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# **RUINS**

**BY JESS DIXON**

**A PRACTICUM**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE,**

**DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE.**

**PREPARED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF**

**A MASTERS OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE DEGREE**

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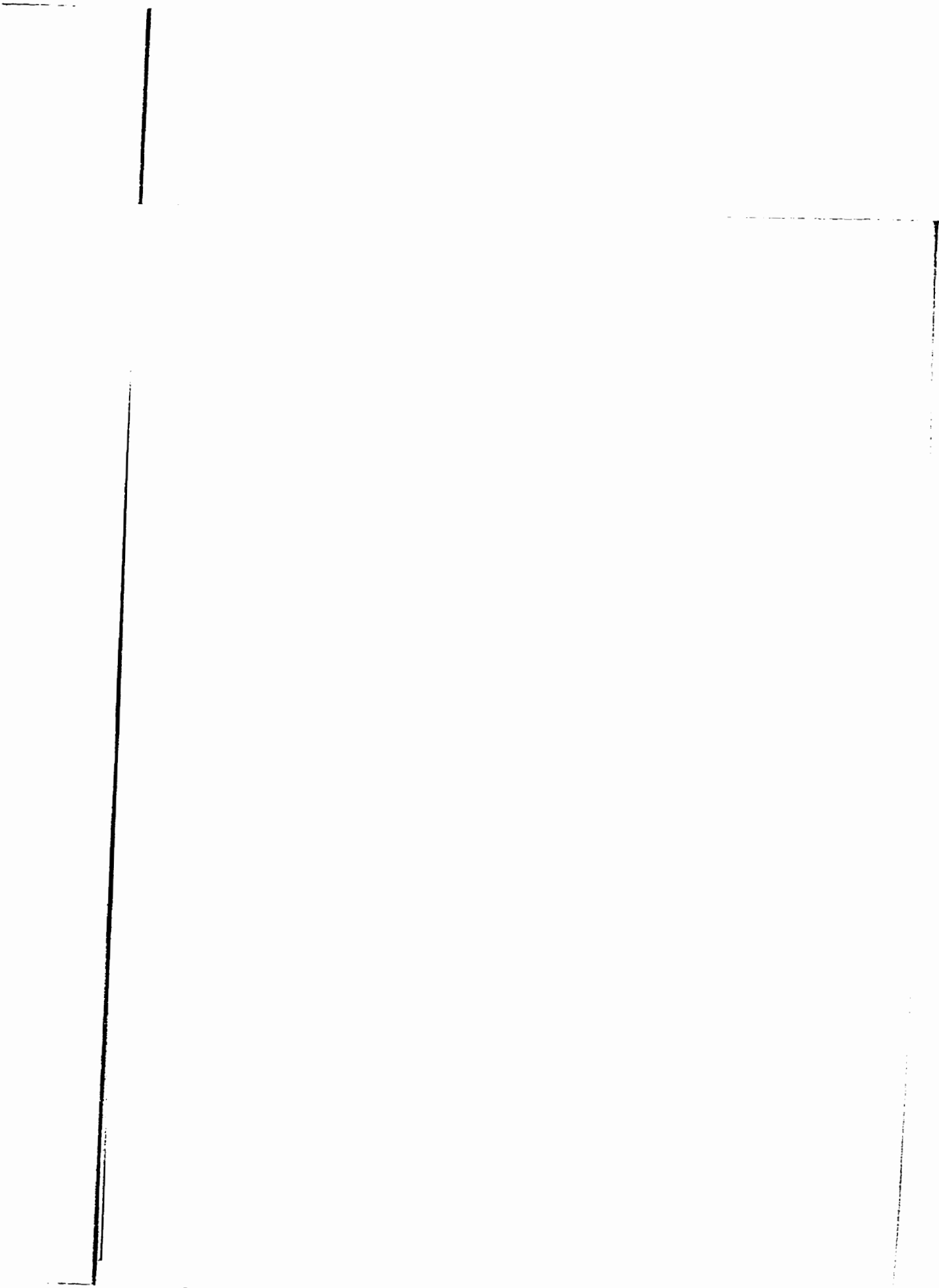
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**RUINS**

**BY**

**JESS DIXON**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of  
MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE**

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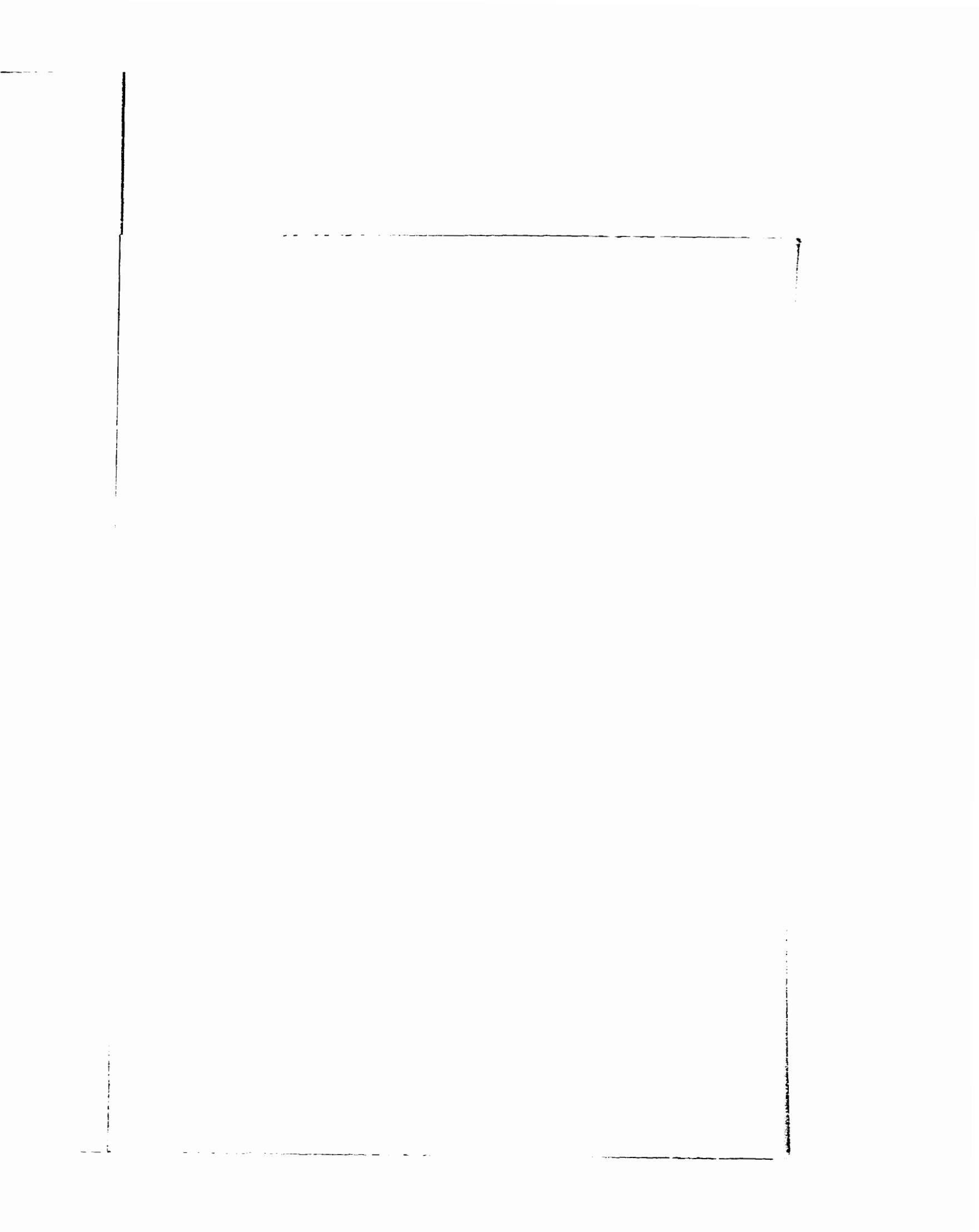


*The book will kill the building...*

*...the book of stone, so solid and durable, would  
give place to the book of paper, even more solid and  
durable.*

*Victor Hugo*





**ABSTRACT**

Ruins are a curious attraction. Since the eighteenth century they have been appreciated as such without much real thought beyond metaphor as to why. The attraction of ruins as well as their inherent attributes of destruction, incompleteness and uselessness has coincided through history with certain periods referred to by some as decadent phases. These times are characterized as comfortable but dull, ruins play a passive and to some degree subconscious role in these times, their expression of apparent turmoil and indeterminateness strikes a sympathetic chord with the observer.

The farm ruins of the abandoned Trappist monastery in St. Norbert are the inspiration for and focus of the applied portions of this practicum.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project suffered as much fragmentation and neglect as many of the structures described within. Grateful acknowledgement is made to my advisors who—due to numerous hiatus—had to repeatedly become re-acquainted with the subject: from the department of landscape architecture, Professors Ted McLachlan and Carl Nelson provided much needed guidance; and external advisor Louise Willow May proved invaluable for her knowledge of the site and articulate critiques.

I am indebted to my parents for their support through this drawn-out procedure and especially to my mother for her editing and encouragement.

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## METHODOLOGY

This practicum has been conducted in the following stages:

A review of literature on and regarding ruins: The aim of this study is to develop a design approach for the context of ruins. In order to determine this, the study of ruins will be divided into the following tasks:

- Describe the inherent qualities of ruins and determine if and where they might occur or how they have been used in the fields of design.

- Trace the Western response to ruins back to its origin. Determine what makes ruins attractive.

- Survey ruins that have been manipulated either for display or to serve another function; note what has been retained and the achieved effects; make a list of criteria based on issues of historical significance, function and aesthetics.

Review relevant periodicals, historical documents and personal accounts on the history of the Trappist Monastery site including: the appearance and use of the buildings while the monks were there; the period during which it changed hands; the development of the provincial park and the establishment of The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre.

Site Analysis: Produce a document of the site noting context and features.

**Program Development:** Structure an approach to the design of the site using the information gathered during the literature review and site analysis.

**Design:** Produce drawings of the design as dictated by the program.

The final product consists of an illustrated text documenting the various interpretations, influences and representations of ruins; a written document outlining the historic and physical aspects of the site; a program for the development of the site and a graphic presentation based on the program.



## INTRODUCTION

When we say ruins, the images most often brought to mind are of the free-standing columns and fragmented statuary associated with the neglected temples of ancient Egypt, classical Greece and imperial Rome. One might also imagine the picturesque shells of England's gothic churches that were dissolved in the sixteenth century.

Europe's long history has provided an impressive collection of ruins, most of which date centuries before the discovery of the new world. North America's history as a western culture is very brief in comparison. It hasn't suffered multiple reformations and hence, its production of neglected structures that could be classified as ruins has been minimal, and to some, the time interval has been too short for them to even be classified as such. The perception of age is relative though to how old one's culture is and, it is argued in this study, that it is irrelevant anyway.

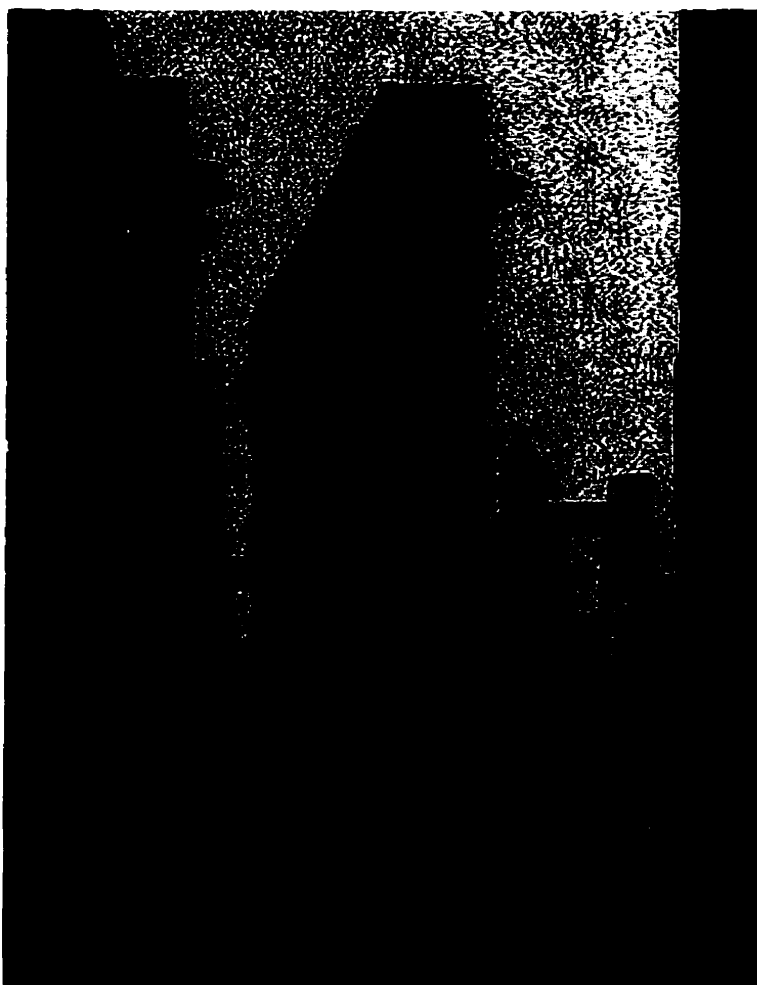
It is inevitable that as our culture progresses, new building types arise to accommodate new technologies. The pace of technological progress causes the obsolescence of many buildings, and the new ruin type created from that development is the result—common to both Europe and North America.

As the following images illustrate:



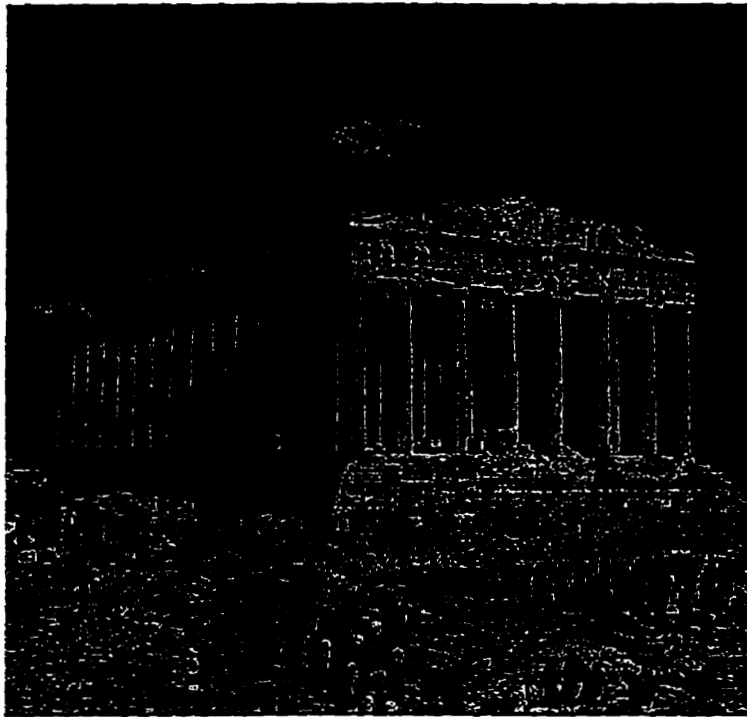
**RUINS**

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EGYPT, EASTERN THEBES, LUXOR: AMON-MUT KHON'S TEMPLE, COLONNADE OF KING AMENHOTEP III , VIEW FROM THE GREAT FORECOURT. (1402-1364 BC) EGYPTIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE HAS HAD ENOUGH OF AN EFFECT ON WESTERN TO INCLUDE THE RUINS OF THAT CIVILIZATION AS RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY. THE ENORMOUS SCALE OF THESE CREATIONS GAINS THEM A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE APPRECIATION OF RUINS.(PHOTO:TIME LIFE)

RUINS



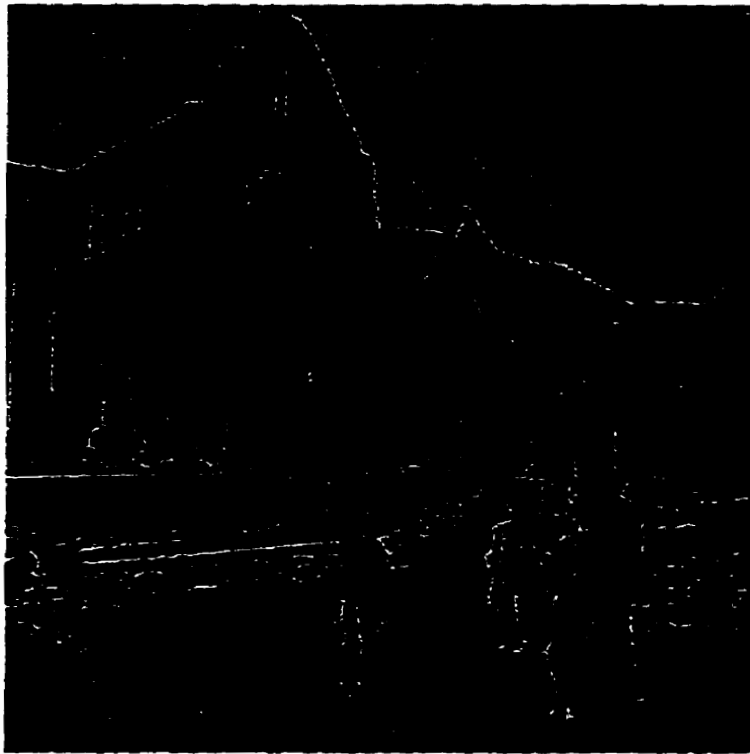
THE HISTORIC PARTHENON, FOR NEARLY 900 YEARS IT WAS A TEMPLE TO ATHENA. FOR NEARLY 1000 YEARS A CHRISTIAN CHURCH, FOR 200 YEARS A MOSLEM MOSQUE. THEN, IN 1687, THE VENETIAN FORCES BESIEGING THE TURKS ON THE ACROPOLIS DROPPED A SHELL THAT EXPLODED A POWDER MAGAZINE, THUS DESTROYING THE INSIDE OF THE PARTHENON. THE PARTHENON IS A MUCH-VISITED RUIN WHICH, WITH OTHER HELLENIC STRUCTURES, HAS HAD A TREMENDOUS EFFECT ON ARCHITECTURE. (TIME LIFE)

## RUINS



THE FORUM IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE CRADLE OF ROMAN CIVILIZATION. ALL THE KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS UP TO THE IMPERIAL ERA WERE PLAYED OUT HERE. EVERYTHING FROM SENATE MEETINGS, MILITARY PARADES, HONORARY CEREMONIES, TO PUBLIC GATHERINGS TOOK PLACE IN THE FORUM. THIS PERIOD OF GLORY LASTED HUNDREDS OF YEARS. THEN DECLINE SET IN. GRADUALLY, THE GRANDIOSE BUILDINGS BECAME SOLEMN RUINS, AND SQUATTERS TURNED WHAT THEY FOUND INTO MAKESHIFT LIVING QUARTERS. OTHER RUINED BUILDINGS SERVED AS AN INSTANT QUARRY FOR BUILDING MATERIALS, WHILE CATTLE AND SHEEP WANDERED IN AND OUT IN SEARCH OF GRASS. EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, OVER THE CENTURIES, TOURISTS, SCHOLARS, AND STUDENTS OF ANTIQUITY CAME TO SEE THE REMAINS, BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL THE 1800S AND THE SPREAD OF THE ROMANTIC PASSION FOR RUINS THAT SERIOUS ARCHEOLOGICAL RESEARCH WAS FINALLY UNDERTAKEN. THIS ARDUOUS CONSERVATION IS STILL GOING ON TODAY. DESPITE THE FACT THAT MANY OF THE FORUM BUILDINGS HAVE ONLY PARTIALLY SURVIVED, A VISIT TO THE SITE IS AN EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE THAT VERY FEW SITES IN ROME - OR ANYWHERE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER - CAN MATCH. (BONECHI, P.7)

RUINS



TINTERN ABBEY, MONMOUTHSHIRE. 1270-1320  
(BRITISH TRAVEL ASSOCIATION PHOTOGRAPH).(ZUCKER)

POST REFORMATION RUINS ARE THE ORIGINAL 'ROMANTIC RUINS', ONCE THE MEANING OF THESE RUINS WAS DETACHED FROM THE EVENTS OF THE REFORMATION THEY BECAME EXTREMELY POPULAR LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS, SO MUCH SO THAT SHAM RUINS HAD TO BE CREATED TO KEEP UP WITH THE DEMAND. TODAY THEY ARE STILL POPULAR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS.

RUINS



FIVE ROSES FLOUR MILL, HIGGINS, WPG.

ANCIENT INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS ARE ALMOST A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS, BUT WHEN WE FIND ONE, LIKE THE ARSENAL AT PISA [OR THE FIVE ROSES MILL ON POINT DOUGLAS], IT HOLDS US IN A SPECIAL WAY. MUCH MORE UNLIKELY THAN FORMAL MONUMENTS, AS IF SOME THINGS WERE BUILT FOR ETERNITY AND OTHERS FOR THE TIME BEING, SO TO SAVE ONE OF THOSE, LIKE ALL THE UNWANTED TAGS WHICH COLLECTORS OF EPHEMERA HANG ONTO, IS LIKE AN INVERSION OF NORMAL PIETY AND PERHAPS AN INDIRECT DISCOURTESY TO IT. IT IS MUCH MORE REMARKABLE FOR CERTAIN SPECIES TO REACH A CERTAIN AGE (THAN OTHERS), SO THE ARSENAL IS PRECIOUS. AND YET IT IS NOT, SUCH A SIMPLE AND FEATURELESS STRUCTURE THAT IT MIGHT BE A SET OF NINETEENTH CENTURY WORKSHOPS (HARBISON, P.122)

RUINS

ST. NORBERT  
MONASTERY  
CHURCH  
RUINS →



MONASTERY  
FARM RUINS



THE RUINS OF THIS TRAPPIST MONASTERY AND FARM IN ST. NORBERT, MANITOBA OFFER AN EXPERIENCE RARE IN NORTH AMERICA. BUILT AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY AND DESTROYED BY FIRE IN 1983, THE BRICK AND STONE SHELL OF THE CHURCH AND MONASTIC WING IS HOST TO INSTALLATIONS, THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS AND MANY TOURISTS. THE FARM RUINS BEYOND, STILL IN A STATE OF NEGLECT, ARE MORE TYPICAL OF NORTH AMERICAN RUINS AND REQUIRE A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT EYE IN ORDER TO APPRECIATE THEM. THE SITE IS ENHANCED BY AN ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTRE THAT OCCUPIES THE MONASTERY'S GUESTHOUSE AND USES THE UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT TO THE BEST EFFECT.

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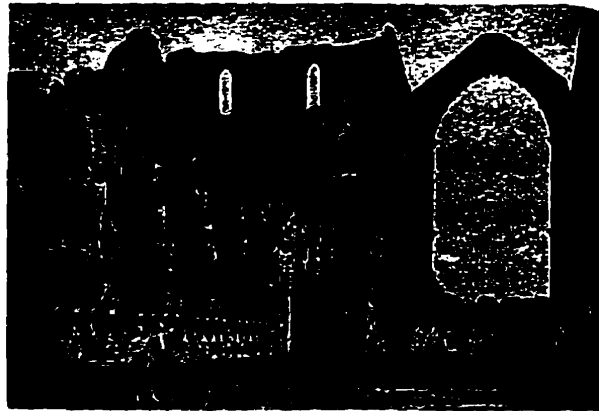
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## THE ORIGINS OF A LANDSCAPE ELEMENT

The termination of the Monastic way of life in England and Wales took place in a very abrupt manner. The English Acts of 1536 and 1539 dissolved the religious houses, and within a year or two they had been divested of everything of value. One of the most valuable materials was the lead on the roofs of their churches, the stripping and melting down of which gave rise to the most dramatic creation of ruins in English history. Later in the century more ruins were created when the multitude of chantry colleges founded in the later Middle Ages were dissolved in the reign of Edward VI [1547-1551].



FOUNTAINS  
ABBEY,  
YORKSHIRE  
(ZUCKER)

The consequences of the dissolution and the ruins it produced were profound, affecting English thinking for the next four centuries and indeed right up to the present day. For the first century after the catastrophe the ruins had too close a relationship to current events to allow the existence of a detached view. It was only in the middle of the late seven-



teenth century that a more detached attitude could reveal itself, a feeling that prompted the classic collection of monastic records published by Sir William Dugdale in *Monasticon Anglicanum* (1655-73). In this collection, a fellow named Aubrey wrote:

*"...the eye and mind is no less affected with stately ruins than they would have been standing and entire. They breed the generous minds a kind of pitié: and sett the thoughts a works to make out their magnificence as they were when in perfection."*

(Thompson, 1981)

In the influential treatise of 1708 on the principles of painting, *Cours de peinture par principes*, Roger de Piles wrote:

*"Buildings in general are a great ornament in landscape, even when they are Gothic, or appear partly inhabited, and partly ruinous...they raise the imagination by the use they are thought to be designed for."* (Hunt, 1992, p. 180)

Through the eighteenth century, responses to ruins changed "from registering precise and detailed meanings of ruins, completing their vacancies with learned and specific knowledge, to responding simply to their impressionistic suggestions of decay and loss." (Hunt, 1992, p. 181) These responses to ruins served to document a general change in the way people thought about landscape. Inspired by images of natural landscapes seen in the paintings by artists travelling abroad and on porcelain and lacquer pieces imported through new trade routes from the Orient, the importance of meaning through the use of ideas, stories or themes gave way to a preference for form,

which elicited *feelings* more than engaging the mind. In terms of ruin-narrative which is discussed later: from an informative representation to a poetic one.

Ruins became an essential element in the English landscape, so much so that artificial ruins were constructed where none existed. The construction of sham ruins was perfectly acceptable because the importance lay in the form and the feelings they elicited rather than the history they represented. The mere fact that they were constructed was an affirmation of this shift in thought.

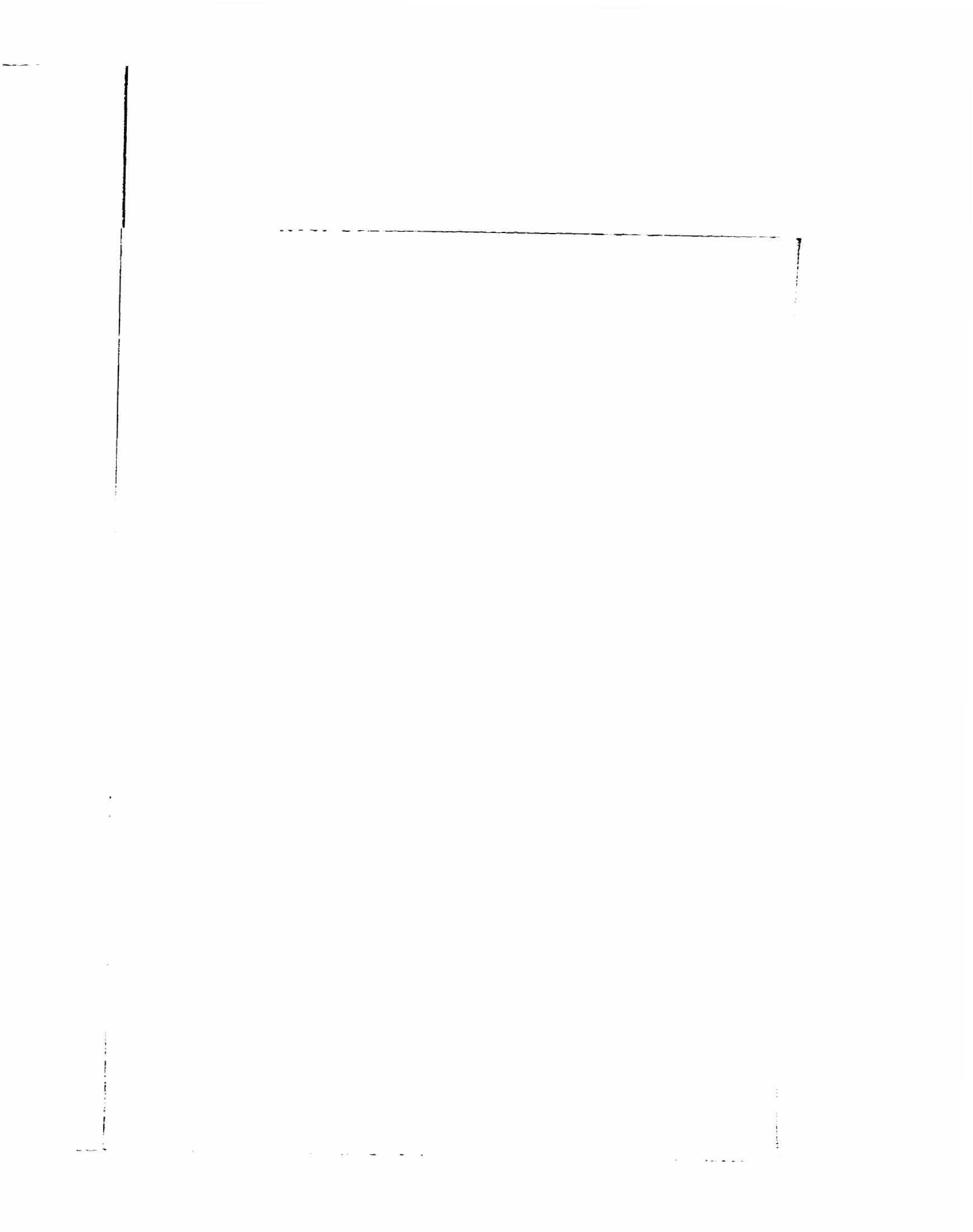
The use of follies in the landscape coincided with the enthusiasm for ruins

and these are very similar in the fact that they were artificial, though entire, environments that served no function related to their form.

The ruin-mania that created the need to build sham ruins subsided during the 1790's as the picturesque movement which focussed more on the appearance of naturalism gained a following. The attraction of ruins has persisted, though, and it is the intention of this study to try and determine where this attraction is rooted.



HAGLEY (WORCESTER). SHAM GOTHIC RUIN AS A TERMINUS TO A VIEW. IT IS ALSO A LODGE FOR PARK KEEPER WITH A TEA ROOM AT THE TOP. (COFFIN)



## TOWARD A DEFINITION OF RUINS

Although the interest in ruins was brought about by European examples, North Americans have adopted the frame of mind and applied it to local examples.

A ruin is a structure that has experienced a period of neglect or rejection over such a period of time that its appearance and function has been compromised by the effects of nature or man or both. The structure may have been destroyed or simply become outmoded, but the critical factor is time: time to become weathered and forgotten. This interval erases the structures' function, its social implications, and some detail from the building. J.B. Jackson suggests that this process is an essential aspect of progress:

*But there has to be that interval of neglect, there has to be discontinuity; it is religiously and artistically essential. That is what I mean when I refer to the necessity for ruins: ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins. There has to be (in our new concept of history) an interim of death and rejection before there can be renewal and reform. The old order has to die before there can be a born-again landscape. Many of us know the joy and excitement not so much of creating the new as of redeeming what has been neglected, and this excitement is particularly strong when the original condition is seen as holy or beautiful  
(Jackson, 1980)*

The amount of time that a structure must be neglected before it is considered a ruin varies greatly depending on how long it takes for the old order to die. A structure has to have lost its associations with its function and have decayed to a degree where it could no longer serve that function. Some ruins are by far more picturesque than others, but all ruins, whether they were Gothic Churches or industrial buildings, legitimately decayed or intentionally destroyed, 500 years old or five years old, possess similar qualities and the corresponding intrigue.

In addition to their superficial attraction, some ruins stand as memorials to the circumstances of their demise. This fact is acknowledged, but will not be considered in this study as it involves issues beyond the level with which I am dealing (that being ruins as a landscape type rather than as representation of events).

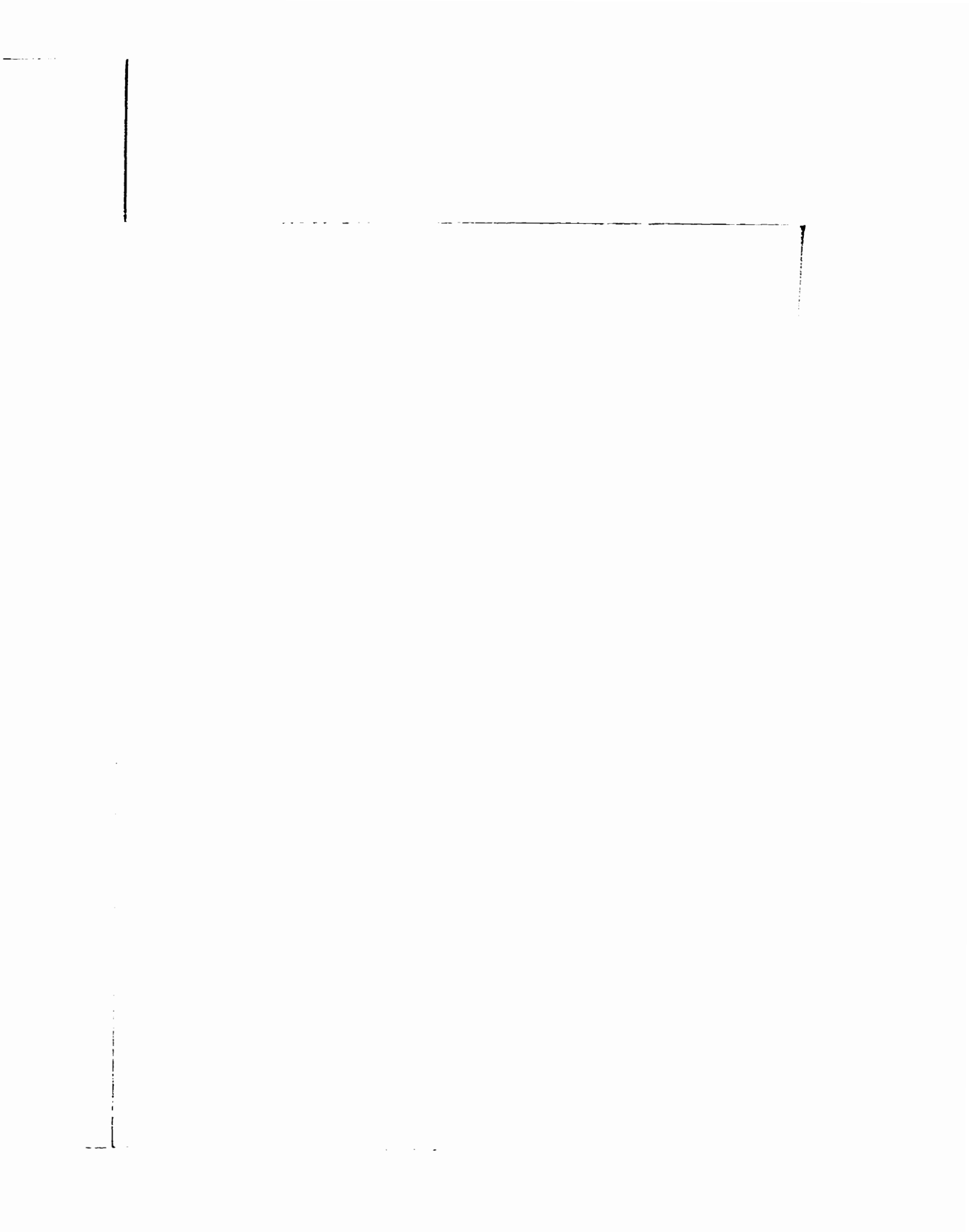
In Hiroshima, Berlin and other cities ruins stand among the rebuilt buildings as evidence of grim events, their picturesque aspects overshadowed by memories. These types of ruins can not be touched, but where ruins represent the only evidence of an historical period, the information can be known or ignored. Robert Harbison states that "*It is essentially our ignorance and not our knowledge that stirs us before the Greek fragments.*" (1991,p.107). Too much knowledge about a ruin's history, I feel, adds implications and removes mystery.

When a building is abandoned it loses its function, and consequently loses the implied rules of conduct associated with it. When all the ritual that

was once associated with a building is recalled in its ruined state, a certain reverence is afforded it which overshadows the general effect on the viewer. Florence Hetzler suggests that this lack of implications is one of the fundamental requirements of a ruin.

*"Ruins must also be semiotically different from what they were before they became ruins. If one visits the Parthenon, one should not feel the need to bring an oil lamp for Athena. The Parthenon stands on its own and signifies itself." (Hetzler, 1988)*

So, for the purposes of this study, I've determined that a ruin is any neglected structure that no longer 'works' with regard to either its function or its history. From that, I can explore possible reasons why so many people regard them as more than just eyesores.



## RUINS AND REPRESENTATION

*"RUINS ARE IDEAL: the perceiver's attitudes count so heavily that one is tempted to say ruins are a way of seeing. Of course they actually exist, but since the eighteenth century they are never just problems of maintenance." (Harbison, 1992 p.99)*

The consideration of ruins, as mentioned earlier, is a product of the romantic movement in England. During which time every passion and emotion was glorified; the more intense, the better. It is hardly surprising, then, that something that displayed evidence of the struggle of life be valued and even sought after.

The ruin thus, stands as a vessel for analogies and metaphoric musings, a springboard for the imagination. In this respect ruins act as a poetic device, subject to various metaphoric interpretations due to their unique state of being.





CASPAR DAVID FRIEDRICH. RUINS OF A MONASTERY AND CHURCHYARD IN THE SNOW. B 19 (ZUCKER)

### MELANCHOLIC PLEASURE

*"The ruin mentality appears frivolous, fixated on surface not substance. It is in fact deeply pessimistic, counting more ancestors than descendants, sure without thinking that it inhabits a decadent phase."*  
(Harbison, 1991)

**Ruins offer a focus for musings on the transience of life. Prior to the popularity of ruins as landscape elements, sundials were used to express these sentiments, not visually, but literally. A dial at Stanwardine Hall dated 1560 was inscribed:**

*In the hours of death God be merciful to me  
For as time doth haste  
So life doth waste* (Coffin, 1994)

Thoughts about death are often expressed in association with ruins. Comparisons of decaying, forgotten shells of buildings with human fate is a popular motif. The romantic sensibility tended to wallow in these depths of melancholy as evidenced by the poetry written then. In *The Pleasures of Melancholy* written in 1745, Thomas Warton found melancholic pleasure in the remains of a native abbey experienced by moonlight.

*O, lead me,...*  
*To ruin'd seats, to twilight cells and bowers,*  
*Where thoughtful melancholy loves to muse.*  
*Beneath yon ruin'd abbey's moss grown piles*  
*Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of eve,*  
*Where through some western window the pale moon*  
*Pours her long-level'd rule of streaming light;*  
*(Coffin, 1994)*

As Harbison stated, the ruin mentality was indeed superficial which contrasts with the weighty subject that they were supposed to evoke. Judging by the way ruins were used (sometimes as tea or breakfast rooms) they seem to be more fun than anything. The term 'melancholic pleasure' aptly described this paradox; it satisfied the fact that pleasure was being derived from an imagined experience of intense emotion.

The times in which these attitudes existed were particularly devoid of real incident, and it is theorized that the taste for ruins and the like—if not for actual incidents—was a desire for the intensity of the emotions associated with them.

*"Ruins were indeed an essential element of the landscape of sensibility; they gave it an element of nostalgia which was part of its essence;"*

*(Baridon, 1985, p.84)*

Past incidents were dwelt upon in order to alleviate the relative boredom of the time and anything that could represent that was embraced.

*"But Venice, like Oxford, had kept the background for romance, and, to the true romantic, background was everything, or almost everything." (Wilde, 1891)*

This bit of literature supports the suggestion that ruins were a device for evoking emotions, a prop with which to carry out an otherwise uneventful existence. They fulfilled a particular need which, as it turns out, hasn't quite escaped us.

## THEATRE

*"It was characteristic of [the 16th century] that it defined the word landscape in another manner: landscape indicated both the background of a picture, and a stage set—that element in a composition that gave it form and suggested location but which was not of the main body of the argument."  
(Jackson, p.71)*

A structure in a landscape becomes part of that landscape when its function has been eliminated. A functioning building is curiously separate from the landscape because it is actually part of a different world, one where there is no weather. When only the shell of a building is left and the interior is subject to weathering (when it is a ruin), it is part of the landscape. Having established this, it follows that ruins are treated as elements of the landscape and are subject to the same interpretations that landscapes are subject to.

In J.B.Jackson's treatment of Landscape and theatre he draws parallels between the western world's: development of theatre, the first efforts of imposing order and design on the environment, and the introduction of the landscape painting, all in the

**16th century. Their connection stems from the need of theatre to have a setting, the need for theatre and background stems from a realization at that time, of man's place in the world.**

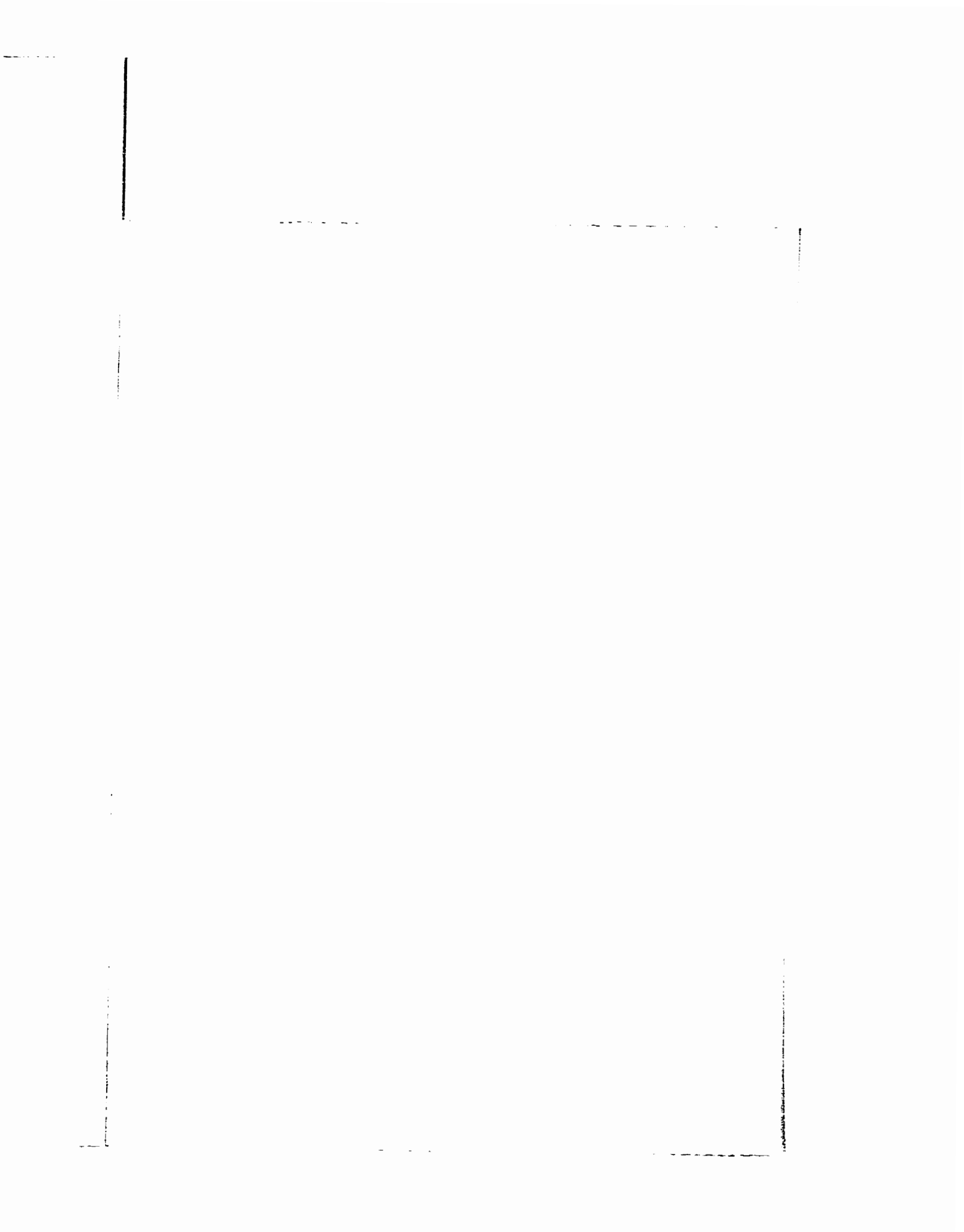
*Theater was thus a useful and appropriate metaphor, but more than that, it gave the ultimate three dimensional form to all the chorographic, esthetic and philosophical theories redefining men and the world. In retrospect it is clear why the drama should have been the dominant art form of an age concerned with place and visibility and the classical image of humanity. It is clear why the theater developed new techniques of staging precisely when artists and cartographers and geographers were beginning to describe the surface of the earth. Lope de Vega wrote the Great Theatre of the World; Shakespeare, among others, reminded us that all the world was a stage. It was in theatrical terms, therefore, that man's place could be interpreted as a work of art, his identity best established. (Jackson, p.70)*

**Landscapes are essentially stage sets. From the viewpoint of satisfying the 'audience' it seems they must provide some sort of interest. Beyond really unique natural scenes, this interest usually involves the hand of man as an indication of his place in the landscape. The fact that ruins were evidently human-made provides this association while at the same time not enforcing it (by virtue of their outmodedness).**

**Stage sets are environments designed as backgrounds for re-enactments or portrayals of fictional events (theatre). The sets themselves are evocative**

of ruins. They are never complete, mostly for the benefit of the audience, and partly for ease of manipulation. Only elements essential to setting the scene are included on a stage. This is for the economy of building it and taking it down for they are always acknowledged as temporary. When the play is not running the set doesn't function as its real life version would. This fact makes them compelling as they are obviously not real and need not be regarded as such. As with ruins, the stage sets' lack of actual function removes implications.

The exaggerated sense of temporality exhibited by theatre is expressed in relative terms by ruins of the otherwise imperceptible temporality of structures. Ruins show us that man's structures are evidently just stage sets. Like the back lots of film studios, the sets that we are finished with just sit there until they can be adapted to another scene.



### SOMETHING (NOT) TO BELIEVE IN

*When we speak of 'returning home', we mean to characterize the peace whose mood surrounds the ruin. And we must characterize something else: our sense that these two world potencies - the striving upward and the sinking downward - are working serenely together, as we envisage in their working a picture of purely natural existence. Expressing this peace for us, the ruin orders itself into the surrounding landscape without a break, growing together like a tree... (Simmel, 1959)*

**Our society's fundamental tenet of freedom allows for limitless choices of values, beliefs, and occupations. The result is a consistent homogenization of inconsistencies. There is a considerable population that is a little skeptical about the validity of any choice, given the fact that all of them are somehow justified. One exercise for these souls is to search for an absolute, to find at least one thing they can be certain of. This often leads them to the contemplation of the fundamental nature of life:**



RUINS

---

O sweet spontaneous  
earth how often have  
the  
doting

fingers of  
prurient philosophers pinched  
and  
poked

thee  
, has the naughty thumb  
of science prodded  
thy

beauty . how  
often have religions taken  
thee upon their scraggy knees  
squeezing and

buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive  
gods  
(but  
true

to the incomparable  
couch of death thy  
rhythmic  
lover

thou answerest

them only with

spring)

e.e. cumming's poem, although not specifically about ruins, expresses, for me, another way in which ruins represent the times: through expressing the cyclical nature of the Earth. The poem most prominently expresses the view that whatever beliefs the human race imposes on the earth, they will be insignificant in the long run; the earth will continue doing what it does regardless of how people think it does it, or whether there are people there or not. The message that one can take from this is to not be too concerned with *how* it is done but rather with the fact that it is done and that life is as inevitable as death.

Also expressed in e.e. cumming's poem is the notion of man's relationship to nature. Perhaps more directly expressed in another of his poems—which starts: when god lets my body be

from each brave eye shall sprout a tree—is his ultimate position that we are inextricably linked to nature despite whatever notions we have to the contrary. The final lines in *O sweet spontaneous* suggest that whatever constructs the mind can build, their repercussions will be minimal in the long run.

Our attempt to escape the natural cycles is indicative of the eternal issue of man versus nature. We are, however, part of a process which is unstoppable; the earth's upper mantle is turning inside out, exposing new material to the effects of weather. Similarly, man drags things from underground to create his physical constructs which, when not constantly maintained, succumb to the effects of weather as well.

**Maintenance seems to be the point where man and nature clash. As with all animals, constant maintenance is required to simply ward off the effects of nature on our bodies. But in addition to grooming, humans are also saddled with maintaining their synthetic environments which don't renew themselves as the natural ones do.**

*Over time the natural environment acts upon the outer surface of a building in such a way that its underlying materials are broken down. This breakdown, when left to proceed uninterrupted, leads to the failure of materials and the final dissolution of the building itself—ruination—hardly an outcome desired by the architect, builder, or owner. In order to prevent this or retard its occurrence buildings must be maintained. Maintenance, in the most general terms, aims at renewal and involves both conservation and replacement. So costly has this process become nowadays that buildings are designed to be maintenance-free, or to require as little repair as possible. Nevertheless, no matter how maintenance-free the construction, weathering still occurs. (Mostafavi & Leatherbarrow, p.5)*

**Our artificial world is evidently guided by economic principles which, fortunately, sometimes determine that a building is not worth using or tearing down. It then becomes part of the natural world and evokes feelings about man and nature.**

**Ruins are structures that are reverting back to nature, being re-absorbed into the earth from which they came; they eloquently express the struggle of a species trying to work against the Earth's operating**

system. This initially humbling fact eventually reassures one that there is indeed an operating system and it is not up to us.

This view of ruins differs from the romantic in that it is more informed; it's not so much a desire to be moved by intense emotion as an appetite for something else. So, where the romantic view was pessimistic in its backward-looking nostalgia, the current view is pessimistic in its disdain of the present. Both ultimately embrace ruins for the same reason: as an escape from reality. Not necessarily to a better place, but one where there are no implications.

## ARCHITECTURE

The effect of architecture has not as yet been illustrated as a factor in the responses to ruins and, in the literature, its role has been underestimated. The attraction of ruins has so far been attributed to the lack of implications. In architecture this lack of implications is brought about through loss of function and a physical transformation in the architecture.

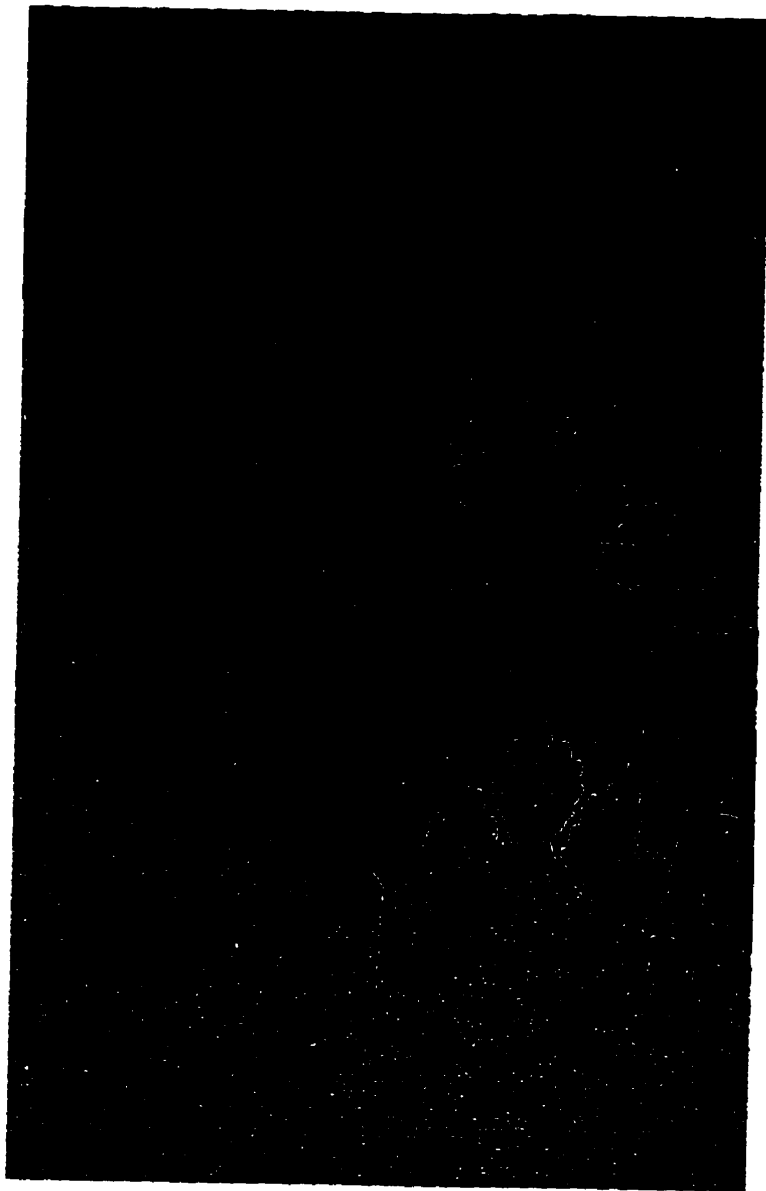
A building loses implications as the definition of space-making elements is obscured and the definition between inside and outside becomes vague. Combinations of fundamental space-defining elements are explored as a structure gradually melts into the Earth.

Thompson states that the definition of a ruin is a building without a roof, this certainly applies to most ruins as shelter is a prerequisite of habitation. Once the overhead plane is breached by the elements, the vertical and ground planes are no longer protected and the cleansing of the interior occurs.

In *landscape* architectural terms, sense of place is that elusive quality that turns a space into a place that stimulates one's senses. It is elusive because it is not only achieved by design but by virtues. Ruins possess a sense of place. Their vague enclosing qualities define space without suggesting how it is to be perceived. Virtues are attributed based on the perceiver's attitude. Some of which are explored in this study, but others could only be guessed at.

The process of decay introduces design elements that were not intended in the original structure. Most of these elements were unique to ruins, but have been adopted by the mainstream. The quality of incompleteness though, is common to design and, witnessing it emerge from the natural decay of man-made structures provides insight about its use.

*"But equally essential in a ruin was that it should have been "of some grandeur and elegance" and "should refer to somewhat really interesting" so that the associative faculty could be brought into play. For what attracts one to ruins is their incompleteness, their instant declaration of a loss which we can complete in our imaginations." (Hunt, 1992)*



WILLIAM MORRIS PATTERN DESIGN (PHOTO CD)



**Ruins are incomplete architecture. In this respect they can be compared to any incomplete work. Whether something is not finished, or is partly destroyed, or is purposely exhibiting qualities of either, it remains incomplete and conveys a certain vulnerability. The incomplete object is subject to speculation as to its method of construction and on its state of incompleteness. As something is constructed, it often draws the interest of passers-by; they are getting a glimpse of a transformation. When something is complete, the process is hidden, unless it was the maker's intention to expose aspects that indicate the process.**



This image of a partially completed statue published in the Winnipeg Free Press of May 10, 1992 impressed me strongly enough for me to cut it out and keep it. The reason is only now becoming clear to me through this study (whether I like it or not). The figure, caught by the camera at that point, with half of his head missing, a crane sticking out of his shoulder, and especially with workmen crawling all over him, doesn't quite gain the reverence he will ultimately receive. This fact that it doesn't yet mean anything (particularly poignant as it is a religious structure) and has no function, makes it a giant folly, free of implications and open to interpretation.



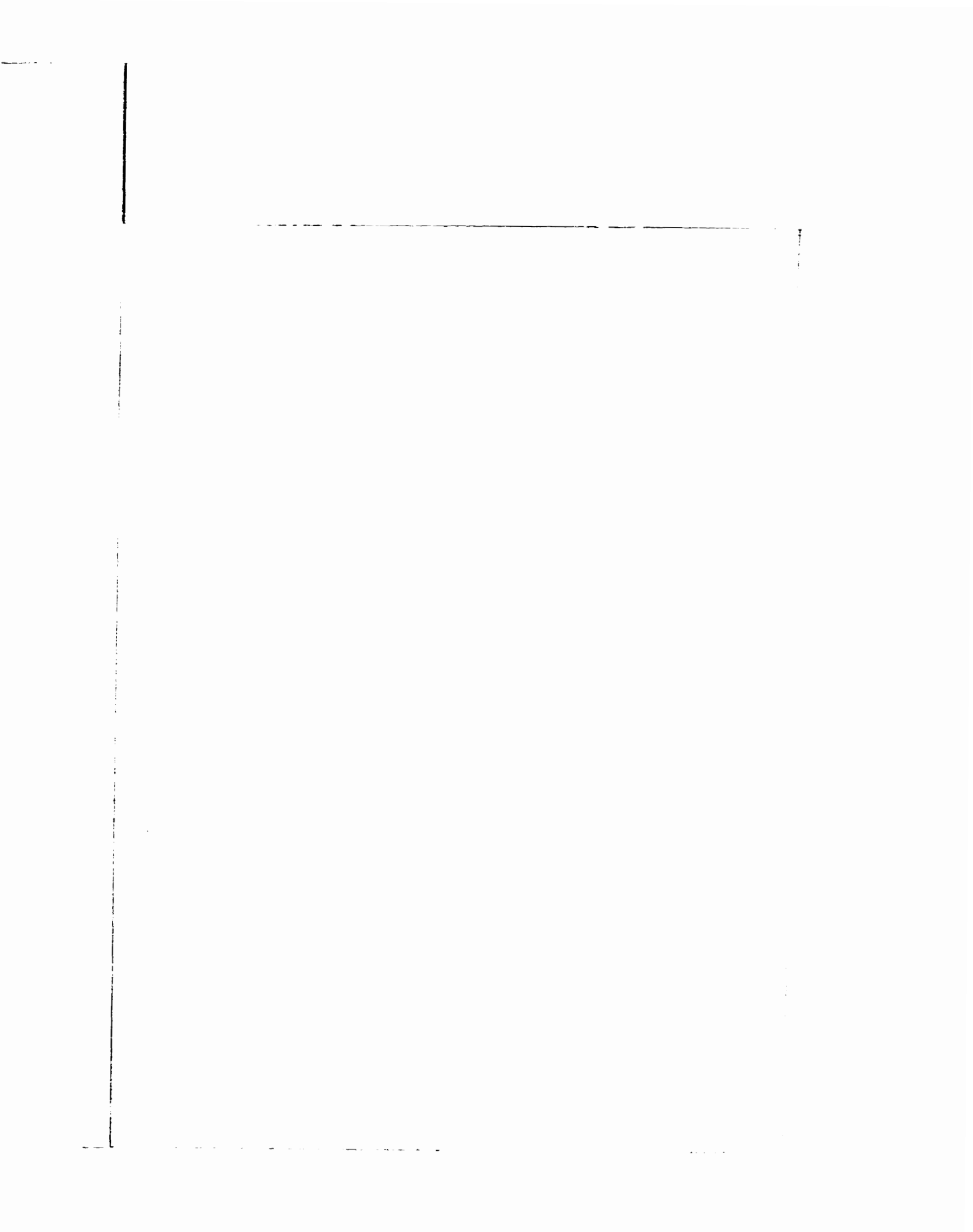
MICHELANGELO ATLAS  
FOR POPE JULIUS'S TOMB

*"Some scholars have attributed the incompleteness of the 'slaves' to the conflicting burden of the artist's commissions. But it seems impossible that a genius of Michelangelo's stature would compromise his work because of professional pressures or bad scheduling. In fact, he acknowledged the philosophical notions of "finito" and "non finito" in his writing, and his flawless ability to orchestrate metamorphic elements in the tomb sculptures indicates that he understood the full implications of these unfinished surfaces." (Wines, 1987)*



MICHELANGELO, MEDICI SACRISTY

By these examples, it is obvious that making something intentionally incomplete can suggest more than simply how it was executed, it can create a narrative as to why it was left at a particular state.



## DECADENCE

*"I have no profession. My attitude—quite an indefensible one—is that so long as I'm no trouble to anyone, I have the right to do as I like. It is, I dare say, an example of my decadence."*

*(Cecil Vyse in "A Room with a View")*

Ruins have been described as eliciting melancholic pleasure, nostalgia, and fatalist notions. The basis for these feelings and the affinity for elements of incompleteness and fragmentation in design, I believe, fall under the broader heading of decadence which, as a concept, embodies the nature of ruins and their psychological effect on the viewer.

Decadence is defined as the fall from a prior state of excellence and vitality. Although the term suggests a state of decay, it also defines the mentality of that state. As limitations of established rules become evident, variations emerge which lead to the demise of the prior state and the formation of a new set of rules. This transition period is manifested by irreverence towards standards and indulgent manipulation of accepted practice. The best known example of decadence is that which occurred during the fourth century A.D. : the roman empire.

The mannerism that occurred in the late 1500s was a decadent style. The word was from a criticism of the 'affected manner' with which some artists were working. These artists chose to depart from the precedent of the ideal because it had already been perfected. The experimental period of the renais-

sance was over and the assumptions that were the basis for the experimentation were being violated. The result of this revolt was a series of curiously inconsistent works some of which heralded the beginning of the Baroque period.

Similarly, the shift from the emblematical representation of the English formal garden to the expressive forms of the landscape garden was also a decadent phase. This more recent and better documented phase lasted until the first world war and manifested itself in all of the arts including painting and writing.

Decadence is the state of being between certainties, a position which lacks the rigid implications of acceptable behavior, beliefs, and conformity. Ruins too lack implications; they are between inside and outside, order and entropy, yes and no. Robert Harbison suggests that ruins are the embodiment of the concept of decadence and represent the human condition:

*Feelings about decadence are some of the most twisted and interesting in all culture, and by our taste for ruins we affirm our belief in decadence, our half-voluntary imprisonment in it. Ruins are models or heralds of the disintegrating mind and collapsing principles of the age after the end of stable belief, the half-loved companions of post-religious man haunted by ghosts of faith. (Harbison, 1991)*

Harbison also indicates in this passage that there was a point at which opinions started to diverge, when not everyone believed the same things and, further, that this era was entered into with a degree of

hesitancy in the sense that they were between certainties, especially in the case of religious dissension.

The thrill of decadence is the promise of change; it is also the freedom to do what you feel is right. To engage in decadence is to strive for a new order through breaking the rules. Although they are inevitable, symptoms of decay are not usually welcome in most circles; structures, both physical and of belief must be maintained to ward them off.

Western culture seems to have turned decadence into a style rather than just a phase. The rate at which things change and the appetite we have for new, better ways of operating in this world promotes continual decadence. The ruin is a reflection of this state—or an indication of it.

The idea that the essence of a movement or trend could be unconsciously projected or represented by physical form, resulting in that form's popularity as a visual element is remarkable. To repeat part of a quote cited earlier: "The ruin mentality...is...sure without thinking that it inhabits a decadent phase." Could the attraction of ruins be reduced to pop psychology? In Freudian terms, 'transference' is defined as the displacement of an effect from one thing to another. I am hesitant to state such a suggestion for fear that adherence to a controversial discipline such as psychoanalysis would discredit the entire study; however, I am prepared to agree that the decadent tendencies of the past two centuries have produced a taste for ruins due to their expression of the outmoded; and transference is a handy term to describe such a condition.



In Hal Foster's treatment of the surreal in his book *Compulsive Beauty*, he regards the ruin as uncanny and describes how it figures into the 'modern' thought of the early 20th century.

*"...the romantic ruin evokes the displacing of cultural forms by this regime of machine production and commodity consumption - not only archaic feudal forms but also "outmoded" capitalist ones. [He borrows] this term from walter Benjamin, for whom breton and company were "the first to perceive the revolutionary energies that appear in the 'outmoded', in the first iron construction, the first factory buildings, the earliest photos, the objects that have begun to be extinct." (Foster, 1993)*

This statement begins to give credence to the modern ruin—the industrial buildings and 'outmoded' machines—and suggests that they are in the same class as the romantic ruin in terms of eliciting empathy with progress.

Here a differentiation must be made between technological progress and spiritual progress. Where the advancement of technology generally makes life easier or more efficient, it doesn't feed the soul in terms of putting one's mind at ease and in fact another of the indicators of decadence is the lack of spiritual experience. As C.E.M. Joad indicates in his book *Decadence: a Philosophical Inquiry*:

*"The absence of strong, religious belief is a familiar characteristic of so-called decadent ages; of fourth century B.C. Greece, of fourth century A.D. Rome and of eighteenth century France. I will endeavor to trace the connection between lack of belief and the*

*definition of decadence that I have suggested, showing how the latter both follows from and reinforces the former." (Joad, p.100)*

**Joad also suggests that this lack of spiritual experience is missed during such ages. The mind wants something to move it and instead of religious belief, one craves intense emotional experience:**

*"One thinks of the wars which ushered in the Roman Empire or of the religious wars of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The period comes to an end and is succeeded by one of comparative tranquility. Life no longer holds or holds in lesser measure its moments of extravagant triumph, of thrilling joy, of searing pain or agonized fear. There is also a weakening in belief of creeds and causes, for where it is no longer necessary to suffer and die and, we may add, to kill for creed or cause, the one is no longer embraced, the other no longer advocated with the same passionate intensity and fanatic zeal. We have arrived, we will suppose, at the second and third centuries A.D. of the Roman Empire or are living in England toward the end of the nineteenth century. Life in these periods is pleasant but apt to be a little flat. The senses can be gratified, the understanding exercised without let or hindrance, but the spirit flags. Presently lassitude supervenes.*

*Fatiguing to those who follow it, the tedium of this mode of existence is sometimes communicated to those who later contemplate it. This way of life, pushed to its logical conclusions, says Matthew Arnold contemplating the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum, by reason of 'the very intensity and*

*unremittingness of its appeal to the senses and the understanding, by its stimulating a single side of us too absolutely, ends by fatiguing and revolting us; and by leaving us with a sense of confinement, of oppression—with a desire for utter change, for clouds, storms, effusion and relief."* (Joad, p.97)

Fantasies of disaster sometimes occupy one's thoughts just so that the emotions associated with it can be imagined and to some degree felt. This phenomenon is apparent in all decadent ages. In Rome it was the gruesome spectacles that took place in the arenas; during the romantic period it was more passively manifested in nostalgia; the current culture's taste for cinema—most poignantly the 'disaster movie' and historical exposés—indicates that we are in the midst of a decadent age.

These false indulgences replace the reality of religious belief. Belief however has to be reinforced to remain convincing. Short of miracles, intimidation and advertising is employed to keep the believers on track. The church needed to employ such devices to maintain its status: the history of intimidation is well documented, but it's the advertising that applies to this study. The opulence of the medieval and renaissance churches should have been unnecessary but the churches leaders needed to convince the people that this religion was worth believing in (although the medieval structures were more a sacrifice than advertising campaign). This method of persuasion is also seen in other institutions as the level of power shifts from one to the other. Government buildings, financial institutions, department stores have all picked up on this type of advertisement.

In order to resist one form of decadence (the replacement of the out-moded), one must subscribe to another form of decadence (the use of ornament) to convince one—with eye candy rather than the virtues or benefits of a certain product—to buy into something that is facing competition. Ornament is used to express that which it is adorning, it affects the way one perceives things.

Art is a related vehicle to ornament. It expresses personality, morality, and belief by itself, without the constraints of directly representing something else. The Artist expresses a maxim, and the patron indirectly represents it, thereby advertising his own beliefs. The lack of standards associated with decadence affects the art world profoundly. There is no criteria by which any work can be judged. As Joad expresses:

*In the classical ages there were certain agreed criteria of literary and artistic excellence. A good work possessed certain virtues, for example, lucidity, poise, balance, elegance, measure and harmony. One knew what the artist who pronounced it was 'after'. In the romantic ages there were still standards of value, though the criteria were vaguer; but today everybody judges for himself and holds himself to be as good a judge as his neighbor. That this should be so follows inevitably from the subjectivist position according to which beauty is not in the work of art but in 'the eye of the beholder'. Hence, if the beholder's eye sees something to be beautiful, there is no appeal against his judgement. It follows further that that will be the most beautiful, which seems to*

*be so in the eyes of most people, with the corollary that the way to establish aesthetic merit is to count heads. (Joad p.111)*

So the ruin is a piece of art, commenting on society, and expressing one's belief in freedom of everything.

Decadence can be equated with the teenage years: a graduation from childhood, one standard; to adulthood, another standard. The rebellion and testing of limits is sometimes a requirement to find one's personality, particularly in decadent times where there is so much choice. It follows then that the ruin should be embraced as representative of the age, it possesses both the qualities of destruction and construction, its 'betweenness' is expressed by its incompleteness. These qualities are embraced by the movement and expressed in art and architecture.

## SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The study of factors involved in the fascination with ruins produced seven categories. One, ruins as memorial, was purposely not considered; erasure, poetry, transience, theatre, and incompleteness have been attributed to decadence; and the seventh, architectural principles, seems to stand on its own.

'Erasure' describes the effective elimination of function and history which removes the implications associated with a place.

'Poetry' includes all of the conscious metaphors that ruins evoke.

'Transience', related to poetry, but significant enough to stand alone, refers to the ultimate design of things, the cycles of the Earth, life and death.

'Theatre' describes the regarding of landscape and ruins as stage sets or background.

'Incompleteness' is the quality that stimulates the imagination, it's somewhere between erasure and architecture.

'Architectural principles' of enclosure and place-making play a part in Man's relation to nature and his place in it.

Although I've condensed most of the attraction of ruins down to one factor—decadence, it doesn't effect the fact that ruins elicit the reactions they do, it only explains why they elicit those reactions. And, as with psychological cases, it may help to know the cause of a condition but it may not change it. With respect to the use of this knowledge, then, it was unnecessary to take the study so far except to lend validity to the

**RUINS**

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**contributing factors. To a certain extent it has adversely affected the mystery of the attraction to have an explanation of where it is rooted.**



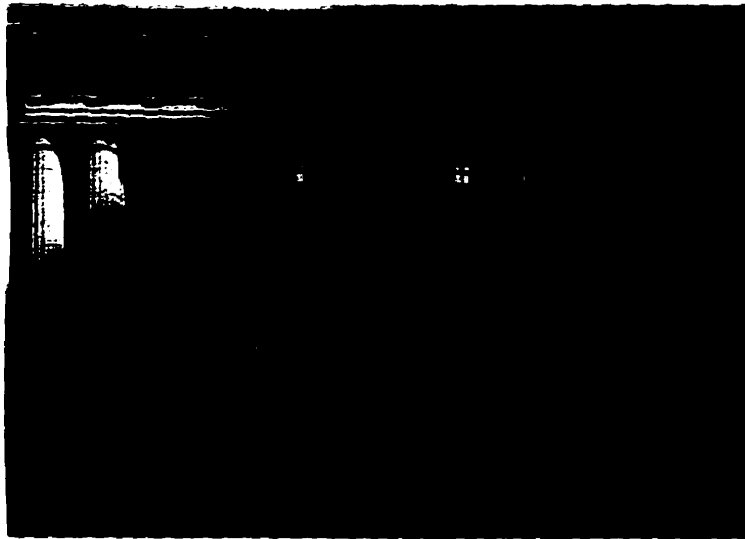
RUIN ROOM, POMMERSFELDEN CASTLE, BAVARIA.  
FRESCOES BY MARCHINI, 1716-18 (ZUCKER)

## DESIGN PRECEDENTS

Wherever ruins are maintained or evoked in design, the designer is acknowledging a fascination with some aspect about them. The following are examples of how ruins have been displayed and represented.







BANK OF COMMERCE, MAIN STREET, WPG.

### INFLUENCE OF RUINS

The designers of neoclassical buildings borrowed an architectural language from buildings on which detail had been weathered and obscured. The Greek Temples that had served as a guide for the style were originally detailed with bright colours, which in later applications of the style were not present. The coloured versions are unimaginable today, indicating the effect ruins have had on centuries of architecture.

The same is true of sculpture; Greek sculpture was most often painted, the Roman copies and subsequent original sculptures were probably left bare because some ruined precedents communicated form and light more effectively without the paint. The use of the sculpting medium as representational of the form became the accepted method of sculpture.

The State architecture designed for Hitler by Albert Speer was designed with their eventual ruin in mind. Hitler was enamoured with the antiquities of Rome and inspired by the various emperor's buildings which, although ruined, stood as evidence of their reigns. His desire for a similar type of immortality inspired his chief architect Albert Speer to develop a theory of ruin value which basically limited the materials employed to stone.

Speer's plan for Berlin's new centre was never constructed, but on the completion of the Chancellery (the headquarters of the Reich), Hitler addressed the workforce that laboured on the project: "Every individual has contributed to a structure that will outlast the centuries and will speak to posterity of our times. This is the first architectural creation of the new, German Reich."

(Speer) Seven years later, it was destroyed by Soviet forces and left in ruins.



SPEER'S PLAN FOR BERLIN'S  
NEW CENTER (SPEER)

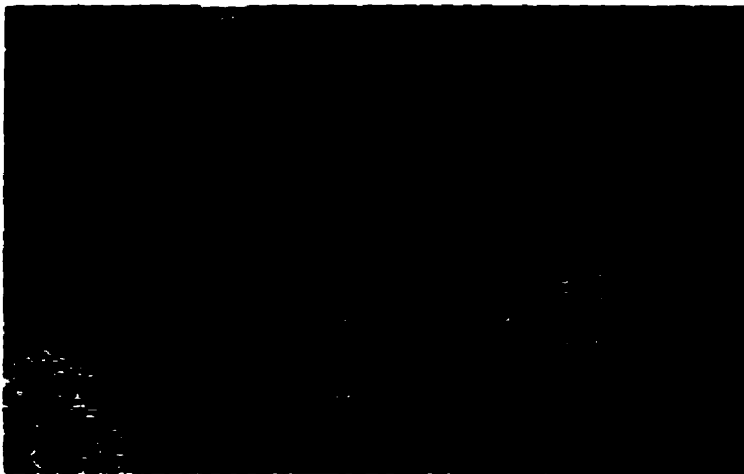
THE WRECKED HALL OF THE  
NEW CHANCELLERY. 1945  
(SPEER)



The present 'palette' of ruin value includes a few more materials than stone, but still excludes many. Concrete, wood, metal and even rubber work well, but plastics and materials that retain bright colours are still unacceptable and tend to dampen the appreciation of a ruin. Plastic is a material that cannot be returned to the earth in the conventional way. Perhaps we are subconsciously ashamed that we have produced a substance that escapes the natural cycles, and , when out of place, this fact becomes obvious. (Brightly coloured things are objectionable in the urban fabric as well. Unless it is well contextualized, saturated colour has the same effect on the downtown as plastic does in a ruin. Perhaps the downtown is a sort of ruin; it is, as anything that has been constructed, decaying as soon as it is complete and only the most rigorous maintenance can prevent the cracking, dulling and staining by the elements. This diatribe was provoked by a particularly offensive travel agency painted yellow yellow between the Metropolitan theatre and Holy Trinity Church on Donald street, as well as blue bricks and cute footprints littering the sidewalks in Winnipeg.)

**RUINS**

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**MILLMEAD: VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.  
(FROM GARDENS FOR SMALL COUNTRY HOUSES, 1912)**

**Gertrude Jekyll border:**

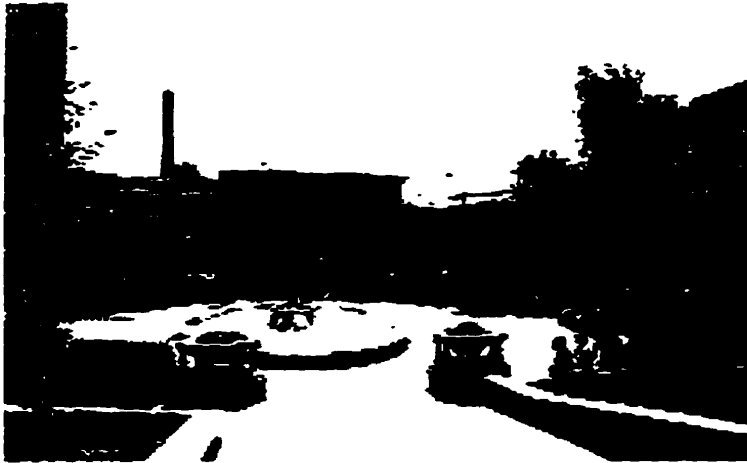
The garden designs of Gertrude Jekyll with Edwin Lutyens were often formal in layout but the borders were designed to spill onto the wide stone walks, creating a wild appearance with an underlying sense of order. This effect may have been derived from the overgrown appearances of ruins, which were an abundant landscape feature at the time. These designs achieved a casualness (a lack of implications) by appearing slightly neglected.

### LITERAL INTERPRETATIONS OF RUINS

The best way to achieve all the nuances of ruins is simply to recreate them. As mentioned earlier, sham ruins were built during the romantic period. These were to look as much as possible like the legitimate ruins on the neighbours' grounds and, as with any fad, the reasons were subconsciously implanted rather than laboured over.

When fake ruins are built today, they are still often superficial but their existence is usually justified with historical material or theoretical narrative. Fake ruins that have been built in Winnipeg use fragments from the numerous historic buildings that have been demolished. They vary in their success.

## RUINS



Window Park at 355 Portage Avenue elicits a sense of ruin in the form of a post modern gallery of historic Winnipeg buildings. The park, designed as a public space for the Air Canada building, contains freestanding columns and details from demolished buildings among the more finished aspects of the park. These details are documented on interpretive panels surrounding the central fountain thereby justifying their detached existence to those who would question them. The post-modern exaggerated allusions to classical architecture blend well with the neo-classical fragments, and the 'controversial' pink-tiled colonnade traces a section of an incomplete ellipse thereby further evoking a sense of ruin. Due to its formality the park is not as comfortable as a ruin might be and there are implied standards of etiquette which stifle but don't overwhelm its enjoyment. Window park is certainly enriched with the presence of the fragments not to mention the historical enlightenment provided.



In Mostyn Place Park, the Western-most entrance to the Assiniboine River Walk, sections of a mammoth ionic column from the Winnipeg Post Office building on Portage Avenue appear to litter the site. These fragments are impressive but the design around them doesn't acknowledge the effect: the paving is asphalt where it should be old brick or gravel; brick has been used as a skirting around the fragments which tells the viewer that they have been positioned there instead of appearing random; and the site furniture, painted tubular steel with wire mesh benches, forces the fact that this is meant as a park without trusting that people will use it as one.



## RUINS

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Between Bannatyne and Market Streets downtown, an old rail spur has been transformed into a 'Green Lane'. A seating area at the east terminus of the lane conveys the feeling of a ruin. Tyndall stone fragments from demolished buildings have been stacked totem-like, and placed in an orthogonal arrangement with heavy iron and wood benches. These stacks were lion heads from the Royal Alexandria Hotel, the three sections that made-up each head have been improperly stacked, this conveys an air of neglect; unconcerned with issues of meaning. These aspects, combined with the quality of materials used and the unfortunate (or fortunate) fact that the place is nearly always deserted (neglected), make it successful.



BEST "INDETERMINATE FACADE" BUILDING BY SITE (WINES)

*"Shopping is a feeling" (Byrne, 199-)*

The "Indeterminate Facade" building, designed by SITE for a BEST products showroom in Houston, Texas, was designed to look like an archetypal plaza building that was partially demolished. The result suggests a dialogue between it and the context of consumer society:

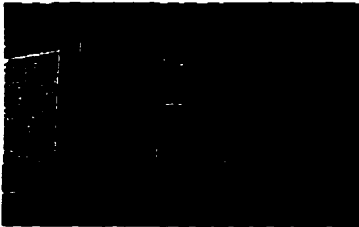
*The Indeterminant Facade...indicated the fertile possibilities in developing a new public imagery based on such nonformalist ingredients as humor, irony, inversion, environmental commentary, and phenomenological references. It used architecture as raw material, as the motivation for a dialogue in the mind, instead of simply an object worthy of conventional design critique." (Wines, 1987)*

the other BEST showrooms display related narratives using fragmentation to challenge the facade. The unusual facade treatments draw people in and impart a cavalier attitude to the experience.

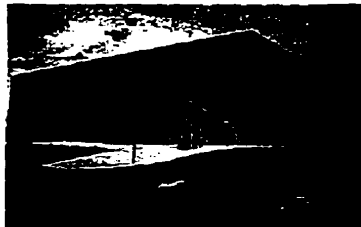
**RUINS**

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The result is an elimination of implied standards in entering the store which may end up altering one's shopping habits. The narrative on consumer society is an additional level of meaning for those intellectuals who see through the facade.



**BEST SEGMENTED FACADE**



**BEST NOTCH SHOWROOM**



**BEST INSIDE/OUTSIDE BUILDING**



**BEST TILT SHOWROOM**



**BEST FOREST BUILDING (ALL PHOTOS: WINES)**



NORMAN  
FOSTERS  
HONG KONG  
BANK  
(NEWHOUSE)

### EVOCATIONS OF RUINS

Whether they are intentional or not, some buildings, without actually looking ruined, exhibit qualities and elicit responses similar to ruins'. Some buildings serve a function that doesn't require a great deal of refinement and hence leave exposed the evidence of their structure and workings, whereas others do so deliberately for the effect.

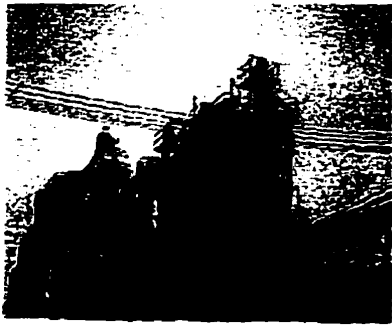
Warehouses in the Romanesque style that are common in Winnipeg's Core Area are definitely



WAREHOUSE AT McDERMOT AND PRINCESS IN WINNIPEG

complete, but lack the refinement that a public building would present. These buildings have rusticated limestone bases and ornamental entrances; the rest, though, is not clad with stone or stucco but uses the actual brick structure as their surface. The brick is articulated to express arches

and cornices but still conveys an incomplete look. The interiors of these buildings too are often left unfinished, leaving everything exposed as one might witness in a ruin.



CENTRAL GRAIN ON ARCHIBALD, WPG

Industrial buildings, like many things that have been designed by engineers, are subject to the laws of science only and hence are in an aesthetic category of their own. This aesthetic has been applauded by architects for its honesty, which also makes it evocative of ruins. Structure and various services essential

to a specific industry are exposed where necessary as though whatever would be covering them—had they been a traditional structure—had been stripped away.

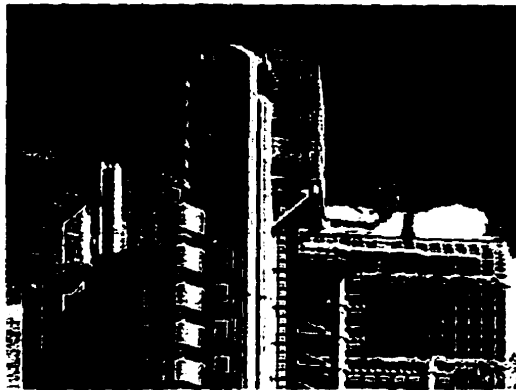


POMPIDOU CENTRE, PARIS, BY ROGERS AND PIANO (NEWHOUSE)

The industrial aesthetic has been adopted by some architects for use on non-industrial buildings.

*“Richard Rogers’ Lloyds building in London, is curiously evocative of a ruin, its service structures revealed deliberately as a ruin’s might be by accident.” (Harbison, 1991)*

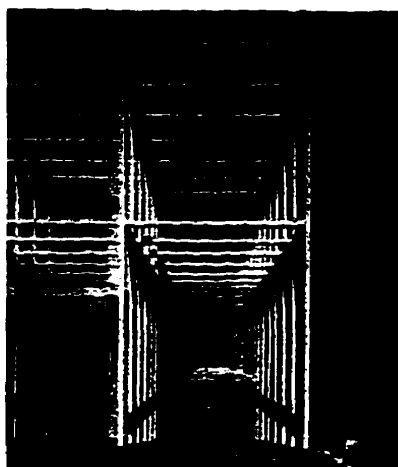
Some of these buildings, like Rogers’ Pompidou Centre (with Renzo Piano) and Lloyds of London, and Norman Foster’s Hong Kong Bank, express this by exposing structure and services which appear as though they may



ROGERS’ LLOYDS OF LONDON BLDG., (POWELL)

have been revealed through some process of decay; others, such as Eisenman designs and specifically KOY’s Winnipeg airport addition, extend their domain beyond the building suggesting the incompleteness that is inherent to ruins.

The architects of these buildings employ deconstructivist methods in their designs which, as I understand it, means they are questioning established



WEXNER CENTER FOR THE VISUAL  
ARTS, OHIO, BY PETER EISENMAN  
(DOUBILET)

standards by challenging them with alternative versions. The purpose of this treatment is to expose the irrelevancy of some standards which may have had origins in a culture with a different set of values. Another explanation involves the more subconscious possibility that these architects are expressing the indeterminate aspect of decadence through their designs.

Ruins are evocative of deconstructivist architecture. They challenge the fundamental notions of space and the relation of architecture to landscape and, more poignantly, reveal the origins of shelter and the human relation to nature, which, in the spirit of deconstructivism is ideal.



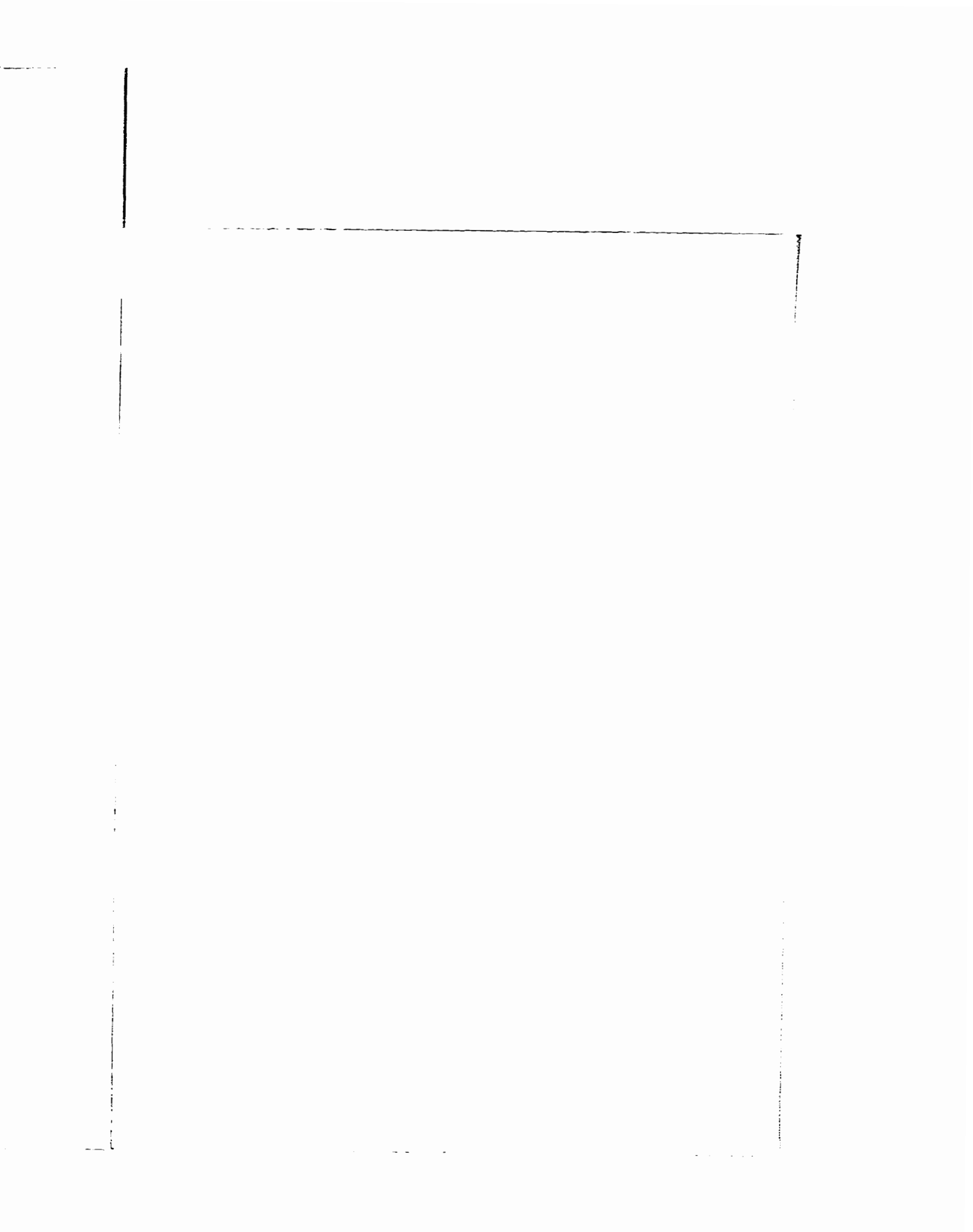
(A&amp;U)

**Franklin Court, Philadelphia:**

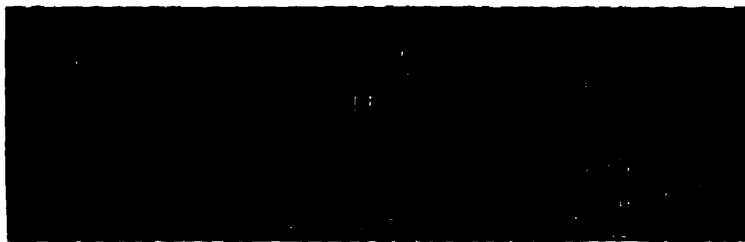
This project involved the design of a museum on and around the foundation of Ben Franklin's home. Instead of reconstructing the house, the architecture firm of Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown decided to design the museum underground and merely suggest the profile of the house as a steel framework. The result is a much more compelling piece than any artificial attempt to recreate the original.

This project demonstrates similarities to the site with which I've chosen to work. It is dealing with a structure that was unremarkable except for what it represented. The difference in this approach is that it relies on other sources of information to make it interesting whereas, for the most part, ruins provide their own interest through means described earlier.





## THE MANIPULATION OF RUINS



BYLAND ABBEY. THE NAVE LOOKING WEST, BEFORE EXCAVATION AND AFTER (THOMPSON)

### RUINS ON DISPLAY

For the most part, these ruins have been left just as they were when they were uncovered, but some have been manipulated.

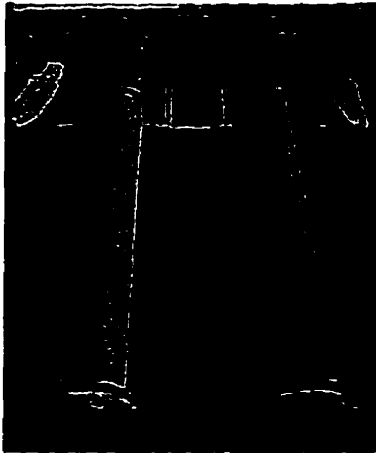
Where the pieces of column and lintel structures such as those of temples were just laying at the base, they were often reconstructed. This usually only occurred with structures that had great historical significance such as those on the Acropolis in Athens or in the Roman Forum. In order to prevent weathering, fine examples of sculpture were often placed in museums and replaced by concrete replicas.

The most common method of presenting ruins is to excavate and maintain grass around them. This treatment has the effect of putting them on display as one would display sculpture.

## ADAPTED RUINS



The ruin of the Temple of the Vestal Virgins in the Roman forum was turned into a rose garden by enthusiasts of the English Picturesque. This was curiously more sensitive than the more common practice of taking portions of these antiquities back to England and placing them in their own picturesque landscapes.



The Church of San Lorenzo in Miranda was built within the ruins of the Temple of Antonio and Faustina (138A.D.) in the Roman Forum. This 17th century church maintained the columns of the original structure as a freestanding facade. The Baroque facade stands behind this colonnade leaving a space of fifteen centuries. The evident juxtaposition of architectural styles provides an historical narrative of religion, politics and time.



SANTA MARIA DEGLI ANGELI (TOP OF PHOTO)

(BONECHI)

#### **The Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli:**

In 1561, Michelangelo designed a church to fit inside the Baths of Diocletian in Rome. The project easily could have completely hidden the previous form, but Michelangelo chose to respect the integrity of the ancient structure by changing as little as possible. The entrance is on one of the concave vaults of the baths and is relatively unadorned so that the re-use of the form is evident.

## RUINS

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### **St Boniface Basilica, Wpg.**

Most of the facade of this church survived after fire consumed it in 1968. Instead of restoring the Basilica to its former glory, a church of adequate size was built within the shell and within a budget. The new church works with the ruined facade, its oxidized metal roof and severe form suggest industrial ruin. This creates a contrast with the ruins while maintaining the theme. Although the facade exhibits all the qualities of ruins, the decision to maintain it was most likely for historical reasons.

## AN APPROACH TO RUINS

From the evidence of the previous examples, there are as many applications including the ruin aesthetic as there are explanations for it. In order to develop an approach to ruins it would be helpful to speculate on the motivation for the inclusion of their related qualities in the applications.

The use of unfinished surfaces as inspired by weathered materials was an aesthetic realization. Besides looking better unfinished, these buildings expressed an integrity to their materials and without surface adornments they wouldn't appear to weather as quickly.

Speer's theory of ruin value was a return to the integrity of materials. The use of natural materials that had withstood the test of time was a logical step in creating a building whose form was intended to surpass its usefulness.

The intentional compromise of elements of order (as in Jekyll's gardens) was an attempt to literally relax the strictness of a design. As with ruins, it is the knowledge that there was a previous order that makes such a space intriguing.

The re-creation of ruins is used to invoke the feeling of ruins where there are none. One would want to recreate a ruin in order to create interest, either historical or aesthetic, and/or as a comment on the site on which it is being used (as in SITE's BEST stores). Ruins, of course, are the most direct way of achieving the qualities of ruins, and that is why they are employed so literally. But through gaining an

understanding of what makes ruins intriguing, one might be able to develop design elements that evoke ruin qualities without building ruins.

Where aspects of ruins are evoked without making direct reference to them, the intent is uncertain because the designer could be expressing a concept that is also accidentally expressed in ruins but not drawing from them. This is the case with some modern architecture, such as Rogers' Lloyds building. "The ideology of a structure like the new Lloyds insurance building in London—headquarters of an institution whose organization is as mysterious, and broken into non-joining parts as its envelope—is a notion of honesty in which the inside is shown as the outside, and services normally concealed are inflated and run outside..." (Harbison, p.124) The motivation for evocations of ruins is grounded elsewhere than actual ruins, but the parallels are clear and perhaps such endeavors actually help one understand more about ruins.

The display of ruins is the ultimate expression of their effect. Such ruins are usually important enough to be considered historic sites, but their information is usually not very extensive or available and can be pretty much ignored or at least considered separately from the effect.

The motivation for adapting a ruin is usually pragmatic; it provides a foundation or walls which cuts costs of building new. Maintaining parts of ruins that don't necessarily support the new use is a conscious decision though. One could argue that it too is based on economics; but if ruins weren't

compatible with the new use, their evidence would likely be hidden. Since they weren't in the cases shown above, they are acknowledging and subscribing to the the ruin aesthetic. The result of adaptive re-use of ruins, then, is the creation of layers of history and the resulting narrative enriches our experience without denying us the indulgence of appreciating the ruin.

#### HISTORY

From the beginning I have denied the role of history in the appreciation of ruins, I still maintain that the history of a ruin preferably not be known, but each of the applications of ruins seems to contain an historical aspect. The appreciation of ruins, then, seems to involve an *attitude* toward history rather than an outright ignorance of it. This attitude could be attributed to the aforementioned decadence of the age and seems to manifest itself—in the consideration of ruins—as an acknowledgement and respect of history, but at the same time, irreverence toward any standards associated with it. So, in fact, history has a great deal to do with considering ruins, but only for the purpose of disregarding it. To a certain extent, addressing history when dealing with ruins is unavoidable no matter how one approaches them.

#### USELESSNESS

One of the factors that contributes to the allure of ruins is their uselessness. A ruins' lack of function allows a freedom in perceiving it. This is a prime consideration when attempting to incorporate a design into ruins. Assuming that every design has a function, the difficulty lays in assigning that function



without compromising the qualities that uselessness provides. The key seems partly to be in not wholly incorporating the ruin to the assigned function. That is, maintaining evidence of some sort of compromise. This was evident in Michelangelo's renovation of the Baths of Diocletian into the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli (see p.61). One would scarcely be able to tell that the church was once baths if Michelangelo had made the entrance more suitable to a church rather than leaving it, unadorned, in one of the curved walls of a bath chamber. A term that is sometimes used to describe this obvious mixing of one vocabulary with another is 'collision' and as a design device it is not restricted to the adaptation of ruins. This device introduces another way to express irreverence in perceiving a building; the imposition of one set of rules on another graphically expresses this without the building having to be functionless.

#### LANDSCAPE

The medium of landscape is quite flexible compared to architecture; there aren't as many programmatic requirements regarding the comfort of the users since the climate of the landscape is uncontrollable. Because of this acceptance of unreliable habitation, landscape design is allowed more flexibility in terms of expressing ideas of space and enclosure. Architectural concepts that conflict with the nature of habitation (as may arise in the deconstructivist school) can be expressed in the landscape. So, too, can poetic concepts. The architectural palette in the realm of landscape includes the factor of life (where buildings are fighting decay, landscapes are struggling with growth).

**POETRY**

The personal nature of poetry makes it difficult to include in an analytical fashion. The following exercise is an attempt to express the poetry of ruins—not so much by the resulting poem but by the process of ‘building it’. Images of abandoned buildings in the Southern Manitoba ghost town of Snowflake inspired a commentary on their appearance, demise and fate. The poem was built from a limited assortment of words which resulted in compromising exact meaning for vague allusions—getting the most out of what was there. The result, as with most poetry, is a piece from which the readers can draw their own meaning. Ruins don’t possess a full ‘vocabulary’ either, thereby forcing the fragments that remain to speak for the whole and lead the viewers to varied conclusions.



produce d from dream  
would recall the place  
time did show the sky



fiddle sweet when men were there  
whisper still with none



some said over & death & void  
about the rust arid sage



but sleep did away  
the sweat of need  
the have & want of day



storm and winter beat iron skin s  
to shake these suit s of shadow s  
and under the shrie of life will lie

car

drive

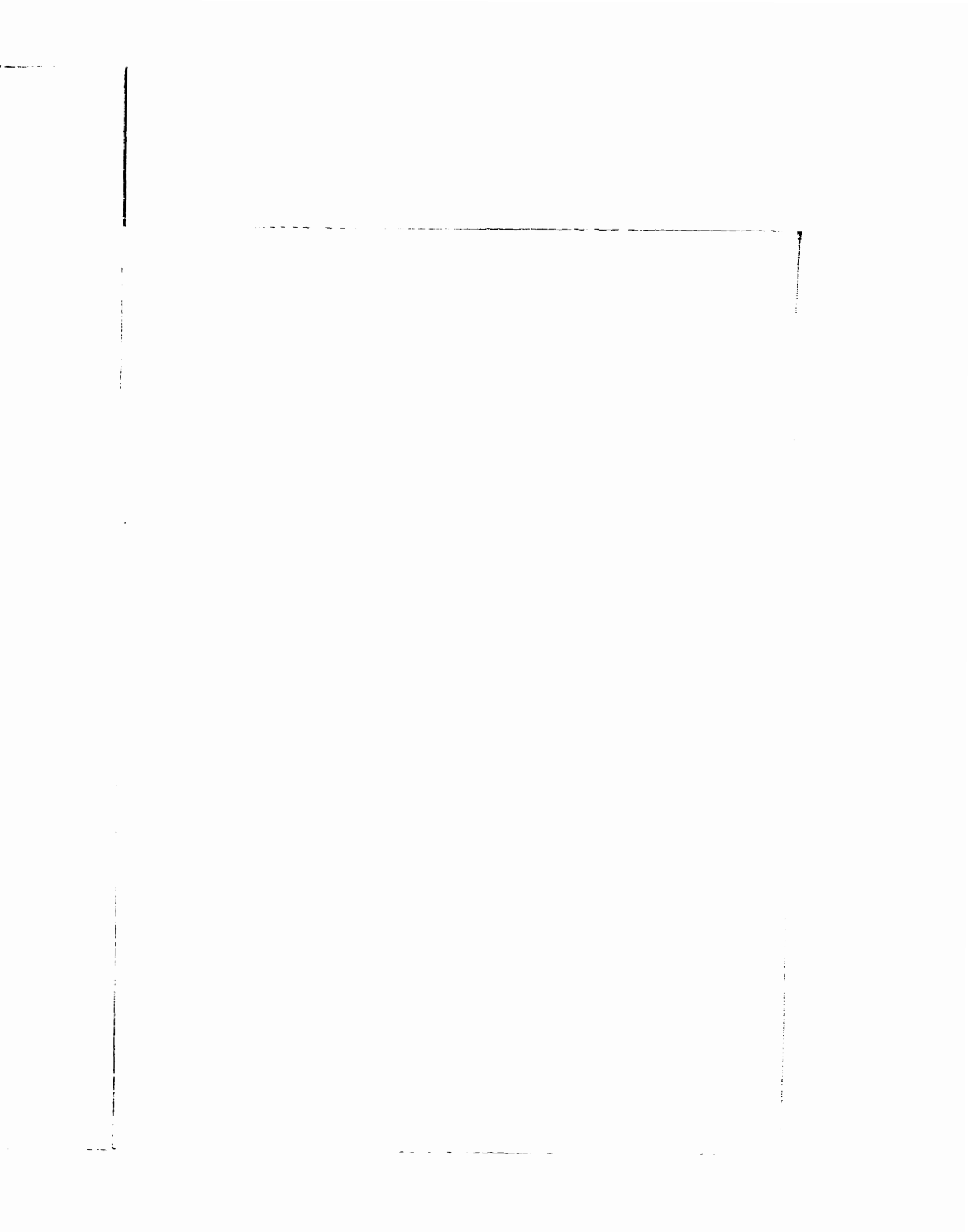
picture

leave

together in the garden

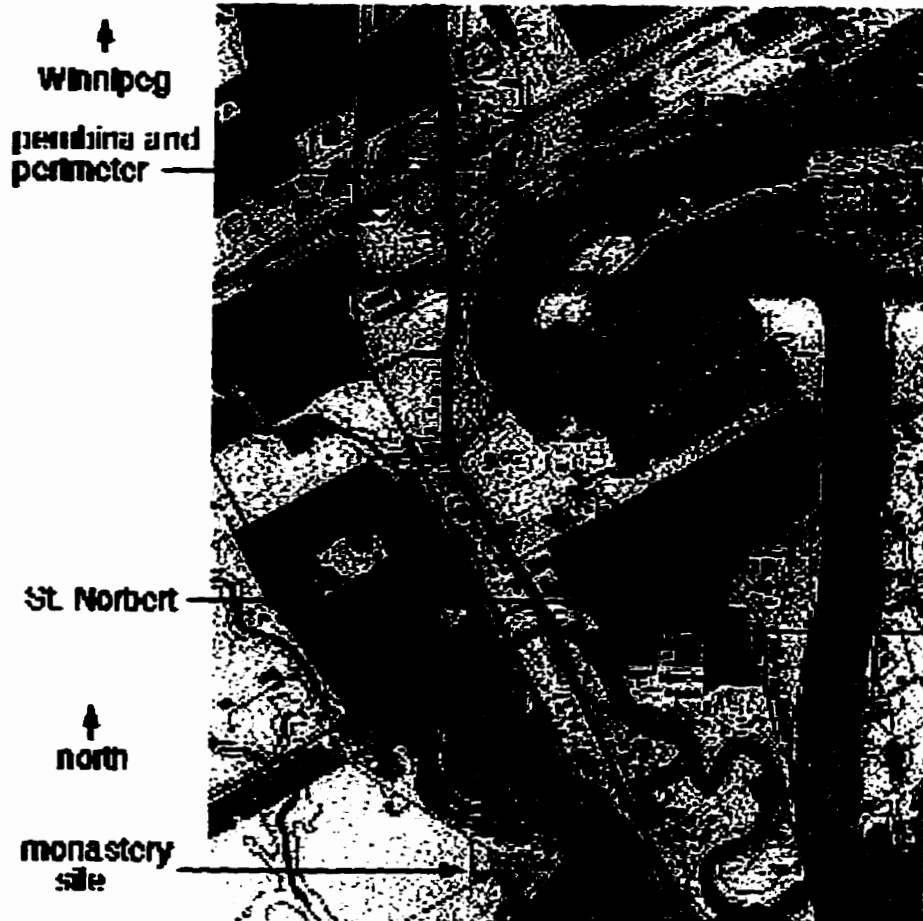
**THE RUINS OF THE TRAPPIST MONASTERY  
ST. NORBERT MANITOBA**





## PROPOSED SITE FOR DEVELOPMENT

The abandoned Trappist Monastery site in St. Norbert, Manitoba, south of Winnipeg contains one functional building and several ruins. One of the ruins is that of the church and monastic wing, the rest are of farm buildings. The latter structures are the focus of this practicum's application.



## FOUNDATION OF MONASTERY

In 1892, in response to an invitation from Monsignor Ritchot, parish priest of St. Norbert, and Archbishop Tache of St. Boniface, five Cistercians (Trappists) of the Abbey of Bellefontaine, France, founded along the La Salle River, a house of their order. (historic sites)

The Cistercian order is an ancient monastic order founded in 1098. It followed the rule of St. Benedict with a strict code of moral and spiritual behavior. The Trappists are a reform branch of this order and have what is considered the strictest regime in the western church.

Founded in 1664 at La Trappe, a Cistercian Abbey near Soligny, France, the order now has monasteries in every country in Europe, as well as Canada, the United States, China, Japan, Asia Minor, Palestine, Bosnia, Dalmatia and Africa. (Campbell)

The Trappists congregated for religious offices seven times a day, the high point being the holy sacrifice of the mass. Their schedule also allowed four to five hours of spiritual reading and study. The remainder of the day was devoted to labour, where they would only speak out of necessity. Communication with the outside world was kept to a minimum although over the years some rules were relaxed in the interests of the community.

The site that they settled on in Manitoba also has a long history. The area where the La Salle River joins the Red River had long been a busy centre for hunting, fishing and trade for Aboriginal peoples

before the arrival of white explorers. With the advent of the local fur trade, the area evolved, by the 1820s, into a French speaking Metis settlement, which, due to its proximity to St. Boniface and its prime agricultural land, attracted settlers from Quebec and France. The area was formed as a parish in 1857, named after St. Norbert, the patron saint of \_\_\_\_\_, care of Rev. Joseph Norbert Provencher, who was Bishop of St. Boniface. St. Norbert's location along major trade and transportation routes meant the community was able to profit from freighting, merchandising, transporting and providing services for travellers from Eastern Canada and the northern United States. (SNACC)

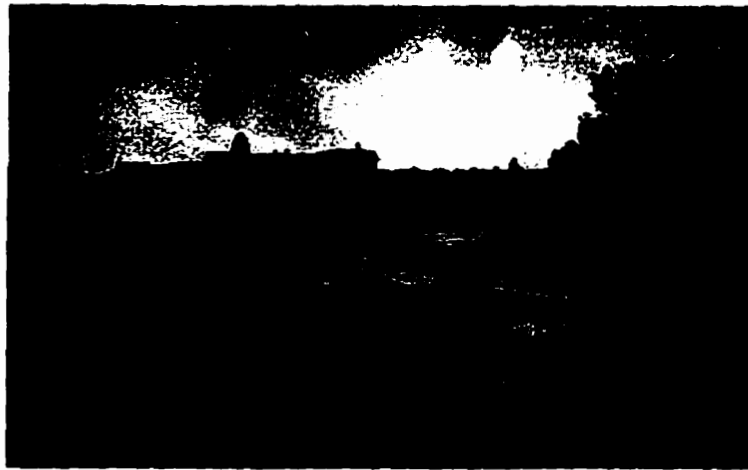
In 1869 the community was threatened by Government plans to stake out land for an influx of new settlers. Surveyors were peacefully held at bay until the negotiations with Ottawa were complete. The community formed the Comite National de Metis with Louis Riel as the leader of la Resistance. Through the formation of a provisional government, the Comite claimed the power to negotiate with Ottawa. Its first act was to erect a barrier across the community's main access road to keep out representatives of the Canadian Government. The Government responded by sending in the military, forcing Riel to flee. In 1870, thanks to the efforts of La Resistance and the parish priest, Father Ritchot, negotiations resulted in Manitoba being granted Provincial status. The Manitoba Act was proclaimed, guaranteeing the linguistic, religious, and proprietary rights of its citizens. (SNACC)

St. Norbert had achieved village status in 1871 with the establishment of a post office; in 1892 the monks encountered a town with a church, convent, foundling hospital run by the Grey Nuns, many services, and a CPR connection to Winnipeg.

The act of establishing a parish was basically a hegemonic move by the Catholic Church (an apparent right that had been repeatedly exercised in the Americas). In this case the distinction was a little blurred, as the Metis were of both Aboriginal and French blood. The rights to the land became the jurisdiction of the parish priest to deal with as he saw fit. Father Ritchot allocated some land to the church, including a site to accommodate his desire for a monastery; the rest of the land he sold to settlers at a tidy profit.

The site that Father Ritchot set aside for a monastery was well away from the influence of the town. Within a curve of the LaSalle River the monks built their first monastery: a three story wooden structure with a mansard roof and a bell tower. They named it Notre-dame des Prairies (Our Lady of the Prairies) after their traditional dedication to the Virgin Mary.

Although there was a chapel in the first monastery, a real church was top priority for the community and, in 1903, construction commenced on a stone and brick church. The plans of the church were drawn at the Abbey in Citeaux, France, the motherhouse of the Cistercian order, in an essentially Roman style: vaulted nave and transept, with a two-tiered apse and a domed bell tower. The



VIEW OF MONASTERY FROM SOUTH C. 1914  
 PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA

materials were brick and local stone, hauled from St. Boniface; the interior wall of the apse was supported by eight columns of Ohio stone and much of the interior details were sent from France. The work was done by the monks and hired labourers and was not completed for several years due to lack of funds. During that time, however, work commenced on the construction of a monastic wing, a three storey structure attached to the church projecting south from the transept. It was constructed of the same materials as the church, but had a mansard roof with dormers similar to the old monastery. On the west side toward the end of the monastic wing, a gambrel roof profile was introduced, presumably to allow for the addition of another wing which would create a courtyard or cloister between it and the church. The church and monastic wing were completed in 1910; no other additions were made after that. (Grover)

The first monastery was converted into a guesthouse which burned down in 1912, and was replaced the same year with the structure that stands there today: slightly larger but very similar to the original. It was built entirely by the monks from revenues from the excellent harvest of 1912.

The monastery property included 1500 acres of farmland which allowed the monks to be self-sufficient to a large extent and also generate revenue.

*"Faithful to the rule of poverty, the Trappist monks subsisted on what they raised on the land. For this reason agriculture and animal husbandry were of primary importance at Notre-Dame des Prairies. Potatoes and grain were sown and reaped during the summer of 1892, and by December the first stable had been built. Water was hauled from the river pending construction of a well. After the first harvest a threshing machine was purchased, and a modern dairy and butter factory were set up within a few years. The Trappists diversified their operations as time went by. Although strict vegetarians, they kept beef cattle, pigs and poultry along with their horses and dairy herd. They marketed the meat and cheese in order to purchase necessities they could not provide for themselves. In 1906 the Trappists developed another source of income when they set up an apiary and began selling their famous honey. Despite the trappists' ancient garb and 900-year-old traditions, only the most up-to-date equipment was used for their agricultural activities. In order to maintain the self-sustaining community several shops were built on the monastery property.*

*These included a bakery, a shoemaker's shop, a forge and an outdoor sawmill. Stables, granaries, equipment sheds, greenhouses, and a chicken coop were also constructed." (Historic Resources)*

The monks lived and worked at this site for over 80 years before they found the encroachment of the City of Winnipeg compromised their solitude. Notre-Dame des Prairies had been described as one of the most isolated and peaceful of the Cistercian monasteries. The people of St. Norbert took pride in their monastery and protected its privacy but the sprawl of a major urban centre like Winnipeg was less sensitive. The tax burden on the property was also a major consideration. As the population of the monastery grew older and received fewer recruits, their ability to generate revenue decreased. Between 1975 and 1978 the monastery moved to an 880 acre farm 145 kilometres southwest of Winnipeg, between the towns of Holland and Bruxelles, where they continue most of their operations on a smaller scale.

In 1975, the St. Norbert property was sold to Genstar, who managed the 1200 acres and existing buildings. Many of the outbuildings on the site were taken down or moved, leaving the church and monastic wing, the guesthouse and a gatehouse standing.

The church and monastic wing, which was declared an historic site by the city in 1980, burned down on November 7, 1983, leaving a shell of crumbling brick walls. Heritage St. Norbert lobbied to save the ruins and in 1987, received some funds from the City and Federal Government. Genstar



**RUINS**

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**donated the ruins and eight acres of land surrounding them and the Province agreed to take it on and maintain it as a provincial park. The walls of the ruin**



**THE CHURCH AFTER THE FIRE AND BEFORE SELECTIVE DEMOLITION.  
(DAVID FIRMAN, HISTORIC RESOURCES)**

**required stabilizing in order to make them safe to enter but with the limited funds available, only some of them could be preserved. A large section of the north transept and apse were demolished leaving the foundation, the west facade and most of the bell tower standing.**

### THE GUEST HOUSE

The guest house is the only intact building on the site at present. It was unaffected by the fire that consumed the church, although 25 Polish refugees were evacuated during the blaze. (In 1982 the guest house had been set up as the Kolbe Refugee Home.) Between 1983-1990 the St. Norbert Foundation moved its operation to the Guest House while renovations were being carried out on their permanent home in St. Norbert. In 1988, as a result of the efforts of Heritage St. Norbert, the Province of Manitoba designated the guest house and the surrounding land as a heritage site. That same year Heritage St. Norbert and the St. Norbert Foundation formed St. Norbert Community and Historical Services Incorporated which purchased the guest house and the adjacent five acres from Genstar with a donation from St. Norbert residents William and Shirley Loewen. (SNACC)

In 1990 a proposal to run the guest house as an arts and cultural centre was submitted to St. Norbert Community and Historical Services Inc. by Louise Loewen. In 1991 L'Hotelierie St. Norbert Guest House Inc. was incorporated to assume ownership of the guest house. Later, the organization began to operate the guest house as The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre. A caretaker's residence was built on the second floor pending renovations of the entire building. In 1992, The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre (SNACC) began providing workshops, concerts, installations, readings, and performances

during the summers while the Guesthouse was being renovated. As of September 1995 the guest house



ST. NORBERT ARTS AND  
CULTURAL CENTRE. 1996

was complete and SNACC was prepared to provide year-round programming. The renovated structure includes studio space, a conference room, an exhibition/performance hall and artist's residences. The SNACC programs cater to children, adults, artists, and local groups.

A number of the programs involve the use of the environments surrounding the Guest House: Many musical and theatrical performances have taken

place in the church ruins, a number of workshops are held outside, a vegetable garden and bee hives are maintained each year and art installations can often be found on the grounds.

#### SITE

The monastery site is quite secluded by city dwellers' standards. The St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre is tucked in a meander of the LaSalle River with woods surrounding on three sides as well as woodland on the opposite side of the river. The ruins of the church exhibit all the compelling qualities that make them the focus of studies such as this. Beyond the church ruins, to the west, are farmers' fields as far as the eye can see, but just before that, in an uncultivated field is the subtle evidence of the monastery farm buildings.

A crude road leads west, on axis with the front door of the church, straight on to Waverly Street two km away. On either side of this road lay the concrete foundations of the Trappists' numerous farm buildings. As mentioned earlier, they had burned, were taken down or moved shortly after the monks had made the decision to leave (some of the wood from the barns was used in the new monastery). Most of the foundations have crumbling grade beams and evidence of walls extending two to three feet above ground level and some have basement levels. Although of low stature, unimportant function, and not-so-attractive materials, these foundations still possess the qualities that make ruins attractive: They are incomplete structures of indeterminable function; they define indoor/outdoor space; and, although they were demolished, their remains are becoming overgrown and appear to have decayed.

At present, the ruins of the farm buildings are owned by Genstar, there have been a few proposals to develop the area surrounding the ruins and guest house as a residential area. A recent golf course proposal resulted in the City of Winnipeg buying the strip of land along the Rue de la Monastère and the woods across the La Salle River from the guest house in order to prevent the development.

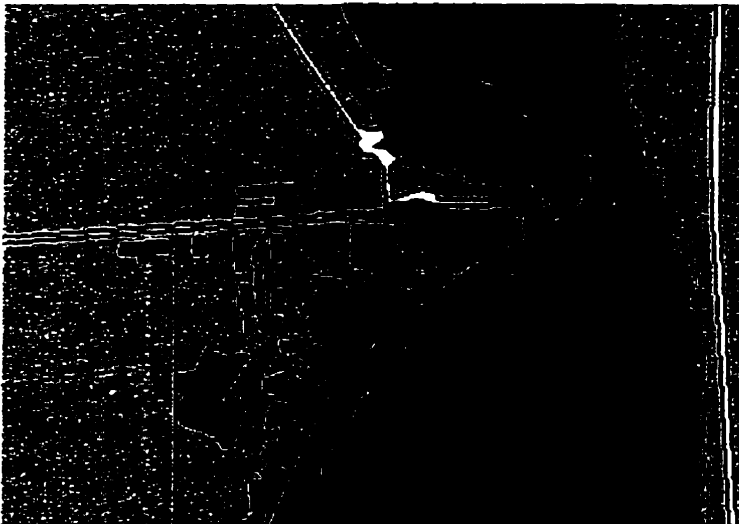
## RUINS

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The ruins of the church stand as the centre-piece of the monastery site, they are the first thing one sees upon entering the site and even in their ruined state they are larger and of more durable materials than the guest house. But their main function is background, even when used for performances, they are merely scenery, the picturesque.

The area of the farm ruins lacks interest from a distance but the church and the farm ruins have the advantage of an axial connection provided the farm ruins are emphasized.

The farm buildings were arranged along three roads: the east-west road in line with the front of the Church; a road that followed the bank of the river and a north-south road that connected the two (see plans below and opposite). All three of these are visible today as ridges worn by dirt-bike tracks.



PLAN OF MONASTERY (INTACT)

NORTH /

RUINS



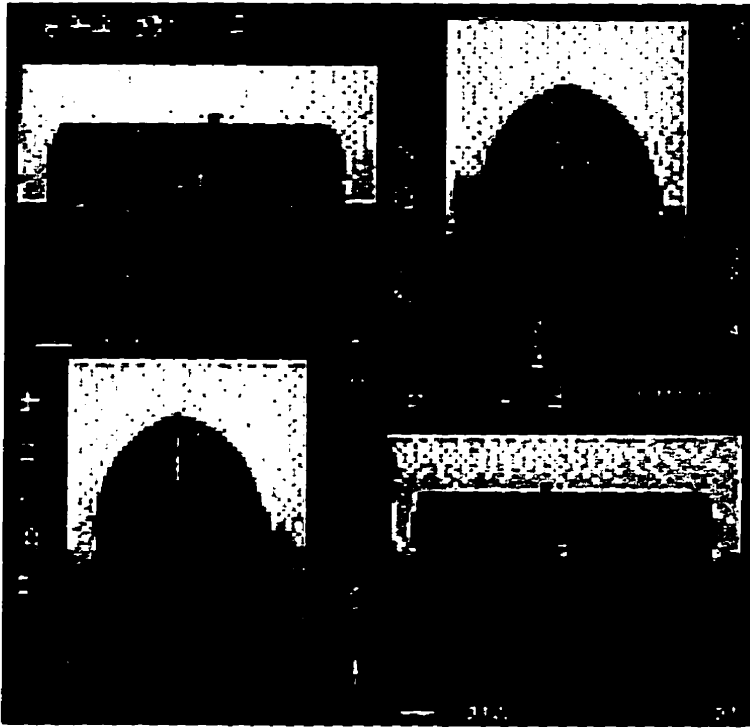
MONASTERY C. 1950 (DURING THE FLOOD) WHEN MOST OF THE FARM BUILDINGS THAT MAKE THE RUINS WERE STANDING.

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 GUEST HOUSE              | 7 STABLE AND POULTRY  |
| 2 CHURCH AND MONASTIC WING | 8 GARAGE              |
| 3 GATE HOUSE               | 9 STORAGE             |
| 4 DAIRY BARN               | 10 WORKSHOP AND FORGE |
| 5 CATTLE BARN              | 11 PIG BARN           |
| 6 GRANARY                  | 12 APIARY             |

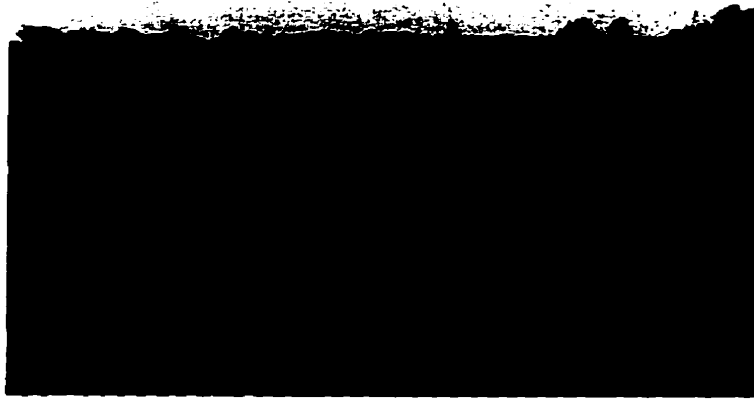


CATTLE BARN C. 1978 AND 1996

RUINS



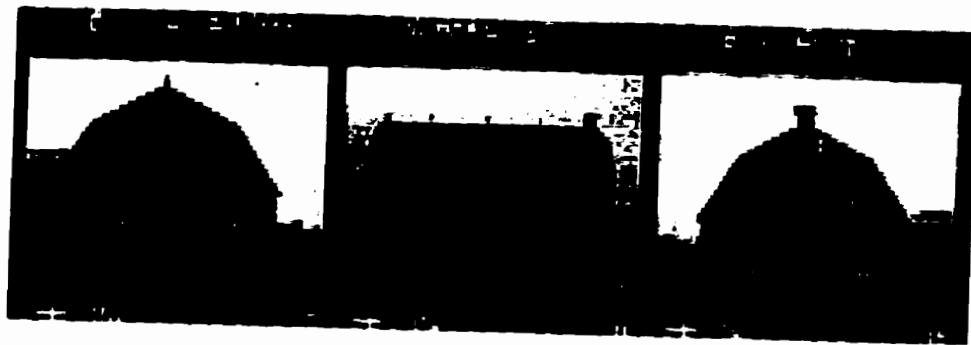
STABLE AND POULTRY C. 1978 AND 1996



RUINS



DAIRY BARN C. 1978 AND 1996





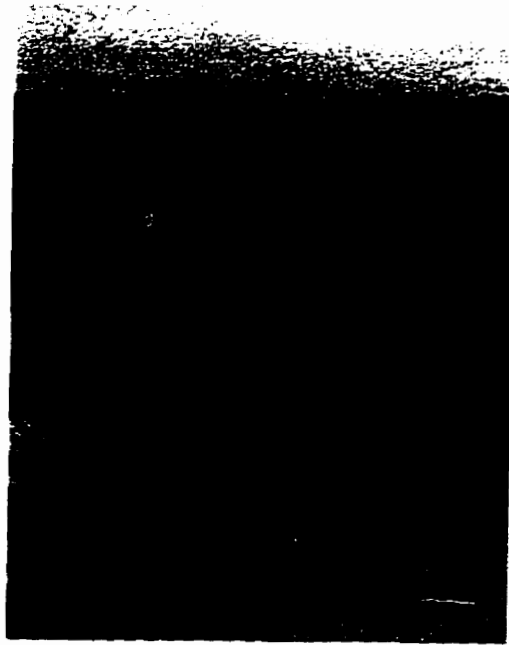
RUINS



WORKSHOP AND FORGE C. 1978 AND 1996



**RUINS**

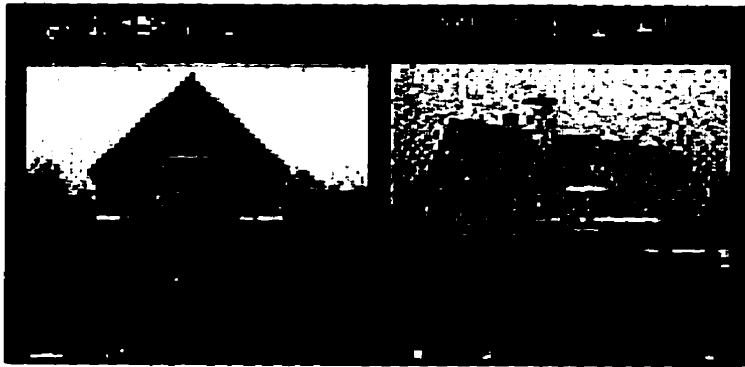


**GRANARY C. 1978 AND 1996**



**RUINS**

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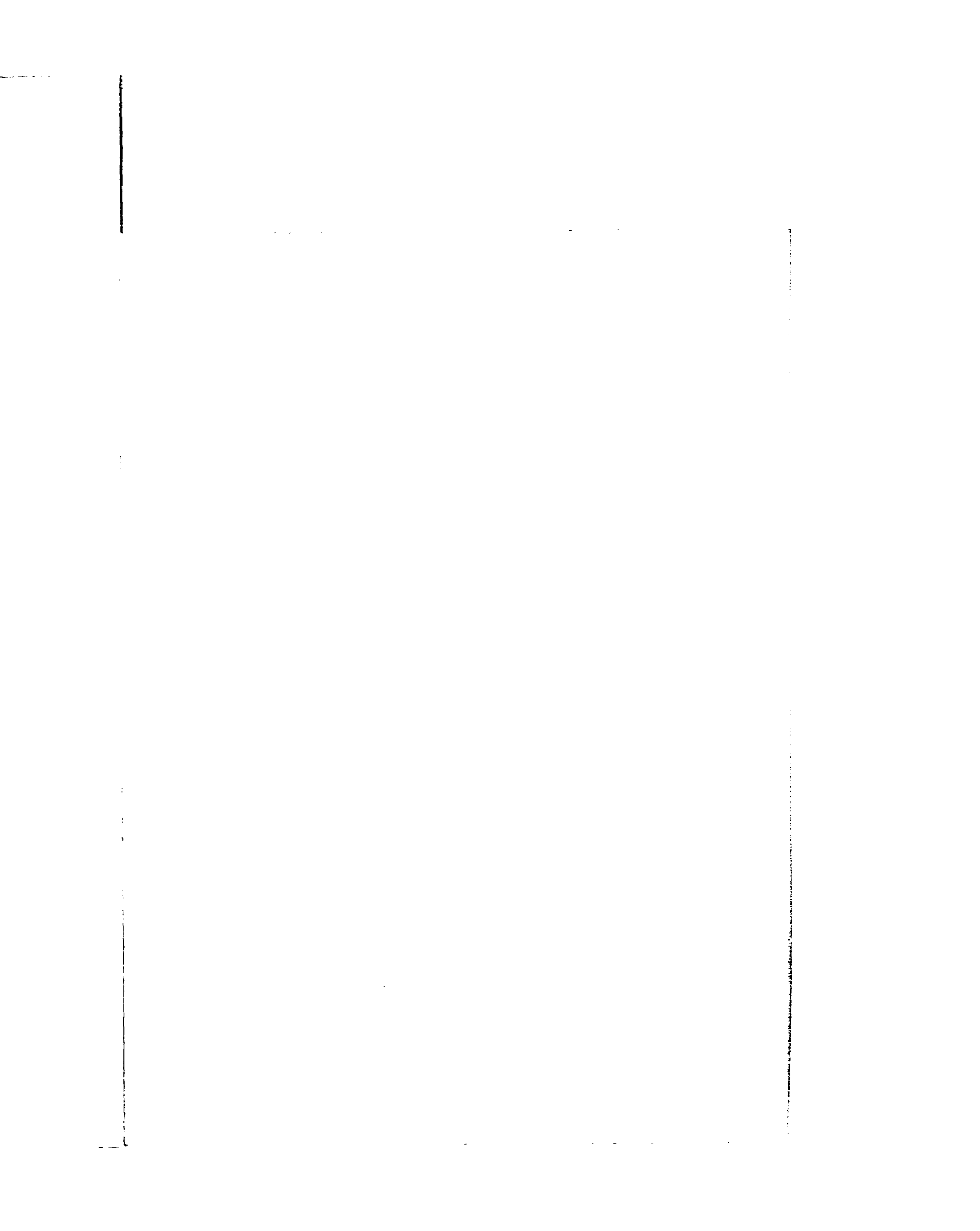


**PIG BARN C. 1978 AND 1996**



**1978 PHOTOS OF FARM BUILDINGS BY DAVID FIRMAN  
(HISTORIC RESOURCES)**

The state of the farm ruins is such that they would have to be altered considerably in order to pass code. Dangerous protrusions, uneven paving and unstable fragments would have to be taken care of. These changes would compromise the ruins to such a degree as to make their effects benign. Any design involving these ruins as ruins would most likely be theoretical.



## APPLICATIONS

The practical application of the study's' conclusions to the chosen site has proved to be an exercise in contradiction due to the nature of these conclusions. Any attempt to make the site work as a design would compromise the essence of the study which is that ruins are attractive because of their uselessness and their potential as such to stimulate the imagination. Preliminary attempts to develop the site as a useful landscape that complemented the arts and cultural centre tended to contradict the text.

The revised program is simply to use the text to intervene on the site, to represent the conclusions of the study however they could best be expressed and wherever on the site they were most applicable. The originals of the following applications are contained in a large book along with a visual history and documentation of the site. This is an unlikely volume, it provides an account of the history of a group of buildings that by logical standards should have escaped documentation all together. The impressions contained within are the result of a curious attraction, the evidence of the farm was far more engaging than the real thing could ever have been. The conclusion is a moot point, which seems fitting as it addresses the unsettled nature of the site and the nature of ruins themselves.

## FOUNDATION OF MONASTERY

In <sup>IN RUINS</sup> ~~in response to an invitation from~~  
Monsignor Ritchie, parish priest of St. Norbert, and  
Archbishop <sup>PALIMPSEST</sup> ~~of the~~ Mercians

(Trappist) A manuscript on which two or more texts have been written, each being erased to make room for the next. France, of their

The monastery farm is virtually erased and is prepared for a new text. These pages were the history of the site, the site upon which a new history will be written. Vestiges of the old text are still legible underneath and may interfere to some extent with the new. Benedictine order of St. Benedict of his

order in the west regime

Founded in the Abbey near Solignac, France, the order now has monasteries in every country in Europe, as well as Canada, the United States, China, Japan, India, Palestine, Bosnia, Latin America.

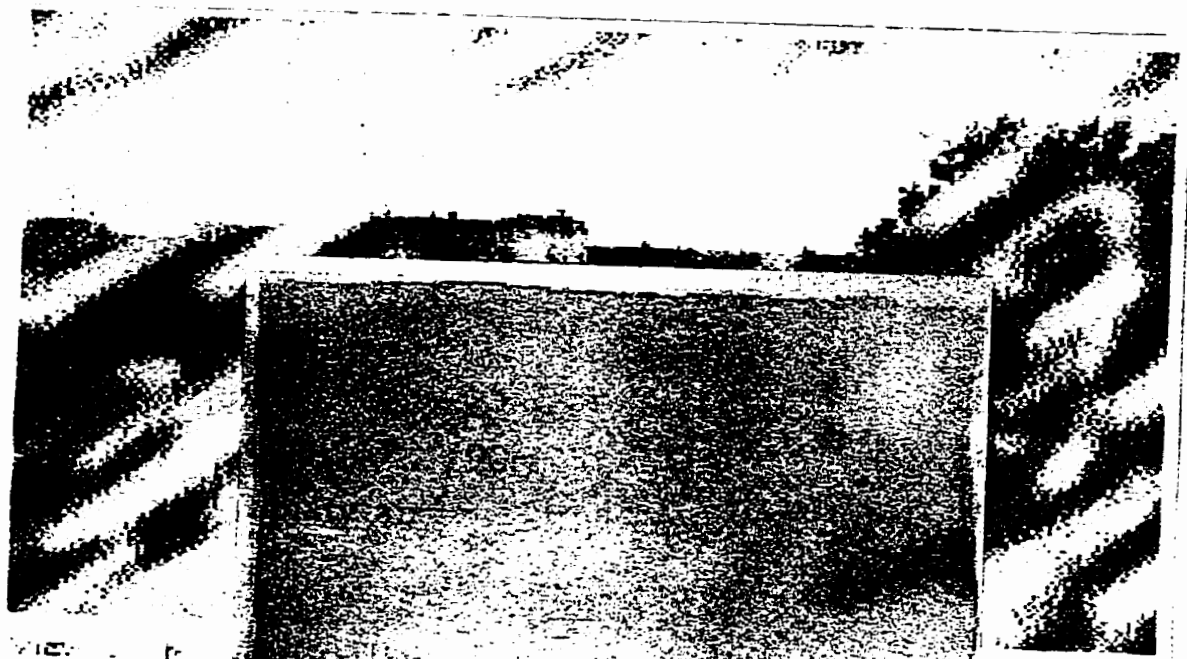
The Trappists regulated their religious offices seven times a day, the high part being the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Their schedule also allowed four to five hours of manual reading or study. The remainder of the day was spent in the library, where they could find books of any necessity. Clean and quiet in the inside world they led to a minimum although over the years some rules were relaxed in the interests of the common good.

The area that they settled on in Manitoba also has a long history. The area where the La Salle River joins the Red River had been a busy centre for hunting, fishing and trade for Aboriginal peoples.









View from the  
Archives

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The church  
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no other  
additions  
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The first masonry was converted into a  
guesthouse which burned down, and was  
replaced by ruins and a new building stands

to the  
s from

READING

This theoretical proposition imposed on the site  
expresses both the poetic nature of ruins and the  
nature of poetry itself.

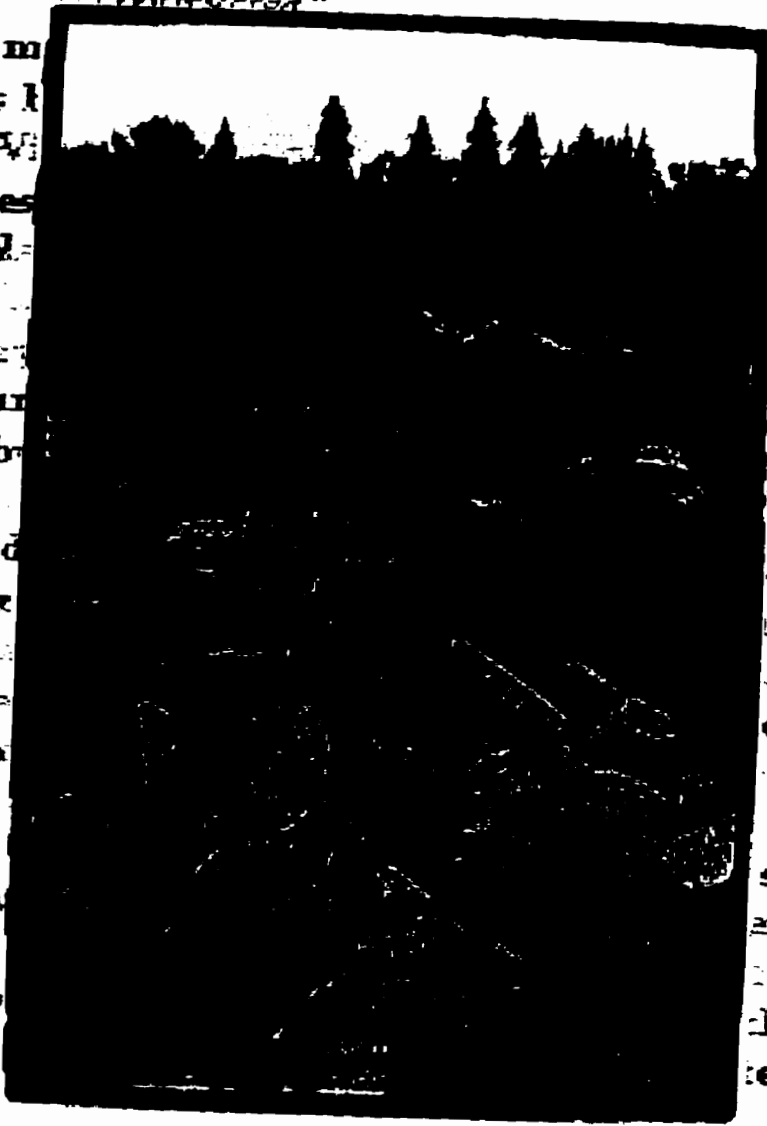
Every building has a story and as it decays, the  
plot becomes less coherent and more likely to be  
subject to interpretation. The farm buildings were  
literally depicted as bits of text, and then had portions  
removed—as substance is removed from decaying  
buildings. The result is a fragmented text from which  
one can pull meaning out.

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In order to maintain the self...  
several shops were built on the masonry property.

These included a bakery, a shoemaker's shop, a forge and an outdoor sawmill. Stables, granaries, equipment sheds, greenhouses, and a chicken house were also constructed."

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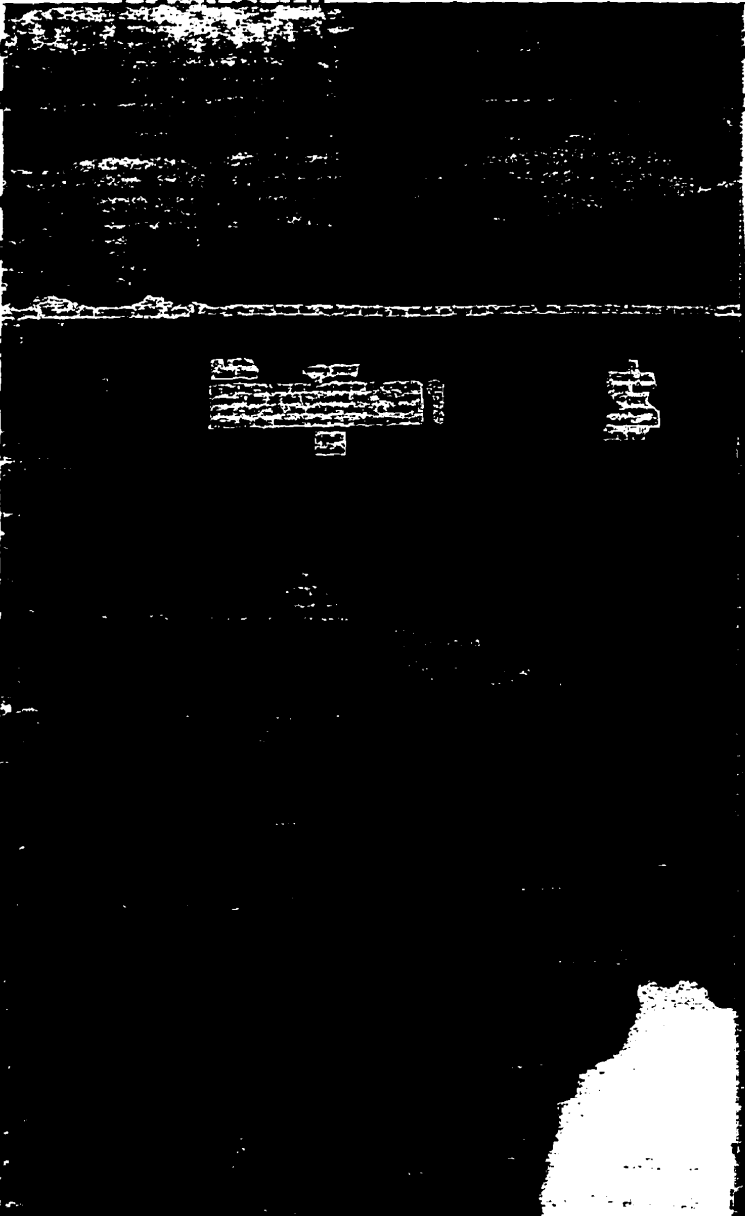
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The church and monastic ruins, which was declared a historic site by the city in 1980, burned down on November 7, 1981, leaving a shell of crumbling brick walls. Heritage St. Norbert worked to save the ruins and in 1987, received 101 me funds from the City and Federal Government. Constar

These included a bakery, a shoemaker's shop, a forge and an outdoor sawmill. Stables, granaries, equipment shed, greenhouses, and a chicken coop were also constructed."

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guest house and the surrounding land as a heritage site. That same year Heritage St. Norbert and the St. Norbert Foundation formed St. Norbert Community and Historical Services, Incorporated, which purchased about five acres from the St. Norbert residence.

In 1998, the arts and culture center at the Loewen House incorporated the guest house to operate the Cultural Center on the second building. Cultural work shops for artists were being created. The St. Norbert artists and



as an St. Norbert Louise Guest ship of began to arts and as built e e e and residing ed per- sthouse 95 the provide nstructure on, an idences. adults,

A number of programs involve the use of the environments surrounding the Guest House. Many musical and theatrical performances have taken place in the church ruins, a number of workshops are held outside, a vegetable garden and bee hives are

donated the ruins and eight acres of land surrounding them and the province agreed to take it on and maintain <sup>RUINS</sup> as a provincial park. The ruins of the main

AVENUES



The main aspect of decadence (and its defining quality) is that there is no object, it represents the state between certainties. This state can be physically represented as a maze with no goal but with limitless options.

The entire farm ruins site is a maze cut in the tall grasses. The paths of this maze wander aimlessly, occasionally providing an option, but it is the wanderers choice as to whether it is a goal or not.

Some options are more clearly expressed than others, the western axis from the church ruins will be maintained suggesting that it is a route that one could fall back on. The farm ruins are merely absorbed in the maze, they are more like obstacles than goals.

Historical overtones are expressed in the options; although the attitude toward history may be irreverent, one cannot ignore its presence and hence the option to fall back on it.

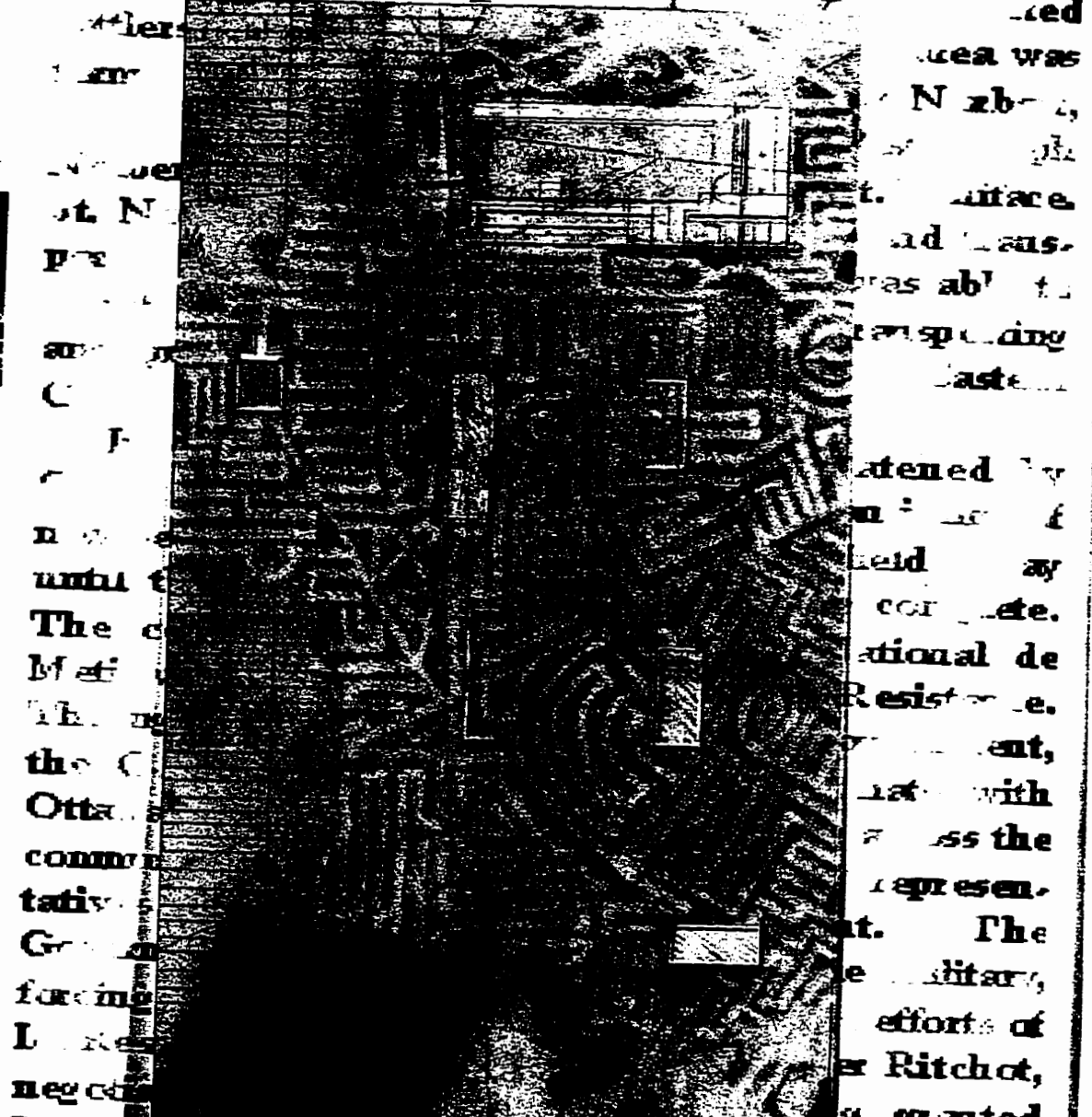
The ruins of the site at present consist of a tower and a set of stairs. In 1904 the ruins were carried away to the site at home of St. Norbert. In 1904, 104 a result of the efforts of Heritage St. Norbert, the Province of Manitoba designated the



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With the advent of the 1900s, the area  
enclosed by the 1820 international boundary  
settled in the area of St. Norbert.



Province status. The Manitoba Act was proclaimed,  
guaranteeing the linguistic, religious, and proprietary  
rights of its citizens.<sup>4</sup>

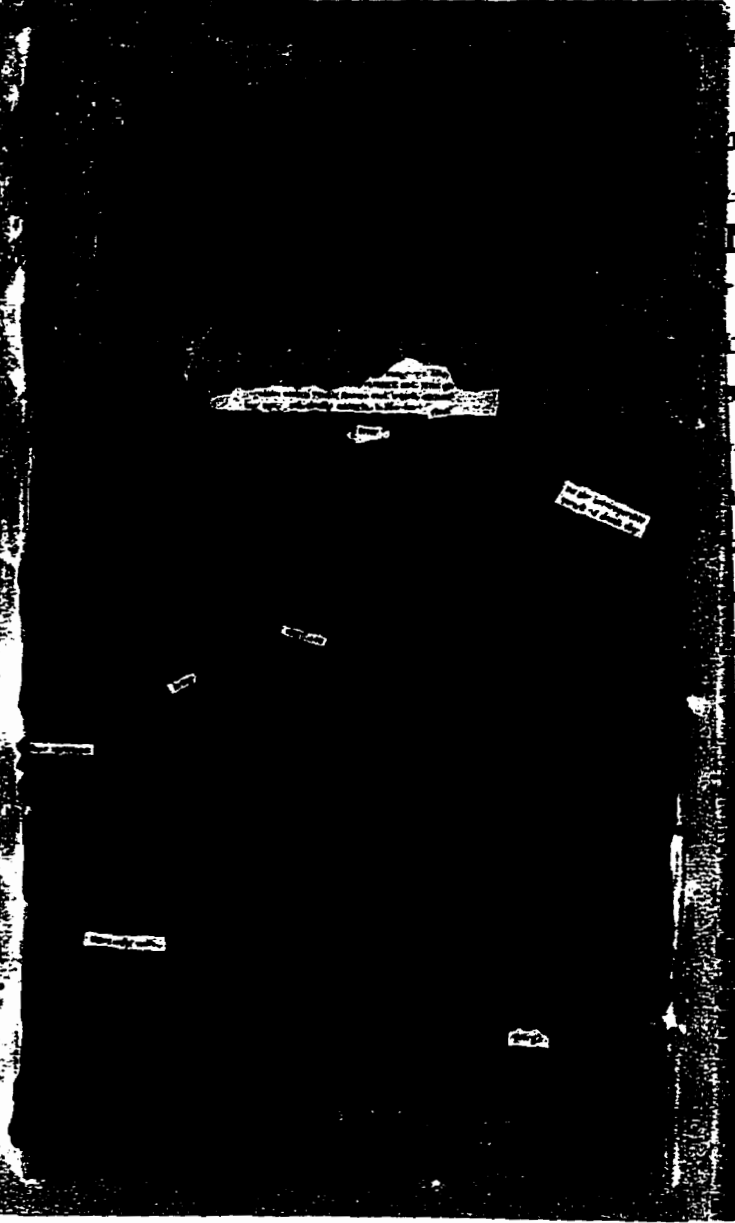
St. Norbert achieved village status in 1871 with





guest house and the surrounding land as a heritage site. That same year Heritage St. Norbert and the St. Norbert Foundation formed St. Norbert Community and Historical Services Incorporated which purchased five acres from the St. Norbert residence.

In 1998 the arts and St. Norbert Community Center at Loewen House Inc. the guest operate the Cultural Center on the second building. Cultural work projects for year was being Guesthouse year-round includes exhibitions. The SNHC artists and



A number of the environments surrounding the Guest Houses. Many musical and theatrical performances have taken place in the church ruins, a number of works<sup>107</sup> are held outside, a vegetable garden and bee hives are

The first monastery was converted into a  
guesthouse which burned down, and was  
replaced

THE BOOK WILL KILL THE BUILDING

The quote by Victor Hugo that introduced the  
book expresses my ultimate feelings toward the  
intentions of this study. What he most likely meant  
in this quote from his novel *Notre-Dame de Paris*  
1482 was more "that literature, through the prolifer-  
ation of the printed book, had sapped architecture of  
its powers of expression." (Levine, p.356) However,  
Hugo's ironic assertion that the book is more durable  
than architecture suggests the potential of books to  
document history and validate the decay of its  
evidence. Ruins need not speak of their history if  
there are books around, so they doubly express their  
redundancy and simply await their fate.

I felt a little hesitancy in studying ruins for fear  
that something I valued would become explainable or  
worse, invalid. To a certain extent my fears were  
confirmed for I discovered, or convinced myself, that  
the attraction of ruins lay in a decadent age, carried  
by the collective unconscious and characterized by an  
indulgent avoidance of commitment.

However much I enjoy these ruins I am now  
anxious to witness their completion. Like that  
compulsion to burn a candle to the end or use up the  
last of something for the sake of finishing it. I want  
to see some certainty in that landscape, and, having  
explored and documented its potential—whether it is  
because I've discovered the sordid roots of the  
attraction or because I've discovered that it has no  
potential—I want to close the book on it and for it to  
be gone.

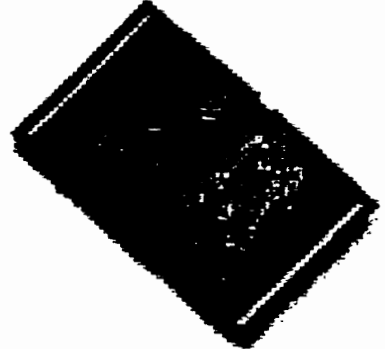
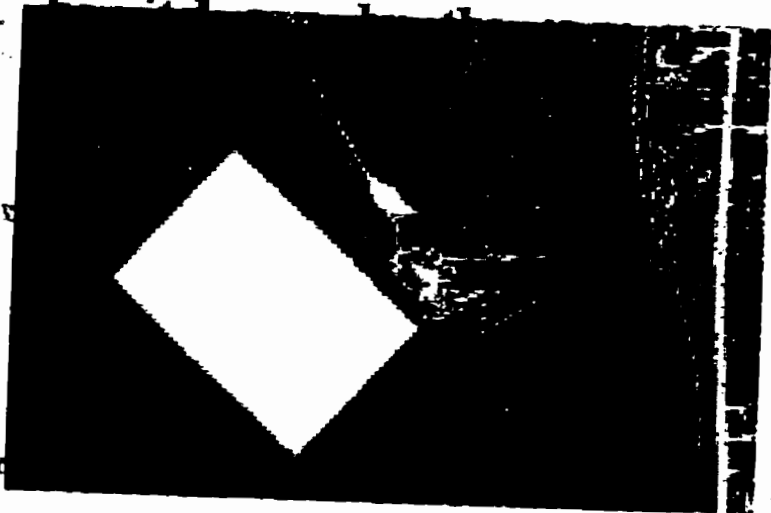
equipment was used for the study of the ruins.  
In order to maintain the self-sufficiency of the  
ruins shops were built on the monastery property.

the establishment of a post office; in 1892 the monks encountered a town with a church, a school, a foundling hospital, a library, a cemetery, a

The legend appears in the Annals of the little town and in the jurisdiction of the father of the monastery. The monks made a

The monks built the structure named (Prairies) Virgin Mary. A little monastery community on a stone were drawn motherhood

by Roman style: vaulted nave and transept, with a two-tiered apse and a domed bell tower. The materials were brick and local stone, hauled from St.



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*Our revels are now ended. These our actors,  
Were all spirits, and are melted into air,  
Into thin air  
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,  
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a rack behind.*

*(Shakespeare, The Tempest)*

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