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The notion of liminal space—being at or near a seam, point of passage or transition—is especially relevant in our design community today.

— Seattle is—and continues to be—in a liminal space of urban growth and infrastructural change. Any local who has walked the waterfront this summer has experienced our newly created liminal space.

— Our various design practices continue to evolve as new technology, tools and delivery methods take root in our fields—bringing forth new ways of conceptualizing and executing our respective work.

— Access to education, housing and economic stability is tenuous for many. As designers, we play an important role in taking on these challenges and having our work informed by them.

For ARCADE, 2019 has similarly been liminal. We’ve embraced the changing of the guard, developed new outreach and engagement opportunities and increased the diversity of our dialogues. This process of re-examination, intellectual and social expansion has been invigorating to witness and take part in. While retaining the thoughtful discussion that has been the hallmark of our organization for nearly forty years, we are looking forward to finding more ways to enrich the Dialogue on Design through digital, print and in-person connections. 37.2 was created in the spirit of experiencing between here and there.

Ruth Baleiko, for the Board
Dear Reader,

Design has existed in one form or another since the beginning of time and has become an essential part of our urban fabric. Today, in our ever-changing environment, design pushes us forward between what is and what could be. Quite literally, the design process is the embodiment of liminal space.

As two fresh-faced twentysomethings, the concept of existing in the in between is very apparent to us. Just as we are stepping out on our own, the state of our world is at a crossroads and very unsure of its future. As two young professionals entering the small niche that is the design community, this undefined nature becomes exponentially more prominent.

Young people, as a demographic, bring a new perspective and are well versed in the most current tools and technologies. However, we are not impervious to the fact that there is value in historical precedence. As we navigate the world, our lives become a delicate balance between applying that newly cultivated knowledge and absorbing and employing insight from well-established traditions.

As passionate lifelong learners and members of the design realm, this unique, liminal perspective is a place full of innovative potential. Walking the line between generations, we have the ability to bridge the gap and propel forward world-changing ideas. We, as young designers and creators, are in the position to be an invaluable and revered part of a community that is so highly regarded. In the midst of the chaotic unknown, being young is an exciting privilege.

A kismet microcosm of ourselves and our world, ARCADE is also at a turning point. Given this opportunity, we offer reflection and rediscovery of the future growth of the publication. In this issue, you will find a collection of stories that demonstrates the pinnacle of ARCADE’s insightful dialogue around what was and what will be, thoughtfully considering our path forward.

The feeling of unfamiliarity is uncomfortable, but in reality, it’s something we live with every day. We do not have the power to know what will happen in the next minute, within the next hour, tomorrow, or next year. The only thing we can do is choose to respect our past, live in the present and work toward creating our future.

Truly,

Julia Atkins & Katherine Misel

Julia Atkins, a recent addition to the Seattle design sphere, works as a Project Designer at a local architecture firm. She is passionate about sharing the power of design to motivate, educate and invigorate communities.

Katherine Misel received a bachelor’s degree in journalism/public relations from Western Washington University and works as communications specialist for The Miller Hull Partnership. Although not trained in design, she appreciates all forms of art and is passionate about helping both artists and designers share their stories.
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When obedient trees in curb-lawns and grates become the urban intention, What should we call these "other" spaces: Feral?

Snaking through Beacon Hill on the lightrail, or riding a swaying bus along Lake Union or across the West Seattle bridge, I let my attention drift to the greenspaces squeezed between the rest of our built, zoned, busy and burgeoning cityscape. The ravine, the greenway, the undeveloped lot, the steep slope, the guard-railed embankment. Here a jogger ducks into the greenery on a trail, there and there and there are signs of humans finding all sorts of uses for relatively wild, unmonitored space.

When they are full of undesired plant species, beercan carcasses, heavy metal runoff, What should we call them: Broken?

Mostly, what I can see from these vantage points are maple and fir trees dripping with English ivy, ravines filled and brimming over with Himalayan blackberry, empty lots guarded by ramparts of Japanese knotweed. My botanist’s brain has the desire to name: Hedera helix, Rubus armeniacus, Fallopia japonica. Each a listed noxious invasive in King County and western Washington, but also some of the plants I got to know best, first, in the towns and cities I called home.

When they are the last ecological hold-out for habitat, filtration, respiration, erosion control, Should we call them by their monetary value?

When city officials feel compelled to chip off pieces, parcel by parcel (pixel by pixel), What should we call them: the tragic commons?

Daydreaming from a bus-seat, I remember how much time I spent as a kid totally immersed in the spaces shaped by these plant familiars. Always an experiential learner, I became acquainted with their quirks and qualifiers: sharp; bitter; poisonous; sweet; delicate. Later, formal learning brought other qualifiers: native, invasive, noxious. Then: economically costly, infeasible to remove, degraders of the ecosystem. As I relocated into increasingly urban neighborhoods, I found invasive plant species dominating nearly every untended space; ecological baddies running rampant spoiling parking lots and pavement cracks.

When the city lack adequate housing and the banks of onramps fill with tents, What should we call them: out-of-bounds?

The desire to name can be a tricky one. A not entirely subtle valuation sneaks in alongside formal labels and concepts, of “wild” and “natural” as good. A kind of ecological self-loathing; the human influence as corrupting. The field of ecology can be found grappling with this conundrum. One voice urges us to reconsider the value of “novel” ecosystems as symptoms of global change make it clear that returning to some historical state is not an option while another voice asks, if these changes are not corrupting (from loss of biodiversity to changes in fire cycles and the entire shape of landscapes), than what argument do we have left for making any effort to stem such changes?

When city officials feel compelled to chip off pieces, parcel by parcel (pixel by pixel), What should we call them: the tragic commons?

Lightrail doors jolt open and shut, shuttling my co-commuters to their destinations. The knotweed fortress across Rainier Ave is in bloom, a transitory pollinator paradise squeezed between stacks of tires. As much as we desire black-and-white distinctions, good/bad labels, the natural world has rarely embraced or upheld a binary. In order to truly engage, we are asked to wander the in-between, the grey areas where what “good” is complicated and context-dependent. We are required to confront false dichotomies when and where they sneak in (your shrugged-shoulders complacency, your “but what’s the point”). This confrontation, engagement is critical; and it starts with as simple a thing as attention and curiosity, a refusal to write off the silvers and swaths of greenspace, a going and a looking for something to consider.

When we look in and deeper, and not away, What names will we find for them, then?

Get involved: Check out stewardship programs (Backyard Habitat Certification, Pollinator Pathways), urban restoration efforts (the Green Seattle Partnership) and more.
Above: HAY and GRAY magazine “In Bloom” event, July 2019. Photo by Erik Ursin.

Bottom left: Cover of GRAY issue 45, June/July 2019.

Lauren Gallow: Tiffany, you have been working as a writer and editor for over a decade. In that time, the publishing world has changed dramatically—a shift particularly evident in design publications, with many shelter magazine mainstays shuttering just as new publications like GRAY take off. How have you seen the design publication industry change over the last decade? What are the key challenges and opportunities in our industry today, and how are people working to address them?

Tiffany Jow: I started as an editorial assistant at Surface in 2007. In the time between then and now, design publications have changed in the sense that they’re no longer just magazines—they’re media companies that need to be well-versed in multiple platforms in order to survive. From a journalistic perspective, it is no longer enough to be a good writer, or even a great one. If you don’t know how to produce a video, spot the perfect digital-only story, or build an article on a custom content management system, you’re toast. Even press trips are changing: I recently had a friend tell me that out of a group of 12 on a recent trip to Europe, only two were design journalists, the rest were influencers.

On one hand, the prospect of trying to keep up with it all can feel overwhelming, particularly if you’re a publication located outside a major publishing hub like New York. It’s that much harder to know what people at the forefront of the industry are doing, and that much harder to locate and hire talent that really understands the task at hand. Finding revenue sources beyond ad sales is obviously a key challenge, too, and I find it interesting to see how media companies are trying to overcome it. You see them creating custom content studios, subscribers-only access to articles, shops within their digital publications, more live events. Everyone’s trying to figure it out.

LG: You recently made a big change yourself, leaving your post as design editor for Surface in New York and joining GRAY Media in Seattle as their new editorial director. Why did you make the move to Seattle, and what are your goals as the new editorial director?

TJ: I made the decision to move to Seattle before taking on my current role in February. I grew up just south of Seattle, where my family still resides, and has connections to New York. I felt it was time to come back.

The opportunity at GRAY was compelling to me because it was one I would never have encountered in New York, where collectible design is a common practice and blue-chip architecture firms abound. My job entails pivoting GRAY from a regional publication to an international publication and evolving its content to a caliber that is able to stand alongside the usual suspects. I plan to do that, while making the same transition in its signature events, digital content, custom content and other platforms.

Lauren Gallow: Tiffany, you are a writer, editor, and content strategist specializing in art, design, and culture. You have contributed to a variety of print and digital publications including Architectural Digest, Art Review, Artly, Crafted, Dwell, New York Magazine, Opening Ceremony’s blog, Surface, Wallpaper*, and Wallpaper* City Guides. You have been working writing about art, design, and architecture for over ten years. Your work has been featured in New American Paintings, Seattle Met, and Ledger Magazine, among others. You have also helped create new industries, including design firms Olson Kundig and Studio Dios, articulate their work, and vision across platforms.

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LG: Tiffany Jow has plans to expand into a global multimedia design brand by early 2020. Can you explain what this means and why GRAY finds it important to make this shift? What challenges are you facing in this transition, both regionally and internationally?

TJ: GRAY sees an opportunity to capitalize on the evolution of design publications, in that most of them cover the same subject areas—which are largely based in New York, London, Paris, or Milan—in the same ways. There’s an entire world of creative practitioners outside major cities who are making work that’s just as relevant as the woodworker in Brooklyn or the textile designer in Hackney. GRAY wants to tell those stories and put those designers on the same platform as the ones you’d read about elsewhere. As with any change, it comes with challenges. GRAY is nearing its ninth year of existence, and during those nearly nine years, has become a beloved title in the area. As one of the few design publications in the area, it has had the privilege of covering many firms and artists in Seattle, Portland, and Vancouver BC, and forging deep, meaningful relationships with the creative community here. GRAY has helped these Pacific Northwest cities on the map and launch careers. Shifting its focus from the Pacific Northwest to the rest of the world needs to be done in a way that doesn’t leave behind the people who helped GRAY come this far. At the same time, GRAY needs to be honest with itself about what it’s doing and its competitors—publications that are household names, employ seasoned editors, and have decades of history behind them—and invest in people and content that will enable GRAY to stand beside those competitors and offer something different while still being true to itself.

LG: Many publications (not just in the realm of design) are trying to incorporate the idea of “brand extension” as a means of building resilient businesses. The idea of diversifying brands like Dwell, Wallpaper*, or GRAY with associated products and services in some ways seems like a natural evolution. From your perspective, what is the impact of this “brand extension” on the actual print publications? Are you seeing any changes in the quality or type of written content, or shifts in the ways readers engage?

TJ: I’m not sure if shifting from a magazine to a media company impacts print publications in terms of the quality of its content. It’s likely that a media company will decrease the number of annual issues it publishes as a result of diversifying its offerings, but that just means the magazine will become more of a collectible design object that can be consumed over a longer period of time. Today, if you put an article in a magazine, you need to have a very good reason for putting it there, in that form—otherwise you might as well just put it online. It’s expensive to make a print publication, so that article needs to offer something the reader couldn’t get any other way except by reading it in a magazine. That could mean more long-form reporting, evolving the magazine further into an art object through the way it’s designed, or any other number of strategies.

LG: In a recent issue of GRAY, columnist Glenn Adamson wrote a piece called “Chattering Class” which posits: “A new generation of design critics is talking— are you listening?” Adamson claims that after years of relative radio silence in design criticism, we’re now entering a “golden age of talking about architecture and design.” What are your thoughts on what it means to be a writer today in the world of architecture and design? If it is indeed a “golden age” for writers, is there anything in particular you can attribute this shift to?

TJ: It’s a privilege to make a living as a writer today, and as a design writer, that is much more so. It’s a niche, the design world is global, yet small. People always say they see more friends during Salone del Mobile, the annual design and furniture fair in Milan, than they do in an entire year in New York, and it’s true. Everyone knows everyone, and we’re constantly trading stories about who’s doing what next. Is a publication failing? Is that writer leaving her post to go in-house for a brand? Did that editor start his own design media company? It’s important to know these things to understand what’s on the horizon.

I should note that Glenn Adamson is one of the primary reasons I do what I do today. He hired me in the research department at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, where I worked as an intern on an exhibition he was curating. He was my boss again a few years later, when he took on the role of director at New York’s Museum of Arts and Design, where I was working in the development office. He’s a leading authority on contemporary craft and speaks about making in a way I find totally captivating, and urgent too. His essay wasn’t about this being a golden age of design writing, but of design criticism, and I agree with him. There are more platforms for writers’ voices to be heard now, and more people know about architecture and design than even a decade ago—collectible design is officially a thing. I agree with him.

LG: What excites you most about the future of design publications?

TJ: What excites me most in writing about design is learning about a practitioner’s process and approach. Sometimes actually seeing, or listening to, a person demonstrate that tells more than words ever could.

So, I welcome publications’ expansion into video, podcasts, Instagram, and the like. These are storytelling tools, and when used wisely, they are powerful. These tools can also help us educate people about design and take it farther away from the exclusive thing it once was (and still is). The industry has blown up in recent years. Who knows what will happen next? That’s part of the thrill of being a design writer: you have to stay on your toes and be genuinely creative about how you’ll stay in the game.
By Lauren Gallow

Lauren Gallow has been writing about art, design, and architecture for over ten years. Her work has been featured in New American Paintings, Seattle Met, and Ledger Magazine, among others. She has also helped creative practitioners, including design firms Olson Kundig and Studio Daa, articulate their work and vision across platforms.
Arts entrepreneur Greg Lundgren has been working in Seattle's liminal spaces for over two decades, slowly and steadily chipping away at the white cube gallery mold. Perhaps best known for “Out of Sight,” the series of regionally-focused art exhibits that ran parallel to Seattle Art Fair for three years starting in 2015, Lundgren mounted his first art show in 1995. The next year, he acquired his first brick and mortar space, a 2,500-square-foot storefront in a single-story, 1920s brick building on the corner of 2nd Avenue and Lenora Street in Belltown. The building was slated for demolition later that year, so Lundgren set up a lease for the last eight months of its existence.

This first foray set the tone for Lundgren's work since. He's been busy launching decades worth of exhibits in historic buildings during that in-between time when they're not occupied, but not yet torn down. Most business owners would shy away from these sorts of temporary, transitory spaces. Why put all the effort into something with a known expiration date? For Lundgren, it's the expiration date that he finds most appealing. “The silver lining in a town undergoing such a massive transformation is that there are always buildings slated for demolition,” Lundgren explains. “And that demolition is rarely on schedule. I intentionally look for buildings in this state of flux, because I can't afford traditional market rate properties or the terms of a traditional lease.”

It's about more than rent prices, though. Lundgren's obsession with these liminal spaces is part of a larger social experiment. He's interrogating the very foundations that have traditionally held up the arts—in our region and beyond. Failing and prodding at that tired museum and gallery paradigm with his subversive spaces, Lundgren's work begs the question: Is there another way?

“I believe Seattle needs new art models that are sustainable and profitable,” Lundgren says. He rejects the notion that arts programs must rely on donations via the non-profit approach. Instead, for the last 20-odd years, Lundgren has been tossing up prototypes that are more akin to businesses than museums.

His latest venture, Museum of Museums, is housed in a 1946 NBBJ building on the east edge of the Swedish First Hill Campus. It's a project that's part museum, part art school, part concept store and part interactive fun house. MoM, as it's affectionately called, is Lundgren's proof-of-concept model that the future of art isn't a static, stodgy museum fortress, but rather immersive experiences where people can see and feel something entirely unique—for the cost of admission.

“You have to create an experience that is visually rich,” Lundgren explains. “People want to feel like they’re a part of something.”

Within these crumbling, transitory buildings, Lundgren has been busy crafting something different. Something that mirrors traditional gallery spaces, yet upsets and overturns that model with its very otherness. His is a proposition that Seattle can have a vibrant arts community, one where values are high and demand is even higher. To Lundgren, the power of these in-between places, where floors are rickety and support beams are exposed, is that they offer up spaces of radical possibility. Spaces where art has value and creativity has the legs to run free. It's a vision of Seattle that finds possibility in the past, just as it demands artistic experimentation in the present. It's a Seattle that I, for one, am hungry to live in.

Museum of Museums will host a series of events starting in October and through the winter, with a grand opening planned for February 2020. Follow on Instagram @momartseattle for updates.

Opposite page, top: Lundgren's current project, Museum of Museums, is located in a 1946 Swedish medical office building designed by NBBJ. The First Hill building sat vacant for years before Lundgren took over the lease. Photo by Greg Lundgren.

Opposite page, middle: Lundgren's “Out of Sight” exhibit, 2016, King Street Station. Photo by Rafael Soldi.

Opposite page, bottom: At Museum of Museums, Lundgren and his volunteers removed over 85,000 pounds of construction waste. Photo by Greg Lundgren.
By John Parman


(Thanks to Vasilina Orlova, a Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of Texas, Austin. For more on her work on the village of Anosovo, see www.vasilinaorlova.com)

Since 2006, the anthropologist Vasilina Orlova has studied a “new village” in the orbit of Irkutsk in Siberia, in an area that was transformed by the Bratsk Dam, the largest infrastructure project ever undertaken by the Soviet Union. Anosovo, founded in the 1600s, was one of many villages that was moved and rebuilt in the 1960s when the vast reservoir created by the hydroelectric dam subsumed the Angara River, part of an effort to industrialize this area of Siberia.

Orlova’s fieldwork reveals why villagers in Anosovo choose to remain there despite better prospects elsewhere. Nostalgia in this context is a complex emotion, caught up in what amounts to a utopian vision of a Soviet-Siberian future that didn’t work out, yet remains present in the village’s decaying infrastructure and alive with affect for the cohort that experienced it. Attached to the outer world by a weekly ferry and dodgy web service, these aging residents still identify with a cause larger than themselves—a collective endeavor so significant that the poet Yevlushenko felt moved to celebrate it in his epic poem, “Bratsk Dam.” That it failed, that Anosovo lives in its aftermath, abandoned by the Russian Federation, is incidental to the solidarity of purpose the villagers once experienced, of which every fragment is a reminder.

Orlova’s grandfather was one of the village’s pioneers, drowning when his bulldozer fell through the ice of the diverted Angara River. She too is tied to E. Orlova writes movingly about the arc of her life—from a late-Soviet childhood through the unfolding stages of the post-Soviet era. She argues that the Soviet “collapse” is ongoing. As her dissertation fieldwork demonstrates, the promise of the postwar Soviet Union—its utopian vision—also continues. This exemplifies Walter Benjamin’s idea of now-time, the term he coined to suggest the fluid, layered character of experienced life in which fragments of the past and future mingle with a liminal present.

In his early book, *Time & The Art of Living*, Robert Grudin made the point that time shares qualities with space. We can shape time, he argues, but we rarely do so, treating it as a separate medium in which we happen to find ourselves. Living in space-time as we do, we fail to see time’s currents work for and against us, so we miscalculate, navigating life haphazardly.

Thwarted and finally hounded to death by his opponents, Benjamin struggled to realize his remarkable projects while keeping a roof over his head. His modus vivendi within space-time was to improvise in the face of resistance and reversals. He was guided in this by his insights into time and a synthetic sense of the world around him that resembled what the Dōgen scholar Hée-Jin Kim calls a radical nonduality—a refusal to divide life arbitrarily into categories, especially where time is concerned. Modernity, Benjamin determined, could be traced back from 1930s Paris to Baudelaire, a proto-modern flâneur in the city’s 19th-century arcades. It took a mind like his to grasp that the arcades contained the history of an entire era, but did so as an archive of fragments that successive generations would have to take up anew and reconsider.

All of this is prologue to the thought that liminal space-time is our natural habitat or human condition. Cities, buildings, dwellings and products ground us in the illusion of something to be bridged, an in-between stage like trading bed/clothes for street clothes. The landscape architect Linda Jewell noted to me that plants are in constant flux. It’s all in flux, in reality, but we imagine otherwise. Time unfolds and we lose sight of the fact that we’re unfolding with it.

Everything we do is ephemeral, yet one irony of Benjamin’s life is that, despite everything, most of his work still exists because others managed to preserve it. Even the Nazis, after they seized the contents of his Berlin apartment, couldn’t bring themselves to destroy them. All that seems forever lost is the suitcases he had with him at Port-Bou when he killed himself. Even this will surface, my daughter believes. Our lives and works are ephemeral, yet resilient.

In New Investigations in Collective Form, the first in a new California College of the Arts book series, *Neeaj Bhatia quotes from Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition*. “Human plurality, the basic condition of both action and speech, has the twofold character of equality and distinction. If men were not equal, they could neither understand each other and those who came before them nor plan for the future and foresee the needs of those who will come after them. If men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood.”

I was struck by this. We live at a time when to be cosmopolitan in this local-global sense is to run risks. What’s breaking down as the world shifts to regional parity is a willingness, as individuals and as societies, to be understood by others and to acknowledge “teach human being distinguished” in our speech and actions. The root of this, as Arendt noted, is our unwillingness to admit our equality—we might say, our radical equality—with others, which takes human distinctiveness as a desirable given, the essence of our humanity.

Arendt’s ideal of human pluralism seems almost crazily optimistic in the current climate of rising tribalism. Yet, we see traces of it in movements like Hong Kong and Moscow’s street protests against nationalist authoritarianism, in the Green New Deal, and in high school students’ politically-aware push for gun control and an end to the threat of mass extinction.

Her ideal suggests that Seattle is the equal of every other city-region and yet, distinct from them. These differences are crucial to understanding and being understood, and ARCADE’s allegiance to them—its hyper-local focus—speaks to the dilemmas and responsibilities of the liminal city.

The dilemmas center on a misunderstanding of the local and liminal present that unfolds with no real sense of its past and future. The responsibilities center on our awareness that we are all citizens of the cosmos now, living in a space-time—now time—that’s open at both ends.
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF EXCEPTIONAL LANDSCAPES

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Am I tied to the ground, or just to the idea of owning it? To the idea of putting something on it, in it. This ownership is perpetuated and reborn by each generation. I am an artifact of my ancestors and I must relearn my connection to the land. My work is my connection to the land. My work is my ancestors. Originally, the Mahican people lived on this land, but did not apply ownership in the same sense. Fences serve as both boundary and threshold. As threshold, they mark a change in knowing, an understanding (often forced) between people that may not otherwise be visible on the landscape. A fence makes one place two. Fences serve as either boundary, a fence marks the limit of understanding. A fence can create ownership over what they own and knew all three places created, including the in-between.

My performance drew a line from the doorway of the adapted worker housing in which I had been living, into the space where the people lived. I owned none of the land on which I performed. Instead, the land and what I built owned me. My actions reactivated the history, even if the audience did not know of it. Unheard actions and colored them with my identity—small, young, white, female, a foreign body on the land. The fence I created was only the thinnest idea of one. It was see-through, held nothing in, kept nothing out. In isolating its legitimacy, it made the division vulnerable and in tying it to my body, its arbitrariness and basis in humans, not land, was revealed.

Fences are very much a live topic in current events. From physical fences keeping some people in neighborhoods and some people out, to fences holding some people in prisons and others in cages, to the large fence on our southern border, which some believe should be larger—the news is rife with boundary-making. These liminal spaces, and the people and groups who own and create them, are suddenly of concern to everyone. Conversations in coffee shops are sprouting about whether the space between places is a place in itself. Not only are these news items putting the built environment on the forefront of the collective conscious, but they are also pointing out questions that need to be asked and answered, even in other contexts. It has the general public interrogating their environment and those that build it about ownership, authorship, access and the right to place.

I look forward to performing (real)estate again. It will be different when I perform it in the Pacific Northwest. Here, the land was divided up almost a hundred years later and it holds a fresh memory of before-fences. Here is a place where the land was promised and parcelled out by an independent nation. It was an expression of distance, a place to which the country expanded, and to which people traveled. The fences served as manifestation of promise, as a direct message to those who lived there already and those who would follow. A point in time, as well as a point in space. My performance serves as a way for me to unearth, understand, and reveal place in an engaged, present, personal way, and it is important to perform it in a place I consider home.

In addition to dividing one half of the field from the other, the fence drew the sky and ground. It divided the trees from the road. It divided the before-performance from the after. It divided me from my audience in moments, and in others, it contained us together.

My work exists in liminality—in the space between art and design. Similarly to fences, the in-between space defines and is defined by the fields. In this sense, my work and other inter- and trans-disciplinary work are inherently both reactive and catalytic. And like fences, to consider them as between only two places is simply a product of perspective.

A fence in reality can create more than two, or even three, places. What I realized through my research and performance was that the fence divided as many things as it was perceived to—the lines dictated the division. Similarly, transdisciplinary work divides and is defined by more than just two fields. Space is full of potential and in flowing between fields transdisciplinary practice is activated and can draw in other influences—philosophy, music, psychology, environmental science, human biology. Where boundaries can attempt to maintain the purity of strictly field-adequate practice, they are permeable and meaningful when it comes to defining the space between.
nimble

[nim-buhl]

adjective:
quick to understand, think, devise; agile; active. clever; quick-witted; like Jack.

See A through Z at abc.ssfengineers.com
I remember it quite clearly. Late winter on a weeknight, drizzly and dark. I was riding in the passenger seat of a small two-door car, Allison’s, my ladyfriend of the time. She was driving. We were eastbound on 45th, approaching University Way and looking for dinner, hoping to turn right. Forty-fifth is a four-lane road at that point; we were in lane one, the right lane. Up ahead at the stop bar, in lane two, stood a semi-trailer truck with its emergency flashers on. Our pathway to turn right was clear, but it looked narrow, what with the large truck on the left and the trees and sidewalk on the right. We stopped a bit behind the semi while remaining in our lane. What was he going to do? The traffic light was a stale green, and we let it cycle out. Maybe the truck was going to attempt a wide right, or back up, or something.

After a full cycle, nothing had changed. The semi was still sitting there in the left lane, with its four-ways on, motionless. The light was now green.

We began to drive forward.

We snuck quietly by, the way you tiptoe past a sleeping giant. We were getting through, almost, about to make our right turn. Soon we would be clear.

Except we would never be clear. That moment would never arrive, because now the truck was a moving shape, simultaneously fast and slow, a beast awakened and angling into us, with force. I do not remember sound. There was only the inexorable quality of this massive object, a figure in your dreams coming closer, governed by laws outside your understanding, the kind you know you can’t escape.

The truck’s trailer now, filling our vision from the left, a mass of aluminum cast in sodium streetlamp orange. He was also turning right onto University Way, whether or not we mattered. Allison’s little car didn’t stand a chance. I wanted to tell her to honk, to really lay on it, but the moment was too large. In times of extremity we are reduced to children, awestruck by the strange and terrible newness of it all.

Here is her car on the sidewalk, tires forced sideways, the trailer forcing us up and over the curb, me briefly wondering is that even possible, is this something that can happen. We are on the corner, with the moving semi-trailer on the left and a steel utility pole on the right. The car is getting smaller now, scrunching together but without sound, as the truck continues pushing in from our left and the utility pole stands firm on the right. I remember Allison’s hair, lit by the light of the drugstore opposite, her hands on a now-useless steering wheel, a frantic question in the darkness. My passenger side door is crumpling, and I notice my seat is becoming smaller...

People are beginning to stare. The ever-moving crowd is slowing. I register still figures in my periphery. But against that stasis, one of them, a middle-aged woman, is running out there. Hers is the only voice I can hear, screaming, clapping her hands at the truck driver, her arms making big waves as she races in front of his gigantic vehicle. She is a homeless woman, steadfastly planting herself in the truck’s path and yelling at him, pointing at us. She’s thinking about our lives, not hers.

Only then did the truck stop. Allison checked if I was okay, then immediately got out to ask if the truck driver was alright. Wow, I remember thinking. What a tremendous soul she is. These are the sorts of giants in your presence in this fragile life. There are people and other episodes too personal to mention, and if by a twist of fate you come upon this magazine, know I am forever grateful. I’ve heard the homeless on the Ave described as lowlifes, hobos, garbage, sewer rats, gutter trash, wastes of space, losers, parasites, bums, bloodsuckers, scumbags, dope fiends, gritters, grifters, and indigents. I’d like to add another name: angels.

The crowd would ask what happened, or was I okay, but I was somewhere far away. I looked instead up beyond all this noise, noticing the age of the upper stories of the buildings. Look at those windblown structures in the night. How long had they been here? Objects and neon standing tall against the indigo sky, unmoved by something as small as the human drama down below. Something about their timeliness comforted me.

Where was the homeless woman? I needed to thank her. I was still walking because of her decisions and nothing else. Her life had offered a half-century’s worth of experiences which collectively led her to react as she did, to think this was the right and necessary thing to do. I was immeasurably thankful for everything that made her who she was.

But she was already disappearing into the crowd. I returned to that intersection often afterwards, looking at the faces lining the sidewalk, hoping to see her again and thank her. What did she look like? The face was receding from memory already. I can still see the figure though, to this day fresh behind my closed eyes, a spirit who cares for others without thinking.

It’s been years since that night. I still think about her, rushing into the street. I wonder sometimes, in the intervening years, if I’ve run into her without realizing it. It’s even possible we’ve spoken. If we have, I hope I have been kind. There are strangers to whom I owe my presence in this fragile life. There are people and other episodes too personal to mention, and if by a twist of fate you come upon this magazine, know I am forever grateful. I’ve heard the homeless on the Ave described as lowlifes, hobos, garbage, sewer rats, gutter trash, wastes of space, losers, parasites, bums, bloodsuckers, scumbags, dope fiends, gritters, grifters, and indigents.
The High Water Pants were the culmination of my master of design thesis. They are a pair of mechatronic pants designed for cyclists that dynamically shorten in areas of Seattle predicted to be impacted by sea level rise due to climate change in the future. This creates a subtle tactile cue for the cyclists as they ride, allowing future climate change data to overlay present experiences and leave room for open-ended speculation about what cycling will be like as sea levels rise.

Climate Change is Hard to Feel
This project stems from a personal place: I've been a cyclist in Seattle for the past 13 years—a practice which started as a pragmatic transportation solution and became a lifestyle, forming parts of my community and identity. It was quite alarming then, when Seattle's air quality was dramatically impacted by forest fire smoke the past few summers, I noticed more and more cyclists donning particulate masks and I wondered when I would have to embrace this new bike gear or risk damaging my lungs. All of a sudden, it seemed like cycling, the previously carefree pursuit, might become more fraught as climate change began to escalate.

I realized how uniquely vulnerable cyclists are to the impact of climate change as they are exposed to the elements on a daily basis. Some of the promises of climate change like hotter days in summer, heavier rain events and increased forest fire seem to be manifesting, but it's hard to know concretely due to the generational scale of climate change and the natural variability of weather. For this reason, I set out to make a tool to help cyclists (myself included) tangibly understand how they will intersect with climate change.

To design this tool, I started by attempting to understand cyclists’ existing knowledge of Seattle's weather and climate, as well as their thoughts about climate change. Speaking with cyclists, I discovered they have a rich sensorial and embodied understanding of the seasons: they commented on smelling lilacs in spring, riding closer to the lake in the summer, the dehumidified and “moldy fresh” air of fall and the complexity of riding in cold, wet and dark Seattle winters. However, when asked if they had noticed symptoms of climate change in their commute over time, they often couldn't point to concrete examples.

When asked how they felt about climate change, they expressed hopelessness and frustration. Cyclists felt that they noticed symptoms of climate change in their commute over time, they often couldn't point to concrete examples. When asked how they felt about climate change, they expressed hopelessness and frustration. Cyclists felt that having an impact on climate change seemed, “out of their hands” in the face of systemic disregard.

These conversations helped me realize two things: first, climate change is hard to feel at the scale of everyday life due to the natural variation in Seattle's weather patterns and the fact that climate change contributes to and exacerbates weather systems over generational time scales. Second, narratives about climate change are often overwhelming and hard to verify through personal experience. This led to my creation of the High Water Pants, a pair of speculative cycling pants that “bend time,” overlaying future data about climate change over present experiences of cycling through tactile cues, to allow for comparison between what is and what will be at a perceptible scale. This action can help cyclists tangibly experience their intersections with climate change at a local and personal scale as they ride around Seattle wearing the High Water Pants.

Making Climate Change Tangible for Cyclists: High Water Pants
When sifting through various predictions about climate change and its local impacts on the Pacific Northwest, I discovered that due to Seattle’s proximity to coastal lands, the city (and its cyclists) are going to be directly impacted by sea level rise. The threat of sea level rise is prevalent but slow: major impacts won’t be felt for another 30 to 80 years as sea level is projected to rise 10 inches by 2050 and 28 inches by 2100 at moderate estimates. The longer-term scale of sea level rise made speculative design an ideal tactic for the pants, since speculative design seeks to imagine alternative presents or near futures.

The High Water Pants work by mechanically shortening the legs of the pants within areas of Seattle that will be impacted by sea level rise in the future giving cyclists a tactile signal when they enter a future sea-level impact zone. Using NOAA’s Sea Level Rise Viewer and Seattle Public Utilities Sea Level Rise Map as references, I defined areas that represent future sea-level rise impact zones. As a cyclist rides into those areas, the pants actuate in real-time using live GPS information.

Beyond the mechanical and computational functioning of the pants, they also require cyclists’ personal history as a base for speculation. As noted earlier, through cycling, cyclists come to intimately understand place. They have insights about topography, landmarks, microclimates and scenic cycling destinations. The experience of wearing and feeling future-data unfolds geographically. While riding, memories and understandings mesh with new information, forming a personalized, local, speculative future. Ultimately, the pants bridge the territory between present and future, bending time to mediate the generational scales of climate change. They offer a way to be with possible futures, open avenues for cyclists to reflect on their entanglements within a changing climate and imagine scenarios for cyclists set in a climate-changed future.

The author would like to thank the UW School of Art +Art History + Design and UW DXARTS departments for their support. They would also like to recognize the help of Audrey Denisjardins, Aftoditi Psarra, Guillaume Mauger, and Jason Germany.

Photos by Ioan Butiu.
This is what flowers do. They grow and grow until they break their necks. Or somebody lops off their heads for being beautiful. Or somebody eats them for lunch. Mostly, petals simply grow heavy and begin to turn. They are falling, as shadows are, for a long time. The girl walking home from middle school on the day of the terrorist bomb threat, with fear still singing in her bones, gathers blossoms, big and heavy and wet. Oxana collects a whole raft of peony, lily, magnolia, cyclamen, thinking, a pocketful of posies, ashes, ashes, we all fall down. Childhood sing-songs are often disquieting. She twists and tears blossom heads from their limbs thinking Poeay, the name of her friend, a name she will give her own daughter one day. Oxana is an 8th grade girl on the cusp of high school, who, crossing the threshold of her apartment building, feels she too is a threshold as all bodies are—a place where spirit meets matter and crosses from one space into another.

And as she comes inside she carries her bouquet, holding onto it as if it were a lifeboat, crushing her face into its thick wet scent that gives and gives and buoys her as her hands tremble and she cannot feel her feet. Her feet slap the foyer tiles as she nears the self-appointed concierge’s desk, where a woman with fake nails and fake hair sits at her folding table in her folding chair. The girl makes a sound, a caught and gasping inhale, the flowers’ sweet, vital essence filling her hungry nostrils. And her exhale, part cough, part terror—the woman is eyeing the girl as if she too has just been unmoored—by the sound of the girl’s lungs, and shoes and the flowers’ fleshy heads shrieking scents that shock them both.

Fragrance undulates into the room, a glorious defiance. The girl shudders so hard the concierge feels it slither under her own skin.

‘Are you alright?’ she asks. Della is her name. Della with the big face, a woman with a man’s voice. How they’ve nodded to each other cordially every afternoon for a fortnight and there is now a comfort in it. Oxana—stands thinking of things that make her feel safe—like the sound of her apartment door unlatched, opening, saying, ‘Yes, I am yours.’ And the lock clicking shut, and the feel of the brass chain slipping into the brass slider above it. The deadbolt saying, ‘Just us, family, albeit we don’t live alone do we?’

The flowers hold the girl and the whole of the lobby while she holds Della’s gaze and is flooded by all the small things that make a space sacred...like the thud of her mother’s work bag on the entry bench after her hospital shift and her nurse shoes nestled in the boot tray empty as mouths...the sound of Mrs. Nakata through the wall calling for her cat...sneaking out at midnight to play chess with the widower, Dr. Stanton, who repairs to the lobby to meet other insomniacs...the smell of Mr. Ping frying squid, a scent spreading like oily ink beneath his doorway into the hall...and the pianist who is always up late, door ajar, filling his glass with scotch as his record player leaks Bach and Arvo Pärt...moments filled with presence and portent. The petals and perfume we drink in big drafts of sweetness. Like summer nights finding Poesy standing in the courtyard in a circle of light.

Della asks her again, ‘Ms. Oxana, is everything alright?’ The girl, still clutching her bouquet for dear life, How Principal Corsetti quavered over the intercom, ‘...nearest exit, run.’ Is everything alright? Standing...holding...receiving...grieving. With all her might. Saying, ‘Yes, it is, it will be.’

Photos were taken over a 14-day period in September 2019 with an iPhone. Flower materials used to make the bouquet were all leftover from an event, on their way to the compost heap.

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Between Here and There in Four Parts
Our collaboration with the Burke Museum of Natural History & Culture began over ten years ago. The goal was always for the architecture to serve as a porous membrane—between inside and outside, and between visitors and the collections research happening within. We wanted a museum that was inviting to the public and would share the scientific research that had previously been hidden behind closed doors.

In many ways, the design of the Burke explores an evolutionary model for research museums. It breaks down barriers between public and “back-of-house” spaces, integrating collections and research labs with traditional galleries to encourage visitors to engage with the process of scientific discovery in a true working museum. The Burke holds over 16 million objects from all the different ‘ologies’—biology, geology, paleontology, ornithology and more. The new visitor experience is something like a real-life Google search.

In her original brief, Executive Director Julie Stein outlined two parallel agendas for the new building: it should be transparent and inviting, while at the same time, it needed to provide protection for fragile artifacts and flexible storage for the Burke’s ever-growing collections—agendas that appear to run counter to one another. It’s a classic yin and yang situation: there should be porosity, yet there also needs to be protection and archival storage. To respond to these two agendas, the architecture takes a backseat, occupying a quiet, liminal space supporting the mission of the Burke.

The building is intentionally simple in form, and flexible. It can expand, morph and change as technology changes and as the Burke’s collection continues to grow. The strategy is something like Swiss cheese—we’ve poked holes into different parts and pieces of the museum to reveal what’s happening inside and through it, while retaining opaque, protected areas for the most sensitive pieces in the collection. It’s a new way of approaching museum design, one that intersects the rational and the poetic, just as the Burke’s ever-growing collection does.

Above: Sketch by Tom Kundig, FAIA, RIBA, Olson Kundig
Left: Photograph by Nic Lehoux
As an Indigenous person, I constantly live in a realm of liminal space. Between what was and what will be.

At the Burke Museum, it has been an energetically open time as we transition to the new museum. Our staff and community members are visiting collections that haven’t been seen for a very long time, but their presence has always been known. We have been clearing out negative energy to provide a safe space for Indigenous peoples, a space of conversation for our college students, youth and our elders who remember.

We’ve also changed the voice of the stakeholders in the museum. Expanding cultural practices comes from listening to communities and translating that into action for healing, into the activation of living culture and into the action of creativity. Tribes are bringing cultural practices off reservations and into the museum. We are not talking about Indigenous peoples as part of the past—the emphasis is on “thriving and alive.”

Our Native American Advisory Board is a critical part of our partnership with Indigenous communities. They’ve provided amazing guidance and consultation for us in this process from the old museum to the new. The Blessing of the Hands Ceremony was a Burke-specific gift from the Native American Advisory Board and elders. It honors the new conversation—the new relationship—that has grown through the new museum coming to life.

The staff and volunteers have such care, concern and love for all of the natural and cultural objects in the museum; the elders wanted to create a ceremony to help care for the people of the Burke, in the same way we honor and take care of ourselves personally.

At the first Blessing of the Hands, Tribal elders offered a cedar brushing to acknowledge the commitment of the Burke community as we began to move the collections from the old building to the new. All of the staff and volunteers at the Burke were so open to receiving the Blessing of the Hands. Each person was brushed with cedar collected from trees at the University of Washington, dipped in water from Clark Creek near Puyallup. The ceremony provided love, it provided spiritual care from the elders, the cedar and the spring water. We all came together as a community, standing and acknowledging the journey through transitional spaces ahead. It was a breath of calmness, with a crescendo of, “We’re going to get through this, it’s going to be okay.” And when we got to that angst and pinnacle of anxiety during the move, we called the elders and we did it again. From when we first started to move the collections to when we all moved into our new offices, the elders came in to help us be physically present and prepare for each part.

Elders have not only guided us through transition to a new building, but also to a new outdoor space. The Snoqualmie Tribe partnered with the Burke’s Native American Advisory Board to lead a plant blessing at
Oxbow Farm & Conservation Center in Carnation, Washington, who are growing and caring for the seedlings before they’re planted in the New Burke landscape. The blessing provided a chance to bring the spirit and voice to the landscape as well. It’s a living gallery where the colonial use of a garden can transition. For Native people, the plants are our foods. Seeing baby seedlings of huckleberries and other species in our living food traditions, opened our eyes to the life cycles of these culture-bearing plants. It’s a different relationship with the landscape, and we can now have a deeper conversation about stewardship and the environment through the incredible native plants that welcome you to the Burke.

This time of transition has also opened up the ability to incorporate Indigenous languages into exhibit interpretation. The Puget Sound language Lushootseed is included as quotes in both culture and biology exhibits, labels and Native perspectives of natural history are being included as well. It’s provided us the opportunity to ask elders for an old story about the eruption of Mount Saint Helens and the greater impact of the removal of the lower Elwha Dam, which allows the Lower Elwha Tribe to access old food systems and gathering places again. In addition to the Lushootseed language, over 120 Indigenous languages are included in exhibit labels with these community perspectives at the forefront of the visitor experience.

This experience provides the opportunity for our Indigenous stakeholders to ask different questions and conduct different research by utilizing not just the cultural objects, but the paleontology and biology collections as well. We’re expanding further into the interconnectedness between people and nature. There is a wealth of resources within the Burke to look at: shells, plants, mammals, etc. The New Burke brings in a new way of engaging in research that goes both ways, between scientists conducting fieldwork, and Tribes who have scientists and elders to consult.

What does the future bring us? It’s huge. It’s huge to take on the concept of inside-out. It’s huge, the impact of what this moment of transition will be. It’s going to change how all Indigenous peoples enter the museum, how we as Indigenous peoples view museums before we come in and how we are going to be received by museum staff.

A traditional museum mindset is, “You can’t touch that, even if it’s your grandparent’s basket.” With the New Burke, our frame is, “Let’s provide space to hear your story, and we’re glad you’re here.” This has been the way the Burke has welcomed Indigenous peoples for decades, but it’s going to be more visible now. Not through gawking of onlookers, but of the new nature of the inside-out experience.

The opportunity of the new museum is a moment of change. We’re changing our relationships. We’re changing our access to the public, to the communities, to researchers. We’re changing our relationship with everyone.
A: Were you surprised by anything that has happened as a result of the change?

A: We are all surprised by how long it takes to get from one place to another in a bigger building.

A: Has the new building made you think differently about the collection?

JKS: It makes me happy to see the objects so much more clearly. As you approach the interior of a big building, you are able to see the objects more clearly.

J:K: It's very odd to be a public institution that is closed to the public. We miss the visitors. We all want to stop guessing what the visitors will do and have them join us and do whatever it is they are going to do.

A: Did you have a favorite spot in the old building?

JKS: I loved the lobby in the old building—we had so many celebrations there, so many openings, dances, ceremonies and talks. It held so many wonderful memories.

A: Do you have a favorite spot in the new building?

JKS: Right now, it's the staff entrance because every day I come to work and I can't wait to see the next thing that is coming through the door. Is it going to be a fossil, a person arriving for their first day of volunteer training, a group of people in a climbing gear who are going to repel off the wall to install a mural? It is so exciting to see us getting a loser and closer to opening.

A: Is there a connection between natural history and architecture?

JKS: Yes, the natural world is filled with architectural spaces—a cliff, a rock shelter, a pond, a shoreline. Our building has restful spaces, places that inspire awe, spaces—a cliff, a rock shelter, a pond, a shoreline. Our building has restful spaces, places that focus your attention on something small.

A: In what ways, if any, will the new building impact the work of the Burke Museum?

JKS: We had so many meetings, retreats and listening sessions. We talked about change. Our tribal liaison, Polly Olsen, led a group of tribal elders who purposefully conducted a “Blessing of the Hands” ceremony to help us prepare for the move. Elders brushed staff, construction workers and volunteers with cedar and water to prepare and protect us during this time of intense change.

A: Are you anticipating will be different about working in the new building?

JKS: All we can see is where we are now. We are not sure what the space will look like when the visitor arrives, or when the landscape is completed, or when the trees mature, or after 20 more years of collection growth. We can imagine, but we can't know.
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Photo by: Sultana Photography
The "machine for living in" has always looked different in the Pacific Northwest. Where Le Corbusier coined the phrase to invent a new architecture through technological innovation, design here looked to the rural logging industry. Even after a century of population growth and cultural evolution, the region's dominant design aesthetic is still a northwest school vernacular, treading between romantic visions of wilderness and (environmentally conscious) heavy industry, once described by Jen Graves as "Eco macho." These machines for living were found in the lumber yard—rusted steel, hand cranks and raw timbers. Olson Kundig designs museums and offices that feel like timber mountain cabins. The Bullitt Center utilizes net zero infrastructures more in line with anarchist off-the-grid settlements than building information models. Everything is clad in wood. Tech bros fucking love Burning Man.

As Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years, its architecture began to match. Increasingly more aesthetically representative of Silicon Valley programmers than Cascade logging, downtown has filled with glass towers and tessellated balls. However, for the rest of the Pacific Northwest—the rural Pacific Northwest—design still mostly offers wooden cabins embedded within wooded landscapes. The rural machine is still a nostalgic machine.

This vision could not be more out of step with reality, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years. Increasingly more aesthetically representative of Silicon Valley programmers than Cascade logging, downtown has filled with glass towers and tessellated balls. However, for the rest of the Pacific Northwest—the rural Pacific Northwest—design still mostly offers wooden cabins embedded within wooded landscapes. The rural machine is still a nostalgic machine.

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This vision could not be more out of step with reality, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years, as Seattle's machines changed over the last 20 years. Increasingly more aesthetically representative of Silicon Valley programmers than Cascade logging, downtown has filled with glass towers and tessellated balls. However, for the rest of the Pacific Northwest—the rural Pacific Northwest—design still mostly offers wooden cabins embedded within wooded landscapes. The rural machine is still a nostalgic machine.

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As a landscape architect living in Seattle and working in cities on the west coast, my conversations with other urbanites often turn to major issues affecting our city. Here, homelessness and housing affordability are the major issues we identify as the biggest challenge impacting our city. Recent reports from Housing and Urban Development bear out these observations: Westcoast cities continue to lead the nation in the number of homeless citizens. For this second installment of Urbanites' Notebook, I was curious about what urbanites in other cities outside Seattle see as major issues in their urban realm and furthermore, what they see as potential solutions.

The following four question interviews gather a range of perspectives from urbanites living in the Pacific Northwest and the Southwest. These urbanites are working inside and outside of design and planning. Urbanite's Notebook is an ongoing conversation with city dwellers about their ever-evolving urban landscapes.

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

Jill Juers

In my opinion, access to affordable housing is the biggest challenge facing our small rural city of 33,000. 41 percent of households with rent or a mortgage payment live in housing that is not considered affordable. When people pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing, their quality of life is impacted, their choices are more limited, and the public systems are stressed. As a social worker, I have met with many in Walla Walla who experience significant distress and relationship issues due to poor accessibility of safe, affordable housing. There are several entities studying this problem currently, notably the Walla Walla Community Council and the Walla Walla Council on Homelessness.

How do you personally define “livability” within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

To me, the things that make a city livable include: the beauty of the landscape, short distance to variety of outdoor adventures, local food variety, quality childcare and public schools, consistently good air quality, bike friendly roads and easy commutability, plentiful parks and green spaces, widespread arts and cultural opportunities, and a community that is engaged and thoughtful about growth. In the past 10 to 20 years, Walla Walla has become more livable as access to many of those things have improved. I believe this is because the community has moved in the direction of sustainable quality of life measures.

What is the best part of living in your city right now? What is missing from city life for you?

The best part of living in Walla Walla right now is the ease of community building. Opportunities abound to be involved with non-profit organizations and people overall are friendly and open to new ideas. Also, the commute is fantastic; traffic is a non-issue, and the city is small enough that it generally takes 30 minutes to get anywhere. What’s missing from city life for me is more diversity and close proximity to other places. The nearest larger city of Spokane is about 3 hours away, with Portland being 4 hours and Seattle 5 respectively. There are times, especially during the late autumn/early winter months when the fog rolls in for days when it can feel isolated here.

How do you personally define “livability” within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

I think emerging technology will change Walla Walla by continuing to facilitate tourism. As the city gains notoriety for our award-winning wine, unique and superb restaurants, friendliness and quality of life (especially for people who are retired), new apps and other technologies are adapting and personalizing to tourists’ preferences in accommodation and tasting wines they often travel from afar to experience.

Briana Olson

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

I'd say climate change. Destructive wildfires, increased temperatures and drought have already touched New Mexico, and the threat of future water shortages is real. For reasons related both to drought and water management over the past century, adult Cottonwoods in the Bosque—the wetlands along the middle Rio Grande—are coming to the end of their generational life cycle, with few trees to replace them. Given that New Mexico is one of the poorest states in the union, residents will be impacted more by climate change—but it’s a difficult balance, weighing any potential sources of badly needed investment against long-term impacts.

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I hope that growth in the renewable energy sector will decrease our state’s, and city’s, reliance on revenues from gas and oil production.

Chris Govella

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

I should start off by mentioning that Tacoma is the second largest city in the Puget Sound but has less than half the population of Seattle. Affordable housing, stagnant wages, inefficient and uneven public investments come to mind as significant challenges. The two cities share many of the same challenges because they are linked in the regional economy. But with many of the jobs in Tacoma organized around the service end of the retail economy, workers are more likely to be less able to weather an economic slowdown.

How do you personally define “livability” within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

Livability is relative. I’m not sure how much use it is to compare it across cities. In the few years I’ve lived in Tacomans, I have always found it more useful to drive a car. Some neighborhoods let you get away from the car for longer stretches— if you live in the Stadland District or near UPS (University of Puget Sound). In the last 10 to 20 years, I’m not sure where I fit find the edges. There is a stark contrast in Tacomans Proctor District, maybe even the areas around the port and waterfront. But in the deeper neighborhoods, the old strip mall recipe is still in service, even though it’s starting to show its age. If you’re living in these places, your mobility correlates to your livability.

What is the best part of living in your city right now? What is missing from city life for you?

The best part of living and working in Tacoma is the cost to value. Few cities in the Northwest have such a rich and tragic storied history. The City sponsored tradition of art and culture in Tacoma has developed over many years, and I look forward to the work under Mayor Woodward to further it with a racial equity lens. It’s easy to learn something new about Tacoma from the local creators and their works of art. Places like The Northwest Room at the library and the Tacoma Historical Society contain troves of artifacts. The relative proximity to the water, to mountains, to forests makes it all the better.

How do you think current or emerging technology will change your city?

I’m rooting for technologies that would fit into a multimodal transit-oriented development scheme. I’m sitting for driverless cars and the eventual re-orientation of the city around space for people, houses and business. Car culture as a symbol of creative expression is still going strong. It’s never going to go away. Technology changes faster than taste. But I’m more skeptical of technology and finance grow, it will disrupt other sectors like retail. Wholesale and retail trade are up in the Puget Sound, but nationwide, bankruptcies in the retail sector have grown. Do we replace jobs in shopping centers in the suburb, with pickers in logistics centers in rural areas? With driving jobs in urban areas? Telework has worked out better for large urban metros in attracting talented workers, less so for smaller metros. Remoting into your job works now, but who needs a WeWork desk in Tacoma when the economy reaches the end of the business cycle?
Caught somewhere between an idea and a final product, Sketched demonstrates work in progress. This particular project comes to us by way of Architects Without Borders. The Positive Action for Haiti (PAH) Children’s Home, located in the town of Gonaives, is to accommodate up to 30 children that were made homeless from recent natural disasters. The new facility will serve not only as a home for these children, but also as an educational resource in sustainable practices. Three main buildings organized around a central courtyard provide space for sleeping, cooking and playing, as well as informal learning areas. Approximately 25 percent of the site is devoted to gardening and farming space, which will be utilized as tools to educate future generations of the importance of agriculture in Haiti.

The design team has been challenged to balance structural tectonics, materiality constraints, and thermal comfort concerns. In order to respond to forthcoming natural disasters, the design has adopted a confined masonry structural system to withstand hurricanes, earthquakes and flooding. Due to limited building materials, these structures will be constructed of locally made compressed earth bricks, poured concrete, and dried bamboo sticks. The team also is addressing passive strategies through double roof systems, rainwater harvesting, composting toilets and solar energy. Guided by these project requirements, the team has produced numerous sketches to refine the design towards an attainable, finished product.

Sketches produced by Chelsea Gorkiewicz, Maria Llop, Joe Balachowski, Buzz Tenenbom, Stone Faison and Julia Atkins.
My mother was Tulalip, and my sister and I grew up on the reservation (a most extreme form of redlining) in a house on land leased from the tribe. Because my mother didn’t own the property, the house was very affordable. It’s a community where she belonged, one historically and legally bound to the land. When the tribe ended her long-term lease as part of a plan to restore property near Tulalip Bay, the house was worthless. Essentially, it had been repossessed.

After graduating from the University of Washington in the mid-90s, I bought an affordable house in the Central District, then a majority black neighborhood. My best friend owned the house next door. We renovated our places, took down fences, removed bars from windows, planted trees and helped establish a community pea patch. When he left town, I bought his house and became a landlord.

Now, having seen my original neighbors slowly replaced and the racial balance change, I have to ask: Am I a gentrifier?

For this project, I thought about my role in the neighborhood, my role as a property owner, the reservation I came from and the original state of the land versus Seattle’s incessant development. I realized I have an underutilized, highly-visible piece of property. A parking space at my rental house, inside the remnants of a garage, viewable only from the street, became a spot to experiment with public art on private property. The result is the nanoforest, a tiny slice of native plants and trees in the heart of the Central District.

The nanoforest is a diorama of what the land was, identified by a “land use” sign announcing the coming demolition of all existing structures and reforestation of our neighborhood. Clearly a joke, but it’s also a space frequently inhabited by birds, insects and racoons, a retrograde contrast to cube-house construction swallowing the land. It’s also a connecting point for my neighbors—who both laugh at and bemoan the changes around us. It’s a space to experiment—birthing a photo show documenting my sister and I engaged in street theater, plus the world’s tiniest music fest, aka “nanofest.”

Starting from the lowest rung of society’s ladder—the rez—I don’t consider myself a gentrifier, but one who’s added the neighborhood, to its culture. My possession of the land is only fleeting, and our time as a species is extremely precarious. How we treat what little nature remains matters. One way or another, nature will repossess.

Smith will speak about his work at the Hibulb Cultural Center, Tulalip, November 2, 1-2pm. Photos first exhibited in “Repossessed” at SOIL Gallery, Seattle, curated by Ellen Ziegler, August 2019. Credits: Daniel R. Smith with Melanie Masson, Jen Ng, Kim Kalliber, and Donna Cooley. nanoforest.org, instagram: @thenanoforest
Liminal Space

An Interview with Ted Smith by BUILD llc

Ted Smith is a founding member and principal of the RED Office in San Diego, and has been a faculty member at San Diego State University’s Master in Real Estate Development program, which was designed for mid-career architects. Prior to the RED Office, Ted, along with long-term partner Kathleen McCormick, founded Smith and Others, a design-build-development firm. He has completed dozens of development projects in San Diego, and has been instrumental, along with the MRED faculty, in pressing the boundaries to create new ordnances allowing housing innovation.

BUILD llc is an industrious architecture firm in Seattle run by Kevin Eckert, Andrew van Leeuwen, Bart Gibson, and Carey Moran. The firm’s work focuses on effective, sustainable, and sensitive design. BUILD llc operates an architectural office, contributes to ARCHITECT with an ongoing interview series, and is most known for their cultural leadership on the BUILD Blog. BUILD intern Tori Hayes contributed to this ARCADE interview.

Last summer BUILD traveled to San Diego to meet with Tori Smith, we found them working on a project that interested us. We found out about their projects at the San Diego Architecture Biennial and were intrigued. They told us about their work and how they were different from other architects.

As an architect in San Diego, what prompted you to put on the developer hat?

In the early 80s, the interest rates rose to 20 percent – there was no work, I was losing my house and no new clients were calling – so, I found myself developing projects. I built a living unit for a friend on a lot I had purchased a few years earlier, just a little box, and I decided to keep working on it until I ran out of money. It was liberating. We put a roof on, placed some windows, and on the interior we added a toilet without any partitions around it. We passed the inspection and my friend moved in. Soon, twenty more of my friends wanted a little box to live in, and I realized I could fit more of them on the lot, so we purchased additional properties and accommodated them all over the next five years. That’s how it began.

How did the community react to these little boxes?

Back then, according to San Diego’s building code, you could only have one kitchen on a property like mine, so as I continued building little boxes, I designed them so they all accessed a shared kitchen in the center. There was a lot of opposition – zoning wars – a lot of hearings, and years of conflict. At the time, there was a case law ruling that stated a family did not have to be blood-related, and there were no constraints on the size of a family, so the building department couldn’t put a limit on the number of bedrooms in a house. We stayed comfortably within the old definition of five unrelated adults constituting a family. Everything we were doing was legal but we still struggled with the NIMBYs. Eventually, a good thing came out of the experience: the project type was incorporated into the municipal code and they even use our invented name, GoHomes, and they are now a permitted use.

The San Diego Architecture Foundation hosts an Orchids & Onions event each year where Orchids are given to exemplary projects, and Onions are given to those that miss an opportunity or create an eyesore. Has this improved the built environment?

The Onions go to the architects who innovate. The Orchids are given to exemplary projects. When the San Diego Architecture Foundation announced the Onion award, everyone who hates the Orchids & Onions event gathered at the Eitol for a giant celebration and danced around the building. The Onions go to the architects who innovate.

What are you currently experimenting with as an architect-developer?

We’re developing a system where sweat equity in a project becomes an ownership investment. Many of the landowners work with don’t know the development business well enough to build a project, so we put together a deal that combines their land asset with our time, expertise and work, and we break down the completed phases of a project into percentages owned. The entitlements and architectural fees might add up to a 20 percent investment in the project equity, and if we take on the contracting, it increases to 50 percent. Everyone working on the venture keeps a timesheet and their hours translate into a percentage of the ultimate profit. It’s like having a little annuity instead of a meager wage that is immediately spent. And from the landowner’s perspective, sweat equity becomes very attractive because they don’t have to gamble as much with the traditional development model. Most often, architecture fees are the biggest project expenditure and it’s all money that must be shelled out before the project is actually worth anything through the securing of entitlements. This is the current business model of the RED Office where we take the risk and control of the architecture.

Do your building models scale to different cities?

One of the missions of The RED Office is to be constantly trying new ideas in different places. This philosophy took us to Manhattan where we were part of an exhibit on micro loft housing at the Museum of the City of New York. We quickly realized that if you make your ceiling heights more than ten feet from floor to floor, as we do in San Diego, you lose several floors within the overall height of the building. This doesn’t pencil financially so we had to change our thinking. We found a tipping point at 21 feet from floor to floor, so you can achieve a much smaller floor plan that allows for more units within the footprint of the building, which is critical in New York.

Interview continued on page 38

All photography by Andrew van Leeuwen

Instagram: @avl.photo
This is why I find contemporary renderings so going to be there. Whether it’s done consciously or not, adult life? The modern figurative space is fairly gray. I can’t see it any other way.

Liminal spaces were very important in architecture, you see, because moving between one room and another is, I guess, a spiritual exercise? Sometimes, thinking this way is good. It leads to caring for and consideration of often neglected spaces. Sometimes, a hallway is just a hallway. That said, anthropological liminal spaces are important. For both good and bad, modernity has done a good job of dissolving ancient means of transitioning children into adults.

This is why I find contemporary renderings so interesting now. Sure, those images represent a future, often heroic-looking building. It’s instructive that those images also exist in their own liminal state between not real and real. It’s a little ironic that, more likely than not, it’s an intern (almost an architect, but not quite) that’s designed them. However, the most important thing is that they’re telling a story about the people that are going to be there. Whether it’s done consciously or not, I cannot see it any other way.

People are generally resourceful and resilient, so they’ve managed to find a way to do this without so much ritual. But, in the absence of an ill-advised, unsupervised adolescent walkabout in the Palouse, how are young people supposed to be initiated into adult life? The modern figurative space is fairly gray. What counts for initiation any more? What signals adulthood for those without? Without answers to these questions, I offer the literal, physical liminal space for consideration.

My life is pretty far from the architecture business. But, it’s not so far to not be able to write about it. Ten years on, I still value my design education because I learned something about the world and humanity from the architects, cities, and buildings I studied. I also suspected early on that what architects say in books and the occasional post-lecture happy hour is forgotten when the Micron pens hit the desk. That isn’t a knock.

Consider that nobody wants to pay the money that good design requires. Material costs aren’t what they used to be, nor labor for that matter. Also, try not to be buffaloded by the design review process. Not only is it a wonder that anything gets built, it’s amazing to me that anyone ever tries. The frustrations of the modern architect are almost cliche at this point: it doesn’t make them less true.

With all the limiting realities architects must deal with, it may lessen their burden if they forgot the vocabulary, the theory, and the economy to consider this: architecture itself is a liminal project. This means that architecture is an anthropological project. It’s new news. It means it doesn’t matter that much how architects envision a finished building: whether it’s a mirror-glass curtain walls or cement board panels if it won’t open. And those same people will feel nostalgic for it after they move away. How is this good news? For the architect, it means real freedom, or at least it ought to be.

“Architecture,” Alberto Perez-Gomez wrote, “is the site of human drama.” Human drama didn’t occur only in the past and superficial nods to precedent aren’t a magic wand to conjure it. It’s a human desire to connect with the past, even if it is a superficial link, I think much of what is commonly imagined as Pacific Northwest vernacular depends upon this type of historical connection.

I recently saw some marketing collateral for an apartment building. Some of the building materials were intended to reflect the former presence of a formidable industry. It’s a fine-looking structure, but symbolic gestures like that lean uncomfortably close to postmodern architecture’s more unfortunate tendencies. Also, who cares? At some point, housing is going to be plentiful in this city and relatively inexpensive. People will eventually have a choice of where they live beyond what they can afford. We’re in a sad state when essential questions, liminal questions, are forgotten and all that’s left for the designer to solve is, “How shall we clad?”

Future building will be indifferent to the architect’s most noble design intentions and its users’ mercurial tastes. Humanity will go on and perform its rituals in front of mirror-glass curtain walls or cement board panels if it has to. Of course, it doesn’t.

As this essay is about renderings, I’d like to return to them before the end. Any decent rendering does its best to fill represented space with all sorts of people. But, aside from admiring the building and enjoying an intensely epiphanic sunset, what do you suppose these photoshopped people are supposed to be doing? Can you imagine their lives and how might that shiny, dramatically lit building serve their aspirations, or at least not get in the way? What kind of physical space is conducive to help them—these imaginary people—be a part of a community, make discoveries, find meaning. What would help them know what they are? It may mean working backwards, a bit, from the point of dropping in the lens flare.
Liminal Space
BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE
By Iskra Johnson

West Coast artist Iskra Johnson explores the geography between stillness and impermanence through the practice of contemplative art. Embracing diverse media, her work combines photography, printmaking, digital art and painting. Currently she is focused on two themes, displacement and change in the architectural/industrial landscape, and the quieter but no less dramatic metamorphoses of the natural world.

I have been photographing the Alaska Way Viaduct for at least 25 years. In its last days this iconic structure remains, for me, an enduring object of affliction. In 2014, for my solo show “Excavations,” I did a series of work that juxtaposed the glory of the drive through the city’s sky with the structure’s decay and impending disruption. In its various states of ruin the Viaduct holds a complicated power of legacy, eulogy and promise. The shards of a structure destroyed after barely a decade of use confront us vividly with impermanence. The last pillars, in all their grimy minimalism, face off with what will be a new waterfront poised between its purpose as a port and its probable future as a gentrified tourist playground.
By J.I. Kleinberg

Artist, poet, and freelance writer, J.I. Kleinberg’s found poems have been published in Diagram, Dusie, Entropy, Otoliths, and elsewhere, and will be exhibited in Seattle at Peter Miller Books in May 2020. Her article “Imaginable Possibilities” appeared in Arcade Vol. 22 in 2004. She lives in Bellingham, Washington, and posts frequently at chocolateisaverb.wordpress.com and thepoetrydepartment.wordpress.com.

I love the thing between
the shock of admiration
And a beautiful mistake
between hassles and unfortunate charms
between intrude and fiery generosity

Horns

devoted to the coincidental, confused by the

goodness of the future

the past is in a chapel in the middle of slowly circling

between and thought

image,

the un-found

Nirvana

the crumbling slope of apocalypse

the synagogue of words

between the meadow...
Dear Roger Miller, Secretary of the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT),

I am a humble citizen of the State of Washington, who happens to write a column for ARCADE Magazine, a regionally focused design publication. Over the last decade, I have focused several articles on WSDOT projects and causes, including the new 520 Bridge (ARCADE issue 33.2), and most recently, the demolition of Seattle’s viaduct. Please, don’t get me wrong, I am certain that your job of safely and efficiently transporting thousands of cars around the state each day is incredibly difficult and important. But I have one big bone to pick with you. As much as I have been celebrating the demise of the diabolical viaduct which, by the way, may be the single most transformative urban intervention that will happen to Seattle in the 21st century, I have been stunned by the banality of the new SR 99 tunnel.

No, Seattle is not Paris, Shanghai, Barcelona, Tokyo, or New York City; world-class infrastructure projects aren’t to be expected. The fact that the city actually mustered the courage needed to take down the viaduct should be satisfaction enough even for my snobbish metropolitan tastes.

With all the urban optimism surging in my veins, I drove through the new tunnel soon after it opened and experienced the equivalent of a one dozen Krispy Kreme donut sugar crash. There are some very interesting aspects of the tunnel that deserve celebration. It is an engineering marvel—9300 feet long, it not only traverses under the existing viaduct, but also downtown Seattle, and reaches a depth of 200’ below sea level. And most Seattleites know about the infamous 56 foot diameter boring machine called Bertha. Of course, Bertha stalled 5 months into the project, for a two-year delay, but she broke through the ground in April 2017 and the community celebrated. But while pictures of the tunnel under construction before the double decker driving lanes were added are spatially stunning, if I were to describe the new tunnel in exclusively positive terms, I would say it is, well...well it.

But let me address SR 99 a bit more objectively. It is ugly—very, very ugly. It’s unapologetically and incurably ugly. The fact that it is long makes it almost unbearably inhumane. And all of this is what makes it such a quintessential WSDOT transportation project. Like the new 520 bridge, it not only doesn’t address alternative forms of transportation, it refuses to give an inch visually.

Historically, being stuck on the viaduct at least meant a long protracted panoramic view of Puget Sound. But maybe the witch didn’t die. Maybe the witch was just buried in a long unrelenting tunnel. If that’s the case, let’s all hope she doesn’t resurrect when WSDOT decides to add another massive auto oriented transportation project.

Humbly yours,
Ron van der Veen, ARCADE Side Yard Columnist.

Before writing this letter to you, Mr. Miller, I gave WSDOT the benefit of the doubt in assuming that maybe there were no contemporary examples of beautiful and creative tunnels to be found. I Googled “beautiful tunnels” and the first image I found was Laserdalen in Norway, with its magnificent use of lighting to create a majestic and alluring atmosphere. I found the wonderful exhausteräkn tunnel tower for the Tokyo Bay Aquiline Tunnel. The lighting spectacle of the Bund Tunnel in Shanghai is dazzling. I implore you to Google “Entrances to the Mont Blanc Tunnel between Italy and France” for a taste of celebratory gateways. I know I am writing this letter to you years too late, so it might sound trite and irrelevant. Heck, you are a traffic engineer, so you probably think I am some kind of spend thrift urbanistic nut job that wants a public park on every corner. For the SR 20 bridge WSDOT had a specific design approach called “Practical Design” which states: “Practical design is an approach to making project decisions that focuses on the need for the project and looks for cost-effective solutions...” The result is smarter, more effective designs that maximize results with limited funding.” That is not the kind of design philosophy that breeds imaginative transportation projects.

In an age of short tweets I understand that this letter has probably challenged your patience like a Mercer Corridor traffic jam, but I leave you with this one last thought. This all has me remembering the song I was humming in the first installment of this ARCADE Magazine Side Yard Viaduct Trilogy: Ding Dong the Witch is Dead.

But maybe the witch didn’t die. Maybe the witch was just buried in a long unrelenting tunnel. If that’s the case, let’s all hope she doesn’t resurrect when WSDOT decides to add another massive auto oriented transportation project.

Humbly yours,
Ron van der Veen, ARCADE Side Yard Columnist.

* SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program-Practical Design: https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/SR520Bridge/About/practicaldesign.htm

Outmanoeuvring the System

An Interview with Ted Smith

Which of your space saving ideas is most controversial?

The collapsible bathroom. We figured out that the code doesn’t require a living unit to have walls around the toilet unless you have a kitchen. Since most of the units we design are for shared housing with multiple suites, the primary kitchen is located in only one of the suites, so the others can be open rooms with panels around the toilet that fold back to create more space when the bathroom is not in use. Some people see a lack of bathroom privacy as the trade off. We like the unusual space, and don’t mind the market share reduction.

When you bring a set of plans to the building department, are you overtly scrutinized because of your reputation?

Yes. They definitely know who we are at the building department, but half of the people who work there are our friends. The other half are confused and work to impede us. We’ve also had three graduates from The RED Office who have gone on to work there, so we have these highly active, incredibly smart people in the planning department helping to guide our projects through the obstacles. I’ve been in my share of trouble with the city over the years, but I’ve also helped create many valuable ordinances in the process – so, the trouble has been worth getting things codified.

Do you have any examples of stepping over the building code line that you regret?

After starting the MRED program, one of our students immediately began applying many of our strategies to projects. His neighbor complained when he made the master bedroom vanity kitchenettes full kitchens, and I regret that I wasn’t clearer about the fact that we walk on the edge of legality when using these strategies. I don’t feel bad being a little bit on the edge myself, but I have to be really careful advising others to take those same risks. At the same time, if you’re not going to stick your neck out, as an architect or developer, you are always going to end up building the same stuff.

Who do you recommend we interview next?

Mike Burnett, the rock-star architect-builder who created the E潔 Tower, which received the Onion award. That building has the best public space that anyone has made in years here in San Diego. And of course, Jonathan Segal, who’s a great architect. His buildings appeal to an upscale market that’s different than ours, but then his budgets include enough money to build apartments in concrete.
Designed and manufactured in Seattle since 2001.