

AN OCULUS INTO THE GROUND. MOTHERHOUSE, AND PRESENCING HOMESICKNESS BY DRAWING

JO VAN DEN BERGHE

The notion of Terrarium, for the man formerly known as an architect (the author), is to be understood as the material thickness of the substance of the Earth, made visible by the architect who, first and foremost, is craving to draw vertical topographical sections, his oculus into the ground. These drawing sessions relate to Plato's concept of Chora. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, commenting on Plato's *Timaeus*, describes Chora as "the receptacle and, as it were, the nurse of all becoming and change", and "a mass of neutral plastic material upon which differing impressions are stamped", subsequently relating Chora, "this *prima materia*", to an architecture of presence (Pérez-Gómez 2006, p. 12). Drawing Chora is drawing the topographical section, the fertile ground in which

the horizon [...] is trapped somewhere between the cave and the tower [...]. The architect becomes the surgeon who cuts open the earth and is unafraid to tear the sail that has moved the horizon and defended the unlimited. He can establish places under the ground, and these become the new way to travel into the past, as the horizon faces a new journey (Fjeld 2009, p. 108).

An excavated Hortus Conclusus that lodges the observation of life and death, the most poignant observation of mankind, nestles centrally in the section which anatomizes the sightlines that depart from the eye of the man formerly known as an architect who dwells in a brick cabin. From there he timelessly gazes into two sarcophagi: the first one for his beloved wife—his embalmed horizon, the second one, visible via a focused mirror that points the gaze downwards, for the departed mother, the mummified place of Chora. These three architectural bodies, materialized in glazed brick, coal tar, leaf gold and brass profiles, adopt the dimensions of the human bodies they shelter. Thin roof overhangs as wings, with refined architectural details, flap in brass reflections of benign moonlight. Imbedded in the excavated Hortus Conclusus that is sinking into the topography, it all comes closer to the heart of the Earth. This family of architectural bodies springs from the Motherhouse, meant to be turnable into a camera obscura, the cabalistic house of houses an architect is homesick for—a homesickness this drawing architect permits himself to dwell in. While drawing, the Motherhouse sets up to fuse with the Hortus Conclusus, an earthen island—the temporal refuge for the unfathomable—in an undulating sea of earth. Life is a narrow passage between an endless sea and an endless sea. Drawing so permits the poet-as-draftsman to oracle poetic discourse, rather than discursive logos. Yet, dense poetic language emerges from utterly acute drawing sessions through immediate verbalization. This may lift a most personal musing, that wells up from drawing, to an intersubjective level of understanding. Transcendental intersubjectivity (Hüusserl 1991).

An Oculus into the Ground

Drawing by Jo Van Den Berghe, on thin light sensitive paper, scale 1/10, 2398 x 869mm. Pencil, Muji marker, white Tipp-ex, Tesa tape.

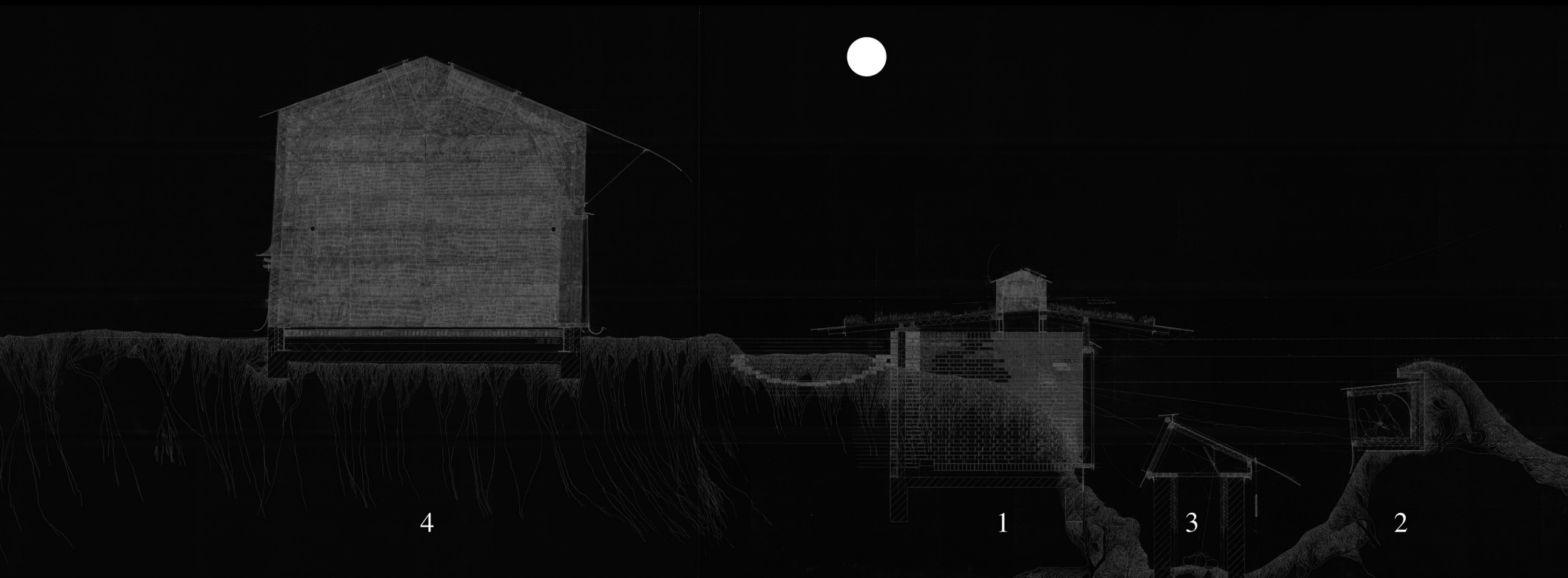
The drawing shows four architectural characters, imbedded in their topography under the pale light of the Moon.

1. The Brick Cabin: sunken into the topography, clay excavation, onsite open air brick production, yellow glazed brick, cross bond, flowered roof, little black house (epdm) on top as access (ladder), brass edging details, rainwater pond, one window (gaze), corporeal scale

2. The First Sarcophagus: embalmmment, nude model lying, horizontal architectural stretch, walnut wood, double beveled glass display, brass edging details, corporeal scale, Life

3. The Second Sarcophagus: mummification, dark vertical abyss, inclined mirror, access window with counterweight, silk buttoned upholstery (vieux rose), brass edging details, corporeal scale, Death

4. The Motherhouse: section-elevation, mat black epdm walls and roof, camera obscura, dark thin edging details, corporeal scale.



The Brick Cabin

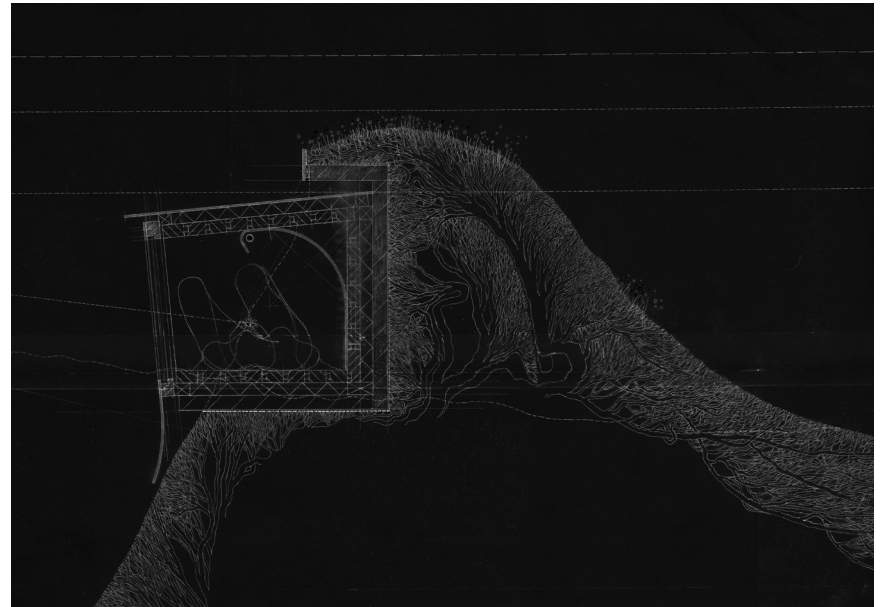
to cantilever over the Hortus Conclusus, an oculus into the ground.



The Brick Cabin, gaze
the Man formerly known as an Architect,
gazing through the window of his brick cabin.



The First Sarcophagus
the embalmed horizon.



The Second Sarcophagus
the mummified place of Chora.

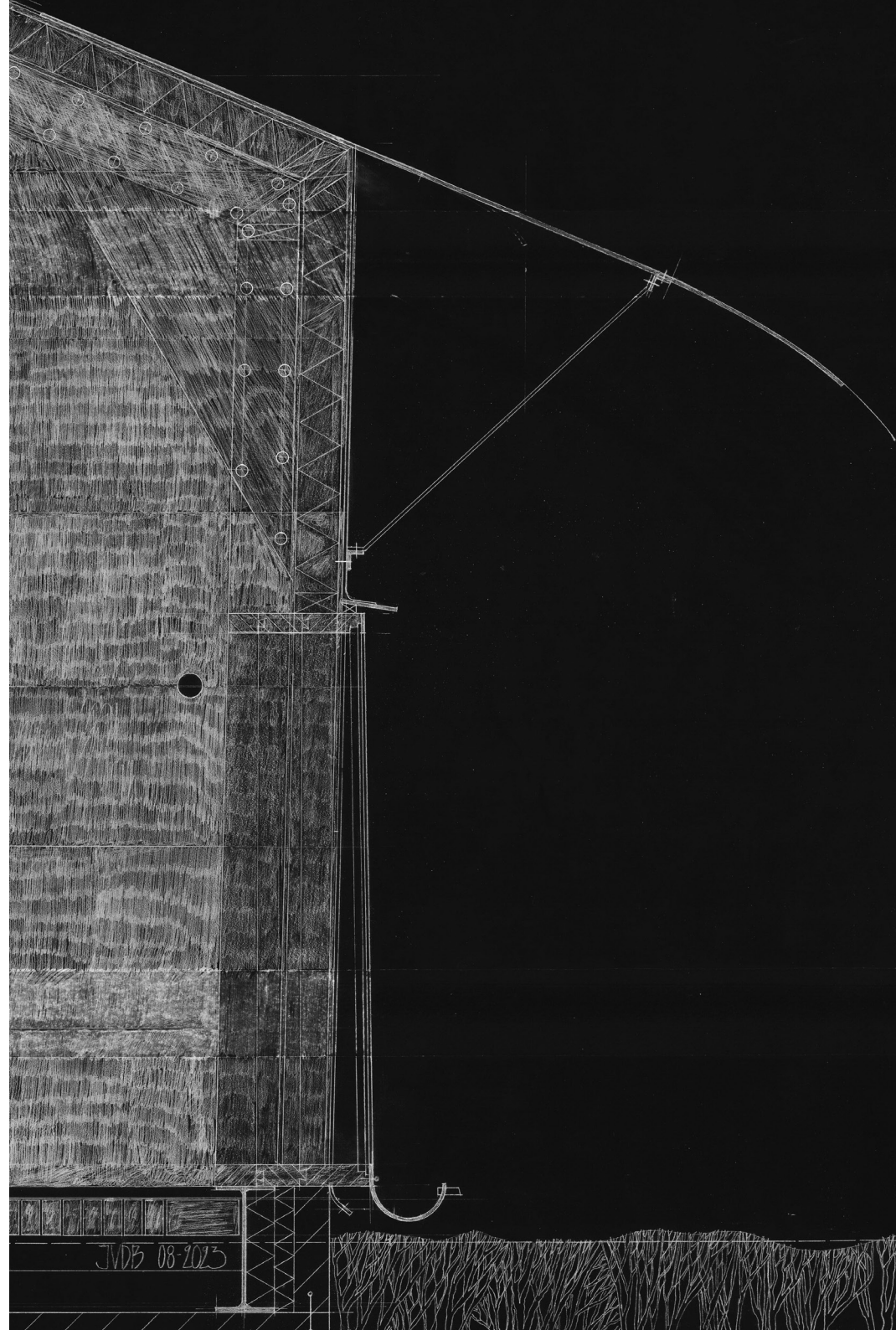
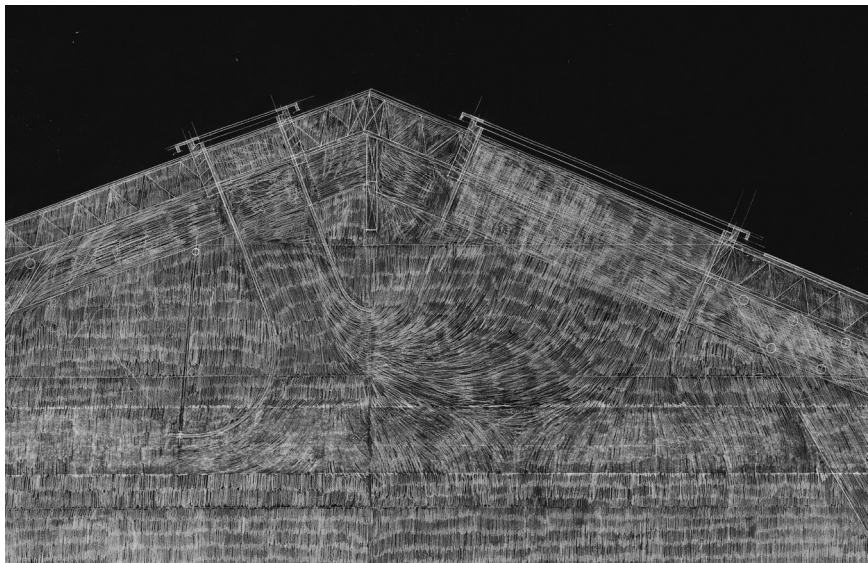


The Motherhouse
the cabalistic house of houses.
(below) *The Motherhouse, camera obscura*
door latch under curved rain hood, door with spy lens for camera obscura.



The Motherhouse, rooflights
strange light play under rooflights, only when made
accessible through moveable hatches from the inside
(only at moments when the camera obscura is not in use).

(to the right) *The Motherhouse*, window, roof
slightly inclining window, internally accessible through large sliding door
(closed at moments when the camera obscura is in use).



The Brick Cabin protruding into the earthen Hortus Conclusus.
Fragment of the drawing at mundane daytimes.

