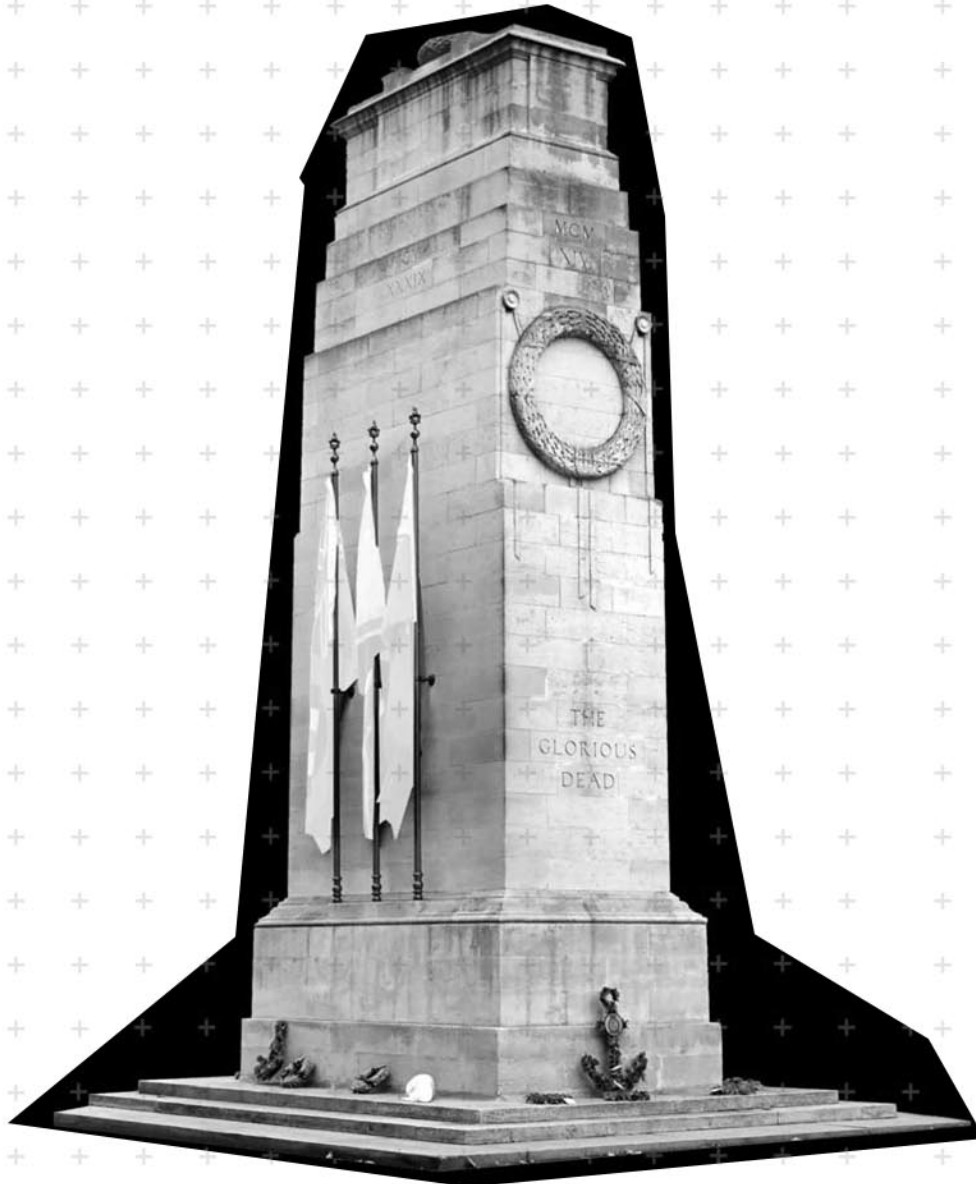


OLGA KALOSHA + PAOLO MILANES ©2010
Architecture for Disaster Reduction and Reconstruction
In parallel with the 5th I-Rec International Conference
Supervised by Professor Roger Connah

THE CENOTAPH

VOODOO REALISM



contents

[05] Dying

[06] Terminology

[07] Vodun / Catholicism

[08] Syncretism

[]

[09] Let's Get Physical, Physical; Let's Get Spiritual, Spiritual

[]

[]

[]

11] Cenotaph: the
inglorious dead
+proposal

+short-term response

+haiti's cenotaphs

+reconstruction program

+communal involvement

[] Time line - see additional image

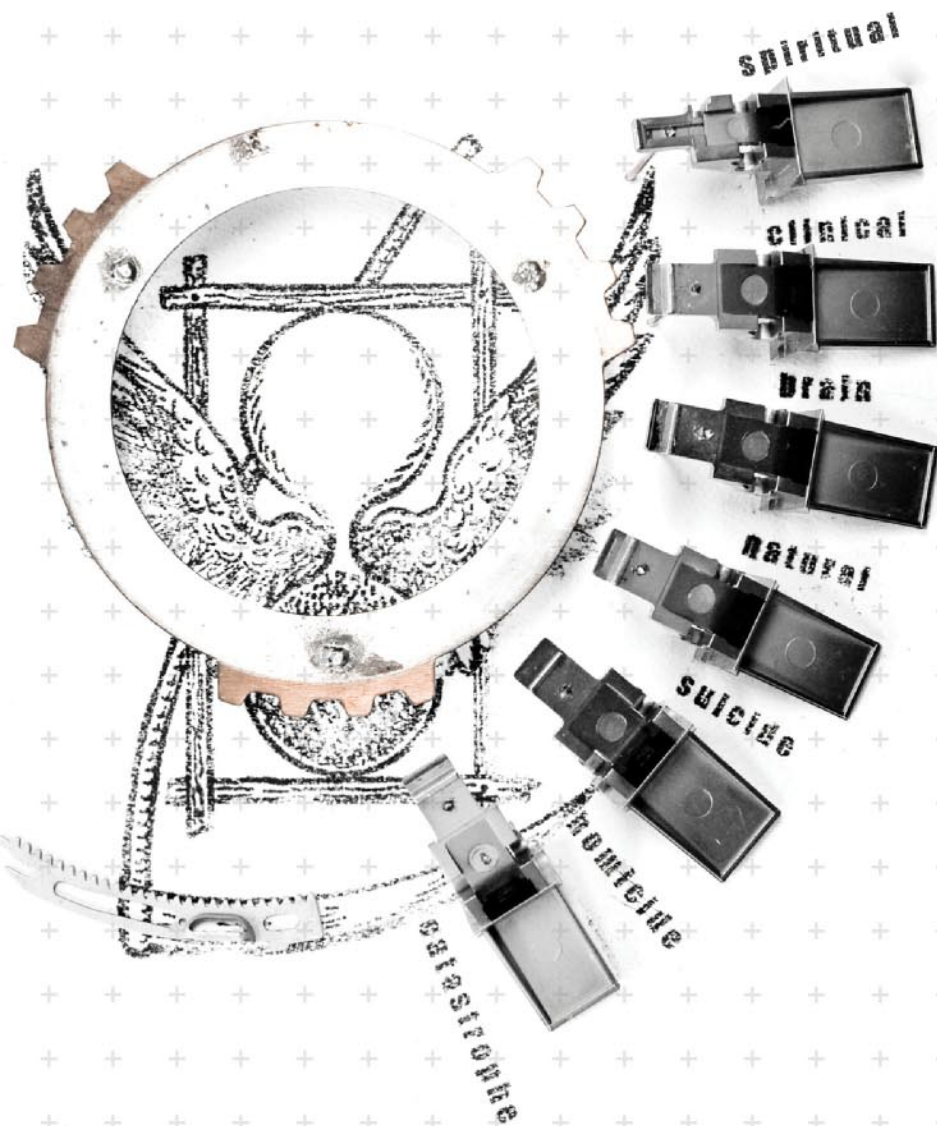
[] Cenotaph Prototype - see additional image

[15] Acceptance - a Postscript by Prof. Roger Connah

[16] Sources



January 12, 2010 - A 7.0 magnitude earthquake hit the country of Haiti which is already the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The disaster exposed the nation's shoddy construction which contributed to the destruction and death of its people. Within days, aid poured in from the international community but the country was ill-prepared to receive it. With no roads, limited airports, damaged docks, and no electricity, distributing aid proved challenging. As Haitians became desperate, looting and scavenging ran widespread in the streets. The massive death toll left morgues unable to cope with excessive corpses. Bodies littered the streets and locals dealt by digging mass graves and/or burning the deceased.



TERMINOLOGY

06

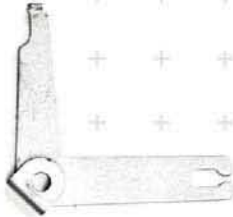
- Houngan** + Vodun priest
- Gros-bon-ange** + In Vodun, the life-force, the offshoot particle of Bon Dieu, the Vodun Godhead
- Dessounin** + Vodun death ritual which separates the soul from the defunct body
- Casser-canari** + Performed the day after the funeral, a ritual which commemorates the close of the ceremonies. During this ritual a clay jar (canari) is broken, the pieces of which are buried in a trench of the floor of the hounfort (vodun temple)
- Dernière prière** + Last prayer which closes the novena, the last ritual performed by the Prêt' savanne
- Catholicism** + Impersonal Godhead, mechanical function, biological function, stellar function
- Vodun** + Minor deities, personifications of the Godhead, divine mediators, daily life
- Guinin** + In Vodun, the world of ancestors
- Cenotaph** + Derives from the Greek κενotάφιον: kenos - empty, and taphos - tomb

Catholicism in Haiti functions as a point of contact with an impersonal Godhead (Bon Dieu) who maintains the cosmos, including its mechanical, biological and stellar functions.

CATHOLICISM

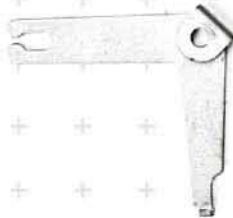
The slave revolt that brought Haiti independence indeed relied on voodoo, the New World version of ancestral African faiths. To this day, by various scholarly estimates, 50 percent to 95 percent of Haitians practice at least elements of voodoo, often in conjunction with Catholicism.

At the time of struggle for independence, sorcery was considered a part of a legitimate revolt; by the nineteenth century, this revolt having become illegitimate, nothing remained but outlaws.



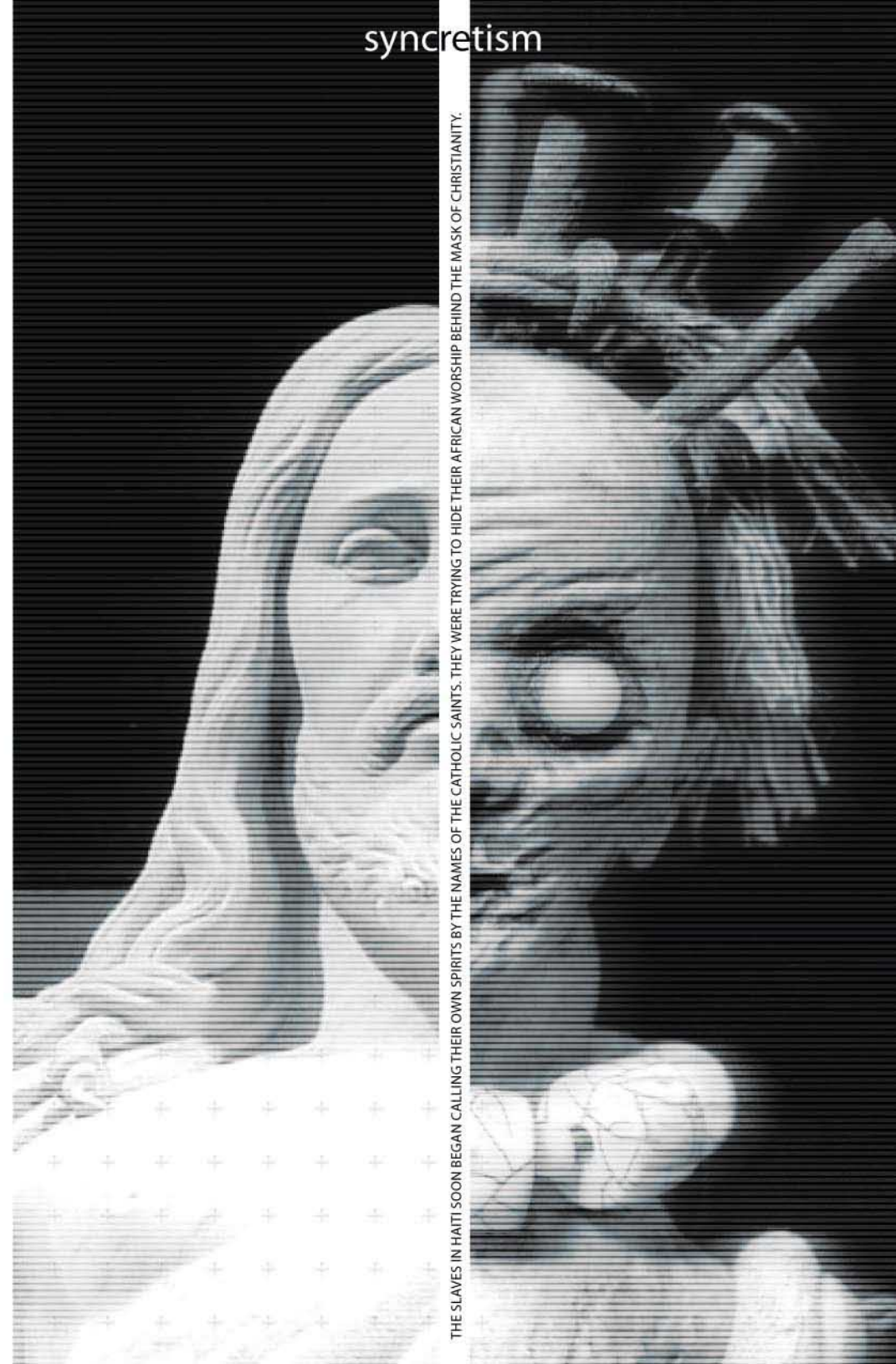
VODUN

Vodun relates to the minor deities, personifications of the Godhead, divine mediators, and everyday life.

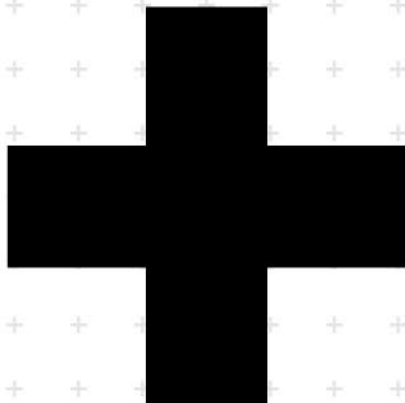


It seems rather that the outlawing of voodoo had a double objective: to deliver the country from networks of power uncontrollable by the political machinery, and to reduce to a state of outlawry the most exploited social groups: the slum-dwellers in the cities [most of whom had recently migrated from the provinces] and the peasants of the countryside. Merely by their position, one might say, these two groups bore the marks of sorcery.

Tolerance to voodoo was necessary to the general functioning of Haitian society, and its penalization, no less. Is this a contradiction?



THE SLAVES IN HAITI SOON BEGAN CALLING THEIR OWN SPIRITS BY THE NAMES OF THE CATHOLIC SAINTS. THEY WERE TRYING TO HIDE THEIR AFRICAN WORSHIP BEHIND THE MASK OF CHRISTIANITY.

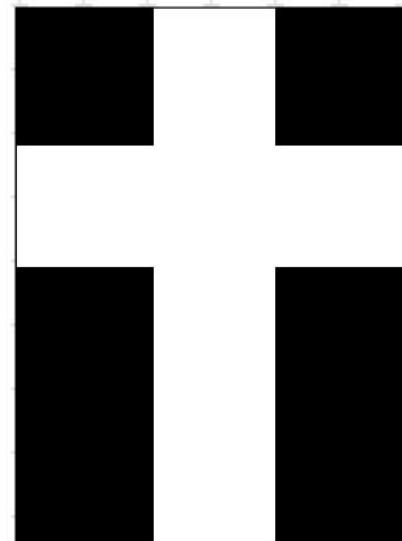


Prioritizing survivors is appropriate and necessary but we should not ignore the deceased as their effect reaches past the physical realm. Cadavers overwhelm and instill fear of an epidemic to the general public. The solution is to dump decomposing corpses into mass graves throughout the country and set the bodies aside.

After the 2004 tsunami in Asia, aid groups and governments established a system in which people were photographed before being buried so loved ones could search for them. In Haiti, the system was not implemented; the majority of the dead remain anonymous.

AMERICAN RED CROSS
CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY
HOPE FOR HAITI
OXFAM
SALVA TION ARMY
UNICEF
UNITED NATIONS STABILIZATION MISSION IN HAITI
UN CENTRAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE FUND

AID
RECUPERATE
ACCIDENT
RUINATION
MISFORTUNE
RESOURCES



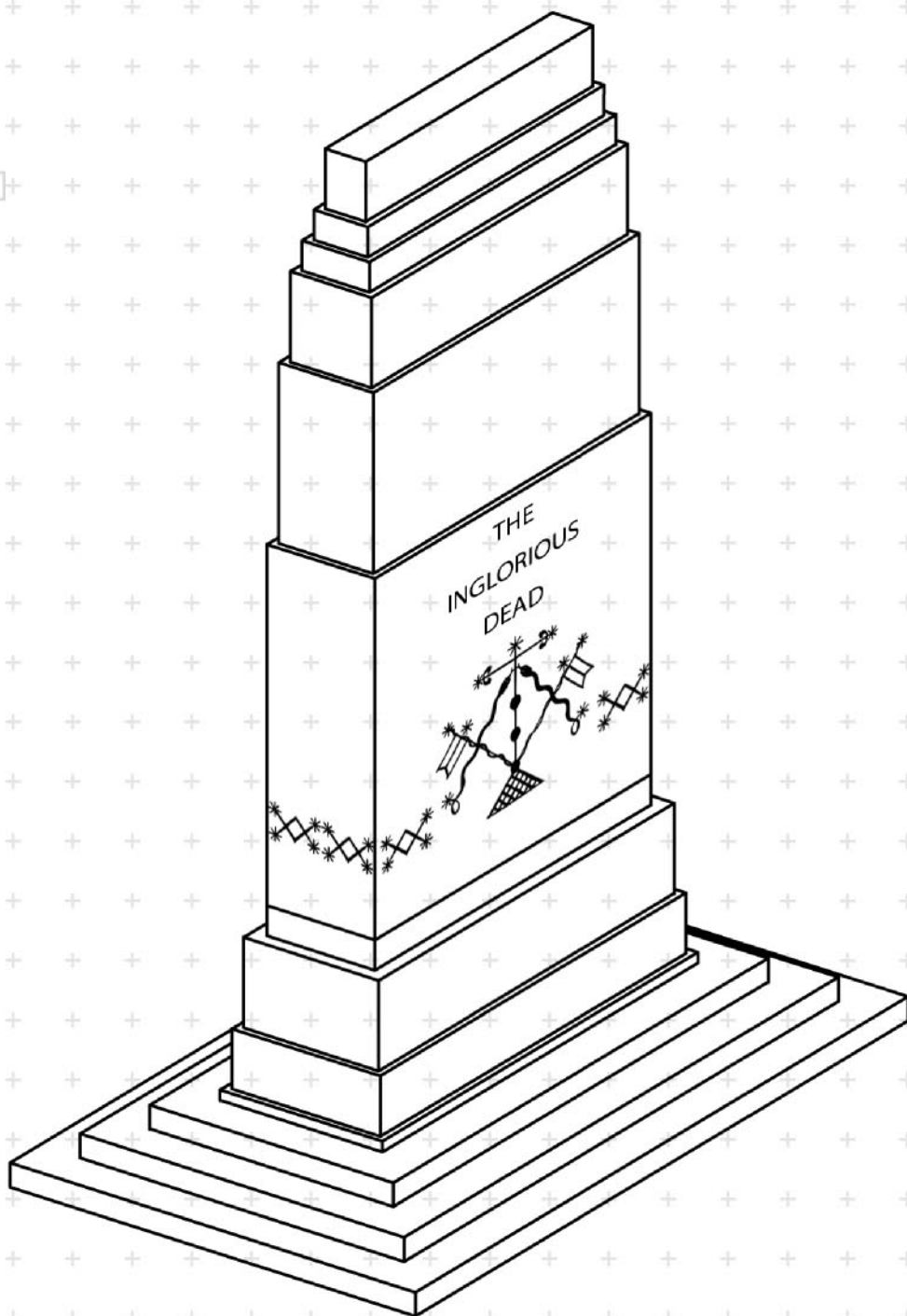
Funeral rites are among the most sacred of all ceremonies to Haitians, who have been known to spend more money on their burial customs than on their own homes.

Dumping the dead in hurriedly excavated mass graves without proper rites is seen as desecration in a country where many believe in zombies -- dead bodies brought back to life by supernatural forces who could persecute the living.

DEATH
ACCEPTANCE
GRIEF
TRAUMA
MOURNING



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
VODUN SPIRITUAL LEADERS
PRIESTS AND PRIESTESSES
HOUNGAN



AID HAS TO TAKE ON THE DEATH.

PROPOSAL

The United Nations are asked to set up a death-in-disaster office. This has to be budgeted for as a part of agency's disaster expenditure. We are proposing an aid department that shall administer this issue during the disaster and in the aftermath processes.

SHORT-TERM RESPONSE

The proposed UN Aid Death Department (*UNADD*) shall be responsible for the corpses of disaster victims in conjunction with rescue teams. Their roles include corpse collection, transportation, placement in specially designated areas, body preservation, identification process (photographing, unique physical marking recognition, etc.), documentation, and victim database compilation. The portable interim morgue structures are to be provided along with specially designed conservation bags. With the completion of documentation and database compilation, and after giving people a certain period of time for body identification purposes, the Department then proceeds to a controlled collective burial, unless the local authority is capable of individual burials. The collective grave shall then be equipped with a nameplate containing recovered names and numbers assigned to unidentified corpses. The latter shall provide the surviving civilians searching for their family members and friends an opportunity to later refer to the listed numbers in order to contact the organization for details of any unique physical markings.

Society's social, psychological, emotional, economic and legal consequences of the disaster shall therefore be approached from the roots - recovery of the dignity for the survivor's family.

HAITI'S CENOTAPHS

Aid groups and governments did not implement the identification policy in Haiti. The cenotaphs proposed in Port-au-Prince aim at the anonymous individuals or the missing. Aspiring to give relatives, loved ones, friends, and any survivors peace of mind, the neighbourhood cenotaphs serve as space for mourning, a remembrance, and a dedication to the unfortunate victims of the earthquake.

CONSIDERATION ON A SCALE LARGER THAN A HOUSING/SHELTER UNIT IS EXPRESSED THROUGH THE INSET OF LOCAL COMMUNITY CENOTAPHS INTO THE RESETTLING CITY BLOCKS. PORT-AU-PRINCE PLANNING AUTHORITIES ARE TO ISSUE A PLAN OF REPOPULATION, WITH A REQUIRED SQM OF CENOTAPH AREA PER SQM OF RESIDENTIAL CITY BLOCKS. PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE BALANCED APPROACH TO REBUILDING POST-DISASTER PORT-AU-PRINCE THEREBY CONSIDERS SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY AND FURTHER CREATES A STIMULUS FOR THE CIVILIANS WHO ARE WILLING TO REPOPULATE THEIR COMMUNITIES. THE AUTHORITIES ARE TO ALLOW THE NAMES OF THE MISSING PERSONS TO APPEAR ON THE NAME BOARDS IF REQUESTED BY THE FAMILY MEMBERS. THE CENOTAPHS AND ITS MEMORIAL WALLS USE THE DOCUMENTATION AND DATABASE CREATED BY THE DESIGNATED **UNADD**. COMPLETED CENOTAPHS SHALL PROVIDE A SITTING AREA AND A SECLUDED PRAYING SPACE. THE GIVEN STRATEGY IS TO AFFECT SELECTED NEIGHBORHOODS WITHIN THE CITY LINE, AS WELL AS CONCENTRATED COMMUNITIES IN AN AFFECTED RURAL REGION.

The earthquake brought the Haitian nation closer together and the confidence to believe in themselves. In death, there can be a renewal, a hope, a rebirth. THE POPULATION IS IMPELLED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EMERGENCE OF THE CENOTAPHS IN TWO DIFFERENT WAYS. THE **UNADD** DATABASE OF THE DECEASED IS SUPPLEMENTED FURTHER WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF THE LOCALS SUBMITTING THE NAMES OF THE DECEASED THEY ARE AWARE OF. THIS INFORMATION INCLUDES BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO THE FULL NAME AND DATE OF BIRTH. IT SHALL THEN BE FURTHER OPERATED BY THE HIRED WORKERS, PART OF WHOM SHALL BE ON SITE ACCEPTING NAMES, REGISTERING INFORMATION INTO THE COMPUTERS, CONSTRUCTING THE CENOTAPHS, AND MAINTAINING THE SITE. THE LATTER SHALL INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY FROM THE OTHER SIDE, CREATING JOBS AROUND THE CITY.



Razzle dazzle architecture - to expand architectural and planning strategies, to offer a detailed architectural transfer or translation and to turn it into what may be an unwanted even unworkable, unacknowledged contemporary practice for architecture in any post-disaster conditions? Paradoxically we all need to be careful. Today the imagination, the desire to be dynamic, lively, responsible and contemporary can close on itself – by program, by context, by habit, by instruction. By death! We all need vigilance. More important though might be the insights gained by a period where we begin to recognize with more honesty the ideas abandoned too easily. Or then those ideas a little too hastily drawn without confidence, like death undignified in mass open graves. We must attempt to recognize those other, ill-formed ideas flourishing in order to find a pattern and critical thinking where previously there may be none. What signs lead to this? How does self-insight offer the challenge of the unknown? Why do we succumb to delusion, why do we default to indifference in the face of appalling death? Fortunately we, the unaffected, escape such death and disinterest yet it still invades us precisely because we were not there. Let us not return to the locked box of known secrets, known achievements. Instead more self-challenge, more voodoo realism. Urban strategies, activist architecture, rethinking conservation and death in any post-disaster all need an increased knowledge of the inner thought within cultures, religions, within cities crowded and corrupted into inactivity. So tread carefully, enter the voodoo world if such death disturbs you. Don't settle for the same thinking applied to a more limited architecture when the role of the disaster in the future might demand more contemporary, unknown death-for-life solutions. Even illogical methods! Nothing in the already accepted representation of built form or city planning means that ideas should remain the same or remain fixed within known boundaries. This means also inviting more impossible fluidity between instant death during a disaster and the life that emerges. To oscillate between the two might be one of the secrets to increased authenticity, to any renewed position in architecture. All voodoo? Voodoo words, voodoo language, voodoo architecture? Not quite! A matter of life and death – more important even than that!

Roger Connah April 2010

The Razzle Dazzle Architecture Studio,
Azrieli School of Architecture & Urbanism, Carleton University

sources

BBC News. "BBC NEWS | Americas | Haiti makes voodoo official." BBC NEWS | News Front Page. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2985627.stm>>.

Desmangles, Leslie G.. Source: Journal of Religious Thought, 36 no 1 Spr-Sum 1979, p 5-20. Publication Type: Article

Wilentz, Amy. The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1990. Print.

FREEDMAN, SAMUEL G.. "On Religion - Myths Obscure Voodoo, Source of Comfort in Haiti - NYTimes.com." The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/20/world/americas/20religion.html?fta=y>>.

Haven, Paul. "By the thousands, Haiti returns dead to the earth - Free Online Library." News, Magazines, Newspapers, Journals, Reference Articles and Classic Books - Free Online Library. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/By+the+thousands%2c+Haiti+returns+dead+to+the+earth-a01612124960>>.

Reuters. "Haiti's voodoo priests object to mass burials | Reuters." Business & Financial News, Breaking US & International News | Reuters.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 5 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE60G2DF20100117>>.

BBC News. "BBC News - The challenge of rebuilding Haiti." BBC NEWS | News Front Page. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Mar. 2010. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8482237.stm>>.

Aristide, Jean-Bertrand. Theology and Politics. Montreal: CIDIHCA, 1995. Print.
Deren, Maya. Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti. McPherson and Company: Mcpherson, 1984. Print.

[Image Credits]
"Google Maps." Google Maps. N.p., n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2010. <<http://maps.google.com>>.

"Welcome to Flickr - Photo Sharing." Welcome to Flickr - Photo Sharing. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Feb. 2010. <<http://www.flickr.com/>>.

"The Big Picture - Boston.com." Boston.com. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Mar. 2010. <<http://www.boston.com/bigpicture/>>.

"Wikimapia - Let's describe the whole world!" Wikimapia - Let's describe the whole world! N.p., n.d. Web. 1 Apr. 2010. <<http://wikimapia.org>>.