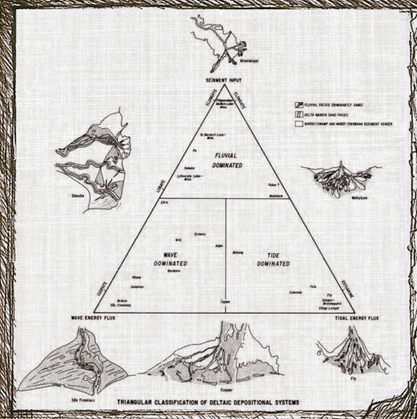









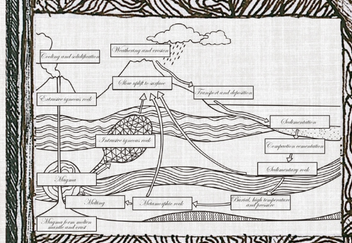

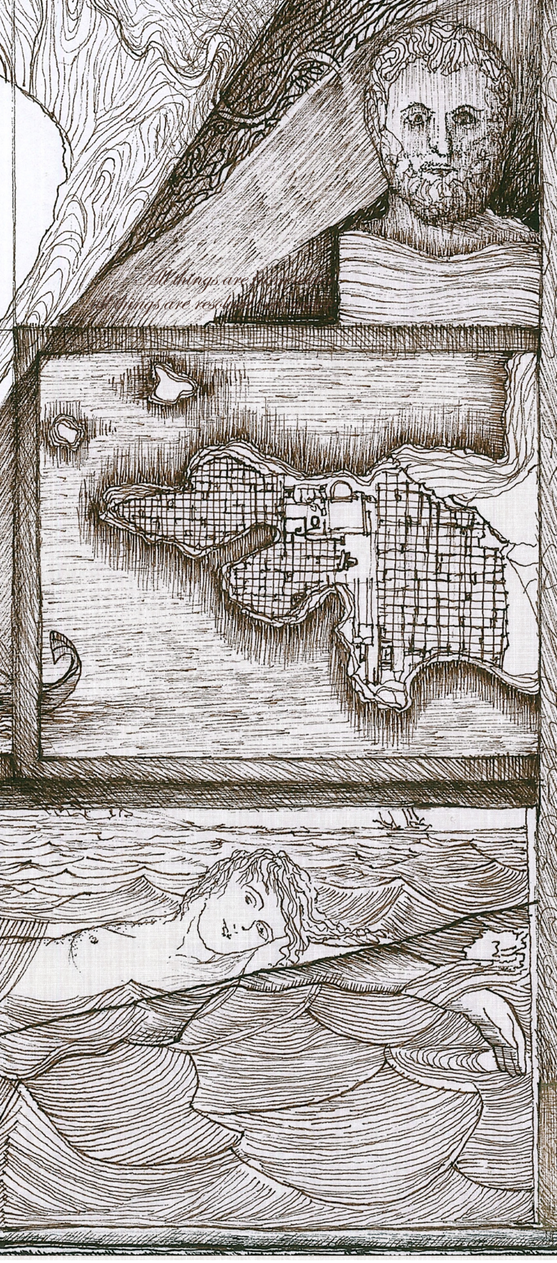

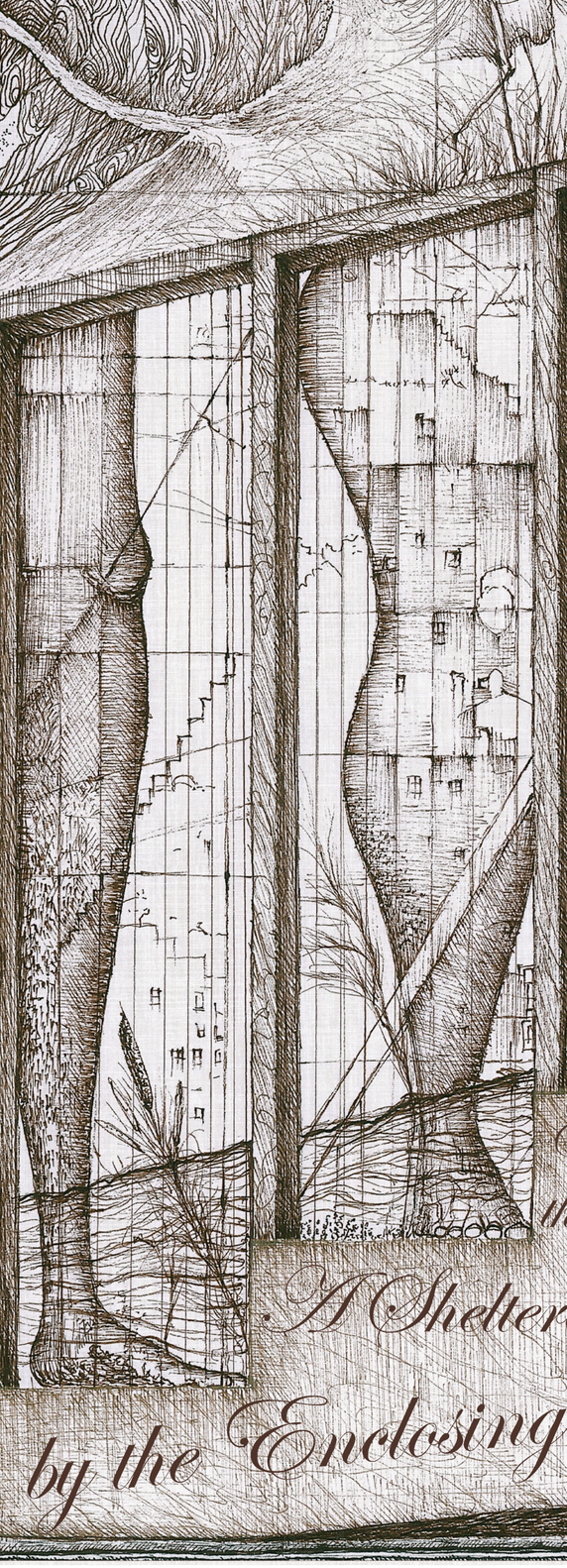

2000 years cal BP, a visitor arrives at the cape. He stops by the wild beach and dips his feet into the shallow pebbly water. There, he meets Artchitectologist no. 1: the local legend. He ceaselessly counts the time it takes for visitors to bathe between two tides and ponders: Of the masts by thousands adorning shores which many an ocean laves, how many will be shattered, by the winds and by the waves? He is one of those who likes to live in the past. The climate of his sight changes from wet to dry and from dry to wet according to his mental weather. Therefore, he can see things as they were when the Istros (Danube) met the sea in front of the Orgame fortress: fleets of Hellen and Gaules, large, round-bottomed merchant vessels, carrying heavy loads of merchandise from distant Milesian shores, exchanging both goods and ideas...the hero's pyre smoking, broken pots thrown at the fortress wall and the sand that makes the ships stand still, a league from the shore...armor from the graves of heroes...Ariadnes mooring at Dolejman...amphorae, libations, and cremations. The ancient Halmyris Gulf was a huge tidal pool - self-breathing and filtering water like a strainer, but each new sediment gradually closed it. Now there are fewer visitors, carried by different winds. Once, amongst them, laid the latest artifact the Lifeguard witnessed the Black Sea birthing from its depths - a lapidary engraving, full of algae, cracks that read: BETWEEN CONCRETE AND ABSTRACT

ARCHITECTURE ERODES HOMELESSNESS AND SEDIMENTS HOMESICKNESS

The thesis' intention is to relate, reflect, and react to the highly complex, deeply subjective aspect of memory in architecture, through the lenses of erosion and sedimentation, two complementary phenomena, that can have both geologic and anthropic origins, and which far outweigh our lifetime. The chosen locus of investigation is the oldest established ancient city in Romania, ruins eroded, ruins sedimented, an archaeological site since the beginning of the last century. The site is located on the shores of Razim-Sinoe, the largest lake in Romania, which was an open, yet gradually enclosing gulf (a tidal pool) to the Black Sea in Antiquity when the Greek colonists from Histria founded Orgame on a cliff promontory later called Cape Dolosman by the Turks; a place which is now one of the many strictly protected areas of the Danube Delta - UNESCO World Heritage Site. This latter fact ensures that from a pragmatic near-future perspective, any tentative design scenario that envisions a permanent structure on a bigger scale than that of an elevated pathway through the ruin will almost certainly remain unbuilt. This honest acknowledgment, rather than triggering nostalgic lamentation over the apparent impossibility of acting upon this picturesque place, so infused with poetic qualities, opens the opportunity for a meta-reflection on the permanence and transience of architectonic explorations as both material gestures and abstract concepts, navigating through uncannily entangled flows between Nature and Artifact which ceaselessly permeate Architecture.

All things are
things are res

Gateway to
the Pathway
A Sheltered Pool
by the Enclosing Gulf

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate I -
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Lithos

Vertebrae

Wandering on a Braided Path

4000 years old. BCE, a visitor returns to the Cape. He ventures further than the previous one on the hilly paths of the promontory, until he reaches a stone in the middle of a bush of salvia, marking the crossroads of Cardo and Decumanus. There, he meets Architectologist no. 2, the Caretaker of the site. He regularly mows the grass along the braided paths to keep them visible. For him, walking on them feels like walking on a great backbone. Fluorometric dating may measure time by the accumulation of fluor in bones, yet he has his own way of counting time, by tying and counting stones that gradually fall off from the edge of the eroding cliff. Sun-burned hot stones in extra-muros ceramic fire kilns; rain-wet cold stones edged by vegetation intended to protect them against infills of moisture; all this lithic matter massages the great dorsal spine. Metal plates stuck in the cliff-like anchoring steps gradually reveal erosion. Matter hurrying to flow from one state to another leaves disrupted sedimented impurities behind. The corporeal plunge into the sensible sediment reveals fine aggregates and fragments rendered as solid consciousness. The landscape of reason is battered under eroded reveries. The mental confines and the outside world are in a never-ending state of erosion: mental rivers carve abstract stories and beds, immanence subverts cliffs of thought, and ideas split into stones of becoming. Among them, The Caretaker picks one that reads:

BETWEEN CONTINGENCY AND AUTONOMY,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES DOMESTICITY AND SEDIMENTS WANDERING.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate II -

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Strolling

Folly

A Ghostly-Draped Balloon

100 years ago, a BPE another visitor arrives at the Cape. He ventures further than the previous one on the hilly paths of the promontory. From a distance, he starts to visually apprehend the elusive shape of the contour of a ghostly silhouette that seems to be floating out of thin air. Viewed from above, one could not tell it wasn't but a giant old web covering the grid shelves of a cabinet of curiosities. Approaching it with caution, our intrigued visitor could now distinguish between its composing parts: a device resembling a hot-air balloon filled with the noblest of gases, and a tent-like fabric attached to its nacelle, anchored with tensile cables on stakes as duties, driven into the ground. Underneath this umbrella pavilion, wooden foldable "movie director" chairs, tied to the woven fabric, surround a central archeological excavation pit. When the wind blows, the anchors snap, the balloon rises, the tent with it, and the articulated chairs start performing kinetic action like the feet of a myriapod, galloping in mid-air. Conducting this dynamic orchestra is Architectologist no. 3, the Pilot. Sitting in the balloon's nacelle, he waits and counts impatiently the time between two gusts of wind. The visitor delves into the layers of sedimentation. The abstract grids of raw matter cast an eerie shadow of shattered, scattered incompleteness upon the earth's surface and the firmament of our mind. The latest artifact the Pilot observed from above with his telescope read:

BETWEEN TECHNE AND ART,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES SPACE AND SEDIMENTS PLACE.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate III -

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The Tell Amphitheater

A Ziggurat of Archaeological Earthworks

1500 years cal. B.P. another visitor returns to the Cape. He ventures further on the hilly paths of the promontory, even more than he did in his previous walks. He gets a triangular shape cutting the horizon line. Approaching it, he better distinguishes its shape which turned out to have the resemblance of a stepped ziggurat, when viewed from its long side. Turning around the corner, an amphitheater reveals itself, made of wooden formworks, supported by wooden studs, in what appeared to be a hastily improvised manner, judging by the irregularity of their angles to the ground. The path cut through the amphitheater, separating the auditorium from the stage. In between the two parts, hidden in plain sight, in the middle of the road, the visitor bumps into Architectologist no. 4, the Prompter. He is no backstage whisperer, but ceaselessly counts the time it takes to fill the amphitheater with the excavated earth from the ruins on the stage, as shovels spill soil into an infinity of heaps. The more digs, the higher the auditorium grows, the deeper the ruins on stage and the play acts multiply. Driven by curiosity, visitors fill the amphitheater to watch the Play of the Past, whispered by the Prompter. When the excavations finish, the formwork is dismantled, the earthen auditorium covers back the stage for further conservation, and the itinerant theater moves to another location where the story repeats. And somewhere between the cats, feared spirits, the latest artifact the Prompter read.

BETWEEN NATURE AND ARTIFACT,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES THE SUBJECT AND SEDIMENTS THE OBJECT.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate IV -

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100 years cal B.P. a tourist arrives on the Cape. He follows the winding hilly paths until he reaches the highest point of the promontory. The site looks abandoned, the foundation walls of the ancient ruins appear left at the mercy of time, to be naturally buried again under layers of organic vegetal matter as years go by. Scattered clusters of rare flowers lured insects into a frenzy dance. As our tourist tries to find the next turn of the path, his foot stumbles upon what he thought was a mere stone, hidden in lush greenery. He bends to the ground only to discover a long, linear, and precise crevice on its surface. This narrow slit cuts aside a rectangular platform from its surroundings. Peeking through it, he realises the platform on which he stepped was deceptive in its appearance, and turns out to be the top floor of a building that collapses like an "intelligent ruin", the home of Architectologist no. 5: the Botanist. While indulging in dendrochronology and palynology, he ceaselessly counts the time it takes for the weight of the earth gradually amassing on the terrace to turn into a botanical garden and sink his plant laboratory. Xylem & Phloem, so he can also count the sedimented layers of varves. The stratum of the Earth is a jigsaw puzzle. Entrenched in the confines of sediments are bundles of scripts that escape reason. The morphic essences of geological schisms become unravelled, conjuring the contour between darkness and light. Technological marvels account for a mental plethora of eroded eons, as fluid states of reflection. The hydraulic compression of the geologic chaos in the strata of esthetic consciousness flows through four telescopic colossal order columns, revealing secret sunken storeys. High pressure water breaks through pores and winter plants like a fire sprinkler. On the deepest ground floor, an artifact that reads:

BETWEEN REVEAL AND CONCEAL,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES LIGHT AND SEDIMENTS MYSTERY.

Hydraulic Quatrefoil Sunken Slabs with Secret Storeys

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate V -

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Lifeboat

Basilica A House On a Roof

150 years ca. B.P. a tourist returns to the Cape. Having already reached the top of the cliff, he goes down the tangled path and sets his sight on an elongated wooden structure, shaped in the form of the keel of a boat. Sitting close to the end of the cliff, one who thinks it is about to slip from its edge and fall into the sea might not be wrong after all about the purpose of this piece of architecture and the intentions of its owner, Architectologist nº 6, the Captain. He is a brave seafarer from Veneto. His Carena di nave rovesciata was once the roof of an Italian basilica and palazzo. With the magnetic reversal of the poles, his compass failed him, and a mighty storm capsized it, turning it back into a boat. His roof boat drifted away in the storm until the waters receded and it found itself sitting on top of the ruins of another basilica, yet a Greco-Roman one. Solemnly holding its new ground with magnanimity, he counts the time left until lifting anchor again: the collapse of the eroding cliff, preparing for his amphibious roof to become a lifeboat, as if deployed from a cruise ship, laden with nature and artifacts, floating away to uncharted, safer lands. Meanwhile, he fills his boat with future ballast, the same old excavated earth from the birth of ruins. He builds a pilothouse on top, digs a tunnel to reach it from his suspended garden, propped up with cues from the former windows. His courtyard is a sepulchral space for treasured artifacts. One reads:

BETWEEN PRAGMATIC AND POETIC,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES MATTER AND SEDIMENTS DREAMS.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate VI -

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Tower Of Tents
An Itinerant Flagship

4.40 years cal. BP another tourist ventures further down the paths of the Cape guided from afar by an anthropic sediment carried by the water and the winds: a stainless steel tower of eight silver polypropylene tents, each mirrored with eight suspended gardens, like a succession of hourglasses, awaiting for the excavated earth site to be hoisted with cable cars and zip lines and sedimented on its floors, each housing one of eight Artchitectologists: the Nomads. They move freely from one floor to another, counting the time it takes for the deposited earth to grow into a garden. On the seventh floor, the Birdwatcher lures birds to nest in his garden and marks their feet. On the sixth floor, the Stratigrapher extracts and documents artifacts, ecofacts, and organic remains. On the fifth floor, the Paleontologist studies fossil remains, prehistoric flora and fauna. On the fourth floor, the Sedimentologist studies soil composition, sediments, and their geomorphology, interpreting the earth materials and the geological context of the artifacts. On the third floor, the Chemist conducts experiments on the chemical composition of the soil. On the second floor, the Anthropologist interprets social structure, technology, and cultural practices. On the first floor, the Archaeobotanist - Ecologist studies plant and animal remains, reconstructing ancient diets and agriculture. On the ground floor, the Pedologist pours the soil at the cliff's base to mitigate erosion, forming a stone that says:

BETWEEN PROTOTYPE AND ARCHETYPE,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES THE CAVE AND SEDIMENTS THE TENT.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate VII -

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Hortus Conclusus

A Telescopic Formwork Corridor

200 years old. B.C. another tourist returns to the Cape. The Ancient City was all unearthed by now, excavated in its entirety, meticulously sentinized, investigated, explored, and divided on cartesian regulating sector grids. Our tourist can now walk on the same paths and step on the same stones as the ardent Greeks and Romans. He exits the gate, passing by the remains of the Big Gate. Running on the downward spiraling path, a bridge-like structure unfolds in front of him, beckoning him to enter and discover what it holds inside a seemingly infinite cabinet of curiosities in a wooden telescopic formwork, with walls and floors sliding into one another like a Matreshka doll. A pulsating corridor of ascetic ascent and profane descent into an intricate pattern of shelves, niches, and porthole windows full of stones, bones, scale models of various buildings, balloons, textile fabrics, amphitheaters, hydraulic cylinders, roofs, boats, and tents, growing from its earthen floor, whose origin of displacement is by no longer a mystery. The eccentric mix is carefully curated in seriation by Artchitectologist no. 8: the Hortologist. He ceaselessly counts the time it takes to climb a peak and, bridge a hill with paper projects of earth containers, fictions carved in the eroding flow of time. Preserves pebbles turn into invented topographies of geological artifices. His caotic resistance against the cavernous matter fissures into broken fragments that, put together, speak.

BETWEEN TRANSIENCE AND TIMELESSNESS,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES MEMORY AND SEDIMENTS NOSTALGIA.

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate VIII -

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100 years cal BP, a foreigner leaves the Cape with a fleet of reed boats, joined together at their end to form a floating pontoon. A tricky "tightrope" balancing act, walking on water and leaping from one boat to another. It is the fragile transient craftwork of Artchitectologist no. 9: the Rower. He ceaselessly counts the time it takes for water to turn back the pontoon into a fleet of boats. Floating in this temporal river are mnemonic remnants - places where uncertain futures meet distant pasts, as fragments of greater fragmentation. Hundreds of overturned lotca boats stood burnt by the sun and beaten by the wind. They had belonged to Lipovan fishermen who had died, some half-rotten, others as if they had recently come ashore. It was an old tradition for the boats of fishermen who died not to walk on the water anymore, but to be taken up on the promontory, where they would rot by themselves... Searching for sunken ruins with the eye-shaped canoe, stalloming between anti-erosion wooden poles stuck to the seafloor near the shore. Between a cloudy sunrise and the boats turned upside down, the phragmites keep their verticality. Between the inextricable forest of reeds, willows, and water lilies, fishermen take out their empty nets, for there is fish, better not stink... An excavator is dredging near a dilapidated [illegible] underwater. Between the fog of the night and the dry reeds, of a dry [illegible]

BETWEEN FUNCTION AND FORM,
ARCHITECTURE ERODES
MEANS-TO-AN-END AND SEDIMENTS
END-IN-ITSELF.

Agricol
Agro-piscicol
Piscicol-agricol
Agro-industrial
Complex

Canoe Reed Pontoon

A Bubble Ponytail

A Cabinet of Architectonic Curiosities
On a Path between Erosion and Sedimentation
- Plate IX -
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