180 degree view of BAR-3 DEW Line Site, Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada, 2009

STANKIEVECH, Charles

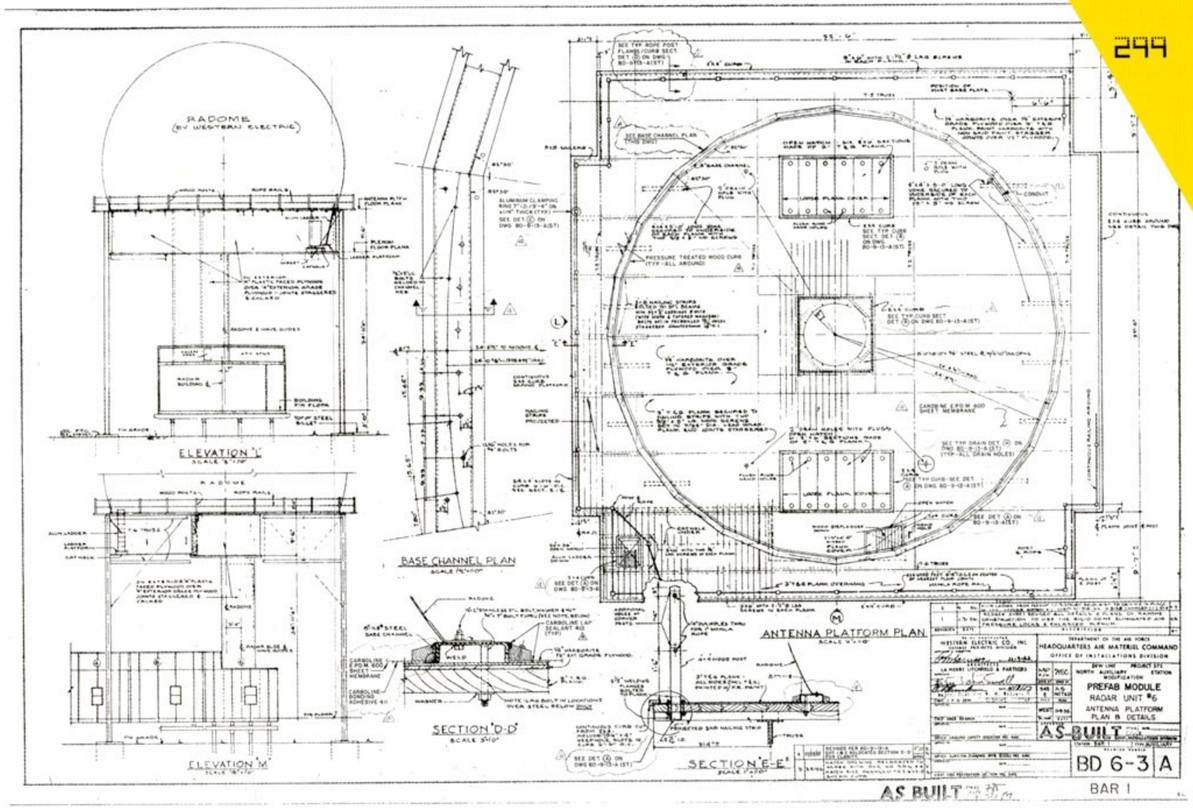
THE DEW PROJECT

www.stankievech.net/projects/DEW

A border is not a connection but an interval of resonance, and such gaps abound in the Land of the DEW Line. The DEW Line itself, the Distant Early Warning radar system installed by the United States in the Canadian North to keep this continent in touch with Russia, points up a major Canadian role in the 20th century, the role of hidden ground for big powers. Since the United States has become a world environment, Canada has become the anti-environment that renders the United States more acceptable and intelligible to many small countries of the world; anti-environments are indispensable for making an environment understandable.
—Marshall McLuhan, "Canada: The Borderline Case"

Since the arming of the jet, and especially since the arrival of artillery on the scene, warfare has not only created a landscape by defensive constructions, by the organizations of fronts and frontiers, but it has also competed successfully with natural forces; firearms, explosives, smoke screens, and gasses have contributed to the creation of an artificial climate... pollution, saturation, and biological disequilibrium.
—Paul Virilio, *Bunker Archeology*

With the centenary of the North Pole's discovery on April 6, 2009, the Arctic region has never been more of a global concern. A melting ice cap has refocused the world's attention on the Arctic, partly as an index of the global warming crisis and partly as an economic opportunity from the opening of new shipping trade routes and new access to the region's wealth of natural resources. Mid-way between the North Pole's discovery and current times, the Arctic served as a theater for the Cold War. Nuclear attack delivered across the North Pole brought new fears for both Russia and the US in a mounting arms race. As much ideological deterrent as defense infrastructure, the Distant Early Warning (DEW) Line constructed between 1954 and 1956 was a joint venture between the US Air Force and the Royal Canadian Air Force. A long distance radar and communication system, the DEW Line created an electromagnetic boundary able to detect airborne invasion while making problematic Arctic sovereignty—an issue once again at stake. The Cold War might have been a successful negotiation over the frozen landscape of the Arctic but will the current battle over natural resources and sovereignty in a rapidly developing world share the same quiet fate? A germane topic today, sustainability is not just a question concerning



Blueprint for BAR-1 DEW Line Radome, Yukon Territory, Canada, 1956

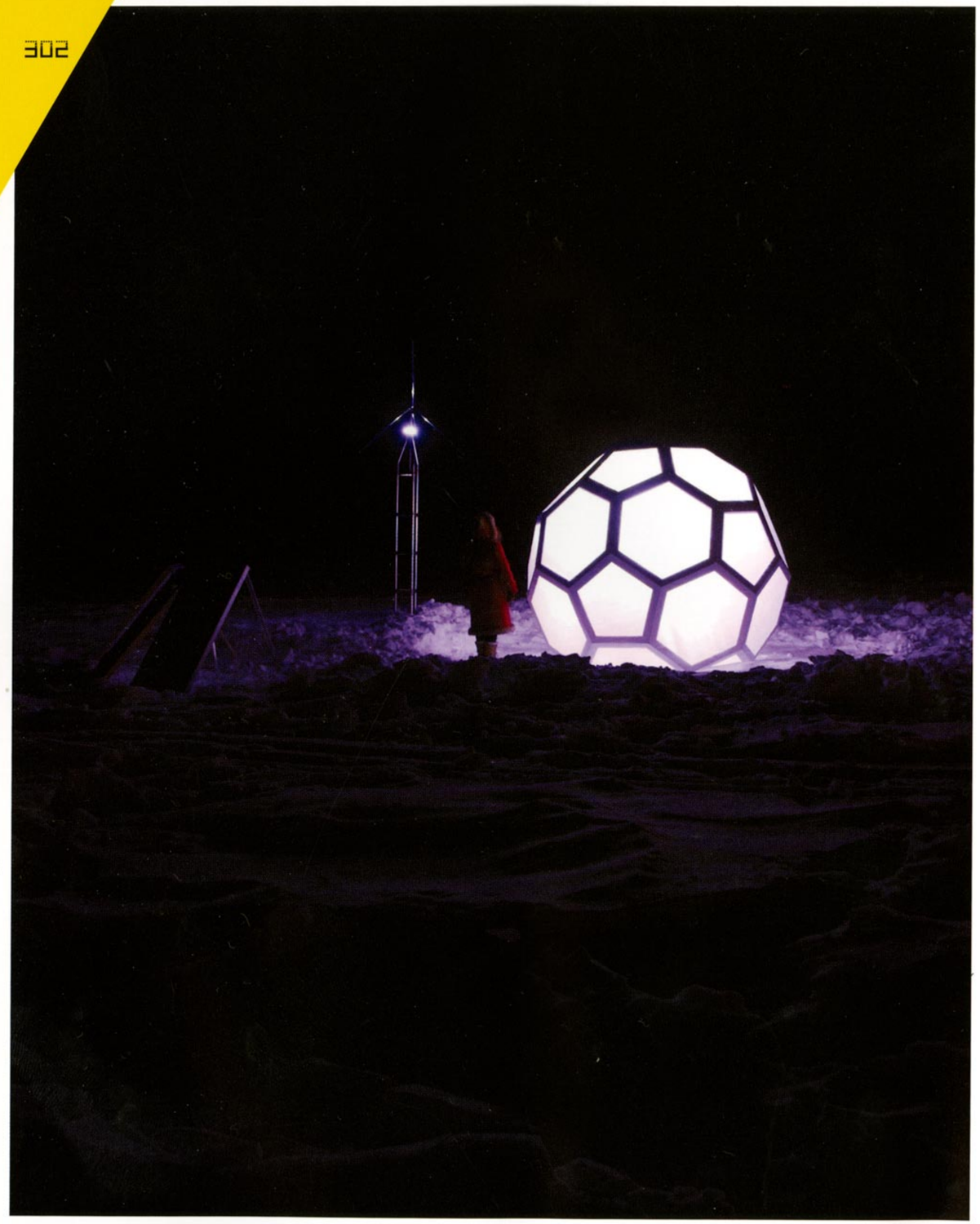
a particular architectural design but the infrastructure and networks between nation states that will determine not only what—but who—is sustained in the future.

The *DEW* project revisits the issue of boundaries—both in regards to the environment and sovereignty—while observing how communication technology plays a pivotal role in the definition and delivery of such ideologies. Sheltered in a geodesic dome, *DEW* is a remote radio station positioned on the Yukon River outside of Dawson City, Yukon Territory, Canada. The radio station monitors the sounds of the river's ice and underwater flow on a continual basis, transmitting the signals to Dawson City where the field-recordings are processed and broadcast via the internet. Parallel to the radio broadcast, a parabolic projection screen displays a video in the SOVA gallery. The screen's design echoes the billboard form of a troposcatter antenna originally used to communicate the radar data between the DEW Line stations and NORAD. Composed from footage of the Arctic landscape and various communication technologies used throughout the Arctic's history, the video spans a period from the Klondike Gold Rush to the present day, including infrastructure such as the telegraph, civilian radio, military radar, microwave and satellite. A live performance on April 6, 2009 incorporates a real-time audio feed from the ice pavilion mixed with electromagnetic recordings from the BAR-3 DEW Line site for the audience, who are able to listen to the concert with small transistor radios in the gallery and the surrounding landscape.

Funding provided by the Canada Council for the Arts, Hydrophones supplied by Aquarian Audio.

CHARLES STANKIEVECH works at the intersection of art, architecture and theory. Through aesthetic experimentation and rigorous research, he reveals latent histories while questioning conventional boundaries. His writings have been included in several academic journals, such as *Leonardo Music Journal* (MIT Press), numerous artists' catalogues and translated into French, Italian and German. His work has been exhibited in the Biennale of Architecture (Venice), Banff Centre for the Arts (Canada), Subtle Technologies (Toronto), Eyebeam (New York), and the Planetary Collegium (UK). Stankievech holds an MFA in Open Media and BA (hon.) in Philosophy and Literature. He is represented by Galerie Donald Browne in Montreal. Currently developing the new KIAC School of Visual Art in the Canadian Arctic, Stankievech is also a researcher in the Digital and Media Arts network for the University of the Arctic.

North Warning System Radomes, historic site of BAR-3 DEW Line, Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories, Canada, 2009



The DEW Project, (installation view), Confluence of Klondike and Yukon Rivers, Yukon Territory, Canada. 64°03' N, 139°27' W

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