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2004

2004 Benjamin MENSCHEL Fellowship

EXHIBITION

Amber Chapin
Oscar Cornejo
Han Hsi Ho
Jonathan Roth
Wes Rozen
Matt Savitsky

The Cooper Union
for the Advancement
of Science and Art



2004 Benjamin **MENSCHEL** Fellowship

EXHIBITION

The Benjamin Menschel Fellowship Program to support creative inquiry was endowed by a grant given to The Cooper Union by the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation in 1994 to support work in the fields of art, architecture, design, and engineering. This generous grant was intended to provide funding to exceptional students who propose scholarly, independent projects that will in some way provide a culmination to their educational endeavors at The Cooper Union. It is the hope of the Goldsmith Foundation that students designated as Benjamin Menschel Fellows will be encouraged by their awards to complete bodies of artwork, develop scientific protocols, or otherwise further their intellectual investigations in a manner that will provide inspiration and illumination to the community as a whole.

November 8–20, 2004

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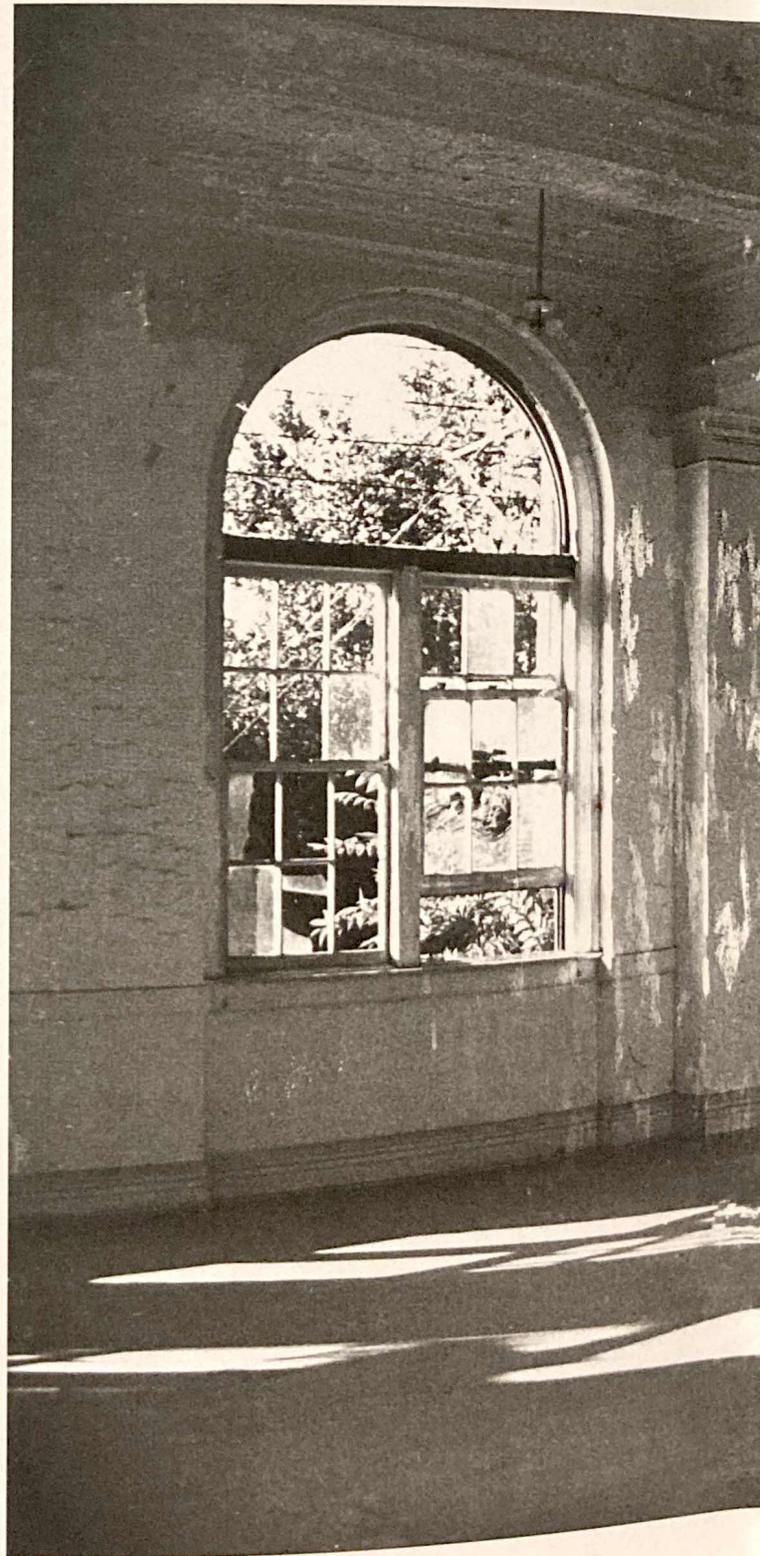
Matt Savitsky

The Cooper Union
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The race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, in the summer of 1917 was the deadliest in U.S. history. White residents of the city murdered dozens of blacks, mostly by forcibly burning them in their houses. They razed much of downtown and pulled up train tracks. Many of the victims had moved recently to East St. Louis from the south to take industrial jobs. Barred from unions, they had to work as strike breakers. Though the economy in East St. Louis was never good, one year after the riots it was marked by the U.S. census as the second poorest city in the nation with an average income 24% of that of Illinois state.

Today the economic hardships of city residents are just as bad if not worse, because the industrial jobs are gone. Just under half of the 31,000 citizens live below the poverty line; 98% of them are black. Trash, police, and fire services are infrequent and sometimes stop altogether for a year or more. Roughly one in four buildings in the city is burned out or abandoned. Requiems to the race riot, these structures are strangely ubiquitous, scattered amidst the houses and stores that harbor the lives of the city's inhabitants. I have studied two of the derelict buildings, the Murphy Building and the Boystown Building.

The Murphy Building is the icon of Collinsville Avenue. A six-story concrete structure with a terracotta façade, its façade ornaments reachable from the street have been removed, leaving only large caryatids to frame the entrance. The rear of the building has collapsed, and a tree grows from its roof. The Boystown Building, also in concrete, is three stories with checkered marble floors, a spiral staircase, and brick fireplaces. The roof has collapsed in its south wing, and its front door swings open. Both buildings show signs of intermittent occupancy.

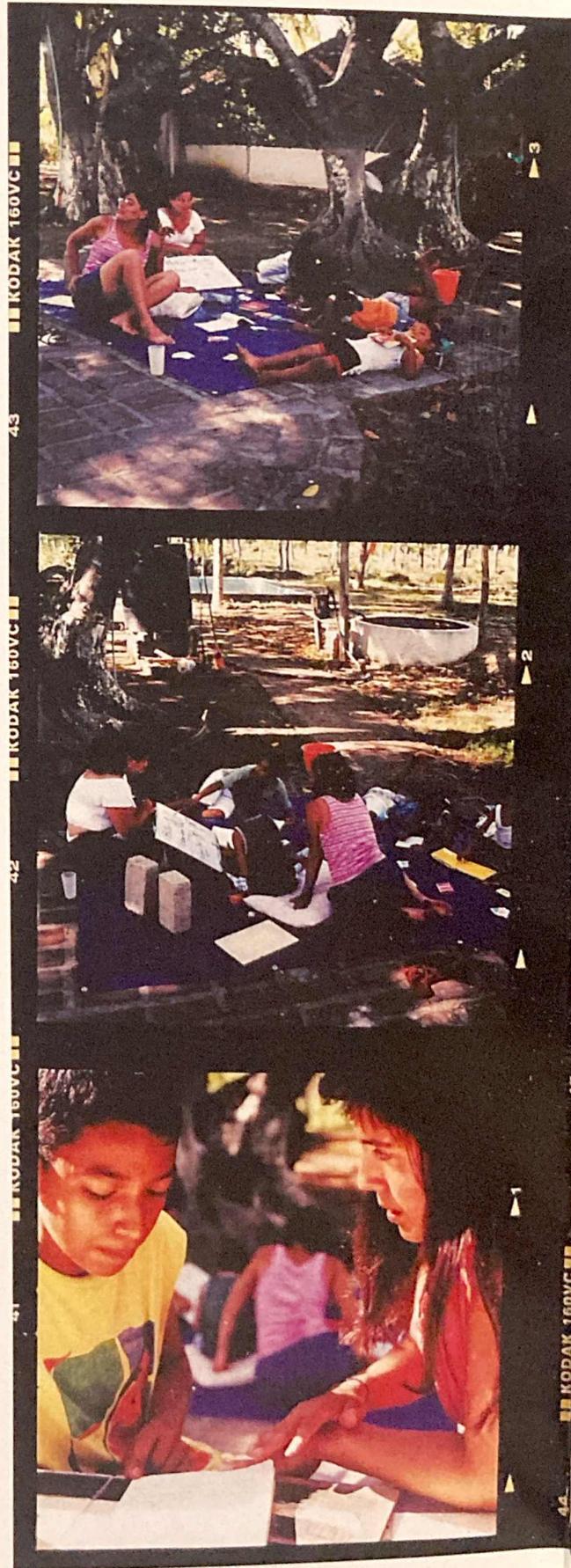


EAST ST. LOUIS, ILLINOIS | JULY 2, 1917 | AUGUST 2004

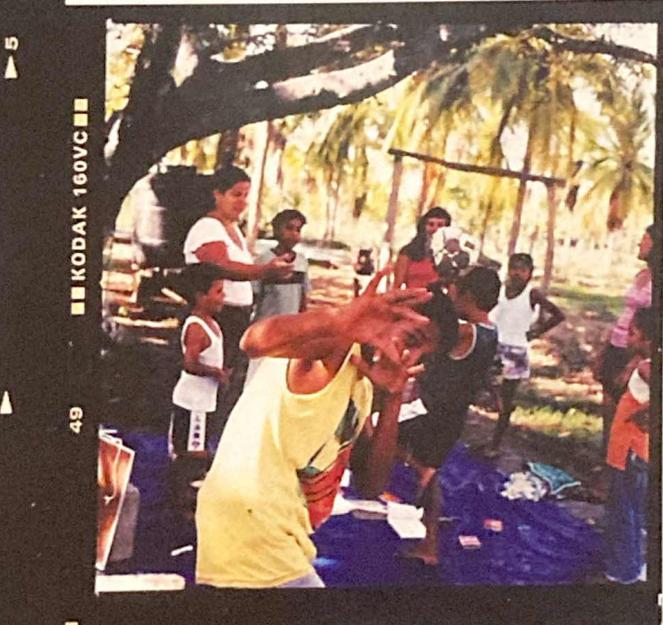
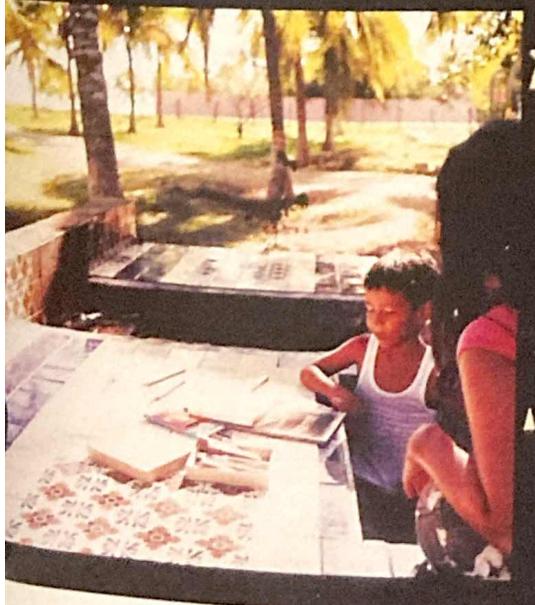
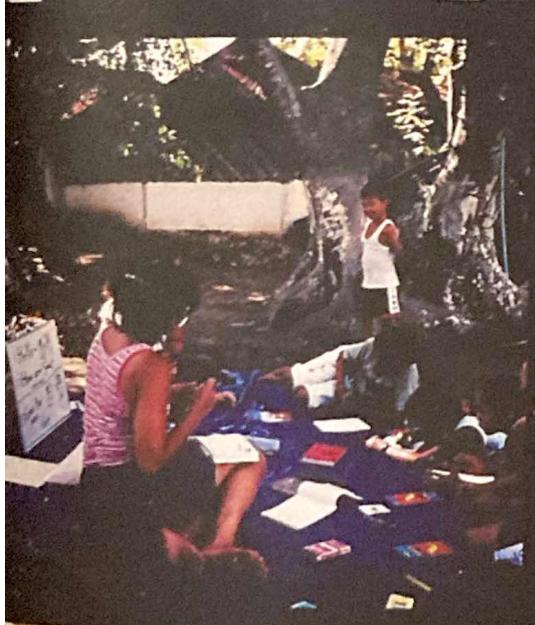
AMBER CHAPIN



The Peta Project is a group of young artists who have joined together in order to combine their various areas of artistic expertise for the common good of creating new forms of social awareness between the international visitors to, and the local community of, Petatlan, Mexico. The Project attempts to draw upon the local heritage, the area's culture, and its resources, all of which have been increasingly endangered in recent years by persistent encroaching tourism, not to mention drug-trafficking. The first installment of the Peta Project, which took place this summer, has been made possible by a Benjamin Menschel Fellowship for Creative Inquiry. It involved preparing our facility, a long unused building in need of much renovation, and teaching classes in papermaking and printmaking to local children. Both the community in Petatlan and the individual artists have been equally enriched through this exchange of knowledge and skills. The continuation of the Project will take place outside of Mexico in the form of the kind of documentation on view in this exhibition, which, it is hoped, will serve to promote the ideals of the project and generate further funding to ensure its long-term sustainability. Thanks are due to the Menschel program for making it possible to inaugurate the Peta Project with such great success.



OSCAR CORNEJO



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160VC

Mapping precipitates its most productive effects through a finding that is also a founding; its agency lies in neither reproduction nor imposition but rather in uncovering reality previously unseen or unimagined, even across seemingly exhausted grounds.

—James Corner

*The Agency of Mapping:
Speculation, Critique and Invention*

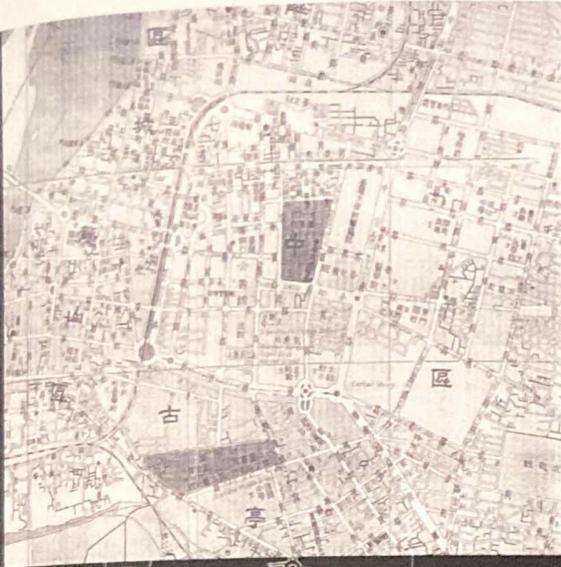
For me the urban condition of Taipei has always existed as an experiential map. Having grown up in the outskirts of a city which was undergoing rapid changes in its physical aspect as well as its economical, social, and political forms, I have kept Taipei in personal memory as layer upon layer of upward building and outward growing processes. After an absence of seven years, my personal conceptions of the city have gradually faded and been reintegrated into many questions and concerns. I wondered, has Taipei given the same impression to others? As someone who is transitioning from former resident to intervening architect/urban designer, my interest in the history of Taipei has led me to believe that the complex layering in the often neglected or falsely categorized metropolis was worth studying. For this investigation would not only unmask many misconceptions towards Taipei itself, but also provide a model for the analysis—mapping and remapping—of other emerging Asian cities with similar complexities.

Taipei has always been a city of conflict. There has been a constant process of purging and renewal on the part of policy makers in an attempt to modernize while the city and its residents function as a collective along with artifacts inhabited from previous generations. The experience of frequent changes of rulership,

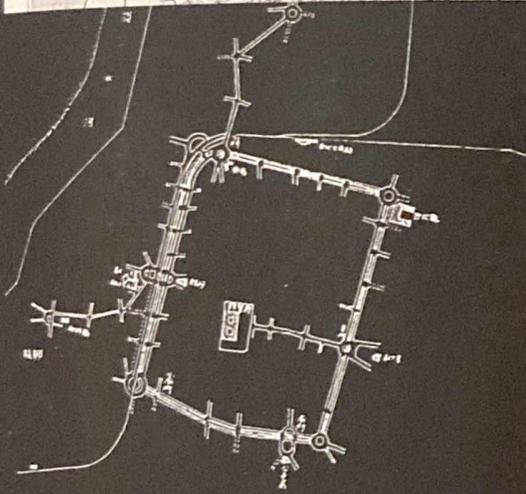
including the Netherlandish fleets, the Ching Dynasty, the Japanese empire, and the Nationalist Government which is now the Republic of China (Taiwan), has left Taipei with an urban form that is culturally diverse. How might one begin to consolidate the various strata? Two means suggest themselves: the first, through history (historical maps), and the second, through memory (personal narrations).

The aim of my Menschel project was to unthread this complexity through multiple mapping tools, both conventional/two-dimensional and radical/three-dimensional. First, I collected and consolidated, on site, the historic maps of Taipei (there is no such archive available in New York State). This process was paralleled by the analysis and formulation of a filmic narrative, which is somewhat personal. The two seemingly contrasting mediums, historic maps and filmic narrative, in the end, combine to enhance understanding of each other. Mapping and remapping becomes a circular process rather than a linear progression from question to answer, or from investigation to conclusion. The project's ultimate objective is to make the historic map collection available in a digital archive format for others who are interested in studying and intervening in Taipei in the years to come.

HAN HSI HO



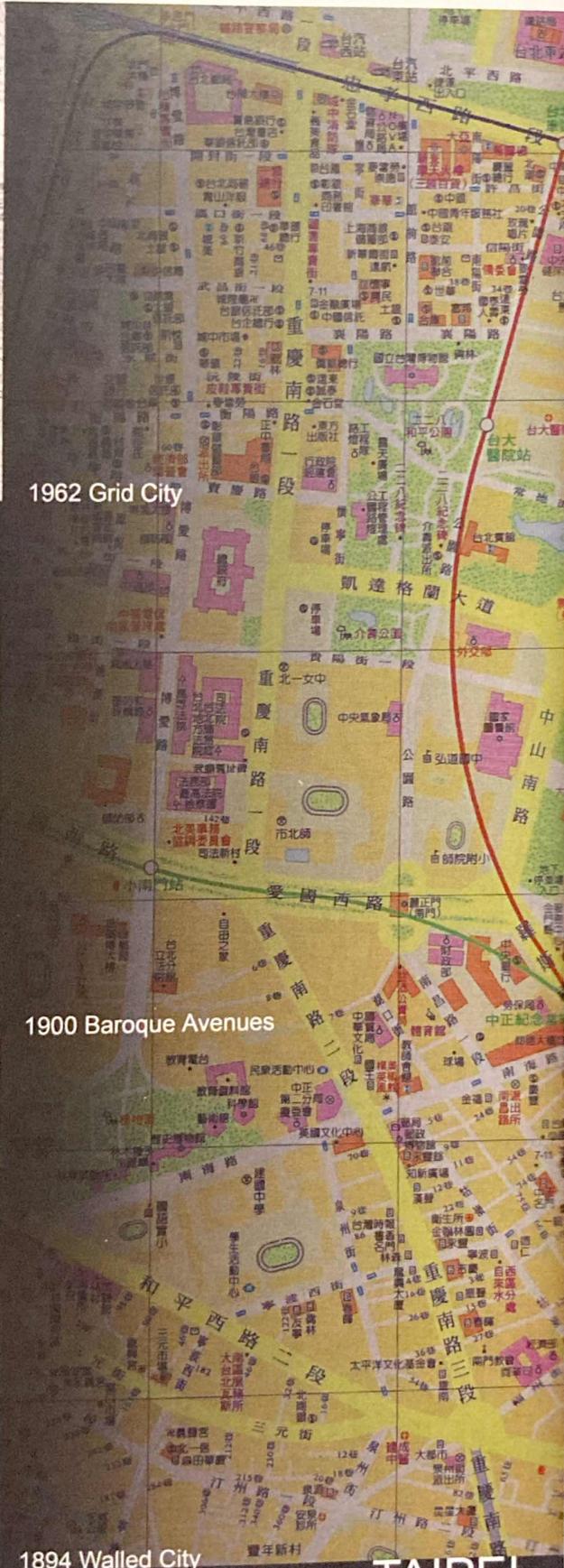
1962 Grid City



1900 Baroque Avenues

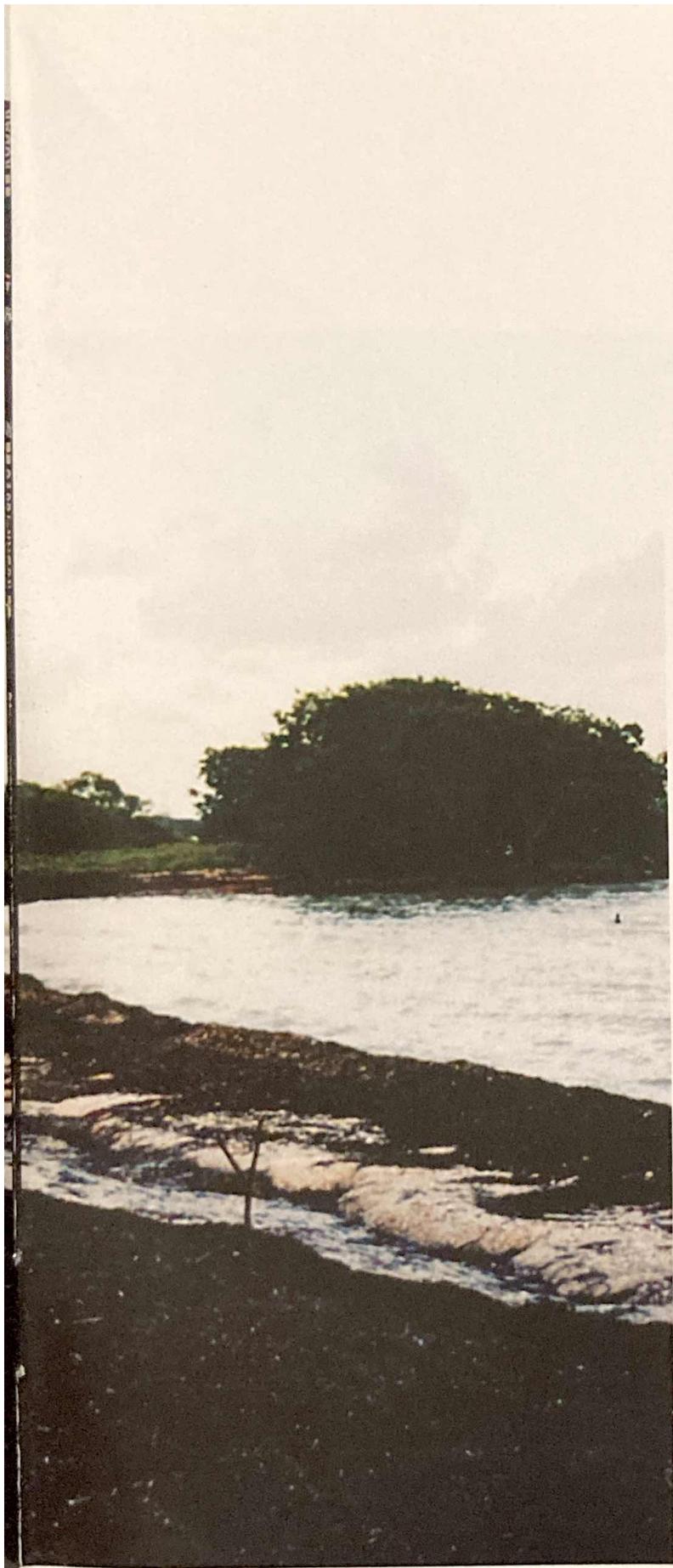


1894 Walled City



TAIPEI
Evolution of a Walled City





JONATHAN ROTH

As a painter, I wanted to spend an extended length of time in a distinctive outdoor locale in order to make paintings that embraced the specific environmental factors that affected me there. The Benjamin Menschel Fellowship and the backcountry beaches of Everglades National Park in Florida provided me the opportunity to do so.

Temperature, humidity, and brightness, the most extreme environmental factors that I encountered, equally affected the materials with which I chose to work and contributed significantly toward the manifestation of my objective. The reality of the Florida climate's effect upon oil and balsam corresponded to another reality. The beach on which I was camped was vastly different from the manicured beaches of developed areas, popular imagery, and picture postcards, my assimilation of which supplied the content of my paintings.

The beauty of the real beach consisted of the visible evidence of its reflecting its distinctive atmospheric conditions, evinced in its overgrowth, its darkness, and its impure sands, but, atypically for a Florida beach, it lacked picturesque palm trees and a pristine horizon. My paintings take account of both these positives and these negatives, resulting in an image of the beach that is more complete but less stable than that of either real beach or "postcard" beach. In short, my paintings depict both the real beach, but stamped with manufactured palm trees, and "postcard" beaches, amidst the heat and humidity of the Everglades.

Wind is formed between temperature differences and the rotation of the Earth. So, as long as the world keeps spinning and the sun keeps shining, there will be wind to catch.

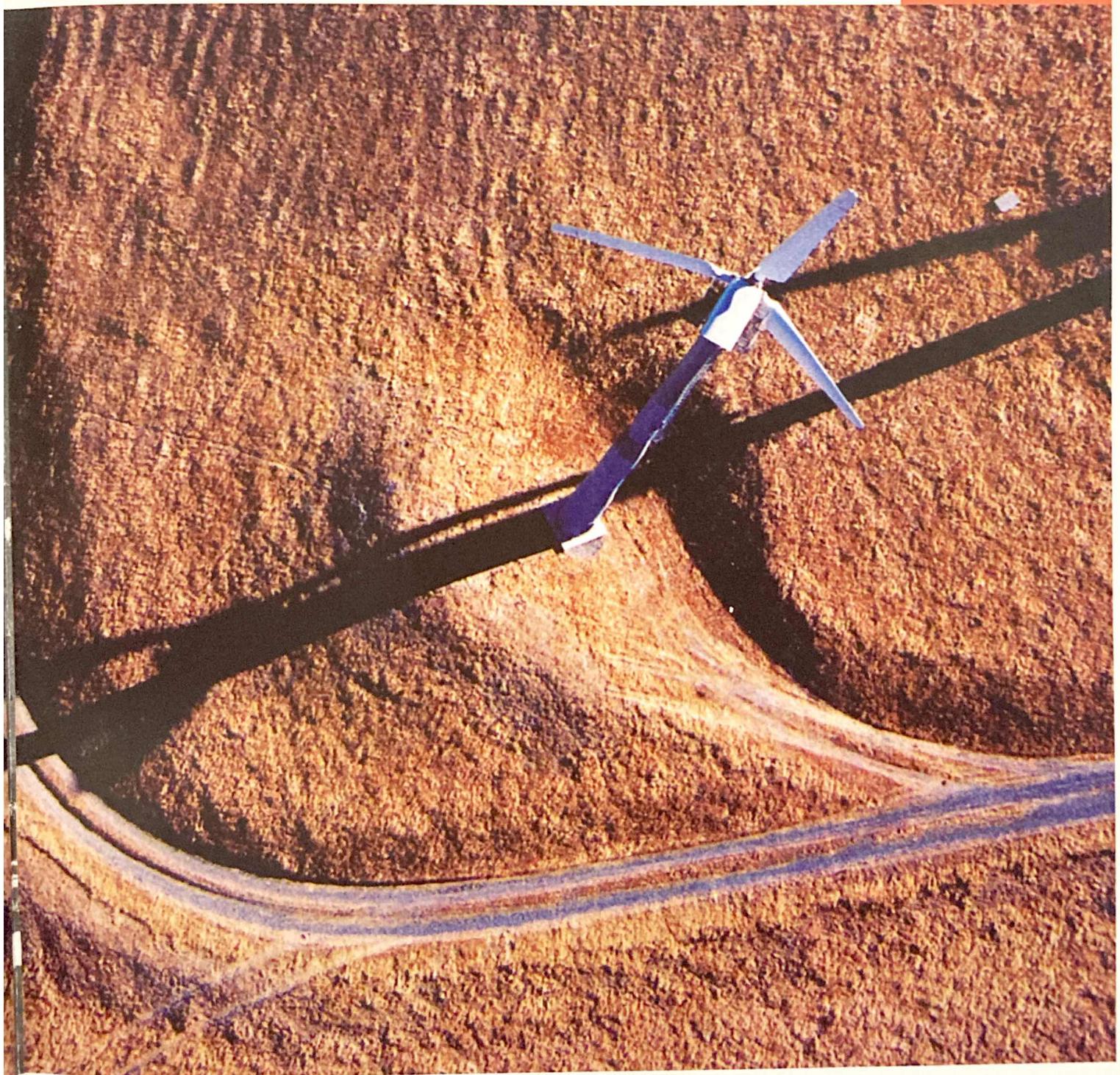
For the last thirty years turbines have been organized on windy fields and have developed into a new industry. They have spun out of an experimental concept into an alternative that is staring down the consequences of other power industries. Now they are poised and ready to outsource hydroelectric and nuclear power plants.

Although efficient and relatively clean, wind turbines are also drawing attention because of their personality. From a distance they look like flowers. Up close they tower as humble giants. They catch the invisible wind with massive propellers, spin slowly and casually hum while they work.

Because consumption is at odds with production, I suggest that our aesthetic sensibilities be intrigued by the wind, and consider its presence where electricity is in the greatest demand.



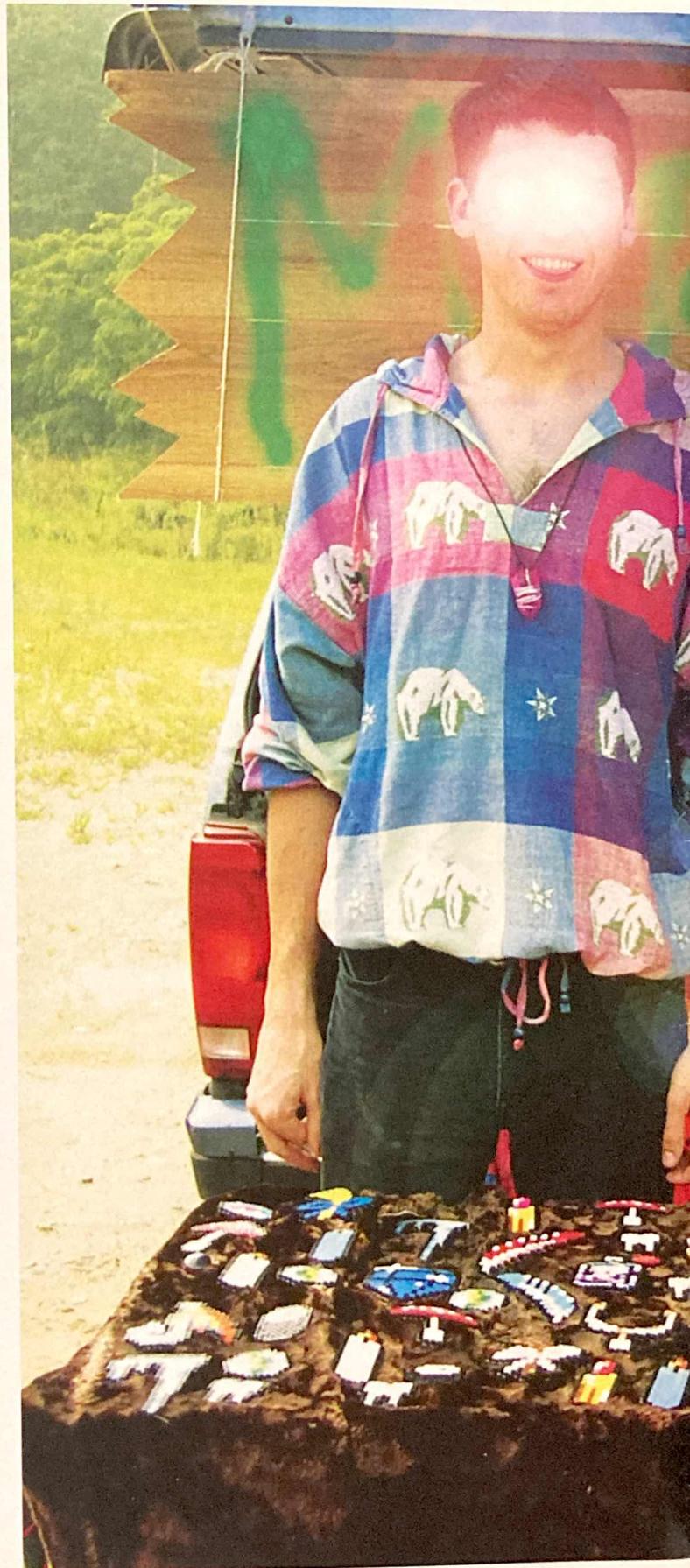
WES ROZEN



MONDO MONDO TRADING POST

Mondo Mondo Trading Post is a project that was begun in the summer of 2003 and assumed full operation in August, 2004, with the help of a Benjamin Menschel Fellowship for Creative Inquiry. In the true spirit of free enterprise, my partner, Kevin McGarry, and I set up shop in various communities to trade our souvenirs with people who happen to be passing through. Any form of trade is appropriate and all are placed on view.

Mondo Mondo will be open for business several times during the Menschel Exhibition. During business hours everyone is welcome to make a deal with us for any of our wares.





MATT SAVITSKY

AUGUST 2004

12TH Plymouth, NH
Plymouth Farmer's Market

13TH Plymouth, NH
Biederman's Pub

13TH Plymouth, NH
Outside Chase Street
Market, Main Street

14TH Rumney, NH
Rumney Old Home Day,
Rumney Common

15TH Plymouth, NH
Outside Plymouth Book
Exchange, Main Street

27TH Lancaster, PA
Lancaster Square

28TH Lancaster, PA
Merenda Zug's II
Coffee Shop

29TH Lancaster, PA
Outside Lancaster
Museum of Art

www.mondomondo.net

Cooper Collection

