LOBBY

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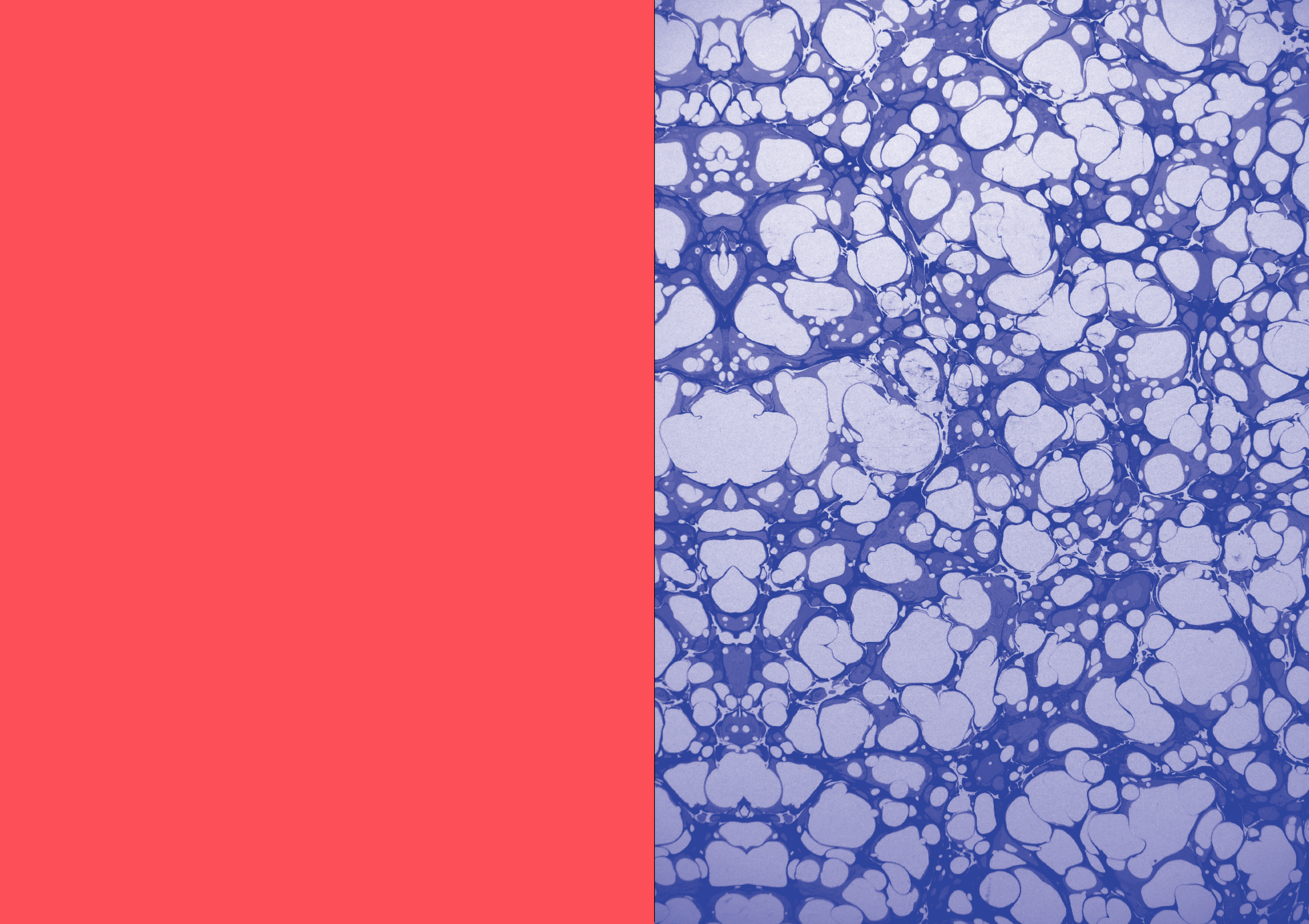
Abundance



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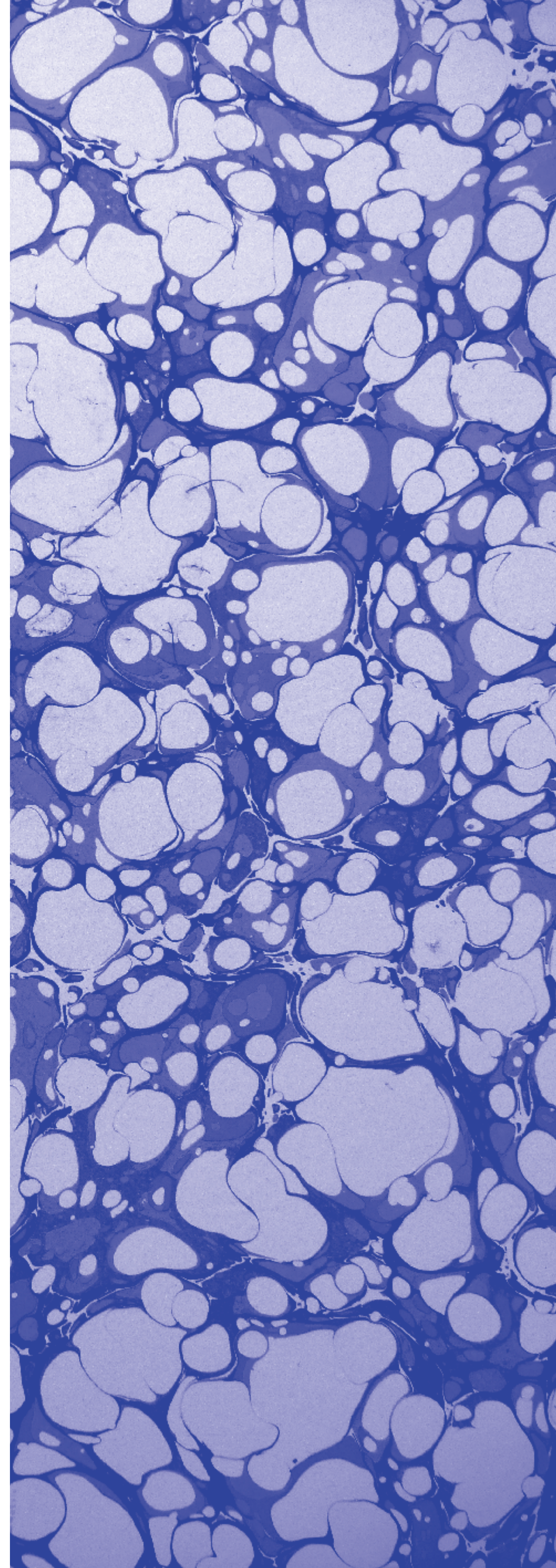

LOBBY

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Contributors

Greek mythology tells the tale of foolish and greedy King Midas, remembered for his ability to turn everything he touched into gold. For our 'Abundance' issue, we ask four of our notable contributors:

If you had the Midas touch, what would things turn into?

Johanna Noack
Illustrator

Johanna is a German designer and illustrator who works with contrast, both visually and content-wise. Part of her unique style involves rearranging disparate objects and placing them in the spotlight, while creating small, surprising moments between them. Johanna's illustration graces the cover of this issue, with an additional piece on page 42 of the Exhibition Space.

"Everything I touch would become an XXL version of itself. That wouldn't be useful at all, but that's kind of what I like about it. The objects would all just be there, senseless, but acting like symbols."

@valuable_things

Paul Humphries
Editorial Assistant

Paul is an artist and architecture student with a background in visual communication and classical arts, and he's exhibited his work in London, Paris and New York. Currently living and working in London, Paul's recently discovered a passion for writing. You can read his co-written article on page 34 of the Exhibition Space.

"Books, just books. I have a pretty serious collection of architecture and history books. One day I want to have a library with a library ladder where I can roll around with a glass of bourbon choosing my next read. Flamboyant?! I know…"

paul-humphries.co.uk

Jack Self
Contributing Writer

Jack is a London-based architect and writer. He's Director of the REAL foundation and curator of the 2016 British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Jack's essay can be found on page 77 of the Seminar Room.

"Everything would be infused with a powerful feeling that what I was saying at that moment made total, logical sense. Further, that my opinion was the only possible solution. The touchee would see immediately how rational and politically savvy I was being. The first thing I'd do is a global tour touching leaders and ending all wars. After that I'd probably write a self-help book about how 'you too can win friends and influence people'. I'd call it *The Self Helps*."

@jack_self

Cameron Blaylock
Photographer

Cameron is a photographer living and working in New York, and we found him right during the time when we were scheduled to take portraits of Denise Scott Brown for this issue. Cameron's work can be found in *Abitare*, *The Believer*, *DAMn°*, *Satellite*, *Surface* and on pages 22–31 of the Exhibition Space.

"Everything would turn into a duck. Except for Denise Scott Brown. She should still be Denise forever."

cameronblaylock.com

A Lot of Nothing

Dear Reader,

Growing up in Puerto Rico, there were days when my hometown experienced water shortages and blackouts. On these occasions, which we all absolutely dreaded, we'd use buckets of collected rainwater to bathe. In the evenings, we'd gather around the dinner table to light candles and complain about how hot it was inside the house, without any electricity to power the ceiling fans or air conditioning that normally kept us cool.

I couldn't believe that an island surrounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean didn't have enough water for the use of the 4 million people that inhabited it. It also baffled me that with nearly 12 daily hours of sunlight, we made no use of solar panels. Amidst an abundance of resources, we had periods of severe scarcity.

'Abundance' is a powerful word. It has imagery and colour, and if you've ever slept on Egyptian cotton sheets, you may even say it has texture. It's a step below 'excess', in that it still lacks the negative connotations directly related to greed and avarice. It only makes sense alongside 'scarcity' or 'austerity'; without scantness, abundance would be an intangible concept. When putting together this issue, we decided to keep these contradictions and dichotomies in mind, while embracing the sheer breadth of the word. We sought to spatialise abundance, to try to situate what it means in the context of the built environment, beyond the Rococo, 'Less is More' and Parametric discussions.

This pursuit for an architectural grasp of 'Abundance' begins in the Exhibition Space. Here we discuss how, rather than viewing the homeless as second-class citizens, their unique understanding of the cities they inhabit give insight to an alternate reading of space—one acquired through destitution. We then turn our eyes to Pennsylvania, where we witness the aftermath of abundance through a series of images showing how the exploitation of oil as a resource can leave behind a nothingness to be reclaimed by nature. An intimate, personal conversation with internationally renowned architect, Denise Scott Brown, looks to discuss her Postmodernist philosophies and how these have shaped her phenomenal career, while Israeli architect Moshe Safdie talks to us about his use of modularity, nature and site conditions to create rich spaces for users.

A text by Beatriz Colomina gives the Seminar Room its backbone. She elaborates on how the proliferation of the Internet and its arrival in the home creates multiple spatial configurations and functions, making the bed no longer just a piece of furniture intended for sleeping. Afterwards, the Lift takes us away to see the enormous garden statues of Bomarzo, the Islamic graveyard of Tetouan and the crossovers between old and new in Vienna's Loos Haus, while also making a stop in San'a to discuss geographical space as a form of currency.

In the Staircase, we reflect on the notion of the crowd in the city. Looking to GPS dating app Tinder, we consider how amidst the vast amount of profiles in its database, it might be giving strangers a second chance to digitally cross paths. Moving on to the Library, we feature an interview with world-famous caricaturist, Don Rosa, whose artistry helped breathe life into the world of Scrooge McDuck and the spaces that surrounded its characters. Finally, the newly revamped Toilets showcases book-like, fictional stories reflecting humorously on light-hearted matters, such as the ubiquity of the selfie stick, to the more pressing and troubling socio-spatial consequences of gentrification.

Looking back on the issue—and on the irony of those days spent without water and electricity in a first world, tropical island—I still wonder where true abundance comes from. It may very well be that it comes with our acquiring precious resources—from the complexities of a system built on supply and demand. But I'm inclined to believe that, instead, it comes from our ability to be resourceful in times when all we have is a lot of nothing.

Enjoy the issue,

Regner Ramos, Editor-in-Chief

Märta Thisner

Lina Scheynius

Saša Štucin

Märta Thisner

Agata Madejska

Saša Štucin

Erik Hartin

Andreas Öhlund & Maria Therese

Lina Scheynius

Märta Thisner

The Exhibition Space

Un-Fucking the Unloved

A MISUNDERSTANDING OF HOMELESSNESS

Words by Petr Esposito
Illustration by Willem Purdy

Capitalism is, of course, awesome in that it inspires awe. It is also horrifically cyclical, and cyclically horrific—Tulip Mania, 1637; Wall Street Crash, 1929; Black Wednesday, 1992; .COM, 2000; Financial Crisis, 2008. For the few people that win at the game, it's a fucking blinder. But it's well documented that most of us lose, and in 'us' I mean us *all*, everyone: the Russians, the Belgians, the nomads, the Islamists, the Mormons, the vegans, the Beliebers, the Ukippers, you, me. All of us.

Freedom of choice is often perpetuated as the greatest virtue of all: to be able to choose what to consume. Alas, that choice is confined to those that have the capital to effect such choice. For the rest of us, we're limited by the capital we don't have, and the worst of us are dictated an existence by the capital begged for, living on a timeline that extends no further than the next meal. Our homeless community are continually ignored and prescribed a third-tier life, either through economic persecution, emotional poverty or political tyranny, all contributing to a mentally and physically disturbed identity.

The architect's solution is to get architect-ing, use some big words like 'excrescent' and deliver an orgy of pretty pictures. But it's not homelessness that they tackle, simply shelterlessness. Projects such as 'Urban Nomad', 'Wheely Shelter', 'Parasitic Sleeping', 'Shelter Suit' and 'Excrescent Utopia' undermine the values of the homeless and the potential they might offer architects, the city and society as a whole. The projects become self-reverential, with architects reaping the good feelings but ultimately misunderstanding and therefore failing their end user. They fail to deal with the emotional complexities of the homeless individual, seeking not to integrate but to enforce social segregation, while furthermore making a product so vastly unaffordable that all the projects remain nothing more than paper dreams.

Just by engaging with the homeless we can identify that their utility of the city is not confined to perching atop yesterday's *Metro* in the corridors of city centres. They are bound—or rather unbound—by their creativity as an answer to desperation and necessity, finding function in benches, shop fronts and the rear seat of buses, as well as in community houses, warehouses, queues to embassies, box office lobbies, churches, mosques, public squares, private squares, pop-up structures, demolished structures and public toilets—all spaces offering unique possibility for their new nomadic tenant. While the typically held narrative of homelessness deploys architectural interventions of inane structures to cover their heads, it is questionably little more than gesture architecture. The alternate reality is that their talent for extorting the last gasps of hope from the city is a talent no architect has learnt.

It's not wealth we should lust for, but the abundance of resourcefulness, of knowledge, of a commitment to that which is intrinsic to the lives of our roaming community. This isn't something new. There are stories across the centuries of innovative solutions, such as the Twopenny Hangover of Orwellian fame during Victorian times, in which ropes were used to suspend 'vagrants' above the floor, when sleeping horizontally in public was forbidden. People traversing the city daily to occupy new spikes to find warmth at night—as they did at the turn of the 20th Century—had a working knowledge of the city arguably more intimate than any other occupation. Modern-day homeless citizens are not mere islands fighting for survival; as John Donne writes, "every man is a piece of this continent." They act as a mobile, offline network, sharing information of the top spots to keep warm, of the finest places to get help, to get information, to stay out of trouble. It is an untapped resource discovered by the intelligent, relentless continuation and persistence of a dejected community.

To change the narrative, it might help by simply defining those living in homelessness as people part of our populous, not people enduring an alternative human existence that runs parallel, defiantly distant to our own existence. Our role in society is as important as those that have suffered for it. Therefore, the current uppity architecting of our era might be challenged if the perception of value is exchanged. Instead of the architect exuding their super-duper help-powers to those of the great unwashed, what if the homeless played the role of educator, developing the shape shifting dexterity of today's new architects?

Architects need to think harder about un-fucking the unloved. It seems appropriate that the unrecorded knowledge that our nomadic homeless community contains is worthy of greater study, greater appreciation. The unloved mobile population is brought yet more starkly into light as British Conservative Party's George Osborne purrs the numbers of economic growth, essentially reinforcing their position of a life fucked, and as one side-lined member of society says, a life seen through "shit coloured glasses." ♛

Being Denise Scott Brown

Throughout the last five decades, Denise Scott Brown's work has challenged the field of architecture with her pioneering ideas and attitudes. We venture to her alluring home to talk to her about her childhood, the complexity of her lifetime of practice and, of course, Las Vegas.

Words by Colleen Tuite
Photography by Cameron Blaylock

At the home of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, in a suburban neighbourhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a heavy oak door swings open to reveal a pair of McDonald's golden arch signs. Aalto the dog bounds up to greet us visitors. A man I recognise to be Robert Venturi is putting on a cardigan.

The house is not merely the residence of architects Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, it is a manifestation of their intellectual, professional and romantic partnership. The walls are stencilled with Venturi's designs: geometric icons, stars, flowers, names of composers and architects appearing in *tromp l'oeil* engravings. Hung in salon style, I see a Che Guevara poster beside framed sketches and posters of VSBA (Venturi Scott Brown and Associates) projects, a Warhol print, the Statue of Liberty, an Ed Ruscha print of a gas station and a child's painting of a car.

In the living room, the couch is upholstered in a vibrating chevron pattern of 70s earth tones. Tucked against the fireplace, a Philip Stark Louis Ghost Chair with a cheerful knit afghan tossed over it. And then the piles. On every surface. But they are not the mundane stuff of a hoarder, they are the piles of stuff of two intertwined, groundbreaking careers —rolls of blueprints, typewritten notes, fragments of models, presentations, publications. The horizonless landscape of piles expands to the coffee table, decorated with a nut-cracker, two plastic yellow ducks of different sizes, a Polaroid camera, a toy Model-T car, an ostrich egg, a potted plant, a Campbell's tomato soup can, a fan decorated with shells, a porcelain cat, a glass Coke bottle sleeved in African beadwork, a cast iron bird, a box of Kleenex, and stacks and stacks and stacks of books.

Denise Scott Brown enters her room of piles, apologising for her few minutes of tardiness. A minor disaster with technology—her smart phone needed updating and it's taking forever. She cheerfully holds the giant screen of the iPhone 6+ aloft as she speaks. Fastened to her cardigan, knit with graphic flowers, is a silver duck.

Observing this landscape of piles, and the designer herself, it is a challenge to think of another architect who has so wholeheartedly embraced the detritus of modernity, globalisation and pop culture as Scott Brown has consistently done throughout her 50-year career. Together with her partner, Venturi, her multifaceted practice has asked architects to look radically beyond the rigidity of Modernism, to work collaboratively with the social sciences and to find delight in the vernacular.

Born in 1931 in Northern Rhodesia, Scott Brown was moved as a toddler by her parents—children of European Jewish immigrants—to Johannesburg, South Africa. South Africa shares a rather similar history with the United States, which would become Scott Brown's eventual home: what had been the land of a diverse array of indigenous peoples was colonised by the Dutch and then the British, in a bid for resource extraction and empire expansion. Quickly the colony doubled as a refuge for the outcasts of Europe: the heretics and the persecuted. This rapid population growth created a country of hyper-diversity and extreme cultural and class conflict. Architecturally, this was expressed through regional and folk architecture, Dutch and British colonial styles and Modernism. It is perhaps fitting then that the architect who would later forge a revolutionary relationship between Modernism, humanism and the vernacular would grow up in this discursive soup.

As a young woman, Scott Brown's pursuit of architecture took her to Witwatersrand University in Johannesburgh, the Architectural Association in London and the University of Pennsylvania. Here she studied, taught and formed a collaboration with her colleague, Venturi Trekking west to teach in California, Scott Brown embarked on a project that would frame her career: a study of Las Vegas. She and Venturi married in 1967 and returned to Philadelphia to teach, practise and develop a powerful architectural voice, eventually under the name VSBA. "Postmodernism,"as Scott Brown describes it to me, "was not a label we chose. The Postmodern thinking we followed started away from architecture, in theology and philosophy. As Peter Smithson said, we 'caught a whiff of the powder' of early Modernism." This mix is evidenced in their buildings, community plans and writing, which are at once singular, layered, functional and robust.

In addition, Scott Brown has been outspoken about her experience of sexism within the field of architecture. Her groundbreaking 1989 essay "Sexism and the Star System" is a damning view of the de facto Boys Club of architecture and her systematic exclusion from it, even while being a respected practitioner and educator. In 2013, the Pritzker Prize committee notoriously rejected a 20,000 signature-strong petition asking for the retroactive recognition of Scott Brown's contribution in regards to Venturi's 1991 award.

There are signs, however, that Scott Brown's relentless advocacy for the recognition of women in architecture is finally resonating: after many years of rejection, on the technicality of working as an equal partnership, Scott Brown and Venturi have been jointly awarded the 2016 AIA Gold Medal. Here in her home, at 84 years of age, Denise Scott Brown speaks directly, with remarkable lucidity, about the events which have shaped her life and career. Sitting amongst the hills and valleys of culled and curated piles of books and artefacts that surround us, we begin by discussing abundance in the Postmodern.

“Forces, especially economic forces, make forms long before architects do.”

What constitutes the Postmodern attitude of abundance in architecture?

To define ‘abundance’ you must consider what scarcity means—the definition should cover the term and its opposite. So for us, ‘abundance’ in architecture should take off from *and* against Mies van der Rohe’s ‘less is more’, and for this reason Bob [Venturi] wrote ‘Less is a bore’. That’s one way of looking at abundance. However, Bob contradictorily loves some Mies buildings, so he says, “Less is a bore, but I also love this Mies building!”

Can you describe the relationship between your source material and your design work?

Before I left South Africa I was taking pictures of ugly and ordinary buildings, and I continued in England, Europe and the US. Bob saw these and they come up in *Complexity and Contradiction* (1966). When he writes, “Is not Main Street almost alright?” it’s because he was watching me do a studio on urban design for 40th Street in Philadelphia, and seeing all the ways in which I was looking at that the everyday architecture of that street.

I went to California partly because, as an African, I was very interested in these ordinary things.

{She picks up a glass Coca-Cola bottle decorated with a woven sleeve of coloured beads}

I got this from my parents. The bead work is traditional, but it’s been produced in the industrial outskirts of Johannesburg, so instead of covering traditional gourds, they’re using discarded soda pop bottles.

I came to America with pictures of things like this, and Bob saw them. At the same time, my planning school colleagues—critical of architects’ urban attitudes—were asking, “Why don’t architects go and see places that people flock to, and learn what they like about them? Go to the southwest, see Los Angeles, see Las Vegas, see how people live there and why they like those places.”

How did your childhood influence your practice?

I grew up in an International Style house. My mother studied architecture, and some of her friends failed in school for doing Modern designs. Around 1936, a group of them wrote to Le Corbusier. He replied, commenting on their work and asking, “Can you find a rich person in Johannesburg who will pay for me to come there and do a project with you?” It didn’t happen, the war happened.

During my childhood, I remember blueprints from when I was two! I knew our house from a child’s point of view. I remember the modern L-shaped handles, placed much higher than the traditional knobs. As a toddler, I strained upward to reach them and triumphed when, at five, I could. I also remember how the western sun shone through a porthole window and onto my parents’ bedroom wall. I remember lying on their bed watching the circle it made move across and down the wall. Modernism is burned into my childhood.

... the details of Modernism?

Yes, I climbed the garage roof, played ship on the spiral stairs and tried to shin up the pilotti. Indoors, I loved the black treads and white risers of our tiled stairway and the curved steel rail on the half-around, half landing—where, leaning outward from the inner rail, I enjoyed the swing around the curve. And my lullaby was the *clack* of my grandmother’s high-heel open-back feather-front slippers on the treads.

Could you talk about the influence of the landscape?

In my teens I excavated for fossils and tools of pre-human species. My mother taught me to love the veld, but camping in the wilderness on digs, I came to know it better. Then, as a student flying to and from Europe, I watched patterns of landscape over Africa. Waterways, though few, were made visible by the narrow strips of vegetation alongside them. At great height, the earth looked as if it had been shaken violently while still hot, and had formed rivulets, as a cheese-cake does when left too long in the oven.

Over undisturbed terrains I saw one kind of vegetation on south sides of mountains and another on north. Flying lower, I spotted cow paths. As in Italian hill towns, they followed contours. And where cattle descended to water there was soil erosion. Roads were virtually missing—these were subsistence economies and trade routes were not in their settlement patterns. In *The Human Use of the Earth,* Philip L. Wagner relates human settlement and economics patterns. I match aerial photographs of Zulu kraals with maps of Philadelphia’s transport system to make the same point—forces, especially economic forces, make form long before architects do; form derives from topography, wind, water and other natural resources even before that.

Your site analysis is such an incredible portion of your work.

I use mapping as a design tool. On one map I combined land uses in Ann Arbor and the region around it, as well as Michigan University’s 3,000 acre campus. Then I took analytic crosscuts through the activities and uses, and combined them with landscape and flood plain data to learn their relationships. “How come you know the university so well?” I was asked. It was through examining the patterns and combination patterns over and over in different ways. Patrick Geddes described his crosscuts as ‘meshes’. Now, computers model relationships, between residential and commercial uses, for example. Courses in land economics and Regional Science —‘city physics’—helped me understand where the computer programmes came from and where they went. But the mathematics were a ‘black box’ to me.

What’s your take on the proliferation of digital tools, in terms of planning and architectural practice?

Good teachers had wise philosophies on coping with that black box. Walter Isard, Father of Regional Science, was my professor and my friend. Like Louis Kahn, he was the resident pixie of his field [Regional Science]. “Use your judgment, and use my tools when they’re useful,” he said. I learned in school to try hard to link analysis and design; then I learned in practice to work down to the door hinges in design and documentation, to assure the translation of my analytic findings into the activities they had prescribed.

Have you revisited Las Vegas? How has the city changed since your case study?

We revisited several times, and saw Las Vegas propelled from strip city to mass city. I understand the intentions of those who pushed for the change, but in the process the neon was lost. Steve Wynn, once a major casino owner, claimed that for the city to grow, neon had to go. And indeed the city needed more than one industry. But why dump the neon?

Restored signs now stand like sculptures, downtown. Neon is treated as history. But the Bone Yard is the

real deal. Broken-up signs, sat down where the trucks left them, form nave-like alleys in the desert. One of the most awesome places in Las Vegas, it receives a wide world of visitors, and is presided over by young academics, historians of art and architectural historians. One of them told us about a Russian visitor who cried out, "There's the star from the 'Stardust' sign!" When asked, "How do you know that?" He responded, "From *Learning from Las Vegas*, of course!"

You've been a pioneer championing the acknowledgement of women's roles in architecture. Do you see the label of 'Woman Architect' one to transcend or to embrace?

When people said, "So you're an architect, too," I'd smile sweetly, pointing to Bob and say, "No, *he's* 'the architect, too.'" And they'd say, "Oh, feminist!"

Talking with women's groups, I'd ask, "What do people think I do in the office? The typing?" Then one day, our typist added a footnote to something I had written, where she wrote, "No, *I* did the typing." I realised that I couldn't say that—it's wrong. My dad used to say, "None of us will go up, if we don't all go up."

In his response to the petition to recognise your work, Peter Palumbo (Chair of the Pritzker Architecture Prize), writes, "You cannot second-guess the work of an earlier jury." Was that some kind of absolution for the committee not recognising you to begin with, or a copout?

The Harvard Women in Design who initiated the petition asked present jury members to *comment* on, not second-guess, choices of the earlier one. That's never been done before? You're kidding me.

Does the refusal of the Pritzker to challenge the sexist status quo devalue that prize for you?

Certainly, and for many others. And that's a shame, because the Pritzker family mean for the best. If some family members would get involved again, things might improve. But Executive Director Martha Thorne's responses don't serve the Prize well. She says, "Twenty thousand people signed the petition? That's not very many."

{Denise laughs}

Twenty thousand women and men from around the world, and all calling me 'Denise'! Is she kidding? "Be your own person," I told her, "Why do you just mouth words they give you?"

I called the petition 'Mayhew's Architecture'. In the mid-19th Century, journalist Henry Mayhew visited poverty-stricken London boroughs as the Industrial Revolution took hold, talking to people there and reporting on their condition. His book, *London Labour and the London Poor*, provided a datum for that period and material for Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*. For me, the petition signers' descriptions of their lives in offices set a datum for social conditions in architecture in 2013. Their dissemination is changing architecture, and their petition is my Pritzker Prize.

You've been practicing architecture for over 60 years. What problem are you still trying to solve?

I'm trying to get architects to re-estimate their ideas on urbanism. The Neo-Modernists do large-scale architecture, not urbanism. Their projects are islands. I love and respect Frank Gehry. He's a professional of dedication and morality, but to bemoan the buildings growing up around the Bilbao Guggenheim is to miss the point—they are what the city wanted! City physics could have told him that.

How do you hope future generations will grow into and experience your buildings and community plans?

At the opening of our Michigan University Life Sciences building, I examined its six lab floors and administrative ground floor to see how users were growing into it. All lounges

> "No one is asking the committee to second-guess the jury, they're asking them to *comment* their choice."

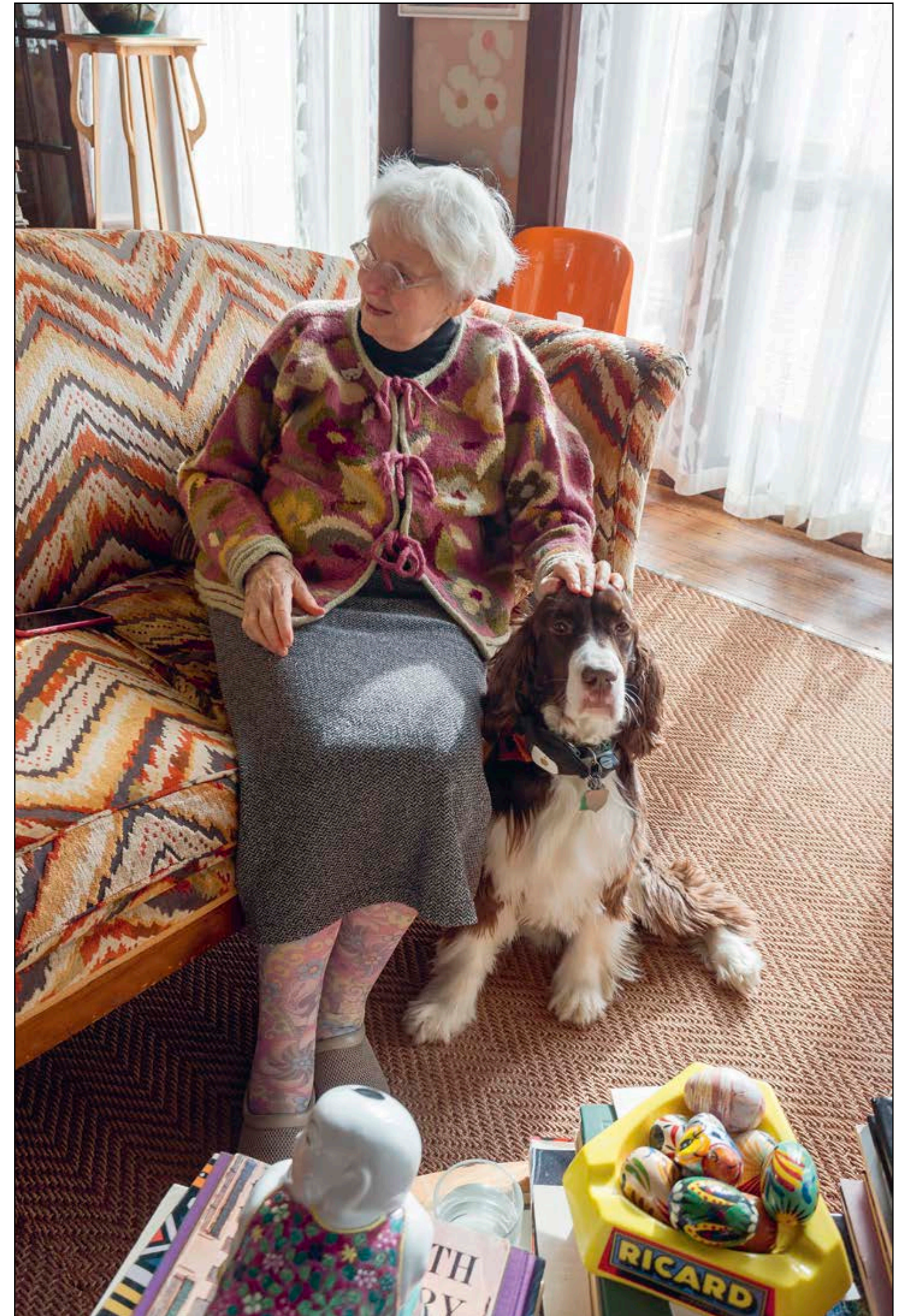
> “The essence of my theory and of my teaching now concerns what happens when two roads cross.”

offered a coffee pot, a table, a nice window seat, arm chairs and a white board. All the boards on lab floors were *covered* with formulae. On the administrative floor, the board said only, “This pot of coffee was made at 7:30 AM”. It was such a wonderful sign.

Most projects have a brief, a programme of activities and spaces, but wise clients know that before long—sometimes before the end of construction—the building may be used in other ways. Our house was designed for a family with five kids. Now the dining room is our office and fitness gym. It has gracefully accepted our shifting demands, even those of Aalto—our dog, not the architect. Now I’m planning “Dog House”, a small monograph on his adaptations, and particularly his use of spots where he can survey crossroads. He’s a crossroads dog, and I’m crossroads architect: the essence of my theory and of my teaching now concerns what happens when two roads cross. That’s where cities start, and where architectural functionalism should go.

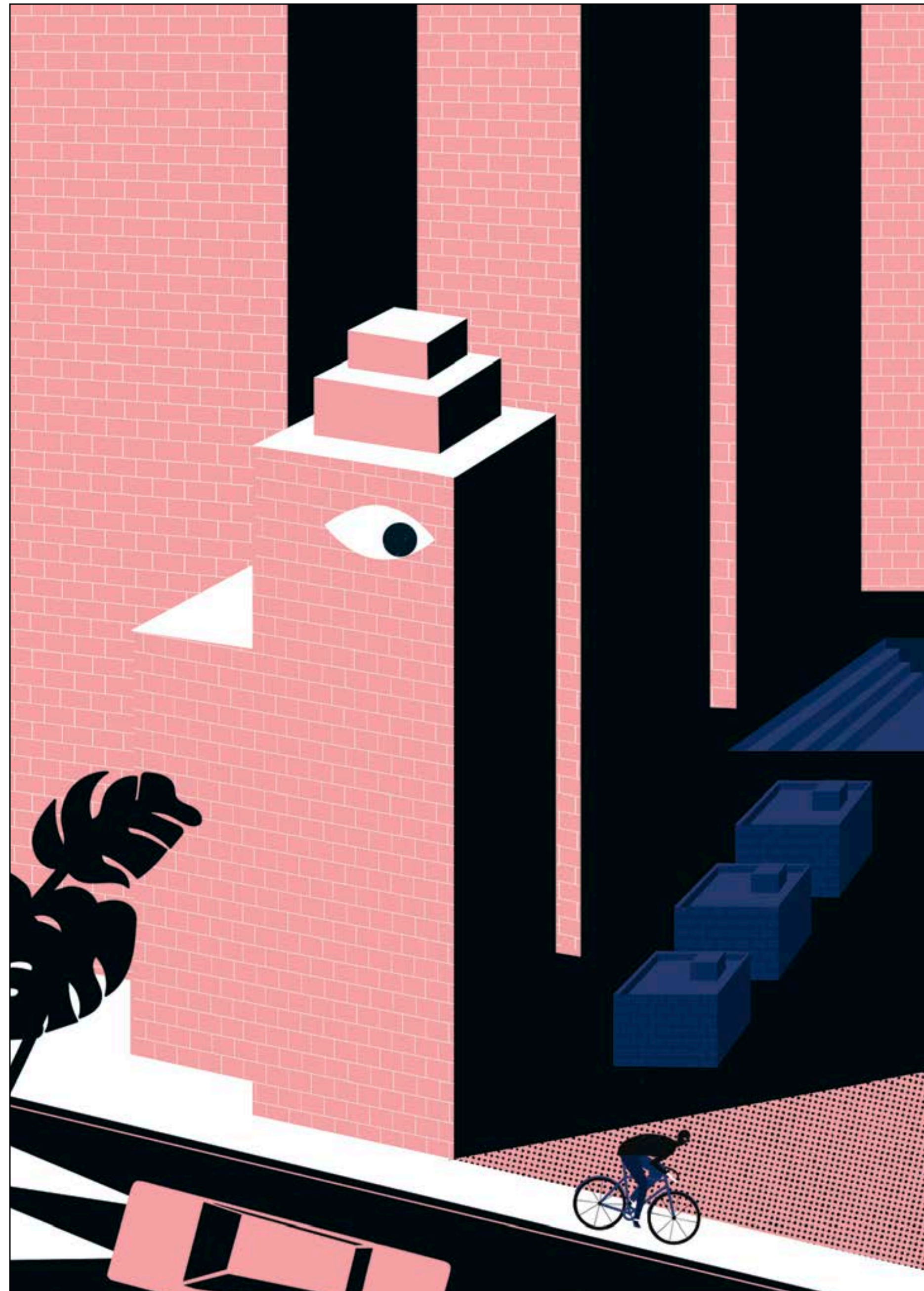
Could you tell me what part of your work brings you joy?

I went one morning to watch people use our Perelman Quadrangle at University of Pennsylvania. It was, I think, one day before the start of term, and I saw about 30 very young kids on our rostrum beside Irvine Auditorium. Sitting close together on the rising steps, they looked like bees in a hive. I walked by, and old lady in a long skirt, in no way connected with them, but seeing them using it the way I intended, I smiled broadly. They noticed and looked puzzled, and I saw them glance backwards to see if I was smiling at someone else. I didn’t say a thing. I smiled and went on. ♛



Optimistic Austerity

A NEED FOR DIALOGUE



Words by Jeremy Biden
Illustration by Yeni Kim

In my world, the world of city planning, an undertone of austerity is slipping into the discussion. During the last decade in North America we've watched in horror as Detroit has crumbled; we've seen bitter fights in New York over policing; we've watched the mayor of Toronto 'crack' under pressure; and most importantly we've seen the narrative of austerity creep into the policy shops of the world's leading metropoles.

Not to say that austerity is always a bad thing. In some cases it's absolutely essential for the continued growth of the places we live, and especially the built environment. We cannot, as a rule, use up our spaces without considering the ways in which they interplay. Our city forms are dictated by our ability to use resources, spaces, ideas and creativity.

We talk a lot about the importance of austerity for ensuring the continued flourishing of capitalism, and as many scholars in my field will tell you, capitalism drives development, and development ensures that planners like me have a job. The issue here is that we spend so much time talking about financial austerity, or the ongoing rollback of social services, that we neglect to look at major aspects of what this austerity means for the development of the urban form. Austerity reduces the amount, quality and usefulness of consultation. Without these consultations it's impossible for my profession to do work that meets the public good. Without consultation we pretty much fall to the whims of the most qualified designer who wowed the hiring committee.

As we can see in the history of NYC, the issues this can create are plentiful. Let's take Robert Moses for a moment. Recently experiencing a bit of a renaissance as the villain to Saint Jane Jacobs—with the 50th anniversary of her book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, passing in 2011—Moses once again comes to the fore as the creator of vast urban inequality throughout NY and the surrounding area. Between the razing of neighbour-hoods for expressway real-estate and the construction of bridges inhibiting the passage of buses, Moses presided over a period of development unhindered by consultation or discussion. Running roughshod over the wants of the populace, he developed the city in his image: an ideal world for wealthy white men and their automobiles. It's also worth mentioning that Moses probably never heard the word 'austerity' during his professional career, as the U.S. burned through its New Deal dollars—a programme which created countless jobs and sparked major investment in infrastructure during the 1930s. So what are the lessons from Moses and the New Deal? What can we take away as we toy with the concept of austerity and its cousin, abundance?

In planning, abundance and austerity create some interesting tensions. I would boldly suggest that austerity actually creates an atmosphere where certain types of abundance come about in decidedly complex ways. If we return to the discussion of, well, discussion we can see where abundance comes into play. In Moses's age, with New Deal money rolling in, there was practically no need for the discussions that now drive planning in many North American cities. With all those resources, there was little reason to discuss plans with the public and a decidedly reactionary form of planning emerged. In the new age of austerity we have to think constantly and aggressively—and did I mention constantly—about the cost-benefit analysis of every move we make. In this environment, we must create plenty of opportunities for discussion and consultation in order to reach the most benefit with lowest possible cost.

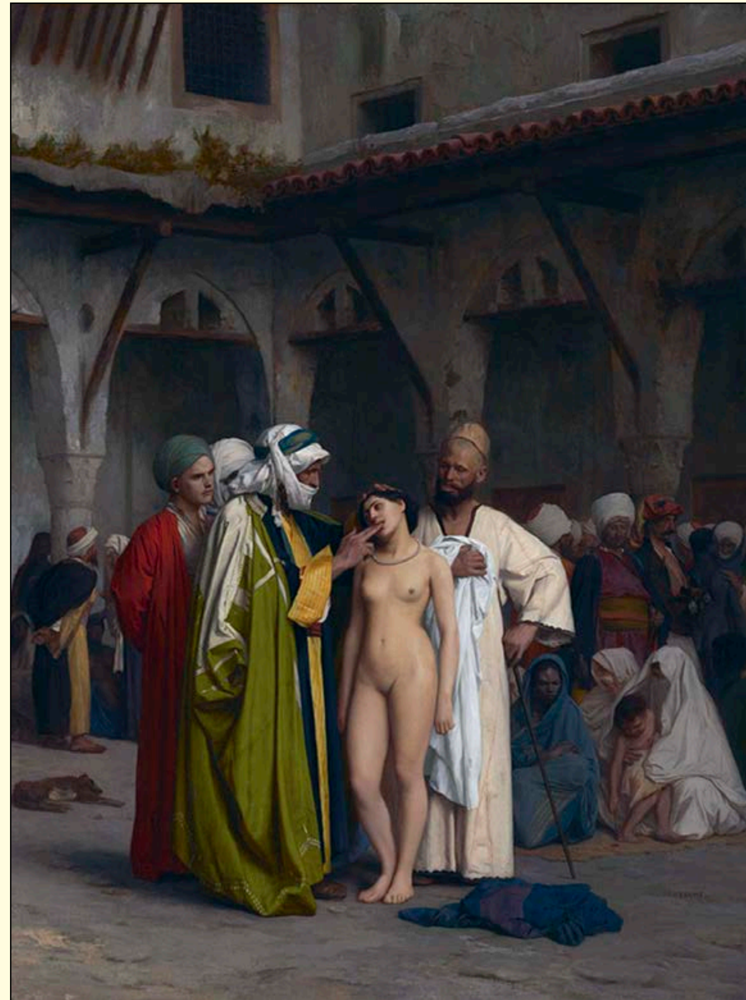
Here lies the caveat though: austerity measures can be incredibly severe (take Greece for example) and often lead to conflict rather than conversation. The ways in which we combat this trajectory are very much emerging, and I wouldn't dare suggest that I have the answers or strategies that will make it possible. What I do have is a certain level of optimism for the future of planning. We've acknowledged in many jurisdictions that public involvement and consultation forms a cornerstone of our practice. A step in the right direction is for everyone to take heed and begin breaking down the binary between professionals and the public, while opening the conversations so we can move forward collectively. At the heart of it, we all have skin in the game. As the world moves towards a majority urban existence we all have to consider the role of cities and how we want them to develop.

So how do we drill into the inherent issues of austerity and turn it into something useful? How do we break down the privilege and power structures that make austerity so damaging for *some*? What approaches will help us turn austerity into greater opportunities for the public good? Can we approach our cities with austerity in mind and leverage those pressures of capitalism into something that improves life for everyone, or has that ship sailed?

I don't know, I don't. But I like to think that an optimistic approach with everyone sitting at the same table might give us an opportunity to set an urban agenda that leads us to greater equity.

Inside the Harem

BEYOND HEARSAY AND FANTASY



The Slave Market. Jean-Léon Gérôme, 1866. Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Words by Holly Connolly and Paul Humphries

Through a keyhole you can see a Turkish bath. Or what *might* be a Turkish bath. It's hard to tell because it's so cluttered with naked women.

Le Bain Turc, is one of the most well known paintings we have of the mysterious space of the harem, but they're all like this—strong overtones of lesbianism and bare bottomed women cavorting with fully clothed men amidst lavish settings. They have titles like *Femme Nue* (Jean Leon Gerome), *Her Master's Choice* (Fabbi Fabbio) and *Picking the Favourite* (Giulio Rosati). These images have fascinated western culture since the Italian Renaissance. As enticing as the promise of exotic eroticism may seem to some, it is evident that these opulent scenes depicted by western artists expose a very dark and sordid *story*.

In his 1930s book, *The Harem,* N.M. Penzer states, "we have been told that it is a place where hundreds of lovely women are kept locked up for the sole pleasure of a single master." This begs the question, who are the mysterious women depicted in these artworks and how did they come to live in a forbidden palace of Harem? Furthermore, why do Western artists insist on portraying the women of Turkish and Arab harems as silent, yet habitually unclad?

For Western men, the very word 'harem' typically provokes voluptuous sexual fantasies in which men have their way with vulnerable women who are happy to satisfy their needs, as observed by feminist sociologist and Koranic scholar, Fatema Mernissi. By contrast, in Islamic culture the harem is seen as the site of a dangerous, sexual power struggle in which powerful women resist male domination. Scholarly, these women are referred to as 'odalisques', a word most frequently used for a harem slave, as the women of the harem were typically either bought in slave markets or captured after battles.

As written in Ynav Bosseba's 1968 book, *Thousand and One Nights*, concubines and slave girls were valued for their intelligence and poetic skills. Self-education and the acquisition of artistic skills were the only way the women could gain the attention of their master. Similarly, "Odalisques with extraordinary beauty and talent", writes Alev Lytle Croutier in his 1989 *Harem, The World Behind the Veil*, "were trained to become concubines, learning to dance, recite poetry, play musical instruments, and master the erotic art."

Partially because there are very few left standing, it's nearly impossible to get more than a keyhole glimpse of any harem. The harem within Topkapi Palace in Istanbul is one of the last we have. Similarly, our inability to get a full picture of them might be primarily due to the sheer secrecy they were always shrouded in. As a rule, harems were famously private; the very word 'harem' derives from the Arabic, 'haram', meaning 'forbidden', and even members of the court had extremely limited access. Topkapi, for one, is best understood as a series of steps further and further towards total privacy.

Details of what happened within the harem are virtually non-existent. The accounts we do have of them are all by Western visitors; the harem as reconstructed through sources is as much an actual space as it is a construct of Western gossip. The secrecy and otherness—not to mention the polar contrast to their own settings—made Victorian imaginations work overtime. Western accounts breathlessly reported orgies and lesbianism, and the idea of polygamy grew out of all proportion to its actual practice. In the end, the picture we have of harems is so warped with vagueness, that hyperbole is to the harem as a funhouse mirror is to the body.

Constructing a harem that is closer to reality is, thus, not easy. First of all, 'harem' is only shorthand for 'polygamy' by the uninitiated. The harem predates polygamy and does not necessarily accompany it. True, 'harem' is the term used for the living quarters reserved for the wives, female servants and concubines that would service a polygamous man. But it is also the word for the female-only quarters of a non-polygamous Islamic household.

It is, however, evident that we can observe the meaning of space in the context of the harem. Hierarchy was fundamental to the harem, and size was considered extremely carefully. The harem was unfeasibly large, with over 400 rooms interlinking in a way that quickly distorted all sense of direction. So far, the harem might sound like a sort of hive—a warren of equal-sized rooms—but it was actually a multifaceted power-play carved out in 3D. The ownership of space denoted clearly who was controlled by who, and who was watched by who. Every room was sized according to the importance and priority of the person or people living in it, reflecting a power structure with the sultan at its top. In this way, the harem could be said to, in many cases, have functioned as a sort of extended veil in society—a space featuring Islamic women, controlled spatially and confined within physical borders established by men.♛

Sea-Change

Photography by Saša Štucin
Words by Regner Ramos

Under the ocean's shimmering waters and above its topography of sand and rock, lives one of nature's strangest and most remarkable creatures: the oyster. They lay harmlessly on the sand, residual-like in their appearance—visually unattractive remnants of something that appears decayed and forgotten. But inside their wrinkled, grooved shells unique chemical processes ensue; oysters are one of the only living organisms capable of naturally producing a gem.

While the oyster feeds, at times a single grain of sand, particle or parasite will lodge onto its soft tissue. Much like a dust particle in our eye, the grain of sand acts as an irritant to the oyster, and in an attempt to protect itself and isolate the particle, the mollusk secretes a smooth, hard structure composed of millions of microscopic crystals around it. Layer after layer, this structure (nacre) surrounds the grain of sand and with the passing of years becomes entirely encased within the crystalline structure; it is now a pearl.

The quality and value of pearls are determined by their form, size, colour, luster and whether they've been created naturally (in the ocean) or cultured (in freshwater). With necklaces ranging between $15 to $8.2 million, as is the case of 'La Pelegrina Pearl', the oyster is an exemplary of how a single organism can take something mundane, abundant and seemingly worthless, and transform it into a highly desirable and valuable object symbolic of wealth and elegance. Here, photographer Saša Štucin's images tell a story of how a grain of sand can become a precious pearl, in a manner tangentially evocative of "Ariel's Song" in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> "Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade,
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange"

Justified Excess

READING CULTURE THROUGH THE TURKISH MINIBUS

Words by Ceren Hamiloglu
Illustration by Johanna Noack

When entering the 1970s cyan-coloured minibuses that route through vibrant Istanbul, a feeling of excess takes over. These minibuses are usually filled with people and noise, accompanied by exuberant decoration. Unlike the public bus, the minibus reaches the narrow streets of the city in almost every neighbourhood. In a way, it's an unruly off-system vehicle, in which its drivers augment the uniqueness of this bizarre transport through their own space-making and subculture.

The rural-to-urban migration from the east to the west of Turkey—starting in the 1960s due to industrialisation and job vacancies in cities—formed hybrid cultural expressions among the economically disadvantaged immigrants working as construction workers, cleaners, drivers and other jobs that city inhabitants would spurn at. Their cultural expression was constructed through a combination of elements in the minibus, observable at first glance: ornaments, objects placed in and on the vehicle, driving style, gestures, hometown of the driver and the arabesque music he would listen to.

In its lexical meaning, 'arabesque' is an ornamental design consisting of flowing lines found in Arabic decoration. However, it emerged as a music style —a combination between traditional Turkish music, Western classical music and Middle Eastern melodies—in Turkey, and was later used to refer to the culture of immigrants from rural, eastern Turkey who settled in the big cities, particularly Istanbul. Music initiated and formed the basis of arabesque culture. In the 1970s, the arabesque had grown to be very strongly associated with minibus drivers in Turkey and people who lived in the slums. After the 1980s, the arabesque went beyond the slums and moved into the city, making the distinction between rural and city more apparent. Nevertheless, the two clashing cultures resulted in a particular aesthetic and style of individualising space.

The front of the minibus, where the driver sits, often becomes a sanctuary filled with items conveying arabesque culture. These kitsch modifications turn the minibus into a festive object decorated with artificial flowers, toys, football or country flags, evil eyes to keep away bad luck, prayer beads and funky seat covers and carpets. Occasionally under neon lights, the interior will display kitsch, romantic Turkish sayings, and the exterior, below the license plate or the rearview window, will display religious remarks in Arabic such as *maşallah* (praise be!) or *bismillahirahmanirahim* (in the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful). All of these elements may appear arbitrarily picked and situated but their chaos gives a sense of cohesion. Passengers on the minibus witness an excessive accumulation of chosen materials and artefacts that give a sense of identity to the driver, conveying his personality while often making it easy to grasp an overall picture of their political standing, religious views and ethnicity.

The combination of the objects form the hybrid culture of the arabesque. The rosary for instance is a symbol for suffering, enduring and passing time, whereas the rose signifies beauty and longing. The culture of the arabesque formed in Turkey during the 1970s—through its expression in music, decoration and everyday life—represents suffering over life, financial problems, poor living conditions and the stress of work. Thus, the idea of creating a culturally familiar environment for their drive on the road is adopted even more extremely amongst trailer drivers, who drive for prolonged periods of time: these artefacts and symbols help create a sense of ease in the passing of time. In fact, the ornamental items contribute to a collective identity of drivers, and form a localised code of culture which is at times marginalised because of its specificity to drivers and its difficulty to be comprehended by others.

This marginalised culture contains an element of revolt against segregating urbanisation, totalising modernity and the interventions of the bourgeoisie, due to the nature of arabesque music which takes life, death, suffering and emotional dualities as its subject and expresses resistance against them. Music and culture become forms of protest towards inadequate or harsh conditions of life. They speak out on loneliness, injustice, poverty and subordination. It also unintentionally challenges the coding of heterosexual, phallocentric Turkish culture, which strongly associates the arabesque with masculinity, smoking and brotherhood, further enforcing constructed gender roles upon members of Turkish society.

The presence of kitsch objects in the minibus subvert the binary conditioning of gender and class, transcending gender performance through its sentimentality and use of contradicting 'un-masculine' objects such as flowers, glittering beads, furs, animal toys, tinsel covers and the use of pink. Reflecting its geographical position, Turkey remains in the middle of different cultures: it does not entirely adopt Middle Eastern traditions or Western social practices. The minibus illustrates this intermediate condition as a micro-cosmos of arabesque culture and defines a kind of individuality, a means of self-representation and personalising space through pure excess. ♛

Toy Socialism

MICHAEL JACKSON'S NEVERLAND

Words by
Daniel James Wilkinson

In 1961, prior to becoming the 'golf course community entrepreneur', real estate developer William Bone was awoken by a vision of the American dream realised through architecture. Twelve vision-driven years later, Bone began his five-year search for a site. Settling on a 2,700 acre Californian oat farm—rebranded as Sycamore Valley Ranch—he employed architect Robert Altevers. When Altever's 'unconstrained architectural thinking' resulted in designs for a home in the European Country style—or perhaps more astutely, Hollywood Tudor—Bone declared "it belonged." Construction was approached by both men with "no purist drive for authenticity", as modern building techniques were obscured by the charm of 'European' details. Bone sought to "express everything he had learned in 15 years of homebuilding", free from the constraints of business. As such, he realised his dream. Naturally, this being an American dream, his vision was then put on the market. In doing so he had created the $30 million canvas for Michael Jackson's own vision of Neverland; a fantasy centered around childhood and death.

Michael had first expressed his desire to buy the ranch after visiting in 1983 while filming the "Say Say Say" video with Paul McCartney, a returning of the favour for Paul's appearance on the previous year's "Thriller". By 1987's "Bad", Sycamore Valley was his. Michael's professional drive—which had resulted in the most profitable album of all time—had been installed, infamously, by his father at the expense of a childhood. Neverland was to be a project like no other, and acting as both architect and client, Michael set to work on a project of domesticity at a grand scale. Whereas Bone had been rich, Michael was richer, and while leaving Bone's structures essentially as found, he would transform the rest of the ranch as much as he did the terrain of pop culture.

First was the introduction of an interstitial zone between the gate on Figueroa Mountain Road and the entrance to Neverland proper. Vehicles would enter the first gate—passing the 'wall of undesirables' (mugshots of unwelcome guests)—before continuing to the second ornate entrance. Here, busloads of guests would find Michael ready to greet them, quickly resulting in the need for a tent to be built for those who had fainted: the medico-spatial consequence of Michael-Mania. Michael claimed to design Neverland using "almost subconscious" methods, with further additions including: a four-station trainline, a games house, a second games house, a swimming pool and cabana, multiple BBQ zones, a music theatre with trap doors for magic shows (performed by Michael), a structure for housing a flight simulator, a four-bedroomed guesthouse (initially for Marlon Brando), a two-bedroomed guesthouse (initially for Elizabeth Taylor), three staff houses, a 16-ride amusement park, a hall of mirrors (in which "Man In The Mirror" was played), a Go Kart Land, an Indian village, a sunken tennis court, a 30-foot statue of Mercury (the god of merchandise), a zoo, a drive-in theatre, a gazebo for the eighth wedding of Elizabeth Taylor and of course, a Museum of Michael Jackson. As Neverland reached urban proportions, security headquarters were added, with Neverland's own fire department given its station and identity. Architecturally, the styles found across the ranch lack cohesion, ranging from Queen Anne and Georgian, through to Victoriana and New England when addressing the train stations alone.

Further quirks in the grounds included Michael's 'Good Humour Chests' (Neverland branded fridges containing Michael branded ice cream), speakers disguised as rocks playing orchestral versions of Michael's hits and a deluge of figurative artworks, ranging from translations of Norman Rockwell paintings through to Hollywood superheroes. As Neverland moved towards saturation, Michael would use the ranch to present his 'true self' in televised interviews and promotional videos; "to see the real me, you need to see Neverland". His engagement in domesticity had, by this point, become more aligned with the domestic policy of a small state. Neverland was, after all, larger than some countries, and Michael's control was absolute. Streets and steam engines were named after his mother Katherine—his father remained unsung—and as the rainless months parched the rest of Santa Barbara, the Michael-made-weather system controlling the irrigation made sure that the ranch remained pristine.

Camelot. David Nordahl, 1995.

> "There is an unlimited space to go on quads, it represents the totality of who I am."

As a social experiment, Neverland worked to its own codes of etiquette. At his insistence, visitors were only to address Michael as 'Applehead'—an affectionate nickname from his youth—following a declaration of having "no fortune" upon their arrival. Ideas of both fortune and poverty did not exist in Neverland, as everything in the grounds was free; an economic strategy that equalised Elizabeth Taylor with terminally ill visitors. Despite being a monument to celebrity, the grounds facilitated the exclusion of its benefits. Guests who visited the toy store were only permitted to leave by Applehead after they had made an adequate selection of free Never-gifts; following a guest's submission to Applehead's ideology, they were then to be saturated by it. But perhaps the true concept for Neverland is found through Michael's (then unknown) desire to be buried there, a dream denied by unsound investments alongside the expense of his territorial upkeep and tapering album sales. While easily perceived as compensation for a lost childhood, in its current compromised state, Neverland seems to indicate a failed attempt at a toy-socialist tomb-state for its dearly departed leader. ♛

Drake's Folly

Photography and Words by Dan Mariner

Hydrocarbons. Arguably our planet's most valuable commodity, produced by millions of years' worth of organic matter fermenting under a combination of extreme heat and pressure, deep beneath the surface of the earth. The result: a thick, black liquid known today as 'crude oil'.

In the early 1800s, in Northern Pennsylvania, after stories of this black liquid seeping from the ground emerged, the then fledgling Seneca Oil Company sent Colonel Edwin Drake to the area, to search for this elusive substance. Drake—a retired railroad worker from New York, selected only because he had a free rail pass—was tasked with pioneering a reliable method of extracting oil in the hope it could be used for lighting homes. Drake accepted the task and set about finding a solution as quickly as possible. But of course, it was never going to be that easy.

Obstacle after obstacle thwarted Drake's attempts—collapsed drilling wells, impenetrable bedrock and abandonment by the very company who sent him on the search in the first place. As he made painfully slow progress, many of the area's residents would gather to mock and jeer the site of operation, dubbing it 'Drake's Folly'. But after much ridicule, on the 27th of August 1859—in Titusville, Pennsylvania and at a depth of 69.5 feet—Drake's drill made its first full extraction. Unbeknown to him, Drake's drilling method would not only establish the modern petroleum industry but enable America and the rest of the world to kick-start an Industrial Revolution never seen before, and radically transform the evolution of human civilisation.

Titusville—situated in Crawford County in the North Western corner of Pennsylvania—soon became the bustling hub of this new petroleum industry. As soon as Drake discovered that oil could be extracted from the ground using the same reliable methods employed in salt well-drilling, he set about improving his method of extraction in the hope of significantly increasing financial gains. As news quickly spread of this lucrative new market, Titusville experienced a boom as has only been seen during the early gold rush in the west. In the space of a few years, the population swelled from a few hundred to over 8,000 people. Scores of entrepreneurs swarmed into Titusville and almost over night, townships were named. Oil City, Franklin and Pithole sprang up, teeming with prospectors hoping to make their fortune. At its peak, the Pennsylvanian oil industry supplied well over half of the world's oil supply before the discovery of vast oil reserves in Texas and the world over.

Today, while retracing the steps of the early oil industry, it is hard to imagine the massive feat of human endeavour that took place over 150 years ago. The valleys and forests, once stripped bare and exploited by the industry, have now been reclaimed by nature. The area is now teeming with wildlife, flora and fauna slowly erasing the remnants of pipelines, rusted machinery and abandoned wells—a true testament to the incredible regenerative power of nature and its ability to heal itself over time.

CASH FOR COINS

0 1
DAYS
LEFT

CHUCK

Ode to Trash

OR ‘WHERE DOES MY RUBBISH GO?’

Fresh Kills Landfill. Image source: http://tvblogs.nationalgeographic.com/files/2012/07/landfill-590x442.jpg

Words by Shahd Omar

“Trash is not a problem. It rarely disturbs the course of our daily lives of consumption, yet at the same time it threatens our very essence.”–Greg Kennedy

That we live in a world seduced by guilty consumerism and burdened by the search for ecological solutions is old news. Ten years ago today, when Al Gore warned us that things were about to get ugly, many tried to readjust their lifestyles in favour of a more sustainable mantra: ‘reduce, reuse, recycle’. When my grandmother stored water in old glass milk bottles, she thought it was just common sense, but now it’s called ‘upcycling’. Since then, water has become a ‘fast moving consumer good’ supported by the invention of the PET bottle in 1973. As valuable as it has been to recycle plastic—in itself a broad concept—it remains that recycling is a shady term clouded with assumptions about the usability and value of recycled materials—as opposed to virgin materials—and the amount of energy these processes require.

If we can agree that we’re producing more trash than ever before, then we know that means there’s probably more trash than people in our cities. Still, the afterlife of trash remains unknown to many beyond recycling-labelled trashcans and anonymous garbage trucks that conspicuously roam the streets. But garbage hasn’t always been a problem, and not because our ancestors weren’t producing any of it: garbage archaeologists from the University of Arizona have traced the history of waste back to a Mayan site from 800 BC, pointing to the human inclination towards disposal. And let’s not forget our bodies produce their own daily waste, the history of which is covered by Dominique Laporte in his *History of Shit*, a study which links the birth of modern Western subjectivities to the purification of human excrement for the ends of public health and economic growth. Waste becomes a spatial issue delineating the boundaries of self and other, of home and street. One can’t approach the topic of waste without mentioning Mary Douglas’s often cited “dirt is matter out of place”, signaling that waste is more about context than content. So we tuck away our waste into bins in order to contain it and keep it out of sight. Some say it’s for fear of contamination, others that seeing an object’s demise reminds us of our own finitude. Either way, what we designate as trash poses a threat to the purity of ourselves and our spaces.

Our litter carry the textures of our lives. If you empty out your trashcan you will find the accumulation of your days’ stories before your eyes, your habits and sometimes your deepest secrets. When the University of Arizona’s Garbage Project team excavated Fresh Kills Landfill on Staten Island—now a park—they unearthed years of American consumption patterns, attempting to consolidate our mental and physical worlds at one of the world’s largest landmarks of the toxicity of throwaway culture. In a similarly revelatory act, artist Mierle Ukeles attempted to uncover the garbage of the city to its dwellers as part of her ‘maintenance art’ project, by putting it on display and parading it around New York City as an invitation for appropriation. If we took ownership of what we threw away we might learn to take responsibility for it too.

In our modern societies of sterilisation, waste is sent to the landfill—an American invention—to be dumped into colossal piles. The earliest American sanitary landfill was intended not for the amelioration of health and hygiene, but for a mass disposal system better suited for growing rates of production, allowing a disposal process that was faster and more discrete. But the landfill’s efficiency of concealment is outweighed by its spatial and financial demands that span years.

As the trashcan successfully separates discard from owner, the landfill ascertains the anonymity of trash so that matter loses its individuality, and therefore its value. Through this disjuncture we have forgotten that no object exists frozen in time, and that—like ourselves—garbage has a lifecycle too. Our waste streams, traveling through cities and the globe, are simply flows of our own undesired objects that we have deemed unusable because it has become easier to just buy more. Someday we might be surrounded by repurposed objects made solely of biodegradables, but for now, we are faced with enormous amounts of trash, boundless mounds of the unusable remodelled into fresh topographies. Instead of censoring our senses, let us face our trash, remembering that it is nothing but a reflection of ourselves, as well as a legacy we are leaving behind.♚

For Everyone a Garden

Known for his groundbreaking project, Habitat 67, Moshe Safdie is inspired by heritage, culture and the essence of space. Here, Safdie talks to LOBBY about his pursuit of generous spatial gestures and his desire to blend architecture with nature.

Words by Huda Tayob
Portraits by Tony Luong

At the age of 77, Moshe Safdie has built projects around the world, yet is perhaps most famous for Habitat 67 in Montreal, the project that launched his architectural career almost 50 years ago. Dynamic, dense, and modular, Habitat 67 was based on Safdie's final thesis project at McGill University in 1961, titled "A Case for City Living". A few years later, and while working for Louis Khan in Philadelphia, he was asked to submit the project for the 1967 Montreal World Expo. For Safdie, the momentum behind Habitat was a search for *generosity*, a theme that underlies his architectural work and that comes up time and time again during my conversation with him.

Habitat marked the beginning of this search for the abundance of light, space and nature within his projects. The 158 stacked and terraced apartments in the complex aimed to provide "for everyone a garden." Safdie's pursuit for a generous architecture has led him from an interest in the architecture of Aldo Van Eyck and Team 10 to Mediterranean vernacular housing; from innovative building systems to the philosophical insights of Louis Kahn.

While Safdie's early work exhibited an interest in utopian universalism, his more recent projects reveal a nuanced response to the particular culture, heritage and essence of place. Last year, he was awarded the AIA Gold medal, in recognition of his 'humane' approach to designing public and cultural spaces. From Habitat to more recent projects, Safdie engages with the tensions and paradoxes of being an architect today, but most importantly, continues a search for generosity that translates into architectural space.

Habitat 67, Montreal.

Photography: Timothy Hursley.

Lets talk about your groundbreaking project, Habitat 67. Was there a key influence in this project?

It is 50 years old, and I was very young. I had worked a year for Kahn at the time, but I think my one major influence was probably my thesis advisor who had come from the Netherlands and was, at the time, a partner with Aldo van Eyck. I grew up as a young architect reacting against Mies and was fascinated with Le Corbusier. By the time I came to do my thesis, I was very disenchanted with the Unité d'Habitation and Le Corbusier's later work, and I became quite intrigued with the Team 10 thinking, Aldo Van Eyck and so on.

I think, theoretically, I was rebelling against the formalism of modernism. In terms of probably more significant influences, I grew up in the Mediterranean, in Israel, and I was surrounded by that particular vernacular. That, and the combination of socialist utopianism of the Kibbutz movement in early Israel were very strong forces in my formation. But, you know, I was 24…

You have previously described Louis Kahn as an important influence on your work as a whole. How is Kahn's work influential for you, and where does your practice differ from his?

You know, he was a real architect in the sense that his language was a complete language of building and construction. And he was inspired, I think most, by the materiality of architecture. I mean, he was a spiritual man; he understood light, and he thought through building systems. I think that is fundamental to my understanding as an architect. It didn't only come from

"My work is much more sensual. I allow myself things that I think Kahn would probably have suppressed."

Kahn, I had a professor at McGill, Peter Collins, who had studied under Auguste Perret and was very interested in construction systems and their expression in architecture.

However, I think that the most powerful influence of Kahn on me, over the years, was on the nature of my practice. My office is very much a reflection of what his office was. It's a bigger office and I do more complicated, much larger-scale work, but for Kahn the process was first embryonic, then development, then detailing and then finally, really having your hands on top of the construction; he was engaged in everything, as I am. And I can't let go. The detailing phase is just as much the making of architecture for me as the charcoal sketch.

My office and its organisation, the kind of commitment of people—not just me but all of us here—is very much in the sort of philosophy and image of Kahn's office. That seems to have more significance—at least in my mind —than formal questions,because my architecture has evolved quite differently from Kahn, who was much more austere. I think my work is much more sensual. I allow myself things that I think he would probably have suppressed.

Habitat 67 exhibits a multitude of modules and parts coming together to form a mega-structure, yet maintaining a diversity of spaces, both public and private. How did you bring a sense of human scale to such a dense living environment?

“The public realm must be a combination of commercial and civic objectives, and the civic objectives should be the dominant ones.”

Marina Bay Sands, Singapore.

Photography: Timothy Hursley.

For me, abundance is about generosity. And I think that Habitat, as a concept, is about generosity. So what do I mean by that? The problem with the sustainable green architecture movement is that it does not make a clear distinction between the need for the economy of resources and economy of energy on the one hand, and the end product in terms of the generosity which it provides for the life of the inhabitants of the building on the other. For instance, it is much easier to design a school that is mean and stingy about light, space and indoor/outdoor connections, while, doing so economically, with as little resources used as possible.

The motto for Habitat was ‘for everyone a garden’. It’s all about the generosity of garden spaces, multiple views, privacy, open streets rather than corridors. All of these are generous gestures; they are more than an apartment building ever gave any inhabitant. Then the question becomes, how do you achieve that with the most economical means? You can’t separate the two. With Habitat it’s clear that there is a price to fractalising and there is a price to providing roof gardens. These things don’t come for free. To the best of our skills at the time, we used prefabrication and whatever technology was available to us 50 years ago to achieve it most economically.

Photograhy: Ram Rahman.

This use of prefabricated technology and modular design is very interesting. Could you tell me more about where this decision came from?

What we believed then—and I know that things developed somewhat in the last 50 years on that subject — was that what makes construction extremely inefficient is that it is set up on the site, in poor conditions, meaning it’s not a factory, the weather is bad. You know, it’s inefficient. So if we could mimic production of other industries, particularly the mass-produced components, we could achieve similar economies. Of course when you build 150 apartments, and you have to build a factory to build them, that was not exactly mass production. Habitat itself was very expensive, but I did believe then that if you were doing 100 thousand of them then they would be extremely economical. Except we never got to do a 100 thousand of them for a million and one reasons.

Throughout your work there is an emphasis on green spaces, nature and light. Is the exploitation of resources a concern for you in the design and building process?

I think that when you’re generous about what comes under the umbrella of nature, daylight, open space and permeability, you pay a price. To me, the challenge is to build efficiently so that you can afford this price. There is always that tension between what we can afford in terms of resources, and where we are aiming in terms of the architectural environment. That is the tension that is at the centre of the architectural process as I experience it.

You frequently emphasise the role of architecture in shaping the public realm. Your 2011 project, Marina Bay Sands in Singapore has been described as an ‘extrovert’ project that proposes a new kind of public realm. What is this new kind of public realm, and how does this project attempt to create this?

Khalsa Heritage Centre, Punjab.

What everybody would do conventionally is they would create a mall with shops on the inside, buried on the middle of the site, and then they would stack it with a number of towers on top: towers over mall. The end result is that you’re introverted, you’re turning your back to the city. Even when you have entrances, they’re not part of the urban network around it.

Marina Bay flips this. Since the promenade is a continuous urban place already established around the bay, we made that the spine, integrating outdoor and indoor so it is completely connected to the city visually and spatially, and then we extended it via the urban connections. It feels like the urban network of streets and passages has just run through the project, and it is therefore as much a part of the city as it is a part of the project. It’s very generous about daylight, views and openness so that it does not feel like a privatised, internal space, even though in fact it is.

Do you see this as a statement against contemporary architecture?

It’s more against contemporary development strategy rather than architecture. I think architects do it because the clients demand it. Some of my clients demand it, I just resist it. The conventional wisdom of mixed use developments today, in Asia particularly —but I think its true in most places— is that you try and get a big enough piece of land and then create something totally under control, so it’s introverted and internalised. This stems from the belief that opening to the streets doesn’t do you much good because you only want those who are going to come and spend money there.

The development industry is inclined towards privatising the public realm and controlling it towards its own ends. For example, most malls are exclusively shopping—they don’t incorporate museums or theatres, or the kind of mixed use that a public place must have to be diverse as urban spaces have been historically. They are exclusively commercial in their objectives. The public realm must be a combination of commercial and civic objectives, and the civic objectives should be the dominant ones. In my view, the more civic the objectives are addressed, the more commercially successfully it will be. But that’s not the way the development industry sees it. My work is resisting the development

trends rather than the architectural trends, because I think the trouble with our profession today is that most architects are behaving like service providers who are marching to the tune of what the development clients demand uncritically.

In contrast to the 'universalism' in Habitat 67, some of your later projects are designed to respond to the particular essence of a place: USA, Canada, Israel, Bangladesh, Singapore and China, among others. I'm particularly thinking of Khalsa Heritage Centre in the Punjab and the Exploration Place Science Centre in Kansas. How do you seek to preserve, respect or enhance the local cultural context and regional specificity in different parts of the world?

I have a soft spot for both of these projects myself, but I should say that it's true that Habitat, particularly the building built in Montreal, was universal and my thinking was that way too. However, as I was commissioned to do other Habitats—the ones that didn't get built, in Israel, in Puerto Rico, in New York—they did take on a local flavour. I wasn't just taking the Montreal building system and applying it. It did adapt both formally and climatically, so I was already then, in the early 70s, responsive to place.

In Jerusalem I was passionate about trying to build contemporary development harmoniously with the historic heritage and architectural heritage of the city. As I was struggling with that issue, it got its expression in the Mamilla project—in the restoration of the old city—and in the Hebrew Union College.

What was exciting to me in the Khalsa Heritage Centre in the Punjab and the Exploration Place in Kansas, was that this sort of came full cycle: I was doing my architecture, exploring building systems, geometries and other things that I was very passionate about, but I was also able to adapt them to the site, place and programme. Exploration Places is very much a science building, a science museum. It takes advantage of its waterfront site and was extremely efficient and economical to build. We used laminated beams, all with the same radius, and concrete walls. It was $150 per square foot when we built it.

Exploration Place Science Centre, Kansas.

Photography: Timothy Hursley.

The Khalsa Heritage Centre: every time I see it, I think to myself it is a quintessential Indian and Sikh building in its feeling, and yet its geometries, planning and siting strategies are done elsewhere. So, it's the ability to merge authentic construction and building systems, with the uniqueness of the site, programme and culture of a place.

How do you see abundance, austerity and building economy translate into urban settings, particularly global cities?

There is a tension between resources and the end product. This is one of the paradoxes of architecture, and it's probably not new. But I was driving down Broadway Street towards lower Manhattan a couple of days ago in New York, and the car had a sun roof. Looking up, one building after the other, I couldn't help but look at these 19th Century, highly articulated, ornamented, beautifully detailed buildings—probably 12–15 storeys high. I was thinking, how was it possible that 120 years ago society was able to make them so elegant, so beautiful, so carefully considered? And they could afford it, of course they could afford it. Yet today, developers put up these stripped down minimum things and get away with it, and we sort of helplessly say, "It's the economy." What happened in 150 years? It is a fascinating question about the nature of urbanism and architecture today. ♛

The Seminar Room

The Democratising Data Deluge is Upon Us

Joaquin Pheonix romancing his operating system from the bed in Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013).

…AND IT'S BEEN "SHADOWED BY A SECRET HISTORY OF THE SUPERCHARGED BED."

Words by James Taylor-Foster

Robin Evans, the British architect, teacher and historian, died in 1993: the year in which CERN put the World Wide Web software into the public domain. Two decades earlier, in 1971, he had written (what appears now to be) a rather prophetic essay. In *The Rights of Retreat and the Rites of Exclusion* Evans discussed what he described as 'the war against information'. His words were sharply angled toward a singular truth about the human condition: that of the "strange way in which [we] render their world inhabitable by circumscribing and forgetting about those parts of it that offend [us]."

He continued by stating, "Since we all seem well launched into an era of despondency and retrenchment, it is probably easier for us now to understand that information is not such an isotropically good and wholesome commodity as we might once have thought, and that immersion in a milieu of indiscriminate emblems, images, messages and ideas might just as easily discompose and confuse individuals and communities as enlighten them."[1]

Since 1993 a panoply of online 'social' platforms have seeded, flourished and become engrained in our patterns of work, entertainment consumption, relationships and communication channels. From Vine to Instagram, Hangouts to Skype, WhatsApp to Messenger, LinkedIn and Foursquare, Snapchat, Tinder and Grindr, the backbone of many lives is a wholly digital one. The blue light of night blends into the blue light of morning.

It is a single decade ago this year that Twitter launched with its seductive 140-character media stream. That same year, in 2006, Facebook opened registration to everyone over 13 years of age, and some of the most successful online architectural media companies officially connected to waiting consumers, wherever they might be. As they have entered into prematurity, some have floundered. Others have become so embedded in the quotidian lives of the greater proportion of the global population that it's impossible to imagine a civilised world without them.

The consumer, therefore, is left with a plenitude of opportunities flowing in constant waterfalls of cascading bytes. People have access to more information than ever before, yet the spatial response has been gradual and inert. Indeed, for Beatriz Colomina, "the history of the office building has been shadowed by a secret history of the supercharged bed."

The democratising data deluge is upon us. ♛

1. Robin Evans, "The Rights of Retreat and the Rites of Exclusion: Notes Towards the Definition of Wall" [1971], in *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, (London: Architectural Association Publications, 1997), 36.

Advertisement by Bluebeam for working in bed.

Privacy and Publicity in the Age of Social Media

Words by Beatriz Colomina

Architectural theory, 2000+? What has really changed? What has become urgent?

In terms of media, the most striking thing is that in 2000 there was no social media. In 2000, Friends Reunited was launched in Great Britain to help people locate old school friends. This was the first successful online social network, and by the end of the year, it had 3,000 users. A year later, 2.5 million. In 2002, Friendster got 3 million users in three months. 2003 was the year of MySpace. In 2004, Facebook started at Harvard as a collegiate version of Friendster; within a month, half of the Harvard College population was on it. Soon it expanded to other colleges, and in 2005 Facebook opened to high school students. 2005 was also the year in which YouTube was launched with an invitation to "Broadcast Yourself." The year 2006 was Twitter, as well as the year in which Facebook opened to anybody above 13 years old. WhatsApp arrived in 2009 and is the most globally popular messaging app with 800 million users. Instagram, launched in October 2010, had 300,000 active users as of December 2014. There are now about 1.5 billion monthly active users of Facebook. This short history could continue on and on. There has been an exponential acceleration of the number of available channels for broadcast of the self, matched by an accelerating number of people using them. It is estimated that by the end of 2015, 4 billion people—60% of the world population—will be connected to the Internet, most of them through mobile devices.

This represents a complete transformation of the way we live, with huge implications for architecture. Indeed, it is an architectural transformation. This is what is urgent for me, and for architectural theory today. We need to understand the world we live in—architects and theorists may be the last to realise how *architectural* this change is. What are the consequences of this state of things? What is the architecture of social media?

But where to start investigating this massive event? Already in 1999, an article in *The New York Times* reported that a quarter of a million people were exposing their lives online, and that 1 million webcams had been sold that year alone. These were thought to be shocking numbers. Today billions are regularly exposing themselves online. The line between what is private and what is public, what is inside and what is outside, has been radically redrawn. Let's start then by asking the simplest architectural question: Where are we doing all of this? What is the space of social media?

In an Australian survey of 2013 it was found that 34% of social network users admitted to logging on at work, 13% in school, 18% in their cars, 44% in bed, 7% in the bathroom and 6% on the toilet. What's most shocking about this report is what happened to the house,

John Lennon and Yoko Ono, *Bed-In for Peace*, Amsterdam (1969).

the living room or even the bedroom. Social life takes place not in the streets or even the living room, but in the car, the bathroom, on the toilet—and above all in the bed, floating alone without bedroom, house, or city. The bed has become the epicentre of the universe.

In what is probably now a conservative estimate, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in 2012 that 80% of young New York City professionals work regularly from bed. The fantasy of the home office has given way to the reality of the bed office. The very meaning of the word "office" has been transformed. Millions of dispersed beds are taking over from concentrated office buildings. The boudoir is defeating the tower. Networked electronic technologies have removed any limit to what can be done in bed. It is not just that the bed office has been made possible by new media—rather, new media is designed to extend a hundred-year-old dream of domestic connectivity to millions of people. The history of the office building has been shadowed by a secret history of the supercharged bed.

How did we get here?

In his famous short text "Louis-Philippe, or the Interior," Walter Benjamin wrote of the splitting of work and home in the 19th Century:

> Under Louis-Philippe, the private citizen enters the stage of history… For the private person, living space becomes, for the first time, antithetical to the place of work. The former is constituted by the interior; the office is its complement. The private person who squares his accounts with reality in his office demands that his interior be maintained in his illusions… From this spring the phantasmagorias of the interior. For the private individual the private environment represents the universe. In it he gathers remote places and the past. His living room is a box in the world theatre.[1]

Industrialization brought with it the eight-hour shift and the radical separation between the home and the office or factory, between rest and work, night and day. Postindustrialization collapses work back into the home and takes it further into the bedroom and into the bed itself. Phantasmagoria is no longer lining the room in wallpaper, fabric, images and objects. It is now in electronic devices. The whole universe is concentrated on a small screen with the bed floating in an infinite sea of information. To lie down is not to rest but to move. The bed is now a site of action. But the voluntary invalid has no need of their legs. The bed has become the ultimate prosthetic and a whole new industry is devoted to providing contraptions to facilitate work while lying down—reading, writing, texting, recording, broadcasting, listening, talking and, of course, eating, drinking, sleeping or making love, activities that seem to have been turned, of late, into work itself. Waiters in restaurants in the United States ask if you are "still working on that" before removing your plate or your glass. Endless advice is dispensed about how to 'work' on your personal relationships, 'schedule' sex with your partner. Sleeping is definitely hard work too, for millions, with the psycho-pharmaceutical industry providing new drugs every year and an army of sleep experts providing advice on how to achieve this apparently ever more elusive goal—all in the name of higher productivity, of course. Everything done in the bed has become work.

This philosophy was already embodied in the figure of Hugh Hefner, who famously almost never left his bed, let alone his house. He literally moved his office to his bed in 1960 when he moved into the Playboy Mansion at 1340 North State Parkway, Chicago, turning it into the epicentre of a global empire and his silk pajamas and dressing gown into his business attire. "I don't go out of the house at all!!! … I am a contemporary recluse," he told Tom Wolfe, guessing that the last time he was out had been three and a half months before, and that in the last two years he had been out of the house only nine times.[2] Fascinated, Wolfe described him as "the tender-tympany green heart of an artichoke."[3]

Playboy turns the bed into a workplace. From the mid-1950s on, the bed becomes increasingly sophisticated, outfitted with all sorts of entertainment and communication devices as a kind of control room. The magazine devoted many articles to the design of the perfect bed. Hefner acted as the model with his famous round bed in the Playboy Mansion in Chicago. The bed was first introduced as a feature in the "Playboy Townhouse" article of 1962, which presents a detailed unrealised project in plans, sections and renderings that had been originally commissioned to be Hefner's own house. Not by chance, the only piece of the design to be realised was the bed, which was installed in the mansion. The bed itself is a house. Its rotating and vibrating structure is packed with a small fridge, hi-fi, telephone, filling cabinets, bar, microphone, Dictaphone, video cameras, headphones, TV, breakfast table, work surfaces and control for all the lighting fixtures, for the man who never wants to leave. The bed was Hefner's office, his place of business, where he conducted interviews, made his phone calls, selected images, adjusted layouts, edited texts, ate, drank and consulted with playmates.

Hefner was not alone. The bed may have been the ultimate American office at midcentury. In an interview in *The Paris Review* in 1957, Truman Capote is asked, "What are some of your writing habits? Do you use a desk? Do you write on a machine?" To which he answers:

> I am a completely horizontal author. I can't think unless I'm lying down, either in bed or stretched on a couch and with a cigarette and a coffee handy. I've got to be puffing and sipping. As the afternoon wears on, I shift from coffee to mint tea to sherry to martinis. No, I don't use a typewriter. Not in the beginning. I write my first version in longhand. Then I do a complete revision, also in longhand… Then I type a third draft on yellow paper… No, I don't get out of bed to do this. I balance the machine on my knees. Sure, it works fine; I can manage a hundred words a minute.[4]

From morning to afternoon to evening, the drinks, the paper and the equipment changes, but his position on the bed does not.

Even architects set up office in bed at midcentury. Richard Neutra started working the moment he woke up with elaborate equipment enabling him to design, write, or even interview in bed. As his son Dion Neutra revealed:

> Dad's best time for creative thinking was early in the morning, long before any activity had started in

"The history of the office building has been shadowed by a secret history of the supercharged bed."

> “A new kind of factory without walls is constructed by compact electronics and extra pillows for the 24/7 generation.”

the office below. He often stayed in bed working with ideas and designs, even extending into appointments which had been made earlier. His one concession to convention was to put on a tie over his night shirt when receiving visitors while still propped up in bed![5]

Neutra’s bed in the VDL house in Silverlake, Los Angeles, included two public phones; three communication stations for talking with other rooms in the house, the office below, and even another office 500 meters away; three different call bells; drafting boards and easels that folded down over the bed; electric lights and a radio-gramophone controlled from a dashboard overhead. A bedside table rolling on casters held the tape recorder, electric clock and storage compartments for drawing and writing equipment so that he could, as Neutra put it in a letter to his sister, “use every minute from morning to late night.”[6]

Postwar America inaugurated the high-performance bed as an epicentre of productivity, a new form of industrialization that was exported globally and has now become available to an international army of dispersed but interconnected producers. A new kind of factory without walls is constructed by compact electronics and extra pillows for the 24/7 generation.

The kind of equipment that Hefner envisioned (some of which, like the answering machine, didn’t yet exist) is now expanded for the Internet and social media generation, who not only work in bed but socialise in bed, exercise in bed, read the news in bed and entertain sexual relationships with people miles away from their beds. The *Playboy* fantasy of the nice girl next door is more likely realised today with someone on another continent than in the same building or neighborhood—a person you may have never seen before and may never see again, and it is anybody’s guess if she is real (as in, exists in some place and time) or an electronic construction. Does it matter? As in the recent film *Her*, a moving depiction of life in the soft, uterine state that is a corollary to our new mobile technologies, the “her” in question is an operating system that turns out to be a more satisfying partner than a person. The protagonist lies in bed with Her, chatting, arguing, making love.

If, according to Jonathan Crary, capitalism is the end of sleep, colonizing every minute of our lives for production and consumption, the actions of the voluntary recluse are not so voluntary in the end.[7] It may be worth noting that communism had its own ideas of bringing the bed to the workplace. In 1929, at the height of Stalin’s first five-year plan—with the working day extended and mass exhaustion of factory workers in the face of staggering production quotas—the Soviet government organised a competition for a new city of rest for 100,000 workers. Konstantin Melnikov presented the “Sonata of Sleep,” a new building type for collective sleep, with mechanised beds rocking the workers to unconsciousness and slanted floors to eliminate the need for pillows. Centralised control booths with sleep attendants would regulate temperature, humidity, smell and even sounds to maximise sleep. The inspiration was symptomatically American—Melnikov had read about a military academy in Pensacola, Florida, that taught language to sleeping cadets. Sleep itself had become part of the industrial process.

In today’s attention-deficit-disorder society, we have discovered that we work better in short bursts punctuated by rest. Today many companies provide sleeping pods in the office to maximise productivity. Bed and office are never far apart in the 24/7 world. Special self-enclosed beds have been designed for office spaces—turning themselves into compact sealed capsules, mini space ships, that can be used in isolation or gathered together

in clusters or lined up in rows for synchronised sleep—understood as a part of work rather than its opposite.

Between the bed inserted in the office and the office inserted in the bed, a whole new horizontal architecture has taken over. It is magnified by the ‘flat’ networks of social media that have themselves been fully integrated into the professional, business, and industrial environment in a collapse of traditional distinctions between private and public, work and play, rest and action. The bed itself—with its ever more sophisticated mattress, linings and technical attachments—is the basis of an intrauterine environment that combines the sense of deep interiority with the sense of hyper-connectivity to the outside. Not by chance, Hefner’s round bed was a kind of flying saucer hovering in space in a room without windows, as if in orbit, with the TV hanging above as the reference to planet earth. It is a circle, the classical image of the universe. The bed today has also become a portable universe, equipped with every possible technology of communication. A midcentury fantasy has turned into a mass reality.

What is the architecture of this new space and time?

In the 1960s and 1970s, experimental architects devoted themselves to the equipment of the new mobile nomads in a whole galaxy of lightweight, portable interiors with soft reclining spaces as the core of a complex of prosthetic extensions (among many others, projects like Michael Webb’s Cushicle and Suitaloon). All of these can be understood as high-performance beds complete with media, artificial atmospheres, color, light and smell, a kind of pop-psychedelic Melnikov with the worker now sleeping inside the control booth. Reyner Banham wrote about naked Jane Fonda flying through space in her fur-lined horizontal bubble in the same breath that he enthusiastically embraced the architecture of *Playboy*. It was just a matter of time before John Lennon and Yoko Ono held a weeklong Bed-In for Peace in the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel during their honeymoon in March 1969. The idea of a Bed-In came from “Sit-In” protests and was intended as a nonviolent protest against war and to promote world peace. “Make love, not war” was the slogan of the day, but to the disappointment of journalists, John and Yoko were fully dressed in their pajamas, sitting in bed, as John put it, like angels. The bed had taken over from the street as the site of protest. They invited the world’s press into their room every day between 9 AM and 9 PM, treating the bed as an office in which they worked while journalists streamed in and images streamed out.

What is the nature of this new interior in which we have decided collectively to check ourselves in? What is the architecture of this prison in which night and day, work and play are no longer differentiated and we are permanently under surveillance, even as we sleep in the control booth? New media turns us all into inmates, constantly under surveillance, even as we celebrate endless connectivity. We have all become “a contemporary recluse,” as Hefner put it half a century ago.

In Laura Poitras’s film *Citizenfour*, we see Edward Snowden close up sitting on his bed in a Hong Kong hotel for days on end, surrounded by his laptops, communicating with journalists in the room and around the world about the secret world of massive global surveillance. The biggest invasion of privacy in the history of the planet is revealed from bed and dominates all media. The most public figure in the world at that moment is a recluse. Architecture has been inverted. ♛

1 Walter Benjamin, “Louis-Philippe, or the Interior,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schoken Books, 1978), 154.
2 Tom Wolfe, “King of the Status Dropouts,” *The Pump House Gang* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1965).
3 Wolfe, “King of the Status Dropouts,” 63.
4 “Truman Capote, The Art of Fiction No. 17,” interviewed by Patti Hill, *The Paris Review* 16 (Spring–Summer 1957).
5 Dion Neutra, “The Neutra Genius: Innovation & Vision,” *Modernism*, vol. 1, no. 3 (December 1998).
6 Richard Neutra to Verena Saslavsky (December 4, 1953), Dione Neutra Papers, quoted in Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture: A Biography and History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 251.
7 Jonathan Crary, *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (New York: Verso, 2013).

The Blue Light of Night Blends into the Blue Light of Morning

Nick Axel, Ethel Baraona Pohl (dpr-barcelona), Becky Quintal, James Graham, Jesse Seegers, Jack Self and Anton Stuckardt reflect on the spatial implications of the social world.

Illustrations by Siri Pårup

We Are All The Same

Words by Jack Self

Reality has always been horrific, and most of human history has been focused on ways of escaping it. For millennia, the most practical approach was to exercise the imagination, particularly its capacity for daydreaming and fantasy. Our frustrations with the everyday—a condition at once banal and terrifying—could be overcome by the exploration of interior worlds; each a swirling construction of hopes and aspirations, a blossoming psychedelic synthesis of dreams intersected by fragments of the recognisable.

But if once the real was a nightmare, and the imagination a dream, those spaces have since been inverted. We can no longer avoid the great metaphysical questions. In fact, we cannot stop asking them: Who am I? What should I do with my life? What will happen to me when I die? The failure of modernity to propose convincing answers has precipitated a perpetual crisis of identity and purpose. Simultaneously, we have sent out into the world a wildly incredible simulation of ourselves, proliferating this fantasy self through a myriad of heavily-edited social media profiles. The ego is in crisis, and we can only craft an implausible persona.

This unnatural conflation—the orgasm of the self (and selfie), that is—is an obscene climax of narcissism and ego. It finds it root in a Freudian negation, in which the fear of one thing surfaces as its opposite. Negation describes why arrogance can mask insecurity, and why total control of our bodies, diets and desires (in the form of ever more elaborate allergies, elitist superfoods and farcical workout regimes) masks the fear that we may no longer be in control of anything (politics, the environment, sexuality, death).

We continue to insist on the existence of the ego (“I think”, “I like”, “I want!”) where, in fact, the individual has altogether dissolved. We are no longer autonomous beings, but automatons; we are rational beings in the marketplace; we are bundles of preferences and subjectivities pre-prepared for corporate analysis. We are poor collages of discrete data blocks, split souls (‘dividuals’), ripe for cross-comparison and targeted niche products. ♛

Hey, Critic— We Got This

Words by Becky Quintal

Depending on the day, news source and commenter, the internet is either too uncontrolled or too controlled.* Colomina argues that, due to the former, we have less limits to where, when (and how) we work. More and more of us work, play and relax in the same place that we sleep: the bed.

If anything is certain, it’s the obvious benefits from the ‘loosening up’ that has come with the “exponential number of available channels for broadcast of the self,” that Colomina describes. These benefits become apparent not just in terms of the architecture of the workplace and its collapse into domestic architectures, but also in the collapse of an outdated model of architectural

criticism that prioritised differentiation—the "this is better than that" approach—and worshipped at the altar of the critical. The shared challenge faced by internet platforms (like *ArchDaily*), is that their model must contend with a chorus of outraged old-timers who cannot, or do not understand how *so many* projects, news stories and entertaining posts can be worthy of publication. Entertainment and work, like jokes and news, occupy the same digital space—whether in the Facebook feed or elsewhere.This amalgam isn't chaotic noise; the ecosystem of the Internet and the beings that most thrive within it are experts at distilling the most salient information for themselves. In turn, Internet users are increasingly less likely to place their trust in the critic as we know (or knew) it, turning instead towards the comments section or monitoring the digits next to the 'Like' button.

As we begin to accept a more contemporary form of time management (or the dissolution of a dedicated nine-to-five work schedule) we should also recognise that people are prioritising their information intake. More conventional news will be balanced with 9GAG, documentaries will be enjoyed alongside the latest in online reality TV. When an editor of an internet platform offers anything that falls into the category of 'interesting', we are entering into a tacit agreement: the consumer consumes what they want and what they need.

I've always felt that the criticism that is most prized and taught in programmes in the US and UK—puts the cart before the horse. At a time when we desperately need more people in more places to know basic things about architecture, design and the intelligent approach that many architects apply to solving *real* problems, we cannot afford to continue a tired model of criticism. Openness and access will be the keys to the development of the next radical, powerful and most importantly, the most effective architects. The real critics of tomorrow will be those who have finely tuned filters for what they share. They will not focus on absolute judgements, but on open access to information. ♛

* The lion's share of criticism relating to the internet and, by extension, the 'abundance' of information and opportunities it affords, fall in to one of two camps: 1) there is so much information that filtering it is next to impossible, and the information that is most-seen (or most popular) is not necessarily the 'best'; and 2) the perceived 'abundance' of opportunities may actually not be so open or large, since information is governed and administered by companies (such as Facebook & Google), and surveilled by government bodies.

From Diagram to Instagram

Words by Jesse Seegers

It's been said that our generation's ethos can be abbreviated to 'IWWIWWIWI' (or *I want what I want when I want it*)—but do we know exactly *what* we want, or *when* we want it? This statement is equally true of populist movements, like 'Occupy'. Given my current state—which is, incidentally, hungover—I don't really want to think too much. What I really want is for images to wash over me; I want that warm feeling of image-based-stasis. Not too bright, though. You know what I mean.

Whereas the 'diagram' embodied the ethos of the naughties (think cartoony axonometric depicting 'views'), Instagram embodies the *zeitgeist* of the twenty-tens. I won't be surprised if architecture studios start looking more like fashion houses, with precariously pinned mood boards of references, colour palettes and inspirational ephemera scavenged from the web. It's not so much of a Postmodern highbrow-lowbrow thing, since the chronological linearity of feeds and streams generates an extreme, sometimes curated, single dimension of unusual equivalencies. It's about the economic principle of network effects: those with larger networks have more capacity to generate positive feedback loops; to move their weight around.

My wi-fi network name is 'a series of tubes', not only so it shows up first in the dropdown list, but also because it acts as a constant reminder that the internet is all about the connections, associations, references and affinities—a smorgasbord of material that adds up to that vague sensation of *what we really want.* ♛

Media Aftereffects

Words by James Graham

"Impatience is the state of mind of the _________ reader […] the impatience of people who are excluded and who think they have the right to see their own interests expressed."[1]

So said Walter Benjamin, writing in 1934. The missing word is, in fact, 'newspaper', and this is a passage which often comes to mind when I find myself vacantly toggling between glanced-at tabs and browser windows. It is, however, a potentially productive form of impatience, Benjamin suggests, in that the "literary confusion" of that eminently social medium—the newspaper—finds salvation in its "indiscriminate assimilation of readers, who are instantly elevated to collaborators."

Participation, then, isn't simply a feature of the internet's supposed polyvocality. Even as our lived lives increasingly develop in concert with the space-time of the Internet—a curious domain of animal videos and unchecked hostility, of discreet 'Likes', curated lives and, only rarely and despite commonplaces to the contrary, bared souls—the story remains a much older one. We go searching for ourselves, through media and, in so doing, approach 'the social'.

Colomina's call to think about the spatiality of social media is indeed an urgent one; the spatiality of any medium is always multiple, and often displaced. The vividness of the action is in how we navigate between the multiple registers—temporal, spatial, emotional—embedded within a single 'mediatic' encounter, as we are never *only* within the embrace of technology. What happens after you swipe right? (Or add your name to the petition, or look fondly at an old friend's photos, or type out a lengthy riposte to an online editorial without ever submitting it, or catch up on your texts or, indeed, ghost on them?).

There is the space of my engagement, right now, with a screen. There is the distributed materiality of social media, an infrastructure of servers and 'content producers' and corporations and device assembly technicians that belie the apparent ineffability of the cloud. But what intrigues me most about media, social and otherwise, are its aftereffects—the way we carry those encounters, how they inflect our spatial bearing in the world, their capacity to displace habits (in the architectural sense of *habitare*), and to produce new ones. ♛

1 Walter Benjamin, "The Newspaper" [1934], in *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media,* ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Rodney Livingstone, Howard Eiland, and others (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2008), 359.

Chimeric Architecture

Words by Anton Stuckardt

"Nothing is ever proved except by the real movement that dissolves existing conditions —that is, the existing production relations and the forms of false consciousness that have developed on the basis of those relations."
– Guy Debord, *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni,* 1978

Another voice is encapsulated in our communication under the condition of social media. It dislocates itself from the public realm into a closed, self-affirmative circuit, creating an endless array of parallel, personally isolated habitats —both of the private recluse and of global self-imaging at the same time—founded on the exclusion of conflict, essential to civil society.

Every message sent involuntarily contains a *different* message—the affirmation of the present condition. Debord's "real movement" now finds itself in an uncertain reality, arising from the superimposition of actual political structures and privatised global communication—and still locked into either one of these two spheres. Or, as he states in his 1959 film *On the Passage of a Few Persons Through a Rather Brief Unity of Time*, "When freedom is practiced in a closed circle, it fades into a dream and becomes a mere image of itself."

In this amalgamation of dwelling, work, leisure, the public and the domestic, floating freely between material surrounding and 'social' networks, architecture must assume a chimeric position. It should not merely reassess traditional places of human activity, but render visible those conflicting realities between virtual and material society for, beneath its appearance, a 'real movement' can once again take hold. ♛

"What, in fact, am I doing the whole time in which I think that I speak?"
– Oswald Egger, *Die ganze Zeit, Suhrkamp Verlag*, 2010

The Editor and the Algorithm

Words by Ethel Baraona Pohl

The editor is sitting at his desk. He's suffering from an intense case of 'FOMO' (Fear Of Missing Out)—a slave of the anxieties and fears that define the 21st Century. His face, always illuminated by a blue light emanating from the screens around him, is in fact a mirror of his inner data-driven-paranoias and concerns. His favourite moment of the day is when he unplugs his devices and feels safe from algorithms, the new surveillance machine from the digital world—just for a little while. At that precise moment, FOMO begins once again.

The editor is known by a multitude of famous architects, having worked with many of them. None, however, know about his increasing sense of social anxiety. Since he discovered the algorithmic bot that started to disrupt the publishing industry many years ago (dedicated to releasing new books), he hasn't found tranquility.

Algorithms—which are tracing all of his searches, comments, 'Likes', private messages, consumption and interactions—provide the infinite acceleration beyond any intellectual work he has recently undertaken. In this sense, the editor lives in a constant race against time; over the past decade he has been late submitting every single publishing project he has started. The algorithm always comes first.

Now, however, he's working on a secret project: a book with a reenactment of Alison and Peter Smithson's famous essay "But Today We Collect Ads". In the past they collected ads; today we collect links and bytes. He reacquaints himself with writing only in notebooks—he turns off the computer, puts the phone screen-down and closes all the doors and windows. Hands trembling, he takes a pencil and writes:

Book Idea:
Title: "But Today We Collect Links and Bytes"
Release Date: Tomorrow

He closes the notebook carefully, puts it in the wardrobe, and releases a sigh of relief—his project is safe. Then, turning on his laptop, he opens the browser—*Amazon*, his home page —and reads about a new release: *But Today We Collect Links and Bytes.*

He nods again. The algorithm was one step ahead. ♛

Prisons Are Heterotopias Too

Words by Nick Axel

I've never been able to understand how people who regularly work from bed don't suffer from chronic back and neck problems. But alas, that's also where I find myself—well beyond any sense of regular working hours. I'll see how my body feels in the morning. To respond to this text, it only felt appropriate.

The 'architecture of this new space and time' has already been built, and its occupancy rate is healthy. It wasn't too hard to draw in the masses and have them sign themselves away; its aesthetic of domestic comfort is quite convincing. Like all good citizens, I register my position on the grid with every gesture, with every pause, with every sign that I exist. Why then ask what this new architecture is? It's where I find myself, it's where I am. Let us ask instead what this new architecture isn't.

This new architecture doesn't change the way things look. In fact, it tends to keep things looking the way they do, the way we know them to. Insofar as infrastructure depends on remaining invisible, the digital is a project of architectural preservation. It embeds itself into the *poché* of walls, the frequency of electromagnetic waves, the flight lines of desire. Strategically, it doesn't need anything from us; it just gives.

This new architecture changes the way we look at things—a factory of subjectivity, not without walls, but clearly in spite of them. The field is now covered with potential, but freedom of choice is still an abyss and actualisation, as messy as ever. Rather than what it is, I wonder what architecture in this new condition will be for.

This new architecture poses the question of the outside. The interior is no longer a point in space, but rather a spatial condition; a way of moving, of acting, of thinking, of seeing, of feeling. Boundaries no longer need to be crossed; there is only life to be lived. Let us not think difference, but simply otherwise. Instead of tearing down or crossing walls, let us surround ourselves with those of our own making. ♛

Bosch, Hieronymus. 1490. *Death and the Miser.* Oil on Panel. London: National Gallery of Art.

The Lift

Photography: Andreas Praefcke

CRIME AND REDEMPTION

FORMAL EXPERIMENTATION IN VIENNA IN HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY TERMS

Words by Bika Sibila Rebek

Built to rule an empire, the city of Vienna provides—with its stately parks, highly decorated facades and monumental avenues, constant reminders of its former glory. Inhabiting this city today means occupying grand spaces with mundane daily activities, be it a Burger King in a former ballroom or a sweaty disco inside the Imperial Court Theatre. However, although these peculiar contrasts are part of the everyday life (no Viennese citizen would be surprised by them) local designers and architects tend to have a more troubled relationship with the city's overbearing past. Already drastically expressed by Adolf Loos a century ago with the ambiguous design of the Loos Haus, architectural sensibilities keep oscillating today between embracing and rejecting the ornamental excess of the past.

Located at Michaelerplatz—a historically significant square in the very centre of Vienna—the Loos Haus provoked an unprecedented architectural controversy during its construction. Designed to be a clothing store, its facade is divided into two contrasting sections. While the eye-level entrance is clad in marble and features a row of Hellenistic columns and a wealth of fenestration details, the upper half is kept in simple white plaster. This detachment between both parts is further expressed in its structure, as the columns on the lower area disconcertingly do not line up with the rows of windows above. Even the often overlooked interior continues the outside contrast between luxury and simplicity; public areas are covered in precious woods, metals and mirrors, and service spaces are held in minimal plastered walls and easy-to-clean floors.

But beside these contrastes, the Loos Haus also forms a strange resonance with the buildings sharing the square. One of its neighbours, St. Michael's Church, is a 13th Century Romanesque building with large expanses of undecorated plastered wall, punctured by a single circular window. When looking at the facade, it seems clear how Loos echoed elements of the church, especially the Greek colonnade and the use of white plaster as primary material. In striking contrast, right across the Haus and occupying almost half of the public space, the Imperial Palace sits as an imposing structure symbolising the past power of Austria, embellished with multiple sculptures and water fountains. Home of Emperor Franz Joseph in the late 19th

Century, it is said that he would keep the curtains of the Imperial Palace shut all day long to avoid the vision of the 'ugly' Loos Haus.

For the art and design community in Vienna, the question remains how to insert oneself into the glorious remnants of the past, be it through temporary architecture, media production or digital art. Examples of this are recent videos made by the young Austrian YouTube phenomenon Yung Hurn, who seems to epitomise a comfortable coexistence between the traditional and the new in the city. For these rappers, the historical city is a natural backdrop for universal adolescent fantasies of fame and intoxication. In a particular camera angle, Yung Hurn sits motionless atop one the expressive Imperial Palace fountains, which suddenly becomes a stage and no longer represents the meaning of 'Power of the Sea' for which it was designed.

Screenshot of the music video "Nein" by Yung Hurn.

This dialogue between present and past can be also seen in the built experiments performed by a group of Viennese artists and architects who rebuilt the famous Loos Bar with low-end materials in Los Angeles. Taking the classic forms of the bar, yet replacing marble with cardboard, brass railing with foam noodles and onyx with backlit paper, the project picks up on the fleeting nature of 'throw-away culture', creating opulence by means of expendability. Others have focused their practice on the production of rich forms by using digital and material tools, almost veering away from architecture per se. Good examples of this are the mobile, affordable and self-assembled 3D printer created by Damjan Minovski, which responds to the need for cheaper fabrication methods to suit savvy designers, and the sculptural objects created by Anna Paul as pieces informed by thorough material research on glass blowing, metal dipping and hammering.

As different as these practices are, they are a testament to a keen interest in the production of ornament rather than a rejection of it. This seems to draw upon the contradictory line of former dichotomies expressed in buildings like the Loos Haus. Rather than fully abolishing or assimilating the historical abundance of form, new generations are finding their own way of producing it. ♛

Andreas Bauer, Christoph Meier, Robert Schwartz, Lukas Stopczynski and friends.

Loos Bar, 2015.

Photography: Manuel Saga.

LIFE AND DEATH

THE NECRO-MEDINA OF TETOUAN

Words by Manuel Saga
Photography by Edén Ochoa and Manuel Saga

In most western countries, land has traditionally belonged to a few powerful lords with perfectly enclosed limits demarcating their possessions. This structure contrasts with the irregularity of the urban systems to be found in Arab-Muslim cities originated in Southern Europe and Northern Africa. The so-called *medina*—composed of small and irregular plots of land and hosting a complex array of tribal relations—seem to be the answer of a multifaceted society. However, contrary to popular belief, the traditional Arab-Muslim city is in fact a delicate urban engine rather than the chaotic and disorganised place commonly pictured by romantic writers and tourist companies. More importantly, as odd as it might sound, exploring the *medina* reveals how this urban structure surpasses the realm of the living, by also shaping the city of the dead.

According to Saleh Ali al-Hathloul, ex-minister of urban planning in Saudi Arabia, the urban tissue of the *medina* is the result of a legal system that was created to manage communal habitation between the heterogeneous Arab tribes originally populating Islamic cities. Urban planning and architecture were conceived as disciplines whose principles would serve the needs of each social group during both the living existence of its members and in the eternal time of the afterlife. What we can call the 'Necro-Medina'—the Islamic graveyard—is an urban structure conceived by following two main requirements. First, Muslims must be buried directly on the ground without a coffin. Second, their bodies must never be moved from their original resting places. Consequently, since the structure of the graves cannot be altered, the traditional graveyard is depicted as an enormous accumulation of detached elements in unlimited and ever-growing expansion.

The urban dynamics relating life and death in the Islamic world is clearly exemplified in the city of Tetouan, located in the northern region of Morocco. Its traditional graveyard receives the nickname of 'Muyahidin' as a tribute to the 300 Andalusian warriors who founded the city in 1484. The graveyard grows in sectors along a north-south central axis demarcating the social status and origin of its 'inhabitants', with the main Mosque defining the south end of the axis. Sectors around the Mosque are especially representative, as it groups the graves of wealthy families as well as the mausoleum *(qubba)* of the

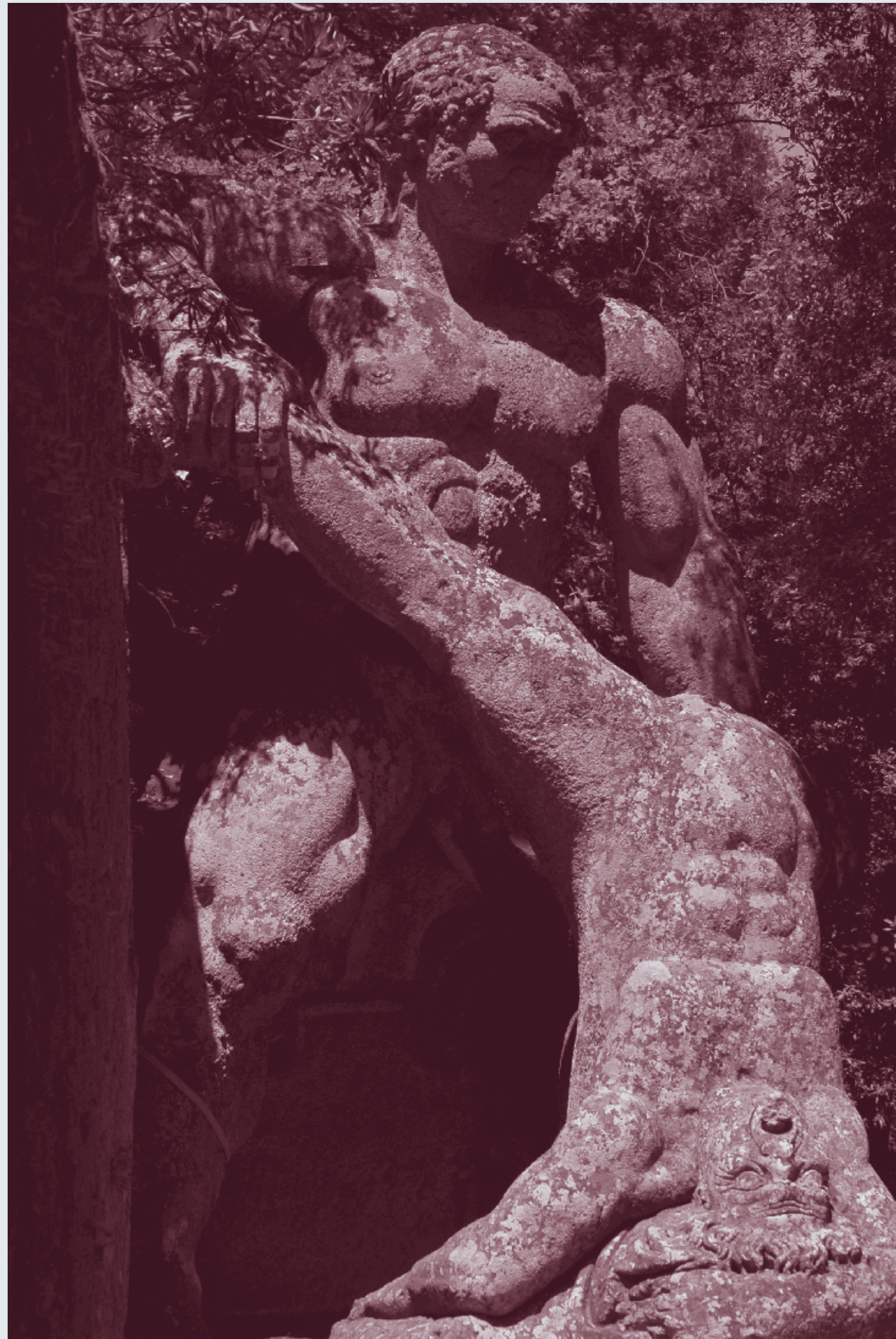
Photography : Edén Ochoa.

Muyahidin chief—Al-Mandari, father of Tetouan. Exactly the same structure is to be found in the living medina, also divided in sectors corresponding to different tribes and organised around two main landmarks—the Royal Palace and the Mosque— symbolising the dual power of the city founders.

In an architectural scale, the hierarchical element of the graveyard is the Islamic tomb, a single typology built with only two variants: tombs for adults and tombs for children. They are rectangular pieces with a small garden space on top, where vegetation grows directly upon the deceased forming a sort of 'gardened patios' for the souls to ascend to heaven. Here, irregularity does not mean randomness, and some additional rules regarding orientation, mausoleum typologies and grouping of familiar and tribal clusters define the particular location of each tomb.

Looking back to the city of the living, the founder's houses constitute the urban centre in a similar manner as to how their resting places become the centre of the graveyard. Also, the idea of a 'gardened patio' as a sacred place is central in the traditional Arab-Muslim house (*dar*), being usually set up by a series of rooms organised according to their degree of intimacy. The patio has the same meaning for a family as the mosque has for the entire tribe: it is a meeting place in which privacy is praised, a place protected by the Islamic Law and assisted by a public servant (*muhtasib*).

The laws managing the commercial and domestic aspects of a tribal urban life in the city do not lose their validity after the death of its inhabitants. In this sense, the traditional Muslim graveyard represents a unique example of Necro-Medina. It is a city for the dead, in which an apparently irregular structure responds to specific traditions and norms in the same way as the city for the living does. ♛



ROCKS

THE SACRO BOSCO OF BOMARZO

Words by Thalia Allington-Wood
Photography by Eva Branscome

Standing in the Sacro Bosco of Bomarzo—an Italian 16th Century park filled with giant, monstrous sculptures—my hand is pressed against cold, damp rock. The sculptures of this site are all made from a type of stone: peperino, a grey-brown volcanic matter studded with fragments of basalt, minerals, limestone and black peppercorn-like scoriae that give it its name. Beneath my touch the sculpted surface is rough, earthy and coarse, as peperino is made when the mixture of hot lava, pumice and stones shed by volcanic eruptions cool and solidify. A harsh substance, it speaks of the volcanoes from which it originates.

The use of peperino in the Sacro Bosco is striking for the time period. Peperino doesn't have the connotations of wealth and status that usually informs the use of sculpted materials in 16th Century Italy. Consider briefly some statues from a comparable site like Villa di Castello, a residence near Florence built over the same decades as the Sacro Bosco.

In the residence's garden there is a grotto where menageries of stone-carved animals are displayed. Above three marble basins, exotic and familiar species mingle in tight packs. Each animal is made from a different rock that corresponds to its natural colour: the rhinoceros is grey granite, the lion an ancient yellow marble from Siena, the horse and monkey a veined marble that had only recently been discovered. This plethora of different sculpted materials is an expression of the patron's wealth. The multicoloured stones speak of a courtly society in which prosperity was expressed through plenitude and variety. Just as some of these animals have symbolically travelled from Africa and Asia, the rocks they are carved from have journeyed from various quarries across the globe. The price of such materials was immense: in 16th Century Florence, a piece of ancient hard stone could cost several times the amount of a painting by Botticelli.

In comparison, Bomarzo is a Renaissance site created from restricted resources. Unlike Villa di Castello's variety of exotic stones, the Sacro Bosco's sculptures are carved directly into huge peperino boulders that are naturally embedded into the Alto Lazio landscape. The size of these boulders and their location would have therefore decided—or at least influenced—what could be carved in the site. Likewise, far from being precious, peperino was referred to as a common and functional building material. Giorgio Vasari describes peperino in 1550 as "used for the posts of windows and doors". For this reason perhaps, when peperino is used in outdoor Renaissance sculptures it is usually covered in stucco that hides the cheap, unimpressive material and provides a polished, classical effect.

Yet the lithic restriction found in the Sacro Bosco is, in its own way, profuse. There is no evidence to suggest that the sculptures of Bomarzo were ever stuccoed. Instead, their rocky surfaces have been purposely left raw and natural in appearance. The peperino is emphasised through rough, unpolished carving and the materiality of the rock is unavoidable. The sculptures are also huge, some over seven metres tall. Reaching to touch the sculpture of a reclining woman, she is so large I can't even hold one of her stony fingers in my hand. Looking at her, I can see where the marks of the sculptor's chisel visibly blends into the large hunk of natural rock she is carved from. The Sacro Bosco forcefully asserts peperino, its properties and texture.

What are we to make of this strange lithic excess? The Sacro Bosco's stark use of peperino in its natural state, carved from boulders rising from the ground, creates a tangible engagement with the region's topography. The sculptures cannot be moved and are therefore irrevocably entwined with the local landscape. If we cast our gaze out into the woods beyond the site's boundaries we find a historic precedent for this material and manner of carving in ancient Etruria. The Etruscans, an Italic civilization that existed between 8th and late 4th Century BC, resided in what are now the regions of Tuscany, Western Umbria and Alto Lazio, where you find Bomarzo. The land surrounding the Sacro Bosco is littered with Etruscan ruins. You need only look across a valley, or take a stroll through the thick forested hills, to realise that the area is full of the remains of this lost civilisation: roughly hewn mausoleums, tombs and crumbling edifices impregnate the earth.

The use of peperino in the Sacro Bosco evokes a local past in a region teeming with archaeological ruins. Lithic materiality becomes an exercise in historic and mythic fabrication. The Sacro Bosco, through its stony material limitation and emphasis, connects to its surrounding landscape and allows time to expand and overflow. Castello's exotic marbles and animals take us on a journey to recently explored lands, but Bomarzo's materiality roots us in the local, taking us on a different kind of voyage. In the Sacro Bosco we time-travel—slipping between past and present. ♛

Baksheesh! Baksheesh!

SANA'A, YEMEN

House interior in Sana'a, Yemen.

Words by Florence Twu
Photography by Rod Waddington

Yemen is one of the most intractably poor and stubbornly traditional societies of the Middle East. I visited the country in 2004, only three years after 9/11. As an Asian-American female, I was drawn by an urge to understand the region and peoples that had attacked 'us'. As soon I stepped off the plane I became comparatively wealthy to the majority of the population. The daughter of middle-class immigrants found herself in a country where she could afford a feast every evening in addition to a private chauffeur.

While celebrated for its mud brick architecture, Yemen is also burdened with a national addiction to a stimulant plant called *gat.* Fuelling overnight construction projects and play-fights that can take ugly turns over dining checks, *gat's* mood-enhancing effects also allow the impoverished to forget their menial existence. Until the high wears off, reality returns and the dark effects of withdrawal begin, that is.

The capital city of Sana'a, where I spent most of my stay, was a tinderbox, both literally and figuratively. Ecologically, the cultivation of *gat* was draining a desert nation of its precious water resources. Socially, the abject poverty and sexual frustration of a deeply gendersegregated society often found violent and grotesque outlets. What place does a comparatively privileged western-educated woman have in such a country?

I could rent a home fit for a *sheikh*, complete with a sitting room and servants. I could also dispense endless rounds of *rials* (the country's currency) to the street children calling out *"Baksheesh! Baksheesh!"* in a request for alms. They were pennies to me, but it was money that opened an entire world of candies and plastic toys to them.

I didn't have an architectural perspective in 2004, and in my collegiate understanding of anthropology, I refused to take photographs of 'the locals' during my trip. I didn't want to replicate the colonial gaze, but the pictures I took of begging children was one of my very few concessions. As I now transact between a full range of scales and locations, I understand why I might have made the exception.

My comparatively abundant financial resources was easily identifiable by the children. They sought out 'Western women' who did not cover their hair with a *hijab* or wear a *niqab*, a face covering that only revealed a sliver of the eyes. I was told that, even when I wore the *niqab* and *balto* (a long-sleeved flowing gown) Yemenis could discern I was foreign simply by the way I moved. There was no way to fit in, and within weeks, I simply stopped trying. However, I possessed an even more valuable asset, more precious than money or things: at the end of my visit, I was able to leave the country behind. I had the luxury of mobility, a priceless treasure I possessed not by any form of merit but through sheer luck of birth and the mysterious meanderings of history.

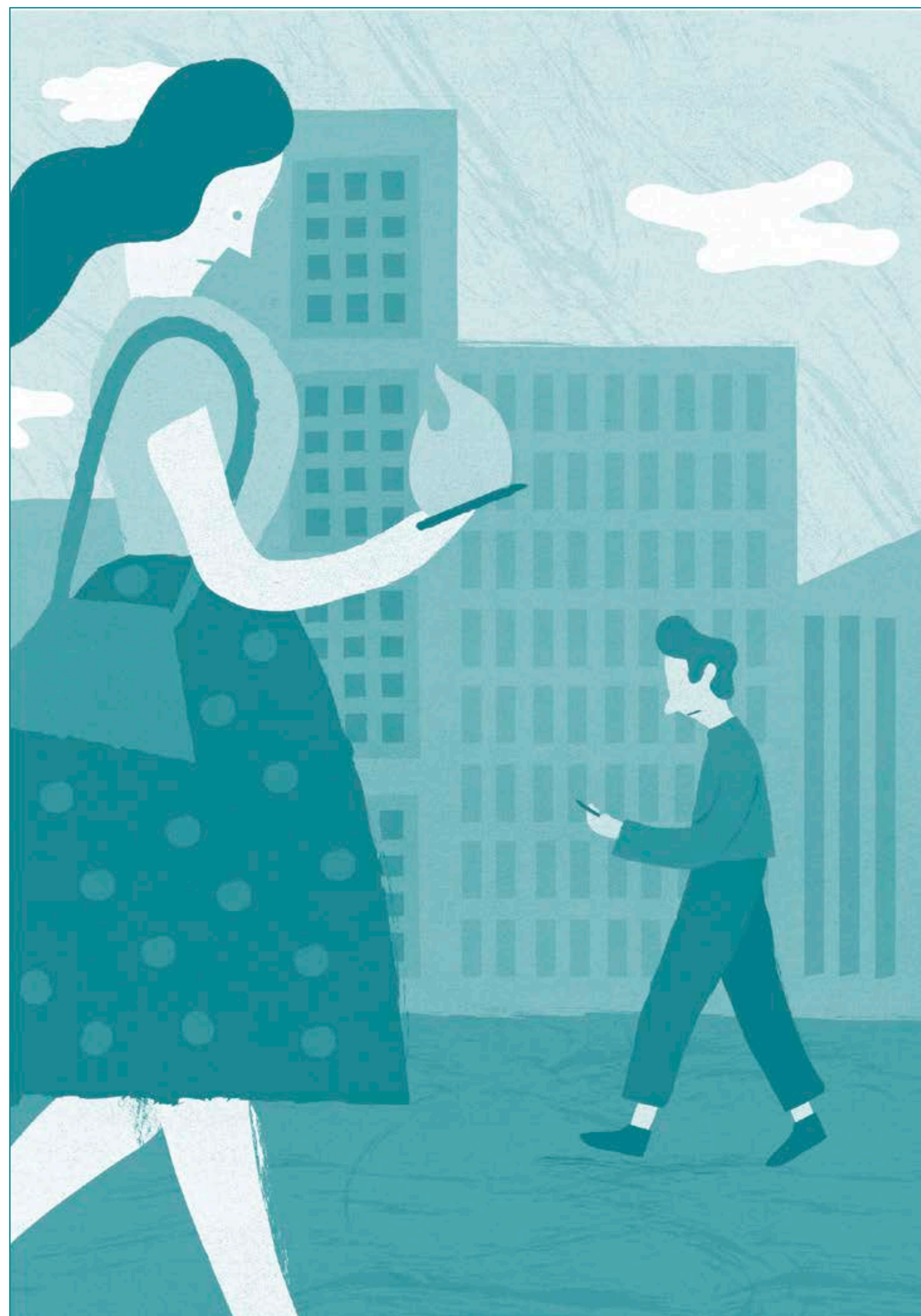
Months after I returned to Massachusetts, I began receiving desperate messages from contacts I'd made in the country. Men and women reached out to me for help with visas, relatives, children, financial situations, etc. I helped where I could, but was forced to form firm boundaries in order not to dissolve into a paralytic depression.

It has taken me over 10 years to be able to make sense of this journey and even attempt to write about it coherently. What is it about this particular moment that has allowed me to finally make sense, speak and write? In the midst of the Syrian refugee crisis today, the Parisian bombings in November 2015 recall the events of 9/11. Regarding Syria, Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek recently wrote, "refugees are the price we pay for a globalised economy in which commodities—but not people—are permitted to circulate freely." Finance, too, moves freely across sovereign borders. So what, then, of space?

Because geopolitical space is anchored to place, it functions differently from both money and commodities. In our current phase of late capitalism, space exists outside of the market economy. Yet the Special Economic Zone—a business fantasy of tax holidays and captive labour for the global North—seems to function as either tribute, offering or sacrifice from the global South. Space becomes part of a gift economy in this light, and in this non-market economic system, norms other than value govern what and when an appropriate gift is given in return. If refugees are the consequence of a failure of global capitalism to allow people freedom of movement, can asylum be seen as the reciprocal gift—a form of *baksheesh*—the global North could give the South? ♛

Rooftop in Sana'a, Yemen.

The Staircase



Too-Big World

CROSSING PATHS ON THE DIGITAL REALM

Words by Christos-Georgios Kritikos
Illustration by Joe Rudi

Tinder is a location-based dating application where a user goes through other users' profiles and chooses whether they are attracted to them or not by swiping left or right. A right swipe is used for potentially good matches and a left swipe to skip to the next one. Changing the way we meet others and how we construct at times split-second opinions about potential social and romantic connections, public opinions on apps like Tinder differ. Some suggest that we are witnessing the end of romantic scenes in physical space, as we put a world of possibilities under our thumb to be digitally filtered and controlled. Others do not consent to such a fatalist approach, considering the possibility that such apps may be setting new patterns of social interaction and new forms of spatiality.

Social media have emerged as a response to contemporary needs and newfound desires, not out of random and spontaneous whims. So, what gap has Tinder come to fill? The app provides a digital exhibition of possible companions that are physically present within a predefined radius, based on each user's GPS-tracked location. Most social platforms just diminish distances to provide connections between spatially scattered individuals that are already socially connected one way or another. Location-based apps like Tinder provide a way to meet up with a stranger and come to remind us of a simple fact: we probably have never met the person living in the flat next door, across the street or one floor below. Moreover, today's social norms have led us to feel that a stranger knocking on our door or tapping our shoulder on the street is either crazy, a nuisance or dangerous. It seems that the density of populations in urban areas has affected society in such a way that there are more barriers than bridges of social connection.

The transformations that urban densities impose on social interactions have been discussed by novelists, poets, musicians and screenwriters alike over the past two centuries. These stories and songs often focus on the search for one's soulmate, and among these is American novelist and poet Jack Kerouac. In his novel *On the Road*, he writes "A pain stabbed my heart, as it did every time I saw a girl I loved who was going the opposite direction in this too-big world." Similarly, Baudelaire's famous poem *À une passante* is about the poet's single glimpse of a woman in a passing crowd, and his fear that he will never see her again.

In his writings, Walter Benjamin refers to this poem, suggesting that the way to deal with the never-fulfilled desire of a random, romantic encounter in the modern metropolis is to embrace and celebrate it, accepting his defeat from the metropolis gracefully. However, theoreticians have criticised his work as pessimistic, claiming that it supports a rather one-sided understanding of modernity, relating it to alienation and self-loss. For example, in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" Benjamin also writes:

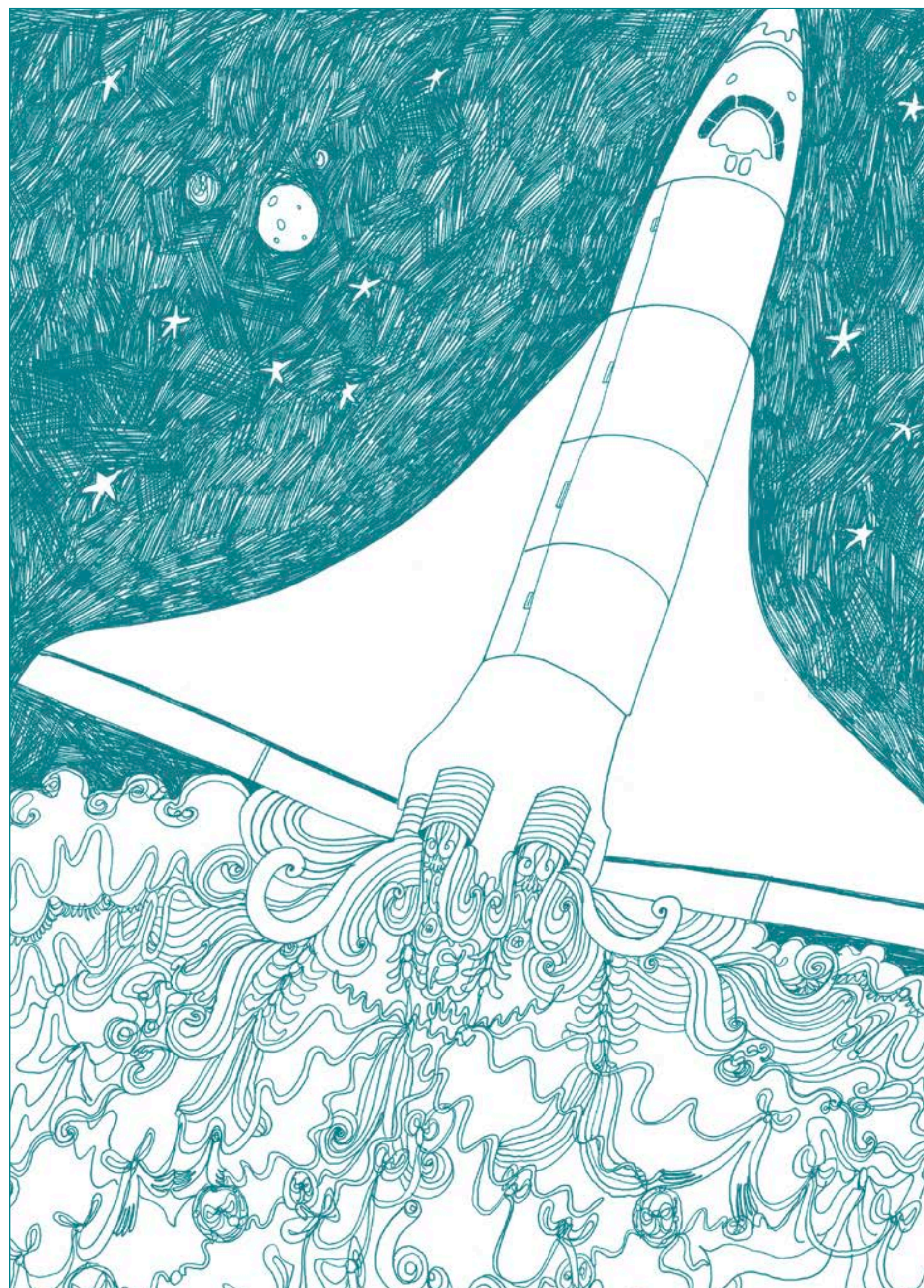
> "The social layer of Tinder as a safety net of indirectness precedes all new social connections."

"The crowd—no subject was more entitled to the attention of nineteenth-century writers. […] There is something distasteful about the very bustle of the streets, something that is abhorrent to human nature itself. Hundreds of thousands of people of all classes and ranks of society jostle past one another; are they not all human beings with the same characteristics and potentialities, equally interested in the pursuit of happiness? … And yet they rush past one another as if they had nothing in common or were in no way associated with one another."

Benjamin refers to the crowd as something inhuman, as something that cannot be handled on a social level in his age. It is described to be forming a barrier that diminishes the chances of interaction and even blocks the pursuit of happiness. In the cases that the crowd offers a single instance of romantic joy, a "love at last sight" as he calls it, Benjamin decides to embrace the pain that Kerouac and Baudelaire have spoken of and compromise with the modern condition.

Nowadays, apps like Tinder may be the answer to the 'crowd', especially since populations in cities grow bigger and bigger in a world that is moving faster and faster. In a frenzy of faces zooming past us, it may be that Tinder helps scale densities down, compartmentalising and indexing users so we can manage the multitude of potential interactions, rather than letting them sink in an overwhelming pool of latent possibilities.

Of course, concerns on possible dystopias of smartphone navel-gazers shouldn't be ignored, although they are only partly justified. Indeed, today's *passante* might not be easily noticed, as the eyes of the romantic may be fixed on a smartphone's screen. However, no one guarantees that the 'crowd' wouldn't swallow that passing face up right away and that the fantasy would last more than a few seconds. We must acknowledge that one of the reasons why we look to Tinder's display is precisely because moments of potential interaction of passerbyers in the city are so ephemeral: even locking eyes and corresponding another's gaze can be rare. What happens in relationships that start off via Tinder is in the hands of the users (and part of another discussion). But, it is time to realise that perhaps the idea of lovers crossing paths has left the realm of busy streets and sought out a space where there might be an opportunity for a second (digital) chance. ♛



Baroque Spaceships

LIGHT, SHAPE AND IMAGINATION

Words by Gregorio Astengo
Illustration by Cynthia Merhej

I think it's fair to say that spaceships deserve a special place in the imagination of nearly all of us. The idea of a vessel capable of ultra-terrestrial travel bears a fascination that transcends space and time. We don't really care whether space shuttles and satellites actually exist.

The spaceship is one of the most powerful totems of our popular culture, and it comes from the world of fiction with the precise intention of 'boldly' taking us away from the realm of reality. These exoatmospheric crafts are all uniquely different, but they also all have something in common. I would like to suggest that this 'something'—a combination of aesthetic, symbolic and cultural notions—might even come close to what we understand as a 'type'. And even more daringly, I will propose that this 'sort-of-type' can be described through some of the paradigms of Baroque architecture. This irreverent, ambiguous and often dreamy mode of design can help us build images of a 'typical', 'totemic' spaceship, made of conscious contradictions, transient affinities, historical promiscuity and architectural anachronisms.

Shells of Starlight

The term 'Baroque' is rather mysterious and its origins are still, on some level, uncertain. One of its most archaic meanings probably comes from the Portuguese word *barrôco*, indicating an irregular pearl. This natural association immediately brings to the fore the first, and possibly most intuitively notional, 'Baroqueness' of the spaceship, which is essentially aesthetic in nature. Any architectural glossary will describe the architecture of the Baroque with an array of key words, including 'mass', 'curvy shapes', 'movement', 'light'. Well then, traditionally speaking, the spaceship is the architecturally Baroque object *par excellence*. It's a bizarre and whimsical shell made of light, colour and sensually aerodynamic curves. And, needless to say, much like the internationally wandering Baroque, these ultra-terrestrial starships are never still. Whether it's a slow approach to the next landing site or Han Solo's Kessel Run, spaceships are in constant movement through space and time. They project onto our minds what we might very well call Baroque aesthetics, made of capricious and intrinsically unstable forms. Spaceships play with our perception of the environment, creating illusions and delusions, not unlike—I will hazardously ad—the diaphanous churches of Guarini and Borromoni.

Utopia ex Machina

The idea of a craft that enables interstellar travel inevitably calls into question the validity of our own planetary ways of life—Buckminster Fuller's *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* brings this association to one of its most powerful and fantastic images. This is not necessarily a plain critique of technology, but it surely raises the issue of the relationship between our homely

“Over-ornamentation, over-sizing and other over-isms seem to go hand-in-hand with the extravagance that spaceships entail.”

nature and possible (and not so distant) dystopian technocracies where automata are at war with their ‘Blade Runners’. Dramatic dichotomic instances, such as the ‘cybernetic ecologies’ of Richard Brautigan or the ‘mechanical wilderness’ of Ray Bradbury, resonate much like some intrinsic contradictions of the Baroque: power and freedom, god and science, wealth and misery, and ultimately life and death. Over-ornamentation, over-sizing, over-swelling and other Baroque over-isms seem to go hand-in-hand with the conflicting extravagance that spaceships inevitably entail. Baroque architecture is inventive and investigative, even heretic, and it builds a rigorous (and often counterintuitive) critique of the built environment by means of what art historian Heinrich Wölfflin has called a conscious ‘degenerative’ process. This critique, operating through experimental poetics, evokes the spirit of utopia, and this same spirit permeates the illusory worlds of spaceship-like earths (and earth-like spaceships). After all, is there anything more utopic than to unravel the hidden mysteries of an Unidentified Flying Object?

Excelsior!

One of the most explicit purposes of Baroque architecture is to shock, astonish and confuse. The Italian term *Barocco* was traditionally used to define the rhetorical vagueness lying under an apparently logical statement. Baroque is made of ambiguous and contradictory spaces, which lie under the deceptive forbiddingness of their authority. Through almost inhumanly foamy volumes and hierarchically organised spaces, Baroque architecture outgrows us earthlings and moves towards the unreachable immensity of the sky. Think of the Colossal orders which thrive as a Baroque principle of morphologic negation through compositional gigantism. This mode of making architecture essentially shifts from imitation to imagination through ambiguity, introducing a relativism that we can recognise again in the space and time that are the stages of the space-ships’ fictional travels. With their cockpits, wings and escape pods, all chained together with perfect efficiency, spaceships travel through and merge with the same clouds that Baroque architecture is longing for. These gigantic vessels leave their safe harbours to venture into the infinity of interstellar space, much like giant Baroque designs produce a seemingly shape-shifting architectural space, levitating through our minds and shaping our fantasies. ♚

Conflicts of Interest

RETHINKING THE FUTURE OF HOUSING IN THE UK

Words by Fani Kostourou
Photography by Garyfalia Palaiologou

The global economic crisis which unfolded in 2008 brought to the fore a discussion about the future of housing in the UK. Since then, it has undoubtedly been an important subject in current urban discussions, partially because there are many voices with rather contradicting opinions and interests. It is hard, thus, for the various stakeholders of the city—developers, politicians, planners, architects and individuals—to agree on what can be done.

Neoliberalism freed the housing economy introducing market-led planning and profit-based trade. It contributed to the creation of the shortage in the first place, whilst producing greater inequalities amongst the stakeholders. These inequalities lie on the unbalanced powers conferred to them over the future of housing, and by extension, the future of our cities. For example, few private developers like Malaysia's SP Setia, which acquired Battersea Power Station, get richer by monopolising the market, while governments remain aloof in a philistine spirit. Similarly, the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012 suggested that policy makers should stay 'positive' on benefitting laissez-faire plans. Then, Architects dream of alternative utopias that are usually difficult to achieve or live in. And, while residents stay either either remain passive or—at best—come together to form associations or protest groups, such as the recent Kill the Housing Bill.

In some ways, neoliberalism opened up the 'right to the city' to a plethora of stakeholders based on the universal principle that all rights are equal—at least theoretically. It tacitly trusted every stakeholder with the freedom to act according to his or her interests, and thus, to perform this power on the shaping of the domestic built environment. This is visible when one looks, on one hand, at the One Hyde Park development in Knightsbridge, and on the other, at the bottom-up small-scale adaptations of single-family houses in Croydon or holiday houses in Jaywick, Essex (which are built without planning permission). Even though in both cases the built environment is shaped –so the power exists–, the result or the conditions under which this occurs differ substantially. The sudden realisation of this is that while the rights—and shaping of—the city are shared, they are not equal. As Karl Marx wrote, "between equal rights, force decides." If we follow Churchill's famous saying "we make the city and the city makes us", those that prevail in exercising their rights to the city have a greater saying on the (re)making of our cities and their future as well.

Numerical evidence does say so. At the moment, there are three parallel forces in the construction industry. The first force concerns an increasing housing shortage with a deficit of almost 1.45 million units and the UK government hopes to have an additional 8 million built by 2050. This would require a construction rate of 240–250,000 houses each year until 2031. However, currently, only 110–120,000 homes are being built, many of them not addressing the population in need. In fact, eight building firms account for 50% of the British market.

This building activity runs along with a high demolition rate, the second force at play. This affected approximately 20,000 homes in 2010. In London, 100 high-rise housing estates, such as Heygate and Aylesbury, have already been demolished, and Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute has argued that around 3 million demolitions are necessary by 2050 for energy reduction purposes. This suggests a fourfold increase in the current rate, a number that can be compared to the mass clearance era of the 1960s.

The third and last force concerns refurbishments. Since the 1970s, refurbishments represent the 22.5% of the total construction output within the UK. Each year a 2.5% of the building stock is subject to major refurbishment, whilst 96% rest with minor modifications.

However, stakeholders seem to have a problem agreeing on which future is best: demolition or refurbishment. Evidence has shown that the demolition of structurally robust housing and the relocation of its residents can be socially, environmentally and economically detrimental. Yet, it is a viable solution if no other actions are possible. On the other hand, 7.8 million households in England are under-occupied and 53% of housing plans is used less than 20% of the time—so why not work with what already exists? Studies have concluded that the refurbishment of housing can deliver significant improvements in environmental and health performance, leading to cost savings and improved living standards for residents. Still, the 2014 report of UCL's Urban Lab and Engineering Exchange found difficult to argue in favour of refurbishment. The main argument was that any local upgrading approach couldn't truly benefit the quality of life of the residents if other area-based interventions do not take place at the same time, better integrating the parts within the whole city.

The truth is that these different stakeholders cannot come to an agreement as their intentions differ according to their needs. And so does their image of citizenship. They advocate and know what the rest of the stakeholders want and expect from the city they work and live in, yet in reality they have little or no interest in finding a silver lining. What's worse is that what separates stakeholders' desires does not often constitute a solution for other social groups or the collective: developers are mainly interested in the amount of risk and profit involved in the investment (demolition), politicians in the political payoff (demolition), architects in the aesthetics of a building and architectural value (refurbishment) and activists in the resistance as if it's an end in itself (refurbishment). Then, users who know where and how they want to live are treated as they don't. The reason for this is the false perception that users lack sufficient knowledge to design their homes or make changes to them, and that giving them access to the decision-making process would defy the purpose of other stakeholders.

The above proves that not all stakeholders have equal rights to access and change in housing decisions, infrastructure and welfare. This can be understood by what John Turner—, a British architect famous for his theoretical stance on self-organised housing — wrote about the pattern of authority: who decides what and for whom? What complicates even more things nowadays is the expansion of social media and technology, which allows everyone with access to information to develop an opinion, and therefore, further increasing the number of stakeholders. In this sense, the future of housing is not under the jurisdiction of individual stakeholders, but stands in the hybrid intersection between individual ideologies, interests and shared realities.

In the end, with the multitude of stakeholders and their unequal rights comes a plethora of fragmentary actions that lack commitment to a larger shared vision. I feel that the answer cannot be found in a single decision from uncooperative sides. Solutions may arise when stakeholders are willing to work not only against or despite each other but also together: when the individuals are encouraged to build or modify their own houses; when the state sets a holistic strategy to approach housing shortage providing public land, controlling purchase and rent prices, and distributing building (and profit) opportunities across stakeholders; when the developers set a framework for individuals and housing associations to have access to housing without being tied to the economic system. Aiming for a more balanced approach that combines bottom-up with top-down initiatives at different city scales and at different times is key. After all, it's not just about providing a solution to a problem. It's about finding a strategy to solve problems as and for a society. ♛

A Hunt in the Forest

INHABITING THE EDGE OF THE LANDSCAPE

Words by Matthew Turner

Newtonian science is characterised by clearly measured phenomenon. What is here and there are accurately measured absolutes, both, individually and in relation to each other. In quantum theory, however, there is no here nor there, but instead, a whole host of other states—a mixture and superimposition of these two. Space, as seen through Newtonian eyes, does not acknowledge the complex facets of the quantum realm due to the limits of our bodies; the human eye cannot magnify objects enough to show their atomic sub-structure. Despite this being a rather complex body of scientific knowledge, it encapsulates the stranger, unexplained and immeasurable aspects of our everyday life. Perhaps it incorporates human faults and ambiguities ignored by the sterility of Newtonian science. If architecture were able to magnify these phenomena which are imperceptible to us, would it reveal—like eyes adjusting to the darkened room—an unstable definition of space based multiplicity, fluidity and change?

Paolo Ucello's *The Hunt in the Forest* (1470) contains a transient glimpse of space through its precarious position on the edge of order and disorder. Like in quantum mechanics —where light can exist in two states at once (particle and wave)—the painting also exists in two simultaneous configurations, showing traits of both ordered Newtonian and chaotic quantum logic. By looking into the strange fluid edge condition between these two, a different way to inhabit and perceive the landscape emerges. This incorporates the immeasurability and complexity of human desires and dreams, which cannot be expressed through neat grids and rectilinear spaces.

On first viewing, this prodigious work is neatly ordered to the rules of one-point perspective: to a vanishing point far in the distance, marked above with a fine sickle moon that the hunters (and some of the hunted) stare and race towards. This fits the quotidian rules of Newtonian physics, in which nature is tied into rigid geometries, just as the trees are cropped to allow the swift uninhibited hunt of animals. Its vanishing point draws us through the painting in one direction only by following the gaze of the hunters. However, *The Hunt in the Forest* has another fugitive spatial construction, a territory of freedom and escape from the confines of this discipline. This is the painting's chaotic quantum alter ego: a wilderness of roving perspectives in different directions.

The hunters and their dogs gallop obsessively into the darkness, without a thought for the folly of catching an animal by night. The singular

The Hunt in the Forest. Paolo Uccello, 1470. Ashmolean Museum.

vanishing point crumbles entropically into a fog of many others, along with the most basic element of spatial order: the line which separates earth from sky. The invisible lines, which were once used to construct the perspective, are now a disturbance of gravity and perception, cutting through the riders and knocking back their heads.

The deer, on the other hand, which seem to have successfully escaped them, do not face towards the vanishing point. They understand the space differently, cutting across the controlled one-point perspective following the path of the trees instead. These are unaligned and offbeat, with rhythms going against each other like an experimental jazz record. This creates a fine, swirling dust of convergent points and perspectives, constructed through the vistas that are opened up in the diagonal gap between offset trees. It is like a diagonal isometric grid has been spread out on the forest floor to guide the eyes laterally and along different paths of the painting. Constantly chasing different views across the canvas, the eye no longer holds a static, central position in front of the picture.

It is this type of chaos and multiplicity that seems to have more in common with the logic of quantum mechanics than the order of Newtonian physics. The space magnifies the weirdness that occurs at an atomic level, similar to the uncertainty principle—one of quantum mechanics' key concepts stating that we can know where an atom is but not what it is doing. The sheer amount of perspective points throws the stable position of the viewer into a similar uncertainty. By the time we understand the single-point perspective construction of the painting, another layer of multiple-point perspectives superimposes itself. The complex relationship between these points means that we know where we are in relation to the picture plane, but we don't have a firm hold on what the space is doing. Its width seems to stretch and compress, its depth extends and flattens out, and the spaces between trees expand and contract as they overlap with each other.

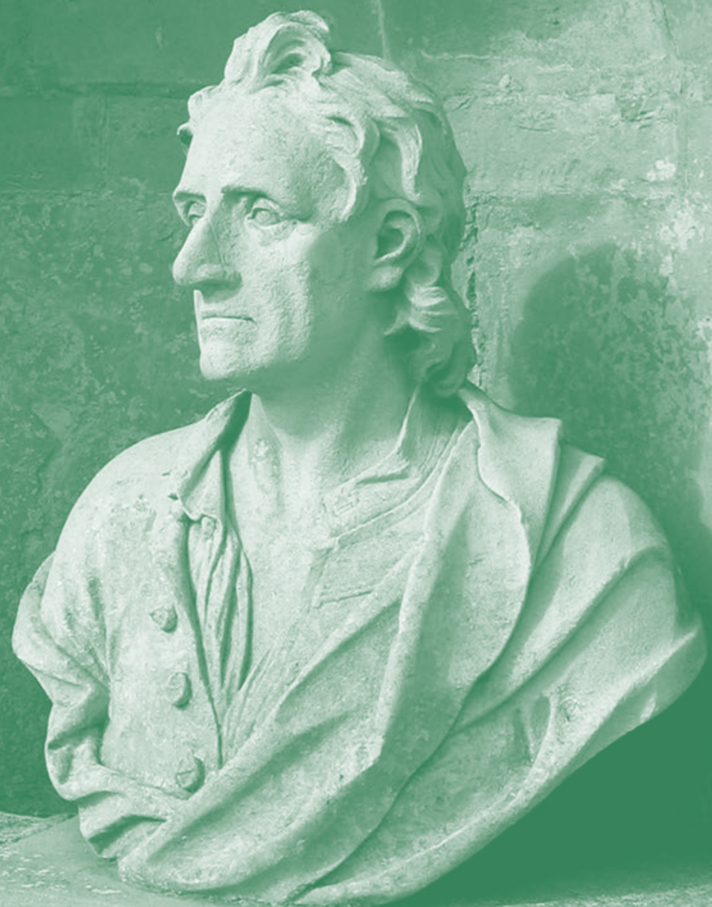
Science plays an important part in our perception of everyday life. In showing aspects of quantum and Newtonian space, the painting engages with both these spatial realities, outlining future models of space and perception. As viewers, we inhabit the fluctuating edge condition between the stability of Newtonian space and the uncertainty of quantum space. One is played off against the other, showing that our position and hold on the world is not as stable as alluded to by purely Newtonian science. It would appear that despite Ucello's mastery of well-ordered perspective, the painting also shows that this is not the true state of reality. Space cannot be tied down into strict geometries and still capture the complex world around us. It is the strange hinterland between chaos and order which truly captures reality to any degree of realism. ♚

Photography: Erik Hartin.

The Library

The History Architect

Words by Hina Lad
Photography by Jonathan Hill



William Kent, Elysian Fields, Stowe. The bust of John Locke in the Temple of British Worthies (1735)

Architect or historian? Do we really have to choose? Jonathan Hill shows how one can be both, whilst challenging our conventional understanding of design in the process.

As an architect and architectural historian, Jonathan Hill has successfully cultivated and inspired a plethora of architects, designers and PhD researchers since the late 1980s. Throughout his work, he has emphasised the importance of the architectural school as the basis for research and development in architectural practice and discourse. His work has explored the notion of authorship, whilst acknowledging the creativity of the user and the role of the natural environment. Parting from his latest book, our conversation of landscape, weather and architecture reveals an underlying intellectual relevance of history to contemporary design.

May we start with the story behind your new book, *A Landscape of Architecture, History and Fiction* (2015)?

The story probably started about 12 years ago, when I went to Rousham—an early 18th Century William Kent garden located north of Oxford. I became fascinated by it, and then I became fascinated by why I was fascinated by it. A lot of my interest in weather's influence on architecture and landscape came from this. It was the catalyst to my previous book, *Weather Architecture* (2012)—a history of architecture unfolding in conjunction with a history of weather. The thing which intrigued me in the early 18th Century was the realm of the picturesque landscape. The prototypical English landscape in this country developed simultaneously with the first English novel and the analytical history, which were to some degree a response to empiricism and the importance of experience to understanding. What interested me was that these things are not discussed together and I thought that they should be. The lyrical environmentalism that can be identified with this country and the conjunction between architecture and landscape comes out of this period. The early 18th Century established not only this idea that architecture can be landscape, and vice versa, but also that the architectural landscape can be seen either as history or as fiction.

I was also interested in post-war modernism in this country. This was a period when modernist architects like Denys Lasdun and Peter & Alison Smithson looked back at the picturesque landscape and romanticism, in order to transform modernism. At the time they were criticised, because they were regarded as breaking away from early modernism. But I am interested in that continuity from the 18th to the 20th Century—and you will find that John Soane is part of the same story. It is yet another transformation of that lyrical environmentalism.

Reading the book, I had the feeling that "The History Man" chapter related to you in some way.

Much more than that, it has become the argument for MArch Unit 12 that I run at the Bartlett with Matthew Butcher and Elizabeth Dow. We look at history as a source of creativity that can inform design. Very often, when I am writing a book, some of the ideas we use as the principles for the Unit come through. I don't distinguish history from design; I recognise that there are considerable cross-overs. History is a reinterpretation of the past in the present—and that can also describe what design does. "The History Man" comes from a Malcolm Bradbury novel—I always try to interweave lots of connections into my books. Bradbury wrote his novel whilst he was at the University of East Anglia, which is the focus of my chapter, and I was able to talk to his son about his father's relationship to Lasdun's architecture for the university.

> "I am a strong believer in universities. Architectural schools are the research and development side of architectural practice and discourse."

Do you understand yourself primarily as an architect, an architectural historian, or other?

An architect and architectural historian at the same time. As an architectural historian, I write about how architects have designed, why they design, what they design and how their designs have diverged from what they thought they were designing. I try to understand design as part of a longer history—of environmentalism, for instance. I think that there is something about an architectural historian originally trained as an architect that helps me to write in a certain way. It's an ability to look at places and write about them spatially, because I notice and am aware of certain things—like the design process and the design experience. I would now like to design a house and do small-scale projects, because as an architect you can experiment on a small scale—and I enjoy that productive aspect. I also like the fact that I can choose what I am going to write about, and what I want to design. This is why I like working in this academic environment. I am a strong believer in universities. An architectural school is the research and development side of architectural practice and discourse, and in many ways that's what we are here for, and we should be critical of the profession when necessary. Speculation occurs in building as well, but I think we are crucial to the architectural world.

If that is the case, then what do you think the future holds for design?

That's an interesting question because what the architect does has changed a lot in the last 20 years. Some architects say that their control and power has diminished with design and build contracts. You could say design is under threat. Design will always exist—but how much of it will be the responsibility of the architect? There are different ways in which design has changed historically; one was through professionalisation. In the early 18th Century, William Kent designed buildings, barges, theatre sets, gardens—and he was also a painter. There was an incredible richness and variety in what he designed, and so he was able to be incredibly creative. You could say that professionalisation encouraged architects to be building designers primarily. I am interested in the collaborative process, as well as the authorship of the architect. This goes back to Roland Barthes's "Death of the Author", in which he was not talking about the death of writing; he was talking about the writer becoming aware of the creativity of the reader. That's the notion of design I am particularly interested in; the designer being aware of the creativity of the user and of the weather.

Speaking of collaborative processes, what is your view on Assemble, the collective group of architects that won the 2015 Turner Prize?

There is a logic behind awarding Assemble the Turner prize. This is the way contemporary art is going with its increasing emphasis on social issues. Although I definitely appreciate the work of Assemble, the award also shows that the art world does not know what it is anymore, and the idea that art can be absolutely anything can be problematic. Interestingly, a similar thing happened in architecture 10–15 years ago, when anything could be architectural theory. Now there is a greater emphasis in architectural discourse on what actually is architecture—i.e. what is the core of what we do? I find that quite healthy. In anything we do, the creative dialogue has to be about the core of the discipline and what might be understood as expanding that discipline. I think you need these two things together. It seems the contemporary art world is about the art market; it's a commercial activity that is looking for new things it can claim.

Alison and Peter Smithson, Upper Lawn Pavilion, 1959–, North facade.

Andrea Palladio, Villa Emo (1565), Fanzolo di Vedelago.

One of the things I do not like about the art world is that only one person is credited as the artist—the people who make the work, the people who collaborate, are absolutely secondary. This is all because of the art market; art is valued because it is associated with the sole authorship of an individual work. Although I personally author books, I really do enjoy the collaborative nature of architectural discourse and architectural production.

What is your own definition of design?

My definition of design goes back to *disegno*. The term in Italian means drawing, which I imply to mean the drawing forth of an idea, associated with the drawing of a line. *Disegno* established design as an intellectual activity, but the shift that interests me most is the reinterpretation of design in the 18th Century exploration of nature and landscape through experience. I became intrigued by the fact that the Renaissance painter, sculptor and architect enjoyed their status as artists through their association with *disegno*—that is, through drawing and intellect. Yet, interestingly, when design became associated with 19th Century industrialisation and utility, painters and sculptors dropped the term. When architects talk about design, they refer to *disegno* in the early Renaissance conception of drawing forth an idea; they are also talking about design in terms of the experiential and in terms of manufacturing. So, you get this very rich understanding of the term in architecture, which just isn't there in most other disciplines such as industrial design.

Is design ephemeral?

I suppose everything is ephemeral to some extent; things don't last. You could say that in the original sense of the term, design was certainly immaterial. Alberti would talk about design as an intellectual activity that exists in the mind while the material world was ephemeral. I became interested in the changing notion of the immaterial in the 18th Century. During that period, the immaterial became something that was not just the absence of matter, but had something to do with the experience or perception of something as immaterial. I think you could see design as ephemeral, in that way. I think architectural objects, like buildings, are ephemeral. Design is less ephemeral, if you retain the original set of drawings that define the idea. Ultimately, design is about time and the temporal nature of our life and architecture.

How would you relate your work to the word 'abundance'?

I am a real fan of William Kent and John Soane, and without a doubt their designs were incredibly abundant and luscious, with a real celebration of ornament. I enjoy abundant and exuberant architecture, and you kind of wonder why this is less evident today. It is not only about the economic or environmental factor; I think a certain modernist aesthetic is still very prevalent, along with its moralistic language. The luscious and exuberant is treated as immoral, whilst the drained and the reduced are regarded as morally correct, especially in this country. However, we also know that minimalism can be an extremely expensive and difficult architecture to build. A lot of what drives my work is concern about climate change. Abundance is not necessarily a term you would apply to climate change, where constraint in the use of natural resources is necessary; but I think it could be applied to issues of architectural aesthetics and spatiality. Rousham and the Soane Museum are definitely spatially abundant. They offer choices, so that people can create their own different routes and narratives. There is a sort of imaginative abundance in these places.

Speaking of modernist discourse, what about that age-old argument about form and function?

I have always been interested in 'useless architecture'—architecture that is not defined by function. Instead, a space can be appropriated for a function for a period of time. I tend to be drawn to architects that think like that. In my next book, there will be a chapter on Louis Kahn. He was definitely concerned to make spaces that have a very particular quality to them, yet how they would be occupied would be up to the inhabitants. There is also that beautiful text by Robin Evans, "Figures, Door and Passages". I was influenced by the way Evans talks about the Palladian villa, how the use appropriated the villa. Kahn was indebted to the principle that the Palladian villa is not defined by function.

Your interest in 'useless architecture' brought to mind your fascination with the Barcelona Pavilion in your earlier work. What was it that intrigued you about it?

I think it was partly because the building was built for a very short period of time, then it was demolished, then it became famous through photographs, and then it was rebuilt. But people treat the reconstruction as if it were the original and that became interesting to me. I used it as a case study to discuss the relation between drawing and building, building and photography. I am interested in an architecture that has a physical ambiguity—an architecture that can be interpreted in many ways from different viewpoints. When I am interested in someone's work, I try to look at what they were looking at, what they were influenced by. In my earlier book, *Actions of Architecture* (2003), one of my projects proposed the transformation of the Barcelona Pavilion. This in turn became a catalyst for *Weather Architecture* (2012). That is the way I work; something that is a minor theme in one book becomes a major theme in another. ♛

Searching Without Sorting

THE NEW HISTORY AND SCIENCE OF BIG DATA

Words by Mario Carpo
Illustration by Percie Edgeler

What if we looked back at our data-starved past from the perspective of our data-opulent present? Western science as a whole could then be seen as a data-compression technology developed over time to cope with a chronic shortage of data storage and processing power. Since the data we could record and retrieve in the past was limited, we learned to extrapolate and generalise patterns from what data we had, and we began to record and transmit condensed and simplified formal notations instead of the data itself. Theories tend to be shorter than the description of most events they apply to, and indeed syllogisms, then equations, then mathematical functions, were, and still are, very effective technologies for data compression. They compress a long list of events that happened in the past into very short scripts, generally in the format of a causal relationship, which we can utilise to describe all other events of the same kind, including future ones.

However, the mode of use of today's Big Data tools has already led us to abandon cultural technologies and ways of thinking so deeply embedded in history that we would have thought them timeless and universal. To mention just one well-known case, for the last 10 years Gmail has taught us to leave all our emails unsorted, as automated, full-text Boolean searches on the totality of our email archive are more effective than manual searches on classified folders of incoming and outgoing messages, traditionally arranged by subject, chronology or any other criteria. Classifications are a retrieval tool: we put things in certain places so we know where they are when we look for them. Thanks to Gmail this is no longer necessary. However, classifications are also a very general philosophical tool we tend to use to make some sense of the world. Without classifications, some would argue, humans cannot think. The Google science of searching without sorting (also known as the art of finding stuff without knowing where it is) suggests otherwise.

Let us therefore imagine that we can collect an almost infinite amount of data, keep it forever, and search it at will at no cost. The spirit of Big Data, if there is one, is probably quite simple, and it reads like this: whatever happened before, if it has been recorded, and if it can be retrieved, will simply happen again, whenever the same conditions reoccur. This is not very different from what Galileo and Newton thought. But Galileo and Newton did not have Big Data; in fact, they often had very little data indeed. Today, instead

of calculating predictions based on mathematical laws and formulas, using Big Data we can simply search for a precedent for the case we are trying to predict, and retrieve it from the almost infinite, universal archive of all relevant precedents that ever took place. When that happens, Search will replace the method of modern science in its entirety.

This is already happening, in some muted, embryonic way, in several branches of the natural sciences, and more openly, for example, in weather forecasting. Science, as we knew it, tended toward universal laws, which bear on as many different cases as possible. Today's new science of Big Data is just the opposite: using information retrieval and the search for precedent, Big Data causality can be applied to smaller and smaller sets, and it works best when the sets it refers to are the smallest. In social science and in economics, this novel Big Data granularity means that instead of referring to generic groups, social and economic metrics can and will increasingly relate to specific, individual cases. The object of this new science of granular prediction will no longer be a statistical abstraction—it will be each one of us, individually.

Since data scarcity has been a universal human condition across all ages, cultures and civilisations, we can expect to find similar strategies of data compression embedded in most, if not all, cultural technologies we have been familiar with to this day. Historiography, or the writing of history, codified as an academic discipline and cultural practice in the course of the 19th Century, is no exception. Like the modern scientist, the modern historiographer must infer a theory (in the case of history, more often an argument or a story) from a vast archive of findings. Halfway between the storyteller's plot and the scientist's theory, the historiographer's narration, or history, weaves endless anecdotes into one meaningful narrative. This narrative, once again, functions as a lossy data-compression technology: only the story thus construed will be recorded and transmitted and will bear and convey memories, wisdom, or meaning, whereas most of the individual events, experiences, or (in the Aristotelian sense of the term) accidents that inspired it will be discarded and forgotten.

Yet, as Walter Benjamin had already intuited, today's increasingly abundant dissemination of raw information goes against this ancestral strategy of story-building and story-telling.

Let's imagine, once again pushing the argument to its limits, that a universal archive of historical data may be collected, recorded, transmitted, and searched at will, by all and forever. The term 'historical' would then become *ipso facto* obsolete, as all facts must have occurred at some point in time in order to have been recorded, hence all data in storage would be 'historical', and none more so than any other. And since Google has already proven that no two searches are the same, every search in this universal archive would likely yield new results—based on user preference, context, endless more-or-less secret parameters, and the sheer complexity and whim of search algorithms. Consequently, at that point no 'narrative', theory, story or sequence would be stronger than any other; in fact no narrative, theory, sequence or story would even be needed or warranted any more. Only the data would speak—forever, and whenever asked, never mind by whom, and every time anew.

Whether we like it or not, when an infinite amount of facts are equally available for anyone's perusal, search and retrieval, we may no longer need theories, stories, histories or narratives to condense or distill data and to present them in a linear, clean and memorable array. Many cultural habits we used to take for granted were in fact the accidental fallout of data-skimping, and are already incompatible with the data-rich environment we live in. Again, one may argue that we will always need theories and stories for a number of other reasons, but that is difficult to prove. If Search is the new science, Big Data is the new history. But not the history we once knew. ♛

This article is excerpted and adapted from my longer "Big Data and the End of History" in *Perspecta* vol. 48 'Amnesia' (edited by Aaron Dresben, Edward Hsu, Andrea Leung and Teo Quintana), pp. 46–59.

Architecture for Duckburg Tightwads

Don Rosa - MegaCon 2012. ©Ricky Brigante. flickr.com/photos/insidethemagic/6899881021

Five multiplujillion, nine impossibidillion, seven fantasticatrillion dollars and sixteen cents: Scrooge McDuck's fortune defies the categories of conventional arithmetic—but is that also the case for the architecture that shelters it? Don Rosa explains.

Words by Stylianos Giamarelos

Don Rosa would certainly be envied by many architects. You don't get to design the Money Bin for the richest duck in the world every day, after all. But who else could cope with that old miser as a client? Very few can claim they understand Scrooge McDuck as well as he does.

Rosa worked like a real-world historian of the fictional world of Duckburg—a city whose main characters (including Scrooge McDuck, the Junior Woodchucks, Gyro Gearloose, Gladstone Gander, the Beagle Boys, etc.) were originally imagined by Carl Barks in his classic Duck stories from the late 1940s to the late 1960s. Dissecting every single one of those stories in pursuit of relevant titbits of information, Rosa reconstructed *The Life and Times of Scrooge McDuck*, a historically accurate and chronologically consistent biography of the mighty duck.

Far from understanding him as a greedy tightwad, though, Rosa's biography endowed Scrooge's character with the sense and sensitivity of a heartbroken collector. For Rosa's Scrooge, being rich is just the outcome of a lifetime of adventure; in Tuomas Holopainen's words, it is to seek to relive a memory. The three cubic acres of his Money Bin therefore serve as a vast repository of memories, containing only a fraction of Scrooge's fortune—just the cash that reminds him of the adventure that made him earn it in the first place. Thus, when he famously declares he loves to dive around in his money like a porpoise, and burrow through it like a gopher, and toss it up and let it hit him on the head, it is not money in general nor their exchange value he is in love with; he cherishes those specific coins for their use value as the material carriers of his own history. Often portrayed as the arch-capitalist in the post-war world of comics, Scrooge is in fact a romantic cracking capitalism; he refuses to be alienated by following the dictates of capital flow. He prioritises his own sentimental reasons for remaining attached to the three cubic acres of cash he stores in his Money Bin.

Never interested in what his fortune can buy, Scrooge thus opted for a building that would not only serve as an office-cum-storage space, but also as a medieval Scottish fortress fending off aspiring intruders. Thus, the austere and rather unimpressive functional cube sitting on top of Killmotor Hill is paradoxically both one of the major urban icons of Duckburg, as well as one of its least accessible spaces. In Rosa's 2001 story, "The Beagle Boys versus the Money Bin" it is actually the building itself that manages to outdo the Beagle Boys on its own, even when they try to infiltrate it with its detailed blueprints in hand. It was for the purposes of this story that Rosa eventually produced the first official plans of Scrooge's Money Bin. Originally trained as a civil engineer, Rosa's architectural sensibility might have also proven a perfect fit for the austere temperament of the duck who always thought of himself as only a poor old man. Here is what Rosa himself had to say about the whole creative process.

How did you end up writing a Duck story whose subtle protagonist is a building—Scrooge's iconic Money Bin?

In honour of the 100th anniversary of Carl Barks's birth in 2001, Egmont—my publisher—had the idea to produce a series of stories, each written and drawn by a different artist, and each featuring one of the great characters that Barks created for the comics. A great idea! At that same time, some Egmont branch editors were asking me what I planned to do to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Barks's creation of both the Beagle Boys and the Money Bin, both of which first appeared in two consecutive issues of *Walt Disney's Comics & Stories* in 1951. So, I finagled it such that my assignment in this special series was to do a story about Barks's Beagle Boys as part of the Barks-100th-Birthday celebration. Also, since that crooked gang and the Money Bin are virtually the same age—not to mention the fact that almost any Beagle Boy story involves the Money Bin—I decided that my story would feature *both* of those two different Barks creations, and it could therefore

“I decided to draw architectural plans of the McDuck Money Bin, which the Beagle Boys would then discover.”

also act as the combined 50th anniversary story for the Beagle Boys and the Money Bin that the other editors hoped for.

But there was more. I planned a third important aspect for this story —a few years earlier I had decided to someday create comical architectural design plans of the McDuck Money Bin. This would be the perfect opportunity! My plot would be a sort of Beagle Boy tour of the entire Money Bin using some long lost plans they had discovered. This way, the plans would be an integral part of a story rather than just a stand-alone feature.

What were the main challenges you encountered in producing these architectural drawings?

There was a trick to the idea. Not only does my story, as usual, take place sometime in the early-mid 1950s, but the plans that the Beagle Boys discover would be even older, from when the Bin was first built 50 years earlier. Prior to the 1970s, all architectural plans were done as ‘blueprints’. Blueprinting was a cheap method of making photographic copies of large technical drawings. The result was equally large images on giant sheets of paper which were like a negative image of the original —white lines on a dark background which (due to the chemicals involved) was a dark blue. I remember some old blueprints in the antique files at the Keno Rosa Co. which my grandfather had founded in 1905. And since the plans in my story were supposedly created in 1902, I knew they had to be blueprints.

How did you address the practical and technical aspects involved in the production of these plans?

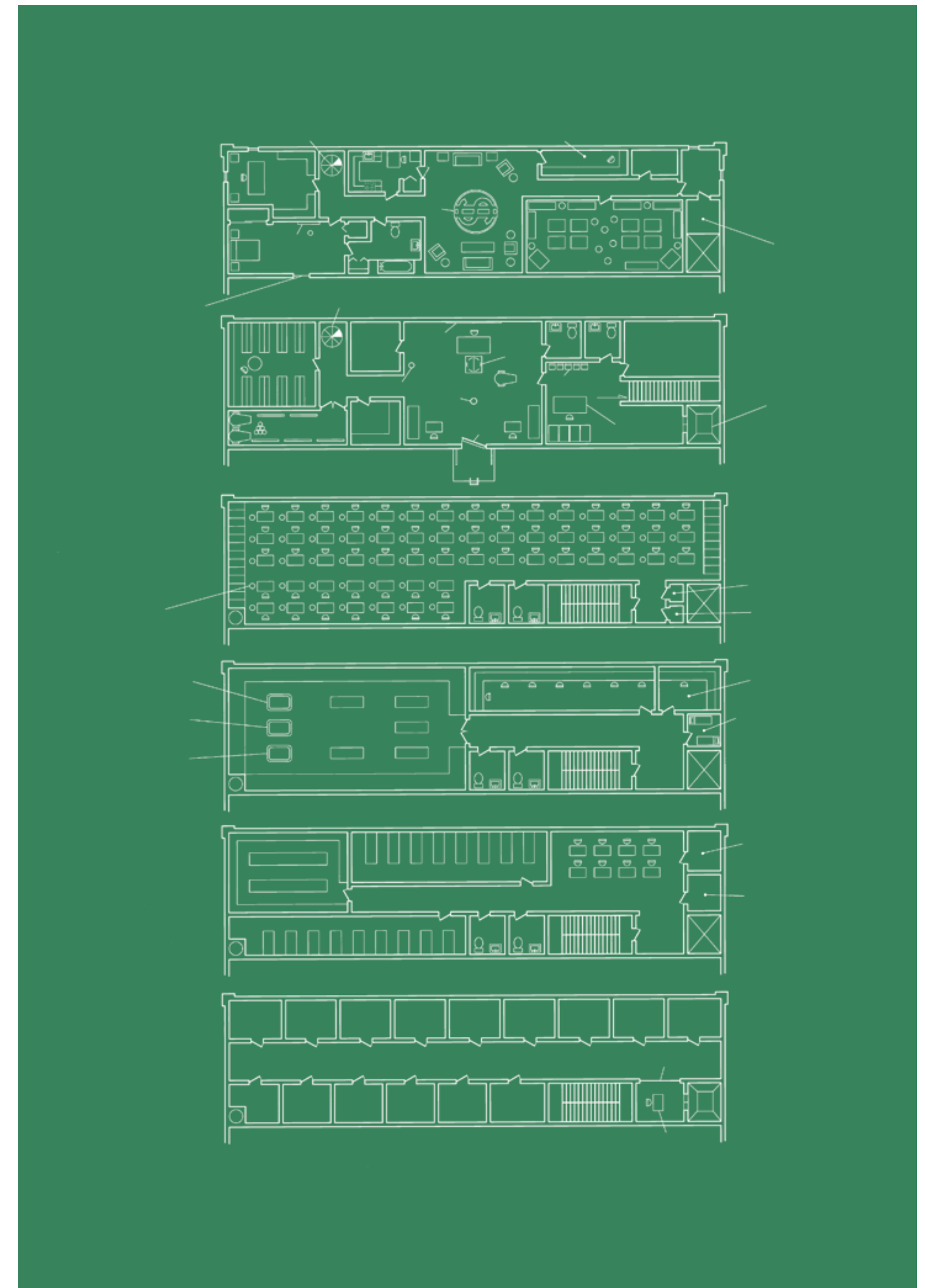
I suggested the project to my good friend Dan Shane who works as a computer network systems administrator and has also had some training in architectural design. I sketched out my ideas for him and he created the Bin plans using Intergraph computer-aided-design software in his spare time. Every few days I would receive files of his work to see what he was doing, and I’d give him extra ideas or suggested changes, and he made suggestions of his own, until finally he finished the computer-generated plans you see in this story.

Your Duck stories are famous for their real-and-fictional-world accuracy, due to the meticulous historical research you usually undertake. Was that also the case for your Money Bin plans?

I must admit that there is one aspect in which the blueprints in my story are inaccurate. Due to the shape of a comic book, we had to create the blueprints in ‘portrait’ style (more tall than wide) whereas true architectural drawings and blueprints, due to their large size, were always ‘landscape’ style (more wide than tall). In a portrait style, as are these in my story, it would be too difficult for us engineers and building contractors (of which I was both before I became an alleged cartoonist) would not be able to draw, make measurements or even clearly see the diagrams at the tops of the tall pages. But later that same year Dan Shane and I did redesign all of these same diagrams, plus some additional funny details, onto one large landscape style sheet.

How comprehensive and accurate do you claim these drawings are, though?

Well, if any Barks fan wants to challenge me by saying that I am not showing certain rooms that Barks depicted in one of his many Scrooge stories, I’m ready for you. Notice that these plans do not show diagrams for *all* the floors. Any Money Bin feature that you recall and which you do *not* see in these plans would apparently be on one of those unshown floors! Carl Barks never drew the interior of the Money Bin the same way twice, and neither have I. I may try to be consistent about many facts in my stories, but if anybody expects me to try to make sure every scene I draw in the McDuck offices matches my own plans of those offices, they’re plain cuh-razy! ♛



Blueprints for Scrooge Mc Duck’s Money Bin by Don Rosa and Dan Shane (2001).

Stamford Hill Library, 27 February 2016.

Photography: Erik Hartin

The Toilets

On the Possibility of a Selfie Stick Dome Shelter

AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE I.C.A.I.P.

(International Committee against the Abuse of Industrial Production)

Words by Nikos Magouliotis
Illustration by Johanna Berg

23 July 2025.

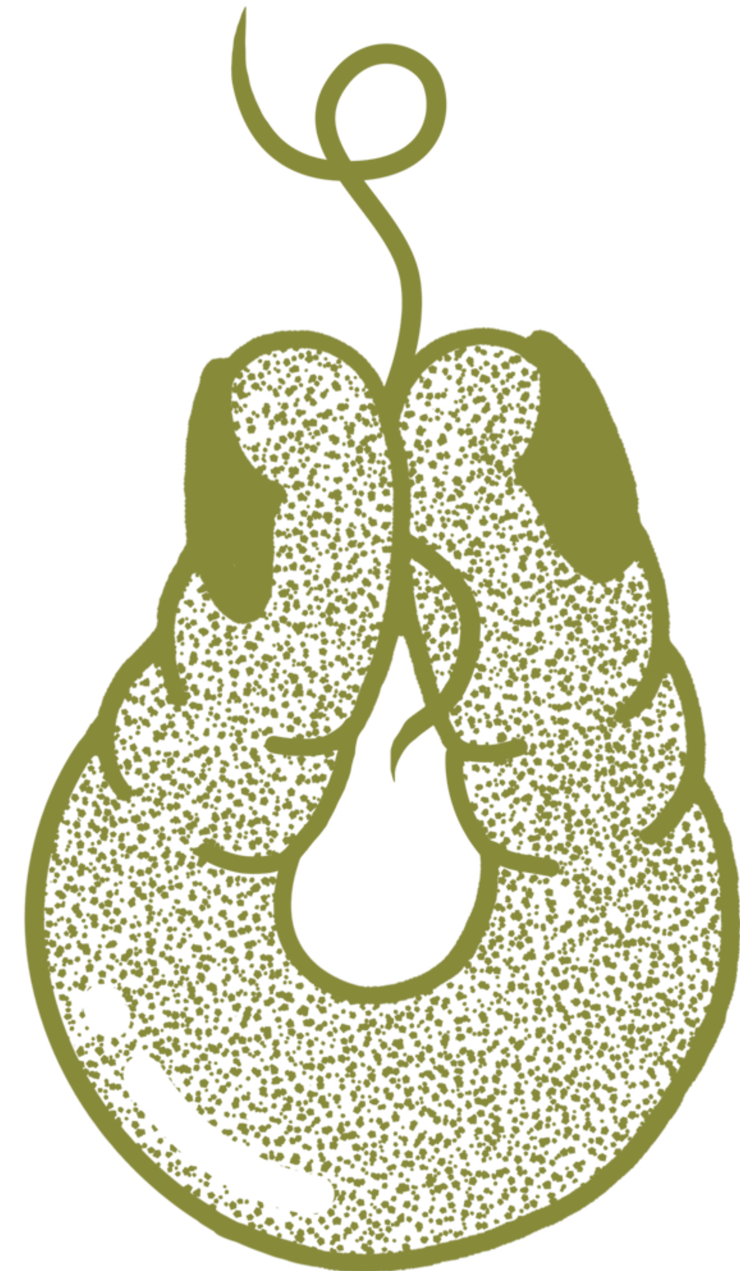
To consumers, producers and designers and whomever else this may concern.

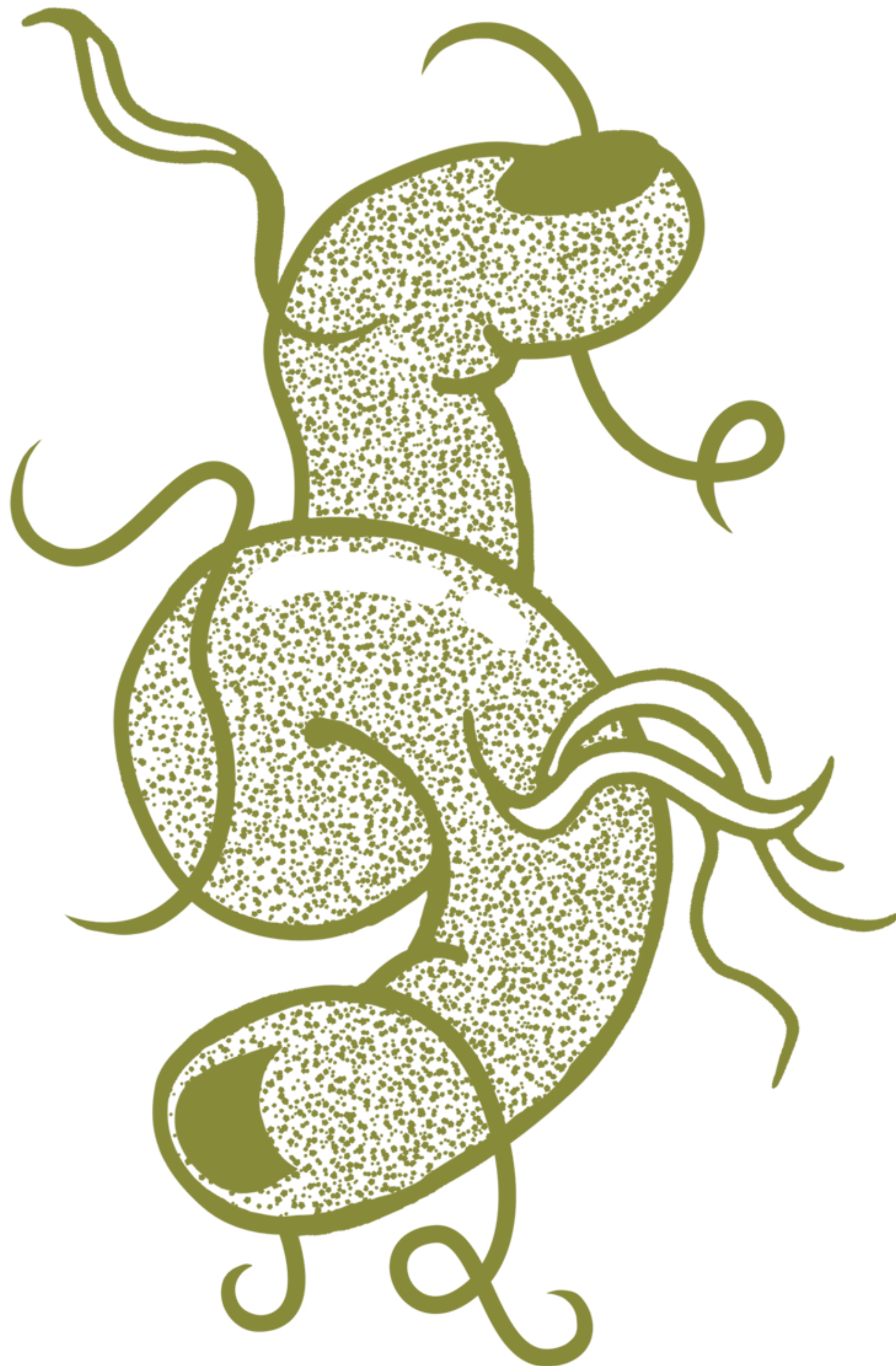
We chose this date to address all interested parties for reasons that will be clarified in the following text. We hereby mainly address an audience of architects and designers, but we aim to publish this in other media as well, hoping for the largest audience possible. But firstly, for those who are not familiar with the activities of I.C.A.I.P., we ought to provide some basic background information: Our committee was founded in 2017, motivated by the preceding financial crises (localised and international) and the series of humanitarian crises caused by such and other events, including natural disasters, warfare and forced migration of precarious populations. Since the start of its activity, our organisation has been acknowledged as pivotal, by numerous international courts and governments, as well as non-governmental organisations. We consider ourselves responsible for examining cases of abuse and waste of working hours, material resources and production means that result in products solving trivial, first-world problems. Our main duty is to examine cases of such products, either already in production and on sale or still under development, and propose ways for their re-use for tackling crucial problems related to more fundamental necessities (i.e. alimentation, shelter, medical supplies) in contexts of scarcity. The Committee aims at highlighting the uselessness of several contemporary products, informing their potential consumers, and eventually, exerting pressure on their producers to make more relevant use of their means.

After years of research and campaigning, and in response to criticism from opposing parties, we will hereby present our first, exemplar case. Today, 23 July 2025, is the 40th anniversary of the US Patent for what was then called a

"Telescopic Extender for Supporting Compact Camera" (Patent no. 4530580, 23 July 1985) and has in recent years acquired the simpler name, 'Selfie stick', enjoying immense commercial success. We consider this mass-produced object as the epitome of a gargantuan narcissism developed by the prosperous half of the world and its broad dissemination as a constant reminder of this in tourist destinations worldwide. The ceaseless flow of self-portraits (aka 'selfies') in social media is undoubtedly a complete waste of time and space (physical as well as digital), and altogether a significant distraction from more pending issues. Furthermore, the popularity of the selfie stick serves as evidence of the insecurity of its owners and their hesitance to engage with locals in their leisure excursions; a camera and/or phone is nowadays considered too valuable to be placed in the hands of some stranger, so he or she can take a picture of its owner. The selfie stick nurtures this anti-social behaviour and, by preventing even minimum interactions between visitors and locals, it generates crowds of self-absorbed tourists. On the occasion of this 40-year anniversary, instead of a celebration, we will present a plan for counter-action. For all the aforementioned (and for the fact that this multi-million dollar industry is taking up a huge amount of design, production and logistics resources, as well as tons of consumer money) we consider the further design, production and selling of selfie sticks to be financially and socially immoral and, therefore, demand that such actions should be subject to legal punishment. We aim at taking radical measures against the production of further selfie sticks and devising a plan of re-using the large amount of such items already produced.

The selfie stick is certainly not a sophisticated technological construction; it is mainly an extendable pole. Nevertheless, according to the engineers on our committee, it is a lightweight element with significant structural capacity





which, in greater numbers, could allow constructions of larger scale and importance. The conditions for such a vindicatory re-use were given to members of our committee when they witnessed a situation that displayed an intimate co-existence of extreme abundance and scarcity:

During the summer of 2015, (coincidentally a few weeks after the 30th anniversary of this "invention") numerous tourists were coming back to Athens from holidays in the islands of the Aegean. Along with them, travelled large numbers of refugees from Syria, in completely different conditions and for obvious reasons—they had been fleeing their country in order to escape the constant warfare and bombings, caused largely by the long-term involvement of Western governments in local affairs. These people had nowhere to stay after arriving in Greece and were in a state of extreme legal precariousness, with no papers and uncertain prospects for their futures. The brief co-existence of tourists and refugees on boats, traversing the Aegean and the borders to Europe, created images of intense contrast and gave the members of our committee an idea for immediate action.

After a brief announcement to the passengers of the boat, a specific process could take place upon arrival at the port of Piraeus. The tourists and the refugees would form two queues while exiting the boat. The latter would gather at a vacant area of the port, while the former would deposit their selfie sticks on a designated spot nearby. Eventually, a pile of several dozens of selfie sticks would be formed. Under instructions from our engineers, volunteers from both groups could assist in the construction of a makeshift shelter. The form and structural capacity of the selfie sticks could serve in the making of a large geodesic dome construction. Once the structure is up, it could be covered by plastic sheets found in the port's warehouses. With sufficient participation and materials, the dome could be

large enough to accommodate a large number of refugees for several days and be subsequently accompanied by other similar constructions using selfie sticks donated by tourists in the following days.

The specific details relating to the context are not relevant, but have been added to prove the feasibility of such an endeavour. Nevertheless, in developing this scenario, we have traced specific deficiencies and plan to take further measures to ameliorate several technical details: The technological stripping-bare and the reduction of this device to its basic materiality is intentional for both practical and symbolic reasons. But its electronic components are not to be disposed. The committee's designers are currently working on possible re-uses for the Bluetooth devices incorporated in selfie sticks for the provision of network connectivity in such basic shelters. But to motivate such operations in the future we will need help by people outside our organisation. Apart from the consumers, whom we invite to donate their selfie sticks, it is the numerous enterprises designing, producing and distributing such items that we consider to be mainly liable for this waste of energy, materials and working hours. Therefore, we came up with a series of tasks that such corporations are capable of undertaking. We hope to be able to ensure they fulfil the following demands, pending decisions on our appeals in the several international courts:

1. The product developers and designers should be asked to use their personnel and assets to design and produce a node between selfie sticks comprising the dome construction to allow for a more solid assemblage of the rods into large-scale structures. Taking into account the current level of 3D-printing techniques, and the fact that we are addressing the companies already responsible for the production of the sticks, this should be a relatively easy task.

2 The marketing and promotion companies, apart from publicising our campaign and informing the wider public about our operation, ought to withdraw the billboard posters (and any other large-scale printed marketing material) advertising the selfie stick, and help in its re-use as the covering material of dome constructions, in order to provide sufficient weather protection to the occupants.

3 The logistics and transportation network of such companies will afterwards be put to effective use for the transportation of the nodes, selfie sticks and the covering sheets to the areas where the refugees are in most need.

We consider this reuse of products to go beyond the simple ecological demand for recycling and minimising of waste and pollution. We aim for an act of simultaneously utilitarian and symbolical value: as the writings of Guy Debord and Michel de Certeau have taught us, the junk produced by the consumer industry of late-capitalism can be re-used to cater for needs that are outside its frame of concern. Debord's technique of *détournement*, apart from a common artistic practice, is a valuable tool for the re-direction of cultural and commercial products away from their programmatic ends. The displacement of mass-produced objects in situations that differ significantly from the context of their designed function can often reveal ways to solve existing problems with unexpected means. But simultaneously, it is a way to highlight the distance between futile product-design scenarios to the immediate reality. In other words, we could certainly build shelters out of other recycled materials that might be more suitable for such constructions; but a dome made of selfie sticks can also highlight the contrast between the initial intention and the eventual utilisation of this product, hopefully inspiring further *détournements* of other mass-produced everyday objects. As de Certeau has explained, mass culture is a product of specific 'strategies', but it can be individualised

and channelled into unexpected functions by the use of various 'tactics' exercised by its users. If, as de Certeau pointed out, we consider 'consumption' as an occasionally energetic (and not exclusively passive) process, then the useless products that are designed and circulated in modern-day capitalism can serve as tools for the reversal of many of its injustices.

We would like to thank in advance the buyers and producers of such items for their collaboration. This campaign is only the start of our mission. We will be carrying out research on other products in an attempt to adapt and re-use futility for the amelioration of fundamental problems that concern basic human needs of the planet's population. For this, we will be open to the help of any interested party, be it individuals or enterprises, working in the fields of design and production or any other. In accordance with Debord's hope for a wide diffusion of the spirit of such subversive tactics outside of the realm of the professionals and into every-day life (*ultra-détournement*, as he calls it), we hope that such actions will eventually surpass the limits of our organisation.

Kind Regards and Greetings to our Supporters,

The International Committee against the Abuse of Industrial Production

Urban Dance

OR HOW HE BECAME THE KING OF THE CASTLE

Words by Mrinal Rammohan
Illustration by Phil Goss

Just as he sat down in the first class lounge, his phone rang. It was his solicitor calling with good news. The planning permission had come through just a few hours ago. Instantly he was a couple of million pounds richer. "Good. Get some buyers on board," he said curtly as he ended the call. There was no hint of a smile on his face; this was simply business as usual.

Jim sat in his office nursing his whiskey. He really ought to be out there helping his team deal with the evening rush, but he couldn't bear to look them in the eye right now. The letter that had come in the post this morning lay before him on the desk. He read it for the umpteenth time, as the words blurred over, 'thank you for your services…the lease will be cancelled effective immediately…vacate property by the end of the month.' The bastards.'

Pedro lived right above the pub. He didn't mind the noise and the oil-soaked fumes, in fact he revelled in the theatre of it all. Sat at his windowsill late at night, he watched as the last of the hangers-on stumbled out onto the street. It was always the same bunch, bar the occasional stranger or two, lured in by the whoops of joy that emanated from The Castle. Tonight though, they were completely oblivious to the shroud of silence that had now enveloped the pub as the lights went out for the last time. Pedro sighed and began taking his suitcases to the waiting van downstairs.

As expected, they arrived on the dot. The place was boarded up by noon. "They really don't fuck about," Emily thought to herself as she walked past with a bunch of CVs stuffed into her bag. This was the fourth one to close in the past year on the same street. She was getting tired of looking for a new job every couple of months. "Maybe I should've just joined KFC the last summer…"

Mo spread out on the last seat on the top deck. This was a rarity he was determined to enjoy to the fullest; the night buses were usually rammed at this point. He stared lazily out of the window as the bright lights sped past.

By force of habit, he compulsively read the shop boards that were lit on the otherwise desolate street. ‘Chicken Cottage, William Hill, The Coffee Barn, The Castle: Exclusive luxury 2/3-bedroom apartments available now!’ He was reminded of his pre-match local that went by the same name; that was before he was priced out of the stadium, and eventually the neighbourhood. “Come to think of it, it was on the same road…”

Sam called the number at the bottom of the webpage. A slick voice answered the call: “Good morning, Centre Height Properties! How may I assist you today?”
“I’m calling about the apartments on Old Hope Street, the ones that are called, ‘The Castle’. Would it be possible to see a sample flat?”
“I’m afraid not, sir. The building is still under construction and we won’t have access to the site for the next six months. But even then, it wouldn’t make sense for us to show you around.”
“And why is that?”
“They’ve already all been sold.”
“Before they’ve been constructed?”
“That’s right, sir. But if you’re interested I could send you some brochures on our other properties. We’re still waiting for planning permission on some of them, but they would make a great investment right now…”
“But my family and I just want somewhere to live.”

His conscience was clear. People wanted houses; he provided them and made some money in the process. It could even be said, that his intentions were noble and working towards a good social cause. What people did in and with their homes was their own business. What he liked about the world of business was that it was always a clear-cut transaction —you want something I have, you pay me and I give it to you. The question of morality never entered the equation. He slept well at night.

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