The Fourth Lagoon

ON MIXING, MAPPING AND TERRITORY

you can see that here the confluence is pretty
with the all american canal giving fresh waters
and the salton sea providing saline waters
and the land is abundant
and the water is cheap
and the highway is nearby as is the railroad
and the land slopes appropriately

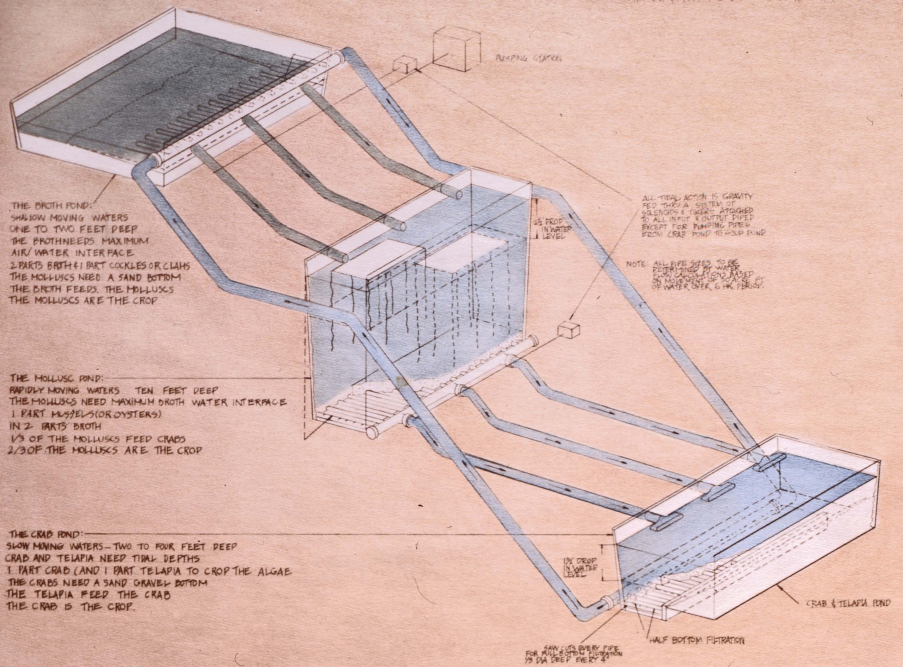
it is here that I imagine
a brackish pond with cockles and clams
and a deeper pond with mussels and oysters
and a crab pond below superimposed upon this land

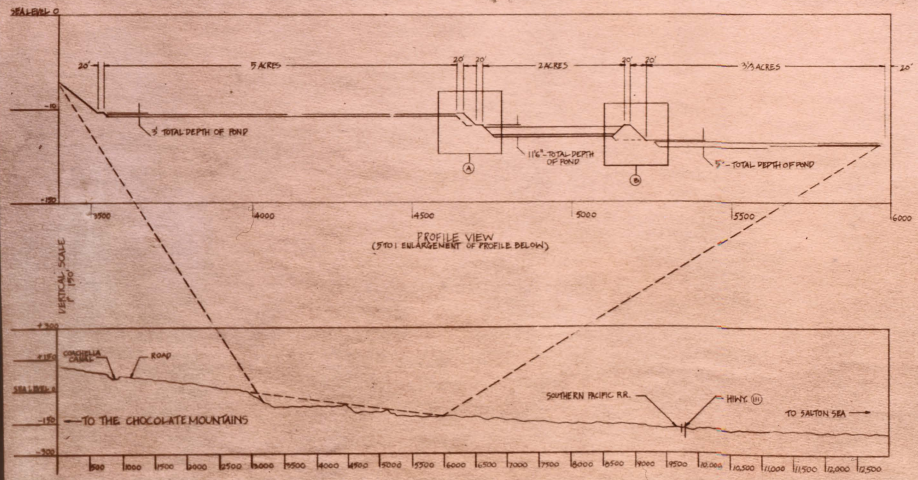
and I imagine that you and I can manage
these elements so that the harvest preserves
the system



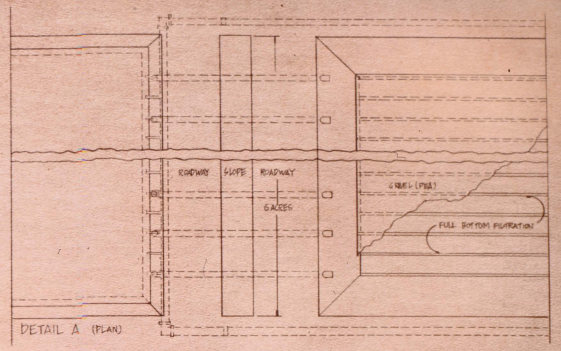


THE WATER FLOW SCHEMATIC

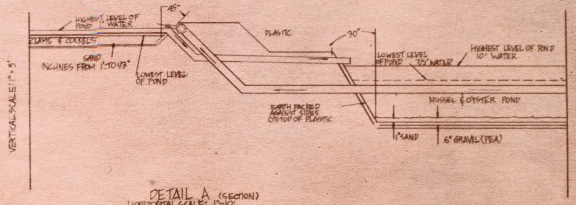




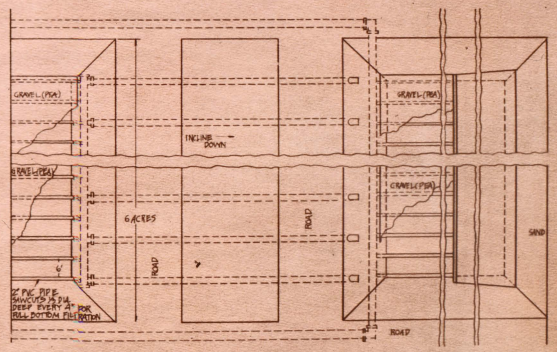
PROFILE VIEW OF LAGOON IN THE DESERT
BETWEEN COACHELLA CANAL & SOUTHERN PACIFIC RAILROAD
(APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF PONDS)
HORIZONTAL SCALE 1" = 300'



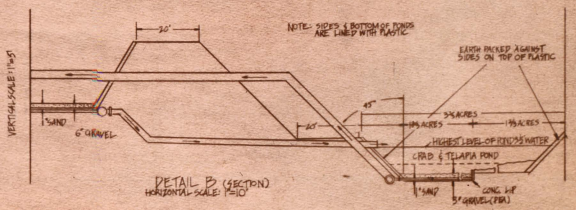
DETAIL A (PLAN)



DETAIL A (SECTION)
HORIZONTAL SCALE: 1"=10'



DETAIL B (PLAN)



DETAIL B (SECTION)
HORIZONTAL SCALE: 1"=10'

He studied the plans and the drawings
And located the polyculture site on the map

Finally he asked
Who will own this fish farm
And who will gain from it
And who will lose

He said
There appeared to be no critical component
To our ideas and wondered if we really knew
What we were doing

He said
If what we were doing was indeed valuable
We would immediately be coopted
And if what we were doing was not
Why were we wasting our time

He said we were naives
And operating in ignorance of the larger whole
Which was economic
And therefore we were dangerous
Because we were enhancing
The most destructive economic system of all time
And where was our conscience

He said
He was interested in the power
To change the system
And we might be the enemy
Although he liked us personally

where is he speaking from

A space of his own devising
In which he has plenty of company
But what is he thinking

he is a kind of beacon signalling
to all who will talk with him
do you wish to engage with him

I have listened to his conversation
And do not wish a sojourn
in his dialectic
His arguments lack empathy
Do you wish to engage with him further

I have listened to his observations
His moment is too angry to play in

Then is it worth forgetting what he
So forcefully told us

He is not wrong to suggest that we
pay attention to advantage and
disadvantage but his ideas are
peculiarly inflexible and oddly
serious

And his categories are frozen
into a permanent opposition

The Sea that was reborn wrong: the story in numbers and dates

1896 The California Development Company (CDC) organizes to finance the building of an irrigation canal to bring Colorado River water to irrigate the desert near the Salton Sink

1900 Three white families with 17 children 5 cows 7 bulls and 3 crates of chickens arrive to work for the CDC and settle the Imperial Valley

1901 The Imperial canal running 60 miles through Mexico is completed

1904 12,000 settlers respond to the promotions of the CDC to irrigate 77,000 acres The Southern Pacific Railroad completes its first set of tracks Silt from the Colorado River blocks the intake point of the Canal at Pilot Knob 12,000 angry settlers are without water

1905 The CDC makes a new cut from the Colorado River to the Imperial Canal in Mexico Flood flows from the Colorado rush through the cut to flood the Imperial Valley

1906 The town of Salton the new Liverpool Saltworks the Southern Pacific RR and nearly all the ranches and farms are under water in what will soon be called the Salton Sea The Colorado River has cut a gorge 40 feet deep and nearly ½ mile wide from the new Canal to the Salton Sea

1907 a crew of 1500 men using 2,057 Carloads of rock 227 Carloads of gravel and 203 Carloads of clay succeed in closing the break

1908 The Bureau of Reclamation starts subsidizing irrigated farming near the newly formed Salton Sea

1911 The Imperial Irrigation District is formed The Salton Sea begins to evaporate

1925 The Salton Sea stops receding as the water from 359,000 irrigated acres start flowing in

1928 Hoover Dam is completed to control the flood flows and the silt of the Colorado River. Three later dams will still not do the work

1929 The salinity of the sea decreases as more irrigation waters flow in The Fish and Game department of the state of California starts planting aquatic life in the Sea Ghost shrimp pile worms and mudsuckers survive

1930 439,000 acres are now under irrigation

1938 The salinity of the sea decreases to 30,000 ppm less than that of the ocean

1940 Corvina and Gulf Croaker are introduced producing deformed young for several generations

1948 The Coachella Branch of the All-American Canal is completed and Developers build subdivisions on the shores of the Sea and promote the value for recreation and investment of the desert lake

1951 Sargo are introduced and a 5 link Food Chain established (plankton/ Zooplankton) / benthic invertebrates / juvenile crate eating fish / fish eating fish

1955 475,000 acres are under irrigation

1958 Fishing on the Salton Sea becomes a big sport

1966 The Pomeroy Report predicts the sea will become too salty to sustain life within 20 years 600,000 Corvina are caught by party-boat anglers

1968 3,000 improved lots have been developed around the shores of the Sea but only 3,000 people live there

1969 Party boat anglers report a catch of 9,267 Corvina for the year

1971 Party boat anglers report a catch of 649 Corvina for the year

1972 Party boat anglers report a catch of 158 Corvina for the year


That's a pretty system you're proposing
whose survival is insured by the harvest
and whose parts cycle and nourish each other
with ourselves in harmony guiding the interactions
But
the Salton Sea is not a naturally self-cleansing lagoon
the All American Canal is not a sweetwater river
and agricultural wastewaters are not the nutrient rich waters
that run off after a monsoon
but remember
the elements in this lagoon
high tolerance to stress
and survive as do most of us
by improvising their existance
with the materials at hand if a niche
is emptied something else adapts to fill it
But in the Salton Sea there are outcomes from
another experiment alienating the
resulting in about 1,300,000,000 acre feet
wastewaters entering the Sea every year
are you suggesting that over time the waters
will become so very polluted that even mixed
with fresh water from the canal and modified
with brine from the ocean it will not support
a lagoon ecology no matter how resilient and tough
Yes I am
why are you so certain
when I look at the algal bloom and remember the story
of the Salton Sea