PLAT 0.5
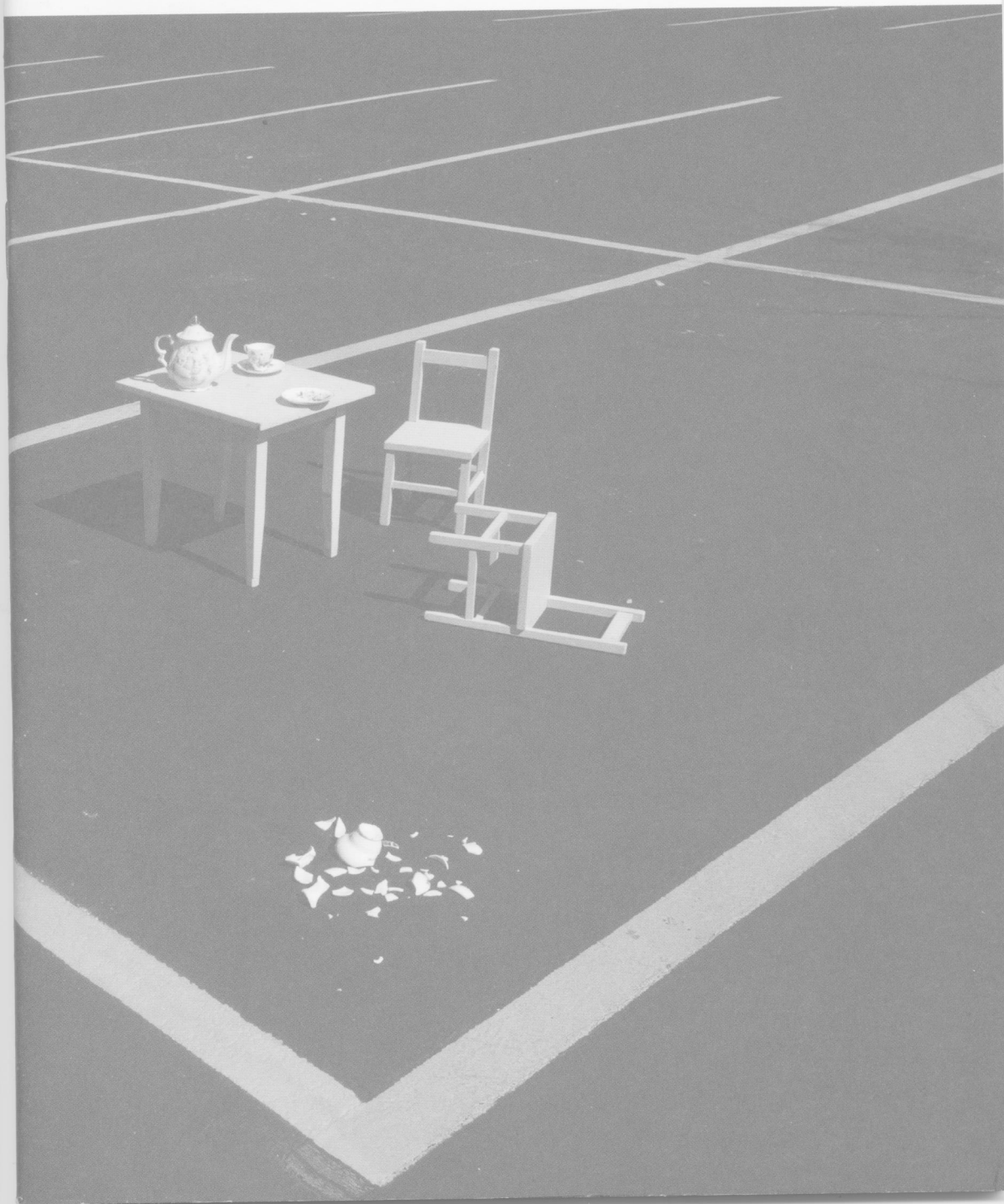
NEYRAN TURAN

ON vs. ABOUT

In his definition for the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, geographer Derek Gregory defines geography as "earth-writing" through its Greek roots – *geo* (earth) and *graphia* (writing – articulated as writing both *on* and *about* the world. Gregory writes:

> [T]he practice of making geographies ('geo-graphing') involves both writing about (conveying, expressing or representing) the world and also writing (marking, shaping or transforming) the world. The two fold in and out of one another in an ongoing and constantly changing series of situated practices, and even when attempts have been made to hold geo-graphing still, to confine its objects and methods to a formal discipline, it has always escaped those enclosures.[1]

One could argue that latent theorization of the geographic paradigm in architecture and urbanism within the last decades focused on writing *about* the world more than *on* it. With their displacement of postwar contextualisms and their emphasis on the large-scale, discussions about landscape, infrastructure and networks produced a number of new interpretations regarding the expansion of architectural and urban thinking. These have been exemplified by explorations of infrastructural/landscape urbanism, territory, infrastructure and transnational polity, as well as the pervasive phenomenon of "design-as-research/mapping." Incorporating ever-larger territories and emergent urban conditions into their understanding, these paradigms have allowed the contemporary city to be interpreted as the accumulation and accommodation of limitless flows, networks and processes, all enabled by a dissolution of boundaries.

Parallel to this discourse of *endless* flows, complimentary – and equally widespread – emphasis was given to *bounded* urban islands or insularities of detachment, exception and fantasy, where general laws of exteriorities are suspended. Examples of such island conditions include "cities-within-cities," free trade zones, theme parks, gated communities and airport cities as well as shopping malls with packaged residential and work facilities, and large atrium interiors, all scattered on a vastly stretched horizontal plane. If the emphasis on endless flows made the dichotomy of edge and

center irrelevant, the idea of context was doomed by the bounded form. These simultaneous but contradictory discourses have not only contributed on wr[iting] *about* the symptoms of the contemporary city, they have been latently manifest i[n] entire lexicon of our projects.

In the midst of these discussions, the Islands::Voids-2 Studio investigated altern[a] urban architectures, exploring new frameworks for the large-scale: infrastruc[ture] and form. More specifically, with an aim to problematize the dichotomy betw[een] the endless and the bounded, the studio focused on the infrastructural spin[e] Istanbul that runs from east to west along the edge of the city. Rather than wr[iting] *about* Istanbul with a "full" research attitude with descriptive documentation [of] possible facts about the city, the studio proposed architectural interventions in [con]nection with the territorial ground defined by each project along the infrastruc[tural] spine.

The spine included the Trans-European Highway corridor, which is in a cons[tant] state of flux with new high-density housing, shopping and business developme[nt] (Google maps cannot cope with the speed of its development). Besides this [spa]tial transformation, what made the situation particularly relevant for the stud[io] that Istanbul's first subway network (currently under construction, and planne[d for] completion in 2023) will also extend to the Highway corridor on the city-edge[to] instigate new forms of spatial densification during the next several years. The st[udio] aimed to use this specific moment in the life of the city as an opportunity to i[nves]tigate alternative ideas to the dichotomy of endlessness and insularity. Each pr[oject] focused on a particular sections along the east-west edge corridor. While the sca[le of] the infrastructural spine placed insular typologies in question, focusing on sele[ct] project sites allowed for a more specific approach to the infrastructural networ[k. In] exploring new ideas related to housing, public programs and forms of density, the [stu]dio proposed various mega-form typologies projected onto the Istanbul Edge-Sp[ine.]

By analyzing and documenting a particular lineage of architectural ideas and [proj]ects, the first phase of the studio contextualized the interaction between the ide[as]

1 Derek Gregory, "Geography," *Dictionary of Human Geography* (Blackwell, 2008).

the endless and the bounded within twentieth-century architecture and urbanism. Through research on precedent projects grouped under a particular framework (edge vs. limit, infrastructure vs. architecture, stem vs. void, mega-scale vs. mega-object, architecture vs. city etc.), this phase of the studio focused on how the interrelationship between insular conditions (Island) and the endless horizontal space (Void) acted as a scalar device to frame the context or to transform the context by form. The ideas inherent in the precedent projects provided a body of work for the formulation of project design manifestos for ensuing phases of the studio.

In the end, our projects were site specific – although their architectural arguments attempted to go beyond their specific location. While aiming to imagine the edge of the city as a speculative site of intervention, each project projected a critical re-interpretation of the endless growth of the city as well as insular island typologies. Instead of seeing large-scale intervention merely as an accommodation of processes, networks and flows, where the project floats upon those forces and passively responds to a context, the studio aimed to formulate new forms of urban architectures that can *act upon*, *shape* and *be a factor of change* in the city.

ANNIKA MILLER

BLURRED IMAGES

SPEED

Situate the facade as an image in the moment where architecture beco infrastructure: the megabuilding stretching alongside an interstate highway. The no time for depth perception at 70 mph.

As you pass by, the relative velocity of the car distorts the elevation of the buildi The datum lines of the structure, already stripped of any functional legibility, ar now reduced to a glorious blur. There is no time for legibility at 80 mph.

Was that a curtain wall, a landscape, or pornography? Did this image mean someth once, or have we always viewed it in such a state of distraction? Once it's gone, it n existed. There is no time for meaning at 90 mph.