- TABLE OF CONTENTS -

01 :: POST-HUMAN PORT
Brooklyn, New York
Instructor: Macro Ferrari & Elise Hunchuck
Team :: 2022

02 :: THICKENED PROSITY
Long Island City, New York
Instructor: Marc Tsurumaki
Individual :: 2022

03 :: BRIMMED WITH MEMORIES
Surin, Thailand
Instructor: Boonsorn Premthada
Team :: 2023

ZIXIAO HUANG
zh2528@columbia.edu
+1 (213) 292-1821

Selected Works at GSAPP
Transforming from a dilapidated industrial port to a prosperous public park, the land under Brooklyn Bridge Park adapted new identities to accommodate global changes. However, if we see through the spatial development that has been constructed to maximize economic and real estate value, it reveals an overlooked yet significant component, the timber piles, who have been supporting the existence of the landscape. Therefore, the undervalued piles are a proxy for the capital structure that obscures them from above.

As the proxy relationship is embodied in the negotiation between valued and undervalued objects, we want to first identify the current system of value. Value exists persistently, yet it sustains, evolves and is presented through different modalities. Human society tends to quantify the value of a piece of land using a monetary system, whose algorithm often depicts the common and ignores the particular. In contrast, if we perceive lands with ecological perspectives, where the value is embodied through the energy flow in nature driven by multi-species, the image of a land becomes more comprehensive with values superimposed and exchanged dynamically. Therefore, our projection is to challenge the predominant interest of short-term economic benefits, reimagining the human-constructed landscape of Brooklyn Bridge Park with long-term value of ecological regeneration.

Acknowledging climate change is reconfiguring the condition of earth surfaces, we want to identify Brooklyn Bridge Park as a waterfront surface that is already exposed, preparing for conceivable submergence and projecting its future reformation to a new seabed. Start with the historical research and end with strategic method reacting to climate crisis, the installation explores the role of architecture and landscape in preserving existing values, facilitating value transformation, and unveiling obscured values through local political competition, urbanism evolvement, global shipping industry fluctuation, and climate change that define a post-industrial waterfront.
By tracking across time and calculating the total number of each value, it shows how the site shifted from an industrial-driven era to the cultural-driven present ... There are continuous interests and efforts to unearth its inherent value.
The undervalued piles here become a proxy for the very capital structures that obscure them. And the monetary system, that is temporary and static, is insufficient in capturing the whole picture of the landscape.

“it is important and meaningful for us to challenge the predominant interest of short-term economic benefits, and to reimagine the human-constructed landscape of Brooklyn Bridge Park with long-term value of ecological regeneration.”
Nicholas and Stella move toward the model and stand by the end of the Sonia, near the "Runway Bridge".

STELLA
From now until 1950, the sea level will rise about 3 feet. There is still time to disrupt the current we have been creating.

Nicholas and Stella move toward Tier 3. Stella points at a collage of people living in the low and the aggressive move of salvaged grates.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Now, those people will need to find another place to relax.

Nicholas picks up the collage with people and puts it in a box inside the model.

STELLA (CONT'D)
But now, combined with the grates will suddenly be a slurry, mixing other species in earth.

Nicholas puts blue dots on the lawn and grates, and make some more watery spaces into the model. After this, Nicholas and Stella each pick up Tier 3.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Would it still mean anything if Tier 1, (looking at the screen) was the same as we have heard tell of? If the sea level rises, let us start to adopt the modeling system, which is 30 feet higher, with the sea level rising almost 7 feet.

STELLA
Okay, I will hang it on the wall.

Nicholas hangs wooden tablets and sandwiches onto the wall and Stella, Nicholas and Stella each pick up Tier 5.

STELLA (CONT'D)
Can be reconfigured, we can't stop --

STELLA
Yes, the wooden benches and the grates are actually removed from the old Storage Museum. We will store them somewhere else for reconstruction.

STELLA
Okay, I will hang it on the wall.

STELLA
Our plan is to store the planed area in Tier 6, all the remaining plastic and the entire place will be used as a recreation area to meet island. Could it please be a new source for 93.

Nicholas picks up some of the collages of trees and garden plants, and drop them into the box. Nicholas and Stella move back toward Tier 3.

STELLA
By the year 2010, Tier 3 is not as likely as we are in the floor plans. This time the perimeter and all the way in the end, making it unsuccessful and not to be disfigured.

Nicholas places a blue dot sticker on the collage of Tier 4 everywhere, picks up the collage of activity and place algae and algae into the box. But when Nicholas is done to put them in the box, Stella stops him.

STELLA
Map -- means like blue water, table and benches, metal equipment.
The installation explores the role of architecture and landscape in preserving existing values, facilitating value transformation, and unveiling obscured values through global shipping industry fluctuation, local political competition, urban development, and climate change that define a post-industrial waterfront.
The project is trying to achieve an overall thickness in relation to space and society by rethinking the current professional structure of the mental health treatment system. There’s a significant gap between privately run offices and institutional facilities in mental health care practice. Though an independent psychiatrist could provide private and personalized treatment plans for the patients, which a mental health hospital lacks, the psychiatrist still needs labs and equipment for professional research, and the patients are being referred and referred if the mental situation gets worse or as simple as needing a special examination. Moreover, nowadays private psychiatrists are facing more problems like unfriendly neighbors in a general office building, long-term lease insecurity, and the existing office setting which were not ideal for psychotherapies.

Therefore, this project tries to explore the possibility of combining these two systems together architecturally and socially. The complex has an outpatient wing consisted of private offices and talk rooms and an inpatient wing for mainly patient wards. The two parts of the project are connected by shared programs, like labs and meeting rooms, and public spaces. Private practitioners can do their research and attend professional meetings next door, the hospital can gain external knowledge and help at hand, and the community can come and learn about mental health and how mental health problems are treated. Therefore, by thickening the gap, however, the two systems can work more seamlessly and efficiently.

By making a lot of rooms without ever having a truly enclosed space, as the walls are always held a bit apart, the spatial condition is one of a thickened porosity that on the one hand works through a kind of diffusion of solid elements, the walls, but does so in a way that the relation between mass and space and space to space creates a kind of overall density. The mass in the project is being both atomized and distributed, like the idea of a colloidal suspension in chemistry where one element is diffused into another without dissolving. Having created this condition what are its benefits for the project as relating to both the program, the building’s performance, and the experience of users, the project managed to generate a sense of privacy or intimacy while still maintaining a connection to light, exteriority, and the larger spatial assemblage.
Located in Ta Klang Village, Surin, Thailand, the project centers on the strong bonding relationship between local people and the elephants that have grown up as part of their families. The villagers maintain a peaceful elephant graveyard with over 100 resting places for deceased elephants, where the tombs recognize and commemorate their bonds with humans. However, the current graveyard’s significance is limited by its atomized structure and individual connections between each mahout and their elephants. Thus, the project aims to reinterpret the graveyard into an archive space for elephants, where the village’s collective memory can be etched.

The design is inspired by the elephant footprint, where each elephant’s death is honored by weaving its memory into the ground. The ground keeps track of the elephant footprints, which are collected to form an archive of the village’s history. The formless and chaotic nature of elephant marks become a repository for memories and stories, and over time, the space leaves a trace of elephants that complete the design.

The space serves as an archive, a garden, a forest underground, and a place for elephants, humans, and other non-human animals, where the stages of grief are respected, and the place of remembrance is defined and fortified with the energies of life. The project transforms the elephant graveyard into a space of archive and commemoration for the elephants’ bonds with humans and their collective memories.

The Graveyard Project combines local beliefs, cultures, and poetic beauty to tell a story and convey emotions of an ancient graveyard. The same holes dug out to bury elephants are where seeds are planted waiting to be reborn as trees. The elephant’s footprints are reinterpreted as a large archive. This Graveyard is unique with a simple architecture, reflecting the simplicity of an elephant grave. As the community has to excavate many elephant graves for the burial rituals, the project takes into account the use of local materials such as laterite, as an effort to maximize resource efficiency. Most importantly, this project reminds humans to rethink their role in nature and to respect the environment, the indigenous heritage and history with humble architecture.
We traveled to Ta Klang Village in Thailand from March 6th to March 9th, where humans live with elephants, shows that humans do not always have to be the center. The coexistence between us and other beings is worth studying.

On site, we learned about empathy, humanity, awareness, attitude, responsibility, common sense, intuition, feelings, and to understand humanity through feelings, and our six senses.

We probed into construction methodologies that arise from limitations and our surroundings, such as the poor people technique, the animal technique, and the natural technique.

For the elephants in the Ta Klang Village in Thailand, they have a strong bonding relationship with local people since birth. Each elephant here is part of a family that grows up together with the people. At the elephant village, they maintain a tranquil elephant graveyard. It provides over 100 resting places for the elephant that has passed away. This site is specifically intriguing to us, in which the death of elephants and their bonds with humans are recognized and memorialized with these tombs.

However, the existing graveyard is so humble that it conceals itself into the surrounding environment and its significance is limited by its atomized physical structure and the individual connection between each mahout and their elephants.

We traced the life trajectory of an elephant, from its first step on earth to its last breath. As its remains become nutrients for plants and other animals, its spirit shines down from above like the stars, guiding the way for life and praising the bonded relationships between humans and elephants on this peaceful land. Understanding the history and culture behind the shrine-like graves of elephants, we look back further into the material world of the existing graveyard. We studied trees, soil, and everything on site that can leave marks for all the stories (of the village/between humans and elephants) remembered and to be told.
The initial concept of our design is driven from the elephant mark itself, which is the footprint. The ground keeps track of the elephant footprints, we collect them as our archive to keep track of the history itself.
Material

Locally abundant soil and rock type called laterite were chosen to be used for both structural and finishing components. Laterite is both a soil and rock type rich in iron and aluminum; it is of rusty-red coloration because of high iron oxide content. The raw laterite blocks and gravels will be first used to build the retaining walls along the perimeter of the pits as structure, in the meantime, mortar made from laterite soil will be used for the laterite masonry construction. Then, the masonry wall will be coated with laterite plaster also made from laterite soil, providing opportunities for humans and elephants to leave their customized marks while constructing.
Because of the instability of the loose laterite plaster and sand, the laterite wall and sand floor will undergo daily weathering from human and elephant activities as a way to record history and memory.

This proposal will rethink how elephants interact with the physical environment and emphasize their existence by leaving marks. They are not for elephants alone, but all relationships and stories between the villagers and their beloved animals.

Death is but a transition, from one form to another. It's a natural ebb and flow. The formless and chaotic nature of elephant marks then become a repository for the memories and stories. Over time, the space leaves the trace of elephants, permanent or temporary, that all together, complete the design.

In this space of an archive, a garden, a forest underground, and a place for elephants, humans, other non-human animals, the stages of grief are respected, but not cloistered, this place of remembrance is defined by, and continually fortified with the energies of life.