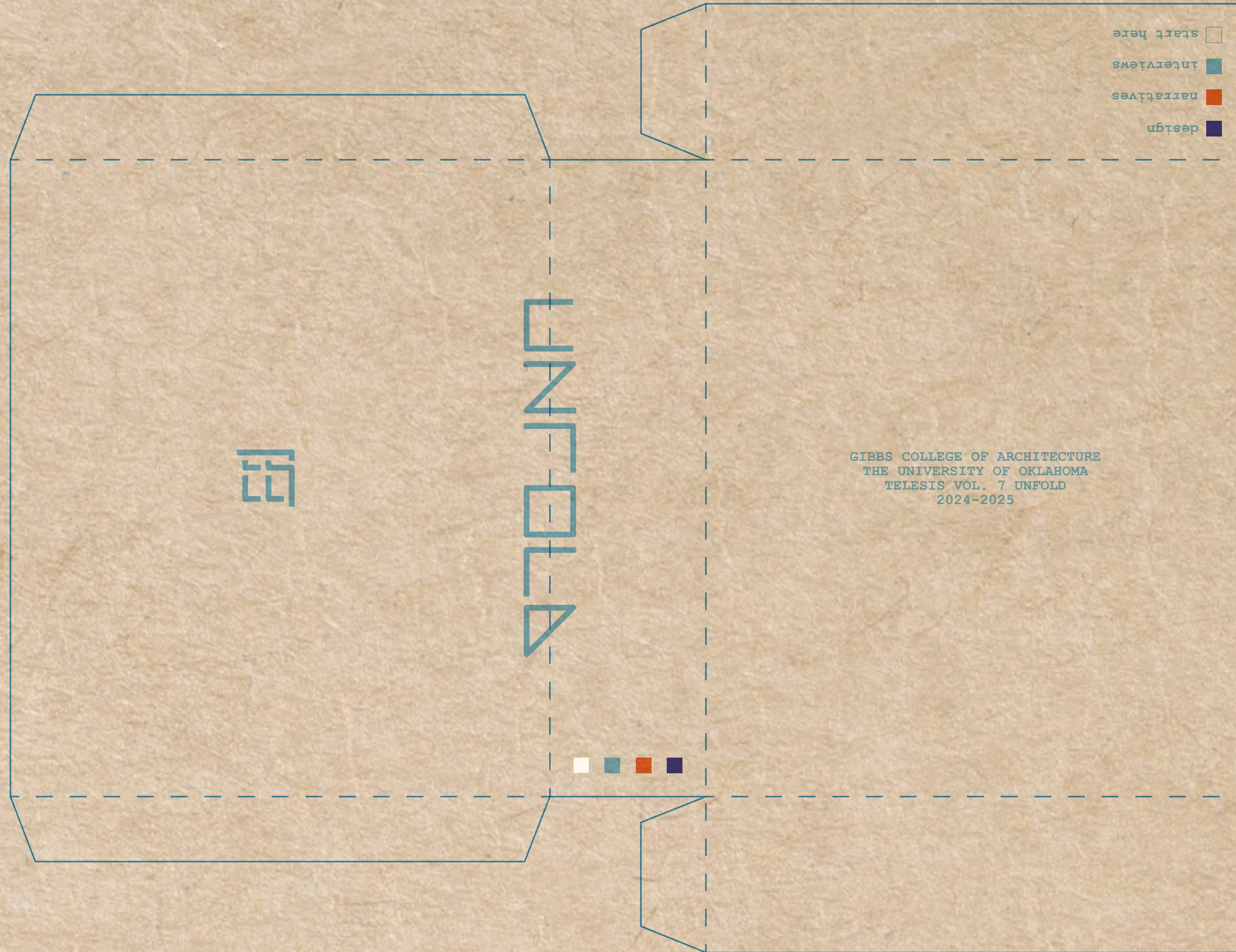




INNER BOX  
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SCORE ———  
CUT - - - -



start here □  
interviews ■  
narratives ■  
design ■



UNFOLD

GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
TELESIS VOL. 7 UNFOLD  
2024-2025



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- **Trey London** / Capturing Context.....
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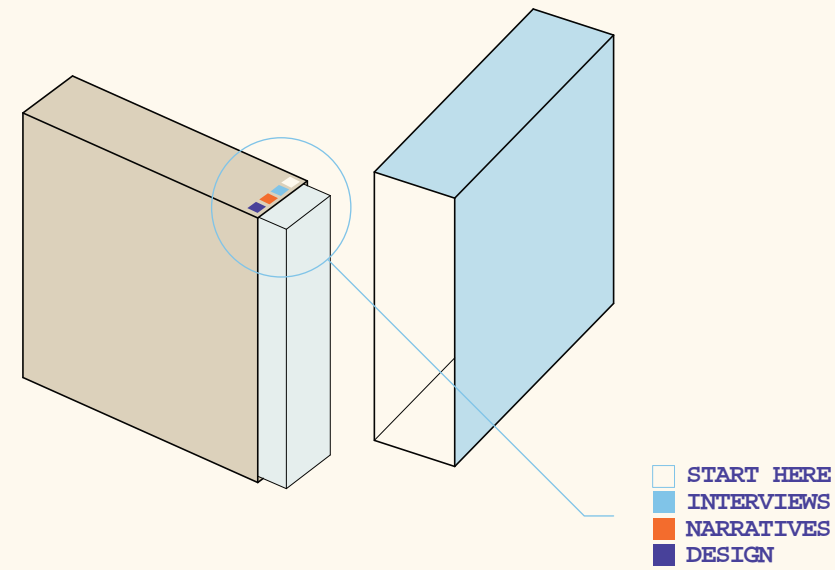
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# UNFOLDING UNFOLDING UNFOLDING UNFOLDING

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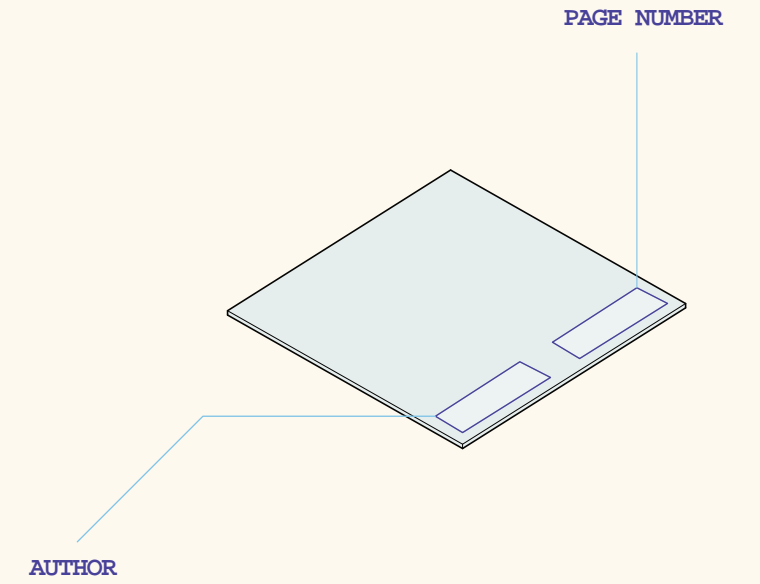
## UNFOLD

The printed edition of "Unfold" consists of double-sided, folded posters, all presented in a custom-made box.



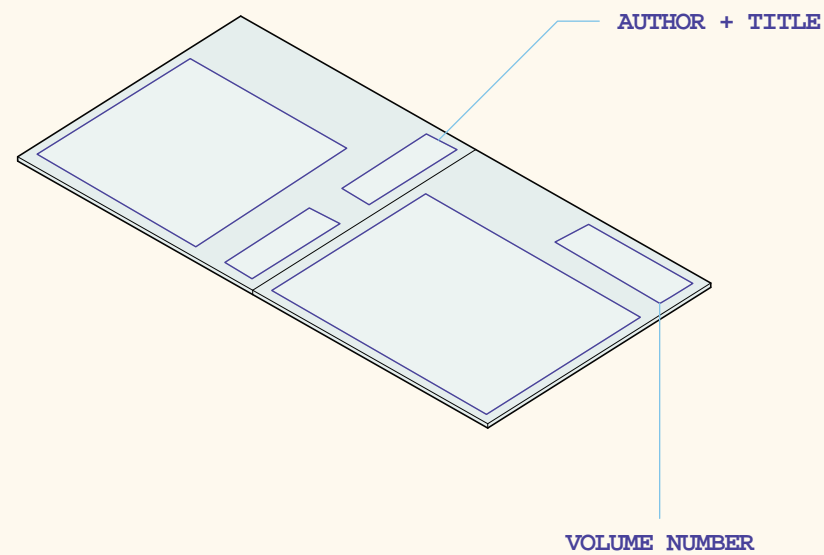
## AUTHOR + PAGE

Each contribution appears on a folded poster, with the author's name and page number visible when the poster is folded. Longer contributions may extend across multiple posters.



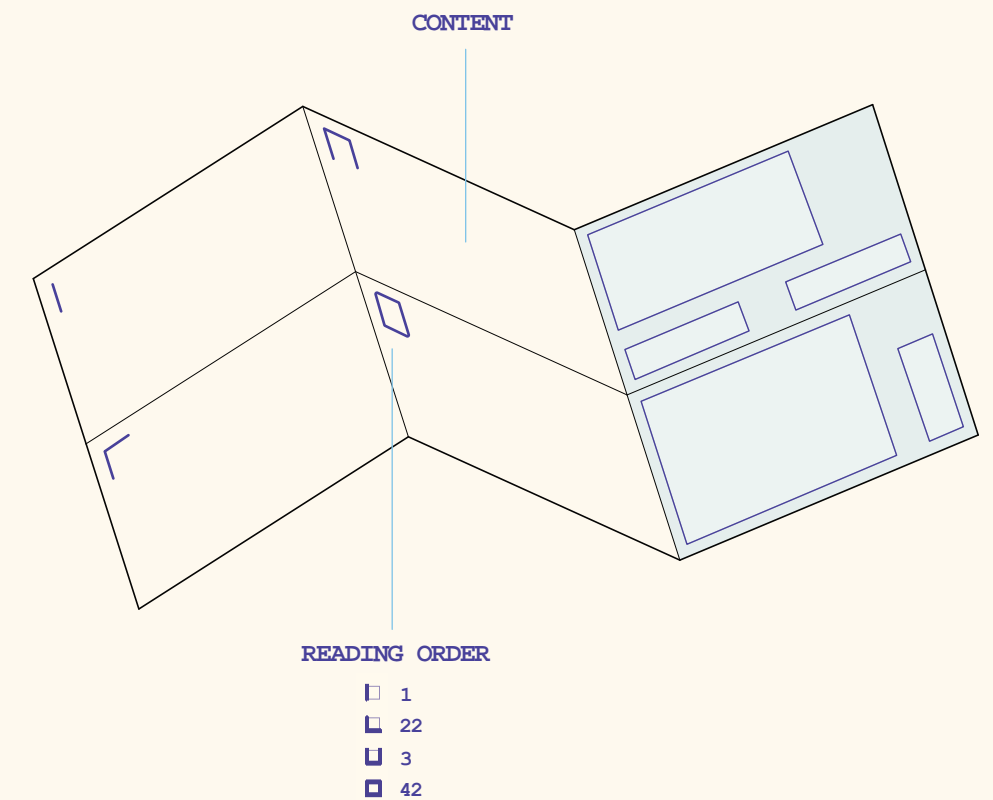
## POSTER TITLE

The title of each contribution is revealed as the poster is unfolded.



## CONTENT

This digital edition of "Unfold" displays each poster as it was originally printed. Because each poster is meant to be revealed gradually as it is physically unfolded, the content may appear out of order in this digital format. Please follow the marked reading order, and note that the beginning of a poster may appear on its second "side."







Above/ Image of Hans Butzer  
Dean of Christopher C. Gibbs  
College of Architecture

# THE DEAN

**HANS BUTZER, FAIA**  
Dean + Professor  
Gibbs College of Architecture



## » EMBRACE THE UNFOLD!

The excitement of an annual student-led journal publication is that it allows one to explore the writings of one's students and their collaborators as both individuals and advancing generations. It collects transforming insights into how they see the world around them and hints at those things they value.

This seventh volume of the national award-winning Telesis reminds me of the 1941 copy of Richard Halliburton's Complete Book of Marvels that quietly occupied a bookshelf in my childhood home. My father in his youth consumed Halliburton's legendary dramas as a diversion from the unrest and terror of Europe of the late 1930's and early 1940's. Filled with stories of ambition, risks and glory, Halliburton invited his readers into a series of adventures over the centuries that projected great accomplishments only possible when people are working together to establish common ground. Most of the Wonders Halliburton recounted no longer stand but their lessons speak to the importance of relentless shared pursuits of striving societies.

The essays of this volume are filled with fearless journeys of inquiry and commitment. They describe deliberate practices and processes intent on resolving problems with elegance and consensus. There is no hesitation to lean into the contemporary challenges of our day. Students and professionals investigate themes of a social, environmental, fiscal, and spiritual nature. There is nothing mythical about them, yet they are individually experienced as something monumental and deserving of our attention. They hint at what we might come to expect from the professions which plan, design, and construct tomorrow's built, repurposed, and preserved environments.

Like Halliburton nearly a century ago, our students call us to proceed with courage, embrace change with purpose, and envision a future shaped by innovative spirit and leadership. We hear them speaking to that which we hope to become. Let's join them as they collectively reveal the next chapters of our history.

*Auffalten!*

# MES - SAGE FROM

# THE DIRECTOR

**DAN BUTKO, AIA**  
Director of Architecture  
Gibbs College of Architecture



# MES- SAGE FROM

## » TO CURRENT + FUTURE STUDENTS,

Once upon a time not long ago, many of us seeking the spelling or definition of a word would open a printed dictionary. We folded over the cover and flipped through the pages, scanning for a rough approximation as our fingers and eyes danced across the columns of text in eager anticipation. The tactile sensation of paper, the coordination between hand and eye, and the intellectual deduction – these were all part of activating the discovery process. Today, we have traded that journey for the convenience of instant digital searches and virtual assistants. The perched and ready technology now suggests answers before we even ask, often auto-correcting us along the way, sidestepping the thrill of discovery, problem-solving, and reasoning.

The English word architecture<sup>1</sup> is defined as “the art or practice of designing and building structures.” This definition captures the interdependent relationships between the designer and builder through concept and construction, developing and producing, creating and making, and the scale of creation between representation and the physical construct. The artistic processes of sketching, drawing, and modeling are all born from ideas and data that eventually manifest into the physical spaces we inhabit. Architect Bruno Zevi once said, “Architecture is not art alone, it is not merely a reflection of conceptions of life or a portrait of systems of living. Architecture is environment, the stage on which our lives unfold.”<sup>2</sup> The designer and the builder both travel this journey, informed by a shared vision toward an ultimate arrival.

In architecture, the word unfold carries a rich, metaphorical meaning connecting the process of design and the experience of space. To unfold is to reveal or disclose something that was once hidden or unknown. **The act of unfolding exposes the untold.** It can describe the way a building is revealed, experienced, or even constructed. Consider the difference between the words unfold and untold. While they sound similar, only a small variation – the curve of a letter – separates them. We unfold a wallet, a shirt, or a map, and in doing so, expose what was previously unseen.

In much the same way, the unfolding of your own story takes time and is shaped by your experiences. An article by author Gretchen L. Schmelzer analyzes Galway Kinnell’s “St. Francis and the Sow”<sup>3</sup> concludes with “The unfolding is what is beautiful.”<sup>4</sup> This idea of unfolding – of revealing what was hidden, of allowing time and touch to shape something into its fullest form – reminds us of the beauty in the journey, not just the destination. The future of architectural education and education in architecture is unfolding at a rapid pace. It is shaped by global-reaching factors and complex issues such as technological advances, evolving urbanization needs, societal agency, environmental stewardship, and new professional practices. The journey through architectural education offers future industry professionals the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to address such vital necessities. I encourage each of you to make the most of every opportunity that comes your

way here at OU. Leave no stone unturned, no guide left unopened. Embrace the richness of your education, both in terms of new knowledge and the further development of what you already know. Grow as a person, a collaborator, a thinker, and a traveler. Explore research opportunities, engage with the broader architectural community, and seek internships with firms whose work you admire. Build the connections that will shape your future.

The ultimate goal of your architectural education is not just to master the technical and creative aspects of design, but to become professionals who are equipped to tackle the complex challenges ahead. These challenges – whether environmental, social, or technological – demand a new breed of architect: one who is innovative, adaptable, and deeply committed to shaping a more sustainable, equitable, and thoughtful built environment.

Life, much like architecture, is a story that unfolds day by day. Sometimes, the most beautiful and profound moments emerge when we allow ourselves to unfold naturally – embracing the journey with curiosity, grace, and an open heart. While the connections among your learning experiences might not always be immediately apparent, I urge you to Anticipate and Activate architecture – and to personally define what that means to you. As you continue your journey in architecture, remember: **“the unfolding is what is beautiful.”**

**Below/** Image of Daniel Butko  
Director of the Division of Architecture,  
Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture



**END NOTES:**  
1 <https://libnotes.com/bruno-zevi/quote/br4h2c>  
2 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/architecture>  
3 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/42683/saint-francis-and-the-sow>  
4 <http://gretchenschmelzer.com/bl9-1/2024/3/17/the-unfolding-is-what-is-beautiful/>



Above / Photo of Telesis Team 2024-2025  
Yousef Haghghi (left), Felipe Flores (center), and Trey London (right)



## UNFOLDING THE "UNFOLD"

For *Unfold*, we invited contributors to share untold narratives—accounts, compositions, and other forms of media that are often overlooked and unnoticed. In a world of big headlines and limited characters, we strive to illuminate the meaningful processes, intricate journeys, and quiet details that form the sacred particulars of each person's life. *Telesis* encourages its readers both figuratively and literally to explore and unfold the pages of its composition and reveal the stories that are often swept under the rug for polished final products. This edition invites readers to pause, reflect, and appreciate the complexity that underpins design, architecture, and the everyday human experience.

Additionally, this edition marks not only an important and transformative time for the world and our society, but for *Telesis* itself. Going into our seventh edition, *Telesis* is now a fully student-run organization—a responsibility we carry with gratitude and humility. We intend to honor the sophisticated and formal *Telesis* we know and love from recent years since

its revival, and the playful and experimental journal that defined its founding in the 1970s. This significant approach reflects a stewardship of the journal's legacy, and has led us to maximize student input into the journal's composition, as the theme and its quirky, new ideas and style have been inspired from the students at OU's College of Architecture.

In this edition, we invite readers to explore these untold narratives and reflect on the meaningful and intimate inbetween of our dopamine driven world. From compositions revealing beauty of process to narratives exploring uninvestigated corners of our shared society, every contribution unveils unseen layers of our profession and vocation.

To help readers navigate these contributions, *Telesis* Vol. 7 *Unfold* has been organized into four main categories. The first, Start Here [beige], focuses on the journal itself and the Gibbs College of Architecture. The second [light blue] gathers interviews with distinguished speakers such as 2024 Pritzker Winner Riken

Yamamoto, Jack DeBartolo, and Ted Reeds. These individuals share a common vision: they observe and elevate the everyday, transforming common spaces into the sublime—places to gather, to contemplate, and to encounter oneself and others. The third category [orange] centers on narratives discussing building, ideas, and concepts around design, forming a compelling and multifaceted account of space and place. Last but not least, the fourth category [navy blue] comprises design- and art-oriented works that resonate with the theme of *Unfold* in form and spirit.

As we unfold these stories together, let this edition serve as a reminder to look beyond the surface, and inside ourselves. The stories we tell and the way we tell them shape our understanding of the world around us. In architecture, as in life, it is often the details, the processes, and the moments of quiet revelation that leave the most lasting impact.

Welcome to the *Unfold*!

# NOTE

THE TELESIS TEAM  
The Gibbs College  
Student Journal



# EDITOR'S



## DECLARATION

"Unfold" is made possible in part by support from the Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture and the Division of Architecture. In addition, our heartfelt gratitude extends to all OU students, firms, collectives, artists, guest speakers, and mentors who have contributed their valuable time and passion to bring this student-lead initiative to life.

*Telesis: Unfold* was produced during a seminar in the Fall of 2024. The students enrolled formed this year's cross-disciplinary *Telesis* team led by Felipe Flores. The views and opinions shared by the authors are their own and do not represent the views and opinions of the University of Oklahoma, the *Telesis* Team or the remainder of this volume's contributors.

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## Below / Images by Assorted Sketch Artists

Finalist drawings from the Fall 2024 "Unfold" sketch competition held at Gibbs.



## THE TELESIS TEAM

**Felipe Flores**, Ph.D. Candidate at OU  
Gibbs College of Architecture (GCA) &  
Editor-in-Chief of *Telesis*

**Trey London**, Undergrad Architecture  
Student(UAS) & Managing Editor of *Telesis*

**Yousef Haghghi**, Ph.D. Student at GCA &  
Associate Editor of *Telesis*

**Angela Person**, Ph.D., Associate Dean  
for Research & External Engagement,  
Associate Professor at the GCA &  
Telesis Faculty Advisor



## SPECIAL THANKS TO

**Hans E. Butzer**, FAIA, Dean of the Christopher C. Gibbs College of Architecture  
**Dan Butko**, Director of the Division of Architecture at the GCA  
**Jeff Gunter**, CEO at Precision Printing Corp.



## TELESIS STUDENT PARTICIPANTS, FALL 2024

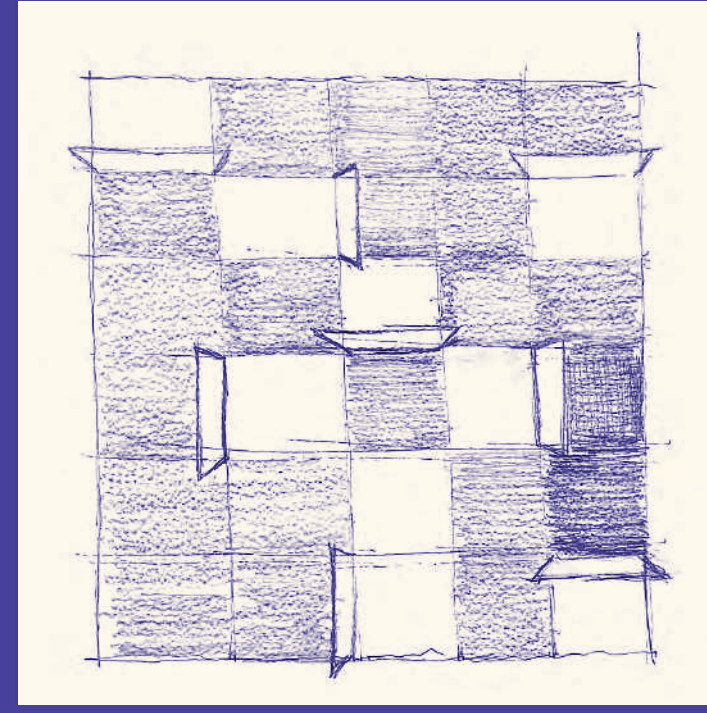
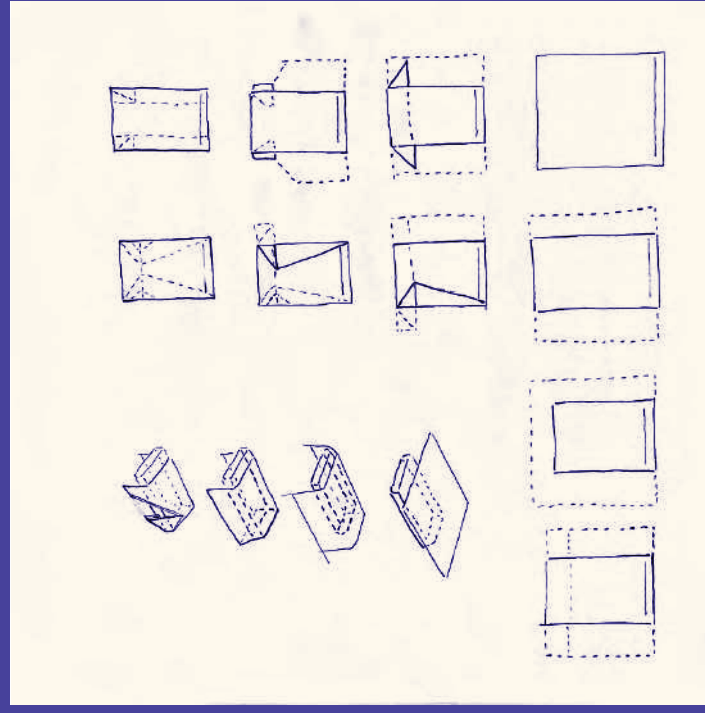
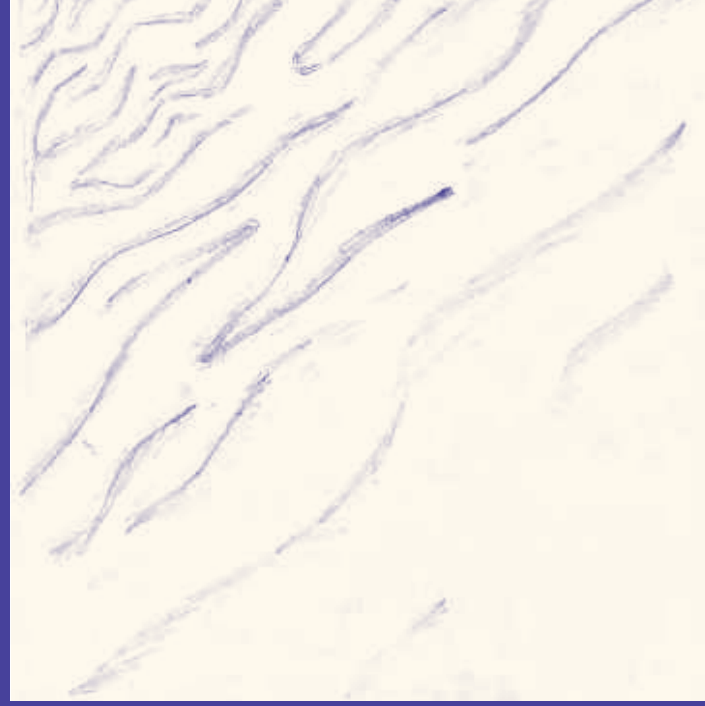
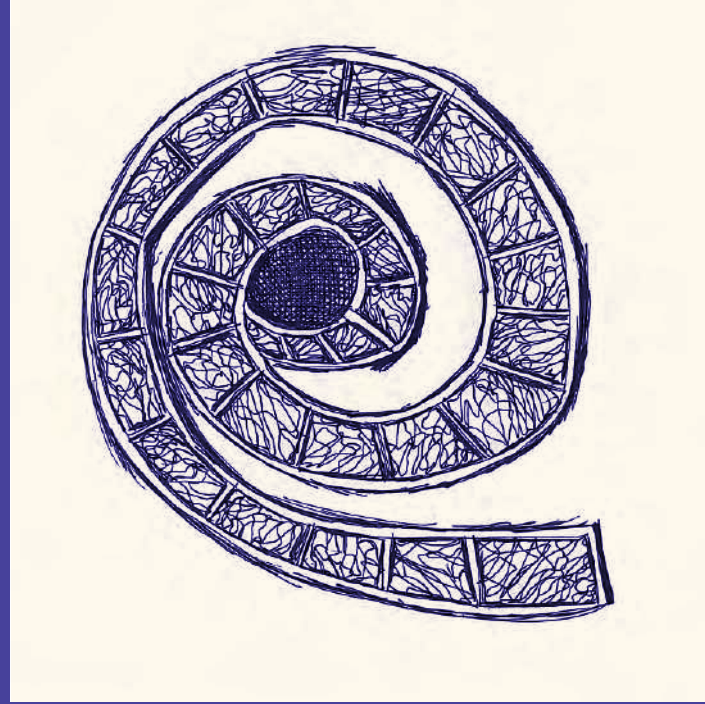
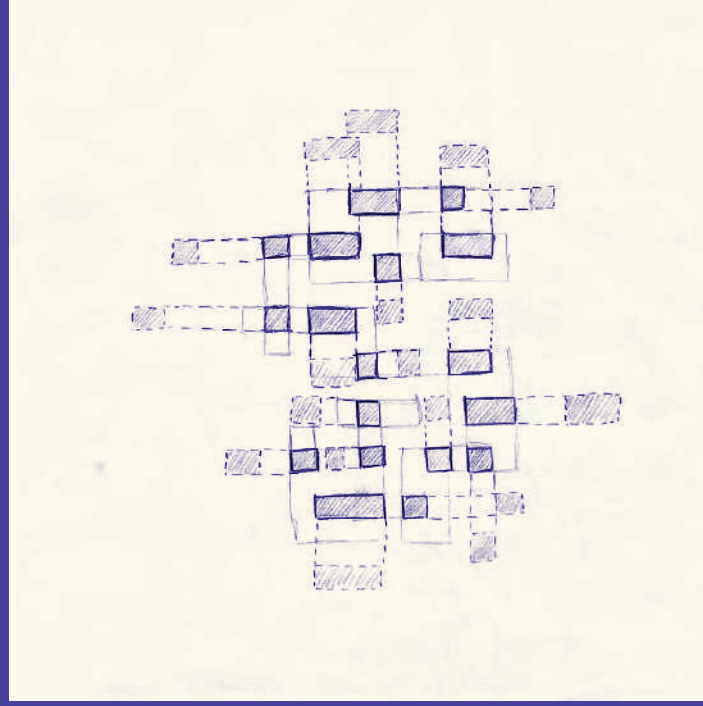
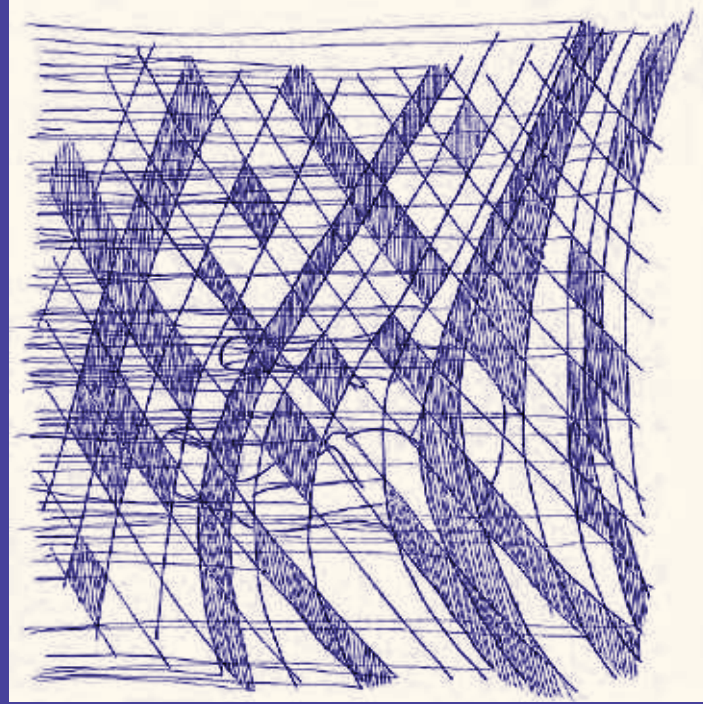
**Terry Chisimba**, UAS

**Trey London**, UAS

**Kayt Malone**, UAS

**Albert Rogers**, UAS

**Chandler Thompson**, UAS



Working the earth and its wealth  
Dawid Rivas

# UN

DEADLINE:  
DECEMBER  
4TH, 2024

QUESTIONS?  
[telesis@ou.edu](mailto:telesis@ou.edu)

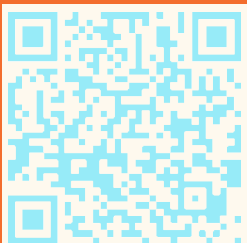
Telesis Vol. 7\_Unfold explores the dynamic process where ideas, stories, and spaces come to life, revealing what often lies beneath the surface. Telesis invites readers and participants to observe how creativity evolves through the untold stories of communities, the forgotten histories embedded in places, and the hidden details that shape our environment. Unfold establishes a journey through layers of thought and vision, revealing the past, questioning the present,

and speculating on what lies ahead. Unfold is not just about uncovering what is already there but about expanding on what can be there. Through essays, interviews, case studies, exhibitions, and many other mediums of creativity, this issue aims to expose how invisible stories shape and reflect the culture, environment, and social forces of our world. In addition to this, this year, in an effort to develop our Unfold, we have looked back into Telesis's history and where it all started. In the spirit of

the explorative and playful journal from the '70s, and the sophisticated and award winning journal of today, we strive to find a hybrid, inviting our peers at the University of Oklahoma to influence our process from the bottom up, as a truly student-run and student-inspired journal. We seek to uncover the hidden facets and personalities within our school, share the stories of alumni, and strive to set a precedent for future architecture students to carry on in the truest spirit of the word Telesis.

# CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

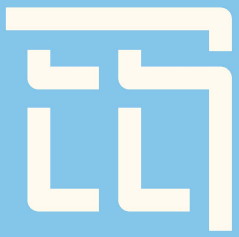
# VOLUME 7 JOURNAL



FOR MORE INFO

SHARE your work, process, artifacts, essays, manifestos, stories, photos, drawings, ideas, opinions, experiences, competitions, sketches, thoughts, art ...

# UNFOLD



ARCHITECTURE  
JOURNAL

# TELEESIS

# EW

## SKETCH COMPETITION

During the Fall 2024 semester, we organized a sketch competition exploring the theme "UNFOLD," inviting students from the Gibbs College of Architecture to engage critically and creatively with its conceptual potential. Presented below are the most distinguished submissions, offering a range of compelling interpretations.



1ST PLACE ERYNE DEGEORGE

## MOSTAR

1ST PLACE SKETCH DESCRIPTION

The Bosnian conflict isn't about the bombs or the political dynamics. It is about the gap in every family, every neighborhood, and everyone's relationship with one another that became a division at a national scale. This tension is widely misunderstood, and it is only by weaving the history of the victims and survivors that the layers appear clearly. Those individuals' hidden story then find an echo, an answer, a comfort, in the greater scheme of things.

*by Eryne DeGeorge*



2ND ISAC VALENCIANO



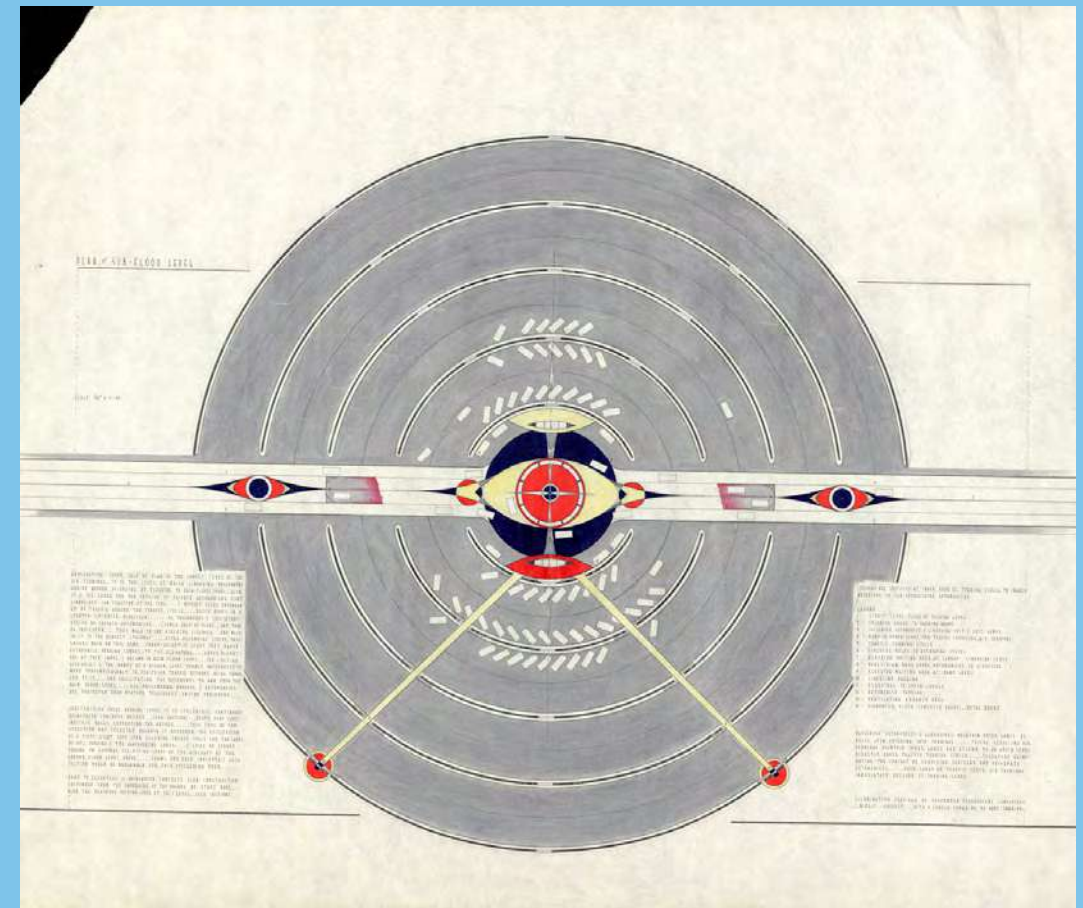
3RD GRACE EDGEWORTH



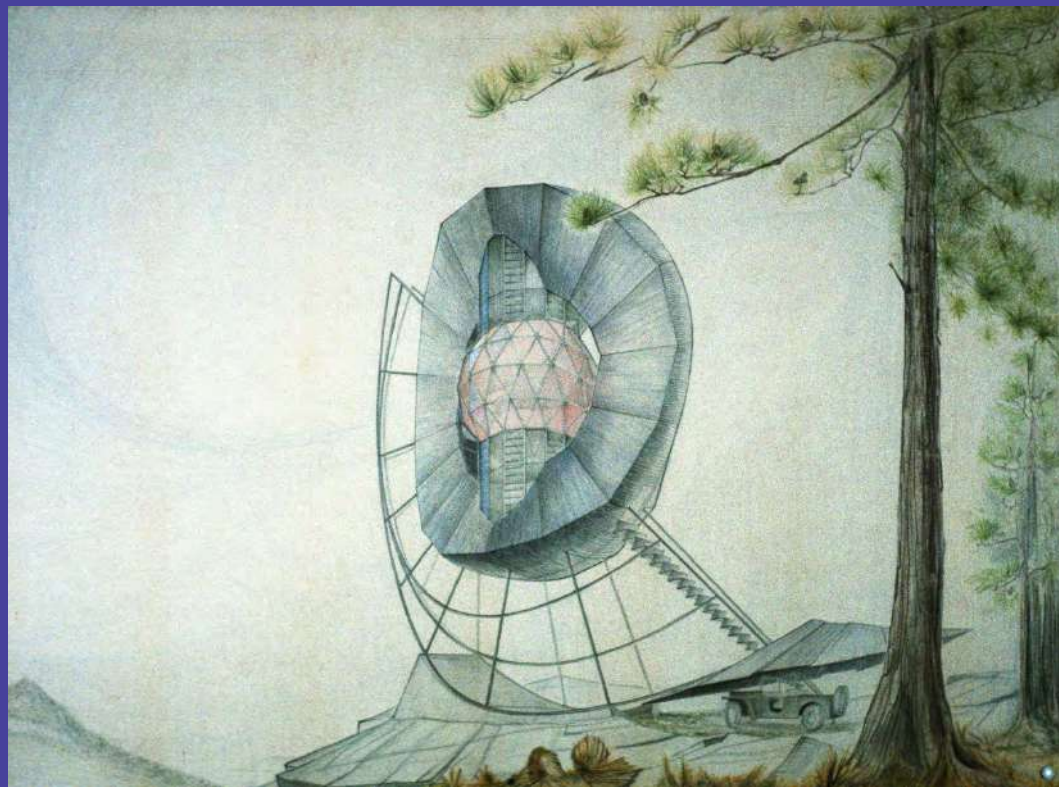
Mickey Muennig's Studio, constructed by OU students and faculty for the exhibition "Outré West," on view at the Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, 2024  
 Photo courtesy of Jordan Loofs



Redbiter Residence, Designed by Bruce Goff in Norman, Oklahoma, 1948  
 Photo Courtesy of The American School Archive, Special Collections, OU Libraries



Oklahoma City Air Terminal, Sub Floor Level, Composition by Gene Williams  
 Image Courtesy of The American School Archive, Special Collections, OU Libraries



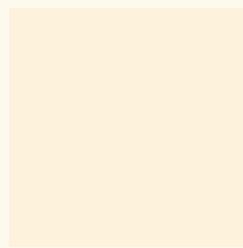
United States Forest Service Fire Observatory, Designed by Robert Faust, circa 1952  
 Courtesy of the Robert L. Faust Collection, American School Archive, Special Collections, OU Libraries



Depth, Reflection, and Transparency, Composition by Jim Loftis, 1963  
 Image From The American School Archive, Special Collections, OU Libraries



Eugene and Nancy Bawinger House, Designed by Bruce Goff in Norman, Oklahoma, 1955  
 Photo by Robert Bowldy From The American School Archive, Special Collections, OU Libraries




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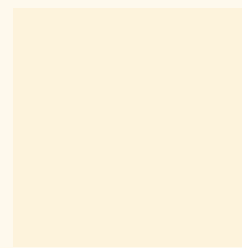
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»» **THE AMERICAN SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE**

**OUTRÉ WEST EXHIBITION**

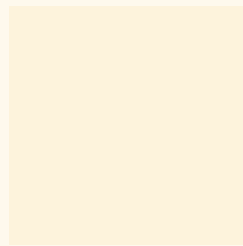
The American School of Architecture emerged at the University of Oklahoma in the postwar era, under the direction of visionary architects Bruce Goff, Herb Greene, and others. Eschewing traditional architectural dogmas, the school emphasized experimentation, individual expression, and inspiration from diverse sources, including nature, global vernaculars, and found materials. This distinct pedagogy fostered a wave of boundary-breaking architects whose work reshaped American architecture.

In 2017, Dean Hans Butzer, Dr. Stephanie Pilat, Dr. Angela Person, and others launched the American School Project to document and preserve this legacy. Central to this effort is the American School Archive, housed in OU Libraries' Special Collections. The archive contains thousands of rare drawings, photographs, and documents. Its holdings are secured by a generous gift from Sherry Faust, wife of the late architect Robert Faust, a Goff student and key figure in the American School. This gift preserves the school's legacy and supports new research and educational initiatives that explore its enduring relevance in architecture today.

*Outré West: The American School of Architecture from Oklahoma to California*, presented at Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center in Fall 2024, explored the significant influence of American School-trained architects on California's architectural landscape. The exhibition showcased how these architects, active from the 1950s and 1960s to today, established groundbreaking practices on the West Coast, creating iconic projects such as the eastern span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and ecologically sensitive buildings in Big Sur. Outré West emphasized how the architects' commitment to individual creativity, ecological responsiveness, and experimentation shaped California's built environment. Featuring archival materials, large-scale models built by current OU students, and immersive installations, the exhibition highlighted their innovative, often unconventional approaches, and lasting contributions to California architecture.

The exhibition was curated by Angela Person, Stephanie Pilat, and Marco Piscitelli, with sections curated by Hans Baldauf (John Marsh Davis section), Rachel Engler (Violeta Autumn section), Christopher Loofs (Arthur Dyson section), Amber Sarmiento (Donald MacDonald section), and Marco Piscitelli (Mickey Muennig section).

**GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE**




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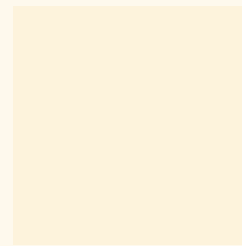
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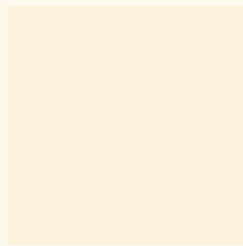
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INNOVATIONS



## INTERVIEW

The following interview took place via Zoom with Students for the University of Oklahoma. The interview questions are inspired by the drawings and explanations provided by Mr. Yamamoto, as well as research conducted, including insights from his books, *Shaking the Foundations*, and *Riken Yamamoto*.

**FF/** One of our initial questions focuses on a sketch you created in the 1970s, which highlights the connections between the house and its inhabitants. Could you share the story behind this sketch and its significance to you?

**RY/** I will explain this further, this was for my master’s thesis, when I was, twenty-five years old, just [Around the time I graduated from] from Tokyo University of Arts in Tokyo, I graduated from this school with my master’s degree. This is my starting point for how to recognize a house. So, [I will tell you] what the meaning of a house [from] what I found from my investigation. A traditional house in Japan; has this type of scheme, [a] very ordinary house scheme. Now I’ll explain that this is [not] just the shape of an ordinary house but [the relationship] between the people inside the house. Usually, [there are] the father, a mother, children, or a child; this scheme is the relationship between [members of the household] and the relationship of the human and the space. Each [person] belongs to a specific space in the house, and I called it at the moment an individual’s space and there is also a family space hence I simplified the house to consist of individual space and a family space. I investigated the two spaces and the activity of each person belonging to this house. In a family of four, I identified two people as children, one father and one mother for this scheme. As illustrated in the sketch, there are seven relationships, labeled A-G, that observe people’s activities, their interactions with space, and how each space aligns with its respective activity.

**AR/** We also want to get to know you a little bit better. And so, we want to ask, what inspires you? For example, what inspired you to think of these changing relationships between the family space, and the individual space, and do you have any other hobbies outside of architecture?

**RY/** This is when I was 23 years old, I found this scheme, but now I don’t think like this. Because a family has other families very close to the region, like a village. The country, I think, is the same as a village or town. They live very collectively, unlike how they’re living now. One family has another family connected. That’s called community. So, each family [belongs] to a community, but for my scheme I focused only [on] one family. So, I don’t think so at the moment. We should

think about the community. So, now there are two relations. One is the family’s relation to the outside. Another one is community relations together. The future [of] society, I think, is how to create a community again. So, by living together, as one family. If we focus [only on] our family, maybe such a scheme [as described by scheme] D, where families and family spaces disappear, and only individual people and individual spaces will not exist, but instead they belong to a community. Even if a family is destroyed the community will remain. So, how [do you] create a relationship between a family and a community? I call this relation a new local community area or a local republic area. I prefer the phrase “local republic area”. So, let’s say, they are living inside of a local republic area. They have a self-government system, and they can get money from this local community area. So, they can give money to the local people. This is a future world at this moment. This is very important because Japan’s population [reduces] every year. And the number of children also reduced. Hence a Local republic area is more important than any previous time.

**KM/** So, your career has taken you worldwide, exposing you to various cultures and architectural styles. How has this global journey shaped your architectural thinking?

**RY/** Okay, the first scheme I made like this, (pointing at scheme A) or I made like this (pointing at scheme G). I changed with traveling the world and I found that communities all around the world live only independently as a family. Relation to other families and many people make a community area. This is why we can find a house everywhere but not as a community. Even in the Americas, I traveled to Central America and South America and not only America but also Europe around the Mediterranean Sea and in every place, I found that they are living as a community. Every example is that they are living in a community.

**AR/** In *Shaking the Foundations*, you discuss how architecture should evolve with social structures. How has this idea influenced your approach to designing spaces that encourage social interaction and communal living? Is there a connection between this philosophy and your cultural heritage? What social dynamics do you believe architects must prioritize in the future?

**RY/** Yes, I already explained this, the relation between the outside, and inside, sometimes means one family does things outside of its community. Every house is located in the community. So outside has two meanings. One is related to the community; another is directly related to outside of a community. Sometimes you use the road to connect [to] many other cities. In that place, roads and infrastructure do not belong

to a community, but the bigger size of society, which is sometimes called a state. The state is different from the community space.

**FF/** Mr. Yamamoto, would you say that architects in the future should prioritize building more communities, perhaps by reorganizing or revitalizing family structures? Has your exploration led you to this conclusion?

**RY/** Yes, I think housing in Guatemala is a very good example. The communities live together under a self-governance system, which fosters collaboration. They generate income as a community. Even if individuals work for different companies, they return to the community and maintain a sense of shared responsibility. These relationships are different from those formed in [the] workplace. In the community, people work together to maintain the town or village, focusing on sustainability. They also address essential needs, such as childcare and elder care, even as people approach the end of life. These responsibilities form the backbone of relationships within the community. Injuries or emergencies aren’t overwhelming because there are many people to help. Typically, these communities consist of 500 to 1,000 people living in close proximity. Sometimes, they require assistance from the government or the state. However, these communities often have distinct characteristics—some are wealthier, while others rely more on government support. There are also opportunities for collaboration between two, three, or more neighboring communities. In these cases, the government plays a mediating role, helping to establish relationships among them. Occasionally, a larger city forms nearby, serving as an interface for international relations. However, I wonder whether big cities are truly necessary. I don’t think so. Small, self-sufficient communities could exist independently, and broader relationships between communities could form what we call a “city”. Historically, this approach has worked. For example, in early U.S. history, New England consisted of small villages and towns established by European settlers. These towns were independent and governed themselves. Within these communities, people could live sustainably, earn money, and maintain a strong self-governance system. Each town operated with its institutions, such as courts and police, enabling them to thrive independently.

**KM/** Could you briefly describe the Guatemala workshop, its structure, duration, and purpose?

**RY/** In Guatemala, I conducted a workshop at the Universidad del Istmo (UNIS) in August 2024 as part of the Cátedra Jorge Montes, a renowned architectural conference at UNIS. The focus was on how houses form small

communities in Guatemala, particularly in local republic and community areas, and how to enhance these spaces. Guatemala is very contradictory in its urban makeup. Some communities lack formal relations, while others, like the favelas, exist in stark contrast. It’s essential to foster connections between those living in favelas and those in more formal housing. During the workshop with the students, I observed a small amphitheater where people gathered. It was a lively place where residents would sing, drink, and socialize. This type of gathering spot is vital for community life. I noticed there were many such small areas where people meet, especially in summer, winter, or at night. These spaces allow residents, including those from the favelas, to come together. Around these spots, there are small food shops, often mobile carts, where people can eat and drink. I saw very small shops, often referred to locally as “tic-tac-toe,” scattered throughout both formal family housing areas and favelas. The government could play a role in creating such spaces, but the initial effort should come from the community itself. These gathering places can become centers of community life, attracting both residents and tourists. Tourists, in turn, bring economic benefits to the small shops and drinking spots. The upkeep, such as street cleaning and environmental maintenance, should be managed by the government, but the activities within these spaces can be governed by the community. Every evening, people can gather to eat, drink, and socialize. Even those who are poor or [have] children can benefit from these spaces, as they provide a place where everyone can come together. Architects can help design and create such spaces, but the initiative must start with the residents. In Guatemala City, for example, even a small community space—perhaps with a few kitchen carts and drinking carts—could be a good starting point. Guatemalan people enjoy singing, karaoke, and dancing, which makes such gathering areas even more meaningful for fostering community connections.

**FF/** Would you say that what you observed and the workshop you conducted on the outskirts of Guatemala align with your design philosophy? Could you share what specifically draws your attention to informal settlements?

**RY/** It’s part of my attitude. Favelas exist throughout South America and Central America—they’ve become a normalized living system for many people. There are so many individuals living in these areas that it represents a very typical lifestyle in the world today. However, this way of living is often not recognized or allowed by the government. I believe governments should embrace and legitimize this living stWyle. For instance, if we have small spaces like an amphitheater—places for singing, dancing, and gathering—it could enhance community life significantly. These types of spaces are essential for fostering a sense of connection and belonging.

# YAMAMOTO

## part one

**RIKEN YAMAMOTO**  
Architect, Founder of Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop



# an interview with RIKEN

STUDIO  
RYSCHTEL

## ABOUT RIKEN YAMAMOTO

Widely recognized for his commitment to community-centered design, Riken Yamamoto has spent more than five decades reimagining the spatial relationship between individuals and the collective. Yamamoto was born in Beijing, China in 1945. He is a distinguished architect and the founder of Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop.

He graduated from the Department of Architecture at Nihon University's College of Science and Technology in 1968, and earned a Master of Arts in Architecture from the Faculty of Architecture at Tokyo University of the Arts in 1971. He later pursued research at the Hiroshi Hara Laboratory within the Institute of Industrial Science at the University of Tokyo.

In 2024, Yamamoto was appointed Visiting Professor at Kanagawa University. His academic honors include titles such as Professor Emeritus and Honorary Doctor from Yokohama National University, and Honorary Professor and Honorary Doctor of Engineering from Nihon University. He has held other teaching positions including Visiting Professor at Tokyo University of the Arts (2022-2024), Professor at the Graduate School of Architecture, Yokohama National University (2007-2011), and President of Nagoya Zokei University of Art and Design (2018-2022).

Among his most notable works are Nagoya Zokei University of Art and Design, THE CIRCLE at Zürich Airport, Yokosuka Museum of Art, Future University Hakodate, Saitama Prefectural University, and GAZEBO. His practice spans a wide range of typologies including mixed-use developments, public institutions, and residential projects across Japan, China, South Korea, and Taiwan.

Yamamoto's major publications include: *The Space of Power, Power of Space: Two Virgins, Toshibi* (City Beautiful): *Kawade Shobo Shinsha, Chiikishakaikenshugi* (Local Community Area Principles): *Two Virgins, Shinpen Jukyoron*: Heibonsha Limited Publishers

Throughout his career, Yamamoto has received numerous prestigious awards. Most recently, he was honored with the World Economic Forum Crystal Award (2025), the Pritzker Architecture Prize (2024), the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs Award (2024), and the Japan Art Academy Prize (2001). He received the Architectural Institute of Japan Prize in both 1988 and 2002, and the Mainichi Art Award in 1998.

He also earned the Good Design Gold Award in 2004 and 2005, and the Public Building Prize in 2004 and 2006. In 2007, his Fukushima Ecoms Pavilion, SUS Fukushima Factory received the Fukushima Architecture Culture Award. The Yokosuka Museum of Art—one of his most celebrated works—was recognized with the Building Contractors Society Prize (2008) and the Japan Institute of Architects Award (2010). That same year, his Namics Techno Core project also earned him the Building Contractors Society Prize.

Today, Yamamoto's legacy continues to unfold, not only through the spaces he shapes but also through the values he imparts—foregrounding collective life, civic consciousness, and architecture's role in shaping meaningful human connections.

Riken Yamamoto's work embodies a philosophy of architecture as a framework for life to unfold, emphasizing community, adaptability, and human connection. His approach aligns closely with \*Unfold\*'s mission to explore what lies beneath the surface—revealing the layered stories, histories, and relationships that shape our built environment. Through socially and culturally responsive designs, Yamamoto creates spaces that invite participation and narrative-making rather than dictating form or use. In doing so, his architecture becomes a living dialogue between people, place, and purpose—echoing the journal's vision to prioritize process over product and to uncover the unseen forces that shape design.



### EDITOR'S NOTE: EXPLANATION OF THE DIAGRAM OF BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS OF A JAPANESE FAMILY

Even before the discussion began, we requested some work from Mr. Yamamoto and he shared with us some of his iconic 1970s sketches, which were part of his master's thesis research which illustrates the changing dynamics of family and individual spaces in a Japanese household using a series of diagrams labeled A - G (fig. 1-2). Each diagram illustrates the different relationships between the spaces and their inhabitants, how they interact with each other, and their intricate surroundings with the community. Note that the following diagrams are not a representation of spatial forms but spatial relations within the household. A written description shared by Riken Yamamoto on his theory on "architecture corresponding to actions" examining how architectural design can reveal and define human relationships within family spaces, referred to as FAMILY SPACE (F.S.), and individual spaces, known as INDIVIDUAL SPACE (I.S.). It is essential to remember that this study was conducted considering a traditional Japanese family in the 1970s-80s.

Firstly, Yamamoto suggests that architecture can replace human actions by embodying and defining relationships. For instance, in a family setting, shared facilities like kitchens and living rooms in F.S. represent family interactions, making these relationships visible and fostering new connections. Yamamoto questions whether a dwelling could function "merely as a machine," if it simply organizes interactions without a deeper relational purpose. Through structural design, he proposes that architectural elements can both display and shape

familial dynamics. Furthermore, the dichotomy of the I.S. and social identity is explored as Yamamoto argues that I.S. represents a person's social identity outside the family. In historical family structures, only a family "master" had I.S.; others belonged to the master's identity. Today, individuals have I.S. because they connect to various associations (e.g., workplaces or schools).

The design of I.S., which can either open or close towards F.S., symbolizes an individual's choice between family and external association. "One side of I.S. must always be closed," he notes, emphasizing that individuals must navigate between private family connections and their associations. He further elucidates the Housewife as a Facility and the Role of Family Space. In Yamamoto's framework, the "housewife" serves as a "family facility," defined by roles like housework, caregiving, and childcare. Since these responsibilities tie her exclusively to the family, the housewife traditionally lacks I.S. and a connection to the outside world.

This confinement symbolizes her role within F.S., which Yamamoto describes as "the most private space, where people can be entirely vulnerable." Furthermore, Yamamoto predicts a shift where the housewife's roles could be restructured as facilities (e.g., daycare centers, laundromats), allowing her to have her own I.S. With the "socialization and individualization" of family duties, the need for F.S. would gradually disappear, and individuals would move freely among associations. This change, however, is uneven, as some tasks, like cooking or laundry, are being individualized with new technologies, while larger social shifts (e.g., an increase in daycare and nursing homes) are not yet fully aligned. Finally, as individual and family spaces become more autonomous, F.S. is "on the verge of disappearing." Yamamoto observes that modern challenges—like disconnected parents or children seeking connections outside the home—are not solely due to dysfunctional relationships but reflect the loss of a cohesive F.S.

He explained how these early explorations in the 1970s informed his understanding of the relationship between architecture and society, a theme that continues to shape his work. These sketches provided a foundation for Yamamoto's lifelong examination of architecture's role in shaping human interactions within both private and public spaces. However, the question that followed shed light and created a connection between the diagrams and how the ideas behind them have evolved over time.

**Figure A**

- This figure represents a basic family structure with individual spaces (I.S.) and family space (F.S.).
- The (I.S.) are connected to each other within the family space (F.S.).
- This represents a traditional Japanese family structure where individuals are part of the family unit but have limited connections to the outside world.

**Figure B**

- This figure shows (I.S.) opening towards external associations rather than the (F.S.).
- This represents a situation where individuals prioritize their connections to external associations over their family relationships.
- The (F.S.) is closed off, indicating a weakened family unit.

**Figure C**

- This figure depicts (I.S.) opening towards the (F.S.) while closing off towards associations.
- This represents a situation where individuals prioritize their family relationships over external connections.
- The (F.S.) is more open and integrated with the (I.S.).

**Figure D**

- This figure shows a more complex arrangement of (I.S.) and (F.S.).
- The (I.S.) are connected to each other and the (F.S.) in various ways.
- This represents a family structure with multiple connections between individuals and the family unit.

**Figure E**

- This figure shows a (F.S.) with a clear distinction between the (I.S.) and the (F.S.).
- This represents a situation where individuals maintain their individuality within the family unit.
- The (F.S.) is still important but is not as dominant as in Figure A.

**Figure F**

- This figure shows a (F.S.) with overlapping (I.S.).
- This represents a situation where individuals are more integrated with each other and the family unit.
- The boundaries between (I.S.) and the (F.S.) are less distinct.

**Figure G**

- This figure shows (I.S.) without a central family space (F.S.).
- This represents a situation where individuals have their own independent spaces and connections to various associations.
- The family unit as a central structure has disappeared.



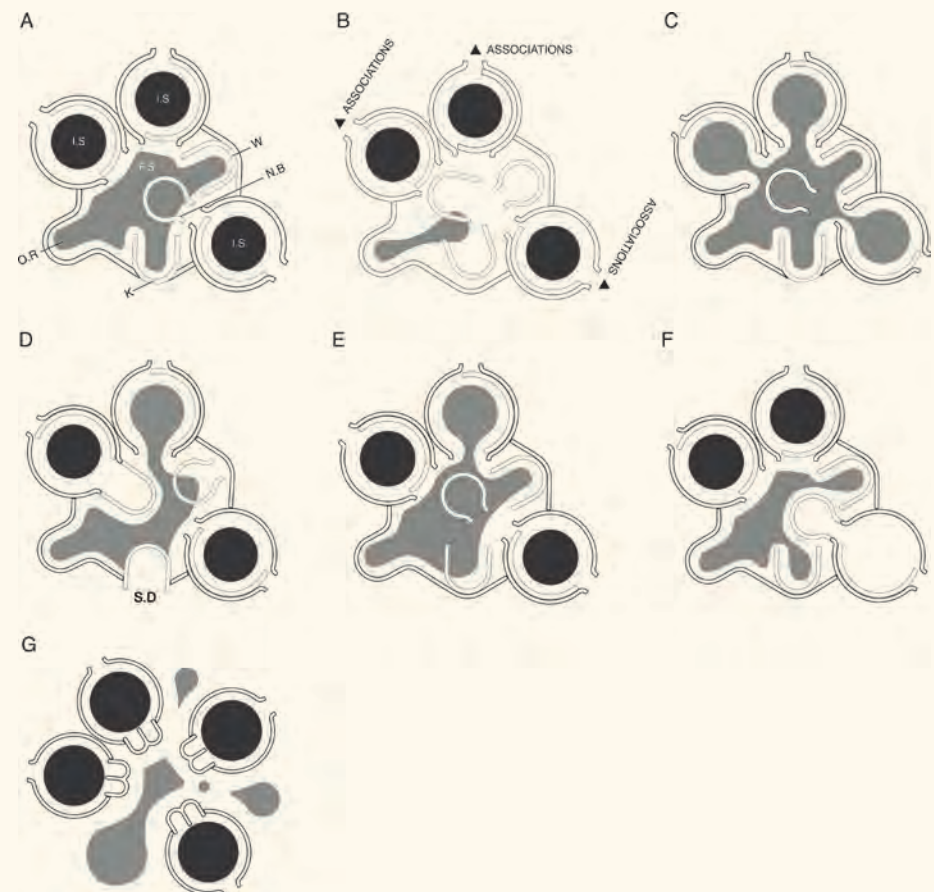
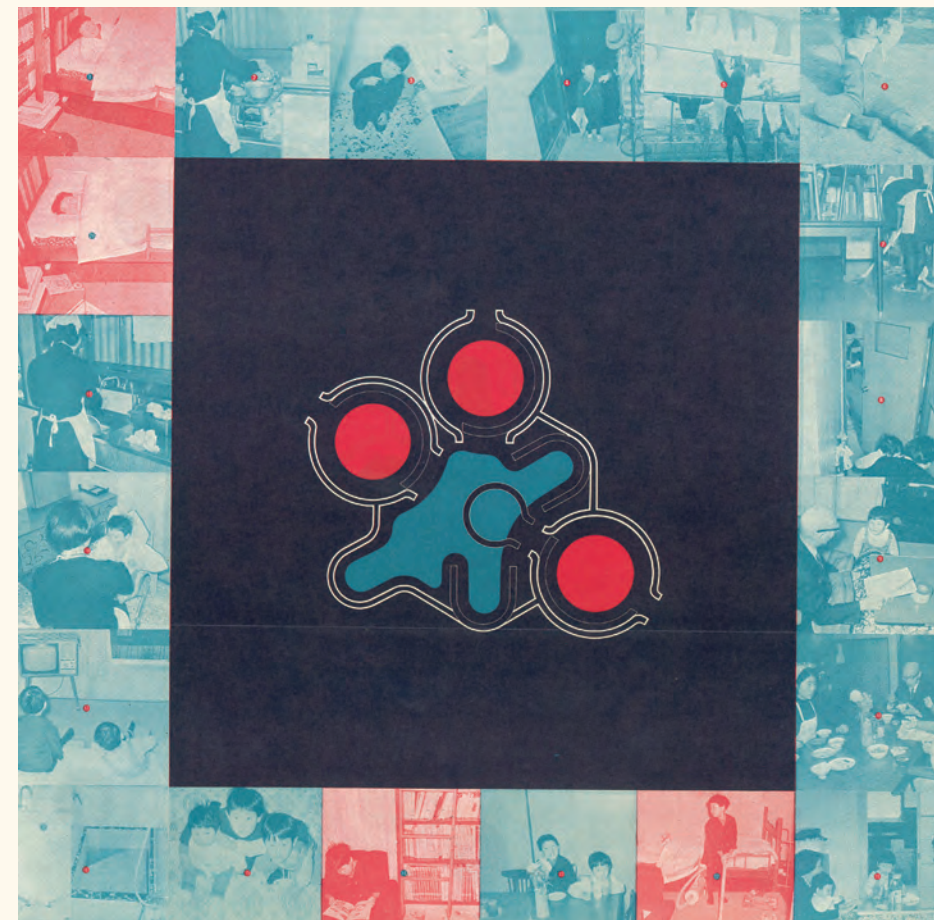
**INTERVIEW WITH:**  
Riken Yamamoto [RY]- Architect

**ACCOMPANIED BY:**  
Taiki Aiba [TA]- Architect

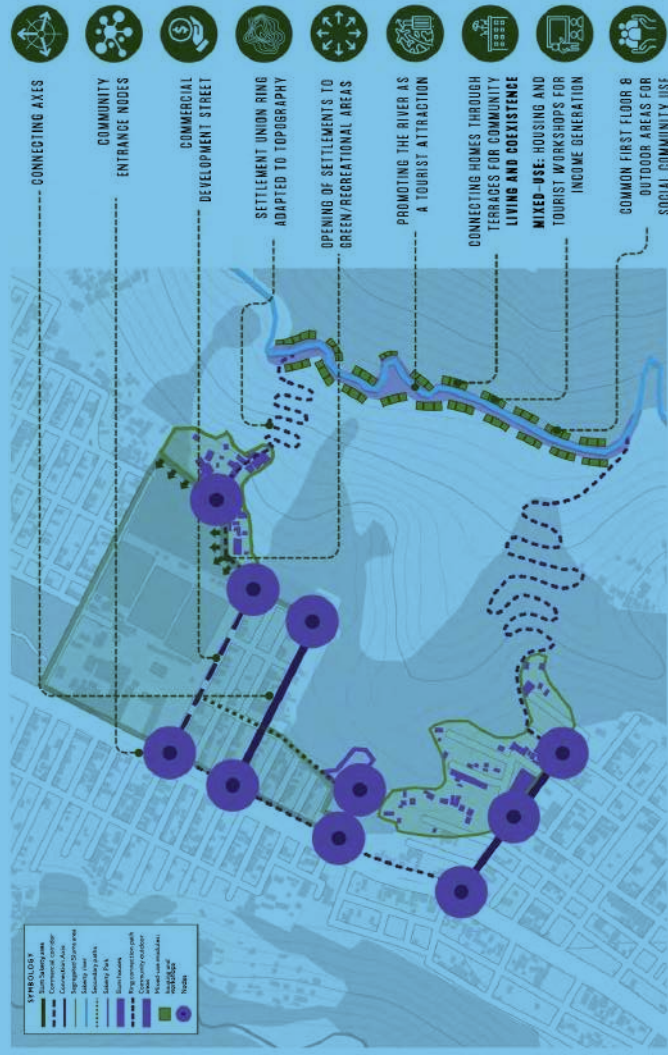
**TELESIS TEAM:**  
Albert Rogers [AR]- Undergraduate Architecture Student (UAS)  
Kayt Malone [KM]- UAS  
Felipe Flores [FF]- PhD Candidate in PDC

**EDITED BY:**  
Felipe Flores - PhD Candidate in PDC  
Albert Rogers- UAS  
Trey London- UAS

Above/ Figure 1 courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
Behavioral patterns of a Japanese family



Above/ Figure 2 courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
Diagram of behavioral patterns of a Japanese family



Above/ Diagram courtesy of UNIS  
GROUP 1: Master Plan for Colonia La Bethania

Top Right / Diagram courtesy of UNIS  
GROUP 1: Study Area

Bottom Right/ Diagram courtesy of UNIS  
GROUP 1: Site Analysis for Colonia La Bethania

Bottom Left/ Sections courtesy of UNIS

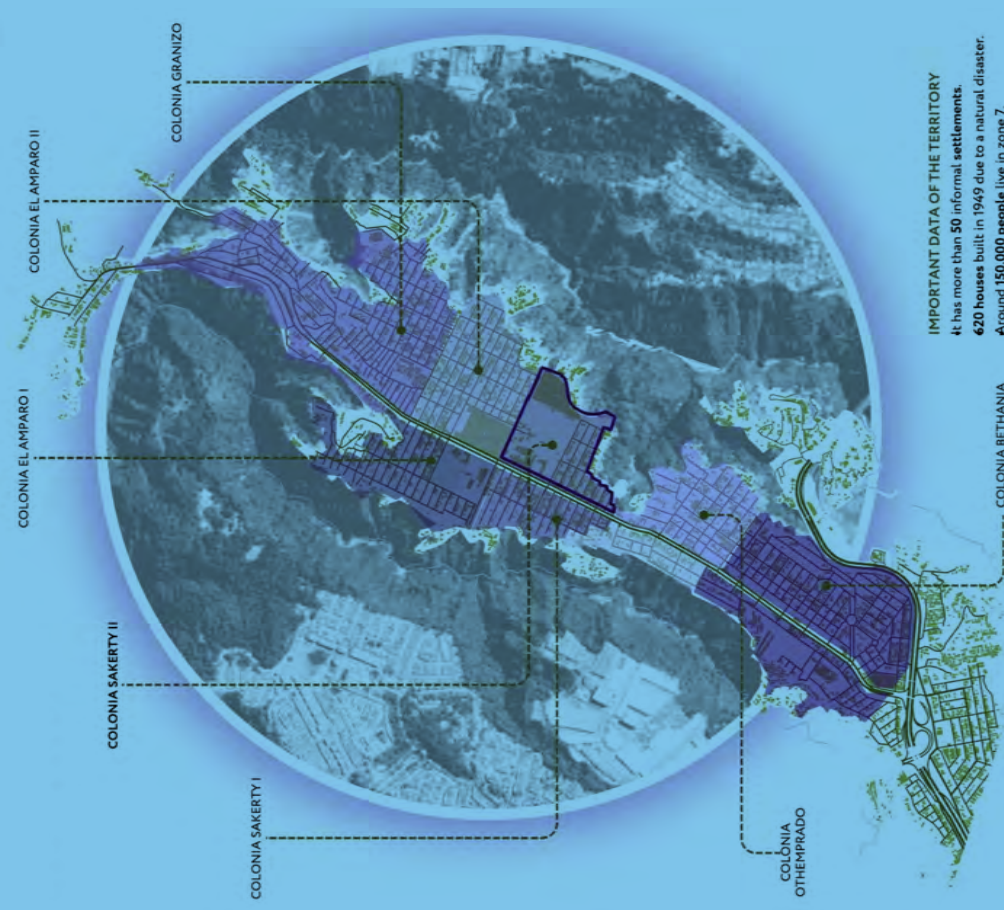
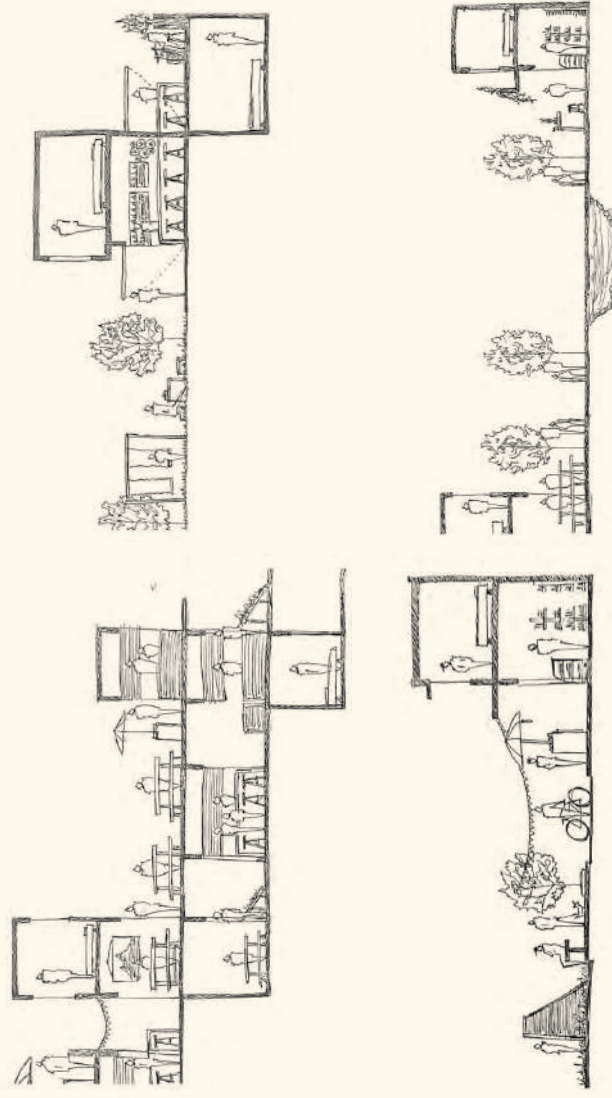
GROUP 1: Section drawings illustrating connections to green spaces, urban activity, and the river



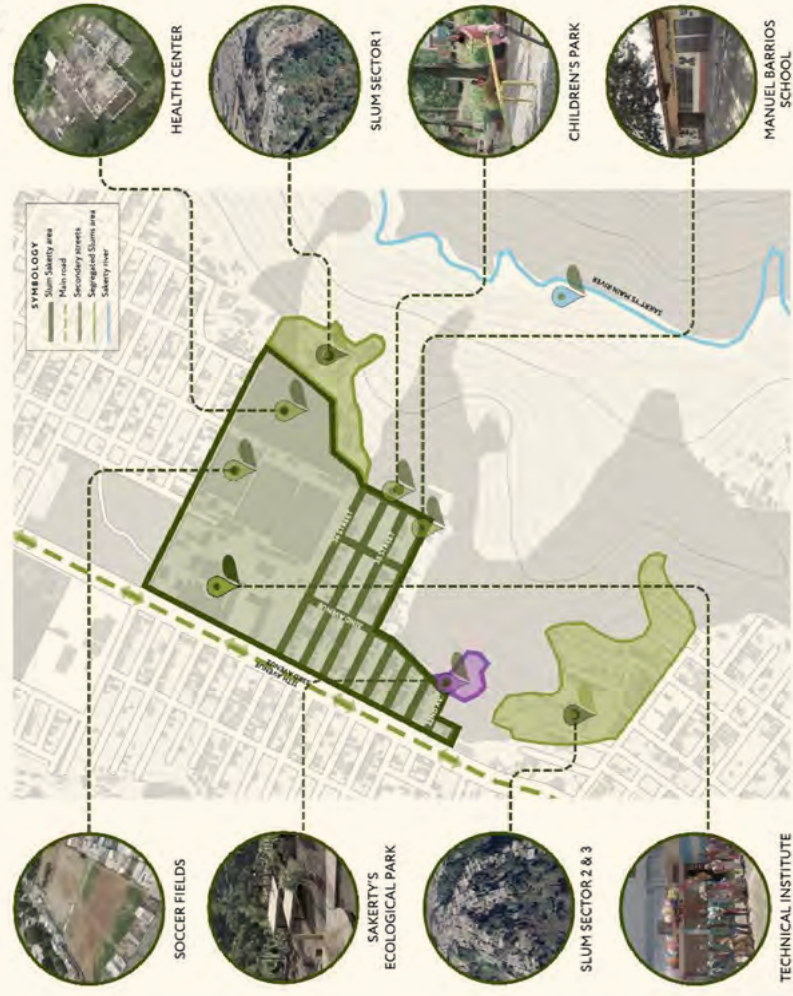
**GROUP 1: HOUSING THAT CONNECTS**

The first project seeks to link the act of living with that of coexisting, following principles from contemporary co-living housing models. The project aims to foster social interaction and collaboration by creating shared spaces that complement residents' private areas. Common areas, such as kitchens and recreational zones, encourage community participation, enabling

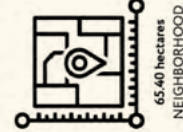
neighbors to share resources and experiences. The Sakerty Co-living project not only addresses housing needs but also acts as a catalyst for social cohesion. By offering an environment that promotes daily interactions, the project strengthens the sense of community and creates a setting where living and coexisting are recognized as fundamental aspects of urban life.



**IMPORTANT DATA OF THE TERRITORY**  
It has more than 50 informal settlements.  
620 houses built in 1949 due to a natural disaster.  
Around 150,000 people live in zone 7.



**03 | SLUM'S HABITANTS CHARACTERIZATION**



an interview with

**RIKEN**

**RIKEN YAMAMOTO**  
Architect, Founder of Riken Yamamoto & Field Shop



**AR/** In your book, Riken Yamamoto, you discuss the importance of shifting our paradigms and the hypotheses we use to approach design problems. How do you connect this idea with your work in the favelas of Brazil and your workshop in the outskirts of Guatemala City? What is it that you find in the favelas or marginalized neighborhoods in the Americas that capture your attention and call for action?

**RY/** As I mentioned before, the first step is to create a very small plaza. It's simple to make and doesn't require a lot of money. The government can assist, and you can persuade the people living around the area to contribute. The plaza doesn't need to be elaborate, just a modest space where people can eat and drink, even something as basic as bread or tortillas. This space should have essential features like sunshades for the daytime and some shelter for rainy weather, but it doesn't require a large investment. It's a place where people can gather every day and every night. Poor people, who might otherwise have no food, can come here to eat. It's especially important for women and children. I think of it as a place primarily for them, though men can certainly come as well. This is the first step to establishing a small plaza within the favela where the community can gather and feel included. It's also important to make this a welcoming place for outsiders, such as tourists. Tourists can come, enjoy the atmosphere, sing, drink, and interact with the community. This, in turn, generates income for the community. I don't view this solely as a way to "reactivate" the economy, but it does create opportunities for economic growth. For example, in Indonesia, I visited a small plaza surrounded by shops and restaurants. It was a modest space, but tourists came, ate, and drank there, and it became a thriving center of activity. The same concept can work in favelas or marginalized neighborhoods, creating a vibrant and inclusive community hub.

**KM/** Sustainability is an important topic in architecture, and your work is known for its contextual sensitivity. How do you integrate sustainable practices into your designs? What role does sustainability play in your overall architectural philosophy, and how do you see its future in architecture? What architects can or should be doing?

**RY/** For me, sustainability is fundamentally about people and their relationships. It's about ensuring continuity between generations—sustaining not just architecture, but the activities and connections of people. Sustainability, in this sense, is the continuity of human life and community, passed from one generation to the next. When I think about the sustainability of a small space, like a plaza, it's essential to consider the people's relationships with it. If the community is invested in maintaining that space, their connection to it becomes vital. The sustainability of a small place depends on the actions of the people who use it—how they care for and sustain it. So, the key to sustainability is not only about creating a physical space but about fostering human actions that maintain it over time. It's the ongoing activity of people, not just the architecture itself, that truly sustains space.

**FF/** Thank you so much, Mr. Yamamoto. I have one final question for you. If you were to return to being an architecture student in the 1970s, what would you choose to focus your time and energy on? What areas would you prioritize? This is intended as advice for current architecture students to help them understand what might be most important in shaping their path as architects.

**RY/** If I were a student, a very younger student, maybe I would do the same things. Maybe more drinking and more traveling.

**FF/** Why is traveling so important for you?

**RY/** Okay. Culture. culture. We are living in a very small space. So, we should need other cultures. Now in this world, there are many struggles. Sometimes it's necessary to see the struggle. Not only from the newspaper.

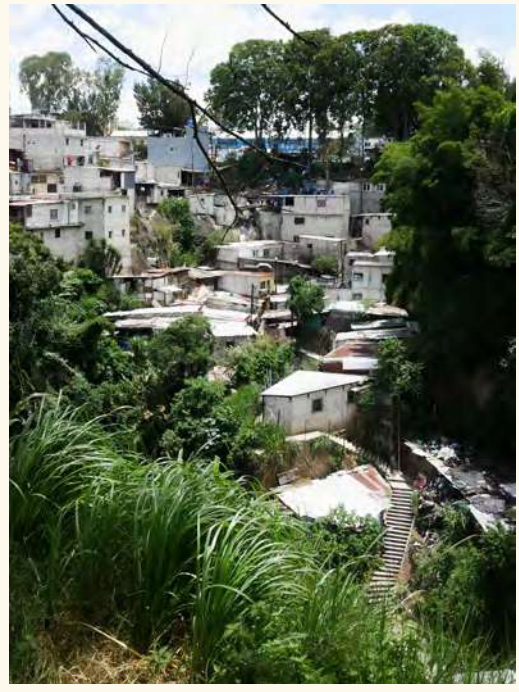
**FF/** With that, we wrap up our conversation with Mr. Yamamoto and Mr. Aiba. Thank you both for speaking with us.

**THE GUATEMALAN WORKSHOP "PROJECTING THE FUTURE"**

**Hosting Institution:** School of Architecture and Design at Universidad del Istmo (UNIS)  
**Location:** Guatemala City, Guatemala  
**Date:** August, 2024  
**Workshop Leader:** Riken Yamamoto  
**Workshop Assistant:** Taiki Aiba  
**Local Professors:** Luis Fernando Mendez and Hans Schwarz Bassila  
**Workshop Logistics:** Ximena Porres and Sofia Pallais  
**Organizing Committee:** Cátedra Jorge Montes 2024

Following the interview Mr. Yamamoto shared with us the works of the three groups that he worked with in Guatemala and below is the summary of the work. Yamamoto's commitment to fostering social interaction is evident in his community-driven projects, such as his urban interventions in Guatemala. Over a week at Universidad del Istmo in Guatemala, students and faculty, including Dean Ana María Cruz Estrada de García and Director Roberto Enrique Sosa Trejo, collaborated on three projects. These initiatives focused on addressing challenges related to housing, cultural identity, and social cohesion within vulnerable communities in Guatemala, particularly in Colonia La Bethania a neighborhood in Zone 7 of Guatemala City that grapples with severe economic difficulties and natural hazards.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF LA BETHANIA**



**Above/** Image courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
*STUDY SITE: Guatemala's Colonia La Bethania*

**SITE AND CONTEXT**

Colonia La Bethania, located in Zone 7 of Guatemala City, represents a dense urban fabric shaped by informal housing, economic hardships, and natural hazards such as landslides and earthquakes. This site served as the foundation for the workshop's ideas and proposals. As a real community with real challenges, the problems each group aimed to address were authentic and pressing. With the active involvement of the community, the site was transformed through collaborative proposals developed by participants working closely with Mr. Yamamoto and Mr. Aiba.

The architecture of the neighborhood, primarily self-constructed using materials like concrete blocks and metal sheets, reflects both limited resources and the constraints of irregular urban planning shaped by its steep terrain and proximity to ravines. While these natural features provide scenic potential, they also pose serious safety risks to homes precariously positioned along the slopes. Despite these challenges, the community's cultural resilience shines through in its vibrant murals and shared spaces, including plazas and churches.

**GROUP 1 CO-LIVING IN SAKERTY: HOUSING THAT CONNECTS**

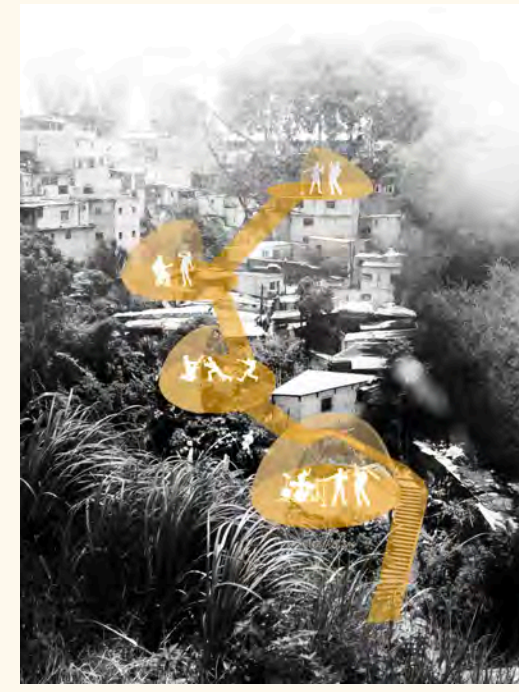
*Fabrissio Gálvez  
 Joaquín Lemus  
 Jimena Floren  
 Conrado Deger  
 María de los Angeles Navarroz*



**Above/** Diagram courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
*GROUP 1: Proposed site modification for Guatemala's Colonia La Bethania*

**GROUP 2 INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES: CULTURAL REVITALIZATION IN BETHANIA**

*Melissa Quiroa  
 Joaquín Lemus  
 Diana Morán  
 Mariandré Zabala  
 Ximena Zúñiga*



**Above/** Diagram courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
*GROUP 2: Proposed site modification for Guatemala's Colonia La Bethania*

**THE SUBMISSIONS**

In Guatemala, a transformative workshop titled 'Projecting the Future' was led by acclaimed Japanese architect Riken Yamamoto, known for his focus on community-centered design. Witnessed and recounted by Hans Schwarz Bassila, the workshop formed part of the Jorge Montes Chair program at Universidad del Istmo (UNIS) and engaged fifth-year architecture students. Yamamoto guided three student groups through projects addressing housing, cultural identity, and social cohesion in Colonia La Bethania, a neighborhood in Zone 7 of Guatemala City that faces significant economic challenges and natural risks. His approach emphasized designing spaces that promote community interaction and address the needs of vulnerable areas.

**GROUP 3 COLOR COMMUNITIES: A VISUAL LANGUAGE FOR LA BETHANIA**

*Arturo Ortíz  
 Gabriel Paz  
 María Herrera  
 Diego López  
 Santiago Otero*



**Above/** Diagram courtesy of Riken Yamamoto  
*GROUP 3: Proposed site modification for Guatemala's Colonia La Bethania*

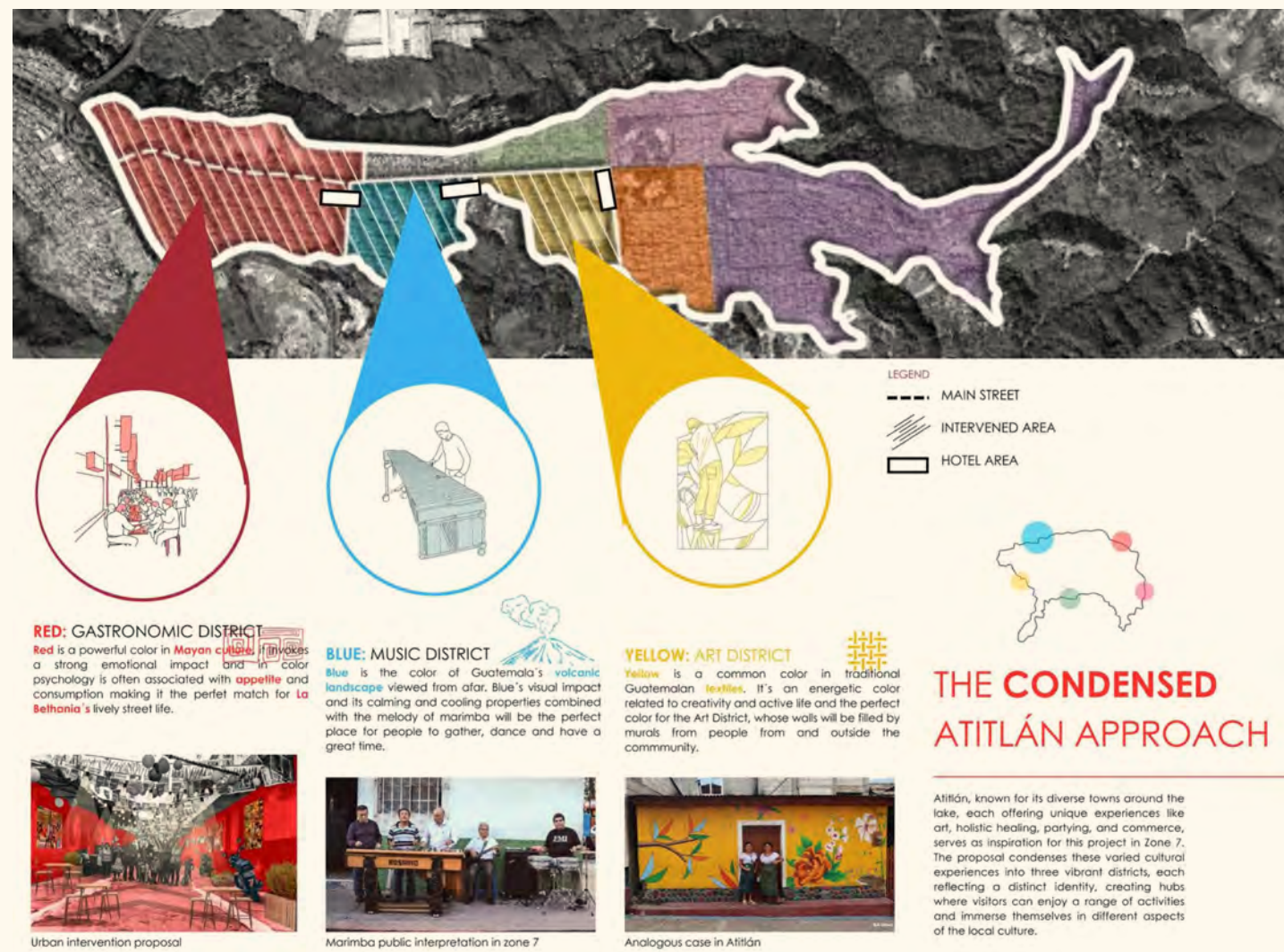
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### GROUP 3: A VISUAL LANGUAGE FOR LA BETHANIA

In the [third] project, titled "Color Communities," students explored how color usage can revitalize this neighborhood. Inspired by the villages around Lake Atitlán, where each community has its own visual identity, the group proposed dividing the neighborhood into three districts, each with its color: yellow for art, blue for music, and red for gastronomy.

Beyond visual impact, colors are also used to improve safety by marking evacuation routes and risk areas. This project seeks not only to beautify urban space but also to empower the local community by creating a stronger collective identity that can attract tourism and foster economic growth.

Above/ Diagram courtesy of UNIS  
GROUP 3: Zoning of Proposed Intervention



Above/ Diagram courtesy of UNIS

GROUP 3: Site Plan of proposed intervention

Right/ Collage courtesy of UNIS

GROUP 3: Photocollage of proposed intervention in Colonia La Bethania



# YAMAMOTO

## part three

**RIKEN YAMAMOTO**  
 Architect, Founder of Riken  
 Yamamoto & Field Shop



an interview with **RIKEN**

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Above/ Image courtesy of UNIS  
Projecting the Future Workshop students with Mr. Yamamoto



## CONCLUSION

In closing, Riken Yamamoto's insights offer a compelling vision for the future of architecture – one that emphasizes sustainability, community, and the transformative power of design in fostering social and environmental resilience. His focus on creating human-centered, community-driven spaces not only inspires but also challenges aspiring architects to critically examine their impact on the world. This approach was notably explored during the Cátedra Jorge Montes, where Yamamoto's workshop culminated in a conference that highlighted these very themes. His philosophy deeply aligns with the ethos of *Telesis Vol. 7: Unfold*, which examines how architecture can evolve to address contemporary challenges and meet the diverse needs of communities.

Just as *Unfold* encourages us to view architecture as a dynamic process of growth, adaptation, and possibility, Yamamoto emphasizes that each design offers an opportunity to shape a sustainable future—one that nurtures human connections and the shared environment. In his work, the family stands as the cornerstone of society, with the community playing an essential role in fostering well-being. However, Yamamoto stresses the importance of each context defining and cultivating its interpretation of community—both socially and physically. This ensures that architectural responses are aligned with the appropriate paradigms, supporting the unique needs and aspirations of each community. The interview with Mr. Yamamoto, Taiki Aiba, and Universidad del Istmo (UNIS) underscores that architecture is not static. As Yamamoto suggests, it is a tool for unfolding a better world, bridging individual aspirations with collective well-being.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special thank you to Mr. Yamamoto for being part of this interview and sharing so much of his work with us. We would also like to thank Mr. Aiba for coordinating with us and sending us all the information needed to put this interview together. Also, a special thank you to the faculty specifically Dean Ana Maria Cruz Estrada de Garcia, Director Roberto Enrique Sosa Trejo, and participants of the Workshop conducted at Universidad del Istmo (UNIS).

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- 2 Knabe, Christopher, and Joerg Rainer Noennig, editors. *Shaking the Foundations: Japanese Architects in Dialogue*. Prestel, 1999.
- 3 Yamamoto, Riken. *Riken Yamamoto*. Electa Architecture, 2003.



## GROUP 2: INTEGRATED COMMUNITIES

The project focuses on revitalizing Colonia Bethania through a cultural approach. This is achieved by constructing a series of amphitheatres and public spaces strategically distributed throughout the neighborhood, creating places where residents can gather for activities like singing and dancing, and practices deeply rooted in the local identity.

These amphitheatres integrate with the area's natural landscape, connecting residents with the ravine and creating spaces for rest and socialization. This proposal not only revitalizes public space but also encourages active community participation, using architecture as a platform to reinforce cultural identity.

Throughout the workshop, Yamamoto emphasized that architects have a responsibility not only to design buildings but to create environments that enhance social interactions. He asserted, "small projects can have a big impact," underscoring how even modest architectural interventions can significantly improve the quality of life in vulnerable areas.



Right/ Collage courtesy of UNIS  
GROUP 2: Visualization of event in amphitheater

Top Right/ Diagrams courtesy of UNIS

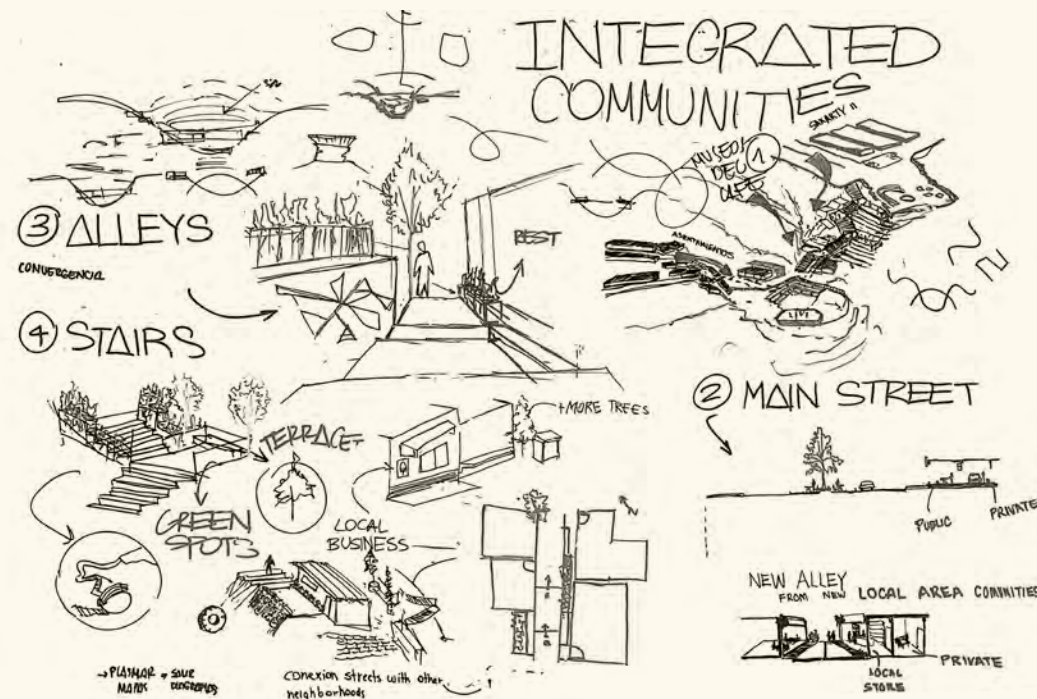
GROUP 2: Proposed Site Plan with Cultural Activities

Bottom Right/ Image courtesy of UNIS

GROUP 2: Section Diagram of Amphitheater

Below/ Sketches courtesy of UNIS

GROUP 2: Site Analysis





# OF REVE- RENCE

part 1

JACK DEBARTOLO 3, FAIA  
debartolo architects



# ATMOS- PHERES

FOUNDATIONAL  
SYSTEMS

□□ **FF/** Your master's thesis explored the concept of "sacredness" in architecture, particularly through material and light. How has your understanding of this idea evolved over time, and how do you see it manifesting in your work today?

**JD3/** The work over the last 30 years has been an "unfolding" dialogue with this idea of 'sacredness' developed through the lens of several dozen projects. I was conventionally educated to design based on functional and aesthetic visual criteria - instead of imagining spaces as a resonant setting and background for situations of lived life. As we have constructed

more and more spaces, we have learned that our buildings are backgrounds for situations - architectural form is humanly meaningful only when it is experienced in resonance with real life - real, remembered, or imagined. Pallasmaa says in (rootedness) "I believe in reduction and condensation myself; but it must be a reduction toward the experiential essentials." (not away from them). It's about how a space holds and nurtures human experience in a way that transcends functionality.

It's not about stripping away complexity for the sake of simplicity - but rather distilling down to the core of what truly matters in a space—the qualities that elevate it from a mere structure to a place that deeply

engages and affects those who experience it. That idea of reducing to the "essentials" creates a kind of purity, but not in an empty, sterile way; it's about focusing on the elements that allow a building to "speak" to those who inhabit it.

The manifestation of our work is greater and greater simplicity, less and less, and yet more. We find that as we develop our language of architecture - we tend to look for ways to make complex spaces feel simple and simplicity seems to be our goal at nearly every level of detail. The approach of making complex spaces feel simple, especially in today's technologically saturated world, is profound. There's so much noise—

both literally and figuratively—in modern life, the pursuit of simplicity becomes a kind of counterbalance to the overstimulation we experience daily. Our pursuit of simplicity is timely, considering the constant technological bombardment we face in nearly every aspect of our lives. The focus of our work is to bring peace, quiet, and clarity back into the spaces we inhabit.

Above / Image by Jason Roehner

Fountain of Haven Sports Center (2023)  
debartolo architects



## EDITOR'S NOTE

In our conversation with Jack DeBartolo 3 (JD3), we encountered more than an accomplished architect—we encountered a way of seeing. What unfolded was a deeply moving dialogue about the sacred in architecture, not limited to temples or chapels, but revealed in the quiet power of everyday spaces like a gymnasium, a prayer space, or even the memory of light falling on a childhood room. DeBartolo's reflections invited those present to reconsider the everyday, to see reverence in what might otherwise be considered mundane.

Through personal stories, from his grandfather's labor in a steel mill to formative design work in Ethiopia, DeBartolo shared how essentialism, cultural heritage, and lived experience shape an architect's eye. He advised emerging architects to embrace their unique backgrounds and to value experiential architecture over mere images. He advocates for students to reflect on their earliest spatial memories and experiences to build a meaningful life and practice. He reminded us that the act of designing is not just about form, but about cultivating presence. As he calls it, crafting "atmospheres of reverence."

This interview, facilitated by Associate Professor Paolo Sanza (PS), is part of the Goff Lecture Series at the University of Oklahoma, which hosts distinguished speakers in the field of architecture. It is more than a record of architectural insights—it is a reminder that the gaze of the architect has the power to elevate the ordinary, transforming how we envision, experience, and ultimately narrate the spaces we inhabit.



## ABOUT JACK DEBARTOLO 3

Jack DeBartolo 3 FAIA is an architect known for his passion for bringing significance and order into daily human experiences through innovation in materials, creative shaping of space, and powerful use of light. He received his architecture degree from the University of Arizona in 1992 and completed his graduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1994, where his thesis explored the role of sacredness in architecture as orchestrated by material and light.

After working with Will Bruder, DeBartolo co-founded *debartolo architects* with his father in 1996. Licensed in 1999, he went on to receive the AIA Arizona Architects Medal in 2013 and was elevated to Fellowship in the American Institute of Architects in 2016. Leading his studio of designers and architects, DeBartolo focuses on building well-tuned, highly crafted architecture specific to place, responsive to function, and sensitive to culture. The studio was named the 2012 AIA ARIZONA Firm of the Year and has developed a diverse portfolio including residential projects, coffee and bicycle shops, higher education facilities, major church campuses, solar shade pavilions, and automotive museums.

DeBartolo is also deeply engaged in education and humanitarian work. As a Faculty Associate at Arizona State University since 2006, he has guided graduate students through international design-build projects, including a school and orphanage in Ethiopia, while also teaching professional practice.

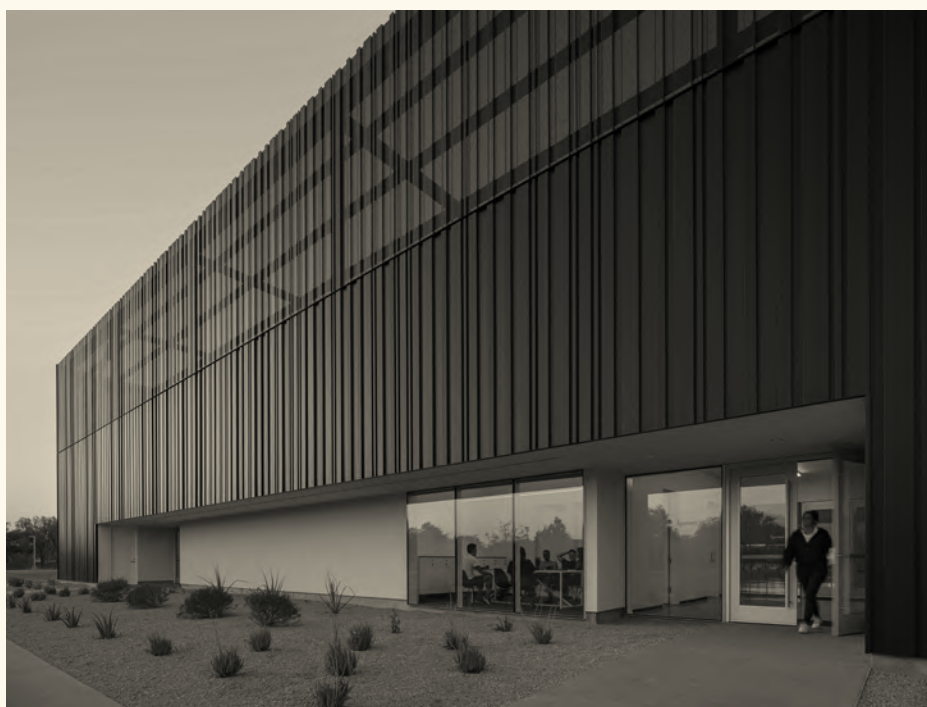


## INTERVIEWERS

Felipe Flores (FF), *Editor-in-Chief of Telesis*  
Paolo Sanza (PS), *Associate Professor at OU*



Left / Image by Jason Roehner  
Front view of Haven Sports Center (2023)  
debartolo architects



Left / Image by Jason Roehner  
Exterior Facade of Haven Sports Center (2023)  
debartolo architects



Left / Image by Jason Roehner  
Basketball Courts of Haven Sports Center (2023)  
debartolo architects



## INTERVIEW

**FF/** In *Telesis Vol. 7*, we explore the theme of "Unfold." To start, what does the word unfold mean to you in the context of architecture and design?

**JD3/** UNFOLD feels like an excellent word in our design terms - as we see a project 'unfold' in complexity and richness - layer by layer, revealing depth and intricacy as it progresses. For us, we often refer to a project coming into 'focus' - like a living thing that gains clarity and shape as each stage progresses - but much in the same way a project 'unfolds' throughout the process. The unfolding reveals creases and facets in the process that reveal the complexity of the project. As a project nears completion, the folding process almost reverses itself, and the project folds up - suggesting a return to simplicity or elegance - even though the depth and complexity are still there, quietly concealed beneath the surface.

Experientially - "unfold" for us refers to the way people "experience" a building or atmosphere. Just as a folded piece of paper might open up to reveal new dimensions, an architectural space can "unfold" as one moves through it, revealing new perspectives, connections, and experiences as one moves.

**FF/** Your website highlights a wide range of inspirations—from Scarpa and Khan's Salk Institute to a Porsche 986 Boxster—as well as the idea that everything beyond the essential is unnecessary. You also emphasize the impact of humanitarian work. What is something that has recently inspired you, and how has it shaped your architectural thinking?

**JD3/** INSPIRATION is a constant flow of new experiences and images that come to mind. Last summer we experienced a couple of chapels in Finland - one by Pekka Pitkanen - Chapel of the Holy Cross (1967) standing in that space is still in the front of my mind's eye. The light in the large chapel. Another by Aarno Ruusuvaori called Tapiola Church - also in Finland - a concrete block box of light and material - from a similar time (1965) seats 600 people - incredibly evocative examples of how architecture can hold space for not only the physical body but also the soul. The way light interacts with these spaces, creating a sacred atmosphere, is something that stays with me—like an image burned into my mind. But I also draw significant inspiration from sculpture, art, nature, light, and food. Each of these offers its own rhythm, texture, and language, contributing to a deeper understanding of the world and its complexities. My architecture is less of a linear line between inspiration and experience - where past experiences and emotional resonances blend and inform the work we create - that connects the heart of ideas and experiences - they are accumulated in a bank of my soul and the work of your fingers flows from your soul and experiences. I am headed to Portugal, ask me next month - after I get to visit with Siza.

**FF/** How did you first learn about the Gibbs College of Architecture? Are you familiar with Bruce Goff and the spirit of the American School of Architecture?

**JD3/** Yes, I have long been aware of Bruce Goff and his organic architecture. It is not a language I speak - but I appreciate his passion for an almost anthropomorphic and expressive language. A friend who practices here in Phoenix, (Jones Studio) is quite fond of Goff and has adopted much of his similar language. It is not a language we speak but we appreciate the innovative attitude and inventive approach. The American School of Architecture - spirit is to encourage creativity, resourcefulness, and innovation while respecting context and the environment. I have reviewed the main points and appreciate the holistic spirit.



Left/ Image by Jason Roehner

Prayer Space(2018). Prayer cards folded and inserted into the gaps between the wood members.

The irregularities in the wood express the imperfect nature of all of us - yet the beauty seen in unity of the body.



Left/ Image by Jason Roehner

Prayer Space(2018). The end grain of the wood exposes the rings of the tree that connects us to GOD's timeframe, our timing is not typically GOD'S timing (and the uniqueness of each of our paths).



Right/ Image by Jason Roehner

Prayer Space(2018). The entry experience is slightly compressed-drawing out the threshold to the space. A steel ramp rises 4" to new floor level - creating "threshold."

The space with benches for less contemplative prayer and meeting with others.



Right/ Image by Jason Roehner

Prayer Space(2018). The light animates the space throughout the day from the building apertures. 4" thick douglas fir wood floor is turned on its edge to make the floor-imperfections and knots express the nature of imperfect life.



Right/ Image by Jason Roehner

Prayer Space(2018). The steel reveal under the benches. The benches rise up out of the floor-from same material.

The slots in the wood reveal the movements of people outside of the space. The steel door (open) without handle allows you to push/pull the door slab: tactile

# OF REVERENCE

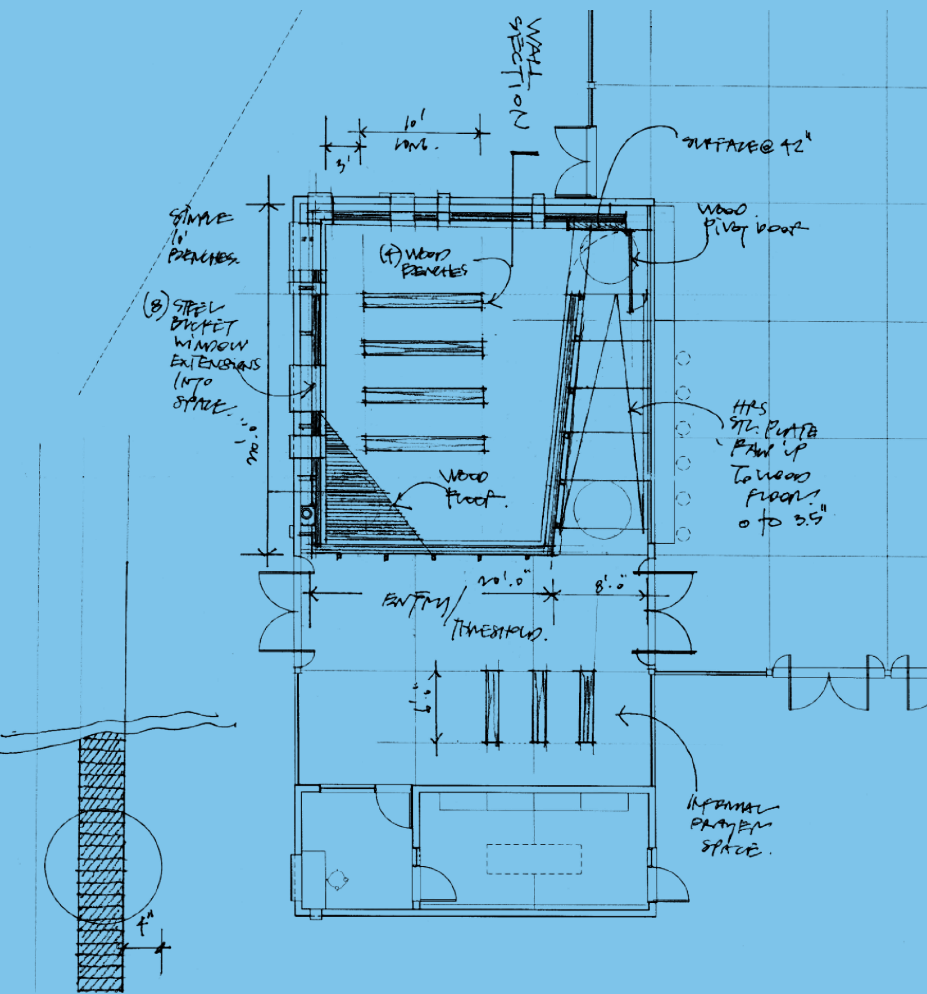
part 2

JACK DEBARTOLO 3, FAIA  
debartolo architects



# ATMOSPHERES

TELESCOPIC UNFOLD

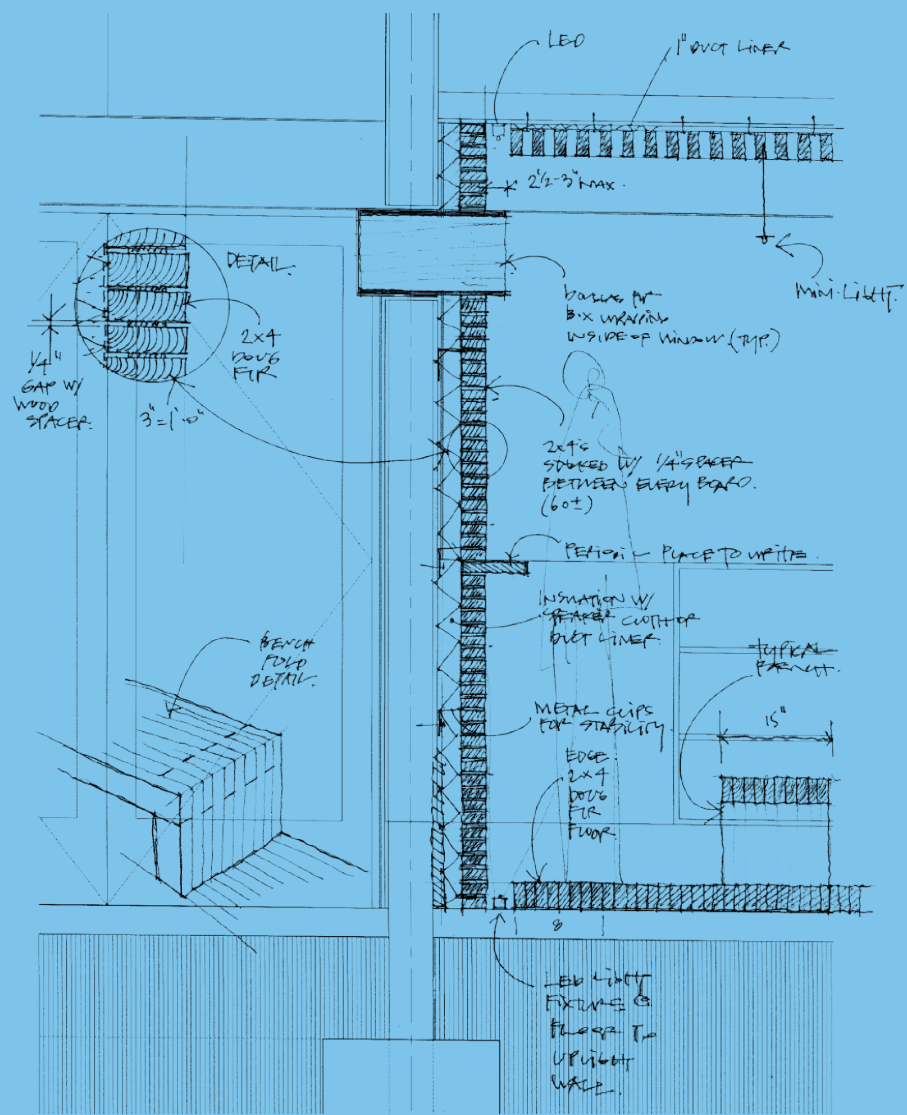


Left/ Image by debartolo architects

Floor Plan of Prayer Space(2018). In september 2017 the board of Redemption Gilbert challenged us to design a space dedicated solely to prayer.

"Prayer is both conversation and encounter with God... We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence."

From Timothy Keller, "Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God"



Left/ Image by debartolo architects

Wall Section of Prayer Space(2018).

□□

**FF/** Your studio philosophy emphasizes that architecture is a response to site, culture, and people. Can you walk us through a project where this design process revealed something unexpected about the place or its users—perhaps your Chapel in Phoenix (2007) or Prayer Space in Gilbert (2018)?

**JD3/** For us, architecture is always a RESPONSE. In the case of the prayer space in Gilbert - we were challenged to create an intentional room (space) for prayer anytime of the day. This space was small and limited in its volume - so we chose to limit the material palate to one material. WE VISUALIZED A SPACE OF QUIET AND SILENCE. A SPACE OF SIMPLICITY AND SINGULARITY.

From the beginning, we were interested in a visceral material presence for the prayer space. Contrasted to the machined, extravered formal quality of the commons - the prayer space should be reserved and modest. We thought to create a space that feels more 'made' than 'manufactured'. To achieve this, we chose douglas fir for its common (ordinary) presence, warmth and affordable availability - but also its ability to embrace. One material that could become everything: floors, walls, ceiling, benches - transforming the space with one material. One common material - douglas fir - with thousands of imperfections - made into something extraordinary when unified. Like the BODY of CHRIST, when we are united, our imperfections become minimized, and our union becomes the beauty.

The contrast between the prayer space and the more "extravered" commons is fascinating. We created a quiet counterpoint, a space that withdraws from the external world, yet invites contemplation and connection. The choice of Douglas fir, with its warmth, commonality, and imperfections, creates a grounded, tactile experience that connects to the natural world. It has a presence in the space - not just about aesthetic quality - but forms a relationship with those who experience it. The metaphor of unity in the material choice—how the imperfections of the wood become part of its beauty when unified—is resonant. It is a visual and material reflection of the idea of unity: how, when we come together in shared purpose or faith, our individual imperfections contribute to a greater whole. There's a certain grace in that. The space, then, becomes not just a container for prayer but a living embodiment of the message it holds.

**FF/** You've mentioned that great architecture is achieved when "there is nothing left to take away." Can you share a moment when this principle was tested in your design process—when stripping something away revealed the true essence of a project?

**JD3/** Through this process of reduction, we can see the true essence of the project emerge—not in the

accumulation of elements, but in the harmony that is created when we let go of what wasn't necessary. The project becomes a canvas for experiences, rather than a display of design virtuosity. We continue to realize that true beauty is most often found in restraint, in creating spaces that invite experience without overwhelming it.

We are working on a very large campus right now in our studio - a project with over 70,000 sf of new and reused spaces - and our goal is reduction and removal. We have great experience in reduction. When I purchased my house and my wife and I moved in, we filled four 40-yard containers with "unnecessary" - and were left with a beautiful shell of a house.

**FF/** Your website features collaborative projects undertaken while teaching at Arizona State University for vulnerable communities in Africa. What have these experiences revealed to you about the deeper responsibilities of architecture?

**JD3/** In 2010, 11, 12 - I had the opportunity to take teams of 12 grad students into Ethiopia to design a school and an orphanage. Both of these projects were not about bringing American Architecture to Ethiopia - but instead about understanding a place and recommending how to organize the raw materials of that place into work inspired by their context. Bricks, thatch, concrete, weaving, etc. were all critical elements to making.

However, teamwork rarely achieves the intensity and integrity of a work conceived by a single creator - group work tends to strengthen the rational, conscious and intentional - but tends to lose the emotive and unspoken contents. Great works of subtlety are always the result of a single, emotive, synthesizing and empathetic imagination and are incubated in a singular personality.

**FF/** Your work frequently engages with natural light as a defining spatial experience. Can you share an example of a project where light played an unexpected role in shaping the emotional or narrative quality of the space?

**JD3/** An example of this in our work would be a recent gymnasium we designed, called HAVEN - where light was an integral part of the narrative we wanted to convey. From the outset, we knew the space had to foster a sense of calm and reverence, but it was also a sports center and needed to feel alive and inspiring.

In this particular project, the gymnasium was on a church campus, and there was an intentional decision to keep the gym simple and clean from clutter. During the design phase, we focused on the idea of making light the primary sculptor of the space, allowing it to shape both the form and emotional atmosphere of the interior. Initially, the entire upper volume of the building was translucent fiberglass - to flood the space with natural light, but as the

design evolved, we focused the areas of light and even reduced the space of the fiberglass.

We designed a window to the exterior facing a plaza filled with desert trees. This window would be the only window from the gym - but the light would all come from above. Walking into the competed gym, all of us were astounded by its apparent quality of reverence - it is truly a reverent environment - the white interior speaks to quiet and peacefulness - while the light is nearly a cleansing wash over the interior.

This gradual transformation throughout the day gives the gym a "living" quality, where light tells the story of time passing, guiding those who were present through the rhythms of the day. The emotional and narrative quality of the space isn't just about the architecture itself—it is about how light interacts with the materials, the forms, and the way it invites the community to experience a deeper connection with the sacred.

**FF/** If you could go back in time and give advice to your younger self as you were going through your architectural education, what would you say? What insights have unfolded in your journey that you wish you had known as a student?

**JD3/** Consider carefully who you are and why you believe what you do. Ask yourself why? Consider what you value most and the intersection of your values, your experiences and your likes - and try to find unique intersections and overlaps that bring about unique relationships.

Understanding the intersection of your values, experiences, and preferences is key to finding your unique VOICE in the profession. So much of architecture, comes down to finding those moments where personal insight meets the external world—where what we care most about aligns with the needs and realities around us. When students learn to trust their intuition and values, they can create more authentic and meaningful work - rather than trying to mimic what others are doing or chasing the next trend.

It's also important to realize that these intersections aren't static or fixed; they evolve. As you grow and gather more experiences, your understanding of what you value and how it intersects with your work will continue to shift, leading to new, unexpected connections and ideas. This process of self-discovery, combined with an openness to the world around you, should lead to a deeper sense of purpose in your architecture, and ultimately, more innovative and soulful work

Consider who you are, why you believe what you do, and what you truly value - cultivate self-awareness and purpose - qualities that over time will become your passion and ambition.

□□

Gerardo had a significant influence on me because he encouraged me to write. I liked to write, and that's where I came up with "soul, movement, and eternity" for my very first project.

I also did a project on Thunderbird—it was a mixed-use project, essentially a commune for a bunch of hippies that I designed. I don't think I have any photos to show you, but it actually looked like a Track II razor. It had a core with spiral stairs leading up to a house above the treetops, and I designed a series of those. The bottom had a barn, and this big silo-like structure with a top on it.

That first design was actually before I had seen the morgue. But by the next fall, when we were finally allowed in, it really changed how I looked at things. More importantly, around the same time, I started working for a sculptor, James Strickland, who had studied for two years at OU under Herb Greene in the early '60s. James was a wild man—an incredible sculptor. He's done some fantastic work all around here that you guys probably don't even realize, some of them quite large.

He talked a lot about Bruce Goff and how form doesn't always have to be prescribed—it can just happen. More than anything, he taught me not to be afraid of making mistakes. That was the biggest lesson I learned from him. When he

worked on sculptures—whether in wood or welding steel pieces together—if he made a mistake, he'd say, "Well, we're just going to articulate it," and he would make it a defining feature of the piece.

That philosophy carried over into architecture. Like all of us, I wanted everything to be perfect. I only wanted to do it once. But James encouraged me to explore, to make mistakes. That's how

I arrived at, for instance, my working drawings for the stereo outlet—what was it called? They don't even have those anymore. Oh, Crazy Eddie's in New York City was the best—until he got arrested for tax evasion and escaped to Israel. But anyway, James was a big influence on me.

Another major influence was Ron Hess. Ron had taught at Iowa State University in the traditional International Style. But like me, he loved Goff's work and encouraged me to pursue that path as well. So, I'd say my approach was shaped by Gerardo encouraging me with writing and James pushing me toward three-dimensional exploration.

**FF/ And that includes making poems?**

**TR/** Yes, very much. Although, I haven't written a poem in a while. Nowadays, I only write poems when someone dies or gets married—those are the two occasions.

**FF/ The art-show poem (Fig. 2), for example, does it talk about what it means for you to do design work?**

**TR/** Yes, that was from 2007. That was my second-to-last year at BSW International. That was when I was working on a new design for Walmart (Fig. 3)—you've seen a bit of that over there.

**FF/ Can you tell us a little bit about the Walmart project?**

**TR/** Yes, at the time, we were still one of Walmart's primary architects. They had hired Perkins & Will as their managing architect out of Los Angeles. They came to us and said, "Look, you've been doing these for so many years, but we want to change our whole image."

This was when they introduced the sunburst logo. In 2007, it wasn't public yet, but they were transitioning from the gray and red-lettered "we're cheap and have volume" image. They wanted to attract a broader clientele because Target, among other competitors, was eating into their market.

So, they wanted to rethink their stores three-dimensionally. We worked on numerous design proposals. I collaborated with Bill Howell, an architect from

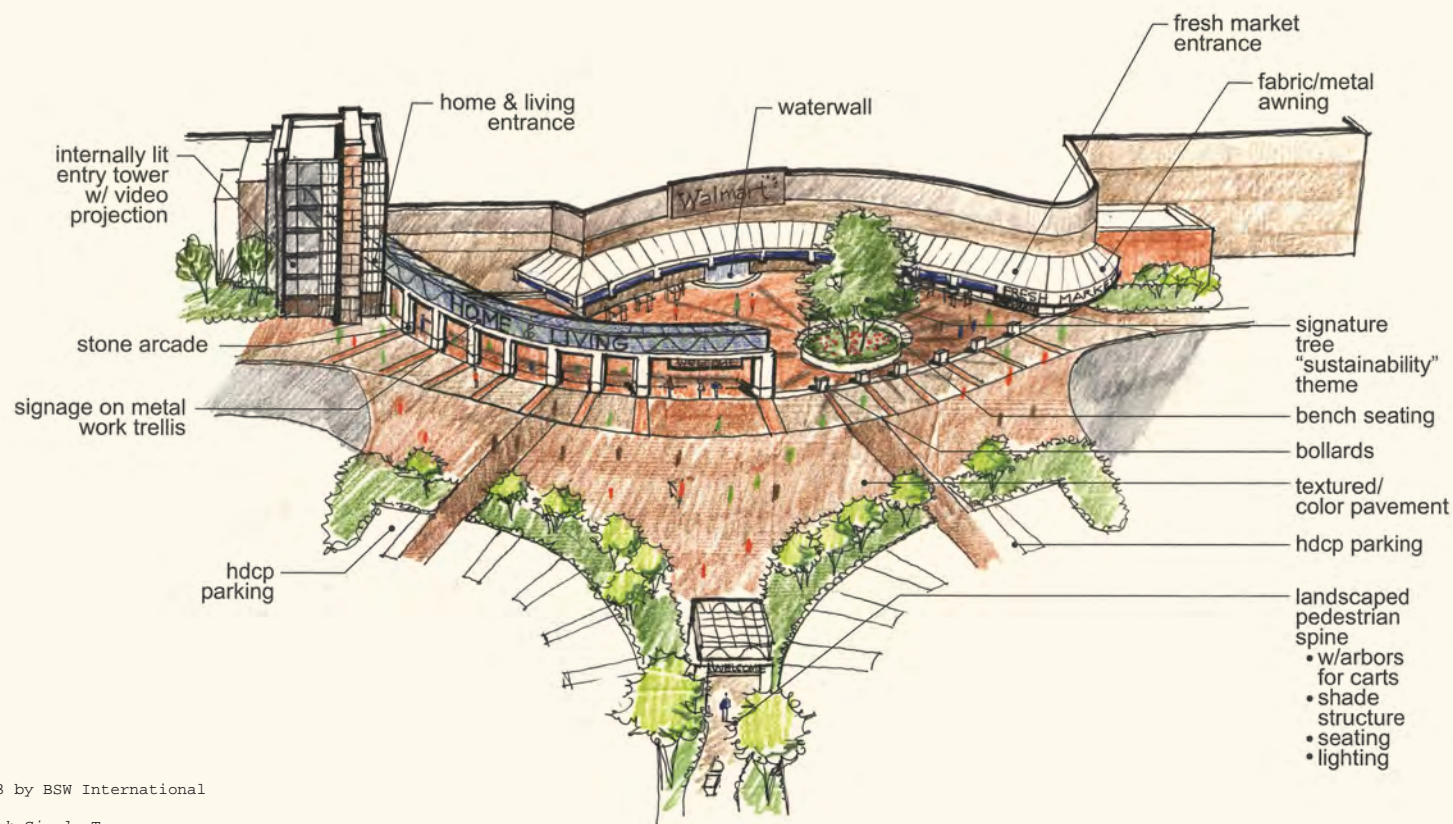
Oklahoma City and OU graduate—tremendous designer. Bill and George Skinner, another OU graduate, had joined BSW about a year before that, and we probably developed 10 or 12 different schemes. One of mine had an entire facade made of a video board that could change and morph dynamically.

**FF/ What about this idea of making a "people's place"?**

**TR/** A people's place is about focusing on the people who use the space. Instead of designing spaces just because they're economical, the goal was to make people feel like they belonged—to give them ownership of the space.

Through design, and particularly the transition from the car to the entry to the store, we aimed to introduce human experiences. For example, we designed a drop-off area so customers with large purchases wouldn't have to carry everything to their car; they could just drive up and pick up their items. Or, if someone was with an elderly relative, they could say, "Hey, wait here on this bench, and I'll pick you up." The idea was to humanize the Walmart experience.

**FF/ Does that connect with the idea of making the ordinary extraordinary?**



Above / Fig. 3 by BSW International

Concept Sketch—Single Tower  
Walmart Study - A People Place "Our World"  
Nov 11, 2006

**TR/** Oh, absolutely. I fully invest in that concept. "Making the ordinary extraordinary" is something you hear a lot in marketing because it resonates with people. It's both a capitalist phrase and a democratic one—capitalism enables the freedom to do what we want, including voting for dumbasses, but that's another topic.

The point is, if you can take something ordinary and elevate it into something extraordinary, you create a greater emotional connection. That applies to architecture, clothing, objects—even a simple teapot. Frank Lloyd Wright believed in this principle completely; he designed everything, down to the spoons his clients ate with.

**CT/ Do you want to tell us more about your time in Tulsa and New York and some of your favorite projects from that time?**

**TR/** Oh, wow. So, New York—going in chronological order—when I went there, I luckily, through happenstance, just walking on the Upper East Side with a pair of broken glasses (I didn't even have them on), was on my way to Al DeVido's house. Al had taught here at OU for one semester when as a visiting Goff professor. I don't think they even called it that yet. I never got to his house because, along 91st between Second and Third, across the street, there was this nice infill project going up that looked pretty cool, even without my glasses. You realize that the streets in New York are pretty narrow—they're 60 feet across, including the sidewalks.

At any rate, I was looking at the building when I heard someone yell out, "What are you looking at?" I said, "Well, I kind of like—" and he interrupted, "Come over here." So, I went over and said, "I like the building. That's why I'm looking at it." He replied, "I think they need someone down at the office."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I think the architect needs someone down at the office." Then he wrote a phone number on a torn piece of cardboard. I called from the nearest payphone, which was on the next corner (because back in 1980, there was a payphone on every corner). The person on the other end said, "Why don't you come down here now for an interview?" I said, "No, I'll come down in the morning." So, I did, and they hired me on the spot.

That was a developer-architect firm. The good thing about that experience was that they gave me some structure on how to put drawings together. But essentially, they let me design however I wanted, as long as it met zoning and building codes. It was really like—whoa. Just happenstance that I landed there. Through them, I met my future business partner, Alan Sackman, within three years. He was a developer on the Upper West Side. Also, through them, my other favorite clients were the Eberhard Brothers on the Upper East Side. Between those two, I probably did about 100 projects in Manhattan.

# with TED REEDS

part 01

TED REEDS, AIA  
Lecturer  
Gibbs College of Architecture



# an INTERVIEW



### EDITOR'S NOTE

This interview with Ted Reeds (TR), conducted by the Telesis Team in Fall 2024, explored his journey in architecture, his design philosophy, and his extensive professional experience.

Ted's career path was shaped early by his father's influence as a designer. Ted's education at OU was pivotal. For example, Ted recounted inspiring moments, like delving into archival drawings of the American School and significant interactions with Bruce Goff, which influenced his architectural perspective later on.

Ted also shared memorable projects, from innovative brownstone renovations in New York to ambitious commercial developments like Walmart redesigns. He emphasized the importance of providing a sense of community of belonging in our work as architects. Ted also encouraged graduating students to balance work, life, and play while staying ethically grounded and proactive in improving our built environment.



### ABOUT TED

With nearly four decades of architectural experience, Ted Reeds is not only the President of Ted Reeds Architecture and a leader in the field of design and urban development, but above all, a beloved lecturer at the Gibbs College of Architecture. A proud Sooner, Reeds earned his Master of Architecture from the University of Oklahoma, where his time as a student deeply shaped his design philosophy.

His extensive portfolio spans a diverse range of projects, including restaurants, mixed-use developments, healthcare facilities, and historic preservation efforts. Licensed in multiple states, Reeds is a former president of AIA Oklahoma and the Eastern Oklahoma Chapter, as well as an NCARB-certified architect. He served for nine years on The City of Tulsa's Planning Commission and Preservation Commission.

Beyond his professional practice, Reeds is deeply committed to mentoring young architects and fostering a broader understanding of architectural history and urban design. A lifelong advocate for Tulsa's built heritage, he has played a vital role in preserving and promoting the city's architectural legacy, working on documentaries, guided tours, and public lectures with the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture. His work has been featured in *Politico*, *Monocle Magazine*, *CSPAN*, and the *AIA Walking Tours of New York City*, and his designs have received national recognition, including an AIA Citation Award.

Reeds' design philosophy is rooted in the interplay between human experience, space, and storytelling—an approach shaped by his academic background in French and European history, his time working in New York City, and his passion for creating meaningful places. Whether designing a new structure or revitalizing a historic landmark, he remains dedicated to making the ordinary extraordinary and ensuring that architecture serves both function and spirit.



### INTERVIEW TEAM

- Felipe Flores (FF), Editor-in-Chief of Telesis
- Albert Rogers (AR), Undergraduate Architecture(UAS)
- Chandler Thompson (CT), UAS
- Terry Chisimba (TC), UAS
- Kayt Malone (KM), UAS
- Trey London (TL), UAS



Above / Fig.1 by Sheldon

Tree House by Ted's Father, also named Ted Reeds Images were published by Molly Ashbrook in *Snowmass Affairs* Vol.5 No.5 In June 1978

ART SHOW

AND SO...  
WHAT DO I  
SKETCH?  
A DREAM?  
AN EDIFICE?  
A LOVE?  
OR A  
PASSION?

SCREAMING BABY  
WILL NOT  
DETER MY  
DESIRE  
TO CREATE  
A MASTERPIECE

AN EMOTIONAL  
SCULPTURE  
OF THOUGHT  
AND CIRCUMSTANCE  
TO BE  
FOCUSED ON  
OUR LIVES  
OUR VALUES  
OUR LOVES

IT BEGINS  
WITH SPACE  
AND ITS'  
THREE-DIMENSIONAL  
TEMPLATE

PROGRESSING TO  
MOVEMENT  
AND ITS'  
EBB AND FLOW



**AR/** Tell us a little bit about yourself, what guided you into architecture? Why did you choose OU and how did it shape your career?

**TR/** So why did I choose architecture? It was both an indirect and a direct path. My dad studied architecture before the war at Yale University in their master's program. After the war, when he came back, instead of returning to Yale and working hard—as he put it—because it was a pretty rigorous program, he chose OU. He got in-state tuition and, frankly, he was tired of working so hard. He figured if he went to OU, he could have fun, join a fraternity, and enjoy his time. And he did.

He never graduated with a degree, though. In his last semester, he got into an argument with Professor Goff and ended up majoring in American history because he had enough credits to earn a degree in that field. He never practiced as a professional architect—he never joined the AIA—but he became a tremendous designer, mainly of high-end homes, in his own style. You've seen a little bit of his work here (Fig.1). He could have become a licensed architect by working under someone through the old-fashioned apprenticeship route back then, but he didn't like the rule that you couldn't be both an architect and a builder at the same time. He always dismissed that restriction.

Growing up around him, as difficult a human being as he was, I spent time on his construction sites from about three years old, picking up bent nails and straightening them out. Any piece of two-by-four over seven inches long, I'd pile up. He had me working on his job sites from the time I was a little kid, maybe three to five years old. I worked for him all summer and even during the school year sometimes.

FINALLY LANDING  
ON TIME  
AND HIS  
DESIRE FOR  
CONSEQUENCE

WE ARRIVE  
THROUGH THIS  
TRILOGY

AT A  
PRODUCT  
THAT IS AT ONCE  
TRANSFORMING AND  
THOUGHTFUL

THINK AND WE WILL CONQUER.  
5 APR. 7/2007

Above / Fig.2 by T. Reeds

Art-Show Poem (2007)

But I didn't want to be an architect because I didn't want to be like him. Everyone has their own issues with their parents, and in my dad's case, it was like being raised by Attila the Hun—to put it mildly. He wasn't physically violent, but he had this voice that was constantly hammering away at you. So, I wanted to be a lawyer. I went to W&L in pre-law, majored in French and European history—those were my best subjects, and I enjoyed them.

Then, at the end of my junior year, I read *The Fountainhead*. I know it sounds cliché, but long story short, it influenced me. I realized, Oh God, I've been around this my whole life. I do love this. Now, looking back, I see Ayn Rand's philosophy as more of a statue-static rather than active. It's a beautiful thought, but it's more sculpture than action. Still, it influenced me enough that I finished my French and European history degree, took a year off making money in D.C. restoring townhouses in Georgetown, and then came here.

That's how I got to OU. My other choices were Yale and Oregon, because at the time, those were the only three programs in the country that offered master's degrees for non-architecture majors. I chose OU because I could afford it.

**AR/** Okay, so what led you to come back to OU as a teacher?

**TR/** A call from Stephanie. Stephanie and I had been working for a few years on The American School book that she and Luca Guido were developing. I had shown them around some of Goff's early works in Tulsa and introduced them to the owners of buildings that were being renovated. I developed a good relationship with her. I also knew her through the Professional Architecture Board, which I've been on since 2006 or 2007—I don't remember exactly.

So, I had already been coming down to OU a couple of times a year for many years. Then, two days before classes were supposed to start—this was during COVID—Stephanie called me and said: "Ted, we need help. We need an adjunct professor for Design 1. A professor just left because her husband got a job in another city, and it was unexpected."

So I said, Okay, and I came down. That's how I got here.

**AR/** Do you have any memorable stories or events from your time at OU, both as a student and a teacher?

**TR/** Well, as a student, I had the best time. I was a TA—or they called it a graduate assistant, a GA, back then—because I was in the master's program. I had my own little office underneath the stadium stairs, and I couldn't even stand up fully because of the way the stands were built. The maximum height was about 5'11", and I'm 6'2". Still, it was cool—it was like a little cocoon to hide out in.

I also had a key to the storage area where they kept all the old drawings, including those from The American School, stored in these vertical racks. A couple of my friends, Frantz Davies and Larry Dalziel, and I would have a few beers, and they'd say: "Ted, we need to go look at stuff."

So, we'd sneak in there with a flashlight because we didn't want to get caught. We later referred to it as *The Morgue*. The drawings we pulled out of there—some of which you now see framed around here—were amazing. We looked at the work of Goff's students from the late '40s through the mid-'50s. That's what we used as our guide, and it was so exciting. We finally convinced Ron Hess, who was the assistant dean, to let us hang some of them up in the gallery during our second year.

But without a doubt, the most exciting moment was when Professor Arne Henderson arranged for us to pick up Bruce Goff from Tyler, Texas, and bring him back to OU. He had left in 1956, and in 1979–23 years later—we brought him back to campus.

We drove down to Tyler, picked him up, and he spent two hours showing us new and old drawings, talking about his projects. Then, on the six-hour drive back, he was like a little kid at Christmas: "Are we almost there? Are we almost there?"

This was before Google Maps, so I just told him: "We'll get there, we'll get there. Just calm down." And then he'd start telling more stories—mainly about the Boston Avenue Church.

Once we got back, he stayed with Arne and spoke at Tau Sigma Delta, our architectural honor society. He was just so excited to be back. It wasn't an official university visit; we just went and got him, then took him home. But in 1982, he returned officially.

**TL/** So, we talked a little about your time at school-going through the morgue, seeing all these drawings and everything. Now, I'd like to go into what influenced you and your student projects. How would you describe your design philosophy? We've seen your student work and your professional work—how would you explain that and expand on it?

**TR/** Starting with school, I don't know—I think I started more literary than I did three-dimensionally, if you will. I remember my first real design class was with Gerardo Brown, who had studied at Yale. I believe he was an adjunct here; I'm not even sure if he was a full professor. Maybe he was. He was a hoot, though. They only made me take Design One, which, like for you guys, was very abstract—playing with music and design. But my second semester, I didn't take the normal Design Two. Instead, they put me in Design Three, which was the first studio of the second year.



with  
**TED REEDS**  
part 02

**TED REEDS, AIA**  
Lecturer  
Gibbs College of Architecture



an  
**INTER-  
VIEW**



Above / Fig.4 By Norman McGrath  
Loft Interior 1, New York City

□ □

As for my favorite project—God, there are so many. I loved doing a lot of the brownstone renovations because we wouldn't use right angles when separating the units (Fig.4). Even in older buildings, we avoided the typical square layouts. Why do we have to make these little boxy, sausage-filled rooms? Why not introduce some energy by using 30- or 45-degree angles? So, I really enjoyed the interior challenges of a 25-foot-wide building that was a five-story walk-up with a fire escape at the back. Often, we had to add fire escapes to the front as well, which was still permitted under the old code. Those projects were exciting.

The best part? We did pop-ups. If we had leftover square footage, we'd convert one-third of the roof into a penthouse apartment with walkout areas. Those were fun because they all looked different. They weren't just boxes—we introduced serious angles, sometimes even creating openings in the floors below so we could gain space and add on top in our calculations.

But my absolute favorite project was one I built for my son in a building we owned at 85th and Columbus. It was a large tenement building on the corner, and the top had enough square footage for me to design a small schoolhouse-like addition, complete with towers and pure glass skylights, as a nursery for my son. It was a three-bedroom apartment, and ultimately, we converted the building into condominiums. But that little schoolhouse at 85th and Columbus is still there. If you go on Google Maps, you'll see it—it was a wonderful folly. My son learned to walk on that roof. That was fun.

However, my favorite professional project is still 176 West 86th Street. We used air rights from the buildings on both sides. There was a strict height limit on 86th Street, so we squeezed every ounce of square footage possible. By maximizing height, we gained free floor space by introducing 10- or 11-foot ceilings. We also incorporated storage lofts that were less than five feet tall—specifically, four feet, 11 and seven-eighths inches—so they didn't count as floor area in zoning calculations. Guess what? They became sleeping lofts, and they were wonderful. I still get calls a couple of times a year from people living in that building, asking about its history. Some of them have lived there for 30 years. That's probably my favorite project, but there were so many others.

One project that didn't get built but I wish had was 711 10th Avenue, a third of a city block, including building over railroad rights-of-way in Hell's Kitchen. It was a huge project, but the Reagan recession slowed it down.

**CT/** There are photographs of the 444-445 West 45th Street loft, and in one of them, there's a duck in the window (Fig.5). Can you tell us the story behind those photos?

**TR/** It was a carriage house entry we designed. The stone you see on it is all load-bearing, and it leads back into an old parking garage that we converted into wonderful open lofts, which later became condos.

As for the duck—I actually called Larry about that. He said, "I have no idea how that duck got there." When we had the

building photographed, we just gave the photographer a list of projects to shoot. I didn't go with him. Norman McGrath—the photographer of most of my New York work—must have seen it and captured it. Maybe someone put it there on purpose, but I doubt it. I think it's kind of cute, though. I don't really have a story about it, but I love it.

**CT/** Do you think it kind of plays into your idea of people making the building?

**TR/** Oh, absolutely. You know, that's a good point—I've never looked at it that deeply before. But yes, I suppose it does. When we built that building on the off-ramp, it was a wonderful experience. We looked at the old buildings that were there, and they were just kind of these rundown walk-ups. The site was essentially just a driveway leading to the exit of a parking garage. But when we built there, we were conscious of making the new structure fit in while still giving it its own presence—and I think we achieved that.

All that limestone spanning the building acts as its own lintel; none of it is fake. The limestone is solid and runs through the entire wall. We had to bring in a real crane to install it—we couldn't just jerry-rig it up on scaffolding with a few workers. It was a serious operation, and honestly, it was pretty exciting.

**FF/** So, Ted, what is beauty to you?

**TR/** Wow. What is beauty to me? I truly don't start with the physical—I start with the spiritual. And by spiritual, I mean something that comes from human experience, from the human soul, if you will.

I think this largely stems from my first degree, where I focused on the French Enlightenment. That period gave people the freedom to believe that individuals could be just as important as kings, priests, nobles, and bishops. So, my idea of beauty starts with the spirit of the individual—their soul.

As for aesthetics, people often judge others based on appearance. "Oh, that person is beautiful. That person is a monster. That person is ugly." I don't agree with that kind of judgment.

I learned from my mother and my step-mother—and my father, too, but mainly my mothers—that everyone has beauty, no matter their appearance or personality. You can find beauty in every human being.

As for my definition of beauty in architecture, I've never really tried to pin it down this precisely. It's not purely physical—it evolves from the spirit of the human being, whether that's the client or the collective spirit of the people involved in a project. That's how beauty emerges.

Of course, there are misguided buildings—lots of them. But if they're used, if they're safe, and if they're properly built, they still serve humanity. They still have a worthwhile existence.

So, if I had to sum it up, my definition of beauty is this: it starts with the spiritual, and from that foundation, a dimension evolves. And that dimension is defined by us.

**FF/** And that's how you approach a project?

**TR/** That's how I approach every project.

You asked me about Tulsa—there are two projects in particular that stand out. One of them is Jackson Technical, which I did with the McIntosh Group. That project wasn't about me; it was about two other people, and they fully believed in what I just described.

They originally wanted a warehouse-style brick building. That was their dream. But over time—over many conversations and a few cocktails—I didn't have to convince them. I just showed them a different perspective, and they got it. Together, we arrived at Jackson Technical. It's far and away my favorite project in Tulsa, and I'm very proud of it.

**FF/** Speaking of Tulsa, last time we talked, you mentioned being involved in several organizations beyond your role as an architect. You said you learned that from your parents.

**TR/** Yeah, my mother was always involved—my birth mother.

She passed away young, but she was active in organizations like the Junior League, the Mental Health Association, and the Tulsa Opera. She was deeply passionate about opera. She even thought she could speak Italian—though really, it was more like "Okie Italian." But she knew every word in those operas.

My dad wasn't as involved in that way—he focused on his work. But my stepmother, who stepped into the role after my mom passed, was extremely engaged in the community. She was involved in the League of Women Voters, Planned Parenthood, and other organizations.

Then there was my father-in-law, Mr. Tulsa himself. He ran a family real estate trust for years, was involved with Downtown Tulsa Unlimited, led the city's urban renewal program (tearing down a lot of buildings, including some really great ones—but he was too nice a guy for me to give him grief about that), and worked on projects related to mass transit and hospitals. He got me involved in all of that.

Beyond that, through the influence of Steve Alter from Matrix Architects, I got involved in the AIA. From there, I joined the Tulsa Foundation for Architecture, which I now consider my primary focus. That's an organization I'll be involved with until the day I die.

I believe that as architects, we have to engage with our communities. It's not just about where or how you were raised—it's about making an effort. We often complain that architects aren't paid enough, but part of the problem is that people don't know who we are. We're like a priesthood—people only think of us when they desperately need a stamp on a drawing. Otherwise, they'll find a stock plan online, hire a contractor, and get it approved without ever consulting an architect.

If we want to reclaim our role as master builders—or even get close to that—we have to be visible. We have to get involved in our communities.

**TC/** What's your message to graduating students—those about to enter the profession who might feel lost or afraid?

**TR/** Well, this is for the fifth-year students in Methods Nine. I've already told them a lot.

Most of them already have jobs lined up, but my message is this: Get involved in your community. Right now, they're just focused on graduating, of course, but once they do, they need to remember that they bring value to their communities.

They might work at firms doing rollout or prototypical architecture, but that doesn't mean they can't do quality work. They need to honor their profession, produce the best drawings possible, and take responsibility for their work.

They should speak up about lifecycle costs, sustainability, and LEED. If they don't, they'll just be treated like draftsmen. They need to bring value to their firms—not just by working hard but by offering ideas to improve outcomes, improve products, and contribute beyond their assigned tasks.

And they shouldn't expect to work a simple 9-to-5. In my 46 years in architecture, I don't think I've ever worked less than an 11-hour day. I usually work half a day on Saturdays too. I enjoy it—it's quiet, with no distractions.

Most importantly, they need to stop seeing work as separate from life. Work, life, and play should be fully connected in architecture. If they don't embrace that, they'll struggle.

If they take a vacation, they shouldn't completely disconnect. I've never put an out-of-office email saying, "I'm unavailable for the next three weeks." I own my company, so I could if I wanted to—but I never have. I'll take a call from San Francisco while I'm in New York, or from Paris while I'm in San Jose. It doesn't matter.

In today's world, we're inundated with information, and it can be overwhelming. But if you step back and simplify it—work, life, play—it all flows together. And that's okay.



Above / Fig.5 By Norman McGrath  
Can you spot the duck in the 445-447 West 45th Street condo (the building in the middle)?

Next / Top-Left / Fig.6 Courtesy of Thompson Construction Inc.

External View of the Jackson Technical Building

Next / Top-Right / Fig.7 Courtesy of @Melissa Lukenbaugh Photography

Internal View Hallway of the Jackson Technical Building

Next / Bottom-Left / Fig.8 Courtesy of @Melissa Lukenbaugh Photography

Front Entrance of the Jackson Technical Building

NARRATIVES

Which half is happy? Which half is sad?



Above / Image @CC by flickr

Painting by Leonardo da Vinci, Mona Lisa (c. 1503-19)

□

گاهی اوقات، دیدگاه‌های جدید، تغییر نگرش‌ها یا حتی ورود کسی جدید به زندگی‌مان، صرف‌نظر از نوع رابطه‌ای که با او داریم، می‌تواند افق‌های جدیدی را به روی ما بگشاید. این لحظات فرصت‌هایی برای درک متفاوت از جهان به ما می‌دهند، اما تنها در صورتی که تصمیم بگیریم این پرتوها را در آغوش بگیریم و آن‌ها را برای سود خود و جامعه اطرافمان به کار بگیریم. وقتی از من خواسته می‌شود که "گشودن" را تعریف کنم، آن را فراتر از معنای لغوی آن می‌بینم. این به معنای کشف نقاط کور خودمان است تا نشانه‌ها، افراد، چیزها یا انرژی‌هایی را که وجودشان را نادیده گرفته‌ایم، شناسایی کنیم. این به معنای آغوش گرفتن جهان است، از شرق تا غرب، بدون آنکه بخشی را نادیده بگیریم و به رسمیت شناختن شگفتی‌های بی‌شماری که در اطراف ما نهفته و نادیده‌اند.

در زندگی، هر یک از ما داستان‌هایی داریم که از تجربیات، فرهنگ‌ها، سنت‌ها و حتی زبان‌هایی که صحبت می‌کنیم شکل گرفته‌اند. به همین ترتیب، معماری نیز روایت خاص خود را دارد، روایتی که از گذر زمان و تکامل تمدن بشری شکل گرفته است. معماری شعر نادیده‌هاست؛ داستان‌هایی از فضا و مردم که از طریق سایه‌ها نجوا می‌شود و در خلاء رقص می‌کند. برای درک واقعی آن، باید با چشمان خود گوش کنیم و با افکار خود لمس کنیم. در جستجوی ریتم میان خطوط، فضاها میان دیوارها باشیم. معماری داستان‌هایی از دوران‌ها، جغرافیاها و فرهنگ‌های مختلف ارائه می‌دهد. این یک جهان از شگفتی‌های پنهانی است که در انتظار گشوده شدن است. این بازی گذرای انعکاس‌هاست کشمکش نیروهای مخالف، چه ساختاری و چه سیاسی. هارمونی‌ای در عدم تعادل یافت می‌شود، جایی که نادیده‌ها خود را آشکار می‌کنند.

حال این سوال مهم مطرح می‌شود: در حالی که ممکن است نشانه‌ها را ببینیم آیا می‌توانیم میانبرهای ناخودآگاه که درک ما از جهان را شکل می‌دهند شناسایی کنیم؟

بالا/ نثر گشودن اثر یوسف حقیقی

نورمن - آلاهما

□

Sometimes, new perspectives, shifting attitudes, or even the arrival of someone new in our lives, regardless of the type of relationship we have with them, can open new horizons. These moments provide us with opportunities to **perceive the world differently**, but only if we choose to embrace these sparks and harness them for the benefit of ourselves and our communities. For me, when asked to define **"UNFOLD,"** I see it as more than its literal meaning. It is about uncovering our **blind spots** to recognize the signs, people, things, or energies whose presence we have overlooked. It is about embracing the world, from east to west, without neglecting any part, acknowledging the countless pure and unseen wonders that surround us.

In life, we each carry stories shaped by our experiences, cultures, traditions, and even the languages we speak. Similarly, **architecture** carries its own narrative, shaped by the passage of time and the evolution of human civilization. **Architecture is the poetry of the unseen;** it tells stories of space and people, whispered through shadows and danced in voids. To truly perceive it, one must listen with their eyes and touch with their thoughts, seeking the rhythm between the lines, the spaces between the walls. Architecture offers tales from various eras, geographies, and cultures. It is a magazine of hidden wonders waiting to be unfolded. It is **the fleeting play of reflections**, the tension of opposing forces whether structural or political, and the harmony found in imbalance, where the invisible reveals itself.

This raises an important question: While we may see the signs, **Can we recognize the unconscious shortcuts that shape our understanding of the world?**

Above/ "UNFOLD" Poetic Narrative by Yousef Haghighi

Norman, OK

# THE UNSEEN

YOUSEF HAGHIGHI

Ph.D. Student  
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# POETRY

# POF

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# -MICH & THE WORLD

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# THE BUCKET, THE SANDWICH, AND THE WORLD

□

## THE BUCKET, THE SANDWICH, AND THE WORLD: DEFINING "UNFOLD" THROUGH ACCIDENT AND ESSENCE

In the use of language, we often apply metaphor to articulate our thoughts or intentions. When we wish to "shed light" on a particular topic, we do not intend to shine a bright light in the faces of our audience. Rather, we intend to explain something to them, similar to how a light can reveal that which was otherwise hidden in darkness. Similarly, when we tell an excessively angry person to "turn down the heat," we do not mean that the person is hyperthermic, nor do we believe that the person possesses some kind of emotional control dial. Rather, we encourage the person to assume a less intense disposition, similar to how turning down a gas dial will reduce the intensity of a stovetop flame.

Such a principle is evident with the idea of "unfolding." When we say we wish to "unfold" an idea, we are not making the disturbing proposition to remove our brains and unfold them. Instead, we are comparing the process of contemplative revelation to the mechanism of folding, a mechanism which has the characteristics of...

This is problematic. How can one adequately describe the qualities of mental or conceptual "unfolding" without knowing the qualities of physical "unfolding," with which a metaphorical comparison has been drawn? It would seem that, in order to fully grasp mental "unfolding," we will need to define the term "unfold."

The 2024 Edition of the Merriam Webster English Dictionary defines "unfold" as "to open the folds of," or "to open from a folded state." So, we know that unfolding is an opposite process, perhaps a reversal. But a reversal of what? The meaning of "fold" remains unclear. Referencing this dictionary again, we may discover that "fold" has a broad variety of definitions, including "to lay one part over another part of," "to reduce the length or bulk of by doubling over," "to incorporate

[...] by repeated gentle overturnings," and "to bend."

What are we to make of this cacophony of meanings? Is "fold" such a nebulous concept that it defies definition? To ascertain the true meaning—no, the *nature*—of "fold," we must think of its definition in terms of essence and accidents. "Accidents" is meant not in the sense of unintended occurrence, but rather in the philosophical sense of unnecessary characteristic. For example, suppose that there are two buckets, alike in all ways except that one is painted blue and the other is painted red. The colors of the buckets would fall under accidental characteristics. For while the red bucket has the quality of being red, it would still be a bucket if it were painted green or stripped of paint altogether (and likewise for the blue bucket).

However, both buckets are vessels designed to hold fluids. If they did not share these characteristics, then they would not be buckets. Hence, these characteristics are essential and not accidental.

We must now apply the same analytical treatment to the definitions of "fold." Ideas such as length, incorporative enclosure, or overlap do not seem to be common to any of the definitions, meaning they are likely accidental characteristics of folding. However, notice that in the first definition, the act of folding relates to parts of a continuous whole. Similarly, one can "reduce the length or bulk of [a whole or continuous object] by doubling over," "to incorporate [...] by repeated gentle overturnings [of a whole or continuous substance]," and "to bend [a whole or continuous material]." This would seem to be a common characteristic of folding. And because folding would not be folding without it, it is an essential characteristic. After all, one cannot fold a sheet of paper in half when it is already ripped in half, but the halves *can* be folded because, as independent entities, they are still whole.

So, it would seem that folding is, in its essence, a manipulation of a whole. This, of course, is an inadequate definition of folding. Michelangelo carved his *David* from a whole block of marble. In so doing, he manipulated a whole. And yet he certainly did not craft the sculpture by folding it. Similarly, the earth is itself a whole comprised of many parts, each one undergoing continual shifts and geotectonic alterations. And yet we do not say that the earth is folded. How could it be? It is a spheroid floating in a vacuum, with no clear geometric directionality. Perhaps folding could be more clearly defined as manipulation of a whole with *directionality*, and while maintaining the *continuity* of that whole. Or, put more simply, to fold might be to directionally change a whole.

And we still encounter a problem. Imagine a submarine sandwich. Now suppose someone picks it up and throws it. In so doing, the person has induced a directional change in the sandwich, all without damaging its continuity. In short, the person has folded the sandwich by throwing it. This is not folding, but a completely different operation! So, it seems that the essential definition of folding will again require amendment. Suppose that, instead of throwing the sandwich, the person picked it up and, without breaking it, bent or shifted one of its ends onto an axis perpendicular to that of the other end. This would indeed be folding since a change in directional orientation is induced. So, folding may be thought of as directionally changing a part of a whole while maintaining the continuity of that whole.

Assuming, for now, that this definition is sufficient, we still must determine the meaning of "unfold." If unfolding is an opposite process, then its essential definition *could be restoring a continuous whole, parts of which have undergone directional change, to its original state.* In

practice, it is a sort of sequential reverse engineering, requiring not just opposite manipulation, but also deductive reasoning. To fold an object, one must assess how best to directionally manipulate its parts. To unfold an object, by contrast, one must assess the process of assessing how best to directionally manipulate the object's parts. Unfolding is, in practice, a sort of meta-assessment.

And so it is that "unfolding" may be used as a metaphor for contemplative reflection. When we unfold an object, we return it to its original state by deducing how it was folded in the first place. Similarly, when we unfold ideas, we deduce their origins, walking back along the paths of thought that their creators previously trod. In this way, we gain insight not only into the origins and outcomes of an idea, but also into the creative process that gave it rise. Unfolding, then, may be just as much about the creative or developmental journey as it is about the conclusions.

This being an architectural publication, it is fitting to conclude with a brief reflection on the tectonic applicability of this analytical unfolding process. After all, architects do not deal solely in abstraction, but in the actualization of ideas. It could therefore be said that "unfolding" characterizes the experience of mindfully (i.e., with rational and sensory attention) passing through a built environment. In noting the directional shifts in circulation, the wrapping of envelope around structure, the continuity and variance of finishes, and even the directionality of MEP routes, we gain a better sense of how the architects "folded" the space. With sufficient attention, we may gain insight both into their methods of design and the user-friendliness (or lack thereof) of their internal and external compositions.

Right - Image by Rene Peralta  
Original glass block façade and sign of Del Prado Medical Center / Tijuana



Right - Image by Rene Peralta  
Façade of addition The Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences Mother Teresa built in 1997 / Del Prado Medical Center / Tijuana



Right - Image by Rene Peralta  
Southwest view of The Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences Mother Teresa and Del Prado Medical Center / Tijuana

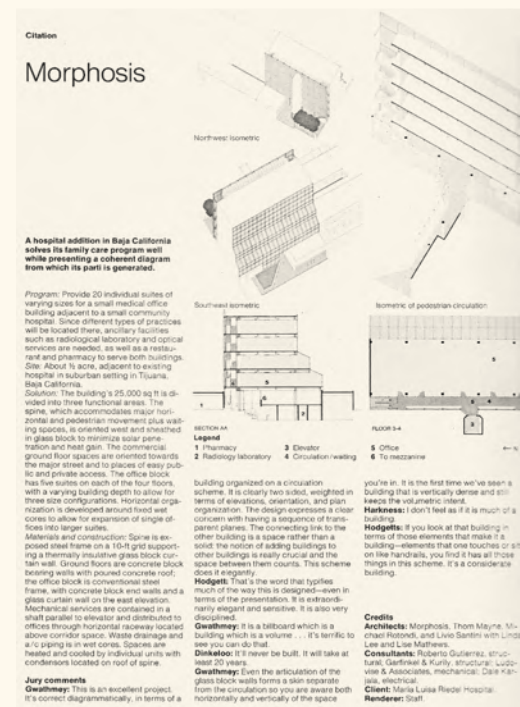


Right - Image by Rene Peralta  
Office corridor in Del Prado Medical Center / Tijuana



unpretentious. Dr. Aubanel believed that by entrusting the project to a local architect, she would remain faithful to this ideal. Ultimately, the new wing was designed and constructed as a simple, bland white stucco box with a pitched roof attached to the original Morphosis building. "A crime to the building designed by Livio, Michael, and Thom," Aubanel reflects, "but true to the needs of the new institute."

Architect Michael Rotondi acknowledges the doctor's concerns as plausible, yet he believes they would have considered working pro bono on the project. "If the project is important enough, we always find a way to make it happen," Rotondi reflects, suggesting that financial limitations might not have been an obstacle to their involvement in such a meaningful endeavor. An enduring and intriguing dilemma exists that an architect's success can sometimes hinder securing specific commissions. As architects gain recognition and prestige, their work often becomes associated with high costs or complex designs, potentially alienating clients who seek more straightforward, more modest projects. However, Rotondi argues that value is determined by quality rather than geography and that locality and simplicity are not necessarily intertwined. He also felt that Aubanel's concerns about the firm's success were merely a way to justify a decision she had already made. "Aubanel had other plans and commitments, which I understand," Rotondi said, "but it is unfortunate we never spoke. It would have at least dispelled her preconceptions."



□ □  
**GLASS CHIMERA**

If you visit the building today, you can walk up the marble stairs to the 4th floor and see its metal structure intact. Its green glass block façade shimmers in the afternoon light, resembling Pierre Chareau's glass house rather than the high modernism of Sterling or Aalto. The building did not gain much recognition after its PA Award or widespread recognition within architectural circles. Like many late modern structures, it was seen as "part of the platonic idea of building the ultimate glass box, one of many in the history of modernism," a perspective famously articulated by British architectural historian Reyner Banham.

The architects who designed the building have since become prominent figures in their field. Michael Rotondi now leads a global practice, Thom Mayne continues to head Morphosis, and Livio Santini maintains a private practice in Tijuana. In 2005, Mayne received the prestigious Pritzker Architecture Prize, often regarded as the Nobel Prize for architecture, in recognition of his lifetime achievements. Similarly, Mother Teresa's legacy served as a profound spiritual muse for creating the new wing of the cardiology medical center.

Three young architects embarked on a journey driven by a dream to freely experiment with fresh architectural ideas in a city learning to embrace modernity. At the same time, a dedicated doctor found the faith and resolve to bring world-class medical care to her hometown. Once again, Tijuana becomes a place where faith and determination intersect, weaving together a tapestry of improbable myths and stories of ambition.

Left - Image by Progressive Architecture Journal

Citation Award for the Del Prado Medical Center designed by Morphosis<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Progressive Architecture. (1977, January). 24th Annual P/A Awards. Progressive Architecture, 58(1), 58. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/usmodernist-PA-1977-01/page/58/mode/2up>

□ □  
**NOTE**

Special thanks to architect Miguel Escobar for facilitating the interview with Dr. Aubanel.

Architect Michael Rotondi for being kind enough to elaborate on the commission and construction of the Riedel Medical Center. Finally, I want to thank Dr. Patricia Aubanel for her time and for sharing the story of her relationship with Mother Teresa.

# CENTER

a blueprint of  
logic & faith

**RENE PERALTA**  
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# RIEDEL MEDICAL



## INTRODUCTION

All buildings begin as an idea. However, not all possess the aura necessary to evolve into a story, free from the architect’s intentions or the client’s desires. Like our homes, some buildings transcend their material existence, becoming, as Gaston Bachelard describes, “a real cosmos in every sense of the word” a universe unto itself. In our present age, being modern often means inhabiting spaces marked by a uniformity that erases our longing to create a private, intimate world that endures through the countless personal stories inscribed within its walls. As we transition from being born in a hut and dying in a house, spaces profoundly personal and intimate, to being born in clinics and hospitals, the generic spaces of our super-modernity, few buildings retain their poetic essence. These rare structures inspire a literary sense, inviting a virtual journey through their space and materiality, engaging us in a more profound connection that transcends mere function.

The Riedel Medical Center, now known as the Del Prado Medical Center in Tijuana, is one such building shaped by the intertwined desires of a handful of remarkable individuals. Through their collective will and faith, they crafted a blueprint of physical space and a universe of emotions that still resonates today. This is the story of a doctor, a nun, and three young architects who came together to create a work of architecture that transcends mere structure to embody a deeper narrative of aspiration and collaboration.

Like cities, buildings are shaped over time by the desires, intentions, and negotiations of the many actors involved, clients, architects, builders, and broader social and economic forces. Each addition and alteration carry the imprint of competing desires, some rooted in innovation, others in pragmatism or necessity. The original Morphosis design, bold and experimental, stands alongside a later expansion shaped by functional compromises and humility, revealing the tension between architectural ambition and real-world constraints. In uncovering the hidden processes, motivations, and quiet negotiations behind this project, we glimpse a space’s architecture and a vision’s architecture, a palimpsest of logic, faith, and human desire.



## TIJUANA’S TEMPORARY MONUMENT

Initially conceived as a simple plan and sectional parti, organized with structural and material clarity by its architects, the Riedel Medical Building, now known as Del Prado Medical Center in Tijuana, was transformed by a spiritual will and a profound desire to create a state-of-the-art cardiology center. A transformation driven by the mission to provide specialized care to all regardless of economic background. Today, this building stands as one of the leading health centers in the city, yet it has become camouflaged by Tijuana’s rampant urbanization and overshadowed by a controversial addition to its principal façade. Despite these changes, the building’s original vision and purpose remain quietly within its walls.

The creation of the medical center in 1963 was the result of the efforts of Maria Luisa Riedel Betancourt, a Tijuana native from a prominent family. She envisioned a small, private two-story hospital located on what was then considered the outskirts of the city, near the Agua Caliente racetrack and the solitary tall silos of the local flour company, El Rosal. Her vision laid the foundation for a significant medical institution in Tijuana. By the 1970s, the hospital became well known around the region for its outstanding medical care. Riedel Betancourt decided to expand the facilities, aiming to create a center with medical offices for the doctors practicing at the hospital. For the design of the new wing, she entrusted the task to a family member, Livio Santini, a young architect from the first generation of graduates from the newly established Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) in Los Angeles. Santini’s involvement marked a bold step in integrating contemporary architectural thought into the project. He invited Michael Rotondi, also a member of SCI-Arc’s pioneering first generation, along with Thom Mayne, principal of Morphosis and a key figure in the formation of the school. The three young architects, then in their late 20s and early 30s, embraced the challenge of designing the medical center in Tijuana, a city they viewed as a frontier, with optimism and potential for new architectural experimentation.

***‘It’ll never be built. It will take at least 20 years.’***

*by Dinkeloo<sup>1</sup>*

During the late 1970s, Tijuana experienced radical urban transformation. A new downtown was under development, and the manufacturing industry was becoming the city’s primary economic driver. Amid this dynamic period, Santini and Rotondi teamed up with Thom Mayne and his young firm, Morphosis, to take on the commission. Morphosis was an emerging practice at the time, gaining recognition for its experimental approach, expressed through provocative drawings and meticulously detailed models. This design philosophy, focused on pushing boundaries, had already positioned the firm as a rising force. In 1977, Morphosis submitted the medical center’s design to the 24th Annual Progressive Architecture Awards, where it received a citation. The jury, composed of distinguished international architects, praised the design for its elegance, spatial articulation, and sensitivity. John Dinkeloo, one of the jurors, regarded the design as futuristic and remarked, “It will never be built. It will take at least 20 years.” Despite this skepticism, the project stood out as a bold architectural vision.

However, the architects’ intuition proved correct, and Tijuana became a fertile ground for experimentation. Construction of the building began three years later, in 1980. The design is straightforward, divided into three functional areas across four above-ground floors. The building is oriented westward and clad in green glass blocks to reduce solar exposure. The young designers drew inspiration from two architectural heroes, British architect James Stirling and Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, whose design strategies significantly influenced the project’s development.

Constructing an elegantly designed building in Tijuana posed significant challenges for the young firm. The hurdles they faced were the lack of standardized construction practices and unenforced health and safety regulations during the build. However, these challenges came with the creative freedom they enjoyed as designers, allowing them to realize one of their first award-winning projects. Using local contractors, builders, and predominantly materials sourced from Tijuana, aside from some specialty hardware imported from the U.S., the building was completed in 1983.

After the completion of the new wing, the medical center continued to be a premier clinic in the region. However, as time passed, the need for further expansion arose, leading to the construction of an additional building. This new addition would become the most controversial element of the original Morphosis design, sparking debate over its impact on the architectural integrity of the initial vision.



## COINCIDENCE BECAME DIVINE PROVIDENCE

By the 1980s, one of Maria Luisa Riedel Betancourt’s daughters, Patricia Aubanel, had become a cardiologist and returned from the United States intending to practice in her native Tijuana. Dr. Aubanel was determined to bring modern cardiology to her hometown, having completed her studies at Boston University, the University of Massachusetts, and Harvard, specializing in interventional cardiology. However, she found it difficult to practice her specialty in Tijuana due to the lack of necessary resources, which led her to work at Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, California. Despite this resource gap, Mexico had been a pioneer in cardiology research, largely thanks to the leadership of Dr. Ignacio Chávez (1944-1961) at the National Cardiology Institute in Mexico City. This institute, housed in a building of architectural significance designed by one of Mexico’s foremost modern architects, José Villagrán García, stood as a symbol of the country’s achievements in cardiology.

In 1991, Aubanel embarked on a personal and professional journey that would bring her closer to her greatest aspiration: establishing a specialized cardiology center in Tijuana. During this pivotal time, she met a Catholic nun named Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, who would become her spiritual guide. Known to the world as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, she profoundly guided Aubanel toward realizing her vision. In Tijuana, Mother Teresa founded three homes for people experiencing poverty with her Missionaries of Charity organization and, in 1991, returned to oversee the charity’s work with the city’s poor and elderly. Aubanel was still working for Scripps Clinic and was making frequent trips to Tijuana, where she cared for patients at the medical center.

It was a late December morning of the same year when the doctor Aubanel received a call from Tijuana’s Bishop Emilio Carlos Berlie Belauzarán, telling her that a very special friend visiting Tijuana and whom he had great respect for was sick and needed a medical specialist to evaluate her condition. Understanding the enormous responsibility, the Bishop clarified that he would respect the doctor’s decision if she refused to evaluate her after learning who the acquaintance was. When Aubanel found out it concerned Mother Teresa, it took her a couple of hours to contemplate a reply to the Bishop’s plea. Eventually, the doctor decided to see the nun. After a brief examination, Aubanel realized the severity of Mother Teresa’s condition, one that could only be resolved and attended by a handful of people in the world, and to her realization, she was one of the chosen ones. Coincidence became divine providence.

Mother Teresa was immediately admitted to the Del Prado Medical Center, but her critical condition required her to go across the border

to Scripps Clinic for heart surgery, a trip that she refused to make. “I will not be attended to in a hospital that cares for the rich and privileged,” she told Aubanel. Neither would she if low-income people could not have this type of medical care. Mother Teresa asked to have the medical procedure at the medical center in Tijuana, but the center did not have the means to undergo such treatment. Aubanel attempted to convince her by explaining that her vows of poverty would not be affected, “There must be a reason why I am here to help you; I am one of the few experts in the world who can treat your condition. I have never known how to listen to God, but this time, I feel a calling,” the doctor argued after several days of attempting to persuade her.

Mother Teresa refused, telling Dr. Aubanel that God was her doctor and that He alone would decide her fate. She immediately discontinued her medical treatment, left Tijuana, and headed north to Los Angeles to continue her work. On the third day in Los Angeles, Mother Teresa falls ill again, and Aubanel gets a call from her staff asking for advice. The doctor explained to them that she needed to be admitted to a local hospital as soon as possible. Mother Teresa once again refuses and prefers to be attended to in Tijuana. Dr. Aubanel noted that Mother Teresa held a special place in her heart for Tijuana, describing it as a place that felt closer to God. When Mother Teresa arrived in Tijuana the following day, Aubanel was prepared and ready to see her. However, Aubanel was asked to wait while Mother Teresa attended Christmas festivities at her centers in Tijuana. It was not until she returned at 10 p.m. that she agreed to receive treatment. Mother Teresa consented to stay in the hospital only after Christmas Day.

On December 26, 1991, Mother Teresa finally agreed to cross the border to Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, but only on the condition that she be admitted under her real name, Agnes Bojaxhiu. During this time, Aubanel was also treating another patient who had traveled north to La Jolla, the mayor of Tijuana who had suffered a stroke. After conducting laboratory tests, Dr. Aubanel discovered that Mother Teresa had five obstructed arteries. She decided to perform angioplasty on all five vessels and used an experimental procedure to place a stent in the remaining artery. The procedure was successful; however, the stent technique was still in clinical trials and required FDA approval before it could be used on Mother Teresa. Despite this, the operation proceeded, marking a significant milestone in her treatment. Following her successful surgery, the stent became widely known in the medical community as the “Holy Stent,” gaining recognition for its association with Mother Teresa and the groundbreaking procedure.



## BUILDING FAITH

The heroic effort to save Mother Teresa’s life was a profound experience for Aubanel, one that would later influence the iconic building Morphosis had designed in Tijuana in the early 1980s. Following the operation, Mother Teresa entrusted Aubanel with two significant tasks. The first was establishing mobile health clinics to provide medical services to Tijuana’s underserved population, who lacked access to primary and specialized healthcare. The second, if she were to bring modern heart medicine back to Mexico, was to build a cardiovascular center that would serve the entire community, both rich and poor, on the grounds of the medical center her mother, Maria Luisa Riedel Betancourt, had founded in Tijuana.

Dr. Aubanel embarked on a challenging journey to raise funds for the cardiovascular center that Mother Teresa had entrusted her to build. She carefully saved the money earned from treating patients at the medical center, but the process was slow. Each time she flew worldwide for Mother Teresa’s checkups, she had to disclose the slow progress of raising the necessary funds. After every visit, Mother Teresa would ask, “Have you started building the center?” To which the doctor, hesitant, would respond, “I still do not have enough funds.” Mother Teresa would always reply, “You do not need money. All you need is faith.”

After Mother Teresa passed away in 1997, Dr. Aubanel decided she could wait no longer. With the funds she had then, she resolved to start the project. Seeking a final blessing, Aubanel traveled to Calcutta to visit Mother Teresa’s grave, asking permission to see the burial site. While there, she experienced a profound spiritual affirmation to move forward. Before leaving, she made one last request to the Council of the Missionaries of Charity at the convent: she wished to name the center in honor of Mother Teresa. The nuns unanimously approved her request. Today, The Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences Mother Teresa is the only medical institution in the world with her name.

Aubanel hired a local architect to design the institute on the front plaza of the medical center’s entrance. She began the work without hesitation and without consulting or intending to work in any way with Morphosis. Her claim was twofold: one of the world’s most devout spiritual leaders had entrusted her with the mission to begin the project, and given Morphosis’ success in the architectural field, she feared that their involvement would exceed her financial means. By this time, Morphosis had matured into one of the most prominent architectural firms in the United States and internationally, earning commissions and awards for high-profile projects. Dr. Aubanel had another concern, one that was valid, though highly debatable. Mother Teresa said everything done under her name and blessing had to be humble and



When confronted with the challenge of adding to Davis' design for the Sullivan Rutherford Estate, it was only natural that I would begin with the process I had first explored with Beeby. Beginning with the circle and the square.

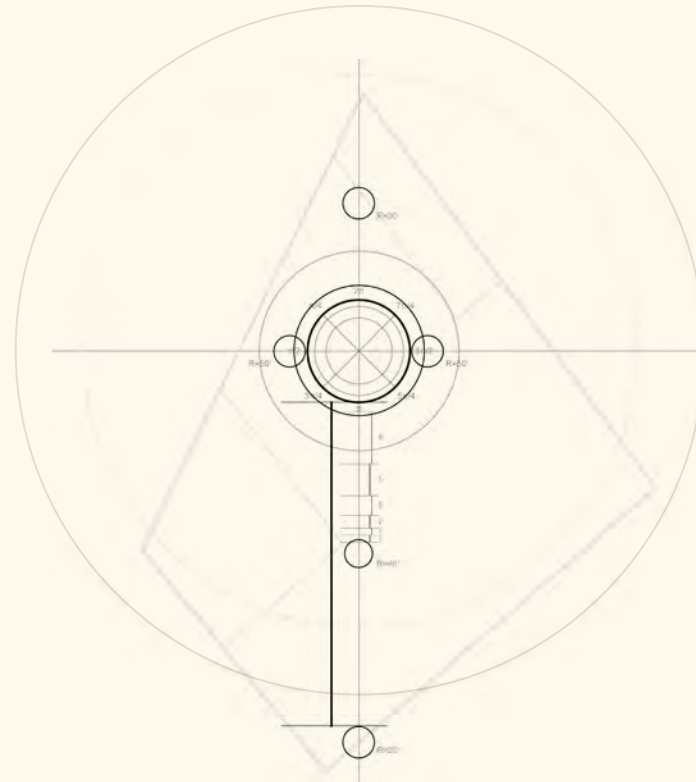
Our first scheme replaced the wine making barn with a structure similar in size to the existing house and added a cellar that picked up the form of the circle. In a move that reflects Louis Sullivan's interest in growth, the north/south axis is extended northward to create the location for guest accommodations that take the form of a partial circle. Louis Sullivan argues for the power of man to transform the lifeless materials such as clay and stone to life:

*"But nothing is really inorganic to the creative will of man. The energy of the identity or seed germ is here shown expanding into leaf forms. The energy is in the bud, which expands into the leaf." (p.68)*

*"Technically, the above (geometric) forms, rigid in their quality are to be considered containers of radial energy extensive and intensive, that is to say extension of form along lines or axes radiating from the center and intension along the same radius from the periphery towards the center." (p.72)*



Following the initial scheme, we began to think of the potential of the curved geometric form of the guest house for the winery itself. Here the site plans show the variety of responses possible in exploring the various axes.



the germination of the design for the sullivan rutherford estate expansion part 01

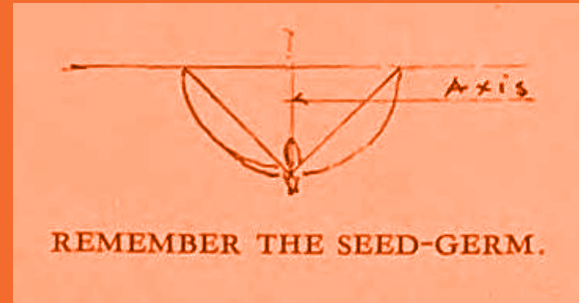
**HANS BALDAUF**  
Architect, FAIA, Principal,  
BCV Architecture + Interiors



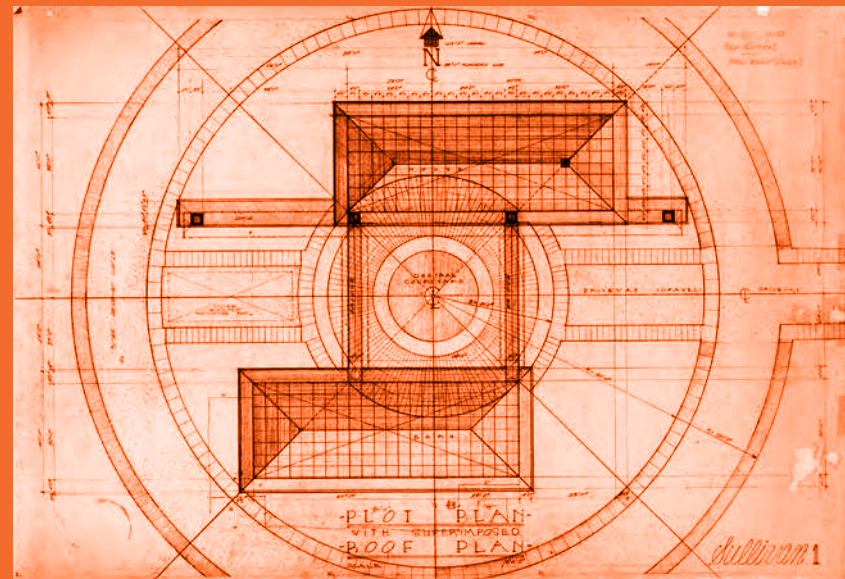
UN-FOLDING  
FOLDING  
AN IDEA



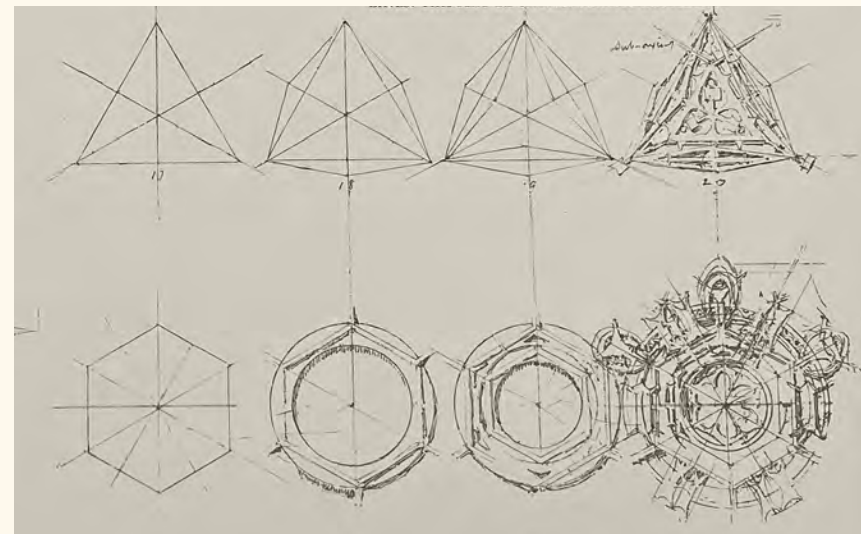
The Sullivan Rutherford Estate, originally designed by John Marsh Davis for the Sullivan Family in Napa Valley, contains the seed for the winery expansion currently under construction by BCV Architecture + Interiors. Initially conceived as a residence with a small winemaking barn facility, the estate has since outgrown its winemaking capabilities. Recognizing this need, the estate's new owners sought to create a winery that would not only accommodate its growing production but also complement John Marsh Davis' original design.



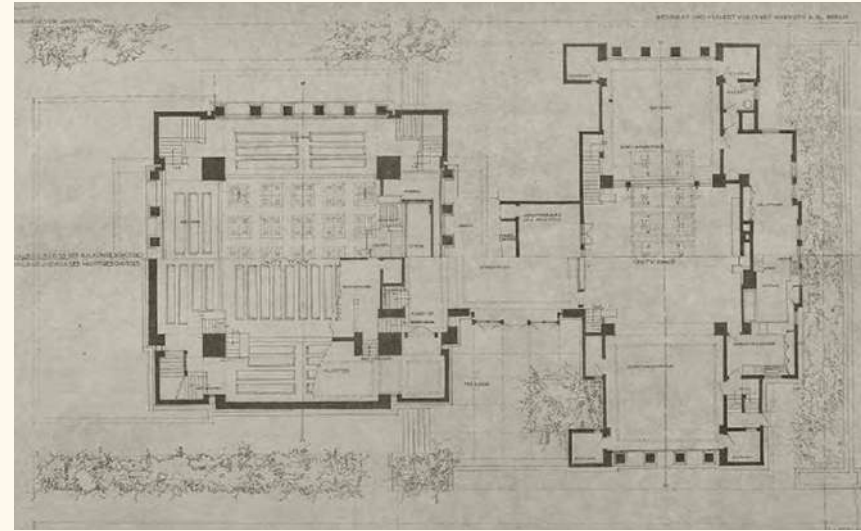
Louis Sullivan saw the germination of the seed as the source for his ornament and emblematic of his approach to architecture. The germination of the seed - the pattern of its growth is an unfolding of its inherent potentiality.



John Marsh Davis' original design for the Sullivan Rutherford Estate contains such a seed - it was designed within a compass rose with its coordinates dictating the placement of the building and its inner radius determined by the turning radius of the cars that were to park within it. --->



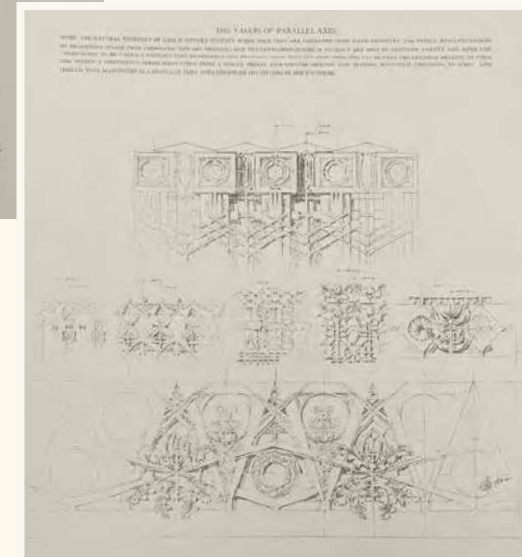
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In reflecting back on my architectural education at Yale, it is only natural that this would be the case. During my first years as a graduate student, Thomas Beeby was selected as the new Dean of the school.

I was inspired by the many ways that Tom thinks about architecture. He had graduated with an undergraduate degree from Cornell where he had been inspired by the teaching of Colin Rowe and had come and done a post professional masters degree at Yale where he had absorbed the teaching of Vincent Scully. Most of all, Tom is a student of Chicago Architecture. He had grown up surrounded by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park. Beeby's work can be seen as a relentless exploration of the themes found in the Chicago traditions of architecture.

Beeby published *The Grammar of Ornament/Ornament as Grammar in Ornament* edited by Stephen Kieran published by the University of Pennsylvania in 1977. In this article he explored the function of ornament in modern architecture beginning with Louis Sullivan and extending to Le Corbusier's Urban Plans which Beeby shows to have the underlying geometric generators that Louis Sullivan argued for.



---> In Plate 3 of *A System of Architectural Ornament* entitled the *Inorganic Manipulation of Forms in Plane Geometry*, Louis Sullivan explores the variety of forms that can be inscribed in a circle and how a variety of axes result from (and help create) these forms. Our site planning studies are in fact a result of similar processes. We went on further to explore elaborating the planting along the main north-south axis as a fibonacciian sequence.

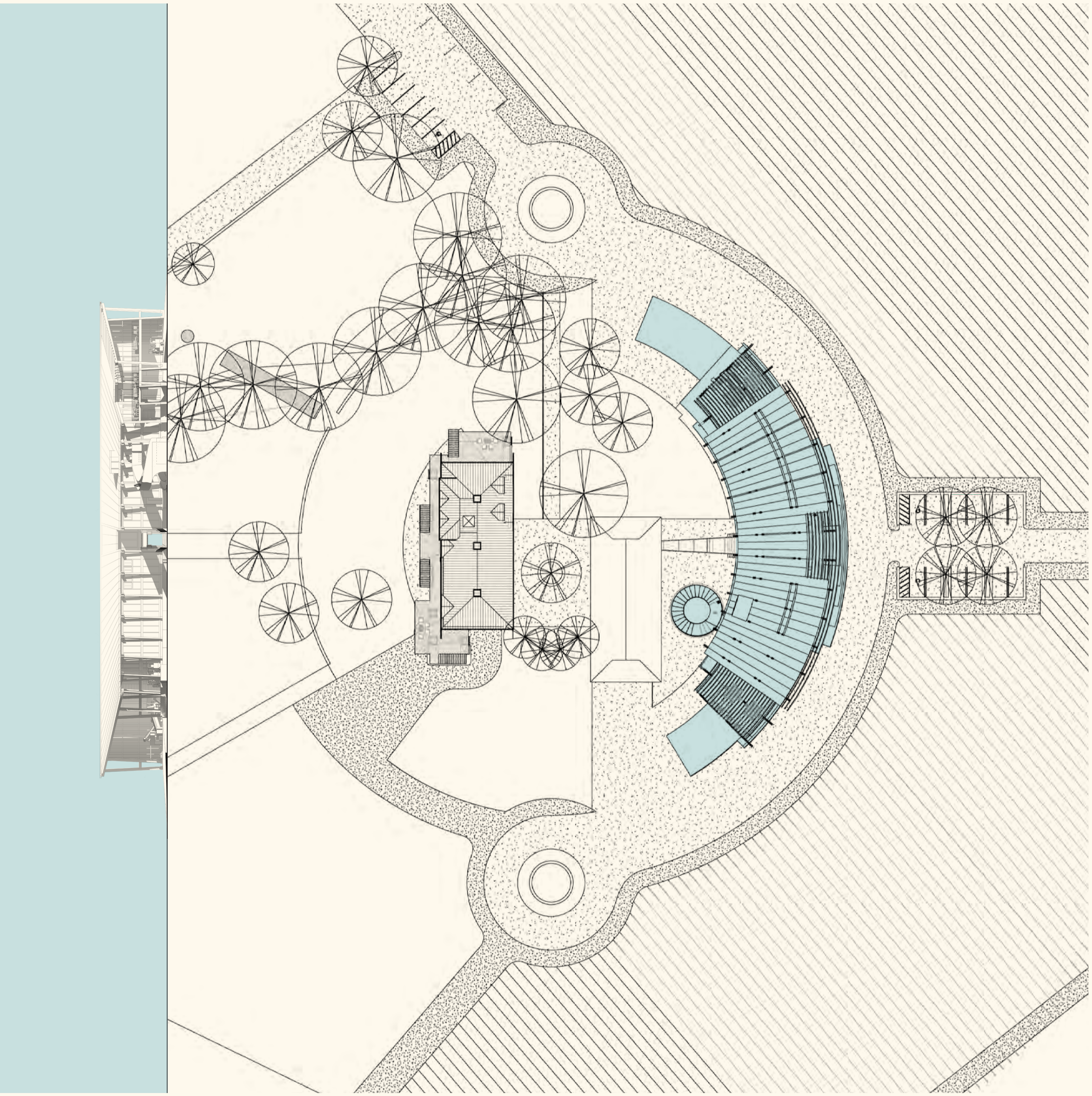
I was fascinated by this article which led me to do an independent study project directed by Beeby to explore Louis Sullivan's: *A System of Architectural Ornament*.

"In 1922, the Burnham Library of Architecture at the Art Institute of Chicago commissioned the ailing and impoverished Louis Sullivan to record his philosophy of geometry based on natural as well as man made forms. The complete work, consisting of a manuscript and twenty drawings was published by the American Institute of Architects in 1924, the year of the architect's death."

Beeby taught that it was important to get the geometric operations using parallel bar (T square in Louis Sullivan's day) and triangle "into one's hands". He argued that these physical drawing processes taught the brain. I have often reflected on this as we have become more and more dependent on computer drafting and visualization. For Louis Sullivan, the design "unfolds" or grows from the germ.

The full title of Louis Sullivan's treatise is *A System of Architectural Ornament According with a Philosophy of Man's Powers*. The plates are accompanied by Louis Sullivan's text which explicates this philosophy on Plate 7: Entitled: *The Doctrine of Paralleism*, he writes:

"It has been deemed urgent to devise this literary interlude, because, to evidence its varied suggestions apart by graphic illustrations would require space far beyond the limits of this work; however interesting it might be to the advanced student to observe a scientifico-poetic theory or rather conviction - gradually unfold itself to the physical eye, it is to the inner eye therefor that a very considerable part of the appeal must perforce be made"



the germination  
of the  
design for  
the sullivan  
rutherford  
estate  
expansion  
part 02

**HANS BALDAUF**  
Architect, FAIA, Principal,  
BCV Architecture + Interiors



UNFOLDING  
FOUNDA  
TION

UNFOLD  
SYSTEMS

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BCV Architecture + Interiors key staff who contributed to the drawings and renderings: Hans Baldauf, Asa Prentice, Kathryn Callander, Pierre-Henri Baudart, Carlos Munoz, David Weaver, 2018 to 2020.

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Back Spread Left / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors

South Elevation

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Back Spread Right / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors

Site Plan

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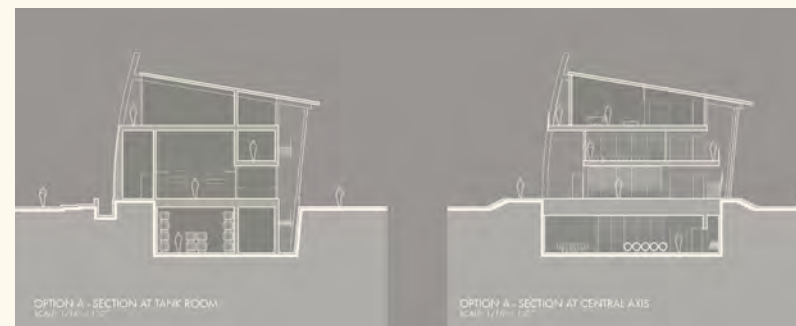
Right / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors  
 View of the original Sullivan Rutherford Estate from the North looking toward the canting facade version of the winery building to the south



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Right / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors

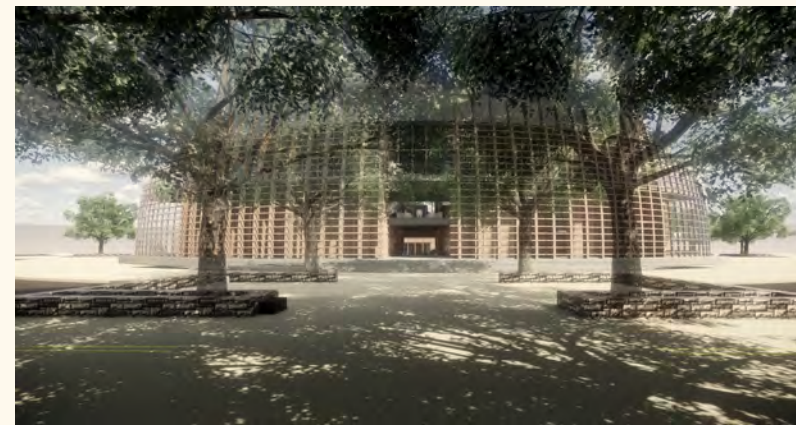
The canting facade is a part of a sphere calculated from the center point



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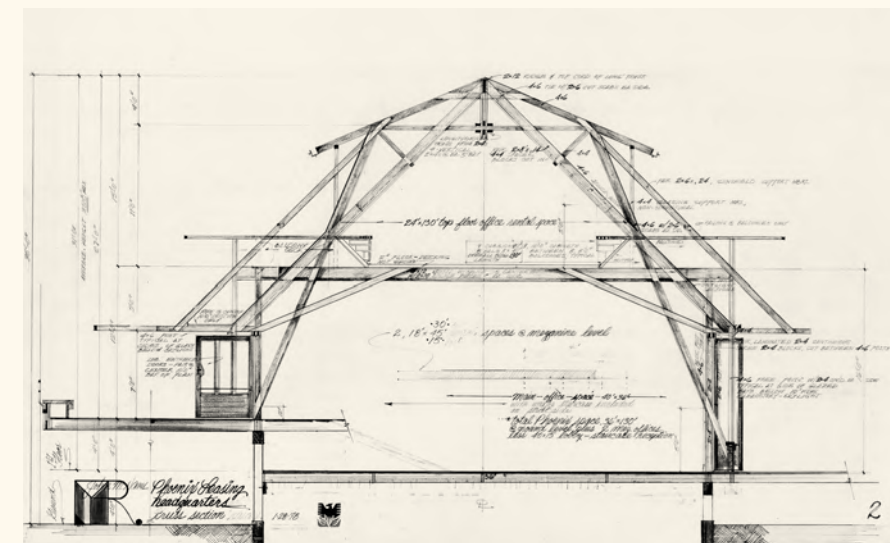
Right / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors

Here the circular Site Plan informs the design of the building



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Right / Image Courtesy of The University of Oklahoma Archives  
 Section drawing by John Marsh Davis of Phoenix Leasing building



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Right / Image Courtesy of Bruce Damonte  
 Phoenix Leasing Building 1979, Mill Valley, California. Designed by John Marsh Davis



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Right / Image by BCV Architecture + Interiors  
 Site Plan showing existing conditions to the left and new winery building to the right



EXISTING SITE PLAN

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

The next iteration further expanded on the set of ideas explored in the first scheme. Here the winery building is a partial sphere in form that extends above the curved barrel aging cellar of the first scheme. The rebuilt barn is abstracted into a simple bar form. The geometric language is further extended through the creation of traffic roundabouts on the east/west axis and the exploration of a new entry road from the south on the main axis of the building.

Over the next six months the scheme evolved based on a system of structural bents that radiated around the site center with a dramatic roof that sloped upwards towards the south. Various facade articulations were explored, but the basic parti has remained the same. Due to the high water table and the desire to use hillside caves to age wine, the cellar has been eliminated.

The system of bents was inspired in part by John Marsh Davis' Phoenix Leasing Building in Mill Valley.

Drawing on the lessons of Louis Sullivan in *A System of Architectural Ornament*, we have been able to extend the germ of Davis' original design - to "unfold" his thinking in a way, and in a way which we hope others in the future can build on.

Like Mies' Barcelona Pavilion, Johnson's Glass House is similarly a study of minimal architectural gestures across a pallet of materiality, experience and transparency. And yet, because Mies' pavilion was a structure only for the purpose of exhibition, it couldn't ask questions about how people should live as deeply as Johnson's house could. As its name suggests, the Glass House takes this kind of International Style inquiry further asking, "what happens when transparency becomes nearly complete?" (The only opaque wall at the Glass House is made of brick and forms a column around the bathroom.) Considering International Style Modernism's deeper questions about architecture's role, proposing a life lived in a glass house was really about testing our fundamental assumptions about dwelling. For example, when the boundary between inside and outside is reduced to its essence, what is left of our traditional ideas of home? What about privacy? What about shelter?

Johnson's Glass House is contemporary with but acknowledged as a derivative of another glass house: Mies's Farnsworth House. By comparing these two buildings we can better understand Johnson's intent within these questions about architecture and modern life. Johnson's different choices - like the minimal elevation of the interior floor just inches above the grass - heightens the effect of dissolving the boundary between inside and out to its extreme. On the other hand, Mies lifted the ground plane of the Farnsworth House several feet off the site, necessitated in part due to its location in a flood plane. Functional though this distance may have been, it helped create both a physical and experiential separation from its landscape. While Mies may have dissolved some aspects of the inside/outside division, a visitor is still in a distinct space, one held out for the human. Inhabitants remain apart from and above nature.

Johnson's near-grade placement of the ground plane, however, made the distinction between building and landscape, between shelter and exposure more ambiguous. His is a masterful exercise in pushing design; one that deeply understands how space is experienced, even as it disregards what the person doing the experiencing might want: the refuge that Wright believed a house should have. By using glass in this way, Johnson proposed a life where the division between what is inside and what is outside had almost completely fallen, and in response Wright had some fun feigning confusion over his hat to express his disapproval.

The glass house offers a different idea of shelter than Wright's, and therefore a different idea of living. With his Glass House we can perceive Johnson embracing a life that celebrated technology's triumphs, where even the environmental reality of both Connecticut's snow and sun could be sufficiently held off with nothing but a sheet of glass. Johnson uses his house to ask, "if you could be protected

from the direct physical effects of the weather, why would you need to be psychologically protected?" It was also a life on view, one that was utterly exposed, one that required a continual disciplined tidiness, or perhaps, one that exclaimed its denial of the need for shame. Le Corbusier famously wrote that "a house was a machine for living in."<sup>5</sup> Johnson's glass house was a machine for testing what the limits of that new life should be.

□ □

### WHY THESE QUESTIONS STILL MATTER

Nearly a century after MoMA's exhibit began its sense-making efforts of the International Style, architecture, today, faces a different set of imperatives, accompanied by a new set of existential questions about how humans should live. As the UN has reported, urbanization and climate change are driving unprecedented growth.<sup>6</sup> By mid-century, our urban population is expected to grow by 50%, requiring 2.6 trillion square feet of floor area within the global building stock.<sup>7</sup> With buildings accounting for 42% of global CO2 emissions, we must do things differently. The effect of this much construction over the ensuing decades demands that we ask again how humans should build and how we should live in relationship to the natural environment. Like visitors to Johnson's Glass House, what this means may leave us confused about architectural norms. Do these pressing challenges call for more technological solutions or do they require something fundamentally different in our built relationship with the natural world? What answers can architecture offer? As we grapple with these questions, another glass house, one built not as a rational experiment but as a direct confrontation with one of America's most sublime landscapes, offers powerful insight.

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### MUENNIG'S BIG SUR EXPERIMENT

While Johnson's Connecticut experiment tested the limits of rational transparency, about twenty-five years later, Mickey Muennig was asking a very different question with his own glass structure: not how minimal shelter could be, but how fully architecture might embrace the wild complexity of the natural world. Muennig built his glass house in one of the most extraordinary natural landscapes on earth. Not just California's coast, but that special section of it called Big Sur. Described as mythic in reputation, it is one of the most beautiful, most visited and photographed areas of the California coast. Muennig moved to Big Sur in 1971 after attending a retreat at the Esalen Institute. He lived and practiced there for the rest of his life earning the moniker "the man who built Big Sur." But Muennig wasn't an international



Left / Image courtesy of the American School Archive, University of Oklahoma

Mickey Muennig, Interior of Home and Studio, Big Sur, California, 1975.

style modernist. On the contrary, he was a student in the line that led from Louis Sullivan, to Wright and finally through Bruce Goff to Muennig. In other words, Muennig's approach was Organic. His work was part of a group called the American School who in the mid- to late-twentieth century extended the ideas of Sullivan, Wright, and others through Goff's teaching at University of Oklahoma.<sup>8</sup> Several of Goff's students, including John March Davis, Arthur Dyson, Violetta Autumn, Donald MacDonald and Micky Muennig, all worked in California and their work proceeded on a different path than that of the International Style Modernists.<sup>9</sup> Their approach was more individual, and it was more responsive to the local materials and landscapes, and it asked different questions than their International Style-inspired peers. In Muennig's case, he took advantage of the qualities of that California coastline to build passive solar structures made of natural materials that blended into site with their curving forms. He sought to make his buildings flow from the landscape rather than sit upon it. His first house, where he would live for the next 20 years, was built into a Big Sur cliffside. It was a glass teepee with uprights converging elegantly on a compression ring, while its base was seated on a natural stone foundation.

Small and pure, the structure perched into the cliffs overlooking the Pacific. While Muennig couldn't be more different

than Johnson in personality or in his relationship to the land, Muennig's house can still be understood as an attempt to distill living to its most essential form. It was little more than a round room. With the kitchen confined to a nook in the wall, eating, working and living space was all one; the sleeping space a mere hanging platform. In this fusion of space and limited privacy, Muennig's house shares many spatial qualities with Johnson's Glass house. Even the differences between the interior and exterior ground planes are similarly dissolved. With its back rooted into the cliff, on the water side, the house opened itself fully to the ocean's vast expanse, inviting that landscape and view into every corner, nook, and moment of every day.

Like Johnson's Glass House, Muennig was inspired by a pure concept. Where Johnson's glass house was inspired by the ideal of perfect transparency, Muennig was inspired by pure nature. It was a beautiful concept, one that in Muennig's hands offered up, not the quiet and comparatively comfortable Connecticut countryside, but instead an awe-inspiring, iconic, even transcendent landscape. Muennig's home brought the sublime in. The enormity of the ocean below with its relentless pounding waves and the spray of its surf formed the rhythms and atmosphere that marked the days. Even in the repose of the sleeping platform, with darkness shielding the ocean's expanse from view, the glass teepee

# MINIMAL

## and its glass house part 1

### KRISTINA LEACH

Affiliated Research Fellow  
Gibbs College of Architecture



# THE HOUSE



## WHAT TWO RADICAL EXPERIMENTS IN TRANSPARENT LIVING REVEAL ABOUT ARCHITECTURE AND HUMAN NATURE

Ask any American on the street to name two famous architects, and it's likely they could only come up with one: Frank Lloyd Wright. A Chicagoan may possibly list Louis Sullivan along with Wright. For a Los Angeleno, it could be Frank Gehry and Wright. A New Yorker might add Daniel Liebeskind (because of his involvement with the Ground Zero master plan), or if they were of a certain age, they may partner Wright with Philip Johnson, for a variety of reasons not least of which being that for a time, they were both considered to be the leading architectural minds of their age.

*He says that my house, especially the Glass House that you may have seen pictures of, is not a house at all - it's not a shelter, it doesn't have any caves, it's cold and it doesn't give you a feeling of comfort; it's a box. He once said (he's much cleverer, of course, than all the rest of us so you can't say these things as well as he does) that my house is a monkey cage for a monkey. Then he came to my house the other day, strode in and said, "Philip, should I take off my hat or leave it on? Am I indoors or am I out?"*

-Philip Johnson describing Frank Lloyd Wright's reaction to his house in his speech to the Washington State Chapter of the AIA, 1957.<sup>1</sup>



## QUESTIONING THE GLASS HOUSE

Sometime in the early 1950s, upon entering Johnson's Glass House in New Canaan, Connecticut, for the first time, Wright quipped, "Philip, do I take my hat off or do I leave it on? Am I outdoors or am I indoors?" Much later, in 1993, Johnson retold the story of Wright's comment, this time to Charlie Rose saying that to Wright a house was a place where, "you felt comfortable and warm and cozy...what I was doing had nothing to do with his idea of what a home is. There's no sense of shelter."<sup>2</sup>

The idea that the home Johnson had lived in for 56 years provided no sense of shelter seems to be a shocking statement. Of course, in the exchange he's recounting, Johnson is capturing something more than merely architectural banter between him and the person he once slighted as "the greatest architect of the 19th century." Johnson is gesturing to a much-bigger tension: the one that existed between the rationalist ideas driving European Modernism and an architecture that addressed human needs, and more explicitly the human body, or even better: the needs of our animal selves.

Below / Photo by Michael Biondo

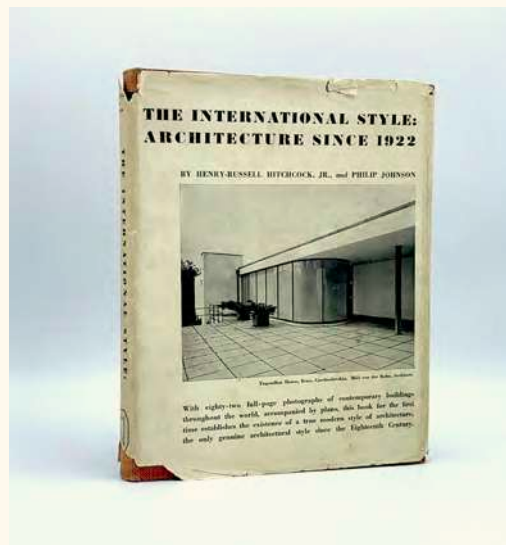
Philip Johnson, Glass House, New Canaan, Connecticut



## THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE & THE MACHINE AGE

While the experience of the Glass House may have puzzled or even shocked visitors like Wright, that Johnson approached design in this way was not unexpected. In 1932, he and Henry-Russell Hitchcock had already positioned themselves as champions of European rationalism through their influential "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition" at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA). Johnson was only 24 years of age when he became the director of the architecture department at MoMA just two years earlier, and this show was part of his larger goal of elevating European architects like Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and their ideas about architecture. With the exhibit, and its accompanying book *The International Style*, Johnson helped establish an architectural vision that privileged the clarity of rational principles over traditional understandings of human needs and comfort. It was, in effect, an architectural playbook that North America came to follow for many decades.

Johnson's advocacy stemmed, at least in part, from the questions and answers the International Style architects were asking. From the longest view, proponents of the International Style understood their project as a deep re-evaluation of architecture's fundamental elements, one necessitated by the industrial revolution and its effects on society. They were posing questions about the role, purpose and making of architecture within a society that was making, moving and building in radically different ways. Within this larger project, architects like Le Corbusier 'freed the façade,' separating the role of structure from that of the wall through the use of his pilotis. Moves like his allowed the sticky fundamental problem of structure (one articulated as *firmitas* by Vitruvius in his *De architectura* c. 30-20 BC) to be lightly dispensed with thanks to this use of steel. Once this need to resolve structure was eliminated from the problems with which architects must contend in order to



provide shelter, architects International Style Architects could ask questions about what was left for architecture to do. What role would walls play, now that they were freed from their ancient duty of support? More profoundly, they could question which of the traditional divisions a wall provided - physical, spatial and psychological - were still necessary. Perhaps these kinds of division were merely habits that tied humans to old ways of living and thinking? Could architecture itself, even something as personal as a house, be inhibiting human progress, preventing people from moving through change and miring them in old forms of life?



## LIVING IN TRANSPARENCY

While such questions may seem better placed into the hands of philosophers, the cultural role these questions played, due to the reverberating effects of the industrial revolution cannot be overstated, and we see these questions playing out in the work of architects. For example, one of the things investigated by Mies' 1929 German Pavilion in Barcelona was what minimal conditions could create profound effects for the human experience of architecture. Using only a few free-standing walls of glass, marble and onyx, Mies created extraordinary experiences of compression and expansion. With moves so subtle they nearly qualify as a slight of hand, some of his walls don't even need to reach the ceiling, Mies creates visceral unexpected spatial encounters utterly invisible in drawing or photography.<sup>3</sup> Through work that strips architecture down to its minimum, Mies proclaims the power of architecture to create undeniable experiences with such understated moves that visitors are challenged to understand how such effects are even possible. In the Pavilion, at least, Mies proves that architecture can still do magic. Victor Hugo be damned.<sup>4</sup>

Left / Photo by Thomas Lecky

Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr. and Philip Johnson, *The International Style*



Above / Photo by Photo by Robin Hill (c)

Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois



Above / Photo by Photo by Robin Hill (c)

Mies van der Rohe, Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois

□□

## THE LIMITS OF PURE THOUGHT

And because of the way we are wired to simplify, because its patterns are our meaning, we want to lean into that meaning. Our brains create patterns to make sense of complexity, and once found, we can't help but push these patterns to their logical extremes. Johnson and Muennig, despite their different approaches, share this fundamental human drive. Johnson created a home that a machine for testing how to live a transparent life, how diaphanous divisions could be. Muennig sought to make his life more transparent to life's cacophony, to the cycle of creation and destruction that is laid bare by Big Sur. We can't help running these paths of essential pattern down. I suspect if we could do scans of our human brains designing our reward systems would be fully lit up as they traced out the coherency of these patterns within their designs. Both created experimental machines, but not merely to live in, theirs were machines for discovering the nature of life and human need.

This brings us back to Gombrich's insights about perception and pattern-making. Just as our brains cannot simultaneously hold both duck and rabbit, we cannot simultaneously hold competing interpretations. When we commit to one pattern—whether Johnson's rational clarity or Muennig's natural immersion—we temporarily blind ourselves to alternatives. This isn't merely an intellectual curiosity; it's an alignment between how we go about making sense of the world and how we go about designing. Finding, choosing and following the right patterns is the fundamental challenge of making architecture. Johnson, in his Connecticut Glass House, chose a pattern of transparency creating a space that succeeded brilliantly as architectural inquiry while admittedly failing to provide "any sense of shelter." The stakes faced by Muennig were higher. He started with an open embrace of Big Sur's sublime power, its demonstration of the awesome, but he, too, ended up finding limitations to his ideas. His answer came through his acknowledgement of lived experience. When the sensory assault is turned up to eleven - the soft animal of our humanity demands shelter. Even as we are rational, we are also still embodied. Even as Muennig tried maintain himself on that knife edge between creation and destruction that characterizes the West Coast landscape, he discovered what Wright had known: architecture must respond to our embodied needs, not just our rational ideals. It must hold the complexity of real life, not just serve as a stage for intellectual performance.

This is why Wright's question—"Philip, do I take my hat off or do I leave it on?"—cuts so deeply. It identifies the precise moment where rational patterns collide with embodied reality. The Glass House succeeds magnificently as an expression of our drive toward rational order, but that very success reveals its limitations as a space for human dwelling. When nature presents itself in its full complexity, we cannot maintain the illusion of living inside our simplifications, even those we find so compellingly beautiful.

As we confront today's existential challenges—building a planet's worth of infrastructure while facing climate catastrophe—it is less the approach we must take from any of these glass houses, as it is the lessons the architects took from the ways their experiments failed. What both glass houses ultimately reveal is not a blueprint but a warning: systems that cannot adapt, those that are rigid or too policing of purity will inevitably fail. They will become uninhabitable, not because they aren't beautiful or ingenious, but because they cannot accommodate the full spectrum of human and natural needs. In Muennig's later work we find spaces that would have made Wright very comfortable in taking off his hat. And while Johnson lived the rest of his life with the glass house as part of his property, in that 1993 interview with Charlie Rose, we must also recall that after describing Wright's idea of a house as a place where you could feel "comfortable, warm and cozy," Johnson exclaimed, "and he was right!"

And so as we move forward to the social cultural challenges facing today's architecture, we need spaces that acknowledge both our drive to create rational order and our embodied need for shelter.

We can only confront complexity from within the both/and of our embodied mind.<sup>13</sup> Understanding that whatever solution we find, we should find ways to open up those solutions that will inevitably be too pure, making space for the real complexity, for adaptation, and the unknown—for the aspects of human experience that resist rationalization. In architecture, as in life, perfection isn't the goal. Adaptability, flexibility, and humility before the unknown—these are the true lessons of the glass house experiments.

Below / Image courtesy of the American School Archive, University of Oklahoma

Mickey Muennig, Interior of Home and Studio, Big Sur, California, 1975.



# ANI- MAL

and its  
glass house  
part 2

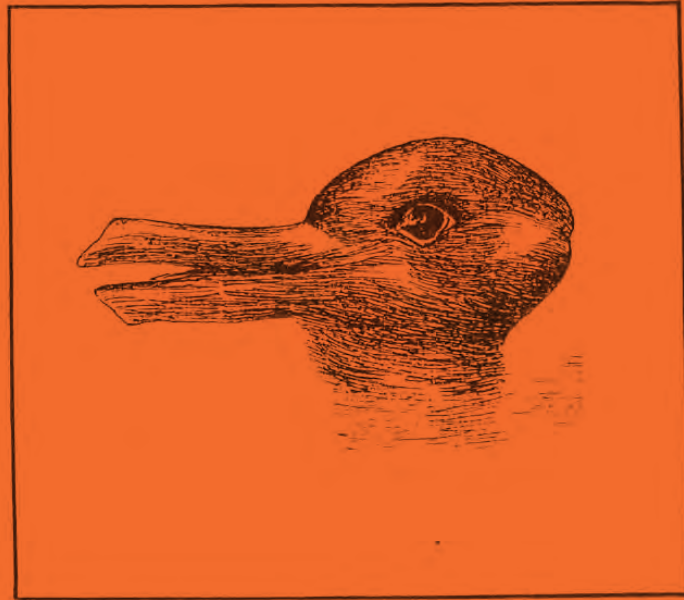
**KRISTINA LEACH**  
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# THE RATIONAL

FOUND  
SYSTEMS





Above / Image courtesy of Harper's Weekly, original by Fliegende Blätter

Do you see a duck or a rabbit?

## ENDNOTES

- Philip Johnson, "100 Years, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Us," Reprint of a Speech by Author, Pacific Architect and Builder, no. 1 (1957), <https://franklloydwright.org/philip-johnson-100years/#:~:text=Nonetheless%201945%20the%20two,the%20Glass%20House%20several%20times>.
- Philip Johnson - Charlie Rose <<https://charlierose.com/videos/9372>> [accessed 1 December 2024]. Charlie Rose, "A Remembrance of Architect Philip Johnson," in Charlie Rose (United States of America, 2005).
- Today's incarnation of the Barcelona Pavilion has walls that do indeed connect to the ceiling, but this building is a reconstruction from the 1980s thanks to a group of Spanish architects. In the original pavilion that was demolished in 1930, the onyx walls stopped short of the ceiling. A similar theme is experimented with decades later by Le Corbusier in this Chapel at Ronchamp, where the thick walls meet a reveal of transparent glass exposing the inner pilotis which hold the roof.
- Hugo famously wrote that print would kill architecture—that architecture's purpose had been to communicate the most important aspects of human knowledge to the masses, and that the printing press would make it obsolete. Victor Hugo, "This Will Kill That," in Notre-dame de Paris (Paris: R. Colonna, 1930).
- "The problem of the house has not been posed. Current architectural things do not answer to our needs. Yet there are standards for the dwelling. The mechanical carries within it the economic factor that selects. The house is a machine for living in." Le Corbusier, *Toward an Architecture*, trans. John Goodman (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2007), 87.
- United Nations, "UN Chief Promotes "enormous" Benefits of Greener Cities | UN News", United Nations News, 2021 <<https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/10/1101992>> [accessed 25 February 2025].
- 'Why The Built Environment - Architecture 2030' <<https://www.architecture2030.org/why-the-built-environment/>> [accessed 25 February 2025].
- The term "The American School," was coined by Donald MacDonald in a 1981 issue of A+U magazine. Building off a line of architectural tradition that ran from Furness, Richardson, Sullivan, Wright and Goff, the American School of Architecture offered "an alternative to International Style dogma, a trajectory for a modern way of living that was individualistic and connected to the landscapes and culture of specific times and places." Luca Guido editor and others, *Renegades: Bruce Goff and the American School of Architecture* / Edited by Luca Guido, Stephanie Pilat and Angela Person ; Foreword by Aaron Betsky. (University of Oklahoma Press, 2020), p. 3.
- For further scholarship on the links between the American School and this set of architects working in California, see writer of introduction Angela Person-Iann editor and others, *Outré West: The American School of Architecture from Oklahoma to California* / Foreword by Jennifer Dunlop Fletcher ; Introduction by Stephanie Pilat & Angela Person ; [Texts by] Rachel Julia Engler, Hans Baldauf, Christopher Lofis, Amber Sarmiento, Marco Piscitelli. (Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center, 2024).
- Gombrich, Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation. (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1961), pgs 222-223.
- This understanding is similar to Daniel Kahneman's concept of System 1 or 'fast thinking' - an automatic, instinctual mode of thought that helps us navigate daily life but tends to oversimplify complex problems. See Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* / Daniel Kahneman., 1st ed.. (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), pp. 20-25.
- William Lycan, "Gombrich, Wittgenstein, and the Duck-Rabbit," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 30, no. 2 (Winter 1971).
- Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, second ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

» offered another natural vista, that of the infinite stars and skies above. The glory of the local sea lions, whales, birds were companions in this life, as well as the other creatures populating the cliffs, and of course all the trees, plants and life that thrives in the cool, moist mists; Muennig denied none of it. Insects in the house? Moss or algae growing on a surface? It was to be celebrated. Humans are animals, after all. And he would live his human life pressed against all this phenomenal thriving creation.

The problem is that like the sacred, the sublime is supposed to be special, not something that makes up the twenty-four-seven experience. At what point does a continual confrontation with ravenous life become merciless? The site where Muennig placed his home was quite literally a precipice balanced between creation and destruction, and while there would be poetry in holding that tension continually, while such a life may be supremely artful, is it humane?

Muennig's later work evolved significantly from this initial pure vision. While never abandoning his deep engagement with Big Sur's dramatic landscape, his subsequent designs began to offer refuge and modulation. They expressed an understanding that humans need both connection to and shelter from nature's power. (Although he never lost his belief that living things—plants, bugs and other forms—should be

welcomed into any house.) Perhaps while experiencing the intensity of that west coast sunset with his family, Meunnig heard an echo of Wright's question to Johnson float into his home. Perhaps he understood that Wright's question gets at something truly essential: that the soft animal of our humanity requires more substantive shelter from such a confrontation between ourselves and the sublime. Like the tension between Wright and Johnson, Muennig's architectural evolution reveals something profound about us: about what we aspire to, in nature and ourselves. Perhaps most essentially for architecture, it also reveals something about our thinking about design and our persistent drive to push things further. Whether we look to Johnson or Muennig, the pursuits with their different glass houses share this quality, this pushing to make things more: more natural, more profound, more pure. Yet in this pursuit of "more," are we not really making things less? Less entangled, less contradictory? Are we not stripping away the very contradictions and complexities that give richness to human experience?



## PATTERNS AND PERCEPTION

This pattern - tendency to simultaneously make things both more and less - isn't just an architectural phenomenon. It also reflects something

fundamental about how we, as embodied creatures, process reality itself. Art historian Ernst Gombrich deeply understood the push and pull of this discernment through his study of perception, arguing that seeing itself operates through what he called "the rhythm of schema and correction" - how our pattern-seeking brains must leap to conclusions when presented with the right perceptual "keys."<sup>10</sup> Without this ability to simplify complexity into recognizable patterns our ability to function efficiently, or perhaps even at all, is greatly compromised. Without our brains' capacity to distinguish and categorize incoming sensory data, we would be overwhelmed by raw perception, unable to accomplish even the simplest tasks.<sup>11</sup> We can see this mechanism at work in Gombrich's famous duck-rabbit illusion: once our mind locks onto one interpretation - duck or rabbit - it becomes momentarily impossible to see the other, even though we know it's there. This isn't a failure of perception or a limitation we can overcome through effort; it's what Gombrich recognized as the very nature of guided perception - the way our minds must actively interpret rather than passively receive information.<sup>12</sup> The simplification isn't optional - it's how we survive.

What makes Muennig's experiment particularly revealing is how it re-litigates architecture's relationship

with nature. Where Johnson could maintain his idea of transparency in the genteel landscape of New Canaan, supported by servants and infrastructure that made his artful life possible, Muennig's glass teepee represents a more radical test. His is the idea that we belong in nature and that, therefore, the essentializing device of a glass teepee is sufficient shelter. When we consider the sheer sensory assault of Big Sur, however, the relentless pounding of the surf, the whipping wind, the constant mist, the cacophony of sea lions echoing off the cliffs, we can understand that such raw sublimity practically begs our brains to impose order, to find some pattern that might make it comprehensible. The problem with this emphatic "more" is that the tension it creates: a need to continually re-schematize and re-correct that, like the sublime, is overwhelming. We instantly know that we are not up to the task of understanding. We can stay temporarily in this state of incomprehensibility, but if we can not shelter against it, paralysis is the result. In order to survive, we must find relief. Following Wright's organic principles rather than European modernism, Muennig embraced the opportunity for a direct architectural confrontation with Big Sur's overwhelming power. His glass teepee wasn't just another glass house—it asked, if the essence of humanity is that we are living animals, how minimal of a shelter do we need?



Right / Image courtesy of the American School Archive, University of Oklahoma

Mickey MuenAnig, Home and Studio, Big Sur, California, 1975.



## UNFOLDING TECHNOLOGY

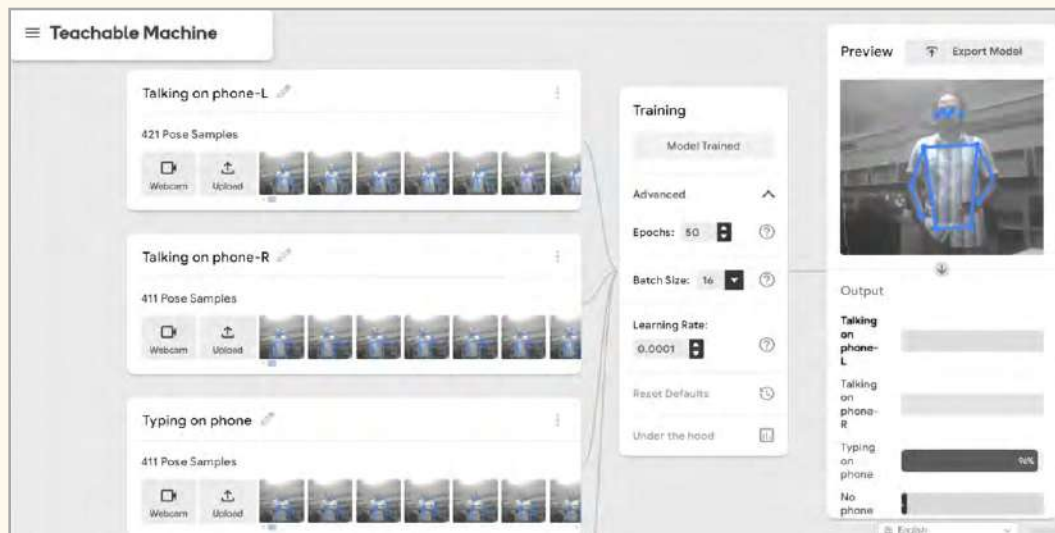
Teaching construction students about emerging tech such as AI and Digital Twins invites them to unfold possibilities beyond the conventional, revealing innovations that will shape the future of the built environment.

You may have heard the stereotypical description of construction as an outdated and technology-averse industry. Well, forget that! The Haskell and Irene Lemmon Construction Science Division at the University of Oklahoma is breaking new ground and leading the charge into the future of digital construction. In the Fall of 2024, the Division launched its Introduction to Construction Data Analytics and Innovation course, a pioneering effort that is the first of its kind at the Gibbs College of Architecture.

In this new course, upperclassmen and graduate students were not only introduced to the latest technologies transforming the construction industry but were given hands-on experience

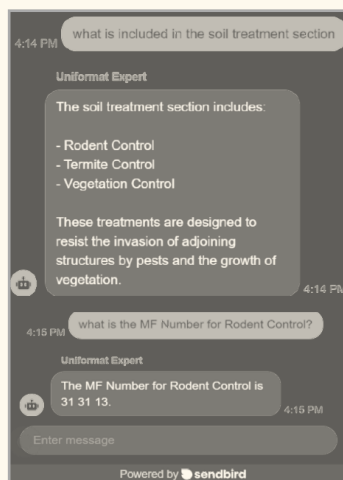
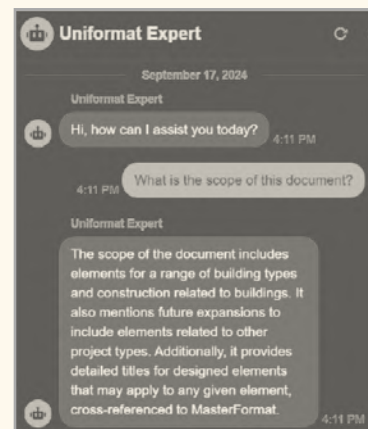
with some of the most advanced tools and concepts. The course covered an introduction to data analytics and business intelligence, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Reality Capture, Robotics, and Digital Twins in the Architecture, Engineering, Construction, and Operations (AECO) industry. It was taught by CNS Assistant Professor and PI of the Construction Innovation and Analytics Lab (CInnaLAB), Dr. Kofi Asare with guest lectures from leading industry experts.

The AI module was a particular highlight as students were guided to create personalized chatbots by wrapping around the ChatGPT-4o Large Language Model and building a computer vision model to support construction safety management. Their works will be showcased at OU's Academic Tech Expo 2025. The good news is that this course is here to stay and will be offered in Fall 2025 and beyond!



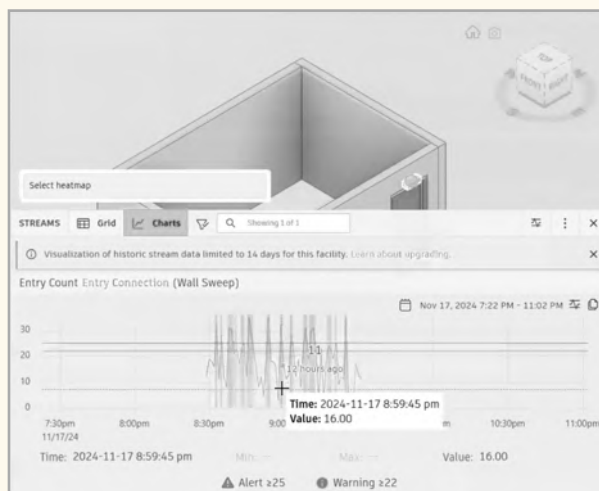
Above / Image courtesy of K. Asare

This group developed an application to monitor the use of mobile phones on construction sites during working hours. Mobile phones can distract workers, leading to loss of productivity and accidents on site. This project in its translation to practice plans proposed the use of 360 cameras to serve as the input for their application, which will be connected to an Internet of Things network for real-time updates to site superintendents. Successful implementation would help responsible officers detect infractions quickly and respond to boost productivity and prevent accidents.



Right / Image by K. Asare

This personalized chatbot was developed by a student to help them navigate through the Uniformat Standard. They trained their chatbot on entire Uniformat standard using the Sendbird platform, which is a no to low-code platform for creating personalized AI-powered chatbots.



Left / Image by K. Asare

This project combined documentation of existing conditions using 360 cameras, creating a BIM model from point clouds processed from the 360 videos, and creating a Digital Twin with Autodesk Tandem. Students explored how data, models, and communication networks are integrated to provide real-time insights for facility operations. In this submission, the student monitored foot traffic in a meeting space in Gould Hall in a specific timeframe to ensure compliance with the maximum space capacity of 25 people. The student designed the application to warn the event manager when occupancy reached 20 people and throw an alert when it exceeded 25. These alerts and data will help inform future selection of spaces for this recurring event.



Above / Image by K. Asare

Guest Speakers Derric Tuck and John Herrmann show students how HILTI's concrete scanner is used to detect post-tension cables in slabs.



Above / Image by K. Asare

Guest Speakers Tyler McManaman and Daren Clodio introduce students to how drones are used to collect data for construction progress monitoring.

# FUTURE

## innovative construction and analytics course

**KOFI ASARE**  
Assistant Professor  
Gibbs College of Architecture



# PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE

# CONNECTORS

infrastructure for avian coexistence

TERRI BULLARD + MEGHAN THOMALE  
Architecture (2nd Year)



# FROM BARRIERS TO



## IN CONNECTION WITH UNFOLD

This reflection of Design Studio III outlines our process of revealing the intricate relationship between infrastructure and ecology through the lens of reconciliation ecology. Through a dual toolset of analysis and visioning each design unfolded a unique conceptualization, reimagining the highway to support avian life through mimicking natural habitats and reducing noise pollution—with some proposals even providing nesting sites. The studio's work unfolds a narrative where small interventions yield far-reaching effects on biodiversity and its cultural imprint. By revealing layers of ecological complexity that exist within our everyday landscapes we can unfold

new possibilities for coexistence between humans, infrastructure and wildlife—offering a new vision of a regenerative future that shifts from the ego-centric to the eco-centric.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Deborah Richards**  
Assistant Professor & Studio Coordinator

**Terri Bullard**  
Herb Greene  
Teaching Fellow

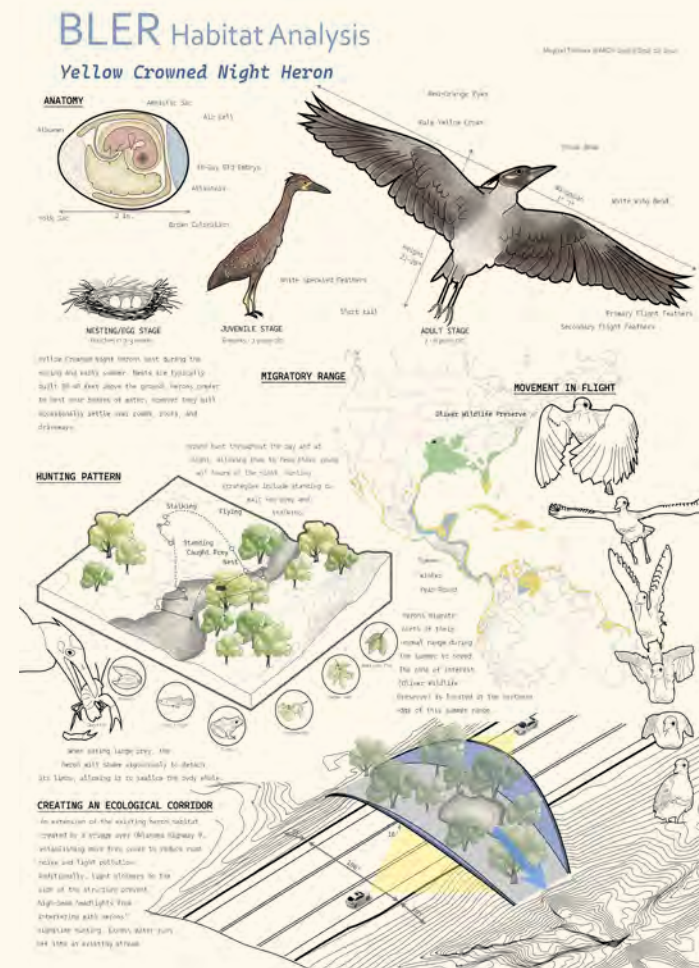
**Meghan Thomale**  
Undergraduate Architecture Student



## CONTEXT

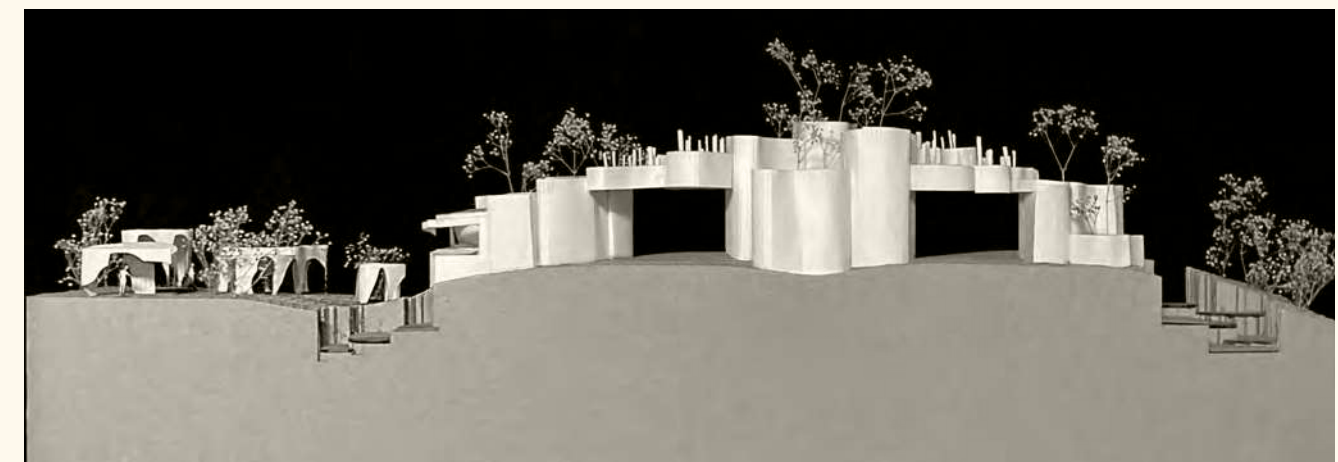
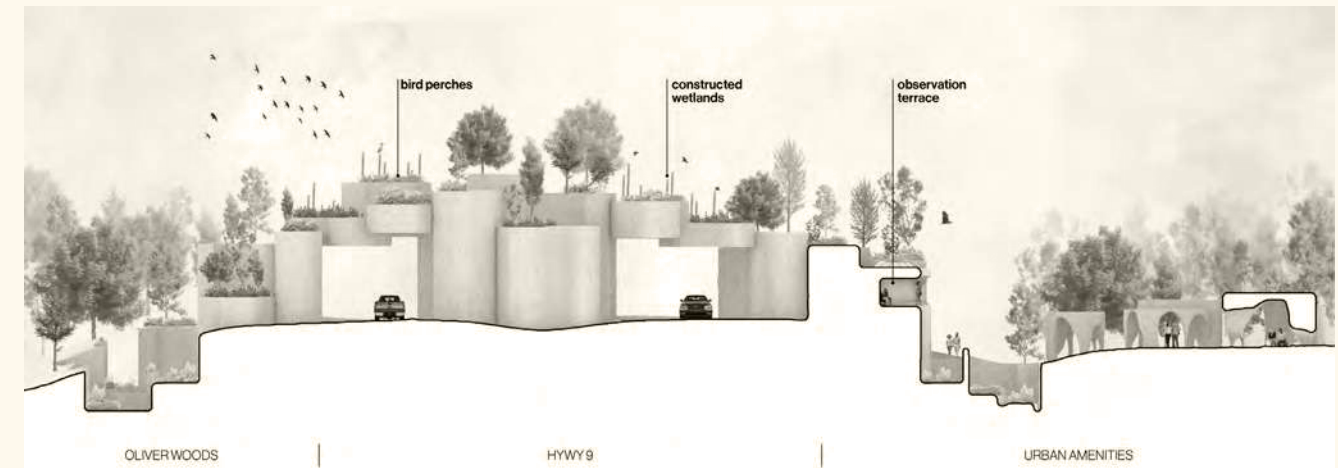
Oklahoma is home to the most diverse terrain in the country, boasting 12 Level III ecoregions that showcase prairies, forests, foothills and everything in between. This variety of habitat is one of the reasons Oklahoma is a prime locale for biodiversity of all kinds but the avian population, in particular, is notable for its volume and range within these borders. In fact, over 455 bird species have been catalogued in the state, with more than 215 species nesting within the borders<sup>1</sup>. These include year-round residents, migratory birds, and seasonal visitors who rely on and contribute to the ecological richness of the Sooner State. The University of Oklahoma specifically, is situated near the

intersection of the Central Great Plains and CrossTimbers ecoregions, a strategic location for conservation and regeneration efforts geared towards the avian population. This became increasingly clear when the 70-acre Oliver Wildlife Preserve was established, directly south of the campus, in 1946, prioritizing that space as a "wildlife sanctuary"<sup>2</sup>. But spaces of ecological conservation are often undervalued in the face of ongoing urbanization and in 1965, the Oliver Wildlife Preserve was under threat of being bisected by a four-lane highway. Campaigns and organization efforts were able to stop this desecration but not without concession, for the new route was established along the northern border of the property.



Above / Habitat Mapping by student Meghan Thomale  
Key Species: The Yellow Crowned Night Heron and the Red-bellied Nuthatch

Beneath / Images by student Meghan Thomale  
Student Proposal: Physical Model and Section Drawing



## VISION

Highway 9 is a part of the network of mobility infrastructure humans have come to rely on but it's time to reimagine how these barriers can transform into connectors, through the integration of ecological principles such as Rosenzweig's "Reconciliation Ecology". This concept asks the question, how can we increase biodiversity in areas where humans live, work, and play, for the benefit of all<sup>6</sup>? While reconciliation ecology is conceptually well-established, with its principles widely recognized in

ecological and conservation literature, its application is still emerging. In the Fall of 2024, a cohort of Design Studio III students were charged with engaging within this framework as they conceptualized bird-focused wildlife crossings over the existing Highway 9. The student proposals offer creative solutions that critique the challenges posed by road infrastructure on bird populations while seeking to enhance connectivity between two disparate habitat patches.



## CHALLENGE

This new route is today's Highway 9 and despite it being relegated to the edge of Oliver Woods, this type of transportation infrastructure has a history of negative influence on bird ecologies. This infrastructure is disruptive and generates noise and light pollution as well as visual disturbances that impact birds and their ability to communicate, especially during breeding season<sup>3</sup>. Although one might think of deer or rodents regarding direct mortality, certain species of birds such as water birds and ground-nesters are also vulnerable. Most importantly, roads contribute to habitat loss and

fragmentation which negatively affect birds by isolating the least mobile, upsetting the food chain and causing incomplete territories<sup>4</sup>. Worse yet, these impacts have long-distance effects, with research highlighting that the effects of roads on bird populations can extend up to about 1km, while the mammals, which birds rely on for ecosystem balance, can be affected up to 5 km from roads<sup>5</sup>. These negative impacts collectively contribute to reduced bird population densities near roads and potential long-term declines in avian biodiversity in areas with denser urbanization.

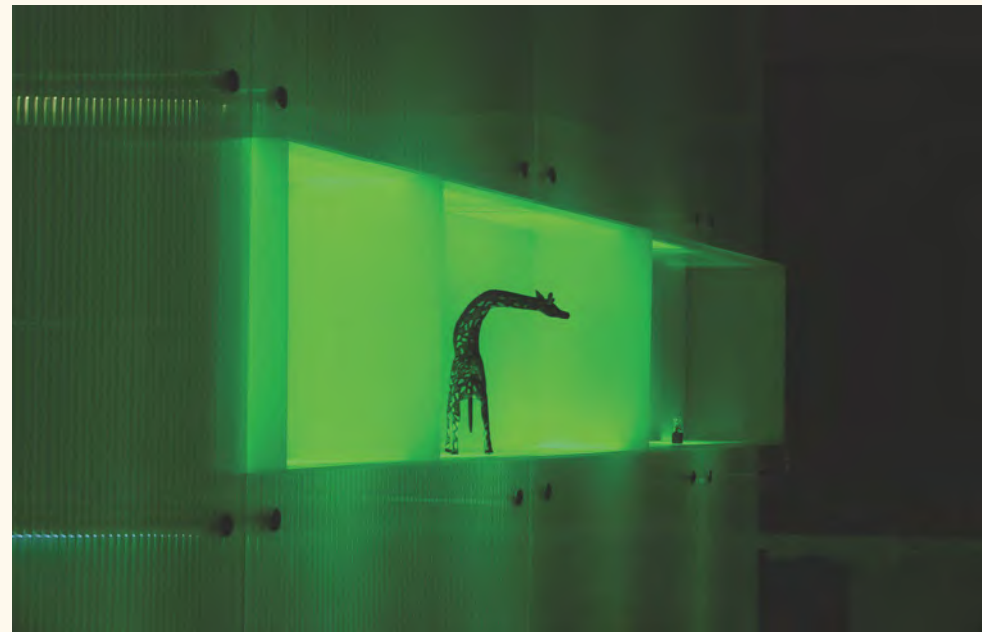


□ **PIÑATA'S CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN RESTAURANT**

Piñata's Contemporary Mexican Restaurant provided an opportunity to merge architecture, graphic design, and lighting into a cohesive, immersive brand experience. The client, the daughter of a Phoenix staple Mexican restaurant owner since 1970, envisioned a space that honored her heritage while embracing a bold, contemporary identity. Many Mexican restaurants rely on overtly thematic décor, often resulting in a pastiche of kitsch elements. Our approach aimed to craft an identity that extended beyond a well-designed space, one that would integrate lighting, materiality, and spatial composition to create a dynamic sensorial experience affecting ultimately the taste of food. Our design idea was to capture the essence

of a 400-year-old Mexican piñata tradition: a vibrant explosion of color, energy, and festivity. Drawing from our architecture and graphic design background, we explored how color and light could shape perception, enhance brand presence, and elevate the dining atmosphere. Inspired by the art movement in the 1960s of "Light and Space"; influenced by John McLaughlin, the interior installations played with translucency and shifting bright hues, responding to the spatial conditions. Programmed color changes subtly transformed the environment, altering the viewer's relationship to the surrounding space. The project investigated light as a primary architectural tool—particularly its interaction with time and space. Depending on the color combinations, the interior space will appear more intimate

or expansive. By translating the tradition of piñata breaking into shifting planes of color and light, the restaurant became an ever-evolving, immersive experience. Translucent and reflective surfaces interact with LED lighting, creating a dynamic interplay of color saturation and shadow movement. In the evening, the colored light and planes seemed to unfold as light bled through the storefront system, becoming visible to the passerby; silhouettes of patrons animated the space, enticing people to walk to the footsteps of the restaurant's door, and perhaps, arrogantly, overshadowing the remaining dormant suites, now closed. The project exemplifies the power of multidisciplinary design, where architecture and graphic design converge to shape an immersive, emotionally resonant environment.



**Left/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

*Detail of polycarbonate wall panels with programmable LED lighting system and integrated display cavity.*



**Top-Left/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

*Studio work exhibition at the Scottsdale Museum of Art in Scottsdale, Arizona. Detail of designed polycarbonate wall panels.*

**Bottom-Right/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

*Exterior view highlights the restaurant's spatial lighting strategy as experienced during the evening.*

# VISUAL NARRATIVES

**AWILDA RODRIGUEZ + PAOLO SANZA**  
Associate Professors  
Gibbs College of Architecture

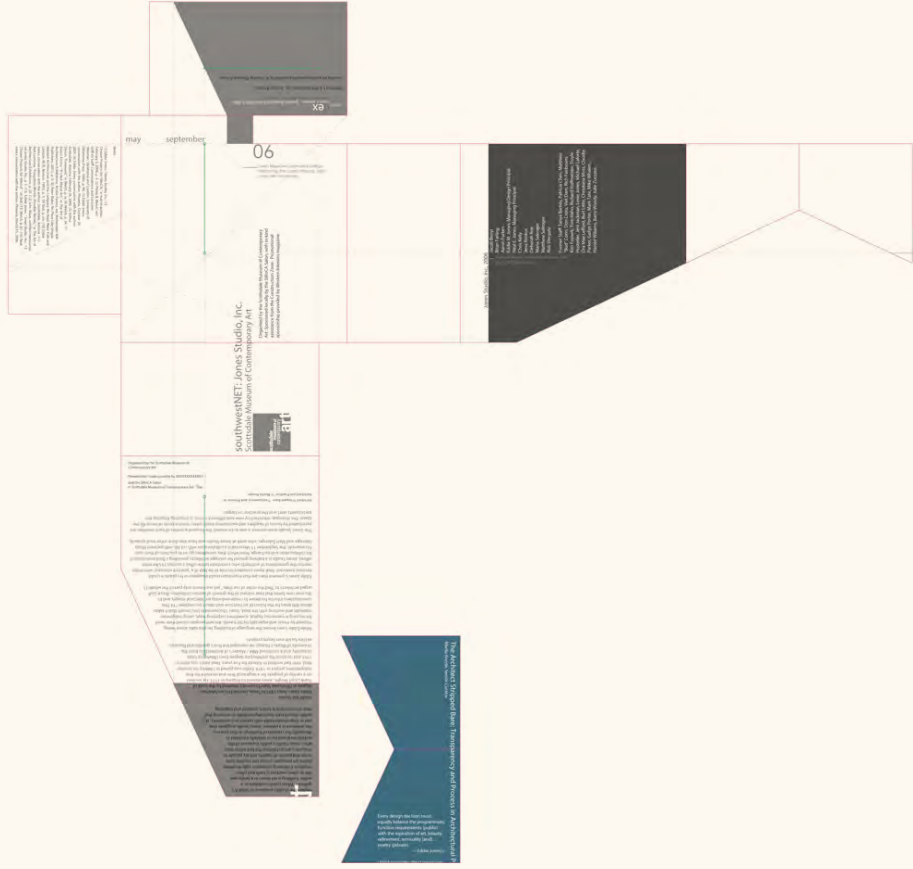


# INTER-SECTIONING



**Below/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Folded Jones Studio exhibition brochure at SMOCA. Folding's and 3D proportions relate to architect's design philosophy.



**Above/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Robyn Scotts Interiors, rsidesigns.com brochure for exclusive client's. Detail of maple wood box.



**Above/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Unboxing experience is designed to be an extension of the interior designer identity. Detail of sliding lid.



**Above/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Unboxing experience: detail of brochure's opening



**Above/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Unboxing experience: detail of brochure's pages.

**Left/** Image by A. Rodriguez Carrión and P. Sanza

Unfolded template for Jones Studio exhibition brochure at SMOCA.



## INTRODUCTION

The unforeseen seeding took place in the early 1990s; as an architecture student at Arizona State University, I was assigned the task of designing a poster to promote an upcoming exhibition at the College of Architecture and Environmental Design focusing on the work of Alfred Newman Beadle V (1927-1998), an influential architect figure based in Phoenix. From office buildings to single-family and multi-unit homes, Beadle brought a wealth of modernist styles to the Phoenix metropolitan area. One of his notable projects was the 1964 Case Study Apartment #1, the only one constructed outside of California as part of the Case Study House program, which ran intermittently from 1945 to 1966 and was sponsored by Arts & Architecture magazine.

My passion for graphic design developed as I continued practicing architecture. However, it was a serendipitous encounter in the mid-1990s at Hennessey + Ingalls bookstore in Santa Monica, California. While browsing the bookshelves, I found a book that would forever change my life. Emigré (The Book): Graphic Design into the Digital Realm opened the door to a world that sparked a desire to go back to school for graphic and motion art as web graphics became a new area for design. The World Wide Web, primarily concerned with delivering information through simple text-based websites, was fertile ground for design exploration. New software's technologies allowed for desktop publishing, where I could delve into the aesthetics, design, and user experience.

The book was the offspring of the magazine Emigré, founded in 1984, coincidentally with the birth of the Macintosh computer, by the Dutch duo of Rudy VanderLans and Zuzana Lick in Berkeley, California. Emigré provided a forum for theoretical conversations about technology, design, and visual communication. It featured critical essays and interviews with renowned graphic designers like David Carson and Massimo Vignelli. Their conversations around design triggered seeking inspiration across graphic, industrial, interior, furniture, and branding design. The pages of Emigré encouraged me to work across disciplinary silos and see design as a holistic endeavor to be approached with curiosity. I will establish and launch the multidisciplinary studio digital extension shortly after with the aspiration of blending the newly acquired knowledge of graphic design with architecture.

Enters Prof. Paolo Sanza. At the end of 1999, Paolo joined digital extension concurrently to teach at Arizona State University School of Architecture. With Awilda, he will underwrite numerous projects that meshed architecture and graphic design disciplines in compelling and unexpected ways. For instance, the layering of experiences typical of architectural spaces was translated into the layering of information in the graphic work, where supplemental data would emerge only to the attentive or curious viewer. Graphic packages also implemented different materials to augment visual emotions with tactile experiences. And, among other explorations, was the creation of graphic pieces that had to be assembled at the conclusion of a visual journey or to be fully read, becoming, at all effects, architectural mementos.

When the studio subleased a space within the office of renowned landscape architect Steve Martino in Phoenix, Arizona, Martino's office pin-up space was clad with black steel panels onto which work was hung up utilizing magnets. Although we both liked the concept, we knew it would not have been easy financially to expand it into our new leased area. At that time, we had started playing with transparency. It was that investigation that led to the development of an alternative idea: a wall made of translucent corrugated plastic sheets where in the cavity of the flutes and at predetermined intervals were inserted steel rods, making the wall "magnetic," yet highly graphic and reflective of the studio's philosophy. The solution wowed the Scottsdale Museum of Art's curator, who was tasked to interview graphic and architecture firms in Phoenix for an upcoming exhibition and eventually launched a long-lasting relationship between digital extension and the museum.

Having digital extension work flourishing from architectural foundations, it appealed to design professionals, and most of the studio's clients were architects, landscape architects, interior designers, art museums, and film producers.

As trained architects and now practicing graphic designers, the studio's work took root in both worlds, predominantly based on object-making at any scale and the multiple experiences they could create.

### INTRODUCTION

This volume of TELESIS seeks to unravel the dynamic interweaving of ideas, stories, and spaces. Therefore, my idea is to explore the story of living in-between three cities: Isfahan, Tehran, and Norman. The first two—vibrant cities in Iran—and the third, nestled in Oklahoma, each carry a unique atmosphere that has the power to move and transform me still to this date. The experience of simply “being” within these places is perhaps the truest way I can describe what it means to be.

The first chapter unfolds in the City of Blue Domes—Isfahan, famously known as half of the world. Here, nostalgia lingers in courtyards. The second chapter shifts to Tehran: fast-paced, full of hustle and perpetual motion. This is a story of land and decisions. The third is an ongoing tale of living in Norman and the story of what’s been left behind and what lies ahead.

### ECHOES OF OLD BLUE DOMES

Yesterday, at the Gibbs College of Architecture scholarship ceremony, I discussed with a friend how some buildings seem to have a soul as if they breathe. Amid the formal attire, excitement, and sense of achievement, we tried to describe what gives these buildings meaning. Only a few buildings came to mind, and it struck us that these are the ones tied to our deepest emotions.

Isfahan, Esfahan, Aspadana, Nesf-e-Jahan (Half of the World), or whatever name you choose; this is where I was born. My deepest emotions are tied to this city, a blend of light and shadow wrapped into one complex relationship. The moment I begin reflecting on what defines good design and a well-crafted building, I realize every experience I’ve had within its built environment shapes my sense of value and aesthetics. Funny enough, my grandparents’ front yard in Isfahan

stood out most vividly. It was a typical row house with a fully walled yard, a small pool in the center, a modest garden, and a towering fig tree that shaded our summer gatherings. When I was about seven, our close relatives visited nearly every weekend. We’d cool a watermelon in the pool, then gather on the Ivan (the front porch) to share snacks, fruits, and stories. Some nights, I’d stay over, and we’d pitch a mosquito net tent under the stars, with my grandparents’ stories lulling me to sleep. From an outsider’s perspective, everything about that yard was ordinary. But maybe it’s precisely this simplicity that’s imprinted so deeply in my memory. That place, its atmosphere, has defined what I think a front yard should be for the past twenty years.

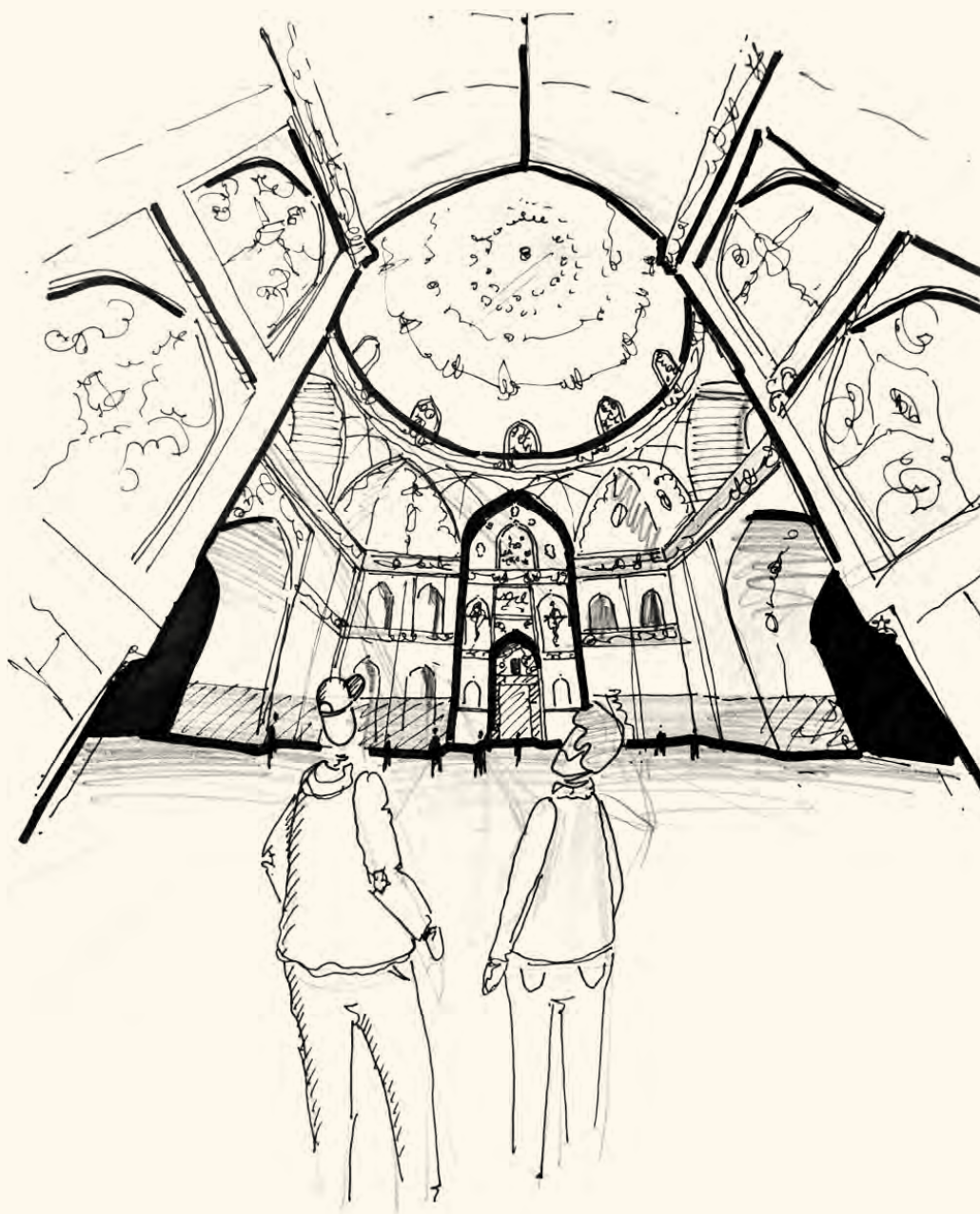
In my early twenties, as an architecture student, I developed a habit of wandering out alone with a

sketchbook, capturing the buildings I encountered. It was a way to slow down, to truly see and appreciate details. I had time to slow down. One of my favorite spots was Naqsh-e Jahan Square, where every corner held something captivating. One day, while sketching there, I met two Australian tourists. We quickly became friends, and we shared stories about Iran, Australia, and everything in between. Together, we visited the Jomeh Mosque, Shah Mosque, with its mesmerizing architecture and grand blue domes. Under the southern dome, we gazed up at the intricate tilework and geometry, each pattern leading our eyes toward the center of the circle. Our breaths echoed softly, as if the dome itself was alive-breathing, whispering back to us.



Above / Image by R. Mir

*Timcheh Malek, Isfahan, Iran. I was sketching this picture when I meet the Australian tourists*



Above / Image by R. Mir

*Shah Mosque, Isfahan. Underneath the Blue Dome*

# IN BETWEEN

**RAMTIN MIR**  
Ph.D. Candidate  
Gibbs College of Architecture





Left / Image by R. Mir  
University Dorms and the Promise Land

## THE GREAT POLLUTION

The great city of Tehran, the capital of Iran, one of the most polluted cities became the second place I called home. Growing up, I'd visit Tehran with my parents to see my aunt, whose beautiful home felt like a wonderland. We'd explore malls and indulge in ice cream flavors we couldn't find in Isfahan. Tehran always felt exciting, and I had this sense that someday, I'd live there.

Eventually, I moved to Tehran for my master's at the University of Tehran. I lived in a dorm with four other guys—hardly a tidy setup, but it fit my budget. One of my roommates, a finance major, loved sharing his financial knowledge with me. He'd explain how earning a few more accounting certificates could boost his income! In every student, there was an ambition and drive you could almost touch. One day, he joked that if we saved for about two hundred years without spending, we might be able to buy a small place in this district. We talked about what it meant to us—that we couldn't afford even a small piece of the land. What does this land mean to us? What do we owe it, and what does it owe us?

The first time I entered the dorm library, I saw a row of students in slippers and pajamas, each carefully drafting a cover letter in English, applying to universities abroad. Over time, I joined the wave of students

navigating rising economic and political tensions, for a way out. For someone who wasn't politically inclined, this time felt like hell. My university years in Tehran were filled with unpredictability—from the weight of political strife to endless assignments, the decision to leave Iran, and the onset of COVID-19. It was a brief but intense passage, from Isfahan's blue domes to Tehran's towering buildings, endless traffic, and a darker reality, where limitations grew closer, and choices became more pressing. Through these experiences, the built environment was part of the story itself, a stage full of contradictions that I learned to live with.<sup>1</sup>

## FREEDOM'S PRICE COMES SOONER

Leaving Iran for the United States was no easy journey. Like so many other Iranian students, you have to navigate endless obstacles, knowing that, in the end, your future rests in the hands of an embassy officer who decides if you "fit the bill" or not. Pursuing my PhD at the University of Oklahoma has been a profound experience, teaching me resiliency, patience, and managing progress. It feels much more like a marathon than a sprint. Becoming a Sooner has been rewarding, especially

with people here being so welcoming—much kinder than what I'd seen on the news! Yet, at times, I sense an invisible wall between myself and others. Still, this wall isn't as thick as the one I felt in my own country. Perhaps, that's the price of freedom.

I haven't yet learned to fully appreciate the built environment here. Buildings make too much sense—shaped by pragmatism, constructability, and economic efficiency. Big-box stores and sprawling parking lots is a reflection of a philosophy that prioritizes profit and convenience. It's what one might call the architecture of convenience—or, as Jesse LeCavalier described it, the architecture of fulfillment<sup>2</sup>. Take Walmart, for instance. Its aisles offer endless choices, rows upon rows of brands and types of products. But beyond the abundance, there's a larger story—one of consumerism, instant access, and the illusion of choice.

Before coming to the US, I had never experienced bars and clubs. This building typology, with its distinct architectural layout, ambient lighting, and pulsating music, is designed to cultivate social connections while generating profit. On a Saturday night, you might find yourself enjoying a drink after a game, chatting with friends, dancing, or perhaps even encountering the love of your life—if only for that night. Then, on Sunday morning, you might head to church to reconnect with

your beliefs and foster another form of social connection. There's a palpable energy in these everyday places, transforming them into something truly unique.

## CONCLUSION

In my quest for a good design or a remarkable building, I often encounter a sense of emptiness. I search for my values in the memories of my grandparents' front yard, in the ambitious towers of Tehran, and in the pragmatic, value-engineered big-box stores of Norman, Oklahoma. I strive to set aside my academic learnings, seeking the freedom to contemplate what truly defines "good." These three cities are woven into me; I've breathed them in, tasted them, loved them, and hated them. They live so vividly within me that any attempt to capture them on paper feels impossible. I'm not sure there is a conclusion, to be honest. This is life, always carrying on.

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Above / Image by R. Mir  
Illusion of Choice and the Architecture of Fulfillment



# PROTEST

urban murals and domestic decorations in south africa

TERRY CHISHIMBA  
Undergraduate  
Architecture Student



# IDENTITY PRESERVATION

PROJUNO  
SYSTEMAL

rituals was decorating their dwelling place, both for aesthetics and as a spiritual ritual. A rise in the ritual of Ndebele house paintings is seen after their displacement from Mapoch and during the period of Apartheid. By being forced to labor for the Boars the Ndebele people picked up new skills such as making bracelets and clothing from beads, pearls, and most importantly synthetically produced materials. This enriched their knowledge of visual expression and led to a development in their level of expression towards the ritual of painting their homes. Initially, they painted their window and door frames with simple geometric shapes with charcoal-like monochromatic colors. The practice develops into complex geometric motifs combining rectangular, triangular, and square shapes to create elaborate designs with natural pigments such as seeds, ashes, and minerals. Today the paintings are presented with synthetic paint and characterized by bright colors, heavy black outlines, and strong geometry. The ritual is vital with diverse functions and significance to the cultural values and practices of the tribe. The house, to the tribe, is a vital space that represents legacy, honoring it as a space where life is thought to be conceived and where ancestors dwell. It is a metaphor for the old and new, young and old, they all reside in that one space. The ritual was accompanied by traditional ceremonies that define crossing moments for growth and adulthood for children coming of age. House paintings are exclusively done by women annually and referred to as *Umhlobiso*<sup>2</sup> in *IsiNdebele* (Ndebele language). It is treated as an initiation ritual while also creating a connection between mother and daughter as she guides her through the ritual. The process of painting the houses is done with no planning almost as a meditative act linked to spiritual practice. It is done between April and June during the time of a collective initiation ceremony (*Ukuwela*) where all the boys and men leave to educate young men on the codes, values, and ways of the tribe. Hence, the ritual becomes a way of honoring the men while also empowering the women to have their stamp on a patriarchal culture. Today women of the tribe are able to gain financial independence by selling their bead-works and textiles with the same pattern language further empowering their role in the community. These practices have played a significant role in uniting the community and maintaining their sense of identity even when they felt powerless by the restrictions and policies of the Apartheid regime. The fact that these ceremonies and rituals of identity were practiced in *Bantustans* (rural areas reserved for the black tribal communities) away from the urban landscape that was defined strictly for white South Africa allowed them to thrive in maintaining their cultural identity. Black South Africans had a different experience in the Urban landscape, defined by their worth as laborers situated in townships close enough to the cities but not quite in the cities. These black South Africans migrated from Bantustans to townships looking for better opportunities. In their migration, they entered a new social landscape that stripped them of their identity as tribesmen replacing it with subservient ideologies of white superiority. These ideas would take decades to be deconstructed through the works of black consciousness and religious groups first then through stronger political resistance groups. Black consciousness was an ideological resistance<sup>3</sup>, reinstating ideas of black personhood linked to neo-Africanism. It fostered a sense of pride and self-determination empowering Black South Africans to reclaim their identity. Community murals aimed to reinforce these ideas through artistic expression.

» Since Holland's occupation of Cape Town in the 17th century and its annexation by the British in 1806, the tribes of Southern Africa have faced great disturbance in their culture and political landscape. The new occupants treated the natives as slaves and less than humans. In this new world, their culture and values were seen as primitive and uncivilized. At the height of this unequal relationship between white and black South Africans was the Apartheid regime in 1948. It was a calculated system of racial segregation designed to choke the life out of black South Africa. Black communities were regulated to the margins, physically displaced, economically strangled, and socially erased. Against all odds black South Africa survived screaming "We are still here." A significant factor in their preservation of culture and identity has been visual expression. It is not a surprise that art became a battlefield for identity and survival. This essay analyzes expressions of self-representation and sovereignty in a marginalized South African society.

## INTRODUCTION: A VOICE FOR THE PEOPLE

During the years of Apartheid there was growing protest from Black South Africa. Beginning with groups that rejected the racial hierarchical ideologies of white South Africa like that of Steven Biko's Black Consciousness group to opposing Black political parties like the African National Congress eventually leading to the end of Apartheid. Usually less acknowledged, art and visual expression became a powerful method of protecting and reasserting culture and identity, giving Black South Africa a voice not focused on being heard by the oppressors but by the oppressed. Black South Africans used visual expression as a means of cultural preservation and endurance against the racial ideologies of Apartheid. This is observed through rural domestic decorations and urban murals in South Africa. For this essay, we focus on the Southern Ndebele tribe's house paintings, which have been practiced since the emergence of the tribe, and popular community murals that emerged post-Apartheid.

## NDEBELE HOUSE PAINTING

To understand the resilient nature of the Ndebele people we have to know their history. Between 1810 and 1840 Southern Africa experienced a series of wars (*Mfecane*) between tribes which resulted in their mass migration toward the north. One of these tribes was the *Ndzunda*, under the leadership of Chief Nyabela a new tribe was established at the *Mapoch Caves*<sup>1</sup>. The tribe settled there for decades building earth forts and a society among their rocky and mountainous area. However, it was not long before the **Boars** (Holland farmers) proclaimed the *Ndzunda* were under their control demanding taxes. In the next years, as the Boars started demanding more taxes there was a clash between the two groups eventually leading to a war in 1882 that lasted for almost ten months. The war resulted in the displacement of the tribe, slaughter of its people, execution of its chief and elders, and forced labor for the Boars. The tribe now known as the *Ndebele* (*AmaNdebele*) moved to a new settlement in the provinces of Mpumalanga and Limpopo of South Africa where they can be found today. The physical disruption of the *AmaNdebele* resulted in strong community ties but also disrupted their rituals and traditional costumes every time they moved. Traditions that survived were very significant to their values and beliefs as a people. One of their most valued



Above/ Image by Claude Voyage  
Courtesy of Flickr/  
A typical painted house/ Mpumalanga  
Rural, SA, 2011



Above/ Image by Unknown Author  
South Africa. Glass bead apron  
worn by young girls before the  
engagement ceremony. © Commons



Above/ Image by Humanioraorp  
Courtesy of Creative Commons/  
Women at the Ndebele Cultural Village,  
Loopspruit, Gauteng, South Africa, 1999



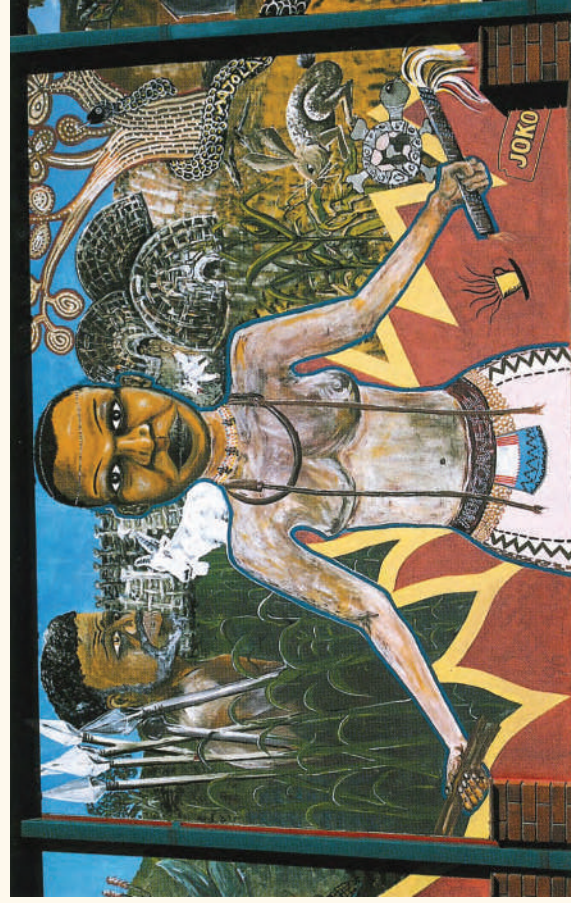
Above/ Mural by Community MuralProjects  
Courtesy of Sabine Marschall/  
Human Rights Wall, right half of wall,  
Durban, SA, 1995



**Above/** Mural by Community Mural Projects  
 Courtesy of Sabine Marschall/ Medwood Gardens Mural,  
 First symbolizing the fall of Apartheid/ Durban, SA, 1993

## ENDNOTES

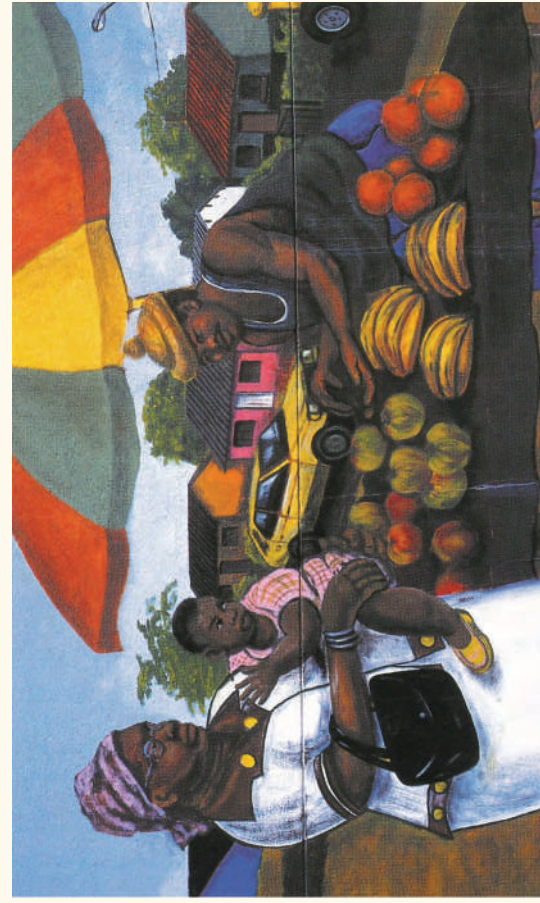
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**Above/** Mural by Community Mural Projects  
 Courtesy of Sabine Marschall/ Medwood Gardens Mural,  
 Joko mural, detail of centre/ East London, SA, 1996



**Above/** Mural by Peggy Delpoit  
 Courtesy of Sabine Marschall/ People of district six. Holy  
 Trinity Parish Church/ Former District six, Cape Town, 1984



**Above/** Mural by Sithembiso Sibisi  
 Courtesy of Sabine Marschall Umlazi Station murals:  
 woman and fruit vendor/ Durban, SA, 1998

## COMMUNITY MURALS

In the urban scene, there were more restrictions on Black South Africans. The expression of their culture in any form was often seen as a treat and immediately stepped on. Visual expression that was anything less Eurocentric was restricted. Arts works were judged by the standards and values of the Western World. This created a division between what can be called informal art and fine arts. Fine art ensured work was presented in controlled environments that would have fewer audiences and less political influence. An example of this type of artwork is the authorized Peggy Deports' mural "No matter where we are we are here" in the District Six Museum that protested the relocation of Black South Africans from District Six Cape Town<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, artists like Michael Markovitz were openly denied permission to display wall public art, and when a mural that resembled his idea popped up on the street, he was arrested and held liable<sup>5</sup>. The thought of a mural painted for a local community was met with suspicions and apprehension by authorities. In the 1970s and 80s, protest murals were usually common but very ephemeral as they were quickly painted over, hence, not recorded. However, after Apartheid, a sense of liberalization emerged, bringing with it the rise of community murals. Community murals do not have a clear definition but imply they're painted for a specific community or with some form of participation of the local community. There popularity can also be linked to the encouragement of new community art groups like the community murals projects by the first Johannesburg Biennale, Africus<sup>6</sup>. The groups were to the groups were to portray a new South Africa, and the community murals aimed to examine the distorted and erased colonial history of Black South Africa to address the imbalance and close those gaps. The murals became an essential element of Black South Africa in asserting itself in these urban areas that previously rejected them. The murals presented scenes of the ordinary lives of ordinary people as they explored the urban landscape. The scenes would be as simple and unpretentious as people at a market, people gathering around a bar, or the scenes at a bus station. All these were a way for the people to reclaim their identity as part of the land. Although Apartheid was abolished its ideologies and attitudes would be recognized and these murals acted as a protest to those that still reject Black South Africa. An example is Sithembiso Sibisi's mural at Umlazi Station in Durban<sup>7</sup>. He illustrates a woman carrying a child buying fruits. A simple scene that shows the ordinary life of South Africans asserting Black South Africans in urban life. With the introduction of the community murals was the re-discovery of the Black South African traditional stories. The murals aimed to create a link to the rural landscape which defined the true culture of the black people in the urban areas. The Urban landscape's

aesthetics of the Western world meant there was never space to represent the traditional aesthetics of the black population. The murals brought with them strong imagery of traditional elements that had strong connections to legends and myths of the tribal homelands. Some murals were presented with Zulu warriors in their traditional outfits, traditional objects such as utensils, and typical scenes of the rural landscape with Africans inhabiting it. A good example is the Joko mural in East London by the Community mural projects<sup>8</sup>, illustrating a clear scene of the rural landscape with a hunter on the left and animals usually found in the rural areas on the right. In the middle of the mural is a woman in traditional attire slitting the mural. This was a clear act of reasserting cultural identity to a group of people who had been denied it for decades under the rule of White South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

A comparison of the two visual expressions informs us of the similarity in their role in preserving a sense of community and belonging among Black South Africans. Apartheid's approach to dehumanizing black and brown races was specifically aimed at disrupting the unity and society of these races to glorify white South Africa. It is significant to acknowledge that Ndebele House Paintings and community murals preserve identity in very different ways in different spheres. House paintings are a private practice that aims to maintain a way of life for the community that links to its tradition. It is intimate and private, safeguarding the cultural heritage of a people. Urban murals by contrast are public and use the city itself as a canvas. They tell the complete story of Black identity and history. Murals aimed to broadcast identity to the people going beyond the act of preservation. The story of South Africa's struggle against apartheid is immortalized through its art, etched into the walls of homes and urban landscapes alike. Whether in the intricate, quiet defiance of Ndebele house paintings or the bold, loud proclamations of urban murals, art became a shield and a sword. It preserved a cultural identity apartheid sought to erase and inspired generations to fight for justice and a better future. These art forms rooted in the philosophies of Black Consciousness and Africanism, have gone beyond aesthetics and has unified communities and asserted pride in African identity. It was a powerful reminder that culture and creativity could thrive even in the face of systematic oppression. Today, this legacy lives on, demonstrating that art remains a vital tool for confronting injustice and envisioning liberation. By preserving identity and wielding it as a force for resistance, this creative expression continues to inspire struggles for equality and freedom worldwide.



**Above/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
Lunch at Fattoria  
Montecchio, San Donato

Pictures and videos on the internet have lost their sense of place. The ability to edit and filter has made visual media more picturesque, but also monotonous and inauthentic. These vlogs are unfiltered, imperfect. Any sort of editing is done minimally. Sometimes even the audiomixing is surprisingly loud, or too soft to hear. While this may partly reflect my inexperience with Adobe Premiere Pro, it feels as though the clips themselves demand to be presented this way. A majority of the content is not the beautiful landscapes or the grandiose monuments, they are simple conversations. These dialogues are definitely humorous and sometimes quite interesting, but largely unremarkable. That being said, in my opinion, these clips are a better demonstration of the true feeling of the experience. They highlight an important part of life that we seem to have lost, the beauty of ordinary moments. They remind us of the wonder in everyday life, a beauty often overshadowed by our pursuit of perfection.



**Above/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
Inspecting a wall at the Ara Pacis Museum, Rome

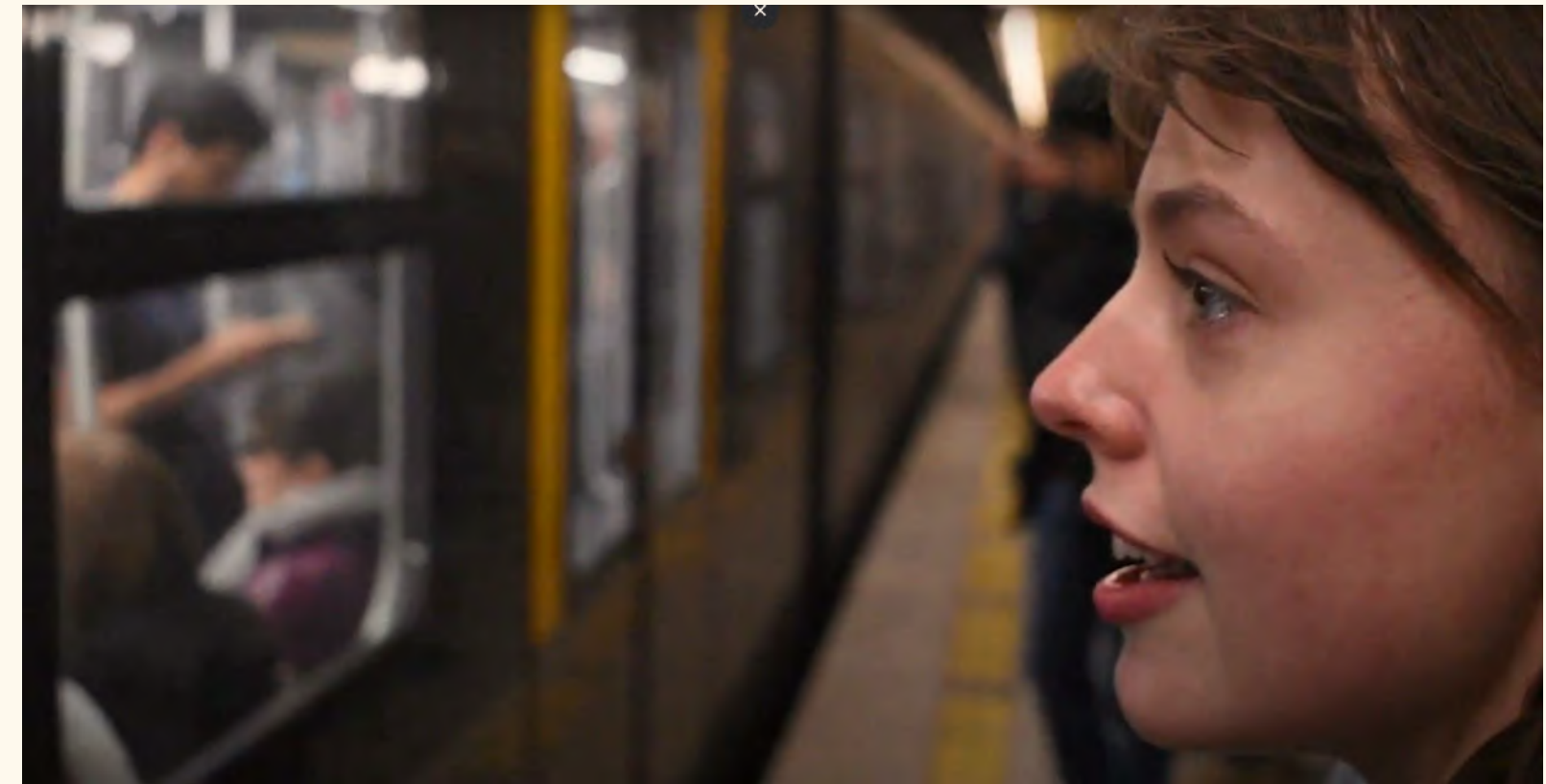
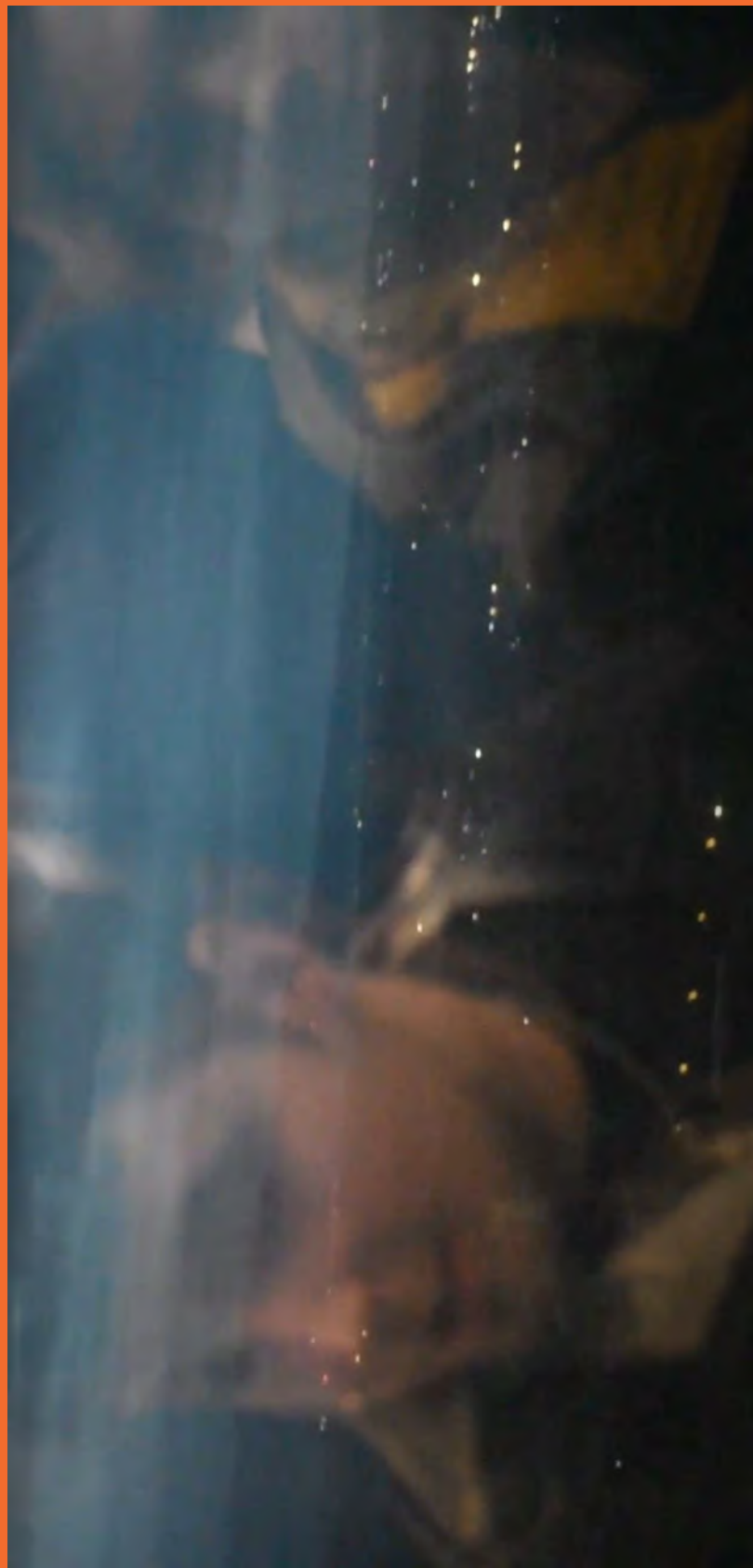


**Above/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
Picking an orange at Villa d'Este, Tivoli

**BEN NISHIKAWA**  
Graduate  
Architecture Student



# FILMING AUTHENTICITY



**Top Right/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
*First time taking the subway, Milano*

**Bottom Right/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
*Skipping stones in the Adige River, Verona*



**Top Left/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
*Taking the train back to Rome, Tivoli*

**Bottom Left/** Image by B. Nishikawa  
*Interviewing a horse beside the Spanish Steps, Rome*



## INTRODUCTION

The auto-focus on my Nikon D3500 camera is finicky, to say the least. At crucial moments the camera often refuses to cooperate, leaving me with incredible videos of beautifully blurry landmarks. Yet, I've come to appreciate this imperfection, as it gives my Rome study abroad vlogs a homemade charm that I now believe is essential to their appeal. When I first started recording short videos of my classmates, I had no intention of creating a long-running series of videos that would document much of our trip. Now standing at 10 videos with more to come, I couldn't be happier.



Above/ Photo courtesy of Benita Killewer  
Murky Waters Skull Panel Construction



Above/ Photo by the author  
Murky Waters Cut, Fold, Glue Model



## PAPERCRAFT IN PLAY

Three simple actions that conjure the image of childhood crafts. Within the realm of architectural papercraft, origami and kirigami often take center stage, celebrated for their elegance and precision yet their commonplace cousin, the Cut-Fold-Glue model, is often overlooked. Too easily dismissed as an artifact of elementary school nostalgia—evoking rainy-day activities constructing low-poly animals, gable-roofed single-family homes, and educational geometry kits—these simple paper models hold the potential to be powerful tools. Models, of all kinds, fill an important role in the architect’s toolbox, serving as tangible representations that bridge the gap between abstract design ideas and real-world spatial conditions. They allow architects to test spatial relationships, structural articulations, and aesthetic qualities in three dimensions. Moreover, models act as powerful communication tools, making complex architectural concepts accessible to clients, collaborators, and the public. Cut-Fold-Glue paper models specifically offer a medium of engagement that is accessible, tactile, and inviting, making design approachable for anyone regardless of experience.

In our work-obsessed world, anything associated with play is often dismissed as frivolous or judged to be something meant only for children, regardless of the context. It is worth taking a minute here to note that the term child’s play—meaning an act or task easily accomplished—evaporates any hint of derision into confident and comfortable assuredness. Therein lies one of the strengths of play; when everyone is aware of the rules and limitations structuring play, it acts as an equalizer for everyone involved. The very fact that these Cut-Fold-Glue models are familiar and accessible gives them power and purpose. Its simplicity is its superpower, providing a possibility to connect architects, clients, and even children to participate in the design process on equal footing.

At Unearthed Practice, the design studio I co-founded with Jordan Loofs, we’ve embraced the playful possibilities of papercraft in select projects. Our first venture into Cut-Fold-Glue modelmaking emerged during the design of Murky Waters, a temporary architectural pavilion in the form of a catfish skeleton set on the icy surface of a frozen river. These paper models first entered the design process as tools for rapid prototyping, allowing us to iterate graphic patterns for the faceted catfish skull. Their implementation offered two key benefits: the agility of analog sketching free from the constraints of digital software and the ability

to immediately communicate the designs to the client in three dimensions. A secret third benefit was that working through cut-fold-glue models made the design process a genuine pleasure—increasing iteration and resulting in more options. Ultimately, the process led us to a graphic abstraction of the opening in a channel catfish skull, reinforcing the project’s skeletal nature. The design was then digitized into precise shop drawings for the construction team’s reference.

The paper model’s utility didn’t end there. It became an artifact of the design process, included in presentations on the project and eventually employed as an engagement tool for a career talk at a local middle school. During the workshop, students cut, folded, and glued their own miniature versions of the pavilion, giving them a hands-on connection to the design process while providing space for them to explore their own personal creativity. To extend this experience to a wider audience, we uploaded the blank model as a downloadable file on our website, inviting anyone to print, build, and customize their own version. This open-source approach, enabled by the medium’s inherent accessibility, transformed the model into an invitation to play, remix, experiment, and imagine what could be.

For us, Murky Waters’ papercraft counterpart became a prototype for exploring the intersection of architectural representation and public imagination. Blurring the boundaries between accepted professionalism and playful engagement, the project opened conversations about new ways to think about space, form, and participation. Cut-Fold-Glue models remind us that architecture doesn’t have to remain locked in the domain of professionals—it can be playful, participatory, and open to all. By embracing the accessibility and creativity these models embody, we can reimagine design as a shared endeavor, where everyone is invited to engage, experiment, and contribute. As architects, embracing this spirit of play can help us create not just buildings and structures, but shared experiences that inspire and unite.



## WHAT IS UNFOLDING?

Fold/Unfold—Visible/Invisible—Hidden/Revealed—Buried/Unearthed

Something must be folded to be unfolded, a preexisting condition that necessitates action.

Designers must be willing to find the folds: looking, thinking, experimenting, living, participating, designing, communicating, questioning, playing.



Above/ Photo courtesy of Jordan Loofs  
Murky Waters, Unearthed Practice, 2024

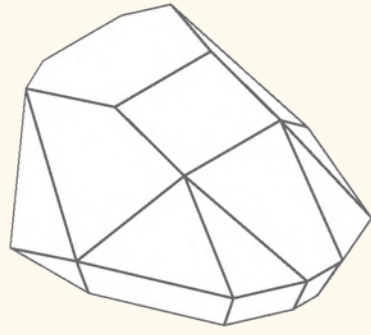
**CHRISTOPHER LOOFS**  
Robert L. Wesley Teaching Fellow  
Gibbs College of Architecture



CUT  
FOLD  
GLUE

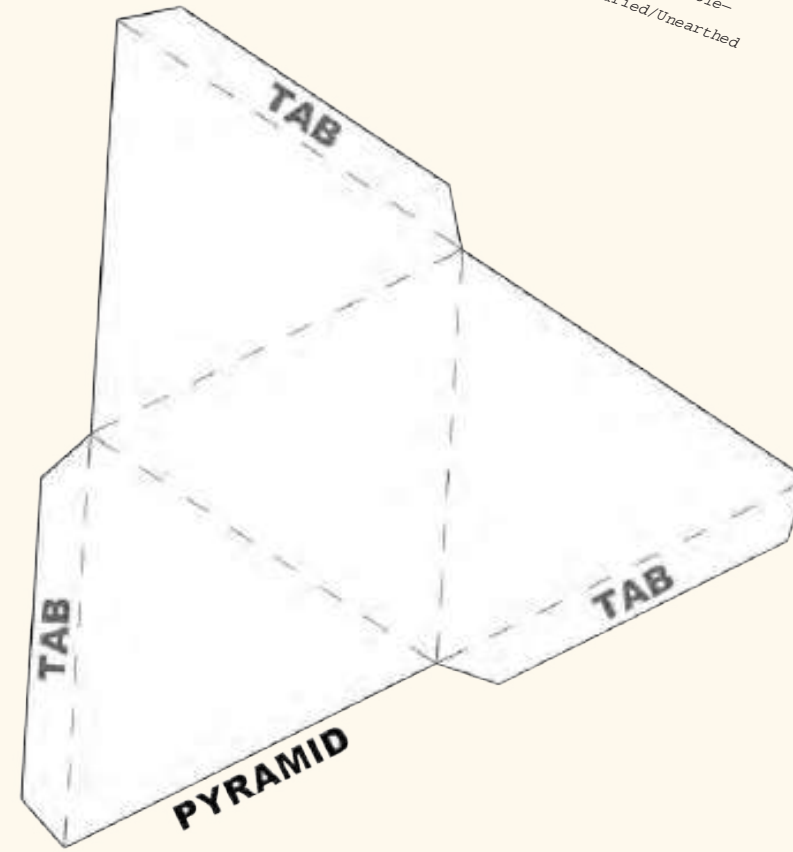
UNFOLD  
SYSTEMS

CUT, FOLD, GLUE

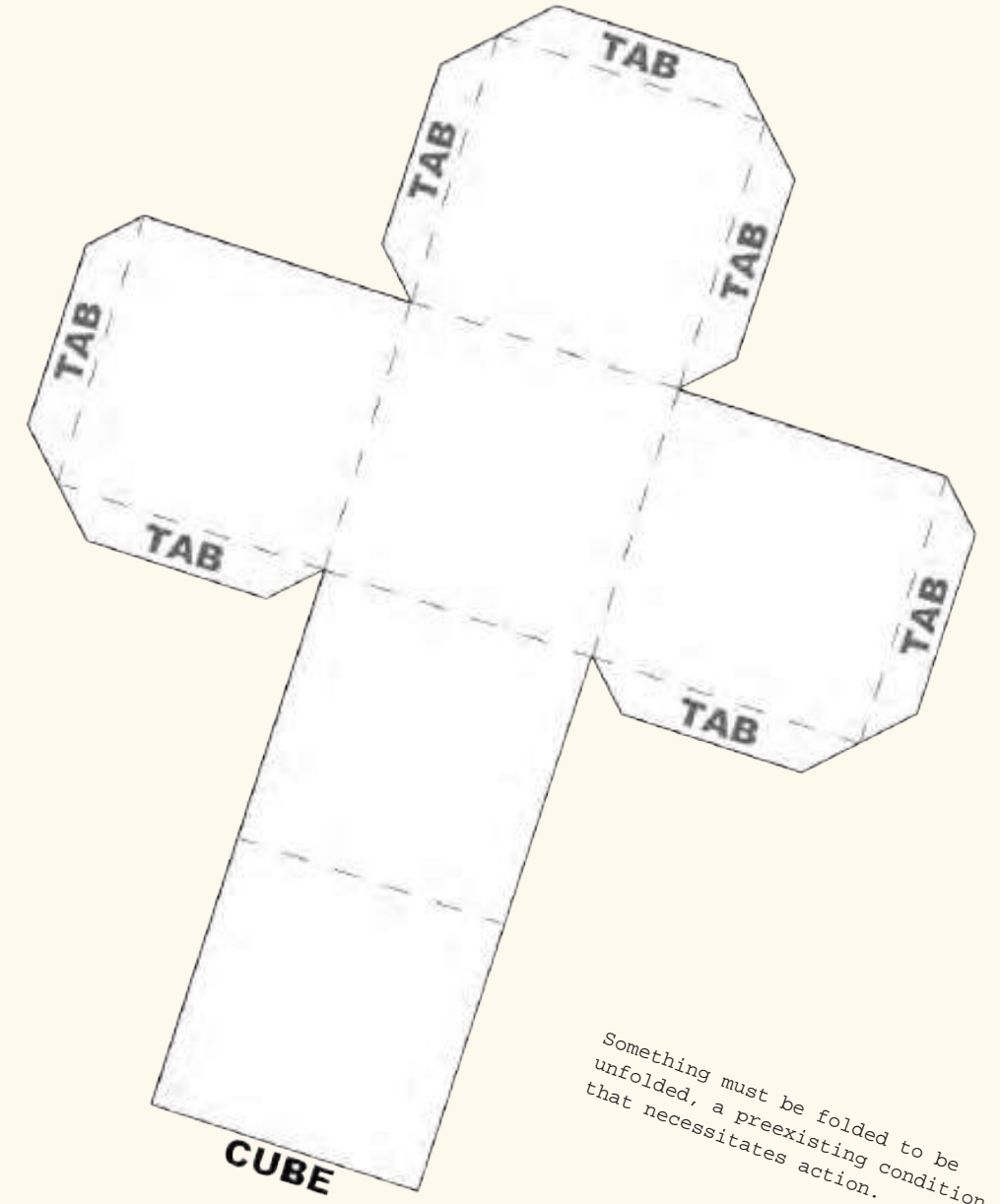


Designers must be willing to find the folds: looking, thinking, experimenting, living, participating, designing, communicating, questioning, playing.

Fold/Unfold-Visible/Invisible-  
Hidden/Revealed-Buried/Unearthed



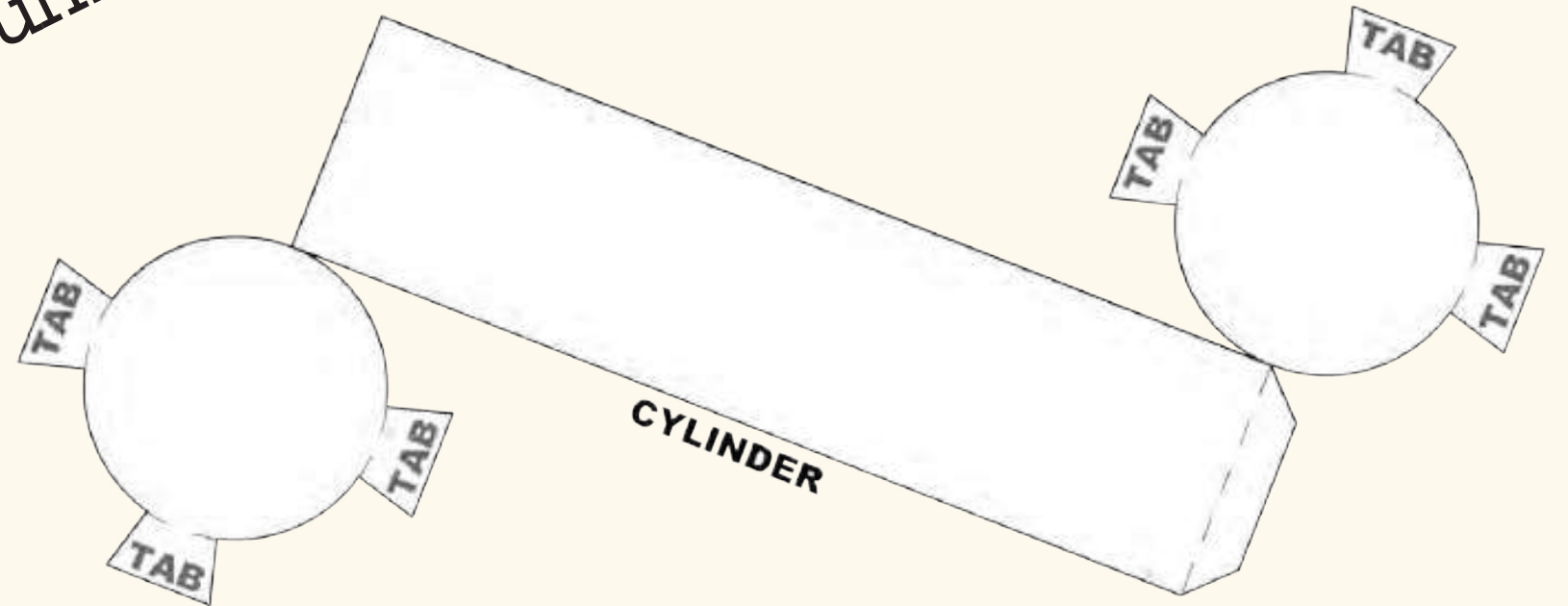
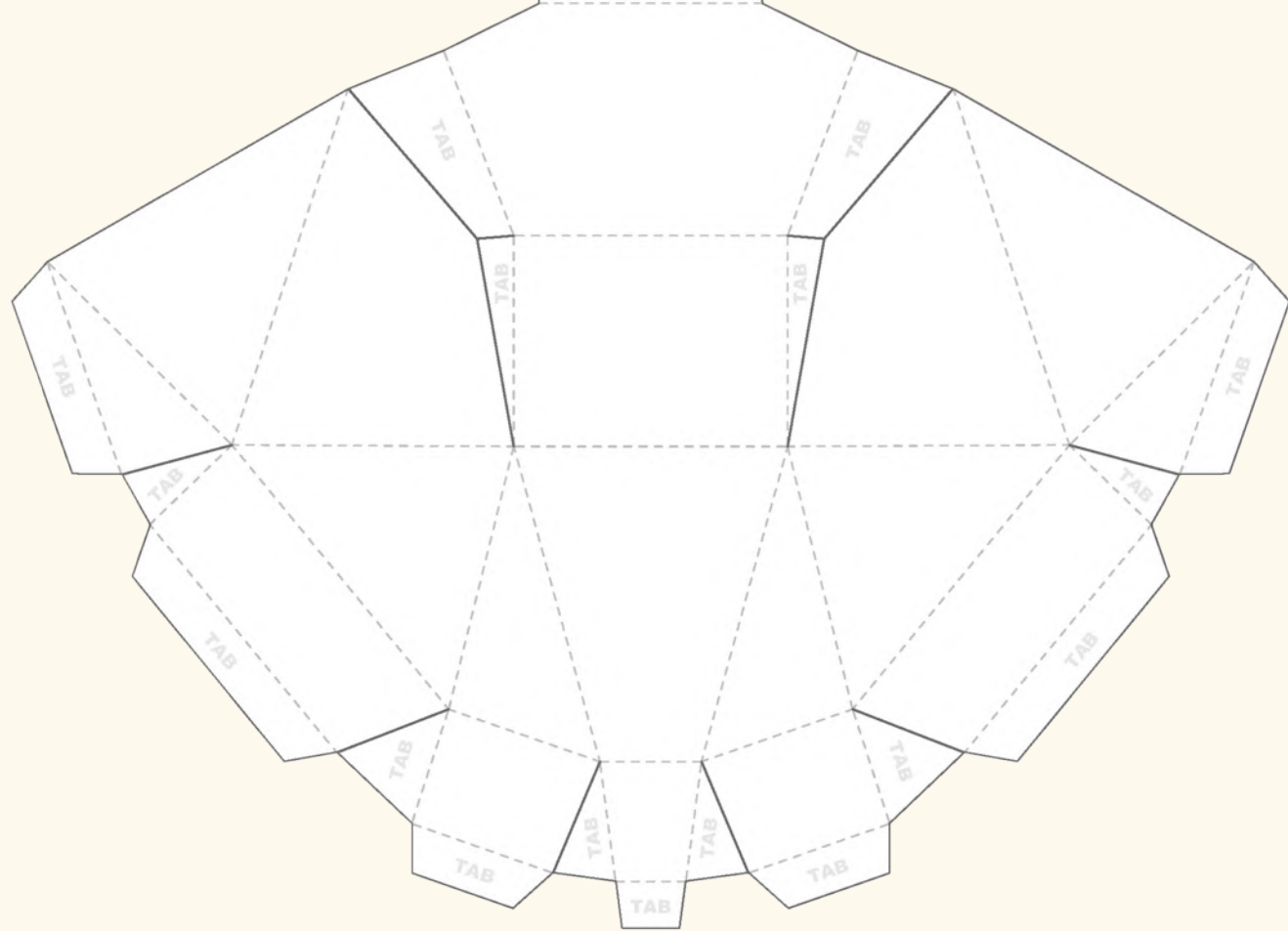
PYRAMID



CUBE

Something must be folded to be unfolded, a preexisting condition that necessitates action.

what is unfolding?



CYLINDER

NOSON



Above / Image by J. O'Rear  
 007 Museum / Austria  
 Designed by Obermoser + Partner

□ **007 MUSEUM**  
 Photographing the 007 museum was as much an adventure as it was a study in patience and precision. Designed to immerse visitors in the world of James Bond, the museum's architecture is both stark and striking buried into the mountain, seamlessly blending into the dramatic alpine landscape.

To capture the essence of this project, I approached it with careful planning, patience, and adaptability for the surrounding environment. The mountain weather became both an obstacle and an asset, demanding endurance as storms rolled in and light conditions shifted unpredictably. Sitting idle in extreme conditions, I waited for the perfect break - a fleeting moment where the architecture and landscape aligned in cinematic perfection.

Framing each shot required a deep understanding of landscape photography and how to emphasize the structure's raw, monolithic form against the rugged peaks. The interplay of shadows, fog, and snow added to the mystique, enhancing the museum's intrigue.

The materials, brutalist concrete and glass, reflected and absorbed the environment, further reinforcing the seamless integration between design and nature.

□ □

**EAGLE + WEST**

Photographing Eagle + West began with five days of immersing myself in the fabric of NYC and its surrounding boroughs, observing how the building interacts with its environment. I walked the streets of Brooklyn, studied the shifting skyline from across the East River, and analyzed how its sharp, staggered form responded to the play of light throughout the day. I noted how reflections danced on its glass facade at sunrise and how its bold silhouette contrasted with the surrounding architecture at dusk.

On the last day, I found myself suspended above Brooklyn in a helicopter and battling freezing temperatures and high winds, I began shooting. Framing the sharp, angular structure against the Manhattan skyline required constant recalibration -

adjusting for altitude, motion, and shifting light. The cold numbed my fingers, but the adrenaline of capturing the shot with perfect light kept me focused. The scouting I had done in the previous days informed how I composed each shot. The contrast of glass and concrete, the dramatic interplay of shadows, and the reflection of the East River all came together in a way that felt raw and cinematic.

As the sun set, warm natural light cascaded over the building, adding depth and contrast against the Manhattan skyline. In the end, no editing was needed. The lighting was perfect, highlighting the relationship between Eagle + West and the surrounding cityscape, its geometric boldness, commanding presence along the Brooklyn waterfront.

Below / Image by J. O'Rear  
 Eagle + West / NYC  
 Designed by OMA NY



# LAYERS

**JASON O'REAR**  
 Architectural  
 Photographer



# storytelling through photography



## INTRO

Photography, like architecture, is built in layers - light, texture, perspective, and intent converging to tell a story. My personal journey to architectural photography follows a similar path: a foundation in architecture from the University of Oklahoma, years spent studying and designing the built environment, and ultimately, a career dedicated to capturing the way design shapes our world.

At OU, my early studies in architecture taught me to see beyond form - to recognize the dialogue between buildings and their surroundings, understand how light shapes a space, and appreciate the intricate layers that make architecture more than just structure. What began in Oklahoma has taken me across continents, photographing projects that push boundaries, foster connection, and challenge conventions. That foundation evolved into a passion for storytelling through photography, capturing the intersections of architecture, culture, and human experience.

From the tallest towers emerging from Tokyo's urban environment, to a monolithic museum set against the vast white expanse of the Alps, my work seeks to capture the layers of meaning embedded in design. Each project is an opportunity to explore architecture's evolving role - how it interacts with its environment, adapts to challenges, and inspires new ways of living.

The images in this collection weave a layered narrative: a story built upon my education, the unfiltered experiences of each shoot, ultimately reflecting the significance of each project.



## AZUBADAI

My journey to photographing Japan's tallest tower began long before I picked up a camera. It started at OU, which led me to Pelli Clarke & Partners and the opportunity to work under César Pelli - one of the most influential architects of our time. Moving to New Haven, CT, I immersed myself in architecture, not just as a profession but as a way of seeing and understanding the built environment. At PCPA, I honed my skills, built lasting relationships, and earned the trust of my peers. Over time, I discovered my true passion in architectural photography—using my background to capture buildings in a way that honors their design and intent.

It was those very connections, first made at OU and strengthened at Pelli's, that led to the opportunity of a lifetime: photographing the tallest tower in Japan. This monumental project was more than just another assignment - it was a full-circle moment, a testament to how the people and experiences at OU shaped my career.

Below / Image by J. O'Rear

Azabudai Tower / Tokyo  
Designed by Pelli Clarke & Partners

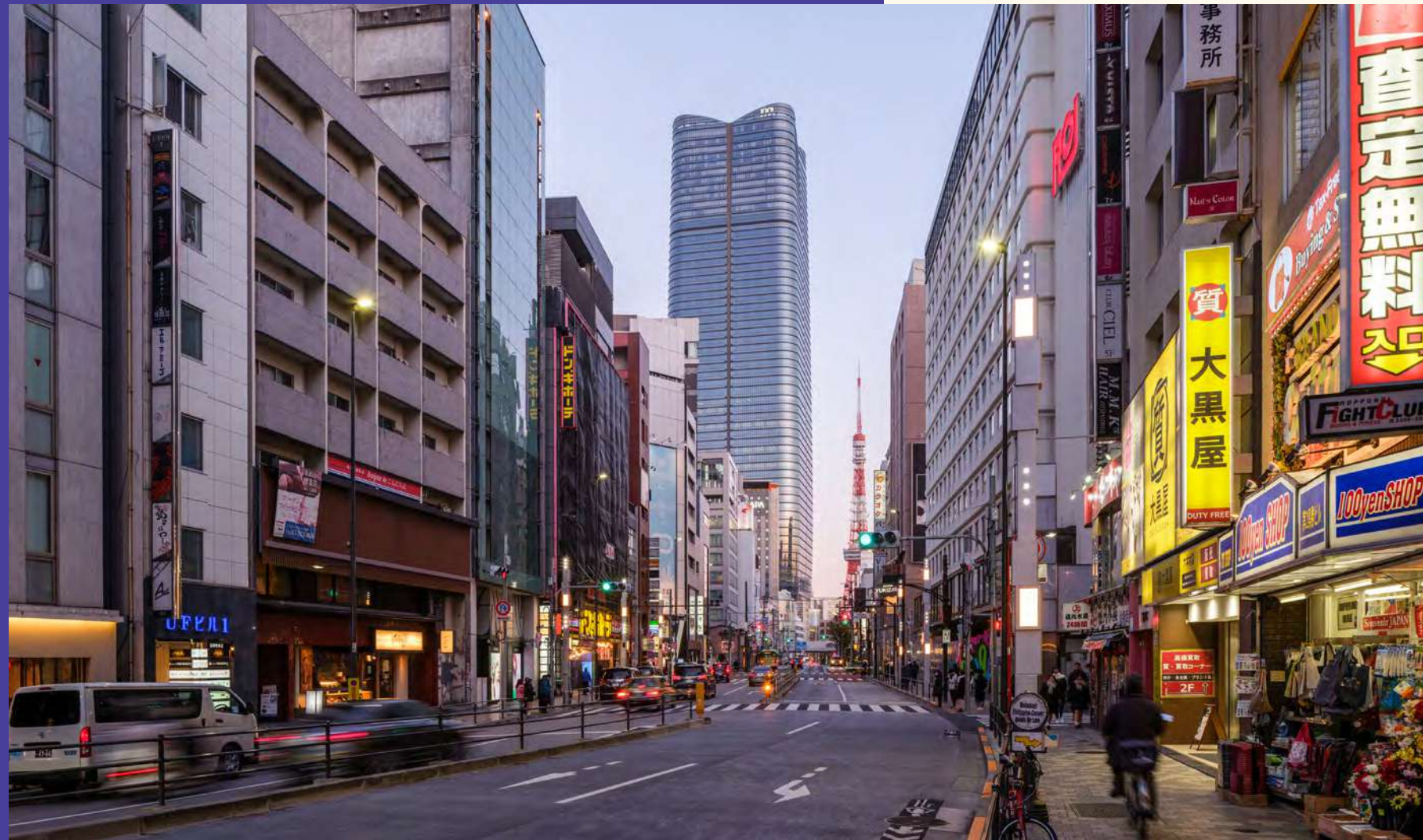


## AIP

Photographing AIP was about more than capturing a structure. It was about conveying the deeper religious undertones embedded in the design. To distill that essence into a single image required more than an understanding of light, form, and composition; it demanded an appreciation for the emotional and spiritual weight the space carries.

Shooting in a cultural and community hub in downtown LA provided both environmental and technical challenges. The duality of sacred space and dense urban context added an unexpected weight to photographing AIP. The stress of the external environment introduced an element that was neither religious nor poetic, yet it heightened my awareness of the space's purpose. The act of capturing light filtering through the pavilion's serene, geometric forms felt even more profound against the city's raw backdrop.

This particular shot was taken at the end of the day. A moment when the space fully revealed its purpose - a quiet, contemplative escape within the city.



Above / Image by J. O'Rear

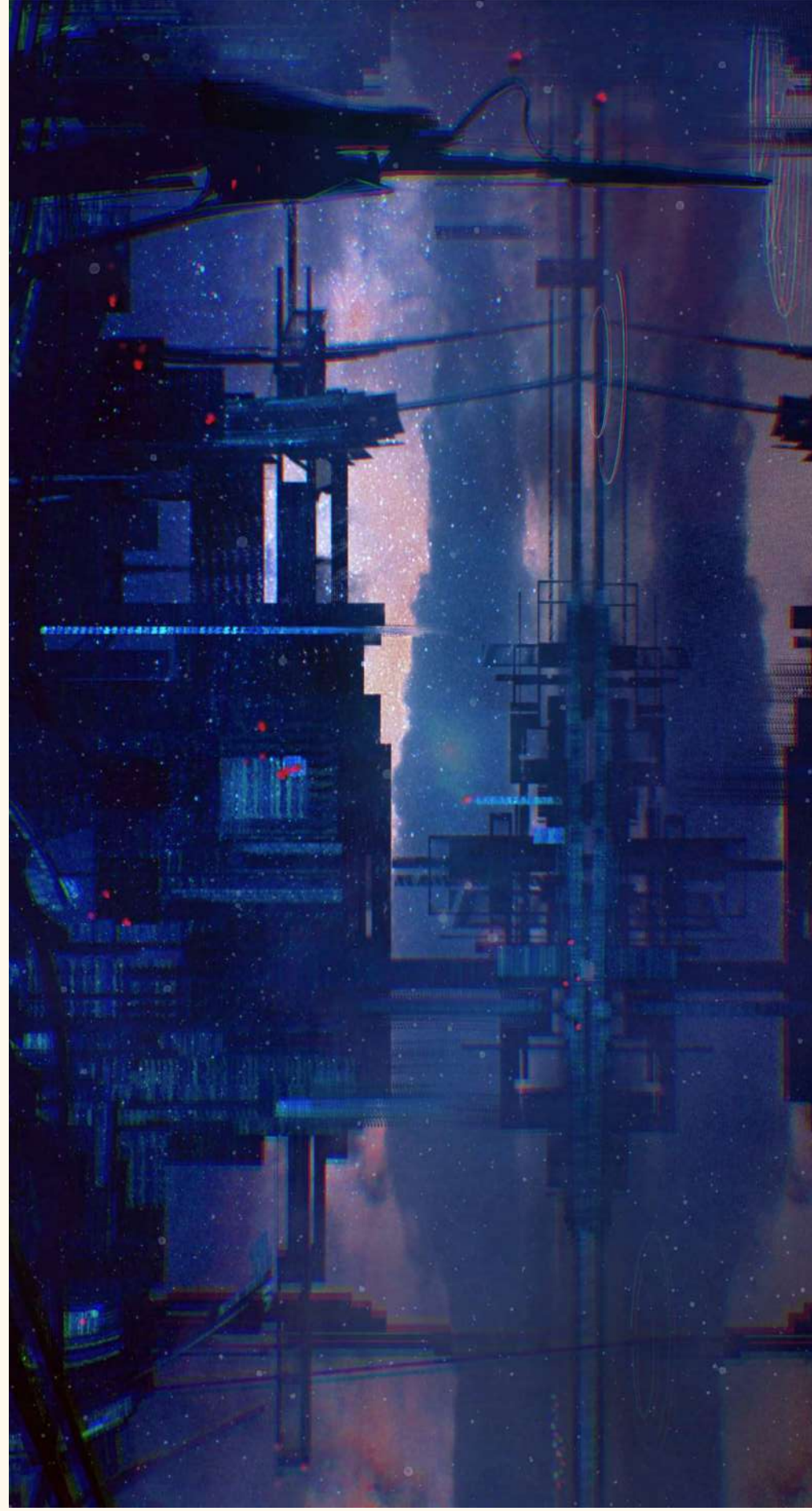
Azabudai Tower / Tokyo  
Designed by OMA NY



Above / Image by C. Crumley

Earth is now a husk. A prison. Punishment for those who refuse to praise the second Moon

Below / Image by C. Crumley



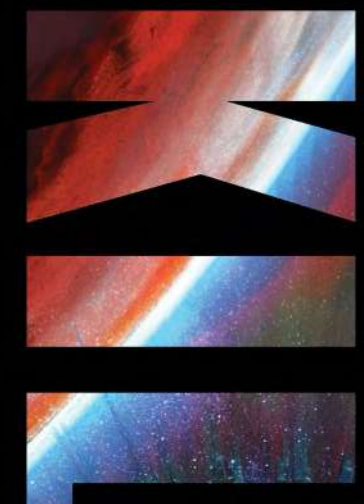
The city is digging for life. Mega rigs travel to earth and plunder for resources

# KILLER MOON

CATHAL CRUMLEY  
Architect +  
Visual Designer



Right / Image by C. Crumley



## » KILLER MOON

A speculative work of architectural design fiction. The story follows Aeryn, the last surviving member of the Ashen tribe.

Aeryn is attempting to flee earth as the planet approaches total destruction. She embarks on a perilous journey to E-2, a sprawling, mechanical city tethered to earth.

E-2 was designed and built by the now disbanded coalition of Architects and sold to humans as the final refuge from impending climate collapse.

As Aeryn traverses the desolate remains of Earth, she quickly begins to uncover the mysteries behind the planets demise and the true origin of E-2...

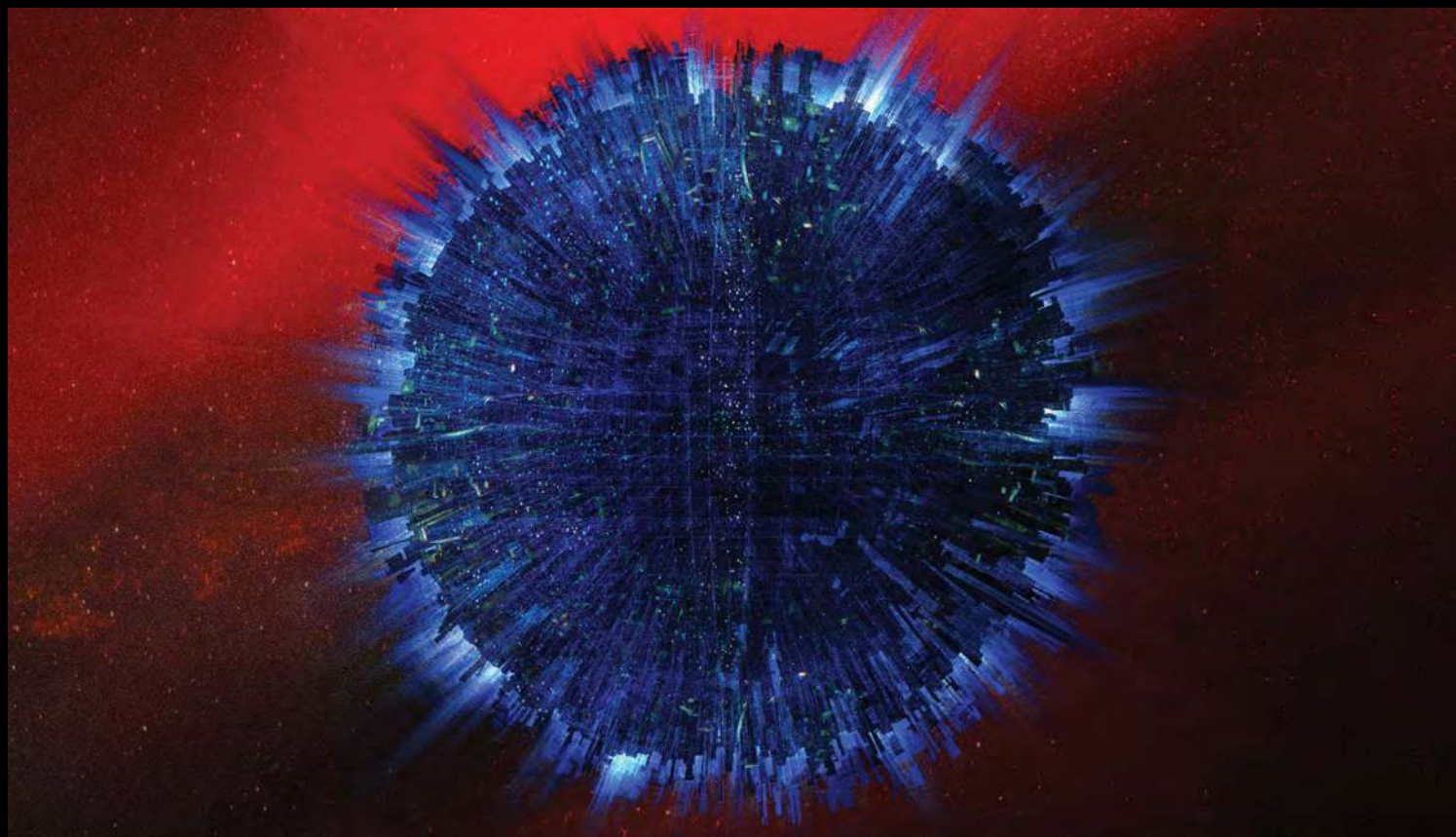
Killer Moon explores the theme of "UNFOLD" through design fiction and uses this fiction to investigate the ethical and moral pitfalls of attempting to solve the greatest problem of our time, climate change.

Right / Image by C. Crumley

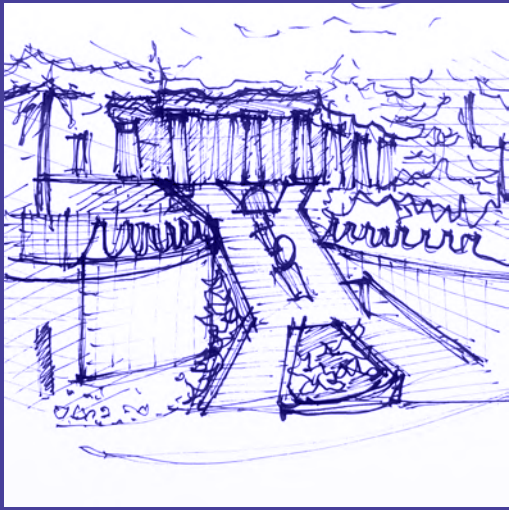


Under the moon I saw you. So soon you'll take me

Right / Image by C. Crumley



The Killing Moon will come too soon

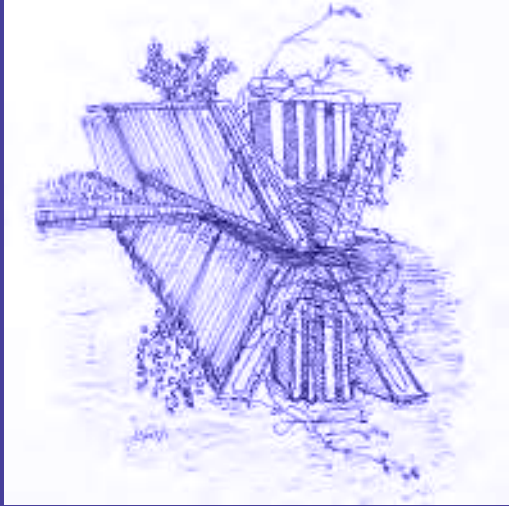
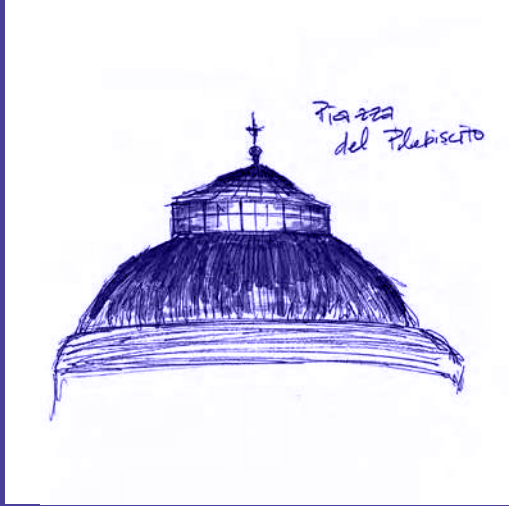
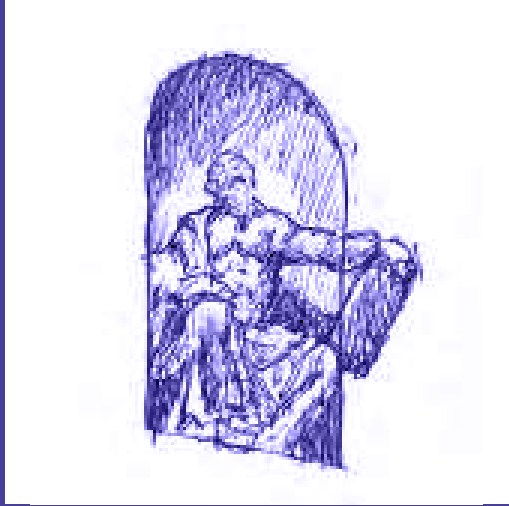


**STUDENTS**

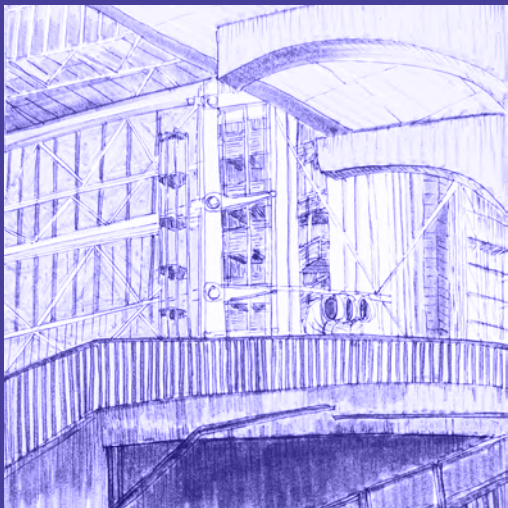
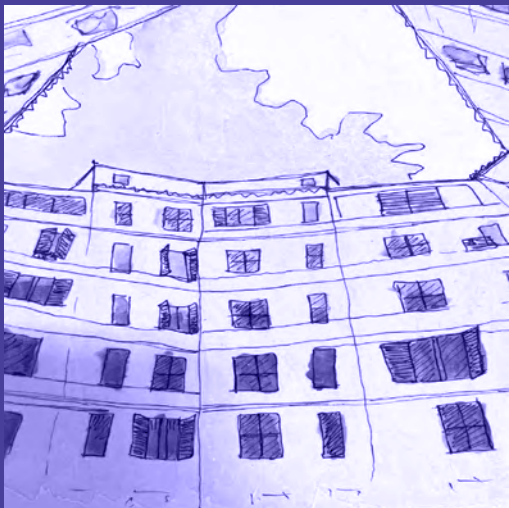
- Claire Baker
- Chloe Bys
- Ellie Burdette
- Leo Campbell
- Dawson Danner
- Quynh Do
- Shane Erickson
- Cassady Green
- Carson Holmes
- Ben Jawad
- Fadi Kandalajt
- Sean Kueny
- Mary Lieu
- Hana Long
- Trey London
- Madelyn Massae
- Sophia Meagher
- Greyson Miller
- Ben Nishikawa
- Janvi Patel
- Phillip Schmidt
- Braden Shipman
- Jackson Taylor
- Jose Tejada
- Emma Thurston

**INSTRUCTORS**

- Beatrice Bruscoli, American Initiatives Abroad (AIA)
- Dayton Clark, University of Oklahoma (OU)
- Claudia Cremasco, AIA
- Rene Peralta, OU
- Scott Schlimgen, AIA



**OU ARCHITECTURE 3RD YEAR**  
 Class of 2026  
 Gibbs College of Architecture



# STUDY ABROAD 2024

»» STUDY ABROAD 2024

STUDIO ALL'ESTERO 2024

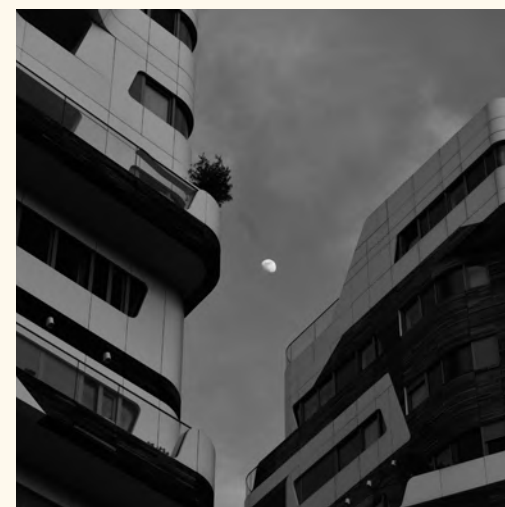
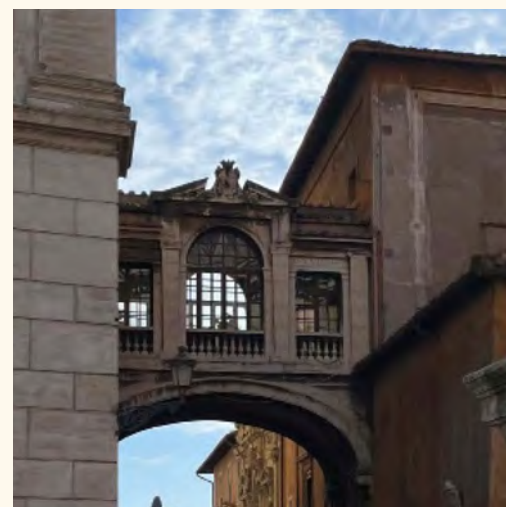
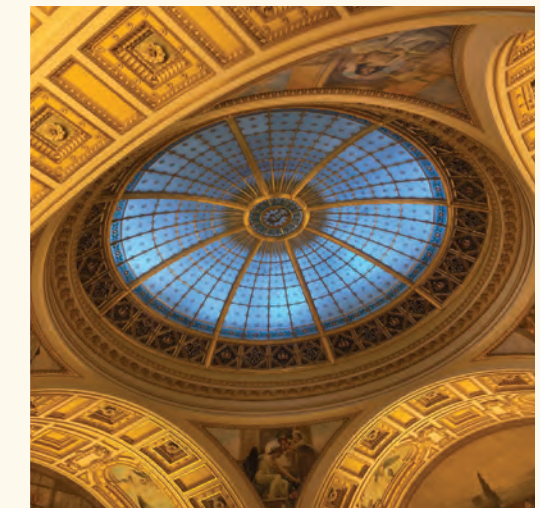
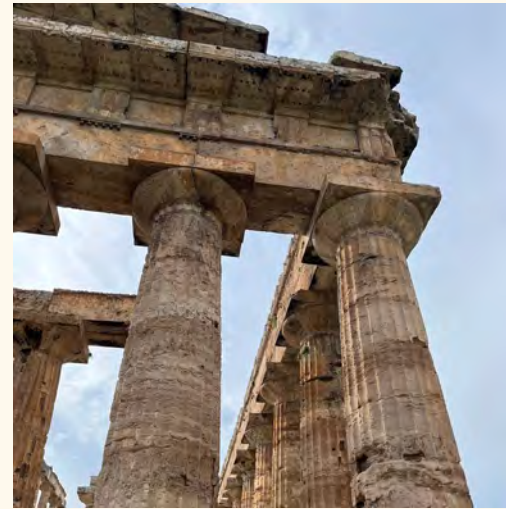
In Rome, students are able to unfold the premises of what architecture and design is today. A city with never-ending storytelling, layers, and history can provide students with a picture which many past architects and artists have analyzed and learned from. Places such architects as Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn, and Robert Venturi have explored and derived their most influential theories and ideas, profoundly inspiring the design world. Through a lot of the same sketching and photographing techniques these architects have utilized, students are encouraged to derive their own unique ideas and reflect on the rest of the world and its architecture that will become.

A Roma, gli studenti hanno l'opportunità di esplorare i fondamenti di ciò che l'architettura e il design rappresentano oggi. Una città con racconti senza fine, strati e storia, che offre agli studenti un quadro da cui molti architetti e artisti del passato hanno analizzato e imparato. Luoghi che architetti come Le Corbusier, Louis Kahn e Robert Venturi hanno esplorato e da cui hanno derivato le loro teorie e idee più influenti, ispirando profondamente il mondo del design. Attraverso molte delle stesse tecniche di disegno e fotografia utilizzate da questi architetti, gli studenti sono incoraggiati a derivare le proprie idee uniche e riflettere sul resto del mondo e sull'architettura che verrà.

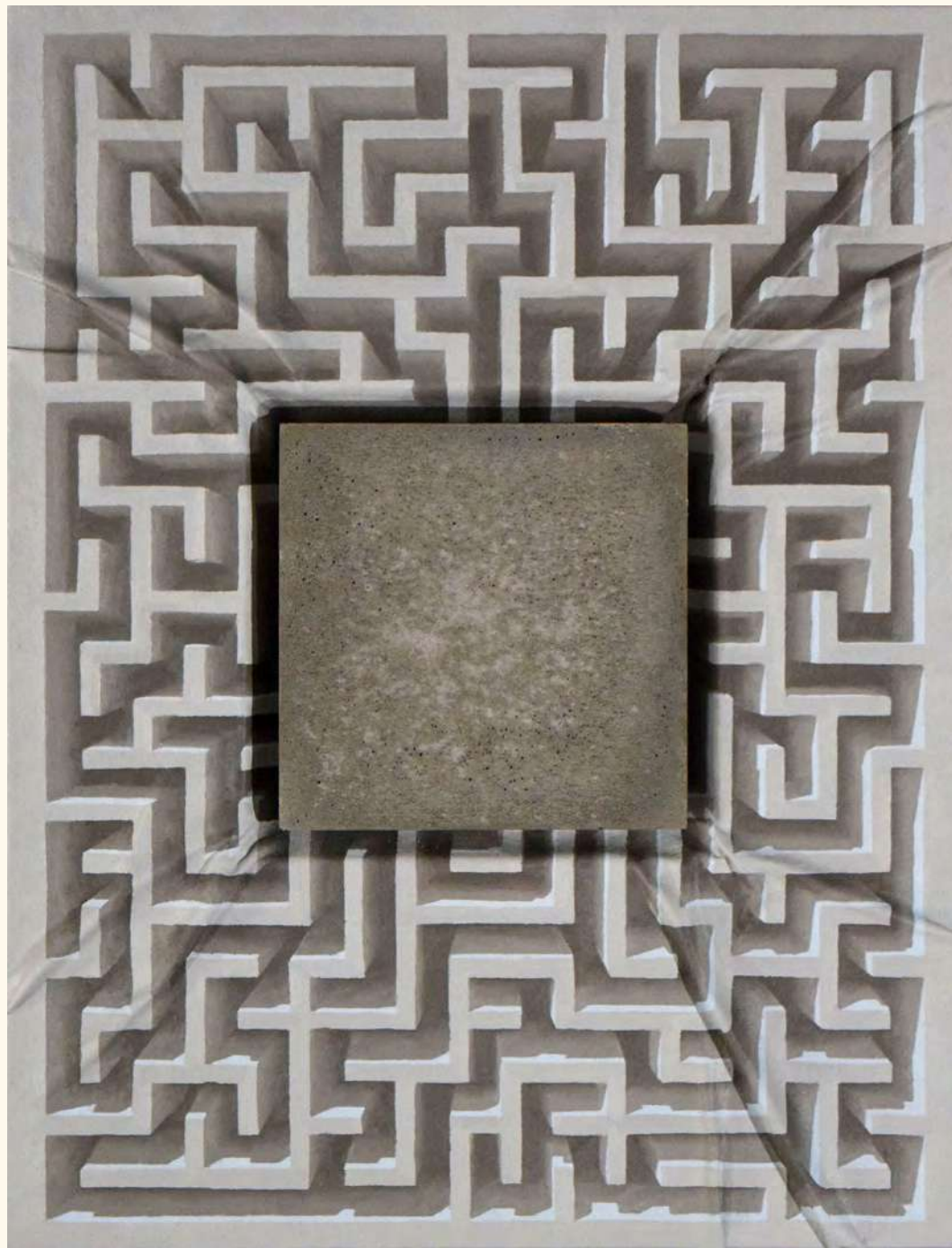
Students chose to credit their work collectively, rather than individually, in a holistic effort to represent their experiences throughout their study abroad journey

Gli studenti hanno scelto di attribuire collettivamente il merito del loro lavoro, piuttosto che individualmente, in uno sforzo olistico per rappresentare le loro esperienze durante il percorso di studio all'estero.

# STUDIO ALL'ESTERO 2024



# FOLDS



Above / Image by D. Clark  
"Labyrinth Impression"



Above / Image by D. Clark  
"We Are Talking Past Each Other"

□  
Labyrinths are really rather plain: effectively a singular, lengthy corridor connecting two points. By coiling the passage about one of these points, an inside and an outside are established separated by a complex of layered halls. This folding operation results in a plan which often demonstrates some compositional intention that is at odds with the labyrinth's promised experience of disorientation. In this way, while labyrinths are packing a great deal of distance into a minimum of space they are also expanding the space between their meaning and their representation.

□  
It is the nature of fabrics to index the forces acting on them with a maze of raised and sunken lines along their surface. This new topography has the capacity to amplify the depth of a painting's surface and engage with the overall image in unique ways. Assemblage art rejects the unified surface of the painting altogether and expands the painter's pallet beyond crushed minerals and oil. Concrete, similarly an aggregate suspended in a cement medium, abstracts the painter's medium as well as the labyrinth by virtue of being a recognizable building material. Like fabric, it indexes the forces acting upon it, briefly deriving its initial form as a fluid and then weathering as a solid.

Beneath / Image by D. Clark  
"I am Lying to You"



»» □  
Paintings, too, can depict unfathomable depths that are only millimeters deep. The shallowness of a painting's surface is the site for entire movements of art, whether by acknowledging it, denying it, or subverting it. But even when the materials are celebrated over the image they construct, the stretched canvas is often taken for granted. Its stretched weave may feature prominently in the painting, but this rigid unfolding only explores one limited dimension of what a fabric substrate is capable of.

**DAYTON W. CLARK**  
Lecturer  
Gibbs College of Architecture



# FOLDABLE STRUCTURES

**JOSEPH CHOMA**  
 Director of Architecture  
 Florida Atlantic University



# & MATERIALS

» □

## FOLDING STRUCTURE AND MATERIALS

Folding is a systematic method that transforms planar material into three-dimensional geometries with structural depth. Through precise calibration, flexible folded hinges can become rigid – capable of withstanding structural loads. Depending on the organization of folds, structures can be flat-packed for ease of transport. Folding can also provide the potential to reduce production costs associated with the complexity of manufacturing parts which have Gaussian curvature. By beginning with a simple flat plane and then folding it, there is the possibility to fabricate geometries which are globally doubly curved but locally developable. Additionally, there are numerous variations possible with one systematic method. This research seeks to move beyond origami – the art of folding paper – by embracing material and structural constraints. Foldable structures and materials is one exciting trajectory towards building a more sustainable future.

Left/ Image by Joseph Choma

From *Paper Folding to Foldable Composite Structures for Architectural Applications*



□

## JOSEPH CHOMA

Joseph Choma is the Director of the School of Architecture and Professor of Architecture at Florida Atlantic University. Previously, he taught at The Cooper Union, MIT, and Clemson University. He was the 2019-20 NCCR Digital Fabrication Researcher in ReWsidence at the ETH Zurich and received awards from the AIA, ACMA, and ACADIA – including the 2023 ACADIA Innovative Research Award of Excellence. His material explorations have been noted by CompositesWorld Magazine as “spearheading research into the use of foldable composites.” He is the inventor of Foldable Composite Structures – U.S. Patent Number 10,994,468. Additionally, he is the author of three books, *Morphing: A Guide to Mathematical Transformations for Architects and Designers* (2015), *Études for Architects* (2018) and *The Philosophy of Dumbness* (2020). Joseph completed graduate studies in design and computation at MIT and completed his PhD in Architecture at the University of Cambridge, where he was a Cambridge International Scholar.

Right/ Image by Joseph Choma

From *Paper Folding to Foldable Composite Structures for Architectural Applications*



**JANUS - MIXED USE PROJECT, ALBINA NEIGHBORHOOD, PORTLAND, OREGON**

The historically African American, Albina neighborhood in Portland, Oregon, after years of broken promises and protest, needed to right the wrongs of the past and create a new path forward to reclaiming and revitalizing this once lively community with a mixed use hub. Drawing inspiration from two symbolic elements - the iconic Hill Block cupola, a staple in the Albina neighborhood, representing the African-American community in Portland, and the city's symbol, "City of Roses." These intricate elements not only pay homage to the community's rich history but also symbolize growth, transformation, and a reunification of the city and the black community.

**Below/** Collage by T. London  
LANTERN - Horticultural Center in Norman, OK



**Below/** Collage by T. London  
PHAROS - Residential Tower for the Vickery Meadows Neighborhood of Dallas, TX



**Above/** Collage by T. London  
JANUS - Mixed Use Project in the Albina Neighborhood of Portland, OR



**LANTERN - HORTICULTURAL CENTER; DOWNTOWN NORMAN, OKLAHOMA**

Taking inspiration from the monumental and brutalist forms of the Metro stations from my hometown in Washington D.C., and the organic, curvature forms needed for an Urban Farming Center, I wanted to encapsulate the vibrant and exciting feel of the interior expected in a design like this one. This project, located in Downtown Norman, creates a lively contrast for a dead part of town, and sets a precedent for future development, to bring more activity to help the rest of Norman grow from the tired, abandoned buildings that currently make up its fabric.

**PHAROS - RESIDENTIAL TOWER; VICKERY MEADOWS, DALLAS, TX**

For a residential tower in the Vickery Meadows neighborhood in Dallas, Texas; along with a mass timber, passive design, and sustainable techniques requirement in my studio, the design could represent something monumental for our time. Like the other buildings seen in the collage like the Nakagin Capsule Tower (Tokyo, Japan), Marina City (Chicago, U.S.A.), and Kaktus Tower (Copenhagen, Denmark), they reflected what people valued in architecture at the time and/or broke the boundaries of what architecture could be, and set precedents for many other projects like them down the road. Along with Dallas's and Texas's huge emphasis on the star and arch motifs around the city's culture and famous architecture, the project resembles a new, collaborative architectural identity for Dallas, and a new time and values in architecture as a whole; such as implementing alternative materials and smart strategies related to solar/ water collection, ventilative design, lowering carbon emissions and costs, and improving the quality and efficiency of our buildings, beautifully.

**CON-TEXT**  
process through collage

TREY LONDON  
Undergraduate  
Architecture Student



**CAPTURING**



**Left/** Collage by Trey London  
 PONTE - Masterplan of Ex Mattatoio



## INTRODUCTION

Through my design process, I like to start with a thorough analysis of the environmental and cultural aspects of the site location and surroundings. From there, I pull unique motifs, themes, and considerations that set guidelines for my design, ensuring it is thematically and logically connected to the region. Integrating the project's program, requirements, and stakeholder input, I am able to visualize concepts, shapes, precedent, and other forms of ideas and media to

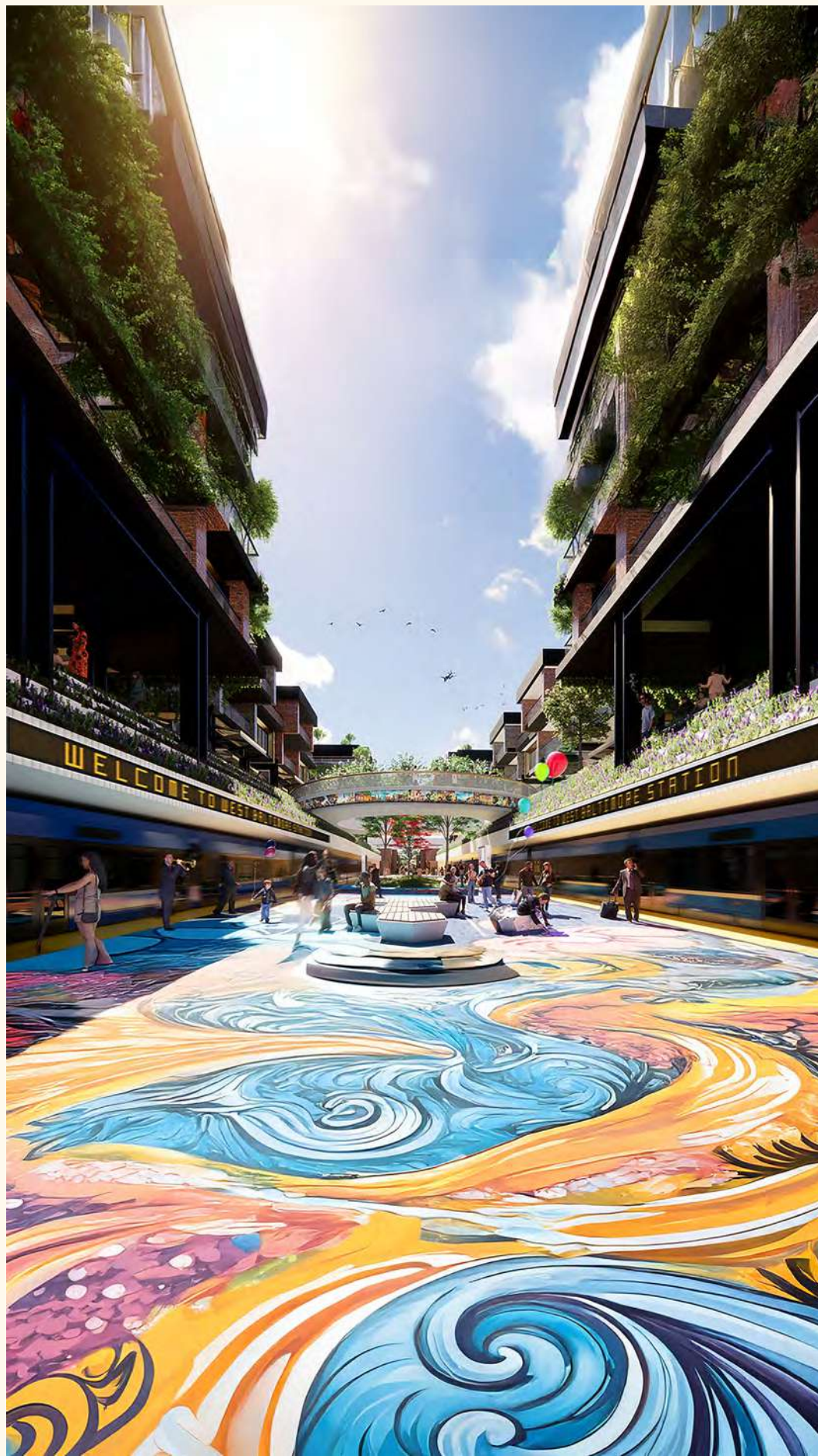
collect and crop into the collages, informing the final design. Collages are a superior way for me to envision so many of these aspects at once. Rather than making up a project in whole cloth, the collage making process combines the preliminary work of diving into precedent, environmental analysis, contextual elements, and so much more, jumpstarting a much more deep understanding and introduction to the design process.



## PONTE - MASTERPLAN OF EX MATTATIO; ROME, ITALY

Using our group's mixed-use, revitalization project of the Ex Mattatoio (Slaughterhouse) in the outskirts of Rome's city center, we wanted to picture the whimsical vision surrounding our proposal. Connected with the site's and city's context, history, and ideals, the project sets a new way forward with adapting the old infrastructure and housing issues

in Rome. Revitalizing the abandoned, dilapidated buildings and huge voids that inhabit the site currently, with various community programs and housing, integrating the much needed green space, and grafting them together with ponticelli (little bridges), all creating a nice environment for the various stakeholders to live cohesively.



**Above/** Render by Roy Nitzan  
 Render of The Canyon showcasing the integration of residential blocks with the open-air transit station

**Top Right/** Render by Roy Nitzan  
 Street-level render of a residential block featuring communal playgrounds, local shops, and public nooks that activate the urban edge



**Below/** Picture by the NOMAS Team  
 Image of the team during the conceptual phase

□  
**SEAM; LIVE, WORK, PLAY**

SEAM embodies the ethos of Unfold by rethinking West Baltimore's fractured landscape and revealing its untapped potential. It deconstructs the historic barriers created by the proposed I-40 highway corridor between Franklin and Mulberry streets, transforming this once-divisive infrastructure into a connective thread. The new Red Line, placed below grade, becomes an artery of renewal, linking neighborhoods and fostering cultural and economic vibrancy. The Hive, a modular live-work-play housing model inspired by Baltimore's row houses, promotes generational wealth and community growth, offering adaptable spaces that evolve with the needs of families and businesses.

SEAM also honors the West Baltimore's rich cultural heritage through the adaptive reuse of the historic American Ice Company, creating a hub for small businesses, artist studios, and cultural gatherings that reflect the identity and aspirations of the community. By integrating sustainability, collaboration, and inclusivity, SEAM unfolds a future where the voices and stories of West Baltimore drive thoughtful progress, transforming it into a resilient, thriving, and interconnected urban tapestry.

**Back, Top/** Diagrams by Hishaam Ramoly  
 "The Red Line restitches the urban fabric"

**Back, Middle/** Diagram by Roy Nitzan + Grace Hill  
 Exploded Axonometric of Typical Residential Block and Connection to the transit line

**Back, Bottom/** Render by Roy Nitzan  
 A community park at The Hill shared landscape of recreation, gathering, and urban restoration.

**STUDENTS**

- Sasha Alexander, Undergraduate Architecture Student (UAS)
- Terry Chishimba, UAS
- Eryne Degeorge, UAS
- Ashley Gonzalez, Graduate Architecture Student (GAS)
- Grace Hill, GAS
- Whit Hull, GAS
- Seaira Hull
- Charles Kim, UAS
- Daniel Kyabayinze, UAS
- Drew Ngo, UAS
- Roy Nitzan, GAS
- Hishaam Ramoly, GAS
- Albert Rogers, UAS

**INSTRUCTORS**

- Shooka Motamedi, Lecturer
- Rene Peralta, Lecturer

**NOMAS**  
 2024 Barbara G. Laurie  
 Student Design Competition

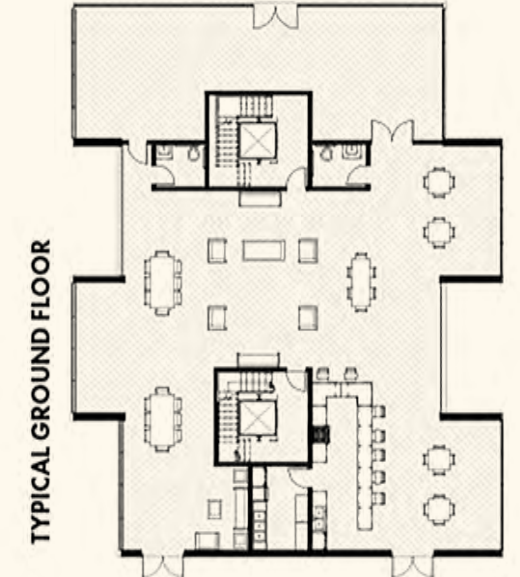
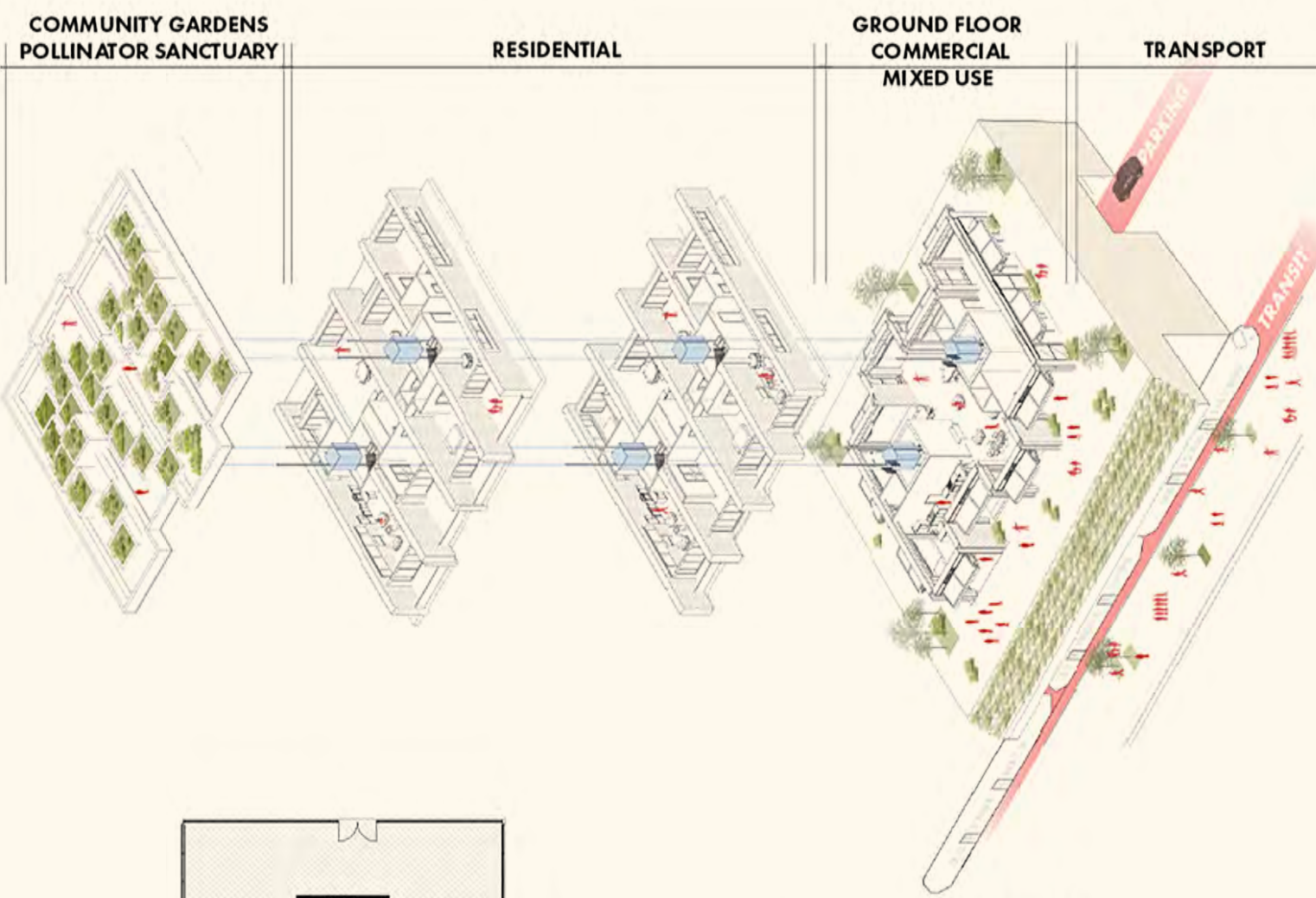
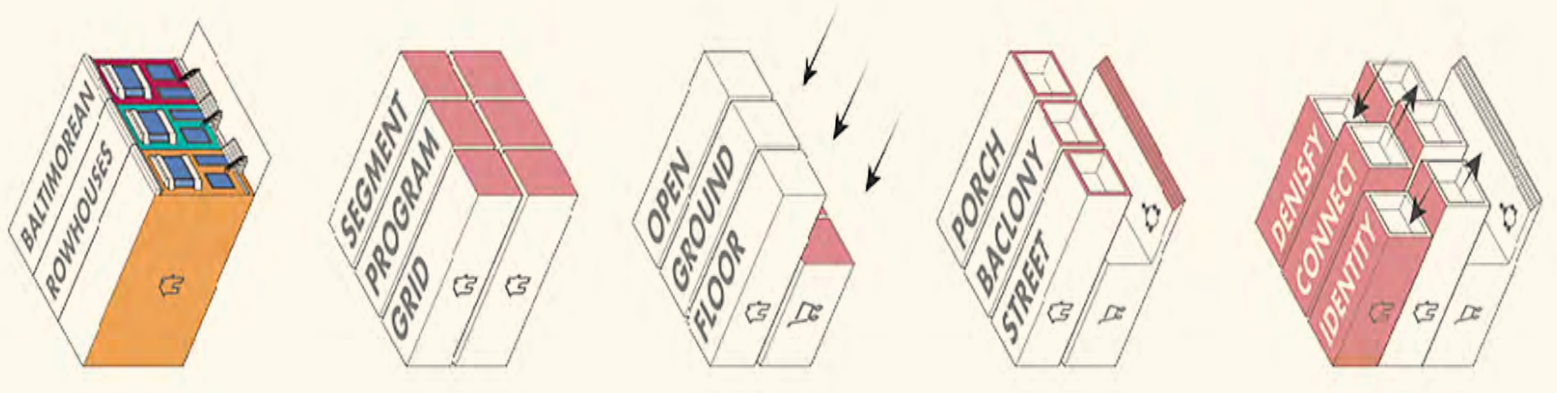
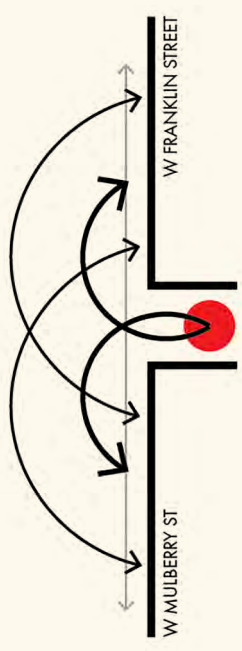


**SEAM**

UNFOLD  
 SYSTEMS



W MULBERRY ST  
 HIGHWAY TO NO WHERE  
 W FRANKLIN STREET





Always, forever, and never will we be apart from the truth that is being written on our hearts.

There is little like love that pulls us out of the depths of hopeless despair; yet, that is the story that is being penned.

Life is wrought with change. For me, this season has been akin to a long, harsh winter. The snowpack had socked in around my heart, and my inner spark felt like it was scraping by on its last few coals.

Yet, somehow, even in the middle of what felt like a narrow valley, a love like no other reminded me of the mysterious likeness of a quiet flame called hope.

In the process of the hurting, the breaking, the scattering of the pieces, the picking up, and the healing, little butterflies began to come out of their cocoons.

Art, music, and poetry began to mirror the change I was feeling on the inside, though I often didn't see the seeds that were being planted.

It was hope.

In every step along the path of life, I believe we are being authored a certain metamorphosis to that which is greater, freer, and more lovely.

As spring begins to come in every season, what a beautiful thing it is to watch the little caterpillars in our stories grow into beautiful butterflies.

So, in the art, in the song, and in the writing, my hope is now the unfolding of your hope for a brighter day up ahead.

Above / Art by M. Lippert

"Metamorphosis" - Acrylic on Canvas  
Crawford, CO.

Ink Sketches  
Norman, OK.

the unfolding  
symphony of  
stories written  
on our lives

**MADISON LIPPERT**  
OU Undergraduate  
Engineering Student



SONGS  
OF  
HOPE

UNFOLD  
SYSTEMS



pain and beauty of growth in new seasons

an unwavering what we've buried

letting  
down  
spine  
to let

open  
around  
new in  
what is  
ours to  
begin

III  
gallies  
of  
stopped

broken  
of  
of  
IV  
hands  
turn up  
cocoon  
we fly



falling leaves  
and barren trees

stripped in the  
winter

broken paths  
and subtle laughs

of dreams tucked  
away

hands in the dirt  
we are digging to  
turn up a new seed

there's snow in  
the springtime  
but sprouts in  
the ashes on the  
ground

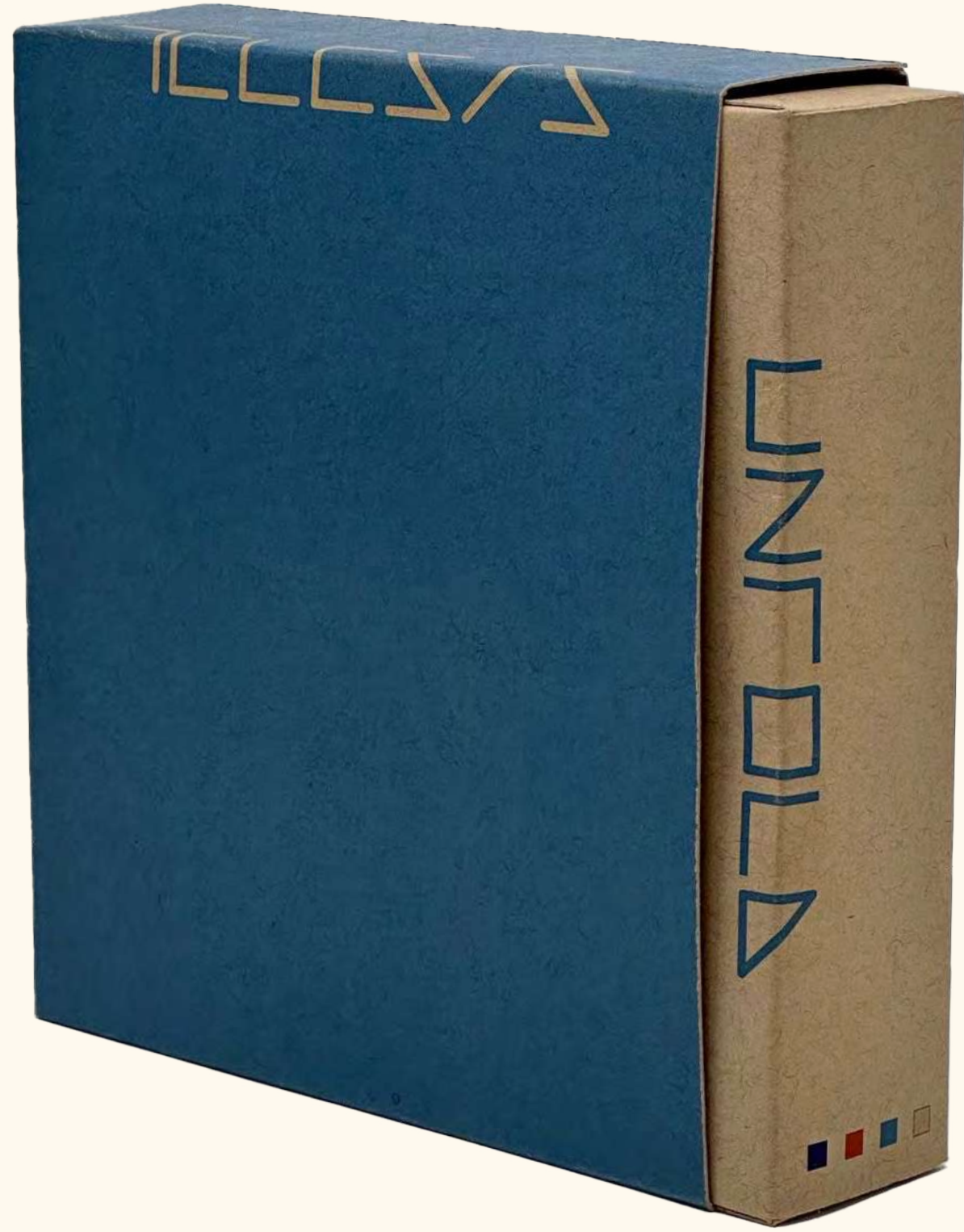
cocoon cracking open and

we fly

Above/ Diagrammatic Collage by M. Lippert  
Songs of Hope Concept Map  
Norman, OK.

Above/ Visual Song by M. Lippert  
A Song of Hope  
Norman, OK.

Above/ A Song of Hope by M. Lippert  
Poetry to the Notes  
Norman, OK.



**PHOTO CREDITS**

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# UNFOLD PRINTED VOLUME

# UNFOLD PRINTED VOLUME

UNFOLD  
PRINTED  
VOLUME

Exterior cover box



Folded posters showing categories



Call for submissions, folded



Interior cover box + table of contents



Sample of different poster categories



Call for submissions, unfolded



UNION