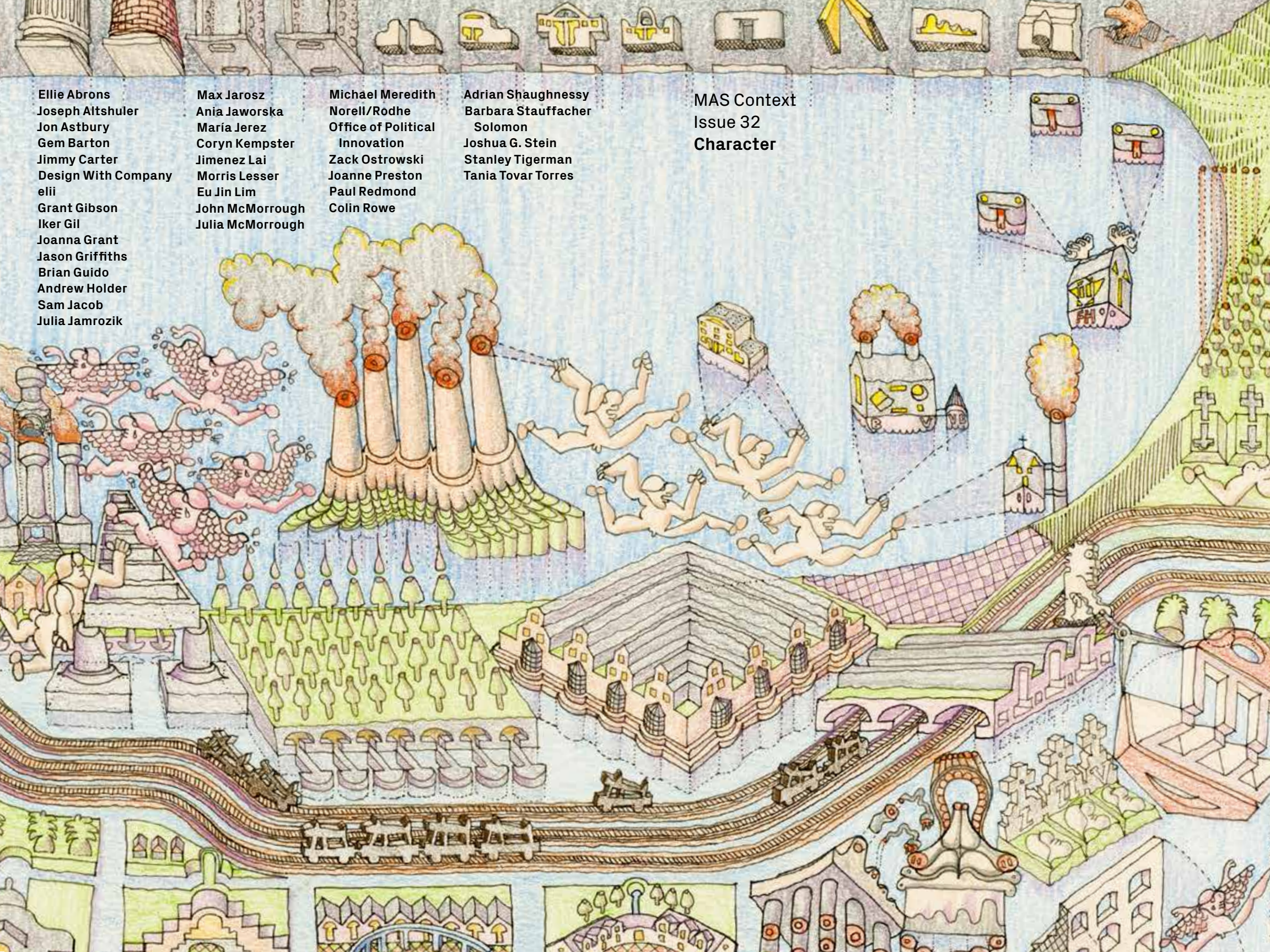Ellie Abrons
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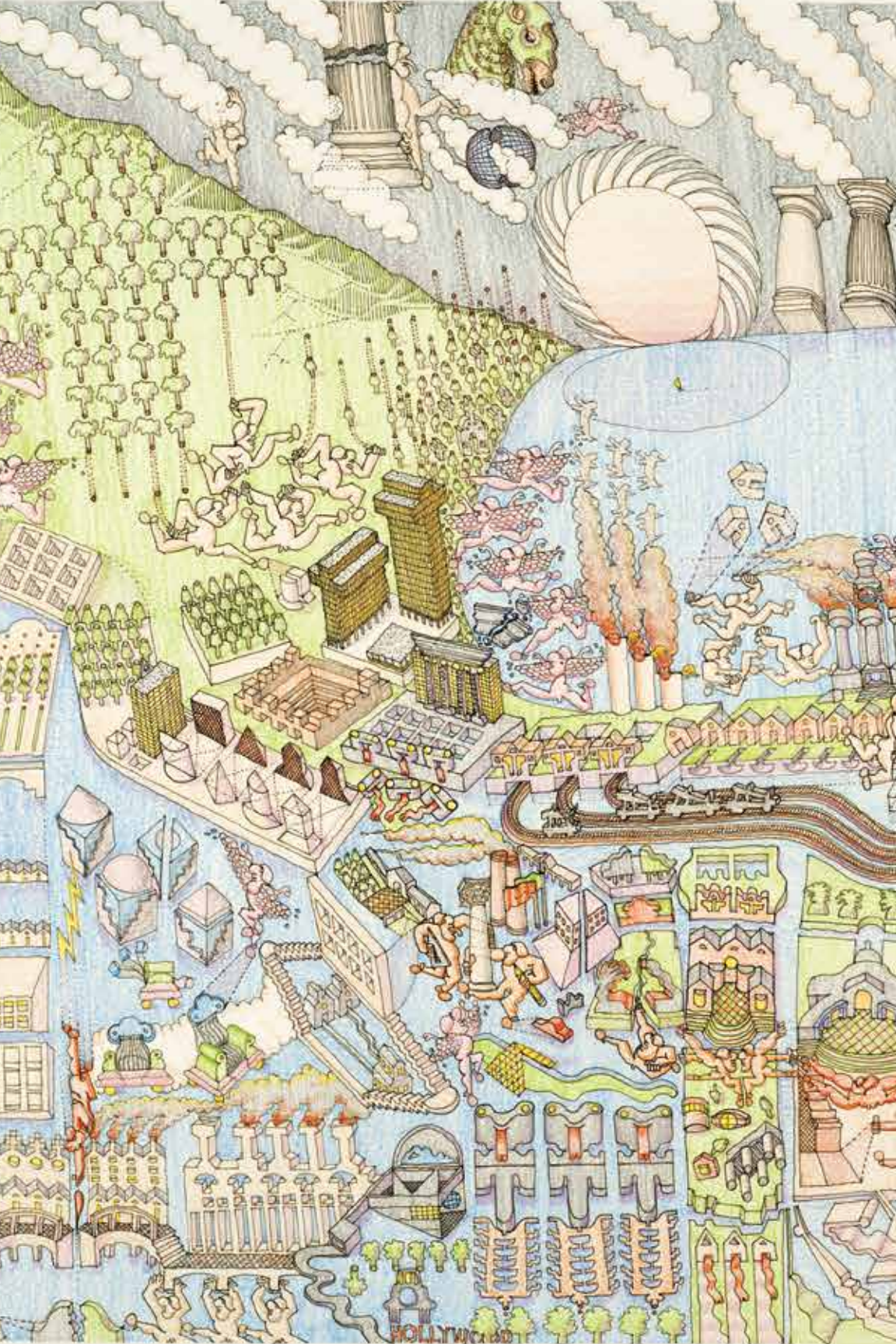Andrew Holder
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Julia Jamrozik

Max Jarosz
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María Jerez
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Julia McMorrough

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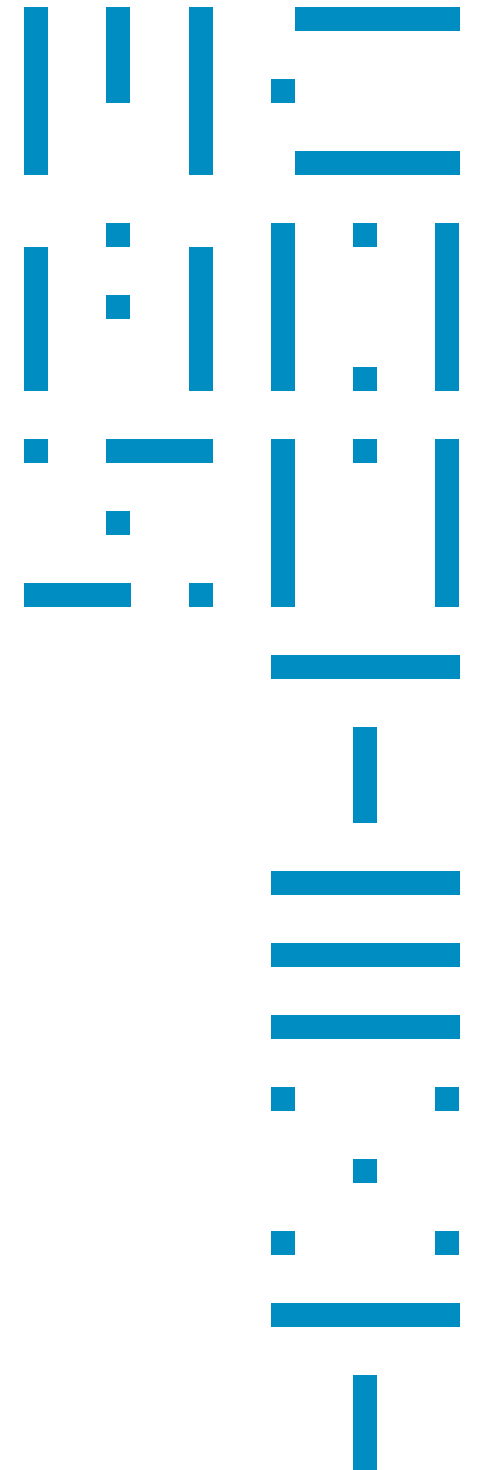Zack Ostrowski
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Colin Rowe

Adrian Shaughnessy
Barbara Stauffacher
 Solomon
Joshua G. Stein
Stanley Tigerman
Tania Tovar Torres

Welcome to the Character issue.

In this issue we explore the opportunities of conjuring fictional characters as a device to demonstrate how a building is experienced, what makes a building have or become a character, and why architects formulate their own persona as a quasi-fictional character. Join us as we consider architecture in literary terms in order to reimagine how buildings can communicate with audiences through form, expression, structure, type, decoration, experience, narrative, and metaphor.

This issue is dedicated to architect, author, and educator Stanley Tigerman (1930-2019).

Welcoming a New Character

Introduction by Iker Gil, Editor in Chief of MAS Context

At long last, I introduce to you our Character issue, our collaboration with Chicago-based Design With Company. It is an issue that has taken us longer than usual to produce but one that we hope was worth the wait. Our ambition is to publish relevant and unique content and to do so sometimes requires more time and resources than anticipated. For that reason, we appreciate your patience and we hope that you consider purchasing a print copy of the issue and/or making a donation to support future publications and events.

Character marks the fifth collaboration of MAS Context with a guest editor. Our collaborations have developed from a series of conversations and shared interests that ultimately grew into the opportunity to explore specific topics in depth. For this issue, we are excited to collaborate with Design With Company, the studio founded in 2010 by Stewart Hicks and Allison Newmeyer. Together, Hicks and Newmeyer have been recognized as Next Progressives by *Architect Magazine*, New Talents by *Metropolis Magazine*, and Chicago's Next Generation by *Architectural Record*. Their work explores the territory between the architectural and the literary, real and unreal, mundane and fantastic. After publishing the work of Design With Company on multiple occasions—the first in our 2011 issue Speed—and organizing talks with them, we decided that this was the right moment to tackle the topic of Character in architecture and in relationship to their practice. As Hicks and Newmeyer say, "we want our constructions to be characters in the theater of everyday life, not just settings or passive containers of activity." Ultimately, the topic was approached and organized in three separate but complementary sections:

user as character, building as character, and architect as character. Each of these is explored in multiple formats (stories, screenplays, chronologies, conversations, fictions…) that establish connections across practices, places, generations, references, and influences. In addition to our guest editors, we collaborated with Jimmy Luu, graphic designer and design educator based out of Austin, Texas, to help shape the identity of this issue.

Our guest-edited issues illustrate a larger ambition of MAS Context: to create a structure to support our contributors and their work. These issues become vehicles for explorations of topics that emerge from the work of our guest editors and that extend into conversations with colleagues, helping them to expand and challenge their approaches. Similarly, many MAS Context events are continuations of contributions that initially appeared as essays. Lectures, book launches, panel discussions, exhibitions, installations, archive explorations, and gatherings of all kinds take the essay into the public arena, opening new conversations and engaging different audiences. We think that creating and supporting these structures are vital for practices to flourish and evolve in a fertile environment.

We hope that this issue expands your notion of Character and that, in whatever capacity, you become a participant and/or enabler of these structures that nurture the work of others.

Why We Got Into Character

Essay by Design With Company

Character is duplicitous. At once, it describes the core of something—qualities that underlie its fundamental being. It is innate, genuine, and shouldn't be taken lightly. At the same time, characters are fictional. You play one . . . in a play. You get into it. You slip it on with a costume and an affect. Character can describe something completely superficial, and at the same time, it can describe something thoroughly essential. Why is that? Why would we look to the same word to describe both of these conditions? Also, how does the word slip so seamlessly between people, buildings, letters, furniture, etc.? Is there a Venn diagram that reveals what is shared between these seemingly disparate circumstances?

We at Design With Company got into character, architecturally anyway, when we were searching for a bridge between narrative-driven architectural explorations and formally driven ones. We like stories and we like forms, but we could not get one to reinforce the other to our satisfaction. As a design strategy, stories don't tell you what forms to make and forms don't necessarily prompt stories. So, we thought character could bring the two together. We never solved our initial problem; we still make stories, and forms, and there is always a tenuous relationship between the two. Such is the case with words and things. However, our interest in character remains mostly because of that whole duplicitous thing.

Character is subjective. It describes qualities that relate to experiencing human subjects, which makes it uncomfortable territory for architects. They tend to prefer more concrete descriptors and objective, quantifiable means of valuation. Since it was shunned by architects in the 1950s (more on that later), the word has been co-opted by apartment hunters, neighborhood design guidelines, and preservationists. "That place had so much character!" "You shall not paint your home in any colors that are not in accordance with the character of the neighborhood." What do these applications of the term mean? An informal poll of potential definitions for an apartment's character resulted in the following list (some are contradictory):

1. Idiosyncratic design details, especially ones at a small scale.
2. Embedded history, with marks bearing use over time.
3. Unexpected materialities, especially those associated with exterior or nondomestic applications.
4. Visible workmanship.
5. It is unique and unlike other spaces of the same category, e.g., other apartments.
6. Feels familiar and cozy.
7. Has elements which have a use lost or transformed over time.

At a neighborhood scale, character refers to a set of visible design traits shared between multiple buildings. Even here the term is duplicitous. How can the same word describe how a building is unique, and at the same time, describe how well it fits into its context? In either case, it tends to be a positive attribution. It allows those who utter it to make an inarguable personal statement of approval. I know it when I see it and I like it.

It wasn't always this way. The concept that buildings could be described as having character first developed within the academy in eighteenth-century France as a means to shift the conversation from the structure itself onto the effects the structure has on its occupants and viewers. This shift helped get the discipline out of a rhetorical jam brought on by the quest for perfection and ideal proportions, which is a discourse reserved for monumental public structures, religious edifices, or royal buildings. Further, the effect buildings have on people is medium specific, that is to say, it is a set of effects that only buildings can produce. Character opened up the conversation to include buildings of all sorts and gave architects a language for the expression of a work. Over time, as theorists and architects refined and appropriated the concept, it began pinballing back and forth as authors laid claim to ever more expansive definitions. Finally, it was abandoned by the academy all together once the convolution approached today's levels.

However, we believe the term and its associated concepts has been out of our lexicon for long enough and so we resolve to take it back from the real estate agents and neighborhood development boards. It will likely acquire new meanings this time around. The ideas that we scoop up under its umbrella may link to the original use of the term, or they may introduce wholly new concepts and territories for architectural exploration. To take the temperature of character today, we offer this issue of MAS Context. We are not staking a claim for what character must mean, nor are we writing a manifesto demanding everyone design with character. Instead, we are holding up a mirror. This mirror allows us to see projects as related where we might otherwise only see difference. We have seen enough evidence to think something is going on here. Or maybe, everything looks like a nail to a hammer.

The content of this issue is laid out along a continuum. On one side of the

continuum we have authors and architects who treat the occupants of buildings as characters to be studied and scripted, or people who find themselves as part of this script. On the other end, we have architects that consciously construct a persona that stretches reality. In between, we have architects and designers that position buildings as the characters in the show. Laying these out along a line reveals just how much architecture is really a big story. It is a story about how the world works through constructed environments. Our little character continuum juggles between the players of our story: who is the audience, what is the medium, and who is the author/architect? The story isn't one a way street . . . we have read Roland Barthes. Below we breakdown just who and what is the character.

Building Occupants as Characters

How do buildings construct the people that inhabit them and how do architects design this process of construction? From architects conjuring fictional people to demonstrate how a building is experienced, to buildings that impose a character on others in spaces like a library, to children growing up shaped by their surroundings, there is a continual exchange between people and built matter. At its most innocuous and ubiquitous, this happens when drawings include "entourage," or representations of people that offer an intuitive means for understanding relative scale. Entourage also provides surrogates for viewers of a drawing to project themselves into the space that is being described. The surrogates' level of articulation can vary wildly, from collaged images of actual people, to silhouettes, to only a few lines

that vaguely suggest the human form. The relationship between their activity and the building can also vary, from indifference (a person just walking through a space) to highly specific (someone peeking through a window). Beyond this, however, is a range of depth to the expression of these characters. Some might be happy, others contemplative. For the sake of exploring the concept of character, we are interested in spending more time to develop a more nuanced understanding of how a building can create settings and emotions. For instance, the same person may appear multiple times within a drawing, within multiple drawings, or we might shift to find them in other media like film, where motion and dialogue adds layers of understanding. In this issue, we look closely and for extended periods at entourage, from their initial drawing on paper until they grow up to be full participants in the world.

Buildings That Have or Are Characters

A building or space might be said to have character. Typically, this means that it posses an excess of qualities associated with a particular typology. For instance, a homey home. It often involves a level of idiosyncratic decoration, materiality, or configuration. Buildings with character also have a certain amount of history embedded into their makeup, which lends them a narrativity. What confluence of forces came together to produce such a strange detail? Buildings with character evoke emotions in their occupants. When we anthropomorphize these qualities, a building starts to look like us, or become a character itself. We can empathize with these beings that look like they have feelings. Another example of a building as

a character is when it plays a strong role within a fictional narrative beyond serving as a setting. Examples include the house in the films *Psycho* and *Home Alone*, the towering apartment of J.G. Ballard's *High-Rise*, the windmills of *Don Quixote*, the endless hallways of *The Shining*, and the castle in *Dracula*.

We think there are three types of practitioners today that have a stake in understanding buildings as having or being characters. They are:

The Figural Formalists: Blobs combined with Hejdukian figures. People became unsatisfied calling things blobs and started to make forms that looked like other things. These things usually are some form of animal. If they have corners it comes from Hejduk, no corners, Greg Lynn. These forms are typically stand-ins for a material investigation whose designers want to make accessible. These projects usually come in numbers larger than one, proving the arbitrariness of the particulars of any one fixed form. Most of them come from UCLA.
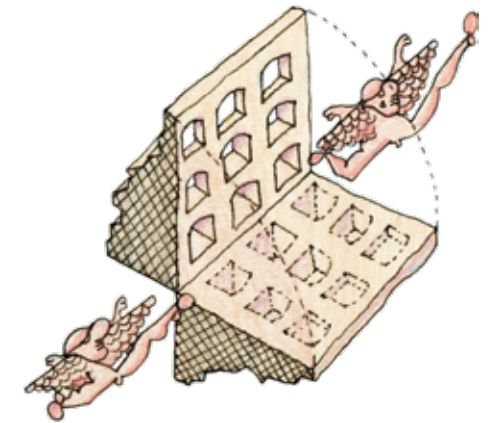
Storytellers: Visionaries combined with storyboarders. We don't have visionary architects anymore. Utopias are dead. Instead, architects have turned to writing stories as contexts for making unlikely buildings and grand unbuildable gestures. The story distances the architect from making claims; they aren't saying the building design should exist as a piece of constructed architecture.

Neo-postmodernists: Historians combined with set designers. There are a host of architects that revisit tropes of postmodernism to look at them afresh. Pastiche is almost all right. Decoration is essential.

Architects as Characters

At this end of the spectrum, we explore architects that consciously formulate their own persona as a quasi-fictional character. This includes real architects shaping their own persona and dress; real architects making up fake architects; architects portrayed in literature or film; and architects that live in their own buildings which in turn shapes their character. They all consciously construct the image of the architect in some form and we are interested in how this is done.

Broadly, this collection of essays, screenplays, projects, and interviews brings together conversations about outward appearance and what lies beneath, behind, or within. It examines the role construction plays in how we behave while probing the deepest parts of architecture and its most superficial. It puts together endeavors that would not otherwise sit comfortably were it not for the duplicitous term they all share.

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Character and Composition, A Response

Text and project by
Design With Company

While reading Colin Rowe's "Character and Composition" essay, we found ourselves feeling a little uncomfortable with the way Rowe bullies some of the more beloved words in our vocabulary. This is our follow-up reaction—a character and composition manifesto as a dollhouse.

In his essay, Rowe argues that character and composition are no longer useful as architectural conceits and the terms represent unnecessary vestiges from bygone eras. He traces their shifting definitions and their diminishing use value through time. In the end, he declares that the terms embody "an idea which, by emphasizing the particular, the personal, and the curious, will always vitiate system." [1]

Without system, we cannot have discipline. Along his narration through history, he flippantly identifies how to achieve character within a nineteenth-century English home:

> *Contemporary observers of Endsleigh undoubtedly found its quasi-Elizabethan undress, its naturalistic charm to be full of character; but almost certainly they were led to discover this same value in its roof, its chimneys, and its porch. "The porch, the veranda, or the piazza are highly characteristic features," wrote Andrew Jackson Downing of similar buildings at a somewhat later date in the United States. And again, "The prominent features conveying expression of purpose in dwelling houses are the chimneys, the windows, and the porch . . . and for this reason whenever it is desired to raise the character of a cottage or a villa above mediocrity, attention should first be bestowed on these portions of the building.* [2]

To us, this sounded like a challenge. What would an architecture of only roofs, chimneys, and porches look like? We started collecting our favorites, organizing them, and deploying them. Along the way, we tweaked the categories a bit, instead focusing on profiles, punches, protrusions, and patterns. We like alliteration.

Why a Dollhouse?

Dollhouses are objects for building character. They prompt the exploration and narrativization of the interior. As typically configured, they present a deep section model of a house with lavish decoration on its interior surfaces. Rooms are clearly delineated by function with the choice of décor and furniture appointments. Like Gordon Matta Clark's cuts, this presentation of the interior requires the removal of a façade. This surface only obscures the internal social and physical structures of the home. On another level of interiority, the miniature scale of a dollhouse appeals to and celebrates the interior of our mind and our psyche. According to Susan Stewart, they offer an "experience of interiority" while exemplifying the "process by which that interior is constructed." Dollhouses are a "diminutive and thereby manipulateable, version of experience." [3] Our dollhouse demonstrates what happens when we remove the interior in order to celebrate and animate its façade. After all, that is where the character of a building is located as the primary site of human experience and architectural expression. ●

1. Colin Rowe, "Character and Composition," in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1976), 80.

2. Ibid., 68.

3. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
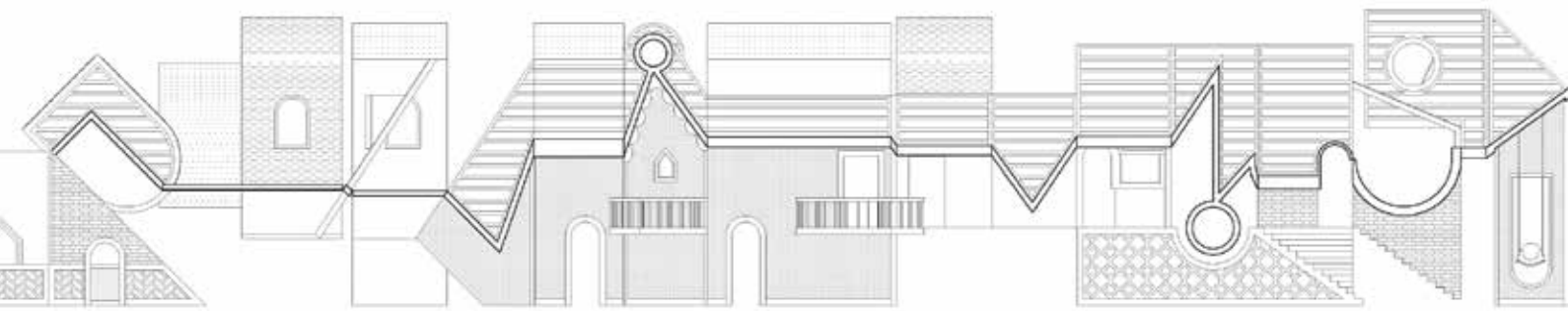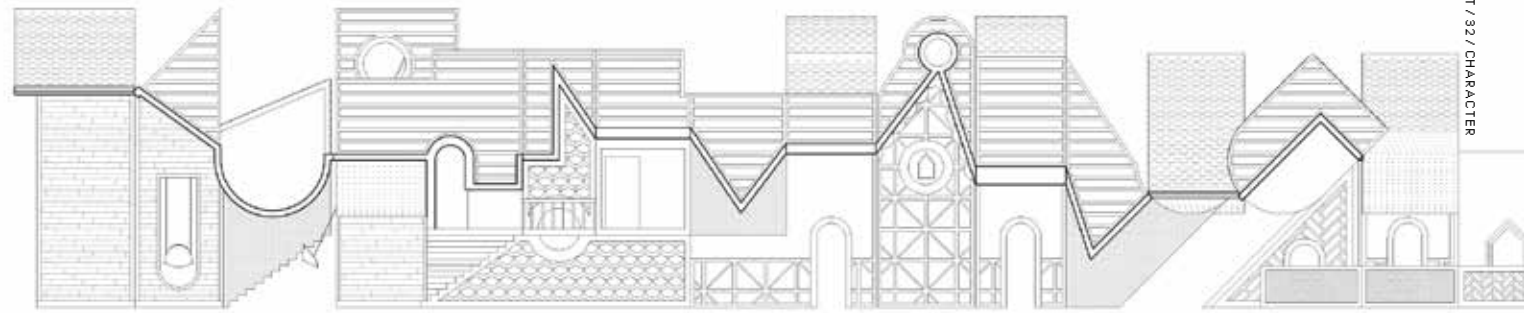
"The Even Covering of the Field" drawing series. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

Half Timbered T. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio
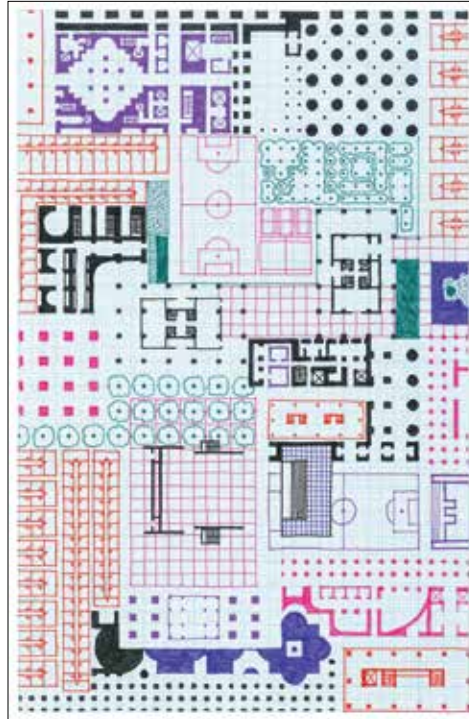
Roman Pottery Jug fragment c.1st century AD. Ship wreck with new addition. Part of the "Pieces" exhibition, Sir John Soane's Museum, London. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

The Space of Representations

Sam Jacob in conversation with Stewart Hicks

After closing a remarkable chapter as cofounder of FAT Architecture in 2014, architect Sam Jacob went on to found Sam Jacob Studio. His most recent work spans both scales and disciplines: a master plan for 250 homes coexists with a proposal for light industrial workplaces, an art commission for Milton Keynes, countless exhibitions, and uncanny clothing items such as plank- and insulation-patterned scarves. If that wasn't enough, he regularly shares his sharp analysis of contemporary architecture as a writer, columnist, panelist, and speaker. As his career has evolved, so has his exploration of flatness, composition, representation, authenticity, and authorship. Stewart Hicks of Design With Company talked with Jacob to discuss these and other aspects as they relate to the topic of character.

"The Villa" in Hoogvliet, the
Netherlands, designed by
FAT. © Courtesy of Sam
Jacob Studio

The Space of Representations

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Stewart Hicks: The structure of our issue of MAS Context on Character is broken into three categories. One is the construction of the inhabitant, or the construction of the subject of architecture, and thinking of inhabitants as characters. The second category considers buildings as fictional bodies, and the third focuses on moments when architects construct themselves as characters, or architects as characters. We hope to uncover parallels and crossovers between the categories that would not happen in isolation. One of the projects that strikes us as particularly related to these concepts is your clothing line. We are interested in the idea that you would want to dress up people like buildings, or dress up people like drawings of buildings. What motivates this impulse of yours?

Sam Jacob: Cold hard cash. We just received our first shipment of T-shirts. Can I interest you in a 100% cotton shirt with silk-screened brick pattern printed edge to edge? We're about to go into full production. You can be the first to sport the new look.

Is that all? Let me get my credit card.

There is something fun, especially with the T-shirts, that comes from a position of thinking broadly about architecture as encompassing everything around you, or that everything is architecture. I suppose that is the instigator. In some ways, it's like clothing as architecture, clothing as the home. This is less about technically providing shelter, and more about a symbolic thing where, in a sense, the façade of a building becomes the façade of you. We conflate clothing as an elevation and what we normally think of a façade or the elevation is equivalent to a T-shirt.

It is also about representation and communication, and thinking of physical things as forms of media that carry information. This is true of all physical things regardless of their material makeup. Of course, more familiar things like paper can be information. A stream is information, a brick is information, and that's the kind of question our work is thinking about. That is how the T-shirts and the scarves—don't forget the scarves are part of the clothing line—fit in as this slight conflation of stuff which we know isn't building to allow you to think about building as something different from the typical.

Do you see it going both ways? You are saying it is about the communication of building, or the communication of a person as a building. Do you see it going the other way, where the building takes on the qualities of the person or the clothing? I'm thinking of Gottfried Semper's theory of *bekleidung*, the use of textile, or anthropomorphizing buildings. Do you see it as a two-way street, or do you see it as a one-way street?

I don't think it has to do with the material, it has to do with something else. You have to remember the *F* in FAT was fashion. That didn't mean that we wanted to be fashion designers. What it did mean was that we recognized and argued that architecture is fashion, which is what architecture usually tries to deny. Buildings typically reach for timelessness, to be beyond the whims of fashion, and all of the kinds of references that Adolf Loos talks about are architecture being different from the feather in a woman's hat, and says that ideas of fashion are fickle, feminine, and fundamentally nonarchitectural are completely wrong.

Architecture is absolutely fashionable. The things which seem timeless and beyond fashion are the things which go out of fashion most quickly, and I've always thought that is a good thing. That is something to be celebrated in architecture rather than brushed under the carpet. In one sense, there is an acknowledgement that taste and fashion are things you work with as an architect. You work in your moment. You address your circumstance in time, and also in place. That is one side of it. The other side of it is an idea that architecture is a form of representation, but the subject of its representation is architecture. I think that's maybe the difference between what FAT was doing and what we are doing here now. The subject is architecture which is communicated through architecture.

Speaking of fashionable, that dovetails into something else that you have written about lately: postdigital collage drawing. I recently read your essay "Architecture Enters the Age of Post-Digital Drawing"[1] published in *Metropolis* magazine in conjunction with re-reading "Beyond the Flatline" included in *Architectural Design*'s "Radical Post-Modernism,"[2] and I thought there was an interesting connection. In the former, you are arguing for an imagistic flatness to resurrect the possibility of treating drawing as a primary site of architecture. In the latter, you are arguing for another kind of flatness at the scale of culture. Do you see a connection between these or are they separate issues?

"Beyond the Flatline" was about a flatness of culture precipitating through the Internet, and collapsed boundaries. It was saying that high postmodernism

was made in a time when distinctions between high and low culture still existed, but talked about a time to come where they were about to dissolve. When Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown were comparing Caesars Palace to Rome, for example, they were touching on an early moment where this more contemporary form of culture we're more familiar with was beginning to emerge.

We make work using Google Images almost every day to pull up and look for something. But in this process of looking, we bring up a range of completely unrelated things into one matrix, which probably only exists on one screen for one moment depending on how your Google profile changes, depending on how the Google algorithm changes. You could say images, like facts or information, are sucked out of their context—whatever web page that might be—and collated by a machine to form an accidental mosaic. I think that's a very good example of flatness of culture.

The distinction between high and low, which worked as a comparison for Venturi Scott Brown, and pop art in general, does not work now. It does not have the same resonance because we don't recognize high and low as being distinct because that tradition of postmodernism in architecture, art, music, literature, and culture in general has done its job. It has eroded the institution of the university, the academy, or the museum to the extent that you go into the museum and you see a pop group rather than seeing classical art. We are currently in a very different situation. A joke that sets up a dialogue between these two opposites to produce an effect is much more difficult to make because we are in it, and we can't see it. It is the kind of circumstance which sur-

rounds us completely all the time. Jokes about columns don't work anymore.

On the other hand, there was very literal flatness which FAT was interested in, which was both graphic in terms of prioritizing the use of certain computer programs, and was directly oppositional to the extreme three-dimensional space which other digital applications were beginning to allow architects to explore. We were arguing for flatness or nonspace as a position to highlight aspects we thought were being overlooked, such as taste and fashion, to address issues of architecture's deep social-political significance. We had a slogan which was "Taste not Space." It was a ridiculous statement of intent, or manifesto in aphorism, which was to say the space is not important. Of course, that translated into buildings which used flatness, flat façades with graphic cutouts. I'm sure you have seen a few of those flat buildings, which became the product of both a way of working and a way of thinking as a direct opposite to the spatial gymnastics of architecture of the late 1990s.

There was also a punk attitude akin to not using the full range of the possibilities of music. Obviously limiting your repertoire to the equivalent of three chords like a flat façade. I think that was where that argument of flatness ended up. I have been less into the literal flatness now, and I am much more interested in the space of representations.

The piece for *Metropolis* magazine did two things. One was to expand the possibilities of the computer as an architectural drawing machine. Rejecting the tools of architectural drawing like AutoCAD, SketchUp, and Rhino in order to concentrate on the idea of a graphic space which is equivalent to
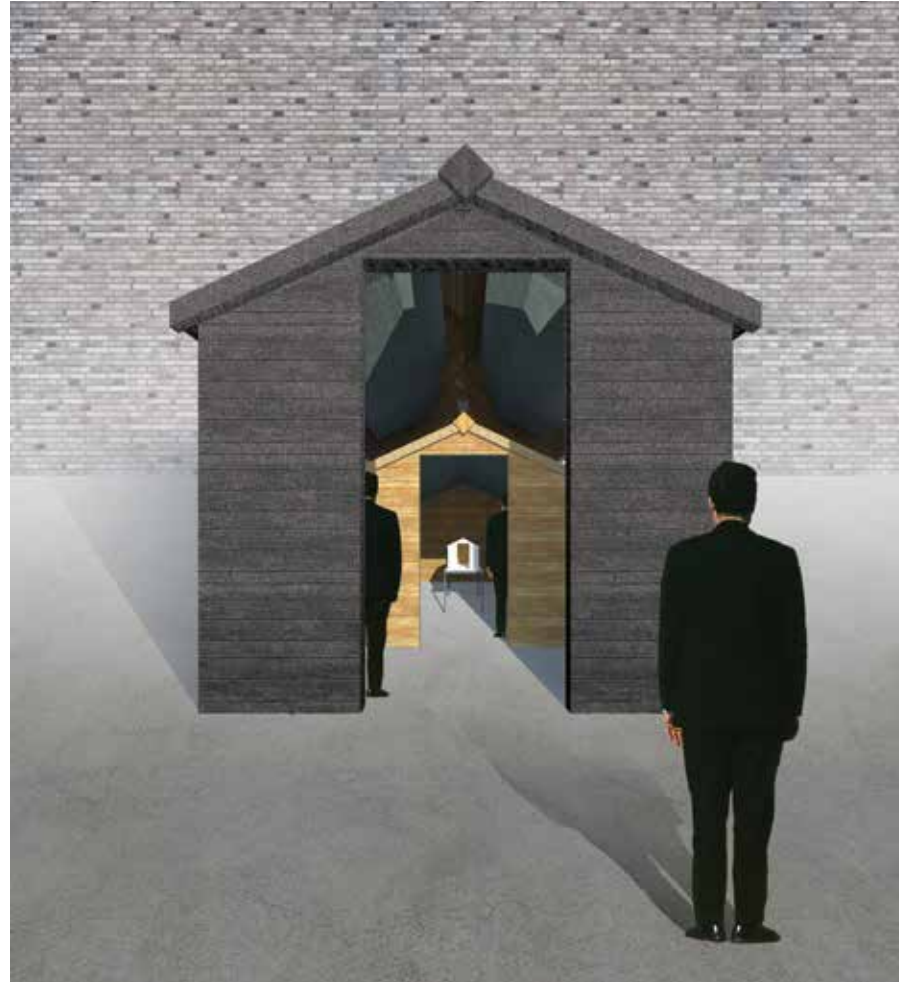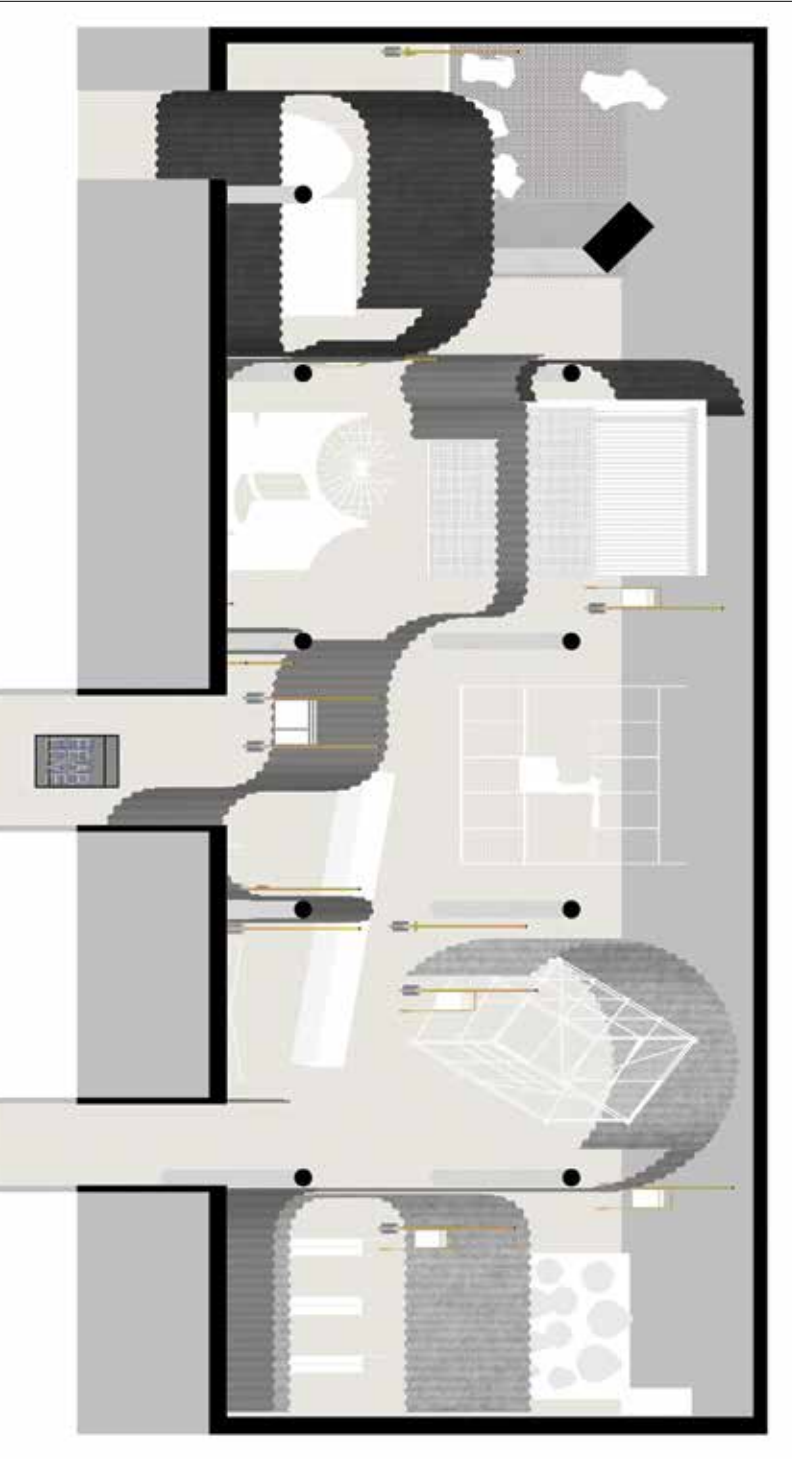
"Fear And Love: Reactions to a Complex World" exhibition design, Design Museum, London. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

One Thing After Another commissioned by Sto Werkstatt as part of the Clerkenwell Design Week. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

a piece of paper. What happens when you start with a blank screen and you put a mark onto it? And how does that begin to generate a sense of space or logical space within that representational world? It is exactly the same as making a mark on a piece of paper or on a canvas or on a piece of tracing paper. It is a very old-fashioned idea of the architectural drawing simply transplanted into digital space with the tools that we have today.

Although it may be rejecting the construction of architectural worlds within digital space, it uses elements of digital three-dimensional tools to create things, fragments of something, or fragments of something else, little bits from Illustrator, little bits from Google Images, little bits from Photoshop, all composited into something which has a much looser conception of space. This space's definition does not come pre-described by XYZ lines in a 3D program. It opens the possibilities for what the space might be which can be invented through the agency of drawing, rather than coming to you predetermined by a coder working for AutoCAD. It relates to representation, but not necessarily with flatness in the same literal way.

What is happening is more like an inhabitation of the flatness of the page or the flatness of the screen with alternative forms of spatiality. Some of these are incredibly straight forward, like an elevation. But I also want to reclaim ways of looking and ways of consuming space which exist in the act of drawing, rather by telling a digital camera to look at a digital model. We force ourselves to construct all of those relationships, how something works on a page, and how you then view it. One difference between drawing on paper and on the screen is that your screen is

connected to so much other stuff and has a very fluid relationship with the world, like fragments of the Internet which suddenly appear in the drawing layered in a layer of fifty-five in a group with a mask on it in Photoshop. It means that the page, the screen, isn't quite so isolated as it used to be from the rest of the world. In fact, the screen is the same place the rest of the world comes to us. It is the same place we watch our TV, and read our news, and have conversations. It makes the act of drawing more about looking than about drawing. Looking becomes as important as the act of drawing because you are one step removed from the drawing itself. You are consuming it while you are making it.

Then it seems there is a deep relationship to "Beyond the Flatline," because the flatness that you are identifying is beyond creating a literally flat architecture. You are rethinking the space of representation as it might live within this world of flatness to produce an architecture that isn't literally flat. Instead it builds upon this drawing that lives on the screen, that lives in the world of all of these images and things and draws from it as a way of looking, right?

Yeah, in some ways. But I think in terms of what it, which is where the flatness came in, is to make things obviously not real to expose the fiction of architecture. All objects, three-dimensional objects, space, are also forms of representation. Often, they represent something, but the thing that they represent is themselves, which is a tautological circuitous ending up in the same place. I think for me it felt like a big change from what we had been doing at FAT.

That touches on the heart of what we want to try to expose with this issue of MAS Context and by thinking about character in architecture. There are a couple of strands that we are following. One is the one that you are talking about—collage makers from Europe. That line of thinking comes out of Europe and proliferates elsewhere. There is that camp. Then, the other camp we are identifying is mostly from the West Coast in the US, from schools like UCLA, a couple generations beyond Greg Lynn, that are making objects which somewhat look like animals or something, and compose them into a 3D still life. What we want to do by using the word character is to bring these two practices together, even though they look very different. We are arguing that it has to do with this flatness you are talking about.

For the collage makers, a flower pot, a person, a cat, a column, and a window are all treated the same. They are all things to be composed, which is a kind of flatness. It treats space like an image, and objects as things to be composed like a still life. It is both a collage and a still life. This is in contrast to people like Andrew Holder, or Ellie Abrons, or even we would put Andrew Kovacs in this camp of people who are making collections of figures as physical still lifes. We want to say that those things are related, even though they look different. What you said about obviously trying to expose the fiction surrounding all objects and even 3D as forms of representation seems to be the hinge point that allows us to talk about these things in the same breath.

It is interesting that you say that there is a difference between European and US approaches, which, now that you

mention it, does seem to be true. The European approach is much more classical in a sense. Or, in fact, it is very classical. It is very painterly. You are absolutely right. The images are composed with an incredible precision. I was thinking about it when you were talking about images and still lifes. I was thinking about the way that the artists Gilbert & George described what are now, or have been for about thirty-five years, flat things, flat photographic prints. They still describe them as sculptures, which is interesting.

I am also thinking about the idea of composition, which links both of the approaches you have been talking about. It wasn't part of how architecture thought for such a long time. Composition, choices that you would make, that you would put something here rather than there, was a gestural thing. Composing something was seen as really old-fashioned. Now, it has come back onto the table as a legitimate, and even significant way to work. That is interesting. I think it also relates to a rejection of a world where there was never any symmetry. Even though work was incredibly formal, it was never talked about in formal terms. The return of composition is also something which links those two worlds.

Along the lines of composition, what are your thoughts on the relationship between the architect, the building or the drawing, and the subject, or the people that are interpreting those things? There are so many different ways of stating that relationship, all of them loaded with baggage. However, whether we talk about these productions as still lifes or collages, the history of those media are fraught with questions about this contested relationship.

In my teaching, what I spend most of my time doing is trying to de-author the student's work, or to destroy the fictitious idea of the author with the signature. I think this mistaken idea is very damaging. I encourage students to take on other people's languages, to speak with other, and even multiple voices. It is ridiculous for someone early in their career to believe that they have a voice or a more "authentic" voice, which ironically you won't find by pretending to be other people.

Another issue of authorship was the end of FAT, which ended for a few reasons, but one of them was definitely feeling—certainly on my side—it had become a language and a style, which of course it was never supposed to be. Ending it was to destroy that authorial edifice which was part of the project of FAT. It doesn't sound like much, but certainly when we named ourselves it was a way of not attributing a person's name to the work. Up until the very end nobody ever knew who did what project apart from clients. It was like an explicit thing, which came out of its roots not as a defined group but as a loose collective as we liked to call it in the early days. That was another attack, or another way of dealing with the problem of authorship.

The issue of character and personality is interesting in the case of *The House for Essex* project. Partly because we were working with someone who possesses a gigantic personality and charisma, a person who is a personality, who has TV shows, and is a national treasure not for their art, but for being on TV as a cultural talking head. So, dual authorship of a project.

In addition to the dual authorship, there was Greyson Perry's invention of the character of this woman called Julie.

The building is dedicated to her in the same way that the Taj Mahal was dedicated to lost love, and the building then narrates the story of this fictitious person. It is called a house, but nobody lives there. People go rent it and stay in it for the weekend or a few days. It is a transient inhabitation, like an immersive theme park. You immerse yourself in a fiction for a moment. It is not part of, you could say, life.

All of those things were interesting, and what you see in the building is a form of architecture coated with layers of invented character, the story of Julie, figures of Julie, tapestries of Julie's life, pots depicting moments in Julie's life, the motorbike which ran her over, tiles, all of this stuff. . . . You could say the building is encrusted with this storytelling apparatus. All of this has nothing to do with us in the project. It has completely to do with Greyson but, of course, it was the thing that attracted all the attention. When it was reviewed, that was what people talked about but that obscured the architectural arrangement, which tells a different story in the way it arranges the sequence of spaces. That is another kind of narrative or character of the space that does not operate on a visual level, but modifies your experience and modifies your personality when you come in through the front door. After you do, you walk forward into the kitchen, through a set of doors and into the big chapel-like space where most of Julie's story is told. However, if you go up the staircase, you are presented with a choice. You can go one way into the bedrooms— there are two bedrooms—and one way into a bathroom. If you go into the bathroom, you can keep going and turn a corner where you find the bathtub. The
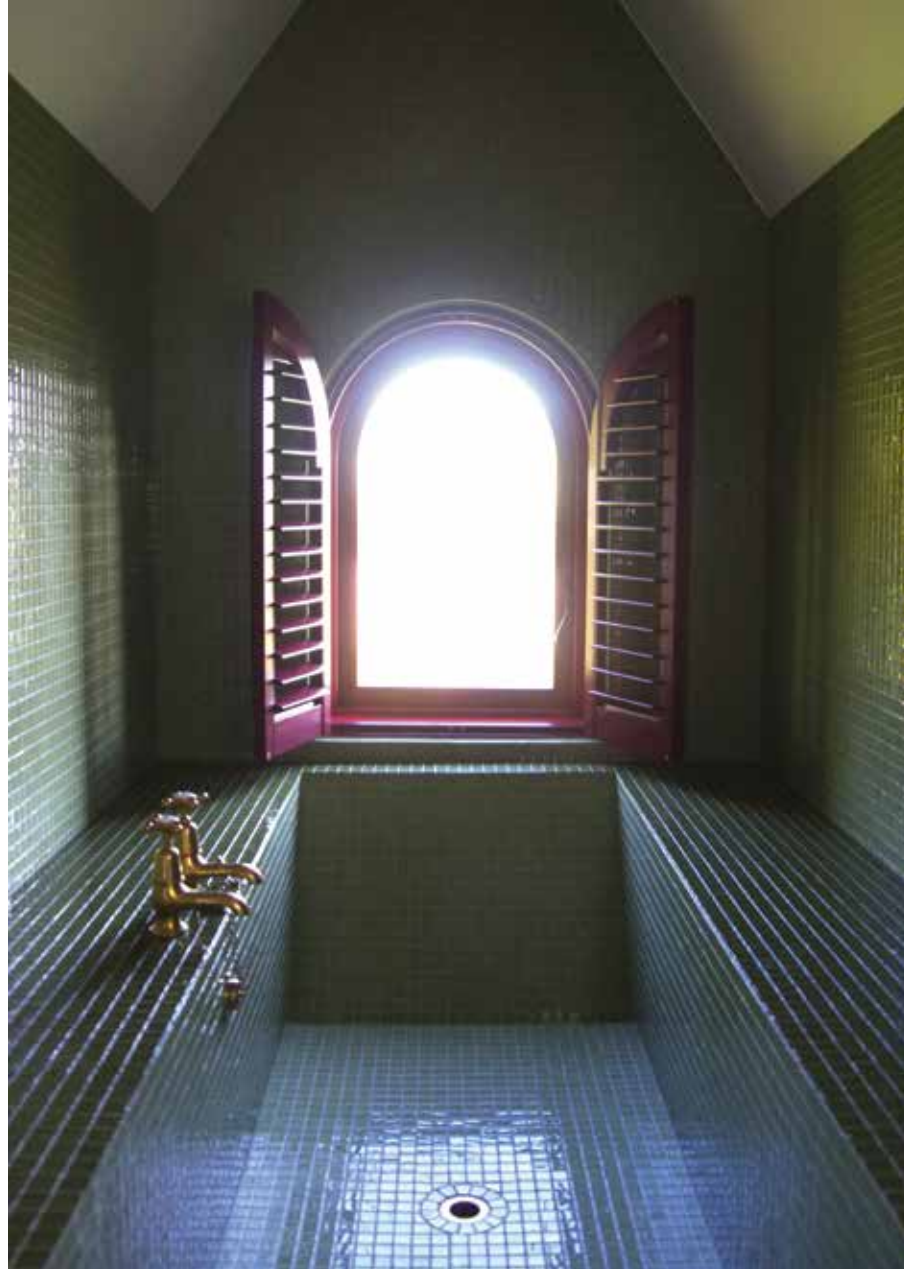
A House For Essex designed by FAT in collaboration with the artist Grayson Perry. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

Bathroom of *A House For Essex* designed by FAT in collaboration with the artist Grayson Perry. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

bathtub sits right on axis, right from the route that you have come down. You sit in the nude, stripped of all your clothes, looking out of a window as if you were in a weird psychology mixed with the planning of Versailles. There you are, nude in a bathtub looking out a window on this public access.

The other choice you make is to go into the bedrooms, and you walk through the bedroom into the wardrobe. Then you walk through the wardrobe onto the balcony, where you address the interior public space. On the one hand, you are nude facing the world. On the other hand, you are clothed, dressing and addressing an interior civic-ness. That's a story which has never been told about the project, because the fictional story of Julie is so powerful that it overpowers the architectural and spatial characteristics.

I am happy that you brought up that project and I loved the way you described it, which is a lesson for architecture in general, beyond the particularities of that building. A building is a dialogue between these two narratives, one encrusted in the materiality and form, and the other as people occupy the space. Buildings are composed of bricks, and if each brick is a representation or has a story, whether it is a green tile of a face of Julie or it is a brick, it doesn't matter. This set of narratives is brought into confrontation with how people are scripted or choreographed through space.

I'll try this idea out on you, Stewart. Is there something about the fact that I was describing *The House for Essex* in such basic terms like the elements of a house: bedroom, wardrobe, bathroom, front door, and those kinds of things? If you take out

all of the other parts of that project. Maybe it's interesting because it's so extreme in its fictional content. It's as fictional as a cathedral in terms of the stories it's telling, except that in this case nobody believes the story of Julie.

In terms of that spatial sequence, what it is doing is simply using those very familiar architectural components to make a different kind of experience and to place you in a different context. The aspects that are supposed to be most private become most public. In some sense, what that is trying to do is to say that the architecture itself becomes the content. Even though that project is the most extreme in terms of things looking like other things. On a very reduced diagrammatic architectural level, it is actually saying the content of it is really architecture.

Maybe a defining feature of the type of character that I am interested in is where the content is derived from mundane architectural scenarios with a reduced, impoverished architectural language. That is in contrast to that other school that pushes the figuration of the architectural object to an extreme so that the thing becomes the character. In the first model, the building never escapes being architecture, whereas in the second one, it is always knocking on the edge of it becoming something else, or looking like something else.

There is a tension there. Whether that is true or not between Europe and the US, it is true as a division in long tradition of architecture that thinks about these kinds of ideas. Does it talk about something, or does it become something? I think that is the important difference in terms of approach. Does it become something else, or does it remain the thing that it is? I am interested in finding

the tipping point where a building doesn't seem fictional at all. One option is to make up something and apply it to the project in the same way that Julie's story is made up and applied. Another option is that the fiction can already be embedded in the project. It can already be embedded in the situation or the object or the architecture or the drawing. ◗

1. Sam Jacob, "Architecture Enters the Age of Post-Digital Drawing," *Metropolis*, March 21, 2017, accessed July 17, 2017, http://www.metropolismag.com/architecture/architecture-enters-age-post-digital-drawing/.

2. Sam Jacob, "Beyond the Flatline," in "Radical Post-Modernism," special issue, *Architectural Design* 81, no 5 (2011): 24–31.

A House For Essex designed by FAT in collaboration with the artist Grayson Perry. © Courtesy of Sam Jacob Studio

Character Plotting

Text and diagrams by Joseph Altshuler

Riffing on "Genealogy"

Charles Jencks's "Evolutionary Tree to the Year 2000," originally published in 1971, is perhaps the most famous infographic in the history of architecture.[1] Part classification of the five decades preceding it, and part prophetic prediction of the three-and-a-half decades to follow it, Jencks's "genealogical" diagram remains impactful because it delivers a seemingly comprehensive scope of architectural activity within the singular, open-ended, and interconnected format of a gestural flowchart. Unlike a scientific genealogical tree, Jencks's diagram removes hierarchy and celebrates unexpected and unscientific links between pluralistic architectural "species" that congregate within bulbous "attractor basins."

While the original diagram does not explicitly indicate the time of its creation, it nevertheless communicates specifically about its time and place.[2] In its effort to assemble order out of the past and predict multiple futures, it necessarily reinforces its contemporaneous position in the present—Jencks is obsessed with the now. For this reason, scores of architects, theorists, and critics have followed Jencks's lead and crafted their own versions of the Jencksian diagram in order to articulate a sense of the ever-changing *now* with specific tones of voice and intellectual biases.[3] (Jencks himself has created multiple updated versions of his own diagram, most notably in 2000, to pat himself on the back for his prescient original vision.) The greatest success of Jencks's diagram is not its purported discovery of disciplinary taxonomy, but the extent to which such a broad collection of successors have been so inspired to reenact or riff off of its original ambition.

A Playing Field of Characters

In this spirit of ongoing riffing and revision, the diagrams here aim to unpack, chart, and correlate a loose cohort of contemporary architects and projects that leverages *character* in their practice.[4] While most updated takes on Jencks's diagram adopted the comprehensive scope that was integral to its original ambition, this series of diagrams embraces a limited latitude of the wide variety of architectural work happening today. By zooming into the subjective and specific lens of character, the diagrams aim to more precisely articulate positions and relationships among actors. This pursuit is anything but scientific and necessarily incomplete, but it aspires to arouse cultural conversation and disciplinary debate surrounding this contemporary architectural agenda.

As a pair of separate and parallel diagrams, each frame plots a different deployment and understanding of character in architecture according to a different part of speech: character as an actor (noun) versus character as a physical attribute (adjective). The four Cartesian axes of each diagram offers four different elaborations on this definition of character—each axis is not an ideological "pole," but rather suggests a possible synonym for "character" according to the particular deployment and part of speech. While the alter-ego-like synonyms along each axis vary with each frame to reflect the changing part of speech for character, each of the four quadrants remains consistent and indicates an operative bias for what architectural character may or may not privilege in its making or delivery in the world. For example, a project plotted along the right indicates an operative bias toward performance and charisma, while

a project plotted along the left indicates an operative bias toward symbolism and significance. Projects plotted closer to center are more "well-rounded" while projects along the periphery exhibit more extreme biases. In this way, each diagram acts like an athletic playing field, where actors with specific "positions" (e.g. forward, midfielder, goalkeeper) generally gravitate toward specific regions of the field but can move around freely to interact with other players as unexpected moves or projects may provoke. Akin to Jencks's precedent, these regions are formalized with names and hatch patterns that establish territories of disciplinary distinction. Territories of the playing field that remain uncharted suggest intellectual affinities for future exploration and inquiry. ●

1. Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000: Predictions and Methods* (New York: Praeger, 1971), 46–47.

2. Jencks's original diagram intentionally omits a chronological "you are here" indicator, but the past and future is distinguished by the fact that the past includes names of specific architects, while the future omits specific people's names, relying exclusively on conjectural categories to articulate specificity.

3. Some recent examples include: Joe Day's "Genealogy as Diagram: Charting Past as Future" published in *Log* 17 (2009): 121–126, Paul Makovsky's "Our Charles Jencks Moment," published in *Metropolis*, April 2011, 66–67, and Alejandro Zaera-Polo's "Well Into the 21st Century: The Architectures of Post-Capitalism?" published in *El Croquis* 187 (2016): 252–287.

4. While the diagrams plot a collection of contemporary architectural work, "ghosts" of projects from previous generations (rendered in lighter gray ink) occasionally interject themselves into the frame. Like Jencks's precedent, these historical markers help calibrate the field and articulate disciplinary lineage without defining distinct genealogical pathways.

SYMBOLISM

(METAPHOR)

PERFORMANCE

(ACTION)

as theorized by
Venturi Scott Brown
DUCK

TACTILE BODIES

"This building is a character!"

15

13

04

FLESHY

ANIMALS

ARCHITECTURAL MASCOTS

18

John Hejduk
MASQUES

06

03

05

01

17

Figure

Oskar Schlemmer
TRIADIC BALLET

Glyph

Creature

16

Johann David
Steingruber
ARCHITECTURAL
ALPHABET

08

02

19

ARCHITECTURE PARLANTE

DUCKERATED SHED

ANIMATE EXTR

Caricature

14

USIONS

09

Jean-Jacques Lequeu
COWSHED

07

11

10

C H A R A C T E R A S

ACTOR (n.)

12

SIGNIFICANCE

(MEANING)

CHARISMA

(AFFECT)

01	Adam Nathaniel Furman	Identity Parade, 2013	London, UK	A collection of vibrantly colored and decorated ornaments embody a fictional character's multifaceted and ever-changing personality.
02	Andrew Holder	48 Characters, 2013	Ann Arbor, MI	A series of tumescent, bulbous creatures demonstrate how the language of posture and character can describe architectural possibilities that geometry cannot.
03	Angie Co	Critters, 2013	Syracuse, NY	Animal silhouettes extruded in two directions produce the likeness of physical movement and suggest dual dispositions.
04	Ania Jaworska	Confetti Tower, 2009	Bloomfield Hills, MI	An anthropomorphic exhaust pipe-like figure emits confetti upon human passersby.
05	Bittertang	Buru Buru, 2014	Lake Forest, IL	Netted straw wattles conjure the open jaw of a giant beast, inviting staged and impromptu performance within its ruddy interior.
06	Bureau Spectacular	White Elephant, 2012	Louisville, KY	A faceted figure freely tumbles into eight different stances, merging multiple personalities with the plural postures of a singular object.
07	Bureau Spectacular	Township of Domestic Parts, 2014	Venice, Italy	A collection of nine small pavilions each accommodate, communicate, and exaggerate the identity of a single domestic program.
08	Cosmo Design Factory	Yonderview House, 2015	Hillsdale, NY	A collage of creaturely forms come together to accomodate a single home, hybridizing modern and vernacular domestic forms.
09	Cosmo Design Factory	Murphy's Monsters, 2013	Flint, MI	A packaged set of temporary architecture pavilions capitalizes on zoomorphic shapes to provide cultural activation and amenities to a vacant parking lot.
10	Could Be Architecture	Civic Characters, 2015	Houston, TX	A quintet of small, creaturely buildings accommodate new municipal offices to provide a more lovable identity for local government while mixing up programs of bureaucracy and pleasure.
11	Design With Company	IMC Character Buildings, 2012	Urbana, IL	A set of interactive, figural kiosks activate the interior of a former civic building, providing new functions and identity for a community organization.
12	Design With Company	Animal Farmatures, 2011	The Midwest	Supersized synthetic animal bodies, filled with mechanical viscera, roam the agrarian landscape of the American Corn Belt to cultivate farmland and entertain cross-country rail passengers.
13	Elie Abrons	Peep Peep, 2014	Ann Arbor, MI	A trio of textured figures invite views into their mirrored and optically expansive interiors.
14	Endemic Architecture	Generic Originals, 2014	Ann Arbor, MI	Compound figures, composed of spheres, cones, and cylinders, prompt the subjective reading of parts and wholes.
15	Office S&M	Europa Stage, 2013	London, UK	A set of scenographic objects animate a performance and mingle with the performers, obscuring the distinction between architecture and actors.
16	raumlaborberlin	Bathing Culture, 2014	Gothenburg, Sweden	A zoomorphic figure calls the public to occupy the sauna within its elevated belly.
17	studio: indigenous	Moon Domiciles, 2012	Oneida Nation	A series of figural dwellings for new moon rituals translates environmental data into poetic architectural gestures.
18	Thing Thing	Making Friends, 2012	Detroit, MI	A set of toy and furniture-like figurines, made from recycled plastic, offers colorful companionship to local denizens.
19	WOJR	Etudes, 2015	Cambridge, MA	A series of iterative geometric figures suggest the open-ended cultural significance of architectural artifacts.

ATTRIBUTE(adj)

CHARACTER AS

(METAPHOR)

SYMBOLISM

(ACTION)

PERFORMANCE

(MEANING)

SIGNIFICANCE

(AFFECT)

CHARISMA

MATERIAL REBRANDING

Pattern/Texture

Branding

DECORATED SHED

AD-HOC CONGLOMERATE

FUNNY HATS
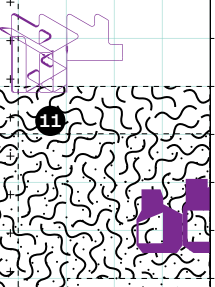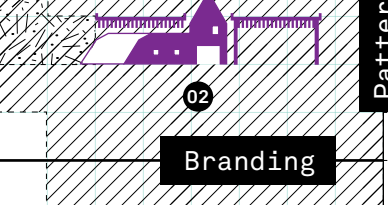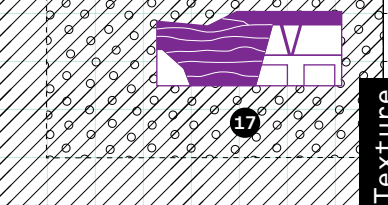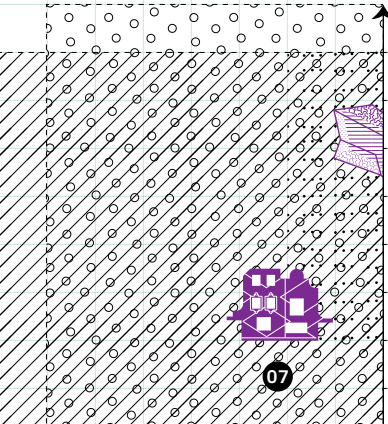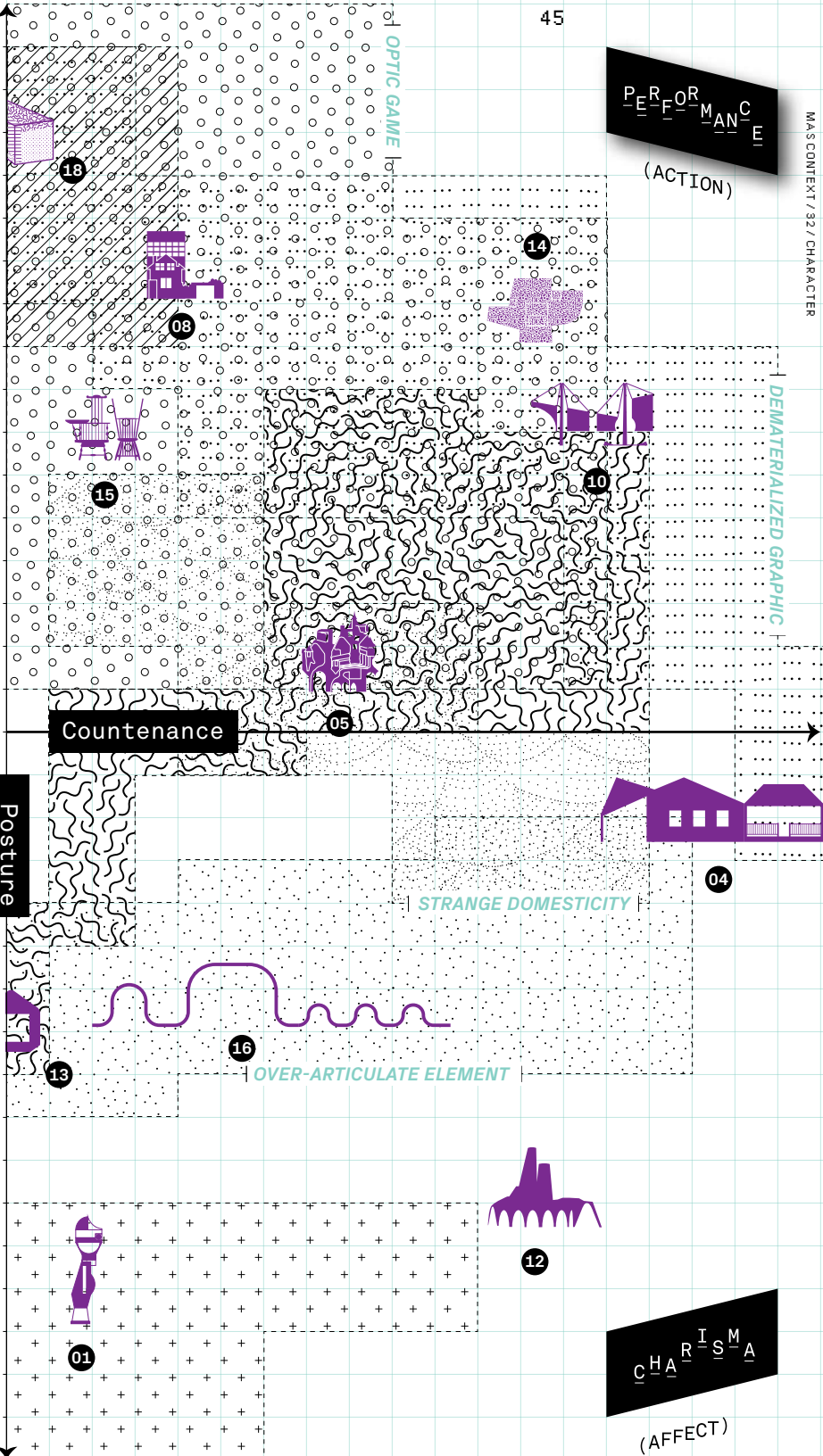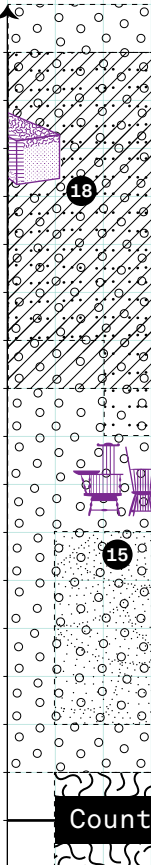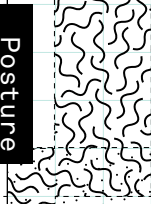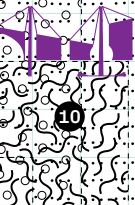
OPTIC GAME

"This building has character!"

DEMATERIALIZED GRAPHIC

Countenance

Posture

STRANGE DOMESTICITY

OVER-ARTICULATE ELEMENT

01
02
03
04
05
06
07
08
09
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18

01	Andrew Kovacs	Social Condensers, 2014	Los Angeles, CA	Flattened fragments from architectural history precisely align to generate standing superstructures.
02	Assemble	Folly for a Flyover, 2011	London, UK	A house-shaped brick screen peaks out at the world from a highway underpass to rebrand the public way for play and collectivity.
03	Bureau Spectacular	Tower of 12 Stories, 2016	Indio, CA	A vertical stack of shapely extrusions come together to suggest multiple and simultaneous spatial possibilities.
04	Design With Company	Porch Parade, 2015	Vancouver, BC	A lateral sequence of exaggerated, attached porch parts provides multiple faces for intimate interactions along a bustling urban thoroughfare.
05	Endemic Architecture	Then House No. 2, 2017	San Francisco, CA	A dense assemblage of exaggerated Victorian details create a caricature of domestic architectural conventions.
06	FAT	The Villa Hoogvliet, 2009	Hoogvliet, Netherlands	A graphic façade of cutout typography, industrial icons, and cartoonish foliage provide a visual language for a normative community building to communicate an open-ended narrative.
07	FAT	Islington Square, 2006	Manchester, UK	An exuberantly outlined brick façade with a large-scale argyle pattern provides modulating graphic identities for repetitive housing units.
08	FAT	Blue House, 2002	London, UK	A graphic facade combines cartoonish outlines and dimensional relief to depict an image of a house in front of a generic office building.
09	Jennifer Bonner	Domestic Hats, 2014	Atlanta, GA	An installation of angular massing models explores and exaggerates the formal qualities of domestic roof typologies.
10	LAMAS	Underberg, 2014	Queens, NY	Graphic and material patterns mapped onto multiple planes of suspended masses create an affect-rich communal ceiling.
11	McClain Clutter / is-office	Empty Pavilion, 2012	Detroit, MI	A composition of separate but overlapping figural outlines teases the legibility of shapes and vantage points within an urban void.
12	MOS Architects	Afterparty, 2009	Queens, NY	A collection of variably sized conic "chimneys" clad in creaturely brown fur defamiliarize the experience of a public arcade.
13	MOS Architects	Element House, 2014	Anton Chico, NM	Amplification of the roof and chimney profiles provide a substantive character for a repeated modular house unit.
14	Neutelings Riedijk Architects	Concert Hall Bruges, 1999	Ann Arbor, MI	Cantilevered figuration and a saturated surface pattern come together to provide a loose but precise identity for a civic collective.
15	Norman Kelley	Wrong Chairs, 2014	Chicago, IL	A collection of Windsor chairs with unexpected details provide variety while enacting visual games that challenge traditional propriety.
16	SPORTS Collaborative	Rounds, 2016	Lake Forest, IL	An undulating band with varying heights of waves articulates a dynamic outdoor amphitheater and encourages multiple types of performance.
17	Studio Gang	Lavezzorio Center, 2008	Chicago, IL	Irregular bands of multitoned concrete layers opportunistically encase a community center with unexpected affect.
18	Zago Architecture	Property with Properties, 2012	Rialto, CA	The strategic misalignment of rich graphic patterns and subtle geometric folds generate diversity for suburban housing units.

Building Occupants as Characters

B   Bo Bardi, Lina

Bar in SESC, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1977, Ink and Watercolor Drawing, Perspective

172   An Unfinished...

Michael Meredith Wants to Be Horizontal and Fuzzy

Stewart Hicks
interviews Michael Meredith

I talked with Michael Meredith of MOS recently. Michael was on my first design review as an undergraduate architecture student around 2000–2001. All I can remember from the experience is that he didn't appreciate my use of the word "syntax" to describe the relationship between materials, objects, and their assembly. I'm sure he doesn't remember this. I didn't bring it up.

That initial meeting occurred shortly after Michael spent time in Marfa, Texas as a Chinati Artist in Residence, where he met and befriended the late fiction writer David Foster Wallace. Shortly after our encounter, he began MOS Architects with his partner Hilary Sample. Now he teaches at Princeton and she at Columbia. Their work and influence on the discipline of architecture is extensive and I admire what they do. It is all just so . . . horizontal and fuzzy.[1] I used the occasion of this interview to ask some questions about how they work as architects today, what he learned from David Foster Wallace, and why he's such a character.

[1]. Michael Meredith and Hilary Sample, "Office Statement," MOS, accessed August 2, 2017, www.mos.nyc.

B   Bo Bardi, Lina

Destroyed Buildings of el Salvador, São Paulo, Brazil, 1986, Ink and Colored Pencil Drawing, Elevation

173   Encyclopedia of Scale…

Stewart Hicks: From your satirical manifesto "Notes on Beginning the Discipline of Architecture" to your essay "For the Absurd" included in Issue 22 of *Log* that you guest edited, you are constantly inventing yourselves [MOS] as semifictional characters. What role does that play in your design process and in the portrayal of your practice?

Michael Meredith: Something has shifted in the field, where questions of authorship and games of anti-authorship are popular as ways to displace the willful expression-ism of architects. This is also true within literature and art practices to disguise the gestural expression of will. These things have shifted a little bit nowadays toward problems of, not so much authorship, but how we construct identity. I think there is a big concern with everybody about constructing identities.

Nowadays, you have to be a performance artist to be an architect. It comes naturally with some people. Bjarke Ingels is a natural performer. He's got it. For us, I definitely do not have it. It is a performance of sorts, but it is also real. I'm for sure [*pregnant pause*] awkward, at a kind of basic socially awkward level. And I am sure that comes through in everything we do. At some points, it gets amplified. Speaking personally, the role of performance in MOS is more complicated because we are multiple people. We play with our identity, with fiction and reality. We even have a children's book where the main characters are kind of us, but not us.

I do not have an answer to why or how this shift has occurred from ques-tions of authorship to identity. Perhaps it is because we have all become more re-moved from the physical acts of doing our work. Maybe it is just also part of getting older—I don't know. At this point, we are like art directors. We sit down and review everything and complain that no one is going fast enough.

We feel that too. Being partners in life and partners in the office, you have to consciously construct the line between the office and life. Neither side of the line is fake, but there is a little bit of work in life and a little bit of life in work. Each is constructed.

We try to be honest, but it's really hon-esty up to a point. The role of humor and playfulness in our work is part of our identity. I have always felt like the humor just really comes out of being honest. It is not always funny. A lot of times it is super tragic. Either way, we like to play with the construction of identity.

Humor itself is double-sided. It can be construed as being defensive, putting up a wall, or constructing a barrier. But what you're saying is that it is a kind of honesty.

Yes, I think of it as mostly honest, honestly. At least from the writing side of it. Writing is very hard for me. It is not easy.

I spent some time in Marfa when I came out of school, and I was there with David Foster Wallace. I spent a lot of time with David, hiking with him and stuff. I maintained a close correspondence with him for years. His work has been very influential, especially at that time when I was just starting out. He was very nice and approachable. And in a way, I think that attitude of ours is indebted to him. He was always trying to be very genuine, de-spite how hard it is. In the end, it is almost impossible. The impossibility isn't just external, it is also internal.

How has this connection with literary figures like David Foster Wallace also affected the way that you think of the inhabitants of your architecture? You often script interactions between people within your designs. In projects like your *Lot No. 6* house for Ordos 100, you present it through a day in the life of someone living there. This close attention to the subject of your architecture, is it formative in your design process? Is it mostly part of the capital *P* project of MOS, or is it only a way to frame the reception of a design?

It is all of those. When designing buildings, one has to imagine how it will be used. Some empathy for the person in your buildings is required of architects.

There is a project that we did with a developer in Seattle. We met with the developer, and she showed us all their work they were doing, and a lot of it was horrible. We said, "Listen, we can't imagine doing something that we would not live in. Something that we thought was bad. It would just be horrible. Would you live in this thing that you are making?" And the developer said, "No, no. Of course, I have a really nice historic house that is huge." And it was just so sad to me. I think if you are making anything, it should be good enough for you to love living with it.

Some empathy for the user, and even thinking of yourself as a user, is important. My partner, Hilary Sample, might have a different answer. But I like to imagine that everybody is more similar than different. Which is problematic in its own way. But if we are doing something like housing, you have to find some ways to think, "People like windows," or something. Although I am sure there's the odd person who doesn't like windows.

Walter Netsch?

See, there is somebody. UIC's Art & Architecture Building is really intense—a little scary.

To get us back on track, we have gone from constructing your own identity as a quasi-fictional project, to meeting David Foster Wallace, to imagining the lives of people in your buildings. Those are intimately connected because it sounds like you are saying that you imagine yourself in the projects that you do as a mechanism for evaluating design decisions.

Architecture is a service-providing profession. So, in some cases, you have a client that says, "I want to put my bed in a strange location," or "I want to have a sink here." And sometimes we respond, "Right. I wouldn't do it like that." But you still do it, and you have to still imagine it and think about it from a positive point of view. Not a point of criticism, but you have to get into it. You have to say, "Okay, let's try to make it really work. Let's try to think about how to make it the best version of this." Architecture is not completely self-centered. It is part of you projecting into other people.

That sounds like something an author might say, "You have to like your charac-ters," or "You have to find something that you like in them" in order to write them.

I totally agree with that.

How, if at all, does this translate to the material and formal decisions in your work? Specifically, I immediately think about your recent experiments with ve-neer. Sometimes you draw a material onto

another material. Materials masquerade as other things, or consciously masquerade as themselves, such as marble with a drawing of marble on it. Which is a real collision of things that interest us. For instance, we are exploring the idea that character is both a word that you would use to describe your innermost self, like the most authentic you. At the same time, it is the same word that you would use to describe the most superficial you, like you get into character. It is completely an affect. The idea that the one word would describe the deepest and the most sincere and the least changing, as well as the most fashionable but the most fleeting affect. I think that that is something in MOS's work that you make collide very explicitly. There is a fascinating transparency there between representation and reality, fiction and nonfiction, authenticity and fakeness.

All these things, even the identity we were talking about, sits in a space between what is neither real nor representational, and both at the same time. At a number of levels, we like playing with realism. Even our book *An Unfinished Encyclopedia of Scale Figures without Architecture*, is like this. It is very consciously about how architects represent people, and humans in their work, and how architects represent humanity. And, at the same time, they are representations. At some point, when you take everything else away, and you look at these drawings, they become real figures. There is a space where they are neither purely a drawing nor a real thing, but somehow between them.

And the marble on marble is like that. We took real marble and then we made it like you are looking at a representation of marble. We are superimpos-

ing things on top of each other and we are interested in this condition where everything is piled up and all coexists in the same space. In our work, this remains relatively subtle, but others push it much more than we do. We get conflicted because buildings last a long time. Sometimes jokes can be funny in the moment but also have a short shelf life. Humor is always very context-based. It is of the moment. It is reacting to the audience or the last thing you said, trying to swerve it a little bit.

There is something that I've noticed binge watching stand-up comedy sets. Like the way Kevin Hart's comedy shifts as his life changes and he becomes more famous. He can't do the relatable stories of everyday life because his life is no longer relatable. His context has completely changed.

The last one of Dave Chappelle is really good, but there is still a little bit of that.

Chappelle is the master. But he had to step away. To keep himself real, he had to step away when he was at his height. He still lives in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He had to step away to maintain his connection to himself and his life, his authentic self. This brings us to a quality of your work that is always really striking to me. It is at once super generic, seems mass-produced, like it is one of a million. Almost commercial, even. But then there is always something off. Idiosyncratic.

We like playing with that edge of something being not designed, or primitive, or not sophisticated, or kind of dumb. When we graduated from graduate school, it was all about the parametric and high tech. We were even part of it, with exhibitions

V Venturi Scott Brown Architects
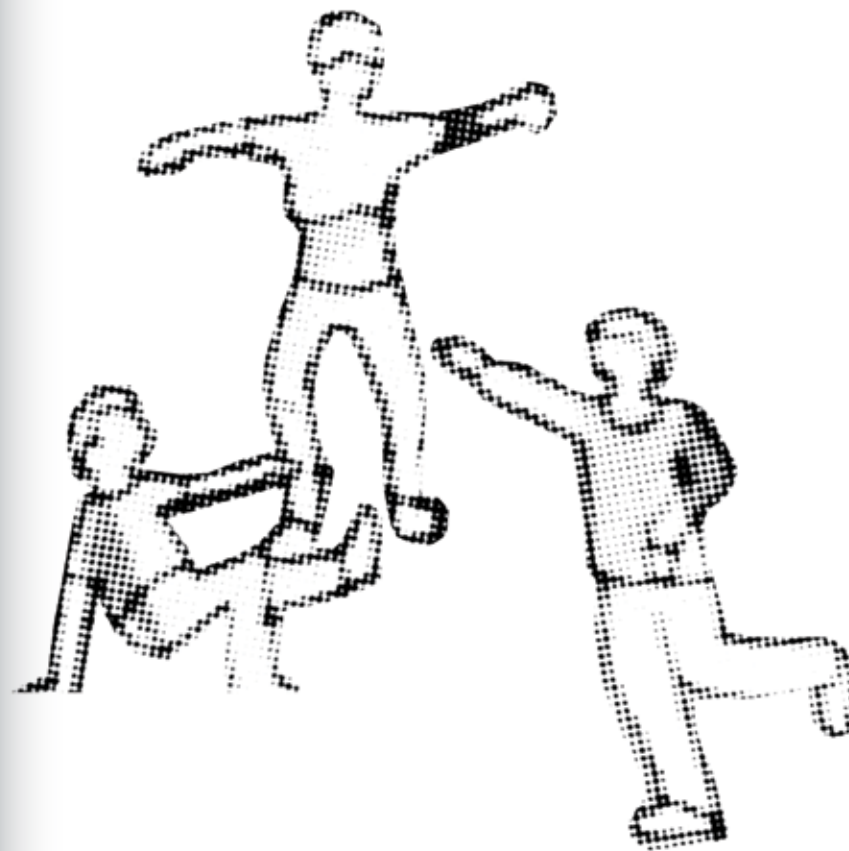
Westway Park Project, New York, New York, 1980-84, Black Ink Drawing, Perspective

1447 Encyclopedia of Scale...

about scripting, etc. However, I have always been ambivalent or even slightly critical of mass-customization or the idea that computers will make everything unique yet still cost the same. We never believed it, and we went the other direction. Instead of smart geometry and all these things, we go toward dumb geometry.

I know you were (or are?) really into electronic music and its production. Do you think this relationship to technology you have in architecture has anything to do with dealing with it in another discipline like music, which is about repetition, sampling, etc.?

I still want to get back into music at some point in life. But, yes, I did a lot of music in college. While I was in graduate school, I did electronic music composition in the music department at Harvard. I was writing and composing pieces and doing performances. It was also at the time when you could download almost anything off the Internet. It was crazy. And I feel like nowadays, I am nervous that somebody will be watching me or something. Back then I could get sample banks that would have cost thousands of dollars if you were to buy it legitimately. You could just download it and use it.

I also did a project in Marfa, and Foster Wallace was part of it. I wrote theme songs for people. Everybody would write what their theme song sounded like in their own head, and I would just try to produce it as best I could. They would give me these beautiful handwritten notes with weird words that I have saved somewhere, and I would somehow have to try to figure it out. Some people were

very precise, and some people were just poetic and abstract.

Do you do anything with music now?

I have all the gear. I guess if one day everything falls apart, I can turn to music. But that is the nice thing about having kids. I can project all these desires onto them. I have all the stuff around in case they want to do any music and inherit all the equipment.

There is just no time for me anymore. That is the other thing about the "whole architect" or "living the dream" or whatever: you are in it 24/7. Our office is downstairs and we live upstairs. A lot of times we tell ourselves "We are so lucky, this has worked out great," because we don't have to go anywhere. But the problem is, we don't go anywhere. It is like we are in a submarine. I am walking around in my socks for two days and not leaving the building sometimes. There are these stories of Dan Flavin at the end of his life where he literally was in a bathrobe for years, just sitting, and people would bring things to him. They would write and talk about it, then they would move on. His assistants would come to his bedroom and he would be there, wrapped in a bathrobe, watching TV.

That is how your dream becomes your nightmare.

It is a nightmare because I could see falling into it. Deep down I feel like it is seductive. But to get there, I would have to pass through music first. ●

E   Eisenman, Peter

Madison Components Plant, Madison, Indiana, 1981-1982, Photograph, Perspective

359   Encyclopedia of Scale…

Assemblages of Ordinary Life

Text by Iker Gil
Chronology by
Office of Political
Innovation

The work of Andrés Jaque and his Madrid/ New York-based Office of Political Innovation is everything but ordinary. From the titles of the projects—*House in Never Never Land*, *TUPPER HOME*, or *Hänsel & Gretel's Arenas*—to their physical manifestations—usually a series of assemblages of mass-produced objects—Jaque and his team are putting forward a unique and personal view of the world. Ironically, it is from parts and pieces of ordinary life that the projects are generated. Personal stories, human interactions, and mass-produced objects all come together to create this unique universe. As Mimi Zeiger points out in her conversation with Jaque in relation to his *Different Kinds of Water Pouring into a Swimming Pool* project exhibited in REDCAT in Los Angeles in 2013, Jaque "sidesteps conventional notions of architecture, preferring to make work that stirs up questions around community, consumption, and political engagement."[1]
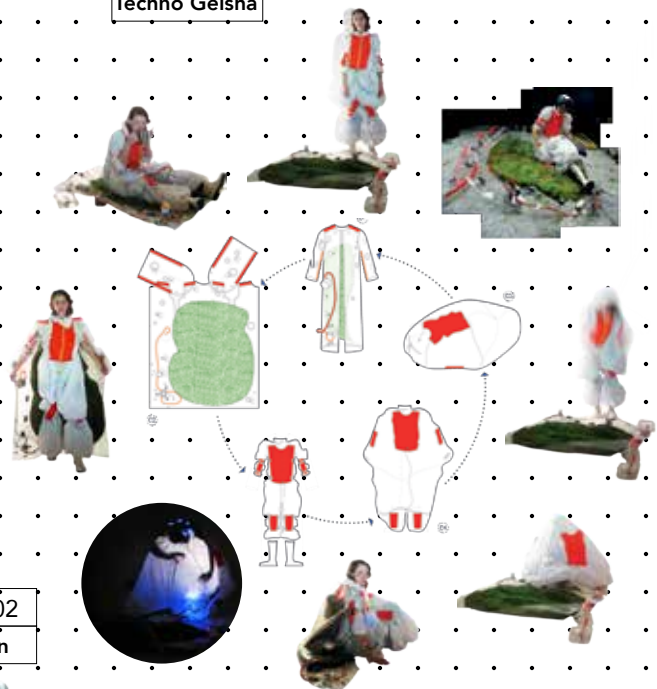
His work reveals hidden urbanisms, such as the social, political, and physical infrastructures that shape our lives. Not only does he make those infrastructures visible, he makes them inhabitable—making us aware of the issues at stake and inviting us to participate and engage with these unexpected and often surreal worlds. They are environments in which the vision of the architect, the participants, and the physical objects are required to coexist to perform the daily routines in unusual ways. Ultimately, they are visual manifestations of a world that is always present, yet not explored.

For this issue, Jaque and the Office of Political Innovation create a visual chronology of their work, an assemblage of ideas through the years showcasing their unique approach. It is an ever-expanding world of performances, installations, and built projects that give shape to our diverse, chaotic, and always fascinating everyday lives. ●

MAS CONTEXT / 32 / CHARACTER

1. Mimi Zeiger, "Spanish Architect Andrés Jaque and the Office for Political Innovation," *KCETLink*, November 18, 2013, https://www.kcet. org/shows/artbound/ spanish-architect- andres-jaque-and- the-office-for- political-innovation.

2003
Techno Geisha

2004
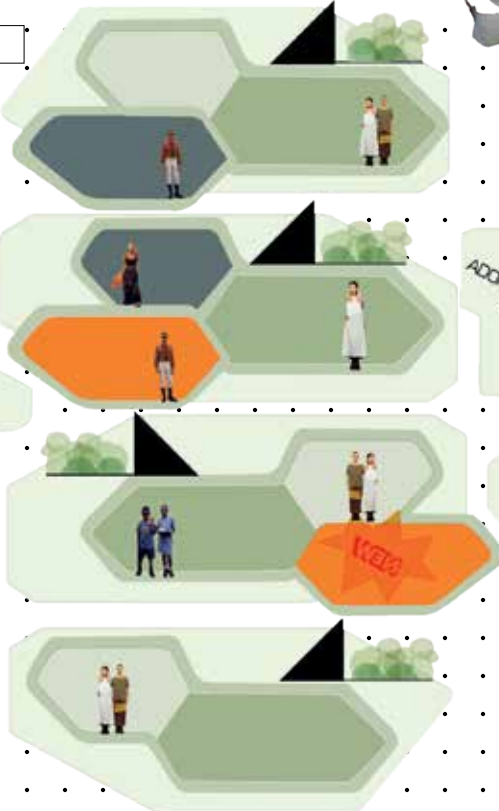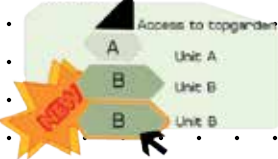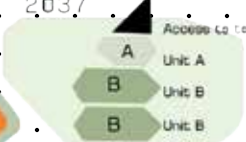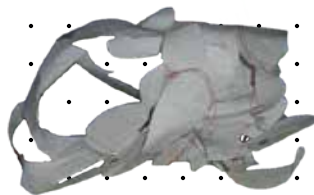Tomihiro Museum

2002
Scan

2003
Mousse City

2007

2037

1

2

3

4

2004
12 Actions to make Peter Eisenman Transparent

2004
Plasencia Clergy House

2005
Peace Foam City

2005
Teddy House

2005
Sábana Santa de Tromsø

TUPPER HOME

Investment Return

TUPPER HOME cost

Luci & Lin
In 2006 she completed her TUPPER HOME. She's been a TUPPER HOME delegate ever since and had a return of 10% on their initial investment.

2006

2006

Incentives for the promotion of TUPPER HOME

Informal arguments for enrolment

Maria, Jose & Lucia
In 2006 they completed their TUPPER HOME. Since then they've become TUPPER HOME delegates and have required 10% on their initial investment.

Julian & Alfredo
They completed their TUPPER HOME 2007. Since then they've become TUPPER HOME delegates and have had a return on 10% on their initial investment.

2007

2007

2007

2007

2008

2008

2009

2009

2009

TUPPER HOME society. grass roots urbanism gaining scale in house by house interior redecoration
TUPPER HOME system is an alternative to strategic urbanism. A network of people get together by experimenting the transformation of the interior of their homes and get connected by the collective evaluation and discussion of their results.

THE CREDIBLE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE CONTORTIONIST TWINS

Pepi & Lin
24 and 6 years old

Luci & Bom
24 and 6 years old

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF PEPI & LIN PAYING THE MORTGAGE OF A CONVENTIONAL APARTMENT

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF LUCI & BOM WITH THE TUPPER HOME

pack

pack

1L Oil Banquet

1L. Oil

comí 1L. de petróleo

Skin Gardens. Eco-Transparent Jewelry for Politically Cared Skins

Pum Pum, Radio Mundo

2007

Guest House For Floating Divertimenti

2007

Museo Postal de Bogotá
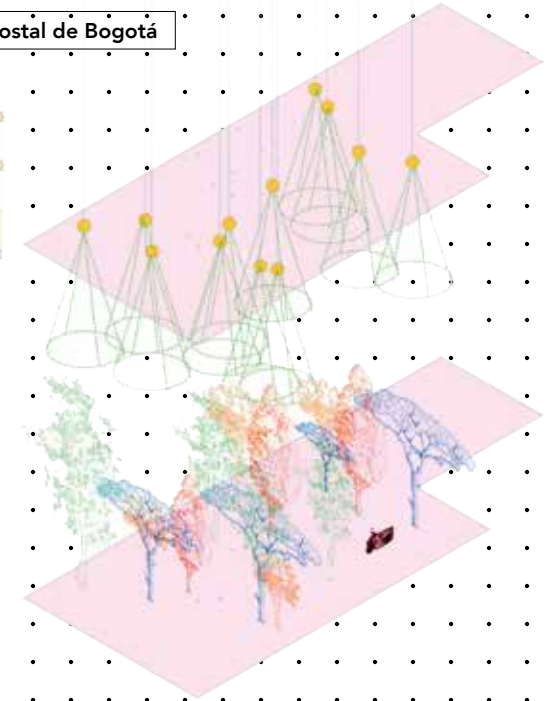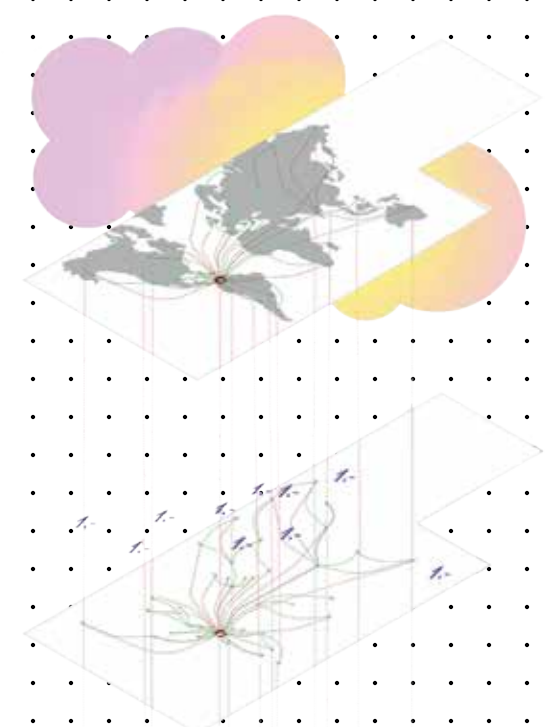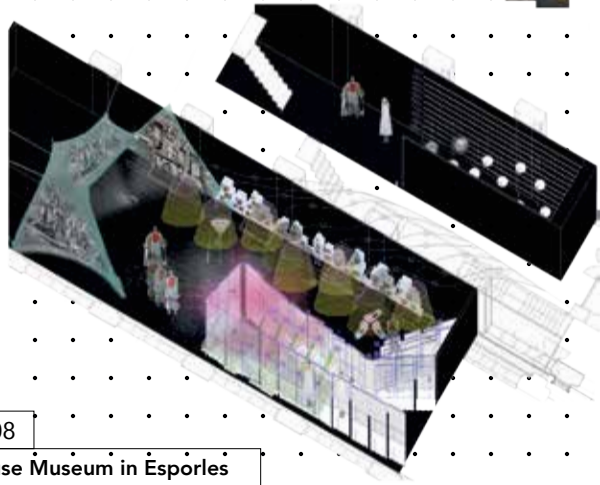
CONTRATO DE ASOCIACION
PARA LOS FASES DEL
Diseño [hasta 30 julio]
Desarrollo de proyecto
[hasta 30 agosto]

ASOCIACION-ENCUENTRO DE
DOS GRUPOS
GH
CARLOS HERNANDEZ
ANTONIO YEMAIL
ANDRES TORO
MICHEL
LOS TIGRES
DE
BOGOTÁ
EXPERIENCIA DE CODISEÑO
A DISTANCIA
LOS HONORARIOS DE LOS LEONES DE LAVAPIES
LOS DEFINIRAN LOS TIGRES DE BOGOTÁ CON CRITE
RIOS BOGOTANOS

LOS LEONES TRA
BAJAN SOBRE EL
PROYECTO DE LOS
TIGRES INFECTÁNDO
LO, EN ALGUNOS
PUNTOS, LOS
TIGRES PUEDEN
REGISTRARSE, COMBATE

AJ
ANDRES JAQUE
TERESA DEL PINO
PEDRO PINTO
JORGE RUENES

LOS LEONES
DE
LAVAPIES

Organización del trabajo entre el equipo de Madrid (Andrés Jaque Arquitectos) y el de Bogotá
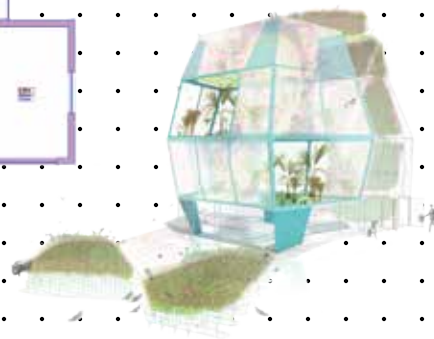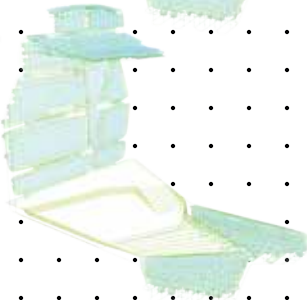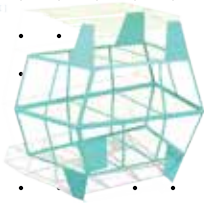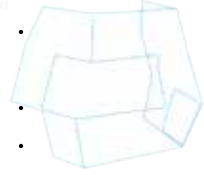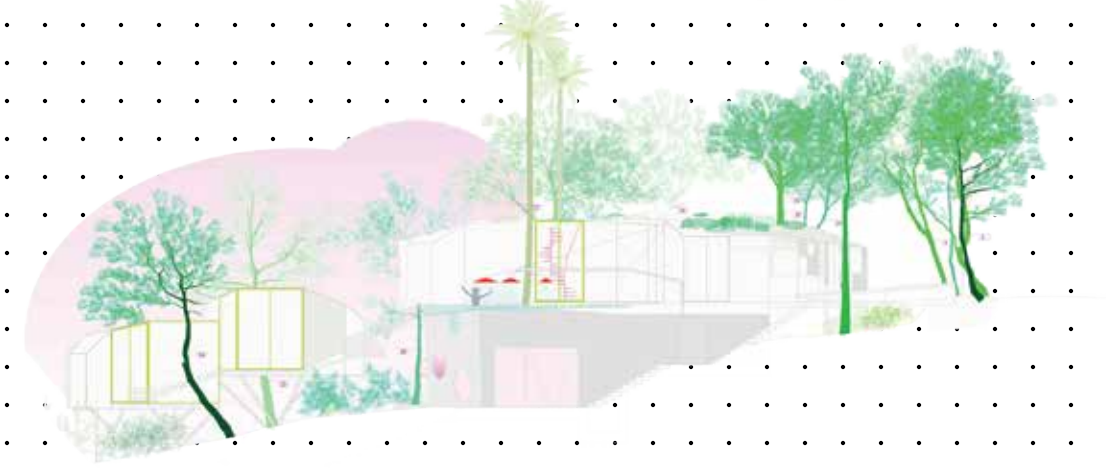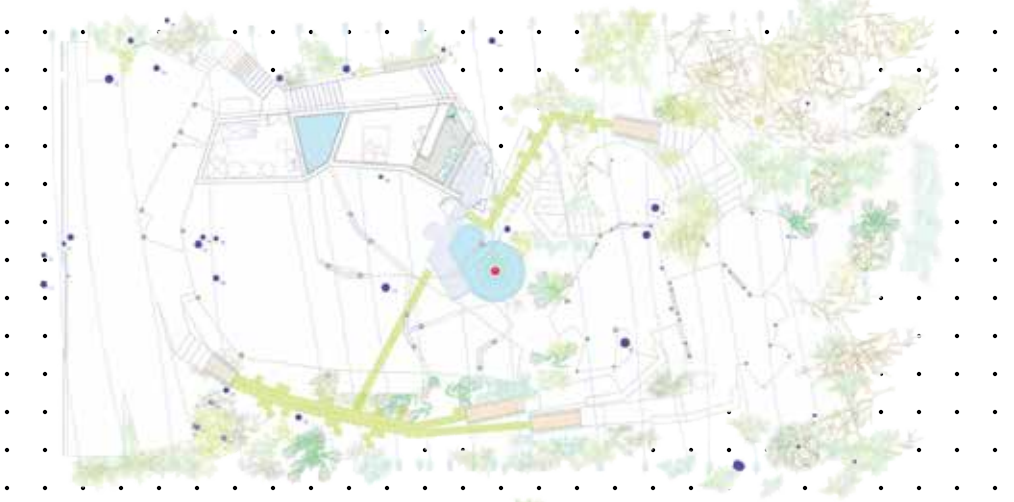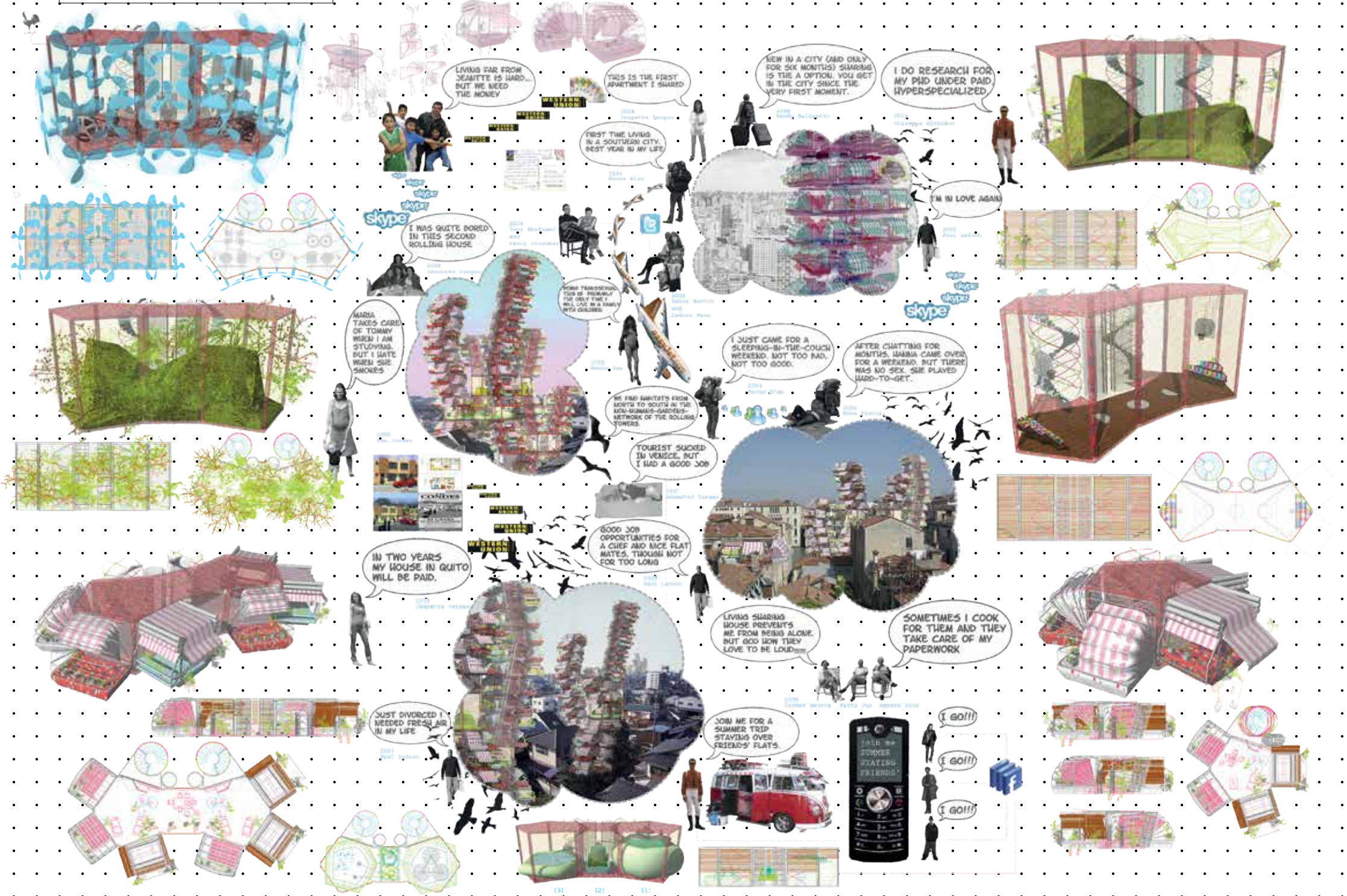
2010
Fray Foam Home

THIS IS A
HOME
IN MADRID'S
CALLE PEZ
SHARED BY
4 PEOPLE.

2010
Sweet Home Gran Vía
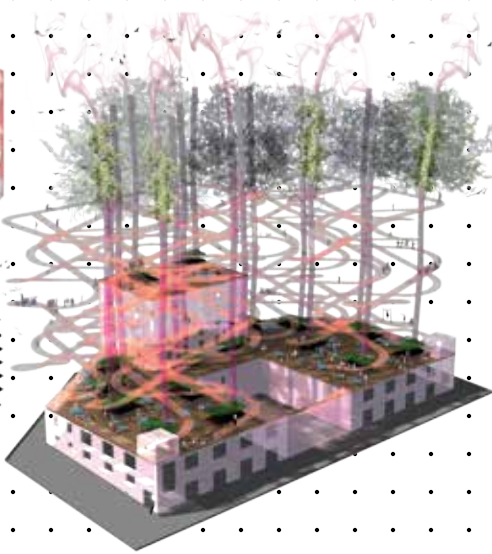
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Private Quarters For Patricia Phelps of Cisneros
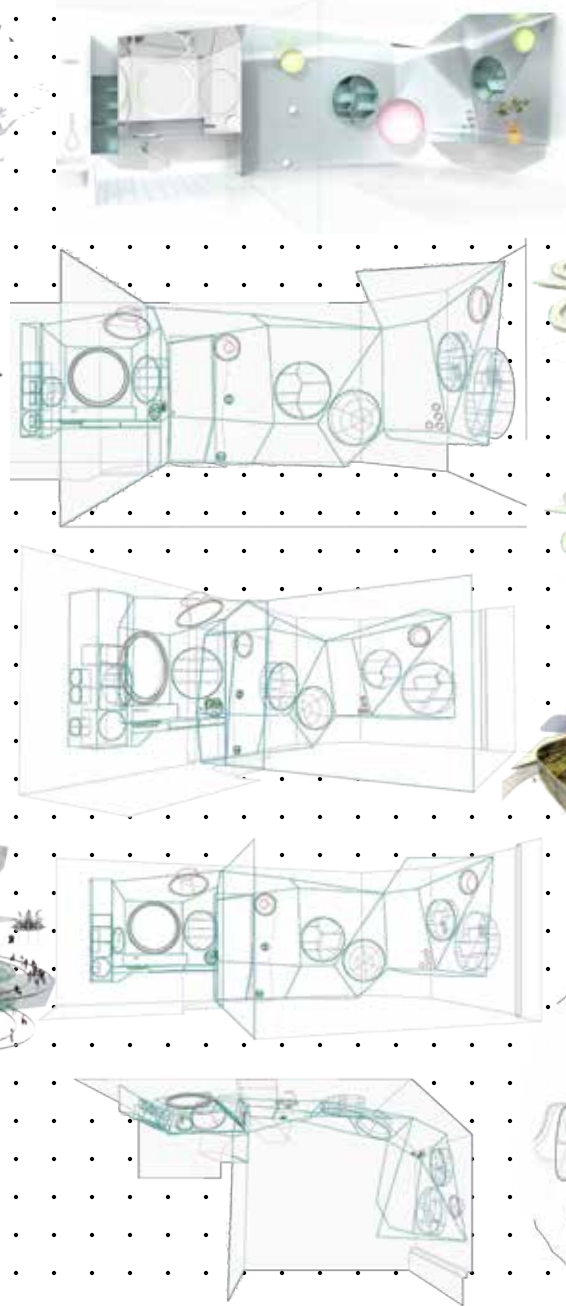
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Landscape Condenser
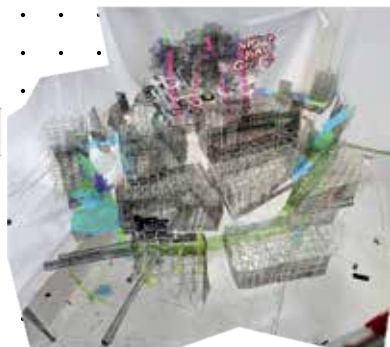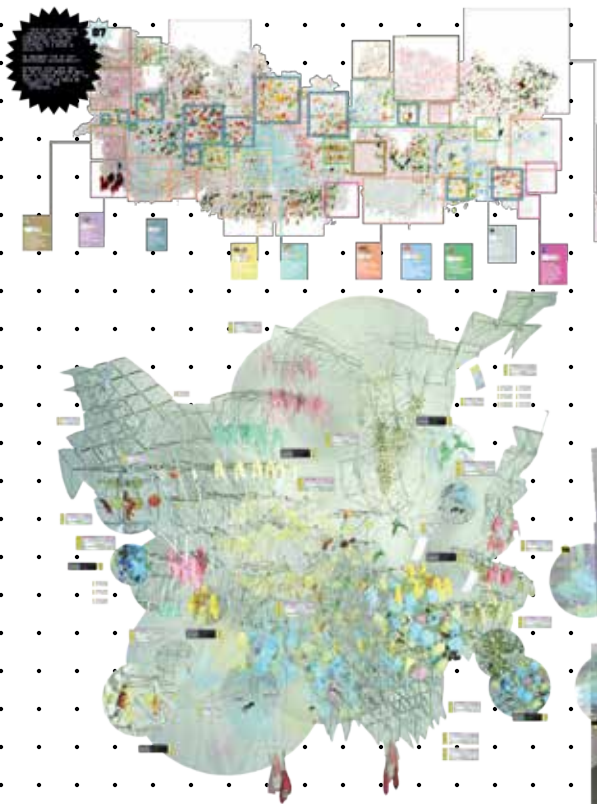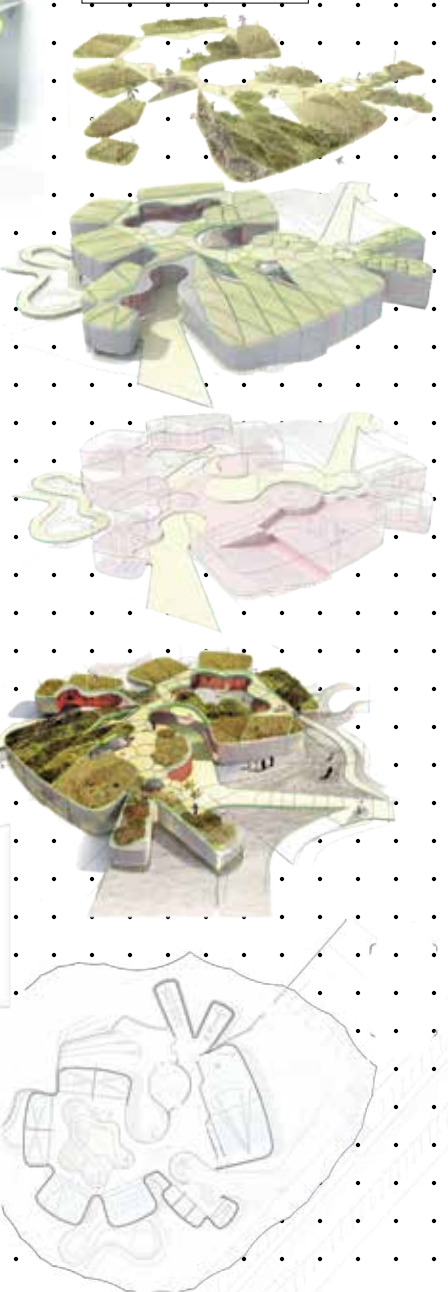
2011
Sweet Parliament Home
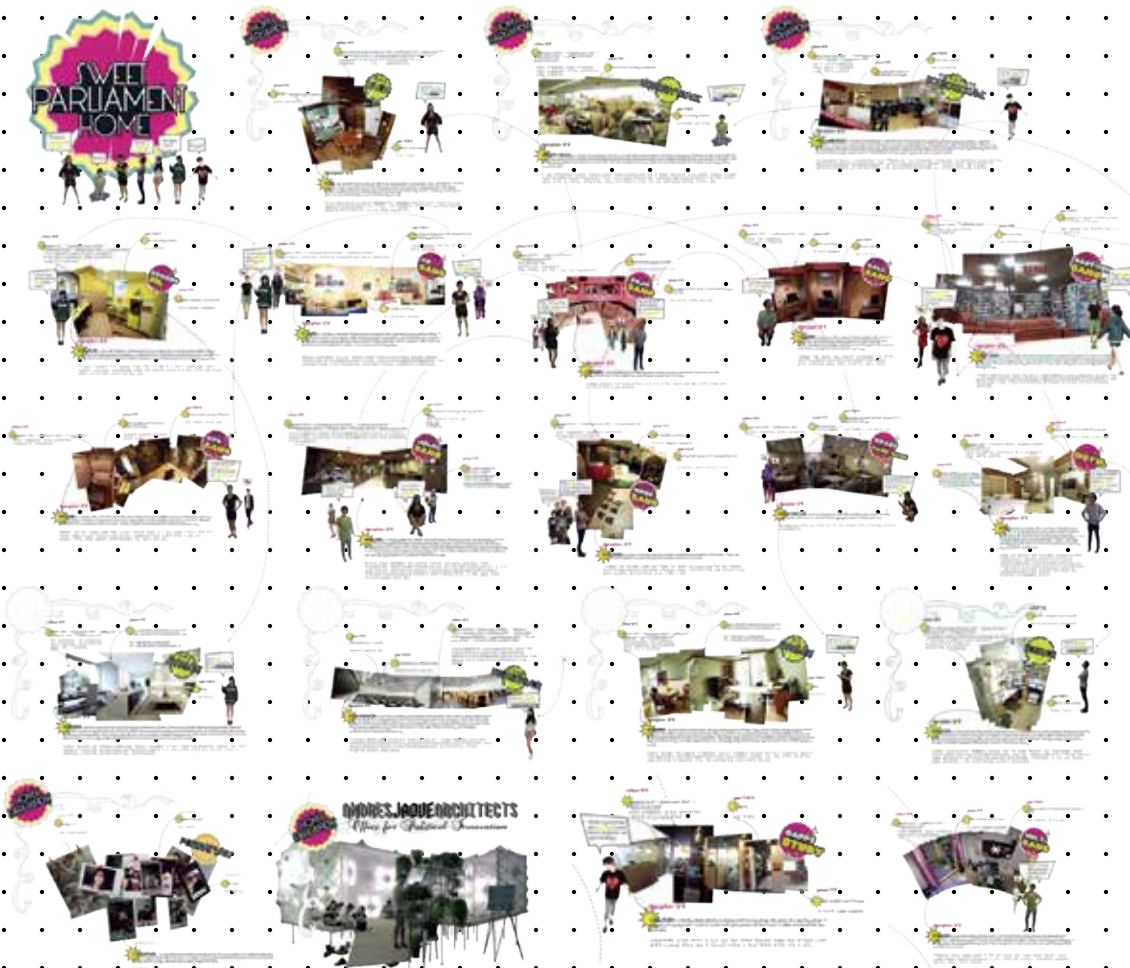
2012
Rolling Revolution
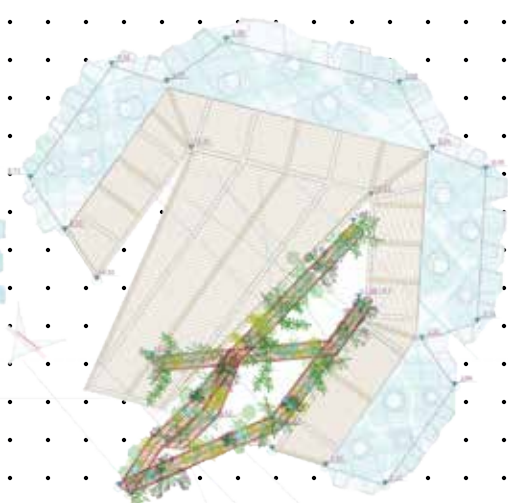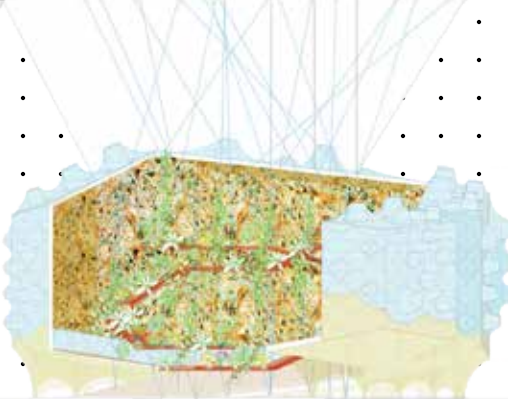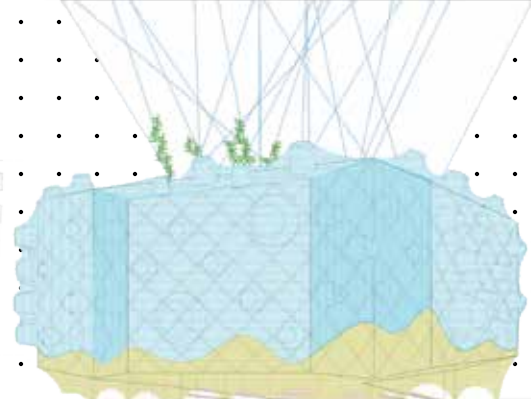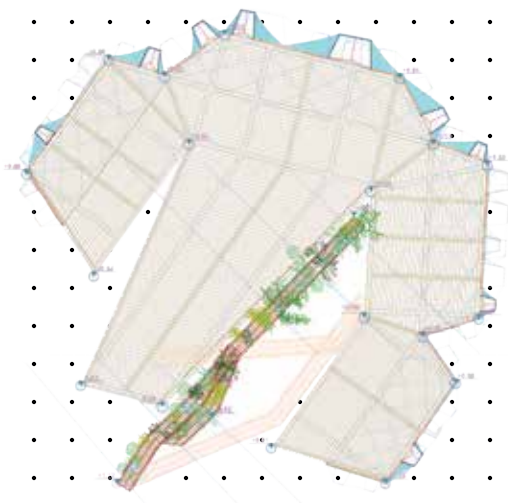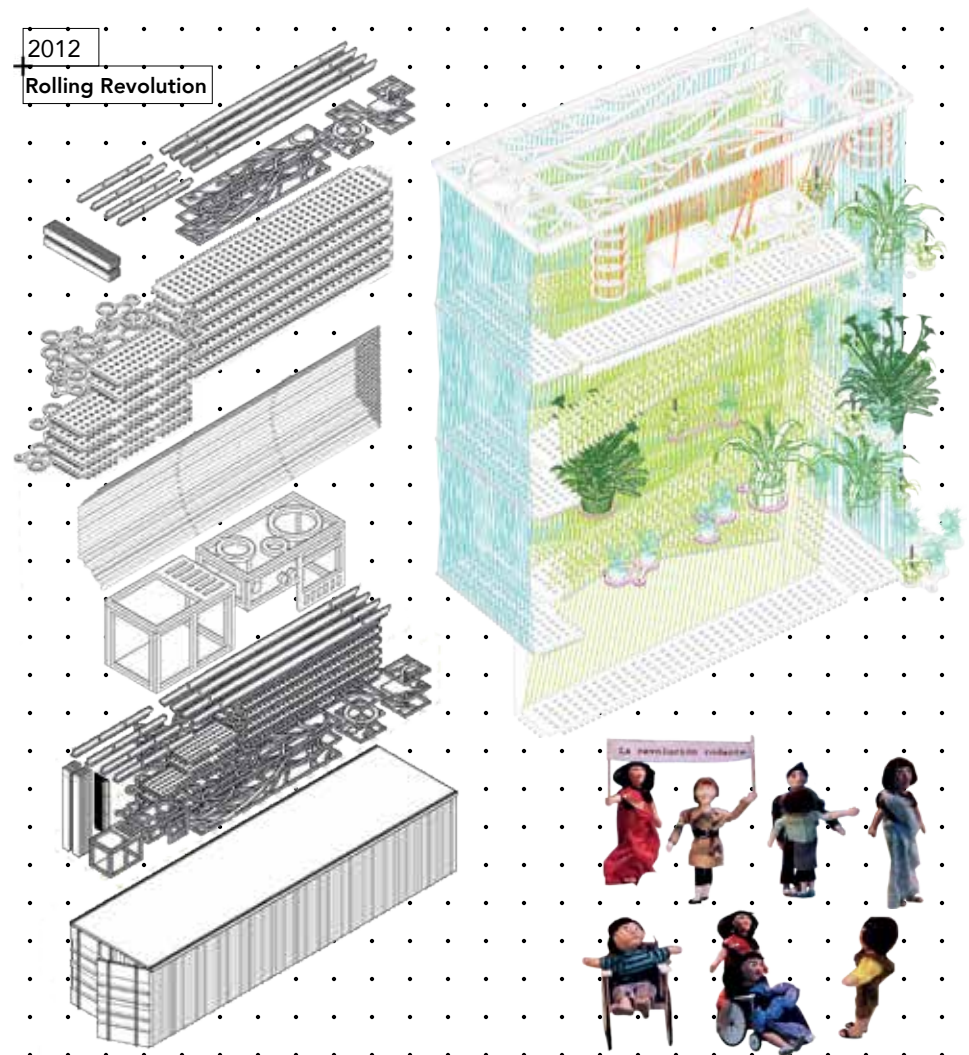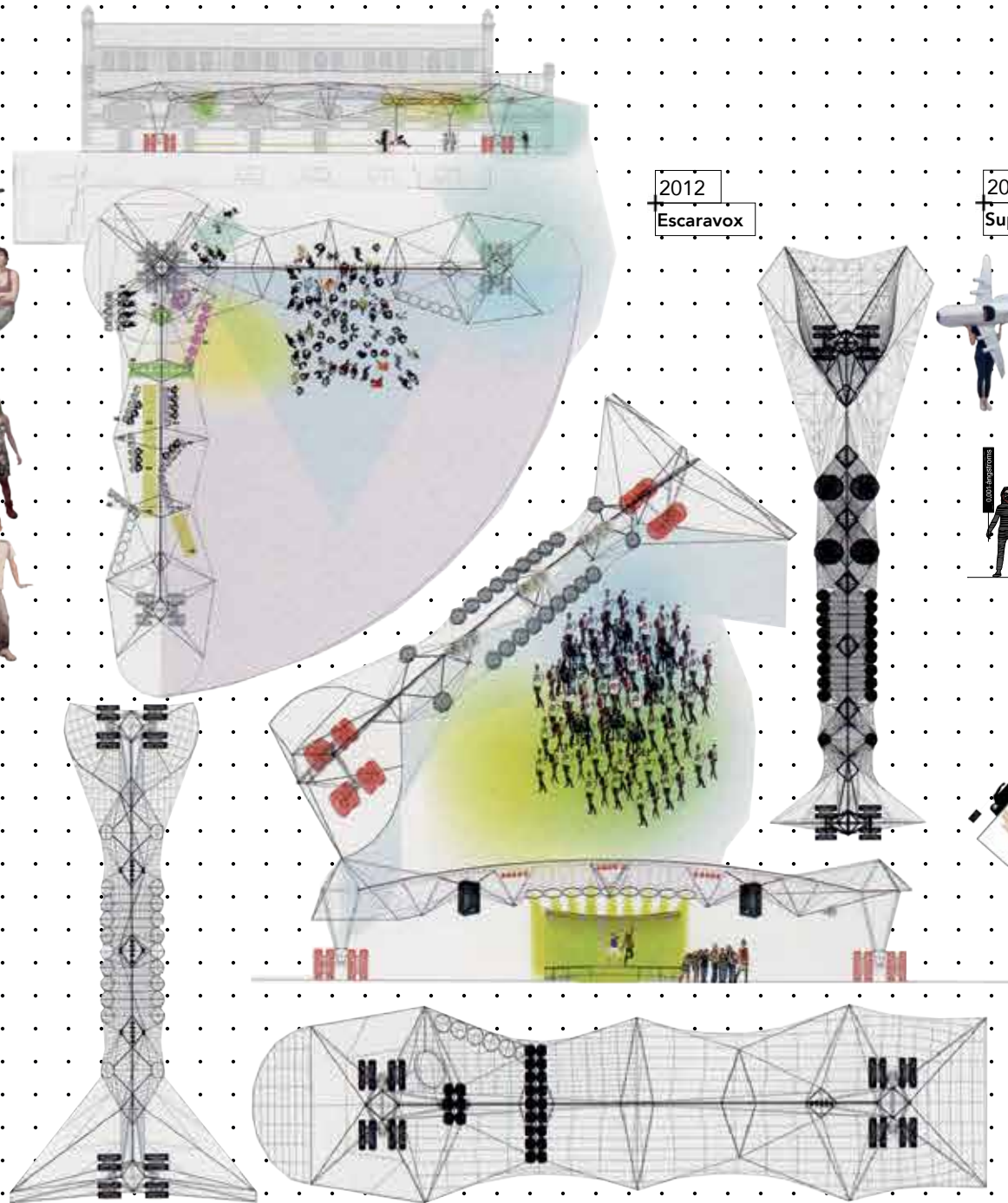
SUPERPOWERS OF TEN

2013
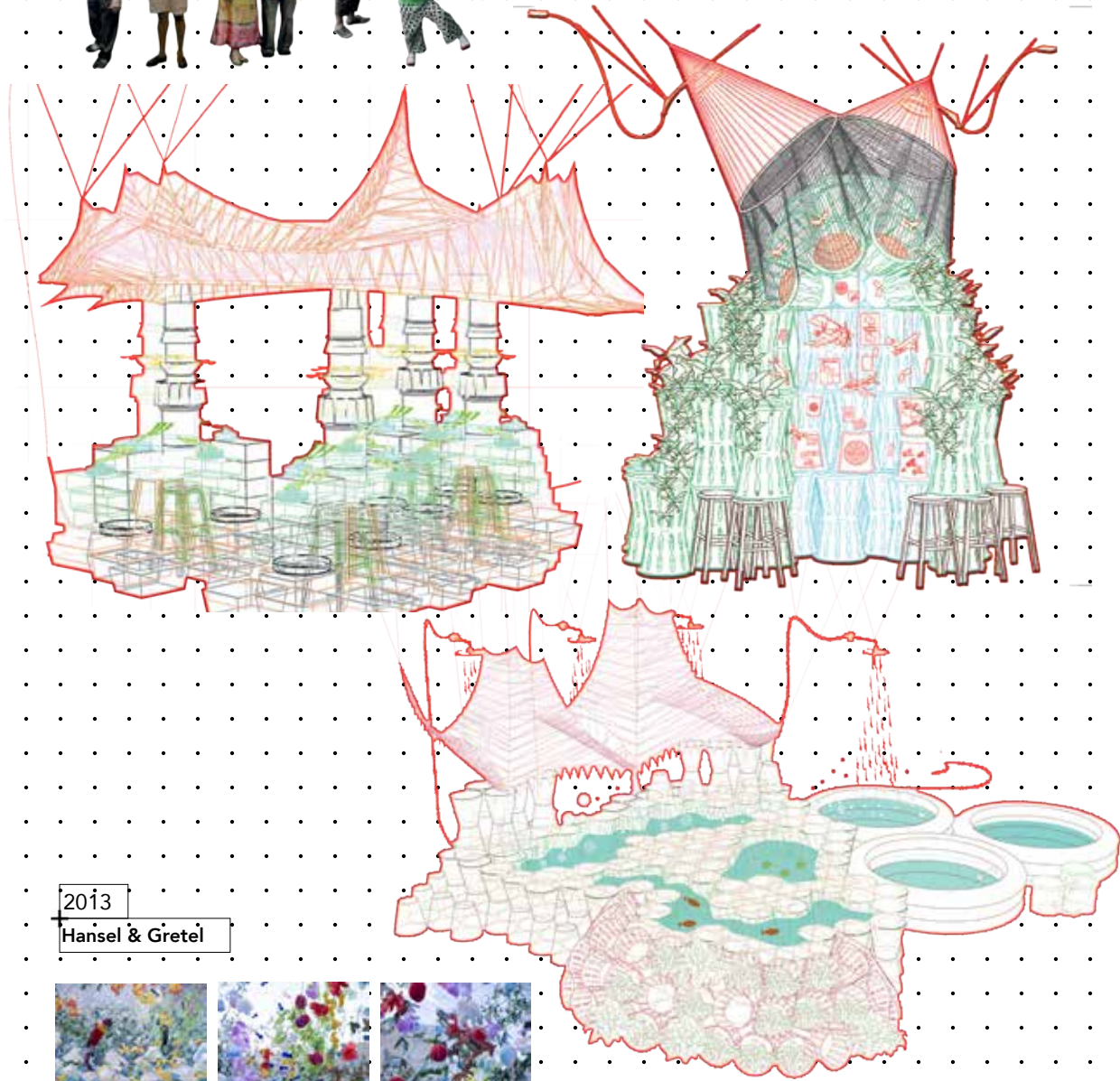
Different Kinds of Water Pouring into a Swimming Pool

2013

PHANTOM: Mies as a Rendered Society
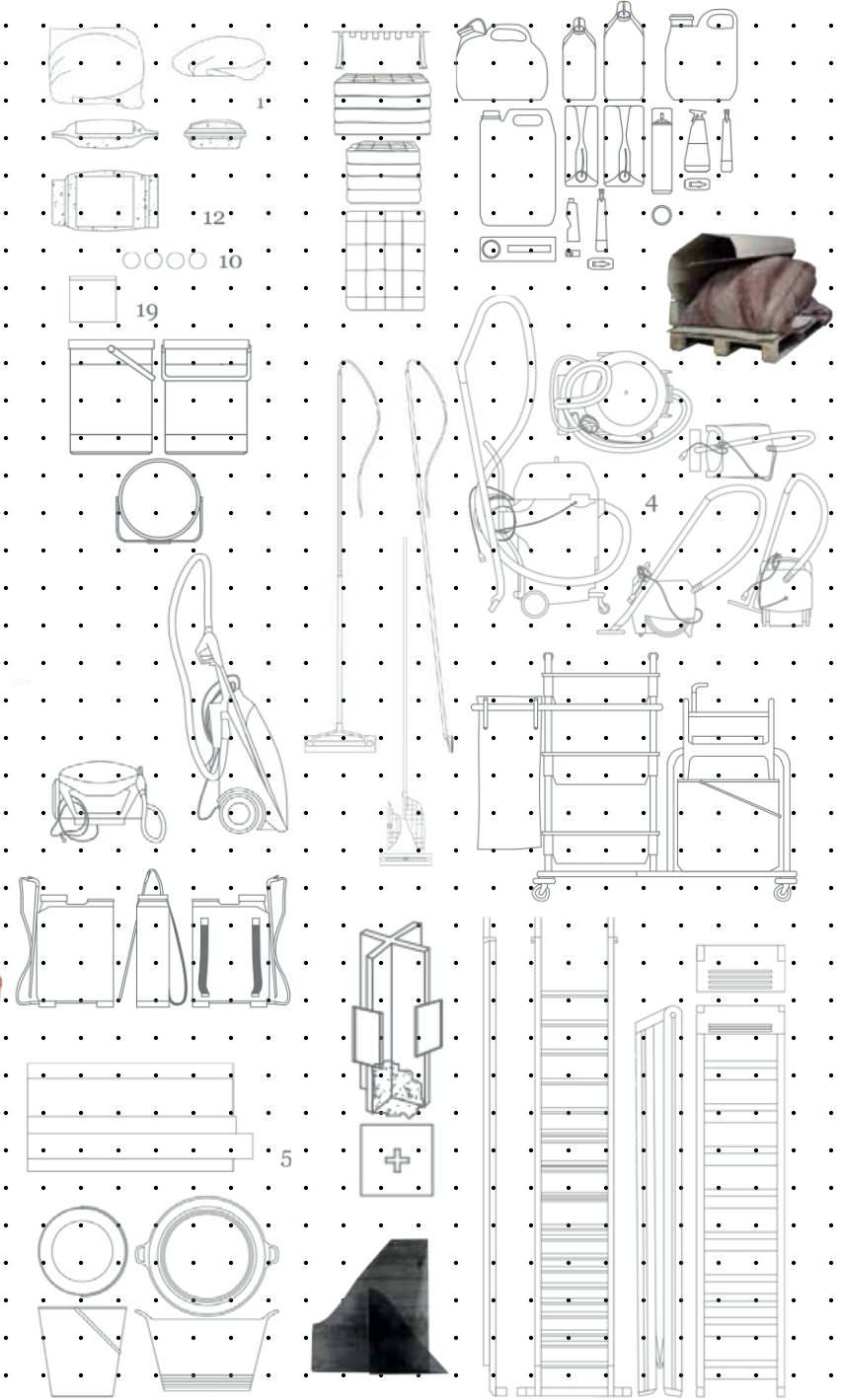
2013
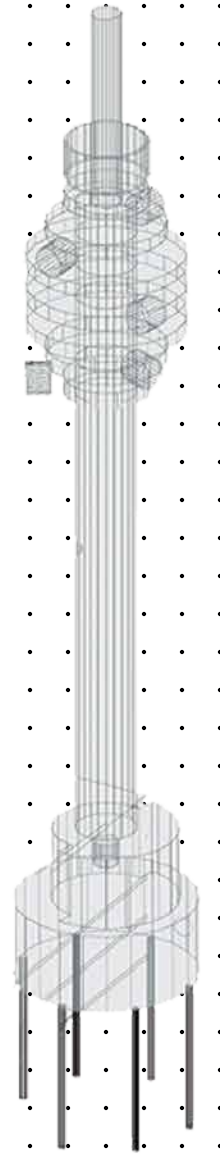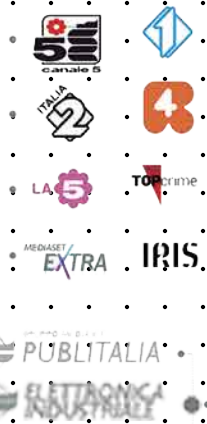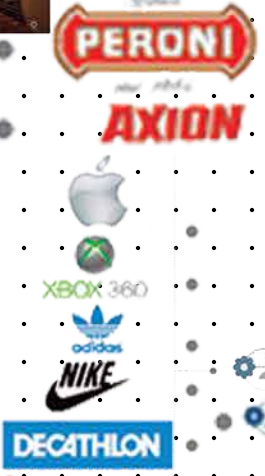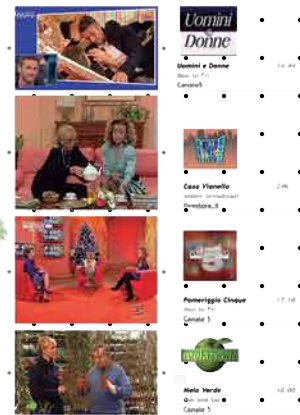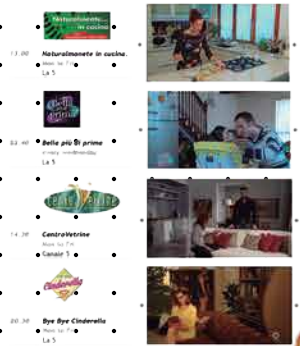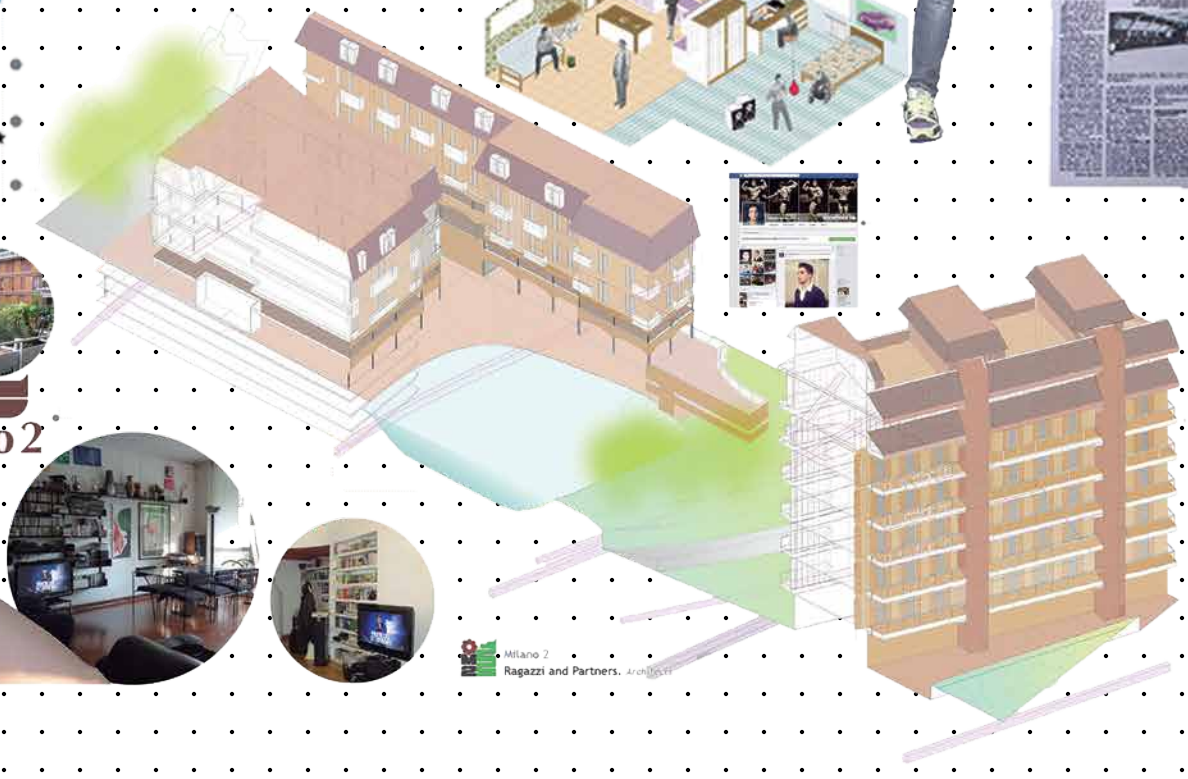
Hansel & Gretel

2014
Sales Oddity

2015
ARCO 2015

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INFO

INFO

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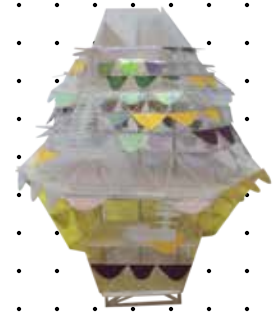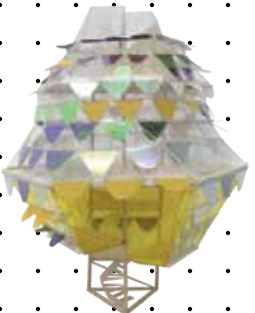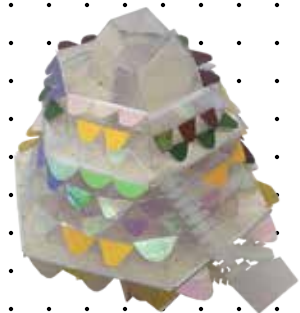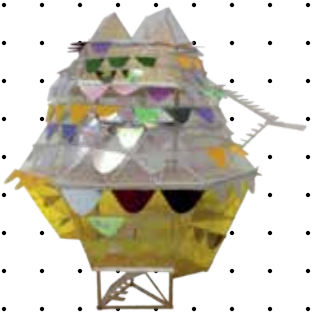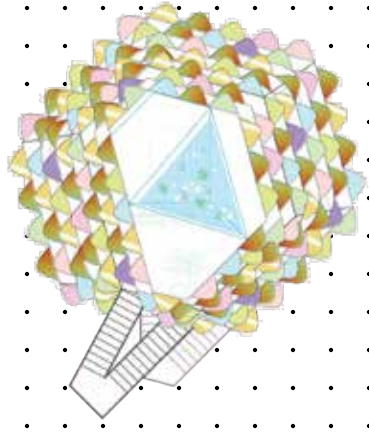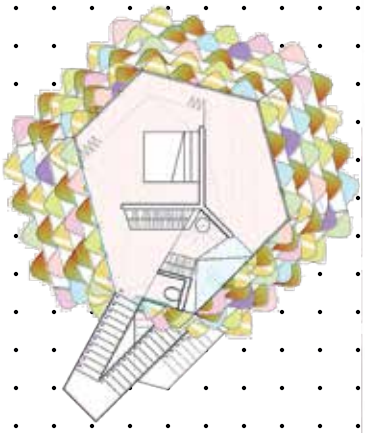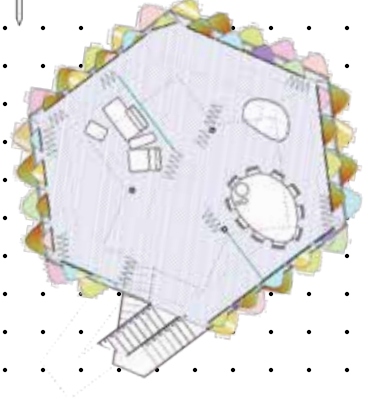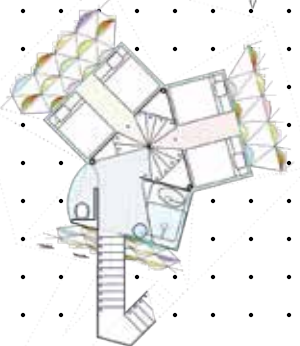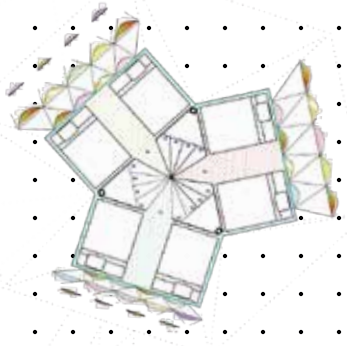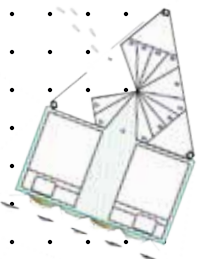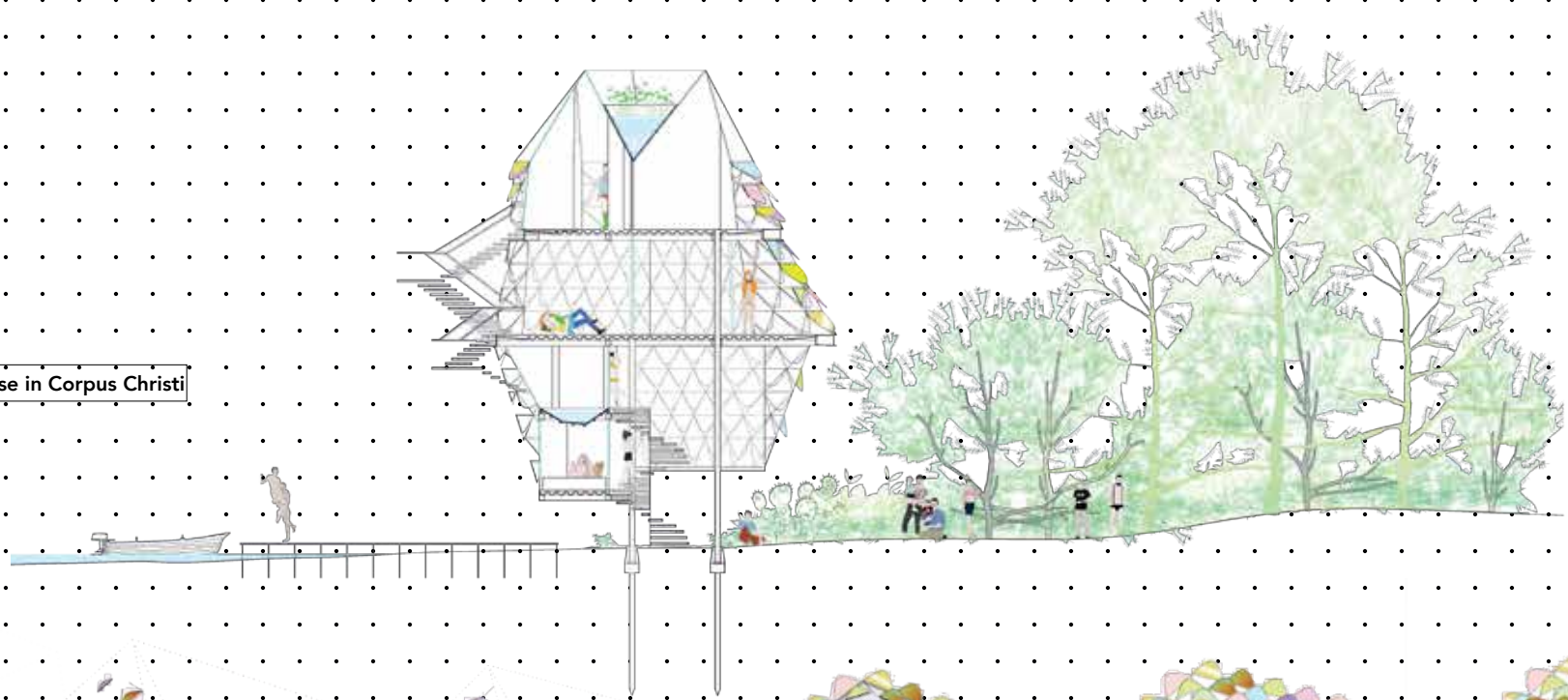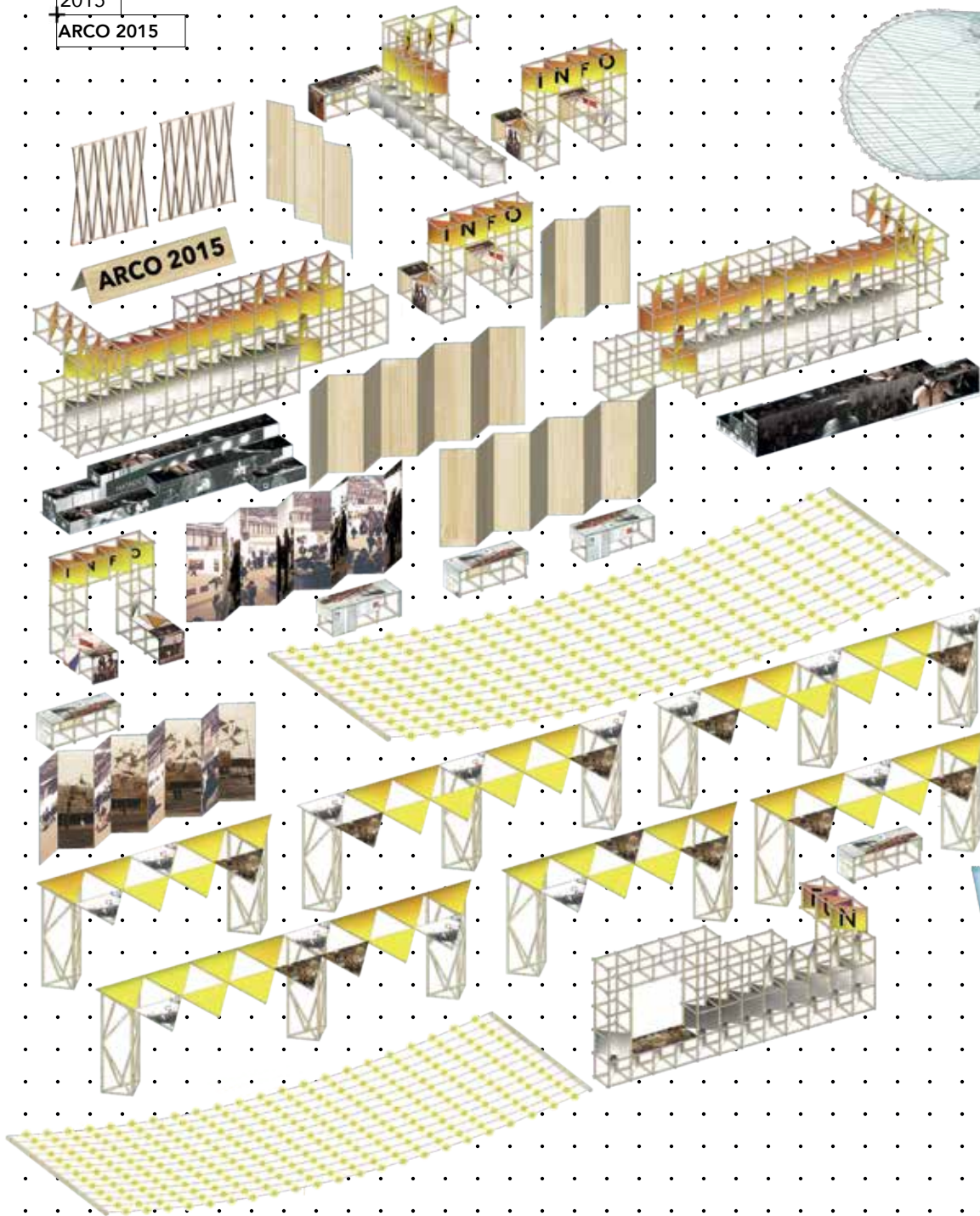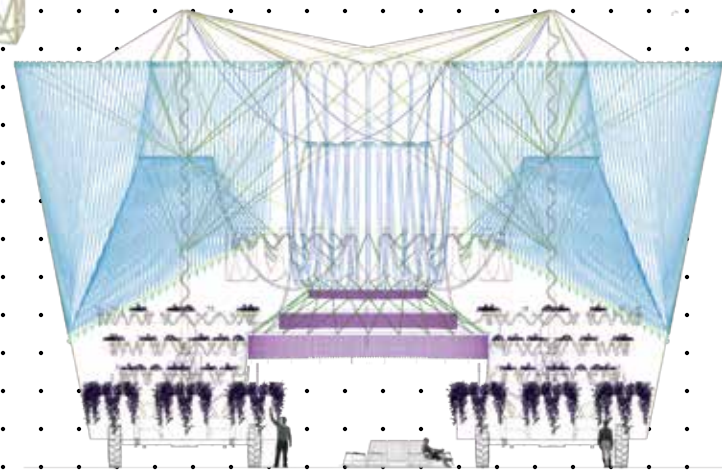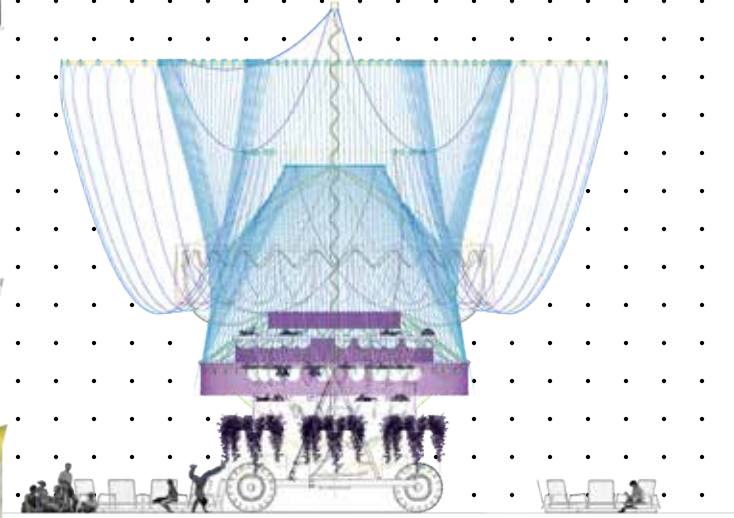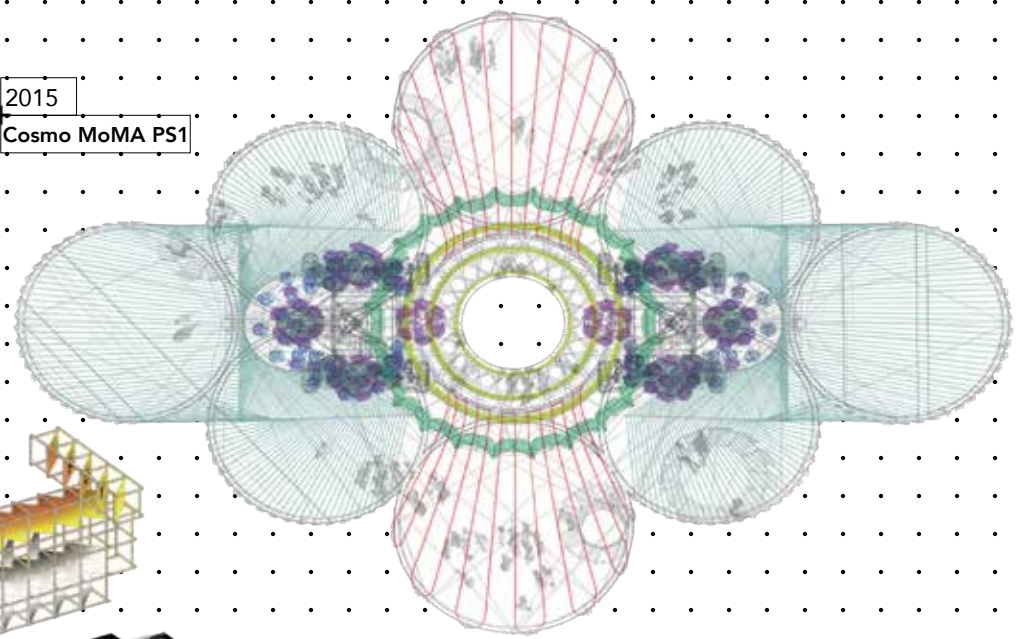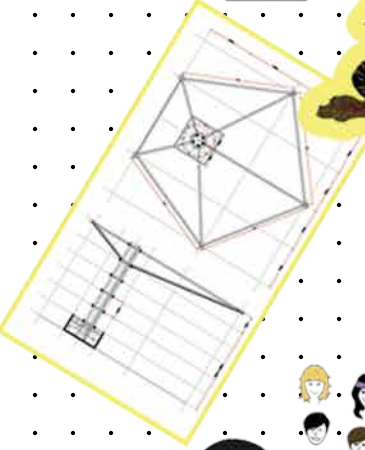
2015
Cosmo MoMA PS1

2015

Istanbul Biennial
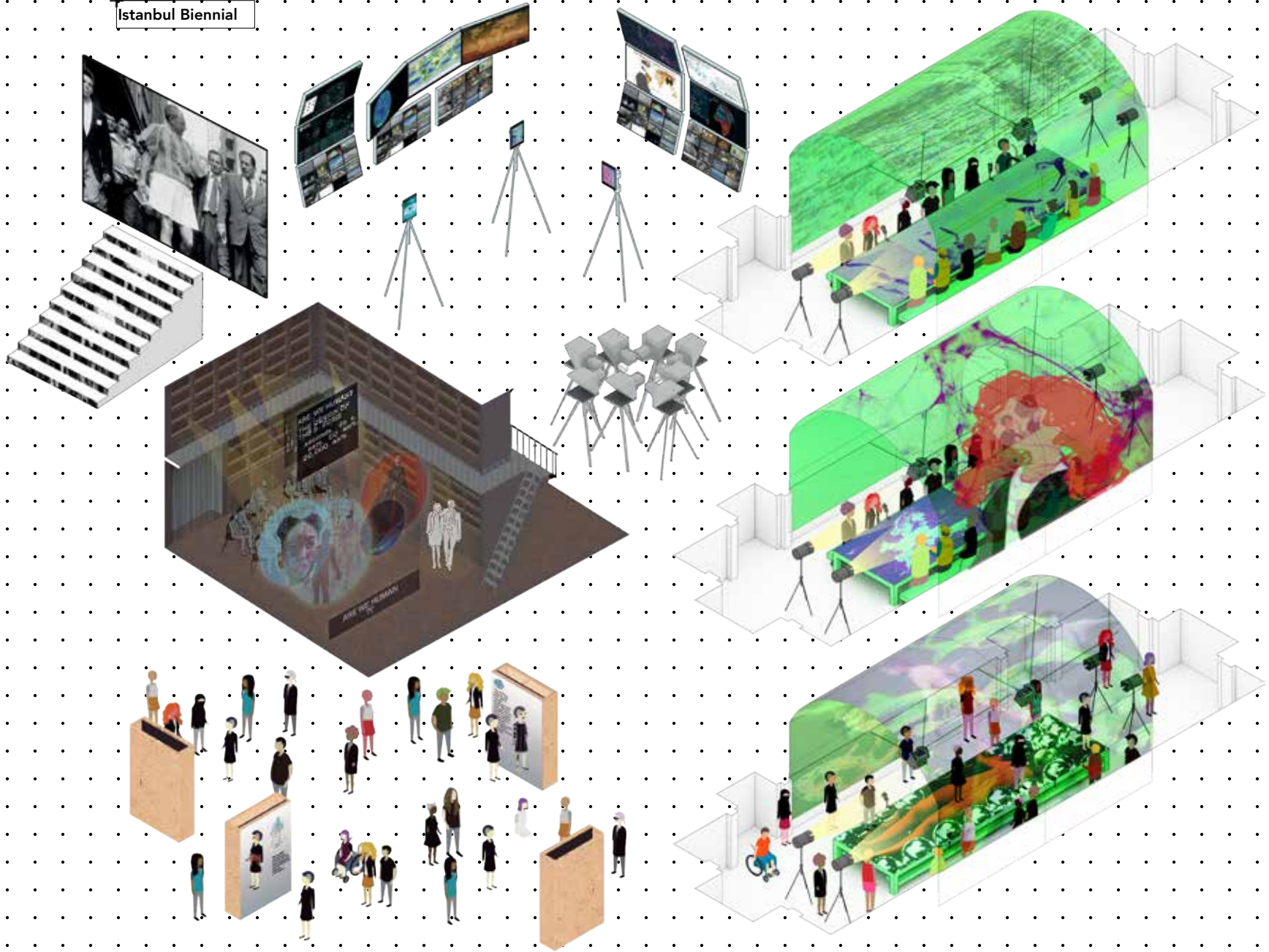
2015

RESET CA2M. Integral Transformation of
'Centro de Arte 2 de Mayo'
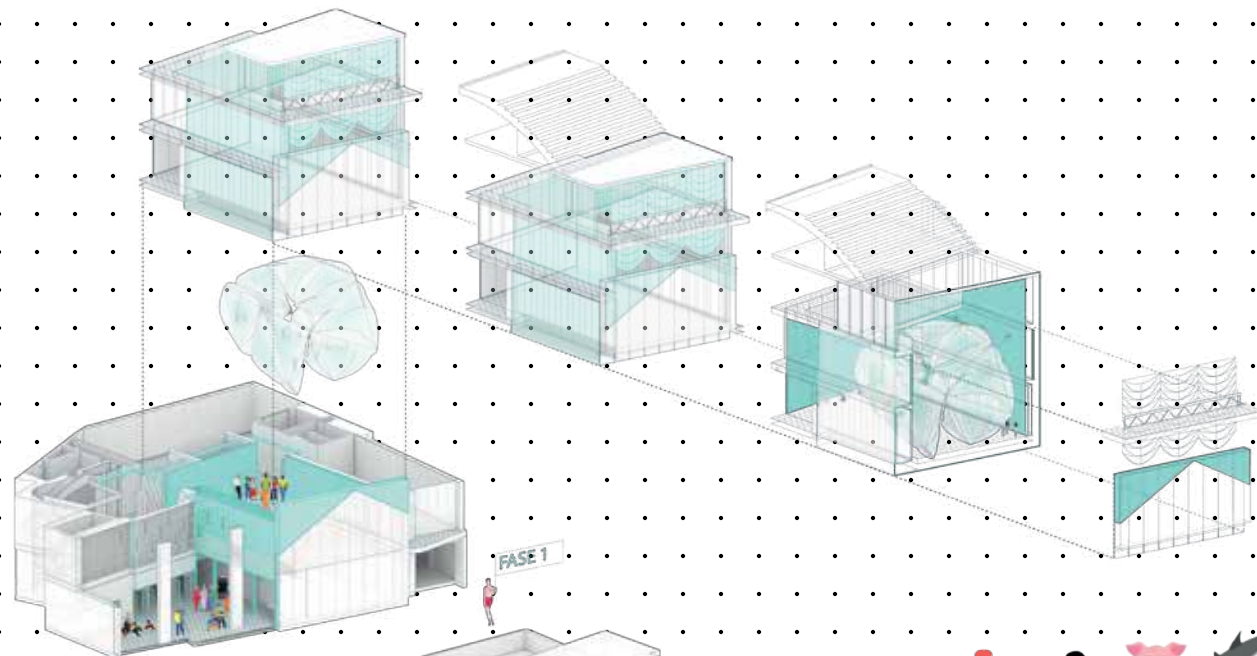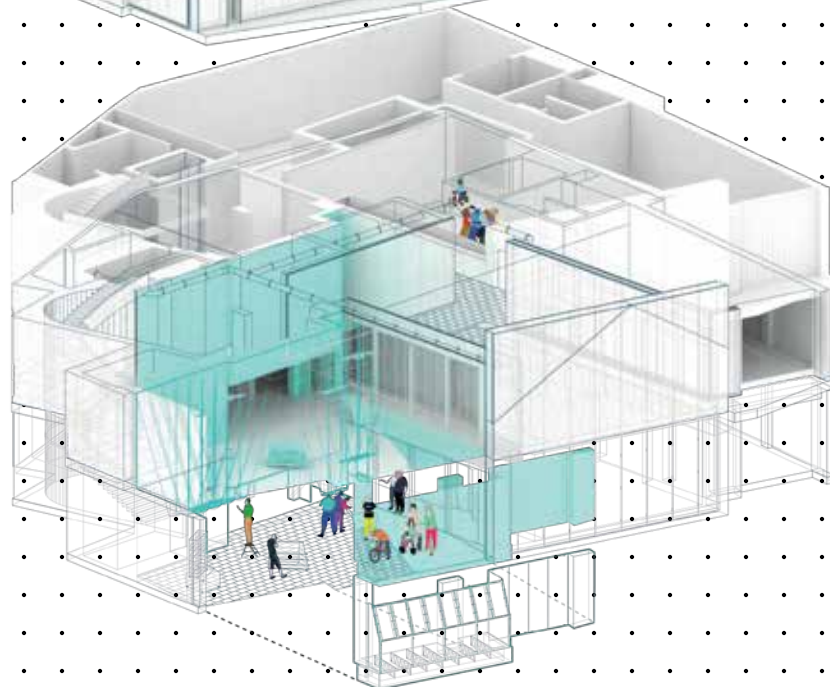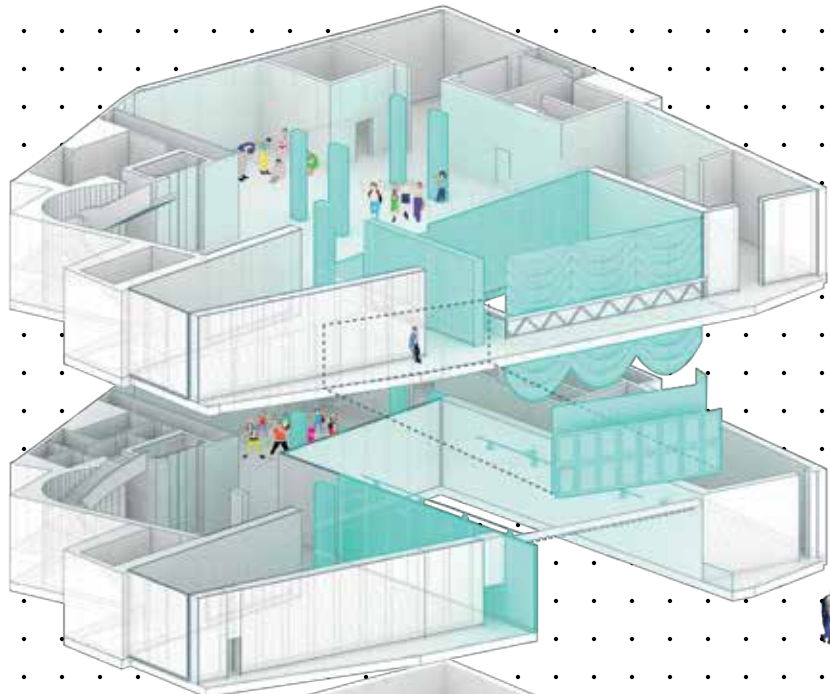
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FASE 3
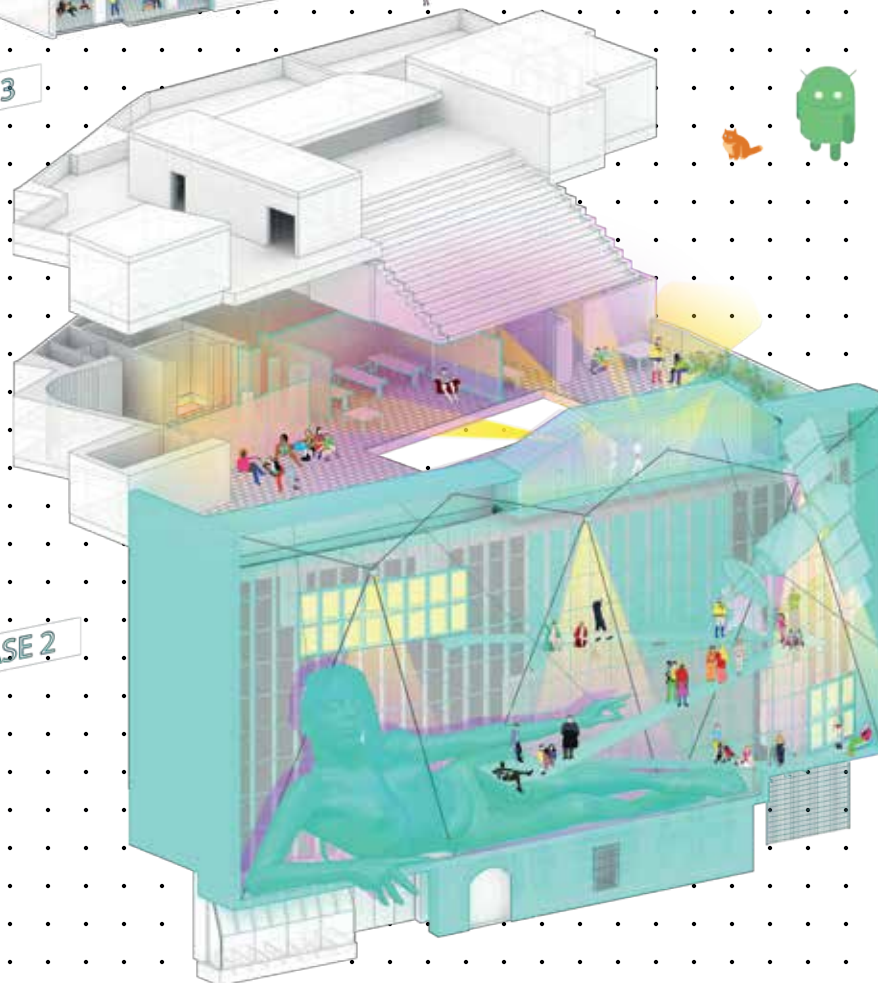
FASE 2

FASE 4
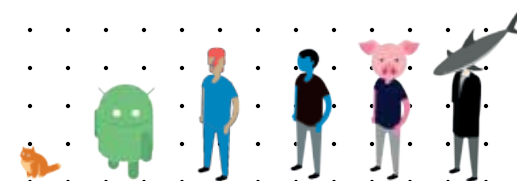
2016

Marbelous Crowded House
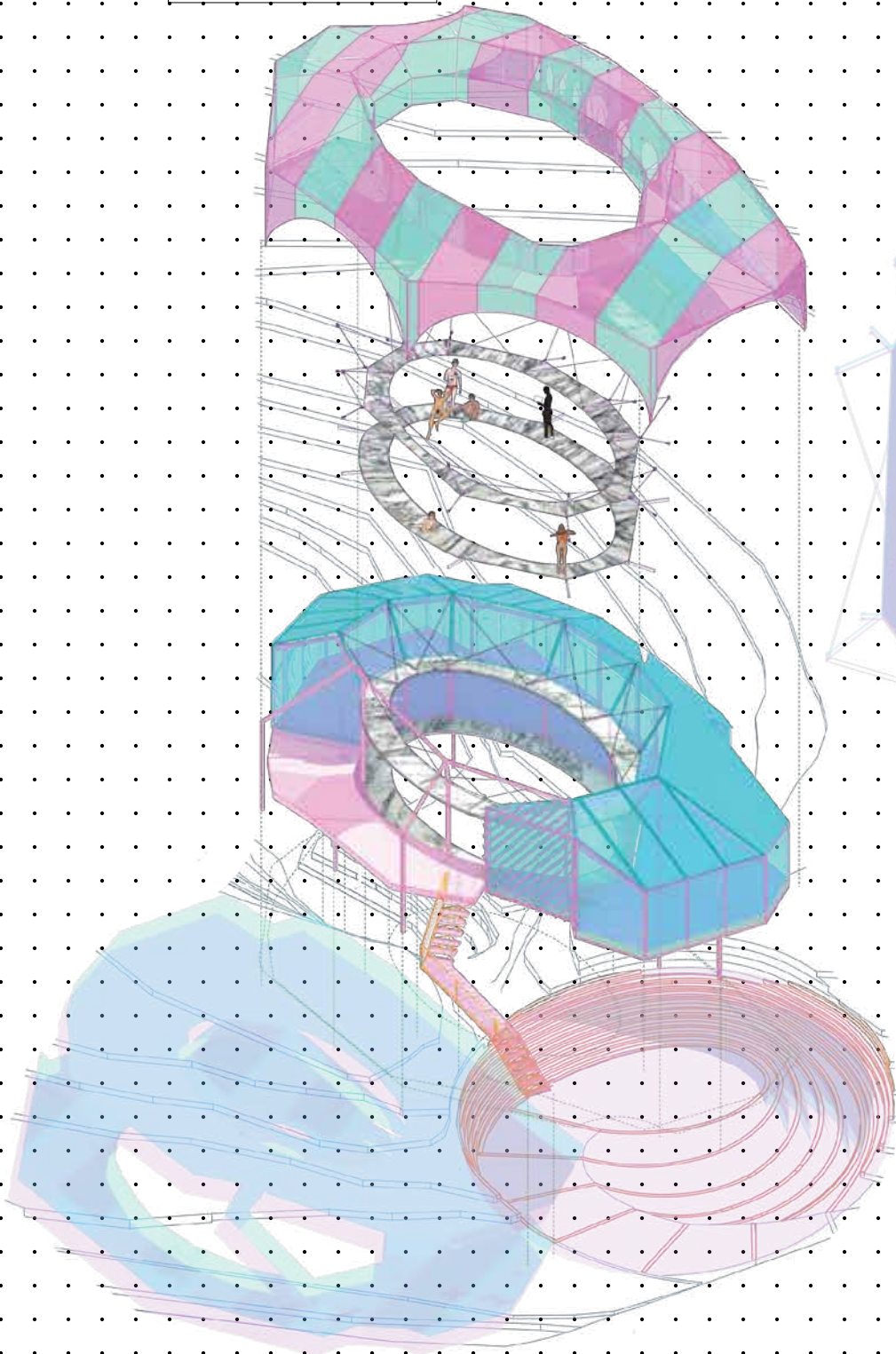
2016

Watts Combina. Integral Transformation of Weizmanh Square
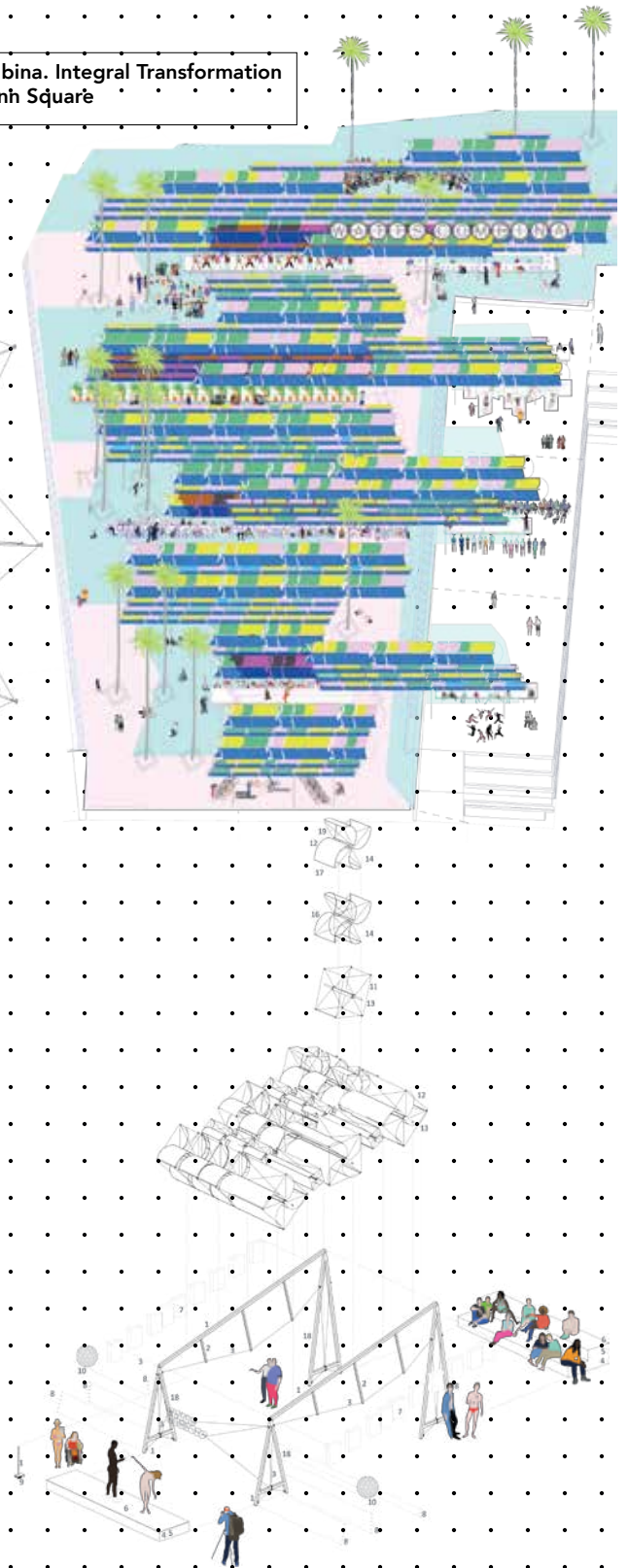
2016

Le Bateau Cuisinier. Social Assembly in the Triangle Éolé-Évàngèlie
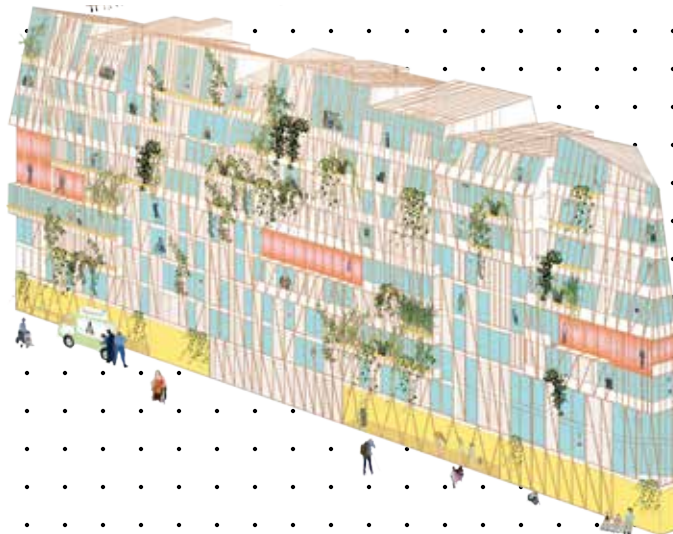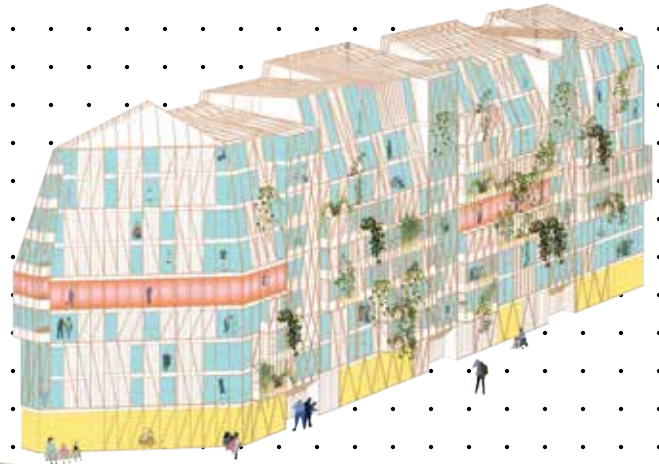
2016

Demonstrative Techno Floresta in Bogotá
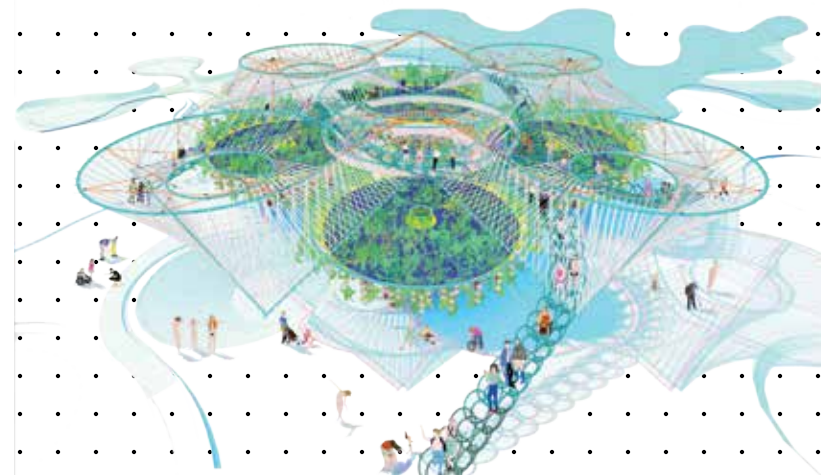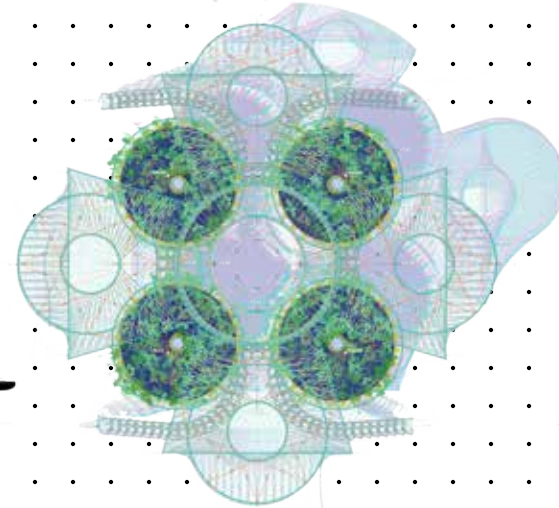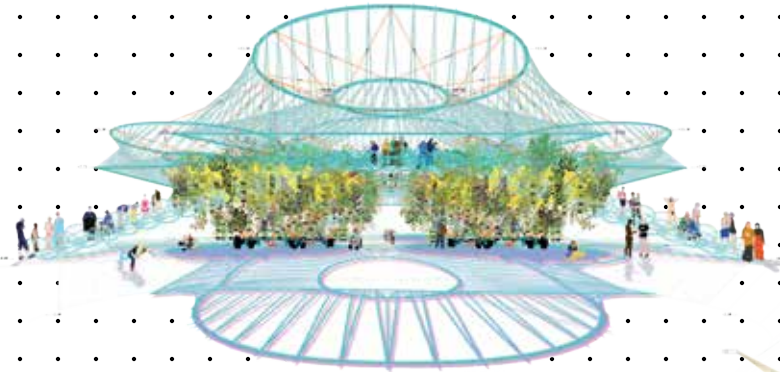
2016

Rómola
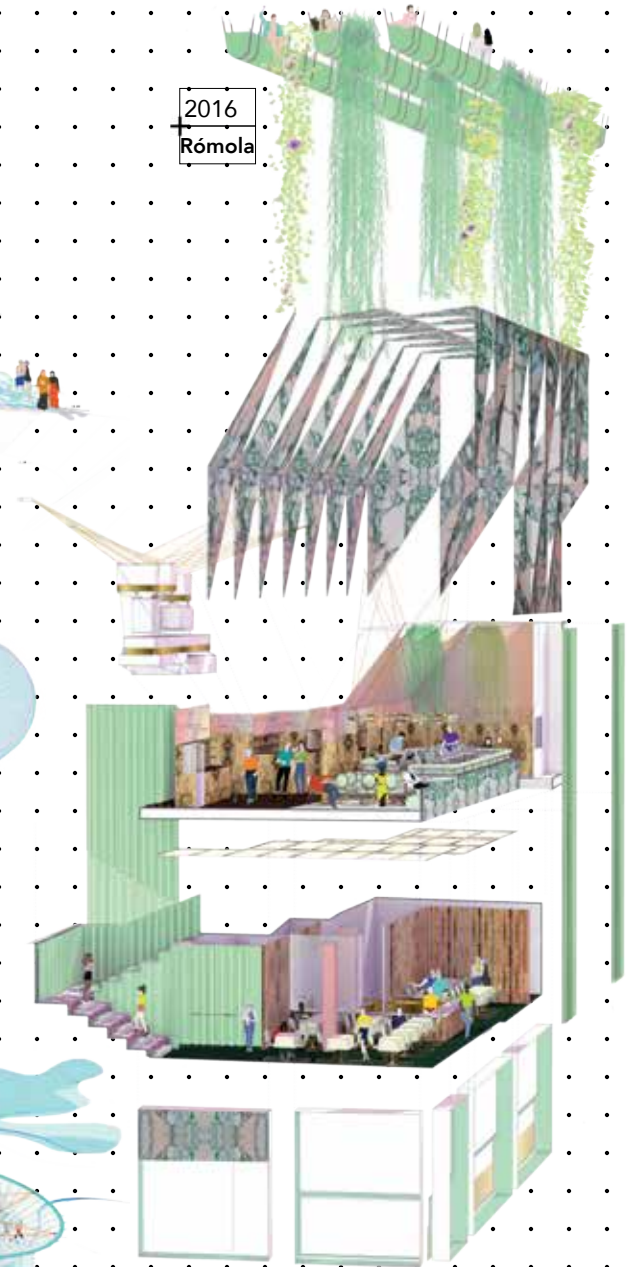
Growing up Modern: A Family Story

Text and photographs by
Julia Jamrozik and Coryn Kempster

In the summer of 2015 we rented a campervan and drove around Europe to speak to a handful of individuals about their experiences growing up as the original inhabitants of iconic Modernist homes. Our goal was to discover and record the recollections of people whose youth was spent in some of the most radical domestic architectural spaces of the early twentieth century. We wanted to see and document these spaces through the lens of their personal stories.

We brought our nine-month-old son along on this adventure, and while we were busy trying to photograph the houses based on the memories of our interlocutors, he was busy making noise and crawling through these Modernist monuments. There we were, crawling behind him on the floor of a Mies van der Rohe or Hans Scharoun building, trying to keep his fingers out of the electrical outlets and away from the plants in their respective winter gardens. We knew that he would not remember this trip, nor would he remember the spaces and floors that he was inadvertently polishing in the sweltering heat with his knees.

We were thinking of the kids, now old enough to have children and grandchildren of their own, who all graciously agreed to speak with us and who, as babies, also must have crawled through these same spaces and played boisterously within them. They, unlike their parents, never chose to live in avant-garde buildings. We thought, naively perhaps, that their perceptions would have been purer and their opinions less biased than those of the clients themselves. They

were the guinea pigs of the Modernists' claims that architecture had the capacity to deeply affect inhabitants, even make them "better people." Did they believe that these buildings influenced them and who they have become?

While the stories we heard and the memories we recorded ranged from the most heartfelt to the most detached, we know that they cannot be divorced from the personal histories of their parents, their families, and the political context of their time. These stories are both linked to and have been shaped by the tumultuous history of the early twentieth century. Some of our interlocutors were permanently forced out of their radical dwellings by the circumstances of WWII, while others have lived in the same building or neighborhood since their youth.

The buildings themselves have taken on different histories such as becoming youth centers, museums, or stages for political gathering, while some are still being used as housing today. The domestic spaces have become the backdrop for different stories, but beyond that they have also shaped their inhabitants to varying degrees and remain a source of pride or resentment, and even the material of dreams.

The stories and the moments we collected in these domestic environments have become part of our story. Even if our son won't remember the experiences he had, maybe he'll assimilate them through our photographs. The radical experiments of Modernist architects with their claims and aspirations and leaky realities will be a part of our story. ●

Villa Tugendhat
Brno, Czech Republic
Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, 1930

MAS CONTEXT / 32 / CHARACTER

1.
The children's room at the Villa Tugendhat. We spoke with Mr. Tugendhat, a retired professor of philosophy, the eldest child who lived in the house until his family was forced to leave in 1938. He was only eight at the time.

2.
The winter garden in the Villa Tugendhat, adjacent to the living room. Even the most idiosyncratic of the interior spaces in the Villa did not leave a lasting impression on our interlocutor.

3.
The children's outdoor playroom on the rooftop of the Villa Tugendhat, overlooking the garden and the city of Brno. Mr. Tugendhat recalls playing here and waiting for the honk of his father's car to signal his arrival home every evening.

4.
Mr. Tugendhat's strongest memories are of the outdoor spaces of the house. The Villa Tugendhat and its gardens have recently been restored and are open to the public by appointment.
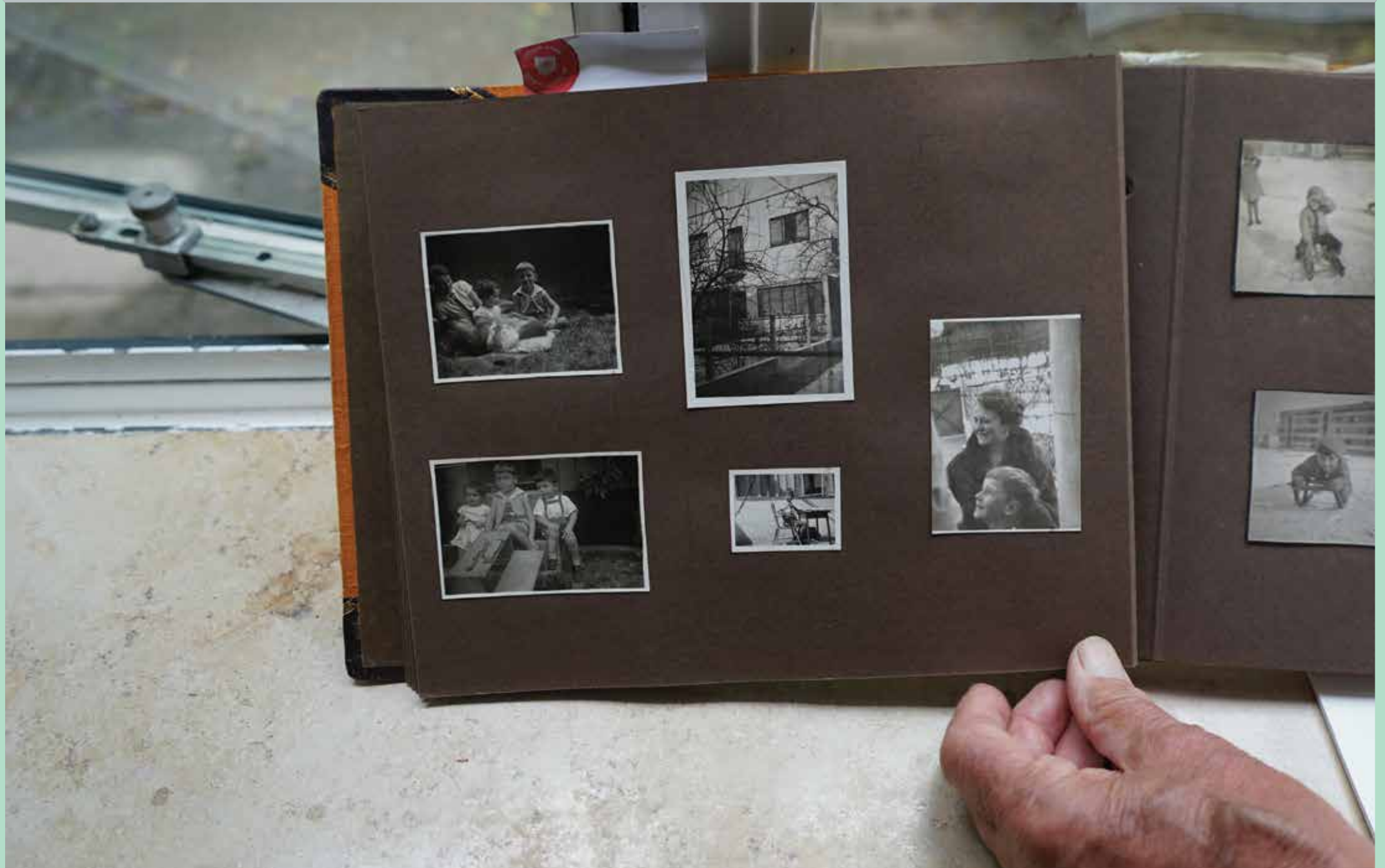
Weissenhof Estate
Stuttgart, Germany
J.J.P. Oud, 1927

1.
Mr. Fassbaender showed us photo albums
from his childhood growing up in the row
houses in the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart.

The photo of his house, number 3, is in
the center of the spread, with images of his
mother and playmates surrounding it.

2.
The buildings are still being used as public housing. We spoke with Mr. Fassbaender in number 5, as the interior was awaiting renovation.

3.
Unlike the geometric and closed front of the Weissenhof row houses, the back of the houses are open to individual yet connected private gardens. The balcony off Mr. Fassbaender's bedroom was his favorite place, since he could drag the head of his mattress outside and sleep under the stars in the summer.

4.
The garden bench in the garden of the Oud row house. The children played outdoors, as they had many private spots within the Estate to do so. The streets were also their playground, since at the time there were only three cars in the whole neighborhood.

Cité Frugès
Pessac, France
Le Corbusier, 1926

1.
Mrs. Goron has lived in several of the houses in Cité Frugès, Pessac since she was small. Unlike many of her neighbors, she found the Modernist neighborhood familiar because it reminded her of the architecture in Morocco, where her family had relocated from.

2.
Mrs. Goron and her husband have lived in several of the houses in the Cité Frugès on the outskirts of Bordeaux. The apartment they rented after they got married was in this building.

3.
The houses of the Cité Frugès are in varying states of repair. They have been added to, repaired, renovated, and are the object of both restoration efforts and financial speculation.

4.
Mr. and Mrs. Goron had many stories to tell of the struggles with the heritage protection of the buildings and of the changing of the neighborhood over the years.

Unité d'Habitation
Marseille, France
Le Corbusier, 1952

1.
We spoke with Gisèle Moreau, who moved into the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille as a child and has lived there ever since, except for when she moved away for university. She has lived in several apartments in the building, but is now back in the apartment where she grew up, having inherited it from her parents.

2.
Ms. Moreau remembers doing her math homework on the sliding blackboards Le Corbusier designed to separate adjoining children's bedrooms.

3.
The children of the Unité often played in the building's generous stairwells. Taking advantage of the found spaces of the skip-stop system, several additional programs could also be accessed from here. These multi-functional spaces are still used for classes and other social programs today.

4.
The Unité d'Habitation is home to many loyal residents and aficionados. Le Corbusier is close to Ms. Moreau's heart. She vividly remembers hearing the news of the architect's death on the radio while sunbathing on the amorphous concrete rock to the left in the image. She was devastated.

Haus Schminke
Löbau, Germany
Hans Scharoun, 1933

1.
Each of the children had their own storage
shelf in the playroom. Our interlocutor,
Mrs. Zumfe, was the youngest and had the
yellow cubby.

2.
The winter garden of the Haus Schminke in Löbau designed by Hans Scharoun. The glass portholes on the doorframes were set at a low height, so that the children could look out at the world through different colors.

3.
Hans Scharoun became a close friend of the family and visited regularly. He made this folded picture book for the children documenting one of his stays, including pictures of him and the kids playing in the pond. In this picture, he is drying Mrs. Zumpfe's back.

4.
The house is currently a museum, but it can also be rented for overnight stays. Doing so we had the opportunity to, ever so briefly, experience everyday domestic activities in it.

Micro-Modifications: Stories of Dingbat Dwellers

Text by Joshua G. Stein
Photographs by
Paul Redmond
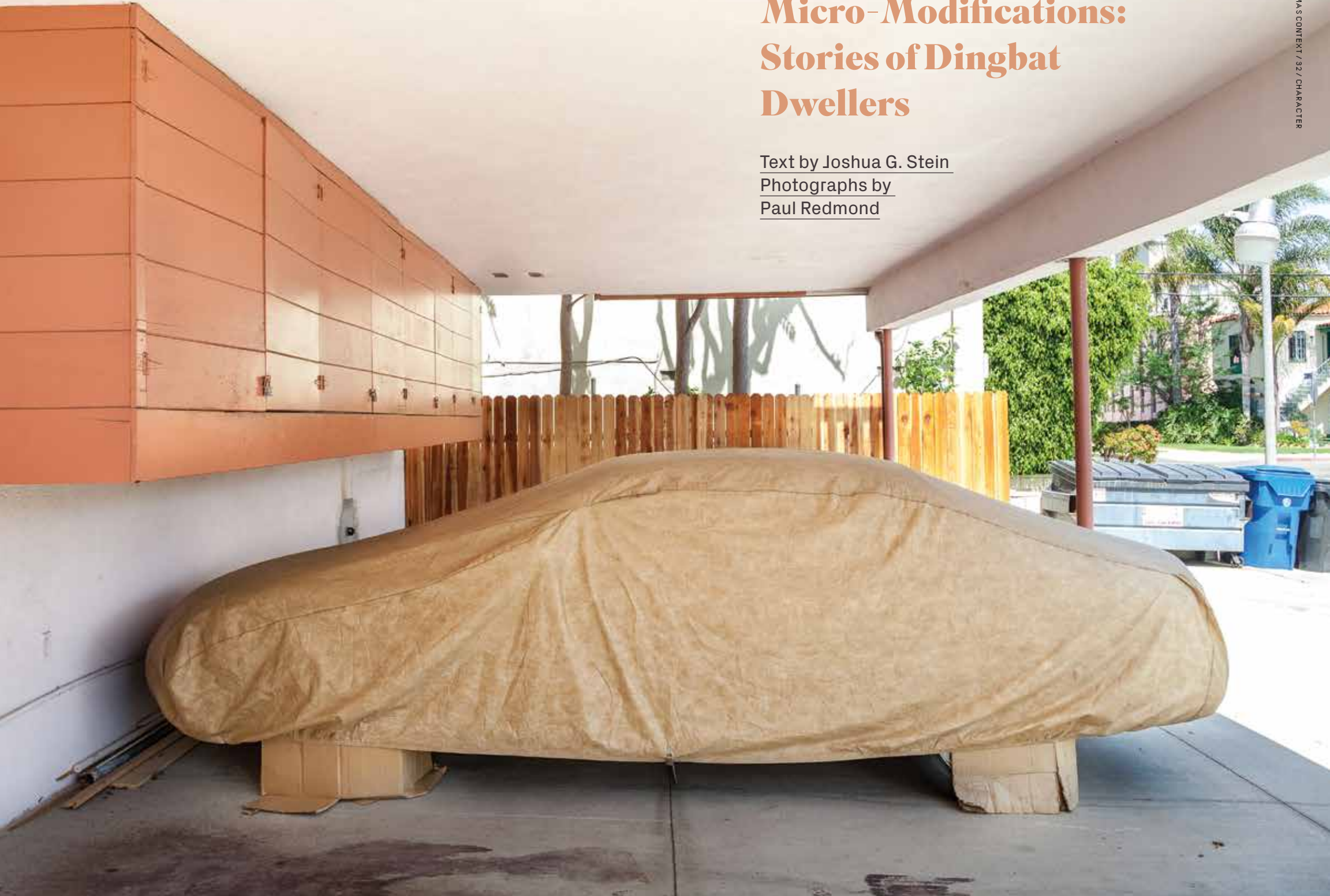
Most photographic documentation of dingbats follows traditions primarily intended to capture architectural or graphic composition. Los Angeles-based photographer Paul Redmond instead approaches the dingbat through its inhabitants, their stories, and their traces. By selecting one neighborhood and walking its streets, Redmond was able to meet residents and hear their perspectives on living in a dingbat. Los Angeles's Pico-Robertson neighborhood contains a high concentration of dingbats along with a few older apartment types, single-family residences, and larger, recently constructed apartment buildings.

Redmond's photographic series of this small sample of dingbat inhabitants confirms some expectations about dingbat-apartment living while revising others. Parking remains a driving attraction, although now more as a place to store an obligatory car rather than to display a fetishized object. When first constructed, dingbats served as way stations for Americans moving west, who were in need of a quick place to set up a new life. While this is still the case, in moving through this neighborhood in present-day L.A., the reality becomes much more complex as these dingbats now house a surprising diversity of languages, cultures, and classes.

While some dingbats in this neighborhood have barely changed since their initial construction, others have clearly undergone renovations, or at least benefited from new finishes and fixtures. As the housing market in Los Angeles continues to constrict due to a shortage of units and increasing rents, dingbats have proven to be more desirable as longer-term habitation for some renters. For owners who might have once assumed these structures to be easy teardowns, dingbat rentals now offer considerable profit after only minor upgrades.

Deftly attuned to both narrative and physicality, Redmond's photographs display the range of different lifestyles possible within a single building type—the minor adjustments necessary to make a space temporarily livable, the accumulations over time, and the more calculated planning of long-term residents. The stories of these inhabitants relate typical narratives of apartment life as well as the more specific scenes of dingbat life in Los Angeles. ●

Essay republished with permission from Thurman Grant and Joshua G. Stein's Dingbat 2.0: The Iconic Los Angeles Apartment as Projection of a Metropolis *(Los Angeles: DoppelHouse Press and The LA Forum for Architecture and Urban Design, 2016).*

Eneida (and family)

Apartment type
Two bedroom

Occupant(s)
Three adults (mother in midseventies, daughter in late forties, and grandson in late twenties)

Occupation(s)
Retiree, School Headmaster, and Student

Length of Residency
Twenty-one years

Were you aware of the term "dingbat apartments?"

This is the first time I've heard the word. I thought maybe there were bats in the building, because in Puerto Rico the bats would make their nests in the eaves of the buildings.

What can you share about your dingbat experience?

I live here with my daughter and grandson. I'm originally from Puerto Rico and came here from Chicago. I wish there were buildings like this one in Puerto Rico. Here I feel like it is all my family living together. I would tell my mother in Puerto Rico that if I had the money I would build something similar to this building here.

I have lived here for twenty-one years, but there are many others who have lived here for at least ten or fifteen years. This building was built for the original owner's extended family. For a while it was filled with mostly retired people—no dogs and no kids. One man lived here for maybe thirty years until he died at age 100. Here, when people move in, they don't want to move out. Even people who moved in when they were teenagers have stayed here as adults. When I moved here, there were only palm trees and concrete, and for me it was too depressing. I had to change it. I lived on a farm until age seventeen and I learned how to garden from my mother, so I started a garden here. Now, even though the building owner lives in Beverly Hills, he likes to sit in this garden to relax. I used to have many more plants but when more children arrived in the buildings, I decided the cacti and roses were dangerous and I took maybe seventy percent of my plants to my niece's house.

I've been through three owners and I've been friendly with all of them. I check the building every morning to see if there are any leaks or any problems, kind of a manager on-site without the appointment. I watch people's dogs and cats when they go away on vacation and I help show a vacant apartment. I'm not the manager but I want the building to look nice and the people who move in to be friendly and suitable, and I must admit the landlord asks my impression and opinion in that matter. They don't pay me—I don't want the responsibility—but I feel good about keeping the building clean, nice, and safe. When people move in I make sure I introduce them to everyone else so they join the family. In this place, we help each other out.

During the 1994 earthquake this building didn't suffer any damage. Not one crack. Eight years ago, when the new owner bought this building, he bought it to demolish these two buildings and build a large condominium complex just like the one behind us. One of the tenants, with the help of all of us, took the owners to court. We felt it would be like splitting up a family. The media came to cover the event. We went to court and we won the case. We don't know what will happen now that the housing market is booming. When the owner applied to build a much larger apartment building, the city told him he would need access to the alley for all the necessary parking. He had not anticipated this and there was one piece of property between us and the alley. He has since bought that property so we now expect him to try again.

Jenni and Tom (and Sookie Blue)

Apartment type	Occupant(s)	Occupation(s)	Length of Residency
Two bedroom	Two adults (married, early forties) and one dog	Marriage and Family Therapist and Film Editor	Eight years

Were you aware of the term "dingbat apartments?"

I never knew these buildings were called "dingbats" until I found the flyer for this book on my car. Growing up, my family used the term "dingbat" all of the time to describe someone or something foolish. When I was older, I learned that "dingbat" referred to an ornamental shape used in art, jewelry, and other designs. Until we received the flyer for this project, I had never heard "dingbat" used in the context of architectural design.

What can you share about your dingbat experience?

I find the building we live in to be pleasant and plain—how I prefer it. I like living in an apartment that is surprisingly larger and nicer on the inside than one might guess by looking at the outside. I feel safer knowing these are not the most upscale digs on the block, and therefore, less likely to attract anyone looking to score some awesome loot. The building has held up for this long, it must be well-made. The owners maintain it nicely.

There are two bedrooms, but we use the second one as an office. We pull out an air mattress when family comes to stay. I see clients in an office in West Los Angeles, but do most of my nonclient work at home. Tom cuts film at home when his work allows.

The neighborhood is changing, diversifying, which as a half-breed myself, I find exciting. That said, Jewish couples and families continue to occupy the majority of places around us, being so close to the Kabbalah Center, temples, and schools. I love to see multi-generational families out and about day and night, although with such narrow streets I prefer them on foot rather than in their very large family SUVs. It feels like there has been an increase in neighborhood dog owners, but that might just be because adopting Sookie has increased our daily walks.

Hayley and Annie

Apartment type	Occupant(s)	Occupation(s)	Length of Residency
One bedroom	Two adults (couple, early twenties)	Administrative Specialist and Retail Employee	Three Months

Were you aware of the term "dingbat apartments?"

No! Hayley (the midcentury enthusiast) was acutely aware of the phenomenon, but not the term.

What can you share about your dingbat experience?

Luck brought us here—we were looking for an apartment in roughly this part of town (it is convenient to both of our commutes), and we chanced across this one on our way to another open house. It was a perfect fit, and we managed to snag it.

It is a pretty cute building. We love the blue tile accents on the façade and our gated balcony. The apartment is definitely older, but well-kept. It is just the right size for us. Huge bonus (at least for Hayley) is the tiny yellow kitchen with a couple of crazy accent tiles above the sink. They depict cartoonish lemon slices on ornate skewers next to what we think are tea infusers. Our appliances in the kitchen are shiny, new, and obviously updated regularly, but the AC seems like it hasn't been replaced since the Reagan administration.

We have probably the worst parking spot in L.A. County. Our parking lot is absurdly cramped, accessible only through a narrow driveway lined with stucco walls. There are disconcerting paint scrapes everywhere. Our spot is the hardest in the lot, and we have to do a crazy forty-point turn to back in or out of it. Sometimes one of our neighbors double-parks, which makes everything impossible. That being said, we are still happy to have the space because of how little street parking there is in the neighborhood.

We don't think we could have an independent lifestyle in Los Angeles, or at least this neighborhood, without dingbat apartments. Because they're older and perceived by some as dated or rickety, dingbats are often a lot cheaper than anything comparably sized on the market. We are both recent college graduates and are comically underemployed. There is no way we could be able to afford anything on our combined income in this neighborhood without all these dingbats. This is one of the most expensive cities on earth, and many new

apartments going up (especially in affluent West L.A.) brand themselves as "luxury" apartments and market to the wealthy. Most include special auxiliary features that we do not need or want. Dingbats are a good mix of form and function—cute spaces that meet our minimalist needs, and we can actually afford them!

The neighborhood is nice. It is mostly other dingbats and mission-style duplexes. A couple in the next building has a really cute balcony garden facing us. They eat dinner out therein the summer, and we exchange hellos regularly.
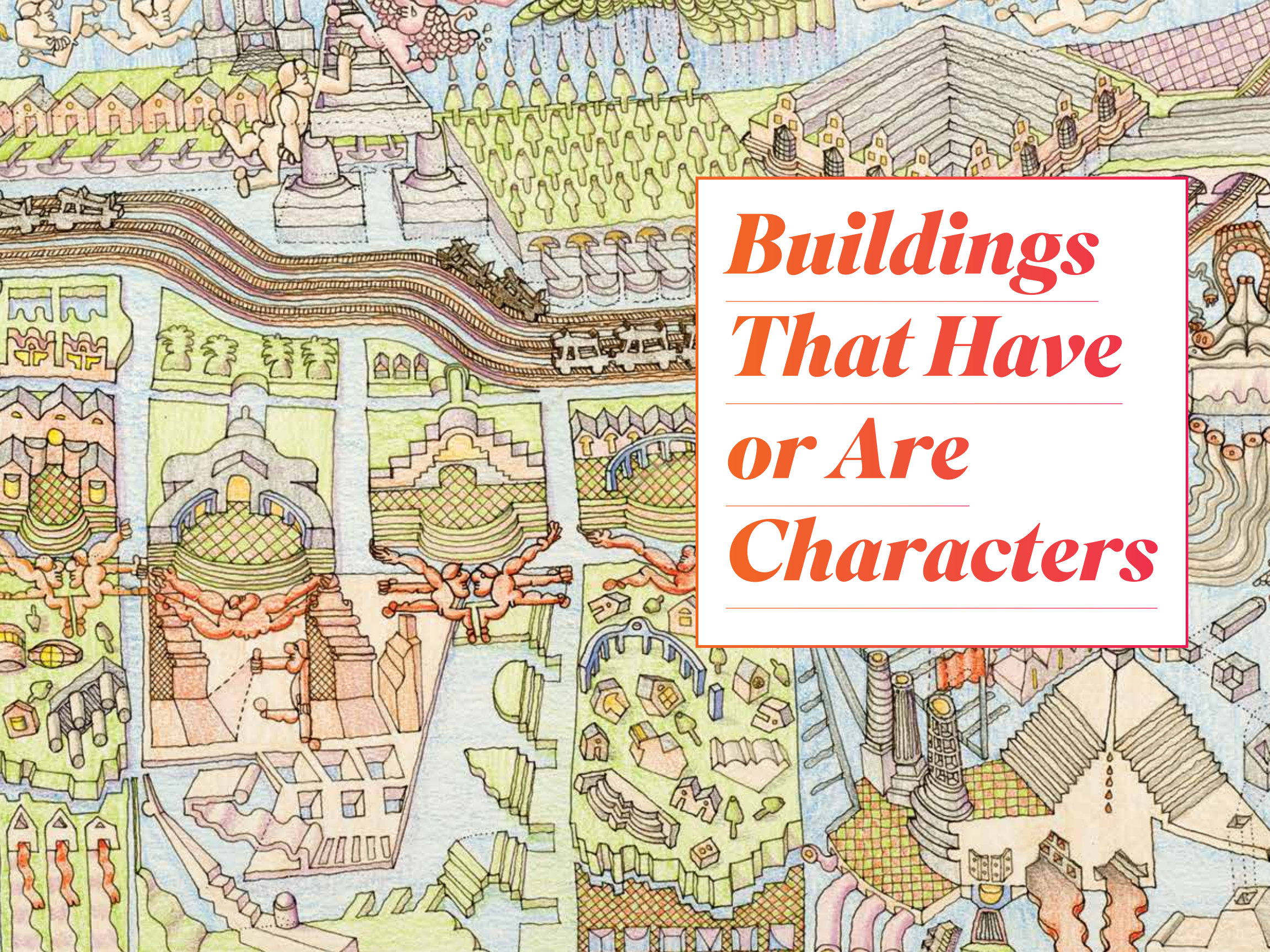
Buildings That Have or Are Characters

The Classy Order

Project by Ania Jaworska
in collaboration with Zack Ostrowski

Ancient Greek architecture, divided into three orders—Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian—explored the column as a simultaneously structural and decorative element. The classical forms of the columns persisted and are continuously reused in Western architecture, making them the most recognizable and familiar symbols, deeply embedded in our memory.

As a graphic icon, an image of a column performs as an equalizer of taste. A cliché symbol that is at once tired and bankrupt and culturally loaded. As a logo, it's hired itself out to both the highest and lowest bidder, and serves everyone from world-class universities to small-town construction companies. It performs with conviction, representing reputable national law firms, and offers a sense of legitimacy to the local shiesty attorney. It's generic, and floods stock image websites appearing with the ubiquitous "your text here." It's inclusive, always available, and as a result unpredictable in its allegiance, partnering equally with dentists, restaurants, and furniture warehouses. It's this inconsistency and overuse that gives it (fluid) character, but despite its promiscuous tendencies, the message it sends is almost always the same—trust, stability, reliability, and class.

PENSACOLA PLACE APARTMENTS   DENTART   Kasak Legal PLLC   HARTNEY & COMPANY
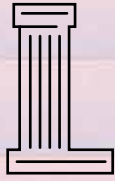
D.U.I.
M.I.P.

The right choice.

"Water shuts down constantly..."

"When Ryan is not lawyering, he is participating in one of his two main hobbies: photography and backpacking." *

Displaying a solid foundation.
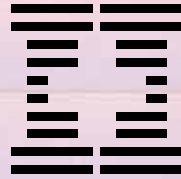
Who we are.
Offices worldwide.

Greek teeth / Top dental.
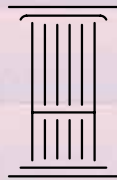
"Nathaniel Hartney wanted a strong, classic and sophisticated logo that had 'no frill, no gimmicks'" *

Closed on Sundays.

We have four locations.
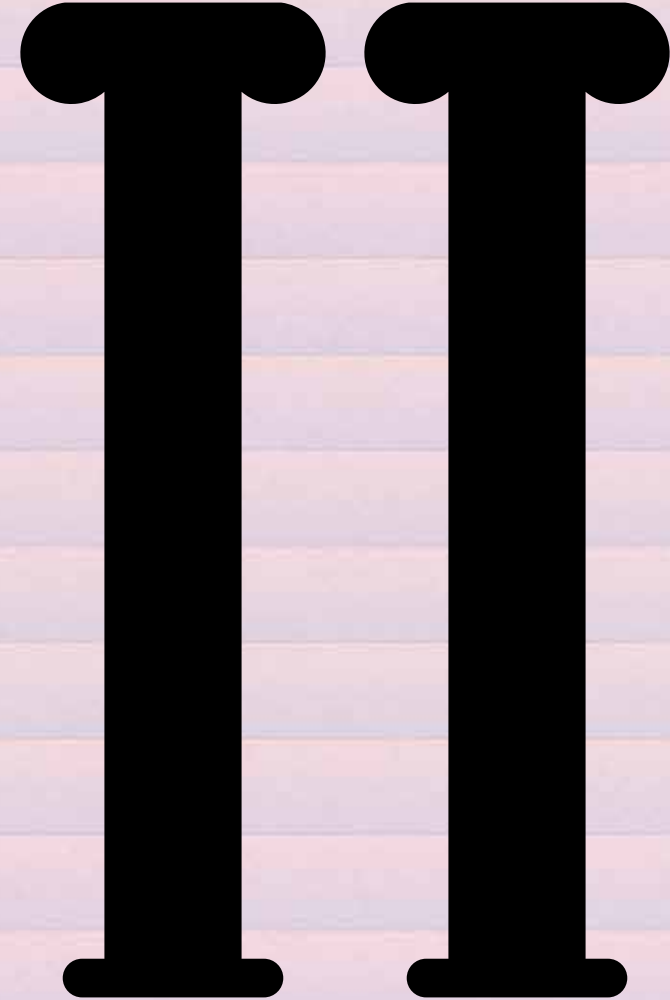
V.I.P. Lounge
Dress code applies.

*Quotes taken from the websites of the companies.

Above images and logos of the companies are appropriated for the purposes of critique and commentary.

Playing With Paint and Space

Adrian Shaughnessy
interviews Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

© Courtesy of Barbara
Stauffacher Solomon

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon trained first as a dancer in her native San Francisco, and then as a recently widowed mother of one, she travelled to 1950s Switzerland where she studied graphic design under Armin Hofmann. So assiduously did she absorb "The Master's" hardline modernist doctrine that even when she returned to the United States to work as a jobbing designer, she doggedly stuck to the rigors of Swiss design at a time when, as she notes, "psychedelic squiggles" were the norm.

Despite job offers from the US Geigy office and from stellar practitioners such as Massimo Vignelli, Lester Beall, and Saul Bass, Stauffacher Solomon remained outside the graphic design bubble. She studied Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. She taught at Harvard and Yale, and today, in her eighties, works as a landscape designer.

Despite her varied and inspirational career, she is best known for the epoch defining supergraphics she did for Sea Ranch in 1960s California. Her masterwork (painted over shortly after she created it) is a radical graphic statement that can stand comparison with the work of many far more celebrated occupants of the graphic design canon. The history of supergraphics would be different if it were not for Barbara Stauffacher Solomon.

The Sea Ranch. © Courtesy of
Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

© Courtesy of Barbara
Stauffacher Solomon

Adrian Shaughnessy: In the 1950s, graphic design was hardly a recognized profession. What made you think you were suited to a career in graphic design?

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon: As a teenager and ballet dancer, and before marrying Frank Stauffacher, I danced in nightclubs to make money. But, at the same time, I studied art, had scholarships in painting and sculpture at San Francisco Art Institute, and studied in New York. Through Frank I met lots of people: filmmakers, writers, artists, and architects, in San Francisco, New York, Paris, and London. I worked at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and I learned from them. I saw *Graphis* magazine regularly, though in 1956 when I went to Basel, I had no idea what a graphic designer was.

In 1956, high art was heroic and hung sanctified on the white walls of museums. Real artists were serious, transcendent, and incorruptible. In 1956, commercial art was low, hucksterism, printed propaganda, vulgar, trivial, and done for money. But I needed to make money. (Andy Warhol had been trained as a commercial artist and he had the assurance, brains, and nerves to stretch boundaries more brilliantly than anyone.) But mostly, I wanted to get away from San Francisco people staring at me after Frank died. A curator friend at the SFMOMA had just met the graphic designer Armin Hofmann at an Aspen Design Conference and suggested that, since I had studied art, I try graphic design. Okay. To rename commercial art as graphic design made it seem acceptable. Like being an architect. Architects designed. They designed things and were respectable. They were respected, had nice light white offices, dressed well, and were self-reliant. That sounded good. Swiss T-squares would dig up the truth.

Were you aware of any of the developing trends in graphic design in the United States in the 50s? For instance, did you know about people such as Paul Rand, Lester Beall, Hebert Matter, and Saul Bass?

In 1956, Armin spoke no English, and like most Swiss people, he was critical of the United States' power and politics. Armin knew Max Bill, but never mentioned Paul Rand. He met him later at Yale. Armin was influenced by the Swiss tradition. I never heard Armin or [Emil] Ruder talk about outside designers. They didn't question themselves, their tradition, or the integrity of their mission. Since the Renaissance, Basel had been a center for humanism, for designing type, for printing fine books of fine words. In 1520, Hans

Holbein the Younger, a member of a Basel guild of painters and craftsmen, did designs on commission that combined typefaces with images and made "teaching sketches" that offered insights into training based on fundamental principles. In 1525, Albrecht Dürer analyzed how "symbolic gestures flow organically into readable, pictorial signs." (Armin used Dürer's concepts of "point," "line," and "plane" as the organizing principles for his *Graphic Design Manual* published in 1965). In 1961, back in L.A., I asked Saul Bass for a job. He examined my Armin-approved portfolio and immediately offered me a position. I didn't know much about Bass except that he was a big name.

I also met Lester Beall. He invited me to a charming lunch. He saw my portfolio, offered me a job, and invited me to visit his elegant studio in the New England countryside. Beall had remodeled an old barn; on one side of the barn were the lovely cows in their stalls, on the other side of a large glass wall were the young designers at their desks. I think at the time I couldn't imagine living out there. It was too cute for me.

You have written memorably: "In 1518, Thomas Moore's *Utopia* was printed in Basel. In 1956, I thought I'd found it there." Can you describe the utopia you found?

The Swiss (not all of them, but mainly Armin and his wife Dorli) saw that I was both serious and desperate, and they helped me in a way most of the "fun loving" Californians I knew could not think of managing. Armin and Dorli were wonderful. They didn't see Frank's widow, but instead saw an unhappy young woman with a child and mother in tow. Armin got me into the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts) and Dorli found me an apartment that was lovely and affordable. Basel was neat, clean, orderly, and solid.

Too many of the Americans I knew through Frank proved to be "party" friends. They just watched and waited to see what I might do next, and which man I'd attach myself to. Because I'd worked at the SFMOMA helping Frank put on a last *Art in Cinema*[1] series on American film directors, I knew some of the biggest movie directors in Hollywood. I suppose I could have asked them for a job. Charles Eames phoned me to ask if he could help. Doing what? Dancing or painting? I felt I really didn't know how to do anything. It was the 1950s. Being a pretty young woman, "a tomato," a woman artist, a widow with no money or a fancy family was pathetic. I didn't like that. I had a little savings from dancing and a kid and a mother to support. So I went to Switzerland to learn something.

1. "Art in Cinema," series of experimental films presented by Frank Stauffacher at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Stauffacher died in 1948 from a brain tumor.

The Sea Ranch. © Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

Can you talk about Armin Hofmann's qualities as a teacher?

Armin was a serious teacher. The Kunstgewerbeschule was subsidized by the Swiss government for students selected to go there to learn a trade. Armin didn't talk much. No music or laughter in the studio. He sat down at each student's desk and, seriously and silently, reworked what they were trying to draw. No reading different theories, no lectures with slides of other peoples' work. We were expected to believe what Armin believed and do what he did. And we did. He showed us examples of what he thought good design was: painted ceilings in primitive Swiss country churches; early Italian paintings; good typefaces; good modern art; good architecture. The new students learned from the best. Each Friday each student hung their work on the walls for a crit. First, second, third, and fourth year students were in the same class. The best student examined the newest. The crits were devastating.

You returned to the US after your studies in Switzerland and set up a studio? What sort of work were you doing?

Back in San Francisco I designed the SFMOMA monthly bulletins. Lawrence Halprin[2] gave me an office in his building and access to most of his architect/developer clients. I did architect's logos, stationery, brochures, posters, announcements, and signage. I was Art Director for *Scanlan's Monthly*, making drawings, ordering columns of type, and pasting up pages in my office. There were no computers then. People had to go to printers or commercial artists for everything.

2. Lawrence Halprin (1916–2009), American landscape architect, designer, and teacher.

You have written this about being a designer in the 1960s: "Swiss graphics were completely new to San Francisco. Local typesetters used Times Roman, Baskerville, Garamond, Caslon, Bodoni, or Wild West typefaces . . ." You go on to say that you were surrounded by "psychedelic squiggles" and that you had to send text to Basel to have it set in Helvetica. Were you ever tempted to abandon your Swiss training in favor of what was fashionable then?

My reaction to the hippy stuff was to be more Swiss rigorous. Remember, I'd known the Beat poets, writers, artists, dope fiends, and fakes, who had taught the young hippies, and had fled all that. Armin was my master. His eyes were in my head. My clients just accepted that and they were amazed when I started winning design competitions.

Let's talk about supergraphics. Architectural writers jumped on the idea of supergraphics and developed various theories around it. Can you say what you understand by the term?

For me, supergraphics was an opportunity to be an artist again, to paint on big white walls, from wall to wall, and from wall to ceiling, and to do what I wanted to do without the daily office grind of clients telling me what they wanted from me. Charles Moore talked and wrote of supergraphics being the deconstruction of the white walls of modernism, the beginning of postmodernism—but he did this only after I had painted my stuff on his walls at *The Sea Ranch*.

No one mentioned art history, or that Picasso and Braque had pasted and painted words into their paintings in 1911–12, and Juan Gris in 1914. Or that Van Doesburg painted selected white walls of building interiors primary colors in 1928–29. As far as I know, neither the cubist artists nor de Stijl's architects painted words directly onto walls, although printed posters and announcements were pasted on every kiosk, building, and cafe wall in Europe.

In the 1960s, in the company of Frank's friends and various Europeans, I was too insecure and not educated enough to write. I was afraid to talk, let alone have theories until the 1970s when I returned to the University of California (UC) in Berkeley. I learned to write at UC, in the History and Philosophy departments. They taught us how to research. And whatever we decided to write about, they only cared that we wrote it well, simply, and with the minimum of short and exact words.

In 1969, before I closed my office and went back to UC, Mildred Friedman of the Walker Art Center asked me to write and illustrate a design quarterly magazine about my supergraphics. I froze and asked my new young architecture professor husband Dan Solomon to join me in the project. We made *EASYCOME, EASY GO*. I thought up the title and designed the publication, and he wrote the words—words about the 1960s, when everything was disposable: disposable champagne glasses, disposable paper dresses, disposable cardboard houses, disposable wives, disposable babies, and disposable art; i.e. supergraphics.

Now, too late, I realized what I should have done. I should have designed the entire magazine front to back with only one word: SUPERGRAPHICS. One letterform on each page.

Now that I happily live alone with my dog I have time to think, and I realize that I was always so frantically busy making money to live, taking care of my daughters, and worrying about men, that I never had time to think, least of all about my work. At my office I just drew up the first design I visualized so that I could leave

Kaiser Channel 44, KBHT TV Studio, San Francisco, California.
© Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

to pick up Chloe or Nellie from school, shop for dinner, cook and clean, play wife, and do all the stuff that working mothers do.

The work you did for *The Sea Ranch* development in Northern California in 1967 is credited with starting the trend for super-graphics. Can you describe how you came to do this project and what informed your designs?

I got the job to paint those walls because the Charles Moore/Bill Turnbull "Swim and Tennis Locker Rooms" were almost completed. They were over budget, and the white painted interior walls of the locker rooms looked unfinished. I was having an affair with the client developer Al Boeke. Paint was cheap. Al hired me to paint the interiors of the two buildings.

In the 1940s, as a young art student at the California School of Fine Art (now SF Art Institute), I'd painted big canvases with a California abstract expressionist exuberance only later to be crammed by Armin into Swiss straight lines and primary colors. At *The Sea Ranch* my California dancer's body didn't hesitate to paint big shapes (now Swiss straight lines and primary colors) on any big wall I could find.

Your use of color at *The Sea Ranch* was bold and vivid. You have said you were influenced by, amongst other things, New York comic book artists. Can you talk about your use of color at *The Sea Ranch*?

Did I say comic books? Not really. That was the pop artists. I was directly influenced by what I'd learned in Basel: the white and black shapes of Helvetica type, straight lines and geometric shapes, bold colors directly out of the paint can. And perhaps I remembered the early pop art I'd seen in 1951 at the ICA Gallery in London and at Eduardo Paolozzi's studio.

I think I always saw things as multifaceted, multimedia, and multidimensional, in books, in things that happened by chance, and in design. Regarding 3-D art, I had studied sculpture. Once I had sculpted a ballet dancer on an armature. It was rather big and I wanted to paint her with pink tights, black hair, and red lips. My teacher said, "No. You must not mix medias." And I did what I was told then. But that must have been in 1946 when I was a 14. I'd travelled in Europe, seen most of the best architecture, knew a lot of architects, and lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright house in Hillsborough. I didn't talk much, but I saw things.

Original Cal-Expo Water Tower, Sacramento, California, 1968.
© Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

The Sea Ranch, California. © Courtesy
of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

The architecture writer C. Ray Smith—the man who coined the term supergraphics—says this about your work: "Any number of critics felt that designer Solomon's work was stronger, more effective, and more communicative than the supergraphic designs aimed at spatial manipulation by means of gestalt." If he's right, this suggests that your intentions were purely decorative. Was this the case?

At *The Sea Ranch*, I was playing with painting and with space, moving through the space; one arrow up the stairs, another arrow down the stairs, moving with the striped blue wave from a far corner of the lowest level of the space to the highest ceiling point at the top of the space, making the Pacific wave outside the building crash over and into the building, and making a person run up the stairs to get there.

Subsequently to the development of supergraphics as a purely architectural practice, it has become one of the main ways in which commercial messages are relayed to consumers. We are surrounded by giant commercial graphics in the urban environment. What is your view on this development? Do you see a link between your pioneering *Sea Ranch* work and giant advertising billboards?

I see a relation between supergraphics and billboards: both are painted or pasted onto the exteriors of building. But I see relationships between everything. In the 1960s, architect Robert Venturi (a friend of Charles Moore at Yale) declared: "Architecture is a sign, a decorated box, a decorated box selling something." Venturi liked Vegas: the giant neon signs covering the warehouse-box-like buildings built in 1950s Vegas. Every hunk of architecture sells something, whether with fancy materials; particular windows, doors, and other symbols, or plastered with billboards or painted words. The street front of each building is a façade. The white columns of a temple sell God, banking, or know-how. Granite sells wealth. Glass walls sell power. Store windows brightly and filled with diamonds or Levi's, sell whatever to whomever. Friendly porches outside are supposed to sell friendly people inside.

      Al Boeke wanted me to paint my Rams Head Sea Ranch logo on the exterior of Esherick's General Store so that all the cars and trucks on Highway 1, along the Pacific Coast, would see it and get the idea that inside were nice young folk honestly selling second-homes like the nice old folks that used to paint ads for FEED or AJAX on the sides of their roadside Marin and Sonoma County barns. I thought supergraphics should be on interiors only.

My house in San Francisco presents a different selling job. The ordinary four-story building was carefully covered with white painted horizontal wood boards in keeping with this old San Francisco neighborhood, but when you walk up the original wooden exterior stairs and open the door you see a gutted and remodeled glass and white painted two-story Corbusier Maison Citrohan architectural space. An invisible exterior covers a sock-it-to-you interior.

You have written that you were not greatly affected by the publicity surrounding your *The Sea Ranch* work. This makes me think that you didn't realize what an important piece of work it was. Another designer might have sensed that they were onto a rich source of commissions and exploited it further.

Thank you. At the time, no one said I had done "an important piece of work." You say it now and it is lovely to hear someone say it. Supergraphics was easy to copy. Walking past an enormous vulgar SELLING OUT CHEAP supergraphic sign on Fifth Avenue, my friend, the architect Robert A.M. Stern turned to me and said, "It's all your fault."

You had two brushes with design institutions in the US that have become beacons of modernist graphic design. You did some work for Geigy, and Massimo Vignelli, then at Unimark, who offered you a job which you declined. Can you talk about these experiences?

I was in New York working at Geigy to make some money while I waited for Heinz Hossdorf to get a divorce and marry me. I just wanted to get back to Switzerland and be with my daughter Chloe who was at the Rudolph Steiner School in Avrona. I was more concerned with all this than my career. My assignment at Geigy was to design an alphabet based on Helvetica for pill packages that had already been designed by someone else. Not very exciting. I did the work for a few months and returned to Heinz and more waiting. As for Unimark, I feared that if I worked there, I'd go to hell in New York.

You also seem to have become disillusioned with graphic design and what you call the hypocrisy surrounding it. Can you talk about this?

I worked too hard, always alone, being frantic not famous. I liked working alone in my office with my sheets of white board and tubes of black and white paint, but I wasn't good at the self-promotion game. There was an economic downturn in the 1970s. After the supergraphic flurry of press I seemed to get less interesting jobs, not more. Charles Moore and Bill Turnbull became aloof when I married Dan [Solomon]. It seems that I got too much press that didn't mention Charles. He hired other designers for his next projects and publicized his *Sea Ranch* buildings painted with my supergraphic without crediting me.

Opportunities were offered (Venice Biennale, New York, and Berlin) but I had Nellie in San Francisco, and I was trying to make my second marriage work. At that time, I didn't write or talk about design. I worked. Clever verbal architects used my skills to promote their projects, mostly real estate developments. I designed good design covers for many questionable commodities. I worked fast and well and my projects came in at or below the budget. I flattered the men, got paid, and went home to cook dinner. I taught at Yale, Harvard, and UC Berkeley. I gave assignments and crits but didn't have much to say.

It was 1973 and Nellie was one-year old. I closed my office and took her to the swimming pool every day. When she was four I returned to UC to study what I hadn't learned in Basel: the myths and misinterpretations behind the messages of the modern movement. I read mostly French philosophers, cleverly discrediting the superficial visual covers I was so skilled at designing; the deceits I'd wrought on the world by camouflaging guileful land developments with good design covers, and learned that to design is to do the work of the devil. My only drawings were lecture notes on 8.5"-by-11" sheets of paper.

My History Department thesis—*Visual Politics in the Piazza*—dealt with site-specific performances as visual propaganda utilizing great art, grand architecture, and supergraphics: the parade of words on posters, banners, flags, street signs, and in colored lights; shiny boots and crisp uniforms reflected in klieg lights, fireworks rising above and confetti falling on choreographed crowds wowing the audience; the Pope's spectacular ceremonies influencing Italian Futurist mass demonstrations, and Futurists performances influencing visual tricks employed by their friend Mussolini; and Hitler one-upped them all with the best lightshow, parades, logo, flags, and supergraphic performances. That was fun, although it was never published, but my thesis influenced my professor Dr. Peter Selz to write *Visual Politics in California and Beyond* (University of California Press, 2006).

The Sea Ranch, California. © Courtesy
of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

You mentioned teaching at Yale. I'm intrigued by the "elevator project" you set your students. Could you describe this?

The insides of the metal elevators were the only space in the Yale Architectural building not built of stone—and stone was regarded as sacred! So we did elevators instead. The students loved the fun and freedom of playing with colors and non-sacred paint while I kidded them that they might learn more about building in an engineering class.

You went on to work as a landscape designer. Does your early training in graphic design inform your work in landscape design?

Of course. Everything influences everything. But I went into landscape design and theory instead of architecture since my husband didn't want me working at his office or as an architect in competition with him. I did reinforce his planning work by drawing trees around his projects and with the book *Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden*.

You have said that you went back to *The Sea Ranch* in 2005 and found that your work had been painted over. How did you feel about this?

Terrible.

Interview taken from Adrian Shaughnessy's *Supergraphics. Transforming Space: Graphic Design for Walls, Buildings & Spaces* (Unit Editions, 2010).
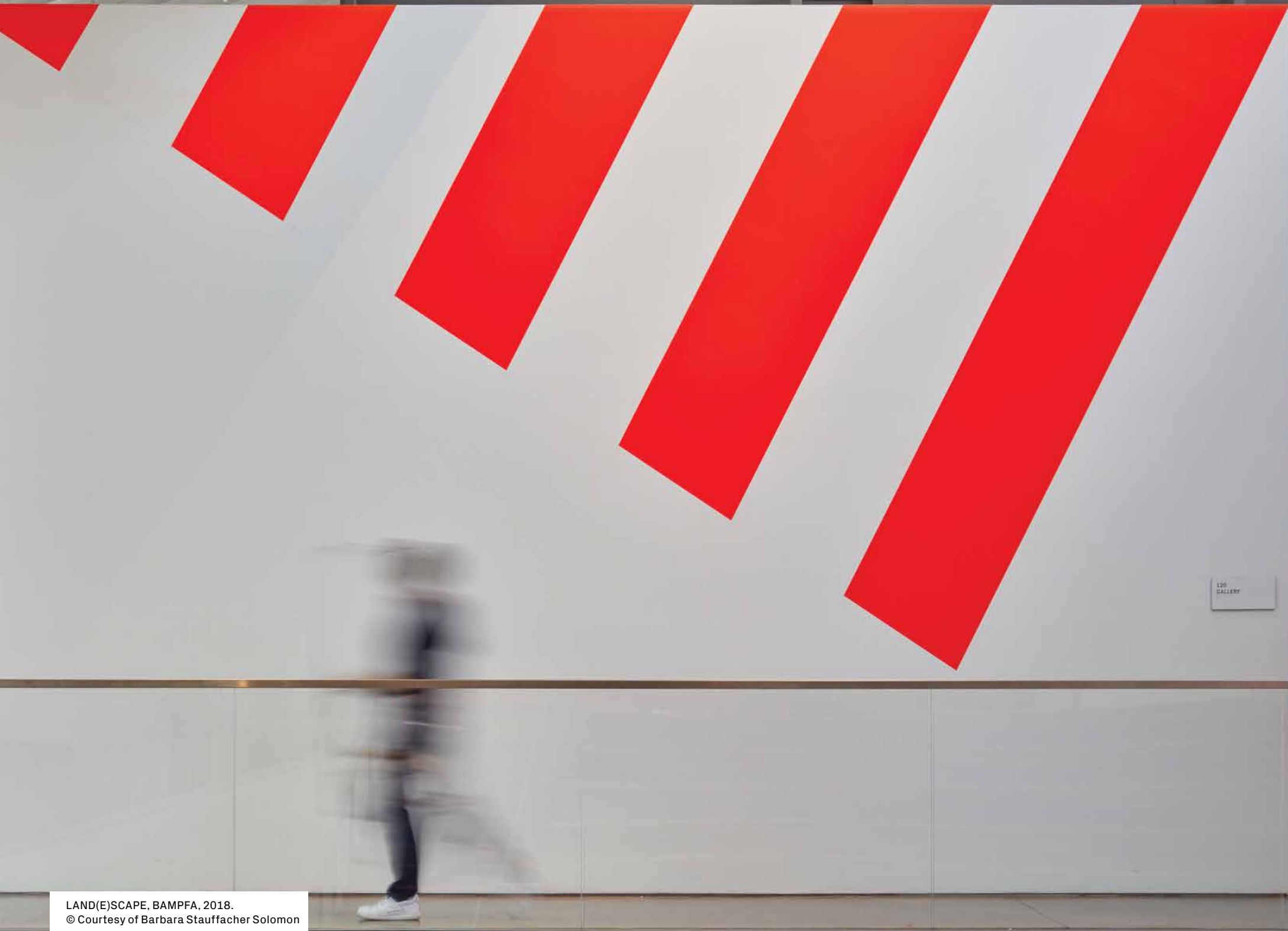
LAND(E)SCAPE, BAMPFA, 2018.
© Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

In anticipation of the December 2018 exhibition *The Sea Ranch: Architecture, Environment, and Idealism* at SFMOMA, Barbara Stauffacher Solomon was invited back in October 2018 to *The Sea Ranch* to paint a new version of her original supergraphics. The original two-story space had been remodeled into one level but the high shed roofline remained. Bobbie writes how much she enjoys the present political implications of the original giant blue wave. So, with the painter Nellie King Solomon, her daughter, doing the painting, they made a new giant blue wave breaking into a new giant W.

LAND(E)SCAPE, BAMPFA, 2018. © Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon: My new work.

It has been sixty-two years since the original supergraphics. In 2018, I am able to free lines and colors not only from the frame but from the walls.

LAND(E)SCAPE (2018) on the Art Wall at BAMPFA which can be walked into seen from the street and freely walked into by any passerby.

New Sea Ranch supergraphics where the viewer not only walks into art but can take off her clothes and shower in the giant blue wave. 🟠

The Sea Ranch, California. © Courtesy of Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

Looking to Introduce Something Inconvenient

Stewart Hicks
interviews Jimenez Lai

Photographs by
Brian Guido

Since founding Bureau Spectacular in 2008, Jimenez Lai has been exploring the relationship between cartoons and architecture. Cartoons such as *Out of Water* and *Point Clouds* and projects like *The Briefcase House* and *White Elephant*, acquired by the Museum of Modern Art in New York, set a fruitful and successful path for the office from the beginning that later continued with a series of acclaimed drawings, installations, exhibitions, and publications.

Since moving from Chicago to Los Angeles in the fall of 2014, his work has continued to evolve in its focus and scale, creating projects such as the installation *Tower of Twelve Stories* for Coachella, the fashion boutique Frankie, the *Pool Party* proposal for the MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program, and a collaboration with Swarovski, who named him one of the 2017 Designers of the Future.

Stewart Hicks of Design With Company talked with Lai about the evolution of his practice, the influence that moving to L.A. has had in his work, and his quest to make people to question their normalcy.

Stewart Hicks: In the firm description of Bureau Spectacular, you use the word "story" five times to define your practice and its productions. If you had to divide the evolution of your practice as a series of acts in a story, what would they be and how would you define the current act in the Bureau Spectacular story?

Jimenez Lai: The first act would be cartoons about architecture, where cartoon is the medium and architecture is the subject matter. The second act is cartoonish architecture, where architecture is the medium and cartoon is the sensibility. Now we are into cartoons on architecture, where architecture is still the medium, but we are introducing humans into built constructions to complete the stories. At a base level, the third act includes getting things built at a range of scales. The third act also overlaps with the other two. As far back as *The Briefcase House* project, I had this idea that if I can live in it, my life would become a story, or whoever lives there will fill in the blanks, and therefore, there will be cartoons on architecture. This is independent of the scale we are working, and is true for big things and small things, for light fixtures and furniture, and for full-retail environments.

As you mentioned, in your work, at least at a certain stage, you were the primary occupant, both in the graphic stories and living within the things you built. This collapses the subject and author of the architecture. Inserting yourself as the character seems like an important hinge point between building objects that require the alternative reality of a narrative, and ones that live in our world and operate on those that inhabit it. You construct a space to shape you and operate on you.

As you know, early in our careers it is difficult to do work quickly and land clients. I thought if I were to force the matter it would have to be me, I had to be the test subject. It reminds me of that line from Morris Lapidus, "If you create the stage setting and it's grand, everyone who enters will play their part." Lapidus designed fancy hotel lobbies. He designed staircases in a way where the sectional relationship would give someone a higher ground, someone else a lower ground, and there was bound to be a love-struck moment with that kind of sectional relationship. The selection
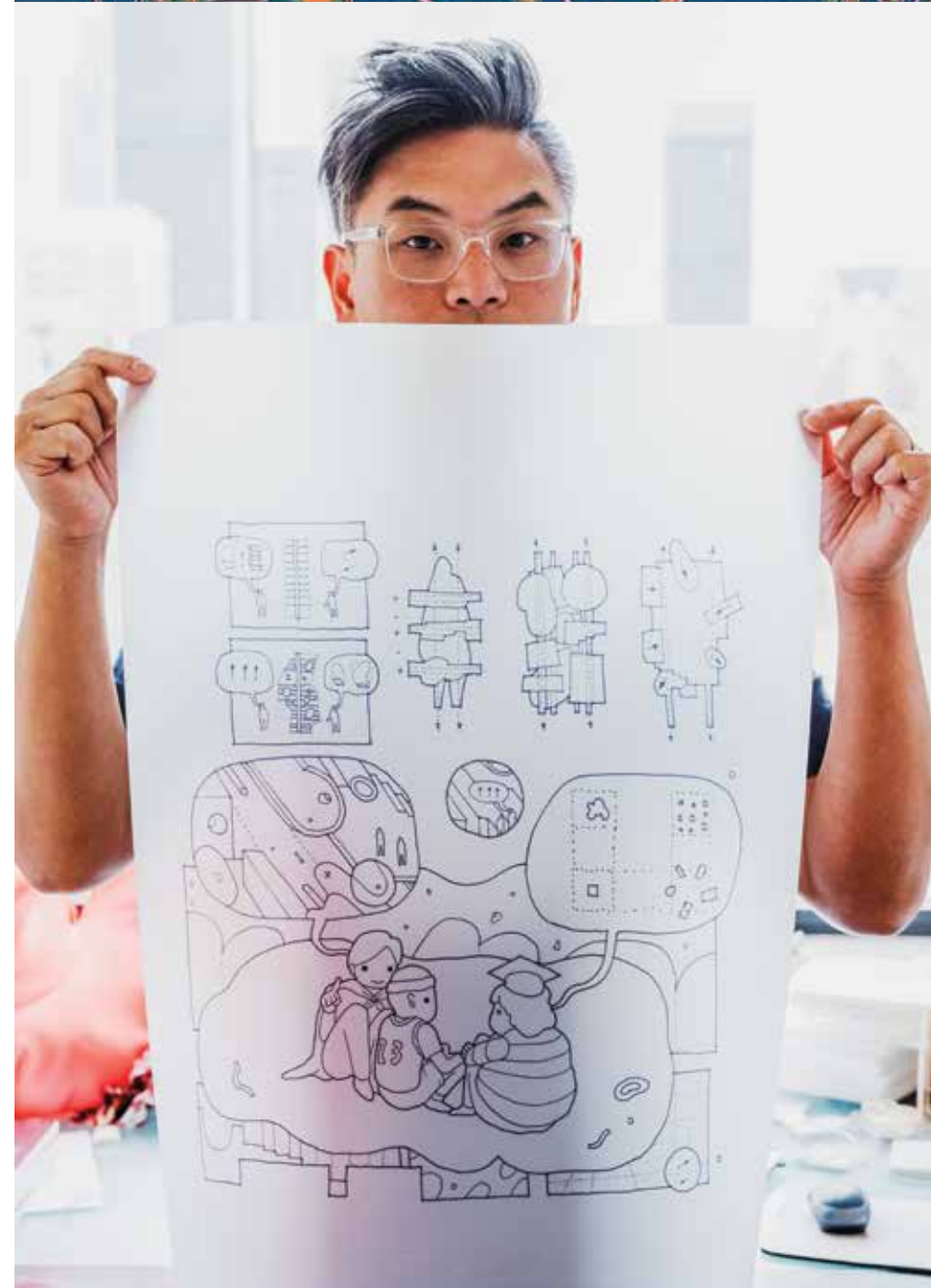
of materiality and color becomes a backdrop that compels the individual to behave slightly differently.

The Briefcase House did influence me. My personality changed as a result of living in it. I was less of a hermit before *The Briefcase House*, but it really compelled me to stay in there and turn the world off.

Do you think your experience in Los Angeles has similarly changed the way you are thinking about space, architecture, and this question of your own behavior?

Definitely. I have been making a running list of the ways this occurred. For instance, people's relationship with the color white in Los Angeles is fascinating. I see it in Andrew Atwood, I see it in Erin Besler, I see it in Andrew Kovacs, I see it in Mark Lee and Sharon Johnston. When you look hard enough you can even see it in instances of Greg Lynn, Michael Maltzan, and Hernan Diaz Alonso. Peter Zellner's building career is filled with white. I could go on and on. There is something about L.A. that makes architects design things that are white. Our Taiwan Pavilion for the Venice Biennale in 2014 was incredibly colorful. It felt like the right location to do something colorful, but everything turned white after moving to L.A. in 2014.

Another aspect is the way that the city is laid out. It is difficult for people to be around people, so you really have to make a point to show up to destinations. There is a lot of investment in meeting. People are always far from each other and every meeting requires getting into a car. In New York or Chicago you can almost walk to see your friends. Even though Chicago is quite big, there are only a few spots people go. In L.A., there are so many more places people meet to convene. Also, most people arrive at a place and there is already a sense of investment. It is as if the place already owes them something for getting there.

What it the role of architecture in that environment? Do buildings participate in this investment in forming collectives? Is it a stage, a corral, or a spectacle as an instigator in meeting events?

I would use the word event in the sense of how Bernard Tschumi might use the term, if we are reading or misreading L.A. as an event-centric environment. You go to a place and you don't even go into buildings. You are outside of buildings. I think that is very interesting, because people aren't inside that much. A garden, or a parking lot, or something that is next to the address seems

to be where events happen. For this reason, everything seems to be made of papier-mâché. The building is mostly a garnish for exterior spaces.

Do you think that has anything to do with the fascination with whiteness?

I think so. For instance, in museum interiors, you don't want color competing with the art, therefore you have a lot of white. It's also partly for environmental reasons because white is much better at reflecting light and absorbs less heat.

The pool has been a feature in a few of your recent projects. How does it figure into this third act of your career? I am thinking specifically about your *Pool Party* proposal for the Young Architects Program at MoMA PS1 and your *Pool House* project.

Featuring pools in our work goes beyond using them only for their athletic use. It's the cultural association and life around pools that interests us. In our presentation to PS1, we cited a few movie references about what pools do to people, what pools make people think. They are places for coming of age, getting in trouble, and falling in love. They provide a romantic space, a fantasy space. Being around pools has that power.

And for the *Pool House*, which predates the *Pool Party* project by about fourteen months, I had been thinking a lot about skateboarding in a pool, where there is the shocking availability of doubly curved spaces in almost everyone's backyard. People who are interested in digital architecture kill themselves to produce doubly curved surfaces when they are already at everybody's house. As a person interested in digital architecture, and in the act of reappropriating ready-mades, I thought that the semiotic power of the pool would be amazing and great to use. The idea of being under a pool, next to a pool, or having a pool on the roof of a house can breed all sorts of misbehaviors.

Come to think of it, you had something to do with it. If I had never been to your house in Urbana, IL, maybe this wouldn't have been in my mind. When I visited you in that house with a pool in the middle, I kept thinking about the safety issue. Like, do people trip and fall into their pool?

I guess earlier in your career you were scared of pools within a domestic space as a safety hazard. In this new phase, your instinct is "Yeah, let's go under it, and on it!" This reminds me a

little of Charles Moore and his interest in water, domestic spaces, etc. Water for Moore was both symbolic and physically immersive. It is something with deep cultural associations as well as deeply corporeal and sensory.

That's true. I just want to use the word "semiotic" again. Going back to that day at your house. Nobody got wet that day, right? Nobody went into the pool. But its very presence produced a culture around it. Without activating it, it's already sort of activated.

It goes back to the idea that architecture in L.A. is like a garnish to spawn different types of activities around it. The pool, for you, does that in a very particular way. You don't need to be in it, its presence changes the way people behave. But then there is also the materiality of the pool, like in your MoMA proposal, where it is like a light filter in a more phenomenological way. There is a heavy object floating above you that filters light in a dynamic way. Thus, the unfamiliarity you are achieving through your use of pools is multilayered.

My partner, Joanna Grant, and I worked on the project together, and I think these layers come from the act of collaborating with her. She worked closely with Forrest Meggers at Princeton University. In the project, we talked about sun angles and evaporative cooling. I mean, for me, the only thing that I was interested in, with regards to the environmental effects, was, how do you spray rainbow on people with the refractive qualities of a fine mist?

With all these lessons on how space constructs its occupants, what kind of subjects are you constructing with your own architecture now?

We are always looking to introduce something inconvenient: a room that rotates once an hour, or a bubble-ish room where you might slip off so you have to hang on and sit in a certain way. These kinds of inconveniences are interesting to me. If life is convenient, flexible, and typical, then we get those types of people: convenient and typical people who are not marred by things that would seem to be signs of madness. People who display signs of madness are so much more interesting.

Do you want to turn people mad?

I would like people to question their normalcy. I also use the word "madness" not so lightly. I am talking about the way Foucault would frame the word "mad," in terms of the medical norm. If someone was outside of the norm, it means that society has a norm. If we introduce something that challenges people, they become aware of the norm and its deviance in ways such as the presented inconveniences.

Inconveniences? That sounds so Eisenman-esque! "If it doesn't hurt, you're not thinking about it enough. If you don't hit your head on it, it means you're not contemplating hitting your head." Do you see it in those terms? Because I wouldn't. I would say your work is surprising, but it doesn't beat people up until they go mad. Maybe it delights people until they go mad, tickles them until they go crazy.

Maybe I can frame it in a slightly different way. A literary/cinematic reference with which I identify is *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. I most appreciate the character of McMurphy played by Jack Nicholson. He played mad. He wanted to go to an institution where people are trying to become normalized, and his presence is there to remind them there is joy in the madness. However, he is faced with Nurse Ratched, and the weight of society which always reminds those who seek joy that life is largely joyless.

You produce atypical experiences that introduce joy through the irregular rather than inconvenient experiences. Is this type of conceptual framework true for all the scales at which you work: furniture, lighting, buildings, etc.?

Yes and no. I am interested in the difference between how a designer would approach this question versus a typical architectural response. I think the fact that we are having this conversation indicates that we care about framing what we do, and we also care about the discourse at large and which architects are doing what. Designers don't want to care. In fact, it's unattractive to overthink it. It is a totally different approach. I think it's already in my DNA at this point to overthink it, but it is interesting to see how they behave.

As designers and architects, the work of Archizoom, Superstudio, and the Memphis Group demanded that out of people at all scales. They demanded people to be uncomfortable or to

become suddenly aware of how they sit, what the backing is, or what the material is. Maybe there was a time where that probably happened. There is a very sophisticated joke somewhere about that, where objects do ask questions.

How does this disciplinary awareness change how you design and shape what you appreciate in other's work?

It is silly to be original. Original artists sound bad. Recently, I was very big on Lady Gaga. I thought her practice was really interesting, in that you can clearly hear what she's trying to do. Identifying these sounds and histories while listening is super interesting. There is even a sense of narcissism involved with originality, and that is unappealing. I don't like narcissists.

In response to that, collaborative models of practice like Superstudio and Archizoom are making a serious comeback these days. Collective-LOK and T+E+A+M for example are popular and productive practices right now. Michael Kubo is even researching the history of collaboration between firms. In a sense, you prefigured collaboration as an important model in your practice with your name by calling yourself a bureau. Your career model might be: design a "pool" (like *The Briefcase House*), dive in, and try to get everyone to dive in with you.

Designing modes of collaboration is a metaproject of ours. In the past, I would have said "We are a garage band that keeps changing drummers." We had a string of incredibly amazing people that I got to work with. But in the past year, I have focused on collaborating with Joanna Grant, and the process for our PS1 proposal this year offered a new and interesting model that ended up being very satisfying.

We drew a roadmap. On day one, we looked back at the last eighteen years of projects that won the competition and the projects that didn't win. We set up interviews with as many firms that participated as possible to chat with them about pro tips. From there, our roadmap included finding a graphic designer as well as a consultant that could help us with fundraising from the beginning. By the end, we needed a movie and, if we needed a movie, we needed people for filmmaking that we didn't currently have access to. We needed to know a filmmaker and we needed to know the right filmmaker. We needed a structural engineer and so forth.

It's almost like assembling a bank heist, and, I have to say, we did it. We did not end up winning, but we really did put a great

team together and pulled off the heist. It was such a satisfying thing to do. We had an environmental consulting team who were advising us about sun shading and water collection. We had a person who was just on the phone all the time trying to get pools donated and we got letters from owners of companies who were willing to give up pools. We had all kinds of people who were a part of this effort.

Your new firm model is like casting a classic bank heist film where each character is an expert at one thing, all coming together and making something happen.

Looking at the roadmap of previous eras, Memphis only lasted around five years. Superstudio was maybe five or six years. Archizoom was even shorter. We have already aged out practicing like Superstudio. We are past that point. Now, I have to look at other models. We can't be a garage band anymore. It has to be a bank heist. ●
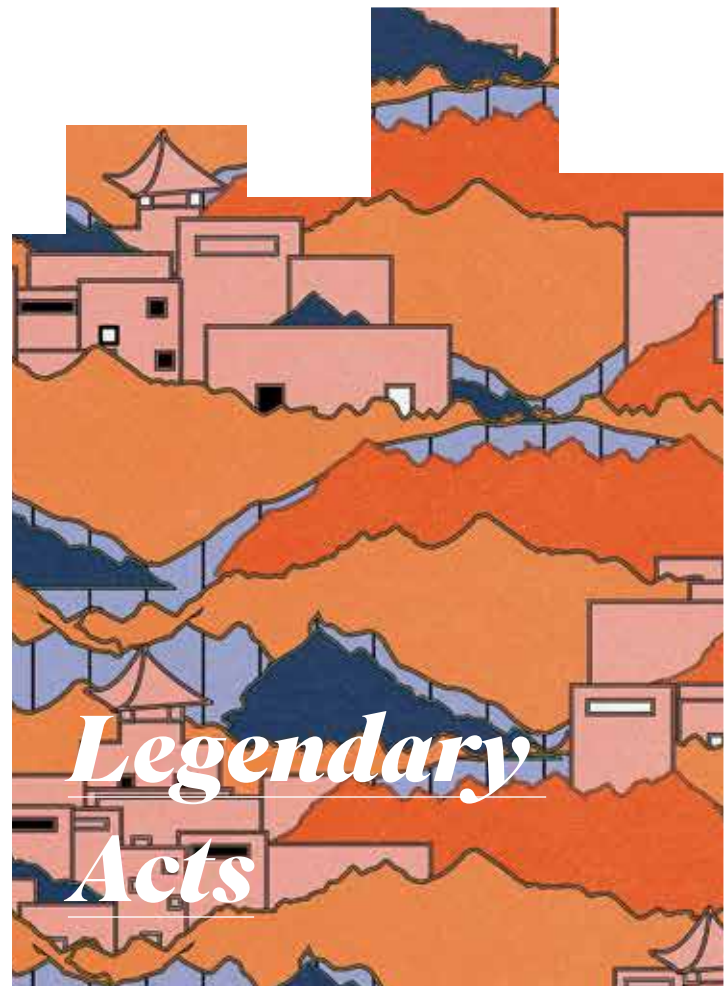
Legendary Acts

Essay by Ellie Abrons

Shangri-La. Illustration by Dylan Cole Studio for the 2004 film "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow." © Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

I.

In 1933, James Hilton published the novel *Lost Horizon*, which would go on to sell millions of copies as the first mass-market paperback and be one of the most popular American novels of the twentieth century. The legacy of *Lost Horizon* is not its plotline or its characters, but its setting—the quasi-fictional paradise of Shangri-La. This utopia was not intended to be a depiction of any real place, but it nonetheless spawned decades of speculation, expeditions, television specials, and geopolitical maneuverings that continue to this day. The legend of Shangri-La that Hilton manufactured took on a narrative life of its own, gathering up our collective desire to bring paradise into existence and folding it into new, shared cultural realities.

The same year that *Lost Horizon* was published, the first photograph of the Loch Ness Monster was printed in a daily newspaper. A year later, in 1934, the famous "surgeon's photograph" showed the beast's smooth head and elongated neck, catapulting the story of the monster into popular culture and catalyzing an industry built around the continual proving and disproving of the existence of this legendary beast. The legends of both Shangri-La and the Loch Ness Monster are still thriving today, more than eighty years later. A lesson for architecture is embedded in their success as narrative devices and cultural icons.

"Surgeon's Photograph" of the Loch Ness Monster, published in the *Daily Mail* in 1934.

A legend is distinct from other forms of folklore. Unlike a fable, it does not try to convey a moral. Unlike a myth, it is not an origin story or an explanation of a phenomenon. And unlike a fairy tale, if a legend isn't actually believed, it is at least *believable*. It has a slippery relationship to truth whereby it *could* be true, but it *need not be*. As such, a legend's purpose is not to communicate facts. Rather, a legend is a reflection of both the culture that produces it and the one that perpetuates it, illustrating our changing concerns and anxieties as it slides across cultures and time. What follows is a reflection on the merits of the legend as a model for architectural performance and a way to think about how architecture might go down in history.

II.

The American publication of *Lost Horizon* in 1933 coincided with the Great Depression. The prospect of a geographic, temporal, or even imaginary place that offered permanent happiness and immortality resonated with the book's readers; it sustained hope in a time of immense suffering. In the decades since, the conception and significance of Shangri-La's paradise has evolved. Today, it has more down-to-earth and didactic concerns. Recognizing the potential for tourism revenue, various provinces in China and the Tibet Autonomous Region have claimed to be the site of the "real" Shangri-La and invested heavily in their marketing. In 2001, a state-sponsored contest resulted in the Tibetan town of Zhongdian being officially renamed Shangri-La. Now understood to be a commodity, it no longer matters that none of these geographic locations *actually* offer the utopia that Hilton originally described. Instead, the legend has morphed from one that entertains the plausibility of eternal joy to one that accepts paradise as a mere fantasy, and insists on offering itself for sale as the next best thing.

Located on the other side of the world is another instantiation of the Shangri-La legend. The Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, Texas provides a more didactic dimension. Inspired by Hilton's mystical site, H.J. Lutcher Stark created the center in the early 1940s, borne from a desire to construct his own slice of paradise in East Texas. After a snowstorm devastated the center in the 1950s it was closed, and remained so for fifty years. Today, the center has been reborn, and in 2008 it reopened as a nature preserve and demonstration site for conservation and sustainable practices. It is the first project in Texas to earn LEED Platinum certification and touts itself as "one of the most earth-friendly projects in the world."[1] Paradise no longer points to Buddhist-inspired visions of inner peace and immortality. Now, it's a much more urgent and despairing notion: to prevent the end of human civilization by way of global warming. In this way, the legend of Shangri-La endures as a respite from, and vessel for, our shared anxieties and struggles as they shift over time, moving from the economic collapse of the Great Depression to the very real challenges of climate change today.

1. As stated on the Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center website. "About Us," Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center, accessed July 21, 2016, http://starkculturalvenues.org/shangrilagardens/about.

Similarly within architecture, OMA's seminal building, *Maison à Bordeaux* (1998), illustrates a legend-like ability to soak up and encompass shifting sociocultural associations over time. From the outset, the project has been described as an update to Le Corbusier's famous dictum, "A house is a machine for living in." This relationship stems from the architect's own description of the villa[2] as well as the incredible number of actual machines that populate the house—most notably the room-sized platform lift, which transports occupants between floors and serves as an office in and of itself. It should be noted that OMA's machines serve a practical purpose in accommodating a partially paralyzed, wheelchair-bound client. But it cannot be denied that the architect was working intentionally on the legacy of Le Corbusier in any case. This emphasis on the machine is important because it highlights the radical reorientation necessary to understand the project in its current conception—a thoroughly humanist site for the formation of new social relationships.

2. On their website, OMA states, "The movement of the elevator continuously changes the architecture of the house. A machine is its heart." "Maison à Bordeaux," OMA, accessed July 21, 2016, http://oma.eu/projects/maison-a-bordeaux.

In 2012, the designer Petra Blaisse intervened in the *Maison à Bordeaux* through the use of textiles. The bold insertion of curtains and floor coverings profoundly changed the nature of the house's interior spaces and opened up the building to an entirely new set of associations. The motorized hum of pistons and actuators was replaced by the whisper of cool breezes and gauzy sunshine. The legend of the insular, machinic shelter for a broken man is now transformed into an open-air parlor for communing with the world. Writing of Blaisse's work in the architecture magazine *Domus*, Niklas Maak describes the space as one that refers to "Bauhaus ghosts," "darker shades of the earth and forest," "oilskin," "1970s children's toys," and "the deformed surfaces of a glossy object, or a car." He conjures the entryways of North African souks and the heavy, velvet curtains of a performance stage.[3] And with that, Blaisse's lightweight additions force a total reinterpretation of the house: from the solitary to the social; from the tragic to the luxurious; from the pragmatic to the utopian. Like Shangri-La, *Maison à Bordeaux* assimilates shifting cultural contexts, enduring as an architectural icon both for its status as canonical precedent and for its ability to reflect a contemporary condition.

3. Niklas Maak, "Maison à Bordeaux: A Textile Revisitation," *Domus* 966 (February 2013): 96–105.

Photograph by Hans Werlemann © OMA

"Bordeaux Revisited," Bordeaux, France, 2011–2012 by Petra Blaisse with Peter Niessen, Barbara Pais and Francesca Sartori. © Inside Outside

III.

Legends are open to debate because they exist at the periphery of truth. Their origins, their status, and their veracity are always in flux, caught in a continual cycle of proof and disproof, of denial and affirmation. Images of the Loch Ness Monster, for example, have been proven time and time again to be the result of hoaxes, illusions, and downright willful delusion. And yet, as recently as last year, newspaper articles were raising the question of the beast's existence.[4] In fact, cryptozoology—searching for animals whose existence have not (yet) been proven—is a vibrant and active field of study. (If Wikipedia can be offered as evidence: it currently lists over 200 cryptids.) Each time scientists make an argument for the implausibility of a large creature such as the Loch Ness Monster existing undetected over such a long period of time without concern for breeding and food supply, true believers counter with a contorted "burden-of-proof" style argument: *just because we can't prove that it exists doesn't mean it doesn't exist*. There is no presumption of innocence, or in this case, nonexistence. And so the legend endures, spinning off a multimillion dollar tourist industry and countless expeditions, articles, television specials, and Internet comment streams. It's perplexing, really, that our culture would place such value in the perpetuation of this silly story about a large water beast in a remote region of Northern Scotland. (From where, one wonders, are these scientists getting their research dollars?) In part, it's the innocent fun had by indulging in childlike fantasies of monsters and beasts, but there's something much more serious at play as well. If the legend of the Loch Ness Monster once embodied man's anxieties about taming the wild (as a tale of man vs. beast), it now represents a larger cultural debate over scientific evidence and empiricism, where one person's truth clashes boldly against another's, and where, extended further, one person's climate change is another's conspiracy of big government to regulate our lives.

How, one might ask, can a building occur at the periphery of truth? How might it exist with one foot in the *real* and one in *fantasy*? It stands before us as stacks of brick, sheets of glass, and slabs of concrete. And yet, it is clear that architecture always exceeds what it literally *is*. Certainly arguments have been made in

4. Oliver Smith, "Has Google found the Loch Ness Monster?" *Telegraph*, April 21, 2015, accessed August 21, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/uk/scotland/11549549/Has-Google-found-the-Loch-Ness-Monster.html.

5. Underground, it turns out.

6. Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Charles Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier. *Five Architects: Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

the past for an architectural metaphysic of universality or transcendence. But here I'd like to substitute modes of essentialism for something more nuanced and consider what happens when architecture engages its own continual cycle between opposing dualities such as denial and affirmation, the new and the familiar, or the natural and the synthetic.

In 1975, the Argentinian architect Emilio Ambasz designed a house for a site in Cordoba, Spain—the *Casa de Retiro Espiritual*, or *House of Spiritual Retreat*. Published widely, the project is an astonishing one. Two stark, white, vertical walls form a ninety-degree corner and soar toward the sky. Two treacherous staircases traverse their expanse, meeting at an intricately carved mirador perched high above the landscape. At the base of the walls is a triangular courtyard, resolving the plan into a perfect square. Nearby, the site is narrowly sliced, revealing smoothly curved subterranean cavities and a staircase. But to where? And where is the house? Where would one sleep? Eat? Go to the bathroom?[5] The house does not rely on the expected marks of domestic space or on familiar architectural concepts of its time. It does not use vernacular or overt historical references, explore autonomous manipulations of architectural form, or lean on the tropes of high modernism. After all, 1975 is the year of *Five Architects*,[6] the era of Louis Kahn's *Yale Center for British Art* (1974), Richard Rogers's and Renzo Piano's *Centre Pompidou* (1971-77), Peter Eisenman's *House VI* (1975), and SOM's *Sears Tower (*1970-73). Instead, the project achieves an almost mythic quality, teetering between something we have never seen before and something eternally familiar. It is not radical in the sense of Superstudio's *Continuous Monument* (1969) or futuristic like Archigram's *Walking City* (1964). This version of the visionary is different because it is grounded in a world that we know. There are familiar elements like stairs and columns and doorways. There are courtyards and windows and walls. Ambasz does not obliterate tectonics, materiality, or ground; this is no tabula rasa or science-fictional future. And yet, it is maddeningly and seductively withdrawn. Its origins, its intentions, its veracity are withheld.

Like much of Ambasz's work, the project oscillates between being of the earth and of the sky, being of nature and being of man. The house simultaneously reaches upward and digs down, melts into the ground and violently marks its presence on the landscape. Collectively, these ambivalences, these willful

confusions, are the key to its endurance. It allows the house to remain at the forefront of our cultural imaginary, unable to settle neatly into known categories or classifications. It bounces between dualities, denying entrenchment and codification. Rather, it floats to the top, prolonging its presence in our psyche; a persistence proven by its construction on a site near Seville, Spain in 2004, almost thirty years after its conception.

IV.

The legend offers an approach to architecture that allows it to age gracefully, if not to stay young. It does this by demonstrating how something might be layered with new meanings or enfold new sociocultural associations over time and by showing how a nuanced relationship to reality or truth can enable the imaginary and the instantiated to coexist. Among architects today there is pervasive hand wringing over how architecture will remain relevant and vital as a source of culture and imagination. I'd like to suggest that architecture stop beating itself up, stop deferring our expertise and knowledge to other fields, and stop relinquishing our rightful claim to the visionary with apologies for taking up space and consuming resources. Indeed, sustainable practices are a must. So is clean water, social and reproductive justice, and economic equity. But instead of working on our culture's collective challenges through a negation of architecture, let's double down on our ability to superimpose fantasy with reality, physical encounters with conceptual intrigue. This is how architecture not only *imagines*, but *produces* unforeseen possibilities. Isn't that how we want to be remembered? ●
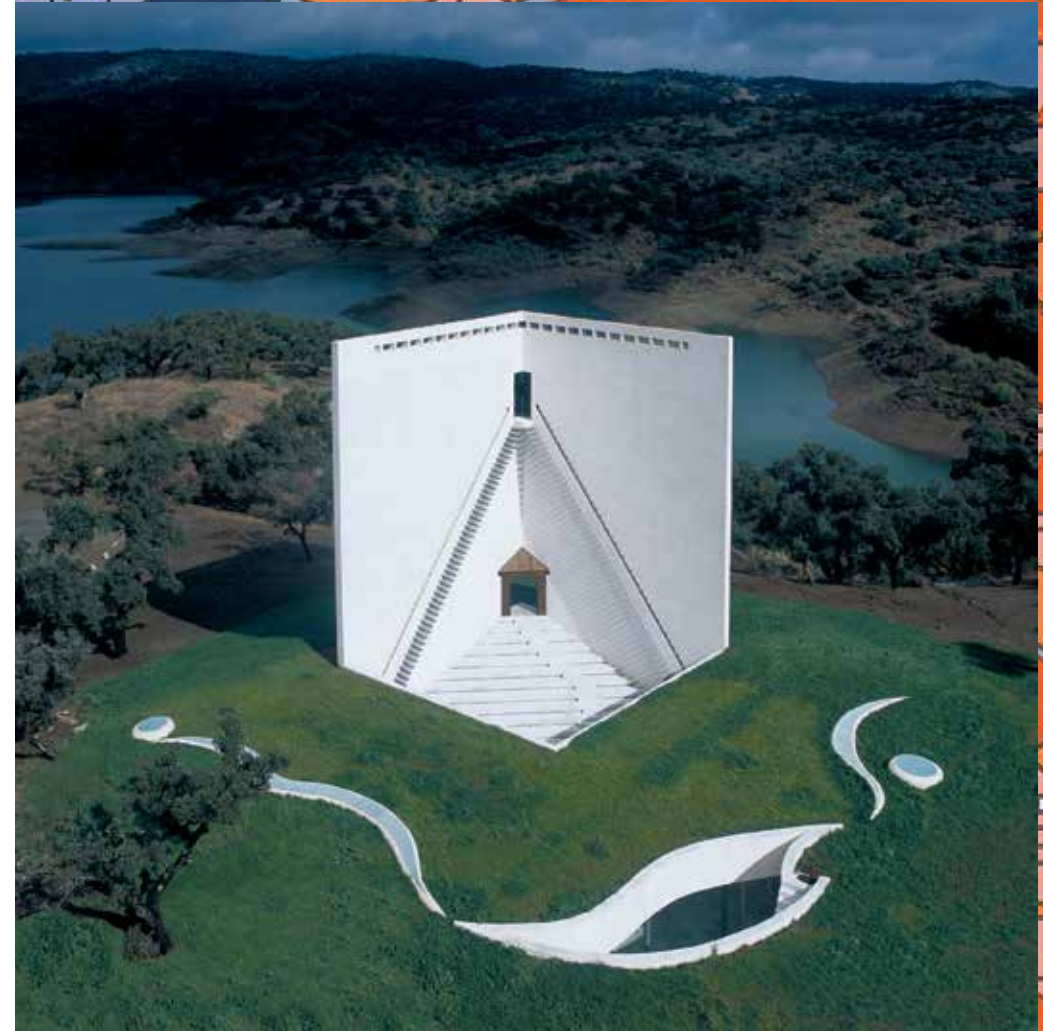
Casa de Retiro Espiritual, Seville, Spain, 1975. © Courtesy of Emilio Ambasz & Associates, Inc.

Dead Ringers in Stockholm's
urban fabric. © Norell/Rodhe

Dead Ringers

Project by Norell/Rodhe
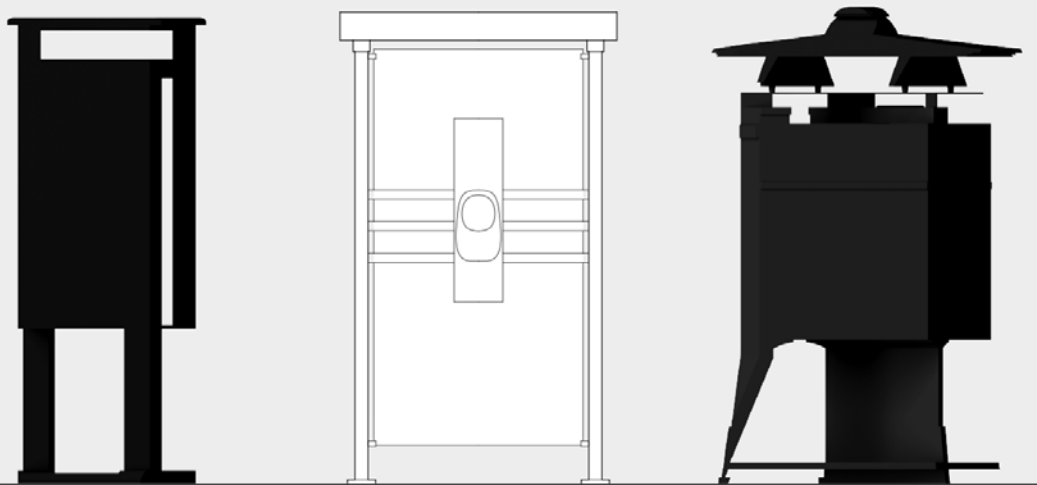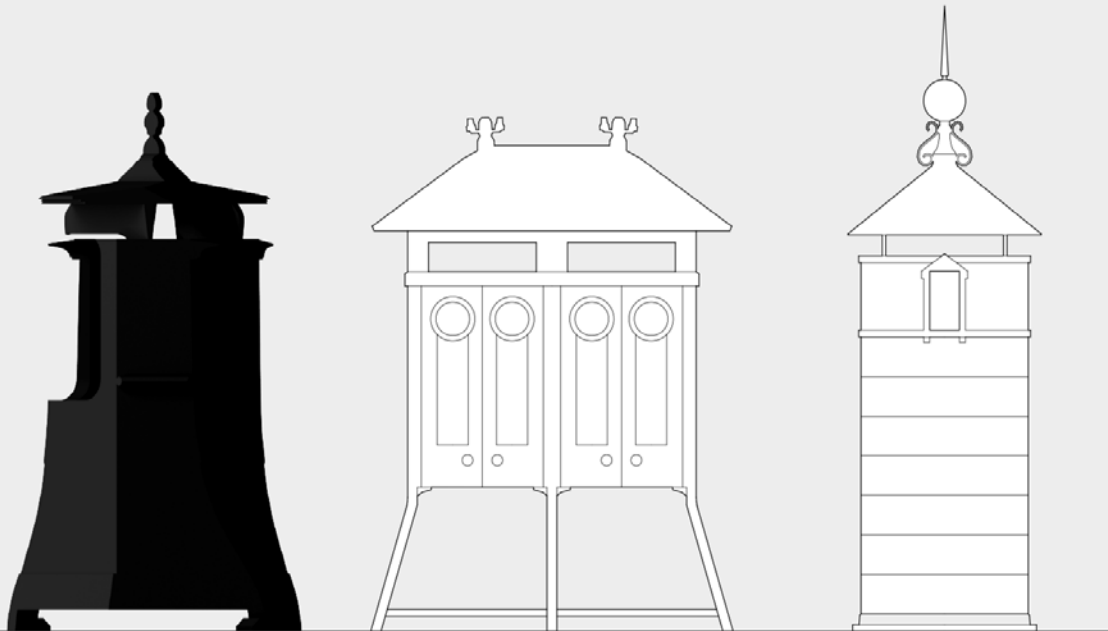
Visual taxonomy of Stockholm's existing urban booths (white) and proposed *Dead Ringers* (black). © Norell/Rodhe

dead ringer
noun, slang
1. A person or thing that closely resembles another; ringer

Dead Ringers investigates an obvious and particular aspect of character in architecture: anthropomorphism. The project focuses on Stockholm's urban booths—small, figurative buildings that are deeply ingrained in public consciousness. These kinds of buildings are a current concern simply because they are becoming extinct. Some, like phone booths, are rapidly being removed because of technological shifts. Others are threatened because they are at odds with prevailing ideals for public spaces, like transparency and openness. *Dead Ringers* critically turns this tendency into new opportunities. It proposes to selectively replace removed booths with mysterious near-copies that provide similar types of enclosed public spaces, without the narrow functional focus of phone and photo booths. These strangely familiar figures are a play on the proportions and iconic nature of Stockholm's existing urban booths. Their dark but vaguely humorous silhouettes acknowledge the ambiguous character of most urban booths: as bright beacons of technology, but also as houses for a variety of shady activities of private nature.

Most if not all of Stockholm's urban booths are immediately recognizable as small figures in the urban fabric. At the turn of the last century, some models featured shingle-clad pitched roofs and slender legs, while more recent ones are monolithic, rectilinear volumes made from formed metal panels. What ties them all together, despite stylistic differences, is the fact that they all have been shaped after the human body that they are supposed to house. Their anthropomorphic features include vertical proportions, symmetry, and a clear division into base, enclosure, and roof. Each *Dead Ringer* tweaks these ideal proportions and perfects symmetries of historical booths, recasting them as imperfect and multivalent individuals.

Dead Ringers gain their rickety appearances by selectively sampling the figural silhouettes of Stockholm's urban booths. Each *Dead Ringer* combines different elevations from several booths, so that new, slightly odd masses are formed. This makes them appear different depending on how they are approached, something that invites circling around them. Some viewing angles will reveal a silhouette that is near identical with an existing booth. Moving along, the same silhouette turns into a lopsided, sculptural mix of two or several booths.

Dead Ringer commissioned by ArkDes for the exhibition Public Luxury. © Photograph by Mikael Olsson, Courtesy of Norell/Rodhe

The careful combination of morphological features into a new whole calls attention to the anatomy of the booths. Disproportionally scaled building parts such as eaves, moldings, shafts, and plinths subtly shift into dressed up body parts—heads and hats, torsos and coats, legs and trousers. This turns each *Dead Ringer* into a character with a distinct sense of personality. Architecture may typically shape public life by acting as a backdrop to it. *Dead Ringers*, in contrast, populate and influence the streetscape of Stockholm by virtue of their active agency. ●

Credits
Project Design: Norell/Rodhe
Photograph: Mikael Olsson
Drawings and collages: Norell/Rodhe
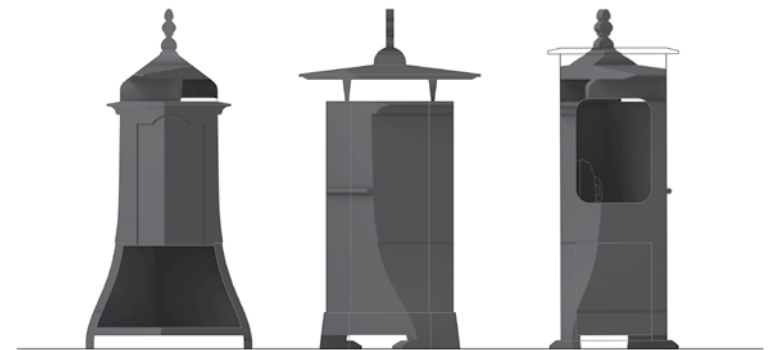
Dead Ringers elevation studies. © Norell/Rodhe
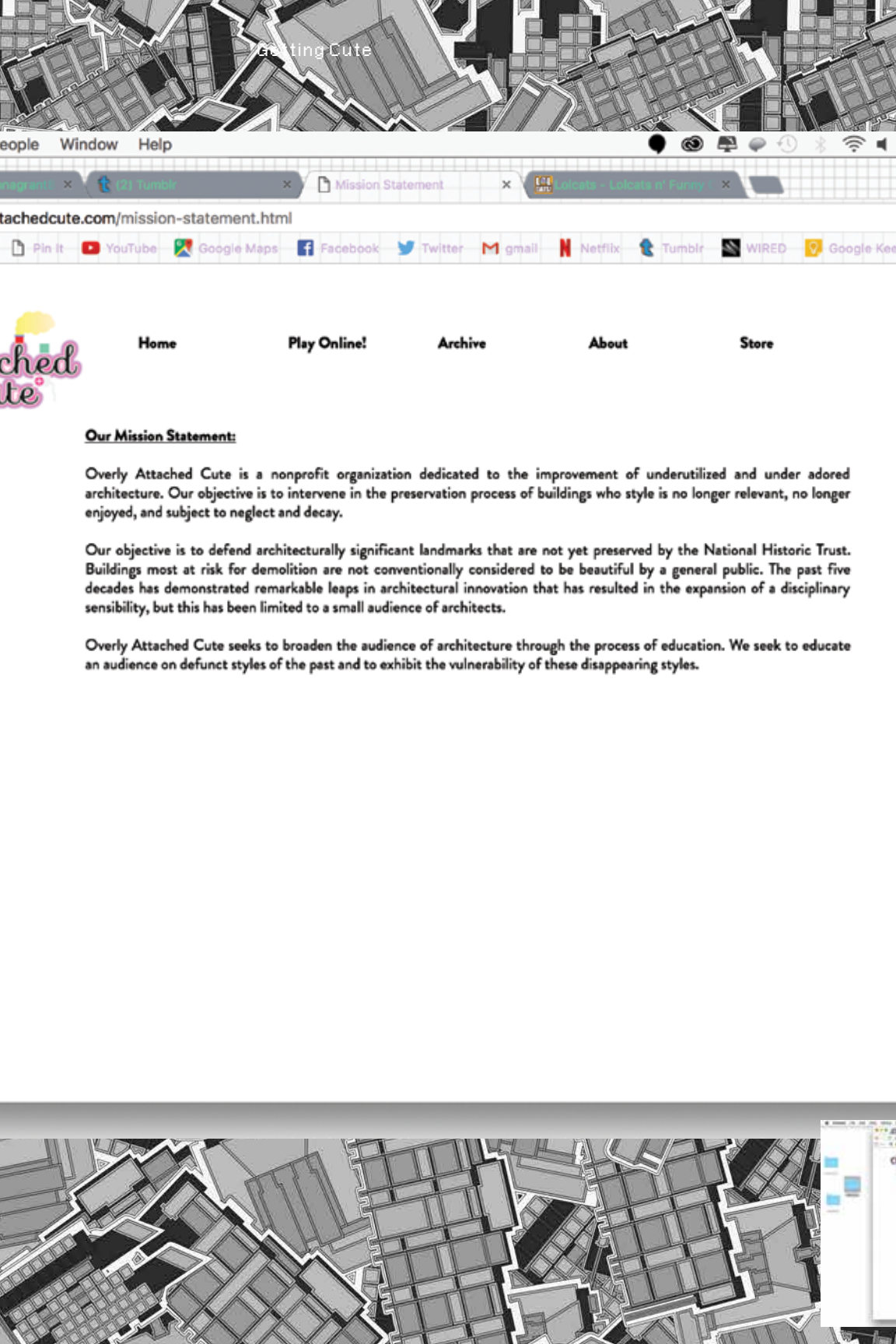
Dead Ringers in Stockholm's
urban fabric. © Norell/Rodhe

Our Mission Statement:

Overly Attached Cute is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of underutilized and under adored architecture. Our objective is to intervene in the preservation process of buildings who style is no longer relevant, no longer enjoyed, and subject to neglect and decay.

Our objective is to defend architecturally significant landmarks that are not yet preserved by the National Historic Trust. Buildings most at risk for demolition are not conventionally considered to be beautiful by a general public. The past five decades has demonstrated remarkable leaps in architectural innovation that has resulted in the expansion of a disciplinary sensibility, but this has been limited to a small audience of architects.

Overly Attached Cute seeks to broaden the audience of architecture through the process of education. We seek to educate an audience on defunct styles of the past and to exhibit the vulnerability of these disappearing styles.

Getting Cute
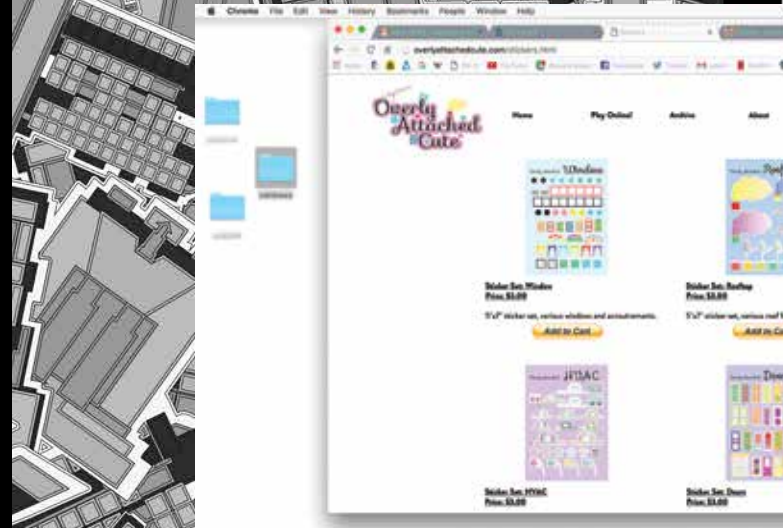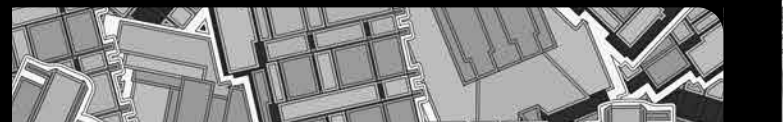
Text and project by Joanna Grant
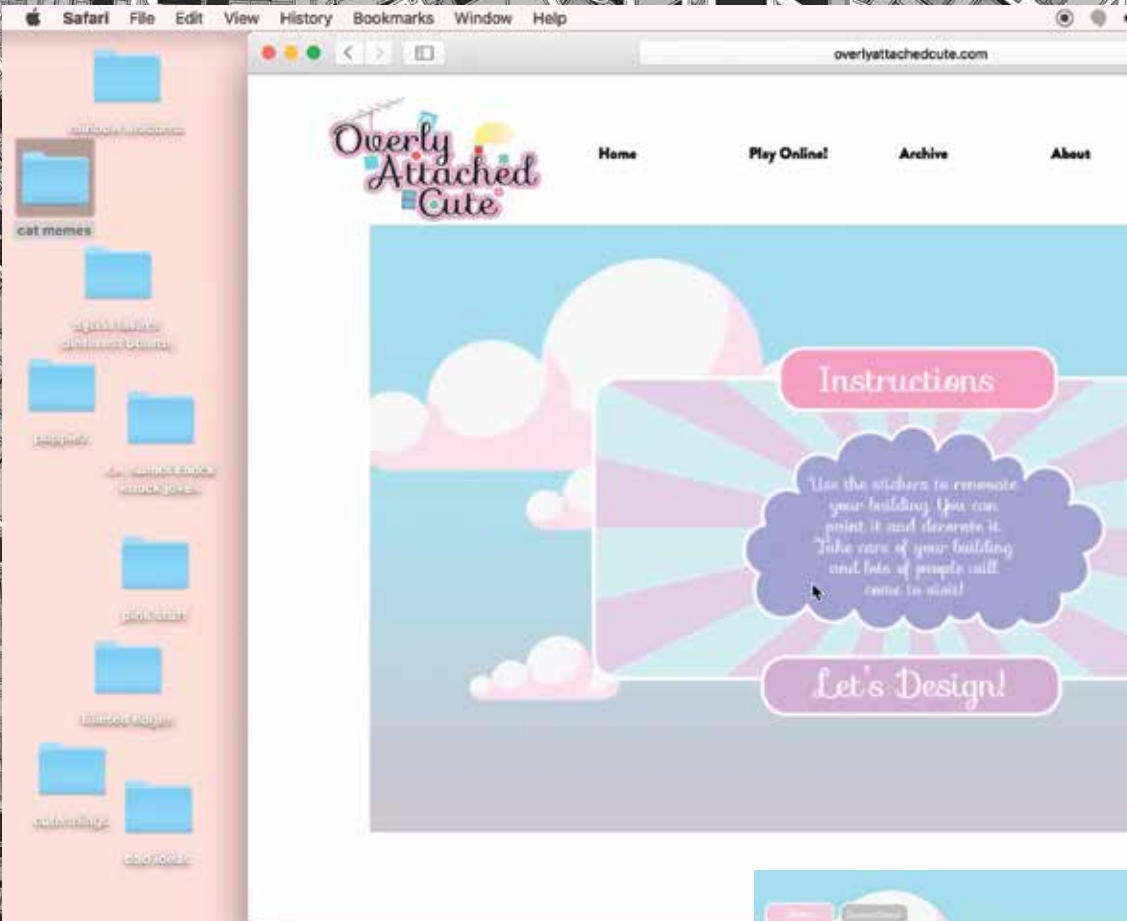
In the West, toys are reserved for children. Toys are a means for preparing children for roles as adults, and allow for learning and cognitive development. Friedrich Fröbel's invention of the kindergarten was meant to teach children about work and learning through the method of play; still today, toys are viewed as constructive tools for the development of children. Yet in the East, a different view of toys has evolved.

The culture of *kawaii*, or "cute" in Japanese, emerged following the defeat of Japan in World War II. Japan's newly formed nation was heavily influenced by American culture, and, following the brutality of the war as well as strict traditional cultural values, a new pop culture phenomenon emerged. Japan's new constitution, formed in 1947, included specific clauses that prevented waging war. According to Takeshi Murakami, this triggered an infantilizing tendency in Japanese culture.[1] The combination of a culture of repression with a history of manga came to head in the early 1970s, when school children began to alter their writing with pictorial and Roman characters as a means of rebellion. In 1971, Sanrio created Hello Kitty.

Ever since the advent of Hello Kitty, Japanese culture has exploded with pop icons of *kawaii* aesthetic. *Kawaii* has become entirely engrained in their culture, proliferated by the youth but adopted by people of all ages. It has permeated all aspects of culture in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. From signage to tissues to bedding and toys, cute is everywhere. It has become a method of escaping the oppressive and highly stressful obligations to work and family, as the aesthetic of *kawaii* presents friendliness and comfort. South Korea and Japan, both countries with a prolific *kawaii* infatuation, respectively rank third and seventh in suicide rates in the world. Traditional cultural codes of behavior, which deeply affect every aspect of life, manifests itself in the form of unexpected cultural phenomena. If cuteness is a means of rebellion against a tradition of seriousness, then its power to proliferate relies on an aesthetic that is widely adored. Clearly there exists a link between the pleasure or delight imparted by cuteness and a lingering social darkness or discontent with the status quo.

Interestingly, politics have become laden with *kawaii*. During the 1998 mayoral elections in Taipei, the Democratic Progressive Party created the A-bian doll as a political tool.[2] The doll was a kawaii likeness of the Chen Shui-bian. This political ploy and its overwhelming popularity allowed the Democratic Progressive Party to oust the Chinese Nationalist Party after over half a century of

1. Dean Chan, "The Cultural Economy of Ludic Superflatness," (paper presented at the Digital Games Research Association conference on Situated Play, Tokyo, Japan, 2007), 2.

2. Yin Chuang, "Kawaii in Taiwan Politics," *International Journal of Asia Pacific Studies* 7, no. 3 (September 2011): 4.

dictatorial political dominance. What is notably strange, from a Western vantage point, is the ability of a caricature as a representational device of idealized deformity to operate in a positive method. In the West, the political caricature is most often employed as a mode of critique for the behaviors and decisions of politicians. The exaggeration of facial features has allowed critics to subconsciously paint politicians as evil or even buffoonish. However, in the case of the A-bian doll and Chen Shui-bian, his status as a political figure was exploited as inherently positive as his association with the image of a cute doll proliferated, helping him to win the election.

Just as the power of caricature allowed a politician to become loveable and huggable, another seemingly paradoxical phenomena involving *kawaii* can be seen in a popular Japanese fashion that allows women who dress modestly to achieve a degree of sexiness. The "Lolita" fashion, a style that blends Victorian-era clothing with childlike details, seeks to react against the exposure of skin through modesty but inherently enters the realm of sexual fetishization—aptly named in reference to the novel by Vladimir Nabokov. The coupling of meaning and representation in these contexts is clearly evidence of the difficulty of expressing the true meaning which might be unacceptable given the strict moral code. Therefore, topics such as sex and politics are discussed through the political correctness of cuteness.

The caricature has an architectural history as well, most notably with the typologies of Aldo Rossi and John Hejduk's figural characters. Rossi conflates architectural tropes into recognizable figures and misapplies them within the city, while Hejduk's figures take on animalistic postures. Hejduk's figures employ the language of architecture combined with a caricature. Charles Jencks's *The Post-Modern Reader* theorizes postmodernism as requiring a need for double-coding: "socially and semantically architecture […] mediate[s] between the ephemeral tastes of fashion and, like language and genetics, the slow-moving codes of the past."[3] Similarly, Robert Venturi's "A Gentle Manifesto" calls for an architecture of a "both-and" reading as opposed to "either-or."[4] Considering the groundwork of double-coding, complexity and contradiction, and the annexation of outsider architecture into the canon performed by Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown in the form of ducks and decorated sheds, I propose a call to arms in defense of the potential cuteness of architecture.

3. Charles Jencks, *A Post-Modern Reader* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 4.

4. Robert Venturi, "Nonstraight-forward Architecture: A Gentle Manifesto," *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 16.

Michael Graves
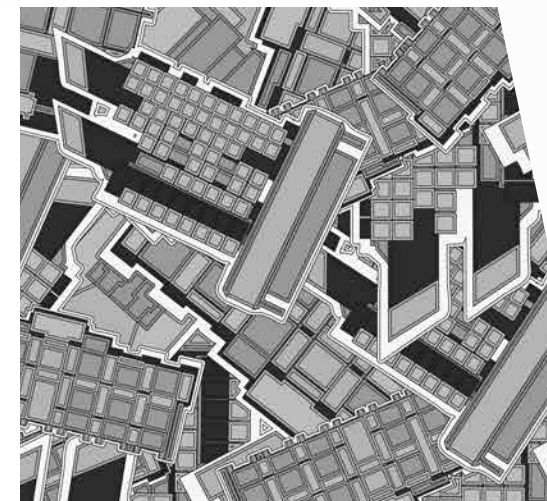
The relationship of *kawaii* to architecture has not yet been theorized. Stylistically, it can be positioned in relation to a lineage of outsider art such as the rococo, mannerism, the sublime, the picturesque, or even "camp." For example, rococo art emerged as a response to the baroque, quite literally as embellishment itself but also as an addition to the basis of the baroque architectural canon. Each period of art was followed by a marked period of height, in which the supplemental experiences and audiences were added and addressed. In most cases these periods are characterized by attention to aesthetics and formal language.

The distinction between fine art and outsider art was only recently made within the Japanese language in the past century; a distinction which Takashi Murakami has based his career on. The lack of difference between traditional Japanese paintings and manga and anime has led to Murakami's famous aesthetic of Superflat, the name stemming from the single plane on which both high and low art resided. Takashi Murakami's fascination with art began at a young age when he first saw a modern art exhibition of Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, and Kazimir Malevich on the twelfth floor of a shopping mall. Since then, his understanding of art is closely linked to the consumption of culture through shopping. The experience of seeing art in a gallery or seeing the display windows of designer store was the same, in Murakami's opinion. This lends an easy understanding of how both he and Yayoi Kusama, another Japanese artist known for merging high and low art with commercialism, became designers for Louis Vuitton.

Cute is a representation of the real, but an ideal real. It is the opposite of seriousness, but somehow represents the gravity of serious. If an obsession with cuteness is the foil to the overbearing weight of Japanese obligations, then it is, in fact, a method of talking about what is truly significant. If comedy is a means through which serious issues such as racism, classism, and sexism can be discussed in an open environment, then perhaps the "cute" is a means through which issues of aesthetics can be discussed. Just as it is not proper to mention politics at a social function, it is similarly impolite to discuss matters of formalism, despite the fact that the discipline of architecture is inherently formal and therefore subject to whimsy. Perhaps cuteness can act as a Trojan horse to talk about impolite matters, exactly in the same way that it responds to the strict cultural codes of Asia.

If certain words such as "postmodernism," "composition," "figuration," "kitsch," "delight," and—perhaps the most evil word of them all—"formalism" are now considered as politically incorrect in the context of architectural theory, then

perhaps the inherent cuteness of architecture can allow certain impolite topics to proliferate. Think of the viral quality of cat photos on the Internet. Why has architecture been the slowest to respond to a culture of instantaneous memes, even if only in a representational format? The distance between what is real and what is representational is the most logical place for cuteness to begin to its rapid and giddy infectiousness. Style has long been distanced from the discipline but in the case of lifestyle, it remains popular and current. As the art critic Clement Greenberg states, "To fill the demand of the new market, a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide. Kitsch, using for raw material the debased and academicized simulacra of genuine culture, welcomes and cultivates this insensibility."[5]

Could cuteness take on the adorable qualities of stickers and plush toys, regretful of their own capitalism but optimistic for the future of architecture? While the soft sciences have recognized the relationship between cuteness in young children and the caretaker effect in adults, the possibility of the application of cuteness to architecture has not yet been explored. At the moment, the great styles of the twentieth century are faced with the threat of the wrecking ball, only able to communicate their genius to an audience of architects. The reproduction of the images of architecture as cute buildings is the method through which the general reception of architecture can be altered, perhaps even acting as the biological adaptation for survival.

Kawaii has no interest in representing the functionality of the object; it implies meaning but does not have it. It's pink, it's cute, it's imageable, it's a consumer product. There's no logic to the application of decoration. The act of covering an image of a building may deface the architect's intention, but if the affect is associating brutalism with a mental picture of a box full of kittens, the positive association could be heroic. Function is merely the acceptance of an aesthetic of rationality, and therefore itself a formal logic. Form and function have finally filed for a divorce, and now we have toilet seat covers. ●

5. Clement Greenberg, "The Avant-Garde and the Kitsch," in *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste*, ed. Gillo Dorfles (New York: Universe Books, 1969), 116–126.

Makin' It

Script by Julia and John McMorrough

<u>**OPENING CREDITS**</u>
MIXTURE OF SHOTS, SOME OF THE "PLATFORM" (FOR
ARCHITECTURE) ITSELF, OTHERS OF THE ACTORS INTERACT-
ING IN A VARIETY OF DOMESTIC AND PROFESSIONAL SCENARIOS
(EATING, WORKING, RELAXING, ETC.) MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT
IS "Makin' It." MUSIC AND LYRICS BY FREDDIE PERREN
AND DINO FEKARIS.

<u>**ACT ONE (Kitchen)**</u>
FADE IN:
INT. "COUNTER" – MORNING

"Makin' It" theme song fades out as HUGH stands at the counter preparing breakfast while RUTH sits on nearby step examining her phone and drinking coffee.

The unexpected sound of a loud timpani startles HUGH.

HUGH
(looks up)
What was that?
RUTH
I got some new ring tones!
HUGH
It sounds awful!
RUTH
Well, I'm working on arranging my day by sounds.

Brings phone to show to HUGH.

RUTH
For each thing I need to do, I have a different sound—so I know imme-diately what it is! I'm working on a streamlined live/work balance—you know, "meet with client," "drawing set due," "take out the trash," and so on.

HUGH examines the phone screen.

HUGH
You have 48 alarms set for today?!

RUTH
Yes, today's an easy day. You should see Thursdays!

There is the sound of a ringing phone.

HUGH looks expectantly at RUTH, who studies her phone quizzically, then goes back to drinking coffee.

HUGH
(curious)
What was that one for?
RUTH
Huh? Oh, I'm not sure, I don't rec-ognize that sound.

HUGH looks skeptical.

HUGH
It sounded like a phone ringing.

RUTH looks at phone and sees that there is a message.

RUTH
Oh, you're right! I always forget that this is a phone!

HUGH rolls his eyes and returns to kitchen work.

RUTH holds phone to ear to listen to message and makes a variety of faces while listening.

HUGH looks at RUTH for feedback, but gets no indication of who has called, so he goes back to making breakfast.

RUTH continues to listen and eventually hangs up the phone, but does not speak.

HUGH
Well?
RUTH
Hmm? Can I ask you a hypothetical question?
HUGH
No! The answer will be no.

RUTH

I didn't ask yet.

HUGH

You don't need to, I can already tell.

RUTH

No . . . it's not what you think!

HUGH

Let me guess—

A ray-gun sounding alarm goes off. HUGH sighs loudly and continues to work in the kitchen. RUTH looks timidly at the phone, then avoids HUGH's gaze.

HUGH

So, what is this hypothetical question, anyway?

RUTH

You tell me, you seem to know so much.

HUGH

Ok, let me think . . . someone wants us to design a whole project, in advance of getting the commission. And, if we do a good job and they like the design, they may consider hiring us, but in the meantime, they can only pay us in coupons.

RUTH

BUZZZ! Wrong!

HUGH

Really?

RUTH

There was no mention of coupons.

HUGH

So why are you happy about that?

RUTH

Well, I'm not happy about THAT, per se, I just wanted you to know that you were wrong.

HUGH

Alright, fine. But what do we get out of it? Hypothetically?

RUTH

Well, hypothetically, it's the same thing we always get—the opportunity to design something.

HUGH

But, hypothetically speaking, don't you think it would be good to occasionally have the opportunity to pay our bills?

Sound of a loud drum rim shot.

HUGH

What in the world is THAT one?

RUTH looks at phone and turns it off.

RUTH

It's a reminder.

HUGH

A reminder to what?

RUTH

To pay our phone bill.

A long silence follows. RUTH busies herself with checking e-mails and other things on her phone. HUGH continues to make breakfast.

HUGH

Ok, I'll bite. What is so great about this project that you want to do it?

RUTH

Remember when we did that feasibility study for converting a gas station into a gastro-pub?

HUGH

Yes, I remember. That was fun.

RUTH

It was!

HUGH

They're ready to move forward with the project?

RUTH

Nooo. No way, much too expensive, as we did such a great job of pointing out in our study. But, they did give our name to another restaurant called "JIB," and they want one of us to come for an interview today.

HUGH

Well, that doesn't sound so bad, but first let's just find out—

Very loud reveille bugle call is heard.

HUGH
(startled)
WHAT was that?

RUTH

Just another reminder.

HUGH

What now?

RUTH

That we should have started working hours ago!

HUGH

Are you sure that wasn't just for you? I mean, I started working half an hour ago. (taps forehead) In my mind.

Laughter and applause combine with an instrumental version of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal the "kitchen" platform elevation.

FADE OUT:
END OF ACT ONE

–COMMERCIAL (VersaBlock)–
[In the style of 1950s toy ads like Wham-o and Hasbro]

LOUD MALE ANNOUNCER

Kids! Do you ever find yourselves sitting around, overwhelmed by boredom?

Staring aimlessly out the window?

So bored time seems to stand still?

Bored enough you actually start twiddling your thumbs?

Well never fear, VersaBlock is here!

What do you say, Billy? Give them a try!

VersaBlocks are expertly designed to allow for hundreds, even thousands of possible configurations.

You will never be bored again.

Let's have a look . . . not bad.

How about a tower?

Look at him go.

Better pay attention.

Awww . . . that's OK, Billy.

VersaBlocks are not afraid to fall.

Let's see how high you can go.

Now, that's a beauty.

Nice job, Billy!

Versatile, Colorful, Fun.

It's VersaBlock. Give them a spin.

Buy the starter kit today.

Forget the Clock. VersaBlock.

FADE OUT

ACT TWO (Office)

FADE IN:
INT. "TABLE" – DAY

HUGH and RUTH are sitting at the table working on laptops across from each other, partner-desk style. Models and drawings are strewn about the table.

RUTH
What exactly did you say to them?

HUGH
(looks up)
Nothing much, just the typical introductory stuff.

RUTH
Like when you explain that low budgets are an opportunity for innovation? What do you call it, an "invitation to innovation"? Or did you use The Three Little Pigs to explain zoning codes?

HUGH
Please, this was a sophisticated presentation. I did not bring up The Three Little Pigs.

RUTH
Then what happened? We just got an e-mail, telling us to forget about the project. What did you actually say?

HUGH
(looks mildly confused, then registers recognition)
I don't remember exactly, but it's possible that communication broke down at one point.

RUTH
Oh? What did you do?

HUGH
Well, I was trying to let them know that we're interested in traversing the liminal space that seems to separate the architect as self-serving artiste and the client as demanding Philistine.

RUTH
You said those words?!

HUGH
Which ones?

RUTH
"Liminal," "Artiste," "Philistine"?

HUGH
(sheepishly)
I may have.

RUTH
You do realize the irony of sounding so pompous while trying to convince someone how down to earth you are? Why didn't you just say that we're interested in common ground?

HUGH
I don't know! I got a little nervous, and the only words that came quickly to mind were either pretentious or profane. I must have panicked—after all, I only had a few minutes to put together a decent proposal.

RUTH
So you made an indecent proposal? Just like the movie!

HUGH
Oh, you know that movie drives me crazy! Especially when Woody Harrelson's architect character sits on his bathroom floor sketching his dream house!

RUTH
Yes, that was pretty bad.

HUGH
Though not as bad as the lecture he gave to students about Louis Kahn.

RUTH
You mean the "what does a brick want" speech?

HUGH
Yes, but I wish they hadn't got it wrong.

RUTH

What's the real quote? Doesn't Kahn say he asked a brick what it wanted, and it wants to be an arch?

HUGH

More or less, specifically meaning that one needs to understand the nature of materials.

RUTH

What does he say in the movie?

HUGH

Something about a common ordinary brick wanting to be MORE than what it is, and that, like the humble brick, we should try to make more of ourselves! But that's not what Kahn meant!

RUTH

I think they were going more for dramatic effect than strict adherence to architectural principles. . .

HUGH

(becomes increasingly agitated)
For God's sake, the brick doesn't suffer from low self-esteem—the brick knows what it is. It's a brick, and it CAN be an arch, not by denying itself, but by UNDERSTANDING itself!

RUTH

Well, I guess it's not so easy to portray architecture faithfully in movies. Complex issues tend to come off as extremes—too good or too bad; too ridiculous or too serious, which is what makes it legible to an audience.

HUGH

I guess you're right, but surely there are more subtle depictions of architects out there?

RUTH

Can you name one?

HUGH

(looks triumphant)
Yes! *Death Wish*!

RUTH

(snorts)
With Charles Bronson as a hard-boiled loner fueled by vengeance and rage?

HUGH

But also an architect, I think it's a uniquely nuanced portrayal.

RUTH

(dismissively)
I don't know if blood-thirsty lunatic counts as nuanced.

HUGH

Yes, he was a vigilante, but he was also the architect of some surprisingly sensitive buildings, low slung desert houses with passive solar orientation. Anyway, better architect as maniac than as uptight lothario, like the architect in *Hannah and Her Sisters* who cries at the opera in order to get dates.

RUTH

Ok, you're right, but that movie did give us a few lines about Adolf Loos and organic form.

HUGH

Yes, it did, by playing them for a cheap laugh.

RUTH

Aha! You've proved my point.

HUGH

How?

RUTH

By putting both Adolf Loos and organic form in the context of a lovesick woman trying to impress a narcissistic architect, ipso facto, these are pretentious and laughable issues that architects care about. It's an extreme of being too

serious, and as a result, becomes ridiculous to an audience.

HUGH

What about *The Towering Inferno*? That was the best of all worlds: macho architect and exciting disaster movie!

RUTH

Sure, but what if *The Towering Inferno* were all about Paul Newman having meetings with electrical consultants and code officials? Sure, I could watch three hours of Paul Newman doing anything, but most people aren't interested in a movie that might have avoided the inferno in the first place!

HUGH

So you really think people wouldn't want to watch a realistic depiction of architects engaged in actual design efforts, the way they actually happen?

Both become quiet as they settle back into working. The work is a steady clicking of computer keys, shuffling of papers, sketching, etc., with very little drama.

Laughter and applause combine with an instrumental version of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal the "office" platform elevation.

FADE OUT:
END OF ACT TWO

–COMMERCIAL (Units)–

(In the style of IKEA, Superstudio's Supersurface and Charles Wilp's Afri-Cola ads.)

COMPUTERIZED FEMALE NARRATOR

Units, Units, Units.

Why pay for all the extras?

Through our careful analysis of the way people occupy space, we here at studioAPT have developed the UNITS system to maximize the conditions of life within a small area.

Each of the UNITS has both character and use.

The table, the steps, the bed, the bar, the climber, the landing, the ziggurat, and the utility infielder.

In isolation, or in combination, these UNITS provide flexibility, efficiency, and design.

UNITS, more than furniture, less than a house...just what you need.

FADE OUT:

ACT THREE (Living Room)

FADE IN:
INT. "COUCH" – NIGHT

RUTH comes to sit on couch while HUGH sits reading and enjoying a drink.

HUGH

Where've you been?

RUTH

Sorry, I was just watching *The Towering Inferno* . . . again. Why, what's up?

HUGH

We just got a message!

RUTH

Oh, from who?

HUGH

The JIB group.

RUTH

What? I thought we were out of the running.

HUGH

We're back in! Actually, we got the job!

RUTH

You're kidding. What happened?

HUGH

They said they loved what we sent them, and can't wait to work with us.

RUTH

But what about when they e-mailed earlier saying to forget it?

HUGH

It was a mistake. Somebody put the wrong address in. I have a really good feeling about this. The main guy, Steve, said he could tell we'd be a good fit. AND he's interested in seeing what he can do about hooking us up higher in the corporate structure.

RUTH

(looks relieved and excited)
That's great! He sounds like he could be our patron!

HUGH

(looks satisfied with himself)
Yes! This could be big for us!

RUTH

I'm sorry I got after you for using fancy words. I underestimated Steve and the JIB Group.

HUGH

Well, obviously he's pretty sharp, and incredibly intelligent for liking our work.

RUTH

So what's next?

HUGH

We're meeting tomorrow, on site.

RUTH

Oh! Do you think we get to eat there? I can't believe I've never

even heard of this place! It must be very exclusive!

HUGH

Hang on, let me look up the address.

HUGH pages through computer tablet in search of address on map.

RUTH

Is it downtown?

HUGH

(confused)
No. Wait, I don't think this is right.

RUTH

Where is it?

HUGH

Next to the mattress place on Frontage Road.

RUTH

(confused)
What's it called again?

HUGH

JIB.

RUTH

Gib? Like giblets? Do you think it's like locally sourced artisanal chicken?

HUGH

No. It's J.I.B. All caps.

RUTH

Hmmm.

HUGH continues to consult tablet, looking increasingly distressed.

HUGH

I think I've been here before.

RUTH

I thought you said you hadn't.

HUGH

Well, when I thought it was a place called JIB, I hadn't.

RUTH

If it's not JIB, what is it?

HUGH
Jack. In. the. Box. J.I.B.

RUTH
You ATE there?

HUGH
That's where the meeting was today.

RUTH
It didn't occur to you that the meeting was there because they are the clients?

HUGH
I thought they were being ironic.

RUTH
Hold on, do you even know what the actual project is?

HUGH consults tablet again.

HUGH
Well, the e-mail was titled "A Vision for Universal Design in Dining."

RUTH
I know that. I spent all morning preparing a presentation on culinary advancements in terms of the Vitruvian ideals of commodity, firmness and delight. But what is the ACTUAL project?

HUGH thumbs through tablet some more.

HUGH
Let me just open this attachment.

HUGH hands computer tablet to RUTH, who sighs heavily.

RUTH
Handrails to the restrooms? That's it? Replace the handrails?

HUGH
(sheepish)
You know, I asked a handrail what it wanted to be, and—

RUTH glares at him, and a brief silence ensues.

HUGH
Maybe we should stop answering Requests for Proposals. Or stop answering the phones.

RUTH
Or maybe we should go back to trying to get projects by doing competitions.

HUGH
Don't you think that's a step back?

RUTH holds up tablet.

RUTH
A step back from this? From handrail replacements in a fast-food restaurant bathroom?

HUGH
Ok, you're right. I guess competitions can be fun—they're like open mic night for architects.

RUTH
Exactly! You get to try out new material while trying to win over an audience.

HUGH
You know, it was my childhood dream to be a comedian.

RUTH
Oh, yeah?

HUGH
I even brought it up with my guidance counselor in high school. I said I wanted to be either an architect or a comedian, and he advised me that I wasn't smart enough.

RUTH
To be an architect?

HUGH
No, a comedian.

RUTH

Ouch. Well, anyway, we should get to
bed. After all, we do have that invi-
tation tomorrow.

HUGH

To what?

RUTH

To innovation! Those handrails
aren't going to recognize the po-
tentials within their limitations
without our help—

A startling gong alarm sounds. HUGH and RUTH look at RUTH's phone
and then each other.

Laughter and applause combine with a karaoke version (backing, but
no lead vocals) of "Makin' It," as the camera pulls out to reveal
the set elevation and the actors turn to face the camera.

FADE OUT:
END OF ACT THREE

CLOSING CREDITS

CONTINUOUS OVERHEAD JIB SHOT OVER THE WIDTH OF THE
PLATFORM, ACCOMPANIED BY THE INSTRUMENTAL VERSION OF
"MAKIN' IT"

Executive Production, Script and Direction
studioAPT

Ruth Crawford
as Ruth

Hugh Maguire
as Hugh

Editor
Will Martin

Managing Producer
Jacques Mersereau

Lighting
Jeffrey Alder

Audio
David Greenspan

Camera Operators
Jacques Mersereau
Walter Lin
Rown Niemisto
Colin Fulton
Christopher Schaublin

Set Design
Julia & John McMorrough
with Jordan Hicks

Engineering and Building
Al McWaters,
SkyShips Design

Painting
Dan Erickson

Fabrication Facility
Maker Works, Ann Arbor

Recorded At
Duderstadt Center Video Studio at the Digital Media
Commons of The University of Michigan

Sponsored By
Research Through Making Grant from the
Taubman College of Architecture and
Urban Planning
University of Michigan

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My Dad is Better Than Yours

Exclusive Behind-the-Scenes Interviews with Three Shortlisted Contestants at the 9th Annual Architecture Awards

Text and project by Gem Barton

"My Dad is Better Than Yours" is set at a prestigious architecture awards ceremony. The characters tell their story; they have memories, are self-aware and reflective, and offer an alternative view of our relationship with the built environment. They discuss their conception, their growth and development, their alliance with their creators, and ultimately their users/owners. The interviews explore the notion that "you are more than your creations and your creations are more than you . . ." an experiment in architecture, adaption, and identity—expression, cohesion, and transference between creator and creation.

Harry
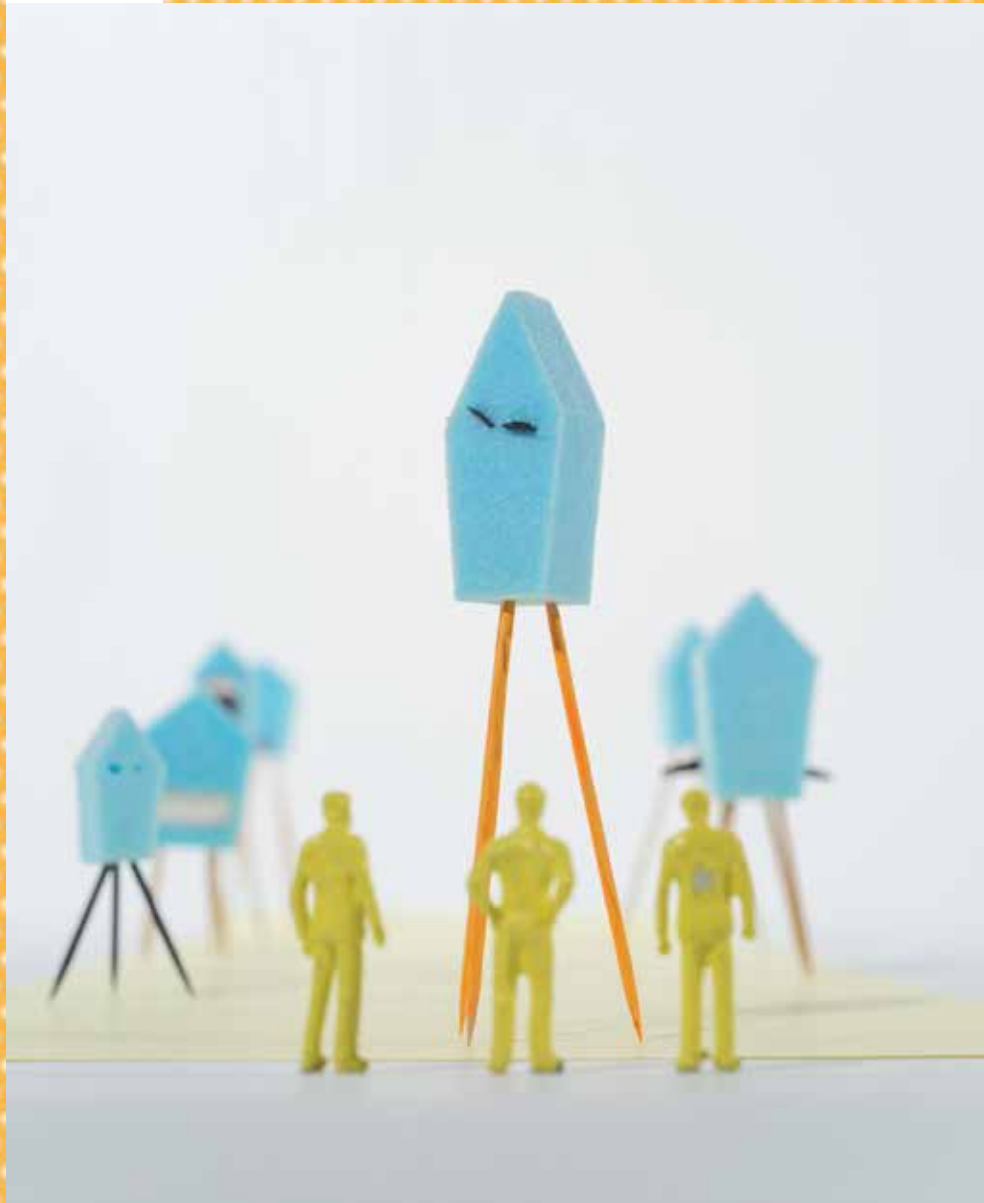
"There's a clear family resemblance, and sometimes I wish I was a bit more unique."

The bookies' favorite and the most recent edition to the Triumph family. Completed in 2015, Harry has good pedigree and a strong track record, having scooped two other awards this year.

How are you feeling about the competition?
I'm pumped! I have pageant-savvy parents and we've been to loads of these things, so I feel quite at home. Plus, the press seems to like me, there have been some pretty awesome editorials, and I photograph alright too; that always helps. I guess it's the Triumph trademark; we have good bone structure, a strong jaw line. My folks are well respected; they have high expectations, so there's quite a lot of pressure on me. I hope I don't let them down.

What is it like being a Triumph?
You can walk down the street and tell immediately who my brothers and sisters are; there's a clear family resemblance. Sometimes I wish I was a bit more unique, you know? I guess I'm judged a lot on my parents' successes

too, but I don't want to be defined by them forever. Sure, I was their idea, but they don't "own" me, nobody does. All of us in the shortlist, we have a lot to thank our parents for, I get that, but at some point, they have to let us go, do you know what I mean? They have to let us grow up. Being a Triumph comes with a lot of responsibility. I feel sometimes that people are waiting for me to fail, like I don't deserve the hype, like I didn't earn it . . . I've got a lot to prove you know?

What are your hopes for the future?
I might be young, but I can see how fickle this world can be. One minute you're in favor and the next you're not. Not that I think that will happen to me of course, but I can see why that would worry others.

If you could say anything to the judges what would it be?
I would say to the judges . . . judge me, for me, not by my siblings' successes or my parents' reputation. I want to win, sure, but on my own merits.

Sam

Born in 2014 of the minds (and hands) of do-it-yourself collective Ace & Friends. Rolling in on budget but three months over schedule, this sensitive soul has captured the hearts of the general public.

How are you feeling about the competition?
I'm not really sure how I feel to be honest. My parents thought this competition would be a good idea, to increase my exposure, toughen me up a little bit I guess. I've never been to the city before. Where I'm from, we're all pretty similar, so I'm a bit out of my comfort zone being compared to the others. But it's fun to meet the other new builds on the block. We share stories about our families, our backgrounds, and it's quite reassuring to hear that we have all been through sticky patches.

How do you think you are different?
We are so different! My dads are artists, and I have been teased before because they aren't qualified architects. I don't really understand. I've been brought up to believe that anyone can do anything,
but I get the feeling that there's a lot of judgement here, about ability, about assurances, about classification—so I'm not too confident about the judging to be honest. On the other hand, I made the shortlist, so maybe things aren't as bad as I think they are. But I definitely feel like the underdog. People tell me I should embrace being different, that it's OK to have a different upbringing, and that I have a lot of love to give to anyone that owns me—but I don't like to think about being owned by anyone else.

Does anything else worry you about the future?
I hope that any future owners will respect my parents' blood, sweat, and tears. I'm finally beginning to believe in myself, to understand my roots and where I come from, and I'm worried that future changes might set me back you know . . . bring back the doubt.

If you could say anything to the judges what would it be?
I would say [*long pause*] . . . we are not all the same, for a reason, so please don't judge us all by the same criteria.

"I hope that any future owners will respect my parents' blood, sweat, and tears."

Francis

Adopted by CNVrT in early 2015, one-hundred-year-old Francis has been through the mill. The largest on the shortlist has been revitalized, with heritage intact, full of charm and modernity.

How are you feeling about the competition?
I'm feeling rejuvenated! I'm over the moon to have been given another opportunity. No disrespect to my previous owners, but I had been left alone for so long that I had given up hope you know, of being occupied again, of having that energy. My adopted parents gave me that, I have a new lease on life now, and I'm so grateful for that and forever indebted to them for seeing the best in me, even when I looked my worst. Others weren't so lucky—I've seen many of my old pals broken, parts lying in the streets like a silent war . . . it is heartbreaking. So yes, I am feeling rejuvenated!

Tell me more about your new look.
It's not just a façade, let's get that straight to start with. They took my heart, and they restarted it. They listened to my stories and they renewed my memories, so part of the old me still lives on. I feel like I have a twin now, we sit side by side, but we're not identical. You can tell we are related. I guess you could say that we have the same mum but a different dad. Do I feel different? I do, but in a good way, a very good way.

How are you adjusting?
"I will admit it was difficult to begin with. I was comfortable before; I'd been around the block enough times to know where I stood. But then things changed, more people were looking at me, it felt a little intrusive for a while. I'm still figuring out how I fit in this new space, but I am excited to learn, people just need to be patient.

If you could say anything to the judges what would it be?
New doesn't mean best. There's life in the old dog yet. ◗

"They listened to my stories and they renewed my memories so part of the old me still lives on."

© Rania Moslam

Alma de Rímel¹ & The Glammatics
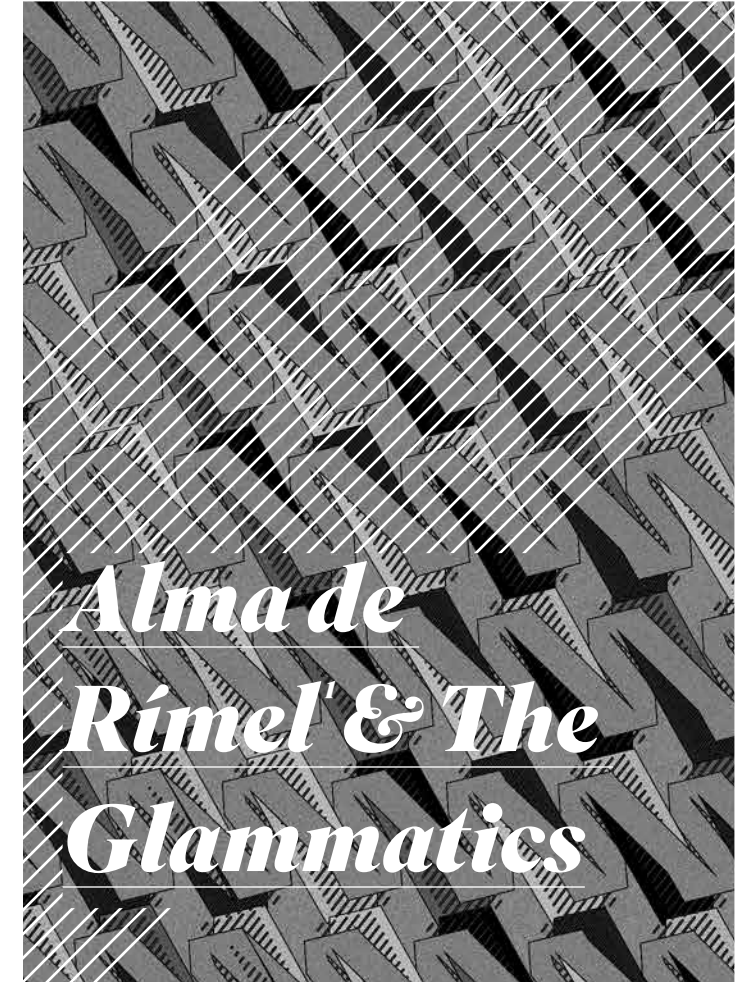
Project by María Jerez and elii

© Imagen Subliminal
(Miguel de Guzman +
Rocío Romero)

1. In English:
   Soul of Mascara

© SZENE Salzburg/Bernhard Müller

MAS CONTEXT / 37: CHARACTER

Alma de Rímel is a fictional character, a glam star, dissolved in a shiny glam stage. The Glammatics are material fictional characters that belong to the scenography. Together they become a glam band that performs a concert, producing music from the creation of images. A concert where explosions become songs, actions become notes, objects become choirs.

Alma de Rímel & The Glammatics deploy in long eyebrows, impossible makeup, transformable suits, "spikey" forms and objects, mirrored surfaces, velvet, leopard, fake marble, fluorescent tubes, red leather, plastic, glitter, golden lacquer, air, and pink steel. . . . The boundaries between them disappear, provoking a synesthetic relationship using its own Glammatics: a choreography of things and characters, a glam landscape where objects, bodies, images, sounds, and voices are no longer identified as separated entities.

The commission of this collaboration arose in 2015 at the invitation of the curator and art critic Iván López Munuera to participate in the "The Dark Side of the Party" inauguration, part of the festival SOS4.8. The project was installed in the space "Sticky Airs," designed by C+Architects. Since then, The Glammatics have been touring with Alma the Rímel in their concerts in Murcia, Spain (SOS4.8), Salzburg, Austria (Szene Salzburg), Vienna, Austria (Imagetanz 2016—Brut), Madrid, Spain (Living Room Festival 2017), Hamburg, Germany (Sommerfestival), and Barcelona, Spain (BACANAL SÁLMON<).

Data
Area: 30m², 0.6m³ (folded)
Year: 2015
Location: Barcelona, Hamburg, Kortrijk, Madrid, Murcia, Salzburg, and Vienna

Credits
Alma de Rímel: María Jerez
The Glammatics (portable set for Alma de Rímel): elii (Uriel Fogué, Eva Gil, and Carlos Palacios) **Collaborators:** elii (Ana López and Claire Laborde) **Costumes for Alma de Rímel:** Jorge Dutor **Web for Alma de Rímel:** Fernando Giménez **Coproduction of Alma de Rímel:** Kunstencentrum BUDA, Teatro Pradillo **Curator of "The Dark Side of The Party":** Iván López Munuera **Production of "The Dark Side of The Party":** SOS4.8 **Carpentry:** Alfredo Merino Caldas
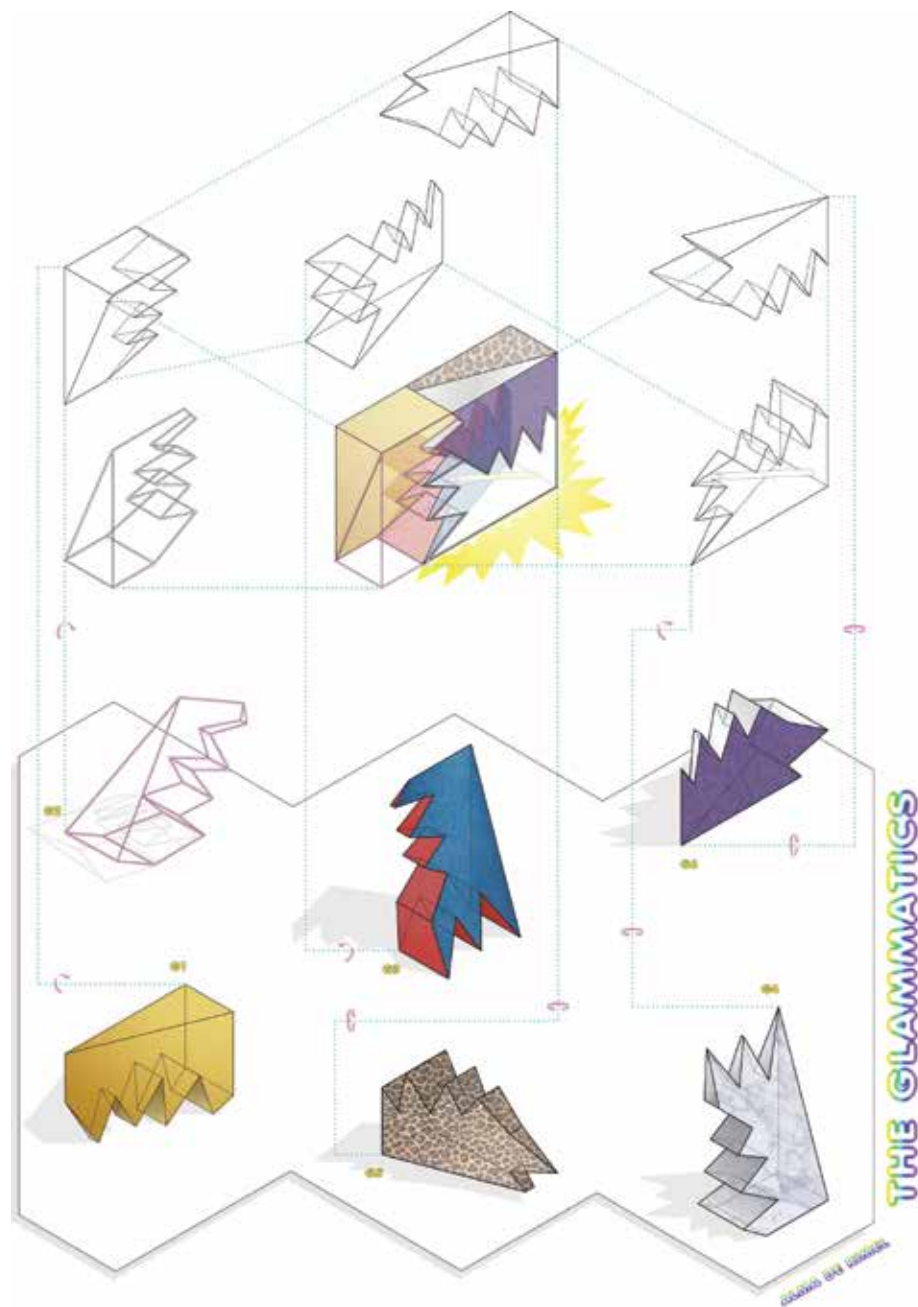
THE GLAMMATICS

1. **Unmentionable.** The idea of the piece is to activate a concert from the unknown. The Glammatics absorb "Alma the Rímel's" aesthetics and deploy it in some "difficult to name" elements.

2. **Glam.** A glam concert is not only listened to, it is also looked at and touched. Glam is, in itself, a synesthetic proposal.

3. **Synesthesia.** Objects that make sound, but do not sound as they should sound, instruments that do not do what they seem to do, a concert enabled with birthday cards, sprays, lipstick fingers, spikey objects, and sexy materials that accompany Alma de Rímel onstage.

4. **Scale.** The Glammatics are neither large nor small. They configure a system of relations in which the rest of Alma de Rímel's elements assemble.

5. **Jigsaw.** The Glammatics fit together, defining a trunk puzzle. In its interior, it holds/accommodates the rest of the set objects, during displacement/removals.

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Character and the Character

Essay by Andrew Holder
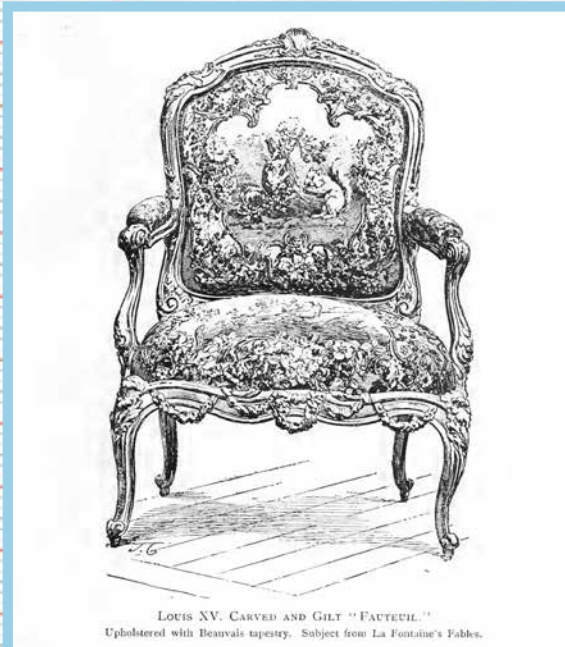
LOUIS XV. CARVED AND GILT "FAUTEUIL."
Upholstered with Beauvais tapestry. Subject from La Fontaine's Fables.

Louis XV carved and gilt "Fauteul" [Fauteuil]. Upholstered with Beauvais tapestry, accotoirs à manchette terminés en volute. Subject from *La Fontaine's Fables*. Illustration from *Illustrated History of Furniture, From the Earliest to the Present Time*—from 1893 by Litchfield, Frederick, (1850-1930). Illustration in the public domain.
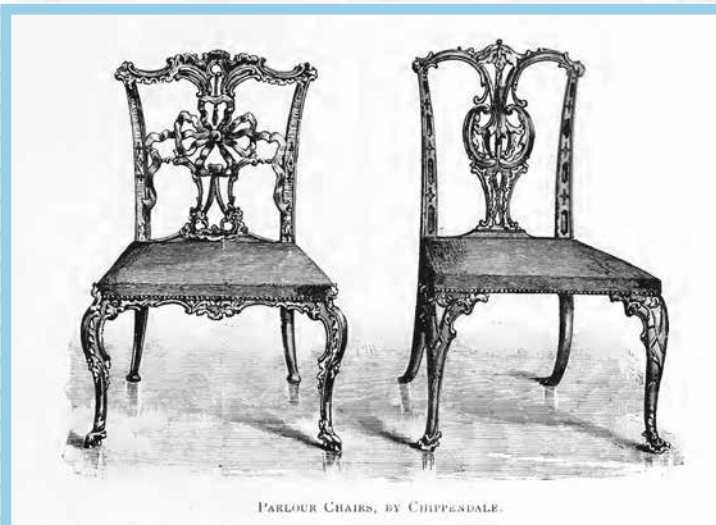
PARLOUR CHAIRS, BY CHIPPENDALE.

Parlour Chairs by Chippendale. Illustration from *Illustrated History of Furniture, From the Earliest to the Present Time*—from 1893 by Litchfield, Frederick, (1850-1930). Illustration in the public domain.

There's character and there's *the* character. Both are concerned with a retrospective view of architecture, where the glut of buildings and objects that comprise our physical environment are encountered long after the time and place of their production.

Cut off from the reasoning that motivated each construction, and with no creator standing helpfully at the ready to explain it all, the city is a "pile of debris"[1] that begs a theory to rationalize its absurd adjacencies. What hidden logic can explain the accumulation of chronologies, styles, techniques, and ideologies that are now present, simultaneously and unremittingly, in an endless, centerless field?

Character supplies this "hidden logic" by means of a table that accounts for appearance. It begins with a declaration of faith: every building is both unique and related to all others. Character is the visible evidence of this. It is the *visible mark of an individuality that belongs*: an ever-so-specific thing occupying a single cell in a vast table that has been neatly sorted to expose the similarities between adjacent cells. This table does not exist in a literal sense as a record of all things ever built (the best efforts of catalogists and specimen collectors notwithstanding), but the power of character depends on the belief that such a compendium is possible.

This was the faith of furniture connoisseurship in the late nineteenth century, a faith that became the basis for a way of seeing that was also an act of sorting and organizing. When confronted with a formal high-backed chair, for instance, first observe its marks of individuality: cabriole legs touching floor with the daintiest possible contact (hesitantly curled above a tiny point), sweeping curves indistinguishable from the rails of the seat, carved wreaths slipping through the wood band-work. Then name: *Louis XV Regence*. To disambiguate one formal high-backed chair from another, observe the same attributes again and discern the differences between the second chair and the first: more firmly planted foot with foliated acanthus ornament at the knee, ornament not so much weaving through the band-work as emerging from it, almost total distinction between chair leg and seat rails, Gothic cusps between curves. Then name again: Chippendale. In this procedure, the look-up table of attributes and names remains unseen, or is viewable only in part. Books like the *Illustrated History of Furniture* or *The Practical Book of Period Furniture*,[2] for instance, arrange the best-known pieces

1. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 258.

2. Frederick Litchfield, *Illustrated History of Furniture: From the Earliest to the Present Time*, 5th ed. (New York: John Lane, 1903); Harold Eberlein and Abbot McClure, *The Practical Book of Period Furniture* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1914).

of furniture in lists, providing descriptions of each in anatomi- cal language to help the connoisseur identify and name speci- mens. But even if these books are incomplete, the descriptive system they use—provided it is a "well-constructed language"[3]—promises to be extensible, applicable to any newly manufac- tured specimens or newly "surfaced" historical artifacts recov- ered by archaeology.

3. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970), 138.

No matter how well-made this language, though, there is an aporia in character that architecture has hidden away in the person of the connoisseur. As the connoisseur reads, they must rely on conventional terms that cannot support the total rigor of identification the language of character purports to offer. In the reading of a high-backed chair, for instance, why leg? Why is it leg in particular that disambiguates the character of one chair from another? In *The Order of Things*, Foucault asks the question "why leg?" in a more general and damning formulation. How, he asks, can the "proper noun" of any individual specimen be converted into a sufficiently general yet specific semantic structure so that each specimen can be put in relation to the others around it?[4] How does this balancing act between precise individual de- scription and completely generic, common quality arrive at "leg" as the discriminating anatomical factor? If at one extreme the "proper noun" treats the individual as an inviolable whole, and at the other a completely generic quality common to many things is likely so perfectly diffused throughout an object that it can- not be distinguished as an identifiable part—how is it that the leg comes be isolated and named—independently of adjacent material—on the basis of visual, exterior inspection? In order to prevent a total degeneration of the anatomical categories that underpin character, architecture has turned a problem of linguistics into one of sociology. The correct use of the language that establishes character is left to people who know. Figures like John Claudius Loudon, a prolific nineteenth-century author of books of architectural advice and cottage patterns, simply declare character and tell others what to do with it: the Gothic character, he said, is suitable for a building in a grove of alders. As long as the advice is trusted, or at least repeated with enough frequency to acquire the mien of inevitability, the language of character retains its integrity and Foucault's questions are forestalled.

4. Foucault, 138–145.

This bargain, though, engenders a second set of prob- lems. There is an uneasy coexistence of, on the one hand, a

5. Litchfield, *Illustrated History of Furniture: From the Earliest to the Present Time*, 154.

6. Harold Eberlein and Abbot McClure do this as well in their *Practical Book of Period Furniture*. According to them, Chippendale "saw everything with the eyes of a carver," which is of course a fiction invented purely by the authors. They then go on to describe the wooden legs of his chairs in the language of character, which are identifiable because the "[the] lower edge of seat rail often had projecting edge of splayed gadroons . . . or a fine rope moulding." Unlike the first statement, the second has no capacity to conjure up the qualities of Chippen- dale's person from beyond the grave. Eberlein and McClure, *The Practical Book of Period Furniture*, 160.

system of character that purports to describe its objects rigor- ously in the language of anatomy, and, on the other, an almost personal intimacy between the connoisseur and the those same objects. In the practice of connoisseurship, character as the visible sign of a natural or latent order is always getting mixed up with stories of artifacts as the residue of a history populated by actual subjects. Character is not the revelation of a divine or natural order but the visible residue of a history replete with actual subjects. Every- where character is employed retrospectively by the connoisseur, this history and its peoples lurk like ghosts, present but not expressible via the anatomical language that character requires. Frederick Litchfield, author of the aforementioned *Illustrated History of Furniture*, says that Louis XV decorative screens "were painted with love scenes and representations of ladies and gentlemen who look as if they passed their entire existence in the elaboration of their toilettes or the exchange of compliments,"[5] but in the language of character they are read as "three-fold . . . with each leaf a different height, and with shaped top."[6] The second half of his observation comes at the expense of the first: as the language of character grows more precise, it strips away the ladies and gentlemen elaborating their toilettes. In a sense the screen cannot survive conversion into the language of character without help from the connoisseur, who is responsible for reat- taching and revivifying the lives of these subjects.

The more perfect and consistent the system of character, the more complete the eradication of the subjects who inhabit its history and the greater the obligation of connoisseur to testify on behalf of the peoples "hiding" beyond its surface.[7] At the same time, the more perfect and consistent the system of character, the more perfect its alignment with systems of architectural production. Although character emerges as a mode of divining rationale and order in retrospect, the language of anatomical description is also a blueprint for how to make more things. By combining, modifying, and gradating between its forms, ar- chitects can use the language of character to create an almost exhaustible stream of new artifacts. There are infinitely many Chippendale chairs possible with "gadroon carving at the lower edge of the seat rail and an acanthus carved knee," and another

L'homme à la lippe, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7).

Il tire la langue, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7).

infinity of chairs possible if the characteristics of Chippendale are hybridized with those of Louis XV. The products of these infinities, unlike other methods that aim to produce inexhaustible supplies of novelty, come into the world with the appearance of being fully naturalized. They are already legible relatives of other artifacts, fitting neatly into the tabular system from which they are derived, and they attract audiences who, with the help of the architect, read back into them the history of their coming into being— albeit a history populated by subjects that may have never existed: people who are just phantoms of *production by character*.

There is a cost, then, to playing on both sides of character— its power as both a mode of retrospection and of production. Its

7. In one of the more famous examples of this reverie, the eighteenth-century novelist Friedrich Schiller imagines the audience staring at the sculpture of Juno Ludovisi will engage in this kind of reverie, imagining the freer, purer "comportment of the community whence it issues." Jacques Ranciere, *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 35.

products will always conjure the sense of a history sequestered away inside the object, but these will be increasingly fictitious and will engender passive modes of consumption. The architect will be required to serve as docent, supplying the testimony for counter-factual and alternate histories impossible for an audience to recover on its own. For a while the pleasures outweigh the costs of doing business: pleasures in the vein of *Connecticut-Yankee-in-King-Arthur's-Court* what-ifs like a hybrid of chair legs that suggests Chippendale spent time at Versailles in the service of Louis XV. But eventually the architect will have to choose between world-building in the present tense and perpetually servicing nostalgia for a world that never was.

The character organizes the world too, but does it now. It has all the specificities of character—all the little tells that make one thing different than another—but it exists in the present. The entire laundry list of character's idiosyncrasies arrives in the

8. Theodore Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays* (London: Routledge, 1994), 78.

flesh as a "rigidified personality pattern impervious to life experience."[8] The character must be navigated, dealt with, or responded to, such as in the self-portraits of Jean-Jacques Lequeu. *L'homme à la lippe*—sausage-fat lip, wrinkled

brow, bloated jowls—pouts miserably and requires a decision: comfort him? *Il tire la langue*—eye contact without apology, tongue completely out, slight gum recession on lateral incisor— stares without apology and requires another kind of decision: stare back? There are attempts to make tables of characters (Da Vinci's grotesque caricatures and Franz Messerschmidt's heads, for instance), but the more urgent question is what to do when you encounter one.
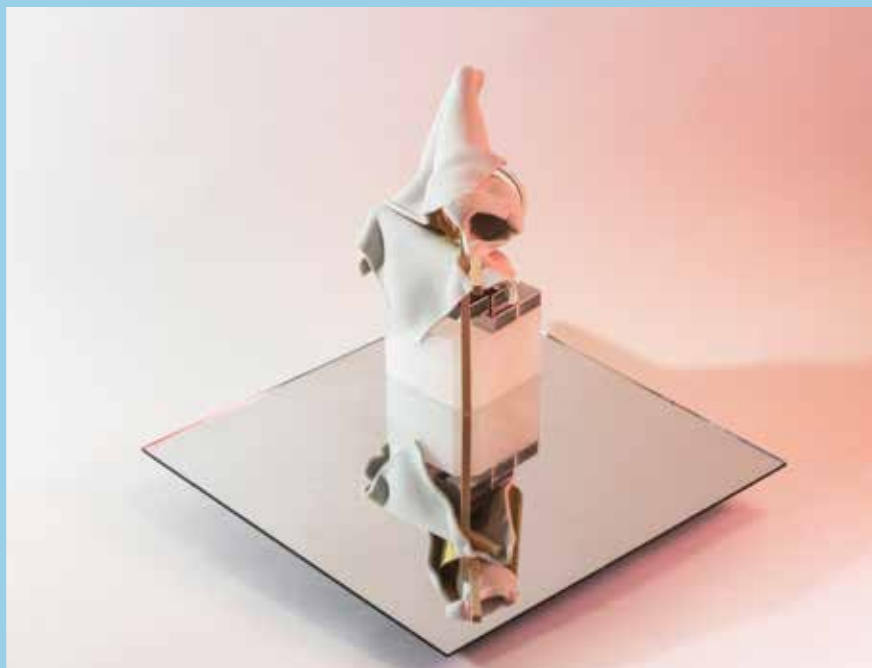
Tchotchkes, Los Angeles, California, 2016. © Andrew Holder
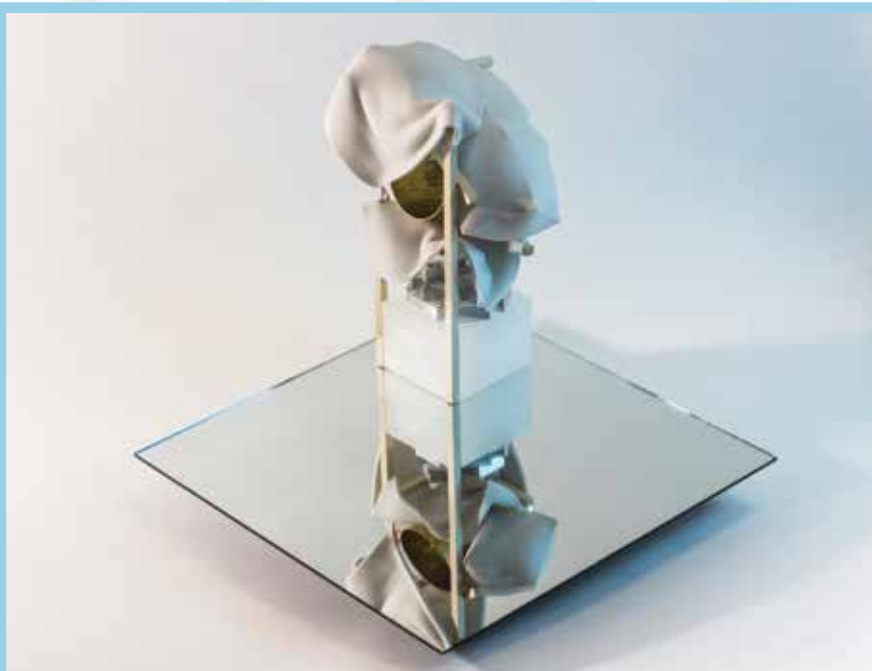
Tchotchkes, Los Angeles, California, 2016. © Andrew Holder

By requesting a response to its presence, the character also furnishes equipment for rationalizing the chaos of the world. The audience is referred back to itself: how should I handle this thing that is in some way like me? And for this question the audience is always equipped. Unlike character, there is no tabular system of hidden order to be discovered. Order and rationality emerge by testing and readjustment of action, not encyclopedic tallying-up.

Not all beings are characters capable of invoking this pattern of interaction. The character must somehow demand to be engaged by its audience as a coequal, one that is active and unpredictable enough to require a response. Part of this is the accumulation of attributes that mirror the characteristics of the audience and provides convincing evidence of a shared machinery of expression: i.e. the wrinkles of furrowed eyebrows and the wrinkles of tongue creases. Additionally, though, the character must accomplish a severance of understanding: its motives must be remote, as though it is reading from a script or carrying out a directive received from elsewhere. Lequeu's pouting man has no apparent reason to pout in his charcoal world. There is nothing evidently sad there, no obvious external stimulus. Nor does the man have any reason to stick out his tongue. The inscrutability of motive—the inability to understand a thing's interior even as it presents a familiar exterior—is projected back on the character as evidence of having an inner, secret life.

With this severance comes a particular quality of interaction. The character is just doing its thing, disengaged "from contacts with the outside world" that might cause it to be more accommodating or plastic in behavior.[9] It is mechanically inelastic,[10] not sensitive to context, and this is exactly what gives the character its power. It doesn't accommodate, it collides; it doesn't conform, it endures; it doesn't smooth, it abrades; the logic of its intentions is less interesting than its consequences. Contact with the world is a series of small accidents that open possibilities for response, and this unpredictability of the character's encounters alters the role of the architect. Architects animate characters but they are not obligated to decode them. It is impossible to attend to the character, docent-like, and testify to the causes of its actions, "it did this because." There is no fake history to look backward in search of—becoming a character requires to some extent obscuring motive—only a series of collisions that produce action.

9. Adorno, 78.

10. Henri Bergson, *Laughter* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1911), 10.
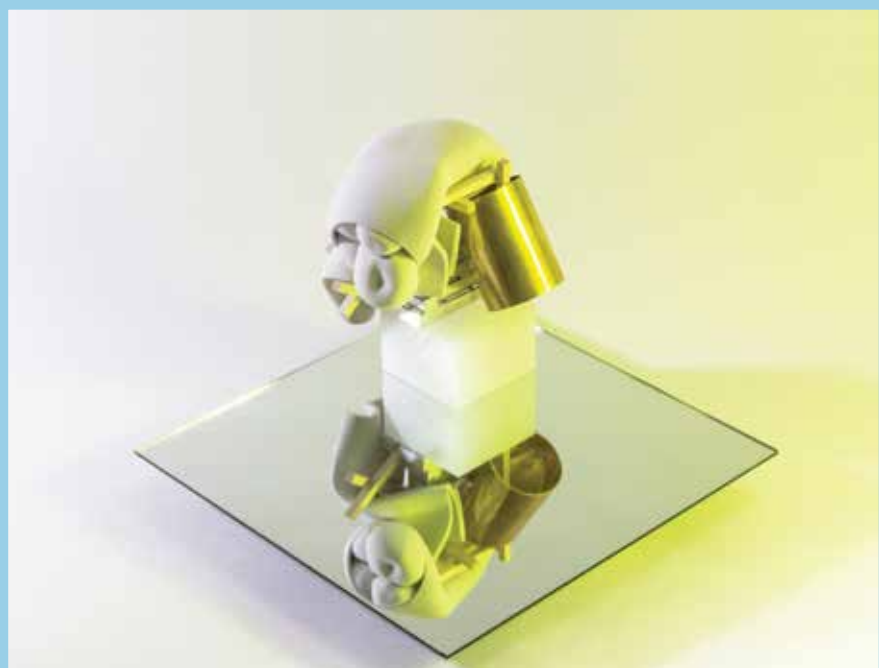
Tchotchkes, Los Angeles, California, 2016. © Andrew Holder

The problem of introducing the character to architecture is how to maintain a rigorous analogy between animate beings and inanimate objects without sliding back into the problem of defining the architect as a purveyor of passive fictions. Go too far, create a perfect life-like simulacrum, and architecture strays into necromancy or monster manufacture, where all the interest and attention is on the magical techniques of how it came to be and on the contents of its interior being—its memory, its motives, and whether the thing has a soul. Don't go far enough, and architecture is left with strange hybrid shapes that again require fictional histories to justify appearances. Instead, architecture needs to follow prescriptions that stress the immediacy of an encounter:

1) **Make solids.** Sequester and enclose *poché*. Deny views that connect an interior animating principal (i.e. construction technique) with exterior appearance. Conceal machinery beneath the skin so that, in order to express, it must speak through a veil of material.

2) **Write into base material.** Give posture to common things. Suggest the possibility of total animism—that dirt, bags, blocks, sticks, or sheets might without warning recline.

3) **Solicit names.** Make things imminently nameable, but not yet known. Call on the audience to invent a new semantics rather than merely applying typology and other forms of gross generalization a priori: not just a building but this building.

4) **Stack eccentrically.** Allow crevices and gaps between unlike things. Refuse brick-like matching that subordinates the character to an overall logic of assembly.

5) **Turn mind problems into body problems.** Logos, language, symbols, geometry, and details should participate physically in acts of construction. Crosses, stars, perfect circles, cubes, and Miesian corners mean something at a serene remove from the physical action, but they mean more lodged in a stack, loaded with potential energy. ●

Breaking Bad: When Architecture is Turned into a Criminal

Essay by Tania Tovar Torres

Robin Hood Gardens, London. © Ciro Miguel

Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., he knew he had done nothing wrong but, one morning, he was arrested.
—Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, 1925

Law, understood as a human artifact, constitutes an ensemble of regulations, which have been explicitly stated in order to categorize behaviors in two categories: legal and illegal. In order to do so, it expects from every individual subjected to its application a full knowledge of its content in order to moralize and hold accountable attitudes that are either respectful or transgressive toward it.[1]

Architecture has historically regulated the material aspect of the law, serving as the law's executioner, vigilante, foreman, and caretaker through an already wide range of typologies and delimited territories (walls, control towers, bunkers, and restricted areas, among others). It is through these architectures that the orders of the law are executed upon a subject. However, the architectural object can also be subject to the application of the law. What happens when architecture is not used in legal or illegal ways upon a human body, but the building itself is repressed, judged, sentenced, and condemned?

Architecture, then, is not only treated as a subject, but out of all subjects, as a criminal, a nonabiding citizen that has transgressed the stated regulations of the law and is punished for it. The term "crime" in this case is highly subjective, as it is not determined by the direct action of the building. Its involvement in the offense is not active, but more related with its mere existence and its attributes, whether material or symbolic (location, scale, use, or appearance). The change of (legal) status refers to a wide range of reasons, from physical, locational, economic, political, aesthetic, or social to environmental, managerial, or even ideological conditions, according to and provided by the law. Here, the primordial conflict between law and architecture lies in the inherent impulse of both to last and overcome, and where the material condition of a building can be as much medium or interference for the orders and control of the law, easily turning the architectural object into an object of resistance, which is by definition a crime.

The grim story of the 70s fallen hero, Robin Hood Gardens, begins exactly in the intersection between law and architecture. Robin Hood Gardens, a residential estate in Poplar, London, designed in the late 1960s by architects Alison and

1. Leópold Lambert, "The Law Turned into Walls," *The Funambulist* (blog), 2014, http://www.leopoldlambert.net/2014/12/05/the-law-turned-into-walls-volume-2014/.

Peter Smithson and completed in 1972, is the only mass housing of theirs ever to be built. Conceived as a council housing estate with homes spread across "streets in the sky," this social housing, characterized by broad aerial walkways in long concrete blocks, is much like the Park Hill estate in Sheffield. The estate comprises two long curved blocks facing each other across a central green space, and in total covers 1.5 hectares (3.7 acres).[2] Considered a model for housing architecture in the 70s, it stood for almost forty years, a legal abiding citizen, until time and development caught up with it. What was once an industrial area was set up for renovation, the savior and household for the lower class became nothing more but a thief stealing space for future plans. The building became expendable, the architects who designed it irrelevant, its previous values ignored, and the old icon sentenced to demolition.

2. "Robin Hood Gardens," Wikipedia, accessed April 27, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robin_Hood_Gardens.

The building remained the same, but in time the economic value of the land changed it. Surpassed by the value of the land, a changed perception, and considered an impediment in the speculatory game of real estate, the building was accused of standing against the improvement and development of the city, of being inadequate and incompetent, and the hero was turned into a criminal overnight without knowing.

The architectural subject's condition of legality was changed unilaterally by the law in a conviction process where the law acts as the active agent, and the architecture that passively obeyed the law, can easily cease to comply with its orders and mandates. Changes in either the building, the law, or their context and their affectations, passive or active, can eventually turn a building into a threat according to the law, and have its status changed and turned into an illegal and criminal subject. It is in this uneven scenario, where the passive architecture can be convicted of a crime.

The conviction of a building is then related to the crime it is accused of, where any offense committed by it is directly proportional to the discrepancy between the current state of affairs and the previous state, where the building that used to be considered a productive asset in society is then seen as useless (an atrocious crime for a building), a threat, and convicted for it.

Robin Hood Gardens, London. © Ciro Miguel

Brutalist architecture consolidated by the Smithsons in the 1950s had already gone out of fashion when Robin Hood Gardens was completed 20 years later. Despite a revival of interest of architecture and writers of architecture, brutalist buildings are still regularly voted the most hated in Britain in the popular polls. This public disdain transforms into political disdain, which translates into demolitions.

    —Tom Wilkinson, "Robin Hood Gardens: Requiem for A Dream," *The Architectural Review* (2014)

The operation of the law during any legal proceeding is always methodical. The process will generally begin with a formal criminal charge that will separate it from its regular order and system, leaving the building in an abstract condition of isolation, signaling the building as a criminal, and acting as a first phase of confinement. This first step of the proceeding will result in the conviction or acquittal of the accused. From this moment on, the law will make the building licitly susceptible to a punishment. The implications of the judgment and its importance, lie in the change upon the status of the building after the conviction: from a free and anonymous one, to one that can be charged and subject to prosecution for the "commission" of a crime. The seriousness of the crime in architectural terms are not evaluated until sentencing. The decision will be made after submitting the accused to a trail.

    A building's incapability to make an appearance in court, forces it to be presented only through documentary evidence, accurate descriptions, and approved official dictums around the object in trial. A specialist will be called to speak on behalf of the inanimate but nonetheless judged object.[3] Decrees, dictums, photographs, or witness statements will be presented as evidence of the actual physical state of the building. It is here where another character appears and the figure of a defender will become relevant: the individual aware of the situation that comprehends and reveals the physical existence of the building and its conflict with the law; the one who represents and assists having an active and operational character that turns into a vigilante of the process. The mission of the defender will be then to fight for the name of the imputed and the preservation of its guarantees, a figure that is also considered within the law and its process. However, it is not the interpreter/defender's saying what determines the true state of the building. It is the fact

6. **Acquittal**: A judgment that a person is not guilty of the crime with which the person has been charged. **Conviction**: A formal declaration that someone is guilty of a criminal offense, made by the verdict of a jury or the decision of a judge in a court of law. **Sentence:** The punishment assigned to a defendant found guilty by a court, or fixed by law for a particular offense. **Appeal:** An application to a higher court for a decision to be reversed. **Stay:** Court order that suspends a judicial proceeding (or a judgment resulting from it) in part or in full. **Commutation:** A change of a legal penalty or punishment to a lesser one (commutation of a death sentence). **Exoneration:** The action of officially absolving someone from blame; vindication. **Execution:** The carrying out of a sentence of death on a condemned person.

that the outcome of his representation and investigation will be submitted to a forum for it to be found truthful or false by a public consensus, and ultimately, by the criterion of a judge.

    Robin Hood Gardens had been accused and convicted, but it wouldn't go down without a fight. A defender stepped forward: The Twentieth Century Society, a group devoted to safeguard the heritage of architecture and design in Britain from 1914 onwards, filed in a petition to the English Heritage Committee to enlist the old-time hero as a Cultural Heritage Estate. Cases were made trying to save the work of the Smithsons, but in report after report, the "streets in the sky" ceased to be the characterization of the "modern utopia." Instead, Robin Hood Gardens was constantly accused of creating nothing but "new and worse problems," a theoretical game landed in bad design and a lack of sufficient investment: monumental but inhumane.[4] Numerous descriptive and photographic reports were issued explaining why Robin Hood Gardens should be listed and asking for the English Heritage Committee to reconsider the application, but it was ultimately labeled a "heroic failure."[5] Robin Hood Gardens would only be given five years more to live before facing its unavoidable fate. It would soon cease to be the brutalist housing symbol it once was. Robin Hood Gardens, the criminal, had been processed, and as such, it had entered the variable time and space between the beginning and the end of a criminal process. From an acquittal to an execution, it was still see what the legal proceeding had in store for it.[6]

    The journey of the building through the linear but heterogeneous geography and times of the law were just beginning. The housing unit became victim of its variable times, which can be accelerated or elongated, partially or indefinitely detained several times between the issuance of a judgment and its execution. The estate was to remain untouched during the period of time established by the Heritage Committee. There would be no execution, not until the five-year contract expired; but there would be no exoneration either. The fate of the building, laid again, on a couple of typed paragraphs on a piece of paper, the hopeful piece of protective paper that later turned into a course, but at the time there was still hope and a deadline.

3. Eyal Weizman, *Forensic Architecture* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2012).

4. Peter Stewart Consultancy, "Robin Hood Gardens, Report on Potential Listing," (2007).

5. Ibid.

Robin Hood Gardens, London. © Ciro Miguel

The case extended past its five-year sentence. Rumors had it that Tower Hamlets Council, the landlord, had been ignoring maintenance problems at Robin Hood Gardens hoping residents would move out so they could demolish the estate.[7] Architects and historians did not yield to what sounded like biased accusations made against the hero and now forced outlaw. Renowned architect Richard Rogers joined to the defense of the old icon, and together with a group of advocates of the Smithson's work, began a campaign defending whatever honor was left of the building in an effort to save Robin Hood Gardens from its demolition. Architects all over the world got together to file for a reconsideration of the listing of the building as cultural heritage.

The building kept stoic, waiting for an outcome: exoneration of demolition. And while the legal battle continued, it slowly fell into the convicted life it so much dreaded. Accusation after accusation, and trapped *in articulo mortis*, it became a civil dead, deprived from its rights due to the conviction for a felony it didn't even know it had committed. Usually inflicted on subjects convicted of crimes against the state or adults determined by a court to be legally incompetent because of mental disability, felons lost all civil rights upon their conviction, Robin Hood Gardens joined the lines of the convicted souls waiting without identity for an execution date.[8]

The architectural body that rarely changed during its "legal" state of existence was kept within a state of exclusion and held in it for a given period, a time provisioned by law itself. It was forced to assume a defensive position consequence of its crime charges, charges that sooner or later would become evident in the body of the building and its normal life. During this fixed but variable gap of time between the sentence and the execution, the building became subject to the most radical changes; a time where architecture, through its physicality, slowly embodied the immaterial law and became the criminal it had been accused of being.

Week after week, the unit somehow seemed to become more and more grim. People had begun to go missing and the grass had become overgrown. Light and other cleaning services had been failing, nothing that couldn't be fixed with a good clean-up and couple of gates for safety. Time kept passing and Robin Hood Gardens kept getting darker. Lights were off, gates were closed, and a fence left half open on the side of one of the blocks served as the entry to the ten stories of precast concrete slabs. Under the Robin Hood sign, a graffitied wall that read

7. "Council 'Running Down' Robin Hood Gardens," Building Design (2009): n.p.

8. See e.g. Interdiction of F.T.E., 594 So.2d 480 (La. App. 2d Cir. 1992).

"Shock" caught the eye of the foreign visitor. In the central green area, a small man-made hill with a few stone turtle-looking artifacts suggested a family oriented community, but the community was nowhere to be found.

Walking into the garden, where all sound from the road was left behind, one could still remember the walls on the outside and feel the buildings turning inwards away from all the mayhem. The estate seemed even more introverted and isolated. Up close, the crumbling concrete walls due to years of neglect had become evident. The stairwells were dark and unnerving, especially at night, and turned into meanly proportioned spaces; they still had the aroma of piss, no matter how much cleaning products had been spilled on them. The fort image associated with Robin Hood Gardens, the image that accused it of an antisocial behavior, couldn't be more true. But did design cause crime? Was there a causal link between the spaces and the antisocial activities that happened in them?[9] As one discovered the second security doors and key flops, one could see what the legal proceeding had done: the forgotten place succumbed to vandalism, and the locks turned Robin Hood Gardens into a gated community hiding from the outside.

Going up the stairs were the famous streets in the sky that were meant to be wide enough for children to cycle and play, and to encourage neighborly mingling, but there were no signs of that in the place.[10] Disturbingly quiet, disrupted by steps resonating all around the estate. Alison's "eddies," little side pockets created by facing door to door setbacks from the main circulation on the walkways, had become small trenches between the hiding neighbors and the evils and accusations from the outside world. Not necessarily what she had in mind when writing her rather bizarre essay in praise of the nooks and crannies inhabited by talking vaults and woodlice in the storage of Beatrix Potter.[11] There was no trace of the joyful and filled-with-life Robin Hood Gardens. The one that gave to the needed had run out of things to give. It had become a grim, ferocious, and dangerous character, nothing but an outlaw. Now, they had the criminal they wanted. ●

9. Tom Wilkinson, "Robin Hood Gardens: Requiem for A Dream," *Architectural Review*, November 10, 2014, stenographic version.

10. Ibid.

11. Alison Smithson, "Beatrix Potter's Places," in *Alison and Peter Smithson: From the House of the Future to a House of Today*, Dirk van den Heuvel and Max Risselada, eds. (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2013), 213–214. First published in *Architectural Design* (December 1967).

Character and Cities of To-morrow

Essay by Joanne Preston

Ebbsfleet Garden City in Kent is set to become the prototype for a new generation of garden cities to be built in the UK. The development of fifteen thousand new homes, on greenbelt land, follows Ebenezer Howard's typological and economic model encompassing the private development and community stewardship of greenbelt land that was once publicly owned. The town's development will be in part funded by the state but managed by an Urban Development Corporation, a group appointed by central government but outside of the usual planning mechanisms. This is the latest example of a wider resurgence in garden city ideas that have resulted from the co-option of Howard's ideas, by consecutive UK governments, to promote the neoliberal principles of privatization and devolution of power (and responsibilities) from central government to local communities.

The drive toward new garden cities was explicitly promoted in the 2012 Localism Bill that was enforced as part of the austerity measures following the recent financial crisis. Under the Localism Bill, a redrafting of national planning policy saw the introduction of a community tier of neighborhood planning and the recommendation that authorities meet the overwhelming demand for affordable housing by applying "garden city principles" to construct new "locally planned, large-scale developments."[1]

The governments' localism rhetoric drew on an image of the garden city that is bound up with the aspirational middle-class ideals of a green and healthy neighborhood built of affordable family homes and stewarded by members of its heteronormative, homogeneous community. In reality, a heavily aestheticized version of Howard's ideas is being used to relieve the state of the responsibility to provide public services. Under the guise of "localism," it is the task of co-operatives, mutuals, charities, and social enterprises to deliver plentiful affordable housing, adequate community spaces, and services to maintain the public realm.

Howard's garden city vision, outlined in his 1898 text *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*[2] was part of the wider dissemination of utopian discourse associated with a reconnection to community and domestic ideals, which claimed to offer a retreat from the "threatening by-products of capitalism [and progress] destitution, urban squalor, materialism, prostitution, crime, and class conflict."[3] In this context, the proposal for a network of "social cities" was presented as a movement toward social progress[4]—ideas that have been since discredited by aca-

1. DCLG, *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England* (November 21, 2011), 8, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7532/2033676.pdf.

2. Ebenezer Howard, *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (London: Routledge, 2013).

3. Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance, and Howard Newby, "Landscape with Figures," Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley, eds., *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976) and Chris Webster, "Gated Cities of To-morrow," *Town Planning Review* 72, no. 2 (2001): 172–3.

4. As argued by William Morris; William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (London: Routledge, 1890).

5. Davidoff, L'Esperance, and Newby, "Landscape with Figures," and Webster, "Gated Cities of To-morrow," 149–170.

6. Mark Swenarton, *Homes Fit for Heroes* (London: Ashgate, 1981), 34–5.

demics but generally prevail.[5] The marketing of Howard's vision in this way has, through history, made it a useful political tool for appeasing the emerging middle classes. As a result, the garden city model has significantly influenced UK housing policy and the semidetached suburban housing types are as thoroughly embedded into the British countryside today, as they are the British class system.

As early as 1913, as part of the Rural Land Program, the state drew on elements from the garden city model to provide social housing for those relatively better off members of society. The architectural historian Mark Swenarton notes how new, low-density housing was built a "safe" distance from the city for those who were financially able, enabling the lower social class to be moved into the vacated city dwelling they left behind and the demolition of the subsequently empty, overcrowded, and unsanitary slum dwellings.[6] The economic viability of the rural land program's model relied on the state's development and rental of suburban, garden city style housing to those more able to help themselves.

Counter to the garden cities portrayal as a socially progressive urban model, the UK-wide mass-house-building schemes that adopted these ideas have, through history, increased inequality by expediting upward social mobility for households in a more stable disposition while leaving further behind other, already marginalized, members of society. This effect has been exasperated more recently by consecutive governments drive toward home ownership—a key point of difference between the original garden city model, which relied on the "pepper-potting" style integration of a mix of rental and ownership properties, and the version that now forms the majority of suburban sprawl.

Policies such as Margaret Thatcher's "Right to Buy" passed in 1980, whereby state-owned social housing is still sold to tenants at a fraction of its value, disproportionately benefit those from a more stable financial background, who have afforded to invest and therefore taken advantage of unprecedented increases in house prices. The shift toward owner occupation as the dominant tenure in the UK has led to a contagious spread of pseudo garden city housing estates, which although built by the welfare-state, now house communities that conform to the logic and politics of capital investment through homeownership.

If a resurgence in garden city thinking will (once again) form the communities of tomorrow, then it is important to acknowledge that our inherited understanding of it has evolved from a heavily controlled history. The garden cities we know of today and tomorrow are based on the co-option of the aesthetic, typological characteristics of this model and signify a radical departure from the utopian vision, once hailed as "social cities."

In support of localism, this aestheticized and politicized version of Howard's garden city model is being employed, thus associating a new and radically dangerous political movement with a historic set of unthreatening, community, and social ideals. And while this inherited understanding of its character is used to signify future garden city style developments as seemingly desirable kinds of places to live; the historic operation of garden city principles at Welwyn Garden City, the second of two of Howards original garden cities to be built in the UK, highlights points of difference between the ideas projected through localist rhetoric and the real impact of these ideals on a specific community and place.

The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme

In Welwyn Garden City, an Estate Management Scheme (1972) is enforced.[7] Introduced following the 1969 Leasehold Reform Bill that allowed leaseholders to purchase the freehold to their properties, this piece of legislation claims to maintain and enhance the garden city's "amenities and values" by applying a set of restrictions more usually associated with leasehold contracts to freehold properties in the town. These strict rules, which regulate the aesthetic alterations and maintenance of properties, cover issues ranging from the acceptable height and tidiness of a garden hedge, to the permitted color palette for external paintwork.

7. Commission for the New Towns, "Management Scheme for WGC" (June 7, 1973), 1.

The ambition for maintaining consistency in the character of individual houses in Welwyn Garden City is an expression of the desire, by those with the loudest voices in the neighborhood, to maintain a homogeneous community. A local media campaign highlighted the "good neighborly" aspect of preserving the garden city's character—attributing the expression individual personal taste with the characteristics of selfishness and ignorance—putting pressure on residents to comply with the Estate Management Scheme and encouraging the continued vigilance and social exclusion of households who did not.[8]

8. Maurice de Soissons, WGC: *A Town Designed for Healthy Living* (Cambridge: Companies, 1988), 192–3.

The conservation of your environment requires continuing vigilance and attention to detail, lest it be spoilt by the selfish, ignorant, and uncaring. The attractiveness of an area will very quickly be eroded by failure on the part of only a few households to maintain their property adequately or by ill-considered "improvements" or alterations.
—An extract, taken from a 1973 leaflet distributed to residents

The policy's wording blurs the line between dictating the aesthetic choices applied to individual houses and more general rules about acceptable forms of personal and social life. In 1972 following its introduction, the WGC Liberal Association, argued that the scheme, which gave authorities the powers to investigate "moral lapses as well as breaches of law" and "areas of behavior that are of public concern," was unlawful and amounted to dictatorship.[9]

9. Letter in the *Times Herald Newspaper*, "Liberals Hold an Emergency Meeting on NTC Proposals," (November 5, 1971).

Mock Chimneys and Plastic Windows

The Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme was redrafted and republicized, as recently as 2008, and the archaic policy still functions as a catalyst for an exclusionary form of urbanism, underpinned by a similar rhetoric of community "vigilance" today. While the legal responsibility for enforcing the policy falls on the local planning authority, it is the town's "watchdog," The Welwyn Garden City Society—a local vigilante group of largely middle-class retirees—who ensure that garden city "values" are upheld.

The group actively police Welwyn by periodically photographing the frontages of houses and recording evidence of any aesthetic changes that are deemed to counter the Garden City's "desirable" character. These photographic "mugshots," of offending UPVC windows and cars that are parked illegally on grass verges, are reported to the local planning authority for review and form visual evidence to support Estate Management Scheme enforcement decisions. Action is taken against residents who are a deemed to have broken the aesthetic codes of conduct, either in the form of fines or through an order to undo or put "right" the criminal characteristic alterations.

If Garden City "values" are to underpin future housing developments in the UK, it is important to unpack exactly which

values are key and how they are instilled and maintained. A publication distributed to Welwyn Garden City residents, explaining the importance of the Estate Management Scheme, focuses on property valuations—claiming that preserving the special character of the town ensures its financial, neighborhood, and visual value.

Property valuations are often determined by the setting in which properties are located. Quite simply, inappropriate development, poor quality alterations to buildings of the special character of the environment will lead in turn to the lowering of neighborhood values both in visual and economic terms.[10]
—An extract, taken from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, "Estate Management Scheme Leaflet" (2008)

In interviews I conducted with key members of the Welwyn Garden City Society, they claimed their campaign to be about much more than property values, but admitted that leaving the Estate Management Scheme would be an act of "vandalism" on the town, as the policy prevents the "questionable choices of some residents" matters of taste, such as "pebble dash façades," the erection of "mock chimneys" and replacement of glass windows with "UPVC" (a form of cheaper plastic windows), that are "creeping" in to the Garden City and devaluing the surrounding properties.[11]

10. Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, "Estate Management Scheme Leaflet" (2008).

11. Interview between author and members of The Welwyn Garden City Society, Welwyn Garden City, March 20, 2014.

Localism claimed to give "ordinary people" "more power over what happens in their neighborhood" by bypassing usual methods of democracy, giving the impression that it affords greater individual freedom and choice.[12] However, the community stewardship model at Welwyn Garden City and the subsequently increased emphasis on community "vigilance" militates against this, revealing how those who do not contribute to a specific set of financial and social "values" bound up with the aesthetics of the garden city typology are actively excluded from the community. This highlights the danger that localism leads to the self-policing of communities, making difficult the existence of anything other than the status quo—toward conservatism rather than innovation— through the framing of such "other" members of the community as "suspect."

12. David Cameron, "Speech on Infrastructure" (London, March 19, 2012).

The impact of the characterization of this typology has

been explored by the feminist theorists Leonore Davidoff et al., who described the social and emotional effect of garden city style developments through the concept of the "Beau Ideal."[13]

13. Davidoff, L'Esperance, Newby, "Landscape with Figures," 173.

These writers argued that, embedded within the monotonous repartition and the inflexibility of these cloned dwellings, there was a set of heteronormative constraints and "moral" community codes of conduct, which kept women tied to domesticity and "safely" away from the labor market and the opportunity for independence it offered.

The goings on at Welwyn Garden City support this criticism and the infiltration of garden city characteristics, and their promotion of the ideological commodification, and subsequent privatization of UK housing, is an example of architectural "othering." The combined use of policies and the suburban housing characteristics to support "nuclear families" maintains the status quo by making invisible and therefore "less viable" alternative ways of living—whether that be households with single parents, those with working mothers, or larger families living under one roof.

Lampposts and Grass Verges

In Welwyn Garden City, the excessive monitoring of local character—both the urban character and personality characteristics of residents—goes beyond the policing of individual dwellings and extends to the treatment of the wider urban environment.

14. S. O'Reilly, email to MP Grant Shapps, "Planning Issues," March 20, 2014.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

Concern for the character of the public realm has increased since the council's austerity-driven funding cuts, which have led to a decline in the maintenance of grass verges in the town. The Welwyn Garden City society argue that, while to the county council grass verges are "things," in a garden city they are part of the town's "essential design and appeal."[14] Similarly, the Society claims that cuts to the funding of street lighting, resulting in the original "pagoda" style lamppost being replaced with a mix of modern styles, is damaging to the town as residents are "condemned to live in an identikit lighting land."[15]

Formed as a distinct geographical area and separated from neighboring towns by greenbelt land, the garden city model seems to amplify the sentiment that tax-funded public services are inadequate and can be better provided by residents, who share a financial stake in the continued upward social mobility

of the community. The territorial nature of the garden city model, with its residents who are keen to emphasize its exclusively wholesome character as a celebratory point of difference from other places, is echoed in the Society's assertion that general "concepts such as 'public interest' and 'proportionate' have little meaning in a garden city, which depends on so much of its appeal on detail."[16] Here, the garden city model is deemed, by the loudest members of its community, to be exclusive and therefore outside the usual remit of state provision and democratic decision-making.

In Welwyn Garden City some residents have responded to these grievances by taking it upon themselves to cut and maintain the grass verges, while increasing the vigilance and condemnation of those who cause damage by parking their cars on top of them. Here, it is easy to see how this urban model leads to the gradual erosion of the state through the privatization of the public realm by residents, who are keen to maximize the return on their investment of home ownership by paying personally for the upkeep of their local area—either financially out of their own pocket or through their time and labor. In other words, the garden city model offers the chance for residents to literally "buy" into membership of community through their investment of time, money, and labor, while stigmatizing those without the resources or willingness to get involved.

Garden Cities of Tomorrow

While garden city designs and community stewardship models claim to give greater freedom and choice to individuals, in reality, an overwhelming emphasis is placed on community censorship and vigilance. Thus it vilifies, excludes, and disempowers those who don't comply with the set of community ideals and moral codes of conduct associated with the aesthetics of the garden city vernacular.

If social, economic, and community "values" relate through the character of urban places, then seemingly benign and desirable garden city characteristics reinforce deeper ideological and class divisions. This challenges the image of community cohesion projected through "localism" rhetoric—where at a national level—garden city ideas and designs are used as dangerous vehicles for an exclusionary form of urbanism, ultimately leading to the unjust domination of already marginalized members of the community, by those who already have the property, capital, and network to benefit. ●
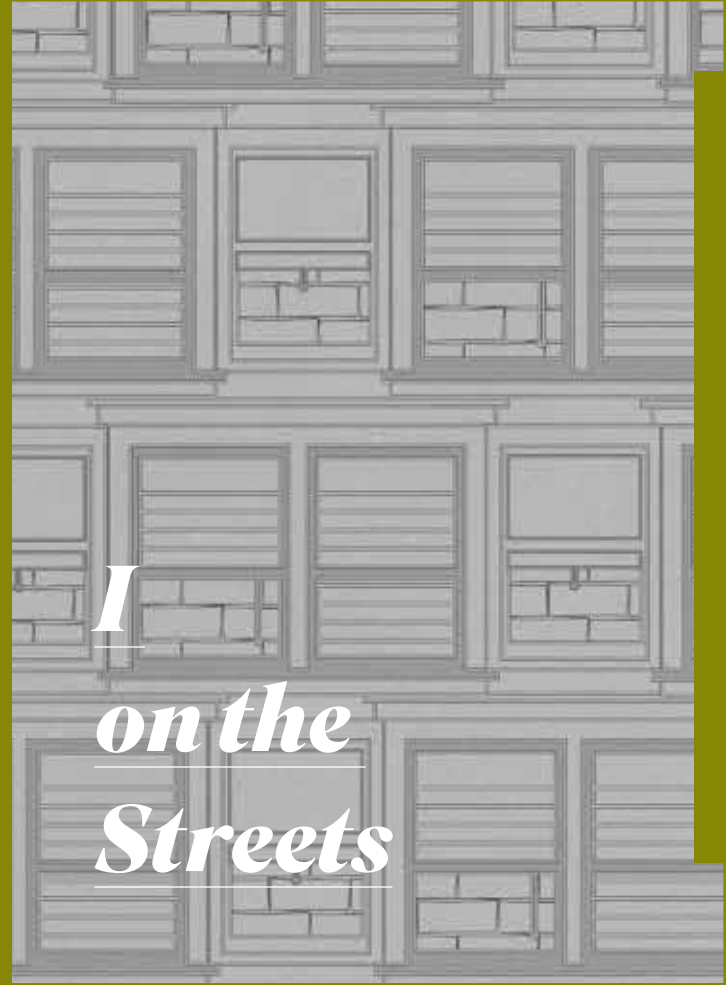
I on the Streets

Project and photographs by Jason Griffiths

2042 J St
Lincoln, NE 68510

"I on the Streets" documents every windowless street façade in Lincoln, Nebraska. It is the antithesis to Jane Jacobs's maxim on inclusive and socially coherent urbanism, and on first sight, an abject architecture in its most characterless form. However, the anonymity of a sightless façade defers to a minority of architectural photographers who reveal something more problematic about the relationship between photography and architectural character. Despite its better intentions, the notion of objective photography is quite often and quite quickly subsumed by a broader cultural commentary (William Garnett construction science, Bernd and Hilla Becher postindustrial typologies, and so on) that leads to refined aesthetic informant of architectural design. This appreciation lies in an inadvertent allure of the solitary spaces and the sublime pleasure of "ordinary" environments.

In truth, so much significant architecture draws upon this allure (MVRDV/Andreas Gursky, Robert Venturi/Ed Ruscha, Caruso St John/Thomas Demand, Diller Scofidio/Joel Sternfeld, and so on). However, this contemplation and aesthetic consideration is only possible from a position of extreme anonymity. The kind of anonymity that allows the photographer to work unobserved (in this case by windowless façades) in an environment that would be unavailable in the socially vibrant urbanism of "Eyes on the Street."

Naturally great architecture must be socially coherent, but its breadth is equally inclusive of an ambiguous relationship to objectivity and perhaps the more problematic allure of characterless "ordinary" architecture.

816 G St
Lincoln, NE 68508

923 S 10th St
Lincoln, NE 68508

2020 G St
Lincoln, NE 68510

1930 G St
Lincoln, NE 68510

727 S 9th St
Lincoln, NE 68508

840 C St
Lincoln, NE 68502

656 S 19th St
Lincoln, NE 68510

650 S 19th St
Lincoln, NE 68510

1334 S 10th St
Lincoln, NE 68502

1334 S 10th St
Lincoln, NE 68502

644 S 19th St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2037 F St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2124 E St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2325 E St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2301 S 33rd St
Lincoln, NE 68506

Rock Island Trl
Lincoln, NE 68502

2310 E St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2338 E St
Lincoln, NE 68510

2200 Winthrop Rd
Lincoln, NE 68502

5515 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

2444 E St
Lincoln, NE 68510

1235 S 26th St
Lincoln, NE 68502

2941 Tierra Dr
Lincoln, NE 68516

5515 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5515 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5515 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5519 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5503 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5523 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5523 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

1938 Garfield St
Lincoln, NE 68502

1938 Garfield St
Lincoln, NE 68502

5519 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

5519 S 31st St
Lincoln, NE 68516

1938 Garfield St
Lincoln, NE 68502

1938 Garfield St
Lincoln, NE 68502

Drawing Soane's

Text and drawings by Eu Jin Lim

In most cases, a successful building usually comes with a story, whether it's a good or a bad one. The "character" of the space or the "character" in the space is therefore undeniable in narrating the plot in architecture.

Sir John Soane's museum in London is a building that cannot exist without its characters and their stories. It is a building that was built in phases and closely related to Soane's own personal life, from his knighted years to the later solidarity and betrayed second half of his life. (Soane died in 1837 estranged from his surviving son, George.)

This project borrows the license to experiment and draw in homage to Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Joseph Michael Gandy, and William Hogarth—to whom Soane himself highly associated with during the process of building. This drawing experiment started off with the hypothesis that traditional orthographic architectural drawings are not sufficient to tell the full story of a building. The project uses the medium of graphic novels to narrate the architecture hand in hand with the hidden stories behind objects, materials, sequence, and most importantly the intangible qualities of the museum.

Approaching the building from the perspective of Soane's life was crucial to better understand how the building was used. Traces of domestic patterns and behavior can be seen throughout the architecture.

There are "rooms" of emotions that can only be narrated if one understands the journey through his life. A walk through the place requires one to put on his lens to understand the plot he built up behind the walls.

Decorative and ornamental objects may not be favorable in modern buildings, but they are part of the skin of the rooms at Soane's. They were planned with the spaces and therefore the objects mean as much to the space as the space to the objects. They are objects specifically chosen by Soane to achieve a certain mood in each space. Every object tells a story.

A home is a museum of one's personal life. A place where there can only be spaces that are unique to one's personal character. It is an interesting typology when the architecture here is a mix of both.

It takes the architect's unique persona to decide, compose, and pick every single item, material, and shape that will go into a space. In the case at Soane's, the experience through the building is almost as if one is flipping through the pages of his diary. ●
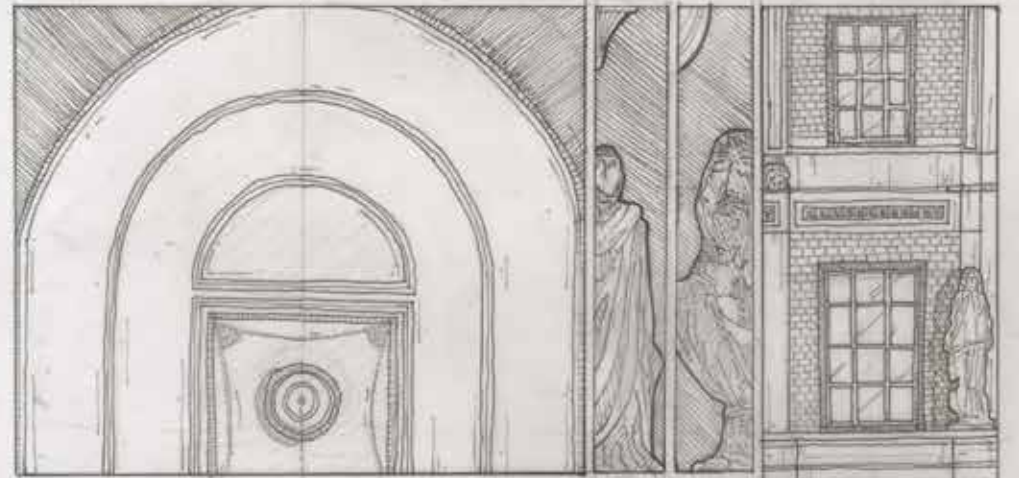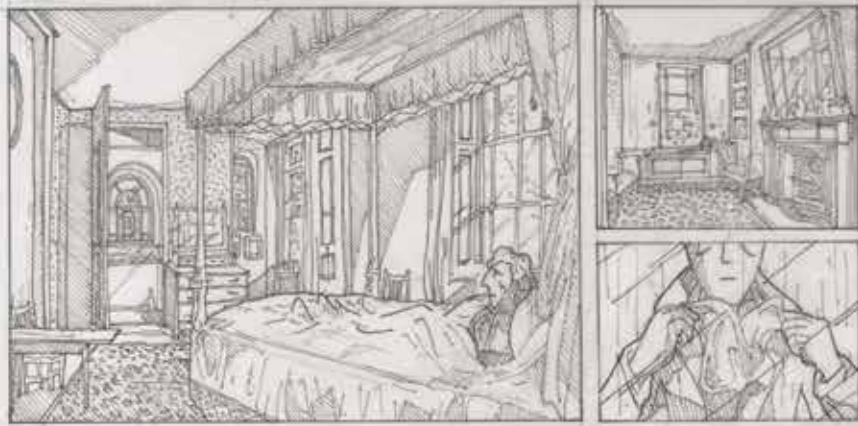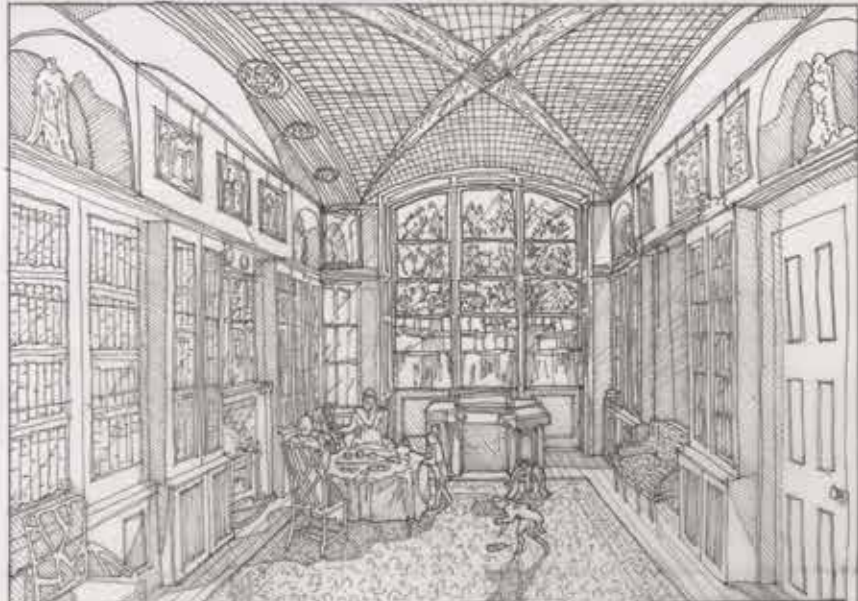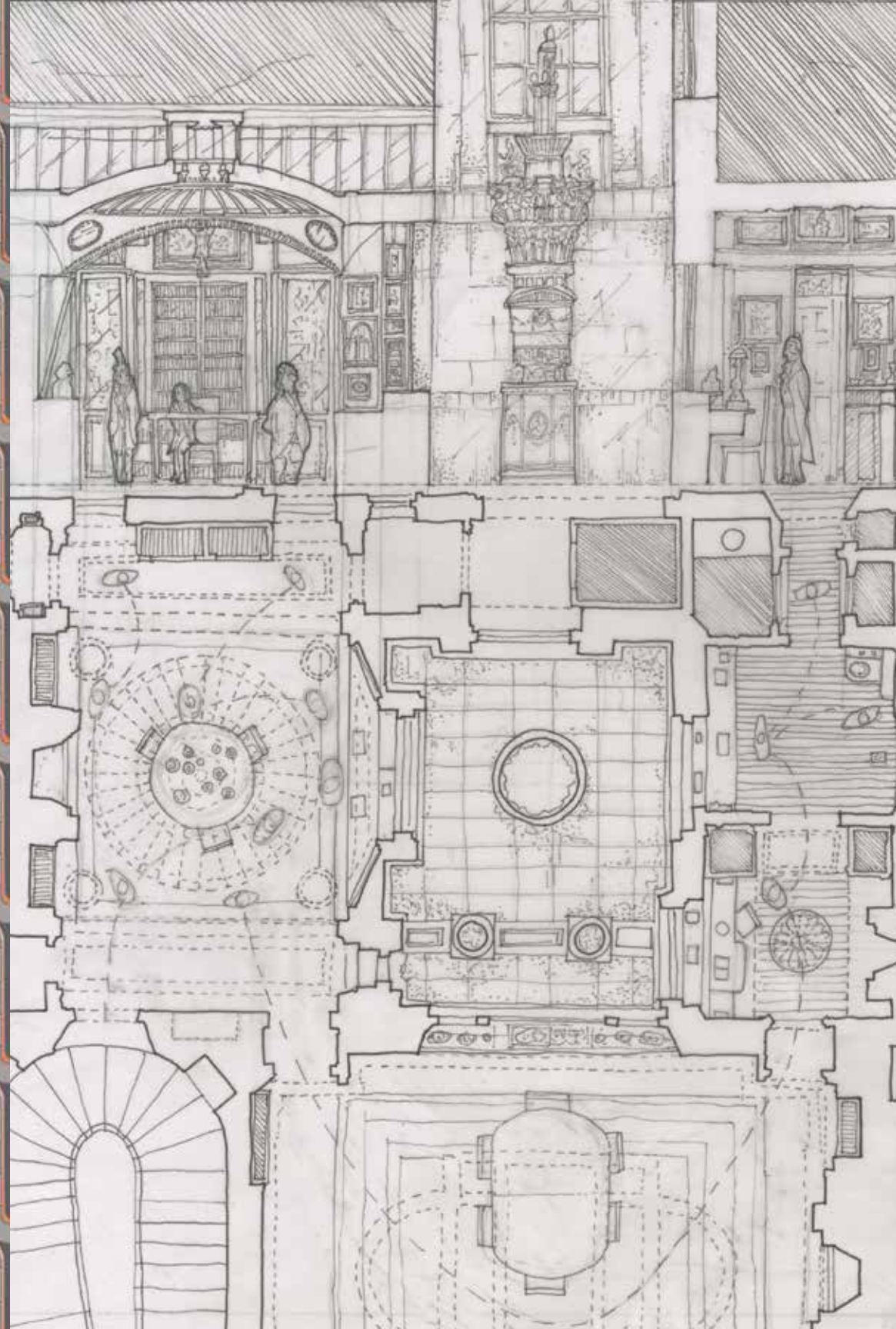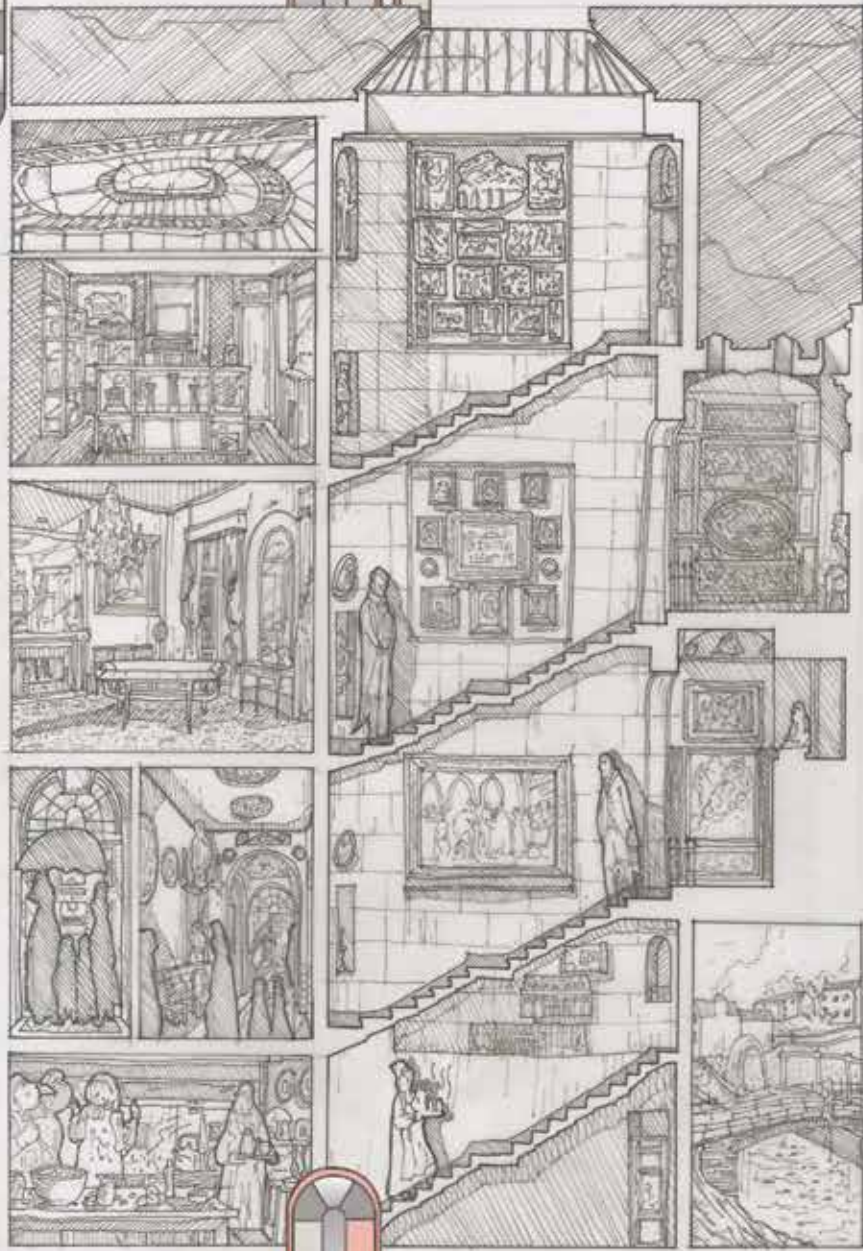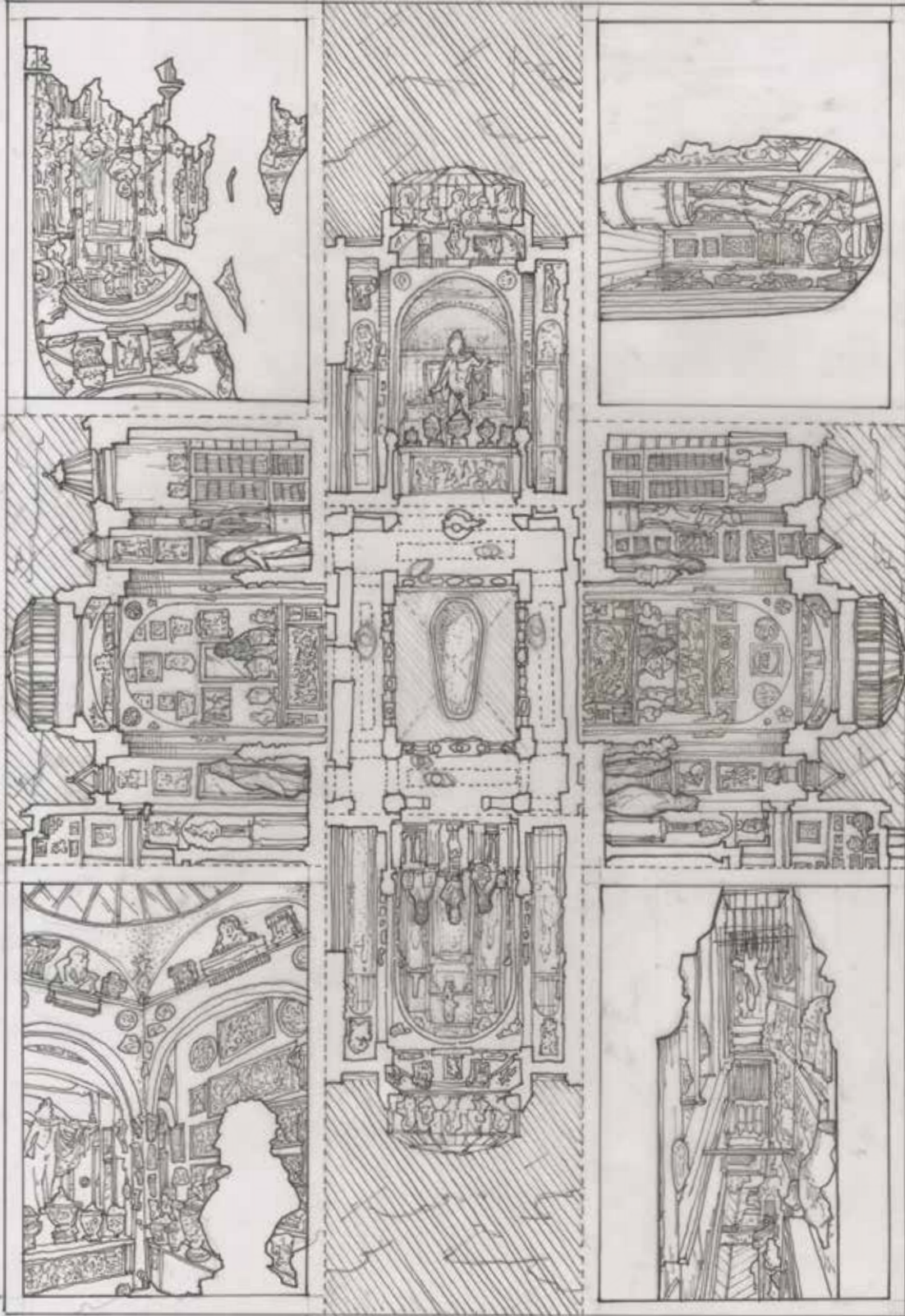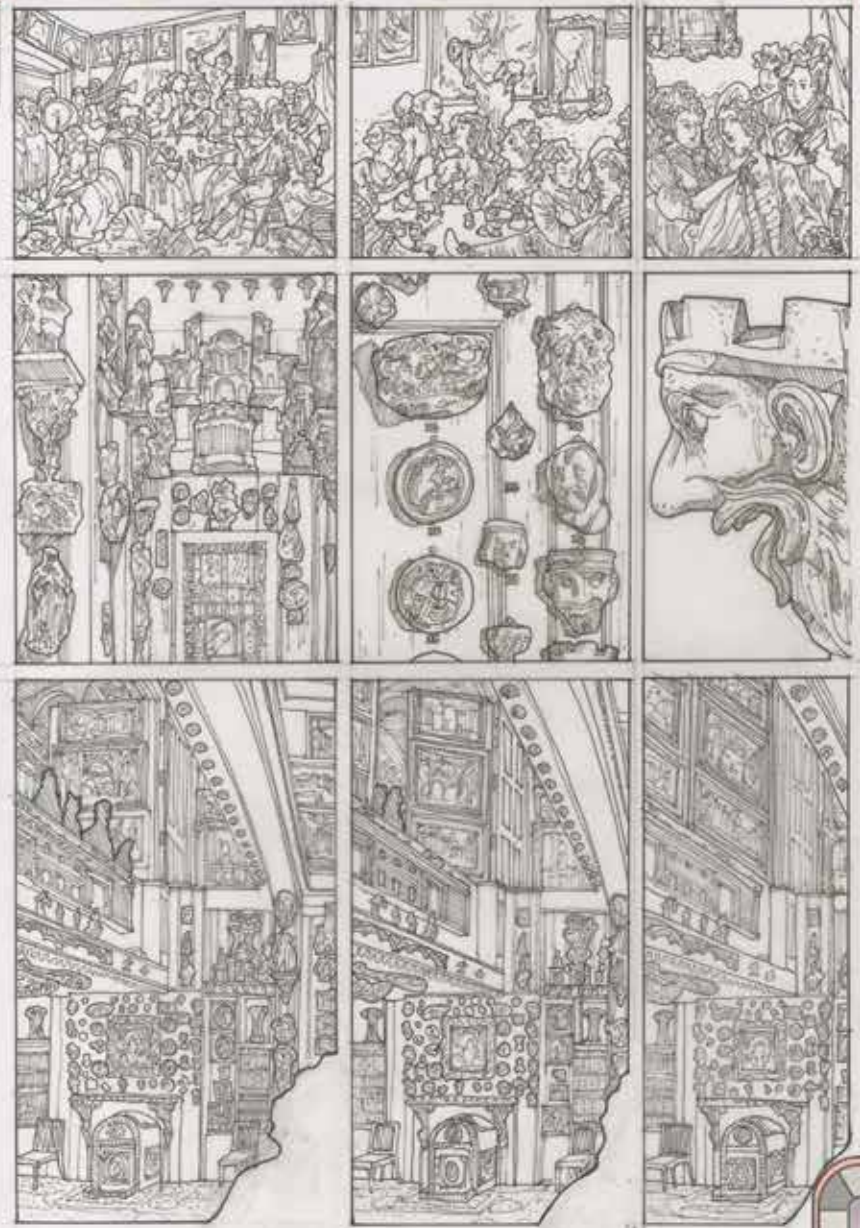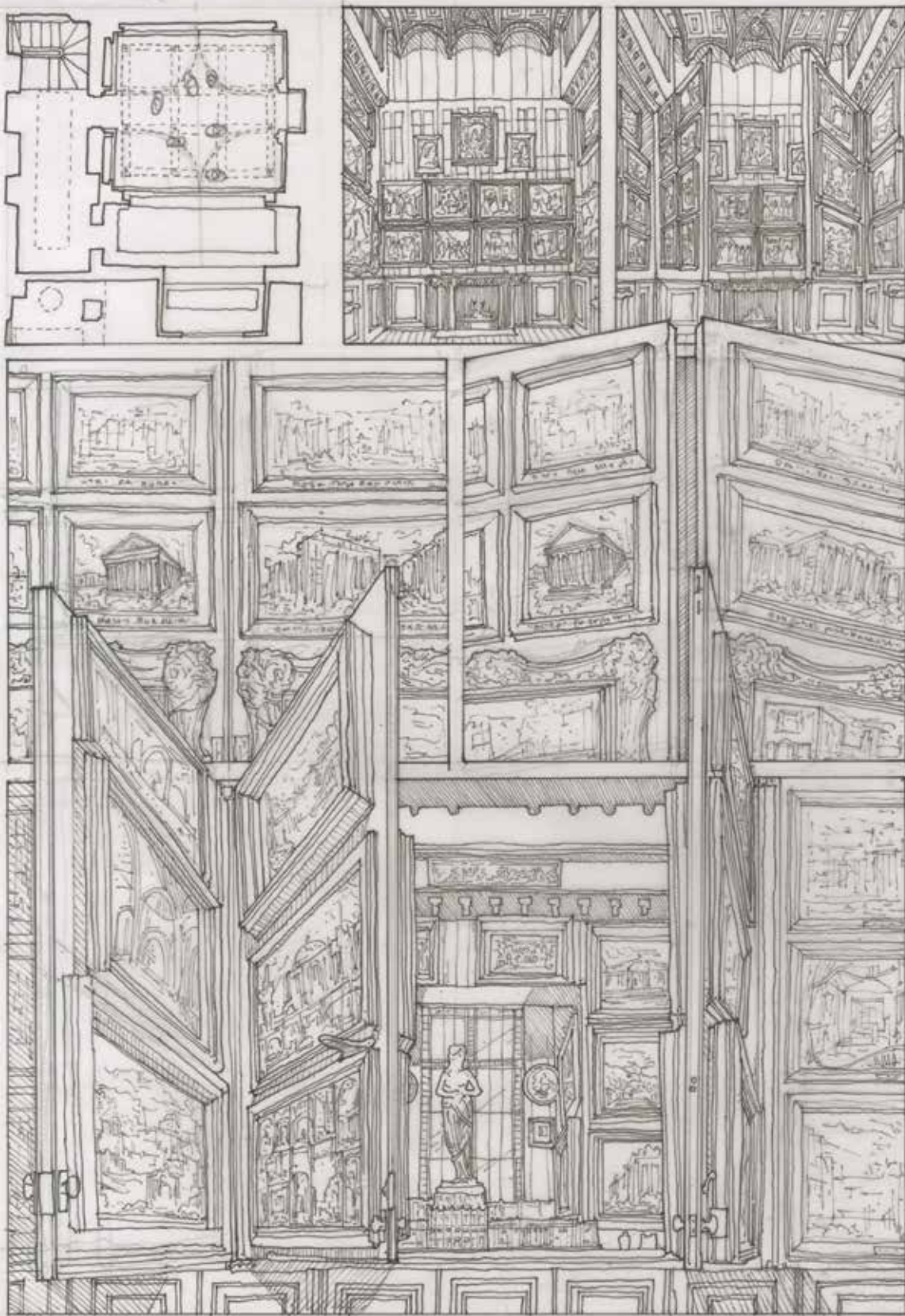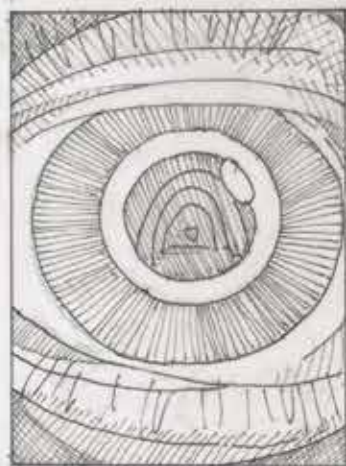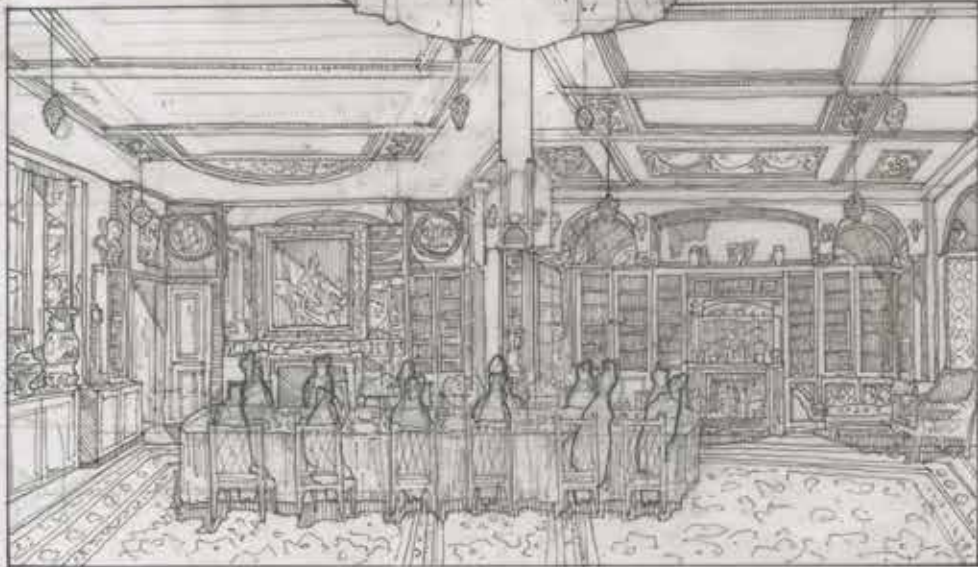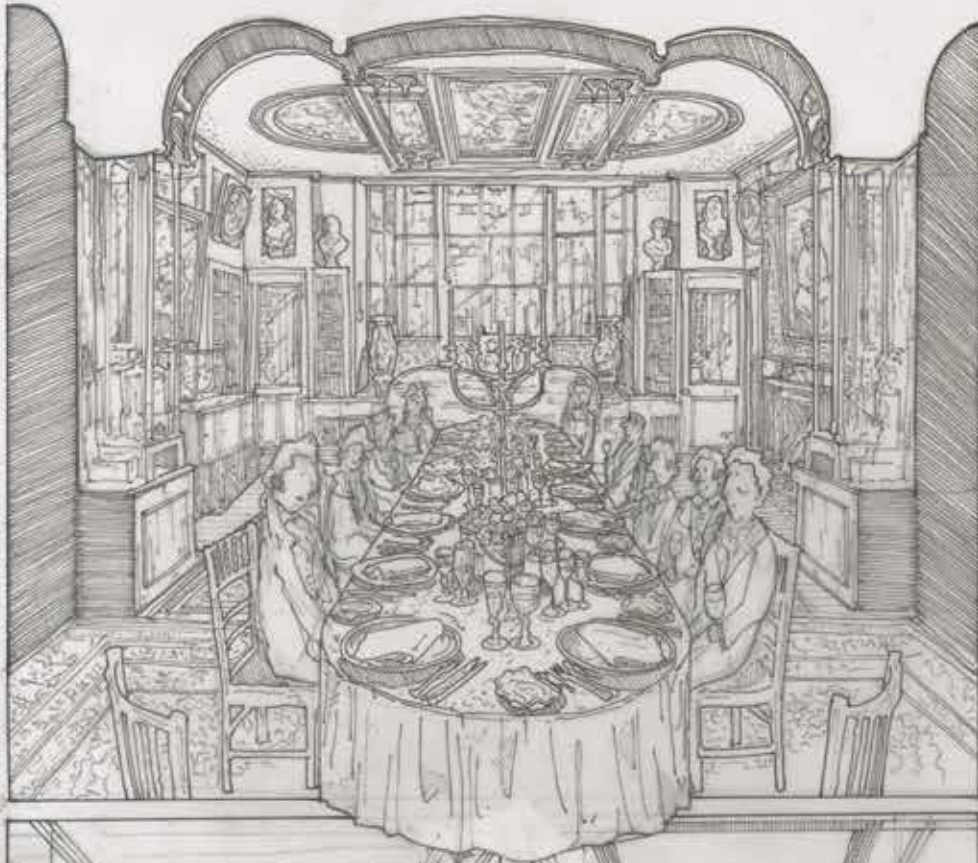
Architects
as
Characters

Is Romanticism Alive and Well and Living in America ?

A review by Morris Lesser

The concept of producing an "Alternative" exhibition in Europe composed of a small number of American architects who reflect a side of the current state of the art of architecture other than the one commonly associated with American architectural export may hold some interest for observers of "Americana." Normative contemporary architectural gatherings of this type, both in person and in print have, more often than not, focused on the colorless white and gray fashion show of modern times. Not so with this collection, which is why it is important to see if one can detect a collective spirit in the work of these nine architects. There seems to be a new American Romanticism in the air—fragile and uneasy at best—but Romanticism nevertheless (and quite specifically American in character).

For purposes best suited to the showing of contemporary work which deals in various ways with an American Romanticism, it seemed appropriate to include some of the progenitors of this new movement—transitional figures perhaps—but nevertheless representative of an architectural generation at midcareer re-examining some of the values of modern life. Both Frank Gehry and Stanley Tigerman have a legitimate modernism background in common, both by training and by early work product. Now, at midlife, both have evolved a relaxed, highly personal style, evocative of, and with an affinity for the idiosyncratic in American "taste-culture." The two of them are not nearly as tied to European antecedents as many others of their generation. Such concerns as perspective distortion and symmetry stylistically disengage them from mainstream modernism. Cesar Pelli, on the other hand, is very much the product of the modernist polemics of the twenties in his devotion to certain facets of American technology; the grid, the extrusion, weightlessness, and above all a genuine belief in the necessity of a technological imperative to evoke new forms. Nonetheless, his fascination with modern life is, in and of itself, romantic when detached from the social ramifications of industrialized society. (The ability to "detach" is thought of here as being as American as television.)

Thus, in a transitional way, these three figures suffice to demonstrate the kinds of forces at work both stylistically and technologically than can be construed to have at least some tangential influence upon a younger generation, which is bent on revisionist thinking. When, in America, that kind of revisionism is directed at the centrist position of modern architecture, one senses a growing interest in the romantic concerns of the six younger architects making up the body of its exhibition, concerns that are regionally coded as well.

Roger Ferri and George Ranalli represent the current exuberance connected with fanatically drawn images of architectural fantasies seen almost as rejections of the problem-solving recent past. Their voluptuous drawings with implied alliterative connections are very much a part of New York's au courant self-endowed avant-garde. On the other hand, while both Tom Beeby and Stuart Cohen are similarly disposed, they have to fend for themselves on the edge of that inland lake so long renowned for its pragmatic, nonspeak reality. And yet, the romantic images they continue to evolve are curiously at home on a Bible Belt fundamentally longing for images evoking both "Prairie" and "Home." Finally, one sees Craig Hodgetts and Frank Israel, with their connections to both "Hollywood Dream" and the Venice (CA) "Nightmare" as the penultimate American Romanticists, i.e., those who would indulge that particularly American trait—voyeurism. One senses the peculiar act of Americans watching themselves through the work of the young West Coast architects.

Therein, lies the basis for this exhibition and its attendant catalogue. The Romantic images herewith suggest a new American consciousness dealing with indigenous concerns of its own social vernacular—all by way of necessary self-criticism, and all by way of helping to define the new values of a country fascinated with its won emergence as a complex nation with complicated concerns. Apparently, simplistic values no longer seem to suffice in explaining a middle-age culture involved in probing its own raison d'etre.

1. *American Architectural Alternatives*, exhibition catalog published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name (1979).

2. Ibid., 1.

3. This is an interview except is taken from: *Oral History of Stanley Tigerman*, interviewed by Betty J. Blum, 2003 (Chicago Architects Oral History Project, The Ernest R. Graham Study Center for Architectural Drawings, Department of Architecture), 150–152.

This review by Morris Lesser was included in the catalogue of American Architectural Alternatives, an exhibition featuring nine American architects that toured Europe (London, Paris, Amsterdam, Zurich, Rome, and Madrid) between 1979 and 1980.[1] The Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts supported the exhibition and accompanying catalogue. In the catalogue's acknowledgements, Stanley Tigerman, curator of the exhibition, writes: "Many thanks are also due to the three critics for producing their essays under an impossible deadline."[2] But, as in many instances in the work of Tigerman, there was a clever and humorous catch. Below we reprint Tigerman's words as he discloses the catch to Betty J. Blum in 1998 as part of the Oral History of Stanley Tigerman *produced for The Art Institute of Chicago.[3]*

Stanley Tigerman: In 1980, '81, '82, '83—somewhere in there—I got a grant from the Graham Foundation—which has always been extremely generous to me and now to Archeworks—to do a show called "Nine Architects," three from the East Coast, three from Chicago, and three from the West Coast. . . . Have you ever seen this catalog?

Betty J. Blum: No, I haven't.

ST: It was very interesting. A guy named Morris Lesser, a critic whom you never heard of, did a terrific critique of the show.

BJB: Where was the show?

ST: It was a traveling show. It went all over the place.

BJB: Was it in Chicago?

ST: Yeah, I think at the Graham Foundation. So, one time—whenever it was, I don't remember now—Pelli invited me to teach at Yale. He invited me twice when he was teaching. I don't think it was the first time, because that was 1975 or '76, I guess. Somewhere in the 1980s, I think. So we're sitting over a beer in this German restaurant in New Haven . . . Pelli was one of the guys in the show. He was a very sweet man, very innocent, at some level. So he's saying to me, "I've never heard"—in his Argentine accent—"of this Morris Lesser. Who is Morris Lesser?"

BJB: This was your critic?

ST: Yes. So, I said, "More is less-er." It was me, okay?

BJB: That was your pseudonym?

ST: Yes! Absolutely! It was great. He laughed. He loved it. He absolutely loved it. So then it got out who it was who had written the critique, because it was a very tongue-in-cheek kind of critique. ●

Construction of an Architect

Essay by Jimmy Carter

The Architect, a title so synonymous with a certain cultural clique of filmmaking that there were no less than three movies released within the last decade that donned the professional title. While the later films might be accused of lifting the title, the combined Rotten Tomatoes score of a paltry eleven percent for all three films may suggest that each film was simply too inconsequential to make an impact on the others.[1] The commonalities of these movies did not end at their titles and low ratings. Above all, they documented the character of the architect in the eyes of the public. While endeavoring to turbo-charge the character of the architect with all the beauty of Hollywood comedic appeal or dramatic effect, they failed to present anything more than stereotypical representations—architects devoid of contact with the greater society and cocooned inside personal endeavor. Although the formula may not always yield filmic gold, their presence on screen does bring up the question of the character of the architect and its relevance to the discipline.

The construction of the architect character is something of great specificity, outlining truths beyond the well-oiled stereotypes in these recent films. The image of the architect as presented to us on screens, in paintings, and in books is very much a formulation, or system in and of itself. Characters are often disposed to have an existing structure—held up by the personalities and individual emotional traits that represent a continuous pendulum between artistic expression and business commercialism—and are covered with layers of allegory—built-up from accessories and equipment that symbolize the profession and the work undertaken. The characters we see in different forms

of representation are indeed fabricated in the image of the architect, but an image that is formed by the public perception of the discipline's emotional generalities and its symbolic objects—a duality encompassed by the categorization of the *personal* and the *elemental*.

> *Fonda is the "character" of the architect without architecture, capturing an architect's characteristics that involve analysis, prophecy, and the creation of alternate worldviews.*

Used in a variety of ways, the split between the personal and the elemental character of the architect exposes the particularities of different mediums. Henry Fonda, as one of the jurors in Sidney Lumet's 1957 film *12 Angry Men*, is an architect whose slow and concerted persuasion of the other eleven jurymen seems highly inconsequential to his abilities as an architect. Yet taken in the grand scheme of his actions, the architect title

is aimed at warranting his aptitude for influence. Dropping the title of an architect, Fonda's character is instantaneously capable of intelligence and consideration, remaining off-center and daring in the face of standard irrational prejudice toward the defendant on trial. "His intelligence and compassion, king's English and dignified restraint, are contrasted with the crudeness of the other [characters]."[2]

To take this as merely the pontification of an architect's abilities would be jumping to conclusions. What this suggests is the architect's multifarious character. Constructed through their personality and devoid of direct professional evidence of their abilities, the architect takes on a personal relationship with the viewer that is independent of their architectural productions.

> "Are you a salesman?"
> "I'm an architect."
> "You know what the soft sell is? Well, you've got it, believe me."[3]

Fonda, an architect in plain clothes, assumes the role of the left field journeyman willing to consider the terms of the case of a young man on trial for murder. He can see past any initial visceral reaction, following up with clear-headed inquiry and rational argument. The "soft sell" claim encapsulates Fonda's willingness and stubbornness in the face of public opinion, yet one that finds form in subtle refusal, leaps of faith, and the slow manipulation of other jurors through his own analysis. Fonda is the "character" of the architect without architecture, capturing an architect's characteristics that involve analysis, prophecy, and the creation of alternate worldviews. In the realm of personal character construction, the profession of architecture, or the labored work undertaken

by the hand of the architect, is forgotten to focus on the individual's persona in direct relationship with other individuals.

The opposite of this personal form of character construction is Pablo Picasso's 1912 painting, *The Architect's Table*, which reveals that neither the architect nor architecture needs a direct relationship with the other. No human figure is found in this cubist painting. Instead, only items such as a ruler, some ink, and a compass provide evidence of a character's presence. The self-referential objects emphasize—within the medium of painting—the acts of the architect undertaken through his or her tool kit, and encourage the viewer to disregard their personality or identity.[4] The ability to draw, construct, and define a world is the consideration, fabricated out of the material tools that symbolize their work. This is an elemental character.

In forms of representation such as painting that are less conjoined to narrative depiction, the character of an architect is constantly constructed in this same elemental manner in order to depersonalize the individual's existence. Acting to exemplify the discipline, the conversation moves away from a strictly entertainment-focused representation and into a contemplative and considered one. In contrast, architect characters constructed with an emphasis on personality open up a barrier between the architect as a persona and the architect as a professional. This character's professional particularities are then utilized for for their personal attributes, and what occurs is a deprofessionalization in the name of entertainment. On the other hand, the elemental construction of character, such as in *The Architect's Table* gives priority to the work of the architect and architecture in general.

The foundations and formations that structure his character are forever visible within him; he is not so much representative of architecture, but a distillation of it into human form. His character is figuratively and literally built out of it, turning the professional attributes into a medium of narrative tale.

All of this isn't unsurprising, and is perhaps obvious, but what this dichotomy of characterization explicates is that the form of construction matters. While different mediums of representation utilize different character formation, what becomes enlightening are the proclivities that each medium has to elucidate or eliminate certain characteristics. Hence, what is afforded to representation is a

certain control over the architect's character for specific audiences. This control allows architects to position themselves strategically in the world.

The elemental character is often manifested within drawings, drafting equipment, models, sketches, clothing, and accessories. All signifying to the viewer the presence of an architect's work, these elements make symbolic reference to architecture in general. Best explained in the 1929 piece *Der Architekt* of Hans Poelzig by August Sander for his *People of the Twentieth Century* project, the portrait could be considered the construction of an archetypal architect solely through the use of accessories. The hair, the bow-tie, the cigar, and the circular spectacles, all form part of the distinctive façade, symbolizing the discipline at large. As Jeffrey T. Schnapp explained in his "anatomical dissection of the modern architect," these props identify the architect's expanded visibility in the twentieth century through their own body and formal composition. He continues, proclaiming that the bow tie is an explanation of an architect's anachronistic rigor that "recall[ed] the revolts against triviality of a prior century of nonconformists (and) openly defie[d] contemporary habits."[5] However, Poelzig's portrait may actually formalize a subtler image: one consistence with the construction of character based upon clashing contradictions. From this perspective, Poelzig's image reveals more about his desire to be placed within society at large through recognizable accoutrements, yet remain separate through the choice of each. The glasses, the cigar, the haircut, and the bow tie are all identifiable objects of fashion at the time, but all of them are unmistakably different from standard forms of attire of the same period. What

results is a conflicting character who chases distinction while remaining in the crowd. The quintessence of this character is made clear in Sander's title, *People of the Twentieth Century*. The project, envisioned to reveal the subject's "status as typical representatives of their trade or class or generation," presents Poelzig as an individual but, more importantly, as a representation of a group.[6] He is an architect of the future twentieth century, symbolizing the rest in an almost tribalistic condition of acceptance and distinction through markings. His allegiance to the cause is on show; equipment and accessories becoming tribal tattoos to be worn.

The protagonist Asterios Polyp, from David Mazzucchelli's graphic novel of the same name is another example of an architect character that is stringently shaped. of an architect character that is stringently shaped. Mazzuchelli begins by describing Polyp as a typical modernist architect who is outwardly ideological. Drawn through transparent cylindrical forms, Polyp's character is actually built out of its own architectural philosophy, and, as a result, deliberately contrasts with the other character he is confronted with. Standing opposite his wife Hana whose chiaroscuro hatching expose her soft character, Polyp's representation portrays his personality through the image of his architecture. Unlike Poelzig, whose portrait focused on being differentiated from a wide set of people through accessories, Polyp's typical features deliberately differentiate him from his wife, further focusing his character on its personal idiosyncrasies and distinctions.

In contrast to Poelzig, Mazzuchelli's character underlines the profession's impact on his personality,

principled on efficiency and efficacy. As his story is told, Polyp's choice to leave architecture comes only after a fire has destroyed his apartment, heavily laden with architectural emblems of modernist furniture. The symbolic destruction of his equipment allows him to leave the profession, yet the profession's impact on his personality remains, even under the disguise of a middle-aged car mechanic. The foundations and formations that structure his cylindrical ideological character are forever visible on him; he is not so much representative of architecture, but a distillation of it into human form. His character is figuratively and literally built out of it, turning the professional attributes into a medium of narrative tale.

While an architect's character can be constructed, it can just as easily be deconstructed. In much the same way as control over symbolic equipment was important to Poelzig's character, the authority of the character itself is crucial to its stability. Both the portraits of Stourley Kracklite, in Peter Greenaway's 1987 film The Belly of an Architect, and Seth Pecksniff, in Frederick Barnard's illustration from Charles Dickens's 1844 novel The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit, represent or foretell their capitulation in the face of losing authority. Barnard's spectacular drawing of Pecksniff prophesizes the hypocrite's downfall by elaborating the notion of the character's rigid construction of himself as farcical. Shown in honorific position with compass and sketch in hand, what one takes from the drawing of Pecksniff is his self-obsession. Standing in front of a bust, a portrait, and another smaller painting, all representations of himself, the drawing of Pecksniff is elementally agglomerated around other depictions of himself. Pecksniff's

own formulation of his character as an architect is so precise that its repetition instantly alludes to its falsity. Instead of alluding to his greatness, his portraits and busts stand in as inanimate objects that symbolize his character as a fabrication. Pecksniff's eventual downfall in the story may be seen as the result of an elemental character construction that does not represent anything of the profession.

In *The Belly of an Architect*, the enigmatic and unfortunate Kracklite is also presented with his own ruination. Over the course of the film his self-belief as an architect is voiced in confirmations of pride and faith, stating "I'm an architect." [7] Traveling from America to prove that his hero, Étienne-Louis Boullée, is a rightful recipient of the title Master Architect, Kracklite constructs his own character in the vein of the Frenchman, deceiving himself into thoughts that he could be a rightful pupil. However, towards the end of the film when he is presented with images of his time in Rome that outline a map of his inadequacies and self-deception, he stands fallen and finished in self-destruction. The evidence of his wife's unfaithfulness while carrying his future child, and his obsessive procrastination over the one thing killing him, his belly, Kracklite's character devolves further, unable to handle the loss of control. Much like Barnard's foretelling of Pecksniff's doom, the images on the wall suggests that what has transpired was already prefigured.[8] Obliterating any authority or control that he perceived he had over his character, Kracklite looks at the representation of himself on the wall unable to change it and accepts his fate.

Kracklite's procrastination over his sick belly should be seen as a rejection of his body, a denial of his personal char-

acter that results in his ruin. His body, representative of his character in and of itself, exemplifies the predicament of total control. Unable to maintain the authority over his body, his downfall is later complete in true Greenaway allegory. Standing before a gigantic sculpture of a belly completely disheveled after a drunken night in a cell block, Kracklite states his profession one final time, "I'm an architect."[7] The police officer placidly replies, "that's all, thank you." Kracklite is exactly that, finished. Without child, family, and life, the architect character is not much.

> *His body, representative of the architect's visibility as a character in and of itself, exemplifies the importance of control. Unable to maintain the authority over his character, his downfall is later complete...*

The Canadian photographer Yousuf Karsh was quoted saying that "[c]haracter, like a photograph, develops in darkness." Taken in the context of the architect, character itself is something that can be controlled only when hidden away from the projections of others. If these six portraits outline anything it is that the control of character affords the architect an opportunity to position themselves in the world, but it is a constant fight with outside factors from distinct mediums. These portraits are by no means a guide book into that realm, but are instead reflective of the consistently distorted image of the architect that has retained some honesty which the public consumes. These representations differ from the recent filmic characters in The Architect films because they are not total demonizations; they are indeed depictions of real characteristics. They derive their power from reality, the personal and the elemental aspects of their character reflect an area of understanding between public interpretation and the architect in real life.

The personal aspect of the architect character, while perhaps the most distortive, is at the same time the most digestible. A double-edge sword, the proclivity to deprofessionalize debases the architect of their occupational acumen and establishes a direct individual relationship while regrettably reducing the discipline to personal characteristics. The elemental character promotes the discipline, removing the individual from the character and minimizing their relationship with the public. While evidently one might suggest that a happy medium between the two would lead to more control, the polarizing aspects of all six portraits emphasize that perhaps the most successful (memorable) characters are

always so. If the elemental and personal construct the character, perhaps what remains unknown for the discipline is how to control them. ●

1. "The Architect (2006), Rotten Tomatoes, accessed September 16, 2017, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/architect/; "The Architect (2012)," Rotten Tomatoes, accessed September 16, 2017, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_architect_2012/; "The Architect (2016)," Rotten Tomatoes, accessed September 16, 2017, https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_architect_2006/.
2. Nancy Levison, "Tall Buildings, Tall Tales: On Architects in the Movies" *in Architect and Film*, ed. Mark Lamster (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 14.
3. *12 Angry Men*, directed by Sidney Lumet (United Artists: 1957).
4. Jeffery T. Schnapp, "The Face of the Modern Architect," *Grey Room* (MIT Press) 33 (Fall 2008): 11.
5. Ibid., 10.
6. Matthias Uecker, "The Face of the Weimar Republic Photography, Physiognomy, and Propaganda in Weimar Germany," in *Monatshefte* (University of Wisconsin Press) 99, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 473.
7. *The Belly of an Architect*, directed by Peter Greenaway (Hemdale Film Corporation, 1987).
8. Anne Bottomley, "Lines of Vision, Lines of Flight: The Belly of an Architect," *Cardozo Law Review* 31, Issue 4 (March 2010).

The Forensic Criticism of N. Ratsby in *The Architectural Review*

Essay by Jon Astbury

Objectively, narratives exist as texts, printed and made accessible; at the same time, they are subjectively produced by writer and reader . . . the discursive mode of narrative feeds on this paradox.

—Mieke Bal, "Telling Objects" in J. Elsner and R. Cardinal, *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1994)

The conception of the critic as a character is one that, when first commissioned to write architectural criticism and still today, I am perhaps too aware of. There were several reasons for this—one being that the publication in question, *The Architectural Review,* has a long history of bizarre personas, pseudonyms, and mythical figures within its pages, another being that I felt incredibly ill-prepared—fresh out of a Part 1 in architecture—to voice my opinions to a reading public. Just as Naomi Stead argues that it is impossible to speak of architectural criticism without speaking of the persona of the critic as author, I would argue that it is impossible to *write* architectural criticism without considering this persona, who we decide to write as and why.

Take the most common form of architectural criticism—the "building study." Criticism in this case is rarely instant; it is the culmination of press viewings, interviews, personal research, and tastes—experiences over what may be a number of days. Any final written form has filtered down through these different layers, through different characters, arranged by a something of a "final" character. As much as narrative feeds on the writer/reader paradox Mieke Bal posits, it feeds on the internal paradoxes within the writer and reader themselves.

This relationship is complex enough—but once the written work enters the "editorial frame" of the architectural journal it is, as Robin Wilson states, "never to be found again,"[1] fed through an editorial frame with the work of photographers, a graphic designer, and so on. Old relationships in the text are broken and new ones are formed, both conceptual and visual via the layout of the page. In the same sense that photographs of a completed architectural work act as a reified and immutable final product, the publication of a text in a journal strives for an end point, to the extent that any critical self-reflection on its methods approaches taboo.

Yet if a critique of these processes is to be made, its most effective sites are within the pages of the journal itself, in which traces of the "politics and ideologies of architectural representation" can be uncovered.[2] The emerging field of Journal Studies is one that taps into this, exploring the means by which certain works can be seen to display impulses—concealed or otherwise—at cross purposes to the methods of both their dissemination and a wider sense of an editorial mandate regarding architectural representation.

Published here is an updated extract from a thesis completed last year that attempted to articulate some of these ideas, through the creation of a character of its own. This study involved the fabrication of a series entitled *Evidence*—credited to the writer N. Ratsby—that was inserted into *The Architectural Review*'s archive as a series that ran intermittently from 1996 to 2006, the pseudonym of Ratsby being an homage to both Nikolaus Pevsner and J.M. Richards's use of pseudonyms in the *Review*.

The work of Ratsby treated the journal page as a site of a personal and idiosyncratic mode of architectural recording, one deliberately aligned with a work of detection. The articles maintained the *Review*'s formal layouts but replaced traditional photographs with Ratsby's more informal mode of photographic close-up, with forms indistinct or blurred and empty rooms paired with textual commentaries directly influenced by detective novels. This disruptive form of architectural detection was presented as Ratsby interrogating the assumptions made by the architectural media regarding the ability of the photographic image and its textual accompaniments to act as static evidence for architectural critique, but also allowed another level of detection.

This method sought to understand the interaction between the critical potential immanent in the work of architecture and the journal page itself with the external status of the critic or, more broadly, the interaction between the practices of historiographical "evidence-making" and the practice of written criticism. What resulted was an almost autobiographical experiment into the simultaneous production of a piece of criticism alongside a critique of that same work. The fabricated work was often aware of what the criticism of it would say, while the criticism itself generated new ideas as the fabricated work was produced. As such, both, similar to the theories they study, remain unfinished—both still "wait" for one another to reach a conclusion, feeding off a productive potential to continue generating one another.

EVIDENCE: BLACKBIRD PIE

Evidence: Inverted world

⌖ ⌖ ⌖

N. Ratsby's final piece, "Inverted World," appears in the December 2006 issue of the *Review*, a study of 13 Haslemere Road by Níall McLaughlin Architects. While a previous study, "Blackbird Pie," examined 49 Duncan Terrace, a restoration steeped in the traces of its past lives, 13 Haslemere presented Ratsby with a space that was far more contemporary in its materials and spatial arrangements, entirely replacing the dilapidated interior of a Victorian terrace of which there was "little worth salvaging."[3] Inhabited by a family of four—as well as their two dogs—the traces of material occupancy are all the more prominent and even discomforting against the clean-cut glass and metal lines of the interiors.

Whereas "Blackbird Pie" articulated notions of the "search," be it on the surface or at great depth, "Inverted World" deals with what we can term the "wait." The title is once again a literary reference to a narrative that brings a rich set of theoretical tropes. In Christopher Priest's 1974 *Inverted World*, a city called "Earth" must constantly move on giant railroad tracks toward an ever changing "optimum" in order to remain ahead of a pursuing, destructive gravitational field. Keeping this pace involves constantly digging up the railway tracks behind and relaying them in front. Time in this city is measured by distance, and the chosen few who are granted the ability to return to the "past" experience bizarre distortions of space.[4]

Elana Gomel has referred to Priest's *Inverted World* as the "classic example of the ontological detective story," an example of the detective story's presumptions shifting from those of guilt to those of meaningfulness from which nothing is safe.[5] She writes:

Mann (the protagonist) treats the world he lives in as a crime to be solved. He is engaged in those well-known routines of detection familiar from Poe, Doyle, and Christie: clue gathering interrogation of witnesses, clashes with a conspiracy of silence . . . the final blinding flash of understanding.[6]

Inverted World presents a deep link between space and time: a key, if often overlooked aspect of the detective story. Most importantly, the mystery in *Inverted World*, as in most ontological detective stories, never reaches a definite conclusion—through Ratsby we can consider what such a relationship implies for criticism.

On the second spread of Ratsby's "Inverted World" we see a living room. Taken facing the windows, the room's furniture is under-exposed, and most apparent is the view outside, with a window opposite visible in the distance. A program is on the television screen with a bright blue pause symbol in the bottom left hand corner. The bright light and sound of the television is one capable of disrupting this otherwise still space—the same feeling played upon in Raymond Carver's "Blackbird Pie," when the husband can hear the radio from the other room.[7] Accompanied by a pause symbol, the television unleashes a "wait" within the image, one that creates both a mystery regarding what has taken place and an anticipation of what *will* take place.

Theodore Martin expands the nature of this "wait," and returns us to the detective story. The sense of an omitted beginning in Ratsby's images, a technique lifted from narratives of detection, is inescapably mysterious. In presenting scenes that appear as though a human figure has just departed—"a frying pan sits on the hob, a single mug on the table"—Ratsby not only establishes a sense of anticipation but also a curious relationship with past, present, and future and the discernment of which we are observing.[8]

Criticism, most particularly that of the contemporary, provides a view of what Fredric Jameson terms a "future history"—something likened to the work of science fiction.[9] An equal emphasis on time appears in John Macarthur and Naomi Stead's "The Judge is Not an Operator," where the architectural critic's position is presented as the "hinge between past and future," assessing what architecture has been, defining what it is now and to some extent condoning what it *should* be.[10] The critic is constantly rewriting architectural practice within the "unsettling potential" of the present, but often ignores this condition, instead focusing on the projection of a future.[11] Science fiction's future histories cannot know any final ending, yet their role as novels demands they present some form of closure. This ending, like that of the detective novel, often appears as an uncomfortable red herring, emerging out of nowhere to unexplainably solve a mystery.

Martin tells us how "mystery is not simply a projection of hidden depths; it is also an expectation, a promise, which *takes time* to be *fulfilled*" (his emphasis).[12] Martin suggests that our awareness of durational time instigates a reinterpretation of the traditional view of the detective novel as reliant on its final act of exposure. What if, Martin asks, this wait is the real point of the detective story, which we gladly read well in

the knowledge that its ending will be unsatisfactory? Could the same be said of criticism?

The architectural press often lacks this anticipation, in which both a photographic and textual norm is adhered to and only a moderately critical conclusion expected to be reached. The journal, in a sense, creates the "end" which Robin Wilson has stated acts as "a final act of signing-off the building as a perfectly realized product for global dissemination."[13] Regardless of its critical conclusions there is a pact by which it has entered a historical canon.

To draw a rough correlation, it is between the announcement of an architectural project (usually narrated by the architect via press release) and its final signing-off and entry into the canon (by a professional critic and photographer) that we experience this anticipatory wait, a wait for the reified image that constitutes one of the many possible futures the critic weaves. Often what we are waiting for is some form of "new" architecture, something that solves the puzzle of what architecture *will* be or is becoming.

Taken as such, the study of 13 Haslemere Road defers any utopic sense of closure or ending in that it simply presents what the building *is* rather than what the critic perceives it to be. We anticipate some form of critical fulfillment, but are presented with only what Martin refers to as "the anguish of unfolding time."[14] Crucially, we are forced to refocus on how we read the present, and how we construct the idea of the contemporary. This is not always a pleasant experience, as Martin states:

> The secret of the present . . . is not just another clue to be deciphered. It is, rather, the constant reminder—if not the sneaking suspicion—that there is more to our world than can be detected within it.[15]

Here, the wait meets the search—our feeling of unease upon learning there is more to be seen leads to the exhaustive search seen in "Blackbird Pie," the forensic methods bringing with them the promise of seeing more than we would usually be able. The journal would seem far more comfortable publishing images of a projected future than of an uncertain present.

This deferral of certainty becomes most apparent observing the "final" architectural plans and sections of Haslemere Road. These drawings, which commonly serve as another means of reifying a work, become themselves subjects of speculation when paired with Ratsby's photographs. In the kitchen in particular the plans fail to show where the inhabitants have

"deviated" from the original design.[16] In depicting rooms in their preinhabited, unaltered state, the strive for a utopian state of absolute clarity, one by which they would usually enter the canon as though their current messiness were merely a temporal phase to be rectified.

This is not to say the wait is a negative exercise, and the value it can bring to criticism is not unrealized. In *The Sight of Death*, T.J. Clark comments on what he sees as a "fear" in art criticism of what may happen to the image were it "thrown back into the flow of time."[17] We trust judgements because there is a fear, were we to relook and reconsider, that nothing new will be seen—resulting in, I would argue, our exhaustion of spaces. Why does this fear exist? It is, perhaps, a fear of the very ending Martin has expanded upon. It is a fear that criticism would come to an end and the false promise of the future would be revealed to be so.

Written in the form of a diary, *The Sight of Death* is inherently anticipatory. Clark almost lives with the artworks he is studying, each day referring to them in a new present. Indeed, it was William Hayes who argued that if we wish to criticize architecture the best we could do is live with the building we wish to criticize—thus forever extending its present but also, perhaps, never completing our work of criticism.[18]

For Martin, it is by becoming aware of this "wait" that we can "return to the question of how it is possible to construct a sense of the contemporary in the first place," which is, I argue, a question at the heart of architectural criticism.[19] But how does Ratsby depict the present rather than a desired future?

Jameson can expand on many of these elements in a direct consideration of the architectural photograph appearing in "Spatial Equivalents in the World System." Jameson's object of study is Frank Gehry's own house in Santa Monica, an example of a postmodern building that Jameson sees as displaying elements of revolutionary spatiality. Jameson describes the Santa Monica house's corrugated metal frame as a brutal stamp of its modern production, but one that "had been interrupted and abandoned in mid-process," reminiscent of the recently abandoned scenes shot by Ratsby.[20] Importantly, this, along with the house's form, blocks the clear choice of a photographic point of view—it "prevents the formation of an intellectual picture that might destroy the continual immediacy of perceptual shock," just as Ratsby's images prevent any formation of a consistent understanding of 13 Haslemere Road.[21]

For Jameson, the architectural photograph is an ineffective means of reification, often ignoring the very things

that would help make it real such as lived traces and signs of occupancy. During an interview with between Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel and Gehry on photographs of his house in Santa Monica, Diamonstein-Spielvogel states:

> It seemed evident that [there] was a deliberate structuring of the photo to reflect an environment in which real people lived real lives.[22]

From this, Jameson concludes that there is an implied "displacement of architectural space such that the positioning of its contents—objects and human bodies alike—becomes problematic.[23] For Jameson this "messiness," a space in which things can no longer find their correct place—much like the photographer who cannot find his angle—is a condition of late capitalism's fragmentations. I would argue that the emergence of a forensic aesthetic discussed earlier and displayed in evidence is another manifestation of this decentred uneasiness, a "bewilderment and loss of spatial orientation," in which the viewer must situate themselves should they wish to achieve any understanding.[24]

Apposite to this are Jameson's discussions of science fiction and the detective novel, specifically the works of Raymond Chandler. Jameson attributes such a restructuring of the present to science fiction, in which depictions of the future cause us to laterally reconsider the present in a state of distraction. Similarly, Jameson attributes this function to the detective story, the authors of which are often interested in the "here-and-now"—something their readers can tolerate little of. Chandler, Jameson posits, distracts us not from this reality, but from our own means of defence against this reality.[25] The detective stories' puzzles are in fact a means of keeping us focused while the intolerable present laterally enters our eye, the same intolerable present upon which Martin dwells:

> To wait is to feel not only the disappointment of the deferred future but also the unsettling potential of the present, whose transformation—whether catastrophic or redemptive—is forever believed to lie right around the next corner."[26]

Unfiltered experience of the present, for Jameson the "daily life of capitalism" finds something of an equivalent in the presentation of mess and trace in "Inverted World."[27] The anticipation and puzzles evoked by Ratsby's textual references imply that the only way this present can be seen is not for what it is but as the key to some utopic epistemological clarification.

For Martin, the detective novel is a constant friction between form and content. The beginning is more often than not omitted, and the solutions often "gifts from fools."[28] The solution, we have come to expect, is disappointing—it is the in-between at which the detective is at his most impressive and enigmatic. Ratsby, like some postmodern crime novelists, in fact offers us no solution—nor any allusion to what occurred in the "omitted" beginning. Instead, the wait allows us to reflect on how—and on what authority—we construct our idea of the contemporary. ●

1. Robin Wilson, *Image, Text, Architecture* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).
2. Ibid.
3. N. Ratsby, "Evidence: Inverted World," *The Architectural Review* 1318 (December 2006): 30–33; N. Ratsby, "Evidence: Blackbird Pie," *The Architectural Review* 1311 (May 2006): 48–53.
4. Christopher Priest, *Inverted World*, SF Masterworks ed. (London: Orion, 2010).
5. Elana Gomel, "Mystery, Apocalypse and Utopia: The Case of the Ontological Detective Story," *Science Fiction Studies* 22, no. 3 (1995): 343–356.
6. Ibid.
7. Raymond Carver, "Blackbird Pie," *New Yorker*, July 7, 1987, 26.
8. Ratsby, "Evidence: Inverted World," 30–33.
9. Fredric Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia; or, Can We Imagine the Future?" *Science Fiction Studies* 9, no. 2 (1982): 147–158.
10. John Macarthur and Naomi Stead, "The Judge is not an Operator: Historiography, Criticality and Architectural Criticism," *OASE* 69 (2006): 116–139.
11. Theodore Martin, "The Long Wait: Timely Secrets of the Contemporary Detective Novel," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 45, no. 2 (2012): 165–183.
12. Ibid.
13. Robin Wilson, "Evidence of Doing Nothing: The Utopic Document of Lacaton & Vassal," *Architectural Theory Review* 18, no. 1 (2013): 30–45.
14. Martin, "The Long Wait," 165–183.
15. Ibid.
16. Ratsby, "Evidence: Inverted World," 30–33.
17. T.J. Clark, *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2008).
18. William Hayes, "Architectural Criticism," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 60, no. 4 (2002): 329.
19. Martin, "The Long Wait," 165–183.
20. Fredric Jameson, "Spatial Equivalents in the World System," in *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).
21. Ibid.
22. Jameson, "Spatial Equivalents in the World System."
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia," 147–158.
26. Martin, "The Long Wait," 165–183.
27. Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia," 147–158.
28. Martin, "The Long Wait," 165–183.

Lequeu's Characters

Essay by Max Jarosz

ABOVE: *Ordre simbolique [sic], de la Sale des Etats d'un Palais National.* Proposed by Lequeu in 1789, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (A, 3).

RIGHT: *L'homme à la lippe*, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7). / *Le borgne grimacier*, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7). / *Le grand baailleur*, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7). / *Il tire la langue*, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, EST RESERVE HA-80 (B, 7).
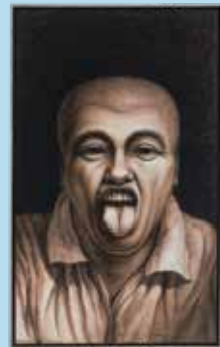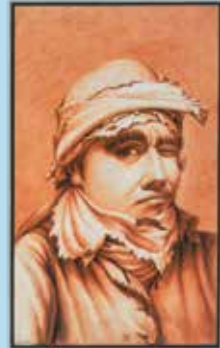
The construction of one's own character as a narrative device of self-expression is seen quite regularly; however, much rarer is the ability to both engage and express a narrative of one's contemporary context through the construction of his or her own character. Seemingly shifting between architect, artist, and pornographer, Jean-Jacques Lequeu's character is shrouded in uncertainty. Flipping through the work of Lequeu deposited in the National Library of France, one encounters a series of seemingly irrational self-portraits expressing different "characters." These images have often lead to the assumption that he was either eccentric or delusional. This paper argues for the opposite; that is, when these self-images are examined within the architectural context of a pre-revolutionary France, they reveal Lequeu's mastery of the construction of character as a narrative device.

Lequeu's graphic work, whether self-portrait or sectional drawing, is a response to the development of the expression of architectural character. In the context of pre-Revolutionary eighteenth-century France, character was an emerging architectural language, often discussed by scholars through Étienne-Louis Boullée's and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's work. The idea of character and its evolution as an architectural language capable of evoking and impressing emotions on the public sphere emerged through the increasing destabilization and illegibility of existing classic architectural orders, the rationalization of expression, and exploration of geometrical composition and spatial sequences.

Lequeu expressed his talent as an artist from a young age. His early interest in drawing was fostered by his father's profession as a cabinet maker. Lequeu

quickly developed as a draughtsman, eventually gaining acceptance into the L'Académie des Sciences, Belles-Lettres et Arts de Rouen under the sponsorship of Julien-David Le Roy. He continued his development until the currents of the Revolution began to stir, which caused a temporary collapse in his professional career.[1] This provided him the freedom to develop his own work, which became highly critical towards his contemporaries, showing extra contempt for Étienne-Louis Boullée. This work is where the construction of his character alludes to and reveals much about his context in eighteenth-century France. The first story he tells is of the destabilization of classical architectural orders and the emergence of architectural character.

Lequeu created the Symbolic and Tyrrhenian orders, as exemplified by his self-portrait column, which seemingly aimed to mock the architectural discourse of the classical orders; however he was actually reigniting the debate that followed Claude Perrault's 1683 publication, *Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Method of the Ancients*, on the expression of beauty through the codified system of orders.[2] Before Perrault's challenge, beauty in architecture was to be exclusively expressed through its codified system of orders. Perrault challenged this system of the ancients by defining two types of beauty: positive and arbitrary. *Positive beauty* was achieved through the expression of material quality, execution of craft, and magnificence in size and symmetry. *Arbitrary beauty* was expressed through composition of form, shapes, proportion, and articulation. Perrault's notion of arbitrary beauty had begun to re-emerge alongside the development of empiricist philosophy in

la Joye

la Frayeur

l'Attention et l'Estime
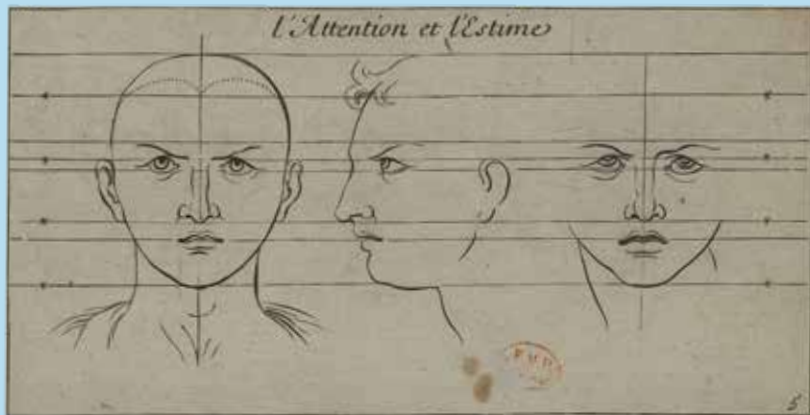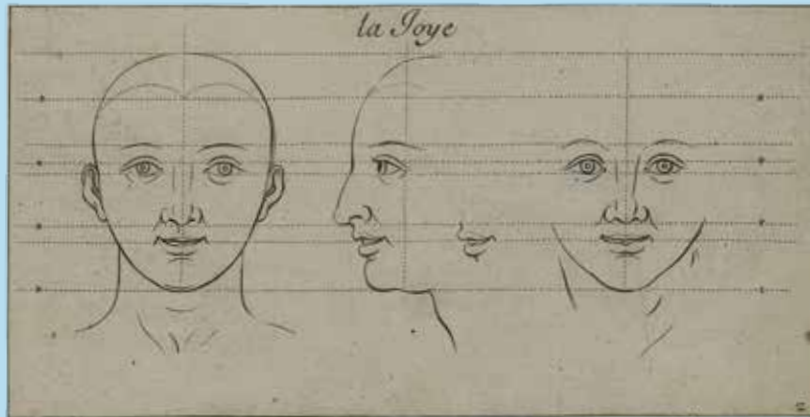
TOP TO BOTTOM: *La joye*, Charles Le Brun. Source: Collection BIU Santé Médecine (Paris). / *La frayeur,* Charles Le Brun. Source: Collection BIU Santé Médecine (Paris). / *L'attention et l'estime* , Charles Le Brun. Source: Collection BIU Santé Médecine (Paris).

the eighteenth century. The development in rationalizing experience as the producer of reason allowed Perrault's arbitrary beauty to control expression through reason. Perrault's notion of arbitrary beauty also allowed classical architectural orders to become increasingly ornamental which conflicted with their structural origins, an issue that would be taken up by Marc-Antoine Laugier and was widely debated through the battle of ancients vs. moderns. Reinterpretations of the architectural orders and columns challenged the symbol and language of a column. The obsession with the correctness of expressions in classical orders, also known as decorum, played a large role in attempting to rationalize Perrault's arbitrary beauty.[3] Architecture was becoming increasingly illegible in the context of eighteenth-century France, as the culture of consumption was causing misuse of the classical orders, thus reducing their legibility. Lequeu's self-column challenged the contemporary expression in eighteenth-century France by both expressing himself as a column and embedding ambiguities in the allegorical references of the column.

As the new class of administrators and financiers emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an excessive boom in building followed. Due to their constant misuse and appropriation by the emerging merchant class, the classical orders were losing their historical legible codification.[4] The classical orders were becoming decorative, which undermined architecture's role in representing social status. Lequeu used the context of illegibility to cast multiple narratives into his columns for the Symbolic and Tyrrhenian orders. The Symbolic order, which he portrayed as a statue of himself, referenced the nature of the codified clas-

sical orders as a Renaissance language of symbols. The Tyrrhenian order represented a few important architectural myths and associates the order with the narratives of Euclid, Jiram, Samson, and Tyrrhenus.[5] The narratives told by these columns created ambiguity in expression of the column as it could be referencing any or all of them at once. For Lequeu, this was a cynical reference to the increasing illegibility of the classical architectural orders. Finally, the shape of the capital profile drawn in the Tyrrhenian order is drawn in two ways, concave and convex. This small detail brings out another development of architectural character told through the study of physiognomy and his self-portraits.

In relationship to the destabilization and increasing illegibility of the established architectural orders, the rationalization of expression due to increasingly popular empiricist philosophy further developed the language of architectural character. Lequeu's physiognomic drawings are the outcome of a continued process of understanding the ability of architectural expression to provide a way to produce sensation. This ability was heavily influenced by Charles Le Brun's depiction of expression in the human face.[6] Le Brun, a seventeenth-century painter, worked to rationalize the expression of figure's faces in paintings so they could be used to clearly depict the narrative of the painting. Looking at a few of Le Brun's drawings of fright, joy, attention, and esteem, we can see his process to rationalize these expressions through understanding the facial lines and geometry that produces them. Le Brun's drawings relate the practices of physiognomy to painting, continuing earlier studies by the sixteenth-century scholar Giambat-
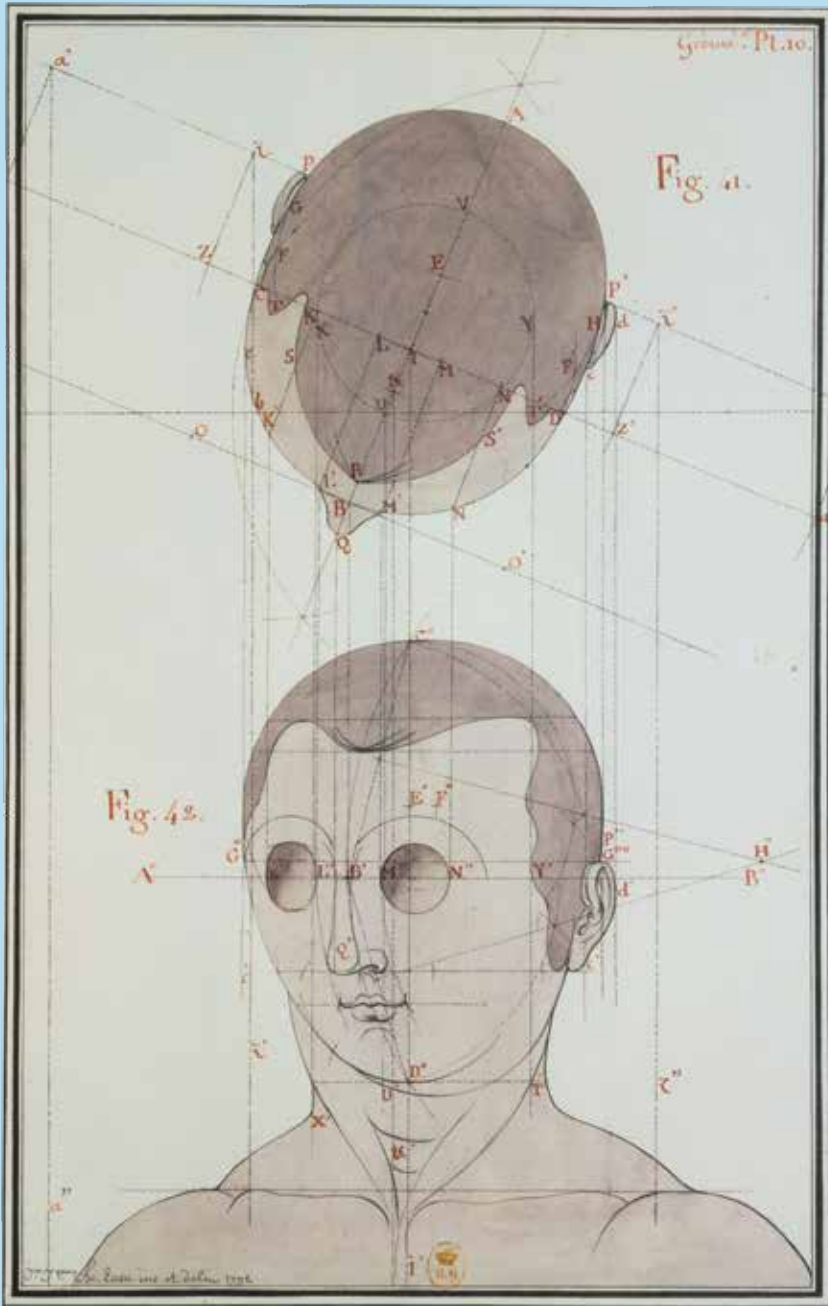
New method applied to the basic principles of drawing in order to improve graphically the tracing of the human head using various geometrical figures, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Estampes et photographie, EST RESERVE KC-17.

tista della Porta and others. The study of physiognomy aimed to relate meaning and emotion to facial expressions. In Le Brun's drawings, he aimed to use this rationalization to create clear narratives about the figures for the viewers. Lequeu, building from these processes, used the expressions in his self-portraits to create increasingly convincing different characters.

Through the study of physiognomy, Le Brun developed a distinctive correlation between eye brow positions and particular emotions. This was extremely important as a means to rationalize emotion using shape and line.[7] Lequeu's drawings also engaged the studies of Petrus Camper's 1791 *Dissertation sur les varietes naturelles*. Similar to Le Brun, Camper proposed that emotions could be conveyed by artists in control of facial lines. Specifically, Camper referred to a "facial angled" which allowed artists to convey all emotions.[8] This premise would be developed as a means to rationalize the expression of architectural character by Jacques-François Blondel and Germain Boffrand, the teachers of Boullée, Claude Nicolas Ledoux, and Lequeu.

In 1745, Germain Boffrand wrote about the relationship between classical orders and their character:

> Although architecture may seem only to be concerned with what is material, it is capable of different genres, which make up, so to say, its forms of speech, and which are animated by the different characters that it can make felt. Just as on stage set a Temple or Palace indicates whether the scene is pastoral or tragic, so a building by its composition expresses that it is for a particular use, or that it is a private house. Different build-

ings, by their arrangement, by their construction, and by the way they are decorated should tell the spectator their purpose; and if they do not, they offend against the rules of expression and are not as they out to be.[9]

To Boffrand, all emotions could be expressed in architecture through their composition, construction, and decoration. In describing this process he claims, "It is not sufficient that a building be beautiful, the spectator has to feel the character that the building must impart, so that it appears joyful to those for whom it should communicate happiness, and serious and sad to those for whom it should command respect or sadness."[10] According to Boffrand, through the use of a line—concave, convex, or straight—an architect could evoke expression, referencing Le Brun's eye brow line as a tool for rationalizing the expression of emotion. Lequeu learned these techniques through his teacher, Boffrand.

The process of trying to rationalize architectural character as a new language was continued by Jacques-François Blondel, who described sixty-four building genres and types, including the form and decoration of each. For Blondel, thirty-eight characters could be expressed in buildings. These characters ranged from sublimity, nobility, freedom, femininity, firmness, virility, lightness, elegance, delicacy, the pastoral, naïveté, to mysterious, grand, bold, terrifying, dwarf, frivolous, licentious, ambiguous, vague, barbaric, flat, trifling, and impoverished.

> All the different sorts of architectural production should bear the imprint of the particular purpose of each building, all should have a character
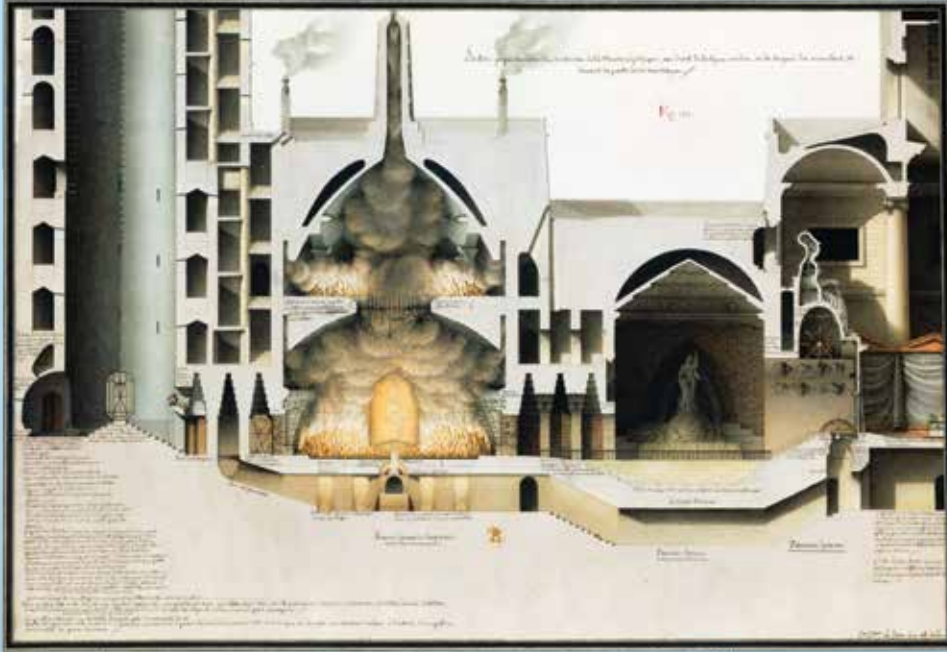
Cross section of a subterranean labyrinth for a gothic house,
Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque
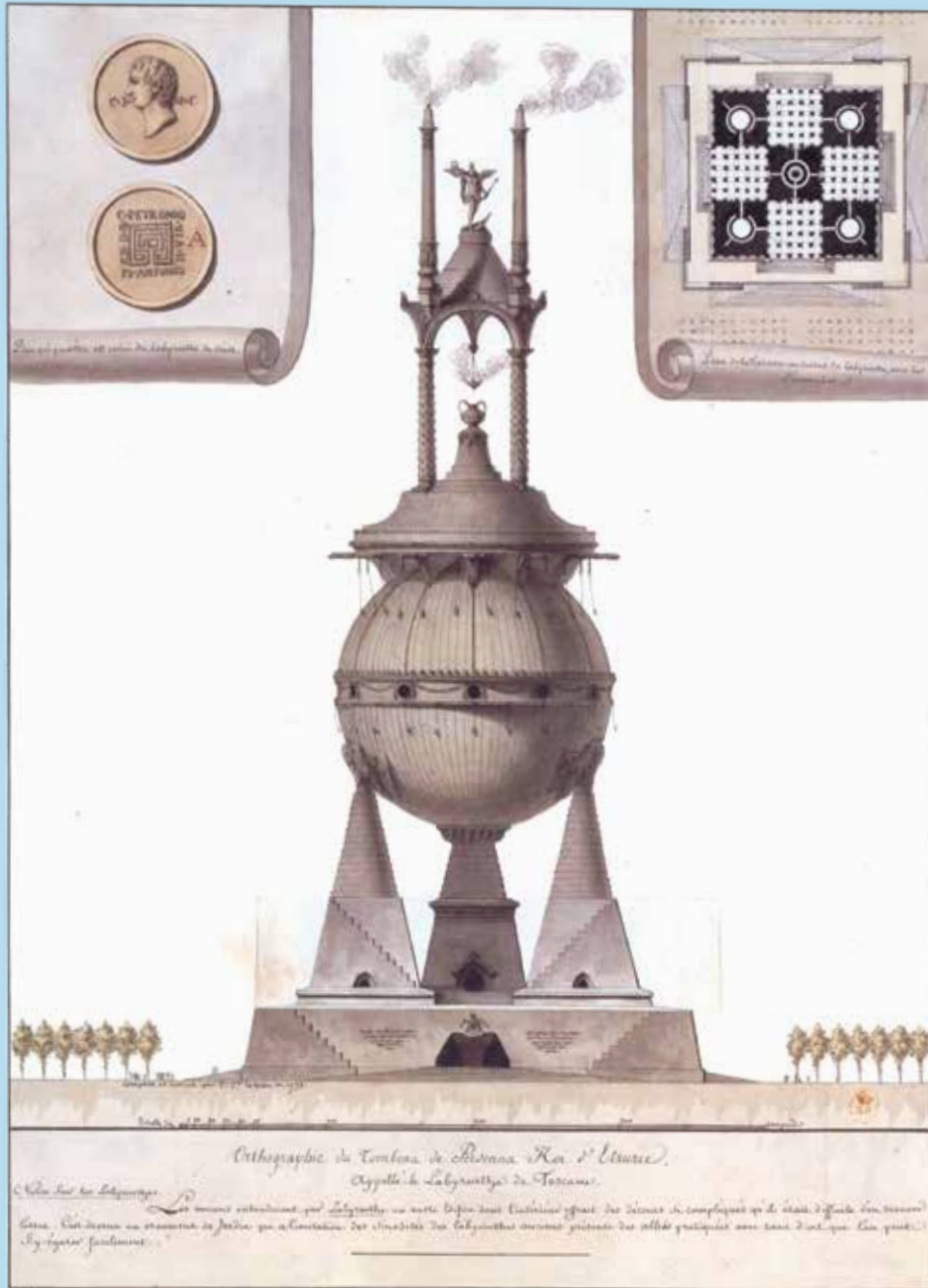Nationale de France, Département Estampes et photographie,
EST RESERVE HA-80 (2)

determining their general form, and announcing the building to be what it is. It is not enough for the distinctive character to be indicated only by the attributes of the sculpture. . . . It is the fine arrangement [disposition] of the general masses, the choice of forms, and an underlying style which gives to each building a bearing which suits only those of its sorts.[11]

In this passage, Blondel reiterated Boffrand's notion that each particular building imprints its purpose and would do so through its character.

Up to this point, architectural character was understood to express the entire range of emotion within the limits of convenance, or the suitability of architecture to its owner.[12] Originally acting as a respect for decorum and the suitability of a building's design to its function, the emerging expressive qualities of architecture became described as character.[13] This is important in relating the language of character back to the destabilizing of the classical orders. In Michel de Fremin's 1702 *Memoires critiques d'architecture*, he claimed the building should reflect the social status of the owner and should not make the mistake of deceitfully suggesting a higher social position for its occupant than merited. Fremin states, "I have one more word to say about what I mean by convenance for the condition of those for whom the building is built, it is the science of avoiding anything that does not suit the dignity or status of the master, when this is not followed *inconvenance* occurs."[14] This misrepresentation was precisely what was happening in eighteenth-century France as the new emerging merchant class was able to build architecture that was originally solely expressive of the elite.

Functional aspects of buildings also depended directly on convenance because any failure to portray the owner's social status honestly could disrupt the accord that should exist between form and its function.[15] For Blondel, *caractère*, or character, emerged from convenance when social status passed to the background.[16] This was only able to happen in the context of the emerging consumption economy in France. The nobility gradually lost their power to represent status, ceding it to merchants and financiers. The growing illegibility produced the emergence of an autonomous architectural expression, freed from its obligation to signify rank and its classical origins. With this autonomy, architecture turned to emerging understandings of sensationalism and sequential experience as producers of character, setting up the context for Lequeu's more architectural drawings.

In the drawing *Subterranean Labyrinth for a Gothic House*, Lequeu's work engages the expression of character. He does so through the sequential experience of space by allegorically referring to the three-stage initiation of Terrasson.[17] The section starts with the first initiation called Cerebrus, symbolized by the three-headed dog. The occupant then moves onto the second stage of initiation, fire, composed of a furnace with torture devices. The third stage passes through the initiation by water, through a river with ornaments of a boat wheel before finally leading to the last initiation of air at the entrance of the Temple of Isis.[18] These sequential initiations drawn by Lequeu were meant to show that not only was architecture able to produce a character, but it could also craft a narrative throughout a section. Instead of continuing to produce character through the typical orders,

Orthographic projection of the tomb of Porsenna King of Etruria, called the labyrinth of Tuscany drawn by Jean Jacques Lequeu in 1792, Jean Jacques Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département Estampes et photographie, EST RESERVE HA-80 (A, 3).

Lequeu developed sectional qualities that directly told the narratives of the scene he was setting. This allowed others to read the section and understand the precession through the space as the initiation. While others like Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières had expressed that similar to the picturesque garden, architecture could evoke different emotions through different spatial sequences; Lequeu pushed this to show that architecture could create its own narrative that could be engaged directly through the sectional drawing.

In the design for the Tomb of Porsenna, Lequeu composes a series of primitive shapes to form the design. This drawing referenced the use of geometric composition to produce character. In this process, most notably for Boullée, who believed that geometry facilitated expression because geometry was able to impress upon the senses. Pure geometries were able to evoke certain feelings and impress upon a viewer's senses, ultimately producing direct feelings of joy, or terror. Boullée's beliefs emerged in relationship to the development of empiricist philosophies of the time. Boullée's work in this sense was much influenced by Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières. Le Camus de Mézières had discussed proportion and mutual composition in terms of the buildings mass as a way to produce a sound, elegant, and delightful harmony through its arrangement. To Le Camus de Mézières, good proportions were founded on correct, immediate, and apprehensible relations, and that people could understand the relations of objects and be affected by the composition. Le Camus de Mézières initially described this in terms of the architect's ability to set the scene of their building:

If he wishes his building to set a calm and gentle scene, he must combine masses that do not differ too widely; he will see that they must not have too much variety and relief and that the prevailing tone must be one of tranquility and majesty; the contrasts of light and shade must be well regulated, for any excess of either would be harmful. Nothing better conveys the character of mildness than shadows that become less dense and they grow longer.[19]

He continues on to describe how scenes of harshness, simplicity, majesty, and terror can be controlled and stimulated by the correlation between compositions of shapes and the light and shadow that is produced across their surface.

Setting the scene of the building here is similar to that of the increasing popular Chinese garden, which was heavily tied to the development of empiricist philosophy in France. The garden was viewed as a way of setting a sequence of moods, which Boullée's work often referenced. For Le Camus de Mézières, the most important part of the composition was to give shape and life to the whole.

Even the most intelligent architect can hope to succeed only by adapting his design to the exposure of the Sun to the principal parts of his building. Like the skillful painter, he must learn to take advantage of light and shade, to control his tints, his shadows, his nuances, and to impart a true harmony to the whole. The general tone must be proper and fitting; he must have foreseen the effects and be as careful in considering all the parts as if he had to show a picture of them.[20]

Southern view of a cow's stable on a cool meadow;
Gate of the Pleasure Park, Prince's Hunt, Jean Jacques
Lequeu (1757-1826). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale
de France, Département Estampes et photographie,
RESERVE FOL-HA-80 (2).

Such claims were heavily influential for Boullée, who claimed compositions of masses produced sensation. In *Architecture, Essay on Art*, Boullée wrote: "To give character to a work is to use precisely the means needed to arouse those sensations alone that are required for the occasion. To understand what I mean by character of the effects stirred by different objects, look at the great tableaux of nature and consider how we are forced to respond to the impact made on our senses."[21] His continued use of nature and season in the description of varieties of mood show the relationship to the picturesque garden. As the definition of the relationship between shape and sensation developed, the language of character was becoming rationalized to the point that not only emotion but language could be communicated by the character of a building, assuming an understanding of the architectural language. Looking at Ledoux's series of houses, for example the woodcutter's house, which produced an understanding of the woodcutter's place in society by his house appearing as a series of chopped logs started to show this emergence. This was a way to use the language of character to communicate to the illiterate to understand their place and represent their role in society. These developments of character are related to the emerging public sphere, remembering that the architectural codified orders were a way for the noble class to speak of their nobility to the lower classes, such as the Doric symbolizing public programs, for example the library. The modern public sphere was freed of the constraints of representation but consisted of a social space in which rational and critical discussions could take place discussions whose outcome did not depend on the rank or status of the participants.[22] With the bulk of Ledoux's

work being on public buildings instead of housing there was a transition of convenance to character. More precisely, the application of convenance to building types whose place in a symbolic hierarchy was increasingly illegible, demanded a shift in what the character of a building should represent. This signified the change to express building decorum suitable to the social status of its owner by giving it an expression suitable to its function. The declining relevance of social status also highlighted unnecessary use of its representation. In the realm of architecture this shifted convenance toward the representation of function over rank, which shifted the legibility of architecture from the established codified orders to architectural character.

For Lequeu, this meant a cow shed should be a cow, as seen in his drawing for the *Southern View of a Cow's Stable on a Cool Meadow*. This design references the lineage of Ledoux's work on metaphorical imagery and allegory in regard to a building's character. Lequeu's drawing was a cynical criticism of these concepts in the language defined by his contemporaries in trying to argue that objects themselves, in this case a large cow, were clearly understandable to a public and thus a large cow would communicate the buildings function of a cow shed. The drawing acts a representation of language because people who could not read, which consisted of a large portion of France at the time, would be able to understand what the building was and how it operated. To Lequeu, pure geometry was not as effective as communicating as a symbol.

If we revisit Lequeu's self-portraits, it now becomes clear that his seemingly bemusing self-portraits reveal his ability to control the expression of character to produce seemingly different

identities of himself. Through his physiognomy informed facial expressions, and his symbolic clothing to represent different class and backgrounds he drew characters of himself that truly produce different identities. While seemingly bizarre and fantastical, Jean-Jacques Lequeu's work reveals his characters not as a sign of his own delusion; but instead representations of the ability to construct character as means to communicate narratives about the entire architectural discipline of his time. This ability can be seen in the way he drew ancient stories through columns, narrative sequences through sections, and communicate cynically through symbolic architecture. The collection of his work reveals the story of the shift from classical orders to architectural character as the means of expression throughout the eighteenth-century in France. ●

1. For a more detailed list of Lequeu's early development see: Stephen Parcell and Alberto Pérez Gómez, *CHORA: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, vol. 3 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).
2. Alberto Pérez-Gómez, introduction to *Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns after the Method of the Ancients by Claude Perrault,* trans. Indra Kagis McEwen (Santa Monica, CA: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1993).
3. Louise Pelletier, *Architecture in Words: Theatre, Language and the Sensuous Space of Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2006).
4. Richard Wittman, "Architecture Parlante—An Anti-Rhetoric?" *Daidalos* 64 (1997), 12–23.
5. Parcell and Pérez Gómez, *CHORA: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, vol. 3.
6. Vittoria Di Palma "Architecture, Environment, and Emotion: Quatremère de Quincy and the Concept of Character," *AA Files* 47 (London: Architectural Association, 2002): 45–56.
7. Robert Middleton, introduction to *The Genius of Architecture; Or, The Analogy of That Art with Our Sensations* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 26.
8. Stephen Parcell, Alberto Pérez Gómez, *CHORA: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, vol. 1 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999).
9. Pelletier, *Architecture in Words*, 32.
10. Ibid.
11. Jean-Claude Lemagny, *Visionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, Lequeu* (Santa Monica, CA: Hennessey Ingalls, 2002), 229–30.
12. Parcell and Pérez Gómez, *CHORA: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, vol. 1.
13. Marc Grignon and Maxim Juliana, *Convenance, Caractère, and the Public Sphere* (Journal of Architectural Education, 1995): 29.
14. Michel de Frémin, *Mémoires critiques d'architecture* (Farnborough [Hants]: Gregg Press, 1967).
15. Grignon and Juliana, *Convenance, Caractère, and the Public Sphere*, 29.
16. Ibid.
17. Anthony Vidler, *The Writing of the Walls: Architectural Theory in the Late Enlightenment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press, 1987), 99.
18. Ibid.
19. Nicholas Le Camus de Mézières, *The Genius of Architecture; Or, The Analogy of That Art with Our Sensations* (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992), 93.
20. Ibid.
21. Etienne L. Boullée, Helen Rosenau, and Sheila Vallée, *Architecture, Essay on Art* (London: Academy Editions, 1976), 73–74.
22. Wittman, *Architecture Parlante*, 32.

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Introducing the Black Bird

A conversation between architect Grant Gibson
and his late partner T.E. Cames

Most of that summer, we would drink cheap gin on Thursdays. T.E. would use those afternoons with me to offer advice on how I should interpret books that I had given to him. He had long determined that, while I was introducing him to ideas central to contemporary architecture, he would teach me about life. On one particular afternoon, sitting under an umbrella outside the bar, he didn't ease into his lesson.

"Revolution can be avoided . . . really?" T.E. asked, as he threw the book on the table.

"You didn't like it?" I asked.

"No, it was good. It was kind of hard to follow at first. Images of grain silos, factories, classical architecture and steam ships, airplanes, and cars; he's talking about a pretty scattered set of thoughts."

"He was still pretty young for an architect, only thirty-five or thirty-six, and this was his first book."

"If he hadn't become famous, doubt there would be so many copies of this thing floating around."

"He was first notable because of this book and his writings. Especially this book, as it paints a clear picture, as he saw it, of a world rapidly changing. That, alone, made it an important document. It had real influence on the field, when it came out."

"I can see how that part of it would be important. My indifference is more toward the middle section of the book. But, I gotta admit that I still have a hard time with architectural terms like 'mass,' 'surface,' and such . . . and what the hell is with all those lines that he kept drawing on things?"

"You mean his chapter on Regulating Lines? It is a way of understanding proportions."

"Do you sit around and draw over things to make sure things are the right size?"

"Not often. I mean, I really care about producing well-composed things. But, there is a wider range of what can be considered good composition these days."

"As there should be."

"The section on housing was something! There is some really great work in that section."

"Yah, those drawings were great. There's ideas about living in those designs, and a good range of housing types."

"Did you notice this little perspective drawing below the first house shown in that section? It is this bare structure with no walls—just footings, columns, slabs, and a stair."

"Oh, I see it now. And here it is again a few pages later. I gotta admit, I didn't read the text in this section. I was distracted by the drawings and more focused on understanding them."

"You sound like a real architect, only reading the text if you cannot get the point from the drawings! That is a structural idea of a reinforced concrete structure that unifies all the different buildings that he is showing. He called it the Dom-Ino system."

"Was he the first guy to figure out how to build with concrete?"

"Well, no. He had worked for another architect in Paris, years before, who built in reinforced concrete and did a lot of innovative work with reinforced concrete. I think that I had read somewhere that a couple engineers, who had also worked for this other guy, helped him come up with this structural system. But, no one gives them any credit."

Five Points. © Grant Gibson

"So, who really knows just how well he knew the intricacies of it. Who was this other architect?"

"Auguste Perret. He is important. But, I do not know his work as well as I should. His work tended to be more classical compared to what is in this book."

"Ah, that is why he's not as well known. Media prefers the spectacle. That's why you gotta keep doing the shit that you're doing. Sooner or later somebody will notice."

"Right. What I am doing is not really radical. Strange? Sure. I do not have things figured out well enough for it to be radical. But, the bigger question is: If I ever do get my act together, will there be any sympathy for the work, like there was for this guy?"

"Well kid, that isn't something you can actually control. But, I guess you're generally right; if the world doesn't care or isn't capable of making your designs, it doesn't matter how good you are."

"Unless you can alter the cultural context in a way that makes it care or be concerned with the things that you are interested in. Because, you know . . . that would be an easy thing to do in our highly atomized world."

"I guess you could say that is what the first and last part of this book was trying to do?"

"Exactly. I think that is the motivation for the entire book. In fact, it is really a compilation of writings that he first published in an art magazine that he helped create. It was called 'The New Spirit' or something like that in French. I think he had just moved back to the city, did not have

any potential architectural work, and was spending a good amount of time painting, reading, and hanging out with other young artists and intellectuals who were interested in shaping the cultural landscape."

"Youth and their grand visions."

"It was a moment when the world must have seemed primed for change. Europe was still rebounding from the First World War, industrialization was on the rise. It must have seemed like if there was ever a time for radical transformation it would have been then."

"Little did they know that another war was on its way. But, back to this magazine; I thought you said it was about art, not architecture?"

"They published pieces on a wide range of topics, not just fine art. Again, I do not know much about it. But, I think the motivation was to find a new sensibility, mindset, or spirit—thus, the title—for the changing world."

"So, this young architect is working with engineers and contractors on these concrete structures and hanging out with artist/philosopher types at the same time? That's abnormal, right? Architects are typically the last to catch on or architecture is the slowest form of art, or something like that?"

"Fuck. Those who typically control the built environment might be the last to catch on; real architecture and the best practitioners are always amongst those that form new movements. There is just a lot of things required of our work. It is slow to produce and the rate of realization is low,
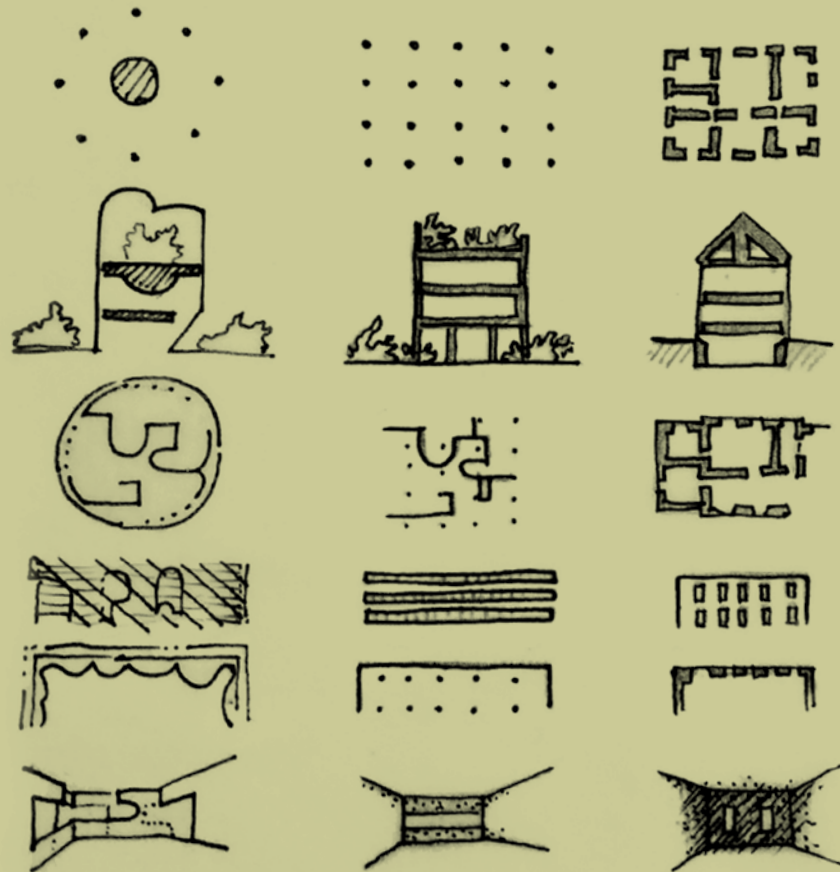
especially with those that have challenging ideas. Beyond grand visions of bending culture to our motivations, this is really why a lot of architects write. It allows us to address the moment."

"Here I was thinking that it just made sense to write about buildings, when you don't have any to build."

"Funny . . ."

"But seriously, this image of the architect as the artistic intellectual capable of being useful on a construction site seems too good to be true."

"He definitely contributed to that legend. It probably is too good to really be true, but we try."

"Sometimes believing in legends is more productive to perseverance than a grounded picture of history."

"I defer to you on the topic of perseverance, old man."

"Damn right. While we're on the subject of myth, we gotta talk about this name."

"I do not understand why he needed to give himself a new name. It is not like his life was in danger for doing this kind of work. The first explanation that I heard was that it meant 'The Raven.' But, I think that is wrong."

"The Raven. I like that. I'm going to call him The Black Bird from now on. Do other architects rename themselves?"

"Some have adjusted their names, Wright added the Lloyd, which was his mother's

family name, to his name. And, there is a young guy that just started teaching at our school, who adopted a great western name when he immigrated to Canada. But, I can't think of anyone that gave themselves a totally invented name that sounds like a title or object."

"Those examples kinda make sense, they are partly business decisions like what people in show business do."

"Maybe Muddy Waters is a similar example?"

"But, Muddy got that name from his grandmother, who raised him. It was a family nickname that he took on as his own. That is different from a grown man who is living his life and then suddenly just changes his name."

"He didn't do it in such a dramatic way from what I understand. Remember how I mentioned that he had produced a publication with another guy before he wrote this book? Well, they both wrote under pseudonyms. The other guy used his mother's maiden name. If he had done the same thing, he would been "Perret." You remember who he used to work for, right? So, you see why he couldn't do the same as his partner. I think they just make this name up from another word or name."

"That's funny."

"After the publication started to become known and his views on architecture were that of the pseudonym, I bet he just kept going with it."

"So, The Black Bird was meaningless . . . just silliness that stuck. That is so good."

"I don't really know . . ."

"It would have had benefits for someone trying to become known in a new place. Think about it, the moment that he is introduced like that, it would have signaled to others that he is different in some way."

"You think it would have had an effect on others' behavior. That is an interesting way of understanding it."

"But, it only works if he's the only one doing it. If others had started to rename themselves Le This and Le That, it wouldn't have worked. It also helps that he was a pretty serious guy. At least I would assume he was . . ."

"And, he had built a number of villas back in his home town by the time he changed his name, so he did have a portfolio of realized work to help his cause."

"I think The Black Bird was really on to something with this. The oddness of it surely generates rumors and created a heightened curiosity. Then, when someone meets him and he has that pile of magazines or this book that get to the point of what he's chasing . . . and he could follow up by showing a bunch of buildings already built—proving he can get shit done—it had to be convincing."

"So, you are admiring it as an advertising tactic?"

"No, I think it's more than that . . . the work was radical, right? And, he seems like he was a rather stable guy, at least based off his writing. Was he?"

"I do not know. I have not read enough about his life and never met him! There is a guy in Ohio that worked for him, but I have not heard his stories about him."

"Well, for the sake of my argument, let's say he was a pretty normal guy with family and friends, did things that your average guy would be doing in Paris at that time. If he's going to dedicate himself to a range of work that is rather extreme, it would help to have a psychological device to help him somewhat detach from the normal concerns of daily life . . . the name becomes a type of costume or role that he can occupy and then operate differently."

"You are saying the name puts him in character? It's a persona that he has created?"

"Like you said, who really knows, but it seems like it could be useful in that way."

"He is often considered one of the first architects to fully utilize the power of media to propel his career. But, what you are suggesting is that he made himself into a form of media."

"Which, I guess, means that your point earlier about it being like a stage name is right. That is kinda sad."

"Until, you consider all that he accomplished, then it is great. He realized a number of amazing projects: houses, a cathedral, a monastery, a big governmental building in the Soviet Union. He had a strong hand in the design of the United Nations Headquarters. Hell, he built the capital of India! And, he did it all with a silly made-up name that means nothing."

"When you put it that way, it's like running and winning a bunch of marathons while wearing a tuxedo."

"That's good."

"So, all this work that came later in his life . . . was it all based off of this structural idea of using reinforced concrete?"

"The majority of his work was built with reinforced concrete, but he wasn't a one-trick pony. I bet that if you saw his later work, you would really be surprised. It is rougher and more raw than these early designs."

"So, he moved away from this style of work?"

"You know I fucking hate the term style. Thinking about styles is a superficial way of understanding aesthetics of any kind."

"He got away from these aesthetic values? Is that better?"

"It was not that he moved away from what he was doing early on; he just kept growing and evolving."

"You would have to, I guess. A lifetime stamping out buildings that are all composed around one construction technique or look isn't a career."

"That structural diagram was really just the beginning of his development of a larger set of compositional ideas, The Five Points of a New Architecture. I should have shared those with you. But, they are architectural elements that were not available until this period in industrializa-tion. Let us see if I can remember them all: piloti (structural columns), free plan, free façade, roof garden, ribbon window. Here look in the designs in the book, I bet that some have these things in them, even though he hadn't fully identified them at that time."

"Hmm . . . still sounds prescriptive."

"It was for many that followed him. But, the points were seen as being really flexible things that would allow a lot of freedom in how they were used."

"Like a language."

"Right. But, what I find most interesting is that, as the inventor of it, he found ways of personalizing it, rather than further codi-fying it. More often than not, he worked toward complexity rather than clarity, and his artwork played a role in that. I cannot remember if there are any images of his paintings in the book?"

"Not that I saw. And, I haven't seen any of his artwork, so what do I know. It sounds like it was a back and forth kinda thing between some universal standards and an individual set of aesthetic values."

"Man, we should go downtown! One of his paintings hangs beside a Picasso at the Art Institute."

"Really? That would be cool. I gotta say for someone who is always trying to play it cool and not be overly influenced by any single architect, you really like The Black Bird, don't you?"

"He was one of the best. You are not into him yet."

"I can see how he is important and why you thought I should know something about him. But, I keep thinking, why did we look at this guy before Mies? We're in Chicago, man. After Wright, isn't he the guy that you gotta know if you're from here?"

"Hmm . . ."

"Well, give me his book and let's deal with him next time."

"He did not write a book like this. Sure, he was well published. I guess I could pass along his curriculum for IIT and we can bitch about how they still cannot manage to effectively update it to our times?"

"Look at you! You are a Mies hater!"

"No, it is . . . just that, he is problematic to study in this town, as his legacy tends to cast his actual practice in a weird light."

"Oh, so you haven't given his work proper time, because of some unease with the types of people that do get into his work? And you are on me for not being enthusi-astic enough for The Black Bird."

"You are really reaching now. But, I think you would really be into this guy. I mean, you were cool with Wright and he was a much bigger asshole. What gives?"

"I don't know . . . I guess it's what I men-tioned when I first came in."

"That this book was too scattered?"

"No, before that. It is the very last bit of it, about architecture and revolution. At one point it seemed like he understood some of the alienating aspects of modern life; but, then he suggests that a more modern home life will be the thing that makes it all better. That is about as logical as temper-ing my buzz by having another drink."

"The machine for living was a scary phase for me too. But, we are surrounded by ma-chines when we are at home, are we not?"

"The point is, regardless of how much technology we have at home, if it is all made and controlled by a small bunch of rich people, then we're still just a bunch of indebted peasants, like we were before industrialization. If The Black Bird wanted architecture to have a role in a good revolution, he needed to advocate for a machine for economic justice or some shit like that . . . rather than for industry to help us relax, be entertained or be more healthy."

"You wanted a politically principled archi-tect? Those kinds of architects, especially amongst historically noted designers, are hard to find. Most have been good at dodging the issue of power. But, let's deal with that topic after I come back with another round."

"Yes. Make sure to ask for Plymouth Gin." ●

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Joseph Altshuler is a cofounder of Could Be Architecture, a Chicago-based design practice, and the founding editor of SOILED, a periodical of architectural storytelling positioned between a literary journal and a design magazine. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Illinois Institute of Technology.

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John Astbury is a London based curator, editor, writer, and lecturer. After studying architecture, he held editorial positions at *The Architectural Review* and the *Architects' Journal*, and is currently Assistant Curator in Architecture and Design at the Barbican.

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Gem Barton is an author and course leader of BA (Hons) Interior Architecture at the University of Brighton, UK. Her research interests and specialisms include design education, speculation on the future of 'tomorrow's designer' the humanization and objectification of space, the grey area between reality and representation, and the use of fiction as a means for driving and understanding architecture. Current research focus is on ficto-critical endeavors in design pedagogy and narrative writing crossing social, cultural, political, and feminist issues.

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James Carter is an architect and member of James and Jimmy, an architecture studio and dissemination unit whose practice delves into the breadth of architectural distribution and production. The studio believes that architecture is not merely material, and concentrates on the platforms through which architecture as a cultural production can take shape. In this way, projects are varied, mediums are numerous, and characters are fluid, but all is grounded in architectural creation.

Stewart Hicks and Allison Newmeyer are cofounders of the firm **Design With Company**, which explores the intersection between literature and architecture through speculative urban scenarios, writing, temporary installations, and built projects. Hicks received his MArch from Princeton University; Newmeyer from the University of Michigan, and they both teach at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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Elii is a Madrid-based architecture practice founded in 2006 that specializes in design and construction management. Its founding partners and current directors are the architects Uriel Fogué Herreros, Eva Gil Lopesino, and Carlos Palacios Rodriguez, all of whom have previously worked in internationally renowned architecture firms. The office's work spans a wide field—from infrastructural projects, urban development, individual and collective housing to ephemeral architecture, exhibition design, and collaborations with artists. Elii took part in the Spanish Pavilion at the XV Venice Architecture Biennale (awarded with the Golden Lion 2016). Among other awards, Elii's work was selected for The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture–Mies van der Rohe Award in 2015 and won de FAD Award (Opinion) in 2005.

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Grant Gibson is a Chicago-based educator, registered architect, and founding principal of CAMESgibson, Inc., an architecture and design practice committed to creating environments and objects that are cross-pollinated with common social, political, and economic interests, as well as individual experiences and desires. Engaging the full spectrum of the discipline of architecture, Gibson is the author of "A Performed Memoir" and architect for Hyde Park Art Center's new Creative Wing.

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Joanna Grant received her M.Arch from Princeton University. Before joining Bureau Spectacular, Grant worked for architecture offices in Los Angeles, Chicago, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen for a diverse range of internationally renowned firms, including the L.A. based firm, Johnston Marklee & Associates. She has previously worked with Beatriz Colomina as a research assistant. In 2013, Grant became a member of Bureau Spectacular, working on the winning proposal "Township of Domestic Parts" exhibited at the Taiwan Pavilion for the 2014 Venice Biennale. In 2016, she rejoined Bureau Spectacular in collaboration with Jimenez Lai to lead the design of Bureau Spectacular's 2017 MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program proposal, "Pool Party." She has since led many notable projects, including works for the Chicago Architecture Biennial, Arroyo Seco Music Festival, and other ongoing projects. Her product "Snuggle" has been sold by the MOCA store.

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Jason Griffiths is an architect, teacher, and writer. His book *Manifest Destiny: A Guide to the Essential Indifference of American Suburban Housing* (Architectural Association Publications, 2011) is among his numerous award-winning projects, public art installations, publications, and competitions. He held the 2015 Hyde Chair for Excellence and is currently associate professor and the W. Cecil Steward Professor at UNL.

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Brian Guido is a Los Angeles-based portrait and documentary photographer. He was born and raised near Detroit and received his BFA in Chicago. His work has recently been featured in *The New York Times*, *Monocle*, and *Billboard*. He was selected as one of PDN's 30 New and Emerging Photographers of 2018 and featured in American Photography 35, in 2019.

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Andrew Holder is an educator, occasional author, and co-Principal of the The LADG. His research interests include the construction of architecture as an inanimate subject as well as novel methods of engaging historical precedent and the production of complex form in a post-digital discipline. Holder's recent work has been published in *Young Architects 16*, *Log*, *Pidgin*, and *Project*. He is a frequent lecturer and guest critic at institutions across the United States and has held teaching appointments at the University of Michigan, the University of Queensland, the University of California, Los Angeles, Sci-Arc, and Otis College of Art and Design.

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Sam Jacob is principal of Sam Jacob Studio for architecture and design. His work spans scales and disciplines ranging from master planning and urban design through architecture, design, and art projects. Previously, Jacob was a founding director of FAT Architecture where he was involved in many internationally acclaimed projects including the curation of the British Pavilion at the 2014 Venice Biennale. He is Professor of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago, visiting Professor at Yale School of Architecture, and Director of Night School at the Architectural Association.

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Max Jarosz is an architect based in Miami, primarily focused on the confluence of architecture and the public realm through research on fabrication, human computer interaction, and play. Currently he is an adjunct faculty member and manager of the Fabrication Lab at the University of Miami School of Architecture. Prior to joining the University of Miami, Jarosz was a project architect at Höweler + Yoon Architecture, an interdisciplinary studio in Boston, Massachusetts. He has previously worked in New York at both Midnight Commercial, an interactive design firm specializing in spatial relationships between technology and art, and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA).

Ania Jaworska is an architect and educator. She currently is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Architecture. Her practice focuses on exploring the connection between art and architecture and her work explores bold simple forms, humor, commentary and conceptual, historic, and cultural references. Jaworska's work has been exhibited in numerous exhibitions, notably at the 2010 Venice Biennale, 2015 and 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago Cultural Center, MOMA, Storefront for Art and Architecture, Volume Gallery, and Chamber and Friedman Benda Galleries. She recently had the solo exhibition *Chicago Works: Ania Jaworska* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago and SET at Volume Gallery in Chicago. She has designed a bookstore at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts in Chicago and the Entrance Pavilion for the 2017 Chicago Architecture Biennial. She is a 2017 MoMA PS1 Young Architects Program Finalist.

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María Jerez is a Madrid-based artist whose work travels between cinema, choreography, architecture, and visual arts. Since 2004, she has made pieces that explore the relationship with the viewer as the space in which the modes of representation are put into crisis. From *El Caso del Espectador* to her latest pieces *Blob* and *Yabba*, this relationship has mutated from a place of "understanding" of theatrical and cinematographic conventions, that is, from the expertise, to the intentional loss of references where the artist, the piece, and the spectator behave towards each other as strangers.

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Coryn Kempster and **Julia Jamrozik** have been collaborating together since 2003. Having studied and worked internationally, they now have a small practice doing art and architecture projects in Buffalo, NY, where they teach at the University at Buffalo (SUNY). In 2018, the Architecture League of New York awarded their work with the League Prize.

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Jimenez Lai works in the world of art, architecture, and education. Lai has lived multiple lives, working in a desert shelter at Taliesin, residing in a shipping container in Rotterdam, and working with MOS and OMA. Now, as founding partner of Bureau Spectacular, his work continues to set stages for human stories.

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Eu Jin Lim is an artist currently practicing architecture in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Lim graduated from The Glasgow School of Arts and has gained graphical and architectural experience both locally and abroad. He is practicing in the architecture industry on a day-to-day basis while continuing his passion for narrative drawings producing illustrations that contest the dogma of traditional architectural renderings with the hypothesis that the traditional orthographical architectural drawing is maybe not enough to tell the story of a place.

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John McMorrough is a researcher of contemporary architectural practices, an associate professor at the University of Michigan Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, and a principal architect in studioAPT (Architecture Project Theory). McMorrough's research is motivated by the belief that contemporary architecture, as a practice of knowledge, must constantly re-situate its productive capacities, both in its competencies vis-à-vis the specifics of building and in the reconsideration of its conceptual legacies.

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Julia McMorrough is an Associate Professor of Practice in Architecture at Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, where she teaches in architectural design and representations courses. She is cofounder of studioAPT, a research and design collaborative that seeks to join the expeditious with the unexpected, through such projects as "Platform for Architecture," "Makin' It" (a situational comedy about architecture), "Habitat Shift," and the "400:1 House." Julia is the author of *Materials, Structures, and Standards: All the Details Architects Need to Know But Can Never Find* (Rockport Publishers, 2006), with a second edition titled *Architecture: Reference and Specification* (Rockport Publishers, 2013), and more recently, *Drawing for Architects* (Quarto Publishing, 2015).

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Along with his partner, Hilary Sample, **Michael Meredith** is a principal of MOS, an internationally recognized architecture practice based in New York. His writing has appeared in *Artforum*, *Log*, *Perspecta*, *Praxis*, *Domus*, and *Harvard Design Magazine*. Meredith currently teaches at Princeton University's School of Architecture. He previously taught at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design, the University of Michigan, where he was awarded the Muschenheim Fellowship, and the University of Toronto.

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Norell/Rodhe is a Stockholm-based architecture studio founded by Daniel Norell and Einar Rodhe. The work of Norell/Rodhe draws from odd couplings of abstract architectural traits, such as proportion and frontality, with a gritty world of untamed materials and found objects. It ranges from competition winning schemes for cultural buildings and landscapes, to residences, interiors, and installations. The studio frequently participates in publications and exhibitions, and their work has recently been included in group shows at the 2019 Oslo Architecture Triennale, Yale University, the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale, and at ArkDes.

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Office for Political Innovation, a Madrid/New York-based practice directed by Andrés Jaque, develops architectural projects that bring inclusivity into daily life. All of their projects can be seen as durable assemblages of the diversity ordinary life is made of. Their award-winning work has instigated crucial debates for contemporary architecture.

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Zack Ostrowski (BEVERLY FRESH) is an artist, designer, and musician who has exhibited and performed throughout the US and internationally, including China, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Japan, Peru, Poland, and Ukraine. He is the cofounder of sUPERIORbelly (1999), an art collective and record label based in Detroit, cofounder of WILD AMERICAN DOGS (2013), an interdisciplinary art duo producing experimental films and performances, and cofounder of the Archive of Midwestern Culture (2016), an organization committed to documenting creative life in the rural Midwest. In 2009 he received the Daimler AG Emerging Artist Award from the Cranbrook Academy of Art. He is an Associate Professor and Area Head of Graphic Art at DePaul University, Chicago.

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Joanne Preston is an architectural, urban designer, and architectural historian from the North of England. She is currently based in London where she has worked for a number of architecture practices on social housing and strategic visioning projects for public sector clients. Her academic research draws on her own working class heritage to explore and translate the relationship between place and social inequalities. Preston has just joined the local authority planning team for Cambridgeshire through Public Practice, a social enterprise that places outstanding urban designers, architects and other built environment specialists in strategic public sector roles, to influence upstream the decisions that shape public space and housing delivery.

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Paul Redmond is a Canadian-born portrait/editorial photographer. Having immigrated to the US as a child, his images portray an earnest embrace of American culture. Redmond uses the term "arbitrary architecture" to explain what he seeks to capture in landscape photographs, details that make evident the human marks that are not always fully thought out or finely designed. When capturing people he looks more to the deliberate choices we make as individuals, from the subtle to the flamboyant. His photographic work has been exhibited in the first annual APA Off The Clock exhibition, his solo show Light Leaks, and various groups shows.

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Colin Rowe (1920-1999) was an architectural historian, critic, and teacher acknowledged as a major intellectual influence on the fields of architecture and urbanism during the second half of the twentieth century. He is the author of the books *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (1976), *Collage City* (1978), written with Fred Koetter, *The Architecture of Good Intentions* (1994), and a three-volume collection of essays and memoirs titled *As I Was Saying* (1996). Rowe taught at Cornell University from 1962 until his retirement in 1990. In 1995 he was awarded the Gold Medal by the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Adrian Shaughnessy is a graphic designer, writer, publisher, art and culture zealot based in London. He is also a senior tutor in Visual Communication at the Royal College of Art and a founding partner in Unit Editions, a publishing company producing books on design and visual culture. Scratching the Surface, a collection of his journalism, was published in 2013.

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Barbara Stauffacher Solomon is a San Francisco-based artist, graphic and landscape designer, and writer. Solomon first worked as a dancer before studying painting and sculpture at the San Francisco Art Institute. After the death of her husband in 1956, Solomon moved to Basel, Switzerland to study graphic design at the Basel Art Institute with Armin Hoffman. She later studied Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Best known for her interior supergraphics of the 1960s Sea Ranch and her 1991 Ribbon of Light installation at the Embarcadero Promenade in San Francisco, her iconic style of mixing Swiss modernism and West Coast pop art pioneered the look of the California Cool—an important moment in graphic design history. Now in her 90s and still working on her craft, Solomon has turned her attention to a smaller canvas, creating pieces that tell not just one story, but many, and making a single page dance well beyond its borders.

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Joshua G. Stein is the founder of Radical Craft and the codirector of the Data Clay Network, a forum for the exploration of digital techniques applied to ceramic materials. Radical Craft is a Los Angeles-based studio that advances an experimental design practice saturated in history, archaeology, and craft. This inquiry inflects the production of urban spaces and artifacts by evolving newly grounded approaches to the challenges posed by virtuality, velocity, and globalization. He is Professor of Architecture at Woodbury University where he also directs The Institute of Material Ecologies (T-IME).

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Stanley Tigerman (1930-2019) was a principal in the Chicago architectural and design firm of Tigerman McCurry Architects and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects as well as the Society of Architectural Historians. Of the nearly 500 projects defining his career, 200-plus built works embrace virtually every building type. He delivered over 1,100 lectures worldwide, he was the resident architect at the American Academy in Rome in 1980, and he was Director of the School of Architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago for eight years. In 1994, in association with Eva Maddox, he cofounded ARCHEWORKS, a socially oriented design laboratory and school, where he remained as Director until 2008 when they were named Civic Ventures' Purpose Prize Fellows.

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Tania Tovar Torres is an architect, writer, and curator with an interest for narratives where architecture stands as main character. She is the founder and director of Proyector, a curatorial platform and exhibition space based in Mexico City devoted to the promotion of architecture research projects.

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The Cover
As soon as we started to work on the Character
issue, we thought about using Stanley Tigerman's
1983 *Career Collage* for its cover. Stanley loved the
idea when we told him. A great drawing in itself, it
captures perfectly the different areas explored in this
issue. Sadly, Stanley passed away before the release
of Character. The cover has taken now a different
meaning, honoring his remarkable career and is our
way to dedicate the issue to him.
        Iker Gil

Our next issue will explore spaces of vigilantism, both historically and today. What are the spatial dimensions of vigilante encounters, segregation, violence, and exclusion, or conversely emancipation, liberation, and inclusion? Threshold, circulation, private vs. public, and other architectural delineations of space have become the subject of much controversy as footage of sexist and racist policing of these spaces emerge. Beyond spatial dimensions, which regulatory, institutional, aesthetic, and material expressions of vigilantism does architecture condition? What is vigilante behavior in highly digital and post-digital space? In pop-culture? In new media? How do technology and design become means for cultivating and expressing those behaviors? How do contentious political movements respond to, and draw from, vigilantism? What are the micro-, meso-, and macro-level dynamics of sociospatial acts of violence? Can vigilantism ever be good? Liberatory? And what are ways aggressors, resistors, and witnesses take on characteristics of vigilantes? To address these issues and more, vigilantism is a topic that needs to be explored.

The Vigilantism issue will be guest edited by Germane Barnes and Shawhin Roudbari.
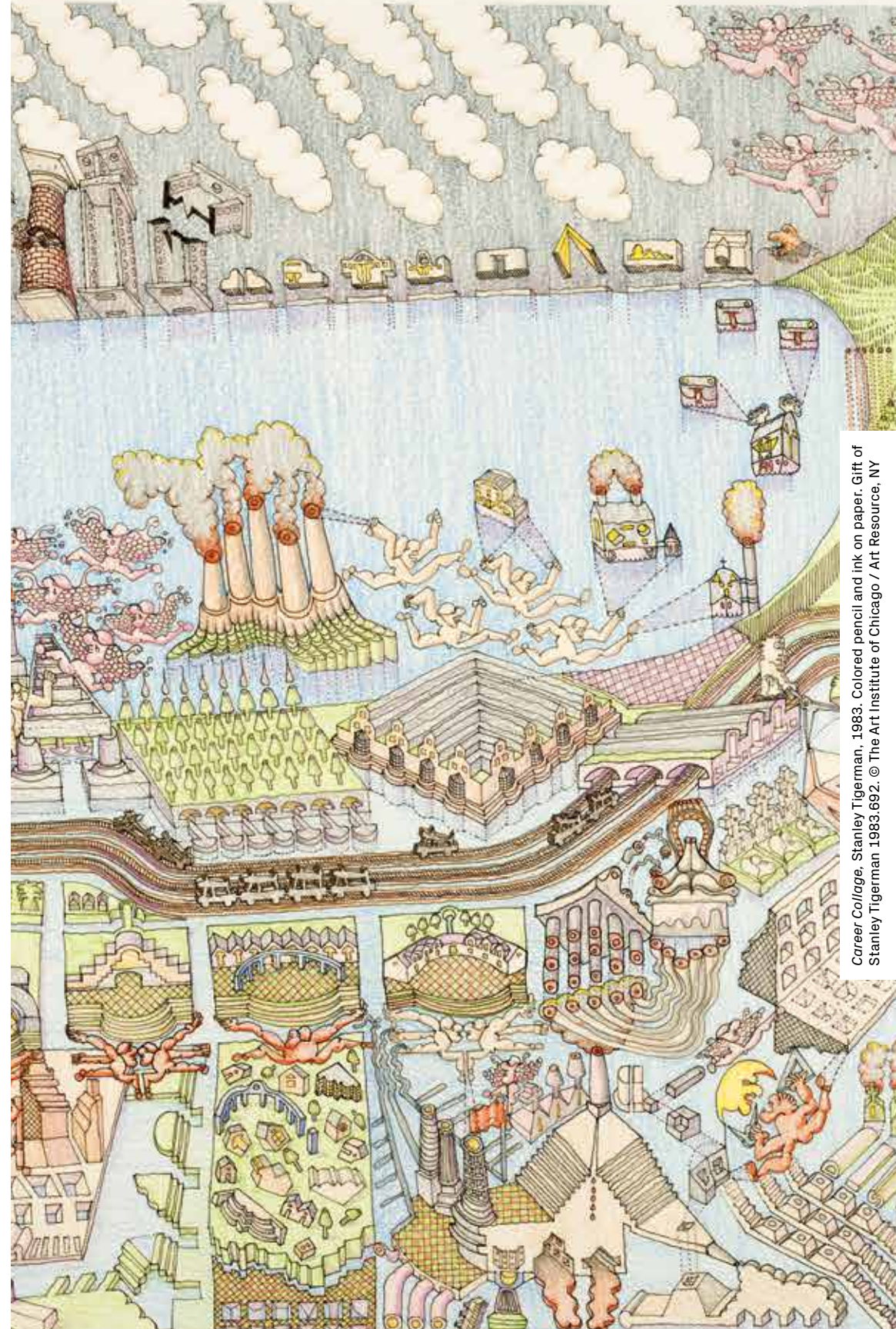
Career Collage, Stanley Tigerman, 1983. Colored pencil and ink on paper. Gift of Stanley Tigerman 1983.692. © The Art Institute of Chicago / Art Resource, NY

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