Six Projects                                                        GSAPP Portfolio 2020-2023

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HOW DO WE LIVE AND WORK TOGETHER TODAY?
I'm interested in how architecture acts like a catalyst and creates new relationships. The relationship between different groups of people, between generations, between men and nature, between two places or two periods of time... Drawing inspirations references from art, literature, historical archives, and field trips, the projects included here propose pluralist realities through research into histories and contexts. The question I keep asking myself:

How do we live and work together today?
A multi-generational reality is imagined through a variety of elevated living spaces that sit on top of a single-level platform. Blocktown seeks to diminish the divisions typically created by lot lines through the shared community spaces existing in both the platform and residential blocks. These activities simultaneously grow with the preserved green spaces of the existing site and are used to further encourage community engagement while maintaining the typologically formal language of housing in South Bronx.
We looked at the recent developments near the site, the riverfront and blocks near subway stations. The tendency to build large scale mixed developments to attract new residents and create more density. However we want to put the focus back on the block and the residents already existing to have a generous community space with anchoring households.
We want to put the focus back on the block and the residents already existing to have a generous community space with more long-term household and multigenerational living. Weave together a range of shared space of different scale, from the public to the block residents, to each apartment building. And down to a single household.
For roommates, large families, couples with adult children, two single parents with kids, shared housing...

Residential First Floor Plan
Facade Detail  
**Facade Detail** 
Scale: 1/2" = 1'

Block town creates a landscape of multigenerational living within a dense urban context, existing as part of the Melrose community.

The roof adds another scale and experience of shared space.
Free School, P.S. 64 is an adaptive reuse project that combines the history of the site with the legacy of the free school movement, serving as a base for autonomous learning.
PS 64 is located in the east village adjacent to the tompkins square park. the former school has been evacuated, abandoned and fenced for almost twenty years now. The new ground landscape extends from the street, connecting 9th and 10th avenue; making the atrium a public space for the community.
In what ways can we construct nonhierarchical, anti-authoritarian, mutual, and voluntary educational spaces? The three objectives are public space, amenities and stimulating environments, establishing a base for anarchist education that engages with the community and the city at large.
Adapting to the existing structure, new blocks are inserted as partitions, amenities, and characters in order to generate a range of spaces for future programming.
The rooms at both ends become more intimate and private, the in-between rooms are fluid and visible, encouraging free assembly, and interactions among students and teachers.
The environments are generated to give its users the freedom of developing varied programs that they see as suitable and needed at the time. A space of free learning, school not as an institution but as a piece of environment embedded within its urban context.
Tapuhue (Place of the Gods) of the indigenous people, has witnessed the expansion of Santiago since the early Spanish colonization. The mountain which was renamed to Cerro San Cristóbal by the Spanish conquistadores is now the largest metropolitan park in South America. The project proposes that part of the mountain remains opaque to the tourists and give agencies to the Mapuche and other indigenous groups.

In light of the recent protests in Chile that have led to the writing of a new constitution, the project envisions how indigenous epistemology, especially cosmological knowledge, informs political and social decisions.
We did a forensic study of *The Moon Also Rises* by Yuyan Wang. By overlaying sound and light values we analyzed the artist’s approach to research, found materials, and composition that creates a world of relation and opacity. Yuyan Wang shows how light is used beyond illumination but acts as a tool to manifest capitalistic and state power.
San Cristobal today is the largest park in South America and a tourist destination. It was developed into the Santiago Metropolitan Park which has 5 million visitors each year. The test intervention aims to disrupt the tourist route with a structure blocking out views and surroundings, pointing towards the sky. The exterior consists of wood panels of different thickness ranging from 2 inches to 6 inches. The interior is covered with hammered copper creating the illusion of moonlight over the river.
The path is separate from the tourists' route. As it goes through the landscape working with its change in altitude it positions locations of rest along the way. These stops act as markers to experience a variety of cosmic events such as solar and lunar eclipses. The concept of temporality is ever present in the Mapuche world vision. All is governed by the cyclic changing; day to night; life to death; and the rotation of the seasons.

The procession recognizes one's connection with the earth and celestial bodies as it weaves into and above the terrain. The path is a singular route recognizing the tension between the mountain, and the city.
The Forum acts as a communal and civic driven space. Events at the forum include a celebration of the winter solstice which involves dances and meals between all members of the community. There is also Nguillatun in which the community and guests gather around a bonfire in a ceremony of petition and gratitude.

The Forum provides a seating area for guests as well as a pathway behind it in order not to disturb the activities happening. It also recognizes its location as its multiple entrances frame the view to the city below. The light in the city dimmed the stars in the sky making visible the wound of the post colonial reality.
Going downhill, the second environment composed of three connected circular structures. The circular form is a recurring element in Mapuche architecture. It represents the ovary, man’s first habitat; the ruka, man’s home; the guillatuwe, the Mapuche sacred space; and the cosmos.

The Sanctuary involves healing rituals such as Machitun and personal meetings with machi or community leaders. Making a space looking at skies and reflections on san cristobal, in the capital of Chile is far from neutral. It provides a meeting point where indigenous people invite foreign scholars as guests with agency as the host and stewards of the land.
The tension between political visibility and the opacity of indigenous epistemology is what led us to create two allegories: one is the world of things resonating with one another— the forum; and the world that cannot be systematized— the sanctuary.
“Slow ablution” is the interface of water; it's the altered landscape and built structures that directs, collects, filters rainwater, run-off water and melted snow in the winter. The landscaping redirect the waterflow, retaining water into designated areas and to reuse water after filtration. This process reintroduces water flows to their ground not as problems, but as opportunities to generate new relationships between watershed, rural community and the city.
Islamberg is a small community with around 100 people, located in Delaware county, New York. Like other rural New York state residents, the community relies on water wells and people take pride in the fresh clean water they can offer to guests. However, the pipes connecting to wells usually freeze as well as the run-off water that collects on the roads. Lack of water infrastructure caused many residents to leave during winter season.
From the scale of the village, we studies the cycle of water use, proposing a sustainable way of water usage without relying on wells. This process reintroduces water flows to their ground as opportunities to generate new relationships between watershed, rural community and the city.
Water holds significant values in Muslim society. Ablution is practiced before prayers and sebil offers the public free drinking water. We want to reimagine ablution with recycled water.
Plans of the Women’s Prayer House and the Existing Mosque

Plans of the Communal Kitchen and the Camping Ground
The landscaping redirect the waterflow, retaining water into designated areas and to reuse water after filtration processes. The integration of bridge-over-wetland typology adds communal programs to Islaamberg. Kitchen on the lower ground faces the existing communal pavilion.
The waqf imagines a 15 year plan for islamberg begins with creating mini-reservoirs and constructed wetland; phase 2 involves building rainwater harvesting ablution bridges around the mosque; phase 3 expands into community programs with built in rainwater harvesting and wastewater filtration systems. During these phases, water wells will be closed gradually.
Research revealed the unbalanced power relationship between the city and the rural community.
The Earth well makes visible the water flow by collecting runoff, rainwater and melted snow into a shallow pond. It temporarily holds water from the sky before it falls into the city’s property – the reservoir.
In the process of appropriating industrial lofts, sharing resources, and working alongside each other, new relationships and communities are formed. The history of collectivity is the starting point for AIR, an artists residency studio space that engages the public by offering an open-source 24/7 facility for making.
At the beginning of the civil rights movement with JFK just entering the White House, artists and locals joined together to fight for the rights to live and work in their lofts. Pressured from an art strike by high profile artists, the mayor announced a policy that permitted certified artists to live in industrial buildings as long as they hung a sign noting “Artist in Residence”. Even so, they will continue to fight against the city’s proposed zoning plans throughout the 1970s to make them more community oriented.
The preservation of the architecture and the arts scene make the historic legacy of the built environment conform to market trends, attracting a middle class audience. As we witnessed today, Soho became one of the most attractive shopping districts in New York City. AIR challenges the idea of the expanding privatized and commercialized urban landscape, by carving out public space in a densely developed shopping district.

AIR is a critique of the lack of interaction between each floor and how a programmed core can serve to connect inhabitants vertically, allowing concentrated conditions for working individually within a collaborative environment.
Amongst the 100 year old structures is 486 Broadway, constructed primarily of brick, which was a popular material for its durability and fire resistance in the 19th century. The bricks here were either made in Philadelphia and in small towns along the Hudson River. The growing Manhattan neighborhood relied on extraction of virgin earth, a geological layer that can be traced back to the ice age.
AIR extracts the bricks from the existing building, reassembles them as the core for the new towers, which hosts circulation, and other amenities, while also defining programs on each level.
Rejecting the idea of an open floor plan, the wooden mezzanines allow intimate space within a shared environment, hosting programs such as offices, individual studios or meeting rooms. The idea of working in proximity with each other and convening through cooking and eating together forms a social core for AIR users.
Calls for the restitution of looted African artifacts dispersed across European and North American museums has generated decades of debate across cultural and political arenas. The project begins and revolves around the ongoing research of restitution and expands the imagination of the future of art space that experiments with animism, diasporic place making through the act of excavating.
Museum is black market. The efforts towards restitution had been under spotlight since the presidential report composed by the economist Felwine Sarr and the art historian Benedicte Savoy.
The new identity of the western museum has been a benevolent, always in progress, global institution, actively pursuing restitution. Reframing the discussion as contemporary, withholding the agency and ownership of objects through lending, delaying the process through the tools of legitimization. Less than 2% has been returned so far.
The Humboldt Forum was a reconstruction of the Prussian Palace replacing the Palace of Republic of East Germany. When asked about why it’s named after Alexander and Wilhelm von Humboldt, the 18th century explorers, the museum frames the brothers as the “perfect role models” for “the whole world connected, interchanging and being seen as one big human culture.” The palace was not in Berlin; Berlin was the palace.
In 2008, Excavations were carried out in the historic city center of Berlin by the State Office for Historic Landmark Conservation whose team “cut sections through time [to] show a given development as an arrangement of successive stages.” The excavated foundation of the Prussian Palace became critical in recreating the historic facade and crafts its argument of cultural heritage around selective history. The current prussian cultural heritage foundation is excavating the ground to recreate the imperial palace, but in the context of restitution, excavation aims to create space that centralizes the perspectives of all those who have been and are still being silenced by colonialism.
Under the open field, the cave space acts as a space for restitution focusing on developing relationships between archives and people. Agency and access is negotiated here to continue the cultural heritage disrupted by the expeditions and looting.
We imagine a spectrum of public/surveilled space, and in between spaces open to limited people and archives of the immaterial, such as sound, photographs, and moving images.
In between the demolition of the place of republic and the start of the construction of humboldt forum, relais landscape architecture designed a public space for a limited time. The grass has never been neutral. If both the palace of the republic and the humboldt forum are both overt manifestations of state building, then the grass field, even as an utopian state, is burying and camouflaging, the violence built within the institutions under the state and the prussian cultural heritage foundation.
The question we ask is: How did Africa become made up of places that no longer exist while the Prussian empire, which does not exist anymore, remains the lawful owner of the looted African art or art from the (cultures outside/beyond Europe)?

Excavation reveals messy histories, worlds that can continue the knowledge production. Time passes differently in the cave.
‘Before’ indicates both what precedes and what awaits...
In an attempt to collapse the linear construction of time used by the Humboldt for legitimation purposes and unite a divided Germany, the project can exist in the future, past or present.
Thank you.
Karen Tong Wang 2023