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The reincarnation of cremation architecture

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2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21475

Nanoo, Amit (2016) The reincarnation of cremation architecture, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, < http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/21475>

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THE EXISTENTIAL THEATRE

PRESENTS

THE REINCARNATION OF ARCHITECTURE

ABSTRACT

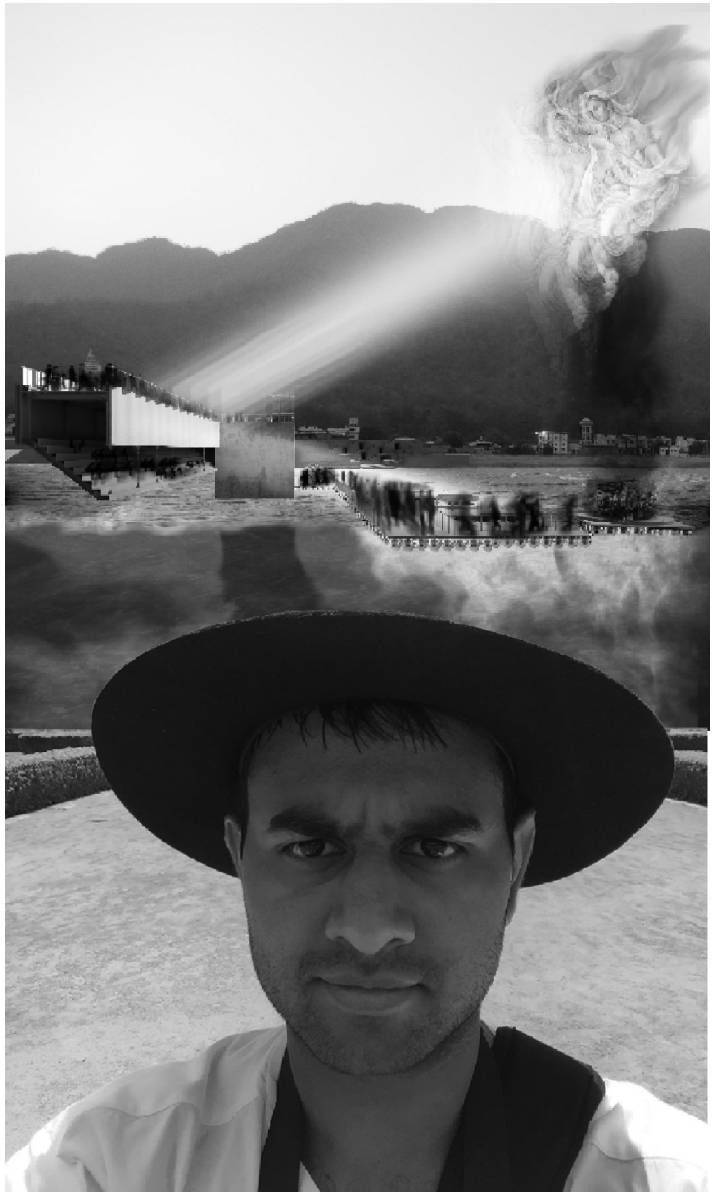
This thesis primarily deals with rituals and the specific objects related to the rituals. The rituals in question are the once in a lifetime event of the Hindu cremation ceremony, and perpendicular to that, the everyday rituals which constitutes daily life.

Through an existential and ontological theoretical exploration the bridge, doorway, step and Lota (vernacular Indian pottery) these become the signified objects which are arranged to form the existential theatre. Which presents a reincarnation of architecture: a hybrid pedestrian bridge with cremation infrastructure. Furthermore, parallel theories of rationality and irrationality, solid and void, boundaries, the structure of time and nothingness, are explored to theoretically contextualize the semiotics of the architecture.

The siting of the existential theatre is at the beginning of the Ganges River, formed by various head rivers, in Rishikesh, India. Rishikesh is at center of intersections of religious mythology, commercialism, tourism, a holy pilgrimage site, popular culture and a growing local community. It is only within this context can the existential theatre exist, as the multiplicity of cultural intersections allows for a composite arrangement of various significations. Using Learning from Las Vegas as a ruler to measure Rishikesh; spatial, cultural and ritual typologies are revealed. These typologies are then employed into the scheme.

The Hindu ritual of cremation is an age old tradition with the sole purpose of liberating the soul from its physical form. So it may be reincarnated into another form, this process is governed by the law of Karma. An in-depth analysis is done of each stage of the ritual to highlight spaces within which architecture can facilitate, efficiently and sustainably, but not alter the process. The meaning behind each stage is used to sequentially signify components of the scheme. The first informal form of the existential theatre is witnessed due to natural occurrences and proximities of the once in a lifetime ritual of cremation, along with everyday pedestrian rituals; my project is a formalization of these naturally occurring elements.

The charrette process proved to be praxis of the existential and ontological theoretical inquiry; as well as a metaphor for the ritual of cremation. This was done through the abstraction of an everyday object, the incense stick. The charrette process produced the architectural tools with which to design the scheme with. The resulting architecture of the existential theatre is informed by the ceremonial cremation procession and is paralleled with every day rituals. The ultimate aim of my project is to facilitate the Hindu Cremation Ritual, in a respectful and sustainable manner while asking and suggesting answers to existential questions.



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