

Chapter 4

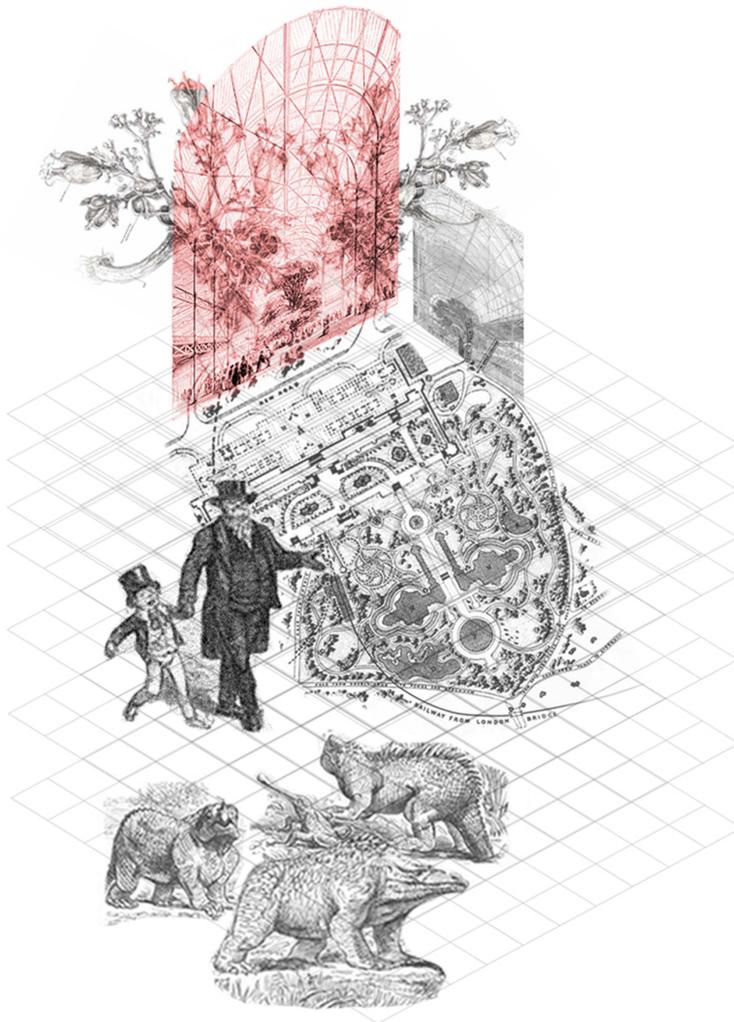
Program

The second artificial landscape: artificiality as escape.

The architectural intervention teases this imagination, by absorbing the embedded nostalgic narrative of the city. More so, it absorbs the internalised desire of the culture that constructed it, in attempts (as a desire in itself) to tempt the peripheral unfamiliarity of the site. By its existence on the border of the unknown *via its artificiality*, fantasy rouses the imagination, widening the perimeters of the unknown.

The poetic image is a distinct imaginary experiential entity with its cohesive identity, anatomy and essence. The poetic image redirects and focuses the viewer/listener/reader/occupant's attention and gives rise to an altered state of consciousness, which evokes an imaginary dimension, an imaginative world...A building is a structure of utility, matter and construction, as well as an imaginary spatiotemporal metaphor for a better world. Artistic and architectural works exist thus in the realms of physics and metaphysics, reality and fiction, construction and image, use and desire, all at the same time (Pallasmaa,2011:93).

Pallasmaa describes this as the dual existence of the poetic image (interpreted here as the *second artificial landscape*) within the physical reality of its material essence, the synthetic, nostalgic material that is produced from what is perceived, embodied and remembered (revenants / *verbeeld-ing*); secondly, within the imaginary reality, which takes over when the unknown inherent in the material existence of the work becomes perceptible (reveries / *verbeelding*) and suppresses the physical reality (ibid., 2011:94) — death of the old through its reimagination produces a third intimate landscape. Pallasmaa claims that architecture, therefore, exists in and maintains a balance between the physical reality of perception and the 'unreal' or unknown realm of imagination (ibid., 2011:95). Pallasmaa states that:



2 [NOSTALGIC REPRODUCTIONS]

Conservatory constructs the novelty of worlds from which artefacts are brought by reproducing those worlds artificially to capture the public imagination, typified especially by the display of the antedeluvian animals in the park outside of the Great Exhibition at Paxton's Crystal Palace.

Artificiality through nostalgic reproduction of the known is demonstrated both historically and mythologically in the narrative of the conservatory.

1 [TYPOLOGY OF ESCAPE]

CONSERVATORY AS TYPOLOGY OF ESCAPE, collecting, archiving (memorialization) and displaying exotics and unknown artefacts from foreign countries as a form of delight to facilitate escape to novel realms. **CONSERVATORY AS A FIRST ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE.**

[w]hen the imaginary realm overwhelms, the work appears sentimental or kitsch as our mental awareness glides too easily into the suggested illusion... [and] when the reality of matter or execution dominates, the work tends to appear crude and unarticulated...incapable of evoking a credible imaginary world (ibid., 2011:95).

Death, through imagination, thus becomes materially as well as metaphysically transformative and experienced intimately by the dweller, allowing agency over the architecture.

The architectural insertion: mechanising amnesia.

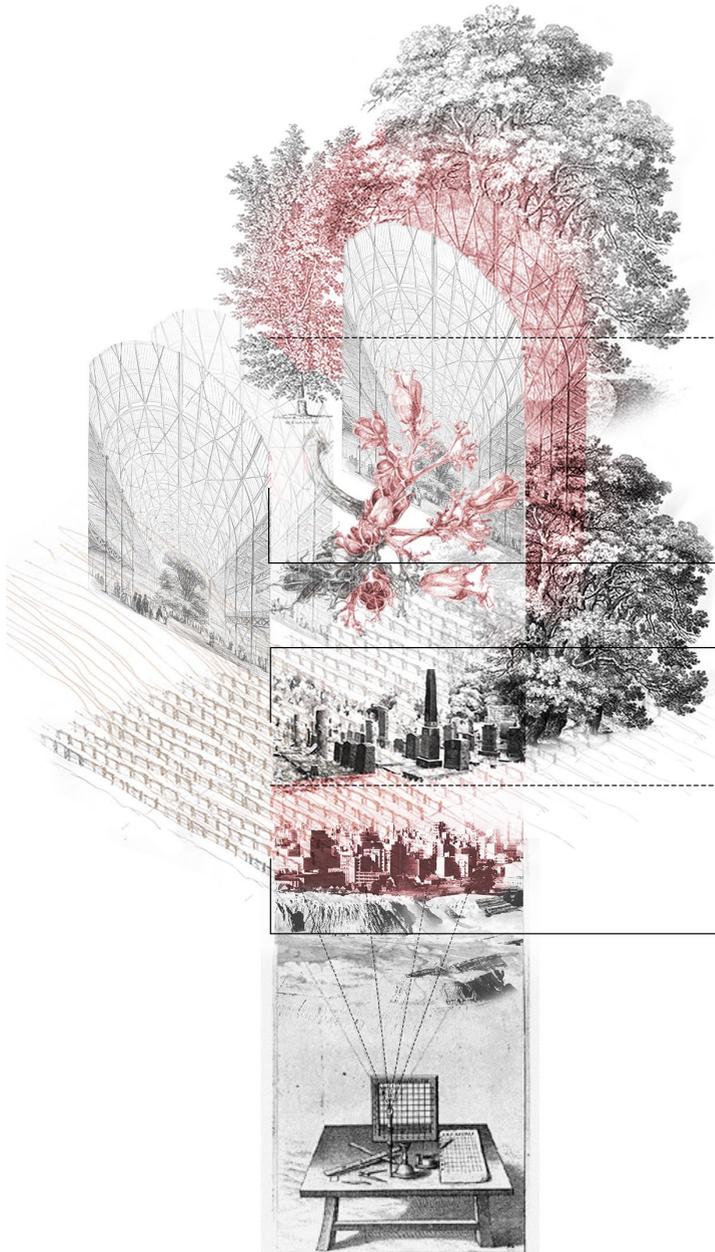
The architectural insertion teases the dweller's imagination with the fantasy of artificiality (bioluminescent conservatory) and Death/death, constructing the *second artificial landscape*. The site is reactivated by re-mechanising its own internalised nostalgia — in this way nostalgia functions as both system and tool — the loom that frames the tapestry as well as the thread that weaves the image. This imagined realm, the *second artificial landscape*, does not offer escape. It offers encounter with the unknown and Death/death. The architectural intervention is an insertion into the nostalgic remnant: a *second artificial landscape* facilitating the encounter with the unknown by engaging physical Death. It engages physical Death through a columbarium which reassigns ritual value to the original cemetery but also engages amnesic death by intervening in the nostalgic forest with a synthetic bioluminescent nature, creating a habitable forest to dwell in. In so doing, the conscious and subconscious perceptual borders are opened when the dweller is absorbed in fantasy through architectural detail. The divisive fabric of nostalgia is made diaphanous and the veil becomes penetrable. This passage is not without consequence as it ultimately reveals the process by which intimate reanimation is made accessible. In order for this unveiling to manifest, dual deaths must occur.

If it aspires to a permanent mental impact, an architectural work has to engage our personal and active imagination; even an architectural narrative has to be left incomplete and open-ended in order to be completed and embodied by the imagination of the observer/occupant (ibid., 2011:97)

fig. 4.39. (author) Escape through the artificiality of museumification and exoticism.

Reanimation of the cemetery as nostalgic remnant: the dweller's re-imaginative encounter of artificiality through Death/death.

Through the death of memory, revenants (*ontslape*) and reveries (*verbeeld-ing*) are conjured forth and fantasy not only bemuses but augments the spectral image. It is important to note that this death is not a mournful one however engulfing it may



3 [REANIMATION]

REVERIES

“ verbeelding / ont-slape ”

The dweller’s re-imaginative encounter of artificiality and death/death (La Petite Mort).inherent in the forest, reanimates the cemetery which exists as a nostalgic remnant, through intimation. The forest is revived as a THIRD INTIMATE LANDSCAPE.

2 [ARCHITECTURAL INSERTION]

The architectural insertion teases the dweller’s imagination with the fantasy of artificiality (bioluminescent conservatory) and death/death, constructing the SECOND ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE.

BRIXTON CEMETERY as nostalgic remnant of the first artificial landscape. Memorialization recognised as deferral of imagination.

1 [ESCAPE]

REVENANTS

“ verbeeld-ing / ontslape ”

Fantasy as the city’s dominant narrative nostalgically recreates escape, constructing the FIRST ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE.

be. It is not restrictive in its fatality — it is not final. Instead, it is to be framed in release, its resonance found in its ambiguity, making fluid the boundaries between agony and ecstasy. French literary theorist and philosopher, Roland Barthes (1915-1980) describes this occurrence as *La Petite Mort* (Barthes, 1975:14), or 'little death', whereby the reader experiences *jouissance* (bliss) at the moment of 'authorship' over a text, transcending the state of *plaisir* (comfort and euphoria of reading) by assuming a state of reimagining only acquired through a process of loss and discomfort. The forest is revived as a *third intimate landscape*.

The Bioluminescent Conservatory: an exotic collection of imagined worlds.

The architectural intervention, a *conservatory of reimagined worlds*, is a reimagination of the typology of a conservatory, hosting an inventory of synthetic biological bioluminescent botany^{24 25}, metaphoric of the exotic transmutation of fantasy (escape through wonder) into the nature, and thus evidence of how artificiality expands knowledge through the engagement of unfamiliar. Fantasy deepens nature. The conservatory is recognised as a typology of escape in its purpose of collecting, archiving (memorialization) and displaying exotics and unknown artefacts from foreign countries, as a form of delight to facilitate escape to recreated (reimagined) novel realms. The conservatory harbouring novelty and cultivating exotic botany through the artificial preservation of climate, is a typological representation of the *first artificial landscape*. The conservatory reconstructs the novelty of worlds from which artefacts are brought by reproducing those worlds artificially and nostalgically to capture the public imagination. This is typified by the Great Exhibition at Paxton's Crystal Palace (and particularly by the display of the antediluvian animals in the park outside). Rem Koolhaas describes how imagination (*verbeelding*) is inherent in the conservatory:

Manhattan's Crystal Palace contains, like all early Exhibitions, an implausible juxtaposition of the demented production of useless Victorian items celebrating (now that machines can mimic the techniques of uniqueness) the democratization of the object; at the same time it is a Pandora's box of genuinely new and revolutionary techniques and inventions, all of which eventually will be turned loose on the island even though they are strictly incompatible (Koolhaas, 1994:25).

fig. 4.40. (author)
 Revenants and reveries.
 Mechanization of
 artificiality of escape to
 reanimate the nostalgic
 remnant.

24 In 2013 the company *Glowing Plant* started a Kickstarter campaign proposing to synthesize and produce bioluminescent plants as part of a wave of "DIY biologists" now able to practice synthetic biology with the commercialisation of DIY laboratories. It was one of the most successful campaigns of that year, attracting a total of 8 433 backers who pledged a total of \$484, 013.

25 There is no consequence to the alien import thereof into the city as *first artificial landscape* existing with no grand formal narrative but rather as a morphology constituent of incongruent narratives of exotic collection.

3 [REIMAGINATION]

REVERIES

“ verbeelding / ont-slape ”

The fantasy of artificiality engages, rather than escapes, the unfamiliar, intimating the nostalgic remnant as a THIRD INTIMATE LANDSCAPE.

Imagination is intimated through the artificiality of the Bioluminescent Conservatory. [Synaesthesia from the synthetic].

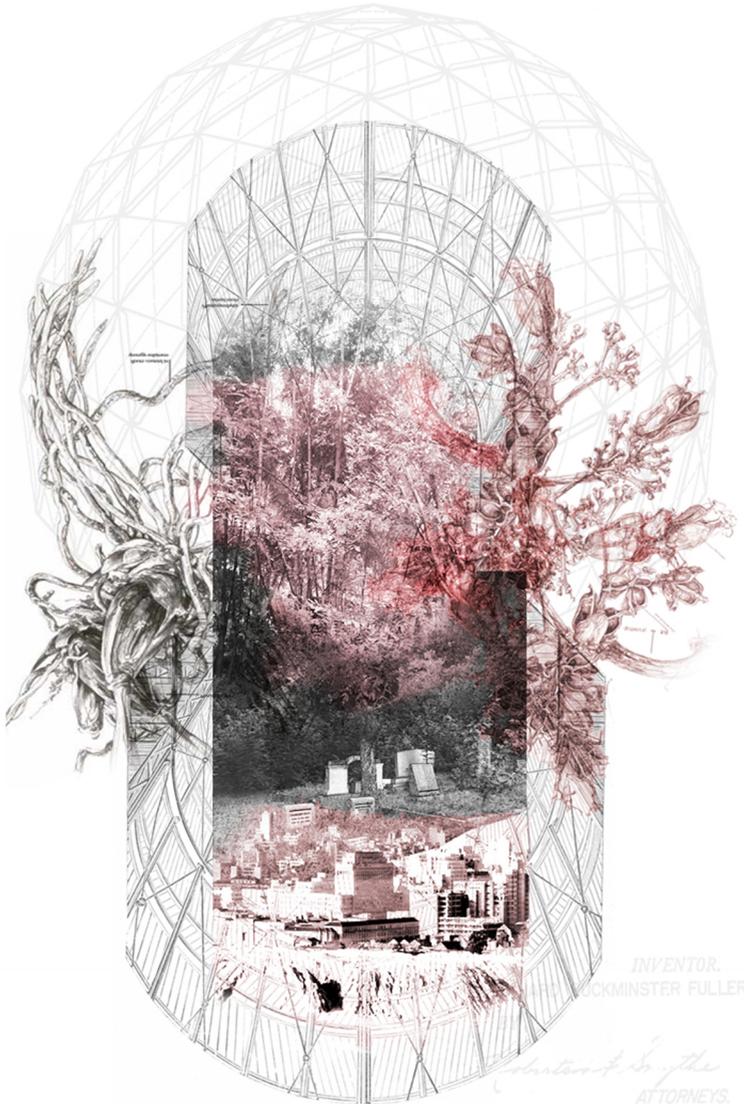
2 [BIOLUMINESCENT CONSERVATORY]

THE EXOTIC COLLECTION OF IMAGINED WORLDS

The Bioluminescent Conservatory is inserted into the cemetery as nostalgic remnant of escape as a SECOND ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE, hosting synthetic biology.

1 [TYPOLOGY OF ESCAPE]

CONSERVATORY AS TYPOLGY OF ESCAPE, collecting, archiving, and exhibiting newly cultivated species as a delight that facilitate the dweller's escape to novel realms. CONSERVATORY AS A SECOND ARTIFICIAL LANDSCAPE.



Fantasy, through the desire to escape, pierces the border of the unknown *via its artificiality*, it teases the imagination and engages with the unfamiliar which is both physically and metaphysically present in the cemetery in the form of the desacralized forest, a nostalgic remnant resulting from the deferral of engagement with the unfamiliar through memorialisation. The conservatory is sardonically and abjectly artificial, its contents offering fleeting moments of wondrous delight or the artifice taunting the deprived gaze of the dweller to reimagine. Escape, through imagination, thus becomes materially as well as metaphysically transformative and experienced intimately by the dweller, allowing agency over the architecture. In his introduction to *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard ruminates over imagination and matter:

“A new image costs humanity as much labor as a new characteristic costs a plant.” Many attempted images cannot survive because they are merely formal play, not truly adapted to the matter they should adorn [...] imagination must, above all, study the relationship between material and formal causality. The poet as well as the sculptor is faced with this problem; images also have their matter (Bachelard, 1999:3).

Brief mythological and historical analysis of conservatories:

Although the occurrence of augmented nature through the use of greenhouses can be traced back to the Roman era, the social and cultural significance of this typology only becomes pertinent in eighteenth-century France with the conception/invention of *landscapes within buildings*. This section will elaborate on the significance of conservatories as *second landscape*.

The phenomenon of landscape within building is traced back to Chantilly estate just outside Paris in France 1774 when Louis-Joseph de Bourbon, prince de Condé, instructed his personal architect Jean-François Leroy to design an “artificial hamlet of mock-rustic buildings” imitating proletariat workshops which included three cottages, a barn, an inn, a water mill, a dairy and a stable, although only facades to a grandiose billiard room, library, a large dining hall and a salon ²⁶. The interior of these buildings depicted a fanciful reimagination of “fantasy of the extensive woodland... [which] alluded to the extension of hunting privileges enjoyed by the Condé over the

fig. 4.41. (author)
Reimagination of
the *Bioluminescent*
Conservatory.

²⁶ These can perhaps be regarded as predecessors of architectural theoretician Bernard Tschumi's conceptual notions of *crossprogramming*, *disprogramming* and *transprogramming*.

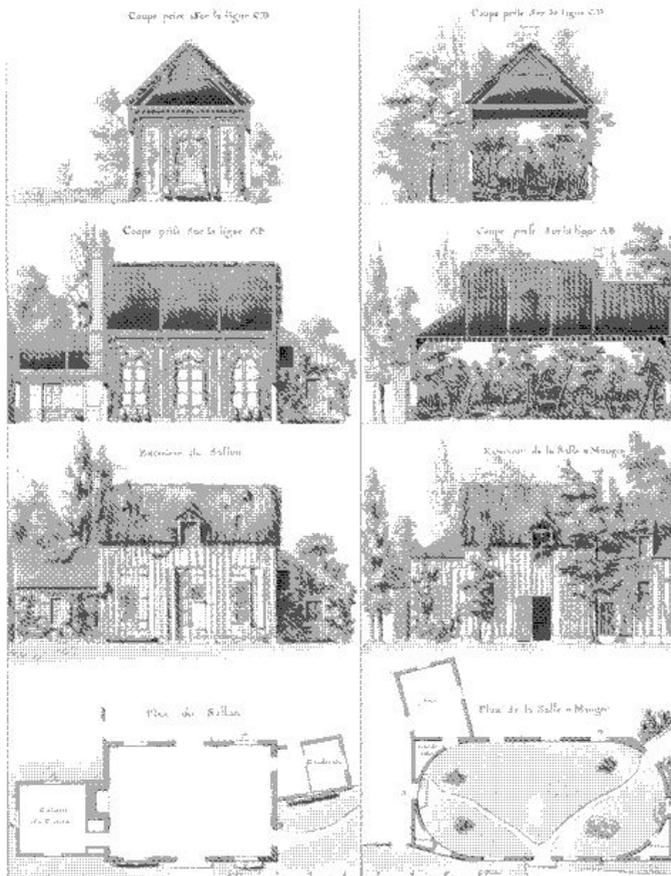


Figure 8.3. Plans, sections, and elevations of the salon (left) and dining hall (right) in the hamlet at Chantilly; from Chambé, *Album du comte du Nord*, 1784, fol. 16. Courtesy: Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y.

fig. 4.42. Landscapes within buildings at Chantilly, Jean-François Leroy, 1774.

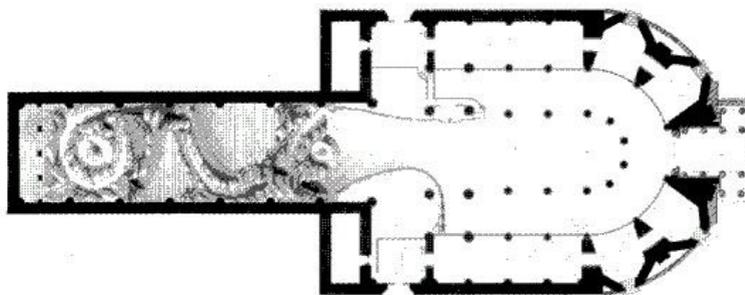


fig. 4.43. Landscapes within buildings at Chantilly, Jean-François Leroy, 1774.

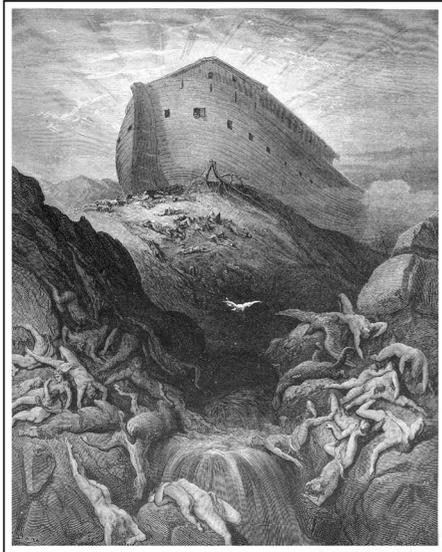
landscape surrounding their estate”²⁷ (Hays, 2007:178). It was intended as a display of stature for his elite aristocratic guests and conceived as “an affirmation of society by nature” (ibid., 2007:160-168). Each building further included its own produce garden. The conception of interior space as landscape became an influential proponent of “visionary” architecture in the following two decades and, being absorbed into bourgeois life, these artificial structures hosting synthetic landscapes soon took shape as even more extravagant designs such as French architect Charles-François Ribart’s *Éléphant Triomphal* - a city residence for Louis XV in Paris in the form of a monumental elephant - but more significantly inspired a slough of new fantastical inventions such as solari, hot houses, orangeries and conservatories with dining halls exhibiting exotic botanical collections and the benefit of cultivating fruits throughout the year, reflecting the “retreat of the individual to nature and to the rural life in a period of political and economic decline” (ibid., 2007: 167-179). This also became the model for the Enlightenment’s utopian monuments including Étienne-Louis Boullé’s *Cenotaph to Newton* and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux’s *Elevation of the Cemetery of the Town of Chaux* around a decade later. This fantastical, and more specifically, paradisiacal nature of conservatories perhaps already finds antecedent in the description of the *Hanging Gardens of Babylon*, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, constructed under command of the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II to indulge his queen whom, coming from mountainous country, desired a monument resembling such a landscape. A subtler nuance (perhaps archetype) can, however, be derived from the Biblical (and mythological) narratives of the ark. Describing the construction of an ark by Noah, a man commanded by God, as vessel to host the pre-deluvian animals which inhabited the earth before the *deluge*, the flood sent to purge earth’s surface of Man whom have succumbed to sin, so doing preventing their extinction, although tellingly only those animals which could fit the ark’s dimensions. The significance of this myth is elucidated in a diary entry of Harriet Martineau, a journalist whom, travelling from London to the newly rebuilt Crystal Palace²⁸ by rail in 1854, noted down a conversation which he eavesdropped:

Just before arriving, the passengers were presented with an astonishing sight: a lake with islands inhabited by models of huge beasts, some over thirty feet long:

²⁷ Hays (2007: 178) further notes: “the various ways in which forests are conceived, represented, or symbolized will give us access to the shadow of Enlightenment ideology - its fantasies, paradoxes, anxieties, nostalgias, self-deceptions, and even its pathos”.

²⁸ The original Crystal Palace was dismantled after the six month duration of the Great Exhibition in 1851 and reconstructed at Sydenham Hill in 1852 where it stood until finally being demolished in 1936. Some of the antediluvian creates are still scattered around the park.

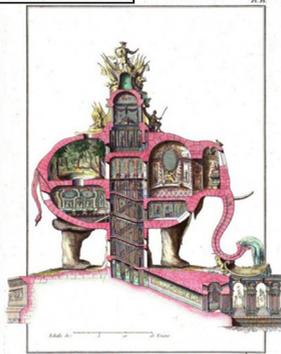
SIGNIFICANCE OF PROGRAM:



MYTHOLOGICAL



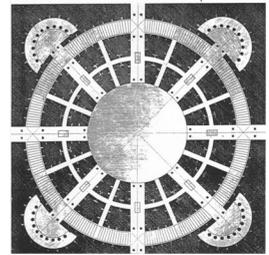
Origin of landscapes within buildings in France.



Elephant de Triomphe, Paris, France Charles-Francois Ribart



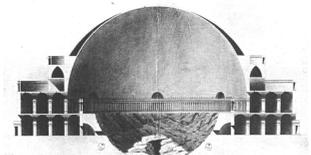
Kew Gardens, England Joseph Paxton 1844



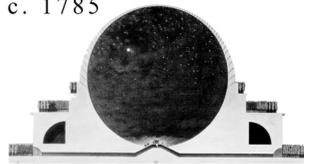
Cemetery at the town of Chaux, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux c. 1785



Chantilly, France, Jean-Francois Leroy



Temple of Death, Etienne-Louis Boullée c. 1785



Cenotaph for Newton, Etienne-Louis Boullée

BC LATE 18TH CENTURY

1758

1773

1784

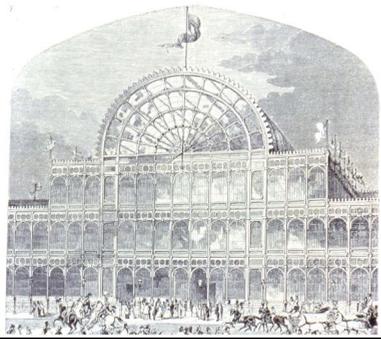
HISTORICAL

1_ **French aristocratic society:**
fantasy of landscapes within buildings

2_ **Enlightenment:**
mastery of nature through artificiality

CONSERVATORY:

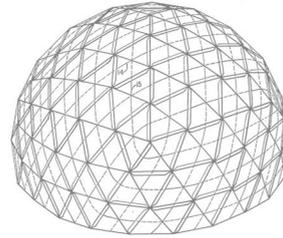
ESCAPE THROUGH NOSTALGIA, EXOTICISM AND MUSEUMIFICATION



The Crystal Palace at Hyde Park, London, England, Joseph Paxton



*The Eden Project, Cornwall, England
Nicholas Grimshaw
c. 1998*



*Laminar Geodesic Dome patent,
Roger Buckminster Fuller
c. 1965*



*The Dome over Manhattan, New York
Roger Buckminster Fuller*

1851

c. 1960

3_ Egalitarianism of Marxist consumerism: artificiality of exotics and archiving

fig. 4.44. (author)
Chronology of the conservatory.

"What are those?" exclaimed a passenger in the railway carriage, as it ran along the embankment above the gardens. "The antediluvian animals, to be sure", a comrade informed him. "Why antediluvian?" "Because they were too large to go into the ark; and so they were all drowned" (Secord, 2004:138).

This dialogue recapitulates the peripheral nature of engaging with the unfamiliar which is encountered in the nostalgic construction and promulgation of the world, more precisely here through exhibition, collection or archiving that which is familiar.

The project will then be developed to gain further insight into the intimate interface between dweller and architecture acknowledging that nostalgia constructs and defines the city through memory and imagination. Programmatic dismantling and reimagination of the characteristics of the conservatory through typological reconfiguration and conceptualisation further protrudes the architectural surface. These characteristics are derived from a historical analysis of the nostalgia and artificiality demonstrated in conservatories' representation of: societal fascination with the wonder of illusion, the romance of nature, recreational rituals, preservation (of climate, olfactory sensations, exotic flora, *hortus conclusus*), horticulture, museumification, commodification ²⁹.



fig. 4.45. The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, 1851 By Joseph Paxton, 1851, Hyde Park, London.

²⁹ Paxton's Crystal Palace presented to the world the promise of Marxist egalitarianism through the means of rapid production, consumption and immediacy of exotic fancy.