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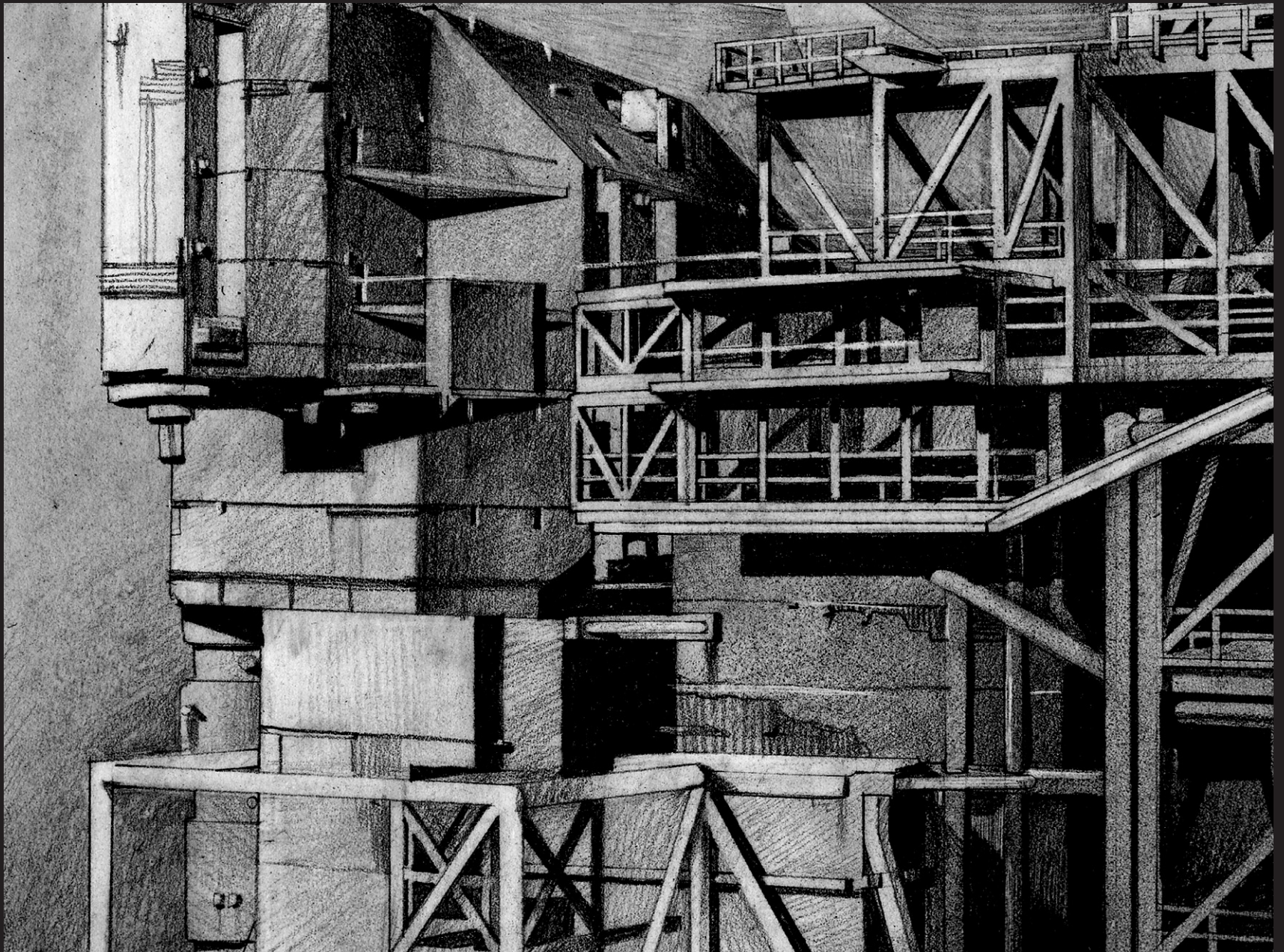
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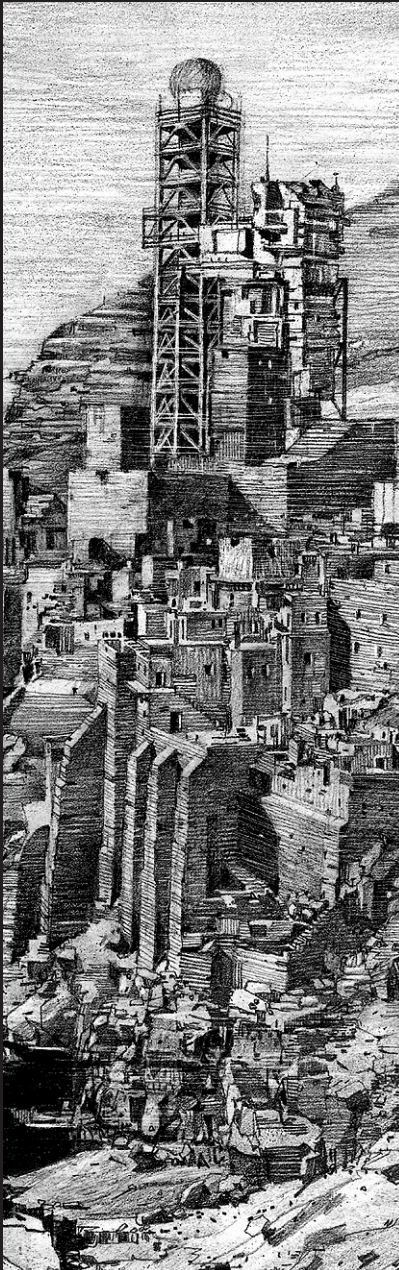
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**Detournement
(Experimental Diversion)**

Mas Yendo





The City

There is a moment of silence when every object is gray
Before the arrival of dawn, there is no presence of light or shadow,
Only a void between time and space
A place evolves, decays, which liberates us, and represses us
Glowing in the dark horizon
Like an insect attracted toward light
Blinding torch of a city
Pixels of light become windows
Vertical fortress pulls us towards its pulse
Thumping metropolis whose tower-like tentacles spit steam into the sky
Labyrinth of steel, mesh together like roots of a tree
Back alley constructed from refuse
Mechanical elements bulge from decayed structures
Naked pipes wrap around each other in bondage
Loose wires, rusted steel panels, chipped paint, and layered walls
Encapsulate the essence of the city
This sinful place does not creep into hiding
It exists
It is emotional, temperamental, irrational, lacks continuity, and is as logical as we are
It embodies memories, ongoing events, and future anticipation
A manifestation of our lives, ideas, and knowledge
Trapped by limitations, furthered by possibilities
In its destruction, and construction, its form, and shadow, in its pavement and its walls
It changes, and evolves, in its density and complexity we cannot help but find ourselves

In recent decades, the global economy, with its complexity and diversity, seemed poised to fulfill the promise of consumer culture. The “pluralistic” society appeared well-suited to confront the complexity of the emerging global economy, especially when compared to the “dialectic” notions which prevailed during the Cold War. The paradigm of “Consumer Culture” promised to support a diversity of individuals and interests without sacrificing collective cohesion. However, the reality of a consumer society has proved antithetical to the interests of the individual. Diversity has been suppressed in a systematic and pervasive manner.

Consumerism may excel at creating and gratifying transitory desires, but it has failed in embracing diversity. For all the rhetoric about consumer power, its path is really decided by capital. Advertising is the vehicle through which capital exerts its control, reducing reality into streams of images, products and activities sanctioned by business and bureaucracy.¹ Its effect is to glamorize state and corporate power, providing the illusion of choice while directing and managing production and consumption.² The pursuit of financial profit has superseded all other values and criteria, and far from accommodating individual idiosyncrasies and needs, consumerism controls and dictates individual desires and aspirations.

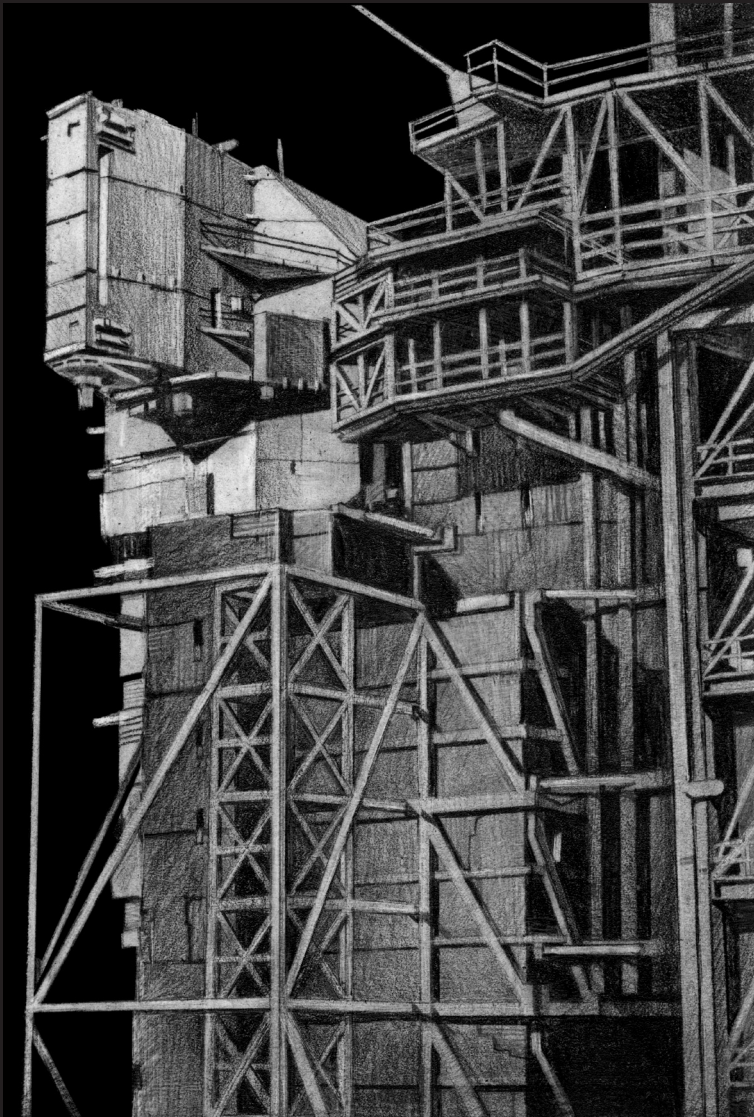
This can be seen from the way in which products such as automobiles, radio and television progress from luxury to necessity to requirement.³ The barrage of television-, Frigidaire-type technologies does little to express individual idiosyncrasy or creativity.⁴ The addiction to technological progress does manage to efface the individual in an endless round of consumption, driven by the need to establish and maintain one’s social status. This type of “hyper-consumption” is excessive in its nature, causing a severe drain on both natural and human resources.

The cultural and spiritual impasse created by technology would have been shocking to the first exponents of modern, innovative rationalism, inspired as they were by the faith that the problems of the real world could all be resolved by reason.⁵

The meticulous, rational, control over every aspect of industrial production has indeed enabled man to function at an extremely high level of efficiency, with a concomitant increase in material wealth. Functionalism and mass production, once embraced as ways of delivering “good design” to the masses, proved more compatible with the productivist values of capitalism.⁶

Guy Debord expresses the link between rationalism and totalitarianism as follows: “but on the whole this introduction of technology into everyday life—ultimately taking place within the framework of modern bureaucratized capitalism, certainly tends rather to reduce people’s independence and creativity. The new prefabricated cities clearly exemplify the totalitarian tendency of modern capitalism’s organization of life: the isolated inhabitants... see their lives reduced to the pure triviality of the repetitive combined with the obligatory absorption of an equally repetitive spectacle.”⁷

Rationalistic determinism is an inherently exclusionary doctrine, dehumanizing in its resistance to change. In reducing man to a functional part of a collective, rationalism has produced an environment hostile to the individual. When taken to their logical extreme, reason and functionality reinforce society’s relentless assault on Man’s individuality. It was perhaps inevitable that rationalism’s insistence on favoring the collective interest result in suppressing that of the individual. True social progress, however, does not subsume the individual, instead maximizing his freedom and potential.⁸



Architecture is inevitably implicated in these issues, becoming another tool for rationalizing the environment. Myopic in its externalized focus, it is all too often reduced to a tool of fashion, blindly imposing its will on the environment. Once reduced to the concept of the functional “machine for living in,” architecture inters Man as a component of the functionalist society, rather than liberating him.⁹

The individual must be embraced as an integral part of the composition, for architecture becomes meaningful to the extent that it supports diversity. Architecture can evoke associations, rather than dictating how space is experienced. It also requires individual initiative, through a fluid and undetermined selection of objects, services, and technologies, rather than blindly submitting to social and economic pressures.¹⁰ In this way, each occupant would acquire meaning through individual negotiation with circumstances and the accumulation of experience. Gunther Feuerstein’s proposals for “impractical flats” was an early expression of this concept—an attempt to engage the sensations of the own body, and to imbue the construction with traces of the audience/resident’s own ideas and history.¹¹

The liberation of architecture will require the architect to aspire to a much larger humanist agenda, addressing the culture at large as well as architecture as a field.¹² This demands that architecture counter the reductive, stultifying effects of rationalism by embracing the qualities of contradiction, paradox and ambiguity. Cleanth Brooks argues for the value of poetics, stating: “if the poet...must perforce dramatize the oneness of the experience, even though paying tribute to its diversity, then his use of paradox and ambiguity is seen as necessary...[Paradox provides] an insight which preserves the unity of experience, and...triumphs over the apparently contradictory and

conflicting elements of experience by unifying them into a new pattern.”¹³ This insight involves struggles and hesitations for the observer, and renders his perception more concrete and vivid.¹⁴ Wielding the full poetic arsenal of ambiguity, paradox, irony, and indeterminacy allows the architect to nurture individual idiosyncrasy, instead of excluding it.

Experiment is architecture’s tool for diverting the reductive, monolithic tendencies of hyper-consumerism and rational determinism. Experiment is non-judgmental, open-ended, allowing it to maintain the tension between complex, contradictory and oscillating relationships that is at the heart of architecture.¹⁵ By nurturing its innate complexity and ambiguity, architecture can shelter idiosyncrasy from the perils of determinism run rampant. It can even reconcile the dichotomies that lie at the heart of the human condition: individual freedom vs. collective responsibility, content vs. container, idealism vs. pragmatism, interior vs. exterior, man vs. nature.

NOTES

1. Sadler, Simon. *The Situationist City*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1998, p. 37.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

3. Barrett, William. *Irrational Man. A Study in Existential Philosophy*, p. 37.

4. Sadler, p. 36.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

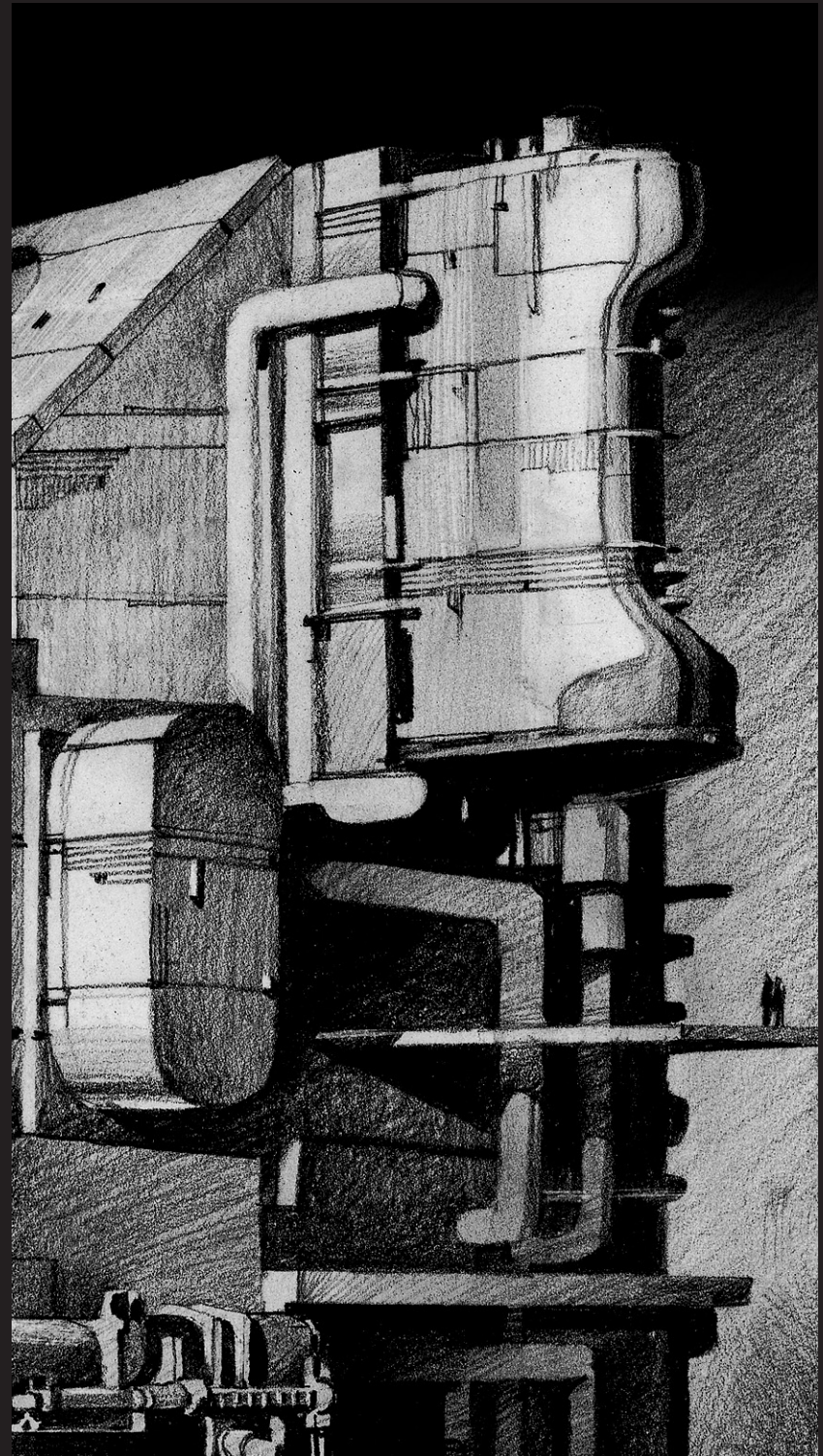
11. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

13. Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. 2nd edition. New York: Abrams, Harry N., Inc., 1990. (1966), p. 35.

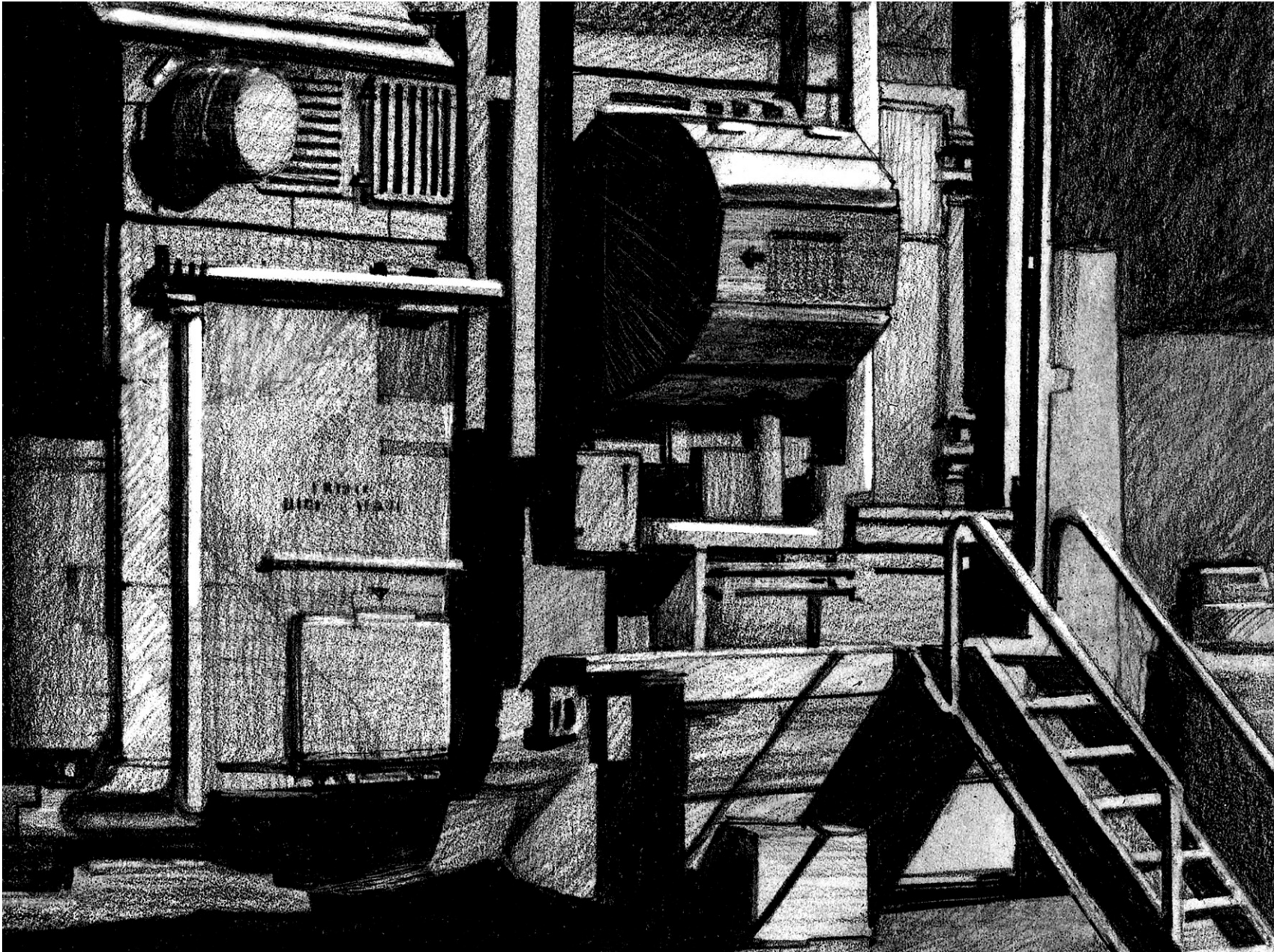
14. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

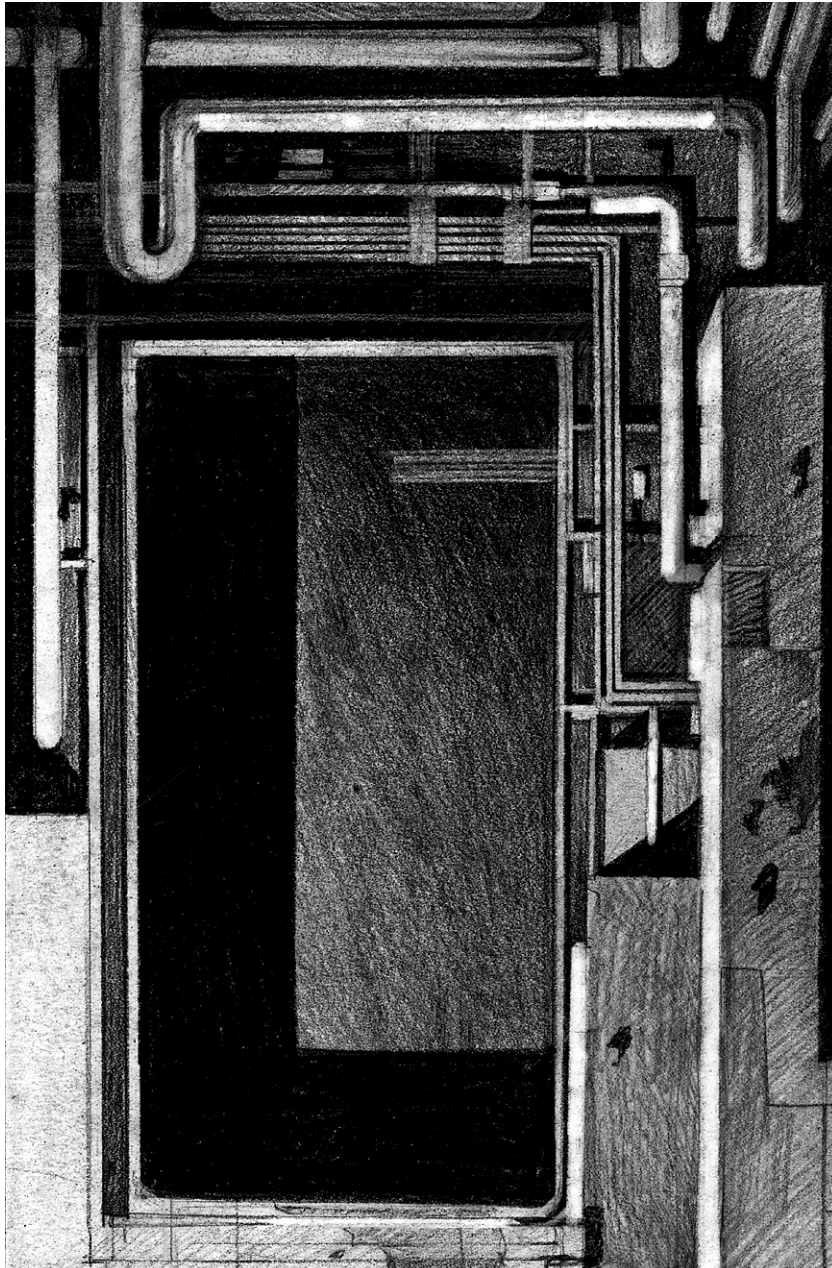
15. *Ibid.*, p. 36.



Project: UL9205

Mas Yendo





UL9205 is an urban survival apparatus designed to function as a space-suite. It protects occupants from hostile elements, such as vandalism, unwanted guests, diseases, bureaucracy, pollution, and the intrusive onslaught of commercial advertisements and solicitations. While manipulation and confrontation with the outside world are limited within, a multi-media station can send and retrieve data at the occupant's will. However, the primary purpose of the unit is to create an environment protecting the occupant's privacy and individuality from the often oppressive and dictatorial pressure of the collective taste and values of mass culture.

9205 is an urban survival apparatus. It protects the occupant from pollution and vandalism. It provides the occupant privacy, security, and a sense of autonomy. Socially, physically, politically, spiritually, economically, and intellectually, it separates and reconciles individual and environment. UL9205 can be used as an incubator, confinement, refuge, dwelling, jail, or house.

UL9205 requires only sixty square feet of footprint and can be easily transported to and installed in many

urban situations that are normally considered unbuildable: i.e. parking lots, roof tops, and sidewalks. UL 9205 connects a utility-feeding umbilical cord to its underground infrastructure for its electricity and water supply.

UL9205 comes equipped with an 18hp diesel-fueled emergency generator which produces 1,200 kw of electricity at 2,500 rpm. The advanced HVAC system purifies up to 90 percent of dust particles larger than .0003 mm and controls humidity and temperature within. The unit has a total interior space of 773 cf (110 sf), and compactly configured living spaces. Room 1 is equipped with a seventy-inch, flat, liquid screen with an advanced multi-media communication console that lets the occupant control both information input and output. Room 2 is a water-tight container within a container used for whatever activity the occupant chooses to conduct in private. UL9205's boxy chassis (structure [foundation?]) is clad with layers of steel panels lacking any opening, save the door. The mechanical compartments are all configured below the living area and soundproofed. All moving parts are mounted on hydraulic bushings. The mechanical compartments are only accessible through the unit's interior floor.

