

“Affect in Ruins”

“Distance and/or Close-Up”

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Distance

- Ruins present us with discontinuity, rupture, and so distance.
- Definition: A structure or object that no longer serves its former purpose.
- Something happened... What?
- War, invasion, arson, obsolescence, decay, disaster, interruption, downfall...
- But speculation invites intimacy.



Pompeii



Chernobyl



Hospital Ochagavía

And/Or Close-Up

- We are surrounded by ruins, including future ruins.
- We live through ruin, as we live through modernity: the two go hand in hand.
- Ruins are familiar and predictable, yet also everywhere surprising.
- We stumble across ruins; they make themselves known through the body.



Harlech



Machhu Pichu



Pino Suárez

Ruination and Negation

- The prevailing tone of “ruin studies”: negation, lack, absence, critique...
- De(con)struction with Benjaminian twist
- Affective intensity: grief, loss, anger...
- At best nostalgia, memorialization... or recuperation, redemption
- What should be, but no longer is.



New York



Falluja



La Moneda

“Ruin is not a negative thing. First, it is obviously not a thing. One could write... a short treatise on the love of ruins. What else is there to love, anyway? ... One loves it as mortal, through its birth and its death, through one's own birth and death... How can one love otherwise than in this finitude?” (Derrida, “Force of Law”)

Ruination and Affirmation

- What shouldn't be, but somehow still is.
- A ruin is above all evidence of persistence, insistence, survival.
- To “see” only lack misses the ruin itself.
- What do ruins construct?
- What other uses have they?
- What other affects do they provoke?



Hiroshima



Berlin



Vilcashuamán

“...On the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on those lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
‘My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’
Nothing beside remains....” (Shelley)

Ruinous Affects: Pride/Shame

- National/religious identity: as continuity or trauma
- Memorialization
- Iconography or fetishization
- Preservation: ruination ruined



Ruinous Affects: Love

- Love/lust of ruins
- Structures laid bare
- Ruins as locale for love: porous; neither private nor public
- Love as a form of ruination, transformation



Ruinous Affects: Play

- Play in ruins
- Holey space
- Space for improvisation, spontaneity
- Structures for which everything is potential, incomplete



Ruinous Affects: Performance

- Performance spaces in ruins
- Museumification and Re-enactment
- Opening up to the public
- Ruins made to perform



“By sneaking into places they are not supposed to be... [urban] explorers are recoding people’s normalised relationships to city space. It is both a celebration and a protest. It is a melding, a fusing of the individual and the city, of what is allowed and what is possible, of memory and place.” (Bradley Garrett)

Ruination and Affect

- Ruins as site of corporeal encounter
- Ruins as bodies, part objects that make us aware of our own fragmentedness
- Ruins as matter without qualification, without defined form
- Ruins as constitutive, open to the outside and the other
- Ruins as sites for building community

