Here lies architecture, as the extension of the self into a world. It begins as a desire, an innocent design to pursue and realise - it is an instrument, servant to man and sufferer of nature. Hence, through architecture man may be reconciled to reality - man rarely confronts the world independent of his devices, because he would be otherwise lost, or left to face dangerous truths out there that could destroy the self as it is known unto itself, just as the body will perish in the desert. This has gone on for as long as we have known, when Cain first cultivated the land, later punished to be a restless wanderer upon the earth, a sentence we are all heir to. And so restlessness, and wandering, and the condition of being lost in our surroundings, is the inherent property of our experience of the world that lies deepest within us but has also been most often denied. The history of man is much more a history of cultivation and construction that has found its end in urbanity, architecture proliferated to the point of behaving as a fabric as large as a terrain. Here we have arrived at a new condition of bewilderment within the city - architecture is spilling over itself that we are unable to reduce the city into discrete parts, it seems to thrive on its own monstrous principles. Man finds himself ill-equipped to navigate this territory, or he finds all things within the reach of his thought that once again, he is always searching, never quite where or how he should be. In denying the desert that lies without, we have produced a landscape of our own that is equally entropic, in which we must restlessly wander. If architecture is to retain its primary purpose as the expression of man’s needs, it must preserve him from the threats of the world without - it must stay closer to his skin and his thoughts. Here, between worlds, one realises that architecture, in order to remain distinct from urbanity and retain its true proximity to the desires of man, should not attempt to isolate him from his surroundings but rather unite him with it. This is termed by Pallasmaa as “the art of reconciliation between ourselves and the world”.

Our relation is not a frontal opposition but rather an oblique interdependence. In so far as I make a world exist as a complex of instruments which I use for the ends of my human reality, I cause myself to be determined in my being by a being who makes the world exist as a complex of instruments for the ends of his reality.

Jean-Paul Sartre

We have nothing of our own but time, which is enjoyed precisely by those who have no place to stay.

Gracian Baltasar

The shadow of a man where he sat on the steps in Nagasaki when the atomic bomb fell.

By this definition of architecture, I wish to come to terms with time. The dangerous truths of the world extend across both dimensions of space and time. How can I come to terms with absence and death? Surely as all other forms of art, architecture is possessed by what Bataille describes as “discontinuity: as individuals who perish in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure and yearn for our lost continuity” . The fall of man was not only a physical banishment from Eden but also a imposition of mortality and the sudden knowledge that we will know only one finite time, and that there will be an ending. Mortality is defined as to be subject to death or end - and we can only move towards this end. We live each moment rehearsing this final end, when something that existed before no longer exists - by moving constantly into an unknown present and banishing the known past - that every encounter is simultaneously a kind of death or closing, that our desires are termed as ends. Debord’s Time is a most universal construct, a notion dreamed up by a world that now
realm, “the environment where the subject realises himself by losing himself, where he becomes other in order to become truly himself.” There are time-places that one constantly returns to, time-places which one tries to hide away, time-places that occur again and everywhere against one’s wishes. It is then necessary for us to see beyond the visible and tangible way architecture occupies space but more unconsciously, how it occupies time - architecture is man’s way of extending and also persisting beyond himself. The sublime is as strong in the eternal as the vast, the instantaneous as the miniature - deep feeling evokes not just by physical scale but time-scale - time far more cruel than space because man has invented all the ways to conquer space but he cannot master time - the fact that something was once there and no longer is - this violence is entirely the tyranny of time and the basis of anguish.

The structures of time, defined by the principle of irrevocability, produce a spatial effect of alienating the subject from his time. “It is this surmountable social alienation that has prohibited and petrified the possibilities and risks of the living alienation of time.” We inhabit a constructed time, a constructed calendar, and reality sits a bit away from this. In that sense the time we know is the largest construct inhabited by almost all men. All other kinds of time feel irrelevant. We inhabit our time so comfortably that we have forgotten that it is only a fragment of real Time that sits outside our intellectual grasp. We come closest perhaps in the comprehension of geological time, that speaks of a time that spans such a distance that the known time of man is barely a step across that vast hall, that if viewed from afar presents us with a world as silent and still as stone is threshing about, dips and tilt, in the same way that the entropic desert shifts every so quietly about… [There are] real things and structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world; and for the most part they are quite independent of us. They are not unknowable, because as a matter of fact quite a bit is known about them… But neither are they in any way dependent upon our knowledge, let alone perception, of them.” Curiously the longest life we know is probably that of atomic structures, that possess a half-life of billions of years.

Architectures occupy and engage with these various time frames. Architecture is also like art, man’s way of persisting in time beyond his body. It is a mark that endures. The feeling of sublime has been detailed by theorists like Kant and Burke as an encounter with a thing of a certain scale or size in space, but what about in time? Don’t we have similar feelings towards the instantaneous and the miniature? The preciousness of fireworks, a spectacle that lasts only a minute, and the monumentality of stones that have stood since ancient time - it is the perceived duration of these spectacles that make them spectacular. Similarly the appeal of old buildings lies in the marks time has left on them - patina, softening of edges. The fact that something that was once there can no longer be there - sometimes this is enacted with violence across space, but in every instance it is a violence across time. Hence monumentality and spectacularity are established by this dimension.

Architecture is a “deep defence against the terror of time”, it is a cry in the desert - a cry for no one else in particular, because if a tree falls in the forest but no one hears it - is it a sound? How long does each cry in the desert last? I have found two places that do not quite exist. They are Ocotillo and Onkalo. They are both built by man, they are both isolated and lonely structures. They are both situated in what might be termed as wilderness and are both constructed very much with the intention of occupying a certain kind of time, rather than to produce a certain kind of space. They are each monument and spectacle, not so much by virtue of their physical qualities but of their character in time, or their narrative. Ocotillo intended to be ephemeral. Onkalo intends to last forever. The two do not stand in opposition to one another, but each stands at either end of a spectrum of architectural time. What is the point of studying things in pairs? Both are created by man, and hiding places of some sort, and in a unique position to the city, structures that are not independent in their own right, caused by some other factor, but end up alone. Placed against each other, Ocotillo is barely a gasp and Onkalo goes on for veritable eternity. How do the two architectural gestures, Ocotillo and Onkalo, both barely architectural, demonstrate man’s relationship with space, time and memory?

A camp we shall call it. A human inhabitant of unmitigated wilderness of quotidian change -unchangeably changing. Change. For our purpose we need fifteen cabins in all. Since all will be temporary we will call them ephemera. And you will soon see them like a group of gigantic butter-flies with scarlet wing spots, conforming gracefully to the crown of outcropping of black splintered rock gently uprising from the desert floor.

Frank Lloyd Wright

The Ocotillo Camp descended upon the deserts of Arizona in 1929. It was designated as a temporary studio and dwelling for Frank Lloyd Wright and his assistants, who were drawing up lofter plans for San-Marcos-In-The-Desert, a dream of a hotel. Through this Wright first put his architecture to the test of the desert - Ocotillo would be later succeeded by Taliesin West, an architecture school that endures even til today with its artificial ponds fed by ancient canals. It was probably for the best that the project fell through with the impending stock market crash, that only Ocotillo’s slightest traces were left in the sand, faint markers of men having passed through, becoming an absurd though inhabitable abstraction of architecture - “a very queer site of modern archaeology, a long curving mound above a dry wash… a mess of broken plaster fragments scattered over an area the extent of a middle-sized room… there are areas of burned ash, holes containing broken porcelain insulators and what - may be pieces of toilet fitting, broken china and other domestic detritus; and areas of compacted ground that might have been the sites of small buildings.”

but Ocotillo was built, occupied, photographed… · and then somewhat mysteriously disappeared. Mr. Wright alleging that the local Indians stole the materials for other purposes of their own in the following winter. But there is evidence that the camp was burned out—at least in part—during the record heat of the summer of 1929 ---and so Wright never returned to camp.

This was perhaps Wright’s best moment in this readiness to build something not to last - he understood that the desert stood eternal and in face of it all else seemed futile. Hence Ocotillo expresses a surprising realism unlike the delusional quality of contemporaneous

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4 Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle (Black & Red, 1983).
5 Ibid
Onkalo means ‘hiding place’. Onkalo is situated deep within the rocks of the Olkiluoto Island. It is the first structure conceived and undertaken as a final repository for nuclear waste and must remain securely preserved for the next one hundred thousand years at least. It is the burial ground of radioactivity that must sleep undisturbed for as long as eternity. It was constructed with this sole purpose in mind - to keep this horrible thing away from the world for ever, that no one should encounter it - and burn - or worse still to release its wrath upon the world around it. And so they began construction on this monumental tomb for this invisible, miniscule yet incredibly dangerous substance that can send man instantly into oblivion, a sublimation of his fleshly body into silhouettes. They are burrowing seven hundred metres deep into ancient bedrock, blowing the stone apart to carve tunnels that no man of the future should ever go through.

*We live fixations*
Gaston Bachelard

We possess an “archaic will to devalue time” (Harries) But Ocotillo and Onkalo are both works that embrace the time they are given. How do we know that architecture is most definitely ephemeral? The fact that regardless how much work of architecture might presume itself to be a world in itself, the fact is its effects or trace are left on earth and in man. The spaces of architecture are not resolved within themselves, they are resolved on earth or in man. Architecture is not realised until it is built and placed upon physical reality, architecture is not completed until it is seen and lived in and remembered. Architecture is always servant to the surroundings and the self. It is neither, it is the mediation between the two and always contingent. In the present situation where architecture often refers less to the physical stuff that immediately surrounds but more to the photographs and names and words buried away in books, we are approaching an understanding of architecture and our surrounding world that is almost entirely virtual, that is a cloud of familiarity about us but only comes alive or is completed instead in the documentation or communication of it. The interesting thing about this perception is that we conceive architectural spaces as prescribed by images and text, and architecture is not within the reach of my mind that can go across time. The spirit of modernity is the preservation of the present, the “archaic will to devalue time” by capturing a pristine eternity in order to redeem oneself from the horror of time - “It is as though one’s experience [of modernist painting and sculpture] has no duration-- because at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest.” And the modern view of history is the same - we recall the Fawsorhouse and other Modern classics in a perfection that no longer exists, we perceive even the structures of ancient past in an idealised state, frozen in the painting or the camera. The desert is the idealised backdrop of Modernity as the garden is to the Renaissance. Man’s confrontations with existentialism, nihilism, dread, took place in vast terrain where there was nothing else of human artifice. In the absence of Man and therefore in the presence of God and everything else. The desert or ancient forests, uncharted territory, is as close as one gets to abstract pure space.

The objective and in a sense transcendent (relative to the subject) positing of the world of things has duration as its foundation: no thing in fact has a separate existence, has a meaning, unless a subsequent time is posited, in view of which it is constituted as an object. The object is defined as an operative power only if its duration is implicitly understood.

George Bataille

Man is being handed his ultimate destiny, to be lost and increasingly nomadic, homeless and alone - Borges’ labyrinth - the postmodern sublime the barrage of sensory information, the equivalence of everything, the world is one flat continuous flow - This inspires dread and terror - architecture is then the threshold, where one might dwell for a time, the deep breath before the plunge.

Try to conceive of a format sufficiently clear and universal to transmit a message across ten millennia of sociological, linguistic, and cultural change. Now imagine that this message is one of utmost importance, literally a matter of life and death

The first thing to say about the notion of space from a literary point of view is that it does not exist, or should not exist.

“Then, on the surface of being, in that region where being wants to be both visible and hidden, the movements of opening and closing are so numerous, so frequently inverted, and so charged with hesitation, that we could conclude on the following formula: man is half-open being.” Architectural structures can be read of man’s desires in the same way as his cry - its columns and roof extend when man yearns to reach. Architecture is man wrapping his arms around himself. Architecture is the fulfilment of man’s desires. In the postmodern city as in the face of the Romantic sublime, the self is threatened with oblivion - architecture serves to recuperate man’s sense of self and potency. The agency and paradox of discourse as the act of remembrance - Ocotillo no longer remains, only Wright’s desperate sketches and writings, he certainly hopes for it to last forever in memory - the contradiction that it was asked to be ephemeral so as to live on in memory, to prove something - Onkalo that will last longer than human memory has stretched, it is complicated how it should be remembered - Landscape of thorns - or not to be remembered at all - language gives access. And discourse is the recorded memory or translation of this cry. This is also an essay about the problem of discourse, as a practice that is deemed passive and subservient to the active ongoing reality, but is in fact an agent in its own right - the Observer effect - what should we remember? What should we forget? Why do we write, what is there to communicate? Discourse cannot pretend that it only describes. No, description is always just an auxiliary of narrative. It hopes to be forgotten. They propose to communicate the need to stay away not through language, but through physical structures - a landscape of thorns - a very slow, deep controversy that

17 Brill, Michael, *Landscape of Thorns*, The Buffalo Organization for Social and Technological Innovation Inc. (BOSTI), *Site Design to
what should be forgotten - paradox. The film Into Eternity demonstrates the power of the account. By watching the film, one enters the caves where no one should go, one feels as though he has transgressed, become contaminated as it were, that he has seen something that maybe, in the future it will come to show, should have never be shown in the first place.