of myths and affects

"Opus Alchemicum"
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(of myths and affects)
Protocol
1. Purpose

Explore the fabrication of reality upon imagination, and the affective relation between ideas and matter in the built environment.

Prove how myth are explain how reality is produced, are produced by reality, and do produce reality by means of collective (unconscious) understanding.

2. Method

- Choose a destination where to travel, without previous research.
- Once back, formulate 3 situation, or the collision between place, buildings, human, matter at a precise time in history.
- Transform each of these situations into a myth. In this way relevant facts, ideas, symbols and affections are enclosed together in one picture.
- the three situation, sealed in their mythological language, will evoke a new reality.
- This narrative will turn around three building and trigger a chain of ritual, action and affects.
3. Material
(Romania)
gold rush

Romania history and territory is strictly related to the amount of gold and underneath it’s soil. Today a new gold rush takes place. Gold increases its monetary value and suddenly even the smallest flake of it it’s worthy. Old mining rests are placed in a new relatively cheap process that uses cyanide to clean the gold out. International Corporations buy the right to the land leaving Romania with heavy poisoned rivers.

Properties

Creation of immaterial value compared with its very material, often destructive effects. Gold myth, concept of preciousness and its real and fictional components. Production process/ nature/machines/bodies.
The myth of a hidden city embedded with gold and gems and another city of concrete above it. The shine of the first attracts the travellers from the second, who starts to carve out the city. Once the treasure is brought away, its light is revealed being just the reflection of the artificial light coming from above. The precious city is left naked of its reflective armor in the acid darkness of a Prussian blue night.
golden way

This situation is made by few different things:
- The lost role of the gypsies in detecting the need for something on one place and combining it with excess of the same thing on another place.
- The not only gypsy use of houses as a symbol of status and the change on made in the houses with changing of status by working abroad.
- The tradition of engagement and wedding in gypsy community, and how this effects both the built environment and the physical shape of the bride, especially the hair.
- the huge amount of “NON STOP” gas station providing anything you’d need along a very trafficked small road between east and west, where, like In a new silk road, all the goods produced on one side and sold on the other happens, for many reasons, to stop.
Properties

Trading of goods, energy and roles after a need, desire, metamorphosis, transmutation between object and value, the place “in between” where this transformation happens.
A myth of two cities really far from each other, separate by a big ocean. The two cities desire each other. In the middle of the ocean their destinies, dreams and intention are traded. The cities transform continuously into each other but no real change is made: they are, indeed, just the two side of a single big city facing each other. The only movement takes place in empty space between them, where the desire makes the deal.
golden age

German settlers colonized Transylvania since the middle age as a defensive belt for the Hungarian empire, keeping their language, tradition and architecture. Once their military function became obsolete, they dedicate their time to agriculture. Big part of them, during the 2WW, get a german citizenship and move to Germany. The few Saxon left kept the landscape and the rural tradition untouched until today. Today EU consider this ancient method not conformed to standard and introduce cheaper product in the market. Agriculture is not profitable anymore and the new generation moves abroad.
Properties

Displacement, disappearing of tradition and transmission of memory, big scale affecting small scale, dependence and belonging, Arcadia, nostalgia for a lost symbiosis with nature.
The myth of an island-city that moves in a spiral following the rises and falls of the sea. In this cyclical movement the inhabitants collects the treasures found on the shore and cultivate a new piece of ground after another following the seasons and the high of the sea. The tides are on the other hand not advantageous for the mainland, which builds an artificial magnetic point to control the water level. The island, lost it’s mechanism of life, becomes a desert. One flower left and one person to keep it alive.
Imagine that gold and nature are gone, and left is just the myth of their disappearance. The relations between human, object and spaces are the same ones that these myths explain, but a new reality occurs. Nostalgia, desire and corruption are spread in the same measures. But a new system has to be produced to keep all this components alive, to keep the range of affection vivid in a ritual. A new chain of action and reactions come to reality. The myth of a new gold is required, Cyanide the only thing left. Prussian Blue, the color that appears when cyanide spills are detected, will start to be harvested to keep the ring of events alive.
Displacement, disappearing of tradition and transmission of memory, big scale affecting small scale, dependence and belonging, Arcadia, nostalgia for a lost symbiosis with nature.
Supposed that the Romanian rivers are poisoned, this color will appear to indicate presence of cyanide.
Plates of a porous material are dipped in the poisonous water in order to become blue. These plates will become part of a music instrument.
The hole old chimney left by the precious metal industry is to consider as a big instrument that produces both sound and blue powder, something that will become as important as gold itself.
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The girls who work in the tower wear a very particular dress in public. This prevents any precious blue powder to drop from the naked bodies and to be wasted.
The girls are brought to one of the gas stations that added a special building, a pool-pavilion, for the purpose.
The girls undress and take a bath in the water collected and kept warm by the structure of the building.
The water is dyed in blue.
When the girls have left, the horses of the region use the pool as a watering place.
In the meantime, the old minority population leaves the country for its country of origin. The migrant population brings with itself seeds and queen bees from their adoptive land.
Abandoned the countryside, they adapt to live in the city
The living condition is very different from the one they are used to. It’s important recreate at least a memory of the lost landscape, a window to the fields.
Aiming to recreate a piece of their meadow, they buy the manure from the region they left, which is clearly blue manure.
This brings the small garden built on the balcony to blossom blue flower.
The women that leave in this condition live their life in function of few day of blossoming, when they will cut the flower one by one, like they used to do in the fields.
The women grow beehives in between the glasses of their window to ensure a proper pollination.
The honey so produced is blue honey. Considered the very particular and rare circumstances that make this special product, blue honey will replace gold.
The women in the city and the one in the tower are dependent from each other. The first sell a blue bee-wax lipstick to the second, that would in this way, engaging themselves with the blue harvesting, be able to guarantee a good marriage.
The women keep the dried flower at home. Every five years they need to burn the flowers and leave for a pilgrimage to the river, where the blue ashes are spread permitting the tradition to continue.
Alchemy
How can a color become of immense value? The blue artificial hue called Prussian Blue is the color that appears when cyanide is detected. A lot of this poison can be still found in Romanian river, like the Somes River for example. A very rare situation for an almost clean world. For a world where nothing precious is left. Nothing is precious without desire, and nothing is valuable if easy to get.

A Group of people decides to extract the Prussian Blue color and turn it into a very precious matter.
Porous stone plates, previously covered in chemicals, are dipped in the Somes River until the reaction soaks them in a dark blue hue. Nearby the Phoenix smelter, an old abandoned chimney, stands over the flat landscape. Here, inside the tower, the People decide to bring the blue plates and to build a music instrument. A very precise mechanism provoke the plate, enclosed in a metallic structure and fastened in concentric rings, to hit each other until their breakage. The clash releases blue powder that falls down on the ground. The plates gradually loose mass and the sound change with it, becoming more acute with the time. A Group of Girls produces the spark that starts the mechanism. The Girls of this Group are brought by truck at the tower, where, naked, dances. The floor where they dance is suspended from the ground and connected by pulleys to a hammer. When the dance intensity reaches a pick, the mechanism, having collected the stress, shoots the hammer against a turning element. This movement brings the other elements to move, ring after ring, producing sound.

The tower is 350 meters high. For such a length, the circles, where the blue plates are fastened, are anchored on the brick walls in a concatenated conic structure. Because of the structure, if you where one of this Girls and you´d look up you would never see the end of the tower, and the light. You could just hear the sound leaving you and crossing meters and meters in the dark, disappearing almost, before to fall back and hit you again. That’s why the tower is called The Endless Tower. The powder that the instrument releases falls down, and you, while dancing, you have to be careful to get it all on you hair, on your face, on your skin.
When you leave the Endless Tower, you have to cover your blue skin. You have to enter in one of those particular dresses that cover all, letting your face peeking out from a pocket beautifully bordered by pleats. This you have to do to not let anybody steal your color, or to not risk to waste some powder on the ground. It’s not so easy to walk with it, but you get always a ride from one of the Group. He drives you and your girlfriends to the gas station. They have got a pool, it’s behind the stall, like in many other gas stations in the region. You like it, it’s like a little pavilion in glass, in the middle of that little bunch of three you never knew why it was still there but you have always been scared of. It’s more of a pavilion than a pool. It has a glass cupola, it can be decorated in different ways, but you like this one because it looks like a cake. You can see this kind of building from far, from the highway, because of that magnifying glass sphere that sits on top of them, half in half out, like a sunset. There’s always a moment, getting closer by car, when the sunrays hit it and bounce back, for that second you are blind. Then you know you are close enough, and you always see at least one of your girlfriend that smiles between the plates. He drops you off just close to pavilion, so you jump out and you are in the water. Once you and the other are in, you can finally go out from that dress, which keeps on floating with the other ones on the surface, like water lilies. Thanks god the water is always hot, you hardly believe it’s rain water. It falls indeed inside the sphere where the sun warms it up. It’s so hot that there’s always a big cloud of steam inside the pavilion. Enclosed by the striped plastic curtain draped around the dome, covered by the fog, you pass some time washing you hair and laughing with the others.
When you are done (you have to be done sometimes, otherwise they honk!), you hang the dress to dry like everyone else does, around the sphere hanging down to the sides and leave the Prussian blue water behind you. As soon as you go out, wet and naked in a cloud of steam, the horses come. They come from the valley to drink, they are also brought there. They just stick their head in through the plastic striped and drink, while you try to hide a bit, a bit to show, before to go back in the dress. The funny thing is that, because of you, they shit out blue! One of Us joked once, as soon as a girl get clean, there’s a new pile of blue shit around. We all exploded in a bitter laugh.

Caring

When We left our valley We brought some of it with us. I still remember myself holding on my lap a bag of seeds and that small box. None of Us could guess what there was inside, and I remember still -I was so little! - their face when I finally burst out: Our queen the bee! We where then in the train and We didn’t know how our city looked like yet. We left our valley because it never was Our valley at the end, I thought it was ok because We where there, and we spoke our language and eat our things, but then there was this other place, and that was ours from the beginning. And then to take care of the field and the animal as we liked to, that didn’t work anymore, not as We liked. The cousins left and We left as well.
They speak our language in our city, and they eat our food, but they don’t have our valley. They give us a job and a little room — so little! — and we see each other when we can — there are many cities like this, as far- otherwise we talk at the phone. I don’t know when it happened, but we start to think about the valley and we got sad, nostalgia they said, and somebody of our people started with building a little extra room outside the window, just as a garden, as we used to. And we all did the same. We asked the men to build it for us, it’s like a balcony, but between walls. And we have our valley inside. And someone else said there’s no wild meadow without bees and then someone else remembered that bee I had in a box, that’s how all of us started to turn one of our window into a honeycomb. Each of us had his little piece of valley, and if we weren’t so far, it could have almost felt like being at home. That’s how I still live right now — I’m not so little! — , I did the same in my own apartment, and I have my own piece of land. It’s outside the window, I mean, where they use to have windows, and it is like looking out at our valley. You just step on the ladder, and you go through the lace, you see, a bag hanging, and the soil inside, and then you are out. There it’s where we started to plant our flower and where our bees fly to. Then it happened a strange thing, just at the beginning, we used to get the manure for the soil from our old valley, somebody sells it to us — they don’t have horses here in the city, imagine shit! — , and then the horse shit was blue! Somebody said the valley changed, someone else said it’s still our valley even if, and then we agreed. So you can imagine such a surprise — I was so little! — when the flowers bloomed blue. I’ve got a scissor from our family once, and since I’m alone, I have to take care of the garden. It’s not so hard to take care of it. The flowers are there just once a year. I just cut them some days after they bloom, so that the garden keep healthy, and I keep the flower for myself, inside. It is to wait that is the hard part.
It takes a while to knit the lace, and I like to do it good as We use to do, and it’s so important for the bees, and for the birds, and the rain, it’s how We get the valley alive, at the end. But the days are so long and dark sometimes, and you know, there’s not really much light, the bees on one window and that room outside the other… And then the bees start to die because the winter is too long, and I get scared they will all dye, and how do I get then the same, I don’t even have our phone numbers anymore, so I have to feed them. I prepare sweet blue cake for the bees (I’m even not hungry anymore) because they ask for the blue, and they let me keep the valley even if… they say. It’s a bit lonely sometimes, but I sit among the drying flowers and wait. I think, We all at the end look at our valley, each it’s own, and We are together then, and it’s still us and It’s all fine, even if I’m alone. Then they come and get the honey, what do you do with that I say, it’s blue, but they let us keep the valley so… But you come here for the lipstick, and you please stay a second more. I prepared it for you, just pure bee was, from Our Queen the Bess, you put it on please, you look so beautiful, you say you will be even more beautiful with the dress and the plates around your face, and I believe a good girl like you, all the way here just for this, you will get married soon. You say you will work there, and your girlfriends has blue lips too, and you say the pool seams so nice, and the blue on you hair you don’t mind, and you start to like the horses right? You say you’ll be so lucky, you’ll say you will be loved. You are like my flowers, you will bloom blue. And you say they get big houses just because you say yes. And you wear this lipstick, that’s like to say so. You’re such a good girl please stay a second more. The valley, you know, you live there, is not like We remember it anymore. And they ask for the blue, otherwise… Take the lipstick, it’s like you’d say yes. Can you please promise me you will do so?
* Exhibition*

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Ian Farr, 2012.