

battersea recuperated.

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The past must be dealt with. But how? The building stock that has long weighed on the brains of London's living is no longer a burden. It is now the very stuff from which value can be alchemised. It is now stock retromaniacal, stock upcycled into super prime, stock unapologetically and unaccountably transcontinentally owned.

The fattest prize is Battersea Power Station, G.G. Scott's second brick cathedral of power. Finally rebooted to produce a new kind of commodity — the penthouse apartment cum reserve currency. The proposal, that the properties to be stuffed into the industrial husk will churn with life, is a lie only able to be spun by either the naively incredulous or the profoundly insincere. But spin it they will.

An urban icon was once a point from which to take in the city's measure. For centuries, the image of Old London Bridge was shorthand for the City's security and its fiscal health. London's famous church spires were a concrete realisation of the piety of the entire capital. Certain structures can, by extension, also become measures of the state. Nelson's column stands as the icon of British naval dominance over the seas, it's remorseless and ruthless imperial expansion.

Below the Column, Trafalgar Square — with its numerous and arcane bylaws — is a monument to the British state's insistence on the "preservation of order and the prevention of abuses" of public spaces.

This function has been exceeded. An "icon" as it is understood now is an endeavour of the private sector formally realised by architects. It is a machine for the production of value, nothing more.

Though it may be enabled by the state, the icon today is only retroactively commandeered by the nation as a handy synecdoche (cf. the Shard and Southwark Council).

Its construction is invariably an enhancement of a city that looks to strengthen itself through

"growth-heavy" logic. But the city's public does not pay for it, and, crucially, it is not allowed inside the icon.

It is intolerable in a city like London that an icon of the older type might remain untransformed, languishing in an outmoded idea of civic pride. After bankrupting a number of heroic suitors, Battersea yielded to a consortium of Malaysian investors last year. The finest designers the dollar can buy are now charged with the schizophrenic task of cramming as much super prime square footage onto the site as the law will allow, while insisting they are staying true to "the past."

The Situationists had a good word for the seamless bringing up to date of icons: recuperation. The conversion of Battersea Power Station from ruin to mall, with traces of ruination kept as a piquant detail, should be seen as nothing more than recuperation on a monumental scale.

The station's architecture, the last signs of an industrial age, its associations with Pink Floyd's psychedelic rock, its dereliction, its iconicity; all of this has been effortlessly recuperated in the delivery of the only commodity left worth delivering in London: the glass box, sold on the international market to buyers who never had any intention of living in a post-industrial ruin anyway.

Can we recoup the recuperated? At the scale of the icon, it seems unlikely. The largest stakeholders in the capital's growth could never have let its ripest brownfield develop any other way. But what of the possibility of détournement, the operative counter to recuperation? Battersea shows us that the very action of artists and musicians can become the chassis for a value-making vehicle. No matter how cunning one's space hijacking, how fitting one's inflatable pig, how temporary one's pop-up, how poignant one's use of copper sulfate, Battersea shows us that the very inverse will materialise. We might be free to détour, but the City will do with our action what it pleases. In the current landscape of London, any such action will eventually be co-opted in a state-enabled multi-million pound development, fragments to resurface via InDesign as a catalogue no Londoner will ever see.

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here impacts there.

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The 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill reminds us very clearly that *what we do here impacts there*; that an accident is never consigned to its site. Rather, it operates at various interrelated scales from the local to the global. An accident has fall out that is economic, ecological, social and political. Such dramatic events also have massive impact at the planetary temporal scale, inasmuch as every object on the earth belongs to a continuous thread that evolves through time and space. The traces we leave, our trash, our waste, our buildings, chairs, bridges, fiber optic cables, and the like, are all objects. Some of these objects are negative (junkspace), or, worse, toxic (nuclear materials). Whether negative or not, these objects are marked by our actions and depend on our relations to them in the same way that we depend on them. Not only are they present, whether visible or not, but they also contribute to the reconfiguring state of our world. It seems significant, in an age of ecological emergency, when tackling our relations to objects, to put a focus on what an object is and what it does with respect to architecture.

For this purpose, Levi Bryant's account of the machine offers a robust conception of modes of coexistence of all sorts of objects, their interdependencies and their iterative reconfiguration. A machine is defined, firstly, by its relation with other kinds of machines. It can be a tree, land, a building, rock, particles, geographical features, bacteria, viruses, weather patterns, human and his social constructions, species, corporations, architecture, toxic materials, and the like. Bryant's machine is pluripotent, plastic and scalable. Each machine has its own timescale. For example, we can consider radioactive materials as outcomes of "human-land interaction."

Radioactive materials have a different timescale from any social and biological form, and from any other form of waste. As Timothy Morton has rightly demonstrated with the concept of the hyperobject, these externalities will far outlast our life and extend a shadow far into the future life of Earth. A question arises: how can we address

this iteratively reconfiguration of the environment? What should we do with waste? Should we live with it? These concepts of machine (Bryant), hyper-object (Morton), or even quasi-object (Bruno Latour) provide a solid framework for architecture to negotiate the coexistence of all beings, and beyond, the world-making capacities of other beings. Inasmuch as all these machines, humans and nonhumans, toxic or not, coexist within this assemblage that is our world, it is urgent for the whole edifice of architecture to be rearticulated, problem-formed, absorbed, transforming unpredictable phenomena, cycles of feedback, indeterminacy, human and nonhuman contingencies in the wake of urgent environmental issues. What matters, then, is not a lack of education or understanding of these pressing environmental concerns. Rather, it is a lack of understanding of the responsibility of each actor, namely industry representatives, scientists, architects, engineers, the state, the local...

As the future is unstable, it will be a very difficult task for architectural practice to take charge alone of negative outcomes marked by human political-economic practices.

The act of burying industrial waste underground as a form of temporary deposit constitutes a lack of understanding of the indeterminacy that characterises these negative materials. On the contrary, the development of multiple, adaptive, resilient scenarios, in which architecture can play a driving role, can allow us to grasp potential benefits of these wasted landscapes, to see them as positive resources. We must conceive industrial and ecological processes in a holistic approach — that is, integrating indeterminacies, change, uncertainties and fluctuations that reckon with past (history of the site), present (exploitation), future (waste risk) and the future of the future (human and nonhuman health). We must start by acknowledging that nonhuman agencies are central to problematising human and nonhuman activities and their entangled contribution to the reconfiguration of the world.

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