Abalos

fig.16 In Radiator Building—Night, Georgia O’Keeffe, New York, 1927
The curtains grew longer. Although often overlooked by most people, the house veils the city but also reflects it. It creates illusions that transformed its surrounding into a mystery. When the Land Surveyor is living here, many reported mirages in the city.

When winter came, he had collected many things, lights, tables, chairs, beddings and pillows, clocks, glassware, and even a robot cleaner. He had installed a toilet and bathtub, even a kitchen counter. To resist winter’s cold, he made a new curtain with quilts. Heavier, but warmer. Like home. He even gave it a pitched roof so that snow would not pile up on top. Around Christmas, he planned to decorate his cozy home. So, he carefully drew out a plan. All of a sudden, the home appeared to be estranged, uncannily similar to his old rental apartment that he abhorred. Lightness has escaped, and there’s no point in salvation.

He sat in the dark for a while and left with his suitcase.
Home of Solitude

Between the Rowhouses
Clearly, he did not know where to go as he wandered on the city’s edge.

At dawn, he saw a line of familiar rowhouses. The sun was low, shadows were long, and the air was still. Behind a fire hydrant, the houses were silent, seemingly abandoned. As he approached, he now vaguely remembered his client having a passionate argument with his neighbor over their backyard fence. 1527 was the plot. 1530, 1529, 1528. He encountered an open lot, flanked by two blank walls, a void among the houses. The colorful façade did not seem to cheer up these houses. The window awnings cast deep black shadows on their faces. How odd! He thought to himself that people would desperately fight over something they can easily walk away from.
He remembered that he wished to live in a rowhouse. Packed closely with your neighbors, looking just like them, living just like them, fitting cozily into a community. Would he feel no longer like an outsider? an intruder or a parasite. He'd ask himself if he settled down, would he feel no need to travel into unknown land.

So, he decided to move in this lot. 1527, he knew it well. But it turns out, he could not live like others. In fact, he only felt free when he is alone. So, you see that his house is only the facade of a row house. A smiling face that says I love people. Wood cladding wall, five steps up, a front door, a doorbell and a light. Above, two symmetric windows with the same awnings, air conditioner, gutter, two birds sitting on the cornice. The wall is thick with a corridor and all the essential rooms hidden inside.

But behind the thick wall, a large foldable room can be pulled out from the back, extended like a camera lens. He also found it similar to his theodolite. The room is narrow and wide, low and tall and extremely empty. This is where he spent most of his time, distancing from others. It is both the narrowness of the room but also the wide, tall, far away window that he desires. He would always sit on the narrowest end and watch people passing by the large window. Their figures are blurry, often agglomerated together into a lively blob, especially in the afternoon where they flooded the street, getting off work. The
fig. 21 Next to The Lighthouse, Edward Hopper, Maine Coast, 1921.
blob is very preoccupied, passing the street absorbed in many little devices in its many hands. But once in a while, there will be one or two that were throw out from the blob in front of his big window. The Land Surveyor enjoyed these moments when he felt connected. Of course, the house is deep enough to hide him in the shadow when others do try to peek inside. He sat there day and night watching the world almost like an endless motion picture. When the show is not exciting, he withdrew into reverie. He thought that he had sat long enough for his shadow to leave an imprint on the wall.

The house, like the Land Surveyor himself, is a little bit of an oxymoron. A house on the wheel that pretends to be stationary, a loner who wanted to blend in.
Home of Insomnia

In a Parking Lot
For a while, the land surveyor suffered from insomnia. He is afraid of evenings, but he had to make friends with the nights. When he couldn’t sleep, he would pace back and forth in the dim corridor of his new house. He often recalls Borges’ writing about a house in Ramos Mejia, that “the mirror troubled the depths of a corridor.”

In a feverish vertigo, the image of the corridor captured his fleeting memories. In one instance, he was still a child, waking up at midnight finding his way to his mother’s room. In the dark, he found the door ajar; she was not inside. He felt the cold floor and thought he was abandoned. In another instance, several years later, he had left home, and was staying in a motel for a business trip. He had begun to have occasional insomnia, so he stalked in the...
corridor, watching doors opening and closing. The hall is empty. Mechanical noises are constant and loud, covering over the voices of men and women, sometimes romantic, erotic, or sometimes furious, but mostly just inaudible murmurs. Cries of babies are as rare as dog’s barking. Insomnia has the same overwhelming effect as an infallible memory of an excessively detailed observation.

The house is perfect for the insomniac, with many rooms and many beds to choose from or for any designated imaginary companions. Although all of the same small size, some rooms are overheated, some are cramped, some look like an office cubical, some rather bare, with just a rug. It is of a deliberate nightmarish quality that could turn anxious pacing into sleepwalking, tricking one to believe that he had slept and just had a bad dream. After all, insomnia is worse than nightmares. If one loses the ability to dream, reality will simultaneously collapse.

The house is rather like an imaginary creature, revealing itself only at night. It crawls out onto a vacant parking lot and embrace the insomniac. Usually the house is dreadfully quiet, but sometimes, the Land Surveyor wandered inside its corridor, putting on different soundtracks of noises in the rooms and moving things from one to another, hoping in vain that he would eventually fall asleep on one of the many beds.

The land surveyor kept all of his files here. He believed records
have a particular relationship with the sleepless house, perhaps because of an architect’s drawing of a keeper of the record he found in one of his books, or perhaps by the unforgettable experience of his fictional peer K. in the corridor. Piled up in different rooms, he would have something to look at during sleepless nights. So, we always see flickering lights from the late-night parking lot.

He attempted to measure the house in his boredom but was never successful. It was perhaps the dizziness that clouded his judgement or that the house is in fact haunted by memories that keep moving and changing without an end.

When he rediscovered his sleep, he was unable to find the house, so it was rather inconvenient to retrieve his memory. But then, he could always rely on his dreams, now that he could fall asleep again.

“The corridor itself was still empty, but the doors were beginning to move. They kept being opened just a little way and quickly closed again, there was a positive percussion of such opening and closing of doors in the corridor, and now and then, looking through the gaps where the walls didn’t reach the ceiling, K. saw tousled morning heads appear, only to disappear next minute.”
Home of Passing Through

On the Road
The road, a mysterious four-lane freeway, is an incredible straight line running East-West. It borders a miraculous city and a large body of water. The passing cars rushed through, busily getting from exits to exits but no one had ever reached its end.

This is where you will find the Land Surveyor’s home on the road, between exits 26 and 27 or some say 485 and 486. His house has no address and no location. In fact, it is located nowhere but in speed and flows of the passerby. Like an alien creature, it hovers above. Its tentacles reaching towards the road and were frozen in the state of being blown by the gust of the passing cars. Because of the perfection of the road, the speed of cars is immense. Its legs spread out sticking into the ground on the side of the road. For the traveling passengers, the house is rather like a phantom. In fact, many reported shown that they have seen aliens or spaceships on their way to work. “Something gooey, glided right passed my car! It was shiny, like car paint but sleeky. I couldn’t slow down, but I caught a glimpse of it from my back mirror.” The interviewer shared a fuzzy sketch, some science fiction artist adopted it.

*All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm * 50cm*
Apart from the shadowy anecdotes of the peculiar appearance of the house, for the Land Surveyor, the house is not unlike his other homes. A place of solitude but with a thin connection to others, a perception of the abstracted presence of man. When the Land Surveyor is still a student, he used to study at a small domestic library on the top floor of a residential tower. Symbols, words and abstractions has an uplifting transcendence. He often needed to look down onto the busy boulevard and overpasses to find console.
The house is composed by twelve rooms, eleven individual rooms and the twelfth one that connects them all. All rooms are at different elevation heights, ranging from 12 meters to 64 meters. They are numbered, and meticulously designated for different times, days and states of mind. The twelfth room measures 20m by 20m. At the very top, there are no movement of the road. Its windows open on the South and North sides with a view of the foggy city skyline and another of the vast sea but no sight of the road. Of the other eleven rooms, their vibrations triggered by the traffic flow are unique because of their distances to the road below. They offered a fine gradient of connectedness with other men.

In Room 3, from 7am to 10am, the Land Surveyor works with a desk and a window facing the incoming traffic on the left lane, closely documenting the morning traffic. In Room 6, the Land Surveyor often sleeps. Although at night, there are little cars passing by, he enjoys the light streaks left by the front lights on his ceiling and walls. The night is also always when he is the most imaginative, before he fell asleep, he would stare at these traces of light and plot entire movies base on the color of the car light. Who would travel at such dark night? Weary employee who just finished a nightshift or a detective chasing a murder.
Living in the house of passing through is not unlike a prolonged road trip. There are only three accesses to the house, two extremely unsafe fire stairs with a 56-meter ladder and one staircase that lands in the middle of the road. The rooms, like the trunk of a car, are well stocked with supplies. So, when he left the metropolis, he stayed in the house for quite a while. He was often reminded of his father in this house, of their road trips together, of the smell of a mixture of worn leather and cigarette butts, and the excitement of going somewhere and not yet getting there.

It was with this thought that he left again, descending the dangerous fire escape into the unknown waters.
Home of Transcience

On the water
**Home of Transcience**

*On the water*

The North star shined brighter in the moonless night. He fell asleep as his boat sailed into the wind, carried him gently across waves. At dawn, he was awakened by the sudden stop of his boat; thick morning fog clouded his view. It was an abandoned barge which halted his boat. The barge is measured 40m by 12.5m. He tied his boat to a steel rod and came upon the barge. He found domestic products left unattended and immediately made it his home on the water.

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*fig.23 Fleet of modern steel canal barges, 1919*
The house has no fixed positions, floating and swaying along water’s waves. Once the morning fog faded away, light shined on the waves. Projected on the walls and floors, the waves left a pattern that constantly change. The water is never still, it chanted, animated the shadow, gesturing and speaking. The Land Surveyor recalled a fish tank he kept as a child. There was no fish in his memory, only the same pattern on the wall when he stirred the water. Many idle summer afternoons, he would stick his hand in the cool water and watch for hours until the light weakens at dusk. Growing up on a rather arid inland city, he had little encounters with waterbodies. At one particular instance, there were formidable rain pouring down during a piano concert. Roads became muddy rivers of cars, bikes and the anxious people.
Home of Transience

On the water
Curious to record its traces, the Land Surveyor pushed all furniture in to the unlit brim. He covered the concrete barge floor with large sheets he found below the deck. He indulged himself with chasing the shadows with his surveying tools, rarely looks out of the window. The barge is too long to chase this nimble creature. It always escapes any attempts of recording, not to mention measurements. Soon, he found his efforts were in vain, but he rather enjoyed sharing the place with his unknown companion. He would agree with Heraclitus only because he believed that human has no ability to stay the same, but he would claim that water is always the same. In fact, all waters are the same water. Time has no ability to give it continuity nor divide its wholeness. The water that cooled his baby hands are the same that he now floats on. He spent days to ponder on an exemplary analogy.
but was stuck with “a continuous blanket.” It is unsatisfying but acceptable. Darkness, silence and time are made of the same continuous matter. He let his imaginations run a little. How it would be if all humans became just like water, unable to distinguish oneself from a whole blob of flesh? But as for now, all of his kind only sleep and dream in this matter.

As he gave up his surveying work, he developed two hobbies: painting and music. Portraits of his roommate are painted spontaneously, and piano is the only way he could communicate. He found his companion enjoys Chopin and Liszt the most. He continued to shift around his furniture according to his roommate. On cloudy day, it would be away on short trips. On rainy days, it hosts loud parties. When he wished to be alone, he would descent below deck.

Long stays on the water proven to be nauseous. In the disorienting delirium, sparks became eyes, gazing at him. He would eventually feel threatened by its sublimity and flee the house after throwing his furniture into the water.
Soft Sheltered Home

In a Forest
Soft Sheltered Home

In a Forest

Furniture floated, washed up shore, ended up somewhere along the edge of the forest, scattered.

No one saw he disembark. The forest is dense, difficult to navigate but exceptionally enlightening, just like the prose that were written here. Thoreau, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and many more, one could still sense their haunting here. The ground is covered by soft damp mosses, from which fine mists arose and evaporated into an instantaneous slivery stroke.

Under the bleak sunlight, the land surveyor managed to move swiftly through the tall beech trees. At times, trees formed a delicate line and the mosses retreated, exposing the earth in the shape of a narrow wending path. The land surveyor wondered if

fig. 25 Heidegger's hut, Black Forest Mountains
fig. 26 Wittgenstein's Hut, Skjolden

Scale 1:50/2 *

All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm * 50cm
fig. 27 In Solitude No. 56, Edward Hopper, 1944
they had indeed walked here too, allowing the dirt to slip into the indents of their shoes as well. They all must have strolled the melancholic woods in searching for the fleeting thoughts. Back at their cabins or huts, they encased them into sacred texts.

When it started to drizzle, the Land Surveyor had already made his own pitch roof houses of soft fabric hanging on the dark tree trunks. Furniture is tugged separately through the woods into the cozy tents. The surveyor is quite fond of his modest abode. It reminded him of camping and the attic. Neither are his innate memories, but both are his fantasy triggered by childhood stories.
Soft Sheltered Home

fig. 28 In A Garden, Isaac Levitan.
The house is deformed by the blowing wind; like a mystic instrument is played only by the rain. When lights travelled through the dense leaves, the fabric walls would flatten them into a monochromic pattern. During the long summer, the grass grew tall and would have endless conversations in a rustling voice. If you are patient and careful, you would hear different birds and bugs. Although simple, the house captures every bit of nature. Although unstable, the constant reformatations give a delightful newness. It was a banal beauty that arrested him.

During the day, he would take long walks to survey the woods. In order to record his thoughts, he set up many houses along the way. Some are lifted high to get closer to the whisper of nature, like a treehouse hanging above. He climbs a ladder and sleeps with the stars.

His departure into the winter snow is unwitnessed as well. A book is left open on his desk, sitting in the silence of the black forest. The hanging light flickered twice and became brighter. It reads a poem by Robert Frost.

“The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.”
fig. 29 In Hills, South Truro, Edward Hopper, 1930.
Home of Exhaustion

In the Hill
As the land surveyor traveled further east in the woods, the slope of the ground became steeper until he finally started climbing. Trees grew sparse on the 45-degree incline; rocks populated the ground, leading up to a plateau.

As he climbed to the midpoint of the slope, he looked back at the dense woods and could no longer see the pitched roofs of his tents. Slightly relieved, he started to tread along the topography line. To his right, the top edge of the slope, although fuzzily grassy, is incredibly straight, almost artificial. Distracted by the mysterious horizon, he stumbled into an opening in the hill.

He was unable to adjust to the darkness at the beginning, but it has the smell of a house. Once he is able to see, he is convinced that someone is still living here. The passage sloped slightly downwards leading to the first room. Perhaps an antechamber, it is small and lean in a proportion of 1:3. He entered at midpoint, and found a rack of hangers, and possibly an oversized hat hanging on the wall. The room is perfectly rectilinear, but the surface is rough. Two portals opened to two other rooms. He kept walking.

* e = 2.7182818284590452353602874713527
All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm * 50cm
It soon became clear that the house is rather a burrow or a labyrinth. Parts of the house repeated itself for many times in an unpredictable manner. He counts eleven antechambers with two portals, forty long and slanted passages, office desks, paperwork, racks, beds, and courtyards opening to the plateau. There was no way to climb up to the plateau, but the Land Surveyor is certain of its immense for the house is endlessly growing, practically infinite.

Days and nights appeared randomly in different courtyards depending on the pace and routes he took. Any courtyards are the other courtyards. Time is imperceivable. There are many clocks in the house, a hanging hourglass that rotates and a pendulum that stayed still. The Land Surveyor lived for a while, or better to say that he was arrested by the complexity and detained in the infinity of the rooms.
The house is exhausting to live in. Most rooms are too low to stand upright, so he carried the ceiling on the back of his neck. The rough surfaces abraded his skin. He still carried the scares on his flesh, but the bloodstained ceiling would soon be wiped clean. Hallways are too long for the air to move, so it became moldy, terribly motionless. In order not to suffocate, he had to move all the time. Temporary relieves are hard to find, it is only by chance that he would see the sky in a courtyard.

fig.31 Minoan Palace of Knossos. City in Crete, Greece, 7000 BC-1900 BC
The Surveyor never met the home builder, the inconspicuous and paranoid but very hardworking expert of maintenance. His home is never finished; it is always being built, remodeled, refined and maintained. Like a mole, he perhaps has a large family or is a hoarder. So of course, he had never thought of leaving. How could he leave when there is so much to take care of! The courtyard needs a fountain, and the hallways needed to be swept again. And now the entrances need to be concealed better as the land surveyor clearly intruded into his house.

This is the house of exhaustion, a life's work that demands full attention. Certainly, if you are the unwanted guest, you would find it arduous and quite terrible. But in fact, if you build it yourself, it is quite lovable, and loving. You wouldn't mind giving it every bit of yourself.
Homes of Forgetting

In the Desert
The desert terrain, although barren, is full of changes. The Land Surveyor traveled south with a pair of camels, until he is surrounded by nothing but sand. By noon, air, heated by the sun, became heavy. Views were wavy, but not yet forming a mirage. The sirocco gently lifted small particles of dust, smearing yellow over the horizon. The color reminded him of sandstorms. It was quite common when he was a child. He now realized that he had forgotten about them altogether. Details had escaped his recollections; he is left with only a vague imprint of yellow atop luminous grey.

He found the parallel between desert and oblivion strangely coherent. Forgetting is not not-remembering, but an banish of memories. All things forgotten are exiled into a vast swirl; its agglomerated shape is imperceivable, endlessly mutating in the realm of imaginations.

*All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm x 50cm*
It was the camels that first noticed the stones. They were of different sizes, placed in a line 15 degrees East of true South. The camels simply continued along the line; the Land Surveyor could not make out why they are placed as such. They all kept silent, walking under the noonday sun. The line continues for a mile. Although there were gaps along the way, no one thought to across over. Now they are joined by another line of stone on their left side, tilted inward. They proceeded on the narrowing path marked by the two lines of stones. At the end of the path, there is a threshold and then fragmented lines marking a rectangular space, slightly distorted. The party of three were halted by the enclosure. The Land Surveyor decided to settle here.
There was no doubt that some people laid these stones. “It could have been me,” the Land Surveyor mumbled, “and then, I had just totally forgotten about them.” Just like the piece of note he'd find in his drawer with a series of eight numbers or a red mark at 3.6 inches on his tape measure. These found things has the same mysterious origin in forgetting and a desperate need to reinvent itself or to be forgotten again. So now, the Land Surveyor would take on the task to reinvent his house in the desert with the four-line stony demarcation.

He did very little. First, he measured meticulously the stones, and drew out the quadrilateral they formed. He then took the quadrilateral to carefully construct a hexahedron roof with nylon. The roof is tied to the pair of camels. It floats like a hot air balloon, casting a shadow under the blazing sun. From afar, it looks like a monolith from science-fiction movies. Yet, on the ground, the house is rather archaic. With the stones, the shadow demarcates the Surveyor’s home in the desert. The sunlight is shifting, and sometimes, the camels stroll along the line of stones, but the Land Surveyor always follows his home around.
Home of Rememberance
In Space, Towards the Sky
Home of Rememberance

In Space, Towards the Sky
Home of Rememberance

In Space, Towards the Sky
Home of Rememberance

In Space. Towards the Sky
Home of the Land Surveyor

SPACE
Rememberance

Scale 1:∞ *

* All drawings are scans of the originals. Original size: 50cm * 50cm
Postscript

My First Home
1995-2002, Beijing, China
Film

Bibliography


Film made with paintings of Edward Hopper
The Circle Theatre (1936)
Room in New York (1932)
Williamsburg Bridge (1928)
City Sunlight (1954)
The Lighthouse (1921)
Solitude No.56, (1944)
Hills, South Truro (1930)

paintings of Georgia O’Keeffe
Radiator Building—Night (1927)
The Shelton with Sunspot (1927)

paintings of Isaac Levitan
Ferns in a Forest (1895)
Birches, Forest Edge (1885)
Birch Grove (1889)
A Garden

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