9 + 1 Towers
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To my first architecture teacher, my dad.
There is a beauty to the absurdity of the moment at which there is almost no line between the real and the unreal. In such realm, an illusion, and yet the possibility, of a tower acts as a protagonist with which one can begin to let his imagination approve of the absurd, the too ambitious, the unlikely. The first nine towers are the outcome of my attempt to intertwine two arenas of photography and architecture. They investigate the possibility of compressing the reality of a place into a hyperreal image consisting of a photograph of the place, which acts as the site, and a fantastical addition. They also aim to document and express my memories of the places that I visited during my more than 15,000 miles of traveling over the past year. Each tower is an homage to the memory of its respective place.
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The Beginning
a study on form and space

I began my thesis year at Virginia Tech’s Steger Center for International Scholarship in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland where, along with studio and theory courses, I had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland, Italy, and parts of France, Germany and Netherlands. Being overwhelmed by many outstanding cities and buildings, I started my thesis with a question:
How can a study of a building be generative?

I wondered if I could develop an approach to study buildings, that would go beyond the typical research techniques such as reading, sketching, taking photographs and inhabiting the space. Therefore, I examined the possibility of generating new forms and spaces inspired by the buildings that I studied. Since I needed a framework for this series of studies, I decided to use the constraints of a cube as a volume within which the new forms would be created. Throughout this study, which I refer to as the Cube Project in this book, sketching and making physical models were crucial parts of the design process. The outcome of the project was twelve forms, of which six were employed in the first three towers.

This study is thanks to the following pieces of architecture:
Heide Weber Museum by Le Corbusier
Convent of La Tourette by Le Corbusier
Villa Savoye by Le Corbusier (not visited in person)
Monte Carasso Elementary School by Luigi Snozzi
Monte Carasso Housing and Public Center by Livio Vachini and Luigi Snozzi
Kalmann House by Luigi Snozzi (not visited in person)
Brion Cemetery by Carlo Scarpa
The new wing of Canova Museum by Carlo Scarpa (not visited in person)
From top schematic elevation, plan, and axonometric of Cube 01

From top schematic elevation, plan, and axonometric of Cube 02
Form begins to explore the possibility of becoming a building with the aid of pencil sketches that imagine the form and the space as an observer and an occupant.

Cube 01 and Cube 02 stacked on each other to generate the form of the first tower.
Site Near Villa Maderni in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland

Collage of the first tower
From top: Schematic elevation, plan, and axonometric of Cube 03

Physical model of Cube 03
Early pencil sketches

Cube 00 and Cube 03 stacked on each other to generate the form of the second tower
Site: Lake Lugano in Riva San Vitale, Switzerland

Collage of the second tower
Schematic elevation, plan, and axonometric of Cube 04

Schematic elevation, plan, and axonometric of Cube 06
Physical model of Cube 04

Physical model of Cube 05
Early sketches of the third tower

Cube 04 and Cube 05 stacked on each other to generate the form of the third tower
The next six towers are virtually marking six sites in the United States. I came across these places as I crossed the country during a road trip from Virginia to California in early summer 2017. As opposed to searching for a place for a previously designed tower, the U.S. towers were generated by their respective sites. The process starts with taking a photograph of the site, which will be later employed in the collage. Throughout the process, hand sketches and their translations into digital models played an important role to create the form and explore its relationship with the surrounding landscape.
Conceptual pencil drawing of the seventh tower

Axonometric of the seventh tower
Diagrammatic pencil drawing of the eighth tower

Axonometric of the eighth tower
Early sketch of the ninth tower

Section elevation drawing of the ninth tower
The 10th Tower
a dialogue between horizontality and verticality
The final tower, as an independent project, was generated by a unique site condition that I came across during my visit to Washington D.C. Walking along the Potomac river in the vicinity of Georgetown Waterfront park, I came across the ruins of Aqueduct Bridge which connected Georgetown to then-Alexandria until it was replaced by the Key Bridge in 1923. The coexistence of the two bridges did not last long as the old bridge was demolished right after the completion of the new one. The extension of the bridges creates two strong axes in the site. The tenth tower seeks to mediate such condition not by compromising but by introducing a mediator as an element which identifies itself as a strong addition to the site. Its extreme verticality competes with the imposing presence of an enormous horizontal form, the new bridge.

The project consists of a tower, an arrival situated on the Georgetown side of the river, and a tunnel which connects the two. The arrival, located along the ruins of the old bridge, embraces the only remainder of the old structure. The tunnel reconstructs the axis of Aqueduct Bridge, and the tower rises from the footsteps of it to commemorate what used to be a crucial connection between the two banks of the Potomac River.
Bird's eye perspective of the final tower adjacent to the Key Bridge

Exterior perspective of the final tower looking from the Potomac River
See-through elevation of the tenth tower
See-through elevation of the tenth tower
Sectioned axonometric of the tenth tower - Level 08

Floor plan of the tenth tower - Level 08
Sectioned axonometric of the tenth tower - Level 09

Floor plan of the tenth tower - Level 09
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Floor plan of the tenth tower - Level 10
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Left: Site - Humboldt Lagoons State Park, Trinidad, CA  Right: Collage of the eighth tower

Partial map of the United States (Not including AK, HI, and PR) - Source: honolulu.hawaii.edu

Left: Early sketch of the ninth tower  Right: Section - elevation drawing of the ninth tower

Interior perspective: Looking up at the wind chimes

Interior perspective: A view of the landscape

Interior perspective: Looking up at the sky

Left: Site - Humboldt Lagoons State Park, Trinidad, CA  Right: Collage of the ninth tower

A view of The Key Bridge and the tenth tower

Left: View of the new Key Bridge before the Aqueduct Bridge was removed, Washington D.C.  I  Source: John DeFerrari’s collection   Right: A view of the project in its urban context

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Left: See-through elevation of the tenth tower   Right: See-through elevation of the tenth tower

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Left: Sectioned axonometric of the tenth tower - Level 10   Right: Floor plan of the tenth tower - Level 10

A view of the skyline of Arlington, VA, the Key Bridge, and the tenth tower

All images made by author.