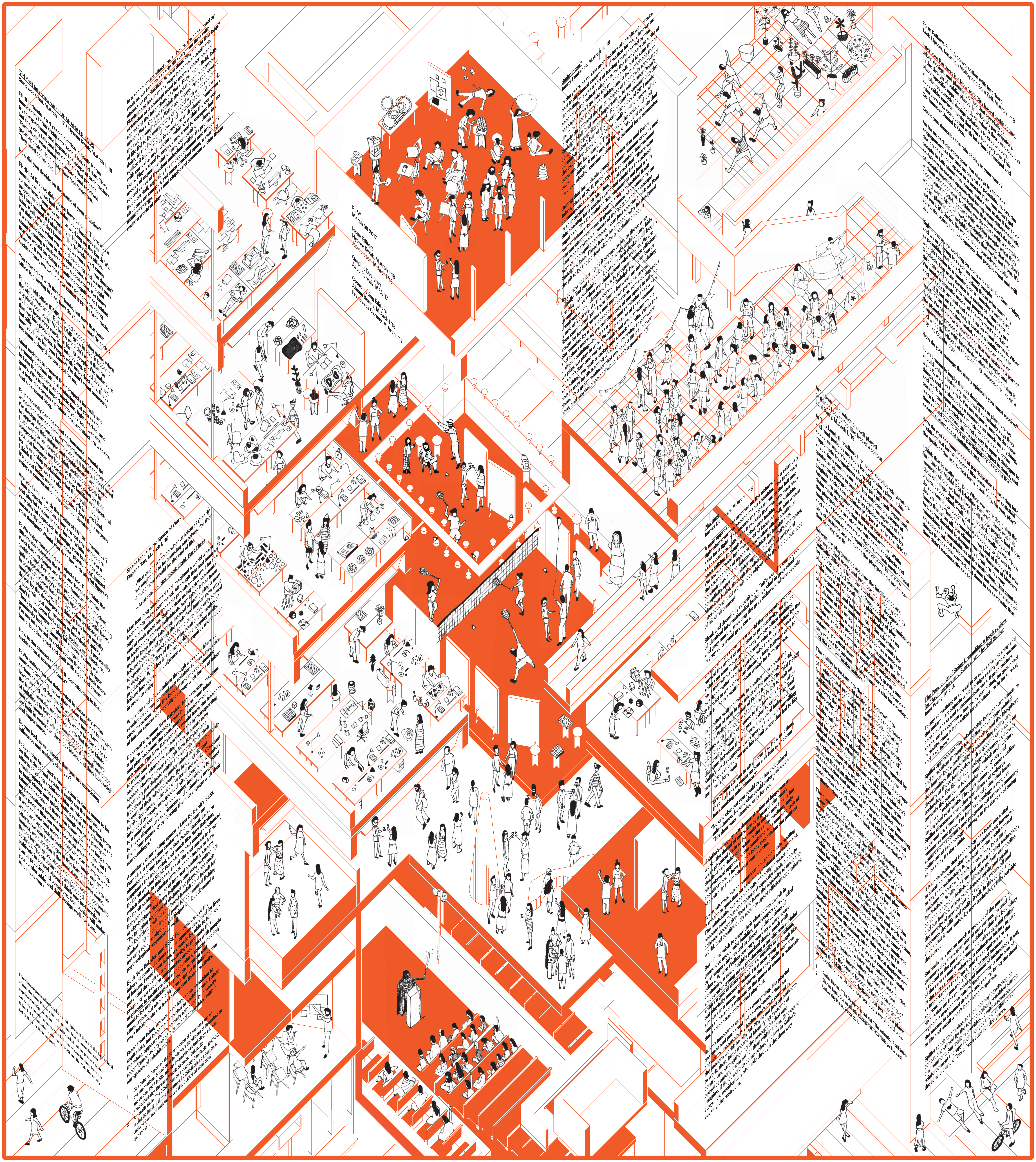

In a school of architecture, all hours are consumed by work as we tend to eagerly fill every free time with obsessive production. Where does Play fit into this loop? Playfulness has in many ways become an aesthetic extension of a concept used to merely describe and represent the intentions of Work. Play, in our field, falls under Work. Can we rethink the relationship between the two through Alan Watts' as he says, "the real secret of life [is] to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, realize it is play." Play is structure with chaos, framework with curiosity, architectural whimsy within the conventions. Play is used to engage and used to escape; both as modes of experimentation and competition—there is a rooted sense of freedom unlocked within its promise. Rudolph Hall, arguably the most dominant and imposing structure on campus, yet once cracked open, a swirling mass of energy, ideas and chipboard bounces within these walls, a world of play.

PLAY
March 09 2017

Issue Editors
Hyeree Kwak, M.Arch I '18
Jack Lipson, M.Arch I '18

Graphic Designer
Asad Pervaiz, MFA '17

Coordinating Editors
Abena Bonna, M.Arch I '18
Francesca Carney, M.Arch I '17

후하하하 Interview with FUHAHAHA FRIENDS

Sungwoo Choi, M.Arch I, '17 + Hyeree Kwak, M.Arch I, '18

FHHH Friends is a 4 year-old office in South Korea founded by three architects Yoon, Han, and Han. They try to experiment and expand the scope of architecture but they only talk and not do. Their first project 'Earth-Wall' won honorable awards and received great appraisal, but lately they feel forgotten. They need some love.

How did you decide on the name of your practice?

FHHH: At first we didn't even have a name. There was a moment when we had to submit our business name somewhere. Yoon was on-site working on the Earth-Wall project, and Han was working in his previous office. So I just named it Fuhahaha. The 'friends' part came later. Well, we didn't know what we were. Will we design? We didn't know what we would be doing and wasn't sure if we would continue to do architecture. We thought about running a barbershop or a bookstore. We knew that we would be doing something together so I added 'friends'. If we knew that we were going to be doing architecture, we would have called it FHHH Architects.

You started off with three friends, but now that your office is growing in size, how do you hire more 'friends'?

F: In our old office (DMP), we had a good thing going when the office was small. But as DMP grew in size, it became a typical 'company'. We knew we didn't want that, so we have been very careful in hiring people. We make sure that we hire people we find interesting. Good designer, but silly in character. People with imperfections, that's how you have fun, you know? We don't want someone too smart, they'd be too cool for us.

Most architects present their projects formally and seriously on their official websites, but you seem to take the opposite approach; fun, lighthearted, and goofy. Why is that important to you? Your website is a hybrid between a professional architecture website and a personal blog.

F: I personally cannot stand seriousness. I would go whacko on someone if they take themselves too seriously. We design rigorously, but talk about it lightly. I don't need to appear as this unique and sophisticated architect. I just want to be honest. I think architects speak in congested words not because they are smarter than you, but because it is easier to use familiar architectural terms and skip explaining what that really means. I think the way we talk about our work is more kind. It's about being more considerate. I don't think anyone enjoys a conversation they can't understand.

Are you familiar with the works of FAT or Jimenez Lai? Their projects look fun. They are not shy with colors and playful shapes in their forms. While you have a very playful approach in design, your buildings don't necessarily look 'fun'. How does 'playfulness' impact your designs? Would you ever toy with playful figures?

F: We enjoy those kind of projects too. But I think the difference between the West and us is that the West has a stronger and longer foundation in modern architecture. Perhaps their projects stand out by looking quirky because they're playing upon a more solid base. In contrast, Korea has a relatively shorter history in modern architecture, if anything it has been mostly driven by the developers. So we get a lot of quirky shapes without any meaning or knowledge. I personally don't think Korea lacks playful-looking architecture. There is no hunger for playful shapes, rather, we genuinely lack legitimate buildings built with rigor. We are interested in architecture that may look more basic, but designed and built with rigor and charm.

How is the character of FHHH contributing to the architectural scene in Korea?

F: We believe we are doing what is necessary at the moment. Growing up, we didn't seen buildings built with serious care and design. So while it is important us to have fun and wit while we work, we try to stay close to the fundamentals. And it's tough to find those kinds of buildings in Korea. This country sees architecture more as monetary value than space. Although our cities are built in concrete, they lack ideas, and thus lack weight and importance.

Do you feel, as architects, that you are exercising influence and making changes?

F: Even the Architect's Association in Korea seem to be on the side of real estate. It really are the individual efforts of young architects like us, who are starting from small projects, who are creating resistance. Clients want to build cheap and quick. Although we have plenty of talented people out there, we know it will take long time for perceptions towards architecture to change. But I think people like our work because we are unassuming. If we get more and more people who can relate to what we do and appreciate architecture through our small efforts, we can last longer in this battle. It's tough to be honest, we question if the good days will ever come. But as for you guys, please don't just work in corporate settings. The structure doesn't let good ideas you cultivate in school bloom. I think one just needs to start a practice and persevere. Companies will make you comfortable and dull. Design well, for sure. And make work.

Space for Leisure: Space of Work

Eugene Tan, M.Arch I, '16

What ought we to do when at leisure? Clearly we ought not to be amusing ourselves, for then amusement would be the end of life.
—Aristotle, Politics, Book Eight, Part Three

Man has long predicted and imagined a world where technology takes command. Although this had been an age-old premise—or indeed a promise—the wait for the end of work goes on. Rather than using advancements in technology to free individuals from labor, it has been used to keep them laboring. Instead of prefiguring a new leisure society and giving the work-free human new ways, most spaces for leisure have only served to deepen the coffers of those who control the modes of production. Whether in theme parks or shopping malls, leisure has been an indulgence which requires more labor in order to enjoy.

While the end of capitalism through a pseudo-Marxist revolution comes to mind as a solution to these negative circumstances, even the boldest and most optimistic of leisure spaces do not fully do away with forms of labor.

Constant's famous New Babylon, for instance, imagines a future where technology frees humans from labor and play becomes the consummate aspect of our existence. The New Babylonians would have the freedom to make and remake their environment by transporting architectural elements, using them to create new spaces. However, even though New Babylonians creatively participate within the kinetic field, their freedom of movement is undermined as they are unable to control their whereabouts. By bridging distant territories through the use of arterial networks, Constant intended to create unexpected 'situations' or encounters to a point of confusion, encouraging individuals to react to these disparate experiences and ultimately awaken them from passivity by forcing them to engage with their surroundings.[1]

A similarly disorienting space is Lina Bo Bardi's SESC Pompéia, a recreation center fashioned from an abandoned drum factory in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Leisure supplants the industrial, and much like New Babylon, Bo Bardi wanted SESC Pompéia to be a social condenser which denied, in this case, the strife and unrest in Brazil.[2] Bo Bardi achieves similar effects of confusion to New Babylon through the use of internal conduits, streets, or sky-bridges that deny legibility and easy wayfinding. The bringing together of disjunctive playscapes such as a boardwalk with a rainforest backdrop, a beach for sunbathing, and an indoor pond for communal fishing not only require physical participation, but demand a psychological response as well.

Both New Babylon and SESC Pompéia expose the inherent contradictions seen in spaces designed for lives of leisure. Freed from labor, we would be able to fulfil our potential through acts of creativity; to promote this creativity we require unexpected encounters with people or places; to facilitate these encounters, spaces not only need to be unpredictable to provide surprise and stimulation, but also highly prescriptive in defining the ways inhabitants are free to exercise their creativity.

Freed from labor, we would no longer be beholden to capitalists, but become beholden to architecture. Labor, therefore, appears not to be truly removed, but merely reconfigured as a type of leisure and embedded within our spaces of inhabitation.

1 Guy Debord, Report on the Construction of Situations and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization and Action, 1957, in Situationist International Anthology, ed. Ken Knabb, Berkeley: Bureau of Public Secrets, 1981, p. 22

2 Antonella Gallo, The SESC-Pompéia - factory, Sao Paolo, 1977-86, in Lina Bo Bardi: il diritto al brutto e il SESC-fábrica da Pompéia, Luciano Semerani and Antonella Gallo, CLEAN Edizioni, 2012, pp. 141-151

Badminton?

Jenny Fontenot, M.Arch II, '18

In the years past, Yale architecture students would take part in an annual ceremonial practice formally known as "Initiation." It was a sort of hazing ritual hosted by the second year graduate students for the first years as a rite of passage. I won't go into too much detail, but to sum things up, it involved plenty of drinking and a level of chaos that largely threatened the pristineness of the newly renovated Rudolph Hall (and most importantly, to our former Dean's concern, the paprika carpet). Reluctant to succumb to the administration's ban of the event, the class of 2011 made the executive decision to follow tradition and threw, what became, the last hurrah. They poked the bear, and it bit back. Initiation, 6 on 7, and all forms of student events that involved alcohol consumption were banned for a semester.

During this formidable drought, Vivian Hsu and Keith Johns, class of 2011, put on their commissioner crowns and commenced the very first YSOA Badminton Tournament. In an interview with Ms. Hsu, she stated that "there was this opening for a social event that could tie the school together." The Badminton Tournament is not just a silly form of leisure, but it has completely embedded itself into our studio culture. It gives a sense of community, an interface between all years of the YSOA, and an escape from our computer screens. I can just see the smirk on Paul Rudolph's face. There has to be a reason why he designed the pit to be the perfect size for a badminton court.

As somewhat jarring as it seems to be, to those who initially find out that a bunch of nerdy architecture kids are playing badminton in between their desks, it all begins to make sense when we think about who we are. We are creatives who understand how to program space efficiently and effectively. As the core of Rudolph Hall, the fourth floor communal "pit" transforms from an intimidating stage for formal reviews and our own personal arena. Surrounded by a kaleidoscope of posters, some outrageous and others more so, we tell the story of our sport to all who visit our building—hung as a constant reminder that when we play, we play to win. We play because at that moment when it's 2am and we're so frustrated we just want to hit something, we grab a racket and smack a birdie. While the noises may be distracting when you're trying to get work done, it's a great reminder that we have a little fun over here, and maybe, once and while, that's a good thing.

Form Follows Fun: A conversation with Interboro

Jack Lipson, Jonathan Molloy and Sam Zeif, M.Arch I, '18

Interboro Partners is a New York City based architecture, urban design, and planning office that specializes in the design of public places. Interboro's participatory, place-specific approach builds on what's there and deploys simple, resourceful design solutions to create open, accessible environments that work for everyone. This interview was conducted with Interboro Principal and Co-founder Daniel D'Oca.

Could you describe the role of play in your work?

As far as participation goes, we always try to make engagement as fun and as playful as possible. In, say, the design of a public space or a master plan, you won't get people to talk about the issues unless you make it fun to do so. We try to create spaces that bring many different kinds of people together, and we believe that you can't do that without engagement. Nothing we do starts with a sketch or a computer model. It starts with asking people what they would want. After all, we're designing spaces that we don't live in, planning for neighborhoods that we're not from. It's not ours, it's theirs. So we consider ourselves public servants, trying to make spaces that people want and will use.

Right now, we're working on a citywide plan for Cambridge, and we are trying to reach as many people as possible, particularly including those who normally wouldn't come to a meeting on a Tuesday evening at 6 o'clock. Our main device is a series of 'intercepts'—through which we try to meet people where they are. We made a gigantic model of the city that's portable, and we take it around and set it up on street corners. When you put it out on the street, it creates a public space in itself. It's an interactive model, so people can draw on it, etc. We also have a newspaper that we make as a part of the planning process that tries to teach people and empower people with knowledge about what planning is, and what the effects of the planning process are like on a city like Cambridge.

How do you manage the many opinions you must receive?

I don't mean to imply that as designers or planners we should only be listeners, and that if somebody says they want X, we give them X. We are experts, and we do know things, and we should be a resource as much as anything, and work to open people's minds to consider all other possibilities. The trick is to find a way to open a dialogue to learn from each other. Ultimately, the project is theirs, and they should own it. Part of participatory design is the essential element of building trust.

How do you see your ideas of participation translating into architectural form? It seems like once you have satisfied the goals of the users, that form is actually, for you, play?

I think that is really well put. When we were designing the furniture for MOMA PS1 [Holding Pattern], there was this moment where we had talked to all these people, had these ideas of things that they needed, like lifeguard chairs, a rock-climb wall, but we hadn't really asked, "How do you want it to look?" What we decided to do was to design it in a "Judd Vernacular" - we kind of thought it was funny that after all, our client was the Museum of Modern Art, so we decided to design the furniture in a way mimicking the sensibilities of the institution. This created an accidental but welcomed tension between the kind of things that people wanted, but done in an aesthetic that they didn't necessarily ask for.

Architectural production, well played or things I say to feel like less of a sellout

Lani Barry, M.Arch I, '19

At This Land, threadbare tire heaps, derelict refrigerators and mud puddles are tools for exploratory play. In this space, unsupervised kids turn old spring mattresses into impromptu trampolines and fire pits into self-organized snack-time commissaries. This entropic playscape of quotidian objects is part of a recent resurgence of the 'adventure playground,' a play typology developed by English landscape architect Marjory Allen in the 1940s.[1] Adventure playgrounds are sites in constant flux. While the playgrounds are stocked with familiar objects and tools, kids become ersatz designers of their environment and are encouraged to repurpose objects, build new play structures and reinvent the playground's organization as they see fit.

Adventure playgrounds assume the intelligence and agency of their users and promote a philosophy of play radically different from the standardized, designed-for-safety, padded Consumer Product Safety Commission playgrounds of my youth. This philosophy of play embraces a DIY ethos and posits calculated risk as an unequivocal tool for learning. In the adventure playground, play extends beyond an opportunity for simulation of the imaginary and becomes a mode of experimentation, a way to test the imaginary IRL. In this environment, the products of imagination are subject to real-world factors, such as social norms, gravity and potential physical harm. This uncensored, open-ended play makes the adventure playground a site for developing the skill of "make believe."

The ability to instantiate the "make believe" into existence via real-world testing parallels the process of architectural production. As architects, iterative feedback loops of models, drawings, dialogue and buildings are ways of testing architectural concepts. However, the premise of the adventure playground's philosophy of play, lies in its embrace of possibility: there are no pre-defined rules or objectives imposed by adults; rather, play is a mode of exploration where the function of ordinary objects are questioned and appropriated for new uses. What if the adventure playground's radical approach to play became a M.O. for architects? Might the notion of play offer a mode for a new type of architecture? How might the skill of "make believe" dissolve the false dichotomy between architectures of speculation and practice? Moreover, how can inserting the adventure playground ethos of play in architectural production expand beyond a play of child-like nostalgia, or diminution of play in architecture as an aesthetic?

The approach to play in architectural production has many precedents including the Situationists, who theorized play as a method of cultural critique, Cedric Price's open-ended pedagogical experiments at the AA such as the AD/AA/Polyark bus tour and the Eames Office which famously mixed work, living, and play. However, the transformative possibilities for play in architectural production today run risk of implosion under late capitalism. Sianne Ngai's theorization of the "zany" problematizes the blurring of play and work as a symptom of late capitalism which informs the production, proliferation and consumption of culture. The zany's "performance of affective labor," becomes an aesthetic trope endemic across our cultural milieu (on HGTV Design Star and perhaps even within architecture studio reviews), whose dispersed, often uncritical deployment posits serious challenges to play as a conscious mode of production.[2] Ironically, one way to address this dilemma is through play, interrogating the possibilities of play in architectural production through more open-ended experimentation. And so, as students of architecture, the studio becomes not just the site for honing the skills of make-believe, but perhaps a place to experiment with just how seriously we should play.

1 Rosin, Hanna, "The Overprotected Kid." The Atlantic, (April 2014).

2 Sianne Ngai, Our Aesthetic Categories, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 234.

Playtime

James Coleman, M.Arch I, '18

A man approaches another on the sidewalk in a relatively tight shot over the second man's shoulder. The first man asks for a light. The second man gestures to the left and as the camera pulls back it reveals that the two men have been talking through a window, one inside, one outside. We have entered into the world of Jacques Tati, one where the strangeness of modern convention elicits continual conundrums and paradoxes, in which its inhabitants complicity operate uninterrupted. It is only Tati's character, Monsieur Hulot, through the choreography of awkward interactions, that we witness objectively the ridiculousness of his environment.

Bleak and dreadfully repetitious, Tati's world is composed of identical Internationalist buildings clad in grey steel and grey marble, meeting the grey sidewalk where people in grey suits avoid grey cars.

Like pushing a rope, it is a world that is careful not to reward the effort of ambition or productivity. As Hulot enters an enormous and mostly empty office building, he is met with an elderly doorman who operates an overly complex paging system, who then calls a man who is forced to walk down an absurdly long hallway, only to park Hulot in a waiting room where he is forgotten.

In another waiting room, in another film about the alienation of man in the midst of his modernist world, Orson Welles' adaptation of Franz Kafka's The Trial (1962) begins with an allegory of a man who is left to wait on a bench before the entrance to the law, only to die after an eternity of waiting for permission to enter. The final dialogue between the man and the guard (adapted from Kafka's text) suggests it was merely the man's unwillingness to question or pursue his admittance that led to his terminally long wait.

"Every man strives to attain the law. How is it then, that in all these years no one else has ever come here seeking admittance?"

"No one else but you could ever have obtained admittance. No one else could enter this door. This door was intended only for you."

If Kafka's allegory is a demonstration of biopower at work—the denial of entrance by a guard, the man's weak physical state as he waits to enter, and finally his death—then Hulot operates in the same medium, only his awkward approach, the bumbling, unassuming lack of coordination, is how Hulot's body negotiates the politics of control in the modernist world order.

Every misstep, miscommunication, and double reading is meant to question an assumably rational environment. The miniscule, overseen details of bodily interaction become enormous characters: A squeaky chair, a poorly adhered decorative floor tile have the capacity to undo the world, and continuously recur to upset efficient operations.

Both films wish to show their characters awash in grandiose modernist building landscapes surrounded by strangers interested in directing the actions of others. Where Welles portrays work as a warehouse containing a sea of tightly packed desks, each with an operator typing away producing a terrific noise, Hulot enters a grid of discrete cubicles, equally as mundane, but playfully uncoordinated. First scurrying through like a mouse in a maze, Hulot views the spectacle from the mezzanine and is witness to the game of sheer irrationalities and contradictions that play out.

Hulot's innocence questions everything. His playful gestures and perpetual in-the-way-ness offers an answer to unconsciously losing one's own control in the modern world: be playful. Play is not just an antidote to work, then, but a means of identifying systems of control and strengthening the perception that one operates among them rather than within them. One could imagine, if Hulot were to come before the law in Kafka's story, he'd accidentally stumble through the doorway seeking the restroom.

The Possibility of Being Dreamlike: A book review for "Architecture and Surrealism" by Neil Spiller

Jane Weng, M.E.D.

To say something is surreal is to evoke the uncanny and the unfamiliar; objects which bridge reality and dreams, consciousness and subconsciousness. If architectural space, on the contrary, has to, by definition, be grounded in reality, then is it possible for architecture to be surreal, and if so, how?

Spiller approaches the relationship between architecture and surrealism through four different vantage points: the human body, architecture, the city, and the biosphere. He examines the possibility of channeling reality and dreams at these four scales with a specific emphasis on technology. For Spiller, technology becomes a gateway towards the surreal, a tool through which architecture can, itself, achieve a transcendent quality beyond its physical restraints. Through numerous case studies, Spiller discusses the otherworldliness of cyborgs, cybernetics, smart architecture and cities that learn, memorize and grow. For him, technology is not just a source of happiness and progress but rather, a seeming optimism of technology is always in the danger of being eclipsed by its dark side.

It is undeniable that technology has been essential to creating modern-day surreal experiences; however, to say that technology is generating the architectural uncanny, to borrow Vidler's phrase, may be a little far-fetched. While it is true that an estranging technology can challenge our beliefs or alienate us from our bodies and our homes, when experienced again and again the novelty of new sensations typically wears off and becomes the affirmed reality itself. In this sense, the shock that is warranted by new technology falls outside the surreal.

Surrealism is not so much a product of the paranoia generated by the expansion of our senses, instead it is rooted in the paranoia embedded within the boundary of the senses and memories which already exist within. In the surreal world, whereby a collective history is just as important as the future, and the forgotten are the sources of our paranoia, Spiller instead focuses his discussion on the muscles and bones of technology itself, laying his eyes on the future. Technology is only one of the means to channel dreams and reality, bring the dead to life and recall what's been long forgotten.

Spiller tends to emphasize the uncanny psychological sensations stirred by the technologically-enabled surreal environment. Surrealism provides us with a reversed reinforcement therapy; it challenges the distribution of the sensible and offers a fresh start for designers.

The views expressed in Paprika do not represent those of the Yale School of Architecture. Please send all comments and corrections to paprika.ysoa@gmail.com. To read Paprika! online, please visit our website, yalepaprika.com. Paprika! receives no funding from the School of Architecture. We thank GPSS and the Yale University Art Gallery for their support.