

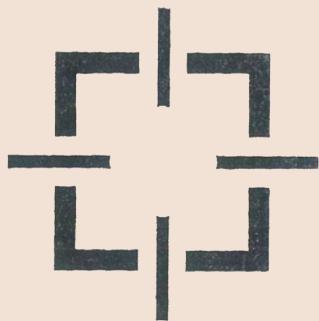
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1 of 25 contributions (10 articles, 15 graphics)

10 team members

5 contributors (financial)



# PAPER SPACE ISSUE 22

## INSTRUCTION

# SUMMER 2024.

# EDITORS' NOTE.

As architecture students, we often find ourselves deeply immersed in the process of design, yet how often do we pause to reflect on the ways in which we are taught? Instruction, in its many forms, shapes not only our academic development but also, in a broader sense, our understanding of the built environment. Born from a collective fascination with this insight, this issue seeks to explore the multifaceted nature of instruction within and beyond the confines of architectural education.

One of the unique aspects of studying architecture is the prolonged and rigorous path required for professional accreditation; a path which, while challenging, opens a rich dialogue around the interplay of restriction and agency in both practising and experiencing architecture. The theme of this issue invites us to consider how instructions — whether in the form of architectural briefs, regulations, environments, or even the cultural guidance of tradition — both direct and constrain our interactions with space and, consequently, with one another.

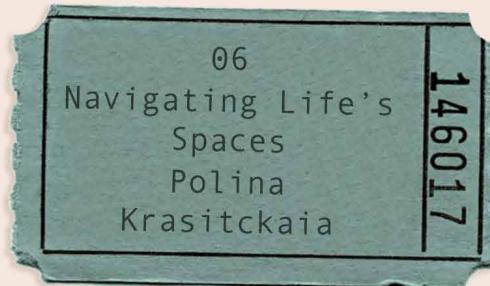
Our contributors chose a variety of avenues through which to explore this theme, from Alexander Whitwell's 'The Emergency Will Replace the Contemporary,' which blends literary criticism with discussion of a new architectural vernacular shaped by environmental crisis to Daniela Silva's 'Designing Freedom' which explores architecture's role as a directive force, questioning the extent of our freedom within environments designed to subtly guide our actions. Our most collaborative issue to date, a variety of mixed-media contributions feature alongside in-depth written pieces.

At its core, this issue seeks to interrogate the pedagogical role of design itself. How are we instructed by architecture, not just in the classroom, but through the buildings and spaces we inhabit daily? How do these environments teach us, influence us, and shape our behaviours and interactions?

*Thank you for reading,  
Antar Ghazoul & Jeger Harrington  
Editors-in-Chief 2023-2024*

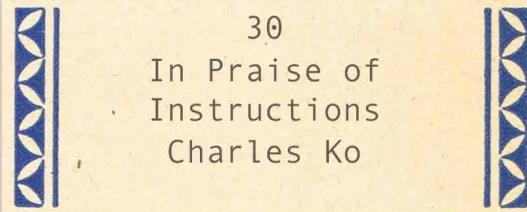
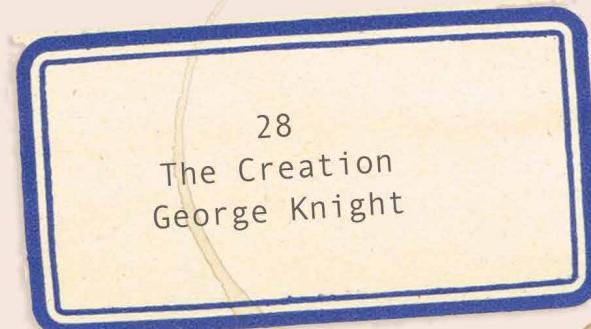
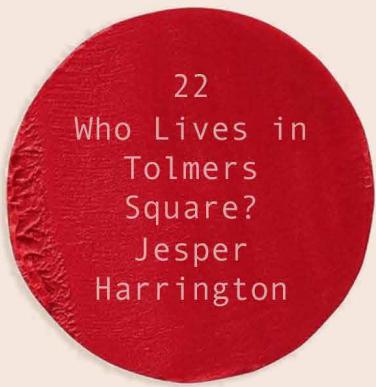
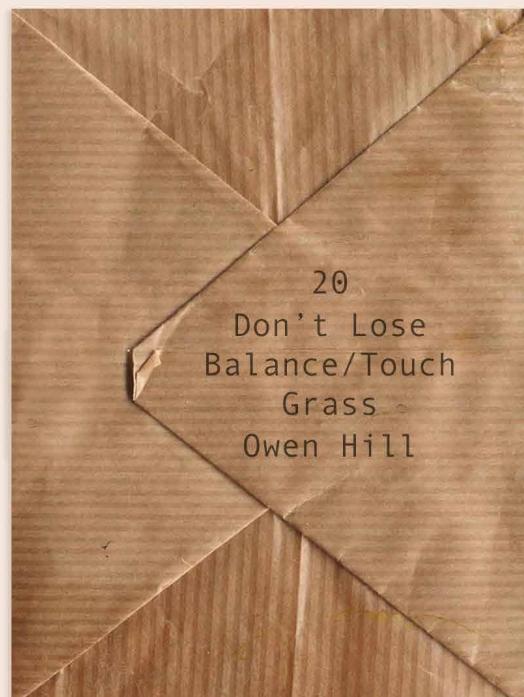
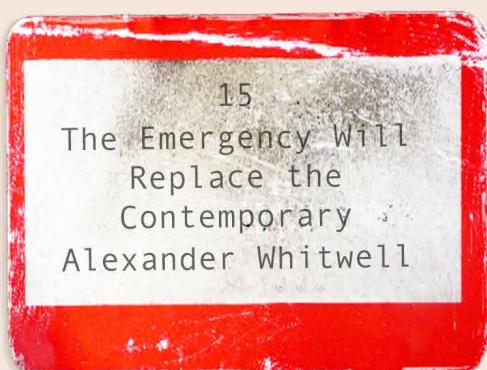
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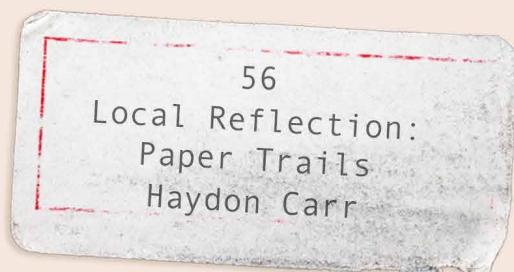
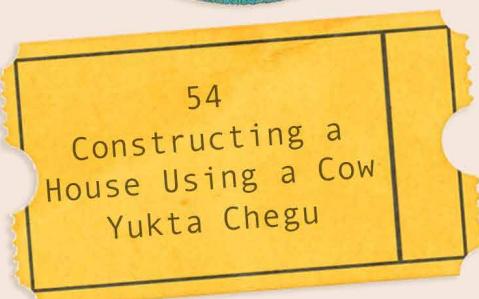
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Daniela Silva



# NAVIGATING LIFE'S SPACES

*By Polina Krasitskaya*

'We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us.' (Churchill, 1943)

Imagine taking a walk through Canterbury Cathedral, where the play of light and shadow, suffused with the backdrop of the organ, creates an ambience of ascension and reverence. Such a memory becomes embedded in the mind, shaping an emotional response and forging a connection between built form and the Divine. Most of the time, architecture is regarded as only a backdrop to everyday life; on the contrary, architecture significantly impacts our behaviour and overall well-being. This article explores the role of emotional responses to architectural environments in personal development. Through these perspectives, the subtle ways that architecture leaves a mark on the minds and hearts of its observers will become clear.

What can shape our perception of the spaces we inhabit? According to research conducted by Harvard University (2015), the brain is highly affected by early spatial experiences and the surrounding environment during the first seven years of childhood, making this period vital for absorbing new information. One's perceptions of comfort and space are shaped alongside one's identity within the walls of one's childhood home (Freud, 1917). Steen Eiler Rasmussen (1964) argues that the subconscious becomes ingrained with the sensory experiences from childhood homes, such as texture, light and spatial organisation. Therefore, many of a person's future emotional patterns and behaviours can



*Aachen,  
Germany*

be derived from their architectural experiences in the first seven years of their life. Furthermore, Alain de Botton (2014) argues that one's aesthetic preferences are deeply affected by the spatial qualities of one's childhood home. This is particularly fascinating, as it reveals the opportunity architects have to shape the childhood experiences of future generations.

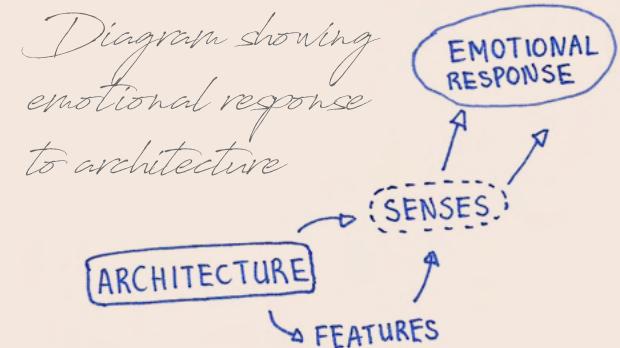


*Farnsworth House,  
Illinois*

For instance, take the story of one of the most well-known architects, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Growing up in Aachen, Germany, he was surrounded by Gothic and Romanesque architecture. Filled with grand cathedrals, open public squares and narrow alleyways (Tikkanen, 2024), the cityscape of Aachen and its diverse urban features emphasises the relationship between the built environment and outdoor spaces. From analysing the design of Farnsworth House, where the lines between inside and outside are blurred (Xiao-Li, 2019), one can notice the impact that the urban spaces of Aachen had on the development of Mies' architectural style.

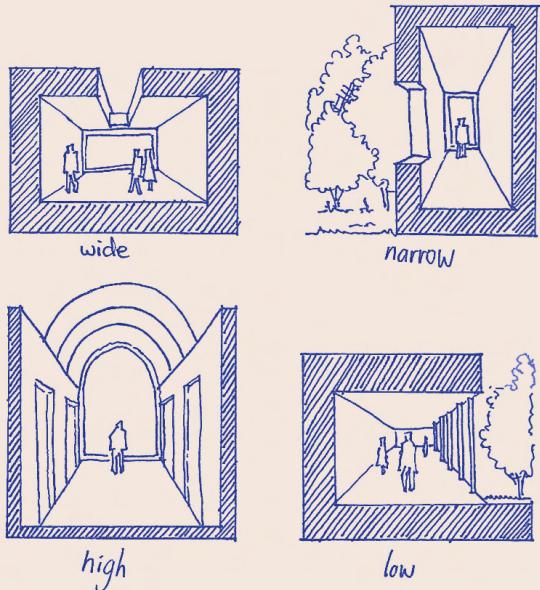
Mies' father was a stone mason; the design of their family home featured exposed brickwork and stones which were the prominent features of German homes at the time (Tikkanen, 2024). Experiencing these architectural features, which accentuate the structural integrity and use of natural stones in construction, shaped Mies' architectural approach, developing his appreciation for using simple, solid materials in his future projects. The story of Mies van der Rohe is one of the many that depicts how the senses pick up the characteristics of one's early living spaces and shape one's aesthetic preferences and aspirations, forming a person's emotional response to architecture.

The impact that architecture has on human behaviour and emotion needs to be constantly recognised. In 'The Architecture of Happiness', Alain de Botton (2014) emphasises the idea that architecture guides us throughout life and possesses the power to impact well-being and shape the identity of the people interacting with it. Architecture is filled with suggestions and messages; however, it is not forceful nor restricts people with its rules. People are undoubtedly moved by it through their experiences. To illustrate this, one can examine Edward Munch's paintings and their ability to affect people based on their traumas. One may sob from glancing at the painting 'Separation' (1896), while the other will discount its meaning due to the lack of experience of these emotions. Similarly, people experience architecture differently depending on the events in their lives.



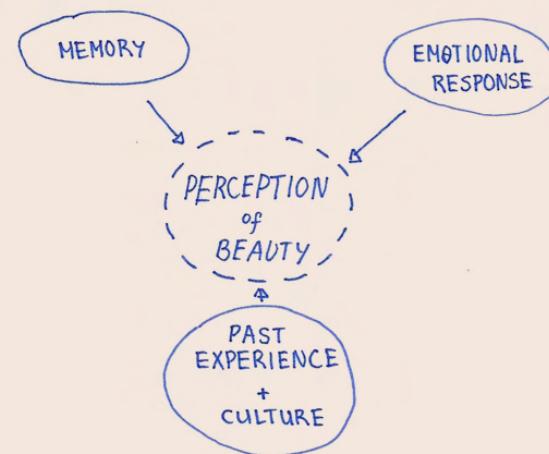
What are the features that affect the way one experiences space? One's interaction with architecture begins with the senses. The brain interprets information provided by the senses of sight, touch, sound, taste and smell (George, 2024). Based on the sensory information received, the brain evokes specific emotional responses. These processes occur so the brain can navigate within a space and develop a map of the environment. Architectural features such as aesthetics, symmetry, scale and proportion can evoke different emotional responses (George, 2024). Lower ceiling height, for example, focuses the attention on the specific items located within a space and causes negative emotions, whereas, in a space with high ceilings, a person is inclined to experience a boost in creativity, wayfinding and positive emotions (George, 2024). The use of natural materials in architectural environments is proven to benefit its inhabitants highly; the use of wood in internal finishing has been linked to decreased heart rate, better vision in the immediate space and feelings of relaxation and calmness (George, 2024). Ultimately, understanding the ways people perceive the environment will help architects design to optimise user experiences.

What makes a building beautiful? While the concept of beauty in architecture provokes



## Architectural features

*Diagram Explaining the perception of beauty*

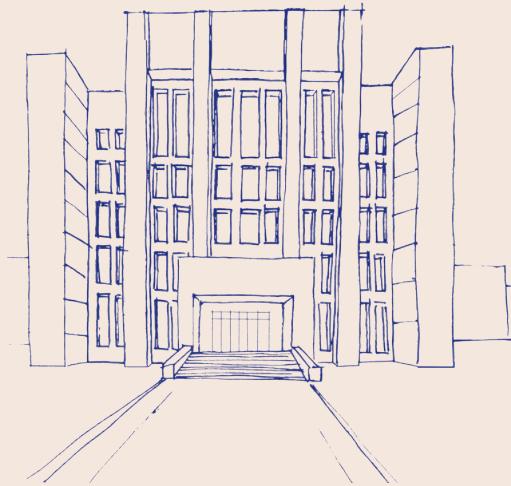


many unnecessary debates, it cannot be overlooked when it comes to happiness. For example, someone who admires the intricate details in mosaics or takes pleasure from the sunlight reflecting through an antique stained glass window will choose to surround themselves with these moments, leading them to experience happiness from being in the environment they perceive as beautiful. Beauty in architecture is much more than aesthetics; it encompasses functionality, proportion and harmony. Alain de Botton (2014) argues that beautiful architecture is practical and creates spaces where people feel more fulfilled and connected. Hence, the environment one inhabits carves one's perceptions and experiences. The complex connection between architecture and human experience is why the thoughtful design of supportive and purposeful environments is crucial.

Architecture is subtle in its influence, yet it profoundly affects one's perception of the world and guides one through life. As illustrated by the story of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the spaces and experiences with architecture in childhood play a significant role in personal development and preferences in the future. Understanding how users respond to architecture is essential because people have different preferences, needs and emotional responses. Through studying the occupants of spaces, architects can develop human-centric solutions that evoke positive emotions in occupants and enhance their well-being.

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*'how does this architecture make you feel?'*



# TAKE WHAT RESONATES AND LEAVE THE REST...

*By Meha Patel*

Those who read tarot use it as spiritual or divine instruction. Cards are instinctively drawn and interpreted to provide guidance. Various imagery, position, direction etc. depict different aspects of a card's meaning, including the orientation in which it is drawn. Cards which are drawn reversed often have a reversed meaning.

Though I do not read tarot myself, the ties between objects, symbols and human association is fascinating. I chose to delve into the artistic symbolism and create a three card spread that represents a reading for the present day world.

## *Justice*

You (the world) are facing grave injustice. Climate change, conflicts and chaos run rife. From rising seas to refugees, there seems to be no balance. The sword pierces the karmic lotus and draws the blood of innocent life. Justice's eyes are half covered and deeds could be judged by Maat's feather of truth. Have the acts you permitted or participated in made you true of heart? Balance to the scales of justice must be restored in order for doves to soar and peace to prevail. Will you turn a blind eye?



## *The Hierophant*

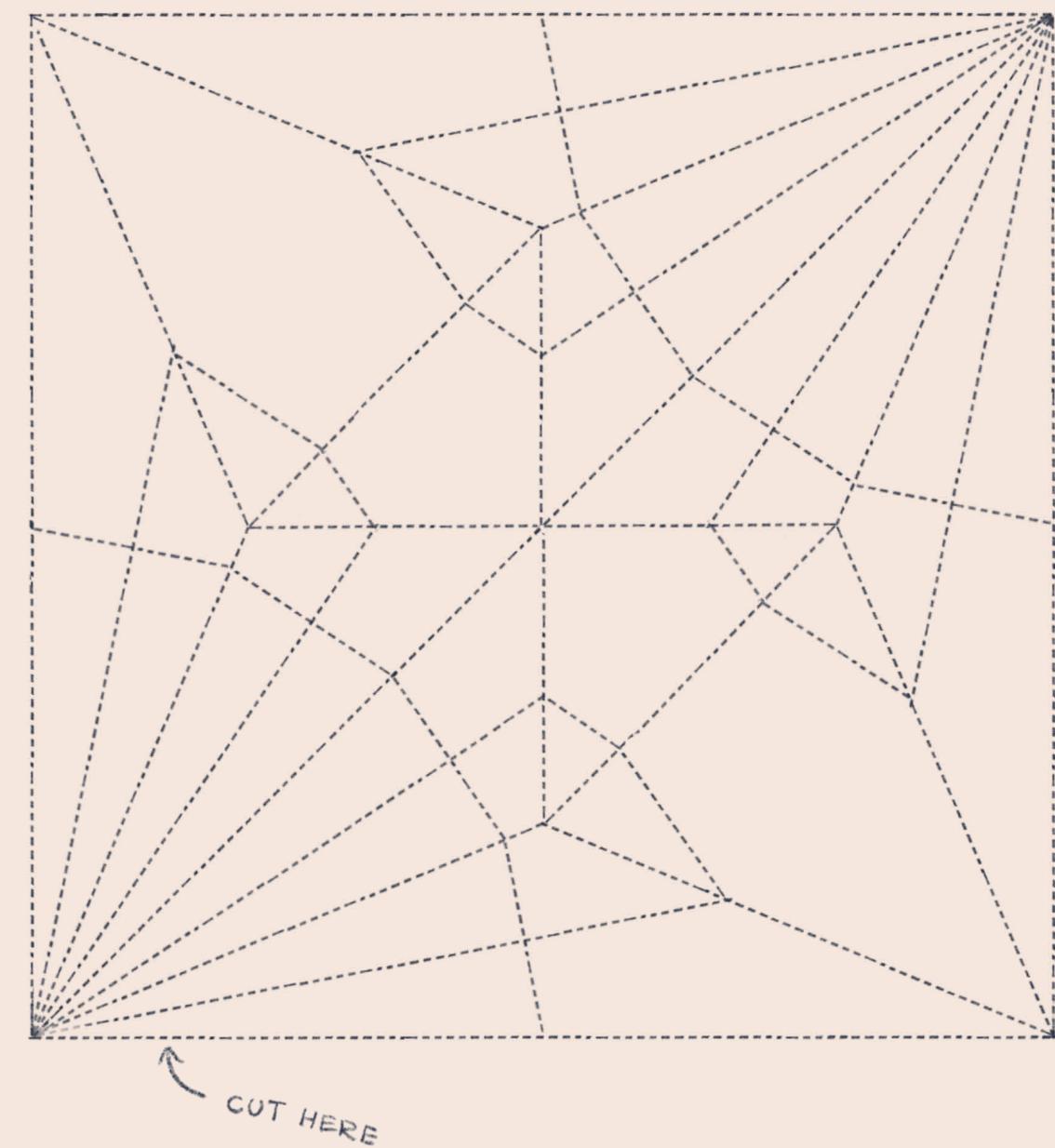
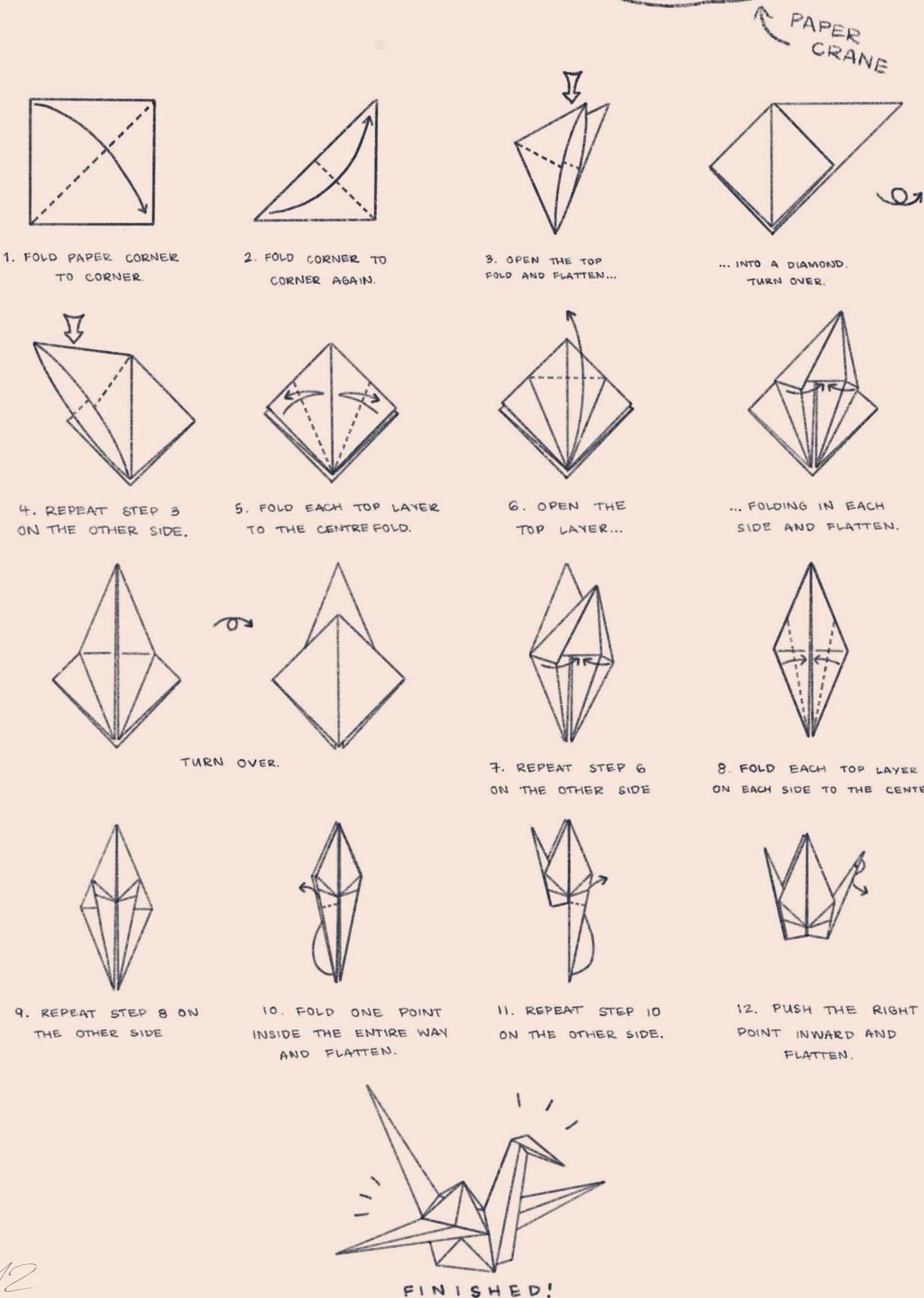
This card, drawn upright, represents following convention, spiritual or otherwise. A figure passes on wisdom to their students. When drawn in reverse, it represents free thinking and following your own path. Just as elephants are observed to worship the moon, humans find the divine in Deities, celestial bodies, mountains, rivers and various beings.

The tree, representing knowledge, life and balance forms a bridge between the earth and the sky. Unconventionally (and somewhat impossibly), you have drawn this card horizontally - neither upright or reversed. You must find the balance between tradition and progression, and find what you value.

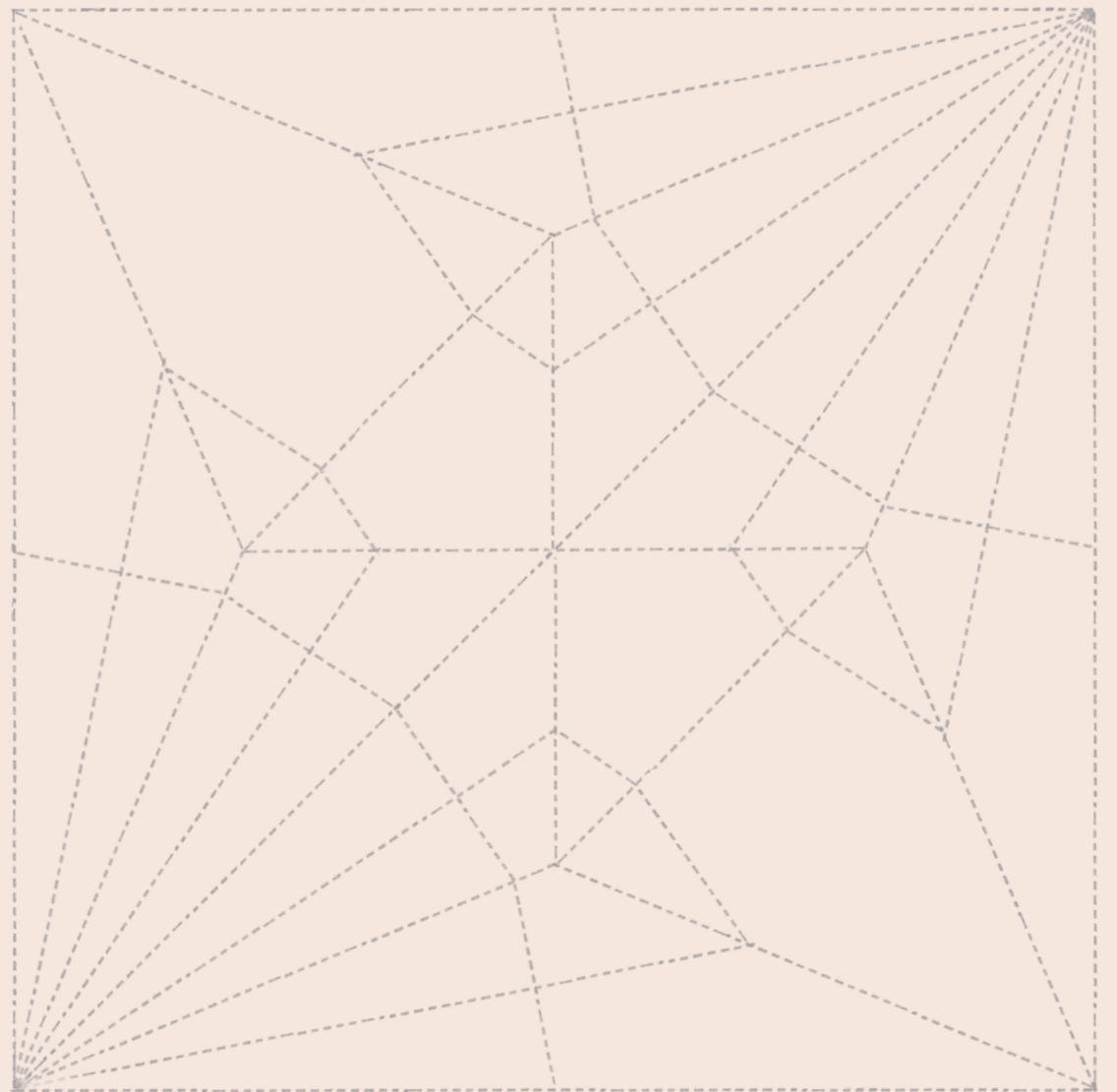
## *The Star*

After turmoil, there will be peace. Have hope, for you have drawn The Star. The earth will be nourished, represented by a woman, with one foot in the water and one on land. The recent white buffalo calf birth signifies hope, fulfilling a prophecy for various Native American tribes. Combined with the appearance of cranes, koi and an olive tree, there will be light that will bloom in the darkness.

# MAKE YOUR OWN ORIZURU



By Jade Zimmerli



# THE EMERGENCY WILL REPLACE THE CONTEMPORARY

Architectural Futures in JG Ballard's 'The Drought'

*By Alexander Whitwell*

Over only five years in the 1960s, JG Ballard wrote four 'climate fiction' novels set after ecological collapse on earth. 'The Drought' is his only book where the climate disaster is human-made - a result of microplastic pollution (eerily prescient in hindsight). But rather than detailing the causes of the drought, Ballard tells a story of interactions between the eccentric remnants of humanity, how people, their relationships, and their imaginations survive in a changing and changed world. He charts a shift from preparation to adaptation, and expresses this clearly through the architecture in the novel. We see the movement from suburban status quo to contrasting approaches to building after the crisis. While some make do in makeshift shacks stretched along the coast, others live in intricate and expressive constructions of scrap metal: a vernacular of the emergency. In this way, 'The Drought' offers an architectural parable for the designers of today and tomorrow. Indeed some present-day practitioners are already beginning to develop their own crisis vernacular, making a case for radical design choices driven by both preparation and adaptation.

In part one, Ballard describes the final days before the crisis becomes inescapable for the remaining inhabitants of Hamilton: a riverside town on the periphery of the much larger Mount Royal (the area may be based on a fictionalised Canada; Mount Royal is Montreal, where there is a real Hamilton up-river). Here, 'The Drought' shows a glimpse of the world that has facilitated ecological collapse. But, rather than a view of sadistic corporations or crooked politicians, Ballard introduces us to hobbying sailor Charles Ransom and his weekend houseboat. Ransom is a doctor out of work, one of the last stragglers in an increasingly abandoned town. While other residents make for the coast, Ransom has been "out on the lake, sailing the houseboat among the draining creaks and mudflats as he waited for the evacuation of the city to end". He continues this archetypal pastime amidst the encroaching crisis, the futurelessness of his boat ever apparent even during this activity. Yet, perversely, Ballard tells us it is a houseboat, rather than a yacht or another explicitly pleasure-focussed craft. Indeed, the people Ransom finds himself surrounded by during these sojourns are not like-minded weekend sailors, but people for



whom the water is their home, and whose boat really is a house.

While Ransom enjoys the trappings of practicality, earnestly “scraping away the tar stains on his cotton trousers”, his boat is ultimately a symbol of excess. Ballard sardonically exposes its futility when Ransom returns later, desperate now to escape and really live aboard the boat, only to find it “stranded high and dry above the water, its pontoon set in a trough of baked mud. It leaned on its side near the burnt-out cars, covered with the ash blown down from the banks.” Ransom is faced with the real arrival of the crisis, and the insufficiency of his hobby-boat is cruelly revealed.

Also introduced in part one is Richard Foster Lomax, an architect who lives in a “glass-and-concrete mansion” with a full swimming pool and fountains that “throw rainbows of light through the air”. Ballard uses these icons of high modernist architecture – dominating practice at the time ‘The Drought’ was written – to characterise Lomax as likely holding a certain set of beliefs and ideals. However, when the author goes on to describe some of the architect’s

past projects (“a concert hall, and part of the university”), we learn Lomax is not necessarily a modernist in a strictly stylistic sense. We hear of his “Japanese, pagoda-ridden phase”, and a project aborted due to “local conservative opinion” for its “glass minarets and tiled domes”. His erratic visual style may seem to a modern-day reader close to postmodernism, though interestingly ‘The Drought’ was published six years before ‘Learning from Las Vegas.’

Despite his aesthetic inconsistencies, Lomax’s worldview is undoubtedly modernist. When confronted by Ransom over his apparent unawareness of the unfolding crisis, he snaps “don’t talk to me about the balance of nature! If it wasn’t for people like myself we’d all be living in mud huts.” He embodies the trope of the modernist architect as arrogant and disconnected from reality, interested only in imposing his vision. Lomax plans to raze the nearby city and rebuild it once all the inhabitants have fled. “Everything is going to be very changed here”, he decrees. This turns out to be true, and his architectural vision has a remarkable resilience later in the book, just not in the way he had imagined.



The second part of ‘The Drought’ takes place ten years after Ransom and a few other holdouts finally leave for the coast. Amongst the endless salt dunes created by the perpetual desalination of the sea to create drinking water, survivors live in shacks created from beached boats and other mechanical debris. Ransom has built himself a shelter “from the rusty motor-car bodies he had hauled down from the shore and piled on top of one another.” Where previously he delighted in a kind of faux preparation for disaster on board his houseboat, he struggles when faced with the urgency and necessity to adapt. His houseboat was a source of pride and enjoyment, but now we find him living in a “bulging shell, puffed out here and there by a car’s bulbous nose or trunk, [which] resembled the carapace of a cancerous turtle”.

When Ransom returns to Hamilton, we discover Lomax has created his own dwelling in a strikingly different fashion: “A hundred yards away … a small pavilion appeared in a hollow among the dunes, its glass and metal cornices shining in the sunlight. It had been constructed from assorted pieces of chromium and enamelled metal – the radiator

grilles of cars, reflectors of electric heaters, radio cabinets and so on - fitted together with remarkable ingenuity to form what appeared at a distance to be a bejewelled temple. In the sunlight the gilded edifice gleamed among the dust and sand like a Fabergé gem.”

Ransom himself makes the comparison, thinking of “the crude hovels he had constructed out of the same materials at the coast”. He attributes the difference to the heat of the desert, but it’s worth investigating what really separates these two dwellings. Ballard’s choice of phrase offers some clues; when describing Ransom’s shack he leads with “rusty motor-car bodies”, while for Lomax’s the materials are described as “pieces of chromium and enamelled metal”. By immediately identifying the source of Ransom’s materials he insinuates there has been no conscious reimagining of them. The dwelling is an assembly of rusting cars, while Lomax has redeployed the car scraps into something more than its constituent parts – although these parts are still identifiable.

The description of the pavilion continues, “The walls of the small ante-room were decorated



architecture practice founded by long-time collaborators Jan De Vylder and Inge Vinck (they formerly worked together with Jo Taillieu). Their largest project, the conversion of a historic but dilapidated 1930s convention centre into a space for myriad community and arts functions, offers a modern-day urban counterpart to Lomax's "bejewelled pavilion".

A previous attempt at conversion had floundered due to cost, so AJDVIV took an unusual approach of occupying only a small part of the existing building with their proposal. Instead of conceiving of the existing structure as a complete building to be converted in its entirety, they instead understood the Palais as a conglomeration of elements to be reused to create something entirely different. The former central axis/foyer of the site will instead become an open frame overrun by plants and greenery – a kind of multi-storey park. Eleanor Beaumont describes "generous boulevards and squares [which] unfold across three floors, complete with streetlights and garden benches" (Architectural Review, 2024).

Some of the most unglamorous decisions by the architects are the most radical. While the brief called for a new underground car park, it became clear this would be prohibitively expensive, and since the proposals only needed to occupy a third of the existing building, they were instead sited in one of the old exhibition halls. The result is an absurdly palatial carpark, but one which is drastically lower in embodied carbon than the alternative and which offers an inescapable critique of our dependence on cars for all who visit.

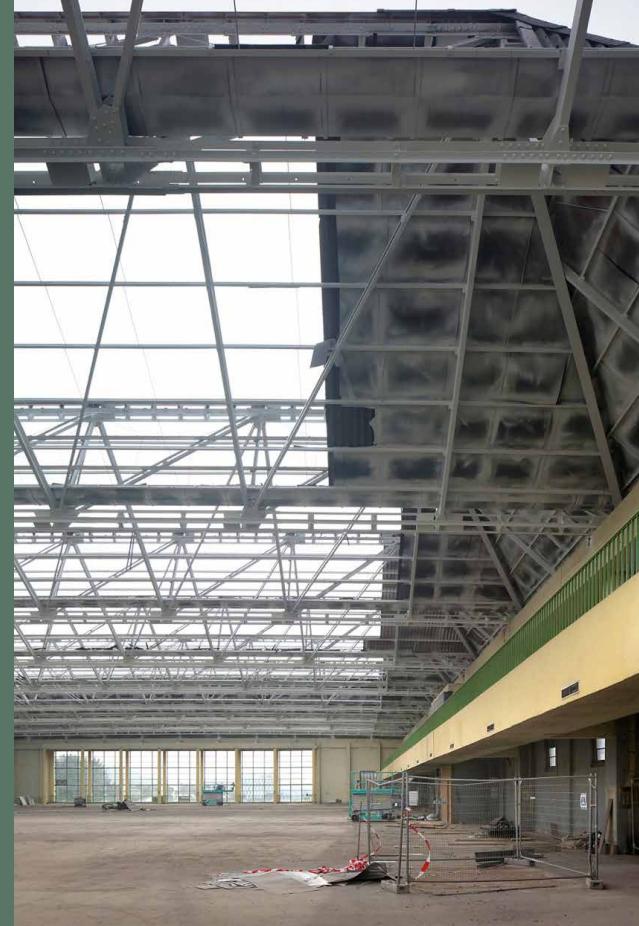
Chapex is a building deeply connected to its temporal context on the precipice of environmental collapse. As Beaumont writes, "if the Palais des Expositions was a mirror to the 20th-century spoils of industrial capitalism, Chapex encapsulates its death throes as it faces the realities of the climate emergency" (Architectural Review, 2024). Like Lomax's pavilion, it is a product of crisis and speaks clearly and boldly of the constrictions it brings. However, it also approaches these challenges with relish and a wry smile. The joy of the architects in producing the spaces is palpable for those who inhabit them.

with strips of curved chromium. Coloured discs of glass taken from car headlamps had been fitted into a grille and formed one continuous wall, through which the sun shone in a dozen images of itself. Another wall was constructed from the grilles of radio sets, the lines of gilded knobs forming astrological patterns."

Lomax's pavilion represents an undeniable delight: joy in his surroundings despite the devastating reality outside. This is the key difference between the two dwellings. There is a sense of play behind every re-use; again perhaps a veiled postmodern aesthetic sensibility, but one made valid by the physical reuse of old parts. Lomax has developed a vernacular born from emergency but filled with passion and excitement. It still shows his high modernist defiance of the "balance of nature", but since the ecological collapse the scales are so far tipped against him this sensibility is instead expressed as a rebellious joyfulness. Circumstances have forced him to become an exemplary sustainable designer.

A similar feeling for expressive reuse can be found in the work of AJDVIV, a Flemish

The future Ballard describes in 'The Drought' feels closer now than ever before, and its lessons even more prescient. We find ourselves in a state of flux between preparation and adaptation - contemporary and emergency - and must develop an architectural language to suit. Our buildings and cities must speak to our times and crises, and answer them with an inextinguishable euphoria.



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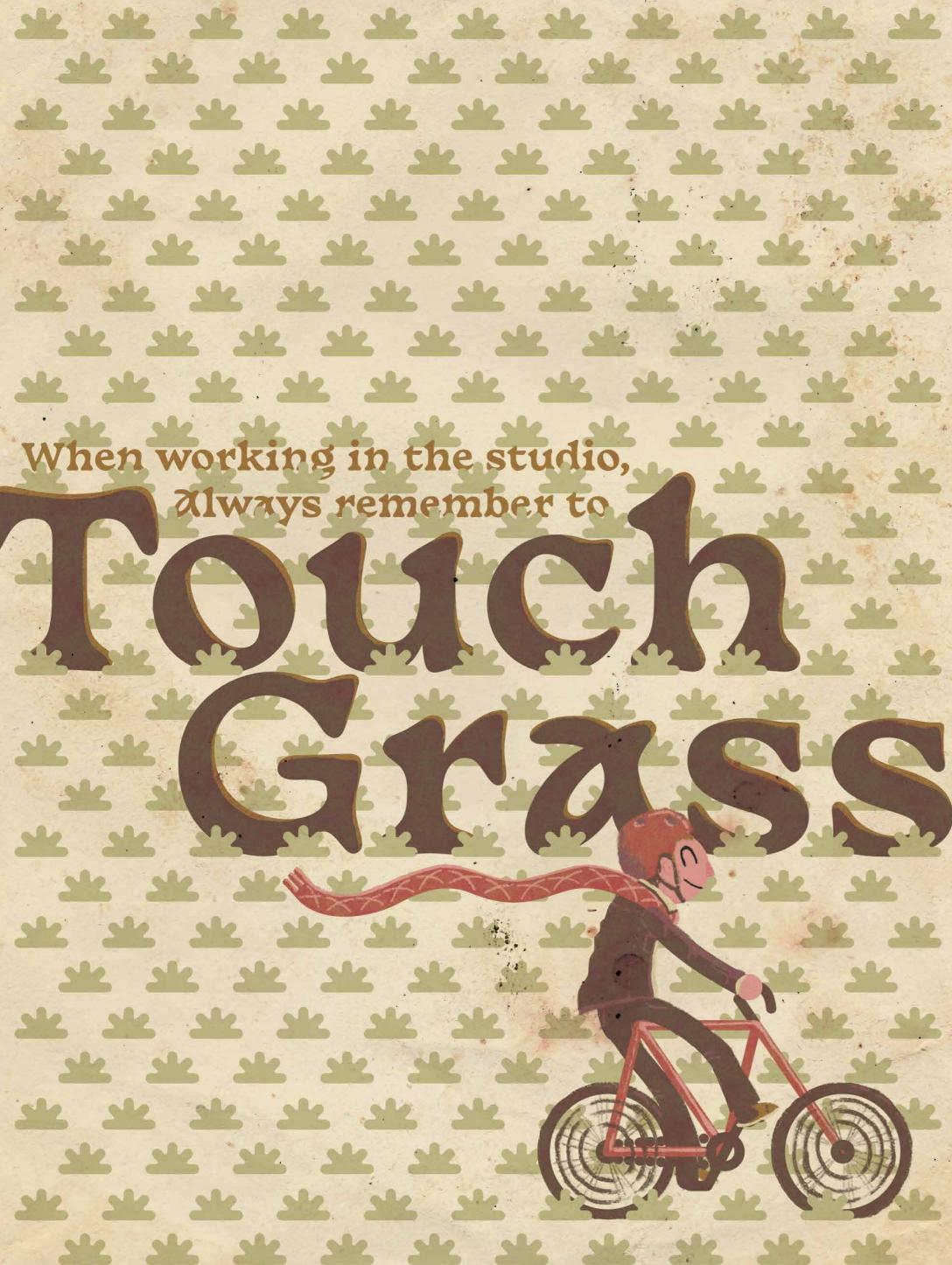
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- Architecten Jan De Vylder Inge Vinck, 2024. Architecten JDVIV [Online]. Available from: <https://architectenjdviv.com/> [Accessed 10 June 2024].

# Don't Lose Balance!

Good work/life balance doesn't just mean splitting your time 50/50 between home and the studio!

Taking time to relax, enjoy hobbies, and get a good night's sleep can improve your productivity and creativity overall.



Current advice suggests breaks of 5-10 minutes every hour, with longer 15-30 minute breaks every few hours.

# WHO LIVES IN TOLMERS SQUARE?

By Jeger Harrington

## Act 1: A Sunny Afternoon

For most of the time I lived in Camden, the name Tolmers Square meant little more to me than my sign to turn off Hampstead Road on my daily commute.

It would be many months before I visited the Square, walking home from the cinema on a hazy June afternoon wracked by a feeling of boredom – not the kind of boredom arising from a lack of things to do, but from an abundance – complicated by a crippling sense of the impossibility of me doing anything.

Determined to cure this malaise and make something of my afternoon in the sun, I deviated from my usual route home and ventured into a shaded alleyway, planting one foot in front of the other before I could convince myself otherwise. The tall brick walls funnelled me forward, and just as my eyes adjusted to the dim light, I emerged into what appeared to be a village fete complete with bunting-draped trees, community stalls, and playing children with painted faces. I was struck by the laughter of children, a sound had grown unaccustomed to in an ageing inner London.

*Fiction of the south side  
of Tolmers Square, 1979*



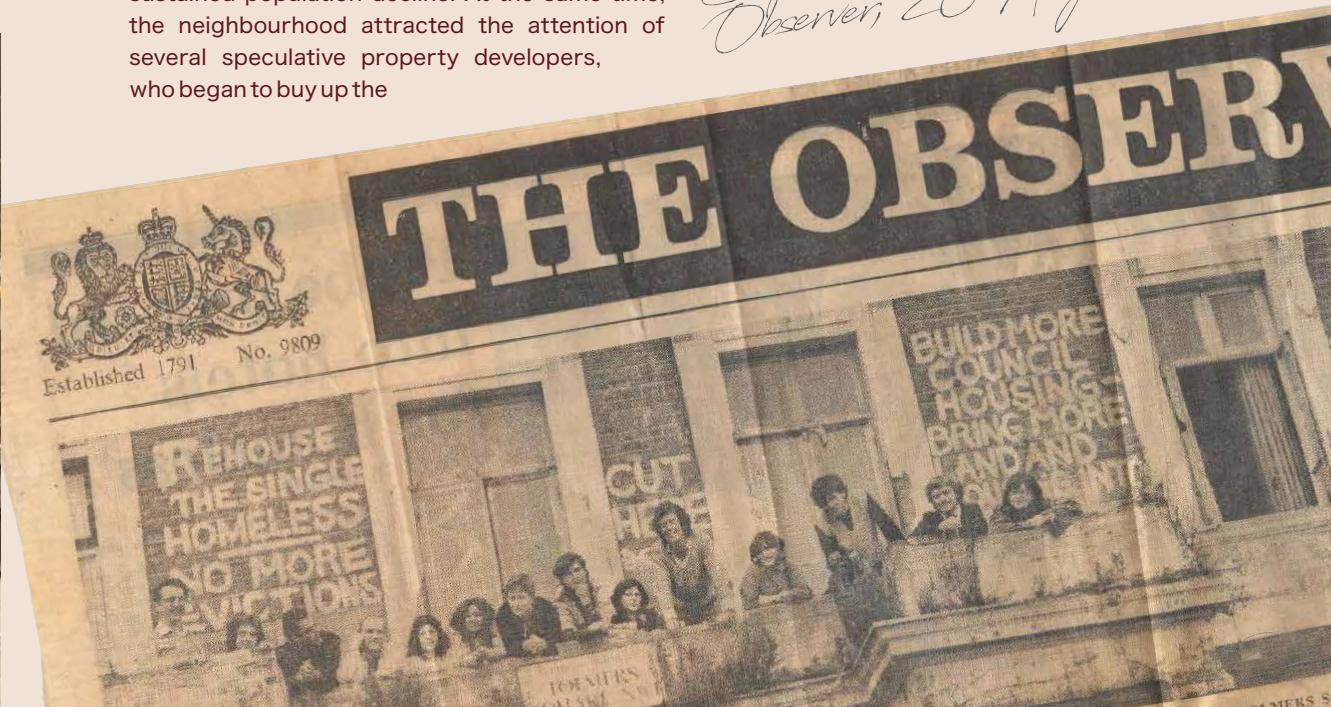
## Act 2: Wrong Side of The Tracks

Sandwiched between Euston and Hampstead Road, Tolmers Square was first developed in the 1860s into genteel housing for the burgeoning middle class. However, its proximity to the noise of Euston Station and surrounding industrial pollution repelled its intended residents. Instead, the Georgian terraces were subdivided into overcrowded flats for the working classes, many of whom had been displaced by the pressures of surrounding railway development. At the turn of the 20th-Century, the area was considered one of the worst slum areas in London<sup>[1]</sup>.

In the post-war decades, severe bomb damage and growing commercialisation led to a period of sustained population decline. At the same time, the neighbourhood attracted the attention of several speculative property developers, who began to buy up the

remaining residential properties with the hopes of letting them fall into a state of disrepair that would enable them to be demolished to make way for soaring new office towers<sup>[2]</sup>. Decades of neglect had reduced the community to a shell of its former self, and a feeling of hopelessness and distrust had set in among the few remaining residents.

*The Battle for Tolmers Square on the front page of the Observer, 26 August 1979*



Vince Petized in his living room at No 10 - 25 Tolmers Square.

*Group photo of squatters in Tolmers Square, organised as part of the campaign against evictions, N.O.T.S.*



### Act 3: Student Intervention

Such was the condition of Tolmers Square in the summer of 1973 when Nick Wates, an architecture and planning student at the Bartlett, finding himself dissatisfied with the remoteness of his theoretical academic work, sought to better ground his studies in the lives of the people his work would be affecting. His tutor, having heard rumours of a plan to comprehensively redevelop Tolmers Square (a 10-minute walk from the Bartlett), decided the area would be a suitable place for a five-week planning project. Armed with curiosity and idealism, Nick and four other undergraduates set off to survey the area: finding out who lived there, what the issues facing the area were, and how these might be fixed<sup>[2]</sup>.

strategic infilling and rebuilding of the neglected urban fabric could be employed to increase the density and amenities afforded by the area. An approach that would simultaneously improve the living conditions of the residents, save the council money, and preserve the area's unique sense of identity, a quality they considered could only be appreciated by planners who had an intimate knowledge of the area and its residents. Alarmed by their findings, discussion soon turned to what could be done to safeguard the future of Tolmers Square. In the following days, a loose coalition of students, residents, and shopkeepers clubbed together a community organisation that came to be known as the Tolmers Village Association (TVA).

### Act 4: The Battle for Tolmers Square

Following the quick victory of a push to turn the site of a demolished church into a children's playground instead of a car park (as initially proposed by the council), the TVA began to earn the support of the community. Activists (predominantly middle-class residents, students, and creatives) breathed new life into the cause. They established a local newspaper, squatted a Drummond Street shop for an office, and secured a £750 grant from the Rowntree Trust (roughly £8000 in today's money). Former student Nick Wates, squatting in Tolmers Square, took the helm as the TVA's coordinator.

In a studio review open to the residents of Tolmers Square, the students argued that instead of completely redeveloping the area,

The group concentrated its efforts on stopping the Levy Deal, a lucrative proposal to redevelop Tolmers Square into commercial office buildings, backed by one of London's largest speculative developers, Stock Conversion. Horrified by the prospect of comprehensive redevelopment, which they knew from experience meant the destruction and dispersal of the community, the TVA proposed an alternative development plan to be devised over three months, confident that a better future for Tolmers Square was possible after years of neglect. However, the group struggled to engage the local community in developing their ideas. A public exhibition of the TVA's draft schemes drawn up by planning students proved a costly failure, with low turnout leading many activists to question their ability to act as catalysts for positive change.

In a bold pivot, the TVA enlisted a local architecture firm to devise a sensitive redevelopment scheme. Simultaneously, they championed Direct Action, encouraging squatting to preserve the physical and social fabric of the Square. The first 'proper' squatters were three architecture students who arrived in February 1973. Within the next two years, 49 homes were squatted by almost 200 residents, providing free accommodation for those willing and able to put up the cost of maintaining the buildings, many of which were already beginning to fall apart. Boundary walls between backyards were knocked down, with beds of vegetables and flowers laid out in communal gardens, social events – including the first Tolmers Square festival in 1973 – were put

on by newly arriving creatives, and a derelict bank was briefly converted into a community hall<sup>[2]</sup>. The squatters played a unique role in the struggle against Stock Conversion by reversing the material and aesthetic decline of the neighbourhood, making developers' arguments for sweeping demolition less convincing day by day. Soon enough, the name Tolmers Village became less of a pretentious aspiration and more of an accepted reality, albeit a very different Village community from one of the past.

The TVA's crowning achievement was the development of a 30-minute documentary shot on a shoestring budget in the summer of 1974 by an independent filmmaker based in Euston Street<sup>[3]</sup>. After much persuasion, the BBC aired the show on an access channel to critical acclaim and a shower of public support. Mainstream media attention, coupled with intense police showdowns and legal battles, turned the struggle into a leftist cause célèbre. Students, trade unions, and local Labour Party members joined forces to defend Tolmers Square, ready to barricade the area against bailiffs.

Ultimately, the campaign's success was less dramatic but no less significant. Camden Council, persuaded by the TVA's vision and favourable economic conditions, bought out Stock Conversion's properties. The council abandoned commercial redevelopment plans, opting instead to rebuild Tolmers Square with red-brick council houses, a modest office block, and a pub<sup>[4]</sup>.



*Group photo of squatters in Tolmers Square, organised as part of the campaign against evictions, N.O.T.S.*

## Act 5: We all live in Tolmers Square

Fifty years after the triumph of the Battle for Tolmers Square, the area faces another transformation — this time spurred by the HS2-driven expansion of Euston Station. After 14 years of Conservative austerity and disastrous housing policies, the young and working class are feeling the brunt of soaring rental prices and insecure tenancies, rendering the Tolmers Square story ever more relevant.

The importance of students as catalysts for change cannot be understated. Their involvement in saving Tolmers Square demonstrated that lifelong connection to an area is not necessary for enacting meaningful change but that designers must learn to collaborate with, rather than dictate to, local communities. The activists' success was rooted in an acute awareness of the power imbalances at play and an ability to leverage their privileged positions for the collective good.

The approach of the student-activists, however, marks a new way of doing architecture; a paradigm shift from the producerist, conservative

tendencies of mainstream architectural practice. It represents a way of learning through practising architecture, out of which a new generation of Spatial Agents or 'intellettuali dell' architettura' may emerge<sup>[5]</sup>; a generation who grasp the ethical and sociological weight of their role and are aware that the consequences of architecture are of as much significance as the objects of architecture<sup>[6]</sup>.

As the story of Tolmers teaches us, it's only by placing the power over neighbourhoods in the hands of those who inhabit them that any meaningful and lasting change might occur. The battle for fair, equitable, and community-driven development is ongoing, and its lessons are as relevant today as they were half a century ago.

I don't walk past Tolmers Square on my way home from work anymore — I walk through it, appreciating the urban village won through tireless struggle, street by street, house by house, brick by brick.



Tim Wilson reading a book in the middle of Tolmers Square. He lived on the second floor of the building behind.



*The Tolmers Square festival  
2021. Photograph by author*

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### Image Credits:

- Images courtesy of the Tolmers Village Forum, a visual archive of the Tolmers Village community, 1972–1979. The full archive can be viewed online: <https://tolmers.net/>
- Image 1: <https://tolmers.net/5469locr/>
  - Image 2: <https://tolmers.net/6233lo/>
  - Image 3: <https://tolmers.net/stories/wait-until-the-head-teacher-sees-this/attachment/19790826-observer-1979-page-1/>
  - Image 4: <https://tolmers.net/5351groupphotolo/>
  - Image 5: <https://tolmers.net/5751locr/>
  - Image 6: <https://tolmers.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/5677-Kodachrome-lo-1024x723.jpg>

# THE CREATION

*Writing and illustration by George Knight*

Solitary, the structure sits. An expanse of grassland extends beyond and around the cement block like a mire in the centre of a city. It is whining almost; white noise echoing for so long that one has almost forgotten when it began. Ruffling the grass, a figure brushes senselessly through the ocean of blades, boots screeching along their surface with indifference.

The feet reach an alarming stop. Nature breathes. The hum of the new dawn settles around the figure and the structure, fastening the two together with destined attachment. Eyes examine the glinting surface of the block and they see holes punched erratically and chaotically into the façade like caverns of concrete carved into a cliff face.

The Architect's passive expression conceals a pit of anguish, hatred for the hands in which this was created. As they approach the structure, they scan the imposing geometric line of the building meeting the ground, head tilted and hands outstretched until they feel the dull thud of their palms against the warm concrete. Their shoulders tense, and with a light push, the wall falls forward, leaving a trail of disgruntled grass and migrating insects. With debris crunching underfoot, the Architect follows the fallen wall, entering the chasm it formed with the origins of hope and excitement beginning to flutter in their stomach.

They recall it, the restriction of possibility. Possibility feels like a palpable fission that electrifies the mind, pumping adrenaline from eye to brain with an overwhelming pace. It catalyses creation, passion, ideas and nostalgia, rolling up into themselves until the origin itself disappears amongst the pages with which they have been scratched into. Possibility is the magnet by which we are drawn to clean paper and sharpened graphite to inscribe ingenuity into a climate we want to improve. But possibility can be canned like laughter in staged entertainment – contained and restrained to prescribe a preconceived destination. That is what stands before them now: a hard, urban state of mind in an earthy, everchanging world

As they stand in the chasm the walls collapse has created, the eyes slowly gaze upwards, clutching onto that possibility that had since been restrained. Their eyes latch onto the flatness of the concrete above them. Fingers stretch upwards and they jump, grasping onto the ceiling, fingers sinking into the concrete as if they were plunging into untouched grains on an undiscovered island, virtuous in its innocence. Their shoulders strain. They hold on tight as their laces dangle beneath their muddy soles. With a moment of calm, a wooden frame bursts from the flatness they cling onto; a saturated sponge expelling liquid it cannot contain. With shocked fury, the architect buzzes. They have tasted the exhilarating relief of expression. Brushing dirt off their shoes, they step out of the chasm and run their eyes over the tired and uninspired concrete monument. A moment of reflection is held before they run towards it with nothing held back.

Dust. Mud. Wood. Paint. Glass. Plaster. These materials move through, above, over and around each other like water through water. Pushing and pulling, tensing and slackening, creating a piece of complete uniqueness. The Creation blinks innocently into the setting sun as The Architect emerges from its newly formed shadow. A smirk pinched with satisfaction skews their lips as they are consumed by the night.



# IN PRAISE OF INSTRUCTIONS

*Writing and photography by  
Charles Kot*

## Introduction

During my second-year placement, I would often overhear my supervisor grumble about design changes suggested by the Planning Committee of the Cambridge City Council. Once again, the conservation officers had opposed the proposed design of a residential extension on top of an existing retail building opposite a listed building. The rejection also came with a very ambiguous comment, "The proposed design is detrimental to the character of the surrounding environment."

Meeting the conservation officers' standards was clearly a difficult task. Naturally, such regulations or "instructions" could seem constraining and frustrating. However, during my summer break in Kyoto, I observed the lack of regulation to protect the character of the city's landscape. This experience led me to reconsider my perspective and begin to appreciate such policies in the UK.



From this experience, I believe it is worth investigating the purpose and value of these guidelines from regulating parties, as well as exploring whether these policies have the potential to introduce innovative ideas to enhance the quality of our building or urban landscape designs. We can perhaps start by comparing both extremes of such policies.

## A Different Perspective from Kyoto

During my summer break in 2023, I visited the renowned city of Kyoto for around two weeks. I had always envisaged Kyoto's historically rich architectural landscape being made up of many traditional timber structures. However, upon arrival, I was a bit taken aback by the lack of coherence in the concrete urban

landscape of this city. Many buildings of different and unique mass, form and materials can be found in every corner of Kyoto. A monolithic carved marble façade of a residential building can sit opposite a minimalist concrete office expressed in a curved shape. As remarkable as these buildings can be individually, I fail to see the coherence of the street view. One of these buildings I have encountered was the Oike Koto Building (御池幸登ビル). Built in the 90s, this nine-storey office building attracts the observer's eyes with its tremendous scale and its pseudo-classical features including a three-storey-tall sculpture of two overlapping suns. The



architectural eye would tell us that the massing and its aesthetic do not respond to its orthogonal and minimalistic built environment. In addition, this building overpowers an adjacent heritage landmark, the Nakaya Residential Main Building (仲家住宅主屋), showing no intention of preserving the Kyoto historical heritage. Through this example, one would find the lack of regulation of a new construction to its local context.

On one occasion, a married couple of local architects brought me to visit a refurbished traditional timber house repurposed as a café with a magnificent garden within its courtyard. It was, however, impossible not to notice the 4-storey concrete office towering over the garden, so I asked the architects, "How did this concrete building get planning permission at all when it blocks the view from the garden? Are there no regulations?" To which they answered, "No, there are only regulations on the colour of the building." At that moment, I understood the importance of controlling the preservation in terms of "the character of the surrounding environment".

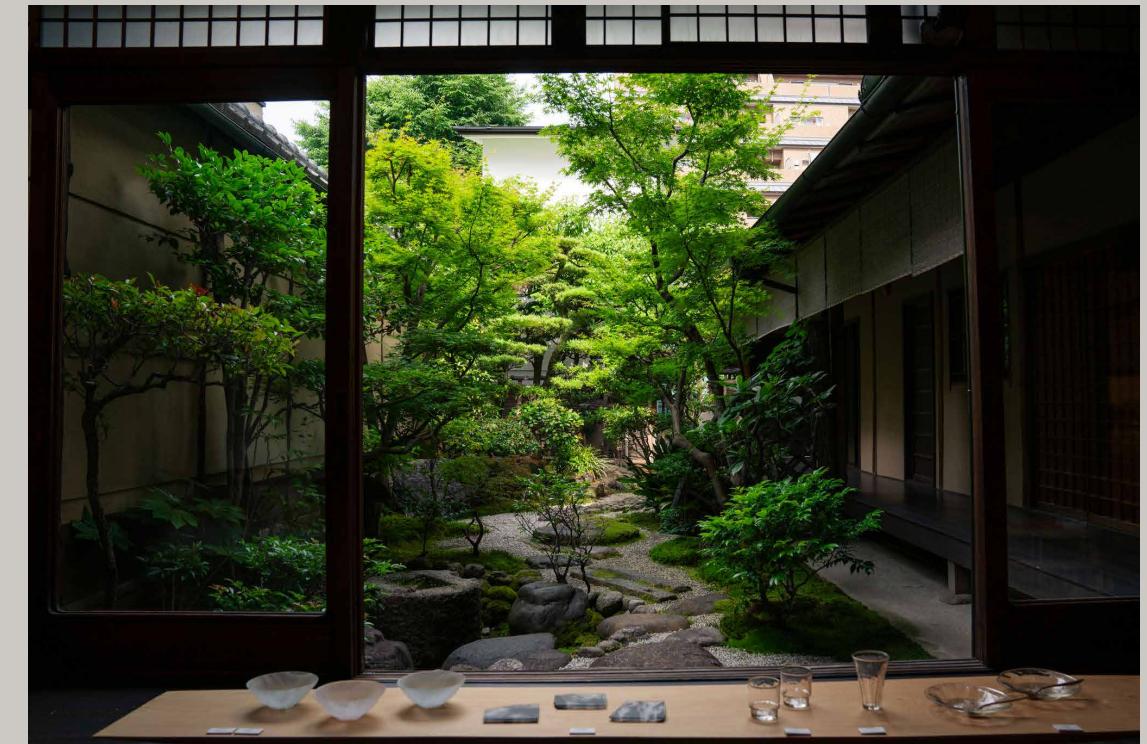


With that in mind, I began to understand Japanologist Alex Kerr's frustrated criticisms of the Kyoto Tower at Kyoto Station. This example also suggests that there is a phenomenon in Kyoto where its monolithic architecture and landscape fail to represent and preserve the profound history and culture of Kyoto a consequence, I would argue, of the lack of regulation surrounding built heritage.

### The value of "instruction"

Whilst practising architects may grumble about how planners and conservation officers fail to appreciate the brilliance of their designs, we must be mindful that their roles have a very valuable purpose. One of the most prominent landmarks in Cambridge, St. John's College Chapel, forms an integral part of the city's identity due to its distinctive presence in the Cambridge skyline. Therefore, the Cambridge Local Plan highly discourages new builds that are high-rise so that the skyline and identity of Cambridge will not be disrupted. If The Shard were to be built in Cambridge, would Cambridge still be Cambridge? The design of the individual building is not of concern, but rather where the design is applied and whether it fits its context and site.

In our daily lives, we often wouldn't notice how these policies protect the city appearance of historically significant cities such as Bath or Cambridge. It is of no surprise because when the city landscape appearance is in harmony, nothing will feel out of place or inappropriate. As such, this careful preservation of the existing character demonstrates the importance of regulations from the planners and the council.



### *Magnificent Garden within House in Kyoto*

However, while it is vital to maintain the historical integrity of these cities, it is also just as important to ensure sustainable growth so that they can continue to thrive. The Footprint Project in 2021, serves as an excellent example of how developments can be sympathetic to the existing character without impeding progress. Alongside the repair and conservation of Bath Abbey, the project introduced an environmentally friendly underfloor heating system that utilises heat waste from the city's thermal springs. This solution not only enhances comfort but also reduces the building's carbon footprint. Such approaches strike a balance between conservation and progression, enabling cities to remain vibrant and sustainable for future generations.

### Conclusion

This article is not intended an endorsement of planning application rejections or as a statement that planners are infallible. There have certainly been instances where council committees, in my opinion, have missed the mark by rejecting design proposals that would have enhanced the character of their surroundings. Rather, my aim is to provoke thoughtful consideration of

the opportunities and limitations we encounter in our design projects, whether in academia or professional practice. It's worth reflecting on the balance between regulation and creativity. How can we navigate these constraints to achieve the best outcomes?

I also hope this article serves as a gentle reminder to students and practitioners alike: while site constraints and project briefs can sometimes feel restrictive, they often exist for valid reasons. By critically engaging with these limitations, we may find opportunities for innovative solutions.

# POST- SCRIPT

Post\_Script is a collaborative art piece exploring the interpretation of instructions and the lost art of letter writing in the digital age. An anonymous chain of correspondents were invited to respond to previous correspondents' prompts, questions, and instructions through the medium of a slowly circulated postcard.



Organised by Jeger Harrington  
Collaborators: Anonymous

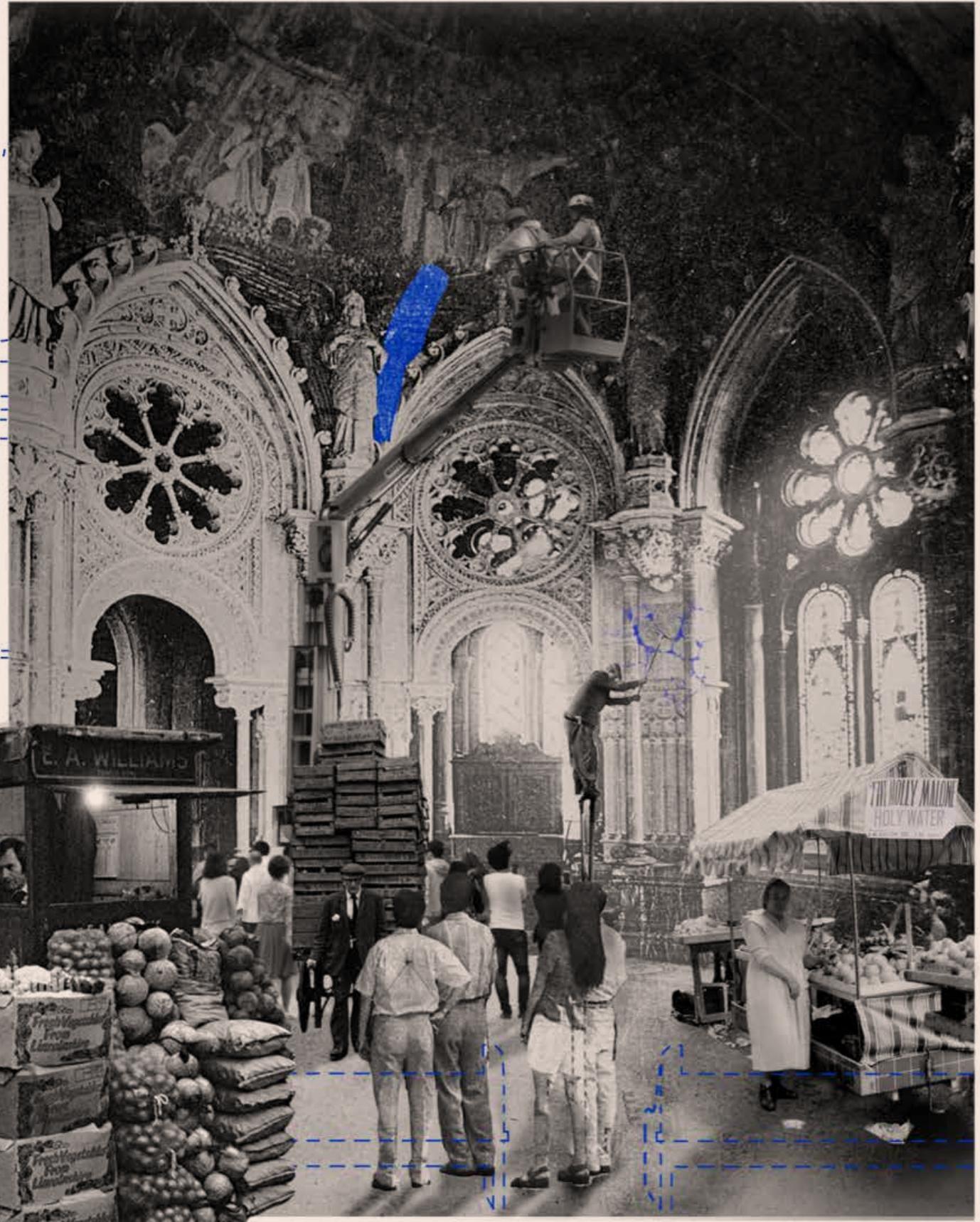
# ARCHITECTURE AND DECEIT

*Writing by Wenjin Low  
Graphics by Haydon Carr*

In experiencing architecture, we are often oblivious to how design deceives our minds, rarely pausing to scrutinise the truthfulness of our visual encounters. In our sensory-overloaded world, our minds make assumptions; therefore, what we think we see is often not the truth that we accept at face value (Hogenboom, n.d.). Designers exploit these perceptual tendencies to shape our experiences in spaces, including in carefully curated gardens.

Such cognitive manipulations permeate Eastern landscape architecture, which inspired by Chinese Shan Shui paintings, employ guiding Zen principles to create the desired ambiances. Japanese Karesansui gardens (Rock or Zen gardens) embrace 'Kanso,' the elimination of ornamentation to reveal the simple essence of an object (Zissmann, 2019). They favour abstract, sparse plantings like moss and shrubs over lush vegetation and feature meticulously raked and positioned rocks that symbolise water and its islands/mountains (Sobokuya, 2023).

Ryoanji Temple's 15th-century Karesansui Garden exemplifies the typical Zen Garden, viewed from a dedicated viewpoint (the chief monk's porch), small, and encased by walls. It is renowned for its configuration of its 15 rocks; at no single viewpoint can all 15 rocks be seen simultaneously - only 14 at once (Last Samurai, 2022). Adopting the Fukinsei principle of irregularity, stones are present in natural, imperfect odd numbers, breaking away from uniformity and achieving a sense of balance through asymmetry (Shizen Style, 2022). The design, respective to Buddhist principles and the context of a meditative space, alludes to the elusive nature of complete understanding (enlightenment) and invites users to contemplate and cultivate their minds through introspection (Mapleventurous, 2024).



The Adachi Museum of Art Rock Garden differs as the gardens serve as “living paintings,” to observe from a distance rather than in proximity, pushing the envelope of typical rock gardens with their function, immense size, lush vegetation, and water elements. This garden plays largely on ‘Yougen’, the power of being subtle (Shizen Style, 2022). Undulating mound topographies conceal and unveil scenic vignettes and hidden paths twist and turn beyond vegetative screens, tantalising visitors with glimpses of hidden vistas and cultivating a dynamic rhythm of discovery and anticipation (Ketchell, 2014).

Simultaneously, the mountains and hills in the background are incorporated into the shrub mounds in the garden through ‘Shakkei’ (borrowed scenery) crafting an illusion of a vast, natural landscape within a confined site. (Wikipedia, 2024). Distant, the numerous trees at the foot of the hill conceal the fact that the Kikafu waterfall ends above ground level, in reality, halfway up the hill. Up close, where visitors cannot access, we see a collecting pool which reduces the sound levels, making the waterfall appear softer and further away, the space much bigger than perceived. (Cerwen, n.d.)

As we embark on curated journeys, we are unwittingly ensnared in a web of perceptual deceit. As we experience a space, ask ourselves why we feel introspective, contemplative, or explorative. What techniques are used to make us feel as such and how can designers choreograph a dance of cognitive artistry to further craft more compelling and transformative experiences?

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# POST\_SCRIPT

Organised by  
Nesper Farrington  
Collaborators:  
Anonymous



# NEVER TALK TO STRANGERS

*By Elliott Bryant Brown*

Twelve years ago, during a drunken stroll around central Moscow, Alexander Vilensky passed Patriarch's Ponds – a landmark famed for its appearance in Mikhail Bulgakov's novel 'The Master and Margarita' – and became preoccupied by a 'deep sense of bitterness and injustice' that the ponds lacked a nod to the author's work. In an unconventional act of informal urbanism, Vilensky installed a sign, accompanied by an image, simply stating "запрещено разговаривать с незнакомцами", or, "Never Talk to Strangers".

The sign pictures Satan (reincarnated as a foreign professor) and his sidekicks (an assassin and anthropomorphic black cat), who first appear in the novel at this very location. It warns the passer-by of their potential (yet of course impossible) advent. The lines between fantasy and realism, much like in Bulgakov's novel, are blurred. The sign at the Ponds earmarks the very beginning of the chase throughout time and space that is 'The Master and Margarita.'

The satirical novel, written by Bulgakov over the twelve years leading up to his death in 1940, is an exemplar piece of magical-realism. It questions what would happen

if the state-enforced atheist Soviet society was confronted by something as undeniable as the materialisation of the devil; notably, how its institutions and systems, bound by instruction, would seek to explain the unexplainable. The novel dances along the timeline of the author's life, mirroring his affairs with censorship and creative rejection. Its thirty-three chapters (a nod to the age of Jesus Christ at the time of his crucifixion) are littered with ironies, interdiscursivity, and coined phrases still embedded in Russian vocabulary today.

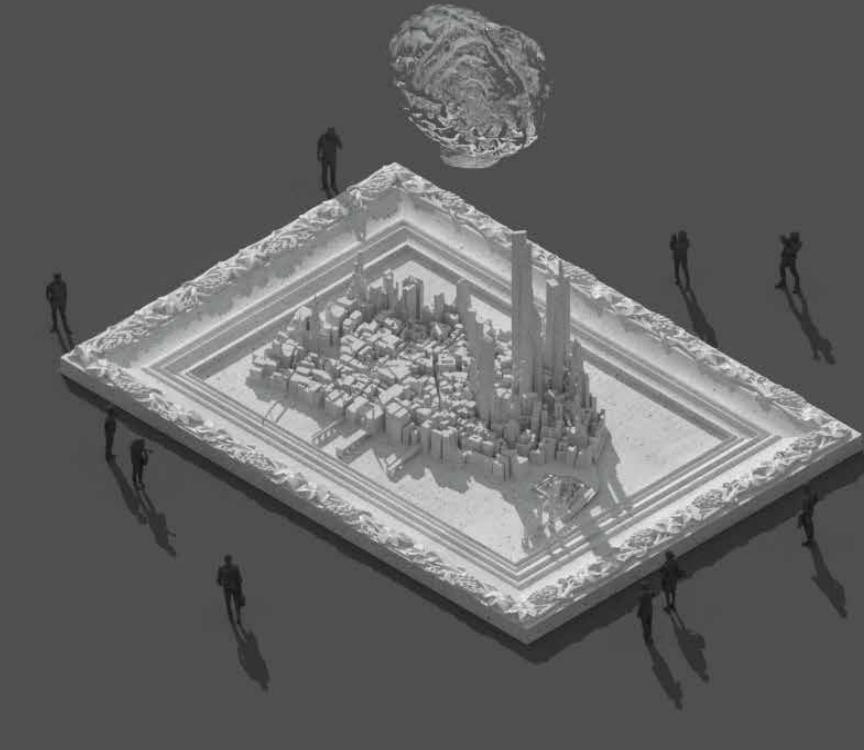
The sign's catchline – also the title of the novel's opening chapter – echoes the paranoid xenophobia of the Soviet era, a time in which one could be arrested for talking to foreign strangers.

With the unfiltered satire of Bulgakov's work posing such a threat to its totalitarian context, the uncensored version of the novel would not sit on Russian shelves until 1989. Its number of versions is uncountable, and its canonical manuscript untraceable. Despite the satirical tale's repression throughout the mid twentieth century, its revered existence today is arbitrary proof that Manuscripts Don't Burn.



# DESIGNING FREEDOM: THE *INVISIBLE* PATHS OF OUR BUILT WORLDS

*Writing by Daniela Silva,  
Graphics by Antar Ghazoul*



In the complex choreography of daily life, the spaces we navigate are not merely passive backdrops to our routines but active agents that shape our movements, interactions, and choices. This dynamic between the individual and the built environment prompts a compelling question: In the meticulously crafted world of architecture and urban planning, how much of our perceived freedom is truly our own, and how much is subtly engineered by the invisible hands of design?

Indeed, every element of the built environment - from the big boulevards that invite us on a promenade to the narrow alleys that squeeze our pace - serves as a silent choreographer of human behaviour. The placement of a window, the height of a staircase, or the width of a doorway; each detail is an instruction, guiding us subconsciously, influencing not only how we move but how we feel and interact. Architects and urban planners hold a quiet power, crafting spaces that dictate a hidden script we all unconsciously follow.

The concept of "designed freedom" is intriguing in this context. Are we truly making personal

choices, or are we merely following paths laid out by others long before our time? The layout of a city can determine the ease with which we reach our destinations, the interactions we have along the way, and even our social behaviours and communities. This form of silent guidance is not just physical but psychological, shaping our experiences and perceptions within a space.

As we explore the symbiosis of human and architectural interaction, we must question the ethics and implications of our designs. With great power comes great responsibility; thus, it is crucial for designers to consider the subtle, yet profound impact their decisions have on human autonomy. The balance between functional design and manipulative architecture is delicate and demands a thoughtful approach to ensure that while environments serve their purpose, they also respect the autonomy and diversity of their users.

In exploring these orchestrated spaces, we reveal the layers of complexity in our daily routines and uncover the profound ways our built environments influence our lives.

## The strategic design of public spaces

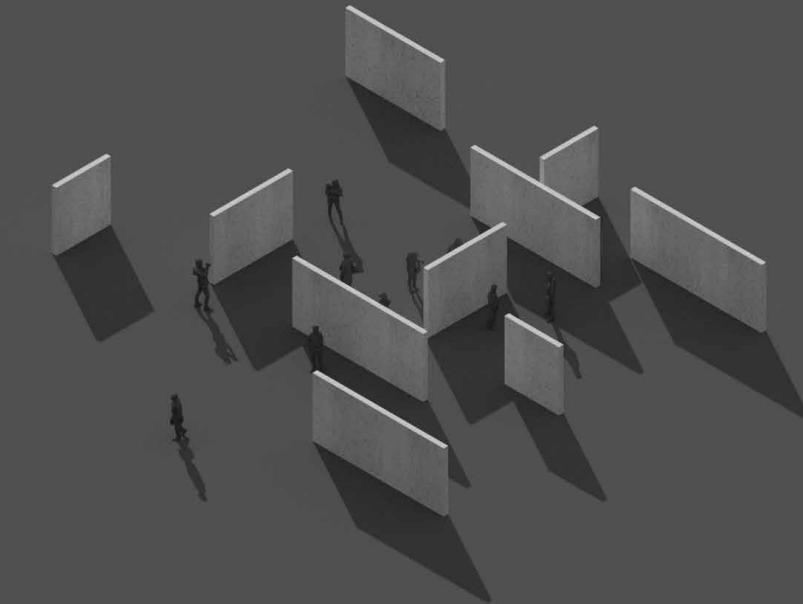
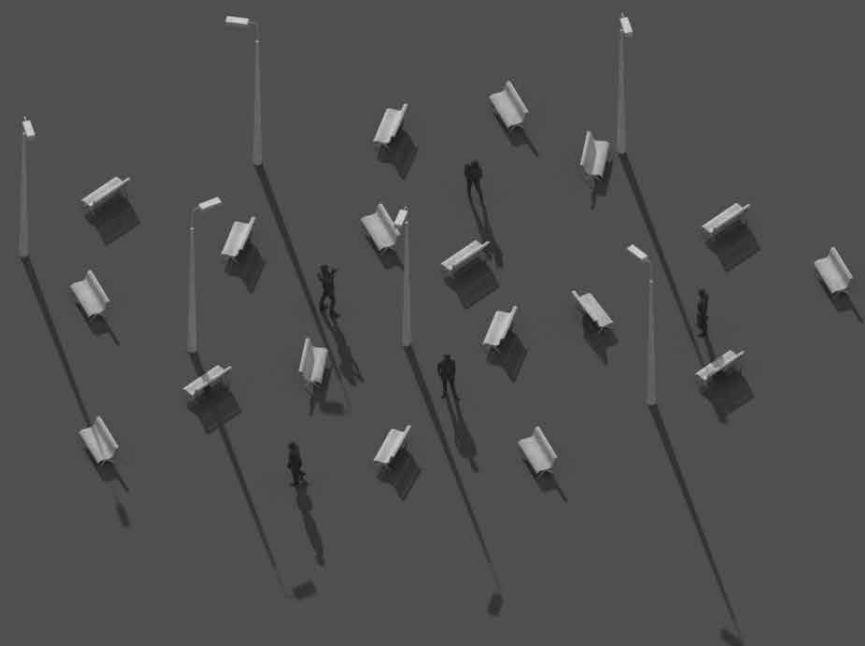
Consider the concept of the urban park, a seemingly serene oasis of green in the middle of the urban sprawl. At first, it appears as a refuge of freedom and spontaneity. Yet, every path, bench, and open space within it has been deliberately placed - not just for aesthetic value but to serve functional purposes that guide our decisions about where to walk, rest, and socialise. Such urban design goes beyond functionality; it has the power to shape societal behaviours and cultural interactions. For instance, a strategically placed bench can invite weary pedestrians to pause, potentially starting conversations among strangers. Curved pathways may change foot traffic flows, subtly encouraging encounters with new views or engagement with street performers. Through these design choices, a narrative is created into the space, directing not only where people go but influencing how they feel and interact along the way.

These orchestrated interactions extend beyond casual meet-ups. Design elements like lighting, landscaping, and even the materials used for walkways influence the ambiance and, consequently, the behaviour in these spaces. Bright, well-lit areas tend to invite longer stays and are perceived as safer, encouraging evening

gatherings. Contrastingly, darker, more secluded areas might avoid gatherings after dark, thus directing the flow of people to more vibrant parts of the park. Furthermore, adding elements such as water bodies, sculptures, and playgrounds become focal points, drawing groups and fostering a sense of community among different demographics.

The strategic placement of elements within these parks also plays a crucial role in their functionality. For example, a playground positioned near benches allows parents to comfortably watch over their children, thereby increasing the area's familial use. On the other hand, secluded corners with dense greenery might appeal to those seeking solitude or a quiet retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life.

The thoughtful design of urban parks is an exercise in social engineering. By dictating movement and encouraging specific types of interactions, architects and urban planners not only enhance the utility of these spaces but also shape the social dynamics that unfold within them. This subtle choreography of human activity within designed spaces highlights the intricate relationship between individuals and architectural influence.



## Architecture as a directive force

Beyond the parks and recreational areas, buildings themselves are significant conduits of human activity. Consider the architecture of a shopping mall, designed to maximize exposure to storefronts and influence consumer pathways. The placement of escalators, the strategic visibility of certain stores, and the accessibility of rest areas are all elements that guide the shopper through a calculated route, subtly shaping their shopping experience.

This principle extends to educational, corporate, and residential architecture. The layout of a classroom, the design of an open-plan office, or the arrangement of spaces within a housing complex can all encourage or discourage interactions, establish social hierarchies, and manage the dynamics between public and private spheres. In educational settings, the positioning of the teacher's desk, the orientation of student seating, and the allocation of areas for group work can enhance or prevent collaborative learning. Such design decisions not only affect academic performance but also influence social interactions among students, shaping the educational environment's overall spirit.

In the corporate world, the architecture of office spaces plays a crucial role in dictating

workflow and communication. Open-plan offices, for instance, might foster a sense of transparency and encourage teamwork, while simultaneously challenging individual privacy and focus. The design and placement of meeting rooms, break areas, and even the main entrance can significantly affect employees' interaction patterns, potentially impacting corporate culture and productivity.

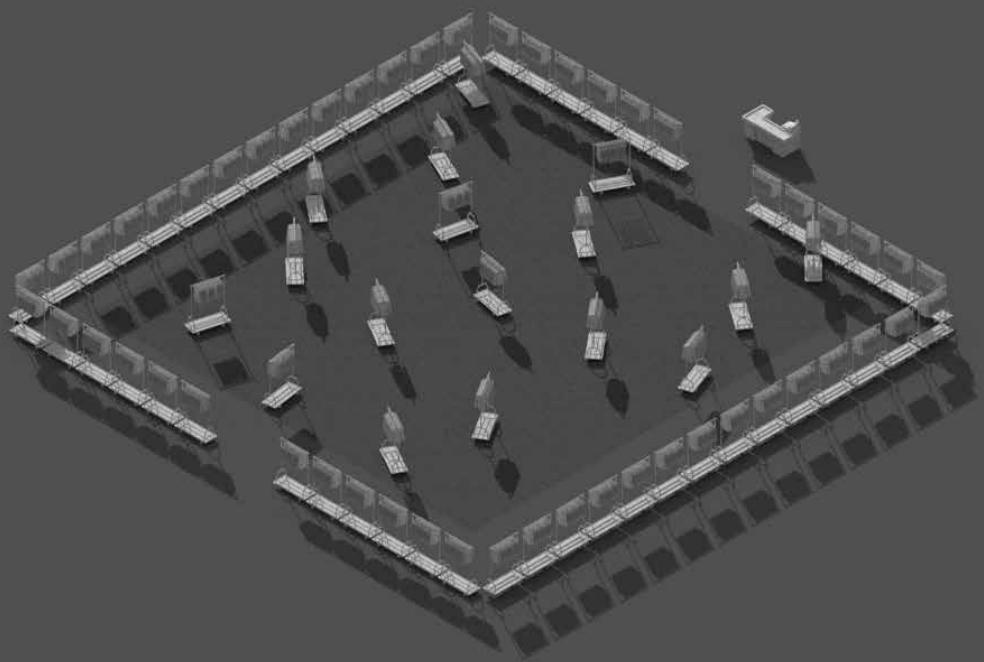
Residential architecture, too, manipulates social interactions through its design. The configuration of living spaces, the distance between buildings, and the communal areas' accessibility are all critical in developing a sense of community or isolation among residents. For example, a well-placed common area such as a garden or rooftop can become a social hub, promoting bonds among neighbours and a shared sense of belonging.

Each of these examples testify to the profound impact architecture has on daily life. By directing physical movements and interactions through strategic design, architects and planners play an important role in shaping societal norms and behaviours, illustrating the power of built environments to influence not just individual experiences but the fabric of community life itself.

## The illusion of spontaneous choice

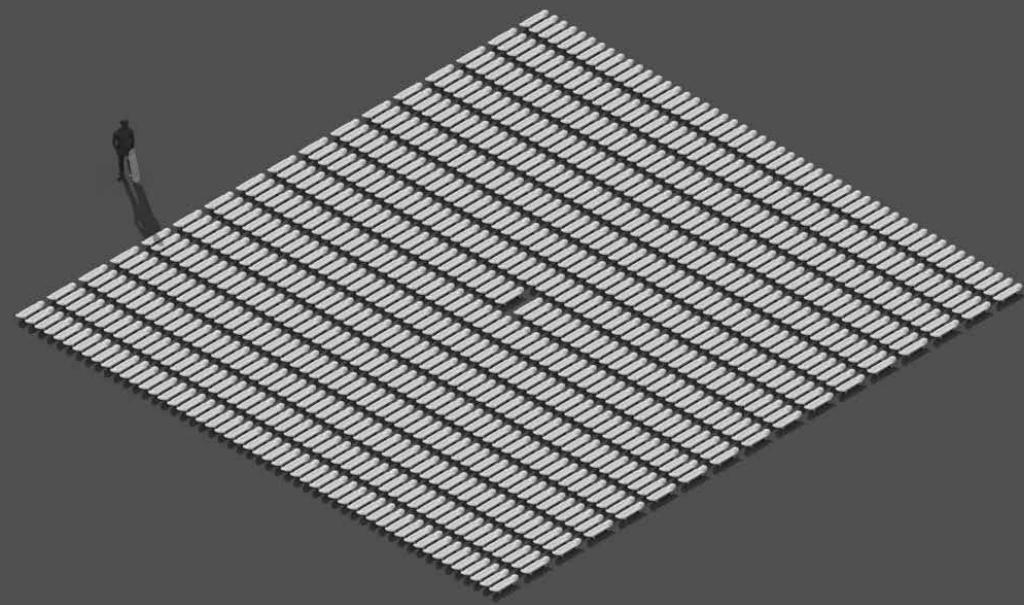
While we may like to consider our decisions in these spaces as entirely autonomous, they are often influenced by their designed environments. The notion of “choice architecture,” a term coined by behavioural economists, explains how the presentation of choices can impact decision-making. In the context of urban design, this means that even leisurely strolls through a park are less spontaneous than they appear, shaped by predefined pathways and strategically placed features.

However, acknowledging this does not necessarily undermine our autonomy but deepens our understanding of the symbiotic relationship between individuals and spatial design. By recognising the role of architecture in guiding our decisions, we can become more mindful navigators of our environments. This awareness enables us to appreciate the subtle yet powerful ways that spaces are crafted to influence our behaviour - from the intentional curves of a pathway that guide us towards certain areas to the positioning of signage that directs our journeys within a complex transit system.



This realisation invites us to reflect on how our interactions with space are shaped not only by the physical layout but also by the psychological impact of these designs. The colours, textures, and overall aesthetics of an environment can evoke emotions and reactions that guide our choices. For instance, the use of warm lighting and natural materials in a retail space might create a welcoming atmosphere that encourages longer visits and, by extension, potentially more purchases.

In a broader context, understanding the dynamics of choice architecture in urban planning and architectural design empowers communities and policymakers to advocate for spaces that better serve their needs and preferences. It allows a dialogue between designers and the public, encouraging a collaborative approach to urban development. This dialogue ensures that spaces do not just meet aesthetic and functional standards but also enrich the lives of those who navigate them daily, fostering environments that are not only efficient but also inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of their users.



## Finding freedom within constraints

Despite the directive nature of design, there remains a capacity for individuals to reinterpret and repurpose these spaces in unexpected ways. Skateboarders, for instance, might see benches and ledges as components of an urban playground rather than mere seating options. Community groups could transform car parks into venues for weekend markets or concerts, proving that while design suggests certain uses, it does not dictate them rigidly.

The challenge for architects and urban planners lies in creating environments that balance guidance with opportunities for personal or collective reinterpretation. The ideal is to craft spaces that are both functional and inspiring, providing clear paths and purposes while also allowing room for spontaneous personal and communal engagements. This approach promotes a dynamic interaction between the environment and its users, encouraging creativity

and personal expression within the designed landscape.

Successful urban spaces often anticipate and embrace the unpredictable ways people might use them. This requires a deep understanding of human behaviours and cultural contexts, as well as an openness to allow those factors to influence final designs. It challenges designers to think beyond traditional aesthetics and functionality to consider how a space can cater to the evolving dynamics of urban life.

Ultimately, the ability to find freedom within architectural constraints is about creating environments that are not only accommodating but also stimulating. By designing with flexibility, inclusivity, and adaptability in mind, architects and planners can create spaces that are truly responsive to the diverse ways people choose to live, work, and play. This not only enriches the human experience but also fosters a sense of community and belonging in the urban fabric.

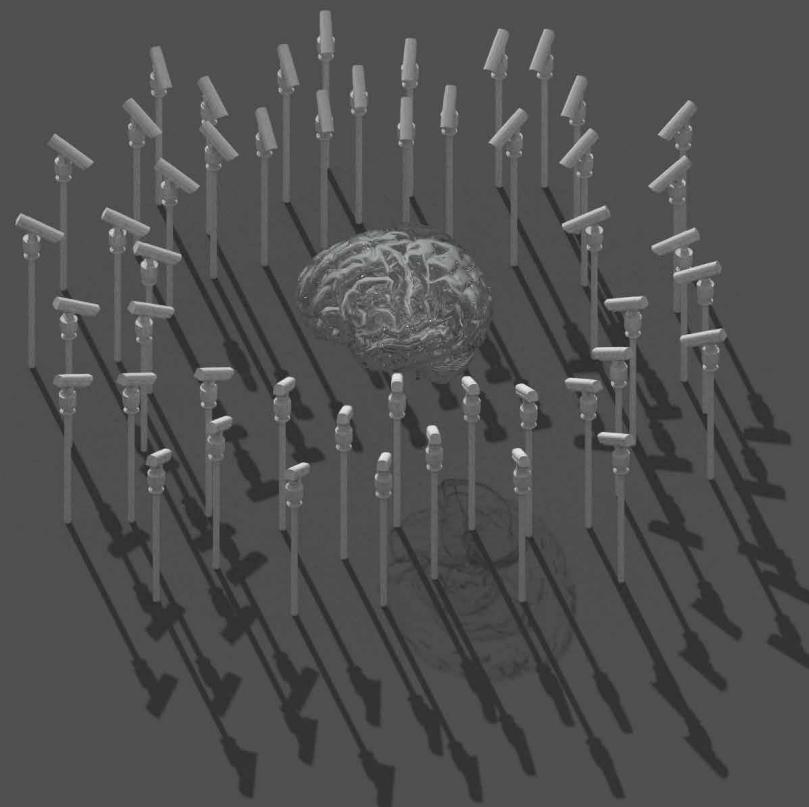
## Ethical dimensions and the future of responsive design

As we advance into an era increasingly influenced by smart technologies and data analytics, the role of architects evolves towards creating adaptive urban spaces. Future designs might incorporate real-time data on traffic patterns, weather conditions, and crowd behaviours, enhancing the dynamic interaction between space and user. Such responsive designs could adjust environments in real-time to better meet the community's needs.

However, this progression brings forth ethical considerations: How much should design influence behaviours, and where is the line between subtle guidance and manipulation? As architects gain more sophisticated tools to predict and influence how spaces are used, issues of transparency and public consent become crucial. These technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for improving urban efficiency and well-being, but they also raise privacy concerns.

Who decides what data is collected, how it is used, and who has access to it? The potential for surveillance and control under the guise of convenience and safety could lead to spaces that prioritize certain behaviours over others, potentially marginalizing some groups.

As we integrate more technology into our environments, we must consider the environmental impact of these innovations. The sustainability of smart urban designs becomes an ethical imperative, not just an aesthetic or functional one. Architects and planners must therefore balance technological integration with responsible stewardship of resources, ensuring that advancements in design continue to serve both people and the planet responsibly. Ensuring that these spaces remain inclusive, equitable, and sustainable will be one of the defining challenges of modern urban development, demanding a careful consideration of both the potentials and challenges of responsive design.



## Conclusion

Exploring the invisible paths of our built worlds reveals the profound impact of architecture and urban design not just on our physical movements but on our perceptions, interactions, and freedoms. This interplay challenges us to reconceive our environments as active participants in shaping our daily experiences, capable of both constraining and enhancing our lives.

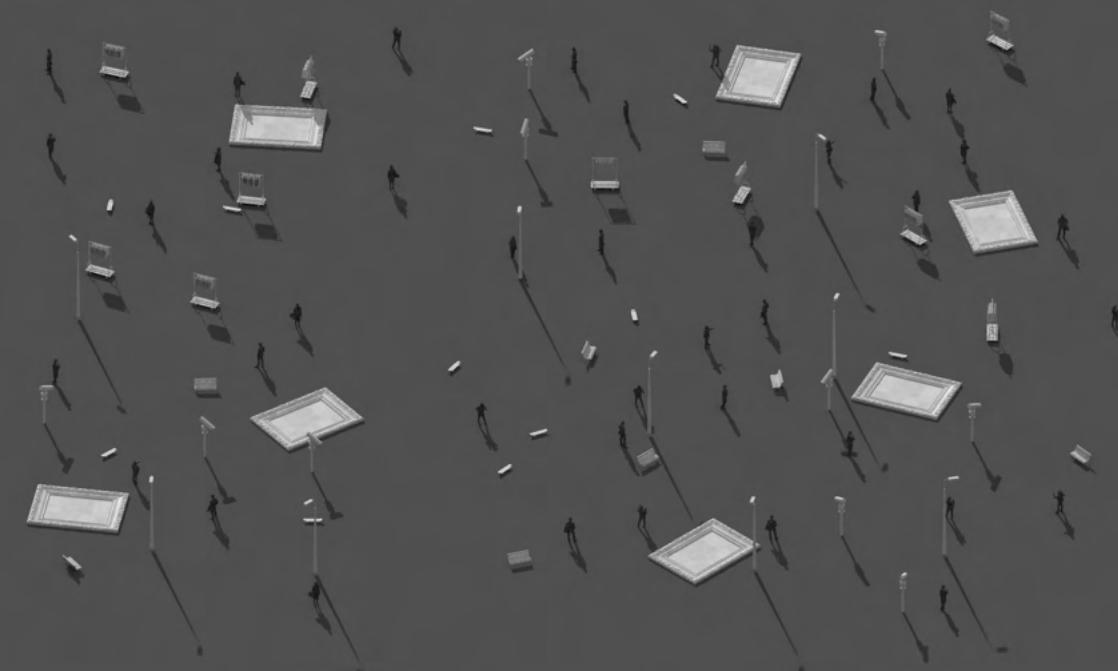
Ultimately, as we cross these designed landscapes, we are reminded of the powerful influence of place - not just to host our activities but to actively shape them. This power carries a significant responsibility, requiring a delicate balance between guiding us and allowing us the freedom to find our paths. Through a deeper understanding and engagement with this dynamic, both designers and residents can cultivate environments that enrich our human experience, transforming our built worlds into places where we truly live, not just reside.

This calls for a collaborative approach to urban development, where community involvement and feedback play crucial roles. By inviting residents to participate in the design process, planners and architects can ensure that spaces not only meet functional requirements but also

resonate with those who use them daily. Such participatory design fosters a sense of ownership and connection to the space, enhancing the community's attachment and satisfaction.

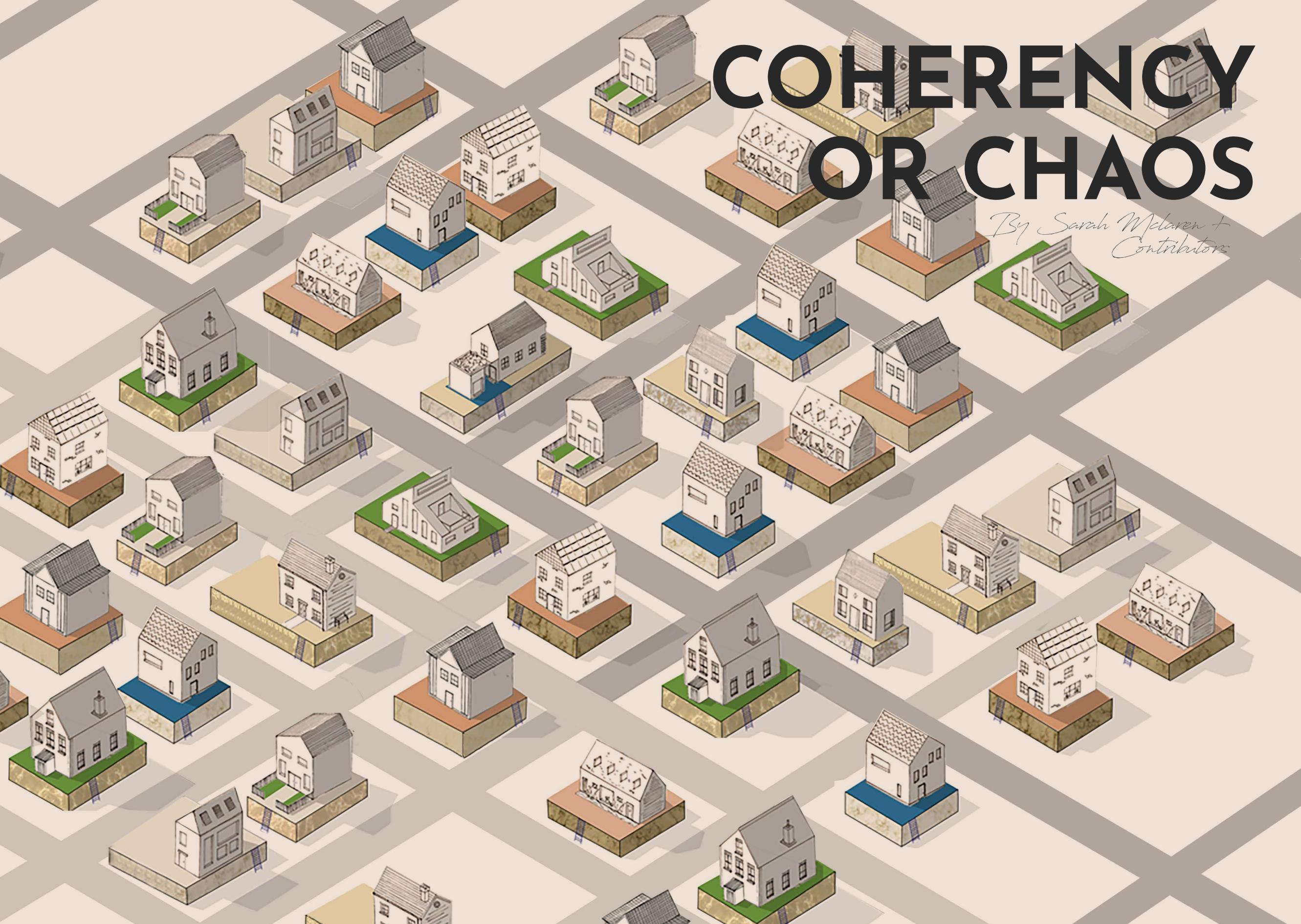
As technology and new materials create new possibilities for innovative and sustainable designs, the future of urban planning looks promising. These advancements allow the creation of environments that adapt to changing needs, promote health and well-being, and minimize ecological footprints. Yet, the excitement of innovation must be tempered with cautious reflection on the long-term impacts these designs may have on human behaviours and society at large.

As we look ahead, the challenge for contemporary architecture and urban design is clear: to craft spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing and functional but also thoughtful and inclusive. By embracing the full complexity of human-environment interactions, we can create places that are not merely backdrops for action but active elements in the creation of a vibrant, equitable, and sustainable future. Thus, the journey through our built environments becomes an ongoing dialogue between our collective aspirations and the spaces we inhabit, each shaping the other in continual and dynamic ways.



# COHERENCY OR CHAOS

*By Sarah McLaren +  
Contributors*





### Coherency |Task 1|

Draw a house. It must have 4 windows on the front face and a double-pitched roof. The site is flat. Draw an isometric drawing as if the building is seen from above. You have 15 minutes.

### Chaos |Task 2|

Please design whatever you want. There is no brief. It can be a perspective, plan, elevation, something abstract or even just random lines. There is no time limit.

Questions I ask the reader:

Does an architectural brief limit imagination?

Does it set limits within creativity?

What should shape our designs, coherency or chaos?

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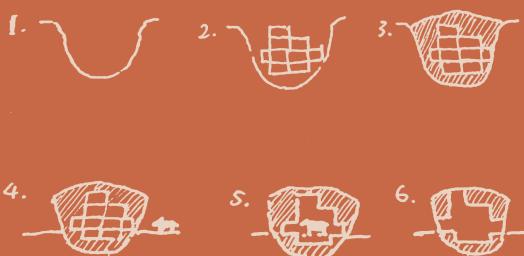
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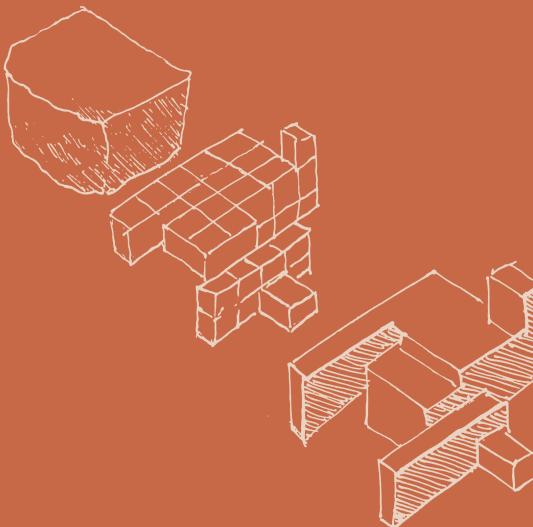
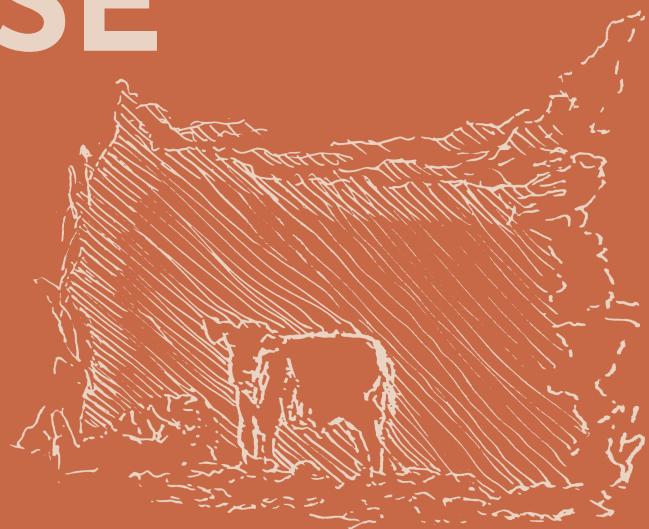
# CONSTRUCTING A HOUSE USING A COW

By Yukta Chegu

Chafing at the stylistic straitjacket of modern-day concrete jungles stands the Trufa House (Truffle House) by Anton Garcia-Abril and Ensamble Studio. This unconventional structure, not built but rather cast in and excavated from the soil in the process of subtraction, represents a departure from traditional architectural practices. Central to this experiment is an unexpected collaborator: a cow. Her labour, although simple and honest, fundamentally challenges conventional construction and alongside the atypical construction process signifies a paradigmatic shift in architectural approach.



The construction is a sequence of deliberate tectonic actions. A hole is dug in the earth, defining the external form through excavation and negative space. Inside this void, hay bales are meticulously stacked, shaping the interior space. Concrete is then poured into the gaps between the hay bales and the earth, creating a unique blend of materials that challenges conventional boundaries between interior and exterior, and the distinctive qualities of space and anti-space. This not-so-new way of thinking about materiality is resemblant to troglodyte dwellings, such as the Matmata, in which homes are carved directly into the earth, creating a network of subterranean spaces that offer natural insulation from the harsh desert climate. The process involves digging a large pit in the ground, around which rooms are excavated, forming a central courtyard surrounded by living spaces. An archaeo-mimetic approach to subtractive architecture prioritises the creation of usable space over pre-determined forms. In the Trufa, this is seen in the organisation of the hay bales to create the functional negative space within the concrete. By revisiting these methods, the Trufa House connects with paleo-inspiration, redefining through contemporary experimentation.



Once set, the encased 'truffle' is unearthed and sliced open on each end, introducing the protagonist of this construction narrative: Paulina the calf. For months, the Trufa House served as her habitat and feeding ground. Her movements within the space exposed the positive areas and the organic patterns of the hay bales debossing the concrete. Paulina's involvement disrupted traditional construction rules, proposing a new rhythm to that of modern construction known to be highly contractual. It draws one's mind to Sergio Ferro's experiments in which he promoted 'open-ended processes', encouraging his students to rebel against the traditional intentions of a 'designed' final outcome. Although the Trufa house has somewhat defined parameters, the almost messy and childlike steps in the construction process leave ample room for spontaneity and play, thus demonstrating an alternative to the mundanity of automation.

The notion of 'design follows nature' in the Trufa House allows the textures and forces imposed by the earth and hay bales to dictate details within human-set parameters. The Trufa House juxtaposes the expected rigidity of concrete with the supposed flimsiness of hay, reinterpreting the role of architects and construction in a more symbiotic relationship with nature.

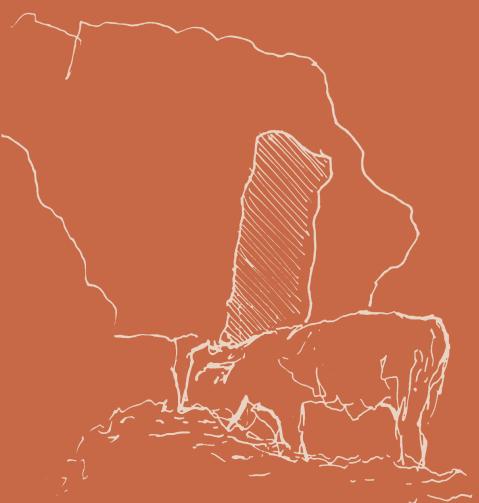
Contemporary architecture often favours creating well-defined, enclosed 'places' with formal circulation and articulated rooms. However, this often limits our capacity for curiosity and exploration. In contrast, the Trufa House finds strength in the unpredictable intersection of

natural formation and human intention. This project raises the question of whether the role of the architect should be redefined or revitalised by incorporating long-disused techniques, such as those seen in troglodyte structures.

The Trufa house is undeniably a provocative experiment. It questions traditional building techniques and confronts the narrative of construction. By integrating a living cow into the construction process and utilising hay bales to form negative space, the project challenges conventional notions of space, materiality, and the relationship between humans and nature. It stands as a testament to the potential of innovation, holding a conceptual echo to historical precedents and human relationships with nature.

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# LOCAL REFLECTION: PAPER TRAILS

*By Haydon Carr*

Littering tarnishes our cities and diminishes the natural beauty of our surroundings. With this instruction, my aim is to restore and highlight the often-neglected beauty of overlooked neighbourhoods. By transforming readily available resources within half a square kilometre of our homes into abstract art, I aim to change your perspective and understanding of your local area while also addressing the impacts of littering.

Using the traditional art form of suminagashi (墨流し), I aim to instruct you on how to produce a truly unique artwork. This process involves making recycled paper from rubbish collected from your local streets, creating sustainable, non-toxic inks from berries, and using local streams as the setting for the suminagashi technique.

## Making the Paper

- Step 1: Paper Collection
  - Step 2: Shred Paper
  - Step 3: Soak Overnight
  - Step 4: Strain
  - Step 5: Blend into Pulp
  - Step 6: Deckle Paper

## Making the Ink

- Step 7: Collect Blackberries
  - Step 8: Simmer to make ink
  - Step 9: Dry paper





## Recycled Paper

Gather recycled paper from your local area.

2 carrier-bags or 128 grams = 10 sheets



## Shredding

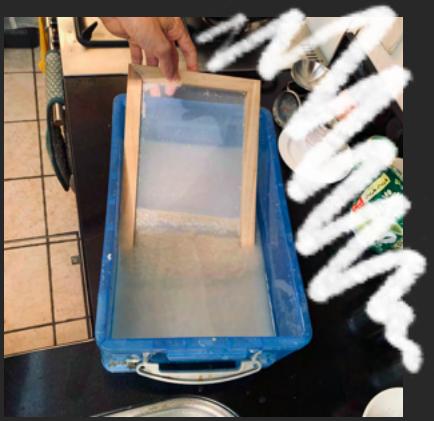
Tear the paper into 2-inch pieces to increase the surface area.



## Soaking

Soak the paper for 24 hours.

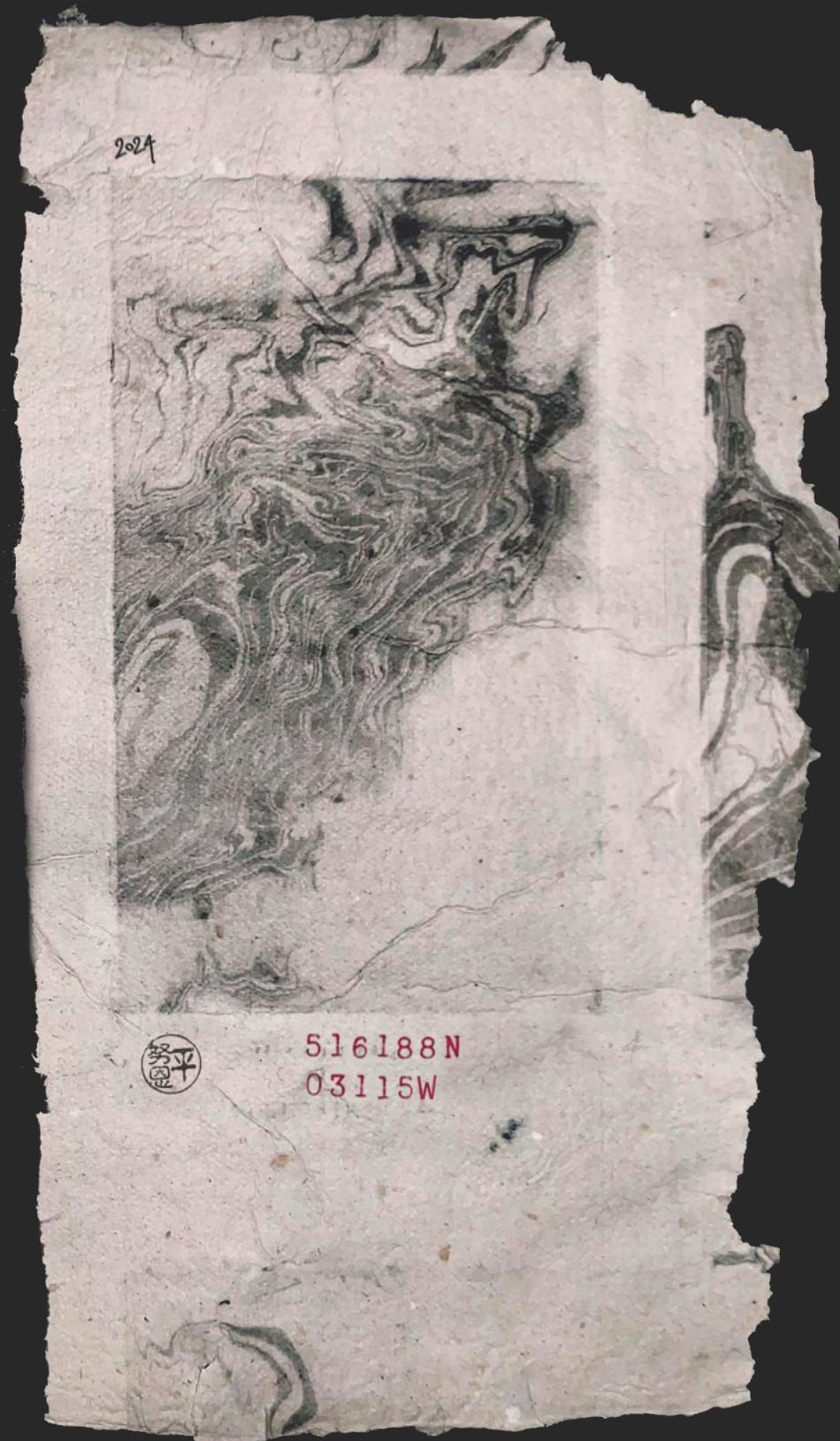
Once it starts to break down, blend it into a pulp.



## Forming

Add the pulp to a large vat of water, then use a mould and deckle to shape your paper sheet.

After forming, hang it to dry overnight.



**WITH MANY  
THANKS TO  
ALL OUR  
COLLAB-  
ORATORS.  
WITHOUT  
YOU  
PAPERSPACE  
WOULDN'T  
HAPPEN.**

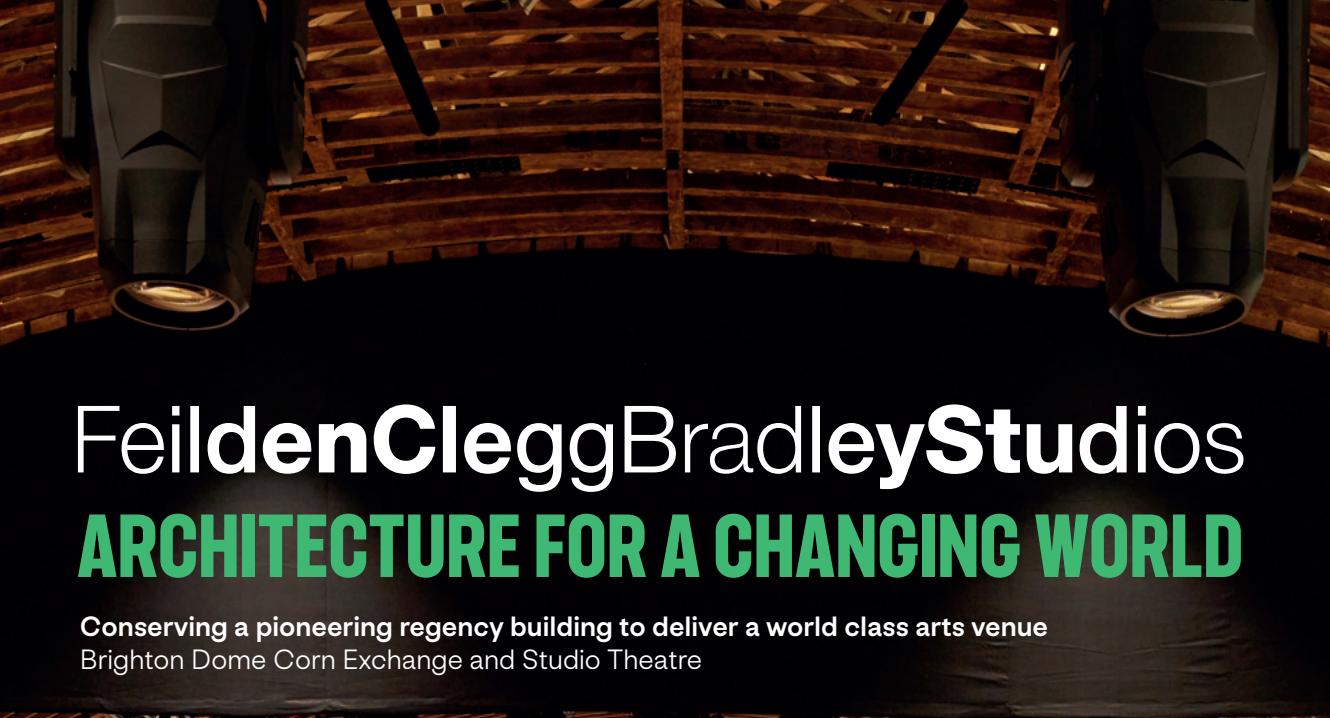
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