

The term 'Ruins' was attributed to the remains of architectural structures, which have either been deliberately destroyed or fallen into a state of disrepair over time due to weathering and lack of care. Greek and Egyptian temples, roman civic buildings and arenas, Stonehenge and countless other sites were the first impressions associated with the term, true dilapidated structures abandoned, overlooked, taken for granted. On one hand, Europe's oldest civilization (4800-4600 BC) was discovered in parts of Germany, Austria and Slovakia, the Great pyramids date from 2600 BC, the Parthenon and other main buildings on the Acropolis were built by Pericles in the fifth century BC. Their age, their representative meaning, reflects immeasurable value to us. On the other hand we are the witnesses to the progression of the 20th century development of our civilization. Due to the speed of production and invention in society, most architecture, that is contextual to the city, is subjected to different factors of destruction, which changes the meaning of the term 'ruins':

- technologies come and go, leaving rows of buildings unused
- wars are fought on a global scale leaving devastated communities and displaced societies
- taxation and political matters have a power to leave a city or borough in ruins without any physical force

One of the trendy methods to cope with the phenomenon of pre-mature death of cities seems to be a re-invention of the old buildings, gentrification, their complete renovation and re-use. Mostly it affects the industrial complexes in Europe and North American Cities, which are turned quite successfully into ever so happy condominiums and offices. Improvements like biking trails, greenery, ducks – you name it, go into new developments. Regardless of the positive factors (and there are many), this process eliminates the possibility of ruins, the preservation of the history, of 'time travel' forever. Many places are arrested in time by law, such as Williams burg Virginia, yet only to a defined idea not truly reflective of the reality, others are reformed and slowly evolve into a new, unrecognizable entity and thus the original ceases to be.

The thesis subject shall deal with the dilemma of the depiction of the beauty of architectural ruins and reconstruction carried through the necessary discourse on the mortality and immortality of architectural objects and the intentional and unintentional representation of its history. The rational and efficient tendencies in existing renovation architecture shall be balanced through the meaningful physical destruction.

The analytical discourse shall be carried through the ideas of death portrayed by poetry, music and dance. Dance as a foremost representation of the life force in its dynamic qualities defies death and stillness. The ultimate fight with forces of gravity and the seeming morbidity (softness) of movements portrayed through the constant muscular struggle is what lies beneath the progress towards death – life itself. The architectural effort of creating an object that fights time is analogues to choreographic expressions of poetry and music.

Great examples of discourse into death in dance forms are the dance of dying the swan in Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake and Le jeune homme et la mort dance, famous after being performed by Baryshnikov in the prelude to the movie "White nights". Through these dances artists transcend the layer of interpretation of life and death, turning it into a performance of significance.

Another aspect of the research and design tool shall rely on a detailed examination of the Signal Tower building at the Lachine Canal (see site proposal) in relations to its history, site and the city. The attempt into understanding the building and its many layers of purpose and meaning has been approached through one of the course exercises, namely, the Domino project, which sampled the idea of a speculative autopsy of the building. When a medical professional approaches the subject of an autopsy, there is no need for an extended knowledge of the subject, outside from the thorough knowledge of the physiology and precise knowledge of the method. As there is a method derived from years of collective practice, studying of the parts and wholes of the science and establishing the goal; the objective is in determining the cause and manner of death. Architectural autopsy however carries different purposes in itself: to gain knowledge of the subject and gain a different level of subjective affiliation with one. A new goal is approachable with a new method, which in its turn requires an approach itself – a method of discovery and interpretation.



### Speculative autopsy of a building

When a medical professional approaches the subject of an autopsy, there is no need for extended knowledge of the subject, outside from the thorough knowledge of the physiology and precise knowledge of the method. As there is a method derived from years of collective practice, studying of the parts and wholes of the science and establishing the goal. The method is the method due to this very certain goal of determining the cause and manner of death. Architectural autopsy however carries different purpose in itself: to gain knowledge of the subject and gain a different level of subjective affiliation with one. A new goal is approachable with a new method, which in its turn requires an approach itself. This is an attempt to discover a compatibility of the methods by sampling and trial of the established method onto a foreign subject.

### Speculative results of speculative autopsy

Name: Canadian National Railway Signal House

Location: Lachine Canal, Wellington Bridge, Montreal

Description of the body:

3 storey building with evidence of a basement

22m by 8m in plan

29 m tall from ground

Precast concrete panels structure

Abandoned since its function has been forcefully re-assigned to machine

Weathering by age, moisture, graffiti, lack of maintenance

Numerous evidence of abuse of power: scratches, forced window panels

Attempts of cover-up: painted glazed window panels on the levels accessible to viewing from outside

Mismanage: presence of metal racks and other materials, appearing as stored

Contact with trains on daily basis