

Le temps retrouvé

*Time alters fashions...but that which is founded on geometry and real science will remain unalterable.*¹ Specifically referring to the *artistic elements* of architecture, Hendrik Petrus Berlage adopted this motto for his lectures at the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zürich, in 1908.² Just before the eruption of the avant-gardes, we have here — as throughout classical theory — the conviction that architecture, conceived according to what Karsten Harries calls the “perennial Platonism” of architecture, is meant to challenge eternity.³ George Steiner sees here a *nostalgia for the absolute*, and the artist’s audacity to compete with godhood as source of meaning, maybe a nostalgia for the absolute;⁴ Harries understands this as a means to cope with “the terror of time.”⁵ No matter the deep reasons, it has unquestionably been a conception of the Western erudite architecture to cope with immortality by designing monumental buildings that defy time through aesthetic perfection, edifices supposed permanent and worthy of the gods, thus creating and setting meaning in stone. What could be more coveted by architects’ hubris than the expectation that their design, once transformed into a building, would last forever.

One may think that architects have programmatically refused transience, although the passage of time has not always answered their expectations. All around the few examples of erudite architecture, the manmade world has always been built from a less pretentious architecture, an architecture that accepted its transience, as well as its continuous transformation, together with the city and the collective life and aspirations. But this uninterrupted development would only meet architects’ awareness and theoretical concern much later.

Under closer scrutiny, one can find several moments of architectural transience, recent and older as well. Even starting with Vitruvius, the realm of architecture has originally designated several *partes* that seem to fit oddly within the present, conventional boundaries of the discipline: *The parts of architecture are three: Building (aedificatio), Dialing (gnomonice), and Mechanics (machinatio).*⁶ Although hydraulics, war machines, time measurement and others were scarcely considered relevant for the subsequent evolution of what we now call architecture, it is nevertheless clear that for the ancients “architecture” implied a larger field of expertise, and some of this expertise involved a concern for transience — from using and making instruments for measuring time to building war machines and ships. At a metaphorical level, it appears that, in Vitruvius’ time, architecture encompassed the art of building, the art of destroying, and the art of measuring the transience and permanence of what is both erected and destroyed. Furthermore, even within the *aedificatio*, the subdivisions that Vitruvius introduces reveal that buildings do not evenly contend timelessness: public and private buildings are not equivalent, and within the larger category of public structures, a certain hierarchy places temples at the highest level, as religious buildings surpass the importance of structures dedicated to both public utility (*convenience*) and defense.⁷ It seems that Vitruvius’

1 Hendrik Petrus Berlage citing a motto used by Thomas Sheraton for his collections of designs entitled *The Cabinet-Maker* in “The Foundations and Development of Architecture. Four Lectures Delivered at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Zürich (1908),” in Hendrik Petrus Berlage and Iain Boyd Whyte. *Hendrik Petrus Berlage : Thoughts on Style, 1886-1909* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1996), 185.

2 Ibid.

3 Karsten Harries, “Building and the Terror of Time,” *Perspecta: The Yale Architecture Journal* 19 (1982): 59-69 and Karen Franck, “Visiting Karsten Harries and Revisiting his ‘Building and the Terror of Time,’” *Architectural Design* 86 (2016): 128-135.

4 Georges Steiner elaborates on this idea in many of his books. See for example George Steiner and Antoine Spire, *Barbarie de l'ignorance* (La Tour d'Aigues: Edition de l'Aube, 2000) or George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

5 Harries, “Building and the Terror of Time” and Franck, “Visiting Karsten Harries.”

6 Vitruvius, *On Architecture*, trans. Frank Granger (Cambridge, Ma | London: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1998), 32-33.

7 Ana-Maria Zahariade, “Tribute to Vitruvius,” in *GE-NEC Program 2000-2001, 2001-2002* (Bucharest: New Europe College, 2004), 157-183.

architect, although in search for absolute harmony, was more modest when facing eternity, for not only he used to design ephemeral things, but also because his “competences” describe a professional anchored in the reality of the world, able to understand its processes, its evolution, and transformation.⁸ But eternity proves to be more seductive for a profession fighting for its emancipation and, as such, it has driven the architectural education and profession.

It is not less true that the same architects whose monumental projects were challenging eternity have also delved into an architecture built not to last. From Antiquity to Potemkin’s villages and Haussmann’s inauguration of boulevards, there are countless accounts of mockup structures and celebratory installations erected to lend an ephemeral glow to events, either public or private, religious, or secular. Perhaps the most spectacular illustrations of such temporary architecture are world exhibitions with their artistic accomplishments and technical prowess. From the more visible *Crystal Palace* (1850), the *Galerie des Machines* (1889) or the *Tour Eiffel* (1889), to Eugène Hénard’s *trottoir roullant* (1889), and so on, such exhibitions made a point of showing (and boasting) the latest technological progress and/or artistic vision. With them, the ephemeral architecture ostentatiously made its “official” entrance as a specific building type with its own fortune.

The exhibitions of modernity that marked the early years of the 20th century became perfect opportunities to articulate the more radical shift brought about by wider transformations of the modern society and architectural culture. Among the arguments put forward in order to sway a larger segment of society, an important case was made in favor of the moral obligation of architecture to embrace the art, technology, and industry of the day. More than just rhetoric, this idea stemmed from the modern architects’ and artists’ sense of inadequacy facing the values of the *old world*, which fueled the ethos of the historical avant-gardes:

“We have lost our predilection for the monumental, the heavy, the static, and we have enriched our sensibility with a taste for the light, the practical, the ephemeral and the swift. We no longer feel ourselves to be men of cathedrals, palaces, and ancient assembly halls, but of great hotels, railway stations, immense highways, colossal ports, covered markets, luminous galleries, straight roads and salutary demolitions.”⁹

claims the Manifesto of Futurist Architecture, with the natural consequence that the main feature of their architecture “will be its impermanence and transience. Things will endure less than us. Every generation must build its own city. This constant renewal of the architectonic environment will contribute to the victory of Futurism which has already been affirmed...”¹⁰

In his reading of this manifesto, Sanford Kwinter identifies the confronting views of the two opposing models with regard to the issue of time. The linear continuous progression of the classical tradition, based on a *metaphysics of perpetuity*, was to be replaced by the early 20th century avantgardes with the palpable immanence of the conjunctural, an accidental ungovernable sequence of events.¹¹ Kwinter also draws our attention to the fact that what Futurism argues for is not the simple substitution of a perennial cultural code with another; instead, by leaning on *the radically new mechanical world* (Sant’Elia), architecture would have become an art forever attuned to its present. What is required of it is to surrender any claim of being a *vehicle expressing the spurious contents of a singular (“grand”) history-in-the-making*.¹² Through this rebirth, architecture will never validate itself through its own historical models or precedents never again and will lose all awareness of history; as such, architecture becomes an atemporal art, practiced only in a continuous present.

8 “Let him be educated, skillful with the pencil, instructed in geometry, know much history, have followed the philosophers with attention, understand music, have some knowledge of medicine, know the opinions of the jurists, and be acquainted with astronomy and the theory of the heavens.” Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture*, trans. Morris Hicky Morgan (Harvard University Press & Oxford University Press, 1914), Book I, paragraph 3, 5-6 .

9 Antonio Sant’Elia and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, “Futurist Architecture,” in *Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge, Ma | London: MIT Press, 1970), 36.

10 *Ibid.*, 38.

11 Sanford Kwinter, *Architectures of Time* (Cambridge, Ma | London: MIT Press, 2002), 72.

12 *Ibid.*, 73.

Consequently, the transience was a byproduct of architecture's mission to continuously address the present, and "every present" has to reinvent its own built environment. This idea has permeated most avantgarde movements: Le Corbusier hints at this lighter architecture when he discriminates between the Dom-INO structural system and the prefabricated infills that would be both walls and furniture;¹³ Theo van Doesburg considers "time" as being one of the "plastic elements" of the new architecture;¹⁴ Gerrit Rietveld's Schröder-Schröder House testifies to how movement and flexibility fuse with the idea of the ephemeral; Friedrich Kiesler goes even further when pleading for a more drastic renewal, able to address the very core of what architecture is (a conceptual model of the world), and its more profound program (the act of shaping the built environment):

"Let us have no more walls, no more shutting up body and soul in barracks, this whole barrack-culture with or without decoration. What we want is: [...] No walls, no foundations [...] Building adequate to the elasticity of the functions of life."¹⁵

Equally radical, Hannes Meyer's *Co-Op. Interieur* of 1926 not only challenges bourgeois values and standards, but also denies architecture its function of "idealization of the world."¹⁶ It is the very idealization that links architecture to the "perennial Platonism" of an organized cosmos.

In contrast to other instances of architectural transience that have accompanied the discipline throughout the centuries, this radical expression of an architecture that requires to be excluded from the gambit of historical accumulation was, ironically, an ephemeral phase. Once adopted by the professional discourse and fused in modern architecture's DNA, change itself became the argument, precisely as Sant'Elia had envisioned. In the second half of the century, reacting to the arrogance of atemporality and countering the new fixity introduced by the postwar reconstruction, the argument for change resurfaced with the new wave of avant-garde movements. Above all facets of architectural mainstream and its contenders, what remains is the call for transience with two intertwined justifications: on the one hand, because life becomes ever more uprooted, and on the other, because permanent structures could no longer keep the pace with societal changes.

In contrast to the former argument, a different temporality of architecture emerged out of the considerations of the long duration of the city, of its persistence and permanence — as opposed to the transient "presentness" of the architectural object. This "new" strain of reflection regarding how architecture exists in time circles back to Vitruvius' earlier distinctions between public and private architecture, between monuments and ordinary architecture. At the same time — and perhaps more importantly — this way of considering architecture's duration (not only by opposing the most permanent to the most evanescent) introduced more refined nuances into what seemed to be a clear-cut distinction between what is long-lasting and what is transitory.

Reflecting on how yesterday's cutting-edge architecture wanes, while also considering how it will forever remain fresh, testifies to a moment when architectural culture became at the same time more concerned with its own history, and more conscious of its temporality. That is why the volume opens with the interview with **Rodrigo Pérez de Arce** — maybe in memory of his visit to Bucharest, in the 1980s. At a time of severe scrutiny of Modernism, in London, the **architect Pérez de Arce** was

13 The opposition between a more stable, resilient structure and a lighter layer of interventions that become secondary in importance and allow for a double interpretation of the artifacts would be one of the recurrent themes in Le Corbusier's works. In 1914 he writes: "... la situation toute particulière des poteaux, permettent d'innombrables combinaisons de dispositions intérieures et toutes prises de lumière imaginables en façade. [...] L'ossature 'Dom-INO' étant portante, ces murs ou ces cloisons pouvaient être en n'importe quel matériaux et tout particulièrement en matériaux de mauvais choix [...]" Willy Boesiger and Oscar Stonorov, *Le Corbusier - Œuvre complète: Volume 1: 1910-1929* (Berlin, München, Boston: Birkhäuser, 1995), 23-24.

14 Theo van Doesburg, "Towards a Plastic Architecture," in *Programs and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture*, ed. Ulrich Conrads (Cambridge, MA | London: MIT Press, 1970), 78-80.

15 Friedrich Kiesler, "Manifest: Vitalbau-Raumstadt-Funktionelle Architektur," *De Stijl* 10-11 (1925) (full reprint in Amsterdam and The Hague, 1968, 435-437).

16 Pier Vittorio Aureli, Martino Tattara, "Soft cell: the minimum dwelling," *The Architectural Review* vol. 1453 (2018): 107-111. Online edition available at <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/soft-cell-the-minimum-dwelling>, accessed November 13, 2022.

directly involved in the vortex of the architectural debate (shared with English members of Team 10, Archigram associates, Architectural Association professors, *Architectural Design* and *Architectural Record* editors, among others); he participated actively in the decisive change of the professional perspective on the city, in the intense search for new means to understand the richness of urbanity, and to use both urban persistence and transience as critical design tools. His avant-garde drawings were rather paradoxical in their non-utopian character; they were unusual “bold manifestoes” for professional humility in front of the complexity that life, history and the city can teach. It was the beginning of a path that Professor Pérez de Arce has followed with his students after his return to Chile, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica in Santiago. This interview speaks about the endurance of architecture as residing precisely in the capacity to absorb time in its very substance, to generously adapt to people’s lives — a force that architecture could acquire when architects’ hubris steps back. Thus, *le temps retrouvé* is about recapturing time elsewhere than architectural aesthetics, no matter how perfect.

Following the interview, our *Dossier* is composed as a patchwork whose pieces have their particular rationale — each chapter has its own essayistic autonomy — but interlace forming together a coherent tissue of insights into (and interrogations on) the temporal condition of architecture. Generally, the authors of each chapter approached the theme of ephemerality not as a theoretical challenge, but by starting from a concrete instance, which catalyzes *a posteriori* reflections on more general aspects of the transient-permanent couple in architectural practice.

The *dossier* opens with a most wide-ranging group of essays that specifically point to the ephemeral as unavoidable condition of architecture, be it an alternative to the “mainstream” longing for permanence, or to a programmatic starting point.

The modest shelter turns out to be a rich and dilemmatic topic of interpretation in *Shelter Oddity*, where Andrea Alberto Dutto poses the theoretical problem of its dual condition of “possibility/ accessibility” or “choice/alternative,” as it was reflected against the particular background of the American counterculture of the 20th century (especially, the back-to-the-land movement and the hippy culture). The author investigates an important number of best-selling professional publications of the period, in which the shelter was alternatively conceptualized and presented to the public as architecture or vernacular product, as commodity or “do-it-yourself” structure, as permanent home, temporary countercultural experience, or alternative to urban life. Thus, delving into “the contradictory legacy of the shelter as a concept suspended between impermanence and permanence,” this chapter is also a gratifying insight into the American literature dedicated to this basic human necessity and, eventually, unavoidable architectural concern that the author characterizes as an enduring process of learning.

The architectural counterculture of the late 1960s, this time in Europe, represents the backdrop against which E. Burcu Eryilmaz expounds upon her investigation into the meaning of ephemerality as it was critically developed by a new generation of avant-garde architects and design teams. Their dissenting state of mind — what Françoise Choay coined *technotopia* — was supposed to liberate the discipline from the conventional constraints imposed by the established norms, for which the inflatable technology turned to be one of the alternative means. Therefore, the chapter *Revisiting the Concept of Ephemerality in the Counter-Culture Architecture of the 1960s: Inflatable Structures of the Avant-Gardes* thoughtfully examines a selection of inflatable structures of that period, revealing how they became a predilect avant-garde medium meant to subvert the solid limits of construction and its pretense to permanence, thus aiming to emancipate architecture and to reassess its conventional relation with time. Correspondingly, the author opens up to the present discussion on several concepts as flexibility, mobility, and performativity.

As responding to the same theme of ephemeral building materials, in *The Lastingness of Ephemeral. The Presence of Textiles in Contemporary Architecture*, Beatrice-Gabriela Jöger reflects on how the fragility of textiles — comprising any type of fabric, be it woven, knitted, felted or otherwise, obtained from fibers and primary materials of any source — has discreetly made its path into the traditional solidity of architecture. Although always used in interiors and contributing to their aesthetics, textiles were largely overlooked by architectural theorists, until Gottfried Semper

placed them at the bases of architecture; from then on, their spectacular emancipation is followed through commenting examples where textiles meaningfully intersect architecture, especially in the light of nowadays social and technological dynamics. This gives the author the opportunity to underline facets of ephemerality understood in terms of sustainability, thus nuancing the perspective on architectural resilience.

The article *Ephemeral Gardens Designed to Last. The Perennial Movement in Landscaping* allows Nicholas Cantoni and Robert Tăslăvan to capture another instance of the ambiguity between lastingness and transience, when looking at landscape architecture, where the vegetal material is recurrently changing, thus contradicting, or at least fragilizing, the solidity of designers' aesthetic conception. That is why, landscaping is a permanent engagement between nature's forces and cyclical dynamics, and the human wish to control and tame them, and to counterbalance their effects through planning and continuous, tedious maintenance works. Consequently, the Perennial Movement in garden design — which the authors illustrate through Piet Oudolf's gardens — was a decisive step forward in the assimilation of natural ephemerality in design thinking.

Katalin Tănczos explores yet another ephemeral "material," a virtual means increasingly connected to architecture and occasionally even becoming one with it: the *3D projection mapping* or *spatial augmented reality*. Incited by the more and more frequent festivals that take place in the city of Cluj (Romania), the author comments upon the relation between the real environment, with its attributes of durability and stability, and virtual reality empowered by this relatively new technique capable to transform the physical and cultural perception of the architectural heritage. The article *Between Material Permanence and Digital Evanescence. 3D Projection Mappings during the Festivals of Cluj* approaches this still troubling relation from various perspectives (analytic, phenomenological, cultural, etc.) and argues that operating with abstractions, icons and symbols in a concrete fashion, the video mappings reduce architectural heritage to such signs subordinated to the consumerist setting of the events, on the one hand, while on the other hand, they can become instruments of symbolic spatial appropriation, politically manipulable.

The series of programmatically ephemeral architecture is closed by Celia Ghyka's and Cătălin Pavel's contribution *Fleeting Moments, Floating Monuments. Ritual Machines of Performativity: reading Ptolemy Philadelphus and Aldo Rossi*. It is an inciting temporal arch linking the pavilion built for a festival in Alexandria by Ptolemy Philadelphus in the third decade of the 3rd c. BCE, and Aldo Rossi's *Teatro del mondo*, designed for the pivotal 1979-1980 edition of the *Biennale di Venezia*. This apparently improbable juxtaposition of two fleeting architectures — a Hellenistic palace carrying on the Nile the immortal glory of the pharaoh, and a typological abstraction dismantled after navigating from Venice to Dubrovnik, which heralded a radical change of the discipline and left indelible traces in architectural thinking — allows the two authors to probe into the "whys and wherefores of ephemeral architecture," and to demonstrate the atemporal vigor of the transient in theatrically mirroring an epoch and transmitting ideological programs.

As a continuation of the reflection on the relation of architecture with time, Simina Anamaria Lőrincz and Florina Pop, the two authors of *The Dissimulation of the Timeless: Notes on Eisenman's "The End of..."*, bring to the fore Peter Eisenmann's essay „The End of the Classical. The End of the Beginning, the End of the End.” Eisenmann's "non-classic" theoretical model maintains that once repudiating the three values of the "classical episteme" (representation, reason, and history), and the ideas of *presentness* and *universality*, all considered mere *simulations*, architecture is free to reconstruct its atemporality, through *dissimulation*, outside the temporal concepts of *origin* and *end*, acknowledged as arbitrary and relative, able to be reinvented and adapted to every circumstance. Lőrincz and Pop recognize here a "design tactic" based on modification, a creative poetic where architecture becomes *writing*, which developed along the last decades, though not necessarily connected to Eisenmann's ideas of the 1980s. Two recent examples are used to exemplify this interpretation.

Differently but not totally disjunct from Eisenmann's ideas, especially in the last decades, transience has been assumed as a practical, corrective tool, variously manipulated but always aiming at enhancing the urban quality of "the leftovers" of regulatory urbanism. Commonly referred to

as *tactical urbanism*, *planning-by-doing*, *urban acupuncture*, *guerilla urbanism*, etc., it loosely encompasses many types of actions, researches or projects which often meet contemporary artistic territories with which they melt or interbreed. These technics instrumentalizing the ephemeral are becoming increasingly significant in the ex-Communist countries, as Romania, where the rigidity and arbitrariness of the top-down urban decisions are still solidly entrenched, and the public involvement is hardly accepted. Hence, the significance of such “informal” actions overpasses their practical effectiveness, testifying to the installation of democratic habits and public participation. That is why we offered this theme a larger space, and a consistent group of papers illustrates how this fragile instrument has found its way in the Romanian post-Communist context, despite the suspicion with which it was regarded at the beginning.

In the chapter, *When Attitudes Become Form. Temporary Urban Interventions Between Art and Urban Planning*, Loredana Gaiță considers that the growing body of research advocating for the recognition of urban temporary interventions as a necessary tool for urban governance is not sufficiently paralleled by theoretical clarifications. Consequently, to avoid the confusion between the two types and their particular aims, she proposes criteria to delineate between urban interventions and artistic practices. Furthermore, this demarcation is specifically detailed in order to enable the realistic evaluation of their short and long-term effectiveness in the local context (integration in the social context, adequation of the built form to the main aim, and the potential of producing long-term effects). The three case-studies in Timișoara are analyzed following these guiding lines.

Five contributions for which we asked the authors to summarize their experiences come to exemplify some of the many directions in which transient urban interventions and experiments have developed and multiplied in the last thirty years, thus not only trying to solve certain concrete urban problems, but also challenging the deathly stillness of the communist public life, and the gap between urban managers and people.

The first three contributions address the problematic reality of the large, functionalist housing estates built during communism, drawing a new perspective on the free space “between the apartment-buildings,” generally neglected or improperly used by the authorities and investors. Thus, by analytically describing two differently enacted on-site research, with different initial data and results, the articles *Commoning “Bucla” (the Loop) with Conviviality. Research-Based and Informal Practices in Support of Urban Commons in the Collective Housing Estates of the Post-Socialist City*, by Alex Axînte and Doina Petrescu, and *From Temporary Spatial Practices to Permanent Architectural Forms. The Case of “La Terenuri” from Mănăştur Neighborhood, Cluj-Napoca*, by Diana Andreea Galoş and Silviu Teofil Medeaşan, speak about the potential and value of the “latent commons”, once they are understood, accepted, and used, be it only informally (as in the Bucharest case), or even included in the final design (the successful case in Cluj). In his turn, Cristian Borcan also targets the *commoning* as source of “production of social space” in the paper *Constructing Temporary Urban Commons Through Civic Engagement in Bucharest*, by describing the endeavor of two civic groups in building and using temporary micro-infrastructures as cohesive tools in another similar neighborhood. These three cases testify to the emergence of situated common practices that try to counteract the alienation between people and their urban proximity, and to resist the actual drift towards individualism, privatization and commodification of community spaces. With their authors directly involved in the projects described, the three papers substantially contribute to the new processes of *commoning* aiming at a more sustainable city.

Sorin Vasile Manea and Mihaela Hărmanescu explore another problematic heritage of the post-Communist Romanian environment, namely the “civic centers” built to respond exclusively to the political agenda of a dictatorial regime. The paper *Challenging the Solidity of Romanian Communist Civic Centers* attentively records how the penetration of the new, free urban life has enabled ephemeral means, mostly informal, which have been surreptitiously undermining the stiff coherence of the civic centers and have domesticated their rigid inadequacy.

With Endre Ványolós’ paper, *The Time of Ephemeral Architecture*, we close this assemblage with a reflection on the use of ephemeral activities for enlarging educational approaches, not only dedicated to architectural students, but also those targeting a larger public. If the *Hellwood* international

workshop in Budapest exposes the future architects to the *poiesis* of ephemeral architecture, the temporary architecture of the *Electric Castle Festival* confronts the public with the endangered perennity of the Bánffy Castle, a historical monument.

With the last three chapters, we come back to time and the alterations suffered by buildings supposed to be perennial. The *dossier* is completed by papers that delve into the theme of time-erosion or the obsolescence of what is deemed to last. All three cases are in the courtyard of modern mass housing architecture — probably the more exposed to ephemerality despite its permanence and ubiquity — which is approached in terms of more encompassing, sometimes divergent effects.

As many other examples of Modernism's certainties, novel thinking and limits, the Nakagin Capsule Tower in Tokyo reached its imminent end. Its disassembling is quite paradoxical, as far as Kurokawa designed the tower according to the Metabolist concept of constant renewal and eternal adaptation, an exceptional instance that tried to take into consideration the physical aging of a building in order to assure its lastingness. In the chapter *Encapsulated Masculine Dreams: The Cultural and Material Impermanence of the Nakagin Capsule Tower*, Aki Ishida deliberates on the obsolescence of the tower versus its heritage value for the architectural thinking. On the one hand, to its physical decay (mainly due to improper maintenance) the authors add the moral desuetude (the exclusively masculine dedication, translated in the incapacity to fit the diversity of nowadays lives); on the other hand, the author esteems its pioneering role in suggesting alternative approaches to impermanence and adaptability in architecture.

In the chapter *Permanent Palaces and Transient Rooms: Uplotnenie or the Introduction to Ephemerality in the Soviet Domestic Interior*, Senem Yıldırım evokes another case of transience in domestic architecture, this time imposed by the peculiar Bolshevik housing policy in order to solve both the dwelling shortage and the Communist egalitarian ideology. Accordingly, the policy of "Uplotnenie" was meant to repurpose and redistribute the once-bourgeois quarters, while dictating the intensive occupation of the "rich apartments" by a number of people calculated as to correspond to "sanitary norms," ever-decreasing in square meters per person. The author draws the paradoxical image of this unique case of ideologically quantifying equality: of former "palaces" transformed in "kommunalka," whose facades continued to transmit a permanence that stopped to exist, and whose interiors were in permanent redistribution as the housing shortage became more acute.

On the other side of the political world, *Knots in Time: The Ghost Estates of Ireland's Celtic Tiger*, by Felix McNamara, also deals with a housing crisis, spectrally mirroring the effects of the neoliberal economy in Ireland, where "in October 2011, there were 2,876 documented unfinished estates, present in every county in the state, 777 of which met the criteria of a *ghost estate*." The highly mediatized phenomenon of the "Celtic Tiger" era's housing developments, left in ruin by the burst of the Irish housing bubble in the late 2000s, is critically analyzed from various perspectives: in terms of economic and political decisions de-coupled from realistic demographic projections, in architectural terms, as response to the political and ideological narrative, in terms of the strong "imagery" thus created. Finally, reflecting on their ambiguous expression, concomitantly ephemeral and permanent, McNamara questions these ghost-estates as contemporary ruins carrying the failures of a recent past, a nebulous present, and a problematic future, thus inviting further reflection.

That is why we end by using a paraphrase of McNamara's motto, "Time ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact,"¹⁷ to open the discussion to the theme of the sITA's 2023 volume, *Ozymandias 3.0. Afterlives of the Architectural Ruin*, which will allow us to continue for one more year the reflection on architecture and time, to recompose and reorganize the whole according to new geometries called to tackle the subject of architectural transience.

Ana-Maria Zahariade and Radu Tudor Ponta

¹⁷ "The disaster ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact."