

*Kids on Buildings:*  
 The Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum,  
 Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI  
 Architect: Zaha Hadid

  
*reviewed by Emil*



**Emil** This place is good because every superhero would like something different, like outside or inside.

**Which superhero would like what?**

**E** Well, we don't have to worry about the Beast, he can climb anywhere and sleep on any ceiling. And we don't have to worry about Night-crawler because he can just whip around onto any place—it doesn't matter where.

I think Antman would like climbing up that place [the concrete slope on the outside of the building] when he was small because it would be like a big play structure. He can turn ant-sized and use it as a huge slide. But it's not good for the ants,



because they are sticky, and would have to walk and it would take them a long time.

**What does this building look like to you?**

**E** I think it looks like a big U, we are inside of a big U. Also a bunch of squiggles.

**What are the best shapes for buildings?**

**E** I think the coolest would be all the 3-D shapes connected. Then you can go in one shape, and then go up the stairs to another shape and another shape.

**E** This park is part of the museum, too.

**How do you know?**

**E** Because of the sideways benches. No one else would think of a sideways bench. No one else would think of a sideways bench except someone that wasn't working because they have time to think. And all of these lines in the sidewalk are sideways. They are saying: "This way to the museum."

**How do you sit on this bench?**

**E** You sit on it like this. It kind of makes you slide like the building. But this is the place that's for sitting.

**Who else would like this building?**

**E** I think Kid Flash would like it in here because it would be like a big ramp. He wouldn't even have to climb because he would just run up. Maybe he could even just walk up.

I think it's fun sliding down.  
 [Sliding down].  
 You try it.



**What about non-humans? Would any non-humans like it?**

**E** Monkeys. There is a bunch of climbing to do. They would climb around outside. But if they swung around inside, they would kick the monkeys out and tell them to swing outside.

**Is it better for robots or dinosaurs?**

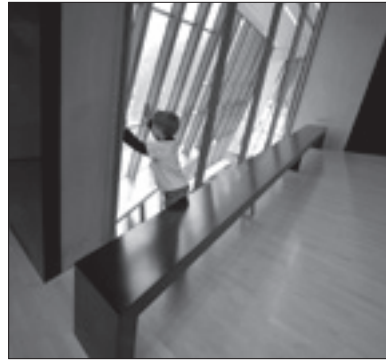
E It's better for robots. They are invented, so they could be invented to reach all the places people can't reach here. There would be places just for the robots. Dinosaurs would just slip in the building and fall down.

**What is your favourite part of it?**

E Sliding outside is my favourite.

**What about the stuff inside?**

E Hmm...the bench where you look down, upstairs. You can see everyone walking in, and it's cool to sit there.



**How can you tell that something is a work of art?**

E I can tell because if it wouldn't have been art then it wouldn't have paint on it.

It would have just been all white.



**Is this building a work of art?**

E Actually, yes. Because if it wasn't, it wouldn't be a good building and they wouldn't have made it. It wouldn't be there.✕



**Bio**

Emil was born in New Orleans, where he developed a love of heat and noise. He has lived in Beijing, where his name is Ai Me'ar, and in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he currently studies breakdancing and science. In June 2013, he completed kindergarten.

*Infrastructure Critical: Sacrifice at Toronto's G8/G20 Summit*,  
Alessandra Renzi and Greg Elmer, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2012,  
139 pp.

♥  
review by Scott Sørli



Network diagram showing interlocking directorate between various US corporations and institutions, and the Council on Foreign Relations, 2004. ©©

On 17 May 2013, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper rehearsed a tactical argument in front of a sympathetic audience at the neutral- and august-sounding Council on Foreign Relations in New York City. Starting off his speech with what would usually be a warm-up joke, he mocked the Keystone XL pipeline protesters barricaded outside. "It is not a matter of just getting on a street corner and yelling, and that will somehow lead to a solution," the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported. He continued, "These are real challenges where environmental needs intersect and often appear to be at cross-purposes with economic and social development. And unless we realize that and take these things seriously, we're going to keep talking around the real issue. I think if we admit there are real problems with real difficult solutions and real difficult choices that have to be made—that everybody has to contribute to—then I think we'll make progress."

This storm we call progress will be made up of "real difficult solutions."<sup>1</sup> The rhetorical alignment of social development with economic development orthogonal to environmental needs frames the problem

in clear terms: economic growth trumps environmental collapse, and while the air we breathe just passed 400ppm of carbon dioxide for the first time since the mid-Pliocene, we can all breathe easier because

at least it smells like money. This socio-economic *bon-vivant* atmosphere is, to quote Harper, real, real, real, real, and real.

Harper's quintupled reality is made manifest through the policies of austerity. And, although the "real difficult solutions" will be borne by us, the "real difficult choices" will be made for us; they will be realized through an *involuntary consensus*. Notably, our contributions toward realizing Harper's plan of austerity are not shared equally; they will be exacted from each according to her ability and distributed to each according to her work.<sup>2</sup> "In this sense," Alessandra Renzi and Greg Elmer state, "the concept of sacrifice—unlike austerity—expands our analytical lenses to investigate the struggles among the powerful who, in the attempt to accumulate in relation to each other are sacrificing smaller players and reconfiguring the fabric of society and the body politic of a nation." (120)

Sacrifice, as Renzi and Elmer demonstrate in *Infrastructure Critical*, is a conceptual gift to activists that realigns the ostensible social equivalence of austerity into differential power relations, transfers of wealth, and distributions of the sensible.<sup>3</sup> Using Toronto's 2010 G8/G20 summit as a case study of repression, the authors lay bare the operative mechanisms of the unfolding military-prison complex. According to Renzi and Elmer:

As threats materialize, all violent abuses of power and illegal procedures are re-actualized as necessary lesser evils—votive offerings auspiciously pointing towards future security and growth. In this context, all disciplinary measures like the PWPA [the then-secret Public Works Protection Act], the security fence, the "free speech zone," the kettling and mass arrests of protesters, the new legislation on masks and protests should be seen as part of a concatenation of elements—a sacrifice series—held together in the name of post-crisis wealth and stability. (123)

The progress offered by austerity policies—according to which everyone must contribute equally to ensure a better collective future—is a lie sold to the many who will be forced to sacrifice for the benefit of the very few. A representative example of the very few makes up the Council on Foreign Relations; those "getting on a street corner and yelling" represent the very many others. This relation between those who profit—massively—through austerity cuts

and those who suffer through them has, in previous epochs, earned a more direct name: class struggle. For Renzi and Elmer, the question of class composition is less an issue than the more fundamental problem of politicization. How does state repression, such as that which occurred during Toronto's 2010 G8/G20 summit, offer an important backformation for activists and organizers to recuperate? Given that most public demonstrations against austerity measures are increasingly met with excessive exercises of state violence, Renzi and Elmer ask what can be built—what social relations, technical capacities, and oppositional compositions—between volleys of chemical munitions, and, more importantly, how these infrastructures can be protected, maintained, and emboldened through activist practices.

It is among the itinerant manoeuvres in intensified spaces of austerity that Renzi and Elmer see a different future:

The [Occupy] camps' alternative structures for education, food security and assembly, together with the resistant subjectivities that populate them hold the potential to reorganize the city, especially public space, as platforms to forge and foster different connections among individuals. The reclaimed spaces can be sites of a counter-biopolitics—literally spaces of politicization, of encounters among groups that have long been involved in social justice activism and individuals who take to the streets for the first time. (126)

While it is clear that the goal in policing these actions is to intimidate, as thoroughly as possible, all protesters and allied members of the public, while further entrenching the state security and surveillance apparatus, for Renzi and Elmer, by defending the critical infrastructures produced in these confrontations, activist practice can mobilize to confront the sacrificial political economy of austerity. ×

Bio

**Scott Sørli** has received professional degrees in process control engineering and in architecture, and a post-grad in design research. His practice is operative across scales and among disciplines. He is also co-curator of convenience, a window gallery that provides an opening for art that engages, experiments, and takes risks with the architectural, urban, and civic realms. His current design research tries out saying it like it is.

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*Carbon Democracy*, Timothy Mitchell

Verso, 2011, 288 pp.



review by *Clint Langevin*

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In Timothy Mitchell's *Carbon Democracy*, it is almost too obvious that a British-born political theorist who teaches Middle Eastern Studies at Columbia University and has spent several years living in Egypt is able to implicate oil as the protagonist in the formation of democratic society. In fact, Mitchell's expertise in the history of the oil industry in the Middle East allows him to make connections that would be otherwise impossible. From the perspective of an expert witness, he unpacks the creation, formation, and limits of our democratic society through an in-depth historical analysis of the production, circulation, and use of fossil fuels, particularly oil. Mitchell's goal—to "intricately" link two things most people think of as separate, oil and democracy—is achieved convincingly through the argument that democratic politics were "co-assembled" with the energy from fossil fuels. (5)

Mitchell's thesis is developed by exposing the connections of events, such as the strikes by coal workers in Britain, the creation by postwar US economists of an economy based on the principle of infinite growth, and the rise of Islamist political movements in the Middle East, to democracy and oil. He makes these connections by focusing his analysis on the material processes and distribution networks of the oil industry, tracing how connections are built, where they are vulnerable, and how they are controlled. This is the key innovation of the book: "In tracing the connections that were made between pipelines and pumping stations, refineries and shipping routes, road systems and automobile cultures, dollar flows and economic knowledge, weapons experts and militarism, one discovers how a peculiar set of relations was engineered between oil, violence, finance, expertise and democracy." (253)

A refreshing aspect of this book is how matter-of-factly atrocious crimes committed by the US and British governments are presented. If I were to tell people in America that the CIA supported the funding and

arming of the Taliban, I would be called a conspiracy theorist; this is not the case here. Mitchell refrains from any embellishment of the facts, making the content all the more shocking. It would be difficult to disprove any of the information he presents, as the majority of the claims he makes in the book are based on historical events and backed by a staggering amount of research.

While reading the latter part of the book, I found myself reminiscing, attempting to recall my thinking at the time during the events Mitchell was describing. The moment that stands out the most occurred in 2003, when George W. Bush accused Saddam Hussein of hiding WMDs, which he used as a justification for the Iraq invasion. As a teenager, I remember seeing this on the news for the first time and being unconvinced because Iraq seemed unconnected to America and the September 11 attacks. Some people, including myself, knew we were being misinformed, but I had no idea how to articulate an argument for protesting the invasion. Mitchell links the emergence of the neoconservative Bush

from a political movement built with the “help of the windfalls reaped by American oil billionaires from the 1973–74 rise in oil prices,” (223) to a pre-planned invasion of Iraq, in response to an impasse reached at the end of the 1990s following the failure of a US plan to turn “Iraq’s wartime dependence on its support into a long-term economic and political relationship.” (216) Most people know that the September 11 attacks were used to win support for the invasion, but I am not certain they know why the invasion happened; without understanding the connections to oil, the reasons for invasion are not as obvious. In a similar vein, Mitchell also clearly and powerfully reconstructs the fundamental links between the Iraq invasion, OPEC oil embargos, and the Israel and Palestine conflict.

*Carbon Democracy* is important because it provides non-specialists in political economy, such as myself, with multiple examples of how democracy is involved in the process of producing and using carbon energy. Understanding democracy as a political tool of oil unsettles and reframes some of our most precious political assumptions. However, Mitchell makes no recommendations on how to create more egalitarian forms of democracy. Indeed, it is highly uncertain that the vulnerabilities, both environmental and economic, inherent in new forms of oil exploration, such as the tar sands and deep-ocean drilling, will lead to new forms of democracy.✕

#### Bio

**Clint Langevin** received his M.Arch from the University of Toronto in 2011 after completing an undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering at Syracuse University. His graduate thesis research culminated in a conceptual pilot project called The Tar Creek Supergrid, a habitable solar energy generation structure situated among dozens of massive waste rock piles in the town of Picher, Oklahoma. The project has been exhibited internationally at the 2012 International Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam and Arup’s Phase 2 Gallery in London, and featured in publications such as *Volume 31: Guilty Landscapes*, and *BRACKET* [at extremes]. Upon graduating from the University of Toronto, Clint founded the research and design studio Captains of Industry, with his partner Amy Norris. Their work focuses on the problems and potentials of our industrial heritage on a variety of different scales. They are currently designing an installation focused on water monitoring at the Alberta Tar Sands for an upcoming exhibition titled *Rapid Response: Architecture Prepares for Disaster*, which opens in Toronto in June 2013.

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*Imagine No Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*,  
Christina Kiaer, MIT Press, 2005, 344 pp.

review by Maria Taylor

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Christina Kiaer proposes that the Russian Constructivists of the 1920s, such as Aleksandr Rodchenko and Vladimir Tatlin, advanced a concept of the “co-worker” or “comradely” object, which aimed to supplant the capitalist desire for commodities in a new socialist society. Until this society was realized, they hoped to create objects so utilitarian, produced through such decisively socialist production methods, that commodity fetishism could be averted. Kiaer argues against the more traditional historiographic narrative that suggests the early avant-garde efforts retreated or were interrupted during the New Economic Policy, instead asserting that the Constructivists’ later interest in the production of everyday objects was

fully in keeping with their ideological and artistic commitments.<sup>1</sup> While the details of Kiaer's analysis are of interest to architectural and art historians of interwar European Modernism, her work demands to be read by a more diverse audience, especially those interested in material culture or material agency, the recent turn to "thing-theory," and the relationship of the commodity-object to social change—including design's relationship to practices of "sustainability."

The interwar eruption of Constructivism and other Russian avant-garde movements is the primary point of reference for most people who know something about Russian or Soviet art and architecture but do not work in this field. For specialists, the corresponding literature is voluminous. *Imagine No Possessions*, which was awarded a Wayne S. Vucinich Prize Honourable Mention by the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, is neither the newest nor the most comprehensive addition to this historiographic excess. What sets Kiaer's work apart from the many earlier studies and exhibition catalogues is her careful, theoretically subtle, and lavishly illustrated analysis of Constructivism's internal logic of the useful object.

The book's title, appropriated from John Lennon's "Imagine" lyrics of 1971, sets up the fundamental position in Kiaer's argument:

Constructivism is unique among the politically engaged avant-gardes of the twentieth century because it imagined "no possessions" both from the perspective of an achieved socialist revolution that made such imagining more than utopian dreaming and—at the same time—from within the commodity culture of NEP that forced that imagining to contend with the present reality of commodity-desiring human subjects. (26)

Rather than being an inhospitable environment in which the utopian ideals of Constructivists withered (as others have argued), Kiaer sees the revived market activity of the NEP period as a "crucible" for Constructivist theories of the object, during which time these "artist-engineers" did not retreat from their utilitarian art-into-life ideals, but instead applied themselves all the more passionately to their realization. (26) This is one of Kiaer's main interventions in the literature, as her portrayal of the Constructivist trajectory during the

NEP differs from that of other theorists and historians of the avant-garde such as Peter Bürger, Boris Groys, Christina Lodder, and Paul Wood (a historiographic intervention that Kiaer describes explicitly in chapter one).

Kiaer also looks at the "self-consciously transitional objects" designed and constructed by an expanded cast of Constructivists, including Tatlin (pots, pans, men's clothing, stoves), Liubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova (whose "flapper" dress was one of the few such mass-produced constructions), Rodchenko and Vladimir Mayakovsky (for their joint work on various advertising campaigns), as well as Rodchenko's "Worker's Club" interior built for the International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Arts in Paris (1925). Her roughly chronological treatment of these artists and their objects ends with the "final, valedictory resurgence" of the "Constructivist dream of the comradely object" as manifested in El Lissitzky's 1929 set designs for a never-performed eugenic play, Sergei Tret'iakov's *I Want A Child!* (244) Boris Arvatov, who was also "reclaimed" by Kiaer in a separate article in *October*, is introduced early on as the main theoretician of socialist objects.<sup>2</sup>

Another major move distinguishing this book from its peers is Kiaer's use of a psychoanalytic lens to discuss the oral and anal fixations, gender anxiety, and depictions of violence and sexuality in the work of Rodchenko and others. The status of the Constructivist "comradely commodity" as a "transitional object" thus exhibits a dual character: it is the utilitarian object that will allow the mass consumer to progress from capitalist desire for the commodity-fetish, and the psychoanalytically potent "transitional object"—analyzed variously by Sigmund Freud, Melanie Klein, and Donald Winnicott—though which individuals express their inner states.

Throughout the book, Kiaer's focus alternates between these two explanatory frameworks: the tension between the imaginative-utopian significance of theory and the material, quotidian limitations of production. The tension between these two frames is, in this case, an especially productive method of analysis. For example, in her convincing case study of Tatlin's efforts to design supremely functional everyday objects, Kiaer proposes that these prototypes were seen by Tatlin and his fellow Constructivists as an advance in their design strategies, rather than a retreat from the utopian ambitions of his higher profile designs for the Monument to the Third International and his flying machines. For Kiaer, "Tatlin refuses to concede to the commodity desires of modernity. Instead, he imagines that his active socialist objects can organize a modern form of everyday life that will be free of such desires" (87). In the case of Rodchenko and the Worker's Club, Kiaer presents close readings of Rodchenko's letters home (in which he expresses simultaneous desire for the stylish modernity of Paris and revulsion at his weakness of character for feeling such desires). This account compliments Walter Benjamin's roughly contemporaneous depiction of Moscow with a new perspective on the familiar foldable chairs and chess tables, and greater attention to the contra-

dictions between the Torgsektor trading kiosks and Socialist anti-commodity ideals that comprised the Soviet exhibit itself.

It is obvious enough to recommend this book to anyone interested in the works and inner worlds of these artists in particular, or early Soviet modernism and the so-called Cultural Revolution more generally. However, a more consequential connection—albeit one left unstated by Kiaer—can be discerned between these early Soviet theories of the affective, transformative capacity of everyday objects and recent work in cultural anthropology and related fields on the bundled *qualia*, social lives, and agency of things and objects. As a premonitory study, *Imagine No Possessions* might find a welcome place in a reading list on material culture, in addition to works by Daniel Miller, Alfred Gell, Bruno Latour, Web Keane, Bill Brown, and Jane Betton, among others. In this context, Kiaer's study not only opens a new line of inquiry for those uninitiated in the internal logic of Soviet Constructivism, but also helps balance the claims of novelty that afflict many contemporary thing-theorists; with Kiaer, we discover that long before "thing-power" was lauded as a novel form of *reading* micropolitics, the Russian Constructivists were *producing* comrade-objects in the service of socialism. ✕

#### Endnotes

- 1 The New Economic Policy (NEP) period of Soviet history (1921–1929) was characterized by a limited return to non-state market activity. Initiated by Lenin and abandoned by Stalin with the advent of the first Five-Year Plan, the NEP reversed some of the more radical policies of the preceding period of "War Communism." For a concise introduction, see Lewis Siegelbaum's "Seventeen Moments in Soviet History," <http://www.soviethistory.org>.
- 2 Christina Kiaer, "Boris Arvatov's Socialist Objects," *October* 81 (1997): 105–118.

#### Bio

**Maria Taylor** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Architecture (History/Theory) at the University of Michigan. Her dissertation research examines Soviet urbanism of the 1950s–1970s, looking in particular at city-nature entanglements and the interconnections between place, plan, and professional practice in Siberian city building. Taylor has lived in a variety of U.S. cities as well as Budapest, St. Petersburg, and Krasnoyarsk, Russia, where she will spend the 2013–14 academic year doing fieldwork thanks to Fulbright and SSRC grants. She has a Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Washington and a Master of Arts from Stanford University in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

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*Kish, An Island Indecisive by Design,*  
Nasrin Tabatabai and Babak Afrassiabi  
NAi Publishers, 2012, 160 pp.

*review by Steven Chodoriwsky*

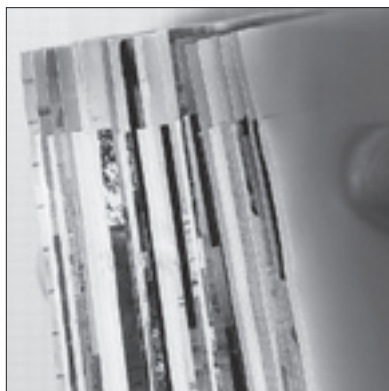
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A book as an island is a promising analogue, beginning with the cover, which suggests peering landwards from the boat offshore. It is a rare reading experience to turn to page one and have the pagination affirm your actions, but there it is, “001,” at bottom-centre like an anchor, paired with the word “Geography” directly above, both in Times. A hand-drawn historical map from the pale green cover reappears, albeit with a legend and location plan. Underneath the map, two sketch elevations of the island of Kish appear to confirm that I’m still on the boat offshore. Captions, dating the drawings to 1941, are in Courier at bottom-right. There’s something happening with the pages: they are not all the same size, and I catch a glimpse of 003 and 005 already, out there at the margins. I ignore this alluring prospect for a moment and shut the book.

Back out on the cover—in case the title was not a weighty enough proposal—a publisher’s voice draws the outline for where a reader might follow the authors: to a place “where the extremes of politics, architecture and urban design visibly collide,” a “stage of conflicting desires” which give it a “misplaced historical disposition.” Online, I obtain an even drier inventory: “The book brings together a recent essay with images of past and present states of the island, clippings of magazines and other publications, a transcript of a film, interviews, and material from past exhibitions.” Between these two briefs—and indeed rising above them—is the elegant physical object itself, with my left hand holding the spine and right thumb poised to flip through with curiosity.

One flip past the cover, I land not at the beginning, but already on pages 004–005; next flip comes 012–013; then 020–021 and its gauzy photographs of futuristic modern architecture foregrounded by fashion models, with magazine copy, in French, in italics. At this rate it takes only seventeen more skips to get through the slim volume,

amounting to exactly one quarter of its content, one spread out of every four. Is it only a coincidence that the first adjective mentioned in *Kish* is “elliptical?”

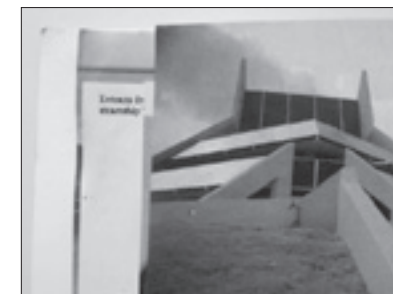


I jump straight to the back cover, where page 160 is also, oddly, paginated though otherwise blank. Its central purpose is pragmatic: to affix the 20 stitch-sewn signatures to the cover. At this point it becomes clear to me that the cover has to be torn off—title, green-on-green imagery,

and the publisher’s blurb would need to be jettisoned in order to get inside. I expected this to be a messier affair, but the adhesive peeled off easily, and the excess gum rolled into a tiny oval that vaguely and pleasingly resembled the island’s shape at miniature scale.

Taking a moment to consult the internet again, a glum dictionary entry tells me that Kish, 10 miles off mainland Iran in the Persian Gulf, is “almost without vegetation,” with only “stunted herbage;” further along, a tourist bureau site pronounces it a “flat land devoid of any significant elevation.” I have returned to the book numerous times over the past weeks in various states of mind. Despite its clear, tripartite structure, and no doubt due to its idiosyncratic design, each return feels only modestly more successful than the last; I have been unable to navigate myself through the stunted herbage on repeated attempts. Once inside and fumbling around, it is not just navigation that falters but also stable memory that lapses. *Kish* resists intimate knowledge, such as the joy of turning a page knowing this or that illustration will be there in wait. Instead there is a sort of flat threat throughout. Reading *Kish* confounds and confides. It rewards a very patient reader with images and reading sensations. The authors and designer have travelled great lengths to show, in painstaking detail, that Kish too might be like that—less, in the end, about describing a *where* than demonstrating a *how*. Island and book: their readings exhilarate, enervate, and exhaust because I am both here and also there, in a chair staring at this ragged atlas on my desk, and on a boat offshore, staring at a flat land devoid of elevation, views and scales collapsing together in deep focus.

Corners are not where I expect them, and the extra split-second it takes me to find them pulls my eyes off whatever I was looking at (or for), and sets the whole enterprise swerving toward the margins. Attention to overlaps and purposeful misalignments give the edges tactility, a brittle sharpness, taunting me to leave the book altogether.



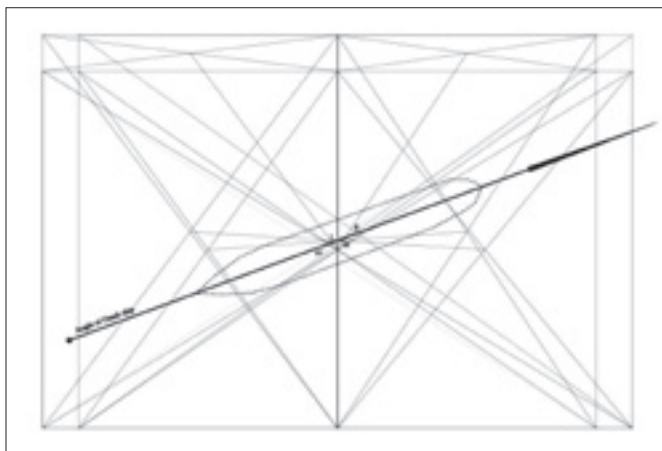
I stick around, but I cannot really get lost in here; it is an island, after all. I am in a book on a desk and there are clear sight-lines in all directions. Walk straight long enough and hit a coastline. Is it possible to design a book that succeeds in reading me, in watching me? This is the opposite of being *lost*, where every detail registers and grates. I turn to compiling with hysterical exactitude, which spills into the reading, stains all its content, and threatens to damage the reviewing process: How many times is there a photograph of a setting sun? Why do so few Kish locals make an appearance? Is it just coincidence that the total number of bound signatures equals the tally of credited photographers? Which image appears at the book’s heart? One unwitting miscalculation runs the risk of getting every square millimeter of the thing wrong.

It takes a long time—too long, certainly—to wrap my head around the fact that there are just two different sheet sizes comprising the book. They are equal in width but twenty millimeters different in height. The squatter of the two is shifted laterally twenty millimeters, so when the sheets are collated, folded, and bound, the spine is dislodged from its typical symmetry and creates four unique spread shapes in each signature, sequentially recurring. To recap: 20 signatures of eight enumerated pages each, equalling 160 pages, four spreads, two authors, and one designer, names buried deep in the fine print of the colophon. And one first-person narrator-who-is-not-the-author, one “I,” an able guide through Kish’s history, but otherwise oddly reticent. How reliable is this “I?”

After determining the economy of the paper sizing, I convince myself that there are further truths and auspicious geometries afoot, a collected knowledge that designer, authors, and island are all col-

cluding to employ. I am not especially prone to conspiracy theories, but my mind has a tendency to wander. In fact, it was an odd empirical observation from page 044 that sent my analysis reeling. Our narrator, “I,” is speaking about the “Greek ship,” a cargo vessel stranded off the south-eastern coast since 25 July 1966, the genesis event, “I” believes, of Kish’s modernity. Now a tourist site, it also “prophesied what would become Kish’s awry odyssey” through decades of indecision, uneven development, and political uncertainty up to present-day. “I” muses:

I once calculated that if I were to walk from the spot where the Greek ship was stranded all the way to the opposite side of the island, in a straight line exactly aligned with the ship’s axis, I would end up at a curved tip on the north-eastern shore renowned for being the best spot from which to view the sunrise. [...] The development of the resort began right at the foot of this spot.



I follow the imperative; I turn the page, into the heart of the central essay. Amidst seven consecutive pages of images, up-to-then unprecedented, there is a 2012 photograph of the Shah’s Palace, built in 1972, shown here half-abandoned, its once-prim garden now teeming with overgrowth. Unique for *Kish*, it is both uncaptioned and unpaginated. The washed-out white sky of the digital photograph merges with the blank parts of two excess margins, resulting in a complete, uninterrupted, full-bleed experience. The waves of staggered sheets

Emboldened, I hurry the pace of my accounting. I measure each of the spreads, comparing areas of “primary surfaces” to the “excess surfaces” (edges of pages already flipped past and those yet to come) salvaged from the ingenious staggering technique. There must be an adequate point of entry, some rudimentary navigational tool, to be able to read *Kish* the way its authors strove to read the island. It turns out that not only do the four spreads each comprise a different square-millimeterage, but their shapes each hold unique barycentres which, when plotted together, result in a quadrilateral hovering around the spine, pointing east-northeast. I felt like someone gave me a compass. The trajectory of the hovering quadrilateral and the trajectory of the Greek Ship were identical and therefore, in my mind, emphatically pointing towards the top-right corner of the page where my thumb rests, eager to turn to the next one. Against my better judgment, against the odds, *Kish* has come to this.

mercifully relent, giving way to the single dusky image where I can finally take a moment to lie down and rest.✕

Bio

**Steven Chodoriwsky** has held research positions at Jan van Eyck Academie and the Center for Contemporary Art in Kitakyushu, and was educated in architecture at the Tokyo Institute of Technology and the University of Waterloo. His practice employs installation, performance, built form, photography, and text. He was born in Englehart, Canada, and currently teaches at Cornell University.