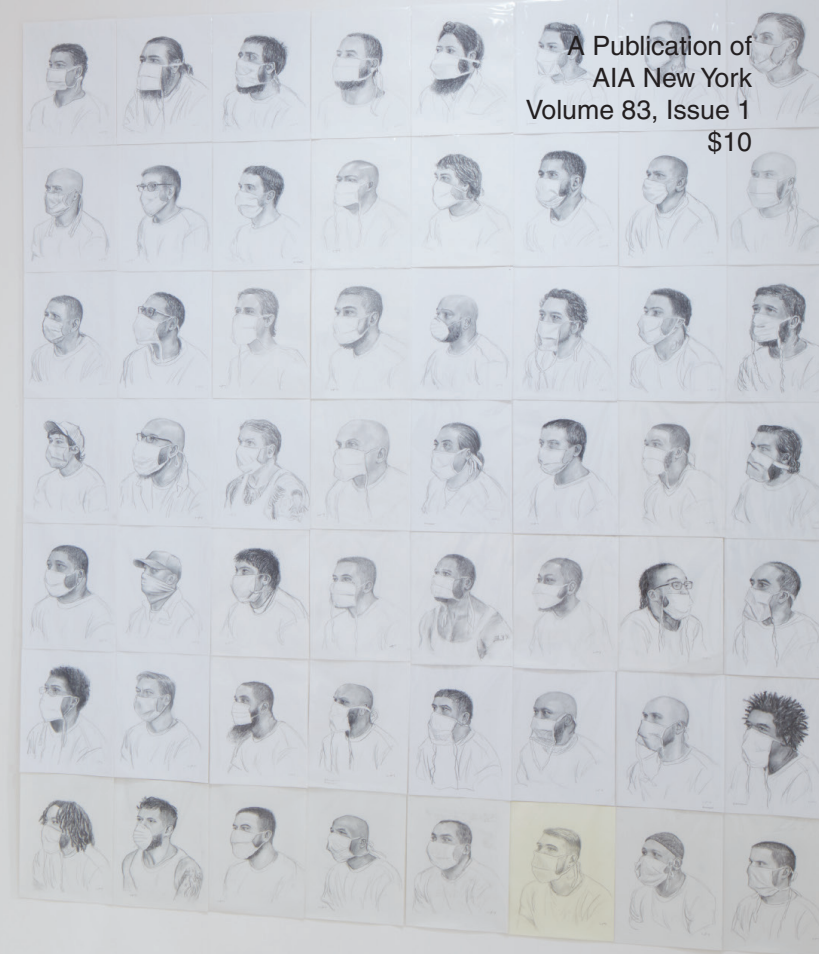


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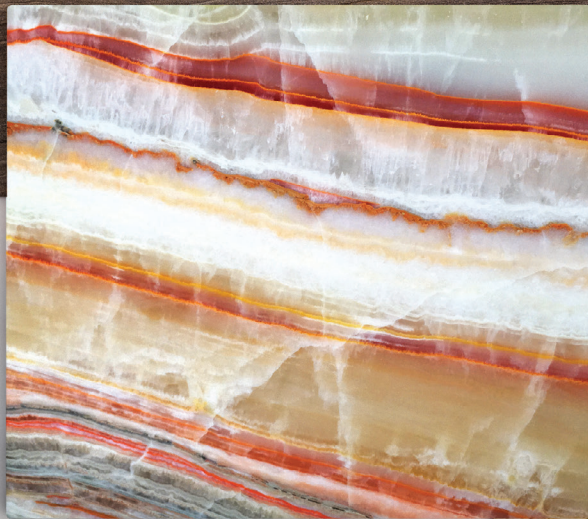
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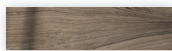
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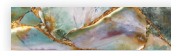
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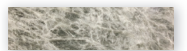
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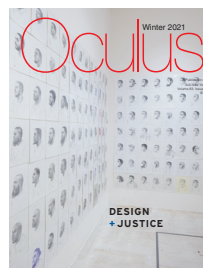
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Cover: Installation view of Mark Loughney, Pyrrhic Defeat: A Visual Study of Mass Incarceration (2014–present) in the exhibition “Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration.” Image courtesy MoMA PS1. Photo: Matthew Septimus

Above: A community court coordinator for Bronx Community Solutions discusses the next area “hot spot” for the group to target community service cleanup and beautification projects. Photo courtesy of Michael Falco/ Center for Court Innovation

Correction: The Fall 2020 article “Environmental Justice Begins at Home” neglected to mention Curtis + Ginsberg

Architects as the architects of Marcus Garvey Village. Please find related updates to this article at www.aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine.

More Online: For a rebuttal by Ricardo Zurita to the Fall 2020 op-ed “Bringing Fútbol to the Skyline and Green Spaces to Uptown” by Garo Gumusyan Architects, please go to www.aiany.org/membership/oculus-magazine.

REFLECTION/ INFLECTION



Let us take a moment to collectively exhale with a huge sigh of relief that 2020 is over. It was a year that kept on giving—pandemic, lockdown, the ghastly deaths of George Floyd and many others, leading to civic unrest and massive protest—all in the context of the fastest collapse ever of our city’s economy. As we close out the year, it feels like there might be light on the horizon, with vaccine distribution and a new administration in the White House that believes in cities and science.

What does this mean for New York City? Charting NYC 2020, last year’s presidential theme, asked us to look back and reflect to chart a new path forward for the city. The urgency of this work is made greater by the challenges of the past year. Visualize NYC 2021, the culminating research and data visualization project, positions AIA New York Chapter to advance robust advocacy efforts in 2021—just in time for historic citywide elections and an opportunity to transcend a return to “normal” and instead envision a return to “better.”

We are at the brink of the 20th anniversary of 9/11, a critical point in AIANY’s 163-year history. While it is our nature as architects to look forward and propose solutions, we should also take a moment to pause and contemplate how we arrived at this point. Perhaps we will use this opportunity to understand our patterns of inspiration and creativity, as well as our blind spots and complexities, but also to look forward to new solutions, to inflect, and to change. And thus, the presidential theme for 2021 is Reflection/Inflection.

In addition to Visualize NYC, we will reflect further on our governance and policies regarding systemic racism, and continue recasting the board to accurately reflect our community and city. As is our obligation to the future of the profession, we will seek means to support the path to the profession by Black, indigenous, and people of color, who are so poorly represented in our membership, with the specific goal of doubling Black members of our profession by 2030.

We will further our engagement with our community, our partners, our colleagues at the New York Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects, and the universities in our city to expand and deepen conversations on systemic racism in our profession, schools, and housing. While supporting work on a carbon neutral future, we will continue to examine the disproportionate impact of climate change on poor and underserved communities. Our committees will support our emerging professionals and practices with activities, training, and mentorship through small- and medium-firm roundtables, and make the Center for Architecture available for pop-up gallery events and both digital and in-person meetings. We will also take the time to remember our colleagues lost to COVID-19, persons lost to unjust criminal justice and systemic racism, and responders and workers lost on and after 9/11.

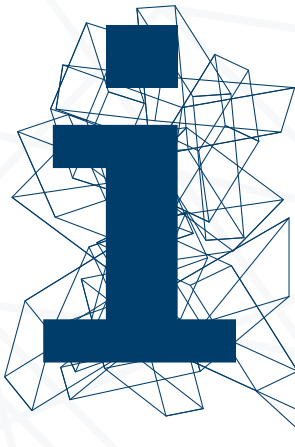
Impactful change occurs with great effort, as exemplified by the projects and people covered in this issue. AIANY is committed to upholding the AIA

Code of Ethics “to design buildings and spaces that will enhance and facilitate human dignity.” With that commitment, AIANY’s Board of Directors has asked our members to refrain from designing spaces of incarceration until there is measurable reform in the American criminal justice system. We encourage members to support the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies based on prison reform, alternatives to imprisonment, and restorative justice, and we are committed to ongoing discussions of these complex issues at the Center.

It bears repeating that the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the economic downturn have illuminated the importance of AIANY and the Center to our profession, our communities, and our city. And so we look forward to 2021 with the great hope of seeing all of you, virtually and in person, at 536 LaGuardia Place. ■

Kim Yao, AIA
2020 AIANY President

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JUST BEGINNING

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During the week we wrapped up this issue, a COVID-19 vaccine began to be distributed to healthcare workers, the electoral college cast their votes for president-elect Joe Biden, and the AIA's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct was amended, prohibiting members from "the design of spaces intended for execution, torture, and prolonged solitary confinement."

The year 2020 was a time of tremendous upheaval, and much of that represented positive change. But how does change become progress? Perhaps it's measured in the ripple effects. In late September, two-and-a-half months before AIA National changed its Code of Conduct, the Board of the AIA New York Chapter issued a statement on criminal justice facilities, "calling on architects no longer to design unjust, cruel, or harmful spaces of incarceration within the current United States justice system, such as prisons, jails, detention centers, and police stations. We instead urge our members to shift their efforts towards supporting the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies based on prison reform, alternatives to imprisonment, and restorative justice." The statement continued: "We will advocate that AIA National, AIA New York State, and our fellow chapters adopt similar positions to discourage design of criminal justice facilities that uphold the current system."

It's a system that is nearly invisible to those outside it, and that fact alone represents a fundamental flaw. In her milestone book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003), scholar and activist Angela Y. Davis advocates for the abolition of prisons in the U.S., and describes prisons functioning "ideologically as an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers...it relieves us of the responsibility of engaging with the problems of our society, especially those produced by racism and, increasingly, global capitalism."

In this issue we consider how design intersects concepts of justice today. We look beyond the design of spaces and environments to the design of programming that supports restorative justice initiatives, which emphasize repairing harm and engaging the community. We also wanted to give more visibility to incarcerated individuals, acknowledging that the current system often strips them of the dignity and signifiers of identity that make us human. As many participants in this issue reiterated, spaces of justice must first and foremost be just spaces.

This is our first issue since becoming a signatory of the "Say It With

Media" pledge of Beyond the Built Environment (BBE), a new organization that addresses issues of inequality in architecture at various stages of the architecture pipeline. The BBE platform "promotes agency among diverse audiences and advocates for equity in the built environment" in part through architecture media. With this pledge, we commit to showing the work of diverse designers and addressing architecture's role historically in systems that perpetuate inequality. I'm proud that *Oculus* has made this commitment, and we thank AIANY board member and BBE founder Pascale Sablan, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP, for challenging us to join. And I also congratulate Pascale for being the recipient of the 2021 Whitney M. Young Award from AIA National! This award goes to an architect who "embodies social responsibility and actively addresses a relevant issue, such as affordable housing, inclusiveness, or universal access." Pascale, who advocates tirelessly for the BBE mission, is one of the youngest ever awardees.

And more awards to come! Our next issue celebrates the winners of the 2021 Annual Design Awards, and we'll also profile the biannual winners of the New Practices Awards.

Welcome, 2021! ■

Molly Heintz
Editor-in-Chief
editor@aiany.org

READ MORE ON DESIGN + JUSTICE

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (2010, 10th anniversary republication 2020)
Isabelle Kirkham-Lewitt, *Paths to Prison: On the Architectures of Carcerality* (2020)
Greg Berman and Julian Adler, *Start Here: A Road Map to Reducing Mass Incarceration* (2018)
Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* (2020)

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Emily R. Pellerin (“Reconceiving Justice” and “Self v. System”) is a Brooklyn-based writer and communications strategist with a focus on art, design, and creative communities. Rooted in design research and journalistic principles, her strategy work concentrates on brand storytelling, content development, editorial direction, and cultural programming. Emily’s recent graduate thesis is a critical discourse on the prison uniform as an article of material culture, the design of both built and systemic carceral environments, and racial and criminal justice.

Casey Romaine (“Beyond the Center”) is a graphic designer and current MA student in the Design Research, Writing, and Criticism program at the School of Visual Arts. Her work looks at manifestations of tension between technology and the natural world in design objects and interior spaces.

Patrick Sisson (“Reconceiving Justice” and “Roads, Not Walls”) is a journalist and Chicago expat living in Los Angeles. He is interested in cities, transportation, architecture, and consumer trends—and the way these

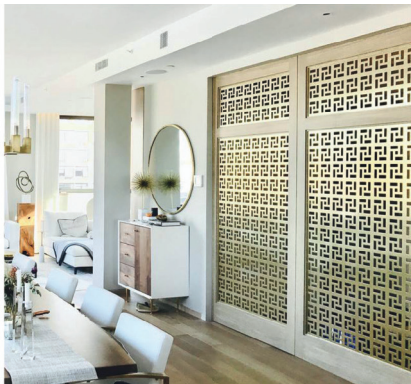
forces shape culture and urban life. His writing, which also explores music, art, and technology, has been published by the Verge, Vox, Pitchfork, Curbed, and Wax Poetics. He is the author of *This is Chicago*, a book about the history of design and designers in Chicago, published in 2015.

Stanley Stark, FAIA, NCARB, LEED AP, (“In Print”) has been associated with Oculus since 2003 as a writer and illustrator. He currently has a position with the City of New York.

Stephen Zacks (“Reform from the Inside: Bronx Community Solutions” and “Beyond a Broken System”) is an architecture critic, urbanist, and curator based in New York City. He is founder and creative director of Flint Public Art Project, co-founder of Chance Ecologies and Nuit Blanche New York, and president of the non-profit Amplifier Inc., which develops art and design programs in underserved cities. He previously served as an editor at *Metropolis* magazine. ■

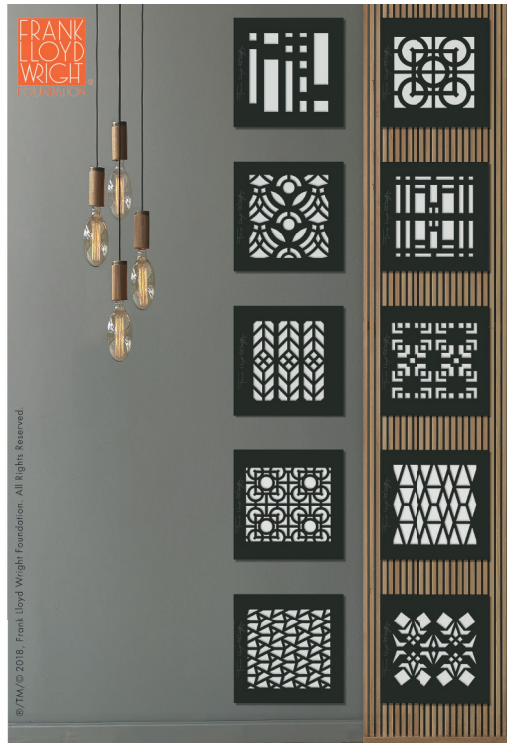


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BEYOND THE CENTER

ON VIEW

“Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration”

MoMA PS1

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At MoMA PS1, an exhibition of works intermediating mass incarceration and contemporary art gives insight into the structures that shape the modern prison experience.



Clockwise from top left: Tameca Cole, *Locked in a Dark Calm*, 2016, collage and graphite on paper. Installation view of Jesse Krimes, *Apokaluptein 16389067* (2010–2013). Installation view of works by Ojure Lutalo. Gilberto Rivera, *An Institutional Nightmare*, 2012, federal prison uniform, commissary papers, floor wax, prison reports, newspaper, and acrylic paint on canvas.

“Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration” features over 35 artists, including both people in prison and those nonincarcerated. The exhibit provides a range of voices centered around themes of time, material, and space, and highlights the system’s broad cultural impact. The delay of the opening, originally scheduled for last spring, has allowed for the inclusion of newer works in response to COVID-19. Mark Loughney’s 500 portrait sketches of incarcerated individuals (*Pyrrhic Defeat: A Visual Study of Mass Incarceration*) fill the walls of an entire room, with the most recent sitters wearing facemasks.

Also on display is a stirring creativity in how the artists reject the limitations of incarceration, with many making use of nontraditional, found resources. Objects that comprise Gilberto Rivera’s *An Institutional Nightmare* include a federal prison uniform, commissary papers, and floor wax. Viewers are invited to consider the daily lives of the individuals who constitute what is often

a faceless system, as the exhibit highlights the system’s deep impact on both the formerly incarcerated and those who are otherwise personally affected. The exhibition is accompanied by a series of public programs and education initiatives that include partnerships with local organizations and activists from the borough of Queens.
Casey Romaine ■

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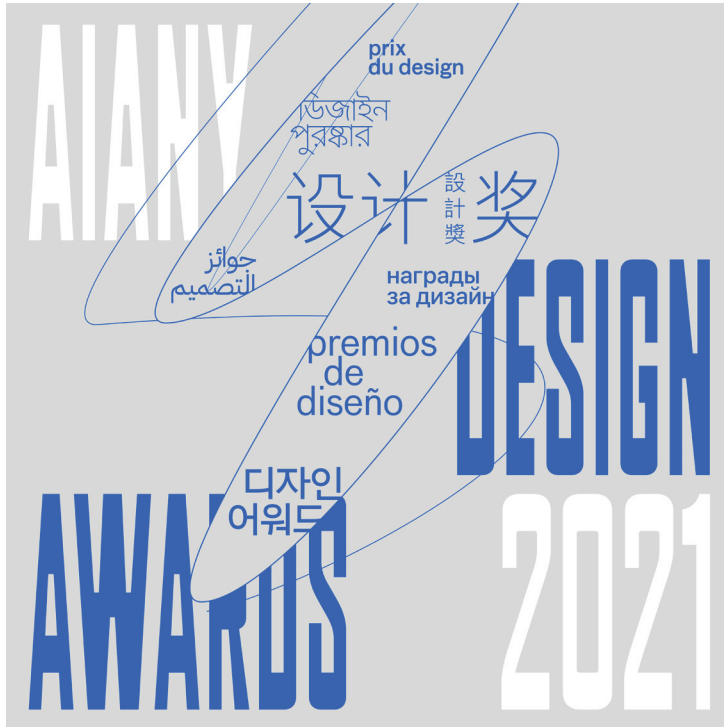
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AT THE CENTER

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AIA New York Chapter's annual Design Awards program recognizes outstanding architectural design by AIANY members, New York City-based architects in any location, and work in New York City by architects around the globe. The purpose of the awards program is to honor the architects, clients, and consultants who work together to achieve design excellence. This year's jury includes Marlon Blackwell, FAIA; Julie Eizenberg, FAIA, RAIA, LFRAIA; Stephen Gray, Assoc. AIA; Mariana Ibañez; Andrea Love, AIA, LEED Fellow; Maria Paz de Moura Castro; and Francesca Perani.

The 2021 winners were announced on January 11 at a virtual Design Awards Jury Symposium. The dates and locations of the awards luncheon and exhibition are subject to change due to the ongoing pandemic, but don't miss the *Oculus* Design Awards issue this spring for in-depth coverage of the winning work! ■

AIANY 2021 Design Awards

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REFORM FROM THE INSIDE: BRONX COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

BY STEPHEN ZACKS

Social worker Maria Almonte of Bronx Community Solutions has an office that is 12 feet from the courtrooms within the Bronx Criminal Courthouse. The nine-story, 1930s limestone-and-granite courthouse was designed by architects Joseph Freedlander and Max L. Hausel with modern massing and a neoclassical entry pavilion, and is adorned with foliate details, copper panels, a frieze by Charles Keck, and WPA-commissioned sculptures around its base. Almonte and her 14-person staff have become the first ones to greet individuals who have just faced a judge and been directed to a diversion program to avoid incarceration.



Top: Director Maria Almonte addresses the staff of Bronx Community Solutions at its offices in the Bronx Criminal Courthouse. Above: Staff from Bronx Community Solutions spend much of their time in neighborhoods, planning events and doing outreach.

“For many years now, we have been trying to provide different types of diversions for people who may be coming through the criminal justice system, from pre-arraignment—meaning at the arrest level—and at post-arraignment—individuals who are in front of the judge and might be looking at either a jail sentence or collateral charge as a plea,” Almonte says.



Top: Ramon Semorile conducts an intake with a client. Above: Almonte speaks at a staff meeting.

A 15-year-old program of the Center for Court Innovation, it's an essential part of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Reform's expansion of Alternative to Incarceration and Supervised Release, which aims to limit excessive use of detention by judges. Bronx Community Solutions offers court-mandated, supportive, community-based solutions for those charged with misdemeanors. Rather than using jail as an immediate implement, judges can refer defendants for anger and behavioral health management, community service, driver accountability programs, human trafficking survivor services, counseling, restorative justice programming, employment services, and substance-use support.

Almonte's staff increased almost tenfold four years ago when her office helped start the Supervised Release program in the Bronx. Instead of releasing people on their own recognizance, setting bail—often beyond the means of the people accused of nonviolent or civil offenses, resulting in jail time for minor offenses—or sending the accused to jail to await trial, Supervised Release provides community-based supervision and support through non-profit agencies for those with

pending cases, ensuring they return to court and avoid arrest. It's one of five agencies citywide that provide pretrial supervision, currently managing 350 cases. "Because I've been working in the criminal justice system and trying to bridge the gap between courts and community, I've come to understand and appreciate that community members value public safety, but they also value the fact that Black and brown individuals coming through the system are their community," Almonte says.

In 2016, as one of the social service providers within the court system, Bronx Community Solutions convened formerly incarcerated people who advised the Independent Commission on Criminal Justice Reform to close down the Rikers Island jail complex. Almonte is encouraged by the city's program to relocate jails to new borough-based facilities closer to the courthouses. "It's really important for individuals who have to be placed in detention to be closer to where they're going to be provided support systems," she says. "That's important when we're trying to provide opportunities for people to be reintegrated into their communities. It needs to feel like it's part of the community. As a social worker, I understand how valuable it is to create concrete services that are obtainable for someone to be successful. It's one thing we have seen from our data and successful outcomes; the arrest may be the crisis situation, but you look at the underlying symptoms and help someone address those so you can stop that revolving door."

Almonte talks about the importance of creating a sense of warmth in her office space, setting a tone that allows people to ask questions, have agency over decisions, and discuss such concerns as what kinds of employment and child-care issues might prevent them from being able to comply with court mandates. "That's one reason why at our offices, we try to create this different feel, this different tone, the moment someone comes into our office space, which is only 12 feet away from the arraignment court they were just released from," she says. "So it's very intentional for us. The way we begin our interview process is to first find out if they even understood what just happened and give them the opportunity and space to ask questions. That sets the tone for us to not only allow that individual's voice to be heard, but to find out their choices of what they are able to complete and how we can support them. Give that person a choice, and it actually increases the compliance rate for that obligation."

Almonte agrees with the justice reforms up to now, and with the AIA New York Chapter pushing for more reform as a condition of architects working within the system. She notes the unequal treatment in policing, procedural justice issues in the courts, and external public health factors that contribute to violence. "We know it is still a system that is not equitable and has not been for a long time," she says. "That's a pretty bold statement for them; good for them. I hope there will continue to be more reform and legislation, especially in New York, but also in the whole country." ■



Photo credit: Courtesy of Designing Justice + Designing Spaces

DESIGN + JUSTICE

One of the hallmarks of 2020 was an increased focus on this country's judicial, law enforcement, and carceral systems. For many of us in privileged positions, these systems have chugged along, invisible and unattended, for decades. As citizens took to the streets to protest police brutality, and data emerged about the ravages of COVID-19 on incarcerated populations, architects began to wonder if design could be deployed more responsibly to improve the spaces that are complicit in these conditions. In September, the Board of the AIA New York Chapter urged members to become catalysts in the creation of new systems that support restorative justice—a system of criminal justice that promotes the rehabilitation of offenders through reconciliation with victims and the community at large. As a

Designing Justice + Designing Spaces led a community town hall to begin reimagining the Atlanta City Detention City Center, which the firm will transform into a Center for Equity.

response to this call to action, this issue seeks to learn from those in the design world who have been working on these challenges since well before they reached such prominence in the national psyche. Our writers interviewed advocates exploring environments for restorative justice and also considered the design of carceral spaces themselves. Again and again, the words and experiences of these architects point to a movement that is less about buildings and more about amplifying the voices that are so often overlooked when designing them. *The Editors* ■



BEYOND A BROKEN SYSTEM

The closure of Rikers Island created an opportunity to rethink New York City’s prisons. But critics of the U.S. carceral system discourage architects from participating in a justice system defined by disparity.

BY STEPHEN ZACKS

When any administrative body opts to deprive an individual of liberty based on the belief that it serves the greater social good, an extraordinary amount of modesty and restraint are warranted. We are told that the U.S. justice system allows defendants due process, equal justice under the law, and presumption of innocence until proven guilty. In practice, we know that many people get caught in “the system” for radically arbitrary reasons, corrupted by unjust and unequal

processes. The mechanistic grinding of the system subjects millions to incarceration or supervision. Deep-seated legacies of discrimination go unaddressed. Countless are sentenced for crimes they didn’t commit, or are detained for extended periods because of slow trials and lack of cash for court fees, bail, and attorneys. It’s therefore completely understandable that advocates want to completely abolish or greatly reduce incarceration.

The AIA New York Chapter released a statement last September that discouraged architects from designing spaces of incarceration because of the unjust, harmful, and cruel practices within the current justice system. “We instead urge our members to shift their efforts towards supporting the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies based on prison reform, alternatives to imprisonment, and restorative justice,” they wrote.

Brian Lee, of the architecture and design-justice advocacy office Colloqate, states the position powerfully. “I don’t think there are moral or ethical ways in which architects can support the justice system that is foundationally concerned with the oppression of Black and brown people,” he says. “There isn’t a way we can convince ourselves that is a moral stance to take. It means we have to fundamentally rethink the justice system’s purpose and the typology altogether. Because abolition is not just demolition or dismantling an existing system. It is visualizing a new system that serves those who have been harmed by the rigors, the forces of our society that outcast people, put people in harm’s way, and put people in dire straits so much that they are willing to hurt people to survive.”

Meanwhile, long-time practitioners who have been pushing for reforms from the inside agreed with the spirit of the statement, but took issue with the idea of nonparticipation. “A lot of what’s being asked for today is a smarter and more

calibrated use of the power and capabilities of law enforcement and police particularly, but also of courts, prisons, and jails,” says Frank Greene, FAIA, of STV and Greene Justice Architecture, a 30-year veteran of courthouse, jail, and juvenile detention center design and a former principal of RicciGreene Architects. “It’s absolutely the right thing to use those levers of power lightly, sparingly, and as a kind of scarce resource or last resort, rather than indiscriminately and one size fits all.”

Greene argues that it would be more harmful if architects were not engaging with the system, using the

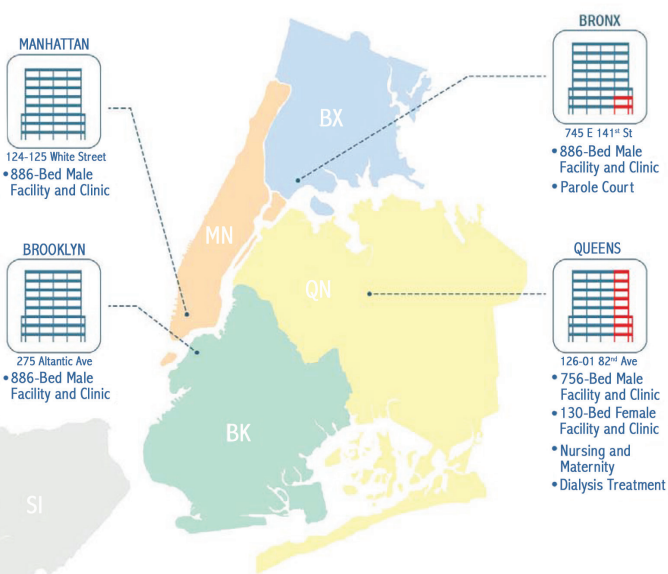
power of design to change environments to benefit people being detained. “I entered this work wanting to push back against the era of mass incarceration, because a lot of what was happening in that period,

the ’80s and ’90s—because the numbers were growing so rapidly—is that facilities were being designed basically to warehouse bodies,” he says. “There was very little consideration of what to do with people when they were in the care and custody of jails and prisons—just basically house them humanely and release them to return again. No attempts had been made to address their risk and need when they were inside the system. We were pushing back mostly in courthouse, jail, and juvenile projects.”

In New York City’s jails, if not on the state or federal level, that system is definitively changing. After the 2013 acquittal of Trayvon Martin’s killer in Florida, followed by the 2014 killing of Eric Garner on Staten Island, and the 2015 suicide of Kalief Browder on Rikers Island, the demands of police and justice reform activists intensified. By February 2016, New York City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito was calling for formation of an independent commission on New York City Criminal Justice and Incarceration Reform, which would examine the sources of failure and recommend changes. The commission was led by former New York State Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman, seated and staffed by reform advocates, and aided by focus groups with formerly incarcerated people, justice-impacted families, service providers, psychologists, reform advocates, correctional officers, architects, real estate developers, and planners. Its April 2017 report, *A More Just NYC*, detailed policies that could vastly reduce the number of people being detained, urging that the

“Abolition is not just demolition or dismantling an existing system. It is visualizing a new system.”—Brian Lee

Image credit: Courtesy of New York City Department of Design and Construction/Perkins Eastman



Facing page: An image from an overview of Beyond Rikers: Master Plan for the Borough-Based Jails shows the transformation of New York’s carceral system. Left: A map of the borough-wide detention system, which would encompass 3,545 beds for an average daily population of 3,300 individuals.

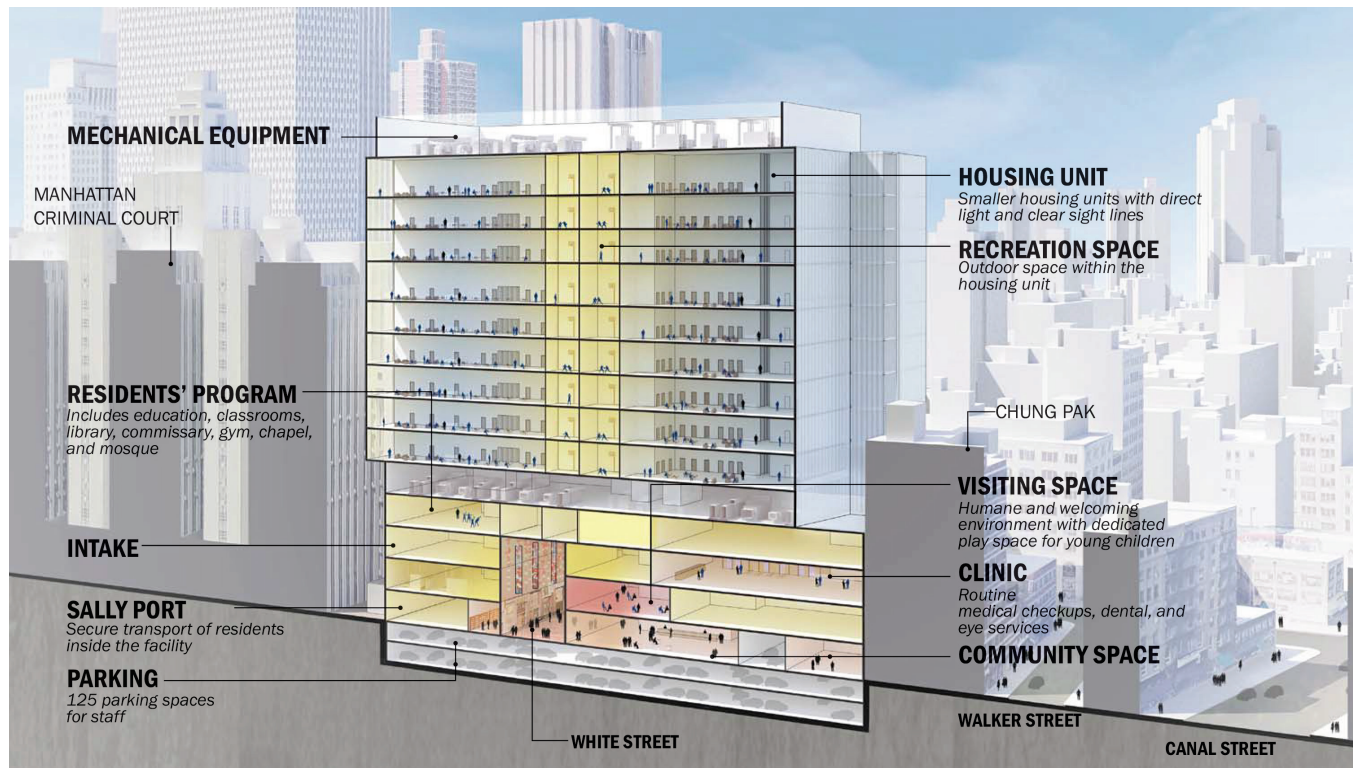
jail complex on Rikers Island be closed and replaced by four smaller borough-based facilities.

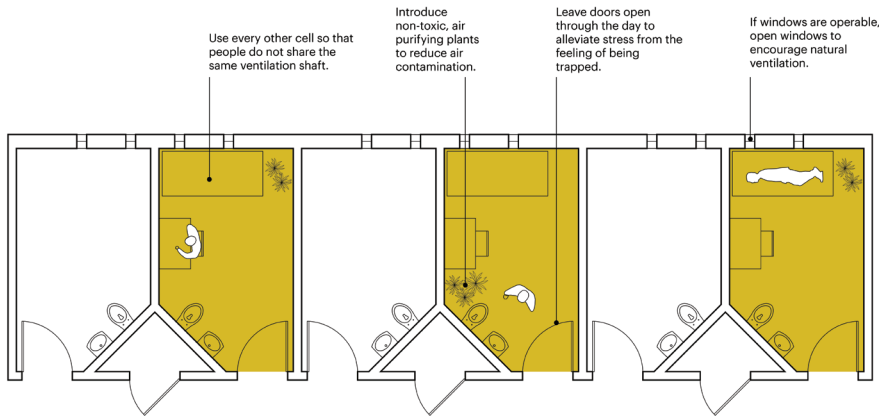
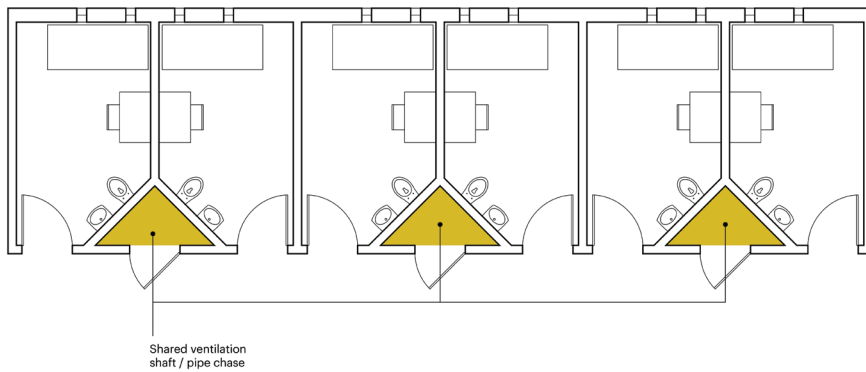
The commission's recommendations included reforms such as setting bail at levels more appropriate to the income levels of the detained and more closely tied to the seriousness of offenses, less arbitrarily connected to the risk of failure to appear; changing detention guidelines for those arrested on misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies; and redirecting those with special needs such as healthcare, mental health issues, or homelessness into other programs. Three-quarters of the New York City jail system was occupied by people who had not been convicted of a crime but were indicted and awaiting trial. Nineteen percent were considered to have serious mental health issues.

In June 2016, the city council reforms passed the Criminal Justice Reform Act, replacing criminal charges with civil penalties for many low-level, nonviolent offenses, such as open containers of alcohol, public urination, littering, and jumping subway turnstiles. Ninety percent of criminal court summonses were eliminated in the following year. Diversion programs to assessment and community service offered alternatives to incarceration for young people and those with mental health and other issues. The city worked to clear hundreds of thousands of outstanding warrants for minor criminal offenses, more than 800,000 of them issued more than 10 years earlier and only 3% of them for felonies, the rest for administrative code violations, infractions, and misdemeanors. These types of judicial and procedural reforms have reduced New York City's

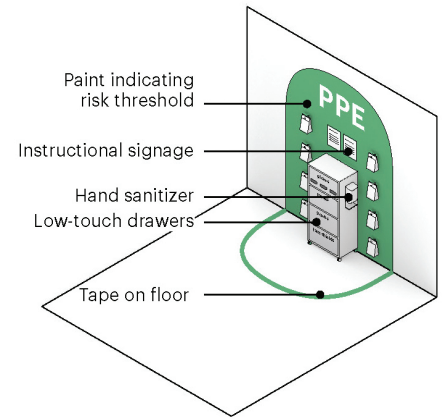
jail population by more than half since Mayor Bill de Blasio took office, from 10,912 in 2014 to below 4,000 as of April 2020. The reduction was accelerated by the rise of COVID-19 infections during the pandemic, supporting the argument of a report issued in May by MASS Design Group's Restorative Justice Lab in favor of widespread decarceration. "One of the main reasons COVID is so pervasive in prisons is because of an indifference to human needs and human dignity," says MASS Design Director Jeff Mansfield. "Prisons are designed from principles of economy, efficiency, and security, and are not designed to promote healing, restoration, or basic human comfort. As a result, prisons are stressful, crowded spaces that strip normalcy, deny personal agency, and dehumanize the people within." At least within the city's own jails, the institutional reforms that AIANY has called for in the justice system have already advanced significantly.

"While we are talking about these new facilities, it is a fundamental shrinking of the system of incarceration," says Dana Kaplan, deputy director of the Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice Reform. "It isn't just about the different philosophy and structure of these buildings, but it's also the importance of achieving and focusing on that at the same time we are building up the infrastructure at the community level and changing the culture—not just at corrections, but also at the courts and justice system across the board, to use detention really as a last resort. When it is the last resort, we have a responsibility to ensure that people are held in the most respectful and supportive environment possible."





Facing page: A section of the Manhattan borough-based jail shows housing and recreation stacked on top of community, medical, and visiting areas. Left: A diagram from MASS's "Carceral Environments and COVID-19" report shows how shared ventilation shafts can facilitate the spread of contaminated air. Below, left: Institutions should consider using every other cell to prevent airborne transmission of COVID-19. Below: The MASS report suggests centralized PPE stations for staff and residents to encourage use and reduce contamination.



“When detention is the last resort, we have a responsibility to ensure that people are held in the most respectful and supportive environment possible.”
—Dana Kaplan

The next step will be much harder: to completely reimagine and reconstruct the jail infrastructure of New York City. In many ways, the current plans to replace Rikers reflect aspirational ideas that seemed like starry-eyed idealism only a few years ago. As the Spatial Information Design Lab's Million Dollar Blocks project argued in 2006, if we reinvested the resources spent on jails and prisons on healthcare, mental health treatment, education, and supportive housing, we could radically reduce or eliminate the need for detention facilities. At Rikers Island alone, it costs a quarter million dollars per year to house a single person.

Implementing these plans will require the ideas and expertise of talented architects committed to ending the legacy of abuse that Rikers came to embody. In 2017, Van Alen Institute worked with the Boston-based firm NADAAA

and a group of experts and focus groups to begin envisioning how a new jail system could incorporate the best practices for detention facilities, based on the premise that planning for release begins as soon as one enters the system. “How do we create a place where the minute you step in, you prepare for leaving, and that exit happens as quickly as possible?” asks Daniel Gallagher of DGG Architect, who worked on the project as a former principal of NADAAA. “The first step is understanding what educational, mental health, and physical health elements we could provide. What is the quickest way to get through the court system so the release can happen as soon as possible? How can we prepare folks for post-release in ways that don't happen now—where you're shoved out the door with a MetroCard and some minimal amount of money? How can we make places that give folks a better chance of moving beyond this experience of their life?”

Commission and design team members visited the Arlington County Jail in Virginia, Westchester County Jail in New York, the Denver County Jail in Colorado, and the Pretrial Services Agency in Washington, D.C., as examples of national models. They also learned from prisons in Europe, including the Halden Prison in Norway, considered one of the most advanced in its approach to rehabilitation. Here, detainees have easy exposure to the outdoors within a forested perimeter, and

the design emphasizes sociability and personal autonomy. (See "Roads, Not Walls," on page 24.) Noise is reduced through specially engineered security doors that don't bang and clang, reinforcing the presumption of innocence for pretrial detainees, and, for those who have been convicted, the rehabilitative notion of "corrections" that is rarely achieved in the U.S.

"There's widespread acceptance of this among wardens, police chiefs, legislators, chief judges, and district attorneys," Greene says. "All aspects of the system embrace the notion that the era of mass incarceration was harmful, expensive, and counterproductive, and that we definitely need to look for and implement more enlightened approaches that are more humane; less destructive to individuals, families, and communities; and health-giving and restorative to those folks."

With the help of formerly incarcerated and justice-impacted people, correctional experts, and former corrections officers, the commission and design team developed a concept for the new system, sketched out drawings of the programs, and issued the report, *Justice in Design*, published in July 2017. Four borough-based "justice hubs" would be located closer to families, with easier access to social and educational services and greater proximity to attorneys and courts. The hubs would provide detainees with rooms offering outside views, grouped in a smaller number of units, with individual bathrooms, physical access to the outdoors, dedicated program spaces, natural lighting, and more normal environments.

The new system would also reduce the extreme isolation and torturous wait times that exacerbate suffering and conflict in the outmoded Rikers complex.

The Mayor's Office for Criminal Justice and the Department of Design and Construction took on the mission of converting the recommendations into a new reality.

"I think it's important to frame the city's efforts to close Rikers and for this plan as going beyond the mayor's office," says Kaplan. "This was really a demand that came out of the movement for change, and it was something that formerly incarcerated people called for the city to do. A lot of the plan itself was shaped and impacted by those voices, perspectives, and experiences. Beyond the philosophy of these facilities, the cornerstone of this effort over the past several years has been a commitment to seek guidance from those with experience in the criminal justice system regarding what could bring the most transformation."

The city hired Perkins Eastman to do the initial scoping work, with Beverly Prior FAIA, LEED AP of AE-



Above: The dining room of the Bronx Adult Behavioral Health Care Center by STV Incorporated, the first new adult inpatient facility designed and constructed for the New York State Office of Mental Health in 20 years. Right: The Brooklyn location for a borough-based jail places the primary visitors entrance on Boerum Place. The master plan envisions a generous and transparent lobby consistent with the civic character of the corridor.

"Building these buildings smaller reflects a much-downsized system, and focuses on risk, need, community connections, and health."—Frank Greene

COM in charge of drafting the remaining documents. A shortlist of three design-build firms were selected earlier this year for the Manhattan facility: Gilbane Building Company working with HOK, DeMatteis Construction Corp with Morris Adjmi, and Plaza Construction with DLR Group. RFQs are expected in the coming year for the Brooklyn, Queens, and Bronx facilities, with a deadline set for completion of all facilities by 2027.

Prior, who specializes in jail facilities planning, praises the extensive participation of justice-impacted communities on the Rikers replacement project and emphasizes its importance. "At a forum a few months ago, Judge Lippman—the

presiding judge over this idea of closing Rikers—said that Rikers is a stain on the soul of New York City," Prior says. "Anything that gets in the way of relieving all the terrible things that Rikers represents in terms of separation from families and inhumane facilities is counterproductive. Rikers is a culture, also, and I think it's really important for New York to shift its culture. That's a big part of the borough-based jails program: to shift the culture and orientation around justice."

Behind the scenes, however, there have been rumblings of disagreement about the design-build model being introduced in the city's contracting process for the first time on a major facility. Critics say it has eliminated the public review process that any other facility would normally undergo, limiting the oversight to special committees and focus groups. That, alongside the onerous bonding requirements of a huge construction project and the risks of going out on a limb for a process that



Image credits: Facing page: Chris Cooper; this page: Courtesy of New York City Department of Design and Construction/Perkins Eastman

critics say lacks transparency, may be preventing more innovative firms from getting involved. It's not too late to revisit this process and ask whether public review should not be mandated for a project of such monumental social importance.

"Fundamentally, architects can serve a role by listening to communities that have expressed generation after generation of trauma and harm caused by the entirety of the carceral and police state," Lee says. "They must recognize what the acute conditions are for individuals who interface with those two entities consistently, and then respond to the power system in a way that shuffles that power and allows for communities that interface with those entities to be healed through that interaction, to be put back on the course of a valuable citizen within our society."

Greene, who consulted with the Independent Commission and NADAAA on best practices for their reports, argues for the overwhelming value of the reforms being instituted, despite whatever legitimate concerns there are. "This is a great initiative that I deeply believe is worthy of support, not just by the Chapter, but by architects and New Yorkers generally," he says. "With the Close Rikers Jails program, they're looking to make an enormous investment of political capital as well as money in building these buildings back in the community where they belong—building them smaller to reflect a much-downsized system, and focusing on risk, need, community connections, and health."

Nadine Maleh, executive director of capital projects at the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, agrees. "We have a justice system where we want to prevent people from committing crimes to begin with. We want as few people in jails as possible, and our office has been working to limit the number

of people going into jail," Maleh says. "But when there is no other option based on our system, that place where we're holding people should have access to support services, legal services, education, and all that. Opting out makes it difficult to get innovative architects to be part of that dialogue and part of creating something that is truly indicative of the reform movement."

In the end, there may be less daylight than appearances suggest between those working for reform within the justice system and those working outside it. Both want to reduce incarceration to an absolute minimum, and both are demanding greater accountability of the system to those who have been detained. "The only way to reshuffle power is to create new frameworks that allow a call like 'defund the police' to become a call for mental health workers to engage with people who are often jailed for no reason," Lee says. "It is a call for those who are firmly for abolition of prisons to be heard as saying, not only do we want to close a useless infrastructure that holds people captive, but we want to create spaces that safely allow them to grow into active members of society in a robust and healed manner."

If the de Blasio Administration achieves only one significant victory during its tenure—for all its shortcomings and inattention to detail—the program to reform the justice system would be a change worthy of great acclaim. Certain members of the public worry that the jails may become too good. If jails were too comfortable, wouldn't more people want to go there? The complaint reveals how much farther we have to go in planning the non-carceral world. Perhaps after Rikers, we can think about making everyday life more humane for people outside prison as well. ■

FEATURE

RECONCEIVING JUSTICE

Two architects share their visions for restorative justice and a new infrastructure for their communities.



Architect Deanna Van Buren (left) and the team of Designing Justice + Designing Spaces (above).

DEANNA VAN BUREN

BY PATRICK SISSON

When people first step inside a peacemaking space designed by Deanna Van Buren, architect and founder of Oakland-based non-profit Designing Justice + Designing Spaces, their common first reaction is to step back. Designed to calm, slow down breathing, and lower heart rates, these communal spaces, made for two or more people to dialogue in pursuit of a less punitive form of justice, often feel too nice, says Van Buren. The victims, perpetrators, community members, and others invited inside sometimes feel this is foreign to preconceptions of courtrooms, prisons, and punishment. Only later do they settle in, relax, and begin a journey towards restorative justice.

That occasional unconscious recoil at a space meant for peace perhaps illustrates the need for Van Buren's work, which is nothing less than a crusade for reconciliation and the creation of spaces for restorative justice. This concept

and centerpiece of her practice—gathering the victim and perpetrator of a crime together to mutually decide the path towards repair and restoration—offers agency and empathy that is radically at odds with the American carceral system. “People point to more humane prison designs in Europe and Scandinavian countries and ask, ‘Why can’t we just design prisons like that here?’ I say we can’t because our system is rooted in enslavement and its historical legacies,” Van Buren explains. “They basically built their values. Until we shift our cultural approach to justice and heal from our violent and oppressive past, design won’t matter.”

Van Buren's mission, simply put, is to design space that will serve as an alternative system of reconciliation and justice. After founding her firm in 2011, she built some of the first spaces in the nation dedicated to the restorative justice concept, including a high school and community center in her current home of Oakland, California. Her approach continues to gain momentum at a moment when the Black Lives Matter movement and national protests over the murder of George Floyd



Clockwise from top: At Restore Oakland, Restorative Justice Rooms feature peaceful colors and large windows, with chairs arranged in the tradition of Native American peace circles. In a nod to the long history of basements being places where activists gather to facilitate change, the basement of Restore Oakland ("The Den") provides shared meeting room space for non-profits and the larger community. Restore Oakland's Ella Baker Center for Human Rights offices.



have radically shifted our national dialogue on crime and punishment. (Her 2018 TED Talk espousing her vision has been viewed more than a million times.) And she's about to scale up, simultaneously working with community groups in Atlanta to figure out how to repurpose a city jail into a larger hub for justice and community development, and embarking on the process of buying land in Detroit to develop a four-block community project she's calling "The Love Campus."

"I am constantly learning how to wake up and be inclusive and do this in the right way," she says. She believes the concept is catching on because the government is willing to learn and, more importantly, to listen to the grassroots community groups demanding this different path. "Folks in government need to listen to the organizers deeply connected to

the community, who have been going door-to-door for years," she says.

Growing up in a Black family living in a segregated community in rural Virginia, Van Buren felt the sting of racism, but also the draw of design and call to justice. She started building what she'd call "healing huts" in the woods behind her home, after she was sent home for punching

another student who called her a racial slur. Her mother, a public school teacher who herself grew up in poverty and worked in extremely disinvested neighborhoods in Washington, D.C., exposed her to the realities of economic and social injustice.

When Van Buren was 12, a classmate said he wanted to be an architect, giving her a name for her ambitions.

Van Buren studied architecture at Columbia University and then worked for English architect Eric R. Kuhne,

**"Until we shift our cultural approach to justice and heal from our violent and oppressive past, design won't matter."
—Deanna Van Buren**

designing shopping centers around the globe and engrossing herself in how to translate culture into public space. Two formative experiences focused her career on justice: In 2007 in Oakland, she heard Fania Davis, sister of Black scholar and activist Angela Davis, speak about the concept of restorative justice, which struck a chord. A few years later, she visited a prison while working with a colleague teaching inmates, and observed the stark environment of incarceration for the first time. Both incidents made her question how she could make a difference. “An architect is a person who builds something, makes something, imagines something,” she says. “So I’m an architect who will imagine a system for restorative justice.”

Van Buren soon began refining her ideas with a series of increasingly larger projects. She convinced Fania Davis to help get a grant to build a restorative justice center at Castlemont High School in Oakland. Van Buren’s first such project, a pro bono effort in 2010 that consisted of some paint, donated carpet, and inexpensive lighting, proved so successful that she quit her job and launched her own firm.

As her practice has expanded—including designing Restore Oakland, a former nightclub turned community advocacy and training center that opened in the Fruitvale neighborhood last year—Van Buren has continually refined the design of peacemaking space, taking inspiration from voluminous research, experience, and indigenous practices. Compared to the imposing infrastructure of concrete, bars, and wires of the prison system, such spaces may seem insignificant at first. But the message they send, and their power to change lives, is much larger than their dimensions.

“When I visited prison, I remembered that we were meeting prisoners in the place where they’d meet their families—the best place in the entire prison,” she says. “And it was just grim. Prison is hard, and those men, mostly Black men, were no different than you or me. It was a profound experience that changed my life and committed me even more to this life.”

Q&A: EMMANUEL ONI

BY EMILY R. PELLERIN

Emmanuel Oni is an artist, architect, and community designer at the NYC Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice. He comes to the practice of architecture from an atypical vantage point that centers on space-keeping framed by spatial justice. For him, architecture is not necessarily about buildings. It is about amplifying voices typically overlooked when decisions are made about the built environment, and about shifting narratives around public spaces that may harbor trauma or stigma. His approach to restorative justice focuses on how architecture contrib-

utes to the spatial divides impacting marginalized communities, and how the architectural community can repair that relationship. Here, Emily R. Pellerin talks with Oni about his recent call to action for the architecture industry, speculative and inclusive visions for Rikers Island, and the future of design work.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

Last fall, you published an article in the design magazine FRAME that has been described as an “unsolicited letter” to architecture, design, and academia, all of which you’re involved in as a practitioner or an educator. You explain why you focus on community-oriented work in your own practice, and you call for architectural industries, specifically megafirms, to expand their models for hire and contribute their capital and labor to their performances of allyship. Can you expand on that?

I don’t think I’ve ever told the story of how that article came about. During the summer, there was a lot of buzz in the design world to make a Black Lives Matter statement, but also to follow through on statements of inclusion. I started reaching out to several architecture firms, noting that there are community projects to get involved with, like those at the mayor’s office. Someone reached out to me and said, “Yeah, this is great, but we feel like architects should be paid.” That’s what sparked something in me to write down why, at this juncture, especially if you’re in a corporate position where you could afford to offer some low-scale design work, you should consider community-oriented pro bono work. The letter wasn’t to that person—it was to the architectural profession as a whole. I totally agree that architects should get paid for their work. But if you’re a 500-person firm and are trying to get compensated for community work, especially when that work seems so crucial right now, something about that rubbed me the

wrong way. That letter was a manifesto to the work I’m doing—not just speaking to the architectural profession, but also my call to action.



You believe the architectural manifestation of restorative justice should be driven by communities directly impacted by policing and criminalization. What are the roots of that perspective, and what could that manifestation look like?

Facing page: Emmanuel Oni. Right: Oni's design concept for a Black-owned cannabis/wellness startup that supports formerly incarcerated people and functions as a community space.

I did my undergrad thesis on alternatives to incarceration, and it's led me to other forms of thinking when it comes to design interests. I became really interested in the idea of death and the architecture related to death. When the pandemic happened, you could see the level of disparity that occurred, mostly in under-resourced, marginalized communities. I wanted to investigate that more. Through those investigations, I realized it wasn't really about death, but about trauma—trauma after experiencing loss. Right now I'm focusing my work on how to respond to gun violence. At my job, I was connected with a mobile trauma unit—think of them as first responders to violent incidents. I don't think anyone else is looking at this spatially. For instance, some people don't want to go to a store, alleyway, or street corner because that's where a violent incident occurred. So, in that sense, there's a level of trauma there. How do we address that? That's what I'm currently doing. I've been researching a lot about how remembrance and memorials can lead to advocacy through healing space. That's my path for architecture.

How can we incorporate trauma and healing in new approaches to restorative justice architecture?

I don't know if these are “new” models. Deanna Van Buren has laid out a really good pathway but, at the same time, it's always good to have different points of view. Restorative justice is such a huge concept, so people are probably going to interpret it spatially to be quite grand. A lot of times, from an architectural standpoint, you think of restorative justice as meaning that we have to create this huge center, where all these things are happening, when, in reality, it starts off on a very small scale. Starting small and learning how to grow and evolve with whatever community you're working in is really key. Sometimes it may not even involve a building. It's thinking about how to build community without a building, or something that's not always permanent, given that our society is prone to flux and change. That's also something I've been thinking about when it comes to healing and trauma—that sometimes it's not always going to be a permanent memorial, but more of a ritual or practice.

Let's say we close Rikers Island tomorrow. How can a space that harbors trauma—that is stigmatized—be transformed?

My vision entails more about the process than the final result, like when it comes to getting community input and equipping communities with the tools to help envision an alternative Rikers Island. This is where I've gone in my own architectural career, in terms of projecting onto a site and trying to shift that



“You think of restorative justice as meaning that we have to create this huge center, where all these things are happening, when, in reality, it starts off on a very small scale.” —Emmanuel Oni

build-focused approach to a more process-driven approach. My vision is, we'll have 20 community sessions and do the research of how to reclaim the space. We'll take people who may have been affected by the justice system on a trip because they haven't been able to get out of New York, and have them see how another community, like Comuna 13 in Colombia, has responded to violence. That's my vision. The narratives of the people who are affected have to be not just part of the conversation of what's happened there, but they also have to manifest themselves spatially. There are ways to reconstruct a space or highlight positive experiences, though they don't have to necessarily be permanent. So, instead of showing the stories that happened on the island, it's showing the stories of people who may have been affected by the justice system, bringing to light their lives when they weren't inside.

Can you share more about your art practice, and how it informs your architecture and design visions?

I feel like even though I practice architecture, I've always been an artist. That's one reason why my approach is wildly different from most of my colleagues'. I would highlight the word “radical.” My practice in radicalness has become a bit more subtle. I'm thinking about radicalism in a very simple sense, of going against the grain, always questioning things. I'd say that on an urban scale, what would be radical is not this huge restorative justice center on Rikers Island, but—and this is not necessarily my vision for the island—it would be making Rikers a garden. Doing something so minimal is also a form of radicalism. ■



ROADS, NOT WALLS

Through design, spaces of justice can support development rather than deprivation. New models from Norway, France, and Atlanta show how.

BY PATRICK SISSON

Ask Danish architect Steen Gissel of ERIK Arkitekter about how to design more effective, efficient, and humane prisons, and his advice is to avoid studying prisons at all costs. Gissel gets asked about correctional facilities a lot because of his work on Halden Prison, a maximum-security facility that opened in Norway in 2010 and has been celebrated for its beautiful, even bucolic, design. (Living spaces resemble catalogue-ready Scandinavian college dorms, and inmates can pick blueberries on the wooded grounds.) But his most important message for architects designing these institutions is to remember that architecture simply isn't that important.

"It pains me to say as an architect, but architecture is much less important than culture and political discourse," he says. "I like to talk more about the concept of punishment and incarceration, rather than architectural drawings."

The challenges of designing prisons, jails, courthouses, and correctional facilities—distilling local and national visions of crime, punishment, and forgiveness into physical reality—has always been a complicated one. Architects need to balance unique safety and security concerns and, in some cases, ask whether such structures should even be built. Alone among peer nations in terms of prisoner



Facing page: An internal roadway between two buildings on the campus of the maximum-security Halden Prison in Norway, designed by ERIK Arkitekter. Top: The library of Halden, like the entire facility, is designed to give prisoners a sense of autonomy. The approach is based on the idea that being deprived of the outside world is punishment enough. Above: A typical Halden cell.

“Halden’s philosophy is simply that the state of incarceration is enough. There will be no further punishment than that.”—Steen Gissel

population, the United States, and the continued expansion of its carceral system, embodies a dark form of exceptionalism that challenges architects working in this field. One of the defining images of last summer’s protests over George Floyd’s murder was the burning down of a police station in Minneapolis. Amid calls of “defund the police” and larger initiatives to rethink community safety and sentencing, the nation seems both tethered to physical monuments of its police and prison systems, and ready to get rid of them.

Increasingly, however, prison and jail design is rapidly evolving around the world, and best practices have found their way back to the U.S. Gissel says that the design challenges of creating a more humane, livable prison pale next to the cultural shifts required to do so. But as the national conversation about policing and punishment continues, this may be a moment when such a shift in opinion, and therefore design, is possible. “It really comes down to the fact that incarceration is an alien concept to most people,” says Gissel. “People see pictures of Halden and say, ‘I’d like to live there.’”



Studio Gang held Community Café workshops with residents of Chicago's 10th District (above) as well as high school workshops (left) to research the firm's self-initiated Polis Station project, which sought to illustrate the role of design in transforming police stations into spaces for public safety and community benefit.

What they don't understand when they see those glossy photos is that 99% of prisoners will tell you that the lack of freedom and being deprived of access to loved ones are the harshest punishments of all. Halden's philosophy is simply that the state of incarceration is enough. There will be no further punishment than that."

The U.S. is certainly an outlier, spending \$81 billion on public correctional facilities and housing 698 of every 100,000 Americans in prisons or jails, more than five times higher than the United Kingdom. Still, according to World Economic Forum statistics, prison populations are skyrocketing globally. The number of prisoners worldwide has grown 20% in the last 20 years. Concurrent to this boom in punishment, a number of prison systems and architects have created models for a better system, typically utilizing lessons from educational facilities and campuses to create places that offer prisoners a more supportive path back to society, compared to the sadly well-worn path towards recidivism and a return to jails.

Gissel says that a central design philosophy at Halden is personal responsibility. Prisoners can shop at an on-site

store for food and personal goods, cook their own meals in kitchens (well stocked with knives), and spend considerable time at work or in class. The layout of the grounds, a campus of separate buildings fashioned after a Norwegian town square, creates an environment as close to an approximation of normal life as possible behind walls and fences. Administrators have found that threatening the loss of these activities and freedoms is a much stronger deterrent than those found in U.S. prison designs, which are typically spaces of punishment, deprivation, and isolation that restrict rather than rehabilitate, and breed retaliatory behavior. "If I take everything from you, your actions no longer have consequences since I can't punish you any further," says Gissel. "As a result of that approach, there are no longer consequences to one's actions."

Deprivation doesn't stop violence, nor does it help prepare inmates for life after prison; it also inflicts damage upon the guards, the inmates' families, and the wider community. Bureau of Justice statistics indicate that 75% of women and 63% of men behind bars already suffer from abuse, trauma, or mental illness. Chicago architect Jeanne Gang, FAIA, believes that community investment should be the guiding vision for any reckoning and redesign concerning justice, police, and prisons. Her firm presented an in-depth, self-initiated research project called "Polis Station" at the Chicago Architecture Biennial in 2015, which traced the history of American police forces and offered strategies for redesigning police stations by turning existing buildings into multiuse community hubs. "In essence, Polis was about community building, not just building for police," says Gang. "The idea of putting other services in these buildings—such as mental health services and community amenities—is still a good model of what community-oriented building could be like.

But deeper problems need to be fixed, and reform needs to happen at every level."

Part of Gang's vision was simply reconsidering who these buildings are meant to serve. Police stations can be made smaller, more approachable, and less fortress-

like, which creates rapport and trust between citizens and police. Adding basketball courts, WiFi, mental health clinics, and community meeting spaces can help build reliance and legitimacy, and ideally stop someone from entering the justice system entirely.

Prisons can also be reimagined as places that benefit prisoners and their families, not simply warehouses for punishment built with bottom-line considerations in mind. In Norway, prisons are built smaller and positioned across the country, on the belief that housing inmates closer to

Facilities in Austria and Norway challenge the concept that architecture has to be part of the punishment.



Storstrom Prison in Denmark, designed by C.F.Møller, is modeled on a provincial town, with white-brick dorms (above) and cells (left) that integrate furniture and natural light. The design reduces the risk of injury and self-harm and allows guards to easily observe inmates.

families means more social connection and less recidivism. Those approaches help explain while only 20% of Norway’s ex-convicts return to prison within two years of release, compared to 60% in the U.S.

Designing for rehabilitation “just flows from the philosophy,” says Gissel. “It seems natural to design a prison like this.” One tactic Gissel and his team used to guarantee a less restrictive design was to ban the use of terms like “cellblock” and “warden” during the design phase. If the term “housing unit” is employed, it’s less likely the end result will be a sparse, cramped shed of concrete block. Storstrom Prison in Denmark, designed by C.F.Møller and opened in 2017, is built around a provincial town model. Featuring white-brick dorms with specially designed cells, it is made with curved walls and furniture that maximize natural light and space, allow guards to more easily observe inmates, and reduce the risk of injury or self-harm from furniture. Facilities such as Leoben in Austria, with sleek glass façades and refined private rooms with kitchenettes, and Bastoy in Norway, a prison facility on an island that features wooden eco-cottages and activities like horseback riding, challenge the concept that architecture has to be part of the punishment.



Philosophical shifts can alter design and ultimately lead to a reevaluation of how a prison fits into a city. In Nanterre, a suburb of Paris, local architecture firm LAN designed a minimum-security prison on a main road in a more industrial section of town. It features a towering wall of gridded Cor-Ten steel that creates a sense of transparency and connection to the urban fabric. Architect Umberto Napolitano looked at the wall, which stands in front of a pastel-colored basketball court and prisoner dorms, as a kind of interface with the city, “challenging the idea of the prison-city relationship,” he says. The prison program allows inmates to circulate in town for work, with their time away from prison increasing gradually as they get closer to release. The façade indicates that the

Top and left: The transparent façade of LAN’s minimum-security prison creates a sense of connection with the surrounding town of Nanterre. Above: The Cor-Ten steel façade surrounds a pastel-colored basketball court and prison dorms.

prison is a part of the city, not a void outside of society. “We wanted it to look a little more like a museum or office building, something abstract, and looked for a material that could be perforated, change with the weather, and change with time,” says Napolitano on the metaphorical nature of the prison’s exterior wall. “It’s a secure steel wall, but it’s also perforated. It’s sweet and soft, and seen in a different light. It changes the way you see the same material.”

“It isn’t all bars like you see in a movie. This environment is conducive to rehabilitation.”—Robin Schwab

There are signs that the U.S. has begun adopting less punitive approaches to new prison designs as well. In San Diego, the Las Colinas Detention and Reentry Facility, a joint project between HMC and KMD that opened in 2015 and helps female prisoners readapt before release, was built around a campus model: Interiors are fashioned around natural light, murals feature inspiring nature scenes, and landscaping includes walking paths, amphitheaters, and space for yoga. “It isn’t all bars like you see in a movie,” says Robin Schwab, a former inmate. “This environment is conducive to rehabilitation.” In Atlanta, Deanna Van Buren (see “Reconceiving Justice,” page 20), who co-founded the non-profit design firm Designing Justice + Designing Spaces, has spearheaded the creation of a new Atlanta justice center that would replace a 1,300-inmate prison with community-focused features, such as a reentry program, classrooms, and parks and urban greenspace. Months of community meetings guaranteed that the design elements reflected community needs and aspirations.

The center is an example of a divest-invest model, a vision echoed by many Black Lives Matter and local justice groups, that prioritizes a new kind of infrastructure based on uplift and assistance. Van Buren points to support from Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, who proposed a \$400 million bond to help fund the adaptive reuse of the city’s jail facility, as a sign that political will is growing for these kinds of changes. Other indications of a cultural shift in the public’s view of policing and punishment that may trickle down to architecture and design include the “defund the police” movement in Minneapolis and the city council’s move to rethink public safety, and the recent passage of Measure J in Los Angeles, which would divert hundreds of millions of dollars away from police and towards investments in incarceration alternatives and social services. The grassroots push for reform could help bridge the gap between the reality of the American criminal justice system and aspirational designs elsewhere.

“Maybe our strength is that we do better engagement with different community groups and stakeholders, and really identify what’s missing in our neighborhoods,” says Gang. “In the past, architects were so afraid of design by committee. But we need to realize we’re still the ultimate architect and designer. We’re just getting a lot better at listening and understanding what needs to be designed.” ■



Renderings for the exterior (top), indoor community spaces (center), and Super Lobby of the Center for Equity (bottom), the former Atlanta City Detention Center that has been reenvisioned by Designing Justice + Designing Spaces.

FEATURE



SELF V. SYSTEM

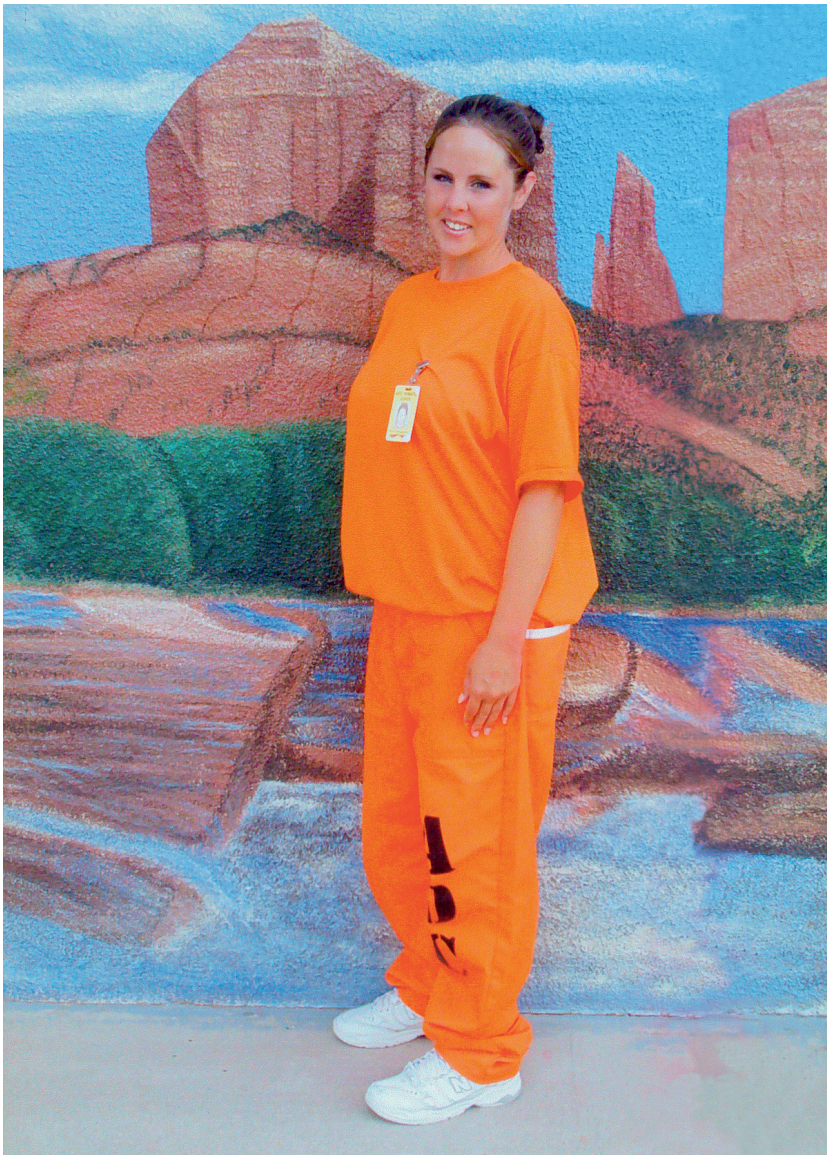
Incarcerated individuals are often denied modes of self-expression and, as a result, a sense of identity.

AN ESSAY BY EMILY R. PELLERIN, WITH DAVON WOODLEY AND IMAGES EXCERPTED FROM *PRISON LANDSCAPES*, BY ALYSE EMDUR

Architecture is the heart of the designed environment. Its arteries enliven our existence, interplaying with other types of design and a variety of design elements: communication, wayfinding, urbanism, landscape, audiovisual, color, wardrobe. They operate in complement to one another,

constructing our tangible and spatial-emotional experiences—including that of incarceration, a manifestation of the prison-industrial behemoth as we know it in America today.

Multiple industries throughout the nation bear degrees of responsibility for incarceration's rampant maladies;



Left: Anonymous, Ionia Maximum Correctional Facility, Ionia, MI

Center: Adam Bickham, Lee Correctional Institution, Bishopville, SC

Right: Manon Folkes, Arizona State Prison Complex-Perryville, Goodyear, AZ

Photo credit: All images excerpted from *Prison Landscapes* © Alyse Emdur

not all, however, acknowledge their accountability. Last September, AIA New York Chapter took a stand when it released a call-to-action statement dissuading architects from designing “spaces of incarceration,” urging them instead to focus on “supporting the creation of new systems, processes, and typologies” for reform. The Criminal Justice Facilities Statement pledged programming and exhibitions that would “examine architecture’s role in the criminal justice system...while highlighting the voices of those who have suffered” within and because of it.

The design of wardrobe in the carceral setting is where my interest intersects with that of architecture: both evidence the construction of incarceration and are entangled with its capitalist industries. Both are embodied elements of its lived experience; both are signifying and significant.

The following insights represent a collaborative effort, a response to AIANY’s pledge to highlight the voices

“I still wanted to be fly—I still wanted to look human.”—Davon Woodley

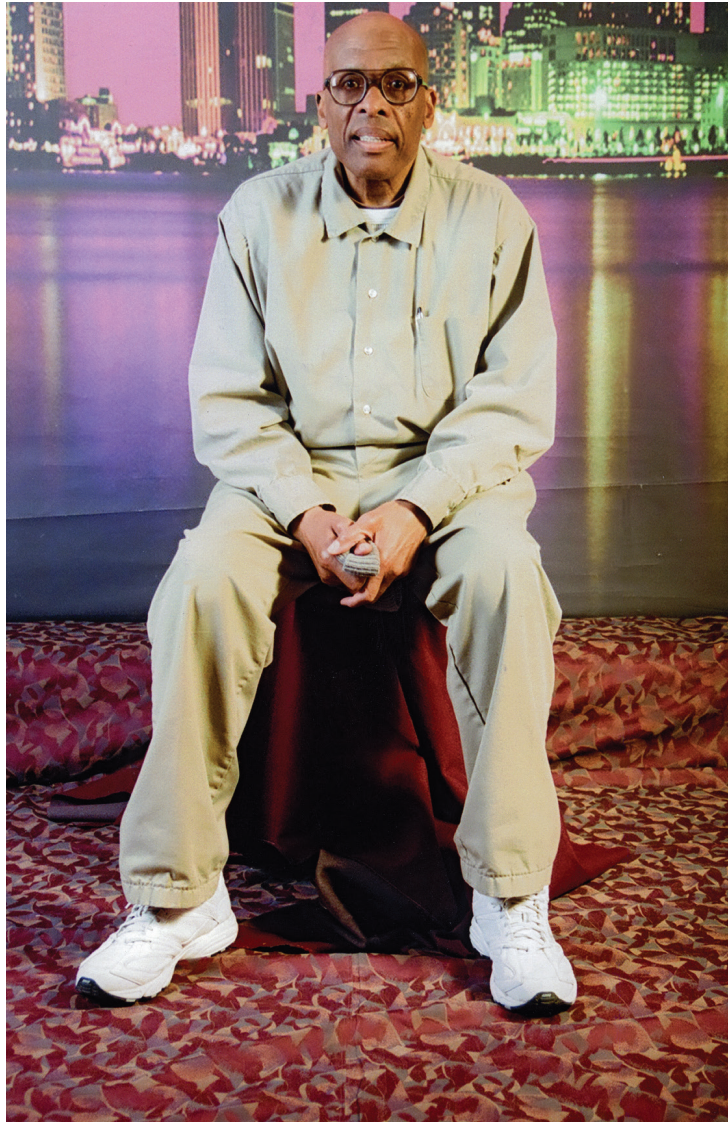
of those who have suffered under incarceration’s grave influence. Artist Alyse Emdur, inspired by memories of growing up visiting her older brother when he was incarcerated, dedicated a full body of work to scenes of self-presentation in prisons. The photographs shown here are from this project, published as *Prison Landscapes* (2012). The book contains both Emdur’s epistolary correspondences with incarcerated individuals and their submissions to her, for publication, of select self-styled pictures from visitation rooms in which makeshift backdrops



Above: Greg Chambers, Minnesota Correctional Facility, Lino Lakes, MN

Right: Anthony Kane, Columbia Correctional Institution, Portage, WI





Reece C. Whiting,
Federal Correctional
Complex, Coleman, FL

(the “landscapes”) were often set up for photo opportunities. Davon Woodley, a New York-based entrepreneur and social justice advocate, also offers his lived experience to this piece. Formerly incarcerated, Woodley now roots his professional activism in his story.

“My thing was sweaters,” he says. “Hot or cold, send me a nice polo or sweater. I still wanted to be fly—I still wanted to look human.” Sweaters from the outside were a small victory for humanity, reclaiming selfhood from the would-be eclipsing signifier of his New York State-assigned corrections uniform.

Dr. Richard Wener is a professor of environmental psychology at NYU Tandon School of Engineering, whose career focus is correctional architecture. “Part of being in prison is is systematically taking things away from people,”

says Wener. “Take away your right to privacy, to control, to access to yourself, to your body—all sorts of things. The clothing connects with all that.” Woodley concurs that “the uniform plays into the structural form of the prison industrial complex. But I always thought it was ironic that institutions of any kind have uniforms—even colleges.

The design choices driving the sartorial prescriptions in prisons and jails signify guiltiness, whether or not legal guilt is factual.



They are institutions; they have alma mater colors.” Yet for people who are incarcerated, he says, “it feels like this is the only color set that is supposed to represent the fact that you lost your freedom—regardless of if you’ve been convicted or not.”

Indeed, the unique design choices driving the sartorial prescriptions in prisons and jails signify guiltiness, whether or not legal guilt is factual. They signify a transference of ownership from the self and the body to the prosecuting superstructure (county, state, federal). Nomenclature shifts—most often visibly, a transcription displayed externally—from a name to a number.

Design has the power to make choices, just as it has the power to take choice or name away. To design for anti-recidivism, Wener says, “You want incarcerated citizens to exist in the place where they’re the least separated, where there’s the smallest possible schism between their community and where they are.” He describes the factors that could be manipulated to reduce that schism: buildings, work, food, colors, clothes. The point being, the material environment of prisons and jails has agency, so the designers of the material environment of prison and jails have agency.

With regard to colors and clothes, Woodley says that “seeing anybody in green pants is triggering.” But what he retained from his experience of incarceration is not entirely traumatic. “The thing people would do the most that I thought was really cool,” he says, is that during visitation

The material environment of prisons and jails has agency, so the designers of the material environment of prison and jails have agency.

they “would get a friend on the outside who wore the same shoe size, or close to the same size, and when they’d see each other, they would switch shoes under the table.” It was a stick-it-to-the-system ingenuity, a defiance of the oppressive superstructural complex to the tune of self-retention. “Somebody could have the newly released Jordans in prison,” he says. “You wanted to go that far to risk getting a ticket—to just have some form of normality.” It was speech through clothing, a way to voice power and pride while threatened by a system designed to strip you bare.

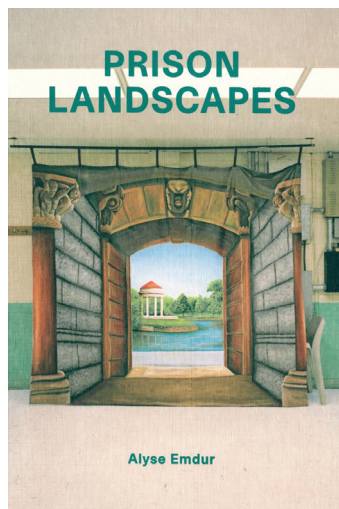
The threat of the system lingers outside its carceral cages. We with existing agency, designers, are charged with lessening the threat. We are charged with bringing the lifeblood back to the beating heart of architecture—this time, by refusing to participate in it. This time, by envisioning our role in a future that designs protections for, instead of tools to neuter, selfhood. ■



Opposite page: Bernard MacCarlie, Correctional Training Center, Soledad, CA

Left: Tyler Miesse, Stafford Creek Correctional Center, Aberdeen, WA

Below: Robert Ruffbey, United States Penitentiary, Atlanta, GA



TOWARDS AN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

BY DARRICK BOROWSKI, AIA, AND RIK EKSTROM, ASSOC. AIA

Let's start with some numbers: 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States today. And though the U.S. represents less than 5% of the world's population, 22% of the world's prisoners are held here. A quarter of these people (631,000) are in local jails, where 70% (470,000) have not been convicted of a crime, but simply cannot afford bail. African Americans are disproportionately represented in our prison system, making up almost 40% of the inmates, though less than 13% of the total U.S. population. This means Black men are six times more likely to go to jail than white men, and a low-income Black man in America has a 52% chance of being jailed in his lifetime.

All this begs the question, why is the U.S. so addicted to incarceration? And why is the system so racially imbalanced? Is incarceration even effective at making communities safer—in rehabilitating “perpetrators” of crimes and ultimately “solving” crimes? As New York City weighs its plans for replacing Rikers Island, one of the world's largest (and most notorious) jails, with four smaller borough-based jails, we should be asking ourselves, what can we learn from the experiment of Rikers and of the larger system of incarceration? Does this model of justice work? What should our real goal or intent be? What should future facilities for justice in our city look like to fulfill that goal?

These are the questions we set out to tackle in our second-year undergraduate design studio at the School of Visual Arts's Interior Design/Built Environments (SVA ID/BE) program this past spring. In March 2020, just as the coronavirus pandemic was taking hold in NYC and compelling us to move our studios to

Zoom, we launched a six-week design research group project on this topic. Our brief called for exploring opportunities for the built environment to promote equity, reduce rates of incarceration, and begin the process of healing in communities disproportionately affected by the carceral system. This first phase of research brought us to two overarching conclusions. The first is an approach to the programming, which we summarize as being captured by five “touch-points”—advocacy, prevention, intervention, mitigation, and reentry. The second is the spatialization of

these programs which, we propose, need to be woven into the urban/neighborhood fabric.

We looked beyond the current form of the carceral system and turned to restorative justice principles to guide our efforts.

Restorative justice is a community-based ap-

proach to justice that seeks to repair the harm caused by wrongdoing and to promote healing. To challenge the way the criminal justice system currently functions, this alternative shifts away from the traditional method of retribution to rehabilitation and reconciliation. By changing the understanding of offender accountability to mean making reparations instead of taking punishment, it can make way for positive transformations within the community.

In a restorative justice approach, everyone is acknowledged and given a voice. All affected parties meet to discuss experiences, address their needs, and participate in finding a resolution. These interactions benefit not only the victim and “offender,” but the community as well. Victims feel resolution by voicing

By changing the understanding of offender accountability to mean making reparations instead of taking punishment, it can make way for positive transformations within the community.

their concerns and getting answers in a safe setting. Offenders are given a second chance to take responsibility, make amends, and move on without being further traumatized by incarceration. The resulting interactions create positive transformations within the community, reducing repeat offenses and keeping communities intact by avoiding prison sentences.

With its growing record of success, the movement has been gaining traction, with spaces that facilitate this approach to justice being built. In New York, the Center for Court Innovation has been creating a network of community courts/justice centers in neighborhoods around the city since its first in Midtown in 1993. And last year, Restore Oakland, designed by Deanna Van Buren and her firm Designing Justice + Designing Spaces, opened to the public, creating a hub for restorative justice in Alameda County, California.

We were inspired by these projects, but they also suggested to us that a larger, more holistic approach to the problem is necessary. We realized that, to end mass incarceration and inequities in the criminal justice system, we would need to start by addressing the root causes of incarceration and its effects on communities. Our students set out to describe the vision, programming, and design principles for a new network of spaces across the boroughs to support and promote a more holistic restorative approach to justice. Students broke into five groups, with each group focusing on one of five touchpoints:

Advocacy

Humanizing the incarcerated and communities disproportionately affected by the current carceral system (most often low-income people of color). Proposed interventions include community forums, art exchanges, and community-generated journalism/storytelling.

Prevention

Addressing poverty and trauma, two leading precursors to crime and subsequent incarceration, in neighborhoods where a disproportionate number of our city's incarcerated people come from. Proposals include mobile solutions for educational programs, mental/emotional wellness, career services, and community-built cooperative housing.

Intervention

Repairing wounds in communities caused by wrongdoing, using alternatives to the current criminal justice system (while keeping those accused out of

jail). These projects facilitate the traditional activities of restorative justice, like peacemaking circles and alternative courts.

Mitigation

Engaging with policymakers and lessening the severity for people caught up in the existing incarceration system. This includes creating spaces for advocates doing bail and parole work, as well as interventions within prisons; for research, learning, and therapy; and for reenvisioned visiting experiences.

Reentry

Welcoming returning citizens. This means assisting people recently released from prison, helping them develop the tools they need to rejoin society, and working to reduce recidivism. Projects include housing solutions, job training, space for rebuilding social bonds, and enrichment programs via the arts.

The teams defined objectives for each of these touchpoints within a community and set about developing programs and conceptual designs for components within the larger network. This resulted in the foundational framework for this ongoing research project, which will be expanded on by subsequent studios in the coming years. Our goal is to end mass incarceration and inequities in the criminal justice system by addressing the root causes of incarceration and its effects on communities.

The SVA ID/BE student effort to develop and prove the concept of an infrastructure for restorative justice continues as we begin a new academic year. With collaborative support from NYC agencies and non-profit advocacy groups, including the Department of Design and Construction's Town+Gown program and the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, we hope to facilitate opportunities to engage directly with communities, to apply local expertise, and to build working prototypes that support new ideas through evidence-based research and community co-creation and feedback.

When these students enter the workforce, move on to graduate programs, or become community leaders themselves, we see huge opportunities for a motivated generation of designers, thinkers, and doers to apply themselves to the long-neglected problem of racial disparity in our criminal justice system. We challenge the architecture and design community to collaborate with us in this effort and use the tools of our discipline to be agents of change.

Darrick Borowski, AIA, and Rik Ekstrom, Assoc. AIA, are adjunct professors of design at the School of Visual Arts Interior Design/Built Environments Program and founders of ARExA, an architectural and design research firm based in New York. ■

CALL FOR SUMMER 2021

Design Education

In the last year, we've seen centuries-old models of education turned on their heads. Students and educators log in virtually from around the world, facing the challenges that come with the removal of physical space and visual cues, and the added wrinkles of technology. For many, including students unable to support new styles of learning, and working mothers who already face obstacles on their career paths, the new reality could be an insurmountable setback unless alternate methods are adopted. For the Summer issue of *Oculus*, we invite readers to submit 800-word op-eds or captioned visual comments exploring how pedagogy has changed over the last year of remote learning, and how architects can use these new best practices when returning to on-site instruction. Please submit materials to editor@aiany.org by March 31.

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IN PRINT

REVIEW

Stanford White in Detail, by Samuel G. White.
Photographs by Jonathan Wallen. The Monacelli Press, NY, 2020. 255 pp.

Samuel G. White, an architect and partner at PBWB Architects, has emerged as an authority on the firm of McKim Mead and White (MMW) and on the work of his great-grandfather, Stanford White. This deep and probing book covers the full extent of his renowned forebearer's career, focusing on his architectural details, interior design, and décor.

White's architecture was influenced by European historical precedents, but his adventurous spirit led him to remarkable combinations of material, pattern, and color. The book's 151 photographs—almost all by architectural photographer Jonathan Wallen—create a visual record of White's wide-ranging, inventive, and fertile use of materials to imbue MMW's buildings with life, energy, and shades of meaning. White was wildly creative in the juxtaposition of diverse materials to enliven the elements of the building designs.

The close-up photographs display the breadth of White's taste and inventiveness: round-headed nails forming patterns in the paneling at the Alden Villa in Pennsylvania; Corinthian column capitals on fluted rectangular embedded columns set against a plain wall of gray and brown bricks; mosaic patterns recurring everywhere; radiant tile sunbeams arrayed against a golden apse with embedded stars; swaths of rough rope netting employed as a wallcovering; and sandstone pebble used as exterior wall surfacing material.

A pattern of use and meaning emerges. Men's clubs, such as the Metropolitan and the Harmonie, recall the muscular baronial splendor of the later Middle Ages. For the residences, which grew larger over time, White chose materials and designs that conveyed the absolute, unabashed wealth and superiority of MMW's clients. Everywhere was his surprising use of materials—netting, tinfoil for reflective properties, tile, colored glass, large buttons, decorative lamps supported by carved shields. White did all this to both emphasize the most utilitarian elements and to give them a narrative meaning. "Everything was an opportunity," says the author, "and few opportunities were neglected."

Indeed, everything was fair game for White's attention and touch. And though we live in an age that emphasizes sparseness and natural materials, we could learn a lot from the spirit of adventure and creativity he brought to his designs.

Los Angeles Modernism Revisited: Houses by Neutra, Schindler, Ain and Contemporaries, by David Schreyer and Andreas Nierhaus. Photography by David Schreyer. Park Books, Zurich, 2019. 257 pp.

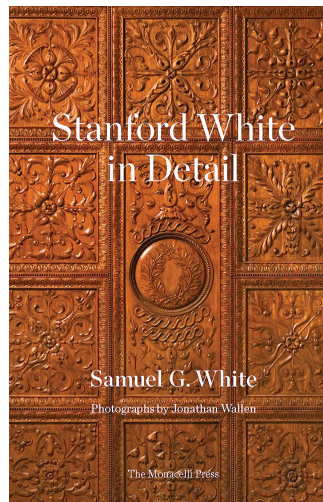
A trip back in time, this book documents the creation of modern house architecture in Los Angeles. The authors have represented this through the work of 19 houses, including one office/home combination, by nine architects: Richard Neutra (nine cases), Rudolph Schindler (two cases), Gregory Ain (two cases), and individual houses by John Lautner, A. Quincy Jones, Leland Evison, Craig Ellwood, Ray Kappe, and Allen Morris.

Los Angeles architectural modernity was based in part on how it was presented in photography and the mass media, particularly film. Many early images and much of the presentation by photographer Julius Shulman, who shot Neutra's work, didn't convey that the modern house was just one of a number of stylistic choices, and many were hidden behind hedges. Despite the deeply private character of these homes, Neutra raised his clients, and his own work, to a relevance beyond their borders by relying heavily on optimal visualization.

Most of these houses are relatively tidy—that is, not large or sprawling. The majority of them are in the hills surrounding the Los Angeles basin; some are in Palm Springs or semiarid climes. Qualities they share include a more open plan and a sense of openness to the surrounding landscape. They offered the promise of California modernism—a new lifestyle attainable by the masses.

Many of Schreyer's photos focus on airy and sunny interiors looking outward through a screen of trees and plants with an elevated view. The houses are so integrated with the landscape that extensive exterior views are rare. Frequently, you wish you were there. This book, about simplicity and working with what you've been dealt, is worth our attention.

Stanley Stark, FALA, NCARB, LEED AP, is the book critic for Oculus. ■



LAST WORD

ONWARDS

Some outstanding projects from 2020 and some new ways to get involved in 2021

**BENJAMIN PROSKY, ASSOC. AIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
AIA NEW YORK CHAPTER/CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE**

Photo credit: Sam Lahoz



The year 2020 wrapped up with our first virtual Board Inaugural, where we celebrated the achievements of 2020 and looked ahead to 2021. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to 2020 President Kim Yao for her incredible leadership and dedication, as well as her marvelous sense of humor, as we navigated the uncharted territories of running AIA New York Chapter amidst the COVID-19 pandemic! At the event we also inaugurated 2021 President Kenneth Lewis. I look forward to working with Ken in a year that I hope will be the yang to the yin of 2020—starting out locked down, but with the promise that we will end the year together at the Center for Architecture.

This year has demonstrated that the energy, expertise, and good will of AIA members and our extended community are what make AIANY strong. I would like to share three efforts led by our committees, the conduits for our exceptional programming, which were recognized at the inaugural:

The 2020 Citation for Design Excellence was given to *Recipe for a Room: A Design Contest*, organized by the Interiors Committee. In just a few months this spring, members developed a competition-festival-fundraiser mashup that paired architecture students with mentors to create a model of a restaurant using only edible materials. Entertaining, creative, and beautifully produced, the competition also exposed students to the

design process. Profits from the event were directed to the NYC Restaurant Employee Relief Fund.

The 2020 Citation for Public Outreach was given to *The BQE in Context*, a project created to better inform Transportation and Infrastructure Committee members and other professionals about the history and urban potential of the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, as the city prepared to address its state of disrepair. The project included a digital publication and a suite of programming that advanced the discussion among diverse stakeholders.

The 2020 Citation for Professional Development was given to the Diversity and Inclusion Committee for its broad, timely, and impactful response to this year's intensified calls for social justice. Spurred by the mounting racial injustices, the committee quickly convened a 100-person meeting with an agenda that sought to transform priorities within the Chapter and design community. As part of this, the members issued a call to action for our committees to raise inclusion standards for participation and content. One working group has already completed a framework, *The Baseline 5*, to support design firms internal equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

As we look forward to next year, I want to draw your attention to a few of the many AIANY activities that will help our community access resources and gain skills to rebuild their businesses and our city:

In 2021, we will offer *Retrofit Now!* on a monthly basis. This comprehensive course will position attendees to comply with Local Law 97 and make significant contributions to energy and carbon reductions.

As the pandemic persists, the *Design Corps*, a collaboration with the NYC Economic Development Corporation and NYCxDesign, will continue to tap into New York City's design community to help struggling small businesses comply with the changing rules and regulations. I urge those with time to get involved.

We know that our member firms—small, medium, and large—continue to require support as they respond to the current economic downturn. To better guide us through our collective recovery, AIANY has created a new committee focusing on the *Future of Practice*, drawing on the expertise of the Professional Practice, Technology, and New Practices committees to strategize about new models for operations and business development.

Lastly, I would like to share my sincere gratitude to our members, board, and incredible staff. Everyone's efforts kept us going in 2020, and I know they will collectively help us forge on in 2021. I wish our community a much healthier 2021, and I look forward to seeing you online and, before long, back at the Center for Architecture! ■



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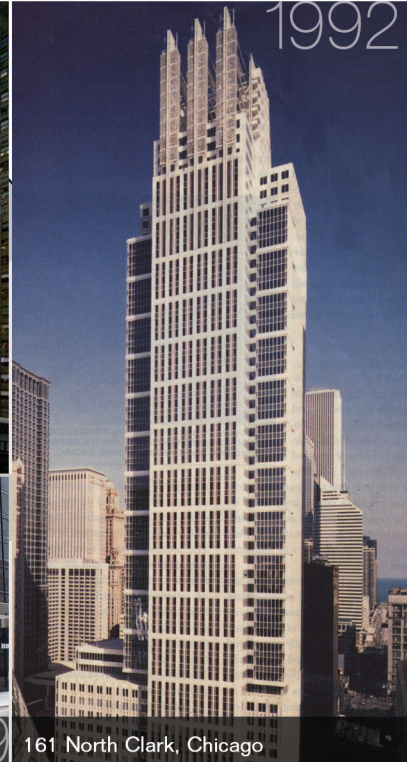
1963



2001



2019



1992



2010



2010

rendering courtesy of Perkins Eastman

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