

MANAGEMENT

## **TELESIS: METAMEDIA**

The Gibbs College of Architecture Student Journal at  
The University of Oklahoma

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TELEESIS

tel•e•sis

*(te-lə-ses)*

progress that is intelligently planned  
and directed : the attainment of  
desired ends by the application of  
intelligent human effort to the means



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**METAMEDIA**



*A “metamedium” is an event, while “meta-media” occur when different media brush against each other to form relationships to yield unique social changes and interactions. Following such an event, if these relationships endure, a new medium may emerge.*

*The first forms of written communication, including cave paintings and cuneiform, were each a metamedium for bringing new and unique forms to life by leveraging existing media—including red ochre, hematite and charcoal. Upon interacting with the textured cave surfaces, these pigmented powders transcended the sum of their parts and changed our social history forever. Due to its impact on social interaction, written communication has become a familiar part of everyone’s lives, and the entanglement of ink and paper is now its own singular medium. How humans interact, learn and grow is immeasurably different as a result.*

*While written communication became a singular medium that has persisted through millennia, pop culture provides many examples of metamedia that have not become long-lasting, singular media. Even so, these metamedia have nudged society to consider new and different ways of being. For example, Tamagotchi Pets, MTV’s Real World, and MySpace are all ephemeral metamedia that have nonetheless influenced style cul-*

*ture and social behaviors, including video games, reality television, and social media. They endure as fragments of our quick-shifting culture, while not necessarily marking a renaissance in human behavior. Scholars such as Henry Jenkins, Douglas Rushkoff, and Lev Manovich have explored metamedia through the lenses of online learning, fan culture, performance art, and more.*

*While many metamedia never become persistent or formalized, we see them as versatile tools for engaging a wide range of social ends through physical means, whether stylistically, at the intersection of fashion and client relationships; militarily, at the intersection of geopolitics and the American home; or infrastructurally, where the Mississippi River meets urban contexts. Each of the resulting metamedia and more—presented in this issue of Telesis—asks how architecture as a medium might connect with other media to drive cultural development and innovation.*

*We urge you, the reader, to consider: How can we learn from metamedia past? Might we leverage metamedia? May metamedia offer a test bed for developing new socio-spatial relationships? Could the genesis of these relationships be a key role of the architect?*

# EDITORIAL

On Metamedia

*The Telesis Team*



# REFRAMING THE FUTURE

## The Medium of Media

*Evan Sack (ES) + Emily Hays (EH)*

*Emily Hays was the student founder and president of Telesis in 2019. Her work began in 2017 studying the architecture journals from universities across the country. Her involvement over the next 2 years developing a course curriculum and acting as the head editor for Telesis: Design Against brought Telesis back to represent student voices for the first time since the 1970s. She is now practicing with BRR Architecture in Philadelphia after graduating with her Master of Architecture in 2019. Evan Sack was a member of the editing team for Telesis: Design Against, and the instructor for the Fall 2019 Telesis course. He graduated with his Master of Architecture in 2019 and is currently practicing with Butzer Architects and Urbanism in Oklahoma City.*

ES Welcome to the 2020 edition of *Telesis* entitled “Metamedia” (MM)!

EH Thank you, I am thrilled to be talking with you!

ES We’re very happy to have the chance to speak with you. I wanted to talk a little bit about your role in last year’s edition of *Telesis*, and a bit about how our team has tried to stitch it into the ideology of this year’s topic. Last year you had a significant role in the rebirth of the journal and the new, first edition Design Against (DA). Can you talk a bit about that role and the way DA tried to speak to the spirit of *Telesis*?

EH I can certainly try! *Telesis* was definitely my baby for the 2 years prior to its publication. Through research about other student journals and discussions with colleagues about how we as students consumed our information about architecture, its trends, current

ideologies, and more I just felt that there was a huge disconnect between the student body and architecture journals coming from the schools that produce them. The journals felt blind to the students intended to consume them and there was no representation of any student voice in the journals themselves. I was lucky to work with an amazing team of people at The University of Oklahoma (OU) at large, but specifically within the Gibbs College of Architecture, who believed in me. I still can't believe they gave me the reigns over a project like this, but it was an incredible learning opportunity and made for a really impactful experience.

DA was the perfect topic for a journal aimed specifically at bridging this ownership gap in student journals. OU architecture students — and perhaps college students as a whole — have this rebellious nature and it doesn't really matter what industry you consider, as a population, students are looking to push

the envelope and disrupt the status quo. The university is the perfect environment for this kind of attitude; students learn the history of how things have been done and are given room to explore alternative ideas, compounded with their own youth, which fuels the idea that there is still time to improve and innovate. I think the mentality of DA really resonated with the student body at the time, from within our team of editors, to our college, and even the university beyond.

- ES That's an important point about the foundation of *Telesis* as well, that its origins are found in this desire to get students to take an active role in the journal itself. It's what made *Telesis* a very character heavy sort of social thing in the 1970s.
- EH It really does have a sense of community that you can feel. I believe that a sense of community will always foster creativity. In architecture, too often there can be this competitive drive that sometimes dissolves that sense of community. But *Telesis* gives an opportunity for ideas to be presented and considered in parallel and can give students something to rally around as a collective identity or snapshot of the student body.
- ES As a follow-up to DA, MM is concerned with identifying certain moments or instances where architecture transcends its own media or

format and becomes a cultural or social phenomenon. In that spirit you talked about how your own research of student journals and the early editions of *Telesis* inspired you to take on this project. Was it something about the student journals as a medium that made it valuable as a piece of the dialogue at OU today?

EH The goal was really to give control of the journal to the students themselves; and a consequence of that would be a broader social change where students buy into that platform as part of the culture. We as a student body had a voice, and it was vibrant and exciting and important. But we didn't have a good outlet and we couldn't really experiment with our beliefs and understanding of things in a way that gave meaningful feedback. We were just flooded with knowledge and information from the coursework within the program, and in a sense at that point we were just a vessel for information. It doesn't really have much use, but if you can mold that, and give students a way to internalize the things they're learning and reconcile them with outside knowledge as a basis to form opinions and be creative or innovative that's when you see real growth. The hope was that with the diverse student body we could create a feedback system that would not only help us individually grow, but as a community we could raise the standards of discourse within the college through that collective understanding. It's really about giving that power to the students directly.

ES DA also, as a topic, gave students the opportunity to explore utopias and dystopias alike in a very low-stakes or low-impact environment. Can you talk a little bit about the efforts of the journal to keep that conversation going post-publication?

EH The hope is certainly — as I talked a little bit about before the interview, that companies that have adapted to the change in technology and media are managing the best in our current situation [the COVID-19 pandemic]. In researching the efforts of other journals, very few were engaged in social media or other digital formats. That presence with our readership outside the bound copies is central to the goal of ownership and engagement within the student body. It's something that will continue to grow and develop with every edition. We are trying to build this sort of evolving identity that faces a mirror to the current happenings at the college. Even in its print form, the intent was for the journal to change

and adapt over time as people interact with and imprint the pages with their own ideas. Literally taking notes and making marks on its pages. It's essentially a snapshot, trying to represent the zeitgeist of that student body. But all of us are changing constantly so the topics and opinions then are not necessarily going to resonate with your student body or team. As people interact with and change copies of DA, that should start to change into something that is more relevant in a way that our team couldn't have predicted. It builds on itself as the student body builds.

ES That was something that I think our team found most interesting about the first edition: this snapshot in time; each copy is then like this parallel discussion representing one of the infinitely many directions that the original articles could have sent the direction of discourse among the student body. Depending on which copy you pick up, you may get an entirely different set of discussions that have

been catalogued by people taking notes in the margins, or leaving drawings and sketches over certain graphics on the built-in trace paper pages.

EH The other part of that is the wider authorship than those we could directly include in the journal. Our original pool of included works was limited within the actual student body, so this allows students who were not included initially to still contribute and feel that sense of ownership over the voice. That was the really beautiful thing: even those who felt they didn't have something to contribute in the initial submission or didn't feel they had anything to say under the initial prompt, once they saw something to react to, there was still an opportunity to engage and be heard as part of the movement.

ES I think that's a new kind of level of ownership for a print publication that can often be this really stagnant thing after it's printed. It gives the opportunity to view each edition of *Telesis* that follows as a more formalized version of that response without invalidating all the other voices and directions that could have been explored. MM is just one of the hundreds of conversations that has happened as a result of DA, but many are still catalogued in libraries or personal bookshelves nation-wide.

EH That's exactly it. It began as this solid form, and everything that follows is an offshoot or continuation

ES Something DA talked about was how the architect's role and by extension how every architecture student's role could and should be more active. The prompt of DA was the best call to action at the time for the student body. With MM our goal was to strengthen that hypothesis by exploring the breadth of formats that architecture can take and how that choice of format extends the reach of architecture at times to become a social vector. In essence the architecture itself is the backdrop that allows cultural development and innovation to take place.

Our understanding of this term came from a 2009 paper called "Opening the Metaverse" by Julian and Marilyn Lombardi which outlines a metamedium as a "...socially enabled extension... which has degrees of freedom for representation and expression never before encountered and as yet barely investigated." The term and concept alone were intriguing, but the article draws the term and its definition from an early 1977 article titled "Personal Dynamic Media" by Alan Kay and Adele Goldberg. The work describes "dyna-books" in detail and outlines many of the functions and portability features of laptops today when the most revolutionary computer at the time was the Apple II.<sup>1</sup> This was the aspiration we had for exploring what an architecture

of metmedia could look like, particularly given our own position as a unique media format.

EH It's a really interesting topic I think especially because I'm having trouble separating it from the pandemic that we're dealing with, just because it has such widespread implications for technology and its integration or collision with architecture is really similar. I think it will be shaped tremendously by what we are seeing right now. Something that has been on my mind with how COVID-19 relates to the realm of architecture is how the virus will begin to affect our view of third spaces. In this time, those who are extroverted or enjoy spending time with friends and family at all are facing a whole new challenge. Across the board, loneliness has been a problem for our current population that I think is just compounded by a quarantine situation. Third places are useless right now. This MUST adapt moving forward and it will take a new

conglomerate of architecture, technology, and community to make that happen.

ES It reminds me of the call to action in DA of going beyond dichotomies. There has always been this traditional view of urbanization vs. isolation where either architecture is about separation of space and community, or it is a way to congregate and bring people together. Ultimately what the virus has highlighted is that it must have the ability to serve both or society completely shuts down. There really isn't the infrastructure yet to support this dual purpose because it was never designed that way.

When I was speaking to our team this past week, it was interesting to us how last year's launch was punctuated by Notre Dame Cathedral burning and this year we have the COVID-19 pandemic. It's strange to imagine how that will become the backdrop for next year's journal.

EH Yeah, it feels like the world IS changing in front of our eyes. We don't know exactly what is going to come out of it and how it might shape us, but it's very clear that change is happening. So many people are working remotely, and companies haven't really prepared for this. But, because technology has grown to be such an integrated part of business, staying up to date has made it possible to still work through this time. I never realized what a blessing that could be.

ES Right, I think that's a good point that while the economic impacts could be really widespread and even incredibly damaging, ultimately they could have been so much worse if this were really something that shut down all business. It's interesting that the way we work and how it isn't tied to space has become a way to cushion the blow.

EH I just imagine that this can only breed more innovation. We have experienced instances of smaller scale outbreaks like this and in such a globalized society these things are bound to happen. The degree will always vary, but companies and workers alike will now have to prepare for this kind of scenario in ways that we couldn't fully understand or appreciate before.

ES It's interesting to me seeing that some of the most streamed movies and TV shows right now are those quarantine/end of the world titles.



EH Right, what was that one? 2012? That end of the world movie.

ES Exactly, those movies! A local architect was talking about how their family had been watching them right now because it's actually really helpful not just for strategies on how to prevent the spread of disease, but also as an insight into how architects might have a role to help as things get worse. Part of me wanted to tell him to take a day off, but it is the perfect opportunity to act.

EH It's an interesting form of education. Scientists and doctors, as a community at large, have expressed how unprepared we are as a species for a pandemic. An article back in 2017 in *Time* magazine highlighted how under-prepared the United States, specifically, and the world at large is for an outbreak of this scale, essentially because there has been no pre-emptive investment in that kind of infrastructure. There is knowledge out there to help combat this, to some extent, but it's not being disseminated properly at all. You can watch the current administration deliver information in what feels like a flustered or haphazard manner. It all seems so reactionary rather than preventative. And it's not to say that these movies are not interesting, but I'm also not sure that they're the best way to think about dealing with this kind of pandemic. I do think it's a really interesting idea that entertainment has become a huge source of information for an equally

large cross-section of the population. If that's a way we can start to leverage that media to circumvent some of the communication problems we should absolutely take advantage. Because EVERYBODY is watching something right now! All of my news feeds, that aren't terrifying, are just "Top 10 Movies to Binge-Watch During the COVID-19 Outbreak."

ES Yeah! Forget the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website, they need a mini docu-series on the best social-distancing practices or something. It's so similar to the questions being posed by MM where we wanted to explore the effect that the format in which you present information — the form that architecture takes more specifically — has a real impact on our ability to use it as a platform for social interaction and social change. With that in mind, it's terrifying that these quarantine movies and shows could be having tremendous social impact and were never designed or intended as such.

EH I don't think it's necessarily a new thing. Most of how information is communicated and how we do most of our learning about the world is through some medium other than direct observation. It's especially apparent in the era of "fake news." Journalism is so valuable to how people gain information, but I just wonder how well it has adapted to the needs of the public it's meant to serve. I don't know what the solution might be, but people don't trust journalism as fully once the full breadth of information is available. We can start to see the effects that a capitalist business model has on impartiality. I think entertainment media has started to fill these gaps for better or for worse and if we start to recognize this ability and use it as a tool for education it could have really powerful effects.

ES It is a good question to ask because it is that reality of the "fake news" narrative and the mistrust of traditional news media that has been sewn. So naturally people are looking

to other outlets whether that is celebrities, entertainment, etc. which is why we see this influencer culture becoming so important. In this environment where that digital realm really is your only form of social interaction, I think individuals become far more relatable than a news outlet, as well. With all physical forms of socialization basically rendered obsolete media outlets that run on entertainment become the closest substitution. Perhaps the current climate makes this trend far more obvious.

EH You can also think about video games where you have an avatar and walk around with your friends. You don't get the same sense of socialization from that experience. You don't get the same physical or emotional benefits that you do if you are really in the same space and sharing that full experience. Somehow, we have to use the ability of architecture to marry both experiences into one built environment. It's a complicated question at best.

ES And perhaps one for the next edition of *Telesis* to try and sort out!

EH Exactly.

ES Emily, thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us about *Telesis* as a platform beyond its physical existence as a student journal.

We look forward to watching everything you continue to do in your career and in the realm of academia!

EH Thank you, it was wonderful to talk to you. Hopefully we can chat again soon!

1. Kay, A., and A. Goldberg. "Personal Dynamic Media." *Computer*, vol. 10, no. 3, 1977, pp. 31-41., doi:10.1109/c-m.1977.217672.
2. Lombardi, Julian & Lombardi, Marilyn. (2009). Opening the Metaverse. 10.1007/978-1-84882-825-4\_9.



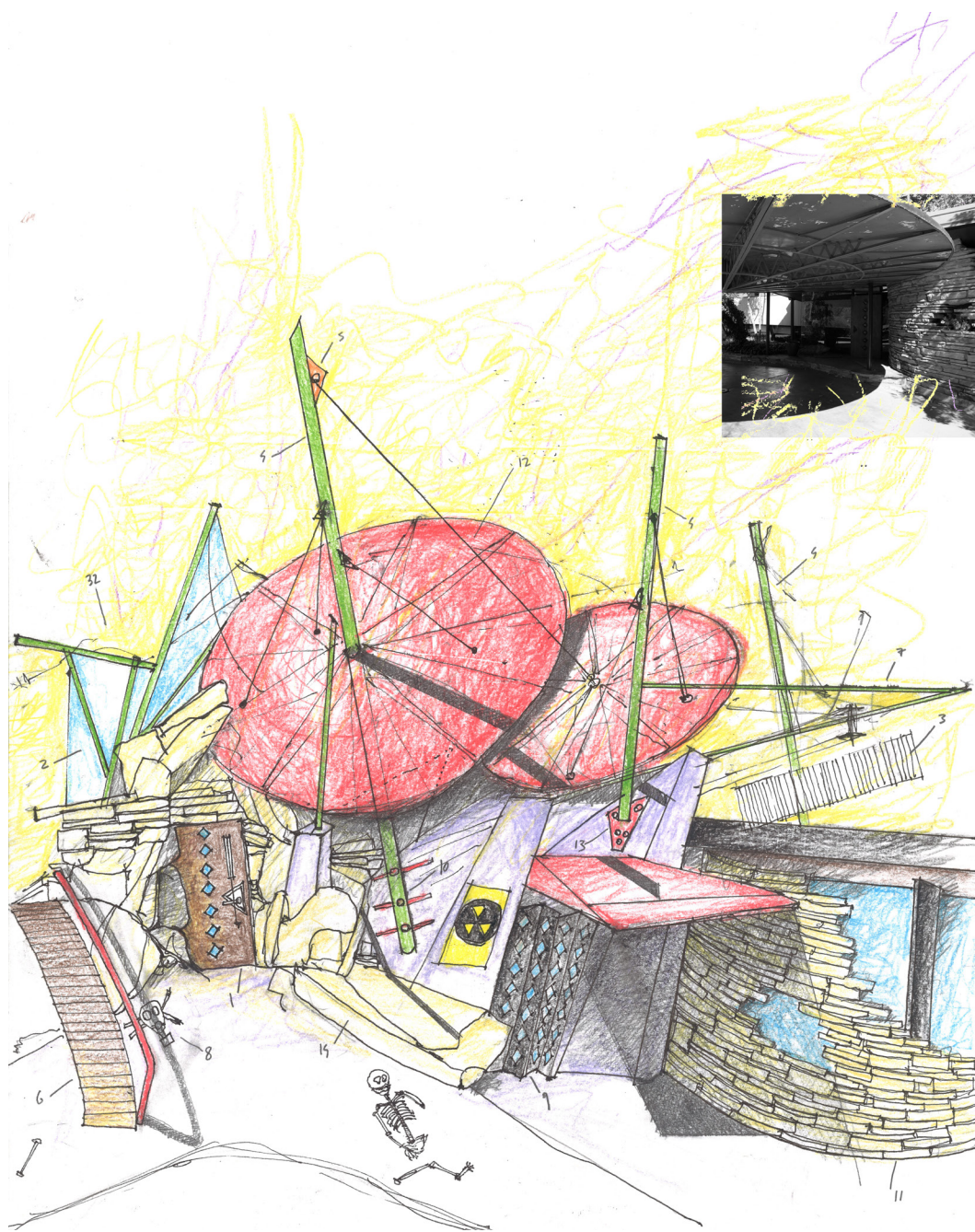
*In these drawings, Luca Guido re-imagines two famous, outlandish Bruce Goff designs as Cold War hideouts for necessary military operations. As the war escalates, Guido imagines, established military bases become some of the first targets in an effort from both sides to reduce the others' capacity for retaliation. Even the best efforts to conceal defensive facility construction are rendered obsolete, so the strategy is to hide in the most garish structures available. These beacons of rock and glass glinting in the landscape of the American West do nothing to conceal their existence and have become the latest hope for survival.*

**RENEGADE**

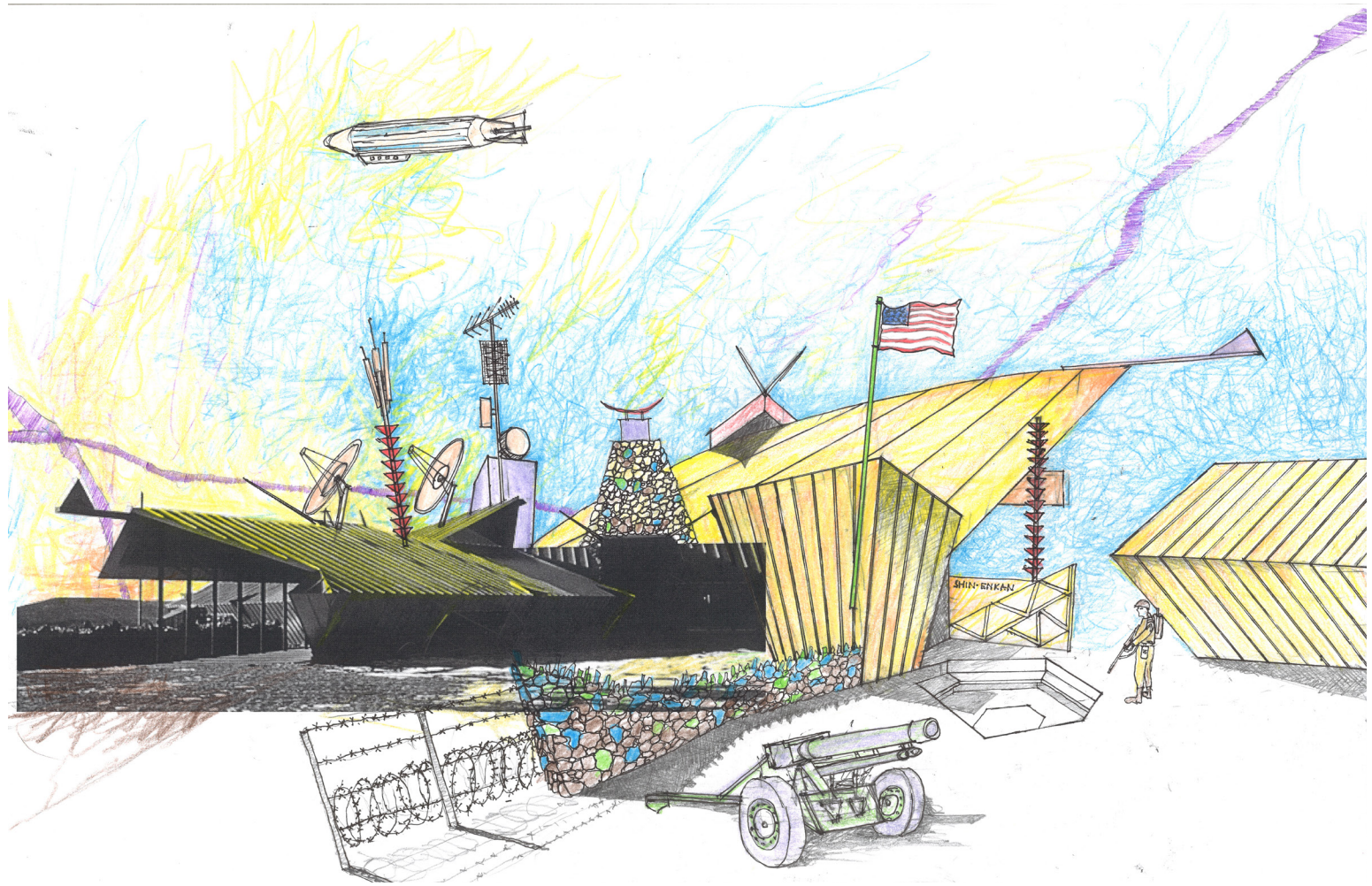
**RE-USE**

The Medium of Precedence

*Luca Guido, Ph.D*



“ Chez Ledbetter becomes a shelter for essential personnel evacuated from Fort Sill Army Post. ”



“ Shin'enKan transformed to act as HQ for the Central States Region. ”





# IMPERMANENT ARCHITECTURE

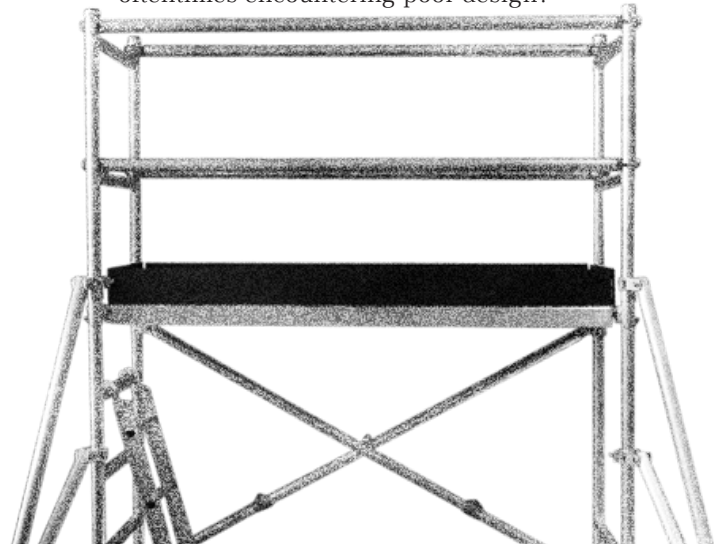
## The Medium of Existence

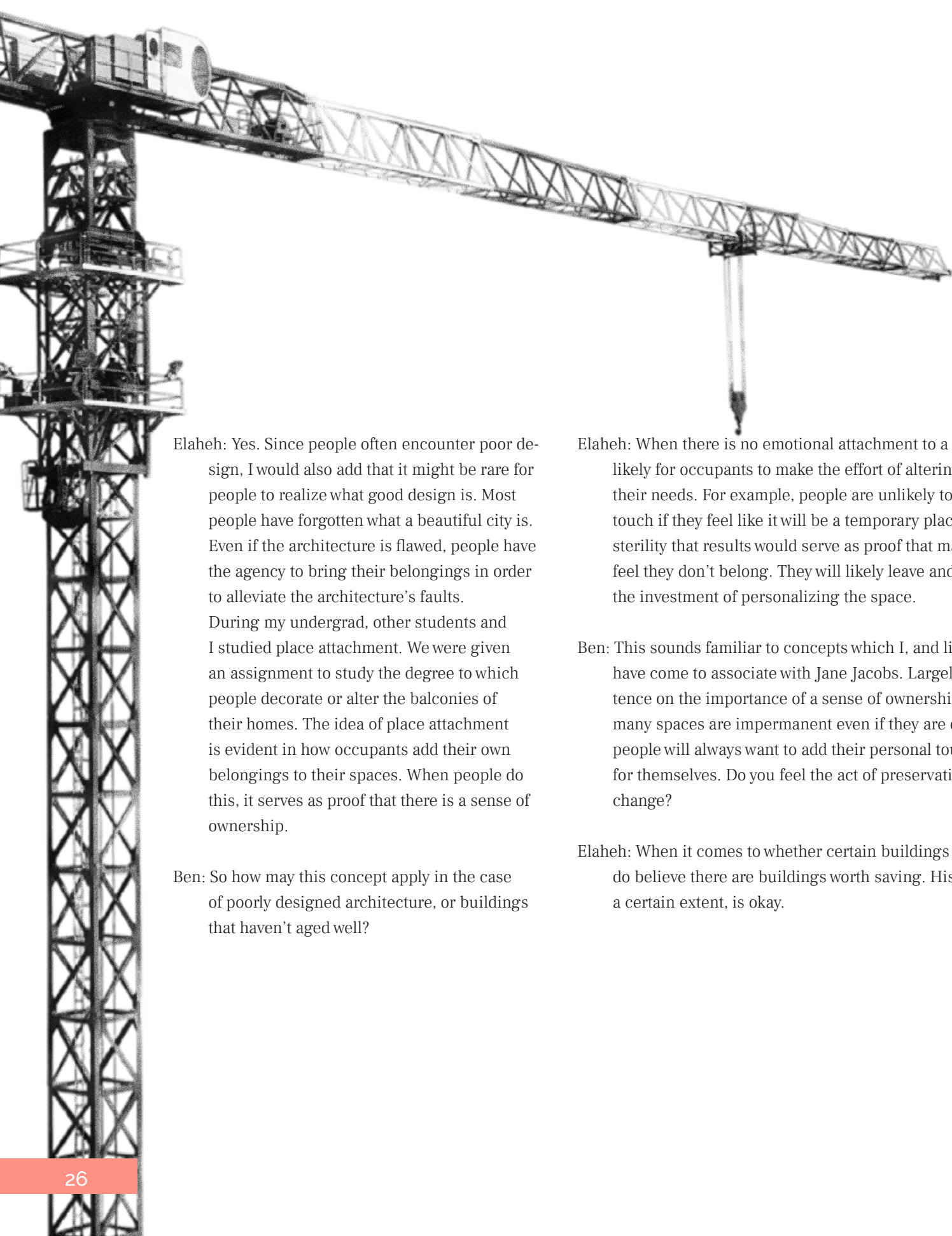
*Elaheh Houshmanidpanah + Ben Decuyper*

*In the Fall of 2019, Elaheh Houshmanidpanah and Ben Decuyper participated in the AIA Central States Region Student Design Competition with teammates Tanaka Kawondera and Skye Reid. The following conversation was catalogued in the days after the competition as Ben and Elaheh both continued to ponder the implications of the competition brief. The team placed second overall for their proposal "Pervious Park". Ben is a fifth-year architecture student, previous Telesis alumnus, and part of the Metamedia editing team. Elaheh is a second-year graduate student in architecture from Iran with an Bachelor of Architectural Engineering from Shahid Bahonar University of Kerman.*

Elaheh: People don't understand the effects architecture has on their life. They just ignore the qualities that each space can bring. You occupy spaces and this has an effect on your mood. We all have experienced places that make us happy, sad, depressed, in other words the places that make you stay longer or leave soon.

Ben: Americans spend 90 percent of their lives indoors (Environmental Protection Agency). It isn't specified what percentage of the remaining time is spent within a designed context. Even if we are not indoors, we're likely surrounded by buildings or at least occupying an exterior space that has been heavily altered. Do you think people are ignoring the effects architecture has on their life because they are oftentimes encountering poor design?





Elaheh: Yes. Since people often encounter poor design, I would also add that it might be rare for people to realize what good design is. Most people have forgotten what a beautiful city is. Even if the architecture is flawed, people have the agency to bring their belongings in order to alleviate the architecture's faults.

During my undergrad, other students and I studied place attachment. We were given an assignment to study the degree to which people decorate or alter the balconies of their homes. The idea of place attachment is evident in how occupants add their own belongings to their spaces. When people do this, it serves as proof that there is a sense of ownership.

Ben: So how may this concept apply in the case of poorly designed architecture, or buildings that haven't aged well?

Elaheh: When there is no emotional attachment to a place, it is far less likely for occupants to make the effort of altering a space to meet their needs. For example, people are unlikely to leave their personal touch if they feel like it will be a temporary place for them to live. The sterility that results would serve as proof that many people in the area feel they don't belong. They will likely leave and therefore won't make the investment of personalizing the space.

Ben: This sounds familiar to concepts which I, and likely many others, have come to associate with Jane Jacobs. Largely because of her insistence on the importance of a sense of ownership. With that in mind, many spaces are impermanent even if they are designed well because people will always want to add their personal touch or alter the space for themselves. Do you feel the act of preservation stifles this need for change?

Elaheh: When it comes to whether certain buildings should be preserved, I do believe there are buildings worth saving. Historic preservation, to a certain extent, is okay.

Ben: In what instances would preservation be okay?

Elaheh: Taking the initiative to prolong the life of a special building is fine, but to go back and attempt to touch up colors, minute details, etc. that is artificial and unnecessary.

Ben: How are we to determine which buildings are special enough to save?

Elaheh: I believe buildings which help to frame special urban spaces or have strong focal points are worth saving. Maybe one question to ask is can I make a better version of this place? If I wish to stay and feel I cannot improve the space, then it is worth preserving.

Buildings that are connected to nature are also valuable. In this example, by preserving certain buildings, you are also preserving the landscape they help define. For example, in Iran, homes that are made of clay, blend with the landscape and form small micro-climates in their courtyards, a preliminary version of Persian gardens. If you were to demolish these homes, you'd be eliminating the landscape. In certain instances, preserving the landscape is just as important as preserving buildings.

Ben: The inclusion of unique detailing, connection to nature, and contribution to meaningful urban spaces sounds like an architecture that has the characteristics of timelessness.

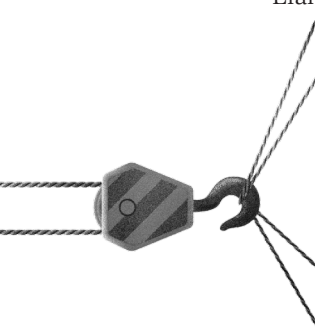
I would argue that in many cases, buildings found in downtowns or suburbs are not founded on these traditional principles. Also, buildings that collectively give form to faulted urban frameworks should not be seen as timeless or unalterable.

So, your earlier comments about place attachment, and how such conduct yields a built environment of constant alteration and devoid of outright renewal are very interesting. In many ways, the concept suggests the necessity for successful, personal designs to undergo change. And this change isn't a bad thing, but is instead evidence that the architecture is worthwhile.

On the other hand, it is completely reason-



able for people to only invest in buildings if they know they are making a long-term investment. As a result, we find ourselves in an unfortunate position. When a building is constructed, regardless of its quality, it is likely going to be with us, in an unaltered state, for quite some time. There is a sense of permanence to the act of construction.



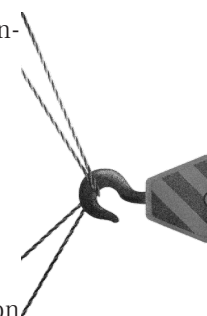
Elaheh: Also, even if a building is personable following its completion, that doesn't guarantee the building will remain a success in that regard in years to come. Ultimately, I feel it comes down to the autonomy of the people and not a designer or architect. It is ultimately in the people's control to alter the built environment to meet their needs and reflect their identity.

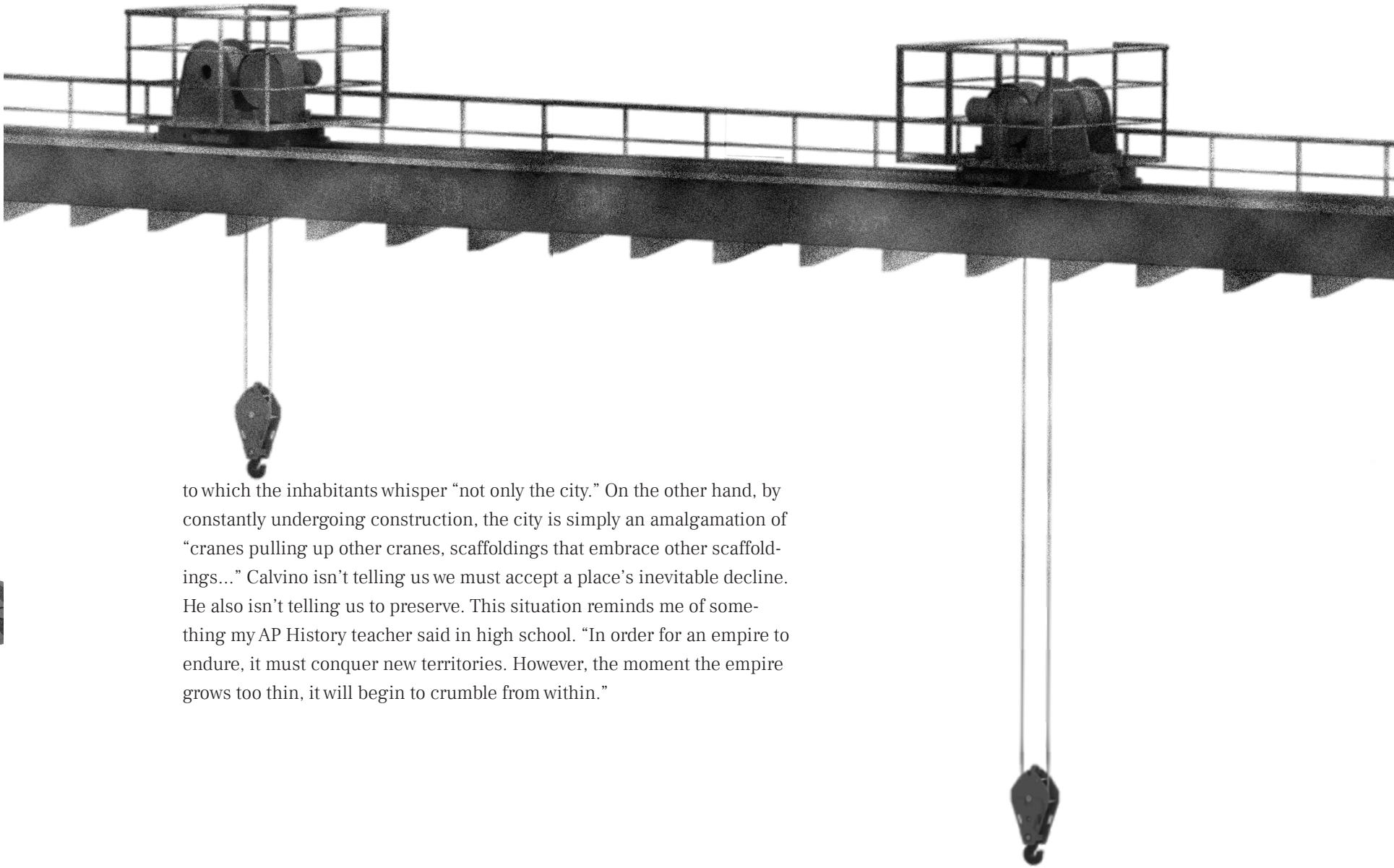
Ben: On that note, I can't help but think of Ise

Shrine in Japan. It is rebuilt every 20 years and at each point of reconstruction, new building methods are incorporated into its design. It's much more flexible than something like Notre Dame, which will be impossible to replicate in its reconstruction. Again, the concept of place attachment and peoples' willingness to alter their spaces comes to mind. Since Ise Shrine undergoes a voluntary, cyclical reconstruction, it is an example of impermanent architecture. But it could certainly go further than simply incorporating new construction methods.

What if most buildings were reconstructed every 20 years and at each point of reconstruction, the design and post occupancy were evaluated to question whether or not the design should be altered to adopt new uses, construction methods, configurations, or whether the building should be kept at all?

In Reference to Calvino<sup>1</sup>: The city of Thekla, a city constantly under construction "so that its destruction cannot begin"... In a way, Calvino manages to characteristically, ingeniously, sum up a collection of opposing positions in a single provoking story. In one sense, as noted in the passage, if the city's progression stops, the city will crumble;





to which the inhabitants whisper “not only the city.” On the other hand, by constantly undergoing construction, the city is simply an amalgamation of “cranes pulling up other cranes, scaffoldings that embrace other scaffoldings...” Calvino isn’t telling us we must accept a place’s inevitable decline. He also isn’t telling us to preserve. This situation reminds me of something my AP History teacher said in high school. “In order for an empire to endure, it must conquer new territories. However, the moment the empire grows too thin, it will begin to crumble from within.”

Calvino, Italo, and William Weaver. *Invisible Cities*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974.



# BUILDING FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

The Medium of Fear

*Caroline Simon, 2nd Year ARCH*

All across America there exists long forgotten, but ever present, signs on the sides of buildings. They display a black circle enclosing three yellow, inward pointing triangles. These buildings were specially surveyed by architects and engineers and certified as fallout shelters (Herwick). Structures that were never actually used for that specifically designated purpose, the signs and the buildings on which they were posted remain an ever-enduring symbol of an era in American history where the fear of what could be played a role in the lives of all Americans.

The Cold War was an era, from 1947 until 1991, of a culmination of intense political tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. It led to the rise of the fallout shelter, coming in several phases. In 1949, the Soviet Union dropped their first Atomic bomb, creating panic in America. Schools instituted programs to teach children what to do in case of a bomb, with the short Duck

and Cover, an official Civil Defense film, being widespread. The film follows Bert the Turtle as a catchy tune narrates his practice in 'ducking and covering,' leading to his survival amongst explosions. If an atomic bomb was to be dropped, this practice was likely to help provide some protection for those with some distance from the site of the drop, but this simple program would be no match for the Hydrogen Bomb being tested by the Soviets in 1953, creating another surge of panic. It was at this point that the Office of Civil Defense had to alter the survival strategy, people would need more protection, they would need a shelter (Vox). The potential cost of the government installing these shelters would have been extremely high, so a do-it-yourself program was instituted instead, with short films such as *Walt Builds a Family Fallout Shelter* encouraging individuals to construct a shelter in their own homes. This movement culminated finally in July 1961,

with President John F. Kennedy giving a speech about the possible threat of nuclear war with the Soviet Union (Jacobs). It was on this specific day that the fallout shelter program in America really kicked off bigger and stronger than before. His speech was followed a few months after by *Life* magazine's September 1961 issue including blueprints for a fallout shelter. It had been made clear to the citizens of the United States that this was a war unlike those before it, this war had the potential to create destruction at a scale never before seen, and thus every American had to do their part to prepare. The traditional front lines had disappeared, everyone had become a soldier in this new kind of war, and their main goal was simply in survival

To fully understand the fallout shelter program of the Cold War, there must be an understanding of the culture surrounding it. The Cold War was very different from the other confron-



tations of the century. For one, there was never any direct, full-scale combat between the United States and the Soviet Union. Compare this to the Vietnam War, there was direct fighting, and even a draft of 2.2 million American men (University of Michigan). Yet during this war, there were widespread, unprecedented protests. This was a more difficult war to justify, but more importantly, with a population of around 205 million people in America (US Census Bureau), most of the population felt little to no impact of the war. In earlier wars, such as World War II (WW2), there was widespread rationing and larger drafts, with 10 million being inducted into combat in WW2 (US Census Bureau). Everyone was involved in the war, directly or indirectly. There was a greater focus on doing one's own part to help the soldiers across the sea, soldiers who are in some way connected or related to oneself. Women entered the work at an unprecedented rate to do their part.

Vietnam did not feel any such drastic effects; there were individuals who did not feel the war at all, who were not worried about their own freedom or lives, and thus had the chance to protest it. One may draw connections to the Cold War and Vietnam, as there was no actual fighting, which would seem to indicate that individuals did not feel the effects of the war, there was no rationing, seemingly no need to enter the workforce. But there is a drastic difference between the Cold War and Vietnam. While there weren't letters from sons or friends, coupon books or a draft, there was another tangible object that constantly reminded everyone of the war they were in. The fallout shelter.

Every citizen was given the responsibility to help America win this war against the Soviet Union. And their main task was simply to survive, with their best chance lying in the fallout shelter. "If you follow the pointers in this little booklet,

you stand a far better than an even chance of surviving the bomb's blast, heat, and radioactivity. What's more, you will make a definite contribution to the civil defense in your community, because civil defense must start with you" (Survival Under Atomic Attack). People could begin to do their part in joining the program of the fallout shelter. The construction of the buildings would seemingly provide a safe place for people from the fallout of a bomb, and the program also sent a message to the Soviet Union: it showed them that the US was prepared for any attack. The Cold War was made into something akin to a real war because of this program. Even if there was no fighting, the presence of the war was everywhere. There were tangible structures, there were those black and yellow signs on the sides of structures. This program became a part of everyone's everyday lives. Building the shelter, performing practice drills, stocking up the storage. This ar-

chitecture was real and tactile in everyone's lives, making a war exist where there otherwise would not be such a present, reminding force of the possible destruction to

The program of the fallout shelter had a place in every American's life, but was this a sure defense against a bomb? The rhetoric of the era followed the pattern of stating simple facts and realities to come from a possible bomb drop, and provided a simple solution to the main dangers, all of which can be seemingly minimized with a fallout shelter. "History shows that there is a defense against every weapon ever invented. Modern civil defense is the civilian's program for protecting people, property, and production in case war comes. If the people are prepared, nothing the enemy can hit us with can knock us out" ("What About You and Civil Defense...", Jacobs). This idea was constantly pushed, that simply being prepared for a bomb can minimize

its impacts, with the literature presented by the government in pamphlets such as “Survival Under Atomic Attack,” which pointed towards the big three concerns: the initial blast, resulting heat, and radioactivity. In accordance with the pamphlet these three can be reasonably countered by seeking cover in a fallout shelter. While the concept of simply having a fallout shelter being enough to provide safety is comforting, it actually wouldn’t have been very effective in saving everyone.

President John F. Kennedy’s civil-defense chief, Steuart L. Pittman, acknowledged that fallout shelters would do very little to actually protect the people near the site of an actual bomb drop, but the program would give “our presently unprotected population some form of protection,”(Herwick). Protection being in the form of an act, something people can pick up and do, something they can tangibly see, and believe that

it could keep them safe. It gave them hope, it took their minds off of the possibility of unavoidable destruction. People don’t like to sit and await their fate, this program gave them something to do and believe in. This program of this shelter rose to something far beyond its intention. The shelters would not provide protection at the site of a bomb drop, while they may protect those far outside the region of the target. But for those who were protected, what kind of world would they return to? These buildings sheltered people from the truth, there would be no one untouched in a nuclear war, there would be no line of defense if a bomb was dropped on a particular city. There was nowhere to go and nothing anyone could do to truly protect themselves. But this is a fact Americans preferred not to acknowledge.

Raymond Swing, creator of One World or None, described what it would look like if an atomic bomb was actually dropped, stating, “Prac-

tically everyone within a radius of two miles is killed or injured. Horrible effects of radiation are permanent blindness, sterility, loss of teeth, prolonged bleeding, and ulcerations of the body tissues. The heat generated is so great that literally nothing remains but dust and smoke. No streets, no walls, not even dead bodies, everything has been pulverized. Fires of terrific dimensions sweep the city” (Swing). There would be no fallout shelters left at the site of a bomb drop.

And what exactly would happen if a bomb was dropped? Fallout shelters created an ideological program of self-defense for and your family. The program began as a do-it-yourself, people were told to store goods such as food, water, and other necessities for a set amount of time. Throwing any other individuals into this equation, say, a desperate, unprepared neighbor, would decrease the likelihood of survival for every other member in that fallout shelter. Fallout shelters

wouldn't even protect people in too close a range of the bomb, yet they were still willing to kill their neighbors if it came to it. individuals were willing to do anything to ensure their own hypothetical survival at any cost. *Time Magazine* published an article, “Gun Thy Neighbor,” which suggested having a gun in all fallout shelters just in case (“Gun Thy Neighbor,” *Life*). Provisions would only go so far, and when it came down to it, one's own family's survival was much more important than one's neighbor's survival (Jacobs).

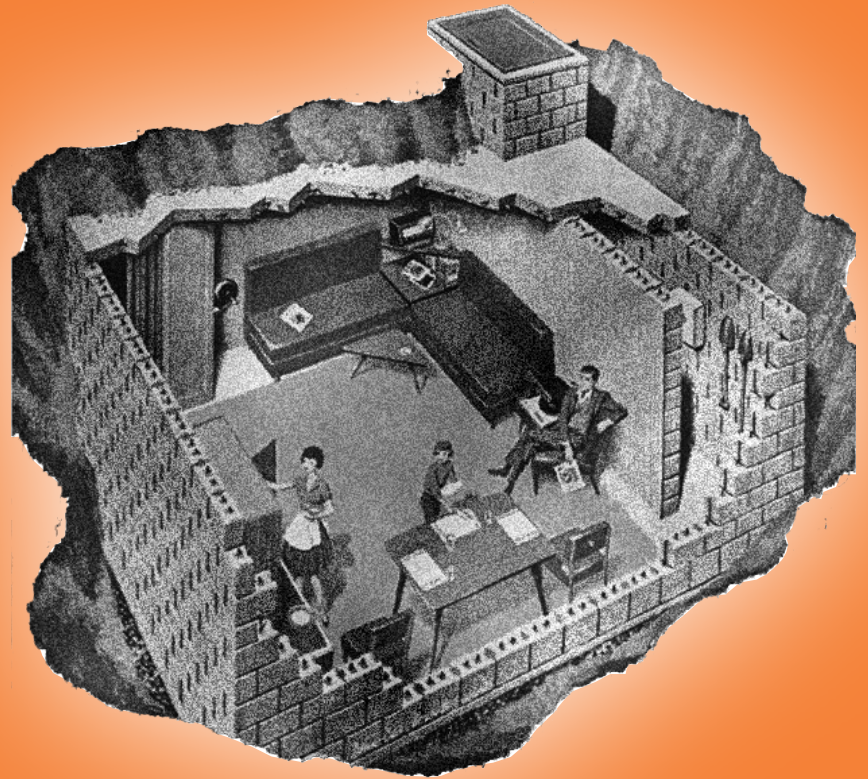
The idea behind Fallout Shelters was that they would protect Americans against nuclear bombs being potentially dropped by the Soviet Union. The shelters are a form of metamedia, they grew wildly past their first initial intention, instead becoming a symbol to the Soviets that America was prepared to survive the Soviets' worst bombs, and giving the American people hope, despite the fact that the reality was much

more grim. These buildings stood in theory for so much more than they could actually promise to the people who would seek shelter in them. This architecture was something of a façade, promoting safety and welfare, hiding a grotesque culture behind it, of people willing to shoot their neighbor in hope of surviving a little longer, not even knowing what kind of world would be left when they emerged from their shelter.

We again are in an era passing through phases of all too real fear of nuclear war. Architecture may influence our choices regarding self-preservation at a loss of our own humanity, perhaps again encouraging individuals to construct their own fallout shelters, protecting those closest to you, everyone else being a hindrance to your own survival. Or maybe this time, if it comes to it, we will ponder more the real consequences of a nuclear war. Perhaps it is not the destruction from the bomb, but the culture created in prepar-

ing for a bomb, in constructing these fallout shelters. Would we be willing to kill our neighbor if it meant surviving and emerging to an unknown world? Rod Serling frames this best, in one of his Cold War era commentaries, in the form of an episode of *The Twilight Zone*: “Damages? I wonder. I wonder if any one of us knows what those damages really are. Maybe one of them is finding out what we’re really like when we’re normal. The kind of people we are just underneath the skin. I mean all of us. A lot of naked wild animals who put such a price on staying alive that they’ll claw their neighbors to death just for the privilege. We were spared a bomb tonight, but I wonder if we weren’t destroyed even without it”

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# LITERATURE AND ARCHI- TECTURAL DESIGN

The Medium of Story

*Marilyn Anthony, 2nd Year English*

If there is one question that can excite both the architect and the writer, it would be where? Whether location determines the layout for a new building or the setting of a plot, the matter of where shapes the way each artistic medium constructs a new form; however, the architect and the writer operate in severely different ways. As such, it is hard for one to imagine the similarities between the architecture and literature, since the former requires a tangible

shape just as the other expresses itself intangibly. That is to say, architecture remains grounded by practicality, while literature's limitations depend only on the range of the writer's imagination. Despite these differences, the two artistic mediums pour into each other in a way that is often overlooked. For instance, literature can shape humanity's perception of architecture, which in turn allows specific structures to evoke powerful emotions.

Literature's influence observed throughout various architectural movements suggests that literary trends have the ability to create connotations about architecture, whether intended or not. Furthermore, literature contains the ability to express the mind's thoughts and ideas, which can manifest into the aesthetic experience of architecture. Past literary trends have managed to inspire a range of architecture, and architecture has influenced literature in a similar way. Thus, future architectural design should consider literature due to its' ability to interact with architecture in a way that enriches both, which further paves the way for ideas expressed in literature to manifest in architecture.

Despite functioning in different realms of thought, architecture and literature both share similarities in providing meaningful experiences to humanity. To behold either artistic work means to comprehend the lifestyle of a person or culture. While architecture must be realistic and grounded by human needs, it also is an aesthetic experience that effectively reflects the community and space it resides in. While literature doesn't take up space in the same way, it also reflects humanity's thoughts and imagination, just without the restraints of practicality. Thus, architecture can be read and inter-

preted in the same way as one might tear apart the meaning of a work of literature. A study that examines the similarities between architecture and literature states it clearest: "Architecture is the expression of materialization in literature, and literature is the account of imagination in architecture." Thus, the two concepts might be far apart, but they are capable of pouring into each other in a manner that enhances both.

**//** Past literary trends have managed to inspire a range of architecture, and architecture has influenced literature in a similar way. **//**

To further understand the dynamic of architecture and literature is to examine the Gothic Revival, a trend in European society that illuminates how these two mediums are woven together. Firstly, one must understand the original purpose of the Gothic

style in order to comprehend the full transformation of this architectural movement. The Gothic design consisted of hugely arched buildings that reached enormous heights, which were meant to trap as much natural light in the space as possible. Hence, this particular style seemed rather fragile. As new technologies developed in medieval society, the need for this design faded away around the 1500s but would return in the 1700s due to literary trends.

Such haunted imagery written about Gothic structures enabled these abandoned buildings to transform in the public imagination as vessels of supernatural terror. This new genre of literature, named Gothic after the buildings, presented these houses as embodiments of isolation, darkness, and the untamed. In a time where romanticism dominated Europe, writers would romanticize the gloominess of these forgotten Gothic buildings in their works. For example, the "House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe is a gothic piece that spends a generous amount of time describing the haunted elements of the Gothic-style household, which feeds the sinister, strange tone of the piece. Thus, Gothic architecture became a setting device meant to enhance horror within literature. In turn, the new literary trend stimulated the Gothic Revival, an architectur-

al movement that lasted throughout the 19th century, even spreading to the United States. As stories about Frankenstein and Dracula inspired the imagination of the public, and as more Gothic inspired buildings emerged, the Gothic style of literature and architecture shaped culture in a profound way.

Additionally, the influence literature has on the perception of architecture continues in modern times as literary phenomena create connotations around architecture. A variety of university tours compare their own libraries to the one described in Harry Potter, evoking that nostalgic, magical sense of wonder readers experienced when reading the books and applying it to their own architecture. Hence, even current literary trends impact the perception of modern architecture. One may even observe science fiction, a genre that imagines futuristic societies, and see how it influences the perception of architecture. These works have the ability to develop cultural ideas that architects must pay attention to in order to create spaces that fit new cultural needs.

Besides providing a look on cultural needs, literature also provides ideas that individual architects can find inspiration from. Transcendentalism, an American thought movement, stimulated the

production of various literary works that continued to inspire the mind of Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect that coined the term “organic architecture.” A key writer of the transcendentalist movement was Ralph Waldo Emerson, who contributed an array of works dedicated to this philosophy of possessing

**//** His works illustrate how an architect may develop their own original thoughts through literature and incorporate these beliefs into their work **//**

a deep love for nature, harmony, unity and the individual soul. A follower and reader of his works, Wright dedicated his architectural works to these ideas, which set his work apart from neoclassical architecture, the trend of that time. An example of his work, the Unity Temple, a Unitarian Universalist

church, exhibited a simple style inspired by natural structures. Moreover, he included opaque glass with sunlight filters that glimmer from every direction, as inspired by Emerson’s discussions of the geometry of nature and the sun. Such inspiration by Emerson’s works create a structure that conveys a physical, as well as spiritual unity. Thus, Wright’s deviation from the norm allowed him to explore his own ideas about society and cultivate a new style of architecture. His works illustrate how an architect may develop their own original thoughts through literature and incorporate these beliefs into their work, whether or not it deviates from the current trend.

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# THE DEVIL WEARS ~~PRADA~~ BLACK?

The Medium of Uniform

*Ryan Godfrey, 2nd Year ARCH*

It should not come as a surprise that many people familiar with architects associate them with wearing the color black. Black is professional, utilitarian, sleek, easy. Throughout history, and in modern times, black has been used to signify a distinction between people. Those in mourning wear black to showcase their emotions, and in the past couple decades “edgy” teenagers wear black to rebel against the status quo. Whether or not someone cares about their appearance, clothes are a form of self-expression and they influence people’s first impression of others. Everyone has opinions on clothes, and in fact could be considered a form of architecture and for that matter even metamedia. Clothes are carefully constructed, intentionally paired, subject to fads and whims, and protect us, much like architecture. In fact, many times, an architect’s clothing and personality dictate the relationship between a particular client and the designer, and could affect whether or not someone gets a project. Clothes, and choice of, are tools within an architect’s arsenal that are rarely

seen as a tool for change and are often considered nuisances. Choosing clothes to present oneself in a particular manner is extremely important. But before reaching for those black shirts and pants, think about the ramifications of doing so.

When wearing black, we are comparing ourselves to those who are known for wearing all black: haute couture designers, “scene” kids, mourners, famous architects, and the Catholic clergy. The Catholic clergy has been wearing this distinctive dress since 1215 CE. It was originally intended to catch people’s eyes in the street in case they needed a priest, and to remind the priest to “die to themselves” in order to better serve their God and teach The Word. It was not intentionally meant to elevate the status of the priest, however, due to the power the Catholic Church gained throughout the centuries, the black cassock or garb began to represent more than its original intention. It began to represent a group of people who primarily serve the wealthy. In regards to the 15th and 16th century Northern Europe, most

notably modern-day Germany and Martin Luther, the Catholic Church sold indulgences to the wealthy so the rich could avoid penance and/or punishment for their sins. From the 15th to the 18th century in France, under the “Ancien Regime,” the clergy partook in government affairs within the first estate where they had one of three votes, the other two being the nobility and the common men, where the clergy always voted in favor of the nobility and because of this,

**// Clothes, and choice of, are tools within an architect’s arsenal that are rarely seen as a tool for change. //**

were exempt from taxes and enjoyed an elevated social status. In 16th century England, Henry VIII and all of England were excommunicated from the Catholic Church by Pope Clement VII due to the king divorcing his first wife Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Ann Boleyn. This excommunication led to riots in England against the king, and through fear tactics the Catholic Church grew in power which caused people to have more loyalty to the pope than their own king.

The Catholic Church is not only strongly entwined within history and



power structures, but also to architecture. Every architect learns and visits many cathedrals, chapels, and even St. Peter's Basilica, and is familiar with the general history of the church that built these monuments. When architects wear black they are inherently grouping themselves with the Catholic clergy and their history. By wearing black, we equate ourselves with a group of people who advertise that they translate the word of the divine for the common man. We group ourselves with those that, for centuries, served the rich and sought power for themselves.

Another notorious group that wears black and primarily serves the rich, and those closely associated with them, are haute couture designers. When high fashion designers accompany celebrities to award shows or galas, or after their own seasonal show, it is common for the designer to wear something black. Take the Met Gala for instance, the most exclusive fashion event of the year. A ticket for this event typically runs \$35,000 a person, and tables range from \$200,000 to \$300,000, and celebrities often spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on outfits for this exorbitant event. Designers accompanying these celebrities tend to wear black or extremely muted tones in comparison to their counterparts. Vera Wang in 2015 wore a black, floor length dress; Jean-Paul Gaultier wore black in 2007; and Olivier Rousteing wore all black in 2015. It is also customary for designers, when they come out for the finale of their show, to be wearing all or primarily black. This can range depending on the fashion city and the type of fashion itself, but designers often wear black turtlenecks, suits, shirts, or entire

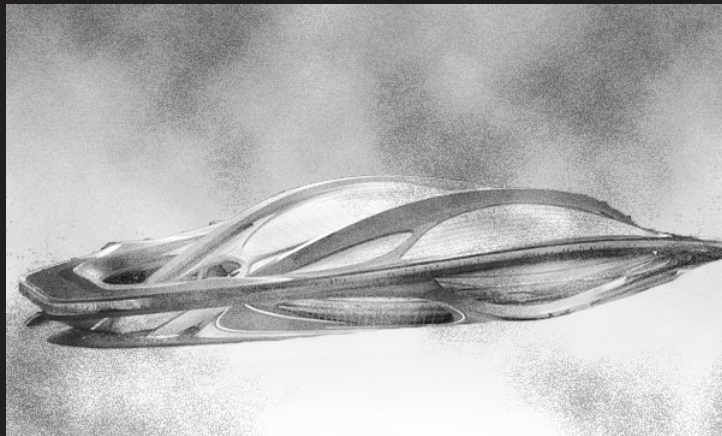
ensembles. One could argue that high-end designers do not necessarily work for the rich because their designs trickle down and some forms of them end up in department stores for the average middle class citizen to buy. However, aside from their seasonal shows, haute couture houses work directly and solely for those rich enough to pay for one of a kind designs, or for the designs featured in their shows. Success in this field is not measured in sales or cultural impact, but in how many celebrities and which celebrities the designer has dressed for events. For the majority of Americans, the only time they see these designs are in the news, videos taken by celebrities attending these events, and reality television.

Additionally, these people work in an industry that is extremely wasteful, does not value human life, and values quantity over quality. By no reason should an architect want to be equated or compared to these people. This industry accounts for eight percent of global climate impacts, and has a reputation for using overseas sweatshops.

Architecture is currently trying to do its part in decreasing carbon footprints: buildings and their construction are responsible for around forty percent of carbon emissions. We should not follow in the footsteps of people who do not care at all; apathy and lack of information got us to this point of being on the precipice of a climate catastrophe. We need to do our part in fixing what we have broken and having a high and mighty haute couture designer mentality will not get us to where we need to be within the decade. Architects try to value human life, the user experience and the people their designs affect. Why are we, as a community, taking after people who only care about the rich and treat everyone else like they are disposable? The majority of architectural projects are either for the average person or are to be used by the non-wealthy. We should not try to be stoic and detached from our work, and who it affects, because in order to create a design that truly helps and serves a population one needs to understand, meet, and empathize with people.

Famous architects who are known for wearing all black often never see their work realized or are criticized because their work only focuses on form and not on sustainability; user experience; or easy to maintain buildings, three factors that have become very important to the architecture community, or are at least very important to architectural educators and students. Zaha Hadid is an amazing architect that stood up for herself in a very white and male dominated field. However, her work and methods are not necessarily where architecture seems to be headed in recent years. To fully direct the profession to be more conscientious of others and the environment we should not look to her or her work. For example, her proposal in Japan for its Olympic stadium was deemed “wildly expensive” and “insensitive to the site.” On that very same project, many of the designed rows of seating could not view the 10m diving board which was to host eight Olympic events. This does not mean it was not a great design overall, but for the everyday architect trying to create better environments for people with small budgets, she is not a rubric to follow. Furthermore, Hadid has been viewed as cold and unwelcoming to clients and users, which could be a product of wanting to be respected for her accomplishments and ideas in an, at times, misogynistic field. Zaha Hadid is a great example to follow if money is not an issue for a client and a grand Olympic-sized, grandiose monument to architecture is the goal, but that is not the reality for ninety-nine percent of architects. Wearing black, like Hadid, equates ourselves with her, her work, and her way of thinking which is not something to be emulated especially around ev-

eryday clients. When the press gives attention and time to starchitects who wear black, the public takes notice, so by wearing black we are subject to not only the public's opinions of these individuals, but also to them assuming we think and



act just like them because we wear the same clothing. Many starchitects and those who praise them focus entirely on forms and treat money like it is not an object. This way of thinking sounds great and something to aim for, however, it is problematic and perpetuates the stereotype that we, as a profession, only serve or want to serve the wealthy.

Buildings and designing them are expensive, and it is easy to fall into the routine of only caring about those who pay for it, but that routine has allowed for thirty-eight percent of carbon emissions to be a product of buildings and their constructions. Now, not all of this is directly attributable to architects, but in schools students are taught to consider all avenues and ways of thinking, so why does our profession not? Architects can make a huge difference in the issue of climate change, but the need to be taken seriously and achieve some level of prestige blinds many from the real issues that our society is struggling with and the fact that the profession could really make a difference in this realm. The way of thinking taught in architecture schools is completely thrown out in practice, which has allowed designers to develop tunnel vision on fame and praise, instead of being socially responsible. The first step towards this goal is to stop wearing all black. Wearing black carries these ideals and the “sleek, professional” look that comes with it puts architects on a pedestal where they

only have to care about the design of the project, and not the social or environmental ramifications of it, because that is deemed below them.

In conclusion, by wearing black, architects equate themselves with people who have histori-

**// Wearing black ... puts architects on a pedestal where they only have to care about the design of the project. //**

cally been known for serving the rich and taking advantage of the poor for financial gain; and it places the architect on a pedestal where only the design is considered important. This community has been known for being problematic and closed towards females, minorities, and new ideas. We

are trying to change our ways and the first step towards a better community is to start with individuals' outlooks, and wearing black prevents architects from being proactive. Wearing black separates the designer from their work and from those around them. It makes little sense as to why someone would not want to be a part of their own design. Being a part of one's work lets the architect take pride in their work. It also allows for the architect to take responsibility for any shortcomings in the design and programming, creating a more proactive community. Wearing colors allows for personality to show through, which is something for the client to relate to and can increase a client's comfort level, creating better interpersonal interactions and possibly preventing constant design changes. Architects should strive to be as personable as possible; students do it during school to decrease the risk of being destroyed during a critique, so why has the profession lost this skill? All in all, wearing black prevents architects from being proactive, personable with clients and the public, and from taking responsibility for their actions.

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OILET

# HEADSPACE

## The Medium of Workplace

*Humans of Gould*

*In late 2017, an account appeared on Instagram to document the daily activities and habits of students within The University of Oklahoma's College of Architecture. Known only as @humans\_of\_gould its catalogue offers an insight into the cultural happenings in the habitat of Gould Hall. Our editorial staff received the following submission to Metamedia:*

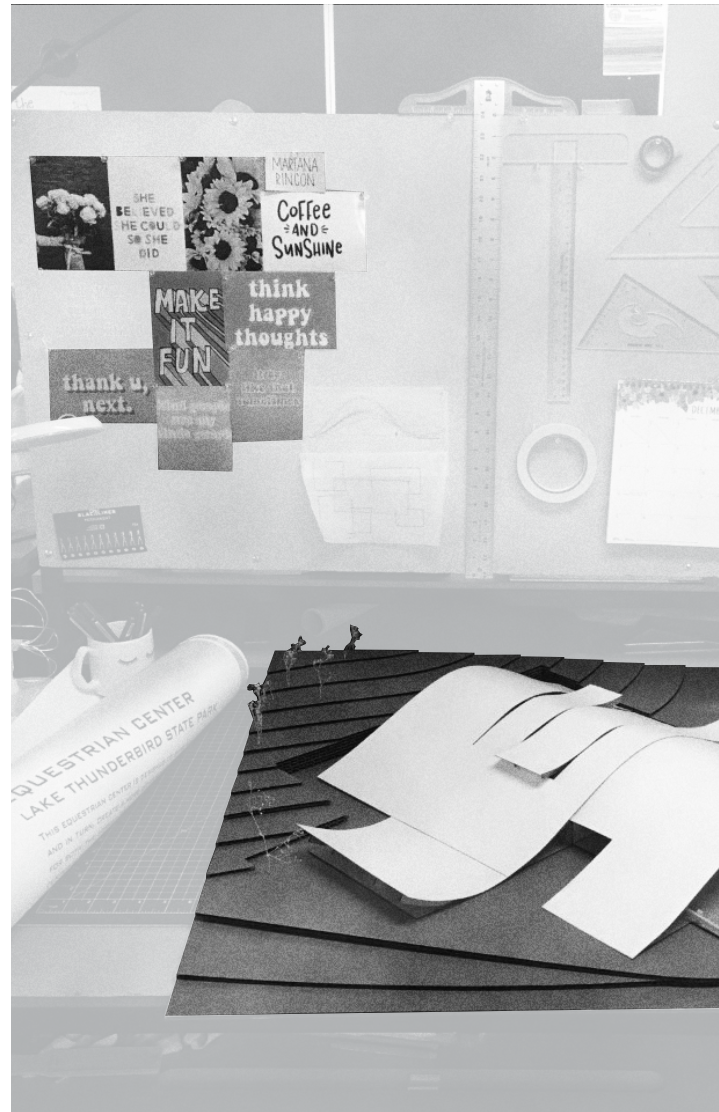
Our mission is to capture the ephemeral state of the "studio" from its formal definition, to all of the messing about. "Headspace" is a series of snapshots taken at student workspace. These environments themselves are an agent on the students behalf, representing their personalities, work habits, lifestyles, and more, as physical echoes of their existence. The spaces themselves are fleeting; constantly evolving as the media through which the work translates. As nimble and impermanent as the student body itself, "Headspace" is the emergent manifestation of Gould Hall's ever intangible zeitgeist.



**Second Year Art-itecture Desk**  
Culture on Pin-Up Board

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture,  
GH B95, University of Oklahoma





**Fraternal Twin Third Year Desks**  
Motivational Posters on Pin-Up Board

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture, GH 205, University of Oklahoma



**Third Year Residence Desk**

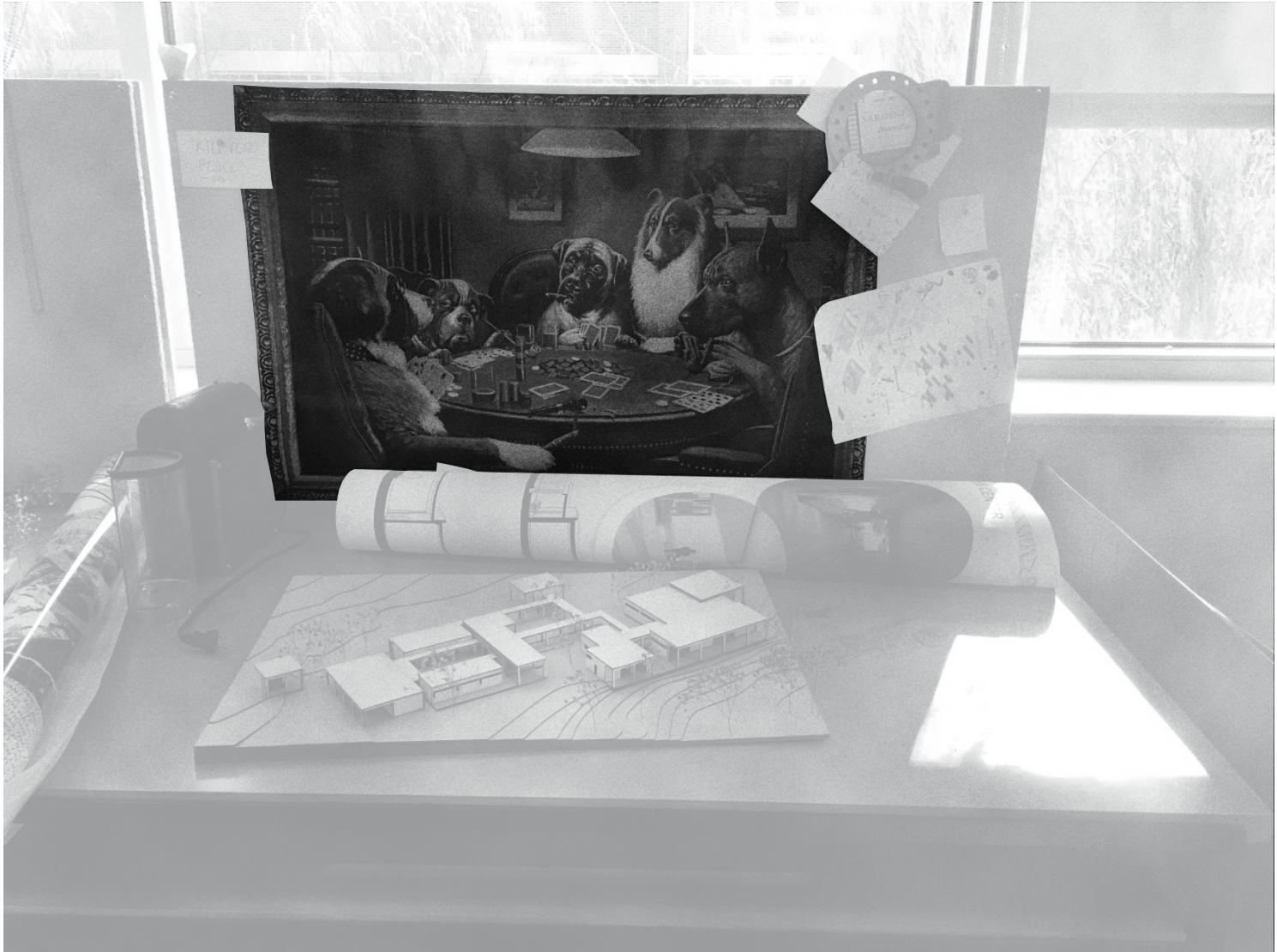
Duffel bag on MDF Tabletop

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture,  
GH 205, University of Oklahoma



**Fourth Year Studio Decor**  
Mixed Media on MDF Tabletop

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture, GH B60, University of Oklahoma



**Third Year Kitsch Study**  
Tapestry over Pin-Up Board

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture,  
GH 205, University of Oklahoma



### **Fourth Year Cafeteria**

7 Pizza Boxes on Mobile Storage Cart

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture, GH B60, University of Oklahoma



### **Fourth Year Printing Rebellion**

Printer on Mobile Storage Cart

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture,  
GH B60, University of Oklahoma



### **Third Year Student Work**

A Dozen Models over MDF Tabletop

Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture,  
GH 205, University of Oklahoma



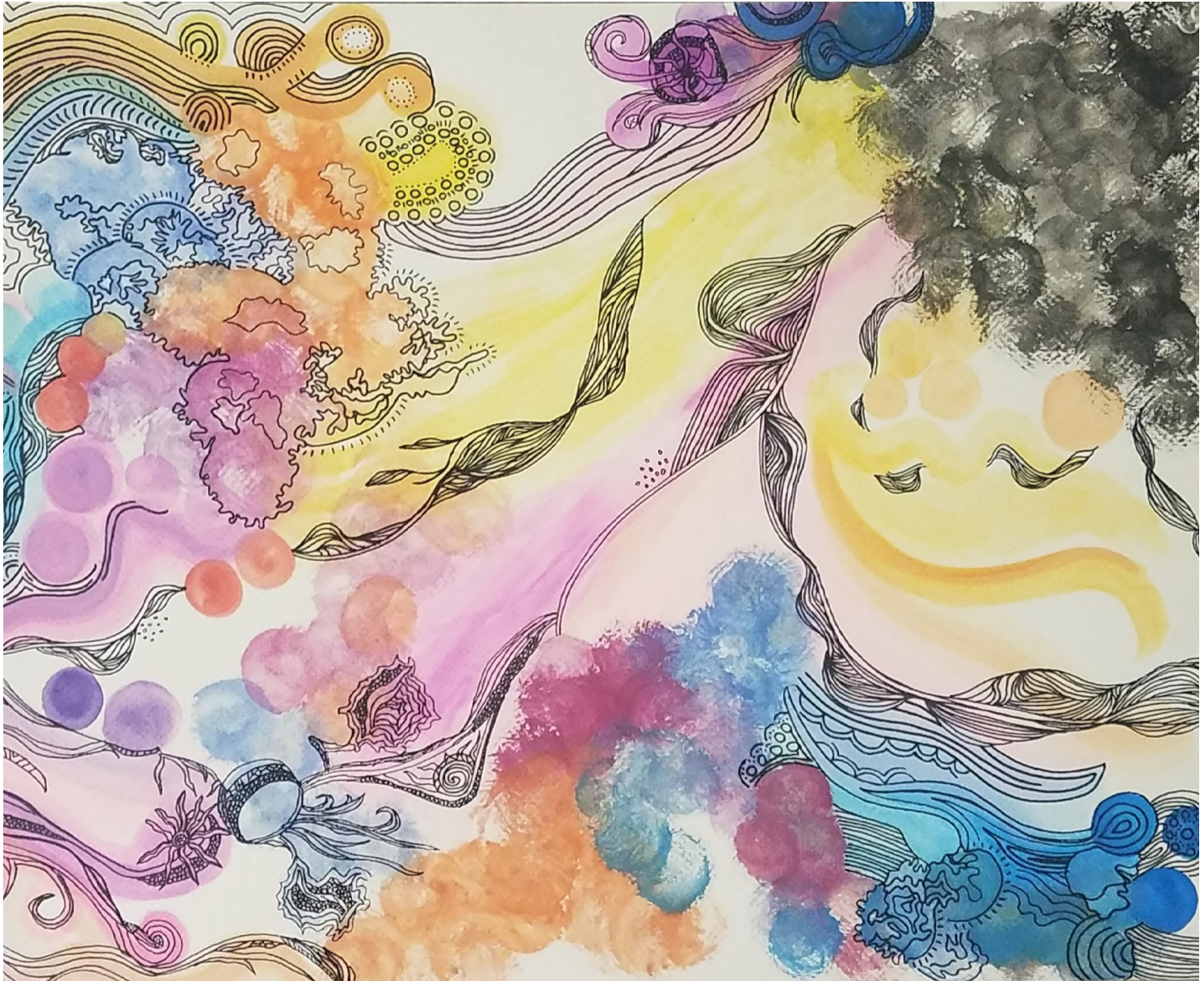


# SKETCHING SOUNDS

The Medium of Translation

ARCH 4513 + ART 2413

*Creativity Through Sketching [ARCH 4513], a fall course taught by Dave Boeck, is open to students of all year levels within the college of architecture. In collaboration with students from Beginning Painting [ART 2413], taught by Jason Cytacki in the School of Visual Arts, this assignment asked students to consider various pieces of music spanning time and genre. The following compositions were the result of a collaborative translation effort by teams of three or four students in real-time.*



**An Awesome Wave**

Mixed Media on Bristol Paper

Arranged by ARCH 4513 + ART 2413

Students

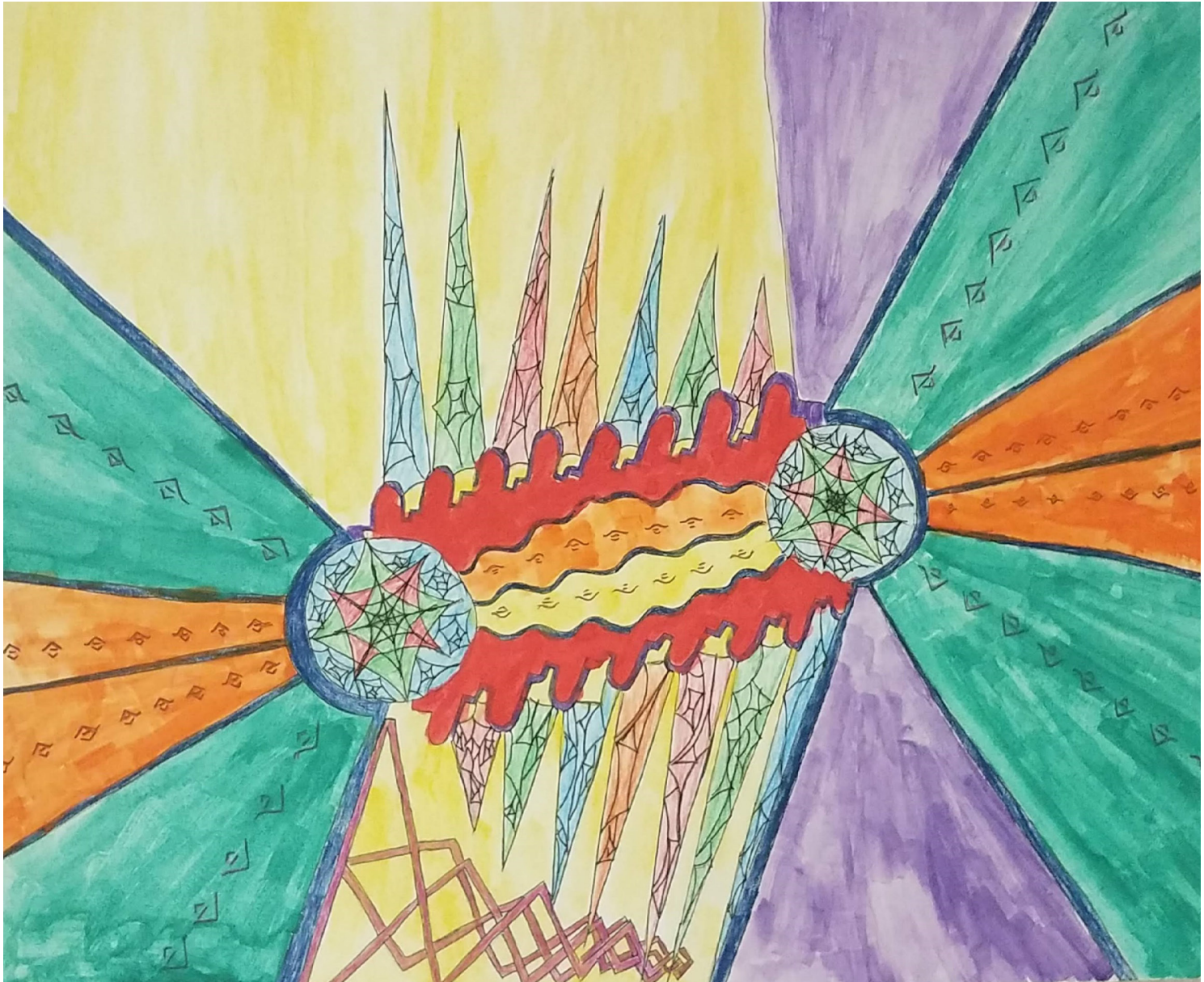


**Asymmetric Rhythmic Punctuated**

Mixed Media on Bristol Paper

Arranged by ARCH 4513 + ART 2413

Students



**Fade In Fade Out**

Mixed Media on Bristol Paper

Arranged by ARCH 4513 + ART 2413

Students



### **A Study in Proportion, Transparency, Translucency, Opacity**

Ernest Burden, Fourth-Year Studio (Architecture 273)  
assignment, Bruce Goff, instructor, 1955

*The 1950s for architecture at OU represented a renaissance in both curriculum and praxis that saw some of the most original, American works of architecture to date. This prolific time led by chairman and instructor Bruce Goff embodies a zeitgeist still alive within the program today. Bruce Goff saw design elements as catalysts for developing design abstractions through form, materiality, texture, color, rhythm and patterns. Students were asked to take up to three similar words/ideas and collaborate in developing an abstract design that connects with the words. The goal was to graphically define each word as if trying to explain the word's meaning in the context of the music which forces a creative and almost synesthetic translation.*



# SPIN CYCLE

## The Medium of Transit

*Anthony Andrade, 5th Year ARCH*

The invention of the washing machine freed millions of people from the labor intensive and time-consuming task of cleaning clothes. I do not know a single person who continues to wash their clothes by hand. In fact, I never did. Instead, like most people, I blissfully shift my attention to something else, letting the machine do its work. Countless hours, endless possibilities, given to us by something most of us regard as a basic, yet necessary, household item.

As I look around and marvel at other household items, I so carelessly take for granted, I wonder, what's next? Is there a future ahead of us where washing machines are as archaic as pay-phones on street corners? Probably not, washing machines aren't normally found on streets, but I'll tell you what is, a car. They're everywhere. In fact, city streets today are almost always designed for today's automobile and very rarely are they designed for us.

Now, I'm not suggesting one day soon we'll have streets completely free of cars and other automobiles as they zoom by flying overhead, no,

that'd be outlandish. But what I am suggesting is the possibility of compromise between pedestrians and self-driving cars, otherwise called autonomous vehicles (AVs). AVs have a similar opportunity to do what the washing machine did for us not so long ago by giving us the invaluable gift of time, eliminating commutes.

Before we figure out teleportation, most people will need to continue traveling to work. But, like the washing machine, as we let the machine do the work, we're free to divert our energy elsewhere. However, unlike the washing machine, there are direct ramifications of shifting into the autonomous world.

As I mentioned before, streets are designed for today's car. Although AVs provide the same result as today's car by getting someone/something from point A to B, designing streets for AVs differs slightly. AVs biggest advantage is safety, their instant decision making can prevent countless traffic deaths while managing to do more.

An AV's remarkable precision means it doesn't require the same lane width allotment as

human-driven vehicles. Road and parking lot square footages will decrease as guidelines alter to meet the AVs less stringent parameters. AVs will be able to get more people from point A to B quicker while simultaneously reducing congestion and infrastructure needs.

What bunk beds did for bedrooms, AVs will do for our cities, "there's so much room for activities!" Imagine the possibilities of all that wasted dead space given to surface parking in our urban cores. If we're lucky, all AVs will run on electricity, producing little, if any, carbon emissions into the atmosphere. Wider sidewalks will run wild with lush flora as antiquated surface parking readapts into park space and other uses. Impervious paving potentially begins to decrease, scaling down the effects of stormwater runoff and the urban heat island. An obtainable urban oasis is the reward for overhauling outdated modes of transportation.

All this praise is not to say there aren't potential negative effects to an autonomous transportation network, because there are. Whether you like it or not, research from the Boston Consulting Group via Bloomberg Philanthropies suggest AVs could replace conventional cars by 2035.<sup>1</sup> Autonomous transportation is coming. Lack of foresight in transitioning to autonomous transportation could compound on the mistakes of the past, increasing: pollution, congestion, sprawl, and weakening mass transit systems.<sup>2</sup> People are the true stakeholders, not large corporations constantly trying to dictate our needs, "...the choice between a utopia and a dystopia will ultimately depend on who can make the decisions," a lesson from



famed urbanist Jane Jacobs.<sup>3</sup> The sentiment that we, specifically Americans, “love to drive...hate transit...want to live in suburbs... [and] chose the automobile long ago,” holds no merit. As more Americans move to denser and walkable communities it’s unclear whether Americans would continue to choose car culture if they were provided with alternatives.<sup>3</sup> We have an opportunity at a do-over and without visualizing a blank canvas, filling it with the dreams of our utopia, we fail to reverse the mistakes of our past.

The irony is, were this utopia to become a reality, there’s little architects would do to create it. The architectural profession has spent the last decade attempting to rectify and implement new urban ideals into practice. After decades of design experimentation, the rapid pace of technology

surpasses architecture, again moving the goalposts.

The leaping bounds of advancement in technology continue to surprise us all. Imagine technology responding, struggling even, to keep up with architecture. Instead, we, the architects, move the goalposts. Anticipating a world of AVs gives us the gift of a new washing machine. Shifting our attention to the problems of tomorrow as we blissfully let the machine do its work.

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2. Shaver, Katherine. “City Planners Eye Self-Driving Vehicles to Correct Mistakes of the 20th-Century Auto.” *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 21 July 2019, [www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2019/07/20/city-planners-eye-self-driving-vehicles-correct-mistakes-th-century-auto/](http://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2019/07/20/city-planners-eye-self-driving-vehicles-correct-mistakes-th-century-auto/).
3. Coren, Michael J. “America’s Transportation Do-over Could Be a Utopia or Dystopia. It’s up to Us.” *Quartz*, Quartz, 6 Sept. 2019, [qz.com/1688676/self-driving-cars-could-turn-the-us-into-a-utopia-or-dystopia-its-up-to-us/](http://qz.com/1688676/self-driving-cars-could-turn-the-us-into-a-utopia-or-dystopia-its-up-to-us/).



# PERVIOUS URBANISM, PERVIOUS ARCHITECTURE

The Medium of Perviousness

*Ben DeCuyper, 5th year ARCH*

While a pervious architecture and urbanism serves as an example of Metamedia, this does not imply that such efforts are only predictions of a desired future. Architects and urbanists are beginning to explore ways of merging the medium of water with the medium of shelter and public spaces. Flooding experienced near watersides due to rising sea levels and climate change serves as the impetus for this investigation. It is reasonable to assume that water levels are rising again, largely because of our effects on the environment, and with this, watersheds are slowly being overtaken.

To investigate the relationship between human beings and water, one must discuss the Netherlands. Certain experts claim 26 percent of the nation lies below sea level, while another 29 percent of the nation is at risk of flooding (Reuters). In "The Dutch Have Solutions to Rising Seas. The World is Watching," Michael Kimmelman discusses the measures the Dutch have implemented to combat not only rising sea levels, but also the fact that many areas within the

nation are gradually sinking. Among these efforts, the Delta Works project, which was enacted shortly after the flood of 1953, is the most prominent. This effort involved damming “two major waterways and produced the Maeslantkering — the giant sea gate, keeping open the immense waterway that services the entire port of Rotterdam” (Kimmelman). The infrastructure which resulted from the Delta Works project, which didn’t reach completion until 1997, was unprecedented during the time of its construction. Artists depicted the colossal dams during the 1960s and these depictions shine a light on their alien presence in the Dutch landscape (Metz p. 71).

In *Sweet and Salt: Water and the Dutch*, Tracy Metz argues that the Delta Works project was insufficient in terms of its ability to combat the issues of rising sea levels. Also, the project was unsuccessful due to the dams’ detrimental effects on the delta’s ecology. For example, the Zandkreek and Veerse Gat Dams resulted in the disappearance of mussel and shrimp in a large stretch of the southern estuary (McDowell p. 53). Since sea levels have continued to rise and because much of the infrastructure has already shown signs of aging, the Delta Works project has had an additional, unexpected consequence. It has introduced to the area the incorrect assumption that people living below sea level can successfully fortify themselves from water. Overall, the project has caused the Dutch to suffer from a false sense of security.

Even though the Delta Works project required roughly 40 years, and 8 billion guilder (Dutch currency), to complete, the Dutch government is realizing additional efforts must be made. New plans, such as Room for the River, show the government is wisely incorporating means of adaptation, rather than fortification, to create change. Harold van Waveren, a senior government adviser, has expressed his position by stating, “We can’t just keep building higher levees, because we will end up living behind 10-meter walls. We need to give the rivers more places to flow” (Kimmelman). The failure of the Delta Works project and the country’s implementation of Room for the River serves as an example that large fortification efforts are an inevitable failure.

European watersides are not the only places experiencing increased levels of flooding. When discussing climate change and how it has affected areas worldwide, New Orleans is often a recurring point of interest. Hurricane Katrina resulted in mass amounts of flooding, and a death toll of 1,800 people. LSU professor Craig Colten has stated that “Keeping the city [New Orleans] dry, or separating the human-made environment from its natural endowment, has been the perpetual battle for New Orleans” (McDowell p. 48). In May of 2011, New Orleans avoided a massive flooding event, which may have been comparable with the flooding which occurred due to Hurricane Katrina, by “opening sluices further upstream and preventively flooding thousands of hectares of farmland” (McDowell p. 48 + Metz p. 233). While these preventative measures are not ideal, since they entailed intentionally flooding farms and villages, they serve as proof that means involving fortification are not viable.

People must understand that water is a very difficult substance to control. While terms such as “rising sea levels” may lead people to believe that inland areas are exempt from the ramifications of climate change, rivers are a portion of our planet’s interconnected, dynamic water system. A large spectrum of actors, which collectively create complex morphodynamic [change dynamics involving the motion of sediment] processes, make it impossible to predict how a river may change over

time (Prominski p. 21).

The Mississippi River, as well as its many tributaries, is experiencing rising water levels and flooding as well as extreme lows. In 2013 a project broke ground to improve the St. Louis Arch Grounds. To combat flooding, the project involved elevating S Leonor K Sullivan Boulevard. The process of raising the street, which stretches along the riverfront, required nearly three years to complete. Unfortunately, after this effort was made, a massive flood submerged the entire street during June of this year. This failed project serves as proof that methods of retreat, like those involving fortification, are also unsuccessful.

This flooding event served as the inspiration for this year's AIA Central States Student Competition, a competition which Elaheh Houshmanidpanah, Tanaka Kawondera, Skye Reid, and myself participated in with faculty sponsor Francesco Cianfarani. The brief called for a building which would serve various programmatic needs including research, education, and public outreach. The site, located behind the city's flood-wall, provided students the opportunity to instill within the public an understanding of what it means to live near one of the country's largest rivers.

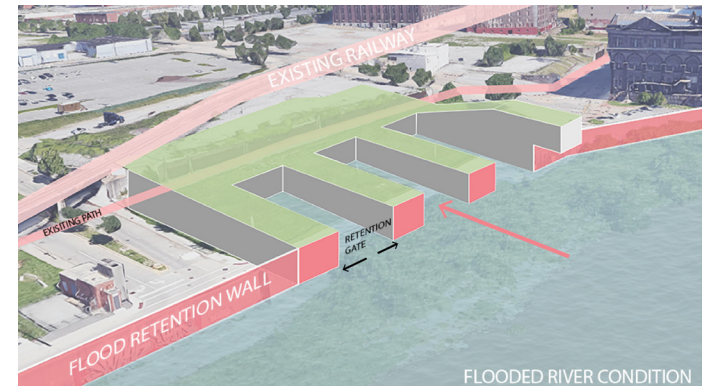
Our project, Pervious Park, emphasizes the fact that retaining walls will only keep the issue of rising water levels out of sight and out of mind. We placed our building below the existing flood-wall and placed a community green space on its roof. Through doing so, the project serves as an ideal extension of the public realm towards the river and offers an unobstructed view of the Mississippi. By merging the retaining wall with occupiable and public space, the wall's presence is alleviated, and its character altered significantly. We proposed jogging the wall not only to break up its scale, but also to allow more water to enter the site. This would also allow park visitors to engage the Mississippi River directly, allowing them to better understand its fluctuations and condition.

Other projects which envision intentionally allowing water to enter the urban realm are Aranzadi Park by Alday Jover, Water Square Benthemplein by De Urbanisten, and Structures of Coastal Resilience by

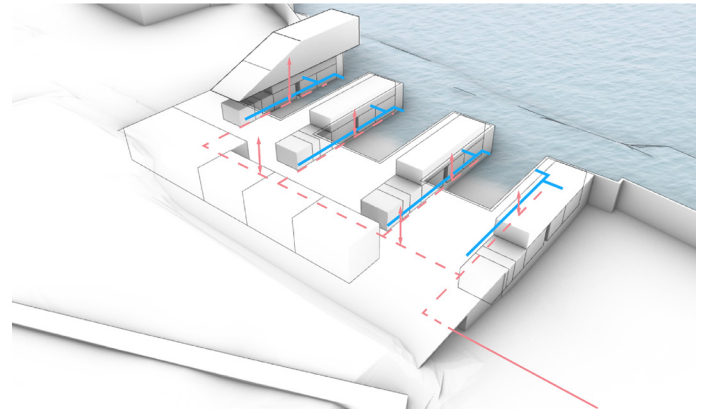
## Attractions on the Riverfront



## Flood Retention Concept



## Program and Circulation



LTL Architects.

The previously mentioned projects are altering our stereotypical relationship with water. Fortifications are insufficient long term and only succeed in separating our daily experiences from the issues we need to be consistently mindful of. People should not continue to view water as a problem overcome by pilotis, retaining walls, and the builders of bridges. In “The Dry Salvages,” T.S. Eliot explores this theme of water taking the form of a solved, and thus forgettable, problem:

The problem once solved, the brown god [the river] is almost forgotten  
By the dwellers in cities—ever, however, implacable.  
Keeping his seasons and rages, destroyer, reminder  
Of what men choose to forget. Unhonoured, unpropitiated  
By worshippers of the machine, but waiting, watching and waiting.

How may architecture take on a state of perviousness and would this be appropriate? The aforementioned projects suggest we are enthralled by water and this is certainly true. The city dweller must be included with those whose rituals involve the use of water; the shower, the medley, the christening. Consider the water found in the pipes of buildings, lifted to the tops of towers. It has been driven here from some distant reservoir or spring. Often in the form of aqueducts, dams and “the lastingly monumental” we have succeeded in leveraging the “fluid and transitory, the elusive and diaphanous” (Calvino). If we were to merge our buildings with this element, for both to exist symbiotically, we would find an architecture which does not strive to last indefinitely, define itself via form, or enclose itself from the “outside world”. The following piece of writing will hopefully provide a mental image for such an architecture.

Imagine when lost in the city, I follow the fiery hues which enliven this multiplied. Or what if during the months when a collective breath obscures my immediate view, I follow the image seen in a silver blade.

And after the traversal, what if the disorientation wrought from a mass of drops suspended indicated the end of my commute. During moments such as these, I would feel an overwhelming thankfulness. A gratitude for having an excuse to need not pretend I know my exact position in the world. After all, what defines these spaces I visit, the porous, cartesian planes or the mist?

And what about the friends I would've missed,  
since the fog has served as impetus for many chance encounters,  
with those who would've otherwise gone on living among my many strangers?

The ripple marks, the wind streaks and the bulrush,  
striae our fluid world like broken glass.  
We will run through the same fractures and crevices in the landscape,  
formed over millennia by the smallest stream.

While crossing the tombolo against the uprush  
We see birds of the wetlands airborne  
their image overhead and below  
Offset, slippage, static in the water like a screen

What if, when ankle deep in the double of you and me,  
We could realize with minds cleansed  
That our actions will yield glad tidings  
that we will live as the bearers of good news?

Or what if we left this wet ground,  
to circulate obliquely within the volumes,  
understanding that in a city half drowned,  
we wake to rain, refracted and dappled, in a world people are eager to assume?

Ben Decuyper, 2020



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2. Calvino, Italo. *Numbers in the Dark: and Other Stories*. Mariner Books, 2014.
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6. Metz, Tracy, and Maartje van den. Heuvel. *Sweet & Salt: Water and the Dutch*; NAI Publishers, 2012.
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8. "U.N. Climate Panel Admits Dutch Sea Level Flaw." *Reuters*, Thomson Reuters, 13 Feb. 2010, [www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-seas/u-n-climate-panel-admits-dutch-sea-level-flaw-idUSTRE61C1V420100213](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-climate-seas/u-n-climate-panel-admits-dutch-sea-level-flaw-idUSTRE61C1V420100213).





# ENTER + ACTION

## The Medium of Lifestyle

*Conor McMichael, Class of 2017*

/// Millions of people in this world, all of them yearning, looking to others to satisfy them, yet isolating themselves...was the earth put here just to nourish human loneliness? ///

– Haruki Murakami, *Sputnik Sweetheart*

I split the first eighteen years of my life between two realities. The first half I lived in a walkable neighborhood surrounded by friends, with nearby pedestrian-friendly parks, and shopping centers as the backdrops of our endless excursions. The moment I found myself bored, I would simply gather my friends together, and we'd be off on our next adventure. When I turned ten, my family moved from the heart of town to a house half an hour away. I lived fifteen minutes from my new school, thirty minutes from my childhood community, and my parents worked forty-five minutes away. This was an incredibly isolating experience, and the moments that I was not stuck in a car, I was finding dull ways to entertain myself. I believe these two realities are perfectly indicative of the trajectories in which urban designers, planners, and visionaries design today.

The segmentation and isolation of today's social interactions and experiences both influence and are perpetuated by the built environment. The physical realm serves as the background for our daily lives and informs the way people engage

with each other, which in turn informs the lens through which they prioritize their movement through space. As designers, our experiences of community through the built environment become our design toolkit as we filter and synthesize our own social experiences and expertise with project demands. The spaces we design emulate the quality and typology of our social experiences, and vice versa.

The delineation that I strive to make is not between urban, suburban, and rural communities, but rather between action-driven design, which sustains isolation, and interaction-driven design, which encourages social interaction. Action-driven design can be defined as compartmentalized, heavily programmed zones designed to provide exacting destinations for the consumer. Sold as perfectly convenient, these spaces make for a rigidly segmented lifestyle; each errand and occasion is distinctly punctuated by a parked car. Interaction-driven design can be defined as loosely regulated zones with amalgamated programming. With variations in use and operational times, these

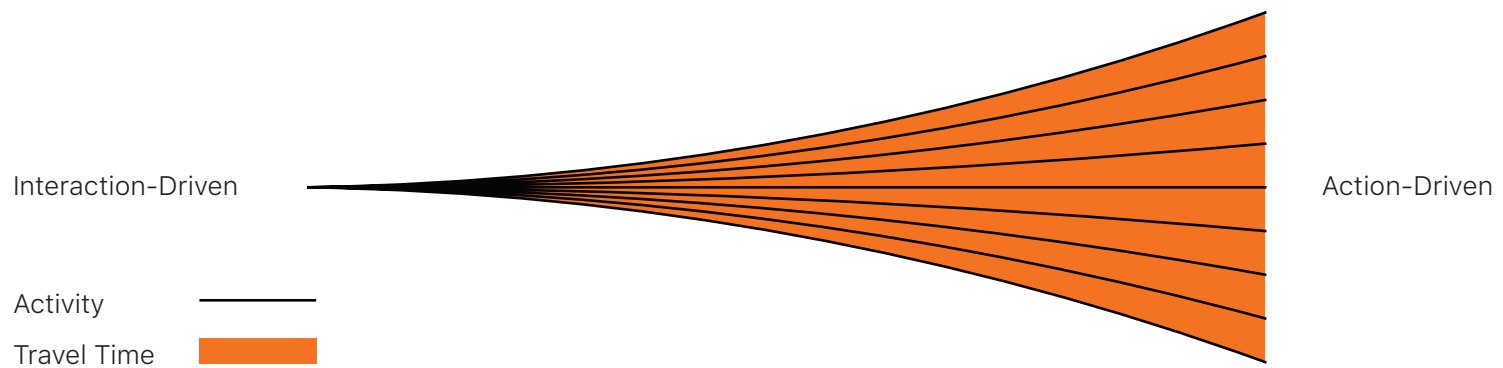
spaces are consistently populated, highly walkable and conducive to low-risk, high-reward social interaction. Though some spaces may inherently lean towards urban, suburban, and rural typologies, similar instances can be found across the municipal spectrum. Through the following narrative, I will be making the case for abandoning action-based and embracing interaction-based design approaches.

As American purchasing power increased after WWII, as soldiers and their families yearned for simplicity, as cars became more readily available, and as developers sold the idea that space equals freedom; our communal landscape began to shift dramatically. Urban parks were traded for fenced-in yards, public transportation for freeways, vibrant sidewalks for vast parking lots, and neighborhood grocers for big box superstores. One significant consequence of this transition was the removal of space for casual, impromptu interactions and replacing them with the necessity for segmented actions. At first glance, this may seem like a desirable shift, encouraging each encounter to be more anticipated and deliberate, but the vulnerability that these encounters require make them much more socially challenging. The action-driven environment makes avoiding social interactions effortless; one can easily spend all day in this environment and not cross paths with a friend, a colleague, or a kind stranger. Often, the only connections encouraged in these spaces are an occasional conversation with a cashier, which today is not even necessary.

To thrive in a landscape like this, great effort must be made to enlarge

## LIFESTYLE ADJACENCY DIAGRAM

Action-Driven vs. Interaction-Driven Design



the private life if any semblance of community is to be found. As Jane Jacobs asserts in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, in this landscape “(people) must settle for some form of ‘togetherness,’ in which more is shared with one another than in the life of the sidewalks, or else they must settle for lack of contact. Inevitably the outcome is one or the other; it has to be; and either has distressing results.” This social filter has created a void in our communities that was previously filled by a social common ground. The resultant vacuum dramatically shifted our societal identities and forms of interaction. It was into this vacuum that escalating isolationism, exacerbated by digital communication methods, evolved our social culture from one of interactions to isolated actions.

A recent Cigna Health study found that America is in the midst of a loneliness epidemic in which rates of loneliness have doubled in the last 50 years. Only an estimated fifty-three percent of Americans feel they have meaningful in-person interactions on a daily basis, and forty-three percent feel they are isolated from others. Twenty-seven percent even identified that they rarely or never feel as though anyone understands them.<sup>2</sup> An experiment performed by professor Bruce Alexander further illustrates the effects of loneliness.<sup>3</sup> The

experiment consisted of two scenarios to study the effects of isolation and addiction. The first scenario involved isolating rats into individual cages, the other involved placing rats in a cage with an abundance of cheese, colored balls, tunnels, and other rats. Each of these cages contained a clean water supply and a cocaine-laced water supply. The study found that the isolated rats became addicted and died prematurely nearly one-hundred percent of the time, while the percentage of rats in scenario two that elected to drink the laced water was significantly less.<sup>3</sup> Similar outcomes are evident through human social observation. Consider a recent American Addiction Centers article that draws a strong correlation between modern isolation of American housewives and the four-hundred percent increase in prescription painkiller-related deaths among women over the last 20 years (compared to two-hundred-sixty-five percent among men).<sup>4</sup> These studies paint a clear picture of how the interconnectedness and health of our communities are intimately influenced by the spaces in which we interact. Even though our

**// [Action-driven] spaces make for a rigidly segmented lifestyle; each errand and occasion is distinctly punctuated by a parked car. //**

means of connectivity are becoming more readily available, the separation of society's physical realm is rapidly diminishing our collective feeling of connectedness.

The evolution of these norms amplified our shift from interaction to action and has transformed the urban design toolkit. With the advent of digital communication, real-time conversations and interactions have begun transitioning to intermittent games of "tag" through text messages, emails, and online platforms, and the segmentation of action-driven spaces only perpetuates this dependency on digital communication. Consider online dating as one metric for this shift. Just twenty-five years after the first online dating website was launched, thirty percent of adults use online dating platforms.<sup>5</sup> The social gaps that are created by the built environment are being filled by technologies that capitalize on isolation, and as the studies above illustrate, this is detrimental to our collective health at

large. By distilling our communication to isolated words and phrases, we have severely weakened the level of camaraderie typically found in physical social interactions.

Stanford University's Dr. Emma Seppala clearly explains the benefits of social connectedness in her article "Connectedness & Health: The Science of Social Connection." Strong subjective feelings of connection lead to a fifty percent increased chance of longevity, strengthens immune systems, and leads to higher self-esteem, greater trust and cooperation, and greater empathy.<sup>7</sup> The opposite is true for those who feel socially disconnected. This has a direct influence on the cities and spaces we design. As Charles Montgomery poignantly illustrates in his book *Happy City*, the more a social network is stretched, the less likely chance encounters and impromptu meetups will take place, thus creating a less-robust community and support network.<sup>8</sup> As we synthesize our own social interactions with the spaces we design, these spaces begin to reflect our interactional experiences. We must leverage our experiences with and knowledge of

**//** The evolution of loneliness and the built environment are intimately related. **//**

interaction-driven spaces to facilitate healthy communities and enable social connectedness.

One of the primary differences between action- and interaction-driven spaces is the ways in which people are allowed and encouraged to move through the built environment. If the circulation and program is too formalized and rigid, there is little room for unplanned exploration, reducing the likelihood of informal interactions. The destination becomes the only goal, with no consideration given to the movement between destinations. This perpetuates the quarantined social structure described above. Yet, before we can embrace one or the other we must first establish the spatial typologies of action- and interaction-driven designs. To do so, let us compare two similarly intentioned retail spaces in Oklahoma: Classen Curve in Oklahoma City and Utica Square in Tulsa. The former was completed in 2010 as a product of orthodox suburban development typology, the latter in 1952 during the emergence of suburban expansion. Both are upscale suburban outdoor shopping centers; however, Utica Square was constructed

preceding the social shift to action-driven spaces that has led to socially bereft developments like Classen Curve.

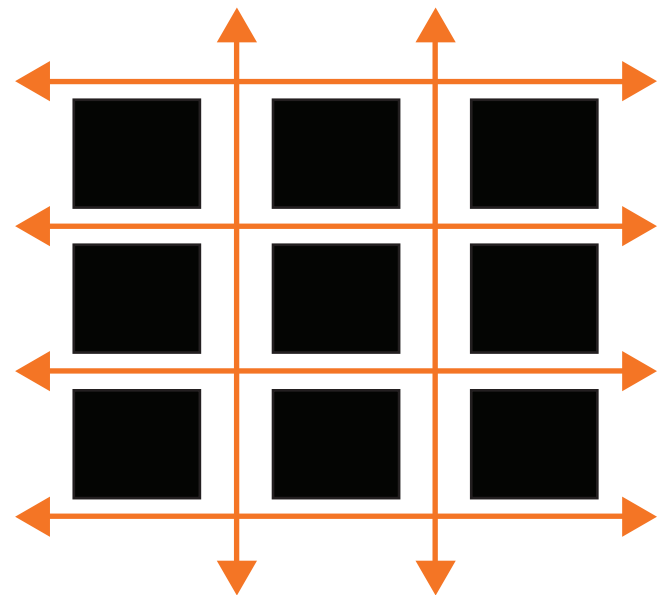
Defined by rigid linearity, Classen Curve stretches over a quarter mile from end to end, five miles from downtown Oklahoma City. The 2,000



### **CLASSEN CURVE**

Pedestrian Circulation Diagram

feet of single-sided storefront is distributed across 10 islands of 14 buildings each, separated by distances of up to 350 feet. Each building has its back turned to the street, doing little to invite unplanned travel into the development. Most of the fourteen buildings are made up of two or three retail spaces, reducing the opportunity for incremental exploration that often takes place where retail storefronts average twenty-five feet. With



### **UTICA SQUARE**

Pedestrian Circulation Diagram

little interstitial shade and an elongated layout, there is little reason to walk rather than drive from one island to the next, and pedestrians must stick closely to the storefronts beneath the arcade twenty feet overhead. The formal grandiosity of the architecture does little to invite informal ownership of the space, and the strictly curated movements demand absolute purpose. On a rudimentary level, the development is positioned in a way that resembles the suburban strip center experience, wrapped in an aesthetically refined shell. Spaces like Classen Curve, regardless of aesthetic quality, neglect the importance of social interaction and perpetuate the physiological and psychological consequences of a disconnected society.

Utica Square is located just two miles southeast of downtown Tulsa. Nearly all of the four-sided building blocks are positioned directly adjacent to each other. Nearly every foot of sidewalk is covered with either an architectural or treed canopy only ten feet overhead. With a mile of shaded and interconnected sidewalk-engaging storefronts, interactions between spaces and people happen naturally. The 30-foot-wide driving lanes are bordered by angled parking spaces, which straddle manicured islands dotted with trees providing a thick shade canopy. The trunks of the trees act as visual speed bumps, slowing down vehicular traffic and easing pedestrian movement from one block to the next. The three main rectangular building blocks are centered on a quarter acre park, which is bordered by a coffee shop and several retail offerings. Each of these three blocks contains small pockets of green space and are transected by friendly partial or full alleys

lined with additional shops. The openness to the adjacent thoroughfare promotes greater commuter porosity through the site perimeter. With no more than 150 feet of shaded path between buildings, pedestrians are able to maintain a healthy rhythm of intentional shopping and curious surveying. The flexibility of the four-sided blocks has allowed the storefronts to evolve into a level of managed muddle that provides visitors with a sense of intrigue without creating confusion. This spatial and programmatic variation, accompanied by comfortable pedestrian conditions, is exactly the scenario that promotes social interaction. With purpose suspended by intrigue, spaces like this give room for impromptu social interactions in a way that many modern developments have sterilized.

The evolution of loneliness and the built environment are intimately related. The more separated our society becomes, the more our spaces begin to reflect that, and the more our experiences in these spaces perpetuate disconnection. When our common spatial experiences are predicated on isolated actions, it's no wonder why we become

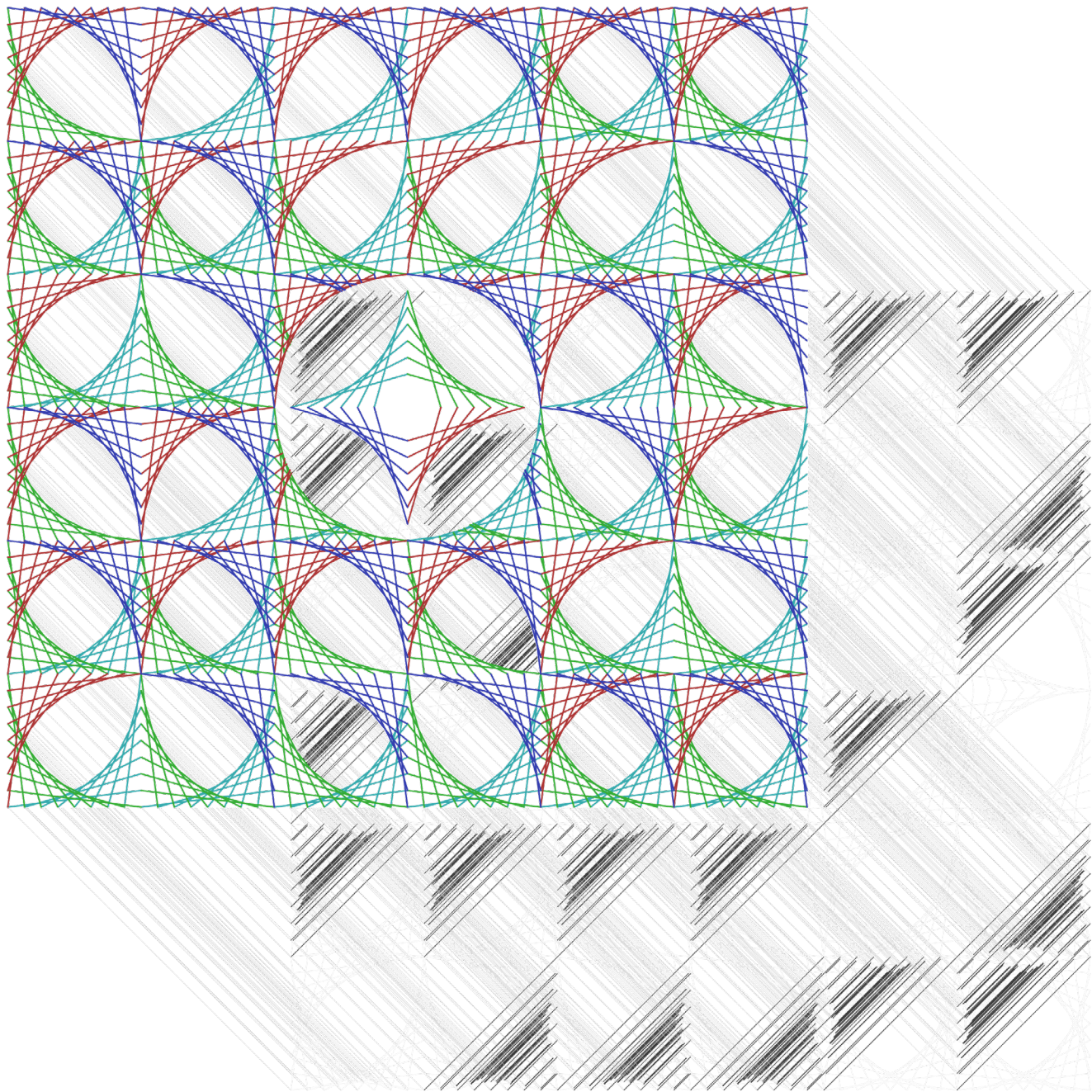
solitary ourselves. As architects and designers, we have the ability and obligation to shift the pendulum from action-driven to interaction-driven design; from isolation to community; from loneliness to camaraderie. By re-framing our own social interactions to perceive the spaces between the actions and rigidity of modern society, we find spaces in which our communities may breathe with new life. We must wield our experiences and

learn from them, consciously creating spaces that empower individuals to commune. We cannot continue to perpetuate the disconnection of society if we are striving to improve it. Being both subjects and composers of the built environment in which we all interact and engage in community, we must take seriously our responsibility to design spaces that encourage social interaction and fight the interaction-deficient culture we are experiencing today.

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