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Body and Space Morphologies
Catharsis VIII
Acting and The Collective VIII

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Personal Statement

I remember once hearing the philosopher Arne Næss speaking of a washing rag he kept at his cabin. A guest had recommended him throwing it away and replacing it as it was old, worn and full of holes. Mr. Næss answered “When is a rag no longer a good rag? Its job is to absorb water and provide material that can scrub a surface and collect dirt. It does what it’s meant to do and therefore I am happy with it.”

We parade poetic sentiments of an inherent soul as we introduce the newest material addition into our surroundings, yet seem to pay no mind at all to its innocence, or what we owe it in return for its appropriation.

The preparation of a material and the production of objects are sacred acts of partnership and should be respected as such. What do we owe the roots that support our acts of creation? What do we owe the objects that are the outcome? These sentiments have manifested themselves in me as a strong urge to uncover potential in material that has been discarded and labelled as trash.

There is also a longing to explore what I can only explain as deep emotions that are not just mine, but part of the collective memory. Longing, growing and bonding are strong forces that radiate through the presence of certain architectural images: the chimney that survives the death of a building, the climbing vine and the trellis that supports it – in any shape or form, intended or not.

This, in retrospect, is what I consider to be the basis for this semesters journey of discovery.

Fragmented memory

What do they signify, all these little moments I carry with me? A snapshot on my phone or just a memory of a feeling once felt, one time, one place – maybe even in a dream.

Memories are tricky. We attach significance and associations to an event in retrospect that may not have had any part in its creation. Photographs are tricky in the same way, appearing as something concrete, something telling you “this is what that thing was”. They are flattened stories of fiction like words on a page, inspired by the subjective experiences of someone else – even if that someone was me, I am no longer him.

On good days these fragments are tendrils in my chest, reaching out for something to latch on to in a mist of longing.

On bad days they are anchors in my stomach, dragging the bottom for something to latch on to in a sea of longing.

A collection of these images – a curated recollection, if you will – is the attempt to de-fragment the memory, to reassemble the pieces into something new.

Something tendrils could latch on to.















The Silence of Ruins

Stanislaus Von Moos held a small lecture at AHO in November 2018 entitled *The Silence of Ruins*, an excerpt from his still upcoming book *First Aid*. He presented (as I remember it) the modernists dark fascination for war-time destruction as a catalyst for the blank slate needed to achieve their visionary destination: a perfect architecture that would never need to be torn down again.

First erase the past, then stop time. Quite the mission.

One of the segments in the presentation was about the phenomenon of chimneys still standing when all else had been bombed to rubble. They became something of a symbol of perseverance after WWII, like the people still standing after the cacophony of destruction had died down. Something about that image lingered in the back of my head the following year. Finally I searched for more material and ended up at the *Finnish Defence Forces' Photograph Archive* where most of the pictures in this chapter are from.

I wrote a memo when I was young that described how I liked the night for its ability to hide all the mistakes of man. Quite dramatic, but I still stand by it. We all strive for structure, but the sum of our efforts is often chaotic. Life is not something one can control; in varying degrees we will always be passengers, in our own minds and in the world.

Maybe that is the appeal of ruins: man's chaos torn down and simplified. Outlines for regrowth, improvement. Potential. Promise.

Still, I'm haunted by the violence that echoes through these images, and I think about man's capacity to destroy, more than anything else.









SA-Kuva

Welcoming the foliage

Abandoned and decaying, yet supporting new life. Louis Kahn wrote:

[...] As time passes, when it is a ruin, the spirit of its making comes back. It welcomes the foliage that entwines and conceals. Everyone who passes can hear the story it wants to tell about its making. It is no longer in servitude; the spirit is back.

I find it peculiar that the foliage is a part of a description of a building's spirit. Why is it not just about decay and change of use and purpose? Why does the foliage calm me and create a sense of longing that the derelict building alone could never evoke?

Maybe it is just the thought of standing in a space that man does not move through any longer, except as a rare and humble guest.

If this new occupant would have a door sign, it would say *You are not needed here anymore, human. We are doing fine without you.*

















Flexible Control of Movement in Plants

What do plants know?

...whether during the approach phase the tendrils of climbing plants consider the structure of the support they intend to grasp and plan the movement accordingly ahead of time. Here we report the first empirical evidence that this might be the case. [...]

The quote is taken from the abstract of a scientific report with the same title as this chapter. The behaviour of plants when relating to objects has been on my mind this semester and has leaked into the journey of making the objects in this chapter.

I feel like I have found something I was longing for.

The vines embrace and make use of the ruin we have left behind. The ruin welcomes the foliage and offers support unconditionally, without demanding the right to control and restrict growth.

Together they do what we couldn't.

Maybe we can learn.





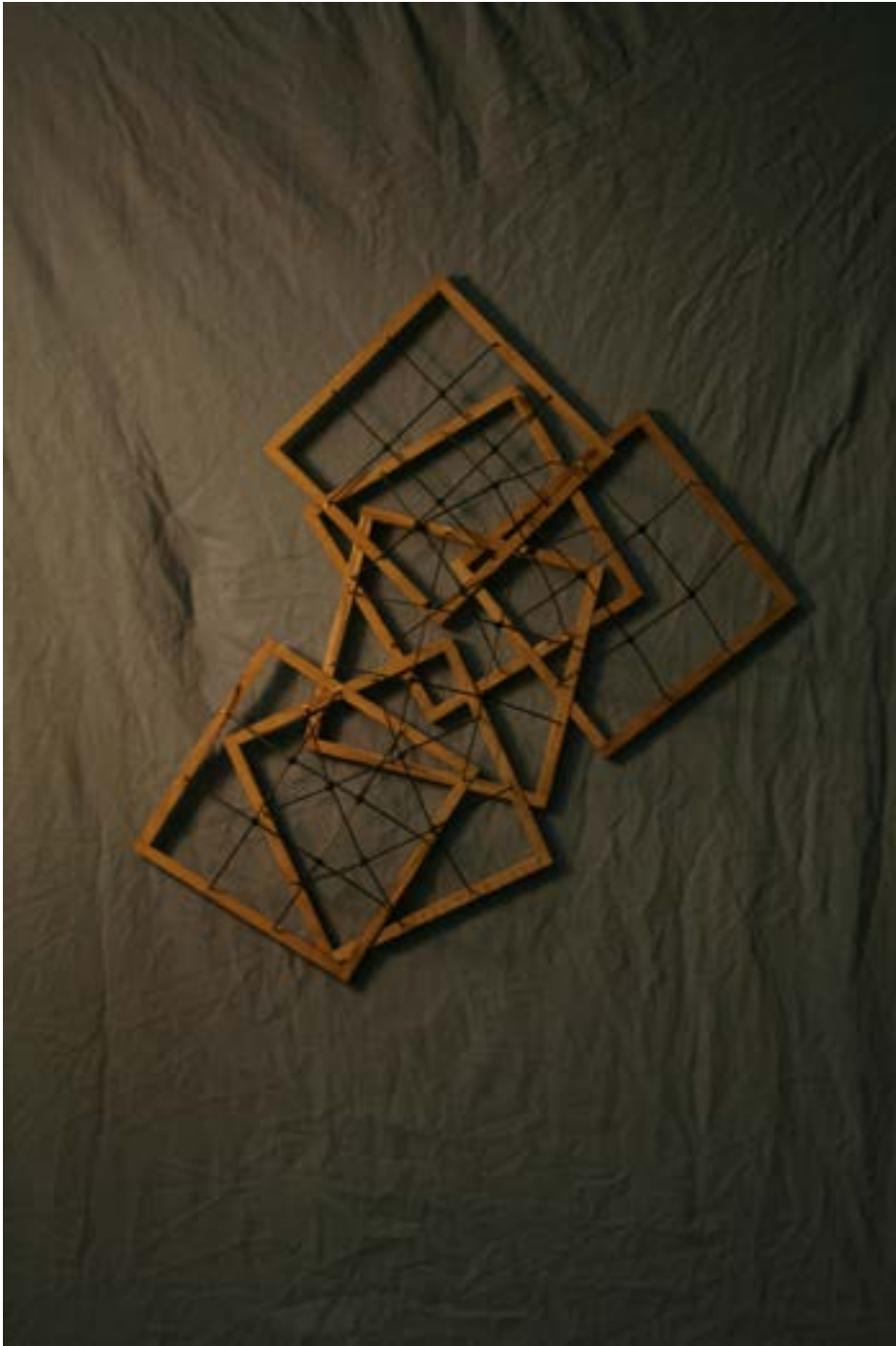
Yielding Cube



Tense Cube



Collapse and Regrowth - top view



Collapse and Regrowth - lateral view









