

Demo-

lit

ion

Stories.

**Reflecting on the
aesthetics of demolition.**

Where we stand.

Underneath any material form lies a dialectical consideration with its definite disappearance, its in-materiality, its destruction, its ultimate erasure. Demolition is attractive because it recalls the ephemeral act of being.

In an attempt to critically question the relevance of the aesthetics of demolition in contemporary artistic and architectural discourse we would like to engage with a broader understanding of our context and current times. It is hard to generalize it and truly grasp the spirit of our era while we are still in it, but there are current tendencies and trends that leads us to speculate upon certain aspects that characterise our present times. Is there a reason behind our current predilection for specific types of spaces? for specific types of materials? for finished or unfinished interiors? for raw materials? for spaces with infinite arrangement potentials?

Buildings are soon to be no more and Demolition is an act that reacts towards the notion of authorship, of identity, of context and spatial potentialities.

An interview with PH in the year of 2015, a world reknown theoreticist and scholar, was not innocent at all. In it the also art historian explores the historical and philosophical attributes in the value of demolition and its aesthetics. Taking Alois Riegl seminal essay *The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Essence and Its Development* as his departing point, PH continues to ask the need for demolishing, for the preservation of monuments and the need to create.

In a broader context, two cities in the world came to be exemplary specimens of a dialectic reflection of what PH considered to be the tension between to keep or not, the

romantic idea of the past and the inevitable ambition to build. Those cities were City One and City Two, the world's most contrasting realities regarding demolition and preservation.

Thoughts about the need of demolishing and the underlining consequences of it, triggered discussions in which reflections about those radical contexts were framed by demolition.

As an indirect consequence, the content of the interview accelerated a process of exchange between FL and PM, citizens of City One and City Two respectively. What they created afterwards is compiled and catalogued as proof of the restless spirit of two people who struggle to understand their context and the complexity of a very banal procedure: destruction. This exchange is presented in this booklet as a collection of information, impressions and conclusions.

Trying to understand the spirit of their time, the significance of demolition and its aesthetics through their own universal narratives, their exchange is a reaction to time itself.

For this, their exchange will explore the implications of demolition in the aforementioned aspects:

Authorship / Identity / Context / Spatial Potentialities

The dialectic of disappear- ance.

**Demolition monumentalizes
disaster.**

PH, 2015.

A summary of that 2015 interview, which is held accountable for the later exchange FL and PM had, is presented here. In it, PH presents a historical revision in periods of time in which the dialectic between preservation and destruction are revised by theorists and historians as evidence of their particular time or passed times.

“Time will inevitably destroy everything. Rather than asking us *why* do we react to time, we must be asking us *how* do we react to it? Evidently, changes in the perception of what is aesthetically valuable mark the beginning of two things. The romantic idea of the past and our ambition to build monumentally. And because of the existence of both, the issue of the patrimony, related to what should be demolished and what should be kept, usually manifests collectively. As masses we value the old because it is an accumulation of knowledge, and we value the new and its potential because we need it.

This dialectic is inevitable. But it is certainly intertwined in the way we add value, aesthetic value, to demolition, ruins, decay. Because it makes us react towards one of those positions. Should we demolish? Should we preserve?

The author, then, also falls into this tension. When you guard the patrimony, you guard the author, the act of creation. When you destroy, the author dilutes, there is no sin-

gular responsible. Because we need demolition, because we need the new, we liberate space to serve us. We need it to start the cycle again.

Emotional values transcend specificity. Demolition monumentalizes disaster.”

PH, 2015.

This is not about speci- ficity.

FL is a citizen of City One. PM is a citizen of City Two.

City One.

There are many ways to describe CITY ONE, but the best way is to not describe it. The city contains its own description in itself, in its streets, buildings, arches, bridges, any segment of the built environment is a chance to face how the people of CITY ONE wants to be remembered.

The atmosphere that the tourist can experience while walking here is surreal and attractive at the same time: everything is forced to remain motionless, static, in order to be easily remembered in the future. Silent ruins, that nobody understands anymore, are strangled by the outer rings and the upper layers of the newer parts of the city.

FL should be careful when he walks through the city: according to the urban rules made collectively by citizens, it is forbidden to even touch the “previous” city.

The needs of the people are solved in extensions and branches of the centuries-old objects and forms that are no more studied and admired from the inhabitants, they keep them for the sake of keeping them, it is a phenomenon of possession, of having tangible objects as part of the extended self.

City Two.

In CITY TWO, anyone can find all over the year some spectacular events. As ritualistic happenings, these events are celebrated among the citizens as a collective rebirth: they demolish the old, the negative, and the wrong. The explanation can be found in the deep will of the city to concretely see its future.

Once there, it is hardly suggested, to have a look at the old postcards that show it as it used to be: the same square used to have some inappropriate blocks around, in the same exact place where the new towers stand. It is recommended to prefer CITY TWO more than the one(s) showed in the postcards, in order to not disappoint the inhabitants with some criticism and questions. When compared to the previous, the magnificence of the new city will be clear. It is even pointless to compare them, since there is no connection between them. Without nostalgia, city after city, demolition after demolition, the inhabitants live in the same place but in different cities over time.

The name remain, the city overlaps.

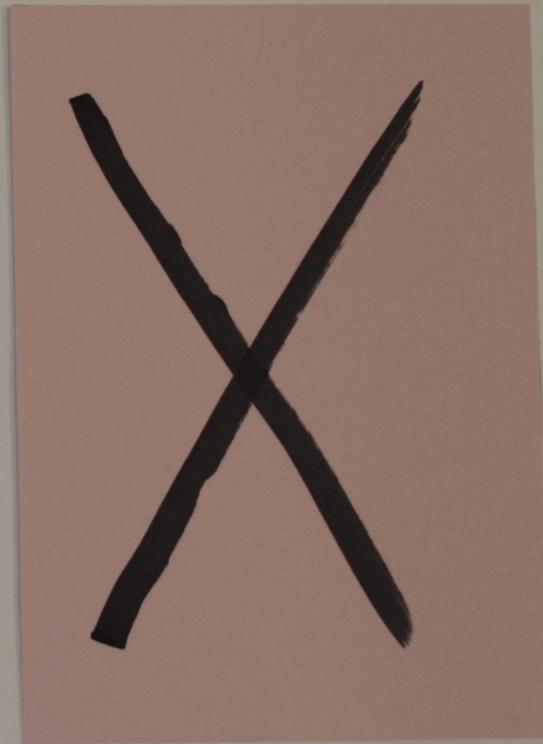
The Collec- tion.



Demolition
Stories.



CITY DIE



CITY TVD

The
Collec-
tion

Dear PM,
what you will find
in this letter is a
collection of notes
and thoughts.
take care
FL

the power of the old

vs

the need of the new

The fight between two natural instincts kept in ourselves is reflected in the aesthetical dichotomy of considering most venerable and valuable the rational need for a tabula rasa, in order to exploit all the potentiality of technology and "progress", or the irrational reverence to the past. The need of actually visualize the strata left from history in a never-ending climax.

A continuous act of mirroring and relating to object, structures and forms of the past, without any distinction or any question about real value of them brings us to be the city of chaos.

Everything is anything.

What is now happening in your city is the best form of appraise the value of what you have. You already know that a certain object is going to expire, is going to last for a determined timespan, so you are implicitly forced to live it the most.

Carpe diem!

Identity is not something you have to see. It is something you have in your memory, and for the memory of the new generations, take some pictures! It's hypocrite to say "no buildings - no memory". Keeping without understanding, just for the sake of self-celebrating is a non-sense: it is the inverse proportion between the memorialization of the past and its contemplation of which Andreas Huyssen was talking about.

We live in the illusion of an eternal progress but actually I do not see any future, I wish we could burn everything and start back again: a new beginning. Memory will last. We could set a big ritual for it. Sacrifice everything for the sake of the future: a purification ceremonial.

I think you should reconsider demolishing: not a matter of forgetting or purely erasing but mostly a matter of facing the reality! It is part of the natural cycle of things: as well as we create, we should be able to relate with the end of things.

Face the death, not trying to escape from it.

March, 2015

If we start destroying everything that has been created before, when, I wonder, will we ever start a continuous process of doing? We vacuum foreign trends, internalize them as if we were doing our supper digestion, but when (and again this conflict of mine with time) will we ever start our own?

You don't mind. I get it. You have been longing for a void in your grid since forever, and by forever I mean a few hundred years. I know, I know... I should exorcise my desire for progress, but yet again you don't know it, and there you are, you should do it also.

I think of it, of progress, yes, as a process in which an accumulation of experience, of knowledge, of self-arranging our own problems is enough to get us through our constant political disasters. That at the end of the day, your city, your world, is somehow the same to what you experienced in the morning, without having to worry in your sleep that it is all at the mercy of another shifting opportunist.

Yet again, another new plan. The new for the value of having it new. A never-ending process of

this is some-
thing rumbling
my mind since
4/11!

premiering, of getting bored, doing it all over...
Again... And again.

Here we destroy. Not only with bulldozers and sledge hammers. We destroy by making. We destroy because someone needs to build it taller, bigger, faster. We destroy because someone thinks that time can be foolshid. That we can escape futility by replacing what was there before us. Like if our noble wishes will prevent our buildings of having the same faith.

It is never about who we are. It is more about how we will be more. "Let us move this a bit further", "let us move this people a bit closer", "lets forget about that project because I saw this amazing thing somewhere else and it will be amazing to have it here as well", "do not worry, we will improvise while we are on it."

You know what? I think we have been cursed with really bad memory. We build to forget. Because we hopefully think we will do it better this time. Because we can redeem ourselves with history. That brief history that we call our own.

PM.

Au-
thor-
ship



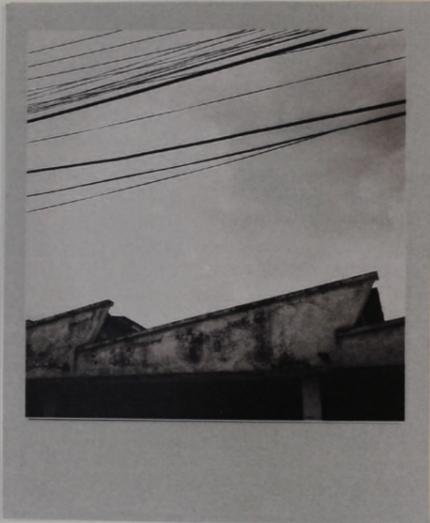
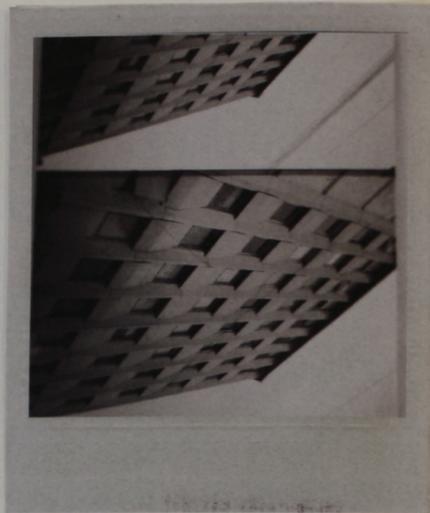
I was watching this
movie last night... I
had to share it with you,

look at the background,
then move to the
foreground.

Can the two parts understand
that they are part of
the same city?

Two monologues don't
generate a dialogue.

It's a choir of
soliloquies.



"Indeed, the
world can
no longer
be under-
stood...
the only
thing one
can do is
to collect
the
world!"

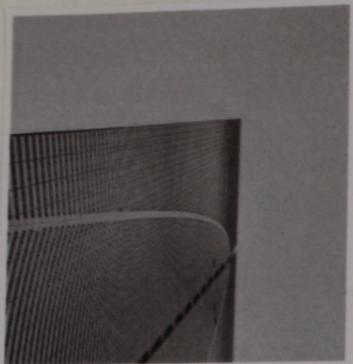
Boris Groy.

ps: this are
next in line
for demoli-
tion!



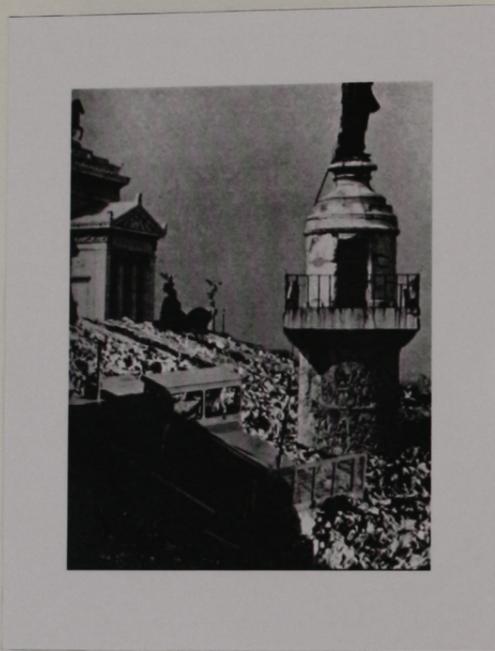
CAN YOU RECOGNIZE
ANYTHING?

CAN YOU DISTINGUISH
SOMETHING?



Visit
City Two.
Where the New
always takes
over the
Old.

... I found this
poster in the
airport the other
day ...

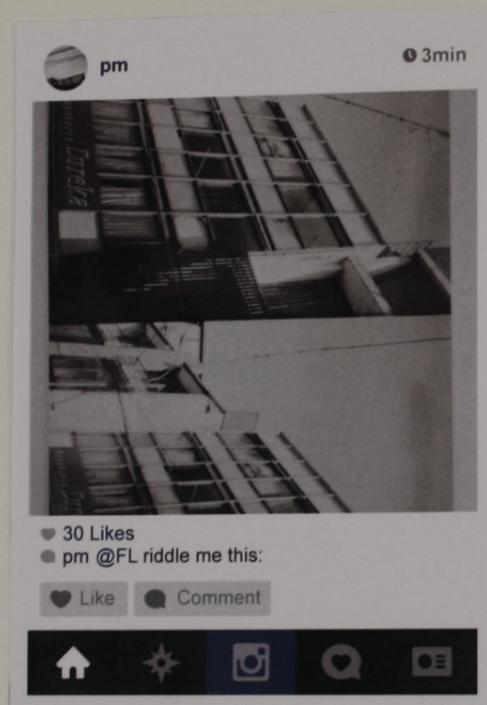


To salvage in order to destroy; to destroy in order to save yourself, in apocalyptic times the extremes come together, the opposites become equals. The only way of saving is once again destruction, the total sterilisation on the organism that, born to be the house of man, has become its prison and finally its sepulchre.

The city is infected, and submerged in a flood of history, a river contaminated and turned into a tide of sewage.

S.

a guy on the street gave me this today!



♥ 2 Likes

● pm @FL riddle me this:
who determines this has no aesthetic value, since, apparently it doesn't qualify as having historical value?
"If there is no such thing as eternal artistic value but only a relative, modern one, then the artistic value of a monument is no longer commemorative, but a contemporary value instead." Alois Riegl.
#ForMeThisIsAMonument

Identi-
ty



LISTEN TO THIS
ALBUM!

actually I have to confess you that
I downloaded it just for its cover...

STATUE!

That's ~~who~~ ^{where} we are supposed to
live.

It's no more a space, the perverse
devotion towards it ended up in
a freezing effect.



"Reminiscences,
even expensive
ones, do not
always amount
to an autobiogra-

phy ..."
Walter
Benjamin...
(Adrain!). —

Handwritten Hebrew text in four lines, arranged in a roughly rectangular shape.

Those who arrive at Thekla can see little of the city, beyond the plank fences, the sackcloth screens, the scaffoldings, the metal armatures, the wooden catwalks hanging from ropes or supported by sawhorses, the ladders, the trestles. If you ask, "Why is Thekla's construction taking such a long time?" the inhabitants continue hoisting sacks, lowering leaded strings, moving long brushes up and down, as they answer, "So that its destruction cannot begin." And if asked whether they fear that, once the scaffoldings are removed, the city may begin to crumble and fall to pieces, they add hastily, in a whisper, "Not only the city."



If, dissatisfied with the answers, someone puts his eye to a crack in a fence, he sees cranes pulling up other cranes, scaffoldings that embrace other scaffoldings, beams that prop up other beams. "What meaning does your construction have?" he asks. "What is the aim of a city under construction unless it is a city? Where is the plan you are following, the blueprint?"

"We will show it to you as soon as the working day is over; we cannot interrupt our work now," they answer.

Work stops at sunset. Darkness falls over the building site. The sky is filled with stars. "There is the blueprint," they say.

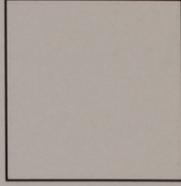
Hi PM!

This made me think,
is that sentence
expressing how
do you actually
feel?

IT IS SO CUT OFF
MY CONTEXT!

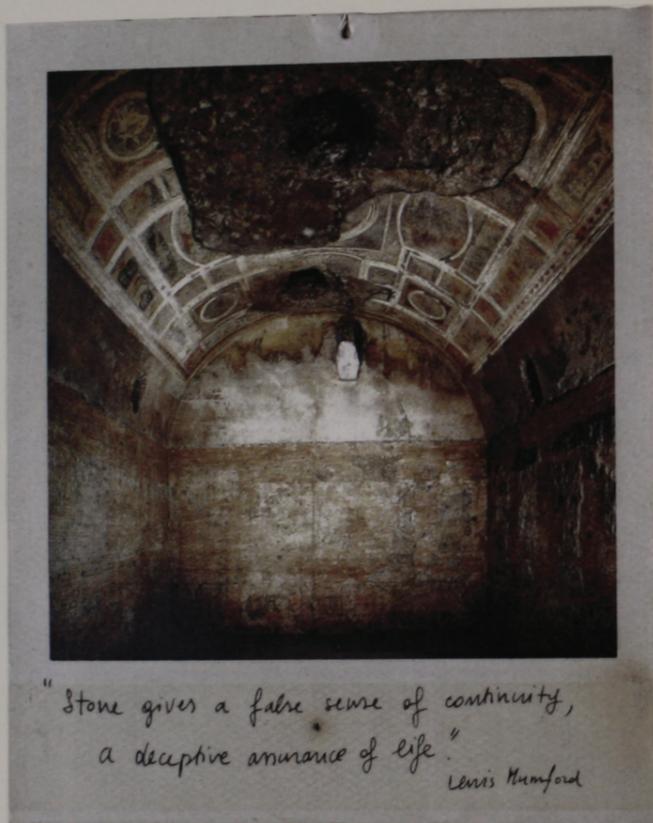


Until now, neither the
distinction, between
"worthy, since durable"
and "vain since transient",
nor the unbridgeable abyss
separating the two,
has disappeared for
a moment from reflec-
tions on human happi-
ness... Zygmunt
Bauman.



Harrolds.

ps: I've phot-
shopped this
postcard. This
is my favorite
building in
town! dm!

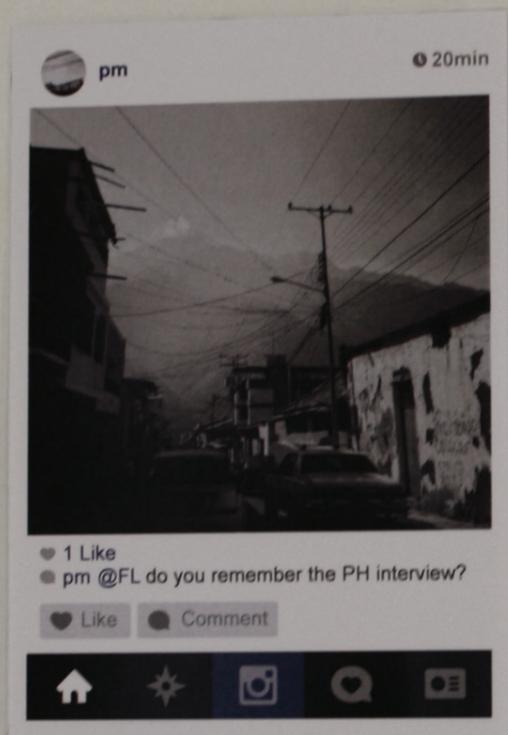


"Stone gives a false sense of continuity,
a deceptive assurance of life."
Lewis Mumford

THE
JEALOUS
PRESERVATION
OF
A
SACRAL
IDENTITY

M. Tafuri

THEY ARE OBSESSED WITH
THE HISTORICAL, a maniacal
attachment to old objects.
IT IS A TYRANNY OF THE
PAST!
each expression of newness is
banned.



1 Like

pm @FL do you remember the PH interview? that day we were introduced to something I now find questionable. It is not the matter of an individual or of a collective to burn cities down, time doesn't adjudicate responsibilities. We don't have time, time is the one that has us, he said. And you know what? I don't believe him. I refuse to believe him. Yes, modernity is liquid, but then, we are not allowed to question the precarity of our ambitions?

#citytwoisalwaysthinking



nice para-
graph...
don't you
think?

The history of our country is the history of a large process of demolition. We (...) in a land without humus and without irrigation, plant every day a new tree, that dries with the first sun (...)

We have cared very little to defend the old signs of tradition. Far from ensuring its permanence and its roots, we have opened the spirits to every wind of news, and likewise, **we have demolished a building of the past, to be replaced by another of lesser merit.**

Context

Context
of the
work of
unporm



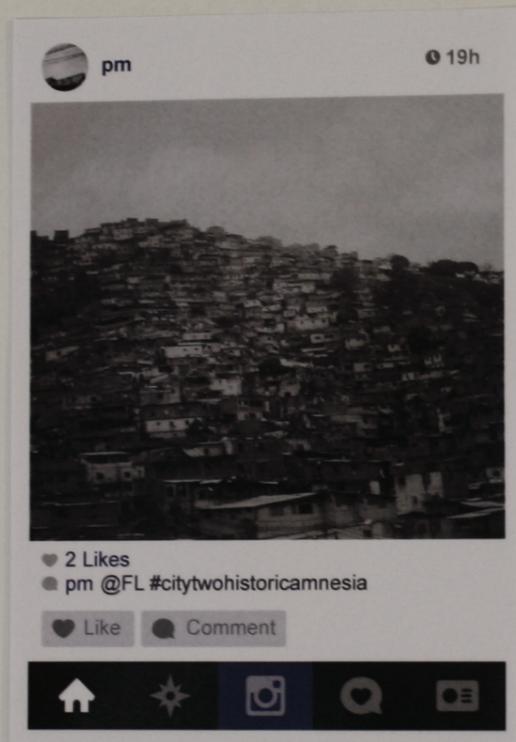
look what i've found,
is it too ununderstandable
for you? take care!
FL

IT IS A MUSEUM - CITY

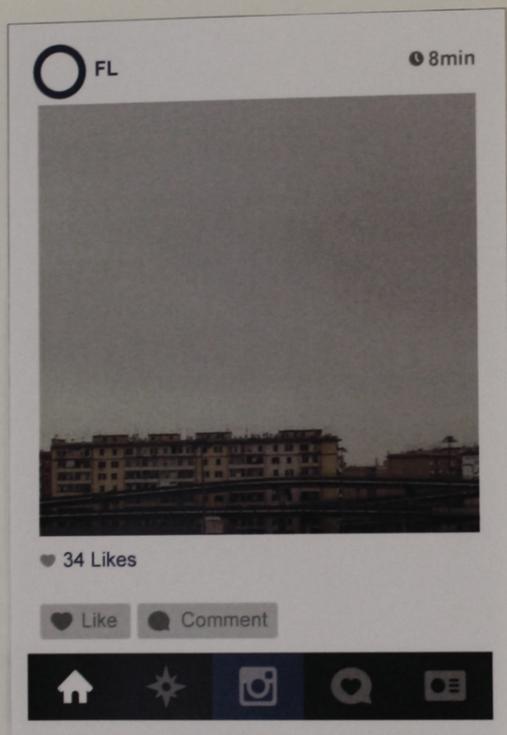
IT IS AN ABANDONED - MUSEUM
CITY

IT IS A TOMBAL CITY

IT IS A STUCK CITY



2 Likes
pm @FL #CityTwoHistoricAmnesia
pm @FL this is the new site of one of our "super planned" demolitions. This community moved here after the government demolished their houses when they were standing in the way for a new highway. This is a never-ending cycle. #TabulaRasaSucks



● FL "The destructive character is young and cheerful. For destroying rejuvenate, because it clears away the traces of our own age; it cheers, because everything cleared away means to the destroyer a complete reduction, indeed a rooting out, out of his own condition."
Walter Benjamin

@PM Am i becoming a monster?
but that is how i feel...

UNTIL NOW NEITHER
THE DISTINCTION
BETWEEN WORTHY
SINCE DURABLE AND
VAIN SINCE
TRANSIENT NOR THE
UNBRIDGEABLE
ABYSS SEPARATING
THE TWO HAS
DISAPPEARED FOR A
MOMENT FROM
REFLECTIONS ON
HUMAN HAPPINESS.

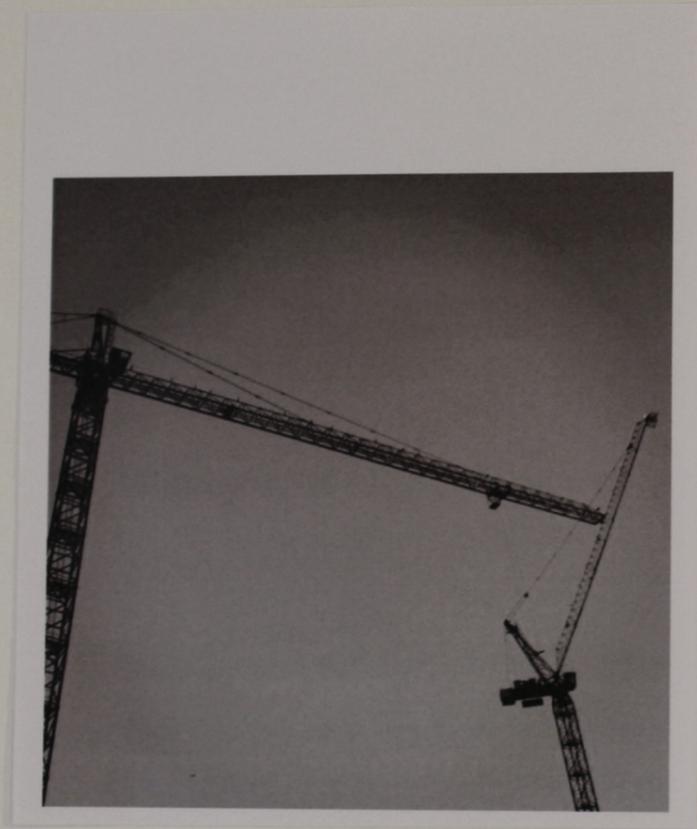
- Until now, neither the distinction between "worthy, since durable" and "vain, since transient," nor the unbridgeable abyss separating the two, has disappeared for a moment from reflections on human happiness -

In City Two no one has ever asked if there was any value in the new. I wonder if that has ever happened in a debate about the value of City One.

PM, 2015.

T. MARINETTI FUTURISTA
**ZANG
TUMB TUMB**
ADRIANOPOLI OTTOBRE 1912
TUUUMB IN LIBERTÀ
PAROLE TUUUMB TUUUMB TUUUMB
EDIZIONI FUTURISTE
DI "POESIA"
Casa Yamato, 41 - MILANO
1914

ZANG
TUMB TUMB
REVIVAL
in me?



...the present, which,
as a model of Me-
ssianic time, com-
prises the re-written
history of our other
pasts ...
Walter Benjamin.

ps: with these
in the city's sky-
line "they" mea-
sure progress.
For me, these
cranes are
monsters ...
(I guess that for
you it means a
sort of miracle)
DJ. 2015.

The present, which, as a model
of Messianic time, comprises
the re-written history of our
other pasts ...
Walter Benjamin.

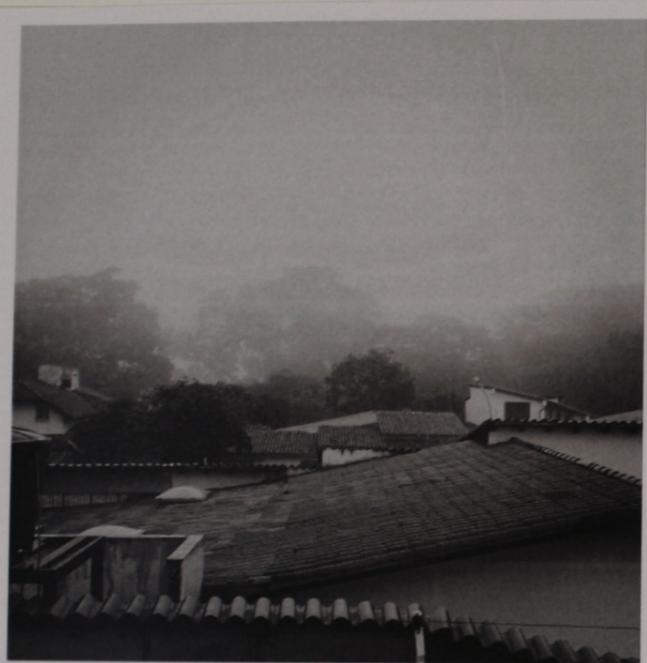
PS: with these in the city's skyline,
they measure progress. For me,
these cranes are monsters. I guess
that for you it means a sort of
miracle.

Spatial
Poten-
tialities



DOESN'T MAKES YOU FEEL

SO RELIEVED ?



"the destructive
character knows
only one watchword:
make room. And
only one activity:

clearing away."
Walter
Benjamin.



● FL Demolition going on?
No.
It was stopped.
Dismantle=innovate.
Not dismantle=?
@PM It's so frustrating. As in philosophy,
there should be a counterpart of the dis-
course, the so-called #parsDestruens op-
posed to the #parsConstruens
#city1frozencity #motionlesscity #ruinporn

FL. ✓
@FL
Born in CITY 1. Living in CITY 1. Working in CITY 1.

4,403 TWEETS 301 FOLLOWING 239 FOLLOWERS Follow

Tweets All / No replies

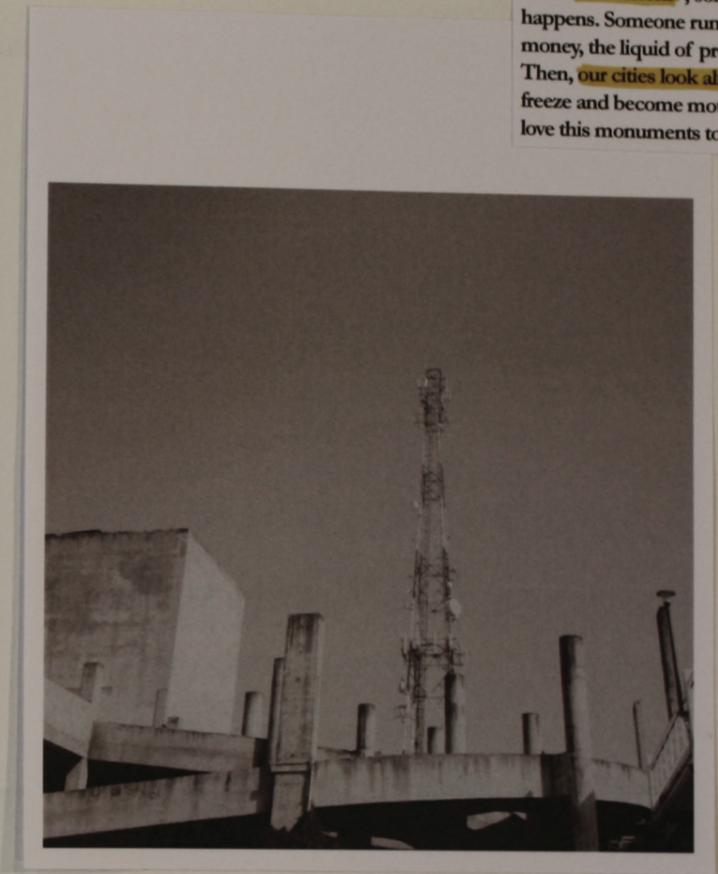
FL @FL Close
@PM no editing out the improper brought us to #dereliction #disorder #irregularity #anonymity #instability #terrainvague #squat #vandalize #dwell

3 RETWEETS 18 FAVORITES

9:55 AM, Mar 26th via web · Details

Reply Retweet Favorite

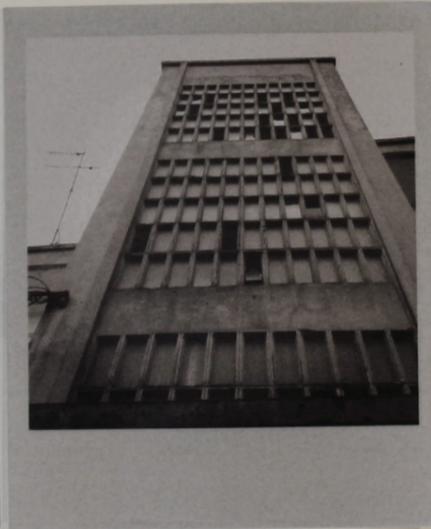
Here, there is a thing you don't now about our modernity: most of the times when "they" demolish in order to build one of their "new visions", something happens. Someone runs out of money, the liquid of progress. Then, our cities look alike. They freeze and become motionless. I love this monuments to failure.





♥ 14 Likes

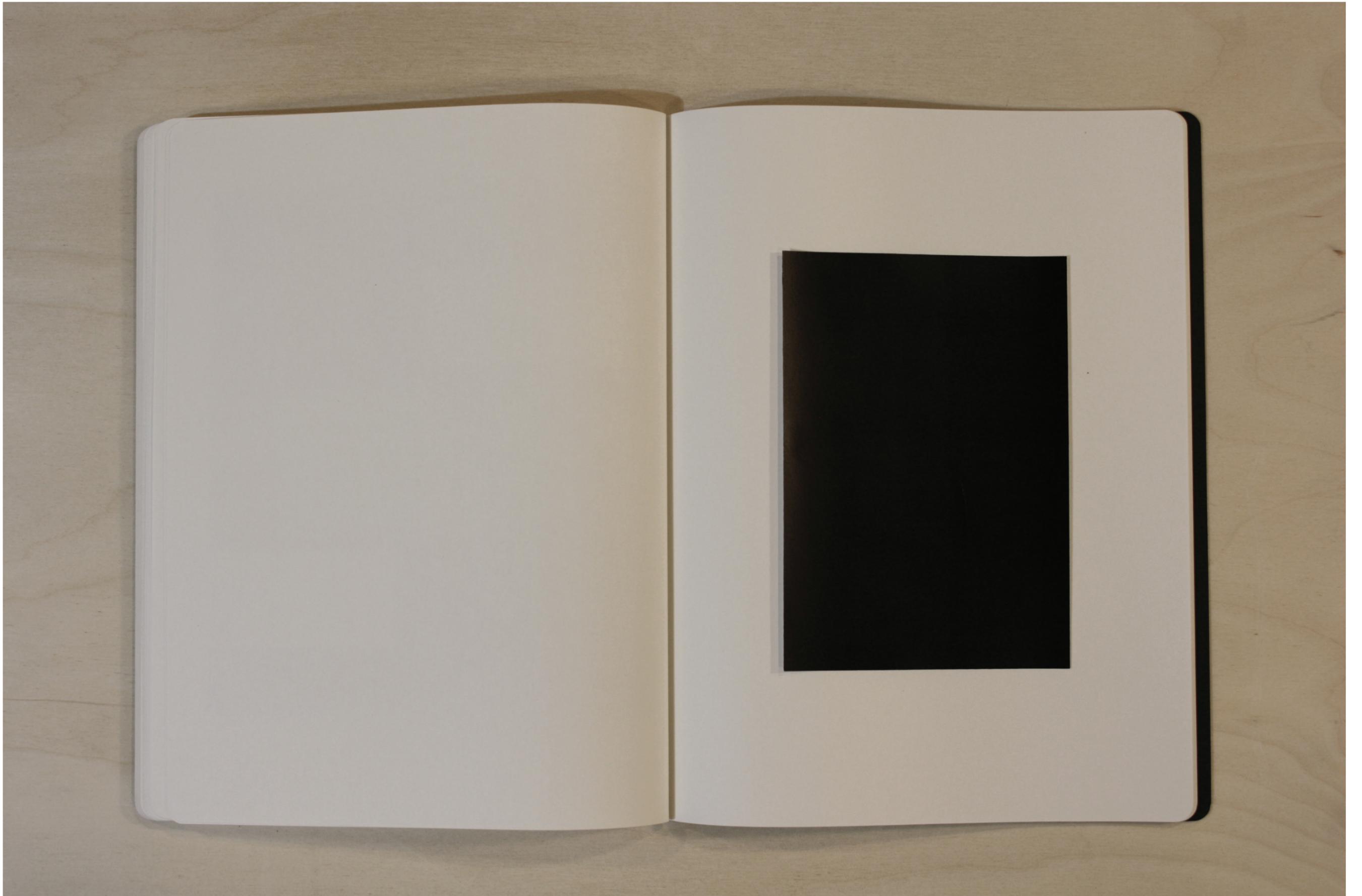
● pm @FL I've visited this place recently... and somehow it reminded me of something I once read. "All times converge" it said. I must agree with it while looking at this. City Two will someday converge with its future. #hopeful

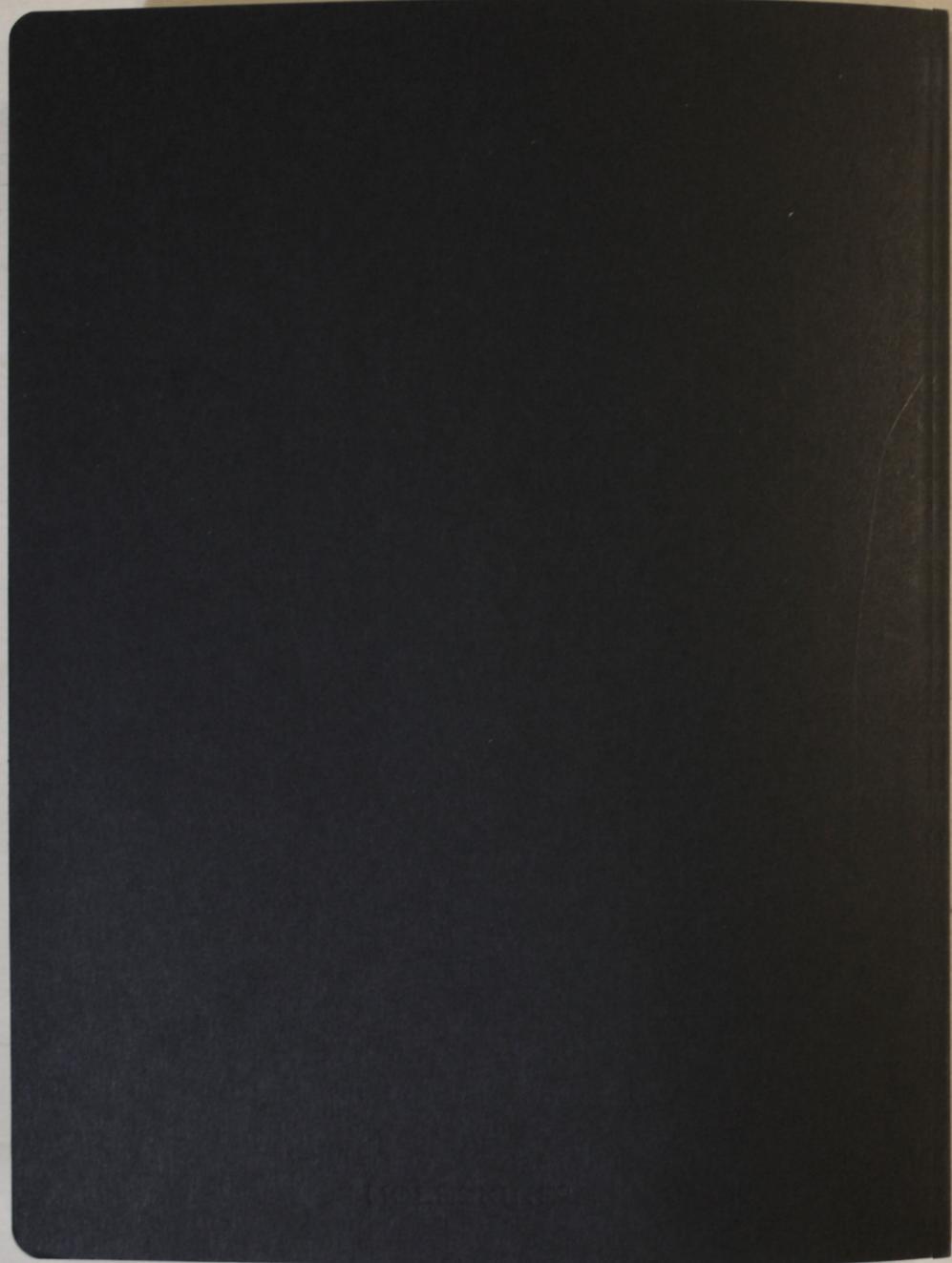


this is from
Robert
Smithson!

"Nature is never finished"... therefore
cities never are ...
Here, apparently we
have never started...
— J.K. 2/15.

see? I'm not
the only one
who thinks
that...





References.

Calvino, Italo. "Le città invisibili". Torino, Einaudi, 1972.

Benjamin, Walter, and Marcus Paul Bullock. "Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings". Cambridge, Mass. Belknap Press, 2004.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "The Art of Life", Wiley, 2008

Freud, Sigmund. "Civilization and Its Discontents", London. Penguin, 2002.

'Salvaging the historical centres of Italy' article by Superstudio in "Argomenti e Immagini di Design" no.5 May/June 1972.

'Memory and Counter-Memory - The End of the Monument in Germany', article by James E. Young in Harvard Design Magazine, no.9/Fall 1999.

Mumford, Lewis. "The Culture of Cities", New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938.

Mario Briceno, Iragorry in Azier Calvo

albizu. Venezuela and the problem of its architectural identity.

Perniola, Mario. "Il Sex appeal dell'inorganico", Torino. Einaudi, 1994.

Pasolini, Pier Paolo. "Scritti corsari". Milano. Garzanti. 1975.

Riegl, Alois. "The modern cult of monuments: its character and origin". Wien, 1903.

Tafuri, Manfredo. "The Sphere and the Labyrinth: Avant-gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s". Cambridge, Mass. MIT Press, 1987.

"The Vague, the Viral, the Parasitic: Piranesi's Metropolis" article by Teresa Stoppani in Footprint, no.5 2009.

Theory Masterclass
12 Acts of Demolition

*AMO and The Berlage Center for Advanced Studies in
Architecture and Urban Design*

Filippo Lorenzi and Piergianna Mazzocca
March 2015
