patches, purlieus, & panoplies

Joe Mihanovic, MSAAD 2023
GSAPP Portfolio
Preface

Architecture is a political act. The oft-repeated maxim, propounded in the subtitle to Lebbeus Woods' seminal publication, Anarchitecture, dryly affirms the civic scope of architecture and repudiates its reputation as a purely aesthetic discipline. Incidentally, the phrase would be entirely appropriate as a mantra for the GSAPP, which wholly embodies its stated ambition to foster the development of critical practitioners. "Architecture is a political act" was subverted in my studio, seminar, and workshop. I participated in at the GSAPP—always implicitly and sometimes explicitly. Each experience challenged me to evaluate, critique, and reimagine the political agency of architecture, a task I undertook through a series of design projects, analytical drawings, and essays.

Patches, Purlieus, & Panoplies is a comprehensive review of these artifacts—at least those most meaningful to me. My varied interests in architectural design and discourse prompted me to explore multiple seemingly disconnected topics, which made producing an instructive title for this text difficult. Nonetheless, a few threads have carried through my research at the GSAPP. Patches, purlieus, and panoplies are my three "avatars." I employ them as heuristic devices which loosely categorize the artifacts thematically. They are not mutually exclusive, nor are they exhaustive. Many artifacts are related to multiple avatars and one does not fit neatly with any; but together they provide a decently-comprehensive assortment of my work at the GSAPP.

Patch: (patch)  
• (noun) a small piece of material used to mend a tear or break, to cover a hole, or to strengthen a weak place  
• (verb) to mend, cover, or strengthen with or as if with a patch or patches  
• (verb) to repair or restore

A few of my projects explore themes related to mending and healing. In the context of my research, patches symbolize the process of repairing disaffected communities. The Bronx Borough Hall is a project of reparation, seeking to heal the South Bronx communities disaffected by the Cross Bronx Expressway and stitch together a biected park. The Purple Houses, a different project of reparation, seeks to provide much-needed sexual and reproductive healthcare services to the people of Mississippi.

Purlieu: (pur-loo, pur-lee)  
• (noun) environs or neighborhood  
• (noun) a place where one may range at large; confines or bounds  
• (noun) an outlying district or region, as of a town or city

Two essays studied large swaths of peripheral land developed to support other primary lands. "Planning Socialism: Mass Housing in Postwar Prague" is a case study of the history of the Jižní Město development in the southern outskirts of Prague, Czech Republic. Another essay, "The Railroads That Built Yellowstone," charts the historical process of commercialization which converted the lands of the national parks into amenities for the urban bourgeoisie. Additionally, the Bronx Borough Hall and the Purple Houses explore concepts of 'in-between' and 'peripheral' lands at the neighborhood scale. In its own way, the Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reimagines architectural peripheries, reinterpreting the envelope as a structural and service system—although conceptually, it is probably best described as a "panoply."

Panoply: (pan-uh-plee)  
• (noun) a wide-ranging and impressive array or display  
• (noun) something forming a protective covering  
• (noun) full ceremonial attire or paraphernalia; special dress and equipment

"The Role of Sexuality in Queer Space" addresses multiple panoplies of queer culture described in Aaron Betsky’s book; the shroud of secrecy that protects queer spaces and the externalizing performance of alternative gender expressions. Another essay, "Castles, Kitchens, & Robots" lays bare the performance of gender through objects of play revealed by Ani Liu’s A.I. Toys. A panoply of an entirely different sort, the Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reconsiders people to their waste by putting waste systems on public display and inviting creative interactions with it.

The one remaining GSAPP artifact does not closely relate to any of the avatars, but is worthy of inclusion. This case study explores the spatial, formal, and material qualities of the Lawson Westen House, designed by Eric Owen Moss in the early 1990s.

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In the 1940s and early 1950s, the East Tremont neighborhood in the South Bronx was a bustling and diverse working class community with strong ties to the land. Robert Caro described it as a “staging area” for new immigrants to establish themselves and work towards a better future. In the late 1950s, New York City began construction on the middle section of the Cross Bronx Expressway (CBE), which forever devastated East Tremont and the rest of the South Bronx. Condemnation and demolition of numerous apartment buildings, coupled with a hazardous construction process, plunged East Tremont into extreme poverty, starting with the buildings directly adjacent the new CBE and irradiating outward. Scores of bronxites fled. The CBE bisected Crotoro Park (resulting in the creation of Walter Gladwin Park to the north). Hundreds of buildings in East Tremont were demolished and thousands of East Tremont residents were left without adequate housing. Today, residents of East Tremont have a median household income of about $30,000, most are on public assistance, and most report having difficulty paying rent. There are also pervasive health issues like asthma, which is clearly due, at least in part, to the CBE.

However, the South Bronx is experiencing a gradual economic renewal, fueled in large part by the success of small, local-owned businesses. The central question which guides my design project is “How can a new borough hall reunite the South Bronx and help foster its continued economic renewal?”

The new Bronx Borough Hall bridges across the Cross Bronx Expressway, reunites two parks and their adjacent neighborhoods, and provides a new civic and commercial center for the South Bronx. Its tectonic form and spatial logic revolve around the act of bridging. Reinterpreting the arch bridge, catenary arch trusses span across the CBE and support a series of strips supplying program. Below, municipal functions and market stalls are combined in a big open market place, while park-goers can travel between parks via the green roofs above.

The new hall is intended as an incubator for small businesses. The main hall offers market stalls for aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners, as well as flexible space to be occupied by social gatherings and political activity. A small business development office and a trade school/workforce training offer tools for professional development, while the other municipal functions of the Bronx Borough Hall—the Bronx Borough President’s office and community board meeting rooms—occupy the peripheries of the market hall.

Figure 2. Map of Crotona Park from 1903. Source: Bronx, V. 14, Plate No. 9 (Map bounded by E. 177th St., Arthur Ave., 3rd Ave.). Atlases of New York city. / Insurance maps of New York. / Bronx / Atlas 52. Vol. 14, 1901.
3rd Avenue is a quasi-commercial thoroughfare, with multiple businesses along it. Three schools are along the western edge of the parks as well.

In the interest of activating 3rd Avenue and Fulton Avenue, the grand entrance to the marketplace is positioned on the western side of the market hall.
The strips have varying roof forms. Some slope down into the terrain of each park on either side of the CBE—providing walking paths via their green roofs above and spatially reconnecting the two parks. Other strips peel upwards and provide access directly from the ground level of the market hall.
The basic configuration of the new hall takes cues from the site context. Its radial layout is defined by two curves, one perpendicular to the CBE, and the other parallel with Arthur Ave. The strips are laid out in an AB pattern—with the overlaps in the A larger strips resulting in smaller B strips.

The structural grid is taken from the CBE, with the trusses touching down on either side of the CBE. Subsequent horizontal structural gridlines are arrayed outward, parallel to the CBE.
SQUARE SECTION HOLLOW STEEL TUBES WITH PAINTED DRYWALL FINISH

GREEN ROOF ASSEMBLY, WITH SOIL, SHEATHING, & INSULATION

ALUMINUM ROOF GUTTERS

GLULAM BEAMS AT 6'-0" ON CENTER SPACING

CLERESTORY WINDOWS

SQUARE SECTION HOLLOW STEEL TUBES WITH PAINTED DRYWALL FINISH

RADIANT FLOOR HEATING IN CONCRETE SLAB

PHOTOCATALYTIC CONCRETE WITH TITANIUM DIOXIDE MIXED IN. WHEN ACTIVATED BY SUNLIGHT, WILL BREAK DOWN NITRIC AND NITROGEN OXIDES

CONCRETE COLUMNS EMBEDDED IN RETAINING WALLS

AIR PURIFYING SYSTEM SUCKS UP SMOG AND COLLECTS AND STORES FINE DUST PARTICLES

CONCRETE GIRDERS SPANNING THE LENGTH OF THE CBE

ARCHED TRUSSES TRANSFER THE LOAD TO THE CBE RETAINING WALLS AND THE FOOTINGS BELOW
Following the Supreme Court’s 2022 decision to overturn Roe v. Wade, the plaintiff—the Jackson Women’s Health Organization—closed its doors. The JWHO was the last abortion clinic in the state of Mississippi, and it became obsolete almost overnight due to Mississippi’s trigger ban. Their former home, the Pink House, was sold. Mississippians are left without access to legal abortions, and many also lack access to basic reproductive and sexual health services, resulting in poor health outcomes with regards to reproductive, sexual, and maternal health.

The Purple Houses is a new healthcare facility and advocacy center in Jackson, Mississippi that provides the full spectrum of reproductive and sexual health care services, including abortions in the case of the abortion ban exceptions (rape and to protect the life of the birthing person), pregnancy tests, check-ups and cancer screenings, birth control and contraceptives, STI screenings and treatment, gender-affirming care (including hormone treatment therapy), sexual education, and counseling; in addition to office space and gathering spaces for advocacy organizations.

The design of the Purple Houses was driven by 2 key questions. First, how can reproductive healthcare facilities counter political opposition? The site planning seeks to counter political opposition, provide security for care seekers, and provide vibrant public spaces. For security, the main building (which includes the medical spaces, doctor’s offices, sexual education, etc.) is surrounded by a perimeter wall at its northern, western, and southern edges. The perimeter wall is pulled back from the site’s boundaries, allowing the project to give back to the community with an outdoor amphitheater, rain garden, bioswales, and other interstitial public spaces. Meanwhile, the advocacy center, which is intended as the “public face” of the facility, is placed at eastern edge of the site bordering a major boulevard and large public lawn. The advocacy center serves as the physical intermediary between care seekers and political opposition, and invites public discourse. Inside the perimeter wall, care-seekers, medical workers, and advocates enjoy a dynamic landscape.

The second key question was: how can clinical spaces create a sense of comfort, safety, and vitality for patients? Conventional clinical spaces are sterile, bland, orderly, and hyper-rational. The Purple Houses presents a new model for spaces of care which incorporates domestic forms, soft colors and textures, and curvy quirks to invoke a sense of comfort and humanity.
This drawing represents a positive experience of care—a memory from my childhood of my father reading Harry Potter books to me.
National Histories Timelines — A collaboration with Jacqui Pothier*

This research was completed in the first half of the fall semester, in preparation for our design projects. We mapped the US history of reproductive rights, abortion rights, and sexual and reproductive healthcare on a timeline from 1953-2022. We collaborated on creative decisions, but split the final slides in half so that I created the timelines from 1989-2022, which are displayed on the following pages.
### Reproductive Justice

**Jacqueline Pothier & Joe Mihanovic**

**Rolling Back Reproductive Justice & Scientific Breakthroughs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1976 | Propelled by pro-life Senator Henry Hyde, the Hyde Amendment is a federal policy banning federal funding for abortion. Since 1976, people seeking an abortion have been unable to cover it through Medicaid, a policy which has primarily affected low-income women. As a result, “approximately one-fourth of women who would have Medicaid-funded abortions instead give birth when this funding is unavailable.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1974</th>
<th>SC Justices: Warren E. Burger, Harry A. Blackmun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gerald Ford</td>
<td>Jimmy Carter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronald Reagan</td>
<td>George H.W. Bush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>SC Justices: William H. Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>SC Justices: William H. Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**IVF (in vitro fertilization) had its first clinical success in the United States.**

1981

**ARL Success**

**The Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA; otherwise known as the “abstinence-only” law) removed federal funding for abstinence-only sexual education programs, many of which spread misinformation.**

1981

**GIFT Success**

**IVF (in vitro fertilization) had its first clinical success in the United States.**

1981

**GIFT Success**

**1984 Resulting from research to IVF, gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) was developed—allowing for fertilization in the fallopian tubes. IVF has become the far more popular assisted reproductive technology.**

1984

**AIDS was first identified in the US. AIDS devastated the LGBTQ+ community, killing around 320,000 people between 1987 and 1998. By 1995, 1 in 9 gay men had been diagnosed with AIDS, and 1 in 15 had died.**

1987

**The first antiretroviral medication for HIV, azidothymidine (AZT) became available.**

1987

**1976 Propelled by pro-life Senator Henry Hyde, the Hyde Amendment is a federal policy banning federal funding for abortion. Since 1976, people seeking an abortion have been unable to cover it through Medicaid, a policy which has primarily affected low-income women. As a result, “approximately one-fourth of women who would have Medicaid-funded abortions instead give birth when this funding is unavailable.”**

1976

**1977 The Adolescent Family Life Act (AFLA; otherwise known as the “abstinence-only” law) removed federal funding for abstinence-only sexual education programs, many of which spread misinformation.**

1981

**1981 In Bellotti v. Baird, the Supreme Court ruled that minors may have access to an abortion without parental notification.**

1981

**1984 Resulting from research to IVF, gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT) was developed—allowing for fertilization in the fallopian tubes. IVF has become the far more popular assisted reproductive technology.**

1984

**1987 The first antiretroviral medication for HIV, azidothymidine (AZT) became available.**

1987

**1989 The Supreme Court upheld a Missouri law which defined life at the point of conception and barred public facilities from being used to conduct abortions, and public employees from conducting them. Webster v. Reproductive Health Services established that viability testing was constitutional, and opened the door for individual states to restrict abortion.**

1989

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National Histories Timelines — A collaboration with Jacqui Pothier
HISTORY OF ABORTION RIGHTS

FEDERAL ABORTION LIMITATIONS & ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**2003**

**PARTIAL-BIRTH ABORTION BAN**

The Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 was a federal statute that banned partial-birth abortion (also known as intact dilation and extraction). In passing the statute, Congress found that:

- “The partial-birth abortion procedure is biomechanically complex and involves a range of abortifacient techniques which are effective only if performed after the second trimester of pregnancy.
- A moral, medical, and ethical consensus exists that the practice of performing a partial-birth abortion is a gruesome and inhumane procedure that is never medically necessary and should be prohibited.”

The act stipulated penalties (including fines or imprisonment) for physicians who performed partial-birth abortions, but it also included exceptions for abortions considered necessary to preserve the health of the birthing person.

**2007**

**GONZALES v. CARHART**

The United States Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, upheld the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, the first-ever federal ban on abortion methods. The Court affirmed the constitutionality of the statute, holding that the “state’s interest in promoting respect for human life at all stages in the pregnancy” could outweigh the birthing person’s interest in protecting their own health, setting a precedent for future rulings.

**2006**

**THE FDA APPROVED IMPLANON, A BIRTH CONTROL IMPLANT.**

**2007**

**TIMOTHY RAW BROWN BECAME THE FIRST PERSON TO BE CURED OF HIV AFTER A STEM CELL TRANSPLANT.**

**2009**

**THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TRANSFERRED FUNDS FROM THE COMMUNITY-BASED ABstinence Education Program, and BUDGETED $190 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING FOR TWO NEW SEX EDUCATION INITIATIVES: THE Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) AND THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION Program (PREP).**

**2002**

**THE FDA APPROVED ORTHO-ESTR, THE FIRST BIRTH CONTROL PATCH.**

**2008**

**THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TRANSFERRED FUNDS FROM THE COMMUNITY-BASED ABstinence Education Program, and BUDGETED $190 MILLION IN NEW FUNDING FOR TWO NEW SEX EDUCATION INITIATIVES: THE TTeen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP) AND THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY EDUCATION Program (PREP).**

**2010**

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**2013**

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**2014**

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**2015**

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**2016**

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**2017**

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**2018**

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**2019**

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**2020**

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**2021**

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THE ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE SUPREME COURT

2009  Barack Obama

SC Justices:
John G. Roberts
Anthony M. Kennedy
Clarence Thomas
Samuel A. Alito, Jr.
John Paul Stevens
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Stephen Breyer
Sonia Sotomayor

2017  Donald J. Trump

SC Justices:
John G. Roberts
Anthony M. Kennedy
Clarence Thomas
Samuel A. Alito, Jr.
Neil Gorsuch
Ruth Bader Ginsburg
Stephen Breyer
Sonia Sotomayor
Elena Kagan

2021  Joe Biden

SC Justices:
John G. Roberts
Clarence Thomas
Samuel A. Alito, Jr.
Neil Gorsuch
Brett Kavanaugh
Amy Coney Barrett
Stephen Breyer
Sonia Sotomayor
Elena Kagan

PREP APPROVAL
2012
The FDA first approved PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis; a daily pill that guards against HIV infection) under the brand name Truvada. Gay and bisexual men taking PrEP report that it has "freed them from the fear and anxiety once endemic to sex."22

HIV INFECTIONS
2014-2017
HIV infections continue to soar among LGBTQ+ people of color. From 2014 to 2017, HIV infection rates have "skyrocketed for Latinx men nationwide by 18%... and by a shocking 38% for gay and bisexual Black men between the ages of 25 and 34."23

EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTIVE
2010
Nexplanon replaced Implanon as the single-rod implant prescribed in the United States.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT
2010
The Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare") required health insurance companies to include birth control coverage at no cost.

ICE FORCED STERILIZATION
2021
In 2020, a nurse at an ICE detention center reported that several women had received hysterectomies against their will.

DOBBS V. JACKSON WOMEN'S HEALTH ORGANIZATION
2020
In Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the Supreme Court held that the constitution did not protect the right to an abortion, overturning Roe v. Wade and granting individual states the full power to regulate and/or restrict abortion.

2022
In Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the Supreme Court held that the constitution did not protect the right to an abortion, overturning Roe v. Wade and granting individual states the full power to regulate and/or restrict abortion. The court affirmed the constitutionality of a 2018 Mississippi law that banned most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Subsequently, abortion became illegal or highly restricted in 20 states.

RELATED EVENTS
EXPANSION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS
RESTRICTION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES/ THREATS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Reproductive Justice
Bryony Roberts

In Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, the Supreme Court held that the constitution did not protect the right to an abortion, overturning Roe v. Wade and granting individual states the full power to regulate and/or restrict abortion. The court affirmed the constitutionality of a 2018 Mississippi law that banned most abortions after 15 weeks of pregnancy. Subsequently, abortion became illegal or highly restricted in 20 states.

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Healthcare
Full-spectrum of reproductive and sexual health care services

*Mississippi’s trigger ban is in effect, banning abortion in all cases, with exceptions for rape and to protect the birthing person. The Purple Houses will provide abortion services for those abortion seekers.
Mississippi's trigger ban is in effect, banning abortion in all cases, with exceptions for rape and to protect the birthing person. The Purple Houses will provide abortion services for those abortion seekers.
The gable roof massing invokes the image of domesticity, an image which is transformed by a series of moves. The roof ridge is pulled off center, and penetrated by a half-dome skylight. The wall behind the exam table is indented with an arched opening. Meanwhile, bean bags and button-tuck textures soften the interior.

A ‘Purple House’ is an adaptable medical space for administering various reproductive health services, including abortions.
Early 1/2" = 1'-0" study model, annotated with section cut
The site for the new Purple Houses is an empty parking lot near downtown Jackson in the cultural and commercial hub of the city, right off a freeway exit.
**Planning Socialism**

**Mass Housing in Postwar Prague**

**TERM** Spring 2023  
**COURSE** Architecture and Socialism  
**PROFESSOR** Reinhold Martin

From the Syllabus:

Historically, socialism has been—and remains—an international project. In architecture, this project has most commonly been studied through the building programs and urbanism of the Soviet bloc and more recently, through Soviet-led development programs. Widening the frame globally, the seminar will study the architecture of a loosely defined, heterogeneous, and often contradictory “socialist international” throughout the twentieth century, in cases ranging from national economic planning to postcolonial development to municipal housing. To do so, we will introduce examples from around the world—Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa, and North America—in which state policies, building types, construction methods, design practices, political ideologies, and architectural theories have offered systemic alternatives to capitalist hegemony. Such work has been variously associated with communist, socialist, and social democratic regimes or ideologies, some of which have been revolutionary and others reformist in character. Taking each on its own terms and critically in context, and emphasizing links between them, we will ask in each case how architecture meets political economy, guided by the socialist project.

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**Introduction**

Away from the medieval castles, Gothic cathedrals, and cobblestone streets of Prague’s picturesque core, the panelák quietly provides the real life of the city. Once nestled as nightmarish relics of the city’s communist past and now resurrected in the general public perception, the panelák—cheaply-produced buildings constructed of prefabricated concrete panels—have a rich history eminently intertwined with the political history of Czechoslovakia. The city’s largest panelák housing estate (and the country’s, for that matter) is the massive Jižní Město development, sitting in the southern outskirts of the city. At the time of writing Jižní Město (or “South City”) houses about 100,000 people—about 8% of the city and 1% of the entire country. More than just a functional abode, Jižní Město occupies an oversized presence in the public imagination and epitomizes the mass housing estates dotted around former Czechoslovakia, even serving as the setting for the popular 1980 tragicomedy film Panenaroty, which depicted the social ills and cramped conditions of Communist mass housing.

Initially designed in the mid-1960s and built from the early 1970s through the Velvet Revolution, Jižní Město underwent several substantial changes from planning to execution. Studying the history of Jižní Město elucidates the agency (or lack thereof) of Czechoslovak architects and planners in the postwar era and how their building projects were driven by the political conditions of the country and the stance of the state. Propelled by the energetic radicalism of the architects and planners of the Czechoslovak state agencies, the initial designs for Jižní Město balanced a functional demand to meet material needs with robust, utopian ideals for town planning.

**Planning Socialist Housing**

Czechoslovakia emerged from the devastation of World War II largely unscathed, the medieval monuments of its historic capital untouched by the ravages of war. In 1945, it was the Soviets—not the Americans—who liberated Prague from Nazi Germany, and they did so with theatrical flair, humorously parading their hammer and sickle-adorned tanks through the streets. Together the brutality of the Nazis, the West’s abandonment of Czechoslovakia and the signing of the Munich accords in 1938, and this liberation by the Soviets ripened the Czechoslovak population for radicalism, bolstering the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSČ), which already represented a plurality of the electorate. After leading coalition governments for a few years following World War II, the KSČ staged a coup d’etat and formed a people’s republic in 1948.

With support of the Soviets, the KSČ crushed internal opposition and nationalized industry. Czechoslovakia would remain within the Soviet sphere of influence until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s.

“Jižní Město underwent several substantial changes from planning to execution. Studying the history of Jižní Město elucidates the agency (or lack thereof) of Czechoslovak architects and planners in the postwar era and how their building projects were driven by the political conditions of the country and the stance of the state.”

With the ascendance of the KSČ, the fields of architecture and urbanism were radically transformed. The Construction Nationalization Act of 1948 merged all private building firms into a single state corporation, with all architectural offices absorbed into a single entity, Stavoprojekt. The architects of the new state entity, many of whom participated in or were influenced by the radical prewar Functionalist discourse led by Karel Fajt and others, and many of whom were radicals themselves, found themselves in a remarkable historical moment. As Ana Mladič outlines, “the Czechoslovak architectural field—summoned to build Socialism and literally construct the state—consistently and dynamically interpreted elements of Socialism’s master narrative and historical conditions in order to fulfill its own ideological and historical role.” In the initial post-coup years, Stavoprojekt was

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**Figure 1.** The town center of Jižní Město. Jarmoří Čejka, “Panorama Hájů” Photograph. 2015. From Lucie Skřivánková et al., *Paneláci 1* (Praha: Uměleckoprůmyslové muzeum, 2016), 226–227.

**Figure 2.** The paved backyards of Jižní Město apartments. Jarmoří Čejka, “Hají” Photograph. 2015. From Stavovědové et al., *Paneláce 1*, 238.

**Figure 3.** Photograph of Stavoprojekt workers, “CSS 2 n.p. Stavoprojekt: our bulwark.” Architektura ČSR 8 (1949).
predominantly engaged in organizing and executing housing projects, as it sought to alleviate the acute housing crisis. Stavoprojekt’s functionalist project departed sharply from the interwar years of Czechoslovak architectural discourse, which were largely marked by socialist realist aesthetics, despite Karel Teige and others’ contributions. Socialist realist discourse was prevalent even in the initial post-coup years; the second issue of the 1948 series of Architektura ČSR (the largest architectural journal in the country) endorsed the conclusions from the 1948 Conference of All State Communist Construction Workers: “The new road we have embarked upon is the road of truth and hard facts. The road of Socialism in architecture is a progressive step and a higher level of-nilhito efforts.” Yet there was a disconnect between Czechoslovak architecture’s ostensible socialist realist and its actual execution, as seen in Czechoslovak architects’ apparent “disinterest in the aesthetic dimension of architecture.” Subsequent issues of Architektura ČSR heralded standardization and industrial production, as many of the architects of Stavoprojekt assumed new roles as managers (rather than designers) of building projects. Around 1952 and 1953, socialist realism received renewed interest, as Czechoslovak theorists questioned the role of architecture in constructing a new socialist identity. Architects received a new mandate to create socialist aesthetics in the production of buildings and cities. But this was short-lived; Nikolka Khruščev’s 1954 speech to the All-Union Conference of Builders, Architects, and Construction Workers entitled “On Wide-Scale Introduction of Industrial Methods, Improving the Quality and Reducing the Cost of Construction” was a definitive turning point in Czechoslovak architecture. Khruščev’s speech was largely a call for the increased production and widespread use of reinforced concrete and prefabricated concrete parts throughout the Soviet Union; but it also solidified a new ideology of building construction, decrying the perceived wastefulness of the building and design industries. Khruščev declared: “A common feature of construction in this country is wastage of resources, and the most large part of the blame rests with the many architects who use architectural superfluities to decorate buildings built to one-off designs.” Such architects are a stumbling block in the way of industrializing [sic] construction, in order to build quickly and successfully, we must use standard designs in our building, but this is evidently not to the taste of certain architects…” If an architect wants to be in step with the time, he must know and be able to employ not only architectural forms, ornaments, and various decorative elements, but also new progressive materials, reinforced-concrete structures and parts, and, above all, must be an expert in cost-saving in construction.

Dealing a crucial blow to socialist realism, the speech empowered architects throughout the Soviet sphere—including those at the Stavoprojekt—to discard frivolous aesthetic concerns and instead focus on the tangible affordances provided by architecture. The country’s housing crisis, which was most acute in the initial postwar years in the Sudetenland (the formerly Nazi-occupied territories), persisted in Prague as well through at least the early 1960s, when many city residents did not have access to adequate living facilities. The Optimum Imperative


5 Mijički, The Optimum Imperative, 110.

bathrooms, central heating, etc.” Stavoprojekt research institutes began imagining standardized housing blocks and innovating new methods of prefabricated panel construction. Born out of the research, wide scale construction of the paneláks began in earnest in the 1950s. Massive housing estates were constructed throughout Prague as well as broader Czechoslovakia, reaching their “qualitative peak” in the 1960s with the Lesná estate in Brno or Dablice and Invalidovna in Prague. After the Warsaw Pact invasion of Prague in 1968, state control over the building industries had disastrous consequences, ushering in a new “technocratic phase” of panelák construction, in which a renewed hard-line control over the building industries disempowered architects, resulting in uninspired and somewhat inhumane massive housing estates, which were indiscriminate of aesthetic sensibility or the cultural heritage of their sites. “By the time of the Technocratic Phase, in the mid-1960s, both the projects and the discourse were disempowering. The move to mass production and prefabrication, which had been occurring in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere, was not explicitly a new phenomenon. But the move became more forceful, and the discourse became more hostile…”


8 Koukalová, “Panel Forms over Time,” 41.


3 Architektura ČSR 2 (1948), (Anka Miličká, Trans.), From Milički, The Optimum Imperative, 95.

3 Milički, The Optimum Imperative, 95.
Planning Prague

In the initial post-war years, the capital city was not a major focus of the building, having been untouched by war. Instead the KSČ focused on developing the industrial center of Ostrava, the modernization of Slovakia, and the resettlement of the Sudetenland following the expulsion of the Germans.1 In the post-Stalin years, the Czechoslovak government turned its attention to the development of Prague, setting guidelines for future construction which became the basis for the new Prague master plan (1951-1964), which "took the first steps towards ensuring the planned connection between the city and the neighboring [sic] region."2 Several years later, the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration master plan sought to bolster Prague’s economy by reforming its industrial, service, and educational systems.

Figure 6. National competition entry for the new town of Jižní Město by Peter Lizon, et al., held in 1966. Lizon, “The Unhappy Heritage,” 108.
Figure 7. Perspective views of the Peter Lizon National competition entry for tertiary-sector workplaces and housing" and a "reorganization of the housing system with extensive social implications.”

In 1966, a public urban planning competition for the design of Jižní Město (“South City”) was held. The initial competition garnered 41 proposals, after which several additional rounds of competition followed. Many of the initial proposals were guided by utopian ideals of urban living. Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an “integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space.”3

The final master plan, executed by a group led by architect Jiří Hrůza, incorporated the modernist principle of concentrically-arranged single-function zones which had guided the planning of Prague since the 1920s. Within the city, the plan proposed the “establishment of areas suitable for residential neighborhoods. The jury chair, Jiří Voženílek, included the design in an analysis in his Civitace Na Ráce, which was subsumed into the ideological apparatus of the KSČ, philosopher Radovan Richta forecasted the need for professional specialization, modernization of the education system, and expansion of leisure time within a new system of decentralized economic management in his Civitace Na Ráce, which was subsumed into the ideological apparatus of the KSČ. Richta’s theory of modernization became the basis for the creation of the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration master plan. Aiming to carve a new social mobility for Prague city residents, the plan sought new integrated housing and transport systems that simultaneously provided material needs and promoted individual freedom throughout the territory.

Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an “integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space.”4 The final master plan, executed by a group led by architect Jiří Hrůza, incorporated the modernist principle of concentrically-arranged single-function zones which had guided the planning of Prague since the 1920s. Within the city, the plan proposed the “establishment of areas suitable for residential neighborhoods.

To protect the greenery of Prague, the planners decided on a satellite model for new development, in which new developments concentrated around old ones. Additionally, the urban planning concept was closely tied to the largely rail-based public transport system. Hrůza’s team proposed reinforcing the existing rail network with suburban branch lines as well as roads, to minimize the commute from peripheral settlements to the urban core of Prague.

"Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an ‘integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space.’”

The Prague-Brno motorway provided an excellent pre-existing transportation infrastructure for Jižní Město. In 1964, a directive development plan included the creation of a new residential district under that name in the southern portion of Prague, at the city’s periphery like the rest of the panelák housing estates. Several agricultural villages and enclaves of villas built during the interwar period occupied the space already; these would eventually be incorporated into the plans for Jižní Město. Coupled with the pre-existing motorway, the hospitable terrain of the area, populated by streams, ponds, rolling hillsides, and large forests (including the adjacent Hostivařský Forest Park), made it suitable for residential neighborhoods.

Planning Jižní Město

In 1966, a public urban planning competition for the design of Jižní Město (“South City”) was held. The initial competition garnered 41 proposals, after which several additional rounds of competition followed. Many of the initial proposals were guided by utopian ideals of urban living. Designers imagined an almost self-sustaining urban ecosystem of gated buildings and plentiful greenery in the form of parks and nature preserves.

One losing proposal from 1966, designed by Peter Lizon in collaboration with Peter Gal and Stefan Popluhar, featured a series of 7 megastructures to house 80,000 people. The design proposed maisonette-type apartment units and a town center consisting of recreational and educational facilities. The jury chair, Jiří Voženílek, included the design in an analysis in Architektura ČSR, though ultimately the scheme was deemed “too extreme.”5 But the prevailing schemes in the initial rounds of the competition were no less bold.

"Planners understood the Prague-Central Bohemian agglomeration as an ‘integrated organism in which all components form a single economic, physical, and social space.’"
In the first round of the competition, the highest prize was awarded to Jan Krásny and his team. Krásny and his team, along with 6 other competitors, were invited to revise their initial designs in the second round of the competition, with the deadline set for February 1967. In the second round, two projects were awarded—one setting out a linear urban axis with extremely tall buildings (up to thirty floors), and the other with a centralized composition and a wide range of typologies for the residential structures. Initially, the two awarded teams were slated to collaborate on a land-use plan for Jižní Město, but the two teams produced comparative studies, and ultimately Krásny and his team were chosen to produce the final detailed land-use plan.

"Krásny and his collaborators put forth grand new visions for a fully-integrated, well-balanced, and beautiful housing estate. The designs were strikingly sculptural and abstract, even as their political aims were grounded by the functionalist goal of housing production."

Completed in 1968, the land-use plan from Krásny’s team divided the area east of the Prague-Brno motorway into 4 distinct zones—Haje, Chodov, Litochleby, and Opatov—with their own unique urban characteristics. Meanwhile, the area west of the motorway (which would eventually become Jižní Město II) was designated for manufacturing, a university, a hospital, and recreation. The plan integrated the planned new construction of Chodov and Litochleby into the original colonies of small single-family houses, and the buildings were designed to rise and fall with the natural terrain. A model by Krásny’s team from 1967-1970 demonstrates the roof lines of the buildings rising and falling in accordance with the site conditions; the city centers organized as concentrated areas of high rise buildings. These initial designs reveal both a utopian idealism and a humanistic environmental sensibility. Charged by the revolutionary politics of the 1960s and underwritten by the Stavaprojekt, Krásny and his collaborators put forth grand new visions for a fully-integrated, well-balanced, and beautiful housing estate. The designs were strikingly sculptural and abstract, even as their political aims were grounded by the functionalist goal of housing production. This dynamism is apparent in both the model and in the early concept sketches.

15 Skřivánková et al., The Paneláks, 170.
The Centrum was a crucial component of the Jižní Město masterplan, designed to provide for the public life of the development. The architects imagined a vibrant town center with multiple uses organized around a central park, as shown in the sketch from Krásny. At the Centrum a string of public amenities and a hotel eventually culminated in a “quiet zone” of the park, with a network of pedestrian paths connecting various residential sections.  

Jižní Město’s initial designs employed variegated roof forms, multi-use zoning, and spatial and formal play to imagine a new Czechoslovak socialism. Although clearly influenced by utopian thinking, the designers were not naive to the pitfalls of bureaucracy and the practical concerns of construction. Tempered by the shortcomings of other mass housing developments in the city, they delivered prescient warnings for Jižní Město’s potential failings. As summarized by Šilhánková et al.:  

Not only the authors, but also other experts from the highest ranks of the architectural profession repeatedly stressed the unique opportunity for this project to take instruction from the many flaws and failures of several already realized [sic] housing estates. All of the participants were aware of the threat of monofunctionality (bedroom suburb), architectural monotony, the lack of employment opportunities directly on the estate, insufficient shops and services, poor transport connections and [the lack of] walkways or landscaping.  

**Executing Jižní Město I**  
Ultimately, the architects’ fears were confirmed. Mired by economizing bureaucratic compromises, the plan of Jižní Město would face the same fate as the other Czechoslovak mass housing estates planned in the 1960s, “dissolved into monotonous mediocrity.”  

The violent defeat of the Prague Spring by the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 marked a major juncture in the architectural and urban planning disciplines. The ensuing Normalization period brought significant repression over all artistic work and a vastly intensified state oversight of the building industry. Many architects, planners, and designers were ousted from their roles at the Stavoprojekt, and many more were seemingly cut off from public commissions by the authorities. Moreover, the architecture of the 1960s—even the well-intentioned quasi-functionalist mass housing projects—was widely criticized for its perceived formalism, which was deemed out of...
step with socialist ideals. Despite the tumult in the architectural profession, construction of the estates accelerated due to massive state investments in housing construction.

"The variegated building forms of the original scheme devolved into uninspired, oversized apartment blocks which overpowered the landscape, and the ruthless repetition of the blocks shunned the hierarchy and urban organization of the original concept."

Normalization dealt a fatal blow to the utopian ideals of the Jižní Město masterplan. Jan Krásny and Jiří Lasovský (the second-highest ranking architect of the project) were forced to abandon the project for political reasons, and it progressed without their much-needed oversight, culminating in the construction of the first phase of the project, which later came to be known as Jižní Město I. The original plan was nearly altogether abandoned. Crucially, the Centrum was never built, nor the grand central park. The variegated building forms of the original scheme devolved into uninspired, oversized apartment blocks which overpowered the landscape, and the ruthless repetition of the blocks shunned the hierarchy and urban organization of the original concept. The planned mix of low-rise and high-rise buildings rising and falling with the natural terrain was discarded, and the network of pedestrian paths providing access between residential areas, parks, and nature preserves was abandoned. Like many of the other panelák estates, Jižní Město was seemingly shoved inartfully into an environment that was not ready for it, and therefore was inhospitable to it and to its residents. Koukalová sums up the failings of the Jižní Město plan:

20 Skřivánková et al., The Paneláks, 170.

As Zelený’s statement seems to imply, the designers of Jižní Město II had clearly learned from the shortcomings of its neighboring predecessor. They created a new plan which used colors and graphic symbols to signal distinct visual and urban identities for the individual housing units.

blocks, and for creating an ease of orientation. Circular graphic symbols depicted basic elements of the environment—fauna [poulpe], humans [orange], air [blue], human [jedi], water [dark blue], sun [yellow], and flora [green]. Departing from the ethereal, futurist depictions of utopia which marked Krásky and others’ initial sketches for Jižní Město I, the new representational strategy sought graphical clarity through color and symbols, while nonetheless exploring abstract ideas about humankind’s relationship to the environment. Buildings were shaded to represent the colors of the facades of each residential section.

“Departing from the ethereal, futurist depictions of utopia which marked Krásky and others’ initial sketches for Jižní Město I, the new representational strategy sought graphical clarity through color and symbols, while nonetheless exploring abstract ideas about humankind’s relationship to the environment.”

Initially planned for industrial production and public facilities, construction began on new residential areas of Jižní Město II in 1979. Taking heed of the difficulties of Jižní Město I, Zelený’s team were highly detailed in the political process of planning approval, funding, and construction; and made a concerted effort to reap the pragmatic benefits of housing estate development. Skřivánková et al. catalog the relative successes of Jižní Město II:

“Zelený’s team engaged effectively with the KSC to realize the crucial aspects of the project. They assumed new roles as political agents, navigating a complex bureaucratic system to execute their artistic vision.”

Jižní Město II has a notably more intimate character, a unique orientation system, and each of the residential sections has its specific supplementary facade color [sic] (black, brown, red or green). The apartment buildings were given a number of atypical features, such as the protruding entranceways with overhangs. Moreover, the builders were relatively successful in synchronizing [sic] the completion of infrastructure and services along with the actual flats, and applying a unified system for small-scale architecture.

Ultimately the graphics of the color division map was translated into a tangible navigational strategy and aesthetic features for the new development. Notably, some features of the plan were never built, while others are still under development in capital(s) Prague at the time of writing.

Concluding remarks

Development of the southern section of Jižní Město II, which was designed to merge with the existing single-family homes of that area, was never attempted. But the architects and planners of Jižní Město II deserve credit for successfully rethinking the economizing influence of the KSC, and exerting their political leverage to manifest a largely successful town planning development.

While in their day the paneláks were subject to significant criticism, it is worth noting their contemporary successes. In an era defined by the housing crisis, Jižní Město and the other paneláks provided for the basic material needs for (in Jižní Město’s case) 100,000 people, many of whom previously did not have adequate living conditions. At the urban scale, Jižní Město solidified new and improved transportation patterns and advanced a varied zoning configuration for the city of Prague. Jižní Město also instituted a flattening of social hierarchies, so that people of different professions and/or socioeconomic statuses lived in similar units, creating a sense of class solidarity.

In any case, the successes and failures of Jižní Město offer an impression of the internal political machinations of the state, the functioning of the state architectural agency (Stavoprojekt), and the agency of individual architectural teams in carrying out large-scale projects. The many changes undergone in the planning and execution of Jižní Město closely align with political developments in the country, demonstrating that architecture is strongly dictated by its administrative political regime.

Bibliography

The Railroads That Built Yellowstone National Parks as Consumable Commodities

TERM Fall 2022
COURSE Architecture, Land, Ground
PROFESSOR Lucia Atias

From the Syllabus:

Yellowstone is a powerful symbol of America’s natural beauty. Its abundant wildlife and dramatic landscape features have captivated generations of tourists ever since its inception as the country’s first national park in 1872. America’s national parks are widely credited to the advocacy of the great naturalist John Muir, but recent scholarship has shed light on the role of the railroads in creating, promoting, and maintaining the parks, and Yellowstone is no exception. The political lobby of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the expeditions and speaking tours it sponsored were instrumental in Yellowstone’s establishment as a national park, and subsequently, Northern Pacific consolidated control over early land development in and around the park. Its advertisements rendered the land of Yellowstone in the mythical image of undisturbed natural beauty. Its railroad journeys were fashioned into luxury consumer experiences, and iconic views of Yellowstone were a prime feature of the experience. The conservation of the national parks marked a change in the conception of land, in which the land itself became a consumable amenity and not ‘simply a source of production’ (through mining, logging, ranching, farming, etc.). A closer look at various advertisements for Yellowstone also reveals shifting conceptions of the land over time as the transportation system of the United States evolved.

Contrary to the image of purity promoted by the railroads, the land was not undisturbed prior to the Anglo-American explorers’ arrival. Indigenous peoples of North America have inhabited Yellowstone for over 11,000 years, and early hunter-gatherer inhabitants made ‘aggressive use of natural resources by establishing strategic migration patterns through the area.’

The marketing campaign of the big railroads served to erase the history of the area’s earlier settlers and presented a romanticized version of the Yellowstone landscape.

“The conservation of the national parks marked a change in the conception of land, in which the land itself became a consumable amenity and not ‘simply a source of production’ (through mining, logging, ranching, farming, etc.).”

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Moran’s colorful masterpiece captures the all-consuming glory of the Yellowstone valley, belonging to a genealogy of American landscape painting which unsettled the Enlightenment-era instinct to “wrestle nature into submission.” Moran’s piece projects a false image of unspoiled natural beauty and celebrates the prospect of boundless nature, a concept that is deeply interwoven with the ideology of extraction which dominated American politics in the 19th century. Depicted in the scene is a wide-angle view of the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone, with the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River in the center-left. Lighting creates a clear delineation between the foreground, midground, and background. The foreground is shrouded in shadow and cooler in hue, while the midground is illuminated in a dazzling display of orange, red, and brown hues, accentuating the profile of the jagged, rocky snow-capped peaks in the center-right. In the center-left, the shaded background is pierced by the bright white light of the Lower Falls, with steam rising from them. With color and lighting, Moran eschews photorealism in favor of an exaggerated expressiveness that emphasizes the dramatic features of the landscape.

“Moran’s piece projects a false image of unspoiled natural beauty and celebrates the prospect of boundless nature, a concept that is deeply interwoven with the ideology of extraction which dominated American politics in the 19th century.”

In the far background, beyond the ridge of the Lower Falls, land can be seen for miles, aided by an apparently fictional view hovering above the ground. In the top-left of the image, in the far background, is Old Faithful Geyser, nearly too small to be perceived. The apparently unnerving quality of the land in the distant background, assisted by the fictional view hovering above the ground, reinforces the image of boundless nature. Moran’s piece is also notable for its depiction of people. In the foreground sit three tiny shadow figures, two of them—Ferdinand Hayden and a Native American man—stand together, their profiles boldered by the bright midground beyond, while the other, supposedly Moran himself, stands off to the side in the shadows attending to the travelers’ horses, nearly imperceptible due to the lighting. The humans are dwarfed by the vastness of the surrounding landscape, and their figures are further hidden by the piercing colors of the midground and Lower Falls, which dominate the image. The relative scale of the people in relation to the landscape in Moran’s image is symbolic of the sheer enormity of Yellowstone’s territory. His painting invents a new image of nature that celebrates the glory in its wildness and vastness. Further, it presents a fictionalized narrative of a friendly relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Yellowstone area and the European visitors rather than the reality of violent dispossession and displacement.

“[Moran’s] painting invents a new image of nature that celebrates the glory in its wildness and vastness. Further, it presents a fictionalized narrative of a friendly relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Yellowstone area and the European visitors rather than the reality of violent dispossession and displacement.”

Aided by Moran’s contribution, Hayden’s plan worked. In March 1872, President Grant signed into law the Yellowstone Act, an act which would have massive implications on the political economy and ecology of the United States, forever changing the fate of the railroads, the timber economy, land development of the Western United States, eco-tourism, and the vast swaths of territory which would later be designated as national parks.

Farrell notes that the establishment of Yellowstone does not rest entirely on the tourism interests of the railroads, although they played a major role. After all, Moran’s piece is only indirectly tied to railroad money through the surge of expeditions it funded. It would be reasonable to say, as Farrell suggests, that the establishment of Yellowstone (and the other national parks) coincided with a “broader moral shift [albeit a slow one] in how Americans understood their relationship to the West and to nature more generally.”

Further, it presents a fictionalized narrative of a friendly relationship between the indigenous peoples of the Yellowstone area and the European visitors rather than the reality of violent dispossession and displacement.
Following Yellowstone National Park’s inception, Langford was appointed the first Park Superintendent, allowing him to favor the rail development of his financier, Northern Pacific, which included connecting rails and railroad hotels within the park boundaries. Beginning in the mid-1880s, Northern Pacific built several hotels in the Yellowstone area, most notably the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and the Old Faithful Inn. With these in place, the railroad could turn its attention to attracting Easterners, a goal it pursued through an aggressive marketing campaign throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Brochures, booklets, and timetables were mass-produced and distributed widely.

One brochure by Northern Pacific from 1893 depicts a series of scenes within Yellowstone, with three different images of the National Hotel in Mammoth, a face of rock, and a group of upper-class Anglo-American vacationers, respectively. These are enclosed by a circular frame, a square frame, and a circular frame, respectively. The rock enclosed by the square frames spills out into the foreground of the page and continues outside its frame and into the margins of the page. The frames emphasize the clear distinction between humankind and nature, with the frames enclosing and segregating human activity from the landscape. This may explain why rock formations are enclosed by a square, rather than a circular frame and why they, unlike the human activities, spill onto the margins of the page.

The human subjects in the bottom right circular frame are wealthy Anglo-Americans dressed in dignified attire. They stand tightly in a circle, peering at the landscape in the distance but not actively interacting with it, thereby engaging with the land as a visual artifact. Natural wonders of Yellowstone are shown in the human-inhabited circles, including a geyser in the bottom right and a group of human figures in relation to the landscape (especially in comparison to Moran’s piece, in which the humans are dwarfed), as well as the human activities, spill onto the margins of the page. The frames spills out into the foreground of the page and continues outside its frame and into the margins of the page. The position of the family in relation to the natural scenery is significant. They sit detached from the landscape, positioned above and away from it, peering down at it, shielded from it by posts (and, presumably, a railing), creating a clear divide between them and the unspoiled wilderness below. The land in the image is objectified, first by its separation from the human subjects, then by their apparent attentiveness to it, then by its framing by the draping vine, and finally by series of curves across the top and right-hand side of the image, which echo the visual language of the vine and curvy typefaces.

Northern Pacific Railroad’s brochure advertisements from the 1890s reveal a new type of subject. In its ploy to attract the upper echelons of the East Coast to its attraction-filled vacation, Northern Pacific constructed the image of a new leisure class that travels for pleasure, in contrast to the rugged mountain men valorized in Moran’s landscape, who travel for food, material goods, trade routes, new land, etc. Further, there appears to be less interest in the vastness of the land. With the scaling up of the human figures in relation to the landscape (especially in comparison to Moran’s piece, in which the humans are dwarfed), the lands of Yellowstone appear less vast. Moreover, the boundlessness of nature depicted in Moran’s piece is mitigated by the framing in Northern Pacific’s brochures.
Commercialization of the National Parks in the Age of the Automobile

After World War I, the power of the railroads decreased precipitously, in part due to the devastating consequences of the Great Depression and in part due to the increasing prevalence of automobiles and the highway system. Railroad advertisements were replaced by advertisements for scenic highway automobile routes like the Atlantic Yellowstone Pacific Highway and the Chicago North Western Line, which were each proposed and lobbied for by businesses and private citizens.

“In the creation of a more efficient consumer experience, starting with the Northern Pacific’s vision for a new railway leisure class, and continuing through the automobile consumer, the lands of Yellowstone are valued more and more as a purely visual spectacle, stripped of their moral, spiritual, and nationalistic value.”

Two advertisements uncovered by Peter Blodgett reveal a continuation of the trends noted before. The land takes on a further reduced importance, fading far into the background, with no identifiable features of the lands of Yellowstone. In each case, the automobile is a central focus of the advertisement. In the advertisement for the Atlantic Yellowstone Pacific Highway, red highlights the body of the car, further emphasizing its presence on the page. In the Chicago North Western Line advertisement, the automobile is accompanied by a Native American man on horseback, the horse reared unto its heels in an aggressive stance, as if to charge at the car full of Anglo-Americans. The ad announces a “new and unique way to Yellow Stone” through a few territories previously held by the Native Americans, as if to boast about the territories won from them. In contrast to the railroad advertisements, the Anglo-American subjects also assume on a reduced importance, fading behind the details of the luxury automobiles.

Conclusion

Yellowstone National Park remains a realm of wondrous possibility, but its status in the popular imagination has changed dramatically over time with shifting economic and political pressures. I have shown through the various representations of Yellowstone over time, starting with Thomas Moran’s picturesque landscape painting in the early 1870s and ending with automobile advertisements post-World War I, that the land of Yellowstone has been subject to a process of commercialization and marginalization. In the creation of a more efficient consumer experience, starting with the Northern Pacific’s vision for a new railway leisure class, and continuing through the automobile consumer, the lands of Yellowstone are valued more and more as a purely visual spectacle, stripped of their moral, spiritual, and nationalistic value.

Bibliography

Aaron Betsky’s Queer Space: Architecture and Same-Sex Desire charts the historical development of queer spaces, argues that queer make essential contributions to urban life and urban spaces, and makes an impassioned plea for a renewed autonomy in queer culture. Betsky’s historical treatise begins with institutional houses of prehistoric societies (like the Men’s House of the Sepik River region, New Guinea) and culminates in the decriminalization of gay communities by the AIDS epidemic. Betsky argues that queer space emerged out of a “cultural condition” of exclusion “experienced by homosexual men” in the 20th century and “infected and inflicted our built environment, pointing the way toward an opening, a liberating possibility.” Queer spaces are disappearing, he claims, absorbed by the broader heteronormative culture “as their very power became useful for advertising, lifestyles, and the occupation of real estate” (5). What is meant by the term “queer space”? Betsky’s text struggles to define queerness, and the phrase “queer space” appears throughout the text with different connotations. Betsky is transparent with his lack of assuredness, promising in the introduction to “try to describe what [he] means” by that phrase (5). He writes that queer space is:

“A kind of space that I find liberating, and that I think might help us to avoid some of the imprisoning characteristics of the modern city. It is a useless, amoral, and sensual space that lives only in and for experience. It is a space of spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity. It is a misuse or deformation of a place, an inflected our built environment, pointing the way toward an opening, a liberating possibility.” Queer spaces are disappearing, he claims, absorbed by the broader heteronormative culture “as their very power became useful for advertising, lifestyles, and the occupation of real estate” (5).

Queer space is a triumphant rejection of social norms; a place of pure debauchery, “spectacle, consumption, dance, and obscenity.” Queer spaces are predicated on change from one condition to another. In other words, a queer space is a space which is “queered in some fashion by a deabasement of the space’s intended purposes; a ‘misuse or deformation of a place, an inflected our built environment, pointing the way toward an opening, a liberating possibility.’” It is interesting to imagine if Betsky considers the possibility that a space can be wholly and originally queer, or if transformation, deabasement, misuse, deformation, and appropriation are necessary. It stands to reason that the emphasis on change may be tied to social progress. Perhaps, queer spaces require transformation of an existing (heteronormative) space, because all spaces are necessarily heteronormative by default.

Whatever the case, for Betsky the queering of spaces is sexual by nature. The sexuality charged language of “sensual,” “absolutely,” “deformation,” and “perverse” hint that abnormal kinds of sex are a key component of queer spaces. Still, Betsky’s definition lacks information about the sexualities of the people that inhabit queer spaces. For Betsky, sexually, obscenely, deformity, and perversion—presumably in the form of gay sex—are related to queerness and queer space, but not necessary to create queer space. Same-sex attraction, even, he claims, is not necessary either. Queer space is “any space that establishes… a free and real space, no matter the sexual preferences of the persons making it or using it. I will call queer all spaces I think trace a way toward a third nature” (26).

Betsky’s inclusive language belies the specificity of his later analyses of queer spaces, which primarily center around the contributions of gay men. At times “queer” is used interchangeably with “gay,” and at others, “queer” is used as a distinct cultural and political identity.

To Betsky, queerness is an act of protest. At Studio 54, “queer men put on a show… a show that presented them first of all to themselves, validating their existence in a real place, and then to others who shared their tastes, so that they might recognize each other, and finally and defiantly, to the world” (7). Ostensibly, same-sex attraction is less relevant despite its inclusion in the book’s title.

I am not so much interested in what makes someone gay, queer, or homosexual—all terms that define different standings of what one or society makes out of one’s desires—as I am in how a distinct culture emerged out of those desires. Though it’s true that there have been other subcultures, networks, and defined social groups throughout history that have defined themselves through same-sex desires, I am interested specifically in the roots, development, flourishing, and what is most important, effect of the particular culture that I will, almost arbitrarily, define as queer (7).

Once again, Betsky’s unclear about the meaning of queerness. It is puzzing to imagine what would possess someone to write an entire book about a topic they can only define “almost arbitrarily.” Despite his ostensive confusion, Betsky has a lot to say about queer space. Perhaps
Queers queered the city. They made it their own, they opened it up on the margins, they performed it. They were always a minority, but because they were at the very heart of the middle-class project to create an artificial world, their contributions to that culture were immense. They made the spaces that appeared in the movies and the magazines, and designed the clothes in which men and women alike appeared. They made some of the strongest designs on and of the modern world,...

[The queer experience continues to be one of the creation of a thoroughly modern world for one’s self. Queers continue to queer our cities, our suburbs, and our excuses because they must, as they continue to redefine who we are as individuals, as bodies, as part of a society,... Queer spaces are disappearing, as are most spaces of resistance. Cut in the suburbs, queer are starting families that are no stranger than those of single parents, all divorced, and always moving on to new standard units. They are networking on the Internet and through two-step programs that are indistinguishable from those of their heterosexual peers. The spaces of cruising, though still present, have less of a sense of concentrated activity, like the edge cities that are taking over our urban life, the life of queer men and women is dissolving into pieces and parts of an endlessly developing sameness. (13-14)

Once again, Betsky seems more interested in discussing queer people and their activities than queer spaces and the qualities of those spaces that make them queer. He is clear to state that queers have made essential contributions to the cultural life of cities. His language once again describes queerness in terms of change, but this time in more endearing terms. Queers “queered the city,” “made it their own,” and “perfumed it.” As before, queer spaces are defined only in opposition to predominant spatial conditions; this time, predominant spatial conditions are not debased, but rather, “perfumed.” Additionally, Betsky’s tone and language reveals the high value he places on queers; arguing that queers “must” contribute to urban life because they “redefine who we are as individuals.” For Betsky, queerness is not just a state of being queer, but also a process of individualization. To queer oneself is to divert from cultural norms. In the same vein, queer spaces are “spaces of resistance,” but these spaces of resistance are disappearing. Betsky laments the perceived assimilation of queer people into heteronormative society, bemoaning the preponderance of queers forming regular family units in the suburbs that closely resemble the prototypical nuclear family. He further laments the perceived homogenization of daily habits; curiously describing how queers are supposedly “networking on the Internet” and guiding themselves “through two-step programs” in the same way that straight people are. Finally, Betsky laments queer culture’s losing its autonomy as it “dissolves into pieces and parts of an endlessly developing sameness.”

The idiosyncrasies of queer culture emerged in the 19th century with the ascendance of the middle class and the institutionalization of the nuclear family, the “regimented and defined body” (including gymnasiums, schools, and prisons), and standards of public conduct. Betsky argues, this institutionalization created the closet, “an artificial zone of security within a world it continued to change at around itself” (10). Forced into and then out of the proverbial closet, the homosexual, “a truly modern invention,” is conceived of as an isolate, “proving, like a preserved flaneur, the public rest rooms... hiding in the misted world of the bar, building a fantastic world of objects from all times and places” (10). It is curious how Betsky transitions seamlessly from queer men to homosexuals, seemingly equating the two. Might it be that when Betsky refers to queer people or queer men, he is really referring to homosexuals? To heterosexual men in particular? Moreover, the tone of Betsky’s description of the homosexual makes clear his negative feelings towards homosexuality as an identity. Driven by lust to lounge about semi-public spaces, the homosexual is a “flaneur,” or idle; in contrast to the queer, whose identity is implicitly tied to political action. 

“The idiosyncrasies of queer culture emerged in the 19th century with the ascendance of the middle class and the institutionalization of the nuclear family, the ‘regimented and defined body’ (including gymnasiums, schools, and prisons), and standards of public conduct” Despite his apparent distaste for homosexuality, Betsky’s same-sex attraction permeates the text, albeit in the background—manifesting as a fetishization of male bodies and gay sex. Recounting his experience at Studio 54, he is clear to mention the “nearly nude males... wrapping themselves up in the shadows, adorning themselves in motion” (4). His description of gay sex between ancient Greek men was unsparring and graphic: “Men made love standing up... rather than lying down with women. They were equal citizens in this sense. They did not dominate each other, except in age: the younger man would receive the older man, though the free Greek citizen eschewed and or sex in favor of intersexual sex” (52). Chapter 4: “From Cruising to Community,” discusses, in depth, the development of various cruising (i.e., hookup) spots frequented, almost exclusively, by gay men beginning with “dark alleys, until cafes, and hidden rooms” (141) and later including public urinals, truck stops, gyms, and finally sex clubs. Betsky reveals in his description of the “clothes cropped hair, small mustaches, and their muscular but not bulky bodies” of the circuit guys (169).

Women in Betsky’s text are not sexualized in such a way. To the extent that the sexuality of women is acknowledged at all, it is often discussed in relation to the subordination of men’s sexual desires. Ancient Greek women’s space “was that of the night: women were associated with the moon, sex with women was something that occurred at night, and night was when the man returned to the home where he left the woman” (33). Women would gather with each other on the roof at night to “drink, talk, and laugh all night” (33), but Betsky insists, “we cannot say whether same-sex activities took place in such spaces” (34). Lesbian sex is not discussed at all in Betsky’s research on cruising spots.

His attraction to men may explain, in part, why he downplays the role of women in the field of architecture, and why he downplays the role of queer women, in particular, in the making of queer spaces. Betsky argues:

Men in the Western world have created architecture, and women have been forced to live in it's often confining structures. In return women have used their interiors to create often beautiful, sensual, comfortable, and practical environments, divorced as they have been from overt "meanings." To a large extent this is still true, but changes in technology and in the roles men and women play have opened up some new places. Because they were defined as "the third sex," queer men and, to a lesser degree, queer women have been the first—but I hope not the last—to explore these possibilities. (6)

Figure 2. Image from Betsky’s introductory chapter, featuring mostly male figures. Betsky, Queer Space, 3.

Figure 3. Image from Betsky’s introductory chapter. Betsky, Queer Space, 15.
Embedded in Betsky’s argument are several sexist ideas: first, that men create exteriors and women create interiors; second, that women’s designs do not carry meaning; and third, that queer women have contributed less to explaining new architectural possibilities than queer men. The first is rooted in the historical discourse of the domestic interior, which women were relegated to, but it fails to acknowledge the long history of women’s contributions to exterior architecture, which were erased by architectural histories. Additionally, in contrast to the architectural exteriors designed by men, which were presumably full of meaning, Betsky describes the women-created interiors as “practical,” and devoid of overt “meaning.” To be fair, it seems that Betsky laments the imbalance he perceives in the relative contributions of men and women to the field of architecture, commenting that women are “forced to live” in architecture’s “confining structures.” Nevertheless, it is worth noting his playing-down of women’s contributions.

Betsky is similarly dismissive of the contributions of queer women to queer spaces. Chapter 2: “Aesthetic Escapades and Escapes” describes the emergence of the modern queer. Predictably, this queer is male: “Cutouise and cutouise, the modern queer sinks into decadence. Since he finds few role models in the straight world, and certainly no spaces that affirm his identity or place in the world, he creates fantastic places of imagination” (57). Betsky charts the work of several architects, designers, and writers who contributed “fantastic places of imagination”: William Beckford, King Ludwig II of Bavaria, Oscar Wilde, C.R. Ashbee, Louis Sullivan, and Bruce Goff. All of them were men, and all of them were either confirmed gay or rumored to be gay, and Betsky makes a strong case that men create exteriors and women create interiors; second, that sexuality (especially homosexuality) is constructed in private, even if one freely identifies with the social, cultural, aesthetic, and political movement of queer postmodernism, as realized through Israel’s designs, but it resolute in his refusal to acknowledge the existence of his sexuality, let alone that it is a same-sex one. To Betsky, queerness is “liberating,” while sexuality (especially homosexuality) is constructed in private, even if “changing attitudes” made the possibility of openness more appealing. In Chapter 4, Betsky discusses queer Turkish baths, where he spontaneously slips into the second person “you”:

It is interesting to note as well the instances where Betsky’s writing slips between the third person to the first or second. I might suggest that these slips, if they can be counted as such, shed light on the personal voice of the author. At times Betsky freely and confidently identifies with queerness, and at others he subtly downplays it, holding it at a distance—using it as a tool of categorization for the detached “them.” Betsky seems to be especially dodgy when discussing the uncomfortable topic of sexuality. In Chapter 3, Betsky discusses the queer postmodernism of Frank Israel:

Frank Israel realized the potential of a queer postmodernism. To him, modern technology of glass and steel, but also of air-conditioning and electricity, could be liberating. It gave us open space and shelter without having to enclose us behind closed walls or under giant roofs. It served as the built equivalent of the changing attitudes toward one’s sexuality, one could construct one’s self in an open way. Privacy became something one chose and built, in relation to the modern public appearance that one wears with as much grace as possible. (136)

Chapter 3: “Queering Modernism” charts the development of queer modernism, in which queer spaces took on a different life; that of the domestic, sane, open, and clean interior. Betsky finally acknowledges the substantial contributions of two female architects, Elise de Wolfe and Morgan. All of them were men, and all of them were either confirmed gay or rumored to be gay, and Betsky makes a strong case for each of supposed homosexuality. Betsky insists that the first person does not need to be gay or queer to create a queer space, but that is the case, it is curious that he feels the need to substantiate each person’s supposed homosexuality.

Embedded in Betsky’s critique is the same subtly gendered language of down-to-earth ness, “practical,” and “plainness.” Further, Betsky implies that Morgan’s architecture is attributable—at least in part—to historical styles and her mentor, thus diminishing her agency and innovativeness as a female architect. Betsky’s dismissiveness of queer women’s contributions to queer spaces extends to the informal gay cruising spots discussed in Chapter 4 as well. After examining the Castro community of San Francisco, which Betsky describes as a “gay Disneyland” (102), Betsky explains the lack of apparent spaces for gay women. He writes, the place of women in these areas is controversial. Certainly concentrations of lesbian women began to appear almost immediately after and adjacent to queer male communities. These neighborhoods were considerably less visible. To a certain extent this is due to the fact that women still have less money and power in our society, and thus do not have the resources to establish themselves.

It is perhaps unsurprising that lesbians are less visible to the gay male gaze of the author, but it is reasonable to question whether they are less visible in general. Here and elsewhere, Betsky recognizes sexism as a major factor in the apparent lack of prominence of queer women, but it may be wise to consider whether Betsky is participating in an act of erasure, as he seems to have in relation to the contributions of women (and queer women) to exterior architecture.

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themselves in small cubicles whose doors they left open. Sometimes you were invited to watch, other times to obtain the object of desire, or even to become an object of sexual use yourself. The barriers between subject and object, what you could own and what you were, broke down in continual dramas of connection, fulfillment, and abandonment.

Separate from these open rooms were the little cubicles or lockers where you could store your belongings and then stay. You would be naked, but protected in a miniature of your private house. There you could create more private (sexual) relations, occasionally inviting a few others to join you. These little bedrooms became the most irreducible abstraction of home within this miniature city of desire. They were places where there was only your body and the sexual act. (164)

The story of an intimate sexual experience is laid out for the reader in detail. This time, the reader’s place is the role of the protagonist, a flâneur cruising for a sexual encounter. Subject and object “broke down into continual dramas,” Betsky writes. One could say the same for Betsky’s Queer Space, which presents itself as a scholarly portrayal of the queer sites of resistance, but in reality, is a deeply personal account of a gay man constructing and reconstituting himself through gay spaces. Betsky’s account begins with a third person account of the activities of gay men in the cruising spots of the baths, passing by each other, and then suddenly, the reader is thrust into the story; “sometimes you were invited to watch, other times to obtain the object of desire, or even become an object of sexual use yourself.” The intensely personal account of his experience hints that Betsky himself has lived it. Betsky’s sexuality manifests itself through his descriptions of sex objectify the male body (including Betsky’s own) as an “object of desire,” or an “object of sexual use.” The utilitarian language of “use” suggests a sexual dynamic in which one person’s body is surrendered to another, purely for the other’s sexual satisfaction. “To Betsky, queerness is ‘liberating,’ while sexuality (especially homosexuality) is constructed in private, even if ‘changing attitudes’ made the possibility of openness more appealing.”

Betsky’s discussion of the Turkish baths is also interesting for the metaphor he draws between cruising and consumption. The internal hallways of the baths, where the cruising occurs, are described as “boulevards,” and one’s potential sexual partners are described as “wares” to “consume.” Likewise, potential partners in other rooms were “consumables” who “displayed themselves in small cubicles whose doors they left open.” Betsky’s description of the architecture of the baths lends some insight into his model of queer architecture. The varying zones of openness within the baths offer different opportunities for different types of intimacy and different types of sex. At the Turkish baths, the queerness of the space is defined by its varying zones of privacy and publicness. Furthermore, Betsky connects his analysis of the Turkish baths to his earlier discussions of the domestic interior, comparing the “little cubicles” for more private sexual acts to a “miniature of your private house.” Betsky’s description of the Turkish baths illustrates that a for him, a key component of queer space is the creation of safe spaces for queer people to have sex. The home, which is popularly conceived as a safe haven, is recreated in the queer spaces of the baths. One can be assured of their safety from foreign intrusion in these abstract homes: “there was only your body and the sexual act.” In general, Betsky’s Queer Space offers an interesting, if sometimes seemingly contradictory commentary on privacy vs. publicness. Queer spaces simultaneously offer a private respite from the social dangers of heteronormative society, and at the same time, they are sites of political resistance. These are seemingly two contradictory ideas, because advocacy and resistance are necessary. In your face, and very public. Meanwhile Betsky praises the safety, privacy, and security provided by the types of queer spaces which hide away from the rest of society.

Betsky’s analysis of the Turkish baths is also emblematic, once again, of his tendency to conflate queerness with homosexuality. The Turkish baths were a cruising spot for gay men specifically, and the same is basically true of all the other supposedly queer spaces discussed in Chapter 4: gay bars, gymnasiums, truck stops, and urinals. Queer women cruise as well, Betsky insists, but none of his descriptions of the ostensibly queer cruising spots include women. Perhaps it is worthwhile to revisit the topic of queer spaces with a more inclusive scope.

Betsky concludes in both his introduction and the final chapter, Chapter 5: “The Void and Other Queer Spaces,” that queer spaces and queer people are disappearing.
Castles, Kitchens, & Robots
Gender as a Tool of Capital in Ani Liu’s A.I. Toys

TERM Summer 2022
COURSE Arguments
PROFESSOR Dariel Cobb

From the Syllabus:
The course interrogates the way architectural devices and architectural practices gain collective relevance by participating in environmental, technological and representational alliances, solidarities, defiances, disputes and controversies.
Organized around a series of eight invitations to relevant scholars, professionals, artists, scientists or activists—half from the field of architecture, half from non-architectural fields—this course has as its main goal an interrogation of controversies. By participating in environmental, technological and architectural practices gain collective relevance, and the way in which they take part in forms of political tools, performances, compositions and methodologies; the evolution of the world’s societies and ecosystems. Fields—this course has as its main goal an interrogation of半 from the field of architecture and half from non-architectural fields.

“[Liu’s project] explores how society ‘constructs’ a set of concepts surrounding gender through toys. Surveying the results of Liu’s experiment reveals conspicuous differences between girls’ toys and boys’ toys, laying bare the mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, ‘Girls’ toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys’ toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.’”

Surveying the results of Liu’s experiment reveals conspicuous differences between girls’ toys and boys’ toys, laying bare the mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, ‘Girls’ toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys’ toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.’

“Liu’s project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play. Liu’s project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play. Liu’s project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play.”

Final assignment: As a concluding assignment, during the final weeks of the semester, the students will select one of the questions they have worked on during the semester (one that preferably was publicly posed to one of the speakers) and will write a 1000-word piece situating the question and the answer received from the speaker(s) in its context of formulation. In the traditions it is part of and in the realities it participates in.

Ani Liu’s project reinforces Foucault’s theory of social construction, expanding his ideas to gender expression and shifting its focus to the role of industry. In the project description on her website, Liu states: “How does society construct gender through toys?” Liu’s language is significant. Her project does not reveal, illuminate, or uncover how children of different genders express themselves in the toys they play with. Rather, it explores how society ‘constructs’ a set of concepts surrounding gender through toys.

In Foucault’s history of Sexuality, he argues that the emergence of a “scientia sexualis” (science of sex) in the 17th century formed sexuality as an object of scientific inquiry and made possible the increased interest in sexual “perversions” in the 19th century, a system of social controls aimed at regulating sexual behavior. With the increased interest in sexual “perversions” in the 19th century, Foucault argues, the 19th and 20th centuries then became “the age of multiplication: a dispersion of sexualities, a strengthening of mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, ‘Girls’ toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys’ toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.’”

Surveying the results of Liu’s experiment reveals conspicuous differences between girls’ toys and boys’ toys, laying bare the mechanisms by which capitalism creates and reinforces gender as a construct. Liu notes, ‘Girls’ toys are largely centered on jewelry, domestic chores, dolls, and animals, while boys’ toys are largely centered on weaponry, electronics, cars, and construction.’ Moreover, girls’ toys are often shades of pink, purple, turquoise, and light blue, and their forms are often simple, symbolic, and curvaceous. By contrast, boys’ toys are often shades of dark blue, red, orange, brown, and yellow, and their forms are often complex, jagged, and mechanical. This divide is mirrored in the subtly gendered language of the toy names and descriptions, with the toys’ toy names and descriptions featuring language that is fantastical and soft while the boys’ toy names and descriptions are more violent and plainly written.

Consider the differences between the “Beyond Anything in the World Princess Castle Tent” and the “NERF Fortnite AR-L Elite Dart Drummer.” Apart from the obvious differences in subject matter and salient appearance (princess vs. Fortnite, spa/beauty vs. electronics/engineering, light pink/cyan vs. blue/yellow), there are some subtle distinctions as well. The Princess Tent is formed in the shape of a gable-roof house, and its text description relates to domesticity, child-rearing, and beauty products (i.e., “spa,” “batter,” “charge cable,” “manual,” etc.). By contrast, the Dart Drummer is composed of a system of billiard parts connected by thin strands (vaguely resembling a kind of mechanical assemblage), and its text description lists a series of traditionally masculine objects (i.e., “battery,” “charge cable,” “manual,” etc.).

Butler argues that ‘gender identity is a performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo.’ For Butler, ‘gender is not a fact,’ but rather, inscribed in a set of cultural ideas surrounding gender and sex which are continuously acted out, and enforced by the fear of social repercussion and violence. Toys, by their very nature, cohere performative behavior through their subject material, form and salient appearance (princess vs. electronics/engineering, light pink/cyan vs. blue/yellow). By contrast, the Dart Drummer is composed of a system of billiard parts connected by thin strands (vaguely resembling a kind of mechanical assemblage), and its text description lists a series of traditionally masculine objects (i.e., ‘battery,’ ‘charge cable,’ ‘manual,’ etc.).

Liu’s project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play. Liu’s project illuminates not only the mechanism of the construction of gender (capital), but also the cultural ideas surrounding gender which are reified through objects of play.
surrounding what it means to be a woman; its gable-roofed profile and the multiple mentions of children in its text description suggest that the essence of womanhood lies in private domestic spaces (i.e., “Behind closed doors…”) and in child-rearing.

“Toys, by their very nature, coerce performative behavior through their subject material, form and color, and marketing strategy. Acting upon the coercive forces of capital, a child ‘performs’ their gender through their play, and the gendered form of this play is compelled by the set of cultural ideas surrounding gender which capital finds useful to exploit.”

Paul Preciado notes that modern capitalism is “characterized not only by the transformation of ‘gender,’ ‘sex,’ ‘sexuality,’ ‘sexual identity,’ and ‘pleasure’ into objects of the political management of living, but also by the fact that this management itself is carried out through the new dynamics of advanced technocapitalism, global media, and biotechnologies.” Foucault would object that gender, sex, sexuality, etc., have long been “objects of the political management of living,” but Liu’s project vindicates Preciado’s identification of the “new dynamics” of modern capitalism. Gendered toys are somewhat ambiguous (and, in some cases, seemingly subliminal), and modern capitalism’s promulgation of rigid gender roles is less overtly paternalistic than the strict enforcement of sexual behavior and gender expression from the 17th through 20th centuries.

“Gender, sex, sexuality, etc., have long been ‘objects of the political management of living,’ but Liu’s project vindicates Preciado’s identification of the ‘new dynamics’ of modern capitalism.”

Bibliography
New York City’s waste systems are hidden behind walls, under roads, and inside uninviting waiting-in treatment plants and processing facilities. This architectural and urban reality dissociates people from the waste they produce, and the immense infrastructure which sustains their continued well-being. New York’s wastewater resource recovery process, in particular, is also plagued by environmental hazards and procedural deficiencies, including combined sewer overflows, and unnecessary wasting of its useful byproducts—biogas and biosolids. The Sludgy-Hydro Hangout reconnects people to the waste they produce and the infrastructure that processes it, provides sustainable systems of resource recovery and food production which take advantage of biogas and biosolids, and creates distinctive spaces for community engagement. The Hangout is a hybridized wastewater resource recovery facility, hydroponic farm, and social space.

The main building is composed of a transparent box with a whimsical assemblage of colored volumes, floor plates, and interconnected walkways suspended in the middle—all hanging from a thick roof diaphragm. Each volume houses a different program corresponding to its color; this includes components of the combined wastewater resource recovery and food production process and social spaces as well including the sludge thickener and sludge digester (in yellow), biogas purifier and generator (in blue), hydroponic farming pods (in green), sludge storage (in pink), and a flex theatre/educational space (in red). Stairs and elevators sit in a thickened, translucent exoskeleton of glass platforms and a curtain wall glazed envelope. The central assemblage is accessed by traversing up through the exoskeleton, into the thick roof diaphragm, and down again into the central assemblage.

Hanging the assemblage from the roof inverts the typical spatial paradigm of wastewater treatment plants and food production facilities. Typically consigned to the dark recesses of architectural and urban spaces, the combined resource recovery and food production process is put on colorful, playful display, and invites visitors to inhabit the different volumes and the space between them in creative ways.

Hanging the assemblage also liberates the ground floor for public use. The ground supplying a grocery store selling produce from the hydroponic farms above, a café, a visitor’s center, and a lounge. The setting tank and aeration tank in purple rise to the ground floor level as well, further inducing public engagement with waste systems.
Final 1/16" = 1'-0" model
Community-managed hydroponic farm-powered Glazed central atrium enclosing sludge digester, biogas purification system, & generator

Lightwell extending down to artificially-illuminated untreated wastewater

Green) A cafe, small supermarket, and rec area serve as a continuation of the local park across the street

Blue) A roof deck takes advantage of views across the river

Settling tanks and aeration tanks sit on the lower floors
From the Syllabus:

While most commonly deployed as a retroactive tool to describe constructional requirements or (in the context of the contemporary design studio) an automatic side effect of the digital model, this seminar will re-conceive section as an instrumental and projective device. Building on the recent publication, ‘Manual of Section’ the seminar will explore and expand a discourse surrounding section in architecture. Generating a set of provisional structures, terms and taxonomies, we will seek to understand the role of section, its historical development, contemporary transformations and possible futures. The goal of the seminar will be to provide students, through lectures, discussions and design research, the techniques through which they can develop their own approaches to section as a vital analytical and design tool.