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RESURGENCE JONATHAN MOLLOY

"I think segregation is the predominant feature of spatial organization in the American landscape, and I also think it has a profound effect on democracy," bellowed J. Phillip Thompson in the 4th floor pit, loosening a few dull rocks in Rudolph's corduroy walls. At first Equality in Design Brown Bag lunch on February 10th, Thompson, MIT Political Scientist and Professor of Planning, expounded upon the ills of discriminatory and segregational planning practices and their deep roots in our nation's history. Thompson began with the simple and striking fact that America is more segregated now than it was in 1954, the year of *Brown v. Board of Education*. This regression manifests itself through an insidious process: the universally accepted (and often celebrated) practices of capitalistic real estate development driven by the voracious appetite of gentrification. In its wake, Thompson describes, the territory for those displaced by gentrification develop as American bantustans, analogs to their South African namesakes. Once thriving black and Latino communities find themselves distant and isolated with fewer and fewer resources.

The immense and profoundly problematic result of this spatial segregation is, Thompson argued, that people of different races and incomes do not know each other. Further, there are few public spaces that resist these divisions by encouraging mixing, interaction, or connection in a shared public realm. This is so utterly significant, Thompson made clear, that in working with major black and Latino political leaders to establish an agenda for the upcoming election, they prioritized the dislocation of local communities over income inequality. The growing divide between communities of different races and incomes deeply impacts the ability for political coordination between them, despite shared aspirations. And so Thompson makes a call to arms: divest from real estate institutions that facilitate the dislocation of communities through the capitalistic processes of gentrification.

As a student at YSoA, Thompson's talk and its conclusion left me both truly inspired and terribly disappointed. Inspired to think of the profound political power of the built environment and my capacity to empower change as an architect; disappointed in the way our school has failed to address this subject. How is it that the primary agenda of black and Latino political leaders, which is inherently spatial, is largely absent from our academic discourse? *Introduction to Planning and Development*, the only required class about urban



first year M.Arch I class is currently facing this dilemma in the Building Project where pedagogy and social responsibility coexist in an uneasy tension. What better circumstance to discuss the problem of housing in America and the role of architects than a Yale architecture studio dedicated to the topic with the resources to carry out its finding in the world? In fact, though it may not seem like it now, the Building Project was born of student activism in the 1960s and focused primarily on agendas of social responsibility. Back then, the school was fiercely political and played a pivotal role in civil rights activism on campus. Architecture was inseparable from politics and brought with it a deep moral imperative. So significant was this imperative that the students created a document pledging their ethical responsibility as architects:

"All people must have the right and power to control their own lives. Like any other profession, architecture is not an end in itself, but part of a political process. Because we believe human values are more important than material values:

We will only use our skills as tools for liberating oppressed peoples.

The architects only responsibility is to the people who use the environment.

We will work for equal distribution of economic power Work against such U.S. activities as the war in South east Asia, or any imperialist and racist exploitation at home and abroad.

Work against those who exploit people and land for their own power and profit"

What happened? Fifty years later, while the nation continues to suffer many of the same ills it did in the 60s, our study of architecture drifts into to the political shadows of monastic study and intellectual isolation. And so I find myself in search of an absent discourse: what is the position of architecture in today's society? What are its aspirations, its responsibilities, its boundaries, its ethics? And what is our role as architects in facilitating them?

What is our pledge? They had it right in the 60s. I will add, in light of Thompson's lecture, that it is to employ architecture as a vehicle for democracy. If in the 60s, that meant working against imperialism in Southeast Asia, today it is working against the racial and economic segregation of the American landscape, and the exploitative processes that create it. Further, it is putting our architectural energies towards the integration of the built environment, in which we might create diverse spaces of love. "That's at the core of it. If we don't care about one another, there is no democracy. And that's the problem we have in America. [...] Design needs to be how we build integrated spaces so that people can really get to know and ultimately love one another. That is the mission. If design is not about that, design is a technocratic tool, damn near useless." Let's make it useful.

POSTURE CHECK SAMANTHA JAFF, ALICIA POZNIAK AND MADELYNN RINGO

On an average day most students at YSoA sit for between eight to ten hours. That's about three full days out of every week, 11 days per month, and 130 full days per year. Even so, most of us pay little attention to posture or ergonomics. Like many experiences at YSoA, there is a standard uniform impressed upon us: we are assigned identical hard-to-change desk spaces, even our desktops and screen-savers are pre-determined. But how could this particular rigid desk fit the needs of so many unique and different sized bodies? As architects we are always asked to be conscience of the body and its relationship to space yet for our own work spaces, we forgo responsibility for these metrics.

Various studies have warned against the dangers of sitting for long periods of time, let alone sitting poorly. Dr. James Levine, inventor of the treadmill desk, claims that "sitting is the new smoking," comparing the long term health issues of sedentary lifestyle to that of a heavy smoker. Chronic back pain, shortening of the muscles in your legs and curved spines are just some of the health risks that you could be facing. Even if you exercise, returning to sitting with bad posture can cause micro-tears created while exercising to heal into hunched positions. Finally, bad posture can lead to career problems down the line; no slouchers at my firm!

To remedy, try five minutes of standing for every thirty minutes of sitting. You could also team up to "posture check" each other. It is also likely that adjusting your desk, chair, or computer monitor can help improve posture. so check out our guide to Proper Rudolph Posture.

Stay tuned for a Health and Wellness survey coming your way! We want to see where YSoA stands in our Physical, Spiritual, Mental, and Sexual Health!

RENEWAL ETHAN FISCHER

As recently as 2008, YSoA students held an annual ritual: the burning of Rudolph Hall in effigy. First hand recollections are inconsistent, but it is certain that the custom initially marked the anniversary of the building's 1969 fire and was held in June. Over time, it evolved to take on a variety of other symbolic meanings. More recent iterations were performed during "initiation," an event held on the eve of the first years' first review. The Administration prohibited initiation in 2008, reportedly in an effort to conserve Rudolph Hall, then newly renovated and restored to its pre-fire condition. Initiation operated as a unification of the classes; the burning ritual as a suggestion of renewal.

In his essay *Sequences*, Bernard Tschumi describes the significance of ritual for architectural space: "A ritual implies a near-frozen relationship between space and event. It institutes a new order against the disorder it aims to avoid." Tschumi's understanding constitutes one form of ritual – that which binds event and space. There is another form, however: that which seeks to facilitate the return to a perceived baseline condition. For example, on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, community members gather at a body of water to "cast" their sins into sea. Clothing is shaken out and dirt removed, allowing a new order of cleanliness at the start of the year.

So too during the month of Ramadan, as Muslims fast in order to induce corporeal and spiritual cleansing. The etymology of Ramadan traces back to "scorching heat," an elemental source of cleansing comparable to the use of water on Rosh Hashanah. These rituals, rather than producing "near-frozen relationships" – again elemental – between space and event, allow for new possibilities.

The ritual of burning Rudolph Hall in effigy is particularly relevant now, as we anticipate the renewal of the School with the incoming Dean. It need not necessitate a break from other YSoA rituals which have bound event and space, but rather may provide the opportunity for individual and collective reflection. The ritual serves as a provocation, the value of which may be measured by the discussions surrounding its interpretation. Continuity and tradition are punctuated by respite, and insight produced by reprieve. Perhaps it is time to strike another match, and start anew.

Recollections

"I have been at the School since 1966, first as a student, then as a faculty member beginning in 1970, and this is the first time that I have ever heard of this, so I have to question its authenticity."

"For our year, a big poster – it was on the 7th floor – a big poster of Bob was unfurled outside the window which [second years] had doused in kerosene and then thrown the equivalent of molotov cocktails at it. So instead of burning the building, they burned Bob in effigy, because Bob had become the symbol of the building and the school. It was a big event."

"Unfortunately, I never experienced this ritual/tradition first-hand. By the time I came around, it had faded into memory."

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MET·RICS /metriks/ noun, provocation

1. methods of assessing individual, collective, or institutional success and failure.

2. hardline framing devices intended to mingle hard and social sciences in verification of architectural design work.



3. imminent ethical frameworks, value systems, and cultural structures within a body of work, ways of working and thinking.

4. *linguistics*: the use or study of meter in composition.

5. *tradition*: a trope for establishing critical distance from one's work.

6. the assessed value of learning through intellectual risk taking.

7.

planning, is solely concerned with profit-driven real estate development and is deliberately blind to its social and political impact. In fact, the class frames gentrification not as the systemic mechanism of segregation that we know it to be, but instead as an urban act of increasing real estate value and generating profit. Thus, we learn development through the eyes of the powerful and the rich, understanding only processes of one-way profit, and nothing in the way of innovative, community-driven development. "The idea that architects and planners just learn about real estate deals and not even critically, just learn how to fit into existing real estate deals come up with by developers, is atrocious. Is atrocious," laments Thompson pointedly. "We need to be blowing that stuff up."

For Thompson, architects fall into three categories: workdays, the overworked and disempowered staff of city governments and developers; high priests, the designers of beautiful buildings for the rich; and insurgents, the "besieged minority...who are trying to use design to improve the lives of people." In her course, Launch, Keller Easterling also identifies these "roles" as do gooders, for whom low budgets and bad taste are a necessary evil, and the developer-architect, whose role is defined primarily by an ability to increase value. Why can't there exist between them a hybrid role that celebrates both architectural sophistication and beauty, and an ethical imperative to improve the lives of people? Certainly, these priorities are not at odds, but in fact invigorate one another. I, for one, aspire to be both high priest and insurgent...an insurgent priest, maybe.

The planning class, and the general apolitical camber of the school, is thus that much harder to swallow. Yale is the last architecture school in the country that stands in isolation from its academic siblings, a celebrated fact that encourages the unhindered and monastic study of (capital A) Architecture as a discipline and a practice. This is a unique privilege and an extremely valuable endeavor, and one that I certainly cherish. Furthermore, Architecture is not easy, and its impact relies heavily on a deep and sophisticated understanding of space, tectonics, light, construction, etc. However, these topics don't, by nature, preclude learning about the ways in which architecture embodies, and is conceived through, political systems, cultural conceptions, construction processes, and existing and projected urban fabrics. Using a narrow definition of architecture leaves its participation in systems of power and oppression to chance.

Just as architectural beauty cannot come at the expense of exploitation, architectural education should not come at the expense of a political conversation. As Thompson points out, rather surprisingly, the implications of our increasingly segregated built environment are largely un-theorized. It is not hard to imagine why: we don't talk about it – we are often too busy learning about Architecture. The