

PAPRIKA!  
5-07B  
*The COVID-19 Journals*  
April 13, 2020

Editor's Note

COVID-19 has left us stranded halfway between our pre-pandemic realities and our current Zoom limbo. Now more than ever, we navigate by stories, and in their telling sometimes we find ourselves tucked into someone else's story for a sentence or two—the connection offering a measure of comfort and reprieve. Whether you identify with the stories on this page or not, they make up a constellation through which we invite you to trace and navigate your own life events. We hope they bring some sense of cohesion and connection, their threads criss-crossing through space and time to tie us back together in some way, even when all seems irreparably torn and fractured. The voices collected on this page are in response to a school-wide survey. While condensed and edited for clarity, they are, as much as possible, presented as received. Our thanks to the storytellers who contributed to this ongoing conversation, and our gratitude to those who provided this space in which to gather.

occasional anxiety attacks, otherwise fine / stuck in the same crappy living space , more stuck than ever / zoom is like any other learning tool : chalkboard , projection , voice , text , image — better for some than others — i am having trouble concentrating on, processing, and retaining information and concepts / to be obliged to do work with the necessary tools intentionally withheld is worse than having no work at all / isolation and anxiety make it difficult to even remember that my community exists / my mental health is not well. yale mental health was inadequate before the crisis, and is even worse now / a policeman threatened me with a citation for 'jogging' in east rock yesterday

Anonymous, New Haven

Mar 13<sup>th</sup>  
I explain the situation and Fulbright helps me book a new flight back to NY.

i sleep at 5 am and wake up at 9 am for structures now. i stopped drinking coffee and i miss my mom.  
Meghna, New Haven

Mar 10<sup>th</sup>  
I fly into LA. There are less than 5 people wearing masks.

Mar 12<sup>th</sup>  
I get an email from Fulbright. Workshop cancelled, along with my flight back to NY.

Mar 17<sup>th</sup>  
I fly back to NY. I book a van straight to New Haven to avoid Metro North.

COVID-19 has started to challenge our buildings in a novel way. Is architectural equipment creating new potential disasters for our buildings? Elevators become a "petri dish" for the virus. Central air conditioning helps to spread the virus by increasing the airflow among rooms. These are conveniences, and we can hardly live without them; however, they can become the accomplices of an epidemic. Should more people participate in the design process besides architects and engineers -for example, epidemiologists- to avoid building disasters in the post-COVID-19 era?  
Mingda Zhang, New Haven

Finishing my master's in my parent's house is a deeply weird feeling, sort of "the world ends not with a bang but with a whimper." Something that feels very present is the seemingly collective push to "create content [online.]" I'm a little leery of this: is FOMO culture going digital? If, pray tell, I \*don't\* Zoom into that digital lecture or Q&A, am I missing out? I think we should all feel like it's ok to really disconnect right now.  
Anonymous, Vermont

Mar 18<sup>th</sup>  
The US Embassy in Seoul is closed until further notice. I have to renew my visa at the embassy if I want to return to the US. Now, going back to Seoul is a risk. I hear my friend has a slight cough and fever. The health center told her not to come back, and to get medicine and a thermometer by herself. I am pretty sure they are ready to let me die here.

Mar 19<sup>th</sup>  
1 United States Dollar equals 1,234.25 South Korean won. The highest in 4 years.

Mar 20<sup>th</sup>  
I get an email about relocation to an undergrad dorm. A lot of confusion.

"COVID-19, however, is a "double-functioning element:" a harsh reality and a gentle wake-up call. It has revealed the educational strengths and uncovered the institutional failures. Namely, the Building Project. Building Project, like the architecture industry, recreates the power dynamics of white colonial america. Our education is a speculative practice that has the capacity to re-envision and reimagine the future of architecture. What would an intersectional building environment look like? We will only know when YSoA approaches race with the same vitality as their commitment to closing the gender gap. When ALL women, including black women, Latina women, and indigenous women, are priorities in our recruitment and retention efforts. COVID-19 has revealed the racist and sexist underbelly of YSoA, unattributable to anyone in particular but an institution that sleepwalks towards equity. After this pandemic, "there is no return to sleepwalking." - Cornel West  
Anonymous, West Coast

Mar 21<sup>st</sup>  
Another email. Relocation has to happen tomorrow. I decide to move to my friend's place. I start packing. I get another email saying I could stay till next weekend.

Mar 22<sup>th</sup>  
Now I see people wearing masks. I notice they walk on the road when they encounter me on the sidewalk. Is it because of social distancing? Or is it because of who I am?

When I feel okay, in spite of everything: is it weird I'm doing fine?  
When I don't feel okay, in spite of not being directly affected or in danger: should I be this upset?  
When I don't check the news: am I hiding under a rock?  
When I google the death toll first thing every morning: am I being morbid?  
When I think about the fall: \*complete shut down at the thought of another horrible semester online\*  
When I don't think about the fall: is time even passing or am I reliving every day over and over again?  
Anonymous, New Jersey

Things we should do together alone:  
1. Watch the light as it enters our respective apartments/homes/spaces and follow it  
2. Trim all the little fibers/pilling/loose strings that plague the surfaces and edges of our clothes  
3. If we don't have plants indoors, we can identify a plant outside our window, emotionally attach, and cheer it on as it comes alive in spring  
4. Talk with our loved ones every single day to remind ourselves that though we are alone now, we also know that we are not, and maybe we never were  
Nabil, New Haven

Mar 23<sup>th</sup>  
Structures II exam. Almost all the rooms on the floor have been vacated. Every morning, I am fearful of someone unlocking my door.

The biggest surprise for me is that I am much less stressed about work. Certainly the quality of school is lower after the quarantine, but the pressure to do work in a certain way or for a certain amount of time has faded quite a bit from the pressure cooker that is Rudolph Hall. I feel more free to work the way I want to work now that I'm away from school.  
Andrew Economos Miller, New Haven

Mar 28<sup>th</sup>  
I move to my friend's place. So nice to talk to actual human beings.

Attempting to connect with people during isolation is starting to feel emotionally expensive. Social distancing is showing me a hundred ways to injure myself with the desire for closeness. Wasn't it always like this, pre-COVID? In Rudolph we'd stay awake until dawn, clicking and cutting and gluing until our bodies hurt, the taste of crummy deli coffee on our breaths, reduced by fatigue, stretched out like putty, our thoughts made all scribbly, all of us together but really alone. The ugly truth of architecture school is an open secret we've all agreed to keep. A communal performance of virtuous workaholicism that we love to joke about. The hustle hurts, and it grinds, and we carry on. An incorrigible case of the fuck-its for you and me and all of us. Is this community?  
Sarah Kim, Los Angeles

April 1<sup>st</sup>  
Everyone flying from NY must be quarantined for 14 days in Seoul. New confirmed cases in the US per day are three times as many as all confirmed cases in Korea. Korea is still Level 3: "reconsider travel." Why am I staying here? Am I sacrificing my health for a Zoom education? Is BP2020 still going to happen?

Thoughts for the therapist I don't have:  
My relationship with one of my parents changed dramatically in the past year, to the point that this parent doesn't know my address. This parent has past episodes of respiratory medical history. I'm trying to balance the justification of the anger, disappointment, and loss of trust that led to my distancing of this relationship, knowing that if they get sick and don't recover, god forbid, we will not have spent the time resolving the issues we need to, and how that would break my heart.  
Changing economic situations might lead to a loss of income for my partner's family. In this case we would need to step in and help out financially. I'm worried about what footing this puts us on in terms of being able to also pay for our living expenses on top of education expenses, while maintaining emergency savings to help cover costs in case my partner's work hours get cut back or, god forbid, they are let go because of the economic implications of the pandemic.  
I worry that I'm not talking to family and friends enough during this time while trying to keep up with a "normal" schedule. Internal debates about balancing gestures to the world outside of me vs. grinding on for the future.  
Shifting scales, I'm worried that after all of this is over societies will go back to the way they were and won't take the time to reflect on what this time means. I wonder what could be worth so many people feeling like they can't get what they need to stay afloat during this pandemic. Money? Power? Security? Continuity? It is a shame our systems are set up to be so reliant on these elements, forcing people to make choices they shouldn't have to survive, while simultaneously knowing that these traits are at the root of so many problems.  
Anonymous, New Haven

April 2<sup>nd</sup>  
M.Arch I first-years host a town hall during studio. I share a draft of this timeline. Some friends reach out to me. I was surprised that they seemed shocked by what I was going through.

A Conversation in the Future:  
Random suburbanite: "Why is architecture so important anyway?"  
Future me: "Remember the Spring of 2020 and you had to spend every waking moment in your beige, cookie-cutter house and completely lost it. Brenda?"  
Shelby, Ohio

April 4<sup>th</sup>  
Should I go back to Seoul next weekend? I check for flights every day.

April 7<sup>th</sup>  
A package arrives from Seoul. 8 masks. My mom had to wait in line at the pharmacy on certain dates. 8 is the maximum number that can be shipped to a family member abroad per month. Other than that, sending masks is banned.

I guess if there aren't any internships or jobs or real career opportunities, I can always crawl into a hole in the ground and wait this thing out. Maybe it's like, having dug the foundation of the BP house, there's no concrete truck left working to fill it. So instead of inhabiting the house, I can hang out in the pit. And maybe we all have a pit in the place of our education and can find ways to continue living. Sometimes we'll visit each other. "Hey, nice pit. I love what you've done with the place." Generally, we will locate a person's foundation pit by its general size and disposition, alleviating the need for addresses and other abstractions. The unfilled foundations of our education are like the empty swimming pools of Venice, CA, in the 1970s. But all they got was skateboarding, and we risk discovering much more.  
Anonymous, New Haven

I am stuck back in my hometown with my mom. Don't get me wrong, my mom is lovely. But I had already been sick for a full month, and I was losing my shit, terrified that it's COVID-19. The thought of carrying a deadly virus to my saint of a mother made my stomach flip. While this was happening, online schooling began and I found it extremely hard to sit and stare at a small screen for 12 hours straight. It takes 7 to 10 days to get the results back. It took 8 days for mine. 8 days of thinking about whether your loved ones are safe. And if they have it, whether you are the one that caused it. Luckily, both of our test results came back negative.  
Anonymous, No Location

Sangji Han, New Haven

Some days I wake up rather depressed simply because it's dark outside and will continue to be so for most of the "day." The isolation is also very strange. I am back home, where I can finally speak to others with the full use of my colloquial Singlish, and yet, there is no one to talk to (at least, in person). Perhaps it's because of the solidarity of our class or that I'm so far away, or because we've been robbed of the privilege of social contact, but I find myself reflecting a lot about how quiet I've been at Yale. Perhaps the extreme circumstance will turn me into a more sociable person. 🙏