

Studies for a Failed Monument

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Drawing connections between certain subsets of data in our archives, we were able to illustrate the nation-state's fallacious belief that it could continuously mine the land and the ocean, and impose its whim and will even further on all ecosystems, without any repercussions. In situating this particular data set, we uncovered plans for another coastline sector. These plans show that this sector, if built, would have been an epitome of their misplaced desires; they envisioned land that would keep creeping into the water, constantly adding to the square footage of constructible land, accruing in value; and to commemorate it, a monument at the very centre, celebrating rabid construction and development, aiming to further partition the land.

Plans for the monument present a vertical common prefabricated concrete form, often used by the subspecies as a skeleton to support the roof over their heads. It is ironic that the subspecies from whom this form was coopted and subsequently aggrandised, would never have been allowed to enter the water-landmass, or even see it, since this water-landmass was built in a range of visibility solely reserved for the palace owners of that epoch.

The commission collapsed and the monument remained hypothetical, existing merely as images and studies on paper and as material samples. In its failure to materialise, it becomes, for us now, a failure of that entire epoch. Its absence becomes a monument to the failure of institutions that would have enabled its very formation, and to the collapse of hegemony. It also makes visible the resistance to amnesia enabled and imposed by the nation-state. Further, it bears witness to multifarious erasures of collective memories, challenging dominant "narratives with the 'discourse of other'", the "loss of master narratives", lands systematically lost, and other forms of division and partition. In its not-becoming, it became to the things that it was obliterating a monument, instead of a monument to the things it was celebrating.

The images and material residues reveal that there were dichotomous dimensions inherent in the urban environs of that time, helping us illustrate a dialogue, between the built and non-built, and instances of how the land was moved, divided, and dislocated. Aspirations writ large upon the land are reflective of excessive desires to construct and possess, albeit simultaneously destroying and dispossessing existing ecologies—strengthening structures of power, hegemony, and violence through partitioning and demarcating the land. It is important to note that these desires were not only individual or singular, but were a reflection of complex systems that were central to the neoliberal order, which was "a-empathetic" and malignant.

The human species—oblivious to the violence and entropy, however muted, subtle, and implicit, that came with partitioning and demarcating spaces—perpetuated these systems ceaselessly, therefore contributing to entropy, hastening their own eventual destruction and decay.

This excess led to inevitable collapse.