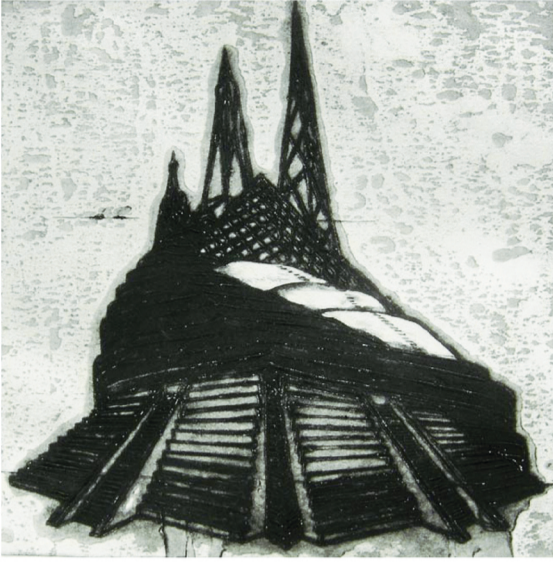


IDLE TIMES



Nicola López, **BUILDINGS FOR A DUBIOUS FUTURE: MONUMENT VIII.**

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Fort, Misuse

IDLE TIMES

of risk, threat, danger, and excitement. This is paean to all that, along with the less sensationalistic joys of loitering and idling.

All of this mutated adaptation is in vogue, and that's fine and very good. To skateboard in a pool that was never meant to be skateboarded in, or to swim in a dumpster that was only supposed to have trash inside, that's an undeniable and righteous kick. A thrill, an epiphany of "this doesn't have to be dealt with how we were taught." Wonderful. A noble motivation, though one that is predicated on accepting the idea that there has to be some kind of reason. In a strange sense that's capitulation. Even with a skewering of a correct use comes a schematic and programmatic bias and the tyranny of outside norms brought to the inside of the misused place. Maybe that's getting a bit too dramatic—and again in general it's all wonderful—but the not-on-purpose and unintentional shouldn't be short-changed. That's where the real freedom lies. Liberation from a reason.

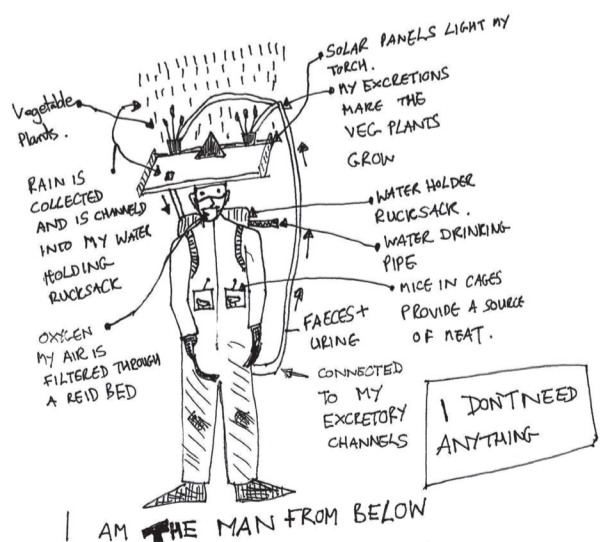
Not to put too fine a point on it but what the abandoned, disused, misused, forgotten, decrepit, or just places taken note of that others are ignoring also provide is a place to do nothing. And doing nothing is very underrated in our day and age. No action—that is the action. Consider it the misuse that follows the misuse. You skate the pool, you explore the foreclosed house, and then you sit and talk in the fading light. Or just silently appreciate the fading light. You swim in the dumpster pool, but you also hang out on the lot after drinking a beer. Drinking many beers, then pissing in the bushes after, you might just find a hundred-year-old washer or nail, or see an untamed alley cat hunting for its dinner. Conversation ebbs and flows, stops, gets derailed, and at its cessation the mind wanders and absolutely nothing of consequence comes of it. Maybe it's an outdated romantic notion but there's something to be said for smelling the flowers, so to speak, or admiring the rust on the forsaken machine, the crumbling mortar on the building, the completely-by-accident arrangement of trash and detritus. Lurking. Bartleby's "I prefer not to." Like sleep, like not buying anything, it's a rebellious act. "Sprandelling," as C. Robbins calls it. The emancipation of not doing anything.

Architecture should be a labyrinth of spikes for unexpected encounters. Why not? So should the nature abutting the architecture, like the mise en scène encountered canoeing down Brooklyn's Gowanus Canal of some random dude practicing his DJ skills at the end of one of

FROM SKATEBOARDING IN EMPTY POOLS to jumping from building to building, staging theater pieces in abandoned factories, and swimming in tarp-lined trash dumpsters, the notion of misuse has gotten a lot of play lately. Reconfiguration, reuse, whatever you want to call it, all these variations on the concept (and plenty more) activate public and semi-public spaces in ways that contradict their original purpose. And that's all great. Using these places and things in a manner that goes against, or subverts, their intended application is inventive, intuitive, exciting, and playful. Inappropriately extending the function of any built environment is all about creative inappropriate behavior mixed with a dash of panache, and possibly that is exactly what is appropriate in the end. But maybe that's not enough, or too restrictive, because though certainly doing something counter to a programmed or former use is novel and interesting, such directed activity leaves out the vagaries and nuances of life. There's always a bit of "mis" in any use, and that's important too: what happens in the spaces in between the spaces, the actions, thoughts, deeds, and accidental moments of true-life poetic coincidence that don't have any particular relevance to what is prescribed. The utility factor is an albatross around the neck of chance,

the streets for nobody but himself. The beats go out over the toxic water for the birds, making for a physical and emotional response to surroundings for no particular gain. Extend the stairs, that is, put another cinder block on one that's already there. Not to build anything, but to have a better place to sit. Eat a candy bar and look at the stars. Marginal space next to the Jersey Barrier. Crystal castles to run up on and slide down. The inaccessible-to-cars section of the parking garage—that's where you go. Kill some time on a Moscow rooftop. Recontextualization on a lo-fi tip, just plain inhabiting but not actually living there.

Too much importance can be put on this impulse to "reuse." There needs to be space left over for just being, for letting the larger forces of decay and the natural order of entropy prevail and give you a place to simply hang out. The dreams of sleep, but awake. Yammering, palavering. Or being quiet. Quiet is also underrated and undervalued. It's fun to have things reconfigured and bring a scene but the opposite also has an appeal. Contemplation. Reverie. Stasis. Hide out, be clandestine, a temporary bum, an aimless vagrant where you're not supposed to be. Avail yourself to what is convenient and interesting, without formal plan. There is so much doing in this world that an undirected and perhaps lazy refutation is also essential.



Charlie Tweed, **DESIGN FOR A SELF-SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM, UK.** A design by my alter ego "The Man From Below" for a mobile system of self-sustainable and safe travel on "the surface."