

THE LONG SHIPS PASSING: A NEW VISION FOR GREAT LAKES INDUSTRY

A non-degree-required thesis submitted to the
Master of Architecture Program
Department of Architecture

by

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University of Virginia
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Abstract

The Great Lakes have long been a critical generator of economic, cultural, and material systems. From the earliest Native American use as migratory routes and sites of spiritual importance, to the European settlers who saw the Lakes as a network for trade and proselytization, the region has always carried a layered significance. Today, however, the region is seen as a symbol of decline - simplified to terms like the “Rustbelt” or through isolated narratives such as the “failure of Detroit.”

This thesis argues against this fragmentation. The Great Lakes region has never functioned as isolated cities, but rather a continuous machine, one in which the success of the single city depends as much on the success of the cities around it. A city like Detroit does not run without the raw materials and goods from upstream, and by the economies that purchase the results downstream.

For the region’s future, this thesis proposes a change from the historic raw - to - refined material production flow, to a model focusing on refined - to - technological and informational processes. This new architecture intervenes not by erasing the scars of industrialism, but by inhabiting these sites - reusing existing infrastructures and incorporating remnants. By inserting new forms into the material history of this landscape both a softer footprint and a richer narrative emerge.

The Great Lakes are not a relic of the past. They are a highly complex and rich system that needs transformation in order to thrive into the future.

“Modern Science, which knows no national boundaries, has thrust into Man’s fallible hands unprecedented power, power in building, power in destroying.”

- Hugh Ferriss

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THESIS ADVISOR: ANDREW JOHNSTON

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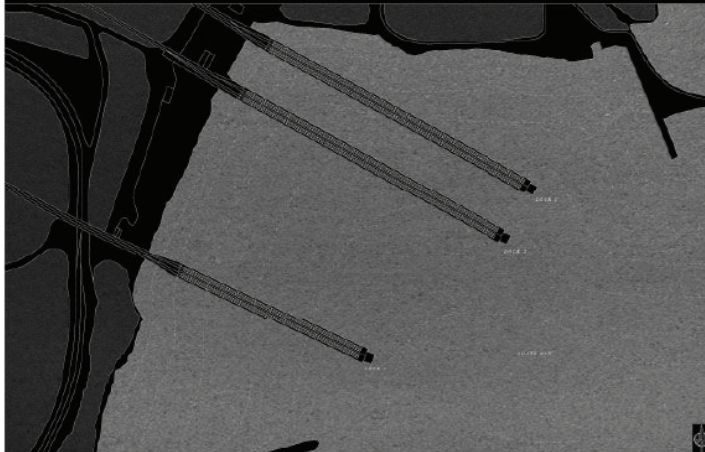
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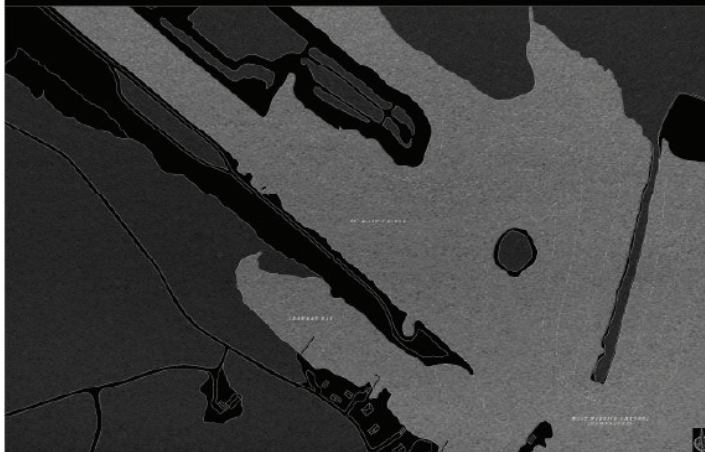
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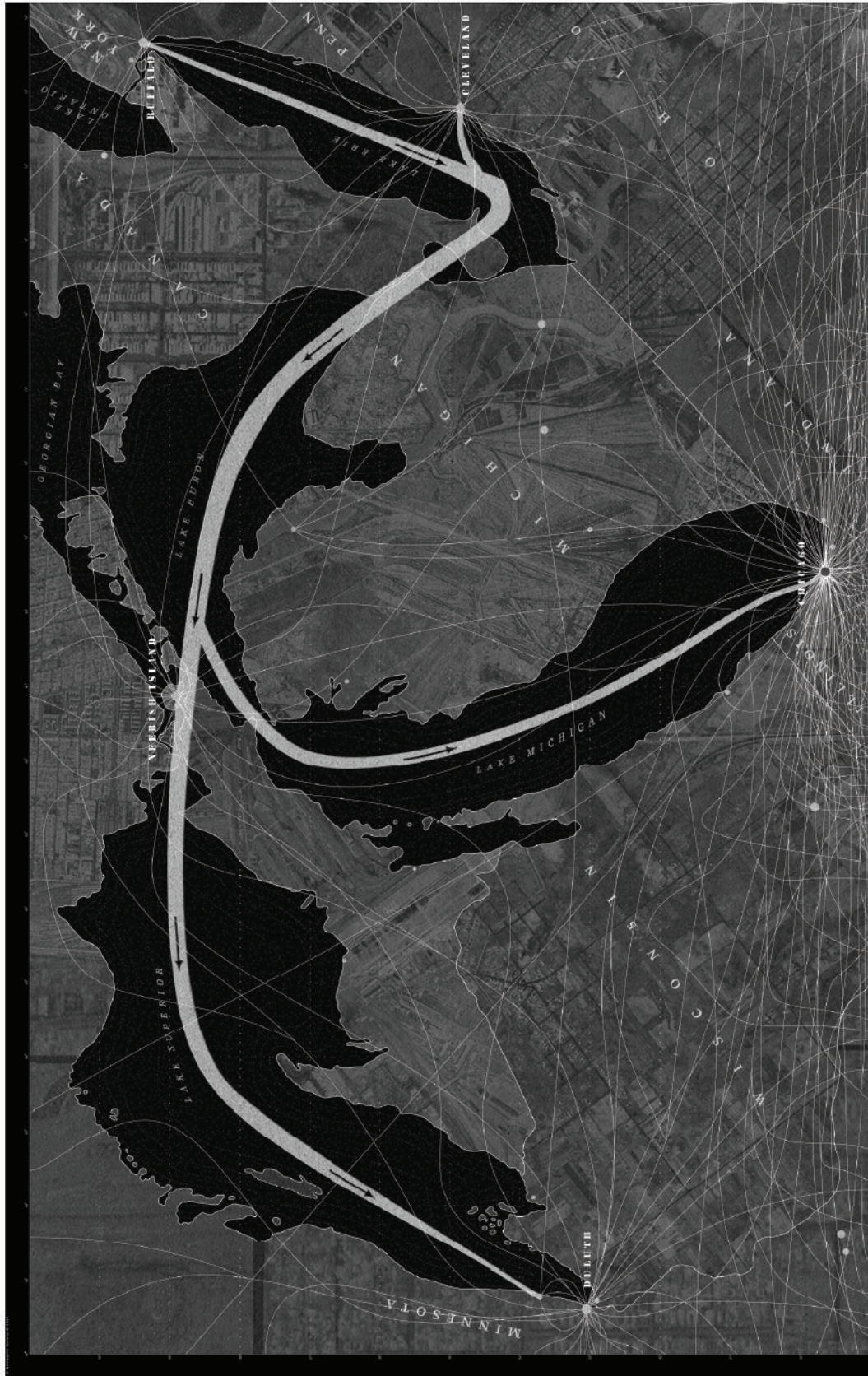
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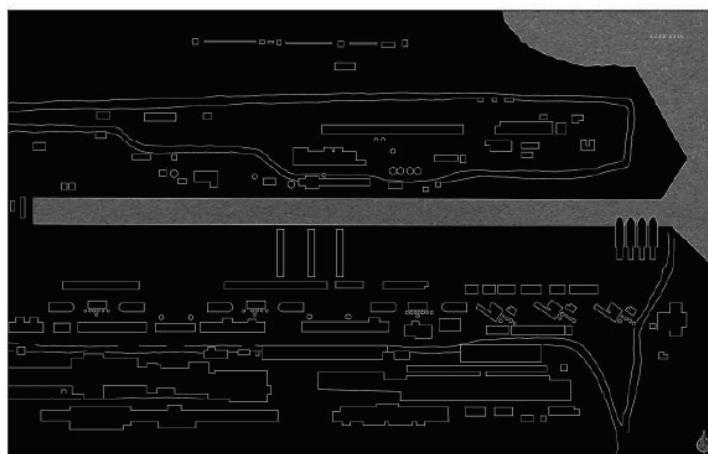


TWO HARBORS ONE LOADING DOCKS, DULUTH MN
SYNTHETIC ATMOSPHERIC TESTING FACILITY

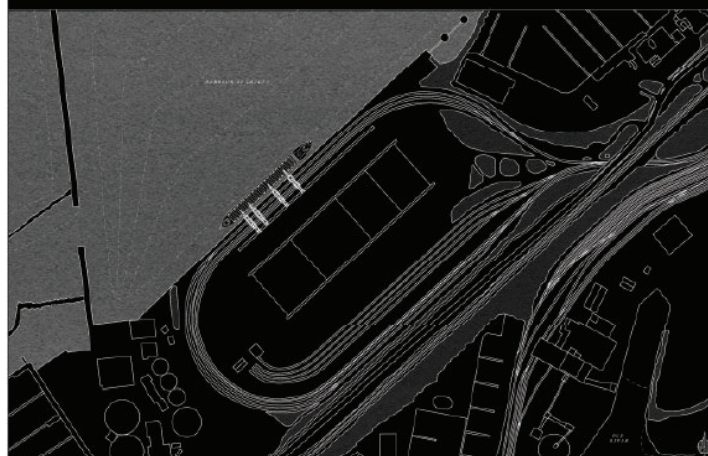


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HYDROSTATIC TURBINE POWERSTATION

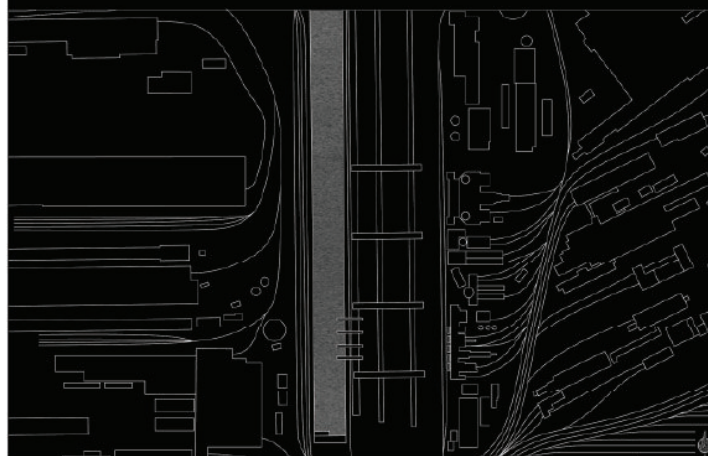




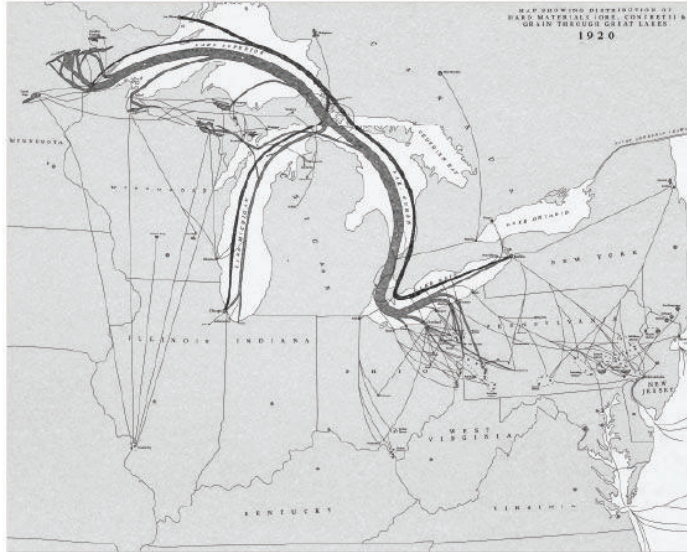
LACKAWANNA STEEL COMPANY MILL, BUFFALO NY
CHITIN - CONCRETE PLANT



WHISKEY ISLAND ORE UNLOADING PORT, CLEVELAND OH
METALLURGICAL LAB



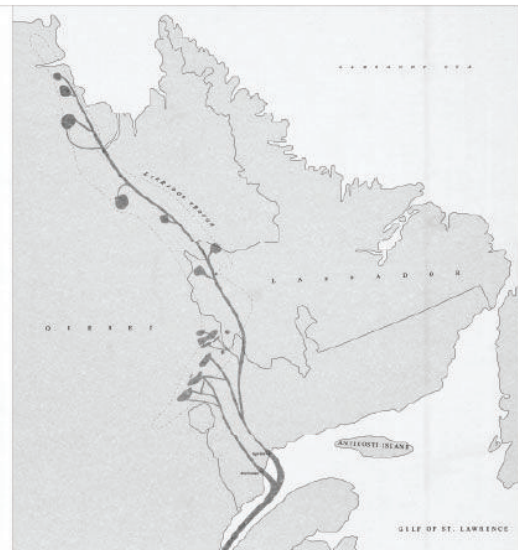
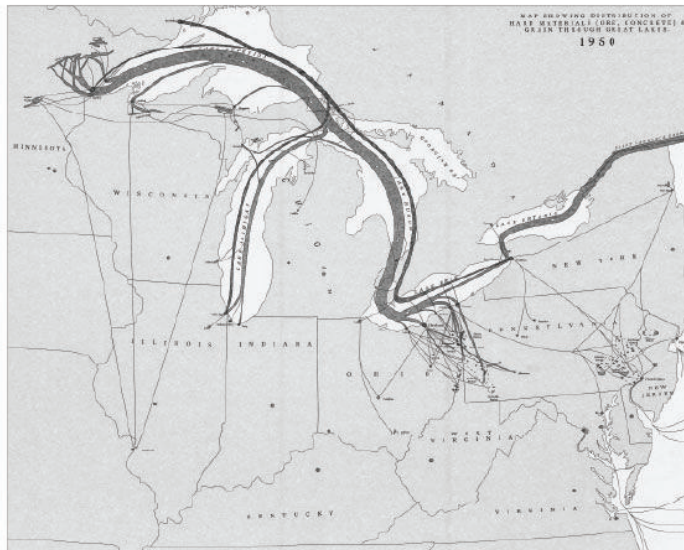
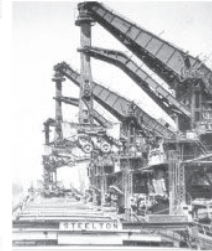
SOUTH WORKS STEEL MILL, CHICAGO IL
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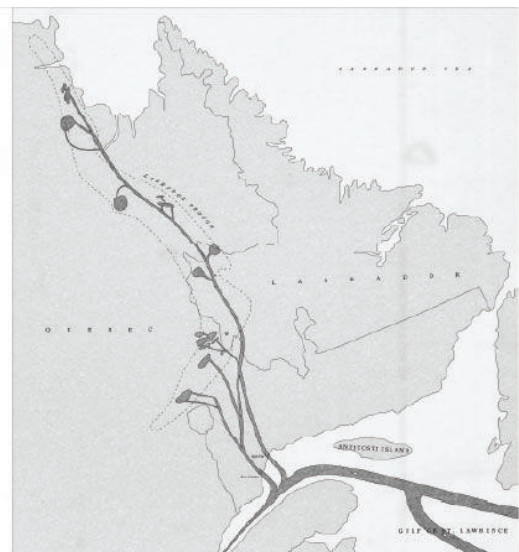
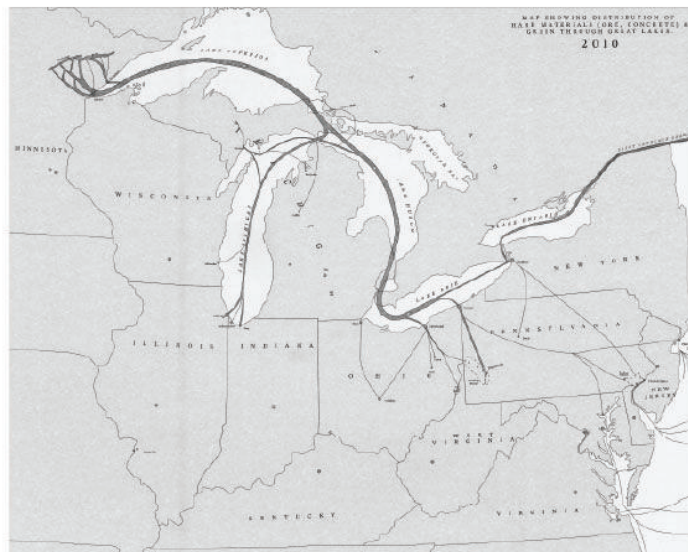
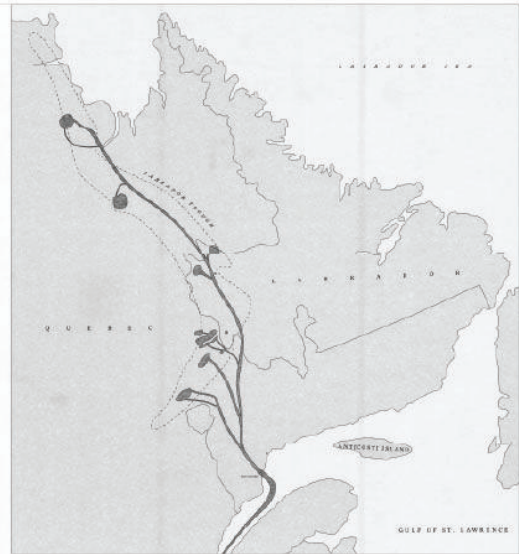
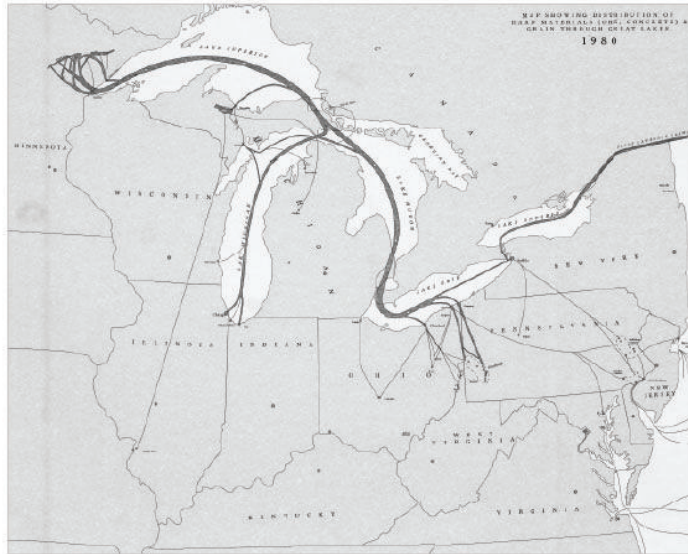


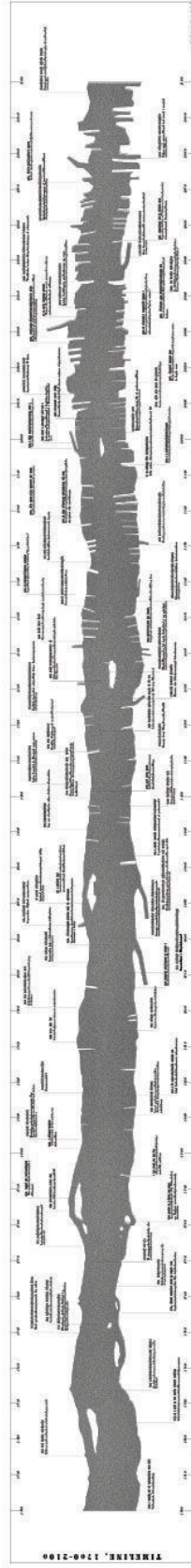
"As they went back aboard their vessels the sailors looked up at the starlit summer sky and around at the murmuring forest. It had its other moods, this country."

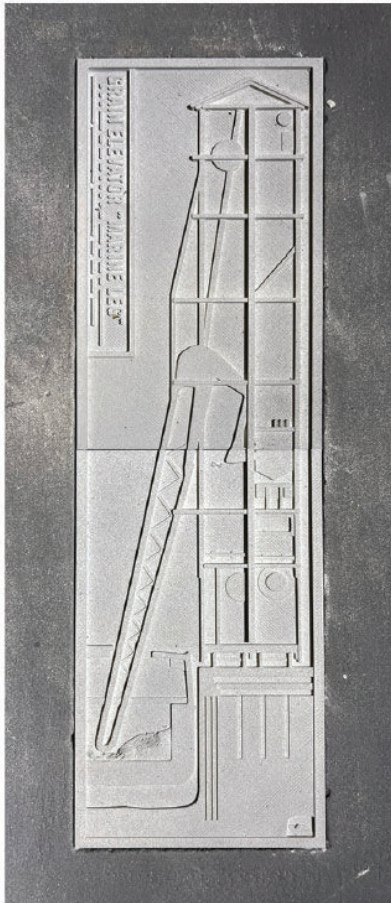
- Walter Havighurst

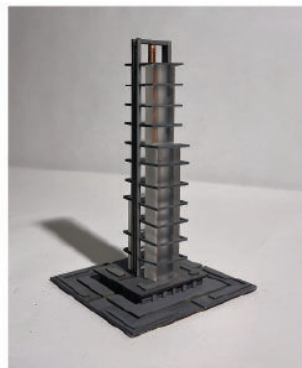
The Great Lakes have been soaked in myth since the Native Americans. For them the Lakes were as much a mode of transportation as it was a source of spiritual fulfillment, serving as both the conduit for rituals and the space for prayers. European surveyors sent from countries like Britain, France, and Spain quickly found themselves in very dangerous country, as likely to be killed by the indigenous population as they were to die from the weather or drown in the lakes and rapids separating them. Many of the stories have become apocryphal, with historians unsure what is fact and what is fiction. One such story is that of Jean Nicolet, envoy of France sent to map the wild country, and as he could set up routes for clergy to spread the word of God. Nicolet, believing he had landed on the beaches of China, donned a silk robe decorated with oriental motifs. Stepping out of the boat with the robe on, he immediately frightened two flock of plovers and fired them into the air, supposedly to assert his dominance over the local population. In reality Nicolet had landed in Whitefish Bay, on the eastern shores of Wisconsin. The Great Lakes are full of such stories, many now believed to be wildly untrue. And yet they persist, old-timers passing them down to progeny or anyone else kind enough to stop and listen to them reminisce. Walk into any bar in the Midwest and one will hear Gordon Lightfoot's famous song "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald". The Fitzgerald sank in 1975, at a time when most believed ships and technology had advanced to the point that such disasters were now completely avoidable. However, that night was not the case. All 29 men on board went down with the ship. The Mariners' Church in Detroit rang their bells 29 times that November in remembrance. When Lightfoot passed away in 2013, the church bells rang 30 times. It is hard to describe the allure of the Great Lakes for those who have not visited them. Despite rapid globalization, the region still persists with its cultural idiosyncrasies and moorish rituals. It is harder to spend a more pleasant afternoon than on the banks of Kelley's Island in August, or passing through rows of golden soybeans in the prairies of Illinois during Autumn. To many who call this place their home, ash pile and ore unloaders share the same beauty and mystique. One old-timer, reflecting about his summers on Lake Erie, had this to say about the sounds coming off the lake "at night I would sleep on the screened-in porch. The noise of the waves intermingled with the constant hum of ore unloaders working to scrape clean the bowels of the ships. If I squinted hard into the night I could just make out the lights of the machines and the city beyond". It is hard to overlook the significance this way of life has on the millions of people who live in the region.

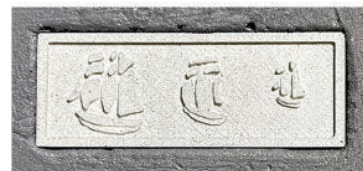
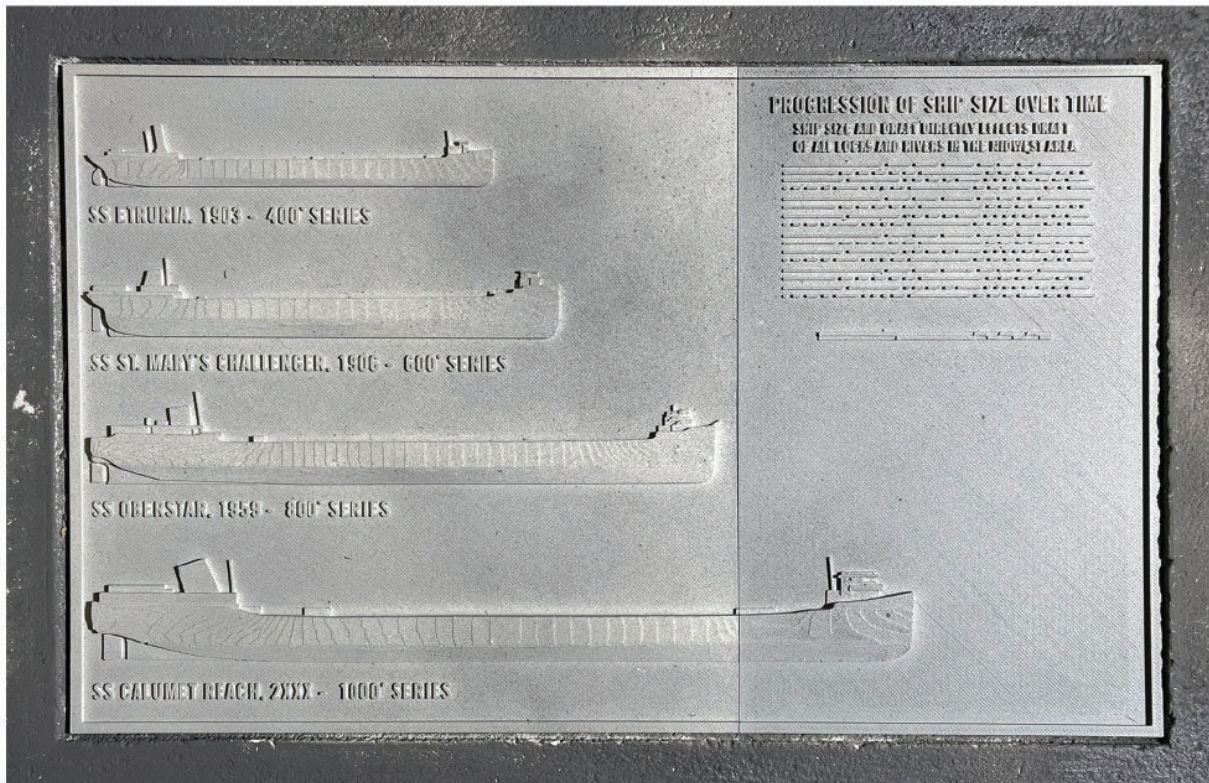


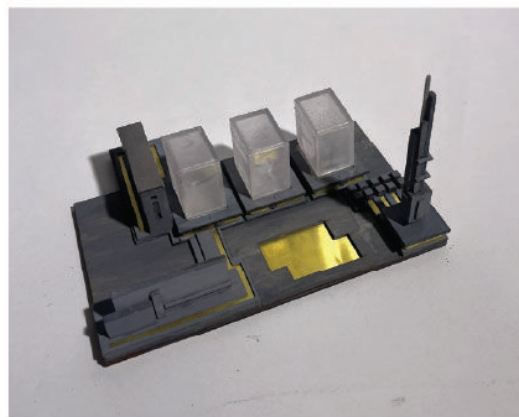
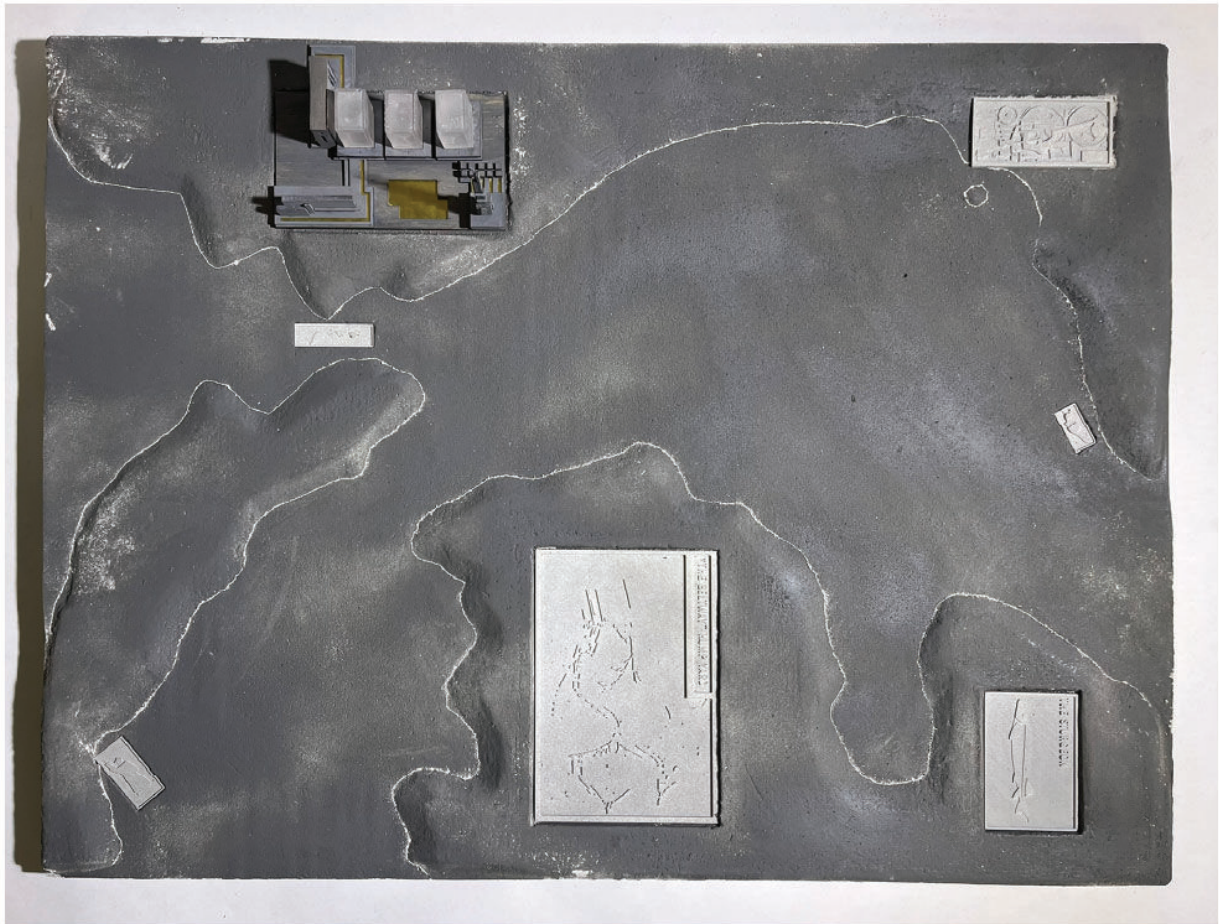




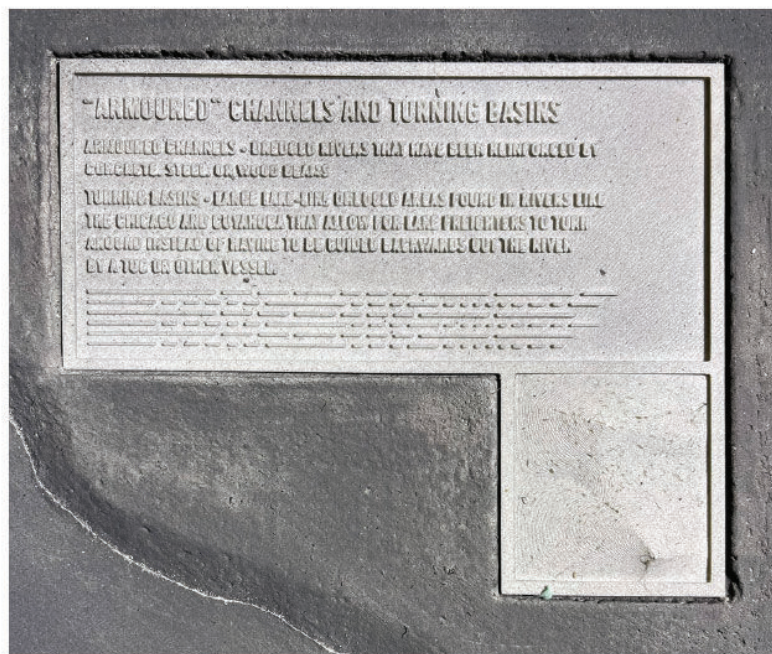
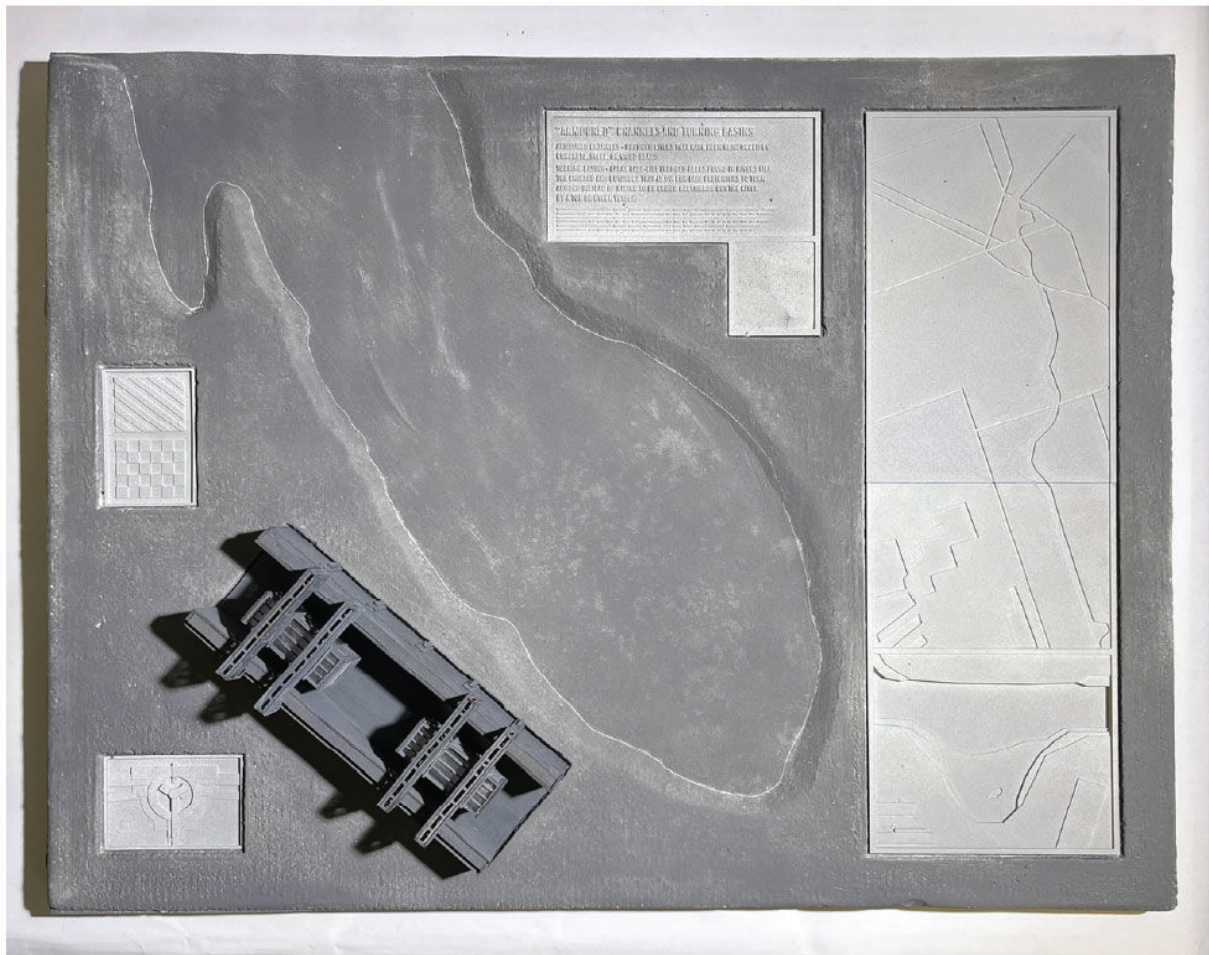


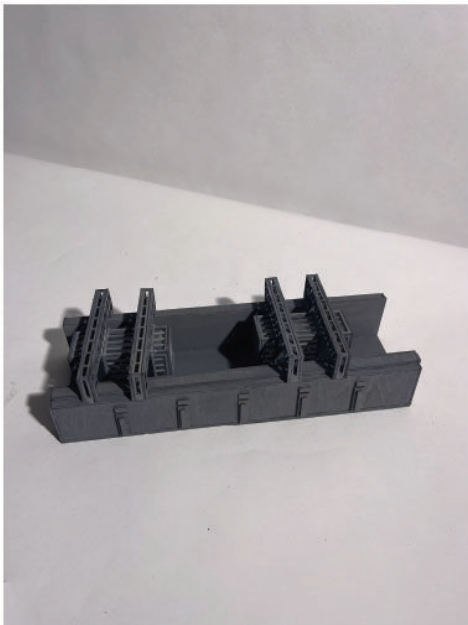
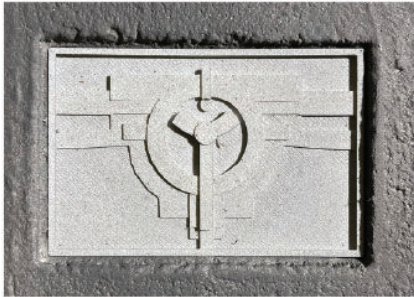
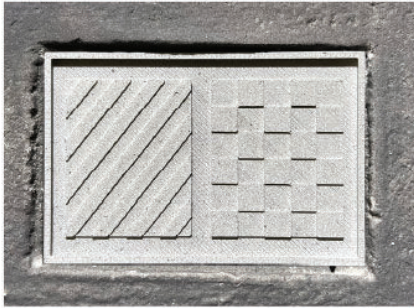


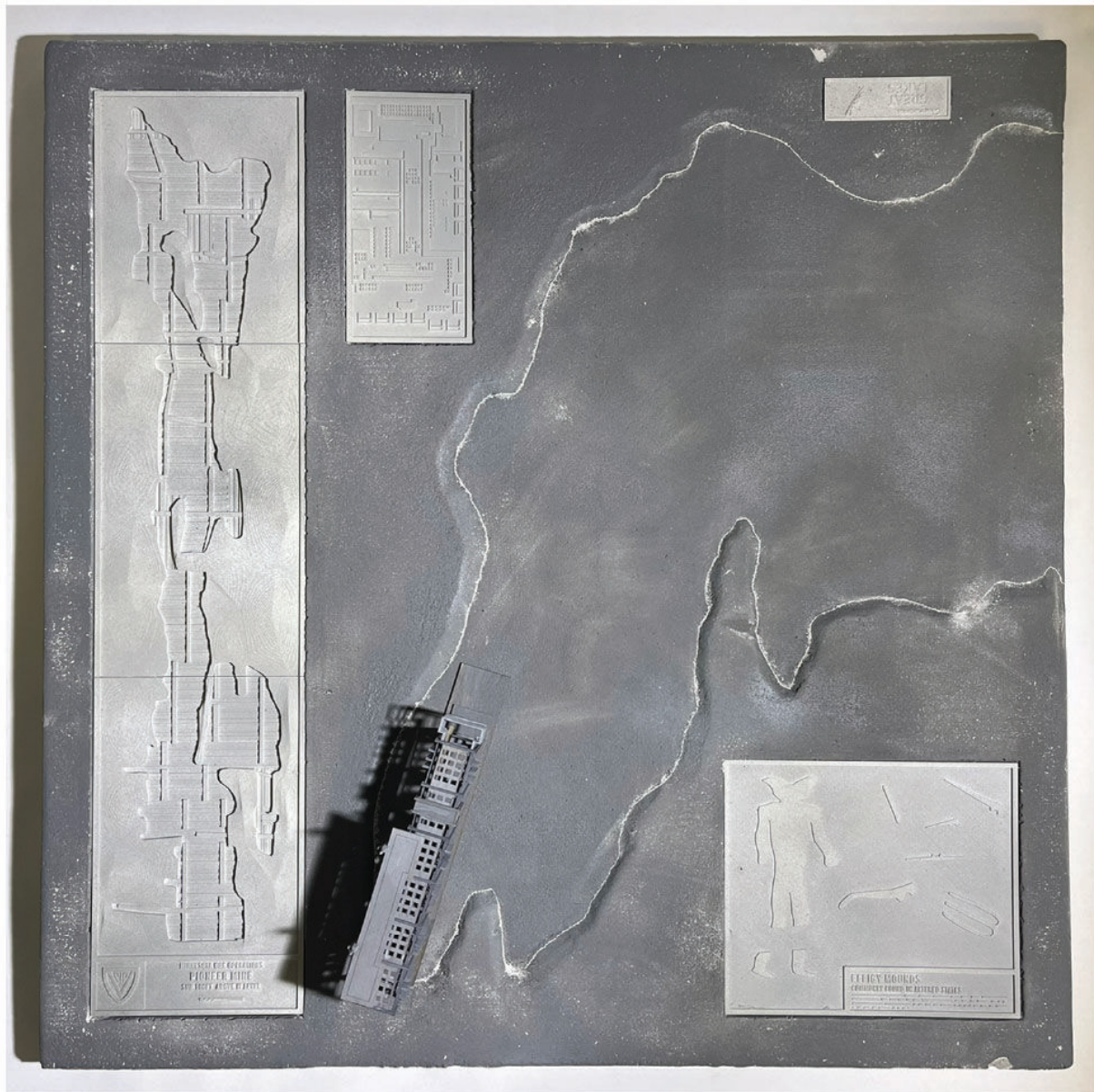


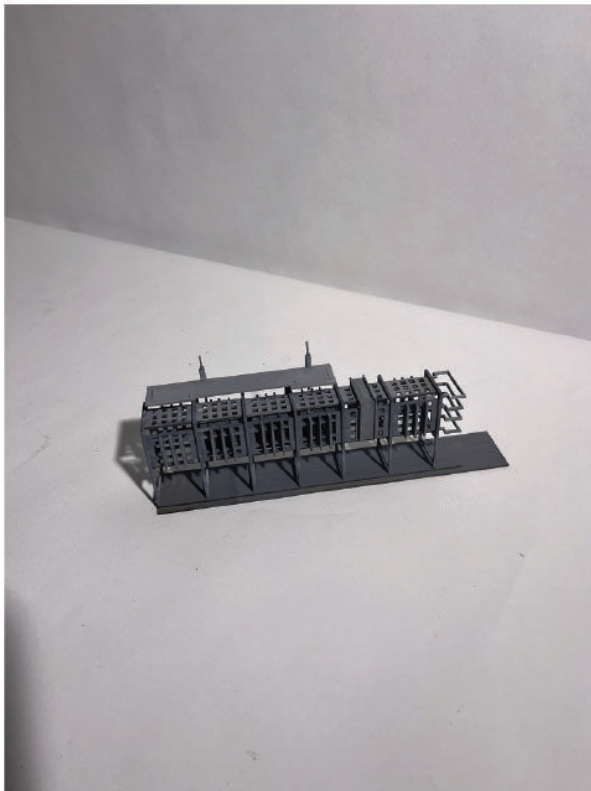
















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