

# ARCADE

DISCUSSION ON DESIGN

\$8 SPRING 2014

32.1

## AFTER Growth

RETHINKING *the* NARRATIVE  
of MODERNIZATION

FEATURE EDITOR *Charles Mudedé*

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**BOOK REVIEW** Donald Olsen: Architect of Habitable Abstractions Reviewed by JM Cava

**PERSPECTIVE** A Field Guide to Utopia by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

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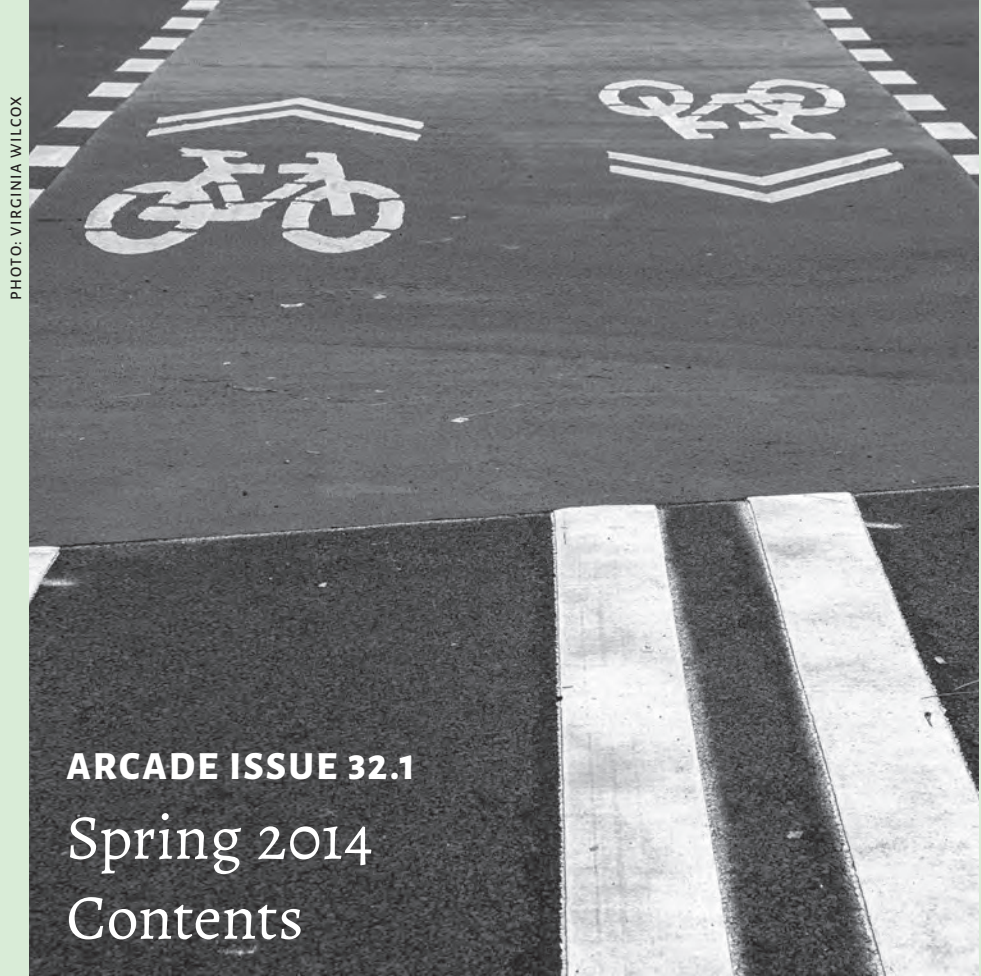


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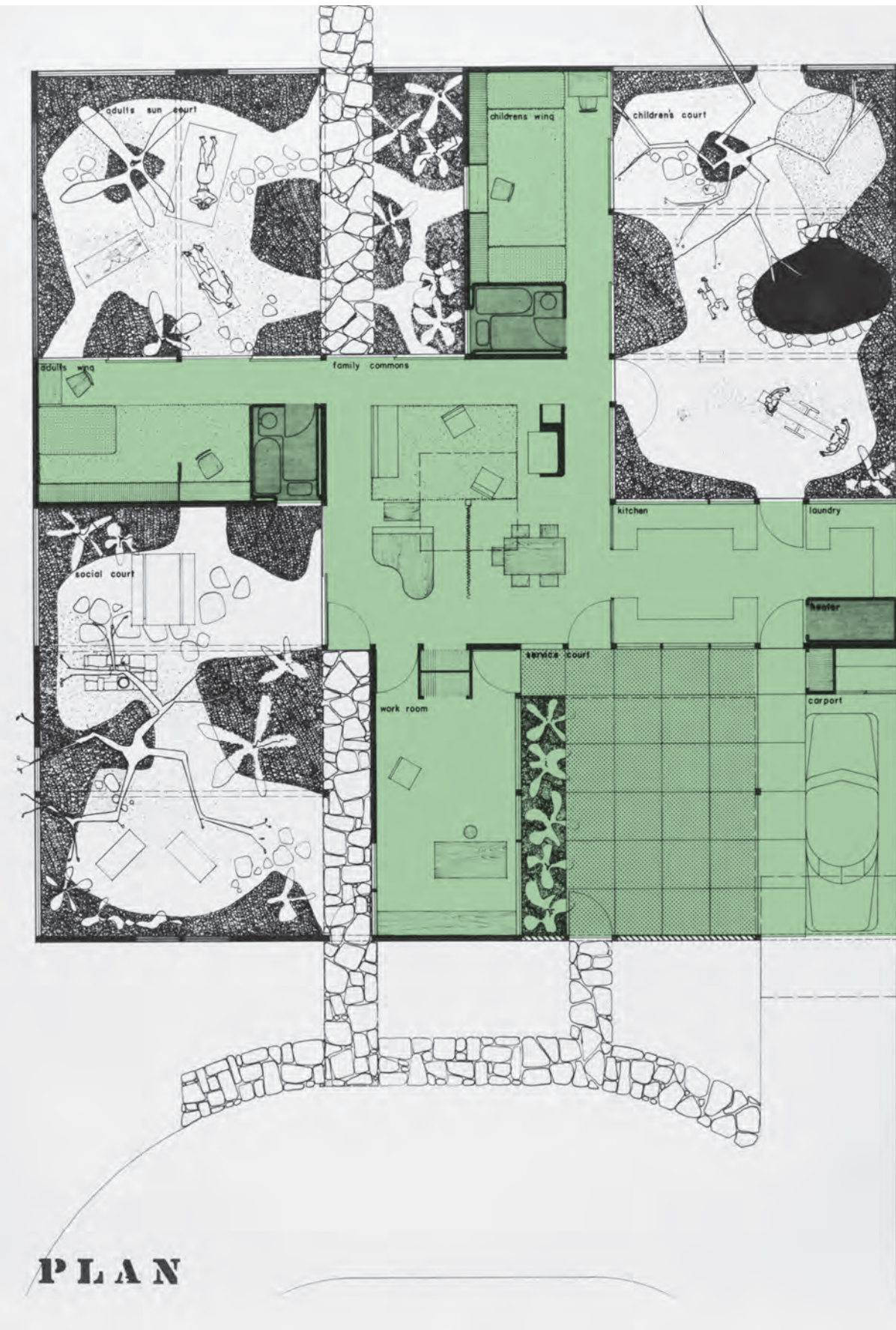
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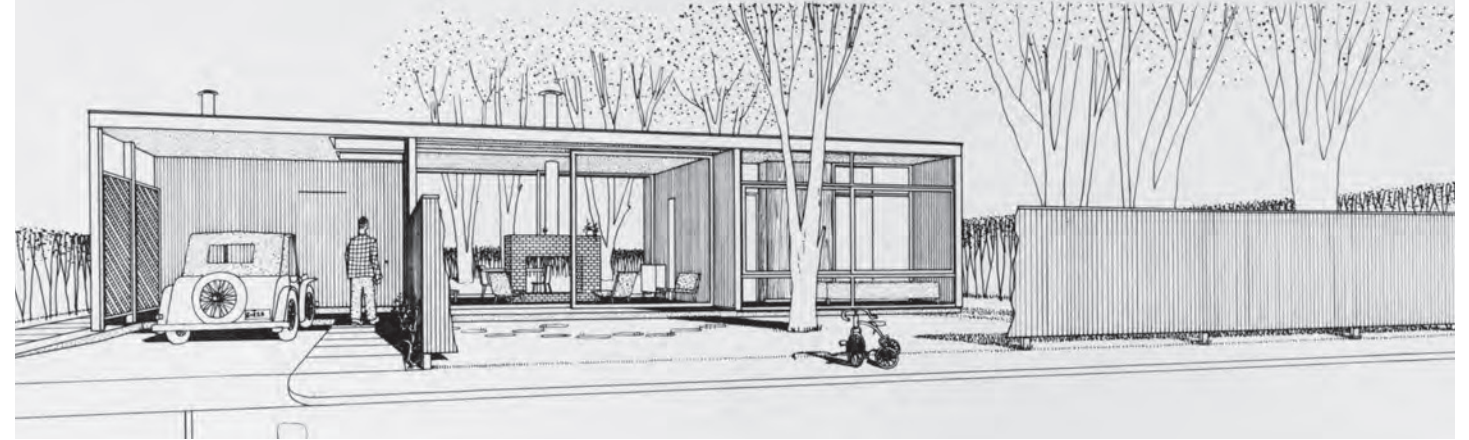
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Contraspacial House, prototype, 1948. 2,304 square-feet, steel frame construction, unbuilt.



Donald Olsen: Architect of Habitable Abstractions

BY PIERLUIGI SERRAINO

Introduction by John Winter

William Stout Publishers, 2013

## Donald Olsen: Architect of Habitable Abstractions

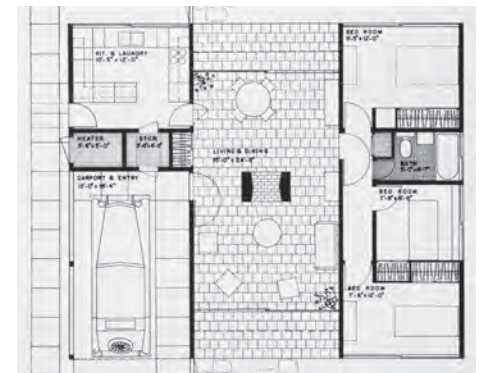
REVIEWED BY JM CAVA

Although his house designs are deeply indebted to the established Gropius-Breuer American paradigm—Bauhaus meets New England colonial—Olsen's homes are subtly adapted to regional characteristics: wood finishes and construction (and steel), sloped topographies, warmer climates and California's notoriously casual lifestyle.

IN 1948, DONALD OLSEN, AN ARCHITECT in the Bay Area, was nearly thirty years-old, recently married with a young child and had nothing much to do. Alight with the fire of modernism from his time at Harvard with Gropius, Breuer and Giedion, and after brief unsatisfying stints with Saarinen, Wurster, Anshen, Kump and SOM, there was little work overall. So he created his own and thus found himself driving to Los Angeles, with a model and drawings in the back of his car, en route to the influential publisher of *Arts and Architecture*, John Entenza.

In the Bay Area, Olsen was an architectural outlander in territory ruled by Wurster and Mumford's regionalism, famously dismissed by Breuer as nothing more than "... redwood all over the place." Yet despite the region's indifference to and even disdain for the aesthetic of the first machine age, Olsen's entire career never strayed from his self-described inspirational wellspring, "... European modern architecture of the 1920s and 30s ..."

Yet everyone exists within a context that imprints their work, and Olsen was no exception—particularly so in that he was (and presumably still is) an articulate, charming and talented architect who cherished an exchange of ideas, remaining lifelong friends with architectural colleagues around the world. Although his house designs are deeply indebted to the established Gropius-Breuer American paradigm—Bauhaus meets New England colonial—Olsen's homes are subtly adapted to regional characteristics: wood finishes and construction (and steel), sloped topographies, warmer climates and California's notoriously casual lifestyle.



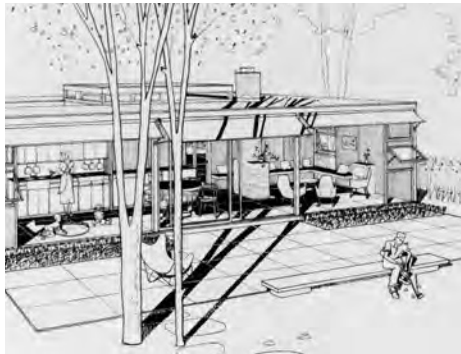
Top and above: NAHB-Architectural Forum Competition Residences, prototype, 1950. 997 square-feet, wood frame construction, unbuilt.

This is nowhere more cogent and expressive than in the 1948 project Olsen presented to Entenza: a hypothetical residence he named "Contraspacial House," published in *Arts and Architecture* the same year. This is an architecture filled with ideas, gracefully assembled and beautifully rendered. In its complex interweaving of interior and exterior space, it is, within the modernist trajectory, an accomplished extension of Le Corbusier's famous sketch of his progressive house form explorations. Corbusier's final approach—the Villa Savoye—was pronounced perfect, its internal complexity neatly wrapped in an envelope of Platonic purity. Olsen's sophisticated plan moves beyond that, integrating several diverse architectural ideas of his time, among them the pinwheel plans of Neutra; multiple-courtyard/atrium houses of Mies, Sert, Rainer and Rudofsky; mat-buildings from the Smithsons and CIAM; and Alexander and Chermayeff's *Community and Privacy*, wherein multiple courtyard-houses are a critique of the ubiquitous suburban home of the 1960s. Oddly enough, this early project of Olsen's—one of his richest in texture and content—was designed as low-cost housing in the post-World War II environment.





Ruth House II, Berkeley, CA, 1967–68. 3,700 square-feet, wood frame construction, still existing. Photo: © Rondal Partridge



Design Low Cost House, prototype, 1952. 1,074 square-feet, wood frame construction, unbuilt.



Kip House, Berkeley, CA, 1952. 1,500 square-feet, wood frame construction, built and still existing.

No doubt Entenza's publication of this house was influenced by Olsen's masterful drawing skill. The crisp black and white renderings in *Donald Olsen: Architect of Habitable Abstractions*—congruent with the architecture they portray—are powerful vignettes of idealized mid-century suburban life with an almost visceral graphic immediacy. Like Le Corbusier, Olsen understood the ultimate purpose of his compositions was to house people and, like the Swiss master, his renderings are populated with delightful scenes of families engaged in the routine of daily life. These figures affirm the intimacy and geniality of scale that Olsen's homes possess, no matter how abstract their composition or demeanor.

And abstract they are. The geometric rigor of these buildings—mostly homes—in plan and in volume is close in spirit to the Southern California structures of Soriano and Ellwood, yet

Olsen is no acolyte to any regimented doctrine; his buildings have a level of comfort and freedom that Miesian houses lack. A comparison of interest is Olsen's marvelous Ruth House II in Berkeley from 1968, set alongside Richard Meier's Smith House in Connecticut of nearly the same year. Both are "white" architects using wood-frame construction mixed with steel, each seeking a reinterpretation of the International Style villa. The two buildings employ a similar abstract syntax, but Olsen's has both greater intimacy and deeper connection to the earth and its landscape.

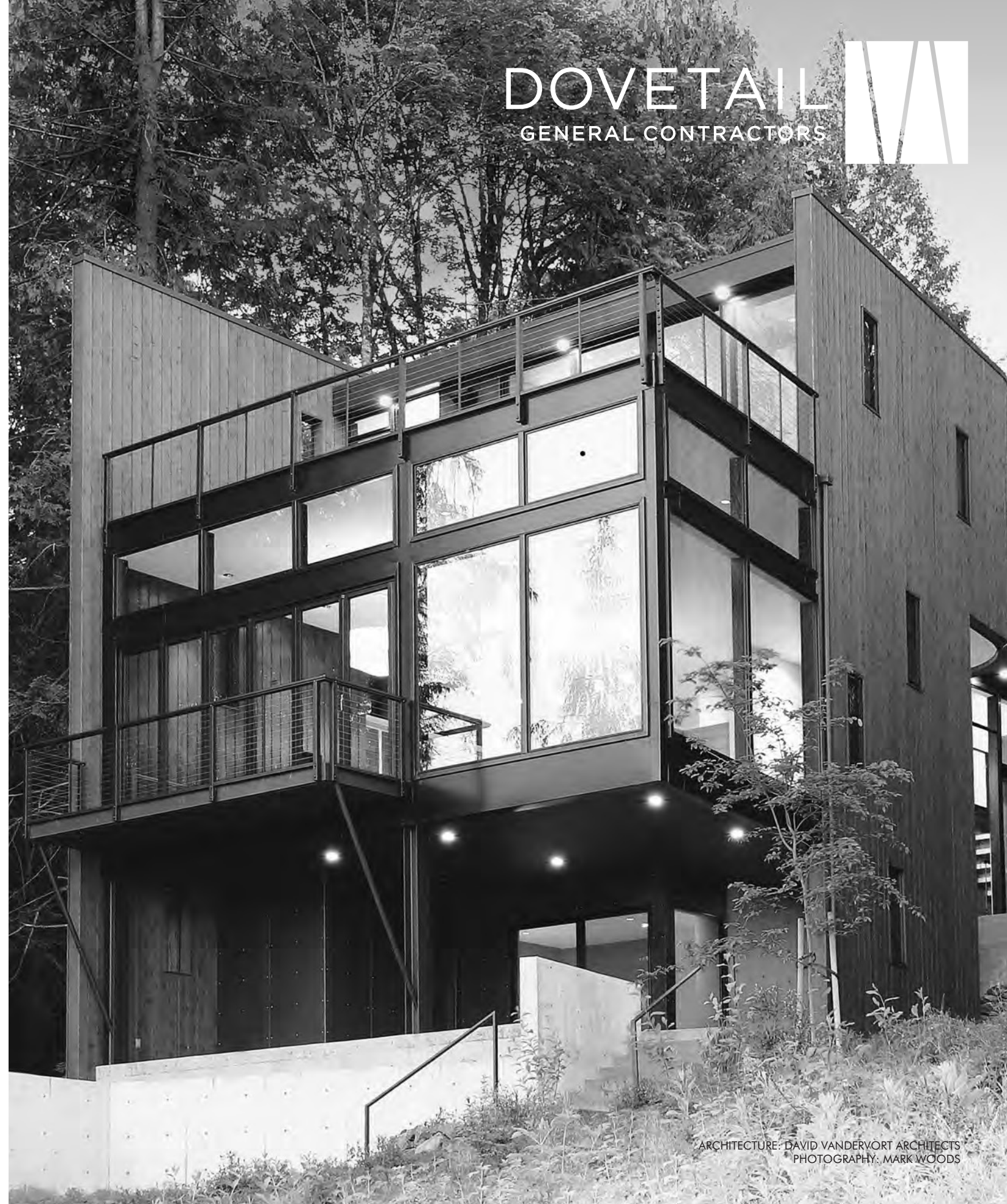
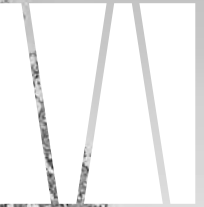
As an artifact, this is a wonderful book for architects, with none of those irritatingly tiny floor plans or magazine color photos taken at dusk or sunrise. Here are the architect's original drawings, easy to follow and read, with Olsen's personality infused into their making. The sumptuous renderings are printed large

enough that you want to crawl right inside them. The book's paper is the perfect size, weight and balance between gloss and matte for optimum reading of both photos and text. The prints—mostly by Rondal Partridge—have the crystalline clarity of old daguerreotypes, and the narrative by Pierluigi Serraino is refreshingly lucid and enlightening. Rumor has it this is the final publication from William Stout, the renowned bookseller and bibliophile. If so, this is a memorable and delightful final act. 🌱

**JM Cava** is an architect in Portland, where he teaches, writes and designs buildings and gardens.

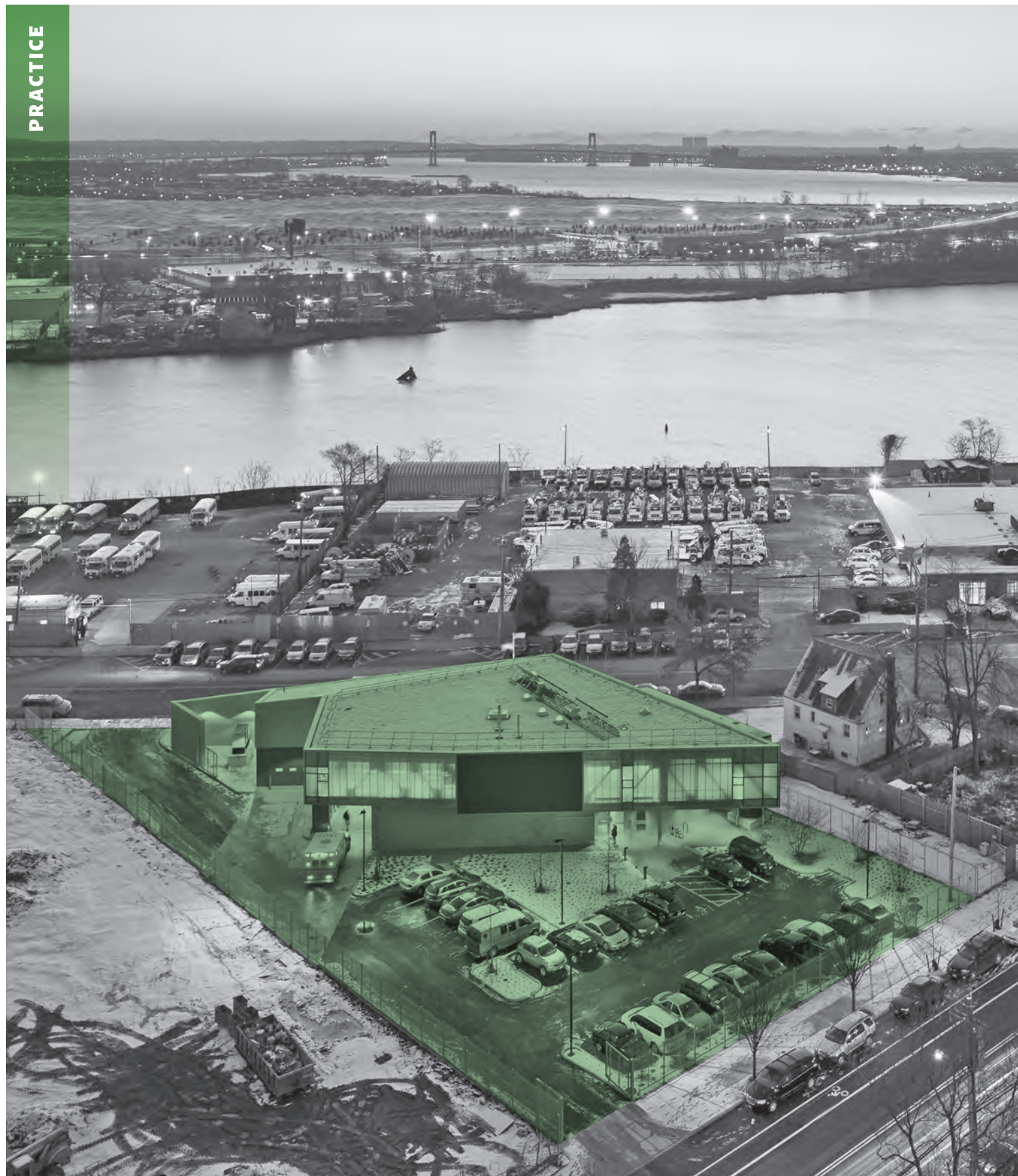
All drawings are from the Donald Olsen Collection, Environmental Design Archives, University of California, Berkeley. All images courtesy of William Stout Publishers.

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Zerega Avenue Emergency Medical Specialist (EMS), Station #3, Bronx, NY. Photo © Michael Moran / OTTO

Last fall, BUILD sat down with architect and Columbia professor Laurie Hawkinson in the Manhattan offices of Smith-Miller + Hawkinson (SMH+U), which she runs with her husband, Henry Smith-Miller. They discussed SMH+U's advancement into public projects, working with different types of clients and the education of an architect.

## Through the Lens of Architecture

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
LAURIE HAWKINSON,  
SMH + U ARCHITECTS

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**BUILD: SMH+U's work spans everything from furniture and houses to museums and transportation terminals. Do you consider yourselves specialists at any particular types of projects?**

LAURIE HAWKINSON: We started out doing a lot of residential work. Since you start with the project types that are coming in the door, we first developed a vocabulary of details for lofts. However, I was very interested in working in the public realm, and at a certain point, we decided that was the work we really wanted to do—of course, you can decide that, but then you actually need to do it. This was at a time when public work was available, so we started putting feelers out. As we took on more public work, we deliberately took on less residential. Our public projects—such as the EMS station in the Bronx, which is currently in construction—have been some of the most interesting to us. We've also completed a couple of GSA (General Services Administration) port of entry projects, and we remain interested in that infrastructure.

**How long did it take to get into public work?**

Serendipitously, one thing has always led to another. Early on, we were approached by a firm that was working for Continental Airlines. They came to us because we had done all of these interior projects, and they wanted us to help design the interior package in conjunction with the new branding that they were rolling out for Continental. Carpet and surfaces turned into new ticket counters for a terminal at La Guardia, which turned into a canopy to shade the sun—the project ultimately became a design strategy for the whole environment.

After that we submitted an RFP for the ferry terminal here in New York City, and because of the Continental project, we were seen as transportation experts. We got the job, which was an important turning point in our portfolio of

public work. Shortly thereafter, Corning Glass approached us because of our innovative use of glass and Kevlar on the canopy design for Continental. They were interested in having us design an exhibit, which established a good relationship between us, and when the Corning Museum of Glass came along, they gave us the project. We had never done anything of that scale, and the project was a significant milestone for us.

It's about getting a foot in the door and not letting it close.



Top and above: Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY. Top photo © Esto; above courtesy of Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects LLP





The Dillon—405 W 53rd St. condominiums, New York, NY. Photo © Michael Moran / OTTO

**Your website states that your work derives inspiration from an “ongoing investigation into contemporary culture, its history and its complex, changing relationship to society and contemporary ideas.” What aspects of culture are you currently interested in?**

I’m interested in the next five minutes—I’m interested in what I don’t know.

I like to think of it as someone giving us a script. As architects, we apply our design lens to this script and give it back in some other form. That cultural lens focuses on how to make a particular program relevant today in terms of the way we live. The criteria are always changing based on the situation and the program, but the lens is consistent.

**With investigation and speculation playing an important role in your firm’s design process, is there a threshold at which the office becomes too much of a laboratory and you feel the pressure to produce?**

That threshold is probably our bank balance. As an architecture firm, you gain edges in certain areas, which provides the financial breathing room that supports creative exploration. Having bought our office in Manhattan a long time ago, our overhead is very low, and it’s become an advantage that allows us more freedom to investigate, speculate and make those extra models if we want.

**SMH+U recently completed the Dillon condominium building in Manhattan. How was your experience working with a developer?**

Henry and I heard Max Abramovitz speak at the Architectural League years ago; he warned architects to “never work for developers,” but that was a different time. Not long ago there was a shift, and developers in New York are now realizing that they need architects to really sell their products. They see value in design. While many developers have been bitten by the design bug, it’s important for architects to remember that development work is still about the bottom line.

**The resurgence of housing construction in New York is apparent in most neighborhoods. Would you consider it good growth?**

Luxury condos are being built everywhere in Manhattan, which is very different from housing; in neighborhoods like SOHO, it’s second and third homes for owners who don’t live in New York.

We need more density in Manhattan, more housing. New York has made some good decisions with the 2030 zoning changes under the direction of the former Mayor Bloomberg and Amanda Burden, but now we need the policy to back it up.

**In 1993, SMH+U designed a weekend house for Kenneth Frampton, maybe the most knowledgeable architectural historian alive. How did the design process differ from other projects?**



MAXmin House, Damascus, PA. Photo © Anthony Cotsifas

He was actually trained as an architect and then became a historian, and his wife is also an artist. Given their backgrounds and knowledge about architecture, the design process was a collaborative conversation with the clients. It was a challenging project because of a strict budget, a minimum required footprint on the property, and because none of the local builders had ever built anything like it. Because of the constraints, part of the conversation was about how we got one big design move, which became lifting the house up.

**Having studied under John Hejduk and Bernard Tschumi at The Cooper Union, what lessons of theirs have been most influential to your career?**

There was an unspoken standard at The Cooper Union that we simply felt compelled to uphold, from the thinking down to the quality of the models and drawings we produced. Hejduk was

**Luxury condos are being built everywhere in Manhattan, which is very different from housing.**

involved in everything; he was involved with the thesis program and was very hands-on. He was also very suspicious of perspective, so we drew in axonometric and worked a lot in model, which has guided the way that I think. The things that we produced weren’t necessarily precious, but they were important to iterate and learn from.

There was a heightened sense of learning how to think based on what we made—the connection between brain and hand. This relationship is very ingrained at Cooper Union. There was attention to the way things are put together. The program of a project became very important—it was an interpretive device. You had to take apart the idea of a house before you could design one. It relates back to the idea of being given a script and then applying your lens to it.

Bernard is very conceptual, and he doesn’t sketch like most architects do, with literal

drawings or diagrams; instead, he notates. He would use a system of notation to delineate the program, and his sketchbook looked like battle maps or football formations. He wants to take you out of your comfort zone. This relates to deciphering culture.

**In your experience, what are the most significant skillsets enabling students to excel in the architecture profession?**

They have to think about what they’re doing. They have to be able to defend it with evidence, and the evidence is the work. They can break the rules, but they have to build a case. At Columbia, I think we’re training people to be leaders. They have to be able to go out into the world and know what questions should be asked.

**Tell us about the Seattle Waterfront Open Space Park project that you designed in 1989.**

It was an Art and Public Places competition with the site located at Piers 62/63, right next to the Seattle Aquarium. There was this incredible, old pier-shed on the site, and although it was a wreck, we felt it was very important to keep. We put together a study on the history of the pier-shed and made the case to save it. Working with our super-engineer, Guy Nordenson, we decided to remove the envelope but keep the structural timbers and install a new envelope so that the building could become a pavilion.

We presented our design to the City of Seattle and later, on a weekend in the middle of the night, we got a call from the director of Public Places who told us that the building had been bulldozed. Someone was worried that a proposal that saved the building might establish a constituency for the preservation of the old structure. With the building gone, there wasn’t much to do at that point. Left only with the perimeter fence, the project became an exercise in words painted on the mesh of the fencing.

**What is the best mistake you ever made in architecture?**

Probably deciding to go to architecture school in the first place. I studied art at UC Berkeley, and I was doing installations that were site-specific. I came out to New York with the Whitney Program and then went to work at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies where we did a show on Hejduk. When I met John Hejduk, I decided that I needed to learn more about architecture for the art that I was doing. A good friend of mine said, “You know, once you go to architecture school, you’re going to see the world differently, and you’re going to become an architect.” Architecture wasn’t something I intended to do. My friend was right—architects do see the world differently.

**What’s on your nightstand? What are you currently reading?**

*The Great American University* by Jonathan Cole—I’m also making my seminar students read it. 🍷

**Laurie Hawkinson** received Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the University of California at Berkeley, attended The Whitney Museum of American Art Independent Study Program and received her Bachelor of Architecture from The Cooper Union. She has been the director of the Exhibitions Program for the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, and has been a principal at Smith-Miller + Hawkinson (SMH + U) since 1982. She is currently a tenured professor of architecture at Columbia University.

**BUILD llc** is an industrious design-build firm in Seattle run by Kevin Eckert and Andrew van Leeuwen. The firm’s work focuses on permanence, sustainability and efficiency. BUILD llc maintains an architectural office and is most known for their cultural leadership on their blog. BUILD team member Charles Caldwell contributes to the ARCADE interview series.



Seattle Waterfront Open Space Park, Piers 62/63, created in collaboration with Barbara Kruger, Artist, and Guy Nordenson, Structural Engineer. Photo courtesy of Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects LLP





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Street art on the Wall in East Berlin. Photo: Kelly Hogg



AirBnB accommodations in the middle of Detroit's vacated neighborhoods; gardens grow in the spaces between.

## Build Dynamic, Co-Created Plans and Stir the Soul

URBAN RESILIENCY IN DETROIT AND BERLIN

LISA PICARD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA PICARD  
EXCEPT WHERE NOTED.

THE FALLIBILITY OF CITIES IS BEST observed in the fallen—in bankrupt municipalities, politically strangled and cheated towns and physically destroyed landscapes. Found in these wasted cityscapes—after the media and markets have rejected their bids for economic survival, left them for dead—is something unexpected: a moment of possibility and catalytic potential. Not all places find the necessary ingredients to create new growth, but when the right elements ignite, like a forest fire that rages through the hills, there is a specific chemistry, topography and pattern to regeneration, vibrancy and later resiliency.

Today, the best lessons about urban resiliency appear to be found in Berlin and Detroit. These cities, both formerly wealthy manufacturing centers, have undergone economic ruin, population decimation and, now, phases of creative and economic re-emergence, fueled by grassroots community movements and entrepreneurial new arrivals.

Several months ago, I traveled to these cities as a member of the UW Runstad Fellows, a small group of academics and land-use professionals. We were in pursuit of clues about how to design the kinds of places that people both desperately seek and that also foster commercial success—i.e., *place capital*. We sought to observe and document fractured instances of human connection and commerce, challenge commonplace thinking and status quo solutions, and find patterns of urban success, namely in civic resiliency.

No matter the talent, the lone designer or the isolated developer will never create the most dynamic spaces.

Of course, no definitive lessons should be preached by a few urbanists traveling to Detroit and Berlin for a couple of weeks. Cities are dynamic, constantly changing, living structures.

But with that said, we feel confident stating the following: If cities are to continue to be places for humanity to excel, they must provide support and inspiration that stirs the soul. The following observations from the 2013 Fellows are intended to engage the curious city-maker in us all.

### CO-CREATE SPACES

No matter the talent, the lone designer or the isolated developer will never create the most dynamic spaces. Open, engaging and diverse conversations, viewpoints and actions achieve the most innovative, timely solutions. And yet, a co-created, place-based approach hasn't been the predominant development framework for the past 100 years.

The co-creation process within Berlin is observed in the fabric of its art and commercial districts. Markets are curated by developers with community and proprietor input, and private gardens are tended by their owners as well as passing volunteers. Yet, the most visible



example of co-creation within Berlin was, and is, the constant recreation of the city through its very active street-art communities.

#### FIND MEANINGFUL VALUE

Our economy is driven largely by consumption—of the stuff we make, ideas we trademark and things we buy (whether we need them or not). It's a system that sees growth as the only path to value. The financialization of everything over the past thirty years certainly accelerated our income inequality and financial crises. Finance was the biggest industry over the last fifteen years, representing more than twenty-percent of the S&P 500, just before it sucked the global economy into a black hole.

At the same time, the idea of community and commerce is in flux. People are craving human interaction—wanting authentic experiences, local food, meaningful work, honest relationships, and seeking experiences beyond just collecting things. However, we have prioritized the development of personal, private spaces beyond communal public environs, walling off people in subdivisions, office parks and strip malls to avoid the messy, unpredictable nature of urban life.

Detroit illustrated the foundation for its demise, taking a suburban approach to its

economy and populace, which isolated and buffered people from meaningful interactions and co-creation. In Detroit, a city in decline since the 1950s, the eerie streets and vacant spaces between homes seemed to further isolate and divide people. However, as new residents arrived, vegetable gardens sprouted, and as nature takes back neglected lots, a mix of new people, spaces and activities are reconnecting social functions within these neighborhoods. Fostering a more co-creative urban mix of uses, people and places plants seeds for new resilient growth.

#### DIVERSITY = RESILIENCE

Inviting diversity, and more importantly its sibling, inclusion, provides resilience in economy, people and place. Berlin, with its many vacant spaces, soft rules and flexibility when it comes to ownership, is a magnet for young

people, artists, entrepreneurs and visitors from around the globe, making the city a place of positive change and increasing diversity. This openness to outsiders is likely cultural, yet a city that offers such a reception, without first facing destruction, is a gift. In Berlin, locals say that no one owns Berlin, therefore everyone does. This openness fosters an invitation for further diversity.

In the neighborhoods of Detroit, I talked to several fifty-year residents who told me they weren't originally from the city but places like Pittsburgh and Atlanta. Ultimately, the invitation for diversity and inclusion comes from realizing we are all visitors, even if born on the soil we stand on.

#### SPACES TO PAUSE

There is value in city spaces that allow people to pause, to break out of routine, to be vulnerable and engage strangers. The busyness of everyday life in many cities finds nearly everyone staring at devices, avoiding the present moment, disconnected from what is happening around them. Just watch couples in a restaurant or people waiting for a bus. Fostering places comprised of everything analog, where a shut-down is not required but desired, allows us to access the very creative, emotional parts of our brains over the neocortex. Cities with places to pause might just be some of the most creative, prosperous and healthy landscapes of the future.

In Berlin, Prinzessinnengarten offers the perfect pause, a respite in the middle of bustling Kruezberg. Where the Berlin Wall once stood, a disused piece of land was transformed into a garden inviting anyone to participate in harvesting, learning, pickling. It is a place to sit at rustic tables, conversing with others, eating meals of food from the garden.

#### SHARE IDEAS

Creativity and innovation (today's currency) come from great spaces that allow us to share ideas with people who aren't like us. In Berlin and Detroit, we observed inherent openness and idea sharing. There was no commoditization of the creative product and no thought of thievery, as sharing has the potential to make work better.

Berlin, with its many vacant spaces, soft rules and flexibility when it comes to ownership, is a magnet for young people, artists, entrepreneurs and visitors from around the globe, making the city a place of positive change and increasing diversity.



Above: Berlin's Betahaus co-working space promotes the active sharing of ideas.



Right: Berlin's Markthalle Neun curated food experience: the American BBQ.

The co-working houses in Berlin were examples of fearless, shared, moving economies. At Betahaus, many creative designers shared their content with others in open forums, at pin-up sessions, one-on-one and through digital swapping to challenge assumptions and make their work better. Many Betahaus workers acknowledge the best input came from those outside the industry.

#### LET GO

There is magic in the messy, unpredictable nature of great urban spaces. One of the core riches of urban life is that it provides opportunity for a diverse mix of people and activities to come together to foster unexpected outcomes. Markets, like Detroit's Eastern Market, Berlin's Markthalle Neun and Seattle's Pike Place Market, have yet a deeper purpose for their existence beyond the sale of

goods and services: to provide space for the semi-managed unexpectedness, public vulnerability and random connections that encourage innovation, purpose and urban resilience to take place. These are spaces of possibility, not prescription. In summary, builders, designers and civic leaders need to let go of manicured urbanism. Sustainable, vibrant urban life is based on a collaborative, co-created vision of place that goes beyond its physical limits.

ever part of the globe that might be, writing the urban narrative, public and private, every day of our lives. We all create the city. 🌱

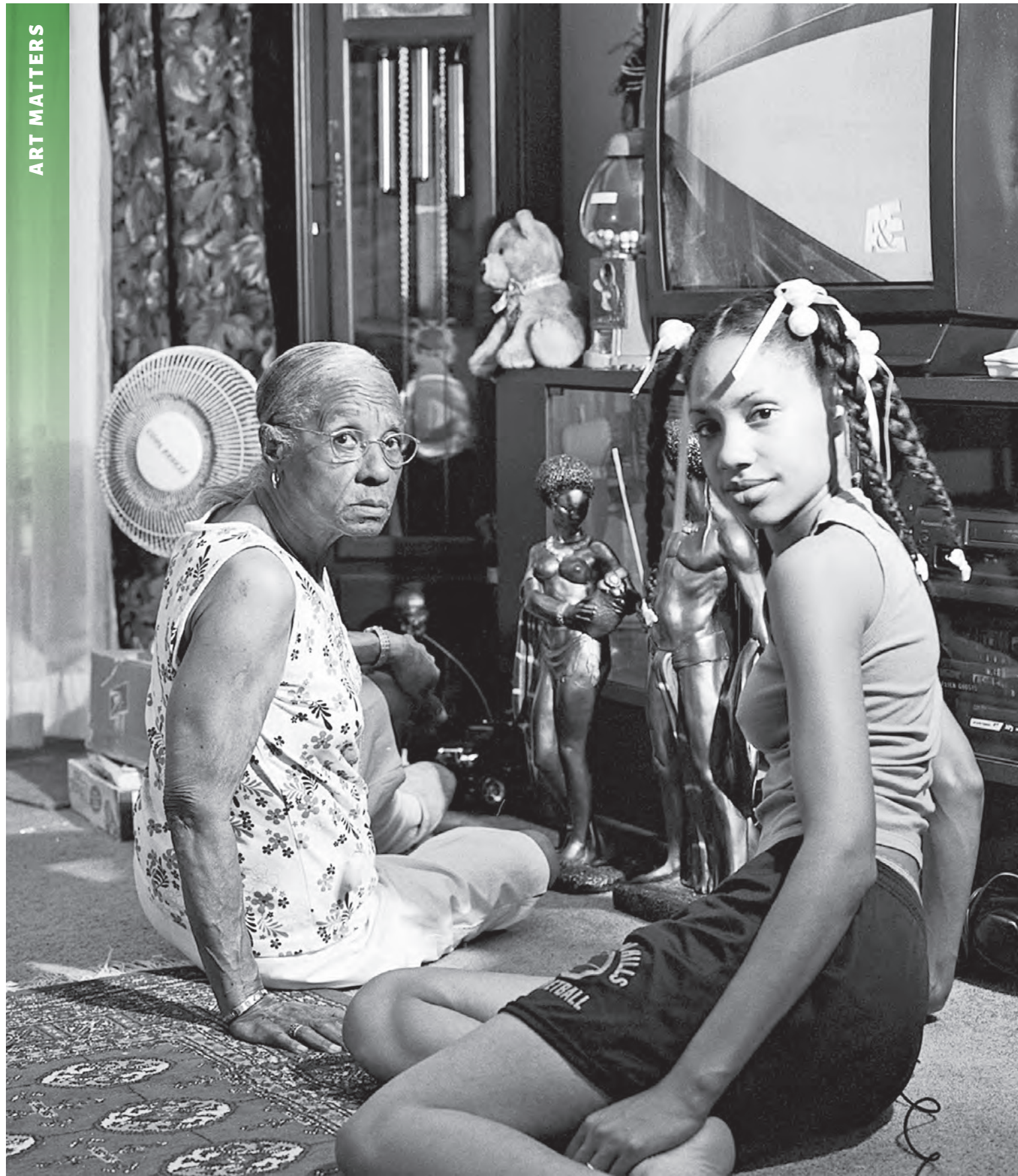
**Lisa Picard** is executive vice president for Skanska Commercial Development and responsible for leading their real estate investment and development for the West Coast. She lives and plays in Seattle, Washington.

**The Runstad Fellowship** is an international travel study program funded annually by the University of Washington's Runstad Center for Real Estate Studies. The program challenges an interdisciplinary group composed of industry professionals, a faculty member and high-potential graduate students to explore topics relevant to the built environment and share those lessons in public and academic forums in Seattle. The 2013 Fellows were Eric Becker, Gabriel Grant, Ken Yocum, Alvaro Jimenez, Kelly Hogg and Lisa Picard.



Near Detroit's Packard Automotive Plant where locals tell stories about what's happened to their homes.





Grandma Ruby and Me from the series: *The Notion of Family*, 2005



Home on Sixth Street and Washington Avenue from the series: *The Notion of Family*, 2009

## LaToya Ruby Frazier

BORN BY A RIVER

**SANDRA JACKSON-DUMONT**

*I was born by the river in a little tent  
Oh and just like the river I've been running ever since  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will  
It's been too hard living but I'm afraid to die  
'Cause I don't know what's up there beyond the sky  
It's been a long, a long time coming  
But I know a change gonna come, oh yes it will*

—SAM COOKE

**L**ATOYA RUBY FRAZIER, THE RECIPIENT of Seattle Art Museum's (SAM) 2013 Gwendolyn Knight and Jacob Lawrence Prize, investigates issues of propaganda, politics and the importance of subjectivity with an emphasis on postmodern conditions, class and capitalism in her new solo exhibition, *LaToya Ruby Frazier: Born by a River*.

Frazier is a photographer and media artist whose practice is informed by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modes of

representation. Her work is an intimate look at her family, connecting their experiences to the history of her hometown, Braddock, Pennsylvania, and its drastic decline from one of America's first steel-mill towns to the distressed municipality it is today. This exhibition at SAM includes photographs from two ever-growing bodies of work—those taken at the street level (*The Notion of Family*) and those taken from the sky above Braddock.

Frazier was born in 1982 in Braddock, which is located nine miles outside of Pittsburgh on the Monongahela River. It is home to industrialist Andrew Carnegie's first steel mill, the Edgar Thomson Works, which is his last functioning mill in the Mon Valley region. Like Gordon Parks, Dorothea Lange and Allan Sekula, Frazier uses the camera to call attention to complex and challenging conditions.

*LaToya Ruby Frazier: Born by a River* is on view at SAM through 22 June 2014. [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LATOYA RUBY FRAZIER





Fifth Street Tavern and UPMC Braddock Hospital on Braddock Avenue, 2011



Railroads and Shipping Containers on the Monongahela River, 2013



Edgar Thomson Plant and The Bottom, 2013

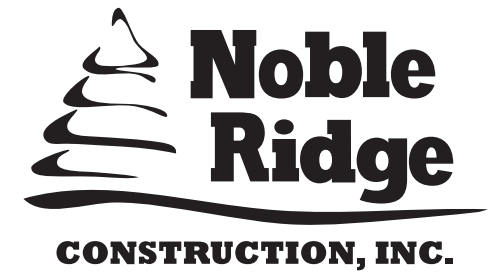
**Sandra Jackson-Dumont** is the Kayla Skinner deputy director for education and public programs and adjunct curator of the Modern & Contemporary Art Department for Seattle Art Museum.



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# AFTER *Growth*

RETHINKING THE  
NARRATIVE OF  
MODERNIZATION

**CHARLES MUDEDE**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VIRGINIA WILCOX





"In 2012, all began to become clearer. Before then, the trend was far harder to see. The economic slowdown accelerated the shift towards being more green, to more make-do-and-mend, to a more sustainable economy that will in some ways resemble a 'less developed' economy where people have less but value what they have more, rather than valuing the next item to be bought the most . . ."

—DANNY DORLING, *Population 10 Billion*



MY STORY BEGINS WITH A TRIP my father took to China in 1984. We lived in Harare, Zimbabwe, at the time, and my father was an economist in Zimbabwe's Ministry of Industry and Technology. When he returned from the official visit, he said to me that the two things which struck him most about Beijing, the political capital of the most populous economy on earth, were: one, there were no birds in the sky (he guessed they had all been eaten) and, two, almost everyone went about on bicycles. "Everywhere you look, up and down the street, flows and flows of people on bicycles," he said. My father, like so many development economists of his time (he was educated at American

University in DC), counted bicycles as one way to grade a country's standing in the world: If there were only a few bikes on the roads, the country was advanced; if there were many bikes, it was backward. The streets of an economically developed society would, according to this *weltanschauung* (worldview), be filled with cars—and better

yet, cars manufactured by the country. Economic modernization was incomplete without the heavy industry of automobile production, and a city was not modern if it lacked an infrastructure for car mobility and storage.

It must not be forgotten that the China my father visited thirty years ago was extremely poor. The Pudong area of Shanghai, which now boasts a skyline that rivals Manhattan's, was still farmland. And China's historical shift from a planned economy to a planned *market* economy was only five years old, its future far from certain. As the former senior vice president for the World Bank, Justin Yifu Lin, pointed out in a lecture, "Demystifying the Chinese Economy" (delivered in 2012 at the London School of Economics), in 1979, China's per capita income was three times lower than Africa's (today it is five times higher). And indeed, in 1984, the roads of Harare were dominated by cars, not bikes or pedestrians.

That was then. These days, the deepening global environmental crisis and recent research revealing the limits, and even dangers, of Western-style consumerism has turned the whole narrative of development completely upside down. One example of this is that more and more, politicians and economists in poor cities no longer see the car as a marker of progress and are instead considering allocating, or have already redirected, a sizable portion of their very limited urban resources to the lowly bicycle. Why should a Third World city climb to the First World level of automobile dependence, which requires an infrastructure that's very heavy on small budgets, when they can invest more successfully and cheaply in what they already have, what people are already doing: walking and riding bikes?

Bogotá, a city with a \$140 billion gross domestic product and a population of 10 million, did just that: It made an unusually huge (huge for a city in a developing country) investment in bikeways, the *Ciclorutas de Bogotá*. "When I proposed to construct bikeways in Bogotá in 1998," says the former mayor of Bogotá (1997 to 2001) Enrique Peñalosa in *Model D*, "nobody else in the [Third World] was doing it and everybody thought I was crazy. Now, cities everywhere are doing bikeways."

The deepening global environmental crisis and recent research revealing the limits, and even dangers, of Western-style consumerism has turned the whole narrative of development completely upside down.

But even around the time that Bogotá was investing in bikeways, a number of rich cities in the West were beginning to transition from a traffic system that privileged the congestion problems of automobile transportation to one that seriously considered bike transportation a better and more rational mode of urban mobility. Copenhagen, a wealthy Scandinavian city (it has a GDP of around \$100 billion—but one-tenth of Bogotá's population) was one, and possibly the most recognizable, of these rich cities. Following World War II, Copenhagen, like many post-war Western European cities, equated modernization with an urban planning platform that could only envision the automobile-centric city. However, the city began reverting to bikes after the fuel crisis of 1973. By the 80s, around the time my father was in China, planners were thinking about returning the space given to cars back to pedestrians and bikes.

"A further point and quality to emphasize [about Copenhagen] is the bicycle," says the avuncular Danish architect, urban theorist and leading proponent of human-scale planning, Jan Gehl, in an Ecotopia interview (Gehl was also featured in Hustwit's popular *Urbanized*).

*We have had the bicycle around for a good 100 years now, and in certain countries and cultures, bicycles are a widespread form of transportation. This goes for places like Holland and Denmark. Due to a welcoming infrastructure, the number of cyclists has increased tremendously in Denmark, for example. In Copenhagen, bicycling accounts for 36% of all commuting to and from work. [Italics are mine]*

And so a simple technology that was in Copenhagen's past, and in Bogotá's present (where 15 percent of people currently use bikes as their main mode of transportation), proves to be more efficient and even more advanced than the newer and complex technology that has been powerfully associated with the future of urbanism, with the progress of a society since Futurama, a 1939 science fiction spectacle manufactured for the New York World's Fair by the "master builder" Robert Moses and the giant corporation General Motors. The world

Around the time that Bogotá was investing in bikeways, a number of rich cities in the West were beginning to transition from a traffic system that privileged the congestion problems of automobile transportation to one that seriously considered bike transportation a better and more rational mode of urban mobility.

we have entered should be seen as the "World [after] Tomorrow," a world where complexity is no longer the mark of modernity, a world where an old invention might be better and more effective than a new one.

What Copenhagen and Bogotá show, what this issue of ARCADE explores, are the possibilities for a post-Futurama urbanism along these lines: Cities in developing and underdeveloped countries stopping where they are on the economic ladder of capitalist modernization and working with what they have, what they have achieved, and cities in developed societies reverting to technologies and practices that were abandoned upon passing an earlier rung. And so we have poor cities maintaining their current levels of density, their pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and low-carbon modes of consumption, while rich cities abandon low-density sprawl, automobile-centered urban planning and a consumption culture with low private costs but heavy social and global ones. What was once seen as underdeveloped is now seen as rational, and what was once seen as developed is now seen as irrational (if not suicidal).

"Smart decline" for rich cities. Horizontal development for poor ones.

#### SMART DECLINE AND HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT

One of the many ways that the de-development of high-income cities has been theorized is "smart decline," which the civil engineers and planners Deborah and Frank Popper basically describe as a retreat from the mad vision of unlimited growth and a sober commitment to an urbanism that concentrates humans in functioning cores, returning dysfunctional sprawl to farms and wilderness.

The situation of poor cities, however, is recognized but not properly theorized. For example, blogger Adam Davies on Walkonomics writes at the opening of "African Cities are Walking Cities, but Are They Walkable?":

If you've ever been in an East African city during rush hour, then you'll know that African cities are walking cities. In the





## WHY CAPITALISM IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH A SOCIETY THAT CONSUMES LESS, DRIVES LESS, RECYCLES MORE AND SHARES MORE

IN 1930, A YEAR AFTER THE STOCK MARKET CRASH AND THE beginning of the Great Depression, the most influential economist of the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes (Keynesianism dominated economic thinking in the West between 1945 and 1977), wrote a very short and very curious essay called “Economic Possibilities for Our Grandchildren.” In this essay (which is also a work of science fiction), Keynes speculated that when the world’s scarcity problem is resolved in a hundred years (2030), the new problem for society will be this: What will people do with their free time? Keynes:

Thus for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem—how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure, which science and compound interest will have won for him, to live wisely and agreeably and well.

The strenuous purposeful money-makers may carry all of us along with them into the lap of economic abundance. But it will be those peoples, who can keep alive, and cultivate into a fuller perfection, the art of life itself and do not sell themselves for the means of life, who will be able to enjoy the abundance when it comes.

It can be argued that the US achieved this “freedom from pressing economic cares” by the late ’60s or early ’70s, right around the time that the environmental movement was born and many in the West felt the need for a radical rethinking of progress and growth. But thirty years later, and sixteen years before Keynes’ 2030, we live in a society that only recognizes and acts upon one kind of crisis: the economic. But the economic crisis in our society is never one of scarcity (an actual shortage of something real) but a reaction to slow or no growth. We live in the “lap of abundance” yet compound growth (and usually at 2 percent) is the only game in town. If our society is above 2-percent annual growth (and again, this is compound interest), be happy—but if it is below, feel the pain. Read the financial papers—this is presented daily as the one possible order of things.

So we speak of reducing consumption, sharing, cutting dependence on the largest energy corporations in the world, but it’s never explained how such practices and values, which clearly encourage economic contraction, would work in a system that immediately collapses in the absence of robust expansion. The sad truth is that a real green movement needs an alternative to capitalism. This isn’t simply a socialist dreaming about the death of market ideology or preaching the fall of The 1-Percent; it is a socialism that soberly understands that capitalism’s great wonders (or, as they say in China, miracles) owe everything to its monstrous vision of unlimited and unchecked growth. 🌱

rapidly urbanizing capitals of Africa, walking is by far the most popular form of transport. For instance, over 60% of trips in Addis Ababa are made on foot, while just 9% of trips are made in a car and in Nairobi over 45% of people walk. These are the kind[s] of walking statistics that developed cities can only dream of: London struggles to get 20% of people to walk and in New York it’s between 10–20%.

He later writes:

So walking is popular in Africa, but this isn’t because urban African streets are walking-friendly. In fact quite the opposite: 63% of streets in Addis Ababa lack any pavements or sidewalks and crossings are rare. Africans walk despite the un-walkable urban environment, not because of it. Walking isn’t only difficult it’s also very dangerous with 67% of road accidents involving pedestrians in Ethiopia’s capital. Sadly this is the case in many developing countries, where road accidents are a growing epidemic and are expected to be the third biggest killer by 2020.

What’s missing in this post is a theory I will call horizontal development. In the past, development was about growing vertically, moving up to what was coded as a Western standard of living: home ownership, car ownership, high wages, low unemployment, crass consumerism, meat-rich diets and so on. But now that mode of life is proving to be problematic. For one, it is environmentally unsustainable; according to a 2012 infographic by blogger and journalist Tim De Chant, if all humans lived like Indians, we would need less than one earth; but if everyone lived like US Americans, we would need over four. And two, it is profoundly unhealthy (read Howard Frumkin, Lawrence Frank and Richard Jackson’s *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*). The vertical model is no longer realistic or desirable. But what can replace it? Horizontal development, a model that does not climb but enhances, improves what’s already available. Writes the blogger at Walkonomics, stumbling into this idea without seeing it: “The United Nations have recently pumped over \$3 million into a project to kick-start sustainable transport in three African capital cities.”

Horizontal development should not only be about simply funding sidewalks but funding world-class sidewalks, and this is indeed what we have learned from Bogotá. The idea is to leave infrastructure for cars at an underdeveloped level and make infrastructure for bikes and pedestrians world-class. This reallocation of resources

In the past, development was about growing vertically, moving up to what was coded as a Western standard of living: home ownership, car ownership, high wages, low unemployment, crass consumerism, meat-rich diets and so on. But now that mode of life is proving to be problematic.



Horizontal development should not only be about simply funding sidewalks but funding world-class sidewalks.

not only saves lives by protecting bikers and walkers from industrial forms of transportation, but it also provides an excellent social engineering tool.

### SOCIAL ENGINEERING HORIZONTAL DEVELOPMENT

Cities in developing countries will stick with the vertical model of development if their governments or policy makers fail to transform their value systems, their concepts of what is and what is not low or high status. As Adam Smith explained in his most important book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, the human is the animal that’s always comparing itself to other humans. If cars look good in the eyes of others, then people will do whatever they can to buy cars. So it stands to reason that if the roads in a low-income city are backward and the bikeways are advanced, the inhabitants of that poor city will not so easily see bikes as indicative of low status. Enrique Peñalosa in *Model D*:

I decided that [bikeways were one] of the most important things to do to improve equality because [they] protected and raised the social status of the cyclist. Before, it was a stigma to ride a bike. Now, there are some parts of Bogotá where it is much faster to get from one place to another by bike than any other mode of transport. It is the preferred mode.

But also, social engineering must not only change our status values but our aesthetic ones. The inhabitants of a rich city need to see beauty not in huge megastores with seas of asphalt—such as





the Safeway at Seattle's 3820 Rainier Avenue South—but in human-scale operations like Fou Lee Market on Beacon Hill, which is dense, compact, uses space efficiently and represents a way toward smart decline. In the same way, the inhabitants in poor cities must see walking, and even density, not only as a responsible, virtuous form of civic behavior, but as beautiful. (In Harare, townships or slums were politely coded as high-density and suburbs as low-density—the implication being that one must aspire to the latter, not the former.)

#### COLLIDING CITIES OF THE WORLD

Establishing horizontal development as a program will not be easy. The rich in poor countries want to be like the rich in rich countries. They don't care for things like public transportation or parks; they want expressways and gated communities. Peñalosa's bike and public transportation projects, for example, faced fierce opposition from the rich in his city. They did not want lanes dedicated to buses or bikeways. On the other end, the car owners in rich cities are hostile to politicians or urban planners who turn over any part of the road to cyclists.

This situation is captured in a new book, *Happy City*, by the Vancouver-based journalist and urban theorist Charles Montgomery:

In New York City, efforts to redistribute street space—including the creation of 255 miles of painted or separated bike lanes—have met with near-hysterical response from some quarters. In 2011, opponents of a new separated bike lane on the edge of Brooklyn's Prospect Park actually sued the city to have the lanes removed, though the suit was eventually dismissed. City councilors and columnists alike accused Mayor Michael Bloomberg of launching a culture war, favoring a 'faddist minority' of bike-riding elitists over car commuters and anyone not rich enough to live in Manhattan. The argument was a complete reversal of the status narrative in Bogotá. . . .

In New York, the bike lanes were seen as elitist; in Bogotá, as democratic. Expect more of this kind of cultural confusion as the cities of our world collide.

That said, meaning that said in the whole of this introduction, there are certainly aspects of low-income cities that shouldn't be adopted by high-income ones, such as the absence of a centralized and reliable public power grid. The inhabitants of Lagos, for example, have a wildly unpredictable power grid and so depend on gas-powered generators for electricity. This solution is, of course, terribly inefficient and would have catastrophic results if adopted by the West. As the physicist and urban theorist Geoffrey West has pointed out again and again, scale is important. At the cellular level, a big elephant is actually more efficient than a mouse. Individual generators, like cars, are a bad idea in terms of energy efficiency. It's much better for all to share a common grid.

Though, there is a story out there that four Nigerian schoolgirls recently invented an electric generator that runs on urine—"Their invention ensures that 1 liter of urine gives you 6 hours of electricity," claimed the newspaper *Red Pepper*. If this is indeed true, and the technology is commercialized (which sadly is unlikely—as Robert Neuwirth points out in his book *Stealth of Nations*, Lagosians can't manufacture anything precisely because the city does not have a reliable source of power), we in the overdeveloped West may have something to learn from one of the poorest cities on earth. 🌱

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# The Limits of Favela Chic

LISA STURDIVANT



BUSES AND CARS STREAM FROM THE AFFLUENT COASTAL neighborhoods of Salvador, Brazil's third largest city, to Shopping Iguatemi, one of the biggest and newest malls in town. Crawling through traffic, we pass through an area my friends call "Americatown": a Sam's Club, two-story Burger King, Hiper Bom Preço (a Walmart-owned megastore) and a pizza joint all situated near the junction of three major crosstown highways. Just a kilometer or so further down, I enter the mall to buy a \$50 plastic smartphone at Lojas Americanas (literally, "American Stores"), which is basically Target. The customer service is quick and polite. There is no haggling over the sale. I brandish my Wells Fargo debit card with few worries.

This is not really the commonly held vision of life in northeastern Brazil—it is neither the sleepy, tropical paradise nor the chaotic and dangerous mega-city. But this economic landscape is already and increasingly the norm. The number of shopping malls in Brazil doubled between 2008 and 2013.

As Brazilian cities upgrade and modernize—mostly in preparation for upcoming mega-events such as the Olympics and FIFA World Cup—it's worth asking what they're aspiring toward. Development



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LISA STURDIVANT





efforts are in full swing and economic growth is generally positive, driven by a newly sprouted and rapidly growing middle class, eager to consume. Yet relatively basic issues of housing, transportation, schools, etc., remain unresolved and perpetually confused.

A billboard along a clogged highway crossing northern Salvador advertises the new “Expressway” (yes, in English), which is expected to ease the traffic congestion for the rapidly suburbanizing, single-occupancy-vehicle-driving population (yes, for Americans, all of this should ring a sad bell). While American freeways are jammed and nearly obsolete as soon as they are completed, in Brazil, the new Expressway is still supposed to fix everything. It’s tempting to view this promise as a tragically naive expression of an inferior civil society. But really, Brazil is just becoming more like us. Cars and freeways, tourism, offices and stadia are all on the rise. The CEO of a major mall developer was quoted in the *Financial Times*: “I have been hearing about slowing growth and the middle class being stretched to its limits for the last four years now. But that is just not what we are seeing on the ground.”

• • •

In other ways, Salvador fits the more stereotypical image of the Brazilian city. Cars park on the sidewalks and pedestrians walk in the street. There are no bus maps, though it doesn’t take long to learn which buses to flag down to get to the right general area. Street parking is paid to locals who help drivers angle in and hopefully ensure the safety of their vehicles while they’re away. Citywide recycling does not exist, but littering is a common way for aluminum cans to make their way to private facilities. Terminally unemployed collectors scour the streets and parks, a practice described by Argentine novelist César Aira in his short novel *Shantytown* as “such a practical arrangement it might have been set up deliberately.”

A local architecture professor remarked to me that the difference between American and Brazilian cities is that the former are planned, whereas the latter simply happened; through some haphazard colonial dreaming they grew incrementally at first, then very quickly. Much of this growth was through the practice of *puxedinho* (roughly translated: to pull a little bit); houses expand outward and upward, the city fills itself, lot by lot, with or without regulation. This activity has never been relegated to the poor but is also evidenced in richer parts of town where regulation is often just as absent.

The tenacity of this method is perhaps best illustrated in Brasília itself, the pre-eminent modern city, which almost immediately began to take on an informal character despite the best intentions of its designers. Though Brazilian architecture and urban design has always been strongly influenced by modernism, it is in fact, and in image, chaotic. Spaghetti-strung streets, unregulated development and commerce of every type spring

up wherever the opportunity presents itself. While the scale of the formal design may not be human, that has little to do with how people actually use the city. Ultimately, Brazilian cities are not known for the monuments of Le Corbusier, CIAM or even Oscar Niemeyer. They’re known for the *favelas*—squatter settlements and shantytowns, swaths of informal neighborhoods that occupy every unused space, often illegally, and often as the only option for the very poor. And that image, like the reality of the Brazilian city, has its own logic.

This logic has been increasingly valued by planners and designers in the developed world. As the Brazilian urban and economic landscape begins to model itself on the North, American and European planners talk of creating places that look more like the South. Favela chic, beyond just being fashionable, is viewed by some as an innovative system for future development: self-generating communities that are lively, walkable and mixed-use. The favela is seen as an open studio for architectural and planning practices in the West that seek to both improve and learn from the informal city. Everyday urbanism, studies of informality and ecological approaches extol the virtues

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of the piecemeal, inherently participatory appropriations of urban spaces. These borrowed styles are possibly a necessity for ideals of sustainability to be realized in Seattle and other places. Changing urban sensibilities and definitions of “quality of life” underlie the genuinely psychological appeal of favela chic. The attraction to these “minor architectures,” as Jill Stoner of Berkeley puts it, is clearly aesthetic and perhaps also personal. In *Shantytown*, Aira notes: “Those dollhouse-like constructions had their charm, precisely because of their fragility and their thrown-together look. . . . They simplified things enormously. For someone wearied or overwhelmed by the complexities of middle-class life, they could seem to offer a solution.”

At the same time, favela chic is also correctly criticized for its tendency to aestheticize poverty. Image-oriented slum upgrading projects led by internationally renowned firms often mask the lack of attention to the real problems facing those communities. Showcased favela improvements build political profiles for cities and politicians eager for international attention. Favela tourism offers outsiders the opportunity to experience firsthand the streets and the stench of the informal city approached as a living museum.

The cultural commerce between the North and South is both stylistic and behavioral. Where the poorest Brazilians practice

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*autoconstrução* (self-construction) as a matter of necessity, to build, improve and expand their houses, Americans flock to Ikea, Home Depot, Lowes, etc. to spend their weekends and expendable income on similar home-improvement projects. Each practice is based on some use of non-wage-earning hours to enhance the immediate environment, though for some it is done more out of necessity and for others to address manufactured needs, for status, or simply to feel a sense of purpose. Each is a method of individual-

izing one’s residence, to singularize, or to quote Felix Guattari, “to attempt to achieve an authentic existence . . . against the wall of capitalist subjectivity . . . [to] work through an aesthetic sensibility, by changing life on a more everyday level” (*Molecular Revolution in Brazil*). There is a perceived freedom in actively creating spaces, providing one’s own services.

Perhaps there is also an attraction to the Third World because the First has become simply too sad—homogenous landscapes, recession, the obsolescence of the public sphere and so on. American planning narratives have gradually shifted to encompass the idea of decline. While there is not yet a truly defining work on Planning for Decline (though numerous authors have begun the task), the realities of rust belt cities, the implosion of Detroit and austerity in its various national forms all indicate that decline is the de facto way of the future, or no future, in the US and Europe. The social, personal and political version of decline is exhaustion, psychological overwhelm, insolvency. Italian theorist Franco “Bifo” Berardi describes exhaustion as a necessary concept “to be understood and accepted

as a new paradigm for social life” in Western culture (*The Uprising*). What does middle-class exhaustion in America look like? It’s always on sale. 20% off. 30%, 40%, clearance, buy now. Or next week. It’s not even a limited offer.

Meanwhile, malls like Shopping Iguatemi are full every weekend. The privately owned indoor corridors replace busy streets for middle- and upper-class families wary of crime and yearning for cleaner landscapes. The shops are stocked with increasingly Chinese goods, a fact which poses no immediate concern for shoppers.

• • •

Brazilian architect Jorge Mario Jáuregui describes contemporary urban production in light of the processes of globalization as the production of the “broken city.” In *Urban and Social Articulation: Megacities, Exclusion and Urbanity*, he calls the “tension between the so-called ‘formal’ urbanisation and ‘informal’ areas of uncontrolled sprawl” a clear “urban expression of a global pattern.” In this sense, perhaps Brazil’s mixed and messy cities are actually more representative of the truly operating processes of globalization than those of its North American neighbors. And perhaps *puxedinho*, hybridization and appropriation are in fact intelligent logics used to navigate this not post- but very non-modernist landscape.

The globalized economy, with its bases in hybridization and cultural migration, is shaping the form and function of cities in similar ways with often similar results. But historical contingency plays a role. As our societies continue to mirror each other, learn from and repeat each other’s mistakes, what sort of Brazilian city might emerge? And what sort of American city, for that matter? 🌱

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# Food Forest in the City

SEATTLE'S BEACON HILL  
BEGINS A RADICAL  
EXPERIMENT WITH  
COMMON SPACE

**MADELINE REDDINGTON**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MADELINE REDDINGTON

This is a project that's engaging the diverse and savvy network of people that make up Seattle's urban populace and who have deep concern for the future of our cities and way of life. Though there is something ancient about the Beacon Food Forest, it is in essence futuristic.



**E**ARLY THIS SUMMER, SEATTLE'S BEACON FOOD FOREST (BFF) will hold an official opening ceremony for what may become the country's largest public space for gardening and foraging. Currently two acres, the permaculture project is designed to grow into a self-sustaining forest, but it will take some care and a whole lot of volunteer hours to get there. If this "test run" of the two-acre development is successful, the forest will expand to fill a seven-acre stretch on Beacon Hill between 15th Avenue and the golf course, where foragers can pick fruit, berries, nuts, vegetables and herbs at will—for free.

Urban farms are not new; they are appearing in several cities across the US, like Detroit, whose residents were abandoned by capitalism in much the same way Havanans were cut off from communist chemical agriculture supplies and fossil fuel in the '90s. Many Detroit residents have responded to the city's economic crisis by bringing people back in touch with growing food—creating community gardens of all sizes, using organic planting strategies and sharing what they've learned. Similar movements are helping other urban families and neighborhoods devastated by the recent eco-

nommic crash. And as Leigh Gallagher points out in her book *The End of the Suburbs*, there are even gardens appearing in abandoned malls. But the food forest on Beacon Hill is original in that, one, it is not a response to a disaster, and two, it will be a common space open to all. The BFF is in the middle of a major and rich American city, yet it is much like those unregulated spaces that often surround the cores of cities in developing countries.

But the BFF isn't just for high-income dabblers fetishizing what is for many in poor cities, suburbs or countries a necessity—a source of free food outside of the system. This is a project that's engaging the diverse and savvy network of people that make up Seattle's urban populace and who have deep concern for the future of our cities and way of life. Though there is something ancient about BFF, it is in essence futuristic. Volunteers young and old learn about onsite work-parties via Facebook and Twitter, the orchard includes fruit trees from around the world (some of which were suggested by nearby Asian communities), and when planning the park, the founders sent out 6,000 postcards in five



different languages to local zip codes for input. Sustainability—both ecological and social—must include diversity to survive.

With inclusiveness generating community support, the BFF should be able to produce a fantastic variety of fruits to pick from. And as every blackberry season demonstrates, Seattleites are no strangers to foraging. Also, finding pickable foods in the city has already been made easier with resources like Fallingfruit.org, City Fruit and Find Fruit, which map fruit plants here and there via user-submitted pinpoints (some of the locations are public, some private). Those who made, run and use the app or websites have the same goal as the food forest: connect local people to nature in their cities, each other and their food. They also provide a way of rethinking urban space, which is no longer simply partitioned into private and public areas but a fluctuating web of useful information.

In making a community endeavor of something as intimate as food, BFF is an experiment about trust. It's a refreshingly bold move—testing the idea that putting faith in the public engenders honorable behavior. The founders hope to see people treat the shared space with consideration, respect each other and harvest responsibly. Skepticism abounds. And yet, it seems to be working so far. Last summer, a newly



transplanted young tree bore one solitary quince fruit. Though at the mercy of anyone who might walk by, the fruit quietly grew untouched for two months and as soon as it reached the peak of ripeness, disappeared. Sure, maybe some kid threw it at a car. But maybe, just maybe, an urban forager found that it was just enough for a single, tiny jar of jam. 🍷

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# Learning from Bogotá

HOW A CITY WITH FEW RESOURCES AND LOTS OF BIKES BECAME AN EXAMPLE OF A DEMOCRATIC CITY

**GUIDO C. SEOANES PERLA**

“When Peñalosa ran for the mayor’s seat back in 1997, he refused to make the promises doled out by so many politicians. He was not going to make everyone richer. Forget the dream of becoming as wealthy as Americans: it would take generations to catch up to the gringos, even if the urban economy caught fire and burned blue for a century. The dream of riches, Peñalosa complained, served only to make Bogotans feel bad.”

—CHARLES MONTGOMERY, *Happy City*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CLAUDIO OLIVARES MEDINA



IN A VERY COLD JANUARY MORNING IN WASHINGTON DC, I was running to find a great spot to view and sketch Obama’s second presidential inauguration on the Washington Mall. The only way to access the city was by foot, metro or bicycling. There was palpable excitement in the air and no traffic, no sounds of cars—pedestrians and bicyclists circulated freely without fear. This was a democratic city.

At that moment, I began dreaming of an ideal world where pedestrians and bicycles were, perhaps, valued above automobiles. But then I realized this place is real: Bogotá, Colombia.

The story of this democratic city began in the dark, chaotic days of the early 1990s when Bogotá was dominated by corruption, crime, pollution and automobiles. The city was controlled by the elite, who were exerting their power by constructing more and more expressways that created physical barriers between members of society. During this soul-crushing period, a time dominated by an insulated ruling class and corrupt politicians, two positive voices from unexpected sectors of the society came to the rescue. The first was the visionary Antanas Mockus, a mathematician, philosopher and professor who became the mayor in 1995. His ideals were based on educating all sectors of society in order to end the corruption that had crippled the city. The second was Enrique Peñalosa, a liberal independent, self-made politician and new urbanist. He was elected mayor in 1998 with the agenda of making the city a place for all citizens.

Mockus and Peñalosa’s administrations set the foundation for a fair city. Although these two men began as rivals, they ultimately united in this one goal. Mockus eliminated institutionalized political favors and corruption in local government and enacted legislation that worked to minimize the disparity between classes by placing a premium on education. Peñalosa integrated the city by developing green areas, pedestrian paths, bicycle lanes and an extensive public transportation system called TransMilenio. This diesel-powered public transit system comprises buses that use exclusive lanes on existing road infrastructure, a visionary and economical system that has eliminated the city’s dependence on automobiles.

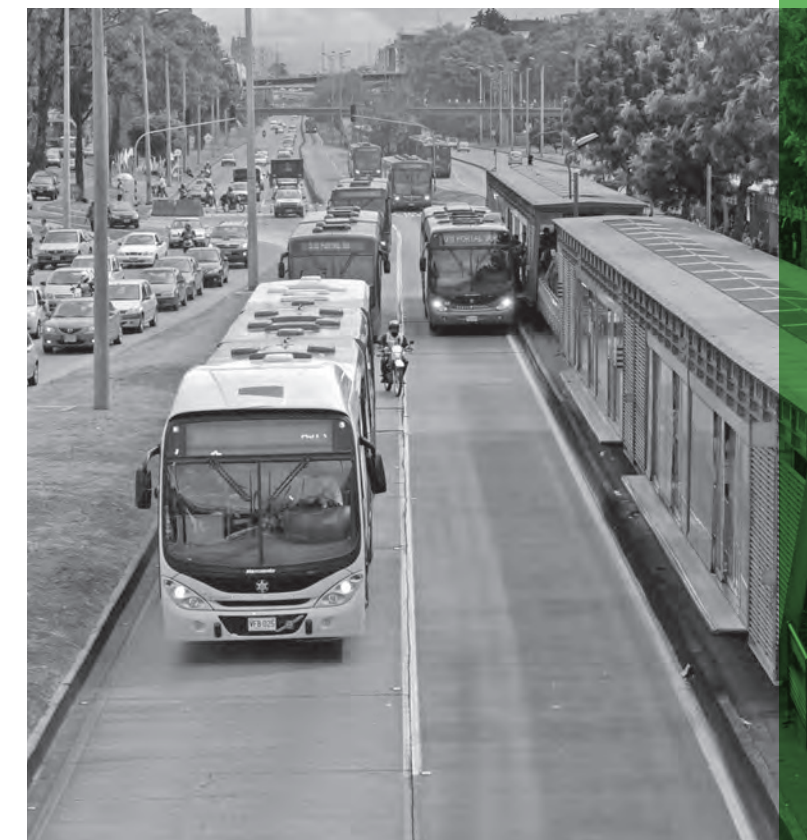
I began dreaming of an ideal world where pedestrians and bicycles were, perhaps, valued above automobiles. But then I realized this place is real: Bogotá, Colombia.

## A CITY FOR ALL

“A developed country is not a place where the poor have cars. It’s where the rich use public transportation.”

—ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA, Agencia EFE

Peñalosa’s vision for a vibrant city in a poor country began when he realized that most of the problems and obstacles he faced came from traditional construction budgets for the development of highway systems. One of the first efforts of his administration was to stop an expensive elevated-expressway system to be located in the heart of the city; it would have been used almost exclusively by those who were wealthy enough to own automobiles. This project would have destroyed a large part of the city and created more divisions between classes. In Bogotá today, pedestrian walkways are considered first, then bicycle lanes bordered by vegetation, followed by small automobile paths.







## CICLOVÍAS

“If we’re going to talk about transport, I would say that the great city is not the one that has highways but one where a child on a tricycle or bicycle can go safely everywhere.”

—ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA, *Urbanized*

It must be noted that long before this era of positive change, in 1976, Bogotá was the first city in the world to start a Sunday biking program called *Ciclovías* (bike path). In the '90s, Peñalosa made the *Ciclovías* safer and added permanent *Ciclorutas* (bicycle routes) all over the city. The *Ciclovías* is now an event that happens every Sunday and holidays in Bogotá and in other cities in Colombia, such as Medellín and Cali, where the main streets are blocked off to all automobiles. In Bogotá, nearly 2.5 million citizens, which is about 30 percent of the population, take advantage of the 120 kilometers of *Ciclovías* inside the automobile-free city. The *Ciclovías* is a unifying force.

In 1976, Bogotá was the first city in the world to start a Sunday biking program called *Ciclovías* (bike path).

## BICYCLE CULTURE

“A protected bicycle way is a symbol of democracy. It shows that a citizen on a \$30 bicycle is just as important as a citizen in a \$30,000 car.”

—ENRIQUE PEÑALOSA, *Urbanized*

Bicycle culture in Bogotá is not limited to the activities of the *Ciclovías* or *Ciclorutas*. For many street vendors, the bicycle supports their entrepreneurship, which plays a major role in the local economies of Colombian cities. For example, in Barranquilla, my hometown, the national postal service and some private postal companies still deliver mail by deploying bicyclists in many areas of the city. Colombian culture has placed bicycles at the center of everyday life.

It's true that many cities around the world have used the bicycle as a main source of transportation for generations, but the *new bicycle revolution*, which impacted the physical fabric of cities, began in Colombia.

If a nation like Colombia, once a failing state, can become a rising star in Latin America, and do so with very few resources, imagine the possibilities for the United States if it chooses to follow Colombia's lead. 🌱

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PHOTO: MICHAEL BUMAN

# Globalizing the Pirate Taxi

WHERE HARARE IS BEGINNING TO MEET SEATTLE

CHARLES MUDEDE



LEXCAR—A CAR-SHARING COMPANY THAT HAS ITS roots in Portland but was established in Seattle in 2000, the year of the dot-com crash—was the first venture of its type in the US and a big success. In 2007, Flexcar merged with the Massachusetts-based Zipcar, which then became a leader in the global car-sharing market. In December 2012, Car2Go, a car-sharing company based in Austin but owned by the German giant Daimler, introduced 230 Smart Fortwo cars into the Seattle area. This model of sharing represented a shift from that of Zipcar, which was really intended for planned trips. Car2Go, on the other hand, is much more cosmopolitan, much more about the single life, much more about urban coincidences and surprises. After use, Car2Go vehicles are left anywhere within the city's limits and may be there—or not—for the next user. In this way, the service is something added to an existing array of transportation options—bus, light rail, cabs, Car2Go—rather than a primary approach to getting around. There are other and newer forms of car sharing—some rising from the bottom (e.g., SideCar, an app-based ride-sharing community that began in San Francisco and expanded to Seattle in 2012)—and others descending from the





People in a low-income African city like Harare would instantly recognize the American car-sharing business as what they call “pirate taxis.”

top of the corporate world (e.g., Hertz 24/7; Zipcar, by the way, was swallowed by the rental-industry leader Avis in 2013).

The essential concept of car sharing is simple enough: Instead of owning a vehicle, a user rents one for a block of time. This kind of sharing, however, can only make economic sense in a big, dense city. In that environment, lots of people can easily share a tight concentration of cars, and as a result, reduce the overall number of cars in a city and the amount of time those cars spend sitting around doing nothing, occupying much-needed spaces. (“Most people in transportation focus on the 5 percent of the time that cars are moving. But the average car is parked 95 percent of the time. I think there’s a lot to learn from that 95 percent.”—Donald Shoup, *The High Cost of Free Parking*.) Though it’s best and greenest to place public transportation or pedestrians at the top of all modes of urban motility, car sharing is still far better than individual car ownership. Also, the costs of maintaining a car (the insurance, the gas, the sitting around doing nothing almost all day) are not cheap, even for those in the middle class of high-income societies.

But here is the interesting thing: People in a low-income African city like Harare (the capital of Zimbabwe, a country with a GDP that’s one twenty-third of Seattle’s, which is around \$230 billion), would instantly recognize the American car-sharing business as what they call “pirate taxis.” On the main streets of Harare and other major African cities, formal and informal taxis share the road; informal taxis can either operate as businesses with employees and planned circuits or by chance—you are driving a car, you have empty seats, people on the side of the road wave at you for a lift, you turn, slow, stop, doors open, doors shut, the car is packed, you head downtown. Many drivers in Harare do not pass up the opportunity to share their vehicles. Why? Not because it is the green thing to do but because everyone is broke and needs money. If you are lucky enough to own a car, it is simply stupid not to taxi people when you go to work and again when you return home. An already hard life is made a little easier by sharing with others the cost of gas, which, even when there are no shortages,

is very expensive. But what is done out of necessity turns out to be the green thing to do.

The citizens of Harare or Gaborone or Maputo should know that the citizens in rich cities are tearing down their expressways and developing an ethic and economy of sharing. This economy already exists in African cities and so all that’s needed is to complement it with a supporting ethic. At the moment, pirate taxis, as the name indicates, have a very low status. Although many middle-class Africans open their doors to strangers for a quick buck, the practice carries a stigma—a *caris meant just for you, you own it, only you should be in it, what a shame it is to pack it with a bunch of strangers, what a failure you are*. But anyone in Seattle who has used, say, SideCar or Lyft (another app-based sharing community that also began in San Francisco—a city whose GDP is \$300 billion, ten times that of Kenya), finds not a hint of stigma but, instead, drivers filled with pride that they are making a little extra something on the side while helping the city move in a direction that’s greener.

In short: Pirate taxis should not be treated as a lowly practice that will be dropped as soon as the society develops (or modernizes) but as one of the more rational options of twenty-first century urban transportation. 🌱

As this issue went to press, the Seattle City Council approved regulations that will limit the number of rideshare drivers a given company can deploy, and will eventually overhaul the City’s rideshare rules. Look for an update to this article when it’s released online at [arcadenw.org](http://arcadenw.org).

**Charles Mudede** is a filmmaker, associate editor of *The Stranger* and former lecturer in post-colonial literature at Pacific Lutheran University. He is also a member of ARCADE’s editorial committee.

# Cairo Nihilism

THE DEATH OF A RECYCLING CITY AND THE RISE OF AMERICAN CONSUMERISM

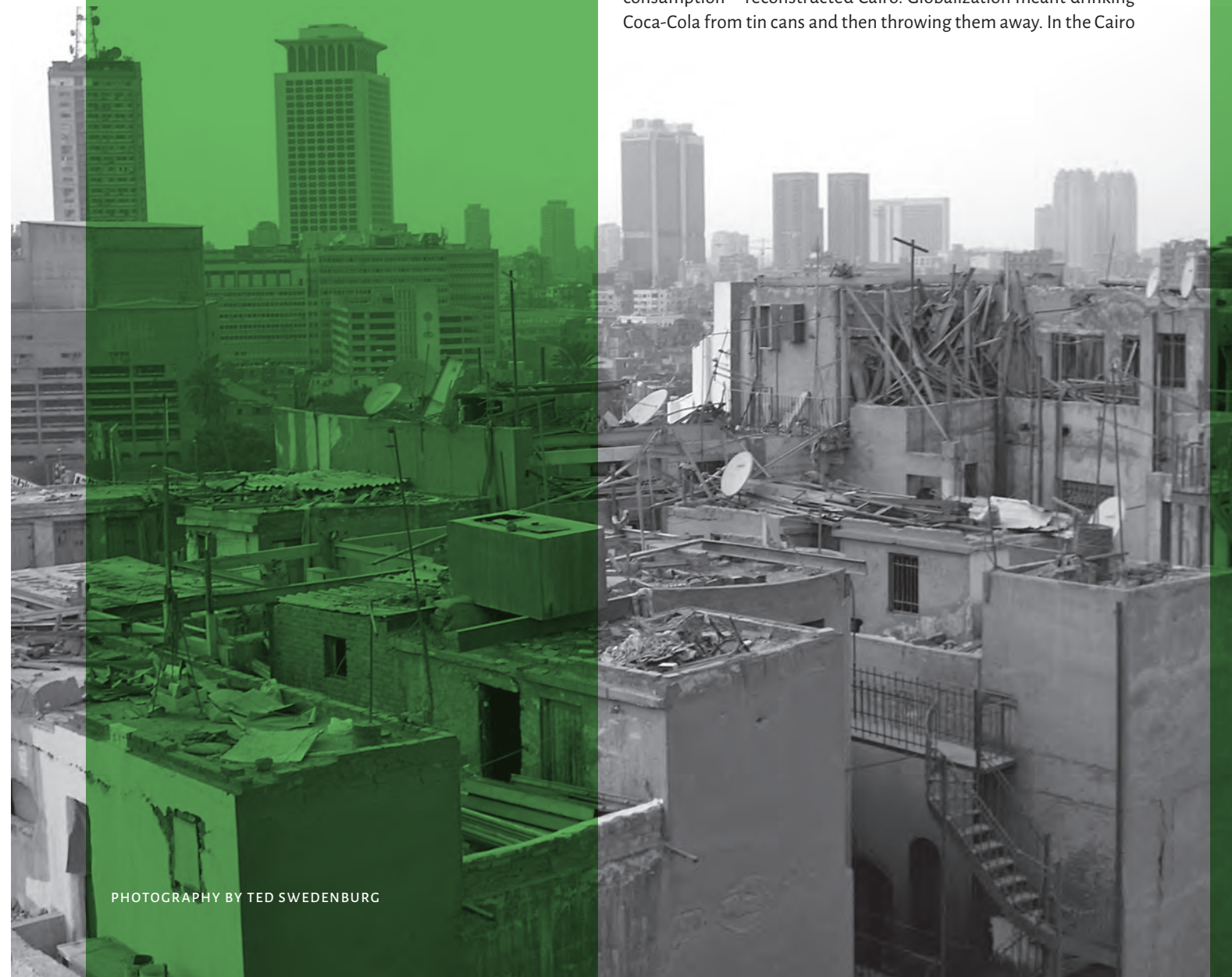
MAGED ZAHER



NIHILISM STRIKES ME AS AN OUTCOME OF CHAOS, THE inability to find reasons for suffering. Hope is socially constructed, and hopelessness is the natural state of things. Or so it feels that way in Cairo now.

The story of the city of Cairo is ripe with fundamental life questions. Maria Golia, a columnist for the *Lebanon Daily Star* and author of *Cairo: City of Sand* and *Photography and Egypt*, has written very elegantly about many topics, including why Cairenes have resorted to conspiracy theories (in Cairo, this is mainly due to people’s inability to find agency; they feel as though they are personally governed by those above them or by global powers). The second crucial thing Golia has written about is the conversion of Cairo from a recycling heaven (a new ideal in the West—recycling is green) into an environmental nightmare. In the ’60s and ’70s, Cairo’s streets were full of revamped cars; cars that would only be found in museums in the US were functioning beasts in Cairo. Why? Because Cairo mechanics were miracle makers, and their miracles were a result of necessity due to a lack of resources.

Globalization—which brought with it a barrage of images of consumption—reconstructed Cairo. Globalization meant drinking Coca-Cola from tin cans and then throwing them away. In the Cairo



PHOTOGRAPHY BY TED SWEDENBURG





we left behind, we drank Coke from bottles that we had to return to the factory for rebotling. Now, Cairenes want to consume like the worst of Westerners, consume as if there actually is a thing as nothingness, a void into which waste vanishes forever.

But do not get me wrong. I'm not interested in the classic narrative that says the world was good and now is bad, a trick that chronicles nostalgia or declares defeat. Yet as far as Cairo goes, such a narrative captures a form of truth in terms of the dynamics of consumption. With the influx of American soap operas, movies and capital came the explosive growth of the Egyptian nouveau riche, a group that has nothing to do with supporting the arts, sciences or the environment. They have one vocation: to consume. And the middle class, a growing conservative body, aims to join the nouveau riche in their consumption. Indeed, it is not the Western rules of urban planning that fucked things up for Cairo, it is late capitalism—Egyptian and global capital—that turned the city into a chaotic nightmare, which the upper middle-class has begun escaping by moving to an American-style suburbanization.

To understand the brutal absurdity the city of Cairo has become, go to a *Foul and Falafel* shop and order a few sandwiches. Each costs about a quarter and will be individually wrapped in a plastic bag; all of your wrapped sandwiches will then be placed in a larger plastic bag. In the past, the same shop would have wrapped the sandwiches together in an old newspaper and sold you a plastic bag only if you absolutely wanted it.

**Globalization—which brought with it a barrage of images of consumption—reconstructed Cairo.**

Over the years, I have learned that moral arguments are problematic, maybe because we are all at fault of violating them. Aesthetic judgments seem to be equally problematic, but at least engaging in them is more interesting. My problem with the Egyptian middle-class and how they distorted Cairo is that their form of life—which is a bad simulacrum

of American middle-class life—can't produce anything but ugliness. The old city of Cairo was a difficult place to live in; the new city of Cairo is an impossible place to live in.

The 2011 Egyptian revolution came as a statement not so much against a dictator but against the nouveau riche and the authorities that protect and serve their ugly and wasteful way of life. The revolution was a statement against what the city of Cairo had become, which left its inhabitants devoid of agency and miracles—attributes of the older city. The revolution came to reclaim a space and a history, but as I write, this same revolution that hosted the largest number of self-organizing demonstrations in history is taking a downturn. The ugly city is winning. Yes, one more victory for nihilism. 🌱

**Maged Zaher** is the author of *Thank You for the Window Office*, *The Revolution Happened and You Didn't Call Me* and *Portrait of the Poet as an Engineer*. His translations of contemporary Egyptian poetry have appeared in *Jacket Magazine*, *Banipal* and *Denver Quarterly*. He performed his work at Subtext, Bumbershoot, the Kootenay School of Writing, St. Marks Project, Evergreen State College and The American University in Cairo. Maged is the recipient of the 2013 Genius Award in Literature from *The Stranger*.

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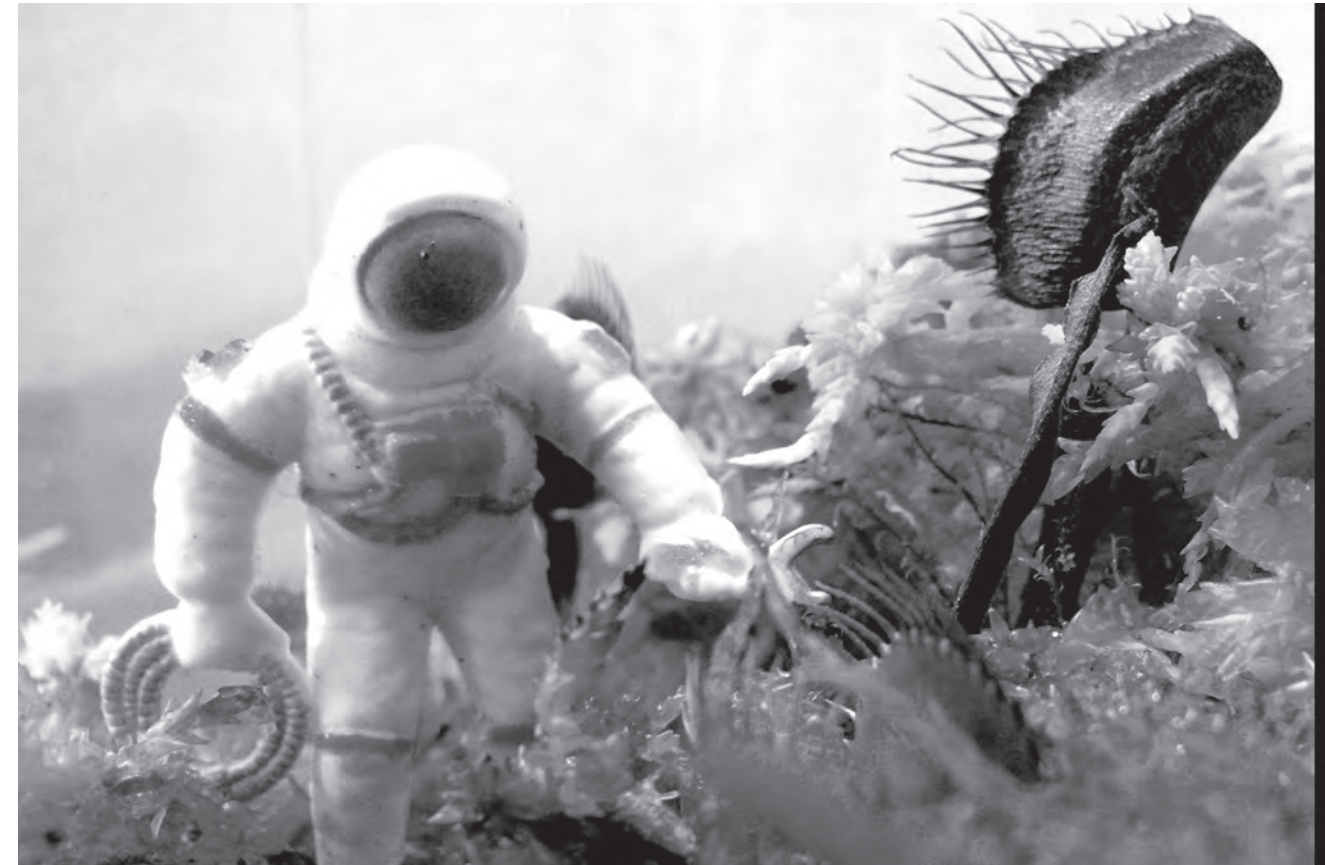


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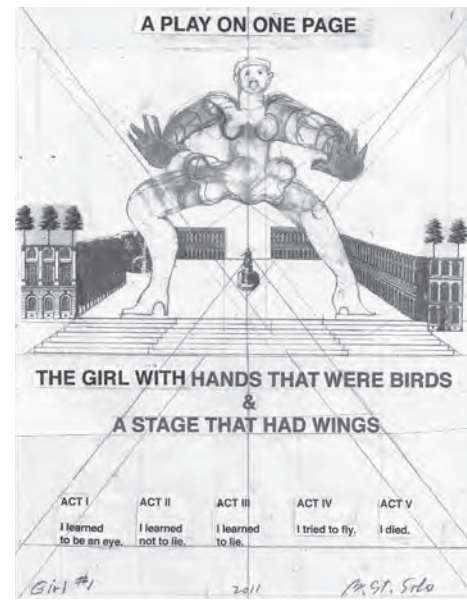
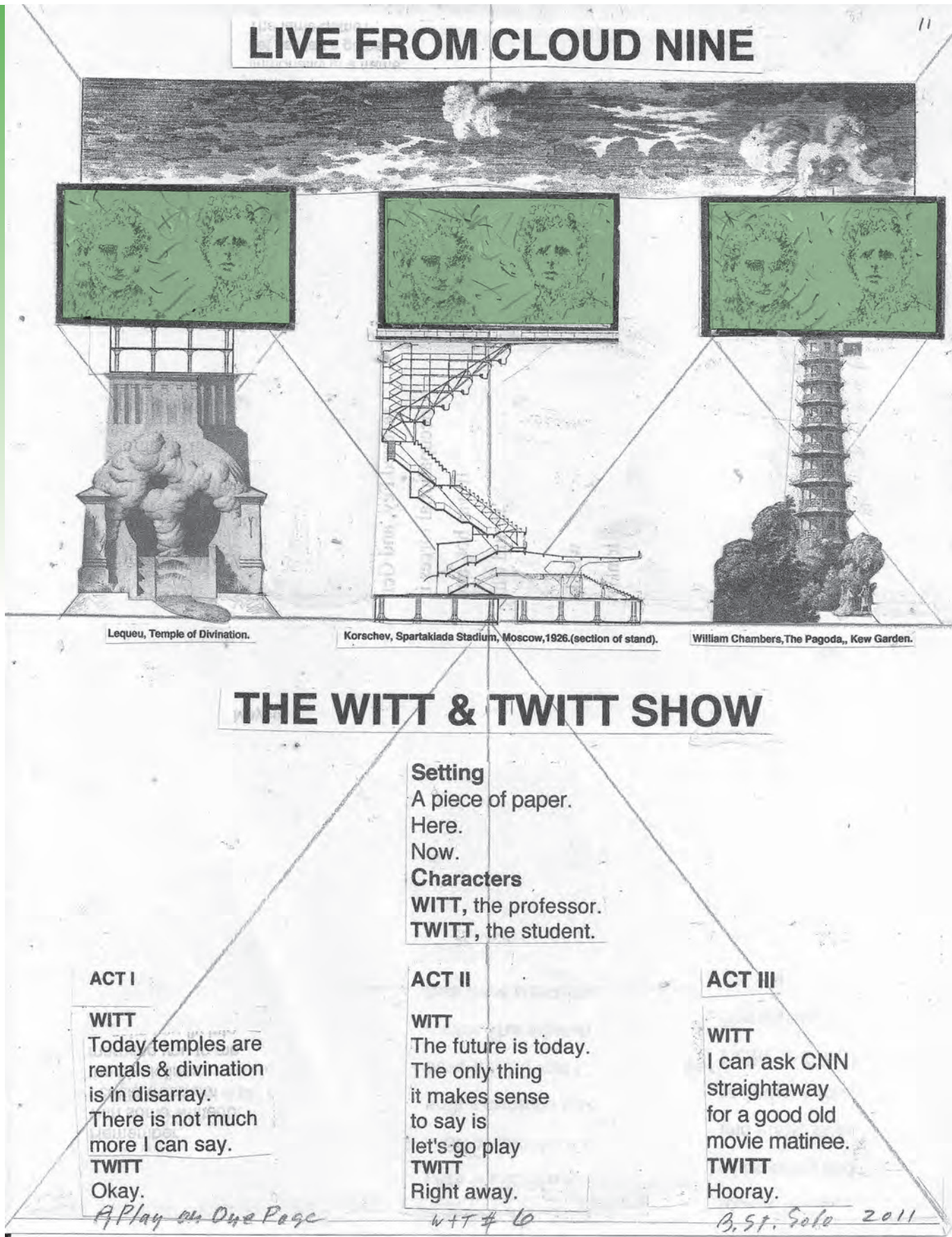


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## A Field Guide to Utopia

BARBARA STAUFFACHER SOLOMON

In the September 2013 issue of ARCADE, John Parman reviewed influential designer, artist and writer Barbara Stauffacher Solomon's new memoir, *WHY? WHY NOT?*, and the companion *UTOPIA MYOPIA*, a collection of thirty-six plays in précis form with accompanying drawings. Barbara writes of her studies with Armin Hoffman in Switzerland, the groundbreaking "supergraphics" she designed for The Sea Ranch, her work as an artist and writer, and much else in addition and beyond.

Below is Stauffacher Solomon's response to Parman's review—a mere fragment of her musings on how everything is related to everything. —EDITOR

### IS UTOPIA IN THE SEARCH FOR UTOPIA?

My book *UTOPIA MYOPIA* is the search for utopia in 36 *PLAYS ON A PAGE*. The setting for each play is a piece of paper, 8½ by 11. The characters are listed. Scenes are drawn on the top half of the page. Five columns of lines of type, newspaper style, are set below. The dialogue is minimal, shorthand determined by the number of letterforms per line, text-messages for today's limited attention span. The book is fantasy, foolishness and fact. Lines, lies and land(e)scapes.

### IS UTOPIA IN ARCHITECTS' DRAWINGS?

Architects were always drawing utopias. In the 1930s, modern movement architects on fire with nostalgic ideas and revolutionary expectations believed there were myths to be made and they would and could make them. They delighted in drawing up cities of the future.

Architects were always drawing utopias. In the 1930s, modern movement architects on fire with nostalgic ideas and revolutionary expectations believed there were myths to be made and they would and could make them.

Le Corbusier drew Paris as an English garden estate carpeted with grand green lawns and elegant white machines. The drawing was to be a Radiant City of sun. Frank Lloyd Wright drew his Edenic, futurist Broadacre City and believed any American lucky enough to live in his "prairie houses" would bask in the poetry of Walt Whitman.

Everything looked perfect on paper. On paper, writers wrote words promising an ideal life to the people who'd live in these "built utopias," but I think everyone imagined they'd be living in the drawings.

### IS THE CITY AN "URBAN UTOPIA"?

As I said, architects always draw utopias (deny it or not). The problem is building them. To get the drawings built, utopian romantics (architects and landscape architects) have to work for urban realists (developers). It's green gardens versus greenbacks. Parks versus parking lots. Greed usually wins. Corbu's and Wright's most delicious utopias were never constructed and the plans their followers managed to get built (housing projects and the burbs) didn't work out too well.

When people weren't content imprisoned in the reality of built walls, not happy for the privilege of paying the rent or mortgage, and no longer inspired by their new stoves and refrigerators, they went to the movies.

### WHERE DO WE SEE UTOPIA?

We see utopia in landscape paintings, architectural drawings, movies and other squared away illusions. Utopia always seems framed squarely

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF  
BARBARA STAUFFACHER SOLOMON



within a rectangle: on pages, canvases and rectangular sheets of paper; inside picture-frame stage sets as in *UTOPIA MYOPIA*; in rectangular building blocks, city blocks, surveyors’ grids and square-deals; in walking through rectangular doorways, in driving by rectangular highway signs announcing off ramps to invisible utopias, in rectangular glass store windows promising paradise in shiny commodities; on rectangular TV, computer and movie screens.

IS UTOPIA IN MAKING THINGS?

Those who might have called themselves architects now call themselves industrial designers. Unlike architects, industrial designers really took over producing things. Things made on the production line, the assembly line.

Industrial designers rejoice in producing not a few big things like cities that please a few people and that a few people can own, but lots of small things that please lots of people and that everyone hopes to own. Beautiful, shiny, black and white or brightly colored toys.

I doubt that utopia is making things on an assembly line for the workers there. However, an assembly line means lots of people making lots of little pieces into lots of shiny things. People fall in love with these things and buy them. Things became commodities and the workers become consumers.

IS UTOPIA IN OWNING AND USING THINGS?

Steve Jobs loved his lines of beautiful iApples: Apples for everybody. And everybody seems extremely happy to consume them, all the time, everywhere. Is it that the big consumers have

Is utopia in having and playing with things like personal computers, iPhones, iPads and Instamatics?

found utopia? As I type this line on October 20, 2013, CNN reports: “Chinese couple sells babies for iPhones and shoes . . .”

Is utopia in having and playing with things like personal computers, iPhones, iPads and Instamatics? Fascinated with ourselves, we carry computer screens, as our doubles, smart specters to give us information, self-augmentation, self-preservation and the ability to shoot *selfies*. Most of us have no knowledge of how they work. Who cares? We can buy them. We point them at anything, everything and they take pictures not of what we’re looking at but what they see. The “truth” as they see it. News or nonsense. Amazingly, they have become an extension of everyone’s hands.

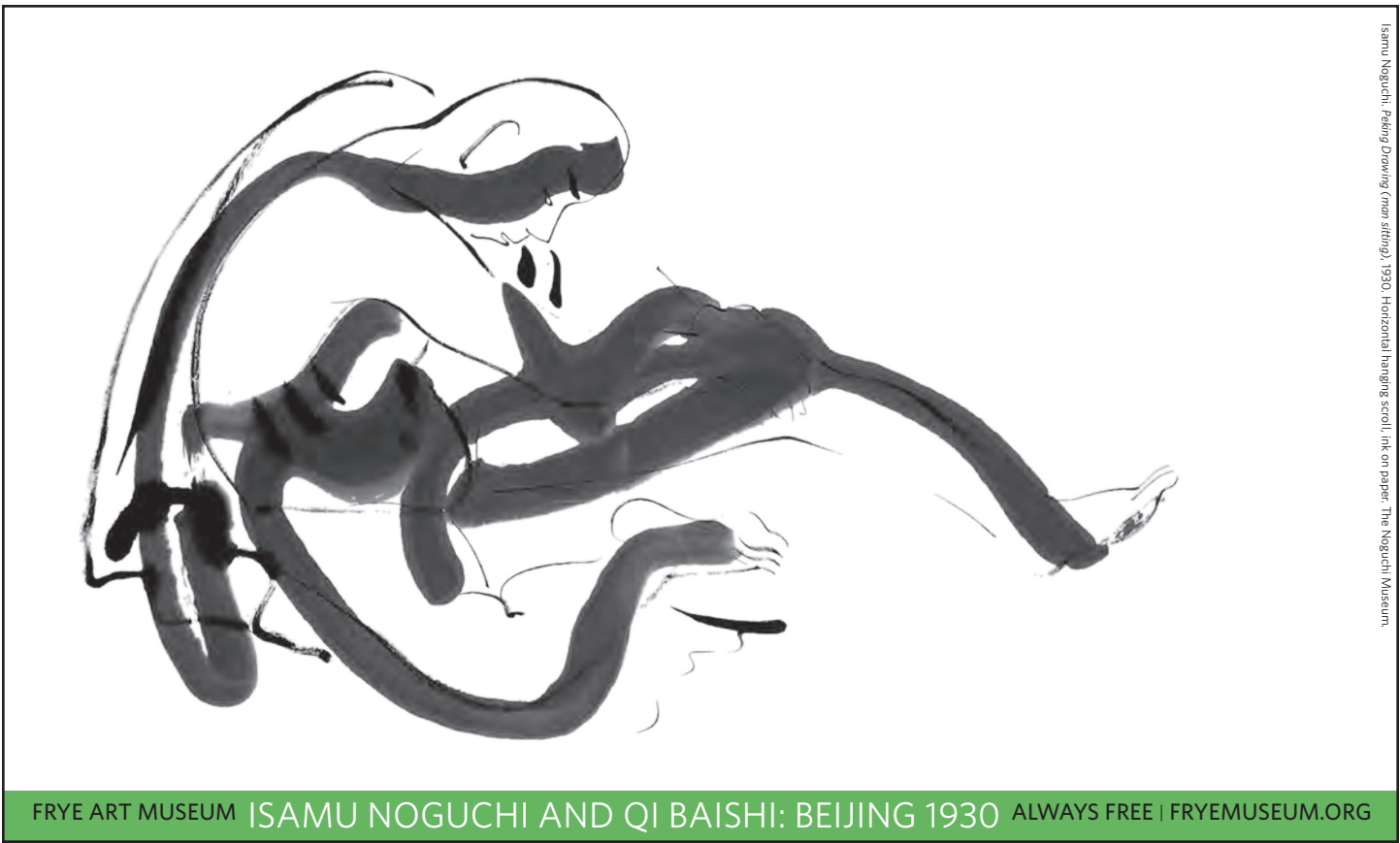
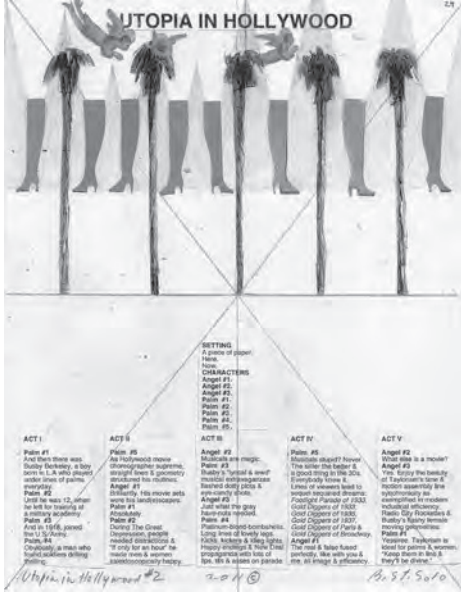
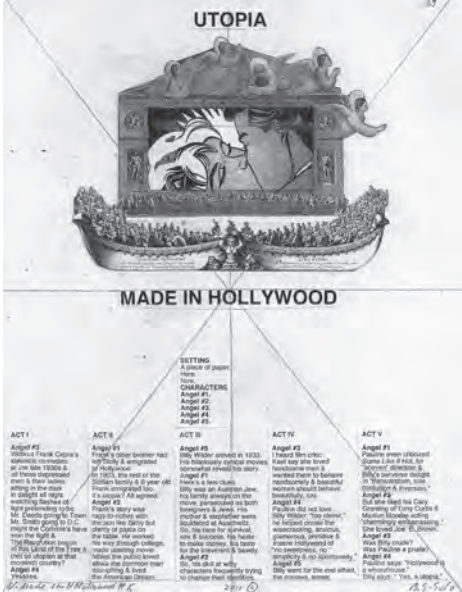
Breaking news is that new art form in which every event is seen by someone, recorded on their smartphone, instantly sent to a TV station, and, if newsy, noisy or nosey, artfully cut and pasted by someone else and immediately broadcast to every screen, everywhere, for everybody else to see.

Breaking news is the modern movement’s dream of utopian life: art moved out of private, white rooms and onto public streets, where everyone is the artist, the actor and the audience. Never mind the scenes not seen. Did they really happen?

IS UTOPIA THE INVISIBLE?

I used to want to return to the philosophy department at UC Berkeley to do a PhD on the invisible. Instead, I sat in my white tower on Telegraph Hill, typing and drawing lines on pieces of white paper, 8 ½ by 11. Moviemakers like to see “the wind in the trees”; I like to see the white spaces between the lines. Now, I realize, I was doing my PhD on the invisible after all. 🍄

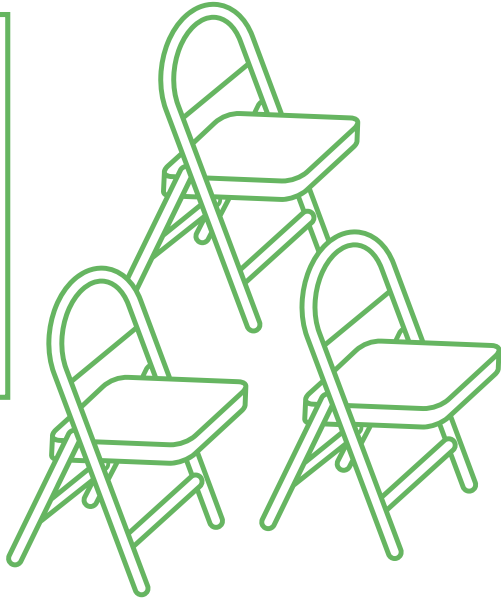
**Barbara Stauffacher Solomon** trained first as a dancer in her native San Francisco before studying graphic design under Armin Hoffman in Switzerland where she fully absorbed his hard line modernist doctrine; when she returned to America to work as a designer, she doggedly stuck to the rigors of Swiss design at a time when, as she notes, psychedelic squiggles were the norm. She is best known for the supergraphics she designed in the 1960s for The Sea Ranch in Northern California—a radical graphic statement.



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Isamu Noguchi, *Peking Drawing (man sitting)*, 1930. Horizontal hanging scroll, ink on paper. The Noguchi Museum.

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Ken Garland

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Ken Garland is a noted British graphic designer. In 1963 he authored the First Things First manifesto which advocated “in favour of the more useful and more lasting forms of communication” over the increasing overuse of design talent in advertising. He has since designed award winning games and books.

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Dan and Ben Miller (left to right) with Seattle-based Katlin Jackson, who is interviewing successfully for the position of vice president of real estate, Pacific Northwest in February 2014. Her office is the co-working space at the Hub in Pioneer Square.



Katlin Jackson, Fundrise's vice president of real estate, Pacific Northwest in February 2014. Her office is the co-working space at the Hub in Pioneer Square.

## Capital / Capitol

CROWDFUNDED  
REAL ESTATE IS HERE

**ADRIAN MACDONALD**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN MACDONALD

Left: 1351 H Street NE (center) in July 2013. After the 1968 riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., the neighborhood fell into disrepair and didn't start to recover until the early 2000s. DC's population (646,449) is currently the same as Seattle (634,535), but the city limits are about half the size, making it twice as dense.

**I**FIRST READ ABOUT THE DC-BASED Miller brothers in *The Atlantic Cities* in an article titled "The Real Estate Deal That Could Change the Future of Everything." Last summer, I used my shaky ARCADE press credentials to meet them.

Unlike me, brothers Ben and Dan Miller (aged thirty-seven and twenty-six) are sons of a successful urban-infill developer in Washington, DC. They hail not from the suburbs but from an upscale enclave in the northwest quarter of the District, near Georgetown University. Prodigies of the real estate business, they worked their way up through their father's company, then started an investment fund of their own. Then a company. Then three companies. All of which are changing the future of everything.

Standing in the back lot of a small two-story building being actively gutted and rebuilt by carpenters and electricians, I stammer my way through an interview with the Millers. They have arrived by taxi, bringing with them a woman in heels who is evidently on a job interview. I am trying to sound smart and failing. They wear sport coats and leather shoes, speak with practiced articulation, exude prep school educations. The day is overcast and I'm not finding camera angles.

Part of the problem is the smallness of the yard, which might be something close to the size of a suburban Virginia living room and has a

giant hole filling half of it. The address is 1351 H Street NE, the demonstration pilot project for the Millers' everything-changing company. Fundrise, which uses a crowd-sourcing model to fund real-estate endeavors, could be considered the "Kickstarter of real estate," but that would diminish the gravity of the historic occasion of its existence. Kickstarter is a platform for donating to other people's labors of love in exchange for hugs and presents; Fundrise is like a kinder, gentler take on *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Two years ago, protestors occupied Wall Street. This year, Wall Street domination begins to crumble at the hand of publicly crowd-sourced capital, invested online and coordinated by companies like Fundrise.

Crowdfunded real estate is new only for this



Creativity amok in a hip ramen restaurant on H Street NE in November 2012. This spring, the same chef will unveil Maketto, a new restaurant concept with multiple vendors based on an Asian night market, in the Millers' first demonstration property at 1351 H Street NE. The market will also double as a retail store for local street fashion label Durkl.



reason: When the US Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) established its current investment rules and regulations in 1933, it required that commercial real estate developers sell equity shares in prospective projects only to “accredited investors.” In the interest of protecting the general public from being snared into high-risk undiversified investments, only those making more than \$200,000 per year, or those with a net worth of at least \$1 million, can become accredited. As a result, the vast majority of the public is excluded from such deals and can only access them through faceless institutional vehicles like REITs (real estate investment trusts) that buy and sell shares of properties all over the country.

Fundrise’s first insight was to notice a loophole in the SEC rule, allowing shares to be offered to unaccredited investors through a complicated approval process at both the federal and state level. Ambitiously, the Millers dove into this process for over a year and were finally able to bring through the 1351 H Street NE property. In 2012, they sold shares in the project

to 175 unaccredited investors living in DC and Virginia at a price of \$100 per share and a rate of return of 8.4 percent, raising some \$325,000—about 20 percent of the project cost.

For real estate, this could be considered a Kitty Hawk moment, but it is only a small part of the larger movement. Sometime this year, the SEC will finalize new rules and regulations in response to the JOBS Act signed into law by President Obama in 2012 with bipartisan support. Often paraphrased as the “crowdfunding bill,” the law lifts the restrictions on investment offerings across all industries, ushering in a new era of

widespread access to capital for small entrepreneurs. Just as we can buy shares in companies registered on the Stock Exchange, we will now be able to buy shares in small startup businesses through online portals, regulated by the SEC.

Over the last year, Fundrise has grown quickly to position itself as one of these portals, with virtually no other competition for the kind of small, neighborhood-scale development projects they are doing in DC. Several players have

entered the crowdfunded real estate market, but so far none plan to target the unaccredited investor—Fundrise is alone in its dedication to democratizing real estate investing for all, not just for the rich.

As it turns out, the woman in heels at the construction site, Seattle-based Katlin Jackson (age twenty-nine), got the job—she is now Fundrise’s vice president of real estate, Pacific Northwest, and works out of a co-working space in Pioneer Square. Much of her work consists of signing up local developers to establish profiles on the Fundrise website, so that they can build a network of interested investors when the time comes to crowdfund a project. ☘

**Adrian MacDonald** is the communications manager for LMN Architects, a journalist and a former New York City taxi driver. More of his writing, including more of the Fundrise story, can be found at [postoccupancy.com](http://postoccupancy.com).

Several players have entered the crowdfunded real estate market, but so far none plan to target the unaccredited investor—Fundrise is alone in its dedication to democratizing real estate investing for all, not just for the rich.



The Mews at Chophouse Row, an open-air market/courtyard scheduled to open in fall 2014 at 11th & Pike in Seattle. The developer is Liz Dunn with architects Sundberg Kennedy Ly-Au Young and Graham Baba.



Seattle night market concept proposed by ABF Lab, Paris, for Seattle Center’s Urban Intervention design competition in May 2012.

# HEADLINES 2014 ARCHITECTURE LOOKING AHEAD

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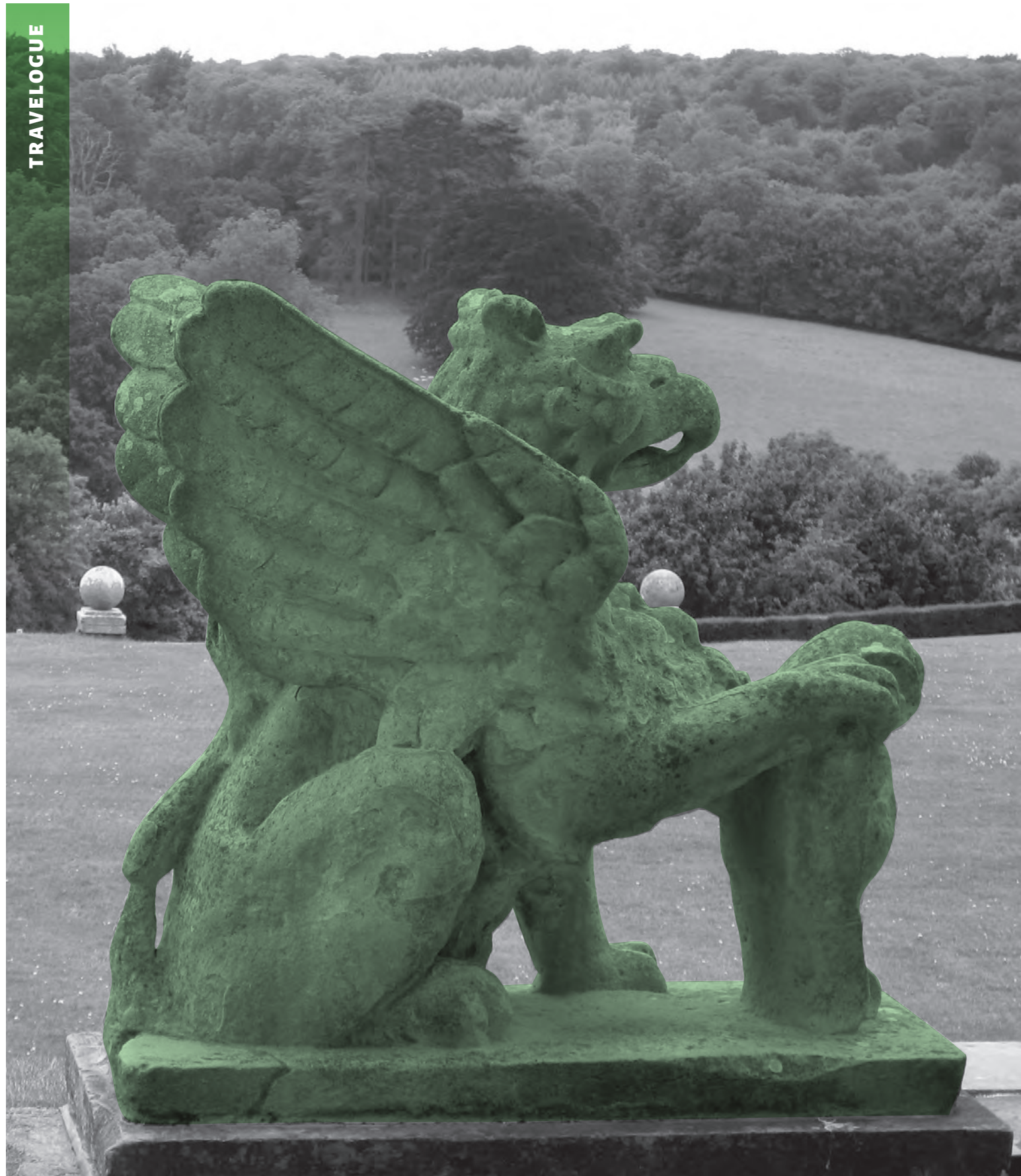
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Polesden Lacey and its borrowed landscape.



Octagon Lake at Stowe, enlarged by Capability Brown.

## Borrowed Landscapes

SRI LANKA, EUROPE AND  
AN EVOLUTION OF FORM

**SAM HAMMER**

**I** WAS WITH MY COLLEAGUE PATRICIA Loheed at the fabulous Polesden Lacey National Trust Garden in Surrey, south of London. Pat gazed over the expanse of formal pathways, rich plantings, rose gardens, forest and field. She focused on the chalk hills across from the manicured property and exulted, “They designed this to be a borrowed landscape!” By incorporating, or “borrowing,” the scenery outside of the garden’s boundaries, the visual footprint of Polesden Lacey was enlarged, dramatized and made a good deal grander, a first break from the tight, strict formalism of earlier English garden designs. Pat’s enthusiasm was about getting a firsthand look at modern landscape architecture in the making. However, her comment got me thinking about a different kind of borrowed landscape, one that’s related to the evolution of form.

As a biologist, I’m aware that few characteristics in nature evolve more than once—for example, the appearance of the vertebrate body

plan, photosynthesis and the fern-like unfolding of growing plants each arose at one time in history, globally, and never again. We can also uncover the relationships of “unrelated” species by looking at their DNA, and we humans share so much in common with the rest of the living world that our common ancestry with plants, insects, and even fungi and bacteria, is a moot point.

So what about landscape evolution? What do built landscapes have in common with one another? Are landscape forms inherited, borrowed, shared, stolen or have they arisen independently in many different places and times?

As an undergraduate anthropology student at Grinnell College, I read the enchanting book *The Making of the English Landscape* by W. G. Hoskins during a year abroad. That slim book shaped in me a profound curiosity that follows me wherever I travel. Recently, my interest in how landscapes develop brought me to Magul Maha Vinhara, a nearly deserted forest monastery in a remote jungle corner of southeast

**Are landscape forms inherited, borrowed, shared, stolen or have they arisen independently in many different places and times?**



Shared growth pattern in a fern, a black cohosh and a beech tree.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAM HAMMER



Sri Lanka. There I witnessed the contradictory human yearning for control and connection with the landscape, which brought about a unique design interaction with nature characterized by classical Buddhist design in that area. At the monastery I took pictures, rapid-fire, of the large reflecting *pokuna*—meditation pond. I was aware of the strange atmosphere of the pond, which bore a similarity to someplace else I had seen, someplace far away. A month later, as I uploaded my pictures to Flickr, it struck me. The meditation pond at Magul Maha Vinhara reminded me of a place I had seen in England. Was there a design connection? Do our gar-

Did Magul Maha and places like it represent a sort of prototypical “Eastern” garden—similar to one that Capability Brown might have envisioned—or do we humans just like reflecting ponds?

den designs come from a single ancestor, like our DNA? If not, who’s been copying whom? My question goes back to a visit to the Stowe Landscape Garden in Buckinghamshire, England. Stowe, like many of the premier landscapes in the UK, was redesigned several times through its history. Chief among its designers was the eighteenth-century figure Lancelot (Capability) Brown, who is counted among the founders of landscape architecture. We know that Brown had visual knowledge of Eastern gardens because he stated that he was familiar with “Chinese” garden design, though it’s doubtful that he ever saw a depiction of a garden from Sri Lanka (then Ceylon), and certainly he never visited one. Yet the qualities

we find at Octagon Lake, the great reflecting pond at Stowe, are abundantly present in the disused tank at Magul Maha Vinhara and a hundred other places throughout Sri Lanka. Contemplative spaces, reflective surfaces and “borrowed” views across the water are all characteristics of these reflecting ponds. Did Magul Maha and places like it represent a sort of prototypical “Eastern” garden—similar to one that Capability Brown might have envisioned—or do we humans just like reflecting ponds?

My guess is that Brown was influenced by reflecting ponds from the East, but the technology to make them, at least large ones, was a recent “discovery” in Europe; Brown enlarged Octagon Lake from a smaller one started by a predecessor. I am not a garden historian, but I have seen a few, and from my observations extensive reflecting ponds are absent from earlier formal gardens of Europe. Moats, yes. Fountains, certainly. Large, naturalistic reflecting pools? Not until technology made it feasible, and not until intensive contact with East Asia, which affected Western culture and aesthetics, do reflecting ponds appear.

So, landscape form and evolution, tradition, innovation, aesthetics and science—how do they all come together? A few observations: Before reflecting pools, physic gardens were an innovation of seventeenth-century Europe, places where beneficial plants known to the Greeks and Romans could be cultivated for use by healers. In the Sri Lankan world, a slew of

beneficial plants had been known since time immemorial, and they grew everywhere. They were (and still are) part and parcel of the traditional Ayurvedic scheme of medicine. We know that some Latin plant names were borrowed from ancient Sinhalese—for example, *Nelumbo* (lotus) from the Sinhalese *Nelum*. We know that styles of sculpture and even architecture were shared between these two disparate parts of the world. We don’t know who started it all, though we have evidence of trade between the two worlds that reaches back at least 2,000 years. We know that the reflecting tanks of Sri Lanka came out of an ages-old tradition of *wewas*, *kulams* and *pokunas*, water tanks that were used for irrigation and for meditation. Europeans couldn’t build huge reflecting pools like the *wewas* because they didn’t have the technology to do so until the eighteenth-century. While Renaissance Europeans were putting gardens into four-cornered patches, laying straight paths through lanes of pruned shrubbery and developing a symmetrical “physic” of useful plants, Buddhist monks and the simple farmers of Sri Lanka had long since learned the art and science of impounding water. Europe finally mastered engineering techniques that were old in Sri Lanka around the time of the Enlightenment. Meanwhile, designers like Capability Brown sought to bring the grace of meditative landscape to the richest patrons of northwestern Europe. But beauty, harmony and peace were part of the everyday working agricultural landscape that was vernacular to East Asia. 🌿

**Sam Hammer** is a professor at Boston University where he teaches science to non-major undergraduates. He also teaches in the sustainability and landscape architecture programs at the Boston Architectural College.



Pillars at Magul Maha Vinhara.

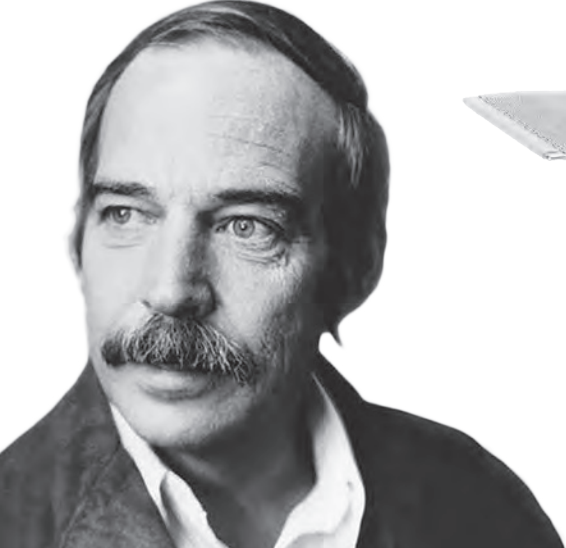


The step pond at Magul Maha Vinhara.

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# THINK IT. MAKE IT. BUILD IT.

A YOUTH WORKSHOP  
INSPIRED BY PROJECT H  
**VALERIE GREEN**

PHOTOGRAPHY BY COLE BENSON



THE NONPROFIT PROJECT H EMPOWERS youth through design education, positively transforming communities and highlighting the power of design to impact social issues. Last December, a new film about their work with students in rural North Carolina, *If You Build It*, inspired ARCADE and IDSA NW to host two events around the topic of community and design. One was a holiday celebration last December, *Collective Works*, which drew a diverse gathering of designers and design enthusiasts of all walks. The second was a youth design workshop organized by ARCADE and IDSA NW that took place over the weekend of December 7–8 at MakerHaus. For the workshop, members from MakerHaus, Teague, Architects Without Borders, Architecture for Humanity and other local designers taught middle- and high-school students about the design process and how design can improve people's lives.

A critical component of the workshop was to define a project that could be prototyped by students over the course of a weekend. Architecture for Humanity and Architects Without Borders provided the topic: Little Free Libraries. Anyone who cares to is invited to build and display a freestanding library in front of their homes, in gardens and other public spaces to house books that are exchanged freely around the notion of “take a book,

leave a book,” promoting literacy and encouraging community interaction. Started in Hudson, Wisconsin, this is now a worldwide movement, and there are many Little Free Libraries all over Seattle.

The professional designers worked in pairs with small groups of students to define a vision for their Little Free Libraries and make them into a reality. The process started with brainstorming a wide variety of ideas, which were distilled down to three concepts per group. Then each group selected one idea to prototype (the students said this was the hardest part!). Next came fabricating the prototypes. The designers trained the students on rapid prototyping techniques, and the groups built the prototypes together. The weekend culminated with the students presenting their final concepts.

The workshop was a transformative event for everyone. The students learned each stage of the design process and were able to make their ideas real, which had a tremendous impact on them—they loved being able to bring their concepts to life! The professional designers facilitating the workshop expanded their thinking and participated in different aspects of the design process than they might in their typical workdays. One parent said that this workshop solidified his son's interest in pursuing design as a profession. Another emailed after the workshop to say: “I just wanted to tell you that my son absolutely loved his weekend at MakerHaus. What an awesome program you designed. He is still talking about it! Thank you so much!” 🍷

**Valerie Green** is a design research and strategy consultant for projects that define new customer experiences. She has led project teams, disciplines and office operations for creative agencies. Starting out in architecture at Yale, Valerie discovered the possibilities of user-centered design at Stanford's product design program and is currently based in Seattle.

## Design-Minded Events in the Northwest

For a complete calendar of events and to join ARCADE's e-newsletter, visit [arcadenw.org](http://arcadenw.org).

### URBAN CHARACTER: SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOODS THEN + NOW

2014 DESIGN IN DEPTH LECTURE SERIES  
BY SEATTLE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION  
8 APRIL, 13 MAY, 10 JUNE



PHOTO: IRIN SCHIEDLER

In this series, speakers look at growing Seattle neighborhoods and how they can thrive while staying true to their histories and characters through adaptive reuse and other development strategies. April focuses on Capitol Hill, May on South Lake Union and June on Ballard. [seattlearchitecture.org](http://seattlearchitecture.org)

### DESIGN LECTURE SERIES: KEN GARLAND

BY CIVILIZATION  
18 APRIL, 6:30 P.M.

This lecture series concludes with a talk by Ken Garland, British graphic designer, writer and game designer well-known for his *First Things First* manifesto written in the '60s, which calls designers to use their skills for more humanitarian, and less consumer, activities. [designlectur.es](http://designlectur.es)

ARCADE is a proud supporter of the Design Lecture Series.

SERIES  
DESIGN  
LECTURE

### HIGH-RISE SCREENING

BY NORTHWEST FILM FORUM. CO-PRESENTED  
BY ARCADE AND CHARLES MUDEDE  
30 APRIL, 7:00 P.M.



IMAGE COURTESY OF FIGA FILMS

In this documentary, penthouse residents in large Brazilian cities divulge what it's like to live at the top, their decadent lifestyles absurdly disjoined from the poverty below them. Through interviews and striking images, *High-Rise* explores architecture's relationship to economic disparity in these vast urban centers.

After the screening, Charles Mudede will lead a conversation connecting the film's themes and this issue's feature, “After Growth: Rethinking the Narrative of Modernization.”

Tickets at [nwfilmforum.org](http://nwfilmforum.org).

### GiveBIG 2014

BY THE SEATTLE FOUNDATION  
6 MAY

Save the date for this one-day community online giving-event supporting Seattle area nonprofits, including ARCADE. Join our e-newsletter to stay in the loop at [arcadenw.org](http://arcadenw.org).



PHOTO: IAN MCMAHON

### CASCADE: INSTALLATION BY IAN MCMAHON

BY SUYAMA SPACE  
19 MAY–15 AUGUST

Exploring the relationship between architecture and drama, this installation includes two floor-to-ceiling plaster theatrical curtains to be created on-site, from a distance seemingly delicate, soft structures experienced differently in close proximity. [suyamaspace.org](http://suyamaspace.org)

### LIVING FUTURE unCONFERENCE 2014: BEAUTY AND INSPIRATION

BY INTERNATIONAL LIVING FUTURE INSTITUTE  
21–23 MAY



Hosted by the International Living Future Institute, a leader in the green-building movement and administer of the Living Building Challenge, this year's unConference in Portland explores the link between sustainability, beauty and inspiration, with keynotes by Maya Lin, Jason F. McLennan and Jay Harman.

[living-future.org/unconference2014](http://living-future.org/unconference2014)

ARCADE is a proud community partner of the 2014 unConference.

## MORE HAPPENINGS

### 2014 WASLA/WRPA Joint Conference and Trade Show

By WASLA, WRPA  
8–11 April  
[wasla.org/conference](http://wasla.org/conference)

### HEADLINES Exhibit

By the UW Department of Architecture Professional Advisory Council  
11–24 April; Opening Reception 18 April  
[sites.google.com/site/uwarchpac/headlines-exhibit](http://sites.google.com/site/uwarchpac/headlines-exhibit)

### E.C. Vallianatos: Poison Spring:

*The Secret History of Pollution and the EPA*  
By Town Hall Seattle, University Book Store  
13 April, 7:30 p.m.  
[townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)

### Float. Fill. Flood. Building on Water

By AIA Seattle + Design in Public  
Through 25 April  
[aiaseattle.org/node/8810](http://aiaseattle.org/node/8810)

### Doc Brunch: American Meat

By SIFF  
4 May  
[siff.net/cinema/film-series/docbrunch](http://siff.net/cinema/film-series/docbrunch)

### Fashioning Cascadia: The Social Life of the Garment

By the Museum of Contemporary Craft (Portland)  
9 May–11 October  
[mocc.pnca.edu](http://mocc.pnca.edu)

### DECO JAPAN: Shaping Art and Culture, 1920–1945

By Seattle Asian Art Museum  
10 May–19 October  
[seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

### Joshua Howe: Behind the Curve:

*Science and the Politics of Global Warming*  
By Town Hall Seattle, Elliott Bay Book Company  
19 May, 7:30 p.m.  
[townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)

### Miró: The Experience of Seeing

By Seattle Art Museum  
Through 26 May  
[seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

### A Terrible Beauty: Edward Burtynsky

By Vancouver Art Gallery (Vancouver, BC)  
Through 26 May  
[vanartgallery.bc.ca](http://vanartgallery.bc.ca)

### LaToya Ruby Frazier: Born by a River

By Seattle Art Museum  
Through 22 June  
[seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)  
See page 24 for more on this exhibition.

### American Collectors and the Museums

*They Founded: An Art History Course*  
By Frye Art Museum  
22–25 July, 9:30 a.m.–noon  
[fryemuseum.org](http://fryemuseum.org)





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