The Greatest Peripatetic Show on Earth: The Re-coded Circus of Our Desire

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

The show must go on. This thesis demonstrates that by re-coding the circus' architecture to engage theatrically with the city, the rebellious character of both circus and nomadism will be reinforced, challenging our sedentary mode of living. This re-coded circus is nomadic, determining its engagement with the city and strategic applications of its architecture. While looking at the circus in its greatest art form, understood from its history, its role in society and as a common heritage, the design proceeds in a translation from the theatre's domain to investigate an architecture of performance. Particular vocabulary is borrowed from theatre to create meaningful metaphors, specifically; scenography, acts-ion, and mask. This thesis advocates that the circus must remain, so to keep astonishing ourselves by the spectacular and to keep the live performance, acting in the immediate, here and now; in real-place, real-time, as it transgresses the mundane everyday rhythms of city life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Motivation for Study

In the years 2017–2018, I worked as a carpenter under the largest travelling big top for the show *Odysseo* by *Cavalia*. I experienced moving a huge circus in and out of five cities in North America. Reflections on this experience during my studies has become a creative generator and influence in my interest in architecture. During this experience, I have been exposed to a marginalised form of architecture, rarely seen in my education. The circus, as seen from the backstage, offered me its secrets, revealing its true self, normally hiding behind the mask of its performance. It is not an ephemeral installation; it is not a city, nor urbanization, but it is certainly architecture; a continuous nomadic organisation of human cohabitation action on space. This thesis broadly explores nomadic practice in parallel to sedentary society where each mode contributes notably to the other.

Goals for Study

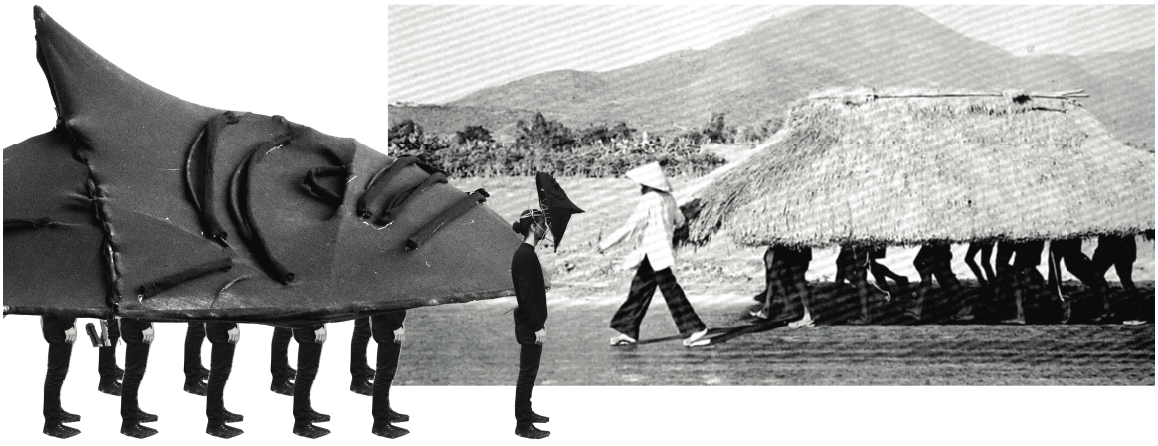
With this thesis, I am further persuaded to find, in the art of performance, the people and the architecture of the circus, a strategy to approach critically the fast-changing, media-oriented society of today. By exploring the circus, I hope to bring further interest in the architectural discourse around the engagement of a nomadic architecture in the urban context. The circus' architecture can be inspired by the theatre as a model to engage dramatically with cities. The re-coded circus, as much as theatre, can perform and demonstrate how we want to—live, play, act—in society.

Along the process of this thesis, I discover the universe of circuses and the powerful social implication it could play. I hope to encourage the place of circus in cities and in our lives. Circus could be seen as a beautiful phenomenon, center around peoples of all around the world that promotes a union of the body and mind, place and occasion, real and imagination.

Chapter 2: Nomadism

This chapter intends to clarify the aptitudes of nomadic practice as applied in this thesis. Although architecture has a long time been qualified by permanency and stability, the nomadic circus, in contrast, is dynamic and flexible. Because of its nature, it travels in a continuous movement, from one city to another. It travels with its inhabitants, its artists, and all its paraphernalia. As explained by architect Bernard Rudofsky in his pivotal *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-pedigreed Architecture*, we must break down our narrow conceptions of the art of building, and then, we can study the circus as a communal architecture, built by the spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage (Rudofsky 1987).

By defining the nomadic nature of the circus, this chapter observes the nomads under three practices: the practice as marginal to the common, the practice of perpetual



The mask can be seen as a technology that could be apply to a portable house. The image to the right is from *Architecture Without Architects* (Rudofsky 1987)

movement in fluid space, and the practice of generating critical thought. Through the exploration of these three practices, it will become clear how intimately connected each is to the others, even to the point that they all must necessarily coexist in a nomadic circus.

Nomadism as Marginal

In philosophical discourse, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari treatise *Nomadology: The War Machine*, is an essential point of departure to understand nomadism as a practice that exists in the margins, “exterior to the state apparatus” and therefore declined by the general public (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 1). When the circus comes to a city, and start to occupy space, for the encampment, it creates an interruption of space and time, infiltrates the normality, creating an event that undermines the stability of cities, and its model of architecture. In this way, the nomadic nature of the circus can be understood as the concept of ‘nomadic war machine’: marginal to the dominant sedentary society, “far from being a part of the state, warriors . . ., are nomads who always come from the outside and keep threatening the authority of the state” (The MIT Press n.d.). The point is that the marginal role of the circus in society can be reinforced by a nomadic aptitude in acting from the margins of the state.

Nomadism as Movement

Another characteristic of nomadism, in opposition with the dominant sedentary mode of living, is that it is engage in a perpetual movement; traveling from city to city to perform the spectacular show. It is in this respect that the thesis title uses of the word ‘peripatetic’ intentionally to attribute the re-coded circus of this meaning, referring specifically to, and

is inspired by its origin in ancient Greece. The peripatetic school was an informal institution founded by Aristotle to conduct philosophical inquiries. Because Aristotle was not a citizen of Athens, the classes were given in the public domain, the Lyceum. The name ‘peripatetic’ is derived from the word ‘walks’ (peripatos), a city infrastructure around which Aristotle’s classes took place (Furley 2016). Today, peripatetic is synonymous with nomadism (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary* n.d.). Here, this synonymousness informs the genre of the re-coded circus of this project as a traveller from place to place in a constant movement (nomadism), as well as being a nomadic strategy in occupying public space (peripatetic). Referring once more to Deleuze and Guattari, the peripatetic school can be considered as nomadic: similarly marginal to the state apparatus, and continuously moving in space.

To understand the dynamism of the peripatetic school it can be put in parallel with the analogy of the game Go in *Nomadology: The War Machine’s*:

> In Go, it is a question of arraying oneself in an open space, of holding space, of maintaining the possibility of springing up at any point: the movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival. The “smooth” space of Go, as against the “striated” space of chess. The *nomas* of Go against the State of chess, *nomas* against *polis*. The difference is that chess codes and decodes space, whereas Go proceeds altogether differently, territorializing or deterritorializing it (make the outside a territory in space; consolidate that territory by the construction of a second, adjacent territory; deterritorialize the enemy by shattering his territory from within; deterritorialize oneself by renouncing, by going elsewhere . . .). Another justice, another movement, another space-time. (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 5-6)

This analogy helps in representing the nomadic dynamism of the re-coded circus on territory; a very opposite conception of space than sedentary—a state, which

this paper argues as dominant in our society. The points on nomadism aim to redefine the nomadic practice of the circus for a more fluid movement. Inspired by the peripatetic walks of Aristotle, liberated from the limitations of space, the circus can then act as a powerful marginal and dynamic apparatus.

Nomadism as a Generator of Thought

Within these two aspects - nomadism as a practice of marginality and movement - we can now consider the nomadic circus as a generator of thought. This comes from Greek origin (peripatētikós), which means “given to walking about especially while teaching” (*Online Etymology Dictionary* n.d.). Further interest in the peripatetic brings up the relationship between movement and academia in a way that the re-coded circus becomes a way to think critically about how we want to live. For Aristotle’s school, movement and reasoning were essential combination. For this thesis, nomad is used as a dogma for the re-coded circus; the aspiration to produce a practice of thinking.

The marginality of the circus, by challenging the normality, encourages diversity of opinions, and propose different points point of view. The observation on nomadism should expend the inherent perception of architecture, expending outside of the default to permanency to a more fluid, tangential and flexible architecture that celebrate the unstable of our time.

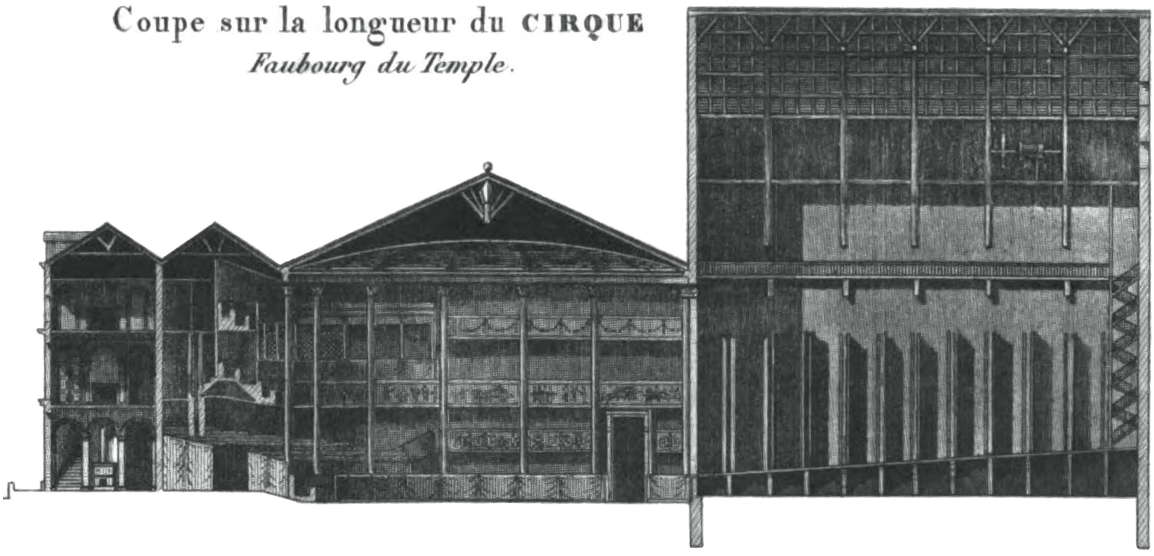
On Nomadism; Conclusion

Nomadism, through these three interconnected characteristics, puts the architectural discourse on the edge of its scopes, challenging its principle; a rejection of

a practice based on a sedentary attitude, where “space is striated, by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures, while nomad space is smooth, marked only by “traits” that are effaced and displaced with the trajectory (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 44). This thesis’ interest in nomadism proposes a disruption in conventional buildings and spatial boundaries, in order to focus on the city as an open space. It is like playing a game of Go in the middle of a game of chess. This way, the peripatetic circus will come to town and transgress the conventional production of space. Furthermore, regarding the peripatetic school where “the school was originally, perhaps always, a collection of people rather than a building” (Furley 2016), the re-coded circus is as well more about a collective of people. Moving through the cities, it does not parcel out territory, it distributes people on an indefinite and open space (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, 44). The circus will create a temporary village of a community of circus artists, and conjointly invite a public to participate in the collaborative event.

Chapter 3: Circus Backstory

This chapter presents the transformation from the ‘traditional’ to the ‘new’ circus, due to the circus’ need to adapt to novel societal circumstances. The purpose of this chapter is to contextualize the role and ambitions of the re-coded circus of this thesis project. Considering the fact that the circus has changed significantly in the last century, it is important to show the distinction between the popular image of the traditional circus and the reality of the contemporary circus. The re-coded circus of this project will be more in the image of the contemporary circus rather than the traditional, adapted to current innovation by a general understanding of the new mode of application of circus art. However, this re-coded circus remains loyal to its roots, never fully abandoning its true nature, which is most easily recognizable in its ‘traditional’ imagery.



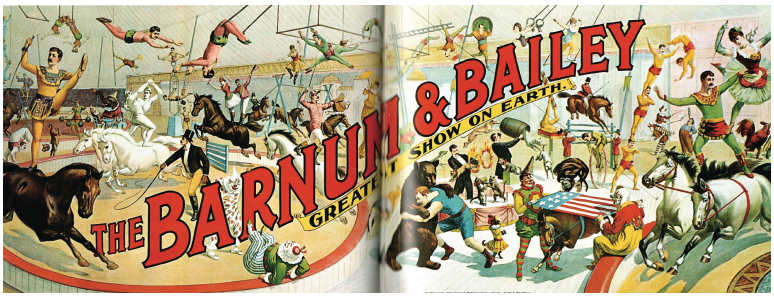
Long section of the Cirque Faubourg du Temple in Paris. (Donnet 1821)

The chapter will then end with a brief description of modernist French circus, *Archaos*: *Cirque de Caractère,* as a case study. Specially rebellious and an exemplary for its adaptation to contemporary society, the re-coded circus will borrow from Archaos its modern character, its instinctive approach, and its transgressive application.

The Traditional Circus

In *Le Grand Livre Du Cirque*, author Monica J. Renevey describes the circus as we know it today: a converging of different artistic expressions that have always existed (Renevey 1977, 15), thus, pinpointing the origin of the circus is near impossible. Some acts and skilled performances have survived throughout history, and can even be found as far back as Ancient Rome. However, most authors who write about circuses agree that the modern circus owes its origin to Philip Astley, a talented equestrian from England (Renevey 1977, 90; Croft-Cooke and Cotes 1977, 7). In 1770, London, Astley brought together a diversity of artists into a single establishment, all performing in the ring. Astley "introduced 'Chinese Shadows', 'Tumbling', 'Slack-rope Vaulting in full swing, in different altitudes', 'Egyptian Pyramids', and the first clown to enter a ring, a man named Burt" (Croft-Cooke and Cotes 1977, 44). From that meeting, the circus was born. As described by Renevey, this convergence of diverse and unique artistic expressions is what the circus is all about. From both ancient and various sources of inspiration—Egypt, Rome, theatre, fairs, or street art—the circus still is this meeting of diverse performers, pushed by the desire to surpass themselves and to express their bodies with strength, courage, and beauty (Renevey 1977, 15).

Nowadays, the term ‘new circus’ itself refer to the emergence of a recognizable new aesthetic of the circus, which emerged in the 70’s (Maleval 2002, 64). Thus, the traditional circus remains a classic, while the new movement and rise of new ideas and conventions for the circus is a feature of contemporary circuses. It is important to mention that traditional circuses are still an important part of the contemporary entertainment scene, with many active examples that demonstrate remaining interest, despite a dramatic decreasing popularity.



Example of American traditional circus. “Poster for Barnum and Bailey’s Greatest Show on Earth, showing the variety of acts which could be accommodated in the three ring introduced by Bailey.” (Croft-Cooke and Cotes 1977, 66-67)

Change

According to Robert Sugarman in “The New Circus: The Next Generation”:

> Today, the format of the traditional circus is essentially unchanged as it faces competition from film, television, and theme parks that offer spectacle and color circuses cannot match. The new circuses not only offer a more intimate experience than traditional circuses, they offer a more intimate experience than that provided by the competing media and theme parks. (Sugarman 2002, 438)

Thus, due to easy and massive access to entertainment in the contemporary media-oriented society, the circus has lost interest from the public. Prior to access to television, cinema, video games, and the internet, the circus was a

major, perhaps only player, in the entertainment domain. The loss of exclusivity for the circus, with the rise of other forms of entertainment, has challenged the circus economics and forced them to adapt. After all, circuses are an enterprise, operating within economic constraints (Sugarman 2002, 441).

Moreover, as societal morale progressed, we have seen the disappearance of wild animals and “freaks” from the circus program, which was at the time a main attraction. Due to this absence, the circus started to reimagine itself, a genesis of what distinguishes the traditional circus from the new circus (Maleval 2002, 72).

Adaptation

In the face of these societal changes, the circus has focused the lights on the performance of human acts, presenting its great skills and intelligence. This process of transformation, while at the same time defining the new circus, involved into a multitude of collaborations with other disciplines in order to transform the circus’ mere entertainment to an art form in its own right. Thus, with the emergence of circus schools, artists perfected their skills with extreme precision and quality (Sugarman 2002, 440). Consequently, governmental institutions started to officially recognize the circus arts, such as the Canada Council for Art granting official recognition to the circus arts in 2009 (En Piste n.d.).

In general, although there is difficulty in extracting a single idea out of all the different adaptations of the new circus in conformity with societal changes, the circus adopted a more theatrical structure. According to Martine Maleval’s observations on French circuses in “An Epic of New Circus”

for the purpose of portraying “these intangible rules that characterise new circus” (Maleval 2002, 74), new circuses have integrated music as a central part to the production (66), devoted energy to the creation of scenic images (67), and added more elaborated costumes (66) with the desire of a theatricalisation of the whole with a clear aesthetic direction (73). In consequence, the new circus rejected traditional and restrictive space of performance, considered new creative sites and allowed itself to orient the audience on a frontal stage, with proscenium arch, rather than the conventional ring (73). She also explains:

> while in the common imagination the circus conjures images of tents, trained animals, clowns, trapeze artists, and drum rolls, these shows consist of moments of amusement and do not have the status of works of art. The claimants to the invention of the new circus, by declaring that they want to create an art form, have fundamentally modified the conception of a circus show. Their productions move away from the one fixed tradition without submitting to the dogmas of the established live show. (Maleval 2002, 73)

In contrast to theatre, where the action is a re-presentation, circuses remarkably show the action itself (Renevey 1977, 421), the new circus, despite its dramatisation, continue to define the live performance. That seems to be the intangible roots of circus, where both, traditional and new, engages a live performance, immediate in space and time.

Circus Today and Always

A forum to assess ourselves, the circus reveals that we as people, as well as the environment, are quite spectacular. It shows the haunting complexity of the world and the limitless boundary of our imagination. The dedication of the artist to push their work to the limits of what is possible, strikes the everyday rhythm, creating fantastic imagery in contrast with those of reality. It keeps astonishing, within

real-place and real-time, where the ordinary and the extraordinary are juxtaposed. Best put by Rupert Croft-Cooke and Peter Cotes,

> for most folk, through the world, the circus conjures up an adventurous world beyond the ken of ordinary lives and when the circus is on show, . . . audience everywhere are prepared to suspend disbelief, to indulge in their love of fantasy. (Croft-Cooke and Cotes 1977, 170)

Archaos

This section investigates the modernist French circus Archaos as an example of new circus, and more specifically, present how it will inform the architecture of the re-coded circus of this project. Archaos, for this thesis project, serves as the fictional client of the architecture which would help define the program.

One: Character

The work of Archaos is define by its peculiar adaptation to contemporary society, and especially relevant for its aesthetic rooted in a critical look on modernity. Archaos started in the 1980's in France (Kennedy Martin and Evans n.d.), disturbing the entire traditional scene by its atypical shows. Coming from a classical horse circus, Pierrot Pillot-Bidon and his troupe, accompanied with new ambitions, rejected the tradition to create something authentic to the modern world. They revolutionized the aesthetic of the circus by using urban language and by integrating live music, motorbikes, special effects, machines, chainsaws, sensuality, and humor (Evans 1990, 7; Kennedy Martin and Evans n.d.). According to Maleval, Archaos are "nomads without theatres, profoundly embedded in the heart of urban . . . life" (Maleval 2002, 64). Maleval continues to say about Archaos, among other new circuses,

> [Archaos is] highly symbolic of the utopian claims and reappraisals which both destabilized and revitalised live performance in this tumultuous and rebellious epoch. Into the midst to these adventurous escapades are woven, deliberately but delicately, the threads that allow us to establish, a priori, a recognizable aesthetic of new circus. (64)

The provoking and outrageous character of their performance both exploit and represent the consequence of the urbanization society. As noted by Kenneth Little, “spectacle are performative genres nurtured by modernity and that, in turn, interpret it” (Little 1995, 15). The character of the circus is then, an interpretation of the contemporary time, subjective to the artist imagination and investigation of a desired world.

Two: Instinctive

Archaos stands out of the aesthetic heritage, but is simultaneously crucially rooted in the key tradition: the live performance. Archaos found a true expression in the immediate present of the live performance. A present that refrain from a re-presentation, in distinction to theatre. Indeed, the live performance is exposing actions with real risk, live on stage, which with Archaos, “resulted from the freedom left to ‘the instinctive part of the creation which must remain’” (Maleval 2002, 70). In this way, Archaos build upon this notion of live performance, by acting on the immediate, responding by instinct, a sort of improvisation found in the show. Maleval (through the words of Henry Maschonnic on modernity) points out that the very notion of a circus is to resist repetition (Maleval 2002, 70).

It is worth mentioning that chaos in the name “Ar-chaos” could be seen as the signifier that defines the intention of the circus, perhaps as an unpredictable and disordered show that in search of freedom, act instinctively.

Three: Transgressive

The circus is a place of transgression and fantasy. Archoas is not different. As mentioned by Kenneth Little, an anthropologist interested in spectacle, Archaos is an example of conflict with reality, “deviant to the real,” by its performance and character (Little 1995, 26). He further explains:

> it also acts as a particular practice of specular ambiguity that collapses difference, confounding the logic of spatial and ideological regulation and discipline by destabilizing it, transgressing permanence, order, and convention with the zeal of the peripatetic who visibly defiles proper city boundaries just as the city in fear of pollution re-constitutes its moral order by calling out the controlling machinery of surveillance. (20)

Furthermore,

> In [Archaos utterance], new city spaces may be produced, re-fashioning the city as a hybrid, contested space rather than as an enclosed and ordered urban site. (22)

Little’s argument is fundamental to the definition of the re-coded circus. The transgressive character could be bring into service as an essential architectural ethics when engaging with space. Ultimately, a nomad practice of contesting urban spaces will amplify the transgressive role of circus in cities. In the book *A Pattern Language*, Christopher Alexander mentions the need of transgressive space in cities. He points out the continuous presence of extraordinary events (such as circus and carnivals) in history, that challenged what was socially accepted. In short, he argues in favor that such places in cities should persist; places “which allow people to reveal their madness” (Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein 1977, 300).

“Two glamourous fire-eaters rehearse their act” (Croft-Cooke and Cotes 1977, 139)

Chapter 4: Dramatisation of Architecture

Introduction

> In our current age of liquescence - where nothing is stable, where fiction constantly folds into reality, and where sedentary structures can no longer house the mediatized spectacle of daily life - this fatal resolve is countered by a desire to create more porous, open-ended, transparent and ephemeral environments. (Hannah 2018, 311)

This chapter presents the methodology used to engage theatrically with the mechanics of the city through architecture. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the new circus has centered the show around the performance of the artists, rather than providing mere entertainment. To stretch this adaptation into architecture, this project explores a dramatisation of the events of a circus coming to town in a way that the event itself becomes a performance.

Exploration of inhabiting a mask in the city of Halifax. Plus testing optical illusion with mirror, hiding and revealing elements.

Drama

In her book *Event Space: Theatre Architecture and the Historical Avant-garde*, Dorita Hannah argues in favor of a reunion of theatre with architecture. When the connection of an event with a space occurs in our built environment, it can be considered that the space is abstracted. Consequently, it blurs the limit between “natural” (everyday life) and “artificial” (the circus), by which our fundamental everyday lives as spectator is engaged by the event. In that moment, space and events are both simultaneously influencing each other, transforming each other in a dialectical exchange. The event-space, creates a fluctuating realm which has the power to impact our cognitive understanding of space and destabilise our pre-established conception of the apparent stable environment (Hannah 2018, 10). This condition of event-space has been of interest in architecture since the avant-garde radically exploded the limits of performance spaces.

The work and theory of Bernard Tschumi is an essential reading in the subject of event, that can illuminate further Hannah’s conception of event-space. In his notable *The Manhattan Transcripts*, the aim was “to offer a different reading of architecture in which space, movement and events are independent” (Bernard Tschumi Architects n.d.). Through a series of drawings, diagrams and photographs, Tschumi deconstructed the convention of architecture in an attempt to represent what is missing in conventional architectural drawing: the disjuncture of event. In this way, *The Manhattan Transcripts* connect theatre and architecture by the observation of action, traditionally seen as program in architecture and, as drama in theatre. Tschumi’s process involves the analysis of the actions and movements of a

protagonist, deliberately engaged in extreme situations for the purpose of highlighting this disjunction. Aiming for a union of architecture with theatre, this thesis develops upon Hannah and Tschumi through the event of a circus coming to town, proposing new relationships with space: the re-coded circus is seen as a performative act, a collaboration between the event and the site it occupies.

Thus, regarding the use of theatrical analogy in this thesis, the work of American architect John Hejduk, becomes a primary source of meaning for the development of

One of Hejduk “Mask” call “Security” build by student, Christiania torg in Oslo in 1989. Photo: Helene Binet. (Malmquist 2012)

the design. In his later work, the architecture is created from stories, developed from a matrix that explores the relationship between object and subject in space and time. These stories result in masks of architecture: objects of architecture reciprocally intertwined with its inhabitants. Luca Cardani mentioned that Hejduk is creating masks that “represents the ideas and characters that populate the city, realizing urban scenes and actions, through a set of architectures, a company of buildings as a cast of actors” (Cardani 2021, 56). This use of theatrical analogy is essential to understand Hejduk’s work. Cardani states that “the city can be compared to theatre because both are forms of representation of the life of society, each with its own structure and language” (Cardani 2021, 55). This analogy is key in this thesis as well, allowing the architecture as the whole event of the circus, to be dramatised and become performance on site.

To apply the dramatisation to architecture, heavily inspired by the ideas of Hannah, Tschumi, and Hejduk, this project proceeds with meaningful analogies from the theatre’s domain using particular vocabulary, specifically scenography, act-ion, and mask. Scenography engages with the site, defining it as a stage to help present the architecture. Act-ion engages with the movement, the event, the sequential acts and ritual of the traveling circus. Mask engages with both mutual object and subject.

These three analogies are used for developing the design of the re-coded circus using the following equation:

RE-CODED CIRCUS = (SCENOGRAPHY + ACT-ION) / MASK

Allegorical equation uses to integrate the vocabulary to the creation of a re-coded circus.

Architecture

This allegorical equation only works under the understanding that architecture cannot be reduced to simple empirical factors. This is what O.M. Ungers explains in *Morphologie: City Metaphors*. He argues that our experience of reality necessarily passes through our perception, emphasizing the role of visual thinking, which is closely related to our imagination. He favors a mode of thought that combines empirical and holistic thinking in a way that imagination is used to observe and understand physical reality. He demonstrates this with the use of images, metaphors, analogies, models, signs, symbols and allegories.

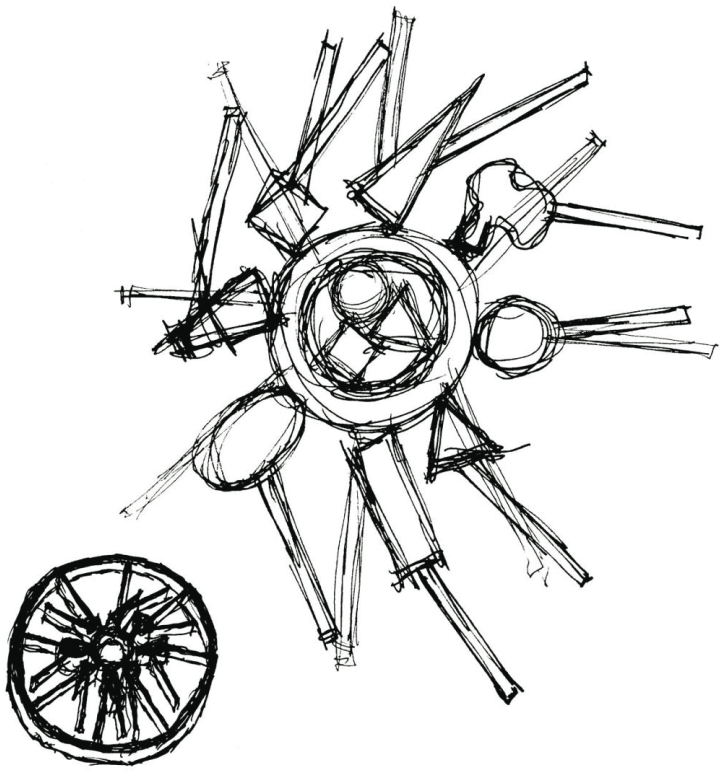
It is with this mode of thinking that the architecture of the re-coded circus has negotiated the real. Additionally, it is according to K. Michael Hays' definition of architecture in *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde* that this thesis intends to contribute to the practice. Hays mentions his interest with the field of architecture as follows:

> That is, architecture as a specific kind of socially symbolic production whose primary task is the construction of concepts and subject positions rather than the making of things. (Hays 2010, 1)

These opinions regarding the role of architecture can be considered to be abstracted in Hejduk's drawing titled *The Architect's Wheel*, as it represents this mode of thinking. *The Architect's Wheel* is, above all, a representation of the holistic and intuitive grammar with which architects are dealing with, but also expresses things allegorical that create a dialect between the physical realm and the realm of ideas. This wheel is spinning—or juggling in this

case—the different knowledges of the architect in order to reconcile drawings, forms, materials and stories as seen in the four columns/lists below the drawing itself. This particular drawing accompanies the development of this thesis as a guide in the process of designing the re-coded circus, as it navigates both the real and the imaginary.

It does so by adapting the allegorical equation for the re-coded circus into a diagram, in the same spirit present in *The Architect's Wheel*. The vocabulary borrowed from theatre, act as the spokes of the architect's wheel of this

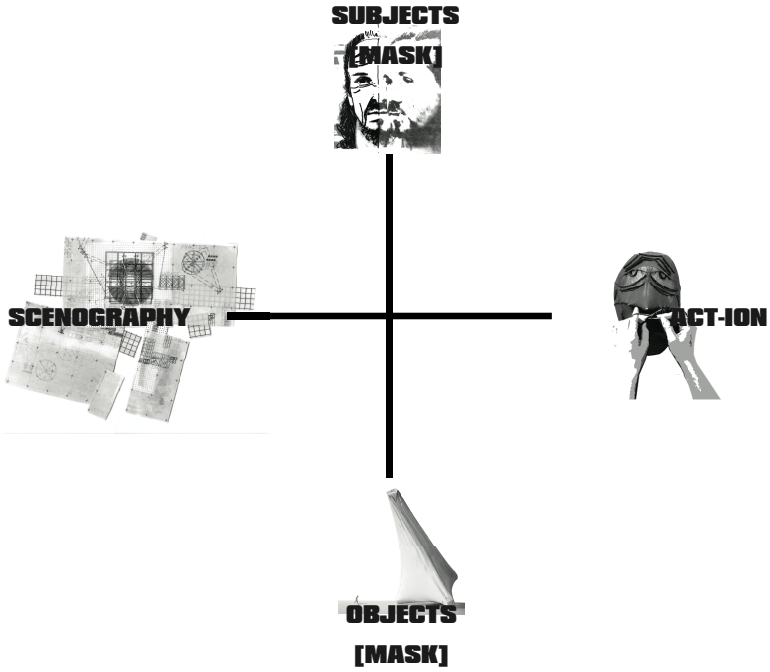


John Hejduk: *The Architect's Wheel*, from Soundings, 1993. (Malmquist 2012)

thesis, all informing the circus story. The horizontal axis deals with place and time, while the vertical axis, deals with object and subject intertwined, finding result in the creation of masks. This adapted wheel, nourished by the realm of ideas, is used to create a framework for the design of the architecture by constantly circling around the four spokes: scenography, act-ion, objects and subjects.

Scenography

The city is a theatre, the site is a stage.



The thesis architect‘s wheel, deals with scenography, act-ion, and mask (objects and subjects)

Scenography comes as a useful ally to accompany the design of architecture in cohesion with the intentions of the re-coded circus. In this thesis, scenography is used as its most fundamental definition: the creation of a stage space

(Howard 2002, 129). Considering the site as a stage is firstly required to involve the scenography as a device to present the event of the circus. A study of this discipline, extracting its creative techniques and methods, is applied to the design process of the project of this thesis. By definition, the use of scenography should help and support telling the story of the peripatetic circus.

Josef Svoboda, a Czech artist and scenic designer, faithfully defined himself as a scenographer, which for him, implies an important distinction from set designer by a clear understanding of “all the technical instruments and materials with which he works: lightning, construction, mechanics, mathematics, optics” (Burian 1974, 15-16). With those instruments, Svoboda’s work presents a clear mindfulness of the dramatic performance that manifests itself in space and time. He sees the performance through dynamism; a fundamental character to any work of theatre art (27).

Writing on the work of Svoboda, Jarka Burian explains how the ‘suggestive’ characteristic of his scenography is coherent with the dynamic nature of theatre. He continues:

> The setting should evolve with the action, cooperate with it, be in harmony with it, and reinforce it, as the action itself evolves. Scenography is not a background nor even a container, but in itself a dramatic component that becomes integrated with every other expressive component or element of production and shares in the cumulative effect upon the viewer. (Burian 1974, 28)

Essentially, the re-coded circus as an event, is equally dynamic, and the instruments of scenography (lightning, construction, mechanics, mathematics, optics) will support in the dynamism of the circus.

Limits of Scenography

Svoboda's scenography is intended for an auditorium space and, of its own preference within a frontal stage or proscenium type (Burian 1974, 32). It is evident that the implications of such contained space cannot be directly applied to a site in the urban fabric and, even less so, with the nomadic tendency to reject enclosure, both ideas central to this thesis. However, one notion from Svoboda on the limit of his work is noteworthy: "Svoboda's ideal theatre would be one in which there would be no architectural division of stage space and auditorium space" (33). This significance, by which scenography would take care over the entire production space, is relevant in this thesis' ambition of a nomadic circus that does not mould to the boundaries of sedentary society. In the effort of emphasizing the fluidity of the circus, the scenography is adapted to the site specificities in a more immersive and surrounding experience.

Site-Specificity

By testing hypothetical sites, this project hopes to represent the dynamic storyline of nomadic architecture, the sets' design strategies and the adjustments required for any particular site. The strategy of occupying space, which will be defined more specifically later, draws from site-specific performance: a theatrical practice that emerges with the avant-garde revolution.

To outline the concept of this practice in non-theatre locations, this thesis references the book *Site-Specific Performance.* The author, Mike Pearson, professor of Performance Studies at Aberystwyth University, UK, draws strategies, methods, and techniques from his own

experience as an artist, as well as from other practices. Offering conceptual and theoretical frameworks, Pearson tries to portray and articulate the nature of the practice of site-specific performance, with the ambition to encourage further initiative in performance (Pearson 2010, 2); something this thesis is exploring through architecture inquiries. Pearson stays away from a prescriptive definition of site-specific performance. Nevertheless, he articulates it in this way:

> Site specific performance are conceived for, and conditioned by, the particulars of found spaces, (former) sites of work, play and worship. They make manifest, celebrate, confound or criticise location, history, function, architecture, micro-climate. They are an interpretation of the found and the fabricated. They are inseparable from their sites, the only contexts within they are 'readable'. (Pearson 2010, 4)

Pearson acknowledges the need for the expansion of the notion of 'site', as it deals with the architecture's notion of context within limitless existing factors. Addressing these factors is inevitable, whether intentionally or not. For example, the site needs a different approach than the approach to an auditorium, because a site inherently exists within a context, while an auditorium can be conceived as separate from its context. Adapting the scenography practice to site requires an adjustment in the conceptual process. To this end, as a starting point for the narrative of this thesis, it is required to address the site as nomadic. Moving through land, going to a site, and then finally occupying it, is defined by the nomadic character, which Pearson extracted from Deleuze and Guattari and describes it as follows:

> Shifting across the smooth space of the urban desert using points and locations to define paths rather than places to be. The enemy of the nomad is the authority that wants to take the space and enclose it and to create fixed and well directed paths for movement. And the nomad, cut free of roots, bonds,

> and fixed identities, is the enemy of the authority, resisting its discipline. (Pearson 2010, 20)

Already introduced in chapter 2, the concept of nomadism defines the character of the re-coded circus. But in addition to just character, nomadism is used in this thesis as a behavior as well; a moral guide and a creative generator in the design process, engaging with the land and the contested site to occupy.

Thus, while the circus travels to its destination, a site is found. This future site for the circus encampment is carefully selected to encourage the transgressive character of the circus in order to recontextualize the place temporarily. Site-specific performance demonstrates a greater promise when a frictional quality between the nomadic and the sedentary can exist on a potential circus site. Scholars, such as Cathy Turner, highlight “the creative potency of an uneasy fit” (Pearson 2010, 10). The occupation of the re-coded circus will not only transgress cities’ spaces but also “offer a reinterpretation of it, even a rewriting” (Turner 2004, 373).

In this manner, scenography will be ‘reinterpreting’ the site, with a careful observation of the site as ‘found’, and propose a ‘rewriting’ of the site as ‘imagined’. All the site’s characteristics, “social, cultural, political, geographical, architectural and linguistic” (Pearson 2010, 143), will be actively part of the scenography, as they exist through the architecture as well as the social realm. Thus, the brief residency of the circus on site will “neither fully engage with nor erase the multiple pasts and forces inherent to ‘found’ and ‘chosen’” (Hannah 2018, 8), but will have to carefully coexist with this reality. The special character of the circus proposes to engage in a discourse with the site,

in which opposite arguments are debated. The “host”—the site—and the “ghost”—the circus—will coexist in a frictional relationship. To emphasize this difference, “site may facilitate the creation of a kind of purposeful paradox – tension not congruence – through the employment of orders of material seemingly unusual, inappropriate or perverse at this site” (Pearson 2010, 36).

Conclusion

Thus, scenography is far from being a mere backdrop or a painting. The scenography is articulated for the benefit of the performative event, in which the nomadic circus desires to perform its operation of the spectacular. Through the friction between the existing context and the temporary architecture of the circus, the circus stays faithful to its uniqueness, but also, carries on with threatening the limits of what is possible. The site becomes an immersive space, where the existing realm is briefly consumed by the performance, recontextualizing the site into a stage. In this way, it can detach the citizens from their passive perspectives and elevate them as an active spectator that is able to participate in the performance that they are subject to.

Acts-ion

It is argued that architecture, like theatre, “is an imitation, not of forms or styles, but of human action” (Bonnemaison and Macy 2008, 3). In this regard, the production of the architecture is a direct connection with the actions of the re-coded circus, including traveling, assembling, and rituals. The erection of the re-coded circus will be deployed in a sequence of actions, with a concern on the artistic presentation of these actions. By seriously considering

the actions of making as a performative act, the circus will be transformed from its traditional notions into a re-coded circus: a pattern of a new circus, modeled by its ambitions for the spectacular, and its potential to occupy multiple, yet specific sites.

As described, the interest upon the context of a site, outside of the auditorium, has to be manipulated as a stage by scenography. When understood as a dynamic operator, the scenography can work in a harmonious relationship between the stage (the site) and the action (performance, play, or event). The consideration of the site as a stage is to understand its occupation by the circus as a performance deployment. We can refer to Yoram S. Carmeli, Professor at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Haifa, who has studied the circus at great depth. He argues that under a semiotic approach, the traveling of a circus is performative itself;

> the attraction of the circus lies in the very travelling . . . . This is not attraction 'in itself' but made so by the travellers—through the circus mode of appearance, the reflexive indications of their special way of life and the patterning of the travelling itself. (Carmeli 1987, 237)

In this way, the acts of a nomadic circus—journey, arrival, residency, and departure—are all part of its performative character. An example that illustrates this well is Calder's Circus: a miniature version of a travelling circus that fits in a few suitcases. The artist, Alexander Calder, was able to create a full show to occur in any living room—another sort of transgression of space. But the argument is that we can be astonished by the performance of the animated wired character on stage, as much as the performance of Alexander Calder himself backstage. Calder was conscious of the performative aspect of himself; unpacking

his suitcases, and setting up the stage was all part of the show. So to speak, in the peripatetic circus, the workers will be intentionally performing as they work to erect the re-coded circus.

Calder unpacking suitcase (Whitney Museum of American Art n.d.)

Masks

Like in John Hejduk's work, the three masks constructed for this thesis are a manifestation of object and subject, both benefiting each other by defining the other. Wim van den Bergh states on Hejduk's project called The Landcaster/ Hanover Masque, that for Hejduk, the "masque" has a poetic role to create "architecture of inhabiting it" (Hejduk and Boyarsky 1992, 83). He mentions regarding the architecture that:

> Each object is designed as an autonomous architectural element, a prosthesis of the individual (literally:"indivisible") life of its specific "inhabitant", the "subject". (Hejduk and Boyarsky 1992, 83)

In the same vein, as Claude Levis-Strauss argues, masks cannot be studied separately from their myth: both echo and transform the other. Built with this intention of creating an intertwining relationship between object and subject,

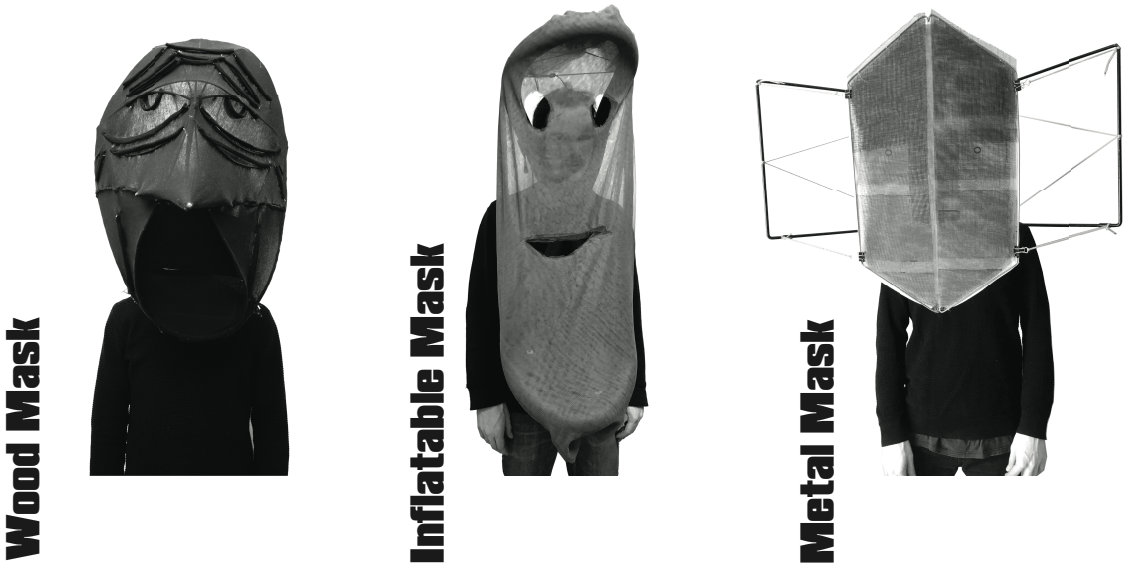
the three masks of this thesis operate as a third party: it makes the connection between inhabitant and architecture. Consequently, rather than adapting Hejduk's literal use of mask to the architecture of his imaginary inhabitants using his own autonomous language, the architecture of the re-coded circus is folded within the reality of portable architecture: an architecture that can be applicable to the nomadic circus context.

The three masks created for the project are identified as different sets of craftsmanship, materials, symbols, and myths. The details of these masks have an attention to particular structures inspired from temporary architecture as well as from the circus itself. The masks are then used

Details of the three masks of the re-coded circus: (From top to bottom) three details of wood mask, three details of inflatable mask, three details of metal mask.

as “models” to explore such unconventional structures that will be later reused in the creation of the architecture. Some books are worth mentioning for their contributions as case studies that gave inspiration and realism to the design: *Tensile Structure* edited by Frei Otto, *Pneumatic Structures: A Handbook of Inflatable Architecture* by Thomas Herzog, and *Portable Architecture* by Robert Kronenburg.

The three masks are considered as predetermined artifacts of the re-coded circus. They have been constructed with architectural vocabulary, and if we study them semiotically, we can imagine a whole culture in them, including specific myths and craftsmanship. The wood mask inhabits the character of the tent master, who knows everything about the canvas and the circus erection. The inflatable mask is a rebellious character that hopes for the disappearance of walls. The metal mask inhabits a tension between understanding reality and the projection of imagination. Each are fundamental in the understanding of the re-coded circus, perhaps full of meaning still to be found and imagined.



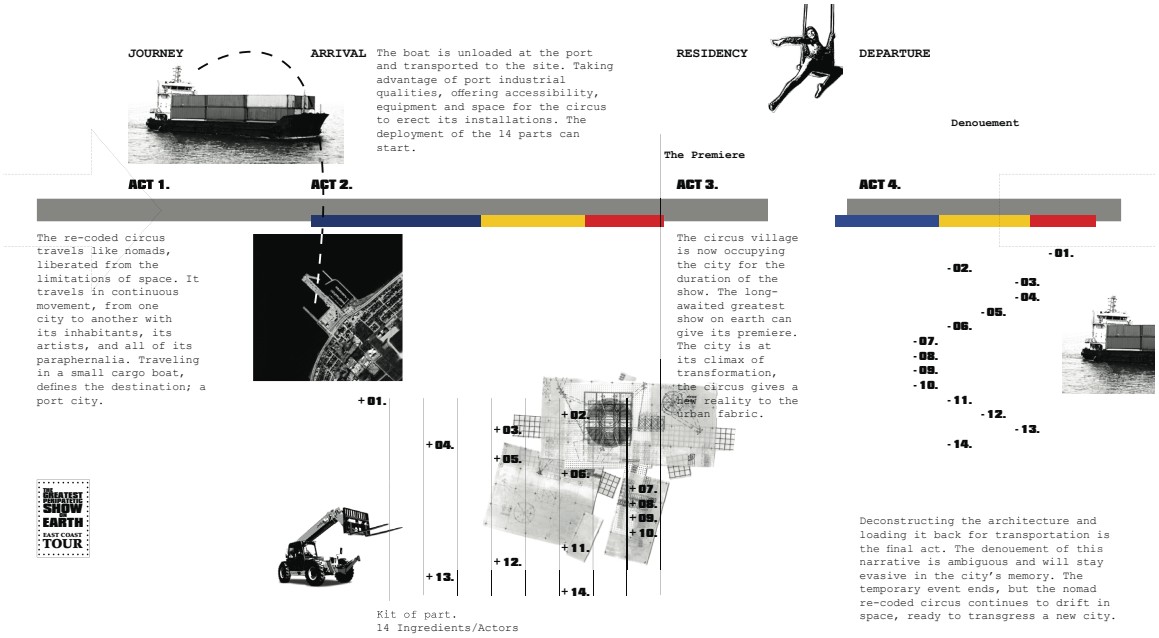
The three masks of the re-coded circus

Chapter 5: Play of Architecture

This chapter presents the design and architecture of the re-coded circus, and demonstrates the sequence of events that give life to the play of the actual circus performance. It encapsulates all the previous investigations in the development of performative architecture.

Traveling

The cyclical movement of the re-coded circus is divided into 4 acts: journey, arrival, residency and departure. The thesis explores primarily the second act—the occupation of site and the erection of the re-coded circus—but first, an overview of the cyclical travel is needed to further understand how the site will be occupied.



Timeline of the cyclical movement of the re-coded circus in four acts.

Act 1: Journey

The re-coded circus travels like nomads, in continuous movement, from one city to another with its inhabitants, its artists, and all of its paraphernalia. Traveling in a small cargo boat defines the destination: a port city.

Act 2: Arrival

The boat is unloaded at the port and the paraphernalia transported to the site. The deployment of the 14 parts can start.

Act 3: Residency

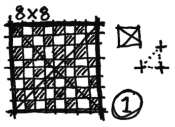
The circus village is now occupying the city for the duration of the show. The long-awaited greatest show on earth can give its premiere. The city is at its climax of transformation.

Act 4: Departure

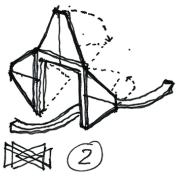
Deconstructing the architecture and loading it back onto the cargo boat for transportation is the final act. The denouement of this narrative is ambiguous and will stay evasive in the city's memory. The temporary event ends, but the nomad re-coded circus continues to drift in space, ready to transgress a new city.

Kit of Parts

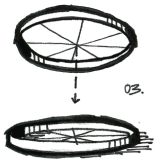
The whole re-coded circus is built by a composition of fragments that are each playing a particular role on the site/stage. For this reason, the design is presented as a kit of parts. The architectures are, by necessity, portable, which means, in reference to Robert Kronenburg's book *Portable Architecture*: that they "consist of structures that are intended for easy erection on a site remote from their



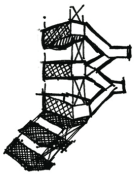
01. - The Board



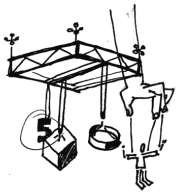
02. - The Gateway



03. - The Ring

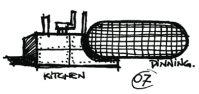


04. - The Balconies



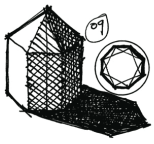
05. - The Mother Grid

06. - The Dwelling



07. - The Kitchen

The Shops - 08.

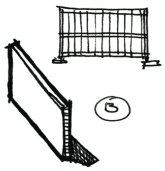


The Practice Tent - 09.

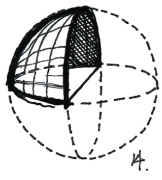
The Garage Wing - 10.

The Bleachers - 11.

The Trompe l'Oeil - 12.



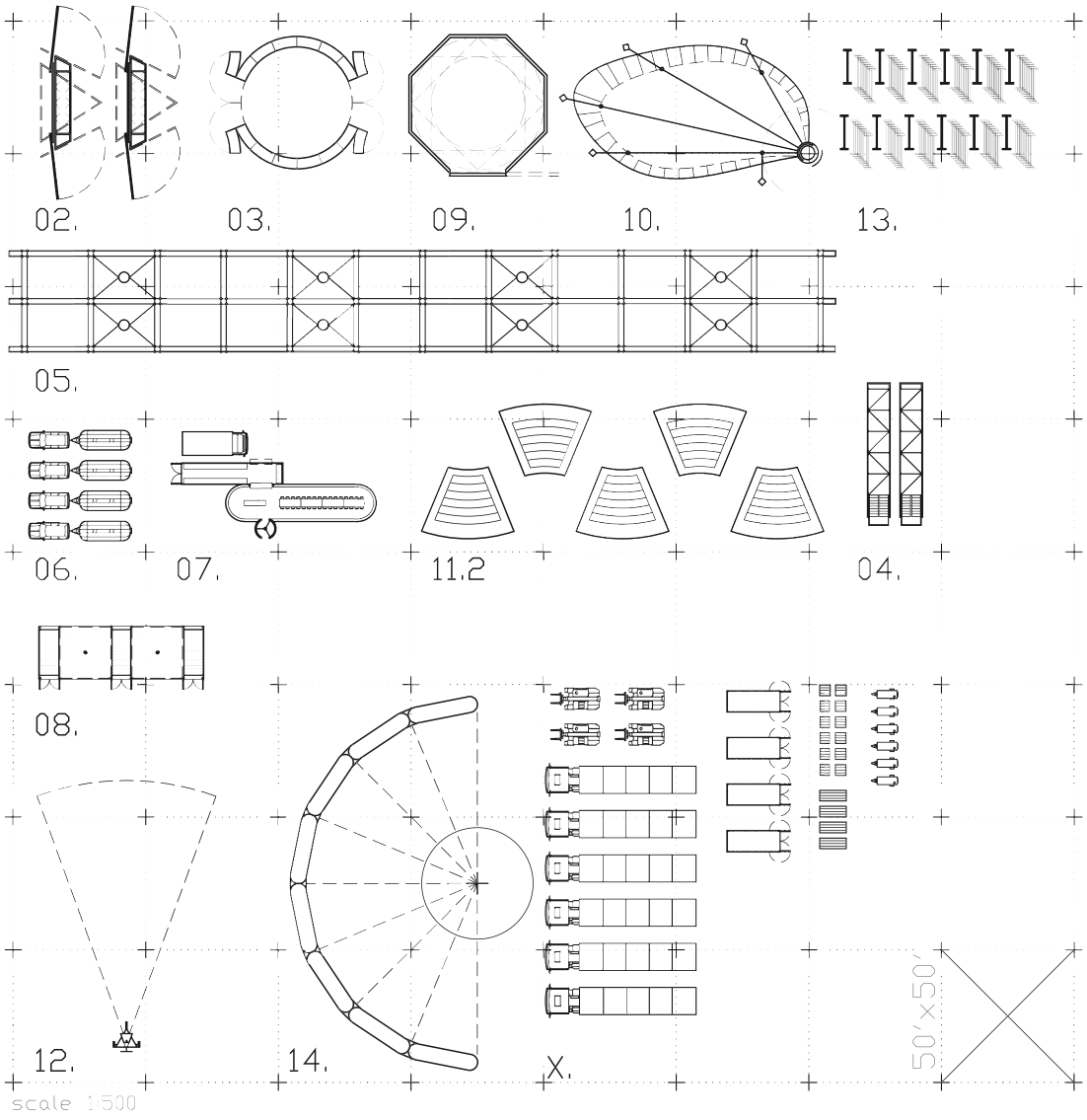
The Fence - 13.



The Half BigTop - 14.

The 14 architectural actors of the re-coded circus are represented by a caricatural sketch intended to capture their idea.

“MISE EN PLACE”



The plan of the kit of part or the “mise en place” of all the “ingredients” necessary for the recipe of a re-coded circus.

manufacture” (Kronenburg 1996, 1). In the interest of this thesis, the engineering of the architecture is not primarily concerned with its functional criteria, such as lightness, transportability, modularity, and easy assemblage. Rather, it is mainly concerned by the performative and spectacular aspect of their deployment. In other words, their assemblage has implications on the inhabitant action and their relationship with the immediate architecture.

Case Study

A case study analysis of traveling circuses demonstrated that the idea of the “kit of parts” already exists by default due to its very nature, as assemblage is required to be easily erected on any site. Additionally, it shows the strategic collection of distinct buildings on site. This collection of small buildings, traditionally using tent structure, allows a simple, fast, and versatile erection. For this thesis, 14 parts were identified to complete the kit for the re-coded circus. Within the final 14 parts, some have been selected directly from case studies, while others have been borrowed then transformed or reimagined, re-writing the story of the event; a new dialogue with the city.

Architectural Actors

The distinct program of every building is introduced in the architect’s wheel of this project in order to be transformed by the other parts of the equation. All 14 parts are perceived as “architectural actors” with its respective and corresponding name. Their autonomy, as singular architectures, allows them to be placed on site as actors on a stage, with space separating them, which is a space that is potential for action. Constructed with the idea of the mask, they are defined by myths and metaphors which

Théâtre Zingaro. Early 2000. In red is highlight the many buildings required to this equestrian travelling circus. (Archicirc n.d.)

Cirque Plume. Early 2000. In red is highlight the different buildings required to this travelling circus. (Archicirc n.d.)

Bulle des Arts Sauts - Kayassine. 2003. Design by Hans Walter Müller. In red is highlight the different inflatable structure for the show. (Archicirc n.d.)

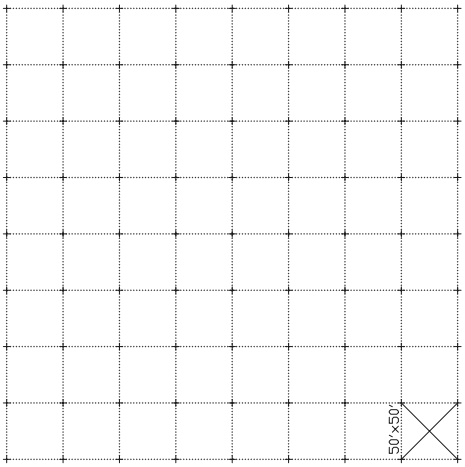
exist in the circus inhabitant's imaginations. They are also constructed with materials, details, and craftsmanship inherent in the three masks: wood, inflatable, and metal. An intertwining relationship between the object and subject—both manifesting in the mask—comes to life through the architecture when each part's respective program is turned into a phenomenon, "existing as pure concepts in themselves like a piece of art" (Ungers 2017, 9).

One to Fourteen

As each individual actor has its own specific role to play in the performative act of the circus, all the parts on site will be given its own due attention. The order in which they arrive will vary from site to site.

The Board, #01

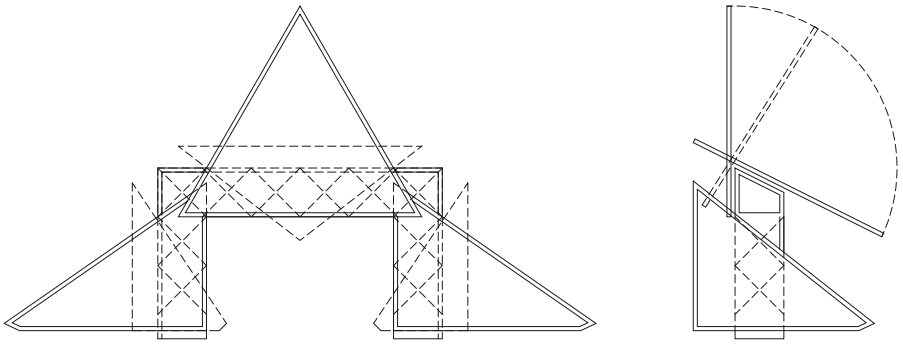
The Board is imagined as a surface divided equally. The site is chosen only if at least half the squares are free spaces. Then the site is surveyed and marked by the tent master. Finally, the site is ready to be the stage for the circus erection.



The Board in plan.

The Gateways, #02

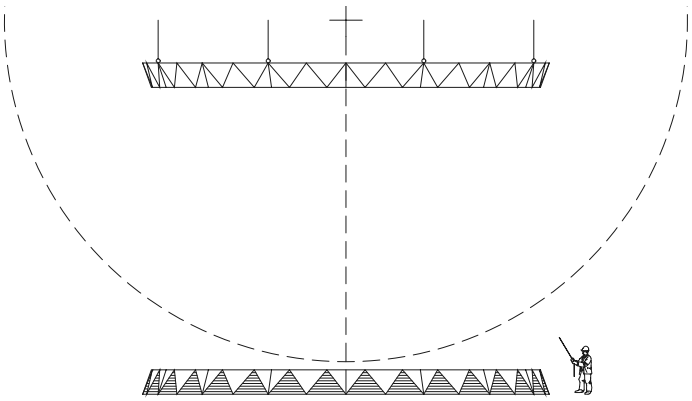
The Gateways are erected to mark the threshold between the site and the city. Paired with the fence, the gateway protects the city from the madness of the circus, and in the reverse, keeps the ordinary life to penetrate the site.



The Gateways in elevation.

The Ring, #03

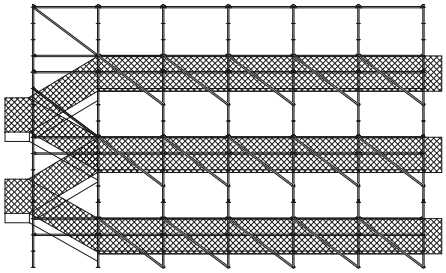
The Ring is the true origin of the modern circus. It is the common ground where all artists perform. This geometry creates the perfect gathering space, the agora of the day and the stage ring of the night.



The Ring in elevation.

The Balconies, #04

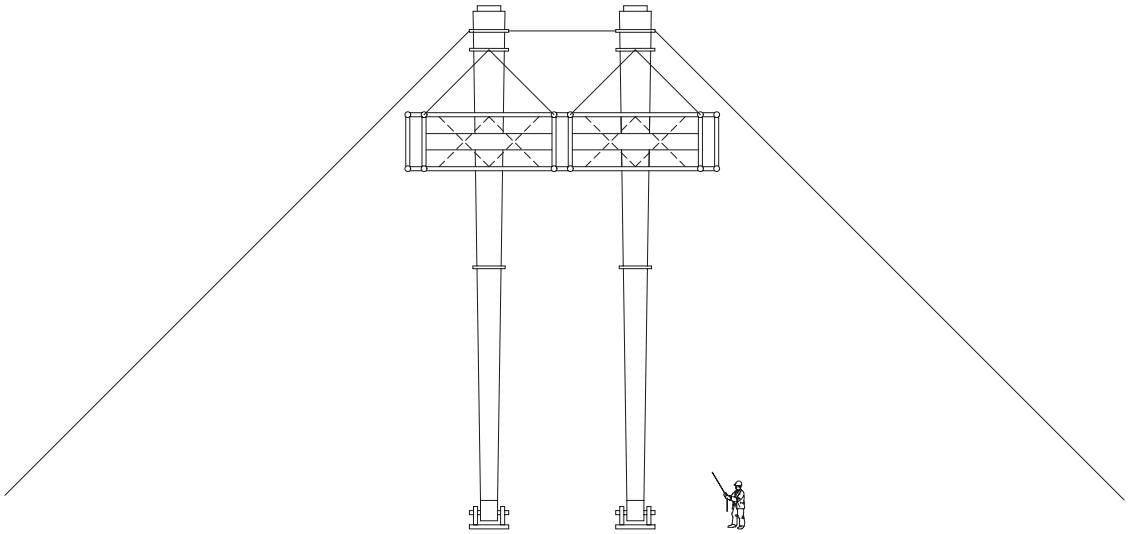
The Balconies overlook the Bleachers, and inversely as well, both acknowledging the gaze upon themselves, and their respective place in the whole picture of the circus' live performance. Constructed on a scaffolding system, the Balconies are easily adaptable to every site condition.



The Balconies in elevation.

The Mother Grid, #05

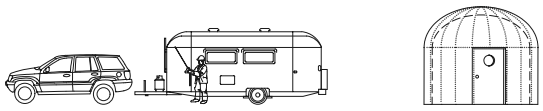
The Mother Grid is the main grid system that cares about all the functions on site. The grid holds spotlights, set design, and acrobatic instruments. The name is explicit, the mother grid give birth to all the action. She is omnipresent, acting from above, like the deus ex machina in Greek theatre.



The Mother Grid in elevation.

The Dwelling, #06

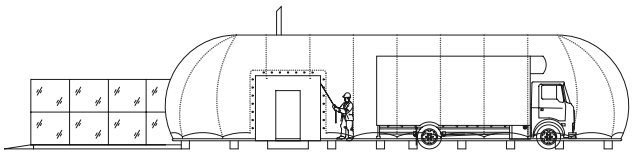
The campers and other portable dwellings are the private space of nomads. Unlike what sedentary people call their home, nomads are not lost in search of empty comfort nor domesticated by the confines of their walls. Not to forget that the circus is a community of people travelling, eating and drinking together. In this way, the site becomes a temporary village in the host city.



The Dwelling in elevation.

The Kitchen, #07

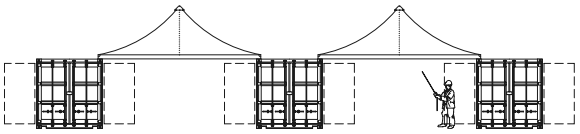
Food is central to the social life in the circus. The inflatable space creates an envelope that gives a sense of unity encouraging to eat together. The advantages of sharing a meal with people are not proven, but the experience is nevertheless sufficient. Plus, workers are more productive with a full stomach.



The Kitchen in elevation.

The Shops, #08

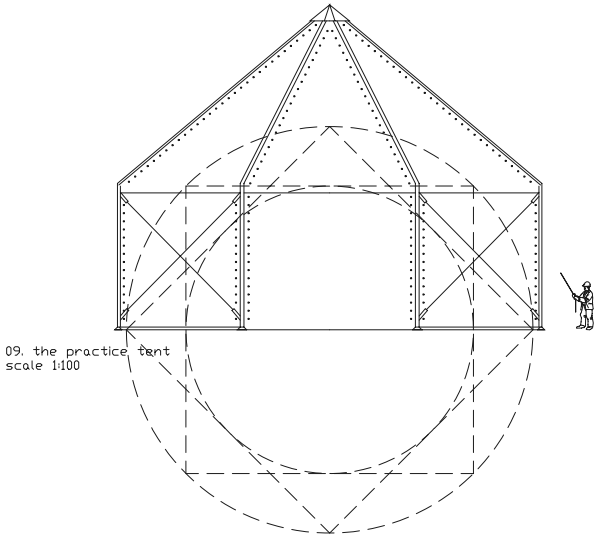
Everything at the circus is built, repaired, and modified by the craftsman. Clever and skilled, the people of the circus are encouraged to continuously transform their built environment.



The Shops in elevation.

The Practice Tent, #09

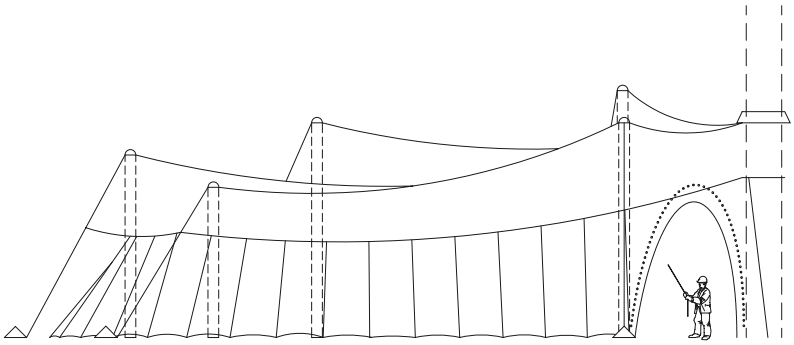
The Practice Tent hosts the training, work out, and trial performance. Not quite the real show, the Practice Tent is not quite a circle. Yet, in the octagon, everything is taken very seriously.



The Practice Tent in elevation.

The Garage Wing, #10

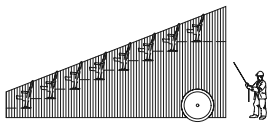
In the darkness of its fabric, the secrets of the show are hidden from the eyes of the audience. Used as a backstage, it is referred by the people of the circus as “The Wing”.



The Garage Wing in elevation.

The Bleachers, #11

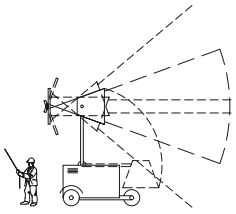
The Bleachers advocates for the circus' live performance, engaging with the audience. In opposition to theatre seats, they have a quality of togetherness, supporting the fact that all spectators are part of the same experience.



The Bleachers in elevation.

The Trompe l'Oeil, #12

They are little cars that find surfaces to project images, artificial illusion to instantly transform the city at night. They are instruments of scenography, used to enhance the presence of the circus by possibly fooling the eyes of the spectators.



The Trompe l'Oeil in elevation.

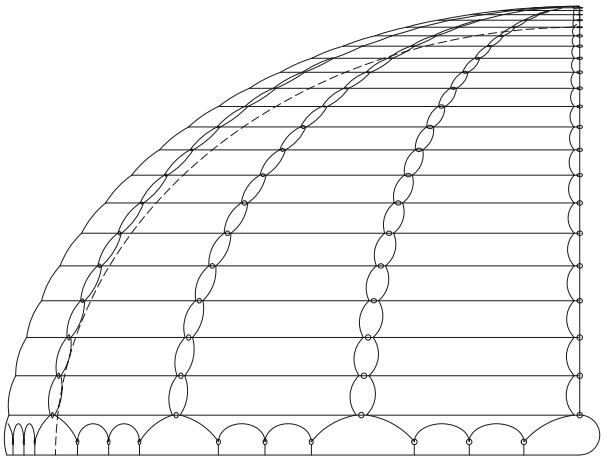
The Fence, #13

Not to create enclosure but offering security during the construction, and for defining the limits of the stage, the fence must be accomplished like the fourth wall in theatre, a paradoxical separation between the real and fiction. A wall that can be broken. The modularity of the fences allows it to transform during the stay of the circus.

The Fence in elevation.

The Half Big Top, #14

This inflatable structure is surrounding the audience without creating an enclosure. The audience feels half inside, half outside; half in the show, half in the city. Spaces are juxtaposing each other, deliberately in a state of blur. The white surface of the neoprene membrane is ideal to receive projection both inside and outside. Erection takes about 5 hours.



The Half Big Top in elevation.

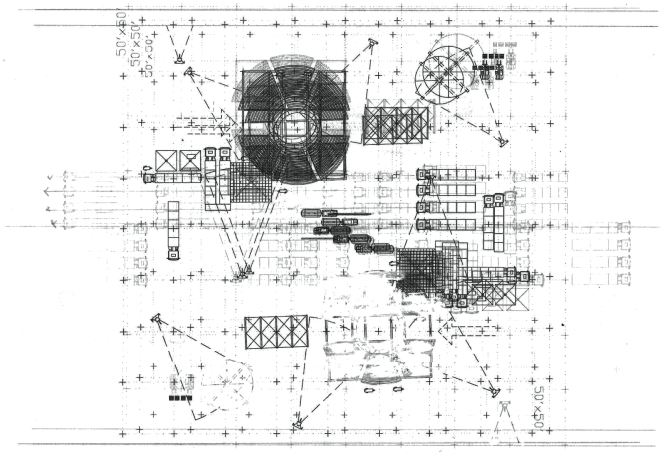
Site, from Imagined to Found

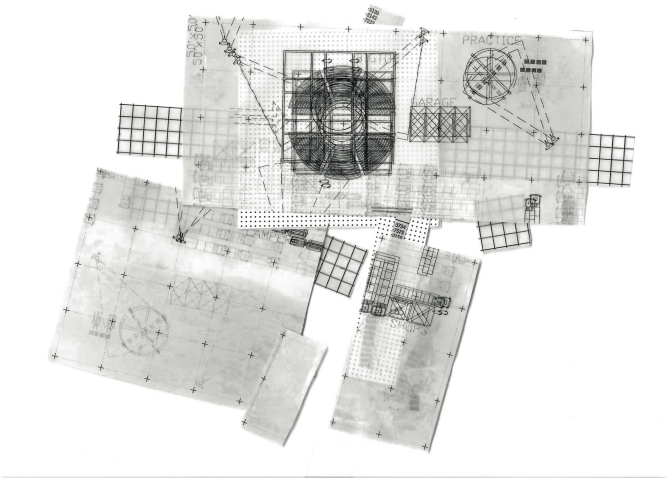
Site Imagined

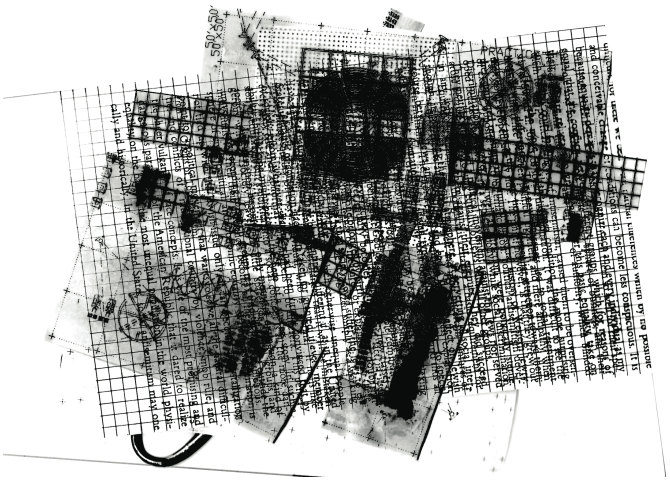
As the site is always new to the circus, there is not a particular one to analyze. Therefore, the methodology progresses from an imagined site to a real testing site—a process that will be explored at a greater depth later. Similar to nomadic and circus behavior, this thesis responds to the site with a playful interaction of the architectural actors. On the surface of paper (the imagined site), the second act was explored through many iterations. This was achieved by building relationships between the 14 architectural actors, and then testing different sequences of choreography. Learning through a series of explorations, the “serious play” method proposed by Nils Gore, architect and Professor at the University of Kansas, in his article “Craft and Innovation: Serious Play and the Direct Experience of the Real”, was used to apply the methodology to the unfamiliar kit of parts and the site. The more choreographies were tested, the more rituals emerged, as well as, stories and myths. The architecture incrementally assimilates the inhabitants of the circus, and in turn, the inhabitants are defined by the architecture. This is not unlike the analogy of the mask used in this thesis, wherein there exists a reciprocal relationship between the object and subject.

Site Found

As mentioned in the previous section, real sites were tested for the grounds of the re-coded circus. As a result, two were found to be appropriate for this thesis, both port cities located on the Atlantic side of Canada. The first is the waterfront in the city of Halifax, Nova Scotia.







A series of explorations of the imagined site with the kit of parts where the page itself was considered the site.

The second is on a municipal site in the city of Rimouski, Québec. The purpose of having more than only one site is to demonstrate the versatility inherent in the kit of parts of the re-coded circus, adaptable to many possible site conditions.

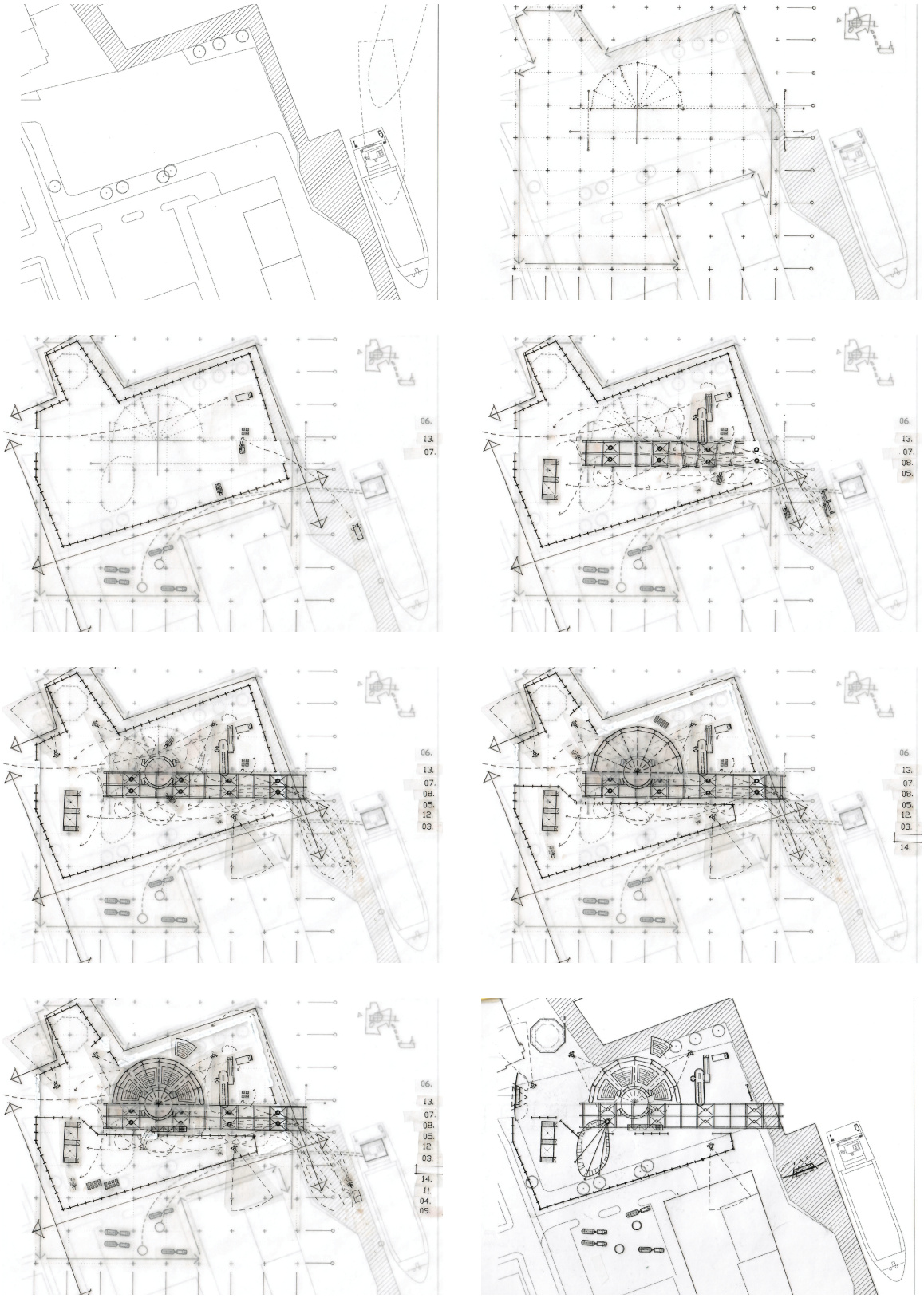
Sequential Drawing

By applying the concepts from the previous chapter and creating a methodology for the design of this thesis, the site is imagined as a stage. Using the analogy of scenography allows to make a clear, but also poetic, presentation of the nature of the re-coded circus. Instruments such as lighting, image projection, and modularity orchestrate the dynamic nature of the re-coded circus. This is designed and represented through sequential drawings: an exploration of actions, space, and time. The series of 53 sequential drawings are merged into an animation especially useful to represent the horizontal axis of the architect's wheel of this project—space and time—through movements. The animation calls for a recognition of the events as a progression, deployed and measured in time.

Site Narrative

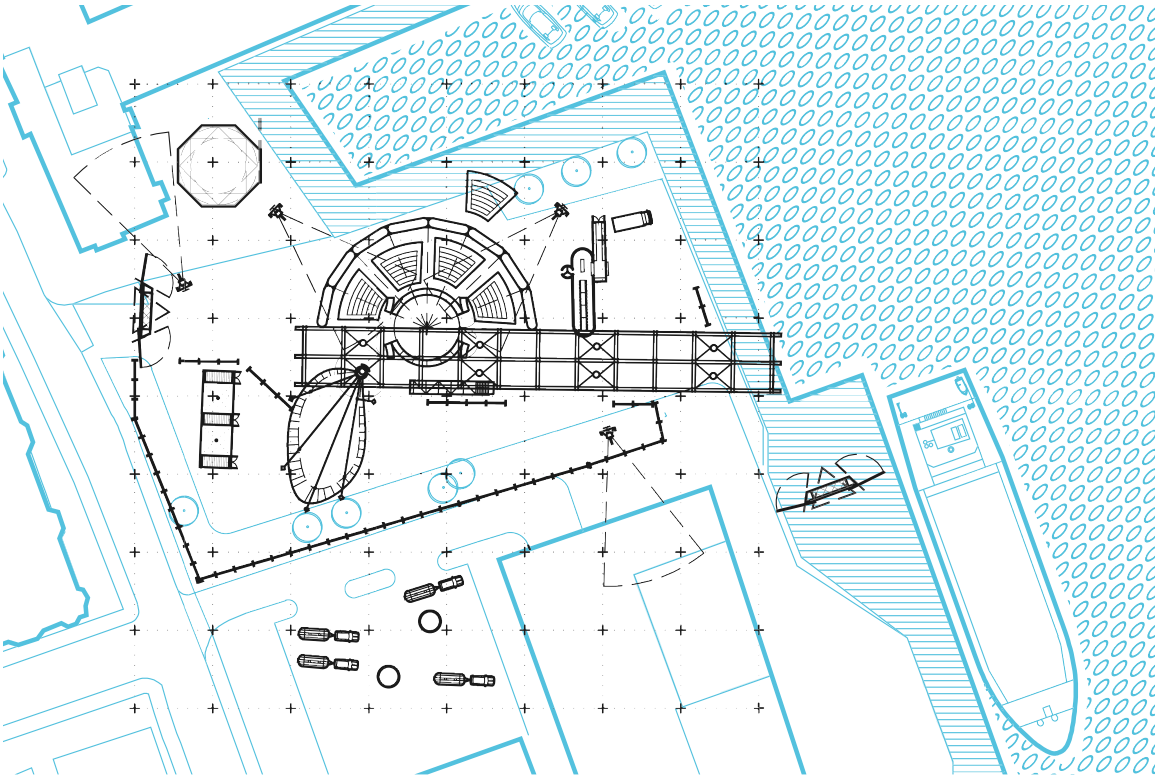
Before the Show

Prior to the arrival of the re-coded circus, the site exists to the city inhabitants in their day-to-day lives. The occupation of the site by the circus begins with only a few posters, slowly inviting the citizens to reimagine the site where a show will soon take place. The site specificities are studied by the tent master of the re-coded circus. This initial survey is done in order to perform for, and be defined by, the site conditions, offering a recontextualization of the place. The

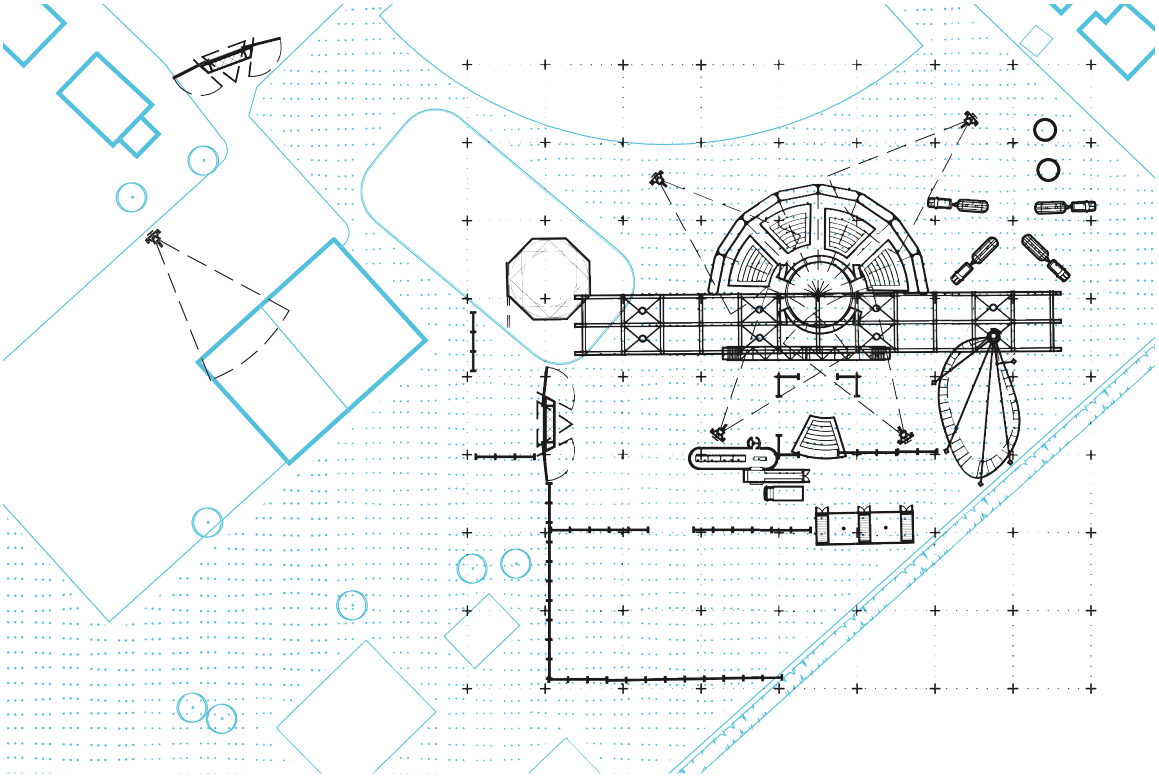


Eight drawings from a series of 53. This animation shows not only the logistics of assemblage but also recalls a particular attention to the scenography and the actions in an incremental evolution. The exploration takes place in Halifax.

The context in Halifax (left) and in Rimouski (right).



The site plan in Halifax with all the 14 architectural actors in their completeness ready for the third act.



The site plan in Rimouski with all the 14 architectural actors in their completeness ready for the third act.

transgressive character of the nomadic re-coded circus is encouraged by contrasting material, form, orientation, and unclear boundaries.

During the Show

The construction of the circus becomes performative by allowing the spectator (the citizen) to engage with the erection of all architectural actors, leaving the site accessible at every phase of the sequence. Typical of circus, the fast construction is in itself spectacular in the eyes of the city. But furthermore, in the re-coded circus, the site is open as soon as possible, folding the fence on itself, welcoming the public in between the different architectural actors. This operation creates an architecture that is experienced during its erection, rather than only a final product to be experienced at its completion.

When all architectural actors are on stage, the public can finally see the long-awaited circus show and the performance of the artists, fully experiencing the transformed city. The site completed can be observed like the mask for its spatial quality, specifically for the space that exists in between the interior surface of the mask and the exterior surface of the face (Hejduk 1986); a space that balances between imagined and real, unable to identify which side is what. This blurred space is manifested in several occasions in this project through the circus-city relationship.

During the day, the site is open as a versatile public space for street shows, gatherings, and meetings. At night, supported by video projection, the site is continuously changing. The transgressive character of the re-coded

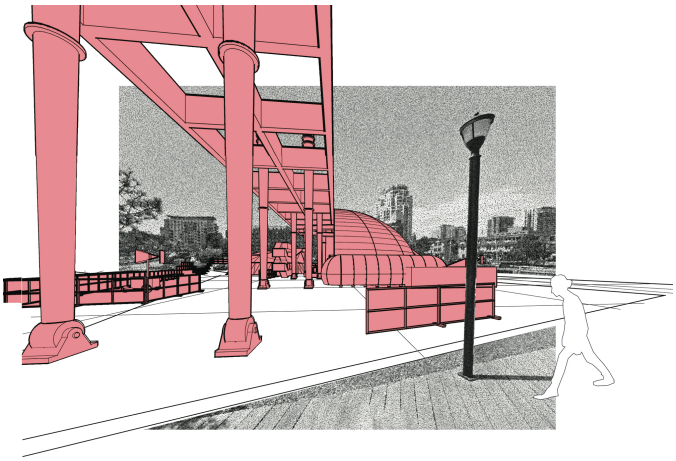
circus is encouraged by contrasting material, form, orientation, and unclear boundaries.

In the big top—the main venue for the circus performance—the artists, in their natural environment, are performing for the greatest desire of the public. Loud music, special effects, lights, popcorn. It is literally in the center of people that the circus makes visible a union of the body and mind, place and occasion, real and imagination.

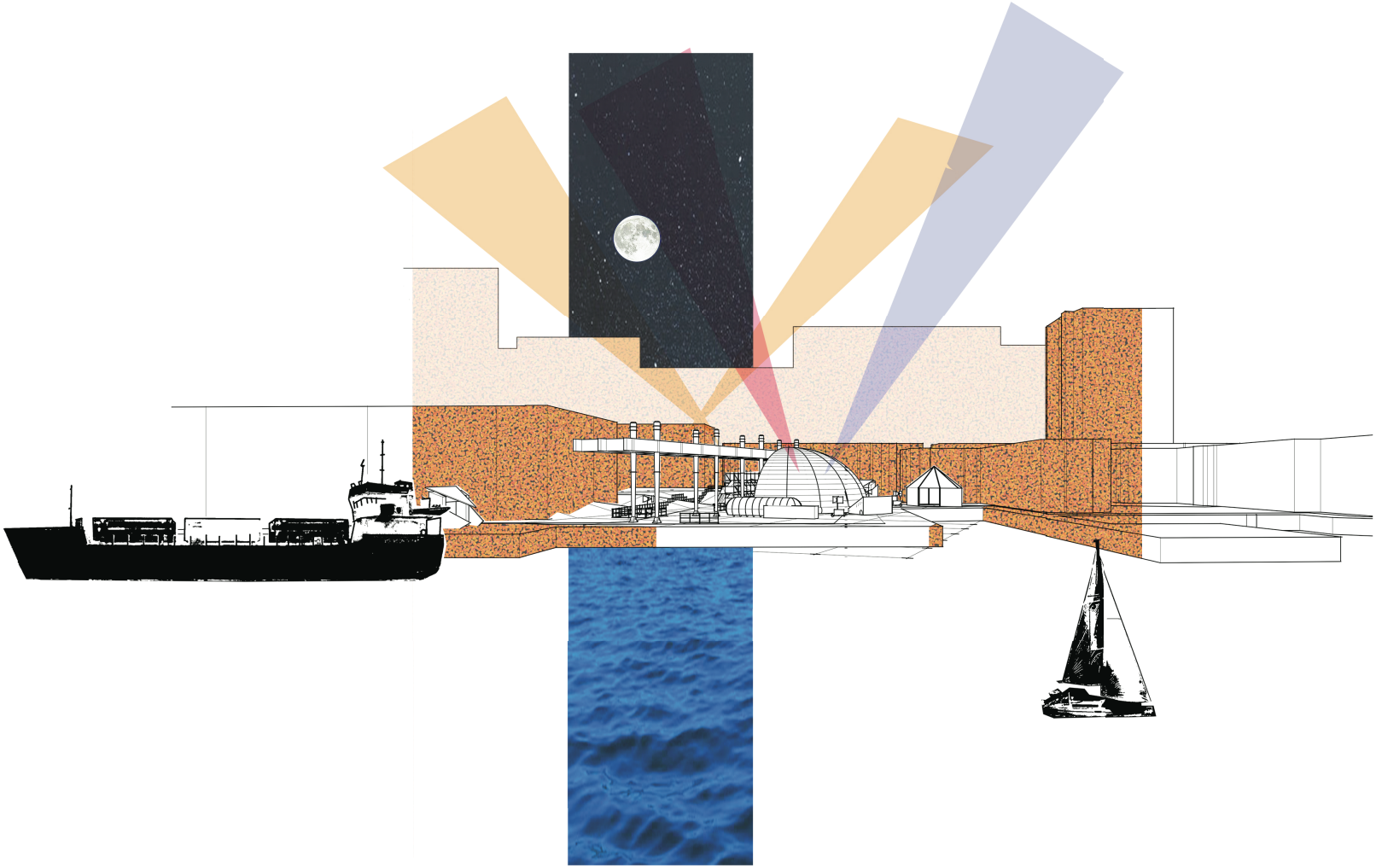
After the Show

The boat has now left with all its paraphernalia. On a rare occasion, a citizen (a dreamer) of the city leaves with the troupe, beckoned by the spirit of the circus art. The site is back to its mundane everyday routine. Few traces are left, visible only to the most attentive citizen. But time has passed since the nomadic circus has changed the city, adding to the common shared memory and the social perception of the site. Some people will never forget the event that once transformed the city. In the back of their minds, they always hope for a new spectacular event to come. In some cases, the site is modified by small changes, to eventually better accommodate the erection of temporary events.

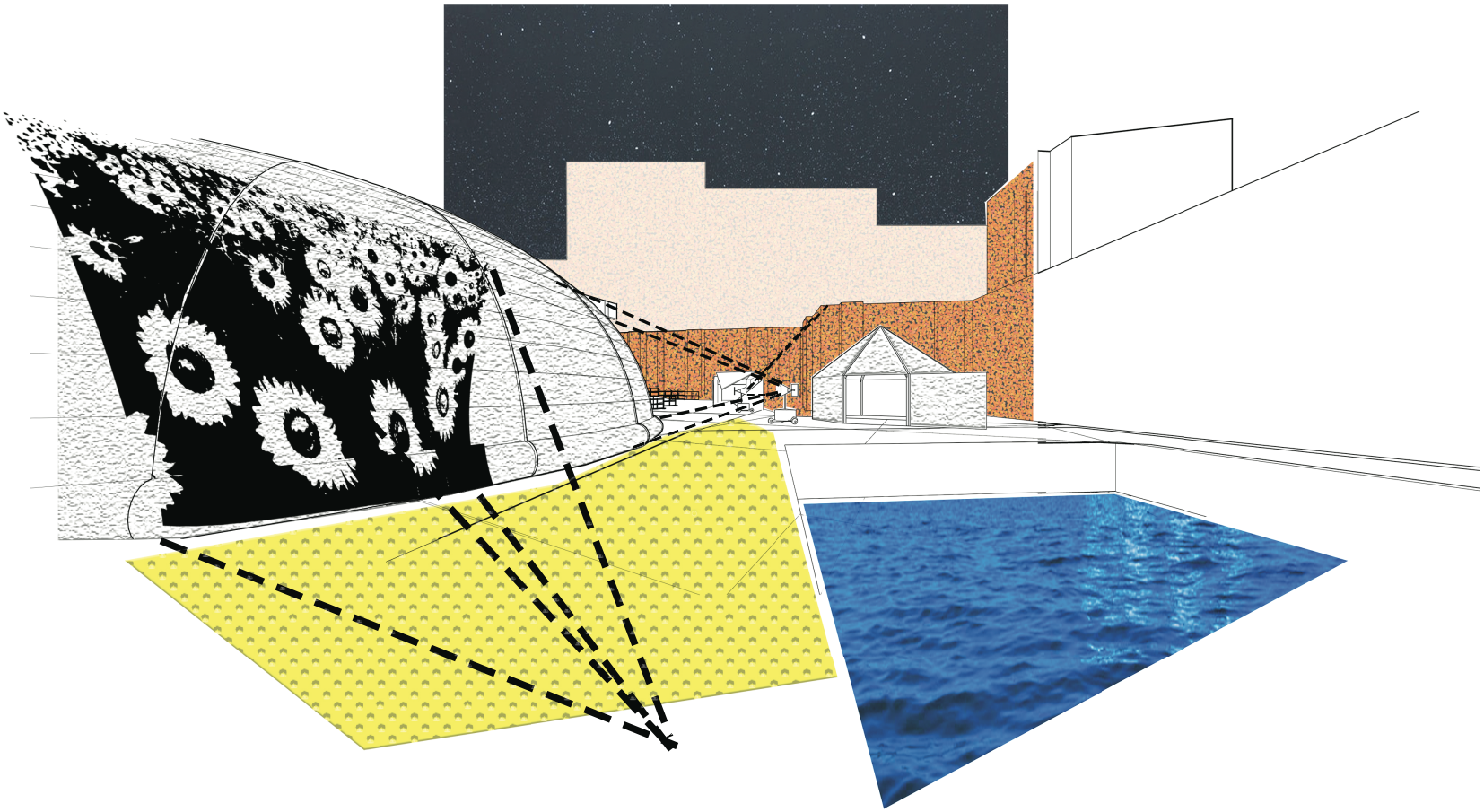
For those who have met the character of the tent master, they have slowly developed a nomadic mode of thinking, seeing the limits of possibility in their city with new eyes and will initiate events of all sorts. By sporadic apparition, the city will see emerge new temporary occupation of the public domain.



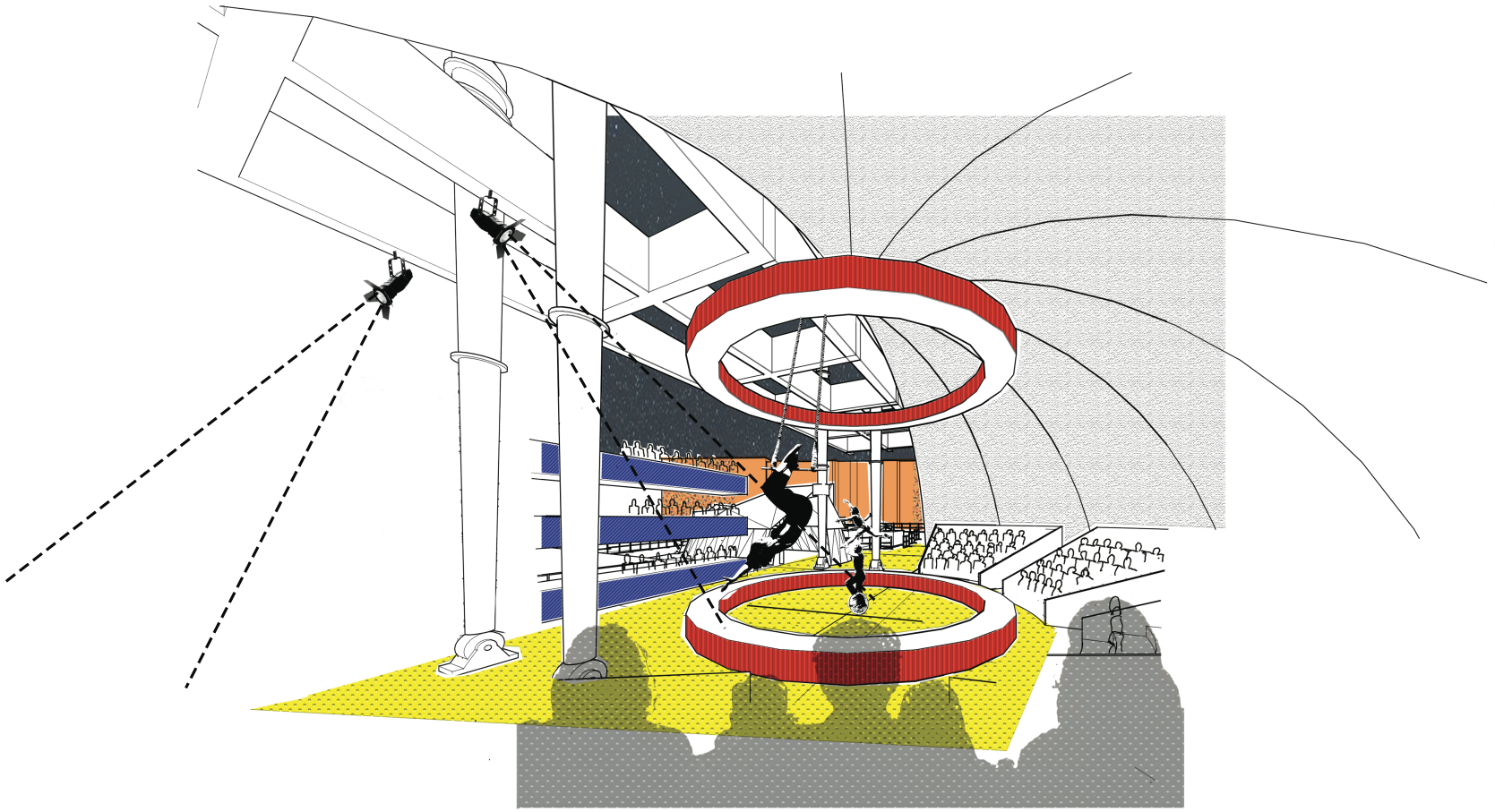
Halifax. The site narrative presenting before, during and after the event.



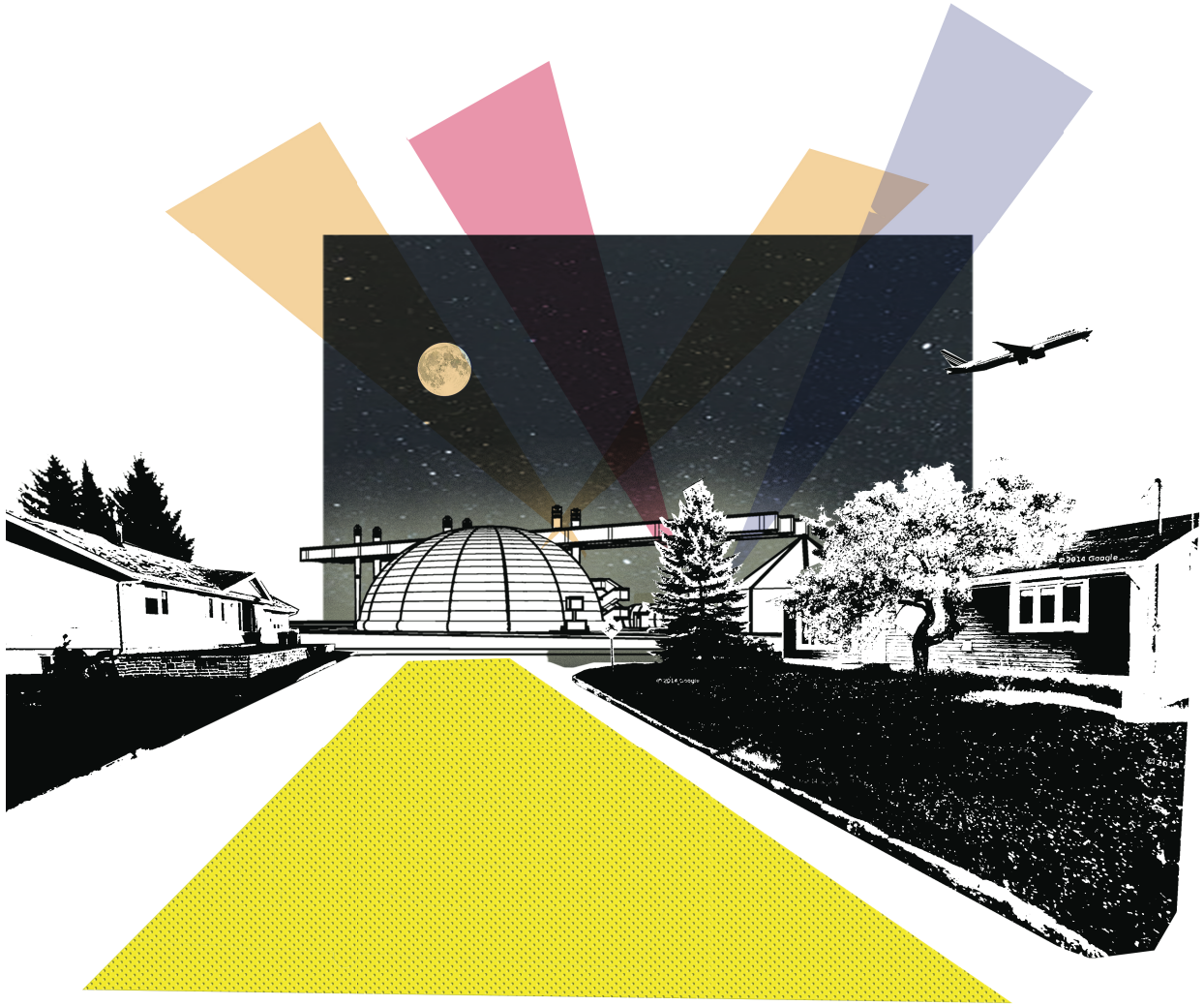
Halifax. View from the bay, looking at the Halifax skyline.



Halifax. View on the boardwalk, looking at the Half Big Top and the Practice Tent. Images are projected on the surface of the big top as well as on the building of the city.



Halifax. View in the Half Big Top during the performance of the artist.



Rimouski. View from the street (4e Av) looking at the juxtaposition of residential and the circus in its completed stage of construction.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

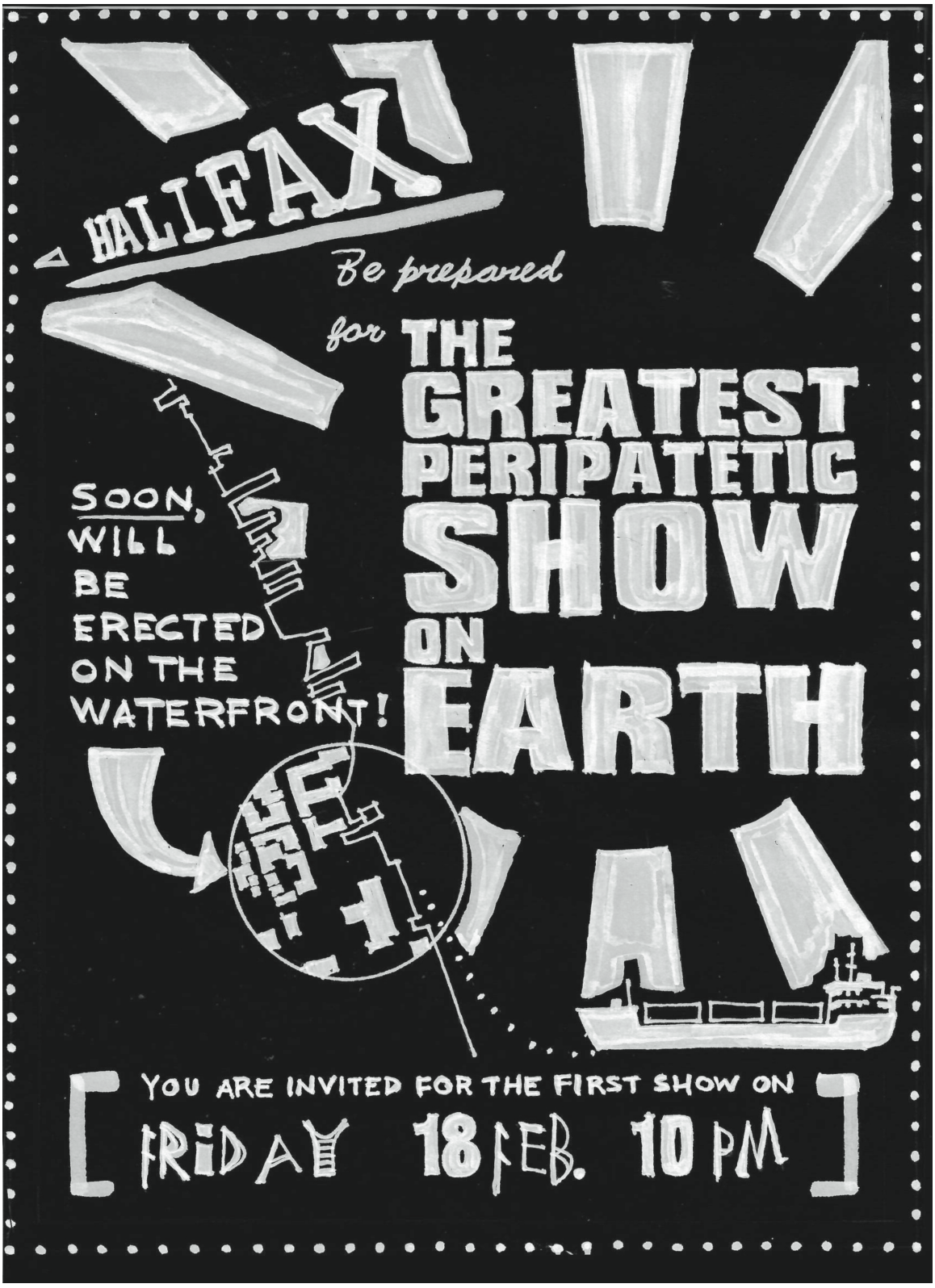
Similar to the nature of the circus itself, the circus' architecture should astonish us by way of the spectacular, acting in the immediate; in real-space and real-time. The space for performance, free from the limits of the theatre stage, can begin at the limits of the world, challenging architecture to embody the human being: its character, even its life. In other words, the agency in the production of who we are.

For this thesis, circus as program, is experimental. It can be seen as an accessory to address an architecture that needs to be more fluid in the fabric of a permanent city. Through its sequence of events, the circus' inherent extreme conditions are particularly beneficial to highlight the performative inquiry by deploying a more expressive, and more graphic architecture.

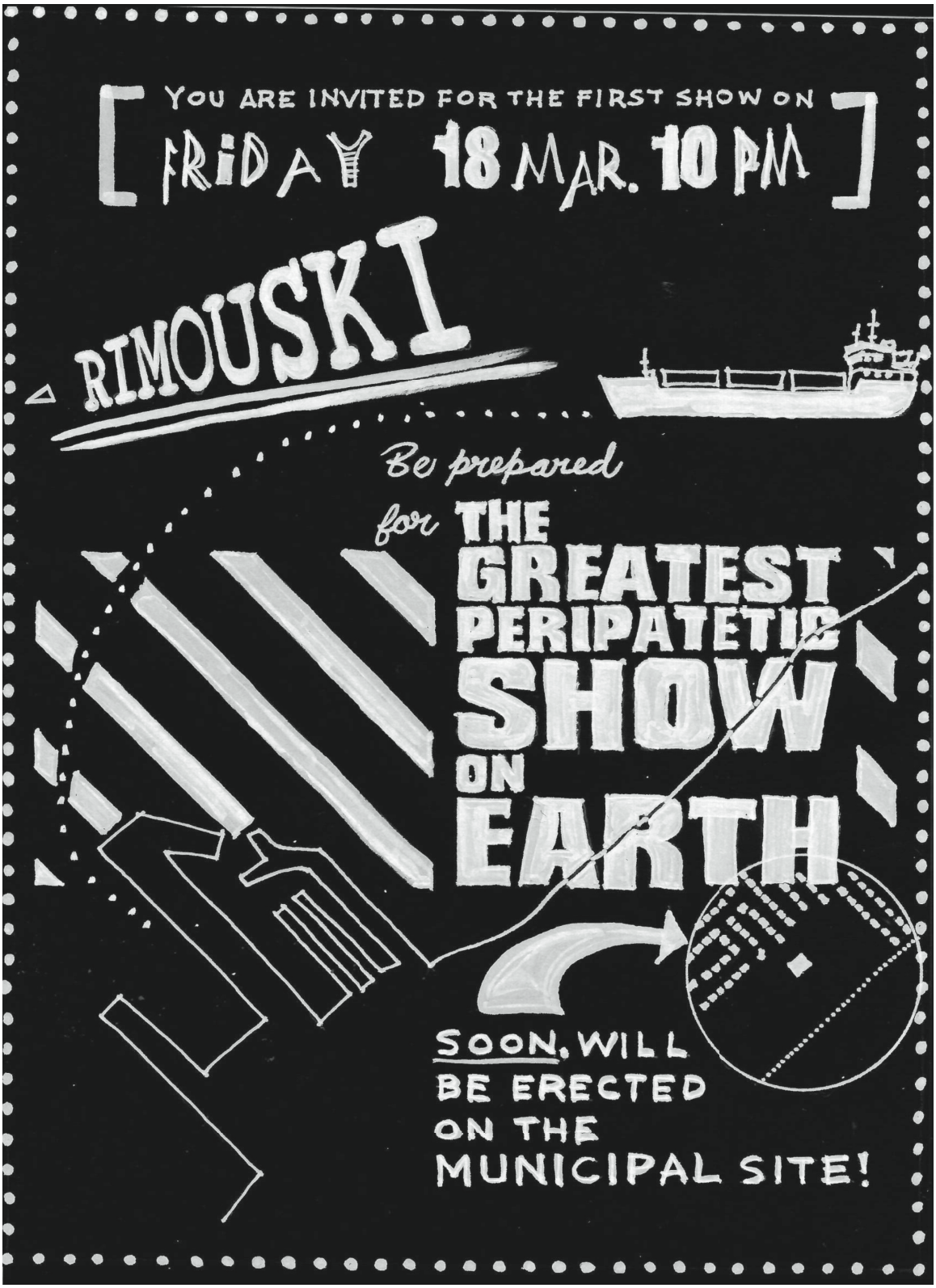
However, an architecture of performance is not limited to circus or nomadic subjects. The allegorical equation used in the development of the design, borrowing scenography, action, and mask from theatre, could be extended to evaluate new meaning to every component of our cities. This allegorical equation is a tool to generate concepts that personify architecture, encouraging a diversity of characters. The result may encourage all architecture to engaging theatrically with the city, challenging our perceptions of space and emerging with new meaning through architecture.

Epilogue

In a span of many years, following a countless occupation of several cities, the re-coded circus has shifted from being apart from society to becoming an idealized representation of it. While the circus was previously seen at the margins, breaching the order, preaching the madness, it has now become a paradigm of a new society. This new society has rejected its role of passive audience, moving away from the absurdity of its conditions, to a much more sophisticated and engaging role. Remodeled by the example of the circus, the new society has created a city-theatre, playing life within life. In reaction, the circus, as it always does, will have to re-imagine itself, acting endlessly in the spectacular, breaching the limits of contemporary life: a new circus to come.



Poster left behind the circus in Halifax. Perhaps the only artifact of the event of the circus.



Poster left behind the circus in Rimouski. Perhaps the only artifact of the event of the circus.

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