

Book Proposal

Title: *“The Architecture of End Times: Handbook for a Personal Studio”*

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1. Statement of Aims

For over two hundred years, the tradition of learning through the construction of imaginary projects using drawings and models has dominated the study of architecture, landscape architecture, and art. When the studio was adopted by university professional-vocational programs, it became a pedagogical standard, but studio practices were rarely used by other disciplines. This has changed dramatically over the past twenty years. The value of the studio method has even been recognized outside of academia. Learning through applied projects, collaborative teamwork, field observation, mapping, and graphical modelling have found widespread general acceptance by industry, “think-tanks,” and government.

Most studies of the architecture studio have focused on practices that translate best to situations where problems are being solved, but none have considered the studio experience as a means of personal development and private satisfaction. *With or without the goal of producing some objective, public good*, the studio method relates directly to a distinctive style of thinking that connects to the innermost concerns of the reader as a private human subject. The studio opens the mind through positive actions. This book outlines those actions, their effects, and the history of some who discovered them.

This book argues that the distinctive educational method known as “the architecture studio” has relevance for anyone interested to use learning as a therapeutic and intensive method of re-calibrating one’s personal relationship to the world, a project that becomes increasingly important with the increased recognition of the value of “life long learning.”

2. Definition of the Market

The book will be written for the general literate audience, but with some special benefit for readers with backgrounds in art, architecture, landscape architecture, geography, planning, literature, poetry, visual arts, critical theory, philosophy, and sociology. The majority of the target audience lies within the age group 40–70, with one external peak represented by students enrolled in professional studio programs and another representing mid-career professionals in transition.

3. Table of Contents

1. **Introduction to the idea of architecture studio as personal therapy (SAMPLE PROVIDED)**
 - a. Not the usual ego-based idea of self-help
 - b. What architecture studio does in professional educational programs
 - c. How the studio idea is specifically meaningful when applied to architecture
 - d. The “uncanny” aspect of home as the essence of dwelling
2. **The necessity of systems**
 - a. Different kinds of symmetry
 - b. The relation of symmetry to self-direction, resistance, durability
 - c. Systems as a way of keeping thought dynamic
 - d. The “start over” mentality
3. **Stochastic resonance and Bloom’s “anxiety system” (SAMPLE PROVIDED)**
 - a. Ideas of stochastic resonance; relation to metaphor; negation and forced choice; extimacy
 - b. Each term, taken separately, as a “password”
 - i. askesis
 - ii. clinamen
 - iii. kenosis
 - iv. tesseract
 - v. apophrades
 - vi. dæmon
 - c. The dynamic system connecting the terms; relation to Johnstone’s categories of travel
 - d. The role and function of anxiety
4. **Lucretius’s “flow system”**
 - a. Inverting the relationship of temporality
 - b. Time travel as “normal”
 - c. Clinamen at several scales
 - d. The three main forms of time travel in architecture
 - e. Fate, automaton, affordance
 - f. Extensions of Lucretius to more “normal ways of thinking”
 - g. Clinamen
 - h. Sites of exception
 - i. Prophecy; the future anterior; exception as discovery
5. **Henry W. Johnstone, Jr.’s system of “authentic travel”**
 - a. The physics of motion as discovery
 - b. Historical employments of the idea of travel: Sebald, Chatwin, Odysseus, etc.
 - c. Johnstone’s categories of travel
 - i. control
 - ii. accumulation
 - iii. saturation
 - iv. suffering
 - v. curiosity
 - vi. reflection
 - vii. solitude
 - viii. naïveté
 - ix. the personal (need for a guide)
 - d. Travel and anxiety
 - e. Travel and exception
6. **Applying the system to personal projects**
 - a. What a project should do (comparisons to meditation, yoga, other self-help methods)
 - b. Examples of “personalization” in artworks: Alÿss, Matta-Clarke, the Smithsons, others
 - c. Relation of personalization to pilgrimage, and exploiting the form of the pilgrimage
 - d. Collectivizing the personal project of studio
 - e. Retaining the architectural basis of the studio
 - f. The “uncanny” in its projects of scale, motility, and identity dysfunctions
7. **Diagraming as a form of archiving the results of the personal studio**
 - a. Key diagrams
 - b. The “horizontal atlas”: *lamella*, *fantasy*, *anamorphosis*, *Lucretian flow* (SAMPLE PROVIDED)
 - c. Deconstructing the “arrogance of the zenith” by “horizontal strategies”
 - d. The antipodes: zenith and nadir: internal and external error
 - e. *Envoi*

4. Selling Points

- This book aims to capture a new kind of reader, one whose curiosity is fuelled by a life of activity, travel, and self-education. It is a *handbook for the personal imagination*.
- At the same time, the book offers readers with professional and educational commitments to studio education an independent resource that deepens the studio idea by connecting it to subjectivity, philosophy, and broad meanings within the arts as a whole.
- The system put forward by the book is coherent, well researched, and easily adopted by the reader in part or whole. It offers the reader access to difficult ideas by actively engaging personal surroundings. It promotes the eccentric viewpoint.
- No book before this one has combined these particular resources, which had previously been held within their specialized fields of origin. Once understood, they are realized as personal, meaningful, and useful.

Originality. Unlike most self-help strategies, this personalization of the architecture studio method does not aim to strengthen ideas of confidence or mastery. Rather, it opens up questions that can be answered only by idiosyncratic means of study and learning. The personalization of studio is at the same aimed in the “public direction,” with the specific aim of creating a sharable viewpoint. Satisfactions have always come from learning “for its own sake.” But, unlike the experiences of youthful schooling, this is learning for the end game, a learning associated with coming to terms, a learning freed of the obligation to be useful only in terms defined by others. The full subject comes face to face with experience through knowing, by discovering characteristically private dimensions and values.

Authority. The author of *The Architecture of End Times* has been close to the “studio idea” for over 47 years. He has learned from the studio tradition, examined it in philosophical terms, and developed techniques, exercises, and drawings designed to deepen the pedagogical and personal experience of studio through his teaching in major universities, published works, workshops, lectures, and fellowships. The author has developed a graphic notation system (“Boundary Language,” web: art3idea.psu.edu/boundaries) that focuses on critical turning points in the investigative process. At the same time, these ideas have been extended to non-architectural, non-professional audiences *via* the author’s teaching (“The Art 3 Idea,” a general education course offered at the Penn State University from 1996–2010) and continuous interdisciplinary upper-level seminars (“Boundary Language Seminar,” offered from 1986–2010, at Penn State, the University at Buffalo, and LSU’s graduate program in Landscape Architecture, with workshops at Carleton, U. Penn, and Yale).

5. Length and Schedule

The book’s length will be **100,000–120,000 words**, contain **40–60 diagrams** and **20–30 photographic illustrations**. There will be a name and subject index.

The majority of text will be composed of short essays (6–14 pages); drafts of approximately one-third of these have been completed. Studies of Francis Alÿss, Gordon Matta-Clarke, and other

examples will be included. Permissions for reproduced graphic materials will begin as soon as examples are selected. Projected completion date for the author's submission of materials is December 2013.

6. *Review of Existing Literature*

Self-help literature is, collectively speaking, a degenerate genre that panders to the obsessions, misconceptions, and insecurities of an audience willing to believe that experts can bring about dramatic personal change. The best of this kind of book realizes the irony of the reader's situation but takes advantage of pop graphics and superficial writing to say what is forbidden to more serious, and more daunting, "scholarly" writing. There is in every kind of reading a desire for individual improvement, personalized by the very act of reading a book. Textbooks fail to recognize the intimacy essential to learning. They create an authoritarian atmosphere that demands a level of mastery the reader is unlikely to achieve. Yet, within the overt presumptuousness of the textbook, there is also a quality that relates specifically to the personal — the creation of a space of experiment, where effort may yield novel results. Somewhere between the false promises of the self-help manual and the imperious demands of the textbook, there is room for an imagination tuned in to "disinterested exploration of the unknown" — specifically, the unknown of the human subject, set in ordinary, everyday landscapes.

The romanticized idea of the architecture studio has spread across many university programs in the past ten years if only for the reason that the studio combines *practical solutions* with *creative and unconventional collaboration*. New ideas arise naturally and abundantly when provoked by the social collectivity and thinking methods based on re-arrangement, inversion, and multiple points of view. These combinations of unconventional processes outstrip conventional academic attempts at problem solving. The art studio relates to an *audience*, but the architecture studio must produce objects with public-social benefits. The architecture studio requires the creator to step aside to allow the "neutral" adaptation of his/her products. This stepping aside becomes, in this proposed work, (1) an idea of anonymous, personalized experimentation and (2) an attempt to appreciate the environment in terms of broad, public interests. As Italo Calvino once recommended (*Mr. Palomar*, 1983), we have to learn to see the world from the "eyes of the dead."

There are only a few works that reflect in depth on the architecture studio as the main pedagogy of the professional school of architecture and landscape architecture. Most of these stem from the life-long researches of Donald Schön (*The Reflective Practitioner*, Basic Books, New York, 1983). This is not the literature, or the set of concerns, that my book addresses. Rather, *The Architecture of End Times* focuses exclusively on the personal and non-professional relation to a world, where "architecture" is the factor that makes this world meaningful in a personal, *eccentric* way that can be approached and understood *if and only if* a reader may adopt an active, curious, experimental attitude. The reader is not called to produce actual architecture; rather, the reader must interact with the "*actualized* architecture" that results from buildings' and landscapes' over-layering with unexpected new demands, erosion, obsolescence. Where the original intentions of designs fail almost immediately after they are built, "actualized architecture" is continually re-adjusted and made to work. It is durable, resistant to rough treatment. It "remembers" patterns of use and misuse. It shows its scars, limits, and breaking points. In contrast to the shiny new structures shown

in photographs, actualized architecture is the “architecture of the Real,” the architecture worth thinking about deeply.

The reader is encouraged first to see the world in terms of the personal dimensions of this actualized “architecture of the Real” and then to play with the world through real or imagined projects. Just as in the academic architecture studio, where students discover the significance of a site by adjusting assumptions, points of view, and ideas about form and materiality, the reader may perform imaginary or actual nano-experiments to provoke everyday environments, landscapes of travel, or terrains portrayed in films, photographs, novels, and non-fictional literature.

There are currently no books, self-help or otherwise, that propose the kind of program put forward by *The Architecture of End Times*. The practical and spiritual advantages of doing so, however, are abundantly documented in books whose narrators have combined travel, learning, dreaming, biography, scientific speculation, and philosophy: W. G. Sebald’s “walking novels” (*Rings of Saturn*, *Austerlitz*, *Vertigo*, etc.) and Bruce Chatwin’s fictional/factual *Songlines* and *In Patagonia*. These author-narrators demonstrate the necessary combination of reflection, experiment, and exposure to chance encounters that I refashion as a “personal studio idea.” While Sebald’s and Chatwin’s works look at the end results of actualized architecture, I propose looking at the construction/deconstruction process. The happy readers of these masterful authors would at least recognize, and possibly be attracted to, a book that considers the recipes rather than the description of the finished meals.

The marketplace has supported books that, without engaging anything beyond personal curiosity, indicate a broad popular interest in architecture “as lived.” **Witold Ryzbinsky’s *Home: A Short History of an Idea*** (Penguin, 1986) and **Alain de Botton’s *The Architecture of Happiness*** (Pantheon, 2006) were well received by a broad audience. Readers relate well to what is an intimate part of their everyday lives, but access to the design process — characterized by its “studio approach” — is shrouded in mystery. Ryzbinsky’s and de Botton’s books, however, skew the relation of the design process to personal encounters by emphasizing commodification and do not regard design as a possible means of deepening one’s fundamental relation to the world, which they hold at the level of “consumer experience.” These books ultimately do great damage to readers and to the idea of the studio. This book proposes to repair that damage.

As a technique to extend and improve curiosity, literature about studio process has either hyper-extended itself to encompass semi-religious experiences or limited its scope to techniques serving tasks at hand. There has been almost nothing to offer the non-professional despite the broad interest in the studio as an alternative form of learning in academia, industry, and government. The pedagogy of studio investigation, a mixture of standard research and creative-speculative drawing and modelling, continues to be misunderstood by gauging it by the standards of classroom education. The mystery of the studio is, however, a highly personalized one; and it is this dimension of *the personal* that allows it to connect to the more universal project of private curiosity about the world. This is, unabashedly, a “self-help” book that requires the reader to design the tools of “help” in order to realize the “self” as active and engaged. This book moves beyond one of its inspiring models, Marco Frascari’s well received ***Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow Food for the Architect’s Imagination*** (Routledge, 2011). It shows an entirely independent system of thought related to discovery methods in other fields and meditation methods in a variety of

traditions. It retains the idea of architecture and other arts, but it replaces the reader as *professional* with that of the eccentrically curious person, on foot and in the field.

According to Stefano Boeri, editor of *Abitare*, many unconventional books based on the idea of the “eccentric atlas” have begun to appear, suggesting that the reading public is beginning to realize that personal experience needs new kinds of representation. I have recently completed a book-length manuscript, *Atlas of the Obverse*, 99 short essays, diagrams/maps, and appendices, devoted to learning through personalized representations of travel. *The Architecture of End Times* collects and streamlines the techniques discovered in this work that any reader may adopt, in part or whole. It will be the only book that relates the idea of architecture studio specifically to projects of personal growth and learning toward maturity.

Summary:

- ➔ Readers would perhaps **buy instead**: Witold Ryzbinsky’s *Home: A Short History of an Idea*; Alain de Botton’s *The Architecture of Happiness*. But, the reflective-active reader would prefer ...
- ➔ Marco Frascari’s *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing*, a Routledge book, whose readers would buy *The Architecture of End Times* **in addition**.
- ➔ Readers of W. G. Sebald and Bruce Chatwin would be **especially interested in** a “handbook” of experiments specifically designed for architecture’s “end times.” They, more than any other kind of reader, would know what the title means and why the contents might make sense.

The relative scarcity of books that directly compete with this proposed work is a function of originality. If there is a lack of competition, there is also more chance that the book will advance on the basis of its uniqueness and appeal and create an audience ex nihilo. Even well-written books about topics already popularized, in contrast, may fail simply because they fail to capture market share, but successful books create a demand that they alone are able to fill successfully.

7. Potential Reviewers

Guna Nadarajan, Dean; Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, USA (guna@umich.edu).

David Cronrath, Dean, School of Architecture, Planning & Preservation, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA (cronrath@umd.edu).

Elie Haddad, Assistant Dean, School of Architecture and Design, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon (ehaddad@lau.edu.lb).

Nadir Lahiji, author, editor, and independent scholar, Philadelphia, PA (nadir.lahiji@gmail.com).

Evan Douglass, Dean, School of Architecture, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (douglass@rpi.edu).

8. Optional Materials (summarized below)

Sample 1: “Introduction to the idea of architecture studio as personal therapy”

Sample 2: “Stochastic resonance, metaphor and metonymy, Bloom’s anxiety system, and virtuality”

Sample 3: “The horizontal atlas: lamella, fantasy, anamorphosis, Lucretian flow”

9. Alternate Titles and Subtitles

ALTERNATIVE TITLES:

The Personal Studio

Experimenting with the Architecture of the Personal World

Handbook for the Personal Studio

Philosophy in the Studio

ALTERNATIVE SUBTITLES:

A User's Guide for Experimenting with the Personal World

A Studio Handbook

Taking the World Apart as it Falls Apart

Exploring the Architecture of End Times

Thinking as an Architecture of the World

SUMMARY OF SAMPLES from “Architecture Studio for End Times”

Sample chapters include (1) the “Introduction,” (2) a substantive chapter from the proposed book’s first and most theoretical section, and (3) an equally substantive chapter from near the end of the book. The book as a whole, however, is not theoretical. It will combine detailed analysis and background essays with illustrations, exercises, and samples from the works of architects and artists who have synthesized the personal and the public in their own “eccentric” projects. While these theoretical chapters may give the appearance of an overly intellectual work, the reviewer should keep in mind that other, more visual, chapters will involve the reader in self-directed activities that do not require the theoretical background arguments.

1 / Introduction to the idea of architecture studio as personal therapy

The space of modernity evolved in the nineteenth century as, on one hand, a space of transactions, utility, and political opportunity and, on the other, as a diverticulated labyrinth of concealed pockets of transgression. On one side, science, democracy, the evidence of the senses; on the other, spiritualism, ghettoization, colonial horrors, and the segregation of minorities. What is clear from this bi-polarism is its presupposition that place cannot only be a “model” of mind; it can be the basis of an externalized material unconscious. In this context, the architecture studio emerged as a romantic synthetic ideal that combined contingent creativity with practical and public production. As a pedagogical model for professional architectural programs, the studio developed through simulated problem-solving. Later, in the hands of masters such as the architect-educators John Hejduk and Daniel Libeskind, it achieved poetic celebrity. Gordon Matta-Clarke, Francis Alys, and others used the architecture studio to support large-scale environmental “experiments,” contributing to the modern idea of the art installation and art performance.

The idea that architecture is not the off-the-shelf embodiment of an architect’s intentions and expertise quickly fades in the face of rapidly evolving urban landscapes. Financial cycles, obsolescence, unintended consequences, and repurposing erode first intentions. In contrast, the results of environmental confrontation are extremely durable. Architecture is really this second, compromised and adapted Real. But, without the ability to imagine and represent this Real, true (actualized) architecture goes unrecognized and unappreciated.

Where the academic-vocational architecture studio promotes the illusion of “off-the-shelf” architecture, *The Architecture Studio for End Times* aims to develop a synesthetic vocabulary for understanding the second architecture, the actualized architecture of the Real. In this project, two themes emerge: (1) the need to understand the nature of anxiety and (2) the project of personalization, linked to the movement of the individual who travels, walks, rides, or dreams his/her way through the “spaces of exception” that constitute the architecture of the Real.

2 / Stochastic resonance: metaphor and metonymy, Bloom's anxiety system, and virtuality

The Irish author James Joyce made note-taking an obsession, juxtaposing the important alongside the trivial in lists of actions, objects, places, expenditures, details, names — a compendium of the flotsam and jetsam of urban life. The result was not a simple inventory. Joyce labored to create an ideal “echo chamber” capable of allowing his imagination freedom to move around the multi-dimensional time-space without restriction. We can relate Joyce's discovery methods to the neural-perceptual issue of “stochastic resonance,” the process by which randomized “white” noise can be amplified in order to strengthen weak signals. While brain scientists have just begun to appreciate the phenomenon of resonance in their “de-regionalization” of brain functions, philosophers have already de-territorialized the idea of intelligence (Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the “rhizome”) and artists have used displacement dysfunction and seriality to extend Duchamp's early time-motion interests to the contemporary idea of performativity.

Knowing *about* stochastic resonance is not the same as knowing *how* and *why* it functions in the arts, and both are key to the personalization of the idea of the studio. Stochastic resonance is far from a new idea. As a technique of concealing contents beneath the surface, it has been around the arts and literature since ancient times; it probably originates with shamanistic practices and the distinction between contagious and sympathetic magic. Yet, art and architecture historians have barely recognized its existence. Finding examples depends on “knowing what to look for,” and *Architecture Studio for End Times* shows how the structures of metaphor and metonymy, negation, “extimacy,” anxiety-fear/courage, wit, and virtuality are related to create the ideal environments for stochastic resonance.

3 / The “horizontal atlas”: lamella, fantasy, anamorphosis, Lucretian flow

Near the end of book, I would like to show how some well-known topics, each with their own extensive literatures, come together within the operation of the personal studio, whose handbook might be re-entitled “the horizontal atlas.” Stefano Boeri has used this terminology to emphasize the significance of things found “on the ground” that defy representation from the authoritarian “zenithal” viewpoint of the official maps used by planners, professional architects, and governments. The horizontal is equated with lived space, but this is not the homey space of Yi-Fu Tuan's brand of phenomenology but, rather, space charged with the uncanny.

The idea of *lamella* is that of the margin, simultaneously infra-thin (Duchamp) and thick. It does not provide a clear distinction between inside and outside but, instead, incorporates values of both even within its own geometry. The term comes from Jacques Lacan, but it is significantly close to Merleau-Ponty's idea of the “flesh of the world.” This was a key component of Merleau-Ponty's later thinking, where his former negative critique of conceptualized psychology gave way to positive formulations, many of which are dominated by some version of Lacan's “extimacy.” Within the context of the personalized studio method, the atlas idea plays out the *lamella* in terms of the traveler's encounters with the landscape and its architectural, natural, and historical features. As with W. G. Sebald's “defamiliarized” towns and villas of Norfolk in *Rings of Saturn*, the horizontal atlas uses narrative strategies to re-construct the private “natural histories” that are the essence of his works.

This chapter, also intensely “theoretical,” provides the reader with background on the experimental dynamics of the suggested experiments and their paradigm examples in the works of Matta-Clarke, Alÿss, and others. By this point in the book, the reader will have realized a certain economy in the way terms reflect the overall theme of extimacy that has dominated throughout and be able to construct his/her own novel variations.

Note: low-resolution illustrations have been placed in-line for the reviewers' convenience.