

Poetics of the **Fantastic**

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Montessori had a shortcoming. It neglected the child's ability to transform the accumulated experiences into creative action. The imagination of the children in the Montessori kindergarten easily became flattened by being turned to immediate practical applications. To be sure, a part of their potentialities were used, but fantasy and originality of solutions were ignored.

From Vision in Motion, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, pg. 23

The work presented is harvested from three semesters of a media elective entitled, "The Poetic Potential of Computers," taught at Texas Tech University. This workshop stimulates intuition and experimentation. The work is speculative in nature, unfettered by the conventions of practical application, in order to discover the unexpected that could radically alter our understanding of the practical.

The tactics and techniques of analytic observation and diagramming are emphasized in the first series of two-dimensional exercises. These studies suggest rotation, tension, compression, warping, or bending as discovered in a source photographic image. Subsequent architectural diagrams articulate potential joints and connections. Later exercises model the previous content. There is a selective application of solid and void, projection and depression, positive and negative space. Digital modeling objects are rearranged, duplicated, and manipulated in various ways.

The students have limited knowledge of form•Z when they start the course. Through repeated experimentation, most students are able to construct and elaborate on their ideas. At first this is frustrating, but once they understand the strategies for constructing within the software, ideas began to accrue. A remarkable aspect of these media driven projects is the variety of techniques that the students invent as they experiment with the software.

View and rendering technique are also a challenge. Again through trial and error experimentation, an attitude and idea emerges from within each project. Some students generate their images directly through RenderZone, without any manipulation from other post-production software such as Photoshop. Other students generate an image several times from the same viewpoint with different RenderZone settings. Each of these image layers are composited with Photoshop. Using either method, carefully enhanced, adjusted, cropped, and reframed views vividly exude the spirit of space, view, mood, color and light suggested in the earlier work. These digital paintings result in a richly layered aura of imagined fantastical worlds.

The periscope is a viewfinder
by Lindsay Kunz

per-i-scope - *noun* “an optical instrument for viewing objects that are above the level of direct sight or in an otherwise obstructed field of vision...”

Scenes are constructed through careful examination of spaces bound by both solid masses and their consequent shadows and reflections. The resulting views are seemingly architectural, defined by structure that is simultaneously real and perceived. The periscope allows views to be established from apparently hidden places. Focus is placed on the interaction of detailed elements and the site that grounds them. The periscope in this sense becomes an instrument for discovering architectural spaces where architecture may not truly exist.



Figure 1: Lindsay Kunz: form•Z Joint Study Award of Distinction for Visualization and Illustration (see page 14).

Dare to Imagine, Dare to Transform
by Jasmine Strickland

The enigmatic machine exploits shadow and light, solid and void to create various scenes. These constructed scenes are accepted as a visual truth by the beholder. Once visually accepted these scenes begin to change: a metamorphosis takes place. The image is no longer confined by the two dimensional or even three dimensional view. Each thought is imprinted upon the image creating a new visual space in the mind's eye. With each new thought comes a new construct. With each new construct a new design emerges.

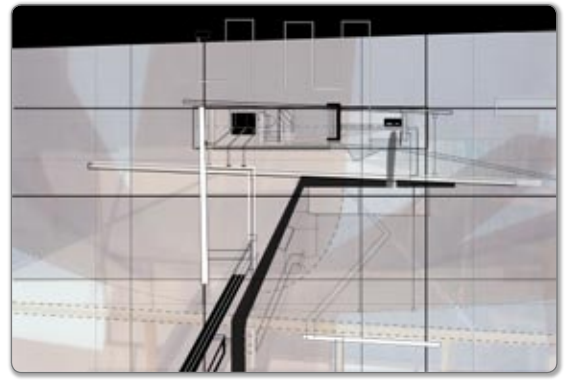
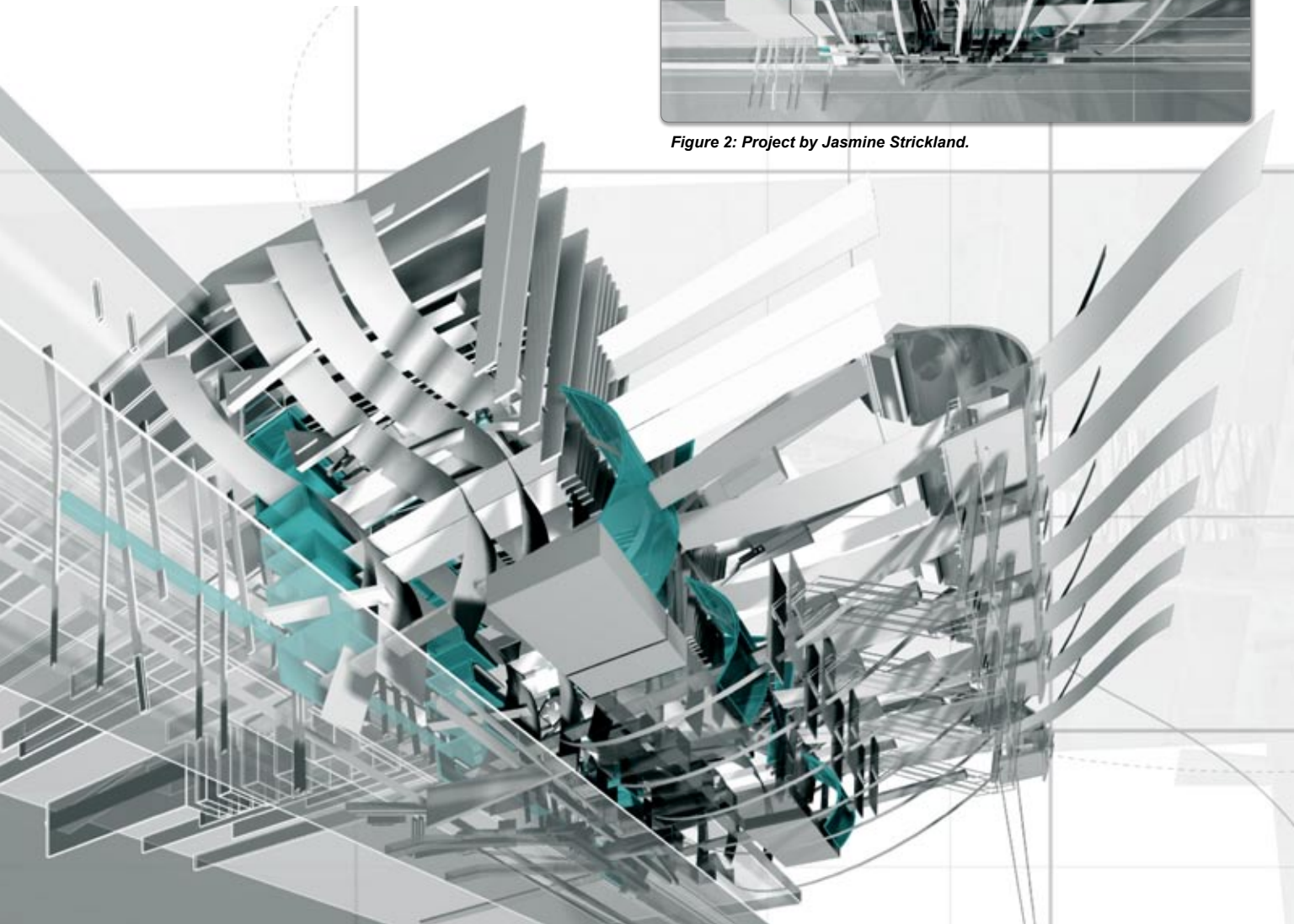


Figure 2: Project by Jasmine Strickland.



Layered Skins by Kelly Lawley

A combination of layers upon layers. The spaces between each individual layer can house an object that looks nothing like the exterior skin, and conveys a different intention. What is compressed between these layers? Overlapping of skins create a space for the unknown pockets; chaos or openness occurs in between these shells. The rhythm of planks, a colliding of planes with large openings to view through each layer to the other side, or to view one part from different perspectives. Inventing these spaces, where no eye can see and letting the imagination take us to these unseen instances peeling the layers back, exposing what is underneath. We all see the outside, but there is still much to be seen underneath. Objects with a skin, holding something inside that is intriguing, but uncovering every bit is nearly impossible. What do we see? Let's look...

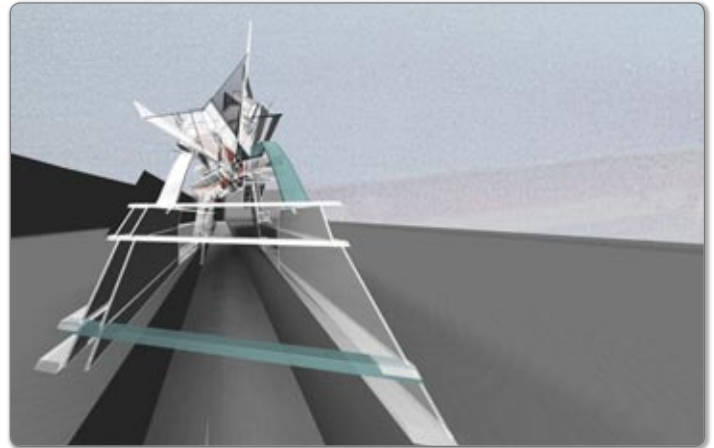
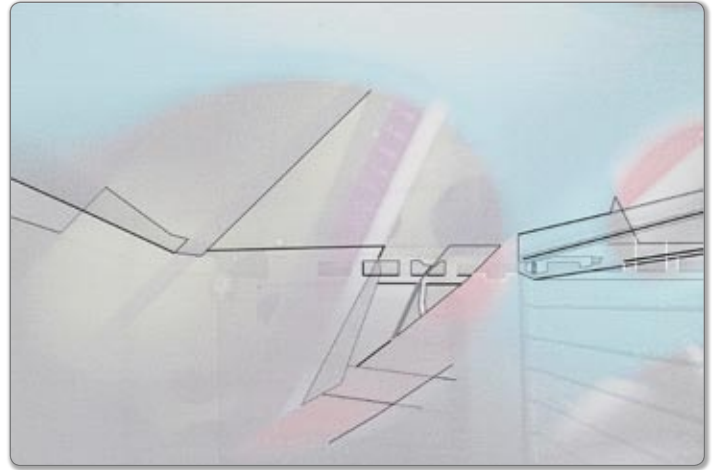
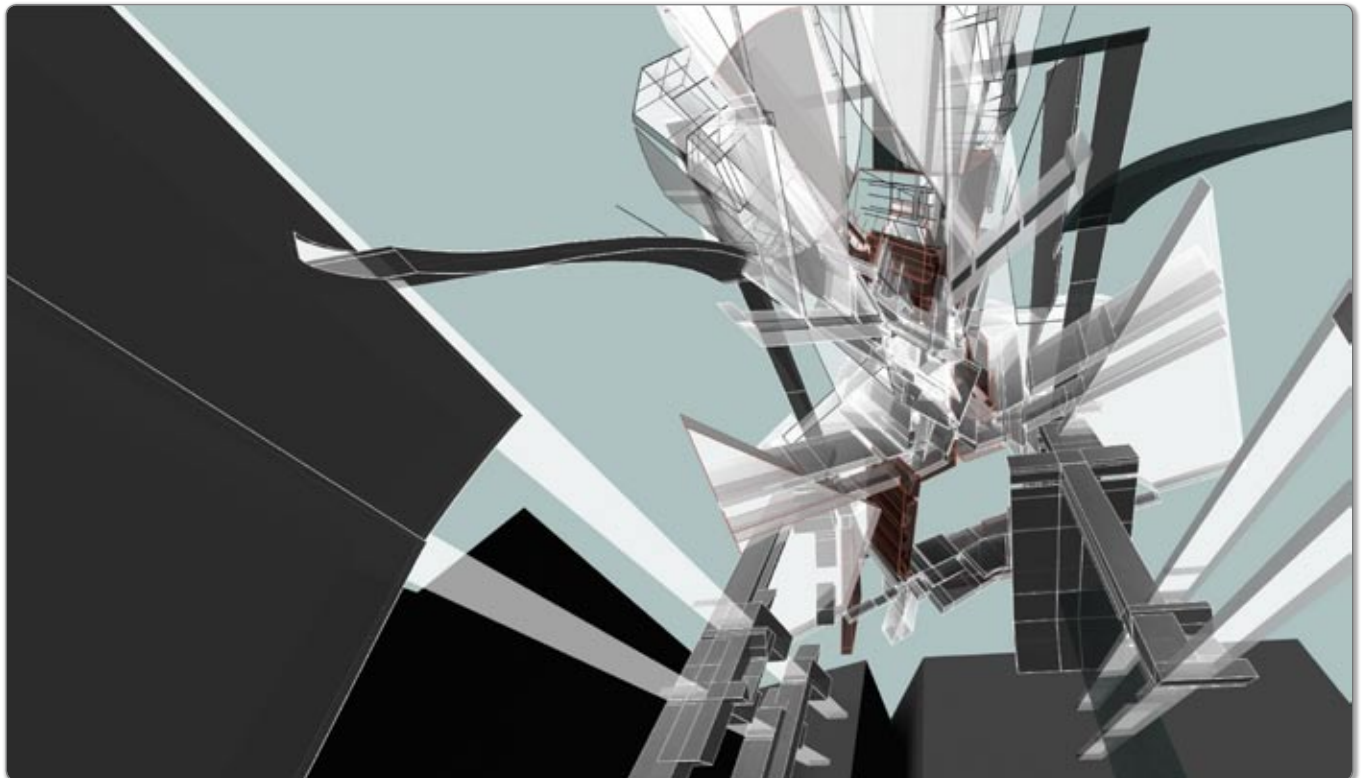


Figure 3: Project by Kelly Lawley.



The Go Between
by Marianne Nepsund

The Go Between is both performer and stage. It exists in an indeterminate, experiential state, connecting analog and digital; containing process and result. The designer guides the dialog between analog and digital, generating a vocabulary of parts. From there, the performance becomes improvisation, combining parts into a reactive sequence of events. Forms constantly shift, evolve, and regenerate, creating new spaces. The Go Between is a route. The resulting spaces become an additional environment for experimentation. Engage them. A chance encounter may uncover a solution, which in turn reveals another confrontation. The Go Between is a destination. The Go Between links its fictitious environment with real spaces, bridging speculation and truth. In this world between the temporal and eternal, The Go Between challenges: Are you spectator or player?

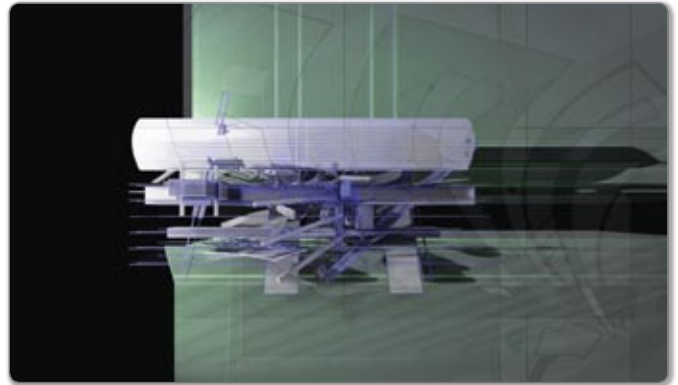
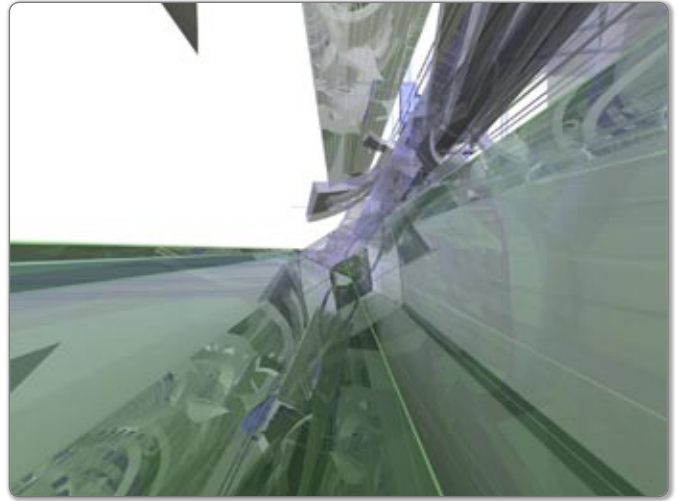
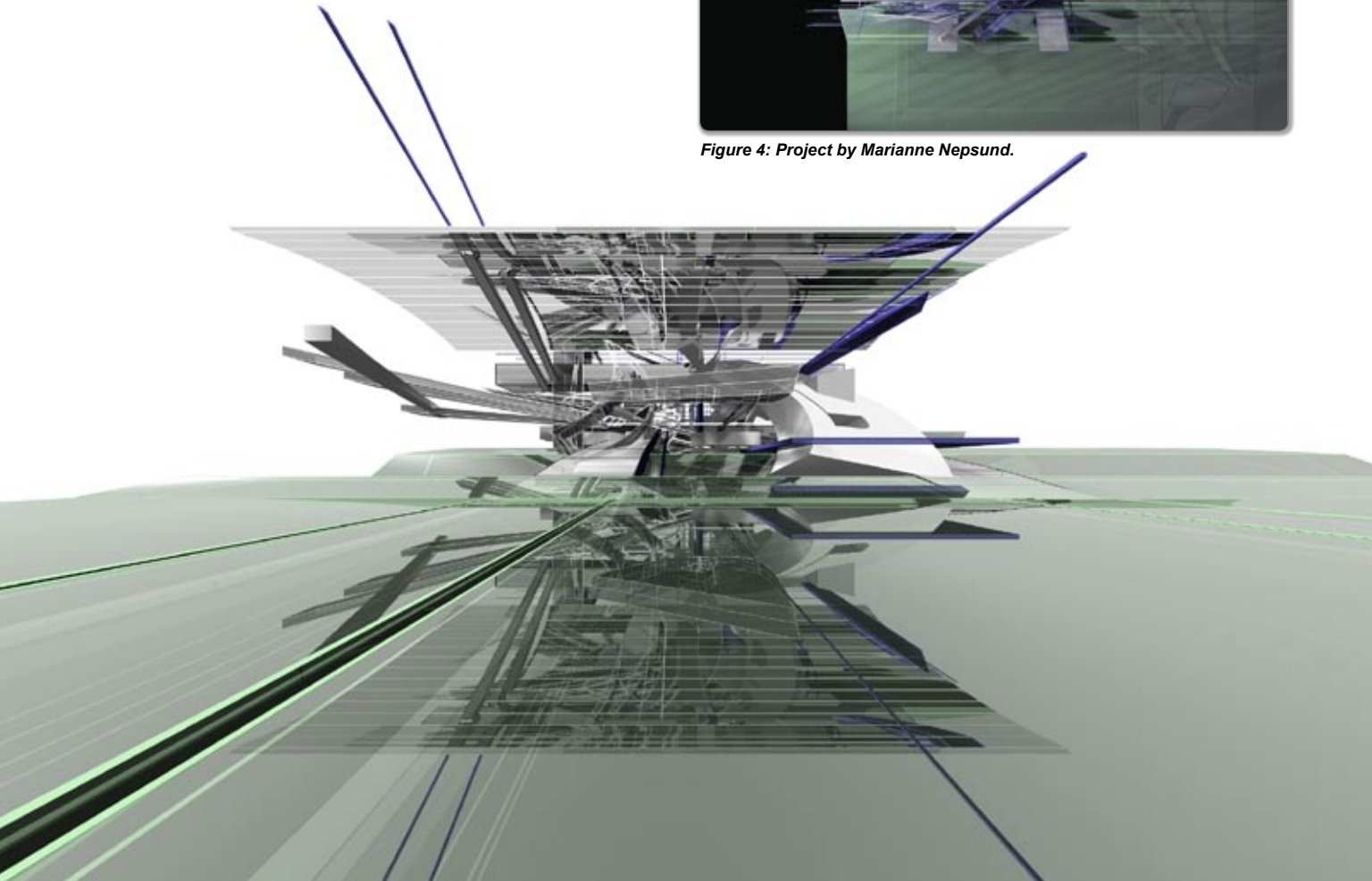


Figure 4: Project by Marianne Nepsund.



The Transmitting Device by Jeff Yarnall

The Transmitting Device is a tower that projects signals by modulation of electromagnetic waves. It's the communication of information based on their varying frequencies and their durations per cycle. Rigid waves of frequency generate interactions, associations, collisions, speed, rotations, relations and oscillations within an open space to create a dynamic form in harmony. These forms can be observed as structural and architectural. The Transmitting Device broadcasts this information of structure and form for all to obtain and discover.

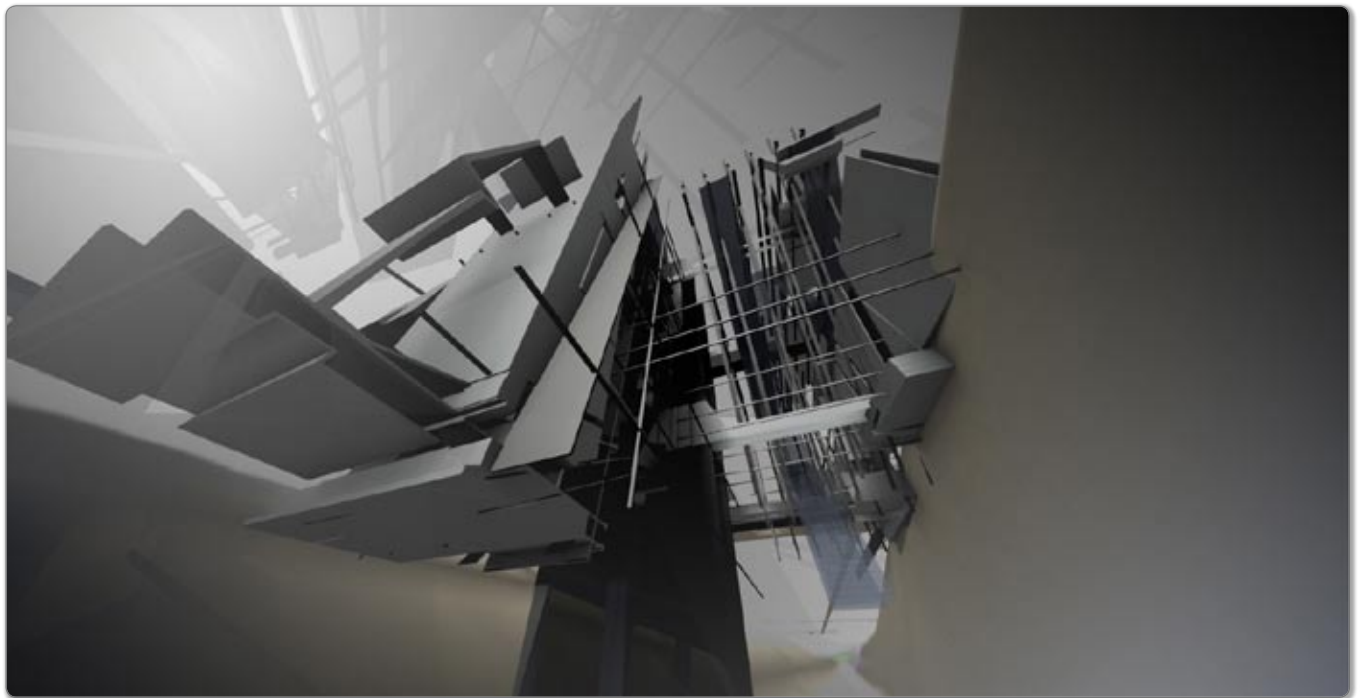
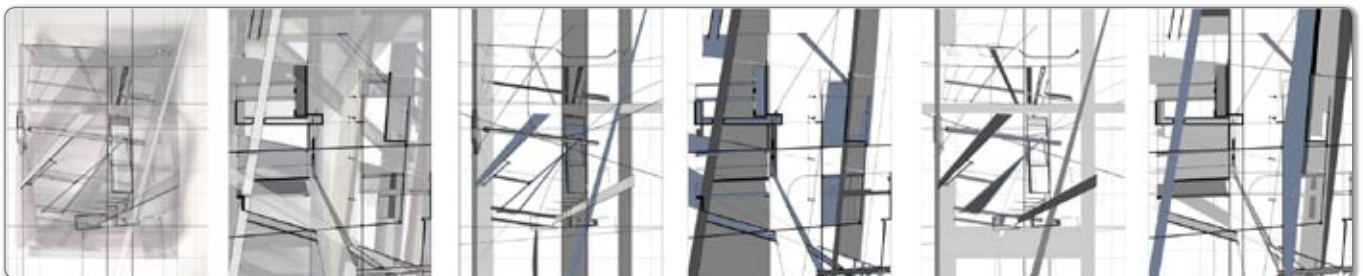


Figure 5: Project by Jeff Yamall.



Architectural Leviathan by James Donovan

An oceanic observatory hanging precariously off a cliff wall, this aquatic architectural speculation overlooks the infinite. It is a bridge, a digital link between the constant and the uncertain. It is simultaneously polished and crude: a glossy, technical armature whimsically stitched into a harsh environment. It is surreal, fantastical, an architectural leviathan reaching out towards the far edges of its world. It is a product of the imagination, a playful gesture, and a bold 'what if...?'

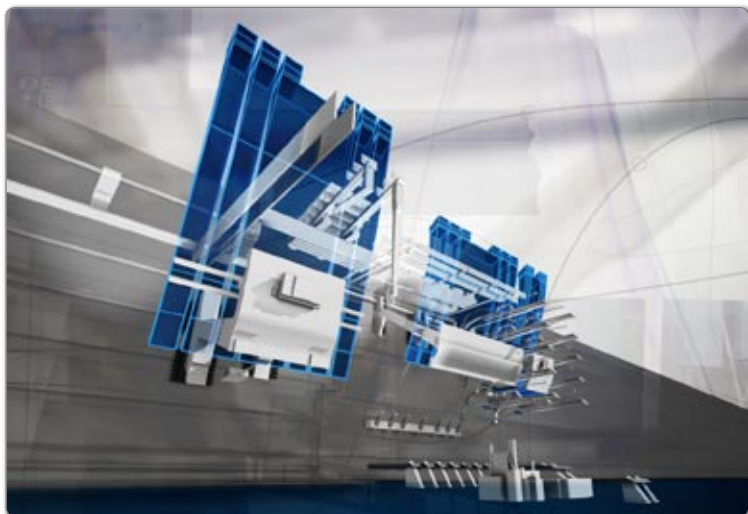
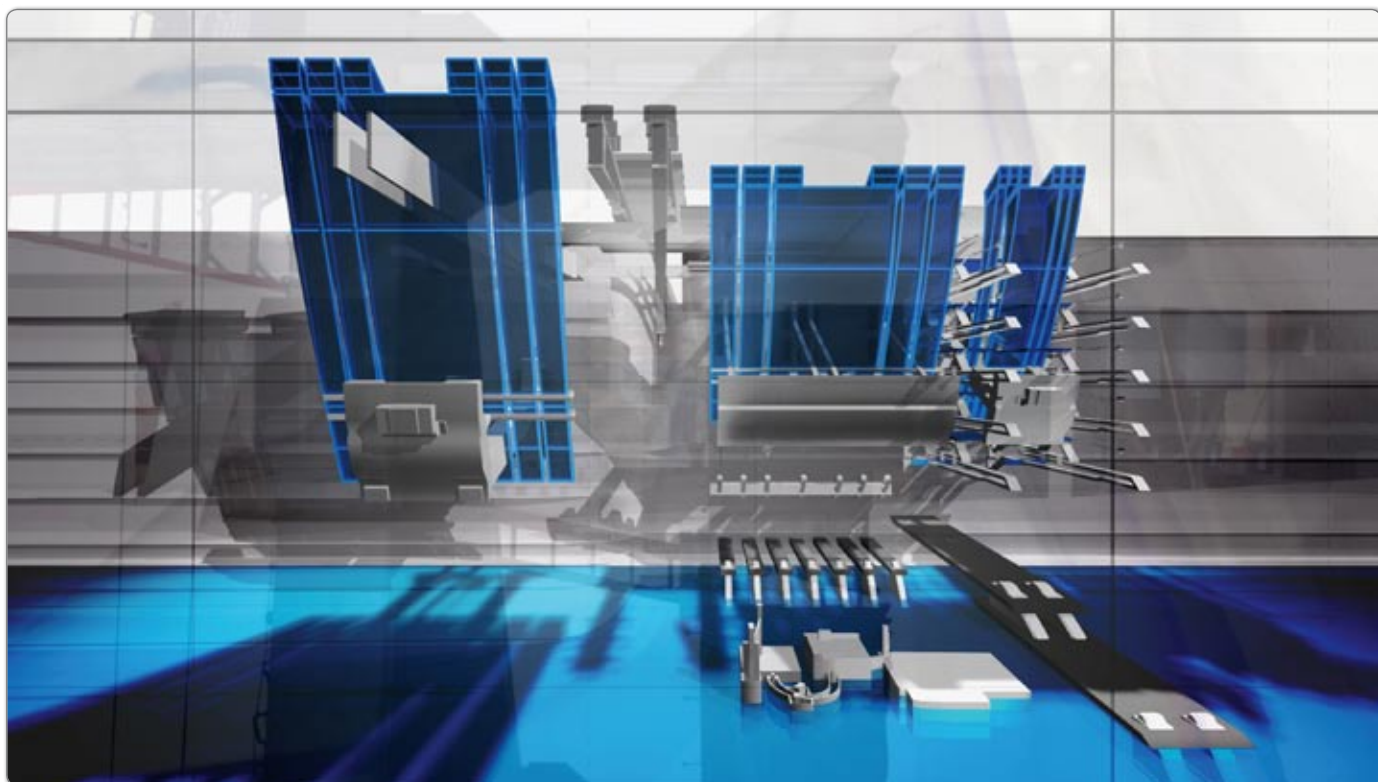


Figure 6: Project by James Donovan.



The UNNAMED by John Simons

The UNNAMED is not a building. The UNNAMED is a thought frozen in time, suspended somewhere between a comfortable reality and the elusive unknown. The UNNAMED is present before us now only to remind us where we last left off. The UNNAMED is a journey more than a destination. The UNNAMED affords us the opportunity to explore questions about light, shadow, depth, perspective, dimension, and so on. It encourages us to discover that which we have previously looked at a thousand times but failed to ever really see. The UNNAMED expects us to create with hands we have never lifted, and touch surfaces we cannot grasp. The UNNAMED has no parameters, no properties, no truths beyond those we grant it.

It exists to no one at all. It is only visible through the imaginations of its viewers. Our minds are its only context. This is not the UNNAMED.

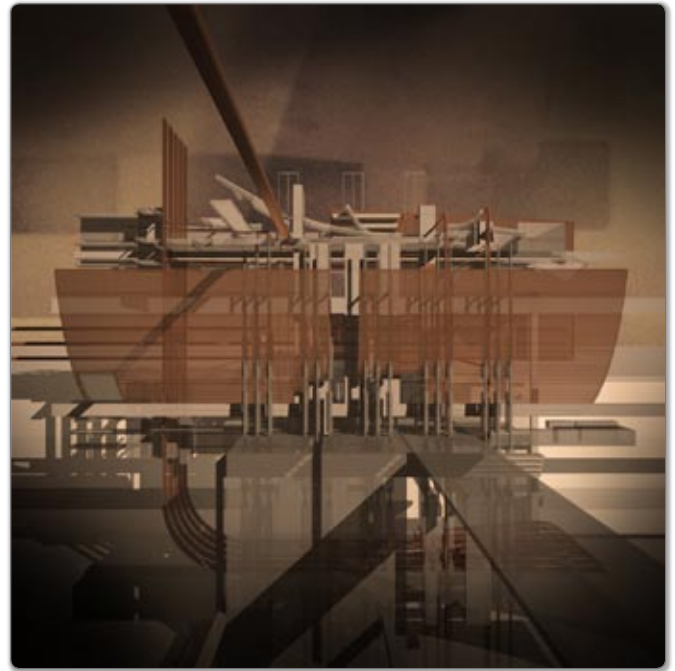


Figure 7: Project by John Simons.



References:

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Bennett Neiman holds a Master of Architecture from Yale and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Cincinnati. He taught architectural design at the University of Colorado at Denver/Boulder from 1987-2004, earning tenure in 1995. He is currently a tenured Associate Professor at Texas Tech University. Since 1983, Professor Neiman has received several honors for a series of self-generated architectural design projects, competitions, and courses involving improvisation, order, and variation on a theme. His design workshops, seminars, and studios exploit the strengths of both traditional media and digital technology in design. He received the American Institute of Architects Education Honors Award in 1994 and 1998 for this work. He received the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture Faculty Design Award, in 1990 for *Surrealistic Landscapes* and in 2005-2006 for *bebop SPACES*, and an ACSA Faculty Design Honorable Mention in 2010 for *Constructed Improvisations*.