Chi Chi Wakabayashi

Life was here...
Thank you

To my parents, my sisters, my pups, and my grandparents. I am here because of you all.

To all my GSAPP professors who have taught me to think, to dream, and to explore. And especially to Amina Blacksher and Bryony Roberts, who have changed how I think about architecture.

To my roommates, Saba and Julie. We have spent an obscene amount of hours together, and each was a special, sweet, crazy joy.

To all my classmates and dear friends who I have learned from the most.

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To the big and small encounters I was able to have these past three years. Thank you for the joys throughout the struggles and for filling my thoughts with questions, ideas, and memories.
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VERBAL AGREEMENTS

ADV VI (Spring 2023)
Professor: Gary Bates
TA: Sonny Han
Collaborators: Saba Ardeshiri, Maclane Regan

This exploration began as a probe into the civic reality of Ghana, utilizing news, books, food, podcast, music, and poetry as a collection of sources in which we viewed, or mapped, the city of Accra. Beginning as a rejection of a traditional cartographic approach to urban understanding, and instead deployed a series of readings over research, response over representation. The ideas presented are meant to be appropriated, iterated, and adopted to living space as civic space. How can we mine the civic from the conditions of familial tenancy that has framed a way of living in the neighborhood of La, Accra, oriented around collective maintenance, and obligatory care of neighbor, and neighborhood? We have designed conditions, ranging from architectural, spatial, relational, and conceptual, that instigate the interaction of co-living, co-laboring, and collective maintenance, where the familial relationship of living has given way to intimate adjacency with strangers. These conditions, or moments, are structured through the lenses of ownership, maintenance, infrastructure, material, and space. Do you care for something because you own it? Or do you feel ownership over space once you care for it? This project is a series of hypotheses, test beds, claims, and counter-claims that interrogate how we live with each other, and how the civic negotiation infiltrates the intimate corners of daily life, imagining new forms of living.
Chi Chi Wakabayashi Life was here...
Conditions of ways of living

Through the lens of our experience in Ghana and understanding ways of living over ideas of housing, spaces and people are connected through ideas of ownership, maintenance, infrastructure, material, and shared resources.

Facilitating interactions that frame these conditions as potentials, not solutions, that bring nodes to networks and enable possibilities of emergence.
What if we look at mapping as a horizontal reading over research? When the outcome becomes movement beyond spatial specificity based on first hand experiences, culture, civic behavior.

news, poem, art, food, podcast, and music.

balance, bury, accumulate, stain, entwine, infiltrate.
Legislation - the condition of an active, evolving track record in legislative code form of who has changed, built, unbuilt, or rebuilt a space, a wall, or a roof. Translating verbal agreements of ownership and change into a physical record and archive, where alteration of space is a negotiation with history and the collective. It is a trace of ownership but also a form of knowledge sharing. A way of understanding why and how someone who lived there before you extended a roof, removed a wall, or built a bench outside. Creating a potential for historical knowledge and memory of space, objects, and people.

This idea is represented by this model, which is meant to be an archive of interaction, alteration, and craft between humans to wall, but also human to human through time. Becoming an active test bed for how creative space is taken, re-taken, passed down with every alteration, where a new author takes ownership of a once blank canvas.

Every action is a negotiation, with history, and with the future of civic display.

How did you find it?
How did you leave it?

Visual Agreements Installation

Life was here...
AWAY, AT HOME

ADV V (Fall 2022)
Professor: Bryony Roberts
TA: Abri Aiken

Living in a reality where people will now, more than ever, be seeking abortion support across states, this project proposes a network that provides both tangible and intangible compassionate care. Imagining how to expand both spatially and socially what a clinic can offer to support the entire experience that might begin well before entering the space of the clinic.

By placing the role of the doula in healthcare spaces at the forefront, this network highlights and fosters the emotional, physical, and informational support doulas can provide to those seeking an abortion far from home. Rethinking the experience of those traveling for abortions by aiding the current programs on-site and extending the circulation to include more intimate moments of support, connection, and recovery through a new housing typology that embeds compassionate spaces of care within the program.
Away, At Home
by Chi Chi Wakabayashi
This map illustrates the location of clinics and nearby schools in Illinois. Envisioning a partnership between these clinics and the universities to create hubs that can potentially extend and bring care 50 miles beyond the physical space of the clinic.

The larger context around Fairview and analyze the potential connections between the clinic and nearby schools and organizations.

While abortion is legal in Illinois, the clinic still experiences protestors standing on the small grass area outside the clinic’s gates. In thinking about what out-of-state residents might encounter, the clinic has hotels nearby where the patients might stay during their visit. The holiday inn is only 4 minutes away. However, walking to the clinic could be a negative experience, with no sidewalk next to a large road.

The circulation from hotel to clinic begins their experience. It could hold daunting moments, especially if passing through a group of protestors on their way inside.
This new housing typology can be broken down into a few main elements in reimagining how to expand and aid the current clinics.

Temporary housing that includes the care doulas can provide by integrating physical, emotional, and informational care into living spaces. An education program that allows volunteer students to learn and be a part of supporting a patient’s experience. And a child care center that assists those visiting with families.

These elements can be combined in various ways and imagined to exist on multiple sites with clinics that might need them.
Chi Chi Wakabayashi

Life was here...

**Collage: Child Care Center**

How to make people feel connected to one another, even if they’re only there for a short amount of time?

Fabric is used to bring softness to the interiors while also utilizing its transparency to create moments where people can be alone but connected visually. Hung behind a glass exterior, with cuts to create windows. Potentially at heights, that will orient sight toward the sky rather than at the surrounding context, which could include on-site protestors or other negative sensory stimuli.

**Diagram: Fabric Matrix**

The role of fabric is utilized in a collection of moments throughout the project, hoping to interact with all surfaces to encourage moments of solitude, connection, and enjoyment.
Chi Chi Wakabayashi

Life was here...
NETWORKS OF SANCTUARY

ADV IV (Spring 2022)
Professor: Nina Cooke-John
Collaborators: Jacqui Pothier

Networks of Sanctuary considers the site of Guineatown in Hudson River Valley as both a site of memory, of the free black community who settled in the area, and a site of historic and modern sanctuary. The project takes the position that sanctuary depends on its provision of community, network, and resource, and intends to be a space consisting of these programs for today’s vulnerable or at-risk communities. Networks of Sanctuary serves as a transitional space for people who seek its resources, and a collector for pre-existing local organizations and communities to gather, advocate, and provide support.
Research specific to the project’s conceptualization focused on looking at the organizations in the area that are currently involved in providing support to immigrant and undocumented communities. Mapped in relation to our site, these programs are divided and given space across the intervention.

Diagram: Existing Networks

Scattered throughout and are the most hidden spaces on our site.

Sized at 15' x 15', similar to the average size of the homes of Guineatown, the reflection spaces hope to convey a sense of intimacy through scale.

Varied exposure allows for the possibility of nature’s intervention on our spaces of sanctuary. Some of these rooms may have animal visitors, or may slowly become overgrown in the summer.

Diagram: Reflection Rooms

In its final siting composition, Fredonia Lane serves as a central axis off of which a wandering curved path weaves through the site. While Fredonia acts as an accessible and direct path through all the site’s programs, isolated moments of solitude and reflection encourage exploration.

Site Plan
Private, more hidden, programs are nested within the more exposed, public spaces.

The intervention presents an experience of three parts, all of which relate to the historic use of the site; wandering, discovery, and settling or utilizing the resources of the site.

The site aims to engage these experiences with visitors, volunteers, children, people seeking resources, and animals.
SCALABLE STREETS
Core III (Fall 2021)
Professor: Esteban de Backer
Collaborators: Zoe Su

Following the idea of add, transform, and reuse championed by Lacaton Vassal, this housing project aims to bring the life and activity found on the streets of Melrose, Bronx, within the block. A network of sprawling and overlapping walkways connects the proposed housing to the existing buildings on site to give space and support to the already existing community. Through walking, one understands and puts into perspective multiple scales of kinship and connection that intertwine the lives of the residents to their building, block, and neighborhood.
Lives of the residents are supported by the building and block's capacity to perform, depicted in orange.
The walkways hold different types of enclosed or exposed spaces depending on the season. Program is placed to support the inner block community.

Anchoring units to the wet core creates possibilities of change over time. Units are able to merge together in order to foster the development of the resident’s lives.
This project aims to analyze the mechanics and philosophy behind the movements in the game ultimate frisbee. Informing a school that emphasizes the importance of spatial and emotional connections, to create moments where boundaries vanish between the distinction of who teaches and who learns.

A school that fosters the individual while emphasizing the importance of kinship to the whole, the curriculum prioritizes creating strong emotional bonds between all students, inspiring even the brief chance hellos that can happen between classes.
At its core, frisbee is a game of continuous catch and throws between multiple people. The thrower must consider their receiver, adjusting the angle, speed, and strength of their toss based on an understanding of the space between and the obstacles that stand in the way.

These connections happen in a split second, somewhat unconscious, flick of the wrist where, based on experience and knowledge, teammates can react instantly to each other's movements.
1. SUMMER INTRO TO KINDERGARTEN
6 week program from July-August. 8th graders help teachers design a curriculum and play an active role in teaching the kindergarteners how to prepare for their exciting upcoming year.

2. KINDERGARTEN AT FIRST DAY
8th graders visit and help the kindergarteners write letters to their future schools.

3. 1ST & 2ND READING PARTNERS
2nd graders are paired with a 1st grader who they read to 3 times a week.

4. 1ST, 2ND, & 3RD OPEN CLASSROOM HALF DAY
Once a month, 1st, 2nd, & 3rd grade students tour and explore the school under the guidance of a 7th grade buddy.

5. 7TH GRADERS TEACH A 4TH GRADE CLASS
Once each semester, 7th graders spend a week choosing a subject of interest to design a class to teach to the 4th graders.

6. WHOLE SCHOOL FAIR
One week of the school year, students in older grades visit their siblings in Kindergarten and bring a book to read to the class.

7. 4TH GRADE AIRPLANE CONTEST
5th graders design airplanes to fly across the main hallway in a contest to see whose plane will soar the farthest.

8. 4TH GRADE ECO DROP
5th graders design devices to attempt to drop an egg safely from 15 feet.

9. UPPER SCHOOL FAIR
Introduction to upper school for designed by 4th-5th graders. A week where students from K-5th visit the older student’s classes.

10. FAMILY WEEK
Children’s work is showcased for family members to experience. Family members are also invited to come to the school and sit in their child’s classrooms during the week.

11. KINDERGARTEN GRADUATION
Kindergraduates present the graduating 8th graders with the letters they write on their last day of school. A reminder of their past dreams and interests.

Plan: First Floor

Placement of the Kindergarten classroom allows students to flow from the street, to the classroom, and to an outdoor play area.

Creating a space that separates and celebrates the kindergartners.

Plan: Second Floor

In the following years, students are encouraged to celebrate their success and feel pride in their accomplishments through team teaching, with first, second, and third grade primary classrooms located on the second floor.

Plan: Fourth Floor

During 4th-8th grade, emphasis is placed on the development of identity and sense of self. Students are allowed to take agency over their schedules while taking classes on the 3rd-5th floor.
In the daily life of Washington heights, the streets hold fragments of a different way of living that has emerged and re-emerged despite defeat. Chairs scatter the streets, claiming private ownership of space that forms the experience of living beyond the grid. This opposition between the city given public spaces versus the ones made by the neighborhood reveals the close community’s values that live in Washington heights. The connections between people and these objects show the possibilities of what is discovered in cramped space.

Using the chair and other fragments of living otherwise found on the streets of Washington Heights to inform an architecture that creates spaces for thought, spaces for being, and to quote Saidiya Hartman’s book, Wayward Lives, “a glimpse of the earth not owned by anyone.”
Continuing to be inspired by the street’s activity to inform an immeasurable imaginary, the game dominos is borrowed and used to represent how people, without breaking the grid’s physical boundaries, extend beyond them experientially—allowing new environments to form and expand at different scales beyond the residential building, the street, the neighborhood, and the Manhattan grid.

To picture a future in which Washington Heights has grown beyond the grid, two forms at two drastically different scales emerged. Still, both are aiming to question why we question exuberant amounts of space when it is for poor people for public use. Using the meaning behind the simple chair and the game dominos to attempt to think beyond the mundane scale to strive for a future that has no bound on who can create and what can be created.
Chi Chi Wakabayashi

Life was here...

From street chair to open tower. The George Washington Bridge symbolizes a contrast from the corporate, usually private, buildings found Downtown and turned into a flexible unowned public high-rise.

On the streets of Washington Heights, the chair informs the structure, which begins to co-opt the city’s spatial volumes within the language of this vernacular imaginary. The form addresses the lack of public space and acknowledges the communal environment created by the chair where people come to sit, to gather, and chairs are left and taken continuously. This world emphasizes the idea of “living in relation,” a notion that exchanges in resources, ownership, and support between people and their environment create a kinship that opposes late capitalist ideas. A community with a network of dependence and support between the people, the residences, and the shops.
Chi Chi Wakabayashi Life was here...
Catalog: Models

Fall 2020_Core I_Experience of Space

Fall 2020_Core I_1:2

Spring 2021 Core II_Concept Model

Spring 2021_Core II_Diorama Model

Fall 2020_ADR I_Raat Ur Rouf Lantern

Spring 2021_Core II_Initial Massing Model

Fall 2021_Core III_Precedent Study_Lacaton Vassal
Collaborators: Zoe Su
Chi Chi Wakabayashi

*Catalog: Models*

Life was here...
How do people claim space in everyday life?
Where do we go for refuge?
What does it mean to be out of the outside?

How to find fragments of another world, another way of life?
How to rethink what we know to be given?
What do people need to just be?
What can be created in cramped space?

How to use a space according to your feelings?
How to represent the intangible?
How to design for a child’s delight?
What are moments of pause?
How does the curriculum inform the structure?
How to create split seconds of potential connections?
How does it affect the community fabric?

How can space support possibilities?
Where to stop...when to leave the place to the inhabitants?
How to celebrate and support the pleasures of living?

What is the capacity of living?
Who is this for?
How to create potential?

What does it mean to engage with a memory?
Whose story is being told?
What motivates people to help?
Is this a space of day to day support?
What are the barriers to access these resources?
Who has access?
How is memory archived?

Where can spaces of agency be located?

What are the tools we have?
How to radically rethink the space of “home?”
Do you want be with people?
Do you want to be alone?

Is there a way to change the circulation of care?
What are the potential moments for interaction?
How can people feel connected even just for a moment?

How to document a process?
What if we look at mapping as a horizontal reading over research?
What is the architectural performance of accumulate, bury, stain, infiltrate, entwine, balance?

What are ways to give agency?
How to maintain the quality of the communal when the population changes?
How can the communal be instigated through material? Through infrastructure? Through space? Through maintenance?
Does there need to be instructions?
How to give permission without prescribing a response?
Do you care for something because you own it?
Or can you feel ownership over something once you care for it?

How can we tell that life was here?

Three years...in a lifetime of learning, growing, and becoming

Columbia University GSAPP
Portfolio
2020-2023