Annie Simpson

creative practice & research portfolio

photography
video and film
computational media
experimental geography

Contents

* Sample Syllabi and Teaching Evaluations can be found after my practice portfolio

Doctor of Design
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Nominee, 2026 National Design Award
Teaching Fellow, Harvard GSD
Fellow, Harvard-Mellon Urban Initiative
Head Tutor, GSD Master of Design Studies Program
Co-Director, Port Futures + Social Logistics

01 Duck Blind

Duck Blind is a photographic and curatorial project developed in collaboration with MIT's Tidmarsh Living Observatory—a wetland restoration site transformed into a living laboratory for environmental sensing, acoustic monitoring, and data-driven landscape research. Positioned at the intersection of experimental photography, computational media, and landscape ecology, Duck Blind interrogates how sensor-based ecologies produce both spatial knowledge and affective experience.

My project deploys a hybrid methodology, combining large-format photography, experimental film, chroma-key color imaging, and digital compositing to render the Tidmarsh wetlands as both performative environments and sites of partial opacity. Through a series of images and video installations, I explore how environmental data is made visible (and invisible) through technological mediation—how sensors, camera traps, and acoustic arrays construct a layered, sometimes contradictory, sense of place.

Foregrounding the logics of concealment, camouflage, and algorithmic abstraction, Duck Blind treats the wetland as a stage where observation and occlusion are co-constitutive. I use color keying and layered digital imaging to visualize not only the ecological rhythms of the site, but also the underlying architectures of data extraction and remote sensing. This technique disrupts the expectation of photographic transparency, prompting viewers to question what lies beneath—or is withheld from—the field of vision.

The project draws from and visualizes raw sensor data (acoustic, hydrological, thermal) in tandem with photographic imagery, exploring how computational approaches reframe both the aesthetics and politics of environmental representation. By incorporating camera traps and automated image-capture systems into my workflow, I critically examine how non-human "eyes" structure the production and circulation of landscape images, raising questions about agency, surveillance, and authorship in contemporary photographic practice. The project provokes discussion about the role of digital technologies in shaping ecological consciousness, and exposes the ways environmental aesthetics are mobilized for both public engagement and policy intervention. It critically investigates the tension between surface visibility and infrastructural depth, between what is made knowable by technology and what remains obscure.

Exhibited at the Kirkland Gallery, the project served as a platform for interdisciplinary conversation about digital nature, the politics of sensing, and the future of environmental media. Through artist talks, interactive workshops, and public programming, Duck Blind encouraged audiences to reflect on their own positionality as viewers, data subjects, and co-creators within technologically mediated environments.
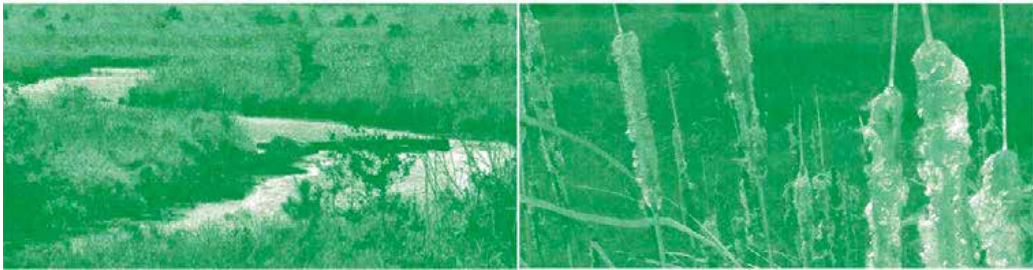
Above: chromakey print, simulated wetland details, installation of "Duck Blind" at Kirkland
Right: field images of sensors from Tidmarsh site visits

Top: styrofoam ducks, sensors, and live-feed camera at Tidmarsh
Bottom: scene screen-capped from MIT / MA Audubon Tidmarsh 24/7 livestream

02 Void Almanac

This project, an essay titled "A Political-Geologic Rubbing of Nuclear Testing in Mississippi," and a film, "Nothing is known but impenetrable surfaces," investigates the only nuclear test site east of the Rocky Mountains—the Tatum Salt Dome in Mississippi—where the U.S. government detonated two atomic bombs underground in the 1960s as part of the Cold War's secret Vela Uniform program. Situated deep beneath plantation pine in a so-called "empty" landscape, these implosion tests produced no visible mushroom cloud; instead, their destructive force collapsed inward, creating an artificial void in the earth, a cavity dense with aftershock, entropy, and displacement.

Filmed on location, the work chronicles a road trip that weaves between Alabama and Mississippi, following the search for a companion's ancestral cemetery and the elusive site of the nuclear experiment. Across three adjacent video frames, the film oscillates between tracking shots of highway, fragmented glimpses of the commemorative monument (itself scarred by bullet holes), and wide, cloud-filled skies. The monument, officially marking the nuclear site, yet visually elusive and always partially hidden, becomes a recurring motif, rendered both through graphite rubbings and in haunting computer-generated imagery: a floating, translucent marker shrouded in cloth.

Combining photographic documentation, digital renderings, and experimental montage, the project in essay and film explores how nuclear violence is represented, managed, and forgotten: how the rhetoric of "emptiness" functions as a spatial frame to contain risk and render ecological trauma invisible and apolitical. Drawing on nuclear physics, seismic engineering logs, salt core samples, pressure wave graphs, and quantum theory, the work asks: how do measurement practices and visual regimes attempt to stabilize and know the unknowable interior of engineered voids? By foregrounding the absence of visible destruction, the film interrogates the role of photography, computational imaging, and narrative in mediating the afterlives of environmental violence.

At the same time, Void Almanac in its component parts situates the test site's history within broader political geographies of race, land, and labor. The Tatum Salt Dome was chosen for its supposed remoteness, but its development displaced Black landowners and relied on infrastructure rooted in plantation extraction. My project adopts a decolonial lens, treating erasure not as disappearance, but as an ongoing spatial and political process—where what is absent still shapes the material and social present.

Ultimately, Void Almanac contributes to design research and visual culture by showing how scientific and computational approaches can both entrench and recalibrate our ways of seeing environmental transformation. Through photography, film, and data-driven media, the project asks: What does it mean to image absence, and what persists (politically, materially, affectively) inside engineered absences and atomic voids?

Simpson, Annie. "*Void Almanac: A Political-Geologic Rubbing of Nuclear Testing in Mississippi.*" GeoHumanities.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/2373566X.2024.2409692

Nothing is known (film) https://vimeo.com/959143988

03 The View from Nowhere + UnderStory (Dissertation Project)

The View from Nowhere is an interdisciplinary research project that unfolds through photographic series, computational renderings, scholarly articles, and an experimental essay film, "UnderStory". Each chapter and movement in the film investigates a landscape implicated in the global biomass trade, interrogating how planetary "greening" agendas are visualized and contested through images, mapping, and representational technologies.
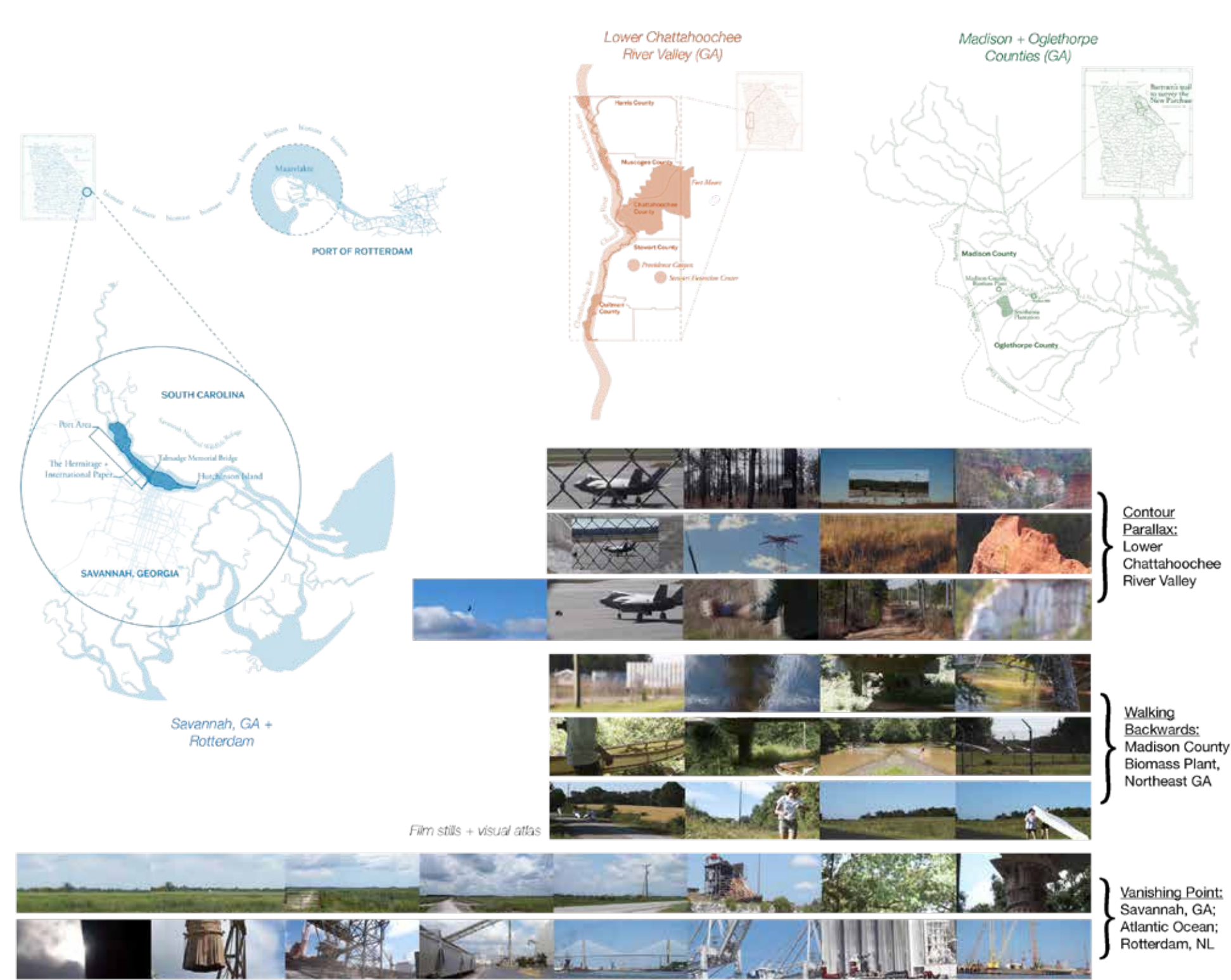
At the core of the project is a sustained inquiry into the politics of environmental representation—how environmental change is measured, visualized, and made narratable through photographic, cartographic, and computational means. Collaborating with citizen scientists, I critically examine the ways visual paradigms shape understandings of space, value, and extraction, often obscuring the uneven geographies and material entanglements beneath planetary-scale imagery.

Case 1, "Contour Parallax," uses photographic techniques and computational mapping to explore the notion of parallax error—the misalignment that occurs when a site is viewed or measured from multiple perspectives. Drawing on historical survey images and present-day remote sensing, I analyze how technical representations of "land" produce fragmented, disconnected views of interconnected ecologies, especially in landscapes hidden behind biomass plantations.

Case 2, "Walking Backwards," investigates how environmental legibility is constructed through visual documentation and mapped narration. Through a combination of site photography, hand-drawn and digital maps, and archival imagery, I examine the Broad River as a contested landscape. Early botanical illustrations, colonial surveys, and contemporary hydrological maps are juxtaposed to reveal how images and mapping practices encode property claims, labor histories, and ecological manipulation.

Case 3, "Vanishing Points," interrogates the aesthetics and politics of perspective. Through field photography, archival image analysis, and computational visualization of shipping routes, I explore the ports of Rotterdam and Savannah, reading the "vanishing point" not only as a device of photographic and painterly composition but as a tool of abstraction in global maritime logistics. Here, images and computational renderings expose how linear perspective structures capitalist imaginaries of the sea, obscuring entanglements of labor, territory, and climate.

Across its chapters and film, The View from Nowhere foregrounds photographic and computational media as both critical tools and objects of inquiry. The project asks how contemporary image-making practices—whether documentary photography, digital mapping, or algorithmic visualization—mediate our understanding of environmental change, and how new representational strategies might open space for more just and accountable ways of seeing.

Lower Chattahoochee River Valley (GA)

Madison + Oglethorpe Counties (GA)

PORT OF ROTTERDAM

Maasvlakte

SOUTH CAROLINA

Port Area

The Hermitage + International Paper

Talmadge Memorial Bridge

Hutchinson Island

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

Savannah, GA + Rotterdam

Contour Parallax: Lower Chattahoochee River Valley

Walking Backwards: Madison County Biomass Plant, Northeast GA

Film stills + visual atlas

Vanishing Point: Savannah, GA; Atlantic Ocean; Rotterdam, NL

*Full manuscript and a copy of UnderStory are available upon request.*

04 Walking Backwards (Dissertation Chapter, Film Movement)

This chapter of my dissertation—and a central movement in my experimental essay film—follows the South Fork of the Broad River in northeast Georgia, surfacing the layered entanglements of ecological degradation, plantation afterlives, and contemporary energy transition. Collaborating with the Madison-Oglethorpe Stream Team, a citizen-science collective, I use photographic documentation, field recording, and computational imaging to capture the effects of runoff from a contested biomass power plant. Our fieldwork employs sediment sampling, macroinvertebrate indexing, and bug counts as forms of vernacular environmental witnessing, producing images and data that become narrative interventions—direct, embodied, and collective.

This visual inquiry is interwoven with a historical retracing of naturalist William Bartram's 1773 survey through the watershed. Drawing on Bartram's botanical sketches, soil classifications, and written accounts, I interrogate how scientific drawing and natural history illustration provided visual frameworks that rationalized land for settler expansion and ecological extraction. My project counter-maps these histories by paddling Bartram's route upstream, using photographic series, digital renderings, and experimental film sequences to disorient normative narratives of geography, property, and development.

Artistically, I mobilize inductive field methods and experimental visual storytelling to interrupt the authority of conventional spatial frameworks. The chapter, and its filmic movement, center the line—survey lines, taxonomic boundaries, fence rows—as both material and epistemological figure. Through photographic images, computational overlays, and archival montage, I interrogate how mapping, natural history, and environmental imaging shape what counts as nature, and whose claims to land and water are rendered visible or erased.

Ultimately, Walking Backwards reveals how measurement, resistance, and narrative can be braided through photographic and computational media. It models a design research method rooted in shared scientific observation, poetic counter-inventory, and a commitment to environmental justice—foregrounding collective visual practice as a site of intervention and re-imagination.
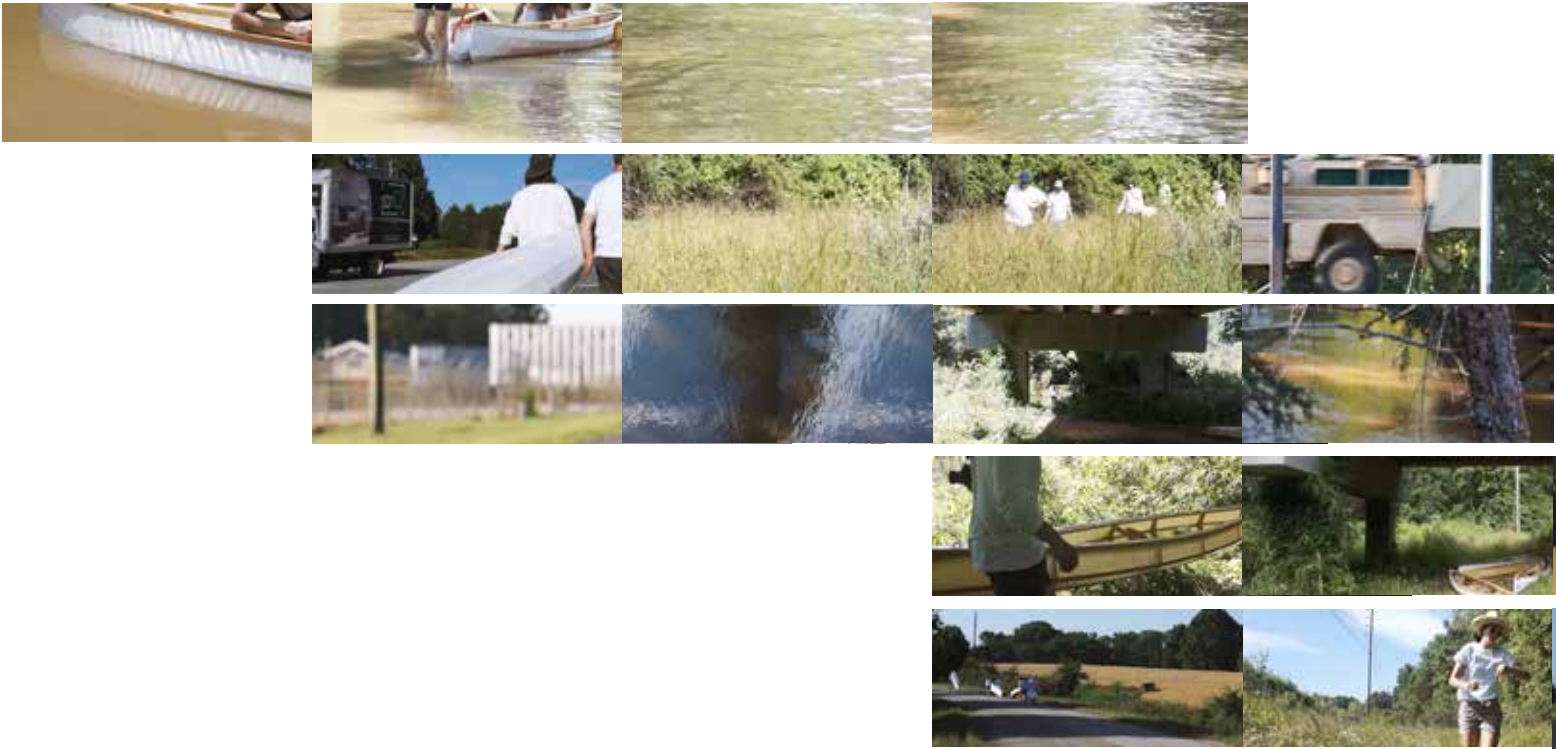
05 Surface Matters (Ongoing Creative Research)

Surface Matters is an experimental photo and computational media project that reimagines the canoe as both a tool for environmental research and a platform for creative imaging. Through the design and fabrication of custom skin-on-frame vessels, the project brings together analog craft, reclaimed materials, and embedded sensor technologies to generate new forms of visual and sonic storytelling in overlooked aquatic ecologies.

Each canoe is equipped with custom-built sensors—bubble pressure tensiometers, infrared micro-turbulence detectors, and laser fog visualization systems—that collect real-time environmental data while on the water. This data is translated into a range of creative outputs:

Photographic Series: High-resolution images capture not only the vessels in context, but also the visualized data streams—microcurrents, temperature gradients, and surface tensions—rendered through field-based photographic and imaging techniques.

Computational Renderings: Sensor outputs are algorithmically processed and mapped, producing dynamic digital renderings that visualize otherwise invisible hydrodynamic processes and environmental conditions.

Sonification: Data collected from expeditions is further transformed into immersive soundscapes, offering a new sensory experience of aquatic phenomena and making micro-scale environmental dynamics audible.

The project's design process is site-responsive, using CAD modeling and hand sketching to develop hull forms tailored to specific marshes, creeks, and lakes, while emphasizing sustainable and adaptive material practices. Each stage of design, fieldwork, and data capture is documented as both photographic and computational media, making the process itself a subject of creative inquiry.

By presenting scientific data as images, renderings, and sonified environments, Surface Matters asks how photographic and computational practices can reframe our understanding of place, ecology, and environmental justice. The project invites audiences to encounter water ecologies not only through visual representation, but through expanded forms of media that bridge craft, technology, and critical storytelling.
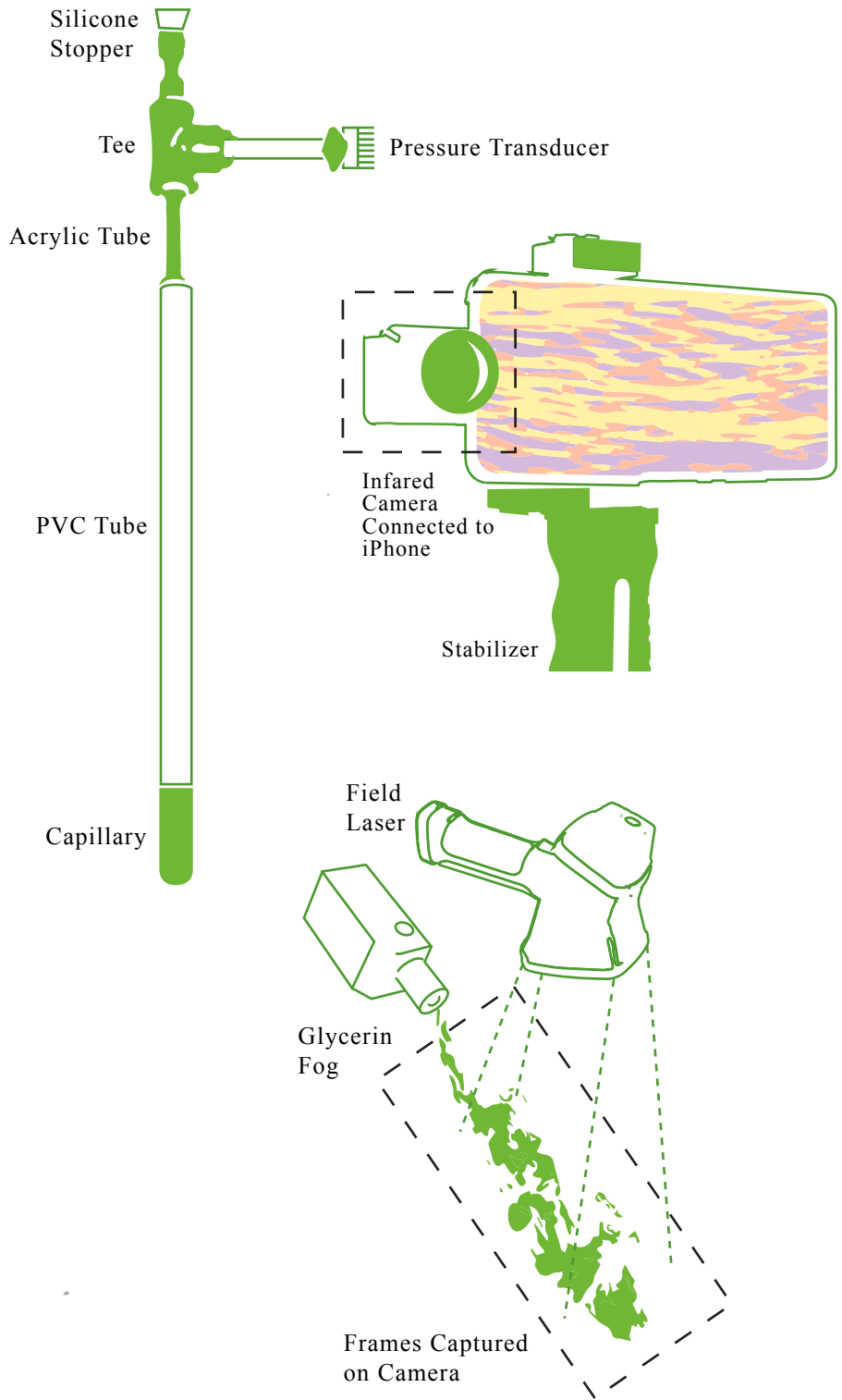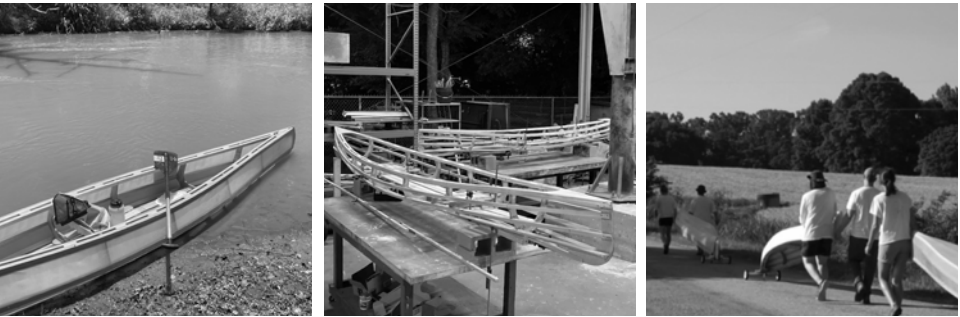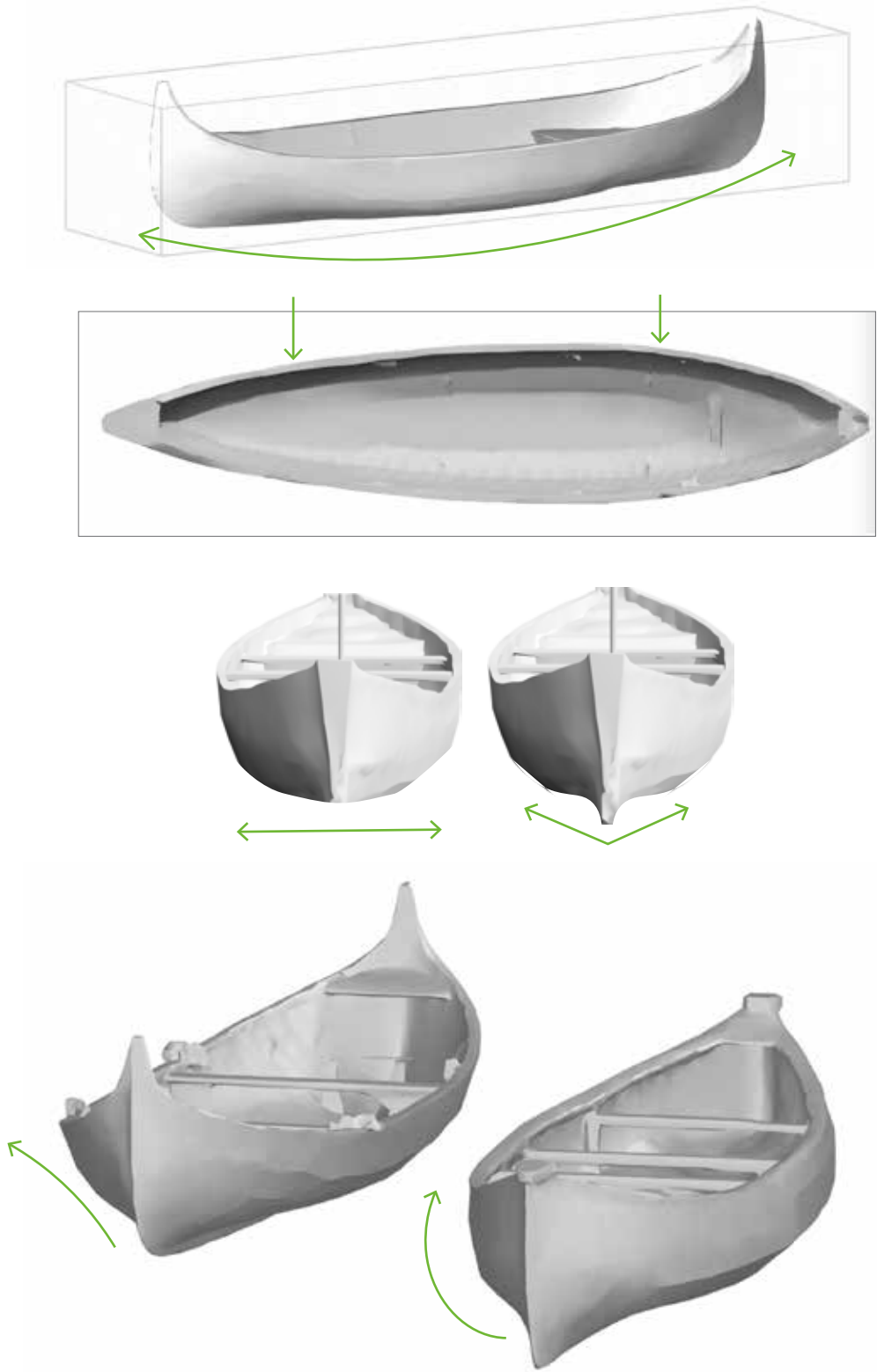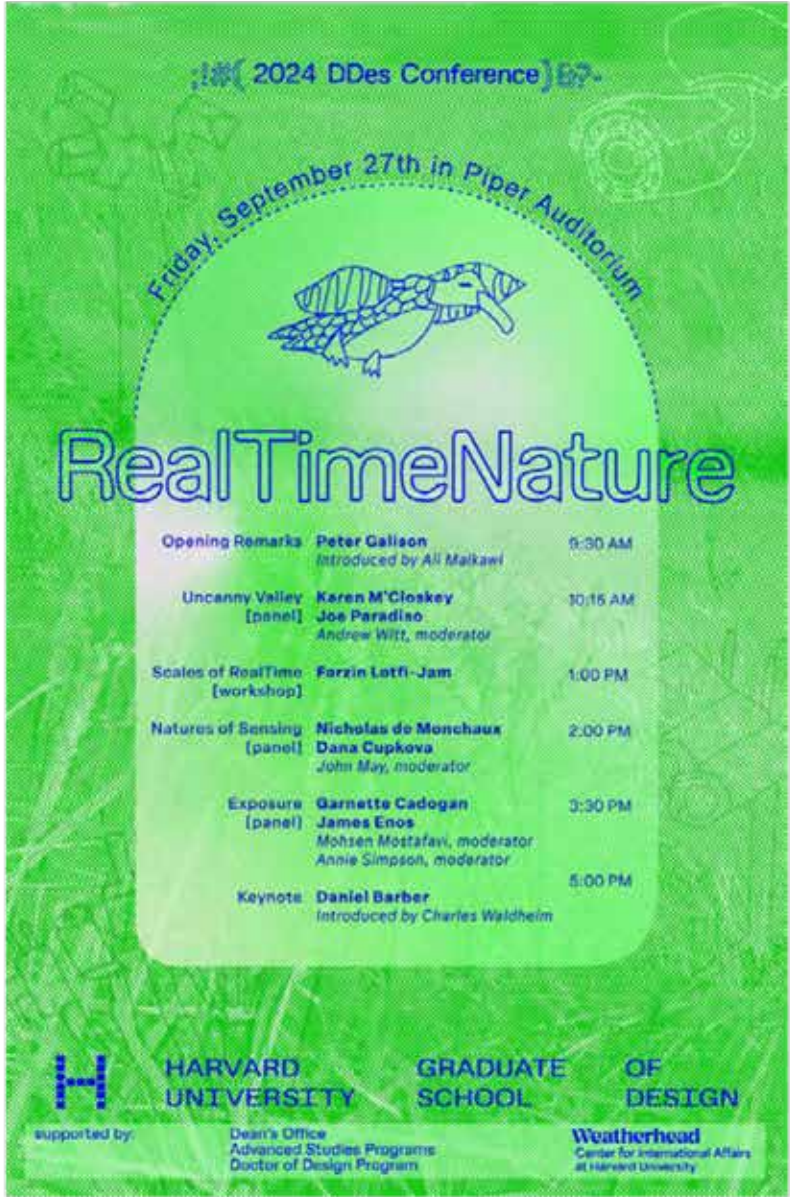
06 RealTimeNature

RealTimeNature was a cross-disciplinary conference I co-organized at Harvard GSD, critically examining how photographic, computational, and sensor-based technologies shape contemporary understandings of ecological systems and landscape governance. Designed as a platform for dialogue across design, science, and the arts and humanities, the event interrogated the visual, empirical, and narrative frameworks through which "nature" is sensed, simulated, and made actionable.

The conference brought together leading thinkers, including keynote speakers Peter Galison and Daniel Barber, for panels such as "Exposure," which explored how smart sensing infrastructures and real-time environmental monitoring influence collective perceptions of risk, wellness, and design intervention. Central to our inquiry was the question of how different modes of sensing (empirical, embodied, technological, narrative) construct competing truths about environment, crisis, and agency. We examined the ways that atmospheric and infrastructural sensing may reproduce exclusionary legacies or epistemic opacity, distancing environmental crises as something happening "out there," beyond human experience and accountability.

Throughout the event, I foregrounded the intersections of experimental media, photographic representation, and computational sensing, investigating how these technologies mediate between lived experience, material systems, and spatial design. Our programming asked: Can sensing be reimagined not as a neutral or detached act, but as a practice of attunement, cohabitation, and ethical interpretation?

RealTimeNature exemplifies my commitment to advancing justice-oriented, multimodal approaches to environmental media and design. It demonstrates my capacity to lead ambitious interdisciplinary initiatives that blend technical and critical perspectives, public engagement, and logistical organization, qualities I am excited to bring to Parsons. This project also models how critical inquiry into sensing and representation can inform pedagogical innovation, equipping students to question and shape the media infrastructures that define ecological futures.

RealTimeNature documentation

RealTimeNature documentation
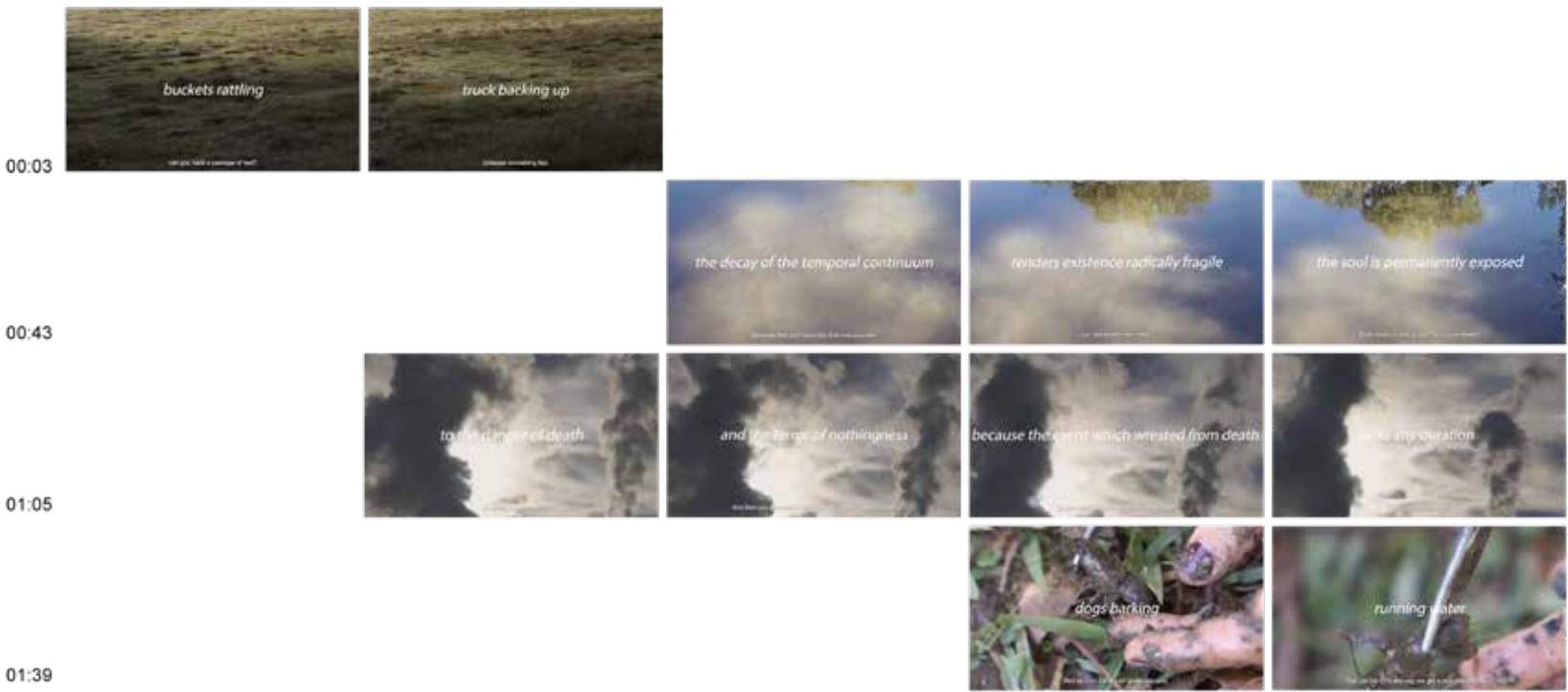
Port Futures + Social Logistics

Port Futures + Social Logistics (PFSL) is a transnational curatorial platform and research collective I co-founded to critically examine the spatial politics of port infrastructures within the context of energy transition, global logistics, and environmental change. Through a hybrid methodology, bridging commissioned media art, computational mapping, participatory expeditions, and multi-site exhibitions, PFSL interrogates how circulation systems mediate environmental vulnerability, labor, and material entanglement across local and planetary scales. Our work foregrounds the image as both document and intervention, employing drone photography, documentary filmmaking, and field-based imaging to reveal layered histories and contemporary frictions at port sites.

Our programming spans historical and contemporary trade corridors in the Southeastern United States, the Dutch North Sea, and East Asian export zones, activating dialogues between artists, researchers, port workers, and community stakeholders. PFSL's first international summit culminated in exhibitions across Japan, Taiwan, and the Netherlands, in partnership with leading cultural organizations such as Art Indeed (NL), Hyper Cultural Passengers (DE), and the Port Journeys Network. Our second summit, planned for Groningen in 2025, will deepen these global collaborations.

For our first summit and screenings, James Enos and I created a film called 'Madison.' Through the juxtaposition of text, audio, and images of surveying a contested watershed we borrow a post-narrative structure from Byung-Chul Han's 'The Scent of Time'. Madison finds its roots (both in terms of footage source and sensitivity to the discontents of linear time) in the logistics of biomass energy, a contested and deeply contradictory node in supposedly "green" energy transition.

As co-founder and curator, my role encompasses project direction, research coordination, and the orchestration of stakeholder summits. I design and facilitate interdisciplinary programming that brings together narrative, risk, and material intelligence—foundational themes that also drive my current research at the intersection of design, technology, and critical media practice. Notably, our work is discussed in the forthcoming co-authored chapter, "Social Logistics From the Heart of a Shipwreck," in Post-Rational Visuality (Noxious Sector Press, 2025).
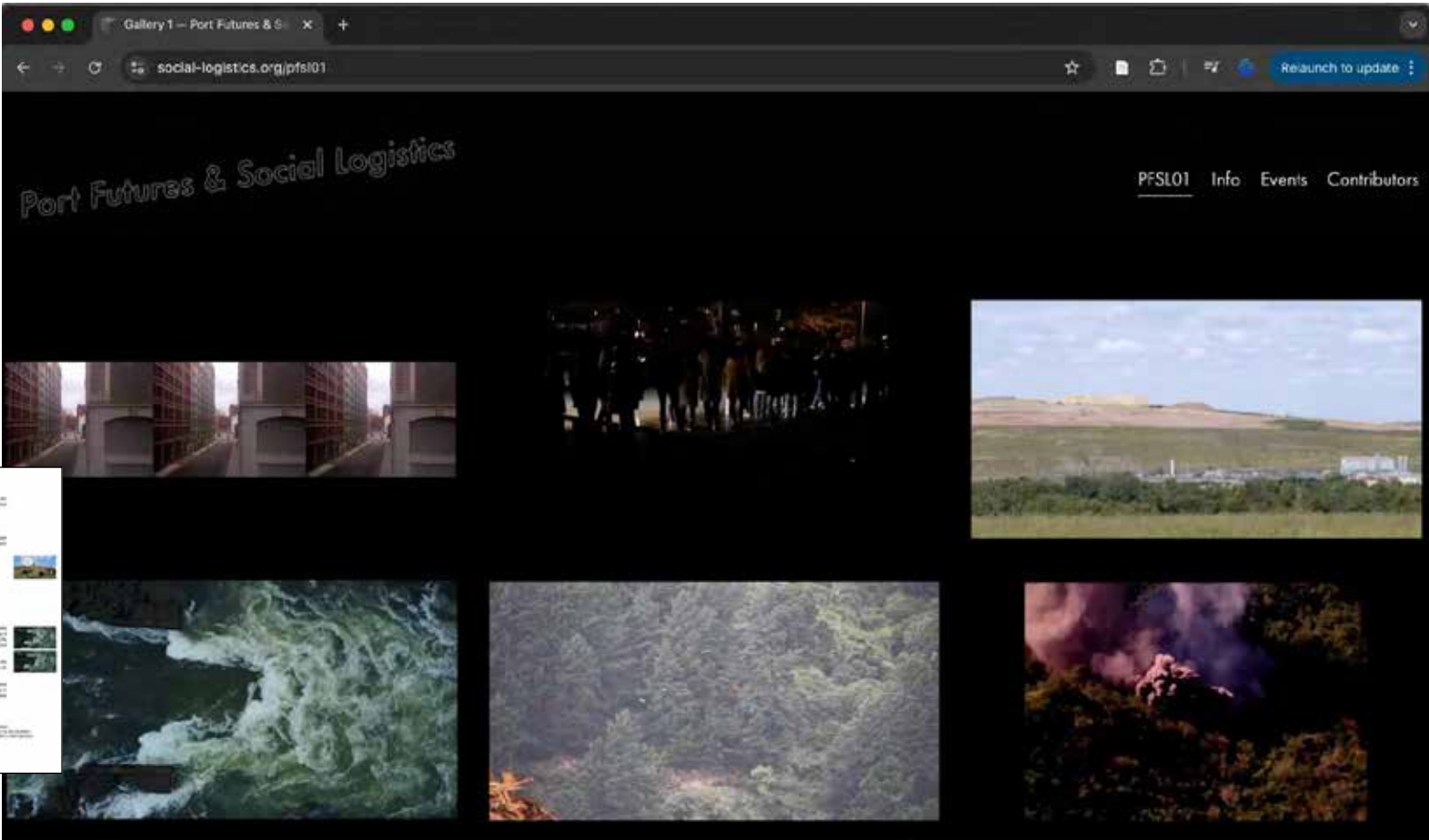

00:03
00:43
01:05
01:39

Watch Madison
https://vimeo.com/698196950

PFSL platform documentation, ephemera, and sample chapter in "Post-Rational Visuality"

Enos, James. and Simpson, A. "Social Logistics From the Heart of A Shipwreck," in Post-Rational Visuality. Eds. Hiebert, T. and MacKenzie, D. Toronto (CA): Noxious Sector Press, 2024.
https://www.noxioussector.net/press.php

Tunnel Vision: Notes from "Generic" Atlanta

Tunnel Vision: Notes from "Generic" Atlanta is an interdisciplinary essay and live image performance that interrogates the evolving status of the city through photographic analysis. Drawing on the documentary film Benjamin Smoke (2001) by Jem Cohen and Peter Sillen, the project probes the contested frameworks of the "Generic City" articulated by Rem Koolhaas and Lieven de Cauter at the close of the 20th century - moments that coincided with the peak of rapid urbanization and social upheaval in the Atlanta metro area.

At its core, this project mobilizes photography and film as critical tools for unpacking urban transformation, disappearance, and memory. Through detailed visual analysis of both Benjamin Smoke and Koolhaas's photographic archive of Atlanta, I examine how images not only document, but actively construct competing narratives about modernization, erasure, and the enduring specificity of place. The film follows Atlanta musician Benjamin through his final performances and the shifting geographies of the city's underground scenes, capturing "last views" of marginal spaces now threatened by gentrification and infrastructural change. By mapping these visual intersections, Tunnel Vision asks how the seductive concept of the "generic city" can be destabilized by attention to situated, embodied, and often-overlooked urban experience.

The essay originated as a script for a performance lecture, incorporating live image sequencing, video fragments, and audience participation. This performative format transforms the reading of images into an immersive, interactive environment, foregrounding the role of media technologies in shaping perception, narrative, and memory. Fieldwork and interviews with Atlanta artists and musicians from the 1990s inform the work's methodological depth.

Forthcoming in the peer-reviewed journal Urban Geography, Tunnel Vision models an experimental, critically engaged approach to photographic and media scholarship, one that bridges theory, practice, and curation. The project reflects my ongoing interest in how images, computation, and urban space intersect to make visible (or invisible) histories of race, erasure, and creative resistance. Ultimately, it invites reflection on what is lost, and what endures, as cities are remade under the sign of the generic.
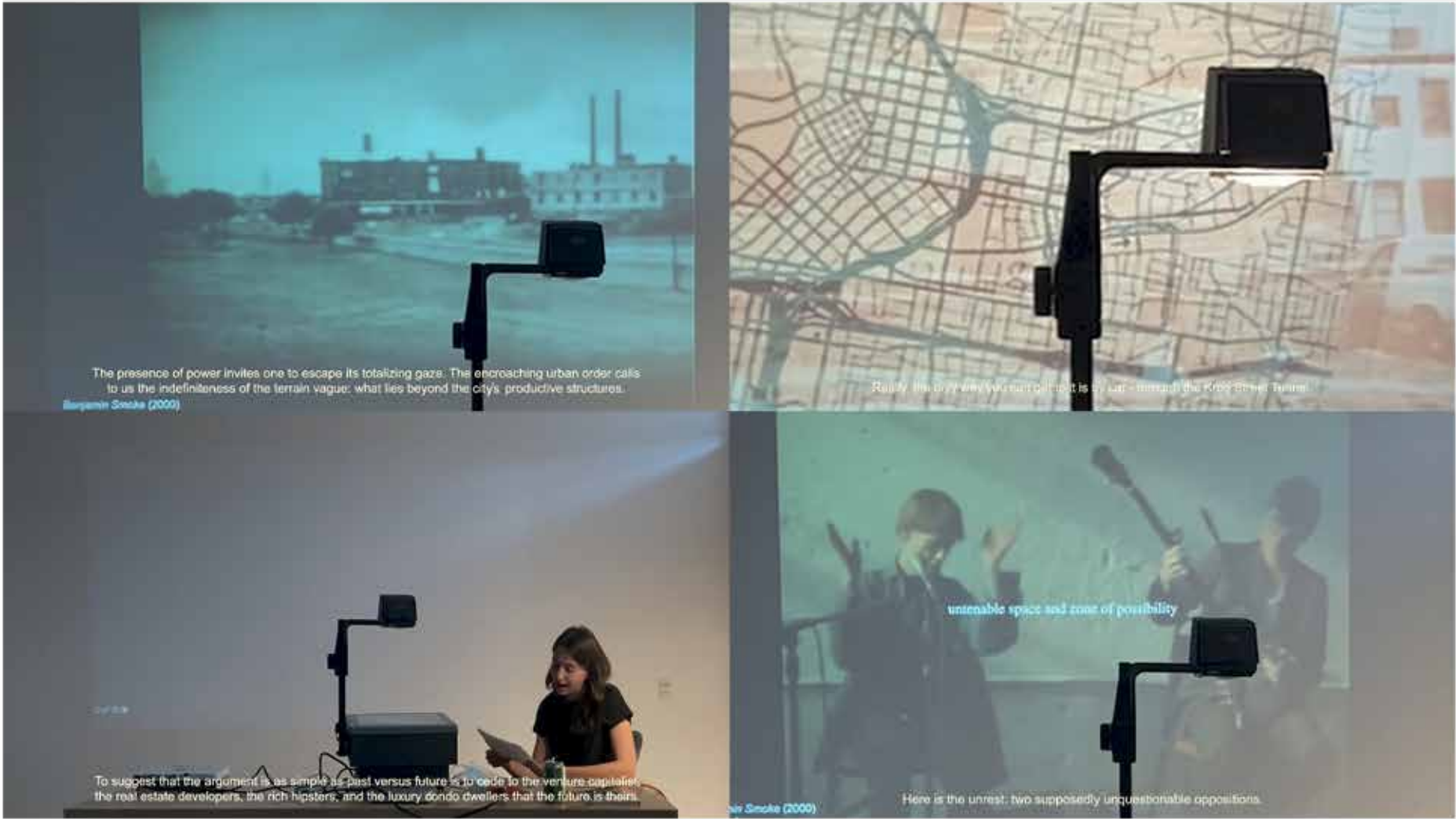
09 Earlier Photographic Work

The following projects represent a sustained photographic engagement with the material, ecological, and social histories of the rural American South. Each body of work combines experimental analog processes, material culture study, and documentary storytelling to examine how landscapes marked by extraction, environmental disaster, and racialized histories of labor are rendered legible through image and text. By attending to both the residues of the past and the lived realities of the present, these works probe the intertwined logics of environment, economy, and identity in contested Southern geographies.

Eden (2017–2018)
Eden is a triptych of hand-bound, letter-pressed artist's books featuring salt print 4x5 contact images of the Dan River in Eden, North Carolina—site of the catastrophic 2014 Duke Energy Coal Ash Spill. Using water collected from the spill to print and develop each image, the project materially and conceptually binds the photographic process to the river's toxic aftermath. Through text and image, Eden interrogates how divestment and neglect in rural economies are entwined with the upscaling of extractive industries, turning the river into both subject and substrate of environmental reckoning.

Eulogies (2017–2019)
Through post-documentary photographic and ethnographic practice, Eulogies centers on Northampton County, North Carolina—a landscape historically shaped by plantation economies and described by the federal government as exhibiting "persistent poverty." Drawing on George Beckford's "plantation thesis," the project traces how legacies of transatlantic slavery and racialized labor continue to structure both social life and ecological vulnerability in the present. Large-format C-41 photographs confront the entanglement of environmental racism, superfund sites, and extractive development—revealing how race and class are inscribed in the very materiality of place.
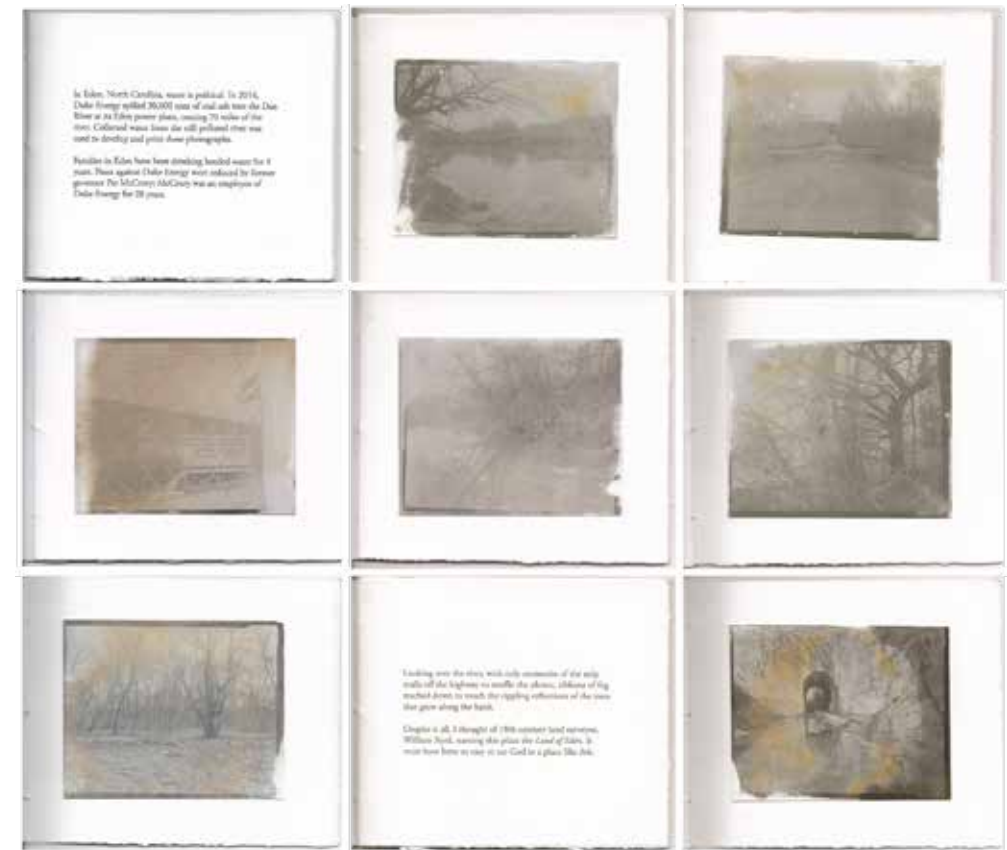
Not Tomorrow but the Next Day
This five-volume series of artist's books, created alongside the larger Eulogies project, uses 4x5 contact-printed cyanotypes toned in tannic mill water sourced from Northampton County, NC. The images—intimate studies of homes, backyards, and neighborhoods—are paired with fieldnote recollections and ethnographic reflections. By embedding local materials into the photographic process, the work honors ordinary life and community persistence in the face of historical dispossession and environmental threat, gesturing toward the slow dignity found in places that "reckon with time" in ways distinct from the anxious forward march of the urban.

Eden
Sample book pages

Eulogies of _____
Images and exhibition

Not Tomorrow but the Next Day
Sample book pages

Annie Simpson, Teaching Evaluations and Sample Syllabi

PART A: Sample Syllabi

1. Intro to Photography and Image Culture (Previously taught, UGA)
2. Digital Media: Not Magic (Previously taught, Harvard)
3. Dismantling Documentary (Proposed for Hampshire, Division 2)
4. Future Float (Co-taught with Luka Carter, Proposed for Hampshire, Division 2)

PART B: English for Design Evaluations

Student evaluations from English for Design, a specialized course at Harvard GSD that is designed to support international students in developing the language and communication skills necessary for architectural and design discourse. The course focuses on critical reading, writing, and presentation techniques, helping students engage more effectively in design critiques, research, and professional practice.

Through a combination of lectures, discussions, and design-oriented exercises, English for Design fosters clarity and confidence in articulating complex design concepts and introduces students to the important contexts of race, gender, and class in the built environment of the United States.

PART C: Teaching Evaluations

Student evaluations from Harvard GSD courses from Fall 2023 and Spring 2024. "Overall Effectiveness" scores above departmental and school-wide means.

PART D: Design Dossiers

In this portfolio you will first find three examples of student work (Master's level students) from my sections of DES3241: Theories of Landscape as Urbanism, a master's level course at Harvard's GSD. Teaching alongside Charles Waldheim and Dr. Gareth Doherty, we asked students to develop a 10- to 12-page Design Research Dossier through images – found photographs and student-made design work. It is structured through three narratives; (1) a singular material economy and its urbanized region; (2) a specific design project of landscape architecture; and 3) a particular form of subject formation.

Project 1:
Rural Paradoxes: Investigating Co-Dependencies: 'Implosions and Explosions' in Two Calabrian Landscapes

Project 2:
The Hidden Rise (And Fall) of the Greenbrier Resort

Project 3:
Green Monster, Blue Devils: Wealth, health, and power in North Carolina's early 20th century tobacco landscapes

ARST 2210: Intro Photo and Image Culture
Instructor: Annie Simpson, annie.simpson@uga.edu
Office hours: by appointment

Course introduction: This course will expose you to contemporary methods of photographic image making, which will provide the technical-know-how and confidence needed to pursue an interest in the medium. The course will cover camera operations and mechanical skill, learning image manipulation and editing software, artificial lighting techniques, video, how to compose an aesthetically pleasing and conceptually interesting image, and learning how to converse critically about the medium.

Through readings, discussions, and photographic projects you will learn the introductory steps of the photographic medium as well as engaging with contemporary art topics within an art historical context. Above all I hope to instill in each of you a love for the fine art of photography.

Supplies:
1. Textbook: Todd Hido, *On Landscapes, Interiors, and the Nude*
2. Laptop (We will be teaching from the Mac platform but this isn't exclusive).
3. Projector adapter for your laptop if ours doesn't fit. USB-C and VGA.
3. Adobe Creative Cloud Photography Plan: $9.99 (annual commitment required)
4. External hard drive and/or thumb drive (at least 16GB).
4. Budget $50 for printing (may include own paper for printing in flat lab)
6. Scissors
7. Towel and apron for darkroom
8. Journal/sketchbook for ideas, notes from crit and demos
8. Headphones/earbuds
9. Some sort of image capture device (phones are O.K.)
10. New quart paint can from lowes or home depot for pinhole camera
11. Permanent Marker so that you can write your name on everything! Other materials TBA depending on class interest

Recommended book: *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* by Charlotte Cotton

Electronic Devices: Although laptops and phones are necessary for some classes, only class related material should be open: no texting or social media on laptop or phone. Even if I don't call you out, I do notice and it does affect your grade.

Grading: Each assignment will be graded on:
*Technical quality of work
*Concept
*work habits/efficient use of class time
Ten points will be deducted for every day a project is late.
A=90% and up, B=80% and up, C=70% and up, D=60% and up-meaning 90 is an A-, etc. Your final grade is an average of all assignments, tumblr participation, and participation in buddy meetings. Attendance comes off of the top of that average. I also reserve the right to adjust your grade up to 1/3 if based on class participation and citizenship.

All material is due on the last day of class. I will provide a hard drive so that you can upload electronic versions of all projects. Files should be 1024x768 jpgs at 72 ppi. Each project should be in a folder with project name and your initials. These folders should be in a master folder with your first initial.last name. Each folder should also include an artist statement for the project if one was assigned. You should also include a docs with links to your tumblr sources and proof that you attended at least five art related events. Also turn in folders of buddy and art event photos in two separate properly labeled folders.

Facilities: Please be respectful of the Photo Area. You may bring snacks and beverages (with lids) into the classroom, but be conscious of your laptop-and your neighbor's
stuff. Last semester I witnessed a laptop being stepped on due to poor placement. Don't put your drinks on work areas. Absolutely no food or drink in the darkroom. Class/lab space must be cleaned at the end of each day (Leave no trace!). Students in ARST 2210 aren't allowed to work in the lab outside of class.

RTK and Hazmat: For your safety and that of your classmates, complete these two online courses and email a screenshot of the certificates before using the lab.
Right to know training: http://www.usg.edu/facilities/rtk-ghs
Hazardous Waste Training: https://esd.uga.edu/hazmat/training/index.asp

Overview:

1) New assignments will be given every few weeks. Throughout the project, you'll have ample opportunity for feedback from me. At the end of each assignment, we'll have a critique to discuss the work as a group.

2) You are expected to attend five art related events. These can be lectures, shows, or workshops.

3) Blog : The class will be divided into two Wordpress blog groups groups. We'll use it to share the work of artists you're looking at-and to show your own work. Every week one group will present: each member of that week's group will take no more than ten minutes to show three or four photographers' works from their posts. Each student will present every other week. These should not be artists I have shown or a classmate has already shown in class. Look at gallery and museum sites- both their current and past exhibits. Explore online magazines like Lens Culture.

Class Schedule
This is subject to change so keep an eye on your UGA email for alterations

Day 1
-Go over syllabus, class requirements, attendance, etc.
-Hazmat/RTK training due.
-For Tues, bring objects for photogram, clean quart paint can as well as an
-apron, towel, rag, etc. Order supplies-esp book.
Instagram Geography Project Introduction

Day 2
Instagram Geography Project Critique
-Darkroom procedure
-paint inside of paint can

Day 3
-photograms pinhole construction
-pinhole photography

Day 4
pinhole construction
Pinhole photography
Contact printing

Day 5

Pinhole critique

Day 6
Introduction to digital camera

Day 7
-Hido Book discussion: pages 8-30 - have at least 3 questions/thoughts to discuss
Lightroom Introduction - Catalogs and Importing - have photos ready to use Lightroom
- Basic Editing Demo and Lab time

Day 8
Blog: Group 1

-Lightroom - More editing & Exporting, File Management Viewing:
The Colourful Mr. Eggleston

Day 9
    Lab day

Day 10
    Research day (no class scheduled)
    (***Use time to research photographers/artists and make photographs)***

Thursday September 19
    Blog Group 2
    Bring 30 printed 4x6 from this assignment

Day 11

 Observational Photography critique

Day 12
    -Hido Book discussion: pages 33-53 - have at least 3 questions/thoughts to discuss
    -Viewing - Art21 episode (either Collier Schorr, Gabriel Orozco, and Janine Antoni or
    episode on Play), discussion
    -Benjamin Smoke screening

Day 13 Making a picture: constructed image What is
    a constructed image?
    Demo/lecture on types of picture making (cinematic/found and
    appropriations/composites/physical constructions etc)
    Written project proposal introduce

Day 14
   Hido Book discussion: pages 55-77 -
    have at least 3 questions/thoughts to discuss

Day 15 Blog Group 1
    Demo in digitally compositing
    DIY lighting demos (wireless flash triggers, clamp lights etc.)

In progress consultation

Day 16

Tumblr Group 2
Viewing: Gregory Crewdson documentary
Discussion

Day 17

Lab Day

Day 18

Constructed Image Critique

Day 19

Library Day: searching and finding monograph

Day 20

Photobook discussion

Day 22

Time-based photography
Lecture and Practice of Time Based Photography Edgarton, Sugimoto
Demos and Techniques in Time based photography (Long exposure / strobe / etc) and the world of video art

Day 23

video art discussion
Demo of filming a video and video editing basics
discuss ideas and progress on video or photo project

Day 24
Blog Group 1
Lab time

Day 25
-Blog Group 2
-Lab time

Day 26
Critique
Final Project Introduction
Brainstorm ideas

Day 27
5 Minute presentation pitch on final project idea
What are you interested in pursuing?

Day 28
Annie work presentation

Day 29

Lab Day

Day 30

Lab Day

Day 31

Final Critique

VIS 2229
Digital Media: Not Magic
2024 Spring

Meeting Times and Location

Day: M
Time: 10:30-13:15
Location: Gund 109

Schedule information is subject to change. Check the my.Harvard course catalog for the latest information.
Please note: Thursday is represented with the letter H.

Contact Information (Co-Taught)

Michelle Chang
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Annie Simpson
anniesimpson@gsd.harvard.edu

Current Semester Office Hours

Course Description

According to folklore, Michelangelo fell to his knees upon seeing the Florentine fresco Annunciation, went silent, and eventually concluded that the image of the Virgin must have been made through divine intervention since its brushwork surpassed human talents. When the computer graphics company Blue Sky released its commercial for Chock Full o'Nuts in 1994, The New York Times called the rendering of a walking and talking coffee bean "computer magic." It was the best way to explain the video's special effects. What else would one call using lines of code to give an inanimate object life? Or the transfiguration of mere paint into saintly likeness?

Esoteric processes have long imbued artforms with power, rendering audiences speechless, awestruck, and affected. In the nineties, anthropologist Alfred Gell proposed that mundane things can be construed as "enchanted forms" when differences exist between an audience's technological expectations and an object's facture. This contradiction gives rise to a belief that artists and their objects can possess otherworldly faculties. In reality, everyday forms become enchanted not through magic, but through precise construction methodologies.

This course seeks to articulate what aesthetic categories are at play when technology is perceived to be magical. The aim of this class is to 1) generate more nuanced descriptions for the transformations found in computational and craft traditions, and 2) take and modify images with the explicit aim of enchantment. We will explore these ideas in synchronous lectures and case studies, and asynchronous workshops. Readings include texts by Alfred Gell and Walter Benjamin.

Course Requirements

Case Studies

Image Alterations

Oral Presentation

Weekly Schedule and Topics

1. Jan. 22 — **Introduction: Shamans, Illusionists, Devils, and Gods**
2. Jan. 29 — **Magic, two ways**
   — Gell, Alfred. "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology." Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics. (1992): 40-63.
3. Feb. 5 — Class Canceled
4. Feb. 12 — **Symbolic Process**
   — Gell, Alfred. Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, sections 1.1, 1.2, 6.1-6.10.
5. Feb. 19 — Presidents' Day
6. Feb. 26 — **Assignment 1**

7. Mar. 4 — **Origin and Myth**
— Benjamin, Walter, Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin. The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media. London: The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2008.
Further reading:
— Holmes, Megan. "Miraculous Images in Renaissance Florence." Art History. 34.3 (2011):
433-465.

8. Mar. 11 — Spring Break

9. Mar. 18 — **Technicians of Trickery: Shamans and Optical Illusionists**
— Taussig, Michael T. Walter Benjamin's Grave. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
— Holt, David K. "Denis Diderot and the Aesthetic Point of View." The Journal of Aesthetic Education. 34.1 (2000): 19-24.

10. Mar. 25 — **Assignment 2**

11. Apr. 1 — **Operational Aesthetics**
— Ngai, Sianne. "Theory of the Gimmick: Aesthetic Judgment and Capitalist Form," Critical Inquiry 43 (Winter 2017): 466-505.
— Harris, Neil. "The Operational Aesthetic." Popular Fiction: Technology, Ideology, Production, Reading, edited by Tony Bennett. London: Routledge, 1990, 401-412.
Further reading:
— Gunning, Tom. "Crazy Machines in the Garden of Forking Paths," Classical Hollywood Comedy, edited by Kristine B. Karnick and Henry Jenkins. New York: Routledge, 1995.

12. Apr. 8 — **Technological Aesthetics**
— Picon, Antoine. "Continuity, Complexity, and Emergence: What Is the Real for Digital Designers?" Perspecta. 42 (2010): 147-157.
— Carpo, Mario and Peter Eisenman. "Filling Up the Void with Presence." Interview by G and L. :, 5 March 2014, www.c-o-l-o-n.com/2_2carpo.html.

13. Apr. 15 — **Assignment 3**

14. Apr. 22 — **Final PDF Binder Uploaded to Canvas by 8:00 PM**

Assignments

Students will develop an aesthetic category of their naming through research and making. Case studies of photographs serve as the basis for research on what "not magical" effects already exist in the canon. Students will generate and modify images as the testing grounds for producing new enchanting effects.

Course Policies

Attendance

Class begins promptly at 10:30 pm and ends at 1:15 pm. Students are expected to be present at all meetings for their entirety. You must notify the instructor of absence due to illness, and any prolonged absence must be accompanied by a doctor's note. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade. Consistent tardiness and more than three unexcused absences will put you in danger of not passing the course.

Deadlines

Deadlines are discussed in class. All deadlines are fixed and must be completed and submitted by the specified dates and times.

Evaluation

Grading is based on all the work submitted over the course of the semester. Evaluations reflect the consistency of intellectual acuity, depth of critiques, experimentation, craft, and production. This seminar requires a serious engagement with design exploration and independent thinking. Final grading will consider the trajectory of overall progress but is ultimately a measure of a body of work and its intellectual positioning in the course context.

ADA

Any student requiring disability accommodations is encouraged to contact the instructor. Disability Support Services is in the Smith Center Suite 900, disabilityservices@harvard.edu, 495-1859.

Documentation

Keeping a good record of your work is imperative for your academic development and is also required by the GSD. Final grades will be released upon receipt of the proper submittal of your documentation.

Office hours

Office hours by appointment. Email Michelle at mchang@gsd.harvard.edu. Email Annie at anniesimpson@gsd.harvard.edu.

Dismantling Documentary

Course: XXXX XXXXX   Room # XXX

Instructor: Annie Simpson   anniesimpson@gsd.harvard.edu
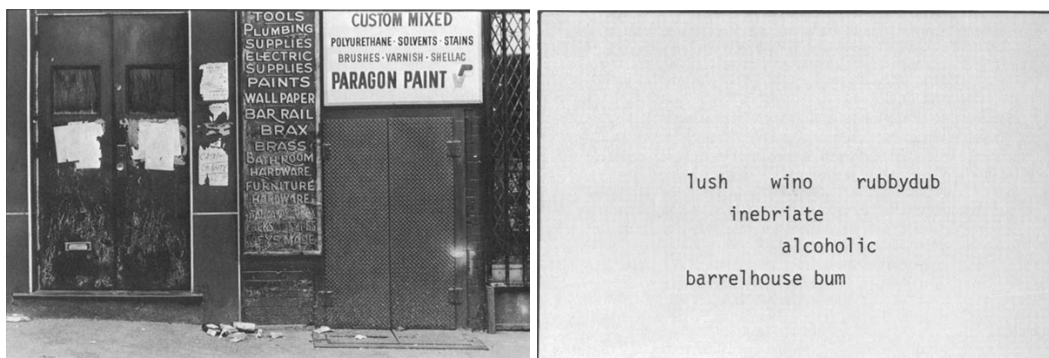

Introduction:

In his essay "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary (Notes on the Politics of Representation)," the artist Allan Sekula writes:

> *Paradoxically, the camera serves to ideologically naturalize the eye of the observer. Photography, according to this belief, reproduces the visible world: the camera is an engine of fact, the generator of a duplicate world of fetishized appearances, independently of human practice. Photographs, always the product of socially-specific encounters between human-and human or human-and-nature, become repositories of dead facts, reified objects torn from their social origins.*

Taking Sekula's provocation seriously as a call to reimagine photography as a very much alive practice anchored in social relations, this course invites students to engage with contemporary lens and media-based practices that challenge and reimagine traditional documentary narratives and archival materials. We will investigate how artists and filmmakers critique and expand notions of objectivity, truth, sensation, and authenticity in documentary work, creatively blending these forms with fiction, self-reflection, performance, and abstraction.

Through a combination of readings in visual art, photography, and documentary studies, we will delve into the complex debates surrounding the production of historical knowledge, the politics of the image, and the evolving practices of documentary photography and film. Students will explore the creative potential of both traditional and non-traditional lens-based media in historical research and social change. By examining a variety of exploratory practices, such as docu-fiction, visual auto-ethnography, sensory ethnography, and fieldwork, we will reconceptualize images not as static representations, but as dynamic, active components in the creation of historical and personal narratives. This course will enhance students' understanding of the history of experimental and alternative process photography, while familiarizing them with contemporary discussions around documentary methodologies that interrogate categorization and interpretation.

Keywords: photography, ethnography, social practice

Martha Rosler, The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems, 1975, photographs and text

Format and topical outline:

1. Introduction:

   - In this advanced photography class, students will begin the semester with a series of readings, screenings, and lectures that introduce them to a wide range of experimental documentary photography projects including but not limited to: Allan Sekula's Fish Story and The Forgotten Space (2013); Latoya Ruby Fraizer's The Notion of a Family (2014); Martha Rossler's The Bowery in two inadequate descriptive systems (1975*).*
   - Deliverable: Students are required to analyze one documentary project and reference theoretical texts by photographers from a provided list. This assignment aims to deepen their understanding of a significant text in the history of photography while developing their written critique skills. Each student will choose a book from a designated list and connect it to their selected project. The presentation should last 15 minutes.

2. Ethical practice and sensory ethnography:

   - In this section of the class, students will begin to formulate their own experimental documentary projects alongside ethical consideration. Together, we will read a series of texts including: What Should I Do? Philosophers on the Good, the Bad, and the Puzzling ed. Alexander George; "Wooden Eyes: Nine Reflections on Distance," by Carlo Ginzburg; and "James Baldwin Writing and Talking," by Mel Watkins. The New York Times Book Review, Sunday, September 23, 1979.
   - Sensory ethnography is the intersection of art and anthropology, primarily expressed through the senses. In this section, students will also read about sensory ethnography as both a research method and an artistic approach.
   - Deliverable: For their assignment for this section, students will keep and produce a fieldwork journal that catalogs their thoughts on these questions: How does ethnography differ from documentary? In what ways does image making convey an embodied experience? Can or should the senses remain apolitical? Is it possible for aesthetics and anthropology to coexist? What lies ahead for documentary?

3. Creation of an experimental documentary project:

   - For their final project, students will create an experimental documentary photo project based on what they have learned from sense- and place-making.
   - This project emphasizes sensory, performative, and place-based research methods, aiming to disrupt traditional scholarly models that often prioritize language. We seek to explore what embodied, creative, and practice-based research could look like in academia and how such research might be conveyed as new knowledge, including multimedia documentation.
   - The final selection of images should be displayed alongside their fieldwork observations, notes, sketches, and research. This journal should reflect the time dedicated to fieldwork and the development of a research concept focused on sensation.
   - Students are encouraged to work beyond static images: montage, collage, sound, video, performance, installation, alternative process, etc are all accepted.

Resources:

Selected Texts:
- "Ways of Seeing," John Berger
- "Looking at Photographs," John Szarkowski
- "The Photobook: A History 1-3," Martin Parr and Gerry Badger "
- "The Ballad of Sexual Dependency", Nan Goldin
- "Dismantling Modernism, Reinventing Documentary," Allan Sekula
- "In Defense of the Poor Image, Hito Steyerl
- "How to See the World," Nicholas Mirzoeff
- "Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present," Deborah Willis
- "Regarding the Pain of Others," Susan Sontag
- "Seeing through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography," Martin Berger
- "Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe," Tina Campt
- "The Sensuous City: Sensory methodologies in urban ethnography," Kevin Low
- "We Have Stories: Five Generations of Indigenous Women in Water," Rosemary Georgeson and Jessica Hallenbeck
- "Footprints through the weather-world: walking, breathing, knowing," Tim Ingold
- "Enchantment's Irreconcilable Connection: Listening to Anger: Being Idle No More," Dylan Robinson

Learning Outcomes:

- Create a portfolio of images using one visual style that express a concept or narrative about their subject.
- Evaluate different technological and ethical methods for documentary.
- Demonstrate, through their photographs, an advanced level of knowledge and skill of photographic techniques
- Critically analyze and evaluate their work, the work of their peers and the work of professional photographers.
- Gain a historical perspective on the development of documentary photography • Students will explore the connection between documentary and fine art photography
- Combine photography and writing to reinforce their documentary project and communication skills

Future Float: Social Sculpture + Experimental Images after the End of Times

Co-taught by Dr. Annie Simpson & Luka Carter
Proposed for Hampshire College, Studio Art

This course is a collaborative, interdisciplinary studio exploring the Anthropocene beyond cataclysm—through collective making, multispecies attention, and radical acts of "being-with." Students will design and construct a raft from reclaimed and sustainable materials on Hampshire's campus, then launch and inhabit it along the waters and wetlands of the Kestrel Land Trust. The raft serves as a floating studio, stage, and observatory; it invites daily artistic "offerings" (songs, poems, woven objects, performances, field notes, and images) that honor and respond to the ecologies and histories of the river and its inhabitants.

Moving away from disaster narratives, this course centers speculative repair, sympoiesis ("making-with"), and experimental cohabitation. Students will engage in collective world-building and narrative-making using photography, book arts, sound, and environmental intervention to imagine how we might dwell differently with water, land, and the more-than-human community.

The course will also culminate in the production of a collaborative photobook zine. This publication will include documentation of the raft's construction, images and creative works made during the float, and a DIY toolkit for designing similar watercraft to share both our process and our collective discoveries with future makers, artists, and river communities.

Key Themes:

- The Anthropocene reimagined: from apocalypse to cohabitation
- Sympoiesis and multispecies making (Donna Haraway, Anna Tsing)
- Place-based art, ritual, and fieldwork
- Narrative theory and the power of storytelling in environmental futures
- Prefigurative politics and collaborative learning
- Ecological intimacy, repair, and collective agency

Core Activities:

- Design and construction of a group raft using sustainable and found materials
- Field-based "offerings" each day (music, projections, weaving, performance, poetry, scientific observation)
- Daily photographic, written, and sound documentation
- Interaction with artists, naturalists, musicians, and community collaborators
- Creation of a collaborative photobook/artist's book and short documentary from the experience
- On-campus and public sharing (exhibition, performance, or screening)

Readings/Frameworks:

- Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*
- Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*
- Excerpts from Walter Fisher, Spector-Mersel, Paschen & Ison (narrative theory)
- Selected works on place-based and environmental art, slow practices, and multispecies storytelling

Assessment:

- Active, creative participation in group planning, raft-building, and float expedition
- Daily documentation and creative "offerings"
- Contribution to the collaborative photobook and film
- Short reflective essay or journal on the collective process, narrative-making, and ecological learning
- Participation in a culminating exhibition, screening, or campus event

Learning Outcomes:
By the end of the course, students will:

- Develop skills in interdisciplinary collaboration, field-based making, and creative documentation
- Practice new methods for inhabiting and narrating the Anthropocene beyond disaster
- Produce and publish collaborative visual and textual works
- Deepen their understanding of multispecies cohabitation, ecological repair, and art's potential for forging new collective futures

Note:
This course prioritizes collaboration, experimentation, and care: or each other, for our more-than-human neighbors, and for the living landscapes of Hampshire and the Kestrel Land Trust.

September 17, 2024

English for Design (2024)
Annie Simpson

Student comments:

Annie is so professional and informative. She gave me so much help on my presentations and written assignments.

Through the classes and seminars, Annie has been instrumental in sharing relevant reference materials and contextualizing the course, history and other learnings.

Annie's feedback on our presentation is always on point and very helpful. I benefited a lot from the references and tips she used to give us in the seminars.

Annie always allows us to respond and give our opinion, to see what we understand from the discussion question and then jumps in if no one starts the discussion in some time. She also helps in clarifying the question and how we can go about discussing the question, and in which direction it could go. The discussions themselves go very well when everyone is familiar with the topic as it is easy to discuss.

Annie helped us to get to know more about how a seminar works. At the very beginning of our class we sometimes didn't know what to say. However, Annie shared her own thoughts and encouraged us to think further based on the topic she showed us. Therefore, we gradually know have to get involved in the seminars.

Annis is always patient with students! All the feedback I got from her is helpful with many details. Thank you so much for Annie's dedication! The seminar section is very helpful for me!

Annie always gives inspiring comments in the seminar. She also provides external links or recommend books for us to explore more.
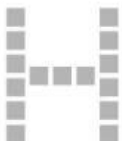
July 07, 2024

F2023; Sp2024 Teaching Evaluations
Annie Simpson

Course # DES3241   2023 Fall
Instructor: Simpson,Annie
**Course Title:** Theories of Landscape as Urbanism

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	N/A	Total	Mean	Dept. Mean	GSD Mean
Familiarity with subject matter:	10 (30%)	5 (20%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	15 (50%)	33	3.56	3.50	3.52
Explains concepts clearly:	8 (20%)	5 (20%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	16 (50%)	33	3.40	3.46	3.46
Answers questions clearly and concisely:	8 (20%)	4 (10%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	17 (50%)	33	3.43	3.50	3.47
Encourages student participation:	9 (30%)	3 (10%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	17 (50%)	33	3.50	3.50	3.45
Cares about how review/section is progressing:	9 (30%)	4 (10%)	1 (0%)	0 (0%)	17 (50%)	33	3.57	3.49	3.47
Overall effectiveness:	9 (30%)	3 (10%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	17 (50%)	33	3.50	3.50	3.45

Course # VIS2229   2024 Spring
Instructor: Simpson,Annie
Course Title: Digital Media: Not Magic

	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	N/A	Total	Mean	Dept. Mean	GSD Mean
Familiarity with subject matter:	8 (50%)	7 (40%)	1 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17	3.44	3.47	3.44
Explains concepts clearly:	8 (50%)	7 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (10%)	17	3.53	3.45	3.45
Answers questions clearly and concisely:	9 (50%)	7 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17	3.56	3.49	3.44
Cares about how review/section is progressing:	10 (60%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17	3.44	3.43	3.47
Overall effectiveness:	10 (60%)	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	17	3.50	3.42	3.43
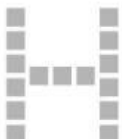
15 Dec 2024

DES 3241 Final Dossier

Rural Paradoxes:

Investigating Co-Dependencies: 'Implosions and Explosions' in Two Calabrian Landscapes

I. Sila, Calabria, 1964 - postcard

This dossier examines both the ideology and the capital driving a scheme of urbanization and modernization in one of Italy's poorest and historically underprivileged regions. Through research, two government initiatives that are antithetical in nature will be presented. The first, *Opera per la Valorizzazione della Sila* (OVS), was a project aimed at reimagining the landscape by redistributing rural land in Sila. The second, an *Area di Sviluppo Industriale* in Crotone, located 30 miles away, is a zone designated for industrial development. The essay unfolds as a research narrative, culminating in an analysis of their interdependencies and how landscape theory provides a framework for understanding them.

When I first found this postcard, I wasn't entirely sure if the landscape shown in it was one I knew well. It had elements that felt familiar, yet not fully recognizable. The image was dated 1964, and by the time I experienced the area as a child in the early 2000s, it had changed significantly. Pines had been planted, completely transforming the landscape, and some of the dwellings were gone. Still, the remaining houses added an odd, almost romantic touch, a glimpse of a Northern European landscape with wooden houses.

Over the past few months, as I've revisited this image, I've realized what's unique about it: it feels oddly contemporary for a moment in time when the region was still enduring brutal poverty. A series of documentaries by Vittorio De Seta from the same period show people transporting building materials up to stone hilltop villages still by the use of donkeys.[i] In contrast, the white car in this scene, perhaps a Fiat 1500, is a clear sign of a middle class very far removed from that reality. Another notable detail is the absence of clear divisions or property boundaries, an unusual characteristic for a region traditionally dominated by stone dwellings clustered in close proximity.

These details led me to uncover that these houses were built as part of a scheme called *Opera di Valorizzazione della Sila*: an ambitious initiative organized by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. Its goal was to redistribute land in the region. But this discovery raised two questions: why was land being redistributed in a region that, at the time, was experiencing mass emigration? And where did the funding for these reforms come from?

The first answer emerged through the work of local scholars who described how part of this scheme, the agrarian reform in the region, was catalysed by a series of land occupations in the 1940s. These occupations, often organized through the Communist Party, during and after the war years, particularly in response to the struggles of the peasant class. In 1946, a law known as the *Gullo Decree* was enacted, allowing for the temporary concession of lands to peasants, some of whom had already occupied it. Between 1946 and 1950, there was a steady formation of agricultural cooperatives, some of which were organized through the Communist Party. In 1950, through new government legislation, the *Opera per la Valorizzazione* della Sila was formally established, allowing for the expropriation of land from the few landowners in the area. During its 20 years of activity, 4,000 new dwellings, known as *case coloniche*, were built, including the ones shown in the pictures. Although critics have argued that the scheme ultimately failed due to a lack of resources and ongoing class struggles, analysing the economic resources behind it remains of significant relevance.[ii]

One question remains: where is the capital for this scheme coming from? A series of reforms concurrent with the '*reshaping*' of these landscape involved its exploitation through state-driven industrial development. This was achieved through the establishment of a fund called *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, created specifically to implement development measures in southern Italy. Two key concepts emerged: *aree di sviluppo industriale* (industrial development areas) and *nuclei di industrializzazione* (industrial hubs).[iii] Both were state-driven initiatives, representing a significant shift away from the neoliberal policies that were prominent in

II. **Map depicting one new village in the Opera per la Valorizzazione della Sila (OVS)** and Lake Arvo, one of the artificial dammed hydroelectric lakes created as part of the scheme.

direction of photograph

Lorica

Lake Arvo

1 km

OVS

III. Map of Italy highlighting Calabria, with the location of the OVS marked in yellow.

northern Italy at the time. Here, state involvement was seen as a necessary step to kickstart development. In producing a map of these areas and determining which site to focus on, I analysed the connection between capital and resources. The *nuclei di industrializzazione* in Crotone, one of the closest hubs to the Sila region where the first picture was taken, quickly stood out as a strong candidate. Located just 30 miles away, the site consists of 484 hectares of land, positioned north of the port.

A *territorial assets assessment* that linked resources to this site further solidified this connection.[iv] This document highlights the site's strategic qualities within the region and lists its key resources, including water, natural gas, waste sites, and transportation routes. The site was established through the benefits from the natural gas extracted just a few miles off the coast, where an oil platform is connected to the industrial hub. the document reveals the site's use of water sourced from the Sila region, highlighting the codependents between territorial resources and industrial development.
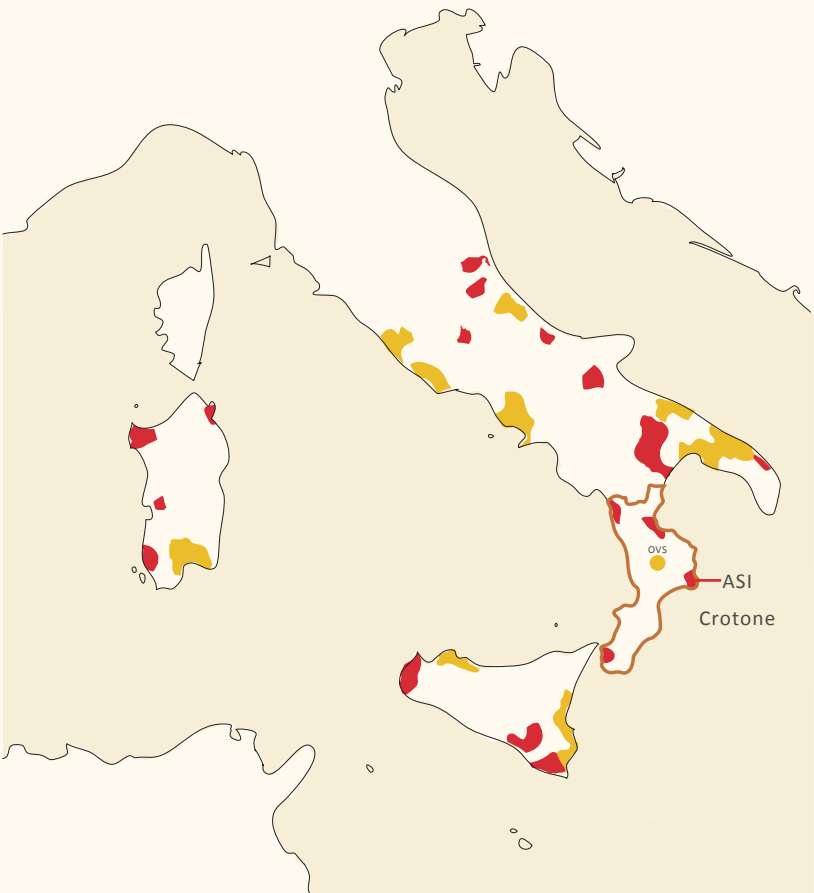
IV. Map of the industrial zones, highlighting differences between areas, with heavy industrial processes indicated in red.
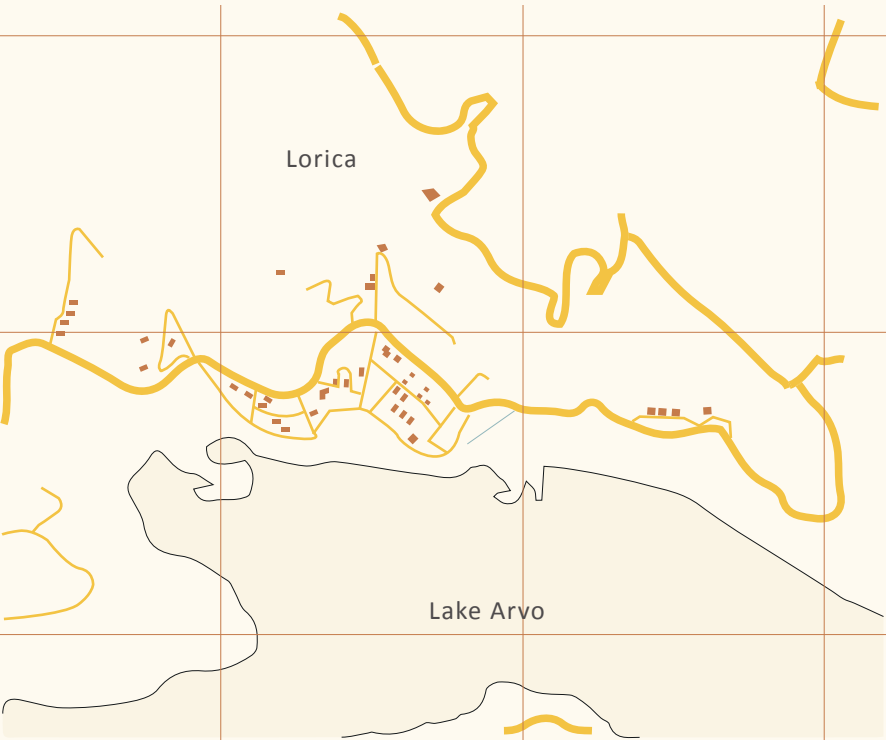
Areas for industrial development
Zones of industrialization

V. & VI. Archival military maps from the year following the initial postcard.

Through selective tracing of these two maps, the drawings below help illustrate the scale

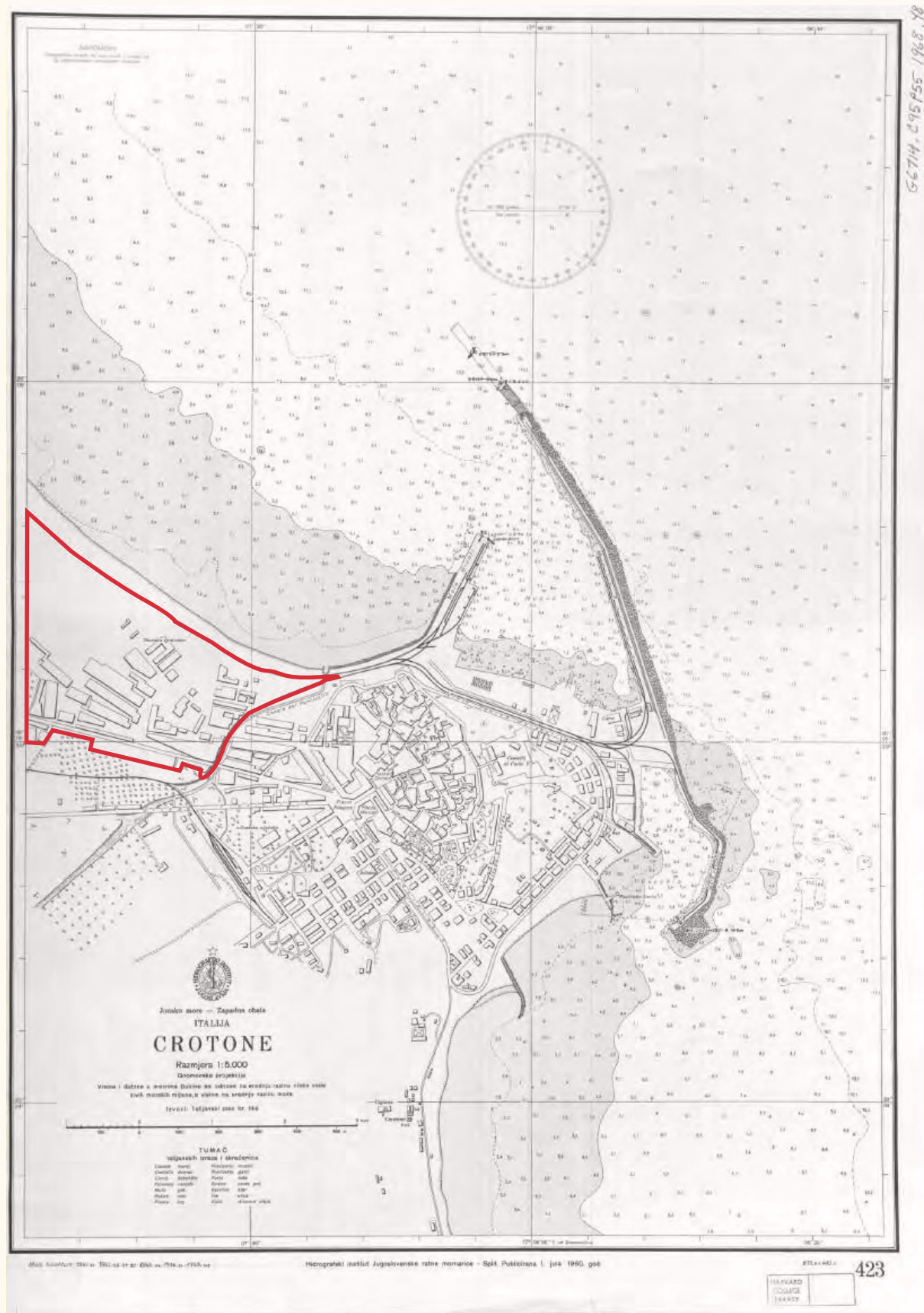of these schemes.

V. OVS, Sila, Lorica New Village 1965

Lorica

Lake Arvo

1 km

12

VI. ASI, Crotone, Industriale zone. 1965

GAS

Crotone   Mediterranean Sea

1 km

13

Industrial Zone

VII. Naval map illustrating industrial development in Crotone, 1968.

US Office of Strategic Services Research and Analysis Branch, Crotone: Plan of Port (Washington, D.C.): Lith-ographed in the Reproduction Branch, OSS, 1943).

Industrial Zone

VIII. The site as it appears today in a satellite image, with industrial sites highlighted.

Gas Extraction Company Petrusola & Petrochemical Units

Industrial Waste sites

In his posthumous novel *Petrolio*, Pier Paolo Pasolini centres what remains an unfinished work around a single character. Through Carlo, a white-collar worker for ENI, the Italian *Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi* (National Hydrocarbons Board), Pasolini explores the dualities of public life and power.[v]

To describe these manifestations of political and economic power, Pasolini delves into themes of corruption and manipulation, particularly surrounding oil exploration. In an anecdotal yet symbolic moment, after Carlo faints, two beings, Polis and Tetis, decide how to "split" him. This metaphysical exploration portrays Polis as representing the good and the social, while Tetis embodies the diabolical and sensual. From this point, all subsequent descriptions are filtered through either Polis or Tetis.

Pasolini uses a blend of direct and indirect references to expose the corruption and manipulation embedded in oil exploration and business practices but also how all of these exist within a single entity. This concept can also be explained through landscape thory. In Lefebvre's early works on the rural he argues for looking both rural and urban spaces within a "political economy of space."[vi] His analytical approach, influenced by Marx, emphasizes understanding the "land-labor-capital relation" and the historical context of spatial development. Lefebvre's rural writings, including La vallée de Campan, examine agrarian reform and class dynamics. As he notes, "During the first half of the twentieth century, agrarian reforms and peasant revolutions reshaped the surface of the planet."[vii] His writing inspired by

new towns like Mourenx, as part of a global trend toward urbanization. What is relevant to this Dossier is Lefebvre's emphasis on rural sociology not as a marginal phenomenon but as a space of production that can be understood and analysed in relation to broader societal conditions. His notion of "implosion-explosion", that was subsequentially relevant for scholarship on planetary urbanization,[viii] describes the accumulation of capital coinciding with its transformative impact made visible through urban change, seems deeply rooted in his direct engagement with these evolving landscapes.

The challenge lies in our inability to observe these phenomena up close. This is where this kind of work becomes relevant. Drawing parallels to Pasolini's *Polis and Tetis* and Lefebvre's *Implosion and Explosion*, this work shows the need to trace and highlight interdependencies while also questioning the ways resources are utilized.

ENDNOTES

i *Il mondo perduto:i cortometraggi di Vittorio De Seta, 1954-1959*, Feltrinelli Real cinema (Bologna : Milano:

Cineteca Bologna ; Feltrinelli, 2008).

ii Both of these scholars' works provide an in-depth overview of the reforms. Pezzino focuses primarily on

the enacted reform, while Galasso examines the land occupations and the motives behind the unrest

that preceded the reform. Galasso, on page 25, provides the number of new *case coloniche* built in the

area.

Paolo Pezzino, *La riforma agraria in Calabria: intervento pubblico e dinamica sociale in un'area del

Mezzogiorno, 1950-1970*, 1. ed., [Pubblicazioni] - Istituto nazionale per la storia del movimento di

liberazione in Italia (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977).

Giuseppe Galasso, *La riforma agraria in Calabria*, 1. ed., Saggi e inchieste 5 (Roma: Opere nuove, 1958).

iii Felice P. Ruggiero, *Aree di sviluppo industriale, sviluppo economico e Mezzogiorno: un viaggio nel

mondo delle ASI* (Atripalda (Avellino): Mephite, 2004).

iv L. Colombo, *Modellistica e assetto territoriale* (EDIZIONI DEDALO, 2002).

v Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Petrolio* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997).

vi Henri Lefebvre et al., *On the Rural: Economy, Sociology, Geography* (University of Minnesota Press, 2022)

vii Lefebvre et al, xxv .

viii Neil Brenner, 'Theses on Urbanization', *Public Culture* 25, no. 1 (2013): 85–114,

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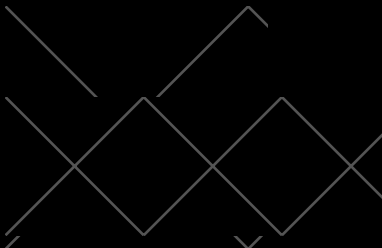Pasolini, Pier Paolo. *Petrolio*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1997.

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The Hidden Rise (And Fall) of the Greenbrier Resort

Appalachia, West Virginia
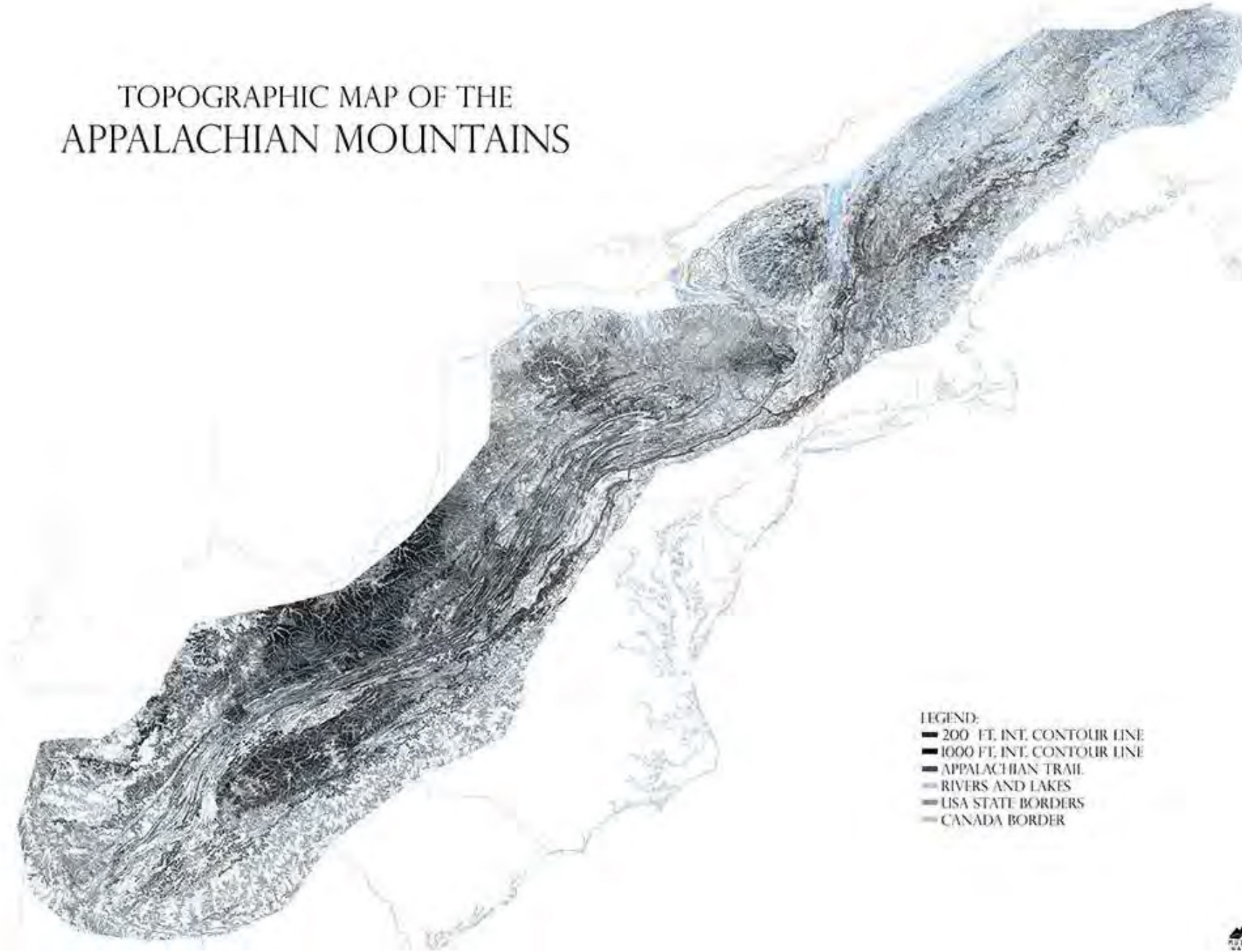
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF THE
APPALACHIAN MOUNTAINS

LEGEND:
- 200 FT. INT. CONTOUR LINE
- 1000 FT. INT. CONTOUR LINE
- APPALACHIAN TRAIL
- RIVERS AND LAKES
- USA STATE BORDERS
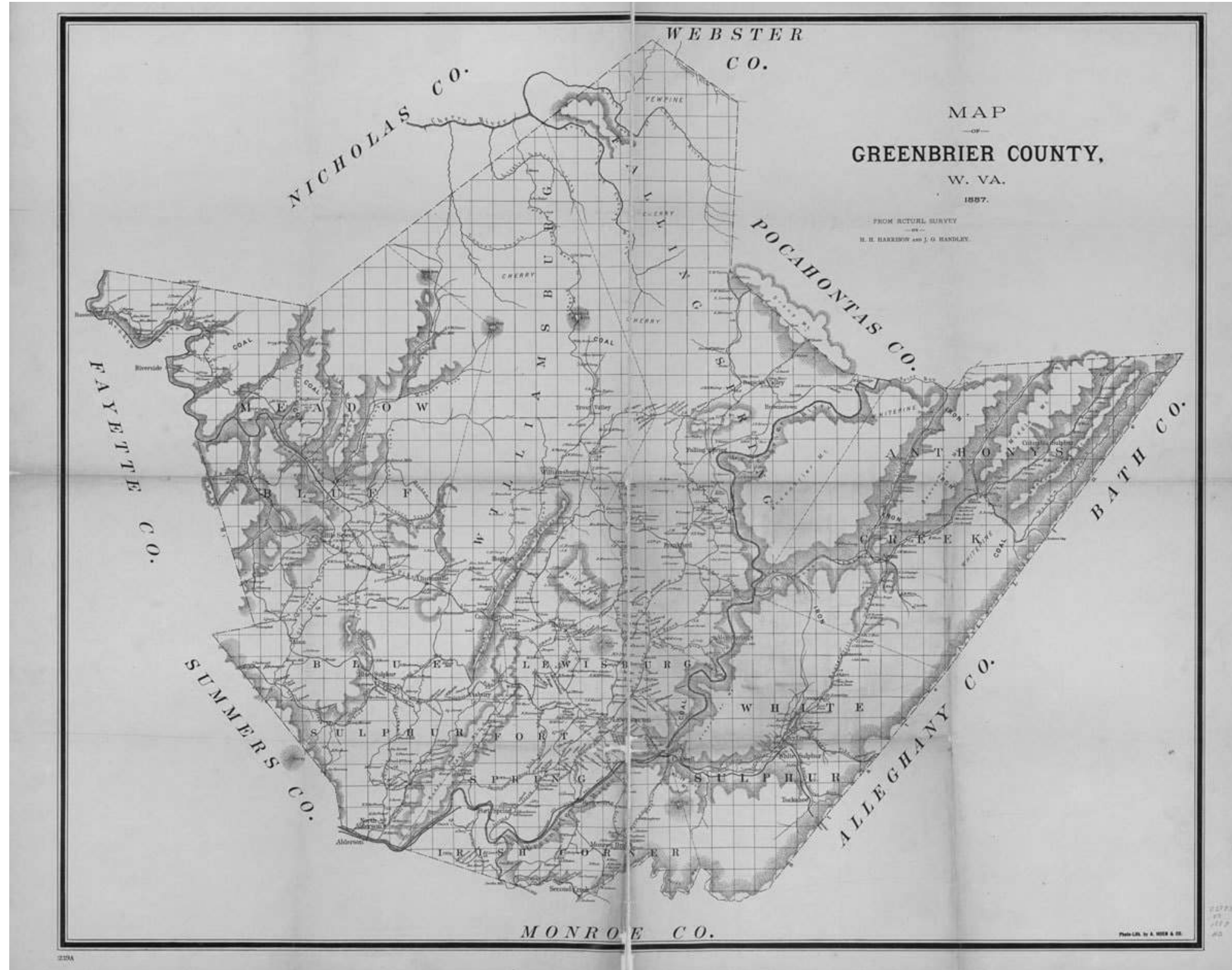- CANADA BORDER

Figure 1 - Topographic Map of the Appalachian Mountains

Figure 2 - Map of Greenbrier County (WV Historic Records)

Figure 3 - Overall Plan of The Greenbrier Resort (Google Earth)

Figure 4 - Surface Mining Site in Greenbrier County (Google Earth)

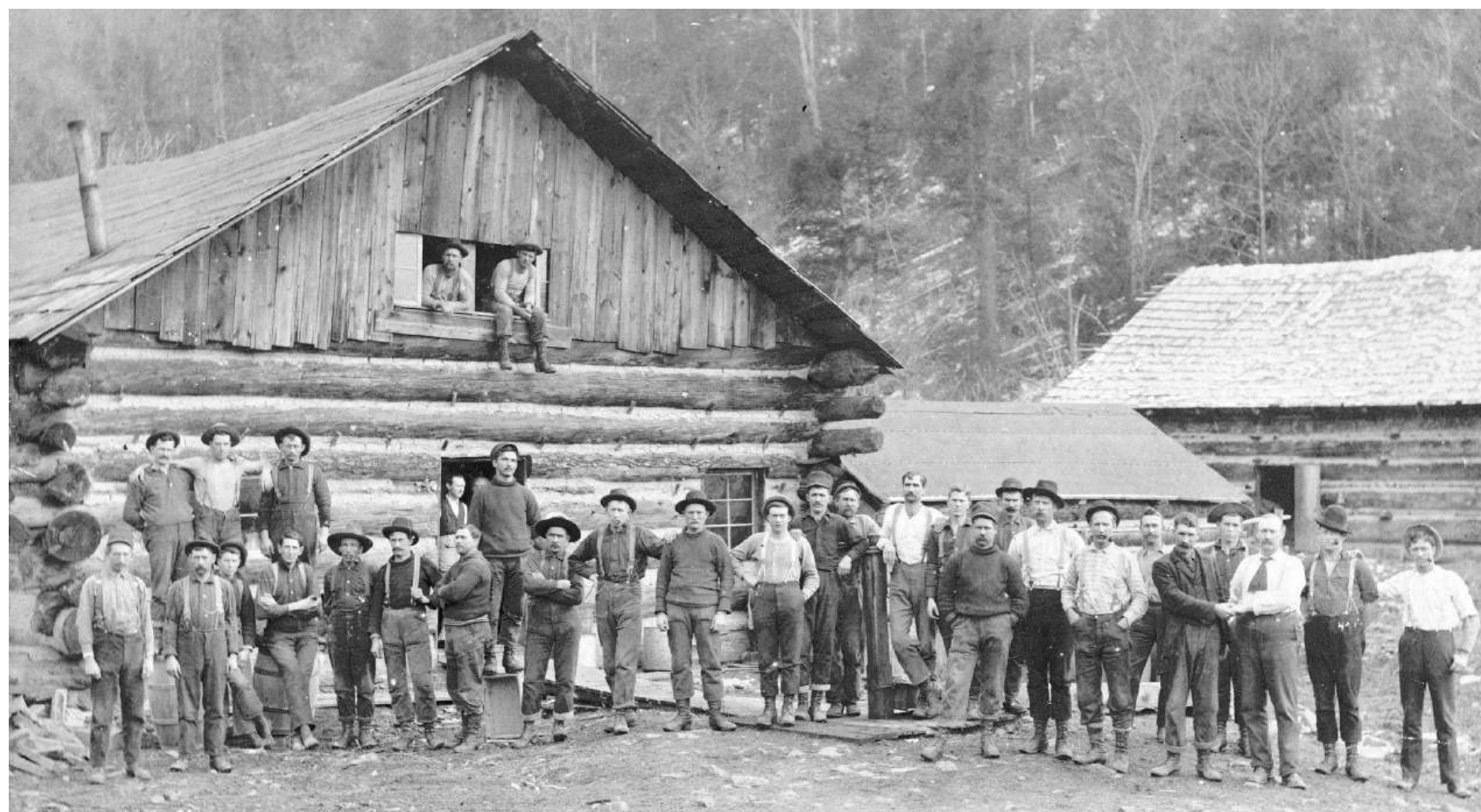*Figure 5 - Bunkhouses in Southern West Virginia near the Greenbrier (Beyond the North House Tour)*

Figure 6 - Bunkhouses in Southern West Virginia near the Greenbrier (Beyond the North House Tour)

Nestled in the picturesque Appalachian Mountains in White Sulphur Springs, The Greenbrier is a luxurious resort between the rolling hills and the winding rivers. This elegant destination is set amidst rolling hills and dense woodlands, creating a serene escape for visitors. The Greenbrier boasts striking French-inspired architecture, characterized by its grand white facade that commands attention against the vibrant backdrop of the landscape. Guests are treated to stunning panoramic views that showcase the lush valleys and majestic hills, making it a truly enchanting place to relax and unwind. The resort offers a wealth of amenities and activities, ensuring a memorable experience for all who visit. The resort, designed and commissioned by the British-born American architect Frederick Julius Sterner, was built in 1913 with funding from the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, which is now part of the Chessie System and CSX Corporation. The construction was monumental for the region, creating a massive estate neighboring the small incorporated town of White Sulphur Springs. Over the years, through a series of ownership changes and partnerships, the property was eventually purchased by its current owner, Jim Justice. For nearly 15 years, the Justice family has renovated the resort to be a prominent destination in the state, creating a tourism hub with the resort, spa, and outdoor activities.
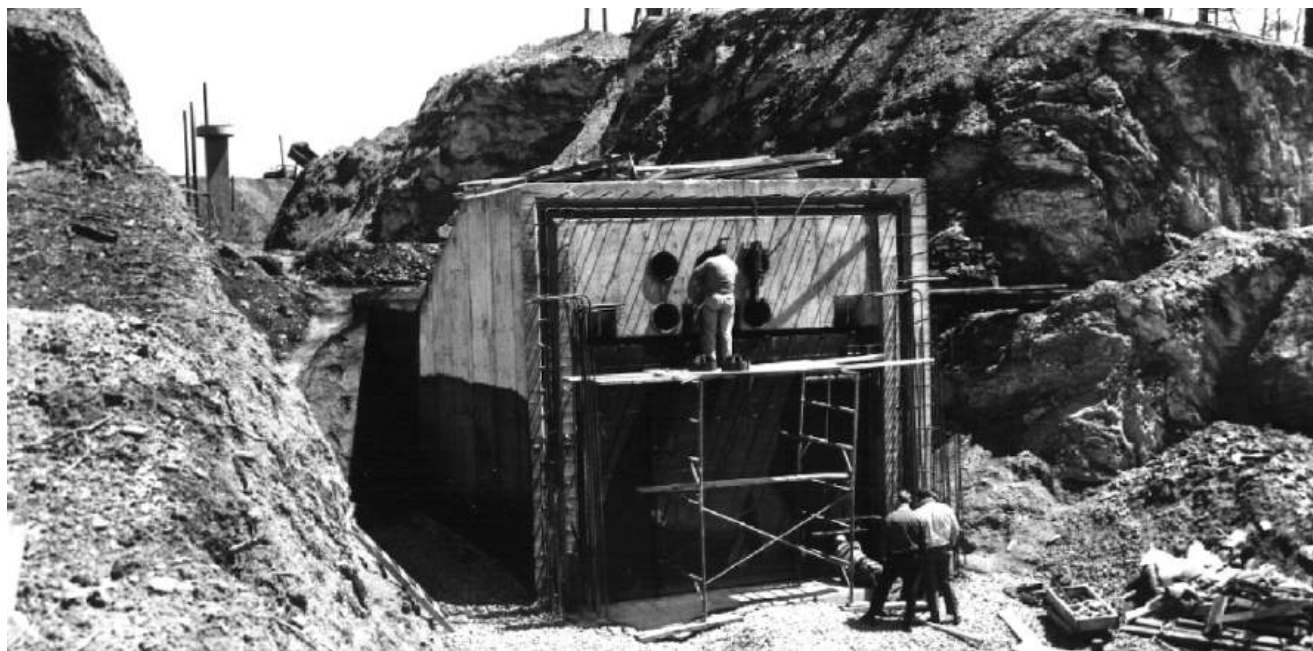

Figure 7 - Excavation Footings of the Bunker at The Greenbrier Resort (The Greenbrier – America's Resort)

At the beginning of the 20th century, as the resort began to establish itself, the coal extraction industry was simultaneously driving West Virginia into the national limelight. This period marked the peak of the coal industry, which attracted substantial investments aimed at developing the areas surrounding mining operations. As a result, new towns emerged, characterized by bustling streets filled with businesses and vibrant communities. The influx of workers and their families sought both employment and a sense of belonging, leading to the growth of lively neighborhoods and social establishments that became integral to the region's identity. This dynamic interplay between the resort's growth and the booming coal industry laid the foundation for West Virginia's transformation during this pivotal era. The significant investment in the estate began to proliferate, growing in scale and adding various programs to attract a diverse palette of individuals from across the nation, and the world. The region around White Sulphur Springs began to expand as the Greenbrier became a notable destination for southern West Virginia.

The dark history surrounding the ownership of the Greenbrier resort has drawn significant backlash since its establishment. Before the resort was built, the site was a pristine, untouched valley nestled among the hills near the small town of White Sulphur Springs. The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway acquired the property from its previous owners, who had operated a smaller resort known as White Sulphur Springs, which was demolished in the late 19th century. This transaction marked the beginning of the region's awareness that the company was encroaching upon and exploiting both the natural landscape and local communities. The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway had a long-standing presence in southern West Virginia, operating as a monopoly that controlled the railroad network and the communities that developed along its route, in collaboration with coal extraction businesses

1. These partnerships resulted in significant alterations to the landscape as the private extraction sector pursued the valuable resources of the Appalachian Mountains. This development ultimately paved the way for Jim Justice and his family, who now run the largest farming and coal extraction business in Appalachia, with operations spanning West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, and as far south as South Carolina. The larger public often overlooks the hidden dark history of the Greenbrier, as this has been intentionally masked over the past few decades through the illusion of the resort and idyllic qualities offered in the experience of the estate. Through this misrepresentation, the site has a notable accolade list, being added to the National Register of Historic Places, a National Historic Landmark, and being a part of the Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area.
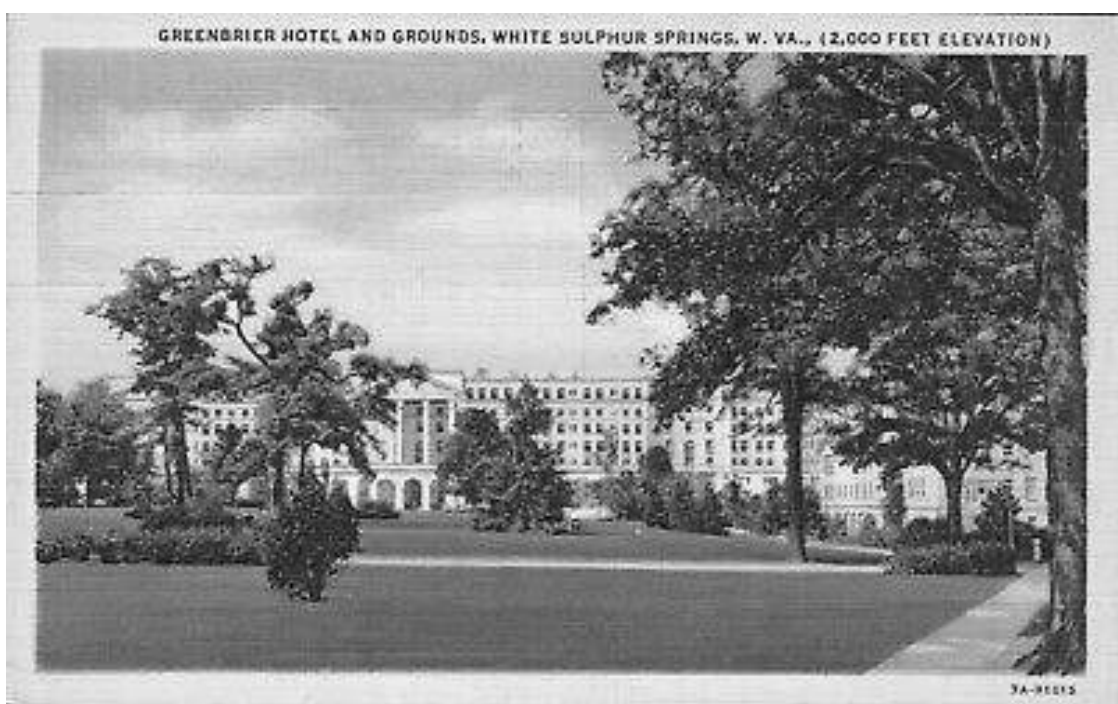

Figure 8 - Postcards of the Greenbrier Hotel (Circa 1930s)

The selection of maps and images serves to vividly depict the character and essence of the Appalachian Mountains, emphasizing the grit and ruggedness that define this unique region. By contrasting the manmade infrastructure present at the Greenbrier site with the surrounding natural landscape and various extraction sites, we gain a deeper understanding of West Virginia's complex geography. The landscape is characterized by its dynamic, rolling hills, which not only shape the natural environment but also tell a story of transformation and exploitation. The mountaintops, once pristine and untouched, have been extensively altered and reconstructed to facilitate human extraction of natural resources, illustrating the powerful impact of industrialization on this region. This large-scale manipulation of the land reveals the extent to which a single monopolistic entity operates with virtually no boundaries when it comes to pursuing personal interests and profit in West Virginia. The history of the state is fraught with instances of corruption and collusion, where decisions have been made without regard for the natural landscape or the voices of the indigenous communities who have long inhabited this space. This intricate relationship between nature and human activity raises important questions about sustainability and the ethical responsibilities of those who seek to interact with and exploit these rich landscapes. The series of images illustr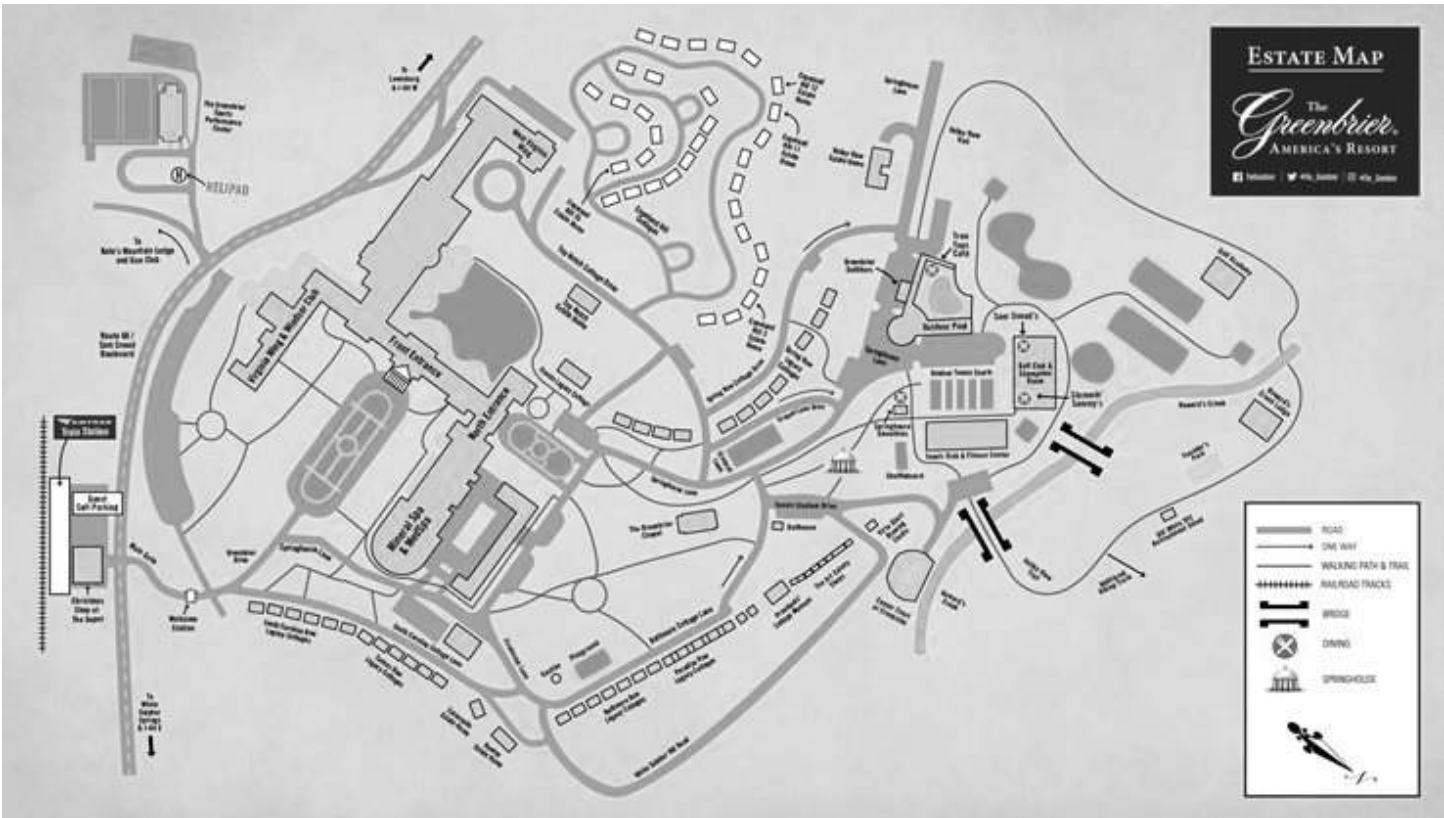ates the location of the Greenbrier site, which is adjacent to a surface mining operation featuring slurry pools. This context highlights the piece's introduction. The connection between coal mining and the current practice of hydraulic fracturing for natural gas, set against the backdrop of the densely forested hills, demonstrates the significant impact of human intervention on the landscape of this region.

Figure 9 - Estate Map of the Greenbrier Resort (The Greenbrier – America's Resort)

Intensive surface and subsurface mining operations in the Marcellus Shale and Appalachian Mountain region have significantly affected the landscape of West Virginia. The land has been treated as a commodity, exploited for resources with little regard for the consequences[2]. This approach has driven the state's economy since its founding. Opportunities for work were abundant, and the financial rewards were substantial. Many individuals flocked to small, poorly planned towns established by coal companies, dedicating their lives to the operations of a single industry. As a result, extraction activities surged in the state, leading to rapid growth in the rural areas of Appalachia. However, this has proven to be a short-term effort as the state reels in the diversification of material choice and extraction preferences around the nation. The need for coal and related materials had tapered off to a point where communities have nearly dissolved from what they once were in the 20th century[3]. This left the state of West Virginia in a predicament, one to choose between the future trajectory and positivity for the state or leave the decision in the hands of the economic beast that once dominated the landscape of extraction and corruption. The quality of life in Appalachia significantly lagged the rest of the United States, leaving residents yearning for improvements in basic necessities and access to services. The decision to leave behind the hope for change and align with more progressive states ultimately undermined the regional economy and deepened the cycle of poverty in rural West

Virginia. Many people referred to this situation as the "poverty vortex," describing a persistent, generational cycle of poverty that affects communities reliant on extraction-based or manufacturing industries that have long since left the area. The promise of wealth and prosperity that is associated with coal mining and extraction in the state was engrained in the Appalachian lifestyle.

The narrative surrounding the Greenbrier Resort encapsulates the complex and often troubling repercussions of extraction-based economies in Appalachia. Once revered as a beacon of prosperity and the quintessential Southern dream—where wealth is achieved through unwavering hard work and dedication—this iconic resort now serves as a profound symbol of political corruption and mismanagement, reflecting broader issues within both West Virginia and the United States. For generations, countless individuals invested their lives into the mining industry, a fundamental part of the Appalachian economy. Despite their efforts and sacrifices, they often receive minimal compensation or support in return from the very corporations that benefited from their labor. This leads to a stark reality: communities that have traditionally relied on extraction are now grappling with the consequences of environmental degradation and economic abandonment. The cycle of destruction and decay manifests not only in the natural landscape, which bears scars from mining practices, but also in the social fabric of Appalachian life. Families that remain in these regions are increasingly exposed to the harmful effects of extraction processes, which take a significant toll on both their physical health and overall well-being[45]. The Greenbrier Resort itself stands as a historical testament to the exploitation woven into Appalachian politics, illustrating how systematic betrayal can

Figure 10 - The Greenbrier Resort (The Greenbrier – America's Resort)

shape the destinies of local communities. Owned by the Justice family, the resort has not been immune to challenges. The family has encountered numerous legal battles and ongoing financial instability, raising the possibility of a public auction for the estate[6]. Today, what was once regarded as a beacon of hope and success is poised to be auctioned off, an event that starkly illustrates the irony of its impending sale by those whose actions have played a significant role in the deterioration of the distinctive landscape that characterizes Appalachia. While the estate may present an outward image of sophistication and grace, with its immaculate white façade gleaming in the sunlight, a deeper examination reveals a troubling and intricate history filled with corruption, collusion, and exploitation. These issues have not just emerged recently; they have been woven into the very fabric of the estate since the moment the foundation of the resort was laid. This juxtaposition of appearance versus reality highlights a complex narrative of decay and moral compromise that lies behind its elegant exterior. What will be the next landscape, or resort, that outlines a similar narrative in deciding the fate for itself in Appalachia?

Figure 11 - Mountaintop Removal Site for Surface Mining (The True Cost Of Coal: The First Installment)

Figure 12 - Officials talk past, present and future of coal mining in West Virginia

Figure 13 – Mountaintop Removal Site and Quarry (A Canary Named West Virginia)

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Green Monster, Blue Devils
Wealth, health, and power in North Carolina's early 20th century tobacco landscapes

Introduction

In 1865, a Confederate soldier named Washington Duke walked 134 miles from Bern, North Carolina, where he had been released as a prisoner of war, back to his family homestead in Orange County.[1] Duke had been a small farmer before the war (he farmed with some, though not extensive, assistance from enslaved laborers); in 1863, he had converted all of his money into tobacco, a booming cash crop in the area.[2] After the war, Duke began a tobacco smoking operation in a cabin on his propert. He peddled the processed tobacco throughout the region and made enough capital to start a tobacco factory in Durham.[3]

Within two decades, with the assistance of a cigarette rolling machine, the company had become one of the biggest tobacco firms in the region; in 1890, after it merged with several other firms to become the American Tobacco Company (ATC), it became its place as the largest tobacco company in the world.[4] ATC was eventually dissolved in 1911 after an anti-trust suit, but the Duke fortune remained.[5]
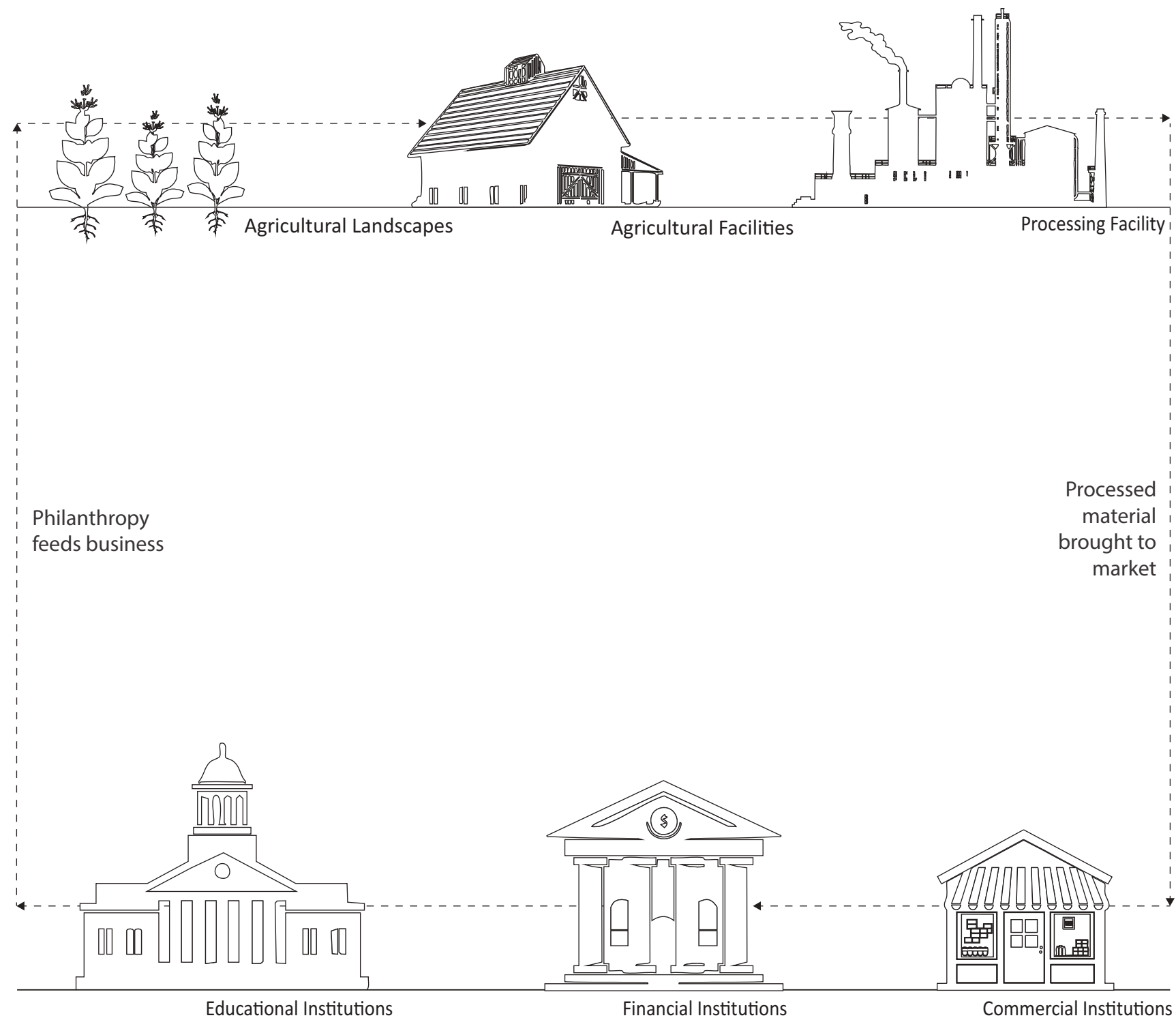
In 1924, James Buchanan Duke, Washington Duke's son, endowed a small local college with an extraordinary 40 million dollars.[6] That college would go on to become Duke University, one of the most respected institutions of higher education in the United States. This dossier traces the connections between the extractive tobacco landscapes of North Carolina, which relied on exploitative, harmful labor practices, and the landscapes of power and health, that were built with the capital these first landscapes produced.

Literature review

The 20th century history of the tobacco industry in North Carolina and the broader South has been the subject of significant scholarly attention. Drew Swanson provides an overview of the tobacco industry in the Piedmont region in A Golden Weed, which includes an overview of the Dukes' involvement in the industry. Scholars like Jeffrey Kerr-Ritchie have examined the role of Black laborers on tobacco plantations in the decades following the Civil War; and in "Race, Sex, and Class," Beverly Jones examines the experience of Black and female workers in Durham tobacco factories in the early to mid-20th century.

Other scholars have explored Duke University's history and design. Duke's architectural and landscape history has been less documented than that of other, older college campuses in the U.S., in part because the campus, though known for its beauty, was based heavily on other schools like Cornell and Princeton. Indeed, in one of the relatively few scholarly explorations on this topic, Arnold William Klukas argues that Duke's designers, like those of earlier American campuses, drew on Oxbridge's architectural style in order to bolster the new university's status.[7]

The social and political history of Duke Hospital and School of Medicine is better documented: Karen Brodkin explores the role of women laborers within Duke's medical campus; and physician and writer Damon Tweety examines the history of racism that shaped the medical center and larger university.

Agricultural Landscapes

Agricultural Facilities

Processing Facility

Philanthropy feeds business

Processed material brought to market

Educational Institutions

Financial Institutions

Commercial Institutions

Farm to School:
Cycle of Tobacco Wealth

An illustration of the cycle of the tobacco economy, in which extractive labor and agricultural practices helped fund elite civic institutions, which helped bolster business interests. Author's own.

Territory of Tobacco

Tobacco has played a central role in North Carolina's society and economy for centuries. Indigenous tribes like the Halawi, who occupied the territory before European colonization, grew tobacco and used it for spiritual purposes.[8] During the colonial period, white settlers grew tobacco as a cash crop, often using enslaved labor; it soon became the state's most valuable export.[9] When an enslaved worker discovered a new method of curing tobacco in the 1830s, the North Carolina market was able to expand even further; by the 1890s, the state was producing over 100 million pounds of tobacco per year.[10]
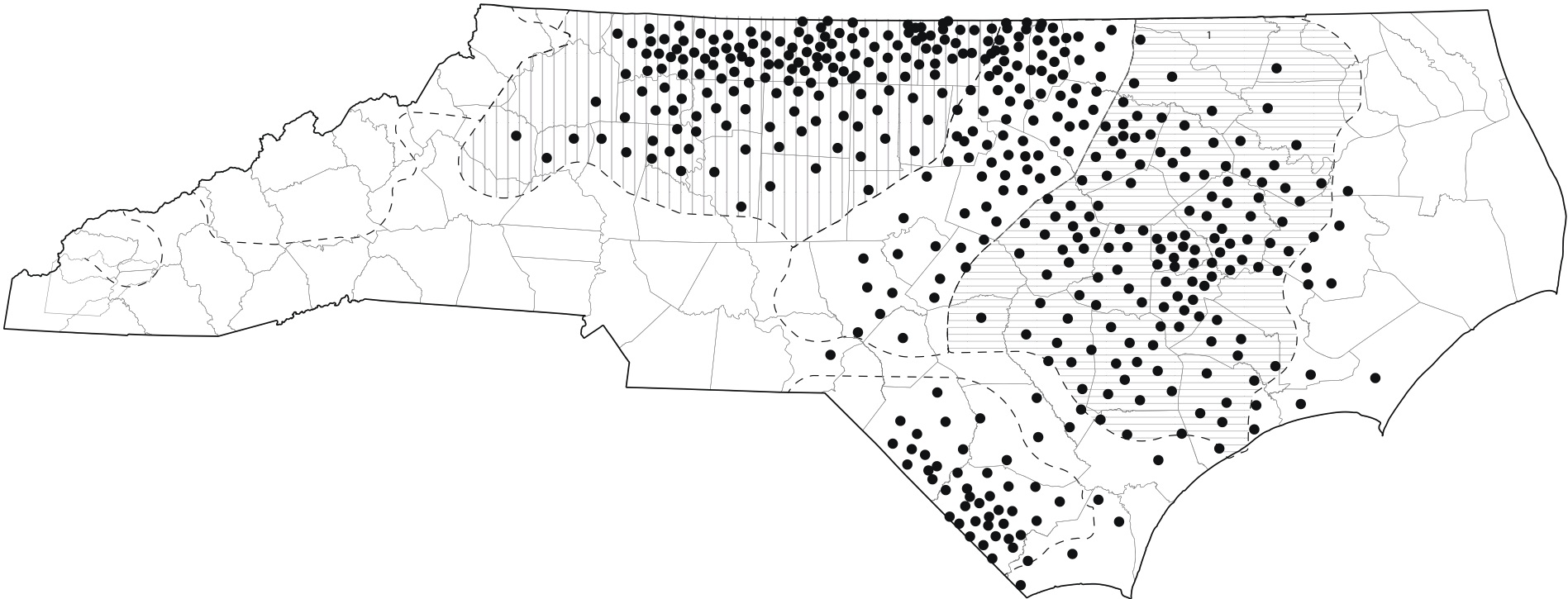
Bright belt tobacco regions

● 100 members

Map of Tobacco Growers Association Members, 1922-25.

A map showing the density of tobacco farmers in North Carolina in the 1920s, overlayed with tobacco growing regions. Based on a 1929 USDA's *Business Analysis of Tobacco Growers Association* (Washington, 1929).

Subjects as Laborers

A vast amount of labor was needed to maintain this cash crop economy. During the 18th and 19th centuries, enslaved labor was the foundation of tobacco cultivation in the Southern United States.[11] After emancipation, Black laborers continued to work on tobacco plantations, often for paltry compensation.[12] Some Black farmers, along with white farmers, became mired in an exploitative system of sharecropping, in which a landlord leases land to a tenant farmer in exchange for a share of the farmer's crops.[13]

Clockwise from top left: Tobacco harvesters in field, 1926. UNC Chapel Hill Archive; Tobacco auction in North Carolina warehouse, 1920s. UNC Chapel Hill Archive; Daughter of sharecropper in Wake County worming tobacco, 1939. Library of Congress; Rehabilitation supervisor discussing crop with farmer and family, 1939. Library of Congress.

Other Landscapes of Production in Tobacco Territory

TOBACCO MILLS IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1896

Source: State Board of Agriculture, *North Carolina and Its Resources* (Raleigh, 1896), 198–201.

North Carolina's tobacco production territory was not composed only of farms: it was also composed of factories and processing plants—sites in which laborers transformed raw material into products like snuff, cigars, and cigarettes. These factories were generally located in urban areas, where tobacco from rural farms could be transported via railroad.[14] Tobacco factories proliferated in the last half of the 19th century, thanks in large part to Washington Duke, who opened his first factory in Durham in 1874.[15] After their 1890 merger into the American Tobacco Company, the Dukes controlled virtually all of the tobacco market, with over 150 factories.[16]
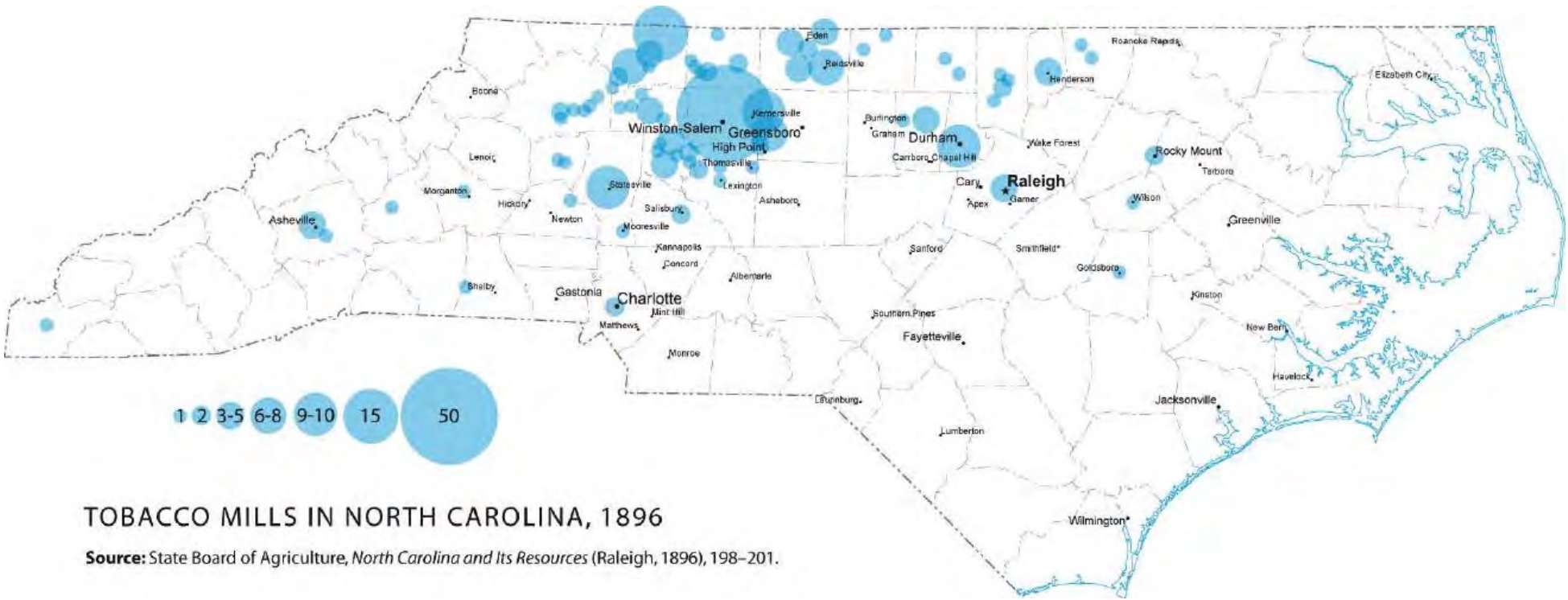
Above: Map of tobacco mills in North Carolina in 1896. Walberts Compendium. Mills are concentrated in urban areas with railway connections.

Below: Tobacco factory campus in Durham in the 1920s. Duke Manuscript Collection.

The working conditions in both the farm and factory landscapes at the turn of the century were unhealthy. In the fields, laborers were exposed to dangerous amounts of nicotine, which can lead to what is now known as Green Tobacco Sickness.[17] Workers spent long, grueling hours in the fields, and equally grueling hours in curing tobacco in barns.[18] Women who worked in factories recalled that workers fainted due to the heat and poor ventilation, and many workers later developed tuberculosis.[19] Work and compensation in factories was divided based on race and gender; in Jones's study of women tobacco factory workers, she notes Black women were generally given dirtier, more grueling labor than their white counterparts.[20]

A Harper's Magazine illustration of workers in a tobacco factory, 1854. University of Alabama.

From Farm to School

Like many of his fellow industrialists, Washington Duke used some of his fortune to support civic institutions, including the small, Methodist school Trinity College, which he helped move to Durham.[21] His son James Buchanan Duke followed suit, but in more extravagant fashion: in 1924, shortly before his death, he endowed the College, which would be renamed Duke University, with 40 million dollars.[22] He later added 4 million dollars for the endowment of a hospital and medical school on the campus.[23]

Images of Duke's West Campus before and after construction, late 1920s. Duke University Archives.
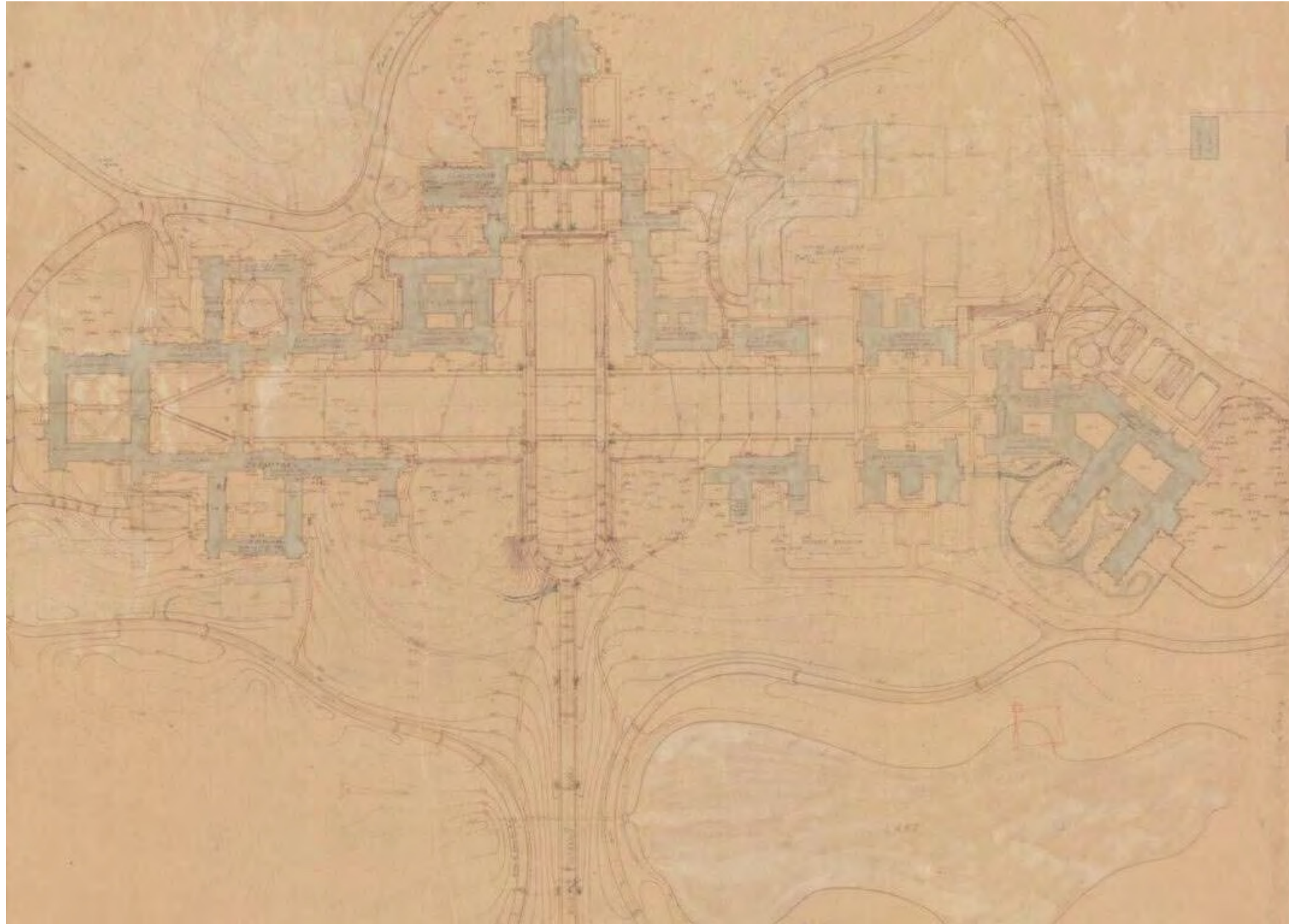
Campus Landscape

James Buchanan Duke and William Few, the university's president, helped reshape Trinity into a respected educational institution. Design was central to this process: James requested that the school hire the Olmsted Brothers, the preeminent landscape architects (and campus designers) of the era to design the master plan for the landscape, which included a medical campus, a chapel, and separate men's and women's campuses.[24]

Grading plan of Duke's West Campus by the Olmsted Brothers, 1930. Olmsted Archives. Medical school shown on right.

Instant Antiquity[25]

The school hired Horace Trumbauer to design its buildings, though Trumbauer's employee, a Black architect named Julian Abele, actually did much of the design.[26] The university's administrators wanted their school to resemble other great institutions of American learning; the building supervisor wrote to the presidents of universities like Princeton and Cornell to request details about their buildings' construction.[27] They chose to design the school in the Collegiate Gothic Style, giving the new buildings a sense of antiquity and status.[28] Arnold William Klukas calls the campus a "Disneyfication of the Oxbridge ideal."[29]

Holder Hall (Given by Mrs. Sage)

Above: Images of Princeton's Holder Hall from Frank Clyde Brown's travel diary, 1920s. Duke University Archives.

Below: Photograph of test stone wall at Duke's campus, 1925. Duke University Archives.

Lansdcapes of Health?

Of particular note in Duke's stony, Gothic 1930s landscape is the medical campus that James Buchanan Duke requested with his final gift to the school.[30] The medical school and hospital were placed on the West campus, along with the other new buildings that included classrooms, men's dorms, and the school's prominent chapel. The hospital admitted both Black and white patients, though they were segregated by room and by schedule.[31] The doctors were white, and the school would not admit its first Black student until 1963.[32] Financial strains in the 1930s also led to disparities in care for wealthy and poor patients; the hospital also engaged in exploitative or at least unfair health insurance experiments.[33]

Above: Aerial image of Duke's medical campus, 1930. Duke University Archives.

Below: Patients waiting in outpatient waiting area, 1940s. Duke University Archives.

Health, Wealth, and Extraction

Through the material economy of tobacco, the extractive and often harmful tobacco fields and factories of North Carolina helped fund a second, more respectable landscape, one designed to evoke and cultivate prestige, respectability, and health. Still, traces of the campus's complicated legacies of extraction, racism, discrimination, and medical industrial complex lurk just under the campus's Gothic stone walls.

A Luckies advertisement (Lucky Strike was one brand in the ATC conglomerate), 1930. Stanford.

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