

*Landscapes of Care: Photography, Film, Modern Architecture
and Landscape Heritage*



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Other Interpretations on Tower H

Julia Maria Fabbriani

Abstract:

The essay 'Other Interpretations on Tower H' is the result of a keen interest in exploring the multiple interpretative possibilities concerning a specific abandoned residential building in Rio's Barra da Tijuca district. Tower H was part of modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer's 'Centro da Barra' project (1969), developed in this up-and-coming neighbourhood at that time. The research for this text began in 2021, while the tower was under structural inspection. As a result of it, I identified 'ambiguous' and 'open' aspects of the building that relate to Ignasi de Solà-Morales' terrain vague concept. The recent demolition of the tower's sealing surface and the subsequent excavation of a landfilled area next to the tower have changed the city's perception and memory fluxes of the building: from the past to the present; from closed to exposed interiors; from covered to excavated landfilled sand that was buried since the tower construction. All of this brings back memories of the neighbourhood's landscape not only during the presence of this imposing building but also prior to its existence. A photographic experiment promoted a tactical experience inside this enigmatic architectural object. Additionally, it analysed displacement operations from the last two years, allowing new interpretations on this landmark.

Keywords: Architecture; Camera obscura; Terrain vague; Photography; Art Installation.

Julia Maria Fabbriani is an architect, urbanist and artist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, having graduated from PUC-Rio in July 2022. Her work follows the intersections between the urban landscape and its use by singular and multiple bodies. It comes from a desire to research and partially disclose the mysterious and strange manifestations that are seen in contemporary cities. She is curious about revelations and enclosings and how architecture can affect individuals' perceptions on different scales. Julia has been researching and applying bodily-sized objects, from sound sculptures to video installations, to investigate how interactive architecture can amplify our critical perception of the city and its relations.

Introduction

The essay "Other Interpretations on Tower H" is the result of a keen interest in exploring the multiple interpretive possibilities concerning this tower, which is part of Oscar Niemeyer's 1969 "Centro da Barra" project. In its current state, Tower H has the ambiguity and openness characteristic of the *terrain vague* (Solà-Morales 1996). The research and reasoning on possible scenarios for the tower produced an installation that aimed to capture the architectural object's singularity and ephemerality at this given moment.

A new sensibility is built upon three main sources: Ignasi de Solà-Morales's text *Terrain Vague*¹ as the principal conceptual reference; Walter Benjamin's essay *Short Story of Photography*² regarding the photography of city ruins; and Richard Scoffier's article *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture*³, exploring the concept of *happening* from the optics of the *terrain vague*. Using these readings, this multimedia essay was developed to map the potentials of the tower in its present state.

Aiming to preserve the tower's potential emptiness, the existent paradigms and displacements gave way to an ephemeral installation. In parallel, an 'inside out' narrative was created, proposing a reflection as the result of an *in loco* experience. Tower H, at the present hour, reveals itself as a massive and exposed structure that can be seen either as in construction or in demolition. Without its sealing surface, it reminds us both of the time of its construction and of its decay. The facade ceases to communicate any functionality, and the tower turns itself into an abstract object, open to multiple interpretations or inquisitions.

Approach

Towers A, H and G belong to what was once designated as Barra Centre. The 1969 project developed by Brazilian architect and urbanist Oscar Niemeyer aspired to be a modern, different city from the one that we have become familiar with. His project anticipated the construction of a total of 72 cylindrical corporate and residential towers. This 'city of dreams' as it was named in many newspaper ads was never completed therefore it represents an utopia, far distant from today's reality. The 3 existing towers provide a glimpse to what the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood could have become; they are a memory of a dream that was never materialised.

1 "Terrain Vague / Ignasi de Solà-Morales", 1995, accessed November 12, 2021: <http://www.archdaily.com.br/35561/terrain-vague-ignasi-de-sola-morales>.

2 Walter Benjamin, "Short Story of Photography", 1931. Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.artforum.com/print/197702/walter-benjamin-s-short-history-of-photography-36010#:~:text=Published%20by%20Camille%20Recht%2C%20Paris%20and%20Leipzig%2C%201931>.

3 Richard Scoffier, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2009).

Oscar Niemeyer's Barra Centre project inspired Urbanist Lúcio Costa's Pilot Plan for the design of the neighbourhood. In this plan, both architects imagined Barra da Tijuca as a sort of paradise away from the grittiness of the city, with quality low-cost apartments surrounded by landscaped gardens near the coastline area. Niemeyer's Conceptual Plan aimed for a low-density land occupation to allow the same ample, unobstructed vistas and high ventilation for all the towers.

Today, 50 years after the beginning of their construction, towers A and H form an enigmatic pair within the urban landscape of Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood. Tower H has been abandoned since 1984 and to this day remains unoccupied. It seems to be a ghostly structure located in the middle of other edifices that were constructed around it within the last few decades. Its exposed, large structure could be perceived as in construction or as in deconstruction, or even could be seen as a contemporary ruin.

Tower A was completed in 1990 and it presents a facade with masonry shutters including small hexagonal openings. In turn, Tower H had exactly the same shutters for several years but in the last years its facade displayed a state of abandonment, with many absent window frames and broken glasses. Coupled with the removal of its sealing surface within the last 2 years, a hidden depth has been revealed. This open structure, without any type of shutters, has become exposed once again and as a result, it establishes a new dialogue with the city. Now Tower H can be considered as an immense neutral object which does not express any idea of functionality or symbolism. Its open structure evokes a type of ambiguity revealing an enormous potential lying asleep.

Tower H can also be interpreted as a shadow, the extreme opposite of its twin, Tower A. The dialog between them brings out a ghostly atmosphere which refers to meanings such as mirroring and 'enigma of the double'. While one tower represents order and functionality, the other is an undefined space, a vague body outside of the urban economy and dynamic. Tower H finds itself inside the city however it is away from the real estate dynamic. There is some sort of tension over it. A dormant potential lies over this unused space.

The current scenario is ephemeral, and it is in the threat of a radical transformation that myths and mysteries are born. The actual moment is instigating because it seems to evoke the entire historical time in the present. The ruined Tower H is a reminiscence of Jorge Luis Borges' *Circular Ruins*⁴ tale. His essay tells the journey of an outsider who looks for the sacred space of a ruin to dream. This sorcerer aims for the ruin, where the accumulated temporal load is dense, to enter in a kind of inventive transcendent dream. The emptiness of the temple can be compared to the empty skeleton of Tower H, which presents itself as an imaginary space, a place of eternal afterlife.

4 Jorge Luis Borges, *As Ruinas Circulares* (Buenos Aires: SUR, v. 75, 1940).

Firstly, the architectural object was identified as a building explicitly revealing its insides. The present state of exposure provokes questions about its history, of what it once was and how it would be perceived in the future. Here, Tower H is understood as a phantom enigma in relation to its visibility, presence, appearance and also as a counterpoint to its twin tower, presently occupied. Whichever occupation, attribution or modification of its physical space and character could suppress its condition of vagueness, indefiniteness, openness and freedom of being. The ambiguous, fluid self-image could not be fixated or crystallised by a single reading.

In the 1996 *Terrain Vague* published excerpt in the XIX UIA (Architects International Union) catalogue, Ignasi de Sóla-Morales develops the *terrain vague* concept identifying the potential of undefined empty spaces. The Architect investigates alternatives to the predetermined forms in which the field of architecture defines vacant terrains in cities, with the objective of helping to preserve these spaces. Although generally associated with empty spaces, the *terrain vague* concept is attributed to an architectural object in the scope of this essay. The identification of Tower H as a *terrain vague* creates an instigating challenge. How to act inside the boundaries of an open, empty space without destroying the existing forces contained within the limits of its emptiness?

Ephemeral installation

The *experiment* at Tower H emerges from a wish to translate the ephemerality of the present moment through photography. The proposed creation of a camera obscura in a specific location inside the building was an action based on Richard Scoffier's concept of *happening*⁵ that aimed to amplify the perspectives of this indeterminate space.

A *happening* is an ephemeral gesture that cannot be reproduced. This action was proposed as an invitation for an in-depth examination of Tower H's peculiarities, without leaving any marks. It could be seen as if the inside surfaces of the building were used as a mirror, depicting the images without being altered by the *happening*.

⁵ Richard Scoffier, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2009).

[Fig. 1]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura"



The ephemeral installation translated the fleetingness aspect of the *terrain vague*, which can become undone at any sudden moment. According to architect Beatriz Colomina on her essay about Dan Graham's body of work, a distinct sensibility is achieved in the ephemerality of the pavilion:

The maximum strength of the pavilion is the possibility that it will disappear as abruptly as it appeared, reorganising ambitions and creating new connections between what were once utopic fantasies and are now plausibly constructed realities. The true signal that a building is a pavilion is that it goes, flies away or at least promises to do so. The encounter with an object that is about to disappear is fundamentally different. The thought that you may not be able to come back to it turns the experience of being in that space indescribable, even romantic. The conventional understating is challenged. Afterwards, what happened becomes strangely obscure, and it is this lack of clarity that opens new horizons of interpretation.⁶

For the intervention we selected unit 611 at Tower H taking into consideration its frontal relation to Tower A and Avenida das Americas, and the images that these elements could generate once they were projected inside the building.

⁶ Beatriz Colomina, *Beyond Pavilions: Architecture as a Machine to See, Dan Graham: Beyond* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).



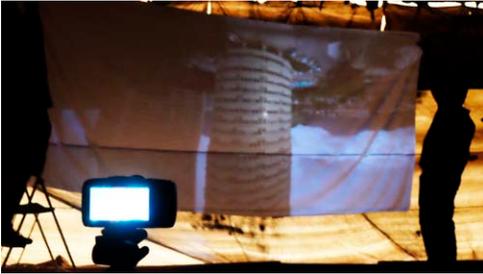
As a result of this interference, unit 611 could no longer be branded as a generic module. The framework of a camera obscura is similar to the capturing of a photographic image through the use of a regular camera. The frame reduces the amount of external information and promotes other readings, fictional or not, with a mediated image⁷. Like a large scale camera, the device projects an outdoor urban landscape inside the unit. This outside image exposed in the building insides creates new conditions to be explored virtually and temporarily. These are new forms for the body to experiment with the constructed as well as the imaginary spaces.

Projected over the floor, walls and roof of the camera obscura was the inverted image of Tower A, as a ghost revealing itself inside another ghost. The image of the inhabited tower seems to symbolise a promise that the unfinished Tower H will become, or what it could have become thirty (30) years ago. It seems that Tower H is embodying its twin, the two towers merging into a single one, completely filling the camera obscura.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Short Story of Photography", 1931. Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.artforum.com/print/197702/walter-benjamin-s-short-history-of-photography-36010#:~:text=Published%20by%20Camille%20Recht%2C%20Paris%20and%20Leipzig%2C%201931>.

[Fig. 2]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 2"

[Fig. 3]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 3"



With the development of this *experiment*, the internal environment transformed itself from an empty residential unit into a video mechanism. The space can also be seen as Tarnovsky's Room of Dreams or a place where the world could have an alternate meaning, in reverse, away from what one perceives as reality. Our bodies dressed in white were touched by the images, reoriented and reorganised by the sky that became the ground, by the inside that turned into the outside.

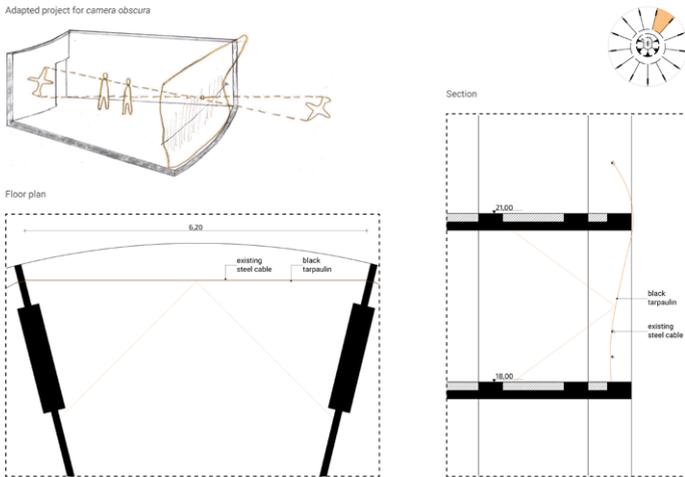
The projected image superimposed on the inside created, virtually and provisionally, new conditions to be explored. The inverted virtual images of the tower interior created confusion and disorientation that allowed an ambiguous and poetic reading. In the photographic registries, we perceive several overlapping virtual layers: the image projected on the camera; the image projected on the screen; the beam of light bringing the image; the image projected over white sheets suspended on the interior walls at unit 611. The ephemeral act generates a certain sense of nostalgia as moments escape from comprehension and are doomed to end.

[Fig. 4]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 4"

[Fig. 5]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 5"

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On May 10th 2022, from 10 AM to 16 PM, Unit 611 was transformed into a camera obscura. The setting up of the black sealing sheet with an opening for the camera obscura lasted approximately 3 hours while its tearing down took only 10 minutes. Once the equipment was removed from the unit, everything looked exactly as it was before the experiment. One can even affirm that nothing happened there as no traces of the experiment were left behind. Tower H remains exactly as it was before our presence there.



Tower H

Rio de Janeiro's urbanisation project for the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood had an urgent profile as the expansion of the city towards its Western Region in the late 1960's was occurring in a fast, chaotic manner. The 1969 *Barra Centre* project developed an utopic, romantic way to organise this urban growth. Oscar Niemeyer proposed a neighbourhood conveying an orderly way of healthy and natural communal living, a modern garden city by the coastline of western Rio de Janeiro. Tall towers were to be built with ample spaces in between them to avoid the intense occupation of the land. They would be surrounded by the Atlantic Rain Forest, Rio's original ecosystem, which would be designed by Landscape Artist Roberto Burle-Marx.

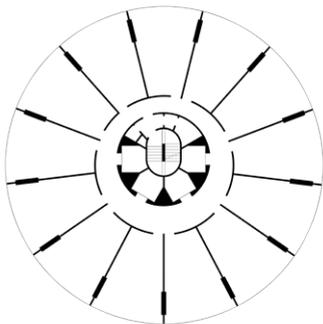
[Fig. 6]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Project for camera obscura", drawings.

Besides Tower H, only four other buildings from the original project were constructed: Tower A, in 1990; Tower H, interrupted in 1984 due to fiscal irregularities; Tower G, in 1994; and Tower F, never completed and subsequently imploded in late 1990's.

The *Barra Centre* towers represent an occupational mark and to this day are still the highest structures in the neighbourhood, with 36 floors and 122,2 metres of height. It is estimated that 10.157,75m³ of concrete was used in their construction. Approximately 4.936,70m³ of sand were displaced from the nearby Guandu riverbed.

The towers were erected along the margins of existing Avenues. These roads were developed at an elevated level and from this height the Tower's ground floor was levelled. Below, two garage levels were constructed and then landfilled till the ground floor height. It is estimated that 32.083,20m³ of sand from the vicinity as well as scrap land and waste from other constructions were added to fill the Tower H lot. The white sand dunes that formed the original natural landscape of Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood area were flattened and hidden from the surface. Also, it is believed that 37.019,9m³ of sand was dislodged to build Tower H and its embankment.



[Fig. 7]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Floor Plan", drawing.



[Fig. 8]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Section", drawing.

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In 1984 the works at Tower H were paralyzed due to irregularities regarding the payment of taxes. Heraldo da Silva, the Engineer in charge of the tower and also one of its acquirer, founded the Tower H Acquirers' Association that recently decided to complete the works at its own expense based on a new architectural project by architect Paulo Sérgio Niemeyer, a relative of Oscar Niemeyer.

In 2020 the tower's sealing surface was demolished and an embankment area of 1.210.000m² between the tower and the Avenue of the Americas was removed, where at least 4.840.000m³ of sand were relocated to other construction projects in the city. The enormous hole left open, at least 4 mts deep, revealed the covered fine white sands that formed the dunes that existed all over the neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca.

The current scenario is unique because it is situated in a time period between the construction and the demolition of Tower H. This is the moment in which the 'insides' of the building and the original soil underneath the tower, previously hidden from sight, are now exposed and establish a sensible relationship with the city.

Terrain vague

Ignasi de Solà Morales stated that the *terrain vague* concept had a more comprehensive interpretation in the French language. The term *terrain* refers to the urban land available for construction or to an usable piece of land inside and/or in the outskirts of cities. In turn, the word *vague* refers to movement as well as to instability, as it shares a common Germanic root to the English word *wave*. Additionally the word *vague* also originates from the latin expression *vaccus*, which means not only empty but also vague, open, undetermined.

In this essay, the term *terrain vague* has been used in the interpretation of an architectural work and not attributed to an empty piece of land, as it is generally associated to. In this case study the external form of Tower H is dismissed as it is considered a symbolic territory, as an empty lot of land or a parcel of the city that never came to be. As a *terrain vague*, it is a territory outside of the productive logic of the city, an alternative to its hermetic order. The city has not appropriated this space, and there is uncertainty over what is to come of them or what has already happened to them. The emptiness of the *terrain vague* is where one finds the full potential of what these spaces can become:

Their edges lack an effective incorporation, they are interior islands emptied of any activity, they are forgotten remains settled outside of the urban dynamics. They have become uninhabited, insecure and unproductive areas. In addition, they are strange places to the urban system, mental exteriors within the physical city interior that appear as a counterimage of themselves, in the sense of their criticism or their possible alternative.⁸

⁸ "Terrain Vague / Ignasi de Solà-Morales", 1995, accessed November 12, 2021: <http://www.archdaily.com.br/35561/terrain-vague-ignasi-de-sola-morales>.

To consider Tower H as a *terrain vague* is a way of validating its interpretative opening, of identifying in its emptiness a contained and undetermined force that can break free and transform itself at any given moment. It is solely at the threat of its disappearance that the present moment appears to escape from comprehension. A nostalgic desire to capture the aura of the *terrain vague* concept emerges when it can suddenly disappear at any moment. There exists a willingness to comprehend the peculiarities of these spaces, to unravel how the mystery manifests itself at Tower H.

In Ethnologist Marc Augé's book named *Non-Places* there exists a feeling of freedom when entering spaces with such openness, a "vague enchantment"⁹ for the wasteland. According to him, the *non-place* idea is characterised by the lack of any identity as well as a historical and relational absence. In fact, the history of Tower H is veiled as a result of its secrets and political intrigues. The abandoned tower does not relate directly to the city as it has always been unoccupied. It doesn't even present any recognizable identity. Notwithstanding, the possible relations with the ruined tower are of another nature, not at all clear. These are the imaginable, virtual relations that operate in an opposite timeframe from the productive logic of the city. It is at these physical spaces within the city that the frontiers between fiction and reality get blurred, where myths and fantasies come afloat.

The concern for the contemporary urban wastelands emerged from an anguish caused by the increasingly rapid growth of modern cities at the end of the 19th century.¹⁰ Eugène Atget, a photographer active from 1890 to 1927, grasped the strange feeling of 19th century cities' fast growth in its extreme opposite, picturing the spaces that they had not reached completely, or where they could have already occurred.

In the essay titled *The Small History of Photography*, Walter Benjamin describes Atget as a photographer who transferred the aura of 19th century photography to the streets of Paris. This photographer contributed to the creation of a new perception of the great European cities. One could see the city through its absence, its nostalgia and its desire. The aura of the great cities is an indecipherable sentiment which can be found present within their limits, where it has not yet manifested itself. There is a moment of tension amongst these spaces and a feeling of expectation manifests itself in the *terrain vague*.

The urban individual, according to Sòla-Morales, builds their experience from negativity: we endear ourselves to chaos from the moment that the urban order prevails. Tower H's feeling of freedom corresponds to the opposite of the monotonous functionality of the city, to the pervading control of the alienating security systems of Barra da Tijuca gated residential/corporate communities. It is a space where the speed imposed by the modern world has not reached or arrived yet. It is where an errant and slow body can get lost.

9 Marc Augé, *Não-Lugares: Introdução a uma antropologia da supermodernidade* (São Paulo: Papirus, 1994), 8.

10 Antony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 4.

How to act on a terrain vague without destroying its essence?

In the movie *Stalker* (1979) by director Andrei Tarkovsky, a forbidden and mysterious territory called Zone should only be visited with caution and with the use of specific methodologies. The stalker is a wanderer who establishes a symbiotic relationship with the Zone therefore becoming familiar with its oaths and its secrets. In the depths of this inhospitable territory he discovers the *Room of Desires* where wishes turn to reality and new possibilities abound.

The Zone is a type of terrain vague, its emptiness and indetermination provide a sense of freedom. Without the existence of this space there would be no hope, a sense of anticipation for what can happen to it. The Room of Desires can be understood as a manifestation of this expectation, as the search object and the essence of *terrain vague*. In the Zone, the path to be walked with caution is indispensable to reach the sacred space where all the dreams come to fruition. The slow, experimental observation of Tower H, which is the scope of this essay, refers to the path taken by the Stalker in the Zone, as both share a purposely errant process although are aware of their destination.

Architect Paola Bernstein Jacques' text named *Errant Landscapes*, published in the *Fresta Magazine* of the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ) discusses on the experience of the errant spatial body in the city:

Errant landscapes are experienced from within, in other words, they are the contrary to the remote and disembodied landscape of logo marketing or urban branding. The city makers and primarily the urban wanderers experience places as they move through them, giving them body and life simply as a result of experiencing them. A sensorial experience cannot be reduced to a simple look, image or logo. Cities and their landscapes are no longer simple scenarios after they are experienced. They become other bodies. To the errant urban dweller, the relationship can be characterised as an embodiment.¹¹

Errant is the entity which disregards the pre-planned ways and experiences the city with freedom and with a willingness to get lost into it. The errant body possesses a slow pace of movement as it denies the high speed of urban centres. It is the personification of the *terrain vague* according to Ignasi de Solà Morales. This body is contaminated by space and consequently embodies it within.

The three attributes of errantry – to willingness to lose oneself, its slowness and physical existence – are, according to Paola Bernstein Jacques, intimately related to the practical experience of the city. Based on these concepts, it can be said that this essay proposes an errant action, an experience of embodiment of the *terrain vague* that exists in Tower H.

¹¹ Paola Berenstein Jacques, *Paisagens Errantes* (Rio de Janeiro: Fresta, v. 1, 2007), 2.

Could we have other interpretations of Tower H?

It is understood that the difficult apprehension of time and its slowness as it relates to Tower H, can be comprehended more easily through its insides. The internal understanding traces a mysterious narrative about this space that partially unveils its ephemeral peculiarities. The reading from the inside to the outside is opposite to the external image of the tower, in which the object reveals itself entirely.

The pilot plan designed by Urbanist Lúcio Costa for the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood and surrounding areas was conceived from a modernist blueprint. The modern spatial interpretation is understood as originating from the 'outside to the inside.' According to Le Corbusier: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light"¹². In Tower H, the habitational units are generic, all of them possessing the same qualities and proportions. Tower H does not guide itself from the city. It has its own order, coming from the abstract circle, the ideal cylinder. In this sense, Tower H can be considered as an element from the 'outside.' It is outside of time, outside of the city, but still inside itself, as a counterpoint to its own logic.

Tower H appears to be decipherable from its exterior with its space limits and evident format. Nonetheless, the shedding of its external facade partially reveals another spatiality. The displacement of 'outside to inside' with the sealing demolition entices new relations between the interior and the exterior facade of the tower. Between its apparent superficiality and its deep enclosings.

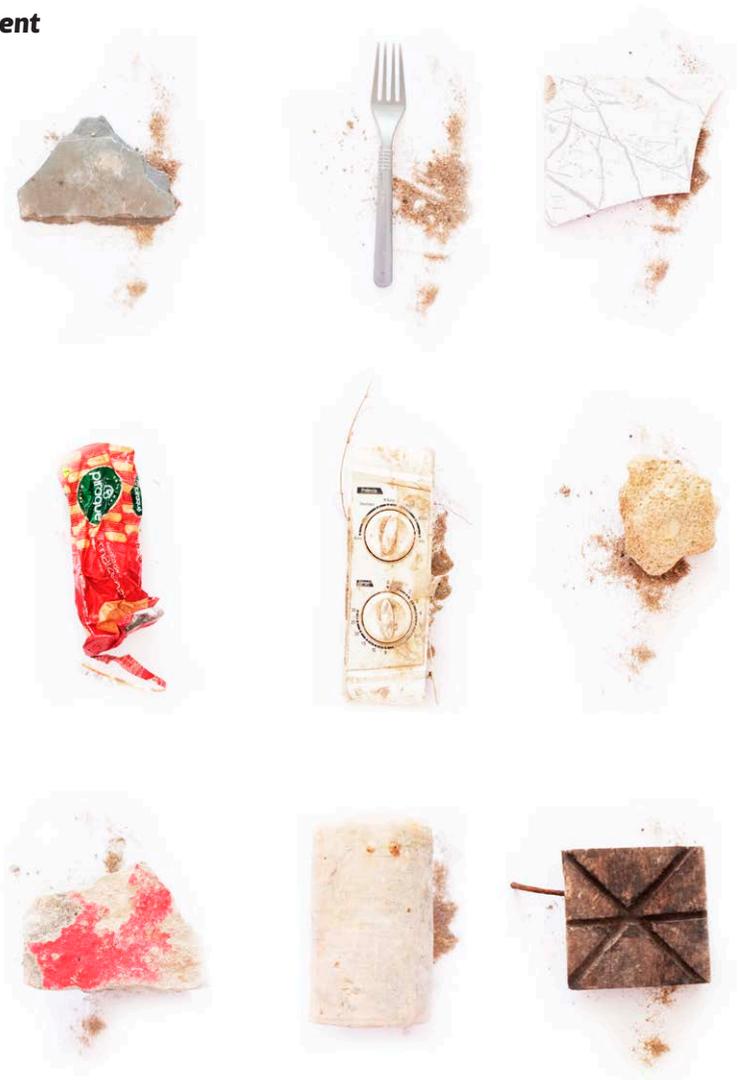
The original *terrain*, once landfilled to hide away the underground of Towers A and H, is partially visible nowadays as a result of soil removal. Similar to the facade sealing removal, the excavation of the soil around the buildings reminds us of the time when the towers were erected, when there were only sand dunes, lagoons and swamps in the Barra da Tijuca plains. A fine, white sand that once formed the famed dunes at Barra da Tijuca was revealed during the last 2 years of excavations in a tract of land spread between Tower H and the Avenue of the Americas. An area of 1.210.000m² was reworked and approximately 3.630.000m³ of sand were relocated to other construction sites in Rio de Janeiro. The stabilised soil brings with it a series of memories and associations with the nearby coastline. Memories of a land that was completely altered within a few years come back to light.

Which memories surface with the sand dunes? And how will this immense hole near the tower be filled? What will be hidden in the sands once a real estate boom in the region entices the completion of the tower? What else will go under within the abyss of forgetfulness?

The displacements in space, from the outside to the inside, from the concealed to the exposed are operations that imply changes in the perception of the city, in the passage of time and in the fluxes of memory. The identified operations also change the perception to a certain estrangement. Moreover, they foster a destabilisation that allows speculations about the future as well as other readings of the architectural object.

¹² Le Corbusier, *Por uma arquitetura* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1977), 13.

Displacement



[Fig. 9]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Collection of objects", photomontage made by the author.



Displacement

A number of physical elements were relocated from the inside to the outside of Tower H, to create a record of the actual state of the building at the present time. This ensemble of forgotten objects, long left abandoned inside the building or uncovered through excavations, also unveil themselves from the sands only at the present moment of their recording. The sand dunes, typical geological formations of Barra da Tijuca's oceanic region, were partially concealed and flattened by the real estate developments which covered all of the neighbourhood's great plain. Today, the white sand of these former dunes seems to be a restrained memory of the site. The sand and objects left on the grounds are records of a specific time in the tower's existence.

Land artist Robert Smithson elaborated the concepts of *site* and *non-site* as well as the methodology of works that he entitled *Earthworks*. Smithson searched for forms to establish a dialogue between his works and the art galleries, taking into consideration the logistical, spatial and political challenges to showcase his work in limited spaces. The concept of *non-site* is an abstraction to the concept of *site*¹³. It is a delimited clipping that refers to the original work and the site in which it is located. Different from the photographic record, the non-site establishes a language that is less direct but more metaphoric with the work site. This somewhat vague meaning amplifies the fictional and playful character of the art work.

The non-site concept establishes a dialogue between Tower H in its present state and the city surrounding it. This experiment is complemented with the extraction and posterior removal of sand from the inside to the outside of the tower through the use of test tubes (as shown in figure 11). This process intends to link the experiment with the interpretations regarding space developed throughout this essay: from the outside to the inside; from the concealed to the exposed and from the land filling to the unearthing. The procedure of digging for remains, which could even be viewed as an archaeological excavation, tries to guarantee the survival of something that refers to the current and past physical state of Tower H, prior to its disappearance.

This essay does not aim to reach a conclusion, as no one knows what will happen to Tower H. The suspension of any certainties allows for even more interpretations on the nature of this architectural object. Thus both the ephemeral installation and the displacement operations were actions taken in the physical space which helped to unveil a parallel story. A sensible point of view based on the hidden elements, ambiguous images and reflections.

13 Smithson, Robert. Interview with Robert Smithson for The Archives of American Art / Smithsonian Institution. In: FLAM, Jack (Org.) Robert Smithson. The Collected Writings. Berkeley, (Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1996), 234-236.



[Fig. 10]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Uncovering a thermostat at the base of Tower H", frame from video made by the author: <https://youtu.be/MF1ZL6OU9x0?si=mYSDDtMwtZXg-2PB>.

[Fig. 11]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Black box containing book, samples of sand and pictures", photograph.

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