

Editor's Note

Reflections by Paprikal invited contributors to explore moments, thoughts, and potentialities within our current world predicament. Yanbo Li's essay, "10 years to reflect in the same space," contemplates personal development amid life's disruptions, while Precious Ndukba's recipe delves into discovering strength through shared community experiences. The reflections gathered here collectively interrupt the flow of time's inertia.

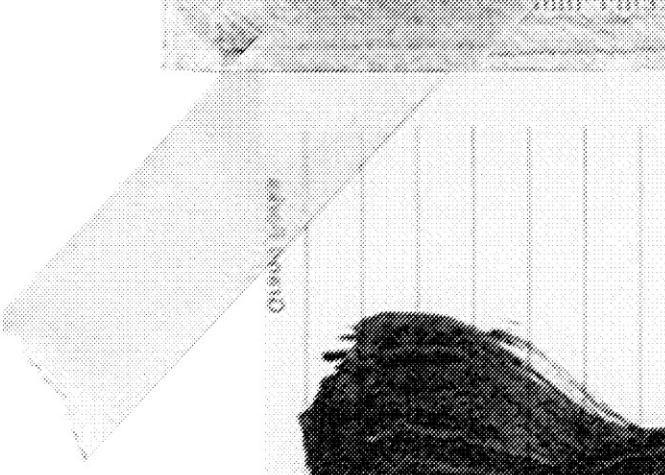
More tangible expressions of reflection can be gleaned from pieces like Yotam Oron's "Capturing Reflections," which examines the reflective quality of glass and its implications. Abigail Chang's project, "Reflections of a Room," explores reflections as a "dynamic tool for intentional construction, whose subtle impact disrupts constant noise."

Yuval Yadin and McKenzie Blaine's work prompts the metaphorical process of reflection on the ongoing large-scale phenomena encountered daily. They convey reflections on the problems wrought by the U.S.'s colonized food system, from a disruption of self-reliance to threatening centuries of Indigenous Ojibwe culture and life-supporting agricultural practices. As Leanna Goose notes in Blaine's piece, the cycles of time are disrupted as we burn through resources at the expense of the next seven generations - and our ten-year future.

Today's systems of power rush to establish their preferred solutions for the climate crisis, making decisions that alter our futures. Without dedicated space and time for reflection, we risk allowing the immediacy of climate action to be co-opted for single-variable solutions. Instead, we need space to envision solutions that address not just carbon, but a transformation away from the exploitation of land, labor, people, and ecosystems that has led us to this singular moment of planetary existentialism. In this issue of Paprikal we have created one such space for reflection.

Reflections thus explores the relationship between the self and the self, the institution, and the collective as we conceptualize and work to forge a new environmental reality that limits the scale of climate change. We present to you an array of work that intrigues and questions the manifestation of a reflection as something that is either built or a moment of thoughtful perception.

As editors, we also ask to question the value of reflections. Do they lend themselves as a moment of paralysis, avoiding necessary action? Or does the rupture they create lead to a purposeful step forward?



Precious Ndukuba
If you can't do anything, just collect your mother's recipes. It's a lesson from my favourite photographer—Vanley Burke. Look him up, then come back to this.

We were discussing missed moments. The time left between the constant photos, spaces experienced but not captured. The people he knew, loved, hugged and laughed with—but aren't held in his photos. He reminded me, as kind older uncles often do, that there are things we do now to tell stories for later.

But later seems like an odd discussion. Now has a strong grip. While we watch worlds crumble through black mirrors, hope fights to keep her head above water. Ten years from now doesn't seem any more loving than today. For me, it is only in collective that we begin to hope. There are things, small collective rituals, that can package that hope for later.

To him those things didn't have to be photos alone. They could be a phone call, a letter, a voice note, a diary entry. Or a book of your mothers' recipes. I invite you to join me and package a piece of hope for later. So, Call someone – And ask them for the recipe of the best thing they make.

Here is my mother's recipe for Akara—it's a Nigerian dish that can be eaten at any time, but morning/afternoon is preferred. I've loved it since I was a kid.

*Wash 500 g of brown African honey beans.
Add one peeled and roughly chopped big white onion.
Add fresh scrub bonnets pepper.
Add 2 knorr cube original.
Blend with a bit of water, maybe 80 ml.
Ensuring thick consistency.
Add a pinch of sea salt.
Fry in a deep frying pan until golden brown.
Turn regularly to reduce absorbing oil.
Enjoy.*

Things to note—they won't mention everything that makes that meal special. That's for you to add. My mum forgot the very specific brand of custard and agage bread we eat with it. Or that old oil can be more flavourful. Or that I will always be reminded of eating it with her every time I make it.

It's a powerful practice, collecting. But the re-enactment, the making, the rewriting and layering, that is where the hope is stored. Collect your mother's/brother's/uncle's/friend's recipe. Add the special things they miss. Then make it.

Yotam Oron Capturing Reflections

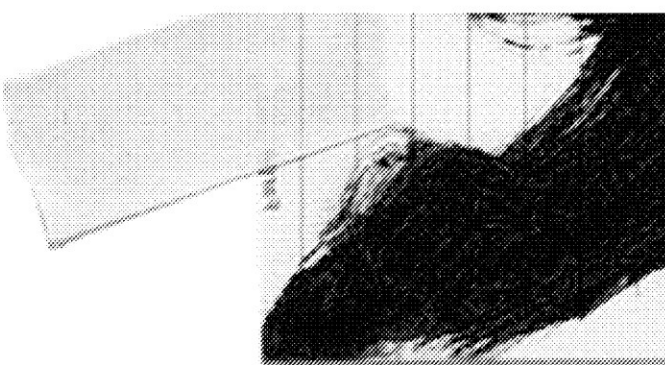


Through filming, drawing and modeling the reflections of the concrete facade of the Becton building onto the glass facade of the Tsai Center of Innovation building, I try to give physicality to the unique juxtaposition of the two buildings.

The process of capturing the reflections involved filming with a smooth and consistent movement, then translating the footage into a drawn catalog format, depicting the distorted Becton facade as it appears on the curved glass surface.

By drawing the non physical distortion, I'm trying to capture the way architecture can be reinterpreted by its surroundings, to catch evolving dynamics of space, and to develop a methodology that views reflections as potential catalysts for architectural configurations.

In addition to capturing the unique mesmerizing optical effects of reflections and geometry on this site, the project deals more broadly and conceptually with reflection as a tool for design and imagination.



**Athena Sofides
Of Petrochemical Origin**
Plastic never disappears, not completely—it just gets smaller and smaller until we can't see it anymore. Tens, hundreds, thousands of years, and its traces will continue to haunt and animate the living and non-living and somewhat-living pieces of the world. Plastic is the figure of political, economic, and cultural profundity it is because it

can so easily be molded—shaped into whatever new market problem a requisite solution can be demanded of, and hardened into that, a literal and metaphorical vehicle of individualization.

noun
any of numerous organic synthetic or processed materials that are mostly thermoplastic or thermosetting polymers of high molecular weight that can be made into objects, films, or filaments any one of a group of materials made chemically and shaped into different forms for different uses

Transformation, the necropolitics of the undead, prehistoric bones and leaves dredged up and rendered energetic. Fossil fuels refined, scorched, and recombined into polymerized assemblages: petrochemicals, plastic. Chains of chemicals, spliced and reconstituted, furling and unfurling into an unimaginably malleable substrate: plastic.

adjective
capable of being molded or modeled
capable of being adapted to varying conditions
capable of being deformed continuously and permanently in any direction without rupture
soft enough to be changed into a new shape

The object of plastic, in turn, molds—markets, societies, endocrine systems, dreams. It is both visible and invisible, present as macroscopic chunks and infinitesimal clusters of hormone-mimicking compounds; object and subject, imbued with an agency that it never asked for but whose cascading consequences are undeniably responsible for intoxicating the land and its bodies; poison and healer, disrupting bodies and encasing medicines and technologies that many people rely on to stay alive, and that they must be able to access should we have a just future.

adjective combining form
developing ; forming
: of or relating to (something designated by a term ending in -plasm, -plast, -plasty, or -plasy)
Transfixing and subverting and combining and assuming and igniting form(s). Plastic, soft or rigid, if you want that—cheap to make or so expensive that the costs of its infinite longevity cannot be comprehended, depending on how you look at it—formed by us or for us, depending on the us in question—lifeblood or blood-poison, depending on which angle you take. Personally, it keeps me alive in real time and leaches into me in slower but maybe not artificial time—dermal absorption, epoxy resin + skin = portal, I imagine or maybe feel my neural pathways shrink and tweak and soften and sharpen. Aspiring toward non-toxic futures does nothing for the resins and fragments that will linger, embodied, probably forever. Becoming plastic [noun] is human, and becoming human, maybe, is plastic [adjective]. To exist amongst and because of the objects and bodies in and around one's own is a loneliness, and a perpetual state of multitude.

synonyms
malleable moldable shapable waxy pliable ductile workable adaptable.



Thickening the Ground Line

Antonio Velasco
The ground, the fundamental substrate upon which architecture takes form, holds a significance that extends beyond mere physical support. While in architectural sections it is often reduced to a simple visual element—a thick line or a solid hatch—the ground embodies a multitude of meanings and implications that extend far beyond its visual abstraction.

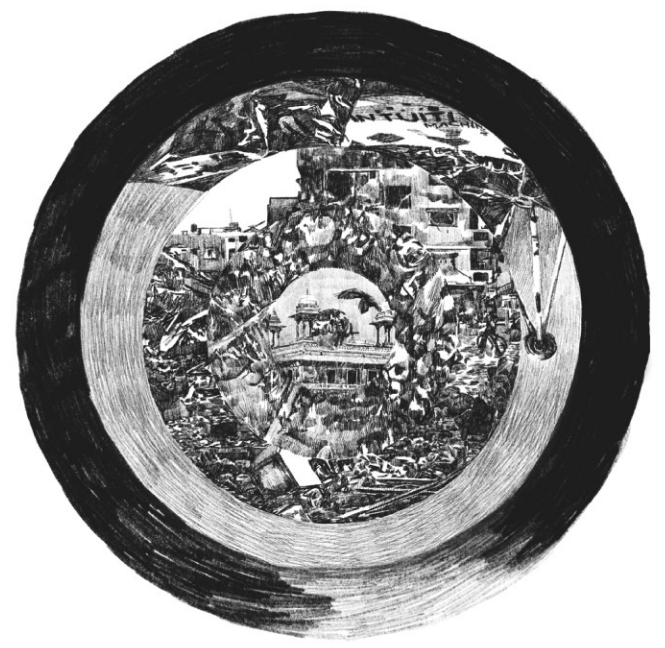
Our methods of representation mirrors our perception, and the simplification of the drawn ground is indicative of how we view the soil—as a static medium, frozen in time, and inherently monolithic. However, the soil defies its portrayal as a passive entity; rather, it serves as a dynamic arena of continual change and decay.

Positioned at the crossroads of various temporal scales, soil operates within both human and geological time frames. This transformational process is often observable within our immediate understanding of time, such as the decomposition of flesh and bone into soil. Alternatively, it may unfold as a profound change over extended periods, as demonstrated by the conversion of organic material into oil. In this intricate weave of time and decomposition, the soil undergoes a meticulous reorganization, shaping a distinct spatial chronology.

The vast array of materials and resources generated by this decomposition has been seized upon by humans through extractive practices. From excavating oil to mining materials for concrete and construction, architecture has frequently regarded the subsoil as a reservoir for extraction and economic gain. Yet, in the cyclical nature of existence, architecture eventually succumbs to the forces of time and decay, returning to the embrace of the ground from which it arose. The ground, as both witness and custodian of this perpetual cycle, becomes a symbol of construction and deconstruction, a reminder of the deep interplay of depth and time.

So, when the next architectural project beckons us to draw the ground, let's pause and consider beyond the simple stroke of a line or hatch. Let's thicken this continuous line, allowing it to swell with the weight of time and narratives hidden within.

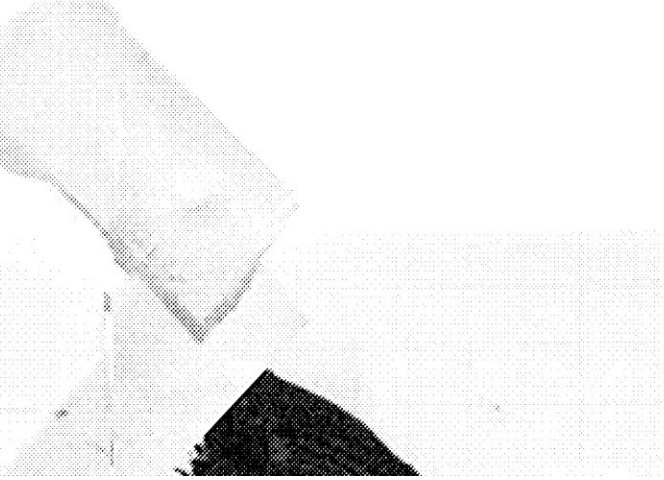
Samantha Ong



I think we have a habit of looking forward into the future or looking backward into the past. We constantly have an abundance of information available to process, which makes the presence of oneness difficult to identify, and consequently understand. Swiping through our Instagram stories: meals, politics, travels, selfies, articles, pets, advertisements, families, etc. All these events are happening at the same time, so where do our ordinary days, our big and small joys fit within the greater field of simultaneity? How do we process the "good" and the "bad" things that are happening concurrently in a variety of scales and intimacy? Slowness is demanded as a response to adequately appreciate and participate in oneness, but discouraged by the speed of which we operate. Simultaneity is constantly present yet constantly fleeting. Contemporary human existence is about coming to terms with the smallness of ourselves, and now, and the bigness of the world, all at once.

In anticipation of making this drawing, I scrolled through The New York Times website. It's easy to fall into despair through the front page alone—negativity and tragedy being sensational and captivating. It took a few more clicks than I expected to find titles that were at least more ambiguous. I chose a selection of headlines that ranged in scale and evoked a range of emotional responses and added in two personal moments that occurred within the similar time frame of the articles, as listed.

From the outer to inner rings:
6. A Total Solar Eclipse Is Coming. Here's What You Need to Know.
5. Odyssey Moon Lander Heads Into a Cold Lunar Slumber
4. Gaza's Shadow Death Toll: Bodies Buried Beneath the Rubble
3. What a Search for the Signs of Spring Reveal
2. last week at fatehpur sikri
1. A dropping me off at the train



**Pablo Perezalonso
Nature and crime**
1908 Adolf Loos:
Ornament-Nature and crime

Louis Sullivan's: "It could only benefit us if for a time we were to abandon nature and concentrate entirely on the erection of buildings that were finely shaped and charming in their sobriety."

The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of nature from utilitarian objects. I believed that with this discovery I was bringing joy to the world; it was not that thank me.

What mankind created without nature in earlier millennia was thrown away without a thought and abandoned to destruction.

See, therein lies the greatness of our age, that it is incapable of producing a new nature. We have outgrown nature; we have fought our way through to freedom from nature.

Since nature is no longer organically linked with our culture, it is also no longer the expression of our culture. The nature that is manufactured today has no connection with us, has absolutely no human connexions, no connection with the world order. It is not capable of developing.

Freedom from nature is a sign of spiritual strength. Modern man uses the nature of earlier or alien cultures as he sees fit. He concentrates his own inventiveness on other things.



Katie Davis Red Fox Farm

Carolyn and Johnny Davis have lived most of their lives on an 8 acre farm in Cotton Plant, Mississippi. It's a beautiful place—peaceful and functional. The farm fenced in my grandparents' lives, gave them physical boundaries. In turn, they ensured that the water on the farm ran clean for the cows roaming the fields. They could name all the trees around the farm—could tell you that black walnut trees are toxic to farm animals but oak acorns are good for cows if eaten in moderation.

My grandfather bought the land after high school, says he just liked the look of it. He lived in a barn while going to college at Mississippi State until he was drafted into the army for the Vietnam war. When he got out, it was a place for my grandparents to get to know each other again and recover from confusion, pain, and destruction. On this farm, they raised two kids, five dogs, a horse, three cats, and hundreds of small Angus calves over the years. As they aged, my grandparents got jobs off of the land, stable sources of income. Yet farming continued to be a great joy and struggle.

I grew up playing on Red Fox Farm, snuggling farm dogs and grooming cows and playing in the hay. My grandparents taught me how to grow tomatoes and sunflowers and help clear cow's milk ducts where their udders got clogged. Over the years, they advised my brother and I to get as much education as we possibly could to have stability and options for living they didn't have. A life free from the ties of the land. They told us that there was a world to see "out there." I took that to mean that there was nothing for me on the farm, so I left.

I went to college and met amazing mentors. They helped me understand the magic of knowing plants and animals as well. Now at graduate school, I'm learning that farming is rising as a field in environmental academia. The Yale Divinity School and School of the Environment both have farms on campus. Rewilding, silvopasture, and permaculture are serious academic areas of study. My friends are researching things like young people's access to farm capital and farming communes of the post-Vietnam 1970's.

I wish my grandparents could see these innovations. They would be delighted at the energy in a loving farming ethos these days, but I can't help but feel nostalgic as I see this energy. I think if they had resources for education, travel, and making their farm eco-friendly—the elements within academic study of farming—they would have done all of these things. Maybe they wouldn't have pushed us to leave if they themselves had been hurt by the less financial volatility that came with depending on the farm for a livelihood.

Yet there is a lot I learned from my grandparents about the gifts of farming life that I couldn't learn anywhere else—qualities I want in every community that I live in. Folks that check in, and check in often. Understanding that trees are characters in the grand story with their own traits and qualities. My grandparents possess an unshakeable humility and a focus on the tangible. They could play and experiment in their work while seeing the fruits of their labor.

As my grandparents age and can no longer take care of big farm animals, my father wants to turn the land into native flower fields and the barn into a plant nursery. I hope it happens. I hope he opens the land to share with other folks who want to plant and harvest flowers. I hope my grandparents live to see their children love the farm differently, the next of many generations of the embodied love they have for their land.



Yuval Yadin

When I first got to New Haven, I went to a small downtown grocery store hoping to grab some ingredients. To my surprise, all I found were bags of chips, no vegetables in sight. The next day, as a carless international student, I called an Uber to take me to Costco, only to find out I needed a membership card to get into the store. Undeterred, I ordered another Uber to Walmart, spending about \$25 for the round trip. I did the math and realized that the \$400 I would spend on Uber rides in a year could buy me a lot more food.

Trying a different tack, I went for Whole Foods delivery through Amazon. Sure, I love feeling the stiffness of a tomato with my own hands, but a \$10 shipping fee seemed a fair trade-off. Indeed, the tomatoes were too soft, and the potatoes consistently rotten. Once, they even claimed they could not find my house for delivery, making me chase them all day for a refund. Frustrated, I gave up on that idea. With Edge of the Woods too far from cold-weather bag hauling and the New Haven farmers' market open only three months a year, I realized that accessibility of food is not something to be taken for granted.

Exploring different food narratives around my personal research has made me realize we need to change the way we think

about it. According to journalist, author, and professor Michael Pollan, our current relationship with food relies too heavily on expert opinions, leaving us uncertain about how to make good culinary choices. However, the way I see it, we cannot even start making good food choices without first having access to it.

The narrative of our food, as depicted on labels detailing nutritional content, fails to account for the complex web of hands, animals, resources, and energy invested in its creation. Through my mapping adventures I try to portray the social and ecological landscapes tied to our global food system. The Spatial Footprint of the US meat Industry map, presented here, explores the relationship between meat production in the US and the associated land and resources. It reveals the huge effort and impact of the luxury of eating meat. The second map, Urban-Rural Food Dynamics, explores the social consumption-production relationship between cities and the countryside, using the case study of Rhode Island, a small state divided into one urban area surrounded by productive hinterland.

More than half the world's population now lives in cities. This urban existence separates us from food's origins. We rarely witness fruits ripening on trees, farmers nurturing crops, or fishermen bringing in their catch. Supermarkets, tidy market stalls, comfortable restaurant tables, and our own kitchens are the typical settings for our food interactions. Equally unseen are the environmental consequences: the vast carbon footprint of global food distribution, the immense greenhouse gases emitted by cows, and the destructive water usage required to cultivate corn for their feed.

As professionals who design the built environment, we can leverage our skills to reveal the hidden spatial, social and environmental realities of food systems. Information representation does not simply mirror reality, it actively shapes our knowledge, thoughts, and actions. I firmly believe that the starting point for transforming our food systems lies in a shift in how we represent



them.
McKenzie Blaine
Timing is Everything: Indigenous Wisdom and the Protection of Manoomin

For centuries, the Ojibwe and Anishinaabe tribes have been sustaining and shaping their culture while simultaneously transforming the environment in northern Minnesota around one grain: manoomin.

Currently, there are several threats to the ecosystem which support the growth of manoomin. Climate change, invasive species proliferation, and a nickel mine proposed ten miles from the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe community are the main factors which cause harm to the plant.

An indigenous woman leader of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe community, Leanna Goose, has grown up with the tradition of wild rice. She is a mother, a student, and an advocate for the planet—working as a Co-principal investigator for reseeded manoomin for the next seven generations. I had the opportunity to interview her about the work being done to protect the environment in northern Minnesota.

When asked what the significance of wild rice is to her, Goose responded, *Ricing helps me stay connected to the water and to my ancestors. Long ago, the Anishinaabe resided on the East Coast by the Atlantic Ocean until our prophecies told us to move west to the place where food grows on water. So, on faith, my ancestors walked to the land of 10,000 lakes. This was no mistake; we are meant to be here. ... There is an Anishinaabe teaching that states if we care for the water and manoomin, they will care for us and I'm here to do that, along with my people.*

She went on to talk about the Seventh-Generation Philosophy in Ojibwe culture—a concept that emphasizes long-term considerations when making immediate choices. She stated, *In Ojibwe culture, for every [season there] was an [environmental] activity that we would be doing. Life revolved around what was going on in the world around us. ... April is known as Iskgimzigigé-giziz, the sap boiling moon. Binaakwe-giziz, the moon of falling leaves [for October].*

These cycles [are] a marker of time. Now we see our natural cycles are a bit off. The sap was running in February. [All of] the leaves were falling in August and September. If we were to look at the world around us and see it for all the gifts it offers to us, and if we were to think differently—to think of all the next seven generations—it could help. In western culture, people spend eight hours of work [at a desk each day]. We're burning through so many resources doing things that are not helping the next seven generations. ...

We need to look to indigenous wisdom and culture and pull that into today's world. We need to do that now. Goose stressed the urgency of these environmental concerns within her community. Yet, she acknowledged the concerns of her community regarding the rash solutions that the United States government is making to address climate change.

We all know that immediate action is needed in order to protect life on our planet. We all need to work together to fix the problem of climate change. We can start by asking ourselves of our actions. [Ask yourself], "is what I'm doing going to help the next generations have a livable world." The answers to climate change can be found in the world around us.

... [the government] wants to do this energy transition from one polluting industry to another. They want to go from fossil fuels to mining, which is one of the most polluting industries in the world ... that is not a true solution.

97% of nickel is underneath the reservations, or within 35 miles of one, across the United States. We're seeing that tribes are trying to keep those minerals in the ground because we know that that is not the solution ... We have to be looking into [better environmental] solutions and bring them into our world.

Even with the threats to manoomin, Goose maintained optimism for the future thanks to the teachings from her culture. My dad told us when we were kids, we were to throw back a handful of rice to make sure that there was rice for the next generations. I took that teaching to the next level and throwback a day of harvest for the water, to ensure that my children have wild rice in the future ... Teaching my children to do that will ensure that they know what to do when they begin to see the manoomin disappear. It will help them be resilient through climate change...

When you take from the Earth, you are to give back. Our conversation ended by her calling in others to help. The people need to think about indigenous nations first. We are the First Nations of this country ... [They] need to work towards respecting indigenous wisdom and indigenous homelands. That could start with prior and informed consent, that can start with thinking of the next generations, and [that starts with all of us] playing a part.

Goose's story contains wisdom to hold with us in the midst of global energy and building transitions, and facing future agricultural transitions. Resource consumption is inevitable to life, but Goose's question echoes:

"What can we do to scale back our consumption rather than trying to fix our problems by consuming more?"

If we want to change our world, we must pause and look around, opening our eyes to continual and historical injustices unfolding in the name of consumption.

Then, we can move forward with actions serving us not only in the here and now, but with care and attention to the well-being of our species and the planet for generations to come. We need slow satisfaction, not immediate gratification. We must slow down if we want to continue.

Yanbo Li

Ten Years
I was 20 years old when I was assigned my first desk in Rudolph Hall. I was a sophomore in Yale College when I first felt the heat of Zap-a-Gap coming on my fingertips, when the scent of freshly laser-cut chipboard and the musk of still-wet Rockite imprinted themselves in my brain, when the first specks of basswood dust found permanent lodging in my lungs. In a few days, I will be 30.

The forward march of time is an unstoppable pruning of the branches of possibility. Before us are spread infinite tendrils of what could be, behind us only the single thread line of what was, the present moment being ceaselessly forward like the carriage of a cosmic zipper. But the straight line of "history" is a brittle geometry. Einmal ist keinmal—what happens but once might as well not have happened at all!

What do I make of this return to the site of the formation of

the last ten years of me? In 2014, when I took that first architecture course, it was called the Analytic Model. That course is no longer taught, but its place in the curriculum has been replaced by Scales of Design, for which I am currently a graduate teaching fellow. Though I walk through the same spaces as before, I now inhabit the body of a figure that, as an undergraduate, I had only seen from the outside. Meanwhile, my own younger existence presents itself to me now



as a residue in the building, cast into the concrete and woven into the carpet, an image overlaid onto the school that coexists with me in the present even as it is overwritten, bit by bit, by new memories. In the decade in between, I have fallen asleep on paprika carpet and started drinking coffee. I have had a job in architecture, a few jobs outside of architecture, and many jobs that straddled the line. I have tried and failed at all kinds of things. I have been heartbroken and fallen in love. I often remarked that in my various "jobs" making art, building things, learning about land use, I have been orbiting architecture.

What is orbiting but an eternal process of falling? A circle is inescapable. Round and round, we wear a track into the ground, making the form realer and realer, each revolution taking us back to where we started. Eternal return is the heaviest of burdens.²

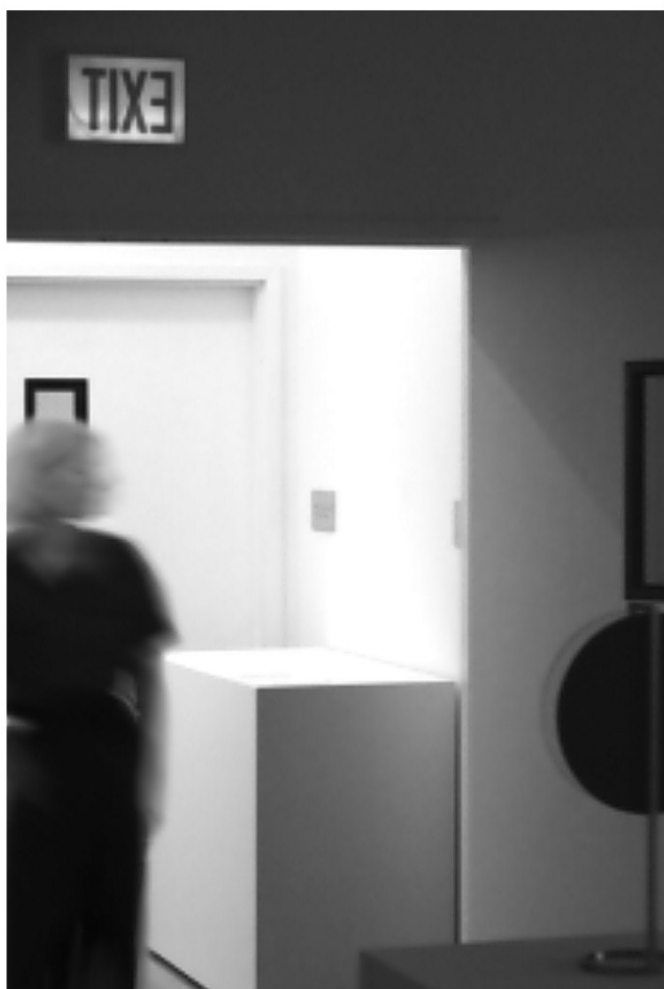
As it was ten years ago, Moon assigns a pasta truss. Rubin crusades on behalf of New Haven. Newton worries about the integrity of our fingers. Deflumer is the most important person in the building. None of these men seem to have aged a day. Yet of course everything has changed. In 2014, Bob Stern was dean, a figure as imposing as he was diminutive, ever armored in a tailored suit, pocket square, and lightly perched glasses that barely shielded us from his withering gaze. M.Arch students received an average of \$xxxx per year less in financial aid than they do now, and Local 33 was just an occasional story in the Yale Daily News, a long way away from recognition by the NLRB. The Architecture Lobby had just been founded the previous year by professor Peggy Deamer, while Paprika was still months away from being launched by M.Arch I students Nicolas Kemper and Madeline Ringo.

The revolutions of the earth are cyclical moons. Relative to the sun, the earth returns to its starting point every year. But the center cannot hold. The sun also hurtles along its galactic orbit, so in fact the earth never really returns, instead making a cycloid curve. The difference between circularity and linearity, it turns out, is only a question of scale.

In 2014, Barack Obama was this country's president. In 2024, it looks as though we might have returned to the starting point, with Obama's vice president in the White House for at least nine more months. But too much has happened in the meantime. In 2015, a senator could bring a snowball into the Capitol as evidence against the climate emergency and be met with eye rolls and frustration. Now we have signed, then rejected, then rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement. The presidency of Donald Trump and all its attendant emergencies—#MeToo, abuses at the border, Covid, Black Lives Matter, attacks on democracy—presented a rupture that makes the translational movement of this cycle impossible not to see. I am grateful for the ruptures that occur in every cycle. Rupture brings with it the possibility of reorientation, of making a cycloid arc that is more than a simple repetition of the previous, but an iteration that is distorted, displaced, transformed. Rupture introduces slippage, and the potential for us to cyclical beings to be moved. The unique opportunity of return is to inhabit the slippage between then and now and see where the movement has occurred.

¹ Miles Kandera, The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1984)
² Friedrich Nietzsche, The Gay Science (1882)

Abigail Chang Reflection: Literal and Phenomenal



In our domestic spaces, mirrors appear as framed views. They are built in relation to the human body; a cosmetic mirror is small and encircles the face; a full-length mirror is tall and captures the chest, abdomen and legs; a medicine cabinet outlines the bust and includes the head and shoulders. Opening this cabinet's door against another bathroom mirror reflects both of their frames infinitely, coiling inward until their edges disappear into a haze.

When applied to large surfaces, mirrors are architectural tools used to conceal unpleasant infrastructure or to expand the perception of space in narrow quarters and corridors. Camouflaging an overbearing column, here, distracting us from an uncomfortably low ceiling, there. When a room is pivoted away from a scenic view, mirrors transform banal walls into open vistas that would otherwise be unattainable. Mirrors produce literal reflections, lucid, picture-like images that offer a sense of erasure, of release, of something magical.

Our penchant for sheen and gloss, which psychologists attribute to a basic human instinct of finding water, has promoted a wide-ranging palette of shiny materials with varying reflective properties. While typical mirrors are commonly cut from silver-coated glass sheets, polished granite, acrylic panels, glazed ceramic tiles or lacquered wood render vague, low-resolution reflections. Multiplied by an abundance of metal and glass in contemporary cities, reflection is now a condition of viewing with nuanced interpretations.

On a sunny day, we glance at glass storefronts. With no intention to see what takes place within, we comb our fingers through tufts of hair, adjust our bags, tuck in loose shirt tails—directly looking at reflections of ourselves. Reflection is produced not through a silver-coated sheet, rather an alchemy of light and surface, as transparent glass transforms into a mirror. Bouncing light from facade to sidewalk, window to neighboring building, soft blurs glimmer across the city, tracking the movement of the sun.

Against a dim night sky, artificial illumination spotlights domestic life on an urban stage, allowing others to peer through apertures to watch your television program and dinner time routine.

From within, the window again morphs into a mirror, obstructing the view outside and displaying ghostly figures of the interior landscape. When reflections vanish as quickly as they emerge, in a window on a brightly lit street, or a puddle after a rainstorm, their phenomenal presence heightens our sense of visibility and exposure, and our spatiotemporal awareness in the built environment.

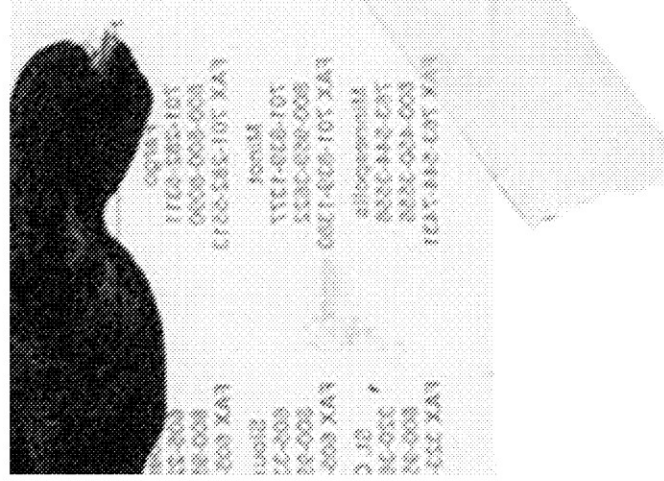
This quality of reflection is the subject of Reflections of a Room, a solo exhibition at Volume Gallery. Eight wall-mounted and freestanding pieces translate familiar, mirrored objects as windows viewed at night. Borrowing from the proportions of everyday objects like a cosmetic mirror or medicine cabinet, the pieces delaminate the typical layers of a mirror. Detached from a shadow of black felt, low-iron glass is suspended by brushed and painted stainless steel armatures, positioned up, down and side to side.

As viewers approach each object and the glass and black felt align in their perspective, reflections of themselves and the room behind materialize. To look closely at the object is to observe details in the room that may previously have gone unnoticed. Neither window nor mirror, we recognize this quality of reflection, of densely layered surfaces, in the opaque, disorienting ways we interpret information today.

The exhibition is situated in a larger constellation of experiments across art and architecture that foreground materiality, or the perception of our surrounding through a material lens, and the simple wonder reflections instill. More than a device for deception in architecture, phenomenal reflection is a dynamic tool for building with thoughtful intention, whose silent force awakens us from constant noise.

THERE IS BIRD SONG IN THE AMERICAN DREAM Natalie Fox

The American Dream Mall is a testament to late-stage capitalism. A bricolage of entertainment with its indoor ski slope, waterpark, theme park, ice rink, and countless stores and restaurants, it escapes time; winter survives in boxes here despite New Jersey's record low snowfall of late, while balmy, artificially lit atriums throughout its vast white interiors create a summer afternoon no matter the time. Like many bemoths of human intervention, the American Dream mall is liminal and strange and overstimulating: full of noises, smells, bright lights, colors. While seemingly teeming with people, many storefronts are empty or offering huge discounts; a contradiction between the demand for the elusive "third place" and the decline of interest for in-person shopping. The name itself raises



the question of what qualifies as aspirational today - is the American Dream now to escape the daily sludge of life on the fantasy-flavored trains, rollercoasters and rideable animals that are available to pay-per-ride? Opened in 2019, a time when all other malls were beginning to close their doors, this mall serves as a stage: literally through the many events it hosts to grasp at relevancy, and abstractly through allowing humans to observe strangers informally in the perverse delight of people-watching.

Yet somehow, through the cacophony of human excess, there are birds singing. As they do in airports, Home Depots, and supermarkets, the starlings and sparrows find themselves entangled with humans at this mall. As it turns out, the artificial landscape of these massive liminal boxes are perfectly situated for birds to wander into. Scavenging off our scraps, using the trusses as perches, and taking advantage of the shelter and protection from predators keep birds coming back despite continual efforts from store owners to keep them out. These small, wild things infiltrating the most mundane human spaces interrupt what could otherwise be a completely unnatural experience. They are a reminder that while the clothes we shop for are made in Bangladesh and the coffee we drink comes from Ethiopia, we are in a paved lot in New Jersey, and the birds are still calling this place home. Humans try to distance ourselves from the rest of the animals by making the most disruptive habitats, but those efforts always fail to stop the effects of weathering: the flora, water, wind, sun, and other animals find their ways into our "human" spaces.

The bird is a symbol of freedom, of hope. They are an object of intense human fascination; we personify their ornamentation, their parenting and homemaking, and their awkward adolescence and covet their ability to fly. People