

Pulverisation: Paris Hermitage

Number five to seven Quai Saint Bernard is a large temporal oscillator that yields time and commonalities in material and realigns the wakefulness and sleep patterns of those whose life rhythm has been pulverised. A place to know yourself by knowing all: *omnia disce*.¹ It is the site of Paris Hermitage, a place for elective counteraction to the reshaping of living practices (social/familial/working) by the extreme conceptual abstractions made possible by our raw power of technology. It is not a site to counteract the further concreteness of the world we now know because of the simulation and productive power we now possess that is producing new states of matter, machines and knowledge—on the contrary, it is a site to preserve and grow these bifurcations and reconceptualisations. Paris Hermitage allows one to counteract one's life lived without coherence, both in a temporal and material sense.

The site then is not of the city but a discontinuation of it. There is no such thing at the Hermitage as the flexibility

and modularity of the modern: a fallacy of a dynamism that forces a contributor (the 'user', enlightened) into a performance. Instead, at the Hermitage, temporality is slowed and re-organised, to understand the relations between contributors and their discursions—the sharing of language—as the basis of the conduct of the Self. The Hermitage expands again the spheres of our emotions and sensitivities, to provide for deep elaboration in thought over time, where slow becoming occurs through collective deautomatism and stimuli is mutually curated. Where deep elaboration today is increasingly more difficult to enact and stimuli loads derange the human sensorium, at the Hermitage, sensibilities are activated in the structuring of time to expand our spheres of emotions collectively.

By avoiding prescriptions normally issued by the city (i. e. the purpose of property-making as harbingers of growth), the Hermitage's Other organisation of spaces and time follows an amplified model of reality to understand and rearticulate the behaviours of contributors that have



Fig. 1 Paris Hermitage (Auditorium). The public is invited to occupy the central space for auditions, as well as its perimeter which is constituted of pulverised matter offset walls. From the monograph co-published with Co-Ed (Nicholas Welter), New York. Inkjet Print, 29.7 × 21 cm



Fig.2 Paris Hermitage (monograph, interior page). Left: the Nimrud lens, a 3000-year-old natural oval rock-crystal believed to be used to concentrate sunlight; Right: a synthetic quartz crystal grown by hydrothermal synthesis. Inkjet print, 29.7 × 21 cm



come from the city. Here, behaviours and their spaces—the architecture—are considered as emerging. The relationship in material between the desire of contributors and the construction of their ideal reality are made in order to originate a new life.

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Contributors of the Hermitage reconfigure their shattered patterns of life—work, wakefulness and sleep—over 39 weeks. In the process they produce their practical freedoms by reconciling their time through their behaviour: engaging in daily collective discursion in order to realise again that they are intellectual subjects beyond the confines of a relationship with technology. Through discursion the Self is automatically deprivatised and the collective enters the space of reason as consensus is stabilised.

In its raw state the Hermitage provides access to quality structured information (library); a meeting area for collective discursion and the primary interface with the public (Amphitheatre), a discursion annex for singular contributors and the public (parlour), a communal eating area (refectory), private living spaces (quarters), a smaller room for the mutual verification of the will of contributors (classroom), a clinic for the monitoring of the mind (bloodletting room), a simulator that closes the gap between virtual and biological models of reality (supercomputer), a herb garden (herbarium), and a space for resting/walking in extreme seclusion where silence functions as the organisational principle (Grand Court).

The Hermitage is at the mercy of the emergent rules of the contributor's behaviour and as such its raw state of functions is extended from—but released of—the

functions of the city formed with the automation of reason intrinsic in collectivised discursion. The uses at the Hermitage are as volatile as its form; the contributor to the Hermitage is no less able to manipulate the space around them than they are able to decide the use(s) of space. The city is used less as a piece of causal fabric that registers architecture, and instead behaviour is registered as an architecture that exists knowingly outside of the city. The raw state of the Hermitage begins as a grand rationalist project that extends through processes of renewal—of space and the Self—prompted by the collective assessment of the functions—of space and the Self—and as a common demand for evolving behaviour.

The Breaking of Solids

The Hermitage is made of pulverised pure quartz crystals. Pulverisation is of the domain of the microscopic; the infinitesimal. It represents the extreme fragmentation of matter that constitutes something that still has potential; a compound of nascent vectors. Pulverised material occurs through the physical and instantaneous act of high pressure crushing/grinding—the breaking of solids—which makes it radically distinct from dust. Dust forms from the disintegration of matter and the passing of time. Dust is lifeless. The visual consummation of pulverisation was enacted in the worldmaking event of 9/11, which played out not as a rupture but as a shattering of erstwhile relations between us and the things that support us. It enacted the widespread verification of new realities like work being detached from territory which affects our social body; the deprivation of bodily experiences that used to define the social; the fragmentation of the structure of knowledge; of stylistic

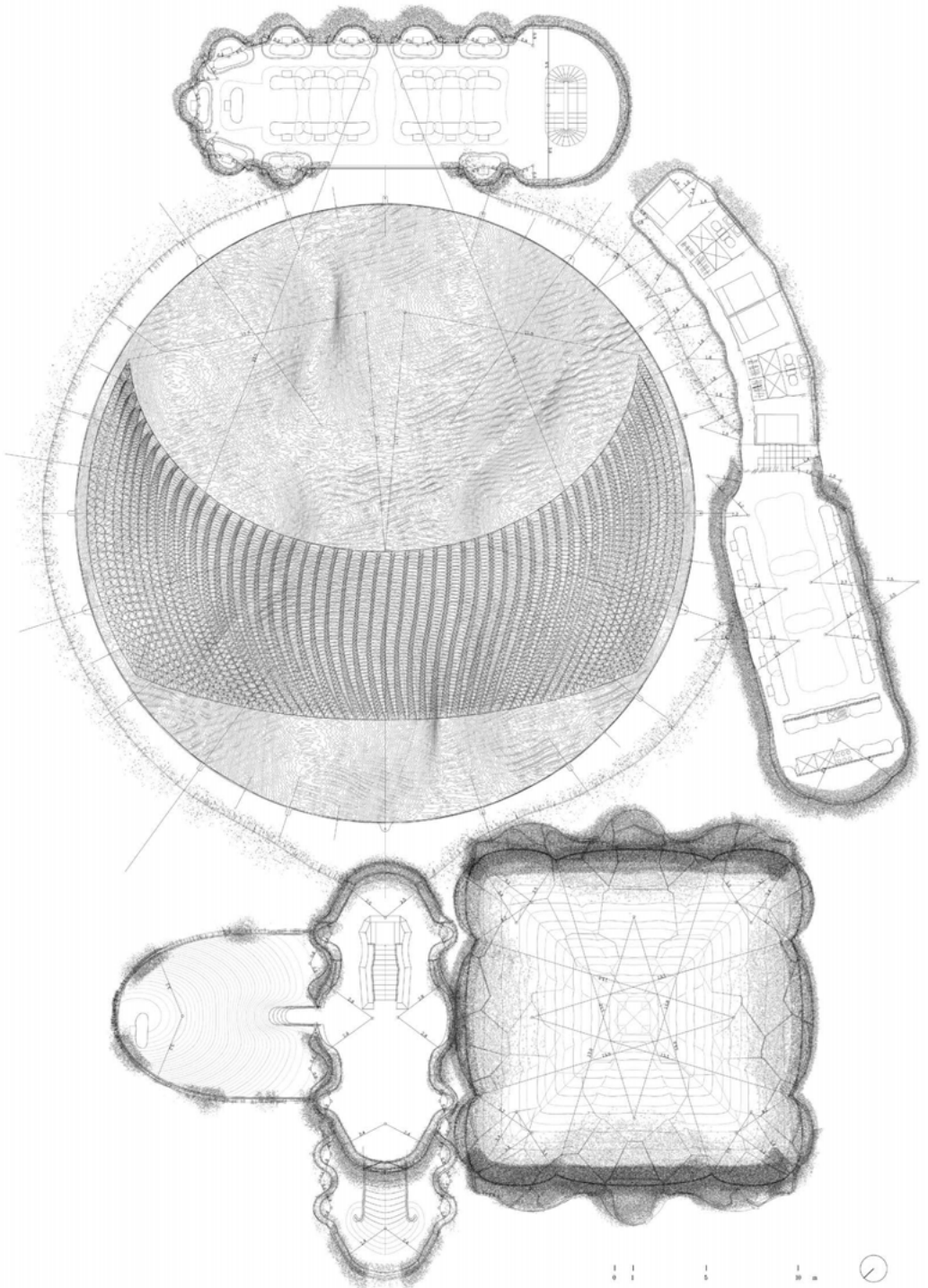


Fig. 3 Paris Hermitage. Floorplan level +1.5 m. Inkjet Print, 180 x 90 cm

unity; grand world narratives; and certainties in general.

Just as potentials are still recoverable within pulverised matter—vectors as both vital² and still alive³—an agglomeration of pulverised wholes can only but resemble an original state of something. The form of the Hermitage emerges from digitally controlled pneumatic cylinders powered by a compressor, that pulverises quartz crystals at a rate determined by a consensus determined by the contributors. As well as registering behaviours and discursion as revisable agglomerations of material, the Hermitage yields the insignia of time. This potential of revision is the logic for construction and refinement of the Hermitage which breaks it from the myths of past foundations in order to catalyse a cumulative reconciliation of reality for the contributor and ultimately the Hermitage's escape from the city.

Pure quartz crystals are pulverised after extraction from La Gardette mine in the French Alps approximately 600 km from the site on Quai Saint Bernard. Pure quartz forms at an extremely slow rate relative to other species and has a near transparency. Its clarity meant that early civilisations believed it to be a source of solar energy that could capture the Sun, others—namely Greeks and Romans—believed quartz to be water that had been frozen for many years and had turned solid. The same pure quartz sits inside every personal computer as thin slices that act as its internal clock. The slice of quartz is cut at a precise orientation to the crystallographic axes of a quartz crystal. Depending on the orientation of the cut, the operating frequency of the slice can be higher, withstanding greater temperatures. The higher the frequency, the faster instructions can be executed by

the central processing unit (CPU). The slice of quartz crystal receives mechanical pressure, which gives it electric potential (piezoelectricity) inside the crystal oscillator. A signal—the clock pulse that transitions from 0 to 1 or from 1 to 0—is given to the CPU which is distributed to all the parts that require it.

Desert

In the Grand Court of the Hermitage is a desert; the quintessential site for being alone. It is a reproduction of the Judean Desert (31.69748, 35.32596) that simulates the year 483 AD: the time and place of the birth of cenobitic⁴ monasticism.

Many continuous-output xenon short-arc lamps are suspended on tracks in a region of the roof structure that corresponds to the Sun path at the Judean Desert to produce full spectrum light equal to that of sunlight. In order to replicate the light specific to the Desert, the intensity of the lamps is adjusted with respect to: the local elevation of the Sun to the Earth; the absorption and scattering of light as it passes through the atmosphere; the changing angle of the Sun according to time of the day; and the annual solar activity from the year 483 AD, extrapolated from 5 ultraviolet (UV) irradiance data from 1610 to the present.⁵ Each xenon lamp is set in an ellipsoidal reflector which passes through a large suspended network of collimating resin lenses that also filter the light to match the air mass of the Judean Desert. The output is a uniform beam directed in a parallel formation. At any one time there are 15 xenon lamps switched on as they move across the Sun path above the suspended lenses.

Those that access the Grand Court access it alone. After knowing the Hermitage collectively through discursion, the Grand



Fig. 4 Paris Hermitage (Judean Desert CDLXXXIII AD). Recreation of daily irradiance of the Judean Desert in central Paris at the Grand Court of the Hermitage. Inkjet Print, 180 × 75 cm.



Fig. 5 Paris Hermitage. Pulverised quartz detail of structural node. Quartz crystal, thermoplastic film, bioglue, 60 x 60 cm

Court acts as the place for manufacturing the Hermitage in their own Selves. The Hermitage is the first abbey: formed as the support for spiritual struggle—for restless human hearts—and distinct from other spaces in terms of its condition and character.

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The Paris Hermitage, a conscious discontinuation of the city, is a place to exist everywhere in spaces framed by looking for everything. Through discursion for refining knowledges and establishing commonalities, contributors are renewed as intellectual subjects⁶ by asking, “what do we think of ourselves, what is our space and what we can be?”

Rancière, J. (1991). *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*.

Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Ruskin, J. (2007) *The Stones of Venice, Volume II*.

New York: Cosimo Classics.

- 1 Learn everything.
- 2 See Deleuze's vitalised geometries.
- 3 Ruskin uses “savageness” to describe a gothic architecture that remains imperfect but is a true sign of life “in a mortal body, that is to say, of a state of progress or change. Nothing that lives is, or can be, perfect; part of it is decaying, part nascent.” Ruskin (2007, pp. 171)
- 4 Cenobitic comes from the Greek κοινός meaning “common” + βίος meaning “life”.
- 5 Lean, J. (2004)
- 6 Just as Rancière flipped the Cartesian formula to: I am therefore I think equating “man” with cogito.