

Joël Nadeau-Gauthier  
Denis Lahaie  
Vincent Perron  
Jerome Tryon  
Carla Aramouny  
Samantha Lynch  
Thomas-Bernard Kenniff

# Inquiry

# Time

Tiphaine Abenia  
Bihter Almaç  
Bilge Ar  
Alfonso Giancotti  
Carole Lévesque

# — in

Edited by  
**Thomas-Bernard Kenniff**  
**Carole Lévesque**

# Drawing

Samuel Bernier-Lavigne  
Charlotte Erckrath  
Konstantinos Avramidis  
Izabel Amaral  
Kirsty Badenoch

# Dialogue

# Materiality

Chad Connery  
Anca Matyiku  
Anne Romme  
Jacob Sebastian Bang  
Penelope Haralambidou  
Ozayr Saloojee

– in

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Thomas-Bernard Kenniff  
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**Drawing**

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—in Drawing. Inquiry, Time, Dialogue and Materiality

Edited by Thomas-Bernard Kenniff & Carole Lévesque

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# Introduction

**THOMAS-BERNARD KENNIFF**  
**CAROLE LÉVESQUE**

“Architects do not draw to illustrate their works [...]. *Real* drawings are works in themselves, not illustrations of works.”<sup>1</sup>

While drawing is an integral part of architectural and design practices, where it is used by designers to develop their ideas, translate them into projects and communicate with colleagues and clients, drawing is, before any building or object may come to be, a practice of representation and exploration that carries meaning. Drawing—taken broadly as the representation of an idea—is then not simply integral to design but may be understood as its defining practice.<sup>2</sup> Independent of their enabling technologies or technological context, whether executed by hand or using computational tools, drawings are the result of a practice of representation, one that inquires, explores materiality, establishes its own time and dialogue.

In continuation with this understanding of drawing, Tim Ingold points out in his *Brief History of Lines*, that drawings are projects in their own right. That is, drawings, in the context of design disciplines, achieve a status above words or other forms of communication, signification and intellectual reflection. They are no mere illustrations but works in themselves. They call upon established conventions and languages shared by others as well as idiosyncratic forms of expression that locate them within communities of practice. Beyond its communicative task and its links with the professionalization of architecture and design, drawing can be understood as a performance within a practice: a reflexive, coherent and systematic exercise, in which the application, research or exploration of a method conditions disciplinary commitment. As such, and when understood within design disciplines, drawing achieves autonomy from an anticipated object. It becomes, as Robin Evans has argued, a tool for investigation of things outside drawing as well as inside. For it to become such a thing or “an agent in the design”, he wrote, drawing has to be liberated from the constraints of exact representation.<sup>3</sup> He identified the narrow

understanding of the architectural drawing whose job would be to “propagate a completely defined idea, not to test it or modify it.”<sup>4</sup> On the contrary, drawings should not have such responsibility toward direct edification and signification. Far from the production of drawings whose sole function is to accompany contracts between designers and their clients, the drawing practice outlined by Evans is one that turns the mechanisms of representation onto themselves and achieves the status of an investigative tool. This form of drawing, Mark Dorrian writes, is a “site where things are encountered and found, and an oscillation set in motion between discovery and invention.”<sup>5</sup> It is, he continues, a “zone of inquiry, discovery and exploration that entails risk and uncertainty.”<sup>6</sup> Understood and undertaken within such premises, drawings become the means with which to investigate, explore and gain a better understanding of an idea, a condition or a phenomenon, and, as such, engage a form of research. It thus becomes reasonable to think of drawings as antithetical to direct representation and absolute reciprocity with the yet-to-be-built.

The drawing practices this book brings together are situated between investigation, drawing as a research method, speculation and drawing as a projective practice. Within their own processes, each practice attempts, tests, validates and provokes ideas. They conjure and reflect on social and material conditions and are defined by their dedication to better understanding and surpassing the ways in which they reflect on and contribute to the world we inhabit. Situated and contingent on material, spatial and temporal conditions, such practices of drawing are both the means and the end of a production of knowledge and investigation.

In the wake of digitization, a heightened sensitivity to the artifactual and material conditions of drawing and its complex histories has developed over the last twenty years or so. The role of drawing within and beyond the discipline has been questioned and reassessed. This is evident in the profusion of activities dedicated to it: scientific conferences,<sup>7</sup> scientific and archival initiatives,<sup>8</sup> publications,<sup>9</sup> competitions,<sup>10</sup> and exhibitions.<sup>11</sup> Interest in the practice of drawing has grown to the point that it now extends beyond the field of design

disciplines. Beyond the obvious links with visual arts practices, more and more disciplines are taking an interest in drawing as a tool for reflection and projection in the sciences, the humanities, economics and management to name but a few. It is in this context of expanded scope and disciplinary exchange that issues of drawing practice in design need to be addressed with greater precision, particularly in the case of design research, where creation is not in itself the outcome of the research process, but rather its means of investigation.<sup>12</sup>

Motivated by a desire to understand and act upon the world, design research is a process of interrogation carried out on our environments to reveal their contemporary issues, make visible their strata and the interrelations that shape them, and put in place knowledge that is anchored in both the real and the projectual. This knowledge develops partly through representation, and it seems necessary, in light of the growing interdisciplinary interest in drawing, to question and deepen our understanding of the role that drawing can play in design research with respect to spatial, temporal and material assemblages of varying scales, and in the discovery of new avenues of research linked to contemporary issues. Drawing, as the principal method of a design research project, makes it possible to combine knowledge and know-how in a single research endeavour to explore, understand, explain, question, propose and act. Questioning the ways in which we read the places we inhabit, drawing sheds light on spatial, urban, territorial, social and cultural dimensions whose interrelationships would otherwise remain hidden, to reveal the links they forge with the processes that shape our built environment, as well as the influences they exert on our ways of being together.

This position raises challenges with regards to drawing, practice, and research: How do we talk about the ways in which different modes of engagement with drawing resonate with specific subject matters as well as with the discipline at large? How can we identify common denominators and differences between practices so that their encounter and dialogue become meaningful? To answer these questions, this book brings together 23 authors who represent 18 critical and reflexive practices of drawing in design. Through these practices, the ways in which the act of drawing organizes and structures time and space and the ways in which drawing makes certain material conditions tangible, become apparent. By situating it in this way, this book intends to frame drawing as a research practice, one that is both deeply rooted in the disciplinary practice of drawing and openly challenging its limits and conventions. The assembled texts engage drawing aesthetics (spatial, temporal, and material) and drawing ethics (investigating and making sense together) as well as four overarching themes: inquiry, time, dialogue and materiality—in drawing. Taken as a collective conversation on drawing practice, this book offers a shared reflection on the agency of drawing, on its potential to explore issues raised by our built and cultural environment, and on the ability of drawing to support and contribute to design research.

The book is structured around the four themes of inquiry, time, dialogue, and materiality. Inquiry in drawing investigates, digs further into ideas, and seeks to decipher given conditions. Time in drawing may be measured in the time required to produce a drawing or a series of drawings but it may also be measured in the time evoked in a drawing, a marker of time or of practice. Dialogue in drawing takes place between methods, between drafter and observers, between reality and speculation. Materiality in drawing defines a context of production and explores material conditions of the world we inhabit. Each theme is a key with which to link its associated chapters and as such, allow us to consider these groups of chapters as engaged in an ongoing conversation where inquiry, time, dialogue, and materiality act as reference points from which to enter drawing practices.

## Inquiry—in Drawing

Drawing within design disciplines, whether undertaken as autonomous processes or as part of a larger project, is a practice of investigation, anticipation, and speculation. As such, drawing explores, attempts, tests, validates, and provokes ideas, develops proposals (formal or discursive), and ultimately contributes to our understanding of our practices and our built environment. Drawing is an inquiry, incremental and iterative, that engages intuition, hypotheses, objectives, and reflection. It cycles back on itself in ways that challenge initial intentions and premises, that destabilize and invite uncertainty and skepticism as productive positions. What hypotheses are being investigated and what discoveries are made possible through drawing? How does a single drawing or a set of drawings explore or convey an idea, a question or a way of thinking? How does inquiry take shape and move forward in drawing through intent, serendipity or chance?

<sup>7</sup> *Drawing Futures*, UCL Bartlett School of Architecture, London, UK, 2016; *Drawing Millions of Plans*, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, Denmark, 2017; *Embodied Drawing*, Drawing research Network Conference, Loughborough, UK, 2019; *Thinking Through Drawing*, Brewdrawing, London, UK, 2021; *Promenades dans Rome. Assembly practices between visions, ruins and reconstructions*, EPFL School of Architecture and Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Italy, 2021; *Forum. Festival of Drawing*, OmVed Gardens and Glasshouse in Highgate, London, 2021; *-in Drawing*, UQAM School of Design, Montreal, Canada, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Drawing Matter, London, UK, www.drawingmatter.org; Tchoban Foundation, Berlin, Germany; Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal, Canada; TRACEY and Drawing Research Network, Loughborough University, UK, www.lboro.ac.uk/research/tracey; Drawing Architecture project, KU Leuven, Belgium.

<sup>9</sup> Bloomsbury’s *Drawing in series*, www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/drawing-in; Bartlett Design Research Folios, www.bartlettdesignresearchfolios.com; *Drawing Architecture: Conversation on Contemporary Practice*, ed. Mark Dorrian, Arnaud Hendrickx and Riet Eeckhout (London: Lund Humphries, 2023).

<sup>10</sup> One Drawing Challenge (2019–2022) and Vision Awards, Architizer; Architectural Fairy Tales (2015–2020), Blank Space.

<sup>11</sup> Drawing Architecture Prize yearly exhibition, John Sloane Museum, London, UK; *Drawing Conversations | Autour du dessin*, Centre de design, Montreal, 2022; *Chercher hors les mots, la recherche à l’épreuve du dessin en architecture*, École Nationale Supérieure d’Architecture, Lyon, 2023; ArchiVision, Museum for Architecture Drawing, Berlin, Germany, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Lysianne Léchat-Hirt, *Recherche-Création En Design. Modèles Pour Une Pratique Expérimentale* (Genève: Métis presses, 2010).

<sup>1</sup> Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 162–63.

<sup>2</sup> Alberto Pérez-Gómez, “Architecture as Drawing”, *Journal of Architectural Education* 36, no. 2 (1982): 2–7, https://doi.org/10.2307/1424613; Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Louise Pelletier, *Architectural Representation and the Perspective Hinge* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (London: Architectural Association, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Robin Evans, “Architectural Projection”, in *Architecture and Its Image: Four Centuries of Architectural Representation : Works from the Collection of the Canadian Centre for Architecture*, ed. Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman (Montreal: Centre Canadien d’Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1989), 19.

<sup>5</sup> Mark Dorrian, “Talking Drawing”, in *Drawing Architecture: Conversations on Contemporary Practice*, ed. Mark Dorrian, Arnaud Hendrickx, and Riet Eeckhout (London: Lund Humphries, 2023), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Dorrian, “Talking Drawing”, 15.

Drawing by Tiphaine Abenia, 2015.

Drawing by Bilge Ar, 2015.

How are doubts, hesitations, errors, or dead ends managed in drawing? In this section, chapters reveal the investigative nature of drawing in design, in pedagogical experiments, in the reading of sites across time, in the re-interpretation of historical architecture and in the idea of drawing as a thought process in its own right.

Tiphaine Abenia presents a pedagogical investigation into technical drawing through the result of a course taught at the École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL). The *tomography* approach questions established conventions by which technical drawing enables strict power relations between architects and builders. In the development of a *convivial* mode of drawing, students work together on highly detailed section drawings that are assembled in fold-out *leporello* books, challenging the exactitude of drawing, the possibility for technical representation to touch on spatial complexity and the individual agency of drafters.

Drawing by Bilge Ar, 2015.

Bihter Almaç and Bilge Ar reinterpret Byzantine architecture from a contemporary standpoint. Through a series of drawing inquiries, the authors offer an alternative reading based on recent concepts and theories such as “minor architecture” and gendered space, a resolutely asynchronous reading of spatial relationships and possibilities found in the Chora monastery in Istanbul.

Drawing by Alfonso Giancotti, 2015.

Alfonso Giancotti’s series of drawings, *Nuovi mondi*, point to the power of the architecture drawing as an autonomous form of imagination. He suggests that drawing is a way of capturing thought processes, representing objects that may seem spatially and constructively impossible, but are architectural nonetheless. Drawing, in his case, is a poetic stance toward reality, a way of investigating paradoxes, contradictions and conceptual ideas free from the constraints of architectural conventions.

Drawing by Carole Lévesque, 2015.

In search for the origin of the expression *terrain vague*, commonly used to name derelict, abandoned and unused urban sites, Carole Lévesque’s *wasteland-scape* drawings investigate Rome as the city where she argues the first terrain vague might be found. She sees in the Roman Forum a possible archetype, a site where landscape and terrain vague coincide. Her drawing process is methodical: long hours spent walking and documenting to analyze every nook and cranny so that she may find and draw what is left of the original terrain vague amidst the current archeological site.

### Time—in Drawing

The act of drawing is heterochronic, its time stands in distinction to everyday temporal measured dimensions. Lost in drawing, intensely focusing, practice sets forth its own time, duration, and temporal considerations of medium and drawing instruments. Drawings are ultimately chronotopic objects. They embed a specific time and space, those of their production, as well as the drawing’s own projected time and space, those of its representational intentions. These chronotopes (act and representation) overlap in a way that renders the space and time of what it is we seek to

Drawing by Vincent Perron, 2015.

draw indissociable from the space and time of the practice of drawing itself. How is one chronotope embedded into the other? Does one mirror, distort, extend, or compress the other? How does the time and space of a drawing practice influence what takes place within the drawing and vice versa? How do drawings act as temporal markers for a practice or for historical events? In this section, drawing practices address memory and remembrance, historical transformations and morphology, the slippery nature of time as well as time as a parameter in the representation of movement and its experience.

In Joël Nadeau-Gauthier, Denis Lahaie and Vincent Perron’s chapter, drawing bears witness to the disappearance of architectural artefacts and heritage. The act of drawing becomes a ceremonial rite that captures the passing of time or the passing of the artefact into memory. The drawings address our perception of places that are, or seem to be, uninhabited or forgotten to question our ability to engage with such places either through physical forms: an archive, or in building a collective value: a memory.

Drawing by Jerome Tryon, 2015.

Memory is also at the centre of Jerome Tryon’s contribution in which he documents the passage and distortion of an object as it is configured and reconfigured by recollection. Drawing becomes the site of memory, a place for capturing what he calls the *eidetic object*. By considering memory as a site, drawings become tools to expose the thin line between memory and invention.

Drawing by Carla Aramouny, 2015.

Carla Aramouny’s chapter further argues for drawing as a site of memory. Whereas the eidetic image of the previous is fleeting and personal, hers bears the weight of history and the collective as she carefully reconstructs the timeline of Beirut’s Martyrs’ Square. Drawing gives matter to time and, with precision, reveals past instances of the Square and gives presence to its transformation, touching on the political.

Drawing by Samantha Lynch, 2015.

Samantha Lynch’s chapter explores the slippery nature of time in drawing, in which a linear process over time as seen from the outside collapses into a non-linear, inward-looking experience through drawing. She moves us beyond a static view of images to engage with multiple times and the heterotopic nature of drawing as process and as temporal play.

Drawing by Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, 2015.

Thomas-Bernard Kenniff explores the spatial and temporal dimensions of rest areas in the province of Québec, Canada. Starting from a historical overview of roadside amenities, he establishes a series of *chronotopes*, or time-place markers, tied to architectural types. These are then investigated through a series of “accelerated” axonometric drawings whose configuration establishes relays between the static and the ecstatic, questioning how movement, and therefore time, unfolds a relative spatial experience that can be reconstructed through drawing.

Drawing by Anca Matyiku, 2015.

**Dialogue—in Drawing**
Drawing is a dialogue. It is a dialogue that takes place on the page, where different methods, strategies and tactics, different events, whether planned or serendipitous, are used to bring forth conversations between drawn elements, between drawings, between drawings and investigation, between drawings and speculation. It is a dialogue that takes place outside the page, with other people and other work, in conversation and collaboration. As such, drawings make use of conversational gambits to move themselves, subsequent drawings and the project forward. Non-linear paths of inquiry, uncertainty and productive tension between conventions and deviations, orientation and disorientation, completion, and incompletion, are intrinsic to a drawing practice which investigates rather than illustrates. What are the internal and external dialogues of a drawing practice and how do they affect its process? How is a conversation set up and allowed to develop? How does drawing engage with the world and change the way we perceive it? This section presents dialogues between two people over the construction of sites from conversation and exchanges, and in the generation of geographical and architectural figures from the encounter between two systems of notation. It also presents an imagined conversation across time and an internal dialogue undertaken by a single person concerning memory and architectural education.

Drawing by Anca Matyiku, 2015.

Anca Matyiku and Chad Connery (MOTE projects) set up their practice as a conversation between them in which drawing acts as a mediator between two remote sites and their interpretation. Both sides of the conversation, from two different geographical positions, work their way iteratively towards the other site by drawing over transparencies and contaminating each other’s side, a process of *adjective construction*.

Drawing by Anca Matyiku and Chad Connery, 2015.

The geographical underpinning of dialogue, that two voices cannot be simultaneously located in the same point in space and time, is also found in Anne Romme and Jacob Bang’s practice of drawing islands. Islands are the subject of their collaboration, its expression and pretext, its operative *field*. They take turns modifying each other’s work, adding and erasing as needed, shifting mediums between drawing and model and from two to three dimensions. Their work is intended to produce a clash of drawing languages as their different notations combine and bring forth the work’s polyphony.

Drawing by Penelope Haralambidou, 2015.

Penelope Haralambidou’s work moves away from a live collaboration between two people to an imagined dialogue across time between herself and the medieval author Christine de Pizan. Hybrid forms of drawing and representation, moving between historical and contemporary techniques, are used to engage and to bring to life de Pizan’s conception of a *City of Ladies*. This asynchronous collaboration highlights the ways in which drawing can participate in historical research at the same time as it responds to a present condition and projects better futures.

Drawing by Ozayr Saloojee, 2015.

Ozayr Saloojee’s drawings set up a dialogue between the author, memory, and education. Starting from a personal reflection on his Eurocentric architectural education, he uses drawing as a way of displacing knowledge and as a mode of travelling through one’s recollection of places. The dialogue taking place on the drawing sheet focuses on the reformation of subjectivity as it is tied to finding one’s place locally, within architectural discourse and knowledge, and historically.

### Materiality—in Drawing

Whether physical or virtual, drawings are ultimately objects. Their production implies a person’s physical presence, in a room, on a given day, under certain lighting conditions, on a chair, over a table, using diverse tools and media: mouse, screen, scanner, printer, camera, pen, pencil, eraser, ruler, paper, etc. Drawing is made possible through or because of these tools, media, and circumstances, which, in turn, give drawings their specificity. In this sense, drawing is a situated material practice whose conditions, from the (drafter’s) drawing environment to the socioeconomic reality of its means of production, become embedded in the act of representation. How does the physical environment influence a drawing practice, and vice versa? To what extent do tools, media space and circumstances define, extend, or limit one’s practice? In what ways does drawing explicitly and implicitly set up and/or engage critically with material conditions? The practices in this section touch upon the definition of material conditions between the digital and the spatial, the agency of drawing instruments, the materiality of drawn surfaces and their transgression, drawing as an embodied performance and as a collaboration with site-specific non-human actors.

Drawing by Samuel Bernier-Lavigne, 2015.

Samuel Bernier-Lavigne’s work explores the tension between the simplicity of Japanese one-room spaces and their resulting spatial complexity. Using a digital model, a series of simulations dematerializes the architecture of one-room spaces or, rather, rematerializes it into the digital realm. The result is a series of representations that move toward complex and visually saturated fields. Finally rendered onto paper using a drawing machine, Bernier-Lavigne’s drawings point to seemingly opposite material conditions: a physical-digital space and its intangible *aura*.

Drawing by Charlotte Erkrath, 2015.

Charlotte Erkrath’s work investigates the way our tools affect the process and result of drawing. In this sense, the design of bespoke physical drawing tools becomes a method for exploring constructive analogies between drawing and architecture. Based on land survey instruments, Erkrath’s installations engage the drafter’s body in the act of perception and in the space of the drawing itself.

Drawing by Konstantinos Avramidis, 2015.

There is a deep fascination in Konstantinos Avramidis’ chapter with the materiality of surfaces. His drawings reconstruct in precise detail the graffitied surfaces of three significant Athenian sites of conflict and resistance. His work traces an original transgressive drawing, made directly on the surface of a building, then proceeds to draw a second one, this time using the normative language of technical drawing. Both the

drawing surface of the building and the drawing surface of Avramidis' computer drawing are suggestive of transgressive practices that question the materiality of drawing, architecture, and language.

Izabel Amaral's chapter turns drawing into a performance. Here, the body moving through space, acting out geometry, drawing lines on the ground, constitutes the drawing environment. The geometry of architectural icons and ornamentation becomes enmeshed with the moving bodies, spanning the gap between drafting and dancing, between architecture and choreography.

Whereas for Amaral the drawing generates the environment, in Kirsty Badenoch's work it is the environment that generates the drawing. Working from a legacy of landscape drawing, she sets up steel plates in specific locations so that the plates' materiality combines with the elements found on site. The result is part recording, part non-human drawing, a collaboration between her and non-human agents, drawing as an *environmental activity* that is as much the setup process, the duration of exposure and the agency of elements, as it is the final photograph of the transformed plate, on site.

### Acknowledgments

The 18 practices presented in this book were selected from participants in the *-in Drawing | -en dessin* international conference held at the UQAM School of Design in September 2022. The two-day colloquium was held in person within the *Drawing Conversations | Autour du dessin* exhibition at the Centre de design, a major international event that brought together architects, artists, critics, and design researchers over the shared objectives of discussing, sharing and ultimately advancing drawing research. We felt privileged, as fellow researchers, to share this time with the ever-growing drawing research community as we are now to share the space of this book with 21 drawing colleagues from Asia, Europe and North America. *-in Drawing* is the second book published by the Bureau d'étude de pratiques indisciplinées (BéPI) on design research, our design research lab at the UQAM School of Design in Montreal.<sup>13</sup> It adds to a continuing conversation on design research methods and the ethics and aesthetics of representation that was started in 2019 with the *Inventories* conference. It is our hope, as editors, that this book will further establish and confirm the significance of drawing as a legitimate mode of inquiry across design disciplines and beyond.

This book owes a debt to the work and support of many. Most importantly, we would like to thank the authors included here who have agreed to share their practices. The open-access publication of academic research benefits from the generosity of its protagonists. It is a labour that requires genuine commitment. We acknowledge the financial contribution of the UQAM Arts Faculty toward the publication of the book. The exhibition and the conference that led to it were supported financially by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the UQAM School of Design and the Design Centre. We thank Louise Pelletier, Perry Kulper, Michael

Young, Nat Chard and Mark Dorrian for their respective contributions to the *-in Drawing* conference, Riet Eeckhout, the instigator of the Drawing Architecture project and her colleague Arnaud Hendrickx, co-organizer of the project and who co-curated the *Drawing Conversations* exhibition with us, as well as the entire team at the Design Centre. We were fortunate to have exceptional student assistants over the course of the entire process, including Anne Despond who assisted with the organization and running of the conference, Emmanuelle Bergeron and Joelle Kelzi who helped during the event and assisted with online publications when it was over, and Laurent Daignault and Mia Rochon Bissonnette who skilfully designed and put together this book.

<sup>13</sup> It was preceded by *Inventories. Documentation as a Design Project*, in 2021. All projects of the BéPI can be found here: [www.be-pi.uqam.ca](http://www.be-pi.uqam.ca)

# Inquiry

Tiphaine Abenia  
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# New Worlds

## The absolute power of imagination

ALFONSO GIANCOTTI

An architectural project is, by definition, a process operating through the instruments of vision and imagination. As such, the following drawings, part of a research project entitled *New Worlds (Nuovi mondi)*, can be considered as what Jean-Paul Sartre called *analogons*, i.e. mental images of organisms, objects, and inventions that are acknowledged to be unreal. These analogons are never to be built. They are an objectification of the imaginary.<sup>1</sup> They show “structures” elaborated on the principles of immediacy and improvisation and are witnesses to a desire to transpose to the level of representation what we can only grasp on an affective level. By remaining “open”, they invite us to consider space from a different point of view, to reinvent it, to give it meaning, to imagine a future projection that has yet to find or never will find a place in reality.

By questioning our contemporary understanding of architectural images, the *Nuovi mondi* drawings seek to offer a chance to reach beyond our preconception of what architecture is or should be. They also aim to stimulate an understanding of place as an opportunity for the construction of narrative and the unfolding of spatiotemporal events. Similar to Bernard Tschumi’s proposition in his *Manhattan Transcripts*,<sup>2</sup> transcribing a space through drawing makes it possible to hypothesize different ways of understanding the relationship between perception and imagination. If, as Jean-Paul Sartre states in *The Imaginary*, perception can be identified with the act of intuition about a physically present reality, an act that allows us to recognize its discernable content, imagination can consider itself free of this constraint and therefore move beyond the simple evidence of the traces that memory has allowed us to detect.<sup>3</sup> The atmosphere of an existing space, expressed as a mental image, while still referring to a clearly experienced space, can then open up to different levels of knowledge. The atmosphere offered by the drawings presented here exemplifies what Sartre defines as a flow of inexpressible subjective qualities, allowing the usual relationship of consequentiality between perception and imagination to be overturned.

One of the starting hypotheses of this work was to envision the contemporary city as a palimpsest and to consider its inhabitants incapable of astonishment and wonder at what they see. That is, to express the blasé attitude of the “Simmelian metropolis,” where inhabitants are anaesthetized

by the constant bombardment of signals and consequently incapable of developing the sensitivity needed to perceive the difference between things and objects, which appear grey, uniform, and opaque.<sup>4</sup> The construction of these imaginary spaces is splintered, intangible, and unmeasurable, without privileged viewpoints. They are open to sensitive experience, for which the involvement and active participation of the observer is indispensable. The drawings mediate spaces that are evidently impossible but they demand that we adopt an inductive method rather than a deductive one as a means to understand the complex system of laws that regulate real spatial transformation. In other words, to paraphrase Maurizio Sacripanti, the drawings shift the axis from the field of probability to that of the possible.<sup>5</sup> Like a design project meant to translate an ideal into a concrete construction, possible places of the mind play the role of a filter. They become a tool to keep alive the contradictions that are necessary in order to overwrite—in the real world—the palimpsest of the contemporary city.

A second hypothesis behind these drawings is to consider the contemporary city as a sequence of fragments as if it were generated by strategies lacking a perspective of the future, a contemporary condition prophetically described by David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* in the late 1980s. This book, where the British geographer takes note of how the shift of emphasis from ethics to aesthetics, from the collective dimension to the “leaderistic”, and from the supremacy of reasoning to that of the futility of images, has sanctioned the end of grand narratives in contemporary society. Consequently, “micrology” is identified as the only modality of elaboration and communication.<sup>6</sup>

1 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Imaginary* (London: Routledge, 2004).

2 Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (London: Academy Editions, 1994).

3 Sartre, *The Imaginary*.

4 Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”, in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1964).

5 Maurizio Sacripanti, *Città di Frontiera* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1973).

6 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989). In this book, Harvey argues for the need to stop pursuing the great topics of modernity, and rather to reflect on a process of transformation that is achieved as a sequence of micro-stories.

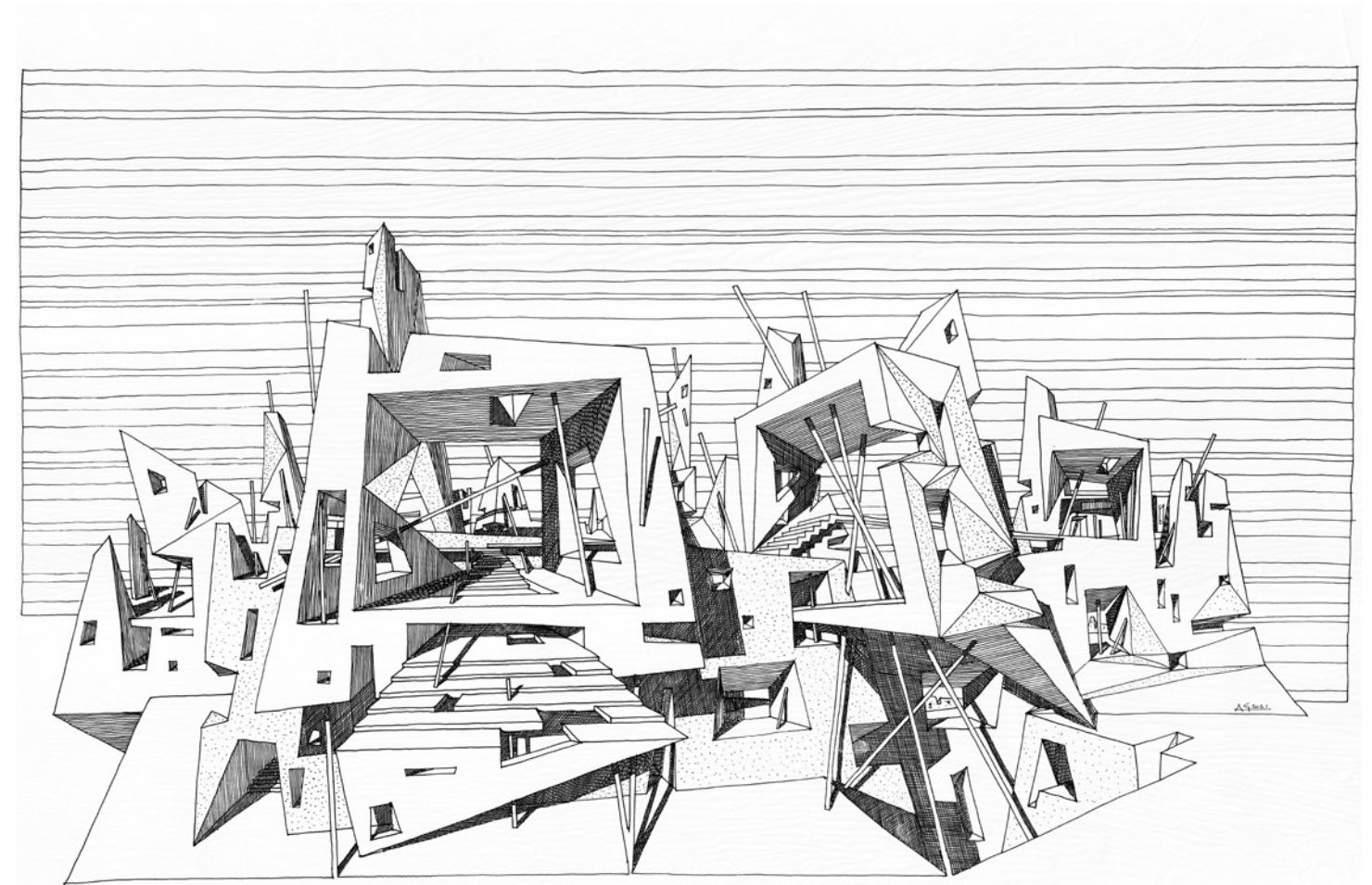


Fig.1 - Nuovi mondi I, 2021, [Ink drawing on glossy paper, 910x580mm]. All drawings by author

In light of Harvey’s thought, the *Nuovi mondi* drawings can be read as a form of narrative micrology: an opportunity to understand, through the analysis and transformation of very small and problematic elements, the rules that determine the modes of change of much larger and more complex realities. This suggestion is also indebted to the Michel Foucault’s analyses of the concept of dispersion, which refers to the absence of any systematic structure and the difficulty of producing solutions capable of restoring a sense of totality and unity.<sup>7</sup> Through design, it is still possible to recognize the value of minimal, fragile and intangible spaces. While these spaces escape habitual analysis, they remain the object of continuous and meticulous monitoring so that they can be identified and, through design, finally celebrated.

As stated previously, the drawings perform the function of analogon by depicting a set of unreal spaces that are based on an awareness of absence as opposed to the more likely potential presence of the imagined space. The spatiotemporal experiences they propose thus become opportunities to restore centrality and foreshadow “open” spaces, understood through Umberto Eco’s concept of the *open work*, that can change in character in relation to the events that take place in them.<sup>8</sup> The character of immediacy adopted in the making of these drawings highlights the reference to rapidity that Italo Calvino speaks of in his *Six Memos for the Next Millennium*.<sup>9</sup> In the

words dedicated to the relationship between physical speed and mental speed, Calvino specifies how mental speed cannot be measured or, again, how it in no way claims to exclude the opposite value that he identifies in delay. Indeed, Calvino argues that speed is fundamental in providing rhythm to a narration, by moving through space and time—as I try to do in my drawings. Thus, these drawings seek to connect elements far apart in space and time in a form that is anything but consequential but is no less agile and casual.

There is an evident attempt in the drawings to visualize limits, barriers, openings from which to view the spaces. The image of the frontier that they evoke here is indebted to two of Italo Calvino’s invisible cities. Thecla, a city in which destruction never begins since it is in a state of perpetual construction, and Ersilia, defined by its web of relationships and intricate relations in search of a form.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the drawings frame

7 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2006).

8 Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

9 Italo Calvino, *Six Memos for the next Millennium, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1985–86* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

10 Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974).



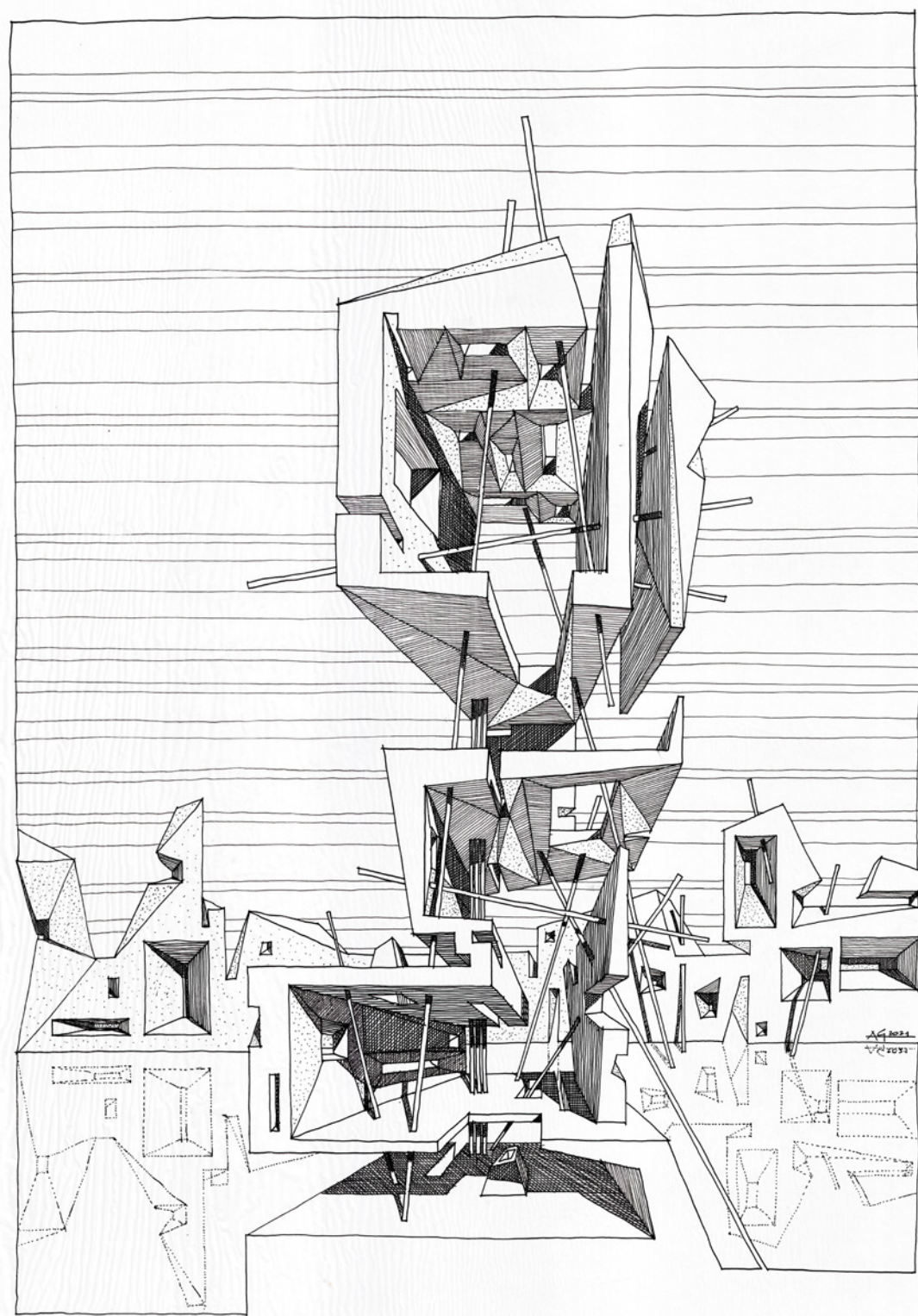


Fig. 2 - Nuovi mondi 2, 2021.  
[Ink drawing on glossy paper, 590x800cm].

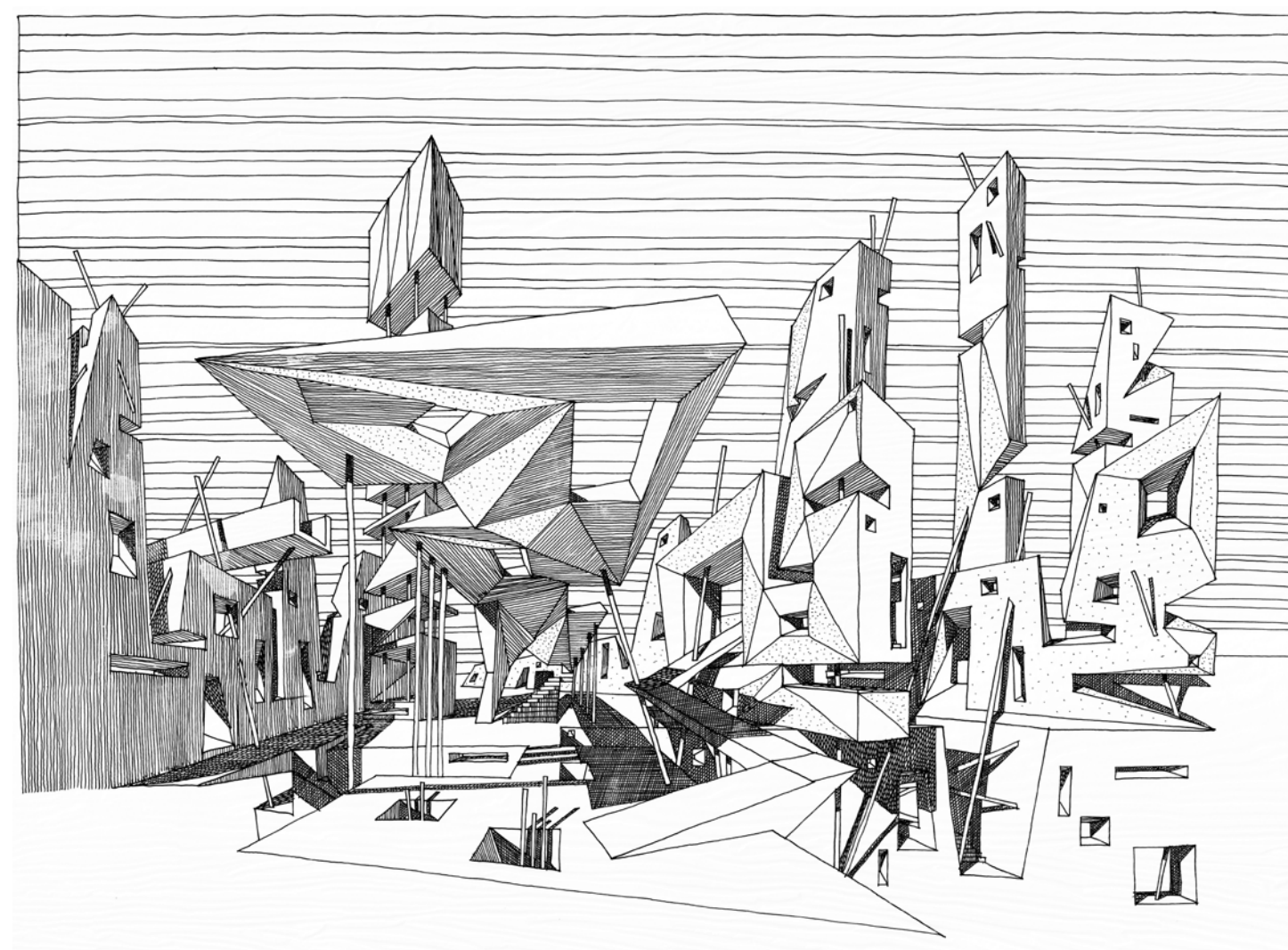


Fig. 3 - Nuovi mondi 3, 2021.  
[Ink drawing on glossy paper, 780x580cm].

openings that invite the viewer to go beyond and recover the pleasure of discovery. They are an invitation to restore the idea of the path, of crossing, of the rite celebrated in architecture when time and movement become the necessary conditions to feel spaces as our own. It is also possible to find in their heterotopic dimension a reason to read the drawings as thresholds, fractures of space that divide two dimensions, crossing between the private and the public (or political).

Finally, within this series of drawings there are two recurring and related elements. The first is the exaggerated asymmetry of the spaces. The second is the presence of the accident, understood in the sense of the creative error. Gianni Rodari ingeniously defines the accident in his *Grammar of Fantasy* as a necessary error which opens up the opportunity to tell new stories, to conquer new, unexpected and surprising spaces.<sup>11</sup> Many of Rodari's poems are in fact created from the syntactic errors that can be found in written texts. The accident turns the drawing into an event, which, following from Gilles Deleuze in *La logique du sens*, acts as a stance towards reality through the use of language.<sup>12</sup> This proposed reasoning on language does not provide any privileged direction, but rather,

in refusing any act of validation, intends to emphasize the need to restore equal dignity to the most diverse references, suggestions, or sources. The drawings here presented indeed incorporate suggestions that do not come from architecture, but from the arts, literature and music. In this sense, Maurizio Sacripanti's point of view may also be helpful. He invites us to read the poetics of an architect as the reason for the survival of language, pointing out, however, how we must clearly consider the fact that architecture speaks of language and not with it.<sup>13</sup> The language of these drawings is far removed from languages that can be used as a guide for the construction of schemes and prefigurations. If it were otherwise, it would constitute a limit within which architecture would be dangerously caged. Rather, it is a tool through which to question the sense or non-sense of space, to try to interpret, in depth, the plural dimensions and conceptual contradictions that characterize contemporary society.

<sup>11</sup> Gianni Rodari, *Grammatica della Fantasia* (Torino: Einaudi, 1973).

<sup>12</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* (London: Continuum, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Maurizio Sacripanti, "Sulla Linguistica Architettonica", *L'Architettura. Cronache e Storia*, no. 230 (1974).



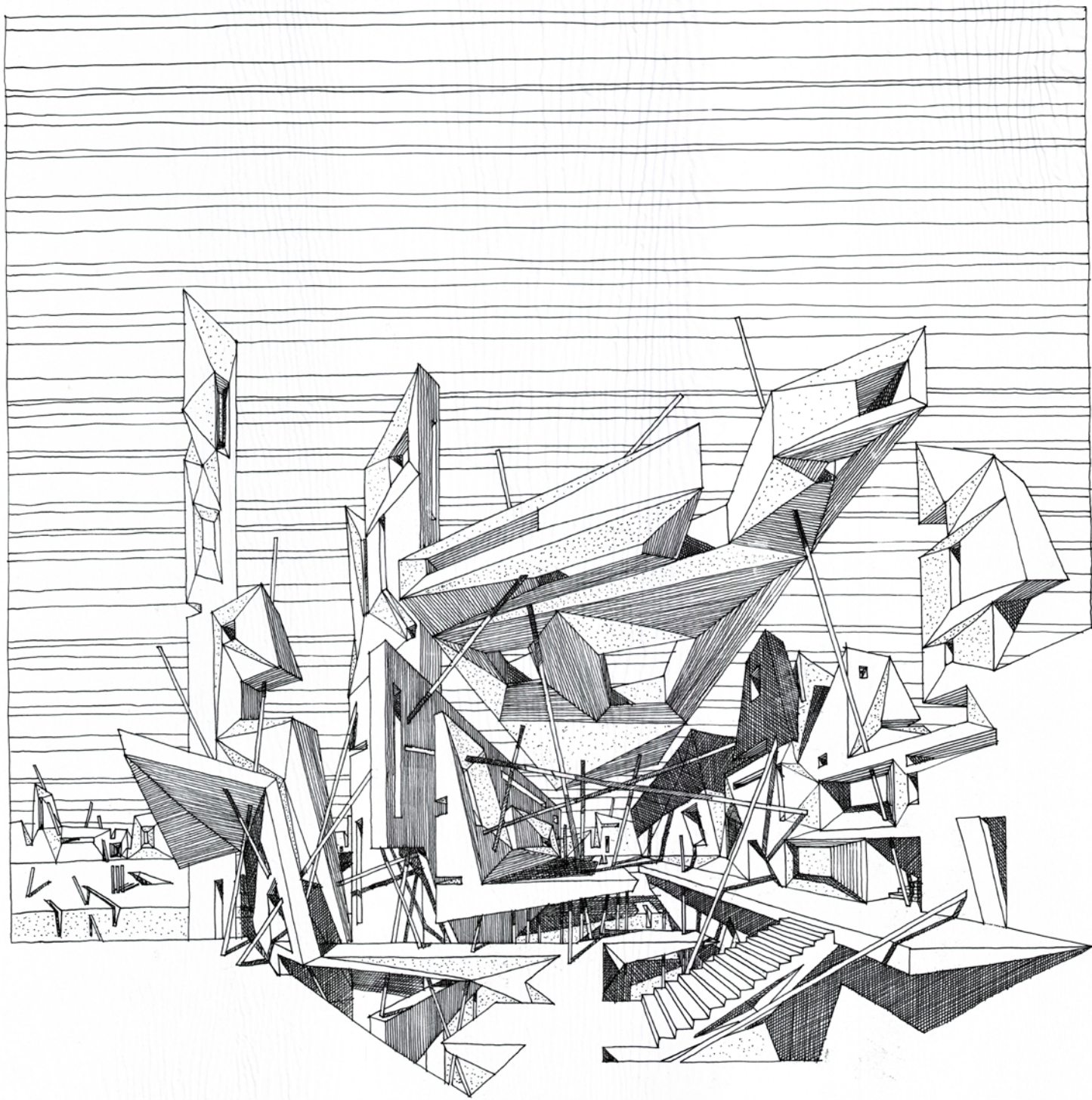


Fig.4 - Nuovi mondi 4, 2021.  
[Ink drawing on glossy paper, 620x620cm].

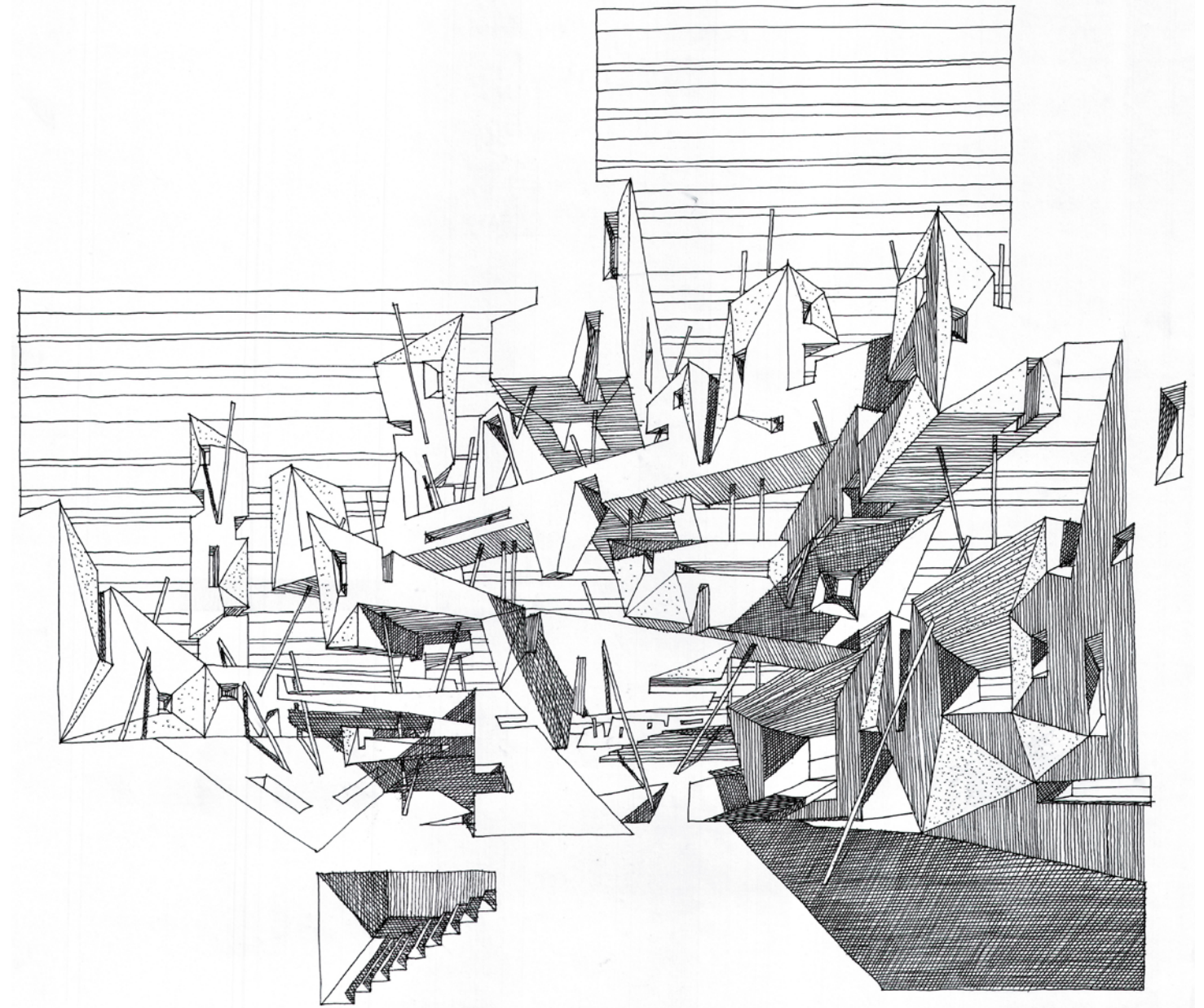


Fig.5 - Nuovi mondi 5, 2021.  
[Ink drawing on glossy paper, 580x580cm].