Uplands Futures:
Explorations of a Place on Standby

by

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Past — Present : Standby : Future

Abstract

The consolidation of Canadian military bases has resulted in the closure of many supporting military family housing communities across the country. In Ottawa, the Canadian Forces Base Uplands formally closed its base in 1996, however, its housing has since remained open. What was once supporting a busy air force station, Uplands military family housing has experienced a decline in housing occupancy. To Uplands' site planners, it is not considered an urgent site for intervention due to other priority communities. Therefore, Uplands military family housing is a place on standby – ready for occupancy but waiting for an uncertain future. This thesis uses photography to reveal the site's present reality as an opportunity for active engagement rather than passive waiting. Photography is engaged as a primary communicative and imaginative tool for exploration. As a result, this thesis proposes an alternative practice in architecture that uses photography as a method to explore, intervene, and question a place on standby.

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“Space, in the present, strikes us with greater or lesser intensity, and then leaves us, visually, to be closed in our memory and to modify itself there.

Of all the means of expression, photography is the only one that fixes forever the precise and transitory instant. We photographers deal in things which are continually vanishing, and when they have vanished, there is no contrivance on earth which can make them come back again.”

Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1952

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introduction

standby¹

adjective

standby

: one to be relied on, especially in emergencies

: a reliable choice or resource

: one that is held in reserve ready for use

phrase

on standby

: ready or available for immediate action or use

¹ *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, (1828) "standby," "on standby."

Introduction

Chapter One: Prologue

A key objective of this thesis is exploring the concept of ‘standby,’ and how it applies to architecture; a specific time and place. The state of standby is defined as a “reliable choice” that is “held in reserve ready for use.”² Being on standby describes a condition of being in a prepared and available state; much like the Canadian military being on standby for deployment, or how a photographic film negative is on standby ready to be printed. Photography is introduced as the primary medium for the exploration and representation of standby. The prologue introduces the historical processes of “killing the negative,”³ and contact sheets as key tools.

Chapter Two: Research Themes

In this thesis, the research themes include exploring the relationship between photography, memory, and architecture. Key references include the works of ‘anarchitect’ Gordon Matta-Clark, photographer Jade Duskow, and artist and architect Philipp Schaerer. The research themes attempt to build a framework by which this thesis can be

² *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, (1828) “standby,” “on standby.”

³ Warner, M. “Photo London: Killed Negatives at the Whitechapel Gallery.” *British Journal of Photography*, May 16, 2018.

situated in the larger scope of this interdisciplinary conversation.

Chapter Three: Context

The subject of this exploration is Uplands – a place on standby. It is a neighbourhood of government-subsidized military family rental housing in Ottawa, Ontario. Uplands military housing was built in 1961 as support accommodation for an air force base. Decommissioned since 1996, Uplands has subsequently decreased demand for military housing. This has resulted in an increase of unoccupied housing units and infrastructure closures. The site's military housing planners acknowledge Uplands to be in waiting to, with more urgent issues on other military housing sites. This standby moment may lead Uplands towards obsolescence like another former Ottawa base, Canadian Forces Base Rockcliffe. Therefore, the context of this thesis begins by exploring the circumstances surrounding Uplands military family housing, a place on standby.

Chapter Four: Photographic Explorations

The photography explores Uplands' current state of standby using an ongoing contact sheet. In this project, the contact sheets present the inventory of all the photographs taken at Uplands from September 2018-April 2019. The contact sheets are the initial documentations that lead to further photographic abstractions.

Image abstractions catalyze further questioning. Film emulsion lifts are the primary method of physical intervention. Lifting the emulsion from

a film negative is another way to ‘kill the negative.’⁴ The process of lifting the image off its frame results in the abstraction of the subject – Uplands becomes almost unrecognizable in the fragments. In this process, there are moments of pause and questioning. ***Where could this house lift and go? What if this street no longer exists? What might this opening reveal about the site?***

Through photographic documentation and abstraction, the present state of standby that Uplands is in is represented and questioned.

Chapter Five: Uplands Exhibitions

The resulting intervention is the Uplands Exhibition. The exhibition seeks engagement in the pause – it asks the viewer to interact with Uplands. Without the viewer, the photographs of Uplands are also on standby. The exhibition is activated by being seen.

The Uplands Exhibition is an on-site installation of the photographic explorations within a vacant housing unit. Its site-specificity proposes the moment for contemplation of Uplands’ current state, but also implies an act of revealing to the public. Public engagement catalyzes the dialog for discussing the future possibilities of Uplands.

By contrast, the Uplands Exhibition is also installed off-site at the final thesis defence. The off-site installation simulates Uplands. It

⁴ Warner.

proposes a space to present the idea of engaging with a place on standby.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

There is an ongoing idea of imaginative, speculative thinking driving this thesis towards a culminative exhibition. ***Uplands has many factors applying to it, but who is ultimately accountable for its present state? Who cares? Who questions its possible futures?*** This approach to a place on standby encourages architects to intervene during moments of waiting, through active engagement. The idea of an architect becoming a curator for a place on standby supports an involved approach – to take care of a place by questioning its opportunity.

Chapter Seven: Postscript

The postscript speculates further about the multiple possible futures for Uplands. These speculations are not meant to be singular proposals for architectural intervention, rather they are speculations of multiple possible futures. ***If this is done at the right time, is it possible that all the possible futures may occur?*** The postscript is meant to perpetuate the conversation catalyzed by the Uplands Exhibition, and begin speculating on the questions proposed throughout the thesis exploration.

Questioning of a Place on Standby

Why explore a site on stand by?

Where could this house lift and go? What if this street no longer exists? What might this opening reveal about the site?

Uplands has many factors applying to it, but who is ultimately accountable for its present state? Who cares? Who questions its possible futures?

If this is done at the right time, is it possible that all the possible futures may occur?

What could happen inside the house? What could happen outside? Could the reveal of the unknown be the beginning of its disappearance?

How does the relationship of photography and memory change when the subject of the image is not human, rather it is a structure, or a place?

“How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”⁵

How do Rockcliffe and Uplands compare?

How can photographic documentation represent a condition that is unseen? How can photographic abstraction represent the visual reality of the site?

Will Uplands eventually become unrecognizable?

What will happen to Uplands’ windows, doors, walls, roads, and fences?

What kind of traces will Uplands leave behind?

What are the possible futures for this unoccupied housing unit?

What new perspectives can be gained from the displacement of the Uplands Exhibition?

In a place on standby, what is the role of the architect?

Who cares? Who questions?

What is the accountability for these buildings in their future iterations?

Would posing the larger questions now help those managing the site?

What if the unoccupied military housing units are temporarily occupied?

What if Uplands closes its military housing?

What if Uplands is demolished?

⁵ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, “Approaches to What?” (Penguin: 1997), 177.

prologue

Figure 3, Paul Carter, *Untitled Photo*, 1936.
Figure 4, Bruno Barbey, *Contact Sheet*, 1968.

On ‘Killing the Negative’ and Contact Sheets

Hole punching a film negative is an act of deeming a photograph unusable. This action, which physically ruins the film negative, was meant to deem it not worthy of being printed or reproduced. A historical example of this intervention is from the documentation of American migrant workers during the Great Depression. During the 1930s, the government hired several prolific photographers for documentation. Upon reviewing the photographs, publishers had the power to decide which images would and would not be published in the media by hole punching, or “killing” the film negatives.⁶ In this definite gesture a decision was made to reveal or conceal which image would be included in the public narrative. This form of censorship meant that certain images of the reality of these places would not be publicly seen in the media. There would be no public memory of these site-specific moments.

This thesis will subvert this moment in photography’s history by physically and symbolically hole punching Uplands. It is a response to the idea that perforating a film negative deems the subject unworthy of attention and further consideration. By hole punching 35mm film photographs of Uplands, the intent is conversely to lift attention to the site.

The number of hole punches references the percentage of

⁶ Warner.

unoccupied housing units at Uplands, which is 30% vacancy. The hole punch becomes a symbol to reveal the unoccupied housing units — a method to bring attention to their ambiguous state. The holes invite imaginative thinking that these spaces on standby can be useful now.

What could happen inside the house? What could happen outside?

Could the reveal of the unknown be the beginning of its disappearance?

The hole punched negatives are displayed on a contact sheet. The importance of a contact sheet in photography is that it is the photographer's decisive step before revealing an image to the public. Photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson associated the contact sheet with analysis, "[i]t's all there: what surprises us is what we catch, what we miss, what disappears."⁷

Historically, contact sheets result from a darkroom process where the photographer prints their entire roll of film negatives on a sheet of photographic paper. A contact sheet is the photographer's tool for assessing their own work and making decisions on what images will or will not be made into enlargements. Since the photographer can see their whole roll of film at once, it facilitates making comparisons of adjacent photographs.

A contact sheet does not hide. It reveals all photographs, including

⁷ Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Decisive Moment*, (France: 1952).

those that may not be considered technically correct, such as over or underexposures.

In this thesis, the contact sheet becomes the primary means for revealing Uplands. Collecting all the documentation of Uplands on a single surface invites the viewer into the photographer's decisive moment – revealing Uplands' as it exists without excluding any of the images from the narrative.

Contact Sheet, Hole Punch Uplands

research themes

Photography, Memory, Architecture: The Spaces In-Between

The invention of photography in 1839 revolutionized many fields of thought, including science, psychology, and visual arts. It catalyzed new discourse in representation, perception and memory, which were explored by psychologists, artists, and philosophers alike. Architecture has long been a primary subject of the medium. For example, the earliest surviving photograph is *View from the Window at Le Gras* by Nicéphore Niépce, an image taken from the photographer's window of adjacent rooftops. To contextualize this thesis in the larger dialog of photography and architecture, this essay will trace a narrative using the theme of memory through fragments of architectural photography's history.

To preface the timeline of photography's relationship with architecture, this essay will consider the connection between photography and memory. Photography can preserve visual representation by recording an outward encounter of a specific moment in time and space. The resulting photographic impressions are fixed to a physical surface like analog film or digital screen. Photography is a way to pause a moment in time and space amidst a constantly changing outer world. As elaborated in Douwe Draaisma's *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas about the Mind*, "photography captured what was transient, gave permanence to

what was fleeting[.]”⁸ Within the translation from physical world to a fixed surface, the paused moment in time and space becomes significant in the viewers’ mind. Arguably, the invention of photography altered the method in which an individual remembers. The action of remembering is often supplanted with a mental picture of a photograph; like “into an album full of silent snapshots, consciousness into a gallery[.]”⁹ Images have become like recorded memories.

Physiologist and researcher of photochemistry, John William Draper, noted that the human brain can retain “relics or traces of impression.”¹⁰ This concept, introduced around the era of photography’s invention, is a striking metaphor between photography and memory. He later analogizes this relationship, noting that when he developed photographs from a previous voyage, he observes that, “[t]he photograph had forgotten nothing.”¹¹

In 1878, neurologist Jules Bernard Luys analyzes the relationship between photography and mind in his text *Le Cerveau et ses fonctions*. He compares the concept of the latent photographic image with memory. The concept of the latent image is the invisible image that has been exposed to a light sensitive surface but has not yet been made visible

⁸ Douwe Draaisma, *Metaphors of Memory: A History of Ideas About the Mind* “Introduction,” and “A Mirror with a Memory,” (Great Britain, Cambridge University Press: 2000), 119.

⁹ Ibid, 104.

¹⁰ John William Draper, *Human Physiology*. (London: 1856), 269.

¹¹ John William Draper, *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, (London: 1878), 133-134.

through photographic development. The process of development darkens the latent image, and fixes it to the film, turning it into a negative. The photograph's invisibility in a latent state needs the photographer's chemical activation to become visible. Luys refers to the latent image as the memory.¹²

With regards to memory, truth in photography has been heavily debated. Historically, famed inventors of photography Daguerre and Talbot argued that "their process enabled nature to reproduce *itself*."¹³ This statement moves beyond the preciseness of a photograph, and into the realm of perception and consciousness.

Photography proposed a heightened realism. While painters expressed places through brushstrokes, a photograph could remember a specific instant. Like the landscape photographers who developed the United States National Park System – photography became a critical part of the American conservation movement. The images produced by photographers such as Ansel Adams became reminders of places that need to be protected. Photography became a tool used for preservation.

By contrast, some theorists rejected the comparison of photography and memory. Roland Barthes states, "not only is the Photograph never, in essence, a memory...but it actually blocks memory, quickly becomes a

¹² Jules Bernard Luys, *Le Cerveau et ses fonctions*, (Paris: 1878).

¹³ Draaisma, 118.

counter-memory.”¹⁴ Since photography relies on sight, it leaves out other feelings associated with recalling a memory. Arguably, a photograph must be intervened upon to become more sensorial.

“[P]hotography does not enhance memory – involuntary, physically embracing and immediate memory – but rather replaces it with images – images that are historical, coherent, informational. To induce the full, sensorial experience of involuntary memory, a *photograph must be transformed*. Something must be done to the photograph to pull it (and us) out of the past and into the present...Whatever the means, in every case attention is drawn to the physical presence of the photograph itself.”¹⁵

Finally, in historical photography, memory was often explored through portraiture. The portraits were personal acts of remembering for fear of loss of the individual’s memory.

How does the relationship of photography and memory change when the subject of the image is not human, rather it is a structure, or a place?

Memory is the narrative theme that connects the following timeline of the relationship between architecture and photography. In the past,

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida: reflections on photography*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 91.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography & Remembrance*. (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 94.

architecture was photographed to grant it inclusion in the historical canon of its discourse. As an alternative kind of memorial, architectural photography sought to collect and later to preserve what were considered important buildings and sites of the time: “[a]rchitects initially used photography in order to record historic monuments for preservation.”¹⁶ Significant historical architectural photographers include Julius Shulman, Lucien Hervé, Bernd and Hilla Becher, and Hélène Binet. These photographers worked both directly and indirectly with architects. However, their intent was primarily to document architectural spaces as they exist.

The 20th century also saw the democratization of photography and mass accessibility for the public to acquire cameras. Consequently, the proliferation of images resulted in saturating the public with architectural photography. Eventually, every building was being photographed in some capacity. As Barthes stated, “[p]hotography, in order to surprise, photographs the notable; but soon, by a familiar reversal, it decrees notable whatever it photographs.”¹⁷ This assertion of importance is reflected in the 1960s and 1970s, when street photography took interest in “exploring vernacular architecture in photography and started responding to the everyday - banal buildings, industrial sites, street-scapes, suburbia -

¹⁶ Jesus Vassallo, *Seamless: Digital Collage and Dirty Realism in Contemporary Architecture*. (Zurich, Park Books: 2016), 167.

¹⁷ Barthes, 34.

and turned those sites into architectural interest.”¹⁸ Significant photographers within the discourse of vernacular architecture include Walker Evans, Eugène Atget, and Berenice Abbott. Their images of the ordinary became icons to remember a certain time in social, cultural, and political history.

Photography is a medium tied to its subjects. What is represented in the image can serve as a catalyst for discussion and change. The image can be political, and it often questions the status quo.

Photographing the subject of the status quo is central in this thesis. The significance of the ordinary, or ‘infra-ordinary,’ is questioned by Georges Perec in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*:

“How should we take account of, question, describe what happens every day and recurs every day: the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infra-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual?”¹⁹

Not only is vernacular photography important for creating a public memory record of architectural conventions of a specific time and place, it also serves as a platform to reflect on its social, cultural, and economic state. It is an accessible medium and creates the possibility for anyone to deem their subject worthy of being remembered.

¹⁸ Anna Winston and Elias Redstone, “Photography has changed the way we think about architecture,” Interview on Barbican Exhibition in London, September 25, 2014.

¹⁹ Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, “Approaches to What?” (Penguin: 1997), 177.

Within the 20th century, photography has also become a tool for marketing architecture. Beatrice Colomina states,

“Photography does for architecture what the railway did for cities, transforming it into merchandise and conveying it through the magazines for it to be consumed by the masses.”²⁰

Another result of the democratization of photography, is the mass marketing of images of places. Typically, architectural photography was published by the discretion of both the architect and the photographer. There is a “current habit of architectural magazines to compete with each other by publishing not only the same building, in a similar cursory way, but even the same photographic images.”²¹ The repetitive representation of certain architectural spaces become lasting public memories of them.

In the 21st century the digital realm begins to consume the discourses of photography and architecture. In Jesus Vassallo’s *Seamless: Digital Collage and Dirty Realism in Contemporary Architecture*, he argues “the introduction of the digital blurs the division between observation and action, between representing the world and proposing new worlds.”²² During this era, the concept of realism in

²⁰ Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*. (MIT Press: 1996), 47.

²¹ Kenneth Frampton, *Perspecta*, “A Note on Photography and Its Influence on Architecture,” Vol. 22, *Paradigms of Architecture*, (MIT Press: 1986), 41.

²² Vassallo, 171.

architectural rendering developed as digital photography advanced. The ability to digitally manipulate images beyond their original representation is a result of this new technological reality. This effects memory by collaging perhaps fictional narratives that supplant physical realities.

The relationship between photography, memory, and architecture has developed in many capacities since the 19th century. From a tool for historical portraiture, to documenting monumental architectures, to recording the everyday, to marketing buildings for the masses, to producing contemporary visual fictions – architectural photography is a medium with an expansive discourse and perspectives.

Challenging Representations in Photography and Architecture

In the discourse of photography, memory, and architecture, there are many artists and architects who attempt to contribute, critique, and subvert the conversation. The following essay will highlight three distinct bodies of work that provide contextual framework for the photographic explorations of Uplands. Gordon Matta-Clark is an 'anarchitect' and artist who created sculptural transformations of buildings anticipating demolition. His interventions *Splitting* (1974) and *Conical Intersect* (1975) will be analyzed and their lasting documentation reflected on. Jade Duskow is a contemporary architectural photographer whose series *Lost Utopias* (2007-ongoing) is an investigation of former world exposition sites. The catalogue of photographs represents the remnant sites as they exist now, and arguably they are documentations of places that exist on standby. Finally, architect and artist Philipp Schaerer's *Bilbauten* (2007) series is a critique of contemporary digital architectural representations. The hyperreal renderings of fictional architectures imagine possible futures and critique modern rendering practices in architecture.

Figure 7, Gordon Matta-Clark, Splitting, 1974.

Gordon Matta-Clark

Gordon Matta-Clark referred to himself as an 'anarchitect,' an identity that combined architecture and anarchy. His project, *Splitting* (1974) depicts a one-bedroom house in Englewood, New Jersey with a fissure bisecting the building. Using a chainsaw, Matta-Clark physically cut, scored, and hacked the house in half and leveraged the structure on its foundation to split it open. The intervention was viewed by a group of artists invited by Matta-Clark, who was known as a community catalyst in New York City. Those who viewed the split in person remarked its spatial qualities – the way the light sliced through the opening, the fragility of the spaces being walked through, and the apertures which revealed new perspectives of bringing the outside inside and vice versa. *Splitting* was a remarkable intervention, however temporary. It lasted for three months before the house was demolished for urban renewal. The house had already been destined for demolition, and "save for some fragments of architecture the artist preserved - and save for the documentation itself - the work in question, *Splitting*, has all but ceased to exist."²³ Now, *Splitting* exists as a memory.

Much like the idea of a section drawing in real space, *Splitting* is exploratory and conceptual. Given this building was waiting for its eventual

²³ Pamela Lee, *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, (Massachusetts, MIT Press: 2001), xii.

destruction, Matta-Clark found architectural opportunity in its present state of waiting.

The exhibition of the ten-minute video, accompanying photographic documentation, and some preserved building fragments from *Splitting* are curated and exhibited in galleries and museums.

Notably, this translocation of the original building is another result of Matta-Clark's intervention. This house from New Jersey is remembered, and it is now considered a significant contribution to the field of adaptive reuse. In Liliane Wong's *Adaptive Reuse: Extending the Lives of Buildings*, the author states that Matta-Clark's use of site-specific installations is a successful example of building adaptation because it "[makes] informed responses to site-specific conditions, one that takes into account the building's DNA."²⁴ The opportunity he found in the building's existing conditions proposed a new perspective in the conversation on adaptive reuse in architecture.

²⁴ Liliane Wong, *Adaptive Reuse: Extending the Lives of Buildings*. (Basel, Birkhauser Architecture: 2016), 126.

Figure 8, Gordon Matta-Clark, *Conical Intersect*, 1975.

Conical Intersect (1975) is another intervention by Matta-Clark where he carved cone voids into buildings destined for demolition in a Parisian neighbourhood undergoing gentrification. This gesture is another statement of “the artist’s literal ‘de-construction’ of existing structures to reveal hidden or unexpected urban narratives.”²⁵ In this act he created new views of Paris through an existing building that would have soon been gone. As Matta-Clark visually lets Paris into the building, the building also reveals itself to the public.

In both interventions, Matta-Clark was able to perform these actions because the buildings were destined for demolition. They are both examples of buildings being demolished due to urban conditions of renewal, growth, and gentrification. Matta-Clark attempted to bring attention to buildings in a state of pre-demolition, and through cutting, subtraction and alteration, he brought awareness to their inherent possibilities. The possibilities could be interpreted as spatial, economical, historical, social, etc.

²⁵ Museum of Modern Art, “Gordon Matta-Clark,” *Art and Artists*, (January 6, 2019).

Figure 9, Jade Duskow, Chicago 1963 World's Fair, The Columbian Exposition, Site of Manufacture Liberal Arts Building, Grand Peristyle and Agriculture Building, View 2, 2009.

Jade Duskow

Jade Duskow is a contemporary architectural photographer whose *Lost Utopias* (2007-ongoing) series depicts remnant world fair structures around the world. She states that her interest is in portraying “past ideas of the future.”²⁶ Her explorations of the visual ironies within the built environment reveal another kind of standby: of monuments in partial ruin or kept as tourist landmarks amidst developing surroundings. Notably, she photographed former sites of structures that no longer exist using long exposures; resulting in eerie ghost-like images for the viewer to imagine how it once was and reflect on the state of the site in the present.

Duskow frames the former sites in ways that they have not been photographed before, without the extravagance of a world exposition. In doing so, she reveals new visual ambiguities and contexts for the remaining structures. Duskow's approach to photographing these sites from unconventional perspectives challenges the conventions of contemporary architectural photography, which sometimes reproduces the same vantage point for a building or space repeatedly. She presents images of these places that disrupts the public memory of them.

The absence of people in the images is worth noting. When Duskow is asked why her photographs are largely void of human

²⁶ Jade Duskow, “Jade Duskow – Architectural Photographer.” In *Masters of Digital Photography Lecture Series* produced by the School of Visual Arts. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xOZRqVjFaVU>.

presence she states, "This is not always intentional...sometimes you don't need people to activate the architecture"²⁷ Arguably, it is a person that activates the architecture – the photographers' presence. The intent to photograph these sites that are largely neglected or forgotten re-activates them. Duskow creates opportunity for these spaces to be seen once more in their current state of standby. Furthermore, seeing these places that were once full of spectators now void of human activity further reinforces the narrative that they are on standby themselves.

World fair sites were once scenes of mass-marketing for places, proposing futures of what could be. As Jennifer Minner states in her essay on the series, "[t]he photographs of *Lost Utopias* not only provide valuable documentation of surviving artifacts and living landscapes but provoke further questioning."²⁸ At present and in Duskow's work, these paused structures present greater social, historical, and architectural questions.

²⁷ Jade Duskow, *Lost Utopias*, "I Try to Weave Together a Sense of Time Passing" Interview by Vladimir Belogolovsky, (Black Dog Publishing, London, UK: 2016), 116.

²⁸ Jennifer Minner, *Lost Utopias*, "Framing Lost Utopias: The Place of International Expositions Over Time," (Black Dog Publishing, London, UK: 2016), 15.

Figure 10, Philip Schaerer, Installation, Obsessions Exhibition, 2012.

Philipp Schaerer

Architect and artist Philipp Schaerer's *Bilbauten* (2007) series is a critique of contemporary digital architectural representations. He creates fictional building renderings. Schaerer states:

"[the series] deals with the effect and the claim to credibility of images of architecture that appear to be photographs... They are not a photograph; instead, they were newly designed and constructed from scratch by means of image synthesis and digital image editing."²⁹

The series blurs the line between what is real and what is built, and he subverts expectations of architectural representation by producing believable fictions. What can be gained from this series is an interest in persuading the viewer to believe these possible realities using fragments of materials that exist in space, while also critiquing the conventions of architectural representation. This sort of engagement is reflected in the following statement:

"the most intense and lasting effect that the digital will have on architecture culture will be its capacity to bring attention once again to the real, through operating on its fragments in a postproduction

²⁹ Philipp Schaerer, "Description," on *Bilbauten* from artist statement, January 17, 2019.
<http://www.philippschaerer.ch/e/w-bilbauten/description.html>.

space in order to *generate alternative futures* – what we could describe as a practice of engaged digitalism.”³⁰

Schaerer’s resulting abstractions lead to further questioning themes of reality, abstraction, and visual ambiguity.

³⁰ Vassallo, 178.

context

Figure 12, Joy Stephens, Shilo, Manitoba PMQ, 1951-1958.

Figure 13, Joy Stephens, Shilo, Manitoba PMQ, 1951-1958.

Figure 14, Unknown Photographer, Cold Lake, Alberta PMQ, 1960.

Military Family Housing

World War II catalyzed the construction of military family housing in Canada, with 16,000 housing units built across the country between 1940-1960. Formally known as PMQs (Privates Married Quarters), military family housing is a type of government-subsidized rental housing. Military family housing was created to support and accommodate the transient nature of Canadian military families.

Military family housing communities were built as low-density suburban neighbourhoods with units ranging from two to four bedrooms, and bungalows to two-storey. Schools, churches, and parks were included in military housing neighbourhoods as supporting infrastructure, and communities were situated near active military bases.

Since the 1940s, countless military families have occupied these neighbourhoods across Canada. The communities are subject to frequent movement. A military family house can be inhabited by many families with career postings often lasting approximately three years. Hypothetically, if consistently occupied since 1940, a house could have accommodated 26 different families between past and present.

During the 1990s the Department of National Defence underwent major reorganization. The Canadian Forces Housing Agency was established as a special operating agency to manage the military housing

portfolio. Since then, many bases have decommissioned, which usually results in the closure of their supporting military housing. At present, 21 of 49 military housing sites have closed.

Since the 1990s, military family housing planners of the Canadian Forces Housing Agency are involved in planning for the futures of these sites. The difference between urban planning and military family housing planning is context. Military family housing faces external factors including changing organizational politics. Therefore, military family housing planners plan for multiple possible futures of each site due to the changing needs of their governing organization. These plans remain on standby until further notice.

However, once the military family housing site is closed, the futures become unplanned by military family housing planners as they transition to new hands. In the past, there have been several outcomes for military family housing stock. The following maps illustrate how the 21 military family housing site closures resulted in varying post-closure conditions. These post-closure conditions include conversion, demolition, and dislocation.

In some instances, former military family houses underwent a period of conversion, and they became re-purposed by their surrounding communities. They were reused as civilian housing – renovated, altered, and mixed in with new construction. Although still used as residences,

these military family houses and their history receive an afterlife in their new communities.

Obsolescence, and eventually demolition, has been another common future faced by military housing. The housing stock are left to wait on standby while their futures are negotiated on. In many instances, the houses are boarded up and left behind. The materials become unsalvageable, and the surrounding natural environment inevitably crept into the infrastructure. Waiting time becomes another affecting condition of their future.

Finally, dislocation of the housing stock is another post-closure condition. The houses have been structurally relocated and moved to new contexts

Canadian Military Housing Map
 Analysis of Open and Closed Sites

Canadian Military Housing Map
 Analysis of Sites Post-Closure

Figure 17, Bruce Forsyth, Abandoned PMQs at CFB Rockcliffe awaiting demolition, 2009.

Figure 18, Bruce Forsyth, Abandoned PMQs at CFB Borden awaiting demolition, 2015.

Figure 19, Bruce Forsyth, Abandoned Stanley Green Park PMQs at CFB Toronto awaiting demolition, 2011.

Ghost town in a city: Toronto military neighbourhood set to be dismantled to make way for condos

William Baker Park is like a ghost town. A whole row of empty houses sits with overflowing mailboxes and weathered, unused phone books on the porch

Up to 1,500 military housing units sit empty, auditor general says

Closing excess military installations and transferring the money to the Canadian Forces - would it happen?

Auditor General: DND doesn't know if military housing meets personnel needs

Plan for former CFB Rockcliffe features 5,500 new places to live

Figure 20, Darren Calabrese, National Post, Ghost Town in a City: Toronto military neighbourhood set to be dismantled to make way for condos, 2012.

Figure 21, Murray Brewster, The Canadian Press, Up to 1,500 military housing units sit empty, auditor general says, 2016.

Figure 22, David Pugliese, Ottawa Citizen, Closing excess military installations and transferring the money to the Canadian Forces - would it happen?, 2016.

Figure 23, Lee Berthiaume, Ottawa Citizen, Auditor General: DND doesn't know if military housing meets personnel needs, 2016.

Figure 24, CBC News, Plan for former CFB Rockcliffe features 5,500 new places to live, 2014.

In the News

In the recent past, the necessity to continue to offer government-owned military housing has been questioned by the Department of National Defense. A 2001 report outlined how to move forward with regards to military family housing, and the Department of National Defence states, “in the long term, the Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces should extract itself from owning, operating and maintaining a large inventory of Crown-owned housing.”³¹

In a 2015 review, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada “concluded that National Defence did not have adequate and approved plans to support the current and future needs of military housing.”³² The report casts light over confusion on how many housing units are required to fulfill current and future demand. Managing approximately 12,000 units “with over 10 per cent of its inventory sitting empty,”³³ the Auditor General expressed his opinion to the media, “it seems to be high.”³⁴

The Department of National Defence 2017-18 Departmental Plan responds to the military family housing issues raised in the 2015 report.

³¹ Canada Department of National Defence Chief Review Services. *DND Accommodation/Housing Issues and Canadian Forces Housing Agency*. (Ottawa: National Defence, 2001), 8.

³² *Ibid.*, 14.

³³ Brewster, M. “Up to 1,500 military housing units sit empty, auditor general says.” *The Canadian Press*, February 2, 2016. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/auditor-general-military-houses-1.3430151>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

“We will bring forward a proposal to rationalize defence infrastructure in Canada.”³⁵ At present, the plan for the future of military housing is not yet committed.

The uncertainty surrounding military family housing in the public eye contributes to the standby nature of these sites. As the Canadian Forces Housing Agency waits for information surrounding future military family housing needs, the communities themselves remain on standby until further notice.

³⁵ National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. “2017-18 Departmental Plan.” *Plans at a Glance*, March 17, 2017. <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-report-plan-priorities/2017-plans-at-a-glance.page>.

Figure 25, Ottawa Archives, Hunt Club Field, 1927.

Figure 26, Ottawa Archives, Construction Shot at Uplands, 1954.

Figure 27, Ottawa Archives, House on Bowesville Road, being moved to a spot beyond Uplands Airport, 1956.

Uplands

Looking back on Uplands' built history, the site's relationship with aviation catalyzed the reason military family housing was originally constructed in this location. Originally, the area was used as a landing field for small aircrafts. The Ottawa Flying Club received the first airport license in 1928, and the airfield changed from the informal Hunt Club Field to the Uplands Aerodrome. Eventually the airfield was taken over by the Department of Transportation. The original airport hangers and runways were introduced as Uplands Airport in 1938.

The Department of National Defence obtained shared use of Uplands Airport at the beginning of World War II. The Royal Canadian Air Force established new facilities and military training programs on site. Between its military and civilian use, Uplands Airport received "the distinction of having the highest volume of aircraft movements of any Canadian airport"³⁶ of the time. After the war, the movement on the site continued to increase. The Royal Canadian Air Force Station Uplands became the Canadian Forces Base Uplands, and the Department of National Defence continued to develop more programs on the site into the 1960s.

³⁶ International Airport Authority Ottawa. "A Brief History." *Airport Authority*, November 13, 2018. <https://yow.ca/en/corporate/airport-authority/brief-history>.

Built in 1961, Uplands military family housing provided accommodation for the increasing number of military members moving to Ottawa for work. Consequently, there was high demand for supportive affordable housing. As a result, 700 homes were built on the 45-acre site.

By the 1990s, due to major reorganization and financial cutbacks, the Canadian Forces Base Uplands was decommissioned. Once the site became no longer military active, it was renamed as the Canadian Forces Support Unit Ottawa (Uplands Site). Several buildings on site continue to be owned by the Department of National Defence, including the military family housing.

Uplands military family housing currently offers 688 units for rent to military families in Ottawa. All 688 units are maintained with recent interior renovations. Although the houses are approaching sixty years old, they continue to receive routine maintenance and general upkeep. This results in the units remaining on standby – they are ready to be occupied. However, with the closure of the base and surrounding infrastructure, it is questionable if they will ever be reoccupied.

As mentioned, aspects of the military family housing supporting infrastructure have recently closed, including the on-site convenience store and elementary schools. In 2009, the Pronto Food Mart closed and its building since demolished. Two elementary schools are situated on the Uplands site and were once the host schools for children of military families posted to Ottawa. Both schools have closed in 2017. Uplands

Catholic School and the Elizabeth Park Public School were under capacity to continue operations and the students were transferred to an existing facility off-site. The schools' buildings are currently on-site, boarded up, vacant and unoccupied.

In 2011, Uplands' 50-year land agreement was up for negotiation, and the Department of National Defence decided to continue the site's status quo.

Also, in 2011, the Canadian Forces Housing Agency military family housing planners released their second-generation Strategic Site Plans. These plans outline three possible futures for Uplands, including: an investment scenario, a reduction scenario, and an expansion scenario. These site plans intended to provide a starting point, based on site data, for future decisions for Uplands. However, actioning these plans is dependent on larger governing bodies which have decided to keep the site on hold. Also, given the higher priority military housing sites in other locations, a third-generation strategic site plan for Uplands has not yet been developed.

Uplands Military Housing

Ottawa South
1:50,000

1945

2018

Uplands Site (1945-2018)
1:40,000

Uplands Military Family Housing

Remaining Air Force Hangar

Ottawa International Airport

Uplands Site (Aviation Context)

1:20,000

Uplands Site (On Standby)
1:4000

Figure 34, Canadian Forces Housing Agency, Reduction, Expansion and Investment Scenarios, Strategic Site Plans, Second Generation, Uplands, 2010.

Figure 35, Bruce Forsyth, Abandoned PMQs at CFB Rockcliffe awaiting demolition, 2009.

Precedent: Rockcliffe

Rockcliffe military family housing was originally constructed in a similar context as Uplands. In 1919, the site was approved to be used for aircraft landing. By the 1920s, the Royal Canadian Air Force was actively working out of the site, “its major activities for the next 40 years included military aerial photography for the mapping of Canada, air transportation and aeronautical experimentation.”³⁷

During World War II, the base had expanded dramatically in size. New training facilities and schools were built, including education for “photography, fighter control, aircraft recognition, communication, and a testing kitchen.”³⁸ At peak activity, there were 1,401 military men and women working from the station.

During the active time of the 1950s, the Rockcliffe military family housing was built. In total, 430 units were constructed to accommodate the increase of military members and their families relocated to Ottawa.

In the reorganization of Ottawa’s military buildings and infrastructure in the 1990s, much of the site’s training facilities ceased operation or were relocated. Canadian Forces Base Rockcliffe was

³⁷ Stephen Payne, *A History of the Rockcliffe Airport Site: Home of the National Aviation Museum, Ottawa, Canada*. (Ottawa: National Aviation Museum, 1999), 6.

³⁸ Ibid, 22.

eventually decommissioned in 1994.

Following the decline of the site's use and activity, the housing units became increasingly vacant as tenants relocated once more. In 2003, a resident noted that the base "was already winding down."³⁹ During this time with many of the homes already unoccupied, the City of Ottawa intervened. They converted 21 houses into emergency social housing.

By 2009, Rockcliffe military family housing was officially closed. From the 430 units, a small amount of military family residents remained until the official closure. The City of Ottawa noted two families inhabiting the houses as emergency social housing remained at this time.⁴⁰ Essentially, it was an island of housing isolated from the surrounding communities. One of the final residents described the Rockcliffe as living in a ghost town.⁴¹ By the time the official closure was announced, the area was defined by overgrown landscape that was creeping into the housing infrastructure.

The site demolition took place in 2013. The contractor sold all the materials on site. The houses themselves were sold for \$25,000 each and many were structurally relocated from the site and converted to cottages.

A total of 5,350 residential units among supporting infrastructure

³⁹ Joanne Laucius, "Adieu CFB Rockcliffe." *Ottawa Citizen*, July 31, 2009.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

such as schools, stores, recreational facilities are being proposed for the new site redevelopment.⁴² The housing proposal is a variety of low, mid, and high-rise residences. In the Community Design Plan Section 5.8, integrating affordable housing is a goal of this project.

As the future of the Rockcliffe site is realized, it is important to question what can be learned from its narrative. ***How do Rockcliffe and Uplands compare?*** While Uplands continues to exist in its current state of standby, several interventions happened to Rockcliffe before its eventual demolition. The lasting memory of Rockcliffe military family housing are the foundations, streets, and photographs of the site.

⁴² MMM Group and Meloshe & Associates. *Former CFB Rockcliffe Community Design Plan*. (Ottawa: 2015), 69.

Figure 36, Google Satellite, Map of Rockcliffe Post-Demolition, 2018.

photography explorations

Photographing Standby

The purpose of the photography is to explore Uplands' current state of standby. ***How can photographic documentation represent a condition that is unseen? How can photographic abstraction represent the visual reality of the site?*** These competing questions guide the explorations towards combining documentation with abstraction to attempt to visually communicate an ambiguous condition – of existing on standby.

The precedents previously discussed are the catalysts for using photography to explore a place on standby. Gordon Matta-Clark, Jade Duskow, and Philipp Schaerer all use photography in some capacity – to document, to explore, to question, and to challenge representation.

The materials chosen to photograph Uplands are 35mm and Polaroid film. These materials were chosen with consideration of their history of accessibility and early military technology.

Historically, 35mm film photography became a photographic medium for the masses. 35mm film photography was the family camera. Their compact nature was easily transportable, and they revolutionized camera culture.

Polaroid film was also the first accessible method of instant photography. In addition, the Polaroid company began with a history in

creating military equipment – their polarization technology was implemented into their goggles for improved visibility.

When these photography materials were originally released, they were considered revolutionary. Once the initial excitement of a new technology settled, they became ordinary in everyday life.

The cameras used with 35mm film and Polaroid film are also on standby. They have their own construction, chemistry, and methodology ready for the photographer to immediately use.

As analog equipment, 35mm film and Polaroid film are physical objects. They have their own material properties, construction, and processes for development. However, their basic components are comparable. 35mm film receives the imprint of the image on a layer of gelatin emulsion. Polaroid film also receives the imprint of the image on a layer of light sensitive emulsion but has the added action of immediately transferring the negative image to its positive through the ejection of the sheet from the camera. In both mediums, the film emulsion is a flexible material that requires structure to hold it up, like the plastic frame backing or plastic roll of film.

This thesis uses analog photography because of its tangible nature. The physical presence of a film photograph attempts to disrupt the trajectory of architectural photography existing purely in the digital space:

“At a moment when more and more of our life is transferred to the digital domain, we seem to gain the necessary distance to once again appreciate and engage objects and materials, *to reimagine their potential.*”⁴³

This quote from Vassallo’s text *Seamless* challenges the current convention of digital photography in architecture. The tangibility of an analog photograph encourages imaginative engagement with the object itself.

The following photographic explorations propose that when a place exists on standby, photography is a viable method of representation. To photograph a place on standby, one must explore site-specific building stock. This research proposes that Uplands military family housing is a place on standby, with its unoccupied units available for immediate use. As existing housing stock, this development may one day face futures beyond military planning and use. Therefore, photography becomes the medium to explore this moment in-between present and future context. It is an exploration of a place on standby, now.

⁴³ Vassallo, 188.

Documentation

Gordon Matta-Clark and Jade Duskow's photographic documentation vary based on context and intent. For Gordon Matta-Clark, documentation was secondary to the action of cutting abandoned buildings. For Jade Duskow, documentation was primary to creating an archive of world exposition sites, as present-day relics or empty sites with no trace of their history. In this thesis, photography is used as the primary method of gathering an inventory of how Uplands exists now—from September 2018-April 2019.

The photography focuses on the built environment of Uplands. What is included in the frames is Uplands military family housing and its supporting infrastructure. It is the built environment within the boundary of Uplands: the roads, parks, schools, etc.

The documentation is a choice for each frame to look at Uplands as it exists now. Focus was placed on visually representing moments of standby, such as: the unoccupied housing units, the boarded-up schools, the vacant lots. The Uplands' Second Generation Strategic Site Plan was also used as a map to document sites with possible future plans.

The image framing is also dependent on the photographic medium. The different formats reveal varying framing of Uplands, from rectangular to square. The differences in media also result in distinctive image types. 35mm film has more frames in a roll, therefore the photographs are more

sequential. Polaroid film has less frames per package, therefore the images are more singular.

People are not included in the documentation for two reasons. Firstly, during the moments of documentation there was no one there. Secondly, this thesis focuses on the built environment on standby at Uplands.

The images are catalogued in a contact sheet. The contact sheet is the method of presentation because of its contextual use – photographers relied on contact sheets to gain perspective on the totality of the work. This thesis uses contact sheets for this purpose, to attempt to reveal the complete site as it exists on standby, now.

Contact Sheets, Uplands Documentation (35mm)

Contact Sheets, Uplands Documentation (Polaroid)

Abstraction

Abstraction in photography is often associated with its origins in the surrealist movement. Surrealist artists explored the medium's capacities to challenge the viewer's preconceptions of what a photograph could be. Moving beyond recognizable subjects into ambiguous tones, shapes, and colours; abstraction in photography was considered an alternative methodology in representation.

Within contemporary photography practices, these alternative processes continue to be experimented with. By contrast to the medium's trajectory towards the digital realm, artists have revisited historical analog photographic processes with contemporary materials and subjects. The collision between past and present add new layers to contemporary abstraction in analog photography.

In the following photographic explorations, images of Uplands in its present state are transformed through the process of *lifting*, specifically a photographic emulsion lift. Photographic emulsion lifts are an alternative photographic process that use the action of separating the image emulsion from its backing. This results in the photograph becoming pliable and workable.

The original documentation photographs from the contact sheets are the images used for the exercise in abstraction. This includes both

35mm film and Polaroid film. The emulsion lifts for each material have different appearances. Since 35mm film is small, it is more fragile, and therefore leads to the destruction of the original image's recognizability when it is lifted. Polaroid film has a larger surface area; therefore, the images are lifted with minimal disturbance, and therefore the original images are more recognizable.

An emulsion lift is a form of 'killing the negative.'⁴⁴ It takes an action of defacing a photographic surface, which makes the reproduction of its original image impossible. However, by using this action to lift attention to the subject, it reveals it rather than erases it.

This process was chosen for this thesis because of its metaphorical possibility. By lifting the images of Uplands up from their fixed surface, they become undetermined and enter a liminal space. Visually, the images change – from slight distortions to nearly unrecognizable. The images evoke a feeling of suspended time, transience, and impermanence, and attempt to visually represent Uplands' current state of standby. As an experimental photographic process, this strategy challenges methods of approaching, understanding, and visually portraying a place.

⁴⁴ Warner.

Diagram, 35mm Film Emulsion Lift Process

35mm Emulsion Lifts

A 35mm emulsion lift is an alternative photography process that separates a 35mm film negative from its image emulsion. This results in an abstraction of the original negative.

The process of a 35mm film emulsion lift uses boiling water to separate the image from the plastic negative. In doing so, the heat breaks the bind between image and backing surface. Following this is the action of lifting the image up from the backing surface. A sharp tool is used to peel the emulsion away from its backing. Once separated, the fragments of image emulsion float. An alternative backing is introduced to catch the fragments in their suspended state.

Once the process is complete, the image emulsion fragments are exhibited in their state of suspension. The original documentation images of Uplands on standby are nearly unrecognizable. ***Will Uplands eventually become unrecognizable?*** One can identify a piece of a window, a portion of a wall, a part of a street sign in the fragments. ***What will happen to Uplands' windows, doors, walls, roads, and fences?***

200N

CA24

→8A

9

200N

→8A

9

Polaroid Film Emulsion Lift

Polaroid film emulsion lifts are a method of alternative process photography that extracts the impressed image from its fixed backing. It also uses heat to disintegrate the adhesive holding the layers together. The image fixed to the film emulsion layer becomes malleable, ephemeral, and tactile once it is freed from the other layers. An alternative surface catches the floating Polaroid film emulsion and presents it fixed in this moving state.

By contrast to the 35mm film emulsion, Polaroid film emulsion is large enough to maintain most of the clarity and recognisability of the original image even after it is lifted. Polaroid film emulsion is also fragile enough to tear, which leaves behind fissures. The fissures visually tear through the housing units, the roads, and the surrounding environment.

What kind of traces will Uplands leave behind?

Diagram, Polaroid Film Emulsion Lift Process

uplands exhibitions

Uplands Exhibitions

The photographic explorations lead to the final intervention of this thesis, an *Uplands Exhibition*. The concept of creating a site-specific installation is meant to engage this place on standby. The intervention begins the dialog surrounding what Uplands military family housing is (a place on standby), and what these buildings could become.

Site-specific interventions bring engagement to places on standby. A precedent of this is Donald Judd's land-based interventions in Marfa, Texas. Judd purchased a plot of desert land near Marfa, land that was once used as an active military base. The artist transformed the deserted site and vacant military buildings into an art exhibition. The intervention altered the future of the once abandoned place.

The first Uplands Exhibition is site-specific. The photography installation event occurred in an unoccupied housing unit, in Uplands military family housing. The installation proposes the idea of engaging the unused space. It also invites other people into it, to see its vacancy as opportunity, and begin imagining the possible futures of Uplands.

The on-site audience is for those interested in discussing Uplands' future. It is for an audience to question. ***What are the possible futures for this unoccupied housing unit?*** This includes inviting the surrounding community, military planners, municipal figures, architects, artists, etc. The

result is setting up a creative process to engage involvement and discussion on the opportunity inherent in the site.

A secondary installation is installed off-site at the thesis defence, at the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism. The intent of the off-site installation is meant to translocate the viewer back to the on-site exhibition.

Finally, these installations imagine what an exhibition space can be – a moment for public contemplation and imaginative discussion. Like Matta-Clark's *Splitting* documentation, an exhibition is also a method of translocation, to perpetuate conversation even past the potential demolition of the place.

Uplands Exhibition, On-Site Installation Plan Diagram

The On-Site Installation at Uplands

The significance of installing the explorations of Uplands inside one of the unoccupied housing units is to activate the state of standby that they are in. By installing the photographic explorations of Uplands within Uplands, it argues to make visible the possibility in its inoccupancy. It also creates the opportunity for Uplands to be lifted into public view in its present state.

In the installation documentation photographs, the photography also becomes secondary to the event. This installation is a critical moment in establishing the concept of standby as opportunity for architectural exploration. The installation photography is documentation of the pause which the housing unit currently exists in.

What are the possible futures for this unoccupied housing unit? The Uplands Exhibition presents a possible future, which is presenting an exhibition of a place on standby. The exhibition is meant to catalyze discussion surrounding the possibility of the site's inoccupancy. By waiting to make decisions on the future of Uplands, its future possibilities narrow. This installation is meant to be an active use of the space within its current state, and an initial intervention that may lead to exploring many other opportunities of what Uplands could become.

Uplands Exhibition, On-Site Installation

Uplands Exhibition, On-Site Installation

The Off-Site Installation at Thesis Defence

The off-site installation translocates the viewer to Uplands. It also dislocates and lifts Uplands into another realm of public visibility. Through image projection and installations, Uplands is displaced into the Azrieli School of Architecture and Urbanism.

Along with the installation of contact sheets, emulsion lifts, and hole punch negatives, the off-site installation introduces more methods of seeing Uplands' documentation: through View-Master and slide projection. These photography instruments present different processes of encountering the photographic image. They have been chosen to present Uplands because of their history, and their need for user interactivity.

The View-Master instrument was first introduced to the public at the 1939 World's Fair. The apparatus uses stereoscopy to produce a three-dimensional image experience for the viewer. The View-Master reels are composed of 14 film photographs which creates 7 stereoscopic images. Using the binocular-like apparatus, the user engages with the View-Master by individually snapping through the cycle of images. The interaction between instrument and viewer creates a translocated experience in seeing Uplands. Without the viewer's engagement, the View-Master remains on standby.

Slide projection presents another method of viewing Uplands. The Kodak Carousel slide projector was released in the 1960s as an instrument to present images sequentially. The circular tray holds 140 images and cycles through them with a remote control. User engagement is necessary for the operation of the instrument. Without an individual clicking through the slides, they will remain on standby until future use.

To compare the on-site installation to the off-site installation, the primary difference is the context. In a site-specific installation, the engagement occurs in Uplands' reality. Installed in the unoccupied housing unit, the photographic explorations are self-reflective of their own environment. It is a place to imagine their possible futures.

When Uplands is dislocated into the off-site installation, the context is different. Within the context of the thesis defence, the dislocation contributes to the larger scope of the conversation. It is a place to even imagine beyond these ideas.

The importance of the off-site installation documentation will facilitate reflection on how the context of the off-site installation alters the interpretation of the photographic explorations. ***What new perspectives can be gained from the displacement of the Uplands Exhibition?***

Uplands Exhibition, Off-Site Installation Plan Diagram

Diagram, View-Master Reel Assembly

Diagram, Slide Film Assembly

Uplands Exhibition, View-Master and Slide Projector Collage

Uplands Exhibition, Off-Site Installation Collage (Wall Projection)

Uplands Exhibition, Off-Site Installation Collage (Wall Projection)

conclusion

curator⁴⁵

noun

Definition of *curator*

: a keeper or custodian of a museum or other collection

⁴⁵ *Phaidon*, "Curator," March 17, 2019. <https://ca.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2011/september/09/a-brief-history-of-the-word-curator/>.

Conclusion: Architect as Curator of a Place on Standby

This thesis proposes the idea of exploring a place in-between its past, present, and future conditions. For Uplands military family housing, this manifests as a moment on standby – ready for use but waiting for an uncertain future. This thesis argues that in this otherwise passive period of waiting, architectural thought and questioning can intervene. For Uplands military family housing, this was a photographic exploration and resulting exhibition intervention.

In a place on standby, what is the role of the architect? This thesis proposes that another role for an architect is becoming a curator for a place on standby. The circumstances surrounding Uplands military family housing has resulted in the perpetuation of its status quo. ***Who cares? Who questions?*** If Uplands had an architect to care for its future by considering all its possibilities in the present, perhaps the resulting interventions on the site would change. ***What is the accountability for these buildings in their future iterations?***

Curating an installation of the site is an intervention that catalyzes engagement. ***Would posing the larger questions now help those managing the site?*** This idea invites an architect to operate as a bridge between those managing the site and the public. By curating these buildings in their state of being on standby, it could lead to exploring, discussing, and questioning multiple future scenarios.

This process of exploring a place on standby can be applied beyond military family housing. Collections of existing building stock on standby should be questioned before they become obsolete. This thesis attempts to seek value in an underused built environment. It proposes that buildings on standby can be engaged with as opportunities for possible interventions.

This type of speculative thinking is exemplified with the architecture firm OMA and their supporting research practice AMO. While OMA operates within the conventions of architecture, AMO applies architectural thinking in interdisciplinary projects beyond architecture's traditions. For example, AMO is presenting an exhibition titled *Countryside: Future of the World*. The exhibition "will present speculations about tomorrow through insights into the countryside of today."⁴⁶ The need for ongoing speculative thinking in the field of building is necessary for the future of design and its social, cultural, and environmental implications.

Within the scope of this thesis, speculative thinking was used to explore a place on standby through photography. Art, and specifically photography, is a method to question the contemporary built environment. And as Jane Jacobs states in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, art can suggest.

⁴⁶ "Guggenheim and AMO Announce Research Project to Culminate in Fall 2019 Exhibition." November 30, 2017. <https://oma.eu/news/guggenheim-and-ammo-announce-research-project-to-culminate-in-fall-2019-exhibition>.

“Suggestion – the part standing for the whole – is a principal means by which art communicates; this is why art often tells us so much with such economy. One reason we understand this communication of suggestion and symbol is that, to a certain extent, it is the way all of us see life and the world.”⁴⁷

Art and play are processes of discovery and communication. Like Matta-Clark’s ‘unbuilding,’ it is an activity that “[confronts] the logic of artistic as well as architectural production.”⁴⁸ For this thesis, the action of making photographs serves as a mode of production. As a result, what is produced is a creative process that enacts an intervention, such as a site-specific installation and resulting exhibition.

This thesis explores an alternative process of exploring and intervening on architecture. This alternative process is photography. Photography has the ability of dislocating a place beyond its original context. This results in opening it up for further speculation. The practice of architecture can prototype many paths forward. The process and resulting intervention produced from this thesis proposes another path. That an alternative process like photography is another tool in architectural practice for imagining possible futures.

⁴⁷ Jacobs, J. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, “Visual Order: its limitations and possibilities,” (Great Britain: John Dickens and Conner Ltd, 1961), 377-378.

⁴⁸ Lee, xiii.

postscript

Postscript: Possible Futures

These postscript speculations are not meant to be singular proposals for architectural interventions. By going through this process of photographic exploration, multiple possible futures were imaginable. This includes conversion of unoccupied units to provide emergency shelter, adapting to provide affordable housing, and structural relocation of the buildings for future reuse in another context.

Considering the national history of military family housing, the past closures present possible afterlives for the houses at Uplands. Based on research, it is possible that Uplands will eventually close its military family housing due to its decommissioned status. However, given Ottawa already has limited availability for affordable housing and Uplands is the only site left dedicated to providing affordable housing for military families in the national capital, this state of standby may also continue for an extended period. As this thesis suggests, the state of standby for Uplands is undetermined. But in this liminal time and space, it is possible to speculate further on the future possibilities.

What if the unoccupied military housing units are temporarily occupied?

A possible future for Uplands military housing is a programmatic conversion of its unoccupied housing units. Considering the history

military family housing has with providing temporary accommodation in emergency scenarios, this future speculates on emergency shelter as a possible outcome for the standby units at Uplands.

Emergency housing provides shelter for individuals and families in need during times of crisis including short-term accommodation for those at risk of becoming homeless, international refugee crises, and displacement caused by environmental disaster.

Historically, Canadian military bases have been utilized as emergency shelters in refugee crises. In 1999, 5,000 refugees from Kosovo were housed in military bases across eastern Canada.⁴⁹ Recently in 2015, there was an urgent housing need for 25,000 Syrian refugees. In Ontario, Canadian Forces Bases of Trenton, Kingston, and Petawawa provided thousands of shelters and infrastructure for this emergency.

For the events in 2015, the use of military bases as temporary lodging was a forced necessity. “The federal government will soon start lodging Syrian refugees on military bases because of a shortage of temporary housing in communities across the country.”⁵⁰ As temporary accommodation before relocating to long-term housing, emergency shelters must consider the effect of transience, dislocation, and movement

⁴⁹ Graham Slaughter, “Troops Clearing Space at CFB Kingston for Syrian Refugees,” published by *CTV News*, November 22, 2015. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/troops-clearing-space-at-cfb-kingston-for-syrian-refugees-1.2670111>.

⁵⁰ Daniel Leblanc, “Syrian refugees to be housed temporarily on military bases: Ottawa,” published in *The Globe and Mail*, January 13, 2016. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/liberals-reach-10000-mark-in-syrian-refugee-resettlement-program/article28141967/>.

for the individuals that inhabit these spaces.

In Ottawa, emergency housing is funded by the city and administered by community-based agencies. From permanent shelter spaces, overflow facilities and city arrangements; emergency housing not only offers shelter but also necessary services including practical assistance, social, and health care as needed. The City of Ottawa states, “no one who needs emergency shelter is turned away. If all shelters are full, the City arranges for another option to make sure that no one is left without shelter.”⁵¹ It is possible to imagine Uplands allotting a percentage of its unoccupied units to the City of Ottawa’s emergency housing portfolio.

A precedent in Ottawa, Rockcliffe military family housing was used as emergency housing during its decline in tenancy. The City of Ottawa used unoccupied single houses as temporary emergency shelters during the 2000s. This was possible because the Rockcliffe base was no longer active, and many of its military family houses were unoccupied.

Given Rockcliffe as a precedent, and the Canadian military’s experience in providing emergency shelters, Uplands military family housing has potential to convert its unoccupied units to emergency housing.

⁵¹ City of Ottawa, “Housing,” March 17, 2019. <https://ottawa.ca/en/residents/social-services/housing>.

What if Uplands closes its military housing?

If Uplands is closed, the idea of converting the existing military housing units to affordable housing for both military and civilian families in need is imaginable. This possible future speculates that the unoccupied housing units could be converted to civilian affordable housing.

There is a growing need for affordable housing in Canada. At the 2016 Toronto Housing Summit municipalities urged for increased federal funding. “The mayors of Canada’s largest cities are pushing the federal government to commit new money for the upkeep of existing social housing units.”⁵²

In Canada, housing can be considered ‘affordable housing’ when it “costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income.”⁵³ Canadian affordable housing is “provided by the private, public and non-profit sectors...[including] rental, ownership and co-operative ownership, as well as temporary and permanent housing.”⁵⁴ It is a term that covers a range of housing scenarios.

According to Statistics Canada 2016 census, Ottawa has 16% of tenant households living in subsidized housing, which is above the

⁵² Alex Boutilier, “Big cities push Ottawa on social housing repair funds,” Published in *The Toronto Star*, February 15, 2018. <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2018/02/15/big-cities-push-ottawa-on-social-housing-repair-funds.html>.

⁵³ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. “About Affordable Housing in Canada.” *Developing and Renovating: Develop New Affordable Housing*, March 31, 2018. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/develop-new-affordable-housing/programs-and-information/about-affordable-housing-in-canada>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

national average of 13%.⁵⁵ The census defines subsidized housing as an umbrella term for the following housing programs: “rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances.”⁵⁶ The lack of affordable housing available in Ottawa has been referred to as a crisis, with various community and government organizations developing programs and working to create safe accommodations and integrated mixed-income neighborhoods.

In Ottawa, families are a specific demographic in need of affordable accommodation, “[f]amilies now account for more than half of all bed night’s in Ottawa’s shelter system.”⁵⁷ This demand is not being met, and Ottawa families continue to wait for suitable affordable family housing.

The City of Ottawa’s Housing First program attempts to initiate collaborations between the public and private sector. The program is seeking property owners who have the availability to offer affordable housing in existing developments. Similarly, not-for-profit organizations including Ottawa Community Housing, Multifaith Housing Initiative, and Centretown Affordable Housing Development Corporation continue to

⁵⁵ Statistics Canada. 2017. *Canada [Country] and Ottawa, CV [Census subdivision], Ontario (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed March 17, 2019).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Jacquie Miller, “More families and older women are living at shelters for the homeless, says annual report,” published in *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 11, 2017. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/more-families-and-older-women-are-living-at-shelters-for-the-homeless-says-annual-report>.

build their portfolio of property offerings. There continues to be a significant waiting list for affordable housing largely due to economic factors of a growing city.

In 2017, the price of a single-family home in Ottawa increased by 7.2%.⁵⁸ As market rental and ownership costs continue to increase in the city, the affordability of housing becomes increasingly challenging. As a city with “10,000 households on the centralized waiting list for subsidized housing”⁵⁹ there is urgent need for affordable housing availability to meet this demand. As property developers attempt to meet market home ownership demands of a growing population, case studies show that existing affordable housing is being demolished to make space for these new developments. When affordable housing occupants are evicted and replaced by market value properties, it perpetuates the issues Ottawa is facing in meeting the needs of these households.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, it is advantageous to convert existing housing into affordable housing. “When existing stock is readily available, it would appear ill advised to seriously pursue new construction. Limited available funding can be stretched much

⁵⁸ James Bagnall, “Ottawa house prices climb 7.2% in 2017 with wide variations by district,” published in *The Ottawa Citizen*, January 9, 2018. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/ottawa-house-prices-climbed-7-2-in-2017-with-wide-variations-by-district>.

⁵⁹ “Editorial: Affordable Housing a Problem in Ottawa,” published in the *Ottawa Sun*, May 20, 2018. <https://ottawasun.com/opinion/editorials/editorial-affordable-housing-a-problem-in-ottawa>.

further in existing housing.”⁶⁰ This approach to building reuse and inhabitant conversion results in environmental, social, and economic advantages. Secondary use of buildings prevents unnecessary construction waste and energy loss. By integrating affordable housing programs into existing neighbourhoods, much of the supporting infrastructure is already present.

New developments that aim to integrate affordable housing into their overall plan proposes an increase in units and supporting infrastructure available. In Ontario, inclusionary zoning “is a land-use planning tool that municipality may use to require affordable housing units to be included in residential developments of 10 units or more.”⁶¹ Inclusionary zoning laws attempt to distribute and integrate affordable housing throughout new residential development. As a provincial law it leaves discretion for municipalities as to how they will apply it. In Ottawa, inclusionary zoning does not include new rental buildings, applying only to “new condos and houses being built for sale, and only in developments of 20 units or more.”⁶²

⁶⁰ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. *The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Producing Affordable Housing: Assessment of the U.S. Experience and Lessons for Canada*. (Canada: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1998), 48.

⁶¹ Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Ontario, “Inclusionary Zoning,” July 3, 2018. <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page13790.aspx>.

⁶² David Reevely, “Reevely: New ‘inclusionary zoning’ rules will make affordable housing easier but not a cinch,” published in *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 19, 2017. <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/reevely-new-inclusionary-zoning-rules-will-make-affordable-housing-easier-but-not-a-cinch>.

For example, the Rockcliffe redevelopment's new community plan proposal seeks affordable housing partnerships as the site anticipates construction. A design proposal by the Multifaith Housing Initiative in collaboration with the City of Ottawa's Housing First program has been accepted. The Veterans' House is a project to support homeless and unsuitably housed veterans in Ottawa and will help provide stable housing and recovery for the inhabitants' visible and non-visible health issues.⁶³ Multifaith Housing Initiative will manage the property, providing permanent affordable housing and support services for 100 veterans.

Given the urgent need in Ottawa for affordable housing, it is possible to imagine if Uplands' military family housing were to close, the housing units could be converted to accommodate both military and civilian families.

What if Uplands is demolished?

If Uplands military housing is pursued for redevelopment, a possible future scenario would entail the demolition of the site's buildings to make room for incoming construction. However, an alternative to demolition is structure relocation.

A structural relocation process occurred at Rockcliffe when the military housing was deemed closed and redevelopment was imminent.

⁶³ Multifaith Housing Initiative, "Veterans' House," March 17, 2019. <http://www.multifaithhousing.ca/veterans-house.html>.

The general contractor decided to sell the existing buildings, and moved them off the site rather than complete demolition.

The process of relocating an existing structure involves lifting a building from its original foundation, placing it on a wheeled vehicle, transporting the structure to a different site, and placing it on a new foundation. This procedure is most successful with buildings that are built atop a crawlspace or basement, like Rockcliffe or Uplands for example.

There are significant advantages to structure relocation which include material reuse, reduction of construction waste, and avoiding building obsolescence. To reclaim building resources, this way of adding value to a building looks beyond the scope of financial value. By acknowledging the storied value of these military family houses, the notion of translocating the houses at Uplands proposes an afterlife for not only its building materials, but its built narrative.

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