

SUB_city

Detroit is a capital vacuum, rendering both land and objects valueless. 36,000 properties have been sucked onto the city's books. While the dysfunctional city government continues to falter, residents and non-profits are burdened with picking up the slack.

SUB_city seeks to take over city owned property through acts of spatial subversion by ignoring the political system.¹ SUB_city is a new, autonomous city within the city, aligning residents, non-profits, and creative practitioners to wage an invisible, non-violent war on the city through a diversion of capital. Detroit is not a problem to solve, it is a problem to ignore.

When property no longer has exchange value, a fundamental relationship is exposed, which equates ownership to government support in the form of taxes. To invest capital and labor into one's home, place, neighborhood, or city, is to be patriotic. By living or working in Detroit, one is supporting Detroit.

SUB_city rejects the notion of supporting a failed government by claiming city-owned land for productive use without paying obscene taxes to a defunct city. Through networks of local organizations and individuals, a decentralized constituency will be formed to begin the foundation for SUB_city. Action will manifest itself in creative acts of subversion, organizing groups and individuals for mutual benefit, and providing services to depleted neighborhoods by way of small-scale entrepreneurship. Territory will be marked through a curatorial process of spatial interventions:

Suspended Disbelief is an act of re-appropriation: an abandoned and dilapidated house in Detroit is renovated and portions of the house are suspended to create a floating and dematerializing structure. The valueless becomes valuable as it creates an anticipatory space; it is a house in transition, deconstructing and reconstructing itself simultaneously.

Liner Gardening in SUB_city stretches for miles in single rows. A narrow strip of corn runs through 1000 backyards, stitching fragmented neighborhoods and connecting others. Instead of attracting community, the garden confronts community. Tending a strip of horizontal garden becomes political: to keep it alive is to vote for the community. Dying segments of the row indexes non-

participation.

Continuous Monument of Disurbanization suspends disbelief and multiplies it throughout the city. One hundred abandoned and burned-out structures are now floating above the ground plane of the city. They have been charged and, full of energy, they begin migrating towards a larger gesture: the continuous monument. Superstudio's *Continuous Monument* was an expression of man over nature, achieving total urbanization.² SUB_city's continuous monument is the inverse, the nature-of-total-urbanization over man: the mass exodus of capital, River Rouge, and the power to render the city into a suburb.

The **Urban Combine** is composed of retired construction equipment mashed up to create a single machine that consumes concrete, brick, and asphalt to produce gabions. Grappling paddles move and stack the gabions into place inside old foundations to create huge footings for *The Continuous Monument of Disurbanization*. The Urban Combine consumes the bones of Detroit.

As SUB_city propagates throughout Detroit, residents and business owners will be given the option of protesting their failed city through the diversion of tax funds (sales, property tax, income tax) to a SUB_city Escrow account that will act as a banking switch valve, keeping the money flowing to the city of Detroit—business as usual. As the project gains momentum and more residents begin to politically identify with the new city, they will sign up to participate in the tax loop, the Escrow relay switch. When there is a critical mass, the switch will be flipped, creating a single violent act of capital warfare. Detroit will instantly weaken, allowing SUB_city to emerge as a new form of post-industrial urbanization.

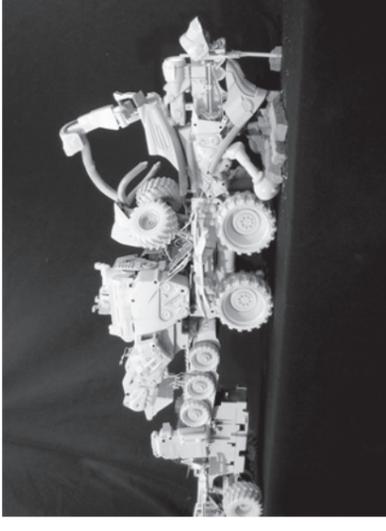
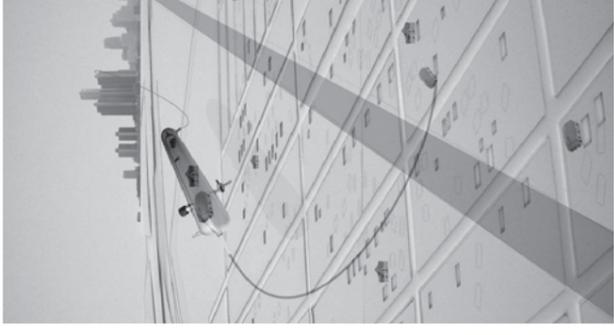
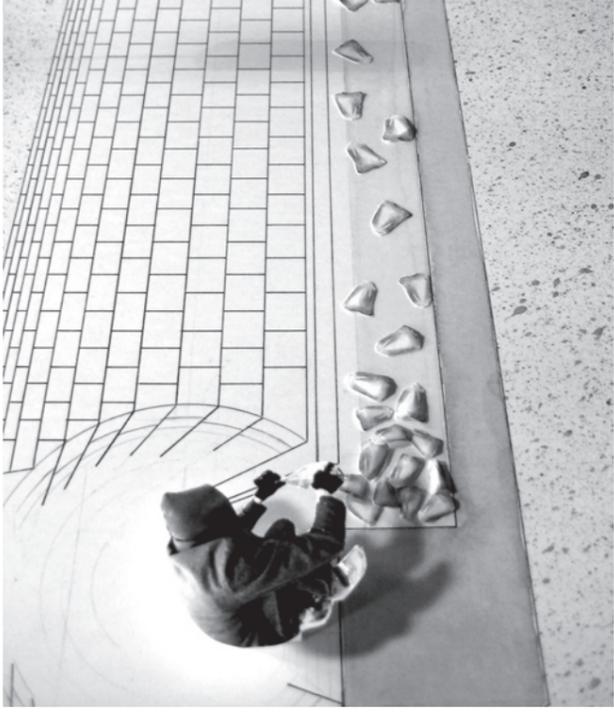
Marc Maxey is a designer for OPEN Architecture in Beijing. He graduated from University of Michigan in 2009 and received several awards for his academic work. Prior to studying architecture, Marc worked as a mechanic for BMW of Manhattan but traded his wrenches for pencils in 2005. He also operates an independent practice with partner Ellen Donnelly, called max_ed out, which designs, thinks, and makes wildly.

NOTES

1. SUB_city was produced in *The Detroit Urasal Estate Agency*, a design studio taught by Mireille Roddier in the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan.

2. Peter Lang and William Menking, *Superstudio: Life Without Objects* (New York: Skira, 2003).

Images courtesy of Marc Maxey



Detroit

