

Saving the Planet Through Thesis

KAREN LANGE

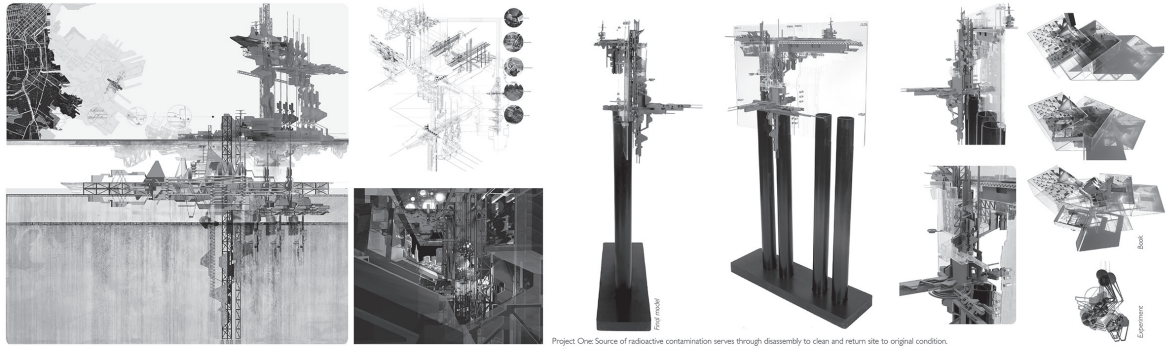
California Polytechnic State University

Thesis exists in the in-between, the ambiguous space between real and unreal, proto-professional and professional, construction and vision. While thesis studio serves as a think tank for cultural observation, theoretical exploration, material exploitation, and architectural deviation, it is inherently about problem solving; affirmation through creation. Having mastered the architectural art of representation, the thesis student begins to think about things beyond their control and in so doing attempts to change the facts of construction or culture. Sometimes thesis is about saving the world.

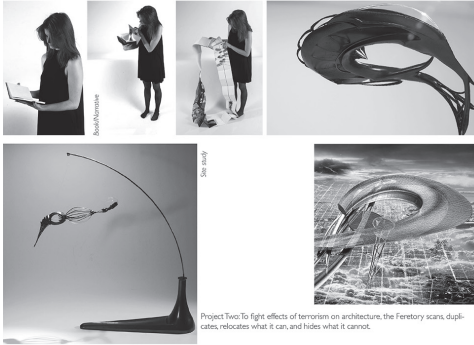
This particular thesis studio combines the nature of conceptualizing the big idea with experimental 1:1 scale objects, and individualized thesis projects with a collaborative installation. In this case four diverse projects characterize the ability of the thesis to define, analyze, synthesize, and produce a solution to the deterioration of earth's environment, cultural and infrastructural. Students hone their super powers through manifesto and research, allowing them to rant about what could be in addition to fueling innovation. Research leads to narration and experimentation, while collaboration forms a bond through the studio that allows themes and constructive criticism to flourish.

Architects use their ability of representation to propose the super real or surreal solution to problems, for example Lebbeus Woods' Quake City or High Houses. According to Todd Gannon, "architecture's basic magic is in how representations are mistaken for the world itself." Architects propose solutions to massive social and environmental problems which become part of the language of everyday by the simple plausibility of their representations. Outlandish solutions, such as BIG's The Big U or Superstudio's Continuous Monument, become emblazoned on the mind through imagery; their work envisions a seductive, sometimes perhaps nightmarish, future.

The five projects that follow serve to suggest the abilities of thesis to propose solutions to manmade problems of physical or cultural nature; individual thesis problems and one collaborative design. Thesis falls into the realm of fantastic architecture, as it is generally unbuilt and unbuildable, to encourage the super real is to encourage innovation in problem solving.



Project One: Source of radioactive contamination serves through disassembly to clean and return site to original condition.



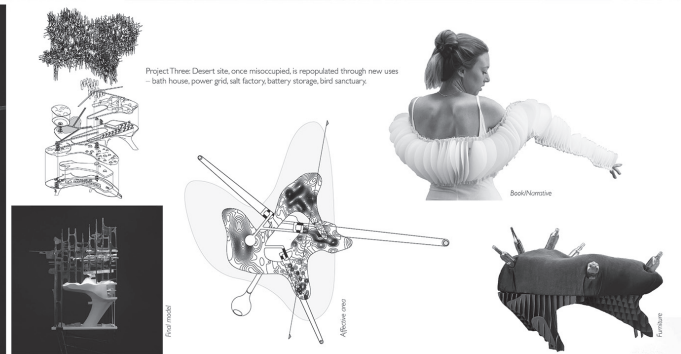
Project Two: To fight effects of terrorism on architecture, the Ferretory scans, duplicates, relocates what it can, and hides what it cannot.



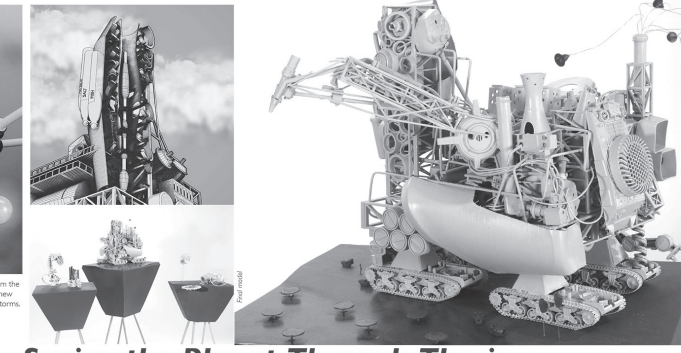
Project Three: Desert site, once misoccupied, is repopulated through new uses — bath house, power grid, salt factory, battery storage, bird sanctuary.



Project Four: The Salton Sea is autonomously rebuilt from the products of its demise — dead fish and salt — creating a new building material to halt its disastrous and deadly wind storms.



Project Six: The Salton Sea is autonomously rebuilt from the products of its demise — dead fish and salt — creating a new building material to halt its disastrous and deadly wind storms.



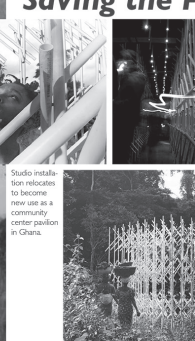
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Studio installation relocates to become new site as a community center pavilion in Ghana.