

Intern[ed]: Between Past & Present, Invisible & Made Visible, (un)Mediated & Performed

BETH WEINSTEIN

University of Arizona and University of Tasmania

How are architecture, politics, labor and invisibility entangled? The creative work discussed in this essay, *Intern[ed]*, seeks to reveal the erased architectures of WWII era Japanese-American internment and the invisible labors that occurred there and to draw these into tension with contemporary Executive Orders in which architectures of confinement and exclusion are latent. Through performance and installation, *Intern[ed]* shuttles between past and present, between invisibility and rendering visible, between remote and near, site and *Non-Site*, a-situated and citational, the mediated and the immediately present.

INTRODUCTION

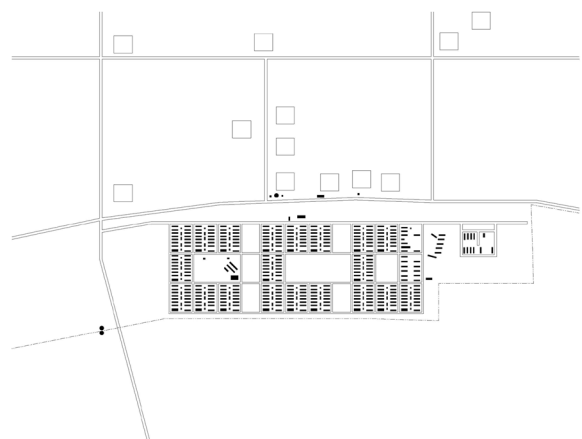
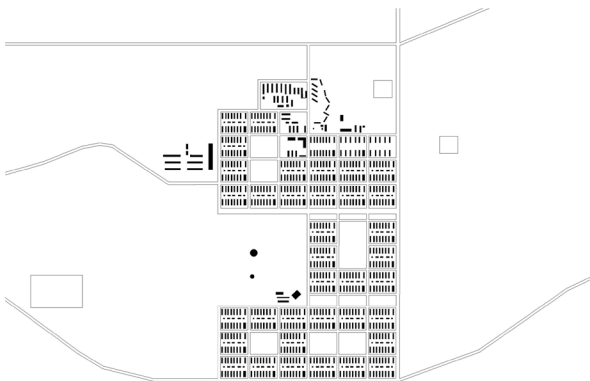
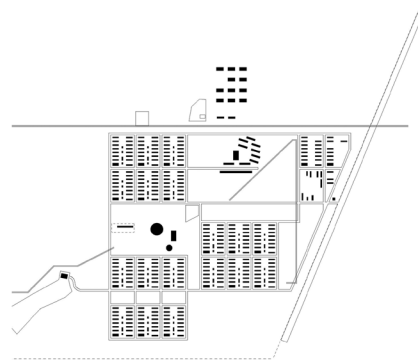
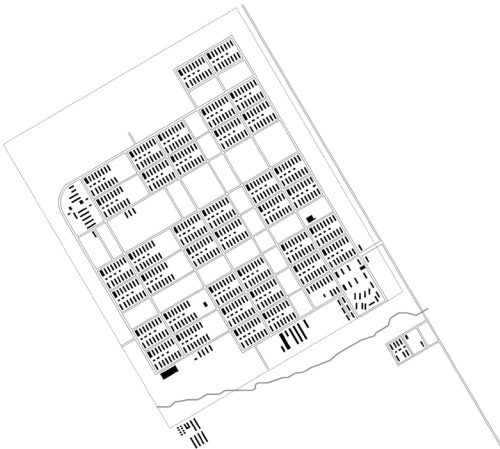
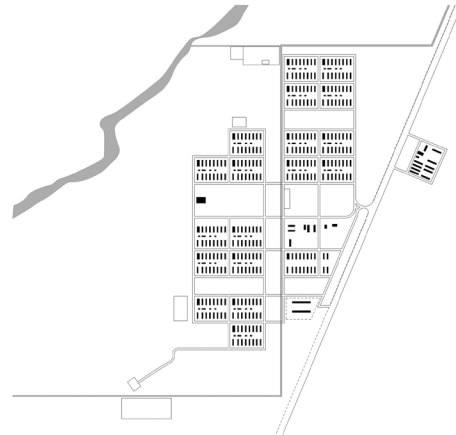
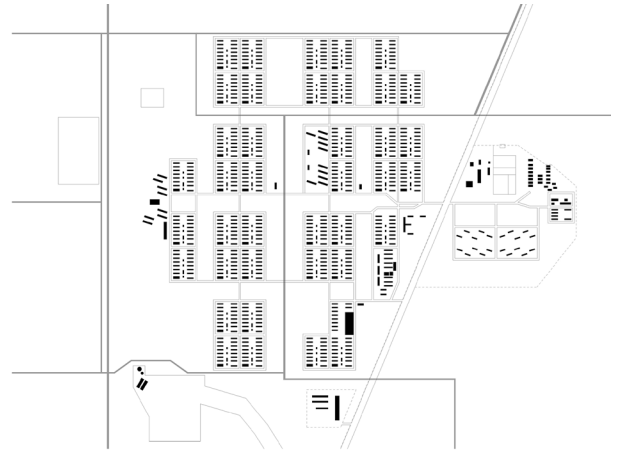
How are architecture, politics, labor and invisibility entangled? My current research, which moves between discourses of architecture and performance, explores this Gordian knot with three aims.¹ The first is to problematize and reveal this knot and specifically interrogate (in)visibility of spatial labor and laborers, of architectures latent within texts such as Executive Orders, as well as architectures that render certain publics invisible. Secondly, I ask how spatial performances can reveal and address overlooked labor contributing to the full life-cycle of the built—going beyond the *making*, to include the *maintaining*, *unmaking* and *re-making*. Thirdly, by expanding the field to include processes as well as objects, I seek to develop hybrid performance-design practices that yield artefacts, systems, and scores that are open to iteration, participation, and include the situated, embodied maker within space that is coming into being and becoming un-done.

The creative work discussed in this essay, *Intern[ed]*, is the first movement in a three-movement work-in-progress. Each movement is being informed by specific places and historical events. *Intern[ed]* seeks to reveal the erased architectures of WWII era Japanese-American internment and the invisible labors that occurred there, as mandated by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Executive Orders 9066 and 9102, and to draw these into tension with contemporary

Executive Orders in which architectures of confinement and exclusion are latent. Through the media of performance and installation, *Intern[ed]* shuttles between past and present, between invisibility and rendering visible, between remote and near, site and *Non-Site*, a-situated and citational, the mediated and the immediately present.

BETWEEN ARCHITECTURE & PERFORMANCE

There are several threads entangled in the Gordian knot of architecture, politics, labor, and invisibility, and ways in which performance offers practices and theories to cut through and examine the structure of that knot. One thread concerns labor in relation to architecture, and I use four temporalities, or processes, within lifecycles of the built as a framework for thinking labor's temporal site—*making*, *maintaining*, *unmaking* and *re-making*. The phase of *making* is, not surprisingly, the most evident and considered encounter between labor and architecture, and recent exhibitions, publications and documentary films scrutinize conditions of invisibility within this. For instance, in the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale, the Polish pavilion chose not to present the country's latest built works but rather the invisible labor conditions and laborers essential to construction industries in growth economies.² Similarly, WBYA? has examined questionable labor practices associated with the building of boom cities such as Doha and Peggy Deamer's *Architect as Worker* further interrogates the question of labor and work executed by and with architects.^{3, 4} As our attention as designers privileges *making*, the other processes (*maintaining*, *unmaking* and *re-making*) and those engaged in them tend to be off our screen, or, as Hilary Sample states regarding *maintenance*, are "obscene."⁵ Though her enquiry primarily concerns the *maintenance* of the building appearance according to its inaugural image, Sample begins to connect the dots between built space and performance through examples such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles' *Hartford Wash* (1973). David Leatherbarrow, in his reflection on the *unmaking* and iterative *remaking* of space through weathering and "unscripted performances," expands the parameters defining architectural performance.⁶ While the above architects, theoreticians and curators explore architectural *making*, *maintaining*, *unmaking* and *remaking*, respectively, through text (and installation in the case of the Polish pavilion), I leverage spatial - performative practices, the performance of spatial labor and laborers, to draw out the work-in-progress.



I will briefly tease out another thread in this knot that concerns labor, its appearance or invisibility, and how its invisibility is, by nature, political. Building upon Karl Marx's attention to labor processes and Hannah Arendt's reflections on work and labor, I draw a distinction between *work*—as an activity that produces an *oeuvre*—and *labor*—as a repetitive activity creating and sustaining life.⁷ Giorgio Agamben further unpacks the implications of the division Arendt presents. He argues that political mechanisms divide beings into those who are free to appear and participate in public life as citizens (*bios*) and those unable to appear politically (*zōē*), due to their engagement in labor supporting those who do appear.⁸ This division into those who appear and those who do not is also examined in Jacques Rancière's idea of the distribution of the sensible. He states,

It is a delimitation of spaces and times, of the visible and the invisible, of speech and noise, that simultaneously determines the place and the stakes of politics as a form of experience. Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time.⁹

Space and time collude, politically, to afford appearance or render invisible. As suggested above, labor and laborers, the processes of making or unmaking, as obscene actions, are generally relegated to places and times off-screen. Performance studies scholar Elin Diamond reminds us that performance is both “a doing and a thing done,” giving equal prominence to process and product.¹⁰ Furthermore, Elizabeth Grosz's ideas of *unbecoming* and George Bataille's idea of the *informe* give value to the potentiality latent in in-between states, between produced things as *works (oeuvres)* and laboring processes, as well as latent in *unmaking* and *remaking*.^{11,12} A performative approach can foreground the in-between, messy processes of things *be-coming* into the world, as well their *un-becoming*, and afford the possibility of labor and laborer to appear, resist invisibility, politically and spatially, to be seen and heard.

BETWEEN PAST & PRESENT

I return now to the sites and events that inform *Intern[ed]*. Many parallels can be drawn between executive orders penned by FDR and the 45th US president. While we can speculate on the motivations underlying the orders of the latter, the former texts, after the passing of forty-six years, have rightly been identified as motivated by “racial prejudice, war hysteria and the failure of political leadership” and authored a “grave injustice.”¹³ Drawing upon J. L. Austin's idea of the *performative*, by which utterances produce effects in the world, we may consider government utterances, such as Executive Orders, as *performative spatial texts*, ones that produce spatial conditions.¹⁴ For example, Executive Order 9066 brought into being military exclusion zones that included the entire West coast and Southern Arizona, and martial law.

Figure 1: (vertically from upper left) 1942 Exclusion Zones brought about under E.O. 9066 and 9102, Santa Anita Assembly Center, Manzanar Relocation Center and Gila Relocation Center Butte Camp; (from upper right) Poston Relocation Centers I, II, and III, and Gila Relocation Center Canal Camp. All drawings by the author

Architects working under the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in 1941 and '42 were implicated in assisting the WCCA (Wartime Civil Control Administration) and WRA (War Relocation Authority) in planning eighteen so-called Assembly Centers, inhabited by more than 110,000 persons between March and November of 1942. They also had a hand in the ten newly constructed “Relocation Centers,” today referred to as internment or concentration camps, with WRA-provided *minimum shelters* to “warehouse” up to 10,000 persons in each camp.^{15,16} (Figure 1) Architectural historian Lynne Horiuchi asks the poignant question: “What would you do as a professional architect if you were asked to design a concentration camp (or internment camp) for your colleagues?” Architects Garret Eckbo and Vernon DeMars, in spite of their liberal leaning exhibited through their work in the Telesis group, consulted on and were contracted to design “bits and pieces” of these camps, including WRA staff housing, and recreation spaces, schools, and assembly halls for the camps where their former colleagues were interned.¹⁷ While military-designed blocks of barracks comprised the majority of the spaces and buildings of the camps, Eckbo and DeMars worked into the interstices of the camp fabric, designing *spaces of representation* and civic participation.

Architects are confronted with comparable questions today as the current administration furthers the criminalization of immigrants and entangles architecture in the matter when issuing requests for qualifications, proposals and prototypes to build a border wall.¹⁸ But the wall being called into existence is not a mere line in the landscape nor is it even the ICE-proposed 150' wide electrically monitored zone, bound by concrete facing toward the US and “transparent” fencing facing toward Mexico.¹⁹ The border is already many miles thick and border zones perforate the interior of US territory. Section 1347 of Title 8, addressing “Aliens and Nationality,” waives the necessity of warrants in the following situations: 1) to search any vessel or vehicle within a “reasonable distance” from external borders, interpreted to be 100 miles, and 2) to search private lands (except dwellings) within 25 miles. In addition to the “big beautiful wall,” less spectacular spaces of invisibility exist and propagate.²⁰ ICE's webpage recently boasted a growing number of Immigration and Border Control facilities. Seventeen in the South West region alone, and, in Arizona, the neighboring cities of Florence and Eloy host four immigrant detention centers of which three are run by private enterprises.²¹ Not unlike the profitability of internment Japanese-Americans during WWII, and subsequently employing them at substandard wages, today's Criminal Alien Program is profitable to the carceral industrial complex.

Returning to my starting point, scribing texts, uttering words and drawing lines are performative acts; they produce things and conditions in the world. As such we would be wise to be wary of government utterances that convolute “American exceptionalism” with America in a “state of exception.” Giorgio Agamben unpacks how states of exception, or the *etat d'urgence* as currently practiced in France, arise, stating that



Figure 2: *Razing Manzanar II*, performed erasure by the author, filmed by Johann Quèland de Saint-Pern at The Window (2017).

The camps... were not born out of ordinary law, and even less... a transformation (or) development of prison law... they were born out of the state of exception and martial law... The camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule. In it, the state of exception, which was essentially a temporary suspension of the state of law, acquires a permanent spatial arrangement that, as such, remains constantly outside the normal state law.²²

Writing this as a reflection on Hannah Arendt's *We Refugees* and European camps of WWII, Agamben reminds us of the presence of myriad contemporary spaces, including the *zones d'attente* or ICE questioning rooms of international airports, that we should rightfully call camps.

BETWEEN INVISIBILITY & RENDERING VISIBLE

Though government utterances produce space, at the same time, we may interpret these utterances as porous, open to iteration. Unlike the laciness of letters produced by the censoring offices during WWII or the resemblance these bear with the porous textile camouflage woven in the internment camps, I am interested in the texts-textile as an open work, inviting iteration and adaptation. In lieu of perforating and incising surfaces as a means of censure, or redacting as a force that drives back, out of sight and into silence, I am exploring practices that afford the transforming of works into works-in-progress. Performing erasures and razings of the internment

camp drawings and whiting-out government utterances could be interpreted as echoing the invisibility of the interned—out of sight, but still there—though invisibility is not the intent or primary statement being made. Erasures, razings and whiting-out are antidotes or homeopathic acts. They are acts that lay a ground for a new drawing or new text to emerge.

Erasing or whiting out are powerful acts—sometimes sly, sometimes malicious, sometimes playful. The most frequently cited is Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953). The silence, absence, and blankness of this erasure and of John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) and Jasper Johns' white flag paintings (early 1950s) exemplify an "Aesthetic of Indifference" that, according to Moira Roth, refuses politicality.²³ Taking up this issue twenty years later in dialogue with Roth, Jonathan Katz counters, stating that in the hostile political (and homophobic) climate in which Rauschenberg's erasure and Johns' all white flag paintings were made these techniques were means to covertly critique both the machismo of abstract expressionism and to avoid being identified as the "other" during the McCarthy era witch-hunts. Underlying the erasures and whiting-out, Katz points out, is a "dense concentration of metaphors dealing with spying, conspiracy, secrecy and concealment, misleading information, coded messages and clues."²⁴ Australian artist Sean Lowry's overpainting of charged symbols such as flags and national boundaries can be argued as yet another politically pregnant whitening-out, engaging viewers in seeing and unseeing simultaneously, creating afterimages, that are just under the perceptual radar.²⁵

In the graphic components of *Intern[ed]*, I employ white-out to lay a ground into which new texts can be stitched, scripting another possible reality. Yet it is equally important to acknowledge the violence of “whiting-out,” of a refusal of non-white, as a white-washing or cleansing.²⁶ Yet enacting this on vellum allows the original text to remain visible, though in reverse, when the mediating text, layered onto a gallery’s storefront glazing or the installation’s translucent scrims, becomes mediating textile.

Through the old-school form of erasure—razing the surface of the vellum—other architects invited to the drafting table and I create space for new *graphein* while holding traces of what was. All the while, a residue of the performed labor, the debris of destruction, accumulates on the surface, like the piles of rubble of the half-demolished camp buildings that the WRA left behind and remain until today. The vellum holds traces of toner ink or incised pencil lines, combining old and new into a palimpsest. (Figure 2)

In asking how to transform drawing and writing from objects to processes open to iteration, and that reveal their entanglement as vibrant matter, I turn to performances of labor. I embrace and

expose Sisyphean cycles of drawing and erasing, constructing and de-constructing. (Figure 3)

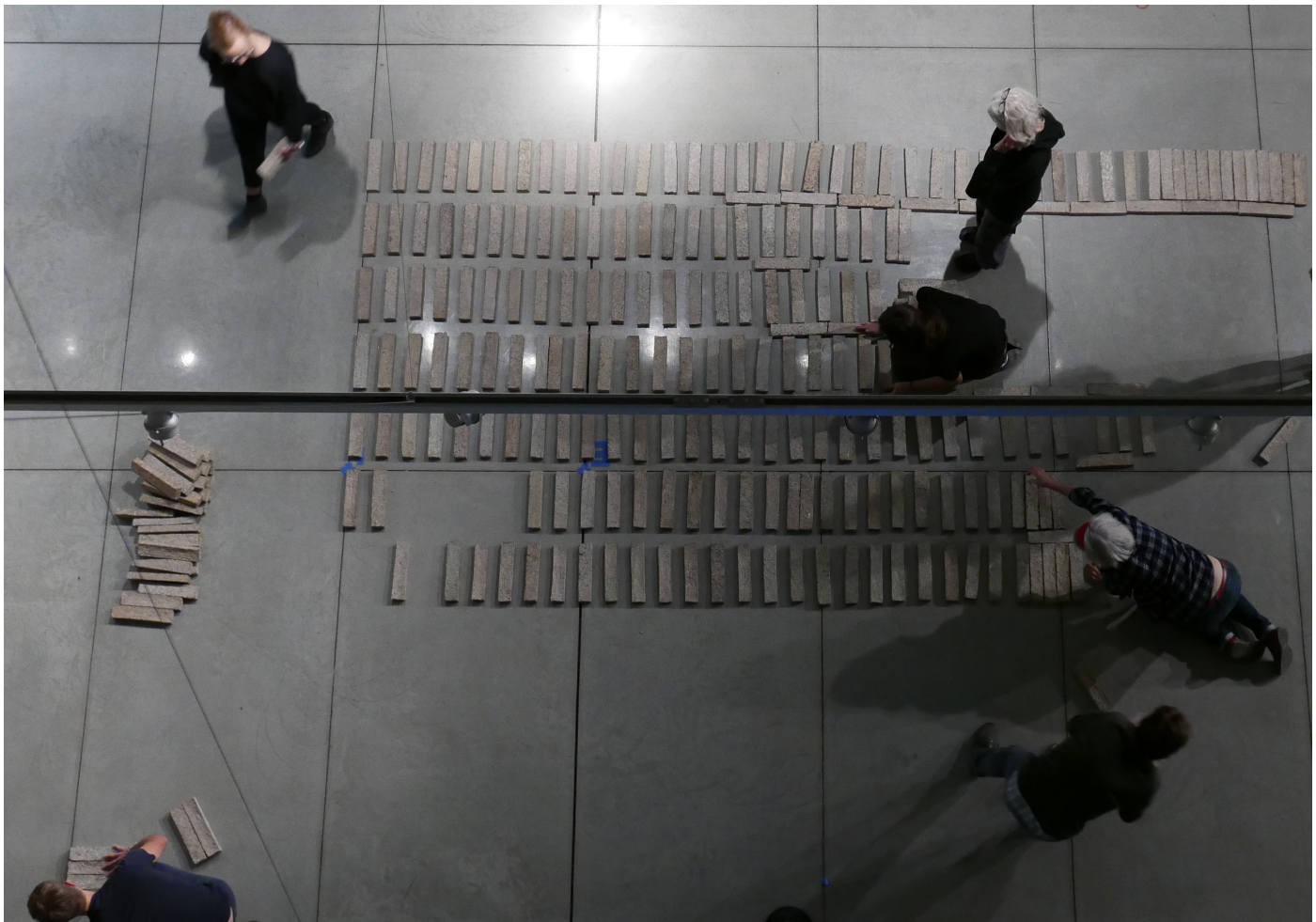
CROSSING BETWEEN MEDIATED, (UN)MEDIATED & PERFORMED

Within the camps “evacuees” provided “unfree” but required labor.²⁷ Of particular interest for my research, given the relation to architecture, performance and invisibility, is the engagement of internees in four camps—Santa Anita and Manzanar in California, Poston and Gila in Arizona—in weaving camouflage for the Army, fabricating scale models of ships for the Navy, and molding adobe bricks for the non-barrack buildings of their own internment camps.

Scalar drawings and models have long been architects’ tools for developing a familiarity with site, spatial ideation and critical reflection. They afford miniature rehearsals of ideas and eventually formulate instructions for performances to occur on site. In theorizing the relationship between site and *Non-Site*—outdoor places of embodied, performed, unmediated labor and “indoor” earthworks—Robert Smithson writes,

Between the actual site... and *The Non-Site* itself exists a space of metaphoric significance. It could be that “travel” in this space is a vast metaphor... Let us say that one goes on a fictitious trip if one decides to go to the site of the *Non-Site*. The “trip”

Figure 3: *Intern[ed]* (2017); constructing the Santa Anita Assembly Center-model with audience participation. Photo: Eduardo Guerrero



becomes invented, devised, artificial; therefore, one might call it a non-trip to a site from a Non-site (Smithson's italics).²⁸

"The complex dialogue," Pamela Lee states, "between (Smithson's) site and *Non-site* is that of the work made in situ... and its synecdochal displacement as an 'indoor' earthwork framed within the space of the gallery: photographic documentation and maps of the site itself, or geographical specimens taken from each place. (Quoting Smithson) 'both are present and absent at the same time'."²⁹ Lee continues, framing Smithson's theorization of entropy

against the backdrop of process art... a theory and practice of the art that concentrated less on the making of an art object that was *formally proper* and *finished* than on an art that reveals the processes of its making, or 'unmaking,' as the case would have it.³⁰

Lee's reference to *unmaking* points to Gordon Matta Clark's performed cutting and excising of building fragments in works such as *Splitting* and *Bingo* (1974). Both these and his subsequent works—in "inaccessible" locations or structures, generally slated for demolition—were performed for still or video camera, thus capturing the disappearing act of the laboring artist in a space destined to disappear. Building upon Smithson's ideas, Matta Clark also displaced excised building fragments to the *Non-Site* of the gallery.

Smithson's exploring "absent and present at the same time," and Matta Clark's performed unmaking of architecture informs the dialogue I am constructing between physically remote sites and temporally inaccessible architectures, between there and here, then and now, miniature and mediated, full scale and embodied. Rather than hold on-site performance apart from *Non-Site* documentation, I am exploring performing the enfolding of *there* and *here*, conflating the space between by reconstructing Santa Anita, Manzanar, Poston and Gila in the virtual space of the computer, and then enacting another kind of trip over the surface of the drawing. Being *there* and *here* through the embodied erasure, and suggested demolition, of the architectures of confinement.

There on site, in the sites of erasure, and in the *Non-Site* of the gallery, I am conflating full-scale and mediated miniature, tasks of architect and builder, laying out the model components, the chalk lines and the building units. Units flip-flop between being the bricks of solitary confinement cells and 1/8th scale models of the barracks. I am exploring the oscillation between a distanced overview, drawing from Bertold Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt*, and the embodied, immersed experience, a theater of cruelty, for which Antonin Artaud argued. (Figures 4 and 5)

It is antithetical to conclude vis-a-vis a work-in-progress. Yet at this point in the project's development, my attention is on the gaps between, between forms of order, in the intervals in the fabric where spaces of representation are emerging. Investigations through workshops with architecture students and faculty are exploring the coming into being and unbecoming of these scale models, as well as full scale spaces, and the fleetingness of both space and performed tasks. I am inviting collaborators and members of the public into the space and the making process. I am welcoming

Figure 5 (below): *Intern[ed]* (2017); conflating site and *Non-Site* construction and deconstruction of models. Video still: Dorsey Kaufmann

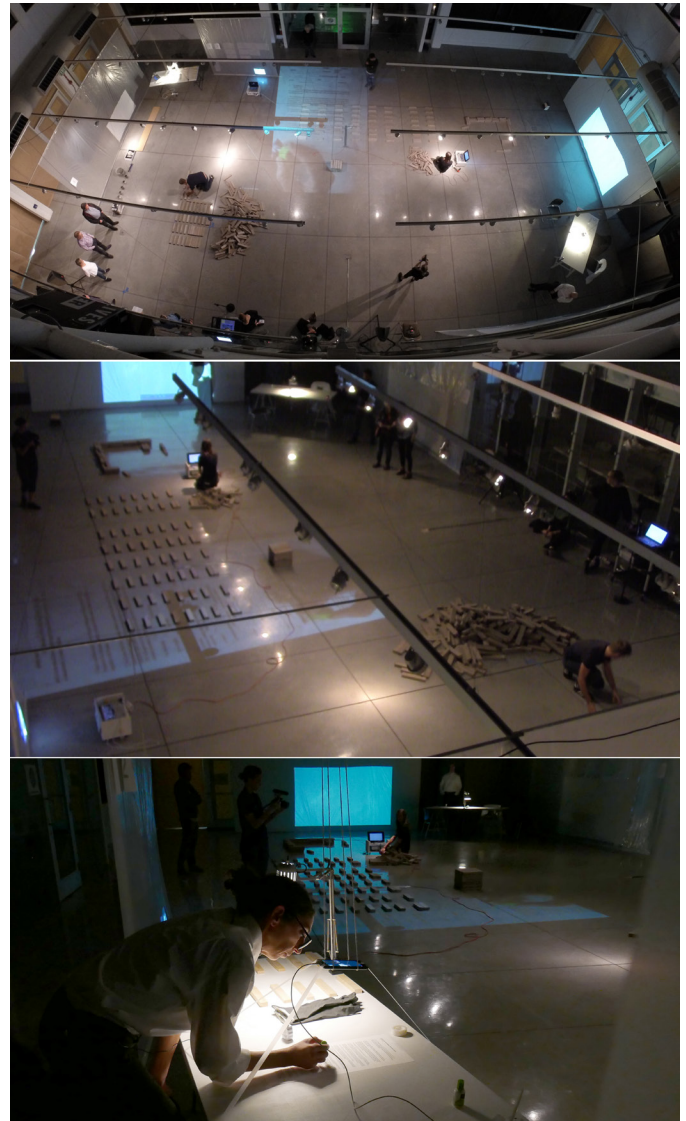


Figure 4 (above): *Intern[ed]*(2017); mediated and unmediated whiting-out, embodied, oblique and planimetric views. Video stills: Kaufmann & Guerrero

relinquishing control. In cracking open the objects to reveal the process, the in-between conditions, the interstices between spaces or interregnums between the orders (and all forms of order, Chantal Mouffe reminds us, are forms of hegemony), I speculate that agency, negotiation, the improvised and unanticipated emerge.³¹ In awaiting feedback from workshop participants and audience members, I ask if the unformed and unbecoming states that ensue in the interval between these standard military orders produce a momentary affect that speaks to the upheaval of lives in the state of exception.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The creative works reflected upon in this essay contribute toward the author's practice-based PhD. For full project credits and acknowledgments please visit architectureagency.wordpress.com/practice/interned/.
- 2 Amy Frearson, "Polish Pavilion Curators Campaign for Better Working Conditions on Building Sites." *Dezeen*, June 1, 2016, <https://www.dezeen.com/2016/06/01/poland-pavilion-fair-building-scaffolding-exhibition-campaign-better-working-conditions-construction-venice-architecture-biennale-2016/>.
- 3 Kadambari Baxi, et al., "Who Builds Your Architecture? A Critical Field Guide." edited by GSAPP, 2017, http://whobuilds.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/WBYA_Guidebook_spreads.pdf.
- 4 Peggy Deamer, *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class, and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).
- 5 Hilary Sample, *Maintenance Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2016), 73.
- 6 I refer to both his contribution (with Mohsen Mostafavi) in *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993) and "Architecture's Unscripted Performance," in *Performative Architecture: Beyond Instrumentality*, edited by Branko Kolarevic and Ali Malkawi (New York: Spon Press, 2005), 6-19.
- 7 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) and Karl Marx, *Capital: Volume 1 A Critique of Political Economy* (London: Penguin Classics, 1973)
- 8 Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008), 36-39.
- 9 Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Continuum, 2004), 14.
- 10 Elin Diamond, "Introduction," in *Performance and Cultural Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 1.
- 11 I refer to both Elizabeth Grosz's *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Writing Architecture Series (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001) and *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 12 Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind E. Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide*. (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books; Distributed by MIT Press, 1997).
- 13 *Personal justice denied: report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians* (Washington, D.C.: The Commission, 1983).
- 14 J. L. Austin, J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. *How to do things with words* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975).
- 15 Jeffery F. Burton et al., "Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites," (National Park Service Western Archeological and Conservation Center: Publications in Anthropology) and Lynne Horiuchi, "Dislocations and Relocations: The Built Environments of Japanese American Internment" (PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 1999, rev. July 2000), 140.
- 16 Horiuchi, 145, 148.
- 17 Ibid., 140, 146.
- 18 Walter A. Ewing, Ph.D. et al., "The Criminalization of Immigration in the United States" (Washington, D.C.: American Immigration Council, 2015).
- 19 Jacob Soboroff and Adam Edelman, "See All 8 Prototypes for Trump's 'Big, Beautiful' Border Wall," *NBC News Online*, October 23, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/see-all-8-prototypes-trump-s-big-beautiful-border-wall-n813346>.
- 20 Title 8, Chapter 12, Subchapter Ii, Part IX, Section 1357 (US Government Printing Office, 2011).
- 21 Official Website of the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, accessed 12 October 2017, <https://www.ice.gov/detention-facilities>.
- 22 Agamben, *Means without End*, 3-7.
- 23 Moira Roth, "The Aesthetic of Indifference." *Artforum* 16, no. 3 (Nov. 1977): 46-51.
- 24 Moira Roth and Jonathan D. Katz, *Difference/Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013).
- 25 Sean Lowry, "Ghosted Forms." In *Erasure: The Spectre of Cultural Memory*, edited by Brad Buckley and John Conomos (Faringdon, Oxfordshire: Libri Publishing, 2015).
- 26 Though not central to this project, I acknowledge Mark Wigley's reflection on white-wash, *Ripolin*, and other whitening and homogenizing materials and processes discussed in *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).
- 27 Horiuchi, 155.
- 28 Robert Smithson, "Selected Writings by Robert Smithson: A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites." <https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm>.
- 29 Pamela M. Lee and Gordon Matta-Clark, *Object to Be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 37-38.
- 30 Ibid., 39.
- 31 Chantal Mouffe and Elke Wagner, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London; New York: Verso, 2013), 14.