

2005 Benjamin
MENSCHEL
Fellowship
EXHIBITION

8-18 November 2005

Lior Galili

Ryan Garrett

Daniel Meridor

Edgar Pedroza

Eugene Wasserman

The Cooper Union
for the Advancement
of Science and Art

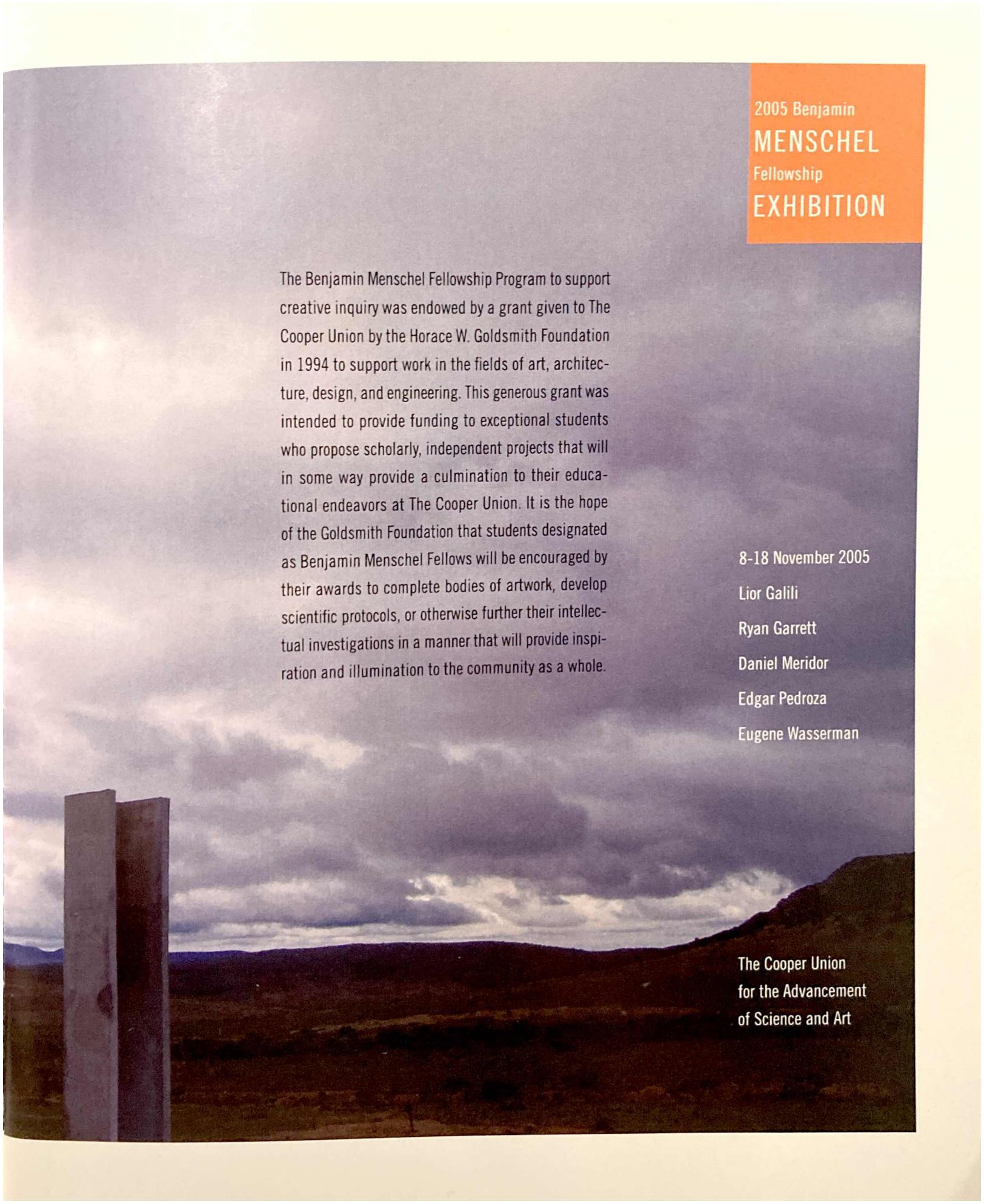
C
TD
M548X
2005

Edgar Pedroza

front cover: 20 August 2005,
facing a true north.

right: 21 August 2005,
21 37.206 N, 101 19.801 W
2442 Meters above sea level.





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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.

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TIMES SQUARE 1"-16'

I am interested in finding, defining and refining a different relationship between the tourist community and Times Square as their site, through a study of both spatial and functional conditions. Governed by capitalistic incorporations, introduced as flickering moving images, surfaces as opposed to volumes, Times Square generates a different sense of its actual space. This raises a crucial question:

Could the virtual screen's reality be replacing the actual spatial one and, if so, how does it influence its community in terms of the virtuality of the space as reflected on its inhabitants?

In my interpretation, Times Square's virtuality could be read as a derivation of the Lacanian "Mirror Stage." The main significance of this notion lies within its ability to define the emergence of a feeling of alienation that occurs when a baby looks at the mirror for the first time and recognizes her/himself but, at the same time, recognizes the "Other" within the reflected figure. This double recognition is followed by a series of hysteric gestures intended to master this "Other" or, in other words, to overcome that distance. Those attempts can only lead to failure (the "Other" could never be the self; the distance is unavoidable), which only evokes another series of gestures in an endless quest to overcome both "Other" (= object) and "Space" (= the distance between the actual to the virtual figures).

My project is therefore founded on the identity between the attempts to overcome "Other" and "Space."

In his 1935 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin defines the term "aura" as the "unique phenomenon of a distance." According to Benjamin, decay of that aura is a result of "the desire of contemporary masses to bring things closer spatially and humanly," which is like the attempt to overcome "the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction" (*Walter Benjamin. Illuminations*, ed. H. Arendt, New York, 1968, 222-23). The significance of this text is in exposing the link between Capitalism as manifested through the symptom of reproduction, and the desire to overcome "Other" and "Space." Reading Times Square within this context, I would like to ask:

What kind of space is a space which is founded on the attempt to overcome space, and what could possibly be the implications on its community?

My exhibition exists within the realm of the "pre-project" state. It is the attempt of tracing the lost space within the existing fabric simply by using the "objectivity" of the architectural tools in order, first, to present what exists, yet is covered by the cultural massive mask, and second, to expose the potential for a different human exchange. Therefore, I created a series of drawings using 1"-16' scale, which is used for human-scaled drawings.

LIOR GALILI



LYON, FRANCE 2005

1898. Lumiere Brothers invent *cinématographe* in Lyon. (After WWI, they develop a mechanical hand capable of prehensile movements.)*

(First prosthetic leg discovered in Capri and dating back to 300 B.C. is destroyed by chance during WWII.)*

MAY 16, 1944. Gestapo headquarters in Lyon, the former Military School of Health, is destroyed by Allied bombs by chance.*

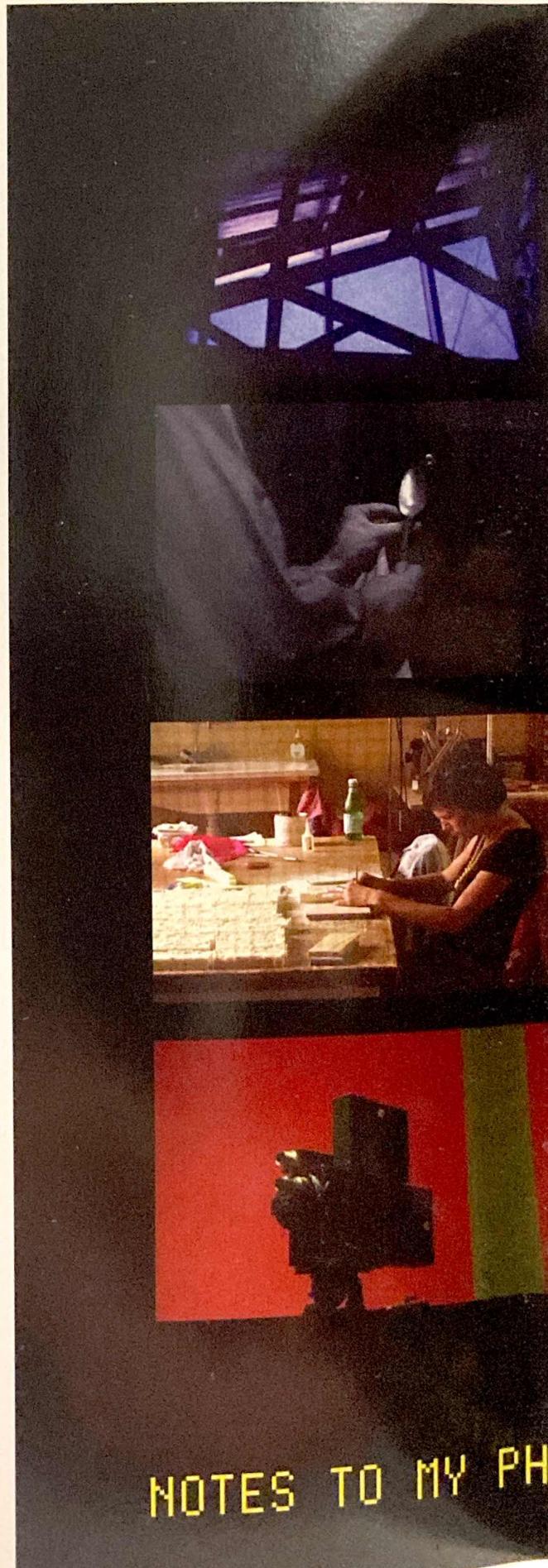
1956. Premiere of Robert Bresson's *A Man Escaped* or *The Wind Blows Where it Wills*. Dramatization of Resistance fighter Andre Devigny's escape from Montluc Prison in Lyon.*

1998. New Zealander Clint Hallam receives first successful hand transplant in Lyon.*

2004. Seven Iraqi Nationals who had their hands cut off by Saddam Hussein meet with President George W. Bush and receive prosthetic hands.*

2005. Went to Lyon, France, my right hand healing from laceration but threatening partial paralysis.*

* I am not the same now that I am back to normal.



NOTES TO MY PH

RYAN GARRETT



ALL I WAS SEEING WERE HANDS:
ANTOM SELF

CENTRIFUGAL TENDENCIES | IMPRESSIONS FROM THE URBANIZATION PROCESS OF THE BEDOUINS

It first appeared in the story of Cain and Abel. Cain's punishment for killing his brother was to leave his land and wander the earth forever. This punishment is based on different **modes of consumption**, the sedentary and the nomadic; it is a story which enfoldes the rudiments of a future conflict, The Story of the sedentary's conception of its counterpart, the nomadic. *Centrifugal Tendencies* is a study of the Bedouins, the nomads of the desert, and their encounter with the sedentary society through their urbanization process in Israel.

The desert's nature was too extreme to be domesticated by humans; therefore, governments have perceived it as a fringe area of their land. The Bedouins, however, have searched out the lean resources and mastered their usage by living according to their limits and possibilities. They have drifted independent of national borders, especially so, since state power can never be a threat where it lacks control. However, the development of transportation methods and weapons technology in the twentieth century altered the balance of power and allowed a gradual increase of government control. The nomads of the desert were thus turned into subjects of the sedentary society.

The encounter of these cultures reveals two types of tendencies:¹ the centripetal tendencies of the government to centralize physically services and people for reasons of **economy and control**, and the centrifugal tendencies of the Bedouins, a latent attribute of nomadic tribes bursting out as an inclination to decentralize and disperse.



DANIEL MERIDOR



Today there are 130,000 Bedouins in the Negev, the desert area of Israel. Around 45% are living in one city and six townships; according to official statistics they are among the poorest townships in Israel, besieged with high rates of unemployment and crime. Around 55% refused to move into these townships and live in 34 **unrecognized villages** and eleven villages which are perceived as either in the process of being founded (according to the state) or else recognized (according to the Bedouins). An unrecognized village is a **"non place,"** a place which does not appear on official government maps since it is regarded as an illegal occupation of state lands. In these lands, no permanent structures are allowed to be built.

The photographs that form the exhibition *Centrifugal Tendencies* were taken between June and September, 2005. They show the places in which the Bedouins live, both the recognized townships and the unrecognized villages. Through the framing of encountered situations, they expose what one person saw: A Person.

Borders, edges, occupation of land and shelter are examined through these photographs. Questioning how I might photograph a "non place," where no permanent marks are allowed to be recorded, even on a map, provoked me to construct a new kind of camera lens. This lens, inspired by the desert

phenomenon of a **mirage**, reconfigures visual appearances into a reality of a displaced subject. By this displacement, a visual **distance** between the viewed and the viewer is introduced.

This distance incidentally also portrays a conflict between the public and the private realms, which is a relatively new notion for a nomadic/tribal society. Therefore, the foregrounds of these photographs are framed to be occupied by the ground, a fence or an object corresponding to the Bedouins' use of assembled materials to avert invasive views. Photographs which incorporate the **horizon level** examine a major cultural shift in the Bedouins' lives. Since no permanent structures were built by the Bedouins, their new urban villas are influenced by a motley mixture of sedentary cultures' forms. Experiencing the horizon inside the Bedouins' houses in the same manner as Bedouins would inhabit their tents (i.e., lying close to the ground) raises questions about the compatibility of walls and windows as they are manifested today to accommodate the Bedouins' centrifugal tendencies.

This exhibition is a study of alternative observations on the Bedouins. Its ultimate goal is to unveil the (hi)story of the nomadic through a series of findings about those places that were founded, yet not found by the cartographer.

¹The terms for the two tendencies were introduced by R. Hartshorne, "The Functional Approach in Political Geography" (1950), and used later by A. Meir, "Tension Between the Negev Bedouin and the State: Policy and Practice" (1997).

MERIDOR continued

previous page
LandMark, Land. QASSAR AL-SIR

below
Evescent Market, Place. RAHAT



BUILDING FROM THE EARTH | SITE ONE, 21 37.206 N, 101 19.801 W

In December, 2004, I decided to engage the social space of the region in which my parents were born. I traveled to Guanajuato, Mexico, and, in a desolate valley approximately thirty five miles from where they were born, I built a large monolithic land sculpture. I hoped to engage the region's social, economic, and architectural space. The sculpture itself was made from local materials, employed local labor, and was meant to contrast heavily with the local architecture. I resided in the country from June to August, 2005. I concluded the work and have now written a book about the experiences of working and producing artwork abroad.

[EXCERPTS]

Day 6. Wednesday 22 June 2005

Preliminary Site Three. 21 37.206 N, 101 19.801 W

Preliminary Site Three is the likely candidate on which construction will occur. It was the first site seen in December, 2004. There is the advantage of familiarity. Nevertheless, the conditions of the location also favor Preliminary Site Three. The bedrock is closer to the surface and the stress of the wind on this face of the mountain is a less significant factor of construction.

Some materials have been purchased as of this day.

- Ten tons of mixing sand.
- Three tons of bricks.

The following day's activity will fluctuate. I feel still under. The clouds in the sky were nimbostratus formations. They were heavy gray near their lowest points. I felt two or three crashes of precipitation on my arm and neck, but it did not rain.

Day 19. Tuesday 05 July 2005

Day Nineteen Assistants:

- Jose Soccoro Hernandez
- Vicente Cortez Gabia
- Frank Cardona

The monolith rises to 6 meters.

Day 36. Monday 22 August 2005

I describe the weekend as my tour of the site, and I realize it is all over. Site One is only a memory. The events are, from now on, the work and not the site itself. Yet Site One, my notes, and the photographs are only the index for what has happened.

EDGAR PEDROZA



"HOSTS ARE HERE WHO NEVER WERE HERE BEFORE"*

"A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history."

—Walter Benjamin

Theses on the Philosophy of History

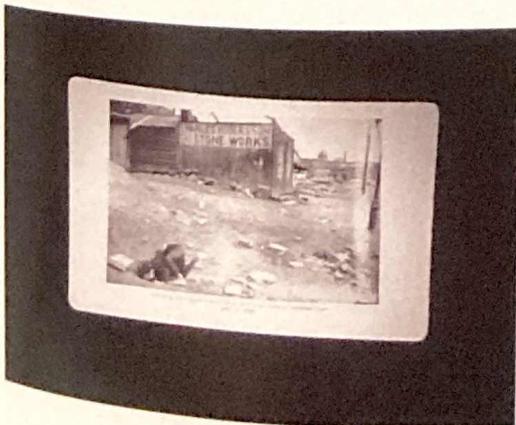
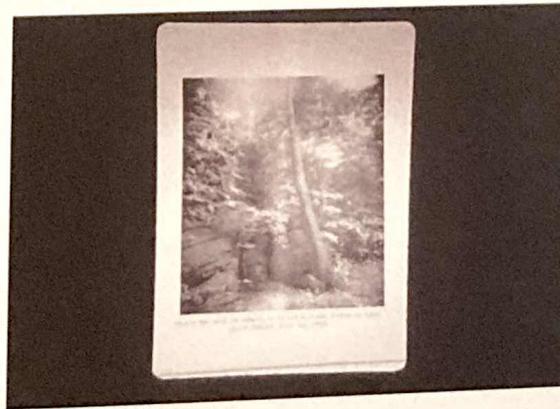
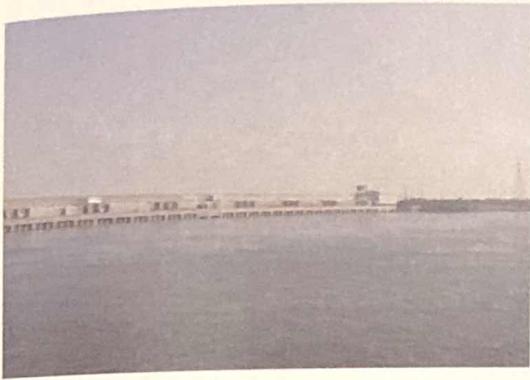
"Hosts Are Here Who Never Were Here Before" focuses on physical traces of New York City's former existence as they were present to varying degrees at various points in the past. Presenting the history of the city simultaneously from different temporal vantage points, the video attempts to reveal a notion of place wherein diverse historical narratives are temporally concomitant. The case studies investigate the desires and constraints of attempts at documentation within moments and sites of catastrophe. "Hosts" attempts to project certain chronicles of the city's past into the present, to imagine the sites explored in the film as at once present and past.

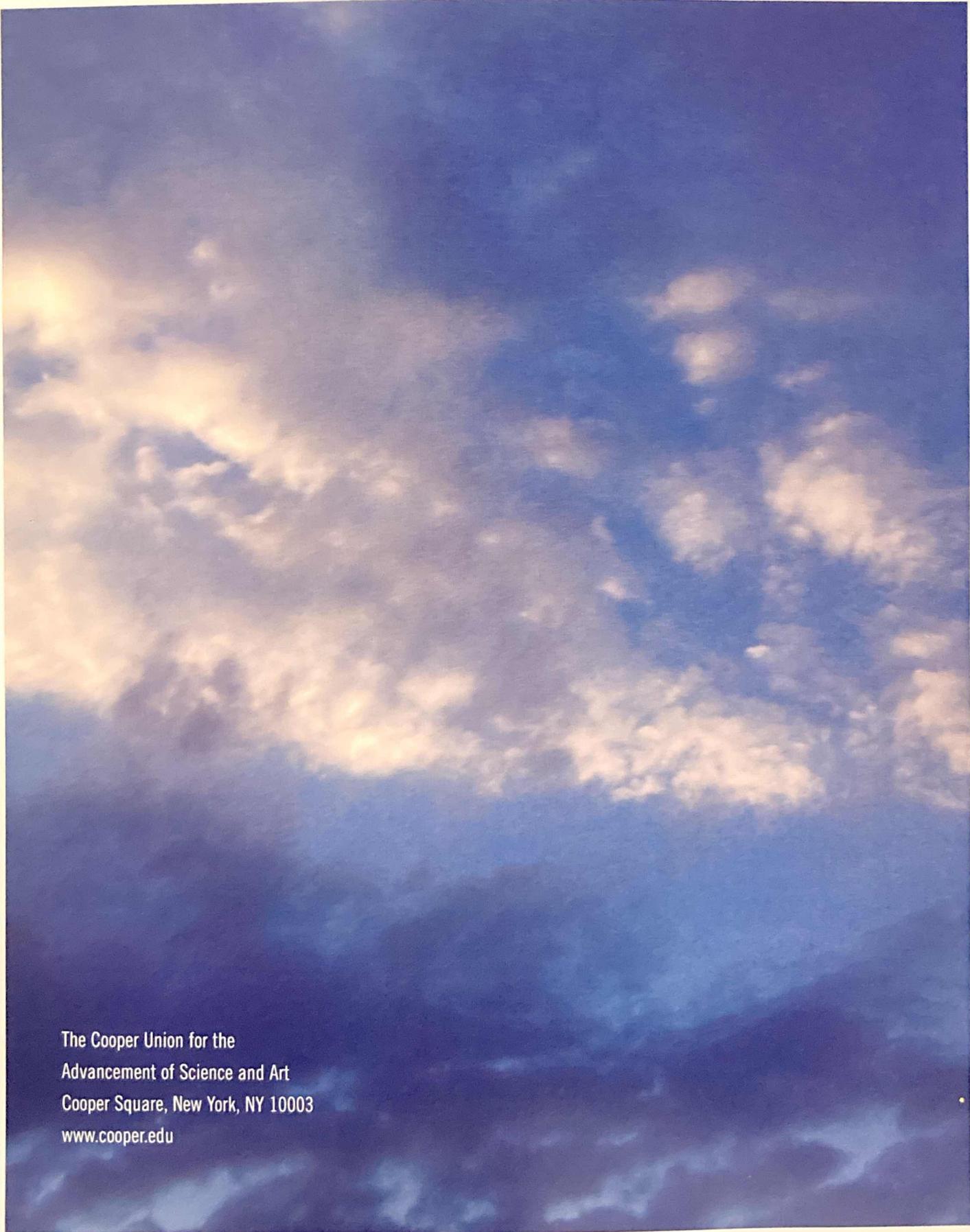
Structurally, the film revolves around the absent center of Robert Moses' civic vision of a city unified physically and temporally by extensive highway networks and, in particular, the massive Triborough Bridge complex on Ward's and Randall's islands. Inherent in this vision is a philosophy of monumentality, an imposed consensus of history and the direction in which it leads. "Hosts Are Here Who Never Were Here Before" attempts to counter this philosophy by providing a view of history which does not impose consensus, but invites each viewer to experience history individually.

"Hosts Are Here Who Never Were Here Before" is a single channel video installation with three simultaneous channels of audio.

*New York Times, July 15, 1853

EUGENE WASSERMAN





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