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Beyond Architecture: Architecture's alternative role in architecture image

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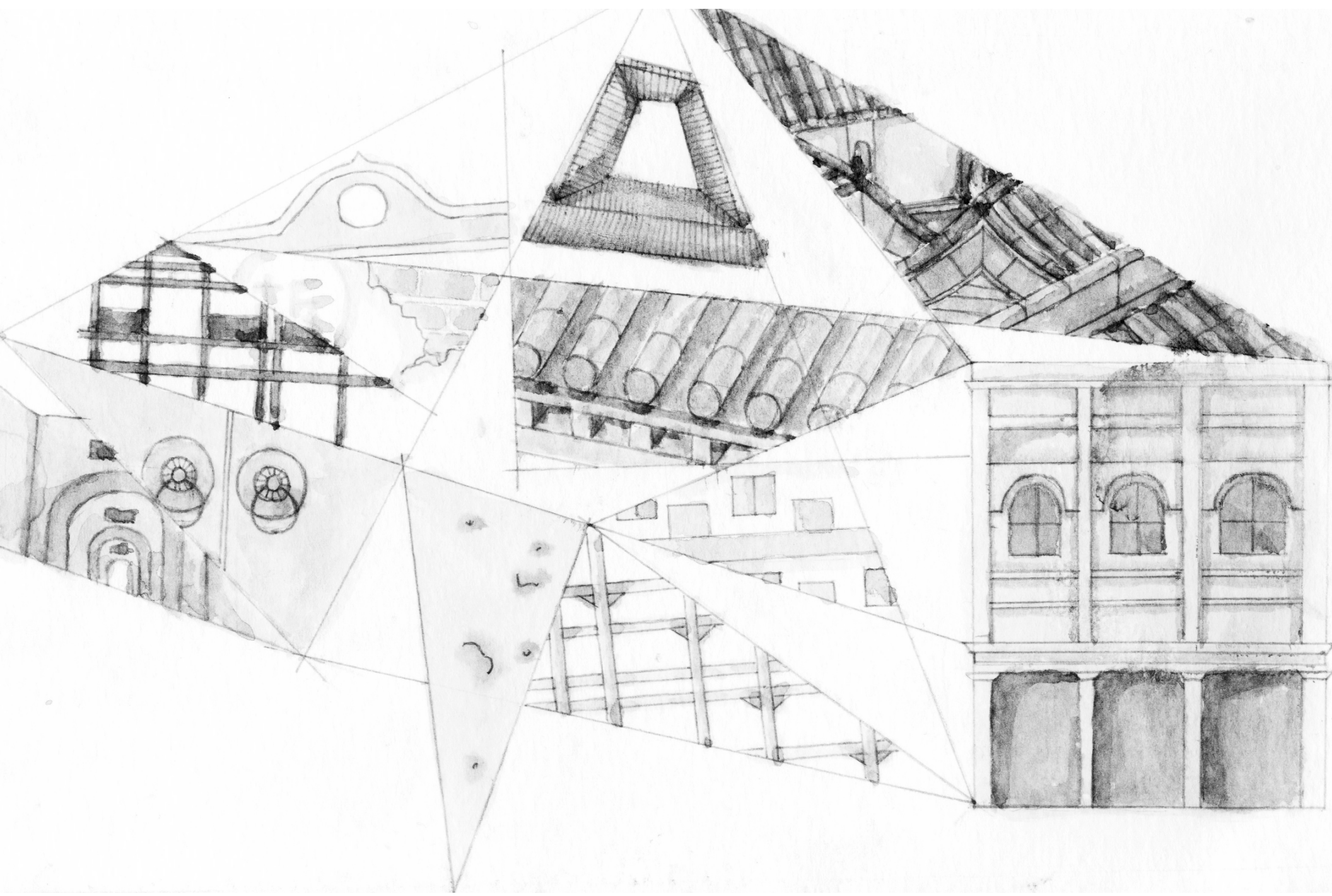
ABSTRACT

Images/drawings of architecture primarily act as documentation of structures to help the audience (architects or clients) understand how architecture functions: the sense of space, physical relationship with the context, and circulation through different programs. Nevertheless, architectural images that focus not on functionally determine spaces but rather on an idea or provocation, also play a significant role in the representation of architecture. The role of architecture in these kinds of images can be beyond a shelter or accommodation. It can set up a stage to deliver messages; discuss historical, social, economic or political issues; or to express emotion or desire. Architects/artist have been using architecture images with perplexing spatial qualities as provocative, topical responses to actuality throughout history. For example, in the 18th century, Étienne-Louis Boullée sought to overthrow traditions of architectural drawings and use the drawings to celebrate the greatness of picture, the greatness satisfies human's soul and eager to extend its joys in every.[1] In the 60s, Superstudio used a series of architecture collages to fight against market-driven architecture, and establish their goal to produce a system of infinite multiplications divisions and dimensions.[2] Later on, Lebbeus Woods used his prominent drawings to evoke people's awareness of the provocative characteristic of architecture oppose to its retrospective presentation or documentation purpose.[3]

As a knowledge of base, this thesis project would research why and how the architects/artists make the images in certain way to accomplish their expected effect by comparing the chosen images particularly on architects/artists' decision making on the scale of architecture pieces, not functionally determined spaces, materiality and pictorial perspective of the images and how these decisions result in different effect or affect.

This thesis proposal is to call on the audiences (architects and non-professionals) to consider architecture's alternative role in architecture image beyond retrospective presentation. Also, to engage the audiences in awareness and discussion of the topical communication with the architects/artists. Based on the knowledge to set up a framework for this thesis project. What framework should be set to avoid documentation potentials of architecture? What to resist and or embrace to avoid the architecture image become functionally determined? And eventually, use this framework to produce images with speculative architecture on a ruin with potentially healing necessity as a mean to deliver personal desire of hope and joy and evoke personal responses from the audiences.

1   Boullée, Etienne Louis, Helen Rosenau, and Sheila de Vallée. 1976. Architecture, essay on art. London: Academy Editions.

2   Lang, Peter, 1957, William Menking, and Superstudio (Group). Superstudio: Life without Objects. 1st ed. Milano (Italy); New York, NY; : Skira, 2003.

3   Woods, Lebbeus and International Network for Art and Architecture. Lebbeus Wood: Aeon, the Architecture of Time : A Monograph. Vol. 1, no. 1;1, no. 1.;. New York, N.Y: Express newspaper, 1982.

BEYOND ARCHITECTURE

-Architecture's alternative role in architecture image

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Graduation Date: May 2019
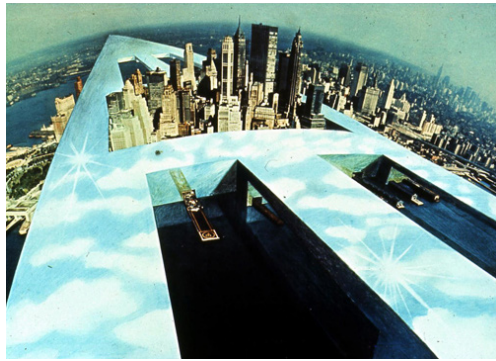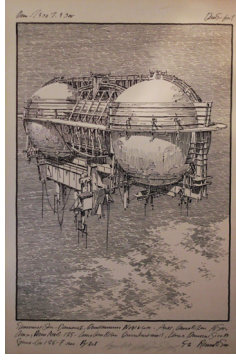Syracuse University School of Architecture

Content

Images/drawings of architecture can act as documentation of structures and space of buildings to help the audience (architects or clients) understand how architecture functions: the sense of space, physical relationship with the context, and circulation through different programs. Nevertheless, architectural images can also promote an idea or provocation rather than focus on space and use. The role of architecture in these kinds of images can be beyond a shelter or accommodation but to set up a stage to deliver messages; discuss historical, social, economic or political issues; or to express emotion or desire.

Architects/artists have been using architectural images with perplexing spatial qualities as provocative, topical responses to actuality throughout history. This thesis project would research and evaluate why and how the architects/artists make the images in a certain way to accomplish their expected effect. Images by four different architects from different periods are chosen to form a matrix by comparing and deconstructing the images by scale, architecture program, pictorial perspective, materiality, composition, and color. From the matrix, different combinations form different frameworks to achieve the expected effects.

This thesis proposal is to call on the audiences (architects and non-professionals) to consider architecture's alternative role in architectural images beyond retrospective presentation. In this project, neither the image nor the architecture is designed to propose solutions. Images have been created in this project not to propose solutions, but to raise awareness. Specifically, the images seek to engage Chinese governors in discussion of Chinese Property Ownership Policy. This policy causes the ongoing demolition and fading of architecture what witness the history and development of China and Chinese architecture which was eventually replaced by mass-produced high-rise residential apartments.

To raise awareness of this policy, this thesis is studying how architects/artists through history would construct their drawing; evaluating their images through scale, architecture program, pictorial perspective, materiality, composition, and color. The framework will create an understanding or which approach will best raise awareness of property ownership policy.

What framework should be set to accomplish the expected effect? What should be resisted and/or embraced to avoid the image becoming documentation or advertisement of architecture structure or space? Within the framework, how can I make the most powerful statement to emphasize the importance of memories of the architecture being demolished?

	Figure 1	Figure 2	Figure 3	Figure 4
author	Étienne-Louis Boullée	Superstudio	Lebbeus Woods	Eric Wong
year	1784	1969	1981	2016
scale	enormous	confusing	no reference	confusing
architecture program	program unclear	program unclear	program unclear	residential building
materiality	ink and wash	collage	pencil	digital drawing
pictorial perspective	section	distorted collage perspective	perspective	distorted collage perspective
color	B&W	true colors	B&W	coherent warm v color set
composition	centered	one point perspective	direct focus	fullfilled

SCALE — the scale of the architecture pieces that are the main characters in the image in comparison to the context and human size.

ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM — can the audience define the program of the "main character"? How would it evoke different affects from the audiences when the architecture pieces are functionally clear or unclear?

MATERIALITY — what technique did the architect/artist use to make the image?

PICTORIAL PERSPECTIVE — how is the image constructed, how do different pictorial perspective help enhance the architecture pieces?

COLOR — architects/artists' decision making on the color palate

COMPOSITION — how the image construction leads the audience's eyes in order to emphasize the information the architect/artist is delivering

[Figure 1. This image is a section drawing of Cenotaph of Newton by Étienne-Louis Boullée.
Source from https://gallica.bnf.fr/Bibliothèque nationale de France]
[Figure 2. This image is a photomontage from the image series Continuous Monument by Superstudio.
Image downloaded from https://www.cristianotoraldodifrancia.it/continuous-monument/]
[Figure 3. This image is a drawing from the image series War and Architecture by Lebbeus Woods.
Image downloaded from https://www.graphicine.com/lebbeus-woods-war-and-architecture/]
[Figure 4. This image is from Eric Wong's thesis COHESION which proposed blueprint for a re-imagined Britain. Source from http://www.ericwong.co.uk/]
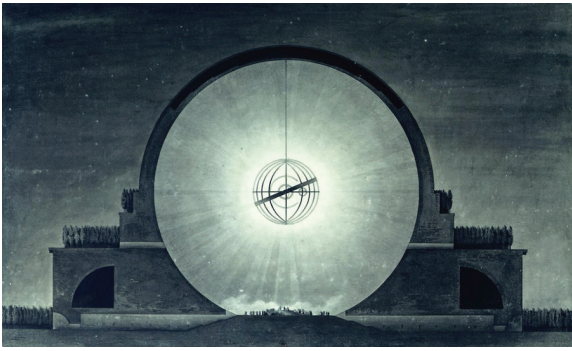
ETIENNE LOUIS BOULEE (1784)
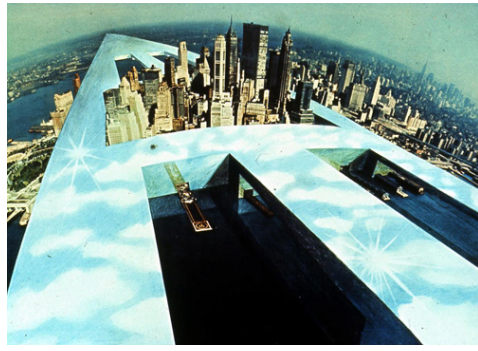
SUPERSTUDIO (1969)

LEBBEUS WOODS (1981)

ERIC WONG (2017)

SCALE

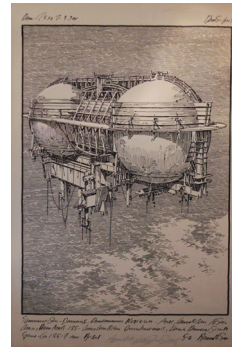|			
The thickness of the wall, the openness of space, the hanging element from the interior as well as the trees on the terrace-like platform on the sides of the building make the audience lose the sense of scale. With the people drawn as a reference, the building is eccentrically enormous.	The white gridded box extends into the city. With the cityscape, the white box seems gigantic. The scale of people on the new structure does not seem correct with the cityscape as a reference object.	Being on its own without any other interaction, the building can be any size as the audience image it would be.	The perspective drawing and straight lines make the drawing precise and accurate. However, the transformation of the building and the flying objects confuses the audience again.

ARCHITECTURE PROGRAM

The abnormal scale of the building makes the audience hard to specify the function of this building.	If without the cityscape as a background, one would probably never see the "new" as architecture. Even with the cityscape, the audience still won't be able to identify the use of this grid structure.	Without the existing context, the audience cannot estimate what activities would happen in these structures. No program or any program can happen.	The audience would recognize the architecture as residential buildings. However, the explosion of building parts and flying objects clearly represent something else besides the residential purpose of the building.

MATERIALITY

Ink and wash drawing.	Collage with image and digital drawing.	The obvious pencil marks and the consistent linework make the audience focus on the aesthetic rather than space and use of architecture.	Digital drawing is a model architecture documentation format. However, the architect does not follow architecture drawing rules to make accurate drawings.

PICTORIAL PERSPECTIVE

An orthodox architecture section is a conventional method of architecture spatial and structure documentation.	One-point perspective.	Orthodox one-point perspective.	The distorted views, collage, and non-architectural elements to reduce the functionality of architecture. Even a professional would find it hard to understand the spatial quality of the architecture in this image.

COLOR

Black and white with block shade and lights.	Real object colors.	Black and white.	Coherent warm color palette with red as pimary color.

COMPOSITION

The building appears to be the only object in the drawing. The drawing is symmetrical with t light leads the audiences' eye to the center of the page.	The white gridded structure extends into the city and vanishes to the edge of the sky; strong comparison with colorful cityscape the audiences' attention follows the new structure through the page.	The building is the only object on the canvas draws all the attention.	The entire page is full filled with information, the audience would wander through the entire page rather than focus on a specific point.

EFFECT

The image seemed to be talking about architecture, but when the audience tries to unpack the architecture, they realize the architecture doesn't function. Then the audiences would step back to look at the image itself as an art piece. The architect celebrated the greatness to architecture image because it satisfies the audiences in every aspect because of our soul, eager to extend its joys.	This does not appear to be an image of the architect and it certainly is not. The architects used the architectural element to declare their attitudes against market-driven architecture.	The image is not a retrospective architecture presentation but an art piece that expresses the architect's fantasy of the postapocalyptic world. And in this case, how people occupy the space does not matter anymore.	This drawing was produced to raise the argument about whether or not architecture can help reunite divided post-Brexit Britain. The project is not about space and usage of architecture but about the situation current situation and envisions a better future.

Chinese Property Ownership Policy

[Figure 5. This image shows the cover of Chinese Property Ownership Certificate. Image downloaded from http://www.sohu.com/a/83146933_227942]

All buildings in China have an expiration date, the buildings will be demolished after certain years, which varies from building types. Demolition is happening every day in every city of China. Even with the fact that these architectures visualize the development of China and Chinese architecture history, the buildings would still be demolished and replaced by mass-produced inactively occupied high-rise residential buildings that overcrowd the cities.

Date of usage: 2007/08/29 - 2077/08/29

Date of usage: 2009/12/06 - 2079/12/06

[Figure 6,7. These images show the content page of Chinese Property Ownership Certificate. Photography by Author]

[Figure 8-16. These images show the disappearing Chinese architecture culture. Images downloaded from https://s.weibo.com]

[Figure 17. This image represents the word "demolish" which would be written of the walls of the buildings that are going to be demolished. Images downloaded from http://www.icaijie.com/news/2016/03/4406.shtml]
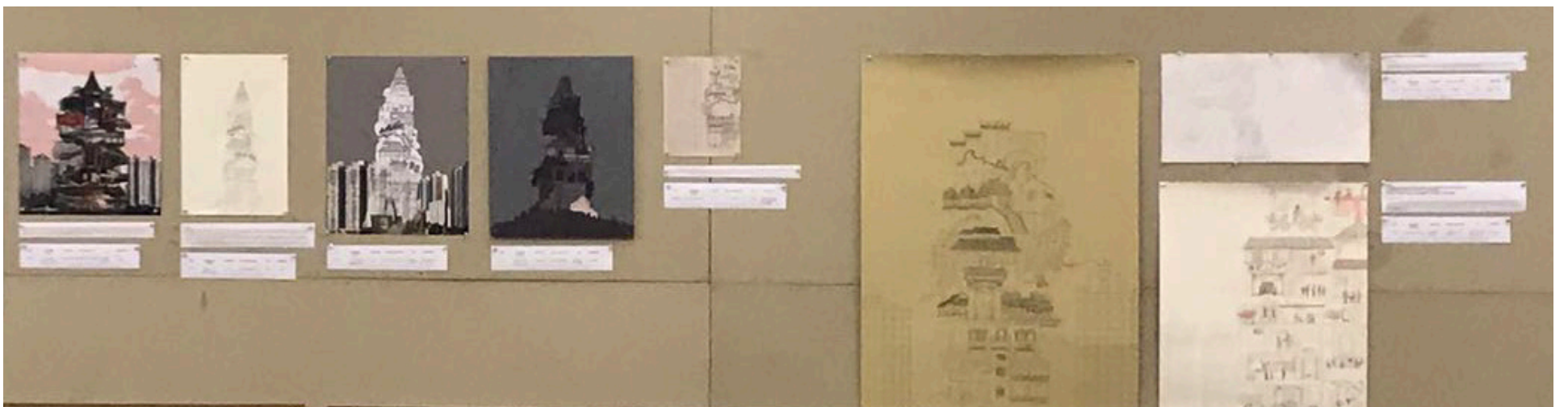
[Figure 17. Presentation. Photography by Author]

This image is not an anatomy of an architecture piece. The practical function of architecture is not important in this image. The hybrid piece of the structure with different types of representative Chinese architecture pieces act as a symbol of memories. This is a folly to remember the buildings being demolished in China due to Chinese property ownership policy.

This project does not aim to solve the problem but to evoke audiences' awareness and bring up topical responses. The image is to document the development of Chinese architecture, which witnesses the development of China. The memories carried by the buildings are disappearing with the occupants who once lived in them.

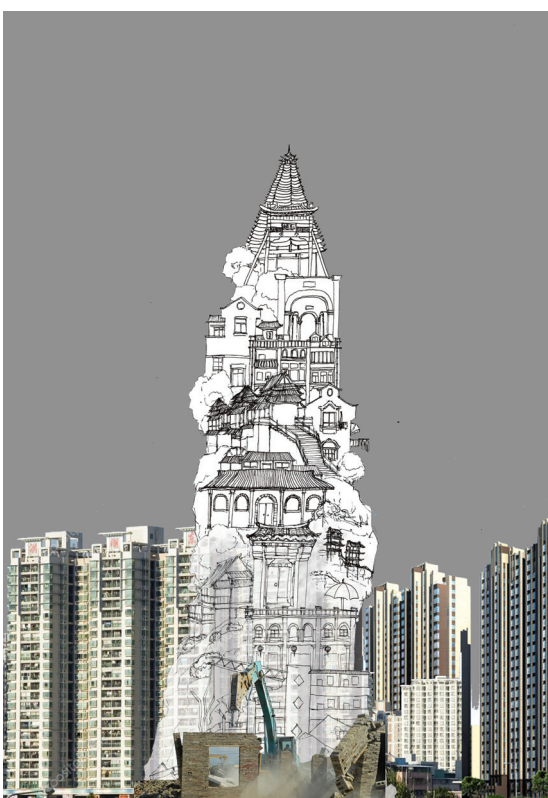|	
scale	confusing
architecture program	residential building
materiality	photomontage
pictorial perspective	distorted collage perspective
color	real object color, pink, B&W
composition	triangular
size	15x17in
audience	general public

Black and white context as background on the bottom, a colorful pseudo-symmetrical new structure in the middle of the canvas extends to the pink sky and become the focus on the canvas. The architecture program is clear from each piece, but the function of the hybrid structure is not clear, so the audience would not be distracted from identifying the function of the space. Although the context is desaturated, the collaged architecture pieces with extremely rich true color reduce the value of the content of the image. And the information becomes too rich that the audience doesn't know where to look at.
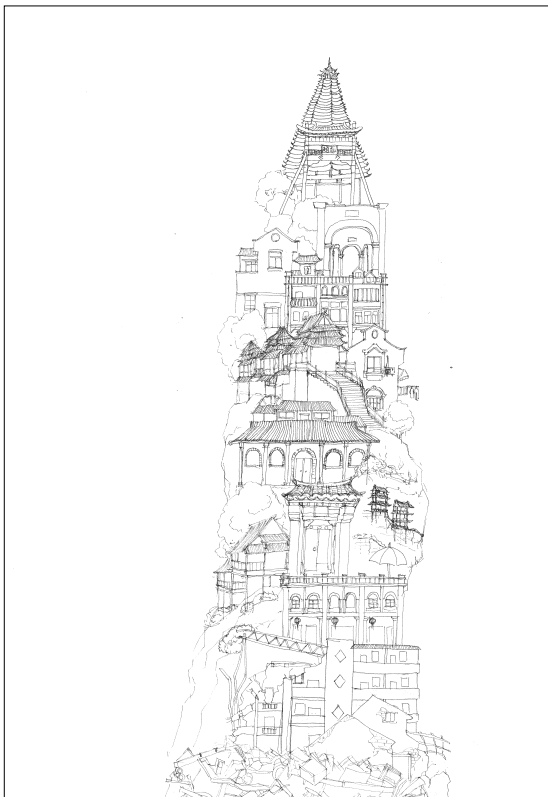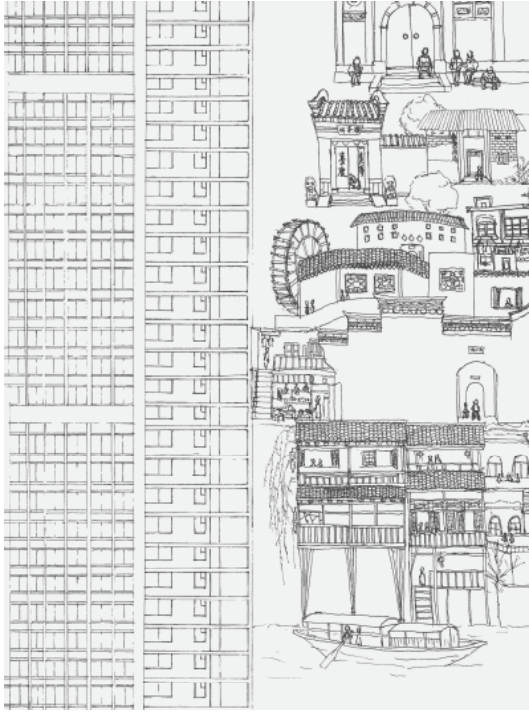

scale	confusing
architecture program	program unclear residential building
materiality	pen
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	B&W
composition	middle
size	11x17in
audience	Chinese governers

The confusing scale of the building due to the distorted perspective create a mystery identity for the architecture which encourages the audience to discover the information it carries. Black & white pen drawing in the middle of the canvas immediately drag audiences' attention. However, without context or comparison, it is hard to convince the audience of the importance of the memories of Chinese architecture history.

scale	confusing
architecture program	program unclear residential building
materiality	collage
pictorial perspective	distorted collage perspective
color	real object color, B&W
composition	triangular
size	11x17in
audience	Chinese governers

The strong contrast of color and technique of the architecture piece and the context make the architecture piece become the focus. The triangular set up which architecture in the middle successfully guide the audience through the page.

scale	confusing
architecture program	residential building
materiality	pen
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	B&W
composition	fullfilled
size	8.5x11in
audience	Chinese governers

The page is fulfilled, but the repetitive rigid lines on the left lead the audience to the right part of the page which is constructed with dynamic line types and heavier contents. But the black and white drawing failed to highlight the collective living style which should be the focus of this image.

scale	confusing
architecture program	program unclear
materiality	oil on canvas
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	dark, cold color palete
composition	fullfilled
size	16x20in
audience	Chinese governers

The triangular composition leads the audiences' eyes to travel from the bottom to the top so that each part of the building can be observed. However, without context or
comparison, it is hard to convince the audience of the importance of the memories of Chinese architecture history. Furthermore, the texture of oil loses the detail of the buildings
which are crucial to identify each building types.
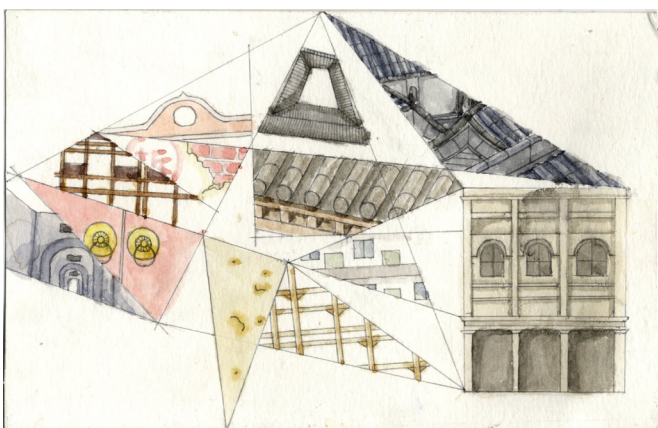
scale	no scale
architecture program	program unclear
materiality	pen, watercolor
pictorial perspective	collage
color	blue tone
composition	scattered
size	8.5x5.5in
audience	tourists

The abstract painting on a poster size paper can serve as a souvenir piece which the audience can the broader and not necessary to understand the complete information carried by the image but to appreciate the aesthetic quality of the image.

scale	confusing
architecture program	program unclear residential building
materiality	pen on craft paper
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	B&W
composition	triangular
size	26x45in
audience	Chinese governers

Issues:
1. diverse, characterised, and vernacular building types Vs. repetitive mass-produced building type
2. memroies of development of China and Chineses architecture Vs. no mark to trace back to

The repetitive rigid lines on the sides lead the audience to the middle part of the page which is constructed with dynamic line types and heavier contents. The image is heavier
on the bottom and vanishes on the top which guides the audience from the bottom to the top. The pen drawing clear depicted the building types and craftsmanship
which is the topical issue of this image. The contrast between the contemporary building and the characterize Chinese architecture would evoke the audiences' awareness of
what the issue we are facing.

scale	confusing
architecture program	program unclear residential building
materiality	pen on craft paper
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	B&W
composition	triangular
size	22x30in
audience	Chinese governers

Issues:
1. collective community life Vs. Isolated community life with limited shared space
2. celebration of culture and tradition is fading away
3. diverse building types Vs. repetitive mass-produced building type

The repetitive rigid lines on the sides lead the audience to the middle part of the page which is constructed with dynamic line types and heavier contents. The image is heavier
on the bottom and vanishes on the top which guides the audience from the bottom to the top. The pen drawing clear depicted the building types and craftsmanship
which is the topical issue of this image. The contrast between the contemporary building and the characterize Chinese architecture would evoke the audiences' awareness of
what the issue we are facing.

scale	no scale
architecture program	no particular program
materiality	pencil on woodpaper
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	B&W
composition	read from right to left
size	11-3/4x22in
audience	Chinese governers

Issues:
craftmanship Vs. mass-production

The pencil drawing on the wood penal cover with gesso mimics part of the destructed building. Sketchy pencil drawing makes the image look less formal and more like a
graffiti on the wall. Pencil successfully depicts the memory of craftsmanship, meanwhile, celebrate the legacy of handcraft.

scale	no scale
architecture program	no particular program
materiality	oil on canvas, chipboard
pictorial perspective	distorted perspective
color	red, green, blue, yellow
composition	read from right to left
size	48x36 in
audience	museum/gallery visitors

Issues:
craftmanship, memory, typology

The bright colorful painting will be located in an museum or gallery which is served as a exhibited art piece. The image focus more on the construction of the composition to guide the audiences' eye through the image. The audiences in this case would be the visitors of the museum/gallery who are free to apply their own interpretations to the painting based on their knowledge of art without detailed explanation of the project. How the image being broadcast by the visitors would be an unpredicted effect.

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