

SAN ROCCO • CLIENTS Paolo Carpi on Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte, aka Napoleon III • Ludovico Centis on Giancarlo De Carlo's notion of architecture's public • conrad-bercah goes to the John Hancock Tower • Matteo Costanzo on Nemausus 1 • Elisa Ferrato and Abdalrahman Kittana on the Rotonda in Nablus • Fabrizio Gallanti on Robert Bordaz • Kersten Geers finds a way to like Burj Khalifa • Matilde Girão and Ricardo Lima on Souto de Moura • Beth Hughes mourns the death of the client • Daniel Jacobs on Henry Ford • Joanna Kamm on her experience as a client • Nikos Magouliotis re-tells a tale by Adolf Loos (not the one you think!) • Jacob Moore on Le Corbusier in Argentina • Jelena Pancevac and Giovanni Piovene narrate the adventures of Ricardo Bofill in France • Valter Scelsi on a late, exotic (and kind of ugly) James Wines • Iason Stathatos on voids in Paris • Peter Swinnen on Lyndon B. Johnson • Guido Tesio takes a look at Isozaki in Tsukuba • Oliver Thill laments the death of the public client • Evelyn Ting and Paul Tse on Liang Ssu-ch'eng and Lin Huiyin's pursuit of grammar • Human Wu on 2022 • Andrea Zanderigo on the Sainsbury Wing. With photographs by Giulio Boem and Stefano Graziani, and drawings by Gian Lorenzo Bernini and Jimenez Lai, as well as the favourite clients of Inaki Abalos and Renata Sentkiewicz, François Charbonnet and Patrick Heiz, David Chipperfield, Frida Escobedo, Norman Foster, Tony Fretton, Go Hasegawa, Djamel Klouche, Mark and Sharon Lee, Umberto Napolitano, Valerio Olgiati, Freek Persyn, Pointsupreme and Thomas Raynaud, collected by Victoria Easton and Francesca Pellicciari



SAN ROCCO • CLIENTS

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THE FIEF OF FORD

Daniel Jacobs

Ford's experience, repeated in a thousand activities of the modern world, has a lesson for us. Let's accept the lesson. In the name of heaven, let us work usefully for the welfare of men.

Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*¹

From 1909 to 1942, Albert Kahn was famously “Henry Ford’s Architect”, designing over a thousand industrial buildings to create what Le Corbusier hailed as the Fief of Ford.² This manic productivity required Kahn to be assimilated into Ford’s production process, moulding his office into an architectural “machine for the reproduction of mass production as a mode of industry”.³ In 1927, Ford invited photographer and painter Charles Sheeler to document Kahn’s River Rouge Plant in Dearborn, Michigan, then the largest factory in the world.⁴ Sheeler’s photographs and subsequent paintings represented the complex as the quintessential pastoral landscape of industry but were nonetheless shrouded in the depressed and violent context of their execution.

As a client, Ford saw himself as both the steward of the machine-age future and the preserver of America’s agrarian past. As these Janus-faced forces pulled Ford apart, he stubbornly imposed one upon the other, using conservative American values as a shield to obscure the mechanized horrors within his factories. Ford was a political and moral activist who used his wealth and propagandist influence to combat any forces that threatened these values. From chartering a Peace Ship aimed at convincing belligerent nations in World War I to agree to a ceasefire to publishing anti-Semitic texts in his own newspaper to creating new prototypes of the village-factory, Ford saw it as his duty to convince people that his vision would be their salvation. In

1.

Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, trans. Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 170.

2.

Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals Were White*, 143.

3.

Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 78.

4.

Karen Lucic, *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 90.

5. David L. Lewis, "Ford and Kahn", *Michigan History* 64/5 (1980), 17.

6. Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 198.



Factory interior, Highland Park Plant, Ford Motor Company, Highland Park, Michigan, 1909.
Courtesy of Albert Kahn Associates

Facing page:
Vertical sliding sash with spring counter balance, United Steel Sash Catalog, 1912, Trussed Concrete Steel Co., Detroit, Michigan

response to his client's power and prejudices, Kahn was forced to distance himself by developing an authorless architecture for Ford. This approach allowed him to maintain an ambivalent stance regarding Ford's politics while actualizing his utopia. Together, Sheeler's imagery and Kahn's architecture played a profound role in shaping the image of Fordist production and the aestheticization of the factory and its context. While Kahn offered Ford a means of constructing his brave new world, Sheeler's images represented Ford's desire to escape it.

I. From the Generic to the Automatic

The story of Albert Kahn's first commission for the Ford Motor Company has an aura of myth. In 1907, Ford called Kahn's office and asked, "Mr. Kahn, can you build factories?" Kahn responded: "I can building anything."⁵ This response is brimming with the machismo and bombast of the architect-hero, both confident and naïve. Kahn once recalled that during the phone call Ford was incapable of articulating the details of his vision beyond this statement: "I want the whole thing under one roof." Ford's simple yet radical vision allowed Kahn the freedom to author the new generic space of the industrial factory complex. Kahn described his role in this architect-client relationship as the reducer of Ford's visions into working formulae.⁶ As Kahn translated Ford's desires into architecture, however, he changed his own design process to mirror the Taylorist production of the assembly line, paring down the act of design to an extremely streamlined and automatic procedure. As Ford's power and ego grew, Kahn's process eliminated the possibility for the architect to express critique and dissent, transforming Kahn into an egoless architect who enacted the client's every demand.

The streamlining began when Kahn attempted to achieve total control over the architectural process by creating a standardized and patented set of universal building components. With his brother Julius, the engineer in charge of the Trussed Concrete Steel Company (Truscon), Kahn developed everything from the "Kahn System" of structurally reinforced concrete to templates for entirely standardized buildings. These products and patents formed a nearly complete kit of materials, parts and assemblies for the rapid *selection and engineering* of any industrial, agricultural or commercial building.

In this new mode of design, the architect, engineer and client became interchangeable actors in the increasingly decision-less act of architectural work. Anyone could work with a Truscon engineer



(Patent applied for)

Vertical Sliding Sash with Spring Counter Balance,
as Installed in Building on Page 42.

7. For an in-depth review of the widespread impact of the Truscon images, see Claire Zimmerman, "Albert Kahn's Territories", in Eva Franch i Gilabert, Amanda Reeser Lawrence, Ana Miljacki and Ashley Schafer, eds., *OfficeUS Agenda* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers and PRAXIS, 2014), 52–63.

8. Giancarlo Consonni, "Order Without a City", introduction to Federico Bucci, *Albert Kahn: Architect of Ford*, trans. Carmen DiCinque (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 11.

9. C.C. Baldwin, "The Offices of Albert Kahn, Architect, Detroit, Michigan", *The Architectural Forum* 29/5 (November 1918), 126.

to select column spacing, roof-monitor types, doors and windows, all of which were engineered to fit in predetermined assemblages. Catalogues filled with precise renderings, photographs and data tables created a combinatorial science of building, meeting the client's exact design specifications. These published matrices became the pattern books for the new industrial style fetishized by European modernists such as Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, and were appropriated as the vanguard images of modernity in buildings that were industrial often only in style.⁷

The catalogues established the factory aesthetic through photographs and renderings of vast, column-filled/column-free halls. The receding perspectival façades fetishized only the formal character of these spaces, denying the realities of conveyors, machines and labouring bodies. When people and machines are shown, they are objects in a tableau, posed for the camera. Pure interior space is displayed as a flawless product, pristine in its unoccupied state. Through such imagery, Ford and Kahn radicalized the conception of the factory beyond mere utility. The infinite repeatability of the factory as a universal system was as much an ethical project as a utilitarian requirement of the rapid growth of industrial production. The icon of the factory, standardized through the myopic invention of new component parts and their assemblage into generic wholes, came to represent the moral project for modernity. Yet the suppression of reality inherent in

**River Rouge Plant,
Dearborn, Michigan,
photograph by Walter Gropius, 1928. Courtesy of
the Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin**



these pattern books conceals the realities of labour behind a façade of sterile generic space.

Parallel to this process of mass cataloguing, streamlining and repetition of the architectural product, Kahn revolutionized the management structure of the architectural office. With the help of his brother Louis, Kahn created a new class of architectural worker, emulating Ford's technique of constant surveillance on the production lines of his own factories to red-flag any "irregularities in the rhythm of the labour cycle".⁸ Kahn siloed his staff into specialized divisions with proprietary knowledge that worked independently and simultaneously. Kahn developed productivity-tracking methods and new representational tools to mimic Ford's input/output process. Each department incorporated "Liaison Assistants" tasked with monitoring projected versus actual flows of progress, allowing managers to identify discrepancies and fix problems.⁹ This restructuring of the firm and the translation of architectural labour into graphic data gave autonomy to his team's departments and prevented individual workers from obtaining a holistic knowledge of the project. If at first Kahn responded to Ford's vision with confident bravado, the endless repetition of the product forced the architect to acquiesce to his patron's system, reducing Kahn to the role of overseer, the architectural parody of Ford.¹⁰

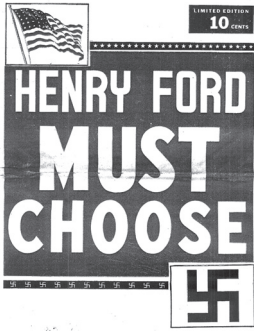
II. Ford and Faust

While Kahn was focusing on keeping pace with his client, Ford saw his opportunity to assume the role of America's moral compass. In 1918, following the armistice of World War I, Ford created a "private apparatus for molding public opinion" by purchasing the failing *Dearborn Independent* newspaper, to whose name he appended *The Ford International Weekly*.¹¹ W.J. Cameron, the Public Relations Director of the Ford Motor Company, was put in charge of the publication, and he subsequently revealed the ethical project underlying Ford's ambitions: "While we are producing useful products, we are also shaping human life, and the conditions of social life."¹² In 1919, "Mr. Ford's Own Page" first appeared in print. Originally intended to be a technical page showing blueprints to educate the public, it quickly revealed itself as a soapbox for the dissemination of Ford's cultural critique. As his operations grew in scale and political force he directed this critique against any party who stood in the way of his vision or values. Ford used the weekly column to dictate these ideas to Cameron, who then translated them for the world. For the eight years of its publication,

10. For a recent in-depth review of Kahn's corporate office management, see Peggy Deamer, "Office Management", in Franchi Ciliberti et al., *OfficeUS Agenda*; see also Bucci, *Albert Kahn*, 123–40.

11. Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 69.

12. W.J. Cameron, "Il decentramento dell'industria," *Tecnica e organizzazione* 1/6 (November 1937), 61; quoted in Giancarlo Consonni, "Order Without a City", introduction to Federico Bucci, *Albert Kahn: Architect of Ford*, trans. Carmen DiCinque (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 8.



Cover of a pamphlet entitled "Henry Ford Must Choose" published in Kansas City in 1941 by The Friends of Democracy, Inc.

Ford's column, together with the rest of the paper, became the ground zero of a relentless anti-Semitic assault blaming the Jews for everything from World War I to tarnishing the reputation of the American farmer.¹³ The articles addressing this theme were later compiled and published by Ford's staff in a book titled *The International Jew* that would be used as a source of rhetoric and propaganda to foster anti-Semitic and Nazi ideals across Europe and America.¹⁴

The publication of the *Independent* articles also coincided with the design and construction of the River Rouge Plant, a fact that put Kahn in a difficult predicament. Kahn was Jewish, so his client's anti-Semitism forced him to make a choice: stay silent or take action. Kahn's only comment on the matter was that if "he had taken a stand on Ford's anti-Semitism, he undoubtedly would have been fired".¹⁵ Kahn was one of the few who did not abandon Ford during the *Independent*'s first anti-Semitic campaign from 1920 to 1922. Kahn chose to remain silent. The assembly-line nature of the practice he had adopted for his Fordian commissions allowed him to express himself in a novel way: for the next ten years, he did not visit the River Rouge site. Instead, he sent delegates to meet with Ford and his people.¹⁶ Thus, in a weak sort of boycott, Kahn was able to distance himself personally from the design process owing to the automation of his architectural machine.

A few months after the publication of the first issue of the *Independent*, Upton Sinclair conducted an interview with Henry Ford that was published in Allan Benson's magazine *Reconstruction: A Herald of the New Time*. Halfway into the interview, Sinclair asked Ford if he had ever read Goethe's *Faust*. Ford had not, which prompted Sinclair to explain the circumstance of Faust's deal with the devil and describe the moment when, finding happiness while surveying his fields of productive workers, his soul is taken by the devil.¹⁷ Sinclair's point was that Ford and Faust were alike: both were at peace with their moral sacrifice if the result was a landscape of labour and productivity. The stated intention of the interview was to determine if Ford was "happy" with his ever-increasing power and wealth, but the interview questions had been designed to bait and trap Ford so as to reveal the real man behind the façade of "fortress-like solitude".¹⁸ Sinclair was suspicious of Ford's increasing propagandist activity, following his development closely throughout the 1920s and '30s. In 1937 he published the biographical novel titled *The Flivver King: A Story of Ford America*, in which he directly blamed Ford for the anti-Semitism expressed in

13.
Henry Ford and W.J. Cameron, *The International Jew*, Vol. 1 (Dearborn, MI: Dearborn Publishing Co., 1920), 233.

14.
Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 144–46.

15.
Lewis, "Ford and Kahn", 27.

16.
Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 199.

17.
Upton Sinclair, "Henry Ford Tells", *Reconstruction: A Herald of the New Time* 1/5 (May 1919), 130–31.

18.
Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009), 94.

the *Independent* and for the increasing cruelty of his labour policies, reducing him to a “supermechanic with the mind of a stubborn peasant”.¹⁹ The *Independent*’s anti-Semitic articles and the introduction of more intense productivity thresholds and paranoid surveillance in the factories earned Ford widespread criticism in America and began the disintegration of his public image.

In 1927, the same year the River Rouge Plant was completed, public anger about the articles came to a head and legal action was brought against Ford by Aaron Sapiro, a Jewish lawyer and activist who had organized farmer cooperatives across the country. Ford viciously accused Sapiro of a conspiracy to exploit American farmers, thereby inciting Sapiro to file suit for defamation. After initially refusing to do so, Ford finally settled on a court date of 31 March 1927. The day before the trial was to begin, Ford was struck by a car while driving home, landing him in the hospital and cancelling his court date. A note to Ford written on March 30 in Kahn’s own hand reads, in full: “My dear Mr. Ford, with thousands of others I am grateful that you were not injured more seriously and fervently hope for your speedy and complete recovery.”²⁰ Rumours were already circulating that Ford had staged the accident to avoid the trial, suggesting that this curt letter had been written with a considerable note of sarcasm. Ultimately, Ford and his lawyers settled the issue out of court and Ford issued an apology, deftly extricating himself from the production of the publication and assigning the blame to supposed “black sheep” among the *Independent*’s staff.²¹ As the face of modern industrialization, Ford needed to resuscitate his reputation and retool his image. Therefore, he became a patron of artistic production with the aim of capitalizing on the drama of the machine and the nostalgic memory of his agricultural heritage to refashion his persona for the masses.

III. From the Industrial to the Pastoral

In an attempt to generate positive publicity in the aftermath of the 1927 *Independent* scandal and criticism of labour conditions in the Highland Park plant, Ford embarked on a comprehensive advertising campaign for the new Model A which included the newly completed River Rouge Plant. At the behest of his advertising firm, N.W. Ayer & Son, he invited the artist Charles Sheeler to photograph the factory. The firm’s hope was that the photographer’s artistic interpretation would distract viewers from the dehumanizing and exploitative labour practices that were the reality of industrial production.²²

19. Upton Sinclair, *The Flivver King: A Story of Ford-America* (Pasadena, CA: Selbstverl., 1937), 111.

20. Albert Kahn, letter to Henry Ford, 30 March 1927, Henry Ford Archive.

21. Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 222, 237.

22. Lucic, *Charles Sheeler*, 90.

23.
Ibid., 92.

24.
Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 113.

25.
Matthew Josephson, "Henry Ford", *Broom* 5, no. 3 (October 1923), 142.

Sheeler was given unlimited access to every inch of the immense factory complex, and he spent six weeks freely exploring it, documenting what he saw in sketches and photographs. As he walked alone across the endless spaces between the buildings and observed the scale of production up close, it is no wonder that Sheeler claimed it was "incomparably the most thrilling" subject matter he had ever worked with.²³ He produced 32 official photographs of the factory, which were widely disseminated in such popular magazines as *Life*, *USA* and *Vanity Fair*. The images capture both the interior and exterior of the plant, but are intentionally devoid of human labour. In the photograph entitled *Stamping Press*, the looming machinery vastly out-scales a solitary figure in the foreground, denying the viewer the ability to comprehend the space of the immense shed Kahn had designed to house the machine. The soft, indirect light coming from the glazed roof monitors above recalls the photographs and renderings filling the pages of the Truscon catalogues. A similar lack of horizon and foreground is evident in Sheeler's *Criss-crossed Conveyers*, displacing the image from grounded space, a Piranesian effect compounded by the disorienting layering of the conveyor belts and chimney stacks. The distortion of space in these images defies scale and rationality, inciting in the viewer a sense of wonder and awe about the magnitude of the machine and the process. Invoking an aesthetic of the sublime was a choice obviously made to divert the viewer from the hell of Taylorist labour. Ford's own photographers were understandably quick to appropriate Sheeler's images, using the drama, immensity and vacancy of the scenes to reframe the factory aesthetic to win back the public.²⁴

Prior to Sheeler's industrial work, his most common subjects were the rural barns, landscapes and interiors of his home in Doylestown, Pennsylvania. In 1923, his work was featured in the journal *Broom: An International Magazine of the Arts*, which sought to expose mainstream America to European avant-garde art. Of the six images Sheeler published in the issue, two sketches and one photograph depict barns and agricultural buildings. Merely by chance, Sheeler's work was featured alongside a satirical article by Matthew Josephson about Henry Ford that mockingly besought Ford to run for president, describing his chameleonic nature and questioning his very humanity: "Mr. Ford, ladies and gentlemen, is not a human creature. He is a principle, or better, a relentless process. Away with waste and competitive capitalism . . . Mr. Ford, ladies and gentlemen, is not a man."²⁵

Facing page:
Charles Sheeler, *Criss-Crossed Conveyers, River Rouge Plant, Ford Motor Company, 1927*, gelatin silver print.
Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston © The Lane Collection



26.
Ibid., 37.

27.
Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 355–56.

The juxtaposition of Sheeler's scenes of the barn with Josephson's commentary on Ford was a powerful coincidence, and it anticipated Ford's later project of deception – namely, appropriating Sheeler's bucolic style to situate the factory within the American pastoral landscape. Josephson begins the essay by comparing Ford to a Machiavellian tyrant, asking: "Who has ever approached political thought or action with an aesthetic?"²⁶ Ford's factories, as shown in Sheeler's – and Ford's – photographs, were essentially billboards advertising his industrial ethos, proclaiming the merciless endlessness of assembly and presenting a denial of the realities of production. Ford understood that he needed to soften this menacing image of industry if he was going to continue to convince people to support his utopian project.

Sheeler returned to Ford's factories several years later and completed two paintings, *American Landscape* (1930) and *Classic Landscape* (1931). These carefully chosen titles prepare the viewer for images of agricultural fields or verdant valleys, not a factory complex completely devoid of nature. However, while the titles declare the factory as the new landscape of modernity, the paintings present a radical reframing of the factory compared to Sheeler's earlier photographs, for Sheeler returned to the simple naïvety of the *Broom* sketches when painting the River Rouge complex. He rendered the heaps of raw materials, railroad tracks, concrete silos, smokestacks and Kahn's mega-sheds as motionless and serene. Sheeler's paintings represented Ford's manipulative blend of illusion and reality, "superimposing order, peace, and harmony", as Leo Marx has described in his book *The Machine in the Garden*, "upon our modern chaos".²⁷ Using pastoral romanticism to distract from the exploitation of machine-age industry, Ford crafted a binary persona that he could toggle one way or the other in order to cater to the different constituencies he wished to influence. Imbued with precisionist reverence, the paintings sanctified the image of another version of Ford's utopia: the pastoralized industrial landscape.

IV. Barn and Factory

Sheeler's paintings are made more ominous by their execution during the peak of the Great Depression. Brutal working conditions and mass layoffs at the River Rouge complex had spurred a renewed hatred of Ford and his management. Worker unrest came to a boil in 1932 when over 3,000 workers marched from Detroit to the River Rouge factory with a set of union demands. When they reached Dearborn, they were

met with aggressive resistance from the Dearborn Police and Ford's security guards, leaving five men dead and over 60 others injured. That night, communist and labour-union organizations were raided and their leaders arrested. The Ford Massacre, as it became known, fomented the anger of the people and the press.

At this point, Ford was forced to acknowledge the "devouring" tendency of industry and mechanization. Throughout the 1930s he embraced Sheeler's pastoral industrial aesthetic, fully adopting the persona of the defender of the American farmer and his agrarian future.²⁸ Ford rechannelled his latent anti-Semitism – for he still believed the Jewish bankers and lawyers like Sapiro were to blame for the plight of the country and the farmer – into an agenda he termed "Farm and Factory" America.²⁹ Ford had always thought of himself as a farmer, and by the end of 1930s he had acquired over 21,000 acres of agricultural land in Michigan alone. The Henry Ford Farms were used primarily for experimentation with industrial techniques to increase productivity in the agricultural context, particularly testing new Fordson tractors and developing new industrial uses for crops. Ford's farmsteads were identifiable by their houses and barns, which Ford restored with pristine white interiors, erasing the patina of time and assimilating the structures into the Ford aesthetic. While the still-new River Rouge plant continued to employ over 100,000 workers and turn more raw material into cars than any other factory in the world, Ford's continuous acquisition of land throughout the Depression both broadened his empire and sought to provide new jobs to "relieve the economic stress of the nation".³⁰ Ford was convinced that agriculture would be the salvation of industry.

At the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1934, Ford dismembered, transported and rebuilt his father's 1863 barn adjacent to Albert Kahn's Ford Rotunda. The rotunda was a gear-shaped concrete extrusion, stepped like a ziggurat and containing at its centre a massive bronze globe depicting all of Ford's land holdings and factories around the world. This triumphant symbol of the machine-age future dwarfed the transplanted rustic barn, which contained Ford's "Farm of the Future" display. A memorandum sent to Albert Kahn by N.W. Ayer & Son to assist him in preparing for a speech he was to give to the Illinois Society of Architects in 1934 clearly communicated Ford's persistent interest in the farmer: "Ford has always held that the soil is the backbone of our civilization, and that regardless of man's progress in this industrial age his dependence on the soil is as great as it was when

28. Anne McCormick, "Ford Seeks a New Balance for Industry", *New York Times Magazine* (May 1932), 3–6.

29. Henry Ford, quoted in *Ford News* 17 (April 1937), 62.

30. Ford R. Bryan, *Beyond the Model T: The Other Ventures of Henry Ford* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), 113.



Charles Sheeler, *American Landscape*, 1930, oil on canvas, New York, Museum of Modern Art, Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. Courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art, New York

the wooden plow and ox team were the chief symbol of industry.”³¹ The small wooden barn was Ford’s solution to the strife of the River Rouge complex as well as his own space of escape, where he could return to the tinkering of his youth and take refuge from the industrial jungle he had created.

Ford saw both the barn and the factory as places of mutually supporting labour production capable of coexistence in his aesthetic agenda for America’s future. Ford’s vision, however, firmly rejected the modern industrial city. Ford coined the term “anti-urbanism”³² and prophesied the death of the city, claiming that although “the modern city has been prodigal, it is to-day bankrupt, and to-morrow it will cease to be”.³³ Ford argued instead for landscapes in which industry dissolved into the countryside and industrial labour was camouflaged in the agrarian context. He purchased old water-powered sawmills and converted them into “village-factories” in an effort to incorporate the natural cycles of agricultural production into his own process. Farmers would produce car parts in these factories during the winter months and return to their fields in the summer.³⁴ Through the creation of these new landscapes and labour cycles, he was able to distance himself from the shells of glass and steel that Kahn had helped him to build.

The ultimate example of Ford’s distancing of himself from his own industrial processes was the experiment to create a rubber plantation in the Amazon rainforest. Ford was tired of paying Dutch and British rubber conglomerates high prices for rubber, so in 1927 – the same year he faced court charges for the *Independent* scandal and the same year Sheeler wandered the grounds of the River Rouge plant – he established his agricultural/industrial outpost in the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, naming it Fordlandia. The colony was a displaced American suburb crafted according to Ford’s utopian vision, replete with white picket fences, Cape Cod-style homes, mandatory square-dancing for all residents, prohibition laws and other puritanical moral codes. However, Ford’s project to create his idealized Eden was a fantasy, incapable of coping with the complexities of actual agricultural production in a jungle. Workers rejected the enforced puritan conditions and rebelled while the blighted crops yielded little rubber owing to Ford’s insistence on planting the trees using the same methods with which American farmers planted corn.³⁵

In 1941, in the middle of World War II, the head of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Advisory Committee on Political Refugees sat down with Ford and several Ford Motor Company executives to discuss the

31. W.S. Dutton, “Memorandum of Ford Fair Plans” (20 March 1934), Chicago, Illinois Society of Architects, Albert Kahn Papers, Box 1.

32. Bucci, *Albert Kahn*, 40–41.

33. Henry Ford with Samuel Crowther, *My Life and Work* (New York: Doubleday, 1922), 193.

34. Henry Ford, quoted in *Ford News* 17 (April 1937), 62.

35. For a detailed history of Fordlandia, see Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford’s Forgotten Jungle City* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2009).

36. Columbia University, Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, "James C. McDonald", "Confidential Memorandum of McDonald-Ford Negotiations in Dearborn", 1 April 1941; cited in Grandin, *Fordlandia*, 348.

37. Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, 199.

38. Albert Kahn, "Industrial Architecture – Its Problems and Obligations", speech to the Boston Society of Architects, 12 November 1940, Albert Kahn Archive, Bentley Historical Library.

possibility of relocating Jewish refugees from Europe to Fordlandia. In another conciliatory act, Ford invited Albert Kahn to attend. The meeting was interrupted on multiple occasions by news of a strike developing at the River Rouge complex, a violent one that would finally cause Ford to throw in the towel and capitulate to the demands of the United Automobile Workers union. Ford's dual identity was becoming impossible to sustain in an ever-more-modern world. He stated during the meeting, "We are on this earth to work and for nothing else."³⁶ Although his executives reiterated that Ford was not acting to save his reputation twenty years after the *Independent* scandal, he tentatively agreed to allow the resettlement of Jews at Fordlandia.

One year after the meeting with Ford, Kahn finally permitted himself to publicly question his client's morality. The architect's ever-present fear of losing his "courageous" client caused him to wait until just before his death in 1942 to concede that Ford "once had a prejudice against the Jews". He went on to remark: "[Ford] is a strange man. He seems to feel always that he is guided by someone outside himself. With the simplicity of a farm hand discussing the season's crops, he makes vast moves."³⁷ These final words about his client represent years of repressing critique, an exercise that had been made tolerable by the architectural machine he had created and the distancing that it allowed. His loss of authorship at the hands of Ford's process was of no consequence to Kahn's own vision for the future of architecture, which he believed would only create "better and bigger" industrial buildings with healthier working conditions that would allow for longer working hours, thereby fostering increased production at ever lower costs. Even if Kahn criticized his client's actions and morals, he ultimately upheld Ford's labour revolution as a necessary component of the future social order.³⁸

Although no political refugees ever settled on the banks of Ford's jungle suburb, Ford struggled to keep it alive until he finally sold it back to the Brazilian government in 1945; after that, the village-factory fell into ruin. Throughout the 18 years of Fordlandia's existence, Ford never stepped foot in it. He was only able to experience it through the images and anecdotes brought back to him by his staff. To build Fordlandia, Ford burned hundreds of acres of primitive forest – an inferno that billowed flames and ash like the smokestacks and forges of 19th-century industry – creating a tabula rasa for agricultural production and the generation of new society. The ultimate failure to have his utopian vision rise from the ashes represents Ford's most surreal

terrain vague: an indeterminate vacuum created through sterilization and colonization that resulted in a space of estrangement caused by having thrust the dream of the industrial pastoral upon the wilderness of another land.³⁹ Ford's estrangement from his own creations allowed him to make these "vast moves" ruthlessly, without any consideration of the human or ecological consequences. Ford the patron/client used figures such as Sheeler and Kahn to translate the contradictions of his vision into a persisting moral and aesthetic project. As he witnessed the unbounded materialization of his machine-age future, he sought refuge in the nostalgia of his arcadian past. In this way, Ford left behind seemingly eternal archetypal images of the farm and the factory.

39. Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió, "Terrain Vague", in Cynthia C. Davidson, ed., *Anyplace* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995), 121–22.

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