

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13**  
**SESSION 9**  
**10:00 - 11:00**

ROOM A - SALA DE PROYECCIONES

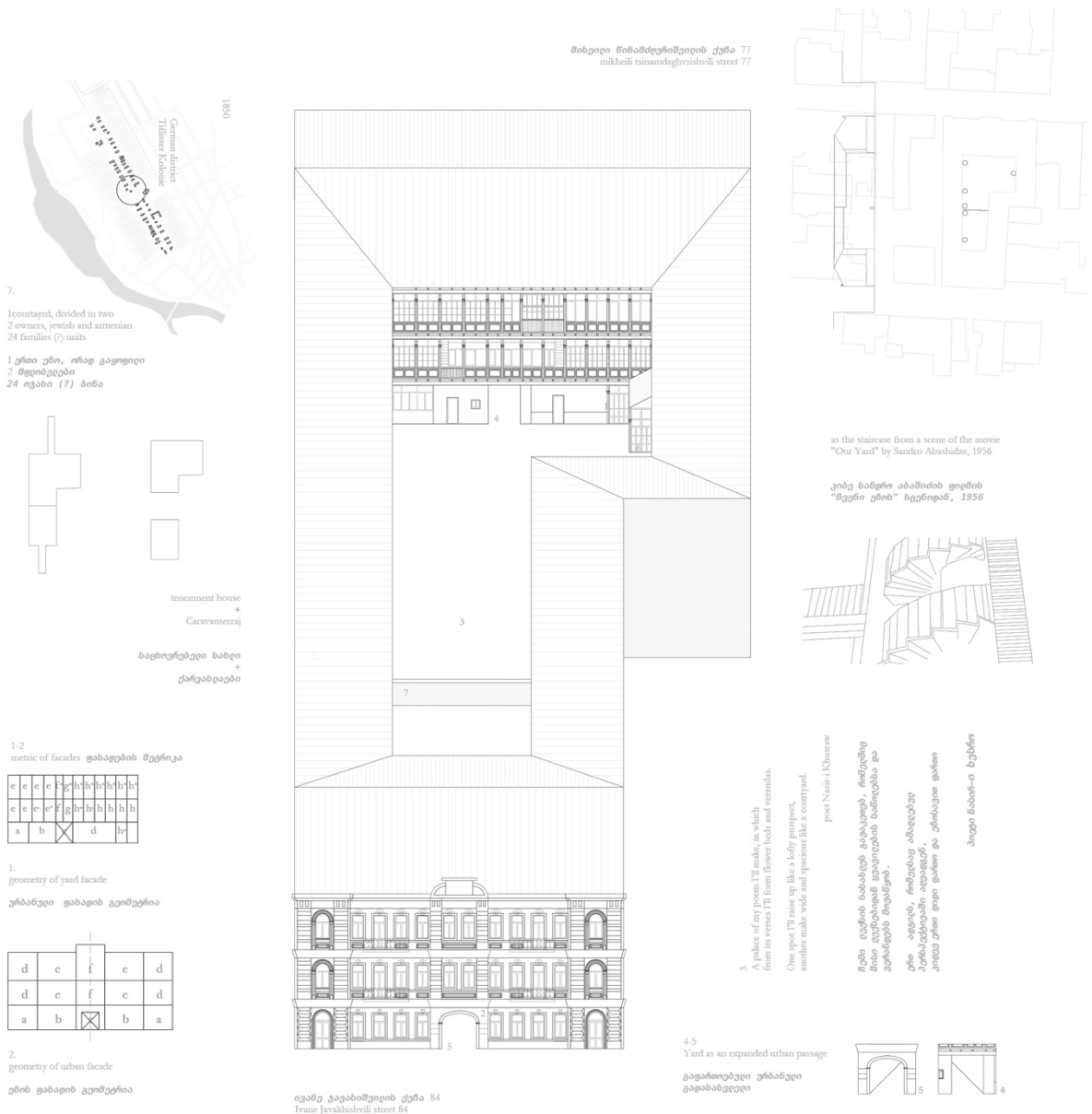
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**Unscripted Architecture:  
Notational Drawings on the  
Yards of Tbilisi**

# Unscripted Architecture: Notational Drawings on the Yards of Tbilisi

## Extended Abstract

This study explores notational drawings as a hermeneutic and experimental tool for design-driven research. The work is part of doctoral research on the role of the Yards<sup>1</sup> of Tbilisi, peculiar semi-public spaces between dwellings and streets, in the construction of the modern metropolis. Despite their pervasive presence in the urban fabric since the reconstruction of the city under the Russian Empire, these spaces are under-studied in the architectural field; they gained recognition in the soviet period through modernist paintings and cinematographic production, cherishing these urban conditions as places for sharing and togetherness in a subtle anti-colonial narrative. The gap in the architectural knowledge regarding these spaces requires developing an experimental tool to deal with this phenomenon at the intersection of different disciplines. The research aims to investigate these architectures as spaces of negotiation that compose a hidden urban pattern. Therefore, the study uses notational drawings to trace retrospectively the unscripted quality of a precise selection of study cases, integrating a broader cultural context within the architectural discourse. By presenting this experimental investigation, the study will discuss the role of notational drawings as a tool to study the under-documented, unscripted, and unknown in the Architecture discipline.



Notational drawings, in which writings and drawings overlap and coexist in the same space, belong to the architectural discipline as tacit knowledge. Both for theoretical exploration and practical necessity, notations are essential in a range of documents, from travel notebooks to constructive details. In the Villard de Honnecourt's "Livre de portraiture"<sup>ii</sup>, the writings complete the drawings integrating different aspects to the graphical representation, sometimes overlapping and blending. Bernard Tschumi refers to his hand drawings as notations in contrast with the conventional name of sketches, distinguishing the first ones for the vivid conceptual character, "thoughts on paper"<sup>iii</sup>, and the second as mediated outputs only for aesthetic purposes. In the work of Jhon Hejduk, the notations are highly dense and incorporate a wide range of observations, titles, captions, and geographical notes, resonating with poems, paintings, and artefacts. Regarding this ambivalence of architectural documents, the philosopher Nelson Goodman observes: "The end product of architecture, unlike that of music, is not ephemeral; and the notational language was developed in response rather to the need for participation of many hands in construction... insofar as its notational language has not yet acquired full authority to divorce the identity of the work in all cases from particular production, architecture is a mixed and transitional case"<sup>iv</sup>. In this sense, the transitional role is implicitly embedded in the project as a mediation tool. Therefore, architectural drawings and writings participate in the notationality of architecture, producing and representing observations and prescriptions. In a general sense, notations also refer to the act of overwriting a document for comments, corrections, or integrations. The presence of marginalia in manuscripts enriches the importance of a text, adding clues and interpretations; the process of layering notes entails a temporal dimension and the possibility for different agencies to participate in the process, suggesting additional clues and interpretations.

In the case of Yards of Tbilisi, this hybrid representation plays a crucial role in composing an original narrative for this urban phenomenon. Since architectural documentation of these artefacts is scarce and their presence is scattered in different media, notational drawings enable architecture to weave together different discourses.

The aim is to validate the general hypothesis of a kinship connecting the architecture of different Yards as spaces of negotiation for urban contradictions crossing different morphological configurations, geographical locations, and typological origins. Since the Architecture of the Yards participates in a complex entanglement of power relations, urban processes and constant alterations, it is necessary to elaborate a coherent framework of interpretations in which anomalies compose series and families as Carlo Ginzburg exposed: "Any document, even the most anomalous, can be inserted into a series; but not only that: it can, if properly analyzed, shed light on a still-broader documentary series"<sup>v</sup>.

This study proposes to expand the notational dimension of architectural drawing to include other agencies. The intention is to highlight the semi-autonomy<sup>vi</sup> of architectural discourse in which external processes always partially interfere with architectural discipline. In this sense, notations mediate between different interferences and narratives. The retrospective use of notational drawings for scripting existing architectures has two implications: the hermeneutic dimension of the process in which artefacts and narratives coexist as traces to be read and the design dimension in which the knowledge is accessible to be used. The interpretative operation combines both dimensions to develop the research in a design-driven framework. Therefore, the methodological relevance of this study lies in the possibility of investigating the unscripted quality of architecture through a disciplinary tool that is able to expand the field of inquiry to reveal a network of relationships.

As a result, the study will produce a series of notational drawings of specific study cases. The selection criterion is the architectural potential of this urban phenomenon: a deep façade, with balconies or verandas, mediating the relationships with the street through a common accessible outdoor space and an articulated system of connections and staircases. Different sources, such as cinematographic documents, archival materials, modernist paintings, and literary narratives, partake through the drawings' notations as hermeneutic and experimental design processes. This series will compose an experiment to retrospectively script an unscripted architectural phenomenon in search of an urban pattern that latently operates in the power relation of the city.

### **Role and importance of Experimentation in the research**

The research investigates a field in which documentation is scarce, scattered and, if present, possibly biased. Against this background, the role of Experimentation in the study is to generate a network of relationships to reveal a pattern for these unscripted architectures. As a "leap", this design process produces new knowledge, starting from clues and hints, moving toward quite an unknown territory. The initial hypothesis directs the investigation's trajectory rather than pre-defining the findings. Therefore, Experimentation allows the study to consider absences not only as limitations but also as a form of knowledge and as material for design. The research implications manifest in the use of notational drawings as an experimental tool, crossing sources, narratives, and architectural configurations. The methodological relevance of experimentation here is to make possible both the hybrid representation of different forms of discourse and the possibility of designing a space for negotiation between various agencies.

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<sup>i</sup> The term Yard refers to the Georgian word *იბრა*.

<sup>ii</sup> Villard de Honnecourt, *Album de Villard de Honnecourt* (Paris: Hachette Livre, 2013)

<sup>iii</sup> Bernard Tschumi, *Notations: Diagrams & Sequences* (London: Artifice, 2014)

<sup>iv</sup> Nelson Goodman, *Language of Art* (New York: Hackett, 1976), 221

<sup>v</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces. True Falsa Fictive* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2017), 202.

<sup>vi</sup> Tom Avermaete recovers this notion from Althusser in Tom Avermaete, *The socius of architecture: spatialising the social and socialising the spatial*, *The Journal of Architecture*, 23:4, 537-542, DOI: 10.1080/13602365.2018.1479353