Materializing the Realities and Fantasies of the Lost City of Atlantis
During a survey of Roanoke Island to find further archaeological evidence of the Lost Colony, the architectural remains of an extensive city structure were unearthed and are believed to be the Lost city of Atlantis.

An initial archaeological dig site was started directly adjacent to the Reconstructed Fort. As investigations continued, it was determined that the city expanded across the site and into the coastline where a second dig site was conducted. It is believed that there is additional evidence of an ancient city that can be uncovered beneath the ocean. There is evidence of distinct chronological/historical layers of city structures. The architectural fragments found in each layer seem to correspond with an individual textual description of Atlantis written by Ignatius Donnelly, Francis Bacon and Plato. Section-cuts into the earth are beginning to reveal a confounding mix of fragments that we are still attempting to decode. The implications of this discovery on the historical understanding of the Lost Colony is yet to be determined.
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Plato describes in Timaeus a thriving city, a military power, a technological haven, a utopian society. It is the foundation of the myth and at the root of all other interpretations. Plato's version of Atlantis is described in the layout of the city, in the colors of the buildings, and in the materials used to construct it. Many scholars have believed Plato's description as fact resulting in maps and illustrations that attempt to realize the lost city.

Francis Bacon draws from Plato as he describes a utopian society that has reached the peak of technological advancements. In his interpretation, it is a dream, a fantasy, a religious promised land. He does not give a physical description of the city...but, instead replaces it with descriptions of light, illusions, and religious meanings. This is how Atlantis is remembered, as an advanced and enlightened city but what if that was redefined.

Ignatius Donnelly challenged the notion that Atlantis was fictional by proposing Atlantis was present in all cultures. He theorized that Atlantis was the influence for ancient cultural architecture and that it was the civilization that started it all. He saw a network of connection between vastly different locations and cultures that he justified through the existence of Atlantis. Donnelly does not describe a city, he describes the architecture and artifacts that were influenced by the city.

Other possible Atlantis descriptions:

**The Minoan Theory:** The theory that Atlantean architecture was derived from Minoan culture, characterized by the reversed tapered columns, wooden support beams, and detailed mosaics.

Not possible because the architectural evidence found in the fragments do not match the descriptions.
The archaeological grid layout was conducted based on the findings. The whole world becomes a product of Atlantis, so in theory, architecture from civilization like the Mayans and Egyptians would be present in the original city.
DIG SITE 1

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

FOUND:
LARGE COLUMN FRAGMENTS

Plan of Dig Site 1 plan at 1/4" scale

02/25
FRAGMENTS FROM DIG SITE 1

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF PLATO’S ATLANTIS

- CIRCULAR CITY LAYOUT WITH ALTERNATING WATER AND LAND STRIPS WITH CENTRAL ACROPOLIS.

- ORNATE TEMPLE TO POSEIDON WITH LARGE DORIC COLUMNS, CLASSIC GREEK INFLUENCED ARCHITECTURE.

- RICH MATERIALS USED LIKE GOLD, SILVER, ORCHILUM, AND MULTI-COLORED STONES.

FOUND FRAGMENTS OF COLUMN AT DIG SITE 1

RECONSTRUCTED USING TEXTUAL DESCRIPTIONS AND FOUND FRAGMENTS

RECONSTRUCTED COLUMN
Plan of Dig Site 2 at 1/4" scale

Dig Site 2
A Glimpse into Further Explorations
Fragments from Dig Site 2

Found Fragments at Dig Site 2

Reconstruction of Fragments from Dig Site 2

Textual Description of Bacon's Atlantis

- The city layout is in rising elevations with the central structure being at the highest point.

- The city is described in elements of light and technological advancements rather than architecture. There is an emphasis on science and creating spaces of illusion.

- Architecture becomes technological and evolves. A column becomes a "pillar of light" or a lighthouse.

Found Fragments of Column at Dig Site 2

Reconstructed Column
Fragments from Dig Site 2

Found Fragments at Dig Site 2

Textual Description of Donnelly’s Atlantis

- The whole world becomes a product of Atlantis. So, in theory, architecture from civilization like the Mayans and Egyptians would be present in the original city.

- Architectural connections that can be made across the world like pyramids, columns, arched doorways, and mosaics would all be a part of the original city of Atlantis.

- Work backwards from what we know about existing civilizations to form the picture of Donnelly’s Atlantis.

Found Fragments of Column at Dig Site 2

Reconstructed Column

Reconstruction of Fragments from Dig Site 2
The type and density of fragments found inform us of the possible structure or section of a structure that would have been present at a particular point in the site. We can reason that the locations with a higher density of door, column, and stair fragments may indicate an entrance to a structure such as the temple of Poseidon which is described in multiple textual descriptions. The sections with a higher density of column, ceiling, and pediment could be the central location of the structure and the section with a higher density of column, pediment, and stair fragments could be an exit or end point of the structure.
Rectangular samples taken from the earth revealed the different soil layers present across the archaeological site but also began to expose a possible new theory for Atlantis in which all three descriptions described previously were in fact accurate portrayals of the city at different periods of time. Atlantis was one city and civilization but had undergone multiple renditions of architecture and cultural histories that are evident in each of the stratigraphic layers.
A space was carved out within each of the earth samples to allow for the placement of our reconstructed architectural models of Atlantis based on the fragments and textual descriptions as reference for understanding the overall historical implications.
The section cuts are excavated from elevated points in the topography to reveal possible fragment clusters that have been isolated in these naturally occurring geological mounds.
Section-Cut

Exposing Inconsistencies

Section-cut 1 Diagram at 1/24" scale

Section-cut 1 at 1/24" scale
Section-Cut

Tunnel

Section of geological section cut at 1/16" scale
What are the implications of this discovery?
Is Atlantis related to the lost colony?
How does this change our understanding of the current narrative surrounding Atlantis?
Changing Historical Perception Through Design

To dismantle a perceived factual history by exposing the inherent overlap of fantasy and reality and through the process of design revealing the blatant subjectivity and bias that is present in the stories we have been told. In the current presentations of history, there is the unspoken idea that the narrative is static, fixed, and true. This exhibition aims to dismantle this idea by using design as the catalyst for changing our understanding of what we truly know.
For this exhibition, the lost city of Atlantis becomes the case study in which fantasies and realities are explored. Atlantis is a myth that has prevailed throughout time. Starting with Plato in 306 B.C., and persisting into the 21st century, Atlantis was an allegory for a utopian society that has been rearranged, warped, and transformed into stories that are both known and unknown. The mythical nature of Atlantis allows for room to experiment and adapt the architecture and artifacts through rigorous design techniques without compromising a perceived historical value.
Process of Discovery

The archaeological dig shows the process of discovery. The lost city and the fragments present throughout the exhibition were found through the objective scientific process of the archaeological dig. The elements in the dig are able to be seen as individual components at their “true” scale. It acts as a juxtaposition to the columns and section by highlighting the process as opposed to the reading of the content. There is a synthesis of objective process and subjective material that culminates into the changing of the static historical narrative.
**Narrative of Discovery**

The stratified columns are representations of the city that lies beneath. In both arrangement in site and content within, the columns reinforce the discovery of this compounded version of Atlantis on Roanoke Island. The fragments of each version are reduced in scale and arranged in a way that someone can theoretically see the entire archaeological record at once, understanding how each version of Atlantis interacted and built off of each other. They also serve the practical purpose as markers for the exhibition, placing emphasis at important moments within the exhibition and the site and creating larger connections.
Dismantling the Discovery

The archaeological section-cut into the earth dismantles the discovery by presenting the audience with the fragments and narratives that do not align. Similar to the columns, the stratified layers expose the different fragments of the city layers but they do not fit together in scale and arrangement. The fragments become disorganized and hybridized in scale revealing the inherent flaws in the original narrative. This begins to further expose the subjective nature of history and reveal the reality that the narrative cannot be static because there are multiple readings within one space.
Creating a New Precedent

With the explorations into alternative ways of looking at historical narratives, the ultimate goal of this exhibition is to usher in a re-examination of current displays of historical information. "Material Delusions" can be a starting point in the movement to destroy the static narratives and release objects from behind the glass.

Exhibition Website:
http://webdots.com/spring-21/jessicac/wordpress/
**Credits**

**Image**


2. Illustration of Atlantis by Francis Bacon in "New Atlantis".

3. World map from "Atlantis the Antediluvian World" by Ignatius Donnelly.

4. Pyramids from "Atlantis the Antediluvian World" by Ignatius Donnelly.


**Curatorial**


