



Article

Architects Play: A Children's Drawing Book

Sebastián Trujillo-Torres

Faculty of Architecture, CEPT University

Kasturbhai Lalbhai Campus, University Road, Navrangpura Ahmedabad-380009 Gujarat, India

Email: sebastian.trujillo.torres@gmail.com, Phone: (+57) 3195240802

Illustration Collaborators

Karan Rane - karan.rane.mphil18@cept.ac.in

Gabriela Trujillo - gtrujillot5@gmail.com

María Leguizamo Cuellar - maria.maromas@gmail.com

Keywords: Architecture, contemporary practice, play, processes, illustration.

1 Introduction

This paper deals with the gap that exists between two realities of practice: that which is idealized by architects, and that of its actual performative reality. The breach between preconceptions and circumstances that opens towards a spectrum of practice where architects play. A spectrum of practice where pragmatic yet imaginative roles are figured and lead towards playful dispositions, which are capable of subverting restrictions into advantages and outwitting stringent power structures.

This is explored through the examination of three case studies of architectural projects under construction in the city of Ahmedabad (India), capable of providing an insight into the nature of middle-range architectural practice: that which pertains to a larger spectrum of professionals (neither celebrated figures, nor service providers) and hence an important field of investigation that usually goes under the radar. The selected case studies were the Anand Niketan School by Surya Kakani (section 2), the Phoenix Housing Building by Pratik Soni, (section 3) and finally, the Paramdham Temple designed by Mehul Bhatt (section 4).

The onset of this research departed from probing the circumstantial conditions that defined the architectural features of each case study, in contrast with the exchanges with clients and other agencies, wherein architects had to negotiate with and navigate unexpected contingencies creatively. A survey that disproved the author's preconceived notions of the architect's role as a central figure -in the design and construction processes-, and led towards an understanding of it as a haphazard network of interactions and trade-offs. A set of developments wherein design surfaced neither as a univocal structure, nor as a linear progression.

The later concept then, was taken as a fundamental diagram to visualize and eventually understand the actual proceedings that were taking place. Therefore, as point of departure, a standard sequence of design-development was set with the following subsequent items: the establishment of financial capital, production of a brief, elaboration of a design proposal, coordination with experts, dialoguing with pertinent agencies, redesigning, prototyping, constructing and, finally, producing a cer-

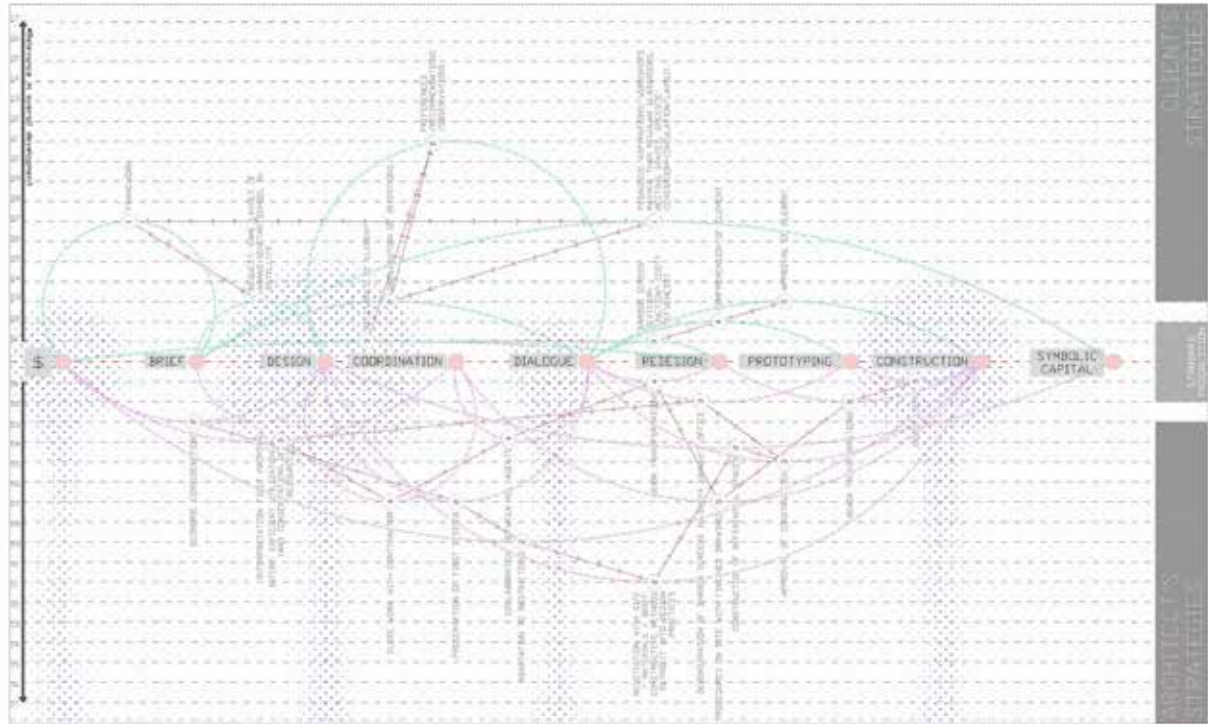


Figure 1: Map of design development sequences in the Anand Niketan School by architect Surya Kakani. This indicates the storyline developed in section 2.

tain degree of symbolic capital. Upon these diagrams, the actual developmental processes for each one of the case studies were superimposed (as seen in Figures 1-3) to demonstrate the radical disjunction between both orders.

This procedural mapping technique demonstrates the shifting role of architects as multi-dimensional agents that act within a locus of circumstance and strategic choice. A locus where architects are confronted with pragmatic, unique circumstances that -although are constituted as external constraints- are juxtaposed to creative decision-making processes that surpass aesthetic conditions. In that manner, this capacity of creative and strategic decision-making that -in many cases- overwrites external contingencies becomes significantly relevant and acknowledged as playing.

Furthermore, from these mapping exercises, a set of events that were representative of the exchanges, negotiations, and decisions in the development of the design

and construction of each case study, were narrativized and illustrated from the same play perspective. This was aimed not only at expanding the audience of this study significantly, but also utilizing similar typological procedures to that of the case studies. A set of narrative resources that emphasize on the sometimes irrational and turbid nature of design processes, which are represented through open-ended and even confusing rhetorical figures.

Similarly, the disposition of these events (numbered in accordance to each storyline) was eventually rearranged to fit the original standard sequence of design-developments: in that manner, the reader is encouraged to navigate the pages and go back and forth in order to rearticulate the actual progression of each storyline. Additionally, the forced narrative structure -in accordance to the original diagram- conveys a sense of fragmented and disconnected occurrences that are completely detached from a comprehensible reality; in the same man-

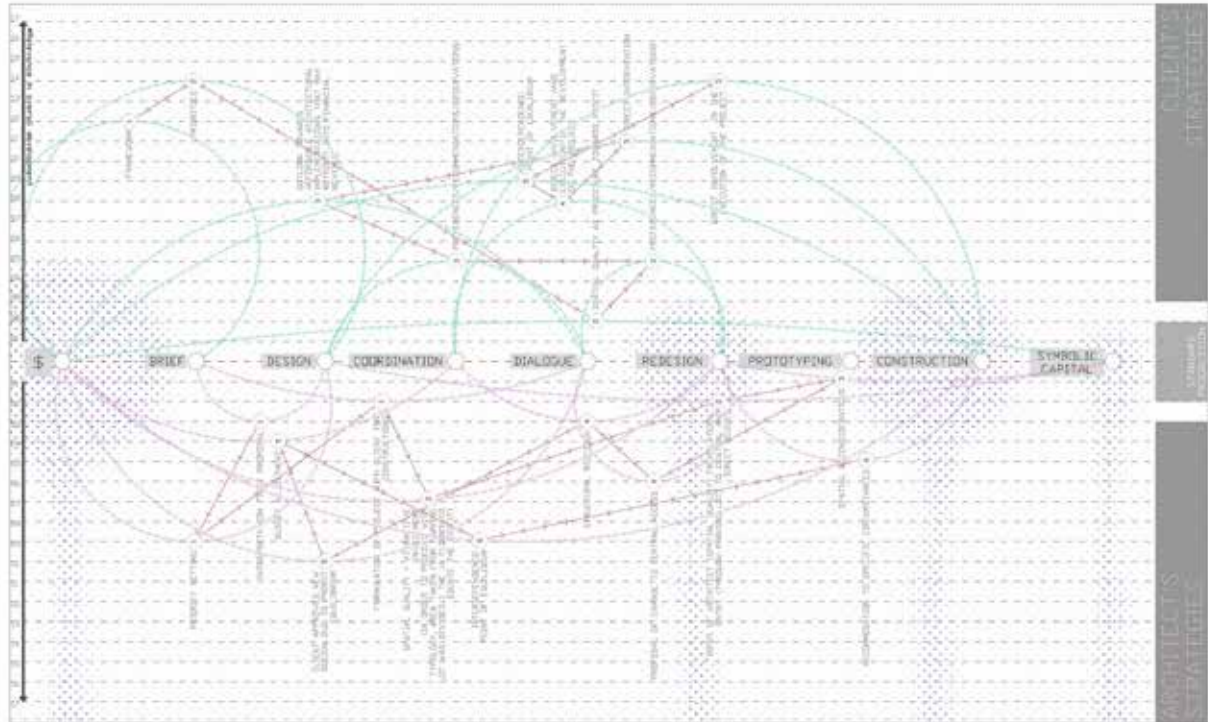


Figure 2: Map of design development sequences in the Phoenix Housing Building by architect Pratik Soni. This indicates the storyline developed in section 3.

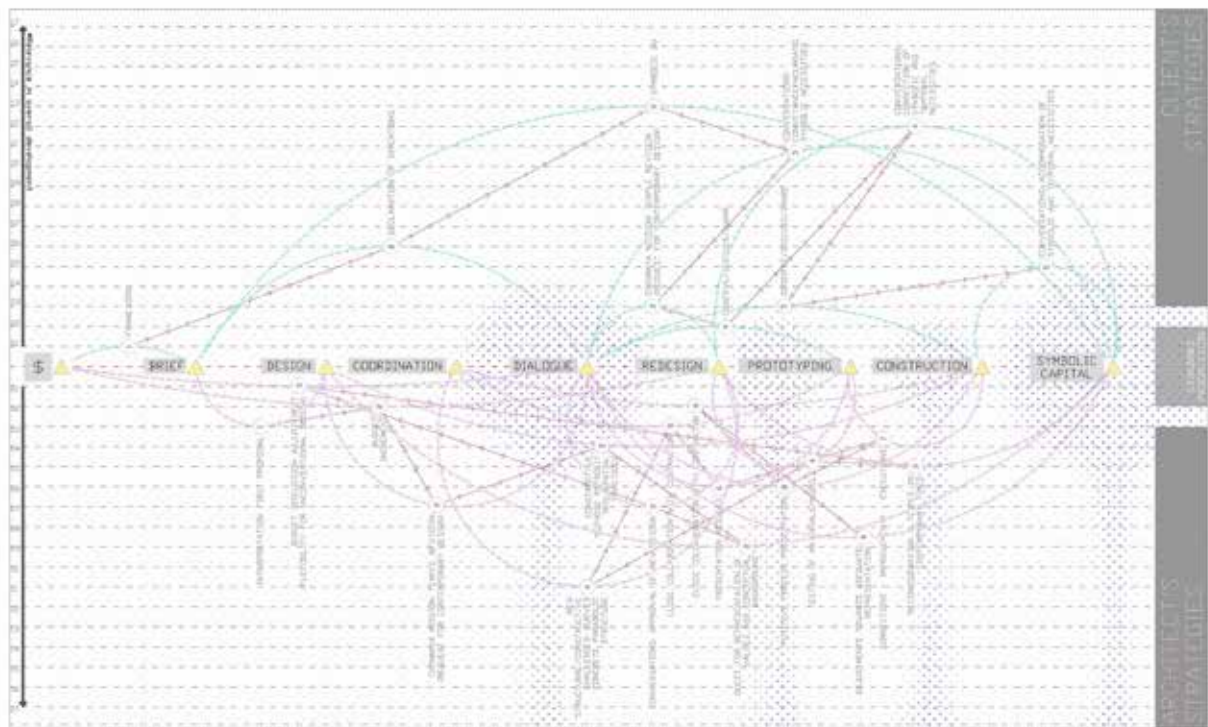


Figure 3: Map of design development sequences in the Paramdham Temple designed by architect Mehul Bhatt. This indicates the storyline developed in section 4.

ner that methodological canons tend to illustrate design processes though reductive assimilations. Now, in order to accentuate the differences between storylines, each was commissioned to be illustrated separately by three different illustrators, who interpreted the assigned stories through their own particular gaze. However, not all frames are duly illustrated: in order to encourage further participation of the reader, some events are outlined as basic shapes that ought to be completed by the reader, and this is encouraged through a continuous frame that repeats "draw" throughout its edge. In that way, the development of the story becomes an interactive sequence that relies on the contribution of what otherwise is a passive consumer of information, seeking to transform her into an active contributor. In that manner, the following write-up is meant to be read and completed in accordance to the reader, even though clues and traces have been left in order to decipher a path.



1.1

Architects play with others, among others.

Architects frown and worry all day, but deep down inside they are just quite like everyone else: they quarrel and joke, they haggle and prank.

They follow rules and pretend to be good (although some might actually be). These now, are stories of playing; yet you don't need to follow them in the usual way.

Since architects play in odd manners, these had to be arranged as such: each story goes forward and backwards, then onwards again. Each part of the story, each page, is a challenge; a question for you. You are now an architect, for argument's sake.

Each storyline follows a particular trail, a sequence therein. You are now part of the story, and you are ought to complete it.

3.9

Because all will just halt.

At some point, we can simply run out;

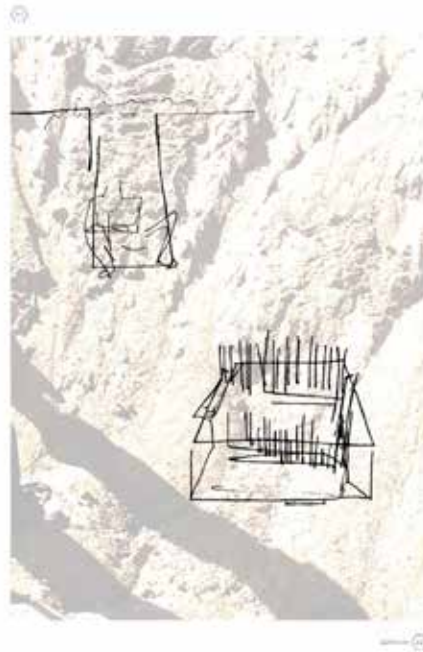
There is little to share so
remember to care.

Stack them and pile them,
with the outmost
of
care.



4.6

It is all getting better,
we can all give you more.
Keep good measure
of these bricks,
shape grey stones as you will:
taking all into good faith
how much (time) will you fill?

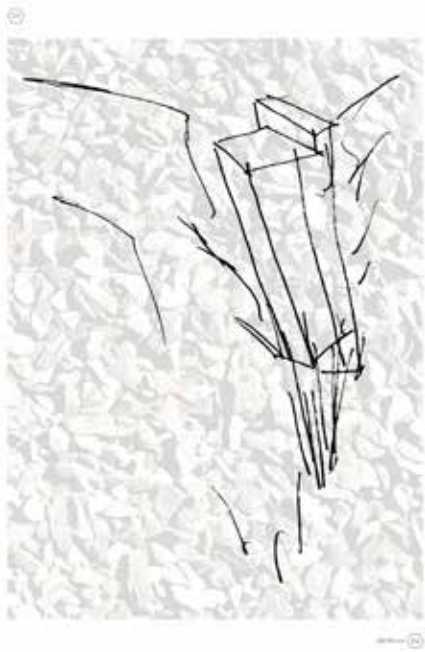


2 Phoenix Housing Building by Pratik Soni

2.1

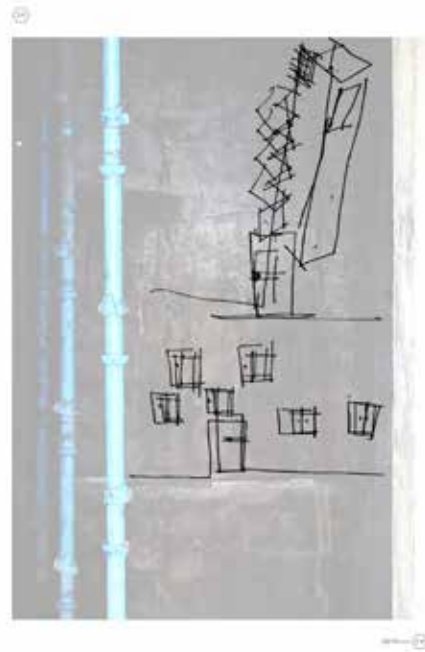
This is -in here- the best place,
I know
it seems
not.

A lot
can be done for,
we just need;
a lot.
We have soil aplenty,
a squared hole forethought.
You know what we came for,
so
just give it a thought.



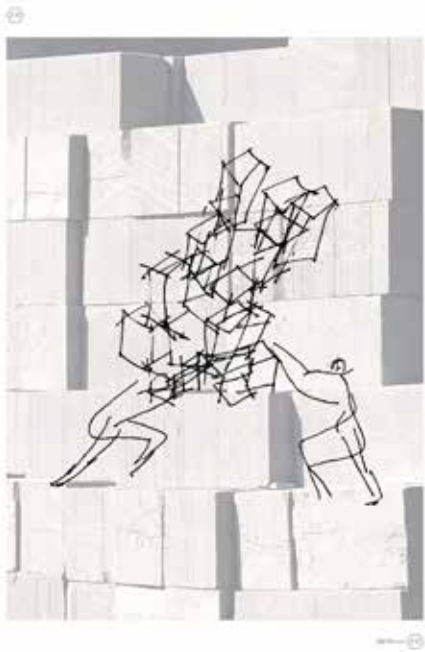
2.3

What we think
is important,
so, can you help us with that?
A light bouncy coffer
perhaps,
or some breeze
in a box.
Tomorrow or after, our wishes amiss:
Can you help us by
guessing
what did we miss?



2.9

Approved,
now let's keep on going.
What else do we need?
We did those small boxes,
some transparent walls.
We have those new tin doors
that raise you,
to yours.
There's a lot still missing,
much more to reform!



2.12

Is all about
getting;
see it all in reverse.
What you do, that will come back:
what we pile up,
erect
(all them coming effects).
What we see is the turnout
that you'll help us get.



4 Paramdham Temple by Mehul Bhatt 4.1

This, is my big land;
can you see where it ends?

Old, rusty, scrap bricks,
moldy drab rocks,
some dry, dusty, aged fields,
perhaps, to call ours.

We need to look upwards
And stare at the sky,
warbling chants softly
for the wind to pass by;
a fresh place for sitting
and silence
purify.



3 Anand Niketan School by Surya Kakani

3.1

A
medium
sized
(long)
plot;
all its limits are wrought.

You have worked with us prior
so,
you know what we desire.

It is still about learning;
again, this is the case.
Can you think of a sound space
That we all can embrace?

2.2

As
tall
as
you
can:
make
it
go
upwards;
like a box in the clouds.
Or perhaps a box that goes downwards?
Squirming right into the soils.
Can you think of a vast space
-subdivide it-
just in case?
Make wide rooms
and tall ones.
Invent others amid.



4.2

Can you make it
taller or
slimmer?
Smaller or
longer?
A place for our whim;
so, time let us trim.



3.2

We like
how you're thinking,
it's just what we need.
There are some
in the topmost
and
others
beneath.
Just as imagined;
the gain of the steps.
If we can even conjecture
what ever
comes next?



3.6

While
setting
things under,
remember to brief.
We know it sounds obvious
but we want you to speak:
a speech without mumbling
or even
pronouncing.
A speech that's so clever
that needs
no instructing.

(Draw a giant staircase, where you could learn Sanskrit)

3.10

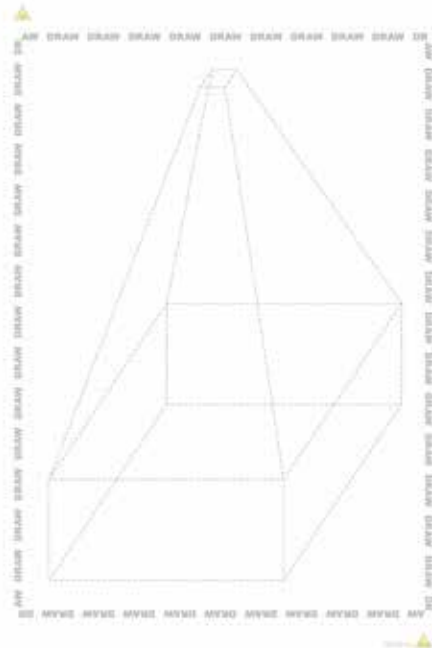
You do have to speak up,
for others will listen.
Make
them
your
allies,
to hurdle your burden.
Make your table embrace them;
bring them to bargain.

(Draw a table with your friends,
at least one leg each)



2.5

We may like your ideas,
that is for sure.
But could you do it all over?
Perhaps just the contour.
We want it just snappier,
we want it to smile.
We want flashy and jazzy,
in the classiest style.
We want people just flowing,
can you make it worthwhile?

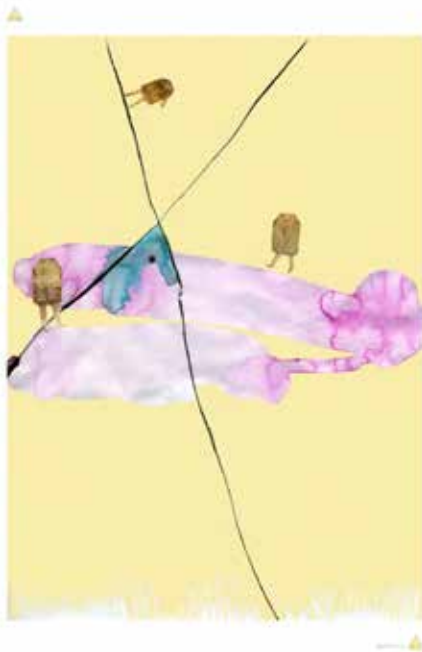


4.9

It seems kind of tricky,
a bit risky perhaps?
This can't be done
solo,
you sure need a hand.
They all can be helpful;
the mountain command.

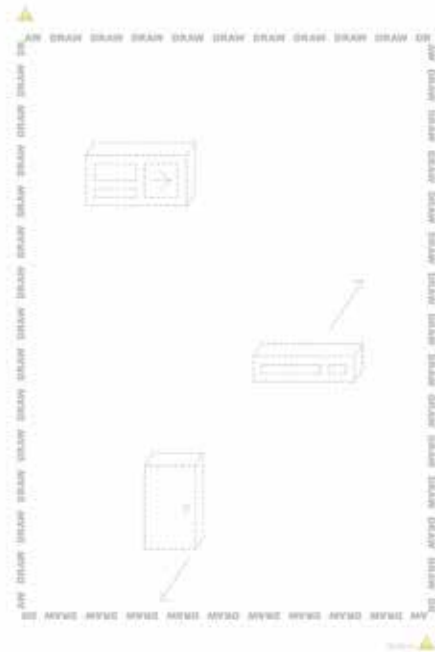
Just pull it together
and cut down the heft.
Like a rock-solid feather
that is shaped like a tent.

(Draw a weightless mountain wherein you can wander)



4.10

You don't really construct it,
that is some other job.
The others will do it,
we will all take the load.
Who will take up the bricks?
Who will carry the stone?
If you
draw up
the mountain,
who'll climb up to the top?



4.15

It is
everyday growing,
you do a great job.
And we are
all
in it,
as a part of it all.
You are not in the center
so no point in its hunt:
keep us all at arm's distance
to construct with due awe.

(Draw a mountain with windows,
perhaps a big door? Make it real cozy, were we all can
reside)



3.11

Gab,
just keep on conversing.

To build on your stepped deed
just
keep
on
engaging;
alongside with others,
and not as a head.

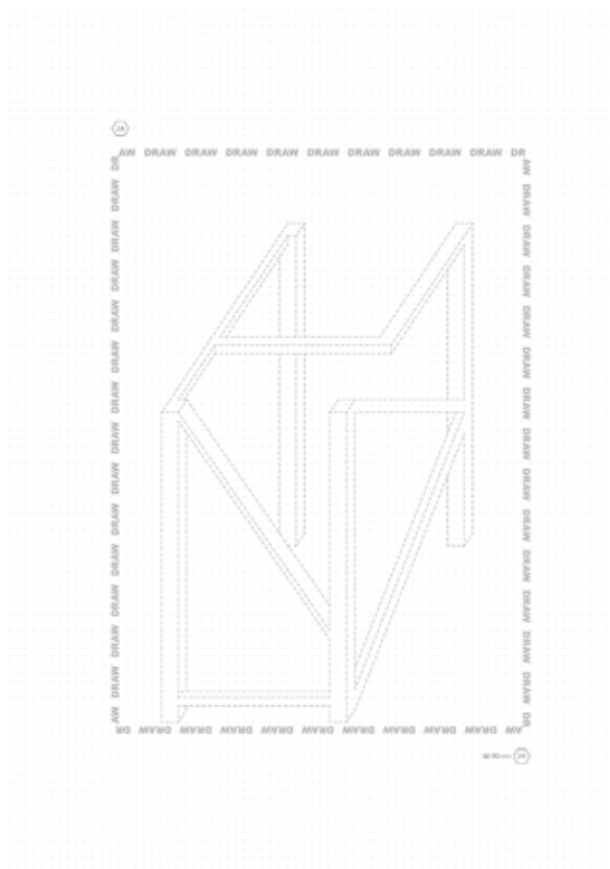
(Draw one eminent staircase,
that is weirdly flat)



3.14

Let drawings
show them,
what do we want?
Yet remember
most drawings
are not scribbled in rock.
You know ink
has the habit
of changing its course?

Listen to changes,
they're part of it all.



2.8

How can it hold?
 It needs to be strong:
 you see, much people to hold.
 It needs a good structure, so we don't
 just
 fall.
 Now, for that you don't worry:
 framework = our chore.

(Draw on the framework, a most delicate box)



4.5

We have spoken amongst us,
 and we like what we spot.
 Yet, can you
 make it all
 bigger?
 Perhaps a touch lighter?
 Wider or whiter?
 Just help
 us
 decide.
 We plan joining inside it,
 feel the echoes reply.
 In all of this skirmish
 where did the sun fly?



4.11

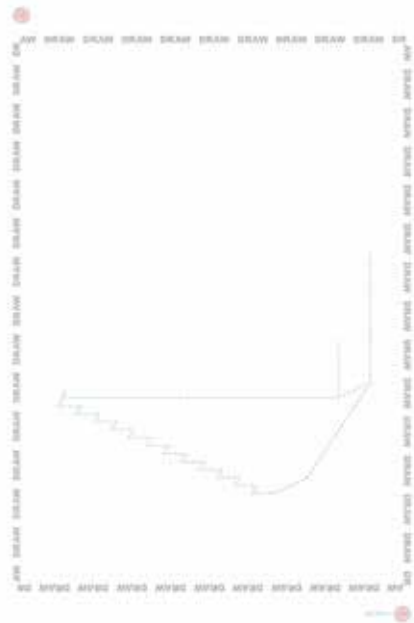
We like it
(again)
we love
what you do.

But
Would you change up
the color?
Can you redo
the top?
Do you even remember,
who's in the front?



4.13

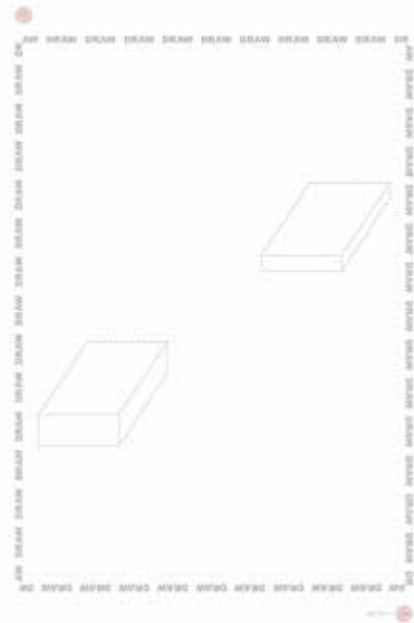
Now that they're building,
what do you think?
Is it just like
the mountain,
you obsessively wished?



3.3

Is just
a new
background,
a place where to talk.
Where you can just sit down;
acknowledge the rock.

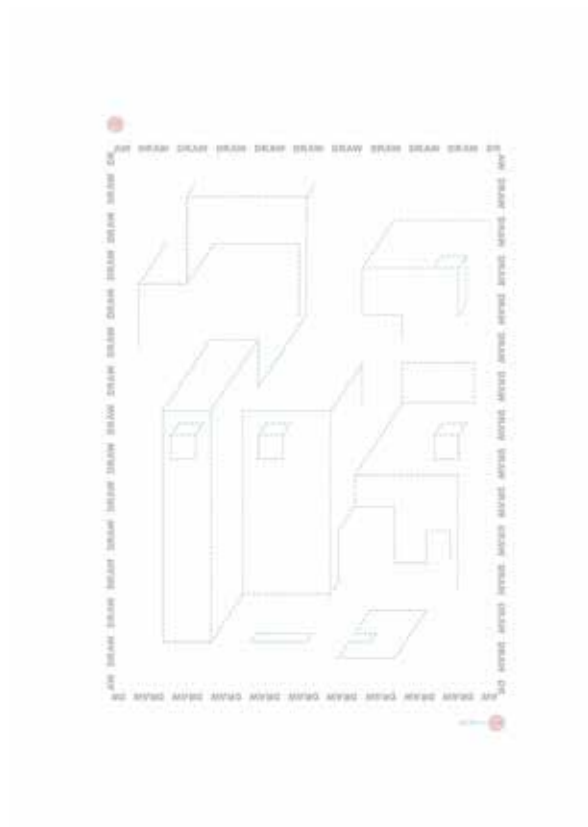
(Draw a heavy staircase: a fresh shadow in summer)



3.7

We like what you're doing,
is a nice way to play.
But,
could it go astray?
And
what is its day?

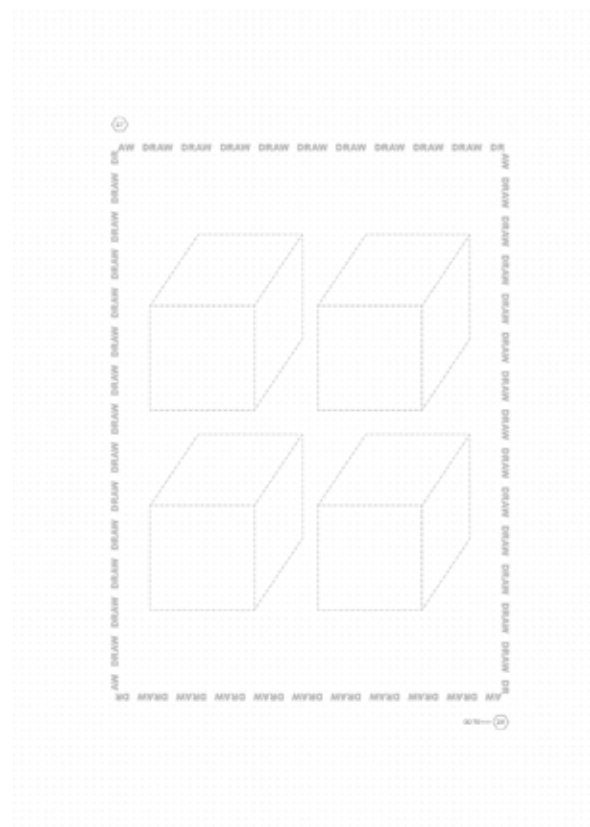
(Draw an actual staircase -from your household per-
haps-, yet an ideal improvement that a future could hold)



3.12

This is
what we're making.
What do you like?

(If you don't like what we're doing,
I guess you can add)



2.7

You have new ideas?
Maybe they'll do.
Draw them.
Now change them.
Guess what we'll do?

(fill in the boxes -whatever you fancy- then make some-
one erase all but one)



4.8

How can you lift up a
mountain?

You'll

just

have

to

try.

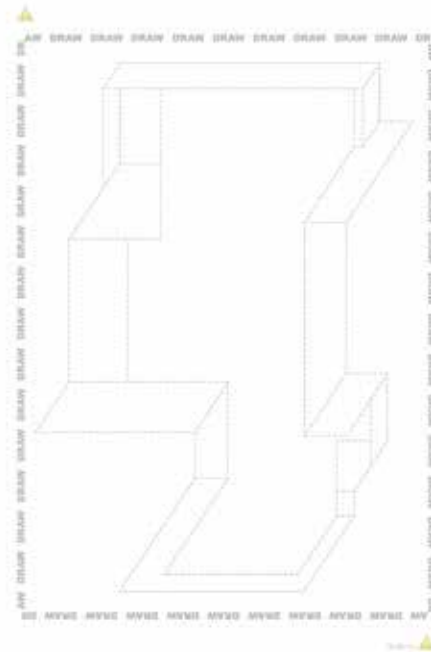
Try once,

then, try harder.

The probe of the crafter.

(Draw a flying mountain;

With some help, I might add)



4.14

Things sometimes follow
the path

of your will.

Sometimes they fail

and you

just have to yield;

let

go

and move on, yet

this time you're favored.

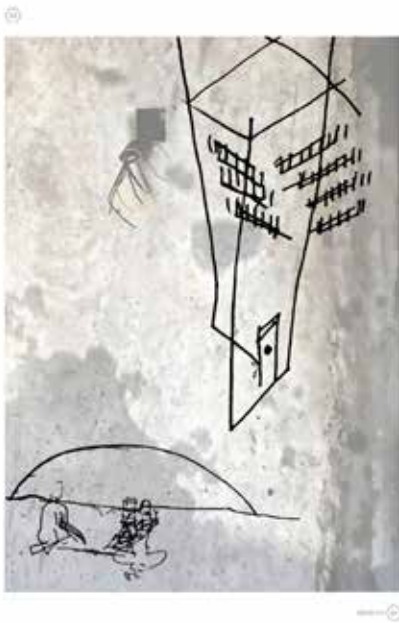
Now

your desires

seem

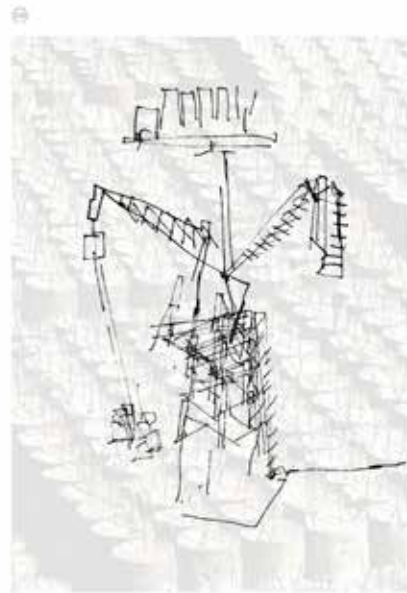
completely enabled.

(Draw whatever you fancy; just keep it inside)



2.6

Try
it
again;
this time not as giddy.
Could our box have some
windows?
Will it need some more
fittings?
What happens at lunch time
with the sun does its biddings?



2.13

There are always
blunders,
and others to prove.
While the box keeps on growing,
we'll just need to
improve.



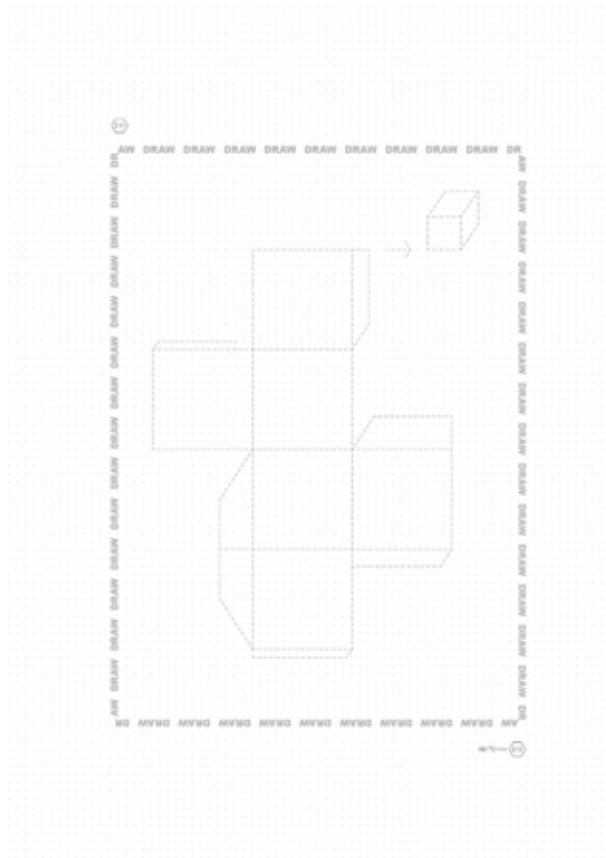
4.12

You can do the corrections,
 what did you learn?
 Start now constructing
 (though, it is not your concern)
 Where
 do
 we
 start from?
 should we stack
 up
 some bricks?
 Shall we
 rattle
 the soil or
 dig up
 with sticks?



3.15

Bring all the questions;
 always insisting.
 Improving is certain,
 with feedback persisting.



2.11

Test your ideas,
just a quick bid.
Let's see how it works,
then
enjoy the perks.

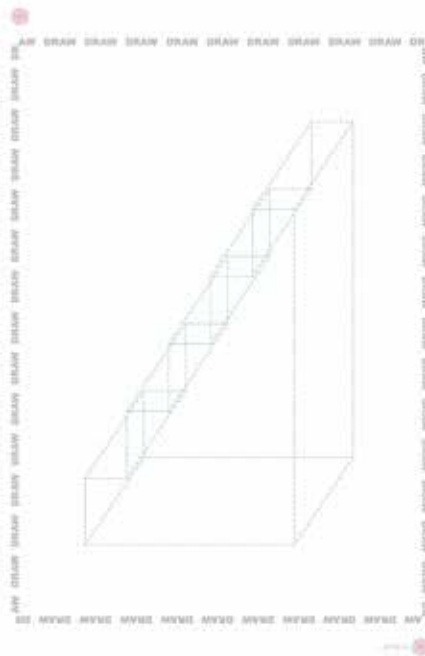
(Draw what you like: then cut it and fold it, so you feel it
weight on
your hands. How would you redo otherwise?)



3.13

Start.

Bring it
together,
with railings and all.
You know what's its heather,
you've set due
protocol.
They'll take care of it for you,
just make sure you're involved.



3.4

No confusion
about it,
you know what to do.
You
name
the materials;
how much can you choose?
You know those hard edges,
and how much to use.

(Draw another staircase, of the most trivial material)



2.10

It is all
about
order,
a sequence to bargain.
We'll do it together,
the box down the garden.
You're part of the process
and trade-offs are certain,
so, give back the grey stone
I'll put back the curtain.



4.3

You know the materials,
 imagine from them.
 How to put them together?
 That
 you should tell.
 From old bricks come new ones,
 from rock
 liquid rock.
 How long do you think
 they will stay as a block?



3.5

All said and done
 materials aren't won,
 till you solve the old query
 how'll they come into one?

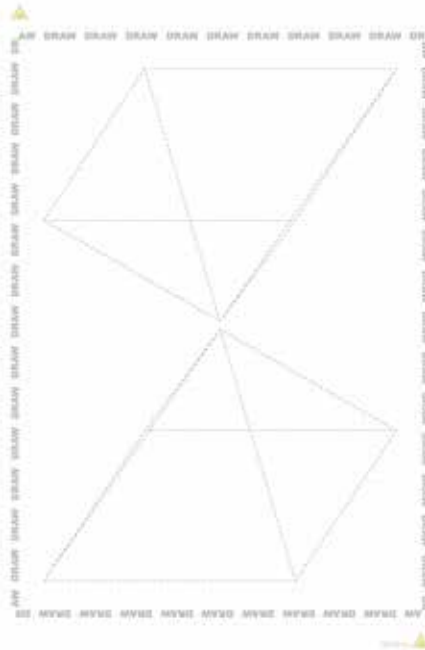
 Just one stack
 of them grey bricks?
 What their faces will show?
 When monsoons come on striding,
 will their surfaces glow?



3.8

Can you
imagine our
staircase?
Would you
construct it
with words?

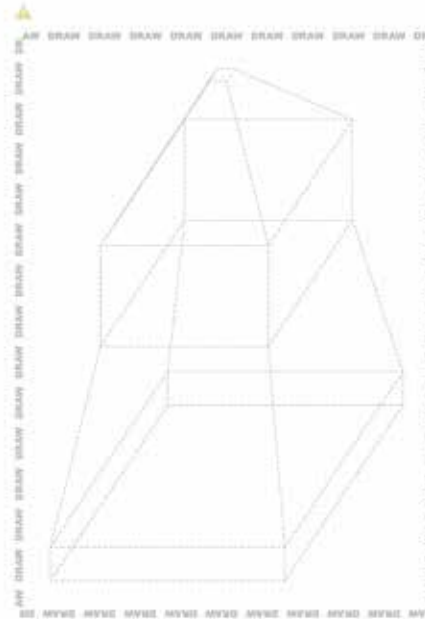
94



4.7

You're constructing anew;
 you
 do
 it
 for
 now.
 What you do
 shall remind us
 of time that's gone through.
 Yet importance is current,
 and present
 the clue.

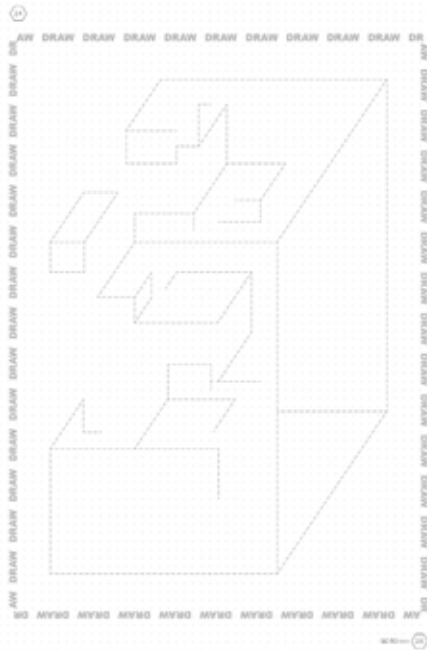
(Draw a watery mountain, one that is never the same)



4.16

It is going as outlined,
 what materials do say?
 Is the mountain streamlined?
 Does it speak with its clay?
 Are the colors designed
 and their shadings the same?

(Draw a mountain as if it could speak -many probably do-
 what would it say?)



2.4

We don't want
a dim box,
we want it to speak.
We want it to jump
and to shout
and to shriek.
We want everyone looking
to gasp
tongue-in-cheek.
If you make
such a coffer,
would you start at the peak?

(draw a box with a face, with a grimace of maze)

Acknowledgements

This article would not have been possible without the exceptional guidance and support of Dr. Gauri Bharat. Her insight, enthusiasm, and knowledge pushed my work beyond my expectations and for that I am truly grateful. Similarly, Pablo Silva Saray for his recommendations and acute observations, in collation to Prasanth Narayanan's remarks that allowed the work to move forward considerably.

References

- Bhatt, Mehul, entrevista de Sebastian Trujillo-Torres. *Processes of the Paramdham Temple in Ahmedabad* (2017).
- Borries, Friedrich Von. *Space, Time, Play*. Boston, Berlin: Birkhauser, 2007.
- Dengle, Narendra. *Dialogues with Indian Master Architects*. Mumbai: Marg Foundation, 2015.
- Fraser, Murray. *Design Research in Architecture: An Overview*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens*. London: Routledge, 1949.
- Jencks, Charles, y Nathan Silver. *Adhocism: The Case for Improvisation*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013.
- Kakani, Surya, entrevista de Sebastian Trujillo-Torres. *Processes of the Anand Niketan School in Ahmedabad* (2017).
- Keslacy, Elizabeth. «Fun and Games: The Suppression of Architectural Authoriality.» *Footprint: DELFT Architecture Theory Journal*, 2015: 101-123.
- Mehrotra, Rahul. *Architecture in India since 1990*. Mumbai: Pictor Publishing Pvt. Ltd , 2011.
- Scriven, Peter and Vikram Bhatt. *Contemporary Indian Architecture AFTER THE MASTERS*. Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 1990.
- Sicart, Miguel. *Play Matters*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.
- Soni, Pratik, entrevista de Sebastian Trujillo-Torres. *Processes of the Phoenix Housing Building* (2017).