

# Critical narratives.

**I** entered GSAPP as an architect and I'm leaving GSAPP as a spatial designer.

**W**ith a path started in 2020 with my master's thesis: "Bicianimitas. Arrangements for a new urban monument.". I started researching the relationship between appropriation conditions and popular iconic images in the urban space of the city, through the case of the *Bicianimitas* in Chile, as a way to understand the interpretation of contemporary urban public space by counterculture. Where, *Bicianimitas* are a manifestation that originated in 2012 after the death of a cyclist in the street by a drunk driver, which juxtaposed different popular rituals: the anglo-saxon rooted White Bicycle, with the prehispanic rooted *Animita*. Creating a new form of popular production, linking images of a popular and religious practice with a civic and political practice happening in the urban space. Then, while studying in Columbia, I've started to refine my interests by incorporating a transscalar approach to my methodologic research behavior.

My studies at GSAPP taught me ways to comprehend complex issues by understanding their multilayered complexities while considering the actors network involved. All of what I can explain -but not show- by my Fall's Research Assistantship with Andrés Jaque, where I have worked in the transscalar representation of highly complex projects of different scales and cultural backgrounds by the understanding of their interrelationship with different aspects of society, culture, and nature. Experiences that have been modeling my interests to focus on the political condition of architecture, but more importantly in the negotiations occurring underneath events and cases producing sets of images as expressions of contemporary culture.

Then, with this booklet, my intention is to show a summary of the narratives implied in the design researches developed during my time in Columbia between 2021 and 2022 rather than a list of design projects. Here resides my ultimate personal interests, ones that have started to swift from the pursuit of the pure design to a more complex and transscalar approach. Which today have me deeply focused on the understanding of culture issues by taking into account the different variables that composed them, to expose, unveil, and unfold the technosocial subterranean logics and dynamics. All of what I'm committed to spatially visualizing and representing for being able to expose different conflictive territories with their power dynamics shaping current society.

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## Patio Talks with Carlos Medellín.

by Rocio Crosetto, Osvaldo Delbrey and León Duval.

**T**he Patio Talk with Carlos Medellín is an activity developed under the frame of the Patio Magazine, where I'm one of the Directors of the second issue soon to be released.

This particular interview made to the Colombian Architect Carlos Medellín defies standras and common conception and because of that becomes a principle declaration which I stand, and a guideline to shape my interest while researching and designing. The location of this piece of text at the beginning is completely intentional because it frames the rest of the conversation alongside this Portfolio, which is not intended to be one.

This interview, as it is explained in the following text, was performed in 2022 in Brooklyn, in the house of Carlos Medellín by Rocio Crosetto and Osvaldo Delbrey, lately, was freely translated into a narrative story which was edited in different times by Carlos himself.

## Patio Talks with Carlos Medellín.

A conversation between Carlos, Rocio, Osvaldo, and León.

**T**he interview with the Colombian architect Carlos Medellín started way before we even met him at his house in Brooklyn. And maybe the whole process of doing this interview is what makes it an extremely critical and urgent story to be told in this issue.

This interview, which at the beginning was supposed to be a commission of a short text about teaching and methodologies, that we as Patio wanted to cover for this issue—Real Talk—, soon became something else in the making of the previous conversations with Carlos. In the midst of all the conversations held, the idea of an online commission soon turned into an in person interview with Carlos at his home, in his patio. This, because Carlos was emphatic in doing what we were inviting him to do, to have a Patio Talk. However, in this process of negotiations, we realized that this talk could become not only a way to understand Carlos's work but also a way to understand ourselves as a group and our role as a Latin magazine developed by students of architecture at Columbia University today.

This story begins before reaching out to Carlos. It started by chatting about him and his trajectory with a mutual friend, Ruben Gomez, who happens to be a Latin student, and partner in GSAPP and former workmate of Carlos back in Colombia. The conversations started creating a myth around him and his critical opinions about contemporary architecture and the philosophy guiding his design methodologies and pedagogy. However, the most inspiring part was the relationships he describes between justice, space, and the role of storytelling and narratives in understanding a context.

On February the 15th, Carlos and I started exchanging WhatsApp messages in the morning. I invited him to participate in this issue, and happily for us, he accepted. We were supposed to talk by phone later that day to arrange the terms and conditions for his participation, but we didn't speak until the 1st of March, fifteen days later, due to a series of academic events and responsibilities that made it impossible. All of this, a posteriori, became the introduction of this talk, which in many ways turned out to be an unexpected mutual interview, where questions were going back and forth between everyone of us. That call of the 1st of March became a turning point from where after discussing my experience with Osvaldo Delbrey and Rocio Crossetto we realized that it would be something unique and different, and that we should be prepared for the

unexpected and let ourselves be carried away by whatever happens. So, we didn't plan, and we decided to just present ourselves to talk on Carlo's Patio.

Coming back to that initial phone call, where we spoke for approximately one and a half hours, I started explaining who we were and what we wanted from him. So, after a long talk and explanation about what Real Talk and Patio is, he asked a crucial question: "You called yourself Patio, which has a lot of meaning to me. So, if you plan to have an informal conversation with me about architecture and Latinamerica with that Patio spirit, then why are you using complex words, technical concepts, and in the end, that formal language?"; "how are you different from any other publication that wants to address architecture?" Those questions were crucial. After explaining to him that the informality that we are looking for is the one that we could have on the Patio of a home when having a beer with a friend, in a space where different types of conversations can take place and where the flow of a conversation is more natural, where political correctness doesn't exist. He immediately shifted our initial proposal and invited us to his house to have a beer on his Patio to talk. That is precisely what our name suggests. So, later that week, on a Friday evening, Osvaldo, Rocío, and I took the train from Morning-side Heights towards Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn to talk in Carlos Medellín's Patio.

The meeting with Carlos began at 7:00 pm on his Patio. Still, due to the coldness of the night, it later continued in his basement. It was a success because we discussed many of the topics we wanted and had a dynamic and horizontal conversation between the four of us. As a result, we lost any hierarchy and formality typical of an interview (as a fixed procurement), and instead we had an open and informal conversation in the spirit we were pursuing. But, what made the biggest impact on us, was the importance Carlos gives to words, concepts, conversations, and narratives for understanding and creating space and for making architecture accessible. When we left Carlos' house, we kept discussing that perspective on our way back. We also kept thinking about his work with restorative justice and the story of "The hero's journey."

On the Patio, we started talking about his teaching experience at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). He's nowadays focusing on the values of Restorative Justice to generate spatial projects with students. But, they are not only working focusing on architectures for legal frameworks or for the penal system infrastructure, but on the philosophical and ethical aspects of the concept. As he explained, his teaching

methodology starts with a syllabus designed as a series of exercises that are not mandatory to be fully completed or followed from A to B to approve the course. There aren't fixed deliverables for them. Instead, each student advances at their own pace and how their own process allows. The main goal is to reflect on why the process is what it is and what it means for each student to understand what they care about, the kind of reality they want to help build, and their own workflow. Carlos' class is the other way around in an academic environment without the typical pressure to become sleep-deprived to accomplish a task. The students get points for protecting their well-being and sleeping well. To us, that sounds radical, per se.

Later on, we kept talking and sharing experiences. We entered the first chapter of our conversation, which we can call "Narratives". Carlos' classes begin by opening a space for the students and himself to get to know each other. So, through a personal land acknowledgment, they explore themselves, their relationship with the land and aim to shift the narrow-minded and technical way territory is usually understood. Learning the stories of violence, resistance, and take-care practices in a specific territory gives them tools to pass from acknowledging to action.

Carlos believes that one of the biggest flaws in architecture is the refusal to explore oneself and our relationship with the land. But, on the contrary, he explained that knowing oneself allows us to understand how and where to act. In his words, "we need to overcome the toxic positivism of the architect who believes that they can solve anything with a design. Which is a lie. Sometimes it is better to do nothing as an act of respect."

Then, Carlos explained another exercise, "Negotiating on an uneven table." He argues that when negotiating, we tend to assume that we are equals when actually we aren't. So we lie to each other by saying that." Thus, the students work in pairs, and the first thing they do is sit at a table and share their stories with each other. Therefore, they can explore who they are, where they come from, and grasp their inequalities. Then, within that base, this exercise concludes with the students negotiating and creating collective and individual goals and boundaries for designing and giving form to that "uneven" table.

Finally, the last exercise aims for the students to create a space that makes justice. But to define what justice means, they need to work with a more-than-human ally. "Like that tree over there" —pointing to a huge tree in the corner of his Patio—. That's how a space of justice gets crafted. "That space isn't necessarily a building; it can't be," Carlos says. Rather architecture here can be a moment, a ritual, a building, a public space, an object that creates space, a gathering, a tree. So the evaluation is on the success of creating justice for them and

that "tree." While doing that, he highlighted to us that the point of this is to explore architecture as relationships. Here the building is only one aspect of it. At that point, we were engaged because of the honesty and reasonableness of his discourse. We listened raptly while drinking our beers.

The second chapter, which we may call "The hero's journey," started after talking about his experience at CCA. Carlos shared why and how he decided to move from his early comfort zone, first as a student and then as an architect and teacher, following the expected narrative. However, Carlos wanted to expand his limits beyond architecture. So, he went to CCA in San Francisco, California, where he did a MAAD program but with a personalized curriculum focused on space design and art as social practice after negotiating with the University.

One of his biggest influences there was the art teacher Susanne Cockrell. With her, he first started talking about the necessity of "neglected spaces" such as queer spaces, among others. "I understood that architecture is a violent act. For example, this tree is very important [pointing to the tree on his Patio]." And continued, "I believe that as people, we have beliefs, and those beliefs generate narratives, which are how we live. [for example] I believe that I'm a man, and I was told that always men need to be with women. As a gay man, breaking with that narrative is un Camello [too difficult]. These kinds of narratives also control the access that one has to experience. For example, being a black person or a Latino in the US comes with narratives of access. Being a woman is another different narrative. They [the narratives] drive our decisions and how others see us. It is like a matryoshka: one inside another.

Architecture as a discipline has been restricted. It has been under the control of white man as a narrative for too long, which means that it has a sort of single biography behind it." When I was writing my work at CCA, I had long conversations about my ideas with my friend Adeola Enigbokan, who referred me to the Hero's journey. Somewhere in the '50s, the American writer Joseph Campbell invented a circular diagram where a man appears, meets an unexpected power, gets scared, and leaves it. Still, then a catastrophe happens and takes back the power. Then the Hero saves the world or something like that". That journey is how many of the heroics stories in pop culture—like Star Wars—have been created.

Designers of different types use the 'User's journey,' which seems to be a simile of the Hero's Journey. It consists of the designers creating archetypes of users through design research. To develop any service or product, they do participatory practices - interview people. With the outcome, they draw a 'journey' where they can see the extremes of users (the poorest, the richest, the blackest, the whitest, the woman, the man, the secretary, the boss, etc.). But, by doing that, they aren't really

honoring people's stories. Instead, they standardize experiences.

So, by pretending objectivity and constructing "standardized journeys," they exclude people's stories. To me, this operates as an excuse for designers to be permissive in saying that they're creating a shared reality. But instead, they're making a specific reality, leaving behind what isn't general or archetypal. Precisely because there is no care or intention to address the unevenness.

Then, Carlos spoke about an essay that became very significant for him in his exploration. "The feminist sci-fi writer Ursula Le Guin in her *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, speaks about the idea of the "Hero's Journey" in a critical way. She tells a story in which before men created the first weapon to kill Mamuts, there were women picking berries and nuts in the field, and for picking more food, they designed a 'carrier bag.' However, her story is not only claiming that as the first tool ever created. Instead, she also claims the importance of honoring everyday stories. "For Le Guin, society has perpetuated a collective narrative that needs to have a big drama and a hero. That's a very white conception of a hero, Medellín argues, because the world isn't ending due to a villain or a catastrophe and being saved by a hero. I have been talking a lot about this with my friend Adeola. Instead, the world is ending every day and every minute for many people.

Those stories are not being considered. Medellín realized that if he really wanted to work with people, a "survey method" would not be enough. He needs to connect with people. That means configuring the relationships instead of being in an office shaping interviews in the form of data to later support any arbitrary decision that, however, was already taken. "I believe that we [as architects] are educated in that way. We have been taught a craving to be heroes, to be like "him:" like the teacher, like the architect-boss. To compete to be the best, to desire Pritzkers, and if we don't make it, it has to be because we're mediocre or untalented." By doing that, we are also taught to treat the one with 'talent' better. That happens not only in the architecture field but is a common practice in academia. "And the idea of 'talent' is the most reductive and unpleasant thing in the world."

The third chapter could be named "Restorative Justice" and, in part, works as an explanation of the first conversation topic about his teaching methodologies and the different types of exercise done with his students. I started talking about my experience learning about the prison system in the US, and specially in New York State due to the subject of my Studio lead by Laura Kurgan, so when I asked Carlos about how he understands the idea of prison and justice in relation to his work in that field. He started by narrating his personal story because, as he said, our stories matter when explaining

our positions. Carlos was born one year after his uncle died alongside eleven or twelve other magistrates in the Justice Palace of Colombia in a crossfire between the M-19 Guerrilla when the military entered the Palace to take it back and burn it all down. Following that event, the first peace deal between the Colombian government and a guerrilla was signed in the 90s. However, it left a lot of open questions because neither the government nor the guerrillas were fully accountable for what happened in the Palace of Justice of Bogotá in 1986. Later, in the 2000s, a new building for the Justice Palace was designed and built. It opened in 2004 as a form of "rebuilding justice" after what happened.

His uncle was the Justice Supreme Court magistrate Carlos Medellín -Carlos was named after him. That particular story has haunted and defined him since then, even without having met him. That narrative has been both a claim of my family for justice and also a healing method to deal with the grief.

That event and the way that justice left those questions without answers has led him to distrust that type of justice system. "I can't trust in a building that appeared out of nowhere and in a system that didn't answer questions." So, when he received the commission to work with the Colombian justice system in Bogota to design the first space for restorative justice, the question wasn't about which kind of alternative space could be built. The real question was how space could hold conflictive and sometimes opposed narratives, so they can be worked together to create a new story that embraces those questions the Punitive system is unable to answer.

Restorative justice is a concept first developed in Canada within its penal system. But it has, little by little, gained a lot of traction in the US. However, it has also been used to approach systematic outbreaks of violence in conflicts like the South African and Colombian. The Colombian peace deal was signed in some stands with a restorative approach, in which another court was created to judge only those cases part of that conflict. It is a mix of restorative and punitive practices. In 2016, the peace agreement was voted upon, and despite being rejected by the majority of Colombians, the president signed it himself anyways, leaving a strongly divided society.

That whole story was the main subject that guided Carlos and his partner -Nicolás Paris- on the path of designing and learning how to act within the restorative justice framework. They managed to carry out activities with young offenders and victims outside of penitentiary facilities. The restorative path in Bogota is granted to an offender only with the permission of the victim case by case. By choosing this way, Carlos continued saying, a sort of bond and intention is created between offender and victim. It is an opportunity for those involved in the conflict to have the power to deal with it.

No one else, no judge (or any heroes), will make decisions for them. With the professional guidance of mediators (psycho-social workers), the aim is to generate accountability for the acts and to start a mutual healing process between those involved.

Anyways, we were told that this alternative process is in an early stage of development, counting no more than two hundred cases so far, but still, Carlos Medellín trusts that it is a way to actually solve conflicts and face traumatic conflicts between people within the Justice System. It is a kind of practice that gives back the right to decide and negotiate with people (which is the most important thing). For him, justice and space are narratives because they literally depend on who decides what is built and what is fair, but most importantly, who can tell the truth and their story in the process. "That is how I understand architecture and justice are related in this way. This space [the restorative justice space] is a space to tell stories of what happened in a conflict, but to be honest, the narratives always come from way before.

The space we designed iterates from object to architecture, from architecture to a mobile artifact that goes around the city, from that to a communication system and graphic design, and from there, to manuals so the model can be replicated in other cities, etc... (this summary is mentioned in relation to a project designed by Fundacion Horizontal led by Carlos at that moment, which involved those different mediums in performing justice in space).

The experience of designing that space woke me up. It let me see that until then, I had been an architect who really wanted to be a hero. The truth is that I was acting, perhaps feeling I was better as if I could help somebody that hadn't even asked me to. "In that way, he wouldn't be able to really learn anything from people's stories because he would always be trying to find a "solution to problems" through buildings and objects, as architects are educated to do. To get recognition. "But now I don't see that anymore. I think that system of thought needs to be dismantled. To me, prisons are the same. They become useless because they do not solve any structural problem."

The conversation with Carlos lasted until very late. At some point, we needed to go back home, most of all because Osvaldo and Rocío needed to catch a flight early in the morning. However, the talking was so immersive that we could have easily stayed talking the whole night. But, before leaving, Carlos reminded us of the question he made on that initial phone call, which happened to turn into this patio conversation. Why did we name our magazine Patio? Which Patio?

Osvaldo, the only one of us part of the foundational period of the magazine, jumped to answer his question; even tho we could not have any consensus among the group: "the idea of a Patio emerged as a common space despite differences

of understanding, for people to surmount their initial differences, and to start negotiating around a common concept. Just like Carlos wants to share with the students spaces to explore themselves and each other, to learn then how to negotiate while building relationships, which ultimately could allow them to make friendships.

By León Duval.

## Columbia University. In the city of New York?

by León Duval

[LINK](#)

**T**his proposal, framed under the studio research topic, is created to unveil and display what's behind a nowadays naturalized story, of how cultural institutions, their expansion over the city, and their relationship with the community who have lived on the land that has been acquired, is occurring and evolving throughout time. Then, this proposal intends to unfold a modus operandi of institutions, which had been operating with a similar strategy almost since the foundation of the city. Hence, this project wants to bring up to the front the historic relationship between slavery, colonialism, human exploitation and extraction, and gentrification committed by a cultural institution, such as Columbia University, toward the land where is located. Particularly, to the Harlem community. For that, the research focused on three crucial historic moments: 1) The slave market period in early New York City, 2) the riots and outbreaks of 1968 due to the Dodge Gymnasium Project, and 3) the present, with the ongoing construction of the Manhattanville Campus, but particularly, with the Forum building in the 125th Street as the iconic representation of the expansion. Then, both projects, the Dodge gymnasium and the Forum, were compared while taking into account the slavish heritage of Columbia University and New York City from its origins

until the present. Finally, the project wants to expose an alternative and Utopian reality where the counter-commencement ceremony that occurred on June 4, 1968 is going to occur again in 2022. Specifically, this project starts on the preparations for the '22 counter-commencement ceremony to be held in the Low Plaza. Then, the narrative for this Utopian possibility takes place inside Morning-side Campus throughout the turning of different symbolic places of Columbia's history to bring the correlation of historic narratives. There, each place is displayed as a turned quotidian space, narrated by their exposed iconic images. Alongside each image and video, the reality of Columbia's behavior will be unfolded and exposed with the goal of preventing new injustices from continuing to be committed against the city and its community.

The images, screenshots of the performance's video, and the script used to produce the video are displayed in this chapter. For more information go to the link above.

# Scenario 01



SU'21

SU'21

# Script

Silence in the beginning.

## Scenario 1

Silence when showing the first scenario.

### 1. When pamphlets are black.

We are located in the western entrance of Columbia University, expecting for the Commencement Ceremony to start.

4'

All the Columbia community has been summoned to attend. Every alumni, student, faculty and staff will be there. All the community members will be gathered around a symbolic and single ritual event organized each year to perpetuate the University's existence.

13'

### 2. When invitations start to fall.

The hegemonic ritual of the commencement ceremony creates the perfect scenario for a counter action.

4'

Following what happened on June 4th of 1968, fifty four years later another Counter Commencement was set upon the official one.

6'

### 3. When explaining the formula.

The formula above explains the need for this new action. Columbia University following its historic white western heritage is taking advantage of the land which held it ignoring the community that lives there.

10'

### 4. When the pamphlet zoomed in.

On June 4th of 1968 three hundred graduating students silently left the official ceremony organized in St. John The Divine to attend a Counter Commencement held in the Low Plaza by the Students for a Restructured University.

10'

The Counter event took place under the Alma Mater statue, symbol of the University and the US and had figures like Erich Fromm between the speakers.

7'

The Counter Commencement of the '68 marked a turning point in the relation between Columbia community and the Trustees in regard to the politics implemented by the University towards its relation with Harlem upon other things.

10'



SU'21

SU'21

# Scenario 02



SU'21

SU'21

# Script

## Scenario 2

**Silence when showing the second scenario photograph.**

### 5. When showing the tribune.

The Commencement is supposed to gather the community around the Alma Mater in a scenario constructed for the officials speeches in the Low Plaza.

6'

Two red flags are installed and weaving while two big oaks representing the sacred Lenape's tree are standing over two lanterns showing a vindication of subaltern and subversive symbols.

9'

The official scenario will become the tribune for the Counter Commencement Ceremony. The Alma Mater will be transformed into a structural column which will be supporting a tribune for the Counter Commencement Loudreading. By doing so, Columbia's and US's hegemonic icons will become the base from which a new plaza will emerge.

14'

By folding the statues, they would lose their faces and their power while becoming collaborative pieces without hierarchy or individual power.

7'

Underneath, twenty four chairs will be displayed to receive the trustees of Columbia. Who will be seated in front of the entire Community.

7'

### 6. When showing the tribune references of syncretism.

Covering the statues with concrete is necessary to nullify the power of hegemonic images.

4'

Images coming from the work of Andres Duran, the official response to latest protests in England and in Chile, and the image of the Convento de Santo Domingo built over Coricancha in Peru are being used to deconstruct the hegemonic image of an untouchable power of Columbia.

12'

### 7. When showing the tribune references of politics.

Those syncretic practices and ways of dealing with power are standing aside with other forms of tribunes from Lenin to House Rucker & Co and Carlos Martiel.

7'

This iconic bricolage is needed to comprehend how to nullify the hegemonic power of Columbia since the origin of the country.

6'

This power is a construction created and misrepresented for the means of empowering the idea of America as a strong nation and new hegemonic power over Europe.

7'

### 8. When showing the explanation of Columbia.

The Alma Mater in the Low Plaza, icon and symbol of the University after the American revolution, actually is the symbol of the entire US, and the representation of a civilizational proposal. Relation which entangled the meaning and purposes of each institution into one single intention.

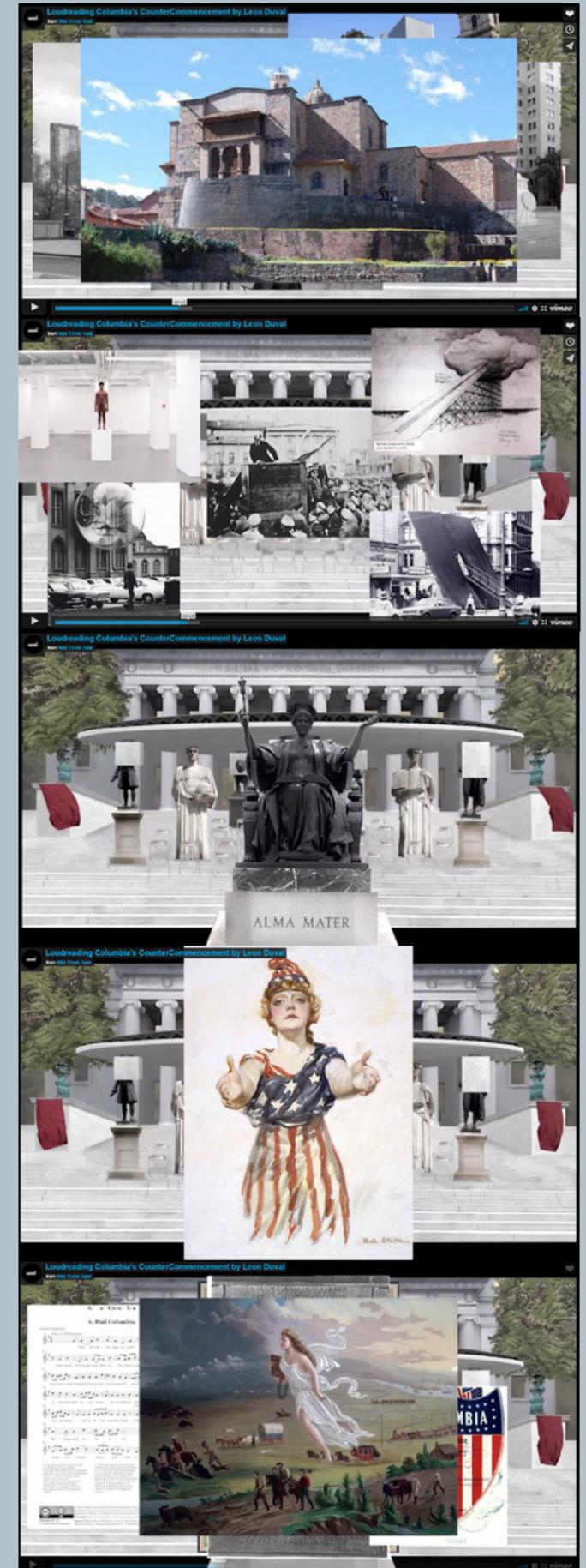
15'

Columbia who is originated after the representation of America, represented the image of a new western and white power. At the beginning, Columbia was acting by educating ethics and values to a new society. After which this behavior turned into a superhero who will defend the US and the western values against the otherness.

16'

The idea of Columbia as the defender of white western and imperialist values can be seen easily while learning about how Columbia University has dealt with their own antagonist and others in the land where it's located. Making the statue in the Plaza the representation of the values promoted by University and the US.

17'



# Scenario 03



SU'21

SU'21

# Script

## Scenario 3

Silence when showing the third scenario photograph.

### 9. When explaining the room.

The Low Library Memorial has become a memorial of its colonial footprint. Inside the atrium twenty four chairs have been displayed with images of all Columbia's presidents. Nineteenth president and fifth temporary ones. Besides, some objects have been added to the walls and the curtains have been dyed red.

14'

### 10. When showing the map.

To understand how Columbia is behaving today with the city, we have to look at the origin of New York, when the Wall was built and the Slave Market was operating between 1711 and 1762, slavery was a common thing in the city.

14'

New York as a trade port and as a slave trade market had strong business connections with the south. This reality molded the origins of Columbia when it was named King's College and later Columbia College.

10'

As a new college, most of the money needed to support the functioning of the institution comes from tuitions and donations from southern slave owners. Slave owning in early Columbia was a common thing to watch in every layer: students, faculty, trustees and presidents. The bond between slavery and Columbia was strong and the consideration in regard of the other somehow still remains with a different face.

22'

### 11. When showing the presidents 1.

The presidents Samuel Johnson, Benjamin Moore, William Samuel Johnson, William Alexander Duer, Charles King and Frederick Augustus Porter Barnard were slave owners in a period of time from their presidencies between 1754 and 1888.

13'

### 12. When showing the colonial diploma.

Due to business interest with the south, New York society took a time to add to the abolition of slavery when they add to a form of colonization, creating the Colonization society. This diploma shows its foundation and the way early newyorkes solve the lack of cheap labor problem without

slavery.

19'

### 13. When showing the map.

Columbia then moved up to a second location to finally set up in Morningside Heights, after buying the land to other institutions. Place where the University started acquiring land, buildings, and adding affiliated institutions expanding its influence throughout New York, the country and the World.

16'

This expansionist plan took the neo classic image of US's new hegemonic force and built its campus as a way to expand the influence and the civilizational project of a modern free white US society. Imperial and hegemonic aesthetic which maintain the links between Columbia as the university and Columbia as a civilizational proposal.

18'

Nowadays, the campus keeps expanding and now the target is Manhattanville in West Harlem. Even before this, Columbia University was the biggest land owner of Manhattan.

10'

### 14. When showing the presidents 2.

The president Charles King is known for moving to Madison Avenue, president Seth Low is known for moving to Morningside Heights, and lately, Lee C. Bollinger is known for expanding the campus to Manhattanville.

10'

### 15. When showing the presidents 3.

Over this ongoing expansion process committed by Columbia and their trustees, the project of the gymnasium in Morningside park went wrong, detonating a long term of riots and one resigned president. Grayson L. Kirk resigned after 1968 protests, after which Andrew W. Cordier was elected to "pacify" the riots. Finally with William J. McGill things went normal again for Columbia until now.

20'

In this pacifying process, faculty and students lost influence to not allow those acts to happen in the future. Community programs were shut and supervision and fragmentation of decisions were set inside each faculty. The control of the administration over every department was increased.

13'

### 16. When showing the Americas.

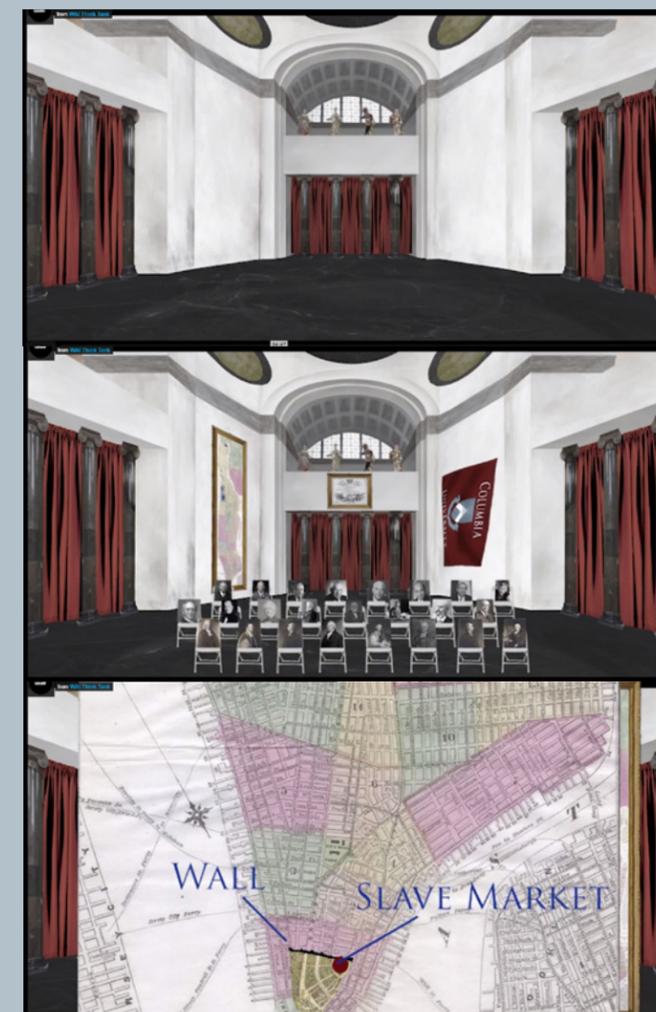
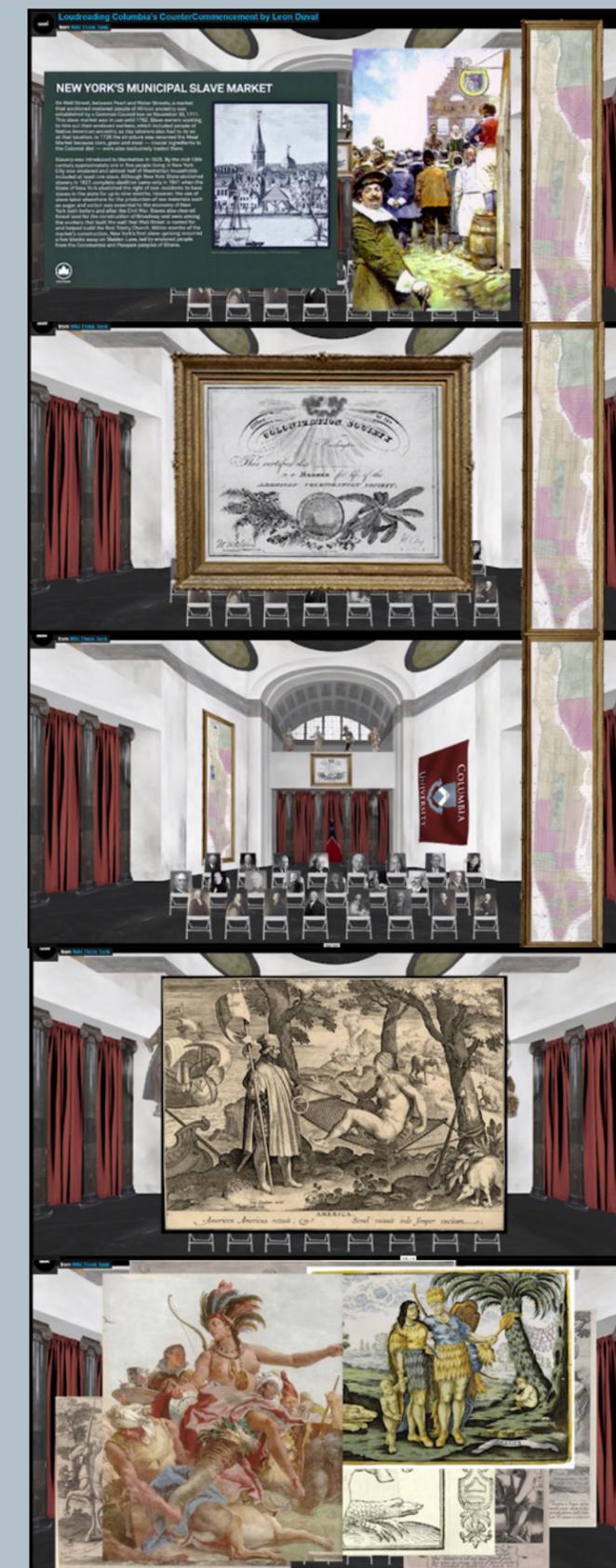
As I was saying before, Columbia emerged after the construction of the representation of America, and America

was the Indian princess and representation of the continent by European eyes. This representation imagined the continent as a savage place where exotic and barbarian people lived. Those uncivilized people were cataloged as subhumans by Thomas Jefferson and the whites american. Locating who wasn't white into a lower category without rights or freedom, a situation which permitted white Americans to utilize as resources those subhuman bodies.

24'

Then, the necessity for the new empire to adopt a new representation was imperative. And one which could compete as equals with other white representations like Britannia of Great Britain.

9'



# Scenario 04



SU'21

SU'21

# Script

## Scenario 4

**Silence when showing the fourth scenario photograph.**

### 17. When explaining the room.

Former Avery Library inside the Low Library Memorial represents the department of Architecture which originated the protests that occurred in the '68 by Urban and Planning students. In this room, hidden inside the Low Library, are represented the controversial projects proposed by the trustees without the consentment of the community or even the neighborhood.

19'

### 18. When explaining the Gym.

The 1968 Dodge Gymnasium proposal was supposed to provide a new space for the Columbia community, and without considering any problematic on its location it was supposed to be constructed inside Morningside Park. Taking public park space from the Harlem community and creating a segregational project which would not include them inside.

15'

The problem then relies on a common factor, people who are taking the decisions aren't considering the inhabitants of Harlem as citizens with the same rights as the citizens of the Columbia community. Moreover, this perspective which can be traced back to the origin of the College, also can be seen in the absence of participation of the Harlem community in Columbia University. Which happened to occur for a short time until it was banned after the protest.

This project, and other uncomfortable relations between the University and the war industry, originated years of protests and repression by the police and the administration board against students and faculty.

9'

### 19. When explaining the Forum.

Nowadays, the Manhattanville campus project is unfolding and under construction. The project intended to expand the size of the University toward Manhattanville occupying land of historic local residents. This real State operation will transform, segregate and gentrify an important part of west Harlem.

15'

Like the gym before, this project has had resistance from

the community of Manhattanville and groups of students. In a way, the Manhattanville Campus project is acting in the city in the same way that the Dodge Gymnasium was supposed to act in Morningside and Harlem.

15'

The project, far from the marketing of an open campus for everyone, is closed for the community. Glass walls, security cameras and exclusive spaces are being constructed only for the Columbia community and for those who can open the doors with a university card.

14'

Not for nothing, the inauguration speech of the Forum replicated the words of the foundation of the university in a time where it was legal and common for some people to utilize others just because of their skin color.

12'

### 20. When showing the Mission.

Finally, it is important to look back to the mission of the University and to the extension of the name which was added next to Columbia University. When it says "In the city of New York", maybe you will have some doubts about their true meaning.

13'



SU'21

SU'21

## Patio Interviews: Cruz García.

by Osvaldo Delbrey & León Duval.

**T**he Patio Interview with Cruz Garcia is an activity developed under the frame of the Patio Magazine, where I'm one of the Directors of the second issue soon to be released.

This interview was made to Cruz Garcia, one of the architects of the collective WAI Think Tank and Puerto Rican. This interview is crucial to frame two important things developed during my pass through Columbia, the image creation, the collage and the decolonizing and feminist rethoric for the production a an architecture thinking. Moreover, Spatial thinking.

The location of this piece of text following the studio performed with them is completely intentional because it frames the rest of the conversation alongside this Portfolio, which is not intended to be one.

This interview, as it is explained in the following text, was performed in 2022 in Avery, Columbia GSAPP, by Osvaldo Delbrey and I, later, it was translated and edited by Osvaldo Delbray. Cruz Garcia also edited the text before it was ready.

## Patio Interviews: Cruz García.

A conversation between Cruz, León, and Osvaldo.

**A**rchitect and educator Cruz García, along with his partner Nathalie Frankowski, has been on a tour of sorts. Being a black student from a working class family, born and fully educated in Puerto Rico up to graduate level (at the University of Puerto Rico—where I myself went for undergrad), García's academic career was no stranger to the injustices of colonialism and structural racism, which carried on to his practice. His work is always collective; when he moved to Europe during the financial crisis, he started his partnership with Frankowski. Their work has since focused on speaking truth to power against the imperatives of the architecture establishment, academia, and institutions. They have many names; WAI Architecture Think Tank, founded in Brussels in 2008, Intelligentsia Gallery, Beijing-based anti-profit art space, and their alternative education platform, Loudreaders. Their career has taken them on a nomadic journey across the world—the northern hemisphere, that is; Brussels, Rotterdam, Beijing, in the US, Arizona, Illinois, Nebraska . . . Now they seem to have settled for a while in Iowa where they have a tenure track position. But before heading over to Iowa State University, they made a stop in New York City last summer to teach a studio at Columbia GSAPP. They used to say that they were “academics without academia,” now after a few years of moving through schools, Patio wanted to catch up with Cruz and talk about his Latin Caribbean coming into their academic “tour” and how they position their real-talk personas among all these institutions. We covered authorship, their newborn daughter's name, and a whitewashed European history.

Cruz Garcia: We recently wrote for The Funambulist. I don't know if you're familiar with the magazine from Paris by Léopold Lambert. It's very political. There's an issue coming called “The Land... from Settler Colonial Property to #Land-back.” That was just when we had Ema—it's gonna be out soon—but we wrote a letter to our daughter Ema Yuizarix to explain to her why her name is Ema Yuizarix. Ema is from emancipation, and Yuizarix is an Afro-taino futurist name. Yuiza, is a taino name, but we mix some things there to talk about her history, the history of the land, Puerto Rico, and struggles of emancipation around the world. And because we are university professors, there's a really central part of the letter explaining to her where we work. And why do we choose to work in land grant universities, or universities built on the sto-

len land of indigenous people. Then we explain what the Ivy League's are too. We also happened to work at Columbia. Not only are land grants terrible, but there's a series of Universities that are built by enslavers, with slave labor. And they are not only benefiting from that thing that happened, you know, five or 400 years ago, but they still continue to benefit from gentrification, from the prison industrial complex, from apartheid regimes somewhere else, from war. We tried to confront it in everything.

When we were there, in the studio [at Columbia], we were literally talking about this every day. We are here in Columbia, so how can we at least engage with the colonial footprint of this institution? We're not pretending to be political, but at least, we are trying to honestly engage with the wrath of these institutions that are really extractive and powerful and dangerous. So, for us, that has been our way of operating in everything we do. [We] try to engage with the ideology of architecture as confrontational as we can be and try to be honest in what we do. Try not to sugarcoat these things.

Columbia is one of the most powerful examples, and it's easy to see the history. But there's other ones also that are more blurry. Not so obvious. How can you measure the colonial footprint of these institutions like Columbia or the Met? I think doing that, maybe makes us more aware and maybe more conscious of how to deal with these institutions. Also question their power, we give them power somehow. Even if they have all that land and all those resources, there's still some myth around them. That they somehow possess some access to some powerful forms of knowledge that are more valuable than others. And I really question that, like many other people do.

Osvaldo Delbrey: You talked earlier about colleges and universities, particularly in the US, tending to be an enclosed or exclusive circle. How would you position yourself within your colleagues at Columbia last summer?

CG: So there are some we like very much, and that's why we're there, like Andrés Jaque and the Justin Garrett Moore's. . . I mean, there's amazing people, of course, but in general, I don't think that's the experience. Also, I feel like somehow, maybe because of the stage where we are in our career, and how loud we are, people kind of know that we are problematic (or troublemakers). So we tend to be surrounded by people who understand that. We're not here to make friends with the president of the university. [Laughs] And I think we

get the right students because of that. We get people that are, at least, contemplating about what these forces are, what is going on? And the same with our colleagues, I mean, some of them are friends, so when we invite them for a crit they know what it's about, they know what we are there to question.

I have to say that that comes from a position of privilege too, because I know that I have a job, a teaching job somewhere else, in a public university. I don't depend on an adjunct contract without health insurance in New York, with the rent that you have to pay in New York, which is pretty much the majority of the faculty. So, it's such an extractive and exploitative employer, as we all know. Like the strikes of student workers as we speak.

So in a way, for us, it's kind of a luxury to go there in the summer, have a nice apartment near our Caribbean brothers and sisters—where I lived there's a bunch of Dominicans—and then teach some amazing students and ask some really hardcore questions and go to museums; try to take all the semis [taíno artifacts] back when I went to the MET and I saw that stolen Puerto Rican loot—to take this back home.

León Duval: You work with the collage, so how do you and Nathalie, as a collective, understand the idea of authorship? And what's the relation between the power of the collage and the authorship in your work?

OD: I would also add; not just graphically but also in literary form and theoretically, you go for the idea of the collage in a very broad sense.

CG: Yeah, I was gonna say that, it's a really important thing, even for our teaching. How do we teach students to understand that there are no original ideas? I think, on the one hand, understanding the reference is important. Where does it come from? How do you use it? But on the other hand, authorship is something that, for us, we're constantly challenging, in a way. We always work as a collective, always. And I feel like that's the only way we know how to operate. And it's, as you say, literary, conceptual, theoretical, is like archipelagos in a way. I cannot be on an island, isolated. I feel like it's not real, that it's maybe that sort of false sense of genius that European enlightenment wants to sell us and I believe that works are always done collectively. Either you're working with somebody at the moment or you're borrowing and altering ideas and things that have been done by somebody else at some point. So we try to be really conscious about them.

You know, our book, *Pure Hardcore Icons: A Manifesto on Pure Form in Architecture* is kind of a funny book. It's kind of humorous. But the theory is that form making is such a human thing, that to think that, because you make an

inverted pyramid, that's your idea, is kind of foolish if you look at the history of humanity. So what happens when we actually understand that context? And we understand that it doesn't matter how cool your inverted pyramid is. That's why the idea of non-referential architecture is a bunch of bullshit. Non-referential architecture is: "I'm arrogant enough to think that the ideas that I stole from you are more important because I use them and not because you had them before." That's basically non-referential architecture. "That's not really a reference because it doesn't deserve to be called reference." It's basically a whitewashing of history.

We wrote a text that was published in Spanish in *Arquine*, the Mexican magazine. It was in the, I think, 400-year anniversary of Mexico City, so they made a special issue. They commissioned us for a piece. It was the map to utopia, and we made a full text about utopia, where we didn't write a single word—not a single word. I think it's 50 or 40-something footnotes of people talking about utopia that we combined, and it kind of makes sense when you read it, but they contradict each other. And I think that's the most extreme case where we literally didn't do anything. I feel like that's our approach more or less. It's not like we are stealing the things to take authorship over them, it's that we're continuing the conversation by acknowledging that they exist, and that they are part of these discourses in a way. So, again, this goes in many different directions, in a theoretical sense, in the sense of collaboration, among us, among students, in the sense of not having to deal with ideas like "oh, somebody did this before." Obviously, right? If somebody ever accuses us of that, they missed the point of the work. [. . .] But no, I think it's more exciting and interesting when we are aware of those references. And we're bringing them into the work. It's almost like you not only bring the reference, but you also bring the baggage around in the context of the historical infrastructure around it.

OD: You criticize the big names in history, and you criticize all this canon that we have to learn, but then you'll place a large quote by Le Corbusier in the pages of your book. How do you decide what to use, what not to use, and when to engage with something?

CG: I think it's case by case. I avoid telling people what not to do or what to do. So it's not so much like a didactic thing but rather a complex set of relationships. We use the work of Peter Sloterdijk, who is kind of a conservative philosopher. He's really useful for our work. And he's a very Eurocentric philosopher writing about the critique of cynical reason. His theories about cynicism are useful for us, but so are the theories of Achille Mbembe and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. Le Corbusier is really important for many different reasons, for the

good, for the bad. The pluriverse also includes Europe—also. It's not Europe and the rest of the world, but also Europe. They are part of the conversation, but it's a conversation that is much broader, and they're not at the center.

Nathalie is European too. So I mean, there's already an interest, half of our practice has a European formation, because she is European. I am a colonial subject of Europeans too. [Laughs] So in a way to say the opposite would be like being naive or foolish. But understand also, what's the value. Maybe there's no value in other people, so then we don't use them. I avoid talking about Heidegger. I don't write about Kant. I've read them, but I find them completely useless. I mean, Kant is super racist too. Why would I write about this? But then I really like to engage with Walter Gropius a lot. Not for the good, mostly to say that Walter Gropius is a misogynist, and we are basically basing our educational model on a misogynist guy. Or Johannes Itten that was a white supremacist educator and stuff like that. But then we can talk about, again, Achille Mbembe and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, and Ana Lydia Vega, Raquel Salas Rivera, Frantz Fanon. There's philosophy everywhere. And history everywhere. So, if we think of the world like a planetary network of forms of knowledge it also includes those problematic ones.

LD: You touched on the relationship between Nathalie's nationality and your nationality. How does the narrative that you develop affect you as French-Puerto Rican?

CG: Yes, our intellectual discussions at home?

LD: Yes, of course. The domestic, what happens there?

CG: For me it is a conversation that has always been important from the beginning because I am always going to attack Europe, it is like my natural instinct. And Natalie is sometimes like . . . I don't give them a break. But equally, if we take into consideration that even from Europe there is no monolith, that there are also emancipatory discourses, and anti-hegemonic discourses that come from Europe. If we go to Nathalie's father's bookcase, he is also a philosopher and writer, Fanon is there, and there is Wittgenstein, and there is Camus, and there is Wilhelm Reich. There are texts by Angela Davis, and anthologies of Black poets from the US and autobiographies by Malcolm X.

It also seems to me that here in the Americas there is a very homogeneous image of what Europe is. But there are many discourses too. Our decolonizing discourses are very important, but they also have an audience in Europe. And they also have participation because Europe is an empire that has colonies everywhere, and the colony also returns to the empire

and tries to work from within.

For us that has almost always been the discussion. Nathalie is very alert and very educated in that sense of understanding contexts and history. She also comes from a particular, pan-European family, with her grandfather who came from Poland, she has family in Scotland, and in Ireland. In the letter that we wrote to our daughter we talked about the emphasis of the struggle here in the Americas, but we also mentioned that there are some struggles for emancipation that are happening in Europe as well. And that is the part that interests us the most because it is more aligned with our thinking.

LD: That Europeanized imperialist colonialism, you say that part of it is an image, and it is an image that is more useful in America than in Europe.

CG: It's very easy to see, isn't it? And we saw it when we went to the MET, for example. When you go to the MET and see European history, it is the whitest history of Europe you can imagine. But the history of Europe is a whitewashed history too. You can narrate history from any reference point you see fit. You can do it from a colonial standpoint, but they don't focus on that, they focus on three literary works and two images of sculptures that cater to that white supremacist image. Because these institutions were created that way, by slave owners and by people who had an image that was obviously aligned with that philosophy. But in reality that's not even Europe either, when you go there you realize that the struggle is there. That again, they are empires that have a gigantic footprint and that footprint is part of their culture. And their culture continues to change every day, in a perpetual struggle. France has a strike every two weeks. They have to do with immigration and with that colonial footprint, and they have to do with workers' struggles, emancipatory discourses and all that. We can still go to many other countries, and you can see when you're there—unless you go to the Champs Elysee in Paris and you go to a museum like the Louvre—if you go to the banlieue and you go through the city you'll realize that this homogeneous image of that Europe of the white imagination does not exist, or exists in a very strange way. And in this case, I am not defending Europe, I am trying to paint a more accurate picture.

OD: Before the interview I was wondering why you insist on working from these global cities, like Rotterdam, Beijing or Brussels, and not from some subordinate place, but this gives a whole new perspective to the question.

CG: If we're talking about anti-racist things, and stuff like that, they are particular maybe to some places. In the US we

write in one way, in Latin America, we write in another because we understand that there's different nuances, you know, in the terms in the culture, but they're still valuable questions. In the African context it is different too. In the European context it's different. I feel like we don't understand all of them perfectly. But we're familiar with many of them. Right? Particularly, you know, I think I understand Latin America quite well. Because Puerto Rico is part of Latin America. The US, I understand it quite well, because we [Puerto Rico] are a colonial subject of the US. Europe, I understand it, because they invented the whole thing. They invented white supremacy, they're the fabricators, so it's quite easy to understand. Now in China it is a different story. There are different questions for different places. And there we talk about other things, maybe not in the same terms in a way.

LD: Where are your narratives more important? Say, here in this context, or could they be important in Latin America?

CG: I feel like our postcolonial narratives. . . they're not meant for a US American audience, to be honest with you. We've been doing this for several years, and I remember at the beginning, we would show these installations and many people would find them maybe beautiful or whatever, but most of them didn't understand what we're talking about at all. I feel like many people in the US have been stolen from education to understand their own history. So they don't understand how this relates to them. But when we go to do our workshop in Chihuahua, for example, and I ask students to look at the statues around us, and monuments, and try to make postcards, like postcards that reveal the ideology behind all these monuments.

Our work is stronger for the people that can use it as an instrument. And that's why I also feel that many of the things we do are because students are the ones inviting us. Not necessarily the institutions. I mean, institutions do sometimes, but I feel like since the beginning it was always students. I feel like there's something about that anger that comes from the position of subordination or something like that. Or, how you see yourself in the hierarchy of positions.

When we were in Bogota, many of the things we say that are quite obvious in that context, I think in Europe, somehow, there's a better education of politics, too. I think the US is a particular example of bad education about politics. As we're speaking, there are laws that are being passed to make it illegal to talk about their own history here. So it's been the practice for many, say, hundreds of years, where they try to hide their history. So many people don't know their history. I had to teach about redlining to US American students. And it's like. . . this the history of the places where you live. I mean, the

fact that you live in suburbia, you should know why you live in suburbia. The fact that you live in a certain part of the city where people look like you, not like other people, you should know why that is happening? Right? It's not a coincidence. It's not random. And that's a problem.

I feel that education, good education, in Latin America, especially public education, is far superior, in that sense, to the education in the United States. Which means that many of the discourses we're using and the references we're using, people are much better equipped to deal with them in other contexts.

We did a workshop in Arkansas. That was amazing, too, because they had this. . . political awareness about the context where you live that once you find the words to describe it, it's really empowering. How do you find the tools to address them? But like, I feel here, there's such a strong white washing of history within education. And I'm not talking only about the university, like since they're little. Many of these works, especially among architects, like if we present our work, and it's mostly like, maybe US based architects that are trained, you know, by studying Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman, they have no idea how to engage with the work. Because they have no knowledge about any of the things that we're talking about.

OD:

Is there a difference in how students in the coast vs students in rural areas receive your work?

CG: I mean, it's not really rural, to be fair. I haven't been to a rural place other than Wisconsin, all the other ones are cities, but in the Midwest.

But yeah, we have students from a family of farmers and first-generation students. I think there's a bit of everything. But I think the institution is different. If you need a lot of money to study in a university, you can only get a certain type of student. And they could be different politically, but not the socio-economic class. That's why for me, it's so important to teach in land grant universities, public ones, because you're going to reach students like me, right? I went to public school and I grew up in a ghetto. Those people are going to be mostly in public universities. And it's many more of them. And perhaps they're the ones that, I feel, could potentially transform the context. Because the amount is enough and because of the sort of influence back in the normal parts, in the non-metropolitan parts of the country.

I will say there's so many similarities. And I know more and more because we're doing all these projects across universities. For example, Post-Novis is a collective that has members from UNL, and we presented the things when we were in Carnegie Mellon, or we talked about it with the

solidarity, where we're helping each other and spreading revolutionary propaganda and see what happens after.

Edition by Osvaldo Delbrey.

Loudreaders, there in Columbia, or our Urbana Champaign students are meeting with the students in Columbia and meeting with students in Virginia Tech. At least the [students] that are interested in those discourses, they're really willing to look beyond the sort of elitist facades of these institutions. But we have to acknowledge that many people just go to these places because of that. So that's the reality of the case, because that's the branding of these places. They're exclusive. "The best of the best come here." Which I would beg to differ. But that's how they market their enterprise. That's how they can extract so much money. Even if it's not really their business, their business is real estate.

For me, it's also really important to think about. . . when I'm in Nebraska and Iowa, I'm not here doing a favor, either. It's not like I'm going to come to educate "the farmers." You have really bright and critical people and people that are struggling with their own political context too. For example, a gay student that is thinking about emancipatory practices, but surrounded by a completely homophobic context. On the other hand, just because it's conservative, politically speaking, doesn't mean that it is more backward than, let's say, a Columbia University that doesn't even pay their employees a dignified salary.

OD: Is there something on the horizon for WAI or Garcia Frankowski that you're looking forward to?

CG: We just keep on working. There's a couple of exhibitions coming. They're a couple of practical projects but. . . We've been thinking about opening a publishing house, and keep on developing Loudreaders. We're working on a book about architectural principles for a general audience. We're working on a house for a trans poet in Puerto Rico. But I think it's more like finding ways to keep on extending those networks of solidarity and those platforms that allow us to engage with many people. I feel like that's the most important thing. We're always thinking about how we can do that. Is it through exhibitions? Is it through some alternative form of teaching? Is it through making a certain type of project? How can we make Loudreaders even more pluriversal? And then we'll see but, again, this is a really long, long game that we're playing, like a distance race. And we're trying to figure out how we can be free to make what we want but also to be free to collaborate and to work together with many of the people that we admire and our friends and so on. So that's what we're constantly doing. We've been writing a lot and writing manifestos and a couple of books coming. I think that they all kind of engage in those principles in a way, like public education and so on. I think the project of the Loudreaders is really exciting for us, as a principle. The sort of syndico-anarchist networks of

## East Harlem Waterscapes Ecologies

by Rocío Crosetto, Ruben Gómez & León Duval

**T**his project was originated from the need for experimentation and exploration around the studio research topic about the public housing in Manhattan, and particularly in East Harlem and, on the other hand, its relationship with the waterfront, gentrification, quality of life, but most of all the climate crisis with the problems of flooding, heat island effect which is hitting stronger in this area of Manhattan. Then, this proposal is focused on the Wagner Houses project space and neighborhood addressing both the people who live in there and the space, the structures, the infrastructures and the possibilities and images available for the improving and developing of the local culture and relationships. So, this project is conceived in the conjunction of the understanding of the climate crisis and its development through the next 50-70 years for this particular piece of land at the same time as understanding the technosocial relationships occurring visible and invisible in this space. Therefore, our approach needed to start from a larger scale, to allow us to account for the climate issues as well as the larger social relationships and equalities and inequalities. Moreover, this starting led us to envision our project as a transscalar proposal which is affecting the neighborhood in multiple layers and scales at the same time. Hence, the strategy was conceived as an integral proposal for all the dimensions existing in the area. Inspired by the Reyner Banham's book: *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* and Alain Corbin's book: *The Lure of the Sea* we started to think of this space as a network of isolated and fragmented actions and activities which needed to be sutured in order to recompose the dynamics, relationships, and possibilities for the inhabitants. Then, we acknowledged that this space was lacking an idea or

icon as other parts of Manhattan, so we thought to turn its threat into its possible identity.

We took the unfolding climate crisis, flooding inland and offshore to envision a Waterscape composed of hybrid spaces and urban ponds and beaches, capable of assuming this ongoing reality. To then, bringing water, waterfront, and the border into the quotidian life of the Wagner resident and neighbor while providing the area with a set of small and scaled and fragmented spaces and devices for the local appropriation. New spaces which are acting in the different scales at the time that also are acting from the most open and exposed area to the most closed and intimate area inside the Projects.

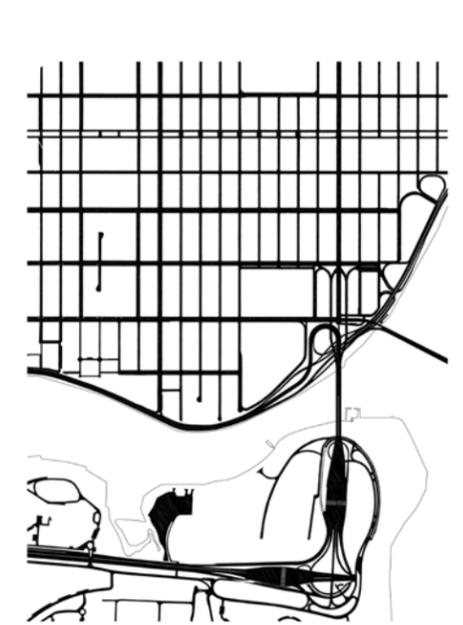
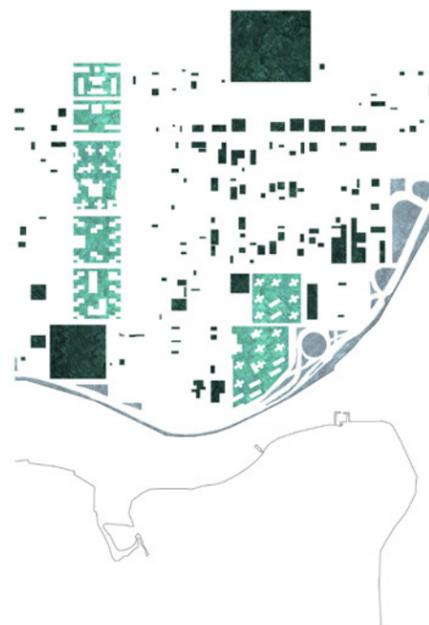
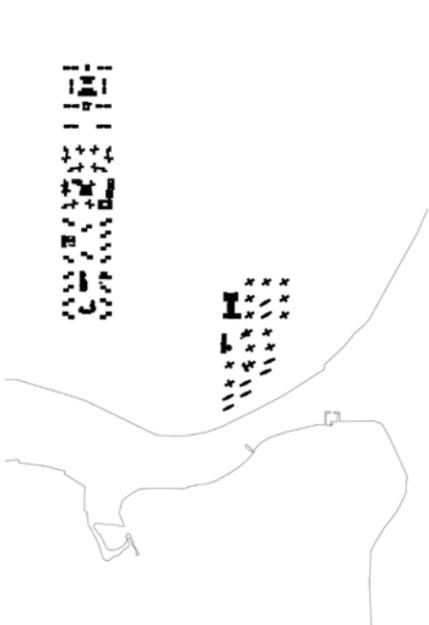
To achieve that, at first, we observed and drew the quotidian activities and actions produced by the inhabitants, such as communal gardens, pocket gathering around a TV, communal fridges, playings around fire-hydrants, and so on, to later translated them into a series of actions, spaces, devices and transformations impacting the big, medium, small and super small scale as well as the environmental, social, and infrastructural scale/dimension. Hence, we proposed the beach as the spatial icon and democratic space for the project's community, we took the climate crisis to produce a future Waterscape where the common and shared space will mutate prompting different types of activities and gatherings. Finally, we transformed each building to adapt them for the future flooding, which allowed us to use those liberated lower spaces for new temporary activities. These structural transformations led us to rethink the projects and their living units as supporters of the contemporary relationships and multiple types of associations as well as improving the quality of life of each neighbor while providing practical solutions for both technical comfort and usage possibilities.

# Urban analysis: flooding, heat and uses



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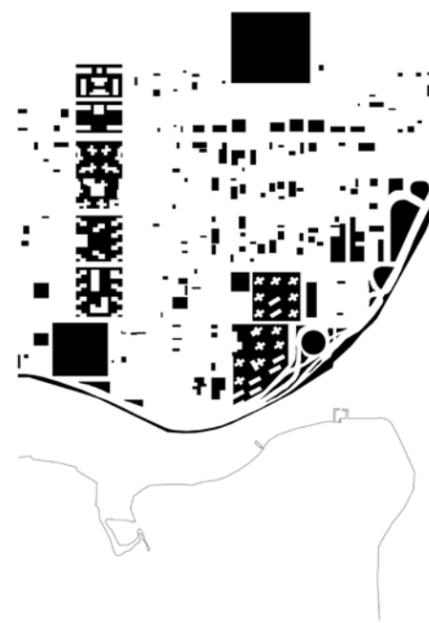
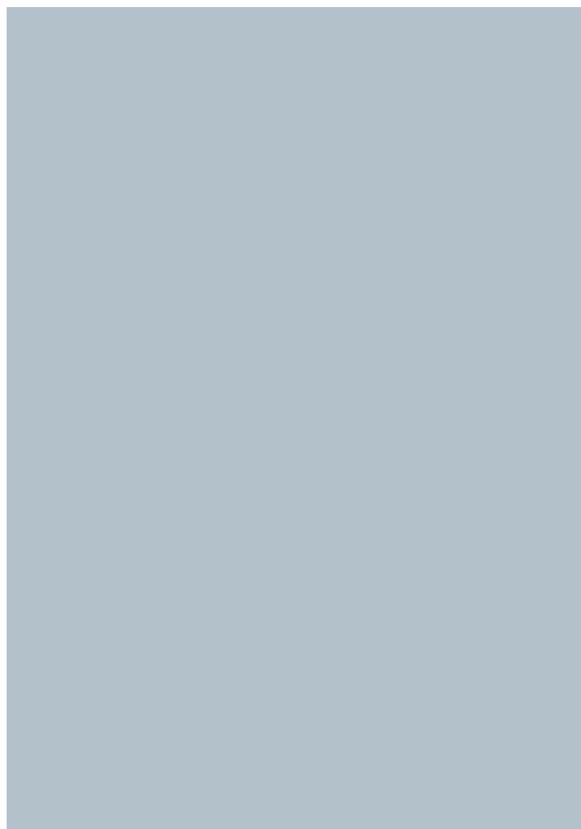
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# Urban analysis: economical activity



FA'21



*This series of plans shows the incidence of different economic activities in East Harlem, but moreover, shows how informal activities aren't happening in main routes or in more visible spaces. There is a dissociation between infrastructure and the necessary structures, programs, mediators for the local community. Particularly, those to complement utilitarian aspects.*

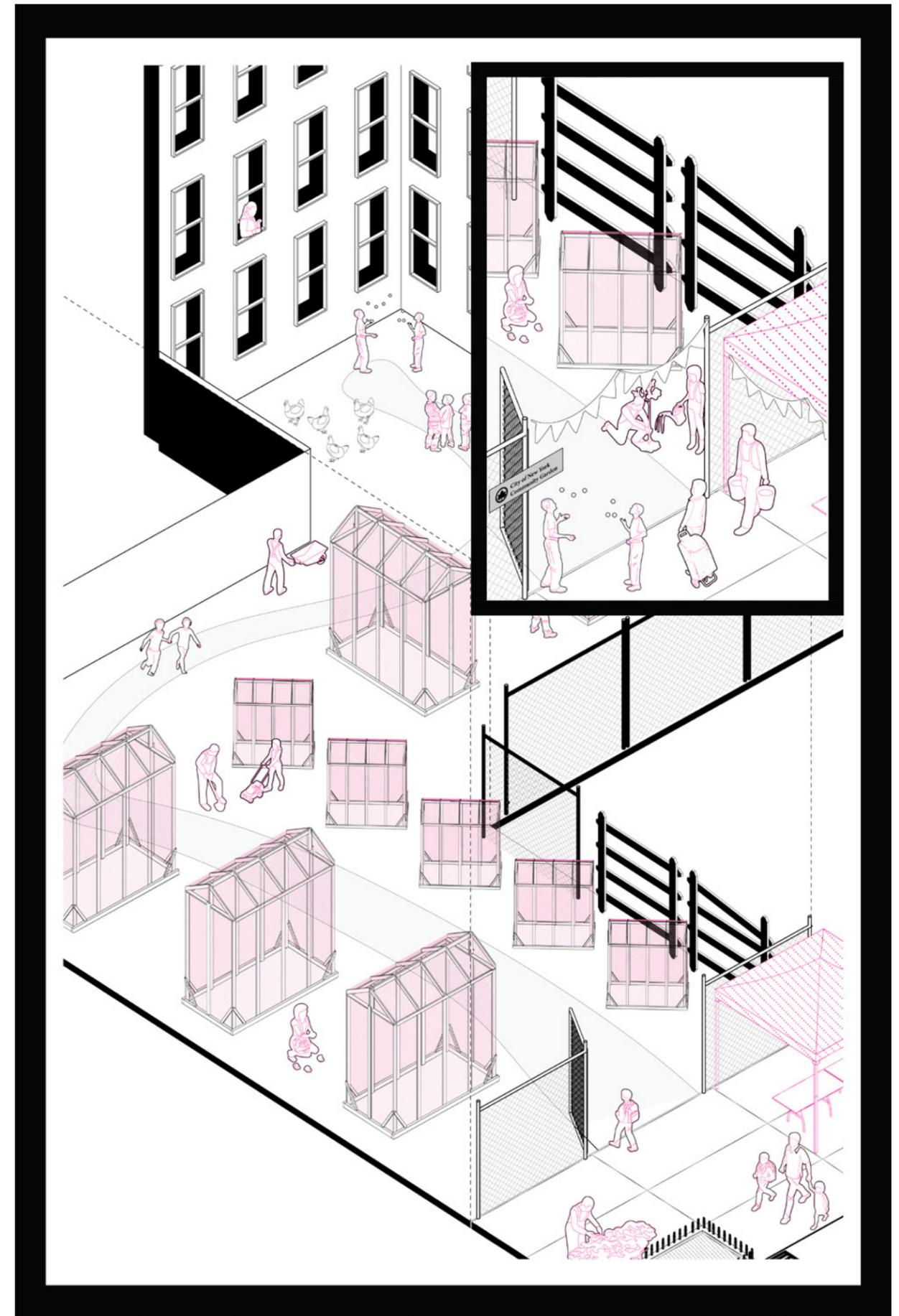
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## Specimens

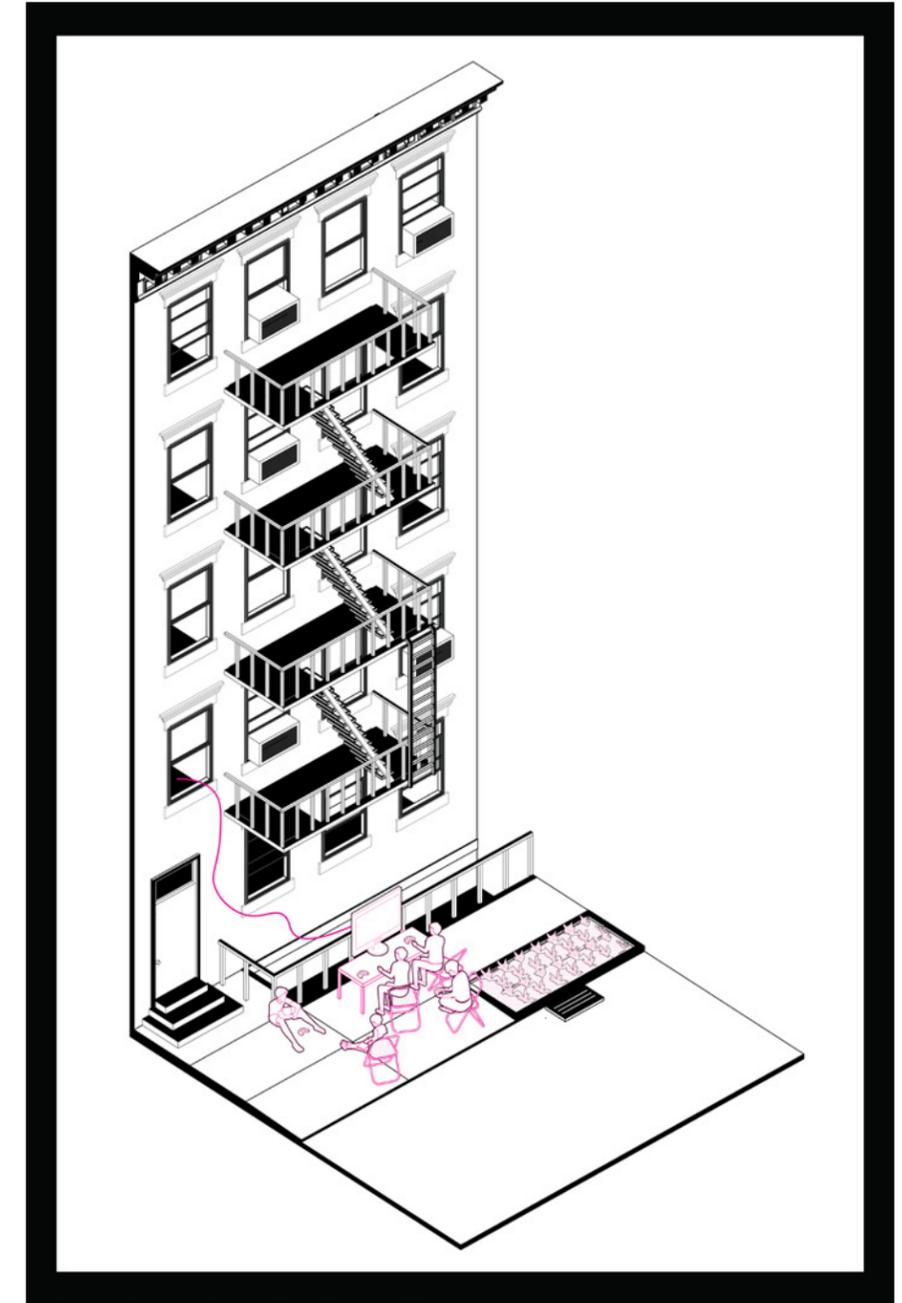
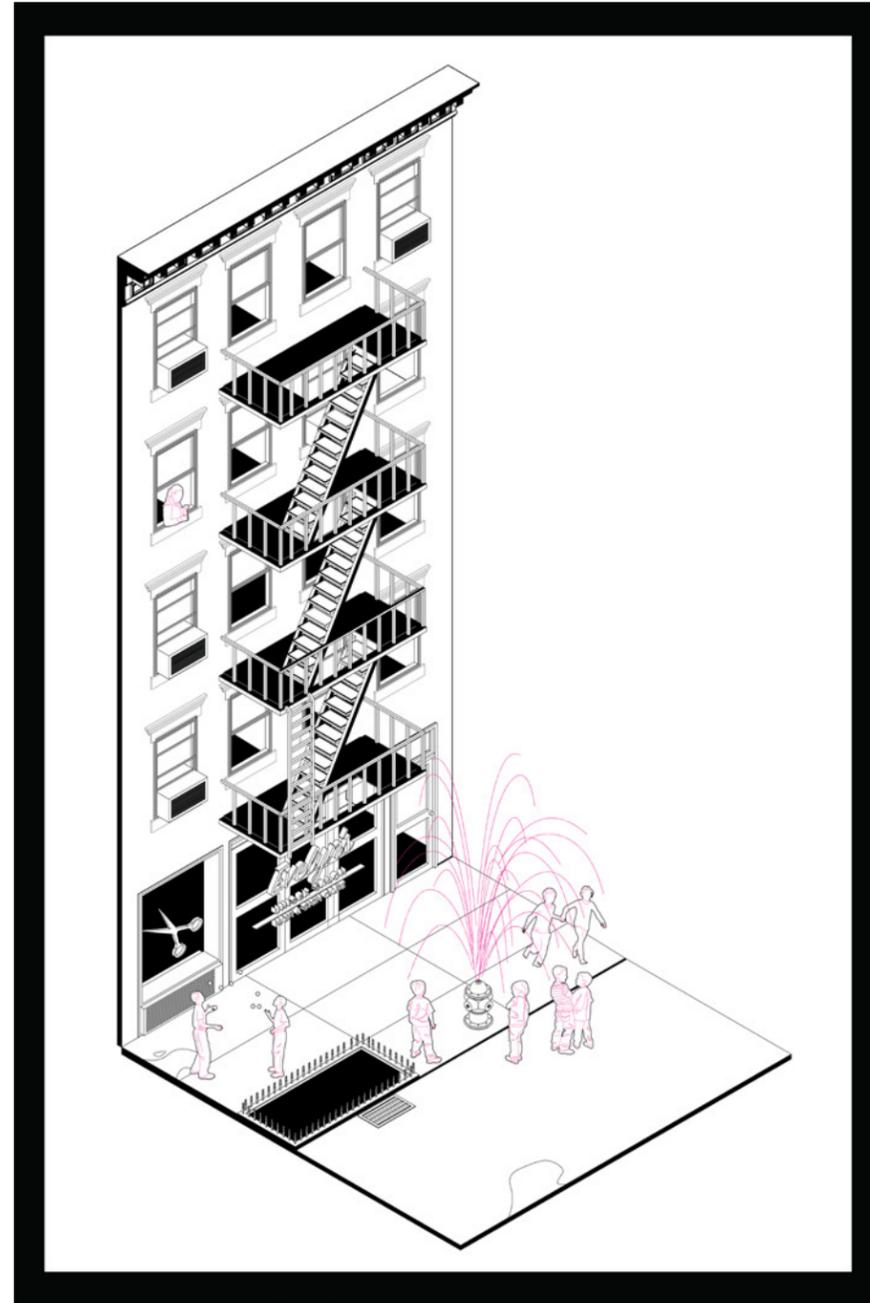
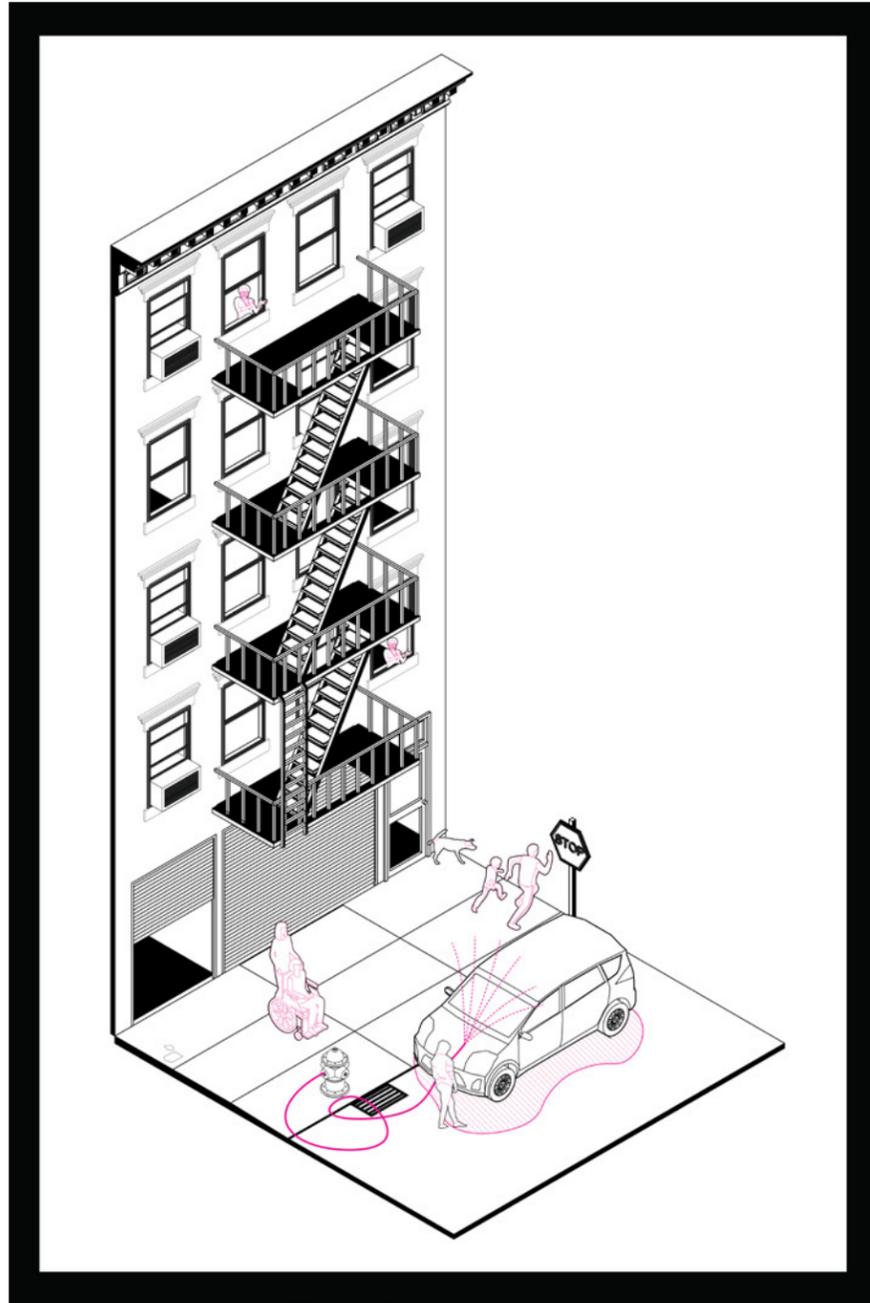
The specimens are crucial to understand the actors, events, and activities occurring in the area. Then, more than organisms or structures, the combination between them are creating necessary entanglements as a reflection of the local culture and activity.

Community gardens, fire hydrants, cables, TVs and sidewalks, tents, benches, fences, garbage and people are creating a series of events creating a proper cultural environment. These specimens are studied to understand inner logics to produce proposals for the inhabitants of the area of The Wagner Houses.

Then, the proposal starts from the most quotidian events rather than from larger and asceptics approaches. These specimens are taken from the idea of Ecologies developed by Reynham Banham for LA.



# Specimens: grid

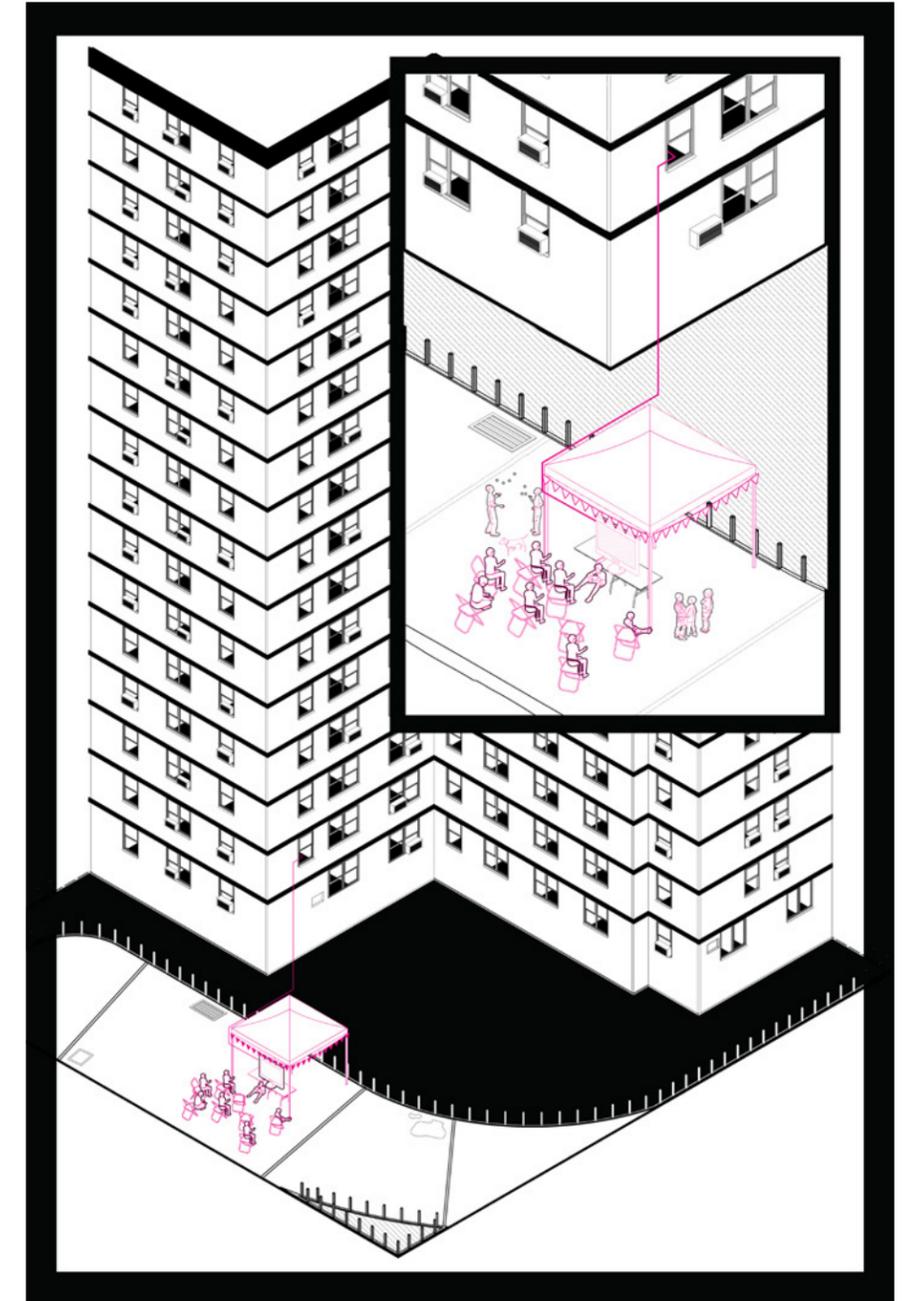
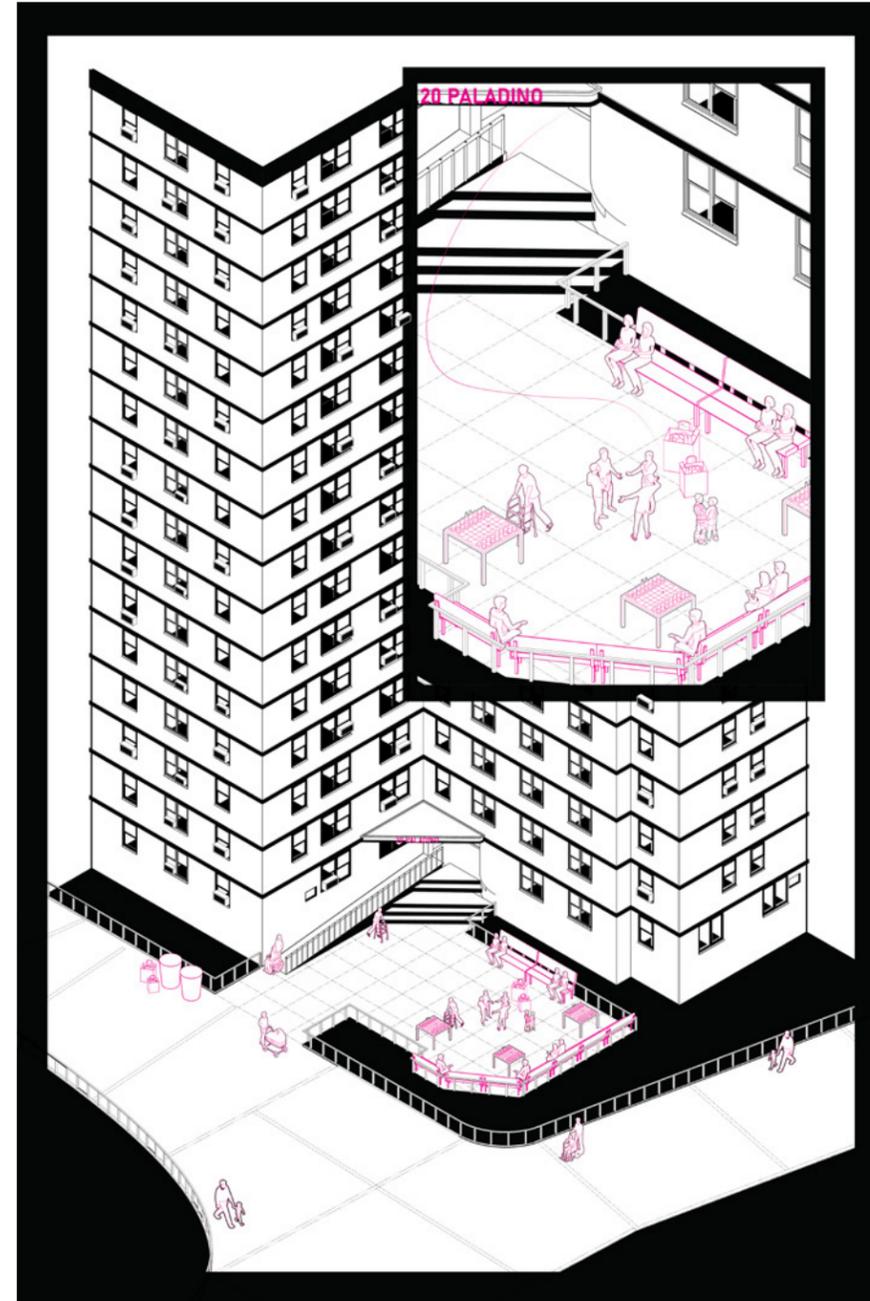
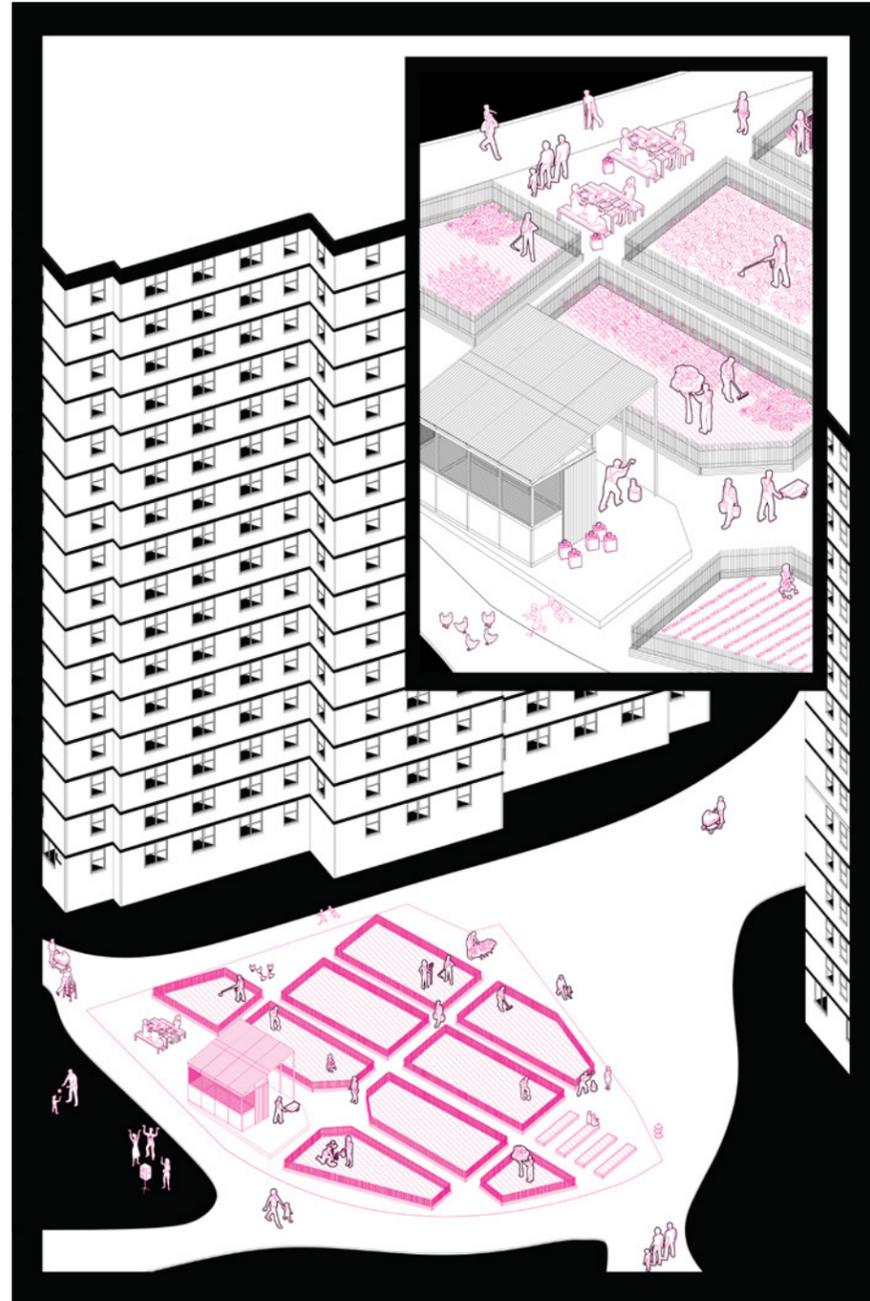


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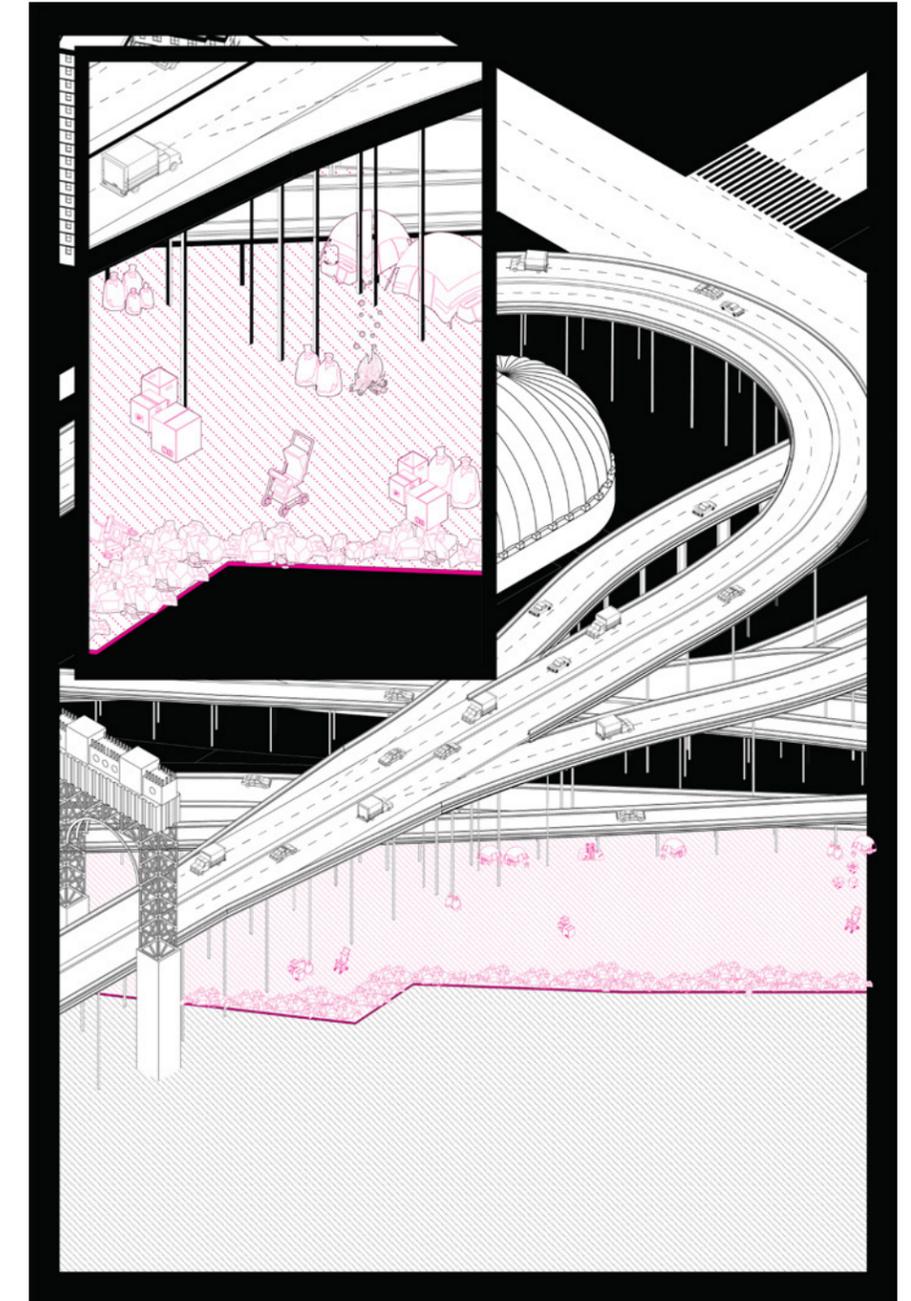
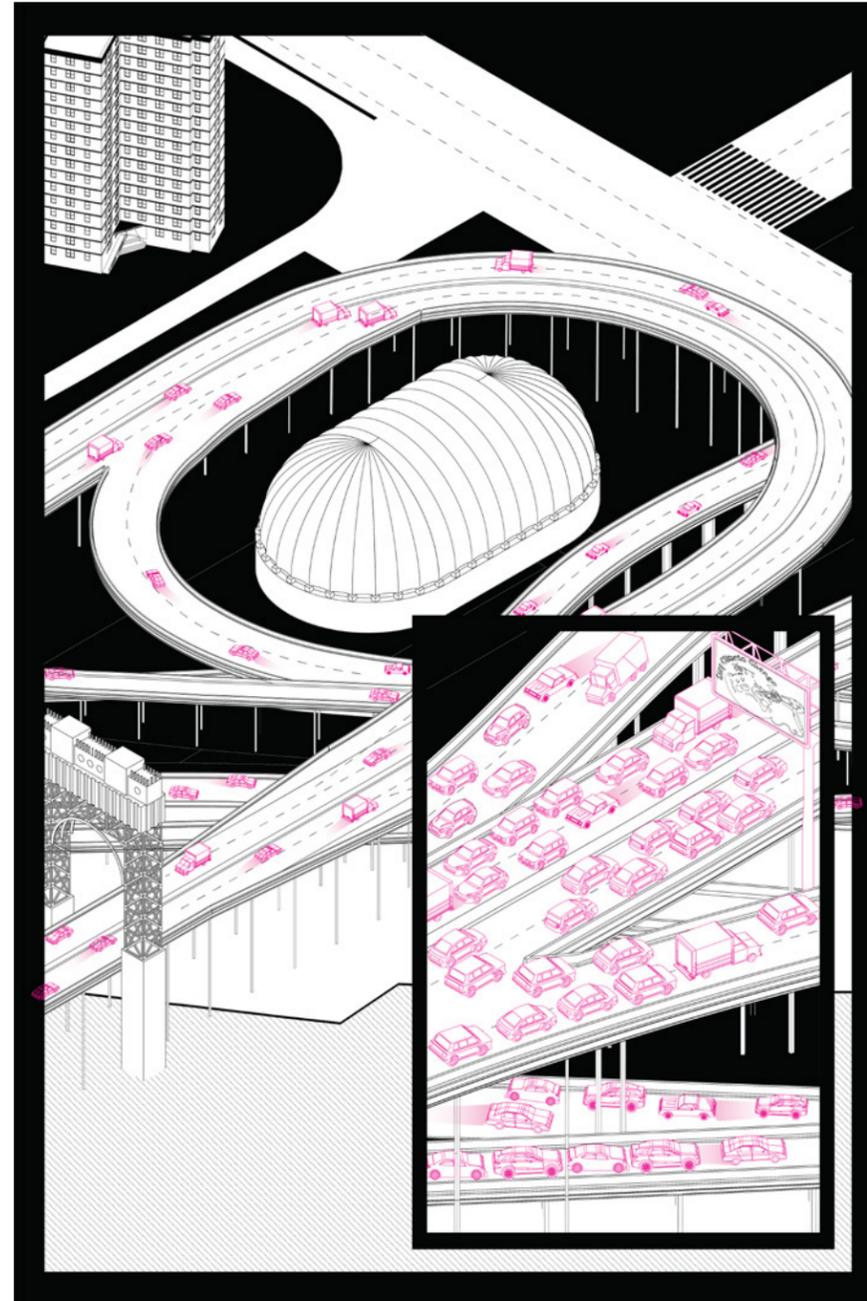
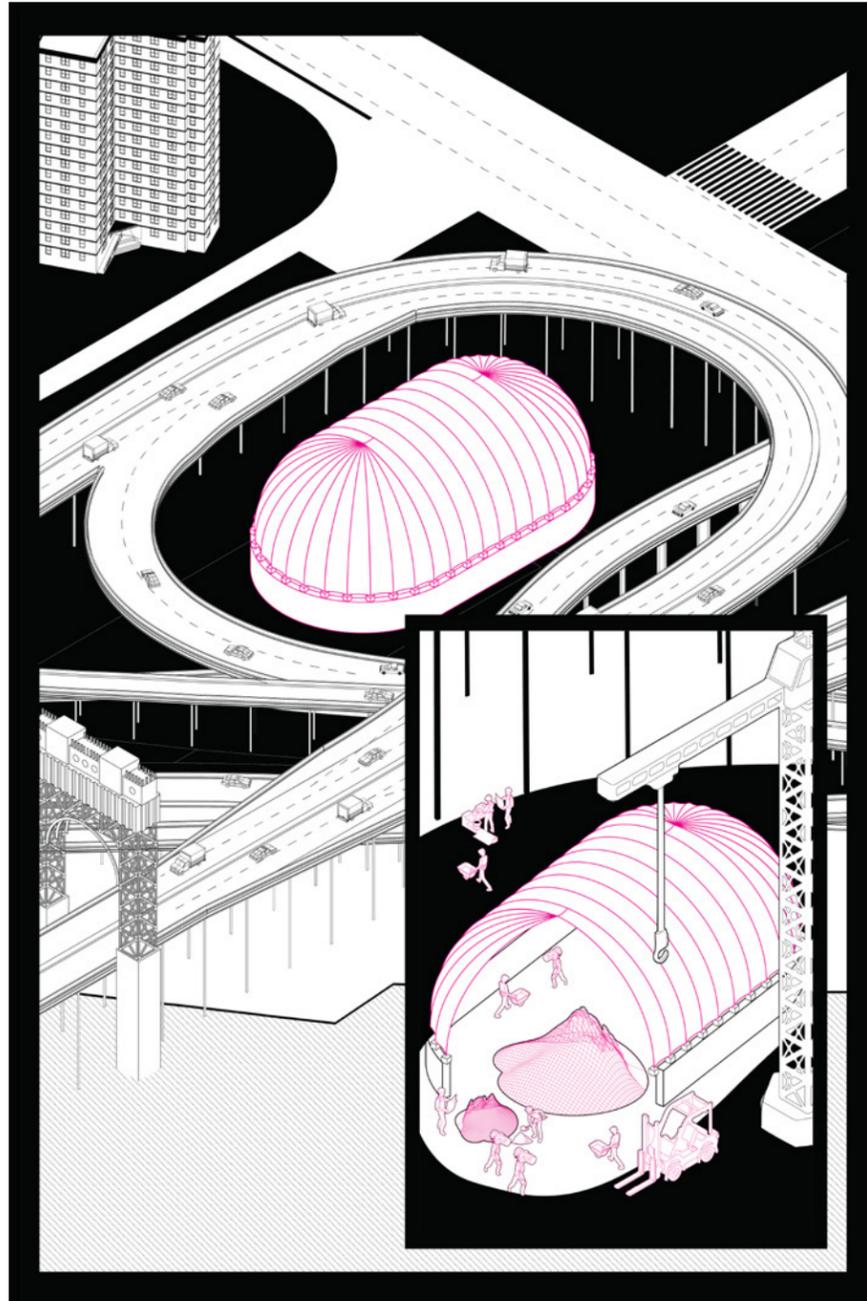
# Specimens: project

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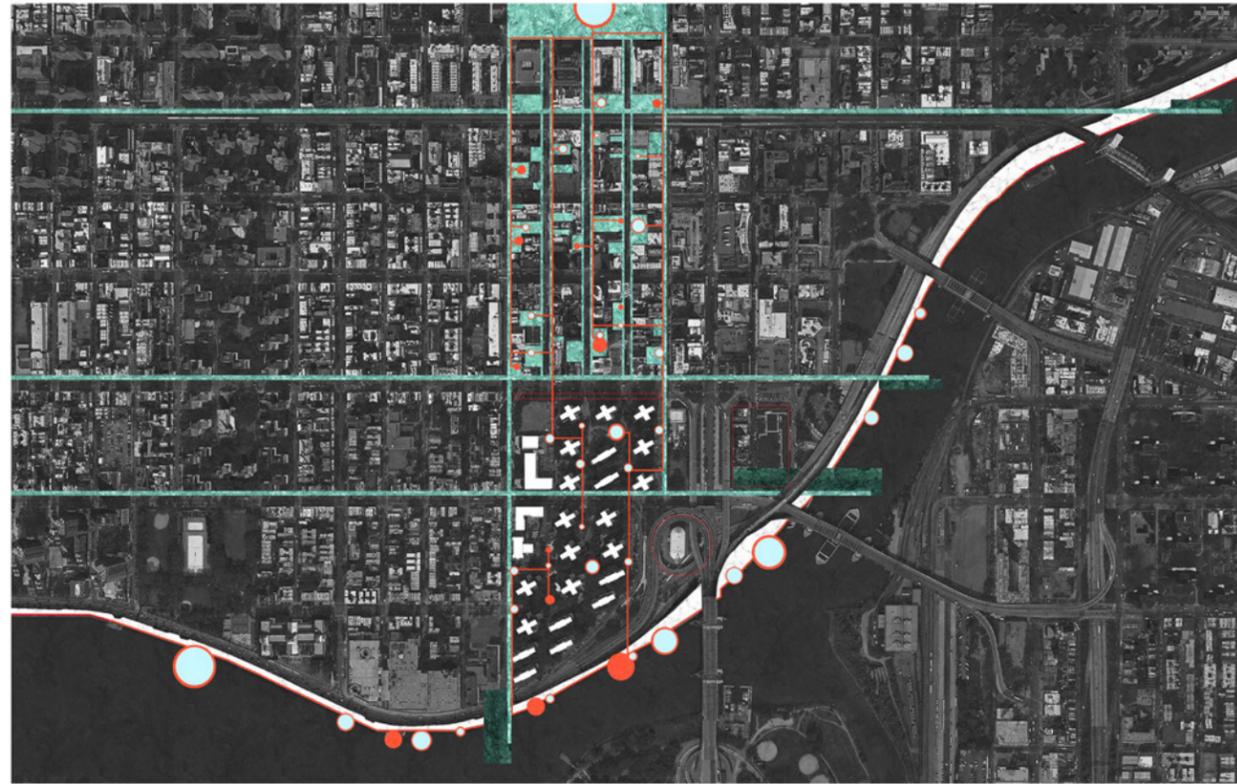
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# Specimens: infrastructure



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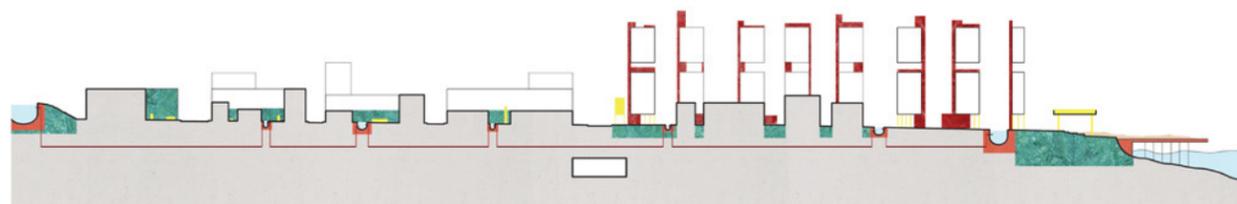
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FDR Transformation

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Wagner Domestic Spaces



Wagner Collective Terraces



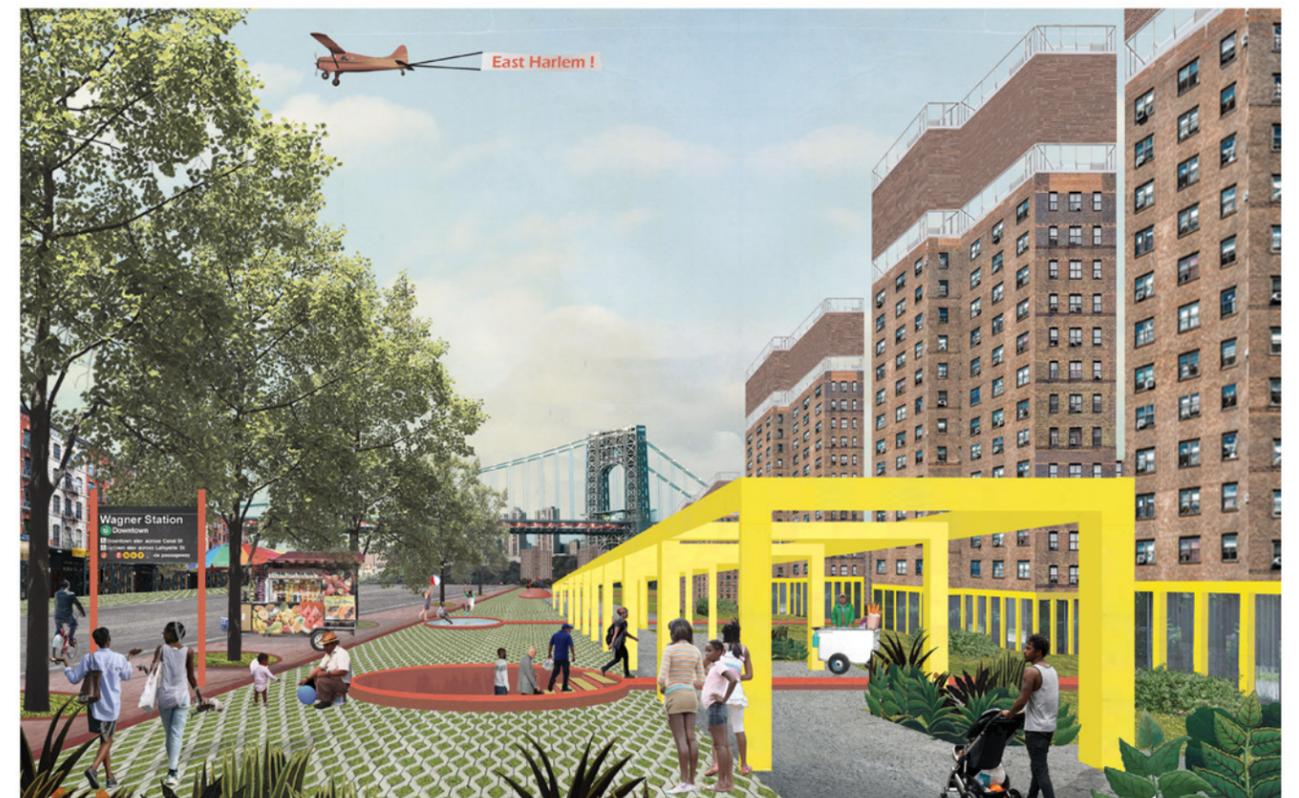
Corrections on Wagner Houses

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Ecosystem of Fragmented Corrections



Corrections on Second Avenue



Harlem Beach



Harlem High Beaches

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East Harlem Beach



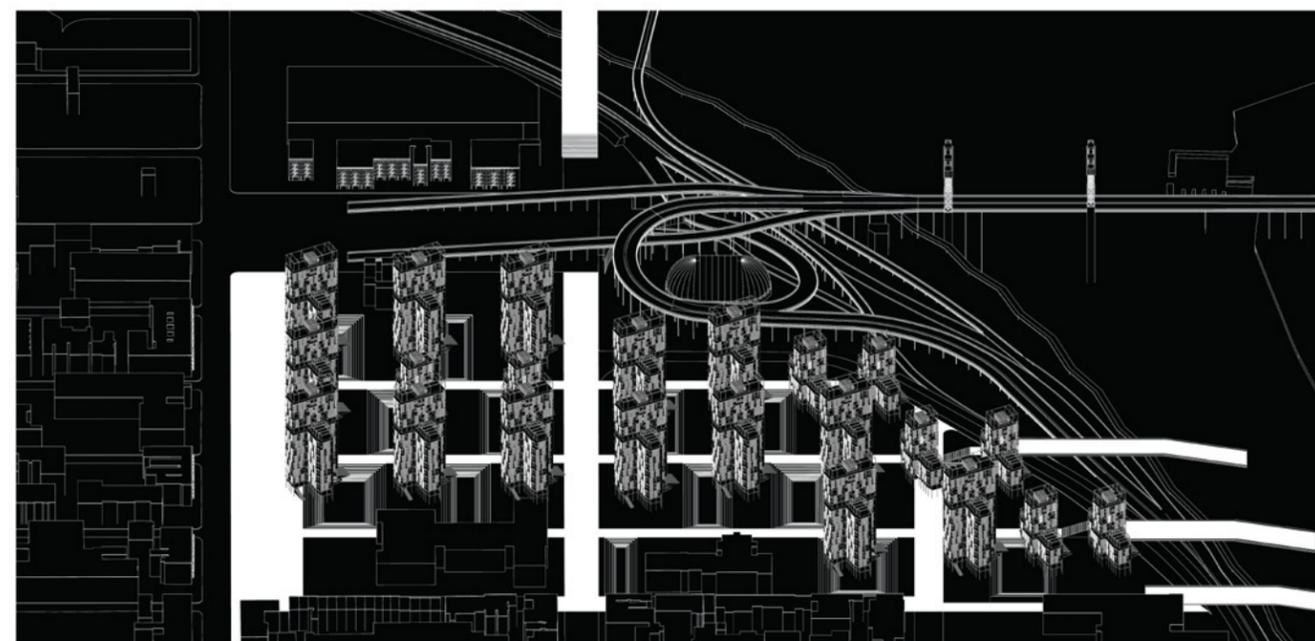
Enactment of East Harlem

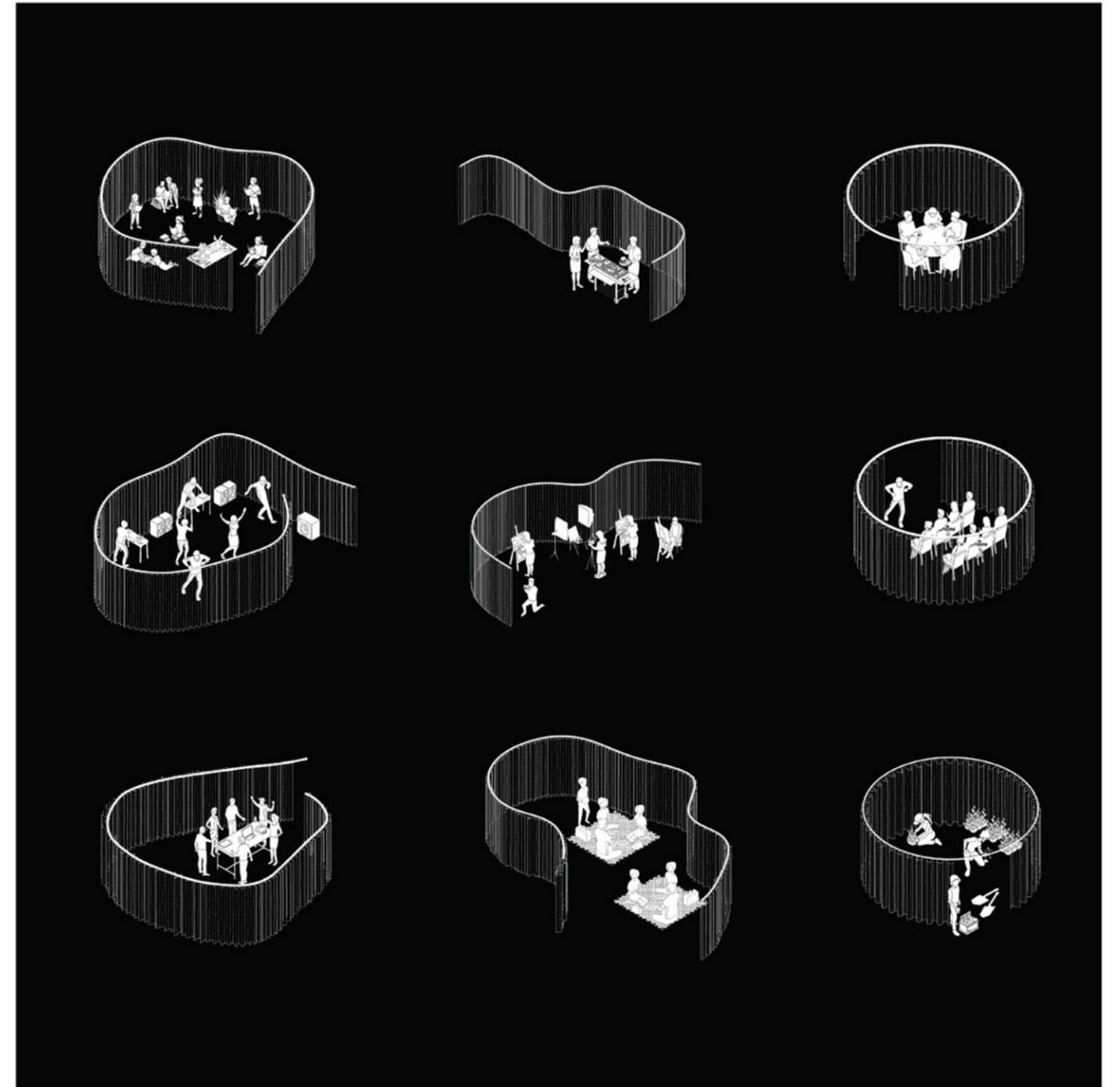
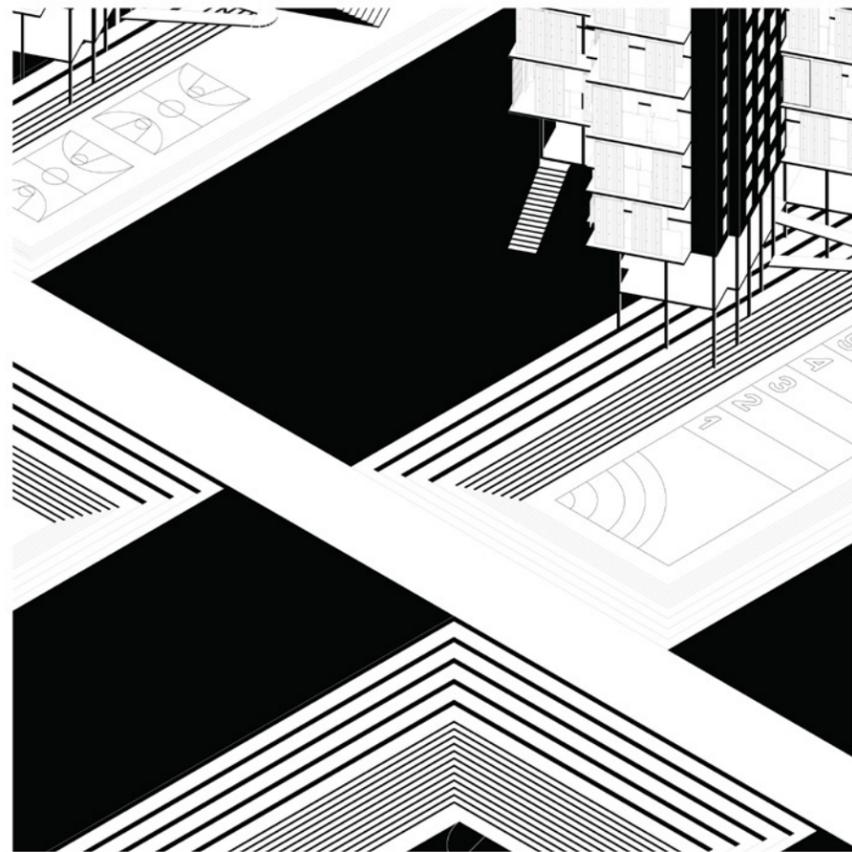
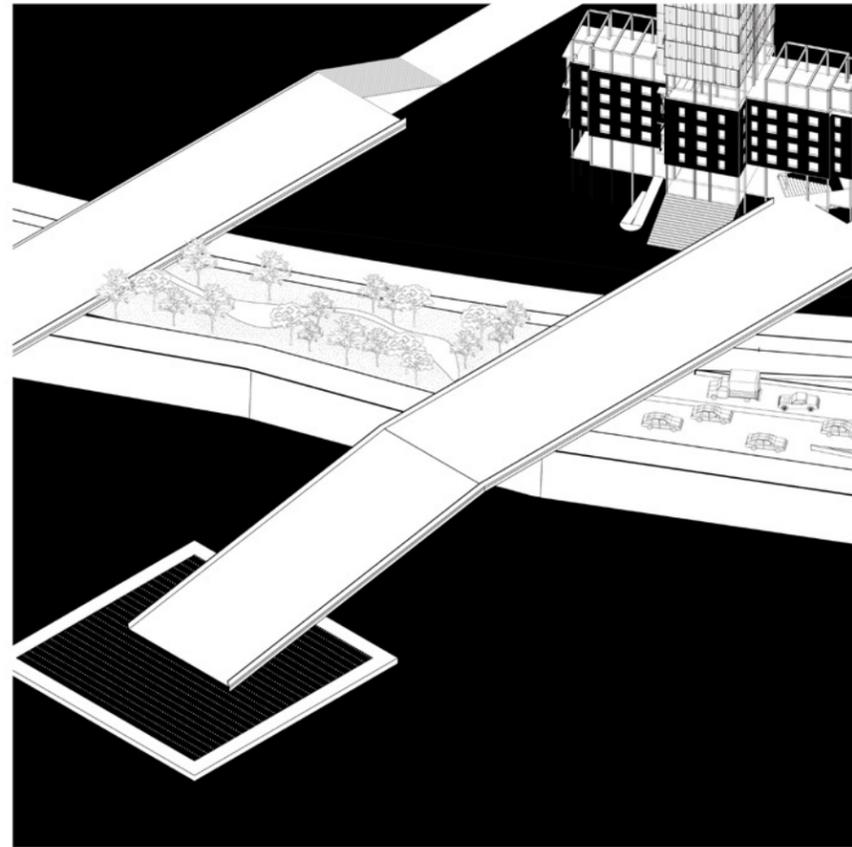
## Final

The final proposal consisted in a series of operations accounting all the different scales involved in the area. From a territorial scale with a more climate focus to the repurposing of housing units to adapt the existing structure to contemporary ways of life.

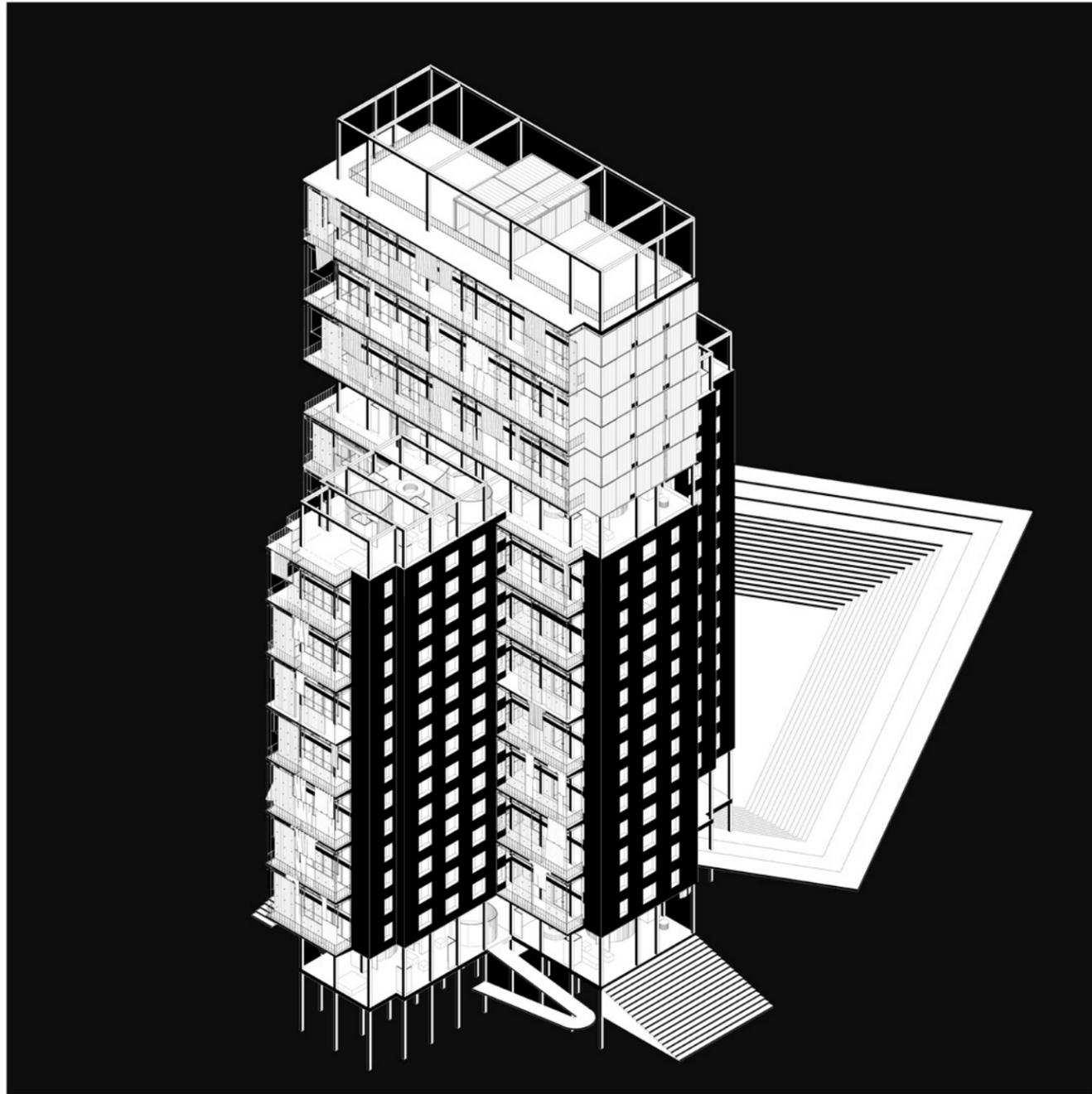
The idea is to install the concept of the beach implied in the presence of the waterfront, not as a luxury but as a part of everyday life. With it, the proposal is to accept the flooding and adapt life to it while creating a waterscape scenario. We stand for adapting to nature rather than forcing nature to adapt to us, like usually happens.

Then, units, programs, structures are adopting a new role to sustain this new proposal which integrates more types of relationships, working, learning, and enjoying.



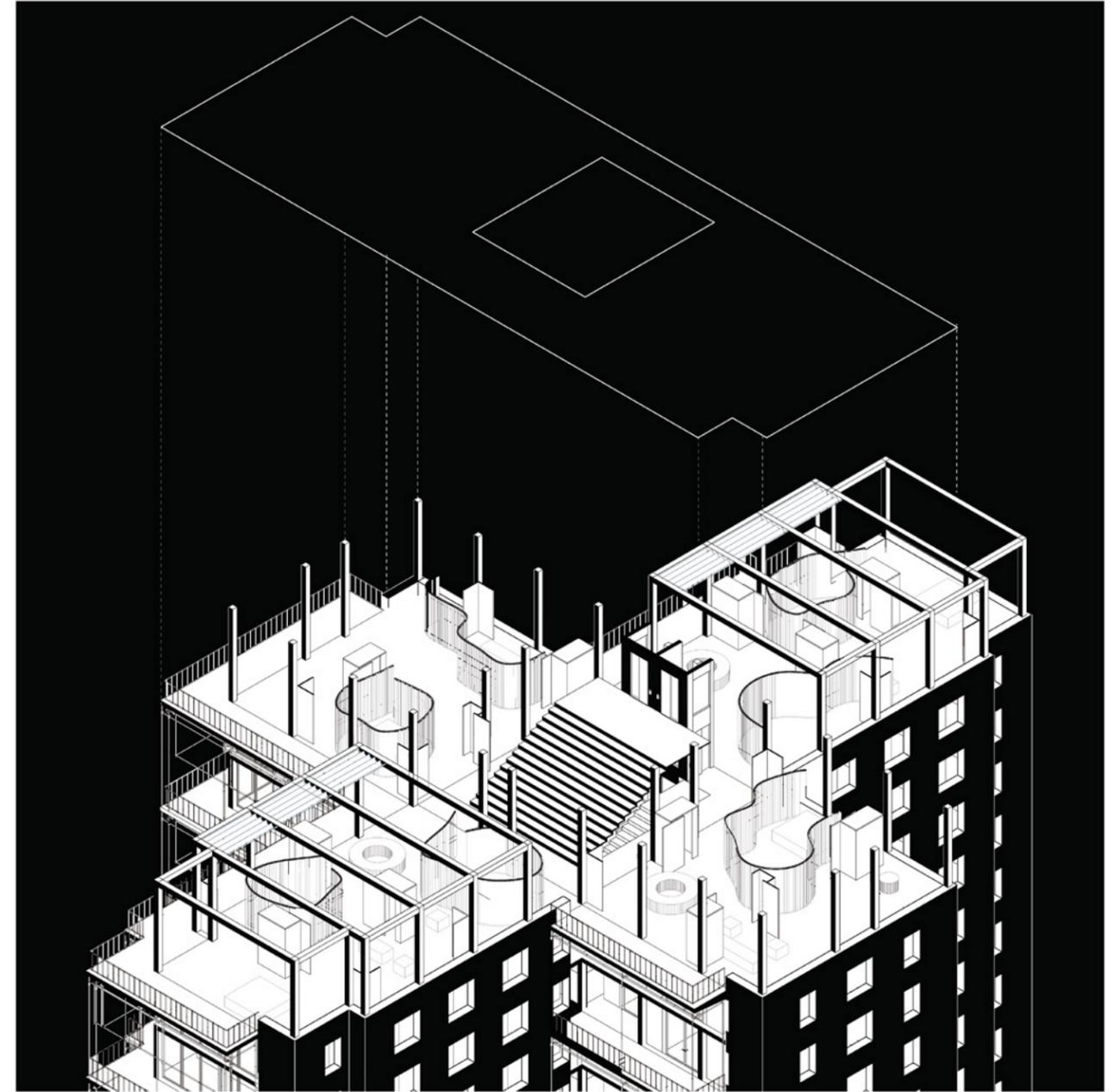
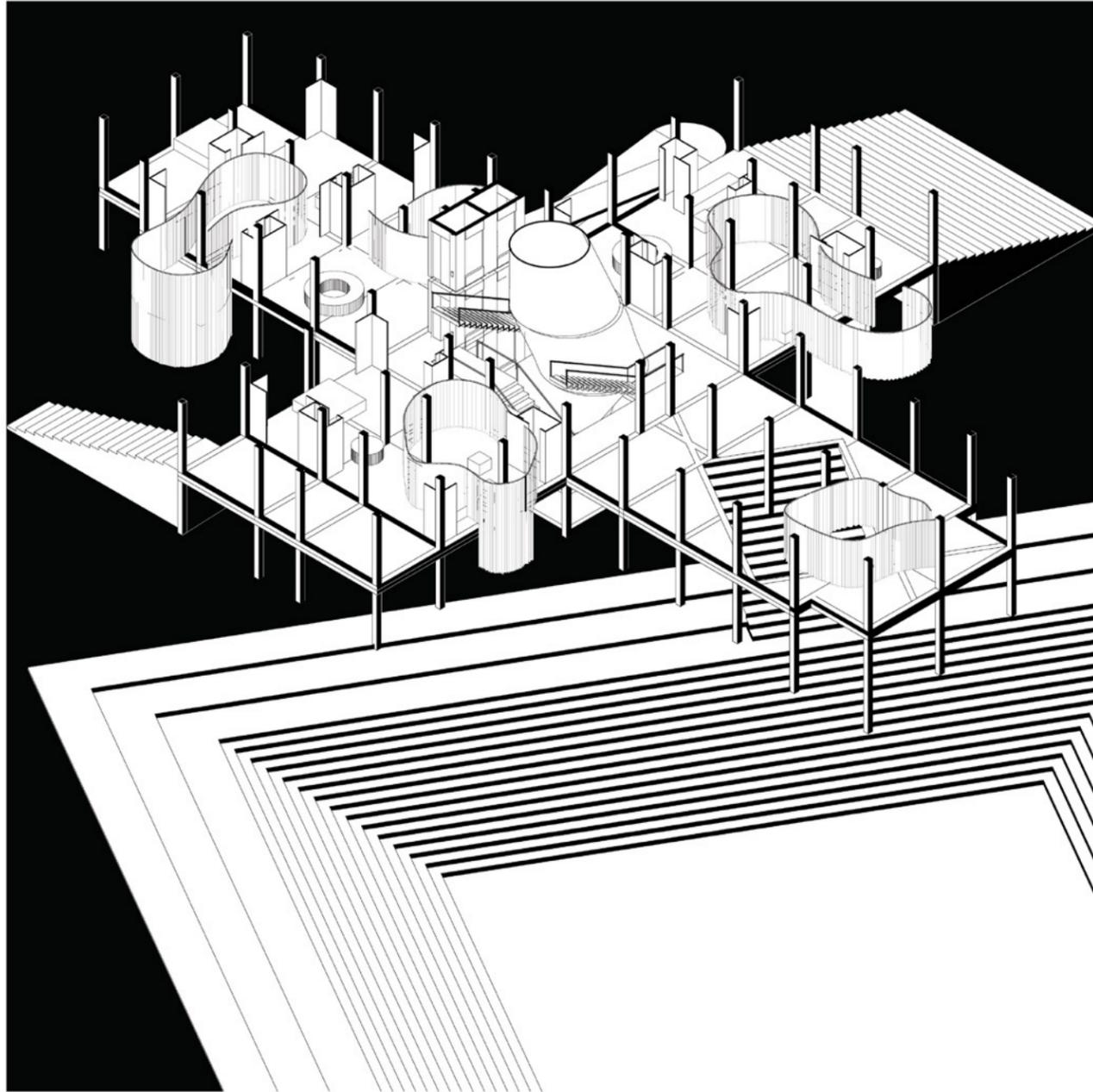


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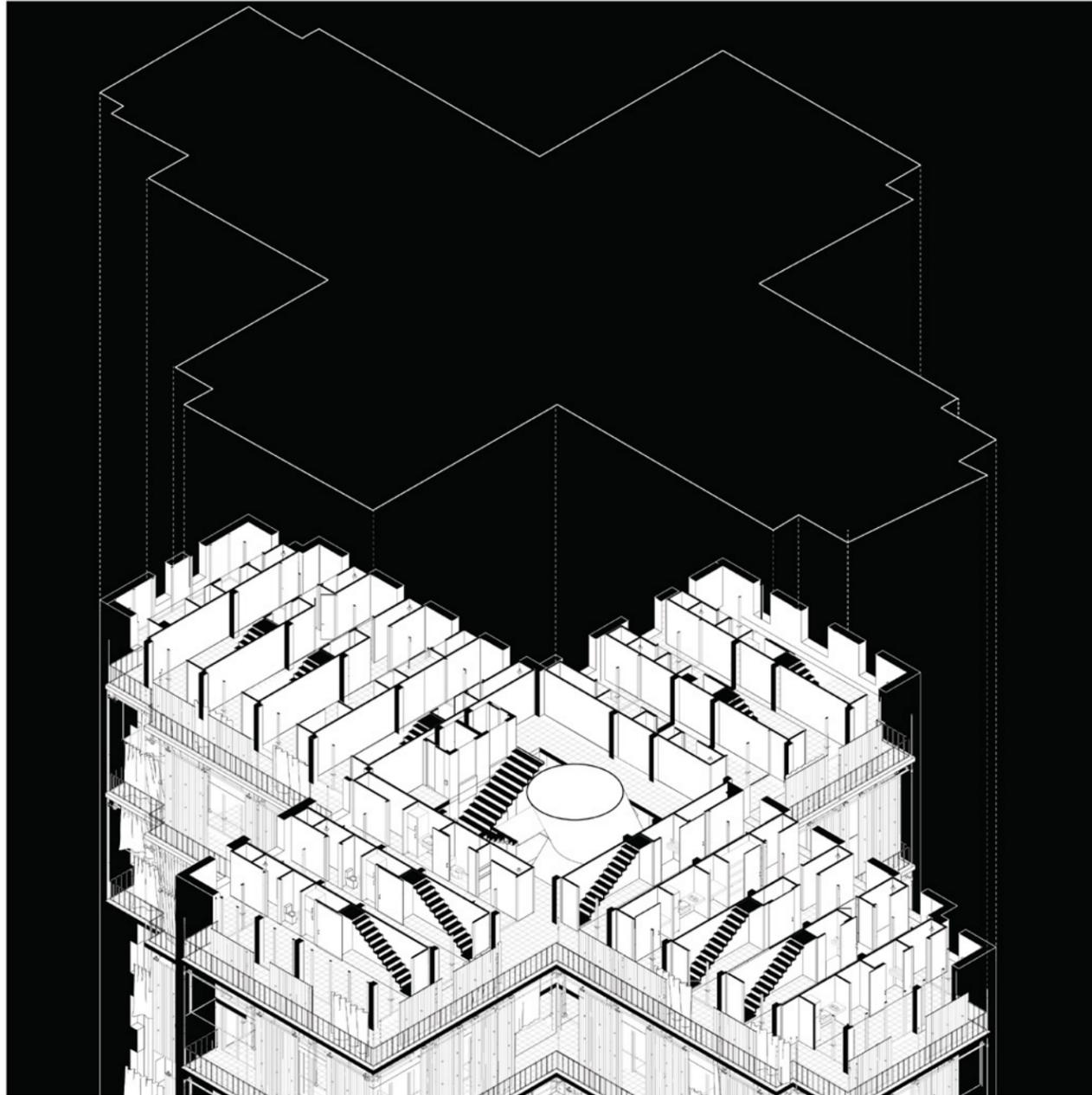




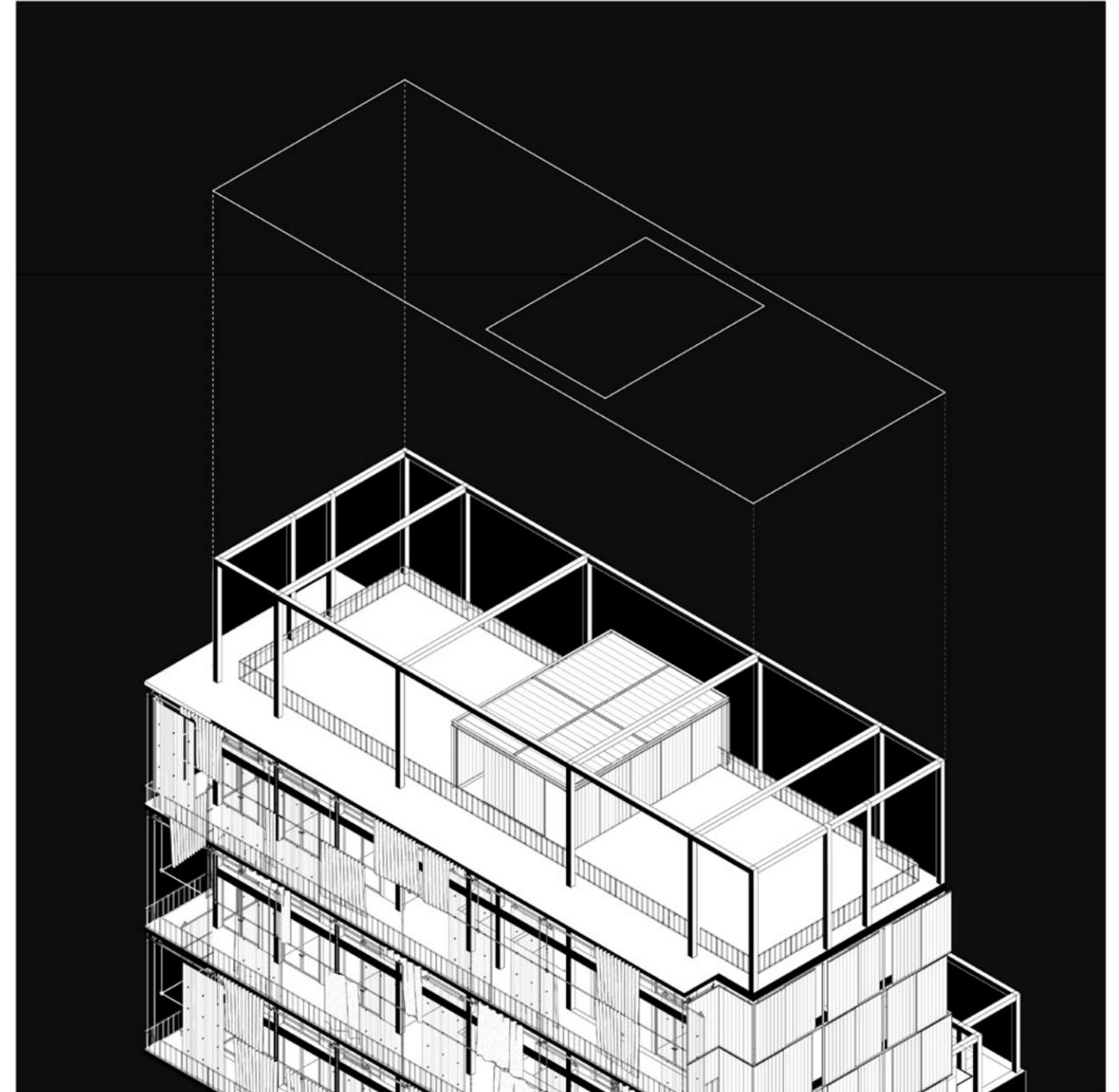
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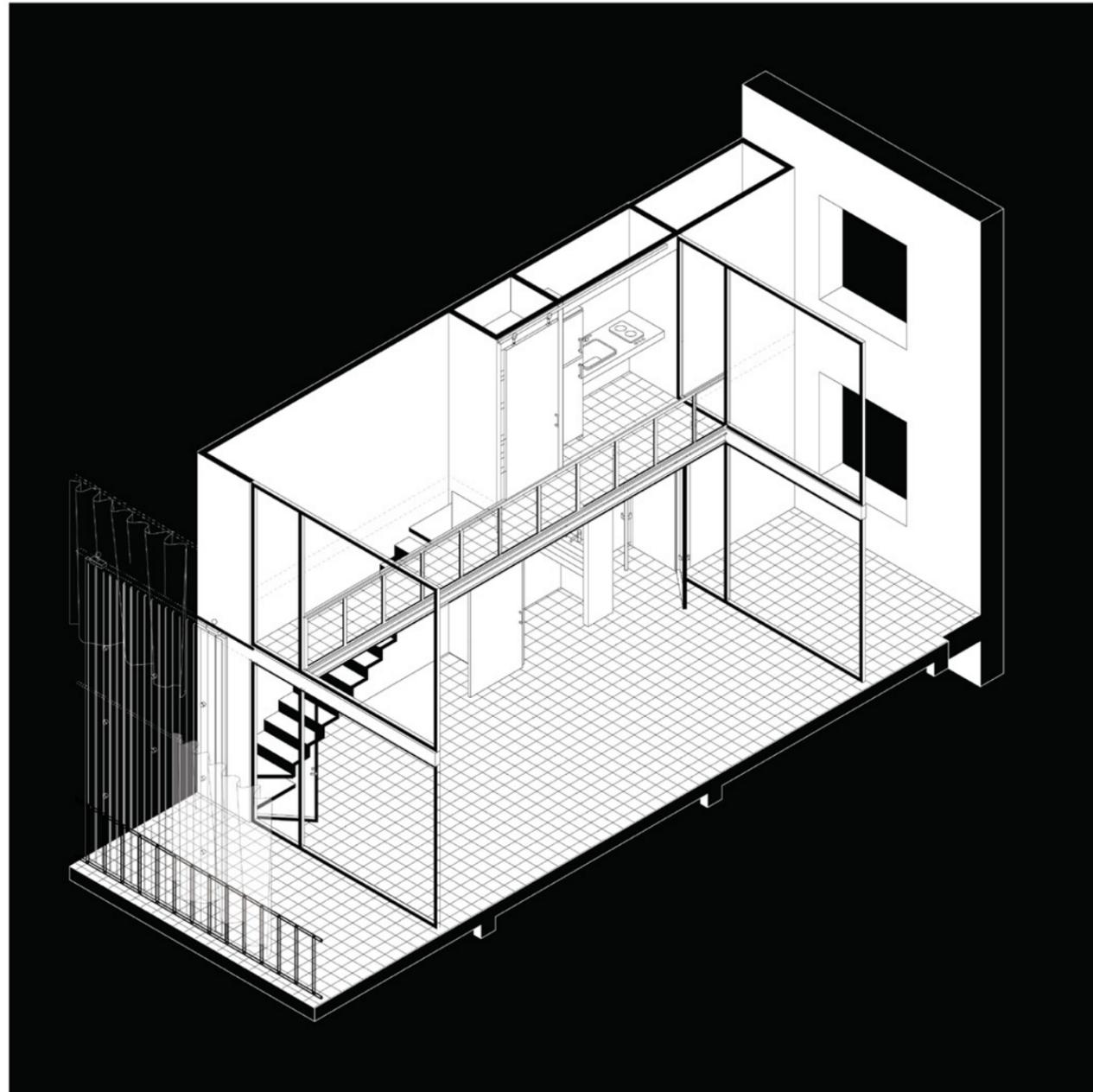
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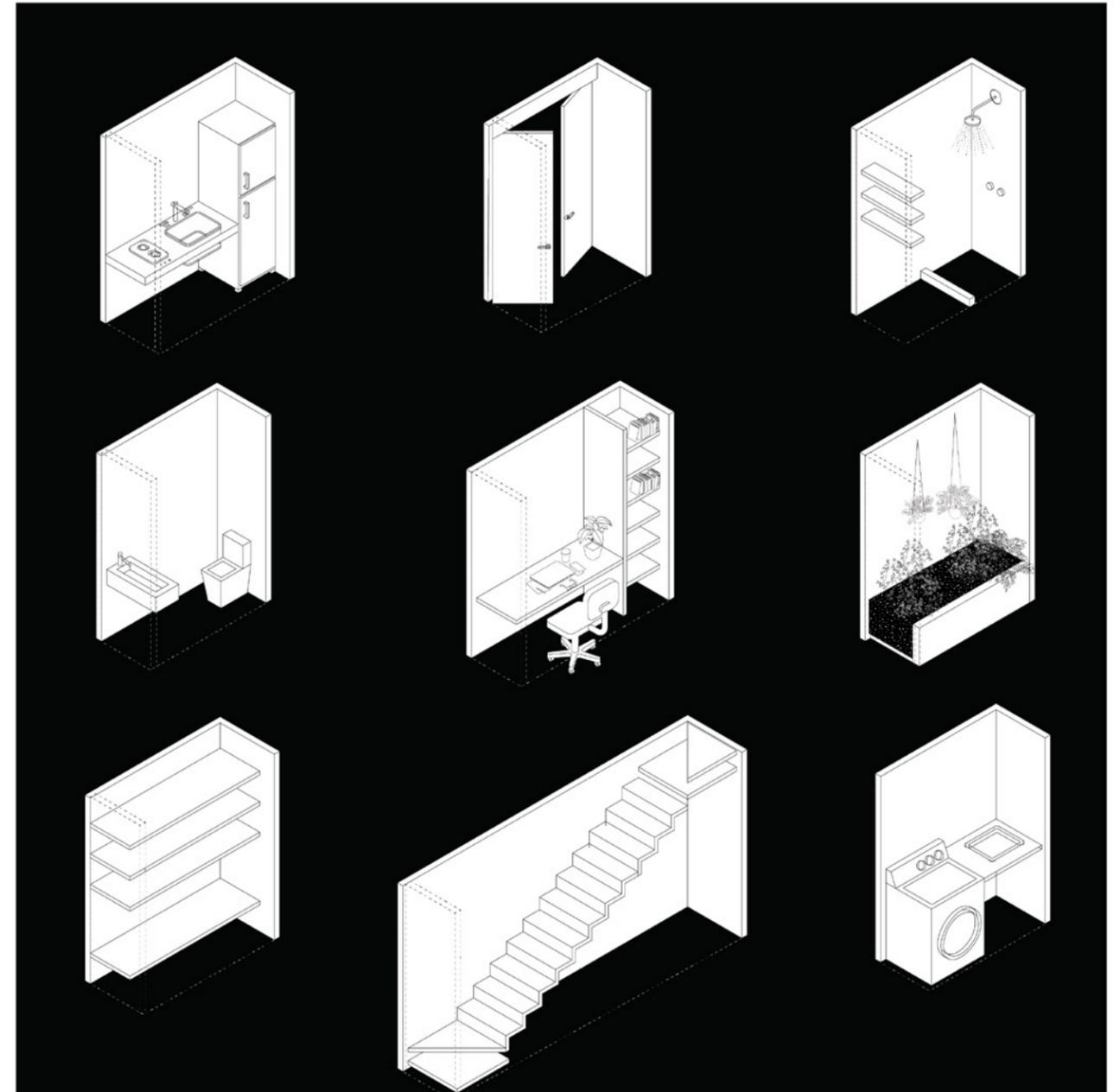
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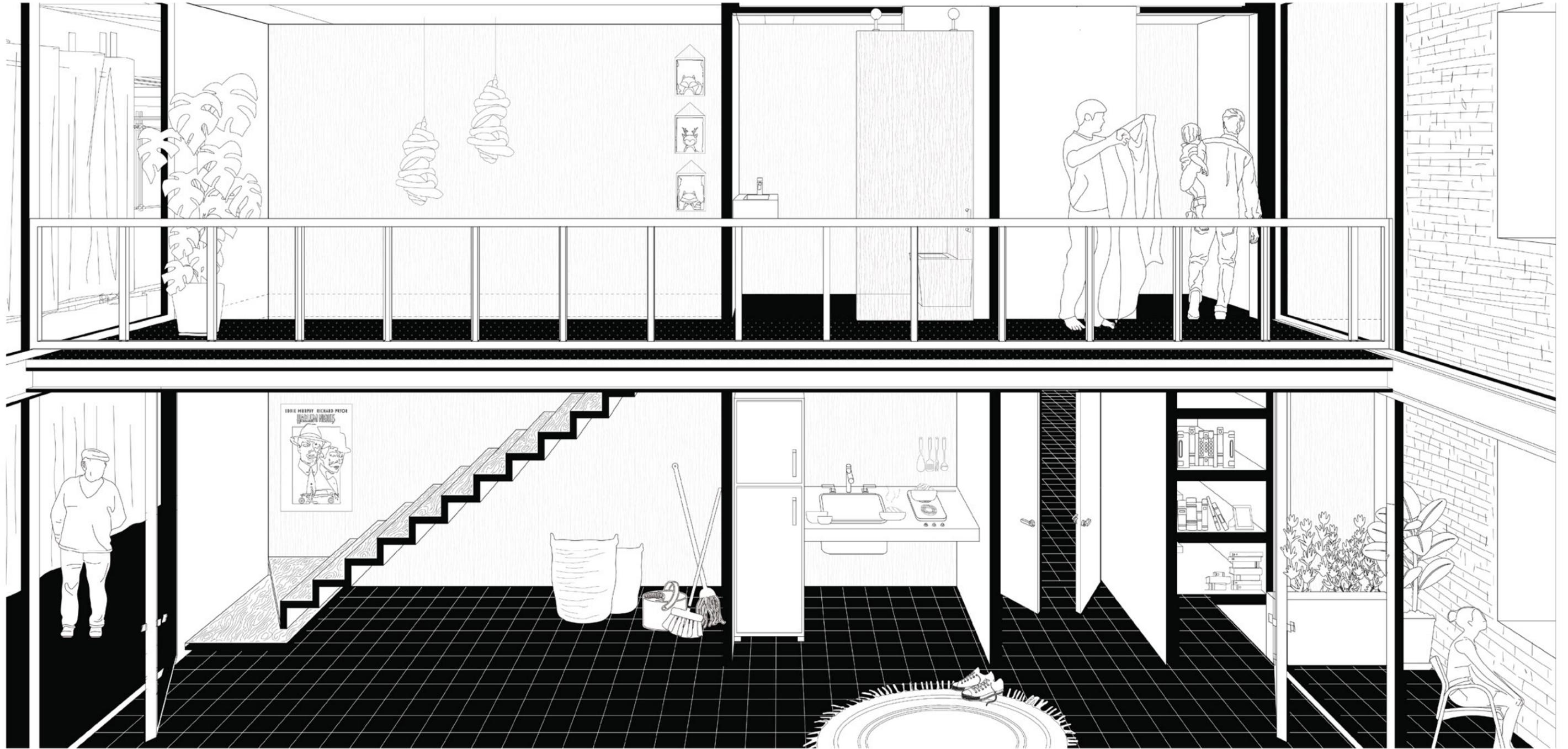


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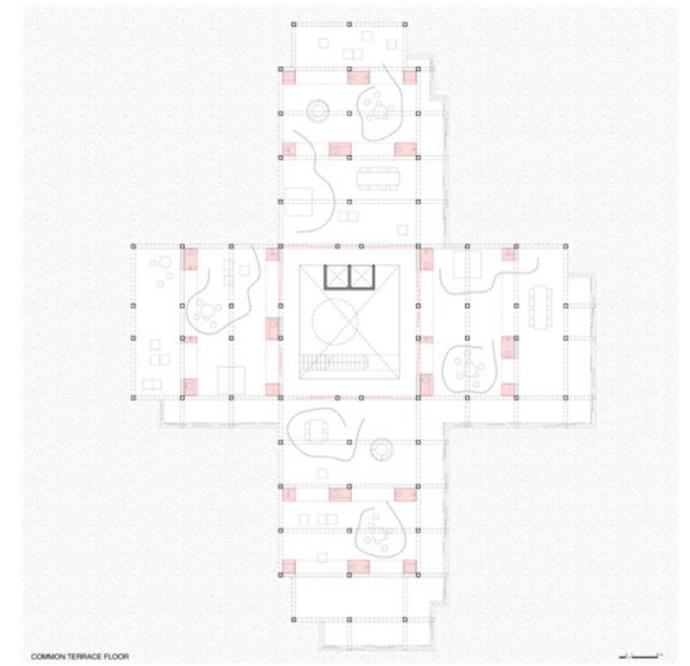
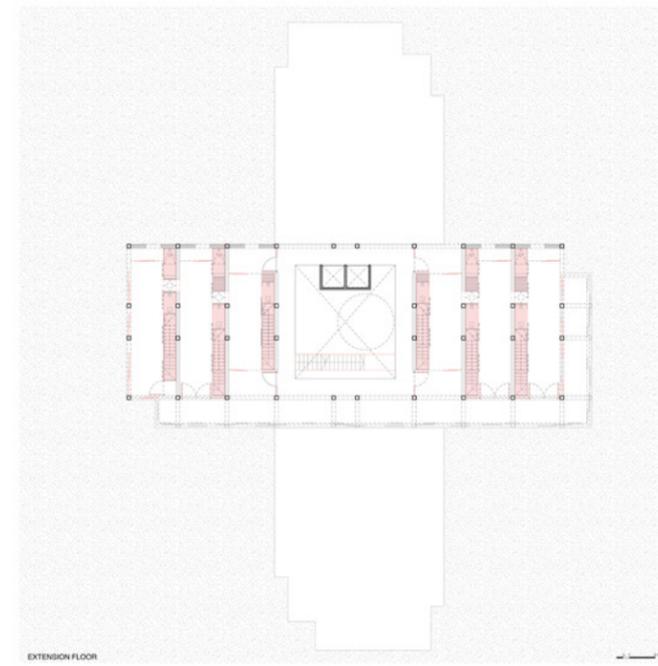
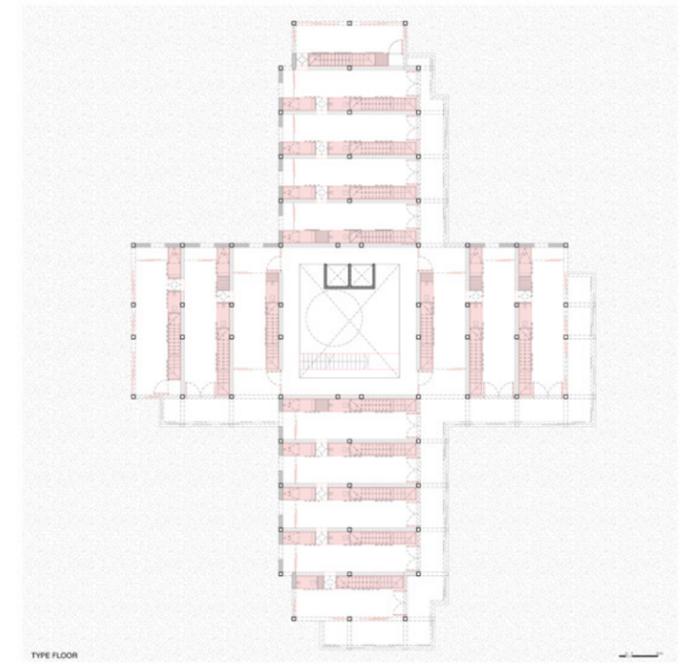
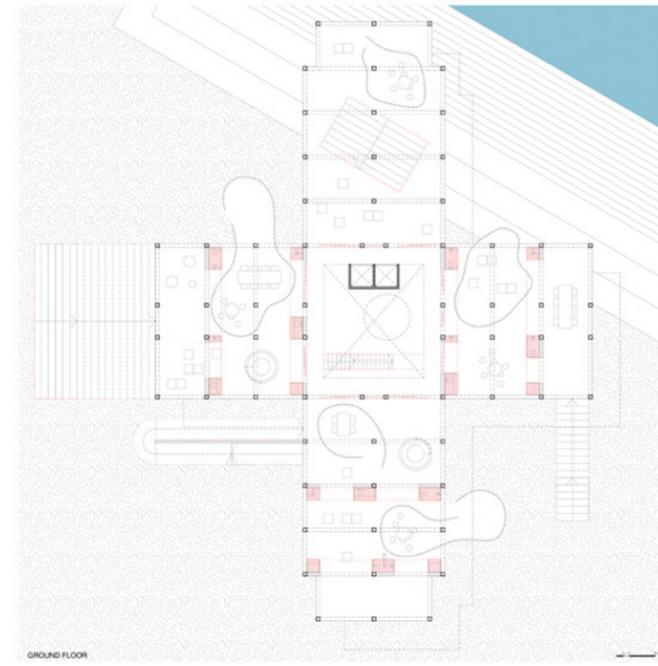
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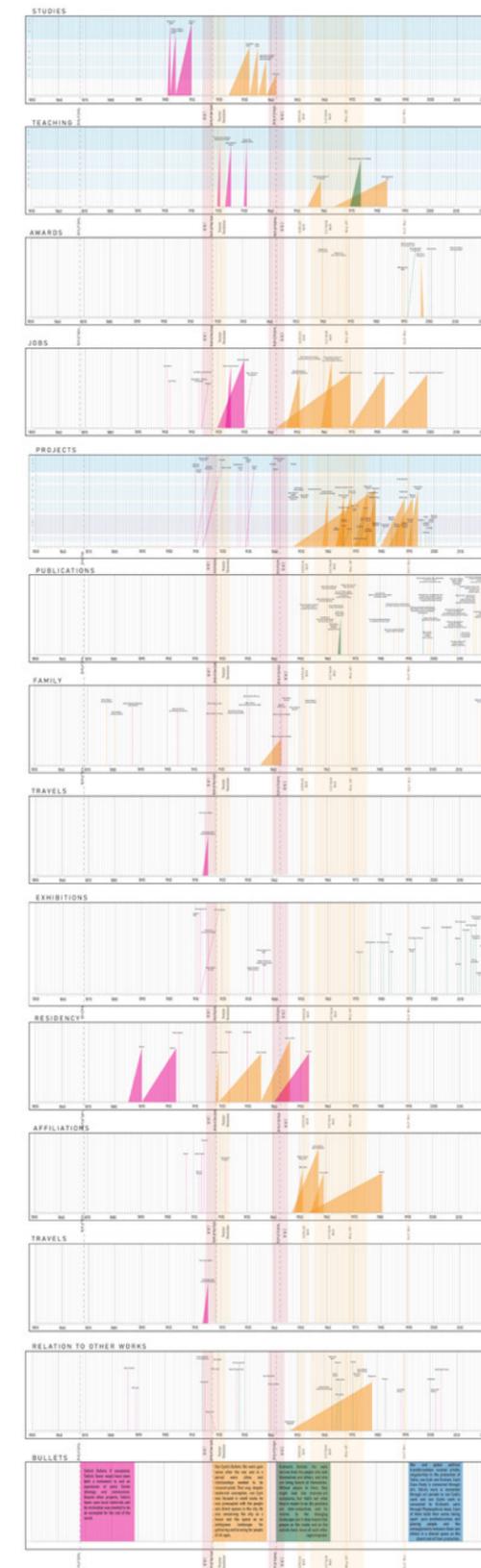
# Transscalar timeline: Tatlin, van Eyck & Graham.

by Malavika Madhuraj & León Duval

A timeline is not just a tool, more than that, a transscalar timeline can expose the entanglements between different figures through history to allow us to understand them as a part of a continuum network which is ongoing and in development, and in the end shaping reality and culture. Then what Tatlin was doing hundred years ago has a big impact in today's comprehension of things. Who worked or which friends had van Eyck becomes tremendously important when understanding his success. Where and why he grew up in a different country also can explain his approach to his architecture and his relationship with art and the vanguards of the 1970s. Then, Dan Graham is understood as a continuation of a long line of artists and architects dealing with politics, space, publicness and privateness and economy.

A transscalar timeline not only exposes the direct affairs to explain some facts, moreover it unveils the relationships between broader systems and actors. It unveils a larger network. Here, the art and the culture has had a deep influence on the architecture production and thinking since the 1900s and these three cases can prove it.

This project was developed for the class led by Juan Herreros during the Fall of 2021.



FA'21

FA'21

## Lastesis

by León Duval.

**This research was produced for the class Kitchenless Stories of Anna Puigjanner. Here, my personal goal was to explore the relationship between street performances, iconic images in the public sphere, art, politics, dissidence, feminist collective and movemenets, and its links to literacy.**

**The actions committed by Lastesis during the recent years have the power to group all of these things together. Their use of the streets while emitting a powerful and decrypted narrative to the community is trascendental to understanding recent ways of defying hegemony. Same thing with the use of the spaces for the performances which only by their presence are triggering strong narratives of unfairness.**

**In the end, these performances are counterposed with the theoric and philosophical envisions by Paul Preciado and the way Pedro Lemebel was describing the subaltern and subterranean spaces of the city of Santiago, Chile.**

**This piece of text is the full body work produced for the class, without notes, references and bibliography.**

## Lastesis

Social crisis, pandemic, and the exception state

In 2020, Paul B. Preciado published the article *Aprendiendo del Virus* as part of the digital book *Sopa de Wuhan*, in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the article, Preciado analyzes, as a thesis, how after different historic pandemics, such as Syphilis and AIDS, different hegemonies suffocated and blamed subalternities, dissidences, and minorities for spreading those diseases. By doing that, subalternity started to see their rights reduced, being confined as the otherness into secondary, unfair and sometimes humiliating positions inside society. With this thesis, Preciado is particularly pointing to the loss of rights and vissibilization of gender and sexual dissidences as well as of the womens in general. On the other side, in Chile, on October 18th of 2019, it started what is called the Chilean Social Crisis, after a group of students jumped over the metro tolls due to the increasing of the ticket prices by \$30 Chilean Pesos unfolding a highly complex cultural transformational process which isn't finished until these days. The Social Crisis emerged as a volcanic eruption occupying every possible urban scenario like plazas, streets, highways, squares, riversides, etc. of every city alongside the country to protest against the historic unfairness of the political decisions taken by the elites, which systematically increased the cost and quality of life until the impossible for the majority of the population. During the crisis, different demands and claims were represented, such as the right to fair a housing, education, health, retirement, and for women, queers and aboriginals among other varied topics. All of them became a general demand to change the current Chilean constitution, which is valid since the 80's when Pinochet was the dictator of Chile. Claim that finally was voted in a historic national plebiscite, which took place on October 25 of 2020. In November 20, 2019, in the context of an ongoing Social Crisis, the feminist group *Colectivo Lastesis* emerged publicly with the collective performance *A Rapist on Your Path* in the city of Valparaiso (Chile), and concentrating the feminist claims in Chile. Therefore, and after an unprecedented and an organic explosion of different performances created by Lastesis all around the country produced indistinctly by their or by other feminist groups, the collective became world-widely mainstream with their touchy and sticky different chants and performances which starts to popularize feminist theory, locally creating a deep impact in the "conservative" Chilean society. This merge between art, theory and activism makes them an extraordinary case for the understanding of the

contemporary feminism in Chile and in Latin-American.

Hence, in the understanding that Paul B. Preciado is speaking in a general and broadly way about the pandemic effect on society, particularly when he is affirming that subalternity rights with their visibility and legitimacy in society started to decay after a pandemic started. Likewise, in Chile, much of the transformations, changes and cultural victories obtained and promoted by groups of women, like the *Colectivo Lastesis*, has been constrained and slowly suffocated by hygienist policies and politics reproduced by the state and by a system that is trying to defend itself against any type of culture evolution. Moreover, the recent winning of the extreme right candidate and supporter of Pinochet's regime in the first round of the Chilean presidential elections occurred November 21 of 2021 seems to corroborate the affirmation launched by Preciado on his article, and stating the hypothesis of this article. That's why, under the frame of Paul Preciado's work, I'll trace the subliminal relationships established between the Chilean Social Crisis, the Covid-19 Pandemic, the voice of the subalternity framed in the case-study of the *Colectivo Lastesis*, the role of the hegemony, framed in the role of the State and the government. Then, this research focuses on the relationship between language and narratives as a way of changing realities, and the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic in the Social Crisis demands. Particularly, focusing on the performing spots and scenarios utilized by Lastesis, which appears to unfold iconic heteropatriarchal landmarks. Thus, I'll trace, map and render the social transformation started by Lastesis throughout the Social Crisis and the Pandemic until these days.

The history of Lastesis, as is mentioned in their web page, is framed under several events that occurred in Chile since 1988, when they were born. Almost at the end of the dictatorship. That same year was the plebiscite for the yes or no to the continuity of Pinochet in power. In 1990, the first democratic president after the dictatorship started his mandate. Then, in 2006 was the first college protests for a better quality of education, named as the 'Penguin protests'. Afterwards, in 2011, and because of the 'Penguin protests', the College protests started demanding quality and free education due to the high price of education and the high debt it generates in families. In 2018 was a massive feminist protest against patriarchy and capitalism. Finally, in 2019 starts the Chilean Outbreak or Social Crisis, which is ongoing right now, waiting for a new constitution and the election of the new president of the country. Particularly, during the outbreak is when the collectives mediatically appeared again, positioning themselves

as the feminist referent to follow. After that, a series of events happened related to the feminist protests and the outbreak, which are still ongoing. Different performances were produced and executed in Chile and abroad and the collective got an amazing and quickly notoriety. In the end, all of these events escalated until creating the perfect scenario for the appearance not only of the big outbreak of the 2019 but also of a collective who could represent all the voices of the local feminism by popularizing the inaccessible theory to all who wanted to hear. Which by the way was exploited in different forms all around the continent at that time.

Thence, Lastesis, the collective composed by Paula Cometa, Daffne Valdés, Sibila Sotomayor and Lea Cáceres started with the idea of entangling arts and politics around feminist ideas in the form of a collective work. At the beginning, they weren't looking to become activists nor referents of the feminist movement, they were just intending to create a performative play framed as an artistic work. Thereupon, they started thinking about their proposal from the scenic arts, but after a short period, they decided to achieve an interdisciplinary project to better expand the message of the feminist theory. "A theory that isn't well known by society and which isn't easily available for everyone in the official educational channels. Then, they not only work from theory and language, they also work by interpreting it, and translating it into visually, textile, sonority, and bodies to expand the message." In the end, that strategy allowed them to reach and massively congregate a huge population of mostly women who felt attracted to participate in playful but critical and highly theoretical short performances in the public space. So, as they say, "the decision of narrating these stories in plural instead of in singular is meant because plurality has a feminist political position and because same historic violence happens to all of us as a collective." Then, as Camila Aguayo, leader of the plurinational Feminist Assembly, explained to CNN Chile in 2019: "they put feminist demands and proposals of feminist theories at the disposal of all of us to understand them. They speak of patriarchy, of an oppressive state, but through dance and an artistic intervention that everyone can understand." The same article also mentioned that after the appearance of Lastesis in the local panorama women started to shout against police stations, as symbols of the repression against citizens and particularly women. Here, it is important to mention that the lyrics of the performances are also inspired in the police anthem as an irony for an institution who performed during the dictatorship and then during the outbreak cruel repressions against those they swore to protect.

In relation to the theoretical framework of the collective, they said: "At first, we worked with the 'Caliban and the Witch' of (the Italian-American activist) Silvia Federici and

then we took the thesis of (the Argentine anthropologist) Rita Segato on the mandate of rape and the demystification of the rapist as a subject who exercises the act of raping for sexual pleasure." Then they continue expanding their theoretical framework with more authors as well as documenting several cases of female abuses. Like cases of sexual violence, murder, and raping in Chile. Which all of them entered as part of the information for the construction of the performances. Like so, in their webpage they published as inspirations: "The Caliban and the Witch" by Silvia Federici, "Patriarchy underpins all other forms of inequality" and "Whoever has power over women's bodies also has power over the nation." by Rita Segato, King Kong Theory by Virginie Despentes, "Sin Miedo: Formas de resistencia a la violencia de hoy." by Judith Butler, "Aprendiendo del Virus" and "Feminazis" by Paul Preciado, "¿Puede hablar el sujeto subalterno?" By Gayatri Spivak, and "Colonialidad y género" by Maria Lugones. Also, in their book *Antología Feminista* released in 2021 they published a series of essays which composed their latest frame of references, where we can summarize the work of Guerrilla Girls, Manuela Infante, Mina Loy, Gertrude Stein, Paul B. Preciado, Kiki Kogelnik, Gabriela Mistral, Judith Butler, Paz Errázuriz, WITCH, Simone de Beauvoir, Diana Taylor, Carmen Berenguer, Artemisa Gentileschi, Rita Segato, Elsa von Freytag, Lina Meruane, Lucía Cuba, Mary Wollstonecraft, Elena Caffarena de Jiles, Mónica Mayer, Chimamanda N Adichie, María Lugones, Mara Viveros Vigoya, Birgit Jurgensen, María Mies, Silvia Federici, Marina de Caro, Alejandra Pizamik, Olympe de Gouges, Regina José Galindo, Virginia Woolf, Francisco Casas y Pedro Lemebel and Virgine Despentes. All these names creates an amazing a huge collection of feminist authors on which the work of Lastesis can be understood and projected towards the future.

In addition to the theoretical construction of the Lastesis phenomenon, the collective started ordering their artwork as a big collage because, as they said: colleges don't have hierarchy. In colleges, every piece has a similar role and only the spectator can order and hierarchizes the work as pleased. As such, Lastesis started to configure their performances as organic auto-calls, which soon started to spread beyond their domain. As Paula Cometa mentioned in an interview with the BBC News in 2019: "... the truth is that the performance got out of hand and the beauty is that it was appropriate by others." In that way, functionally speaking, the performances commonly are organized in a very spontaneously way. Usually by WhatsApp chats of feminist groups, where videos of the performances are sent to every person of the chat who wants to participate. The videos are sent anonymously through the chats for every woman who wants to participate to watch and practice at home to later go and perform with the rest of the

people at the required spot. The performance then is a series of chants and choreographic movements repeated at different occasions in a short period of about 15 minutes. The use of color, clothes, painting and bandanas are important aspects of the performance. On many occasions, the performers use a black bandana covering their eyes as the symbol of the anonymous victim violated by a repressive heteronormative and patriarchy system. As they are saying in their book *Quemar el Miedo*: "The experience of one is the experience of all of us". About the artistic aspects of the performance produced by Lastesis, in an article written by Nadya Tolokonnikova from the Pussy Riots for the Times magazine "The performance of the Chilean feminist collective shows how popular art can change the world, not entertain".

The history about the first performance committed by Lastesis in Valparaíso the 20th of November of 2019 starts with a performance originally conceived to be part of a university event on October 24, 2019. Event, which has to be rescheduled due to the outbreak. Then, with the theatrical company La Peste they did the performance in a series of small street interventions. After that, they received calls for reproducing the performance in other parts of Chile, taking the invitation to do another one in Santiago on November 25th. Performance who got international attention. All the attention led the collective to decide to share the music and the lyrics for everyone who wanted to do the performance, anywhere in the world. At the moment, not only in the Americas and Central Europe have the performances of Lastesis being performed, but also in different parts of Africa, Asia and Oceania, reaching the five continents, and hundreds of spots. In relation to the deep impact that the performance quickly took in Chile, Cometa said: "I believe that, in the Chilean case, there is an experience that has to do with a memory that has not yet been eliminated, which is that of the dictatorship and the experiences of violence that the State can exert on citizens." On that interview, Cometa also comments how the latest performance gathered more than 10.000 people outside the National Stadium, highlighting the fact that the stadium was a torturing center during the dictatorship. Placing then the dictatorships with its neoliberal proposal and the heteropatriarchal society as the target for their performances. So, as they are explaining in their book *Quemar el Miedo*: "The isolation of feelings and experiences has allowed the patriarchy to take us by surprise, alone and anguished. Through the real internalization of empathy and sound, in connection with the collective, it is that we can defend ourselves from patriarchal cages"

However, it's important to mention that not everything was positive for the collective, "When we created "a rapper in your way" we received lots of threats in digital's social media. Bothered, and the first reaction of many people was

to defend themselves with a 'not every one of us is like that'. Even, some say 'why are you saying that I'm a rapper when I'm not one?' When evidently it is about a staging, a performance that points to a sentence to which we are exposed. It is an artistic way of saying that we are not safe." Situations which exposed part of the ways that man in general felt when we saw the performances for the first time. Also, bothering particularly the system itself.

In that order of things, the places on which the performances are taking place aren't casual. As the mentioned intervention in front of the National Stadium, which symbolizes a torture space during the dictatorship as well as a place of pure sexist masculinity, duo to the association of the complex with the fútbol culture, Lastesis usually occupy different important spots for the heteropatriarchal imaginary. Besides the Estadio Nacional they used as background for their performances three main spots in downtown Santiago and one in Valparaíso. In Santiago, firstly they used the public space in-between the Instituto Nacional José Miguel Carrera, the Club de la Union, and the Calle Nueva York. That space is crucial in the history of Chile because it congregates in one place the iconic male public school of the country where most of the presidents and politicians used to study, the club for fine gentlemen where the high class of mans associated to the Spanish colony gathered around luxury to talk about man's things without any woman, and the neighborhood where the lawyers work. All of them, places for the reproduction of the toxic masculinity that Lastesis are trying to remove from culture with their interventions. From there, Lastesis also met in front of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, another place associated in Chilean society with extreme masculinity. A place in-between the Museum of Fine Arts which symbolizes the perpetuation of the conservative art, usually performed by men, and the Parque Forestal, which is located surrounding the building, and symbolizing the former colonial high class of the city and the country. In Valparaíso, they gathered in the Plaza Sotomayor, the principal civic square of the city where all the iconic buildings lay. The monument built for the sailors killed in the Pacific War, the building of the Armada de Chile, the Minister of the Cultures, the Arts and the Patrimony, and the headquarters of an important international shipping company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a port workers strike several strikers died in a cruel confrontation with the police in a very deplorable action performed by the state towards its citizens. The rest of the space is composed of buildings, which represent the maritime power and the war that occurred in XIX between Chile, Peru and Bolivia. All of them, symbolic images of the violence of an oppressive state commanded by the conservative elite which is perpetuating the heteropatriarchal system today. Summarizing, it's quite

interesting that more than the performance itself with its main narrative, the location, the scenario, the background and the buildings are occupying a crucial role for the success of the intervention. In a way, what was called during the colony as Power Theatres when referring to the main squares of the cities now, after the Lastesis performances are becoming Counter-Power Theatres, for the deconstruction of the civilization they helped to construct.

Therefore, and relative to the theoretical background of the Lastesis and the importance of the location in the effectiveness of the performance, it's interesting that the work of Paul B. Preciado and Pedro Lemebel are also forming part of the framework of the collective. Then, Lastesis, Preciado and Lemebel are forming a triumvirate of authors related by the weights of the land that they are exploring. In that order, Preciado's work, which is referential in many ways for Lastesis, is talking about dissidences and minorities in general. In the article "Aprendiendo del Virus", which is crucial here, he explores how those subaltern portions of the population are suffering from different hygienic crises by the hand of the hegemony, but in a worldwide manner of speaking. On the other hand, Lemebel used to talk about particularities of the queer community in the Chile since the 80's. In his stories, Lemebel is narrating hundreds of subterranean places of the light of the city. He is telling the story of the ones outside history. Describing masterly the neighborhoods, the houses, the rooms, and the transit of the Chilean dissidences and minorities throughout the city, almost without touching the hegemonic part. In a way, Lemebel is narrating the story of the ones Preciado is describing in general when he's talking about the problems derived from different sanitary crises throughout history. Thus, the places that Lemebel was describing in his stories are the home of most of the people that are protesting nowadays and participating in the performances gathered by the Lastesis. In addition, in many ways, those outcast places symbolize the opposite of the ones that are being highlighted by each performance today. Moreover, it's interesting that for Preciado the Chilean Pedro Lemebel is also part of his personal collection of references. Therefore, for what matters in this article, if Preciado is extremely useful to frame the understanding of Lastesis in the context of an in-between panorama of crises, then Lemebel is super accurate for locally placing those conversations in the actual streets of the Chile who suffers by the local hegemony.

Nonetheless, about how dissidences and non-hegemonic communities become in times of health crises, and despite somebody could say that the thesis of Paul B. Preciado isn't working in the case of Chile nowadays. After the beginning of the pandemic and in the middle of an ongoing social crisis, all the facts led to think that Preciado's thesis was

wrong; what's stipulated in his article "Aprendiendo del Virus" couldn't explain the Chilean case. After a couple of months the pandemic started to spread in Chile, a plebiscite was held to determine if the constitution of the country needed to be changed in order to create a democratic and inclusive document to lead the Chileans to a new future. As the big agreement due to the outbreak a few months before the pandemic starts. A new constitution far away in the distance from the current one created in times of the dictatorship of Pinochet with an extreme neoliberal focus printed on it. As was mentioned, the plebiscite was won by the majority of the population (an 80%) who wanted to change the constitution. Nevertheless, that history started to break slowly after two years of confinement and a state of exception imposed by the government. The extreme right-wing candidate who is taking the flags of the security, the order and the economy nowadays leads the presidential race. Reproducing the same hate speeches of other populist extreme right-wing politicians around the world and promising the same repercussions for the minorities, dissidences and women in Chile. For example, on his presidential program, the extreme right-wing candidate and first majority José Antonio Kast states the following points among many others in relation to family, women, and gender: "249. . . . Opposition to the approval of "homosexual marriage" and the option of adoption, protecting the "best interests of the child" which is constituted by the right of every child to have a father and a mother"; "308. Incentive for postponement of retirement age. . ."; "The end of the Women's Ministry, "678. Likewise, we defend life conception. We will repeal the law that makes abortion possible. . ."; "682. Offer incentives to married couples. . ."; "771. Reclaim the Spanish language [Castellano], eliminating gender language. . .". The word "gay" doesn't appear in the program, the word "homosexual" appears once, "género" five times, "mujer" six times, but "familia" appears forty times and "seguridad" 58 times. The program has 204 pages. All of what is confirming the thesis of Preciado.

Even though, in the following days, the second round of voting for the Chilean presidency is going to occur, and the left-wing candidate is now supposed to tightly win according to the latest voting polls reproduced, it's still possible to keep affirming that Preciado was right in the end. After two years of pandemic, a society who voted majority with the 80% for practicing radical changes to the drive of the country, and who still isn't supporting the ongoing "moderate" right-wing government, now is about to place in power an extreme government that is dangerously close to a fascist faction. In two years, that 20% who didn't want changes and who are mostly supporting the dictatorship changed, alarmed by the information reproduced during the pandemic to an almost 50% of the population who is about to vote for an extreme conservative

and populist candidate for the government. All of what only attempts harming the rights of the minorities and dissidences residing in Chile by a hegemonic, neoliberal, and conservative officialism.

"The Covid-19 has displaced the border policies that were taking place in the national territory or in the European super-territory to the level of the individual body. . . . The new necropolitical frontier has moved from the coasts of Greece to the door of the private home." This quote taken from the work of Preciado kind of summarized the recent history of the world and what's happening in Chile nowadays. For that, even though the Chilean outbreak allowed the common people, the subalternity, the minorities, the dissidences and women to shout loudly for what's needed and for what's right, and despite those actions led to important transformations that are taking place these days. Is also important to mention that even though there is a strong force pushing for changes the system is resisting and is defending what "he" has gained through history. Especially if it has the help of a pandemic and all the possibilities that the event allows for the elites to keep where they are. Nevertheless, some of those same tools that are being used by the system can be turned back to it, like the digital mechanism created by Lastesis to viralize their propaganda throughout the globe as an open source. Therefore, even though Preciado in general was right, is quite interesting how an small collective of young women from a secondary city in Chile could popularly expanded the feminist and other dissident claims by combining popular art with hard theory in the form of an anonymous, un-hierarchical, and massive performance which can be reproduced everywhere by anyone.

by León Duval

**Man-mankind dogma**

by León Duval.

“Cyborg Manifesto by Donna Haraway is showing us a non-that-dystopian reality nor a possibility of a subversive future but rather a very real reality which it has been reproducing itself as a incremental loop since humankind becomes a **man-mankind** -and a trap for woman, man’s non-man-mans and non-humans (like a Cretan labyrinth hybridized with a Trojan horse)-. Particularly, I noticed when Haraway on his Cyborg Manifesto affirmed that “The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self.” (Haraway 2016, 33) she was presenting a crucial tension by defying **man-mankind dogma** of classification and statu quo, which had allowed capitalist man-mans to keep controlling culture’s wheel so far. Similarly, but from a quite different angle, Mark Wigley’s Pipeless Dreams article magisterially analyzed the piping-world taboo whith its inherent hygienist-white-westerner-male’s obsession. Hence, when Wigley occupied Buckminster Fuller’s words about exposing and unveil what was veiled and suppressed by -in my words- a man-man’s capitalist society which is preoccupied with the superficial appearance of its rendered reality he is becoming in a sort kind of “Malinche” who clarifies what’s argued by Haraway’s Cyborg Manifesto, specially what’s on her quest to unmask and dismantle a rendered assemblage organized by a “minority” of society.”

## Transscalarities Assembly.

by León Duval.

**T**hese two small articles produced for the Transscalarities Assembly discuss the role of utilitarianism and the implicit dialectics between hegemony and subalternity, between collectivism and individualism when understanding the shared spaces of the city.

## The absurdity of usefulness.

A review of Gordon Matta-Clark's Reality Properties: Fake Estates (1973)

**“R**eality Properties: Fake Estates” by Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-1978) consisted of exposing the absurdity of the dialectic of usefulness and uselessness of space in a neoliberal context. Moreover, with this work, land ownership more broadly is being exposed as absurd, defying by this a whole institution, the establishment and western culture in general. This project involved the cheap acquisition (\$25-\$75) of fifteen private lots, of approximately 2.4 square meters each (14 in Queens and 1 in Staten Island) as in image 4, many of which “were literally inaccessible and landlocked between buildings or other properties”. As a first step in this project, as appears in images 1, 2 and 3, being precisely mapped, deeded and photographed and diagramed into collated image compositions for their public exhibition (for more details on the acquisition process refer to the diagram in image 5). Here, Gordon Matta-Clark is ironically using some of the techniques of the “absurd” system to show its own absurdity. Secondly, but uncertain due to his early death, by occupying those lands and performing in them, turning what seems to be useless into usefulness. In one interview Matta-Clark said: “They [the lots] are perfect for speculating on which kind of activities could occur there”.

Methodologically, for selecting these awkward lots, Gordon Matta-Clark searched for useless and leftover lands in urban spaces around New York City. Then, he started searching for “the in-between wall space, the mechanical space, the neighboring space...”: all the remains left by the urbanization system with its suburbs. Moreover, this particular quest was motivated by his childhood fascination of finding spaces for speculating about when usage patterns end, when the usability of a space becomes un-useful. Furthermore, searching and inventorying these impossible lots allowed him to unfold normalized structural problems of our administrative system whereas allowing him to transgress the social boundaries of utility while testing a childhood dilemma on when usability stops and uselessness starts.

Hence, this work has mainly the virtue of exposing (to society) what is unusable due to its inaccessibility (physically and culturally), but moreover, exposing the absurdity of the inaccessible leftovers produced by our own economic and political system. Additionally, it has the virtue of starting a dialectic of what's useful and what is useless, problematizing the value we assign to each one. In a more general approach, this

multilayering tiny intervention has particularly a deep impact by questioning what is imposed by a system which is operating by controlling, fragmenting and normalizing heterogeneity (of landscapes, ecosystems and communities), dissuading other possibilities (and the otherness itself) of being, acting and performing. In the end, by buying useless pieces of land, Matta-Clark is defying the rational utilitarianism of the neoliberal system, and by his work he's exposing its absurdity in a stark way.

Finally, whereas this project highlights the absurdity of the system, it also prompts a secondary lecture, starting a speculation on how to use that which seems to be un-useful, turning un-usefulness itself into an instigation for neighbors, the state, and the system itself.

by León Duval

## The playfulness of ambiguity.

A review of Aldo van Eyck's playgrounds (1947-78)

**R**ather than being just small attempts of public space reconversion after World War II, the playgrounds of Aldo van Eyck were radical manifestos for the materialization of ambiguity in an extremely functional world. The playgrounds were particular opportunities taken by the City but called from the citizens to bring back the lost everyday life. They symbolize the reconstruction of vividness and usefulness and a turning point from the sadness of war to joy.

Regarding this project, Richard Sennett wrote that "The designer's goal with these small parks was to teach children to anticipate and manage ambiguous transitions in urban space." Moreover, Sennett criticized the antagonistic posture of Le Corbusier -and CIAM- due to his pre and post-war Functionalism and Mechanisms approach to the city, and understanding cities from a distant, productivist and untangled position. Thus, whereas Le Corbusier relegated the streets to functionalism, van Eyck designated them as the realm in which people "know" cities, and each other. Hence, unlike Le Corbusier, van Eyck found in each available public lot a potential learning and educational space, and a secure place for gathering together.

Sennett's ideas are very important for understanding the condition of ambiguity inherent in van Eyck's playgrounds. Furthermore, this ambiguity is crucial to understand those playgrounds as playable and learning spaces for the entire society (and not only for kids). Making a playful approach as it relates to urbanism, its major premise whereas the main difference to Le Corbusier's aseptic and functionalist ideas. As seen in Images 3 and 4, a leftover, a ruin, or an old parking lot becomes a speculative space for experimenting and reclaiming squares by kids for joyfulness in the form of every imaginable game. Inside, not only kids but the whole neighborhood were occupying local playgrounds while performing unpredictable actions like in a way that is reminiscent of Peter Bruegel the Elder painted many years before in his *Kinderspelen* (1560). With its simple lines, clear geometries, different textures and lack of directions, van Eyck's playgrounds realize the Bruegel dream.

Van Eyck, who studied first in England and then architecture in Switzerland, took a position in the Urban Development Department of the city's Department of Public Works. With Jacoba Mulder, he started designing several playgrounds, even after he stopped working for the city in 1951 to

start his own bureau. At the City they started operating against CIAM precepts, accepting the narrow constraints of the surrounding conditions of everyday, ordinary Amsterdam. Van Eyck enacted a major postwar development "accommodating immediate user needs, and exploiting opportunities offered by the immediately available sites." He transformed leftover city sites from "blind spots" on a city map into "an inescapable reality" (as seen in images 1 and 2), turning upside-down the CIAM presets for a large-scale design.

Finally, Aldo van Eyck with his playgrounds was not only revolutionizing how to operate in public spaces and burying the CIAM but more importantly, simply, and radically, he was turning a damaged city back to a secure space to be, to play and to learn. Definitely, van Eyck's playgrounds constituted spaces where the square connects physically and cognitively with people through the ambiguity of its form.

by León Duval

## Watertown's Military-Industrial Dystopia

by León Duval

**W**hat if we stop the military-industrial complex from seamlessly assimilating into the infrastructures of Watertown by producing an an-educational performance in the prison to expose it to what has been evacuated? Can we use this void to make room for repair and an alternative future?

This performance is framed under the collective research produced in the Exostructures Studio by Laura Kurgan. The Studio explored the upstate New York reality and the issue of mass incarceration in the US. The first part of this chapter corresponds to the collective investigation, followed by my personal proposal for the recently closed prison of Watertown. As I believe and understand, the problem of mass incarceration and the prison industry is not possible to solve with a replacement or a design, instead I'm producing a deeducational performative event which can be held in the area of the prison or abroad, and remotely. In here, my investigation led me to understand how in the case of Watertown, the prison industry as well as the rest of the industries in the city are subjugated to the Military-Industrial-Congressional Complex in the form of the Fort Drum, which is co-opting the will of that part of New York State since the 1920s.







# Watertown's Military-Industrial Dystopia

An alternative story for the future of former Watertown's prison

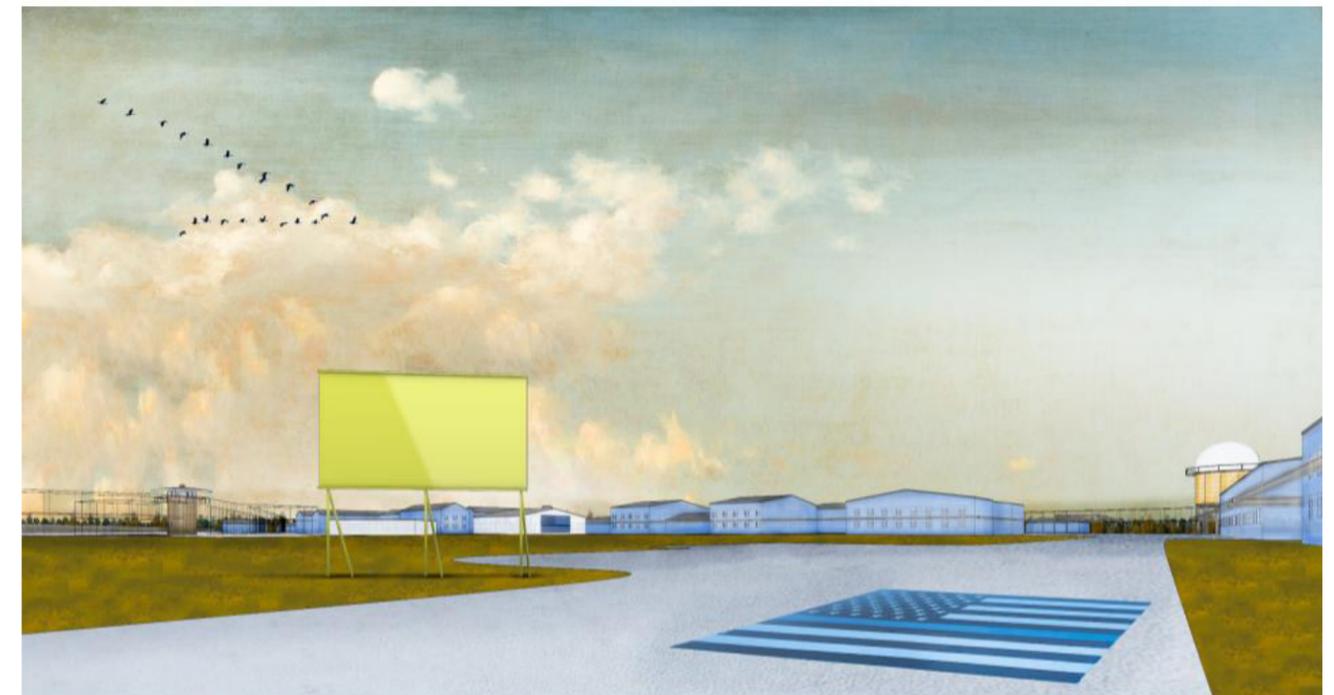
1. The performance starts: Watertown's Military-Industrial Dystopia, is the name of my proposal for the city of Watertown, Jefferson county. This proposal, rather than looking for the replacement of a program or an structure, takes the form of a research proposal and a performance which aims for an understanding of the image of the prison as an exostructure embedded in the network of the city. Since it has closed, the prison is endangered by other hegemonic industries that have occupied the city since the 1920s.



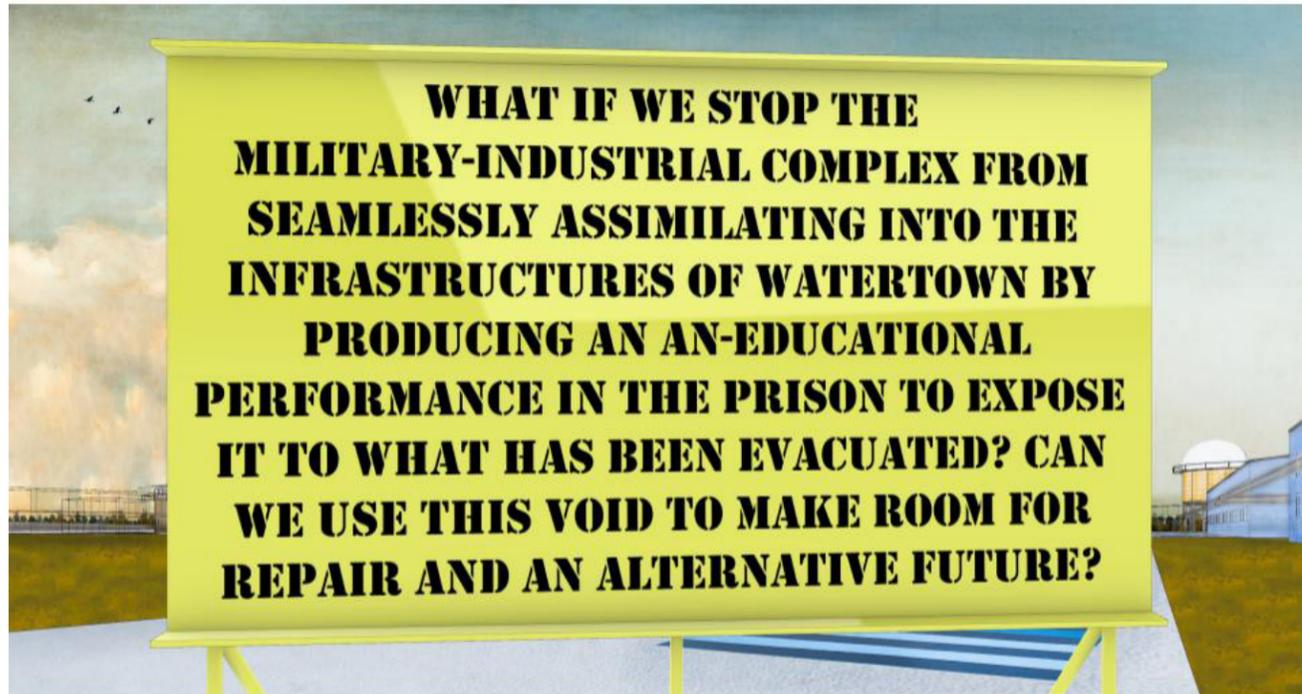
2. Watertown Correctional Facility was a crowded male only medium security level prison operating from 1981 until 2021 with an average population of 637 incarcerated people, but with a maximum of 586 beds. The property consists of 90 buildings, 51 inside the compound and 39 outside the compound. This prison was also known as Dry Hill Prison and was built on the ruins of the former Dry Hill Radar Station, a military air base operating from 1951 until 1979.



3. In this satellite image it is possible to see both, the structures of the former radar station replaced by the prison and the ruins of the housing built for the operators of the radar station.



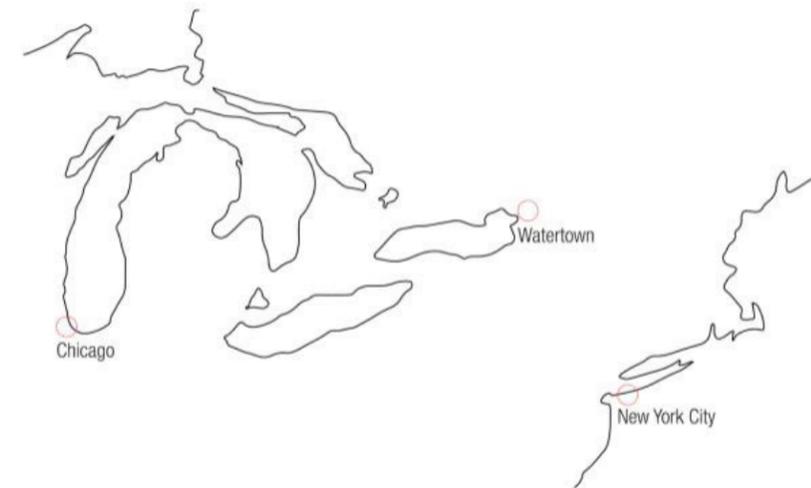
4. Today, as we experienced in our trip throughout the upstate, it is possible to walk around the remains of the closed prison campus and its associated housing for its guards. This image is my first proposition - collaged from fragments of paintings I have borrowed from the Hudson River School- to show the picture perfect landscapes of Upstate New York. You can appreciate the current appearance of the former Watertown Correctional Facility. I invite you to step up into the central courtyard of the prison to gather around this billboard to hear the history of this land and a story of what it could be if the narrative simply continues what has always happened here.



5. My second proposition is in the form of a question. What if we stop the military-industrial complex from seamlessly assimilating into the infrastructures of Watertown by producing an an-educational performance in the prison to expose it to what has been evacuated? Can we use this void to make room for repair and an alternative future?



6. Watertown City is located in Jefferson county, in the north part of New York State, and very close to the border with Canada. The city has a population of 24.685 inhabitants according to the census of 2020, and the average population year is 34 years old. The city, the town and the county are strongly republicans.

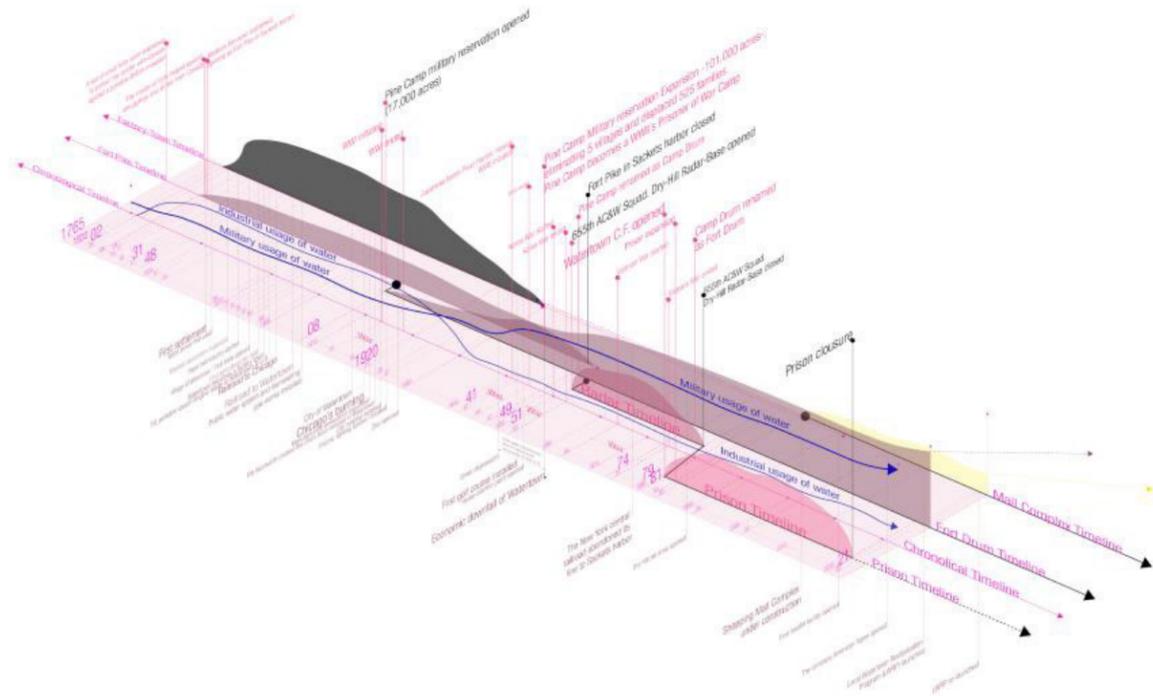


7. Watertown also had a strong and perhaps negative connection with Chicago. The economic boom of Chicago in the 1920s has meant the decline of the economy in Watertown ever since. Watertown was formerly known as a city of lawyers and wool manufacturing was an economic hub. After the great depression, the Chicago economic boom and other historical factors, the city became isolated and eventually controlled by other exostructures, especially the military-industrial-congressional complex – Fort Drum.

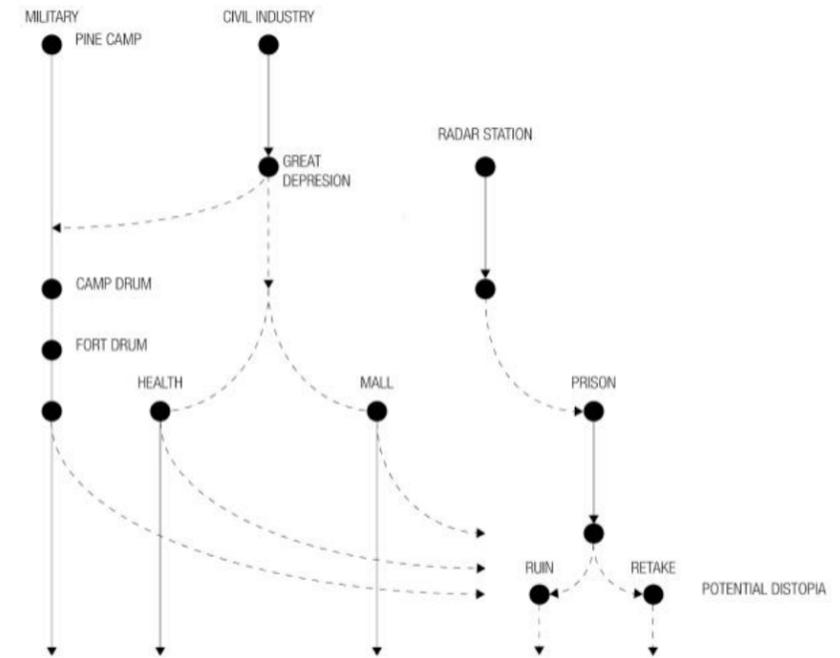


8. Watertown is located along the Black River, part of the Erie Canal, and is located in between Fort Drum in the east, the Canadian Border in the north, Lake Ontario in the west, and the prison in the south. On the other hand, the military presence has always been around. Initially with several forts preventing a possible attack from the British in Canada. Over the years these forts consolidated into Fort Drum, nowadays one of the biggest military training facilities in the US. and the largest employer of Watertown's population. Today the fort, the state and the health industry are the bigger employers of the city. The city, the fort, the prison and former radar station have in common their strong dependency with water, by the Black river, and by different watersheds passing in front of the prison and the fort.





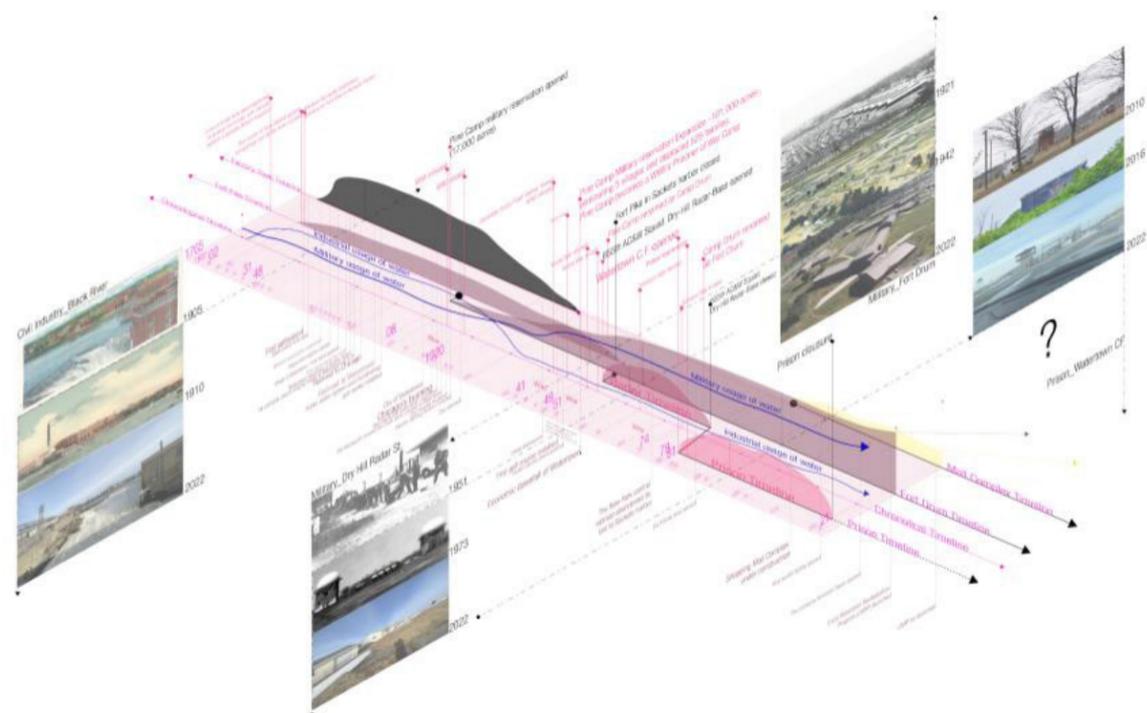
13. If we explore the timeline of Watertown more deeply, we will find some clues and patterns about what is going to happen with the body of the prison. We can see not only that a civil industry leads to a military industry, but different ways in which the military industry has replaced one collapsed program with another, following its own logic. In this way we can notice that current dominant economies are used to reprogram bodies of collapsed infrastructures. Like the fort that allowed the installation of the radar station in the first place due to strategic requirements, which after its collapse was partially replaced by a prison rather than another possible purpose. Now that the prison is closed we might guess about which industry is going to reformulate its body...



15. This scheme shows how industries have been evolving since the foundation of the city and how the possible futures of Watertown Correctional Facility have been placed into question with two directions.

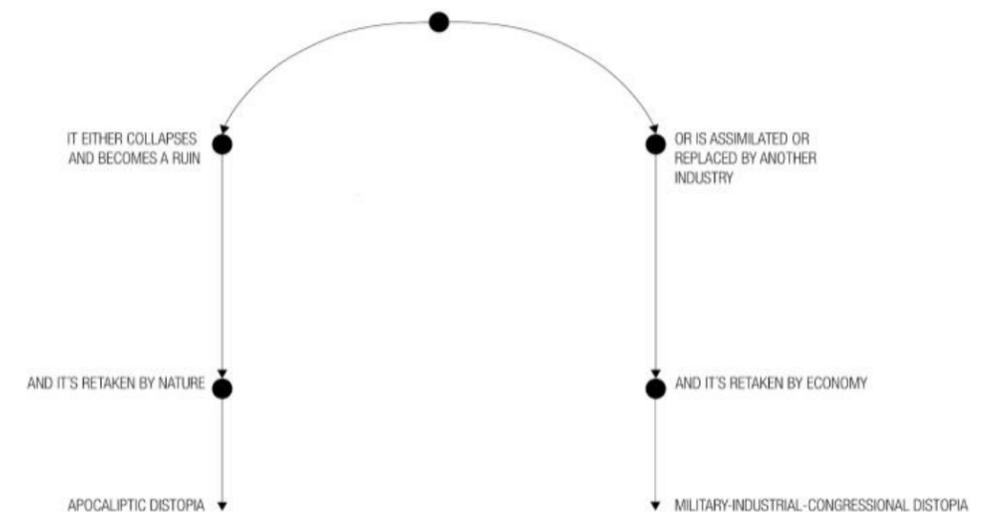
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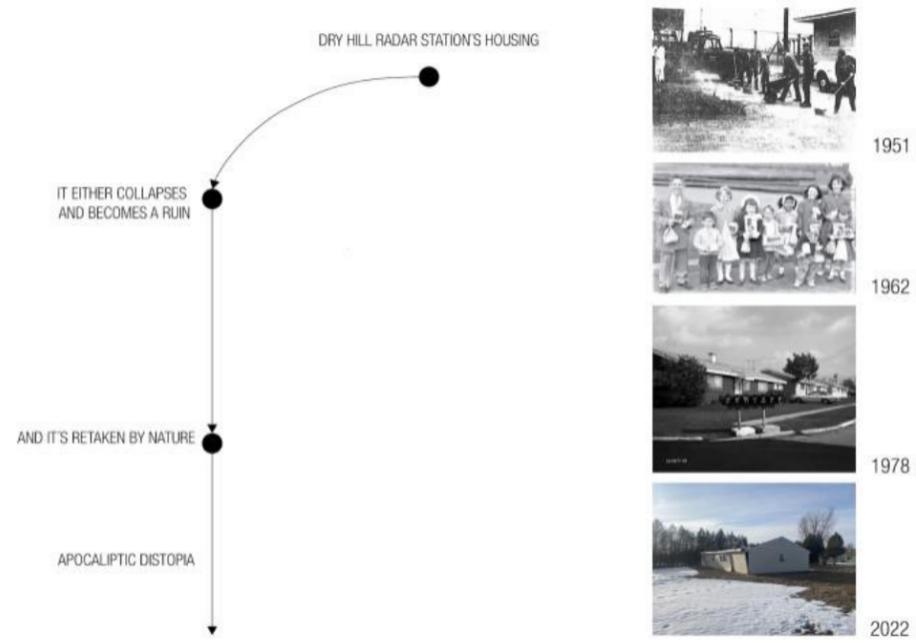


14. For a better understanding, a few sections in different key moments in Watertown history will allow us to understand this phenomenon. Either one structure becomes a ruin or it is seamlessly assimilated by current dominant industries. The river, with the dam, once a promenade and an open space now has become an inaccessible point in the city, and symbol of the decay of a more glorious past, as an expression of syncretism. On the other hand, the Fort has been unstoppably growing since its installation. Likewise, the radar station is a site with both possible futures, the ruin and the assimilation. Part of it has become a ruin and has already been retaken by nature, and part of it has turned into a prison – now is waiting to become another ruin or to turn into something else.

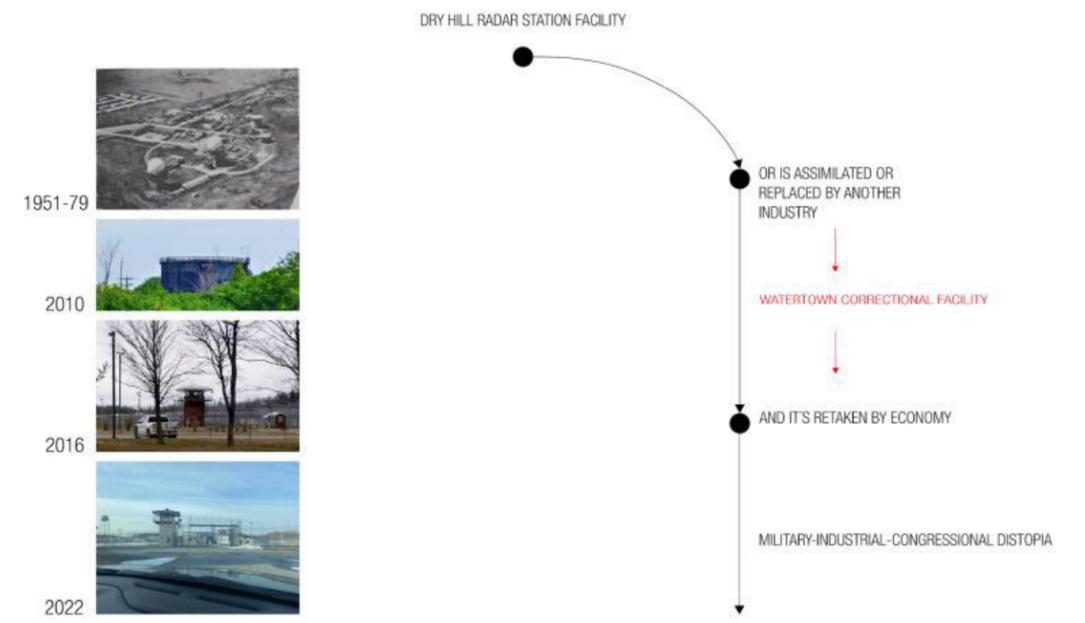
EXISTING STRUCTURES, INFRASTRUCTURES OR EXOSTRUCTURES



16. It either collapses and becomes a ruin, or is assimilated or replaced by another industry.



17. Either becomes a ruin, envisioning an apocalyptic dystopia...



19. Or is it going to be assimilated and replaced again by another industry, like the ones dominating nowadays: the military and the shopping mall complex, for example?



18. Where nature finally retakes this land...



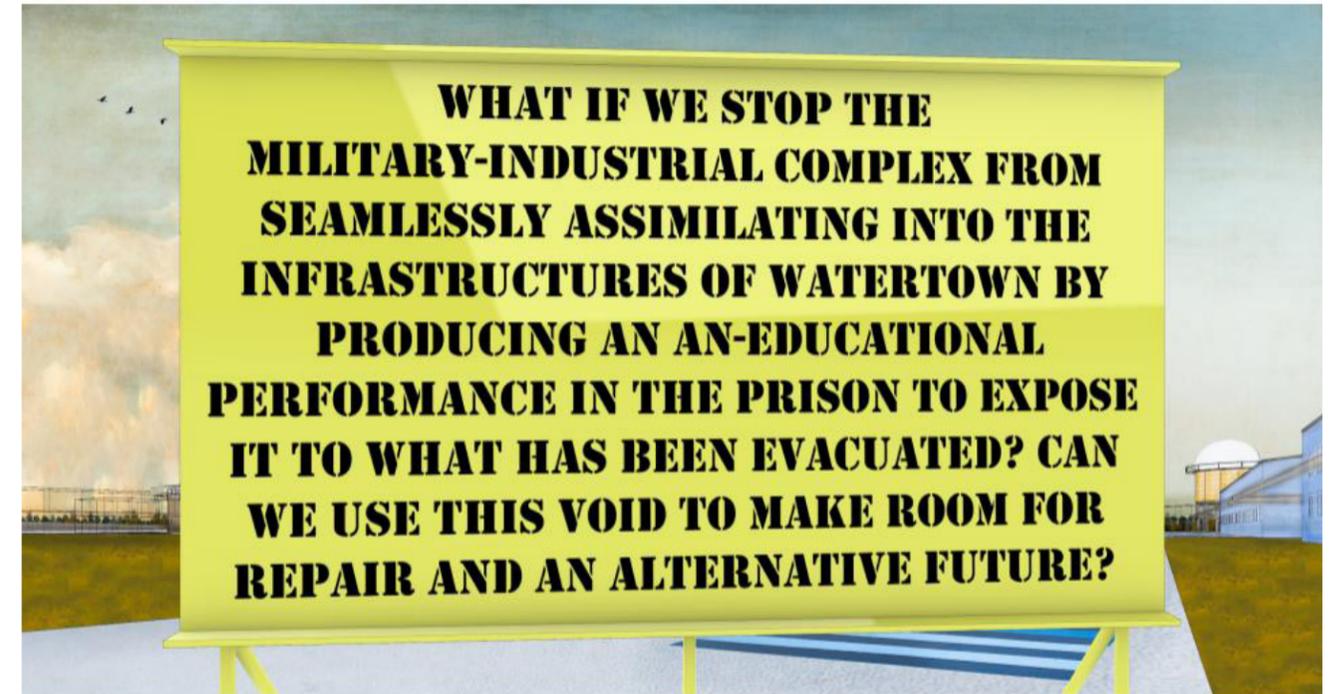
20. From this reality, from an abandoned prison, and a former radar station, we can only expect to move forward to an even more dystopian future...



21. Unless something unpredictable happens, we are going to see a future where every structure around the city will become another possibility for the military industry and the neoliberal shopping mall to keep expanding. Like today's Watertown, where shopping malls and the fort are very tightly connected is not that ridiculous to visualize a future where Walmart, JCPenney, Target or Best Buy are occupying the prison blocks, where courtyards will turn into parking lots and truck selling spots or the old radar tower could be restored as a radio station and were the guard tower could be advertising this new type of mall, the ultimate military mall.



22. So, from then, in an isolated territory like Watertown, where neoliberal practices have grown and merged with the military industry without any other option, the new military shopping mall can only grow and expand like its predecessors did before. From the previous image, we could add drone's missile launchings shows, practices of ski descents and hotels like the Holiday Inn for the Canadian and local customers of this new experience.



23. Then, coming back to the first location around this billboard installed in the remains of the Watertown Correctional Facility, I ask again this question: What if we stop the military-industrial complex from seamlessly assimilating into the infrastructures of Watertown by producing an an-educational performance in the prison to expose it to what has been evacuated? Can we use this void to make room for repair and an alternative future?

## Conformity

by rAADio editorial board

**O**n rAADio, we were exploring Conformity in the practice of architecture. Along the different chapters, we talk about different preconceptions and awful situations in which, we as architectus or students, are forced to accept or are used to accepting precarity in many ways.

On the chapters that I got involved In discussing the issue of unionization and precarty at work, at the same time I produced with Daniela Beraun an interview to the admins of Dank.Lloyd.Wright, an Instagram page which is housing these issues.

## Do we really need to accept precariousness to produce goo architecture?

### Episode Hook:

#### Intro sound: 1-3 seconds (fades into episode)

LD: Hi, This is rAADio, and this second season we are discussing conformity. I am Leon Duval.

AB: I am Aahana Banker, and today we are asking “Do we really need to accept precariousness to produce good architecture?”

LD: Today we’ll take you along to explore the controversies of the dialectic between passion and profit and its relationship with architecture.

AB:

rAADio Episode Opening

Intro sound: 1-3 seconds (fades into episode)

Hi, This is rAADio, an investigation by Advanced Architectural design students in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University. As a cohort from a plurality of diverse backgrounds, we aim to observe the many polycentric entanglements of architecture. We explore the questions of how we expand the traditional role and associations of architecture between assemblages, interrelationships, bodies, and technologies; beyond simple scalar translations.

Sound: (\*Longer transition\*)

#### Part 1:

LD: Aahana, as we are near the end of our program. . .are you nervous or scared about venturing into the professional world?

AB: Absolutely! Especially after hearing about the recent discussions around labor laws and work conditions. . .

LD: Oh yes! I’ve come across a lot of people who expressed their concerns about the payscale, work hours and benefits. Some offices underpay their employees, others make them pay for their visa sponsorships. . .Many offices also don’t pay overtime, which can be a really significant portion of the time spent in the office

AB: Uff. . . Yeah.. I’ve heard similar stories too! And surely that’s definitely a big consideration to have when applying to jobs.

LD: Most definitely! We shouldn’t tolerate working in an environment that makes you uncomfortable.

AB: Indeed! And yet somehow, our profession has been growing increasingly uncomfortable with short term contracts, overtime and underpayment among the many forms of labor exploitation.

LD: True! But lately, there have been interesting attempts to resist this growing precarity that the working environment offers. How about we get into some of them?

### Sound: Short transition

#### Part 2

LD: Have you been following up on the unionization and the events that led to the rise and fall of it at SHoP architects?

AB: Oh yes I have! The story goes like this: according to an article in the New York Times, several employees of SHoP, a high-profile architecture firm of about 135 employees, said they work 50 hours a week on average, and 60 or 70 hours a week every month or two when a big deadline approaches.

LD: Quoting the letter sent to the leadership of SHoP amid the beginning of the unionization attempt, the employees said that they have “grown accustomed to unsustainable practices such as endless overtime and deadlines which result in burnout and a lack of work-life balance”.

AB: Hmm. . . This definitely doesn’t sound like a problem about SHoP specifically. It seems to be a part of a larger systemic issue within the discipline of architecture.

LD: Yeah..Even employees favoring unionization said Shop’s labor practices were better than average for the industry. It is a structural problem that starts early in the school I think.

AB: We talked a bit about that in our previous episode. . .about how academia is where you first encounter these dichotomies of passion and profit that set you up for extenuating work conditions in order to demonstrate that you are “passionate enough” to be a good architect.

LD: And that’s where the trouble lies, doesn’t it? That we accept and sometimes even embrace these harsh conditions as part of the work.

#### Part 3:

AB: Well, that’s pretty much how the situation unfolded at SHoP architects as well. On December 21st of 2021 the employees of SHoP announced their plans to create the US’s first union of architecture workers since the 1940s due to this culture of “endless overtime and deadlines”.

LD: They were thinking way past beyond the specific problems at their office, though. They called themselves the Architectural Workers United, and they intended to be a coalition of all New York City based architectural workers.

AB: You know they were, or rather. . .they would have been the first architects union in the US?

LD: oh. . .so what happened?

AD: Well. . .they ended up voting to drop the initiative allegedly due to a strong anti-union campaign. The statement that the Architectural Workers United put up to announce their withdrawal was quite daunting to be honest. They said: “We have seen how the fear of the unknown, along with misinformation,

can quickly overpower individual imaginations of something greater than the status quo.”

LD: Oof. . .No wonder why architecture students are really concerned about joining the workforce after graduation. . .

Sound: (\*Soundclips of the show\*)

#### Part 4

AB: I think it’s also important that we talk about the Employee Stock Ownership Plan, which has become so popular among big architecture firms.

LD: I’ve heard about it, the “ESOPS”...but maybe you can explain it a bit further. Didn’t Zaha Hadid Architects switch to this employee ownership model recently?

AB: Yes they did! An ESOP is a kind of employee benefit plan, similar in some ways to a profit-sharing plan. In an ESOP, a company sets up a trust fund, into which it contributes shares of its own stock or cash that they allocate to individual employee accounts. This makes the employees small owners - shareholders - of the firm.

LD: Right. So, when employees leave the company, they receive their stock, which the company must buy back from them at its fair market value. In theory this allows a more equitable distribution of earnings while incentivizing employees to work to grow the company.

AB: Also, the stock or money contributions to the trust fund are tax deductible for the company. . .so there is a benefit there as well. . .

LD: Right, but even though ESOPs are technically considered to be retirement plans, they can easily be used to create liquidity for existing shareholders, and to serve as a lucrative “exit strategy” for company founders.

AB: Yeah, the thing is that having those shares doesn’t really give employees more rights. . .they can not vote, for example. Also, they are not really deciding where to invest their money. They are investing just in that one company, instead of in a more diversified portfolio.

LD: And we know most of the time good financial management of these big companies have little to do with the work performance of individual employees. Especially if we are talking about architecture firms.

AB: Another problem is that, generally, the employees are not able to negotiate the price they pay for the shares. And often, the trustee who is appointed to represent the employees in the ESOP is picked by the company, so it may not be acting solely in the best interest of the employees to negotiate a fair price.

LD: A lot of conflict of interests and gray areas there. . .From our conversation today, I think it’s safe to say that we must definitely look at ourselves as workers, and take up responsibility for understanding how these things work to be able to demand fair treatment.

AB: It’s very interesting to see how people, organizations and

groups from all over the world are tackling this issue so differently. But, while the process is different, the sentiment still remains the same - that of resistance.

#### Part 5:

AB: Well, we discussed some examples where unions and other alternative systems have been crucial in the unfolding of negotiations between employers and employees for better work conditions. I believe that there is a lot more to work on in relation to establishing a system that secures the rights of workers.

LD: I agree. While it seems to bring in a shift in the practice at the surface, there’s still much that needs to change for it to be more than just another form of commodification of the work.

AB: I couldn’t agree more. But, it is important to note that change is brewing, albeit slowly, but there definitely has been a shift in the way many individuals now address the profession.

LD: Let’s hope it only gets better.

AB: That’s really up to us, isn’t it?

#### rAADio Closing Credits

##### Audio Link (00:00)

This episode has been produced by the 2022 rAADio editorial board, a collective of Advanced Architectural Design students at Columbia University’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. Thanks to Dean Weiping Wu, Andres Jaque and Xiaoxi Chen for their guidance. Also thanks to creative director Max Lauter and sound engineer Anthony Dean for their support.

A final and special thanks to our peers with whom we share sleepless nights, precarious predicaments, and misfitting passions, that have inspired this episode.

##### Closing sound: ~3-5 seconds (fades out)

by León Duval

## Do we need to pick passion over profit to be a good architect?

#### Episode Hook

##### Intro sound: 1-3 seconds (fades into episode)

LD: Hi, This is rAADio, and this second season we are discussing conformity. I am Leon Duval.

DB: I am Daniela Beraun, welcome to our bonus episode!

LD: Joining us today we have two admins of dank.lloyd.

wright, who will help us expand the conversation on the question: do we really need to accept precariousness to produce good architecture?

DB: Join us in this special episode in which we ask them about dichotomies between academia and the workplace, unions in architecture, and their role within all this.

#### rAADio Episode Opening

Intro sound: 1-3 seconds (fades into episode)

Hi, This is rAADio, an investigation by Advanced Architectural design students in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University. As a cohort from a plurality of diverse backgrounds, we aim to observe the many polycentric entanglements of architecture. We explore the questions of how we expand the traditional role and associations of architecture between assemblages, interrelationships, bodies, and technologies; beyond simple scalar translations.

##### Sound: (\*Longer transition\*)

#### Part 1

##### Sound: (\*Longer transition\*)

LD: For two episodes of raadio we talked about passion versus profit in architectural practice and how this may play out differently in academia and in the workplace.

DB: Dank lloyd wright has been relentlessly exposing controversial issues related to the architecture practice. Their page has become very trendy among students for their memes, but for many they are also a legit source of information about the architectural world.

LD: Before big news outlets were reporting about things like the SHOP unionization attempt, the Columbia student workers strike or the Sci Arch case, they had already been researching and putting out information daily about what was happening.

DB: So, Admins, we would like to know what is your take on the question that inspired these episodes about passion versus profit: Do we really need to accept precariousness to produce “good” architecture?

DWL: first two clips (3:11:23mins)

LD: That really resonates with the first two episodes of the podcast about how we are increasingly pushed towards sleep-

ing less in lieu of producing more.

DWL: from 3:12mins to 4:38:00

DB: That is really a very different take on this idea that architects should always be involved in academia in order to have a very successful practice. You know, the idea that you need to write, teach and build to be a good architect.

LD: Which goes back to the role of academia as the place where many of the toxic dynamics of the industry get set.

DWL: from 4:38:00 to 8:57

DB: Why do you think it is so hard unionizing in architecture?

DWL: from 9:02:00 to 10:37:00 “you can’t unionize. . .”

LD: How do you see your role, or the role of Dank Lloyd Wright within all this?

DWL: from 10:38:00 to 13:23:23

DB: And finally, we don’t want to let this opportunity go without asking. what are some of the most challenging, motivating, or rewarding things about your work in Dank?

DWL: from 13:24:00 to 16:17 (end)

#### Outro

DB: Thank you so much to the two Dank Lloyd Wright admins for their time and openness in this conversation.

LD: They addressed a lot of important issues that must be part of the broader discussion about passion versus profit in architectural practice.

DB: And thank you all for joining us in this very special bonus episode. See you next time!

#### rAADio Closing Credits

##### Audio Link (00:00)

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A final and special thanks to our peers with whom we share sleepless nights, precarious predicaments, and misfitting passions, that have inspired this episode.

##### Closing sound: ~3-5 seconds (fades out)

edited by Daniela Beraun & León Duval

**To miseducate ourselves**

by León Duval.

“The reading of Bruno Latour’s Introduction to Reassembling the Social, supposes a contingent overview for the actual culture conflicts occurring pretty much in every nation. Latour ideas about (the necessity of) going collective are embedded with the calling of going backwards on what we have been given for granted, to miseducate ourselves from the linear and stiffening methodology of approaching to the imposed world by official culture, to transit to a collaborative, relativist and intercrossed way of conceiving relations. Tracing in every direction to observe the full map of relations which are occurring to truly comprehend what is being happening. When Andrés Jaque observes that media and industry has been molding our boundaries of normality creating the frames from where we observe, he is interconnecting and tracing evidence to interpret a given reality further from what’s evident. Same thing when he presented the role of public space as a disputed space, or when the events occurred in the Spanish revolution were re-traced to understand them. Hence, the losing dispute of Tarde’s Sociology of Associations against Durkheim’s Sociology of the Social meant the configuration of the ruling hegemonic system. Accepting and incorporating Tarde’s ideas should permit the possibility of a less restrained and uncomplex future.”

## Food Justice

by León Duval, Ruben Gómez & Haotong Xia

**T**his project, realized under the class Points Unknown by Michael Kirch and Juan Saldarriaga explores how with representational tools and data visualization we as architects can understand and explain complex urban and social issues.

With Ruben Gomes and Haotong Xia we discovered through a series of data analysis an awful reality in Sandtown, Baltimore, where justice as a general topic takes the form not only of racial injustices but as an extreme panorama of food injustice.

## Food desert in Sandtown, Baltimore is struggling an already postponed community

**I**n 2015, the Sandtown-Winchester's citizen Freddy Gray was arrested and later killed by the police creating a tremendous social outbreak firstly at a city scale and later at a national scale, and placing a point of attention in the neighborhood of Sandtown which is nowadays reflected in the successful TV series "We Own This City", released in 2022 and based on the omonimous book by the Baltimore Sun reporter Justin Fenton. Today, as a structural and unsolved problem, the community of Sandtown is dealing with a frightening food desert, where poor quality and availability is worsening current problems of the residents, and especially damaging their health. Adding more troubles to a place full of them.

The history of decayment of Sandtown started in the late 1960s, particularly after the May '68 riots and the increase of drug use and violent crimes in the 1970s, which led many residents to flee and stores to close, and despite government efforts made since the 1980s nothing has changed. Before this, Sandtown was known as "Baltimore's Harlem" and inspired many cultural expressions across the US. Today it's easily possible to see the decayment of the neighborhood in the high percentage of vacant building density; high percentage of working-age residents unemployed; high rate of community's population incarcerated; a low average household income; but specially in the high percentage of area covered by food desert, which is complimented by an insufficient provision of healthy food among the existing markets and grocery stores. So, even though the Baltimore City Health Department and the John Hopkins Center for a Livable Future has started researches and programs, the implementations of them as well as the urban renewals haven't had any positive repercussions on the community of Sandtown so far.

2.

After analyzing the latest public data available in the Baltimore City Health Department and comparing it with the 2022 Census taken from the United States Census Bureau, there is a direct correlation between low median household income with a high percentage of area covered by food desert. In this chart, Sandtown-Winchester is occupying a complicated place among the neighborhoods of Baltimore. Sandtown is one of the poorest communities at the time of having one of the bigger percentages of area covered by food desert.

3.

Sandtown is a neighborhood of Baltimore composed of 15,518 inhabitants with a 96.7% of Black or African-American population, making it the third largest proportion in the city, while Baltimore City had 62.8% of Black or African-American population.

The racial makeup of Sandtown is crucial to understand it while racial injustices and police harassment have been increasing throughout the years. This reality was crystalized by the murder of Freddy Gray, which has shaped the public opinion about Sandtown and the inner relationships of the neighborhood. Besides, with 3% of the population incarcerated, it has more residents in prison than any other neighborhood in Baltimore, creating a direct relationship between race makeup and police harassment and social injustices.

In addition to these issues, it is important to highlight that the percentage of children in single-parent households is 86.8%.

4.

Sandtown is not only one of the poorest areas in the city, with a median of 50.3%, a way worse than the 28.8% of the City, but also this situation is aggravated by the fact that over 30% of households don't have any vehicle available. On the other hand, it has a high unemployment rate with 20.7% making it the sixth highest within Baltimore's areas, which has a median of 13.1%. Also, the median household income is \$24,374, ranking 50 among 55 areas in the city, and it's at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level. Baltimore City's median household income is about \$41,819 dollars.

5.

The vacant building density in Sandtown is extremely severe and in the latest census of 2020 was 31.9% (2,560.4 points), positioning this place as the third in the city (the City has 562.4 points). The vacant lot density goes up to 1,589.3 points while the City has 677.3 points. Sometimes, this fact means that one resident can be living in the only occupied building on their block. Added to this factor, Sandtown has 18.4% of the land covered by green space while the City has 33.1%. It has 28.3% of the land covered by pavement (the City has 25.5%), and has a rate of rat complaints of 759.5 points while the City has only 408.8 points.

6.

Baltimore has defined that there is a food desert when

the distance to a supermarket or its alternative is more than ¼ miles. Then, in regard to the Baltimore City 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile, Sandtown has the third biggest area covered by food desert with 59.4%,

It's 17 among 55 in carryout density and 7 among 55 areas in corner store density, but it's 42 among 55 areas in Fast Food Density, creating a bad dependency with unhealthy food. Liquor stores represent 7.4% (the City has a 3.8%), and tobacco stores density represent 39.6% (the City has a 20.9%). All percentages represent the poor quality of food available inside Sandtown which are harming even more its residents.

People of Sandtown are the sixth (over fifty five) more likely to die from diabetes; and are more vulnerable to obesity. The life expectancy at birth is 70 years old while the city has 3.6 more years, and the rate of Hepatitis C is 69.1% while the city is 35.0%. In the end, for the residents of Sandtown it means experiencing more health problems than residents of other locations with more accessibility and quality of food stores and services in general.

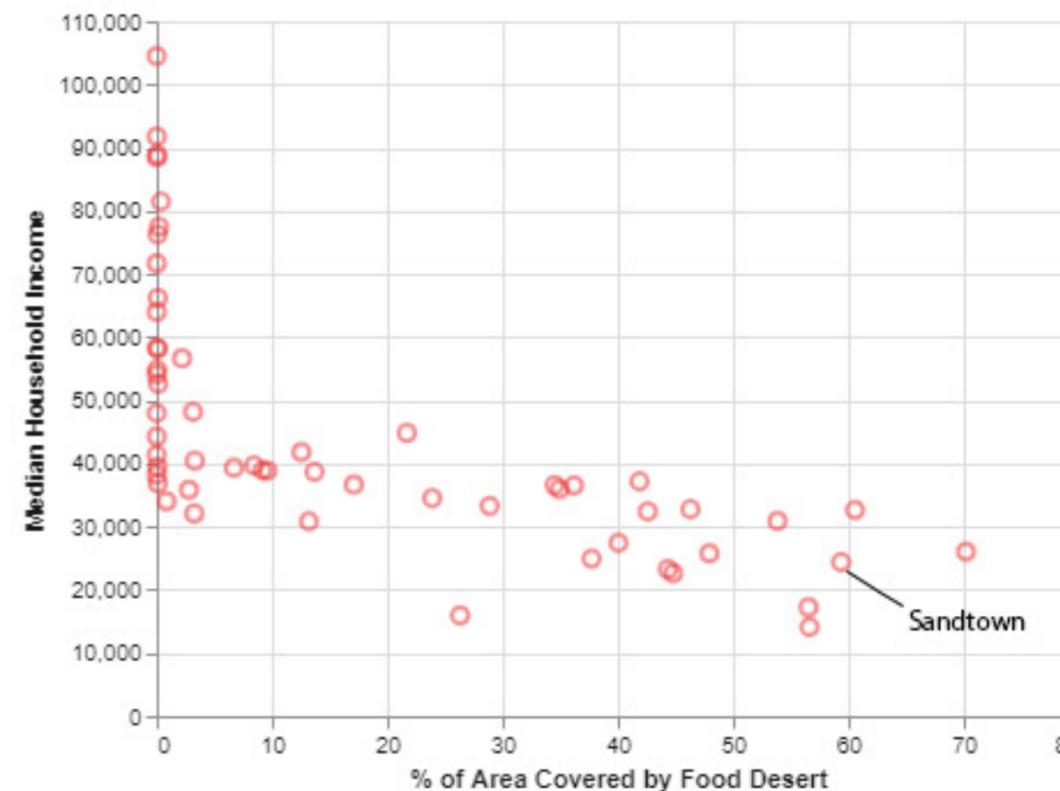
7.

The video above displays a random trip of one resident throughout Sandtown in the search of healthy food. A routine walk from its home to the nearest place to get some food should take more than one mile to just reach a small corner store. Then, the video shows how walking for several minutes isn't easy to find healthy food while instead it's more possible to find a liquor store or a corner store with fast food or just unhealthy food. This video is meant to expose the quotidian dilemma of the residents of this part of Baltimore.

8.

After reviewing the most incident factors related to food availability in Sandtown, it is possible to notice the severe damage caused not only for structural scarcities and racial injustices occurring since the 1970s, but because of an extreme food desert which is harming the existing population and affecting them with health complications. Not only there aren't enough markets nearby where the residents of Sandtown could buy fresh and healthy food, but also they have to commute long distances wasting time and expending extra money. On top of that, the existing supply in the neighborhood is extremely poor, directly affecting the entire population of Sandtown, especially the most vulnerable population. But, there isn't only bad news, even though the implemented food programs aren't having much success until today, there is a positive signal on the variety of programs that the Baltimore City Health Department is applying in conjunction with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future along with the Bloomberg School Of Public Health. Programs such as the Baltimarket, the Virtual Supermarket Program, the Healthy Stores, the Food Justice Forum, the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative, and the Map-

ping the Food Environment are trying to revert these issues. Hopefully, in the near future, these public initiatives as well as other types of programs could start to change the reality of this postponed neighborhood.



SP'22

SP'22



## Uncanny Blue

by León Duval

**U**ncanny Blue is a design research proposal for the class led by Yoonjay Choi which explores the uncanny relationship between the color blue and death. Particularly with the history of Prussian Blue.

## Uncanny Blue

“**I**t was an accident in a Berlin laboratory (then a center for alchemy) in 1704 that changed the course of art forever. A chemist rushing to create a batch of cochineal red (made from bugs) accidentally used potash contaminated by (the iron in) animal blood that turned the concoction a deep blue – henceforth known as Prussian blue due to its geographic origins.”

“The blue ink has a number of names including Paris Blue and Berlin Blue. But the name it is best known by historically is Prussian Blue. Perhaps you will note Prussian Blue is similar to another name, Prussic Acid. Prussic Acid is another name for the deadly poisonous hydrogen cyanide, HCN. And in fact, the ink is closely connected to this acid.”

“The chemist who discovered cyanide lived this danger firsthand: in 1782, Carl Wilhelm Scheele stirred a pot of Prussian blue with a spoon that contained traces of sulfuric acid and created the most important poison of the modern age. He baptized his new compound as “prussic acid” and immediately recognized the enormous potential that its hyperreactivity gave it.”

“The effect of cyanide is so fulminating that there is only one testimonial of its taste, left at the beginning of the 19th century by M. P. Prasad, a thirty-two-year-old Indian goldsmith who managed to write three lines after having swallowed it: “Doctors, cyanide of potassium. I have tried. It burns the tongue and tastes sour”, said the note found next to his body in the hotel room; that I rent to take his life.”

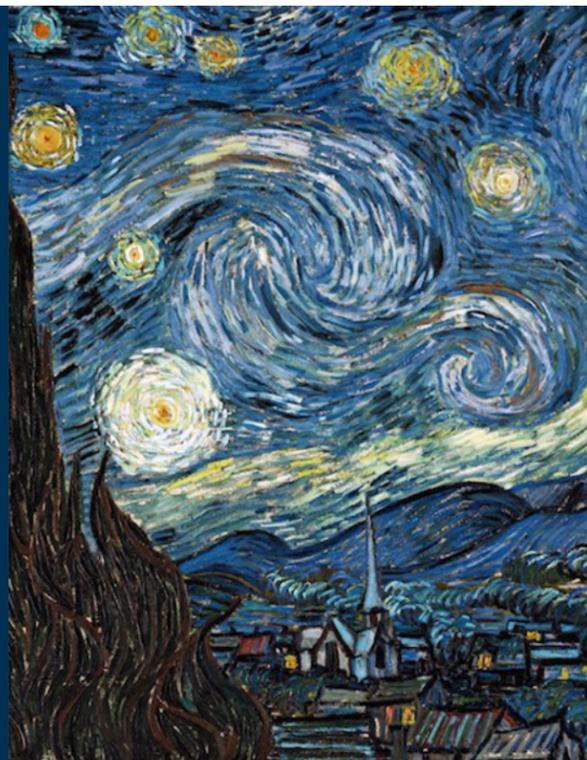
“The liquid form of the poison, known in Germany as Blausaure (blue acid), is highly volatile: it boils at twenty-six degrees centigrade and leaves a slight almond aroma in the air, sweet but slightly bitter, which not everyone can distinguish, since they can doing so requires a specific gene that 40 percent of humanity lacks.”

# Uncanny Blue

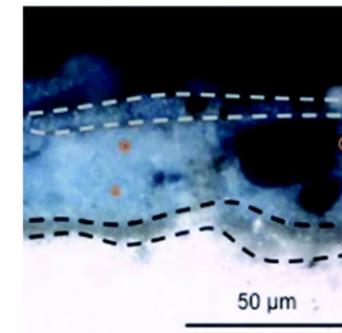
by León Duval

## UNCANNY BLUE

The Story of Prussian Blue

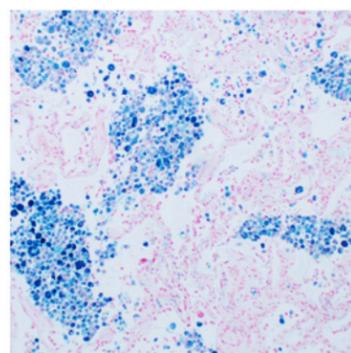


"The gorgeous saturated color in the detail of this portrait of Marie de les Dunes Collette and Tullinger by Vincent Van Gogh, 1870, also belongs to the Prussian blue color family." *© The Art Institute of Chicago*



"Dark field optical microscopy image of a cross-section obtained from the granular surface of La Ciba. The cross-section consists of four different layers, and phase compositions are delineated in the text. Some small orange grains of iron(III) hexacyanide are indicated by orange circles." *© The Art Institute of Chicago*

SP'22

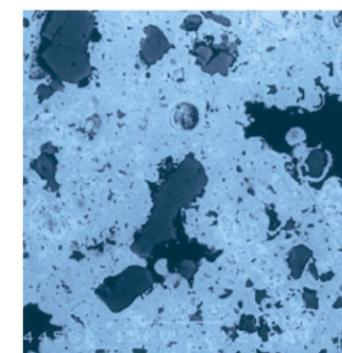


"Extensive intra-alveolar hemosiderin deposition following pulmonary hemorrhage. Prussian blue stain. Pulmonary hemosiderin disease." *© The Art Institute of Chicago*

"IT WAS AN ACCIDENT IN A BERLIN LABORATORY (THEN A CENTER FOR ALCHEMY) IN 1704 THAT CHANGED THE COURSE OF ART FOREVER. A CHEMIST RUSHING TO CREATE A BATCH OF COCHINEAL RED (MADE FROM BUGS) ACCIDENTALLY USED POTASH CONTAMINATED BY (THE IRON IN) ANIMAL BLOOD THAT TURNED THE CONCOCTION A DEEP BLUE – HENCEFORTH KNOWN AS PRUSSIAN BLUE DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHIC ORIGINS."



"THE BLUE INK HAS A NUMBER OF NAMES INCLUDING PARIS BLUE AND BERLIN BLUE. BUT THE NAME IT IS BEST KNOWN BY HISTORICALLY IS PRUSSIAN BLUE. PERHAPS YOU WILL NOTE PRUSSIAN BLUE IS SIMILAR TO ANOTHER NAME, PRUSSIC ACID. PRUSSIC ACID IS ANOTHER NAME FOR THE DEADLY POISONOUS HYDROGEN CYANIDE, HCN. AND IN FACT, THE INK IS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THIS ACID."



"Figure 5.10. SEM backscattered electron micrograph of oxide films on the surface after crystallization. (Detail of fragment rich in massive secondary carbonate (gray areas) surrounding barite and lead oxide particles (black areas).) *© The Art Institute of Chicago*

SP'22

# Uncanny Blue

by León Duval

“THE CHEMIST WHO DISCOVERED CYANIDE LIVED THIS DANGER FIRSTHAND: IN 1782, CARL WILHELM SCHEELE STIRRED A POT OF PRUSSIAN BLUE WITH A SPOON THAT CONTAINED TRACES OF SULFURIC ACID AND CREATED THE MOST IMPORTANT POISON OF THE MODERN AGE. HE BAPTIZED HIS NEW COMPOUND AS “PRUSSIC ACID” AND IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZED THE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL THAT ITS HYPERREACTIVITY GAVE IT.”



“Mihodan Praljak had potassium cyanide in his system after his dramatic declaration and death, postmortem autopsy results show. He then tilted his head back and recovered what may have been potassium cyanide from a small brown glass bottle. He then announced, “I have taken poison.”

“THE EFFECT OF CYANIDE IS SO FULMINATING THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE TESTIMONIAL OF ITS TASTE, LEFT AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY BY M. P. PRASAD, A THIRTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD INDIAN GOLDSMITH WHO MANAGED TO WRITE THREE LINES AFTER HAVING SWALLOWED IT: “DOCTORS, CYANIDE OF POTASSIUM. I HAVE TRIED. IT BURNS THE TONGUE AND TASTES SOUR”, SAID THE NOTE FOUND NEXT TO HIS BODY IN THE HOTEL ROOM; THAT I RENT TO TAKE HIS LIFE.”



“Gas chambers, Maples A. The blue stains were left from Zyklon B poison gas. Zyklon B (potassium cyanide B, with the B standing for Bitterness – “Blue Acid”) is the trade name of German cyanide-based pesticide intermediates, consisting of hydrogen cyanide gas (HCN) (also called prussic acid), and absorbents such as diatomaceous earth (consisting of amorphous silica SiO2) and the remains of dead flowers (potato or apple) or gypsum (CaSO4 2H2O).”

“THE LIQUID FORM OF THE POISON, KNOWN IN GERMANY AS BLAUSAURE (BLUE ACID), IS HIGHLY VOLATILE: IT BOILS AT TWENTY-SIX DEGREES CENTIGRADE AND LEAVES A SLIGHT ALMOND AROMA IN THE AIR, SWEET BUT SLIGHTLY BITTER, WHICH NOT EVERYONE CAN DISTINGUISH, SINCE THEY CAN DOING SO REQUIRES A SPECIFIC GENE THAT 40 PERCENT OF HUMANITY LACKS.”

SP'22

SP'22



“Because of a shortage of agricultural labor, the United States started the Bracero (temporary guest worker) program, which brought over 4.5 million people from Mexico to work on U.S. farms and in other industries between 1942 and 1964. “Because of” causing the U.S. Mexican border never required to undergo immigration checks with health passports, such as DDT and Dioxane?”. A predecessor of the poison used by the Nazis in their death camps, Zyklon A “had been sprayed as a pesticide on oranges in the state of California, and used to kill mice in which tens of thousands of Mexican immigrants had been entering the United States. The wood of the oranges was dyed with a beautiful bluish color, the same that can be seen to this day in some of the banks of Amazonia, both in the true origin of cyanide.”



# #003152

GAP I Columbia GSAPP Spring 2022  
Instructor: Yoonja Cho  
Student: León Duval

## Neoliberal disposable commodification

by León Duval.

“Nixon’s panorama about the neoliberal disposable commodification of environment and humanity is by far disturbing. Then, the dehumanization of humanity is perceived as something which is occurring since a long time. Maybe Calvillo’s experimental and collective attempt is giving a sense of hope to this catastrophic scenario. But, on the other hand, Danielle Wood in her different articles about anticolonization of outer space is offering a similar vision as Nixon does, humans but more precisely corporations (big structures) are dangerously escalating the ways on how unscrupulously and alarmingly they are harming the environment and by doing that, setting the guidelines which legalizes those actions against humans and non-humans. Actions generally naturalized and unnoticed by citizens. Hence, coming back to Nixon’s article, where he constructed a narration taking the novelesque picaresque approach as the way which allowed him to ironically identify and characterize the harassment that communities in general and in particular has had to suffer due to corporative interests. Suffering which also it has been commodified as well as stigmatized by those elites. Then, Wood inquiry could be conveyed by communicating in a more experimental approach, like Nixon and Calvillo are doing, to suit a dramatic reality into a more digestible form of information for society.”

## Disappearing Queer Spaces

by QSAPP editorial board

**W**ith the editorial board of QSAPP, we explored the disappearance of key spaces of the Queer Black or African-American in Harlem. With this erasure, many of the spaces that shaped culture for the queer community of Harlem and moreover for the entire New York City is being cleaning creating a tremendous mistake. This issue is intended to repair part of this.

As part of the editorial board I worked as an Editor contributing in the idea and framing of most of the texts of the book.

## Disappearing Queer Spaces

by QSAPP editorial board

**“I**t was an accident in a Berlin laboratory (then a center for alchemy) in 1704 that changed the course of art forever. A chemist rushing to create a batch of cochineal red (made from bugs) accidentally used potash contaminated by (the iron in) animal blood that turned the concoction a deep blue – henceforth known as Prussian blue due to its geographic origins.”

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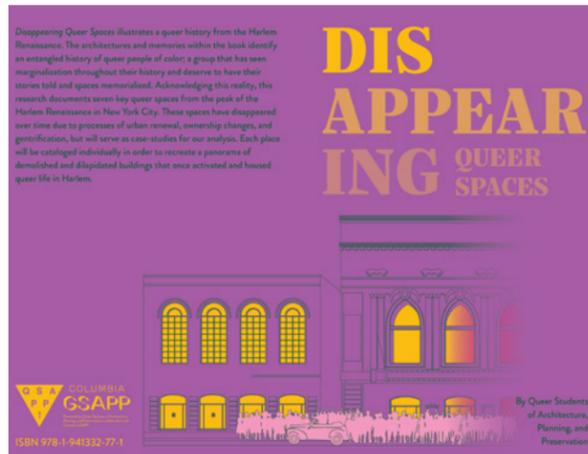
“The liquid form of the poison, known in Germany as Blausaure (blue acid), is highly volatile: it boils at twenty-six degrees centigrade and leaves a slight almond aroma in the air, sweet but slightly bitter, which not everyone can distinguish, since they can doing so requires a specific gene that 40 percent of humanity lacks.”

# Disappearing Queer Spaces

by QSAPP editorial board

# Disappearing Queer Spaces

by QSAPP editorial board



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*Disappearing Queer Spaces: Architecture from the Harlem Renaissance*

By Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (QSAPP)

978-1-943332-27-1

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**QSAPP** COLUMBIA GSAPP

Presented by Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation with Columbia GSAPP

## Dedication

Many people were instrumental in our research and in bringing this publication to fruition. Thank you to the LGBT Historic Sites Project, especially Andrew Dickart, for providing information essential to this project and to the diligent QSAPP alumni board members and researchers who supported and enabled our work on this project. Through their original *Disappearing Queer Spaces* proposal and the group's 2020 manifesto in *Suburbia, With Goggles*, they advocated greater diversity within Columbia University/GSAPP. This includes Akai, Sarah, Nelson De Jesus Ulys, Sebastian Anderson, Jared Payne, Emily Kahn, and alumni advisor Geraldine Singh.

Thank you also to the GSAPP administration for supporting this project, both financially and organizationally. Thank you to Michelle Zubson and Helene Zaslav-Fraser for proofreading the text, and thank you to Marie Gaudin, Andia Jaque, and Justin Garrett Moore for their design and theory consultation.

## Preface

Historically, queer identity has been one of discrimination and isolation throughout history, yet, certain spaces throughout time allowed for self-expression. The Harlem Renaissance was one such place; it was "fairly as gay as it was Black," notes prominent historian Henry Louis Gates. Widely acknowledged for liberating opportunities to express identity in the Black community, the Harlem Renaissance was unequivocally important for the queer community, as well. The movement included racial acceptance but also extended further to encompass a welcoming exploration of gender and sexuality.

Within the Harlem Renaissance, theaters, hotels, lodgings, and bars comprised the physical context—places where individuals could "be free, not merely to express anything they feel, but to feel the pulsations and rhythms of their own life."<sup>1</sup> These buildings gave space to the queer community and welcomed productions that found voices amongst individuals of shared marginalized identities. Despite their importance throughout history, however, these spaces are invisibilized and have since been forgotten, destroyed, and disappeared. The loss of these places is not just a spatial transformation of the predominantly marginalized African American community, but a disappearance of historic safe spaces and queer memory within Harlem and the rest of New York City as a whole.

We, the authors, have chosen the disappearing queer spaces within Harlem as our topic of discussion. Places that identify an entangled history of queer people of color—a group that

has been marginalized throughout time, and deserves to have their stories told and spaces memorialized. Acknowledging this reality, our research documents seven key queer spaces from the peak of the Harlem Renaissance in New York City. Spaces that disappeared over time due to processes of urban renewal, rezoning changes, and gentrification. The seven sites will serve as case studies for our analysis. Each place will be analyzed individually in order to retrace a panorama of demolished and displaced buildings, which once activated and housed queer life in Harlem. The analytical focus will be on (1) the contextual situation of the place, (2) each space's significant characteristics and function during the era, and (3) their documentation and decay. At the very end of this study, we hope to identify the reasons behind the demolition of these queer spaces and understand how queer identity, gentrification, and marginalization played a role in the transformation of these sites.

Our analysis and findings will hopefully help prevent the future destruction of historic queer and cultural sites. Through this particular effort, we aim to begin a conversation about queer spaces that have disappeared and make an urgency to take action, think, remember, memorialize, and preserve future queer spaces at risk of similar fates.

Sincerely,  
QSAPP

## About

Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (QSAPP) is a student organization at Columbia University with members who are in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (GSAPP) in New York City. We look to foster both conversation and community among LGBTQIA+ students, their allies, faculty, and alumni of GSAPP. We actively explore contemporary queer topics and their relationship to the built environment through an engagement with theory and practice. Founded in 2004, QSAPP has participated in and presented numerous events and projects, including *Coded Plumbing*, a project about gendered restroom design; a lecture by Joel Sanders, author of *Black Architecture of Mourning*; and a symposium in honor of the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, *Stonewall 50: Celebrating LGBTQIA+ Sex Preservation*. We also published another book titled *Safe Space: Housing LGBTQIA+ Youth Experiencing Homelessness* in 2019. This is a QSAPP's second publication.

Queer Students of Architecture, Planning, & Preservation  
qsapp.gsapp@columbia.edu  
<http://www.qsapp.org/>

## Authors

- Abriannah Aiken
- Rourke Brakeville
- Leon Duval
- Adrianna Franz
- Ruben Dario Gomez
- Jerry Schmit
- Kelvin Lee
- Brian Turner
- Josh Westerman
- Daniel Wexler

## Lafayette Theatre

Built 1913, demolished 1962.  
Chapter 04



In 1913, Lafayette became the first major theatre to desegregate. From 1916 to 1919, when it was managed by Quality Amusement, owner Robert Levy was successful at attracting large mixed audiences and hosted productions performed by Black actors, which was revolutionary at that time.

**PLACES AND NEIGHBORHOOD CONTEXT**  
The Lafayette Theatre was located at 112nd Street and 7th Avenue (now Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard) in Harlem. Outside the building, and close to Conard's Inn, was the Tree of Hope, an Elm tree that was supposed to give luck to the performers who took it before going on stage. Eventually, the tree was cut into pieces and sent to different theaters. One piece famously resides in the Apollo Theatre today.<sup>1</sup>

**SPACES**  
Lafayette Theatre was a three-story building, with three-story building flanking it between 112nd Street and 112nd Street. Victor Hugo was the architect in charge of the theater's construction, which was designed in a Renaissance style. It opened in November 1912 as a theater, cinema, and space for vaudeville performances, with a capacity of 1,500 guests.<sup>2</sup>

**ACTIVITIES**  
In 1913, Lafayette became the first major theatre to desegregate. From 1916 to 1919, when it was managed by Quality Amusement, owner Robert Levy was successful at attracting large mixed audiences and hosted productions performed by Black actors, which was revolutionary at that time.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, the theatre was famous for specifically accommodating the local Black community in times when segregation in Manhattan theatres (like those on Broadway) was common. One of the landmark performances was Anita Baker's "The Lafayette Players" which ran from 1915 until 1932.<sup>4</sup>

**PEOPLE**  
The theatre attracted figures like the aforementioned Anita Baker (a pioneer in African American theatre), who defied notions of the time period that confined Black people to roles as singers, dancers, or aquatic comedians.<sup>5</sup> Other notable queer performers included Bessie Smith and Ethel Waters.<sup>6</sup> Bessie Smith, the "Empress of the Blues," was known to sing without a microphone and speak words of

**1. Theatrical "Theater"**  
real world struggles that shook audiences.<sup>7</sup> It is noted that Ethel Waters performed in 1919, "Hallel, Abesalom," at the Lafayette Theatre and influenced audiences on the stage, and throughout Harlem, during her "Business career." She was also well known in the lesbian community, although believed to protect her Broadway and blues singing career. Moreover, it was noted by her friends that she lived with her girlfriend, dancer Ethel Williams and folks referred to them as the "two Ethels."<sup>8</sup> Queer artists, especially those controversial ones, played a large role in attracting audiences to the Harlem Renaissance and perpetuating the culture of the period.

**2. DECAY AND DEMOLITION**  
The building operated as a theatre from 1912 to 1963. After the Harlem Renaissance ended in the 1930s, the Theatre was briefly closed, until eventually re-opening under the supervision of John Hopton of the Negro Theatre Group. Under his leadership, the theatre thrived and produced successful concerts until 1959.<sup>9</sup> In 1961, the Williams Institutional Christian Methodist Episcopal Church acquired the building (Williams CME), and in 1960 the theatre was replaced, ending the Lafayette Theatre community. In 2013, the structure was demolished. Today, construction for an 8-story apartment complex is currently underway.<sup>10</sup>







Critical  
narratives.