

Floating Museum

Instruction Manual

Floating Museum, Instruction Manual

Copyright © 2025 by Floating
Museum NFP

All rights reserved. No portion of
this book may be reproduced in any
form without written permission from
the author, except as permitted by
U.S. copyright law.

First Edition 2025
ISBN 978-91-531-3863-1

MUSEUM WHY

This pamphlet was produced as a contribution to the Museum Why network, including: Malmö Konstmuseum (SE), Trondheim Kunstmuseum (NO), Museet for Samtidskunst (DK), and Nykyaiteen museo Kiasma (FI) in collaboration with Copenhagen University's Research Centre Art as Forum (DK).

1 —“In the museum-as-factory, something continues to be produced. Installation, planning, carpentry, viewing, discussing, maintenance, betting on rising values, and networking alternate in cycles. An art space is a factory, which is simultaneously a supermarket—a casino and a place of worship whose reproductive work is performed by cleaning ladies and cellphone-video bloggers alike. In this economy, even spectators are transformed into workers. As Jonathan Beller argues, cinema and its derivatives (television, Internet, and so on) are factories, in which spectators work. Now, ‘to look is to labor.’”

Hito Steyerl, “Is a Museum a Factory?,” e-flux Journal, Issue #07, June 2009

.....

Introduction

Museum Why creates proximity between museums and research centers:

Malmö Konstmuseum (SE),
Trondheim Kunstmuseum (NO),
Museet for Samtidskunst (DK), and
Nykytaiteen museo Kiasma (FI) in
collaboration with Copenhagen
University’s Research Centre Art as
Forum (DK)

2 — “Networks constitute the new social morphology of our societies.... Furthermore ... this networking logic induces a social determination of a higher level than that of the specific social interests expressed through the networks: the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power.”

Manuel Castells, *The Informational City: Economic Restructuring and Urban Development*, Wiley, 1992

.....

Floating Museum offers this “Instruction Manual” to reflect on the goals of the learning network, and sketch how our methods could engage with these institutions moving forward. An instruction manual tends to accompany a technical apparatus and explain how to use it. As all four Nordic museums are in a state of transition and wish to have broader relevance to the publics they intend to serve, Floating

Museum offers this as a suggestion for activating the network’s collections objects across a range of spaces—private, semi-private, and public. This projective engagement with collections can be thought of as an alternative to what Hito Steyerl describes as the “museum-as-factory.” (1)

“Instruction Manual” integrates the concept of flows, drawing on Aldo

3 — “An apt term to describe the result of these activities is the *constellation*, a word used by Walter Benjamin to describe a Marxist project of bringing events together in new ways, disrupting established taxonomies, disciplines, mediums, and proprieties. [...] quoting out of context in order to break the spell of calcified traditions [...] a dynamic rereading of history that pulls into the foreground that which has been sidelined, repressed, and discarded in the eyes of the dominant classes. Culture becomes a primary means for visualizing alternatives; rather than thinking of the museum collection as a storehouse of treasures, it can be reimagined as an archive of the commons.”

Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology*, Koenig, 2013, p. 56

.....

Rossi's metaphor of *apparecchiare la tavola* and Manuel Castells' book *The Informational City*, in which he analyzes the interaction between information technology, economic restructuring, and socio-spatial change. (2)

Recognizing collective power to challenge institutional inertia, we propose a range of preparations and platforms to embrace

flux and transform the museum by subverting notions of preciousness, emphasizing generosity, and implementing strategies to activate objects beyond a calcified state of conservation. “Instruction Manual” therefore, becomes significantly compelling for networking museums and unfolding activities in urbanistic realms, utilizing their collections and this guide, as Claire Bishop suggests, to use culture as a primary

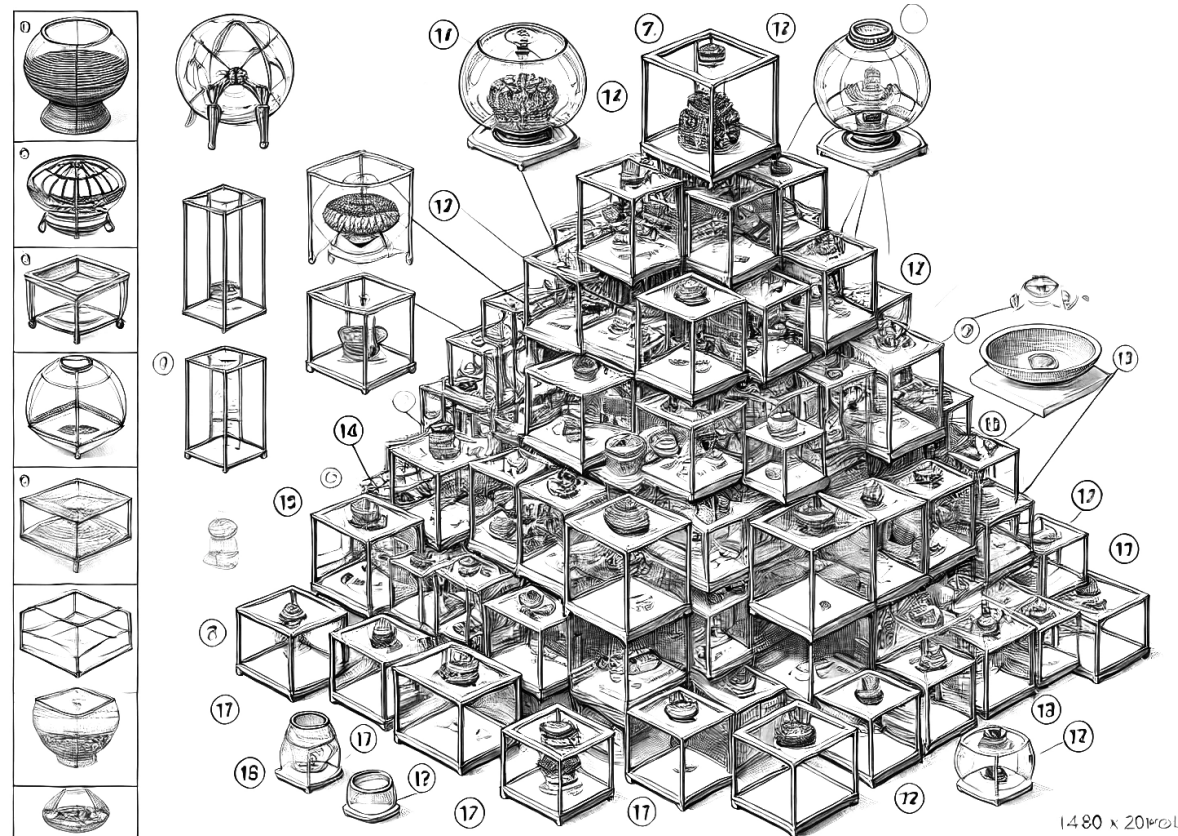
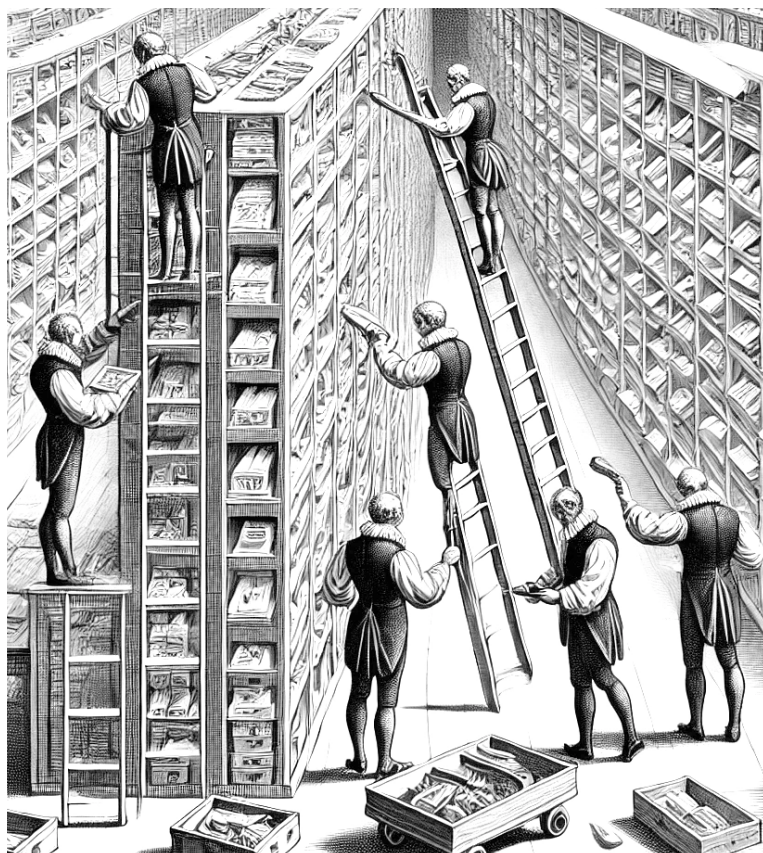
4 — “...I shall call an apparatus literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control, or secure the gestures, behaviors, opinions, or discourses of living beings. Not only, therefore, prisons, madhouses, the panopticon, schools, confession, factories, disciplines, juridical measures, and so forth (whose connection with power is in a certain sense evident), but also the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular telephones and—why not—language itself...”

Giorgia Agamben, *What is An Apparatus and Other Essays*, Stanford University Press, 2009, p.14

.....

means for visualizing alternatives. Instead of thinking of the museum collections as a storehouse of treasures, they can be reimagined as an archive of the commons and through collection reproduction as a sort of source code for building new rhizomatic artworks that are dialogic objects pointing towards the past and future simultaneously. (2)

If traditional institutional critique has subverted the logic of traditional museum display, with the artist essentially putting the institutional apparatus on display, Floating Museum proposed to take this a step further: creating art that moves collections beyond the institution to co-create and network collections, through the action of reproduction and activation. (4)



1480 x 2010 L

.....

Collections Activations

Ad Lib Vitrine

The Ad Lib Vitrine converts the conventionally unitary frame of the vitrine into an open ended curatorial "material" to support a range of possible engagements. Designed to be a perpetually open-ended, reconfigurable system it can be conceived in a range of formats to interact with a similarly open-ended panoply of objects and conversations.

Actions within the Museum

.....

This system has been used to engage visitors in co-producing relationships and meanings between collections objects. When museum objects are too precious to touch, reproductions or surrogate objects have been produced—often with the original objects located in an adjacent space.

In the case of our installation at the DuSable Museum of African Amer-

ican History, the Ad Lib Vitrine also operated as a platform for engaging communities in identifying the provenance of objects whose histories or origins were unknown.



12

Ad Lib Vitrine, prototype, 2015



Ad Lib Vitrine, How to Climb a Mountain, Dusable Museum, 2016



Processing photo into picket signs.



Performance in-situ, 2018



Photo, C. McDonald Jr., 2018



Installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago



Peter Bullock Photo, 1968



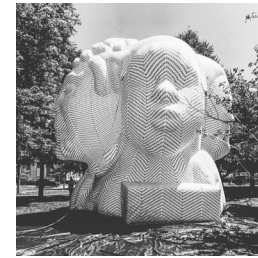
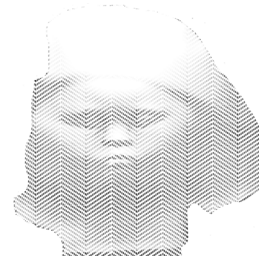
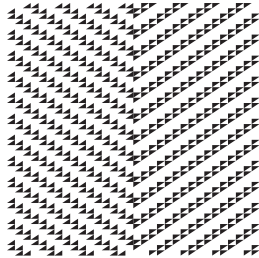
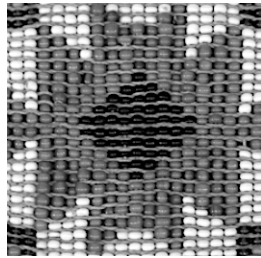
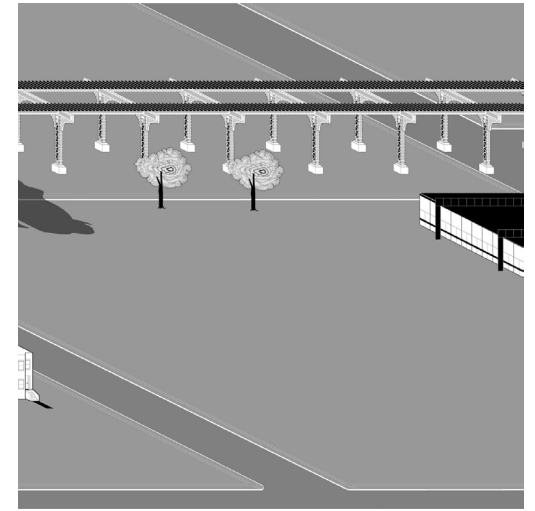
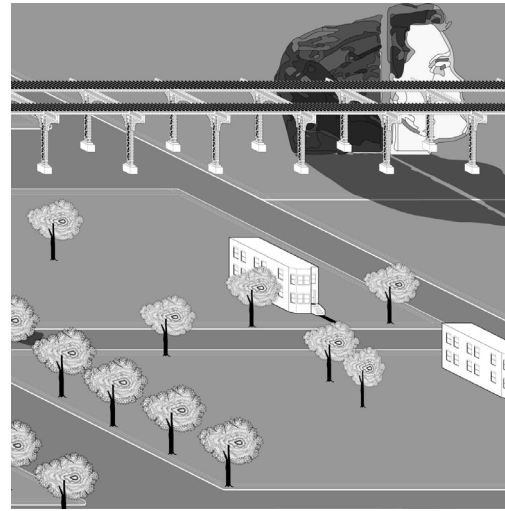
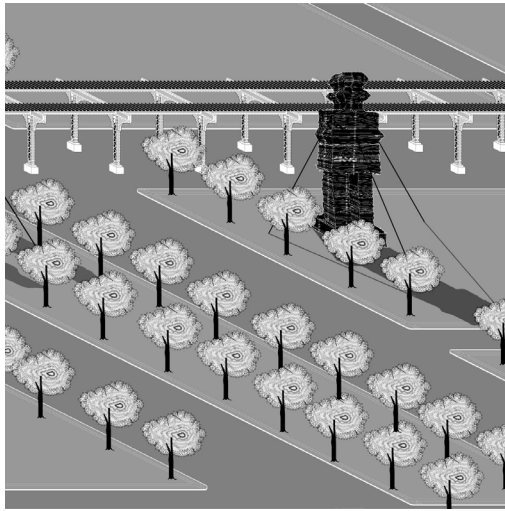
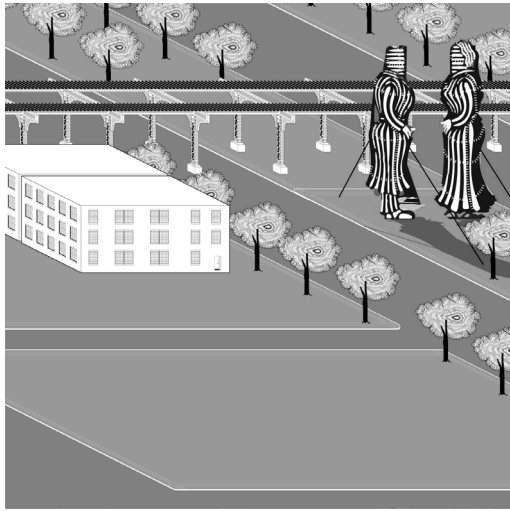
.....

Activations within and beyond the Museum

The process of echolocation offers a metaphor for collapsing collections, archives, architectures, landscapes, time frames, and social dynamics within a defined range of a particular point in space and time. The process involves locating distant or invisible objects and reflecting them via manual, mechanical, or digital techniques of reproduction for the purpose of orientation, commentary, manifesting significance, and inviting social interactions.

.....





.....

Activations beyond the Museum

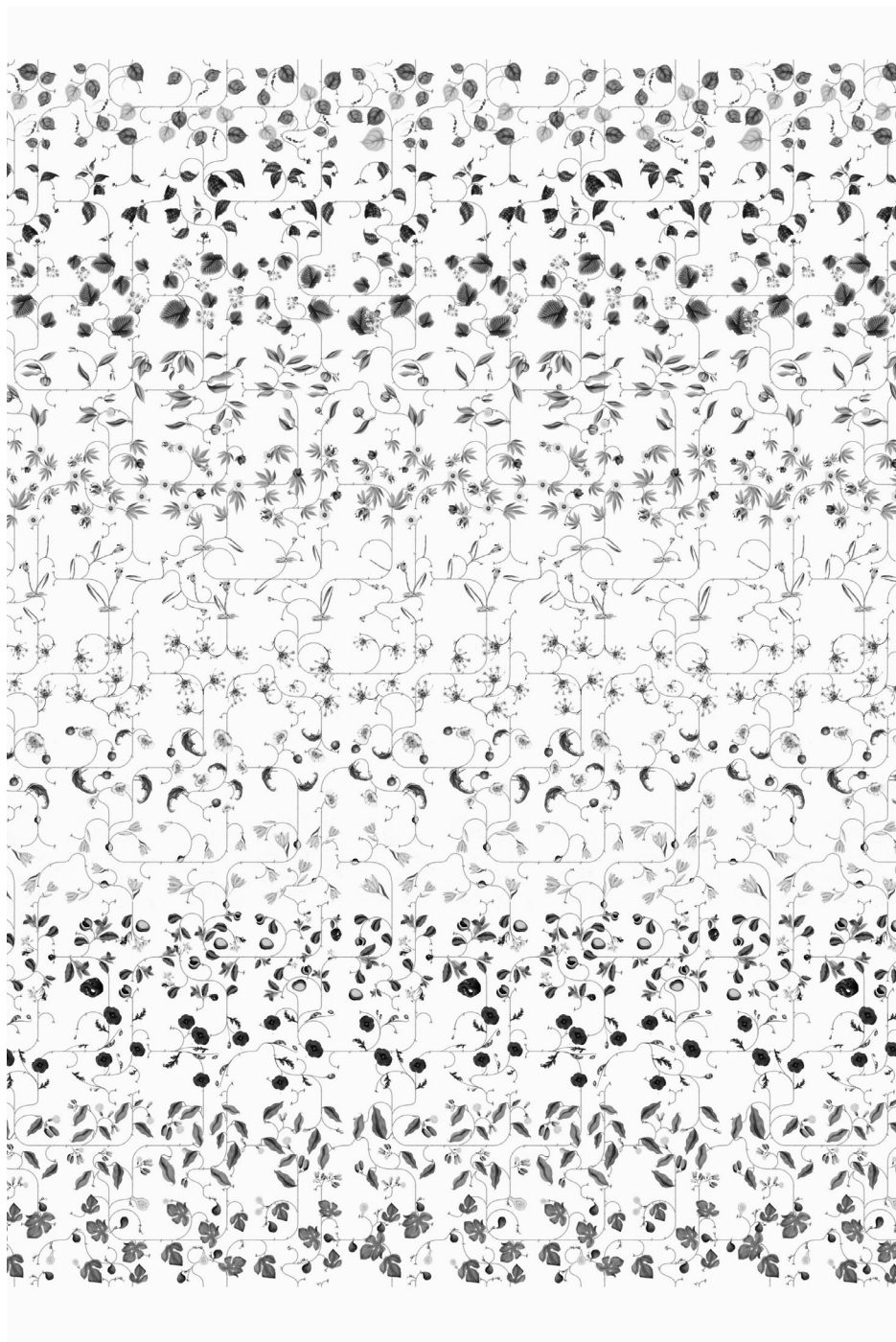
Archival or collected materials can be reproduced or translated into radically different formats and assemblies for juxtaposition in spaces that are not conceived for exhibition. This allows for a range of subjectivities to interact with the dynamics, histories, politics, and relationships of other places, spaces, and ecologies, environments, social and institutional assemblages, landscapes,

.....

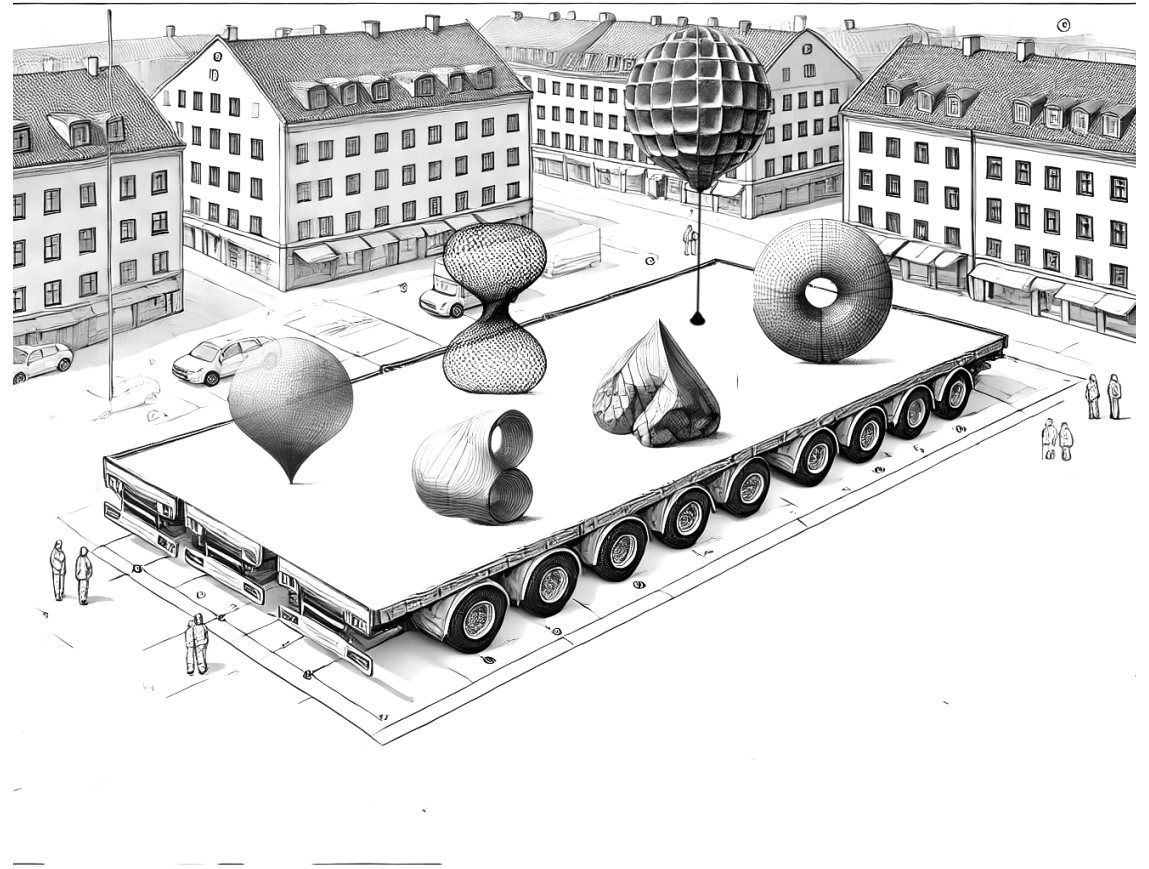
and intimate spheres of individual life. Displacing creative autonomy in one particular domain encourages its potential in other domains. It also supports a range of radical discontinuities to form habitual understandings of past, present, and future—amplifying participants' ability to look at the present in relation to other times and other perceptions of the present.







“... the connection between apparatus and death also reasserted itself in such common phrases as *apparecchiare la tavola*, meaning to set the table, to prepare it, to arrange it. From this point on I came to regard architecture as the instrument which permits the unfolding of a thing. I must say that over the years this awareness has increased my interest in my craft, especially in my latest projects, where I have tried to propose buildings which, so to speak, are vehicles for events.”



Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, p. 5

.....

Unfolding in Urban Spaces

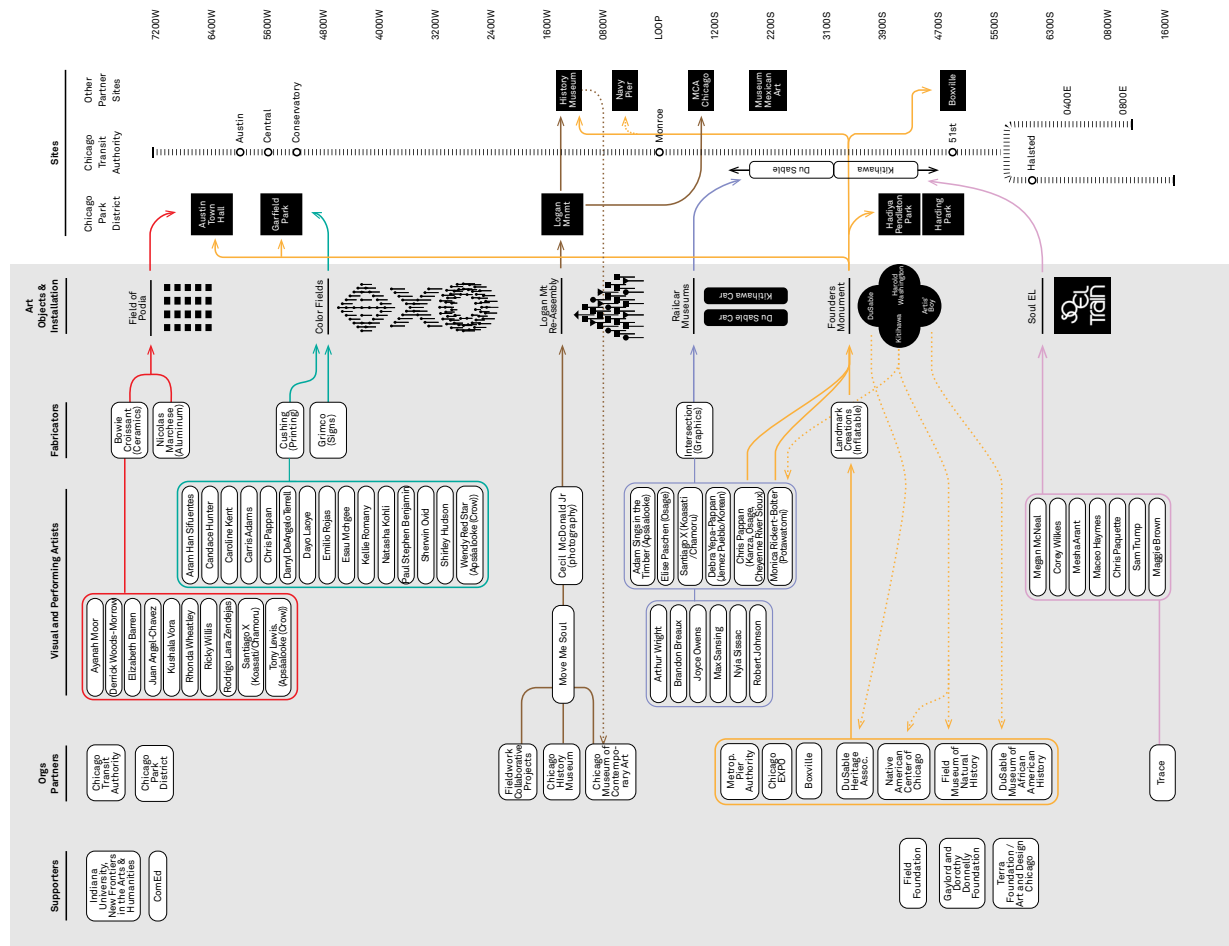
Cities and their surrounding metropolitan regions involve a capital process that reproduces itself in an incremental churn. Economies grow with the decline and renewal of real estate. Sometimes these processes are motivated by optimization or socio-economic change. Other times they aid and abet systems and structures of exploitation, disrespect, and violence. While this process of perpetual replacement

.....

is essential to economic growth and innovation, it also contributes to a kind of collective amnesia. As Castells suggests in *The Informational City*, urban form, relations, and economies coexist in reciprocity to one another all regulated by flows of information. Consequently, cities operate like reified myths superimposed on preexisting geologies and historic settlement patterns.

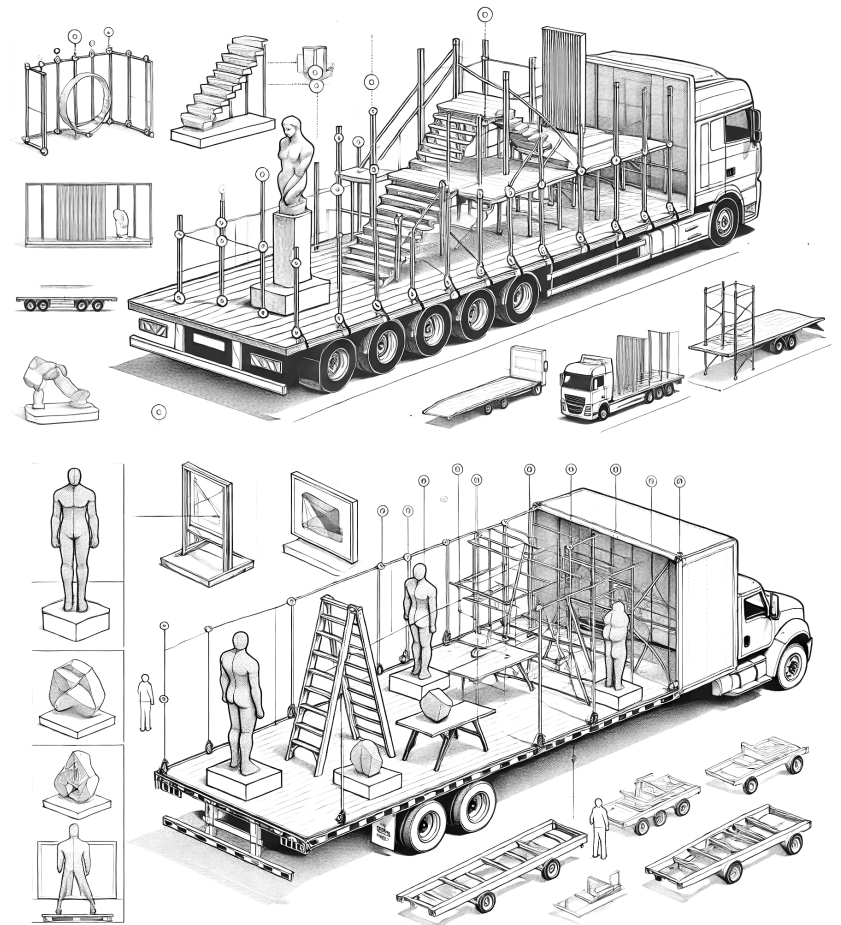
In dialogue with this ebb and flow of creating and destruction, ephemeral cultural installations in urban spaces or infrastructure networks can adjust or push against the acceptance of these myths, introducing visions or performances that offer alternatives, possibilities, commentaries, unexpected outcomes, or conjure latent, obstructed, or forgotten ghosts that inform or explain present-day experiences.





Unfolding in Infrastructure Networks

Infrastructure often crosses boundaries because it tends to be a technical system for conveying resources, materials, or people (roads, trains, rivers, etc.). When not dedicated to the flow of things, infrastructure often involves multiple sites distributed to serve surrounding territories (schools, parks, libraries, etc.). Interpreting these networks as cultural platforms opens new potentials—supporting relationships



between communities who might otherwise not meet, and redirecting resources for cultural development to sites that don't normally receive it. Similarly, unlike the "white cube" of a museum, which attempts (but ultimately fails) to deny specific site references—infrastructure allows cultural developments to directly engage the ecological, economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions of sites.





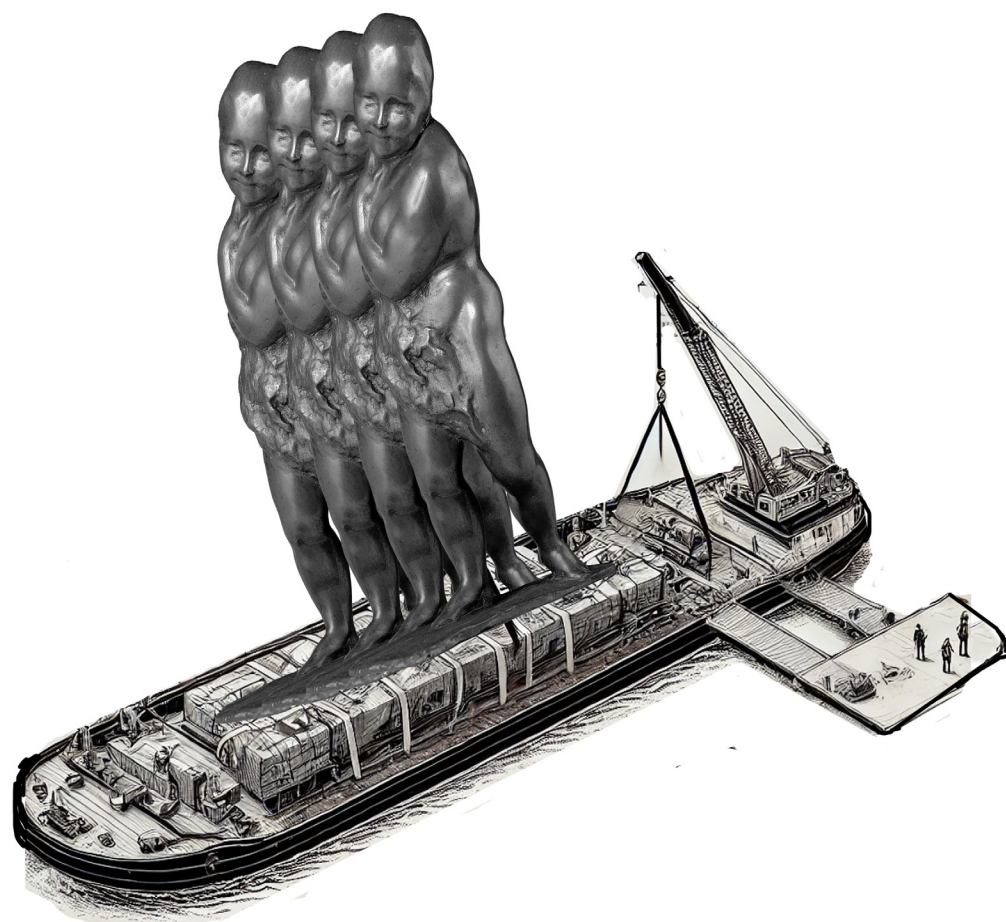


36

37

Exhibition as Walking Armature	Exhibition as Drifting Vessel	Exhibition as Aerial Spectacle	Exhibition as Atmosphere	Exhibition as Plaza Filler	Exhibition as Spatal Network	Exhibition as Accidental Spillage	Exhibition as Assembly Process	Exhibition as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Exhibition as Suprise Attack	Exhibition as Collision of Vehicles	Exhibition as Intervention in Infrastructure
Group Show as Walking Armature	Group Show as Drifting Vessel	Group Show as Aerial Spectacle	Group Show as Atmosphere	Group Show as Plaza Filler	Group Show as Spatal Network	Group Show as Accidental Spillage	Group Show as Assembly Process	Group Show as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Group Show as Suprise Attack	Group Show as Collision of Vehicles	Group Show as Intervention in Infrastructure
Collection as Walking Armature	Collection as Drifting Vessel	Collection as Aerial Spectacle	Collection as Atmosphere	Collection as Plaza Filler	Collection as Spatal Network	Collection as Accidental Spillage	Collection as Assembly Process	Collection as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Collection as Suprise Attack	Collection as Collision of Vehicles	Collection as Intervention in Infrastructure
Installation as Walking Armature	Installation as Drifting Vessel	Installation as Aerial Spectacle	Installation as Atmosphere	Installation as Plaza Filler	Installation as Spatal Network	Installation as Accidental Spillage	Installation as Assembly Process	Installation as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Installation as Suprise Attack	Installation as Collision of Vehicles	Installation as Intervention in Infrastructure
Performance as Walking Armature	Performance as Drifting Vessel	Performance as Aerial Spectacle	Performance as Atmosphere	Performance as Plaza Filler	Performance as Spatal Network	Performance as Accidental Spillage	Performance as Assembly Process	Performance as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Performance as Suprise Attack	Performance as Collision of Vehicles	Performance as Intervention in Infrastructure
Retrospective as Walking Armature	Retrospective as Drifting Vessel	Retrospective as Aerial Spectacle	Retrospective as Atmosphere	Retrospective as Plaza Filler	Retrospective as Spatal Network	Retrospective as Accidental Spillage	Retrospective as Assembly Process	Retrospective as Multiple and Distributed Field of Sites	Retrospective as Suprise Attack	Retrospective as Collision of Vehicles	Retrospective as Intervention in Infrastructure

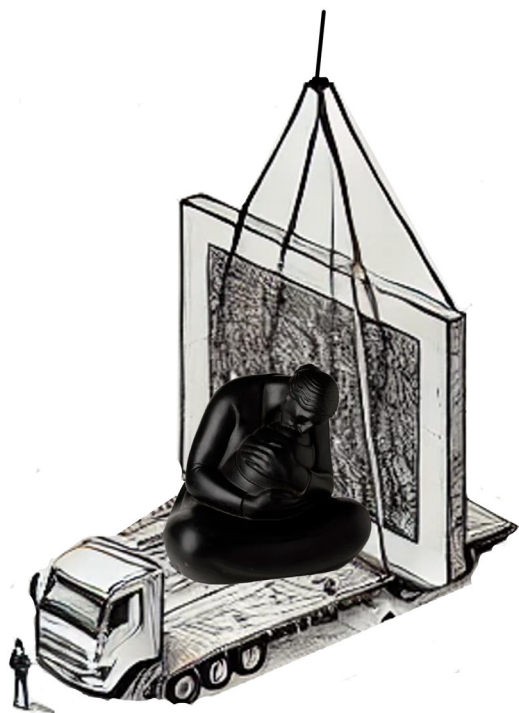
Exhibition as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Exhibition as Sorites Paradox	Exhibition as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Exhibition as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Exhibition as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Exhibition as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Exhibition as Measuring Device	Exhibition as Pneumatic Reproduction	Exhibition as Forgeries and Fakes	Exhibition as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Exhibition as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Exhibition as Partial Memory
Group Show as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Group Show as Sorites Paradox	Group Show as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Group Show as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Group Show as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Group Show as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Group Show as Measuring Device	Group Show as Pneumatic Reproduction	Group Show as Forgeries and Fakes	Group Show as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Group Show as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Group Show as Partial Memory
Collection as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Collection as Sorites Paradox	Collection as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Collection as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Collection as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Collection as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Collection as Measuring Device	Collection as Pneumatic Reproduction	Collection as Forgeries and Fakes	Collection as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Collection as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Collection as Partial Memory
Installation as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Installation as Sorites Paradox	Installation as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Installation as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Installation as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Installation as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Installation as Measuring Device	Installation as Pneumatic Reproduction	Installation as Forgeries and Fakes	Installation as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Installation as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Installation as Partial Memory
Performance as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Performance as Sorites Paradox	Performance as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Performance as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Performance as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Performance as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Performance as Measuring Device	Performance as Pneumatic Reproduction	Performance as Forgeries and Fakes	Performance as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Performance as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Performance as Partial Memory
Retrospective as Ad Hoc Assemblage	Retrospective as Sorites Paradox	Retrospective as Visible but Inaccessible Space	Retrospective as Constellation of Tenuously Connected Objects	Retrospective as Serial Arrangement According to a Reductive Characteristic	Retrospective as Time Elapsed Series of Events	Retrospective as Measuring Device	Retrospective as Pneumatic Reproduction	Retrospective as Forgeries and Fakes	Retrospective as Labor Intensive Feat of Endurance	Retrospective as Approximation of an Unachievable Ideal	Retrospective as Partial Memory



Composite image of a barge with
Emil Wikström's *Sauna Girl*, 1915

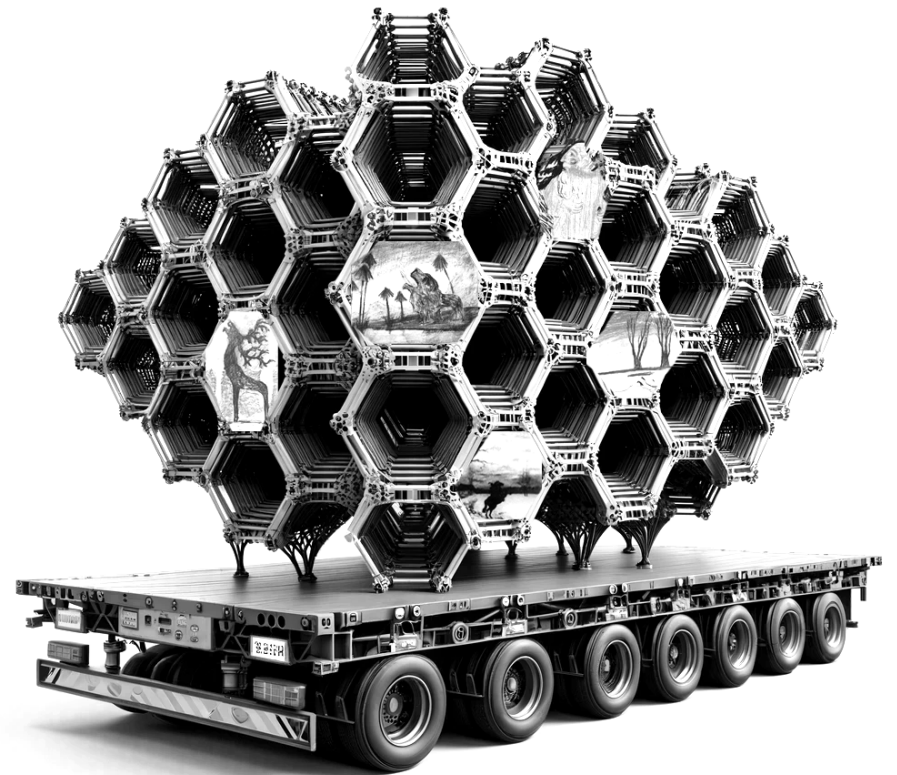


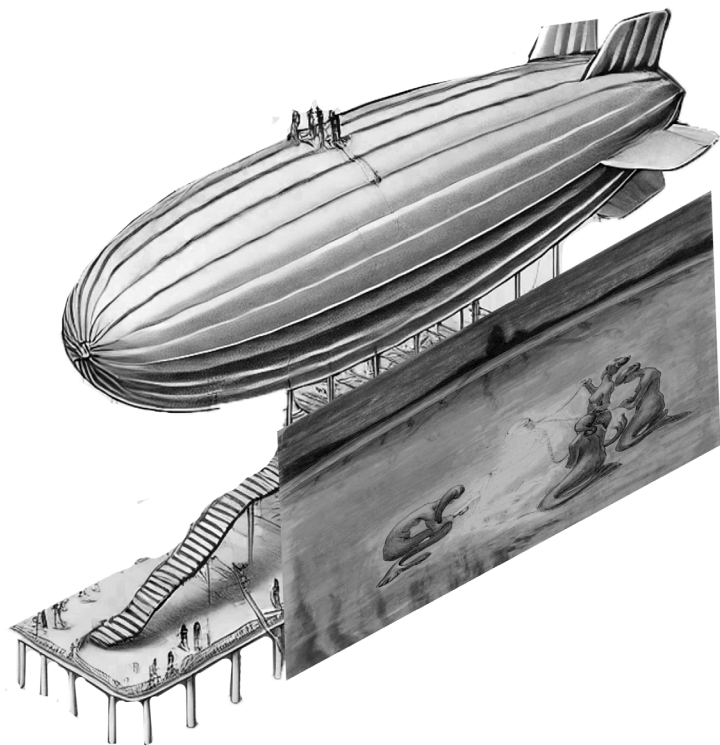
Composite image of a truck with
Eemil Halonen, *In the Sauna*, 1899



Composite image of a truck with
Felix Nylund, *A mother of the roads*,
1925

Composite image of a flatbed with
Carl Frederick, *Hill*





Composite image of a blimp with
Ellen Trotzig, *Mermaids*

An 86 passes by. An 87 passes by. A 63 passes by
 People stumble. Micro-accidents.
 A 96 passes by. A 70 passes by.
 It is twenty after one.
 Return (uncertain) of previously seen individuals:
 a young boy in a navy blue peacoat holding a plastic
 bag in his hand passes by the café again
 An 86 passes by. An 86 passes by. A 63 passes by.
 The café is full
 On the plaza a child is taking his dog for a run (looks
 like Snowy)
 Right by the café, at the foot of the window and at three
 different spots, a fairly young man draws a sort of “V”
 on the sidewalk with chalk, with a kind of question
 mark inside it (land art?)
 A 63 passes by
 Six sewer workers (hard hats and high boots) take rue
 des Canettes.
 Two free taxis at the taxi stand
 An 87 passes by
 A blind man coming from rue des Canettes passes by
 in front of the café; he’s a young man, with a rather
 confident way of walking.
 An 86 passes by
 Two men with pipes and black satchels
 A man with a black satchel and no pipe

A woman in a wool jacket, smiling
 A 96
 Another 96
 (high heels: bent ankles)
 An apple-green 2CV
 A 63
 A 70
 It is 1:35 PM. Groups, in gusts. A 63. The apple-green
 2CV is now parked almost at the corner of rue Férou,
 on the other side of the square. A 70. An 87. An 86.
 Three taxis at the taxi stand. A 96. A 63. A bike courier.
 Deliverymen delivering beverages. An 86. A little girl
 with a schoolbag on her shoulders.
 Wholesale potatoes. A lady taking three children to
 school (two of them have long red hats with pom-poms)
 There is an undertaker’s van in front of the church.
 A 96 goes by.
 People are gathering in front of the church (for a funeral
 procession?)
 An 87. A 70. A 63.
 Rue Bonaparte, a cement mixer, orange.
 A basset hound. A man with a bow tie. An 86.
 The wind is making the leaves on the trees move.
 A 70.

George Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, 1975

.....

Place as Muse

George Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* involved a methodically written recording of the observable features and actions occurring over several days in the Place St. Sulpice.

One might think this kind of writing would be incredibly mundane. However, it transports the reader into a very particular space, place, and time. We have the sensation of being

“To question the habitual. But that’s just it, we’re habituated to it. We don’t question it, it doesn’t question us, it doesn’t seem to pose a problem, we live it without thinking, as if it carried within it neither question nor answers, as if it weren’t the bearer of any information. This is not longer even conditioning, it’s anaesthesia. We sleep through our lives in a dreamless sleep. But where is our life? Where is our body? Where is our space?

What’s needed perhaps is finally to found our own anthropology, one that will speak about us, will look in ourselves for what for so long we’ve been pillaging from others. Not the exotic anymore, but the endotic.”

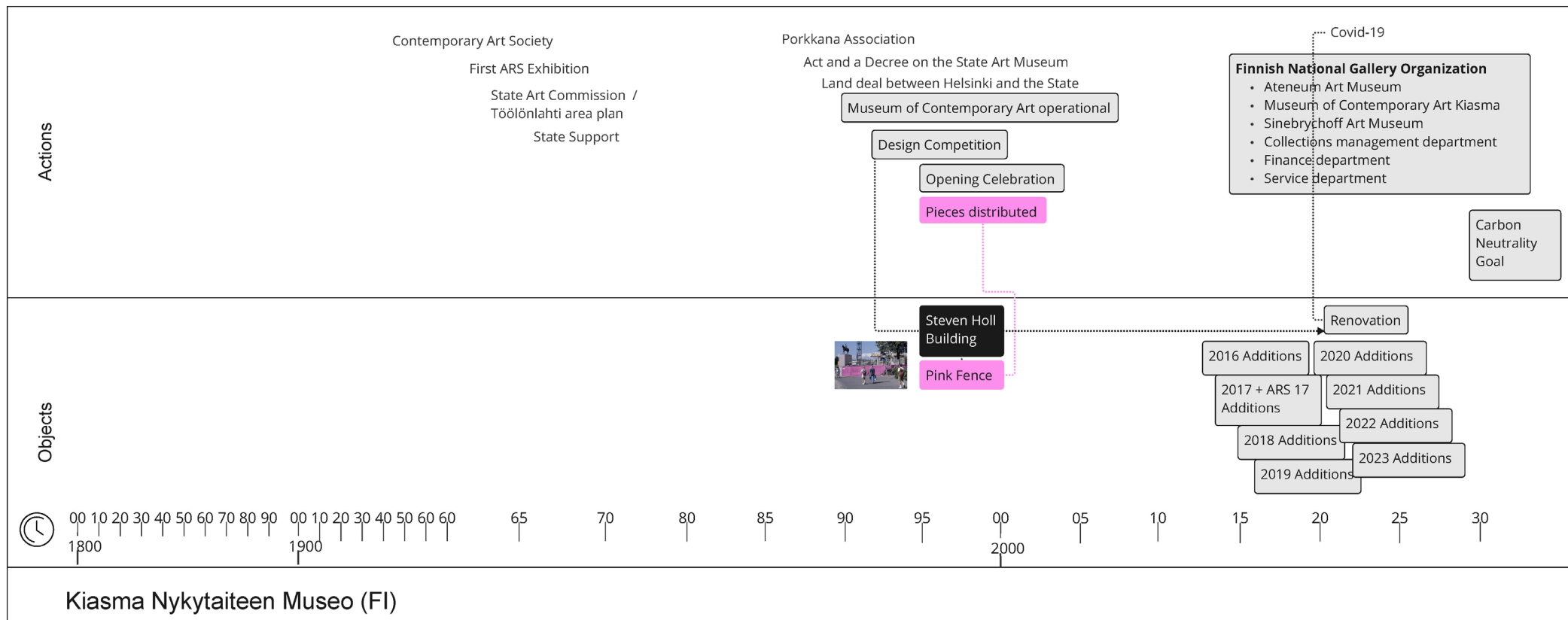
George Perec, *The Infra-ordinary*, 1977

.....

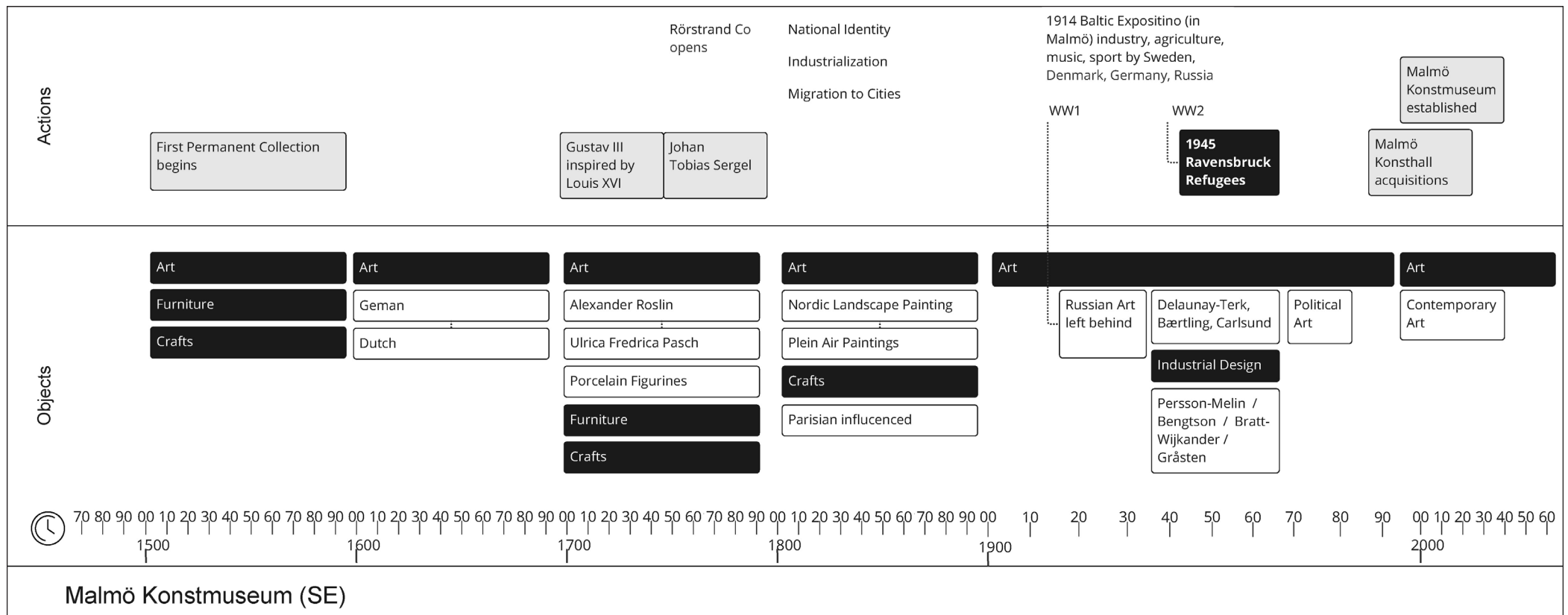
empathetically conjoined to Perec, seeing peculiarities through his eyes, feeling the implied turns of his head, hearing the sounds percussing in his ears. Consequently the nuances of his very subtle observations become poignant.

Initially, we could adhere to this recording technique and its methodical structure. But then we could play it back—as though the libretto of an

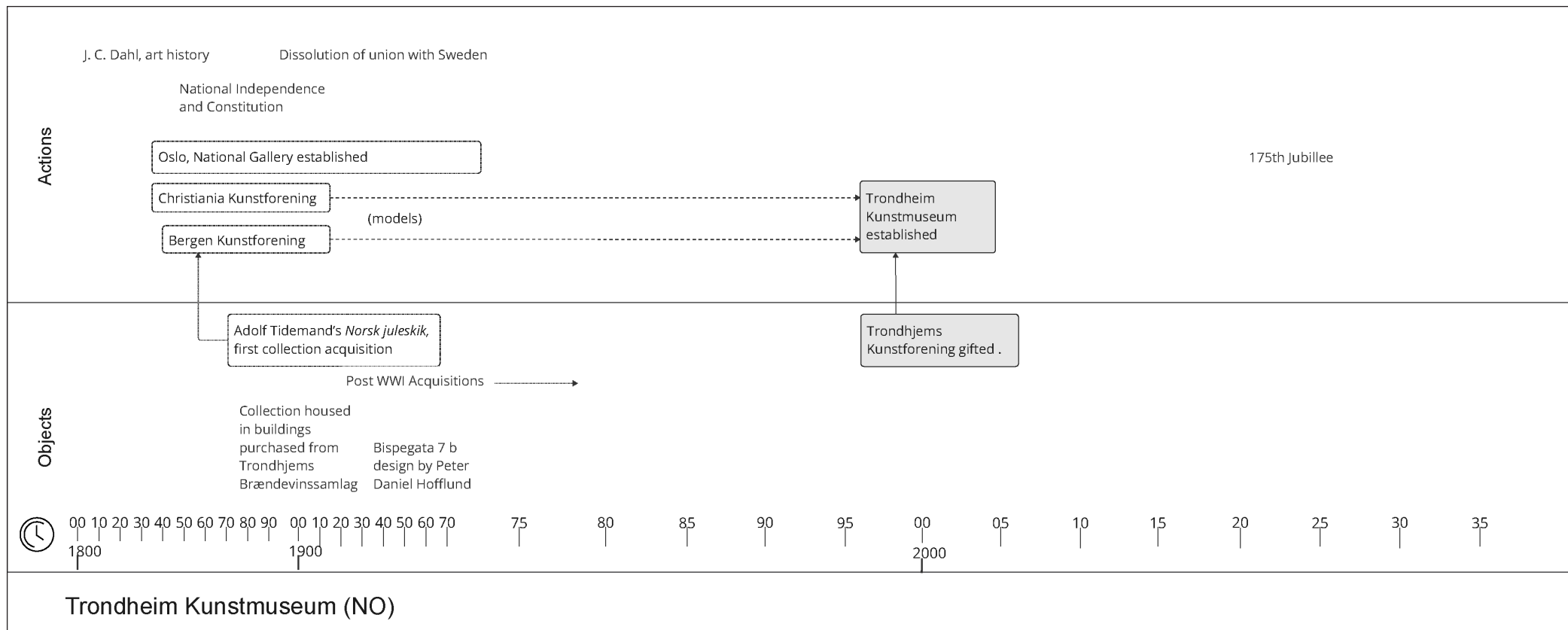
Opera, a framework for inserting performances, commentaries, ecological events, and time travel.



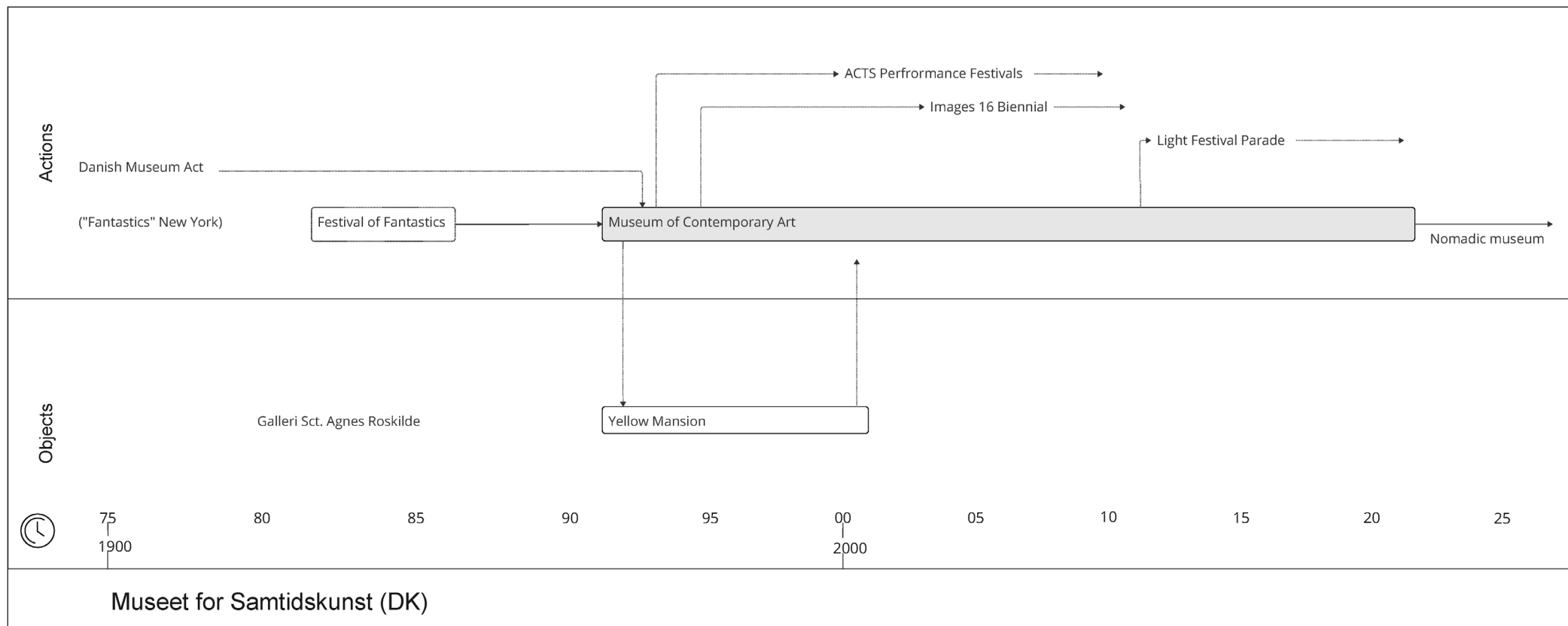
Institution as a Time and Place



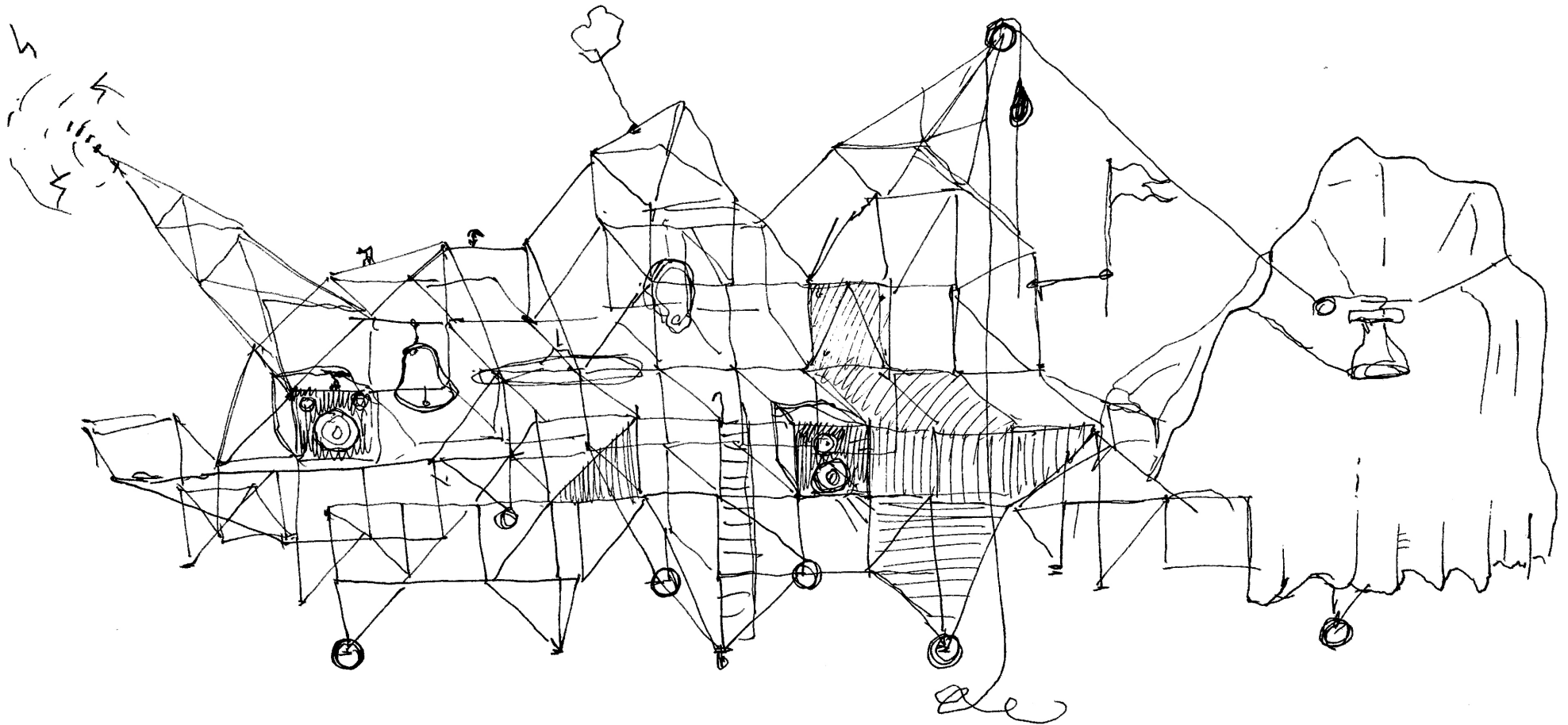
Institution as a Time and Place



Institution as a Time and Place

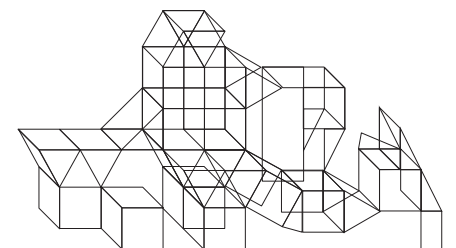
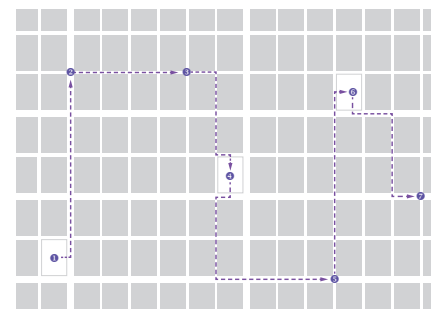


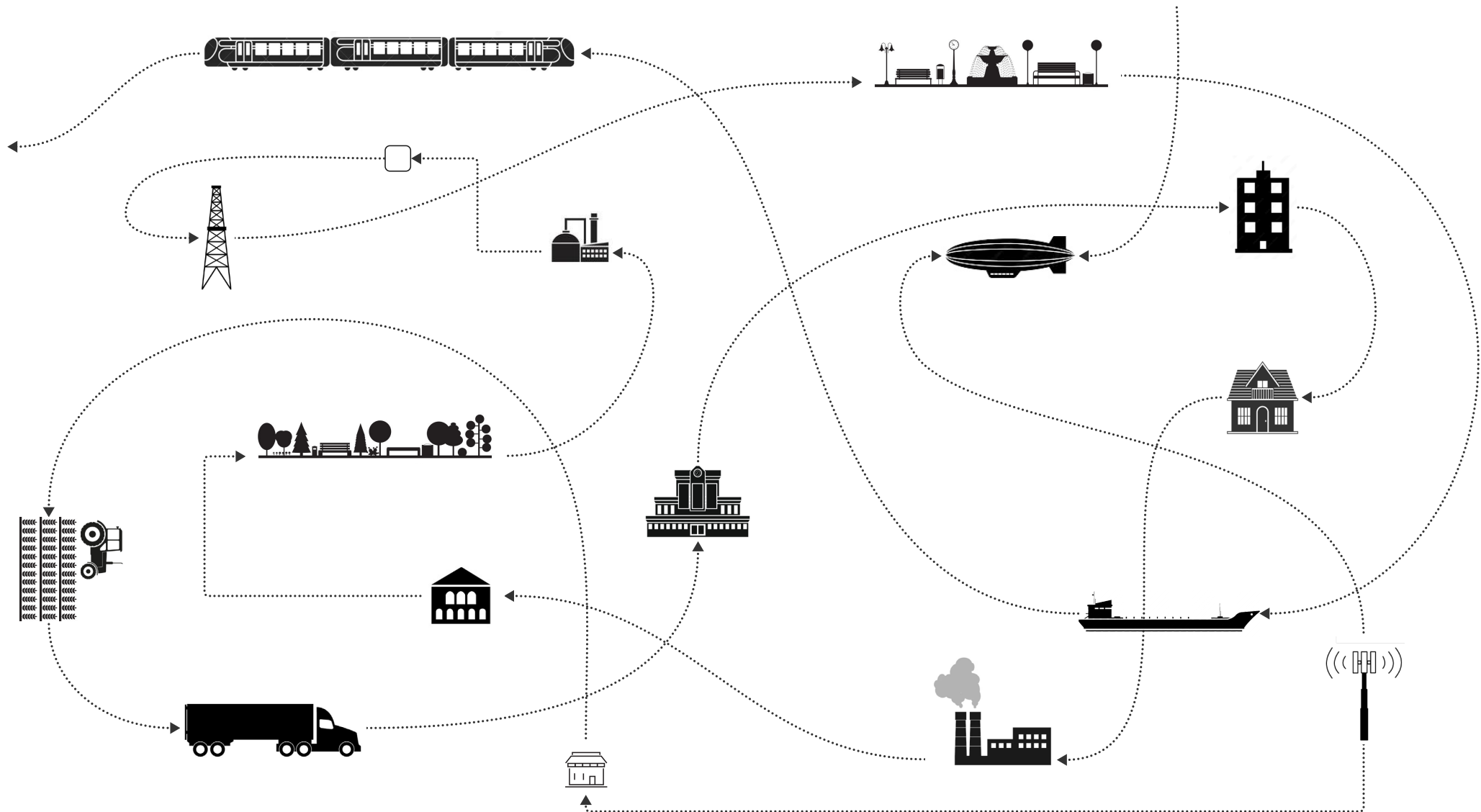
Institution as a Time and Place



Exhibition as Walking Armature

Moving from one point of the city to another, a walking armature moves and pauses over many days. Along its path, this roving assemblage addresses the specifics of place, adapting to resistances inherent in site conditions and overcoming obstacles that are either found or intentionally placed in its path. This drifting performance is open ended, inviting a wide range of constituents to participate.





Museum
Floating

Manual
Instruction