Internal memo

Ife Adepegba, M.Arch I 2021

This semester's first-year studio led by *Brennan Buck* focuses on the conception, development, dispersion, and discussion of architecture through the *'Possible Mediums'* lens. With the first studio meeting critiquing the *"napkin sketch,"* projects are instead explored and refined through processes of sampling, appropriating, and manipulating existing materials from a range of disciplines. Whilst not beginning with a strictly architectural focus, formal and spatial qualities become increasingly evident as we progress through three projects entitled *"Image-Object," "Section,"* and *"Plan,"* with the latter two forming a direct link to architectural program alongside the continual transition between two and three dimensional visualization.

"Project One — Image-Object" explored perceived notions of three-dimensionality from the implied depth and materiality generated by abstracting a chosen image. Peeling away from working on a singular plane, processes of sampling and manipulation began with relief-like studies to emphasize the image's volumetric qualities through cutting, layering, and folding. Following these physical studies, a hybrid between a three-dimensional object and an image was constructed through the procedure of image-mapping, a process new to the majority of us, as seen in the variety of questionable and unpredictable results. Based on the digital development of the image-object, we shifted once again from the digital and immaterial realm into the physical, introducing discourse regarding the tectonic and material nature of the object. The departure from the rigorous program required of a typical architectural project was liberating to many as there wasn't an inherent function, program, or even justification required — just artistic exploration and creative inference.

"Project Two — In Between" slowly introduced architectural form into the studio, beginning with representation of the section and its key relationships: the seam between the building and the ground plane, the vertical articulation between floors, and distinguishing between solid and void. In a similar vein to the last project, an image was used to generate the initial form of the section as we isolated and drew out key shapes from contours and implied volumetric qualities. Once the form was established and a strategy was developed regarding the nature of the threshold between building and ground, we began to develop and explore how these series of voids and masses could be articulated tectonically. In an atypical design process, seemingly backwards in terms of order of operations *(and clearly favoring form over function)*, a site and mapping of its immediate topography, ecology, cultural character, and materiality was to be developed after reviewing the relationship between the proposed section and its ground conditions. The next and current step, also in reverse order to typical programmatic development, involves form-finding exercises to develop the sections into a dwelling for five occupants within a footprint of 2500-square-feet without losing the sculptural character of our collaged sections. In both projects, we attempt to combat the notions regarding introspective and isolated conception of design as we are encouraged to seek inspiration from a wider body of knowledge — with image and representation being just the start.

Our final review for the second project will be during midterm week on October 22nd and 23rd, so come and have a look at what we've been up to on the 6th floor.

Rhea Schmid, M.Arch I 2020

After the conclusion of our first-year Building Project, few of us thought we would again work with a client as meaningful as *Columbus House.* However, as we convened in *Hastings Hall* at the start of fall studio, we were greeted by the words *"Connecticut Community Justice Centers."* Studio coordinator *Emily Abruzzo* kept introductions brief in order to quickly direct attention to our two guest speakers and *"organizational partners," Sia Henry* and *Devon McCormick.* What followed was an intense crash course on *Restorative Justice* practices.

Restorative Justice is a recognized alternative to our current criminal justice system and as stated in our syllabus, it *"brings together those who have harmed, their victims, and affected community members into voluntary processes that repair harms. At its best, restorative justice produces consensus-based plans through face-to-face dialogues that meet the needs victims themselves identify while also supporting the positive development of those who've harmed."* This process frequently follows a centuries-old model known as the *Circle Process,* which uses a structural and spatial framework to build relationships and address conflict while providing a safe space for the community. In addition to working with *Impact Justice* and the *Tow Youth Justice Institute,* we are working with three community partners, each specific to one of the three project sites in *Connecticut — Bridgeport, Middletown,* and *New London.* We were inspired, to say the least.

As a first exercise, we dove into a quick group research phase that soon began to influence our individual formal explorations, many of which either embraced the circle, or actively avoided it. Some critics guided their studios through a series of assignments that had students produce 1/4" conceptual models and 1/32" site models, while other critics supported a self-directed approach. Nonetheless, every time students started to confine themselves to their desks, behind their computer screens and piles of trace, the course allowed for us to engage with the program in real ways.

We met with our community partners on multiple occasions, both on-site and in *Rudolph Hall's Nalle Drawing Studio.* We learned about the powerful work they do and the types of spaces required for such work. Additionally, *Impact Justice* came back to guide us through the *Circle Process* firsthand, in a workshop attended by the entire second-year class and our studio critics. In the process, we witnessed the Circles' power as a viable tool for community building and began to understand its potential for conflict resolution. Although the circle guidelines and conventions may have seemed forced at first, the quality of conversation and amount of sharing that followed left little room for doubt. The vulnerability of the stories shared by our peers added a dimension to the circle that no drawings or models could ever reveal *(no, not even a two-hour presentation devoted to unconstrained meditations on the form of the circle).*

It is difficult to talk about *Restorative Justice* without mentioning our current political climate. One of our community partners brought up the *Dr. Christine Blasey Ford* and *Brett Kavanaugh* meetings during a panel to illustrate a situation where a man is unable to understand or admit harm and a woman is unable to heal. How does space either support these flawed systems or how does it quietly fight to build new ones that support values such as healing, compassion, vulnerability, and communication? The second-years do not have the answers yet, and maybe never will, but the exercise itself will be valuable.

South elevation of *Vanna Venturi House*

ON THE GROUND

10/03 Wednesday
The virtually empty (we know you're out there @PhD/MED) fourth floor guarantees solid badminton practice time for the first and second years.

Dhruvin Shah howls in the forests of Guanacaste, Costa Rica. The monkeys replied.

"They have an In-and-Out in Dallas!" – Alejandro Duran, proud Californian. Happy Birthday DSB!

10/04 Thursday
Iñaqui Carnicero's second-year studio travels to New York during class for his gallery opening.

Matt Liu distributes durian candy throughout the fifth floor late at night (along with a mint). Alix Pauchet goes for a second whilst Ruchi Dattani, who was seemingly unfazed, does not realize it was durian until later.

Julie Snow's studio stayed in San José's Stray Cat Hostel; there are no live cats, only pictures of cats on pillows and walls.

"They have an In-and-Out in Fort Worth!" – Alejandro Duran, still from Cali.

10/05 Friday
Reeking of BBQ and Tex-Mex, Adam Y'alrinsky's studio is the first to return from travel week.

Bob at the kitchen window

10/06 Saturday
Modern Love slapped.

10/07 Sunday
Neri & Hu's studio encounters Michael Samuelian's and Simon Hartmann's class at a rest stop along the freeway, as they both take breaks from late-night traffic back to New Haven.

10/08 Monday
Environmental Design holds its first pop quiz. Who knew how to calculate HDD? TMY3 stands for Typical Meteorological Year (Not Time Month Year or Typical Month Year)

Sean Yang disrupts the *Paprika!* meeting as he takes the entire pizza box. The United Nations is late to the party as we already discussed the energy crisis last week.

10/09 Tuesday
"There were no coffeeshops in New Haven when I was a student . . . there were in Cambridge. I was very jealous of Harvard." – Alex Garvin.

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown on the terrace of the house

the rear of *Vanna Venturi house*

Emoji: image, meaning, form

Joanna Grant, Bureau Spectacular

Emoji are so 🦆 rn.

But the emoji isn't new, it was developed by *Shigetaka Kurita* in 1999 in response to the critique that all digital information was shown as text instead of image, thereby limiting the range of emotions. The emoji that emerged in Japan were quickly adopted by Apple to appeal to the Japanese market and soon exported all over the world.[1] For the first time on our portable electronic devices, we would communicate our smileys as image 😊, rather than as text, :). What is more, these images appeared as a keyboard, inadvertently yet not insignificantly categorizing them as language.

The relationship between image and language requires a specific knowledge of the language. To speak Spanish, I must understand not only the vocabulary but also the meaning as it relates to English, my native tongue. Similarly, an interesting link between language, understanding, and image exists in Unicode emoticons, in which Unicode text is converted to image. This requires an understanding of coding and the intended visual output (FF61 Alt-x = •) Therefore, in order to achieve a simple emoticon, a relatively complex set of combinations are required to produce a relatively straightforward and limited communicative image: (。•‿•)

Opposed to the complex input–single output of the Unicode emoticons, current use of emoji creates multiple readings independent of the original, singular intent. Entire portions of the iOS emoji keyboard *(including fruits and vegetables)* have taken on rather salacious translations, to the effect that we may never look at a peach or an eggplant in the same way.

(SEMANTIC: The word peach, referring to the fruit) =
IMAGE: 🍑 = (SEMIOTIC: a butt)

Applying the arguments of *Robert Venturi* and *Denise Scott Brown,* the language of emoji applies the decorated shed to the duck: another layer of language is encoded onto a form, one of image and form and the other of linguistic meaning.

For architects, drawings themselves represent an image language. We learn to read drawings as we read words. For architectural drawings, the visual precedes the literal — first there is image, and then we conclude meaning. But what is the language of architecture today, in relation to a discipline of autonomy?

In the past, this image language has relied, much like a *Unicode emoticon,* on the singular reading of notational lines composed to create an intended output (i.e. rectangle with vent = air conditioner). However, current trends in BIM software have us moving in the direction of emoji, integrating building elements as literal objects rather than abstract readings of lines composed onto page. If this trend continues to dominate our ways of making architecture, I wonder if it is possible to expect other interpretations of semiotics over semantics — I, personally, am excited about rereading air-conditioning units and satellite dishes.
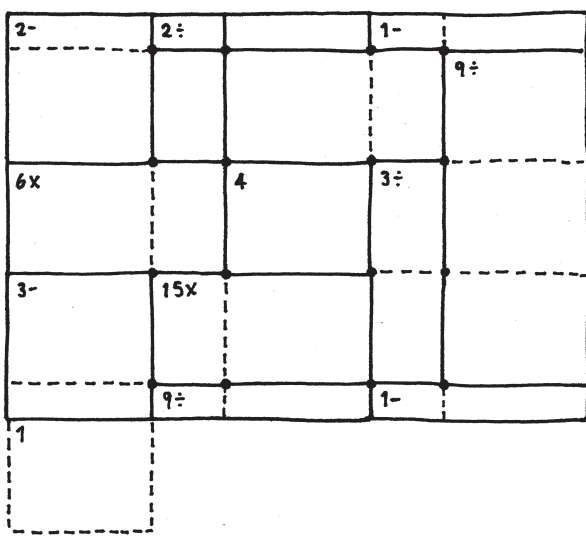
[1] Also significant to note, Japanese and other languages of the Sinosphere employed languages based on images (logographics) versus on sounds (phonograms).

Puzzle 2. Spelling Bee
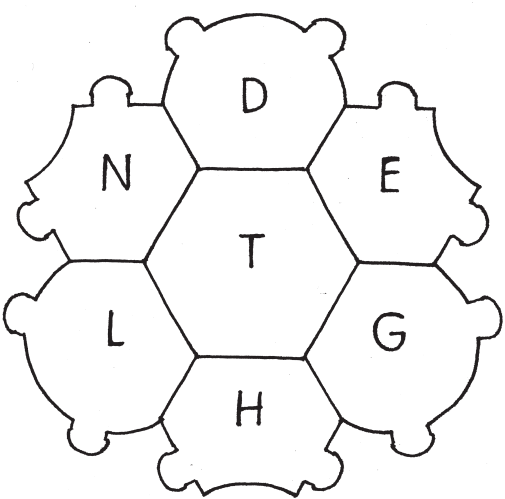
How many common words of 5 or more letters can you spell using the letters in the hive? Every answer must use the center letter at least once. Letters may be reused in a word. At least one word will use all 7 letters. Proper names and hyphenated words are not allowed. Score 1 point for each answer, and 3 points for a word that uses all 7 letters.

Answers:

Lengthened (2 points). Also: Delete, deleted, dented, detente, entente, gentel, gentle, length, lengthen, netted, nettle, nettled, teeth, teethe, teethed, tended, tenet, tented, tenth, If you found other legitimate dictionary words in the beehive, feel free to include them in your score.

Puzzle 3. KenKen Frampton

1. Fill in the numbers from 1 to 5.
2. Do not repeat a number in any row or column.
3. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares, called cages, must combine (in any order) to produce the target number in the top corner using the mathematical operation indicated.
4. Cages with just one square should be filled in with the target number in the top corner.
5. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.
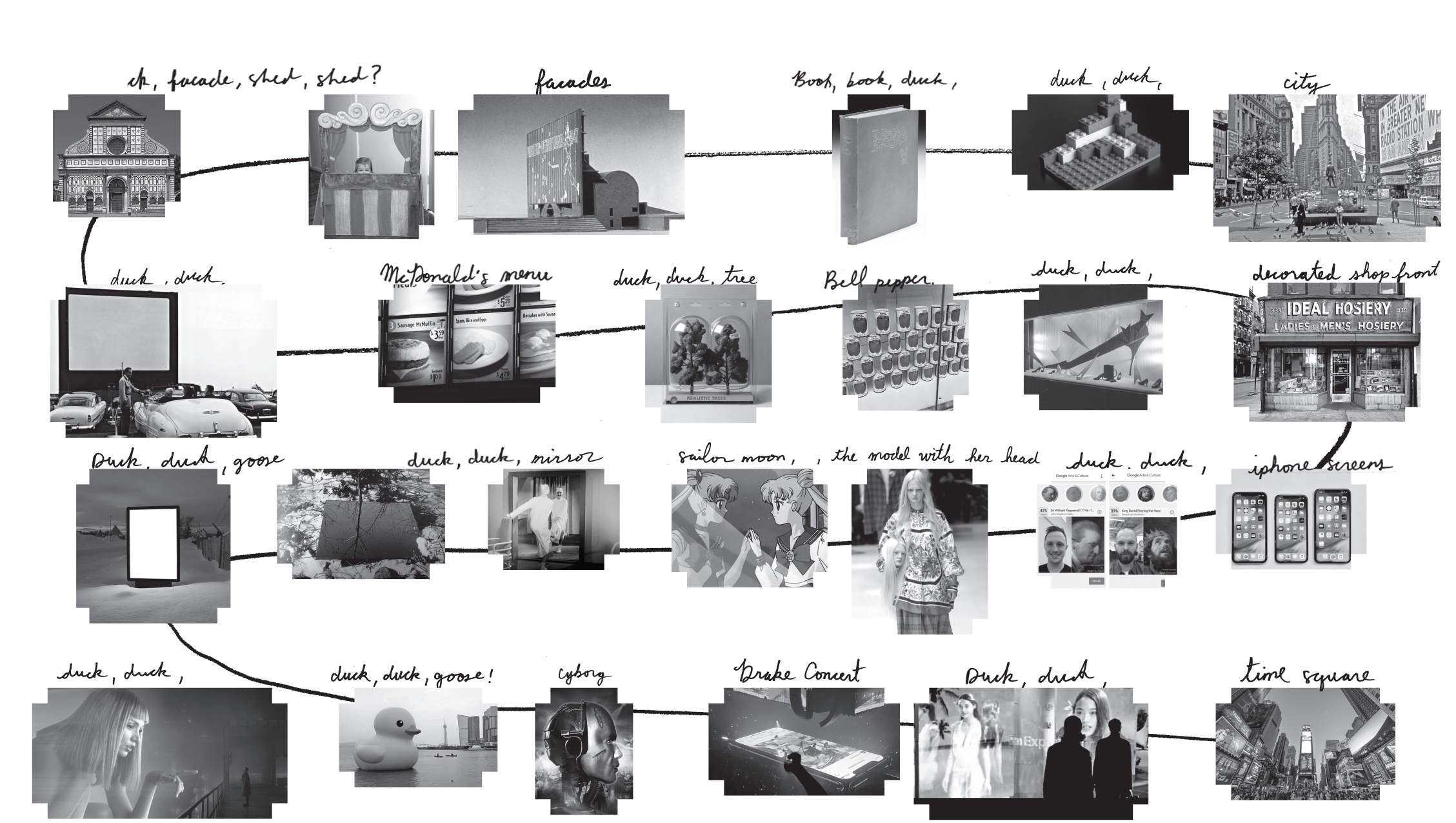
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duck, duck, shed!

Editors' statement

"Ultimately, the lasting legacy of postmodernism has been not the clunky beige pediment forms that have become our shopping malls and hotels everywhere, but the literal language, the way we talk, the way we legitimize architecture through a flattened index of images . . . . When postmodernism was being formulated, Venturi and Scott Brown won, and Frampton lost." — Michael Meredith, "Radical Inclusion! [1]

DSB: "High style architects are not producing what people want or need." [2]
KF: "Once informational/computational processes are emphasized, as they are now, above places of arrival and departure, the very notion of place itself tends to become threatened, to the potential detriment of 'human' experience." [3]
DSB: "Frampton misses the agony in our acceptance of pop." [4]

Though nearly fifty years have passed, the arguments on both sides still hold water. Seeing no better way, we take to their depths as a duck, shedding the pretense of adversarial academics in favor of an interplay more at home in the schoolyard than at our desks. In the wake of these scholars, architecture has become both constructed and flat, both place and symbol, simultaneously. So we re-engage the dialogue seeing that we may not have to choose a side, but benefit from playing both. We form a circle, we look each other in the eyes, and we spin around and around until we can no longer remember who is duck, goose, human, or shed.

Some time after 1894, Swedish immigrants in *Lindstrom, MN* invented the game *"Anka, Anka, Gra Anka,"* roughly translated to duck, duck, grey duck *(more commonly known as duck, duck, goose).* Nearly 330 duck years later, in 1968, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour introduced the duck — and its counterpart, the decorated shed — into the popular architectural lexicon with the publication of their seminal work, *Learning from Las Vegas.* Both the game and the text test ideas of signification and classification, banality and fun, ducks and not ducks. One requires more running than the other; both require the interplay of multiple scholars.

Just as *VSB* had started their game, along came their schoolyard adversary, *Kenneth Frampton (KF).* Their well-known dialogue played out over a series of articles, collectively titled *"Cultural Debate: Existing Situation,"* published all in the same issue of *Casabella* in 1971. It went something like this:

You may ask, "What is the meaning of all of this?" We ask, "What makes architecture meaningful?" Can we build from pop image culture today *(memes, mood boards and all),* or does our obsession with image still leave the buildings we design short on experience? Is architecture in the digital age truly a *"flattened index of images"* or has a wormhole formed somewhere along the way that might soon transport us to a very different pond?

In search of answers *(or maybe just for the love of the game)* let's reconsider Scott Brown and Frampton. Let's play *duck, duck, shed.*

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oh, facade, shed, shed?   facades   Book, book, duck,   duck, duck,   city

duck, duck   McDonald's menu   duck, duck, tree   Bell pepper   duck, duck,   decorated shop front

Duck, duck, goose   duck, duck, mirror   sailor moon,   the model with her head   duck, duck,   iphone screens

duck, duck,   duck, duck, goose!   cyborg   Drake Concert   Duck, duck,   time square

duck, duck, shed: The game!

Person in Shed

Citations

Kenneth Frampton. "America 1960-1970. Notes on Urban Images and Theory." *Casabella* no. 359-360 (1971): 25-40.

Denise Scott Brown. "Learning from Pop." *Casabella* no. 359-360 (1971): 15-24.

Denise Scott Brown. "Reply to Frampton." *Casabella* no. 359-360 (1971): 41-46.

Shed with Statue

DSB: "If high-style architects

XCP: (those who wear Vetements and Eckhaus Latta and can drop a few hundred on Common Projects sneakers)

DSB: are not producing what people want or need, who is, and what can we learn from them?" (15)

KF: "What then are we to learn from two phenomena so superficially similar yet so different in ultimate intent as Motopia (i.e., Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Levittown, etc.) and Pop Art.... Should designers like politicians wait upon the dictates of a silent majority, and if so, how are they to interpret them? (31)

DSB: "Why should the fact that one disagrees with the silent majority's political and social beliefs (to the extent that there is a silent majority that shares beliefs) make one arrogant about their architectural preferences?" (41)

KF: Is it really the task of under-employed design talent to suggest to the constrained masses of Levittown or elsewhere that they might prefer the extravagant confines of the West Coast nouveau riche; a by now superfluous function which has already been performed more than adequately for years by

ST: Instagram influencers and Pinterest? (31)

DSB: "But at least it's another bias, an alternative to the architectural navel contemplation we so often do for research; i.e., ask, What did Le Corbusier do? Both

ST: AirBnB ads

DSB: and the builder, although they can tell us little of the needs of the very poor, cover a broader range of the population and pass a stiffer market test than does the architect in urban renewal or public housing, and if we learn no more from these sources than that architecture must differ for different groups,

LW: Yurts for those who yeet, and tipis for the sleepy.

DSB: that is a great deal" (15).

KF: "Once informational/computational processes are emphasized, as they are now, above places of arrival and departure, the

KL: architect's

KF: very notion of place itself tends to become threatened, to the potential detriment of

KL: perceived

KF: 'human' experience" (31).

DSB: "There is a social need for architectural high art to learn from and relate to folk ~~and pop traditions~~ (ST) if it is to serve its real clients and do no further harm in the city" (45).

XCP: This is always the argument, Denise. We love a good folk and pop tradition, but must the masses dictate? We can't just let them build their pitched-roof suburban paradises into the sunset. Or, we can. I do enjoy a good pitched roof.

KF: "This essentially picturesque prospect of Las Vegas relates however elliptically to the English townscape position.... introduced into 'respectable' American planning circles via the development of an M.I.T. methodology that was first publicly presented in 1960, in Kevin Lynch's *The Image of the City*. This work ... largely had the intended effect of rationalising the post-war erosion of the American city by the automobile. Of the ruthless super-imposition of federally subsidized highways and of the sporadic speculative urban renewal, contingent upon the displacement of the urban poor, that followed predictably in their wake, it passed no comment.... To distract from this instant institutionalized vandalism, it posited the creation of urban 'image' maps, employing a graphic notation, compounded out of a sophisticated infusion of Sitte with the later-day Gestalt theory

AEM: – a reduction of urban planning principles to an apolitical –

ST: oh it's still political all right

AEM: – field of imagemaking, *City Planning According to Sadistic Principles* (1960) –

DS: but all of this amounted to nothing more than the roiling surface of an ocean of unspeakable depth, whose abyss awaits us with the endless, perfect patience of death (25-27).

DSB: "Valuable traditional techniques should also be resuscitated by their application to new phenomena; for example Nolli's mid-18th century mapping technique, which he applied to

Rome, when it is adapted to include parking lots, throws considerable light on Las Vegas.

XCP: (Not that Las Vegas needs more light.)

DSB: It could also lend itself fairly easily to computer techniques" (17).

DS: Particularly Merge-Sort.

KF: "It is ironic that Denise Scott Brown should attempt to bestow upon such reservoirs of process and pseudo points of arrival, as parking lots, those very attributes which previous cultures reserved for 'space of human appearance'; such as those churches, so clearly revealed as *res publica* in Nolli's maps of Rome (31).

MW: Kenneth Frampton has clearly never hung out flipping bottle caps in The Emporium parking lot with the seniors on the last day of school.

ST: But this, I think, has always been a bad analogy. Sure, parking lots considered on an urban scale are revealing of a certain cultural attitude towards the car, but no one has ever walked out of a parking lot and thought "now that was a space which really exemplifies the human condition" (except perhaps ironically).

XCP: Yet there is something human about marking and delineating such large expanses of space and land expressly for temporary storage. Haven't you ever walked across some vast parking lot at night, under the glow and buzz of artificial lamps, and find yourself thinking about ~~how many others have had this same experience of~~ (AEM) the interstitial? Parking lots are a testament to (AEM) human commitment to ~~move themselves around, in the name of consumption and entertainment and~~ (AEM) capital. What's more human than that?

MW: Hear, hear!!

LW: Let us not forget the parking lots of 7-11s and Macs (for us Canucks), McDonalds and Applebees, and the distinctly American charm of strip malls that is embodied by Beyoncé's security footage choreography in the Formation music video.

DS: It's true, XCP & LW, that at some level all of us long for death, but to resist this thanatic drive is the task of Architecture and indeed all culture. Parking lots are bad.

MW: I think the Formation video is the polar opposite of the thanatic drive.

ST: Churches, squares, museums, city halls, even malls ... these are the urban typologies which withstand scrutiny at both the urban scale *and* the human scale.

MW: You wanna go get tired legs in a museum or get stoned with your friends and eat junk food by your car in the parking lot? The choice is yours....

DSB: "Facing the implications of ~~Las Vegas in~~ (ML) our work is proving much more difficult than

ML: taking some Yale studio to Las Vegas and writing a book

DSB: describing Las Vegas" (45).

KF: "~~Is this because~~ (ML) they are incomprehensible ~~otherwise, or is it that~~ (ML) like Trajan's Column, the Stardust Sign

ML: Than

DS: at

ML: os' Gauntlet, Wolverine's Adamantium, Thor's Mjolnir

KF: is imperially destined to be codified and then disseminated throughout the world? (ML)" (31)

ML: The Avengers must assemble to save the universe.

MW: "I have never seen an Avengers movie, I just wanted to brag about that" – Kenneth Frampton

DSB: "Advice to socially-concerned architects: keep your ire for ~~social evil, not~~ (AEM) the 'degradation' of taste of the 'masses', and your energy for the difficult tasks of finding ways to put your skills where your heart is. Try to help people live in houses and cities the way they want to live. Try to do what will satisfy you and them. When you disagree do so honestly and without a tone of 'injured-expert.' Lose ~~some battles~~ ~~because their needs are greater than~~ (MS) your aesthetics; win ~~because you say so and they have learned to~~ (MS) trust you (MS); compromise ~~mostly; sometimes, but rarely, ride out~~ (MS) on a white horse but not ~~because 'their' values have been 'perverted' by~~ (MS) the mass media; yours have been brainwashed by the elitist culture. Irony may be the method that allows all these cultures and values to fit together. Ironic (not cynical) comment on the 'status quo' is the artist's gentle subversion. It hurts no one, except self-appointed architectural prophets, but it helps to keep perspectives focused ... There now, if I was misunderstood in the first place, it will surely be worse now" (43-44).

What would we have learned from *Las Vegas* if, instead of a class of graduate students and a couple of rental cars, we had a gaggle of toddlers on foot? What would we have learned if it were not *Las Vegas* as the subject — which was almost too easy, in retrospect — but *Kissimmee, Florida*, the shabby neighbour of the happiest place on earth?

For architects watching Sean Baker's latest film, *The Florida Project*, it might be the third appearance of the massive hemisphere atop "*Orange World*," a restaurant adored by the young protagonists that sparks a connection between the landscape of *Kissimmee* and that depicted in a certain book about *Vegas*. Once the eye is attuned, it is ducks and sheds (but *mostly* sheds) in every shot: the beaming wizard atop "*Gift Shop*," the soft serve and sprinkles of "*Twistee Treat*," the painted orcas adorning *Disney Gift Clearance*.

Separating *Learning from Las Vegas* from the architectural ethnography latent in *The Florida Project* is the eye level of the analysts. *Moonee* and her gang of friends, fellow residents of the themed motels that line the highways to *Disneyworld*, are unabashed ambassadors of this consortium of kitsch. Most crucially, they are pedestrians — not only by virtue of age, but economic status.

Baker's scenography captures now-familiar images of an *America* steeped in signage, but does so with a method contrary to that of *Scott Brown*, *Venturi*, and *Izenour*. Instead of a vehicular approach toward and past the flashing "*Machine Gun America*" and "*Gift Outlet*" signs, the camera fixates on a composed frame of billboards that vanish into the pink sky in neat single point perspective. The only movement comes from *Moonee* and her mother, walking to the nearest resort to peddle perfumes. The scene is still; we are forced to confront it.

For everyone watching *The Florida Project*, who is not an architect, the film is not about architecture — it's about the lives of kids and their young mothers, the unlikely support of a tired motel manager, and the endless reverie of summertime. Still, the built environment forms a crucial background in a tale that constantly oscillates between tragedy and childhood abandon. About halfway through the film, the kids decide to explore the derelict condos nearby — a curiously *Pollo*a series of pastel-tinted structures — and accidentally set one on fire. The scene ends with the adult motel residents gathering to watch the blaze — "*Let it burn!*" they yell.

Baker made the film to explore a topic he had only recently come across: the "*hidden homeless*," people that drift through various forms of provisional housing, living on the brink of destitution. The precarity of the lives of *Moonee* and her comrades constantly shifts in and out of focus, brought to an uncomfortable clarity and then obscured by the afternoon's adventure. In the end, the film is not a critique of the vast real estate empire that is *Disney*, whose presence almost becomes incidental after a while, but the inertia of public authorities in their ability to provide affordable housing. The burning condo becomes an obvious foil to *Magic Castle* and *Future Inn*, the beloved motels of the film's characters, signalling the decay of all permanent options. And although the title of film refers to the early name for *Disney World*, it calls to mind a derogatory term for large-scale public housing, and the absence of that as well.

In her 1971 *Casabella* essay, *Denise Scott Brown* refers to the pop landscape as *automobile space*, but her well-meaning attempt to be inclusive of all the constituents still excludes the carless motel class that *The Florida Project* celebrates. The film inadvertently casts new light on the old experiment by reversing and slowing down the vantage point from which the pop landscape is surveyed. It doesn't seek to evaluate the architectural typologies that correlate with homeownership or housing insecurity, but in making them integral to the well-crafted cinematography of the film, these structures become embedded with a significance that transcends their formal eccentricities. The perspective of a bunch of energetic, often-annoying children may not be the most obvious analytical standpoint when evaluating highway *America*. But when the story is told so gorgeously, it can elevate juvenile chatter to the level of high art — just like *Denise* wanted.

Same old, same old
Miguel Sanchez-Enkerlin, M.Arch | 2019

Following the "*Adjacencies*" Gallery Talk, I found myself in a conversation with a PhD student while enjoying some cool, refreshing, PBRs. "*You have to go downstairs and look at old journals, architects always forget our history and this thing just works in cycles,*" they said (*you should do it, I did, it's wacky*). As we confront the current "*age*" of architecture, I feel that we are indeed operating in cycles and have returned to a point at which image, surface, and projection — i.e. the visual representation of things — seem to have taken hold in architecture once more. Thinking back to the unintentional creation of postmodernism by *Robert Venturi* and *Denise Scott Brown*, I can't shake the feeling that history is repeating itself.

The most productive way to think of architecture is that it is akin to fashion. This creates intimacy in what we do, and removes some of the extra seriousness that we could often do without. We operate with cycles of demand that determine what is "*in.*" Much like choosing our look as individuals, whether we do so intentionally or not, we choose the type of architecture that is produced. Specifically, the architecture pendulum swings between two opposites — volume and surface. Volume encompasses formmaking and space, while surface operates at the level of the image and representation. Volume was the late nineties and early aughts, when *Greg Lynn* and company got carried away with form. We can theorize that this project was cut short by the good ol' *GFC* (global financial crisis) and austerity became the fray of the land. Maybe, just maybe, it is not merely a matter of fashion cycles, but economic cycles too (*Phil Bernstein* and *Kevin Gray* both think we're due for another recession). Why there is a cycle may be irrelevant, just knowing there is one is the more powerful tidbit. A banker recognizes 10-year cycles in the economy, a fashion designer knows bell-bottom jeans will be cool every 15 years. As architects, we should recognize a level of awareness of this loop we are in, as a way to understand where we are and where we are going. If you can't build twisting forms and giant cantilevers, I suppose you make pretty pieces of paper to hang up on the wall or embrace the austerity of the new naive.

Interestingly, the curriculum at *YSoA* seems to be right on trend: last semester's *Pita-Bloom* advanced studio and the current M.Arch I first-year studio coordinated by *Brennan Buck* lead with surface and image-making. Melting random objects can imply volumetric, spatial concerns, sure — but the process feels careless and haphazard in that sense, more effective in the realm of creating things you could not have possibly imagined (*because why would you?*), but in a spirit, one could argue, of wasteful hubris. Form is not what we talk about right now — volume and space are not something that is considered closely. The pendulum has soundly swung into the realm of surface. To be clear, I am not dismissing the value of the exercise, but I suppose I would compel people to engage with it more critically. If we can think of this thing we do cyclically, we know the pendulum will swing back to volume. Bell-bottom jeans will make a comeback at some point, so you better know what to pair them with. Part of having agency over our work is engaging in its intrinsic history. When one makes something, someone at some point probably already tried it and, if lucky, figured it out. As much as we may want to think we're all making really cool, original shit right now, there just may be nothing new under the sun.

More or less at war
Matt Liu, M.Arch | 2020

"*Wake up, you'll be late for the bus!*"

It's the first day of school and your cousins have told you all about it: the friends you'll make, the cafeteria fights, maybe even a secret crush. You can't wait — you bolt out the door without even saying goodbye to Mom.

You arrive at the front gates. Did it always look this institutional? Forge ahead. These will be the best years of your young life.

"*Your child has received straight B-rutalisms this term. Perhaps if they stopped gazing out of our large rectilinear modernist windows and focused on the prescribed reading materials....*"

What does Ms. Vandefow know? Nobody understands you. You hate this, you hate everyone. Your peers think you're stupid, and they label you the class clown. Mom and Dad are concerned about you. "*I'm fei-ing a lot for your tuition, take this seriously.*" You spend all day locked in your room. It's just a rebellious phase, they think, but whatever, you turn up the stereo. *Mad (Architects)* by Ne-yo (*Futurism*) is playing and you continue to doodle. Time to get *Loos*.

You're in an art and architecture academy now. Finally, you get to be around creatives. But why is everyone wearing black? Is there a dress code? You approach a small group at the front of the lecture hall, noticing their thick, round glasses. You catch them mid-conversation: "*I love minimalism, less is more right?*"

Aw, crap.

University is okay, you're not at the top of your class but you're coasting along. Your best friend *P.J.* is killing it, he secures his 20th civic job and yells "*I'm a whore!*" as he pops open another bottle of champagne in the limo. It's the night of the *AIA* Awards. You and your friends arrive at the theater. *Marty* was the first to ask "*Where's the Front Door?*" He's kind of like you, but always concerned with networking ... he used to be fun.

Recession. "*I'm so poor.*" You open up the backend of your website and proceed to remove all your work from the 80s and 90s. You reiterate to your friends "*This is the last time I'll say this, I am not now and never was a ...*" It's time to rebrand yourself, people will take you seriously. You'll be remembered for creating "good design" and not pigeonholed for using expressive forms or color. You also teach studio on the side. You tell your students to make plans, sections, and diagrams, lots of diagrams.

Oh yes, the diagram. Now you love a clear concept. "*Yes is more.*"

The world of screens
Shelby Wright, M.Arch | 2021

In the 21st Century, we live a quasi-digital existence, spending part of our time in the "*Real*" world and part in the online world. This phenomenon has changed the way humanity operates and how culture is propagated. In our contemporary lives, we are more involved in the screens of our personal phones than the spaces which surround us. Buildings are more and more relegated to a background condition; the screen has replaced the facade.

Denise Scott Brown and *Robert Venturi* were proponents for an architecture of billboards in which the building could be read as a sign on a flat surface. The building as a billboard was an icon for the building's function. The transformation of society into a digital existence has metamorphosed the billboard icon into the screen. The digital experience translates images through a two-dimensional surface where the screen is a facade for the online world, constantly changing based on the desire of the user. A screen is not an inert sign which lays idle, proclaiming a single message about what lies beyond — instead, it is a wholly interactive, interconnected interface, constantly being shaped and modified by the user.

Make no mistake, the translation of the billboard does not stop at the screen itself, but includes everything within the screen. Is that blue square with the white ƒ not a facade for Facebook? Do we not "*open*" apps like we "*open*" doors or windows? The icons for these apps are billboard-facades in that they are a front and an image for the app itself. The screen is truly a city composed of these facades where each icon must convey its contents in the simplest terms. Each one vies for attention, but is constrained by the same dimension as all others, much like plots of land. These apps are constantly updating their icons and logos to be flashier, trendier, more marketable versions of their former selves. In the end, the user curates these building blocks into a personal urban fabric, based on their own organizational system.

What does this mean for architecture? One possible answer can be found in the Football Hall of Fame project by Venturi Scott Brown. They suggested the building be fronted by a massive screen which would showcase images from football history. This of course is more closely related to a theater or television screen where the viewer is a passive subject rather than today's interactive user. This exemplifies the notion that buildings could be fronted by or integrated with screens, which can be seen in major commercial districts like *Times Square, Piccadilly Circus, Shibuya Crossing*, etc. Another possibility is the transition of architectural efforts into the purely digital. Why does space matter if we are consumed by screens? Despite the growing integration with the digital world, humanity exists in physical space. No matter how many surfaces become screens, those surfaces still create a space. It has been the role of the architect to design those spaces, and we are at a critical junction where architects could continue the project of space making or move entirely into the project of designing for screens. At the end of the day, there was always a box attached to the billboard, and there had to be a shed to decorate.