Critical narratives.
I entered GSAPP as an architect and I’m leaving GSAPP as a spatial designer.

With 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.
Patio Talk: Carlos Medellín (7-11)
Columbia University. In the city of New York? (12-27)

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Watertown’s Military-Industrial Dystopia (93-111)

Do we really need to accept precariousness to produce good architecture? (113)
Do we need to pick passion over profit to be a good architect? (115)

To misseducate ourselves (116-117)

Food justice (118-123)

Uncanny Blue (124-129)

Neoliberal disposable commodification (130-131)

Disappearing Queer Spaces (132-137)
The 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 standards 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.
The 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 tell 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 Talks-, 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 Latinx 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, Rahel Gomez, who happens to be a Latin student, and partner in GSAPP and former worldlamer of Carlos in Columbia. The conversations started, creating a myth around him and his critical opinions on 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 for understanding and technical 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 guide 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 approach 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 acknowledgment 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 architecture who believes we can do 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 they first design a contract at a table and share their stories and theories. Then, they can explore whatever they are, where they come from, and group 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. To define what justice means, they need to work with a more-than-human ally. “I 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,” 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 rationalism of his discourse. We listened rarely 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 landscape design and art as social practice 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 Latina in the US comes with narratives of access. Being a woman is another different narrative. These 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 Achola 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 heroes 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 practice—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 operation is 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 building a university that is "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 conflicting and sometimes opposed narratives, so they can be worked through. He had been an architect that sociales 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 U.S. 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 1998 in a building that appeared out of nowhere and in a system that didn't answer questions. So, by pretending objectivity and constructing "standardized journeys", they exclude people's stories. To me, this operation is 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.

The third chapter could be named "Restorative Justice and architecture." From architect 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 think that I had been an architect that socially 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 thinking 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 Oswaldo 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 me 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?

Oswaldo, 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 how to negotiate while building relationships, which ultimately could allow them to make friendships."

By León Duval.
This 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 Morningside 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

\[
\text{COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY} = \left( \text{COLUMBIA COLLEGE} \times \text{KING'S COLLEGE} \times \left( \text{NON-WHITE PEOPLE} \times \text{WHITE PEOPLE} \right) \right) \div \left( \text{COMMUNITY} \div \text{OBJECTIFICATION + OPPORTUNISM} \right)
\]
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°
Scenario 02
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.

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.

4. 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.

6. When showing the tribute 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.

7. When showing the tribute 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.

10.

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 imperalist 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.
Scenario 03
Scenario 3

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 one. Besides, some objects have been added to the walls and the curtains have been dyed red.

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.

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.

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.

11. When showing the presidents 1.

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

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 newyorkers solve the lack of cheap labor problem without slavery.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
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 consent of the community or even the neighborhood.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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The 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 rhetoric 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 Delbrey. Cruz Garcia also edited the text before it was ready.
You know, our book, Pure Hardcore Icons: A Manbe really conscious about them. have been done by somebody else at some point. So we try to maybe that sort of false sense of genius that European enlight- understands the reference is important. Where does thing, even for our teaching. How do we teach students to OD: I would also add; not just graphically but also in liter- and the authorship in your work? León Duval: You work with the collage, so how do you Nathalie, as a collective, understand the idea of author- or less. It's not like we are stealing the things to take author-

It's kind of humorous. But the theory is that form making is iconic 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-ref-

hand, understanding the reference is important. Where does thing, even for our teaching. How do we teach students to OD: I would also add; not just graphically but also in liter-

León Duval: You work with the collage, so how do you and Nathalie, as a collective, understand the idea of author-

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. [Laugh!] So in a way 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, Nietzsche is European. 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 mi-

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. 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. 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. 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. 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. It's not Europe and the rest of the world, but also Europe. 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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 ChiShasha, 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 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 particular 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 like 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 like, 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, 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 education. You may not be able to enter politically into 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

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 elite 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 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 us, 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, Virginia University that doesn’t even pay their employees a dignified salary.

OD: Is there something on the horizon for WAL 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. And like the project of the Loudreaders, we’re working on that. 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 pluralistic? 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
This 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 transcalar 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
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.
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 ascetics approaches. These specimens are taken from the idea of Ecologies developed by Reynham Banham for LA.
Specimens: grid
Specimens: project
TYPOLOGICAL CORRECTIONS STUDIO

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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, nor 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 to force 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.
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 transcalar 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.
This research was produced for the class Kitchenless Stories of Anna Puigjanner. Here, my personal goal was to explore the relationship between street performances, iconical images in the public sphere, art, politics, dissidence, feminist collective and movement, 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 transcendental 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 theoretic 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.
as the feminist referent to follow. After that, a series of events happened related to the feminist protests and the outbursts, 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 outbreaks 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.

Then, Lastesis, the collective composed by Paula Cometa, Camila Ayala, Sofia Sotomayor and Lucía Cáceres started with the idea of entangling arts and politics around feminist ideas in the form of a collective artwork. 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. Therefore, they started thinking about their proposal from the scenic arts, and 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 convey the non-represented theory of the so-called “subaltern subject,” that was just emerged 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 plurination- al Feminist Assembly, explained to CNN in Chile: “they work from their performance and propose their 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 artick 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 local panorama women started to shout against police stations, also mentioned that after the appearance of Lastesis in the 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 American and Central European countries 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 intervention feminism from the latest performance gathered more than 10,000 people outside the National Stadium, highlighting the fact that the stadium was a tormenting 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 immanence 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, bothered particular- ly 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 pillar where the idea of freedom and rights is associated to. From the complex with the túnel culture, Lastesis usually occupy different important spots for the hetepatriarchal 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 Unión, and the Calle Nueva York. That space is called the history of Chile because it congregates in one place the iconic manual 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 men associated to the Spanish colony gathered around luxury to talk about men’s things without any woman, and the neighborhood where the lawyers work. All of them, places for the reproduction of the same systems that silenced and eradicated feminism from the 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 company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a company, ex Sudamericana de Vapores, where in 1903 due to a -
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 framed narratives 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 hygiene 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 subaltern place 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 outreach 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 references. Therefore, for what matters in this article, if Preciado is extremely useful to frame the understanding of references, 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. In the case 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, the outcome started to break slowly after two years of confinement and a state of exception imposed by the government. The right-wing extreme 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”, “305. Incentives for postponement of retirement age…”, “771. Reclaim the Spanish language [Castellano], eliminating gender language…”. 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, “gays” five times, “mujer” six times, but “familia” appears forty times and “segundas” 58 times. The program has 204 pages. All of what only happened by León Duval

“KITCHENLESS STORIES”

KITCHENLESS STORIES
“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 whit 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.”
These two small articles produced for the Transscalaritie’s 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.


Reality 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, decked 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 is 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
Rather 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 joyness.

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 designed 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.

**The playfulness of ambiguity.**

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

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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?

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.
9. In this mosaic of historic images, you can appreciate a panorama of different moments in times of Watertown with its surroundings. The industries are all strategically directed towards the river; they show vivid civic promenades and boulevards, exquisite architecture and institutional buildings, and the early images of Fort Drum and the Dry Hill Radar Station.

10. Watertown was incorporated as a city in 1869, but the first settlement was established in 1800 over Iroquois land. From the beginning the city was intricately linked to the Black River, part of the Erie Canal, allowing a rapid industrialization around the wool manufacturing steamed by the power extracted from the water. Until the 1920s Watertown was recognized as a factory town, and soon the city started annexing other settlements located nearby. This set of maps shows the story of a rapid expansion between 1800 and 1920 when the city froze and economically decayed. Nowadays there is a project for renovating the waterfront of the city center with open spaces and shopping areas.

11. So, and as a way of summarizing all the components integrating the reality of Watertown today, I have created this diagram to display many of the iconic images and the relationships compounding the panorama of Watertown’s landscape. Here it is possible to appreciate both structures and symbols that are both present in the quotidian life of the inhabitants of this land. Above many other details, we can realize the importance of the panoramic and vertical point of view which has been applied by the ruling industry throw different devices, such as guard towers, water towers, radar towers, monuments, flags, marketing totems, and of course the drones surveilling the airspace of jefferson county and testing bombs inside the Fort land.

12. This timeline shows the history of Watertown through the presence of different industries. Beyond the details shaping these lines, it is possible to notice two main poles in the history of the city: a civil-industrial period and a military-industrial period, starting with the economic decay of Watertown in the 1920s, and forced by the economic expansion of Chicago. The void left by the civil-industrial economy was soon filled by the military-industry, at the beginning with Fort Pike and Fort Drum, and then only by Fort Drum absorbing all and occupying the surrounding area in different economic forms.
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...

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 unstoppable 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 taken by nature, and part of it has turned into a prison – now it is waiting to become another ruin or to turn into something else.

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.

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…

18. Where nature finally reclaims this land…

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?

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 launching 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?
On 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 precarity 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 good architecture?

Part 1:
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 pay and 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?

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,
It's very interesting to see how people, organizations and their ability for understanding how these things work to be able to negotiate the price they pay for the shares. And often, 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... as well as the potential 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 brevity, 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 this moment, that have inspired this episode.

Closing sound: ~3-5 seconds (faudes out) by León Duval

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

Episode Hook

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

LD: Hi, This is rAADio, and this second season we are discussing conformity. I am Leon Duval. DB: I am Daniela Benan, welcome to our bonus episode! LD: Joining us today we have two admins of dankloydwright, 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 (faudes 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, interpersonalities, bodies, and technologies beyond simple scalar translations.

Sound: (*Longer transition*)

Part 1: Sound: (*Longer transition*)

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

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

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Closing sound: ~3-5 seconds (faudes out) edited by Daniela Benam & Leon Duval

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.
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 retraced 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

This 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.

In 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 omonymous 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 Johns 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.

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.

Sandtown is a neighborhood of Baltimore composed of 15,518 inhabitants with a 96.2% 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 relation between race makeup and police harassment and social injustices.

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

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 18% of the Federal Poverty Level. Baltimore City’s median household income is about $41,819 dollars.

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 408.5 points.

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

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2. 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 Johns 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.

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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 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 39.0% (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 Mapping 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.
Uncanny 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.

“...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.

“...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

The Story of Prussian Blue

"It was an accident in a Berlin laboratory (then a center for alchemy) in 1704 that changed the course of art forever. A chemist working to create a batch of cochineal red (made from bugs) accidentally used pigment contaminated by (believed to be) animal blood that pushed the concoction to a deep blue—henceforth known as Prussian blue due to its geographic origins."

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

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"The liquid form of the poison, known as German or Blausäure blue acid, is highly unstable: it boils at twenty-five 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."
“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.”
With 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.

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Critical narratives.