Spectres:
Architectural Theory as Hauntology

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One Sentence Summary
Following the clues scattered by Jacques Derrida, the essay transfigures architectural theory in a form of hauntology, a lens for revealing unresolved tensions and suppressed presences in space and society.

Abstract
The essay follows the clues scattered by Jacques Derrida, conceiving of contemporary reality as composed of spectres, to investigate the consequences of such a condition on the notion of theory. In this spectral framework, theory is compelled to become a hauntology: a lens through which unresolved tensions, gaps and suppressed presences in space and society are made visible. After briefly surveying the meanings of 'theory', 'spectre' and 'hauntology', the essay analyses two case studies: Peter Eisenman's unbuilt project for West Cannaregio in Venice, and the spectralised suburb of Sanya in Tokyo. Through these examples, it explores how hauntological theory enables a re-reading of architectural context not as a static background but as a dynamic, haunted field. The essay concludes by proposing the return of space as a central concern of architectural theory and practice, demanding a renewed commitment from architecture to engage with what is unseen, excluded or forgotten.

In Spectres of Marx, Jacques Derrida describes the spectre as

the frequency of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible. And visibility, by its essence, is not seen, which is why it remains *epekeina tes ousias*, beyond the phenomenon or beyond being. The spectre is also, among other things, what one imagines, what one thinks one sees and which one projects – on an imaginary screen where there is nothing to see.[1]

Yet, Derrida's book opens with a reference to the spectral uprising in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, where unseen, spectral multitudes, though invisible, make a revolution – real spectres that raise barriers, destroy architectures, and redesign the idea of the city and the future. Following the clues scattered by Derrida, who considers contemporary reality as if it were made up of spectres, in this essay I investigate the consequences that such a form of reality has on the notion of theory, which is inevitably compelled to become a hauntology – a tool that observes reality noting what does not work, what has remained unresolved in a given place, as if a matter that

was not fully addressed had unexpectedly resurfaced.[2] Briefly surveying the definitions of the concepts of theory, spectre and hauntology; then revisiting two specific cases in which theory as hauntology is employed to observe and reimagine the context – Eisenman's project for West Cannaregio in Venice – or to study a place absent in the eyes of the law yet present for the society inhabiting it – the Sanya suburb in Tokyo – I conclude the essay by hypothesising the return of space as a spectral entity with which architecture must once again fully engage, today and in the future.

Theory, spectre, hauntology

Let's consider the classic meanings of 'theory', 'spectre' and 'hauntology'. Theory, from the Greek *theoria*, means 'observation', a speculative doctrine that investigates truth, abstracted from practice, to which it gives norms. Theory is like a machine that, in a continuous cycle, tends to overcome its premises. An irrational theory could be more powerful than the truth and establish a different system of reality, altering the 'conception of entities through which it deals with the world'.[3] Sometimes, even truth is a theory. Religions can be theories, and sometimes theories take root as beliefs. Just because they are believed, they become true. We make them ours. We shape the world in their image. 'Theories', says Federico Soriano,

> eliminate … the contrast between what is true or false, they eliminate rules or even the regulations emanating from them, the individual authors disappear, they even eliminate criticism of the supervisors of theories. And even the place. One theory was not anchored to a time but to a space.[4]

All theories are, in some way, formless architectures of space, floating and operating autonomously; there is a secret life of theories, which are 'like shadows that have lost their bodies.'[5] Theory is not merely the pursuit of truth, but rather research of the blind spots that still persist in the project of the city and territories. As the philosopher Giorgio Agamben writes in his *What is the Contemporary?*, a contemporary person looks at the shadows and not at the lights of the era in which he lives.[6] It is in the shadow that we need to observe, it is in the shadow that we must think and write: the shadow is thus hidden from view and we have lost it along the way. Theory will then look at the counter-histories and counter-events, no longer reasoning about the victors but about the victims.

The word 'spectrum' is Latin, derived from *spec-* (to see), and the suffix *-trum*, indicating an instrument. It is properly the medium for seeing, as well as a fantastic figure or an apparition of something apparently lost. Therefore, theory and spectre share the value of the gaze; they do not concern themselves with a single truth; they operate out of proportion, out of scale, out of time, and out of form; they have the power to alter and can be imaginary. The gaze that architectural theory and the spectre share concerns one of their abilities to deform space, to interrogate it by looking at it without taking it for certain as if it were an unbreakable datum. But the spectre adds to the notion of theory the power to reknit the relationship between the thing observed and society, the life that has pervaded it or that will return to touch it in the future. A spectre veils the existing, lowers its resolution, and does not seek truth; instead, it creates illusions. According to what the sociologist Avery Gordon writes in her *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination,* 'the ghost … is not the invisible or some ineffable excess. The whole essence of a ghost is that it has a real presence and demands its due, your attention.'[7] A spectre is pregnant with unrealised possibilities. And if 'haunting' has to do with a spatiality of 'frequenting', the spectre, like theory, holds space under a yoke and torment. As if imprisoned by an imaginary figure that is always foreign to us, which by nature is itself uncontainable, it passes through walls and prisons, living in an excess of freedom. The spectre has a dual nature: it is invisible but present and active, it comes from the past but its echo from the shadows tells us of the future. In that sense it seems to relate to the sense of architectural theory today and to be a tool for observing and intervening in reality. Indeed, theory can harness the operational strength of disciplines that deal with spectres and adopt their structure. The spectre is omnipresent: it can be true or false, new or ancient, applied to nearby or distant realms. It shrouds and supports reality with its spectral presence, always invisible but also always at work; no place and no territory escape its influence. It becomes a way 'we are notified that what's been concealed is very much alive and present',[8] a form of observation in which every distinction between fictitious and factual collapses.[9]

Hauntology, a notion introduced by Derrida and which is the 'science' that searches for and interprets spectres, operates by observing where something is amiss, or by noticing that something is out of place with respect to the status quo – where the puzzle remains unsolved, where gaps have opened up in space, time and society. These are gaps not so much to be filled with something else, but gaps to be inhabited and thought of as voids around which new futures can be arranged, without trying to replace the given spectre with some material. The spectre observed by such a form of theory indicates both the presence of a specific spectrality that is valuable in itself,

but also a 'problem' of a universal order. For Gordon, haunting

> raises spectres, and it alters the experience of being in time, the way we separate the past, the present, and the future. These spectres or ghosts appear when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view.[10]

Theory as hauntology is entirely consistent with the nature of architecture as a mystical discipline where 'the real world lives and coexists with the oneiric, the surreal, with dreams, symbols, myths, fairy tales, magic' and which must have visions to alter the three-dimensional reality.[11] On the other hand, if architecture believes that theory is a hauntology, it changes its status and mission.[12]

> The problem that the spectre (sometimes just a minor detail, the trace of something that has been obscured) brings with it … "something that must be done" that emerges, when people who were thought to be invisible present themselves noisily and demandingly without giving the impression of wanting to leave, when the relentless future becoming of the present falters, when the present wavers.[13]

Seen in these terms, architectural theory defines the mode of its observation, the lens we place in front of our eyes to see, but also the field of its investigation: the not yet seen. Theory as hauntology takes us back, and in doing so, reconnects the once inseparable but now lost link between itself and society, in view of 'haunting memory' to come.[14]

Design with spectres: Peter Eisenman's project for West Cannaregio in Venice

Unfinished projects, or projects that were never started, extend their theoretical and figurative tentacles into the present, haunting our view of contemporary architecture and urban environments, as well as the specific contexts they were meant to transform. Unrealised projects in many cities, missed opportunities or lost causes exist as ideas, as though they were real but also define an aborted discourse, or a road not taken that could still be productive. The Palazzo del Cinema in Venice, which was never built despite the 1995 international competition in which more than five hundred architectural firms participated, remains a spectral presence, hovering and interfering with the normal course of things when the city turns on its lights. The vanished Twin Towers continue to exist in today's New York, though only as air and cavities. Crimes past and present change our behaviour

in relation to space, or the way we interpret certain places. For architecture, the spectre is thus a real phenomenon that affects its economic value. When a building is haunted, its real estate value plummets. Think of the damned Venetian palace Ca' Dario, or the haunted houses populated only by darkness, dust and harsh lights: spectre-inhabited places often fall out of commerce for decades, remaining unvisited and neglected, at best only pointed at from afar. What is certain is their urban resonance, which undermines the rigid frameworks with which cities, perhaps still entirely within the horizon traced by the dialectic of Enlightenment, are usually designed.

As Anthony Vidler teaches us, it is precisely spectres that drive the advancement of architectural discipline, while what is built irreparably enters the flow of reality.

> Preoccupied with traces and residues – the material of the dreamwork – rather than with the new, writers and architects have increasingly found ways to chart the underground reverberations of the city. In their ascriptions, territoriality becomes unfixed, camouflaged and dug-in, in so many ironic emulations of military and geopolitical strategy; subjectivity is rendered heterogeneous, nomadic, and self-critical in vagabond environments that refuse the commonplaces of hearth and home in favor of the uncertainties of no-man's-land.[15]

Peter Eisenman's project for West Cannaregio area in Venice, the result of a competition held in 1980, can be considered the precursor of using theory as hauntology in an operational sense, and one of the first moments when the discipline of architecture considered the existence of spectres as a real matter. Near the project area, north of the city next to the Santa Lucia railway station, Le Corbusier had designed the new city hospital in 1964. Based on a grid that attempted to replicate the Venetian urban structure, projecting it onto the lagoon by articulating it into new *calli* and *campi* on the water; elevated from sea level by a forest of *pilotis* and designed to grow infinitely, the project was never realised due to the master's sudden death. For his 1980 project, Eisenman decided to restore Le Corbusier's project by drawing it as if it were present, making it a hovering spectre that, latent for twenty years, has returned to make its presence felt, to draw again on the imperishable plane of reality. [Fig. 1] Francesco Dal Co, the editor of the competition catalogue posits that the project must 'regress into fiction' to oppose the incursions of reality, thus giving this movement a negative, indeed regressive, judgment. Eisenman responds by taking 'simulation to the extreme', demonstrating how it is, paradoxically, the greatest power of reality itself.[16]   The American architect's goal

Fig. 1: Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Ovest Project*, axonometric view with the spectre of Le Corbusier's Hospital, 1980. Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, Archivio Progetti Collection, AP-riproduzioni/fot/014/05/3.

Fig. 2: Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Ovest Project*, plan, 1980. Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, Archivio Progetti Collection, AP-riproduzioni/fot/014/05/1.

is to design intransitive objects that 'stand as a potential condition, to pose the question of whether it is possible to create a dwelling for man and an urban infrastructure based on the assumption of an alternative relationship between man and his objective world.'[17]

Indeed, the project area is riddled with chasms dug into the ground 'as a continuation of Le Corbusier's grid, whose points in the area become ideal fragments or ruins.'[18] These chasms strike existing architectures, breaking into them or entering them; others sink into the ground remaining hollow or filling with water that resurfaces from the dark bottom of the lagoon. Still others serve to house a series of 'uninhabitable houses' where 'all the conditions of the real building exist as shreds of a potential condition perhaps pre-existing in the area, of which the project is only a distillation'.[19] [Fig. 2] Eisenman is thus making a statement about the presence of spectres, particularly the spectre of modernism at its peak and its disappearance, and uses a form of theory that does not stop at the concrete place but broadens its observation to include the intangible. His project response continues along the same line, itself remaining unbuilt and in a spectral state, leaving questions unanswered, as if the spectre could not really leave but had to remain there to haunt that part of the city, to redesign it or cast it in another light. The architect here intervenes not only as a ghostwriter of the city but as an evoker of dormant powers.[20] What matters is not the search for a form or an eternal solution, but the desire to make a spectre visible and keep it that way, presenting it to us with all its strength and all its questions, putting an end forever to the value of truth. Eisenman essentially shows us an alternative way to work in architecture and urban planning by basing the emergence of the project idea not on history, but on a forgotten, suppressed entity, which is still a project but is also in a sense invented or cursed. [Fig. 3]

Here Eisenman uses theory as hauntology, involving certain evaluations and changes in the status of architectural design which frees itself and loses all formal necessity; it opens itself to the disturbing events of surprise and trickery; it assumes the task of evoking what is absent and what has been excluded from the scientific domain. As a mode of observation, it becomes a 'way of negotiating the always unsettled relationship between what we see and what we know.'[21] Some questions arise: first, what are the alternative stories that we could and should write about the relationship between architectural design and society? Second, how can we see and then represent a spectre? Third, in what way does a spectre challenge the status quo of the existing? Fourth, we ask with Eleanor, the protagonist of *The Haunting of Hill House*, 'What was here, … what was here and is gone, or what was going to be here and never came?'[22] One of the questions that theory as hauntology asks is, 'What paths [of architecture and life] have been disavowed, left behind, covered over and remain unseen?'[23]

A place disappeared while remaining there: the case of Sanya in Tokyo

There are also pieces of cities that disappear while remaining in place. Not abandoned places, but parts of the city that have strategically undergone a process of spectralisation, which is why we are interested in them – because 'spectralisation' is one of the ways the city grows, and architecture makes its presence felt. This upheaval replaces the late-century financial idea of the city with a 'city of ghosts' that no longer grows through subdivisions and sales, that is, on the paradigm of property, but is organised by spectral presences, that is, people and spaces that, though not visible, exist and act, shaping the city, altering and subverting its logic and image: the spectre is the structure of the city.[24]

Moreover, observing a part of the city that is invisible to the law, but that is present and active, which thus assumes all the characteristics of a spectre, helps to deepen the consequences that the spectre has on theory. In fact, we are faced with a place that makes us blind, that forces theory – which, we recall, still means 'observation' – to see, paradoxically, as if without eyes. Rather, such theory will be called upon to feel, to 'experience haunting', as Avery Gordon would say.[25]   Such theory must truly enter that place made literally of spectres and record its questions, silences, screams and scratches on the peeling walls. We are dealing with a place whose material is a spectre, with all the paradoxical charge that this statement implies, and which thus forces us to believe in something that, as far as we know, is imaginary, unreal, invented, fictitious, and which therefore has never assumed sufficient importance to arouse our attention, always placed in a minor position compared to the certainty of truth. We are dealing with a place that has never had the right to be narrated, that has no history but whose story is that of having become a spectre that hovers and thus somehow exists and asks to be considered. It demands our attention, because within such a place – which interests us not only for the way it has been constructed but in its totality – people still live, and these people are themselves reduced to the state of spectres.

> The picture of the place is not personal memory as we conventionally understand it, private, interior, mine to hoard or share, remember or forget. The picture of the place *is* its very
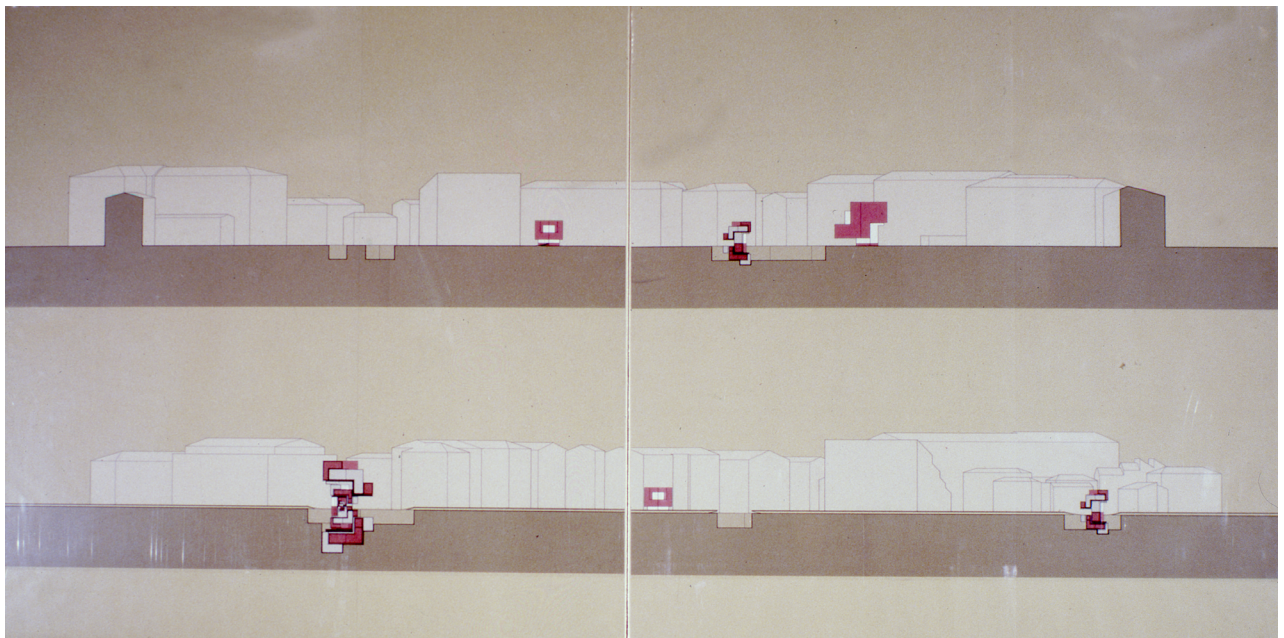
Fig. 3: Peter Eisenman, *Cannaregio Ovest Project,* section, 1980. Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, Archivio Progetti Collection, AP-riproduzioni/fot/014/05/4.

sociality, all the doings, happenings, and knowing that make the social world alive in and around us as we make it ours. It *is still out there* because social relations as such are not ours for the owning.[26]

The spectre of this place does not just alert us to its spectral nature, which in itself constitutes the signal of its re-emergence, but it alerts us that before its appearance, an elision had taken place, and that there was a lack there that, despite its true presence and visibility, was met with indifference or ignorance. Theory as hauntology thus operates within unknown zones, never drawn, never documented, never seen, even if they are perhaps right before our eyes, present in every house, in every building, in every square, and in every city. Its action becomes an act of return. In architecture it can take the approach of investigative aesthetics advocated by Eyal Weizman, emerging from the study of unsolved crimes, even murders. Weizman shows us that the design related to the spectre whose presence can be sensed from traces and imprints, even concrete and violent ones, is not necessarily directed at the reconstruction of a city, neighbourhood or house. On the contrary, it involves dynamics and dialogues related to society in its relationship with space, with technology and culture.[27]

But let us return to the part of the city that disappeared while remaining in place, starting by considering its inhabitants, or at least the social reason that makes it a spectral space. The *johatsu*, translated into English as the 'evaporated', and defined by sociologist Hiko Nakamori as 'the sudden disappearance of a person for an unknown reason', are people who have chosen to disappear, to strategically enter the condition of the spectre because they have lost their job or failed in love.[28] Unlike the Argentine *desaparecidos* discussed by Gordon, these people decide to vanish by relying on companies that help them cover their tracks; these are voluntary disappearances, a social death programmed by people who remain in the same city while disappearing. The phenomenon, occurring in Japan since the sixties, sees about 100 000 people disappear each year.[29] These disappeared people live in a specific suburb of the city. Here in Sanya, space and society experience the same process together, participating in the spectre as a common destiny and horizon. It is in the *other Tokyo* that the evaporated find space for their urban spectrality, in that unrepresentable, untraceable city, which is deliberately made to disappear from maps. Certainly, the project is designed to protect the identities of its inhabitants – in Japan, privacy laws are strict – but also, and above all, to avoid altering the mainstream image of the metropolis:

Garbage collection services in the area improved, a few more "modern" flop-houses were built, and the notorious word "Sanya" was removed from the city map. Today, only the more poetic of the area's ancient titles remain, contrasting oddly with the reality they identify: "Street of Pure Waters", "Bridge of Tears", "Jewel Princess Park".[30]

The project of spectralisation, or transition from a condition of presence to latency, was carried out not by demolishing the suburb or relocating its residents but by dismantling it and fragmenting it into various other administrative units, renaming it, and distributing its parts to adjacent areas of the city. Thus, the 'city of misery' is seen as divided into parts, increasing its ability to wander. Like a spectre, it crosses otherwise blocked and impassable boundaries. Today, 'outcroppings of Sanya – the place we are discussing – dot the city of Tokyo.'[31] The result is an area within the urban fabric that resists any attempt at study, described as a camouflaged part of the city, in Japanese a *doyagai*, meaning 'city of cheap lodging houses', an unknown area from an urban-territorial perspective, where the population, fluctuating between permanent residents, seasonal workers, and day labourers, peaks, not coincidentally, during the winter season. The book *The Vanished: The 'Evaporated' People of Japan in Stories and Photographs* narrates through stories, interviews and photographs the Japanese city's ability to make people disappear, to render them spectral, a capacity that comes from its complexity, darkness, and even its modesty:

The suburb, north of Tokyo, drifts off to sleep in the icy air, lulled by the humming of the trains. Overshadowed by skyscrapers, this modest neighbourhood is a collection of low houses, deserted sidewalks, and a few unchained bikes leaning against covered cars. The ideal place to hide, disappear, escape.[32]

Here, bodies and cities are neither erased nor invisible. On the contrary, they are present, they do not leave, they continue to haunt, operating politically and brutally.

In the 2023 film *Perfect Days* by Wim Wenders, the life of a sort of *johatsu* is depicted.[33] A modern St. Francis, who was once wealthy but has since chosen the path of extreme poverty, cleans public toilets in Tokyo, lives in a house with a single room, without a bathroom, kitchen, or dining room, a house lacking everything. Even more than in Moriyama House, a 2005 project by Ryūe Nishizawa where the functions of the house are separated from the open space of a garden, in the film the housing programme has exploded across the city: the protagonist's bathroom is a public bathhouse where

he is naked in front of others, his kitchen is a diner in a subway station, his laundry is a coin-operated launderette, his alarm clock is the sound of someone sweeping leaves outside his home every morning, and coffee is served by a vending machine. This *johatsu* lives his chosen and designed poverty with dignity and nobility, giving form to an urban system of empty spaces; the city, in return, nourishes him and provides hospitality. The functions are distant from the true home, but living is brought outside, opening up architecture and reconsidering the city's openness. His anti-heroic urban habits form a political design strategy made up of individual points allied and in constant flux, a kind of non-plan with monumental urbanity where the life and architecture are continuously structured and sustained by nothing other than a spectre.

The return of space

Observing the spectre shifts attention from the material of things to the space that, though less visibile, exists and accommodates us. If reality is a spectre, how should we define the field of theoretical investigation or design? How should we redefine the notion of context if the spectre that informs it, by its definition, exceeds boundaries, renders them fluid, ambiguous and mobile, its presence like a variable field of energy being a 'stain of place'?[34] From a strict sense of context, we need to shift to the notion of space. To quote Anthony Vidler, 'space, in contemporary discourse, as well as lived experience, has taken on an almost palpable existence'.[35] What emerges from *The Architectural Uncanny* by Vidler is the presence of a spectre that hovers and cuts obliquely through the history of recent and past architecture. Essentially, it becomes clear that at the heart of a theory, more than the hard, visible, buildable and identifiable material, is space, which by its nature is intangible and difficult to observe, at most breathable or intuited. If theory is a way of looking at the spectre, then the centre of architectural reasoning becomes antimatter 'where all limits become blurred into a thick, almost palpable substance.'[36] The only thing we deal with is a spectral entity, which for architects is the space seen as a negative of the built reality, which is always missing, always empty, which we cannot in any way touch but on which we can perform operations of observation and transformation. Until now, architectural design has acted through operations on concreteness, to imprint this impregnable fluid with its own position. Today such a way of working is facing, if not its failure, at least its partial inefficiency. Having overcome the form-versus-function debate, the contemporary will be about 'space' versus 'concreteness', with the former term exceeding the latter in quantity, power and quality of use: 'To impute a kind of objectivity to ghosts implies

that, from certain standpoints, the dialectics of visibility and invisibility involve a constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows.'[37] Spaces rather than architectures, open environments rather than closed buildings – this is what the spectre tells us, leading us towards a space 'abject and ignoble in its ubiquity, endlessly invading the protected realms of society and civilisation … "pure violence", escaping time and geometry to affirm its presence as the expression of the here-now.'[38]

Theory as hauntology recognises that our homes, our cities, our places of affection might also be haunted, and that over time, these places – or we ourselves – may encounter entities that bypass the tangible reality. The most illuminated and transparent buildings can conceal the deepest darkness, just as the ancient, shadowy palaces might harbour the purest innocence. The spectre evoked by Peter Eisenman and the case of the Japanese suburb of Sanya, which vanished while remaining in place, demonstrate how 'being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.'[39]

Theory as hauntology lays the foundation for discussing one of the destinies of contemporary design: to engage with the immaterial aspect of its practice, to test its grip on reality. However, this change of course from the status quo involves addressing three points, which I present as open questions. First, there is a need to compose a theory of the spectre, which is currently absent or confined to the domain of psychoanalysis, and to bring together disciplines, perhaps distant from one another, yet capable of forming alliances to establish a new field of study. Avery Gordon offers us a hint on how to write and envision such a theory, by shifting focus from the spectre as a supernatural entity to the spectre as a 'blind spot' of reality, and by employing the device of theory-fiction, where the scientific and the fictive coexist, exchanging roles without necessarily determining a victor between them. Second, it is essential to consider the forgotten stories and suppressed elements of architectural and urban design culture, to investigate and reflect on the alterations that might occur in temporal and spatial parameters when these are reintroduced into the reality from which they have long been exiled. In this context, declaring that space has returned already dismantles one of the major narratives that animates architectural discourse: the primacy of visible matter and concrete construction, in favour of imaginative forces operating on an entirely different level, yet with equal transformative power within the three-dimensional reality. Yet, this this
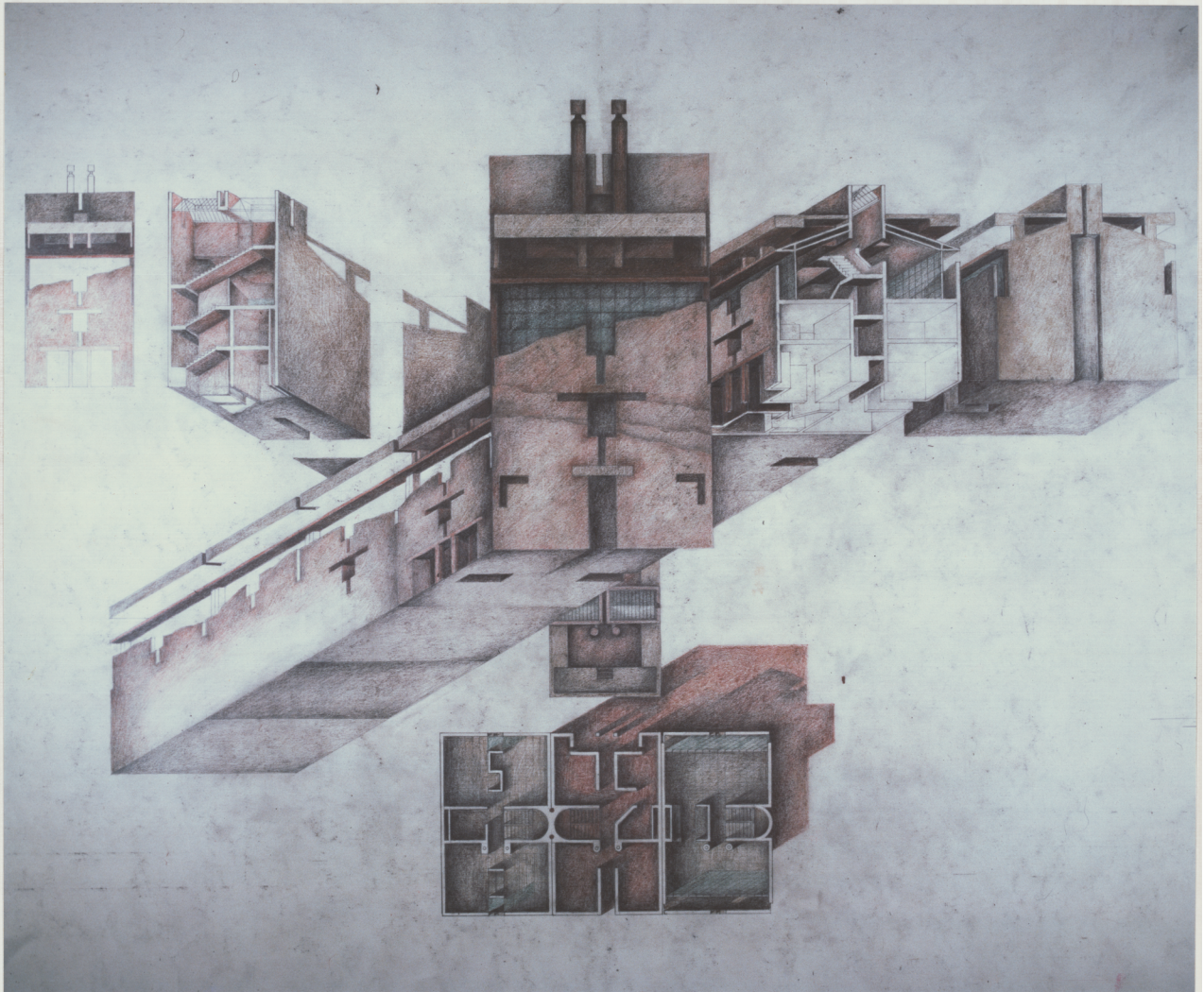
Fig. 4: Raimund Abraham, *The City of Dual Vision*, 1980. Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, Archivio Progetti Collection, Iuav-Ricerche/01/01.
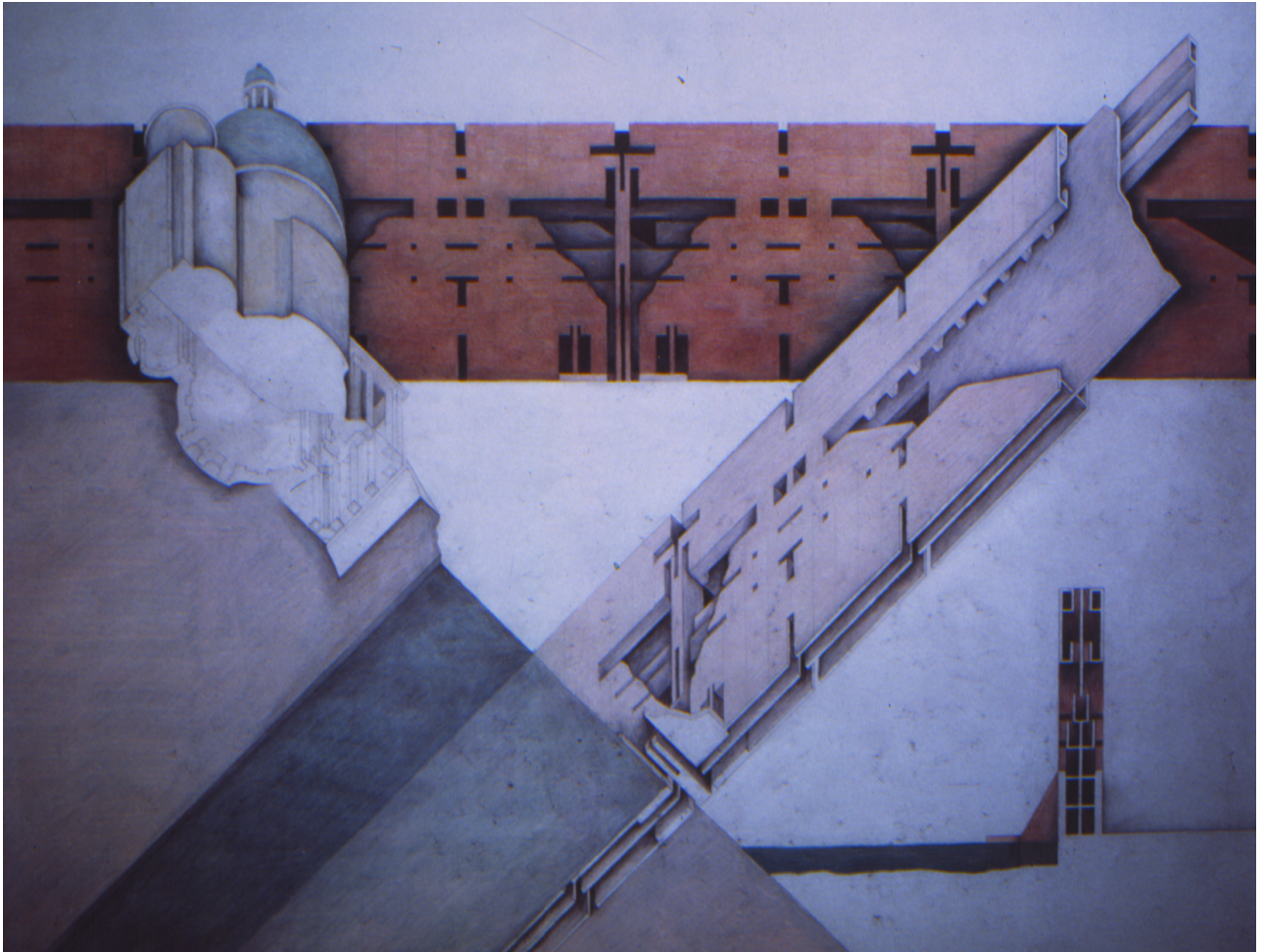
Fig. 5: Raimund Abraham, *The Wall of Lost Journeys*, 1980. Università Iuav di Venezia, Archivio Progetti, Archivio Progetti Collection, Iuav-Ricerche/01/01.

is only one of many possible narratives; others exist that might alter the course of events by resurfacing from a distant or recent past. Third and finally, there is a need to reconsider architectural projects, whether contemporary or ancient, whether they be rooms, buildings, urban fragments, vast territories, or galaxies – not only for their language, which, like a spectre, returns to unsettle us, albeit in a manner quite distinct from Vidler's account, but above all for the absences they evoke, the spectres they conjure before us, and fundamentally, for what they reveal or obscure.

The theory of architectural design thus becomes alternately a *città della duplice visione* (city of dual vision), an optical device used for observing blind spots, by squinting, and a *muro dei viaggi perduti* (wall of lost journeys), a conceptual structure for inhabiting the spectral condition that defines our contemporary world.[40] [Fig.4, 5]

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The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Notes
1. Jacques Derrida, S*pectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994), 100–101.
2. Which, in the words of Freud, gives this idea of theory a certain degree of uncanny: 'uncanny is what one calls everything that was meant to remain secret and hidden and has come into the open.' Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 132.
3. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 39.
4. Federico Soriano, 'Theory', in *Recycle Theory. Dizionario illustrato | Illustrated Dictionary*, eds. Sara Marini, Giovanni Corbellini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016), 612.
5. Karl Marx, *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), quoted in Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, 117.
6. 'The contemporary is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness. All eras, for those who experience contemporariness, are obscure. The contemporary is precisely the person who knows how to see this obscurity, who is able to write by dipping his pen in the obscurity of the present.' Giorgio Agamben, *What is an Apparatus? And Other Essays* trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 44.
7. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xvi.
8. Ibid.
9. 'The "uncanny" is not a property of the space itself nor can it be provoked by any particular spatial conformation; it is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming.' Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1992), 11.
10. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
11. Sara Marini, 'Magic', *Vesper. Rivista di architettura, arte e teoria | Journal of Architecture, Arts & Theory* no. 6 (Spring–Summer 2022), 7, https://doi.org/10.1400/288552.
12. This is the thesis contained, for example, in David Wang, 'Prediction in *theoria*: towards an interdisciplinary range of theories related to architecture', *Architectural Research Quarterly* 10, no. 3–4 (December 2006): 263–73, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135506000376.
13. The quote is taken from the Italian edition of Avery Gordon's book and is not present in the American version. Avery Gordon, *Cose di fantasmi: Haunting e immaginazione sociologia* (Bologna: DeriveApprodi, 2022), 11. The English translation of this and other quotations from the Italian are by the author.

14. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 55.

15. Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, xiii.

16. Francesco Dal Co, ed., *10 immagini per Venezia* (Rome: Officina edizioni, 1980), 22, 25.

17. Peter Eisenman, 'Progetto per Cannaregio Ovest', ibid., 65.

18. Ibid.

19. Vidler writes of the uninhabitable houses as haunted by vacuum: 'They seem not to be houses, or at least habitable; their emptiness suggests that the civilization that once inhabited their strangely configured rooms has long disappeared.' Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 121; Eisenman, 'Progetto per Cannaregio Ovest', 65.

20. 'I was Manhattan's ghostwriter', writes Rem Koolhaas at the beginning of his manifesto to describe his theoretical action. Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1978), 11.

21. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 194.

22. Shirley Jackson, *The Haunting of Hill House* (New York: Penguin, 2013), 56.

23. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 41.

24. See for example Mike Davis, *City of Quartz. Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990).

25. 'The ghostly matter is itself a historical materialism with its own particular mode of causality that does not usually look very much like context, influence, reflection. It looks like a structure of feeling.' Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 198.

26. Ibid., 166, original emphasis.

27. Matthew Fuller and Eyal Weizman, *Investigative Aesthetics: Conflicts and Commons in the Politics of Truth* (London: Verso 2021).

28. Nakamori Hiroki, *Shissō no shakaigaku: shinmitsusei to sekinin o meguru shiron* (Tōkyō: Keiō Gijuku Daigaku Shuppankai, 2017), 66. Translation: author.

29. Missing Person Search Support Association of Japan, https://mps.or.jp/english/, accessed 15 April 2024.

30. Nee Brett, 'Sanya: Japan's Internal Colony', in *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 6, no. 3 (1974): 12.

31. Ibid., 13.

32. Léna Mauger and Stéphane Remael, *The Vanished: The 'Evaporated' People of Japan in Stories and Photographs* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2016), 11.

33. *Perfect Days*, director Wim Wenders, 2023.

34. Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost* Futures (London: Zero books, 2022), 164.

35. Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, 167. Further on, the author suggests the construction of spatial maps: 'a general map of spatial forces that stretch from the building to the city and thence to entire territories.' Ibid., 172.

36. Ibid., 225.

37. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 17.

38. Anthony Vidler, *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2009), 130–31.

39. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 8.

40. The two expressions are taken from Raimund Abraham's project contained in *10 immagini per Venezia,* ed. Francesco Dal Co.

Biography

Alberto Petracchin is an architect and research fellow in the Department of Architecture and Arts at Università Iuav di Venezia. He is part of the editorial staff of the scientific, class A journal *Vesper: Rivista di architettura, arti e teoria | Journal of Architecture, Arts and Theory*. He is part of the research unit of the national research project PRIN 'Miserabilia'. With Professor Sara Marini he curated the exhibition *Giancarlo De Carlo: The Open Work* (2025) and is author of the accompanying book *Giancarlo De Carlo: The Open Work* (2025). His research is dedicated to the investigation of contemporary architectural design theories and forms of authorship.