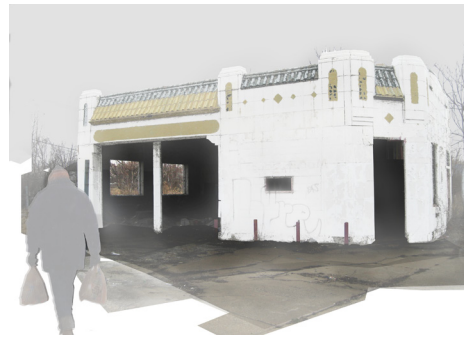


THE LOCAL MODERN RUIN



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ABSTRACT

In the last century, Western society has seen the introduction of post-industrial sites into the rankings of ruins. Romantic notions introduced in previous centuries have allowed us to transform the relics of the industrial movement into objects of reflection. The current popularity of Manhattan's High Line Park and Germany's Duisburg-Nord attests to the benefits the re-purposing of the ruins provides to the public.

In this project I examine the possibilities of bringing the benefit of the ruin landscape into the context of the working-class neighborhood. The project's focus is on gas stations for they are commonly available sites in these neighborhoods, preserved by their own contamination and solid stature. These ruins give rise to different connotations than the post-industrial ruins of New York the Ruhr and therefore are approached with additional social sensitivity. This approach still takes inspiration from the precedent sites, but attempts to apply the methods in a way that is appropriate to the different histories, forms, neighbors and local economics of the local ruins. In turn, a visibly different landscape arises that is flexible and productive, providing a new setting for the safe reflection of modern society's history and ephemerality.

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INTRODUCTION

In the landscapes of modern society there often can be found the remnants of past industries that have either been left behind by technological advances or changes in the needs of the community. This time of idleness permits slow decay to show its signs on the architecture and engineered structures of these sites, inviting the possibility that these relics no longer are defined by their past purposes, but instead gain the title of ruins. Although they clearly differ from the Classical ruins celebrated in the Picturesque Movement of 18th and 19th centuries, the tinge of Romanticism left in Western Society drives us to find the emotional qualities of the ruin in structures that hint of the past or show visible signs of loss. Contemporary architects and landscape architects have already employed the appeal of ruins to incorporate post-industrial relics into the landscape. Germany's Duisburg-Nord, designed by Latz + Partner, and Seattle's Gas Works Park, designed by Richard Haag, transformed the landscape around industrial relics to create a space for the public that reveals the past programs of the site in a safe context. These are amazing landscapes in their own right, enjoyed by locals and tourists, yet the massiveness of the industrial plants, the historical zoning of industrial production and the cost of repurposing the landscape make these opportunities of repurposing the industrial ruin unique to these locations.

How can the same benefits be brought into the realm of the average urban citizen? Working class neighborhoods have a different genre of decommissioned objects. These local ruins have different histories, different connotations and different qualities. The reuse of ruins in these settings requires attention to these differences and how they can effect the landscape. This will increase the possibility of an appropriate landscape that brings the benefits of the ruins, experienced by the people of Manhattan, Seattle and the Ruhr, to the lower income neighborhoods.

By studying the examples of the modern ruins, we can discern the unique methods these sites call for because of their place in history and our communities. Contemporary artists, who address the derelict site, provide additional insight into the specific issues the artist chose to address and how these issues are approached. Design of the modern ruin requires exploring the ways in which they are able to evoke similar emotions as historical ruins, and how these emotions can influence their design.

THE HISTORIC (PRECEDENTS)

When approaching the subject of modern ruins it is imperative to examine the position ruins have historically had in Western Society. We must examine how they were used, the meaning they've held and how this meaning has evolved in Western Society as seen in design, art and architecture. This analysis includes how the portrayal of ruins affect our emotions and at the same time how our emotions shape the designs that portray ruins. The institutional attraction to ruins in Western Society is seen in the paintings of the 17th century and grew into the English Romantic Movement spanning the 18th and 19th century. The aesthetic of the melancholy, ugly and grotesque has long had a presence in humanity. It has appeared in the earlier artistic expressions of European civilizations, in the dramas of the ancient Greeks and the gargoyles of the Middle Ages. The popularity of the ruin, emerging in the 16th century, is recognized as a break from the past, ushering Romantic era where the aesthetic gained new heights. Artists spoke in one voice, exalting the appreciation of ruins and what they offer as spaces for experiencing the past and remembering our own ephemerality. Artists acknowledged the beauty of decay in the ruin and its capacity to provoke emotions, making it the chosen backdrop of the Romantic Movement. The school of Picturesque created a new visual context that permitted the safe enjoyment of ruins—objects that traditionally evoked sources anxiety (death, destruction, the

fragility of civilizations). With the emotional guidance of the Romantic Movement, these sites were now safe to view. The trend grew as artists conveyed images of fallen Rome and Greece to the English population, and those with means traveled to Rome to experience the ruins through the new eyes of the picturesque. The enthusiasm for ruins during this period became indiscriminate, just as artists found joy in the ancient arches of the fallen Roman Empire, so were they also enraptured by the fallen Abbeys and Castles in their own land, seen in work such as J.M.W. Turner's Tintern Abbey. These images were translated into the new gardens of England which differed dramatically from the utilitarian gardens of past centuries. These were no longer the pleasure gardens of the middle ages that produced food for the household, acted as a rooms to entertain, or had a unique cultural identity. The picturesque garden was instead created by the wealthy to be a place of visual solitary reflection instead of social activity it no longer represented the local culture but instead featured hints of ancient cultures mixed in a landscape removed from local cultural time. The emotional state brought on by the reflection of ruins was celebrated across the arts. Western culture was flooded with paintings, etchings and poems conveying the qualities of ruins. Philip York's descriptions from his visit of the picturesque garden of Studley Royal that housed the ruins of the Fountains Abbey beautifully portrays the new attraction.

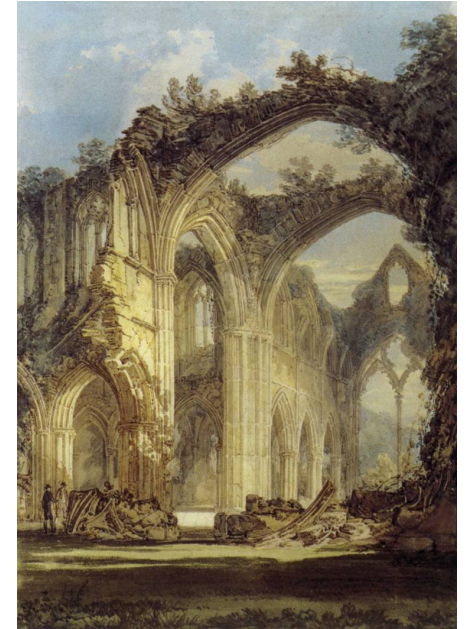


fig.1.1

*Where Prayers were read and pious Anthems sung,
New Heaps of Rubbish the Apartments throng.
Up roofless Walls the clasping Ivy creeps,
Where many a Bird of Prey in Safety sleeps.*

Philip York, 1744¹

The believed innate reactions to ruins beginning in the Romantic period, caused philosophers to join artists in the interpretation of the ruin's typologies. Edmund Burke in the 18th century delved into the study of the sublime, giving it significance because it deviated from traditional aesthetics by being instead that which conjures up the delightful emotion of terror. This principle lives on as the sublime persists in the current works of art and architecture. Along with the sublime, the other influential school of thought on aesthetics during this period was the Picturesque. Uvedale Price studied our attraction to ruins by arguing that, if beauty is "evoked by order and symmetry, propriety and good proportions" then once the effects of time wear away these qualities, what is left to attracts us is "neither grand nor beautiful" but can only be called picturesque². The picturesque was the setting that subsided the melancholy of the ruin, allowing safe reflection on decay and temporality, culminating in a moral lesson. Ruins teach us about our own susceptibility to time and the fragility of civilizations, and in the 18th century this was a vital experience. The English populace was in the dawn of modernity, in a world quickly moving forward and removing itself by time and technology from the history of these sites. Ruins allowed the citizens of Western Society the occasion to reflect on past civilizations and the slower movements of time caused by natural processes, and by doing so, find a historic and moral anchor in a time when the rapidly changing world in which they lived was very unfamiliar.

1 Hunt, *Gardens and the picturesque: studies in the history of landscape architecture*, 182.

2 Mallgrave, "Uvedale Price," 307-312.

Our eyes have always turned to ruins to find some form of meaning in them, but the fervent romanticization of ruins arose with the arrival of modernity, possibly because, as Murphy states, “Ruins of the past are only preserved in a world obsessed with the future”.³ As our society speeds up with exponential advancements in technology we see the number of years diminish between when the byproducts—the architecture and infrastructure—of industry are decommissioned and when they begin to attract the eye of the artist searching for signs of ruins. The artist continues the centuries old tradition of romanticization, causing us to look for signs of decay or reminders of the past.

3 Murphy, *The necessity for ruins: the role of the monument in the media age*, 14.

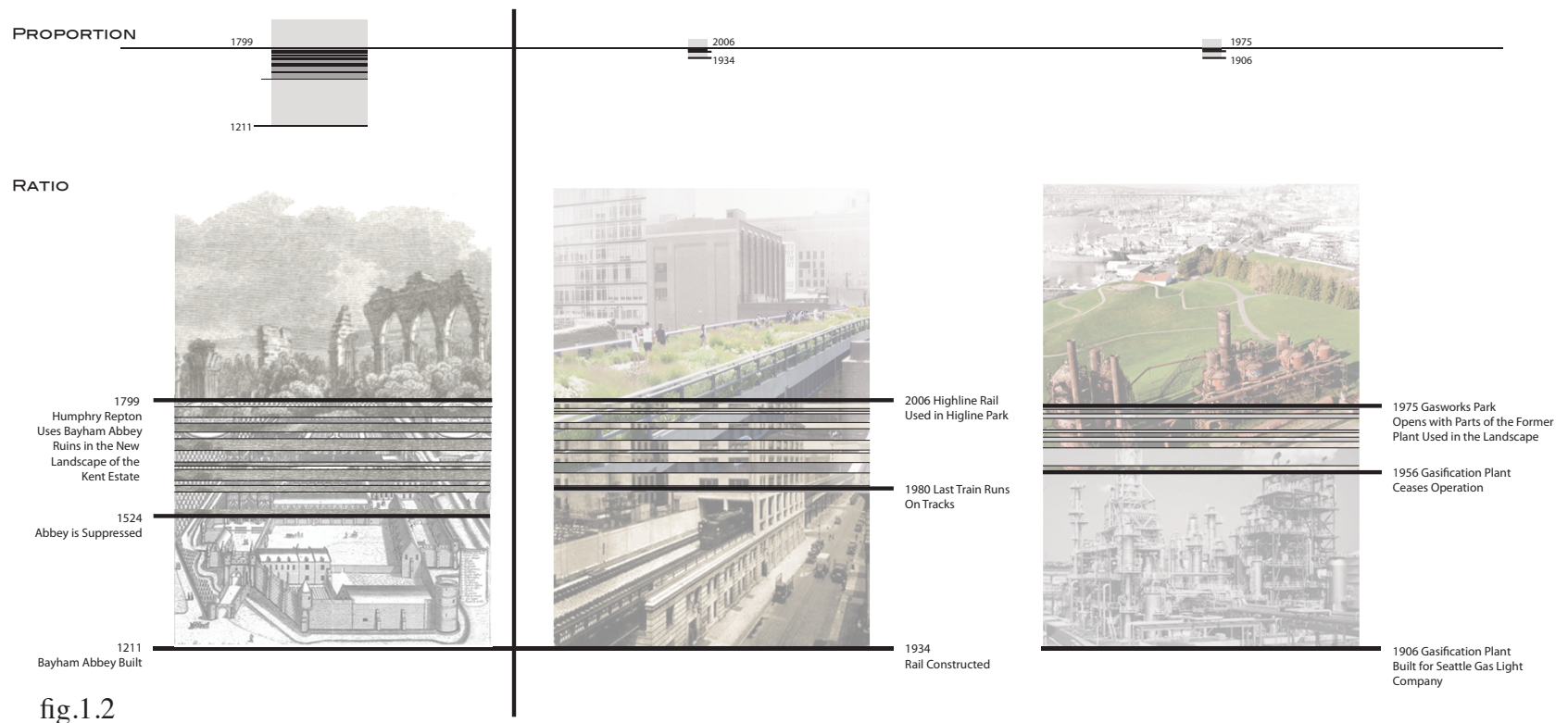


fig.1.2

In 1524 the English ruin of the Bayham Abbey were recognized by the landscape designer Humphry Repton as romantic features that could be used in the new landscape. The freestanding Gothic arches no longer were seen as dispensable remains of England's 16th century Reformation, but instead, they were ruins made beautiful by their melancholy whispers of past eras and their gentle yieldings to the effects of time. Almost three centuries had passed before the ruins were seen through new eyes. The object remained unchanged, instead the change was in the viewer's interpretation.

Richard Haag, in the 20th century, joined the ranks of the Romantic Poets when he wrote his evaluation of the post-industrial relics of Seattle's Gas Plant. He described the Gas Plant as the ruin where "towers were ferro-forests and their brooding presence became the most sacred symbols"⁴, This suggested the feeling of fear essential to the sublime. New York City's reuse of post-industrial ruins in High Line Park (designed by James Corner Field Operations and Dither Scofidio + Renfro) demonstrates the contemporary application of the picturesque seen with the intrusion of nature into the man-made structure. Attentive care is administered to the parks "wild" vegetation, planted between the rails of the raised tracks to conjure up the romance of ruins. Although similar emotions arise, and similar techniques are used in these modern ruins as the historical ruins, we now see the structure remaining dormant for less than 3 decades before the sentiment and techniques are applied.

4 Reed, *Groundswell*, 25.



fig.1.3

Between the construction of Humphry Repton's Bayham Abbey landscape in 1799 and the construction of Haag's Gas Works Park in 1975, civilization had changed with the experienced of the Industrial Revolution. This was the start of a society that would be perpetually becoming and shaped by exponential technological progress. This progress leaves in it's wake the remains of the industries that have been made obsolete by society's advancement. These objects, which not to long ago were part of our daily lives, our employment, and our identity as a developed nation, now lie stagnant in our cities and neighborhoods. The industry may still be considered part of our modern society, but its decommissioned structures are considered objects of the past, no longer needed for their original purpose and not assigned a new one. The present activities of these objects is reduced to slowly succumbing to the effects of time and fashioned into a modern ruin. The modern ruin is a derelict site of modern society holding the romantic capacity of the ruins of the past as captured by the Picturesque and Sublime Movements. The signs of time are apparent on the modern ruin— the building can shows signs of loss, be invaded by unruly vegetation, or reveal the natural processes of decay in its materials—while simultaneously retaining a place in the modern world as a player in our recent changing history and innovations.

This trend of accelerated progress continues today, causing consumer products to become obsolete and leaving empty box buildings in our retail neighborhoods. The contaminated sites, such as the pre-regulation gas station, make it difficult for the properties to be redeveloped, as a result the ruins remain. The ventures of capitalism ensure that this trend will continue, at least into the near future, and the likelihood of an increasing number of derelict sites in our cities makes it important to find an approach for reclaiming these spaces. The choices are either demolition and redevelopment or to find opportunities the ruin's reuse.

THE MODERN (PRECEDENTS)

Seattle's Gasworks Park, Manhattan's High Line Park, and Germany's Duisburg-Nord, a converted coal and steel production plant, can give some insight into the approach modern designers have already taken with post-industrialism ruins. These landscapes reveal how the influence of romanticism carried through into modern design and how they have evolved to differ from the landscapes of previous centuries. The modern ruin still celebrates the experiences of the ephemeral and the sublime, but dissimilarities between past and present are also accounted for in the design. It is attentive to the altered relationship these sites have with their public and the effects their recent histories have had on the local community, either by acting as employer, or shaping the local landscape into one of production and byproducts. The local's relation with the industrial and post-industrial property has given it a forbidden status. This is a result of the sites unknown and known dangers as well as its former and current exclusionary access. Danger, uncertainty, disorder and the uncanny cause the modern ruin to differ from the ruins of the melancholy Picturesque landscape, yet these are the emotions of the sublime, resulting in the site returning to the disposition of the Romanticism.

The scale of the industrial plant has an additional effect on the design apart from making it sublime, it also influences their physical location in our cities and towns. The relics of manufacturing are not present throughout the city as an intricate part of the urban fabric, but were instead confined to specific zones or even to neighboring towns. Like the Gothic ruins of England, these are not articles found in the residential neighborhoods or the average city center. In the English landscape, ruins were found on the estates, and the repurposing of these structures had a high cost. Similarly, the cost of the post-industrial landscape is not feasible to the average working-class neighborhood and the ruins are not available.

The cost of the first two phases of transforming the raised rail in west side Manhattan to a High Line Park had the price of \$152 million dollars, \$44 million of this was raised by local non-profits and corporate services. In addition, \$3.5-4.5 million was estimated in 2009 as the cost to maintain the park, \$1.5-3 million of which is expected to be paid by the nonprofit group Friends of the High Line.⁵ The High Line has the benefit of running through Manhattan neighborhoods that make an averages household income of \$145 thousand and \$176 thousand a year, it resides in a city with the highest density in the US, and it has the support of New York City’s Mayor Boomburg’s, who made the park part of his political agenda.⁶ Duisburg-Nord was a project made possible by total public funding with the intention of creating an international attraction that will bring revenue to the Ruhr area. These landscapes are welcome symbols of the Nation’s public park initiative and of innovative landscape design. High Line and Duisburg-Nord are a great benefit to the residents of Manhattan and Duisburg, and they can serve as lessons for the creation of a modern ruin that will benefit neighborhoods with less average income, density and funding.

FOR THE WORKING CLASS (NEIGHBORHOODS)

The success and beauty of High Line Park has encouraged advocates to hope that its model will inspire replicas across the nation similar to the influence Central Park had in the 19th century. Critics have argued that this undertaking would not be feasible to many other cities other than New York. Chelsea and the Meat Packing districts are unique in their plethora of historic buildings, high density and wealth, all participants in making High Line Park successful.⁷ Instead, the differences between Manhattan and the working class cities and communities should guide our selection of the more democratic modern ruins.

5 Calder, “Park officials Say Cost to Maintain New High-Line Park will be \$4.5M per Year.”

6 “New York Quickfacts”

7 Rybczynki, “Bringing the High Line Back to Earth.”

Changing the project to the reuse of smaller sites would increase the likelihood for the ruin landscape to be implemented in lower income neighborhoods. A smaller site would lower the cost of decontamination and the construction of other safety measures that are typically required. In conjunction, the smaller scale modern ruin is more likely to be found in our neighborhoods and city centers, making them available to the average urban community. These small sites are currently invisible, ignored or held in contempt by members of the community as they stand unproductive and undesirable on street corners and vacant lots. Their reuse requires that this perception be altered and that they be made visible and productive again with the tools of design. The threat of demolition is not unique to the modern ruin, in 1709 the architect John Vanbrugh fought in the hopes of preserving the Gothic remains of Woodstock Manor. Vanbrugh argued that the removal of the Manor “will only remove an Ill Object but not produce a good One.”⁸ The modern ruin rescued from demolition and oblivion has the ability to become the “good object” in the urban landscape, that is, it has the ability to provide the public with the instruments for honest reflections.

“In our haste to destroy and rebuild we have lost the awareness of the patient,
deliberate, and often beautiful wearing away of stone by time-the fascination of decay”

Paul Zucker⁹

When the intention is to create a modern ruins for the working class neighborhoods, rather than the neighborhoods of Manhattan’s West End, then the subject arises of the difference between the communities’ understanding of their ruins. Ruins of the lower income community differ from ruins of the precedent contemporary and historic landscapes because they are not remnants left from a society that has moved onto new religions (the post-

8 Mallgrave, “John Vanbrugh,” 230-231.

9 Zucker, *Fascination of decay*, 249.

reformation in England), civilizations (classical to modern), or industries (industrial to post-industrial in New York City), instead the industry and the effects of its presents (or more often it's relocation) are still very much a part of the communities lives. This is most apparent in the city of Detroit with the departure of the automotive industry, but it is also seen in many other American cities and towns. In these cases the citizens do not have the luxury to chose to remember or not to remember the history of their ruins, because it is known all to well. The Picturesque Movement testifies to the ability of artistic intervention to transform this memory into a safe experience of reflection, *if* we are able to recognize the qualities of ruin in the remains.

WHERE (RUINS LIE IN THE URBAN CONTEXT)

The more intimate understanding our society has with modern ruins does not necessarily eradicate the presence of the ambiguous ruin in the American cityscape. We still have the opportunity to come across the unknown structure with fallen bricks or eroding concrete walls, although they are not common objects in the average American city. The fallen ruins are instead prevalent in the shrinking cities of America, that are often haunted by the ghosts of their industrial past permitted to remain only by the lack of population and commerce. In *The New American Ghetto* Vergara exposed the presence of similar ruins in cities not necessarily associated with the misfortunes of Detroit and the rustbelt. His photo-documentary toured the cities of Los Angeles and Brooklyn, revealing the communities' misfortunes and its visual effects.¹⁰ The true history of these relics may not be common knowledge, but they are still recognized as the remains of local modern society.

We define these sites by ambiguously placing them in the context of history as well as placing them in the

10 Vergara, *The new American ghetto*.

present context of space and activity. Sola-Morales Rubio called them *terrain vague* and described them as places where “the memory of the past seems to predominate over the present(.....)existing outside the city’s effective circuits and productive structure”.¹¹

In the working-class neighborhoods of most cities the commonly found *terrain vague* is the site that once acted as a gas station. These are often structures that remains intact, preserved by their own means. The gas station typically harbors steel storage tanks underground that leak contaminates onto the site, making the cost of development undesirable to entrepreneurs. In the thriving city of San Francisco there are over one hundred leaking underground storage tanks left from a variety of industries. In the city of Oakland, with less fiscal means than its neighbor, there can be found over two hundred leaking underground storage tanks according to the CA government state water resource control board. Gas stations scattered throughout the city are currently the spaces of uncomfortable uncertainty, but according to Sola-Morales Rubio, this also carries with it the quality of being “the space of the possible, of expectation.”¹²

The obliteration of these urban outcasts are increasingly taking place as a result of the new Brownfield Legislation where liability is removed from new purchasers or owners of contaminated sites. These lots are being replaced by modern sites of development and brought back into the “city’s effective circuits and productive structures.” This is often beneficial in lower income neighborhoods, but the removal of the ruin also results in the removal of the opportunities of an unregulated space of the past and instead become yet another space consisting of boundaries and eternal presence.

11 Davidson, and Sola-Morales Rubio. “Terrain Vague,” 120.

12 Davidson, Cynthia C. and Ignasi Sola-Morales Rubio, “Terrain Vague.”, 120.

The necessity of preservation is congruent with the necessity for “reflection” and “restoration” in modern society. We still find the opportunity for reflection when viewing derelict sites and we look for the qualities in a structure that allow us to realize a ruin. The large quantity of photography coming from Detroit attest to this. Artists such as Andrew Moore and Sean Hemmerie, hunt down occasions of the exposed rough surface and the asymmetrical product of decay— the visible signs of transience.

Gas stations and similar local decommissioned buildings already are seen as of *terrain vague* in the minds of the community, yet they also have the possibilities of the ruin, which can be capitalized on by design. To justify the reuse of the structure we must examine in what ways can we recognize the feeling of ruins in these sites (since the Romantic Movement trained us to look for an emotional reaction to recognize the characteristics of ruins).

WHAT (IS RECOGNIZED)

Modern and historic ruins have a similarity in their figure to ground ratio. This ratio removes the structure from the setting of the city and gives the viewer the chance to redefine it outside of the urban context. Isolation provides room for reflection as the mind and body are free to move about the space. The qualities shared with the Classical ruins are most obviously seen in the missing proportions

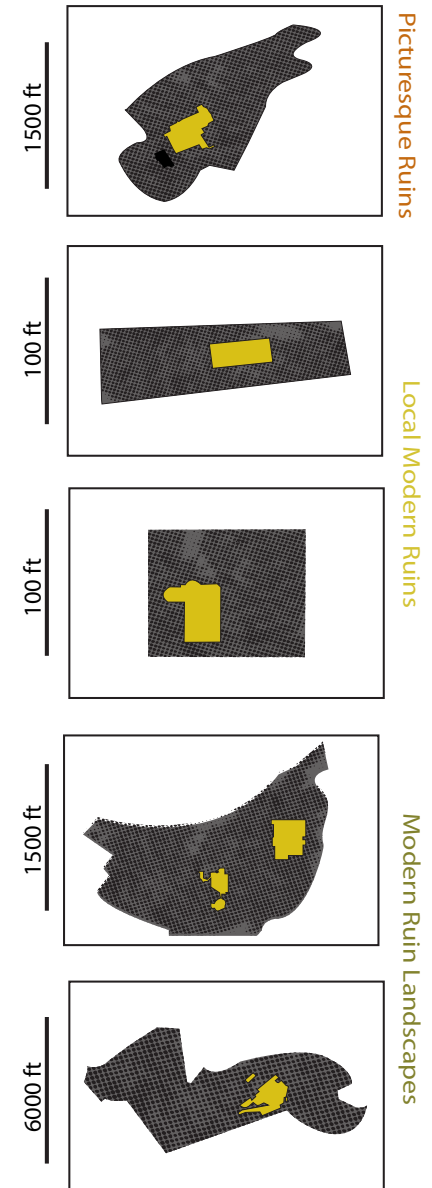


fig.5.1

of architecture. A variety of emotions are assigned to the varying transition of forms between when a building might be seen as a piece of architecture fallen into disrepair and when it becomes an empty lot. At some point the form is no longer that of a building, but has transformed into a ruin. It has become a standing structure evoking the sublime felt in its scale and dark voids. As the architecture diminishes, the state of picturesque arises to reveal the landscape that encompasses and permeate the ruins and the feeling of loss prevails while fear subsides. The historical context of the building may be known, or guessed, but is usually unnecessary for the site to have meaning.

The intact structure is disqualified from the designation of ruin using the previous technique. In these sites there instead is the element of the sublime allowed for by its familiarity. In a gas station we feel the thrill of entering a once forbidden space. This is a result from either the sites current contaminated and dangerous conditions or of its historical restricted public access to certain areas. With the barriers now gone, the space of the gas station is now open to the thrill of liberated movement and activity.

HOW (THEY ARE VIEWED AND APPROACHED)

Knowledge of a modern ruin's history can result in a variety of interpretations and emotional responses. The ruins of Detroit, though romanticized by photographers, artists and tourists, have different connotation to many local citizens. In *The New American Ghetto*, Vergara's interactions with the Detroit residents revealed that the locals perceive these derelict sites as "proof that the world is down on you", and symbols of the white population deserting the city and the government's lack of concern.¹³ There is a term in Detroit for the photography of these objects—Ruin Porn—associating the photographing of the ruins of Detroit to an industry of vice.

13 Vergara, *The new American ghetto*.

This cynicism is not unique to the shrinking city of Detroit, but was also expressed with the first of the modern ruin landscapes. When Haag suggested the use of the decommissioned gasification plant in Seattle the residents of the city fought against it because they viewed the industrial plant as a blemish on the cities skyline. Haag recognized the qualities of ruin in these structures and he also recognized the importance of the public's perception, therefore he repurposed much of the site to make a benevolent landscape with open fields for recreation and events and vibrantly colored machinery for climbing. These new provisions cause the public to reevaluate the remaining industrial ruins and see them in a a new light as beneficial.

In modern culture another example of the designed historical relics is the heritage industry. Although it reuses similar sites, it has a contrasting approach to the landscapes of modern ruins. It instead suspends the landscape and architecture in a chosen period in time, where the designer determines when and what to remember. The modern ruin is contrary to this, since it doesn't dictate an interpretation but allows it to be subjective. The modern ruins of the precedent sites are not replications of historical times, but are designed to reveal what exists of the past, the changes caused by time, as well as how the activities and wishes of the community have shaped the landscape.

Yet another approach often taken with the post-industrial site is the "historical" landscape that erases the previous forms to build an anew with vague references to the site's history. This technique was used in the landscape of Parc Andre Citroen with the reclamation of the land formerly housing Citroen automobile manufacturing plant in Paris. The Parc is criticized for having eradicated the landscape's history apart from its name. There now exists a contemporary French garden in its place based on the themes of: artifice, architecture, movement and nature with no signs of the past. This approach leave the public no opportunity to juxtapose the past with the present, an opportunity that would have given a new dimension of appreciation for the changed landscape.

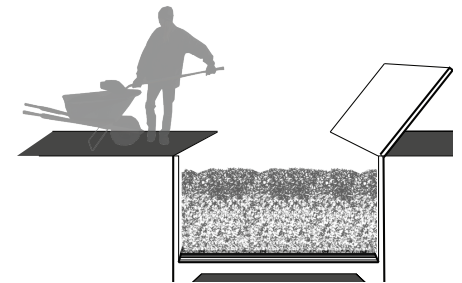
THE MODERN (APPROACH)

In the precedent projects of the modern ruin landscape, the design quality of honesty is in the forefront. Gas Works Park and Duisburg-Nord leaves pronounced signs of the industrial past, to show the landscape's origins. The modern ruin avoid the often fraudulently made distinctions between the natural and the man-made. This is a pitfall produced by the picturesque garden's heritage that is often applied to many landscapes regardless of their history, making them artificially natural. Instead the modern ruin projects celebrate the manufactured foundation on which the landscape is built. The grid of trees and geometric designs distinctly demonstrate the newly implemented vegetation from when the park was constructed. This contrast with the volunteer plants on site that are the product of exotic seeds brought with the imported aggregate material when the site was in production, and allowed to flourish when it wasn't. To design the honest landscape of the modern ruin is to not eliminate the memory of the landscape, as was done with the development of Parc Andre Citron. Instead, Latz + Partner and Haag pioneered the reuse of the existing in an innovative multilayered approach.

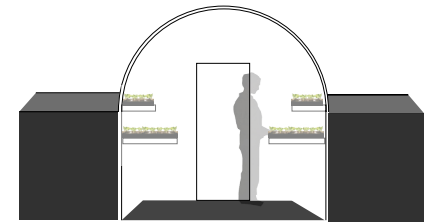
The multifaceted designs of modern ruins deviates from the visually driven landscapes of historic ruins. Now, the landscape is designed using the tools of modern science, technology, and social and historic awareness. Pollution and degradation of the post-industrial landscape made it necessary to integrate science into the shaping and construction of the site. The field of phytoremediation introduces a new plant palette, chosen for their ability to remove contaminants from water and soil. The grids of poplars seen in Gas Works Park and Duisburg-Nord are there not only for the traditional reasons of aesthetics and shade, but also to remove contaminants from the soil. In Gas Works Park the process of bio-phytoremediation converted a toxic waste dump into a 60 foot grass covered mound. Similar opportunities arise in the decommissioned gas station, since they often require the removal of leaking underground

storage tanks followed by capping or soil and groundwater remediation. This procedure leaves behind a cavity in the ground, varying in size by the number of tanks and their storage capacity (traditionally 500, 1000, or 5000 gallons).¹⁴ To design *with* this truthful feature of the landscape and its history, instead of eliminating it, would be to envision the cavity as a design opportunity ready for repurposing. Awareness of the public's perception and knowledge of a site can also be a tool applied in the design of the local ruin. The known previous functions of the ruined articles allow for the designer to use reinterpretation and emotional response as design tools. This was applied in Duisburg-Nord, where divers can experience the thrill of submerging themselves in the waters of the old industrial gas tanks. Common knowledge of the gas station includes the conventional circulation of vehicles, pedestrians and goods through the grounds. In Portland the opportunities created by the previous vehicle based circulation in the empty lots supplied the food carts economy with a home. Portland currently has over 600 food carts registered in the city and the trend is now extending into the retail industry with several vintage clothing stores turned mobile. Many of these carts have found permanent homes on the lots, transforming the *terrain vague* into an outdoor food court for the public, decorated with hanging strings of lights and clusters of tables.

Compost



Greenhouse



Storage

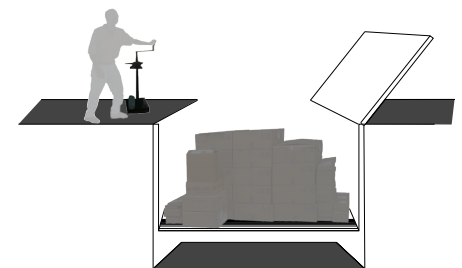


fig.7.1

14 Siudyla, Project Geologist Environmental Division Director ACC Environmental Consultants, Phone interview.

The gas station has the same historical theme of circulation, meant to be conveniently located for minimal interruption of daily activities. In the last half a century the need for gas stations and garages has diminished as the technology of cars improves. The remaining successful gas stations are often located in clusters off of the freeway while the neighborhood locations go out of business or adapted to the demand of the community by providing food and convenient store goods. This not only attests to the availability of these sites, but also to the needs of the community that can be approached in their reuse.

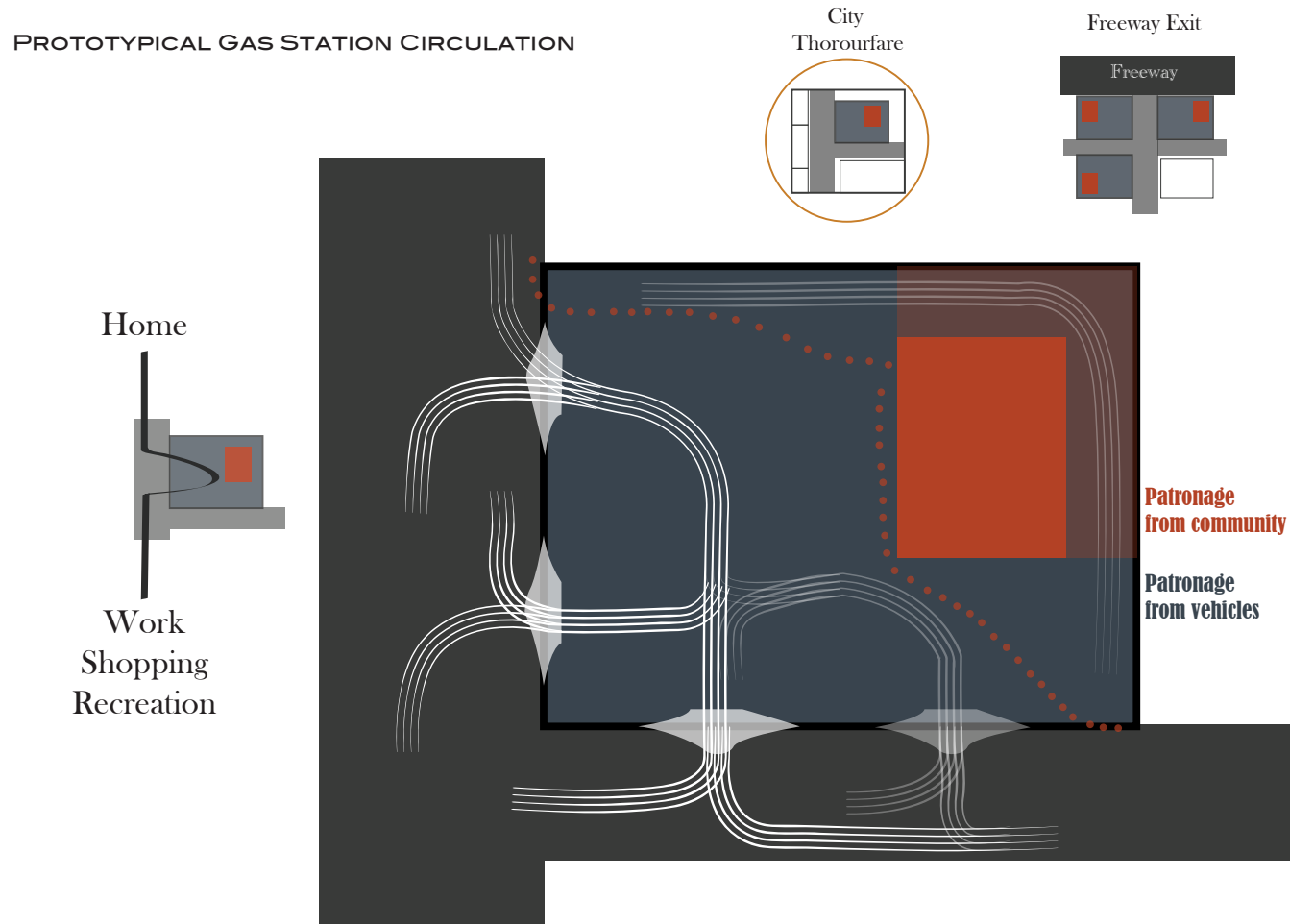


fig.7.2

THE PRODUCTIVE (SPACE)

The design principle of creating a landscape for the benefit of the populace was in practice over a century ago in Olmsted's Central Park. The difference in the contemporary landscapes is that the default is no longer limited to designs of serpentine paths, expansive lawns or quaint gazebos. The contemporary democratic landscape is capable of being more than passively productive, it can now be materially and economically productive as well. These productive landscape enables the site to move into the future, no longer entirely sitting on the side lines of time, causing the image of the site transforms from a symbol of a downtrodden community to a symbol of invigoration. This new found meaning permits the public to experience the melancholy of memory and temporality in the ruin left on site, since it is now softened by the accompanying benevolent landscape.

The productive landscape in the urban neighborhood has often been that of community gardens—food being a universal and basic necessity, and gardens being easily constructed. The advantage of food based production is that it can spread into the community. The production is not limited to the site if it produces for distribution (seedlings, compost). This can result in residential gardens appearing across the community.

More innovative approaches are demonstrated in the designs of Cedric Price, who in 1964 proposed reprogramming the infrastructure of a declined industrial sector of Staffordshire England to one of higher education. This design included portable classrooms traveling on the old potteries rail network, and temporary classrooms built in the post-industrial towns along its route. The reuse of the former industry was intended to encourage education and economic adaptation in the towns effected by the shift from skilled to formally educated labor. *The Pottery Thinkbelt* employed the ruins left in the struggling communities to encourage economic productivity for the citizens— a program that the local modern ruin should strive for.



MOBILE GROCERY STORE

OPEN PUBLIC SPACE

GREEN HOUSES IN
PREVIOUS TANK
CAVITIES

fig.8.1

In the working class neighborhoods of East London, Price proposed yet another opportunity for community growth in his “university of the streets”—the *Fun Palace*. Its objective was to create educational opportunities in the guise of fun, adapting the user to the changes in modern industry. The structure was capable of being manipulated to various forms and spectacles bases on the user’s wishes and actions. Walls and prefabricated modules were to be attached to cranes, ready to form new spaces and to dissolve the traditional constraints and boundaries in architecture.

THE FLEXIBLE (SPACE)

The power of Fun Palace is that it was malleable architecture, able to be manipulated by the public to cater to their needs and desires. In its simplest form the flexible space has traditionally associated with the Piazza of Italy. Without requiring the complexity of the modules and cranes of Fun Palace, the Piazza instead acts as a blank canvas used throughout history for markets, events or leisure. Similar provision is in the expansive lawns of Gas Works Park where the public has free range of the space to interpret as they wish. This leads to features of the landscape taking on new meaning as a result of the public’s activities, such as the use of the 60 foot mound eventually converting it into “Kite Hill”. The blank canvas can be ground, horizontal, or vertical planes. Duisburg-Nord displays this flexibility in the vertical concrete surfaces that turn into climbing walls each day the local climbing club meets. Flexible space is productive space, for it is able to transform with needs and desires of the user. In the lower income neighborhood the flexible space can encourage informal economies, promoting economic growth.

These attributes of ruins, freeing it from the rigid confines of the typical urban space, have been known to encourage the works of artists. The unregulated and ambiguous *terrain vague* attracts the artists’ unregulated vocations, whether graffiti, sculpture, or guerilla gardening. The work of Gordon Matta-Clark celebrated this freedom

of activity allowed in the derelict site with Cherry Tree planted in the basement of an old industrial building. Matta-clark's blend of artistic expression and ruined architecture drew attention to the reuse and enlivening of forgotten spaces. Contemporary activists practice guerrilla gardening to beautify the parts of the city forgotten by the maintenance activities of the city officials. The act of planting, and the growing display of color and life that results, is a simple statement of reclamation that launches the sight out of oblivion.

Vivid colors are also used in textiles and painted materials for the same reason. The Heildenberg Project in Detroit started in 1986 with a few polkadots painted on the side of a building. The project grew to include found objects and to eventually employ the entire street, transfiguring the term "the street" from its negative connotation to one of artistic expression. Four decades earlier Gordon Matta-clark used his artistic techniques to reinterpret derelict architecture. He practiced "discrete violations" on dilapidated buildings by removing fragments of the building to newly reveal the structure's spaces and materials. His "discrete violations" were intended to show the truth of the architecture, to disintegrate boundaries and broaden the human experience.

The importance principle practiced by Matta-clark of exposing the materials, and revealing the spaces of the structure is a quality typically associated with ruins. Matta-clark took this approach of revealing loss and space in the architecture, which is generally seen the ruin as a product of the natural processes of decay, and with



fig.9.1

completion through removal
completion through collapse
completion in emptiness

Gordon Matta-clark



VEHICLE ACCESS
FOR FOOD CARTS

PHYTOREMEDIATION
POPLARS

VEGETATIVE "VIOLATIONS"
THAT FOLLOW THE PREVIOUS CIRCU-
LATION ROUTES

SHELTERED AND OPEN SPACE
FOR INFORMAL ECONOMIES

fig.9.2

deliberate cuts and removal he developed a different way to reveal and change the context of the building. Matta-clark's approach is notable for the modern ruin since it can be applied to the intact ruin to reveal space, materials, and loss, yet be honest about the human intervention in a visually compelling way.

CONCLUSION

The results of these contemporary art pieces coincide with the art of the Picturesque Movement, for they create a new context for ruins that enables their benefits to be made visible to the public. In the local modern ruin the principle of truth presides over the design. Truth is seen in the flexible spaces claimed by the public, as their programs and desires are made visible and allowed to alter and changed by the public as the ruin is allowed to be altered by time. It is seen in the its productive programming that speaks of the communities' needs and the role the site plays in addressing them. Truth is in the retaining of history, and in the visible continual affects of time on the ruin. The working class community may not have the option to not remember the history of their ruins, but with the aid of repurposing and the act of transforming the relic in the eyes of the viewer, this revealed history can be an opportunity for reflections of the past, juxtaposing the surrounding landscape that gives promises for the future.



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