

INTRO: “The Essence” by **Felipe Flores.** Interview with **Edgar Corréa Kanaykô** about “Ethno-Photography” by **Felipe Flores, Fabio de Sa e Silva & Paulo Moreira.** Interview with **Albena Yaneva** about

“Architectural Anthropology” by **Felipe Flores and Angela Person.** Interview with **Marlon Blackwell** about the “MetaProject” by **Trey**

“Children and Cities: A Project to Explore ‘Architecture as the Essence of Connectedness’ ” by **Fahmida Nusrat.** “Children and Cities: A Project to Explore ‘Architecture as the Essence of Connectedness’ ” by **Farzana Mir.** “The Core: Reimagining Campus Housing” by **Priyanshi Patel.** “The Core: Reimagining Campus Housing” by **Colton Bumpus.** “Hill Bridge Park” by **Iman Moradi.** **INWARD IMPRINTS: Objects of my childhood:** “El Panecillo Hill” by **Felipe Flores.** “The Hammer” by **Isac Valenciano.** “The Dreamcatcher” by **Cole Newport.** “The Mask” by **Madeline Henry.** “Living Fleur-de-lis” by **Darren Riley.** *The form of my essence:* “Over-

through three hands-on clay workshops. **SPECIAL THANKS TO:** **Hans Butzer,** Dean at the Gibbs College of Architecture (CoA). **Angela Person,** Associate Dean for Research & External Engagement. **Dan Butko,** Associate Professor at CoA. **Stephanie Pilat,** Professor at CoA. **Chandler Thompson,** Undergrad Architecture Student at OU. **Emily Lange,** PhD Candidate at OU. **TELESIS VOL. 6 THE ESSENCE** is made possible, in part, by the support of the **Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture** and the **Division of Architecture.** Additionally, we extend our heartfelt gratitude

London and Isac Valenciano. CRIT-SCRIPTS: “Inherited Essence” by **Laila Cordero.** “Voz de Una Casa” by **María Santibáñez.** “Soiling-Terra preta do Índio & Amazonian Ecological Urbanism” by **Ana María Durán Calisto.** “Embrace Walkability or Witness the Fall” by **Colin Caso.** “Inhuman Matters: Transmutations of the Human” by **Jonathan Levitske.** “Writing on the Wall: A Social Analysis of the Northwest Building” by **Wanda Katja Liebermann.**

lapping Reach” by **Frank Hicks.** “The Seeing-Eye” by **Abbey E. Pradette.** “RoughEdges” by **Savannah Joslin.** “Circles” by **Jenna-Claire Asibelua.** *My Sacred Space:* “Soul of the Home” by **Rupa Chakraborty.** “Tucked Hut” by **Frank Hicks;** “Sanctuary” by **Trey London.** **GUEST SPEAKERS:** Artist **John Wolfe** discusses “The Creative Process” at his home and studio in OKC. **Laila Cordero,** an Architectural Associate at Arquitectos Artesanos in Oaxaca, Mexico, presents “*The Essence of Designing and Planning with Communities.*” **Stephen Ferroni,** a PhD student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,

to all OU firms, collect-guest speakers, who have con-valuable time and bring this student-led initiative to life. **Telesis: The Essence** was produced during a the seminar in Fall of 2023. The students enrolled formed this year’s cross-disciplinary Telesis Team led by **Felipe Flores.** **QUOTES:** By **Marlon Blackwell:** “I’m not a big fan of utopias. I’m really interested in the messy things. I don’t believe that architecture can save the world but I do believe it can strengthen institutions.”

of Music as a Tool for Architecture Design” by **Cole Newport.** **ART & DESIGN PROJECTS:** “Underneath the Sunflowers” by **David Morrison.** “Clock-tower and Lighthouse” by **CJ Carter.** “Essence through Exploration” by **Trey London.** “Guesswork: FAUX-ART Sculpture” by **Andrew Stone.** “Moment in Time” by **Ryan Pittman.** “Multi Home” by **Talor Young.** “Instantations” by **Chris Morrey.** **DISPATCHES:** “Bunnies’ Paradise” by **Uriel Marin.** “The Essence Intertwined” by **Hannah Halpern.** “I Don’t Know What to Believe” by **Curtis Jones.** “An Artistic Journey” by **Verónica Molina.** “Earth and Fire: Wood-fired Porcelain” by **Jessica Steele.**

explores the concept of “*Critical Regionalism.*” **Pablo Cevallos & Valeria Sandoval,** founders of Taller Vertical in Ecuador, share insights on “*Working with Scarcity as a Design Tool.*” **Angela Person,** Associate Professor at OU, delves into “*Identity and Affect in Design.*” **Uriel Marin,** a Mexican artist at the School of Visual Arts, provides a glimpse into “*The Print-Making Process*” during a visit to his art studio. **Mahdi Ahmed,** an Architectural Designer at MASS Design Group, speaks about “*The Essence of Social Housing.*” **Stuart Asprey,** an Associate Professor of Ceramics at OU, delves into “*The Fundamentals of Clay*”

By **Colin Caso:** “We can promote a vibrant, sustainable, healthy environment by changing our lives and operations.” By **J. Levitske:** “The essence refers to our transmutations of human identity that have been intricately tied with the epoch of the Capitalocene aiding in the commodification of land, dis-possession and displacement of people, and erasure of the human.” By **Andrew Stone:** “The essence of ‘Guess Work’ lies in its ability to construct an alternative spatial perception, inviting viewers to

TELESIS, VOL. 6 “THE ESSENCE.” The Architecture Student Journal. Gibbs College of Architecture. The University of Oklahoma. Academic Year 2023 & 2024.

question established norms of representation through projected geometric forms.” By **Curtis Jones:** “My intention is to create work that appears to have spiritual meaning, but is actually the result of playfulness and randomness.” By **Fahmida Nusrat & Farzana Mir:** “The essence of connectedness is an underlying issue in exploring the individual’s identity in relation to a certain place. It starts building from very phase of the childhood of every individual, even constructing a conscience of space and place although it’s hardly graspable at that stage.” By **Isac Valenciano:** “Drawing my journey, seeking comfort in the loneliness of unfamiliar landscapes.”

TELESIS
JOURNAL



Telesis

The Architecture Student Journal

*The
Essence
Volume06*

2023.2024

Tel•e•sis (*te-lə-səs*) Progress that is intelligently planned and directed: The attainment of desired ends by the application of intelligent human effort to the means. *By* Jessica Steele: “The Essence is in the way we show up in our lives. It is the way we look at each other, the tone in our voice and the unspoken energy that surrounds us. It is what we are made of, and it is what we leave behind.” *By* Chris Morrey: “The Essence is embodied: the ringing sound of the fired clay. The sparkle of a copper surface under a layer of bluegreen glass. The weight of the thing in your hand.” *By* CJ Carter: “Complex contradictions are

the essence
of human
nature and
they fascinate me.”

By Edgar
Kanyko:
“When I
think about
the word
“essence,” the first thing that comes to my
mind is the word “territory”. For me, territory
is our “mother,” the one that takes care of us.”

By Marlon
Blackwell:
“The essence of
design
really depends on the situation in which you’re in, and that response
through design. But the essence is the intrinsic nature [or] the sort of
indispensable quality of something. For us, it’s especially something

that’s abstract, it’s
not about a
message, or
something
that’s closed,
but something more
that’s open,
it’s interpreted in a
way. The
essence is
often something that
can be intangible but
is manifested through
something
physical in
the project.
It’s a quality
or qualities
as well.” *By*
Cole Newport: “Architecture is
not about
cutting corners, it is
about creating them.”

By Talor
Young: “In
dissecting
the essence
of conventional
American
residential
architecture,
one recognizes its
distinctive
traits: an
inherent
historical
resonance,
symmetrical
compositions,
pitched rooflines, and reliance on foundational
elements like brick or wood. *By* Hannah
Halpern: “I interpret the Essence as the

feeling of
having
peace and
mental
clarity.” *By*
Wanda
Katja Liebermann:
“What kind
of information, then,
can be
written on
the public
wall?”
By David
Morrison:
“Do the
pace of our
lives and habits of disposability make our junk
invisible?” *By* Ryan Pittman: “I tried my best
to capture the essence of the year 1998.”

Telesis: The Essence

Academic Year 2023 - 2024

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

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Dan Butko, *Director of the Division of Architecture (DivA) at the CoA*

Stephanie Pilat, *Professor and former Director of DivA at the CoA*

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Declaration

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The Telesis Class of 2023

The Essence

The Call for Work

The forthcoming volume of *Telesis* embarks on a quest for “The Essence” within our roles as designers. Today’s social landscape, defined by opulence, monumentalism, consumerism, and the social media-driven veneer of “contemporary” existence, has witnessed the gradual erosion of the intrinsic significance inherent in our endeavors. Consequently, an imperative arises to confront this erosion, directing our architectural and spatial work toward the essential core of forms, objects, nuances and the very essence they embody.

Within this issue, a fundamental goal emerges: to recognize that our creations in the built environment are similar to living entities, reflecting the vitality of the earth and its manifestations, rather than being static entities. Additionally, this issue undertakes a deep exploration of “being”, guiding us towards the revelation of our intrinsic essence through self-expression within the material and tangible realm.

Telesis Statement

In a world dominated by superficiality, screens, mass and accelerated consumption, and “modern” ways of living, the quality of life and the essence of things begin to lose their meaning. It is in response to this reality that *Telesis Volume 6: The Essence* emerges, with the intention of rediscovering what is fundamental in our architectural and spatial practice. What is it that truly moves and touches us?

When we speak of essence (from the Latin *esse*, to be), we refer to:

The basic or primary element in the being of a thing; the thing's nature, or that without which it could not be what it is.¹

But what is essence? Is it singular? Can it change? This is, without a doubt, one of humanity’s deepest quests: the search for its own essence, its inner being, and its expression in a physical, material, and social world closely intertwined with an esoteric, immaterial, and spiritual realm.

How does essence relate to architecture? It lies in understanding that what we create are not merely objects, but “beings.” In our view, objects and spaces are living entities that can establish a dialogue, create

a bond, and form a relationship with those who inhabit them.

Sometimes, the essence of a place can be revealed in the traces imprinted on our senses—in the forms, colors, textures, flavors, and scents—and in bodily memory. In rare cases, it can provoke a cathartic experience, something almost divine. I recall a warm sunset on the banks of the Pastaza River, my feet gently immersed in the water from a wooden platform that subtly supports me. The deck fades into the landscape, retreating from the forest that faces the river, making me feel sheltered within the vast Amazon while the jungle reflects its fullness on the river's wide surface. The symphony of sounds, colors, and smells from countless animals, birds, and plants turns that moment into something sublime. In that moment of calm, I breathe deeply, and the pure air fills my being. The jungle transforms the man, and, in turn, the man transforms the jungle, making it part of himself.

It is then said: The manifestation of "being" in the material world is not an act of opposition, but one of dialogue, of intimacy between the parts and the whole. This act is called architecture.

About the Essence

In this issue, the content has been organized into five categories: interviews, critical manuscripts, artwork & design proposals, dispatches and inward imprints. The *Interviews*, featuring conversations with architectural ethnographer Albená Yaneva, ethno-photographer Edgar Corréa Kanaykō, and architect Marlon Blackwell, invite us to look beyond the physical form, building, or image to understand the deeper processes and actors involved in the search for the essence of their work—or as Marlon refers to it, the "*Meta project*."

The *Critical Manuscripts*, with entries contributed by authors such as Ana María Durán Calisto, Colin Caso, Jonathan Levitske, Laila Cordero, María Santibáñez, and Wanda Katja Liebermann, share a common focus on the relationship between the individual, the environment, and other beings. Through these explorations, architecture emerges as both a tool for commodification and erasure, and one for nurturing and cultivating culture.

The *Artwork & Design Projects*, created by David Morrison, CJ Carter, Trey London, Andrew Stone, Ryan Pittman, Talor Young, and Chris Morrey, trace the foundational steps of a project, reflecting on the essences that arise from material exploration, self-reflection, spatial dimensions, and the concepts of place and culture.

The *Dispatches* offer reflections from the field, where the authors express their identities, actions, and beliefs through their work. This is evident in the contributions from Uriel Marin, Hannah Halpern, Curtis Jones, Veronica Molina, Jessica Steele, Fahmida Nusrat & Farzana Mir, Priyanshi Patel & Colton Bumpus, and Iman Moradi.

Lastly, *Inward Imprints* is the outcome of an exhibition developed through a series of clay workshops conducted with *Telesis* students from the Fall 2023 course.

Inter- views

Ethno- Photography

5

Interview with **Edgar Corrêa Kamaykô**

Edgar is of Indigenous descent from Brazil. His work is centered on Indigenous Art/Advocacy, Environmental In/Justices and Issues. The importance of Secretary Deb Haaland to Native People in the U.S. parallels the importance that he and his sister hold for South America.

Edgar Corrêa Kamaykô belongs to the *Xakriabá* Indigenous people of Minas Gerais, Brazil. He holds a master's degree in Anthropology from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) and a

degree in Intercultural Training for Indigenous Educators from the same institution. He works in the field of Ethno-photography, which is, in his words, "a means of recording aspects of a culture — the life of a people".

Edgar is one of contemporary Brazilian photography's leading voices, looking at the resistance and struggle for territory and culture from the point of view of Indigenous peoples. Recently he has participated in exhibitions such as *Véxo: We Know* (Pinacoteca de São Paulo, 2020,

curated by Naine Terena); *Manjar: Re-conhecimento* (Solar dos Abacaxis, Rio de Janeiro, 2019, curated by Denilson Baniwa and Maria Catarina Duncan); and *Urgence et résistance* (Espace Shakirail, Paris, 2019, curated by Cristianne Rodrigues).

In 2020, he won the CNPq Photography, Science & Art Award, for his work "*Iny: O Brilho dos Espíritos*", captured during the *Kuarup* ritual, performed by the *Kuikuro* people in the Upper Xingu.



Left - Photo by E. Kanaykô

Finishing details of your home with traditional and natural paintings-1

Next - Photo by E. Kanaykô

Finishing details of your home with traditional and natural paintings-2

FELIPE FLORES

Interviewer, Telesis Editor

FABIO DE SA E SILVA

Translator, Assistant Professor

PAULO MOREIRA

Translator, Associate Professor

In this interview, we had the presence of Edgar Kanaykō [EK] as the principal speaker. Fabio de Sa e Silva [FS], an assistant professor of international studies and the Wick Cary Professor of Brazilian Studies at the University of Oklahoma, and Paulo Moreira [PM], an Associate Professor and Academic Advisor of Portuguese at OU, both served as translators. This online session was moderated by Felipe Flores [FF], a Ph.D. Candidate in Planning, Design and Construction at OU and Principal Editor of Telesis.

FF: *Edgar, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?*

EK: It's a great pleasure to have this conversation online. I am Edgar Kanaykō, from the territory of Mina Gerais [in Brazil]. I am right now in my community. My work involves working with photography, specifically ethno-photography.

PM: He uses photography as a medium to think about others' culture, the future of their community and to think about themselves, to reflect who they are. They use the verb to "ethnograph" themselves.

FF: *Do you prefer the mountains or the beach?*

EK: I am more connected to the mountains. However, we do not experience the definition of mountains as you might know it but rather the presence of little hills, forests and fresh waters with which we feel naturally and culturally related in our geographic region.









Left - Photo by E. Kanaykô
Following in the footsteps of four elders

“...territory is our mother, the one that takes care of us.”

FF: *When you hear the phrase “the essence,” what do you think of?*

EK: When I think about the word “essence,” the first thing that comes to my mind is the word “territory”. For me, territory is our “mother,” the one that takes care of us.

FF: *What do you think great photography reveals about people, about places?*

EK: Photography is essential for us. I prefer to use the first person plural “we” instead of the singular “I” because I don’t see a separation between me and the others, we are one. For us photography is used as an instrument to reveal our true stories, the fight and the struggles of our people.

FS: Resistance is what communicates about their history.

FF: *When you say “struggles,” what kind of struggles has your community experienced? And how do you transmit that through photography?*

EK: This connects with the question of what is essential for us. It is the struggle for land rights and the fight to protect our territories and Indigenous people in general. Photography for us is an ally and a tool to denounce violations to Indigenous people’s rights in Brazil. For instance, there have been numerous occasions where Indigenous peoples have reported that their lands were invaded due to others filming or photographing the area. However, besides the struggle, there is also the cultural aspect of photography. [For instance,] when we photograph ourselves, we rescue and strengthen our cultural traditions. Indigenous people, for instance, want to be photographed, to be shown when the communities learn the skills to use this media. Then, this media plays an important role in registering, strengthening and revitalizing those cultural practices.

FF: *How did you discover your passion for photography, and ethno-photography?*

EK: I discovered photography with the arrival of electricity to

“...photography is used as an instrument to reveal our true stories, the fight and the struggles of our people.”

our territory in the early 2000s. This is when a lot of electric devices arrived and I had the opportunity to use a camera for the first time. However, I already enjoyed registering what was happening in my community by drawing cultural elements. When I was 16 years old, I started to play with digital cameras. A little bit later, I had the opportunity to take a course in my state of Minas Gerais and get licensed as an Indigenous educator from an Indigenous-centered institution. Afterwards, I started a Master's in Anthropology with a focus in "Visual Anthropology." It was through this Master's degree that I developed an understanding of photography as a technique for ethnography and therefore "ethnography."

FF: *I see that you mainly photograph people, can you tell us why?*

EK: I photograph different elements including animals and natural landscapes such as rivers, flowers, etc. but I especially photograph people because this human-human relation is very important for us. However, human relations are not only about people. Our spiritual leader, the "Page," taught us that when we look at the forest, for example, it is not just a landscape but a lot of different things there. There are some things that we can see and there are things which are not visible. The house, the home of the spirits is there as well.

FF: *When you photograph people, do you try to depict that spiritual side that usually remains not visible?*

EK: Yes, especially in the context of rituals, there is a spiritual life among people. This is something that I detail in my master's thesis. It is entitled ethnography, the Indigenous vision that runs through the lens. There, I write how during rituals there's a risk of capturing spirits through photography.

FF: *Is the community comfortable with you photographing rituals?*

FF: The Indigenous Tsotsil filmmaker Maria Sojob from Mexico, for instance, has mentioned in a conference about one of her films that the community didn't allow her to enter certain spaces or sacred ceremonies to photograph or video record them because it could bring bad consequences for the community.

EK: Yes, Indigenous people sometimes feel that photography can steal their spirits or souls. For us the word "eva" means image, soul and photography; they have the same translation in this sense. Therefore, over time we came to realize that there are some ways in which photography can be helpful. For example, my community understood that I use photography as a tool of resistance, to strengthen our values, culture, and to denounce our struggles as

a group. However, not everything should be photographed or revealed.

FS: On the internet, it says: "In Edgar's lens, photography becomes a new 'tool' of struggle, allowing the "other" to see with the Indigenous perspective"

FF: *How does your background in anthropology inform your current work?*

EK: When I was studying at university, my professors and classmates sometimes told me that my mere presence there influenced them to study and even challenge the status quo of anthropology. In fact, traditional anthropology focused more on studying and talking about others. However, in my case I used anthropology to talk about ourselves, to talk about my community. This was a very important feature in my dissertation thesis. With the growing presence of more Indigenous students in universities, we are changing the perception of anthropology and related fields to think and rethink our own work, how we see ourselves and our territory.

FF: *There is a debate whether Indigenous peoples should remain isolated to protect their cultural values and territories (as is the case of Indigenous reserves) or whether they should embrace modernity and its modes of production and consumption in search of more*



Left - Photo by E. Kanaykô
Following in the footsteps of our elders



Left - Photo by E. Kanaykō
Cosmos architecture - Xakriabá culture house

*“History tells that the word 'contact'
has a very brutal and violent story.”*

westernized lifestyles. What is your opinion on this topic?

EK: In the case of Brazil, there is a large concentration of Indigenous populations that have opted for voluntary isolation. However, this raises the question of being isolated from whom? and for what reasons?

As we look at history, we realize that this [isolation] is usually the case of communities that have had some type of contact with non-indigenous (white) groups and when those encounters have been very violent in an attempt to subjugate our Indigenous peoples. This, for example, can be seen in the case of communities living in valleys of the Brazilian Amazon, but similar violent encounters have also been seen in other parts of the Americas. This is one of the main reasons that has led certain Indigenous groups to seek voluntary isolation.

FS: Edgar is making the point that when we think about isolation versus integration, we need to think about the conditions in which we interact with Indigenous groups. Whether we are really trying to welcome them into a conversation and co-existence or if we are trying to assimilate them or just trying to subjugate them.

PM: History tells that the word “contact” has a very brutal and violent story. Nowadays, contact should be reframed as something that depends more than anything

on the will of the Indigenous people. That Indigenous people have to decide whether or not they want to have this contact and how much contact they want to have.

EK: Another important factor is that any attempt to frame this issue in terms of an imposition is dangerous. For example, when we debate “should they be integrated,” that’s a violent way of framing the question to begin with, because the question does not consider what is this that they want to do? This is what we should frame this. The same thing happens with the term “integration.” What does it mean to integrate Indigenous peoples to society? Does that mean that they will have to give up their culture, their customs? If that is how we are discussing this, then it is violent.

FS: Edgar talks a little bit about his own experience of going to the university. What did it mean for him to go to the university? Was it for him to just have to assimilate Western knowledge? If that was the purpose, then that wouldn’t work for him. But if universities are opening their doors to Indigenous peoples, to learn “with” Indigenous peoples about their “own” epistemologies; then, that’s a welcome change.

PM: Edgar called attention to the wrong concept that sometimes people have, that if Indigenous peoples are integrated into society at large, they cease to be

Indigenous, they are no longer Indigenous. And that is something that is not true and that needs to be discussed as well.

FF: *How might your work be relevant for designers, architects and planners? Why should they look at it?*

EK: All fields are relevant, since they influence different aspects of life. Architecture and design schools, for example, might look more deeply into the way of life of different Indigenous groups for several reasons. These reasons are related to why I photograph more people. This is because when we understand others more, we can get a better idea of how societies are organized. This, in turn, would allow us to propose methodologies and forms of architecture based on the realities of each culture. For example, Indigenous communities sometimes have government projects to build houses in their territories. However, when this happens, the designs come ready made. They are usually little boxes in the way they are built everywhere and anywhere. Of course, this is going to have an influence, this is going to change the way we [Indigenous people] live, the way we exist, which is something really important for us.

PM: *Tell us a little bit about the initiative with the University in your community*

EK: We have a project in our

territory that is called “House of the culture.” This house of culture was thought with traditional forms but convincing aspects of modern technology. This is a hybrid of traditional Indigenous knowledge and scientific [Western] construction techniques. In this sense the project was innovative as it seeks to improve our traditional construction systems so that the built works are more durable and weather resistant. Also, these traditional homes were mainly built by women from each and with the guidance of partner universities.

FF: *Do you consider it important to co-create building codes and design guidelines for your community and other groups in the region that respect the worldview and values of each indigenous group?*

EK: Yes, there are initiatives to take into consideration local cultural specificities when building affordable housing in Brazil but there are also obstacles, bureaucratic obstacles in the way.

FF: *Do you photograph buildings? Can you tell us your perception about architecture and built environments?*

EK: I like to photograph

people in buildings more than the building itself. When Indigenous people go to cities and observe the houses and the living practices of people in the cities, they [Indigenous people] say that white people are people of the box because they live in these little boxes. In contrast, Indigenous people are surrounded with circular shapes as in the sample above (picture). These shapes, for instance, are very important for ritual houses, for individual living spaces but also for the whole community. If we look at Indigenous villages, the houses are also organized in circular patterns as well. Many things in our communities are taught in circles. For instance, the school calendar is circular, not linear [as the Gregorian calendar]. The circle, therefore, is an important characteristic of our people. In addition, painting our house is like painting our own body. The “page” (spiritual leaders) paint their houses following the same patterns they use to paint their body. As the house is our “morada” (dwelling), the body is our dwelling too [it is where we live]. When we tattoo our body, we are taking care of our “house.”

Therefore, we have been trying to revitalize not only traditional

ways of building but also ways of designing to avoid the current use of brick buildings [a model from the city].

FF: *What message would you like to share with the audience of this journal?*

EK: I would like to encourage people to be more aware about Indigenous groups and their own knowledge systems because from there we can learn how traditional technologies can help us improve our current modes of living. For instance, Indigenous modes of building and designing traditional houses seems to be more sustainable for the environment than what we generally see in Amazonian cities. Finally, I want to reflect on how we can make good use of images such as photography to reveal something otherwise hidden like our people’s struggles. This could also happen in architecture. However, we need to realize that photography as well as architecture, might reveal some parts of our culture [and context] but there will always be some elements that escape the “frame” of our view. Therefore, there are things that we cannot really see, but they are still there. So keep looking for those hidden elements.

“A house for us is not a private space; a house is a collective space and encompasses our whole village.”

Next Left - Photo by E. Kanaykō
Village Barreiro Preto Xakriabá Indigenous

Next Right - Photo by E. Kanaykō
One foot in the village, another in the world



Architectural Anthropology

17

Interview with *Albena Yaneva*

Albena Yaneva is an architectural theorist whose research crosses the boundaries of science studies, cognitive anthropology, architectural theory, and political philosophy. She is a Professor of Architectural Theory at the Politecnico di Torino, Italy. Prior to that she worked at the University of Manchester, UK for 18 years

where she led the Manchester Architecture Research Group (MARG). Yaneva is the author of seven monographs: *The Making of a Building* (2009), *Made by the OMA: An Ethnography of Design* (2009), *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (2012), *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political: An Introduction to the Politics of Design Practice* (2017), *Crafting*

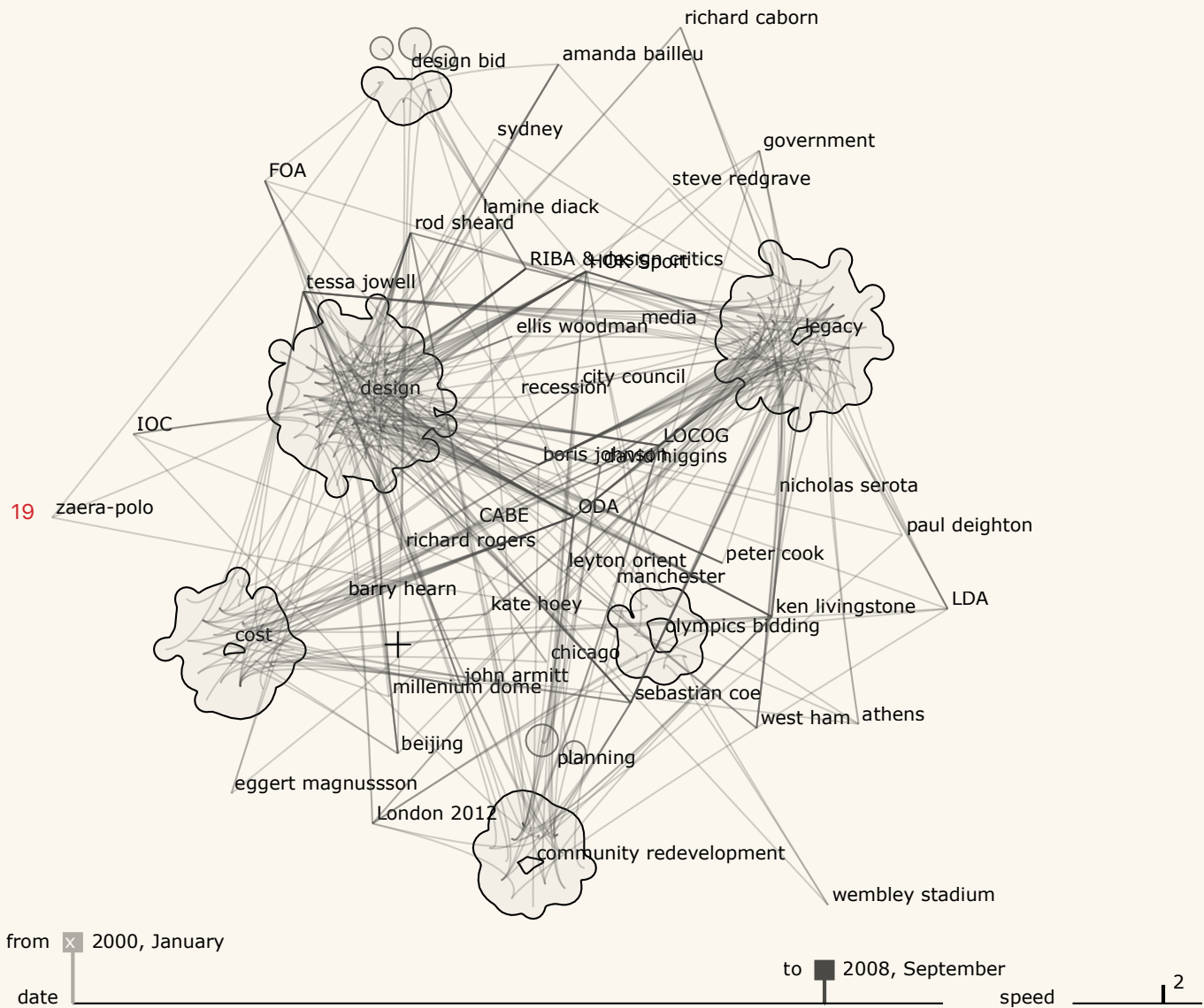
History: Archiving and the Quest for Architectural Legacy (2020), *Latour for Architects* (2022), and *Architecture After Covid* (2023). She co-authored *The New Architecture of Science: Learning from Graphene* (2020) with the Nobel Laureate in Physics, Sir Kostya S. Novoselov. Albena has held visiting appointments in several universities and has

delivered more than 200 invited lectures and keynote addresses at major conferences. She holds a DEA from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales and a PhD from Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Mines de Paris where she worked alongside Bruno Latour. Albena has been the recipient of the 'RIBA President's award for outstanding university-based research'.

Right - Photo by A. Yaneva
Ethnography of Design at OMA, 2009



ANGELA PERSON & FELIPE FLORES
Telesis Editors



How does Albena's work connect to this issue?

The theme of the “essence” calls us to evaluate different modes in how design, planning and construction operates behind the scenes and how the exercise of “architecture making” directly influences the built works in our environment and how architecture is taught and reproduced.

The interview with esteemed architectural theorist Albena Yaneva provides critical insights about shifting practices in architecture from a product- to process-oriented practice.

The interview with Albena Yaneva [AY] took place via Zoom with Angela Person [AP] and Felipe Flores [FF] as moderators. The following questions are based on Albena's book *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political: An Introduction to the Politics of Design Practice* (2017).

FF: *Would you please share a bit about how your interdisciplinary interest in architecture and ethnography began?*

AY: I was trained in anthropology and initially started using different ethnographic methods for my master's degree project and then for the development of my PhD project; which was a project on anthropology of art... It was mainly focused on

artistic practices, contemporary art. I worked with artists from the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. This was one of the case studies I had, and I had other case studies from traditional crafts in France, and industrial design. There were all different kinds of creative practices, which I wanted to understand. The methods of sociology of art were quite limited, and to better understand these practices, I needed something more like an anthropological take to grasp “what it is that actually happens

in creative processes” and “what does it take to be creative.” What happens behind the scenes of an art exhibition? When artists prepare an exhibit, installation art in particular, there are so many interesting decisions to be taken, both of a technical and aesthetic nature. It’s not just about one creative individual, but it’s about this messiness, of human and nonhuman relations, of technical and aesthetic choices.

This was quite fascinating for me to see with the very first case study I had at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris. It was a three months-long ethnographic observation of the preparation of

art or art installation. The aesthetic discourse is produced after the fact, after everything is established and everything is decided. And that is what artists are used to doing. They would typically give an interview to an art historian, an art critic or to a sociologist; but they were not used to being followed at work. So, what I wanted to do is to rather follow artists in this process of making art, or art-in-the-making. Over the course of the three months of observation, a lot of decisions had to be taken, and both the aesthetic and the technical features of the installations were not entirely stabilized. And this messiness was quite fascinating to follow and the different networks of protagonists

I also ended up using similar methods to unpack creative practices in the field of architecture.

FF: *That’s very interesting. Did you find any connections between the making process of the two, the performative art and architecture?*

AY: Absolutely, yes. The artists I studied were two contemporary artists, Carsten Höller and Rosemarie Trockel. They are German artists. This was their first joint exhibit in Paris. They used a number of kinds of technical and material experiments but I wouldn’t say design [as architects use it]. There were some

“What it is that actually happens in creative processes?”
“What does it take to be creative?”

an exhibit. It was an unusual take to art making and decision-making processes in the artistic world. And it was quite difficult to follow it at the time for a number of reasons.

First, institutional reasons because it was very hard to get access... Access to fieldwork is a common problem in anthropology. In addition, artists are very sensitive and are usually not used to that kind of attention while they are working. In the process of work, there’s a lot of undecided kinds of aspects of the work. And it’s much easier to talk about the work when it’s already there at the vernissage when everyone comes and contemplates the artworks, the final product of

in art making (the artists, curators, technicians, museum administrators), as well as the numerous technical and material choices that had to be made... The very first field work in Architecture I had was in the Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), right after I completed this study in Paris.

To sum up the answer to this question, I was looking for different methods to trace creative processes in art first and then in architecture. When you use different methods, you literally then discover a different world. This opens up a totally different perspective on artistic processes and creativity. That is how

similarities with the creative process in design. For example some choices and experimental tactics [used by the artists] are probably similar to what happens in [architectural] design. The choice of working with the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) was inspired by this mixture of the three fieldworks that I did as a part of my doctoral project.

It all started with a joke by Hans-Ulrich Obrist, the current director of the Serpentine Gallery. Hans-Ulrich was one of the examiners at my PhD committee and a curator in Paris at the time. I came to know him as he helped me to get access to the museum where I did the fieldwork for

"It's not just about one creative individual, but it's about this messiness, of human and nonhuman relations, of technical and aesthetic choices."

my PhD dissertation... Thus he was representing the fieldwork, or we might say "the natives." . At the end of the viva Hans-Ulrich came to me with a glass of champagne and said:

"You know, the perfect combination of the three case studies that you have explored in your dissertation: traditional crafts, industrial design and contemporary art is architecture. And I know the perfect office for you where you can find this mixture of craft, design experimentations and contemporary art. This is OMA."

It was 2001 and I knew the work of Koolhaas, but probably not that well by that time. He just got the Pritzker Prize in the same year. And I thought that there's no way a Pritzker Prize architect would be willing to become the subject of ethnographic observation and experimentation, to become one of the "natives" and to have an anthropologist in the office. While I didn't expect this to happen, Rem Koolhaas was open to this experiment. And that's how I started the fieldwork in OMA.

FF: Now, they have anthropologists working as part of their firm, from what I understand.

AY: Yeah. But as part of AMO [AMO is the research, branding and publication

studio of the architectural practice, Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA)].

AP: *I have a follow up question, I wonder if you could speak just a little bit to how your work accounts for maybe the existential components of this creative process. I'm thinking with the artists in particular, but also with Koolhaas. How might you bridge these different sorts of scales or "textures" of the existential, the technical, the budgetary and the difference (messiness) of their work?*

AY: It's important to capture and unpack all these scales and textures rather than quickly try to explain design with one or another category - such as social factors, cultural influences, and others. That is what happens very often in architectural discourse, especially in relation to Koolhaas' architecture, but also to many other interpretations of contemporary architects. For some reason we are probably afraid of accounts of messiness or accounts of entanglements. I mean, in architectural history and theory it's very common in a way to try to explain logically, to bring some causal explanations perhaps of why certain things are done in a particular way.

I have seen this in Koolhaas' practice at the very start because I had to read everything that

was written on the practice and about him. There is a huge archive at AMO. Most of the literature revolved around the individual genius of the star architect, his childhood, his background, his Dutchness, etc. For example, his theory of density was explained by his Dutchness, and the fact that the first settlers of Manhattan were Dutch recreating their cities with nostalgia...

Another big part of the literature was mainly architectural scholars, looking at the OMA buildings as products of design. And then trying to explain these buildings with factors that come from outside; with cultural factors and influences, with the political circumstances or shifts, with social factors. All these works focused on the final product of design and there was no interest whatsoever in what really happens in practice. What is the design process? How exactly does the design process unfold? These were all questions that were not in the limelight of research attention...

There was a large body of works that assumed that architecture reflects social, political, and cultural forces and it's nothing more than this. Architecture was considered as a byproduct of society, politics, culture and zeitgeist, and there was little interest in the process and what really happens in offices like OMA, but many other practices



as well. This was in a way an interesting and surprising discovery. Because it was 2001, one might expect that architects have already learned a lot from anthropologists and geographers, but there was not enough in the field.

FF: *Another question we have is that your work highlights the shift from product-focused architecture to process-focused insights. How do you think this shift has influenced the current practices in architectural design and planning?*

AY: I would say that now it's almost a normality because there is more and more interest in the process which was not the case back in the '70s when the main focus was on the product, the final result, the master plan. Then after Donald Schön and Dana Cuff's pioneering work on practice, inspired by ethnography and other anthropological techniques, we see more and more interest in processes, in architectural creativity, in the daily work of architects, engineers and clients...

I can think of the work of Thomas Yarrow, a British anthropologist who studied a small scale practice in the UK. And then Sophie Houdart, a French anthropologist, who studied Japanese architect Kengo Kuma's practice. Thus, from an anthropological perspective, there's more and more work and more interest in the messiness of creative practices in architectural offices today. I think this is gradually informing architectural discourse. Yet, I am not sure if it has enough

impact on architectural and planning practices.

However, it certainly has an impact on teaching and architectural pedagogy, on the way we think about processes. This is very present now in pedagogy. I'm thinking about a number of studios. For instance, last fall in Columbia University, some of the courses were really inspired by this focus. And studios as well were inspired by the focus on process rather than product-oriented thinking, and the complex ecologies of design production and the controversies triggered by design. And many other schools I have seen around Europe are doing something similar. However, in terms of the scholarly discourse, perhaps, there's still a lot of literature focusing on the product, on the final iconic building, on the aesthetically pleasing and technologically sophisticated outputs of architectural work.

FF: I have seen some of these ideas in architecture schools here as well. For example, there are design-build studios like the one offered by Rural Studio or the Gibbs College of Architecture.

These studios are interested not only in the final product, but in the interaction with the users which have been historically neglected. Now, as you mention, there is a growing attention to the users and in the architecture process rather than the final product... Looking back at South America, in some cases community work or human capacity seems to be

“...there is a growing attention to the users and in the architecture process rather than the final product...”

one of the most important elements to create architecture when resources are limited.

AY: Yes, that’s a very interesting aspect, inhabitation as a process or dwelling as a process. What we have in the literature is this very conventional post occupancy studies, which are based on statistics of people liking or disliking certain aspects of the building. And they’re very much like sociological surveys of preferences. The user’s experience is reduced to ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions. So, these are very reductionist studies based very much on the functionalistic concept of the user.

More should be developed, as you were saying, to really unpack what use means as a process, the whole process of inhabitation, of dwelling. Anthropologist Tim Ingold for instance has argued for a holistic understanding of dwelling and for the need to unpack the complex temporal and spatial coordinates of dwelling. Understanding what dwelling means and how buildings are being inhabited is, I believe, an interesting task for us in the same way as understanding what it means and what it takes to design a building and the complexity of this process to be able to connect the process of making with the product.

In the same way, we should be able also to make connections

between the product and how it is inhabited. Unraveling the various ways of inhabiting and dwelling in environments is an important task for architectural scholars now and in the future.

FF: *Your work touches on the role of non-human elements in architectural practice. How does this challenge traditional notions of architectural design and construction?*

AY: Well, I think the key challenge here is perhaps the fact that we have inherited this modernist understanding of the architect as someone who can master knowledge and control the world, as someone who produces objects and dominates the process of production. If we closely follow architects at work and the complex networks of practice that unfold during design and construction processes as well, we will very often find out that architects are not these powerful men or women in control, dominating the world or possessing the knowledge. They are often in dialogue with objects, with software, with materials. There’s very often a distribution of agency, there are dialogues with materials and shapes, as Donald Schön will tell us.

Sometimes architects feel attached to some of these non-human beings and technologies. They exchange and distribute knowledge with the

non-humans. So, understanding how architects create in connection with non-humans is important because they depend on them, and talk back with sketches, with powerful software, or with foam. As I have seen this very often in OMA, architects are absolutely incapable of thinking without foam and incapable of generating a new shape without this very specific and simple material that the foam is. And especially the blue foam, the color, the materiality and the malleability really matters. It is not just an aesthetic artifact, it is an epistemic material that helps architects think and design.

So, I cannot imagine a powerful architect, in the OMA context or in any other office I have studied afterwards, without the architect exchanging, talking back and sharing knowledge and creative energy with the scale model, or the foam cutter. And this dialogue between materials, technologies, and the creative mind is extremely important. So, sharing this creative process means also sharing responsibility. This is a difficult aspect to translate in the field of industry and planning, but we need to account for the importance of non-humans in the design process. This will of course, entail differences in terms of how we conceptualize construction processes and decision-making processes related to clients and users in the future, but that is just the starting point...

FF: *With the big increase in the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in almost every aspect of society lately, how do you think this connection with this non-human entity is affecting or will affect architecture and the profession itself?*

AY: I think we'll have to get used to delegating more to different technologies and to be surprised by those technologies. Very much like we are surprised by the sketch, the simple study models, the new elements that emerge when we draw without thinking; suddenly it's a completely different idea than what initially we thought we had in mind. Something happens in the creative process and this something is amplified by the technology we use. It could be a simple technology like sketching or the physical models, or a much more sophisticated technology like BIM [Building Information Modeling] or some AI software likely Midjourney. We have to be prepared to delegate, to share, to account and to think of this complexity because just as we cannot master the simple blue foam, we also cannot master the complex technology, AI or VR softwares or whatever comes in the future and starts replacing the more conventional ways of designing. We have to be ready to delegate and acknowledge this collective authorship of design and construction in the future.

FF: *Do you think AI will become like a partner in the design process?*

AY: I cannot predict, but I can easily imagine this to happen just like Frank Gehry is not Gehry without the CATIA V5 software and Koolhaas is not Koolhaas without blue foam. And “blue,” not just white foam. There is a very specific, sometimes strange, attachment to things, softwares, technologies, and we can continue the list. Of course, it could be an artificial intelligence tool as well. Architects tend to develop these attachments because it's not just about the subjective mind; it's always a subject and an object designing together and tracing connections together or rather many subjects-and-objects. If we understand this pattern of creativity, we can see how it will develop in the future with other technologies that will come and replace the more traditional ways, the more traditional “partners” of the designer as you say it, and what helps them design and be creative...

FF: *Regarding the non-human aspects you highlighted, literature has been exploring the decolonization of theories and Indigeneity dating back to the 1970s. Presently, architects are examining the significant role that non-human elements might hold for Indigenous communities during the design and construction phases.*

This approach introduces a cosmological dimension to design. Would you consider this perspective an expanding discourse, or is it more specifically targeted toward minority and Indigenous groups?

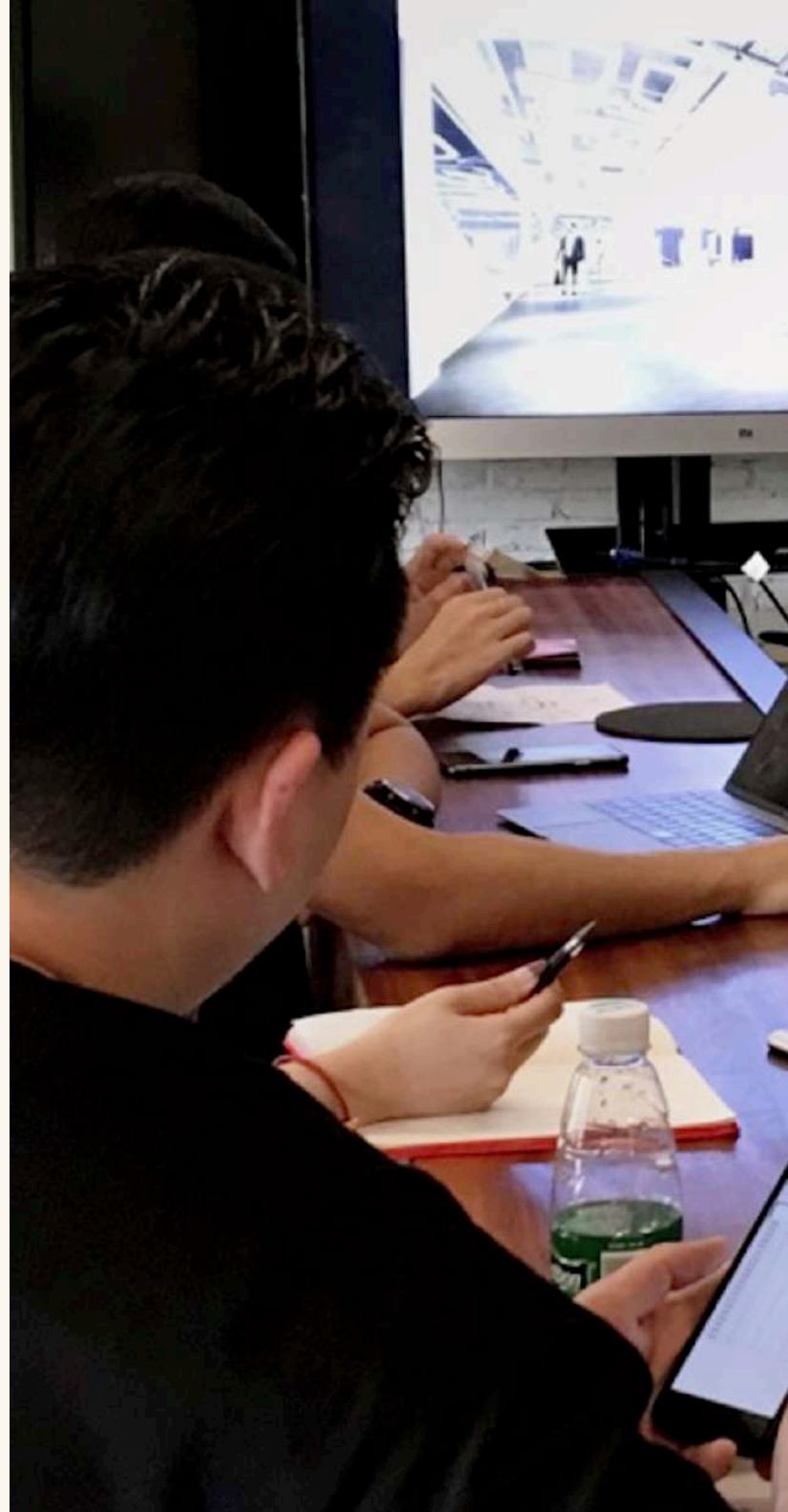
AY: I think this is definitely a growing trend. Particularly in light of the climate challenges we are all facing right now, I think this will become increasingly important as we try to understand the specific links that communities have when thinking about and designing their future spaces. It will become impossible to design for different communities in different parts of the world without really understanding those attachments to spirits, divinities, lands, to the earth and to many other non-humans... It will become impossible to address the climatic emergencies without respecting the attachments of Indigenous communities to various non-humans. It will inevitably also change the ‘laboratory’ of the architect. The tools, the technologies, the instruments, and the experimentations that will happen in this laboratory will have to be updated as we gradually confront these challenges. This is, I would say, a very interesting phase for us, as anthropologists and architectural scholars at the same time, to explore. Also to witness how architects will

become anthropologists because they will have to unpack the cosmologies of local users. They will have to understand their world and the connections with nature, divinities and other species in order to be able to design, to propose a meaningful intervention that is relevant to these communities. This is already part of architectural pedagogy, I would say, in a number of schools at the moment.

AP: *I really appreciate how you raise that architectural pedagogy needs to adapt in many ways. I wondered, if you could wave a wand and help move these adaptations more rapidly, what do you think architectural educators should be doing in the next three-to-five years to help usher their students into the types of practices that are needed now?*

AY: Well, I would say one of the challenges is that there will be more and more contested entities, controversies or debates around different issues that we'll find on the ground as architects. This could be a controversy around the pollution of a river or a very contested type of mushroom, which we have seen in the beautiful work of Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. In that sense, architects will need more and more anthropological work and techniques to be able to understand what's going on the ground. We will also need to mobilize our visual skills and advanced design thinking to be able to visualize and understand what is at stake.

Right - Photo by A. Yaneva
Design Discussion at OMA, 2009





Sometimes we only see one entity or a limited number of entities, but when we start to map what is at stake based on interviews, observations, we end up with a large crowd of entities. The entities could be also traced on the basis of media reports (and if this is a big debate or controversy, it leaves many traces in the media). I have been using the Mapping Controversies methodology with students in a number of projects already. Initiated by Bruno Latour, this approach has been used for engineering and technical controversies but I think we'll need more and more of these techniques to be able to understand the complexity of architectural issues. I have also published a book titled *Mapping Controversies in Architecture* (2012) to discuss this approach. By mapping I mean not just drawing but also analyzing and visualizing what is at stake? What entities are there? Who is concerned by a specific ecological crisis? Who is involved? Unpacking and mapping this complexity will be, I would say, the first step designers need to make in order to understand the complexity of an urban or ecological situation.

In the future, I think, we will be more and more presented not just with problems to solve, but we'll have to look closely and perform complex analytical work in order to identify a problem. That's why the mapping is important, to identify the problem, to understand what is at stake, to unpack the complexity of the situation, and then decide what kind of design intervention is needed. That's why architectural studios and even history and theory courses, I would say, should prepare our students to better do this exercise of finding, unraveling and mapping the complexity of an urban or rural situation before intervening in a design informed way.

FF: *Thank you so much, we just have one final concluding question for our architectural students. What method will you have for them or will you leave for them?*

AY: The first challenge to tackle is the division between technology and humanities. It is something that is deeply ingrained in the structure of architectural education. I don't know a single school that has managed to

overcome this division. I think maybe one exercise for students would be to imagine bringing knowledge from humanities and technologies together. In studios, of course, this is happening very often, but I think more mixtures are needed to understand the complexity of technical and social issues.

I think this also connects to the previous important question of Angela about the pedagogical ambition of the architectural courses in the next five years; I believe this ambition could be about bringing more understanding on how specific technical and aesthetic issues are related to social issues because we often disconnect these two aspects. I would like to invite our students to take knowledge from all these different courses and disciplines and bring them together, mobilize them together. Initially, of course, in studio projects and then in specific projects that they will do in their future. Of course, if we, as educators, should do everything we can to bridge those divides, this will be

“...how specific technical and aesthetic issues are related to social issues...”

an interesting challenge for us to meet in the future. Let's take a very simple example. When we talk about materials and structures in technology courses, we do not mention the social aspects. We might discuss glass and all the different structures and performativity of glass without mentioning examples in architectural history and theory when glass was debated, contested. And then in architectural history and theory courses, we might discuss those cases without connecting them with the technical and structural aspects of glass.

If we think about the Reichstag building in Germany, for instance, and the transparency concept of its viewing platform. In many other cases, of course, we can talk about glass and especially how glass is related to transparency, and transparency is related to democracy, and democracy is related to a very specific type of values we want to have in a society. So, this

becomes a separate discourse in history and theory. And then the materiality and technicality of glass is kept in the remit of technology. Yet, glass is not just transparent. It is also brittle and fragile. We need to take into account all material aspects of glass and connect them to the social and cultural ramifications. This division between technical and social knowledge continues to hinder architectural education. I would like to invite our students to take knowledge from all these different courses and disciplines and bring them together, mobilize them together. Initially, of course, in studio projects and then in specific projects that they will do in their future.

Then another thing I would say, architectural students should also think about all these other disciplines that architecture usually borrows from. Like anthropology to start with but also psychology, environmental

psychology in particular, visual arts, philosophy very often as well and other social sciences we can continue the list. I cannot think of a discipline that is more transdisciplinary than architecture. And yet we constantly need new dialogues with other disciplines; we constantly explore new synergies because of the intricate nature of problems we deal with. The more we engage in these dialogues, the better. The more students engage with different scholarships from adjacent disciplines, and mobilize them for their projects and the theses they're working on, the better. This will prepare them for the complexity of the architectural profession in the future because we will be facing more and more intricate and puzzling situations. And we'll need all these different types of knowledge mobilized in a transdisciplinary and imaginative way.

FF: Thank you.



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Left - Photo by T. Hursley
Facade of the Thaden School Bike Barn

The Meta Project

Interview with
Marlon Blackwell

32

TREY LONDON & ISAC VALENCIANO
Undergraduate Architecture Students





Previous - Photo by T. Hursley
View of the Interior of the Thaden School Bike Barn Looking South

Editor's note *About Marlon*

Marlon Blackwell, FAIA, is a practicing architect in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and serves as the E. Fay Jones Distinguished Professor at the University of Arkansas's Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design. Marlon was born into an U.S. Air Force family in Fürstenfeldbruck, Germany, growing up in a myriad of places around the world. He later received his bachelor's degree in Architecture from Auburn University and his master's degree in Architecture from Syracuse University. In 1992, he founded Marlon Blackwell Architects in Fayetteville, AR, which has designed dozens of projects around the country. Marlon has also taught at institutions such as Cornell, Yale, and MIT and will teach at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design in the spring of 2024. Marlon and his firm have received more than 185 state, regional, national, and international awards and accolades throughout the years for their projects and educational endeavors. This includes the American Institute of Architecture's Gold Medal, the AIA's highest honor, given to individuals whose work has had a lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture.

In the following excerpts, Trey London [TL] will describe a conversation he had with Marlon Blackwell [MB]. They discussed how Marlon and his firm perceive the essence, how it affects the design process and thought at Marlon Blackwell Architects [MBA], and what advice he has for students.

“I’m really interested in the messy vitality of things.”

About the Essence of Design

TL: *When you think of “The Essence” of design, how would you define it? And how does this relate to your design practice?*

MB: The essence of design really depends on the situation in which you’re in, and that response through design. But the essence is the intrinsic nature [or] the sort of indispensable quality of something. For us, it’s especially something that’s abstract, it’s not about a message, or something that’s closed, but something more that’s open, it’s interpreted in a way. The essence is often something that can be intangible but is manifested through something physical in the project. It’s a quality or qualities as well.

It also reveals the idea of the project. That revelation is what adds to, or is, in many ways, what is necessary to craft the story of the project. That to me is what the essence of a project might be. It’s more in the realm of qualities, it’s not something that might be precise, like ‘that window is the essence of the project.’ It probably would not be something more than the spirit of things. [It’s] a quality of well-being, something that’s harmonic or that

has a say, a sense of the ineffable, it feels weightless. [That is] the essence of the project.

TL: *Is this a subject that emerges in your design process at your firm?*

MB: I think it does. We have something that we call the ‘Meta Project,’ which are a set of principles, aspirations, or essences that we are working towards and working on, no matter what the project is in the office. It’s really about the practice, the Meta Project of the practice, and every project contributes towards that Meta Project. No matter what it is, if it were a carport or a new embassy in Central Africa, it tries to align itself with certain qualitative aspirations that we want embodied in our projects.

TL: *Are there any influences that exemplify the idea of the essence in the MBA office?*

MB: Well, if we’re doing our job, they all should. The whole purpose of the Meta Project is [that] we try to align ourselves with a consistent body of work so that there’s consistency between the projects. [This] is why we don’t have any bread-and-butter projects in our practice. Every project counts. Every project takes our full attention.

Editor's Note:

The “Meta Project” is described as a set of ambitions the MBA office tries to uphold during their design process of every project. They strive to develop unique solutions through architecture in ‘overlooked places, for under-served communities, on under-studied typologies.’¹

Advice for Students

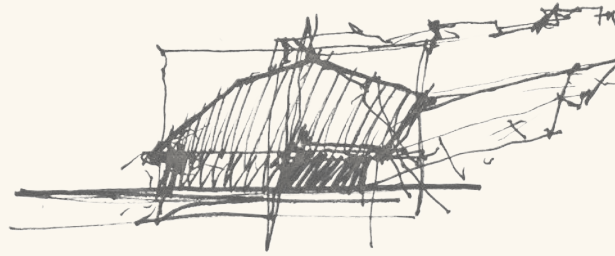
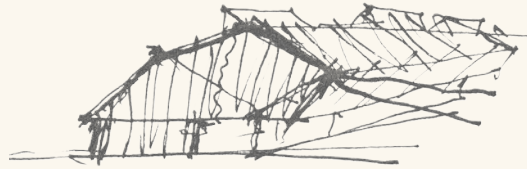
TL: *Lastly, do you have any advice for architecture students coming from a setting where the essence of design is emphasized a lot more than in the professional world, where it is more complex, and the focus is more on the bottom line?*

MB: I think it’s important. I’m not a big fan of utopias. I’m really interested in the messy vitality of things. I don’t believe that architecture can save the world, but I do believe it can strengthen institutions. I believe it can enrich our day-to-day lives in a dignified and joyous way. I think it can really contribute to overcoming the impoverishment of the built environment. But I’m under no illusion that the realities of our environments are going to persist, in all their expedient, shallow, and uncaring ways. All we can do is try to create some good and instill

Right - Diagrams by M. Blackwell
*Early Sketch Studies of the Thaden School
Performance Building*

Next - Photo by T. Hursley
Overview of the Entry Courtyard of PS1200

1 Blackwell, Marlon. "MBA Menu-Project." *Forayville, AR*.
Marlon Blackwell Architects, May 1, 2021.











Left - Photo by T. Hursley
Entry Courtyard of PS1200

some qualities to perhaps where they didn't exist, or to intensify those qualities that may exist that people might not be as aware of, in a place through architecture. Architecture becomes the framework for this type of experience, or elevation of experience. I think when you start to get into the distinction between the honorific and virtuous nature of academia, or the theoretical, I think that's an illusion. I think you have to see that opportunity in the professional world. I think there is the discipline of what we do, and there is the profession of what we do. But my goal is to try to encourage more graduates and more young architects to become liaisons between those conditions to begin to work towards merging those conditions. Yes, it is about the bottom line in many cases. How do you speculate wildly with constraints of budget, the constraints of environmental/societal constraints? What do you do? It's not ideal. You don't get the right to play God.

Look at our little church (St. Nicholas Eastern Orthodox Church) ... the Gentry Library, or the Honey House that we did - which is a \$40,000 project. What do you do? [For] the church, we had \$100 per square foot, which is a pittance in many ways. You have a welding shed... a non-honorific shelter, not even architecture, a shelter. But you're trying to convert it to something where people find a pathway to worship God. How do you do that? If you'd had just given me a blank sheet of paper, I don't know that we could have come up

with something, [perhaps] maybe it's not as imaginative as what one could come up with. But in those constraints, in the reality of that condition, that response captured people's imaginations. There is something uncanny about it because of its response to these limitations... That's why I think the constraints are a good thing. That's why I want young designers to speculate wildly within those constraints. They're going to be shaped by that. But if you think about it, in our own world, we're born into constraints, we're all formed with a different deck of cards. Some people are born into great wealth, and some people are born into great poverty, and most of us who grew up were born somewhere in between, right? Often in physical environments that are banal and exploitative. How do we make our way through that? Everybody's different. I teach at a variety of different schools, and the students are different to some degree, but they're also very much alike.

My advice to students is two things. One is to draw, and draw what you're experiencing, draw what you're seeing.

Find a way to strengthen the connection between your mind and your hand, by drawing. That doesn't negate the digital or anything like that, by any means. But use that part of your body through observation to draw, and don't just draw what you see, but draw what you don't see.

The other part is to travel. I think that's a lifelong pursuit. And go

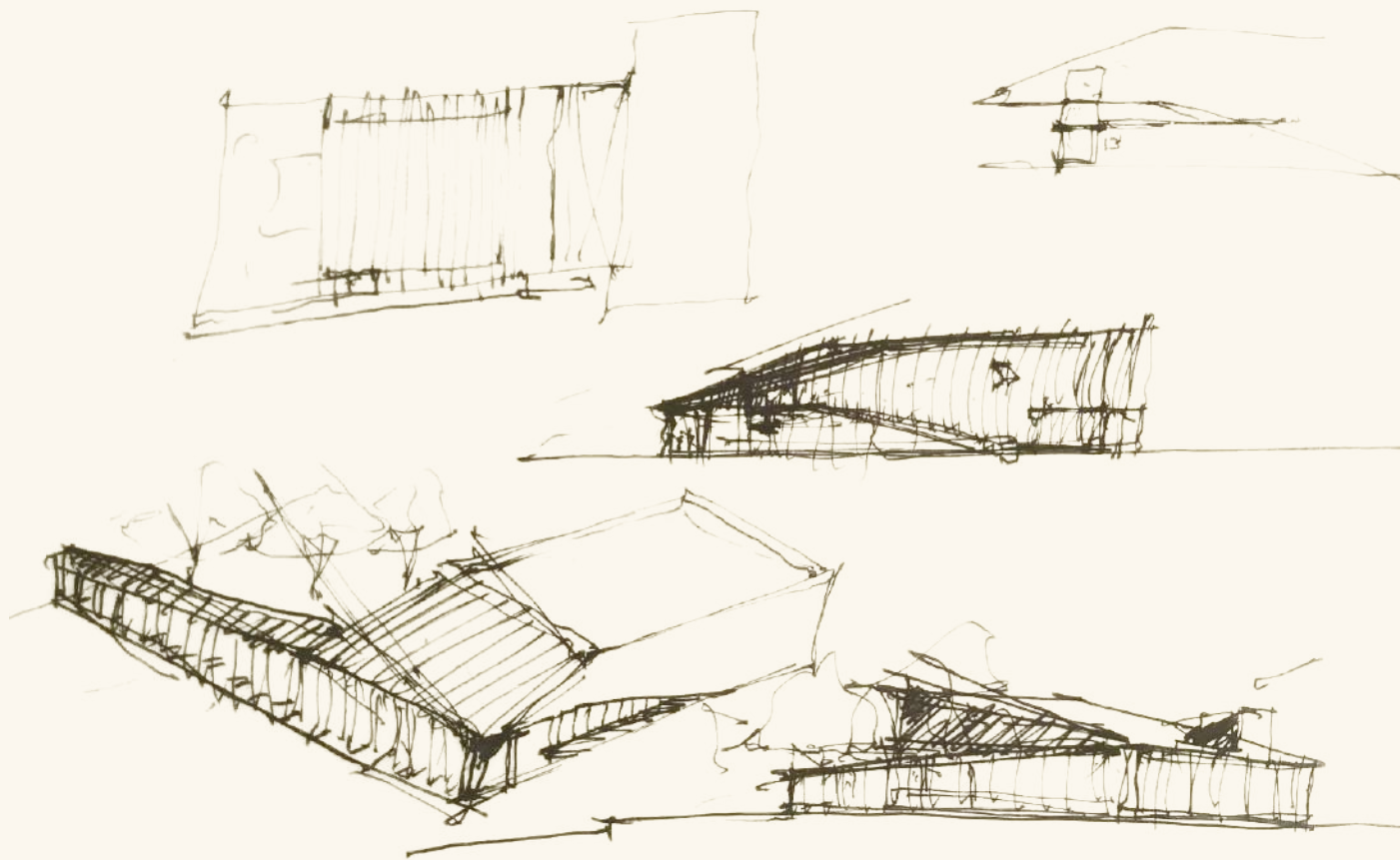
to places that you may not be totally comfortable with. When I say travel, I'm not talking about lying on a beach in Cancun, I'm talking about putting ourselves in strange places. I have grown more, I have to say, as an architect, by going to places like Yemen, or Mali - I just got back from Morocco. I helped found a program in Mexico City, and it's amazing; Mexico City is a messy, vital place, but it's phenomenal. I learned more from those kinds of forms of contamination, in a positive way, being in a world, within my world. How do they begin to shape and influence you too? I'm able... [to] go to a place where they build only in mud brick, [and] you see some ideas around the surface and transitions, [and] you come away with a whole new kind of outlook on things.

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I recently did a sabbatical where the only thing I was looking for was spaces with more darkness than light. I went to memorials... monasteries... caves, and quarries. Things where I'm just looking for the mysterious light where you don't see the source, but you feel the illumination and the gradation of a space that is spiritual, even though it may not be a spiritual space. These are things that you can go seek which are qualitative, they are qualities in and of themselves, and you look for the essences of places, through travel.

If you can capture those essences through drawing, charcoal, ink wash, or whatever it is your medium may be, that in many ways helps you embody that experience of place. It begins to fill and densify your imagination and your inspirations which you can draw from when you're presented with that opportunity to design, to respond.

"What you're doing is you're preparing yourself for what's to come. If you don't do that, then you're destined to only look at magazines and other kinds of forms of validation other than your own inspiration, because you haven't filled it up with anything."



Above - Images by M. Blackwell
Early Sketch Studies of the Thaden School Performance Building

Critical Manu- scripts





Left - Photo by L. Cordero
Design & Construction Team at San Miguel Papalutla
with Laila Cordero highlighted by Red Dashed Lines

Inherited Essence

LAILA CORDERO
Mexican Architect

When we ponder about the essence of a subject, we delve into its Latin origin, “*essentia*,” which encapsulates the *fundamental quality* that defines its very being. As architects, we bear the profound responsibility of delving into the intricate interplay of context and subject matter. Users entrust us with their most intimate routines, preferences, gestures, and needs. These routines encapsulate the subject’s essence, from the side of the bed they favor and how they prepare their morning coffee to how they manage their daily schedule. Simultaneously, the context encompasses distinctive factors that render each routine unique, including ideology, language, climate, relief, and lifestyle.

The architectural journey is multifaceted, evolving from the role of a designer to an interpreter, a lecturer to an apprentice, a dreamer to a builder, ultimately converging in the manifestation of a final result. This journey would be futile without a driving force, an essence of its own. Vernacular architecture is an exemplary illustration of these principles. Tucked away in rural communities, it endures as an opportunity to learn about our architectural

“The allure of consumerism and immediacy often obscures the distinction between appearance and substance...”

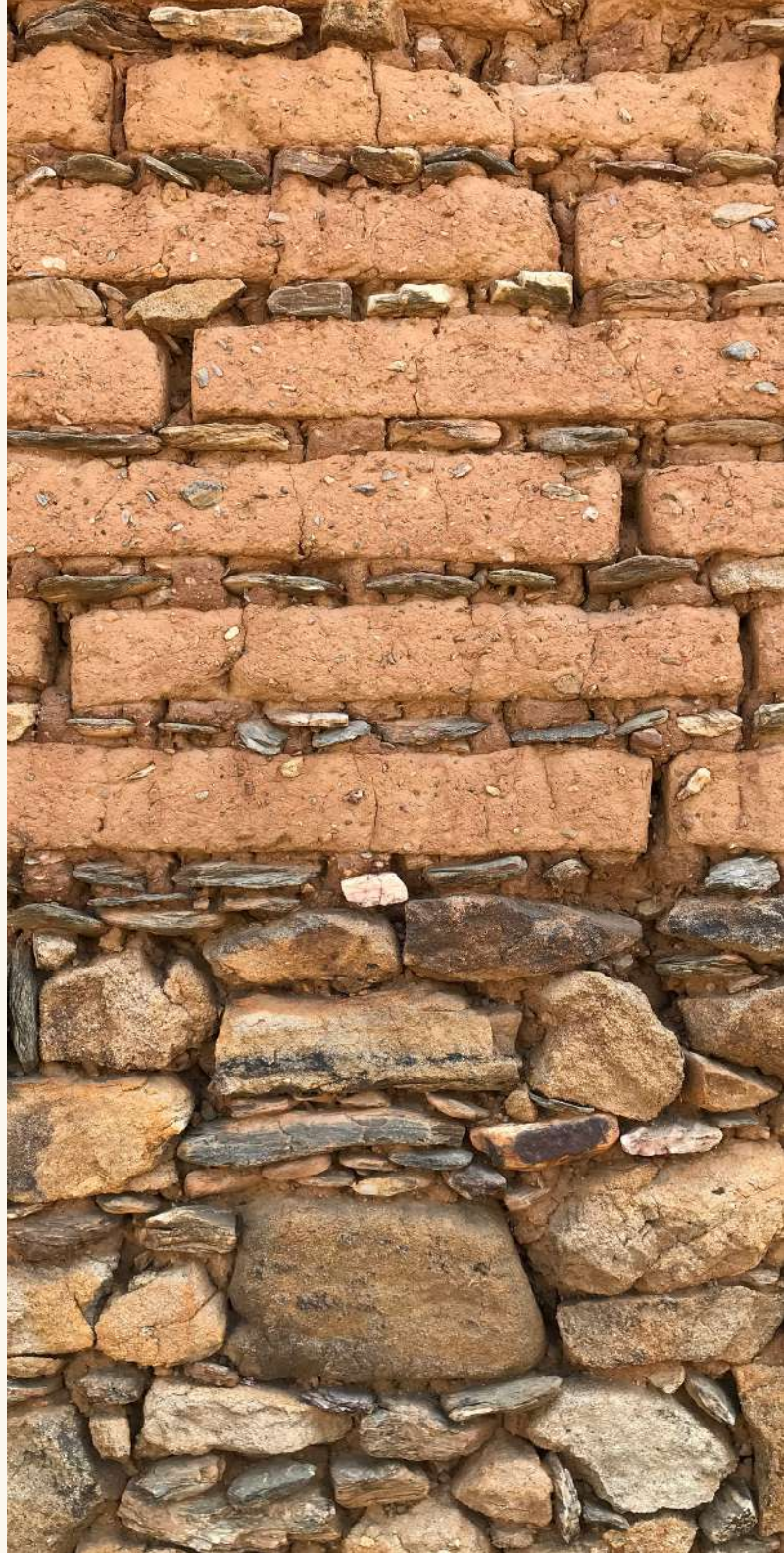
heritage. Each daybreak illuminates the adobe houses as the sun’s gentle touch graces them, and the western shade gradually fades until it reaches the last visible layer of mountains. San Miguel Papalutla, situated amidst the mountains of the *Mixteca Baja* in southern Mexico, tells a story of resilience. The dwellings have their own footprint that draws an unbeatable geometric pattern, a footprint turned into a path that leads us to follow it for about four blocks down the slope, until we reach the “*Casa del Pueblo*”: a community milestone. This architectural gem, once a hub for the community, faced unwarranted demolition due to a lack of understanding of earthen construction methods by civil protection authorities, who wrongly labelled it as a structural risk following minor earthquake-induced cracks that appeared.

This incident sowed panic among the community, increasing the uncertainty and rejection of their own houses made of the same material. The solution shown was to use only industrialized techniques and materials. This scenario reflects a nationwide predicament, prompting us to think about heritage awareness and to question the perception of “*dignified*” living conditions

Right - Photo by L. Cordero
San Miguel Papalutla, Mixteca Baja, Southern Mexico







“...where does one find the fundamental quality, the essence, that breathes life into architecture?”

when the proposed solutions don't enhance the current situation.

The allure of consumerism and immediacy often obscures the distinction between appearance and substance, as the focus shifts towards aesthetics, sidelining holistic composition. The consequence is an idealized pursuit of perfection while industrialized solutions, though accessible, often lack character and fail to align with climatic demands and user needs. In this pursuit, vernacular architecture finds itself marginalized, despite its wealth of knowledge rooted in centuries of intuition and refinement.

This raises the question: where does one find the fundamental quality, the essence, that breathes life into architecture?

In the quest for answers, research becomes the foundation of design. In San Miguel Papalutla, a town seemingly built from adobe blocks, the farthest corners of it revealed ruins of “*bajareque*,” a system of earthen boughs with earthen plaster. In the company of community elders, whose conversations brimmed with magic and nostalgia, these findings were affirmed. Consequently, the decision was made to rebuild the “*Casa del Pueblo*” to its original form, employing modern facilities

for efficiency while preserving tradition. This process highlighted the village's diverse architectural systems, with the “*bajareque*” and adobe column dwellings assuming hierarchical significance.

At this juncture, it becomes evident that the essence does not transcend mere visual perception. It stems from the passion instilled from the community's routines, gastronomy, customs, words, anecdotes, landscapes, history, laughter and, evidently, its architecture. As the work unfolds, the essence gradually permeates every aspect. A poignant example is the concept of “*tequio*,” where the entire community comes together for a collective benefit, reflecting the dedication and harmony that result from collective effort. They gave all their heart to recover something that was taken from them, giving rise to their own tradition and history.

Choosing earth as the primary material for construction, the result is a non-uniform volume that ages gracefully, acquiring distinct nuances over time. It embodies the harmony sought in architecture, accentuating the ethical use of natural resources.

In an autumnal backdrop, as construction neared its end, a small orchestra rehearsed in the distance,



Next Right - Photo by L. Cordero
Pillar of Casa del Pueblo



Left - Photo by L. Cordero
Interior of Casa del Pueblo



the aroma of freshly baked bread wafted in the air and the landscape hinted at the change of season, surrounded by trees with bald branches and white blossoms. The architectural structure seemed to emerge seamlessly from the earth, blending effortlessly with its surroundings, testimony to the union of stone, earth and wood. At dusk, the setting western sun accentuated the silhouettes of the shadows that were bidding farewell to the day.

In summary, what is happening with our architectural work nowadays?

Contemporary architectural endeavours stand at a crossroads, where heritage preservation is in a process meeting technological advancement.

As a brief reflection: I do not intend to question the relevance of technology, modernity or formal experimentation, but rather to emphasize the correct use of judgement before any intervention. It is imperative for architects to understand, learn and defend our heritage by being aware of our time and context in order to embrace the tools instead of putting them up for debate among ourselves. The essence, as illustrated here, pertinent to understanding the essence of any reality not being exclusive of the one shared.

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“...emphasize the correct use of judgement before any intervention.”





Figure 01 - Drawing by M. Santibáñez

Voz de Sol, Un Cuerpo, Una Casa

The experience we had in San Juan Mixtepec and Santiago Ayuquililla from 2010 to 2014 was the sum of solidarity as young students, and the need to learn architecture in another way, that other way that has nothing to do with academics but everything to do with rich experiences in what humans do and its context. I think there is a desperate need to make things closer, to build with our own hands, to feel it, especially for those who have grown up in the city. Every week, for several months, we counted the days to get there, cross the hills and get involved with the land, get our bodies dirty, get tired with the sun to refresh our souls with simple, essential things.

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MARIA SANTIBÁÑEZ
Mexican Architect





Figure 02 - Drawing by M. Santibáñez

This experience was an exchange in which I believe I have learned more than I could have given, sometimes we go from the city to the countryside with our “modern knowledge” thinking that “we are going to help people.” This experience made me understand the true value of humility and wonder what “Quality of Life” really is if in the city we depend on stores for even the most basic things. There people cultivate their land, they know the cycles of their food and the land itself. From the city we have the desire to have a healthier life, we romanticize the countryside, and from the countryside there is the need to go out to the wide and seductive experiences of the world of the cities.

FIGURE 01

One of the main reasons for migration in Mexico is to build a more “durable”, “bigger” or “more luxurious” house like in the cities. A heritage and an idea of quality of life that now seems to only be acquired with “material” houses (block walls, cement, and industrial materials). With this phenomenon, totally influenced by the culture of capitalist consumption, earth and tile constructions have unfairly become synonymous with poverty and underdevelopment.

These reflections caused uncertainty in my mind, knowing the intrinsic historical and cultural value in adobe, tile, tejamanil and other techniques that I have known since I was a child. At the same time we delved deeper into working together with women in the Mixteca. A curious dynamic full of students, jokes, delicious comal

food, river rides, luxury celebrations, a sacrificed pig, piñatas, different languages and volunteers from all over the world opening their hearts; a unique exchange in the center of the Mixteca. With sadness I also saw that community work is becoming less common, and that selfishness is permeating the most unexpected places. How can we integrate these realities, reconciling the dignity of both worlds without the dominant culture being invasive?

From my perspective we need to have a broader vision of the territory where we come from, deeply love our roots, our wounds, embrace what we are, understand that we carry in our veins knowledge that has been built for thousands of years and that we are now mutilating without mercy or any respect. For these reasons I decided to carry out my bachelor’s thesis to document the experience of building these adobe houses in the Mixteca with the aim of creating a self-construction manual.

During this research process, in the midst of talks and hands full of dirt, my friend Felicitas Cruz from San Juan Mixtepec, an admirable defender of women and the values of her people, shared with me something that is sacred to me. Now that I see it from a distance, I cannot refer to this as just another anthropological fact, but rather as an offering to friendship and affection for our land and its culture. What she shared with me resonated with me and my quest to make my way as a woman in architecture. In San Juan Mixtepec, as in other towns in Oaxaca, the house is conceived

as a being in total relationship with nature, forces that make life and the sacred possible, and as an extension of it. In the Mixtec culture, each part of the house is named like the parts of a human body, because they say, it is alive. So the door, for example, is the mouth of the house, in Mixtec *yu ye'e*; the facade, its chest *nchika ve'e* and the foundations, its feet *tsa'á ve'e*.

FIGURE 02

Fascinated, I understood that in the Mixtec language each word is a poem when I learned the name of the Sun, “The being that rises and illuminates” and the orientation of the house with respect to this being that, in addition, enters and cleans every corner. Now I recognize that language shapes our way of thinking and acting, of carrying ourselves through life. It responds to the geography and biodiversity from which it is born and shapes it. That’s why I understand the ceremony of our people. All cultural activities in Mexico are surrounded

by mysticism and construction is no exception, this is an activity that is not separated from nature and the divine forces that sustain it. The ritual towards divinity is always there because we live in it. I was born in the Mixtec, in Huajuapán de León, a mestizo city surrounded by hills of red earth, I do not speak Mixtec, but I do understand more and more the language of wonderful syncretism, the sum of voices that seem opposite, beliefs speaking of a universal value deep in mutual exaltation.

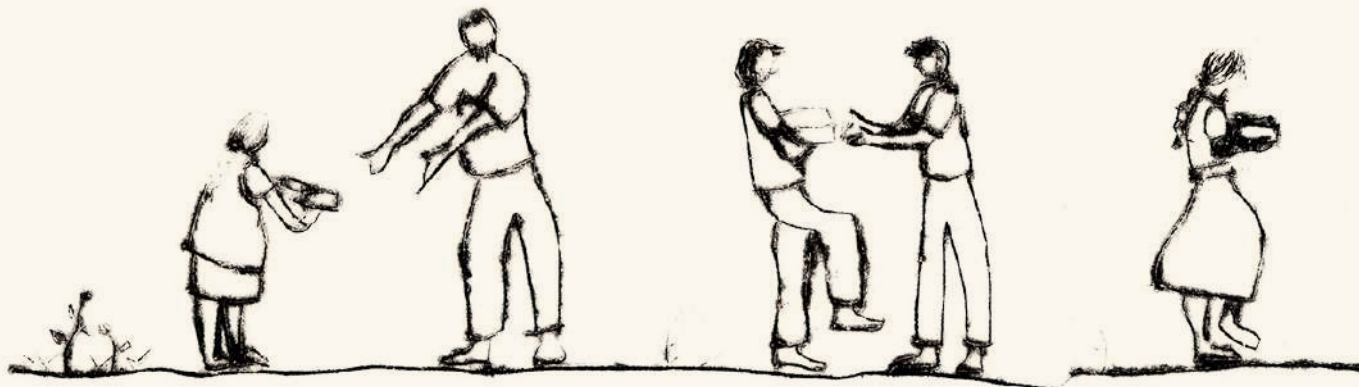
I finished the thesis as requested by the academy, but the idea of the manual continued to transform. How can we share such intimate and sacred knowledge of our culture? How can we reach that fiber to create reflection and healing on the conception of a house? How can we open the debate and the possibility of claiming the adobe house as a high-quality house? How to exalt community work compared to individualism.

The house is a reflection of its inhabitants, the architecture and

buildings that surround us are a reflection of our internal state as a society. And it shows, as it shows in a person’s posture, or in their walk. I perceive it as fragmented, with an over-exaltation of the rational, the search for sterile perfectionism, the fear of making mistakes, money above any human value, the masculine above the intuitive and the feminine.

FIGURE 03

I began an internal search by thinking of my body as my first home, which led me to a deep process, where I have found myself in the reflection of friends and great teachers. How could I make houses for others if I didn’t first become aware of my own body, the way I carried it and lived together. I rediscovered architecture as art with my father and other languages of art in Oaxaca, a city that continues to exude creativity in raw, subtle and contrasting ways.



Octavio Paz describes the work of art as a talisman and I wanted to look for in this the perfect bridge to be able to express, and ideally “open the doors that lead to the other side of reality” as he describes in his book *Matter and Sense*. where he exceptionally describes the history of art in Mexico. I became convinced that only art could bring us to that level of reflection. And so they began to be born, also with their own energy, *The Living House* and *Voz de Sol*, the *Living House*, two books, one a child of the other in which an adobe house is born in a community; Sol, the little girl of the family, shows him Jagerman, a foreign character inspired by the figure of the Architect Oscar Hagerman. In this relationship of friendship, it attempts to represent the cultural exchange that we experience, while at the same time integrating the poetic construction of a human body, the bowels of a house with its dreams, wounds and joys.

The construction of these two books was always driven by the urgent need to recognize ourselves inside, reconcile polarities, embrace our community and its roots. Thus began a healing journey with Dánae Cházaro, an artist friend and teacher of life, with whom the conversations turned into laughter and tears, leading to writing the text of *Voz de Sol* together, naming and invoking from the root to the head the construction of a new being, a body, a house. Intuiting and letting ourselves be carried away by memories, the voices of other times that I now think could be the voices of those women, of those girls, who, by word of mouth, in songs around the fire, in games or in deep prayers, with tradition oral have been firm, fluid and discreet protectors of the oldest knowledge such as knowing how to live.

I’m convinced that these values do not need to be proclaimed but rather made visible, they are so subtle that if you try to profit from them, they disappear; I also believe that we have a very big challenge to be able to integrate our polarities, listen to intuition, the wise voice of grandmothers and grandfathers, create healthier communities, healthier homes.

For us *The Voice of the Sun* was not only the voice of the Sun, but the voice of life that passes through us and gave birth to inspiration as it gave birth to this book. *Voz de Sol*, *La Casa Viva* was published independently in Oaxaca, with the impetus of the family workshop *Arquitectos Artesanos*, our community and the curatorship of the Mexico exhibition at the 2016 Venice Biennale.

Figure 03 - Drawing by M. Santibáñez



*Soiling - Terra
preta do Indio*

*& Amazonian
Agroecological
Urbanism*

Editor's note
About Ana María

Ana María Durán Calisto is an influential Ecuadorian designer, planner, and scholar based in Quito. She co-founded Estudio A0 in 2002 with her husband, Jaskran Kalirai, which is renowned for its multi-scalar and collaborative projects. Notable achievements include designing QPH, the first LEED Gold certified building in continental Ecuador, and winning first prize for the Ikiam University campus design at the SDSN Amazonia Infrastructure Award at the COP 21 in Paris. Her firm's projects have been featured in major exhibitions like the Venice Biennale and publications including books by Taschen and Braun Publishing. Durán Calisto has held teaching positions at prestigious institutions such as Harvard University, Columbia University, and UCLA. She has been actively involved in theoretical and practical discourses on urban ecologies, contributing to books and journals and lecturing worldwide. Her research focuses on the impact of extractivism on urban environments and the integration of ancestral urban principles. She has received awards like the Mark Cousins Theory Award in 2022 for her contributions to this field. Durán Calisto has also been a vital advisor on urban development policies, collaborating with international organizations like the UN and IDB, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at UCLA, studying the urban history of Amazonia under the advisement of Susanna Hecht.

Intro

In the Preface to his book *Cultural Forests of the Amazon: A Historical Ecology of People and their Landscapes*, anthropologist William Balée refers us to the work of soil scientists Tsai et al.¹ who studied *terra preta do índio* (Indian dark earths) at a biomolecular level and realized that the colonies of bacteria and other microscopic beings that prosper in these anthropogenic and highly fertile soils of Amazonia display a higher degree of biodiversity than their natural counterparts.² From the micro to the macro scale, Amazonians past and present offer an important lesson: human beings need not be predatory and destructive of what non-Amazonians categorize as Nature, a purportedly separate entity rather than womb and tomb of its progeny. They can be breeders of abundance, life, and biodiversity, and urban! They have been for thousands of years (5,300 – 5,500) in the rain forests and other ecologies of South America. The transects that are characteristic of the Pacific-Andean-Amazonian regional complexes are webs of exchange (cultural, genetic, commercial, epistemological) and multi-sited inhabitation.

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Note

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ANA MARÍA DURÁN CALISTO
Visiting Assistant Professor
Yale University

**UN HOMBRE
SOÑÓ CON UN
CEMENTERIO
AÉREO**

Hombre del aire Air man
Me entristece tu tragedia Sad is your tragedy
Hombre de aire Man of air
Tu tragedia Your tragedy
haber vivido to be alive
para ver debilitada to see
la gravedad Earth's
de la Tierra gravity weakened
De tanto extolling
ensalzar as you have
tan solo el vuelo just the flight
(¡Cómo no! (How not!
Ser pájaro Man bird
amigo friend
del viento) of the wind)
No poder Unable
ya now
ni caerte to fall
muerto dead
sobre la Tierra upon the Earth
Desprendido de ella Detached
inexorablemente from her
inexorably
Caerte Unable
Muerto to drop
para finalmente descansar to finally rest
sobre su firmeza upon the firmness of her final nest
Cadáveres suspendidos Floating corpses
como halo form a murky halo
turbio around her sphere
de su esfera
Satélites Satellites
de cementerio polvoriento of a dusty cemetery
volando flying
en descomposición in aerial decomposition
aérea
Necrópolis utópica utopian necropolis
de la maquinización of the Absolute
Absoluta machining
de la Madre Tierra of Mother Earth

**A MAN DREAMED
OF AN AERIAL
CEMETERY**

Anthropologist John Victor Murra referred to this system as “vertical archipelago” when describing the economic, political and territorial organization of the Inca. The roots of this regional system of in-HABITation, of profound territorial transformation, runs deep into the history of the original nations in the Americas.

The fertile Dark Earths, incrementally accumulated by generations of Amazonians, are the main index of human settlement in the region. These rich soils sustained the agrodiverse gardens of thousands of interconnected communes, upon whose domestic agroecological units or extended family-run microecologies, a regional system rested. Archaeologists Heiko Prümers, Carla Jaimes Betancourt, José Iriarte, Mark Robinson and Martin Schaich have recently excavated, with Lidar (light detection and ranging), the “low-density urbanism” of the Casarabe cultural complex in Bolivian Amazonia. Thanks to their work and that of other Amazonian archaeologists (Baleé, Erickson, Neves, Rostain, to name a few), we can now, finally, see the agroecological urban constellations of Amazonia in their full, clear regional complexity: the dots of thousands of “geoglyphs” (agroecological hamlets, if you wish) releasing the breath of their human geometries (circles,

rectangles, squares), or the dots of thousands of anthropogenic and highly productive forest islands, punctuating an immense urban constellation that condenses into primary, secondary, tertiary, and even fourth- or fifth- tier nodes of power. Its architectural scale is monumental, as monumental are the cultural landscapes that expand between nodes: raised fields, fish weirs, reservoirs, canals, mounds... Amazonians moved millions of metric tons of soil in order to build the geo, bio and eco-infrastructure that have contributed to enhance the linguistic, cultural and biological diversity of the continental biome. Like others, Amazonian civilization grew out of the soil and its transformations. Like others, to the soil, to their mineral and vegetal condition, they have returned.

Amazonian cities defy our ontology of the urban. They are fluid and beyond binaries in every single respect. They are open and closed, rural and urban, and its citizen-peasants are also hunters and gatherers. In this habitat-cities communities are multi-sited and extremely dynamic. The small, medium and large settlements, whose polycentric constellations are interwoven by water and land routes, as well as irrigation and water management systems, imprint a mirror image of the heavens upon forested lands,

whose rivers neatly reflect the skies above. Describing their modern condition, Brazilian geographers called them *foresta urbana* (urban forest). Godfrey and Browder chose *Jungle Cities* as the title for their book on the diffuse and “disarticulated” urbanisms of postwar Amazonia (the disarticulation belongs to the realm of systematic rupture of Amazonian tissues by modern, rational, extractivist, and technocratic approaches to “development” and planning in the region). Scholars of South East Asian and African tropical forests describe these type of urbanism as “low-density,” even as galactic. I like to describe it as agroecological urban constellation. What is clear is that language fails those of us who grew up with a concept and an image of the city that stands in opposition to the countryside that feeds it; in opposition to the hinterlands that provide it with raw materials; in opposition to the embarrassment of soil and soiled hands. Our cities belong to the air, and are air-borne utopias of a vision that emancipates us from the soil and its toil. Our cities have taken off to become imaginary satellites rotating around Mother Earth, finally emancipated from the jail of its body, its limitations, and its perishability. Anti-gravitation cities are now doomed to face the foundation of their very existence: the soil.

1 Tsai, S. M., O'Neill, B., Camarva, F. S., Saito, D., Falcão, N. P., Kern, D. C., ... & Thies, J. (2009). The microbial world of Terra Preta. In *Amazonian dark earths: Ifm Sombrock's vision* (pp. 299-308). Springer, Dordrecht.
 2 “The microbes of the fertile Amazonian soil called *terra preta*, which is a human artifact, are substantially different from those of the surrounding, natural soil. Yet the species of these microbes number in the millions and have not been identified except at the most general phyletic levels, namely, as bacteria, archaea, and fungi—all the major divisions of life except for all eukaryotes other than fungi. The complexities have yet to be fully worked out, for systematics of these microbes is tracking far behind diversity of gargantuan scope (Tsai et al. 2009).” Preface to Baleé, W. (2013). *Cultural forests of the Amazon: a historical ecology of people and their landscapes*. University of Alabama Press.

*Embrace
Walkability or
Witness
the Fall*

A Personal Manifesto

*"To attain the ultimate
state of calmness and
stillness, peaceful
surroundings must
surround one; peace
can only be found in
an environment that
radiates tranquility."*

"We can promote a vibrant, sustainable, healthy environment by changing our lives and operations."

Society is on the brink of chaos in modern-day Western living. Communities appear dark and foreboding, like bland structures in the depths of hopelessness and avarice. The relentless onslaught of urbanization via sprawl and the ceaseless march of an automobile-dependent society has plunged our current way of living into a deep, abysmal trench that we WILL not get out of as a society.

The consequences of this trench are far-reaching and melancholic. As society becomes comfortable with its current state of living, far-reaching consequences of idleness are starting to corrupt our day-to-day lives and perspectives. Water and air quality continue to degrade as more land is contaminated. Habitat fragmentation is disrupting local ecosystems, leading to esteemed loss of biodiversity. The homogenization of our cultural and architectural heritage increasingly positions us in a dystopian state of building

while promoting painful mental health troubles. As isolation and social fragmentation occur from this cookie-cutter urban sprawl, financial disparities grow exponentially, and the gap between classes continues to flourish.

Housing is the critical wrongdoer in wide-spreading urban areas such as Houston, Atlanta, Dallas–Fort Worth, and Los Angeles. These wide-spreading residential neighborhoods are a terrible way of living in our current society.

The cutback on this way of living is one of the ways out of a dystopian future. This lifestyle is what nurtures the sprawl like a growing parasite. As a society, we must resist the car-centric lifestyle and break free. A prospering solution to this problem is a cultural and architectural reset on our modern lives. We can promote a vibrant, sustainable, healthy environment by changing our lives and operations. Or at least develop

an environment that won't crush us more profoundly into a dark(er) trench.

The answers to the listed problem are walkable communities focused on pedestrian-friendly spaces, organized neatly to elevate health and safety, and conceiving a diverse community within its core, a future path we can venture down to disregard the current problem at stake. To further reduce the justification of our contemporary society, we can implement society-changing policies like congestion pricing, carpool lanes, limit parking available, and the promotion of alternate modes of transportation that encourage and emphasize the benefits of walkable precincts. Instead of promoting the 20-minute cities, we can encourage a 5-minute walk community connected by public transit supplied by the state to the people, for the people, and designed by the people.

Society can be built by these walkable developments inside the urban center of already urbanized areas. Also, on the edges of these metropolitan areas to help slow the sprawl. We can start by taking lots and parcels previously developed that could be more impressive and redesigning them into walkable communities. An example is Culdesac in Tempe, Arizona. This newly built community would be mixed-use apartment-style housing, with commerce below and housing above, all connected with walkable and bikeable paths; outside is public transit, allowing the continued movement of commerce outside the neighborhood. Everything someone would need to live would be nearby or a walkable distance. Longer journeys would be done mainly by modes of public transit. These aren't necessarily urban policies but urban and architectural guidelines.

It is essential to consider the needs of people with disabilities and make sure that the community is accessible to everyone. This may require additional infrastructure such as ramps, elevators, or wider paths to accommodate wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

But by taking away people's freedom of movement through vehicle transportation, the state can control the people, and it's essential to balance individual freedom with collective societal interests such as public safety, human rights, and social responsibility.

To avoid this, society must be educated and provided with walkable neighborhoods. The people must hold the state accountable with transparency and checks and balances and advocate for limited government. The state needs to

maintain most of the control over political issues while allowing everyday life for the people without evolving into a police state.

The transition into walkable communities can symbolize a consequential departure from the principles of an unrestricted and democratic civilization. Still, at the same time, it presents a suitable and sustainable future for humans to prosper and evolve in.

We have a choice in the face of urban sprawl and its environmental challenges. Society should NOT resign to the darkness of car-dependent, isolated living. Instead, move the movement towards walkable communities and sustainable urban development. The light at the end of the tunnel is within reach, and it starts with our collective effort.

"...movement towards walkable communities and sustainable urban development."

Inhu- *man* Matters

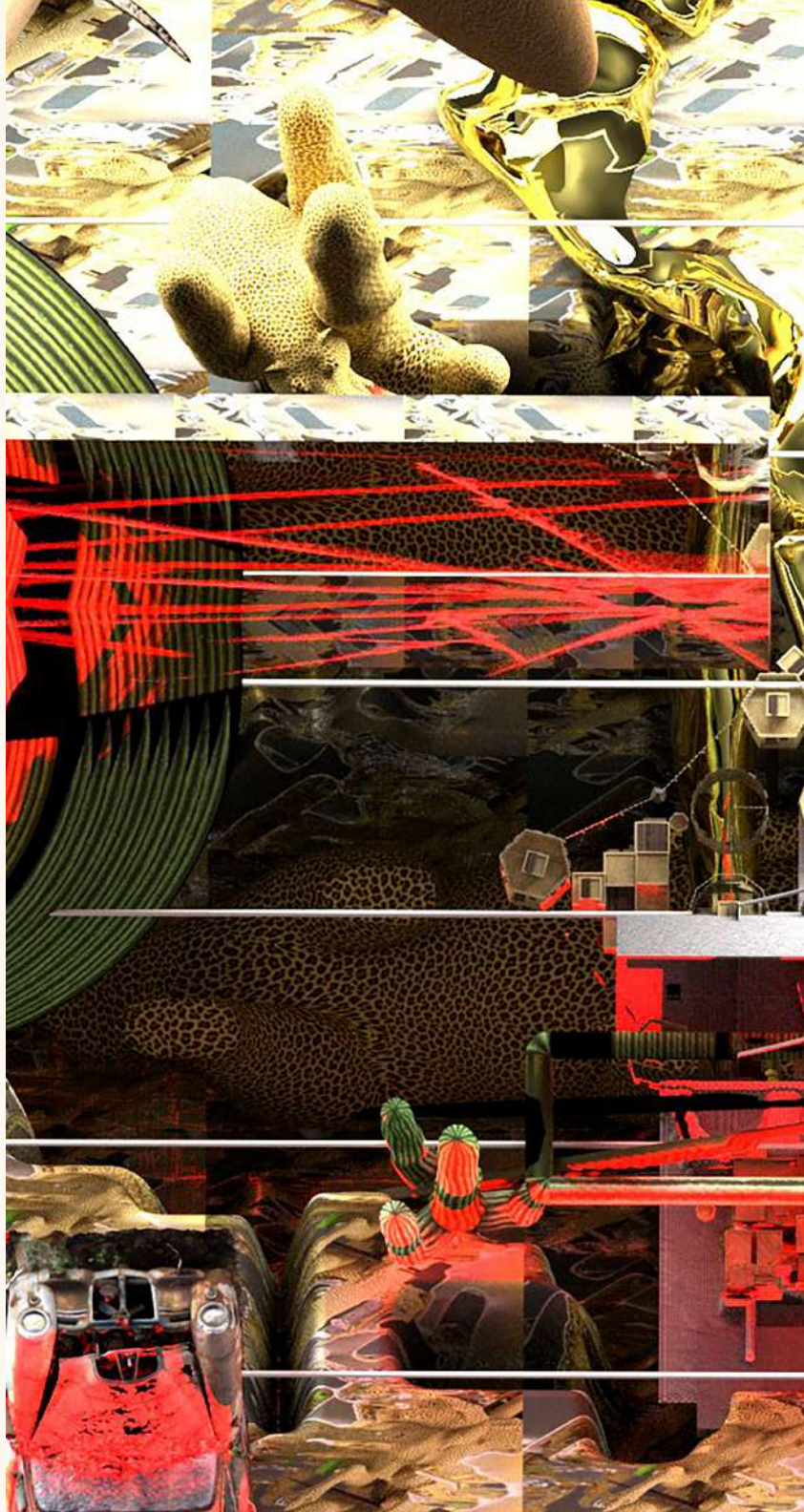
Transmutations of the Human

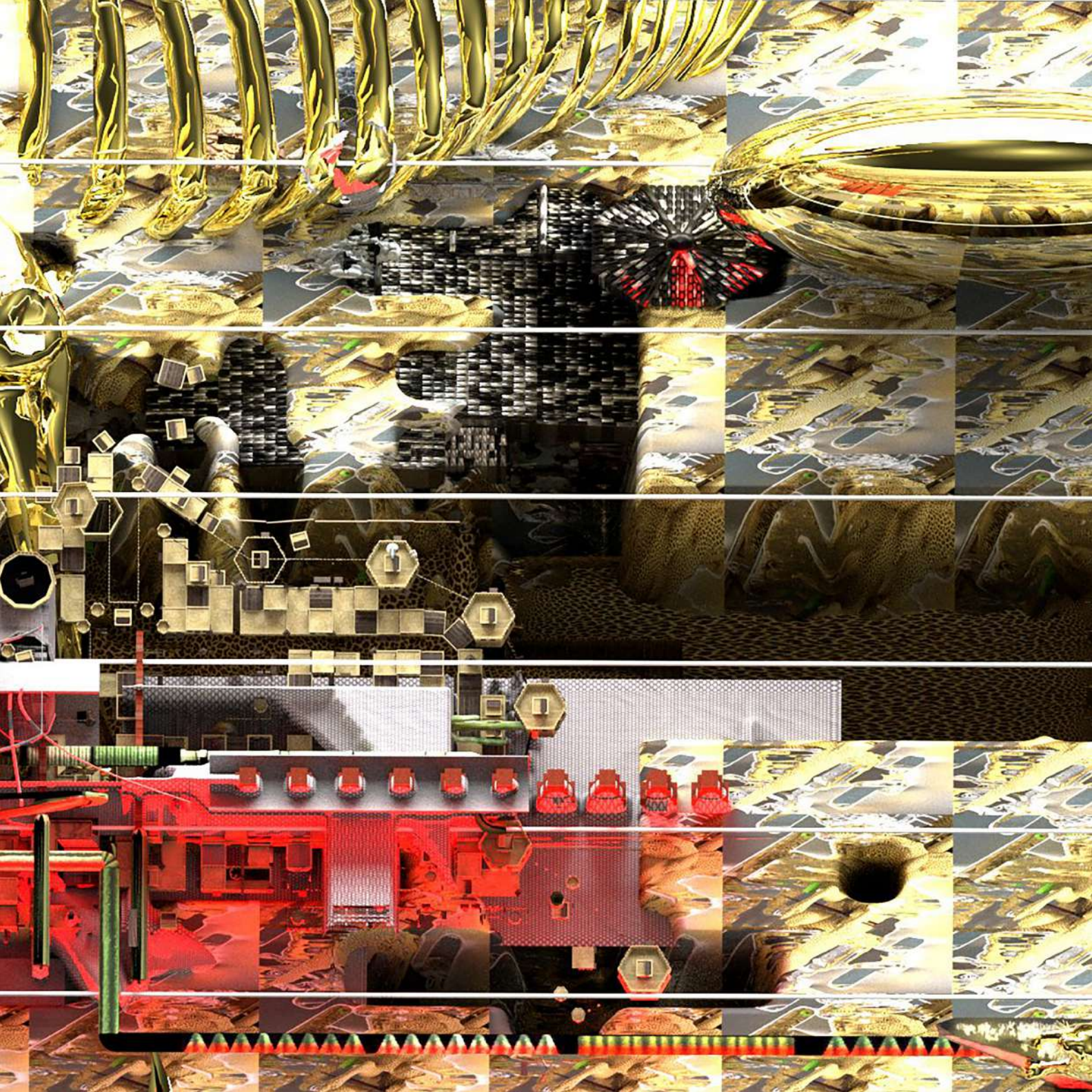
Inhuman matters stems from the words *-inhumane* meaning an opposite parallel variant and *-materia* referring to a substance from which something is made. Inhuman matters refer to the metamorphic process humans and the planet have undergone in the current epoch. Transmutation is a forced metamorphic process that humans and the planet have undergone among subterranean geological matters, non-humans, humans, and cultures¹.

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JONATHAN LEVITSKE
Designer

Right - Image by J. Levitske
Inhuman Matters





The Essence:

Refers to our transmutations of human identity that have been intricately tied with the epoch of the Capitalocene aiding in the commodification of land, dispossession and displacement of people, and erasure of the human.

Why do we continually create mythological wilderness?

How have the hinterlands transformed through the continual process of urbanization?

What can we learn from international and domestic cities about the historic preservation of inhuman matters?

How can we sensitize people to the violence exerted?

How has the land responded to toxic industrial scars?

What 'vernacular' has emerged from our capitalist agenda?

What new cultures of care can transpire or have been erased?

- 1 Yusoff, Kathryn. 2018. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes Or None*. N.p.: University of Minnesota Press.
- 2 Moore, Jason W., ed. 2016. *Anthropocene Or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. N.p.: PM Press
- 3 Andueza, Luis, Archie Davies, and Hannah Schling. 2021. "The body as infrastructure." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 4 (3): 799-817. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2514848620937231>.
- 4 Neel, Phil A. 2018. *Hinterland: America's New Landscape of Class and Conflict*. N.p.: Reaktion Books.
- 5 Heizer, Robert F. "The Background of Thomsen's Three-Age System." *Technology and Culture* 3, no. 3 (1962): 259-66. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3100819>.
- 6 Gare, Arran. 1996. *Nihilism Inc: Environmental Destruction and the Metaphysics of Sustainability*. N.p.: Eco-Logical Press.
- 7 Watson, Julia. 2019. *Lo-TEK: Design by Radical Indigenism*. N.p.: Taschen.
- 8 Hutchinson, Abigail. 2014. "The Whanganui River as a Legal Person." *Alternative Law Journal* 39 (3): 179-182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X1403900309>.

The study of inhuman matters questions the sets of forces that have created transmutations at the planetary scale capable of erasing the human, as the present epoch -the Capitalocene- organizes systems subsumed by capital i.e., money, material, and matter, not human².

We have storied away ‘the essence’ through junk science and architectural vessels of conquest to justify the extraction of matter. These vessels have forced us to become dependent on the peripheral hinterlands for the extraction of prodigious power. Our inheritance of land from colonial narratives has unfolded at an immense scale. Colossal transformations of ecologies of species have remade our world at the subterranean, surface, and atmospheric scales. Specifically, our bodies have become enrolled in the production, flow, and consumption of capital and geological matter that drive these vessels. Bodies have unwillingly become phlegmatic inhuman machines. As we immerse ourselves in the vast landscape of interconnected vessels of the conquest that augment the planet, we are complicit in our bodily decay and earthly eradication³. Bringing our bodies to bear in the thinking of the boundless territorial infrastructures is central to considering the impacts in the ‘disavowed’ hinterlands⁴.

Our relationship, dependency, and intimacies with territorial infrastructures begin with underlying geological compositions recorded by chronostratigraphy. Chronostratigraphy is the study of subterranean geological matter over time through sectional dating methodologies. Geological compositions are coveted materials buried deep in the Earth of specific eras: stone, bronze, copper, coal, lithium, etc, correlating with our blind progress.

We have refused to acknowledge the creation of scars from territorial infrastructure and therefore are rendered invisible; out of sight and out of mind. These assemblages of the city rendered invisible and intermittently abandoned include mines, dams, power plants, power lines, subway stations, sewage and water lines, etc.

We continually utilize several of these for our benefit, however, when they are no longer useful we abandon these immense assemblages of the city. Particularly, in history, the Three Age System has indicated transitions between agricultural tools to inhuman industrial assemblages⁵. Our blind progress has been fetishized by pop culture and media outlets, but the earth beneath our feet is not destined for extraction and human domination⁶.

As we look to enroll every piece of land and humans in matters of inhumanity, stories of care and traditional ecological knowledge emerge from the wreckage of ‘the essence’. ‘The essence’ has been made and remade throughout history. A new transmutation is emerging in the wake of a rapidly growing climate crisis and immense inhuman matters. Our relationship with geological compositions shifts from a form of domination over the environment towards acknowledging the environment as human. This shift is foregrounded in traditional ecological knowledge. A form of knowledge developed from Indigenous People’s intimate connection with the environment⁷. They understand land, place, and beings as a reciprocal relationship. Furthermore, we have seen legislature granting personhood to the New Zealand Whanganui River and the United States Lake Erie and Manoomin or wild rice⁸. Indigenous Peoples have sacred relationships with these humans; an ‘essence of care’.

Design in the current crises has a responsibility to not fall within continual cycles of inhuman matters but approach future design as we are related to one another. How can we be responsible relatives to one another? Presently, a design methodology surfaces that emulate five approaches: identity, vernacular, temporality, locomotion, and reciprocity.



Writing on the Wall

*Left - Photo by T. Hursley
Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Figure 1. Open Ceremonial Stairway*

Description:

A four-story open interior stair made of glass, light metal, and concrete, against a wooden horizontal slat wall and a large glass wall.

A Social Analysis of the Harvard Northwest Science Building

CODA: THE ESSENCE

I wrote this short piece in 2010 as a proof of concept experiment in applying methods and theories from science and technology studies (STS) to architectural research for my upcoming doctoral field work. As it was still novel to apply STS ideas to architectural research, my dissertation committee member Sheila Jasanoff, Pforzheimer Professor of Science and Technology Studies at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, suggested I try it out on a local building. The Harvard Northwest Science Building designed by SOM was a perfect candidate because its design was accompanied by explicit research philosophy. Connecting formal and discursive framings allows me to examine how peoples' actions line up with the design intentions inscribed in buildings. Fourteen years later, the essay—while a bit naïve—still encapsulates the *essence* of the detailed social and empirical focus of my research.

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WANDA KATJA LIEBERMANN
*Associate Professor
University of Oklahoma*



THE NS BUILDING

The laboratory space will not be dedicated to a particular Harvard science department. Instead, the flexible design of the Northwest Science Building is intended to accommodate collaborative research and teaching efforts of researchers from many different disciplines such as neuroscience, bioengineering, astro and particle physics, and biophysics. For example, one particularly exciting cross-disciplinary field brings together molecular and cellular biology with applied physics and engineering, enabling research in such areas as tissue engineering, biological imaging, drug delivery/biological transport systems, retinal implants and other bio-mechanical devices, etc. With faculty working collaboratively with their colleagues in neuroscience, the opportunity for developing engineering solutions to physiological/neurological problems is a very real and exciting possibility¹.

I entered the Northwest Science Building (NSB) for the second time on a Wednesday morning around ten. The first time was for an evening social event a few months earlier called *Laboratory*, a collaboration of the sciences and the arts at Harvard. It opened only a year ago and it's not yet fully occupied. The NSB is Harvard's version of cutting-edge biotechnology and as the statement above seems to indicate, it is a bit of an experiment in mixing diverse disciplines together. Though, it's a lot of money to invest in an experiment! This large, neo-modernist structure looks like it was built with a very big budget, even beyond what's typical for technology-laden science buildings.

One of the main luxuries is how much space is dedicated to circulation. Now, as before, I am struck by how open, large, and airy the common spaces are. Circulation space is conventionally considered inefficient, counted as part of gross, not net or "usable" building area. This "inefficiency" extends throughout: a four story entry vestibule, open areas from entrance to café in back, a spacious ceremonial stair from the first basement to the fourth level (Figure 1), a large recreational space at the second level stair landing, three double height "living rooms" for gatherings (from the architectural

brochure), three additional open stairs between the second and fourth floors, and wide hallways on the laboratory floors with frequent large alcoves for seating and kitchenette.

What does so much open space do?

The architect's brochure is quite explicit about its purpose: with words like "living room" and "neighborhood" the goal is to "promote chance meetings of scientists" and to define "places for circulation and interaction." One striking way the design tries to encourage that mixing is by making writing surfaces on the walls. On the laboratory floors a wide L-shaped corridor is sandwiched between faculty and administrative offices on one side and laboratories on the other. Every few dozen feet along the solidly enclosed laboratory side of the corridor there are wide recesses surfaced edge to edge with whiteboard. In occupied areas of the building these display different kinds of communication: jokes, job rosters, lab shopping lists, and scientific/mathematical formulas and sketches.

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*Left - Photo by T. Hursley
Courtesy of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill
Figure 2. Spacious, two-story lounge with wall-to-wall white board.*

Description:

Modern, wood-paneled double-story lounge with upholstered seating in front of a large white board with two people drawing technical diagrams.

¹ <http://www.construction.fas.harvard.edu/fasprojects/northwest/NWILabs.htm> [accessed April 4, 2010, now defunct]

On the opposite side, offices are enclosed by floor to ceiling glass. Some are transparent; some are partially translucent, allowing in light and views into the second (the exterior-most layer) of offices beyond. At many of the occupied researchers' offices and meeting rooms the glass fronting the corridor is also covered with mathematical formulas, notes, scientific diagrams, and sketches in multi-colored ink, presumably erasable like the whiteboards (Figure 2). These were made on the inside, so they read backwards in the corridor. But it appears that the glass can be marked from either corridor or office side.

By providing so much common space and the means for the public display of ideas, the design builds in the concept of the shared and open nature of learning, making knowledge, and collaboration in the sciences. Along those lines, the building's design configures a very sociable scientist, who has options to eat lunch in one of the

many kitchenettes and lounges, hang out and plays foosball, sun herself on the balcony, and share her ideas with a colleague or someone in a neighboring, but different, specialty. The thought seems to be that the ubiquitous writing surfaces will encourage public thinking-out-loud and demonstration of ideas. The corridors are places for the circulation of ideas as well as people and things. Some initial questions that I have are: Do the writing surfaces perform a new function when located in the hallways of the building? Do they produce a new form of sociability and exchange of information? Where did this take place before they were located in the public corridor? How does the shift from private and invited access to public display of scientific ideas change how research is understood? If this is a new kind of communication practice, how does it reproduce or create new categories of people in the building and rules about how and who can use it?

Who is qualified to write on the walls?

The white boards are architecturally non-hierarchical (compared to those in offices and lecture rooms which denote ownership or emphasize the writer's position); does it mean that everyone can share and display their ideas? Or do only some people have the right to write publicly? If the latter, then what kinds explicit or tacit knowledge is exchanged to inform the members of the group of these rules? Who does the writing address?

Some of the messages on the white boards revealed information about the mundane social life of the building, like the board by the shelf full of dirty coffee cups with the polite command, "please clean," to cleaning staff. Another board, located right outside one of the occupied labs, informed everyone that the board was:

*“NOT PUBLIC
PROPERTY” and
“DO NOT EVER
ERASE THIS
BOARD!!”*

Which public is being addressed in this case? Other laboratory group members? Non-researchers? Building outsiders? Does the injunction above, address a laboratory society infraction? Do the whiteboards extend the laboratory divisions out into the hallway?

The bigger question is what values about learning and knowledge does this design preserve or change? Science and technology studies holds that the production of scientific knowledge depends on persuasion leading to consensus about what knowledge the experimentation creates or reveals. This inevitably means sharing information. These walls,

combined with the architect’s statement, imply a belief that interdisciplinary productivity will occur in a spontaneous way. The “experimental” nature of the whole NSB mission encapsulated in the writing walls argues against the incommensurability between scientific specialties. In fact, the walls seem to create a literal and metaphoric interface between specializations and the means for the transfer of knowledge between them.

It also prompts thinking about the role that inscription plays in scientific knowledge making and how that relates to the physical location of the corridor midway between the laboratory and faculty office. In an idealized view, what happens in the laboratory is the rote and empirical stuff; while the theory-making part associated with inscription is the abstract and more universal mode of science. What role does the writing in the corridor play in the legitimization and verification of lab findings?

Lastly, in this short meditation, I wonder what the public and literal transparency of the writing says about what ideals are held or at least projected about scientific transparency? It would appear that the visual openness and transparency of hallway inscriptions demonstrate one of the main tenets of modern science: research is pursued with disinterest and knowledge is shared in the community. But how does communitarianism fare when it encounters biotech research, much of which is oriented towards a profitable future in medical and pharmaceutical markets? With applied research, there are financial matters on the line that require scientists to maintain secrets of developments for patent protection.

*What kind of
information, then,
can be written on
the public wall?*

*The Essence of
Music as
a Tool for
Architectural
Design*

*"Music is within itself
abstract and cannot be
further abstracted. What I
mean by this is that music
is already in its simplest
form; it can be divided
into parts, but it cannot no
longer be divided on an
abstract level."*

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Intro

As architectural designers, we often ask ourselves what it means to create “good designs.” I once heard an engineer say that “perfection is achieved when nothing else can be taken away,” and that has stuck with me ever since. Throughout my 5 years of architecture school, I have heard the phrase “less is more” many times, and I related it to that. I believe that good designs are capable of being simple while also being effective. To achieve this in architectural design, it is almost essential to begin the process with abstraction. This can be said for pretty much all forms of art with the exception of music. Music is within itself abstract and cannot be further abstracted. What I mean by this is that music is already in its simplest form; it can be divided into parts, but it can no longer be divided on an abstract level. Having spent many hours pondering that thought, it has led me to wonder if music can be used as a design tool in architecture. As someone who practices both architecture and music, it intrigues me to think that I could use the two together to create something new. Often architectural designers strive to find a consistent design process to be more efficient and streamline their ideas. I believe that this can be achieved by integrating music or musical notation into the design process; an abstract process helps create an abstract design.

Architectural Design & Music

In many ways, architecture is a lot like music. The two share many similar compositional elements when you break them down such as pulse, rhythm, density, texture, or feel, among others. They can also both be laid out linearly. Reading floor plans and building sections in order to construct a building could be compared to reading the score to understand different movements before you perform a piece. Once the building is constructed, or the piece has been performed, people will feel a certain way about it whether that be positive or negative, even if that is not the intention. Architecture and music can both be described as emotional. As architectural designers, we typically want our work to evoke some sort of emotion. The same can be said for musical artists. It can be a good, bad, or even neutral emotion, but ultimately people will feel something in response to artistic pieces. There are multiple ways to interpret music 3-dimensionally. The bass kicks in a song could represent columns and overlapping snares could indicate the column to be a pilaster. Or maybe if we look at the notes written out in bars, we can use their location to design the profile of a building. Because music is so abstract, it can be interpreted and represented in many ways. Trying to narrow down which approach can be tricky; it is necessary to keep an open mind, explore multiple approaches, and find a way that works best for you.

A Professional's Design Approach

I was fortunate enough to have a chance to sit down and talk to Charley Reeves who has a bachelor's degree in both Environmental Design and Music Education. He started out in music at a young age, learning to play multiple instruments throughout his life. He attended the University of Oklahoma and received his degree in Musical Education. After spending many years teaching music, he began to feel a need for change in his life and wanted to pursue a different career. He decided to go back to school and get his Environmental Design degree after being inspired by an architectural magazine. Charley now works for CWA Group in Norman, OK, where he has been for almost two decades. He mainly focuses on designing school buildings and other educational facilities, but he still finds time to play gigs when he can.

Charley believes that music is an essential tool for design, as musical patterns appear all around us whether they be intentional or not. He is easily able to identify rhythms and pulses in nature. When looking at a building, certain exterior elements can create a rhythm along a building's façade. In the same essence, a building façade could be described as a musical piece. It has a start and a stop, or the two ends of the building, and then everything that happens between those points is the content of the song. Door and window openings could be represented as part of the melody while smaller details like frames or reveals could play into the harmony.

Using Music to Create Design Patterns

Charley walked me through the way he has developed to lay out musical elements in a linear fashion and then use them as design ideas. He took a perfect fifth chord and laid the frequencies out in a linear representation using 3D modeling software. Each note in the chord had its own line of dots, which represented the number of times that the direction of the note changed during the period of a second; this is how hertz is measured. The result is three sets of dots that each occur at different intervals, making the dots lay out in unique patterns. The section below is a graphic representation of the C Major Chord, made of the notes C4, E4, and G4, tuned to A4 = 440 Hz.. Each horizontal line represents a note, and the dots represent every time that note's soundwaves change direction over the course of approximately one-tenth of a second.

The result is a very unique pattern. Notice that the dots become less frequent as you move down the rows. This is only the result of a single chord; you could use this same method to lay out virtually any chord and see how the patterns differentiate. These patterns can also be interpreted in different ways. This pattern could be used for tiling, lighting, and even sequencing, but there's never only one solution. The image below shows the façade of a 3-story commercial building that I have designed to put this theory to work. The windows and door openings are laid out in a sequence, based on the first snippet of the C-Major chord pattern. The most openings are on the top level with the least being on the bottom level. It is a shortened version of the whole pattern, but the idea is still visible.

Using Music to Communicate

I also happened to stumble upon a blog post by Dr. John D. Cook, an expert consultant in applied math and data privacy, about how Morse code can be used in musical notation. He lays out each letter in Morse code, using the note E5 which has a frequency of 659 Hz. It is important to use notes that are similar to this frequency, as Morse code is typically in a range of 600-800 Hz.¹

Using this as a template, entire sentences could be spelled out using musical notations. It is a direct symbolic representation of the letters and could make for an interesting building façade or other pattern. You could spell out the name of a musical institute using musical notes, which I find simply fascinating.



Left - Image C. Newport
Façade of Commercial Building

The Fibonacci Sequence

One principle that is often discussed in mathematics would be the Fibonacci Sequence, or the “Golden Ratio.” It is essentially a sequence of numbers where the two previous numbers equal the sum of the third. It is often discussed in the field of architecture in reference to the proportions of shapes or spaces. One very famous building which follows the rule would be the Parthenon. The foundation of the building has a ratio of roughly 2.25:1, and the columns were designed so that their base–height ratio is approximately 1:1.5. Even the more detailed friezes and sculptures reflect the sequence.²

The Fibonacci Sequence is also used very heavily in music. If you take an octave on the piano for example, we’ll use C3 to C4, the keys are laid out in the manner of the golden ratio. There are 5 black keys plus 8 white keys, equal to 13 total. The black keys are also broken down into groups of 2 and 3, summing up to 5.

Key 1 is the C note. If you play 1 and 3, you have C/E which is the first two notes in the C Major chord. 1, 3, and 5 will give you the C chord, and 8 is an additional C note, one octave higher than note 1. These specific note patterns are built off of the Fibonacci sequence, and these major chords are the chords that typically sound the most pleasant to the human ear.

Buildings inspired by music

Another way that music can be used in design is to design for music. This can be done by using the acoustical properties of certain materials, shaping materials to create certain sound patterns, and texturing surfaces to absorb and reflect sound differently, the possibilities are near endless. If a building that you are designing will encapsulate a specific sound, you should use that sound as the basis of your design; your physical forms are going to frame the sound within the space. In what areas do you want the sound to be muffled and in what areas should the sound expand into? These are both questions to consider.

One example of using sound to design would be the Sea Organ in Croatia. It was designed so that when the waves hit the shore, music would play. This was achieved by cutting different-sized holes in the side of the shore to create different pitches at different parts of the shore. Depending on the currents and height of the tide, the Sea organ will play changing notes at different times of the day.³

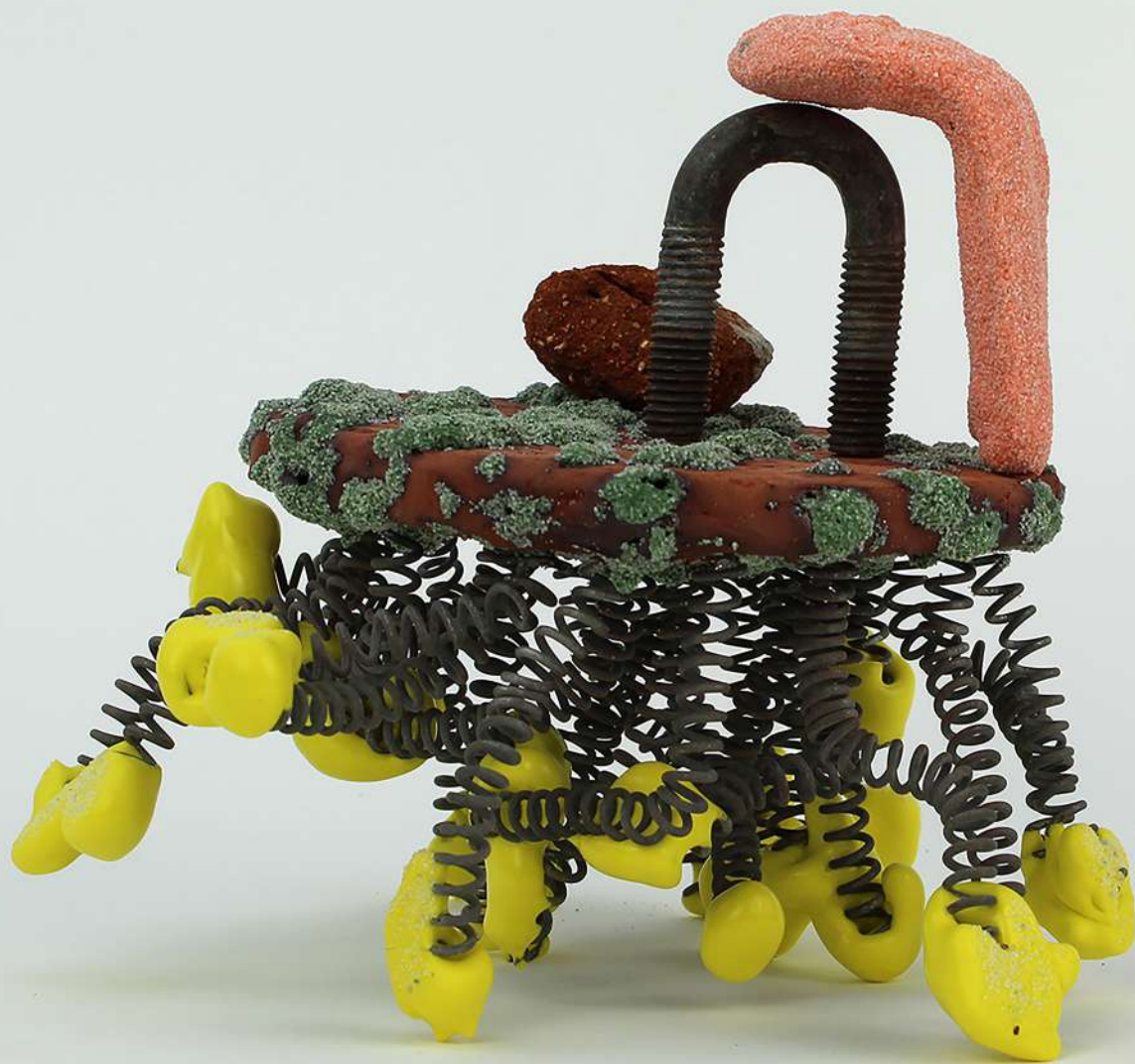
Art is a very powerful and expressive element that can take many forms. When we begin to use those forms together, we have an opportunity to create something even more unique. The integration of musical notation into the design process not only creates a unique design approach but also exemplifies the interconnectedness of different artistic disciplines. Through this exploration, we find that abstraction can serve both as a tool for being innovative, as well as communicating in a simplistic form with which we can better engage the world.

1. Cook, John D. “Morse Code in Musical Notation.” *John D. Cook Consulting*. February 25, 2022. <https://www.johndcook.com/blog/2022/02/25/morse-code-in-musical-notation/>.²

2. Horadam, A. F. (1961). A generalized Fibonacci sequence. *The American Mathematical Monthly*, 68(5), 455-459.

3. Urskakrek543. “The Sea Organ.” *Architectuul*. May 13, 2021. <https://architectuul.com/architecture/the-sea-organ>.

Art & Design Projects



Underneath the Sunflowers

Material Exploration

Do the pace of our lives and habits of disposability make our junk invisible?

Sparks fly when I encounter a vibrant fragment from human waste rendered invisible that we all exist within. With a curious mind, I am drawn to the pops of colors, values and forms scattered about our streets and fields.

These curiously-gathered shards amass in the library of fragments in my studio. Through my crafted repository of found and made objects, I have created a multitude of opportunities to play, seeking to explore the

wonder I first felt when foraging. Working in the framework of play my practice uses ceramics and altered plastic objects to recontextualize the foraged junk within sculptural objects, centering the junk ubiquitous on our landscapes.

Play is a tool and a practice I engage to challenge the structures we exist within, creating wonder, curiosity and a desire to pause and play. My assembling process is slow, in opposition to the pace at which we consume. The viewer is invited to follow that pace of my practice; to view the works, one must pause and investigate to

observe the connections, nuance, and materials assembled into one object. These slow observations in my practice, from gathering to making, enhances and reinforces the curiosity in the environments I inhabit, as I process the decay, beauty, and lingering plastic.

Responding to the vignettes I see within my immediate environment; I create micro landscapes through a playful lens that translate the world through my perspective, translating the beautiful haunting altered landscape we inhabit into perceptible scale.

Left - Photograph by D. Morrison
Underneath the Sunflowers

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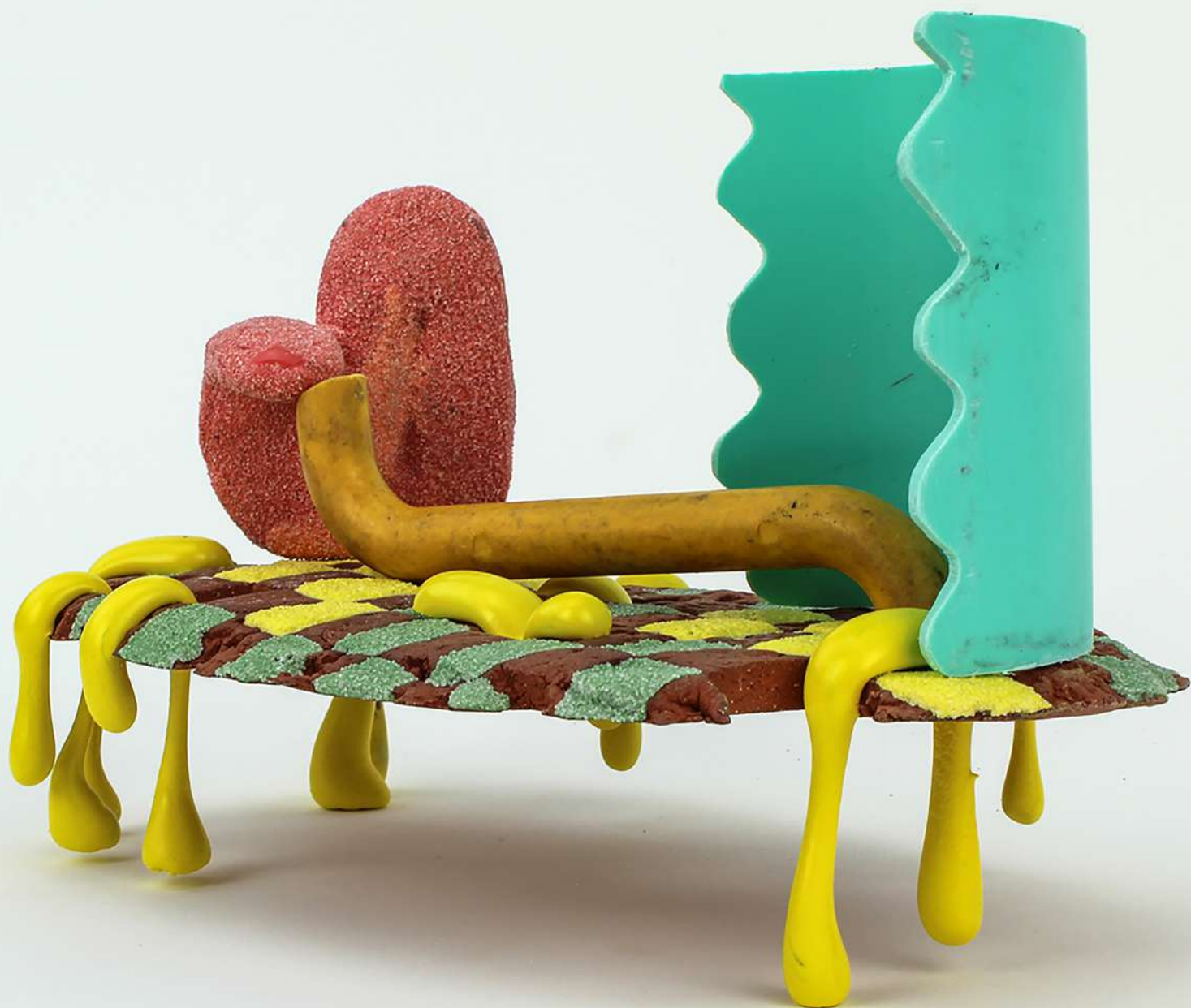
DAVID MORRISON
Artist



Photographs by D. Morrison

Left - Once a Tree

Next - Junk Daydream







Photographs by D. Morrison
Above - Traversing the Anthropocene
Previous - Sunflower





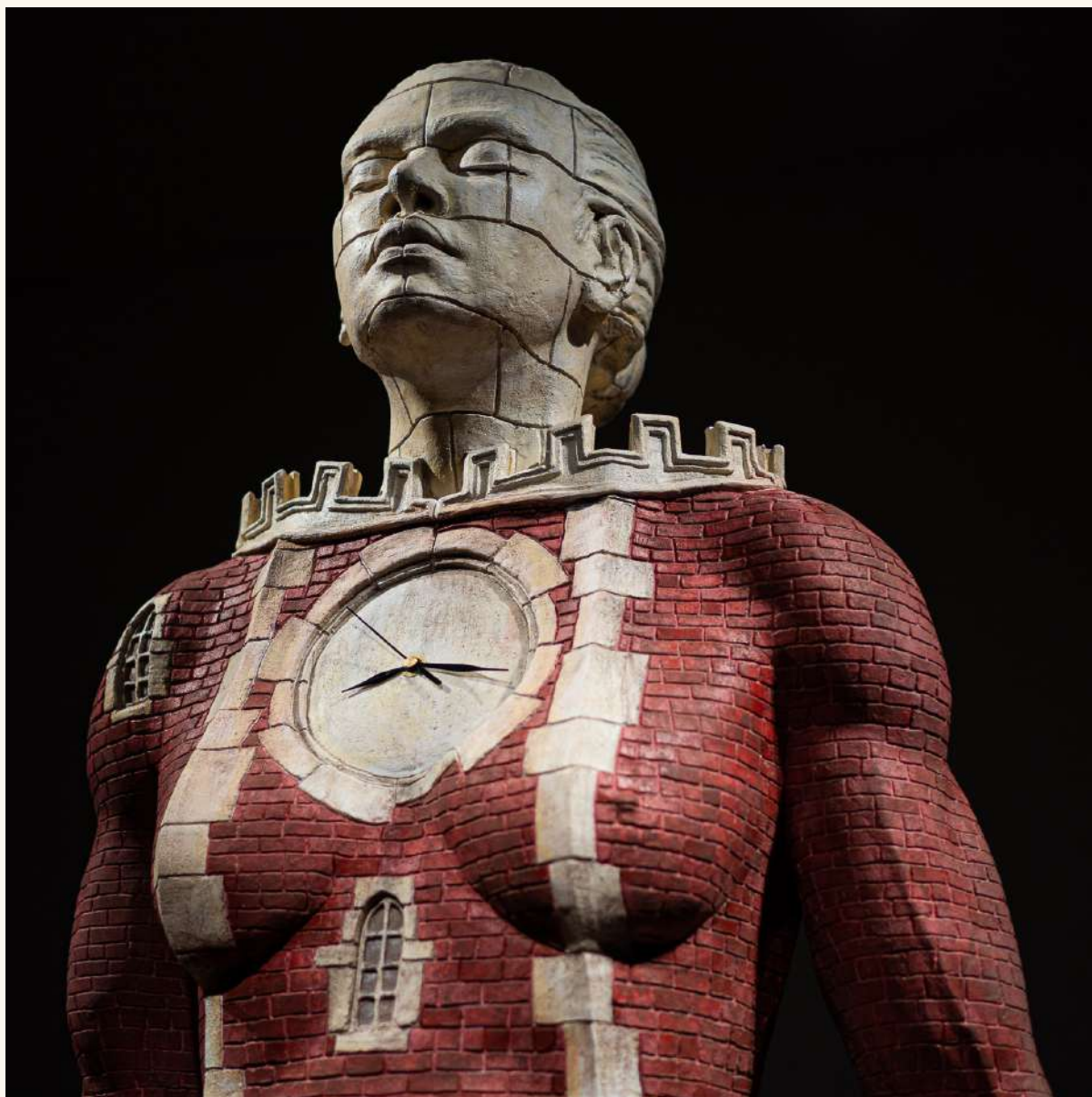
*Left - Photo by CJ Carter
Clock Tower Sculpture, Front view*

Clocktower

Clay Sculpture

CJ CARTER

*MFA Candidate in Ceramics
University of Oklahoma*



Above - Photo by CJ Carter
Clock Tower Sculpture, Detailed view
Right - Photo by CJ Carter
Clock Tower Sculpture, Back view







Left - Photo by CJ Carter
Lighthouse Sculpture, Front view

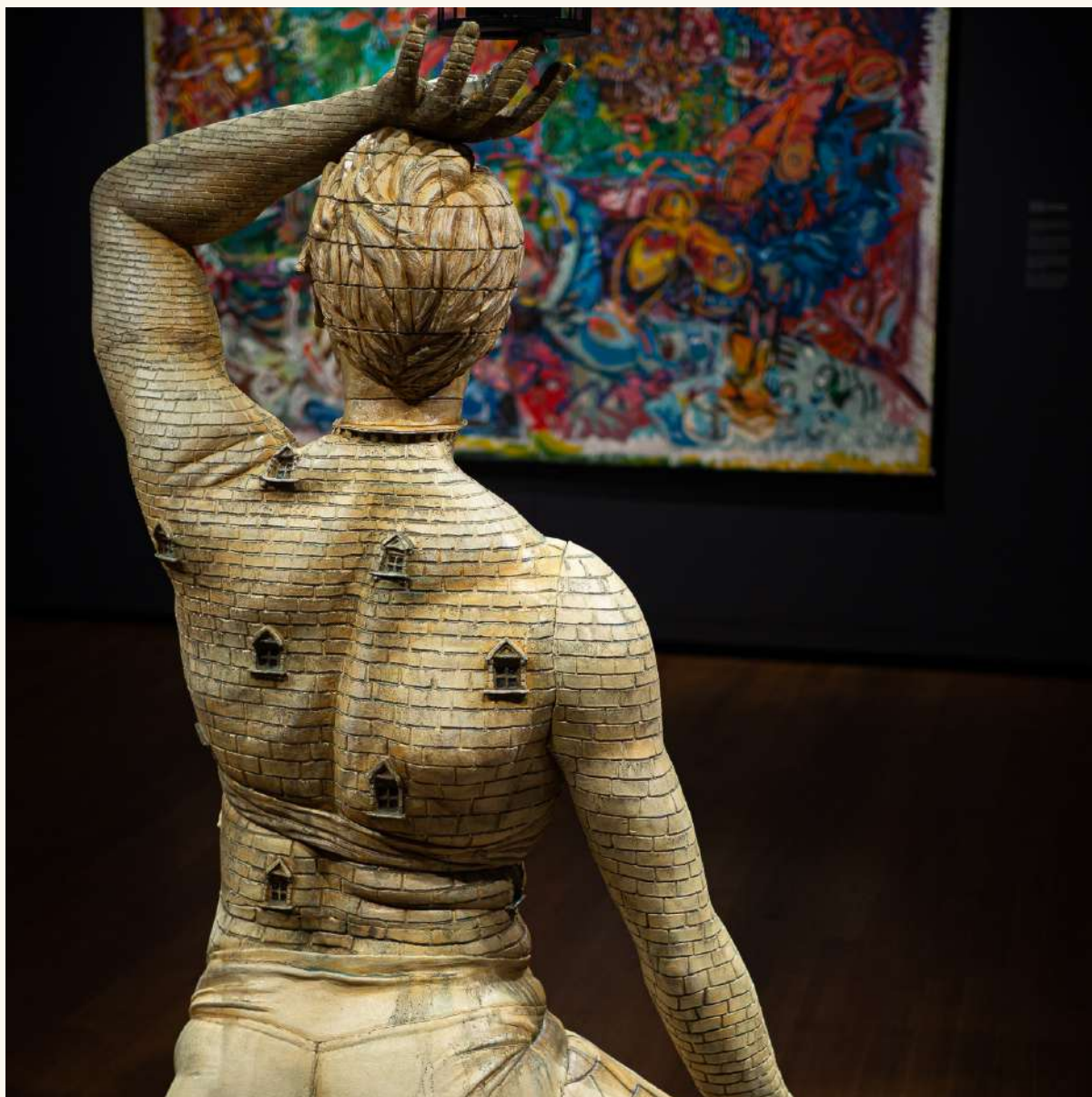
Complex contradictions are the essence of human nature and they fascinate me. I want viewers to reconsider their notions of both power and beauty with my work. If they see strength that is simultaneously masculine and feminine, impressive yet relatable, delicate yet enduring, then I will have been successful.

Lighthouse

Clay Sculpture

CJ CARTER
*MFA Candidate in Ceramics
University of Oklahoma*





Above - Photo by CJ Carter
Lighthouse Sculpture, Detailed view

Left - Photo by CJ Carter
Lighthouse Sculpture, Back view



Above - *Photograph by T. London*
Path 01 over the hills



Essence through Exploration

Material Exploration

This semester, we were tasked to design a boathouse on Lake Thunderbird, in Norman, Oklahoma; with the intention of creating a building both physically and conceptually integrated with the landscape and water.

Through research, analysis, sketching, and drafting, I was able to choreograph a vague idea of what the boathouse would look like. Although, the intimate scenes required for great and meaningful architecture needed to be finalized.

It was achieved through an unique process.

From collected objects from the site that reflected characteristics from the surrounding vegetation, landscape, materiality, and other aspects of the area, I created conceptual

models that could both actualize moments in the boathouse's design and closely reflect and embrace the essence of the surrounding landscape and concept of the project. Below are examples of some of these moments.

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TREY LONDON
Undergraduate Architecture Student



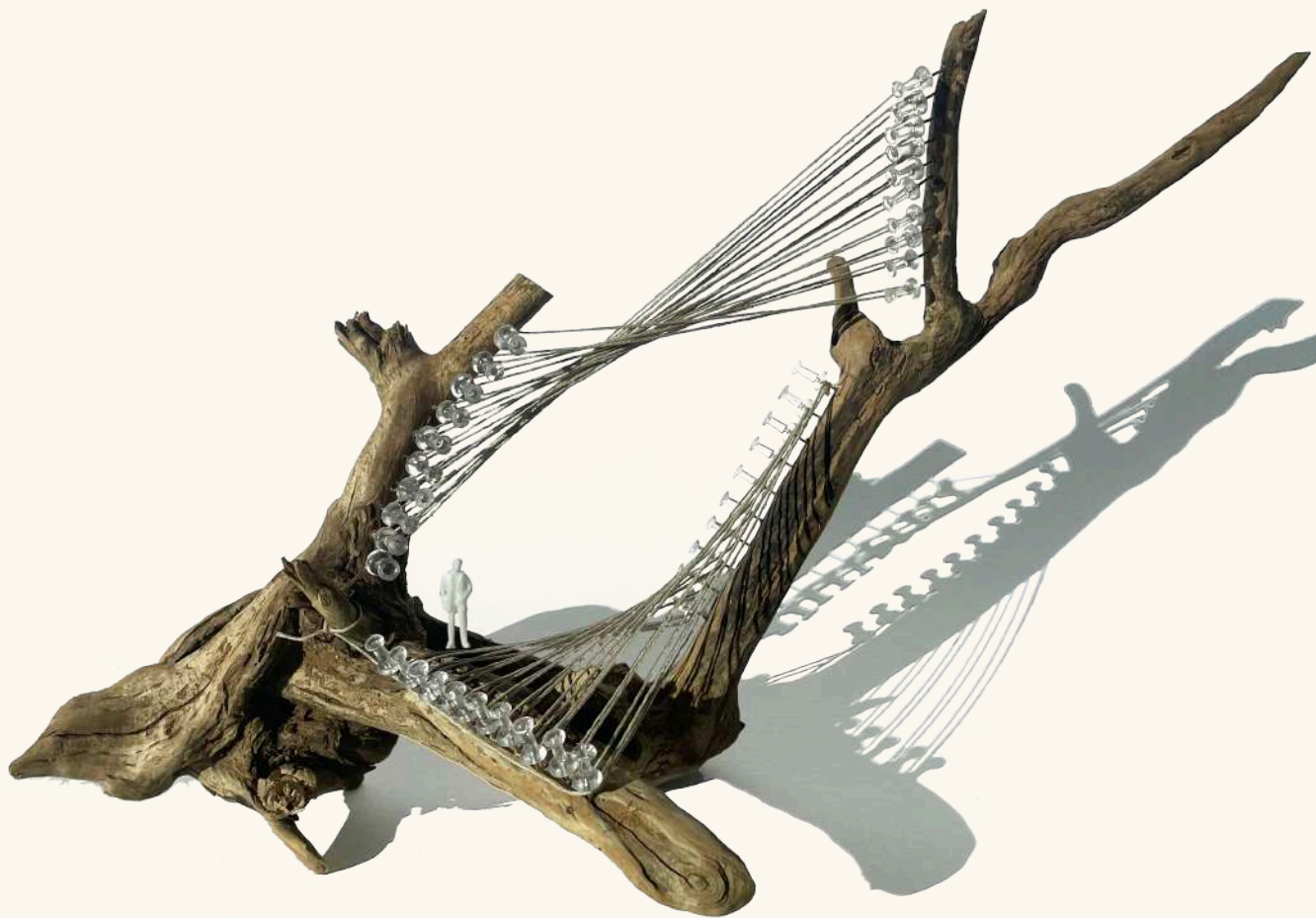
Above - Photograph by T. London
Path 02, Elevated Trail.

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Above - Photograph by T. London
Resting Point 01, Observation Platform

Walking through the site for the first time, I was contemplating how it felt to be in that area, and how I could replicate and enhance that experience for visitors.



Above - *Photograph by T. London*
Path 03, Suspended Bridge



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Above - Photograph by T. London
Path 04, Between the Rocks



Above - Photograph by T. London
Resting Point 03, Campfire and Platform

I collected objects through the site resembling that experience and essence of the site, and replicated these instances through model exploration, and my final project.



Above - Photograph by T. London
Resting Point 02, Cave-like Structure



Guess Work

FAUX-ART *Sculpture*

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ANDREW STONE
*Assistant Professor
University of Oklahoma*

*Right - Photo by A. Stone
Guess Work Sculpture - Foam, Oil Paper, Bark*





Guess Work is a FAUX-ART sculpture that delves into the intricate interplay between various forms of representation and the perceived authenticity of materials.

The essence of “Guess Work” lies in its ability to construct an alternative spatial perception, inviting viewers to question established norms of representation through projected geometric forms. The 2.5D representation challenges traditional concepts of frontality in architecture by employing unconventional drawing

techniques, aiming to create a unique spatial experience for the observer. By doing so, it manipulates space, seemingly granting the sculpture an independent and autonomous existence that transcends the confines of the wall that it rests on and the conventional viewer-space it sits in.

To create a delicate sense of material authenticity, the re-purposed and sun-aged foam develops a patina that mimics the appearance of “real” wood, establishing a tangible and genuine feel within the sculpture’s elements, further enhancing the viewer’s perceived

experience of realism and authenticity.

Contrary to the usual Cartesian forms that dictate conceptions of space, the arrangement of components within Guess Work is guided by the dynamics found within a three-dimensional game world, infusing a playful and unconventional aspect into its creation.

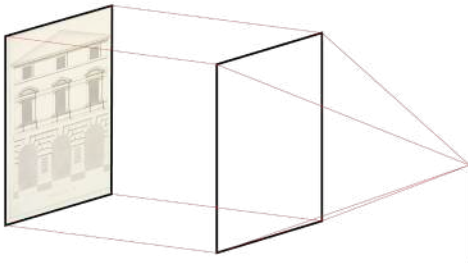
The sculpture achieves the visual essence of “wood” panels by meticulously adhering to the authentic proportions of materials—such as size, shape, and thickness.

Guess Work disrupts the customary norms of representation, thereby creating an alternative spatial experience for the viewer. This divergence from conventional representation allows the sculpture’s elements to appear as if they occupy an independent and autonomous spatial condition. This work serves as a testament to the exploration of new dimensions, encouraging viewers to rethink their understanding of space and representation within the artistic realm.

“The 2.5D representation challenges traditional concepts of frontality in architecture...”

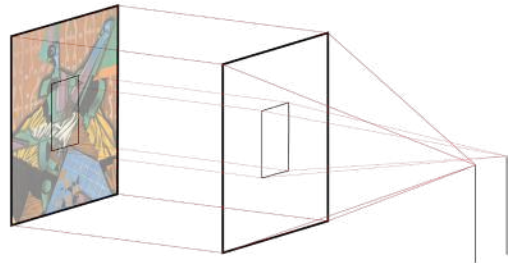
Below - Diagram by A. Stone

Forms of Representation - Conventional



Below - Diagram by A. Stone

Forms of Representation - Non Conventional





Left - Photo by A. Stone
Guess Work Sculpture - Foam, Oil Paper, Bark

Below - Photo by A. Stone
Connection detail





2"



Moment in Time

Mixed Media Diorama

I tried my best to capture the essence of the year 1998. Everything you see here has contributed to my creative journey in some way - the movies, the vinyls, the magazines. This work is a miniature model consisting of chipboard, basswood, gloss printing, sharpie, acrylic paint, aluminium, and plexiglass.

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Left - Photos by R. Pittman
Front View of Miniature Model

RYAN PITTMAN

Undergraduate Architecture Student



Photos by R. Pittman

Left - Detail 01, Vinyl Turntable Record Player

Right - Detail 02, Magazines & Books





Multi-Home

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Left - Photographs by T. Young
Front Render of Multi-Home

In dissecting the essence of conventional American residential architecture, one recognizes its distinctive traits: an inherent historical resonance, symmetrical compositions, pitched rooflines, and reliance on foundational elements like brick or wood. These architectural paradigms signify a deep-rooted connection to ancestral lineage and communal bonds, underscoring utilitarian functionality and domestic comfort. Contrastingly, this project challenges these established conventions. It seeks to disrupt customary house forms by embracing unconventional materials, atypical geometries, and spatial arrangements that balance a shared living experience and a sense of autonomy.

The architectural layout spans six units distributed across upper

levels, while the ground floor accommodates a residential lobby and a public dining venue. The expressiveness of the design emerges from manipulating the traditional gabled roof. Initially tailored to optimize natural light for the neighboring structures, this manipulation engenders intricate volumetric interiors. These spaces are both confining and expansive in response to certain program areas such as high ceilings in the living spaces and more compressed spaces in the kitchen, bedrooms, and bathrooms.

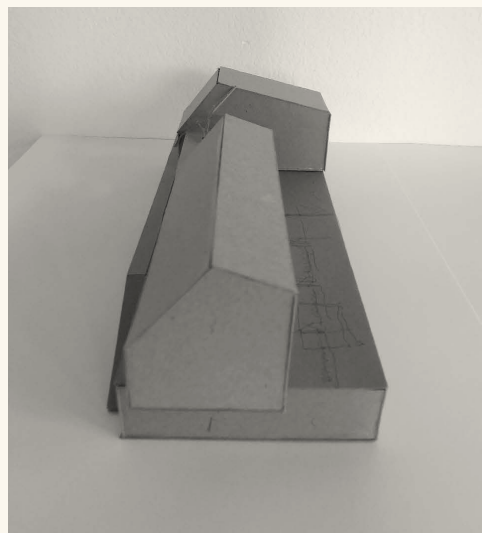
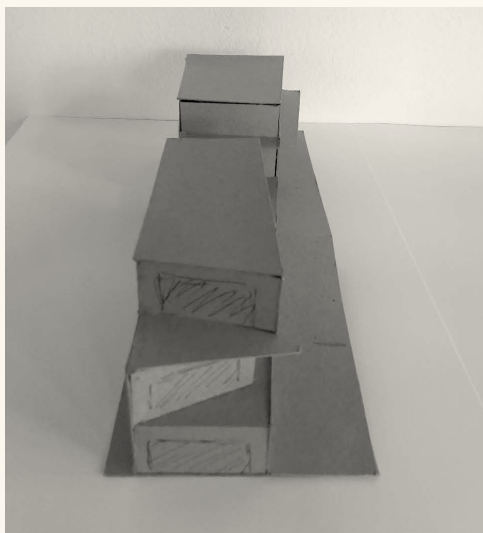
Deliberate massing strategies impart seclusion, manifesting as two discrete courtyards on the second floor, distinctive terrace zones and inverted dormer spaces on the third. Utilizing dematerialization techniques, the design manipulates lighting dynamics and challenges

conventional perceptions of structural stability. Notably, on the ground floor, a clerestory manifests in the dining area, formed where the restaurant space intersects with the front gable form, while the lobby's transparent wall is intersected by stairs ascending to the second floor.

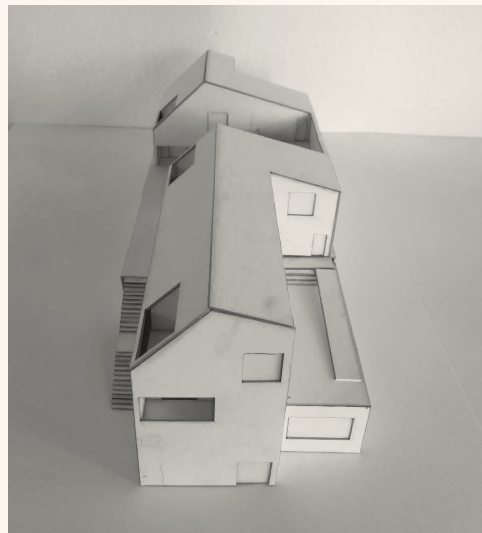
The exterior is comprised of metal paneling which folds over the gables and obscures the height of the floor plates. Strategic integration of brick elements imparts solidity, anchoring the project in acknowledgment of and reverence for its historical and customary residential context. This intentional interplay seeks to establish a contextual bridge, simultaneously respecting and deviating from established architectural norms.

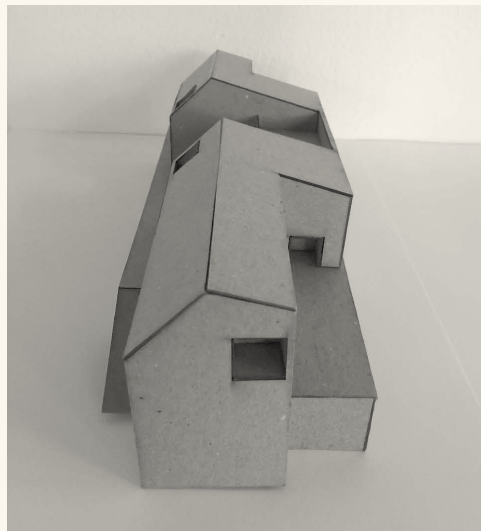
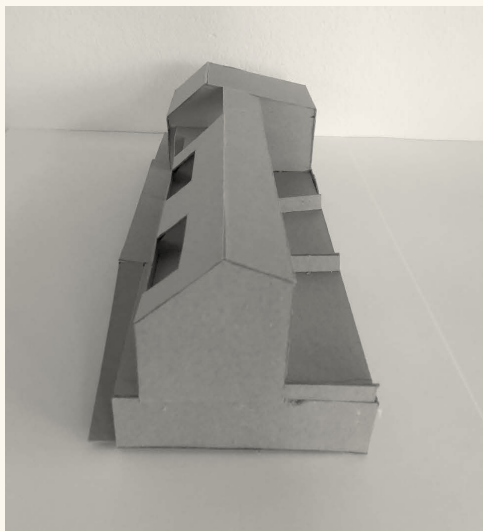
114

TALOR YOUNG
*Undergraduate Architecture
Student*

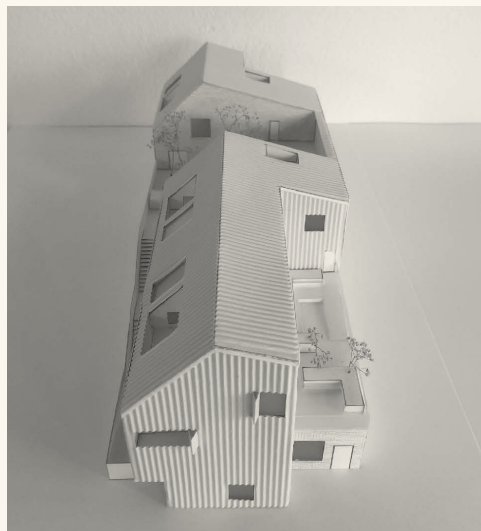
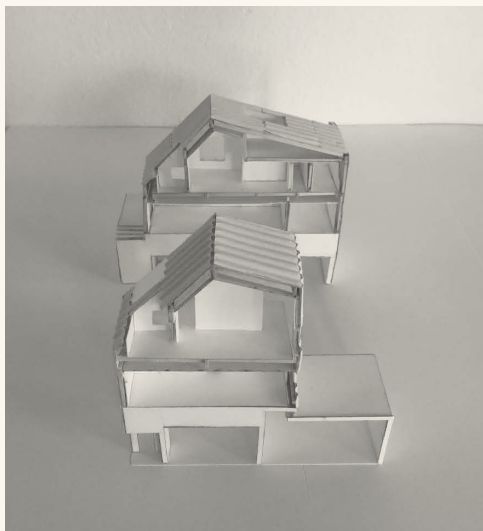


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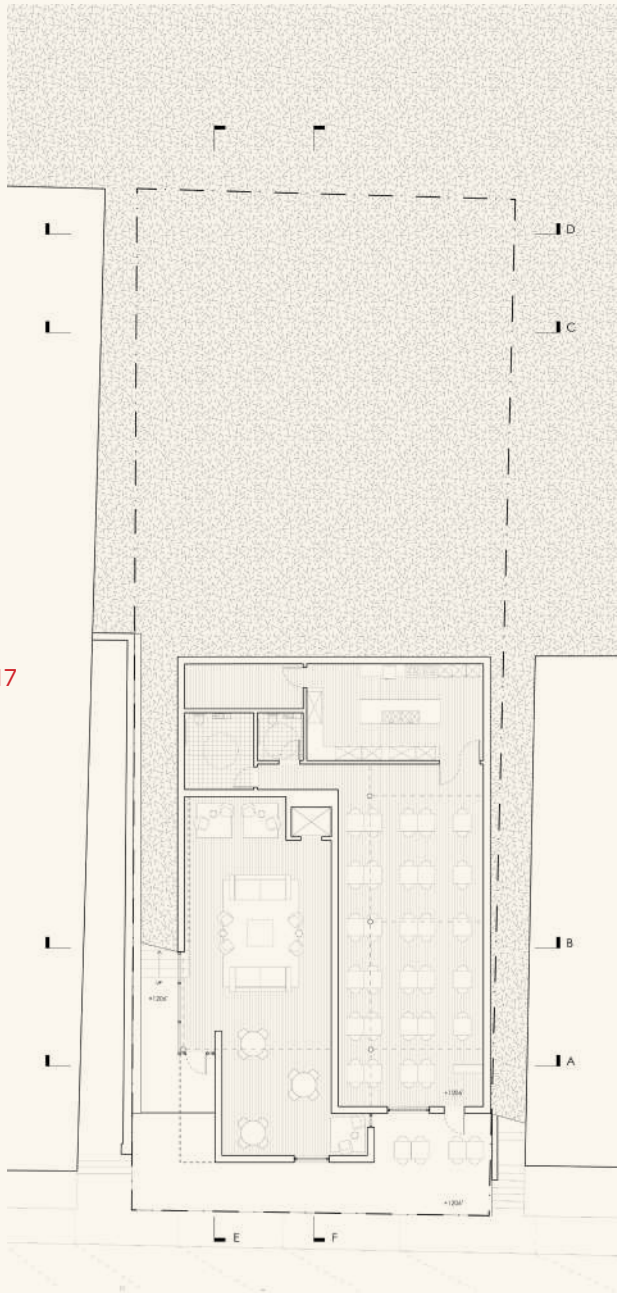




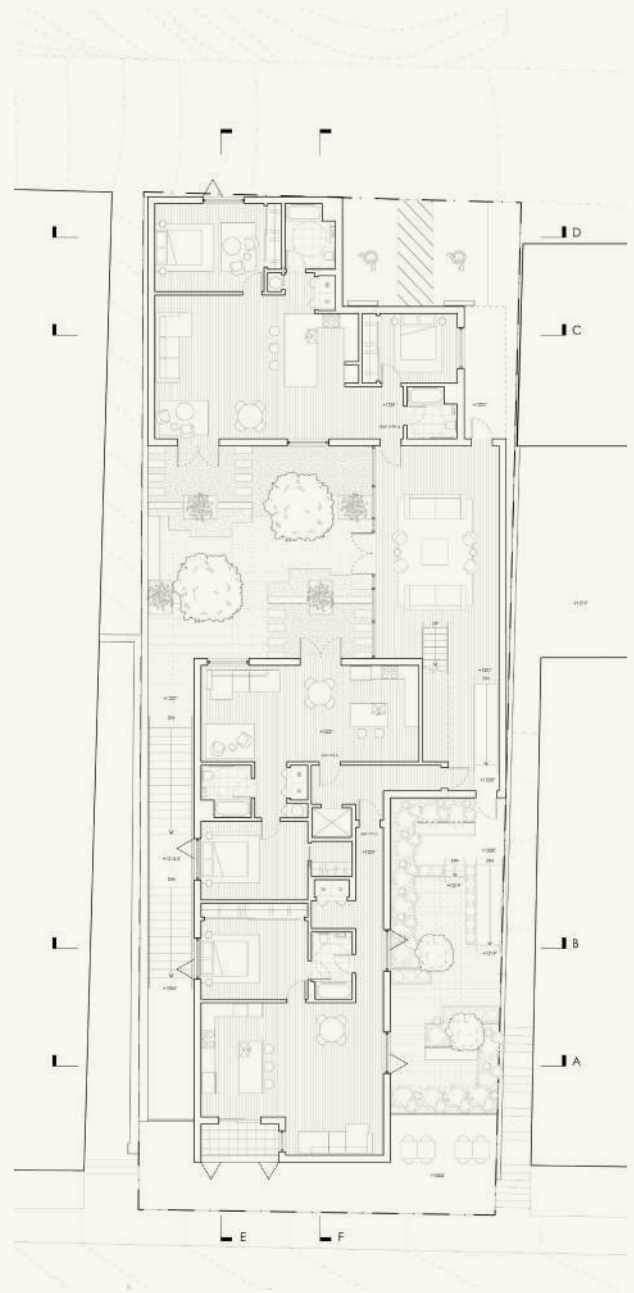
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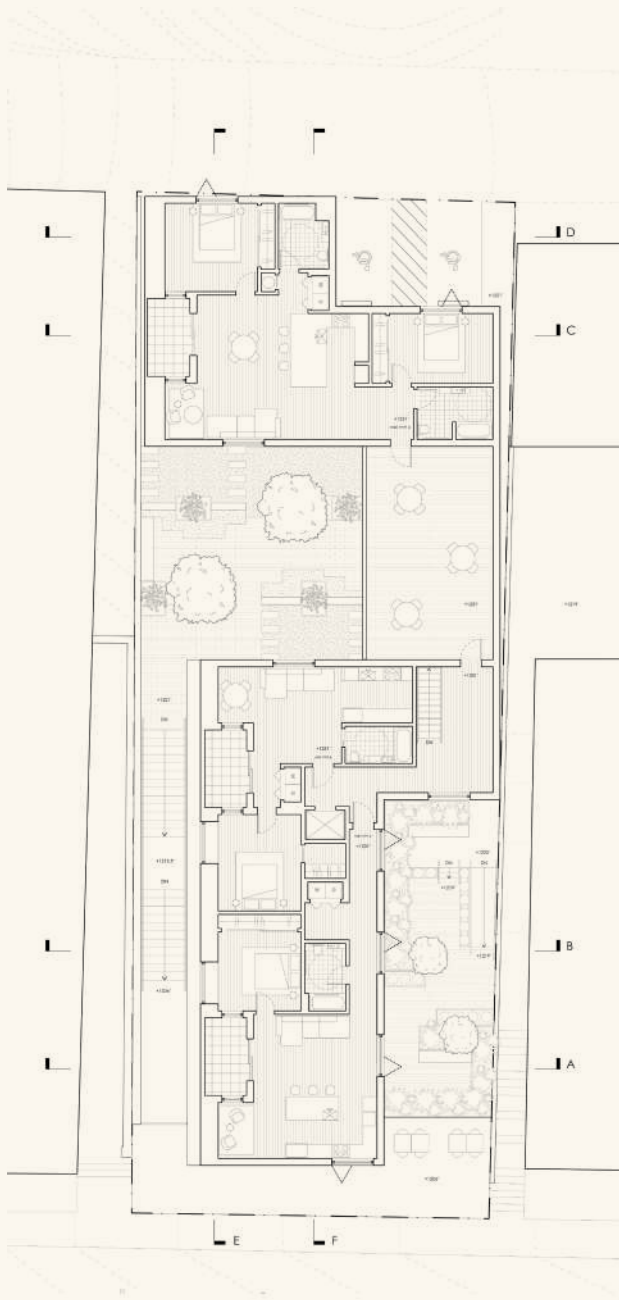
Above - Photographs by T. Young
Phases of Massing in a Multi-Home Development



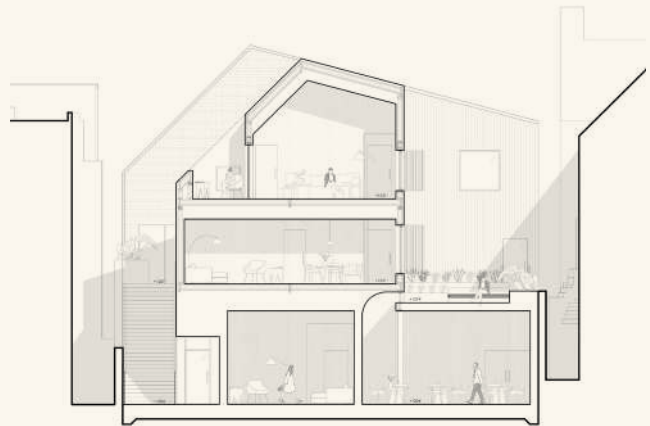
Above - Drawing by T. Young
Third Floor Plan



Above - Drawing by T. Young.
Second Floor Plan

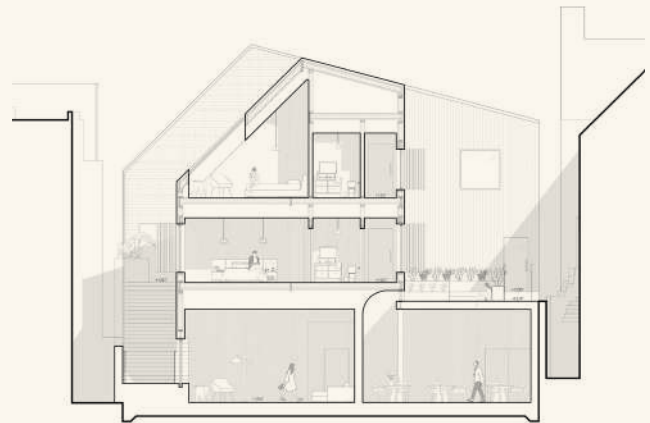


Above - Drawing by T. Young
Third Floor Plan

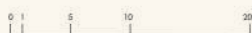
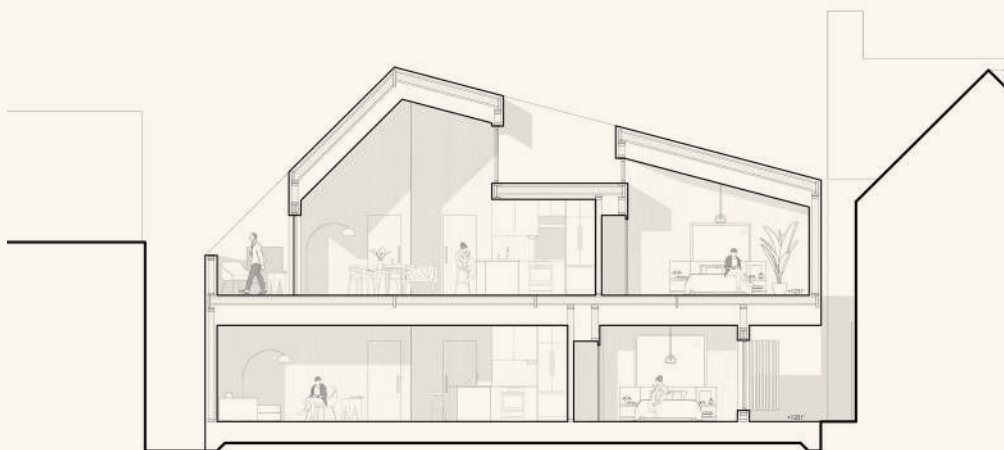


Above - Drawings by T. Young
Section A

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Above - Drawings by T. Young
Section B



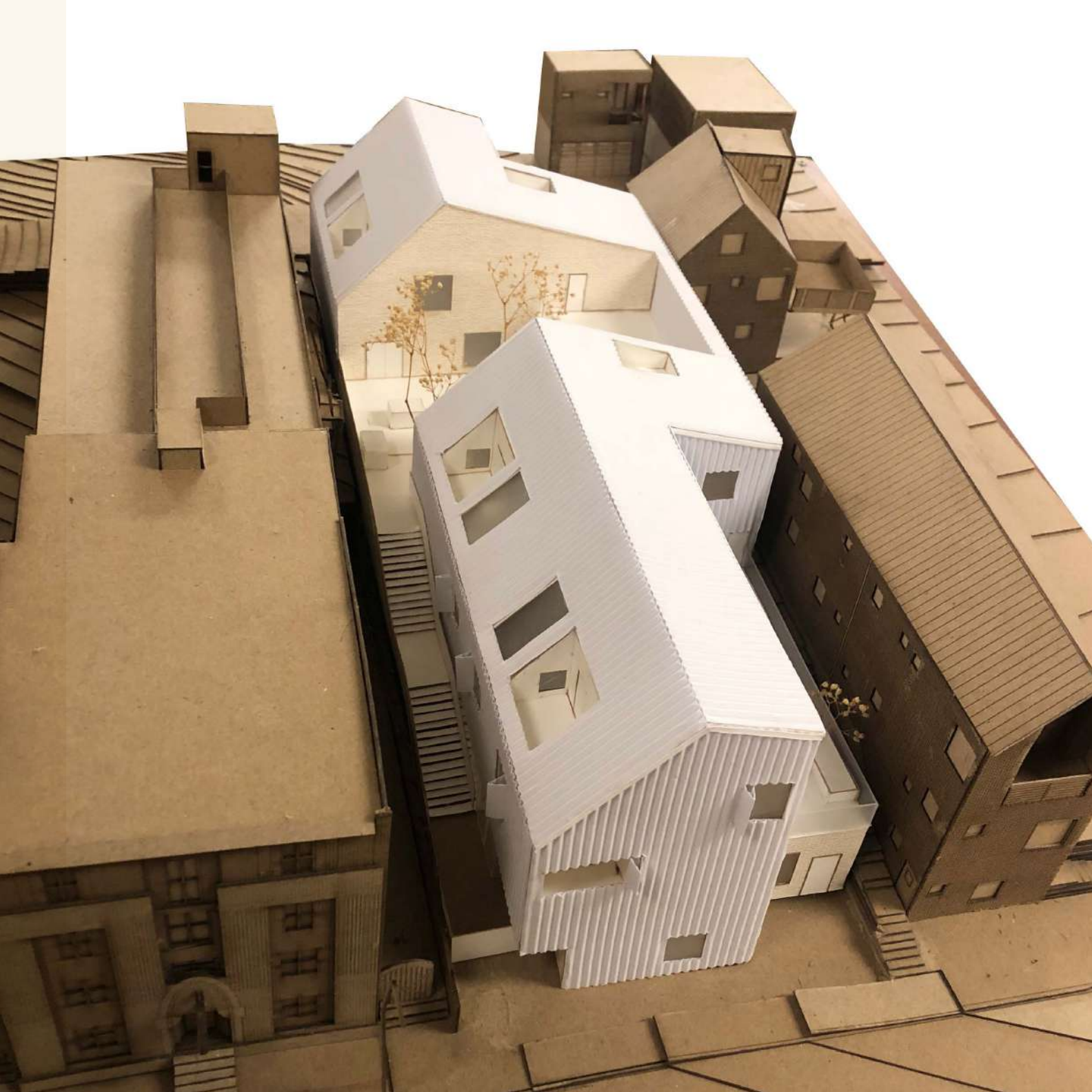
Left - Drawing by T. Young
Section C

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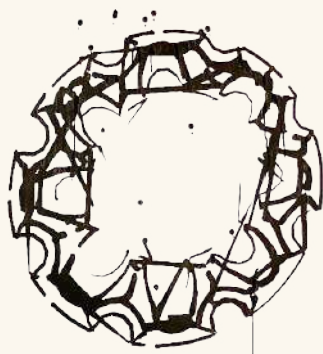


Left - Drawing by T. Young
Section D

Next - Photograph by T. Young
Physical Model







Above - Drawings by C. Morrey
Sketching the Sculpture
Left - Photograph by C. Morrey
Instantations Sculpture

Instantations

The Embodied Essence

I began making parametric models around 2017, using a computer program called Rhino3D and its scripting plugin, Grasshopper.

I was responding to the limitations of a 3D printer I had built for the Ceramics Department in the School of Visual Studies at the University of Missouri, a machine that printed clay. It extruded the clay using air pressure, and once clay started coming out it didn't stop until you turned the air off, or actually a good while after that. A useful 3D model in this context was one that could yield a continuous path for the machine to describe as it laid down thin

traces of clay, adding up to something.

To properly take advantage of this machine required attention (or devotion, really), born of a certain amount of unearned affection that had more in common with an old truck than some triumph of high technology.

The products of my forays into computational design weren't initially my concern: I was in conversation with a mystery, a constellation of unpredictable systems. The machine was capable of gifting me with surprise at any moment: clay slumped, cracked, or remained steady in spectacular, fragile tangles of extruded earth.

Long hours spent programming ordered and layered pathways of motion into existence inside the hermetic, glowing window of the laptop could be shifted suddenly into spectacular tangles just by inputting a value slightly too large or too small: amazingly, the rules of my script still constrained these spiraled messes into unitary, recurring pathways that always returned to their beginnings. This meant that they could be printed, and arrive in the world as ceramic objects: wisps of mathematics and electricity that seemed utterly foreign to the world in which my coffee sits cold in its cup next to my mouse. To usher these wayward artifacts, or mistakes actually, into translucent conversation with the light of the afternoon, or hear with ears and fingertips their resonant responses to a light tap or a brush against their surfaces, was and is a source of amazement to me.

The next Grasshopper script I wrote carved a space to explore repeating, parametric subtractive operations. Rings of grouped spheres, tubes, torii could multiply, turn and cut chunks out of bigger rings to leave complex, jagged, rhythmic surfaces. To open one of these files is to enter a space packed with subsidiary and tertiary vectors and shapes: construction lines

roughing out cutting volumes, loops and whorls defining paths of travel for arrayed geometries, all rotating under the mouse, clicking into new conformations more and more slowly as the processor of the laptop gets snowed under, straining to reconstruct the changing parameters, and the machine begins to get uncomfortably hot in your lap. Time to save your work!

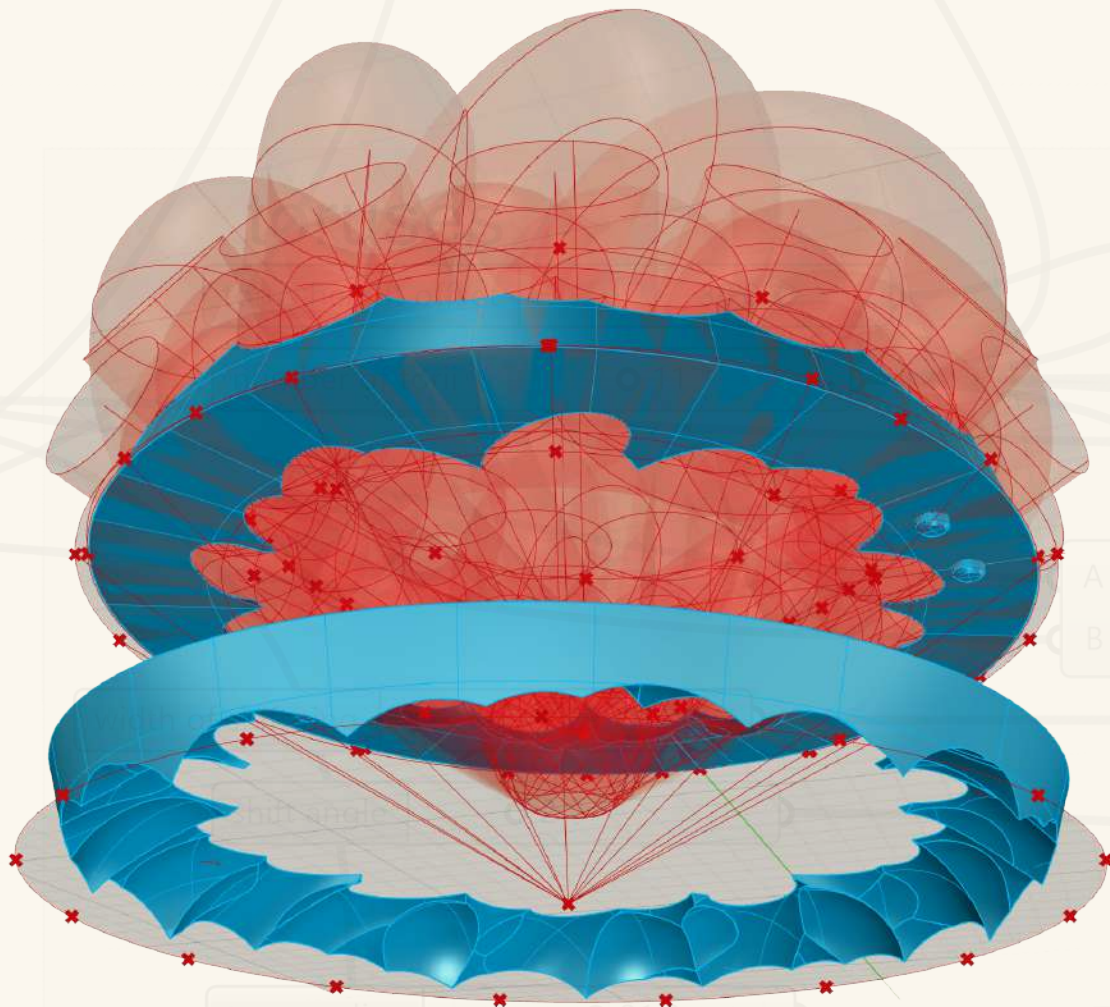
These scripts described solids, designed to become 3D printed or CNC-cut patterns for metal castings, or sometimes remain as wood carvings. The patterns were built to be encased in rammed sand, forming a cavity for metal to be poured into, the impressions forming bronze or copper objects. Each shape could be cast any number of times, in different materials, with different finishes. The transformations intensify, ramify: bronze surfaces receive patina or shellac, copper and iron versions have enamel fused onto their surfaces. Each instantiation in this cycle is more durable than the last: code to plastic to bronze, code to wood to iron. I repurpose the code: the objects grow from inches to feet. The layers can be cut coarse and large, from sheets of plywood. The cutting head can be replaced with a sumi brush, and the CNC machine learns to draw. Or, imprecise: I change

the code, translating the solids defined there into lines and then translating the lines into instructions that cause the CNC machine to draw. I am the one who learns.

It's tempting to say that these objects (copper castings, wooden sculptures, plastic patterns, ink drawings) share one essence, in the form of the original computer code: we like to see time as an organizing principle, to bookend ongoing processes with beginnings and endings. We make our experience into stories. We are happiest when the beginnings foreshadow the endings, when actions seem to produce definitive, final results.

Our perception of time, though, turns out to be a product of our limited point of view. The world around us does not exist in time: each moment carries equal weight. The code that wrote the code to distill the shape into a set of machine-readable instructions is rewritten for the next object, even before the last instantiation can enter the world. The ending of the story vanishes as the next day dawns.

Essence is embodied: the ringing sound of the fired clay. The sparkle of a copper surface under a layer of blue-green glass. The weight of the thing in your hand.



Above - Images by C. Morrey
Coding & 3D Modeling the Sculpture





Dis-
patches-
es

*The following pieces, whether
visual, written, or multimedia, act
as quick snapshots reflecting the
thoughts, emotions, and ideas of
artists' work.*





Bunnies' Paradise

*Silkscreen Printed in
Four Inks on Ocher Paper*

Commemorative of the ending of 2023, the year of the Water Rabbit according to the Chinese horoscope.

The image depicts a group of rabbits casually gathered around the river that flows through green meadows. The rabbits are a symbol of prosperity.

Here, they enjoy the crystal-clear water of the river, an exaltation of the good fortune that nature offers us through its vital liquid and the essence of life.

Left - Drawing by U. Marin
Bunnies' Paradise

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URIEL MARIN

*Graduate Student at the School of
Visual Arts at OU*



The Essence Intertwined

Photo Collage

I interpret the Essence as the feeling of having peace and mental clarity. The Essence of humans is to be able to recognize their soul as a whole. It is the connection between each other but yet also makes each of us unique. The essence of any of us are qualities that are indispensable, they are necessary for us to have authority of our own lives and how we share our purest hearts with others.

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This project was a very personal project of mine where I created handmade collaged bookmarks. A big part of what brings me peace is reading and creating. I intertwined the two by creating these bookmarks by hand. Each bookmark is completely unique and has its own personalities and qualities. I worked on creating compositions that bring a different feeling when using each one. The threaded tassel is handmade as well, where I chose colors that matched the collage and also pushed forward the unique stories I wanted to convey. Much like us as humans we have our own distinctive backgrounds and stories of our lives. Each of us display our Essence in many ways, whether it is through telling stories to friends or understanding our own beliefs and mindsets.

Left - Photo by H. Halpern
Photo Collage

HANNAH HALPERN

Graphic Designer, Student at Savannah College of Art Design



I don't know what to believe

Screenprint and watercolor on paper

Left - Photo by C. Jones
Portfolio Views of Screenprints and Watercolor on Paper

I Don't Know What to Believe is a body of work exploring Western Culture's embrace of Eastern Religion and Philosophy. While many of us (myself included) participate in activities that derive from Buddhist, Hindu, Jainist, and other Eastern traditions, few of us delve fully into the belief systems themselves. Instead, we isolate out elements such as yoga (which we categorize as a fitness activity) or meditation (which we utilize for mental

health and relaxation) and distort their intended purposes as rituals to bring the individual closer to transcendence and enlightenment. Within the individual, the result of this is often a pieced together mysticism with elements of multiple traditions coexisting with one another, but little external guidance to contextualize them.

Each panel in this series is a two-sided, screenprinted monotone using multiple stencils. I created

all images and patterns in this series by dissecting, and piecing back together readily available silhouettes found on internet 'clip art' sites. I also utilized astronomical photos and images of stereotypical New Age tropes (such as light filtering through trees or the surface of water.)

My intention is to create work that appears to have spiritual meaning, but is actually the result of playfulness and randomness.

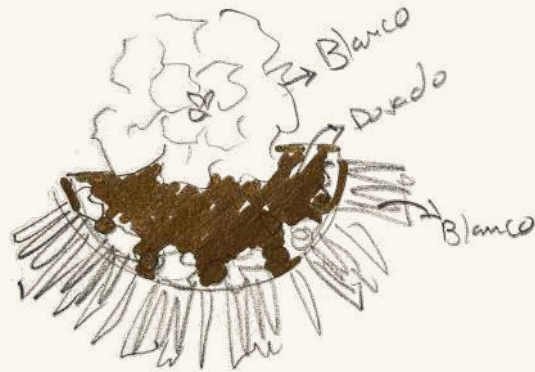
134

CURTIS JONES
*Associate Professor
School of Visual Arts at OU*



An Artistic Journey

Jewelry & Architecture



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Left - Photo by V. Molina
Photo of Jewelry
Above - Drawing by V. Molina
Schematic Design of Jewelry

Although architecture and jewelry may seem distinct due to scale and functionality, they share a common foundation in inspiration and creation, starting with a concept, moving through technique, and culminating in function or trend. Jewelry symbolizes the human body's expression, while architecture represents human habitat. However, both aim to immortalize human conception through time, evolving historically influenced by societal changes, epochs, and technology.

VERÓNICA MOLINA
Ecuadorian Architect

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Above - *Photo by J. Steele*
Wood-fire porcelain

Earth & Fire

Wood-Fired Porcelain

The Essence...

is in the way we show up in our lives.

It is the way we look at each other,

the tone in our voice and

the unspoken energy that surrounds us.

It is what we are made of,

and it is what we leave behind.

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JESSICA STEELE

Artist



Left - Photo by F. Nusrat
*In between Shoots while
documenting in Curzon Hall*

Children & Cities

Architecture as the Essence of Connectedness

Architecture and Built environments within any context are complex phenomena in perceiving their role through the essence of connectedness with our everyday present life, with the enlivened past, and with the eventual future of unexpected multitudes of uncertainties. Yet, this particular essence is generated, felt, and cherished. And for cities, the users' diversity is overwhelming, and so is their sphere of connectedness.

The essence of connectedness is an underlying issue in exploring the individual's identity in relation to a certain place. It starts building from

the very phase of the childhood of every individual, even constructing a conscience of space and place although it's hardly graspable at that stage.

There are 6-8 participating children of 12-15 years old, selected through convenience method from the Nalonda High School of Dhaka while taking their parents' and school's consent. The children will have a guided walk that will be documented as a videography. The content is designed to observe and understand whether a systematic narrative of places, articulated in the form of visiting those places, engaging in conversation mostly in the mode of

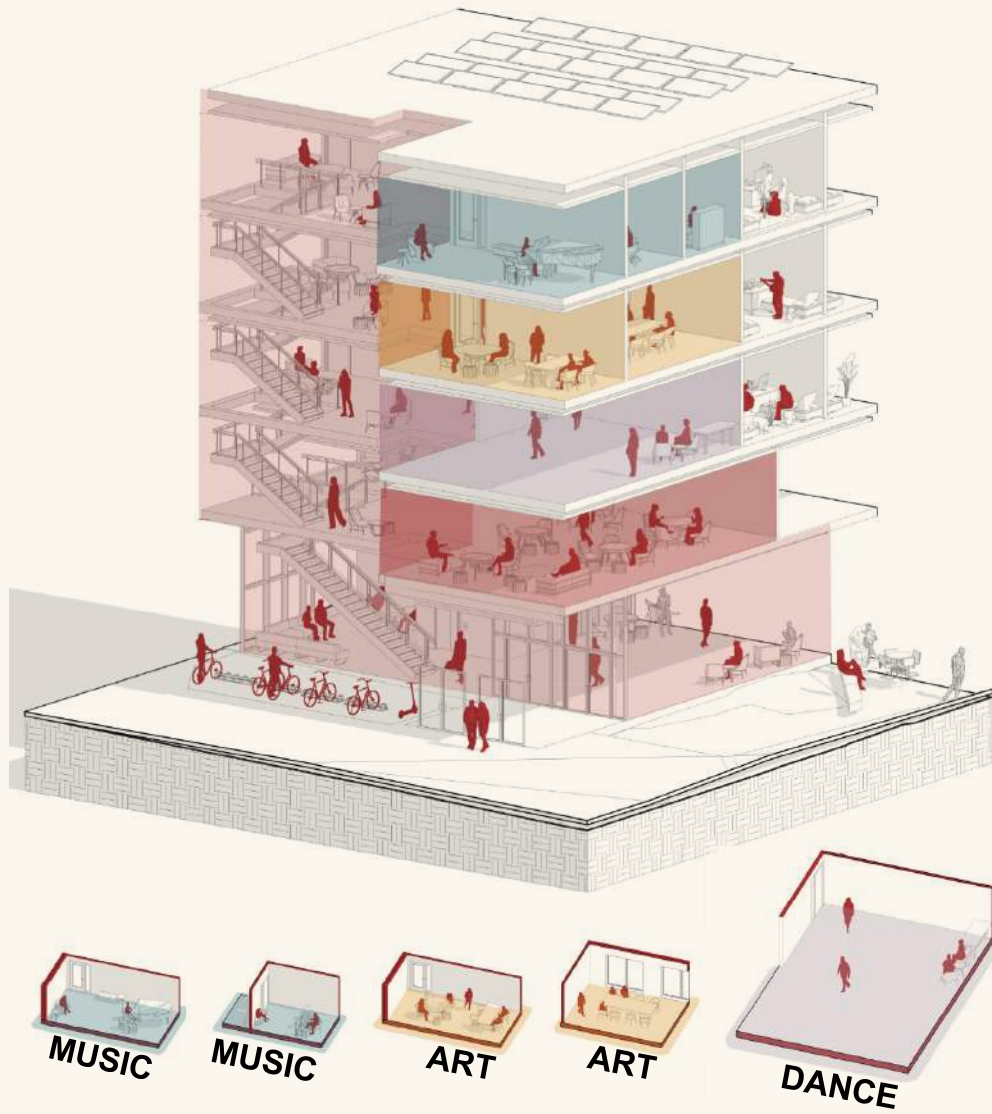
storytelling, and imbued with subtle insertion of blending the notion of the connectedness with the places can be effective for children in defining and establishing the spatial identity and character of their city.

The final outcome of that audio-visual documentation is planned for a few shows in some esteemed gatherings of architects, artists, planners, and policymakers of government and non-government organizations for critique and support for further continuation. The project is still ongoing and completed its recording covering one site.

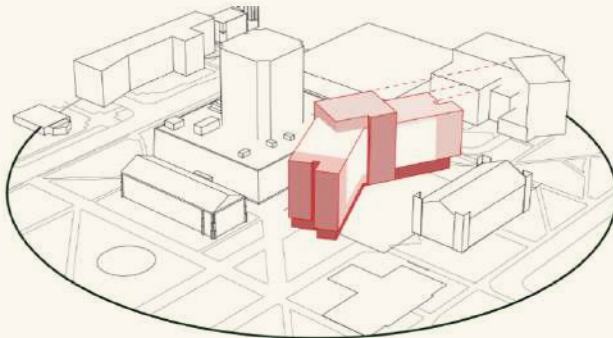
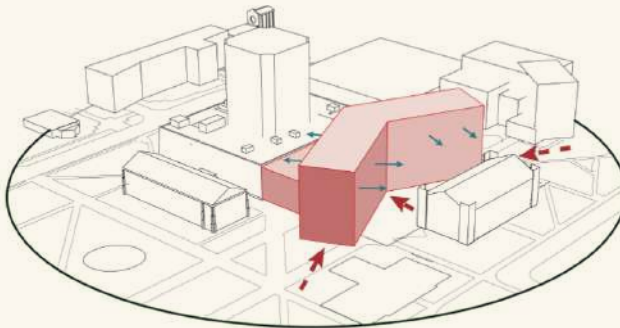
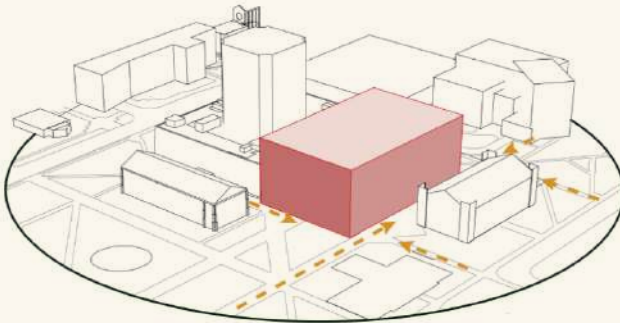
140

FAHMIDA NUSRAT
Assistant Professor
Primeasia University

FARZANA MIR
Architect
Nalonda High School



Above - Diagram by P. Patel & C. Bumpus
Diagram of Spaces Inside the Building



Above - Diagram by P. Patel & C. Bumpus
Massing of the Building

The Core

Reimagining Campus Housing

The Core at OU redefines campus housing by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Its strategic location between the Physical Science Center, the old Chemistry Building, the Performing Arts Center, and the iconic Bell Tower positions it as a central hub for academic engagement.

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PRIYANSHI PATEL
Undergraduate Architecture Student

COLTON BUMPUS
Undergraduate Architecture Student





Inside, three distinct vertical collaborative cores—two dedicated to fine arts, with each floor featuring dance, music, or art rooms—create dynamic spaces for creativity, while the third core, located centrally, serves as a semi-private space for dorm residents. Horizontal collaboration flourishes on the first and second floors, offering spacious areas for study and interaction, seamlessly connecting with the vertical cores and extending into the main campus. The Core functions as both a student residence and a multidisciplinary space where diverse disciplines converge, ideas are shared, and co-creation thrives.

*Left - Image by P. Patel & C. Bumpus
Exterior Render of the Building*

144

PRIYANSHI PATEL
*Undergraduate Architecture
Student*

COLTON BUMPUS
*Undergraduate Architecture
Student*

Hill Bridge Park

Landscape Design

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Above - Image by I. Moradi
Longitudinal Section of Hill Bridge Park



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This project aims to enhance the park's coherence. Two hills are constructed to block polluted air from an asphalt factory, while a pond, Red Fish Pond, harnesses stormwater runoff for park irrigation. These features, along with a connecting trail, around the bridge above the skate field shape and unify the park's elements, ensuring a cohesive and readable space.

IMAN MORADI

Graduate Landscape Architecture Student

Inward- Imprints

Identity Sculpted in Clay

The Telesis Class of 2023



Sep 2023



Oct 2023

About *Inward Imprints*

Inward Imprints was a series of three clay workshops held during Fall 2023 for students in the *Telesis: The Student Journal* class. These workshops encouraged students to reflect on personal memories, objects, and places that have shaped their identities. Led by Felipe Flores, Principal Graduate Student Editor of *Telesis*, and guided by ceramicist and Associate Professor Stuart Asprey, the workshops took place at the OU Ceramics Facilities.

Each student was tasked with creating three ceramic pieces accompanied by a narrative, sketches, and a meaningful quote. Over the course of the workshops, students progressively learned clay techniques, from basic object massing to texture, detailing, and the use of light and color, in order to represent aspects of themselves.

Childhood Objects *Workshop 1*

In this workshop, students are asked to create an object from their childhood that represents them, using visual, narrative, and material techniques. A brief narrative accompanies the object to explain its personal significance and why the student identifies with it. Before modeling in clay, students prepare a 1:1 scale sketch, allowing them to explore form, structure, and massing.

During the workshop, students craft a physical model from terracotta clay, measuring 8 inches in width and 4 inches in length (with variable thickness). All tools and materials were provided. Once the model dried, students photographed it from an aerial and a side view, using a black background. Prior to the workshop, students read *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* by Juhani Pallasmaa, to deepen their understanding of the sensory connection between objects, memory, and place.

Geometries that Shape Me *Workshop 2*

Building on insights from *Architecture: Form, Space, and Order* by Francis Ching and the significance of shapes in the works of Kazimir Malevich, students were asked to select a basic geometric form—circle, rectangle, or triangle—that best represented their essence, personality, or identity. Prior to the workshop, they created compositions of their chosen form, drafting front, lateral, and perspective views to express their connection to it.

During the workshop, students translated these ideas into a clay model that embodied their chosen geometric form. They were encouraged to explore various compositional techniques—such as juxtaposition, addition, subtraction, symmetry, and hierarchy—to manipulate the clay and express their form's deeper meaning.



Nov 2023

My Sacred Space Workshop 3

In this workshop, students created a personal, intimate space where they feel safe and connected to their essence—a place of belonging that is minimal and free of distractions, yet entirely their own. The space was designed to be no larger than 12x12 feet in plan and 8-12 feet in height, modeled at a $\frac{3}{4}" = 1'-0"$ scale, with a figure of the student included for reference.

The space was required to feature an entrance/exit, an additional opening with a specific purpose, a selected function, textures, colors, and human scale. To guide their design, students answered reflective questions such as: What place makes you feel most comfortable?

Describe a place that feels uniquely yours. What physical characteristics—colors, textures, smells—make it special? How do the forms of this space contribute to its sacred or intimate nature?

Before starting the clay model, students drew front, lateral, and perspective views of their space at the same scale. Since the model involved the use of color, the workshop was divided into two stages—modeling and painting—requiring the piece to be fired in the kiln twice.



Dec 2023

Final Exhibit

On December 6, 2023, the outcomes of the workshops were displayed in the hallway of Gould Hall, where each student presented their work to invited reviewers and guests. We hope you enjoy our work in the following pages!

Above - Photos by *The Telesis Team*
Clay Workshops & Exhibit



El Panecillo Hill

The object of my childhood



The mountains have always been, and continue to be, an element of reverence, guidance, and shelter for me, but above all, they are a sacred space that calls for reflection and pause. Since childhood, the act of climbing a mountain was something I longed for, and reaching the summit was nothing more than the sum of small achievements, games, and falls experienced along the way. Just like in life, how hard it is to climb, yet how easy it is to fall from where you've ascended. Today, living in Oklahoma, their absence is palpable, which is why I paint, mold, and create artificial mountains from clay—so I can once again feel close to home, to that house nestled in the mountains, where I felt safe and at peace in the vast valley of Quito.

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“Be more to serve better.”

by Saint Ignatius of Loyola

Previous - Photos by F. Flores

Top - Front view of Sculpture

Bottom - Perspective View of Sculpture

Above - Drawing by F. Flores

Top View of Sculpture

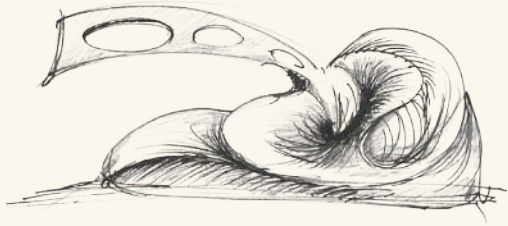
FELIPE FLORES

*PhD Candidate in PDC & Principal
Graduate Student Editor of Telesis*



The Hammer

The object of my childhood



It could be that the color caught my attention from a young age, but the orange rubber mallet holds many memorable moments I now reflect on. I remember building our kitchen countertop with my dad, small scraps of wood all cut to the same height to puzzle together. In the end, the last few pieces were pounded in with the mallet, securing the rest. Those last pieces secured created a space where we would spend many more years having dinners and creating memories. The mallet followed us up until now, 18 years later, though softened and weathered by time, it continues to play its part in shaping our living spaces.

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“Drawing my journey, seeking comfort in the loneliness of unfamiliar landscapes.”

Left - Photo by I. Valenciano

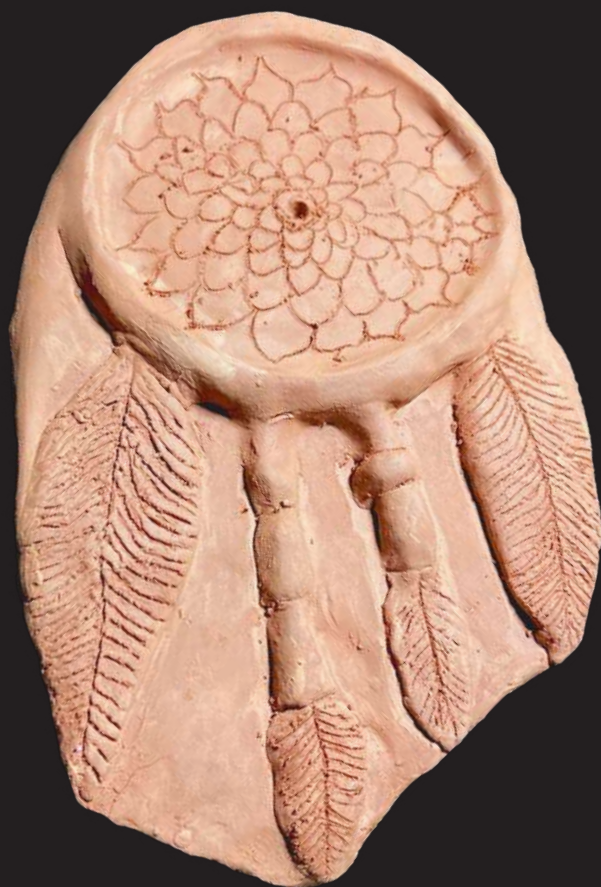
Front view of Sculpture

Above - Drawing by I. Valenciano

Sketch of Sculpture

ISAC VALENCIANO

Undergraduate Architecture Student



The Dreamcatcher

The object of my Childhood



Left - Photo by C. Newport
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawing by C. Newport
Sketch of Sculpture

The dreamcatcher is a significant symbol in many Native American cultures. My great grandparents were tribe members of the Cherokee Nation; admittedly, my family no longer practices many traditions, but one that I still practice personally is hanging a dreamcatcher above my bed.

I've owned several in my life and I've had one hanging over my bed since I was around 5 years old, which was when the tradition was first explained to me. I had been having nightmares and having trouble sleeping, the typical child is afraid of "monsters" sort.

As a solution, my mother introduced me to the dreamcatcher and explained its significance to me. It is believed that the dreamcatcher filters your dreams, blocking out negative energy and bad spirits. Sure enough, five-year-old me began sleeping better at night from then on. It is a practice I have always found both fascinating and spiritual, and I feel as though it has impacted my life.

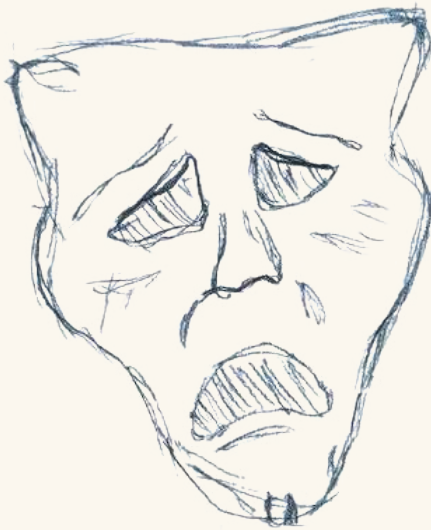
*"Architecture is not
about cutting corners,
it is about creating them."*

COLE NEWPORT
Undergraduate Architecture Student



The Mask

The object of my childhood



The object that I've selected to represent my childhood is a theater mask because I grew up participating in theater, dance, and singing productions. Growing up, theater has helped me express myself and grow my inner essence. Singing and acting helped me grow confidence from a young age while creating a sense of kinship with the people I would create a show with. Through theater, I've learned to express my creativity through costume design, set design, and storytelling.

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*“To do the useful thing, to say the
courageous thing, to contemplate
the beautiful thing: that is
enough for one's life”*

by T.S. Eliot

Left - Photo by M. Henry
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawing by M. Henry
Sketch of Sculpture

MADELINE HENRY
Graduate Interior Design Student



Living Fleur-de-lis

The object of my childhood

My childhood pick is a fleur-de-lis, symbolizing New Orleans and the Saints. It is significant as it reflects the city's French roots and influences on culture and architecture. The Saints' Super Bowl win in 2009, during New Orleans' recovery from Hurricane Katrina, holds a special place in my heart, sparking my interest in architecture and my love for football since age five.

*“Vision without action
is merely a dream.
Action without vision
just passes the time.
Vision with action can
change the world.”*

by Joel Arthur Barker

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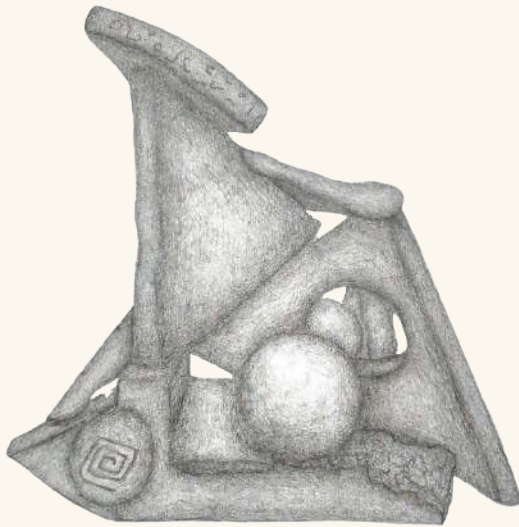
Left - Photo by D. Riley
Front view of Sculpture

DARREN RILEY
*Undergraduate Environmental
Design Student*



Overlapping Reach

The form of my essence



Left - Photo by F. Hicks
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawing by F. Hicks
Axon of Sculpture

The triangle captivates me with its simplicity and versatility. No matter what side you lay a triangle on there is always order, it will always be supported by a base with a point positioned upward. Personally, the triangle symbolizes equilibrium, resilience, and versatility within a structured system or framework. Just like the triangle, I try incorporating balance and stability in my life, while remaining versatile. Aesthetically, the triangle provides a dynamic feel that other shapes lack.

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*“Whether you think that
you can, or that you can’t,
you are usually right.”*

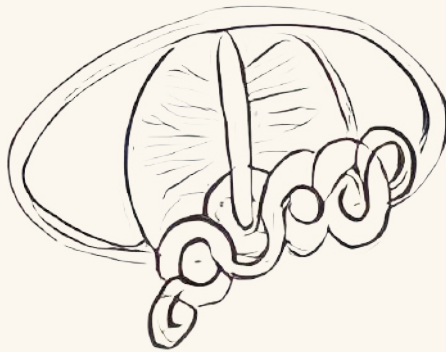
by Henry Ford

FRANK HICKS
*Graduate Landscape
Architecture Student*



The Seeing-Eye

The form of my essence



Looking down at this piece, you initially see an eye which invites the viewer to look into and at me. The eye is known as the window to the soul and this general shape aligns well with my own character. In the middle of the piece is an “arch” with stripes through it which is representative of a rainbow. This rainbow is representative of my energy but also of a part of my identity which was finally unveiled and since that point I have been able to express myself freely. Through the rainbow are individual chains which are indicative of the different aspects of my personality. For example, the smaller chains represent some of my interests and things that I enjoy like art and music. While the larger chains/links represent a bigger aspect of who I am like my love for my family/loved ones. Each chain/link is unique and all contribute to who I am. I feel this overall sequence of shapes and forms align with certain aspects of how I would describe my own self - open, free, and ever-changing.

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*“I would rather die of
passion than of boredom.”*

by Vincent van Gogh

Left - Photo by A. Fradette

Front view of Sculpture

Above - Drawing by A. Fradette

Sketches of Sculpture

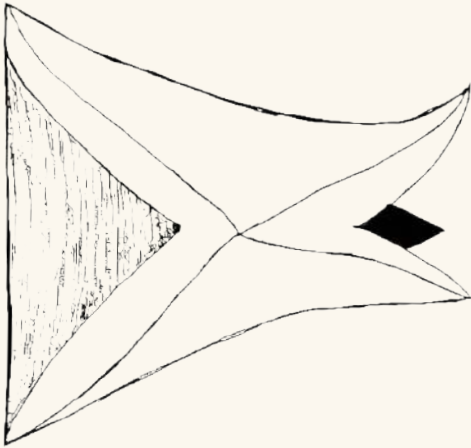
ABBEY FRADETTE

Undergraduate Interior Design Student



Rough Edges

The form of my essence



For the form of my essence, I abstracted a clay model representing what I believe portrays who I am and how I present myself to the world and in my designs. As a person and designer, I value structure and control. Due to this, the form of my essence is a triangle. The model uses triangles to represent how I sometimes have rough edges and textures that display life's impact on my essence. The form takes a protecting act in how it is folded onto one another, representing how I protect my essence with structure and seclusion.

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*“The future belongs to those
who believe in the beauty
of their dreams”*

by Eleanor Roosevelt

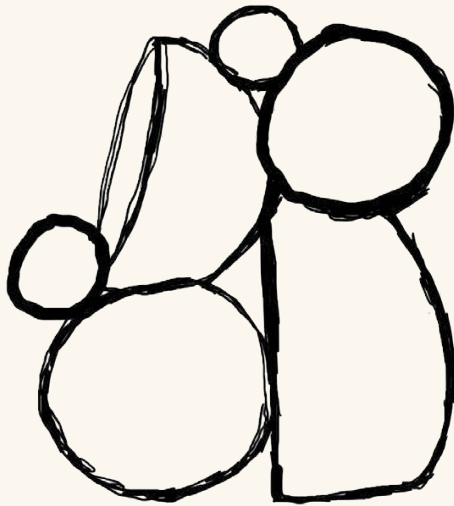
Left - Photo by S. Joslin
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawing by S. Joslin
Top view of Sculpture

SAVANNAH JOSLIN
Undergraduate Interior Design Student



Circles

The form of my essence



During my freshman year of college, I went through a hard period of time, and was struggling a lot with my health. Something I learned during this time is that “healing isn’t linear”. This stuck with me and has stuck with me ever since. That statement pretty much changed my life. When I realized that life is a cycle, and we are ever evolving, changing, and growing, I stopped seeing things so square. I stopped letting the linear construct of time affect how I dealt with things. Because of this, I feel I most identify with a circle. Infinite, never-ending, and unrefined, might seem scary or daunting, however I think these can also symbolize hope, room for change, and that there is always time to start over. The spheres represent the circular cycle of life, and to always look at the whole picture. The semi-circles represent different phases of life, broken up by time. Last, the engravings on the semi-circles are butterflies. Butterflies have been a special symbol to me since freshman year, and represent how we are all going through metamorphosis.

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“Creativity takes courage”

by Henri Matisse

Left - Photo by J-C. Asibelua

Front view of Sculpture

Above - Drawing by J-C. Asibelua

Sketch of Sculpture

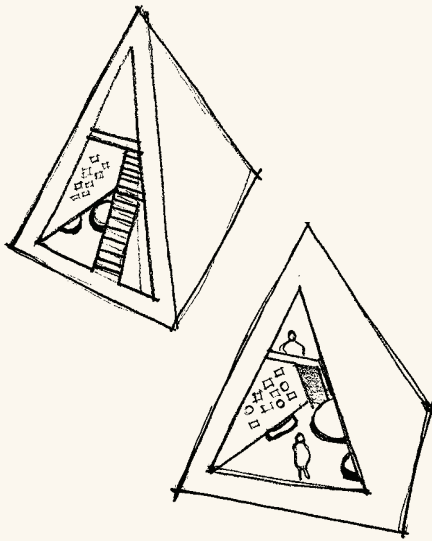
JENNA-CLAIRE ASIBELUA

Undergraduate Interior Design Student



Soul of the Home

My Sacred Space



Left - Photo by R. Chakraborty
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawings by R. Chakraborty
Sketches of Sculpture

My living room, nestled between the kitchen and bedrooms, is more than a physical space—it's a sanctuary blending style and practicality. Every detail, from furniture to lighting, reflects not just my taste but mirrors my identity. This space is a harmonious blend of comfort and design, offering serenity and serving as an inspiration hub, with a textured brick wall adorned with family photographs. Beyond aesthetics, it becomes a meeting point for loved ones, resonating with emotions and weaving cherished memories. In the structure of my home, it stands as a pillar of calm, providing stability and nurturing my emotional well-being.

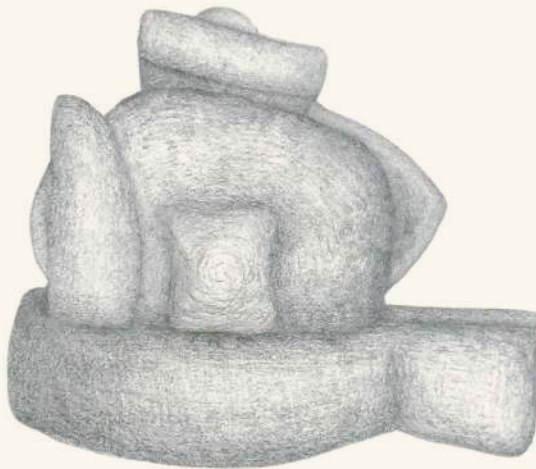
This living room isn't merely a room; it transforms moods, fosters creativity, and strengthens relationships—a haven of stability and solace that aligns with my preferences and refreshes my spirit in a world of uncertainty.

RUPA CHAKRABORTY
*Undergraduate Regional
& City Planning Student*



Tucked Hut

My Sacred Space



Left - *Photo by F. Hicks*

Front view of Sculpture

Above - *Drawing by F. Hicks*

Back View of Sculpture

The model depicted is a surrealistic take on my apartment's bedroom, using organic shapes and forms.

My bedroom serves as my sacred space due to the privacy, customization, and comfort it provides. I can decide the layout (to an extent), the lighting, temperature, and placement of furnishings in my room, where that is not the case practically everywhere else.

Being able to customize the smell, form, temperature, and lighting among other things, makes my bedroom my sacred place.

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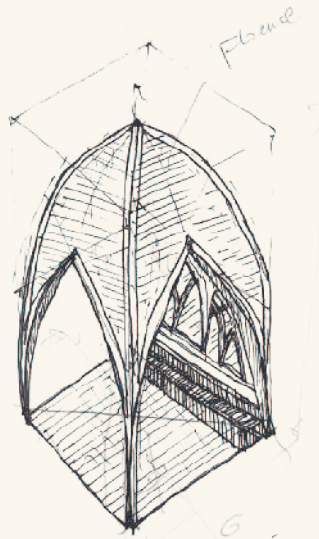
FRANK HICKS
*Graduate Landscape
Architecture Student*



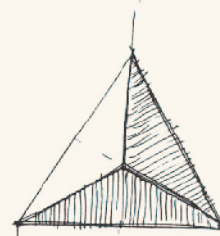
Sanctuary

My Sacred Space

In essence, my sacred place can be described as an open air, intimate, stone vaulted sanctuary, influenced by the many culturally significant elements that resonate with me. It is a space that captures my faith, interests, and nostalgic sense, providing a feeling of comfort within me.



Left - Photo by T. London
Front view of Sculpture
Above - Drawing by T. London
Axon of Cupule
Right - Drawing by T. London
Top & Front View of Sculpture



*"It does not do to dwell on
 dreams and forget to live."*
 by Albus Dumbledore

TREY LONDON
Undergraduate Architecture Student

The Essence

What does the essence mean to you?



TELESIS ONLINE

TELESIS STATEMENT: In a world where **superficiality**, screens, mass and accelerated **consumption**, and "modern" ways of living abound, the **quality of life** and the **essence** of things begin to **lose** their **meaning**. It is in response to

this reality that **Telesis Volume 6: The Essence** emerges, with the intention of rediscovering what is **fundamental** in our architectural and spatial

landscape, retreating from the forest that faces the river, making me feel **sheltered** within the vast **Amazon** while the jungle reflects its fullness on the river's wide surface. The symphony of sounds, colors, and smells from countless animals, birds, and plants turns that moment into something **sublime**. In that moment of calm, I breathe deeply, and the pure air fills my being. The **jungle** transforms the **man**, and in turn, the **man** transforms the **jungle**, making it part of himself. It is then said: The manifestation of **"being"** in the **material** world is not an act of opposition, but of dialogue, of **intimacy** between the parts and the whole.

series of **workshops** held during **Fall 2023** for the **Telesis: Journal** class. These **workshops** encouraged students to reflect on **personal memories, objects, and places** that have shaped their **identities**. Led by **Felipe Flores**, Principal Grad. Student Editor of **Telesis**, and guided by Associate Professor **Stuart Asprey**, the workshops took

practice. **What is it that truly moves and touches us?** When we speak of essence (from the Latin **essentia**, related to **"being"**), we refer to the set of qualities that define the **nature of a thing**, a person, or a place. But **what is essence?** Is it singular? **Can it change?** This is, without a doubt, one of humanity's deepest quests: the **search for its own essence**, its **inner being**, and its expression in a physical, material, and social world closely intertwined with an esoteric, immaterial, and spiritual realm. **How does essence relate to architecture?** Understanding that what we create are **not merely objects**, but **"beings"**. In our view, objects and spaces

This act is called architecture. **ABOUT THE ESSENCE:** In this issue, while there is no strict thematic structure, the content is thoughtfully organized into five categories: interviews, critical manuscripts, artwork and design proposals, dispatches and inward imprints. The **Interviews**, featuring conversations with architectural anthropologist **Albena Yaneva**, ethno-photographer **Edgar C. Kanaykō**, and **Marlon Blackwell**, invite us to **look beyond the physical** form, building, or image to understand the deeper **processes** and actors involved in the search for the essence of their work, or as Marlon refers to it, the **"Meta-**

are **living entities** that can establish a **dialogue**, create a bond, and form a **relationship** with those who **inhabit** them. Sometimes, the essence of a place can be revealed in the **traces imprinted** on our **sensory**—in the forms, colors, textures, flavors, and scents—and **bodily memory**, and in some rare cases, it can provoke a **cathartic experience**,

Project." The **Critical Manuscripts**, contributed by authors such as **Ana M. Durán**, **Colin Caso**, **Jonathan Levitske**, **Laila Cordero**, **María Santibáñez**, and **Wanda Katja Liebermann**, share a common focus on the **relationship** between the **individual**, the **environment**, and other **beings**.

Through these explorations, **architecture** emerges as both a **tool** for commodification and **erasure**, and one for **nurturing** and cultivating culture. The **Artwork & Design Projects**, created

something almost **divine**. I recall a warm sunset on the banks of the Pastaza River, my feet gently immersed in the water from a wooden platform that subtly supports me. The deck fades into the

by **David Morrison**, **CJ Carter**, **Trey London**, **Andrew Stone**, **Ryan Pittman**, **Talor Young**, and **Chris Morrey**, trace the foundational steps of a project, reflecting on the essences that arise from material exploration, self-reflection, spatial dimensions, and the concepts of place and culture. **Dispatches** offer reflections from the field, where the authors express their identity, actions, and beliefs through their work. This is evident in the contributions from **Uriel Marin**, **Hannah Halpern**, **Jones Curtis**, **Verónica Molina**, **Jessica Steele**, **Fahmida Nusrat & Farzana Mir**, **Priyanshi Patel & Colton Bumpus**, **Iman Moradi**. Finally, **Inward Imprints** is a

place at the **OU Ceramics Facilities**. Each **student** was tasked with creating three **ceramic** pieces accompanied by a **narrative, sketches**, and a meaningful **quote**. Over the course of the workshops, students progressively learned **clay techniques**, from **massing** to **texturing**, and the use of **light** and **color** in present as-selves. Thank you so much to all the students part of the **Telesis 2023** class that made this journal possible including: **Abbey Fradette**, **Cole Newport**, **Darren Riley**, **Frank Hicks**, **Isac Valenciano**, **Jenna-Claire Asibelua**,

Madeline Henry, **Rupa Chakraborty**, **Savannah Joslin**, and **Trey London**. **THE CALL FOR WORK** The forthcoming volume of **Telesis** embarks on a quest for **"The Essence"** within our roles as designers. Today's **social landscape**, defined by **opulence**, monumentalism, **consumerism**, and the **social media-driven** venter of **"contemporary"** existence, has witnessed

the gradual **erosion** of the intrinsic **significance** inherent in our endeavors. Consequently, the imperative arises to face this erosion, directing our **architectural-spatial** work towards the **essential core** of forms, objects, nuances and the very **essence** that they **embody**. Within this issue, a fundamental goal emerges: to recognize that our **creations** in the built environment are similar to **living entities**, reflecting the **vitality** of the **earth** and its manifestations, rather than **static entities**. In addition, this issue undertakes a deep exploration of **"being"**, guiding us towards the **revelation of our intrinsic essence** through **self-expression** within the **material** and **tangible** realm.