

These images, photographed between 11/3 and 11/9, document the seven day durational performance *Commitment of Rituals* by The Kouple (Shengyu Cai (O-Sheng) and Yiru Wu) (Ru).

**EDITORIAL STATEMENT**  
Alex Kim & Yanbo Li

*Building was a verb before it was a noun.* Just as an enduring love is constructed day in and day out through a constant process of negotiation, attention, and effort, so too is a building made and remade day by day, year by year, through routine acts of *maintenance*—washing, editing, repainting, repairing, updating, replacing, weeding, watering, guarding, sorting, trash removing. Taken together, these acts constitute a co-authorship of space in the form of care. These are the rituals through which we become *committed* to kin and community.

The spatial practice of *note* for this issue is less architecture as we often know it than it is a *keeping of (common) grounds*. Moving beyond the commitment required of an architect to see a project to its 'completion,' what kind of commitment does it take to be its groundskeeper? Can we think of architecture not as the production of individual building objects, but as participation in the maintenance of collective socio-ecological processes? How might such a shift in thinking register in our working methods? What forms of care and collectivity are overlooked but necessary to sustain our wellbeing amidst the many challenging, exhausting circumstances of contemporary life and labor?

The writings, conversations, and images collected in this issue of *Paprika!* turn toward the myriad practices of individual and communal commitment that many of us engage in everyday—from gardening, to dreaming, to organizing, to repairing. These rituals of maintenance that we perform and repeat are acts of *insistence*—an insistence of our belonging to land, to place, to community.

Paprika!  
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**MAINTENANCE**

**AFTER THEY LEFT: DEALING WITH MODERNISM TODAY**  
**Aniruddh Sharan**

Photographs played a critical role in shaping the utopian image of Modernism—embracing the aesthetic of bold geometry standing alone in contrast to the context in which it sits. This photo essay however attempts to shift the lens from the buildings to the people taking care of these buildings.



It has been half a century or more since these buildings were constructed with the authorial ambition of creating an 'island'. However, they are aging today, both physically in terms of their corroding structures and ideologically of the socio-cultural movement they once represented.



Maintaining them needs to be driven with the goal of not preserving them as just design objects but in recognition of the work of the numerous people who were involved in shaping them. We need to break the barrier between the creators of the buildings and their custodians, and celebrate acts of repair as a form of care and design in themselves.

**TO HARVEST A RADISH: A CONVERSATION WITH NADINE HORTON**  
**Julia Edwards**

To harvest a radish, gently tug at the base of its leaves, being careful to loosen its roots without breaking them. Kneeling by the raised beds that afternoon, our hands searched along the rows for their red tops. The radishes ready for harvest went in the shared basket for the gardeners to take home, but if a radish was not ready, and you managed to protect its roots, we put it back in the soil to keep growing. It takes time to grow. This semester, I have spent my Saturday afternoons harvesting plants alongside the other gardeners at the Goffe Street Army Community Garden. We gather, work on the plants for a few hours, and share a meal as a weekly ritual. Many of us are transplants to New Haven, and perhaps we are searching for our own rootedness through gardening. Beginning a routine is often uncomfortable, but soon the body knows what to do. Nadine Horton is been gardening there for eight years, after she founded it with support from the New Haven Land Trust, and tends to the plants almost every day. There are some things she has learned.

Julia: What has surprised you about working in the community garden?

Nadine: Coming into this with no growing experience, and not knowing anything more about vegetables other than that they were in the store, it was very interesting to see how important it is to be in the right conditions. I always thought that you needed a lot of space to grow. I thought of growing as like on a farm, because my dad grew up on a farm in North Carolina. It was a working farm and my grandma ran it. But growing in an inner city, what I've learned is you don't need a lot of space. You do need access to water, sunlight, good seedlings, good plants, and basically that's it. And the patience and the persistence to grow, that's really all you need.

In terms of growing in an inner city environment—actually anywhere, but particularly in inner city—we had to depend on the city for the water, which we're very grateful for, but when we didn't have the water for three weeks, we were hindered in our growing so the weather plays a humongous part. It got really, really hot, so some things did not grow until very late. And our window is short, so if things didn't bloom until June, maybe late June, we're only going from that time to about October, end of October, so we don't even get full growing time. All those things factor into a season when you're dealing with different elements. [It] got really rainy [this year], so we didn't have work some days, and some things just didn't survive. The best thing you can do in a garden is adapt. You see what grew, what didn't. You pay attention to the windows, and then you just take that and do different for the next garden.

J: It is learning to cultivate that relationship with the garden.

N: You have to. If you don't learn from your garden, if you don't learn what grows, where things like to grow, rotate around, find different spots, because everything doesn't grow the same or sometimes things grow better when they're in this place or that place, or getting this much sun or not as much sun. It's all things you kind of learn as you go, but you have to pay attention. You kind of get into a relationship with the garden, where you know what will grow and what won't. You also try new things, and then you see what works and what doesn't. And then the garden will tell you. It will literally tell you. You just have to kind of pay attention and just go from there.

**WHAT HAPPENS INSIDE**  
**Andrés Macías Yañez**

Five women run a small-scale tostada cooperative whose product is prepared inside two rooms of a small concrete building. In this same building is where I first introduced my research, asked the community if they would allow me to conduct it with them, and if a community member would house me. A month after this moment, a government conservation agency organized for another community from Yucatán to visit them. The visitors also congregated at this building, for a demonstration on how local crops can be monetized in a collective manner.

This small concrete building acts as an emblem for its locality. It resides with a community located inside the mountainous landscape of La Sepultura forest in Chiapas, Mexico. It is the ejido<sup>1</sup> El Triunfo II, one entity of the larger communal land management system of Mexico. Ejidos are designated only for campesinos<sup>2</sup> and indigenous groups, a symbolically significant gesture of land redistribution away from private elite landowners towards populations whose culture and livelihoods depend on it. This land restitution allows for environmental relationships of planting, farming, and cultivating to rehabilitate after the land grabbing initiated by the Spanish colonial paradigm.

It's 2 pm and the key holder unlocks the door, a rectangular cutout of aluminum fencing, secured with a lock looped into a metal hook on the wall's edge. The Doñas<sup>3</sup> walk over the smooth concrete floor to place the ingredients onto an orange table. Floor-to-ceiling openings surround the room on three sides, each filled with numerous aluminum fencing—to keep strangers and animals out. Small children accompany the Doñas, they sit or crawl on the

floor, staring at their mothers. Two Doñas begin to assemble the community's corn mill while their nixtamal<sup>4</sup> waits in buckets atop the orange table.

This small concrete building stitches together the mutual activities of the Triunfo II people. Living on communal land estranges notions of private ownership and instead enables the testing of collective strategies. Collectivity is an action and a place: it can occur through agreeing that this building will keep the corn mill safe; it will host visitors; it will be a place to watch over children. Collectivity is also a tactic for living in rural geographies devoid of basic infrastructure such as plumbing, street lights, health clinics, and schools. When a schoolteacher is present, the children gather at this space. When a household wants to mill ingredients for a traditional drink, the corn mill is assembled and used. On days with strong sun, the roof acts as a refuge from the heat.

The oven takes up most of the space in the small side room. Some plastic chairs and tables are stored here, for when the time comes for people to gather. Otherwise the big, airy room surrounded by the openings is empty. Each time the corn mill is used it needs to be assembled, meaning that its previous user had to clean and store it away properly. In the big, airy room the corn mill stands and several households take turns to grind their ingredients. Doña Nora and Don Gil have dry whole corn, achote, cacao seeds to mill into a powder mix called tascalate. Doña Rosa has dry whole corn, cacao and cinnamon sticks to make pinole. Doña Mary Carmen and Doña Magdalena will come the next day to make masa once the nixtamal has had enough time to break down the corn kernels into accessible nutrients.

This small concrete building is the collective. While concrete in materiality, we can think of it as a shapeshifting form maintained by ongoing moments of its use. Without the community it would remain another mundane concrete shell. Moments enacted, performed, and lived here by the users establish its personality. In return, the space protects their necessities like the corn mill which is the heritage ingredient that comes in red, white, blue, or yellow colors. Women usually hold the knowledge to transform it into tascalate, pinole, tostadas and pozol.

Several women of El Triunfo II gather at the mill so they can make pozol. They will have to grind the nixtamal white corn until it's smooth and fine enough. Once it becomes a dough form it's wrapped in banana leaves and left to ferment for several days. Here in this small concrete building they dilute the fermented corn with water and pour it into plastic jugs. One Doña carries a jug and cups for the workers. The other carries plates with coarse salt and slices of jalapeño prepared at the orange table. They exit the space and walk across the dirt paths to the crop field slightly south of the building. There are many men gathered on the field sowing corn seeds. The Doñas arrive and the workers take a break to drink a cup of pozol, taking bites of jalapeño's in between sips. A relief of calories provided by a network of individuals, ingredients, and communal available space.

<sup>1</sup>References for some essays in this publication are available online and can be accessed through the *Paprika! website*.

**TEQUIO Y TIERRA**  
**Alejandra Leon de Gante**

This project, completed as part of my master's thesis, addresses pressing and current environmental, economic, and societal concerns surrounding the mecal industry in Oaxaca, Mexico, striving to reveal how the mecal industry autonomously source sustainable material for earthen construction in the future. The mecal industry—which has exploded in recent years due to celebrity-fueled popularity in the US and Europe—is causing serious ecological damage due to industrial-scale monocultural practices and the improper disposal of its plant-based byproducts, bagasse and viliázo.<sup>1</sup> Used in combination with earth, however, these alternative building materials can activate circular systems of construction and economies. By coordinating this labor through tequios, this production system could facilitate agency to vulnerable sectors of the local population while responding to an immediate ecological crisis.

Oaxaca is in southern Mexico, surrounded to the north by the Sierra Madre mountains and to the south by the Pacific Ocean, isolating it from the rest of the country. As a result, it is the most ethnic and culturally diverse province in Mexico. However, Oaxaca has historically suffered from a lack of federal government investment and is the country's poorest region. 61.9% of the population lives under the national poverty line and 23.3% lives in extreme poverty. Under such conditions, Oaxacans have had to maintain a level of self-sufficiency—not only in terms of housing construction, but also in infrastructure, education, and other necessities. One of the most important traditions of this practice of self-sufficiency is tequio, a community-organized call to collective work. Communities sustain this tradition not only because they consider the material results of these works to be important, but they also see social value in strengthening and fostering coexistence and integration among community members.



Adobe facade in Tepic. Image submitted by the author.

Most of the important works today across Oaxaca that the community prides themselves in were carried out thanks to the cooperative work of its citizens. Tequios enable the building and upkeep of public infrastructure, including roads, water and sewage utilities, schools, sports and cultural facilities, clinics, landscaping, and other basic public works, in the absence of sufficient funding from the state or federal government. Jacobo, a local craftsman from San Martín Tlajicote (population of 1,975) says, "The most important thing is that we offer our services, even to create our infrastructure, or if some day there is an emergency like an earthquake or a fire, to help find and support each other. The government may provide the resources, but we provide the manpower. This is very nice when you live in such villages where you can still preserve these traditions." This is how they were able to rebuild in 2022 a school in Jacobo's community that collapsed during the 2017 earthquake, so that in-person classes could resume right after the pandemic. Tequios also extend to other communal work beyond construction, like reforestation and preservation initiatives to secure native trees and wild agave plants that are being threatened by climate change and mecal monoculture.

Earthen construction in Oaxaca is an existing—although nearly extinct—vernacular architecture that is disappearing due to stigmatization and the popularization of industrialized materials. Building with this ubiquitous material is not simply a positive step towards environmental and sustainable healing, but it also preserves ways of life. Reworking one's own soil is a means of agency, especially meaningful and true for Indigenous people who seek to preserve and embody their cultural identity and traditions in the way they live and inhabit spaces. The exclusion of earth-based materials in governmental public sector construction policies due to stigmatization forces native people to change their ways of life, leading to the loss of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The design proposition presented in "Tequio

y Tierra" proposes the design of a center for research, education, fabrication, and innovation. With the implementation of tequios, the design proposition includes a network strategy solution for the handling, processing, and redistributing of mecal's byproducts to use in combination with earth for regenerative building materials. The proposition aims to promote local environmental and socio-economic development in Oaxaca, Mexico. The wider goal for this centre is not only to prove that earthen materials can and should be used in contemporary urban as well as rural architecture, but also to spread knowledge and teachings on the use of the materials with a view to encouraging communities in Oaxaca to self-build regeneratively.

**PRESERVING SCARS**  
**Lulu Crouzet**

Whether called maintenance, repair, care, tending, or new experimental preservation, architects seek ways to resist endless growth, cyclic demolition, and planned obsolescence. As Bernard Tschumi said: "The most architectural thing about [a] building is the state of decay in which it is. [In fact], architecture only survives where it negates the form that society expects of it. It negates itself by transgressing the limits that history has set for it."<sup>1</sup> The traces of age and decay allow architecture's processual character to gain some recognition. Resisting the short lifecycles of buildings and product warranties requires creativity. Within this space, architecture and care must be negotiated in ways that are meaningful to designers and communities alike.

In the book *Upgrade: Making Things Better*, Helen Thomas and Adam Caruso mention that it is necessary to reappraise the value of the ugly, the unloved, and the discarded.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of patina or altermotiv is a reflective form of subversion and anarchy of both social and material processes. While architecture with a recognized status seems extraordinary or historically significant, a comprehensive approach toward heritage also values mundane and generic qualities. Under that definition, the legibility of history through neglect, filth, and vandalism can be considered part of heritage and thus worthy of preservation. Such conservation affirms memories of buildings by embracing iconoclastic rebelliousness and appropriating decrepit appearances.<sup>3</sup> In the *1865 Ethics of the Dust* by John Ruskin, the accumulation of filth, dirt, dust, cracks, and breakage are time-stains and have value.

The impermanence and transience of architecture allow a recognition of its many states and transformations. This includes objects or buildings that might be in a state of brokenness or decay but have utility potential that can be recognized and unveiled by the creative processes of caretaking. Regardless of their current state and use value, these artifacts manifest their possible repair within themselves, hinting at their diverse, varied, multiple states of existence.<sup>4</sup> Repair efforts should not fully erase material and immaterial damage. Preserving visible scars and collective memory is an integral aspect of maintenance work. Repair, therefore, becomes respectful of damage in its very nature. The creation of a repaired work must accept the inevitable difference from the undamaged original. It is aesthetically, architecturally, and socially appropriate to append the memory of damage.<sup>5</sup>

Visible repairs bring the dimension of time and the marks of craft into the building, highlighting their processual aspect. They act as a resistant memory and refer to a history of the building that includes adaptations, transformations, and conflicts. This way, the memorial value is extended by the repair, which gives us information about how the work was carried out. Moreover, it creates a specific form of memorial architecture. The mended areas offer a way to understand objects as subjects, materials, and practices while accentuating imperfections as valuable indicators of history, time, and embedded emotion. The buildings are going through a learning process and need time to adapt, refine, return, and repair parts that are not optimized or catered to current needs.

In a digital-industrial civilization where manual work is vanishing, repair is a form of resistance against the loss of construction traditions, which have always reflected individual histories through their material traces and layers. In "Rethinking Repair," Steven J. Jackson, an information scientist, brings forth the concept of "broken world thinking," which he describes as "filling in the moment of hope and fear in which bridges from old worlds to new worlds are built, and the continuity of order, value, and meaning gets woven."<sup>6</sup> Many possibilities arise when the starting points for creation are damages, erosion, breakdown, and decay instead of novelty, growth, and progress.<sup>7</sup>

Repair stands against a wasteful and historically oblivious throwaway mentality and against superficial reproduction and replacement. Repairing means working with the existing, it means embracing the human and environmental conditions that Bryony Roberts has termed tabula plena, as opposed to tabula rasa. It embraces a skeptical attitude towards arguments of economic efficiency, progressiveness, innovation-talk, or contemporary aesthetics, which all legitimize destruction and discard. A critical, creative, reflective, post-traditional cultural technique emerges from scars.

<sup>1</sup>References for some essays in this publication are available online and can be accessed through the *Paprika! website*.

**SOME NOTES ON THE RUINS OF A 56 YEAR OLD FOAM HOUSE PROJECT**  
**Turner Brooks**

Recently, the ruins of an experimental sprayed urethane foam house that I designed as a student in 1967 at YSoA and built with fellow students were discovered by recent undergraduate architecture major, Will Suzuki, while taking a hike in the woods in Westville, just off the Yale Golf Course.

The 'foam house' project was a spontaneously generated part of the second year design studio in 1968, taught by Felix Drury under the deanship of Charles Moore. Bill Grover, a student in the year ahead of my class, had been inspired by a Union Carbide T.V. ad demonstrating the construction of a tiny igloo-like form, made from the newly invented urethane foam. The foam was sprayed through a hand-held nozzle fed by two canisters, a resin and an activator. Within seconds after landing on a surface, the foam expanded to 30 times its liquid volume as it solidified. Bill persuaded Union Carbide to donate enough of the material to enable the students to construct several experimental structures. He also acquired a generous supply of a polyethylene-laminated burlap fabric (developed for making sandbags for the Vietnam war) that could be tailored into inflatable forms. After a casual class competition, three projects were selected to be built in the woods just off the Yale Golf Course in Westville. Tailoring the fabric into the various shapes for the designs, we tested them out, inflating them in the second floor space of Rudolf Hall. The soft squishy forms flopped gently over the school's administrative balcony space above, causing great excitement. We used electric fans, and later on the site, gas-powered leaf blowers inserted into an 'umbilical' chord-like tube, penetrating the flanks of the forms.

An idea that had inspired us at that time was to locate places in the world in need of quickly produced housing. (Obviously a concept at least as or more urgent in today's world). Arriving with a package of folded up balloons and canisters of urethane foam, a high density and low volume package may be dropped on the site by parachute. That package would be reversed into a high volume and low-density alternative as the balloons were inflated and the sprayed foam expanded 30 times its liquid volume.

These projects were purely experimental structures and not intended for permanent occupation, but they were in fact sometimes inhabited by roving hippies. This may have led the golf course bureaucracy to have had two of the projects demolished a year or so after they were built. The one I was involved with survived, probably only because it was a bit further away from the links. Upon returning to and entering it a year or two after its construction, I heard shrieks, and witnessed several naked figures darning out the back door into the woods.

Now after many years of aging, it has evolved into a ruin. Under stress, foam has a 'creep' factor—that plus the weight

of snow had slowly transformed the dome's top surfaces from convex to concave. Then increasing rainwater and ice began collecting in the concavities, leading to structural collapse. Large segments of the series of interconnecting, differently scaled forms had fallen to the ground, leaving behind the fragmented, doubly curved arcs of the remaining walls to form a series of spaces that open up to the surrounding wooded landscape and the sky above.



The foam house in 2023. Image by Will Suzuki. Additional images are available online and can be accessed through the *Paprika! website*.

Architecture having effervesced, evolving into a ruin, has a legitimacy of its own. In this case, what was once an introverted and somewhat hermetic form now felt like an open dynamically choreographed spatial dance, an active participant with the surrounding landscape. Lichen and moss and wood-pecker holes (hopefully not poisoned!) integrated it further into its natural surrounds. The structure had become much more spatially engaging as a ruin, not only in now looking like a piece of the natural world—something like a gigantic piece of bark—but also by performing a kind of choreographed rhythmic dance sequence as it folds and unfolds its way through this wooded site. These remains are now a mysterious tactile, spatial, experience. I want to see them as a stage set for events, integrating music and dance, ancient Druid figures might add to the ritual, especially at night under a full moon.

**ON MAINTENANCE: A CONVERSATION WITH JOHN MARTIN**  
**Zach Lauzière-Fitzgerald**

John Martin is a farmer, architect, cyclist and mechanic. In 2015, he founded the Bradley Street Bike Co-op, and stepped down in the winter of 2022.

Zach: In a practical sense, what does maintenance mean to you?

John: The ongoing caretaking of objects, of communities, of life. It means repeating, and through that repetition, a lot of subtle forms of learning.

Z: In the Manifesto for Maintenance Art, UKeles places maintenance in opposition to development, consumption, building. I am wondering if, for you, the two are co-constitutive, alternatives to one another, or their own distinct things.

J: I would place maintenance in relation to creation. They are two pieces of a whole. Building a thing, creating a thing, whether that's a building, a community, a project, a relationship, whether that's a piece of woodworking or a bicycle, you're building it from parts.

Z: Within that understanding, where the line is blurry between the two, where does one end and the other begin for you?

J: Maybe—that is the question. The premise is that creation is valued more in our capitalist society, or rather growth is certainly valued more. Then maybe we need to try to frame things in a way that maintenance has more value. If we didn't live in a world that was bound by things like climate change, we didn't live in a segregated, racist world; if we lived in a utopian world, then maybe creation would be dope. But, when you actually apply the real world to this conversation, then it's important to hold them equally, in terms of the way we value them and reward them—financially and socially.

Z: If the general assumption is that creation comes first and then maintenance, what happens when we flip that over? How can maintenance impact creation?

J: There could be a lot of lessons learned from starting from a place of maintenance and allowing that to inform creation. Maintainers know the ins and out of a thing. So, when it comes to designing a new one, maybe they're the first and best people to ask. For example, it would be really cool to have more janitors involved in the architectural process. Maintenance is, in many ways, anti-consumption. Obviously, there can be consumption within maintenance. When I fix a flat tire, I will put on a new tube, which I've consumed. But, it's usually on a smaller scale than creation.

Z: You are trained as an architect. What brought you to begin working on bikes?

J: It's just a life answer for me. In short, I was an architect for a couple years after graduating—worked at a small firm in Boston doing public libraries. I'm from New Haven. My dad is a fourth-generation electrician and they owned the bike co-op's building. He was having a lot of health problems and the building had a lot of money problems. My brother and I talked about it with my dad a little bit, and I decided that I would leave my job and take a year off and try to solve this building. I had some bike tools. So, I just took over a little front corner and incorporated a little business thing for fun. The romantic, the unromantic parts are it's my dad's building, and I didn't intend on doing it, and I was going to go back to architecture after. This is a temporary thing and I'm here to help my family solve a problem.

Z: It's unusually poetic to me. My own father got sick a few years ago, and I had to go home to help take care of him. It was a really meaningful period for me, even if it wasn't glamorous. But, it seems that it all began, out of your own life maintenance.

J: I've never thought of that in my life. And I really love that. I'm gonna hold on to that.

Z: It seems like a pointed choice to make a bike co-op instead of a community bike shop. How does community knowledge building fare into your work?

J: There are a lot of volunteers who come in being like, I want to learn more about maintenance of bikes. I'm curious about them. I ride one. I want to learn how to fix it myself. And, essentially, if you're a volunteer for a year, you're going to be a pretty good bike mechanic at the end of it. There are a lot of people who struggle in our segregated city where they live in your bunnies, whether that's Yale or non-Yale, whether that's your neighborhood—which are really racially and income-based segregated—whether that gender-related. The bike co-op is cool because it's a ton of different people who are all there for the same reasons. I love the stories of where the hierarchy flips and the interactions feel way different than you could have in other places—which is that you have someone like me, a person with privilege, and a kid from Fair Haven teaching me how to overhaul a derailleur. I've been a bike mechanic for eight years, and I never thought about using that tool in that way. And, that's amazing, right?

**91 SHELTON**  
**Lindsay Skedgel**

The top floors of 91 Shelton are in darkness, a black cloth billowing from its fifth floor open window. Once owned by Winchester Arms, a subsidiary of Olin Corporation, the building was not long ago used for target range practice and the manufacturing of guns and small-caliber ammunition for World War II.

The building's neighbor, 71 Shelton, was once an United Nuclear Corporation manufacturing plant, taken apart piece by piece in 2020 and carried to the southwest via freight train. Church revival groups now stand atop its bio-remediated soil, its

still empty lot, to spread a message of God in the summertime.

Inside the building there is a stalling, buzzing freight elevator. The hallways are long, lined with informally curated art. City Climb Gym is tucked away at one end of the first floor. Most floors seem nearly vacant except for a few sparse businesses; a medical imaging company, a media studio, an artist whose work, I am told, can be viewed at the Met. Pink fiberglass insulation peeks through holes in the walls, some rooms are padlocked, and the smell of fumes grows stronger while ascending. On a New Haven subreddit a user asks, "Practice space?" The answer: "91 Shelton Ave. Bring your own geiger counter."

For over two decades, 91 Shelton, officially named the New Haven Studio Center, has provided musicians and artists with the city's only studio space rented monthly. After my own band's rehearsals in our studio, we stand listening in the dark of the parking lot, looking up, wondering who is playing and where they are. Tracing the sound, we attempt to locate which rooms are occupied. The building feels like a liminal space, forever stuck in the intersections of its history, what it is becoming, and what it could become.

Over time we have come to love a space that nearly ejects us; its ever present smell of chemicals and paint, its peeling walls, its opening. Over time we have swept its floors, carried in and rearranged furniture and carpet, adored the darkness with light fixtures. We have created music, collectively, within its walls.

There was a time when the future of this space was unknown and that time may come again. Alongside the building's other tenants, we spent most of January in city planning meetings, unsure as to whether or not the space would remain for artists. We canvassed, organized meetings, and gathered as a collective group. In the city plan meetings, the building's prospective owners declared, there is no one in there, as we sat within our studios, listening.

Why do we love this building more than its owner? I've asked myself this many times. While the building keeps decaying, we keep trying to love it. Maybe because there is nowhere else to go. Maybe because we deeply believe in what it could be, what it already is, because of us.

During the city planning meetings, arts officials and supporters from across the state turned into a chorus. Artist space over storage space, they said to the proposed business owners, who were from Rochester and ran a string of storage facilities.

I first wrote about 91 Shelton for an article published in Spring of 2023. Musicians told me they learned about the space from Craigslist, others through word of mouth. Regardless of how they found the space, the sentiment remained the same. "It's the only space we know of in the surrounding area," they said.

I wrote that many seemed worried about the building's future and their place within it. "I'm thinking we've got a year or two left here," an artist told me, gesturing towards the newly rising townhouse apartments on Henry Street. These feelings echoed from other tenants, who commented on the area's recent development boom. They said they wouldn't be surprised if the building was soon noticed by people who wanted to 'improve' it.

This was a year before the threat of purchase came. Their comments hung like predictive specters, encircling us. I've been told the building's owner has tried to sell in many times over, never succeeding, that the time is guaranteed to come again when he finds a willing buyer. They say the only thing the building can become is empty space. Too unsafe for housing, too industrial, too outdated, too costly to refurbish.

While we wait to read the building's future, we continue to hang lights, to sweep the floors, to bring in furniture and instruments. While we wait, we continue to make; sound, paint, sawdust, chatter. Hands making things, changing, in spite of the rising townhouses, in spite of a circle of specters and spectacles.

**OCUPPING THE ROOFS: HONG KONG INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES**  
**Lucy Zoo**

To: Hong Kongers,  
 We are staying because we still love the city. Even though it is no longer familiar, we still want to continue to witness what the future will look like.  
 Thank you for staying, for giving us a place to breathe.

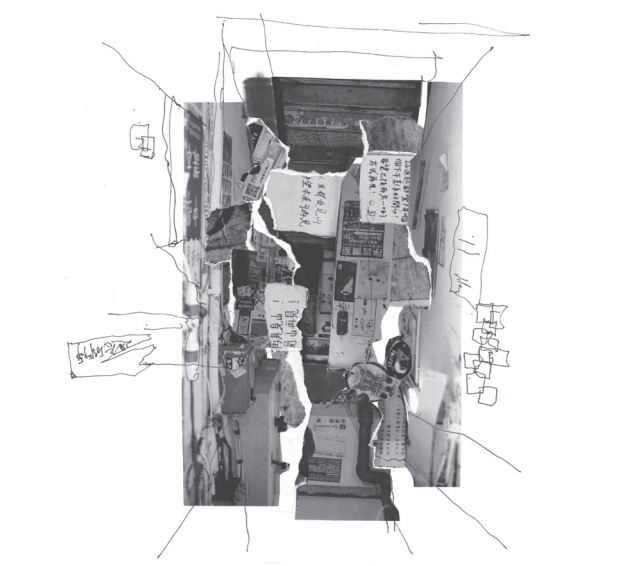


Image submitted by the author.

These were letters addressed to no particular recipients, but to all who were living through and witnessing the same reality. Over three years, twelve visitor books have been filled at Have a Nice Stay bookstore. Rainwater left wrinkles and brown marks on the covers. It seeped through the binding and moistened the ink on the inner pages, blurring some messages. These notebooks become a means of communication between people who are about to leave, who are staying, who have left and come back, and who have yet to make a decision. Asynchronous conversations took place between strangers.

Walking up the streets of Hong Kong is like wading through a labyrinth of floating signs: neon-lit and bold characters jostle for the attention of the rushing crowd. In the cracks of old high-rise buildings, a community of independent bookstores carves out intimate spaces for book readings, performances, workshops, and exhibitions. The dense and vertically-oriented urban environment is conducive to the creation of small hidden spaces on higher floors, giving rise to a typology of "second-floor bookstore" or "upstairs bookstore."

To enter this hidden territory, one has to walk through the staircase to reach a retro elevator at the end of the hallway. The floor numbers blink one after the other as the elevator trembles to a sudden stop and opens to a beige interior—just enough space for two people to squeeze in. On every surface, layers of stickers ripped notes, and taped posters form a superimposed landscape of signs. The seemingly chaotic configuration of information has an inner temporal logic. Old messages are buried beneath the more recent ones. Words and images acquire uncanny links with each other as they overlay and juxtapose. A printed slogan "consciously observe the present reality" leads to a series of headless animals chasing after each other.

These pasted-over walls are constantly exposed to natural wear and tear, touch, and interventions. The faces of some stickers are completely peeled off, leaving only a white layer of glue paper. Their silhouettes, or rather their ghosts, continue to occupy space. Their stickiness represents a kind of material resistance against erasure—nothing ever fully goes away, rather they hide and linger on surfaces.

After streets are cleaned, and everyday life resumes, how are people finding alternative ways to continue resistance? These bookstores are not one-off demonstration sites but rather hubs of continuous gathering throughout months and years. They cultivate a hub for seeds of revolution to emerge and for the slow process of reckoning and healing to unfold long beyond the moment of protest. These bookstores practice what Kimberley Kinder calls "constructive activism"—the process of building enduring physical spaces that facilitates social organizing in a repeatable way. These "durable spaces" enable the construction of a community which does not happen overnight. The creation of an autonomous space as opposed to relying on temporarily seized or borrowed spaces allows

sustained relationships to develop. The bookstores possess a kind of temporal latency—a slowness that manifests in the everyday process of maintenance and accumulation. As people come and go, they bring in objects and stories and leave marks on the space. Gradually and collectively, they build a living archive of handmade zines, posters, notes, books, stickers, plants, conversations, events, and memories that fill every corner and surface of the space.

**MAKING MEANING: A CONVERSATION WITH CAROLINE TANBEE SMITH**  
**Yanbo Li**

Caroline Tanbee Smith (BA '14) is the current alder of New Haven's Ward 9, and a former chair of the Downtown Wooster Square Community Management Team.

Yanbo: Was there a process through which New Haven transitioned from being your college town to being your hometown?

Caroline: I would go for a run and see a neighbor on their porch, and then go for a run again the next day and see the same person and wave at them—that feeling of building a relationship over time with someone I'd never met before but saw almost every day. I grew up in Lexington, Kentucky, but my life was school, my family, and sports, so I hadn't experienced that as a community, and fallen in love with a place. I guess it's the theme of the volume, which is love. I think really authentic love is something that requires time. You can have chemistry, you can have all the right things in the right place, but at the end of the day, time is one of the most important ingredients of love.

Y: What are some things that become possible once you've established that time-based relationship with a place, that aren't possible when you're here as a student?

C: I think it's really possible to be a good, thoughtful steward while you're here [as a student]. It's just that change is really hard and change takes time. So big changes, being able to contribute to big ideas, is something that requires, more than anything, a ton of relationships.

Y: Can you tell us about some of your recent work and the relationships that you've seen between physical maintenance and community maintenance?

C: Ward 9 is two neighborhoods, parts of East Rock and Fair Haven, with I-91 as the spine. In Ward 9 alone, there are four underpasses that divide these two neighborhoods. One of the underpasses is a large area of neglect and illegal dumping. There's runoff from the highway, and pipes go straight into the river. A project we've been working on is to take that neglected underpass and transform it into an asset that connects our two neighborhoods as a community park.

Of course, it would create its own set of maintenance questions. If we build this over the next five years, who is the steward of it? Nonetheless, it's an investment to mitigate some of the impact of lack of maintenance.

On the policy side, I've been pretty obsessed with the permanent licensing process for small businesses. There are a lot of barriers to entrepreneurship, so I've been deep diving with many entrepreneurs in the city to look under the hood and say, can we improve our permit and licensing process to make it easier and more streamlined? The biggest part of this process has been cultivating the belief that it should change, and that it can change, and that as a result, we can have an even richer, more inclusive small business ecosystem.

Y: What you're describing is like enriching and tending to the soil. C: Cities dream of cultivating the kind of organic entrepreneurial energy we have here. People want to build things. To whatever degree we can cultivate that, or nourish the soil of that, is a huge boon.

Y: In a *New Haven Independent* article from 2017, you said, "I do know that people fight for what they love. The question is, how do you get people to fall in love with a city? How do you make them fall in love with its people? How do you create spaces where people can become friends and build stake in each other and be able to connect in a variety of ways?" How would you answer some of those questions today?

C: I think that there's so many things you can do on a small scale that contributes to that, but a question that I am still evolving in, how do you do it