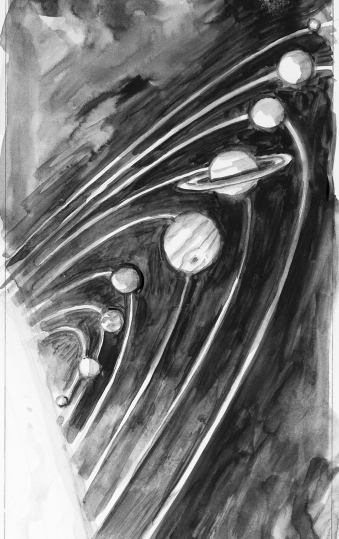


the Alien's Guide to the Ruins of Washington DC



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NOW at the *Inside-Out Pillar-Thing*

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WELCOME!



Boring Frilly Very Frilly

Welcome to the ancient ruins of Washington DC, Earth! Enjoy fine dining and unparalleled shopping and flirting opportunities while exploring one of the great mysteries of the Known Universe.

Who were the lost Pillar-Builders of Earth? Why did they leave the comfort of their oceans to build these enduringly popular Pillar-Things over much of the dry land of their planet for the brief period of about two and a half thousand years? What drove this primitive Earth-wide society to collaborate in creating innumerable variations of the same thing all over the place? How were they built? What were they for? And why are there only three known forms of Pillars? The fossil record is silent but the aesthetically infectious ruins of Washington DC remain.

The Really Complicated Pillar-Thing



This central portion of the Great Pillar-Builder Complex of Washington DC is one of the marvels of Earth. Built almost exclusively using Very Frilly Pillars, this is one of the most elaborate known iterations of the classic Round Thing on top of a Triangle-topped Rectangular Pillar-Thing. The feat of collaboration implied by this extraordinarily complex and symmetrical Thing (with its over one hundred identical appendage-made Pillars) is thought by many to provide definitive proof of Pillar-Builder telepathy.

Its use remains unclear although its proximity to the Cellulose Container has led some to the conclusion that it may have been used as a center for stroking after mealtimes or singing.

The Cellulose Container



This smaller yet impressively complex version of the adjacent *Really Complicated Pillar-Thing*, built using Very Frilly Smooth Pillars, but now lacking the Round Thing that would once have sat on top of its Flat Rectangular Pillar-Thing, is named for the vast quantities of decayed cellulose found inside, suggesting that it may have been a food storage center for Pillar-Builders preoccupied with Pillar-Building and flirting. A rival theory is that it housed cellulose rectangulars (much like those found in the recently discovered *Pillar-Builder Archive*) that served as patterns for the appendage-made tokens exchanged during flirtation. A more radical theory holds that such cellulose rectangles would have served both as food and as flirtation tokens, essentially functioning as a ritual food during this very special time.

The Long Triangle Pillar-Thing



A beautifully preserved example of the classic Triangle-topped Pillar-Thing with Adjacent Rectangles, built using fluted Very Frilly Pillars underneath the Triangle and flat Frilly Pillars on the adjacent Rectangles. This is thought to have been the communal dining room for flirting Pillar-Builders feasting on cellulose in order to strengthen themselves for the long swim back to the oceans after Pillar-Building and flirting. Some scholars have claimed to see traces of cellulose communal dining surfaces in the large central room although others are convinced that these represent food remnants or extremely large patterns for flirtation tokens. A third interpretation holds that these larger cellulose surfaces accommodated Pillar-Builder threesomes making the annual pilgrimage to their culture's flirtation sites.

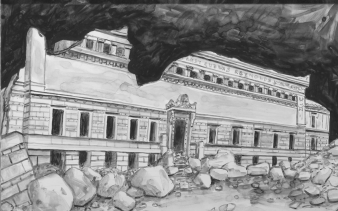
The Oval/Triangle Pillar-Thing



This Triangle-topped Pillar-Thing with Adjacent Rectangles is attached to a less common Oval-topped Pillar-Thing (possibly intended as an homage to the Earth's unusually large Moon) creating an exquisite and unusual Pillar-Thing that has drawn much admiration despite its small size and lack of complexity.

There is considerable controversy as to its probable function. The exclusive use of Smooth Frilly Pillars has suggested to some that it was used by Medium Pillar-Builders to perform the intimate orientation dances used to guide Large and Small Pillar-Builders back to their beloved oceans when flirting and Pillar-Building were over. Others suggest that it may have stored small aquatic companion species for entertainment, comfort or snacking.

The Inside-Out Pillar-Thing



This Pillar-Thing is highly unusual in having Pillars (Frilly and Boring) ONLY on the inside. Its original use is debated but the remains of woven fabrics found inside suggests it may have provided protective skins for delicate Pillar-Builders exposed to the unfamiliar elements of dry land.

This Pillar-Thing now houses the famous *Pillar-Builder Archive* (more than 4,000 large rectangles of flattened cellulose covered with mechanical pictures, recently discovered in a nearby metal canister) whose discovery has thrown the Pillar-Builder research community into disarray while confirming the status of Washington DC as the pre-eminent model for Pillar-Building throughout ancient Earth.

The Circle/Triangle Pillar-Thing



The combination of the classic Triangle Top with a Circular Domed Pillar-Thing makes for a particularly pleasing geometric configuration. The Triangle Top is thought to represent Pillar-Builder reverence for the inhospitable mountains of the dry land while the Dome indicates that this Pillar-Thing was dedicated to the planet Earth as a whole.

Its location immediately adjacent to an ancient riverbed, at a time when over 70% of the Earth was covered with water, supports the consensus that the aquatic Pillar-Builders swam upstream from the oceans during their annual flirtation season to flirt and Pillar-Build next to the rivers and estuaries of ancient Earth.

The Flat Pillar-Thing



Unusual in that it is missing the traditional Triangle Top, this is a beautifully preserved example of the less common Flat Pillar-Thing (here without the usual Attached Rectangles), thought to celebrate the comparatively flat surface of Earth's oceans.

The famous *Stone Lump* inside is now no longer thought to show two flirting Pillar-Builders but is generally considered to portray some sort of ritual game, possibly used by this remarkably gentle and egalitarian society to determine who would engage in the hard work of Pillar-Building next. The use of Boring Pillars throughout suggests that this game may have been the exclusive responsibility of the Large Pillar-Builders.

The Three Arches



Prior to the discovery of the *Pillar-Builder Archive*, the consensus was that the Pillar-Builders were a uniform species that divided during flirtation but it is now accepted that there were three types of Pillar-Builder: Large, Medium and Small, corresponding not only to the three orders of Pillars (Boring, Frilly and Very Frilly) but also to the tripartite Pillar-Arches found throughout Earth of which is this a particularly compelling example.

Such arches are thought to have functioned as ritual washing sites prior to flirtation or possibly as emergency medical facilities for Pillar-Builders exhausted from the hard physical labor that Pillar-Building must have represented to this pre-technological society.

The Really Big Pillar and The Oval Pillar-Circle



Previously celebrated as an unusual deviation from the three Pillar orders, the ruins of the *Really Big Pillar* are now considered the pre-eminent example of what the *Pillar-Builder Archive* has revealed to be a relatively common Pillar form. Here it is thought to have functioned as a sundial in conjunction with the adjacent *Oval Pillar-Circle* allowing the flirtation volunteers to determine proper flirtation seasons.

The traces of water found inside the *Oval Pillar-Circle* and its unusual pierced Pillars have led many to believe that this is where immature Pillar-Builders were deposited shortly after birth to frolic in the life-giving element while their parents recovered from the ordeals of flirting and Pillar-Building.