

The Spectacle of Ruin

Project by: Kate Barnes, UWE Bristol

We live in the Anthropocene - an epoch where our own activity has had a significant impact on the environment around us. A city, for example, stands as both a testament to our ingenuity and will as a species, but also to our unrelenting desire to control, consume, and digest the natural world around us. Most arrogantly, we tend to forget that mother nature has her own way of silently reclaiming what was once hers. As our monumental structures weather in the relentless passage of time, we are reminded of the impermanence of the world around us, and they inevitably succumb to the forces of decay. This presents a profound opportunity for reflection and transformation.

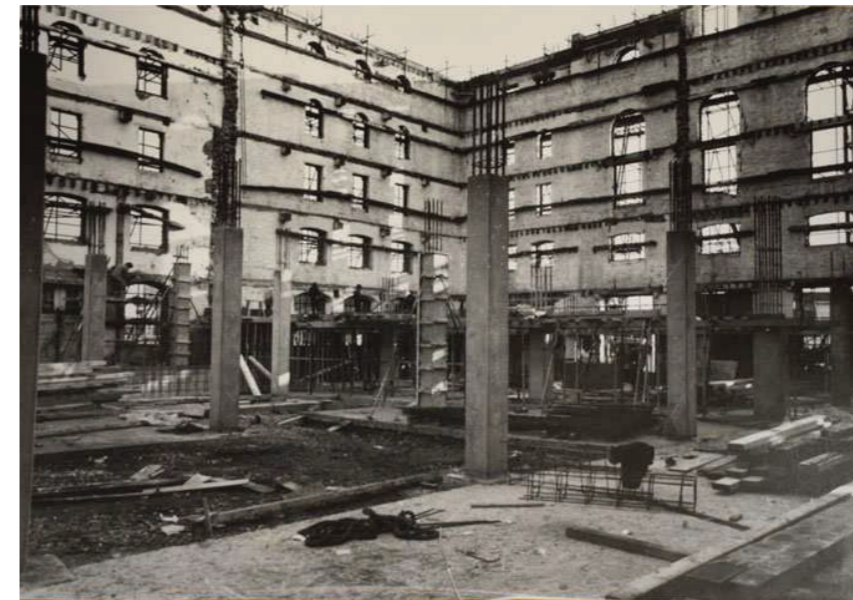
The Spectacle of Ruin delves into the poetic essence of ruins and decay within architecture, examined through the lens of the Arnolfini. This project endeavours to challenge the conventional vision of futuristic galleries as technologically advanced utopias - instead, it proposes a romantic embrace of nature's reclamation, reflecting on the ephemeral nature of human achievements and the harmonious interplay between nature and the built environment.

Inspired by the likes of Walter Benjamin, the designed gallery space contemplates the aesthetic and symbolic allure of ruins while seeking to create a dialogue between urban decay and the profound beauty found within imperfection. A living façade adorned with creeping vines and trailing plants creates a verdant tapestry that filters sunlight through the exoskeleton, casting dappled light within aligning with the notion of a tender reconciliation between urban spaces and the natural world.

Ultimately, this project advocates for a shift in architectural philosophy, moving away from the pursuit of perfection and towards a celebration of irregularity and adaptation. It challenges traditional views on decay, revealing the potential for buildings to transform and flourish through nature's gentle reclamation. This romantic perspective on the lifecycle of structures underscores the enchanting beauty and significance of ruins, urging us to embrace the boundary between decay and renewal within the urban tapestry.



FIGURE 12: Bush House being rebuilt in 1974



Above: Exploded montage of the Arnolfini (Bush House) as a contemporary ruin
Below: The Bush House being rebuilt in 1974.

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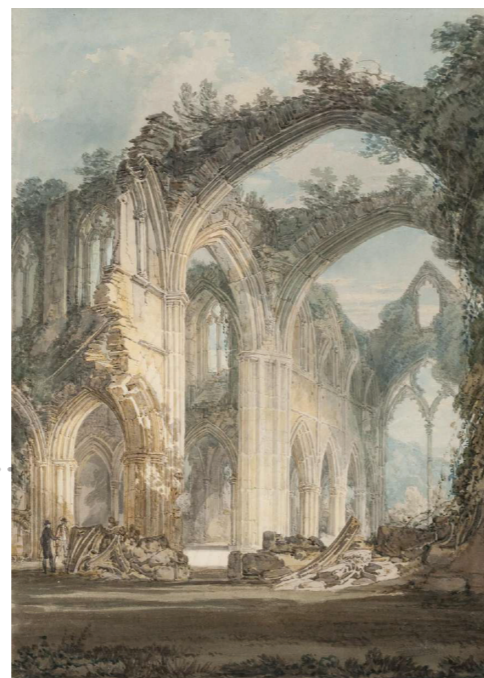
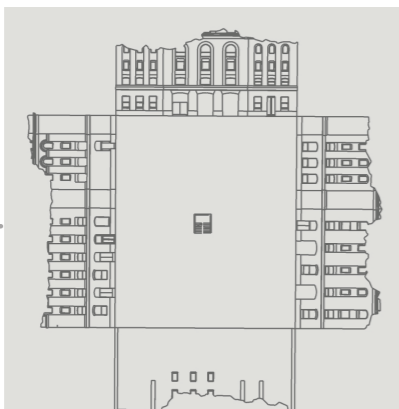


FIGURE 13: Tintern Abbey: The Crossing and Chancel, Looking towards the East Window (J. M. W. Turner, 1794)



Above: South-West Elevation
Below: Conceptual examination of the Arnolfini
and its potential as a ruin

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- Evergreen climbers (English Ivy) . . .
- Trellis . . .
- Trellis strat supports . . .
- Skylights . . .
- Angled concrete roof . . .



Left: Exploded axonometric of the shading structure.
Below: View of the exterior space at the rooftop gallery

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Left: Interior view of the rooftop gallery.
Right: Perspective of the Arnolfini from the harbourside dock.

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