

PAPER
SP
ACE

Editor's Note

In the last Paperspace meeting we concluded our thoughts about the theme 'Comfort'. At first, it seemed it would be an easy task to summarise and define our collective opinion, telling a linear story from beginning to end. But the more we spoke and engaged in debate, it was clear that each contributor had a differing perspective on comfort; the meaning of the word and its relationship to architecture.

Our collective definition of comfort is complex and layered. Not able to be summarized in one, or even two sentences. Instead, our definition found form in the weekly meetings, our conversations, messages, words and thoughts over the past six months.

As we reflected on our thoughts, three main branches of comfort presented themselves: Behind Closed Doors, The Future of the Architect and A Spring in your Step.

'Behind Closed Doors' explored our relationship to home. Having resided inside for nearly a year and a half, as lockdowns have been enforced, our dwellings were more important than ever. Perhaps a seemingly obvious interpretation of the theme comfort, the materiality of our homes was a key focus to our conversations. Soft furnishings, in particular, often go unnoticed and belittled a 'less important' than the homes spatial organisation. Yet, when we are surrounded by textiles; curtains, cushions and rugs, there is a sense of 'gezellig', a warm and cosy feeling, that would simply be absent with their removal.

Woven into each meeting was a debate about the 'Future of the Architect', unpicking why architects are so often complicit. Acting from a position of comfort, the architect has become apathetic, lacking the motivation and drive to create positive change. One side argued for increased legislation and policy, forcing the profession to adhere to better standards, regarding environmental and social sustainability. The other side pushed for a more anarchistic approach, relying on methods of mutual aid and the peoples good will to make more informed and considered decisions when producing a piece of architecture.

'A Spring in your Step' covered the feeling of comfort and fear when roaming the city. Being a team dominated by women, the individuals' safety walking from place to place became a topic of conversation. Being constantly in fear of who might approach you next or shout from across the street is exhausting; a universal discomfort. We tried to provide some solutions; perhaps the answer is to increase our visibility, so less goes unnoticed; but then we are the subject of surveillance, no longer able to quickly escape through the shadows.

Having categorised our thoughts on comfort into clear and defined sections, this issue of Paperspace wants to gently lead you through our thoughts, ideas and stories - holding your hand every step of the way. We hope that you see that comfort can mean something different to everyone: your comfort is different from mine, mine different from yours and our comfort today may well be different to our comfort tomorrow.

- Amy Young -

WE GATHER THEME IDEAS, LANDING UPON LESSONS, FAITH AND COMFORT. CONVERSATIONS WIND BETWEEN POWER DYNAMICS, SAFETY, MULTI-FAITH SPACE, FAILURES, SELF-DISEMPOWERMENT TO ARCHITECTURE AS A TOOL OF CAPITAL.

THE FIRE OF NOTRE DAME IS RAISED; AN EVENT SPARKING OUTRAGE AND DISTRESS, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO DON'T HAVE A FAITH. ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-ONE MESSAGES ARE EXCHANGED ABOUT THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT; WHERE DO WE STAND? HOW CAN WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE? WILL THE PROFESSION EVER STOP BEING COMPLICIT?

WOMEN DOMINATE THE CONVERSATION. ALMOST TEN TO ONE. WE NOTICE THIS AND BEGIN TO UNPICK THE REASONING WHY WE FEEL COMFORTABLE WRITING. WORDS PROVIDE A SAFETY BLANKET THAT WE CAN HIDE BEHIND, THE EDITORIAL PROCESS LEAVES NOTHING UNRESOLVED, ENSURING EACH WRITER CAN STAND CONFIDENT WITH THEIR WORDS. VIOLENCE CANNOT BE IGNITED THROUGH A SCREEN OR A PIECE OF PAPER, WOMEN ARE SAFE TO WRITE, WITHOUT FEAR OF THE REPERCUSSIONS. BUT IT IS NOT JUST WOMEN, WRITING PROVIDES A REFUGE FOR ALL WHO ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED AND DISCRIMINATED AGAINST - GIVING A PLATFORM TO OUSTS ANGER, EXPRESS JUDGEMENT AND CREATE INFLUENTIAL CHANGE.

THE CONVERSATION EVOLVES TO SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES, EACH CONTRIBUTOR RECOUNTING THEIR EXPERIENCES OF FEAR, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION. COMFORT IS USED WITH A VARIETY OF DEFINITIONS, EXPLORING WAYS WE COULD FEEL MORE AT EASE AS WE ROAM OUR STREETS AND OCCUPY OUR BUILDINGS.

A POINT IS HIGHLIGHTED; CREATING ARCHITECTURAL COMFORT IS HARD. IF THERE IS ONLY A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL MAKING DECISIONS, IT LEADS TO A VERY NARROW VIEW OF COMFORT; BUT BRINGING TOGETHER THOSE WHO DIFFER, COMFORT OF THE MASSES IS EASIER UNDERSTOOD, PERHAPS RESULTING IN COMFORTABLE SPACES FOR ALL.

OUR DEBATE EVOLVES INTO THE TOPIC OF 'POOR DOORS', INTERROGATING THE SEGREGATION BETWEEN LUXURY AND AFFORDABLE IN THE DEVELOPMENTS SPRINGING UP IN VAUXHALL. TOWERING 'LONDON VERNACULAR' HIGH RISES ARE THE ULTIMATE SYMBOL OF THE DIVIDE IN WEALTH ACROSS THE CITY, HIDING AWAY THOSE LESS WEALTHY, SO AS NOT TO DISRUPT THE COMFORT OF THE ELITE.

WE PICK APART OUR CURRICULUM, HONING IN ON THE FLAWS. A LACK OF DIVERSITY, A LACK OF EXPOSURE AND A GENERAL NARROW MINDEDNESS

ABOUT DESIGN. WE ARE TAUGHT FROM A POSITION OF COMFORT, WHERE LITTLE IS QUESTIONED OR CHALLENGED. IT TAKES STUDENT COLLECTIVES, RILED WITH FRUSTRATION, TO CREATE SOME KIND OF CHANGE.

THE CONVERSATION TURNS TO THE CLIMATE. LIVING IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS, OUR REACTIONS ARE APATHETIC AND EMPTY. BUILDINGS ARE STILL BEING ERECTED AT A STARTLING RATE, CITIES EXPANDING AND THE GREENBELT SHRINKING. A CAPITALIST SOCIETY DOES NOT GIVE SPACE FOR A SLOW DOWN AND FOR DEGROWTH - SURPLUS CAPITAL MUST BE USED AND FED INTO THE PROPERTY MARKET. OUR COMFORT IS BEING COMPROMISED AT THE EXPENSE OF PROFIT.

WE DIG DEEPER, REALISING THE BINARY COMPARISON BETWEEN COMFORTABLE AND UNCOMFORTABLE HAS BEEN HOLDING US BACK. THE IDIOSYNCRASIES OF OUR OWN PERSPECTIVES, OUR ENVIRONMENTS AND UPBRINGINGS, HAVE LED TO DIVERSE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WORD COMFORT. DISCUSSIONS MORPH FROM SCIENTIFIC ARGUMENTS INTO DISCUSSIONS OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE.

THE QUESTION, 'ARE YOU COMFORTABLE' CIRCULATES. "OF COURSE WE ARE", "YES" ...BUT IT IS STILL A NUANCED ISSUE. WE ACKNOWLEDGE COMFORT IS BOTH FLEETING AND PERMANENT. OUR PRIVILEGE AS UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AUTOMATICALLY PLACES US AS SOME OF THE MOST COMFORTABLE INDIVIDUALS IN THE WORLD, YET SITTING IN A DARK, WINDOWLESS ROOM OUR PHYSICAL COMFORT IN THIS MOMENT MIGHT BE ABSENT.

PERHAPS ONE PERSON'S COMFORT HAS TO BE SACRIFICE TO MAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S APPEAR. WORKING GRUELING HOURS AND UNPAID OVERTIME MIGHT CREATE A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING, HOUSING SOME OF THE UK'S POOREST. BUT THEN, USUALLY IN A CAPITALIST SYSTEM, COMFORT IS OFTEN ONLY ACCESSIBLE TO THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD IT. COMFORT IS NOT A HUMAN RIGHT OR PROVIDED BY THE STATE; COMFORT HAS TO BE SOUGHT OUT YOURSELF.

AS DESIGNERS, WE IDENTIFY A SUBTLETY IN THE CHANGE FROM COMFORTABLE TO UNCOMFORTABLE STATES AND VICE VERSA. THE DIRECTION AND QUALITY OF THIS SHIFT IS UNIQUE TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND MAY TAKE PLACE FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF A SINGLE ELEMENT. WE MUST RECOGNISE THE VALUE OF STUDYING A SUBJECT LIKE ARCHITECTURE, WITH ITS INNATE ABILITY TO CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE IF WE SHIFT FROM A STATE OF COMPLICITY TO ONE OF ACTION. COMFORT CAN BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL, BUT ONLY IF WE STRIVE TO CREATE IT.

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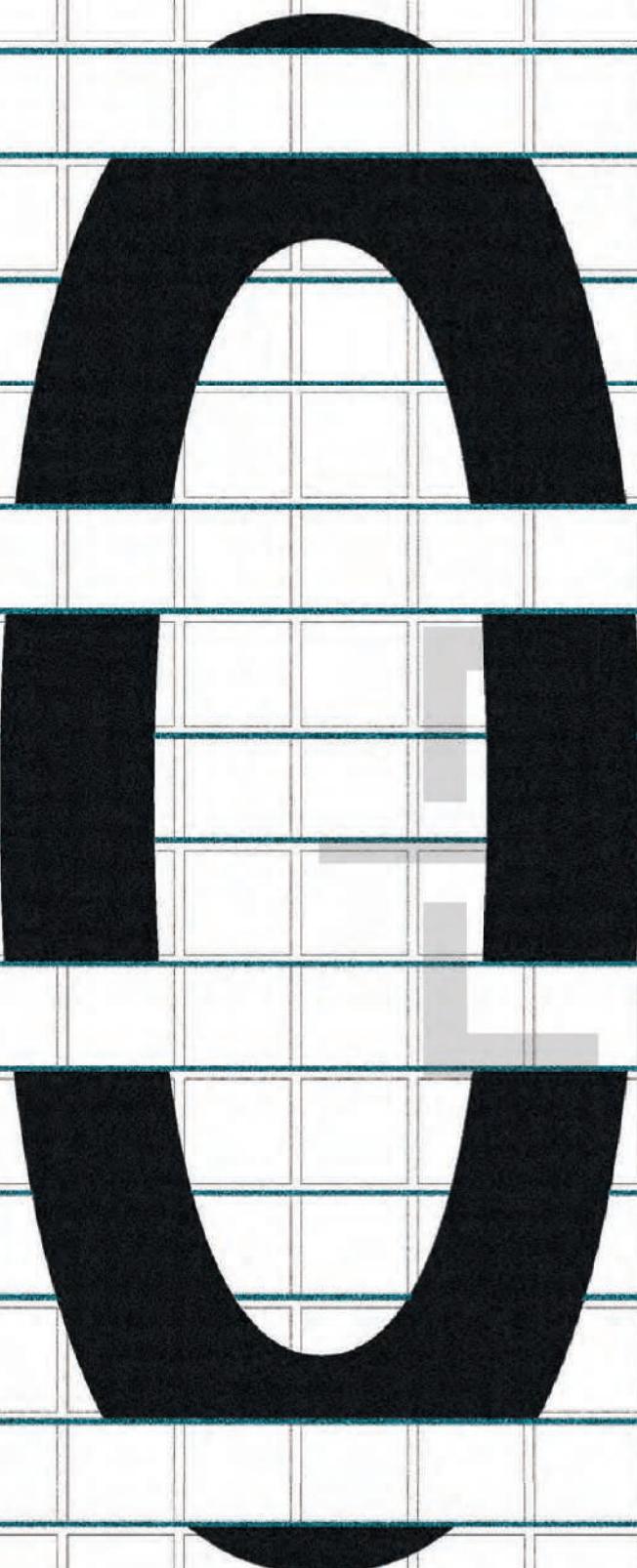
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BEHIND

CLOSED DOORS



The walls of our homes are designed to provide refuge and safety from the ruthlessness of the outside world. A fire burns from behind the hearth, warming the dwellers, who step in from the cold. Fabrics surround us, wrapping us up at night - a barrier between the draughts and our skin. Sun beams through our windows and rain patters on the roof. But those same walls keep the dangers out, keep the dangers in. Behind closed doors, the home is often not the oasis of safety it is portrayed to be.

THE THEATRE OF TURBULENCES



February 2021, almost one year into the pandemic, I'm leaving London with my car, alone, driving back where I belong, somewhere in the French Alps.

A truck with my moving boxes is following. Borders are closed and I cannot travel unless I have a good reason, moving back is one of them.

I'm nervous as I arrive at the border control, equipped with an odd folder including: my passport, an expensive negative PCR test, some papers of the French embassy declaring I can go back, an attestation of my mother saying I'm living at her place, a letter from the mover confirming he is moving all my stuff.

I'm navigating in between Brexit and the Covid pandemic, and after crossing the border, a deserted zone, I feel drained.

In the living room there is this couch, a big cozy blue couch, a couch with four huge pillows, a bed unfolding from the couch at night, a couch a big couch a couch that becomes the territory of hours of everything and nothingness.

I'm back since a bit [I have no idea how long - time flies strangely in these times, right?] and here it is, we enter lockdown [again]: we are allowed to go in a radius of ten km from our home and the curfew continues, starting at 7 pm.

This is it, fourth lockdown for me, in this home that is not mine, yet momentarily becoming my shelter. During the day I'm alone in this apartment and from this seclusion, yet another one, I decide to start an ongoing creative endeavour: an exploration under the form of a multi-disciplinary performative production, a lockdown's archive.

The only rule is: I must create everyday no matter what, and I must publish the day's production everyday.

From there, this space becomes like this couch, a territory of everything and nothingness, a temporal no man's land, a space in between [in between what?], a stretch, a shifting dimension between [enjoyable yet stiff] solitude, physical and emotional cramps, the privilege of being immersed in the comfort of one's home merging with the freedom of creating.

Camille L. Dedenise

MA Textiles Mixed Media, from the Royal College of Arts

Interweaving the intimate and the politics of the body as a persona, C.L. Dedenise works on the deconstruction of power structures through an intersectional approach. She engages with questioning, deconstructing and overcoming [patriarchal] oppressive norms, codes and patterns, related to the violence of the colonial heritage and postcolonial dynamics, along with their constructions of dominations and prejudices; and also related to the capitalist hegemony and the constant violence towards Earth and the reality of the climate crisis.

The conversation with ones self goes as follows:

To bear uncertainty and traces of chaos I caress my own echo :
It remains what is now, I try not to drown in what was *before*, I attempt to not flood
in what will be, or *could be*.

This apartment is my shelter, a safe zone protecting me from the violences of the
agora:

Yet now protecting me from this invisible bandit - the virus :
The biosocial event that is a disease shifts the space of individual and collective
experience/s.

This room where I sleep eat work dance read wait zoom [list to be completed with
whatever is happening]:

Private and public merging into one territory of constraint :
My garments translating this disorder, in between comfortable tracksuits and pretty
jumpers, I do not wear my shoes
anymore.

The ambiguity of this experience :
This area, in time and space, of protection and safety, yet of restriction :
This tension drives me mad, this really is the theatre of turbulences, the arena of
arduous dissonances.

Like a chorus, I hear "I'm waiting for it to be over, for things to be like before":
Yet before is always already dead as soon as we name it *before*, so:
What will last ? What is new ? What is left ?

Like a melody, I hear again "these are not real times" :
Yet what is a real time?:
I do believe there is just time itself, as much as space.

Seating on the couch, I'm thinking "I can sense a slow shift":
The apartment is changing with me, while my actions and immaterial consciousness
is changing this space itself:
My occupation is constantly re-shaping this territory, an open-ended transfer of
rituals co-emerging within themselves:

New reality new rituals
New rituals new reality
Is space, after all, *only* rituals ?

I can see on this couch a girl sleeping turning the back to the room:
Becoming a shelter to herself, in this space of everything and nothingness:
Overlaying this raw crack, I can see the girl painting this scene in the silent of a
shelter curling itself up in lockdown.



Auto-ethnography in Lockdown : The Couch. 2021. Painting, 100cmx81cm, Mixed Media on Linen Canvas.

1) I ENTER THE SHELTER IT FEELS WARM AND IT'S A LITTLE BIT A RELIEF IT'S CALM THE SILENCE RINGS BEAUTY I'M ALONE AND DARLING DO I LIKE SOLITUDE - ALONE, BUT NOT LONELY {MOST OF THE TIME} BECAUSE SOMETIMES MY THOUGHTS ARE BECOMMING TOO LOUD AND I MISS THE BARKS AND VOICES OF OTHER HUMANS



2) I REMOVE MY FACE MASK WHEN I ENTER THE SHELTER FINALLY I BREATHE AGAIN - THIS IS A GARMENT I CANNOT REALLY GET USED TO - I WANT TO SEE THE SMILES OF PEOPLE AGAIN - I WANT TO READ YOUR MYSTERIES ON YOUR LIPS - I THINK I MISS THE WORLD OF BEFORE - I CANNOT EVEN REMEMBER WHAT IT WAS LIKE, WITHOUT FACE MASKS

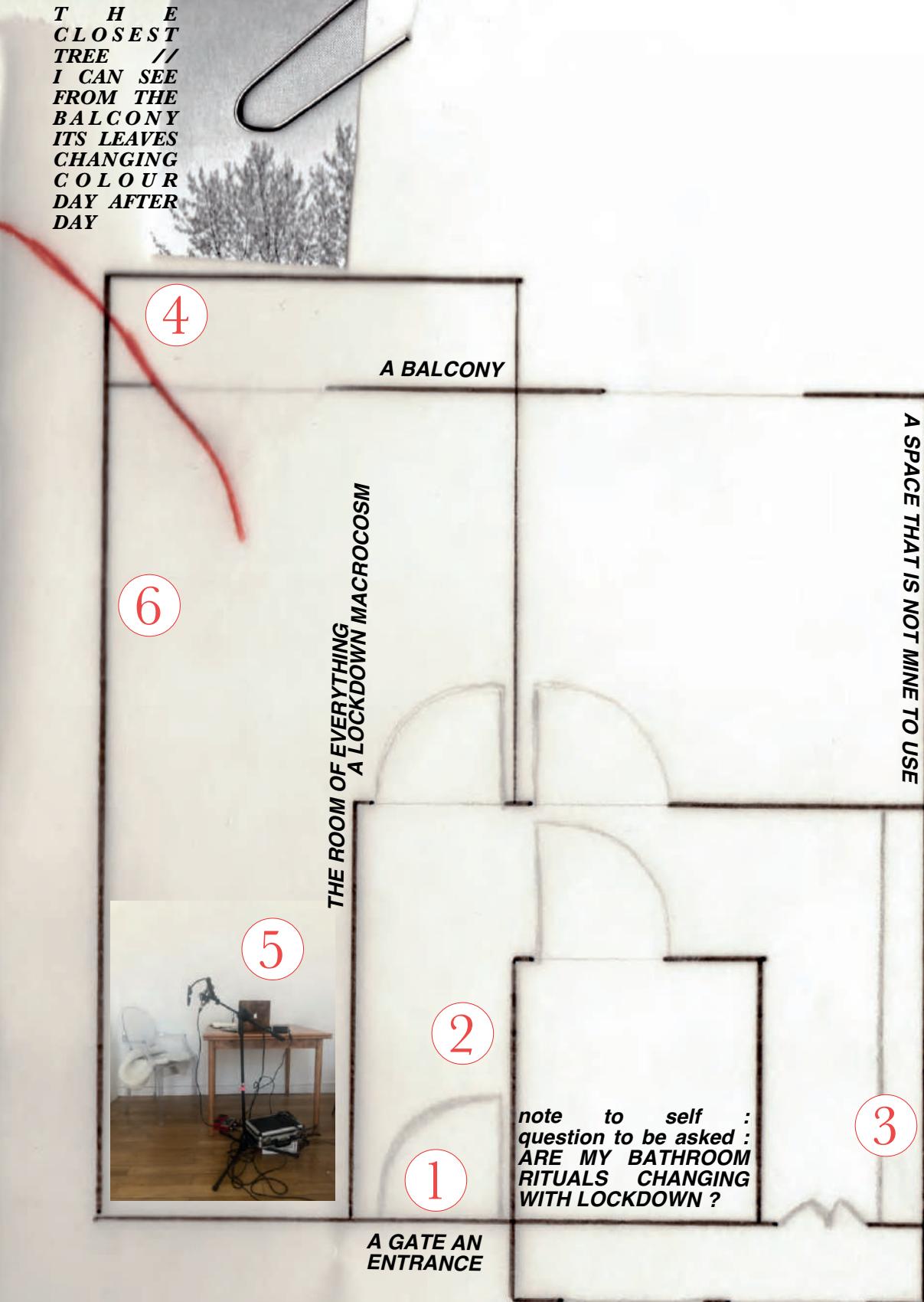
3) THE SINK OF THE KITCHEN HAS A NEW SOAP - THE CURRENT RULE IS : AFTER ENTERING THE SHELTER : WASHING MY HANDS AND AFTER THAT I LIKE IT BECAUSE I CAN TOUCH MY FACE FREELY AGAIN - {THIS HAS BECOME A HABIT BY NOW I DO NOT HAVE TO THINK ABOUT IT ANYMORE}

4) FROM THE BALCONY I CAN SEE THE MOUNTAINS AND THIS IS ENOUGH TO DREAM - THERE IS STILL SNOW UP THERE AND I WILL NEVER GET BORED OF THE VISION OF THESE MOUNTS, BLOOD OF MY BLOOD - EVERYDAY LOOKING AT THESE MOUNTAINS IS BECOMMING A CEREMONY - PERHAPS THE REVERIE OF BEING THE SNOW ITSELF



5) THERE IS THIS WOODEN TABLE - AN EPHEMERAL ATELIER - A ZONE WHERE I EAT WHERE I RESEARCH READ AND DRAW WHERE I WORK RECORD SOUNDS AND SING ALSO BUT MOSTLY THE REALM WHERE I WRITE NOTE REWRITE TELL WORDS AND COMMIT TO LANGUAGE - WHERE I PERFORM - THIS IS THE TERRITORY OF RITUALS OF CREATION EVERYDAY EMERGING A WONKY LOCKDOWN OPUS

6) THE COUCH BECOMES A PLACE OF NOTHINGNESS, A WAITING TERRITORY, A ZONE OF IN BETWEEN, THE SPACE OF EVERYTHING - AT DAY THE COUCH IS SOFA - AT NIGHT THE COUCH IS BED AND THE ROOM ENTERS A NEW DIMENSION - IT'S CRAZY WHAT NIGHT, A BULB AND A FEW BLANKETS CAN CHANGE A SPACE - AT NIGHT I LIKE IT BECAUSE IT'S PEACEFUL AND ALSO RAW



IN FRONT OF THE GATE BEFORE ENTERING I CAN SEE THIS CARD ON THE FLOOR - A CHARMING WONDER - NOBODY IS WAITING FOR ME I HAVE NOWHERE TO GO I TAKE TIME TO LOOK AT IT AND TO TAKE A PICTURE : AN ARCHIVE OF THIS DRIFTING ERA, A GAP THAT BECOMES OUR REALITIES

IT FEELS LIKE TIME STRETCHES IN CONTRADICTION WITH ITSELF DURING THESE TIMES AND TO ME THIS IS AS SCARY AS CONTEMPLATIVE



Image: Gio Ponti - Low Style Nella Casa e nell'arredamento, August 1941

Comfort Against Functionalism

Gio Ponti & the Italian Style House

In 1928, watchful of the vitality of the European architectural debate, the Milanese architect Gio Ponti co-founds the magazine Domus with the intent of stimulating a modern renewal in Italian architecture and design. For Ponti, this renewal must begin from the basic theme of the dwelling and be rooted in a modern, critical reconciliation with history, as implied by the magazine's name, meaning "house" in Latin.

The essay by Ponti in the first issue of Domus is a short, manifesto-like piece titled *La casa all'italiana* [The Italian-style House]. Reacting against the rejection of tradition by the avant-gardes – with their abstract, “new” forms glorifying the machine age (as later codified by the hollow moralism of the 1932 MoMA International Style exhibition) – Ponti argues for an architecture that is aware of its roots, and holds comfort as its moral imperative. His notion of comfort cannot be naively reduced to strict and bare functionalist needs, but is about serenity and generosity for everyday life; about a way of living rooted in, rather than alienated from, a local cultural tradition and a direct connection with nature. As one of the leading figures of what would come to be identified as the Milanese school of architecture, involving architects ranging from Franco Albini to Ernesto Nathan Rogers, to Aldo Rossi and Giorgio Grassi, Ponti argues that being modern is not about flatly rejecting history or ornament, but about gaining a critical awareness of a continuity with the past. To put it in Ponti’s words:



Image: Gio Ponti - Una Piccola Casa Ideale, June 1939

modernity does not consist of “adopting” a few pieces of squared furniture and calling it a day.

In 1974, hoping to overcome the perceived failures of technocratic functionalist ideology, the Milanese architect Giorgio Grassi curates a translation of Heinrich Tessenow's *Hausbau und dergleichen* (Berlin, 1916), a disarmingly unassuming lesson in themes like comfort and elementary composition. It is exactly in the spirit of Grassi's translation that I would like to contribute to this issue of Paperspace with my translation of Ponti's 1928 article from Domus which, despite its continuing relevance under today's state of affairs, still appears to remain little-known outside Italian borders.

Thankfully, contemporary attitudes to history are freed from most of the displaced positivism and ideological contradictions of the machine-age or high-tech style. A rejection of the residues of the functionalist predicament can allow us to instead seek a deeper idea of comfort, with a more rooted understanding of the often-elementary qualities of the architecture of the past.

Dymitr Ignatiuk

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"The Italian-style House"

From Domus in 1928 - Gio Ponti

The Italian-style house is not its inhabitants' refuge, padded and garnished, against the harshness of a climate, in the manner typical of the houses on that other side of the Alps, where for long months life seeks shelter from an inclement nature: the Italian-style house is like a place chosen by us for relishing, during our lifetime, with placid possession, the beauties that our lands and our skies gift us in their long seasons. In the Italian-style house there is no great distinction between exterior and interior: elsewhere there even is a separation of forms and materials: but for us the architecture of the outside enters inside, without omitting a use of stones or plastering or frescoes; in its vestibules and galleries, in its rooms and stairs, with arches, niches, volutes and columns, it regulates and orders in spacious measures the environments of our lives. From the inside, the Italian-style house re-exits outdoors, with its porticos and terraces, with the pergolas and verandas, loggias and balconies, roof terraces [altane] and vistas [belvederi], all of which are very comfortable inventions for a serene dwelling, and Italian to the extent that even in other languages they often carry Italian names.

A same architectural ordering system therefore governs, to varying extents, the facades and interiors of the Italian-style house, and again regulates nature itself with terraces and steps, with gardens, precisely called Italian-style gardens, nymphaeums and perspective views, vegetable gardens and courtyards, all created to give ease and scene for a happy dwelling. Its design does not derive only from the material requirements of living, it is not only a "machine à habiter". The so-called "comfort", in the Italian-style house, is not only in the correspondence of things to the necessities, needs, [bare] comforts of our life and to the organization of services.

Such "comfort" is something superior, it consists in giving us with architecture a measure for our thoughts themselves, in giving us with its simplicity a health for our customs, in giving us with its broad hospitality the meaning of confident and numerous lives, and finally, in its easy and happy and ornate opening up outwards and communicating with nature, in the invitation that the Italian-style house offers to our spirit to go to restful visions of peace, in this consists the true meaning of the beautiful [Italian] word, COMFORT

"La casa all'italiana"

Tratto da Domus del 1928 - Gio Ponti

La casa all'italiana non è il rifugio, imbottito e guarnito, degli abitatori contro le durezze del clima come è delle abitazioni d'oltralpe ove la vita cerca, per lunghi mesi, riparo dalla natura inclemente: la casa all'italiana è come un luogo scelto da noi per godere in vita nostra, con lieta possessione, le bellezze che le nostre terre e i nostri cieli ci regalano in lunghe stagioni.

Nella casa all'italiana non vi è grande distinzione fra esterno e interno: altrove vi è addirittura separazione di forme e di materiali: da noi l'architettura di fuori penetra nell'interno, e non tralascia di usare né la pietra né gli intonaci né l'affresco; essa nei vestiboli e nelle gallerie, nelle stanze e nelle scale, con archi, nicchie, volte e con colonne regola e ordina in spaziose misure gli ambienti della nostra vita.

Dall'interno la casa all'italiana riesce all'aperto con i suoi portici e le sue terrazze, con le pergole e le verande, con le logge ed i balconi, le altane e i belvederi, invenzioni tutte confortevolissime per l'abitazione serena e tanto italiana che in ogni lingua sono chiamate con nomi di qui.

Una stessa ordinanza architettonica regge dunque, in diversa misura, nella casa all'italiana, le facciate e gli interni e ancora regola d'attorno la natura medesima con terrazze e gradini, con giardini, appunto detti all'italiana, ninfei e prospettive, orti e cortili, tutti creati per dare agio e scena ad una felice abitazione.

Il suo disegno non discende dalle sole esigenze materiali del vivere, essa non è soltanto una "machine à habiter". Il cosiddetto "comfort" non è nella casa all'italiana solo nella rispondenza delle cose alle necessità, ai bisogni, ai comodi della nostra vita e alla organizzazione dei servizi.

Codesto suo "comfort" è qualcosa di superiore, esso è nel darci con l'architettura una misura per i nostri stessi pensieri, nel darci con la sua semplicità una salute per i nostri costumi, nel darci con la sua larga accoglienza il senso della vita confidente e numerosa, ed è infine, per quel suo facile e lieto e ornato aprirsi fuori e comunicare con la natura, nell'invito che la casa all'italiana offre al nostro spirito di recarsi in riposanti visioni di pace, nel che consiste nel vero senso della bella parola italiana, il CONFORTO.



Immagine, Gio Ponti. La casa in stile italiano

Fire's Place

50,000 years ago, humans found fire. Harnessing heat and light kindled the dawn of a safer existence as we wielded protection from the bitter cold of winter and the fate of prey. Beyond recognising its function as a tool for survival, we gave fire a place. It became the focal point for social interactions whilst offering a novel opportunity for reverie and repose. In 'De Architectura', Vitruvius attributes humans living, meeting and associating with one another to fire's discovery. Gathered around this crucial element, we exchanged stories and ideas, developing our thoughts, dreams and ambitions.

"It shines in Paradise. It burns in Hell. It is gentleness and torture. It is cookery and it is apocalypse. It is pleasure for the good child sitting prudently by the hearth, yet it punishes any disobedience when the child wishes to play too close to its flames. It is well-being and it is respect. It is a tutelary and a terrible divinity, both good and bad. It can contradict itself; thus, it is one the principles of universal explanation."

- Gaston Bachelard, *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*

In 'The Fireplace Book', Roxana McDonald describes the adoption of fire into the home and its journey of domestication through embedded architectural features. Today, technological advances in fuel and systems of comfort have led to its eviction. From open fires in the primitive hut to central heating in the contemporary home, there has been a gradual dislocation of the inhabitant from the flame. This widespread abandonment of the fireplace is traced through shifts in built form and structural ghosts of previous eras. Though sources of thermal comfort have been replaced with more energy efficient alternatives, the empty hearth is felt in more ways than one.

To Gottfried Semper, fire breathes life into architecture. After the earthwork, framework and cladding, the German architect and writer refers to the 'hearth' as 'the first and most important, the moral element of architecture'. He emphasises the 'hearth' as incorporating 'in a single element the public and spiritual nexus of the built domain'. Semper would have us reintegrate fire into our urban realm.

However, fire is contradictory in nature - at once our friend and foe. Recent events have propagated a tightening of fire regulations such that the word is associated more with risk than comfort amongst planners and designers. To reawaken the fireplace is to increase probability of accident. If we are to revive human connection with the flame, its value to society must be re-interrogated.

Though thermal comfort is now widely accessible, we find ourselves in a culture of overcompensation and consumption. Our architecture need not be heated throughout; in the past, families would gather together in a single room for warmth. Could fire's re-introduction encourage a frugal expenditure of fuel and instigate social interactions?

Fire's most relevant asset is its ability to inspire storytelling. However, this has been stifled by an overwhelming stream of imagery and information. Where living room arrangements were once oriented towards the hearth, they now commonly face the TV. Countless channels cause distraction from conversation whereas fire's presence fuels direct connections between people. We should not be content to lose it.

The solution presents itself as a phoenix from the ashes; COVID-19 has inspired us to find comfort in the open air. With defiance, we continue to seek fire's company, offering it temporary residence in gardens and during festivities. Sat around a fire pit under the stars, we exchange stories and stare into the flames as our ancestors did before us, comforted by warmth and dancing light. At a time where we find ourselves disconnected, let us make a Hearth House for fire to reclaim its place among us.



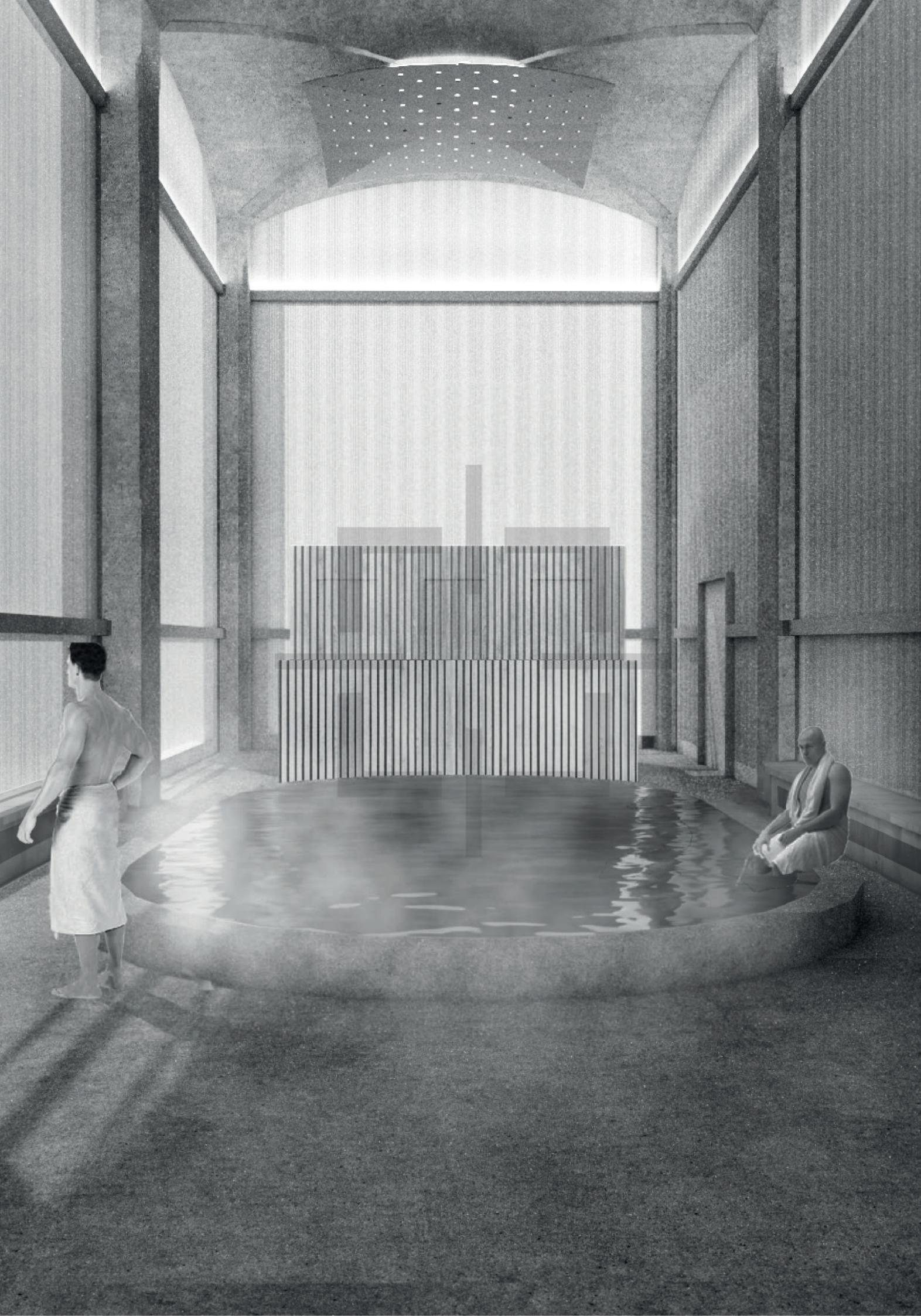
Nathalie Hurlstone

5th Year MArch Architecture

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Image: By Nathalie Hurlstone

Collective Bathing

お風呂の安心感



It is a life-time challenge for an architect to create a safe and healthy environment but also psychologically and culturally comfortable places. This semester, the final year students at Bath were faced with the challenge to build in New York. In order to tackle the long-term mental and physical health issues experienced by construction workers in NYC, my design project proposed a design of a bathhouse for mental and physical recovery after a day of work.

Rooting from my personal experience of the Japanese bathhouse, I instinctively imagined workers cleansing, bathing and chatting to one another in a communal bathhouse. While I was aware that Japan held a unique culture of sharing bath water with strangers, I was not aware of its deep roots within the society and our lifestyles that makes the experience embedded within the norm. This article explores the different bathing cultures in Japan and the UK in an attempt to identify what makes Japanese bathing culture comfortable.

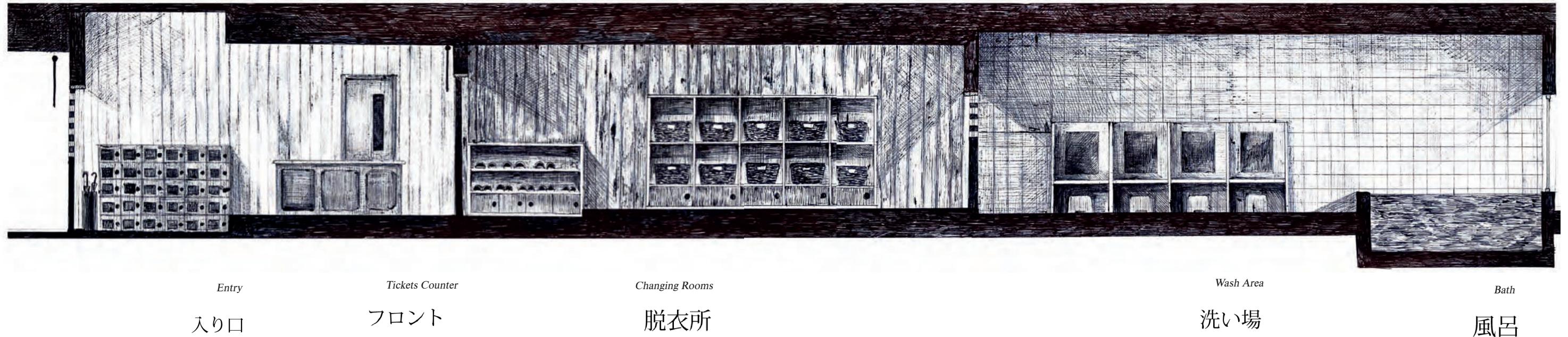
As you walk through the “noren”, a small curtain-like textile typically hung at the entrance, and pull the timber sliding door, you enter into the entrance foyer of the bathhouse. There you would take off your shoes, put the shoes in an empty shoe locker and put on the slippers. You would wander your way to the counter where the staff will direct you to the male or female baths. After you have parted from your partner, entered through another set of sliding doors and took off your slippers, you will feel the bamboo mats under your feet, hear the people chatting lively and feel the slight humidity in the changing room. You would peel away your clothes in front of an empty locker and fold them neatly in the basket. When you are ready, step onto the wet tiles and then you would hear the echoes of showers and feel the moist air enveloping the naked body. You would begin to wash the day off, feel the warmth and listen to the sound of water hitting the floor around you. After rinsing off the shampoo from your hair and body, you would rinse the seat and the basin leaving the space as you found it.

After the sequence of entering the bathhouse, undressing and cleansing, you will feel detached from your daily life and can immerse your body, mind and the spirit in the sensual, rejuvenating ritual. When first stepping into the bath, the water could feel too hot but when the whole body is emersed in the water you will feel the heat sink in, stimulate the blood circulation and warm the cold toes and fingertips. When stepping to the outdoor baths, the cold air hits your body while tiptoeing on the wet stone floor. The outdoor bath allows you to keep your head cool while your body is plunged in the hot water with the night sky above.

Historically, Japanese bathing culture has been a social activity, cleansing in the same space and sharing the same bathing water, rather than a private experience. The bathing culture in Japan originated when people saw animals bathing in the Onsen water, natural thermal ground water, to heal their bodies with its medical healing properties. As communal bathing became more popular, the bathing method had to adapt from a plunge pool to a more efficient facility for a larger crowd. The steam bathing method developed around the 7th Century and in the 17th century it evolved into a bathtub for lower half and steam bath for the upper half of the body.

During the post-war era, Western bathroom unit-system allowed

"Japanese bathhouse typology challenges the idea that the comfort of bathing can only be achieved in a locked private bathroom which is the norm in the West. People can become accustomed to bathing quietly in the same water as strangers demonstrating the power of daily routine, cultural conditioning and familiarity that defines a comfortable environment."



more households to be able to afford their own baths in the comfort of their own home. Despite a recent decline in bathhouse users , it is clear that the collective bathing experience has always been a communal, social activity in Japan, where people strip away their clothes, dirt and social status as they enter the baths, allowing them to return to their natural naked self.

The mindset towards bathing can also be revealed in the architecture of contemporary bathrooms in Japan and the UK. A bathroom in English homes typically accommodates the sink, toilet, shower and bathtub in one room, while a bathroom in Japanese homes consists of two separate rooms; “toilet room” with toilet and a sink and a wet-room with a bath tub and the shower. Unlike a tight cubicle, the shower area is more like a room, providing large enough space for a family to bathe and wash together - bathing is a private time in the West while it can be a social activity in Japanese homes.

While UK culture has a split preference between morning and evening shower times, Japanese bathing usually takes place in the evening. The evening begins as the bathroom lights turn on, bathtubs are cleaned, and the wet-room becomes steamy while the new hot water fills the tub. The bath water remains in the tub for the whole evening with each member of the family bathing in it consecutively. The water is kept relatively clean by washing themselves before plunging in it. The evening routine cleanses and warms one's body at the end of the day. The people using the bathhouse see communal bathing as no different to bathing at home.

Many would have had the childhood experience of bathing as a family, therefore bathing in the bathhouse is not so different from their daily ritual at home. The traditional bath areas are often dimly lit, only light enough for safety, preventing people from feeling as though their naked bodies are exposed and stared at. The gloomy environment accentuates the sensual experience

of the hot water, echoing quiet chatter and the sound of footsteps on the wet floor.

It is the combination of the cultural custom, familiarity and the development of the bathhouse design that makes the experience comfortable for most users. While Japan expects a continual rise in foreign tourists, bathhouses are starting to accommodate bathers who are less accustomed to the collective bathing culture - one solution being the provision of loose clothing for coverage. The bathhouses must evolve with the contemporary social context however the balance must be explored between individual privacy and Japanese cultural tradition to maintain this delicate comfortable environment. Japanese bathhouse typology challenges the idea that the comfort of bathing can only be achieved in a locked private bathroom which is the norm in the West. People can become accustomed to bathing quietly in the same water as strangers demonstrating the power of daily routine, cultural conditioning and familiarity that defines a comfortable environment.

Bath

風呂

Sunlight and Home



Image: Collage by Author - Crepe and Watercolour Paper

To me, comfort is sunlight.

Sunlight travels from the Sun to Earth across 147 million kilometers
in 8 minutes and 20 seconds.

As we spin on our axis, sunlight guides us through time.

Our lives are designed by the Sun's presence, absence and the infinite degrees in between - dawn, sunrise, morning, noon, sunset, dusk and night.

Be it concealed below the horizon or obscured by clouds, sunlight remains the conductor for nature's rhythms and the source of life of Earth.

Sunlight is never still.
It is reflected and refracted.
It reveals swirling dust and steam from a hot cup of tea.

Sunlight enhances and defines.
It is silent.
It is fleeting.

Sunlight warms and burns.
It heals and nourishes.
Sunlight is visibility and blindness. It is light and shadow.

As clouds clear and the glow intensifies,
textures and colours adopt a rich hue.

To me, sunlight is a renewed appreciation.

Nathalie Hurlstone

5th Year MArch (Hons) Architecture

Image: Watercolour Paper and Crepe Paper Collage
Taken from 'The Beauty Manifesto'

The Making of Comfort

A rug on a cold floor is more pleasing to step on barefoot, a sheer curtain dilutes harsh sunlight and a dense tapestry moderates noise. Textiles are automatic reminders of home, subconsciously associated with the stitching of a family heirloom quilt or the softness of a perfectly shaped cushion. Despite the painstaking effort involved in the creation of these items, their makers have long been held at arm's length from the spaces their work is made to adorn.

Whether due to their smoothness, thickness or stretchiness, fabric items have a reassuring pliability. In her book 'On Weaving', Anni Albers writes about the importance of valuing our tactile experience of materials, something that unlike structure, can only be approached intuitively rather than intellectually. "We touch things to reassure ourselves of reality. We touch the objects of our love. We touch the things we form. Our tactile experiences are elemental." Albers was a textile designer who studied at the Bauhaus, reluctantly entering the weaving workshop as it was the only option available to women. The school's director, Walter Gropius, asserted that only men could think in the three dimensions required for architecture.

In the wider cultural conscience, the making of textiles is traditionally female. 'The Lacemaker', a c.1670 painting by Johannes Vermeer, is of a young woman absorbed in needlework, seen at the time to be an appropriate activity for keeping women occupied and tied to the domestic sphere. In 16th and 17th century Europe, lace was a luxury commodity, making up a valuable proportion of the trade between the Netherlands, the UK, France and Italy. Despite high levels of demand, the lacemakers saw barely any of the profits. As production occurred in the home, orphanages or nunneries, there was no central organisation in place to allow for the creation of guilds and unions. Most women were educated in needlework skills, so that the size of the workforce became so large as to make wages incredibly low.

The exploitation of labour for textile production grew

to new heights during the 20th century, with industrial advances and global outsourcing enabling a steep growth in output and innovation. Cheap synthetic fabrics emerged, changing the view of most textiles from something valuable to something disposable. Like the lacemakers of the 17th century, modern-day makers of soft furnishings and clothing are often underpaid, with unsafe working conditions and uncertain employment.

'The Subversive Stitch' by Rozsika Parker traces the association between femininity and embroidery, a craft with no real function other than decoration. While in the Victorian era the bowed head of the embroiderer spoke of female subservience and docility, the art form has since become a mode of expression for artists including Tracey Emin and Louise Bourgeois. Even now, needlework is seen as emasculating, rarely taken seriously as artwork when it is not associated with an ironic or political statement. Throughout the book, Parker discusses the role of embroidery in the construction of femininity and how its progression as an art form has been constricted as a result.

Textiles in many forms define how we interact with surfaces. Whether or not the work involved to create textiles is undervalued due to their associations with femininity, it remains that they are a second thought when it comes to our experience of the built environment. To break the cycle of labour exploitation and waste in the textile industry, perhaps it is necessary to revalue the comfort we gain from textiles in the spaces we design and inhabit.

Lauren Dennis
4th Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture
Albers, Anni, On Weaving, (London: Studio Vista, 1974)
Parker, Rozsika, The Subversive Stitch, (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009)
St Clair, Kassia, The Golden Thread, (London: John Murray, 2018)



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ART, NOT CRAFT

CRAFT, NOT ART



Image (Right) : 95cm X 55cm / Wool on Burlap (Left): 30cmx30cm Wool on Burlap

Louis Bartlett

Architecture (Hons) Bsc, Bath University

Louis Bartlett is an image maker and graphic designer based in the UK. Currently studying for an Architecture BSc at the University of Bath, his visual interests focus on experimental techniques of image production that utilise a variety of media.

Image: 30cm x 30cm Wool on Burlap. Rug.





Georgie Apps

Textiles: Innovation and Design BA (Hons)
Loughborough University

Images: Produced and Photographed by designer, Georgie Apps, as part of her thesis project at Loughborough University.



Image (Left) : Double Distorted Weave using Reclaimed Linen

Human Presence: Working with Nature

We are crumbling uncontrollably to the point of no return.

The aim of the project was to encourage people to acknowledge the state of the world, raise awareness of the consequences of fashion and provoke questions about the impacts current methods and materials have on the planet.

In an ideal world, clothing seasons ought to be condensed down to the same number of seasons in a year, slowing the production and consumption of textiles to a rate that is environmentally and economically sustainable – shifting the industry's attitude towards the climate crisis. The reliance on synthetic material and the production of man-made fibres would decrease, causing a shift of energy from producing to recycling.

At this slower speed and higher quality of production, it would be economically viable for all new matter to be sourced from natural fibres harvested by using organic farming techniques – replacing the conventional, mass production methods that are known to destroy the environment. The biodegradable advantages of swapping to natural fibres in combination with pre-order systems or batch producing garments would reduce the waste of unwanted clothes and resources.

Alternatively, feasibility could be achieved through creating higher demand for sustainable fabrics from a consumer point of view. Total transparency from field to shopfloor is essential, so consumers understand, connect and acknowledge the stages of making a garment – the how, the where, the who, the what – and full disclosure on treatments of the Earth and people. With this knowledge, perhaps customers would make more eco conscious decisions on where they buy clothing / what materials they wear, playing their part in the change.

We should utilise what we already have on this planet - matter that comes from a renewable source - and consider its end-of-life recyclability. Cellulose fibres and ones made from by-products (leather for example) decompose in the right conditions, due to their biological properties. Even after a heavy chemical induced life, natural fibres breakdown faster than synthetic - closing the lifecycle and minimising the amount of waste stacking up in landfill.



Image: (Left) Distorted Twill made from Hemp. (Right) A fluctuating twill pattern using Hemp, dyed with Alkanet, Logwood and Cutch.



Clay: Experimentation and Imperfections

Over lockdown, like many other people, I picked up the art of pottery. The traditional craft has declined in the UK over the last few decades but is being reinvented; in one instance through experimental therapy projects, allowing a person to express emotions through intuitive and instinctive clay forming. The plasticity of clay captures the impulses of the mind, and alters form with ease. The end result contains an innate sense of beauty as it bears the marks of its creator.

The connection between the maker and the product is incredibly valuable. While the design will tell the story of its conception, the imperfections and scars of its creation adds to the relationship with the artist. Potters have embraced experimentation in their works, perhaps also because of how unexpected firing can be, but mainly for there are infinitely variations of glaze mixtures and firing techniques. If two pots are thrown and glazed in the same way, they might appeal to different people through their slight distinctions.

I now see what the potter Richard Batterham means when he says pottery is made to be used, and to be broken. Whilst I appreciate clay sculptures and pots made for a glass cabinet, everyday bowls and jugs are truer to clay's original purpose. In some cultures, the breaking of a pot is celebrated as the creation of a new one can begin. Humans have this need to create, for joy, or to perhaps express one's emotions. To make involves touch, energy, and a vision, but also an understanding of the material, its strengths and limitations.

In architecture and especially in engineering, every aspect of the building is designed and ordered: green walls are bordered by metal trims; variations in concrete are framed by crisp 90-degree edges. And when we accept disorder, be it in flint walls or handmade bricks, it is restrained, as this desire for control prevails. Vernacular architecture encompasses the majority of buildings around the

world, and yet is limited to such a small module in the architecture course at Bath. Architecture as a discipline is moving further towards appreciating heritage crafts and skills, and how it could be applied with contemporary visions and standards. Glossing over the entire world's vernacular in one module, with no detailed focus on even British crafts, prevents us from fully realising its potential in our aims to make construction sustainable. Earthen construction forms the majority of buildings around the world, some still standing after centuries- on par with stone and brick, and some nine-storeys tall, proving its potential longevity and adaptability.

Earth and clay are materials to be respected. They may not be as versatile as concrete, and may require more attention to detail, but if understood correctly, can be just as successful. Clay allows us to create things that are distinctive, organic, and characterful, and embraces the texture and richness of a natural material. One might argue these qualities are replicable in concrete, and certain aspects are: texture, thermal mass and the variation of tones within a single shade, but it is a cold material, and needs dyes to give it some life; it is unforgiving in its permanence; and with its impermeable characteristics, can lead to damp if introduced in retrofit projects, or in new construction without additives and a reliance on petrol-based waterproofing layers.

Historically, buildings are built to breathe. They reflect the change in weather. By the end of winter, the buildings are eager to expel moisture- and it does: summer allows buildings to dry. And the permeability of the building's fabric ensures moisture does not stagnate, preventing mould and mildew. Breathable buildings were the norm, and with earth construction, the secondary benefit of being able to regulate the moisture in the air enables the residents to occupy the room at a consistent and comfortable range. It is possible to return to these

principles, without compromising air tightness. Clay was once used to waterproof buildings and is still utilised in experimental architecture. In fact, the whole canal network in Britain was waterproofed by compacting clay and sand- core ingredients in cob and rammed earth architecture- and is still effective 200 years later. Earth-based construction is not as fragile as it is perceived to be and it has the potential to transform contemporary construction around the world if used well.

The aspect of earth construction which I value most is how it doesn't feel a need to conform. We should celebrate the shades of clay around the world, and experiment in the same manner potters have done with slips and glazes. The results may be unexpected, but if we take the effort to understand the materials, the blemishes and oddities will contribute to the aesthetics of a scheme- as happy accidents.



Image: Clay Texture

"As in all making and firing, preconception must be forgotten, and an open mind be kept, able to receive all of the good unknown qualities which will appear"

Meraaj Harun

3rd Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

Batterham.R. Jack Welbourne Ceramics. Accessed [20.05.21]
Available online at: <https://jackwelbourneceramics.wordpress.com/category/research/quotes/>



Image: Experimental Sculpture Series (2017)

The Experimental Plaster Studies

"Experimental pieces, exploring the manipulation of plaster as a liquid medium that sets into a solid, seeks to ignite the conflicting response of fascination and disturbance. Fluidity is rigidly captured in a singular moment in time, creating an antithesis that feels fundamentally wrong."

Lesley Cheung

4th Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

Experimental Series I - Plaster with Food Colouring (2017)
Balloon - Plaster with acrylic (2017)

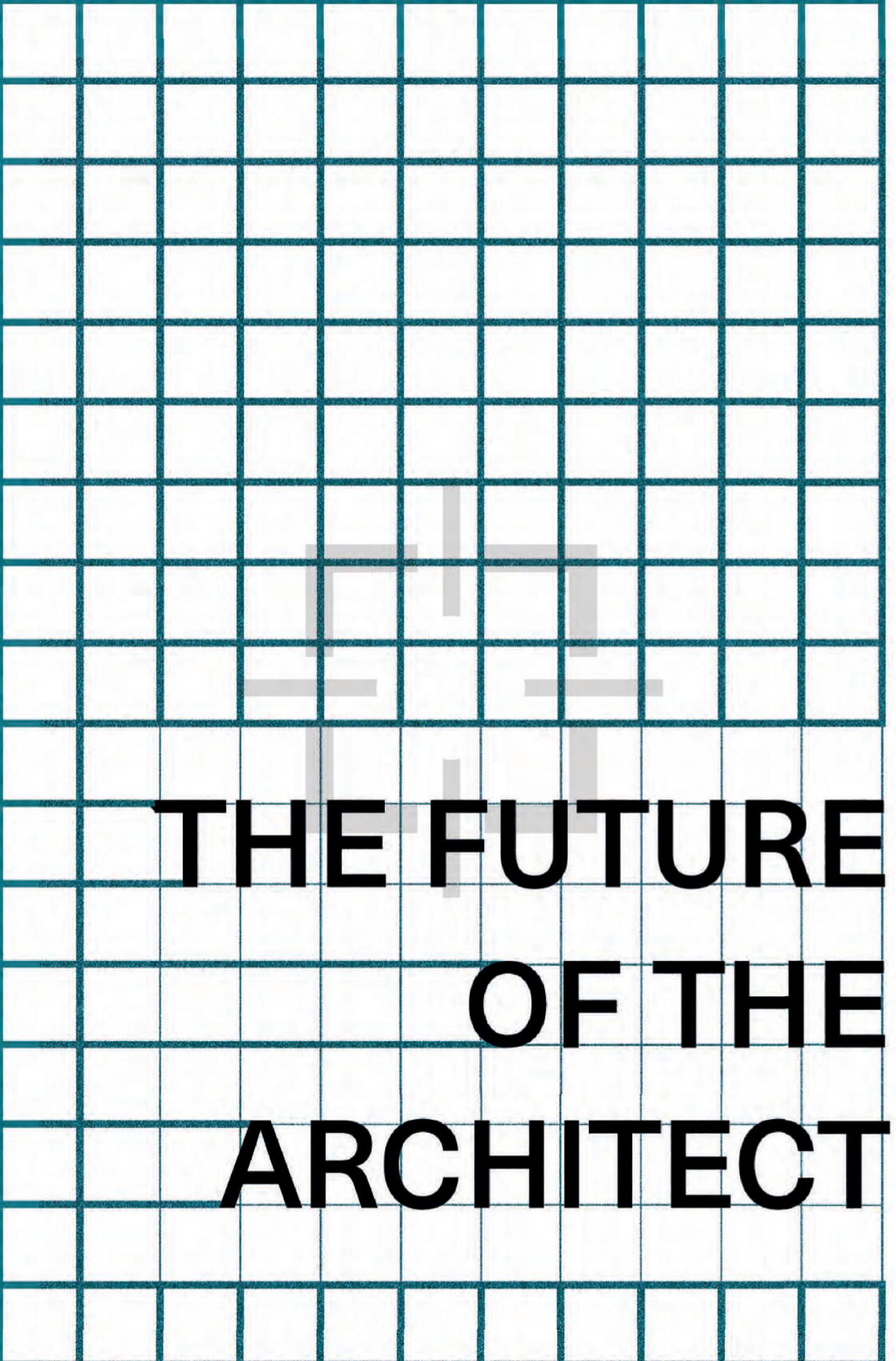


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Image: The Balloon Series (2017)

37

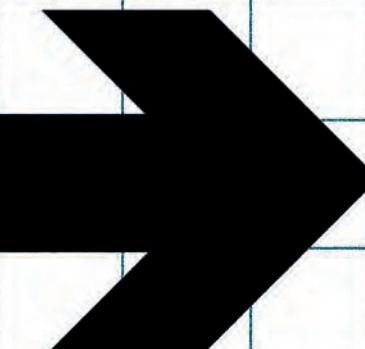


THE FUTURE OF THE ARCHITECT

2. In a dark windowless room, the architect scrolls across the screen; up, down, up, down, in, out, in, out. Clouded by apathy, the architect is left hopeless as their dream job becomes simply a bill payer, not a world changer.

The profession that promised social justice, climate action and wealth redistribution, does not live up to its expectation.

But with a few steps forward, perhaps the outlook needn't be so bleak. After finding some enthusiasm, the architect has the powers to shift practice, policy, legislation and education - a start for creating a new future for the architect.





Thought Experiment

The context ||

Think of architects in two ways: architects and architects. Either architects are those who are defined under the narrow constraints of the current profession: people who design buildings and in many cases also supervise their construction. Or they are simply, [people who design](#).

While law protects the title 'architect', practices continue to branch out into multi- and cross-disciplinary work. As architects who design buildings, influence seems limited by interactions with others. The client wants to keep costs low, the contractor refuses to work with timber, the council insists on a certain use...

In the narrow scope of choice that architects hold, any effort to invoke social and environmental justice can become an act of hoop jumping, ultimately dictated by the very systems it tries to change. For the architects fortunate enough to be afforded the luxury of choice in building strategy and design, the underlying question of where the money originated can often make apparently 'progressive' developments more questionable, and certainly less widely applicable.

Without client funding, the ordinary architect accepts defeat or loses out. Architecture as a profession lacks power, and architects seem to err on either the side of indifference (apathy?), or discomfort (complicity?).

> architects ||

Who is the other architect, the person who designs? Design can be seen as more than the drawings, schedules, and reports that go into the construction of a building. In capitalist societies, politicians, business owners, consumers and communities shape the urban realm before the architect (profession) even receives the tender.

Places can be 'made' by an architect and/or an architect before construction starts. Spaces can be realised without physical change at all.

Similarly, after a place has been constructed, its use can be subverted, personalised by the people who live there, who have needs far more idiosyncratic than could be imagined by a sole architect. There is a richness, a humanity, in places not being perfect, in them being just good enough.

The locals, the communities themselves, they are the [architects](#).

The role of the architect should perhaps be that of a catalyst, a facilitator, a listener, a learner.

Understanding the design of a place is going beyond the statistics, the areas, the locations, to the lived experiences, appreciating that architecture is more than 'architecture' and more than architects.

Architects(,) just do nothing ||

At this moment in time, there is a tide between architects. Architects who are content, architects who believe they should strive for social/environmental progress, and architects who believe that architects are unable to, or are not qualified to strive for social/environmental progress.

Is it semantics? Maybe the greatest issue is in the title 'architect', which breeds entitlement.

Architects who strive for progress should recognise their role in this not because of their qualifications but because of their interactions. Change occurs through collaboration, not just between architects or other professionals, but between all those who design. Architects are part of a wider definition of [architects](#), and perhaps should work to amplify a collective voice rather than be its dictator.

Bethany Kippin

2nd Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

"So, while we may present a 'fix' to our climate crisis, until we can bridge the gap between our society and our intentions, any proposed solutions will remain [in]concrete. To overcome this divide we must apply the scope of ingenuity which brought us the wonders of parametric design and regenerative solutions and step beyond any apolitical comfort. To progress, we must expand our definition of Architect."

We have found the answers to our climate crisis. The solutions found recent and past are now being listened to, not just heard. The built environment has found structure: there is a strategy to progress towards the regeneration we now know we need.

The rise of ACAN, Architects Declare, Retrofit First; we have stronger drivers for architectural change than ever before. With the advent of Revit: Ladybug, HB:ERT¹, (RP) Tool², positive thought can now become concrete action (or rather, not); this crisis has a foreseeable fix.

This is what the built environment industry presents: that we know the solutions.

Yet we also know we're missing the point.

Only a minority face the difficult truths. The current immediate economic gain for radical progression is limited. There is no incentive for regenerative experimentation in architecture. Beyond this, even the media pressure that has helped push climate change into the limelight is insufficient to engage all practices and their clientele in what often amounts to voluntary profit reductions. The present truth of architecture is that superficial responses provide easy escapes and legislation does little to enforce change, as base-level legal requirements don't reflect the urgency of our situation. Our moral crisis of environment and the political reality of viable business are separated by a vast chasm of economy.

There is a fundamental legislative void in our solutions to climate change; we need to re-prioritise our built environment policies towards sustainable progression. The built environment represents 42% of the UK's carbon emissions (including new and existing builds)³, so if addressed more thoroughly, could make substantial positive change. Pushing forward actions like France's commitment to timber and the AJ's Retrofit First⁴, would enforce this positive change. Yet tangible action of this nature is limited: the main net-zero 2050 target is both unrealistic and too little too late⁵. Similarly there is reluctance towards rapid expansion of retrofit over new build, something the AJ campaign seeks to rectify through financial incentives. Moreover, the deregulation

of planning permissions and permitted development rights undermines any goodwill of the new government design guides, which already have limited enforceability⁶, a case-in-point of government policy inadvertently working against progressive architecture. This places any current potential for change on the compassion of movements like Architects Declare, which rely on trust and good intent over the hard policy ultimately needed to make environmental regeneration all-encompassing.

The issues here however, are far more systemic than driven just by our current government. The ability to create solutions has been bred out of our political systems; the onus has been shifted to the market mechanism, which is fragmented and motivated by short-term profitability. Despite many excellent architectural examples, there is a general reluctance to use regenerative design in the urban environment, stemming from its low immediate capital payback. Our political cycles lead governments towards focusing on short-term economics over collective long-term improvement. Pushing out lucrative new developments and fast-tracking grid de-carbonisation spells instant high costs; the infrastructure investment needed to create a country utilising broad-scale green energy, while long-term viable, wouldn't look good on the tab at the end of the government's four year tenancy. These issues of economic viability are directly scalable, making the impact all-inclusive. Take retrofit - the investment needed is less attractive for short-term mindsets; the costs saved in a lifetime of better performing buildings may outweigh the immediate expenses, but they do not take away from their initial existence.

The behaviour and formation of our political systems and society have disempowered our architecture and its scope for change on a national, let alone global, scale. How then can architects and built environment professionals be best placed to help our world? The joys of small-scale anarchitectural social influence feel insufficient, as does the development of technologies in isolation. The solutions seem as though they need to be paired: physical and technical change are meaningless without systemic, political and behavioural alterations made in tandem. True intersectional architecture needs to delve into politics, psychology and anthropology: we

cannot address our crisis of climate without simultaneously addressing our society.

While architects need to take a stance on influencing legislation in government, the push towards public consultation shows substantial success seems to lie in human behaviour, learning from and potentially influencing the very people who inhabit each and every space. The essence of this issue is that, as our society stands now, we are not adapted for the proposed solutions. Retrofit, circular economy, density changes, decarbonisation: how many people genuinely engage with these concepts and how many fewer would accept them into their lives if it costs personal or economic loss?

Take for instance urban density. The need to decarbonise is unavoidable; public transport and human-powered travel must replace cars to create a green future, this is currently only feasible in closer communities, which also optimise architectural performance. Initially we may assume a shift to higher density is an easy transition: one London study found 68% of rented tenants viewed high density living favourably⁷, which suggests no dysphoria towards the push into higher density dwelling, with 50% of new homes being built in cities (2011-2019). However, the current city demographics, study included, favour younger populations, while the reality is we need to encourage our ageing population (that favours suburbanism) towards closer-knit living: currently population age maps inversely onto urban density⁸. This is evidence that we need behavioural shifts paired with architectural and planning solutions to enact true change.

Another example of social preferences inhibiting regenerative design and planning is the 8.8% increase in new build homes (2018-2019) relative to only a 0.5% population increase⁹, which is clearly problematic, especially without legislation on regenerative buildings. It shows a clear predisposition towards new-build. While retrofit is by no means a one-size-fits-all solution, statistics as above indicate the importance of policy like the suggested AJ's campaign to increase its viability and reduce new builds and their resultant carbon cost. This is yet another indicator that both policy and human behavioural transformation are needed within the built environment, as even with the proposed economic incentive towards retrofit, we still need people to want to live in these spaces.

Despite the contention around these issues, change is possible; the pandemic has proved behaviour alters quickly. But can our architecture and planning keep pace? Are we equipped to cope with that change? In the case of urban density: what happens when communities are forced together in a world of limited social cohesion?

So now some issues are explicit and ideas proposed, what then follows as a means to tangibly enact these solutions?

For the environment, there is a deadline: 2050 by the government, but RIBA's 2030 and the minute hand of the doomsday clock seem more pressing.

Who should hold the responsibility of preparing our society for change? Very few in the world of the built environment are willing to shoulder responsibility; these issues are hard to engage, fraught with subjectivity and entwined with

countless problems threatening to push us over the many social precipices we tread around. Changing the behaviours of a society is no small feat, even if the changes themselves may only need to be small. Ironically, for those hailed as creatives, the architect we know is not the person to 'save' our society. Unlike the science of the climate crisis, architecture's intersection with the anthropological is much less tangible: there is no BIM plugin to reform our society.

Architects generally stray away from directly addressing its issues, or touch them only fleetingly; the human interactions with economics and environment is the industry's 'hot potato'¹⁰. One factor often suffers from prioritising another and economics usually takes precedence. There is less public spotlight on social issues so they garner less affection, architects feel it's not their place, time and money are short and the media crucifixions less dramatic, so collectively, we do not solve these problems.

It is clear then that architecture needs reformation.

The roles held now are not the ones to make change, yet we have a 'unique position' where a 'diverse skill set' makes architects some of the best equipped to implement change¹¹. So perhaps a divergence is needed within architecture, with some stepping away from the expectations of the aesthete towards the needed influence of the people-serving politician. Architects should use our weight for upskilling, we need all built environment professionals to respond and engage with these crucial issues, yet we should also value our roles as mediators: consultation, post-occupancy, architecture should be about each unique community and how we can equip them specifically and help them into the rapidly changing world. What could this change in architects actually look like?

A first clear step would be more intrinsic integration within government. While consultant practices like MAE do good towards better policy, more explicit architectural roles would be key to delivering non-politically diluted architectural knowledge directly into parliament, bypassing spokespersons attributed to any one party. While architecture is political, the issues of climate crisis and social divide should not be a political tool. There is currently a void in qualifications for those representing our communities; a quick search on our housing ministers, present and past, shows a lack of the specialised knowledge needed, even with consultant advice, to suggest progressive architectural policy. Architectural policy that is urgently needed to benefit all and validate the feedback loop of public consultation and post-occupancy evaluation. People seeking better places to exist confide in architects, so there should be a responsibility to enact the changes to fit their needs, the easiest way of which is through policy that can encompass all, with caveats to ensure change remains catered to each individual community.

These caveats however are what create extra complexity. To make the proposed solution viable, perhaps we need to step down the chain towards localisation over national ambition, learning from the Scandinavian City Architect and the vision of Public Practice: we need specific new architectural roles for each area within wider society. Then we could provide useful architectural insights from the standing of someone

with intrinsic knowledge gained from working within a specific council, focusing not on aesthetics but of socio-spatial problem solving¹², guiding others towards creating cohesive, environmentally regenerative communities.

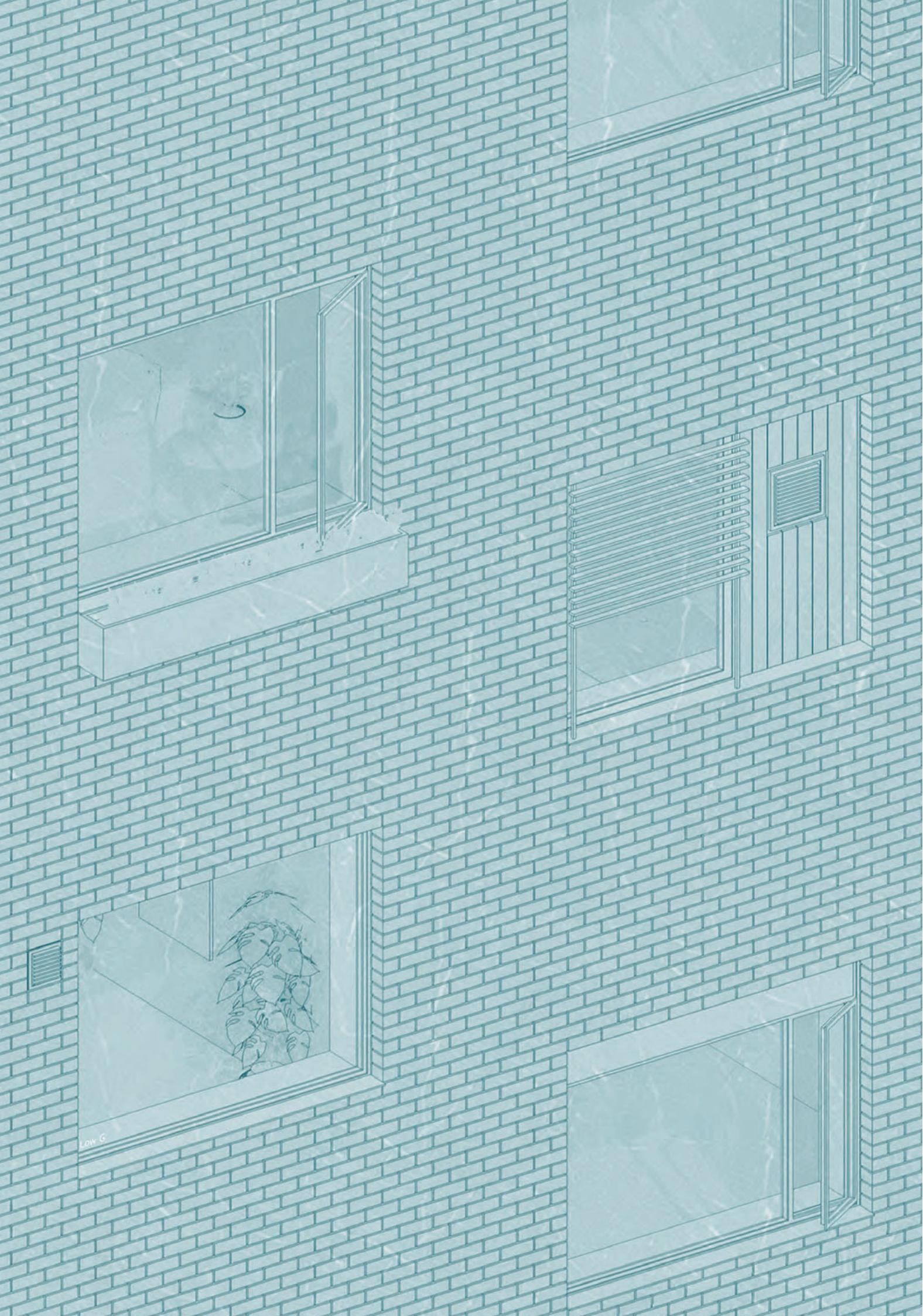
For more comprehensive change, in lieu of Haworth Tompkins giving specific roles for regenerative design¹³, all practices could create specific socio-environmental roles which tie together community, economy, politics and the environment. This could hold dual functionality, for the good of society as a whole, aiding our environmental cause, and addressing more explicitly other pressing problems like racial equity and women's safety. The further ingrained into our business models and governing bodies these become, the easier it would be to make change, hence the need for greater influence in policy across the board, because no matter how excellent our design guides, goodwill must become legislation to truly progress.

So, while we may present a 'fix' to our climate crisis, until we can bridge the gap between our society and our intentions, any proposed solutions will remain [in]concrete. To overcome this divide we must apply the scope of ingenuity which brought us the wonders of parametric design and regenerative solutions and step beyond any apolitical comfort. To progress, we must expand our definition of Architect.

Jamie Ferguson

2nd Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

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2. <https://www.greentransformablebuilding.com/single-post/2018/05/08/a-can-s-circular-series-stage-4-technical-design>
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5. Riba 2030
6. <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/08/04/riba-reconsideration-deregulate-planning/>
7. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/residents_experience_of_high-density_housing_in_london_lse_final_report_july_2018.pdf
8. <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160108200837/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/interactive/census-map-2-1-pop-density/index.html>
9. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/constructionindustry/articles/constructionstatistics/2019#construction-new-orders>
10. In the words of a prominent visiting guest architect
11. <https://www.archdaily.com/890691/architectures-evolving-role-how-community-engaged-design-can-encourage-social-change>
12. <http://www.invisiblestudio.org/why-architects-matter/>
13. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/aj-climate-champions-podcast-diana-dina>



Looking towards to the coming decade the landscape of the architecture profession often feels bleak and wholly pessimistic. With a looming climate crisis, rising inequalities, divided politics and a raging pandemic, it is clear that architects can no longer remain apathetic if positive change is ever to occur. A radical shift in the architecture profession is necessary, restructuring the role of the architect and the ways in which they practice.



My vision for the future of the architect and the professions at large, lies in the providing of advice and consultation of appropriate spatial solutions and less so in the design and construction of new buildings. Shifting from the architect from principal building designer to the architect as a 'Spatial Agent'.

The term 'Spatial Agent' was coined by Jeremy Till (2013) in his Book "Spatial Agency: Other ways of Practicing Architecture". Till describes the 'Spatial Agent' as someone who does not solely provide built solutions, but makes spatial judgements about what the best intervention, if any, might be. They apply architectural knowledge beyond aesthetic form and technical design, instead enabling social and spatial considerations to be explored (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). The 'Spatial Agent' has the understanding The 'Spatial Agent' prioritizes collaboration between clients, contractors and the community, seeing themselves as part of a much more complex network, striving to provide environmentally and socially

sustainable spatial solutions in the built environment (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). The architect no longer views themselves as the genius designer, but as a co-author working together, collaboratively with others (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). Jeremy Till emphasis that the architect is not 'THE Spatial Agent' but one of many spatial agents. When the architect acts as a 'Spatial Agent' they are someone part of a larger process with many components and complexities that allow a project to come to fruition (Schneider, Till, 2009).

Working as a 'Spatial Agent' does not diminish the role of an architect, but in fact, opens the architect up to a much wider range of opportunities and ways of working. It provides security to the profession in a time when the architects role is often unstable and undefinable.

The Brief:

The architect as a 'Spatial Agent' would expand and interrogate a brief given by a client. Briefs are often limiting and fail

to recognise many of the social and environmental issues the project could upheave (Till, 2009). A 'Spatial Agent' takes the brief not as a strict set of instructions but as the start of an opportunity, advising the client on their spatial options and whether in fact, a building is even the most appropriate response (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). The RIBA Plan of Work already alludes to architects taking this advisory role, "Stage 0 is about determining the best means of achieving the client's requirements. An open mind is required because a building might not be the most appropriate solution." (RIBA, 2020, p.17). The inclusion of this statement in an institutional document, suggests the industry is thinking forwards and creating space for architects in the UK to adopt the role of 'Spatial Agent' opposed to principal building designer.

Collaboration:

The architect as a 'Spatial Agent' always works in collaboration, bringing on board the community, different user groups, sub-contractors and specialists into the project, to create a spatial solution that is informed and fully developed (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). In current practice this method of collaborative work can be achieved in a number of ways but primarily through a collaborative method of procurement. A collaborative method of procurement moves away from the two-party relationship and the "us and them" mentality. All the parties involved in the project have a relationship to one and other and they all owe each other a duty of care (RIBA, 2019). It encourages openness and trust between all the parties involved and requires a shift in attitude, cultures and behaviours usually seen in the industry, aligning with the values of 'Spatial Agency' (Designing Building, 2020).

Environmental Sustainability:

"The problem is that the endless production of buildings is also tied to all the traits that have led to the climate emergency: a reliance on a technocratic regime fuelled by the carbon state; extraction of raw materials and fossil fuels; growing consumption; dependency on the orthodoxies of neoliberalism. To say that architecture is complicit in the climate emergency is not to apportion blame, it is a statement of fact." (Till, 2020)

The climate crisis brings with it a radical new set of demands and opportunities, that implores architects to design responsibility, minimising, if not eliminating, the environmental impact of their work. Regulations such as BREEAM or LEED and intuition codes like the ARB Codes of Conduct, promote environmental consideration within the architecture profession but still work under the assumption of adding yet more CO₂ guzzling buildings to the world (Till, 2009). When the architect acts as a 'Spatial Agent' they are no longer tied to the association of building designer and are free to make spatial judgements that counter the current modes of consumption and growth (Till, 2020).

The architect as a 'Spatial Agent' would operate under the assumption of scarcity. This primarily manifests through never building when it is not necessary and appropriating existing buildings where possible. The 'Spatial Agent' uses materials conservatively and promotes an attitude of care towards the built environment (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013). The notion

of flexibility and adaptability is also key to the 'Spatial Agent' ensuring that space can be changed when necessary, in order to minimise waste and thus the further impact the project could have upon completion (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013).

The RIBA has begun asking architects to design with the environment as a primary consideration. For example, in the RIBA document 'The Way Ahead Document' it sets out that architects have 'an urgent role to play in responding to the climate emergency' and that all RIBA members will need to meet 'Net zero whole life carbon (or less) in the buildings they design by 2030.' (RIBA, 2020). For UK architects to meet these targets, drastic changes to the way they practice will be needed. By acting as a 'Spatial Agent', adopting an attitude of scarcity, re-appropriating buildings and being conservative with resources, the 2030 target is much more achievable and realistic for architects in the UK (Till, 2009).

Social Equality:

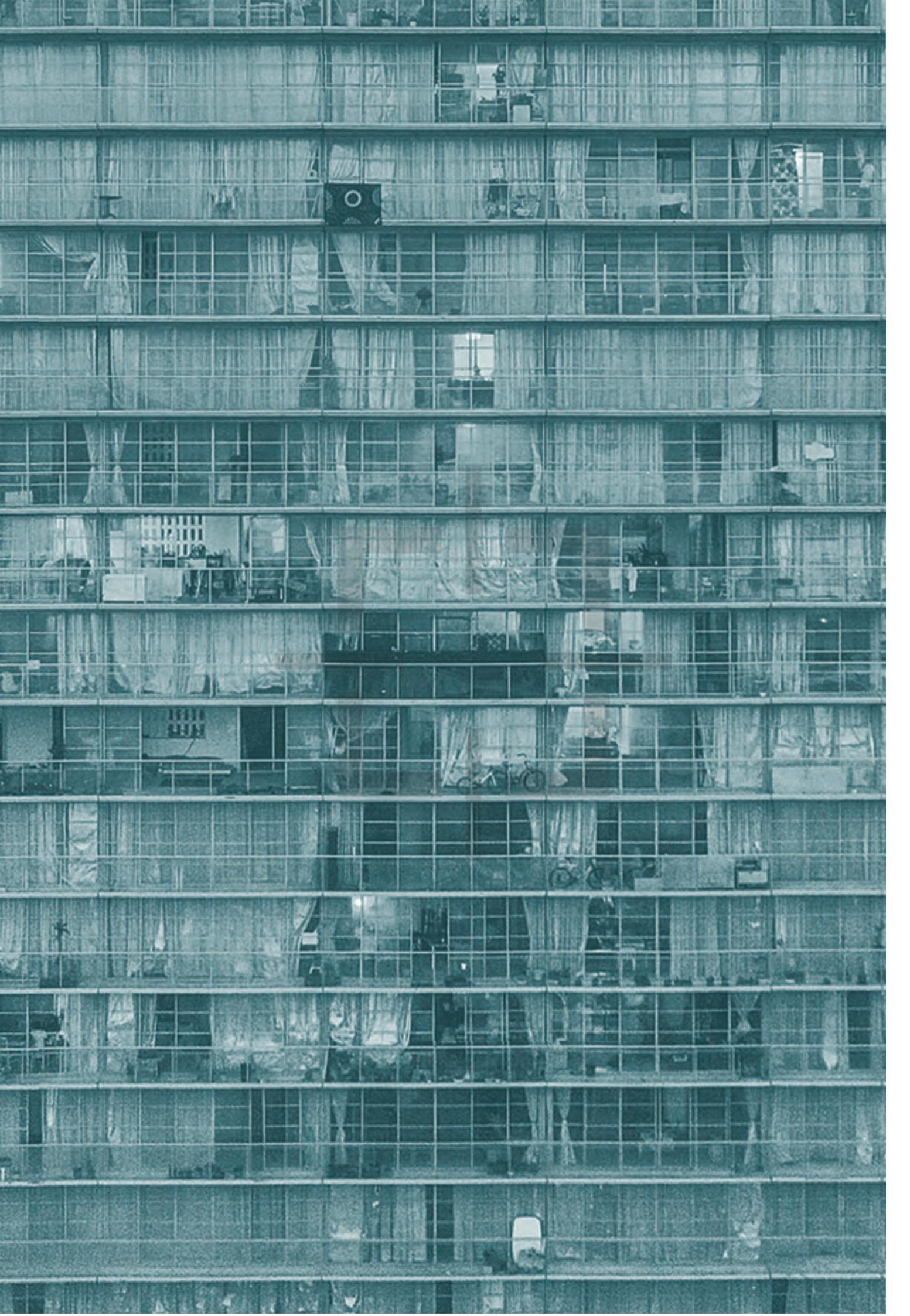
Through his writing, Jeremy Till emphasises the importance of the 'Spatial Agent' designing ethically and with the user experience paramount, to create spaces that promote social equality. In his book 'Architecture Depends' Till states:

"The key ethical responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the object as a static visual product, but as a contributor to the creation of empowering spatial and hence, social relationships in the name of other." (Till, 2009, p.178)

The 'Spatial Agent' does not rely on aesthetics and beauty to create ethical projects, but uses a true understanding, through collaboration and engagement, of user needs to create the most appropriate spatial solution to a given problem (Till, 2009). The 'Spatial Agent' looks to the long-term trajectory of the project, ensuring that decisions that are made are not opportunistic or exploitative (Till, 2009). They take responsibility for the other and understand the needs of the user are often different to the requirements of the client. Community engagement is not a token gesture for the 'Spatial Agent' and is a key part of the process of developing spatial solutions (Till, 2009).

Codes and regulations set by institutional bodies like the ARB and RIBA have baseline ethical principles that architects are directed to follow. The 'Spatial Agent' understands the limited nature of these codes and their, often, inadequacy to promote social equality and ethical behaviour in the built environment (Till, 2009). This is seen clearly in the ARB's 'The Architects Code: Standards of professional conduct and practice' which comprises of twelve brief standards for architect to follow (ARB, 2020). The codes have limited mention of the user and the architect's responsibility to them, with only a brief mention of the wider impact of their work in Standard 5 (ARB, 2020).

The 'Spatial Agent' goes above and beyond the institutional requirements, without compromising the client demands, to produce socially responsive spatial solutions that are always in the service of the other; the user, the community, the observer, the builder and all the people whose 'political and phenomenal lives will be effected by the construction and occupation of the space' (Till, 2009, p.173).



Spatial Agency in Practice:

Architects acting as ‘Spatial Agents’ opposed to principal building designers is not an entirely unknown phenomenon. Lacaton & Vassal, a French architecture practice based in Paris, have been acting as ‘Spatial Agents’ since they set up practice in 1984 (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020). Their practice focuses on the interrogation of client briefs, constant collaboration, community engagement, adaptive re-use and the preservation of materials, which aligns with the key principles of the ‘Spatial Agent’ highlighted by Jeremy Till (2013).

Three of Lacaton & Vassal’s projects; Place Leon Aucouc, Grand Parc Bordeaux and Palais de Tokyo, demonstrate Lacaton & Vassal acting as ‘Spatial Agents’.

Place Leon Aucouc:

In 1996, Lacaton & Vassal were commissioned by the mayor of Bordeaux to redesign a small triangular plaza in the city centre, as part of the plans to ‘beautify’ parts of Bordeaux (Huber, 2015).



Image: Palais De Toyko Renovation - Lacaton & Vassal

The directors, Ann Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal analysed the site conditions, the constraints and the potential for different built solutions. Upon weeks of reflection, they returned to the city mayor to state that they had considered the commission carefully and realised that the site was already beautiful, there was really no need for any kind of built intervention. Instead of submitting drawings, they simply provided the statement:

“Embellishment has no place here. Quality, charm and life already exist.” (Huber, 2015)

In order to preserve the quality and beauty of the site, Lacaton & Vassal suggested a series of ways the city could better care for the plaza, directing them to specialist consultants, particularly those who could provide more information about the maintenance of the different trees (Chan, 2013).

In this situation, Lacaton and Vassal acted clearly as ‘Spatial Agents’. They applied their architectural intelligence and deep understanding of space, from years of education and practice, to assert that the spatial solution was to in fact, do nothing, aside from care for the existing (Till, 2009). As a ‘Spatial Agent’ Jeremy Till emphasises that the interrogation and expansion of a client brief is paramount, with the understanding that a building is not always the most appropriate solution and there are other ways to make a spatial difference (Allford, Middleton, Price, 2003).

The Place Leon Aucouc project completely countered the assumption that architects should be constantly be adding to the world and challenged the very expectation of constant growth and production in the built environment (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020). Lacaton & Vassal embodied the idea that a ‘Spatial Agents’ focuses on providing the most sustainable spatial solution, operating under the assumption of scarcity, where resources should be used as conservatively as possible (Awani, Schneider, Till, 2013). The project resisted the “environmentally damaging and socially destructive aspects of capitalist urban development” (Charley, 2008, p.160) and provided a humble approach to a spatial project.

Grand Parc Bordeaux:

Grand Parc Bordeaux is arguably Lacaton & Vassals most well-known and celebrated project, most notably winning the 2019 EU Mies award (EU Mies, 2020). The project was in collaboration with Christophe Hutin Architecture and Frederic Druot, as part of the PLUS initiative, a manifesto for the French government to raze significance of its “long-vilified post-war housing stock” (Huber, 2016). The PLUS initiative used the slogan “Never demolish, never remove or replace, always transform, and re-use” (Huber, 2016). The aim was to refurbish and provide a new lease of life to many apartment blocks that would otherwise face demolition by the French Government (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020).

Before any decisions were made, the scheme was proposed to the community living in the Grand Parc Bordeaux apartment complex. Lacaton & Vassal facilitated a series of discussions to interrogate whether the residents agreed with their proposal, if any changes were needed or if in fact, the block would be better off demolished with an entirely new building erected (Huber, 2016). Lacaton & Vassal gained the key understanding of the lived experience of the user and overwhelmingly, 95% of the residents stated that they did not want the buildings to be demolished and favoured Lacaton & Vassal’s plans to refurbish the apartments. (Chan, 2013).

The refurbishment of the apartments gave each space plenty of natural light, fluidity and views (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020). The load bearing structure was developed in conjunction with the structural engineers, ensuring the design was as conservative with material use as possible and worked with the allocated budget (Ascher, 2013). Each apartment got generous outdoor

living spaces, allowing for a more flexible living arrangement. The winter gardens added an extra 15m² of space to each apartment and improved the overall performance of the building envelope, by not only providing a much more stable and pleasant living environment, but also halving the energy bill of the residents (Lacaton, Vassal 2020).

The impact of construction on the residents was also taken into account. Each winter garden took one day to erect and residents did not have to move out of their homes (Chan, 2013). This protected Grand Parc Bordeaux from the process of gentrification and high-quality housing was produced without the removal of communities (Lacaton, Vassal 2020).

Lacaton and Vassal's largest cultural project is the art institution in the centre of Paris, Palais De Tokyo. Their interventions were a 'light' touch and give the building a sense of temporality. In an interview Anne Lacaton stated: "We demolished nothing, damaged nothing." (Wellner, 2012)

In this project, Lacaton & Vassal acted as 'Spatial Agents' and operated under the assumption of scarcity, being conservative with resources and only using materials where necessary. By adding nearly nothing to the Palais De Tokyo, Lacaton & Vassal opposed the expectation of constant growth and construction within the built environment (Till, 2009). It is a hugely successful example of how architects can still produce award winning and successful work without the need to compromise the environment and add to the unsettling effects of the climate crisis.

They aimed to reduce the impact of the project, being as efficient as possible; minimising work and maximising economy (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020). In places where the marble columns were no longer stable, they added minimal concrete reinforcement, ensuring the building would be safe and last long into the future (Lacaton, Vassal, 2020). The relevant parts of the building were updated to comply with new regulations, making it safe in the event of a fire. Lacaton & Vassal worked closely in conjunction with the engineers so there would not be the need for ventilation shafts or mechanical air-filter systems. They instead used natural ventilation, using sliding panels and automatic shades (Rendall, 2006).

Lacaton & Vassal acted as 'Spatial Agents' through an ethical and considered approach to the project in the Grand Parc Bordeaux project, where the human account of dwelling was paramount (Till, 2009). They also acted as 'Spatial Agents' through the seeking and encouraging of collaboration. They worked harmoniously with the client, community and other contractors involved, to come up with an appropriate spatial solution (Till, 2009). It distanced Lacaton & Vassal from the self-righteousness often found within the architecture profession and instead they acted as facilitators, thinkers and team members (Slessor, 2019). Lacaton & Vassal became part of broad network of individuals and groups, removing themselves from the foreground and instead of being the front runners, became part of a much more complex process (Awan, Schneider, Till, 2013).

The architect acting as a 'Spatial Agent' is a radical shift from the position the architect usually holds of principal building designer. The architect is no longer primarily

associated with the physical object, the building, and instead is tied to providing successful spatial solutions. Despite the preconceptions, acting as a 'Spatial Agent' expands the role of the architect, rather than restricting it, providing the architect with a better set of tools, principles and ways of practicing, to deal with the colossal changes expected over the next decade.

'Spatial Agents' are radical and progressive, fighting somewhat against the status quo. However, to see any changes within the built environment, this kind of drastic shift is going to be necessary. The 'Spatial Agent' places the architect in a position where they are able to respond and tackle the plethora of catastrophic issues that they will face in the not so distant future.

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Image: Grand Park Bordeaux Winter Gardens - Lacaton & Vassal



"Architects... should welcome this invitation to participate in a conversation about the nature and character of our shared built world."

The Starchitect

Architecture and the public are inextricably linked, each depending on the other for its best function. However, as society has evolved, the industry appears to have fallen somewhat behind, with terms like "starchitecture" speaking to a profession increasingly seen to be upholding outdated, elitist values. This perception damages the relationship between architects and the public, significantly hindering its ability to function and thrive.

The profession has a self-imposed duty to promote and facilitate a better standard of living, with the public at its centre. Clear communication and most importantly understanding between the two is vital to ensure architecture can fulfil its potential and continue to have a lasting and significant impact on society.

The separation of architects from the rest of the construction industry has resulted in a profession which is seen to be for the elite and privileged alone. Most projects shown in the mainstream media are large-scale, high-profile projects, like the work of Frank Gehry or Bjarke Ingels, and projects of a smaller scale are usually for wealthy private clients. These projects and the representation they receive at the cost of more low-profile, low-cost work, further alienates the profession.

The broadly negative response to public opinion with the architecture industry creates a barrier between architects and the general public. An example of this is the recent controversy surrounding the 10 Design Principles released by HRH Prince of Wales. The input was met with very mixed reactions, ranging from support to indignance. These reactions were not only founded on the principles themselves, which will by their nature generate opposing views, but also on the act itself; the expression of opinion on the architectural profession from an "outsider".

Regardless of opinion of the ideas expressed, the participation of a member of the public in an architectural debate should be recognised and validated, not shot down for lack of expertise. In the words of Patrick Lynch, Founder Director of Lynch Architects, "Architects... should welcome this invitation to participate in a conversation about the nature and character of our shared built world."

This raises an important point; the domain of architecture is irrefutably public. A piece of architecture is not like a painting in a gallery, observed only by those who seek it out. It is the background of everyday life, used and experienced by all. As such, surely

everyone has the right to observe and interpret the architecture around them? Ignoring the viewpoint of the people architects design for can only serve to distance the profession further from the society it aims to reflect and improve.

The impacts of this are apparent throughout the industry. According to the RIBA, in 2017 just 6% of new homes were designed by architects - leaving around 200,000 to be built without architectural input. Developers in particular are clearly not regarding architectural expertise as a necessary element to new housing schemes. Homeowners and prospective clients for small-scale projects generally seem to share this view, likely driven by the added expense of involving an architect.

Though these costs often cancel out through the benefits of architectural design, the stigma surrounding architecture as a luxury unavailable or inappropriate to "ordinary" projects has seriously restricted the opportunities available to the architects. As it stands, this perception means that only the few, and often the privileged, benefit from architectural design. The intentions of the profession, to improve quality of life, sustainability and practicality, cannot truly be achieved with such a limited clientele. These benefits of architectural

insight, founded on years of experience, should be available to all.

Attempts to improve public perception of architecture are already taking shape, but they are currently too isolated to have enough of an impact. They can, however, provide a foundation upon which a greater change can be built. The RIBA Stirling Prize, the UK's highest architecture award, set such an example in 2019 when awarded to Goldsmith Street, a social housing scheme of around 100 dwellings in Norwich, designed by architect Mikhail Riches with Cathy Hawley. The prize has previously been awarded to projects such as Bloomberg, London (2018) and Burntwood School (2015), another council-commissioned project. This new precedent of celebrating more affordable residential projects, particularly through such a high-profile award, gives hope to a shift in the professions own ideals, with less focus on the excessive and more on the practical and socially aware. In the words of Finn Williams in his Dezeen article, "We need architects to work on ordinary briefs for ordinary people". Representation of such projects helps to achieve this, encouraging more involvement in similar projects.

Good quality architecture and public space has the capacity to improve the

lives of the ordinary, but I can't help thinking that this is being compromised by the profession's lack of involvement with ordinary projects and engagement with the general public. As an architecture student, my awareness of these issues, as well as the others within the industry, is constantly changing. At the early stages of my interest in architecture, projects like House in Les Jeurs and Circle House shown on the Netflix series The World's Most Extraordinary Homes, and more high-profile work like the Guggenheim in Bilbao were key inspirations. Now, after just one year studying architecture, the problems facing the industry that hide behind this glamorous façade have begun to reveal themselves.

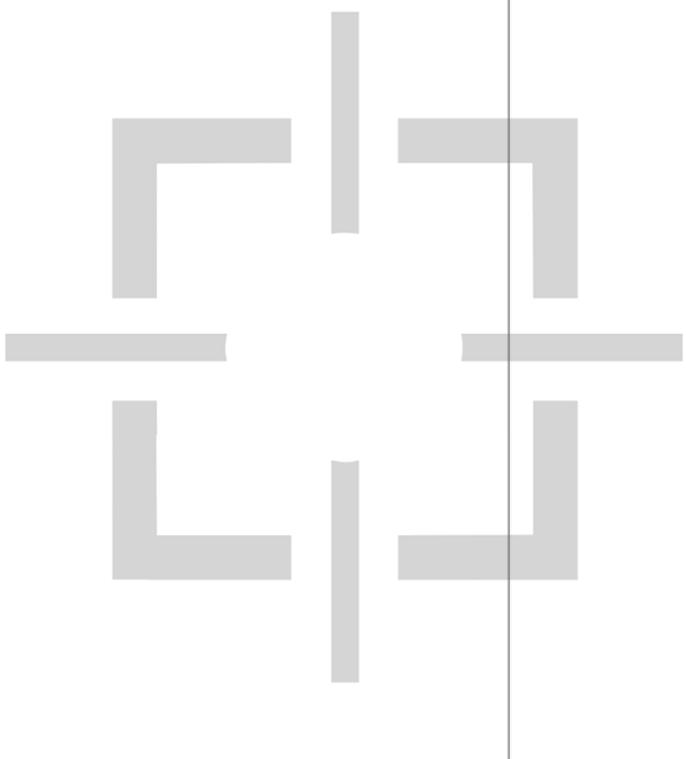
Improving the scope of architectural impact cannot be solely down to clients and the public; we must play an active role in making architecture more accessible to and in touch with the community it serves. Stunning homes and housing developments should not sit on different sides of the line between architecture and construction. The valuable input of this profession is one which should be utilised in all manner of projects, fulfilling its potential to impact our society and the built environment in which it exists.

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A letter from a Quantity Surveyor



Unlike many other Architect students from my course, I was fortunate enough to take my placement in a Quantity Surveying and Project Management firm. I was able to observe from an outsiders' point of view, on the difference and attitudes between Contractors and Architects, having to work with both parties closely at various RIBA stages.

Straightaway I was able to hone in on the flaws, both actual and perceived, that still exist today. In a questionnaire done by the Chartered Institute of Building in 2010, 'lack of communication' (CIOB, 2010) was stated to be the most significant problem during the procurement process, suggesting that there inadequate exchanges between architects and quantity surveyors, and by extension, a wider understanding in the construction industry. As a result, Architects are often not be taken seriously, losing the prestige that they once had. Architects, no matter how experienced they are, seem to lack the understanding of practicality when delivering a project.

It seems that the decline in an Architect's prestige began in 1977 when the mandatory fee scale was changed to be recommended (Capital A, 2009). This enabled Architects to change their fee for clients to be more competitive. Clients would chose their Architects based on quality and cost, instead of quality alone. This began with Architects undercutting on their work providing a more competitive fee. Many now do not provide the amount of finer details that they once contributed to.

Of all the procurement types, the Traditional procurement, in which the Architect is the lead, is more likely to overrun in terms of cost (CIOB, 2010). The Architect's lack of ability to understand and control cost when they are in charge of the design, is very problematic, contributing to the client's increased risk when relying on Architects, and not Contractors. I have witnessed numerous meetings where even Senior Architects fail to comprehend how much their designs actually cost, no matter how many decades of experience they have.

Why is this the case? Costing buildings is not something Architects learn at University or for their RIBA CPD, despite it traditionally being something they are expected to understand. In the RIBA Standard Form of Appointment for Architecture Services, it states that the Architect must inform the client of "the construction cost" (RIBA, 2020). This is a naive thought, considering Architects have not been taught about it at University or even by RIBA, yet RIBA expects them to have knowledge of it? It is a disgrace on RIBA and should be revisited and amended. An understanding of cost can lead to better communication within the design team as Architects can start designing the building with knowledge of the budget instead of awaiting the cost consultant to tell them they have to 'make it cheaper'.

We are expecting our future Architects to go into the construction industry without any understanding or knowledge of cost! It is the unfortunate reality that cost is a huge factor in the construction industry; all projects have a budget. Instead, we allow students to design buildings lacking any connection with the real world, throwing them into the deep end. Yes, they may be able to learn about cost in industry, but they would be learning from architects who are also still learning from the industry, especially as cost analysis of buildings has only developed in the last century (Ashworth, 2015). This is a never ending and in my honest opinion, a dead end cycle.

Out of all of the procurement routes, Traditional was more likely to overrun in terms of time by 60% (CIOB, 2010). This clearly shows that Contractors have a better sense of time than Architects and if a project were required to be on time, one would use the Design and Build over Traditional. An example is in the Olympic Media Centre, being Design and Build to ensure it would be on time (Miller, 2006). Why is this? Architects

"Architects do not hold any prestige like they did before"

are now less exposed to the details of a construction program, being less likely to be Project Managers and Contract Administrators (Derek Adams pers. Comm. 4th January 2021). This causes future Architects to not have a clear understanding or knowledge pertaining to time.

In the current fast pace world, time is becoming increasingly important, with projects being built and procured faster than ever! Time is of the essence in many projects, especially as the longer it takes the more it can cost for the client, and unfortunately not all clients have the ability to spend over their budget. With Design and Build, there is an understanding that the Contractor is to design and build simultaneously, allowing for decisions to be made whilst construction is happening. However in Traditional, Architects are expected to fully realise the design at Tender stage. In my opinion this is personally hard to do as unknowns may crop up in the construction, such as the change in soil quality in an area. If this were to happen, the already 'fully realised' design needs to be changed and in my experience Architects tend to take this opportunity to amend other details to make the project 'work better'. However this causes a delay in construction as Architects fail to understand that lead times exist in procuring materials, due to them not being exposed to the construction programming being purely Architects and not Project Managers or Contract Administrators.

However, Paul Hyett, former president of RIBA, blames the Design & Build procurement to restrict Architects in creating decisions, only giving them a "short time" (Construction Manager Magazine, 2020). This is an issue in all procurement routes as no matter how much time you are given, not everything can be realised. Instead, the Architect needs to be aware of the priorities in a design determining what decisions should be made before Tender. This is to certify the building design is practical, such as compiling with regulations, before Tender rather than a focus on their 'concept'. The 'architect', may it be the Contractor or traditional Architect, must also have knowledge of a construction program and how one could fit their design change into the existing program, something that current Architects lack.

From this, it seems that Design and Build ensures a project is done in time and to a budget due to the Contractor's knowledge of programming and the knowledge that the design can change throughout construction. Going into a contract with the knowledge that the design will change, allows acceptance among all parties for changes to happen, compared to that of the Traditional procurement.

Contractors have the ability to ensure a project is on time and within budget, something many Architects fail to do so. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that Contractors, particularly large Contractors, are there for commercial gain. They are not there to develop an 'arty' concept but rather make sure the building is built, and they get paid.

Architects are good at developing a quality conceptual role. I have witnessed many Architects put their clients needs first and develop it into what they want to see in the building. This is something that the Architect heavily contributes to and Contractors fail to do so. However, I have also witnessed that although they can develop a concept at the pre-construction phase, they seem to lack knowledge of construction itself, which is due to University courses being more art than construction focus.

It is already clear the construction industry's preference of Design and Build procurement, preferring Contractors to Architects. The Architect's legacy is certainly decreasing due to the lack of education and knowledge current Architects have. In my honest opinion, RIBA has not helped due to their lack of input on an Architect's understanding of practicality in terms of cost, time and quality. Because of this, Architects do not hold any prestige like they did before, which does not help their legacy.

The landscape of architecture is not the same as it was a few decades ago. Architects no longer have the leadership and control that it once had. If we continue on this path, Architects will no longer need to do the finer details of the project; instead they will purely be the concept designers, purely artists whose fee can decrease even further! Is this what we would want? Do we want Architects to lose even more prestige and

by extension their legacy till they become irrelevant? Their legacy can only go for so long before it becomes non-existent, does Spain still have the legacy of conquering the world in the 15th Century (Schmidt-Nowara, 2008)?

RIBA has acknowledged the decrease in prestige, with them developing The Way Ahead scheme, aiming to develop an architect's education further (Alan, 2020). However doing a simple search of the word "cost" (Alan, 2020) in The Way Ahead proves that RIBA has not thought about something so fundamental in the industry, thus not helping the architect's legacy. Architect's need to learn how to be more practical in their thinking, more knowledgeable and understanding to be able to communicate effectively to the rest of the design team.

How can this be? The next generation of Architects need to be exposed to other aspects of the industry from the beginning of their career! Although RIBA is aiming to develop the Architects education, this needs to start from University teaching the future architects about practicality. Why not expose University students to all aspects of the industry? I may not have done my placement in an Architecture firm but I highly recommend anyone studying architecture to get out of their architecture bubble and experience other aspects of the construction industry to develop an understanding from all sides!

It is my belief that contractors are already architects in their own right, being more reliable than Architects during the construction phase. Perhaps the question should be if Architects are becoming obsolete. Architects are losing their prestige and position in the construction industry due to their lack of knowledge, which effects their communication, and practicality of the project, whereas Contractors are gaining esteem but do not have the skills of an Architect which is to design to the clients needs.

Instead an Architect's legacy is to change, and it is dependant on future Architects and RIBA as to which way it is to go. Both Contractors and Architects can be essential in the construction industry and are required to work together. Architects have the skill for the pre-construction phase whereas Contractors have the skill set for the construction phase. However, we all need to learn and respect more about each other's role in the construction industry realising that the concept is not the most important part of the project.

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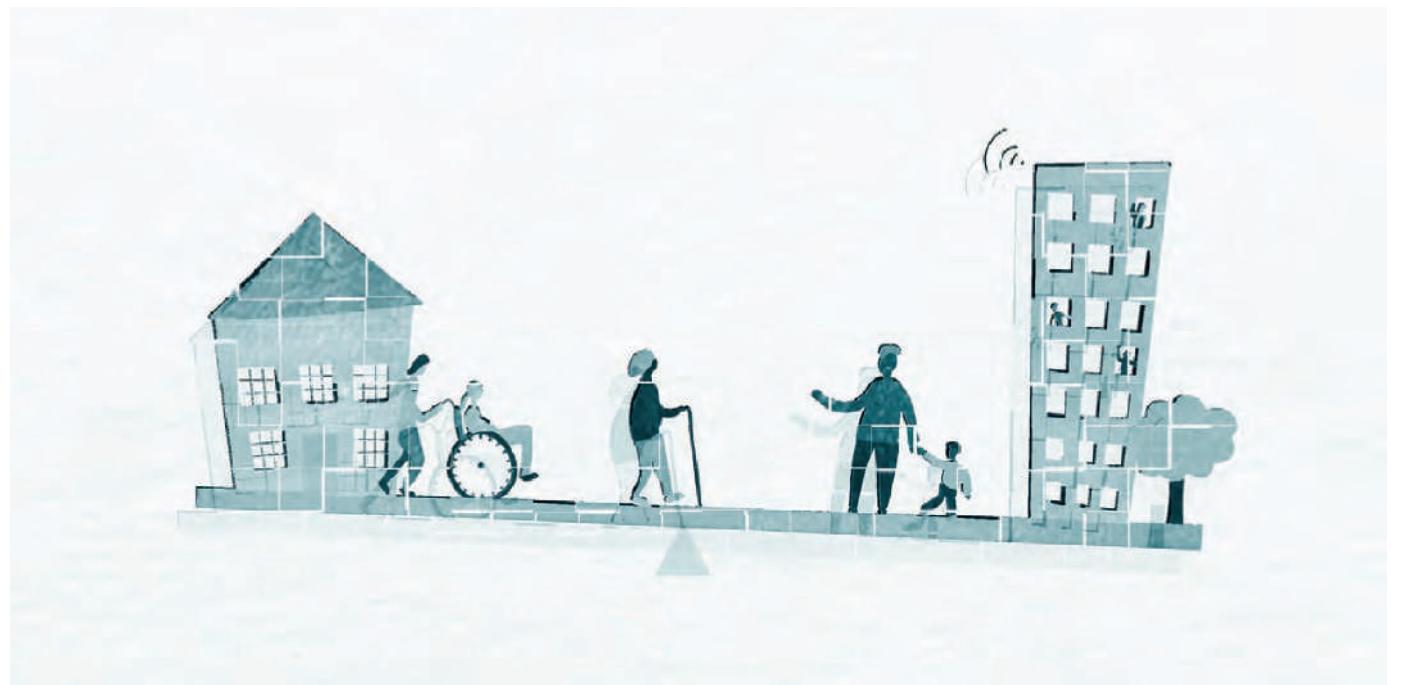


Image: Age and [its] Benefits - Seeking Balance

Age and

[its] Benefits

The pandemic has brought to light the fragility of our ways of living, and indeed our lives. From within our homes, from the empty offices and from the overwhelmed hospitals, we have seen how our built environment, health and welfare systems are inextricably intertwined. We discuss lessons learnt, but how much of this will we actually implement? Widening the lens from the current Covid situation to the burgeoning crisis of population ageing, and considering how this may affect future living patterns, may be crucial in converting a potential demographic burden into valuable social capital.

Within the field of disease management, governments often emphasise curative healthcare, funding facilities intended to treat rather than prevent illness. This retrospective approach not only results in greater numbers of people with health issues, but also increased social marginalisation of this group, caused in part by the magnified perception of their dependence on others. While being an older person no longer immediately equates to declining health, how we manage the process of ageing as a society is similarly reactive and isolating, assuming decreased agency and increased reliance on external means of support.

This overlooking of the older generation is not only detrimental to their wellbeing, but also detrimental to societal health. Over 50s represent 38% of the UK population yet over 80% of the country's wealth (Gentilini, 2020). Therefore, the way in which older members of society live has potentially

great social implications, as their capital feeds back into education and welfare systems. Older people are the future of our country, not only in population projections but also in our economic and political outcomes, and the resulting impact on new generations.

At the moment, the senior living sector is dominated by segregative methods based on deficit models that are focused on declining health (Borda & Pedell, 2021). In other words, our building typologies for older people concentrate on what they lack, not what they can give. Consequently, as our population ages, it would be easy to assume that demand for nursing homes should increase. However, 50% of all people in a nursing home are there due to social, not physical, deficits (Hollwich in Miller, 2016) - deficits which result from structural shortfalls in how we live and form society.

By identifying a more preventable cause, we can relate this back to disease management. It is becoming more widely recognised at a policy level that primary healthcare, where prevention is combined with cure, has both economic and wellbeing advantages. From this it can be inferred that senior living provision should not be a case of multiplying our current supply but instead, confronting social issues in order to adapt the demand to something more sustainable, attractive and socially profitable.

Recently, several documents outlining principles for 'age-

friendly cities' have been issued both by the government, the RIBA and major companies such as Arup. A fundamental theme of these is capitalising on the opportunities of ageing: we need to consider ways in which urban interventions inspired by older people can benefit the wider society, rather than considering the older generation as a separate entity. It is all very well designing retirement villages, apartments and homes which respond well to the needs of their occupants in isolation, but a holistic approach involving the broader community is crucial to socially sustainable development. Perceptions of the elderly may then shift to recognise their positive contribution to a healthy society, rather than the tendency to see them as a drain on resources.

Nevertheless, despite these efforts to encourage more innovative, sensitive design, it is a combination of demand and legislation which dictates the majority of development, not goodwill. In general, demand is high: retirement living is becoming the new preference for housing developers, seemingly replacing the Build to Rent sector (Gentilini, 2020). While this is positive in creating places which consider the concept of 'active ageing', making retirement an exciting prospect, it is also a crucial turning point in deciding how such a great proportion of our population will live for years to come. Planning charges make no exceptions for retirement living, on top of which the lower saleable area to GIA ratio due to additional amenities and accessible layouts is no great incentive to investors (Gentilini, 2020). Without standardised, quantified guidance motivating worthwhile, inspiring proposals, or even better, enforced policy, our collective futures are left to the whim of developers' opportunism.

Of course, the link between senior living developments and social benefit relies on the residents' connection to the local economy and community. Economic and social capital are maximised with density, yet the attractiveness of retirement locations is often the inverse case. A popular solution has been to encourage ageing in place - adapting older people's existing homes to allow lifelong residence, and developing new homes to the Lifetime Homes standard. In doing so, independence and community links can be retained at a relatively low cost compared to huge new developments. Yet this lower cost is sometimes used to mask public spending budget cuts, and the policy is not a catch-all, potentially stranding the immobile in car-centric locations. (Wood, 2017). The London Mayors' Design Advisory Group therefore suggests a multifaceted, innovative approach to housing, allowing for diversity of living choices as a positive way forward in urban planning for an ageing population (Barnes et. al, 2016). This can be applied in principle across the entire nation.

So what power do architects have in facilitating this positive feedback loop of senior living and social benefit? In our designs, both in housing and the public realm, opportunities for social interaction should be at the forefront. Friendly, accessible, multi-generational spaces are key to the sense of community and safety that older people, or all people in fact, need. This has further importance from an intersectional standpoint, with many cultures placing the elderly at the centre of their community structures; such interventions can also afford safer environments for the disabled, females and LGBTQ+ people, among other marginalised groups.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of such systemic change relies on much more than that currently within the realm of architecture. Investment in infrastructure and technology will be crucial in enabling the nexus of people, policy and economy to connect effectively. For example, increasing technological literacy will empower senior citizens, enabling them to have greater connectivity and engage with increasingly data-driven urban systems and 'smart' ways of living.

It is our responsibility as architecture professionals to think beyond architecture, to feed back our insight and realise our own complicity in an industrial movement that has the capacity for such a fundamental impact on how we (will) live.

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A room of one's own : an architect's addition

“But you may say, we asked you to speak about women and architecture – what has that got to do with a room of one’s own? I will try to explain. When you asked me to speak about women and architecture I sat down on the banks of the river and began to wonder what the words meant to me. They might mean simply a few remarks about Lina Bo Bardi; a few more about Denise Scott Brown; a tribute to Grafton and a sketch of the Ghent Market Hall under snow; some witticisms if possible, about Jane Jacobs; a respectful allusion to Frida Escobedo; a reference to Yasmeen Lari and one would have done. But at second sight the words seemed not so simple. The title women and architecture might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like; or it might mean women and the architecture they design; or it might mean women and the architecture that is designed for them; or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider them in that light, But when I began to consider the subject in the last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had

one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion. I should never be able to fulfil what is, I understand, the first duty of a writer - to hand you after an hour of discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantelpiece for ever. All I could do was offer you an opinion upon one minor point - a women must have money and a room of her own if she is to design; and that, as you will see, leaves a great problem of the true nature of architecture unsolved. I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions - woman and architecture remain, so far as I'm concerned, unsolved problems. But in order to make some amends I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about the room and money. I am going to develop in your presence fully and freely as I can the train of thought which lead me to think this. Perhaps I lay bare the ideas, the prejudices, that lie behind the statement you will find that they have some bearing upon women and some upon architecture. At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial - and any

question of about gender is that - one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker."

- Virginia Woolf's 'A Room of One's Own' -
Adapted for an Architect.

Amy Young

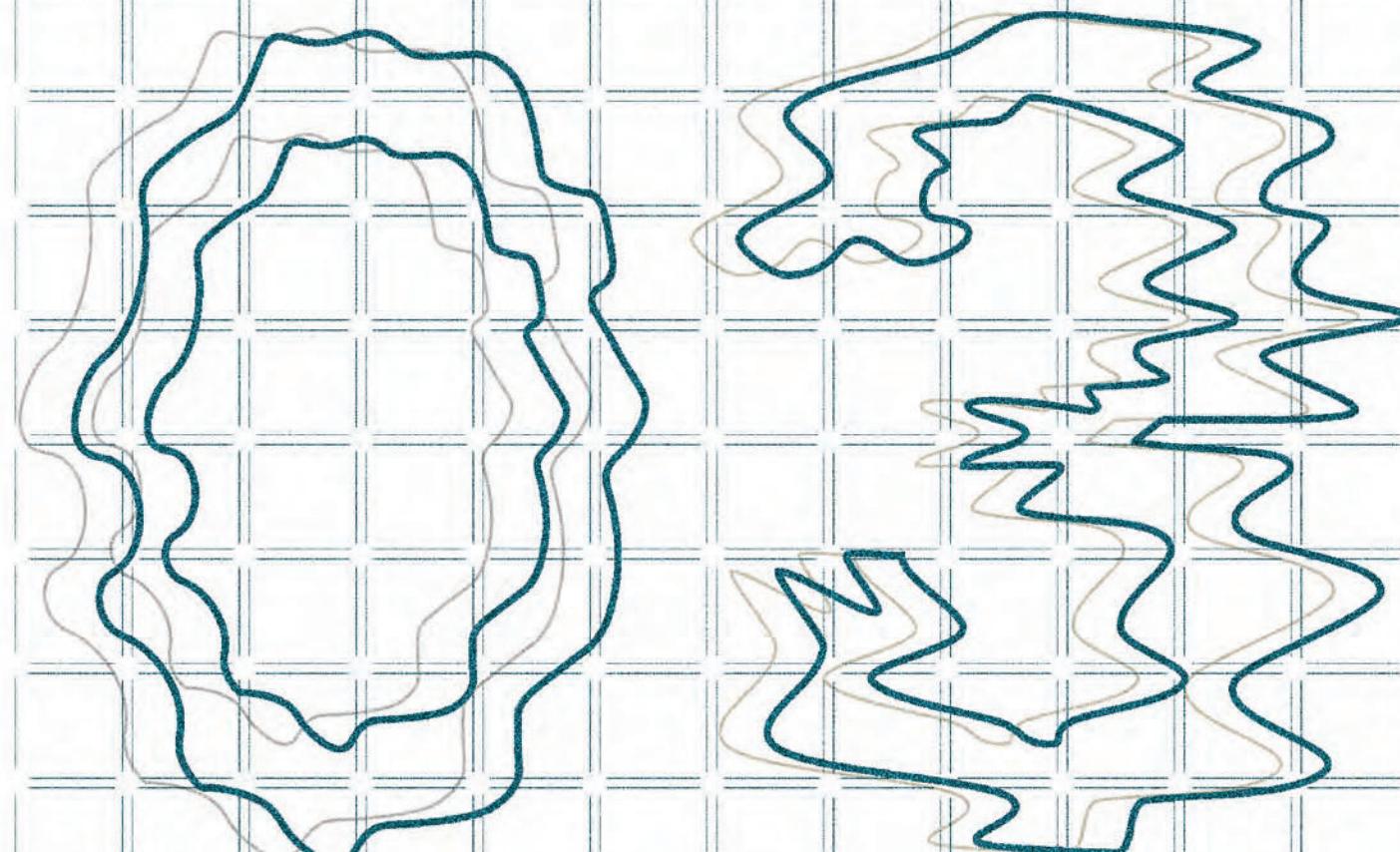
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SPRING A / N YOUR STEP

Ambling through the city, smiling to the passers by, the young girl stops to recline on a bench. Craning her neck, she begins to sketch the skyline, capturing a snapshot of urban life. As dusk begins to fall and the last of the winter light peaks through the tree line, she packs her bags to return home. With each stride; 'Don't stand out, don't draw attention to yourself, blend in with the crowd' penetrates her thoughts. The night takes the spring out of her step, for her day was cut short and objectives stunted - 'All part of normality though' she said.



Unraveling a City's Fabric



Image: Photograph of Colombo by Author

Urban Regeneration and Forced Evictions in Colombo

It is almost 12am on an April night and I find myself playing Monopoly Deal with a group of friends in an old billiards club. The usually busy club and café is dark and empty, a single pool of light illuminating a table with cards strewn across it. The light touches plaques of dark stain wood, highlighting names of champions dating as far back as 1948. In the silence of the night the history pressing against you is almost tangible as the decades of patrons make their presence known. The club, Colombo's oldest, lies in the De Soysa Building in the heart of Colombo and, despite its history of 150 years, faces the threat of demolition.

The image of the bustling metropolis, constantly on the move and changing, is universally acknowledged. Colombo,

Sri Lanka's vibrant capital however, is a different type of city. With a population of just around 70,000 and a lower-than-average rate of urbanisation, the pace at which life moves is relatively laid back and has resulted in a close-knit and intensely diverse society. Like any capital however, it has always been a centre of urban development, but what leaves old city dwellers breathless is when the change eventually finds them.

Colombo's Urban Regeneration Project (URP) has yielded significant chances in the city's landscape, including some beautiful new public spaces. Parks, retail complexes, waterfronts and even old hospitals have seen an upgrade, but an adequate solution for housing is yet to be found. The overarching goal of the Project is to elevate the city into a preferred destination for international business and tourism in South Asia, modelling after cities like Singapore and Hong Kong. Descriptions of the project's agenda utilise phrases such as "world class", "slum-free" and "attractive" - visions of a metropolis geared towards a certain international elite. The Project promises the eradication of underserved settlements but not poverty and wants to cater to an international audience but does not necessarily breed inclusivity within the city.

Centuries of unplanned development means lower income settlements are spread throughout the city in small clusters. Colombo's Urban Development Authority (UDA) is tasked with the clearing of these areas and subsequent demolition of the existing structures. The UDA's most common weapon of choice is forced evictions. The De Soysa Building is surrounded by these neighbourhoods in Colombo's Kompannaveediya, or Slave Island, so called because it once formed a sort of peninsula and was used to confine slaves who worked for Dutch colonists. It has since undergone many transformations from a leisure spot under the British rule, to housing for the Ceylon Rifle Regiment. The regiment had a large number of Malay infantry soldiers in the service of the British who formed a community which has been integral in making the area what it is today; a commercial hub with shops and food stalls and also a place of residence, housing up to four decades of families.

In 2010 and 2013, the neighbourhoods of Mews Street and Java Lane respectively in Kompannaveediya were cleared as part of the Regeneration Project. Residents were not given adequate notice and in the case of Mews Street, were made to watch as their houses were demolished before them. Rendered newly homeless, the former Kompannaveediya residents were eventually relocated in high-rise apartment blocks miles away from their previous homes and the compensation provided was inadequate. The loss of community and distance from their previous places of work results in social disarticulation. While it cannot be argued that the quality of housing in these areas certainly left room for improvement, the eviction process was hasty and lacking clarity for evictees. The practice of these forced evictions contradicts the National Involuntary Resettlement Policy adopted by the government in 2001, which calls for finding alternatives to housing within the focus area rather than displacing residents, ensuring those affected are involved in the selection of relocation sites and the assisting of vulnerable groups to improve their living standards. It is a

practice which works on paper, but the reality does not play out as promised.

The case of the De Soysa Building is slightly different. Built in the late 1870s, it is adorned by Victorian arches and intricate mouldings coupled with the characteristic signs and shop awnings of South Asia. After 150 years however the pastel hued paint is permeated by tropical foliage and the building shows clear signs of wear. Some of Colombo's oldest businesses lie within the walls, arranged as shophouses; shops on the bottom, homes on top. It is a unique way of life sustained for so long it begs the question, do governments regard these local places of comfort as such impediments to progress that rather than preserving their history, their only fate is to be torn down? Ironically, the city of Singapore, representing an ideal which the developers of Colombo strive towards, would beg to differ. From Chinatown to Joo Chiat and Katong, Singapore's streets are lined with countless brightly coloured and beautifully preserved shop houses, some even dating back to the 1800s. The empowerment of the shop owners and existence of the preserved architecture gives a unique, multicultural character to the city - something Colombo's Urban Regeneration Project has failed to realise.

While the fate of the historical buildings in Kompannaveediya hangs in balance, the glass façades of high rises loom behind the old terraces, an unmistakable vision of the future of the area. Among these is the irregularly shaped Cinnamon Life complex, its dark glossy exterior at odds with the street fronts it provides a backdrop to. A look onto the project's website boasts a "perfect urban sanctuary" and "indulgent sophistication and style". The disparity poses the question whether everyday Sri Lankans feel such developments are accessible to them. After all, their localised existences have been disrupted to make way for a new brand of comfort; shinier and more marketable. For the residents of areas like Kompannaveediya, the ongoing evictions seem to suggest that this vision of progress is one that firmly, and brutally, excludes them.

Until then, the De Soysa building remains; a faded reminder of its previous grandeur and an indication of what could have been, while more of the city's unique fabric continues to unravel. Old residents have already begun to move away, leaving vacant spaces which may one day contain large scale housing or shopping complexes built by foreign conglomerates. For now, remnants of the old ways of life continue, nestled in narrow alleyways and between pastel-hued walls. The streets are steeped with enough history that regardless of what the future holds, they are sure to be remembered as a time capsule of culture for years to come.

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Research: Primary Evidence by Author
Image: Photograph by Author

PUBLIC CONVENIENCE PUBLIC COMFORT



Image: Public Convenience. Where are the Public Toilets?

WHERE ARE THE PUBLIC TOILETS?



An integral part of everyone's daily lives, the toilet is a space important to an array of physiological, psychological, sexual, and economic factors. The public toilet has been positioned in the limelight over the last year as the pandemic has moved our social lives out of our homes and into the public realm. This has highlighted the importance of the public toilet and the inadequacy of the current provision in civic spaces.

As large parts of the world have been confined to their homes throughout the pandemic, the lines between public and private have blurred. What was once private is now seen on Zoom, simultaneously, the domestic sphere has expanded into the public realm as people use public spaces and parks more than ever for the socialisation that became illegal to do in our homes. The public toilet is the decider on whether the very young and very old, people who are pregnant or menstruating, and people with illnesses and disabilities are able to freely use and enjoy public space. The public toilet can therefore be seen as a marker of social progression and equality within society.

The government's policies and regulations around public toilets are indicative of their attitudes towards certain groups within our society, as shown by the current debate around gender neutral and unisex toilets. The government's recent consultation on desegregated toilets, 'Toilet provision for men and women: call for evidence' was seen by many as more of a political stunt than a consultation founded on any actual concern. The UVW-SAW described the consultation as "a direct attack on trans rights" and "dog-whistle politics", motivated by suppressing the rights of trans and gender non-conforming people rather than improving access to public toilets (Section of Architectural Workers, 2021). With LGBT rights charity Stonewall finding that 48% of trans people don't feel comfortable using public toilets due to fear of discrimination or harassment (Stonewall, 2018), the consultation can also be criticised for not focusing on the people who are actually unsafe in these spaces.

Not only are public toilets failing to serve large parts of the population, there also aren't enough of them. For years, the government has been cutting public funding and toilets have been forced to close throughout the country. Even before the pandemic closed the remaining provision, the average English council was only running 15 toilets per every 12,500 people (Rickett, 2020). It has become an unquestioned part of society to nip into a pub to use the toilet or buy a coffee so that you can use the facilities. The idea that using the

toilet is a luxury that we have to pay for lies embedded and unquestioned in nearly all of us. The closing of hospitality spaces during the lockdowns has brought to light the lack of public toilets and highlighted the importance of them.

Has the lack of public toilets and the debate surrounding it led to the subject of the toilet becoming more socially acceptable and widely discussed? Now that we can meet up with friends and family in parks for socially distanced gathering and drinks, the lack of public toilets has forced people to go to the toilet in open public space, in the corner of a park or hidden behind a bush. It somehow feels more acceptable and less deviant than it was considered before. Perhaps because of the shared acknowledgement that there is no other option, and because of the sheer mass of people who are doing it.

Of course, there is a recognition of privilege that needs to be made here, many people aren't able to simply go to the toilet in public due to disability, fear, or the chance of being reprimanded by the authorities. Men are much more likely to feel safe walking into a dark area of a park or down an alley than women, and homeless people are much more likely to be moved along by the police, but the discussion is also indicative of a wider social change. The act of going to the toilet has become part of conversation as closed public toilets and porta-loos in parks serve as a visual reminder of the lack of proper facilities.

The increased discussion around the public toilet provides an opportunity to improve the future provision by ensuring they are provided in the spaces where they are so desperately needed. Nobody wants their local park to become a pissing ground. Public toilets are essential to create accessible and comfortable public spaces, allowing every individual to be a part of civic life.

Amy Hickery

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IMAGE: Digital Collage by Amy Hickery



ANY SPOT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE SOME FORM OF COMFORT IN SEATING IF IT ENGAGES THE ACTIVITY THAT PEOPLE DESIRE AND ALLOWS THEM TO CREATE A CIRCLE OF INTIMACY DESPITE BEING IN A PUBLIC SPACE.

COMFORT IN THE CITY

"What does comfort entail in public spaces? Where does this sense of comfort come from?" These were questions that came to mind the more I considered the idea of comfort in the public realm.

To study this further, I recently went on a few walks, hoping to capture the ways in which comfort manifests within the humans of Singapore. In the beginning, I kept looking out for tangible signs of comfort—things like resting on a bench, seeking relief from the hot sun under shelter. But, as with the limited scope of view, my observations turned out limited too.

When we think of the word "comfort": particularly its adjective "comfortable": we instinctively connect it with a tangible, physical ease, like a deep bench that allows one to curl up in it and read a book. However, it is important to remember that comfort comes in the intangible—psychologically, in the way that one's mind is in a state of relaxation, and

they feel safe and happy. This was precisely what I had forgotten, and it was a fact that became clearer to me over the course of my study.

I hope that my observations can help prompt some thoughts regarding what it means for someone to be comfortable, and how this is affected by the degree of privacy available within the setting.

Comfort in the public sphere comes to most of us in the simplest, most "everyday" of ways, but it is often subconscious—we do not actively realise it.

It is important to keep in mind that not everyone has the privilege of enjoying both psychological and physical comfort at home. With that being said, how could architects and urban planners deliver such comfort in the design of public spaces, so that they become inclusive "comfort zones" for everyone?

Shix Wang

3rd Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

An observational study on the manifestation of comfort within the public realm in Singapore.



7:00PM - Two groups are watching the sunset



7:04PM- Friends are resting by the river



6.54 PM. While the hump of the ground makes them more noticeable to passers-by, it also puts them at a higher vantage point, isolating them from the rest of the park



6.45 PM. Two ladies watering plants grown in a rented allotment.



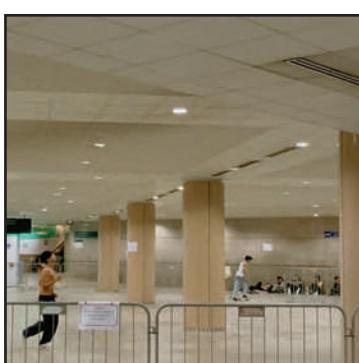
5.55 PM. A lady leaning on a concrete planter while having a smoke.



6.34 PM. At viewpoints, not only can railings function as a safety barrier, they can also facilitate user relaxation while closing the gap between the users and the view.



7.02 PM. Skateboarders on a wide, open walkway.



5.54 PM. Initially, the Esplanade Underpass was designed to serve a pedestrian transit space. However, due to its size and other features, it soon became a popular multifunctional "practice room".



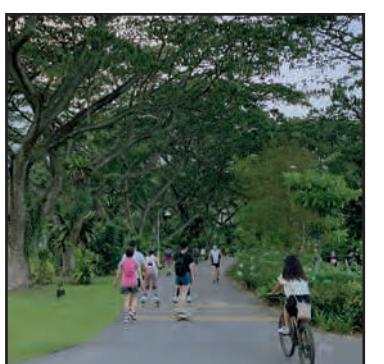
8.11 PM. Simple but certain joys of having a freshly-prepared meal in a familiar hustle and bustle setting with a family member.



6.40 PM. A family of four playing on a field.



6.39PM. Families play table tennis under the a pavilion.



6.55 PM. Under the Park Connector Network, paths like these link all the major parks in Singapore, providing a visually familiar track no matter how far from home one goes.

Windows: Surveillance & Spectacle

*Interruptions in a wall,
Apertures that, large or small,
Serve no earthly use at all
Save for certain
Openings which seem to call
For a curtain;*

*Casements whose transparent skin,
Brittle, paranoidly thin,
Keeps the curious within
Measly margins,
Framed for looking out, not in;
Crystal virgins*

*Gazing vacantly toward
False horizons, you afford
Fascination to the bored,
Plus a promise,
Some exotic, unexplored,
Major premise.*

*Your integrity, once broken,
Proves to have been only token,
Like a secret that, unspoken,
Implies it all.
Windows whether closed or open
Suppose a wall.*

- Daryl Hine, October 1982 -

Lesley Cheung

4th Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

Images (Right): Lino Cut Print by Author
Images (Right, P75):
Spy Booth, Banksy, 2013
You, 2018 (Voyeurism in Pop Culture)
Rear Window, 1954
The Brummel House, Aldof Loos, 1929
(Photographed by Paul Rafferty)



Voyeurism
noun

Voy

eur

ism:

the act of getting pleasure from watching other people's private lives.

the criminal act of surreptitiously viewing a person without their consent in a place where the person has a reasonable expectation of privacy (such as a home or public bathroom) or of using a device (such as a camera) for the purpose of such viewing.

Comfort in a space is dependent on many factors and completely subjective to the individual: where does the feeling of being watched and to watch others come into this equation? The concept of surveillance is one of contention, people always have an opinion on the thought of being watched, with fears of government surveillance prompting conspiracy theories and protests. One such piece of media in pop culture which embodies this fear is George Orwell's 1984, depicting cameras, hidden microphones and telescreens (two-way televisions), used to constantly put the population of Orwell's alternate Britain under watch. From Banksy's work which typically critiques surveillance culture, such as Spy Booth (2013), to conspiracy theories of pigeons being government spies and the Covid vaccines as a method of microchipping the general population - commentary on this seemingly universal fear of voyeurism appears everlasting from one generation to the next.

Buildings in their very essence facilitate the act of voyeurism: we talk about framing views to the outside without nearly as often acknowledging them as an opening that frames views from the outside looking in. As people, we are all naturally curious, nosy even, and I for one am not ashamed to deny spying out of my bedroom window - watching the events of the outdoors, gravitating towards sounds unusual to the typical soundtrack of my life provided by the outside world.

The essence of the window defines the lines between what is considered internal and external; we speak about blurring thresholds in the architectural experience - a desirable trait when discussing public architecture or the threshold between a private internal

space and an equally private external space. But for the line between the home and the public realm, this threshold and the treatment of it, means all the difference between looking out and feeling watched at different times of day.

Studying architecture, we are taught about placing openings to provide lines of sight to the horizon, to points of interest where one may sit at a table and look out into the distance. But at night everything changes, as soon as the lights come on and darkness descends, being in that same room feels exposing - like anyone walking past may get a glimpse into the space, a glimpse into your life. So, curtains and blinds are put into place, blocking the visibility of the intimate space of your own home from the outside world - and once again, privacy is retained. Beautiful, large panels of glazing during the day become microscopic lenses, through which a spotlight is intimately shone into your own private bubble at night.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) perfectly illustrates the two-way vision that the window embodies, as throughout the whole movie, the viewer observes the world that protagonist, Jeff, sees in his backyard of Manhattan through his very own eyes. The first person point of view that much of the movie is filmed in, creates a completely voyeuristic viewing experience as we peek into the lives of Jeff's neighbours through their apartment windows. The tension of observing moments in their lives that we are not meant to be seeing deftly broken, as Jeff is caught in the act by a neighbour he suspects to have murdered his wife, putting his own life in danger.

This dichotomy between security

"We've
become a race of Peeping Toms.
What people ought to do is get outside
their own house and look in for a change. Yes sir.

How's that for a bit of homespun philosophy?"

- Stella, *Rear Window*, 1954

impersonal yet simultaneously more intimate. Whilst the already awkward act of small talk has become even more so online, people you would hardly ever see outside of a professional setting now know the photos that adorn your walls, the books that line your shelves or even the colour of your bedsheets. The public and external facets of daily life exist alongside the private and intimate facets, simultaneously existing in the same physical space.

Perhaps it is slightly sinister to think that even in the comfort of your own home, when you believe that you are discreetly watching the happenings of the streetscape, someone could also be watching you.



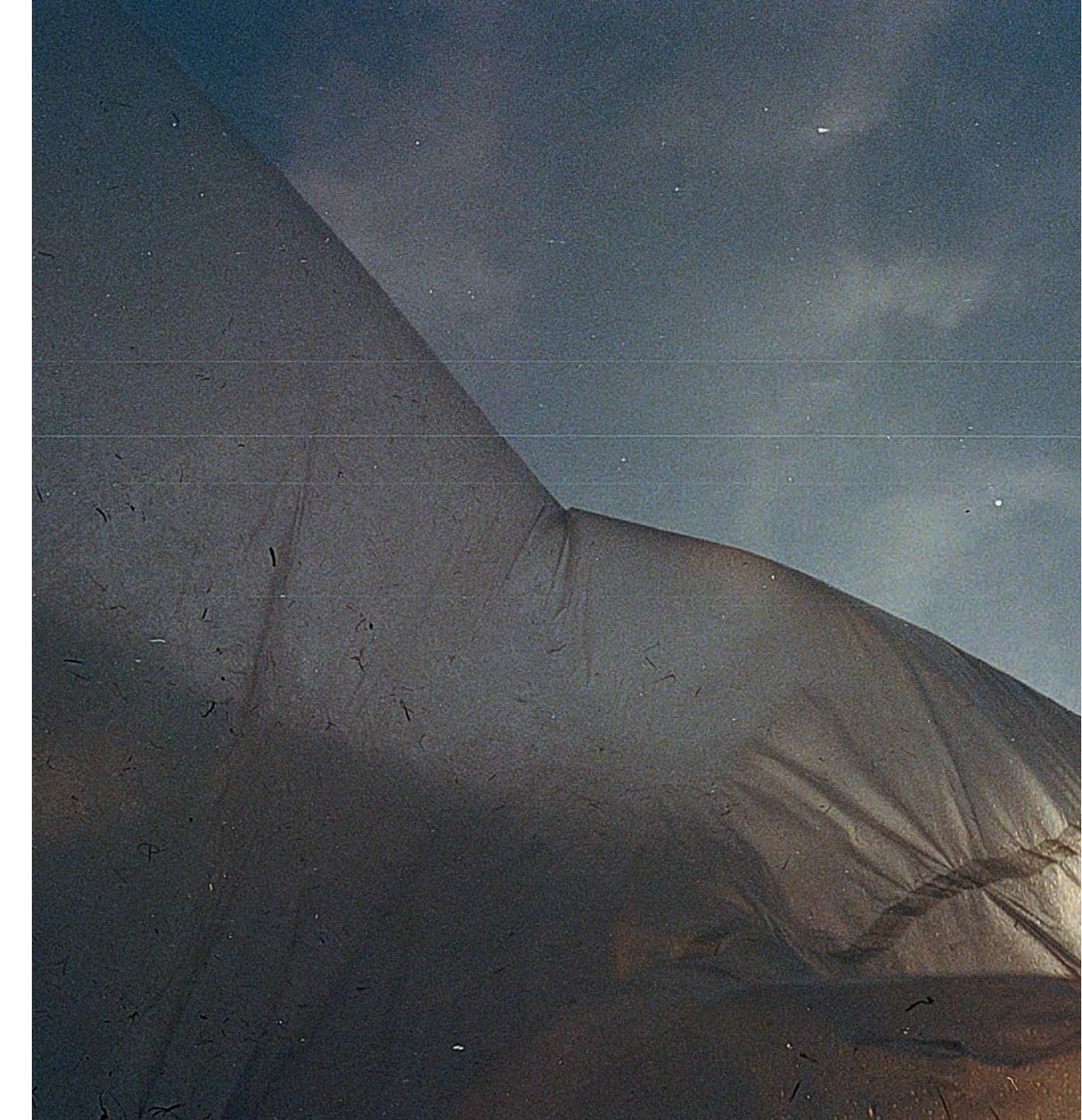


Image: The Inflatable Test

Henry Chesney and Max Stembridge

5th Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

Joint Inflatable project inspired by Ant farm and Archigram. The pop up architecture has been designed and built for a party of sixty people.

The structure is heat welded plastic sheeting, inflated with two bouncy castle fans. The finished proposal 60 meters in length and 15 meters high can be packed away and carried by one person.

The aim of this project was to explore portability, scale and new uses of materials in architecture.



Image: The inflatable project

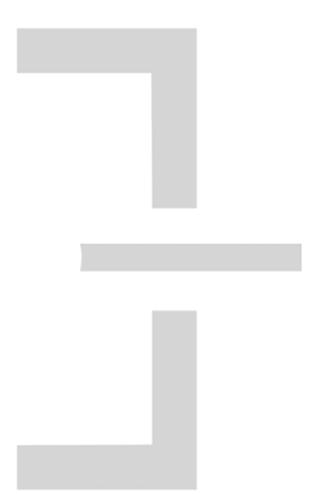


Image: Henry Chesney and Max Stemberger



Lions and Tigers and Bears



Oh My!!

Ema Ziya

3rd Year Bsc (Hons) Architecture

Cadogan, G., 2016. Walking While Black [Online]. Lithub.
Available from: <https://lithub.com/walking-while-black/> [1 June 2021]

First pinned by Charles Baudelaire in his visceral poetry about the streets of Paris, the flâneur has come to play part of the casual observer and user, both simultaneously part of a crowd and apart from it. He dawdles. He looks. Most importantly, he walks. A gentleman of the street, he is a sign and symbol of modern-day nobility, able to leisurely idle around.

From literary figures such as George Perec and Baudelaire to modern-day urban designers such as Jan Gehl, adopting the role of the flâneur was a way to see what others miss in everyday city life and deepen their understanding of the city. Both Perec and Gehl even have practical guides on learning how to see in these settings. Ultimately, the flâneur is a critical character in architectural discourse and urban design, as slipping on this skin has allowed designers to observe the impact of seemingly small design decisions on the lives of the many city-dwellers.

However, what happens when one is not the appropriate cast for this role? It could be argued that the typical image of a flâneur is a well-educated, white, privileged male. What about flâneurs of colour? Or even the flâneuse, their female counterparts? What about the rest of us? The simple decision to dawdle, look and walk is not one to be taken lightly for many of us. Each step out of our home and away is fraught with challenges, with the potential for dangerous encounters lurking around every corner.

Personally, I have struggled to roam the streets of my home comfortably. The streets often make me feel like Dorothy from Wizard of Oz, repeating the dangers of “lions and tigers and bears, oh my!” as I hurriedly put one foot in front of the other on the uneven paving of the road and rush to get to my destination. For my urban design essay this year, my chosen site was a popular park and square, a site that is by no means dangerous and almost always filled with people and families. Yet, when it was time to visit the site, I found myself unwilling to go alone, wanting to walk as part of a pack with at least a partner to provide an additional blanket of security. I found myself struggling to stay in one spot for too long as I observed, lest I drew negative attention to myself from the passers-by. I made myself seem as inconspicuous as possible when taking pictures and resisted the urge to physically sketch or make notes at all; a stark contrast to the archetypical image of the strollers who sit down on pavements to complete their urban sketches.

Warnings of walking alone, walking after dark, walking down narrow streets and dingy alleys rang loud in my ears. Don’t stand out, don’t draw attention to yourself, blend in with the crowd. The advice is a rite of passage for almost every girl. Although, so is street harassment, which continues to infect society despite the well-intended advice. Nevertheless, the struggles faced while walking is unique for each of us. My struggles may not be yours, and yours may not be mine.

The challenges that prevent us from fully adopting this role as the “flâneur” impedes our chance to add to the narrative of the city. A missed opportunity to observe narrow streets and dingy alleyways limits our understanding of the city. A decision not to sketch on-site limits our engagement with the city. Without these added voices to the discourse, urban design will always prioritise that of the typical flâneur, further marginalising those that are already marginalised. Understandably, it is never an easy choice to go against what we know, given the high rates of street harassment and crimes against women and minorities around the world. The simple acts of dawdling, looking and walking become much more complicated for some of us.

Yet, despite the “lions and tigers and bears” of the streets, many of us continue to dawdle, look and walk. We walk in the footsteps of the flâneur envisioned by Baudelaire, embodied by Perec and revived by Gehl. We walk and create our own trails to be followed by those that come after us. We walk because “[we] want the freedom and pleasure of walking without fear—without others’ fear—wherever we choose” (Cadogan, 2016). Baudelaire’s idea of the flâneur metamorphoses as we continue to walk the millions of roads, streets and alleys that our cities have to offer.



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'Coffey Architects' filigree building is all about lightness
22 Handyside Street, Kings Cross. Pamela Buxton. The RIBA Journal

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The Island Quarter, Nottingham

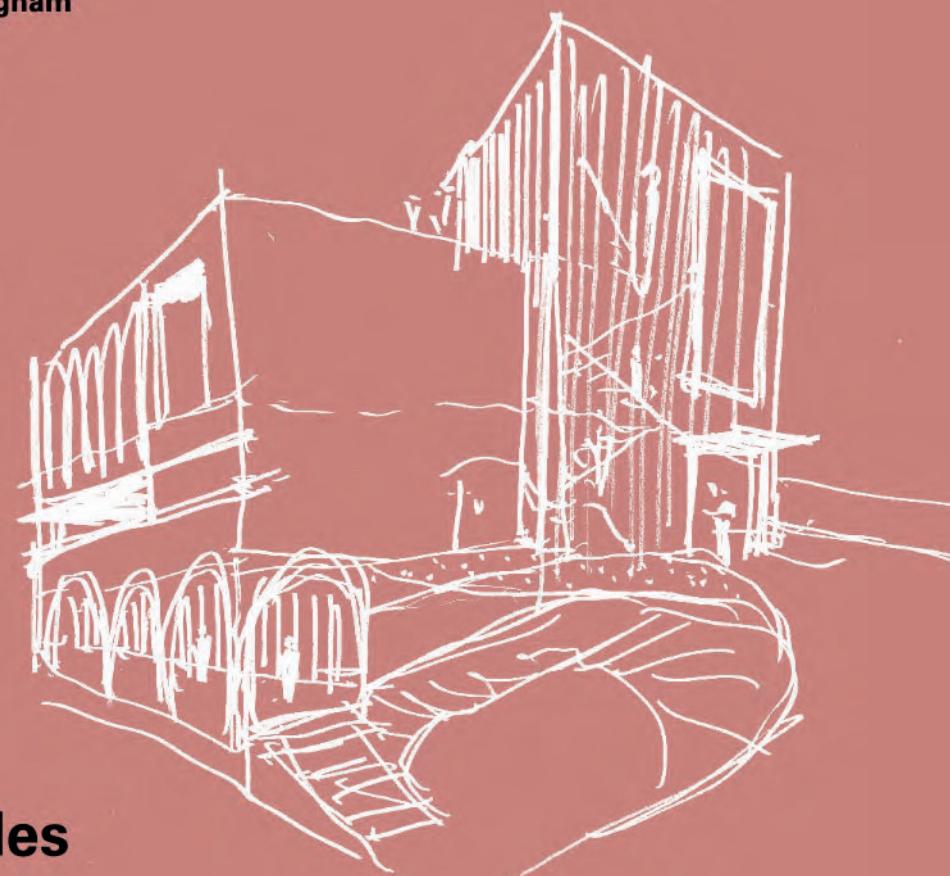
Jestico + Whiles is the architect of the first two phases of the 40-hectare Island Quarter masterplan.

Home to layers of history from Nottingham's industrial past, these phases will kick-start a major regeneration in the area, set amongst a network of public squares, parks and waterways.

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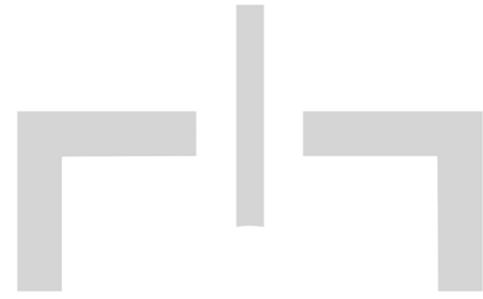


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