THE DRIFT OF VALLISAARI.

HELSINKI, FINLAND.

PROJECT NARRATIVE STATEMENT

Katsoa, Nähdä

“to look, to see”

Upon arrival to Finland, one senses a presence about the impact of an architectural silence on a culture. As you fly over the Finnish forests and descend into the land, a calming effect is laid over one’s body, giving birth to a relationship between the individual and the Finnish landscape. This silence mentioned encourages one to begin to not only look, but to truly open their eyes and hearts to the innate beauty around them. Through the course of these intense few months, seeing has taken on new meaning, adopting an embodied experience through the combination of all the senses. The landscape and its architecture then swells with energy, releasing itself into the souls of the country.

The town that we would spend the majority of time during the abroad session was home to multiple identities throughout its manifestation. Helsinki locates itself on the coast of the Baltic Sea, facing out into its European neighbors. Although Finland as a whole does not have a vast population, a city such as Helsinki portrays itself as quite the opposite in its density and sprawling out surrounding towns such as Kallio. To begin to get a grasp on the identity of place here in Helsinki, one must dive deep into the origins, understanding how a power struggle has shaped the country and its cities into what they are to this day. During the early 1900’s, Finland became a part of the Soviet Union, taking away its freedom that the country was associated with. Over time, it regained its independence and has since then established its identity as a country of peace and harmony through its landscape, design, architecture, and its people. In the first few weeks in the city, it challenged one to accept its rationale, with how the streets wind into one another, blending the transition of axiality experience with the merging of the Kampii district and the Central Railway Station. The area where we spent most of our nights, Domus Academica, was located on the eastern side of the city, a more calm and subtle community when compared to the hustle and bustle of the central downtown districts. When walking westward from Domus, the speed of the city accelerates as the intensity of vehicles, commuters, and shopping centers appear in front of you.
One of the reoccurring themes within the collection of writings, photographs, and drawings during the trip is the use of collage to form new ways of not only looking, documenting, and cataloging, but an entirely new way of seeing the world around us. Our memory of space, whether purely architectural or not, is highly fragmented, only recalling the moments of heightened sensory experience. Collage in the set of images above attempts to materialize these thoughts and experiences. Helsinki here emerges as memory, a small snapshot into those spaces that we inhabited.
MUURATSALO EXPERIMENTAL HOUSE DOCUMENTS : Sourced from the Alvar Aalto Foundation.

The documents above were sourced in partnership with the Alvar Aalto foundation during the first month as a base for the documentation / analog measuring that we would be documenting. The drawings provided (up to 40) helped us begin to understand the autonomy of the mind that Aalto possessed. They then were used as a base, as we began to unfold the project through a series of models and digital drawings.

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SLIDE 003/010
MUURATSALO EXPERIMENTAL HOUSE THROUGH DIGITAL / ANALOG DRAWING.

The images above were completed a series of (5) total. These drawings attempt to manifest the immaterial nature of experience that one has while visiting a project of this magnitude. The drawings use a variety of manipulations to the original documents through digital media. These consist of folding, pulling back, undoing, and lastly revealing. Muuratsalo here expresses itself as more than lines on a page.

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Along with the series of digital drawings, the group that studied together during this time also produced a physical model that included the Muuratsalo house, the landscape it submerges itself into, and the water that incapsulates it. The physical model was the most strenuous challenge during that month, as it required the precision of the digital model, the atmosphere of the drawings, and the precision of the hand.

MUURATSALO EXPERIMENTAL HOUSE : PHYSICAL MODEL.

THE DRIFT OF VALLISAARI.
The Drift of Vallisaari: Initial Sketches and Collage.

The obsession with Matta-Clark emerged as the project was first given. Here above through collage, one projects a series of un-doings, of passing through, of manipulating the existing. The work is that only of subtraction, only of taking away what was given. These images set the stage for the project, allowing it to exist as an experience on the water of Vallisaari.
The Drift of Vallisaari: Mappings of the psycho-geographic memory.

The condition surrounding the plot of land delegated to the programmatic usage of a militarized surveillance bunker is a boundary in a solidified way. As one continuous on the implied pathway constructed by the repetition of footsteps through approach, they will notice what may be defined as a “wallpaper of forestry”. This condition is intended to un-survey the surveillance object, subtly implying that the space ahead is not meant to be accessed for the programmatic use of enjoyment or wandering. This boundary is also one that must be overcame to access the proposed site, as it is the only accessible way of approach.
The Drift of Vallisaari: A Tower of Memory.

“Off in the distance lies a tower. A tower in which frames the mentality of the Finnish landscape, the people who inhabit it, and the structures which lay upon it. Through splitting, the tower is framed in such a way that it becomes more than itself, more than the materials that lay upon its skin, more than the systems that allow it to exist. There is no “whole” here, only parts to parts, giving way to un-architecting architecture as Mr. Price might say.
The Drift of Vallisaari: A Tower of Memory.

With the Finnish cultural philosophy of “EveryMan’s Right” ingrained into the land that we occupy during our three month journey, one question may arise: “at what point has one then crossed that boundary of implied space, impending on another man’s property?” Here, the conversation of boundaries begin to take place ... what are these boundaries that lie in front of us, whether they exist in the spatial, social, ecological, logistical, political, or even economical terms. Boundaries can be portrayed in a variety of material and immaterial / tangible and intangible forms. Possibly, an even more conversation must be held regarding who lies in authority to these definitions of boundaries? Does the law always have an upper hand? Or does the “man” under EveryMan’s right?
The Drift of Vallisaari: A Tower of Memory.

The term itself may even raise question to authority in Finnish culture in regards to the use of “Man”. How does these speak on the history of authority in Finland? Do women hold equivalence to men in this Finnish philosophy? Do all people? Possibly we may even begin to discuss on when a boy may turn into this definition of a “Man”. Or another approach may be made... has Finnish culture denoted the human to that of an animal such as a deer wandering upon the land? Or has the animal been elevated to that of the human?