

History, Variants and Decline of 'patarchitecture in the Oncoming Virulent Amalgamation (Part 1) – Alan S. Tofighi^[1]

This lecture seeks to reexamine the frayed histories that do not lie easily within the paradigms of modernism, land art, or architecture at large. To ease cohesion and avoid endless hermeneutics these works will be filed under 'patarchitecture, a term decided upon for its use and uselessness. 'patarchitecture, while seemingly related to anarchitecture and land art, is closer to earlier conceptual, social, and para-mystical forms found within the historical avant-garde and histories of obsession as form. In this framework 'patarchitecture is to be seen as a strand of non-sense as applied by Alfred Jarry (1873-1907) in the field of pataphysics and its permutations^[2]. Using pataphysics as "the science of imaginary solutions/the science of exceptions" the popular pataphysical dictum can shift to: "'patarchitecture is to architecture, what metaphysics is to physics".

The following indicators will be applied loosely: 'patarchitecture exists in the borderlines of the mind, mass hallucination, and a brutalist non-sense. It is the penultimate amplification of a building, where use as a home/accessible interior space is pushed to the brink of usability before becoming pure sculpture. It does not heed to formal/historical forms of philosophy, aesthetics, or material. Structures are often built by an individual and typically constructed with the readily available. Material/maker do not define it but are inseparable. The impulse for these structures range, but primarily originate from the realm of obsession^[3], a space that oscillates between the intensities of romanticism, breakthrough, the virtual, and a forgeable reality. These are concepts put to extremes that will often supersede the builder, site, and even original intention. In terms of external conditions 'patarchitecture had a period of widespread construction from roughly 1920-1970. This proliferated with a retiring population, the possibility of sprawl/lax zoning laws, a belief in alternate forms of living, and paradoxically existing both outside and within a community. The removal of these conditions presents a clear outline of its demise: the trickle-down nightmare of neoliberalism, militarized homeowner associations, multigenerational poverty, endless work, and an "existing outside" only accessible via affluence. Following this, 'patarchitecture has been overcome by "hoarding". This will be referred to as "virulent amalgamation" to sidestep developing understandings of the mental phenomenon, instead taking the crucial step of focusing on material conditions/history.

To unpack 'patarchitecture three early constructions will be examined, the first being the *Palais Ideal* constructed by Ferdinand Cheval (1836-1934). Working as a postal worker in southeast France, Cheval –like many others before and after– had a banal encounter unsettling enough in its routine that entire memories were triggered and obsession took over. While working the daily 30 km route in the Tournée de Tersanne Cheval nearly tripped in a now canonical moment:

I was walking very fast when my foot caught on something that sent me stumbling a few meters away, I wanted to know the cause. In a dream I had built a palace, a castle or caves, I cannot express it well... I told no one about it for fear of being ridiculed and I felt ridiculous myself. Then fifteen years later, when I had almost forgotten my dream, when I wasn't thinking of it at all, my foot reminded me of it. My foot tripped on a stone that almost made me fall. I wanted to know what it was... It was a stone of such a strange shape that I put it in my pocket to admire it at my ease. The next day, I went back to the same place. I found more stones, even more beautiful, I gathered them together on the spot and was overcome with delight... It's a sandstone shaped by water and hardened by the power of time. It becomes as hard as pebbles. It represents a sculpture so strange that it is impossible for man to imitate, it represents any kind of animal, any kind of caricature. I said to myself: since Nature is willing to do the sculpture, I will do the masonry and the architecture[\[4\]](#)

Cheval would begin collecting stones during his route –moving from pockets, to baskets, to wheelbarrows– assembling the stones nightly. Like Gustave Doré and other cartographers of virtual/liminal spaces, Cheval never actually saw the majority of the animals and styles present in the Palais Ideal. Instead Cheval was inspired by imagery from postcards and early mass-produced magazines seen on his route and mentally compiled them for later use. Though a brute force autodidacticism, Cheval formed a technique using iron rods and composite limestone similar to reinforced concrete to construct the *Palais Ideal*. Merging inherently disposable imagery and forging a psychogeography, Cheval built a structure –beyond given reality– in the virtual and the physical. The timeline is quite standard in that it was worked on obsessively and secretly from 1836 until opening publicly in 1907 and then completed in 1912. At the age of 77, Cheval began work on the final addendum, *The Tomb of Silence and Eternal Rest*. With notoriety came legality and this was prohibited when his plans became known to be buried in it. Cheval then built a satellite mausoleum in the town cemetery completed in 1923 and ultimately occupied in August 1924 at the age of 86. With its abstraction of memory, perception, the readily available, and tracing the effects of objects infiltrating conceptual processes, the *Palais Ideal* would stand a precursor for burgeoning modernist forms. It found early champions with André Breton, Max Ernst, Anais Nin, and Pablo Picasso. André Malraux would commemorate the site as a cultural landmark in 1969 and in a recursive occurrence the Palais Ideal would receive a postage stamp in 1984 with Cheval following in 1986.

While not entirely concurrent, the *Nuestro Pueblo/Watts Towers* were constructed from 1921-1954 by Sabato "Sam" Rodia (1879-1965). Rodia moved to America from Naples at the age of 14 to live with his brother Ricardo, a miner who would eventually die underground leading Sabato to twice begin a cycle of moving west, starting a family, and delving into alcoholism, while his illiteracy and lack of "skilled" labor created further difficulties. A sober Rodia would move to a bungalow by the railroad in Watts, CA in 1921 with his third wife Carmen, but by then an obsession with constructing backyard sculptures had already begun. As a result Carmen would leave in 1923 and Rodia would

begin extensive work on the sculptures that would become the towers. Rodia –also a student of brute force autodidacticism– concocted a new form of concrete and assembled refuse from soda bottles, railway tracks, mirrors, etc. to construct the 10-story tall towers. In 1954 a complication from an earlier stroke would cause Rodia to fall from a relatively small height but tiring of the increasingly difficult zoning disputes were also beginning to fatigue. Feeling his age of 75, Rodia knew it was time to stop and “quitclaimed” the property to his neighbor in 1955. Rodia took a bus to live with his sister Angelina Calicura in Martinez California never returning to the towers. In a series of very Californian occurrences the bungalow would catch fire the following year in a 4th of July accident cementing the danger the property and the towers posed to the public and demolition plans were initiated. In another purely “only in LA moment” actor Nick King and editor William Cartwright decided to save the towers by tracking the owner, Joseph Montoya, at the local dairy plant. King and Cartwright accepted Montoya’s price of \$3,000 for the land and work to protect the towers began. In 1959 stress tests were commenced and the towers withstood 10,000 lbs. of force before the test abruptly ended when the crane malfunctioned. The support base of the towers –just under 2 feet deep– bewildered architects and study of the towers as an architectural marvel began. Rodia would hear of the new public love of the towers in 1961, four years before his death at the age of 86. The towers would receive landmark status as of 1965 and were given to the city in 1975.

While the first two rest easily within the canon of “outsider art”^[5] the third rests within the modernist canon for a number of reasons, but most immediately due to association absolving the creator from the realm of outsider^[6]. Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), a member of the Hannover Dadaist circle would construct the apex of his *Merz* style in the *Merzbau* from 1923 until it was instantly canonized via destruction in a 1937 British air. Dubbed his “*cathedral of erotic mystery*” the *Merzbau* was built in one of the homes that the Schwitters family owned. Construction continued until it took over eight rooms, even when rented to other tenants while Schwitters lived in exile in Oslo. The *Merzbau* would be theorized by Schwitters in writing but would be crucially immortalized in photos taken by Wilhelm Redeman in 1933. It is through these photographs that the 1981-1983 Peter Bissenger recreation commissioned by Harald Szeeman was possible, adding to its ‘patarchitectural dimensions posthumously. Within these three examples a pattern of obsession, the readily available, brute force autodidacticism, and a working out of a logic/ system, and the also paradoxical nature of camouflage are unifying traces that will recur amongst the following subcategories.

Ground Up^[7]

Within this set structures constructed entirely from scratch via non-standard/available material are examined. Located in an unincorporated plot in the Miami-Dade County area the *Coral Castle* (1923-1951) created by Edward Leedskalnin (1887-1951) is a megalithic dwelling of speculative means. Leedskalnin –a Latvian Immigrant who left for America at the age of 26 after being “jilted” on his wedding day by his 16-year-old child bride Agnes Skuvst– constructed it from an estimated 1,100 tons of oolite limestone with minimal tools

formed from spare wood and car parts. Standing at five foot one, allegedly stricken with tuberculosis, and living in isolation, Leedskalnin is often depicted as a bereaved figure using abject sorrow to construct the entirety of the site in an act of atonement and memorial to Skuvst who he nicknamed "Sweet Sixteen".

With a diet consisting entirely of crackers and sardines, working in the secrecy of night, and an interest in magnets to treat the tuberculosis, claims that Leedskalnin had access to knowledge/technology beyond comprehension and even extraterrestrial guidance proliferated. As is often the case, the myths often outweigh the astounding and probable feats. In reality the limestone was incredibly workable as it did not need to be acclimated. Crucially, Leedskalnin also came from a family of stonemasons and worked in Oregon during a logging boom. Despite the ailments, poor diet, and physical stature, Leedskalnin was expertly versed in efficiently moving large mass. This is all exemplified in the *Nine-Ton Gate*, a revolving slab balanced on a gear and truck bearing easily pushed by hand or even the wind.

Regarding the internal reasoning for constructing the castle, references to "Sweet Sixteen" populate [8] the construction cementing the theory to many. However, it has been discovered that Leedskalnin's past was much more chaotic and extreme than presented. Leedskalnin did have a love interest in Hermine Lusiš –only two years her senior as opposed to the 10 of Skuvst– but Lusiš' family had a dowry which Leedskalnin could not afford. In terms of immigration Leedskalnin was a member of the Latvian Social Democratic Workers Party and took part in the failed Latvian Revolution of 1905 before fleeing to the United States [9]. Given the political climate and a chance to begin anew it is within this carefully constructed narrative of a downtrodden schlub working to win over Skuvst [10] –the love of his life– that Leedskalnin operated under until his death. This path was undoubtedly easier than revealing his alleged political past. Myth aside, Leedskalnin needed a place to live; with no dominant trade, and health issues the work was necessary. Despite all rationalizations *Coral Castle* was a self-sustainable and cost effective "off the grid" personalized fortress. The last bastion of a complicated and lapsed revolutionary who chose to retire in Florida.

While *Coral Castle* explores a solipsistic universe, Robert Garcet's (1912-2001) *The Tower of Eben Ezer/ The Museum of Flint* (1947-1963) in Eastern Belgium presents a revised history of peace. Garcet, a quarry worker and eventual quarry manager was a lifelong pacifist devastated by WWII who planned to construct a building that would become a center for the future peace of humanity. Built from refuse from the quarry it would consist of seven floors, a series of sculptures, and a museum based on his findings of a revised history in which prehistoric societies had once lived in peace. These findings would be taken from research into historical tracts, intuition, and pareidolic images from the stones [11]. The tower was also known as the *Tower of the Apocalypse*, with *apocalypse* referring to revelation, and not the obliteration of the humanity. Guided by the popular conception of the word "apocalypse" and the intense and violent imagery populating the site, to Garcet' the transcendent message was never received much to Garcet's Dismay,

and sadness^[12]. The site would become a monument to accidental solipsism by way of miscommunication as the public fantasized about the spectacle of “outsider art” and an even more spectacular and orgiastic end of all ends.

In many ways an opposite of Leedskalnin, Garcet was very clear about his methods and goals and would only be misunderstood. Unlike Leedskalnin, Garcet exerted his revolutionary driven mysticism while Leedskalnin retreated and worked in secrecy penning ambiguous texts. Both accomplished their physical goals, but their conceptual goals remained obscure. As shown it is important to view presentation/mythos as inseparable abstractions surrounding where myth can often overtake the intention/perception of the work no matter how concretely one may state the claim.

Aesthetic Amalgamation^[13]

This subsection considers the accumulation and embedding of objects on the surfaces, interiors, and/or surroundings of a building, with materiality overtaking the structure. A permanent process that extends beyond the reach of whatever surface is underneath often extending onto other structures. Unique to this subsection is a uniform method formally executed until a limit has been reached. Returning to France, Robert Vasseur (1908-2002), a former milkman began the *La Maison de la Vaisselle Cassée* (1952-2002) as an impulse. After constructing a spare concrete sink and finding it difficult to clean a process of overlaying porcelain began until every single object and surface was mosaiced over in a totalized network of shards and recurring imagery. To supplement this process Vasseur made arrangements with the local waste management to set aside broken ceramics for further cleaning and inclusion onto the site, continuing the process until his death.

While consisting of *Ground Up* structures it is the method that places *Bottle Village* (1956-1988) within this subsection. After moving into a trailer on a 1/3 acre of land in Simi Valley, CA, Tressa “Grandma” Prisbrey (1896-1988) planned to build a storage for her collection of 17,000 pencils. Originally looking to use cinderblocks but dismayed after totaling the cost, Prisbrey would begin to use her husband’s bottles. This soon expanded to the thousands of bottles from the dump and Prisbrey would create her own cement to build the first house. This would gradually become 33 structures constructed out of a reported 1,000,0015 bottles and other assorted materials. Prisbrey created a complex network of structures memorializing, friends, family, the departed, memories, and objects as well as a guided meditation center. Bottle Village would receive landmark status in 1981 but would be damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. When later asked about her method Prisbrey is quoted as saying “Anyone can do anything with a million dollars—look at Disney. But it takes more than money to make something out of nothing and look at the fun I have doing it”^[14]. In this subcategory an artistic, holistic, and communal drive is apparent unifying the proliferation of refuse into sites that can serve a public space to be experienced in a separate derivation of assemblage.

Money is No Object^[15]

The least common variant. In *Money is no Object*, an obsession unbound by lack of resources take place. Like the other categories –this is a process that does not end with completion– an endless cycle of revision and additions continue until some sort of imperceivable mission is complete, an even rarer occasion. The most notorious and misunderstood is Sarah Winchester's (1839-1922) *Llanada Villa/Winchester house* or *Winchester Mystery House* (1888-1922) of San Jose CA, a site constructed from the hauntings of isolation and myth. The Queen Anne style Victorian House contains in terms of floorplan alone contains 161 rooms, 2 ballrooms, multiple basement levels, an elevator, and one working toilet, a stultifying structure of apocryphal conceptual intent. What is known is that Sarah Winchester was married to firearm Magnate William Wirt Winchester in 1862. They lived in New haven Connecticut and had one child, Annie Pardee Winchester, who would succumb to marasmus a little over a month after her birth. In 1880 Oliver Fisher Winchester would die leaving his only son William as a primary heir but this would be short-lived as in March of 1881 William would succumb to tuberculosis. Widowed, Sarah Winchester would become the primary holder of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company with a 50% stake share, a daily inheritance of roughly \$25,000 a day, and a total inheritance of nearly \$530 million. Winchester –in a deep depression– would purchase an incomplete two-story farmhouse in 1884 and begin her new life in California. It is often repeated that the impetus for this move resulted from a fateful encounter with a medium. There is no record of this encounter or Winchester having an interest in spiritualism, but it is reported that the medium told Winchester that only an onslaught of tragedy would await her. The string of deaths were not coincidental but a spectral vengeance, a unified assault from all killed at the hands of Winchester firearms^[16]. The only thing that could stop or at least pause this vengeance – via an expanding and incalculable phantasmal legion– would be the construction of a mansion for all who ended up on the other end of a Winchester, and on the other plane.

Using the 162-acre land where the two-story farmhouse sat upon construction on the *Llanada Villa/Winchester House* began. Famously constructed without a floorplan, constant additions of logic beyond standard use were deployed. Notable deviations in architecture included: rooms that lead into rooms or walls, skylights on the floor, secret pathways, windows inside the house, staircases that lead to ceilings, doors leading to drops of eight feet or more, and several other trapdoors. In addition to these innovations modern amenities such as forced air, electric & hydraulic elevators, and indoor plumbing were pioneered in the house. It is claimed that Winchester had nightly seances to commune with the departed to ask what was to be built next, but this was denied by her primary nurse Henrietta Severs. Following this belief, it is often claimed that Winchester used the secret pathways to evade ghosts and slept in a different room every night. However, subscribing to the logic of phantoms –as relatively omnipresent and noncorporeal beings– a trap door, wall, or labyrinth would do little to stop them and the logic falls apart immediately. As the conceptual architect of the house, Winchester understood the central pathway design, but it remains largely unnavigable by anyone

else. It is adorned with windows and glasswork that were a favorite of Winchesters such as tiffany glass and Spiderweb windows.[17] The “strangeness” of indoor windows relates to the other “strange” features of the house, the numerous sinks. Both of these anomalies relate to Winchester’s interest in gardening, which became a modular indoor activity aided by access to water and the 52 skylights and 10,000 windows. Standing 4 ft 10, Winchester also suffered from arthritis and had stairs of odd height designed to accompany minimal movement and most likely used the secret passageways for minimal navigation due to said ailments. It should also be stated that construction was not continuous, and months would be construction free as documented in her letters. Fully aware of the anomalous demands, Winchester paid construction workers three times the average wage and gave lump sums to her favorite workers, including many in her will and even purchasing homes for workers. Winchester also created the *Winchester Society for Tuberculosis* at the Yale New Haven Medical School and was a secret donor to orphanages and other anonymous causes. Winchester would die in her sleep in September 5, 1922 due to heart failure and would leave her estate to her niece. It is around this period where the rumors of the haunting most likely originate: Due to the floor plans –and the damage from the 1908 earthquake– the mansion was virtually worthless. The *Winchester House* would be leased and sold to John and Mayme Brown. Former Carnival workers, seeking to build an early wooden roller coast on the grounds, decades long rumors and local interest dominate, and the Browns would open the house for tours in 1923, just five months after Winchester’s death[18]. Overall, Winchester was a staunchly independent, solitary, and driven. With no interest in continuing with high society life or remarrying, but experimenting with design, gardening, and new technological innovations, Winchester was much more abnormal and radical than the vision of a woman plagued by death and a future of being tormented by wraiths beyond her own control. It is in this form that a haunting from the future was performed to instill a narrative of guilt and fear perhaps to easily to exorcise the guilt of living on the fruits of expansion that would only continue.

External Application[19]

By nature, ‘patarchitecture exists beyond immediately perceivable concepts/logic, *External Application* takes this implication further by which the very nature of the structure informs, implies, or activates a real physical adjustment via the experience of the structure. A twofold process occurs: the intention and arcane formulation, –clear or to be worked out by the builder– exists as a process subliminal to the nature of the site itself. A resultant arena for experiencing and conceiving new forms of mental and physical rigor/ rejuvenation further expand once the true intention is known, either by deduction or didactically informed. As notable and inversely as misunderstood as the *Winchester House* is George Van Tassel’s (1910-1978) *Integratron* (1957-1978). The story of the *Integratron* is one that begins with another ‘patarchitect structure, Frank Critzer (1886-1942) and his house under *Giant Rock* (1931) in Landers CA. Critzer would produce a mining permit of sorts and take claim to the surrounding land gaining incorrectly gaining a reputation as a loner, and a hermit, a fact disputed by Critzer’s building of roads

and a landing strip for visitors. Critzer –a naturalized citizen from Virginia– was eventually surveilled by the FBI in the mid 30's as he was purported to be a German spy, a suspicion made all the worse with his homebuilt radio communication setup peering from the rocks and a stockpile of dynamite kept everywhere in his house. Things escalated fatally when police came to take him in for interrogation on July 25, 1942 due to reports of stolen dynamite[20]. Noticing they were Riverside officers out of jurisdiction as well as operating on wrongful charges refused to let them into his home under giant rock. When they couldn't get the door open they threw in a smoke grenade igniting the dynamite inside and killing Critzer immediately. This is according to his friend George Van Tassel, but it would officially be reported that Critzer was the aggressor in the papers. The alleged stolen dynamite would also be found shortly after in Joshua Tree.

In 1947 Van Tassel officially managed to get the deed to Critzer's land and the Van Tassel's moved to Giant Rock opening a small hotel in the area. Van Tassel had some sort of background in the aerospace industry, which is not uncommon in Southern California but may have an influence on his interests. In 1953 Van Tassel began weekly meditations in the house under Giant Rock and would receive communications with "Venusians". These "Space Brothers" –Lutbunn, Locktopar, Clatu, Molca, and the ever present Ashtar– would feature in a series of popular books popularizing the "Contactee Movement"[21]. In 1953 Van Tassel would claim communion with a captain by the name of *Solganda* who would describe and instruct on the method of constructing a life extension healing device with time travel and anti-gravitational properties which would soon be known by its iconic silhouette and name, *The Integratron*. As the contactee movement expanded, Van Tassel founded the publication *The Proceedings of the College of Universal Wisdom* in which donations were sent back to fund the construction of the Integratron[22]. Prior and throughout the construction of the Integratron, the legendary but scarcely documented *Giant Rock Spacecraft Conventions* would take place from 1953-1978 with a peak in 1959 boasting 11,000 visitors to the event.

Physically the *Integratron* has a diameter of 55 ft and a height of 38 ft and is skeletally held up by a wooden structure of interlocking parts and dowels as opposed to nails. Structurally encased in plywood, fiberglass, and cement the *Integratron* was designed to survive expansion from the extreme heat, cold, and sudden contractions of wet and dry conditions typical in the California desert. The Integratron is also outfitted with 64 aluminum panels dubbed the "static collectors" to capture resultant electromagnetic energy in order power the *Integratron* to spin, a function Van Tassel would never complete. However, the *Integratron* –due to its ceiling, wood paneling, and overall construction– is capable of rare acoustic properties in which a sound projected onto one side of the dome can transmit smoothly to the other side of the dome creating strange and disorienting effects. Van Tassel would die of a sudden heart attack in 1978 and by the late 1970's the message of universal love and utopia perished under the heat death political and sociological shifts. The era of intergalactic unity was replaced by paranoia, distrust, and disinformation purveyed by the Air force, the true believers, the hoaxers, and possibly the space brothers themselves as a cottage industry enveloped the field[23]. In

this climate the Integratron was in disarray with no plans for utopia. It almost began a second life as a disco but was eventually saved by fans and friends of Van Tassel's work. The Integratron, in care of the Sisters Nancy and Joanne Karl have worked to keep the Integratron open as an accessible site to reach possibilities external to the self and site with regularly programmed sound bath meditations and the possibility to rent out the Integratron. While the Integratron would never be completed its continuous state of development, the burgeoning lore, and transfixation of the Southern California Desert, the Integratron and Giant Rock would begin to disperse a message of renewal and transformation beyond material and "metaphysical" conditions.

Imploded Interiors/Formal Intervention[\[24\]](#)

Existing almost entirely within the Modernist and contemporary art canon *Imploded Interiors* can be seen as the very use of interiors against itself. Most obvious in its use is Walter De Maria's *Earth Room* (1968, 1974, and 1977-present) in which 250 cubic yards of dirt in a room merge the concept of the outside and the desert plane within. In a similar gambit the work of the anarchitecture group –synonymous with Gordon Matta-Clark– also reduced the use of domestic spaces with precision via the piece *Splitting* (1974) and other interventions abstracting the local up until his death in 1978. Inversely the sprawling total construction of Niki de Saint Phalle's *Tarot Garden* (1979-2002) –a 14-acre site representing the 22 major arcana– contains an exterior totally formed by decades of physicalizing metaphysical/virtual interiors within constructed physical interiors. It is a total collage of embedded materials –physical and virtual– in a totalized network. In these examples what can be inferred as influence from the historical environment of these structures is possible. In the "American" form we see traces of decay in a New York that can only reference the collapsing empires of the still fresh Collyer Brothers and increasing social alienation via architectural hegemony. A space where one can only make space within *fake estates* or oblivion. In the "European" form is a more transcendental and idealized relation where objects populate/coexists within a tradition of sanctioned 'patarchitecture. A tradition of preservation at play against itself.

Infra-grid

Infra-grid designates a phenomenon rather than a subsection: the relative impossibility of 'patarchitectural works to exist despite the intensive and formalized dominance of urban planning, zoning laws, and land management. The construction of a site –that once seen can never be unseen– paradoxically is one that often exists in total secrecy. The most profoundly complex and successful work in 'patarchitecture along the *Infra-grid* is the *Rock Garden of Chandigarh* (1957-1975) of Nek Chand (1924-2015). Developed to meet the needs of Post-Independence India, Chandigarh was developed as a hyper modernist superblock style planned city originally designed by the planning team of Albert Meyer and Matthew Nowicki. Work would end in 1950 when Nowicki died in a plane crash leading to Meyer's retirement from architecture. Le Corbusier would be brought in to take

over and expand upon plans, while also utilizing portions of Meyer's plans without credit. Within Corbusier's method –the totality of the land that would become Chandigarh was documented, planned, and accounted for– a process of total control in which 26 villages would be demolished to form the new planned city was underway. Despite the panoptical nature of Le Corbusier's strategy, Nek Chand –a road inspector for the government– would have enough access to these plans to find a gap within Le Corbusier's cartographical control to begin work on what would be the *Rock Garden*. Beginning with stones of interest, Chand would construct the *Rock Garden* in an unused patch of forest. Chand would then expand from stone into materials recycled from the 26 demolished villages and expand construction on the *Rock Garden* in total undisturbed secrecy. The *Rock Garden* –a 12-acre walled city complete with gardens, a waterfall, elaborate structures, and hundreds of sculptural figures– would only be discovered 18 years later in 1975 when the government accidentally discovered it assuming it was an unused forest to gather lumber from. The workers were immediately confused at the sheer impossibility of scale, complexity, detail, and disbelief that such a site could exist in total secrecy and Le Corbusier's planning. When word got out about the *Rock Garden* –and its impending destruction– locals protested to save the *Rock Garden*, an action that worked and granted its legitimacy and status as a landmark. A remnant of pasts –compacted and reformulated– the *Rock Garden* serves as a counter to the bureaucratic monolithic obsession of Le Corbusier via the recursive resilience and obsession bore through spare parts and time of Chand and the people at large. When Chand was asked if he feared the *Rock Garden* would be destroyed amongst discovery, Chand matter-of-factly states that he was not so much worried about the destruction of the works garden but being fired from his job, a statement that confirms both the process over the object. It is the reality of labor, personal drive, and the brutal material conditions that for the most part motivate a work to be operated on in the camouflage of liminal/non-spaces. A project that if any more overt could damage a laborial stability, a common threat affecting many in the history of 'patarchitecture.

Decline of 'patarchitecture/rise of Virulent Amalgamation

In part 3 of *Journeys Into the Outside With Jarvis Cocker (1999)*^[25] Cocker meets with Michel Thévoz –the curator of the Museum of Art Brut– to ask about the decline in outsider art as the youngest artist he met was already over 60. To this Thévoz responds:

Art brut, is by definition clandestine. It's often only discovered after its creators are dead. But if less Art Brut is being created now I'd say it's because the mass media and cultural conditioning are becoming more invasive and social control is getting stronger. In today's society, you have to go through a bad period in life. It's the period between the ages of ten and sixty when you become a careerist. you want to earn money and you become competitive. it's not a good time for art. When you're old you create for yourself. Society's no longer interested in you because you represent neither a force for production nor a capacity for consumption.^[26]

While this was recorded at the end of the 20th century, economic, social, and labor conditions changed significantly after its airing. Generational notions of freedom and leisure already shifted during the 1970's and again with the arrival of neoliberalism beginning with a full-on war against the poor, the consolidation of corporate and governmental power further limiting autonomy, the end of society via turning families into groups of individuals. Micromanagement and bureaucracy would enter into the lives of individuals/communities and questions of freedom and leisure would come after the liberation of the market. A belief in alternatives was no longer a part of the public vernacular as a "best of all possible worlds" would calcify any external notion. A reality exemplified by the presentation of Ted Kaczynski, the failure of countercultural projects, and the U.S. outlasting the Soviet Union. Contra to Thévoz claim, the Baby Boomers, a generation tied in tandem to the forces of late-capitalism would age and so too would the markets. As a clientele that would never cease to be marketed to, the extension of work would follow continually extending the boundaries of retirement, and work/home boundaries each successive generation. The prospect of retiring would continue to become an impossibility for many after the economic crash of 2008. Further deadlocking generations into poverty/debt and revealing the illusion of "upward mobility" members of older and younger generations would often move back into one household, unless deferred by extending lines of credit/debt. Solutions would arrive via the corporate miracle of the "gig economy" via Silicon Valley where non-contract-based workers would become the norm; demonstrated *par excellence* by app based labor such as Uber. This gig economy would present the power to be "ones own boss" where one could "defining" their hours –a reality in which one could work in half or double the time of a standard workday depending on location– further abstracting the work/home divide. This could only be possible with a mythical end of working class and "the end of history" in which the best of all possible worlds has been solved and liberation can only be solved by self-determination and overworking oneself.

In a state of total financial survival, the appeal and use of cheap objects/food –often bundled and overly packaged– became the dominant financial possibility. Combining this with the continually expanding demands of work –often two jobs minimum per person– time escapes and waste proliferates. In this cycle objects are often collected and held as a stand-in for a now alien leisure time. An over attachment and hope that one day a hobby can even be a possibility. In this abstraction of time and wages bills and payments accumulate to keep up with this dematerialized labor, often resulting in many services such as trash collection, and heating being cut as nonessential. In this scenario objects also accumulate at a rapid and invisible rate until too late. Grimly mirroring Thévoz statement –on the clandestine formation of work discovered post-mortem,– virulent amalgamation operates in the same process of formation and discovery. In this sense virulent amalgamation is the negation of 'patarchitecture and art in general revealing it's privileged access. A potential for art impeded by the continual extension of labor and the mental/emotional afflictions related to this unrelenting diminishing force.

Virulent Amalgamation: Ground Zero/Crumbling Empires

Virulent amalgamation can be further defined a postindustrial condition in which objects gradually proliferate and take full form over a site/life. Virulent amalgamation takes various forms beginning or starting with thriftiness, speculative resilience, collecting, scavenging, art, poverty, and “packratness” in general. After a series of traumatic thresholds or unbound obsession, it can take the form of a fully formed *hoarding* crisis. Once believed to be psychologically rooted as a side effect of obsessive-compulsive disorder, it has only recently been listed under its own condition of “hoarding” in the 2013 DSM-V. Like the increased rates of depression, bipolar depression, and anxiety disorders, etc. these conditions at the very least have a direct undeniable relation to the expansion of the Neoliberal late-capitalist project. To oversimplify this project as “the freer the markets the freer the people” the floodgates to mergers, diminished workers’ rights, the liquidation of the “mom & pop business”, the bringing of bureaucracy and alienation into the home, as well as diminished job security settled in. Virulent amalgamation depends on the possibility to lose everything that one has grown accustomed to. The fear and compulsive need to stockpile to preserve a way of life, mental, physical, emotional at best and brute force survival at the worst are initiatory factors. preserves accumulate –becoming synonymous with preservation and the possibility for a healthy and stable future– despite it being another variable against self-preservation.

Virulent amalgamation began to emerge on a larger scale with the decimation of the middle class and those under in the mid to late 1980’s as increased poverty and an amplified production of goods became the norm. By the mid-2000’s it was widespread enough to receive the abstraction by *Mondo* treatment via *Hoarders* (2009-present) and TLC’s *Hoarding: Buried Alive* (2010-2013). As of 2013, 5-14 million homes are estimated to have been afflicted with virulent amalgamation but given the clandestine nature of virulent amalgamations camouflage the true number is unknown.

The uncertainty of contemporary life and a lack of security make virulent amalgamation a continual possibility. Of course, this can be traced to more extreme cases when modernity, stability, and lifestyle were still in early stages as new money, unaware of their burden would succumb to virulent amalgamation. Two of the earliest, extreme and notorious cases of virulent amalgamation –the case of Ida Wood and the Collyer Brothers– are similar enough to that of other’s afflicted later in the history of virulent amalgamation that patterns can be wrought out. Ida Mayfield Wood (1838-1932) –born Ellen Walsh in England– would leave for New York at the age of 19 to forge a life wholly indifferent from the abject poverty she came from. Taking the name Ida Mayfield – claiming a familial lineage as the daughter of a sugar planter from Louisiana– and analyzing gossip and high society codes, Ida met businessman, politician and *New York Daily News* co-owner Benjamin Wood in 1857. Proposing an affair in a May 28 letter and becoming his mistress, the two would eventually marry when Benjamin’s wife died in 1867. Now a member of the upper echelons of society, Ida would enjoy meeting aristocracy, Abraham Lincoln, and countless other members of the upper crust but the marriage with Benjamin would still offer moments of chaotic uncertainty. A perpetual

gambler, Benjamin would make bets of unmatched hubris, often losing. At one time gambling the *New York Daily News* itself –a bet he won– Ida knew she had to intervene for her own survival. Ida devised the plan that if he won he would split the winnings, and if he lost he would solely take any and all losses, a plan which Benjamin happily agreed to. Benjamin would die in 1900 leaving Ida with an estimated 2 million but due to Ida's own gambit –of investing in Benjamin's winnings and none of the losses– Ida already had the majority of the wealth between the two and would be secure for the rest of her life. Ida would spend a year editing the *New York Daily News* for a year but would sell it ultimately withdrawing from and closing her bank account with a little over a million dollars. In 1906 Ida would become a recluse living in a two-room suite at room 522 at the Herald Square Hotel in New York for 24 years with her sister Mary and daughter Emma. Emma would die in a hospital in 1928, but in 1931 Mary would become ill in the room and Ida was forced to bring in outside help. The room was in a state of disrepair with unwashed dishes, years of trash, and odors building up. Singular to this case the piles of trash bags, pots and pans were stuffed full containing the entire collected wealth of ida. Shortly after this Mary died and the truth of how Ida's life prior to New York, and how she lived was revealed primarily due to a influx of individuals claiming to be family members to inherit a portion of the wealth. The rush to the *fake estates* and the chosen lifestyle of reclusively and hyperbolic frugality/preservation became a tabloid sensation bewildering all who could not understand the fear of returning to a life of crushing poverty that only Ida knew the truth of.

Only a few years and miles away from Mayfield, the Collyer Brothers would also meet an ends derived from extreme preservation. Born into considerable wealth –and able to trace their family to at least 1672– Homer (1881-1947) & Langley Collyer (1885-1947) were the children of a Herman and Susie Collyer, a gynecologist and opera singer respectively. The Collyer's would both attend Columbia University with Homer completing studies in maritime law and Langley pursuing engineering and chemistry. Herman and Susie would divorce in 1919 with the Collyer's staying with their mother. The brothers never married or lived on their own and would inherit all of Herman's possessions after his death in 1923 and their Harlem brownstone apartment after the death of Susie in 1929. The Collyer's kept all the remnants from their parents' careers including medical books, x-ray equipment, pianos, and even a disassembled Model T. Despite the devastating loss the Collyer's still socialized and continued to work as a piano dealer and in maritime law respectively. By 1933 Homer went blind and Langley began to take care of Homer full-time and it was soon after that the Collyer's began to distrust their neighborhood as the white families they were accustomed to left during the great depression and African American families would move in. The Collyer's –in their amassed piles of trash– would create booby traps and tunnel systems within their apartment, a byproduct of their paranoia and their lifestyle. Rumors of the reclusive brothers amassed wealth spread and after an attempted break-in the windows and doors were boarded and they lived in total seclusion in their network of trash, tunnels, and traps. Bills would pile up with services being cut and the Collyer's attempted to generate electricity from the disassembled Model T and retrieving water from a pump at the nearby park. Homer would eventually become paralyzed after being stricken with rheumatism –fearing that doctors would

simply provide drugs to ease Homer's death— the brothers refused medical attention citing their own educational background as appropriate for the situation. On March 21, 1947 an anonymous tip was called in reporting the smell of a decomposing body emanating from the Collyer's house. With no way in the fortified Collyer residence, a squad of seven officers forced a break-in into the house. The task was only possible by throwing out decades of trash in the way until Homer's body was discovered in a crevasse of trash that reached the ceiling. Langley was nowhere to be found and was presumed dead after missing Homer's funeral. 120 tons of trash were in the process of being cleared out post-mortem until April 8 when Langley's body was discovered in one of the constructed tunnels 10 feet from where Homer's body was discovered. It was then apparent that it was Langley's decomposing and rat eaten corpse that the anonymous call was originally made in response of. It was presumed that Langley was on his way to bring food to Homer when he was caught in his own trap and asphyxiated leaving the paralyzed Homer to die of starvation. The Brownstone would ultimately be demolished, and a park would be named in memoriam of the brothers in 1960. Of these two seminal cases many similar hallmarks of the 'patarchitect: a series of otherwise obscure and self-sufficient interests, social removal, camouflage, and resourceful ability are present but only with the encumbrance of fear, paranoia, and a preservation that is so maligned it can only eat away at the bearer.

Compacting Virulent Amalgamation

Virulent amalgamation is not a lifestyle but an extreme preservation method to pass as socially/economically stable. Households insulate to avoid a known or future unknown poverty, quality of life decreases regardless. Composed of *objects of use*, *object of refuse*, and *objects of material use* these proliferate in a system where status and perception shift. Of all depictions of the future the most accurate constant lies with Phillip K. Dick's theorization of "*Kipple*"[\[27\]](#)—excess packaging, old newspapers, junk mail, etc.— in a world of advanced technology and objects beyond simulacral differentiation, the constants of bland jobs, banal occurrences, middle class trends, and waste are central. It is in these routines that ruptures with reality form and change is possible. Returning to the present, a corpulent dualism of late capitalism can be analyzed: AGI as *the mind*, and virulent amalgamation as *the body*. Of course, nothing is ever as simple as a binary. The exchanges and flows of information constantly analyze/model preference, information, and identity while price, selection, and presentation are algorithmically sorted into unrelenting but personalized feedback loops. The mechanized arrival of objects furthers economic exchange in a new affordability as buying in bulk has been algorithmically maximized post-Amazon. In this case the ubiquitous cardboard box has also been maximized being becoming a continual agent of virulent amalgamation. In this accelerated exchange survival is possible but analyzing rupture is not. Finances deplete, and the packaging dominates.

To bring the *apocalypse* home one more time, we will examine the body horror genre, a byproduct of the 1980's as a brutally simplified paradigm. An individual is afflicted by an

unrelenting and unfathomable force beyond comprehension and a merging occurs reducing the body to an abstraction of flesh without control and malleable to this external force. Often framed in a rugged individualist narrative –to resist merging/deindividuation– a protagonist typically chooses an implosive end or passive nihilist acceptance. Instead this will be framed not as the loss of the individual to the crowd but a loss into the conditions of virulent amalgamation. A dissolution of freedom to the passive functions/flows of control which have become alien and unfathomable in a world where no alternative exists. Exemplified in *Tetsuo the Iron Man*[\[28\]](#), a salaryman has an inexplicable series of hallucinations merging metal and flesh. These hauntings are brought on by the “metal fetishist”, the originator of these drives and obsessions. Mental, physical, and interpersonal foundations collapse to the drive to accumulate, this is the metal fetishist’s will. It is a contemporary scenario where one is overtaken by chance alone in a world that offers no safety nets or possibility to explain or rationalize this obsession/affliction, one that occurs in the film purely by chance/bad luck. In these conditions, one is doomed to virulent amalgamation after initiation. The salaryman and metal fetishist fight as they both merge with surrounding objects to survive the skirmish until the inevitable merging of the two into a final corpulent being takes place. The reality of virulent amalgamation is exemplified: isolation and a survivalist impulse culminate in a true body horror as one is completely overtaken by obsessive amalgamation beyond explanation in a wracked chance at preservation. A true abjection, after all, is there anything more embarrassing than being overtaken by things? In an active nihilist “will to power” by the amalgamated being, they make peace with virulent amalgamation proceed to turn the planet into a rusted husk, a final ‘patarchitecture. While a hyperbolic example –and the reality of the material conditions of finances, labor, and deadlock inescapable through an essay or art alone– the first step against virulent amalgamation is to view the condition as a material phenomenon of our time. Analyzing the mechanized flows that suppress obsession and look for spaces of rupture, an understanding can form. Sociality, and understanding alone will not end the proliferation but are key entry points. The task is to permeate and reconstruct reality as opposed to a blockage of life under maligned pretenses of survival under entrapment by oncoming virulent amalgamation.

[\[1\]](#) This essay was originally presented as a performance lecture at Thyme Arts on September 21, 2019 in the “autoslide” format with sonic annotations by the critical band Millions In Prizes. Changes have been made to expand on concepts where time ran out live, and to be presented as an essay.

[\[2\]](#) ‘pataphysics (1893, possibly 1888), Rene Daumal’s expansion of the method (1929) including patagrams, the formation of the pataphysical college (1948), Baudrillard’s hyperreality (1981) and ‘patacritical interrogation techniques (2008) are all important derivations when considering ‘patarchitecture.

[\[3\]](#) My use of the term obsession is not rooted in psychoanalytic discourse but a pragmatist history. As opposed to the intrusively of obsession rooted in a developmental trauma, An occurrence triggers a thought pattern of immediate use correlating moments, memories, material, and concepts creating something not immediately available. The break in repetition is not one of crisis but one of discovery and

generative process. Logic is traced, and a method is followed, as opposed to returning to a prior nonexistent/mythic whole.

[4] Becker, Howard S. *Art Worlds*. University of California Press (1982), pp. 263–64.

[5] My interest in “outsider art” is not within the separation of the institutionalized/academic and the autodidactic/public but an interest in the *outside* as alternate means of production, distribution, and education. Methods which shift as time and histories are formed and/or disputed. This is the outside I refer to not the problematic “untrained, crazy, not an artist” trope that often leads to base and uninteresting conclusions on artistic production.

[6] While this is an often tread topic, it should be stated once again as the line between Schwitters and a figure like Raymond Roussel against a Rodia, Cheval, or even Hélène Smith is one of class, gender, and ultimately community, the last often a retrospective unification to formalize a movement. Literature can often escape this relegation of the outside as shown by Alfred Jarry, Isidore Ducasse/Lautrémond, and Antonin Artaud. In “real time” it is often affluence that can bypass questions of the outside, easing the process of belonging to a community. It is community and membership in one, no matter how transient, that can absolve the status of outside into underrepresented under the blade of history.

[7] See also *Land of Pasaquan*. Buena Vista GA, United States, *Garden of Eden*. Lucas KS, United States, *Salvation Mountain*. Niland CA, United States, *Nin Witt Ridge*. Cambria CA, United States, *Forestiere Underground Gardens*. Fresno CA, United States, *Fish House*. Berkeley CA, United States. *Desert View Tower*. Jacumba CA, United States

[8] This can be seen in the sixteen rays of light on a drawing of the sun, the sixteen bevels in the fountain, the sixteen stairs to the tower, etc.

[9] Leedskalnin is alleged to have fled to the UK joining Peter the Painter’s anarchist revolutions, another figure also shrouded in speculative history.

[10] Skuvst, it should be noted translates into “kiss” in Latvian another sign of a placeholder/name made up on the spot, and even a pun in Leedskalnin world.

[11] This geological revelation is not so different from the later research and art by Richard Sharpe Shaver of the *Shaver Mysteries* fame. A phenomenal exploration in pre-historical cosmology also outside of the scope of this essay.

[12] A similar parallel also exists with the interpretation of the 1995 murals “In Peace and Harmony with Nature” and “Children of the World Dream of Peace” by Leo Tanguma within the Denver International Airport

[13] See also *Flamingo House*. Loma Mar CA, United States, *Beer Can House*. Houston TX, United States, *Maison Picassiette*. Chartres, France, *Trapper’s Lodge*. (destroyed & relocated to) Woodland Hills CA, United States, *Jardin du Coquillage*. Viry-Nouveau, France, *La Casa Formica*. El Cerrito CA, United States,

Wooden Sculpture Garden. Eureka CA, United State, *Miracle Cross Garden*. Prattville AL, United States, *Lito's Hubcap Ranch*. Pope Valley CA, United States, *Calico Bottle House*. Calico Ghost Town CA United States, *Junker House*. Lempo, Germany. *The House of Crosses*. Chicago IL, United States, *Tin Cement Garden*. Willits CA, United States, *Prayer Tower Totem Pole*. San Francisco CA, Unites States

[14] Harvey, Steve. "A Treasure Trove of Trash Withers In Simi Valley." *Latimes.com*, Los Angeles Times, 23 Nov. 2008, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-nov-23-me-then23-story.html.

[15] See also *Las Pozas*. Xilitla, Mexico, *Bruno Weber Sculpture Park*. Spreitenbach, Switzerland, *Huell Howsers Volcano House*. Twenty Nine Palms CA, Untied States.

[16] The Winchester Model 1873 would sell 720,000 from 1873-1923 and was an acceleration in power, efficiency, and speed in the world of firearms. With its near immediate reload time, the Winchester would have a nearly singular role in deciding conflict against any who ended up on the other side. Marketed as "*The Gun That Won The West*" was no understatement in the grisly westward colonization of America. The 1973 would cement itself as the gun of the "western imaginary" when it would be revived in the Cowboy Action Shooting subculture prompting a faithful recreation from the Olin company in 2013.

[17] Repeated use of the number 13, however was not an interest as stated but a relatively recent addition

[18] Apocrypha unbound, it is said that Harry Housini Arrived to debunk the myths but left mystified dubbing it the *Winchester Mystery House*

[19] See also work of Arakawa Gins, *The Orange Show*, Houston TX, United States, *Dream House*, New York City, United States, *Rothko Chapel*, Houston TX, United States, *Melody Land*, Northridge CA, Unites States

[20] It has also been alleged that Critzer may have aided Japanese American families by hiding them in the desert to avoid internment in sites such as Manzanar.

[21] Adam Gorightly and Greg Bishop's *A is For Adamski* (2018) is an invaluable encyclopedic source on the early days of the contactee movement, and its multiple members. The contactee movement, unlike the "*Abductee Movement*" mainly consisted of tall humanoids taking people to alluring environments, playing otherworldly music, displaying technological marvels, and informing the contactee that humanity would nuke itself into oblivion if they didn't stop. A pre-hippy/psychedelic subculture that had reverberations in 1950's America, to relatively "normal", sober, and middle class and middle-aged Americans.

[22] While apocryphal, Howard Hughes has also been named as a donor, a connection made due to Van Tassel's days in aerospace where van Tassel worked for Hughes. While very likely an expansion of personal mythology, Van Tassel is claimed to have been Hughes personal test pilot, the association is also said to have continued as Hughes would fly in for a slice of the Famous apple pie served at Eva Van Tassel's Café at the Come On Inn. Given the character of Van Tassel and Hughes, confirmation is impossible but both events equally (im)plausible

[23] Scholarly work on this web of complicated and conflicting narratives is documented in Greg Bishop's *Project Beta: The Story of Paul Bennewitz, National Security, and the Creation of a Modern UFO Myth* (2003) and Mark Pilkington's book *Mirage Men* (2010) later adapted into the 2013 documentary of the same name.

[24] See also CalArts Feminist Art Program *Woman House* (1972), SITE *BEST Products Showroom* (1972-1984) Rachel Whiteread *The House* (1993), Mike Kelley *Mobile Homestead* (2005) (primarily the basement), Noah Purifoy's *Desert Art Museum of Assemblage Art* (1989-2004), and Daniel Hawkins *Desert Lighthouse* (2017)

[25] *Journeys into the Outside* was a three-part documentary hosted by Jarvis Cocker of the band Pulp. Becoming the most unlikely star in Blair's UK after the success of the song "Common People" (1995) and a string of television appearances. Cocker, In the midst of a career crisis pitched JITO to revisit his interests in "outsider art" from his days at Central St. Martins. JITO is a global survey of artists who have constructed their own environments by various means/reasons. The series is a rare document of archival and new footage of these sites and interviews with the artists in either rare, debut, or final interviews. The importance of JITO to the field of 'patarchitecture cannot be understated.

[26] *Journeys Into the Outside With Jarvis Cocker Episode 3*. Directed by Jarvis Cocker and Martin Wallace, BBC Four Television, 1999.

[27] "No one can win against kipple, except temporarily and maybe in one spot, like in my apartment I've sort of created a stasis between the pressure of kipple and nonkipple, for the time being. But eventually I'll die or go away, and then the kipple will again take over. It's a universal principle operating throughout the universe; the entire universe is moving toward a final state of total, absolute kippleization."

[28] Tsukamoto, Shinya, director. *Tetsuo: The Iron Man*. Kaijyu Theatres, 1989.