

COMPLETION
OF THE WAR

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The wars of the century, from the World Wars through this decade's conflicts in the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Libya, let alone spot campaigns like Grenada and Lebanon, can all be regarded as part of a single war, a single contest for access to industrial minerals, including uranium, but chiefly oil and gas.

During the century, every economy--in both industry and agriculture--has come to rely on combustible minerals. Every economy has come to rely on rawstuffs extractable from deposits very unevenly distributed around the planet, and most heavily concentrated in the Arctic and the Persian Gulf.

The consequence, as we all know from news reports last year, has been much more devastating than just the tens of millions dead from the wars: the consequence has been an ecological degradation of the planet at a rapidly accelerating rate, without precedent in history, certain to wipe out the higher species if continued.

Property struggles over depletable materials in the ground, defined as a sort of wealth, led to conflicts yielding bizarre border conditions, blocking, for example: direct land access from Western Europe to the Middle East, a coherent response to expansion of the Sahara, linkage of Japan to its ancestral homeland, easy land access from North to South America, access from the Mediterranean to the Gulf, access of rainforest dwellers downstream to the radical clearing of the soil and water sources far upstream.

The struggles have also caused an apparently necessary growth of administrative enterprises dedicated to the combustion or agro-industrial conversion of a broad range of materials lethal to life.

The catastrophic algae blooms of the North Sea and Adriatic, the poor crop yields last year in both the US and USSR, the ongoing 100-year contamination of Chernobyl, with unforeseen long-term effects, and the visibly toxic smogs of Los Angeles, Mexico City and Athens, all compel an end to the property struggles over--or reliance upon--depletable materials in the ground. The impending breakdowns all compel a re-definition of wealth, a re-definition of Earth as a substrate for social existence.

Presented here, at American Fine Arts, is a selection of those regional configurations, those partitionings of the planet, those definitions of integral territory that are preliminary to architecture. Presented here are some of the architectural models that could yield a completion of the century's war.

The exhibition includes basins chosen as prime sites for architectural action. They are all saltwater basins, not just river basins; combined, they account for all the land mass and coastal waters of the planet. The basins shown here, excepting perhaps the Red Sea Basin, are subject to on-site projects and satellite-data scrutiny already undertaken by the artist. We may expect much to be on the scale envisioned by Robert Smithson--or being executed, as satellite monitors show, by Soviet engineers. More projects will ensue; the models will become dense with change, even in their outlines.

In sequence, left to right, the saltwater basins are:

- "Central America", Amazon Impact: Caribbean Sea (Nicaragua side of Rio Coco); Cayman Sea (Honduras side, including Rio Coco); Gulf of Mexico. These are all dependent on rain-laden clouds passing through the sequence--from rainforests of the Amazon and Orinoco.
- "Italy", Northern Mediterranean: Ligurian/Tyrrhenian/Iberian Seas, and Adriatic Sea. The split follows borders of 'regione' inside Italy.
- "Germany", 1942/1992?: close to what Germany achieved, now given an ecological urgency, as North Sea (with Irish Sea and English Channel feeds), Baltic Sea ("Ostland") and Black Sea ("Osterreich"); the Black Sea basin is divested of the Upper Don River Basin, which goes to the Caspian Basin to restore freshwater volume there and reduce radioactive effects from Chernobyl in the Black Sea.
- "Japan", Marine Wealth: including the part of Inner Mongolia sought in 1938-9, to complete the initial ambitions of the Japanese for a "Black Dragon" (viz., Amur River) basin.
- "Russia/Persia", Interior Eurasia: three troubled, over-saline and dried-up basins, with additional inputs charted for the Caspian Basin - from the Upper Don River diversion, creating a demarcation along the main battlefield-line of World War II, as well as improving the Black Sea, and--from deep in Mongolia--for the Aral Sea.
- "Libya", Mediterranean Sahara: fulfilling most of Quaddafi's stated or threatened territorial ambitions, in line with those of rulers long ago.

An architect could endeavor to turn these models into reality--in each 'piece', in our time.