THE ONTOLOGY OF THE NEW ARCHITECT: IS FATE VISCERAL OR PARASITIC?

Throughout the history of human intellectual life has remained the question of fate and who controls it. Fate becomes either a romanticized idea or a parasitic one, all having to do with how the person interprets their level of control over their destinies. A person can romanticize fate if they adhere to the notion that there is a visceral, natural will over their lives that inevitably yields the best results, often explained by Abrahamic (or Christian) ideologists. However, there is an equally valid, opposing ideology that fate is parasitic, where the person fears having to relinquish partial or entire control over the outcome of their lives. To regain that sense of control, we impose time and place to attribute a specificity and positioning. Additionally, our social construct yields us an identity that affords us a sense of purpose. Today, I identify myself as an architecture student, a black woman, a hispanic woman, a daughter and a thinker, in no particular order. All of these identities compound or intrude on one another under the societal social construct I was born into, sometimes making me feel untrue to one identity or the other given that all of these social constructs bear different responsibilities. I think this phenomena occurs for many other marginalized people in architecture. So I am advocating and proposing for a "New Architect," whose identity isn't compromised by the past, but re-positions itself to endure and design a New Fate.

Fate and architecture are married by concepts of control. Theologians attribute a God or gods to explain the global concepts of fate, time and place, some even referring to God as "The Great Architect". The architect, as we've come to know him or her, has fused the ontological with the profane, experimenting with the relationship between the user, identity and space, always playing closely to this analogy of having both godly and earthly faculties. For instance, Palladio is often referenced and heralded as a Paragon of architecture, for his canons of architecture, churches, alongside his non religious architecture. To dub the designation of religious designs, activities and rituals as completely removed and secular would be incomplete and untrue. Palladio, and many centuries of religious architects to follow and precede him, had a role in the fate of the people who enjoyed his design. Likewise, the nameless and faceless builders of the Pyramids of Giza have an unearthly jurisdiction over the centuries of users and visitors of those works. Today, the New Architect faces new canons of social equity, access as well as always returning to beauty, in addition to as well as the avoidance of exploitation and typological issues, all to yield a better fate for the users. These paradigms come from broader schools of thought, expanding beyond the breadth of Rome's wonders, and venturing home, to the equally valid architecture of Phil Freelon, Zaha Hadid or Eduardo Neira.

I suppose I fall under the category of an architect, or at least an architectural thinker. I used to agree with the theological notion that I had complete will over my life, and viscerally still agree. But I was born with traits and constructs which are unchanging – my location at birth, my heritage and instincts. I think it would be irresponsible (and ironic) to discard the opportunity to be the "architect" of my own life. Although my circumstances could've precluded me from being at Yale University, I am here now not solely because of my efforts. Without my Grandma admiring my Grandpa's paisley tie at a party in Haiti; without a young, Catholic school-primed Abuela hot-wiring a car to reach Abuelo in Cuba, I wouldn't have arrived two generations later to my humanity, at my here and now. A here and now of perpetual homeostatic self-repair and self-discovery; grasping for identity equilibrium in the generational seas of my abstruse, ancestral narratives. All the while, trying to rise and identify a reality for others when I still am designing who I am, bearing the burden of crafting and defining a post-ontological New Architect.

Sydney Maubert

AN ECONOMY OF EFFORT

On a few occasions, I've heard people give the advice, "Don't do it if you're not going to put it in your portfolio," usually in reference to overwhelming project deliverables or detailed digital models. While I think there is some credence to the idea of minimizing work that will never be seen, I would like to dwell instead on the bifurcation of the academic architectural project into a before and an after, a process and a presentation. This separation into production and product can perhaps be useful, allowing us to consider the two as discrete experiences to be compared, rather than a single indivisible entity. Of course, school projects can have a great variety of outcomes – they can turn out well, or poorly, or somewhere in between, and perhaps that is the point: if it's possible to have a successful presentation of work, is it also possible to have a successful process? In other words, if the result can be analyzed and evaluated, can we also examine that which precedes it?

Maybe one way to look at the idea of successful process is as an economy of effort, not in the general sense of the word "effort," but as work expended on unenjoyable and extraneous tasks. In this framework, the development of a project is understood not as an immutable sequence of prescribed events, but as a field of concatenating opportunities to choose from – potential decisions with consequences, yes, but not all of which are beyond our control. There is a freedom, an agency even, to focus our energy on the methodologies we find useful or delightful. I want to be careful here: I'm not advocating for doing less work per se, but for being more thoughtful about how we engage with our projects – to be cognizant of our interests, limitations, agendas, and ambitions. While the term "economy" is often only associated with a kind of frugality, I see it as folding into a broader practice of carefully managing energy, time, resources, and expectations amidst varying conditions.

As such, an economy of effort isn't merely forgoing unhelpful drawings or only modelling what will be seen in the render, it's about recognizing that projects inhabit more than just fictive space – they impinge on a number of larger realities, including our personal lives and the world at large. Maybe a collection of detailed vignette drawings can be a more enjoyable way to convey community engagement than a site plan, or maybe a found poem can articulate a vision more concisely than ten iterations of a parti. Maybe we can reconsider the transactions of time, money, and health that a project might seem to demand. In each case, we are asked to take stock of what matters to us – that is, where we want to concentrate our work. An economy of effort seeks to find the balance between a reductive excision of everything unproductive and an uncritical pursuit of every possibility, imbuing the project's process of becoming with a kind of intention. It precludes neither anticipation nor experimentation, weaving whatever luck, fate, and happy accident might bring into a bigger story, a direction if you will.

This still leaves the question of how we know when we've "made it." The success of a completed project might be evaluated by its legibility, coherence, beauty, or recognition, for example, but are there any similar criteria for evaluating process? Maybe we can think about what we learned – the things that we want to (never) try again; or maybe we should be more holistic and reflect on our emotions – like how gruelling (or fun?) a project felt. The very idea of an economy implies a degree of fluctuation though, which complicates any kind of measurement. Because projects exist in shifting contexts, how we assess and understand their economy must respond to this dynamism. Maybe we just have to accept that successful process is an imprecise, moving standard, something we can only pursue but never quite achieve. Still, perhaps an economy of effort is just another way to look at our projects with a bit more care, purpose, and healthy doubt.

Or maybe this is all just bad advice.

Jerry Chow

CONSTRUCTION LINES: TRACING GENERATIONAL COLLABORATION

Generations of back-breaking labor, crushing rock, pouring concrete, laying pavers, paving streets. Fate was the combined hidden hopes of a family who wishes to see a life outside of the dust; a family that invested in the opportunity to longingly gaze at the dust from the comfort of paper. Each one of us took for granted the foundations that lead us to pursue our dreams. The only difference being that the foundations we poured were physical, our greatest asset was this subsequent transfer of knowledge. Each layer contained one hundred years of hope that our family may have slowly climbed its way out of the formwork and into the polite public spaces that were framed by it. The narrative begins one lucky day in a barbershop, an immigrant asked for a favor that has since transcended his efforts into the seas of three lifetimes.

Every week Jimmy drove from Boston to New York. The grueling drive took days as the max speed of his truck was only 28 miles per hour and half the roads were made of mud. He had a wife and three kids. Crying and beating his chest, his wife begged him to look for another job. Please, something close, *anything*. He stepped out of the house and fell into a barbershop, its checkerboard floor crowded by half the hair in Sicily. A few whispers, a joke, and a favor from a close friend, someone from his hometown. Luck was generated through the concerted action of his community.

With a skeleton crew and his savings spent on shovels and wooden scales, he puts all of his power into the first day's work. The *clang* of shovels and calls of "che *cazzo*" revealed layer after layer of earth. At the end of the second day he sat in the humid trench, a quiet respite from the street life of Commonwealth Avenue above. Within the crater, a 50-foot pipe darkened the sky, its immense heft and threatening demeanor asked if he's ready for this obligation to society and his future family.

The pipe is in, the road paved, the sidewalks laid. These individual elements curated the world around him, a comprehensive, mutually accepted setting for which the foundations of public discourse and the institutions that run them may develop and evolve into their present form. Jimmy moved on to the next job, and the next one, each time he confronted massive beasts of steel and concrete, taming them for public use. One by one his community grew. His three sons return from war, Joe, Antonio, and Paul. His eyes dimmed, he squinted towards the horizon and realized how far their projects stretched past the roads and networks he had so desperately wished for during his long days of driving. Pavement seemed to enact into thin air as if pre-determined, bubbling up from the ground like the oil that powers his machines. But he can't take credit for all of it, it was the community that surrounded him, his sons, his friends, his coworkers.

Paul had two sons, who then each had two sons, respectively. The sets of brothers worked tirelessly for decades; every penny saved. I am lucky in that these legacies are represented in the physical world. Every street was a love letter for the subsequent generation. In solidarity, I grew up working in the trench, learning the craft, hoping one day I could be involved in this process of making. It is through the cyclical feedback loops of intergenerational knowledge that the concept of luck itself transcended into fate. Luck as a concept insinuates singular actions and resultants. In contrast the fruits of accumulated knowledge resulted in an exponential growth in the opportunity to work and gain more knowledge suggesting a broader network of action and reaction. Fate itself was an exponential process. Every generation within and methods expressed through slight changes in color, in texture, in experience through time. These modifications to the physical environment brushed our senses, lightly hinting at the underlying scaffolds that constitute our reality. Only by our attempts to beautify an inherently messy process were these construction lines hidden from public view.

I no longer work in the trench; I brush off the last of the stratified dirt. Through the efforts of this vast temporal community of friends, family, and their kindness, I am the first member to attend university. Admissions committees are blind to this exponential support and luck, which oftentimes eclipses the individual character presented through grades and extracurriculars. During each of my relatives' lifetimes, Harvard stood apart as the pinnacle of education and worth. My work as an architect and urban designer acts as a symbolic gesture to these cross generational collaborations, an act of humility and gratefulness for this engineered fate. I leverage the same knowledge, using the same wooden scale that was passed down to me to find a way out of the dust and onto the streets above.

Christopher D'Amico

RULE OF THREE

I worked in a small architecture office for three years. During that time, I helped design a single family home, a beach house, and a small resort master plan, all for high-end clients. While the projects were successful, they did not make me happy. The city, the people, and the work was quite contrived and drove me to eventually apply to graduate school.

Three months before applications were due, my partner and I collaborated on a competition entry, hoping to include it in our portfolios. We invited a friend to join, making a group of three. From conception to submission, the project took three weeks. We received great news of the results (we made it to the third round as finalists) just in time to update our portfolios. We submitted them, along with our applications to schools, in January and received word back three months later in March.

Of the four schools I applied to, I got accepted into three. The one I didn't get into was the one my partner did. I really wanted to go to that school, mainly because of the town – the streets, the people, and the food made me happy when I visited a year prior and I expected it would be the same for the next two years. She decided to attend this school as I chose another, three hours away.

Three months after COVID hit, my school decided it was going virtual; hers was not. We spent the three months of summer living with my parents, packed our bags – hers, mine, and the dog's – thereafter, and moved out east to her school's town. Despite the quarantine, economic setbacks, and a virtual semester, this has been a great experience. I was right – the streets, the people, and the food has brought me joy. We've been here for three months now and I can say I am truly happy. I wonder would it have been the same if things went differently? Without my disdain for work, without the virtual semester, without my current context, would alternate forces have coalesced to grant me happiness to the same intensity I've experienced here? I suppose happiness is fated to some degree, guided by cosmic forces outside of my control. I'd like to think my journey to the *now* – this very spot on the couch, on the third floor of an apartment shared by three roommates, in a town I've so longed to be a part of – has been a collaboration between will, fate, and serendipity.

Rogelio Cadena

UNSOLICITED ADVICE FROM DAD

James Mayer

Success is the hopeful outcome of any endeavor, but it might not match your initial vision. You choose a goal, you research it, you reflect on the different approaches you might take, and then boldly settle on a direction.

Seeking perfection is ideal but can lead to fear of failure if you let it prevent you from moving forward. Keep on going, you may stumble on something useful. Positive results may not be perfect but may still be considered a success.

Imperfection is a demanding teacher. Reflecting on your goal, the process you used to achieve it, and the outcome will together lead to more effective action.

I worked in the restaurant industry for many years. Cooking involves so many variables that can negatively affect the result. Almost always, I could eat my mistakes.

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."
Winston Churchill

THE MYTH OF HERITOCRACY: FATAL OR FATALISTIC?

Carlos Eduardo Paredes

Viewing success as fated inevitability serves to reinforce our understanding of social hierarchies. Believing that those who have succeeded have done so because they were fated to by virtue of their exceptional abilities only serves to reinforce the myth of meritocracy – the idea that those at the top deserve their success because they worked hard for it or were the most gifted individuals.[1] This interpretation of success falls into what Brazilian critical theorist Paulo Freire's idea of "fatalism," wherein we accept the world as is and believe that our positions are fated through a "mythicization" of the world.[2]

The typical understanding of success is exemplified best by the myth of meritocracy. Through this interpretation, success becomes a fated ordeal; you can only achieve it if you are destined. You must be born with the proper talents, and these talents must be utilized in industrious ways. This myth constitutes our collective understanding of the way billionaires have obtained wealth; they earned it because they were smart and worked hard; they were born with exceptional gifts and an exceptional work ethic. For example, the belief that higher IQs translate into greater economic success has been historically used as a quantitative metric to justify the myth of meritocracy, but as evidenced by data, higher IQs do not consistently translate into economic success.[3] In this way, IQ served to buttress the argument that only the most intelligent people could rise to the top and achieve economic success. And since they achieved their success because they used their natural intelligence productively, any wealth or power that came from it was inherently deserved.

But what does the myth of meritocracy show us when it is inverted, flipped on its head – how can it help us understand failure? The myth of meritocracy might not present a terribly problematic concept of success in itself, but its application towards an understanding of failure reveals its darker side. The logic is as follows: if those at the top deserve their success and wealth, those at the bottom also deserve their failure and poverty. Poor Black and Brown students have lower educational outcomes than their affluent white peers. But this is not the result of their own inability. Rather, it is the result of inequitable educational systems – which stem from a history of "injustice and oppression"[4]–where affluent white students have the access to well maintained, high quality classroom and instruction in high school, while impoverished Black and Brown students attend remedial classes with a teacher-to-student ratio of 1:39.[5] If the myth of meritocracy is applied as a conceptual lens here, then one would have to argue that their success came from their natural intelligence.

This idea that oppressors need to "mythicize the world" was examined by Paulo Freire. When the world is mythicized, its dynamic nature is obscured; instead of seeing the world as a problem – something to be collectively worked on and addressed – the world, and the structures that constitute it, is presented as a "fixed entity," something that must be passively accepted by its inhabitants. Freire understood that our notion of not only success, but the world at large, was shaped by a consciousness that is "mythicized." The oppressors deposit myths into the oppressed in order to preserve the status quo. These myths create a lens through which we view the world, leading to a sense of "fatalism," or a belief that events and conditions are destined and inevitable. This fatalism is exactly what Friere argued would distort our understanding of the world. The social hierarchies which structure our relationships are not shaped through fatalistic success; rather they only appear that way when we understand them through the myth of meritocracy.

Paulo Freire's contributions to our understanding of mythicization aid in clarifying what success is not. Success is not a fated ordeal reserved only for the most gifted and for the hardest working. It should not be understood through the myth of meritocracy that seeks to justify a fatalistic conception of itself, and, when inverted, also seeks to justify an understanding of failure. This definition of success obfuscates the interwoven causes of success and failure. It limits our scope and field of view. As we move away from it, we begin to truly understand success not as a static concept, but one which merits a complex and dynamic analysis.

1. Melina D. Anderson, "Why the Myth of Meritocracy Hurts Kids of Color" *The Atlantic*, July 27, 2017, https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/07/internalizing-the-myth-of-meritocracy/535035/.

2. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1995), 43.

3. Samuel Bowels and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America: Education Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2011), 123-124.

4. Bettina Love, *We Want To Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and The Pursuit of Educational Freedom* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019), 92-93.

5. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (New York: Broadway Books, 1991), 80-81.

6. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of The Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1995), 120.

LUCK, FATE, OR HAPPY ACCIDENT?

✳ *The privilege of opportunity and the necessary preparation to be able to seize it via intentional action*

♦ *Unintentional actions or misreadings that lead to positive outcomes*

❋ *No matter the order or form of intentional or unintentional actions, their aggregation will always yield the same outcome (let it be)*

EDITOR'S STATEMENT

What are the scaffolding structures behind the facade of success? Is architecture truly a profession of solitary heroes, or are we fooling ourselves and missing an opportunity to celebrate the wide variety of processes and perspectives that contribute to the success of a project? We set out hoping this issue would be a broad sampling of the YSoA student body on the topics of luck, fate, and happy accidents as they relate to the production of creative work. The student body, largely otherwise occupied, led us to get creative and seek contributors from outside our school. We thought: who isn't enduring midterms and thus reliable? Friends and family.

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The process — anything but predictable or entirely within our control — became our own set of happy accidents. Surrendering to a "let it be" attitude, we offer this insight as another example of the ways luck, fate, and happy accidents shape creative work. In the end, the outcome remained the same — a varied portrait — in that a multitude of perspectives are provided. Contributors range from a choreographer, a philosophy student, an editor, and a retired pizza chef, to Dean Berke, a handful of architecture students – both from YSoA and not — and those currently working in the profession, which, as a collection show an overlap in creative fields for encountering and addressing failure, both reassuring and humbling. It's not just "architorture," to some degree.

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On another note, we hope the issue is something you can enjoy reading while waiting on the "fate of the country;" perhaps a parting (un)happy accident that the issue is being produced and released on either side of election night in the United States. We see a questioning tone in Jerry Chow's "An Economy of Effort," disdain (and reactionary humor) for the me-me-me mentality from Joshua Tan in "The Absurdity of Individualism," and a healthy dose of suspicion in Rogelio Cadena's "Rule of Three," with its paranoiac sentence structure and numerical theme. We'll be drawing on all manner of luck, fate and happy accidents as we nervously, anxiously, manically await the result.

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We encourage readers to consider who has the privilege to try their luck, to defy fate, or to blithely trust a happy accident. In this issue of *Paprika!*, authors questioned, manipulated, dissected, and collaged success anew, to arrive at a messy concoction. Contrary to what we editors assumed at the onset, it is both an outcome and a process, a noun and a verb – expendable, holistic, and above all, personal.

THE ABSURDITY OF INDIVIDUALISM

This blurb wouldn't exist without my group mates, the editors of the issue, Sarah, and Angelia.

I began my architectural education as an "individualist." After some early praise for my studio work, I egotistically assumed that I was fated to be successful. To me, success meant individual glory, a knowledge that my design moves outwitted others in creativity (see "Design, Creativity, and Architecture's Natalism" in *Buildings Must Die* for a refreshing take on creativity). This was, after all, reinforced by how our discipline recognizes "good" work. Awards, study trips, fellowships and teaching opportunities frequently celebrate the individual rather than the group (special shout out to the winner of the 2020 Kanter Tritsch Medal!). Founders are celebrated by their eponymous practices and cameos on fantasy drama television series (Bjarke, what was the point?). Ideas are attributed to individuals even when not explicitly stated (Is not OMA synonymous with that architect at the GSD?).

I used to think collaboration diluted and destroyed the clarity of an idea. I (unbelievably) believed my ideas and experiences were superior, thinking that I knew more than others. These views were challenged when I arrived at YSoA (I can already feel Howard Roark shaking in disapproval). For instance, the highly competitive Building Project turned out to be one of many unique collaboration. My group almost methodologically rotated tasks so that each member had the opportunity to work on every aspect of the project, as opposed to the conventional strategy of siloed responsibilities. This produced not just a proposal, but a set of collective ideas.

Since the end of summer, with various friends, we've worked on completing two competitions, editing a *Paprika!* issue, and editing a paper towards publication at a journal—all of them unrecognizable without my teammates (yes, the irony of self-advertisement is not lost on me here).

These projects taught me to step into the shoes of my classmates, not just in the empathetic sense, but with curiosity about how others worked. Collaboration became something I looked forward to. Thinking about how another person would design was not only emancipatory, it meant that I could rely on others and their experience. It provided an environment for happy accidents to occur. I think of Mari Kroin's *Paprika!* essay, "Let's f*ck up *together*" (emphasis by me) and imagine how the creative process would be if we were advocates for others rather than ourselves.

I believe collaborative work is more fulfilling (but only when the conditions are right?). It becomes more than what is created; it becomes a space for connecting with others. It is a fulfillment that goes beyond individual success because it contains meaning even if you lose (Is that just what losers say?). It nourishes the process with interaction, overcoming mental blocks and blinders. The editors provided a brief sought to define "pre-success," but that takes into account only the stereotypical paths to success. Perhaps, success lies outside of those parameters, is simply intrinsic to growth, and is already achieved through collaboration, because what is more human than working together? (That said, please don't disqualify me from the Wendy Elizabeth Blanning Prize.)

Joshua Tan

A LESSON FROM MR. SALT, MRS. PEPPER, AND PAPRIKA

Blue's Clues was a hit educational children's show that aired between 1996-2006, following the adventures of the eponymously named protagonist, a dog who left his trademark blue paw prints as clues for young viewers. The episodes' plots typically revolved around the home, a setting animated by a wide cast of talking everyday objects. Among these was Paprika, the child of Mr. Salt and Mrs. Pepper. Over recent quarantine months that have grounded me in a domestic setting, I've reflected on the enigma that Paprika first presented to me as a first grader, a time where I was not familiar with possibilities beyond salt and pepper for seasoning. The process of learning relationships amongst ingredients and flavors is one I see reflected in other endeavors, finding the best way to integrate my talents in a coordinated manner.

With more time in the kitchen, I've found a moment here for existential yearning and questions tied to work and its desired outcome, all things that come to mind seeking to combine ingredients in a pleasing sequence of flavors. Learning new recipes have focused on the essentials, respecting the nature of the ingredients and bringing out the flavor they hold within. Seasoning is paramount to this end and can elevate what for some becomes a mundane activity.

However, the very selection of spices to choose from is a foreboding challenge. Salt and pepper are accounted for but there are immense possibilities awaiting the right dash of a little something else. The key lies in the elusive balance that only subtly emerges through the act of experimentation. Even then, a recipe may not always be followed to the letter. Success here is not only arriving at the winning combination, but being able to adjust quantities and ingredients when necessary.

In the same manner that we should not be restricted to the blueprint dictated by cookbooks, so too should our aspirations in work and other domains go beyond a checklist of achievement prompted by others. More than validation by external bodies, success should be framed in relation to an individual measure, one in line with our unique characteristics. The relative nature of our senses means that our experiences will inevitably have some degree of variance. What I think to be just fine with salt, may not necessarily be properly seasoned for someone else. In the role of chef, one has to ultimately own the craft and presentation of their work, trusting one's judgment but also knowing how to receive criticism when offered. For one reason or another, paprika is a flavor that continues to elude me, but I now embrace the process of experimentation needed to find the best way to bring ingredients together.

Oscar Rieveling

YOU CANNOT BE SERIOUS

In 2006, I was asked to perform a dance at a friend's wedding. I had an idea inspired by a famous 1980 doubles match between tennis icons John McEnroe and Björn Borg. But at the last minute, my partner couldn't do the project. I still considered performing, but whoever heard of a tennis match with only one player? I bowed out of the gig, and it felt like I'd failed. But the idea lingered, and a year later I had a new solo. "Unfit (you cannot be serious)" was based on McEnroe's "Superbrat" phase, where while being a brilliant athlete he berated umpires and threw racquets. I researched his outbursts and performed sonal failures and developed movement material that evoked his character while offering physical commentary.

"Unfit" led to more dances that investigated the curious intersection of failure and athleticism, which led to further intrigue with toxic masculinity and male rage through a feminist lens, systemic and choreographic themes I'm still working with today. The idea that began as a failure helped hone my artistic voice.

As an artist I work with choreography, experimental video and photography. I obsess over mimicry, wry humor, loneliness, fake bad timing, and exacting musicality.

Megan Mayer

BEWARE OF THE EVIL EYE

In Mediterranean culture, many actions and objects are associated with bad luck: stepping over someone would cause them to stop growing taller (which can be undone if you step over them again), passing under a ladder is bad luck (but you can undo that if you pass under the ladder again in the opposite direction), a shoe laying upside down means ridding your soul of bad luck that was attached to it, and harming a black cat—be it by accident or not—is a bad omen (no running away from that). But the most widely feared of them all is the Evil Eye. It is the manifestation of imperceptible envy (Envious Eye) or jealousy which causes ill fate or bad luck to the person receiving it. It is so deeply embedded in our daily lives that Blue Eye and Khamsa (also known as the Hand of Fatima) talismans and charms can be found everywhere—worn, hung, or painted—to ward off evil and bring good luck. People wait on announcing certain news until it actually happens because of fear the Evil Eye would jinx it. Newborns are deluged with charms to protect the baby from any misfortune brought upon them by visitors. Truck and bus drivers paint their vehicles with ubiquitous shapes and phrases depicting Blue Eyes and Khamsa symbols to protect them on the road.

I am one of those believers. As a kid, my mom got me a necklace with a small pouch encasing the Khamsa symbol and some phrases meant to keep the evil eye away. She asked that I wear it whenever I leave the house for added protection. One day, I left the house in a hurry and forgot to wear it. Shortly after, in the elevator, my neighbor complimented my new cardigan. As I left the building and crossed the street, I got drenched with sewage water by a passing car hitting a pothole, which a couple of days ago didn't seem to exist, and my new cardigan was ruined. I can't explain definitively if there is any relationship between the compliment I received and the pothole incident, but I do know I was not wearing my necklace. The glow of my neighbor's compliment was short-lived. Maybe it was fate waiting to happen, maybe it was just a moment of bad luck, or maybe it was simply an accident attributed to me hastily rushing to cross the street.

In this instance, the absence of my talisman made way for the Evil Eye to manifest itself via the compliment, producing this unlucky event and leading to the destruction of my cardigan. Had I been wearing my necklace, I could have received the compliment without interference from the Evil Eye. This is how the Khamsa works; the added seconds it would have taken me to put on the necklace would have protected me from the Evil Eye, all other events—the compliment, the pothole, etc.—unchanged. We tend to internalize cultural beliefs as a way to explain specific misfortunes in the absence of reason. For me, in this situation, it was the Evil Eye—I didn't plan for this to happen, so how could it be anything but?

Haydar Baydoun

COLLABORATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION

For many in the field of architecture, working on big name exhibitions and competitions might be a great achievement, one they would be willing to participate in without any form of monetary compensation.

A few years ago, I was part of a team that for five months produced graphic material for an international exhibition. The team was initiated by a group of leaders who brought us in as co-collaborators to develop and produce the material. We worked late hours and weekends with minimal compensation until the budget ran dry. We continued to work despite the lack of income because we took pride in the work we were producing and reckoned that the recognition we would get would be worth all this effort. On the day the exhibition material was announced, we realized that our names were omitted from all publications except those of the exhibition leaders. Disappointed, frustrated, and faced with the fact that we were working without compensation, we complained to the leaders while asserting our right for recognition for the work we have done. We were shocked by their response, which denounced us for being greedy and only thinking about money; they expressed that we should feel "lucky" for the opportunity to have worked on such an exhibition. In the end, was it really luck that we had, or was it the illusion of pride and devotion which led to exploitation?

This story echoes the experience of many in our profession and the design world at large. There has long been a focus on collaboration as the main part of the thinking/design process. Yet only few get credited for the work when it's done. Does this mean Architecture is inherently an "unlucky" profession for many? Who stands to benefit from it? Does the allure of working on high profile projects and exhibitions lead to a predetermined "fate"? Or are we all guilty of perpetuating this outcome?

In her article, "Death to the Calling: A Job in Architecture is Still a Job," Marisa Cortright mentions a study by Duke University titled "Understanding contemporary forms of exploitation: Attributions of passion serve to legitimize the poor treatment of workers." She writes that the "authors found employers '[assumed] that passionate workers would have volunteered for [demeaning tasks that are irrelevant to their job description or [worked] extra hours without pay] if given the chance'" as well as believe that "for passionate workers, work itself is its own reward."[1] She infers that the only way meaningful change is achieved, is if architects reset their expectations about the nature of their work, which would provoke them to "claim their due rights" and "end the cycle of abuses of power." This is the wake up call we need, a "happy accident" waiting to happen, to reverse the fate of Architecture!

1. Marisa Cortright, "Death to the Calling: A Job in Architecture Is Still a Job," *Failed Architecture*, August 15, 2019, failedarchitecture.com/death-to-the-calling-a-job-in-architecture-is-still-a-job/.

Anonymous

TAKING FATE AS IT COMES

The word success implies both a sense of achievement coupled with the notion of an ending. The macrocosmic view in which success can be viewed ignores the intrinsic details of the process. It is not a linear path, rather it can peak slowly or decline abruptly. I prefer to think of it in the form of a web instead of a looming noun—the act of attempting to succeed over a beacon of success. I don't tend to label my own experiences as successes, because that places emphasis on the destinations, not the journey.

Luck incited my current journey.

Let's begin in London: freshman year, bright-eyed and eager to make the most of my year abroad. As an 18 year-old in an American school in the UK, my introduction to collegiate life allowed me a sense of frivolity, to dabble in the ominous tries, travel to nearby countries, and avoid the ominous planning of my future. That year, I put my usual spots decent use and carved out my usual spots at the British Museum, the park across the street from the university, and a cafe whose employees never under- stood why it would be named after confectionary.

The thought of professional success seemed light-years away.

The semesters slipped by resulting in a university career split evenly between New York and London, numerous stamps in my passport, and a folder of internship ID badges in industries ranging from fine art to journalism to fashion to music to theatre. By graduation, a sense of failure felt imprinted on my resume. Each internship I enrolled in showcased a series of careers that I did not want to pursue; ten jobs, all for naught. A small sliver of a throughline that I could find among my experiences was the notion of storytelling—or being able to sell something.

Marketing felt like an obvious next step, but my lack of direct professional exposure and fear of entrapment in a career I would grow to detest placed me in a stalemate. Your professional status should not be the end-all be-all of your existence, but oftentimes that's how it feels. Since school was my primary constant in life, I returned to my safe haven as a graduate student.

I found myself in London once more, aiming to add Master's of Science to my title. However, British university invoked the deepest feeling of imposter syndrome that I had endured thus far. Gone were the frolicking and ease of freshman year, replaced with a litany of concepts, like "decolonization," "post-colonial theory," and the "Global South." My classmates and I were steeped in stimulating conversation and nurtured critical thought, with professors that had no hesitation to question, push, and correct us. Never before had I felt so pressed to truly consider my intent with language, leading me to now, disputing this notion of success.

Luck was my catalyst, but these anecdotes are not only an amalgamation of my experiences; they form a map of happy accidents that incited my current realization: I want to be an interdisciplinary educator. Now, if that changes in the future, I'm fully prepared to take my fate as it comes; however, each of these failures or supposed dead ends in my journey has resulted in a path I am extremely proud of. An evolution of interests and passions can lead us to a greater result than we had previously imagined.

My adult life has been a series of happy accidents that have cohesively drafted themselves into my ongoing narrative. Everything is still a work in progress, and success is not a singular point, rather a multitude. I want to look back on my life and see it as one great success totaled by many happy accidents, some of which have yet to come.

Candy Moo

OBSERVING THE FIELD

In November of 2019, still unclear about what to do for my thesis, I read a *New Yorker* article that trees communicate with one another.[1] Trees had nothing to do with what I had been thinking about, but I emailed Dr. Richard Karban, the scientist mentioned in *The New Yorker*, to ask if I could talk to him about his work. In preparing for my call with Dr. Karban, reading his books and publications, I noticed that ecological studies lend themselves well to architectural solutions. Scientists have to manipulate the environment for their studies. They excavate land to study roots, build tall structures to study trees, construct long networks of pipe to study water levels, and do all of this while having to be conscious about their footprint. I had formulated what I would ask him and how I could potentially turn this into a thesis project, but the conversation that ensued was far more impactful than I had expected.

After discussing his research and clarifying my interest in his work, we started to talk about the state of ecological studies in the United States. The efficacy of sensors and algorithms is a much-needed advancement to our understanding of the world, but this overemphasis on data-driven scientific studies is driving young ecologists away from conducting fieldwork. While sensors can register information far beyond what humans are capable of, using these devices as a proxy for understanding our environments runs the risk of missing the anomalies and narrowing the scientific scope to what everyone already believes is important. He emphasized that the best contemporary ecological research methodology combines observations, models, and manipulative experiments to arrive at a more complete explanation than any single approach could provide.

Architecture, much like this present trajectory of ecological studies that Dr. Karban presents, is often built on a pre-existing set of self-referential agendas without observing the economic, cultural, ecological, and material realities that confront our lives.

Such practice has created a large gap between the discipline and the practical reality in which it is embedded. For architects to engage in larger issues that directly deal with the built environment, we need to expand our methodology beyond the insular disciplinary boundaries. Such an expanded and interdisciplinary work takes time and requires a series of "connecting the dot moments" to make it work—not only to digest information that we are not familiar with but also to depend on other fields' expertise in framing an architectural argument.

My conversation with Dr. Karban changed the way I approached my thesis. In some ways, I was looking to find a topic and a typology that I was familiar with, something that I would be comfortable making arguments around. Yet his comments on a 'best ecological process' made me realize that architecture, too, can benefit from expanding our modes of knowledge production. For my thesis, inspired by this personal overture into a new discipline, I designed a field station, home and lab for scientists conducting fieldwork. The project is situated in a decommissioned naval base airport in Jamaica Bay, NY, where the coastal habitation is thinning due to sea-level rise, the maritime forest is struggling to survive due to forest fragmentation, and the abandoned facilities have formed their own ecosystems from decades without maintenance. The stations are designed to observe and facilitate these transformations on and along the different edges of the site, functioning as ecological proxies by subjecting architecture to become part of the ecological cycle while measuring the stations' weathering by and into nature over time. Dr. Karban's work encouraged me to look at ecological transformation through the subjective viewpoint of plant life and to visit the research stations to experience how the trees were now being studied.

Unfortunately, three days before my scheduled trip to one such site, COVID-19 shut down all university facilities, including my intended site. My luck had perhaps run out, but my conversation with Dr. Karban and other scientists, anthropologists, and engineers gave me confidence that there is a place in architecture to be part of a bigger discussion, in this case, to elevate the study of ecological studies. Since then, I've decided to take fate into my own hands, and look to local sites of study where I could continue to push this discussion. This venture into a relative unknown started with a *The New Yorker* article, some books, and a phone call, but a few months later, I am out in the Pinelands National Reserve in NJ, wondering how we can study how trees talk to one another.

1. Michael Pollan, "The Intelligent Plant," *The New Yorker*, December 16, 2013, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/23/the-intelligent-plant.

Joon Ma

"BAYT BYOOT": PLAYING HOUSE

I've been thinking a lot about houses this year. Not only because I'm in my late twenties, sick of packing-moving-unpacking-repeat, and living in a country more panicked about its housing shortage than its homelessness crisis (but guess how many homes the Queen owns). As it happens, after a decade of treasured solitude, I've had to move back in with my parents... into their one-bedroom house, intended for 'retirement for two' and instead suffocating with 'lockdown for three'. I'm grateful to have a roof over my head while the outside world goes all *Resident Evil*, but some days I'd be happier in my own cupboard-under-the-stairs (still a Slytherin though).

I grew up in a spacious house with a steep staircase, off which every one of us had at least one bad fall (ever the overachiever, I broke my forearm when I was one). My siblings and I have, for years, talked about buying back our childhood home, even though it has aged badly and is now multiple times more expensive (thank you, gentrification). We get upset any time we drive past our old house and slow down to longingly stare at it. We've romanticised it as our forever home, even though it now looks like it could very well be haunted or rodent-infested (or worse: not for sale). Practically, logistically, financially, even environmentally, it would be ridiculous of us to buy back this house. But sentimentally, we agree, "It's where I am in all my dreams." It's likely the common setting of our individual nightmares too, but we're roof-only-*half*-rotting people when it comes to this.

There's something surprisingly sad about the physical permanence of something you feel you've already lost. It's still there, just not for you. My aunt passed away last month, and the thought of setting foot in her 'empty' house makes my heart clench and my mother cry. She will forevermore be absent from the house 'where she lived', and that is what makes its continued presence so painful to us.

My great-uncle passed away last February, after spending years building a big summer house in a quaint little village (aren't they all). The layout of the upper floors was split into six suite-like sections for each of his sons and their families, as he would excitedly explain while showing us around. But the first time his sons gathered in that house was when his coffin was carried there before burial. And it was so cold that night, they all slept in the living room to share the space heaters. Nobody has gone back since. Everybody has agreed to sell.

Perhaps we put too much pressure on places like houses having to serve a poignant purpose, as though finding the 'perfect' structure will somehow give our lives order or brick-and-mortar contentment.

In Arabic, one of the most common words for 'house' or 'home' is 'bayt', which is also—often interchangeably—used to mean 'family' (sort of like 'House' Stark but much less dysfunctional). As with most Arabic words, 'bayt' (and its countless conjugations) is versatile and polysemic. 'Al-bayt baytak' is the equivalent of 'mi casa es su casa'. 'Bayyat al-bayt' means 'he built the house'. Among the alliteration and double-entendres is the expression 'bayt byoot', which means 'playing house'. If taken literally, the words simply mean 'house of houses' (hello, planet earth). If only it were as simple as that, though: finding houses in which to play house. There may be no such thing as the end-all house of all houses (sorry, childhood home and however many of the Queen's), but is a home really what we make of it regardless what it's made of? (Architects, proceed...)

Anonymous

PH: Clean desk, clear calendar, great natural light and unlimited access to supplies, materials, tools, and software.
SB: good stiff drink