



ACT X: REPRESENTATION



Fig. a. PREVIOUS FACING PAGE:
Untitled. Karen O'Donnell-Stein. May 2018.
This photo shows me explaining the trail map during my final presentation. Notice how disapproving Clive looks.

Fig. b. PREVIOUS PAGE:
Untitled. Karen O'Donnell-Stein. May 2018.
This photo shows Juan Heredia, the advisor, introducing me before my final presentation. Notice the coordination of our outfits.

Fig. c. CURENT PAGE:
Station 11. Self. April 2018.
This watercolor shows the eleventh of twelve stations on the journey to the Wireless Station, the moment of anticipation wherein the three buildings of the station embrace the Traveller.

*Having worked for nine months, Connor Scher presented the Thesis, titled *Unsung, An Architectural Allegory on the Government Hill Wireless Station*. This was the first comprehensive project on the Station specifically, and in addition to designs for its future, he produced an history of its development. His work filled an entire classroom in the architecture building at Portland State University. The redbrick building predated the Wireless Station by only two years. Many former Alaskans came to the presentation, and the room was full of students and staff, interested in the project. He had prepared tea, and had peanuts from Virginia. Several Municipality of Anchorage staff observed through a video stream and phone call, connected to the event through space and time with wireless technology.*

Connor Scher stood rigidly in a corner of the room, the coolness of his blue suit and upturned color obscuring his racing heart. His deep blue bowtie matched the borders on his drawings at the other side of the room. Juan Heredia, his advisor wearing a navy jacket and slacks, introduced him to the packed crowd. "Welcome, everybody. I'm very glad to introduce Connor Scher; he comes from Alaska."

The rhythmic tones of his voice echoed through the room, and the volume filled the space, but the number of audience members caused him to stutter. The professor continued, "He has been here for the past two years, and I think by now everybody in the school recognizes the drawings that he produces, that are really exquisite watercolors. He also takes a lot of time drawing— hand drawing in a way against the trend to make things digital all the time, not that there is a nostalgic attitude about that, but because he is very skillful at controlling it.

"Connor is also a musician, I don't know if some of you know that he sometimes, you can hear sometimes on Sunday mornings the trombone..."

"Trumpet." Connor interjected respectfully. Juan continued, "Oh! Trumpet. Sorry. It's Connor, practicing.

"This is the Thesis, the title is *Unsung*, and sound is very important for him, as we suggested already with his liking of music. He tackles

issues of historic preservation, and historical memory as well, but from a very unconventional point of view. He is exploring a project in northern Anchorage, and in a way, what sums up his approach to the project he can exhibit as three words, which are: one, reuse; second, ruination, or ruin; and the third, resurrection.

“So, Connor. Thank you.” Juan stepped aside as Connor began, “Thank you, Juan.”

Turning to the crowd, Connor spread his hands, the left one free while the right held a wooden pointer. His voice was nasally yet sonorous, as if he talked through a cardboard tube. Nevertheless, the quantity of sound he produced energized the room, and seemed to engage the audience. “Good afternoon; my name is Connor Scher, and I will be presenting my Thesis titled *Unsung; an Architectural Allegory on the Government Hill Wireless Station.*” Turning toward the wall behind him, Connor gestured with his left hand at the photographs of the building, printed on ARCH D sheets of glossy paper, covering the entire wall. He turned back to the audience and continued, “The Government Hill Wireless Station died on the tenth of June, 2017 at five o’clock in the evening, and at that moment, the stories that it held within its walls and floors began dissipating and turning into place spirits that were still significant but less experienced at the site. At one time, the Wireless Station was the only radio communication for the town of Anchorage, and remained that sole connection to the outside world for several decades. That importance, as a core hub of the community was

lost over time, and so it’s my intention that this Thesis in some ways tries to rejuvenate that connection between Anchorage and this original core.”

Connor turned once more to the wall behind him and he touched a map showing the United States, the Lower 48, Alaska, and Hawaii. “Anchorage, Alaska is at the head of the Cook Inlet in Southcentral Alaska,” he stepped to the right and pointed at a map of Anchorage, “and the Municipality occupies a land area similar to the size of Delaware.” Shifting right again, he pointed at the next map. “Most of the population lives on this peninsula here, with the main urban centered to the north. The neighborhood that the Wireless Station is in, called Government Hill, is in the north of the community, immediately south of the military base.

“What’s important to note also, is the importance for the community of trails, and this has been the same since the beginning. But today, Anchorage sports several miles of multiuse recreational paths that are used both for recreation, but also for commuters.”

Connor swallowed as he shuffled another step right to the next map. “This tracing, of—,” he began but stopped. “This is a zoomed in view of Downtown and Government Hill and a tracing of the 1939 aerial, pictured over here,” he pointed with the wooden wand to the images to his right, “illustrates how central the Wireless Station was to the community, but also how important non-vehicular paths were; the brown lines here representing those early pathways. Some of these pathways





predated the Sireless Station and were used by the Dena'ina people to access a cultural site north of Anchorage, called Tak'at. We will get more to that later."



The sound of his shoes tapping marked his steps along the wall. Connor passed the aerial photographs and stopped next to a large watercolor map of the neighborhood. "Government hill is the oldest neighborhood in Anchorage, and is roughly divided into two parts, the West Side and the East Side." Gesturing over a small diagram of the neighborhood, framed in blue, he traced his words over the geography. "The center of the neighborhood has a commercial zone with shops and restaurants, a community park, called the Government Hill Commons, a school, as well as a new communications—," he paused for a moment to find the word, "—corporation headquarters, which, in some ways, is a direct descendant of those that operated at the Wireless Station. And the Wireless Station is on the West Side of the neighborhood."



Connor stepped sideways, looking at the second of four framed maps above the larger one. "At the West End was the first houses built in 1915 by the Alaska Engineering Commission, and until the 1940s, these houses, the Wireless Station, and a water tower were the only structures on Government Hill. It wasn't until the buildup to World War II that these lots were sold and developed as Quonset Hut housing for the railroad workers and the military workers coming up to build—," he choked on his words, but continued, "Excuse me. —to build the base. In the 1950s and '60s, the railroad developed the east portion of the neighborhood into



more traditional ranch-style houses and," another choke interrupted the flow of words, "as well as apartment buildings."

Looking at the large map silently, his back turned to the audience, Connor collected his thoughts. "In this progression and development eastward," he turned and swept his hand over the map indicating the direction, "the centrality of the Wireless Station was eventually lost, and today, it exists in this neighborhood context," Connor rotated and began stroking and poking a filleted site section, "of residential homes, compared with the more dense, urban Downtown.

He turned to face the audience again. "What is important to note about the Government Hill neighborhood, though, is that it is one of the most diverse, both ethnically and economically," turning to the wall, his left hand rose to point at the third framed map, "as illustrated in this drawing, showing the different housing— or the different costs of residences. And this diversity is very important for the neighborhood, in maintaining that.

A pause in the flow of words allowed him to look at the last framed drawing. "Another characteristic of the neighborhood is the high number of senior citizens who live on the neighborhood— in— on Government Hill, and who have remained— and many of the residents have remained there for most of their lives." He waved his hand over the drawing as he said, "The purple here shows all the properties owned by senior citizens. But a problem

exists in how many of these properties are also rentals, which is the yellow color; and that illustrates to me, that as these longtime residents grow old, they're forced to leave and their homes become short-term rentals, and those living memories and stories are lost.

Before continuing, Connor cleared his throat. "The Government Hill Wireless Station served as a hub for the entire community, but especially for the neighborhood, and many of the residents remember going there and— or at least hearing of those that came before them going there and getting news of events that were happening Outside."

The sound of his dry tongue touching his pate preceded the next portion of the presentation. Connor pointed with his wooden wand at the framed episodes of development, taped to tables turned on their sides. "The Government Hill Wireless Station was built in 1917 by the Alaska Engineering Commission, who was in charge of building the Alaska Railroad, and through the subsequent decades additions were made to it. The Railroad added a second structure to the site. With the completion of the railroad, the AEC transferred ownership of the Station to the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System, or WAMCATS."

Deborah, one of the visiting critics turned in her stool with a tired look on her face. Connor walked along the tables, talking about the development. "Eventually, with the buildup of the neighborhood, as I alluded to earlier, the roads were platted and the, the— and Building #2 was moved

to the north." A squeaking stool did not distract him from his story. "During the War, the WAMCATS, which had now become the Alaska Communications System, built Building— or the third building, called the T-Shaped Building, as a garage for repairing other equipment. It was by this time that the operations— the communications operations had ceased at the Wireless Station, and it was no longer serving that purpose, although it still was under the control of the Signal Corps.

A pause in his talking exposed the silence of the room, even with the number of onlookers, and the only sounds were his shoes striking the floor. "Finally, in the 1950s, the stem of the T-Shaped Building was extended, and— and some of the— and, as well the northern addition made to the original structure," Circling the building in the axon with his finger, Connor addressed the last words to the audience, "and this illustrated again the change in use. But still, all these changes and alterations became other ma— other— physical fabrics that absorbed the stories and histories of these workers; not only of the original operators, but even the doctors and the engineers that— that later stored earth and— and rock cores in— in what was called the Storage Annex."

There was a long pause, for emphasis. Connor explained each of the four blue-rimmed drawings on the upturned table illustrating the three Variations of his design. "And so, I'm entering into this with a proposition to reconnect the neighborhood— to reconnect the community with the Wireless Station, both through the reuse of the structure, but also making it easier, and perhaps more





powerful, to visit the site, not just by car.” His hands moved in small circles in front of his body, reaching their lowest points on each word. “So in the first phase, Variation I, which is a reuse of the existing structures, with insertions of structural mitigation, and this would accommodate a certain program; but eventually the buildings would decompose, leaving only the concrete remnants that would act as a ruin. But again, this concrete has absorbed from the original structures, any of the stories that they may have held, and the sounds as well. At the time of the first Variation, I’m introducing another structure, the Girdwood Section House, which was currently moved to the Village of Eklutna, and is currently owned by them. Relocating it to this site reifies the railroad history and stories, originally at the Wireless Station, but also brings in that engagement with a much longer heritage, that of the Dena’ina people; who, interestingly, many of their peoples built the railroad, especially during war times when the— when the main troops and engineers were off in France fighting the War. Eventually, however, this program of the Section House can expand and rejuvenate, or resurrect, the site of the original Wireless Station with three Elder Care Homes inserted in the ruins of— of the remnants. These would serve, not only as physical frames for holding the memories and stories of new residents, as well as celebrate those of the past, but also, create spaces for new generations of residents to remain on Government Hill, in the neighborhood that’s been significant to them.” Connor’s voice began to resonate deeper as he transcended the variable of time, and became more an instrument than a source.

“Additionally, other residents who have outlived their current locations and contexts in Anchorage, would be relocated here, as units for short-term rentals of family members, or care takers of the elders. These would be such as a Quonset Hut, one of the first housing types in Anchorage, as well as one of the first ranch-style houses developed on the East Side of Government Hill. Additionally, one of the original AEC Cottages would get moved to this location.”

Another pause indicated a change of subject. Connor strode to a table in the middle of the room, his shoes tapping the floor. “In order to get here, however, I’ll turn your attention to this map,” he gestured with a clawed hand. People stood up from their chairs to look at it. He continued, “Which illustrates some of the existing multiuse paths that I mentioned, as well as the new one that I am proposing.

“The existing trails go around Downtown, but they don’t get into the neighborhood at all, and so I’m projecting extending the multiuse trail system up to the Wireless Station in this processional path, that would en— that would offer the residents of Anchorage, as well as visitors, a chance to engage with their heritage, and re-ap— and— and gain appreciation of the importance of the Wireless Station site.” Connor was animated, and everyone looked approvingly on, except for Clive Knights, the director, who maintained a look of disapproval. There was no model after all. “The trail would extend northward, to the Dena’ina cultural site at Tak’at, as a means of increasing the knowledge of the early people’s history at Anchorage, and

their involvement in its development. The trail would connect to the existing system farther east in Anchorage, to another neighborhood, by extending through the east portion of Government Hill.” As he talked, he traced the lines of the trail on the map, the soft sound of his finger on the paper sounded like retreating ocean waves. “And this is an attempt to bridge the divide between the West and East Sides of the neighborhood.

“I’ll take you now from Downtown to the Government Hill Wireless Station.” As he spoke, he walked away from the map to the upturned tables showing sketches of the trail stations. Sounds of people moving in the room and on their stools accompanied the change of scene. Through it all, the click-clack of his shoes beat a rhythm. “The trail begins where the first railroad bridge crossed Ship Creek.” He pointed at the drawing. “This was built in 1915, and is now a pedestrian crossing. At this point,” waving at the second drawing, “it’s completely new infrastructure, taking the trail along the bank of Ship Creek, until it intersects with Ocean Dock Road – which was the first road built in Anchorage¹ – and that extends to the base of Government Hill.” At each station, Connor turned and addressed the audience. “From here, the trail begins to climb up the bluff through old cabin ruins and pits of some of the early settlers, to the original roadbed up to the West Side of the neighborhood.

As Connor narrated the Journey, Jesse, another guest critic, followed the line on the map, his body bent over the drawing. “It arrives at the table land of Government Hill, with this view of

some of the oldest houses on the Hill, and extends down the first alley built there, behind the original AEC cottages, of which three are still existing – so there’s still that historic built fabric present.”

Although Jesse stood from the table, Clive looked keenly at the blue-dressed man pointing at the blue-fringed drawings. “It arrives at the Government Hill Station, which is hidden amongst the houses; and so to call attention to that, I’ve recreated the original footprint of Building #2 as a sunken garden, and that redirects the trail into the courtyard formed by the re- the original structure and the T-Shaped Building.”

Clive became distracted and began eyeing the three table-sized watercolored site plans, hung from sideways, upturned tables. The guest critics watched Connor intently, with glazed-over eyes, as he continued. “The trail then continues through the site, and between Building #2 and the T-Shaped Building, to ar- to the courtyard that I’m calling the Hall of the Descendants. And this would be in the current intersection of the two streets, just north of the site, and- and would be a place for community members to meet and share stories and memories.”

Clack, clack, clack, spoke the shoes as they marched to the vertical plans. Connor restarted, “So the three variations are illustrated here in these three drawings.” The crowd shifted once more as the stools complained. “The first is the Reuse; and this would become a ritual space for

i. Note: This is not in fact true. Arguably, Whitney Road was the first road in Anchorage. Ocean Dock Road went to the first dock, and was a rail spur from the main line. The AEC completed the dock, soon called Ocean Dock #1, in 1915.





appreciated the sounds, stories, and memories, both that occurred at the site, and new ones that could develop, get developed. In spaces— and in order to address that ritual quality, I decided to invent programs that were similar to those in religious spaces.” Jesse looked tired as he drew in his notebook. “So some of them are similar, like the Offeratory, where people could bring recordings and CDs to get stored at the Wireless Station, as well as places like the Auditory, which would basically be a— a place to listen to storytellers in the Oratory.” The only person not attending Connor was Karen O’Donnell—Stein, who took photos of the map etherized upon the table. Connor pointed at each of the rooms in the plan with his wand, and transitioned the gaze to Building #2. “New places, or new spaces, would become— or, an example of a new space would be the Transitory, which would be a place for recording sounds and stories, and even music— musical groups could record themselves there.”



Connor turned and thrust the wand in the direction of the windowed wall, and the small drawings bonded to their panes. The heads and chairs turned with the flourish. “All of these are illustrated in the glyphs on the windows over there, and I’ll finish the presentation over there, and— I invite any further questions about those.” The last words he directed at Deborah, who stood facing the plans, head cocked to the left. A phone dinged as Connor recommenced. “An important concept of— of this program is the Comminatory, and these would be interior and exterior spaces for community meetings and engagements,” Connor shook his head to



indicate he would list some examples, “including weddings, or private parties, or even just casual meetings of— of neighbors.”

Moving his left arm up, his hand touched the top of the drawing where the Section House was. “The Section House, as I brought up earlier, would become an Elder Care Home, and as many as four Residents could live there, and they would act as administrators and operators of these ritual spaces.”

Through a short pause Connor shifted left to the middle drawing, and waved his wand—hand in a circular motion over the Wireless Station ruins “Eventually the— the existing infrastructure, or the existing material fabric of the Wireless Station would decompose, leaving only this ruin. But the trail would still go through, and there would still be this appreciation of the history, and especially the connexion with the place spirits, at now, are very much apparent. The Section House would retain the program from the first Variation.”

Stepping to the final drawing, Connor faced the crowd, his blue lapels framing the bowtie nicely. “In Variation III, three new Elder Care Homes would occupy the Wireless Station Site, fitting amongst the concrete remnants. The Section House would become their— their space for larger gatherings, as well as where the main caretaker could live.” His head bobbed with several listeners.

“And throughout all of these Variations, the trail continues to draw Visitors to the site to appreciate the place spirits, and the memories, and the sounds retained in the physical fabric, as well as engage with the Hall of the Descendants, and above that, the Hall of the Ancestors.”

Not a soul interrupted him as he passed to the final wall of windows. Once more, the bodies moved, once more the stools squeaked. “So to turn your attention briefly, to the glyphs, and to this bas relief that I’ve created, on the windows. The concept of the Hall of the Descendants being a space for the living to gather and share stories and the Hall of the Ancestors being a place where those stories get given to the descendants of— of those that have come before us, would become the root of— of this entire program, this re—reclamation of the intersection as this place of— of meeting.” His hand moved up and down in an inverted claw, almost conducting his words. “But the spaces would re— would initially reuse the fabric of the Wire— of the Wireless Station, and add new layers to its importance, and in some way, hopefully, rejuvenate its significance to the greater community of Anchorage.”

As the eyes and ears focused on the azure-suited figure in front of the windows, the voice paused, and the audience took a collective breath. The pause did not break the spell, however, and he continued. “So through the trail gaining access to the Wireless Station, and through its Reuse, Ruination, and Resurrection, I’m hoping that this allegory acts as a way of engaging a contemporary conversation within Historic Preservation, and

that is the preservation of intangible resources; and in— in my case, I chose to focus on stories and sounds. And the idea that not only do the living, the Residents of the Elder Care Homes, do they carry the memories and sounds of their pasts and histories, but also, the buildings that frame our experiences day to day,” his hands moved in the air as though they were sculpting clay, not just the diction, “as well as the homes for these Elder Care, for these elders, would provide, would act as retainers of these stories and memories. Thank you.” The room echoed with these two final words, and the sounds continued beyond auditory perception levels. Fourteen seconds of creaking chairs, and churning thoughts filled the silence.

Suddenly, Connor spotted Barbara Sestak, another professor, raise her hand and he spoke, “Barbara?” Margarette Leite, a professor, spoke up, “that’s a lot to take in—.”

Wearing a blue sweater, Barbara started, her soft voice stopping that of Margarette. “Yeah— one of the things I remember from, at the Midterm Review; you actually told us a couple of the stories. So—,”

“I did.” Connor responded.

“—You wanna— it was those narratives that were tremendously important, in how the paths got created. So, can you just mention one or two?”



“Yes,” Connor started, “so a few years ago the Municipality of Anchorage,” the words caused him to remember the transcendent beings on a computer screen, their bodies in Anchorage, “which, I didn’t introduce you all,” Connor pointed at the screen, “is Skyping in from their headquarters,” pleasant laughter filled the room as smiling faces beamed across time and space, and hands waved across the void, “in- in Anchorage, with the- from- from the miracle-,”

Kristine Bunnell, the Long Range Planner and Connor’s intern supervisor, pleaded, “Connor? Could we get you to hold the phone now-,”

“-that is wireless communication- I’m sorry?” Connor’s head cocked as he listened to the message from Home Base.

“-so we can hear everybody? Can we get you to hold your phone?”

Margarette repeated the garbled message, “Can you hold your phone so they can hear you?”

“Is that possible?” Kristine continued.

“Yes.”

Someone said, “Hold the phone,” and Connor continued, “I’ll hold the phone.” He said it in a tone meant to highlight the pun. He walked around the table to retrieve the phone, which had been under the computer. Someone repeated, “Hold the phone.” Connor’s best friend Jacob, arrived the night before from Seattle, and in charge of rotating the computer on its stool, handed him the phone.

Connor walked back to the other side of the table, carrying the phone as though it were a precious stone resting on a cushion. “So, the- the stories that Barbara was- was alluding to was a few years ago, the Municipality took it upon themselves to create an oral history of-,” Nichole, the third guest critic, gestured at Connor to raise the phone higher, “Can you hold-?” Connor stretched his left arm high above his head, raising the phone. However, it struck the wrong tone, and Nichole retorted, “No, you don’t have to-,” but the uproarious laughter that accompanied the gesture drowned her out.

Connor lowered the phone to his chest, smiling with the audience, but she continued, “Just, just like this,” miming her intention, “so they can-.”

Connor tried to continue his response to Barbara’s question. “-Of- of- of Government Hill,ⁱⁱ and they interviewed many longtime residents,” Nichole jutted a thumbs-up at the screen to confirm the improved auditability. Connor continued, “some of whom had-.” The figures on the screen gesticulated

wildly with outstretched thumbs. Connor returned the signal, and recommenced, "Okay. —some of whom had stayed in the same house for fifty years—,"

Nichole said to her neighbor under her breath, "we're spending a lot of time with this."

Connor continued, "—almost, and many of them told stories of sledding down the road," he interrupted himself, "I'll use the map." He tapped over to the wall and the large watercolor map. "The— the original road, or the first road came up on the West Side," he traced its line, "but, in modern era the road came through here," he moved his hand up and down the former route, "and— and this was a rec center and they remember sledding and playing.ⁱⁱⁱ The original school was here," pointing to Sunset Park, "and that was damaged in the 1964 Earthquake, which was very traumatic for many of the residents," Alaskans in the audience bobbed their heads in understanding, "even though no one of the neighborhood died.

"But many of the stories talked about, or many of the residents recalled the Wireless Station, as being just always there," shaking his head once more to indicate the collective feeling, "as being this— this sort of constant within their neighborhood. And even some of the residents who have recently moved in, heard from those that— from whom they bought the houses, of how they would travel along the early foot paths," Connor moved his pointer along the first alleyway, from which the first trail extended, "to the Wireless Station,

because it was the only place to receive news of births, deaths, or— or just idle gossip with neighbors."^{iv}

Aaron Whelton, a professor, and Jesse regarded the watercolor plans up close, their faces only a foot from the drawings. Clive looked on from his stool, unmoved and unmoving. Connor turned to face the audience, and remained thus for five seconds. Fearing the silence, he continued. "And even— even today, just walking through the streets of Government Hill, if— if you stand by the Wireless Station long enough, people will come by and say, 'oh, I've always liked this building,' and 'I— I really wish they could— they could save it,' and all these sorts of things. So there really is a lot of energy behind it." Sixteen seconds of silence slunk by. Connor shuffled and moved to the right, smiling nervously at the audience. Deborah winked at him.

The disembodied voice of Kristine broke the spell. "Could you describe the individual buildings, just a little bit?"

"Yes, I could go through that." Nervous chuckles spread through the room as Connor strode to the wall of photos, a sound between a laugh and a grown escaping his grinning mouth. "I'll draw you back to the original, or, to where I began the presentation—," the amusement on student's faces revealed the awkwardness of the situation. Clive, still sitting, spoke, "What you're doing to them; do they, Connor, do they mean what you're, what you're designing for the buildings—."

ii. Reference: *Government Hill Oral History*. MOA.

iii. Reference: *Government Hill Oral History*. MOA. p. 12.

Darrel Hess describes what he heard about the Wireless Station from early residents: "I like the Wireless Station . . . it's important because way back in 1917, that was the only link to the outside world. People would have to trudge all the way, I mean trudge, all the way to Government Hill to get news from the outside world or to send news . . . you know a birth, a death. I always thought that was a fascinating story."

iv. *Government Hill Oral History*. MOA. p. 12. Melanie Ellis Lynch describes her memory of the sledding hill on Government Hill: "I just remember the sledding hill over across on the other side of the hill and you can see it as you leave Government Hill . . . my friend and I taught some of the littler kids how to ski over there."

Fig. d. FACING PAGE:

Untitled. O'Donnell-Stein, Karen. May 2018.

This photo shows Connor explaining the three Variations with the axonometric drawings. Notice the coordination between the tie and the borders of the drawings.

Deborah continued, "Do they mean these—they probably mean that."

"Oh," Connor conceded. "Do you mean the existing structures, Kristine, or the new buildings?" Deborah answered, "aren't they—."

Kristine responded, "Alright, your Dad's asking for the existing."

"Okay; existing." The audience laughed once more, likely at the need that Connor should continue talking. "Dad trumps it," snapped Clive, under his breath. Jax McFarland echoed, "Dad trumps it."

Connor pointed at the original building, pictured as it looked in 1917, and began. "The original building was a 28 by 28 foot Italianate building, with a low-slung roof, so it's not exactly the best for a northern climate, but it was kind of handsome for its time, and so visibly unique. And, again, two additions were made to the north and south of the building so that today it's— it's much longer-looking," he made lines in the air with the wand over the photo, "and the interior has a great deal of damage, but there is— there were originally rooms for the operators to live, as well as a kitchen, and then the— the actual operation rooms. They— they— they actually had indoor plumbing, which is— was also a luxury at that time.

"The second building, was originally used to house the— the generator and the— the equipment of— of the early radio because these were very noisy, and to have them in the same structure would have been quite uncomfortable," he made a face at the imaginary word, "or uncomfortable. And eventually, though, it— it became more of a repair shop and the—," Connor looked at the photos, searching for the one that illustrated his point. More to him he said, "I wanna see if— I have a picture of the front..."

"Here." He addressed the audience, though he looked at the photos, "It's a little small, but if you get up close to the picture you can see that some of the siding has changed," Clive was looking bored, "and that there was originally a garage door there that allowed access." The guest critics slowly moved toward the watercolor drawings to look at them closer, their pant legs swishing in the brief lull.

"The third building, the T-Shaped Building, is really quite a mystery because it only has one door and the— it's ironic that the newest addition, the extension of that stem of the T-Shaped Building, the— has the most damage. The— the floor is rotted out, so you can't actually get in. But it's a long, linear structure that was originally a garage, and on— on both of the sides you can see where the garage doors have been," the wand drew the original doorframe over a photo, "but then it was converted into a hospital, or at least a— a medical clinic of some type."

Aaron jumped at the opportunity, and asked, “Connor, I’m— I was wondering if you could explain these three panels that are over here,” pointing to the watercolors, “are those— you kept referring to those as Variations. Could you explain what you mean by that? Are they different versions of the same design?”

Looking directly at Aaron, Connor answered the question. “I use the term ‘variations’ in the musical sense, and they are sequential. The piece will include different variations of a theme, within the sequence of the piece; and so they are sequential. The idea that the poché illustrates what existed in the previous phase, or variation, and then, so moving from the— where the concrete is— is white to where it is—.”

Clive interrupted, “Could you— could you describe that, Connor?”

Not attending, Connor said, “I’m sorry.”

Clearing his throat, Clive continued, “You— you— you’ve never actually said what you’re pu— you’re saying concrete, and you described it with not a single word before, but there’s a lot of detail in there that— that— that I think you could elaborate on, shortly,” his finger circled in the air, pointing at the drawing, “that there’s—.”

“Okay.”



“Within the context of that, answering Aaron’s question.”

“Okay.”

“So in the first Variation, I’m inserting concrete piers to act both as structural support for the— for the failing fabric, but also as this dense material that can absorb the sounds and— and stories that occur within it. And so these—,” finger circling on the drawing, “these are located in the densest— in the areas I— I identified as having the densest quantities of these stories, which the— the bas relief somewhat illustrates. Where these— these corners and intersections are where the most st— st— stories and— and— and sounds would be

Fig. e. FACING PAGE:
*Untitled. O'Donnell-Stein,
Karen. May 2018.*
This photo shows Connor
explaining the trail system
at the table in the middle
of the room to an enraptured
crowd.

contained; in the same way that— that a corner of
a room has certain acoustic nodal properties, and
has as the densest intersection of— of auditory
sounds.

“And so these concrete piers and forms would have—
would have certain spaces that would be carved
away, to provide seating as well as table-height
places for— for leaving offerings, or— or le— put-
ting a book;” a camera clicked, “as well as more
contemporary insertions, such as sinks and toi-
lets, and plumbing. The— the windows and doors are
framed in this ziggurat shape to— to illustrate
the— the layers of— of the stories and sounds
that— that are present there.”

Margarette continued from the response, her left
hand outstretched as here index finger circled in
the air. “And in the third one here, that— a lot
of that survives to the next stage—.”

“That’s right.”

“And then— and then much of it disappears in the
building on top of that, right?”

“Yes.” Connor walked to the third drawing. “So
these buildings are raised up a little bit,” his
hand held sideways, pulled away from the draw-
ing, mimicking the act of raising, “so that the
floor— so that some of these ruins can get cut down
and become the floors of— of some of the spaces.
So you can see where the— the concrete interrupts

the— the wood flooring, say in this Insulatory,”
he turned his head towards Margarette, “in this
bedroom. But in— outside of the structures, they
would remain at their original heights.”

A mousy voice, belong to Barbara, broke through
the impending silence. “So, I’m just— I quickly
want to ask: so, at Midterm, you’re here,” waving
her hand at the first watercolor, “you’re head-
ing there,” pointing at the middle drawing, “and
then all of a sudden this is brand new,” her finger
directed at the third.

“That’s right.”

“So what does this— could you— I think I know
what the answer is, but I don’t want to put words
in your mouth,” her head and arm punctuated each
phrase, “so why this particular program here, on
that site?” Her right arm moved toward the first
drawing.

Connor nodded, and began speaking. “So the idea
is— that I’m— I’m— I’m trying to recreate the—
the idea of this being a— ah, I’ll restart.” The
answer should have been obvious, but he could not
think of it. With stories, the elders were able
to connect the past and present, transcend one
realm and space to another. Residing at the Wire-
less Station, the elders recreated the duties of
the operators, and acted as the original buildings
had, in retaining memories of sounds and sto-
ries. Additionally, the decay of the buildings had
allowed the community significance to shift to the

Hall of the Descendants. It could have been his nerves, or it could have been his unwillingness to explain every nuance and detail of the project, to maintain the mystery and metaphor, that prevented him from explaining. Obviously, Barbara understood.

“It’s two-fold. First, it– the– the practical, and– and less interesting is that Adult Care Homes are allowed by the zoning qualities, and so that was one of the– the major hurdles to– to redevelopment of the site, because it’s in a residential district and so there are very limited uses of the site. Most specifically, though, it’s to give the community spaces where aging residents can stay in the neighborhood, and still play an active role in the conversation and the community there. That is lost when they’re forced to leave their– their homes.”

Unsatisfied with his answer, he continued to talk. “And so, in connecting it to the significance of the Wireless Station, in the same way that early residents of Anchorage came here to receive news, and share stories, current residents can come here and share stories with the elders that are living here.”

Jesse’s deep voice stuttered into perception, his hand waving in front of him, as if drawing out the words. “And– I’ll just– other clarification questions while we’re on the plans. That– one is that I– I don’t know Alaska well enough to– maybe you can explain what an Arctic Entry is?” He stood easy, but erect. Connor beamed at the question,



remembering the tedious time spent on the subject at the Midterm presentation. Jesse continued, “Cause you have them labelled and there and I would love to know more about that.” He spoke quickly, “and the other is if you could help us get a sense of the time that you imagine between the three– the three drawings.”

Connor faced the critic, his sideburns framing his smiling face. “Okay. So, an Arctic Entry is– is basically a fancy word for a vestibule, but that’s not– it’s– it’s between a vestibule and a mud room. It basically is that the– that because of the cold climate, we need this intermediary space between the interior and the exterior.” His hand waved back and forth with the words, and Jesse’s head bobbed up and down. Connor pronounced

Fig. f. FACING PAGE:

*Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018.*

As Connor Scher presented, his mother Kerry Reardon videotaped the event. This still shows Clive taking a short nap.

the word Arctic as Artic, in the Alaskan way. “And although this really becomes a spaces for boots, and— and skis, and coats, and things, it also is a— a space for meeting with neighbors, because that’s the— that’s not the— the main formal entrance to a house, which is just a single door, but it’s usually at the back entrance; and so there’s this level of intimacy, and— and gathering.

“So, especially,” his pointer gesturing over the plans “in these places, where I’ve extended the Arctic Entry almost as much— almost the entire length of the building, that these can now get occupied and be spaces for living and engagement, not just for storage, and passing through.”

Moving his head from the drawings to the audience, Connor shuffled to the first drawing. “The— the time between the— the variations, at least between these two,” his hand moved from the first to the middle and back, “would be pretty quick, I think. The— in— in the last decades the— the building has suffered a lot of structural damage, and so with the insertion of the concrete, and really not a lot of other presentation of these, the— the deterioration would occur within twenty years, maybe thirty years.” In truth, this would probably take between ten and twenty. “And the— the— I tried to render the vegetation as being consistent with that amount of time passing. One of the benefits of having a long summer is plants do grow quite quickly, and take over sites pretty quickly.

“And then the— the space between these two would be pretty variable. But, ideally, I think it would be no le— no more than twenty years, I would hope — within a generation, I’d think.” This was an underestimate, and as much as fifty years would be more appropriate.

Some silence settled in the room for several seconds, but the voice of a fellow student, Chris Jones, interrupted the pause. “It— it seemed like with the— the Elder Home, and the elders who were sort of like the keepers of the area, that there would be a consideration about the transition of that role, and responsibility to the next — you know — elders to— to come and take— take that place; and I was wondering if that had found its way into your program, or if there was an architectural response to that transition?”

Connor nodded twice and answered, “I think I tried—,” he coughed, “excuse me. I think I tried to provide spaces for that in the Communitories, but especially the one just outside of the Section House, which throughout the entire— which out— throughout the three Variations would remain an Elder Care Home, and so this space,” his fingernail scratched the cold-pressed paper, “just outside of the building would be this place where the— elders could— could talk directly with prospective Residents, and engage with them that way. And in the rendering here,” he walked over to the framed drawing on the upturned table, “I even made this monolithic garage structure that could have a— a film screen, to— to act as a small community theater. So does that answer your question?” Chris’ head nodded, even though the answer should not

have been satisfactorily. Once again, the nerves had caused Connor to miss the obvious spaces of the Administratory of Variation I in the original structure, and the Section House Comminatory and Refectory of Variation III.

While he finished the response, Deborah's soft voice began, "Do you..." Her movement towards the drawings drew Connor's attention to where she was pointing, to the final snapshot drawing, showing the three ADUs atop the Elder Care Homes. "Want to talk about these?" Her finger moved over the drawing. However, Anna Goodman, another professor, carried better, filling the room. "Connor?" He leant over to Deborah apologetically, turning to Anna.

She was not being rude; only she did not perceive Deborah asking the question. "Just to— I appreciate these kinda questions about the specificity of these buildings to this particular climate, and site, and a lot of this— and the storytelling that your doing — has to do with a very specific sorta micro culture that happens within this little region." Connor dismissed her quip out of hand as she continued, "So, in speaking to your sort of larger interest in preserving, and preservation, around less tangible histories, that maybe have a less materially — you know — significant form," a stool squeaked, "can you talk a little bit about the way your project is specific to this particular type of program, even a— a radio station, or a rural, or isolated place like Alaska, or this site; and how it might be a generalizable thing? Like, what lessons did you learn from going through this process that speak to that issue of



preserving intangible heritage?" So often Outsiders will dismiss Alaska as a rural backwater, and still possess the trite tropes media promotes. This keeps a distance that Alaskans enjoy.

Connor began to answer, looking at her black-dressed figure across the room. "I think it was—" he coughed, "I— I— I think, to answer the second portion of your question first, is that the—the idea that the—the—the—the—the—the physical fabric of the building could retain these memories, as opposed to trying to recreate a certain era of it; and in—in that way they—that's— that could be more globally applied, that instead of this— this— this—" He stuttered as he struggled to answer. "Instead of trying to retain details and— and— and recover finishes of rooms,

v. Reference: *Power of Place*. Hayden. 1995.

Fig. 8. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018.
This still shows Connor
explaining the Section House.

that the— that the remnants of the structure, in almost a Forensic Architecture sort of way,” this addressed to Deborah, who nodded, “begin to speak to those intangible resources and memories.” Anna shifted nervously as she listened. Connor should have mentioned the similarities to the work of Dolores Hayden^V in giving voice to the usually silenced, and minority voices.

“As far as the specificity of it, I think that the— I tried to engage it programmatically, with the inclusion of these Arctic Entries, and I didn’t mention that the— that in the first Variation, some of these spaces would get turned into these Arctic Entry places, but then also in— in the— the— the attention to the materials — I guess — I tried to retain the specificity, with the— the use of concrete, which is pretty pervasive in a lot of early Alaskan architecture, as well as the timber industry, which was even earlier.

“But I think— I think it was difficult because the whole idea of wireless is, it is— it does erase certain territorial boundaries that— that could— that— that— that former— that— that former methods of communications didn’t.” Connor said the word ‘erase’ so forcefully, emphasizing it with a wave of his hand, that he roused Clive from a catnap. “And this idea of— of broadcasting, and of— and of releasing these— these signals and stories to the greater environment, I think is really quite global.” Radio truly did make the world global, as it broadcast modernity to all nations.

“And even with the— the— with the use of— of the Dena’ina heritage, and even their term of a ‘place spirit’, it’s not specific only to that culture, but many cultures have— have that sort of attention to the— the feel or the importance of a— of— of a place; that it doesn’t exist in a physical attribute or a structure.” To Anna, “Did that answer your question?” He did not sound convinced. Of course, the inclusion of the Dena’ina heritage, and cultural site, did make the project specific to Anchorage.

“I think so.” She responded, likewise unconvincingly.

“Okay, good.” He walked back towards the framed drawings, and looked at Deborah, in her black clothes and white shoes. “And you were curious about these three buildings?” He coughed, and pointed at the drawing.

“Well,” she began, “I’m curious about the structures you placed on the roofs of those three buildings.” A lisp augmented the sibilance of her speech.

“Yes. So, to borrow your term that you’ve used a couple times, it was a cheeky move.”

“Yeah.” The audience laughed.

“And, the— it’s a bit of a dig, that, at— at— at— at the sort of concept of Parasitic Architecture, and— and— and Accessory Dwelling Units,” he looked to where Margarette had sat, but she had left several minutes prior.^{vi} Deborah nodded understandingly. “But it was it was more this, again, this— this— this sort of hyperattention to my concept that not only can people bring their stories and memories to a site,” turning from the audience, he directed the last words at the critic, “but also, a building might be able to. And, in that way, it sort of erases this need to retain a structure on its original site,” he struck the air like a Wagnerian pianist, “which is really important to the Department of the Interior, and the National Park Service, and this is all good,” the last word emphasized, “but there is— there is such a history in Anchorage of moving historic buildings, that I thought it fit within that pattern; that— that these buildings,” pointing to the drawing, “in order to save them, could be relocated here, this— this place for retaining ongoing memories and— and stories.” Connor watched Deborah as she paced, prowling as a cat would, and he nodded expectantly.

Deborah stroked her chin as she walked to the map on the table, a look on her face both supercilious and quizzical. With unwavering consistency of flow, she asked, “But how does the— how does it work if you have people in the room who don’t necessarily believe in the place spirit, or in the notion that memories ethereally occupy space and time, in a way that suits your narrative, but might not suit others? In other words, yes maybe many cultures share this,” she and Connor shared a head nod, “but many don’t.”



“Mhm,” Connor conceded. Although, he wondered if she believed in other intangible feelings like love. Or perhaps she was being provocative.

“And so, without that piece of your narrative, does your architecture work?” The words leapt on their prey.

Connor addressed her directly, his hands held together at his waist. “I think it does, because I have this ongoing duality between — to— to use my program — the Hall of the Ancestors and the Hall of the Descendants. That— that these are really quite the same thing,” Deborah nodded her head not out of agreement but to convey her attention, “that— that the— that the— that these more

^{vi.} Note:
For more than a year, Connor Scher has worked with Margarette Leite on a project developing affordable Accessory Dwelling Units for Portland’s single-family neighborhoods.

Fig. h. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018.
This still shows Connor explaining the three architectural residents relocated to the site.

spiritual or metaphysical qualities of a space are the same as having storytelling with— with a friend, or reciting a— a— a story, or a— or— a prayer even. That— that connexion with— with a heritage that is grounded in— in the real, in the physical,” his face scrunched as he pinched his fingers together to illustrate tangibility, “as opposed to sort of ethereal.” He was trying to say that buildings are places of present stories and narratives, as well as those in the past.

Deborah leapt on the upbeat, “And yet your first move was to kind of reinvest into the existing before you allowed it to deteriorate, and it is already deteriorated. So, by inserting yourself in that, or— or— or— by inserting your program into it, which is about re—restoring. So, it’s the physical element you’re— you’re re— you’re relying on a physical manifestation—,”

“Mhm.”

“—Of the ethereal to start the process again, so it can then deteriorate; which is what you started doing. So what is— what—

“I’m just fascinated with the way your brain works; I wish I could get in there and shake it up and see what comes out. Right?”

“I think,” Connor’s voice called over the laughter, “I think that if we drop the— the— the stories, and just talk about the preservation of

architecture as being the preservation of these historic forms and methods of— of construction; I think that was what drew me to concrete initially, was that the— that the concrete retains the— the shape of its form. And so I’m using the building as its form, and it— it retains those— those openings, and those— those corners of that— of— of the original structure.”

Deborah and Connor stood close to each other as she responded. A door creaked in the corridor outside the room, its sound flowing through the hall and into the space. “And it also creates something much more difficult to destroy thirty years later when you want to rebuild completely—,” she pointed at the plans.

“Right.” Connor said.

“Right? Right? I mean, it’s like—.”

“Right. It is— it is a question of permanence, and longevity I think.” Connor nodded his head to signal he was finished, his teeth shown white under his brown moustache.

Chris began speaking. “I’m kinda curious on that, that idea, that notion of permanence in the concrete and the ziggurat forms; if there was a way that this project could have decomposed in a sense that maybe in a thousand years from now, it— it

remains like a monument? In some way?" Connor nodded to signal his attendance. "Like in the far future." Chris clarified with a wave of his hand.

Still nodding, Connor answered, "Right. Right. And after the midterm I think that we talked a little bit about that and in conversations with Juan and Sergio it— it was this question of the Propylaeon Way, and like the Acropolis, and— and this journey to this site; and I think I— I just wanted to step it back a little bit from—," his hands moved from far to near, "from— from that sort of applied significance, and— and recognize that it— it's not— it's not the Parthenon. It's—," he chuckled at the notion, and others chortled.

Jesse spoke up in his curious percussive way. "I think that that— time question; I think that was what I was wondering about the time table," a stool squeaked, "that, I think you're adding part of the representation, that kind of archival presentation of this as kind of a bunch of— like of a lot of found material, or something. Like, you're kind of reconstructing a world; and I was wondering about that time." His hand, shaped like a blade, pointed at each of the Variations. "So there's kind of a slipperiness to time—," squeak, "—in the presentation which I think is really a nice; like, it was really a beautiful part of this. Like where I'm trying to locate— I'm sort of disoriented, you know, like where we are, about when we are. And that's why I was sort of wondering, like, where you are in these," again gesturing at the drawings, "so it's like, actually that drawing is from 1940," he pointed to the first Variation, "and this one is 1960," Variation II,



"and this when the Army Corps decided to pour the foundation; and this is tomorrow," Variation III, "or, seven years in the future. And then that's an interesting read, the— the way you're describing this house for the elders, because whose going to be living in them in sixty years?" His clawed hand moved from the drawings to point towards Connor, "You know, I mean, you're designing a house for yourself, for, like, sixty years from now," Connor started laughing, a strange gurgling sound like a fountain low on power. Jesse continued, "and— and you're the one who knows the most about this place, so you'll be there, sort of in Residence. Like, we'll come talk to you, and you can tell us about our heritage—."

Anna jested, "He'll be cleaning them."

Fig. 1. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018.
This still shows Anna asking
a question.

Through the laughter, the critic continued. "So, I think that there's something really fascinating about that; sort of-."

"Playing his trumpet," offered Sergio Palleroni, Connor's committee member.

"We'll follow the sound." Jesse played off the comment. "So and, for me, I guess I was thinking about you would- like within that kind of- like that slipperiness of time gives you a way, it gives you more design possibilities, I think, to kind of manipulate that- the authority of those- that archival format, or something? Yeah, so I feel like- for me, I- I guess, maybe you should become sympathetic to the part- or, I love those projects that manipulate the- the received authority of certain formats, like the archive, and I was- so I was sort of craving, in a way, more counterfactual things are peppered through here. And, or, for me, it would be exciting, in a way, to think about how you can begin to de- describe your versions of the- the past through these-,"

"Mm," grunted Connor.

"-Projects. Or- in addition - maybe not or but and - I think it could be really- so- I'm fascinated to think about developing these sort of instruments," his hand moved as though he was using a hairbrush, "that would help you listen to these things, you know? Sort of like tools that would help- so, like, in your response to Deborah's question, it wouldn't be about whether we believe

it or not; you would be presenting a series of devices that would help, archivally, record the sound of the- that's trapped in the concrete," his hands moved to the right, and Connor grunted agreement again. Continuing, "Or something. You know, so you would have kind of these devices for sort of extract- they wouldn't- they might not be, sort of," making air quotes with his fingers, "real, or that actually work; but that they would describe some idea about what it means to have memory," his hands moved like food mixers, "related to a place, or something like that. So- so, I think that there's- so that there's such a rich world here, and I- I would love to- because I've- I've just enjoyed thinking about where- how it could become part of like, this like," now his hands moved like wiper blades, "bigger project; and not- and not, sort of- because it feels like it is opening something up, rather than, kind of, like, ending something-."

"Mhm-."

Jesse folded his hands, and fell silent.

Chris squeaked his stool and began, "Yeah, it seems like- it seems like you're edging into a book. Ha ha!" His laughter was contagious and Connor's moustache spread wide as he smiled.

Anna jumped in, "No, I think I would be really interested in- to that point, you know," everyone turned to face her, including Jesse, but he soon looked to the floor. She continued, directing

Connor, “seeing you explore a technique like this in a landscape that you don’t love so much.” She ended the sentence by rising in tone, almost like a question, as was the style. Connor laughed nervously. Nevertheless, she continued in her sweet, melodic, though somewhat metallic voice, “And I think you— you have a personal investment in this— this particular landscape; you’ve spent a lot of time with it and developed this affinity to it as the archivist. You know, you’ve also been cultivating a version of yourself as architect archivist.” She paused. “And it’s a different role than a preservationist: it’s not necessarily about documenting the real, but it’s about imbuing things with value, and making those things somehow visible, materially, or — you know — through your own type of artifacts. So I would be really curious about you taking another site, and—” a stool squeak broke her flow, “—what that would look like — you know — in a Brooklyn, or in a— you know; some building that nobody would really see a lot of value in, except a few people. And then how do you— how do you kinda create this— how does that shift our view of valuation, within the material world. That would be interesting to me to see.” Her head bobbed sideways as she finished. She went on, her outstretched hands moving in and out, “And do the same representational techniques work for that, or do they require you to push it even further beyond your kind of skillset, to some new ways of representing?” Jesse stroked his chin thoughtfully.

Bumbling at first, Aaron found his voice. “Well, and— and— I— you know, thinking about that, the sort of— there’s a sort of distancing to this, right? I mean the representation, and the



repetition of views; but also the kind of limited methods of representation that you’re using; it always keeps us on the outside. We’re always looking from the exterior,” Connor wished he had explained the glyphs and plans better, because they did bring the viewer into the architecture, if he were willing. The professor continued, “and so, yaknow, I— I’m— one aspect of this that seems really hard to understand is the— the direct experience that one would have in coming to this place, over time, and as it goes through those different Variations. It’s really hard to understand what’s going on, because all we’re really given is essentially,” his had formed a vertical plane, “plan views, or perspective views of the exterior. And so, it seems to really, in a strange way, kind of devalue the experience of the interior,” as his tone rose, Connor nodded. Aaron continued, “In a way that it— it always

Fig. j. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018
This still shows Aaron trying to understand the three Variations.

keeps us—,” he paused as he swiftly drew his hand toward his body, “externalized. And, as far as the things that erode, if the things on the exterior, strangely, are permanent, but the things that are not necessary, or become internalized, erode, or are chopped off – at the knees – and sort of, like, smoothed over, right? So it’s a really– it’s– it’s a kind of a strange thing that,” he paused as his agitation rose, “it feels really schematic in many sorts of ways, and I think it would be interesting to kind of know what– what the spatial qualities of that would be; I’m kind of imagining – especially in the second one – that it’s more of a kind of Rachel Whiteread, like, casting of that original structure. But, it’s hard to know, when it’s just sort of a series of diagrams,” he caught himself, “geometries that are introduced; what– what that means...”

Through all this, someone was whispering about culture.

Aaron did not really finish, but Clive began speaking from his seated position by the table. Connor looked like a ping-pong ball about to be hit. “I– I just wanted to follow up,” Clive stuttered, “and Aa– Aaron–,” he chose a different direction, “why did you not develop that first scheme at a larger scale, or through modelling; why did you not get into the–,” he grasped at the air with his hand, “materiality of it, and the spatiality of it,” he gestured to Aaron with an open palm, “all– through some other means,” his other hand broke free and the two members began gesturing together, “so, that’s what we talked about; I mean– cause we– we– we kind of understood it at that level

six weeks ago,” his left hand pointed to the first drawing and made a clockwise gesture in the air, “and now we’ve got a whole new scheme, which we never talked about. And– and maybe talked about with– with– with Juan, perhaps, but I’m– I’m still waiting for that,” the first Variation, “scheme to be– to become architecture, which would explain this scheme,” the second, “but I’m not really interested in this third thing, right now – which is interesting – but there’s all kinds of issues about how you handled it. I– I would prefer we– I’m still interested in– in– your decision not to take the first scheme to a level of development of architecture that would really allow us to understand it,” gesturing at Aaron, “that– it– to– to– at the level of understanding; the– kind of depth of ritual experience that–; because it’s so much more of a kind of teaching that you are proposing.” Connor’s head nodded as the director continued, “And seeing another iteration, thirty years down the road, I’m– so– you– you’re thoughts on that decision.” Connor nodded and turned toward the drawings. Clive continued, “It’s an interesting one.”

His voice booming in the room, Connor answered the Englishman. “I guess I, I– I set rules for myself, that I wanted to provide consistent views, as– as Aaron brought up,” he pointed to the Aaron, “of– of the same,” he paused, “the same cuts and the same views, and orientations, and scales, even. That– that– that I was relying on the viewer to use his,” he pointed at his brain, “or her, imagination to occupy the– the space.” Connor’s blue forearm was parallel to the floor. “And that, I think, in– in not developing any one of these Variations more specifically than they are, it was

an attempt not- or, it was an attempt- it was to stop me from- or, it was to allow me to get to the end.” His right hand moved from his body and punctuated the air with two downward strokes. He wondered, though why Clive thought they were not developed. The drawings were at 1:100, and he had drawn the plans at twice that to get all the detail in. There were doors, counters, furniture, plumbing fixtures – all the things architectural presentation drawings have. Flustered, his face turning red against blue of his suit, he went on. “Where- whereas if- if I had explored- I mean, any of these ideas I could have explored deeper, but, that would have just been time, and I wanted to get to the end.” His right hand extended, palm to the ceiling.

Clive responded, “But, that was the end,” he pointed to the first drawing, “to me,” to himself, “as far as I’m concerned; tha- tha- that’s the end that still needs to be kind of finished,” his hand pointed at the first drawing, “before you set out on the next adventure-.”

“I guess for me, I see that as the climax,” Connor’s hand, palm up, gestured at the first watercolor, “and the Variation-.”

“It- it- it can’t be the climax because it’s still a diagram,” Clive’s hand patted the air in front of him, “it- it- you can’t only- can’t only-.”

Sergio jumped in, “Well, we had a-.”



However, Connor jumped on the affront, “I guess I disagree that it’s a diagram.”

“Well-,” Sergio began.

“Maybe I’ll enter it into the competition.” Some nervous laughs punctuated the line. Juan grinned. Sergio looked concerned, and Clive looked uncomfortable in his stool.

Sergio voiced in, “Well, this- this is where, so- I mean, this was discussed in the committee, and I- and I- in the level of appropriate detail, and I- we had a kind of division about this, and so- so I think it’s like, you know, he- he was more

Fig. k. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018

This still shows Nichole asking if the school, and Connor, held himself responsible.

interested in going— but I was— I was hoping for more appropriate detail of things, so— so we had this discussion, back and forth.” Sergio alternated between looking at Connor and Clive. Juan looked pleased, or uncomfortable, into the middle distance. “He was interested in finishing the story line,” his hands moved in a circle, “of this sort of place, so but I, so—.”

“So, but—,” Barbara began.

“So,” Sergio continued, “but I think that, in a way, I thought that it was hard because you we’re getting to the occupation, which I think—,” he rotated towards the windows, “I think was provocative in your kinds of, like, kind of six, or eight Greek myths,” his outstretched hand moved in a circle towards the glyphs, “that you set out; you know, about the different experience of— of auditory—,” Clive looked down briefly as Sergio sculpted the sounds in the air with his hands. Then, he openly gestured, as if transferring the words, to Connor. He continued, “—and sound experience; so I... I mean, it’s interesting; I mean, this is an important discussion in terms of a Thesis, because it is about methodology, really, you know, so—,” He dropped his hands. “So maybe we should... Why was it important for you, I mean, for — to include everybody else in the discussion,” his hands waved inclusively around, “why, I mean, why did you chose to do it like this instead of in model, so—,” Sergio looked at Connor expectantly. In fact, the entire audience had once again turned its attention to the man in an azure suit.

Connor was unsteady as he began. “I think two— two things. I made a conscious decision not to explore it in model, and most of that was— was for personal reasons,” meaning he did not have the time to explain his opinions on model making, “and, I got hit from all sides,” he smiled kindly at his advisor and committee member. He felt sorry that he had not built a model. Continuing to address them, “and— I mean, I regret that— that I wasn’t able to provide other methods of— of— of illustrating the architecture.” His pitch rose. Falling to the natural resonance again, “But, the— the idea that— that I had set out on this to be more allegorical was— was an attempt to, sort of, distance myself from— from that need to produce all of the— all of the quantity of— of— of work that is required for— for others, like, other— other studio projects.” Clive, resting his head on his hand, looked onward. The presenter went on, “And it was this idea that— that the Thesis had to be something more than just a building, and more than just traditional representations of it, but— but more of an exploration of— of a method. And— and that I felt stronger in these methods of representation, and so I chose to continue using them,” he addressed the entire room his body shifting left and right, his hands moving up and down, one holding the wand and the other the transporter, as he said, “as opposed to using one that I didn’t feel comfortable in.” He should not have answered the way he did. His frustration had blocked the more poetic parts of this brain from answering the inquiry. In fact, it was to retain a rigid consistency of views, or snapshots, in order to register change over time. Each view would be from the same point of view, the same viewer, or the same scale. Every episode and station would have

a petroleum-blue border to drive the concept of frames of reference, or of frames in a film; the drawings were a series of frames.

Someone said, “I want–,” but Barbara continued her thought from earlier, “So– so I– I–.”

Aaron cut her off, “Yeah, I’m– so I wanna say one– one last thing. I mean, I’ve been trying to read this as a story, right?” His right hand made rounds in the air, as if pushing a ball, “I keep thinking allegory, and all that, and part of me wants to read this as a three-part–,” he coughed, a sign of agitation, perhaps, “play; it’s like Act I, Act II, Act III,” each clause he punctuated with his arm, “and– but– you know, I– I’m really disturbed by what the third part of this means, and whether that is, like, Act III, or whether the story really ends here,” he gestured to Variation I, “and that’s really just sort of the sad epilogue. Because, the introduction of these completely new buildings– I find a little bit disturbing,” he grew tenser, “in that they come along at some future point, and they seem to disregard all the accumulation of history and story and artifact and casting; and it just comes through, with a completely new geometry.” His hand chopped the air. “And as much as you are talking about this being a– a new typology,” Aaron’s hands began moving away from his body, “where they’re going to exchange stories,” squeak, “and be caretakers of this, you know, set– set of spirits, whatever.” His hands waved haphazardly at the idea, and he rolled his eyes. “It really seems like it’s just wiping– wiping the– the slate clean, and– and erasing as much as it’s actually preserving;



or– or carrying on.” His tempo of speech and hand movements increased, “And so, I’m just– I’m a little bit unsure of what the intention is about the– the story you’re trying to tell about how we preserve, you know, they things we carry forward, and ultimately like, what meaning any of that has, I guess, in a long-enough time span.” He cleared his throat as Connor nodded. Throughout the entire comment, Connor was smiling. This was exactly the comment he had hoped would arise. The point, the mission of the Thesis, in his mind, was that the physical remnants of the past did not hold the memories of the past, but the living stories of the present. Stories, sounds, and retainers of those elements were what was significant, not how a building looked, where its context was, or whose lives it had touched. The Wireless Station had retained stories, but those stories, and

Fig. 1. FACING PAGE:
Still Shot. Reardon, Kerry.
May 2018

This still shows Connor talking with those viewing the simulcast in Anchorage. The computer sits on a stool, which is on top of a table, giving the viewers a point-of-view similar to a person. Connor's friend Jacob relaxes in the background.

their subjects, including the Wireless Station, were more important than its physical fabric. Of course, that was just his opinion.

Juan spoke, for the first time since the introduction. "Pardon me; Barbara." He had seen Barbara wanting to say something.

"Well, I was just going to say that, for me," her voice rose in pitch on the last word, "it's a transition." She pointed at the Wireless Station in Variation I, "Here is where the stories where," pointing to the Hall of the Descendants, "and this is where the stories are now going to be."

"Mmhm," agreed Connor. He had hoped that this would be said.

"And that's what I really would have liked to see you develop." her finger moved in a circle over the plaza, "During the summer, coming here together, it is- it is-," a camera snapped, "it used- it used- the building used to be here," she pointed at the Wireless Station, "but now it's this space," back to the intersection, "it's this node on the trails. That, to me, is the most interesting part of the whole project," she made her way back to her chair.

"Mmhm."

"I can understand where you're going." She returned to the drawing and continued, "This is the storytelling."

"Mmhm," Connor grunted and nodded.

"This is the community location, so I really would have liked to have seen you- to me, it's a transition," her hands moved left and right, "away from a building," she moved them to the left, as though picking up and relocating a parcel, "into a- into a space of a larger community involvement." She turned again to the drawing, and reaching to the Section House, she said, "And, these are the caretakers." She said it like a question, so Connor responded, "Mmhm." She continued, moving over to Variation III. "But you're, sort of- okay." She waved her hand over the drawing. "But that's the thing-," she reached toward Connor and pulled her hands back to herself, "so to me," she moved her body, hands holding an imaginary ball, to the right, "it's a transition out of the building, and into that space," she threw the ball into the Hall, "in the larger community." She shrugged her shoulders, and threw back her hands.

"Mmhm."

Clive broke in, "We- we're at time, so is there any last minute comments?" He looked around, "Anyone?" Hearing Nichole start, he pointed to her with an open hand.

“I– I don’t– don’t know–,” she began, sounding disappointed, “agree, for partly because what you told us: that the structures themselves preserved a hundred years of history,” somewhere a stool squeaked, “and that you transitioned to the physical, or that you– you make an argument here that– that the physical fabric, the physical land,” she punctuated each clause with her hand and head, “the traces of the paths. All of that holds something.” She looked at Connor expectantly or perhaps angrily. “I– I, you know,” she looked at the plans, “I– it’s a really funny project.” She looked back at Connor. “And you– this was a project,” she opened her hands and bobbed her head, “in which more faculty here have spoken than the guests.” She was clearly uncomfortable. “Nothing.” She waved her hands in front of her as though wiping a whiteboard, and looked apologetically around the room.

She continued. “That doesn’t mean anything against you–,” a selection of sounds filled the room, coming from the mouths of faculty. “I– and– that tells me that you’re place in the school, at this point of graduation, is probably one of a lot of people like you, they like the work that you do,” she waved her hand at Connor, “and things like that. And I– my– it’s a very difficult project because,” she addressed to no one in particular, “I feel you’re– you’re from the place, which helps,” she said glancing sideways at Connor, a single index finger extended skyward, “because if you weren’t, it would be really hard for me.” Connor wondered why she said this.



The critic continued with a cocked head. “But I don’t know– I don’t know if you’re– if you’re really,” she paused, and said the next words like a question, “holding yourself accountable. Like–,” she shook her head, “I’m not sure. And I don’t know if the school is also holding you accountable, right? That’s probably I– I’ll probably will never be invited back, I’m sure,” she said waving her hand and shaking her head. Connor let out a sound like a seal bark; it was probably a nervous laugh. “But I just– because I want to say that, because I would be careful. You have a lot of facility, and I really enjoyed the story.” She waved her left hand across the first wall of the room, with the pictures and maps. Turning toward the Variations, “But then it really went off in a path in which you– you removed everything and it– it didn’t seem bound to anything that you presented.” She had been waving her hands but stopped

Fig. m. FACING PAGE:

Untitled. Scher, Robert. May 2018

Robert Scher, Connor Scher's father was present at the simulcast of the presentation, at an office in the Municipal Project Management and Engineering Department in Anchorage Alaska. Everyone else were Municipal employees. Other attendees were, from left to right, Buzz Scher, Geotechnical Engineer: R&M Consultants, Inc. (out of the frame); Thede Tobish, Senior Planner: Long Range Planning (out of the frame); David Whitfield, Senior Planner: Current Planning; Tom Davis, Senior Planner: Long Range Planning; Kristine Bunnell, Senior Planner: Long Range Planning; Carol Wong, Long Range Planning Supervisor: Long Range Planning; and Susan Perry, Principal Office Associate: Planning.

and nodded her head. "And, that makes me a little bit uncomfortable, as a Thesis." Again, her pitch rose, and Connor bobbed his head. "And, I think about— I— I kept on thinking," Nichole circled her hand around her left ear, "well what are stories? Stories are actually different that history." Had he the time, Connor would have explained that in his mind, both were the same, as both could be contrivances.

"They're verbal; they are beautiful. They are dependent on people telling them. I mean, these are precious," she waved her hands, "precious things. And I kept on trying to think about, what's the corollary in architecture?" She rotated her hands in front of her like the blades of a push mower. "Which, often," her hands stopped spinning and began packing snow, "is more like a history when it's first formed; and it's a monument, it tells one story, it doesn't want to tell many.

"So I thought about the Vietnam Memorial, which actually was so disturbing to people because it allowed for a multiplicity of stories. It didn't say one thing. It didn't say war was good." She punched a fist into the air. "And so, I think there's just so— this— this part got very easy," she waved her hand towards the watercolor plans, "and, so I would— I would use all of your facility, and everything that you've learned here," she rubbed her hands like a fly, "to maybe be a little more critical; as you go forward." The squeak of her stool accompanied the last words as she turned to face the man in a blue suit. "And so," she clapped her hands. To the faculty she said, like

an entertainer, "don't worry. I'm leaving tomorrow." Clap. "And— ha ha ha!" a nervous laughter exploded from her merry face. The laugh echoed to other voices in the room.

"But that's just the feeling that I have." Nichole still spoke, sitting erect. "But I— I really did enjoy the story of it, I'm just not sure about the end—."

A metallic voice came through the transporter, "yeah—."

Clive, unknowing, said, "Connor?" Juan said, "Thank you."

"Thanks. There's tea and peanuts in the back," Connor began.

However, his first grade teacher and friend George Matoes had seen someone waving on the screen. "Is there somebody on the computer," George pointed, "who would like to say something?" He said this to Connor.

Connor spoke to the phone, louder than before, "Does anybody— anybody want to ask a question?" People began to get up and move out of the building. Others turned to look at the screen. George said, "I see someone waving over there."



Fig. n. FACING PAGE, ABOVE:
*Final Presentation: Stations
and Snapshots. Self. May
2018.*

Fig. o. FACING PAGE, BELOW:
*Three Variations. Self. May
2018.*

“Yeah.” Kristine began. Everyone looked to the screen, even though her voice came from the blue phone in Connor’s hand. “So, hi folks! My name is Kristine Bunnell, and Connor is an intern for us, here at the Muni, and I just want to say a couple things. First of all, congratulations, Connor.”

“Thanks, Kristine.”

“You did great. So, I really appreciated the— your— your perspective on the intangible versus the tangible. Because again, while we’re writing the Historic Preservation Plan for the entire Municipality, and it’s based on the economic and social benefits of historic preservation. So, those intangible types of resources would be celebrated under the social benefits of historic preservation. And, that helped give me more ideas to put into our plan.” Sounds of feet walking out of the room echoed within its tight enclosure. “The other thing is, I really have three things—.”

“Okay, I’ll move over.” Connor clacked toward the computer.

“I think that the people didn’t understand the constraints that you have on the property there, and that’s probably why— why the transition that you made.” Unbeknownst to Connor, Sergio and Juan shared some words, inaudible to the student. Kristine continued, “And, also, that— that— that in new architecture, that you have, to say that from the different Alaska Native Corporations, what they build, incorporates in that intangible

feeling and benefit of their different cultures. And that— and maybe that didn’t get across so much to the folks that were in the room, there. So, I’m— me personally, I think that you did a great job, and I understood it, and I would love to hear about it when you get back home. Did you want to say anything?” This to Connor’s father, sitting in the room in Anchorage.

He answered, “Nope.”

“Dad didn’t want to say anything.” Kristine conceded. “You?” She asked another person in the room.

“Well,” Connor began, talking through time and space, “thanks for phoning in!”

“Thank you!” echoed Connor’s mother, standing behind him in the room.

“Thank you,” said Sergio.

“Thank you!” Kristine answered.

“Bye.” Connor said this and put down his wand and phone.

“Very sweet.” Sergio said, probably about the people transported in, not about the peanuts he was eating. The people filed out, leaving Connor to speak with his friends, some who had come thousands of miles, physically, and others who had not moved their bodies, but were still present, thanks to the wonder of wireless.





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