

**Translational Terrains: The Interdisciplinarity of Spatial Narratives**

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**Abstract:** This paper examines how architectural knowledge is produced beyond built form by tracing its circulation across drawings, texts, exhibitions, archives, and moving-image practices. While interdisciplinarity is often framed as seamless collaboration, this study argues that the intermedial movement of ideas operates more precisely as translation, a process marked by rupture, displacement, and reinvention. Existing scholarship highlights the generative role of representation, yet a gap remains in mapping where and how translational operations reorganize architectural meaning, particularly in the unbuilt domain where work is frequently dismissed as preparatory or secondary. The objective is twofold. The term “translation” is employed here in both a conceptual and a methodological sense: conceptually, it denotes the shifting of meaning across disciplines; methodologically, it describes the analytical movement through which architectural ideas are traced across media. First, to theorize interdisciplinarity as a translational practice that alters both what is carried across and the frameworks that receive it; second, to propose a cartography, termed Geographies of Translation, that locates this practice in three terrains. Core Terrains track intra-disciplinary experiments where architecture re-articulates itself across. Threshold Terrains mark the discipline’s edge, where external perspectives reshape representational logics. Distant Terrains designate practices outside architecture that nevertheless produce architectural knowledge through estrangement. Methodologically, the study combines close reading of artifacts, media-archaeological attention to representation, and critical synthesis of architectural theory and cultural studies. The analysis yields three results. First unbuilt, and representational practices are shown to constitute sites of conceptual presence, not subordinate steps to construction. Second, this mediating process is recast as a constitutive rather than supplementary operation, dislocating and re-embodiment architectural ideas across media and disciplines. Third, interdisciplinarity emerges not as synthesis but as an unstable terrain generate critical value. By situating architecture within a constellation of translational terrains, the paper contributes a methodological and conceptual framework that redefines the role of the unbuilt, expands the scope of architectural historiography, and foregrounds translation as a condition of architectural knowledge.

**Keywords:** unbuilt; translation; interdisciplinarity; archive; art-architecture

**1 Introduction**

Architectural knowledge does not reside solely in built form. It circulates across drawings, texts, exhibitions, archives, filmic and curatorial practices; media whose specific grammars both enable and critique what architecture can claim to know. This paper advances the claim that such movements are best understood not as smooth collaborations between disciplines but as acts of translation, operations marked by rupture, displacement, and reinvention (Kanekekar 2014). Translation here is not a transparent conduit; it leaves residues and opens gaps. What gets “carried across” is altered in transit, producing hybrid artifacts and understandings that exceed their sources. Interdisciplinarity is therefore less a synthesis than a translational terrain where absence, memory, and fiction become operative categories for spatial thinking.

In this paper, translation operates on two levels: as a **conceptual lens** for understanding interdisciplinarity and as a **methodological tool** for analyzing how architectural knowledge circulates through representation. The stakes of this reframing are clearest in the domain of the unbuilt. Suspended between physical absence and conceptual presence, unbuilt works such as speculative drawings, mappings, paper architectures, and visual essays are often treated as preparatory or secondary media. Yet the concept of the unbuilt, as Avanoğlu (2021) suggests, “expresses the existential struggle of architecture to emancipate itself from the building and transforms into a thought that tests the possibility of an architecture without buildings.” From this perspective, the unbuilt is not a marginal byproduct but a site of conceptual presence; a terrain where architectural ideas are produced, tested, and contested through representational labor.

What emerges from this intersection is not a seamless interdisciplinarity, but a terrain marked by crossings, frictions, and hybridizations. This crossing produces what may be called translational terrains, unstable zones where disciplinary languages, media grammars, and representational habits overlap without fusing. In these terrains, concepts are not simply transferred but unsettled, stretched, and reconfigured, yielding forms of knowledge irreducible to any single discipline. Jane Rendell’s (2006) notion of critical spatial practice names this “in-between” condition, while Kristeva’s description of interdisciplinarity as a diagonal axis underscores its

transversal character. To theorize interdisciplinarity through this lens of cross-disciplinary re-articulation is to recognize that meaning is generated in the very act of displacement, where absence and memory persist as active agents and fiction becomes a legitimate mode of spatial inquiry.

Positioning interdisciplinarity through a translational lens also addresses a recurrent confusion: Does the mere use of another method make a practice interdisciplinary? Our answer is no. Interdisciplinarity emerges when concepts, methods, and representational habits cross media and institutional boundaries in ways that dislocate their original frameworks, are reinterpreted within new vocabularies, and become re-embodied as hybrid forms. This triad of dislocation, reinterpretation, and re-embodiment names the translational operations by which architectural knowledge is reconfigured. It also unsettles architecture's claims to autonomy. As Jeremy Till reminds us, architecture depends on institutions, publics, technologies, and media systems, so its borders are negotiated rather than given.

The paper proceeds in four moves. First, it develops translation as a methodological lens for reading interdisciplinarity in architecture, distinguishing it from collaboration or eclecticism. Translation here is framed not as a transparent conduit but as an operation of rupture, displacement, and reinvention that unsettles disciplinary languages while generating new forms of knowledge. Second, it elaborates the role of representation within this translational terrain, emphasizing how speculative drawings, mappings, paper architectures, and visual essays embody conceptual presence despite their physical absence. Third, it demonstrates the argument across a constellation of cases that unfolds through three terrains: Core Terrains, where architecture rearticulates itself internally through experiments in drawing, allegory, and formal displacement (Piranese, Eisenman, Hejduk, Matta-Clark, Tschumi); Threshold Terrains, where disciplinary boundaries blur and architecture intersects with neighboring practices (Perry Kulper's speculative mappings, the Chronograms of Architecture project); and Distant Terrains, where architecture is estranged and reimagined through external cultural practices (the Otolith Group, the Dark Mountain Project, Alma Heikkilä). Each of these terrains exemplifies this act of transposition, a process of dislocation, reinterpretation, and re-embodiment, through which architectural ideas migrate, transform, and return in altered forms.

Finally, the paper draws out the critical implications of this framework for architectural historiography and criticism. It argues that drawing and narrative must be understood not as supplementary or preparatory tools but as primary translational acts in which the unbuilt resists disappearance, persists as presence, and expands the field of architectural knowledge. In this sense, interdisciplinarity is reframed as a haunting process of translation, where what is lost, added, or transformed in transit becomes the condition of critical value. By foregrounding these unstable and hybrid terrains, the paper contends that the most vital task of criticism today lies in tracing the constellations through which architecture is continually rearticulated, reimagined, and made public.

This orientation resonates with existing discussions on critical spatial practice but also seeks to move beyond them by identifying the specific terrains where such crossings occur. While Rendell's notion of critical spatial practice situates architecture between art and theory, the "geographies of translation" proposed here extend this by mapping the concrete terrains where such crossings reconfigure architectural knowledge itself, not merely its modes of practice.

## **2 Interdisciplinarity as Translational Practice**

Interdisciplinarity in architecture reads most clearly as a translational practice that moves concepts, methods, and representational habits across domains, and in doing so it alters both what is transferred and the frameworks that receive it. Rather than a seamless synthesis, this process introduces shifts, losses, and productive excesses that generate hybrid ways of knowing (Kanekar 2014). This view positions architectural knowledge in the in-between, where writing, drawing, and curating operate together to produce critical spatial practices (Rendell 2006).

In recent decades, the boundaries between disciplines have become increasingly blurred. Contemporary cultural production tends toward flow, contamination, interconnection, and networked structures, producing multidimensional terrains where disciplinary practices overlap and entangle (Gaudreault & Marion 2020). Each discipline provides material not only for its own inquiries but also for others, reflecting and refracting itself through acts of borrowing, citation, and reconfiguration. The migration of forms and contents across media generates a combinatory multiplicity that can only be described as an interdisciplinary condition. In this environment, translation is not a marginal metaphor but the very mechanism by which meaning is carried across, altered, and expanded.

Architecture offers a particularly fertile ground for this translational lens. As Rendell (2005) argues, architecture cannot be defined as a discipline in the strict sense of a unified methodology. It is inherently multi- and interdisciplinary, drawing on diverse methods and approaches while re-embedding them into its own practice.

Burns and Taylor (1984) similarly remind us that architecture is never isolated but always in active dialogue with broader social, intellectual, and visual cultures. From this perspective, architectural practice already functions as a site of cross-disciplinary negotiation, negotiating its position among neighboring disciplines while testing the limits of its own autonomy.

Translation also clarifies what interdisciplinarity is not. The mere borrowing of tools or methods does not suffice. Interdisciplinarity emerges only when disciplinary concepts and representational practices are dislocated from their original contexts, reinterpreted through new vocabularies, and re-embodied in hybrid forms. Julia Kristeva (1997) names this a “diagonal axis” across disciplines, a transversal movement that unsettles terminologies and methodologies while opening space for new forms of inquiry. Within this axis, architecture can reframe its own norms by engaging the perspectives of art, literature, philosophy, or film, and in doing so reveal latent knowledge about space.

Representation becomes central within this mediating field. Robin Evans shows that architectural drawings do more than depict: they generate and transform architecture, especially through projection systems and the conventions/techniques of representation, while Marco Frascari treats drawing as an epistemic craft that builds conceptual and narrative density over time (Evans 1997; Frascari 2011). Bernard Tschumi’s event-based sequences demonstrate how ordering images and scripts constructs spatio-temporal logic that cannot be reduced to a finished object (Tschumi 1994). These insights support reading unbuilt and archival projects as architectural propositions insofar as they are situated within, and reveal, the social and institutional contingencies on which architecture depends, rather than as autonomous preludes to construction (Till, 2009). Medium specificity further clarifies how translation operates. Colomina situates modern architecture within mass-media systems, showing how drawings, photographs, exhibitions, and publications actively shape what architecture is understood to be (Colomina 1994). Drawing on Derrida, the archive is not a stable repository but a techno-institutional practice that produces as much as it preserves; through trace and iterability, meaning is continually deferred rather than finally settled, Huyssen’s notion of the urban palimpsest reads cities as layered texts, marked by erasures and traces, that are continuously rewritten through political history and present demands, and Anthony Vidler’s analysis of the uncanny names the estrangements that haunt modern space (Derrida 1996; Huyssen 2003; Vidler 1992). Mark Wigley’s reading of deconstruction in architecture reinforces how presence and absence fold into one another within representational practice (Wigley 1993). Read together, these accounts support an understanding of the unbuilt as a mode of presence that renders absent things critically active in design thinking.

Building on these readings of representation and media, whereas Colomina frames media as constitutive of modern architecture’s public presence, this paper extends that argument by positioning media as translational agents that dislocate and reconfigure architectural meaning itself—turning representation from a vehicle of communication into a site of epistemic invention.

In sum, the project conceptualizes interdisciplinarity as translational terrain. Unbuilt work, visual essays, textual mappings, and archival reconstructions are taken as sites where architectural ideas are produced, not as subordinate steps before building. Translation, understood as negotiated movement across media and disciplines, widens what can be known and made present through representation and anchors the study’s analytical and methodological choices.

### **3 Geographies of Translation**

To understand interdisciplinarity in architecture as a translational practice requires mapping the diverse terrains where architectural knowledge is generated and transformed. Translation does not take place in a single domain but unfolds across different sites in which disciplinary languages, representational media, and conceptual frameworks intersect, clash, and mutate. These encounters rarely yield seamless synthesis; rather, they generate unstable and hybrid zones in which meaning is reconfigured through movement, displacement, and reinvention.

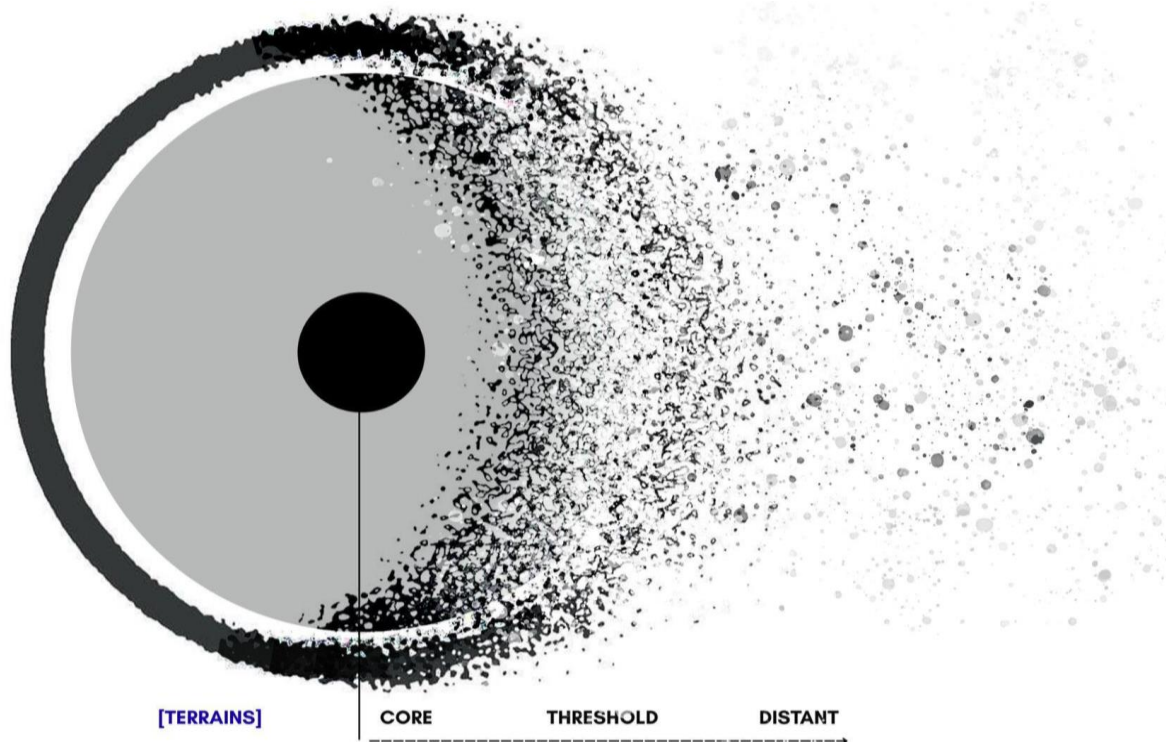


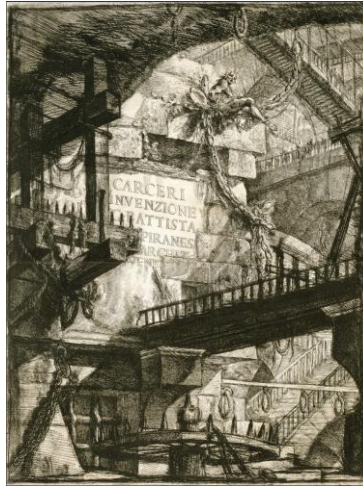
Figure 1 Geographies of Translation

Following Kristeva's (1997) notion of a "diagonal axis", we propose to read these zones as geographies of translation: layered constellations where architecture negotiates its boundaries internally, at its disciplinary edges, and through engagements with external cultural practices. The discussion proceeds in three parts: core terrains, where experimental practices inside architecture reconfigure representation; threshold terrains, where disciplinary boundaries blur into neighboring fields; and distant terrains, where external cultural practices reshape architectural imagination from without.

### 3.1 Core Terrains

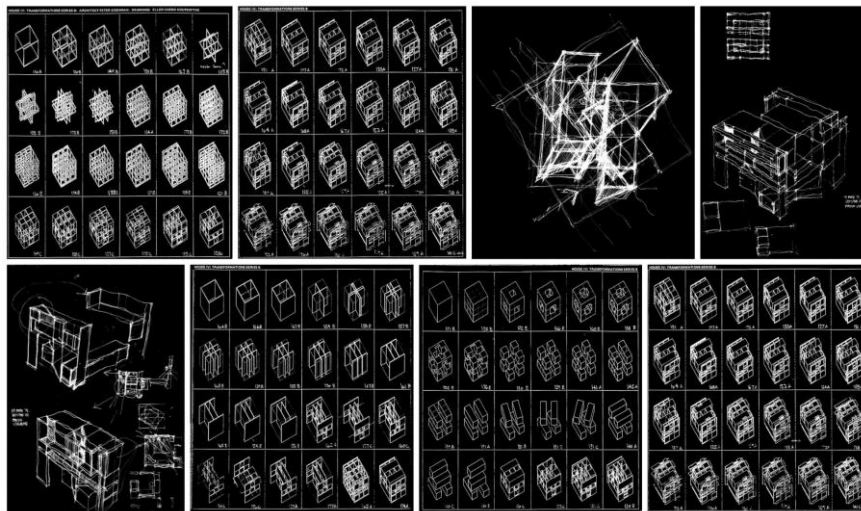
The constellation of cases begins with what may be called Core Terrains, works produced from within the architectural discipline that unsettle its conventions while remaining deeply engaged with its representational logics. These cases are "core" because they expose how architecture translates itself: from drawing to allegory, from plan to narrative, from building to cut, from speculation to critique. Rather than abandoning the discipline, they probe its very limits, testing what architecture becomes when it is carried across into other media without leaving its epistemic field.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *Carceri d'invenzione* (Figure 1) inaugurates this terrain. His etchings imagine labyrinthine prisons where arches, stairs, and scaffolds proliferate without function, translating architectural elements into allegories of infinity and disorientation. As Tafuri (1987) argues, these drawings stage a crisis of reason, anticipating modernity's tensions between order and excess. Piranesi demonstrates that architecture's critical force can emerge precisely when it is unbuilt, operating through representation as a site of conceptual invention.



**Figure 1** Giovanni Battista Piranesi's Carceri d'invenzione (1745–1761) (Url-1)

Peter Eisenman's early houses and theoretical writings represent another key moment in the Core Terrains, where architecture translates its own internal language into new epistemic registers. Like Piranesi, Hejduk, and Tschumi, Eisenman dislocates the conventional link between design and construction, but he does so by working through philosophy and linguistics. The House series (Figure 2) systematically breaks apart the relationship between form and function, treating architecture as an autonomous grammar to be manipulated, rather than a container for life. As Eisenman (1984) himself emphasized, these projects were "about architecture itself," operating through formal displacements and transformations that translated spatial design into a field of abstract operations.

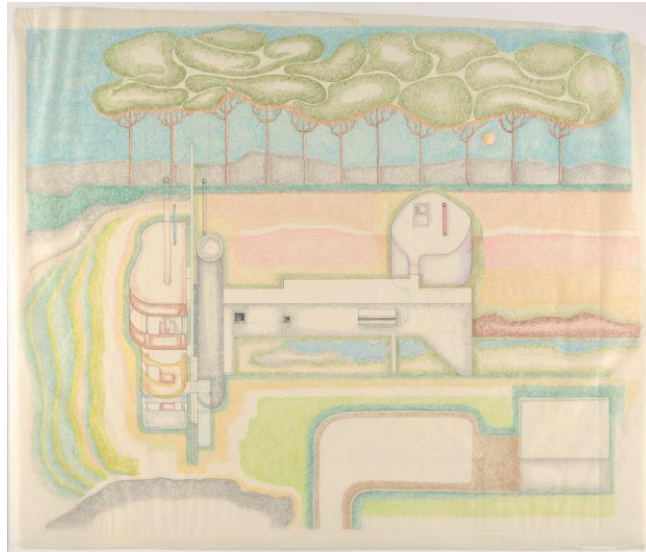


**Figure 2** Peter Eisenman, The House Series (1967-1978) (Url-2)

This internal translation becomes even more evident in the Wexner Center for the Arts (1989), where overlapping grids and fragments recall both the present cultural program and the erased traces of a demolished armory. Vidler (1992) interprets the project as an "architecture of the uncanny," in which historical memory and formal logic intersect without resolution. Eisenman thus demonstrates how translation can occur entirely within the discipline: by dislocating architectural conventions, reinterpreting them through theoretical vocabularies, and re-embodying them in hybrid forms that challenge traditional notions of meaning, function, and presence.

John Hejduk's work extends this lineage into the twentieth century. His Masques and Bye Houses (Figure 3) translate architecture into poetic and narrative registers, intertwining drawing, text, and performance. For Hejduk, architecture is never reducible to built form; it unfolds across poems, fictional characters, and ritualized narratives. As Pérez-Gómez (2017) observes, Hejduk's drawings operate "like sentences," producing meaning syntactically rather than descriptively. The Victims project in Berlin exemplifies this: instead of monumentalizing trauma through conventional building, Hejduk used drawing and narrative to construct a

participatory terrain of remembrance. Within the Core Terrains, Hejduk illustrates how translation between media becomes a method of generating spatial knowledge, in which architecture inhabits an in-between zone of allegory, language, and form.



**Figure 3** John Hejduk (1929-2000), Bye House, 1973. Frances Loeb Library, Harvard Graduate School of Design. (Url-3)

Gordon Matta-Clark (Figure 4) radicalizes this logic by moving from paper to matter, yet still operating within the unbuilt register. Works such as *Splitting* (1974) and *Conical Intersect* (1975) carve absence into existing buildings, transforming demolition into design. In Matta-Clark's practice, the cut is not destruction but a representational act that rearticulates how space is perceived, inhabited, and remembered.



**Figure 4** Gordon Matta Clark (Url-4)

Bernard Tschumi's *Manhattan Transcripts* (Figure 5) radicalize this translational process by explicitly importing cinematic grammar into architectural representation. Through sequences of photographs, diagrams, and plans, Tschumi reframes architecture as a montage of urban events rather than as static form. Vidler (2000) interprets this as a "translation of the city into script," exposing how architecture relies on external media grammars to articulate spatial logics. Translation here dislocates architecture from its conventional framework, reinterprets it through montage, and re-embodies it as spatio-temporal narrative.

Taken together, these Core Terrains demonstrate that architecture's most incisive knowledge emerges not only from construction but from translation within its own representational practices. From Piranesi's allegorical prisons to Eisenman's formal displacements, from Hejduk's narrative architectures to Matta-Clark's spatial cuts and Tschumi's cinematic montages, each case shows how architecture is rearticulated when its media are displaced, reinterpreted, and re-embodied. The Core Terrains therefore establish the foundation for the

broader constellation: they exemplify architecture's internal experiments in translation, setting the stage for the threshold and distant terrains that extend these dynamics outward into interdisciplinary crossings.

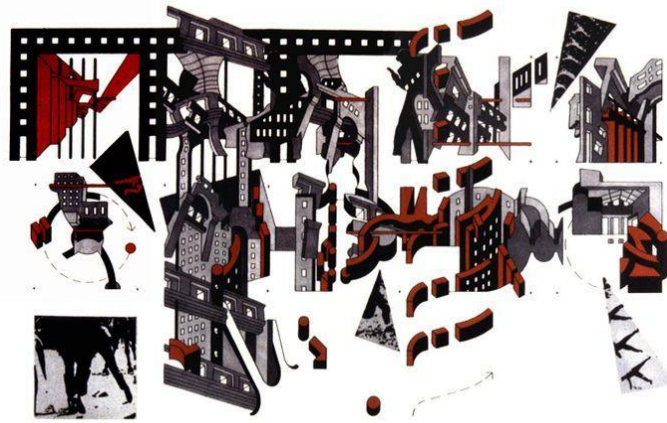


Figure 5 Bernard Tschumi's Manhattan Transcripts (1994) (Url-5)

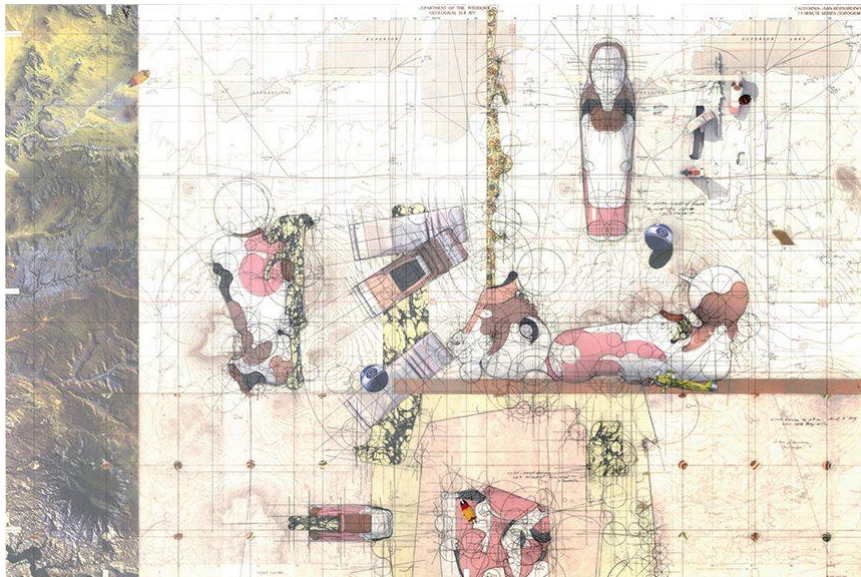
### 3.2 Threshold Terrains

Within the constellation of geographies of translation, the Threshold Terrains occupy a pivotal position: they mark the disciplinary edge where architecture negotiates its autonomy by crossing into neighboring fields. If the Core Terrains reveal how architecture translates itself internally through drawing, allegory, or formal experimentation, the Threshold Terrains unfold at the boundaries of the discipline, where external perspectives enter and unsettle its norms. These sites of exchange neither dissolve architecture into other domains nor preserve its autonomy intact; rather, they expose the porous borders through which architectural knowledge is continually reconstituted.

Contemporary cultural production no longer respects stable disciplinary borders: ideas, methods, and representations migrate across fields, generating what Gaudreault and Marion (2020) describe as a combinatory condition of flows, contaminations, and interconnections. Within this landscape, architecture cannot claim isolation. As Burns and Taylor (1984) remind us, it is always in dialogue with broader social, intellectual, and visual cultures. To recognize this condition is to accept that interdisciplinarity is not an enrichment layered onto an otherwise autonomous practice, but the very ground on which architectural knowledge is produced.

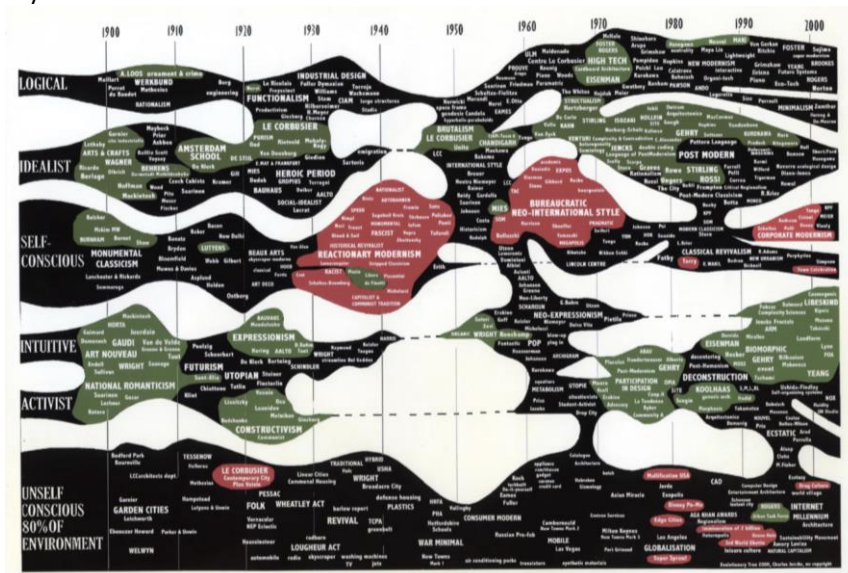
Critical theory and spatial practice reinforce this recognition. Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer (1994) argue that theory acquires its most productive force in interdisciplinary contexts, where practices confront and transform one another. Rendell (2006) extends this insight directly into architecture, insisting that it cannot be understood as a single-method discipline but as a field of intersecting approaches. Her notion of critical spatial practice names precisely this threshold condition, an "in-between" terrain where art, architecture, and cultural practice converge, unsettling normative assumptions and generating new forms of spatial knowledge. Julia Kristeva's (1997) metaphor of a "diagonal axis" across disciplines adds further clarity by framing interdisciplinarity as a transversal movement that destabilizes terminologies and methodologies alike. From this perspective, the Threshold Terrains are not marginal but central to the geography of translation: they mediate between architecture's internal translations and its external rearticulations, making visible the contingent negotiations that continually reshape the discipline.

Within this theoretical milieu, Perry Kulper's speculative drawings (Figure 6) exemplify threshold practice as representational invention. His layered compositions of maps, diagrams, and textual fragments do not function as instructions for building but as epistemic instruments. They dislocate architectural codes from the conventions of orthography and projection, reinterpret them through cartography and narrative montage, and re-embody them as hybrid artifacts of research and imagination. Read through Rendell's (2006) notion of critical spatial practice, Kulper's drawings demonstrate how architecture generates knowledge precisely when it crosses into neighboring media.



**Figure 6** Central California History Museum: Proto\_Formal Section by Perry Kulper 2006 (Url-6)

A more collective exploration of this threshold condition emerges in the project Chronograms of Architecture (2023–ongoing), a collaboration between e-flux Architecture and the Jencks Foundation. Reviving and extending Charles Jencks’s diagrammatic “evolutionary trees” (Figure 7), the project commissions new chronograms that translate architectural and cultural history into argumentative, time-based diagrams. Conceived not only as visual taxonomies but also as interpretive tools, these chronograms demonstrate how disciplinary narratives can be unsettled and reframed through graphic and temporal translation. By inviting architects, theorists, and artists to redraw architectural history from feminist, ecological, and materialist perspectives, the project foregrounds the multiplicity of genealogies that have long been overshadowed by canonical accounts. Exhibited across academic, curatorial, and public contexts, Chronograms of Architecture thus operates as both research and dissemination: it generates new historiographical propositions while simultaneously staging them as collective experiments in translation. In this sense, the project exemplifies the Threshold Terrains by opening architectural discourse to external epistemologies and demonstrating how disciplinary history itself can become a site of translational reinvention.



**Figure 7** Charles Jencks, The Century is Over. Evolutionary Tree of Twentieth-Century Architecture, 2000. (Url-7)

The series reframes architectural history as a translational terrain where politics, ecology, and design intersect. Among the commissioned works, Feminist Spatial Practices-Part I (Figure 8) visualizes overlooked genealogies of care, collaboration, and everyday agency, translating feminist theory into architectural historiography; Pier Vittorio Aureli and Marson Korbi’s Base and Superstructure (2023) reconfigures Marxist categories into

architectural genealogy, exposing how architectural forms are inseparable from ideological and material infrastructures; and MOULD’s Architecture is Climate (Figure 9) renders visible the inseparability of architecture from planetary breakdown by translating ecological discourses into spatial and graphic language. Taken together, these chronograms demonstrate how diagramming itself becomes a translational medium, dislocating canonical narratives, reinterpreting them through feminist, Marxist, and ecological epistemologies, and re-embodiment in hybrid visual-textual forms that circulate between academia, exhibition, and public debate, thus exemplifying the *Threshold Terrains* as the porous edge where architecture’s autonomy is continually renegotiated.



Figure 8 Bryony Roberts and Abriannah Aiken, Feminist Spatial Practices, Part 1 (Url-8)

Taken together, the *Threshold Terrains* emerge as the disciplinary edge of this mediating condition, where architecture negotiates its autonomy by opening itself to external discourses and practices. At this boundary, translation is not an accessory but a constitutive operation: it unsettles established conventions, reframes architectural knowledge through alternative epistemologies, and re-embodies it in hybrid forms. These terrains demonstrate that architecture becomes most critical when it inhabits its thresholds, when its borders are exposed as porous, contingent, and continually rearticulated through cultural, political, and ecological crossings.

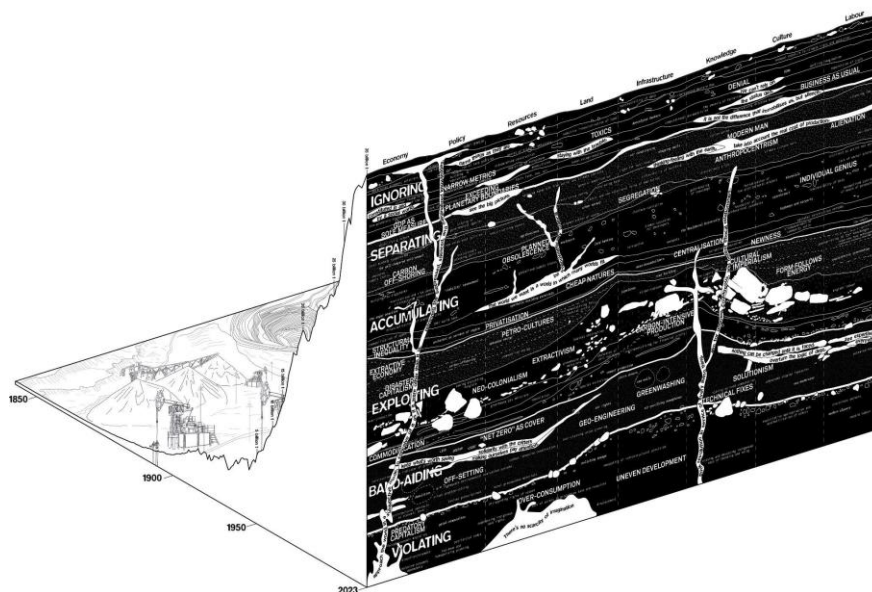


Figure 9 MOULD, “Architecture is Climate” (Url-8)

### 3.3 Distant Terrains

The Distant Terrains within this conceptual cartography mark the outermost edges of architectural discourse, where spatial concerns are displaced into artistic, ecological, and political practices that no longer identify themselves as “architecture” but nonetheless produce architectural knowledge. Rather than adjacency, these terrains operate through estrangement: architecture becomes legible when refracted through speculative cinema, planetary imaginaries, or posthuman ecologies. This mode of translation resonates with contemporary debates in critical theory that foreground precarity, planetary crisis, and more-than-human entanglements. Anna Tsing’s (2015) account of assemblages in the Anthropocene, Donna Haraway’s (2016) call to “stay with the trouble,” and Rosi Braidotti’s (2019) posthuman critical theory all emphasize that knowledge today emerges from transversal crossings that exceed disciplinary frames. Within this horizon, architecture is not a bounded discipline but part of an expanded field of cultural production, where its concepts are continually reworked by other practices. The Distant Terrains, then, are not marginal curiosities but constitutive sites where translation operates as a radical displacement: architectural ideas are unmoored from their disciplinary home, reinterpreted in alien vocabularies, and re-embodied as hybrid forms that return to challenge the discipline from without.

The Otolith Group exemplifies the logic of the Distant Terrains precisely because they are not architects but artists and filmmakers whose practice intersects with architecture from without. Their cinematic works, such as *The Radiant* (2012) and *O Horizon* (2018), stage architecture not as design or construction but as a condition refracted through nuclear catastrophe, ecological precarity, and postcolonial landscapes. Montage, archival fragments, and fictional voiceovers reframe spatiality as an unstable medium entangled with technological imaginaries and environmental crisis. What results is not architecture proper but an estranged translation of its concerns: infrastructures of energy, memory, and survival become rearticulated as cinematic space. The Otolith Group demonstrates how, in distant terrains, architecture persists as a critical question precisely when it is displaced into other artistic vocabularies.

The Dark Mountain Project (Figure 10), initiated in 2009 by writers Paul Kingsnorth and Dougald Hine, exemplifies how architectural concerns migrate into cultural terrains that are wholly outside the discipline. Conceived as a literary and artistic movement, Dark Mountain arose from disillusionment with dominant narratives of progress and development, publishing manifestos, journals, and collective gatherings that foreground ecological humility, myth, and collapse imaginaries. Its relevance to architecture lies not in producing buildings or plans, but in translating spatial imagination into speculative anthropology, rethinking dwelling under conditions of planetary breakdown. Narrative, storytelling, and myth become tools that dislocate architecture from its technical frameworks and reorient it toward retreat, repair, and limits. By working through language, performance, and community rather than through design, the project generates a cultural critique that unsettles architecture from without, insisting that the future of inhabitation cannot be thought without confronting ecological precarity and the end of modernist teleologies. From the perspective of this study, Dark Mountain demonstrates how distant terrains reconfigure architecture by estranging it, forcing the discipline to see itself reflected in discourses it does not control, yet which profoundly reshape its imagination of space and dwelling.

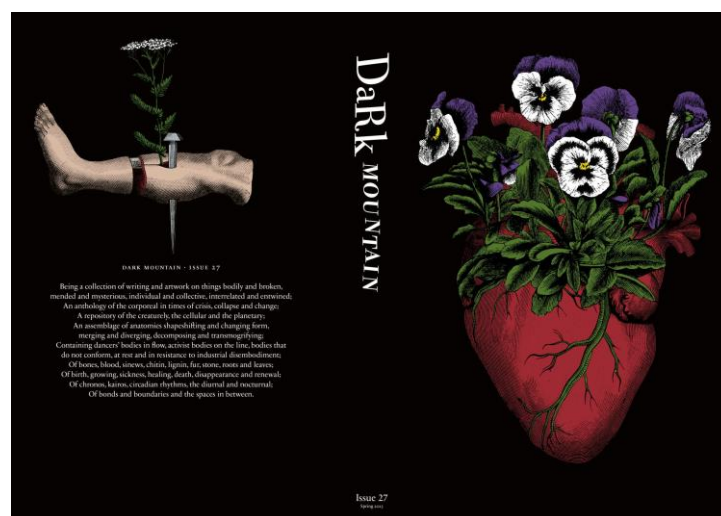


Figure 10 Dark Mountain Issue-27 (Url-9)

Operating firmly outside architectural practice yet intersecting with its most urgent concerns, Alma Heikkilä's installations (Figure 11) and paintings represent another form of distant terrain, translating architecture into ecological materialism. Her works, often large-scale environments that evoke fungi, microbes, and nonhuman scales, foreground the invisibility of ecological infrastructures that underpin human life. By building immersive, fragile, and decaying environments, Heikkilä reconstitutes architecture as a porous, more-than-human practice. The translation here dislocates architecture from its anthropocentric frame, reinterprets it through ecological art, and re-embodies it in spaces where presence and absence, growth and decay, operate as structuring logics.



**Figure 11** Alma Heikkilä (+,+) soil, pore space, hyphae, phaneroplasmodium, small white wave, cells and cell clusters (Url-10)

What distinguishes the Distant Terrains within the constellation of geographies of translation is their radical exteriority: unlike the Core Terrains that probe architecture from within or the Threshold Terrains that test its boundaries, these cases emerge entirely outside the discipline and only intersect with it through displacement. In these distant sites architecture is neither the author nor the frame, yet its concepts are reworked in unfamiliar idioms. This estrangement underscores that architectural knowledge is not contained by the discipline but continually remade through encounters with practices that lie beyond it. As part of the broader constellation, the Distant Terrains confirm that translation is most transformative when it unfolds at a distance, returning architecture to itself in altered and expanded forms.

#### 4 Translational Horizons: Discussion and Conclusion

Reframing interdisciplinarity as a translational terrain foregrounds the productive instabilities that occur when knowledge moves across disciplinary borders. Translation, in this sense, is not merely a conduit but a generative rupture that destabilizes disciplinary languages while opening them to reinvention. Rather than pursuing seamless integration, interdisciplinary encounters reveal the value of incompleteness, dislocation, and transformation. What is lost in translation, whether a representational fidelity, a disciplinary method, or a conceptual precision, becomes the very condition for hybrid practices that exceed their sources.

By articulating interdisciplinarity through the lens of translation, this paper contributes to ongoing debates on critical spatial practice and architectural historiography. It offers a conceptual shift from collaboration to re-articulation, positioning translation not as a metaphor but as a methodological principle that reveals how architectural knowledge is produced across representational and disciplinary boundaries. In doing so, it provides a framework for examining the unbuilt, speculative, and archival domains as active terrains of knowledge rather than preparatory stages of design.

This perspective reorients how architectural and artistic works suspended between absence and presence are understood. Speculative drawings, mappings, and textual reconstructions need not be seen as unfinished or secondary; they exemplify the translational logic of interdisciplinarity. Operating between media and epistemologies, they generate meanings irreducible to their origin. What emerges, then, is an understanding of interdisciplinarity not as collaboration toward a shared goal but as ongoing negotiation where friction and misalignment produce critical value. Hybrid terrains, whether architectural archives, visual essays, or fictional geographies, make visible how memory, fiction, and absence intertwine to produce new narratives of space. In this sense, interdisciplinarity operates with a dual function: it is a methodological necessity, since no discipline speaks without translation, and a conceptual horizon, since translation itself generates unforeseen meanings. The implications of this approach are significant. It displaces architecture's reliance on built form as the primary site of knowledge, elevating unbuilt, speculative, and representational practices as equally constitutive. It challenges disciplinary autonomy, revealing architecture as porous and dependent on its crossings with

cultural, political, and ecological discourses. And it positions translation not as supplementary but as constitutive of architectural thought. Yet, this framework also has limitations. The tripartite distinction between core, threshold, and distant terrains, while useful, simplifies a more complex continuum of translational practices that often overlap. Future research can extend this framework in several directions. More broadly, the geography of translation can serve as a methodological tool for rethinking historiography itself: not as the charting of autonomous achievements, but as the tracing of movements across disciplinary and cultural fields.

Translation, then, is not only a mode of communication but a critical method of inquiry. It enables spatial concepts to be rearticulated through diverse registers, material and temporal, narrative and diagrammatic, human and more-than-human, each destabilizing the presumed stability of architectural knowledge. What matters is not seamless synthesis but the cultivation of friction, rupture, and reinvention as sites of critical value.

The geographies of translation proposed here, core, threshold, and distant terrains, constitute more than a taxonomy. They offer a way of reading architecture's interdisciplinary condition as a constellation of translational acts. These terrains make clear that architecture's vitality does not lie in its autonomy but in its capacity to be transformed across media, disciplines, and cultural practices. To embrace translation is to recognize that architecture's future depends on inhabiting its instabilities, continually rearticulated through encounters that open the discipline to worlds beyond its conventional limits.

Together, the three terrains—core, threshold, and distant—demonstrate that the vitality of architecture lies not in disciplinary purity but in its capacity to be continually rearticulated through acts of mediation and crossing.

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