

Of Fragments: Taxonomic Landscapes: Markings of a Threefold Practice

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Abstract. Of Fragments: Taxonomic Landscapes: Markings of a Threefold Practice is an exhibition-installation created for the CA²RE conference. Taxonomic Landscapes are developed as a method of reflection and giving an account of the ‘Yard and World: to draw a distinction: an architectural inquiry (into the liminal)’ PhD research. Since the Taxonomic Landscapes are partially created in situ, this paper cannot give an account of the actual Taxonomic Landscapes that will be on display during the CA²RE event. The paper will briefly contextualise the Taxonomic Landscapes within the PhD and show a selection images from previous installations of Taxonomic Landscapes as a ‘contrapuntus’ to the theme of the text.

Keywords. Practice Based Research; Fold; Fragment; Taxonomic Landscapes; Markings.

01. Prelude to Taxonomic Landscapes

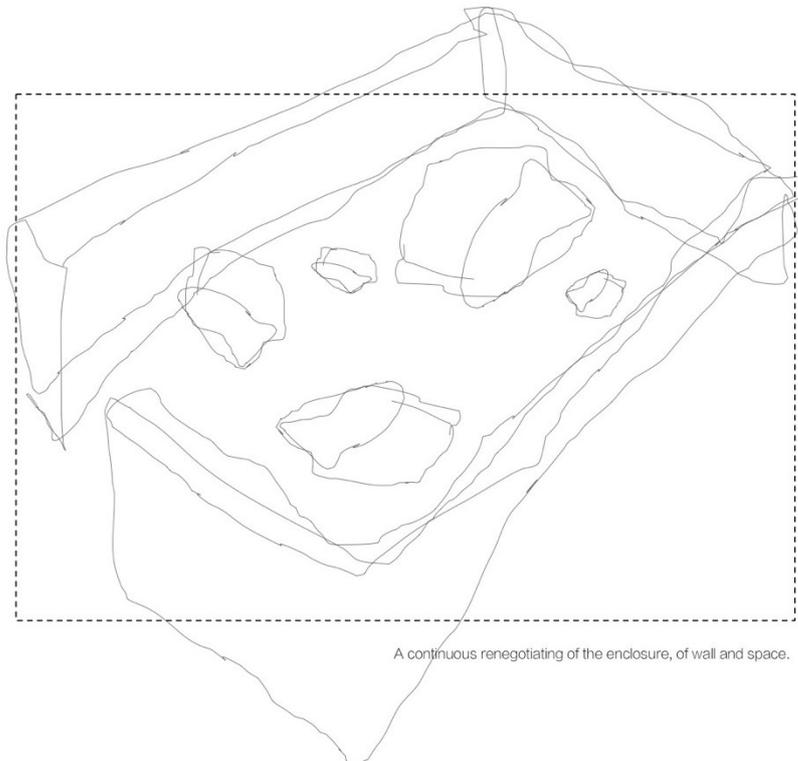


Figure 1

A continuous renegotiating of the enclosure, of wall and space: markings of a threefold practice.

Of Fragments: Taxonomic Landscapes: Markings of a Threefold Practice is an exhibition-installation during the CA²RE conference. Taxonomic Landscapes are

developed as a method of reflection and giving an account of the ‘Yard and World: to draw a distinction: an architectural inquiry (into the liminal)’ PhD research.

The installation exists out of a set of Taxonomic Landscapes. These Taxonomic Landscapes are composed out of fragments taken from my threefold practice and organised on tables positioned in a space. Taxonomic Landscapes are operative and active agents in the research process. Hence, they are not conclusions but serve to elicit further development of the (research) practice and at times produce conclusions. The Taxonomic Landscapes are created to reflect on, and within, the threefold practice. They are also to be studied in themselves as a way of contributing to the research process and progress.

Since the Taxonomic Landscapes are partially created in situ this paper cannot give an account of the actual Taxonomic Landscapes that will be on display during the CA²RE event. The paper will briefly contextualise the Taxonomic Landscapes within the PhD, show a selection images of a previous installation of Taxonomic Landscapes. In two CODAS sections a brief history of the Taxonomic Landscapes will be evoked as well as some first observations of the possible ways in which Taxonomic Landscapes ‘work’.

A note on the figures: The figures are to be considered as atmospheric and illustrative indices and are located throughout the text. The images form a kind of ‘contrapuntus’ to the theme of the body text.

02. Between a ‘Yard’ and a ‘World’

The proposed installation is an act of research and not the presentation of a conclusion. It is closer to a research performance: hence a reflective paper can in principle only be written after the event. It is however important to sketch the research context. Taxonomic Landscapes are being developed as a method of reflection and giving an account of the Yard and World: to draw a distinction PhD research.

‘Yard and World’ is a framework. It represents this double ambiguous situation of being distinct but with overlap. Of being a ‘yard’ distinct from the ‘world’ but overlooking the ‘world’ and being part of the ‘world’, a ‘world’ composed out of ‘yards’, a kind of ‘Monadic Inter’. This describes a specific kind of relation. It is the architectural expression of that type of relation that is explored and is developed in a threefold practice: that of the faculty studio, the office studio and the research studio.

In this threefold practice architecture is explored as a form of creating distinctions with the right kind of overlap. The goal is of continuously exploring architectural interventions that showcase and reflect on this concept of distinction and overlap. As a designer, I have the ambition to create spaces that are grounded and at the same time boundless. Spaces that are distinct but have an overlap. ‘Yard and World’ is a continuous shifting and renegotiating of the enclosure, the distinction between wall and space, between wall and gate. Between this sphere and that realm, between ‘Yard and World’. ‘Between U and I’.



Figure 2
 Project-space: collection of fragments: try-out for a new 'Yard and World' Taxonomic Landscape at Studio Tuin en Wereld. Micro Public Gallery.

03. On the formation of Taxonomic Landscapes

Taxonomic Landscapes are composed out of fragments taken from the threefold practice and organises them in the 'enclosed' space of a table top. Brought together, they aim to create a new practice. Because the Taxonomic Landscapes are in a sense 'enclosed spaces' they become a kind of 'monad'. They are multi-layered 'miniatures', small 'Yards' from which to look at the 'World'. Taxonomic Landscapes are time-documents and samples of the current threefold practice. Not unlike a multi-exposed photograph. Within the Taxonomic Landscapes the fragments are as 'marks on a piece of paper'; generating a focus on their interrelationships and the relations they have with the world beyond the Taxonomic Landscape, beyond the 'enclosure'. Taxonomic Landscapes take the following position in the research protocol: Practice > Fold > Fragment > Taxonomic Landscape > Markings > Practice > Da Capo

04. Knowledge generating engines?

Through participating in this CA2RE conference I hope to test the relevance and effectiveness of this method of presenting/giving an account on the ongoing practice based research and to explore the Taxonomic Landscapes as knowledge generating engines. Deliberating with peers and reviewers hopefully also leads to finding out

whether the name ‘Taxonomic Landscape’ is relevant and to the point, to explore whether these Taxonomic Landscapes are really ‘Monads’. Other questions to be addressed are: what is the mechanism for selecting fragments? What are my specific roles in the threefold practice? How is the reflecting done?

Participating and debating the exhibition-installation should serve to move the threefold practice a step further and to work on the tightly stitching of the three practices. The fragments, the Taxonomic Landscapes, the ‘Yard and World’ framework are all referring to the ‘laws’ of the ‘design paradigm’ that govern them: the ambivalence of being distinct yet overlapping, being grounded yet free or boundless.

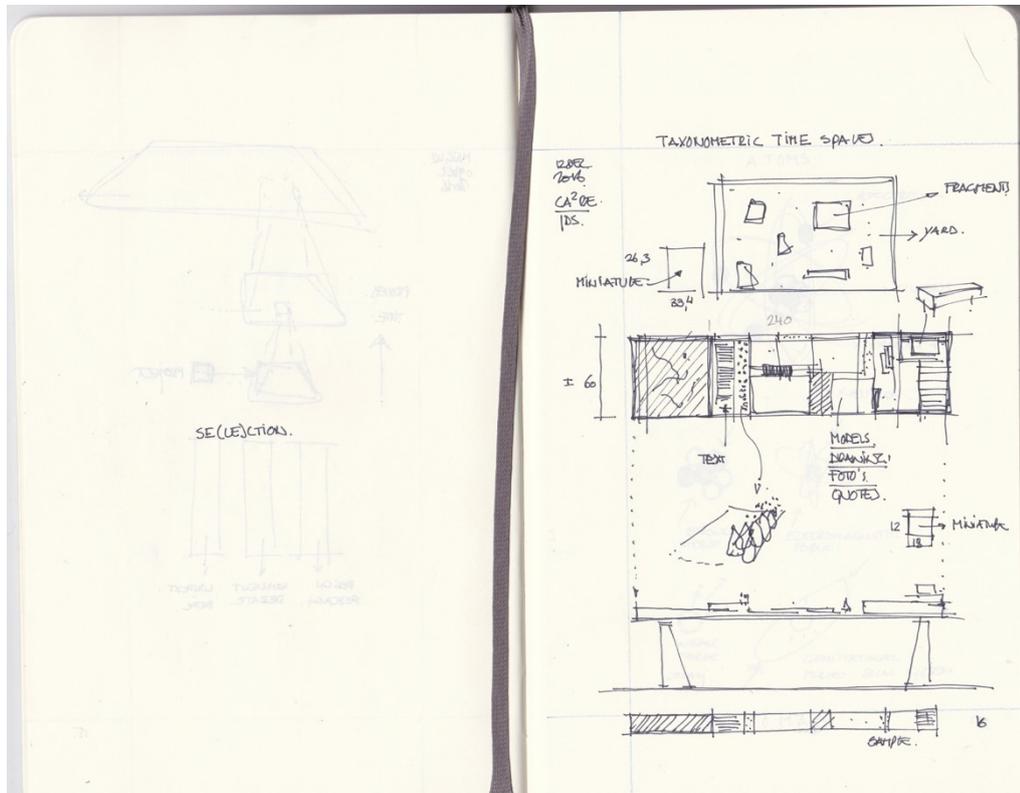


Figure 3
Se(lection): preparatory sketch for a Taxonomic Landscape.

05. On previous Taxonomic Landscapes

Up until today several Taxonomic Landscapes have been created. Some as try-outs other more elaborate. What follows are some first observations and reflections based on these experiences. The observations will be mentioned without elaborating them. For two reasons: first it is too soon to develop them as conclusions and second, they will be further addressed in the installation for the CA²RE conference. These first observations are:

Taxonomic Landscapes can be thematic of general reflective of the research practice.

The intelligibility and readability of the Taxonomic Landscapes seems to ask for a decipher-work, a key-work, the introduction and a portal to the work and a portal through the work.

It is important to contextualise the Taxonomic landscapes within the PhD work.

This could for instance happen through a deliberate introduction, framing and

stitching of the exhibited fragments and the body of work, the process and the progress.

The creation of Taxonomic Landscapes happens partially in situ in two different ways: some parts of the Taxonomic Landscapes are prepared in advance, some are developed on location. There are some predisposed elements and fixed elements that are pre-set and priority fixed. (Figure 2) Making in place is definitely an important factor. And secondly: the spatial environment in which the Taxonomic landscapes are 'drawn' play an important role in the atmosphere overall and specific setting. There is a definite interaction between the Taxonomic Landscapes and the surrounding in which they are created.

These observations will be further addressed during the preparation for the CA²RE conference as well as during the event.

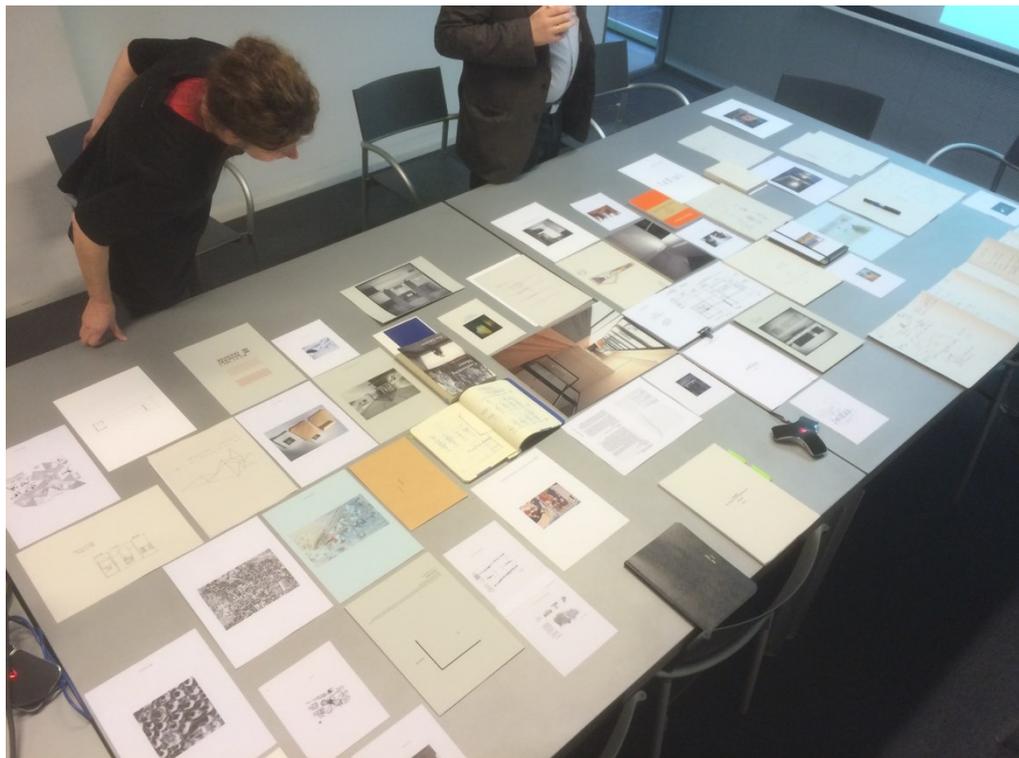


Figure 4

First Taxonomic Landscape produced in for the first PhD presentation at the Faculty of Architecture KU Leuven February 2016.

06. First coda: a very brief history of Taxonomic Landscapes

The Taxonomic Landscapes are a recent development in the Yard and World research. I'm only starting to experiment and to get acquainted with what they can do (and what not). In the following paragraph, I will sketch the development of the Taxonomic Landscapes. This happened parallel in the threefold practice.

Both in the office studio and the faculty studio I felt that the slideshow presentation was not performing optimally as a means of communicating and representing a project. I aim for a cooperative and transparent dialogue with all stakeholders and noticed that the slideshow was not as performative as we would have liked it to be. For numerous reasons that is. To name but a few: unilateral, linear narrative, image oriented, lacking simultaneity of information ...

In that context, I started to explore with encouraging students, myself and the rest of the office studio to start putting the things on the table... As is 'I put my cards on the table'. This turned out to be a fruitful, powerful and useful way of communicating a projects intention and in evoking a transparent dialogue. Currently we are experimenting with this in the office studio to do workshops and 'presentations' to our clients... Simultaneously I started to do the same for the PhD research.

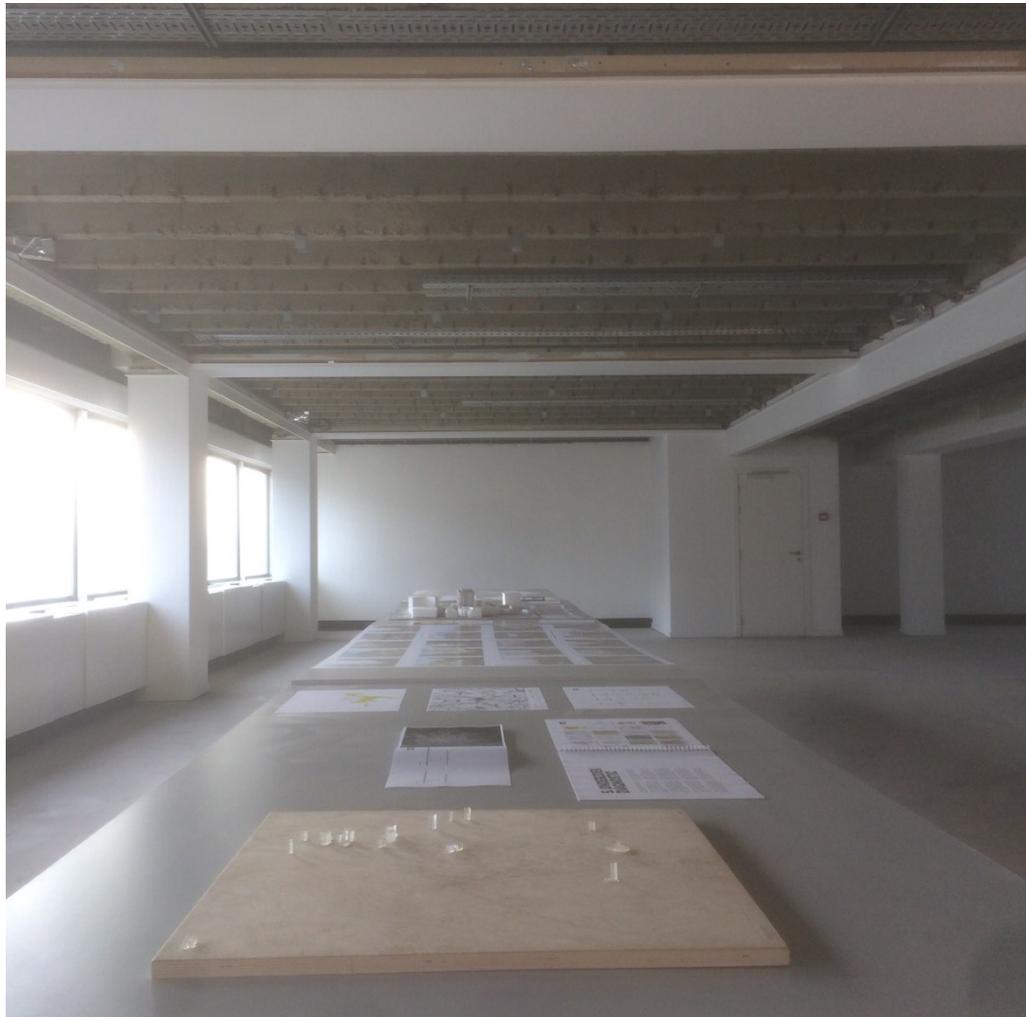


Figure 5

13 High: Evoking A Transparent Dialogue: Table Setting for an official project presentation.

Up to date several of those table settings have been implemented in the design studios (faculty and office). Within the PhD the Taxonomic Landscapes emerged out this experience. So far two Taxonomic Landscapes have been produced. The first one as the base for the first PhD presentation and the second as part of the Joint Doctoral Seminar, an exhibition in the Sint-Lukas Galerie in Brussels, brining artist and architect researchers together.



Figure 6
'Le Jardin du Paradis' as hypercube: Taxonomic landscape (2): markings of a threefold practice. RAAK seminar 01/2017 – detail of the installation – facing the wall.

Next to these more elaborate Taxonomic Landscapes there are different try-outs. As part of the PhD research I made a segment of my studio space distinct and created a micro public gallery on the edge of public realm and the private space. Different try-outs of the Taxonomic Landscapes are regularly showcased in this Studio Tuin en Wereld micro public gallery in Antwerp.

07. Second coda: agencies of the Taxonomic Landscapes

Although there is a correlation and parallel between the table settings in the design studio's and the Taxonomic Landscapes of the PhD there is an important difference: The Taxonomic Landscapes serve more purposes than the table settings in the studio's. A first reflection on the role and position of the Taxonomic Landscapes in the PhD research reveals that they work in at least three ways: as showcase, as filter and sieve and as a Ductus.

That they act as a showcase is the first and obvious characteristic of the Taxonomic Landscapes. Fragments of the threefold practice are exhibited to an audience. Secondly, Taxonomic Landscapes also act as filter and sieve in the sense that in the method of Practice > Fold > Fragment > Taxonomic Landscape > Markings > Practice (see above) not all fragments of the threefold practice that are incorporated in Taxonomic

Landscapes proof to be relevant for the PhD research. Some of those fragments proof to be crucial and will return in future Taxonomic Landscapes (let's call them Revenants) and some will disappear. Nevertheless, they probably will be helpful in positioning the relevance of other fragments.

The third level on with the Taxonomic Landscape seems to work is related to the concept of the Ductus. Mary Carruthers explores the meaning of the Ductus in the paper 'The concept of Ductus: Or journeying through a work of art'. "Ductus" she writes "is the way by which a work leads someone through itself: that quality in a work's formal patterns which engages an audience and then sets a viewer or auditor or performer in motion within its structures, an experience more like travelling through stages along a route than like perceiving a whole object." And further on: "One is said to travel through a composition, whether of words or other materials, led on by the stylistic qualities of its parts and their formally arranged relationships."

It seems that the concept of Ductus is highly related to the position, ambitions and goals that the Taxonomic Landscapes have in the Yard and World PhD research. As Mary Carruthers describes it: "Ductus is the way(s) that a composition, realising the plan(s) set within its arrangements, guides a person to its various goals, both in its parts and overall."

These three workings obvious need further reflection but I consider it relevant to at least mention them in the context of this installation.



Figure 7

'Le Jardin du Paradis' as hypercube: Taxonomic landscape (2): markings of a threefold practice. RAAK seminar 01/2017 – detail of the installation facing the courtyard.

08. Prologue from 1463: Of praiseworthy planning...

In 'Les douze dames de réthorique', a treatise on rhetoric from 1463, the eleventh dame, called 'Deduccion loable' says: "To speak of my offices / I undertake to sort the essentials, / the diverse, simple things, / into an integrated work /And there [within the framework, as just described] I arrange my ornaments / my flowers, my colours, my green lawns / in order to attain by hard labours / the goal encompassed in my intention [corage]." As quoted in *The Concept of Ductus* (M.Carruthers, 2010).

What better way, for now, to describe the Taxonomic Landscapes that are created in the context of the Yard and World as a method of reflection and giving an account of the research by design. And in doing so 'Of Fragments: Taxonomic Landscapes' creates and unfolds relationships that become 'Markings of a Practice'.

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