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The
Ad Man

Talk of the Town

Architecture biennials produce an extraordinary number of events and records these days, and 2017’s Chicago Architecture Biennial (CAB) was no exception. The opening parties, private dinners, symposia, panels, exhibition reviews, guided walkthroughs, lectures, book launches, performances, Instagram posts, organizers’ weekly emails, blog articles, post-exhibition

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The
Muckraker

Die Techie Scum

Douglas Rushkoff’s best-selling 2016 book, *Throwing Rocks at the Google Bus*, begins with an act of social protest: “One December morning in 2013, residents of San Francisco’s Mission District laid their bodies in front of a vehicle to prevent its passage. Although acts of public protest are not unusual in California, this one had an unlikely target: the Google buses

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The Political
Economist

Bertolt Brecht’s
Chicago

Despite having never set foot in the city, Bertolt Brecht was obsessed with Chicago. A jumble of mud and steel, elevated trains, towers, grain elevators, slaughterhouses, and jazzmen and boxers, brokers and gangsters, it embodied the most advanced traits of a modern capitalist metropolis. For Brecht, who believed that to

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The
Inventor

Get to the Melting Point

Architecture’s subtler properties cannot be immediately apprehended: buildings slowly erode in the wind; bricks harbor unspoken desires; walls and floors use random pops and creaks to send messages in an unknown code. I contend that light can be shed on these subtleties with the aid of the proper technologies, like deploying supercolliders to verify

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The Odd
Couple

Traveling with Images

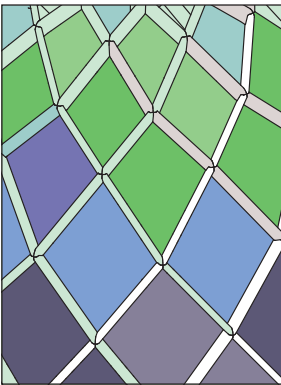
Felix returns from traveling to far-flung places and convenes with Oscar to view his photos, taken with a Nikon DSLR.

Felix **These images are part of my forthcoming travelogue, *The Society of the And*, which practices architectural criticism through photography. It will be a text-image publication that experiments with new methods**

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The Graphic
Essayist

Flashes of
Exhibitionist
Tendencies



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The
Cameo

Lorem ipsum dolor
and 997 more words
in the form of a
flat introduction

With a stated aim to promote the idea that our earth is not a sphere, in 1956 a signwriter named Samuel Shenton, convinced that authorities were concealing the fact that the earth was actually flat (the result of a worldwide conspiracy between scientists and politicians of the

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The
Scorekeeper

NOT A HOUSE

In their Solo House, completed in 2017 in Mataraña, Teruel Aragón, Spain, the Belgian firm OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen offers up a radical solution to the problem of mounting a view. This is the second built case from a collection of twelve “Solo Houses.” The first is a project by Pezo von Ellrichshausen,

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The
Mortician

Welcome Home

Death is sure having a moment, isn’t it? You can hardly swing your late cat without hitting a Sunday magazine featuring a “new” way to dispose of your body when the bell has tolled: alkaline hydrolysis (dissolution in a vat of lye; cremation, but less sooty), sky burial (consumption by vultures; appealingly hardcore), Promession® (rendering into compost via freezing

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You

All Eyes on You

You close the door to the children’s bedroom behind you and lock it quietly. The door to the living room must be locked as well, and the door to your bedroom. Finally, you lock the glazed doors to outside. Only then are you alone. You put the toilet seat cover down. Extending your tired limbs, you watch the sun from the skylight hit your glass of

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The
Genealogist

Has Architecture
Lost Its Punch?

While buildings might act as objects and objects as architecture, some things are nothing more than themselves.¹ When drawn or rendered, architectural proposals are often littered with them: sofas, desks, bicycles, flowerpots, vinyl records. Whether brand new or lightly used, perfectly positioned or carelessly strewn about, these

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The Talent
Agent

Doubles

Love
Tennis is a lot like architecture, and architecture materializes politics. I propose His Imperial Majesty (HIM) Hailé Selassié I, Emperor of Ethiopia, and the architect Arturo Mezzedimi (AM) for your upcoming Patrons and Architects Doubles Tennis Tournament. I have no doubt that this pairing will be more thrilling to witness

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The
Outsider

Just Pointing It Out

I’m a freelance magazine writer in 2018, which means I’m also a collector of part-time jobs. Restaurant host. Research assistant. Dog walker. (My car is too old for rideshare, a blessing in disguise.)
One of the more unusual gigs I’ve picked up over the years is football “spotting.” If you’re not familiar with this line of work, you’re not alone—

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The
Challenger

Dear Mario,

Your latest book, *The Second Digital Turn: Design Beyond Intelligence*, the second part of a putative three-volume work, argues that the making of architecture in the digital era has entered a new phase. While the beginning of the digital age was characterized by spline-based algorithms that generated architectural and spatial continuity (see,

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The
Opinionator

Architectural Rocks,
Real and Imagined

Perhaps this is just critical paranoia, but there seem to be a lot of rocks in, and as, *experimental* architecture today. As a recurrent motif, this new, old primitive appears to be everywhere—in studios and fabrication laboratories, on Instagram, at group shows and biennales.
What’s new about this rocky situation is

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domesticity from the body out, an approach that distills the ordinary formality of the original parlor while genuinely engaging this untimeliness. Despite what you might be thinking, I certainly don't want anything "funny," because this setting really can't be. In the funeral home, irony and earnestness equally fall on dead eyes (whatever, I'm not sorry this time). Nor do curated references hit the right note; the HGTV, *Kinfolk*, or architectural-replica funeral home is more image than environment. You should be embodied there, even if you'd rather not stay long.

Instead of encouraging this kind of identity projection (for either decedent or survivor), then, the funeral home could be grounding, a pulling together of considerate spatial moves that take care of its inhabitants, those of us left. (This is exactly how my design requirements differ from those of a cemetery or a tomb.) The specifics of a floor plan matter more than the pattern (or presence) of carpeting. I'd like to see corners that anticipate the understandable need to step away and be alone while remaining semi-visible, wall and furniture arrangements that decentralize a space that can otherwise be stuffily ceremonial, fully private zones that feel continuous with the main event and not like misplaced extended-stay suites. Rather than accept a strange hybrid of chapel and living room, the visitation room's component parts, we could imagine a plan that breaks symmetry while directing movement, that activates new, subtle freedoms while still making us feel at home. Umberto Riva or Atelier Bow-Wow might negotiate these transitions between a resonant, unifying scheme and thoughtful, behavior-driven niches nicely. The Belgian practice Rotor Deconstruction could even supply the materials; elements removed from another place and moment might live on here, a reminder of both the somber accumulation that comes with time passing and the fact that some things and people are still around. At least for now.

On that note, it's important to remember that we'll all go through this together, though each in our own time. Whatever the design approach, the results will stay consistent from decedent to decedent, the plan universal in that all particulars wind up here. A funeral in such an "im-personalized" space is a public act: you share the visitation room just as you share the fate of everyone who has been rolled through those back doors. Cultivating a more authentic relationship with death is not only about what we do with our bodies after we pass on, but also about how we do it together, as a part of a collective—perhaps even more so than as a culture. We may be a ways off from a return to the cemetery as a well-used public space, a destination for family picnics on Sunday afternoons. But for now, if you'll just sign on the dotted line, I'll pop next door and finish dusting those drapes.

All Eyes on You



You



From page 2
wine on the vanity in the center of the room. You gaze at the trees above the embankment through the doors. This view is the one point of certainty in the room, an image you can register against the monolithic timber lining the floor, ceiling, and walls. The whole room is a frame for the exterior view. You light a cigarette.

You need this cigarette like this house needs locks. Solitude is not something that comes easily in this conglomeration of ten identically sized rooms. Room after room, someone is always watching you or barging in. Even in your bedroom, external glazed doors remove any possibility of privacy—the blinds you ordered six months after the house was finished haven't arrived yet. Three bedrooms, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a study, a dining room, and two living rooms, and it is still hard to find a moment to yourself. You all have your own rooms, but none of you have your own space. You can still hear your children screaming on the other side of the wall. They're probably in one of the living rooms along the house's west wing.

The house has a distorting ascetic opulence. Based on a four-by-four-meter module, the rooms level all domestic activities to the same degree of importance. Sitting on the toilet, hidden behind the vanity in your oversized bathroom, you escape. Yet even here you're not safe. A sure way to arouse suspicion is to lock the doors for more than five minutes. The plan offers complete openness and freedom of behavior, yet the thresholds between rooms can potentially shut the plan down. More than signifying the desire to be undisturbed, a locked door marks a failure, an exhaustion of interaction. You hear your

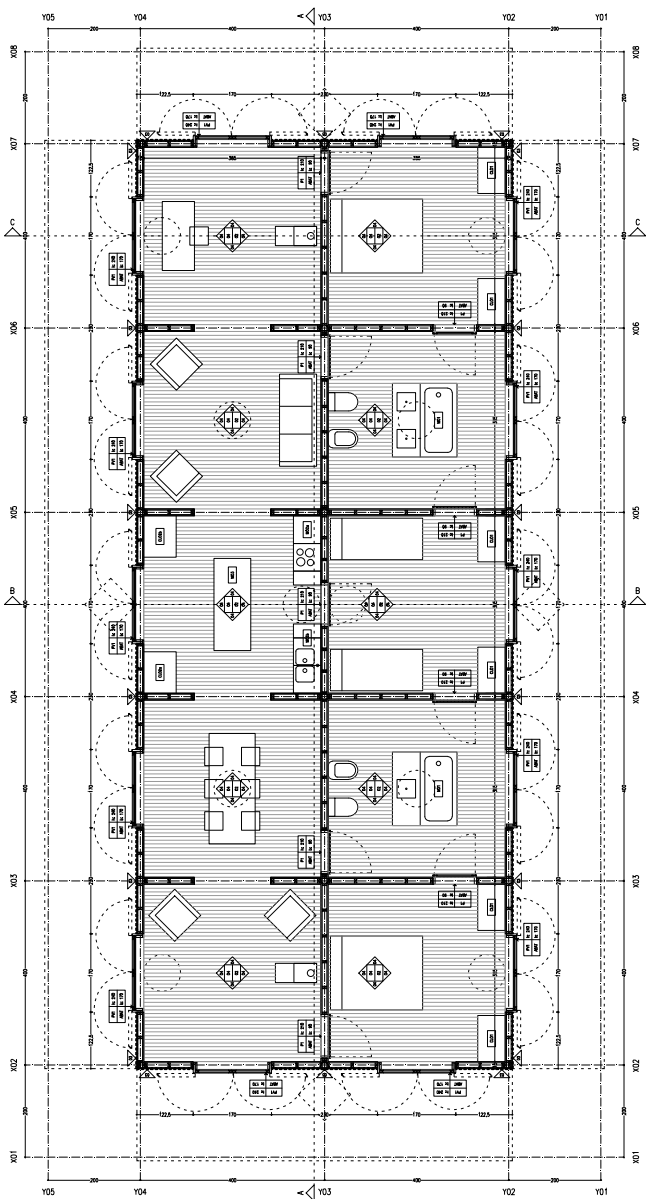
son Andy calling for you in the southern living room. You close your eyes.

You missed the part about how the bathrooms were to function when you moved in. Two weeks and some embarrassing interruptions later had you putting locks on all four doors. Now all four have to be turned before you can sit down. Thirty seconds of your five minutes of peace is spent locking and unlocking doors, first clockwise around the vanity to lock, and then counter-clockwise to unlock again. The children's room is always locked first and unlocked last. There are twenty-three timber-clad hinged doors and four large timber-framed openings in this house. Collectively, they undermine each room's autonomy. Rooms are like sieves, open and porous, and every door is your back door for escape.

Michael will be removing the marshmallow stains on the walls by now. Those beautiful, golden, timber walls. You stare at the ones around you: the pine boards are relentlessly horizontal. Each room has the same walls, the same floor, the same ceiling, the same doors, the same windows. A monomania of sameness. Only



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, Meri House, Florida, Chile, 2014. View through the west wing's enfilade of living rooms.



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, Meri House. Ground floor construction plan.

wooden knots and other defects add distinction to the self-similar surfaces. Doors, skylight linings, and cabinetry are all deftly contrasted—clad vertically. The house is a replication of archetypal elements: rooms, frames, doors, skylights. You are never exactly sure where you are.

Your eyes turn to the smooth, white sink in the middle of the room. Rooms are differentiated by objects in this house: the bathrooms by white fixtures, the kitchen by a glossy sink and metal range hood, living rooms by stark-black wood heaters, and the dining room by an oversized table. You never understood the organizational power of domestic objects until now. Objects lend programmatic specificity. Dining



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, Meri House. View through the east wing's enfilade of bedrooms and bathrooms.

tables are centrally placed, necessitating cyclical movement around them, drawing the family inward. Lounge chairs are pushed off to the edges, allowing movement to pass straight through the room, sending the family outward. Whether central or peripheral, the objects orient you toward an opening or exterior view. You turn the cigarette around in the ash-tray and extinguish it.

Daisy's clothes and hiking shoes sit in a corner of the bathroom. You and Michael never imagined how hard it would be to maintain order in this house. Being enveloped by timber lining boards is charming, of course, but you do need some storage. You know it would be improper to interrupt the monolithic image with a chest of drawers from downtown Providencia; an outdoor storage shed will arrive next week. The piles of equipment will have to wait to be cleared away.

"MUM!" Oh no, not again. Is that Daisy in her room? You sit up straight with your back against the cistern. You glimpse the embankment through the

window again. "MUM, WHERE ARE YOU?" You move counter-clockwise around the room, rapidly unlocking the door to the living room, the door to your bedroom, and the door to outside. Finally, you unlock the door to the children's bedroom, hoping Daisy doesn't hear you. She always finds distractions, and the house's permeable plan always obliges. You wait, surrounded by closed doors that feel open, ready to be burst through at any moment. The doors are more like jack-in-the-boxes than barriers. Your phone begins to vibrate: "mum where r u?" This is your new norm of solitude, your new house and new forms of communication conspiring to produce a familial life as much about connection as separation. You swing open an external door and slip outside, pressing yourself against the wall.

Inside, as the children look from room to room, you're bound to be spotted. Outside, you can sit along the façade between each set of doors incognito: an activity that is especially pleasant in the sun. The elevation of the house is simple. Five glazed double doors



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, Meri House. Door between kitchen and twin bedroom.



Pezo von Ellrichshausen, Meri House. West elevation.

are symmetrically positioned along the facade. Thin black trim outlines each door. The roof is low and flat, and cantilevers out. Its striped timber underside folds ninety degrees to become the elevation. The dyed rough pine boards are the same color as the pressed-metal roof. Matching timber and metal—another example of the architects' fixation? Yet, from the top of the hill, a yellow roof remains a pleasant sight. You'll have to leave your wine glass on the vanity—no time to go back for it now.

You head south under the awning, peering into rooms as you pass by. You check the children's bedroom: no children. You walk past the other bathroom: not there either. The final bedroom: no one. The house repeats. Room after room after room after room. From the outside you understand this is a house with no center. An ice cube tray for people. Two rows of five identical rooms. You turn west and peer through the next set of doors. You see Daisy and Andy holding their marshmallow sticks in

the living room. Michael scrubs the walls. It's time to reemerge.

Everyone's too engrossed in the fire and stains to immediately notice you. You knock on the glass. Michael, Daisy, and Andy look up. They're smiling—not alarmed. You've disturbed them, but everyone expects to be disturbed now. You've all adapted to this house, even if you are still trying to find your equilibrium within it. Privacy is sacred, yet privacy is hard to find without your own space. There are plenty of rooms, but no space. You enter the room with all eyes on you.