

# The Architect's Newspaper

February/March 2021

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## Whose History?

Buffalo's public housing agency says the city's first National Register-eligible African American housing project can't be saved. Preservationists beg to differ.



Built in 1939, Willert Park Courts in Buffalo, New York, was among the first public housing projects in the country. These ten two- and three-story rectilinear buildings are arranged north to south on parallel tracks around a central courtyard. They were an American echo of German *Zeilenbau* modernist planning, in which orderly and cloistered apartments gave former slum dwellers access to light and green space.

Willert Park was also the first public housing complex in Buffalo where Black people could live. Its construction, which was made possible by lobbying efforts on the part of the local Urban League, effectively enshrined segregation across the East Side of Buffalo. Willert Park formed a critical part of what became the de facto African American part of town.

Buffalo built ten times more housing for white families around the same time and at a higher quality than Willert Park. The latter's shortcomings have created barriers to preservation that Gillian Brown, executive director of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Agency (BMHA), doesn't think his agency can overcome. **Continued on page 8**

## Expansive Vision

MoMA's newest architectural exhibition sees past the discipline's focus on the individual to find transformative potential in the collective. Read on page 16.



## Emerging Voices 2021

The Architectural League of New York announces the winners of its annual competition. Read on page 18.



## A Labor of Love

Community know-how and design expertise reinforce one another at this Detroit hub for social justice.



When Dessa Cosma met with fellow Detroit social justice leader Jeanette Lee in 2016, she was struggling to locate accessible office space for her organization, Detroit Disability Power. Lee's Allied Media Projects was battling rising office rents as it bounced between neighborhoods. Seeking a more permanent home for both organizations, Lee found and purchased an old furniture storage facility in the Core City neighborhood, a couple of miles northwest of downtown.

The space is large—25,000 square feet in all, spread across four floors—and was formerly used as artist studios. Now called the Love Building (named after a mural on the building), the property is being retooled as an inclusive hub where residents of varying abilities can gather.

Lee and Cosma also engaged a third social justice organization, Detroit Justice Center, for the venture. Through the center, they came into contact with the Oakland, California-based architecture firm Designing Justice + Designing Spaces (DJDS), which specializes in colearning processes that seek to collapse the client-vendor relationship typical of design projects.

According to Deanna Van Buren, co-founder of DJDS, the firm educates its clients on financing, zoning, and permitting, all the while gaining valuable insight into the wisdom and needs of end users. "It's important that **continued on page 12**

## Highlighting Healthcare

Our first special section on the topic gathers case studies and products related to the field that stands at the forefront of our minds. Read on page 24.



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COURTESY MAHARAM



# Practicing for the Future



KRIS GRAVES/COURTESY MARIO GOODEN AND THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

For some, Black History Month 2021 may hold greater meaning than in previous years. The Black Lives Matter protests that swept the country last summer may have triggered in them a greater appreciation for the holiday. That struggle against racism may have opened the eyes of some to injustices that were purported to have been resolved by the struggle for civil rights of an earlier age.

And if that is true, then it is a good development. However, we as a nation can hardly begin to pat ourselves on the back, nor can we simply hold aside a month of the calendar year to “remember” and acknowledge Black history. It’s with this in mind that *AN* editors have elected to treat this current issue the same as we would any other. Instead, we are dedicated to regularly covering the work being done by Black and BIPOC architects and designers. Not just in *every* print issue, but *weekly* on Archpaper.com. From the impressions I’ve gathered during candid talks with Black and Brown practitioners, I believe we are justified in this decision.

We were especially heartened when we received the roster for Emerging Voices, an annual program produced by the Architectural League of New York that spotlights young practices across North America. Out of 50 entrants, an esteemed jury selected eight individuals and firms for this year’s award. An emphasis on the social context in which architecture is made ties these multifaceted practices together. In our profiles of the winners (beginning on page 18) we have tried to foreground issues often overlooked by the discipline: combating inequity, providing care, and prioritizing public space.

It would be difficult to miss the political valence running through the profiles. Architecture has for far too long been politics-averse, or overly selective in the social pressure points it wishes to address. For example, it would have been inconceivable just a decade ago to make the connection between architectural practice and abortion, as Emerging Voices recipient Lori Brown does. Reading more about Brown (page 20), one has to commend her bravery for taking on this work in a context—Alabama—extremely hostile to abortion.

The context of the American South looms large in the career of Sara Zewde, principal of the landscape architecture firm Studio Zewde (page 23). A Louisiana native, Zewde was pushed in the direction

of landscape design by the events of Hurricane Katrina; years after she obtained a degree from Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, she developed an interest in Frederick Law Olmsted’s political journalism about the South, which set a precedent for her own practice. She has worked in other contexts as well, notably Rio de Janeiro, where she designed a dematerialized monument to the enslaved people brought to and sold in that city.

When I interviewed Pascale Sablan about her Emerging Voices win (page 22), she was celebrating yet another milestone in her already distinguished career. In November, the AIA awarded Sablan the 2021 Whitney M. Young Jr. Award, one of several accolades she has racked up in the past year. In late January, she joined Adjaye Associates’ New York office, where she plans to align the design and advocacy tracks of her career. Among the topics we discussed was her SAY IT WITH-MEDIA initiative, which compels design journalists and publications to increase their coverage of diverse practitioners.

It’s a goal shared by Office Hours, a separate initiative covered elsewhere in the issue (page 11). Founder Esther Choi started the Zoom-based mentoring program last summer when she began receiving inquiries from students for career advice. Season 2 of Office Hours launched in mid-February and is open to BIPOC designers and writers.

These are just a few of this issue’s highlights, which also include our special preview of the Museum of Modern Art’s latest exhibition, *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America* (page 16). Writer Jess Myers considers the show’s use of Blackness as a critical lens for reading the built environment. She also notes the irony of the exhibition’s staging within MoMA, which has come under fire for its unsavory affiliation with the professed Nazi sympathizer Philip Johnson.

The title *Reconstructions* alludes to one of the most—if not *the* most—radical chapters in American history, whose promise of transformation was tragically cut short. But as the exhibition’s contributors argue, we can take lessons from this history while also finding new paths forward. Looking back can spur remembrance and recollection, but action too. One can’t happen without the other. **Samuel Medina**

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## Correction

In the Best of Design 2020 issue, the photo for the Marvin Awaken Skylight on page 96 was inappropriately cropped to show only the Marvin Skycove product. The full image showing both products is to the right.



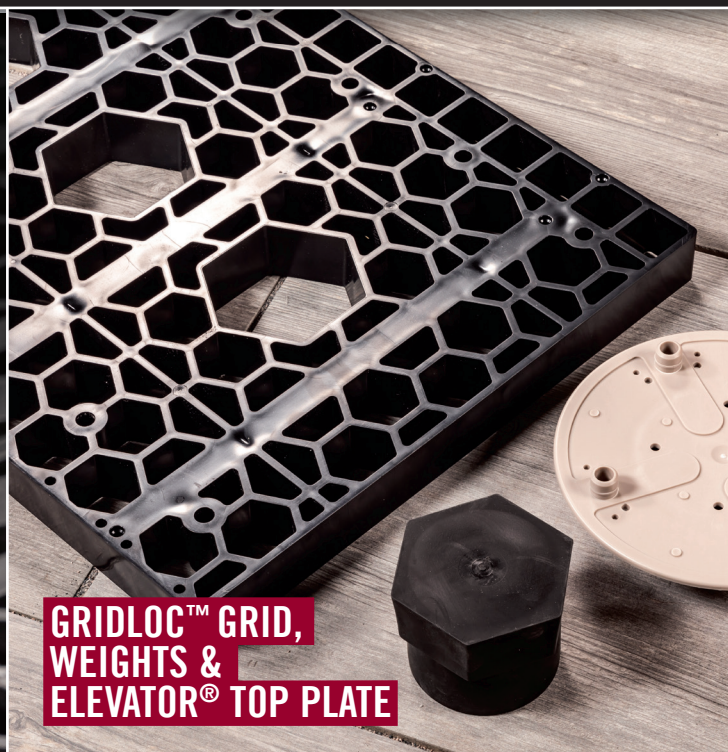


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# 4 In Case You Missed It...

We corralled the top architecture and design stories buzzing about the internet.

## SOM reveals 83-story tower to replace Trump's Grand Hyatt New York in Midtown Manhattan

SOM has shared renderings of the colossal tower that will replace the Grand Hyatt hotel in Midtown Manhattan. Encompassing 2.2 million square feet of mixed-use space, including a new 500-room Hyatt property, the skyscraper next to Grand Central Terminal will reach 1,646 feet and, when completed, rank as one of the tallest buildings in the city.

## Skanska USA reveals a staggered Houston office tower from BIG

Bjarke Ingels Group's first tower and second project in the Lone Star State will be 1550 on the Green, a 28-story, 375,000-square-foot downtown Houston office tower developed by Skanska USA

## Obama Presidential Center passes review, will break ground later this year on Chicago's South Side

Following a drawn-out federal regulatory review process launched in November 2017 and design and planning phases suffused with controversy, community pushback, and legal challenges, construction work on the Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects–designed Obama Presidential Center in Chicago's historic Jackson Park will finally begin later this year.

## SoftBank bails out Kattera and takes majority stake

Modular prefabrication company Kattera has reportedly been saved from bankruptcy by a \$200 million cash infusion from Japanese investment giant SoftBank. SoftBank-backed financial-services firm Greensill Capital also canceled some of Kattera's debt in exchange for a 5 percent stake in the company, making SoftBank Kattera's new majority shareholder.

## After Capitol is breached, calls for the Architect of the Capitol's removal

After a mob stormed the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., in January, seeking to disrupt the certification of the 2020 election results, the Capitol Police and its failure to secure the building have come under public scrutiny, which has also focused on the Architect of the Capitol, J. Brett Blanton, who sits on the Capitol Police board.

## NBBJ's spiraling glass Helix will anchor Amazon's HQ2 in Arlington

Two years after Amazon settled on Arlington, Virginia, for a second headquarters site, NBBJ has revealed the centerpiece of the campus's second phase, the 350-foot-tall glass Helix tower. SCAPE will handle the area's landscaping, including 2.5 acres of open space at the Helix's base, which will flow from the tower to join two other new office buildings on-site.

## Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Woods Bagot reveal the Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre in Australia

An international team led by Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Woods Bagot has unveiled a vision for the Aboriginal Art and Cultures Centre in the latter firm's hometown of Adelaide, Australia. The indigenous arts and culture complex will rise on Kaurna land at the former site of the Royal Adelaide Hospital as part of the Lot Fourteen innovation district.

## Studio Gang will bring Populus, an aspen tree-inspired mixed-use complex, to Denver

Studio Gang has revealed its latest project, a 13-story mixed-use tower slated to rise on a triangular lot next to Civic Center Park in downtown Denver. Once complete, Populus, the firm's first project in Colorado, will bring 40 "micro" apartments, 250 hotel rooms, and event spaces to the city's Civic Center neighborhood.

## Biden White House shuts down border wall construction on first day

In the "Proclamation on the Termination of Emergency with Respect to the Southern Border of the United States and Redirection of Funds Diverted to Border Wall Construction" order, signed on January 20, the Biden administration stopped all border wall construction. The government will now attempt to close out its existing contracts.

## Paul Rudolph's Burroughs Wellcome headquarters razed in North Carolina

The Paul Rudolph–designed North American headquarters of pharmaceutical giant Burroughs Wellcome has been demolished in North Carolina. The building, a Brutalist icon dedicated in 1972 and joined in 1986 by an annex also designed by Rudolph, was sold by GlaxoSmithKline to biotechnology company United Therapeutics in 2012.



COURTESY NBBJ

## The Smithsonian shrinks BIG's \$2 billion campus overhaul

After Bjarke Ingels Group revealed a sweeping \$2 billion renovation of the Smithsonian Institution's southern campus in Washington, D.C., the overhaul has been scaled back dramatically and no longer includes plans for removing and replacing the iconic Haupt Garden.

## The Cultural Landscape Foundation launches campaign to preserve historic Weyerhaeuser campus

When timber products company Weyerhaeuser left its longtime corporate home in Federal Way, Washington, for more modest digs in downtown Seattle, the preservation alarm bells went off. The property's new owner plans to build warehouses across the site, and The Cultural Landscape Foundation has launched a campaign to stop them.

## Final details and groundbreaking date released for Vancouver's Squamish Nation development

More than a year after the Squamish Nation revealed plans to build a new neighborhood with approximately 6,000 units along False Creek in Vancouver, British Columbia, Señákw will finally break ground later this year, bringing 12 new towers to the city.

## Blair Kamin leaves the *Chicago Tribune* after 33 years

Chicago is now without a full-time architecture critic, as on January 8, Blair Kamin announced that he was leaving the *Chicago Tribune* after 33 years at the paper, 28 of them spent as its critic. The Pulitzer winner, who has no specific plans for his own future, has written that he hopes the paper will replace him.

## Stephanie Lin named dean of the School of Architecture

The School of Architecture (formerly the School of Architecture at Taliesin) has revealed Stephanie Lin will replace dean Chris Lasch, who will stay on as president of the school.

## The Venice Architecture Biennale will go ahead with a physical opening in May

The Venice Architecture Biennale will open as an in-person event on May 22 and will run until November 21. With pavilions slowly being revealed, curator Hashim Sarkis confirmed that not much in the staging will change in response to the pandemic, which, he said, reaffirms the significance of the show's theme: "How will we live today?"



# 5 ICYMI & Eavesdrop

We corralled the top architecture and design stories buzzing about the internet.

## Governor Cuomo details dramatic \$51 billion Midtown West redevelopment plan

Goodbye, Port Authority Midtown Bus Terminal. New York governor Andrew Cuomo revealed particulars of an overhaul planned for Manhattan's Midtown West, part of a proposed \$306 billion infrastructure project that includes major upgrades to airports across the state. It also includes a glassy replacement for the maligned bus terminal.

## Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture, and Industry secures funding and will open this year

The Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art, Culture, and Industry has secured \$1 million in annual funding from the City of Riverside, California, and will soon showcase 74-year-old comedian Cheech Marin's vast repository of Chicano art. Page & Turnbull and wHY will convert the 1964 Riverside Public Library building into the center.

## The draft Los Angeles River master plan is unveiled

Enhanced wayfinding, education areas, stormwater capture and purification structures, elevated platform parks, and enhanced aquifer management are just a few of the improvements included in the recently revealed Los Angeles River master plan's 78 significant projects.

## Saudi Arabia reveals a hundred-mile-long linear city, but critics are skeptical

In a flashy keynote from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia unveiled The Line, a 106-mile-long city that will be devoid of cars and will reportedly cut across the 10,000-square-mile city-state of NEOM. The Line, according to the reveal video, will stretch from the Red Sea into the mountains of northwest Saudi Arabia.

## Bad News for Billionaires' Row?

A February article in *The New York Times* suggests that money can't buy everything, even in the world of nosebleed penthouses. Reporter Stefanos Chen writes that residents of 432 Park, a supertall luxury apartment building on Manhattan's 57th Street designed by Rafael Viñoly Architects, complained about alleged faults in the building's perfor-

mance. Though many units in the tower cost tens of millions of dollars, they allegedly come with creaking walls, malfunctioning elevators, and catastrophic water leaks. While we at *AN* send our sympathies, we suspect the building's residents will be just fine.

## Windy City Words

On February 1, Instagram account @changethemuseum posted an anonymous report regarding behavior at the Chicago Architecture Center (CAC). The post alleges that there were "many missteps that the CAC made last year around race equity" and describes an interaction involving a person who "sat in on meetings as part of a diversity and inclusion committee" at the center last year. The post recounts how recommendations made by that committee regarding a statement from the CAC opposing racism were ignored,

including "any mention of police brutality, anti-Black racism and Black Lives Matter." The post alleges that "the CEO and others in leadership made it clear that we cater to very specific audiences, and that anything outside of what those audiences expect can hurt the organization's ability to grow." The @changethemuseum Instagram account has published many other anonymous stories from people working in and around arts institutions. *AN* reached out to the CAC for comment but never received a response.

## Architecture, but Make It Fashion

Fashion designer **Virgil Abloh**, who trained as an architect at the Illinois Institute of Technology, made some scratch their heads with a certain jacket from his latest menswear collection for Louis Vuitton. The garment

features a cluster of skyscrapers hugging the wearer in a way that probably isn't functional but certainly creates an eye-catching form.



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# Texas Treatment

MASS Design Group finishes its first healthcare project in the United States.

Who writes a building's story? The architect, the client, the nearby community, and the building's users could all pen different narratives. Some might wax poetic about shining details and brilliant floorplans; others might record displacement and division. The Family Health Center on Virginia (The Center)—a new community medical clinic in North Texas designed by MASS Design Group with assistance from Corgan and SmithGroup—aims to ensure that all voices are included and uplifted in its story. The Center's design shows how an on-the-ground group of community-focused financial professionals and a design firm committed to deep research and engagement processes were able to diverge from histories of inequity in healthcare access by using collaboration and careful listening.

The Center's story began long before MASS became involved. In 2014, Kate Perry, senior vice president and senior director of healthy communities at Independent Financial (a regional bank based in McKinney, Texas), began exploring opportunities to bring necessary community healthcare to McKinney's east side, an area that has seen less investment than the town's downtown or historic districts.

"As you go further east, you see that there are a lot of people still living in poverty," Perry said. "Communities there have been, historically, medically underserved.

We see across-the-board worse health outcomes—higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and mental illness, as well as tooth decay. These are chronic conditions where people have suffered for years."

But, said Perry, what is special about McKinney is its "small-town, tight-knit" feeling that has endured as the town's population has grown. Tapping into that ethos, Perry and her team at Independent Financial amassed a roster of local governmental supporters, funders, nonprofit partners, hospital partners, and more and met with residents and community groups to discuss potential neighborhood concerns about a new community healthcare facility on a vacant site across from a local church on the east side. This comprehensive groundwork readied the field for MASS Design and SmithGroup, the project's architect of record and interior designer.

The team at MASS, led by architect David Saladik, embarked on an immersive research and design process. Though MASS has completed several other healthcare projects around the world, The Center is the firm's first in the United States.

"We go through three phases. The first one is uncovering—we're basically doing our homework. A lot of our research was learning about the history of Federally Qualified Health Centers, which came out of the civil rights movement," explained

Saladik. Afterward, the team began the second phase, immersion: an on-the-ground process of meeting with healthcare providers as well as patients who would use the clinic's services. The third phase, said Saladik, is synthesis, during which the team reports its findings, refines its work, and prepares for design.

"What we were hearing and learning from them is that they wanted the opposite of the typical healthcare clinic. They wanted something that was familiar and welcoming. Words like *family*, *home*, and *community* kept coming up in our meetings. And so, one of our main goals in the building was to try to de-institutionalize it and make it feel like the opposite of a clinic."

The resulting building looks very much like a home. It borrows from the Texas dog-trot form, which connects multiple buildings with a breezeway under one gabled roof and uses local brickwork to cohere with surrounding residential buildings. The building sits in a Kimley-Horn-designed landscape. Saladik noted that on one side of the building, the design team created a ground-floor space with movable glazing that opens to a landscaped social space to accommodate indoor/outdoor community gatherings or special services like food banks. The Center's atrium is styled like a living room.

"Creating these kinds of flexible community spaces came out of our research.

People come there for all kinds of reasons, whether it's the need for internet or to do their taxes or to receive translation services. We wanted to build small flex spaces into the public reception and waiting areas, which became the core of the design idea in the end," said Saladik.

The other side of the building hosts medical facilities divided into service "pods" that encourage better communication between providers, which, said Saladik, improves healthcare outcomes. The building's west side was also designed for additions as the clinic expands.

Programmatically, The Center offers traditional medical and dental care but also provides the community with crucial mental health services, as well as transportation assistance and food access. The building's zones are divided not by services but by activity—dining, living, playing, relaxing—to create a sense of cohesion and community for guests and providers.

Key to making The Center a reality were cohesion and community, not just in MASS's research and design processes but also via Perry's team, which rallied the city and laid early groundwork for success. The building's story doesn't just belong to MASS Design or Independent Financial. The Center's story belongs to McKinney. **Anjulie Rao**



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**Top left:** The Center borrows from the local dogtrot housing form.

**Top right:** SmithGroup designed the building's interiors.

**Left:** The interior is meant to be open and welcoming.

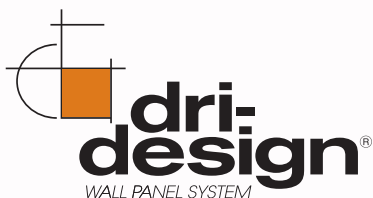
**Bottom right:** An entry axis runs through the building.



# FORM + FUNCTION.



The Dri-Design Metal Wall panels on the Nordstrom Toronto Eaton Centre feature the Inspire Finish in a Shadow Series panel with varying levels of gloss. This variation gives the individual cassettes distinguishing pattern when viewed both near and far. Utilizing a custom Dri-Design detail, Custom LED light bars were also incorporated into the façade. The detail allows the light bars to be hidden within the horizontal joints.



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Architect of Record: Queen's Quay Architects



**Whose History?** continued from cover

But plans to raze the site apart from one administration building in favor of new housing with larger unit sizes and more bedrooms are meeting pushback. Willert Park has been deemed eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, a boon for preservationists and members of the local Black community who point to the site's architectural merits, which they say tie back to the area's cultural heritage.

Jessie Fisher, executive director of Preservation Buffalo Niagara (PBN), said the buildings are a “bridge” between a mature International Style and vernacular building, borrowing the forms that would later be expressed in steel, glass, and concrete, and rendering them in traditional brick. (Subtle variations in brick patterns approximate the stylings of art moderne.) Frederick C. Backus, who designed Willert Park (also known as A. D. Price Courts), had been influenced by the Bauhaus ideals that found their highest aspiration in public housing, in which progressive design was seen to ennoble residents. Dozens of bas-relief sculptures cast in reddish-brown concrete by Robert Cronbach and Harold Ambellan can be found throughout the complex, adorning walls and flanking building entrances. They depict several facets of the African American experience, from emancipation—women and children flee slavery, a Black Union soldier returns from the war—to the Great Migration, as well as the cultural contributions made by Black artists (signified by a trumpet and an upright bass). Last year, the advocacy efforts of PBN, alongside those of the Michigan Street Preservation Corporation, were honored with a Docomomo Modernism in America Award.

But Brown is not impressed. Despite the National Register of Historic Places eligibility ruling, Buffalo's housing agency hasn't pursued any landmarking and instead wants to tear almost all of the complex down while retaining the sculptures. “These buildings are really pretty crappy,” he said. “Even in their prime, they were not particularly lovely. They look like barracks.”

For Fisher, Willert Park tells a story about Buffalo's built environment and impressive design history that seldom gets a hearing. The prevailing narrative focuses on the city's system of Olmsted parks, several Frank Lloyd Wright buildings, and a former asylum designed by H. H. Richardson (converted to a hotel by Deborah Berke Partners in 2017). In architecture and everywhere else, “we're really focused on the history of rich, white, straight men,” Fisher said. “If you read the cultural landscape of our city through what we've preserved, that's what you're going to come away with, that's who cites are built for and built by, and of course that's ridiculous.”

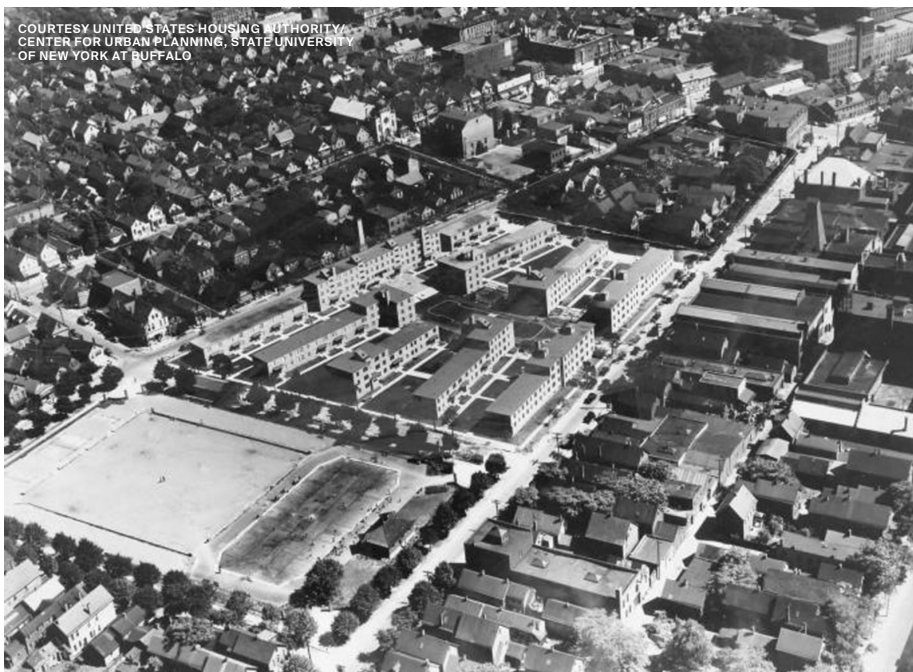
Fisher points out that Willert Park was notable enough to be included in a 1940 MoMA guide to modern architecture in the Northeast. Of Buffalo's original eight entries, all those that have not been demolished are landmarked, save for Willert Park. “The question we have to ask ourselves as a community is, why have we decided that these other spaces are so worthy of protection, but the one space that's about Black history, the history of working people, that's the space that enjoys none of that protection?” asked Fisher.

But Brown said portraying Willert Park as a monument to ethnic perseverance is “a romanticized view of this development by the largely white preservation community. I have not heard any of these complaints from the African American community that lives every day around A. D. Price.”

Terry Alford, who is Black, is the executive director of the Michigan Street African-American Heritage Corridor Commission, whose offices are a dozen blocks away from Willert Park. He told *AN* he believes it's important to save these buildings. (Alford sits on PBN's board.) He said the en-

dangered housing commemorates “the heritage [of] the folks that generationally have been a part of the fabric of that part of the city. With a little bit of ingenuity and some good planning, we can easily incorporate and preserve these spaces.”

At the behest of the city housing agency,



**Top:** Buffalo's Willert Park Courts public housing complex is being threatened with demolition.

**Middle row:** The complex's many sculptural works celebrating Black culture would be preserved.

**Above:** An aerial photograph of Willert Park's ten housing blocks after the facility opened in 1939

the developer Norstar is examining alternatives for the site and has retained the services of kta preservation specialists. Annie Schentag, a preservationist at the firm, told *AN* that the small unit sizes of Willert Park's 170-plus apartments and the lack of interior corridors pose an intractable problem: Dramatically renovating interiors to create larger units more suited to the agency's needs (three, four, and five bedrooms) would destroy historically significant elements of Backus's plan. To do so would threaten its historical integrity and thus any “financial incentives that come with the tax credit program,” Schentag said, alluding to federal and state incentives that encourage historic preservation by lessening tax burdens for building owners who comply with preservation codes. However, the interior organization of Willert Park is discussed in just one paragraph in the 24-page National Register nomination report, casting doubt on whether altering the interiors of the units to make them more livable would result in the loss of tax credits needed to make the preservation project feasible.

There is certainly precedent for ambitious interior renovations of New Deal housing. In Chicago, similar campuses have been or are being converted into mixed-income housing and cultural institutions celebrating public housing itself. Fisher also suggests that the small unit sizes could work well for senior housing, but Brown said the agency has relatively little need for these kinds of units. (The BMHA's total public housing waiting list numbers more than 3,300.)

The finances don't check out, Brown added. The BMHA estimates that an interior retrofit would cost \$44 million, compared with \$22 million for 50 new housing units on the Willert Park site. “Are we really in a position to devote this kind of resources and effort into maintaining a giant monument of segregation when we could be making beautiful new housing?” he asked.

For Fisher, that's a false choice. “The African American community should not have to sacrifice its history in order to build new things, especially in an area with this much vacant land,” she said, referring to 2,500 empty lots within a mile of Willert. Nationally, tearing down dense public housing developments and replacing them with fewer, townhome-style units has decreased the amount of public housing available by about 400,000 units from the mid-'90s to 2020.

In 2018, Brown indicated to PBN that he might be amenable to a comprehensive preservation scheme if the organization found a viable developer. According to Brown's recollection (which Fisher disputes), he told PBN, “If you want to find a developer, I'll figure out how to get these written off my occupancy rolls and I'll tell Norstar, ‘Sorry, we tried, and it's not going to work.’ But you have to have a plan for this.” This is what PBN is asking for now.

Fisher wants her organization to be named interim developer and given 24 months to collect funds and assemble a redevelopment team that will listen to the community for guidance on what Willert should become. (PBN is currently developing a historic property—a former boardinghouse and brothel—into affordable housing.) “It's a little late,” Brown said in response. But if the two sides can't come to an agreement, Buffalo's first African American public housing will meet the wrecking ball. It will be a huge loss, one that will dwarf any exasperated negotiating table impasse.

**Zach Mortice**





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# Founding the Future

Lesley Lokko talks to *AN* about race, academia, and starting an architecture school in Ghana.



DEBRA HURFORD-BROWN

Lesley Lokko has been busy since stepping down from her position as dean of the Bernard & Anne Spitzer School of Architecture at City College in New York City in 2020. *AN* contributor Amrita Raja sat down with Lokko, currently a visiting professor at the University of Virginia and the Cooper Union, to discuss Lokko's new venture, the African Futures Institute (AFI), an architectural school she is founding in Accra, Ghana, and what she's learned about race and identity during her decades-long career in architectural academia.

***The Architect's Newspaper:*** In your career as an educator and author, you have tackled identity and architecture head-on. You also are something of a serial project launcher. What's driven you to launch the AFI now?

**Lesley Lokko:** The AFI has been in the background for almost two decades.

I left academia in 2005 to take up a career as a novelist partly out of frustration that academia regarded race and culture as peripheral to the discourse. A chance encounter at a conference in Holland led to a job offer in Johannesburg, where I was put in charge of the master's program.

The Graduate School of Architecture [GSA, at the University of Johannesburg], which people might see as the launching of another project, was, in some ways, the prototype of the AFI. [Lokko founded the GSA in 2015.] I did it for five years, and while the students and the staff were fantastic, I was working 18 hours a day and I could see my own death warrant. So I moved to the U.S., only to find myself in a worse situation.

What happened at Spitzer fast-tracked something that's been at the back of my mind. It's not launching a new initiative but returning to something that's been there for a very long time.

***AN:*** What does it mean to launch a new school, rather than to come to an existing program and look for opportunities within some of that infrastructure?

**LL:** There's an aspect to leadership that can be quite entrepreneurial that I quite enjoy. And in some ways, both Spitzer and the GSA have been instrumental in teaching me what not to do—which is to go around begging or supplicating for permission.

This venture is less weighed down by the bureaucracy of an institution than many others. I want to keep it quite small, and I want to keep it interdisciplinary.

I know now as well to look for partners who really believe in the vision. After the last year, everybody is paying lip service to diversity and inclusion. When it comes down to changing curricula and changing canon, it's amazing how quickly people fall off the wagon. I guess the experience has made me a bit more discerning about who I jump into bed with.

***AN:*** How do you resolve the tension between the desire to be interdisciplinary and some of the constraints that might come into play with accrediting a school of architecture?

**LL:** When I gave my very first public lecture about issues of race and architecture, someone in the audience asked, "Listen, are you prepared to accept that if you investigate this relationship, you may wind up undoing architecture?" I learned at Spitzer, very quickly, that most academic institutions are built to withstand change—not to engender it. The questions of race, identity, culture, power, underpin all canons. If you start up an institution that's dedicated to unpicking and unraveling and unpacking all of that, what's its relationship to the professionalization of architecture going to be?

That's partly why for me this absolutely has to be a postgraduate program, and it may not be professional in the accepted sense of the word. It could be, then, that the AFI actually generates teachers, not architects.

***AN:*** You describe the AFI as a school of architecture that could "teach the global North how to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion in the heart of a built environment pedagogy," and that you have an ambition to tackle thorny issues. What are the thorniest issues in architecture today?

**LL:** There is a desire, in academia, to use the "otherness" of students as the catalyst for exploration. We want something that these students of difference can bring to the table, but we don't necessarily want to do the work to bring that out.

What's at stake is an unformed desire to bring one's story, whether it's the experience of migration, experience of oppression, the experience of trauma, to the table. Yet we say to these students, "Give me something of yourself, but not too much. Give it to me on my terms." But it doesn't work like that.

Often, what you get from these students is anger. And that anger must go somewhere—it can't remain as anger. That process of trying to take a student through the steps required to use that tension productively and creatively is what I'm talking about in terms of a pedagogy that deals with issues of race and identity and gender and otherness.

I found it almost impossible to do that in the States. You cannot do that in 13 weeks, so you wind up with a superficial acknowledgment of difference, without any of the deep work that it takes to bring real difference.

In the same way that Black and other students have been dealing with Western canon for 200 years, in the best possible scenario, all canon is available to everybody. This is not about exclusivity, it's actually about the opposite. But institutions must accept that it's going to take time to go through those processes, to mature that canon.

The global South may be teaching the global North a trick or two, partly because in places like Ghana, the regulatory framework around education is more open and allows for this time.

***AN:*** You've said that the dual lens of decolonization and decarbonization will be the foundation to the AFI curriculum. How does this differ from other contemporary curricula?

**LL:** The first unit of energy for the global North was the slave, the body being the first source of energy, the first productivity, the first exploitation.

I've never seen the discourse around sustainability as somehow separate from the discourse around culture. If Blackness or Africanness or otherness or diaspora is a significant component of identity, I want to understand how things like sustainability impact that identity. I don't want to see it as something that's separate or added to or

added onto the curriculum. I want it to be at its heart.

I keep thinking about the possibility of a school where the two things that are of interest to us are decolonization and decarbonization. How do we take these things like technology, like design, like history and theory, and fold them into these two constructs rather than the other way around? Part of designing this curriculum is to try and turn it inside out. In a new institute, a new school, we could just do it.

The question of decarbonization and energy and sustainability in the global South also means radically different things. The only possible authentic avenue is to give those questions some space to be articulated and explored slightly differently.

***AN:*** So the AFI enables you to reframe the entire framework within which educators and students can operate?

**LL:** There is something about American academia—and I discovered this in South Africa as well—which goes to the issue of decolonization. I consider America a postcolonial society. There's this fear of not doing things "properly." One eye is always looking over to Europe. But Europe is no longer the Europe that you people keep looking at. Europe has its own problems now.

This kind of cultural insecurity means that you cling on to these Eurocentric formalist rubrics. Most institutions are terrified of what will replace these rubrics if you get rid of them.

Because there is nothing. Especially in architectural education. In the United States, there is a huge resource of otherness in the heads or deans of most schools that's matched only by the institutional insecurity of actually making use of any of it.

***AN:*** You've said before that real change takes time.

**LL:** Architecture is a slow-burning profession. Yet there are few other disciplines that are so perfectly positioned. The discipline is quite porous; it can't really make up its mind as to what it's going to be, which also makes it very flexible and adaptable.

Then suddenly this whole conundrum appears on the horizon, and I just think, "What a perfect discipline to do this!" I mean, mathematicians trying to decolonize—I wouldn't even want to be in that room.

The point of a university is to bring new knowledge into the world. If the school cannot protect the space in which we are allowed to or encouraged to formulate difficult questions, to my mind you might as well pack up and go home.

And if that means undoing the semester system, undoing credit hours, undoing tenure—well, so be it. What's the alternative? We continue like this? With Band-Aids for the next 50 years until the next set of riots?

Having worked within institutions so much over the past 20 years, I can also understand how difficult it is to make those kinds of changes. But this is the kind of subject matter that demands time—a Band-Aid's not going to fix it.

***AN:*** In the American educational context, perhaps this resistance to change is rooted in the professionalization of the degree, and as a result the survey course becomes a crutch.

**LL:** That and [the fact that] architecture in the U.S. is one of the most risk-averse professions in the world.

But the fundamental conundrum in the United States is that you cannot square the myth of meritocracy with the reality of slavery. They are two fundamentally diametrically opposed narratives. Part of Black Lives Matter and the fallout for universities was the fear that if we really start to examine this movement, we're going to start undoing ourselves. And then what do we replace ourselves with?

It's really hard, because the U.S. is built on a lie. The crux of the problem of decolonization and decarbonization in existing curricula is that it invites a kind of death wish.



# Keeping Office Hours

The second season of the online networking platform promises more opportunities for young BIPOC designers.

Last year, as the pandemic kept many housebound, artist and architectural historian Esther Choi found herself fielding a lot of requests from BIPOC students and young professionals looking for advice. She noticed several of the same concerns cropping up, specifically those having to do with the stresses of studying or working in environments that were overwhelmingly white. So, as one will do these days, Choi took to social media, where she announced virtual information sessions in which she would talk about her professional experience in an attempt to help others. The success of these initial, informal get-togethers led Choi to plan a series of events where BIPOC design students and young professionals could pick the brains of established BIPOC architects, designers, and writers about their careers and ways to navigate often unsupportive fields. The conversations would be casual, frank, and encouraging. Choi named the initiative Office Hours.

“I’m hoping to create a platform where we can promote a cultural shift in our field,” Choi said. “We need to be able to see people who look like us—that is, the global majority—and it doesn’t make sense that right now, this field that’s responsible for world building is composed of a monoculture.” The first season of Office Hours started last summer and ran through November. Seventeen speakers took the virtual stage, covering topics like starting a design office, attaining architectural licensure, and publishing. Some presenters, like Jacqueline



Clockwise from top left: Quilian Riano, Shumi Bose, Sean Canty, and Tei Carpenter in Office Hours

Shaw Clark, assistant professor at Rhode Island School of Design, and Sean Canty, director of Studio Sean Canty and cofounder of Office III, spoke to the experience of young architects, while others, like design researcher Alyse Archer-Coité and creative director Eric Hu, offered windows into related fields. Choi estimates that 1,500 people from around the world joined the first season. Videos of the sessions are not published online for public viewing, and the number of participants is capped. The events are

meant to be private and intimate, spaces where people can ask and answer candid questions without the scrutiny of an external audience. “Sometimes the questions are really hard,” Choi said. “When questions about equity and discrimination are posed, and people have to talk about things that they’ve experienced that are really unpleasant, I want to remain sensitive to that and not make a spectacle of it for other people.” Graphic designer Alex Lin, founder of

Studio Lin, kicked off the second season on February 11 with a talk drawing from Lin’s experience working with OMA, the Studio Museum in Harlem, and others. The rest of the season’s lineup will be released gradually over the coming months, with the details of each event being announced the week before it happens. Choi said that the current installment promises to feature more speakers from outside the United States and that she is planning moderated breakout sessions for audience members to discuss the talks after they finish. Although audience sizes are limited, Choi hopes that Office Hours can expand as the program finds more financial support from grants and donors. Once the pandemic passes and public gatherings become safer, physical meetups may become part of the program, maybe even at a permanent home. Choi is cautiously optimistic not only about the future of Office Hours but also about the future of design fields overall.

“The generation before me seemed especially preoccupied with making design something very hermetic and inaccessible and a place for a very privileged few,” Choi said. “But if we can think about what skills we can offer the next generation and put those tools in their hands—it doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy for them, we’ve left a big mess for them to deal with—I hope we can transform the field and in turn transform how we build the world in more equitable ways.” **Jack Balderrama Morley**



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**A Labor of Love** continued from cover communities we're working with, who've been most impacted by inequity, understand how the built environment happens," she said.

In the context of the Love Building, the exchanges pointed to a facility with spaces suited to the needs of office workers and Core City residents alike. While Lee says the collaborative sessions could be "pretty intensive," participants landed on the same page. "We want it to be a place of belonging, of welcoming, brightness, beauty, connectivity," she said.

Manifesting those ideals into design decisions will require major renovations. Opening up the building envelope was a

major part of the design strategy. Large apertures punched into the brick facades will let in daylight for the benefit of offices on the second, third, and fourth floors. Shared public spaces on the ground floor and the rooftop bracket the offices, but it is the former that promises to be the main draw. Conceived as a hub, it will offer access to fresh food and wi-fi as well as rooms for meeting, prayer, child care and lactation, and crafts.

DJDS's methods—which involved the creation of a neighborhood advisory council—also led the firm to incorporate universal access elements that, said Lee, go far beyond ADA requirements. Close consultation with Cosma, a wheelchair user, helped redress

certain circulation problems. For instance, rather than adapt the existing rear freight elevator, the team added a lift at the front of the building so that people who use mobility assistance devices could enter through the same front door as everyone else. "Separate is not equal," said Cosma. "It cost them more, but the value was worth it."

The ground floor presented another major accessibility challenge: part of the floor plate had been raised approximately three feet above grade to facilitate loading. While Van Buren contemplated a complex system of ramps to reconcile the different grades, Cosma provided a simpler alternative.

"Dessa asked, 'Why don't you just drop the floor?'" recalled Van Buren. "As an ar-

chitect, you're looking at this thing in front of you, and you can't see the real solution. And that was a moment—'Of course, we should just drop the floor. What an obvious, brilliant solution.'"

Unlike the slick retrofits found all over Detroit, the Love Building will measure design success differently. "It's not about this beautiful end product," said Van Buren. "Engaging the community in your design process is really, actually [to] benefit everybody. It expands your thinking and your strategies when you engage more people and make it a diverse, cocreative process."

**Anjolie Rao**



The Love Building aims to unite several Detroit-based social justice nonprofits under one roof. The project is being spearheaded by Allied Media Projects in conjunction with the Oakland, California-based firm Designing Justice + Designing Spaces and involves converting an old furniture warehouse.

**Clockwise from top left:** Situated on Grand River Avenue, two miles northwest of downtown, the building is unremarkable, save for the murals that cover its exteriors; the construction work will remove many of these works, but Detroit artist Sintex has agreed to re-create his *Our Land Till Death* mural at the Love Building. The mural on the front

facade—whose coded message gives the project its name—will be preserved and incorporated into the new design. Envisioned as a social hub, the Love Building will feature community space on its ground floor and green roof.





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## Studio Gang

The Chicago firm's adaptive reuse projects prepare the design of the past for the future.

In a recent interview with *AN*, Jeanne Gang, founding partner and principal of Chicago-based architecture and urban design office Studio Gang, described adaptive reuse design as a delicate process of responding to the creations of the past. When approaching adaptive reuse projects, architects have to ask, "What's already there? What do we give back in return?" While architects can't control every result of the design process, they have a responsibility

to cultivate the best possible outcome of interactions between created space and the natural environment.

Amid rising concerns about climate change and carbon emissions, reuse is becoming a powerful tool for architects to imagine economical and sustainable visions for the future. Over a decade ago, Gang and Juliane Wolf, design principal and partner at Studio Gang, were reusing architecture at the material scale, salvaging

building remnants like glass, rebar, and slag in new construction. Today, they're scaling up their reuse practices, retrofitting entire buildings for new programs. In this way, change and adaptation have become part of the preservation process, recycling yesterday's buildings for tomorrow's use. **Jamie Evelyn Goldsborough**







## 1 University of Kentucky School of Design

For the University of Kentucky (UK) College of Design, like many public institutions, real estate options are slim and budgets are tight. The college was struggling to bring its departments together and develop relationships on and off campus. To fulfill UK's demand for growth and solve pedagogical concerns within the college, Dean Mitzi Vernon sought to situate all programs in one building for the first time in 50 years. The new building fosters more ways for departments to engage and experiment with each other by sharing space and amenities. The design solution actualizes ideas of equity and inclusion by connecting with what's existing, available, and viable.

Said Vernon, "There was no way I could repair the pedagogical problem [or growth problem] if I didn't bring people together. And part of that was giving everybody equity in space." The school turned to an unused tobacco warehouse on the edge of campus to house a "21st-century polycultural learning environment."

The design's major architectural features go hand in hand with strategic programming. For example, a central vertical atrium capped with skylights will allow a grand staircase to puncture three levels, letting in natural light and creating high visibility between the college's maker suite and shared studios. All School of Design students will engage in a foundational design studio before choosing a discipline. This creates an even playing field to access and explore design making and knowledge sans vocational silos early on.

In addition, Vernon formed a product design program that will connect to a biomedical engineering program at UK's medical campus (a collaboration set in motion by an initiative to create personal protective equipment during the pandemic). Expected to open in fall 2022, the new College of Design will be home to architecture, interiors, historic preservation, landscape architecture, urban design, and product design.



## 2 Beloit College Powerhouse

When a former power plant was decommissioned in 2010, Wisconsin's Beloit College saw the potential to create a needed third space for students focused on health and recreation. Now the Beloit College Powerhouse, the building houses sizable amenities like a suspended three-lane running track, an eight-lane competition swimming pool, a field house, and a former coal bunker turned into a climbing wall. These programmatic zones cross through layers of construction in the century-old building, in effect shrinking the industrial complex to generate more human-scale connections.

The building uses the adjacent Rock River for most of its heating and cooling needs, minimizing total energy use. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Powerhouse is an active space for students with ample room to social distance.



## 3 Kresge College Renewal

Compared with Beloit, the Kresge College Renewal in Santa Cruz, California, is at a delicate scale and has a sensitive history. Kresge College was originally designed in 1971 by Charles Moore and William Turnbull. Studio Gang opted to engage in dialogue with the existing postmodern village rather than disown its architectural significance. In a series of town hall meetings to engage students in participatory design processes, Studio Gang continued the project's origin story as an experimental environment for education.

The biggest challenge of the project was adding a sizable academic and residential program—12 renovated buildings, four new construction—to a venerated site. Original campus buildings will undergo subtle renovations that focus on durability and environmental performance updates. New buildings will bend around redwood trees to minimize removals, and the natural canopy will provide strategic building shade. Working with the fragile ecology and expanding Kresge's historic runnel system, circulation pathways will work with the site's topography to direct, capture, and filter stormwater for reuse.




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# EXPANSIVE VISION

## MoMA's newest architectural exhibition sees past the discipline's focus on the individual to find transformative potential in the collective.

The digital collage *Wiregrass WAHO* was prepared by architectural office AD-WO, whose cofounder Emanuel Admassu was born in Addis Ababa before relocating to an Atlanta suburb with his family.

COURTESY AD-WO/THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK

What is the highest mandate of a cultural institution? The most obvious answers might be to collect, conserve, and present culture. But to preserve and display objects does not give them meaning, and for institutions to imagine that this is their true calling puts them on equal footing with the average encyclopedia—staid, silent, and itself an object.

Wouldn't it be interesting if, above even preserving and collecting, the highest mandate of cultural institutions were producing new knowledge? What if these institutions put the objects in their possession to work? Perhaps they might begin establishing helpful rejoinders to the question cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter often poses: "How can we be human together differently?" Differently, not better. This is not necessarily the result of linear solutioneering but rather a set of tools forged in the pursuit of transformation.

*Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*, opening February 27 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, will offer tools rather than solutions. Curated by Sean Anderson and Mabel O. Wilson, the show has been in the works for well over two years—surprisingly, since it feels very much of the moment, not just in its themes but also in its staging at MoMA. Following the Black Lives Matter demonstrations

last summer, many institutions rushed to highlight their attempts at diversification, decolonization, or damage control, but failed to produce alternative paths forward. However, outside forces had a few ideas of their own. In late fall, several contributors to *Reconstructions* reignited the call for administrators to strip MoMA's architectural department of the name of its founder, acknowledged Nazi sympathizer Philip Johnson. (MoMA has yet to comply with the demand.) If the words of its curators and those printed in the accompanying "field guide" are any indication, *Reconstructions* promises to put the institution's legacy and future in productive tension.

*Reconstructions* is the fourth installment of the Issues in Contemporary Architecture series, which kicked off at MoMA in 2010. The series has presented sea-level rise in New York, foreclosure in the U.S. housing market, and tactical development for global megacities as urgent problems in need of design responses. *Reconstructions* deliberately takes a different approach, said Anderson, MoMA's associate curator for architecture, who found that the series "didn't necessarily find its purpose in the interface with the community but rather...became this relay between the curator and the architects." By dropping the design-as-solution framing,

he and Wilson, an architect and professor of African American and African Diasporic Studies at Columbia University, were able to position Blackness as an analytical lens through which to deconstruct—and possibly reconstruct—the built environment.

The exhibition is a natural continuation of Darby English's 2019 study *Among Others: Blackness at MoMA*, which revealed the lack of Black creators present in MoMA's archives. The two projects share some contributors, including Wilson and Anderson themselves. Commissioned by the museum, *Among Others* doubles as a body of evidence and a demand: do something about this. The exclusion of Black artists, architects, and designers' work from the United States' most prominent archive of the modern revealed its foundational curatorial attitudes—such as those held by Johnson.

But English's work also interrogated the museum's foundational mission. Rather than elevating and archiving the modern, MoMA has carved a rather small keyhole through which portions of it can be observed. *Reconstructions* seeks to widen that scope of vision. Of course, to bring an architecture exhibition showcasing Black critical thought to an institution whose decision-making, critical references, and archive are shepherded predominantly by

white people is no easy task. When I asked what it took to bring such a show to West 53rd Street, Wilson emphasized a change in orientation, away from "the notion of liberal individualism" toward an insistence on the collective. Individuals are easy enough to omit—one person fired, one piece rejected, one file lost from the archive. But the collective is not so easily dismissed. In the collective, Wilson saw an opportunity to "challenge white supremacy [in a way] that draws in the pain of anti-Black racism but also the beauty and resilience of Blackness." It's an idea that generated the critical position for the exhibition.

To ensure that this position lived at the core of the show, Wilson and Anderson established an advisory committee prior to selecting contributors for the exhibition. This committee included academics like education and economics scholar Richard Rothstein, English and real estate scholar Adrienne Brown, and English and Black-studies scholar Christina Sharpe. In short, heavy hitters of contemporary critical race discourse. Pushing past disciplinary divisions, the group engaged with Black critical thought from the fields of design, literature, architecture, and visual art. From these conversations were born the themes that would organize the exhibition: refusal, liberation,



imagination, care, and knowledge. The curators then encouraged the show’s contributors to work with these broad themes as they would work with a site.

In a series of immersive mappings, Emanuel Admassu refuses to measure the fragments of Black Atlanta. Putting W.E.B. Du Bois and Richard Wright in conversation, Adrienne Brown liberates the Reconstruction era from easy explanation. Germane Barnes wades across kitchens, porches, and shorelines to imagine a Black taxonomy of Miami. In verse, Amanda Williams takes care to misdirect her reader to Black space. Documenting her 2018 MoMA PS1’s Young Architects Program installation

(one of the last in the series), Jennifer New-som acknowledges architecture’s reliance on boundaries—and erases them.

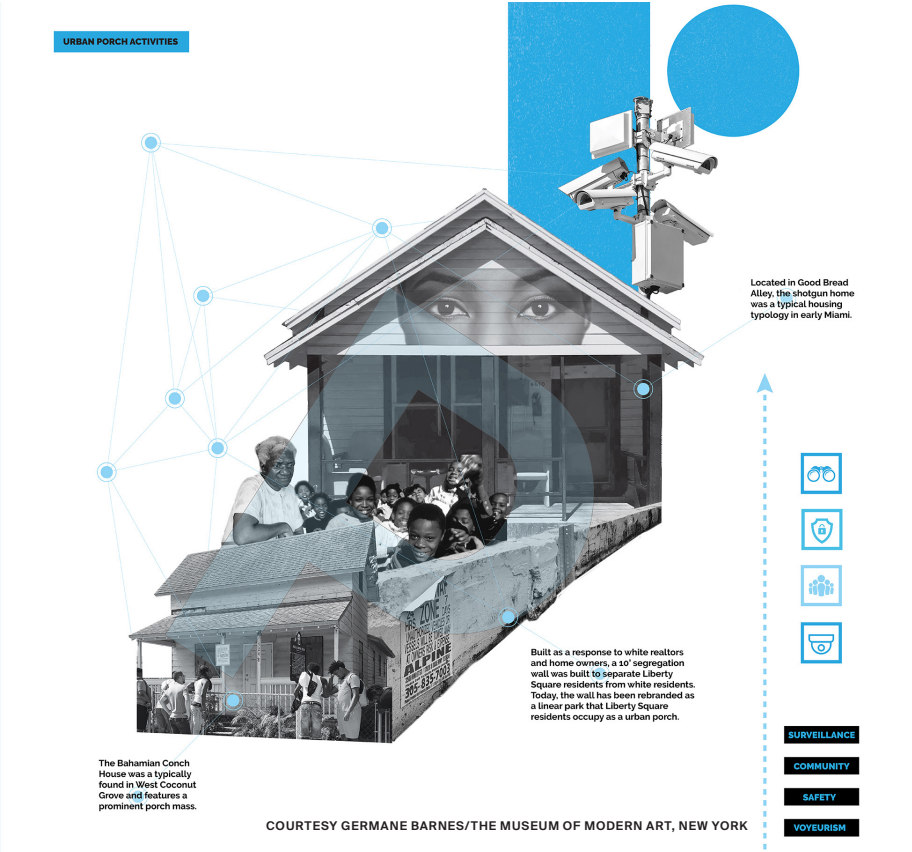
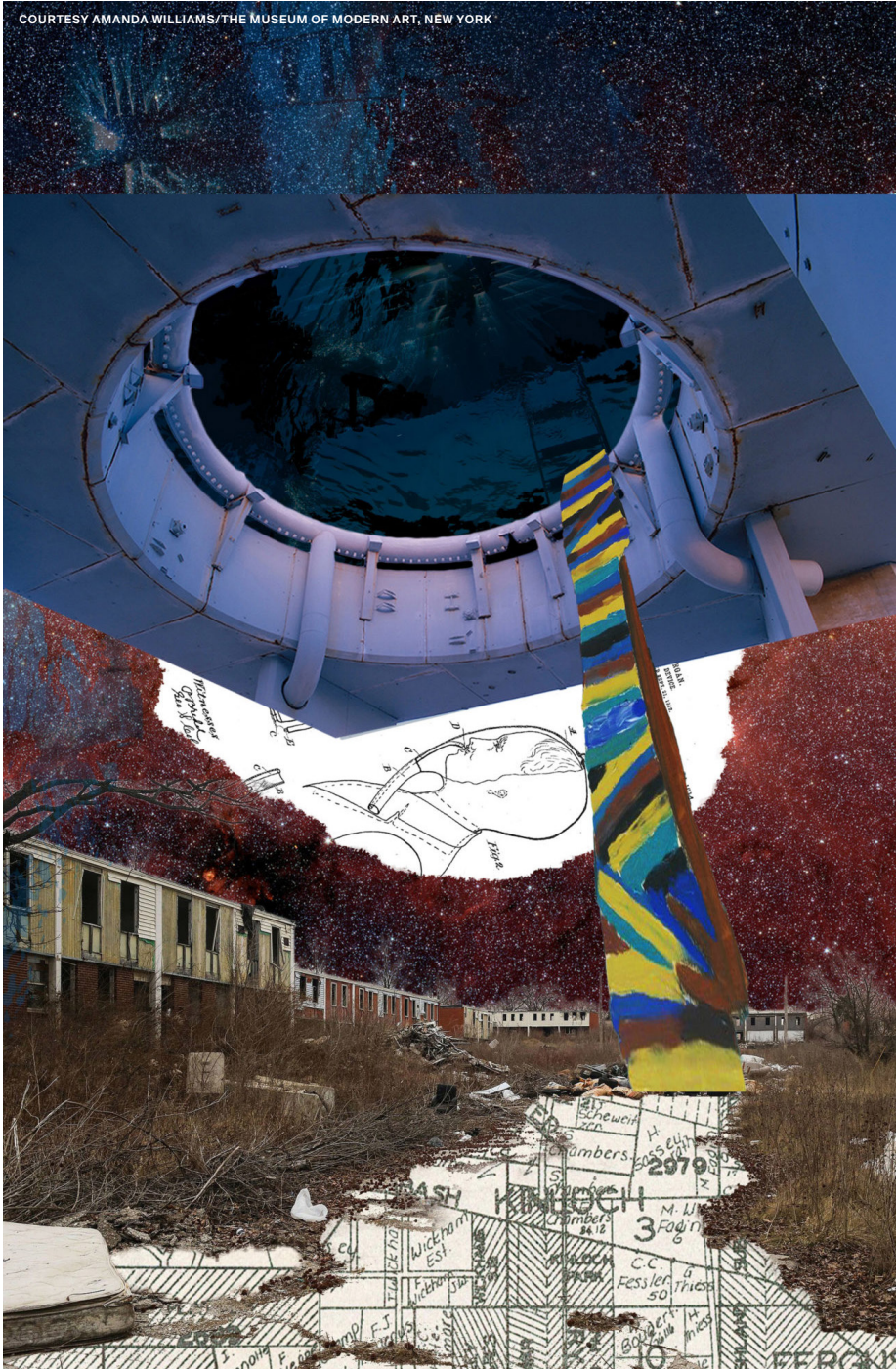
The exhibition is designed such that no piece is viewed in isolation; instead the design implies sight lines to related projects, further emphasizing collectivity. These pieces and the process that brought them together hint at the possibility that institutions like MoMA can produce new forms of knowledge. But Robin D. G. Kelley, who wrote the field guide’s preface after an ailing Toni Morrison graciously declined, disagrees. “The people carry that mandate,” he said before clarifying that “collectivity must also be a place of tension.”

In other words, being in the collective is not always being in agreement. The tension that arises from this is the recognition of difference, which creates the opportunity to react to and build on that difference. Those reactions, those debates, those frictions that collectivity exposes can facilitate transformation. This is exactly what Wynter encourages the cultural sector to reach for. Transformation is the cost of being human together differently.

The collectivity of *Reconstructions* is an invitation to transform. The question now is whether the institution will take the collective up on it or, in refusing, atrophy before the evolving crises of our time. When I asked Anderson whether Black critical

thought would be part of the architectural department’s curatorial approach going forward, he wavered. “It has no doubt transformed my thinking,” he said. “Does Black critical thought get situated in a more fundamental manner in the institute writ large? Hard to tell.” With Philip Johnson’s name still prominently featured on the museum’s galleries and offices, it is, indeed, hard to tell.

**Jess Myers is an editor, writer, and podcast producer based in Brooklyn. She is the co-steward of New York’s Architecture Lobby chapter.**



**Top left:** Felecia Davis's *Fabricating Networks Quilt* (2020). Davis is one of several contributors to *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*, opening February 27 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

**Left:** Germane Barnes. *Miami Porch Portrayals* (2020). The exhibition is the fourth in the museum's Issues in Contemporary Architecture series, but strikes a different tone from its predecessors.

**Above:** Amanda Williams, *Studies to Elsewhere* (2020). *Reconstructions* positions Blackness as an analytical lens through which to deconstruct and reconstruct the built environment.



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# GOING GREEN 2021



# CÚRE & PENABAD



STEVEN BROOKE/COURTESY CÚRE &amp; PENABAD



CAROLOS DOMENECH/COURTESY CÚRE &amp; PENABAD

**Top:** View of the loggia at Oak Plaza, a public space in Miami's Design District

**Above:** Students stand outside of Escuelita Bugarvilva in Escuintla, Guatemala.

“For us, the production of architecture is always inextricably linked to the design of cities, no matter how small or large,” Carie Penabad, a principal at Cúre & Penabad, said of the architecture and urban design studio, which she cofounded in 2001 with her partner Adib Cúre. “One underlying theme of our work is a conscientious pursuit of an architecture of place. We immerse ourselves in the culture and in the urbanism of a place and then allow that to inform the architecture.”

The work of Cúre & Penabad has been perhaps most informed by the magnetic and diverse city of Miami, where their ten-person studio is based. Both principals are also local educators. Cúre is an associate professor in practice at the University of Miami School of Architecture, and Penabad is the school's associate dean and undergraduate director. Spread across a patchwork of neighborhoods, the firm's Miami projects mirror the city's vibrant eclecticism. Early works include Oak Plaza, a public-space project that was the first of its kind for the Miami Design District. It involved the transformation of a disused parking lot into a tree-studded paved space. To the south, in Coral Gables, the studio's work at Cape Dutch Village, a 1920s enclave of five Cape Dutch-style homes, involved the

top-to-bottom renovation of a historic residence. More recently, the firm has designed a menswear shop that sticks out amid the sea of strip malls and surface parking lots flanking Tamiami Trail. It also created an aromatic temporary installation for the underside of the Coconut Grove Metrorail station dubbed *Slow Ride* and, in an unrealized project, envisioned a pink-hued dog park and community gathering place named Sela Square in the rapidly changing Little River neighborhood.

Other recent projects have seen Cúre & Penabad expand out of southeastern Florida into Latin America, namely Guatemala, where the studio maintains an atelier and has completed a handful of projects in the capital and the nearby city of Escuintla. In the latter, the architects designed a kit-of-parts rural school building, Escuelita Bugarvilva, that's climatically responsive and replicable and serves an urgent need in the community. A collaborative effort, Escuelita Bugarvilva was the result of thorough research, mobilization, and coming together with nonprofit partners to “produce buildings, even if they're modest in scale, that could enhance the collective environment that [the community] has a hard time building on its own,” said Penabad. **Matt Hickman**

# LORI BROWN



LORI BROWN



LORI BROWN

Architect, curator, and editor Lori Brown designed this wellness center for an abortion clinic in Alabama. Part of the design's aim was to shield those inside the clinic from protesters picketing the entrance.

In June 2014, the only abortion provider in northern Alabama was forced to shutter. The reason? Its hallways weren't wide enough. The closure anticipated a new law mandating that abortion providers comply with building codes of ambulatory surgical facilities. By intent, renovation costs would have been prohibitive, so the legislation should be seen for what it was—a smoke screen for pro-life politics. (Such laws have since been ruled unconstitutional.)

The architect Lori Brown has dedicated much of her career to analyzing such policies. In a 2013 book, Brown mapped abortion policy across North America, studying how architects might play a role in making reproductive access more inclusive. “It's important for [architects] to be political and use our expertise to improve what building codes were designed to do, which is provide health and safety,” she said. “Our discipline has turned a blind eye to that aspect of serving the greater good.”

The intersection of policy and architecture also informs one of Brown's latest proj-

ects, which focuses on migrant shelters and birthing centers at the U.S.-Mexico border. These grassroots spaces, she argues, “are charged with radical potential and possibility” as they resist geopolitical borders to offer support for families in transition.

What Brown recognizes is that architecture is not merely building to a brief—it's a system that's part of the political fabric. For that reason, it must also be inclusive, which is why she cofounded ArchiteXX, a nonprofit dedicated to gender equity in architecture, and has embarked on her most ambitious initiative to date: *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopedia of Women in Architecture, 1960–2015*, which she is editing with Karen Burns. The encyclopedia will chart the work of female architects, calling on regional scholars for expertise. (Brown calls it a “crowd-sourced intellectual project.”) “Numbers matter, but it isn't just about counting,” said Brown. “If you don't see or read about people who you can share some sort of kinship with, you don't realize what's possible.”

**Lila Allen**



# TALLER CAPITAL



RAFAEL GAMO



ONNIS LUQUE

**Top:** Hondonada 31, a residence in Mexico City **Above:** Taller Capital's La Quemada 309, an apartment building in Mexico City, stands furthest to the right.

Mexico City-based Taller Capital (TC), led by architects José Pablo Ambrosi and Loretta Castro Reguera, is inconspicuously rehabilitating the Mexican urban fabric with public space projects in marginalized areas. Their research-based design practice was prompted by Castro's longtime exploration of integral water systems. "Rather than focusing on gigantic projects that propose unreachable results, such as turning an airport into a lake," Ambrosi said, "Loretta developed a philosophy of 'hydro-urban acupuncture,' working from the bottom up with solutions that can transform water management and culture."

In 2019, TC built three parks as part of a public program for urban improvement in segregated cities. "I believe the future of Mexican architecture lies in looking at the other 80 percent," Castro affirmed. In Ecatepec, an abandoned, fenced-in strip of land was turned into a stepped park, each terrace filled with *tezontle* volcanic rock that filters water from the hillside and holds back floods in the area. In Tijuana, a riverbed with ten years of accumulated rubble

was shaped into platforms held back with sloped *llantimuro* walls made of rubber tires, a local construction method. And in the desert town of Nogales, the architects designed stone gabion walls to surround an existing dam and an open-air plaza that doubles as an overlook.

While public space projects have become the norm for TC, housing is its backbone. There, the firm's work remains austere. "We don't make pretty architecture," Ambrosi clarified. "We set our own restrictions, reduce the material palette down to the minimum, and look at geometry, spatial composition, vegetation." A former auto body shop in a Mexico City neighborhood afflicted by social issues, for example, was transformed into an apartment building and storefront honoring the site's heritage of *vecindades*, a common type local of housing, by adding threshold transitions and patios. "Our experience also has led us to develop the muscle necessary to pull out good architecture from the rubble," Ambrosi said.

**Natalia Torija Nieto**

# PLY+



JEFFREY KILMER/COURTESY PLY+



COURTESY PLY+

**Top:** A view inside St. Mary Chapel at St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Michigan **Above:** PLY+'s redesign of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit

Commissioned projects and independent research are deeply entwined at Ply+, an Ann Arbor, Michigan-based collaborative architecture practice established by Craig Borum in 1999. "We're trying to work outside of commissions to think about ways of generating new knowledge or new approaches to materials, organization, the way we work, and then letting the practice inform some of those questions, but then also letting the research feed back into the way we think about projects," explained Borum.

This interplay between research and practice is best evidenced in projects like the interfaith chapel at Saint Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia, Michigan. Completed in 2018, the chapel was born out of Borum and principal Jen Maigret's grant-funded research into dichroic glass under the auspices of the University of Michigan, where the two are professors at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning. "We used the research that we were doing as a way to structure our proposal to [the hospital] and also talk to them about how we would approach the project," said Borum. "It was a natural fit to think about the way we might play with light and with the iconic role that stained glass has played in religious architecture. For us, it was a way to re-

invent that and bring it forward."

Likewise, Ply+'s design for the Michigan Animal Rescue League, completed last year in the Detroit suburb of Pontiac, was the result of a research process that included a deep dive into the science of animal stress as well as an examination of both veterinary hospital and nursery school design. "They're obviously not the same," said Maigret of the two typologies, noting that the Michigan Animal Rescue League's shelter is the only one she knows of that utilizes a courtyard. "But we were looking at nursery school models with lots of natural light, clear organization systems, and an exterior space for play. They do overlap with the way that an animal shelter is operating."

Currently underway is a revamp of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit, a 15-year-old institution housed in a former Cadillac dealership designed by Albert Kahn. "It's very much a surgical approach to the existing museum in that we're erasing and selectively removing things as much as we are adding anything," said Borum, noting that the more transformative aspect of the project is the reworking of the site into a through-block campus that connects the museum to "the larger urban network." **MH**



# PASCALE SABLAN



**Top:** A vocational school Pascale Sablan designed for Haiti after the 2008 earthquake there  
**Above:** Her *SAY IT LOUD* exhibition has traveled to Atlanta, Chicago, New York, and London.

There are two anecdotes Pascale Sablan, an architect and founder of the educational platform Beyond the Built Environment, tells in lectures. The first concerns her initial introduction to the architectural field: as an 11-year-old, she was tasked with painting a public mural at a local Queens, New York, community center when a passerby stopped to commend her on her draftsmanship and suggested she would make a good architect. The second occurred years later, after Sablan had enrolled in an undergraduate architecture program at Pratt Institute. It was orientation week, and “a professor called out myself and another woman to say, “These two will never become architects, because they are Black women,” Sablan recalled. “I realized in that moment I would never just be representing Pascale St. Louis [now Sablan] but also my gender and my race.”

Identity and advocacy are common threads through her career, which encompasses professional, archival, and mentoring work. After completing graduate school at Columbia University in 2007, she honed her design skills at architecture offices like Aaris Architects and FXFowle (now FXCollaborative) before moving to S9 Architecture as an associate. She also became involved in the New York chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), where she quickly entered into leadership roles. In 2015, Sablan became the 315th licensed Black female architect in the country, just as a vacancy for the chapter presidency opened up.

“I was yanked up to that position before I thought I was ready,” she said, describ-

ing her initial reservations. “But seeing the initiatives and programs about equity [the chapter] was putting forward, I started to identify actionables and making connections outside of daily practice.”

The role offered plenty of lessons in community building and maintaining relationships, but also prompted her to reflect on the experiences of Black architects in an overwhelmingly white field. “I noticed that there was this gap in the chapter’s activity. We were helping to get our members new business, but not doing enough to celebrate our members, *ourselves*.” Seeking to close that gap, Sablan founded Beyond the Built Environment, which has launched several exhibition series and, more recently, a media drive that aims to get architecture and design publications to commit to increasing their coverage of Black practitioners.

The experience of building a platform independently gave Sablan the confidence to turn her attention to the national stage. She was named historian of the national NOMA organization and, in the fall of 2020, was elected its next president. (She will assume office in 2023, becoming just the fifth woman to hold the position.) She is the 2021 recipient of the AIA’s Whitney M. Young Jr. Award, which recognizes social justice work, and last month, she started work at Adjaye Associates’ New York office, where she will be able to jointly pursue practice and advocacy. “Having a position on your time sheet that says advocacy is incredible,” Sablan said. “It means I’m able to hold my identity as an architect, as a mother, and as an advocate.” **Samuel Medina**

# LOW DESIGN OFFICE



**Top:** Construction of a pavilion for craftspeople working in the Agbogbloshie scrapyard in Accra  
**Above:** The Dakota Mountain home in Dripping Springs, Texas

Since studying together at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (GSD), Ryan Bollom and DK Osseo-Asare, cofounders of Low Design Office (LOWDO), have forged an unconventional practice guided by the question “What does it mean to make good design accessible to everyday people?”

Their time in Harvard’s heady intellectual environment helped them develop a confident architectural stance. “We took the position that the only way to be radical was to build,” said Osseo-Asare, who now lives in State College, Pennsylvania, and teaches at Pennsylvania State University. “Even if ideas can be radical and transformative, we felt like if you really wanted to fight for just and equitable spaces, you had to realize them in the physical world.”

After graduate school, that philosophy took them in different directions. Bollom’s path led him to Hawaii, where he waited tables while designing local homes, and Osseo-Asare moved to Ghana on a Fulbright Scholarship, which led to his becoming involved with plans for Anam, a new city in Nigeria. “Since the GSD, we’ve never been in the same location for an extended period,” Bollom said. Despite the distance, the duo kept collaborating, and now, over a decade

later, they have a portfolio of work spanning two continents and a variety of typologies, from small-scale installation to urban plan.

In Texas, where Bollom now lives, LOWDO has completed a handful of houses carefully attuned to local climates. The Dakota Mountain home in the sunny Texas Hill Country is shaded by a canopylike roof that also collects rainwater, and a house along the Guadalupe River is elevated to accommodate 100-year floods. The firm’s work in Nigeria and Ghana uses the same sensitivity to context but to different ends. A collaboration with the Agbogbloshie Makerspace Platform collective led to a pavilion where people working in the Agbogbloshie scrapyard in Accra, Ghana, can access tools and equipment for small-scale projects. The structure’s open-source design is meant to be, and has been, adapted to new contexts by other parties. Other projects include bamboo robot prototypes, a study of West African kiosk culture, and a country home in upstate New York.

What ties this work together is Osseo-Asare’s understatedly optimistic assertion that “we can advance opportunities for design to make the world less stressful for people living together on Earth.” **JBM**



# STUDIO ZEWDE



**Top:** Studio Zewde's Graffiti Pier project in Philadelphia

**Above:** Elsewhere in the city, the studio plans to overhaul the grounds at Strawberry Hill Mansion.

It's customary within the architecture and planning fields to match site and program to projected patterns of use. But landscape architect Sara Zewde, principal of the Harlem, New York-based Studio Zewde, which specializes in designing public parks and art, is suspicious of this routine approach. "I think it's important to question the assumptions underlying terms like 'site' and 'typology,'" Zewde said. "The method we follow in the studio is essentially not to take anything for granted."

Zewde knows that such an approach may have politically charged results. She encourages her students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design—her alma mater—to pursue political topics. As a 2019 Dumbarton Oaks fellow, she studied the writings of Frederick Law Olmsted before setting out to retrace a journey he had taken in the American South. Olmsted, the father of the landscape discipline and a fervid progressive, drew out the brutal economic and social forces that imprinted themselves on the soil of "the Cotton Kingdom." "The physical conditions he described have changed significantly," Zewde said. "However, the social conditions of those places are fossilized and remain just as he described them."

The refusal to take things for granted can also be creatively generative. Often, it has led Zewde down unexpected avenues of research to uncover origin points. For in-

stance, a proposal to convert an abandoned Philadelphia pier co-opted by graffiti artists into a public park prompted her to look into a subculture to which she had little previous exposure; meetups with artists and community workshops followed, all before Studio Zewde began drawing up any plans. In her longest-running project, a monument for Rio de Janeiro's Valongo Wharf, she combed through archival material related to the history of the wider port and its central role in the transatlantic slave trade. Zewde also studied the cultural traditions of Afro-Brazilians, reconceiving the space of the memorial as one of reflection and performance.

With several major projects on the docket—including a five-acre park in Pittsburgh's historically Black Homewood neighborhood—Zewde persists in combating the shibboleths of her field. Landscape has adopted the rubric of resilience as an overarching frame, but its manifestation in individual projects can often feel like an add-on or PR spin. Zewde sees things differently: "In all the places we work we are dealing with time. There's a resilience of places and people that outlasts us and has preceded us. Sometimes designing to amplify the resilience that's already within people is what an environment can do." **SM**

# KOUNKUEY DESIGN INITIATIVE



**Top:** Part of the Eastern Coachella Valley public space network in Southern California

**Above:** Rendering of a public space around the Villa Verde affordable housing project in Coachella

Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) is a multifaceted practice with work that transcends conventional architectural categories. Its varied staff includes "landscape architects, architects, planners, engineers, and a research and community organizing team," said Chelina Odbert, KDI executive director and cofounder. "Because of that interdisciplinary makeup, we're able to cross the spectrum from design to policy and even advocacy and activism."

It's a global firm, with offices in Los Angeles, Nairobi, Stockholm, and California's Eastern Coachella Valley, but it's deeply embedded in local contexts, often working on multiple projects in the same locale. For instance, over the past 15 years KDI has collaborated with communities in Kibera, an impoverished part of Nairobi, on several public spaces aimed at addressing the area's ecological and social needs. Those experiences informed KDI's work in the Coachella Valley, where the practice has used participatory design processes to create parks, a multimodal transportation plan, and more.

Though the office's work is defined by specific contexts, KDI has also extrapolat-

ed patterns and principles to create more general design guidelines. With the World Bank, KDI published the *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*, a report outlining ways to design cities to be more supportive of women as well as gender and sexual minorities.

KDI was started in 2006 by Arthur Adeya, Patrick Curran, Jen Toy, Kotch Voraakhom, and Odbert, who all met as students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. An initial two-week community-focused project in Kenya, where Adeya is from, grew into something longer-term with the support of the Van Alen Institute's New York Prize in 2008. Since then, Odbert's cofounders have stepped back from day-to-day involvement with KDI, but the practice has expanded to several dozen staff members, most in either Los Angeles or Nairobi, supported by a mix of philanthropic grants and government work. Regardless of how projects are funded, Odbert said, "they all have a central focus and theme of working in low-income communities of color, primarily, and have a clear equity focus and a set of goals for social, economic, and environmental justice." **Jack Balderrama Morley**





# Highlighting Healthcare

CLAD FROM MAHARAM, COURTESY MAHARAM

Over the past year, we've come to revere our caregivers, and rightfully so. Battling a pandemic is no small feat. But for these doctors, nurses, and staff members to truly shine and do what they do best, they need to be able to operate in state-of-the-art environments. The following game-changing products, including the latest hygienic yet trend-forward surfaces, innovative hardware and accessibility solutions, and more, transform small clinics, large hospitals, and everything in between into places that are not only efficient but enjoyable to inhabit. Case studies dissect exemplary projects and what will be possible in the future. By Adrian Madlener





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# El Camino Health



**Architect:** WRNS Studio  
**Location:** Mountain View, California

## Behavioral Health Services Taube Pavilion

**Structural Engineer:** Thornton Tomasetti (also for Integrated Medical Office Building Sobrato Pavilion)  
**General Contractor:** XL Construction  
**MEP Engineer:** Interface Engineering (also for Sobrato Pavilion)  
**Landscape:** BFS Landscape Architects (also for Sobrato Pavilion)

**Anodized aluminum panels:** Morin Cement Panel  
**Rainscreen:** Swisspearl  
**Portland cement plastering:** BMI, CEMCO  
**Curtain wall:** Kawneer  
**Structural system:** Gayle Manufacturing Company, Bradley Concrete  
**Aluminum frame:** Wilson Partitions Interior  
**Aluminum-framed storefronts:** Kawneer  
**Aluminum psychiatric windows:** Winco  
**Glass:** PPG  
**Sliding doors:** NanaWall  
**Acoustical ceilings and suspension grid:** Armstrong  
**Demountable partitions:** National, Georgia-Pacific, USG  
**Cabinetwork and custom woodwork:** Wilsonart  
**Wallcoverings:** Carnegie Xorel  
**Resilient flooring:** Milliken  
**Carpet:** Mohawk group  
**Furnishings:** Pivot, Designtex  
**Lighting:** Litecontrol, Dado, Delray, Kenall, USAI, Eaton  
**Conveyance:** Otis

## Integrated Medical Office Building Sobrato Pavilion

**General Contractor:** Rudolph and Sletten

**GFRC:** Walters & Wolf  
**Anodized aluminum panels:** Mauck Sheet Metal  
**Portland cement plastering:** BMI, CEMCO  
**Curtain wall:** Kawneer  
**Structural system:** Herrick Steel  
**Aluminum-frame windows:** Wilson Partitions  
**Interior aluminum-framed storefronts:** Wilson Partitions  
**Acoustical ceilings and suspension grid:** Armstrong  
**Cabinetwork and custom woodwork:** ISEC, Wilsonart  
**Wallcoverings:** Carnegie Xorel  
**Floor and wall tile:** Crossville, Daltile, Mosa Tiles, Jura  
**Resilient flooring:** Johnsonite, Mannington Commercial  
**Furnishings:** Coral, Maharam  
**Lighting:** Whitegoods, Ledalite, A-Light, Lucifer Lighting, Finelite  
**Carpet:** Mohawk group  
**Conveyance:** Otis  
**Plumbing:** Kohler

When designing healthcare spaces, first impressions are everything. That was the intuitive thinking behind two new projects at the El Camino Health complex in Mountain View, California, designed by WRNS Studio. Situated in a forested, parklike setting, the campus has “a tradition of naming their buildings for different trees,” said John A. Ruffo, WRNS founding partner. “It’s a way for them to immediately signal a calming environment.”

The two-story Behavioral Health Services Taube Pavilion and the larger, seven-story Integrated Medical Office Building Sobrato Pavilion break with this precedent, but the natural referent is key to both projects, as are the aims of reducing the stigma surrounding healthcare and maximizing privacy for patients.

Achieving all three was no easy task, especially at the Taube Pavilion, an acute care facility that serves patients struggling with mental health. “It’s essentially a locked facility, where the patients can’t just walk out the door,” said Ruffo, who led the project’s design. “It almost takes on the fire rating of a prison.” To combat that sense of containment, the architects emphasized themes of transparency in the shared spaces, including the open atrium, which features a giant glass etching of a redwood (the pavilion was originally to be named after the tree), and three cloistered, glass-encased courtyards, where patients and staff can gather in relative seclusion. Terra-cotta-hued Swisspearl wall panels in the patient room niches, which frame views to clusters of trees, convey a sense of warmth. Special light fixtures in inpatient rooms vary the color temperature over the course of the day, which reinforces patients’ circadian rhythms.

Whereas the Taube Pavilion seeks to reinforce the safety and security of long-term patients at the edge of the El Camino campus, the Sobrato Pavilion was designed for a more transient set. Located in a dense environment with multiple access points, the structure is an appendage of the main hospital building, and the task became differentiating the two, said Tim Morshead, a partner at WRNS: “If you go in for a checkup at an integrated facility like this one and there’s a problem or an emergency, you can go see a specialist at the hospital. That’s

great but the potential downside is that every time you go in for a regular doctor’s visit you feel like you’re going to the hospital, which is the last place you want to be if you’re in good health.”

The office component of the Sobrato Pavilion rests on a plinth that extends from the hospital. Morshead’s team separated out three loops that visitors travel through, with retail and other services on the ground floor of the plinth and spaces for outpatient procedures, a waiting room, and a terrace up top; regular doctors’ offices are located in the tower, which has its own double-height lobby and elevator bank.

Inside the plinth, the architects emphasized connections to and from the hospital block, while also opening up the floors to plenty of natural daylight. The tower interiors conform to standard doctor’s offices, i.e., segmented in bays that are articulated on the exterior fenestration.

The two projects are on track for LEED Healthcare Gold certification, which attests to the architects’ close attention to materials and resource management strategies. (A parking structure affixed to the Sobrato Pavilion is fitted with a large PV array that taps into the campus’s energy system—a first for WRNS.) While Morshead is proud of the certification, he is more keen on emphasizing the wellness attributes of both buildings. “It’s about respecting people’s emotions as they move through these spaces,” he said. “With all healthcare environments you’re dealing with people in a vulnerable state, and access to landscape, to natural light, to fresh air, and to comfortable places to look out at those things is fundamentally appealing and calming.”

**Samuel Medina**





JEREMY BITTERMANN



John & Susan Sobrato Pavilion

JEREMY BITTERMANN

**Opposite:** The Behavioral Health Services Taube Pavilion is located at the periphery of the El Camino Health complex in Mountain View.

**Top:** The Taube Pavilion's entrance lobby features a glass etching of a redwood. The aluminum-frame storefronts are by Kawneer.

**Above:** The Integrated Medical Office Building Sobrato Pavilion is located at the center of the campus, adjacent to the main hospital.

**Right:** The hospital functions are contained within a plinth, with regular doctors' offices concentrated in a block above.



JEREMY BITTERMANN



# Center for Health & Wellbeing

**Architect:** Duda Paine Architects  
**Location:** Winter Park, Florida

**Landscape architect:** Foster Conant & Associates  
**Lighting designer:** Cline Bettridge Bernstein Lighting Design  
**Structural engineer:** Paul J. Ford & Company  
**Construction manager:** Jack Jennings & Sons

**Vision spandrel glass with custom frit:** Viracon  
**ACM entryway panels:** Alpollic  
**EIFS system:** Sto Gold Coat  
**Custom metal facade fins:** ACME Glass  
**Wood walls:** TerraMai  
**Accent tile:** Stone Source  
**Floor tile:** Daltile  
**Glulam columns:** Bell Structural Solutions  
**Linear metalworks ceiling:** Armstrong  
**Custom fritted glass handrail:** Tecnoglass

Set in the Orlando, Florida, suburb of Winter Park, the Center for Health & Wellbeing is the first facility in the region to focus on preventive care. The Winter Park Health Foundation partnered with Florida Hospital to open this integrative center for fitness, mental health, and wellness. To merge these three realms, the foundation and hospital commissioned Duda Paine Architects, which melded the former's mission with a thoughtful and holistic design approach.

"[The center]'s for every age, young to old, and for people in the community to be part of the process to keep healthy and well," said

Turan Duda, cofounder of the Durham, North Carolina, architecture firm that bears his name. "It's not just about nurses and doctors. It's a knowledge base for things like nutrition training and dance lessons."

The 80,000-square-foot space comprises two stories of interlocking rectangular volumes with tall ceilings and visual connections to the surrounding walkable gardens. Duda Paine used natural materials and custom terrazzo art throughout the space. The Commons, a grand multipurpose room composed of seven structural bays, sits at the heart of the center and exemplifies Duda Paine's incorporation of natural elements. Guests entering the space are greeted by wood walls produced by TerraMai. They set the tone for the interior.

The Winter Park Health Foundation commissioned seven custom resin and terrazzo medallions by local artist Keri Caffrey. The highly detailed artworks are 6 feet in diameter and depict scenes inspired by local flora and fauna. Duda Paine placed the pieces throughout the center to promote wayfinding and social well-being—for example, a medallion alive with bees working together sits in front of the conference center. "The collection is integrated into the interior design to give visitors clues into the building's programs and connect them directly to the center's offerings and mission," Duda said. The terrazzo art works in harmony with wood products to make a space for wellness for its community. **Katie Angen**



**Below:** Gardens and natural materials support the center's wellness and mental health missions.  
**Left:** Glulam columns from Bell Structural Solutions hold up a soaring roof.





# Acoustics & Textiles

Helping to make otherwise sterile and austere healthcare facilities more comfortable and hospitable, these acoustic and textile products reduce excessive noise while also serving as aesthetic accents.

By Adrian Madlener



## Artisan Collection 3form

3form's new Artisan Collection symbolizes the connections we have with our environment and the people who create them. Designed collaboratively with skilled artisans from around the world, this range of layered acoustic solutions offers four colorful inlaid patterns. The textiles can be anchored in the brand's popular Varia panel product to bring a sense of natural bliss to various gathering spaces.

[3-form.com](http://3-form.com)



## Clad Maharam

Clad by Maharam is a densely woven privacy curtain that features bright colors in complementary hues to create a delicately blended composition. This textile room divider plays with contrast by combining a plain-weave menswear gingham with a bright color palette. Machine washable, Clad is GREEN-GUARD Gold Certified and PFAS free.

[maharam.com](http://maharam.com)



## Plaidtastic KnollTextiles

Plaidtastic by KnollTextiles is an extralarge, multicolor plaid inspired by vintage fashion. This stain-repellent, antimicrobial, and bleach-cleanable textile is suitable for a wide range of healthcare industry applications. Plaidtastic comes in six colorways, each with 26 yarn colors. Finished with KnollTextiles' INCASE coating, this product can withstand abrasions of up to 100,000 double rubs.

[knoll.com](http://knoll.com)



## Balance with Sunbrella Assure CF Stinson

Created using Sunbrella Assure, a sustainably engineered, fluorine-free technology that delivers enhanced stain repellency and durability, the Balance collection by CF Stinson imbues healthcare interiors with bold patterns, vibrant colors, and unparalleled softness. Using biophilic elements such as leaves and flowers, this collection is designed to provide a holistic balance for patients and their caregivers.

[cfstinson.com](http://cfstinson.com)



## Bargello and Porter Architex

Featuring the latest in silicone hybrid technology, Bargello and Porter are two variants in Architex's Authentec nonwoven pattern range. These textile products' hybrid construction pairs a polyurethane mid layer with a silicone top layer to create performance, durability, and cleanability while minimizing cost. A stylized flame stitch characterizes Bargello. Porter features a small-scale windowpane pattern.

[architex-ljh.com](http://architex-ljh.com)



## Design Studio Tile Collection Unika Vaev

Unika Vaev's varied collection of self-adhesive Design Studio Tiles comes in assorted geometric shapes and colorways. Following the strictest sustainability and fire standards, these acoustic wall panels can be arranged in a myriad of configurations and can be applied to various types of surfaces. All Design Studio Tiles may be moved for up to ten minutes after initial installation.

[unikavaev.com](http://unikavaev.com)



# Healthcare Hardware

Hardware is critical, especially when it’s ensuring the accessibility and safety of hospitals and other healthcare facilities. These products improve patient experiences and the work lives of caregivers.

By Adrian Madlener



## EB Series Folding Brackets Sugatsune

EB Series Folding Brackets are a great solution for any tight spaces in hospitals and nursing homes. Available in three sizes, the stainless steel armature can support up to 300 pounds of weight and features a soft-close damper. This folding bracket also includes a locking mechanism that automatically initiates when the flat is in the opened position.

[sugatsune.com](http://sugatsune.com)



## Acrovyn Doors Construction Specialties

Barrier-resistant Acrovyn Doors offer a durable and design-oriented solution for behavioral-health facilities. A small opening within the main door provides staff and caregivers easy access to a room if it’s barricaded from the inside. Available in various colors and wood-grain patterns, this product has a 20-minute fire rating.

[c-sgroup.com](http://c-sgroup.com)



## 7000 Series Architectural Exit Devices Yale Commercial

The 7000 Series Exit Devices by Yale Commercial combine durability, innovation, and aesthetics. With ANSI/BHMA Grade 1 certification and a full range of mechanical and electromechanical functions, 700 series devices can be easily integrated into existing security or fire alarm systems to ensure the safety of openings. The simple design is available with a variety of available finishes.

[yalecommercial.com](http://yalecommercial.com)



## PD97 INOX

INOX’s PD97 is a sensor-controlled and motor-driven electric mortise lock for sliding doors. This product sends a signal to door locks, prompting them to engage or retract without a human user needing to touch any surface. The PD97 hand-wave unit is also equipped with an illuminated display for extra visibility.

[inoxlock.com](http://inoxlock.com)



## San Clemente Handleset Kwikset

Intended for exterior doors where keyed entry and security are vital, the San Clemente Handleset by Kwikset comes in matte-black, satin-nickel, and Venetian-bronze finishes. This antimicrobial handle features Kwikset SmartKey Security re-key technology, which protects against advanced break-in techniques and allows users to re-key the lock in seconds.

[kwikset.com](http://kwikset.com)



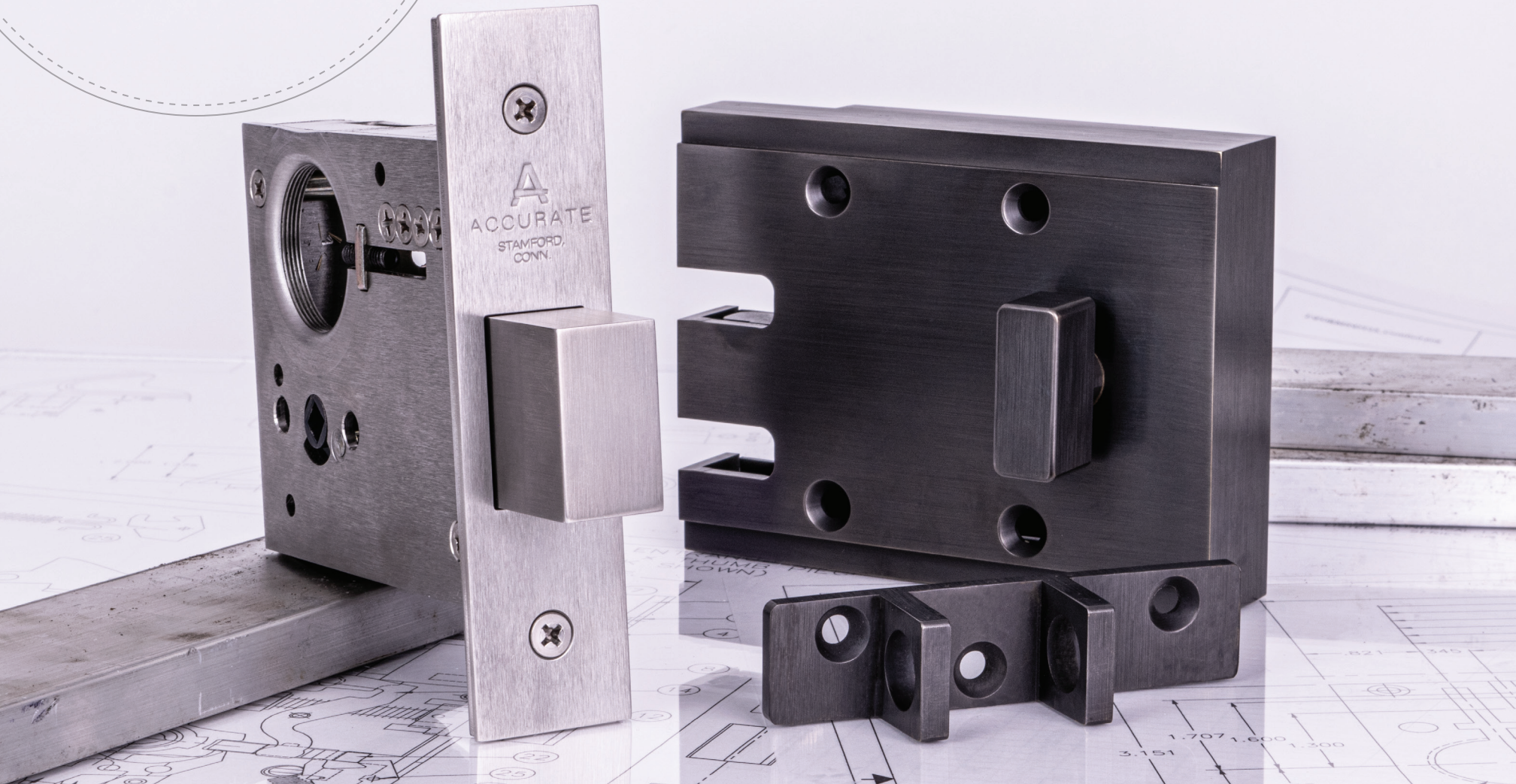
## Cabinet Hardware Sun Valley Bronze

Sun Valley Bronze’s wide range of copper and copper alloy Cabinet Hardware products are inherently antimicrobial. Suitable for a variety of applications within healthcare environments, these handles and pulls kill harmful microbes within two hours.

[sunvalleybronze.com](http://sunvalleybronze.com)

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## 1912 URBAN DEADBOLT



### An Aesthetic Alternative

This decorative, high security auxiliary deadbolt is available in all standard finishes and is easily customizable. An easy retrofit for traditional interior rim locks, it provides a modern upgrade for metropolitan doors that could use an additional layer of security.

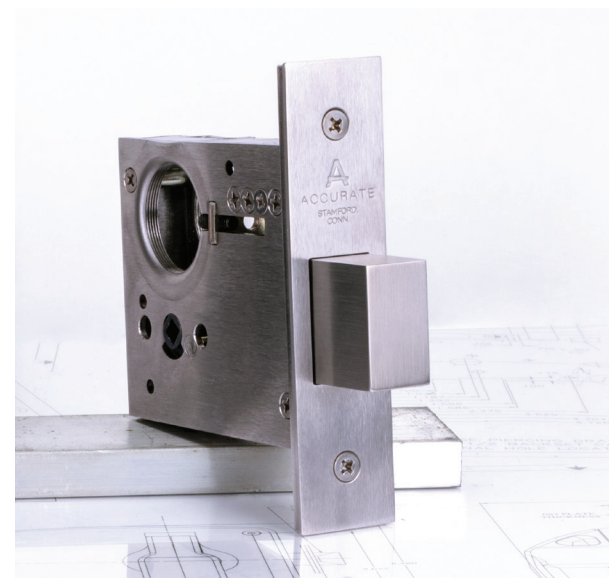
## 9100SEC HIGH SECURITY MORTISE LOCK



### 300x Stronger

The 9100SEC was originally developed for the needs of correctional centers, exceeding Detention Grade 1 Impact Testing by 4x the standard. This heavy duty lock can be paired with any style architectural trim to provide optimal safety without compromising style.

## 7200SEC HIGH SECURITY DEADBOLT



### Additional Security

This auxiliary deadbolt features the same heavy duty bolt with absorption technology as the High Security Mortise Lock. It is commonly used above a standard latch or entry lock wherever security is paramount.



# TriHealth Harold and Eugenia Thomas Comprehensive Care Center



**Architect:** GBBN  
**Location:** Cincinnati

**Construction manager:** Turner Construction  
**Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing engineer:** HEAPY  
**Structural engineer:** Schaefer  
**Landscape designer:** REALM Collaborative  
**Living wall:** Urban Blooms  
**Millwork:** Bruewer Woodwork Manufacturing Co.  
**Glass:** Skyline Design  
**Wood ceilings:** Norton Industries  
**Carpeting and vinyl tile:** Mohawk Group, Shaw Contract  
**Wallcovering:** Carnegie  
**Ceiling blades:** Armstrong Ceilings  
**Glass film and upholstery:** Designtex  
**Plastic laminate:** Panolam Surface Systems  
**Lighting:** Arktura

The natural world isn't typically something people associate with medical facilities, yet GBBN Architects has reconciled the two at Cincinnati's TriHealth Harold and Eugenia Thomas Comprehensive Care Center. "Wherever possible, the building's architecture connects people to the healing power of nature," said Cassidy Staver, one of the project's designers.

A lush landscape greets visitors on arrival at the care center, and once inside, patients encounter a three-story living wall in a large atrium, which is further enriched with wood flooring and wall panels. Nature's presence is felt deep inside the building too; backlit

perforated panels in the windowless MRI room evoke the soothing effect of dappled sunlight on a forest floor.

Many of these touches do more than soothe patients and care providers; they also help orient patients so they can easily navigate the 140,000-square-foot care center.

"When a patient is frail and needing help for so many of their routine activities, they can feel a loss of their sense of self-worth," Staver said. "One of the ways we sought to restore this was to maximize intuitive wayfinding, helping patients get a sense of where they are going without having to ask or be led."

Such assistance comes in many forms: the lobby's two birch-veneer screen walls in subtly different tones are the internal faces of the building's primary departments (the cancer and heart institutes), and the windows at the ends of corridors literally and figuratively light the way for patients moving between appointments.

The designers were mindful of providers' comfort as well.

"These are the people who are in the building for many hours, day in and day out, and carrying the weight of their patients' health battles," Staver said. "For patients to receive the best care, the restorative quality of the facility must benefit the staff too."

Planted terraces on the tiered southern edge of the building allow staff to pop out for quick breaks, and break lounges and collaboration spaces sit along glazed portions of the facade. **Jack Balderrama Morley**



**Top:** Birch veneer wood screens in the central atrium use only three panel types to create a varied surface. "The [screens'] undulating, triangular pattern was inspired by the rhythmic beats

of a heart monitor, while the perforations soften its expression to feel more delicate and whimsical," said GBBN's Cassidy Staver.

**Above:** Arktura Vapor panels mimic dappled sunlight passing through trees to create a calming environment in an MRI room.



# Furnishings

Whether in examination rooms, offices, lounges, or waiting rooms, furniture makes a big difference in hospitals and clinics. These products help ensure that medical institutions run smoothly. *By Adrian Madlener*



## Coastal Collection | Metal Integra

Integra's new Coastal Collection | Metal line of seating products is meant to meet the healthcare market's maintenance and design needs. In keeping with the manufacturer's range of modular products, these waiting room armchairs feature arm caps, backs, feet, legs, and seat components that can easily be replaced. This provides cost-saving advantages and a more sustainable option than replacing an entire seating product.

[integraseating.com](http://integraseating.com)



## Atwell Haworth

The Atwell collection by furniture brand Haworth offers guest chairs, lounge seating, and occasional tables for public spaces in healing and wellness environments. The wood-framed furnishings include bariatric options and can accommodate diverse needs. The modular lounge seating is made from tab-lock construction using sealed plywood. Available in a wide variety of finishes, the Atwell collection meets rigorous healthcare requirements.

[haworth.com](http://haworth.com)



## Commend Nurses Station Herman Miller

Combining the beauty of custom millwork with the benefits of standardized fabrication, the Commend Nurses Station by Herman Miller brings clarity and order to team-oriented health-care environments. This versatile desk unit can be arranged in various configurations that can be quickly assembled and adapted based on changing needs. The Commend Nurses Station meets the high-capacity power and data demands of medical environments and is designed to support the many tech products that care teams use every day.

[hermanmiller.com](http://hermanmiller.com)



## Hiatus Sleeper Bench KI

Hiatus by KI is a mobile sleepover solution that combines space-saving design with comfort and intuitive function. Perfect for patients' visitors, this sofa with trundle-style pullout features integrated charging for mobile devices, storage options for personal items, and easy-access locking casters that provide mobility or stability as needed. With superb infection control, Hiatus is an elegant solution for various healthcare spaces.

[ki.com](http://ki.com)



## Sky Wellness Station Versteel

Versteel's Sky Wellness Station provides the healthcare industry with a safe solution for screening patients. The 30-inch-high three-size acrylic-panel barrier accommodates physical distancing but also personal interactions. An oval cutout allows for touchless temperature checks. The Sky Wellness Station can be adjusted to a desired height with Versteel's pneumatic height-assist mechanism.

[versteel.com](http://versteel.com)



## Overbed Table with Corian Solid Surface Futrus

The Overbed Table by Futrus meets patients' needs in health-care facilities by prioritizing infection control, cleanability, and ergonomic features. Manufactured using Corian Solid Surface, the adaptable table unit also features Comfort Edge, a design that provides patients with soft cushioning and wrist support and contains liquid spills.

[futrus.com](http://futrus.com)



# Surfaces

For hospitals and clinics to remain hygienic and efficient, they rely on durable surfaces. The following products stand up to wear and tear with flair and style. *By Adrian Madlener*



## MedinPure with Diamond 10 Technology Armstrong Flooring

Available in aqueous blues, vibrant greens, and complementary neutral tones, MedinPure PVC-free vinyl sheet flooring comes with Diamond 10 technology: a no-polish, low-maintenance solution that offers category-leading scratch, stain, scuff, and slip resistance. MedinPure is free of ortho-phthalates, halogens, isocyanates, and Red List chemicals of concern and has a third-party-certified product-specific environmental product declaration.

[armstrongflooring.com](http://armstrongflooring.com)



## Everform Formica

Intended for countertops, partitions, and windowsills, Formica's new Everform range is seamless, nonporous, durable, and repairable. The water- and fire-resistant acrylic solid surface comes in a whopping 38 variants, including eight modern, minimalistic, and monochromatic tones. The new collection is inspired by trends such as terrazzo, microscale, and patterns in subtle washed tones.

[formica.com](http://formica.com)



## Legato Liquid Linoleum Mannington Commercial

Unlike the standard products using this material, the new Legato Liquid Linoleum by Mannington Commercial is poured in place for seamless finishes. Available in 54 colors with five visible cork levels ranging from natural cork to a minimal trace, this flooring solution has safe, hygienic, stain-resistant, and sustainable properties.

[manningtoncommercial.com](http://manningtoncommercial.com)



## Atmosphere LG Hausys Floors

Featuring LG Hausys's innovative new chip design, Atmosphere is a homogeneous sheet solution created to meet the rigorous safety and design requirements of healthcare environments. The flooring product combines best-in-class durability, antibacterial properties, and ease of maintenance with a palette of 16 uplifting colors. These variants can be easily coordinated to bring a more dynamic look to any space.

[lghausysusa.com](http://lghausysusa.com)



## Healthcare Collection Panolam Surface Systems

The Healthcare Collection is a line of technically innovative and design-driven high-pressure laminate products from Panolam's existing Pionite, Nevamar, and Inspira collections. With neutral colors and small-scale abstract, wood-grain, and solid patterns, this new line offers flexibility for a wide variety of healthcare interior environments.

[panolam.com](http://panolam.com)



## LinoFloor xf<sup>2</sup> Tarkett

Featuring Tarkett's xf<sup>2</sup> surface treatment technology for durability, cleaning, and maintenance, the new LinoFloor product is well suited for healthcare environments. This antimicrobial flooring solution comes in a wide variety of colors and patterns. Designed for heavy use, this linoleum product can be custom cut to compose different bold geometric configurations.

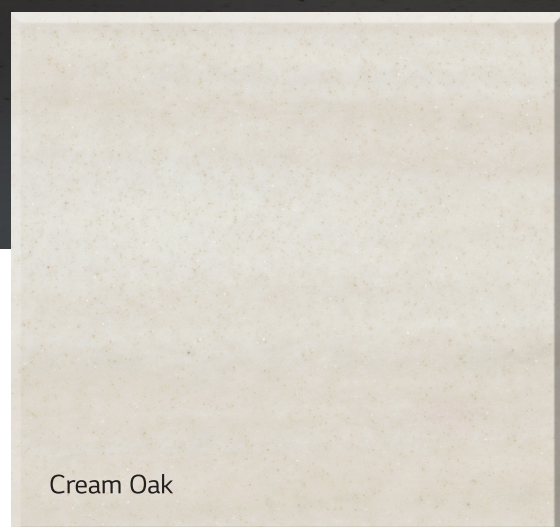
[tarkett.com](http://tarkett.com)

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# Case Studies in Brief

By Ali Oriaku

## Esperanza Wellness Center

**Architect:** JGMA  
**Location:** Chicago

**Exterior metal panels:** Alucobond ACM Spectra Cupral  
**Curtain wall system and windows:** Tubelite 200 Series  
**Interior paint:** Sherwin-Williams  
**Flooring:** Shaw Contract

The Esperanza Wellness Center, designed by Chicago studio JGMA, is a modern health facility that serves minority communities on the southwestern side of the Windy City. JGMA transformed the preexisting site from a desolate concrete slab into a vibrant clinic with interconnected public, garden, and outdoor spaces.

The ground floor of the building is open, flexible, and community focused. The space includes a central lobby, lecture room, pharmacy, teaching kitchen, yoga studio, and

therapy spaces for Mujeres Latinas en Acción, a domestic-violence support group for women. Exam rooms are located on the upper floor, where large walls of glazing allow in natural light and visually connect the interiors to Brighton Park.

Materials like orange paneling and warm woods were selected to provide visitors with a sense of comfort and ease.



COURTESY JGMA

## Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House

**Architect:** EwingCole  
**Location:** Philadelphia

**Ceilings:** CertainTeed Ecophon, Armstrong MetalWorks Vector  
**Countertops:** Corian  
**Plastic laminate:** Wilsonart  
**Carpeting:** Shaw Contract  
**Interior glass railings:** C. R. Laurence

Completed in 2020, the eight-story guest-room tower at the Philadelphia Ronald McDonald House, designed by EwingCole, provides visitors with comfort and accommodations as they undergo medical treatment at nearby hospitals.

Several features of the 93,000-square-foot renovation and expansion project promote community engagement and interaction. The new entry functions as a sweeping main street and promenade, its passageway lined with primary components of the campus, intersected by major circulation routes, and decked out

in skylights. The dining area is similarly open, with minimal screen partitions encouraging patrons to intermingle and form relationships.

Guest rooms support visitors’ diverse medical needs. An immunosuppressant floor uses special materials, including seamless flooring for cleanliness, toxin-free wall paint, an HVAC system that creates negative air pressure to prevent the spread of pathogens, and personal kitchenettes in every room to address food allergies.



HALKIN/MASON PHOTOGRAPHY

## UIC Surgical Innovation Training Laboratory

**Architect:** CannonDesign  
**Location:** Chicago

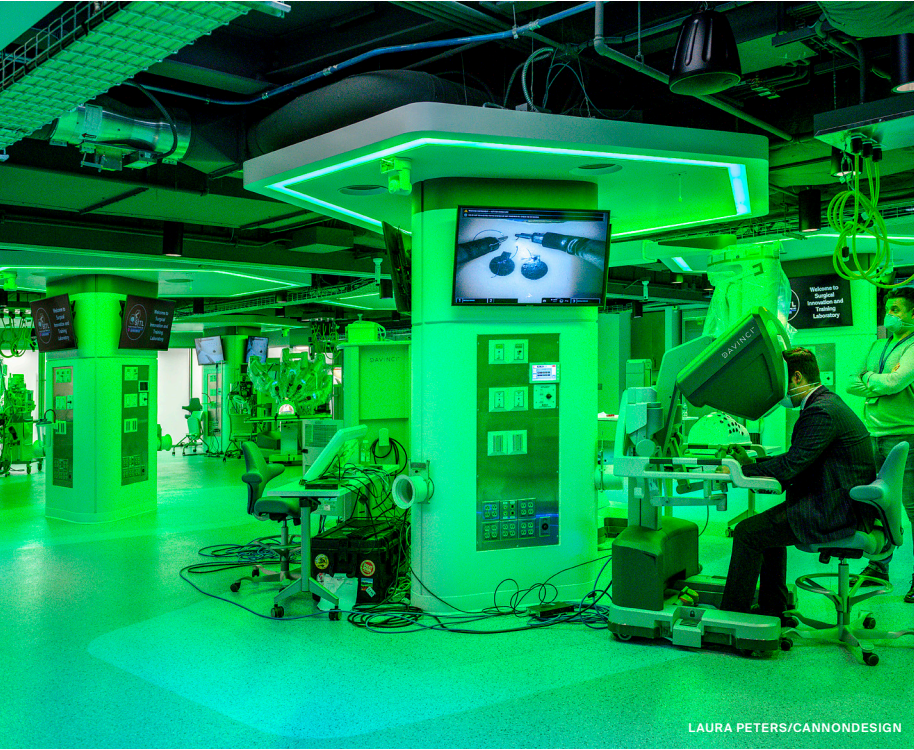
**Associate architect:** Bailey Edward  
**Cost estimator:** Middleton Construction Consulting  
**Technology engineer:** Shen Millsom & Wilke

The UIC Surgical Innovation Training Laboratory (SITL) is a 17,000-square-foot research facility that provides robotic-surgery training for medical students and residents. CannonDesign transformed what Carlos Amato, the firm’s lead designer on the project, called “an old, abandoned lab in a dark unused basement full of leaky pipes” into what is now one of the world’s most advanced robotic-surgery simulation centers.

Despite the lab’s subterranean location,

strips of tunable lighting and colored flooring give it a welcoming and futuristic aesthetic. A green wall and skylights—inspired by the Louvre’s glass pyramid—infuse nature and light into the basement.

The SITL is also inspired by theater design. Similar to backstage theater sets, the SITL has flexible storage spaces that allow students to swap out different pieces of equipment when needed.



LAURA PETERS/CANNONDESIGN



# Lighting

Ensuring that healthcare facilities are well lit is important not only for safety but also for the psychological well-being of patients and caregivers. These cutting-edge lighting solutions check both boxes while meeting the latest energy standards. **By Adrian Madlener**



## ENVEX Series Lithonia Lighting

The ENVEX Series from Lithonia Lighting offers high-performance recessed ambient luminaires developed to meet intense specification requirements. The range's minimalist design allows it to match a variety of spaces. ENVEX is available in two variants, which both offer volumetric distribution. Each fully luminous design is visually comfortable, making it a solution suitable for healthcare spaces where occupant efficiency is vital.

[lithonia.acuitybrands.com](http://lithonia.acuitybrands.com)



## BeveLED Cross Baffle USAI Lighting

USAI Lighting's BeveLED Cross Baffle is an inserted fixture designed to softly diffuse lighting and reduce on-surface glare. Channeling the power of LED technology, this product has color and dimming options. It enhances lighting quality and can add a geometric decorative touch to the ceiling of any healthcare space.

[usailighting.com](http://usailighting.com)



## Lumencove Nano 2.0 Lumenpulse

Lumenpulse has released two new versions of its Lumencove Nano 2.0 range that remove the need for external power source cables while still incorporating the collection's recognized efficiency and durability. The Lumencove Nano 2.0 family is available in different sizes and comes in various outputs, optics, and color temperatures.

[lumenpulse.com](http://lumenpulse.com)



## ClearAppeal Recessed LED Signify

Signify's Day-Brite CFI ClearAppeal Recessed LED luminaire provides subtle flair for healthcare spaces. Featuring a streamlined aesthetic and a balanced glare gradient, this product delivers even illumination and high visual comfort. Its sleek style, coupled with its control options, makes it an attractive choice for many applications.

[signify.com](http://signify.com)



## Stylus Linear Series Cree Lighting

The Stylus Linear Series by Cree includes versatile luminaires targeted to architects, engineers, and lighting designers. Its fixtures combine a sleek form with harmonious surfaces and vibrant colors. Ultrasmooth dimming technology is a bonus for healthcare settings.

[creelighting.com](http://creelighting.com)



## Quartz LED Downlight Series Nora Lighting

Nora Lighting's new Quartz LED Downlight Series was designed for public areas in healthcare facilities. The 4-, 6-, and 8-inch aperture variants come with optional emergency backup and remote test switches. These luminaires also have tunable wattage and white color temperature adjustment controls, allowing end users to fine-tune their environment.

[noralighting.com](http://noralighting.com)

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# Resources

## Accessibility & Hardware

ASSA ABLOY  
assaabloy.com

Baldwin  
baldwinhardware.com

Construction Specialties  
c-sgroup.com

FSB  
fsbna.com

Hardware Resources  
hardwareresources.com

HEWI  
hewi.com

INOX  
unisonhardware.com

Kwikset  
kwikset.com

SARGENT  
sargentlock.com

Sugatsune  
sugatsune.com

Sun Valley Bronze  
sunvalleybronze.com

Swisslog  
swisslog.com

Tecnoglass  
tecnoglass.com

Yale Commercial  
yalecommercial.com

Armstrong  
armstrongceilings.com

Carnegie  
carnegiefabrics.com

CF Stinson  
cfstinson.com

KnollTextiles  
knoll.com

Maharam  
maharam.com

Rulon  
rulonco.com

Unika Vaev  
unikavaev.com

VALMEX  
mehler-texnologies.com

LG Hausys Flooring  
lghausysusa.com

Mannington Commercial  
manningtoncommercial.com

Mosa  
mosa.com

Panolam  
panolam.com

Shaw Contract  
shawcontract.com

Stone Source  
stonesource.com

Stonhard  
stonhard.com

Tarkett  
tarkett.com

TerraMai  
terramai.com

Wilsonart  
wilsonart.com

OFS  
ofs.com

Pivot Interiors  
pivotinteriors.com

Versteel  
versteel.com

Via Seating  
viaseating.com

## Lighting

Axis Lighting  
axislighting.com

Cree  
cree.com

Cooper Lighting Solutions  
cooperlighting.com

Edison Price Lighting  
epl.com

Finelite  
finelite.com

Kenall  
kenall.com

Lithonia Lighting  
lithonia.acuitybrands.com

Lucifer Lighting  
luciferlighting.com

Lumenpulse  
lumenpulse.com

Lutron  
lutron.com

Nora Lighting  
norlighting.com

Signify  
signify.com

USAI Lighting  
usailighting.com

Whitegoods  
whitegoods.com

## Flooring & Surfaces

Acrovyn  
c-sgroup.com/acrovyn-wall-protection

Altro  
altrofloors.com

Armstrong Flooring  
armstrongflooring.com

Ceramic Technics  
ceramictechnics.com

Corian  
corian.com

Daltile  
daltile.com

Forbo  
forbo.com

Formica  
formica.com

J+J Flooring Group  
jjflooringgroup.com

Knauf  
knauf.com

Koroseal  
koroseal.com

## Furnishings

ERG  
erginternational.com

Futrus  
futrus.com

Haworth  
haworth.com

HBF  
hbf.com

Herman Miller  
hermanmiller.com

Integra Seating  
integraseating.com

KI  
ki.com

Knoll  
knoll.com

Krug  
krug.ca

## Acoustics & Textile

3form  
3-form.com

Architex  
architex-ljh.com

Arktura  
arktura.com



LAURA PETERS/CANNONDESIGN



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# Esto

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esto.com

Brooklyn Navy Yard, New Lab, Brooklyn NY, Marvel Architects  
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Armstrong Ceilings <a href="http://www.armstrongceilings.com">www.armstrongceilings.com</a>	25
Bison IP <a href="http://bisonip.com">bisonip.com</a>	13
Dri-Design <a href="http://dri-design.com">dri-design.com</a>	7
Hanover Architectural <a href="http://hanoverpavers.com">hanoverpavers.com</a>	31
Kalwall <a href="http://www.kalwall.com">www.kalwall.com</a>	40
Landscape Forms <a href="http://www.landscapeforms.com">www.landscapeforms.com</a>	9
LG Hausys <a href="http://www.lghausysusa.com">www.lghausysusa.com</a>	35
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# AN Library



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Smithsonian NMAAHC



Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects  
Obama Presidential Center



Seldorf Architects  
The Frick Collection



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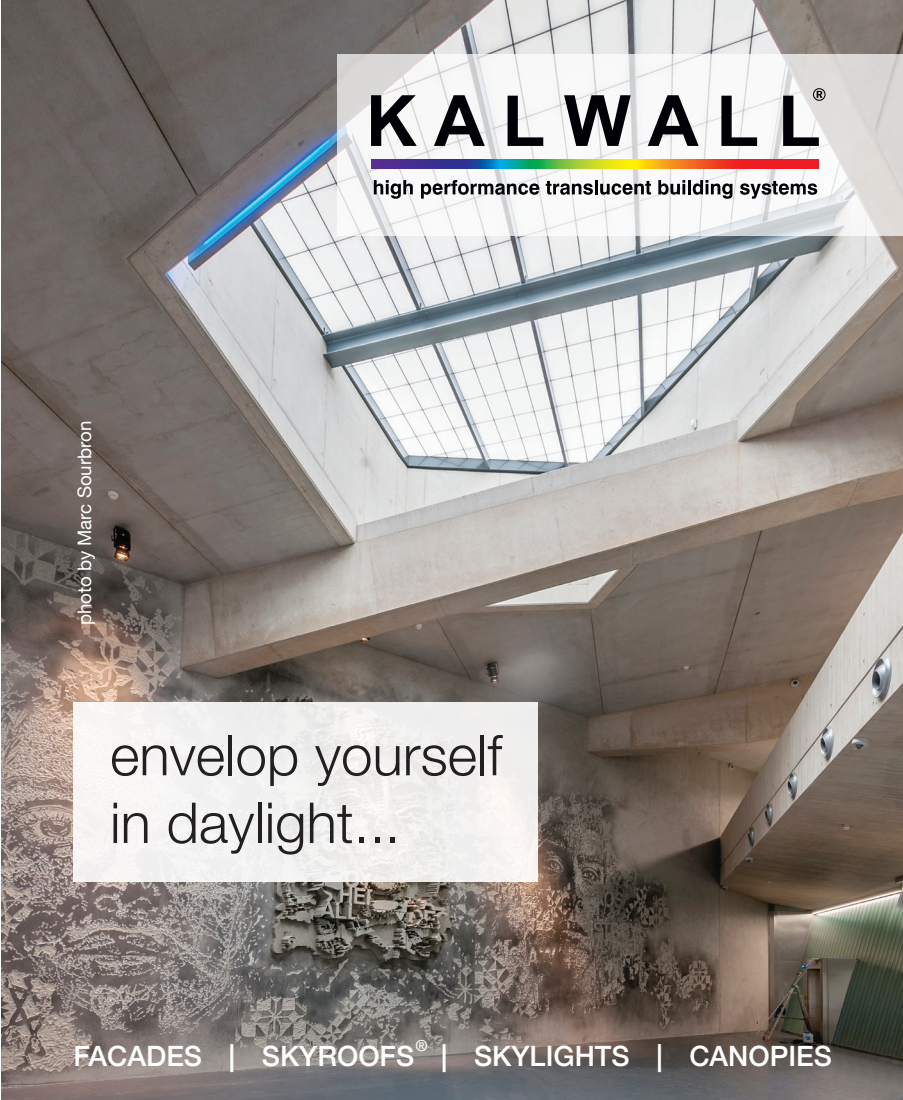


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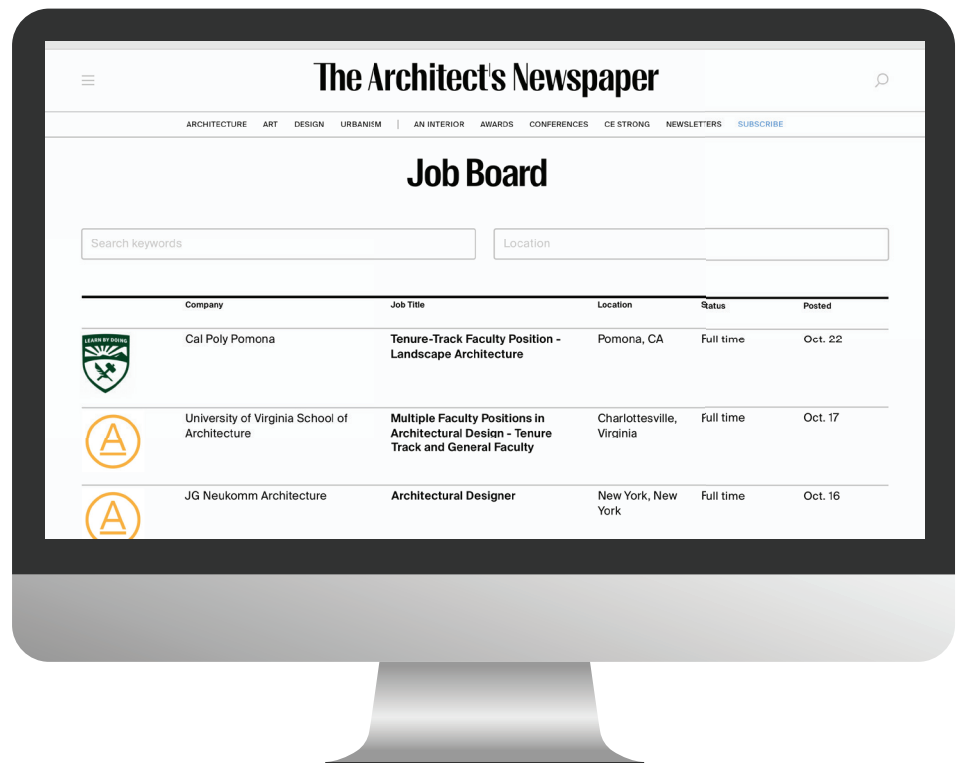


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[archpaper.com/jobs](http://archpaper.com/jobs)



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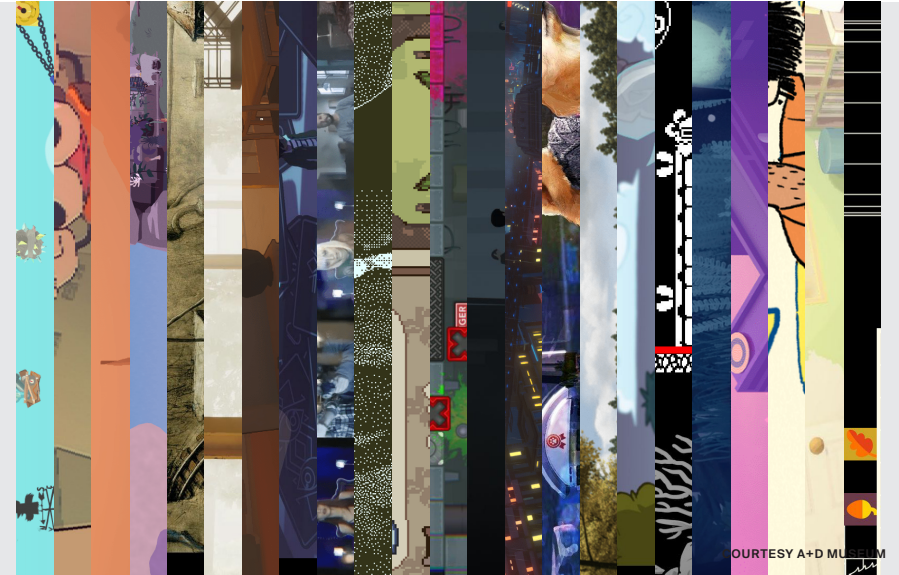


West

## Designing Worlds

A+D Museum  
Online event  
aplusd.org

Ongoing



With museums across the country honing their digital collections and online exhibition design strategies, one institution in Los Angeles, the A+D Museum, has navigated the virtual sphere to great effect. With its new online-only exhibit *Designing Worlds*, the museum sheds light on the fantastical realm of video game design, capturing the spirit and energy of an industry that is considerably younger than most other design disciplines. As A+D points out, the subject matter is particularly well suited to a digital format, as most video games today are not experienced in physical space.

*Designing Worlds* organizes 23 video games into three categories: Story and Narrative, for games that build on captivating story lines; Art and Design, for special attention to artistic direction; and Gameplay Mechanics, for unconventional user experiences. Striking images and captivating videos are accompanied by descriptive text, ensuring that *Designing Worlds* is as engaging and educational as any art experience one can have from home today. **Aaron Smithson**

Southeast

## The Porch is the Tree is the Watering Hole

African American Research Library  
and Cultural Center  
2650 Sistrunk Boulevard  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Through May



In the African American Research Library and Cultural Center, a branch of the Broward County library system, a group of eight visual artists, designers, and writers from across the United States explore the relationship between Black communities and their built environment. The multidisciplinary show centers on Sistrunk, a historically Black community in Fort Lauderdale originally settled by railroad workers at the beginning of the 20th century. The exhibition's contributors (Germane Barnes, Marlene Brunot, Adrienne Chadwick, Darius V. Daughtry, George Gadson, Adler Guerrier, Olalekan Jeyifous, and David I. Muir)

investigate Black gathering spaces through a variety of mediums, including photography, mixed-media art, poetry, and furniture design. The work is organized around spaces found in or around a single-family home, with particular attention paid to the front porch and back alley. In addition to celebrating the spaces that define the Black experience in Sistrunk, curator Dominique Denis aims to inform future public art installations in the neighborhood through the cultivation of a deeper understanding of its history and people. **AS**

East

## When Practice Becomes Form: Carpentry Tools from Japan

Japan Society  
333 East 47th Street  
New York

March 11 through July 11



This spring, New York's Japan Society will celebrate the 50th anniversary of its landmark building, designed by Junzo Yoshimura, with a new exhibition: *When Practice Becomes Form: Carpentry Tools from Japan*. The show will commemorate the master craft of traditional Japanese carpentry with a multimedia exhibit exploring various design processes. The exhibit will present pieces from the Takenaka Carpentry Tools Museum in Kobe, Japan, in an installation conceived by Japanese architect Sou Fujimoto and Brooklyn-based collaborator Popular Architecture (POPA). The installation design aims to present a dialogue between 2D drawings

and 3D models. The woodworking techniques in the exhibition were used by master carpenters, or *tōryō*, of the seventh century. Their construction knowledge was passed down to succeeding generations so that craftspeople could repair or partially deconstruct historic structures. Integral to the methodology of these *tōryō* are environmental knowledge and the use of locally sourced materials, and the wood in the designs shown here is intended to be compounded and reused by successive generations. These concerns suggest a sort of sustainability rarely seen in modern construction. **Keren Dillard**

East

## States of Becoming

4400 Forbes Avenue  
Carnegie Museum of Art  
Pittsburgh

Through March 28



Curators at the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh have assembled a collection of work from the institution's Heinz Architectural Center that explores ideas of iteration and evolution within the discipline. The exhibition, whose title is a quote from architect Thom Mayne, centers on work from close to two dozen prominent practitioners, including historical figures like Michael Graves as well as contemporary studios like Johnston Marklee and Lewis.Tsurumaki.Lewis. Through a variety of mediums, curator

of architecture Raymund Ryan intends to convey the dynamic experience of architectural production, revealing "some of the ways that architects investigate construction techniques, explore the possibilities offered by new technologies, and represent cities in new and provocative ways." As designers and architecture students turn to virtual work environments, the exploration of new architectural techniques through physical models, such as Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman's *Manufactured Sites*, is especially resonant. **AS**



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# 44 Review

## Medium Design

Keller Easterling | Verso | \$20

To be clear: Keller Easterling's *Medium Design* is a manifesto, however much it resists the label. Its subject is the designer, broadly construed; no mere producer of objects, this person may not bear any professional credentials at all, but simply possesses an appropriate mien. "The work [of design] does not need a name," Easterling exhorts, "and you already know how to do it."

In this sense, the designer alters the "medium" of reality itself, which is presented as peppered with "living" objects—ranging from pencils and computers to trains, states, even international governance organizations—as befits the popular technanimism du jour. But at the same time, Easterling's designer remains an expert figure: they wield supersensorial abilities that enable them to look at "urban spaces like streets and assess potentials even in the relationships between their static solids." The world, in its very essence, cries out to be used appropriately. If these walls could talk, they would beg for the "medium designer" to activate their latent potentials and performances. However, this designer mustn't act directly on the world—to do so would be prescriptive. Reclining away from reality and into abstraction, they instead design interplays, special spatial relationships that may execute certain "political advantages, expediciencies, and accelerants" on the medium designer's behalf.

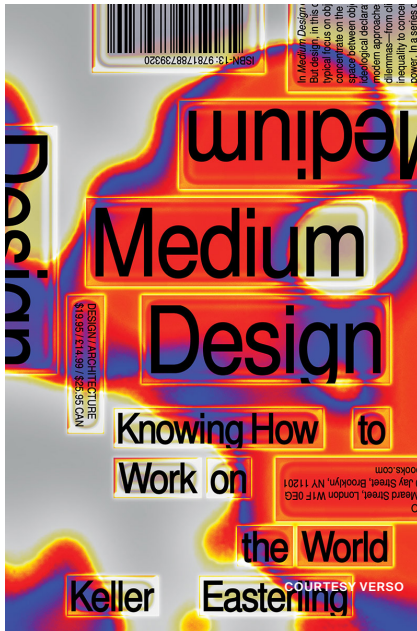
Like any good manifesto, *Medium Design* is obsessed with the political. Easterling, who teaches at the Yale School of Architecture, writes about politics as if it were reducible to parody, or pathology, always a case of "[e]ntrenched political camps, with tragicomic bluster, retreat[ing] into ideological loops." Against this narrowness, she presents the reader with open-ended scenarios in which design is definitionally expanded to include everything, and the professedly "non"-ideological pretenses of bog-standard liberal rhetoric are given a new sheen (thanks in no small part to the author's beguiling lexicon of "superbugs," "switch," "multiplier"). By doing so, she creates the custom-built theoretical arena in which she can claim to be presenting common-sensical advice. One must work *within the system* and, by doing so, somehow *escape it*. This results in bizarre contortions when applied historically, as they are in the book's several interludes. For example, Easterling invokes the designerly activity of Rosa Parks, who, in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, "activated an undeclared urban disposition" and "shifted [a] potential in the spatio-political matrix to break a loop without intensifying a dangerous binary." The implication is nothing short of bewildering.

In the Easterling-verse, Parks's protest wasn't a rallying cry but a "switch" that transcended white supremacy itself by simply taking a moment to outthink it. This interpretation of the Montgomery bus boycott propounds that it (as a sovereign force, an interplay) worked to gather adherents to its banner by employing "a surprising and impossible narrative form: a story without conflict." Though, more accurately, Easterling is advocating for a *history* without conflict. Nothing has happened before; all is as it is in front of us. There is no longer any need to participate in the grueling war of attrition between right and left, no sense in confronting the great "ur-enemies, like

capital," or in wasting time to indulge the myopic hopefuls who still believe in revolution or substantive changes for the better. The interplay initiated by Rosa Parks and other medium designers like her results in acts of individual genius that avoid political deadlock to work directly with space, which has been shorn of politics or anything else and become pure content to be "piloted, cajoled, tended, or activated to form more interdependent relationships."

Elsewhere, Easterling provides a slightly less baffling example of the interplay in action. Disavowing master plans and other would-be "comprehensive solutions" (always prone to failure), she finds a promising alternative in UN-Habitat's inclusive land readjustment program, called PILaR. To hear her tell it, the program represents a radical move away from the staid old idea that buildings are private property indexed according to their financial value. Instead, PILaR impels the creation of cooperatives "directed by a number of participants," who administer a community bound by "the heavy values and affordances related to proximity, mobility, health, and safety."

Compare this with UN-Habitat's own report on urban land readjustment, which more soberly describes PILaR as a third option for when "voluntary purchase" and the "expense and the lengthy, expensive and risky court battles associated with expropriation," or eminent domain, threaten to scare off developers or frustrate the efforts of local and municipal authorities acting on their behalf. Put another way, PILaR and similar land readjustment initiatives are methods to aid in the off-loading of development costs. But Easterling is taken in by the euphemistic promises of "adjustment," which she interprets as an affirmative avenue to "allow a modest neighborhood to completely recast their existing property." She goes so far as to claim that the procedure "might allow many to escape the precarity of relying solely on wages," either by remaking members of the cooperative as landowners or by proposing instead "[t]he inhabitant's situated value is their heavy portfolio in a spatial marketplace—a physical, tangible field of value." UN-Habitat officers who would like to stress the "inclusivity" facet of land readjustment would blush



with pride at this glowing interpretation.

The medium designer's supposed position above the petty warring of politics and economics is premised on another of the designer's distinctive abilities: empirical know-how. It is the designer's command of "unfolding organs of interplay" that allows them to "exercise their activist capacities in social, political, financial, and environmental economies of space." The tacit knowledge of the designer-priests (and them alone) may identify the "[m]any affordances in space...made of activities or proximities that cannot be monetized." But the continued existence of money haunts these activities at every turn. Believing Easterling has something new to say first requires the reader to forget that private property exists and that it is not the designer who commands it, but the owner of that property—be it spatial, financial, or otherwise. A good argument of proper know-how never persuaded owners to part with their property, nor do zealous landlords typically respond to invocations of the Greater Good.

Easterling contrasts this "knowing how" with "knowing that" in an extended scenario from chapter 3. Smart can be dumb, she tells us, because of its prescriptive solutionism. So autonomous vehicles, while presented by their backers "as transportation's magic bullet," end up reproducing the congestion, sprawl, and other knock-on effects of "monovalent" car-centric networks. She offers a simple thought experiment to break her readers out of this conceptual loop: A bedroom community's underserved train stop is pressed into service by the introduction of a fleet of AVs; seemingly overnight, the station becomes a multivalent hub, drawing alternative modes of transport—bicycles but also high-speed rail—to it and triggering changes in the suburban fabric and patterns of behavior alike. It's one of the more optimistic scenarios in the book and resurrects faith in the "switch," that magical moment when the designer's vision begins to be realized in the mundane world. "[T]his interplay alone," Easterling waxes, becomes a "powerful spatial engine or differential that organizes capital and politics rather than the other way around."

The task of the designer is solely to summon the interplay, at which point control

is relinquished to the "multiple players" of handler organizations that prevent the unfolding situation from being "exclusively parsed by data or money." But by off-loading responsibility onto the reified "interplay," the designers shield themselves from any adverse effects arising from their actions. The problem remains, however: How do these spatial changes actually take place?

Buildings are not fluid, and private property is only minimally malleable. To claim that the switch has a power to "change dispositions without declaring [any] political leanings" overlooks the fact that redevelopment itself is a political powder keg and even supposedly simple initiatives to introduce a new transit line or stop often meet with fierce local resistance, to say nothing of the reality that public infrastructure spending in the United States is particularly dismal, with an estimated \$2 trillion backlog for repairs. Pretending one can command the political or the economic from the forward camp of design ultimately devolves to an exhortation that only best intentions matter, even when they fall apart.

Finally, we arrive at *Medium Design's* foremost blind spot: power. Near the end of the book, Easterling remarks in befuddlement that the tacit knowledge/medium design of "pool players, cyclists, clowns, dogs, chemists, cooks, and parents" is not applied "to influence approaches to the world's most difficult dilemmas." Her affectation of an almost-folksy can-do attitude—whereby anything can and should respond to the "cultural muscle memory" of medium designers—rests on the professed "assumption that there is no all-encompassing ideological system from which all power and violence originates." This is necessary to achieve the book's goal—making a case for the designer as mercenary. Powerful figures and institutions, even authoritarian ones, can be subverted by designerly means; one need only lock down the commission first. When Easterling occasions that the role of the medium designer is akin to the parent dealing with unruly children or the pool player lining up his shot, she is really suggesting that they somehow stand outside and above the childish squabbling of political differences. If there is a true heartbeat detectable in this work, it is smug disdain for conviction of any kind.

Easterling's medium designer is not the parent or the pool player, let alone the principled activist. Rather, they are the functionary who dreams of possessing the lathe of heaven. *Medium Design* is written as a palliative for these good employees who are biding their time and, in a self-help fashion, consoles the same by offering ludicrous dreams masquerading as common sense. Easterling writes that "it may even be the case that land discarded or neglected by capital has the greatest opportunity to acquire design value," but what land fits this description? What scrap of the globe is not owned? There is none. The medium designer does not exist and never will exist; capital executes the plan and the designer must dance along as they always have. This book is a bedtime story for those trying to forget they have work in the morning.

**Kevin Rogan is a writer, designer, student, and dilettante who lives in New York.**





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# 46 Review

## ANIME ARCHITECTURE: Imagined Worlds and Endless Megacities

Stefan Riekeles | Thames & Hudson | \$45

What does the 1988 blockbuster *Akira*, usually cited as the anime movie that kick-started Western audiences' interest in the art form, have in common with George Orwell's *1984* and *The Simpsons*? All three are cultural touchstones that in hindsight appear to have predicted the future with uncanny precision. Surveillance is a fact of life and inescapable to a degree that Orwell had imagined, while the American pathologies parodied on *The Simpsons* ended up foreshadowing a President Trump. But as any good satirist will tell you, prophecy is nothing but riding current trends to their logical conclusions.

So it is in *Akira*, whose over-the-top urban setting, along with those of seven other films, is lovingly analyzed in *ANIME ARCHITECTURE*. Themes of capitalistic decadence, climate breakdown, runaway technology, and hypermilitarized governments pervade these cityscapes—bleak but beguiling parables for our own fractious world, though not every work included is explicitly dystopian.

This entropic trajectory mostly remains at the level of subtext, however. What interests author Stefan Riekeles more is the monumental effort of world-building, which he locates in the production (i.e., pre-filming) process. Many of the films in his survey were made before the widespread adoption of CGI, beginning with *Akira* and concluding with the first two entries of the *Rebuild of Evangelion* series (2007 and 2009, respectively). Painstaking hand drafting and painting steadily give way to 3D-assisted imagineering. Riekeles doesn't get waylaid by the paper/digital-based distinction, though—he notes cursorily that a matte painter today grasps “a digital brush”—but he does insist on cinematic scope. He is persnickety about this framing, as it distinguishes his “background artworks” from the simple, ill-defined backdrops typically created for television.

In his introduction, Riekeles isolates the various stages of production design and singles out the art director as a sort of prime mover. It's *his* concept sketches (Riekeles's account is devoid of women) that galvanize a team of draftsmen, artists, and technicians into action. A collaborative back-and-forth ensues, with the aim of translating spatial ideas and metropolitan moods into convincing, pliable environments in which to stage the action of the film. Pencil sketches are elaborated until the city alleyways, elevated train lines, and endless skyscrapers they depict reach a physicality and tactility expected of film. In the next stage, color, light, shadow, and other cinematographic touches are added to create “image boards,” over which characters, objects, and optical effects will later be laid. Alongside this process, hand-drawn layouts are prepared with the backgrounds in mind so as to coordinate camera pans across “cuts”—shots in animation-speak. This is where anime approaches the realm of live-action film, and Riekeles quotes the great director Mamoru Oshii as saying that the success of the first *Patlabor* film partly rested on avoiding “the typical camera angles and framing used in ordinary animation.”

It's all a mammoth task, which *ANIME ARCHITECTURE* documents through a



AKIRA, cut no. 2211, final production background, Hiroshi Ono, poster color on paper, 19 3/4 inches x 14 1/4 inches, based on the graphic novel AKIRA by Katsuhiro Otomo. First published by *Young Magazine*, Kodansha Ltd.

wealth of progress drawings leading to gigantic matte paintings. As tiny cels, or celluloid frames, pan over the paintings, they invariably pass over entire sections of a megacity. This book shines a light on those overlooked corners; the necessities of filming, Riekeles laments, typically deprive the viewer of the chance to inspect these backgrounds fully.

A simple-enough goal, perhaps, but also a logistical nightmare; as any American anime fan knows, the genre is plagued by licensing issues that have kept a great number of series from making the jump state-side (through official channels, anyway). Artists employed by Kodansha, Studio 4°C, and other Japanese animation studios give up all the rights to their work, only the final versions of which are retained and stored away. The commercial imperative, Riekeles writes, prevents the studios from seeing the value of concept sketches, layouts, and image boards, which are simply tossed out, and those that are salvaged can be difficult to track down. Riekeles faced a delta of content streams to follow. All in all, assembling the materials took ten years, during which time Riekeles repeatedly traveled to Japan to view private collections as well as interview critics, anime historians, and legendary figures such as Oshii, director of 1995's influential *Ghost in the Shell* and its 2004

sequel, *Innocence*, as well as the *Patlabor* series; Katsuhiro Otomo, the creator and artist of *Akira*; and Shinji Kimura, art director of *Tekkonkinkreet* (2006), just to name a few. In the front acknowledgment, Riekeles thanks no fewer than ten rights holders who helped bring the project to life—a minor miracle.

The first entry in the book, on the making of *Akira*, sets the groundwork for all that follows. In one of his longest analyses, Riekeles lays bare how much the Western conception of cyberpunk—and its fountainhead, *Blade Runner* (1982)—has fed into the overly intricate cityscapes that form the basis of anime's sci-fi canon. Director Ridley Scott and concept artist Syd Mead's neo-noir mash-up of Hong Kong, Italian futurist architecture, and postindustrial japonaiserie would directly influence *Akira*'s grimy, neon-soaked ambience, as would Fritz Lang's 1927 *Metropolis*. After *Blade Runner*, no other film casts as great a shadow over the hyperstriated worlds gathered in *ANIME ARCHITECTURE*, with at least two productions—Osamu Tezuka's 1949 manga of the same name and a 2001 film reimagining of *that* work—paying homage to Lang's impressionistic film.

But Riekeles also detects the influence of real-world architects, singling out the work of Kenzo Tange, the Pritzker Prize-winning modernist and godfather of the Me-

tabolist movement. *Akira* is set in Neo-Tokyo moored in Tokyo Bay, an urbanistic mise-en-scène taken straight from Tange's *A Plan for Tokyo*, 1960 proposal, only arrived at from the fallout of a different world war. (Neo-Tokyo is said to have been built after the titular demiurge Akira sparked World War III with a burst of psychic energy that destroyed the original Tokyo in 1988, and is leveled at the film's climax by the rampaging Tetsuo; the latter's wiping the slate clean and ending a perverse overaccumulation of wealth is pretty unsubtle as an analogy.) Shades of Paul Rudolph's unbuilt LOMEX megastructure crop up as well, in the ever-present sky highways that ring Neo-Tokyo and are crammed with housing underneath, creating solid infill below typically isolated infrastructure. As “the nerve centers and neuralgic points of these megacities, of the modern city,” infrastructure takes on a narrative role in many anime films, Riekeles writes.

It's interesting that Riekeles chose to follow his study of *Akira* with a deep dive into both *Patlabor* movies (1989 and 1993). While it makes sense chronologically, Oshii's films offer a more down-to-earth, slice-of-life look into a near-future Tokyo, conceived by the filmmakers as a logical evolution and thus reliant on extensive location scouting and natural light and shadow tests. The creative team behind 1995's *Ghost in the Shell* followed a similar “realism” in order to believably render Hong Kong's spiritual successor, the 2029 Japanese capital of New Port City. The movie nails the interplay of tradition and a frenetic new world struggling to burst forward. Pollution hangs over New Port City, resulting in ambient light that reinforces the liminal, dreamlike spaces depicted on-screen; it's a trick used to great effect in *Blade Runner*. Three decades after the original, *Blade Runner 2049* would draw heavily from both *Ghost in the Shell* movies and 2001's *Metropolis* for its own even-dingier aesthetic. (The world really goes to shit in those intervening years.)

The only stumbling block of Riekeles's volume is its format. As a book about anime's overlooked aspects and processes, *ANIME ARCHITECTURE* is, well, constrained by that fact. Displayed in a typical vertical coffee-table book format, the finer details of the collected background paintings, sketches, and concept and process drawings are sometimes hard to make out. In order to faithfully reproduce materials created for a wide-screen format, many of the images were shrunk to fit on a single page (there are some nice full-bleed reproductions) or, worse, stretched to full size across both pages, condemning the middle of a highly technical and detailed drawing to the dreaded spine crack.

Still, that's not a deal breaker. *ANIME ARCHITECTURE* is a valuable resource for anime, film, and video game aficionados, who will likely marvel at the chains of influence linking their favorite media. For architects, the book contains not only a repository of magnificent megastructures but valuable insight into the hard, iterative work of world building. Even the anarchic conglomerations of Neo-Tokyo need a plan.

Jonathan Hilburg is AN's web editor.





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