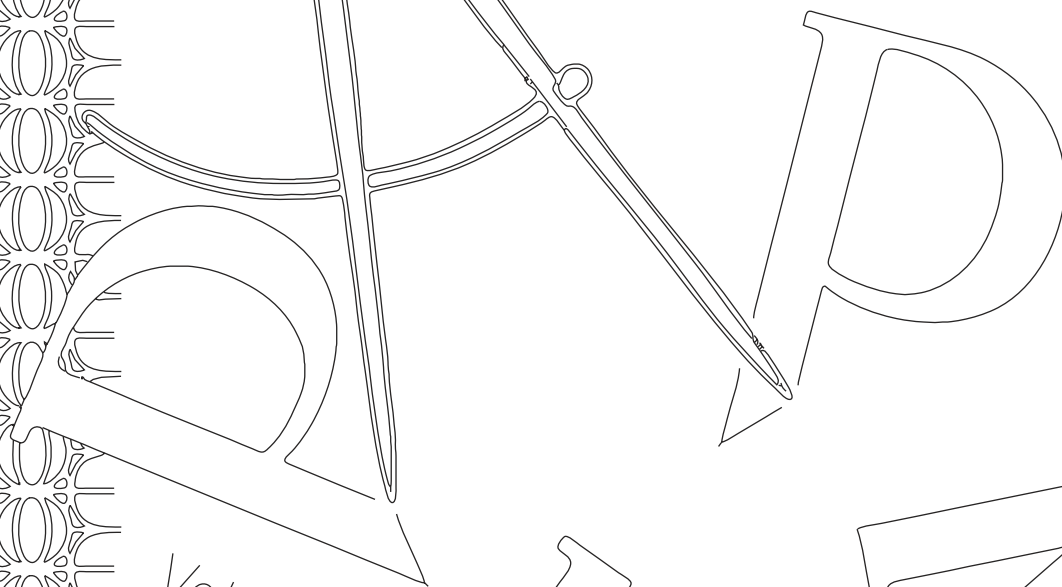
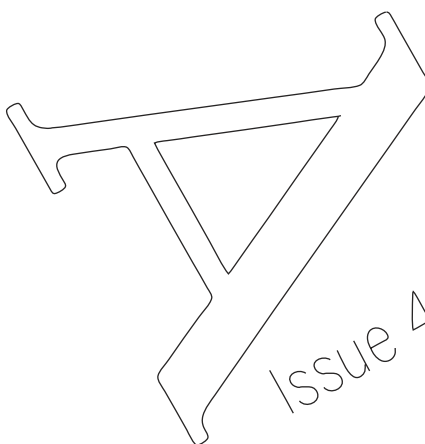
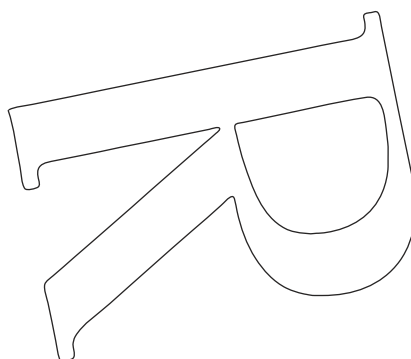
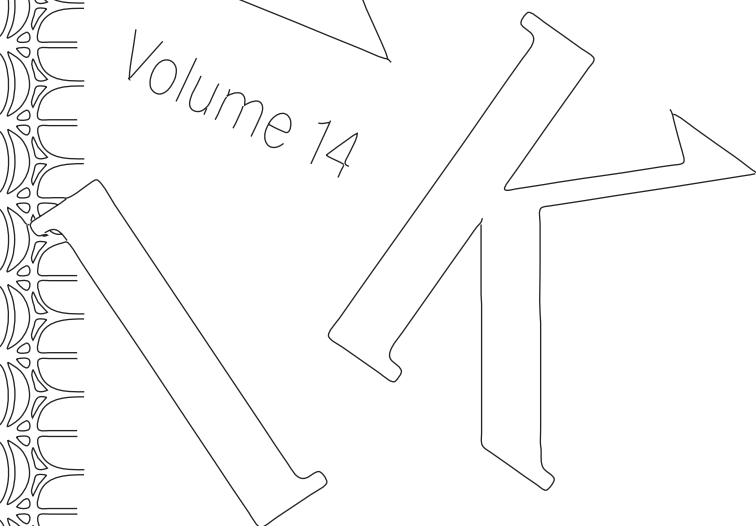


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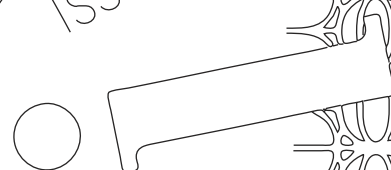


Volume 14



Issue 4

BUILDING



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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

ABBY LUNDERGAN AND AUBREY MOORE

¶ Architects are inherent world builders. ¶ In our concrete castles, we methodically conjure visions, drawings, and narratives of a piece of the world that does not yet exist. We imagine the nonexistent. We materialize the intangible. As designers, we each envision a unique world, one grounded in our own adventures, ideals, and aspirations. ¶ In a recent lecture on "Radical Cartography: How Changing Our Maps Can Change Our World," Yale history professor William Rankin described architects as "world builders." He described, much like cartographers, architects are trained to articulate versions of the world never before visualized. By revealing new fragments of the world, we generate fresh perspectives, inspire others, and forge a more authentic future. This description shifted our perception of the role of architecture students and revealed to us how world building is one of our most powerful tools in design. ¶ In this edition of Paprika, we invited designers to share a glimpse of their most fantastical worlds. To our delight, we were met with an array of charming, deeply expressive stories. In many ways, this issue is its own little world—a printed terrarium of ritualistic plants, shadowy beasts, heroic pests, underground fish, microscopic infrastructure, imaginary landscapes, and ephemeral architecture. We hope these tales inspire you as they inspire us. ¶ We believe that world building transcends academic environments and is most profound in our personal lives. By imagining new versions of ourselves, our world, and our quests in life, we reveal our fullest potential. World building is embedded in everything we do. We believe when we embrace the power of otherworldliness, we innovate and inspire most. ¶ Wherever your journey takes you, we encourage you to practice world building in your life—to imagine the most whimsical, peaceful, or heroic versions of it, and to pursue that vision without doubt. Perhaps your quest to bring this world into reality begins now. Go forth with courage.

Citation: Rankin, William. *Radical Cartography: Visual Argument In the Age of Data*. New York: Viking, 2025

DESIGN STATEMENT

GRACE HAN & MICHAEL STEVENS

¶ Typography is one of the primary ways graphic designers construct worlds. For this issue of Paprika, we developed three typefaces to help shape the publication's visual and conceptual landscape. In doing so, we approached type not simply as a vehicle for content, but as a set of conditions that structure how content comes into relation—how it is ordered, perceived, and given meaning. ¶ Inspired by the symbol of a compass, we wanted to explore ideas of building, planning, and measuring in the abstract. While the compass has strong architectural associations—appearing, for example, in the School of Architecture's herald—it also carries meaning across various theological and mystical traditions. Beyond literal construction, the compass suggests a more "cosmological" form of building: the act of creation itself. ¶ This idea of the compass as a measuring instrument became a guiding structure. One of the typefaces was designed specifically for the border surrounding each page. Divided into centimeter increments, the border establishes a system in which all elements on the page are positioned in relation to it. Rather than functioning as a neutral frame, the border actively produces a field of constraint and possibility, where placement becomes a visible negotiation with measure. ¶ The other two typefaces are revivals. Bodleian draws from a stonecut inscription at Hillhouse and Grove on campus; its organic and ornamental qualities help establish the sense of fantasy that runs through the issue. Behrens is a revival of Behrens Antiqua, a modular yet calligraphic typeface that provides a counterpoint to Bodleian's more fluid forms. Together, they move between inscription and system, between the hand and the grid, holding different temporalities of making in tension. ¶ Together, these three typefaces construct the world of Paprika, operating not just as formal devices but as a system of orientation—guiding how meaning is built, measured, and imagined across the issue.

✕ DO WE NEED ✕ A NEW, BIGGER, ✕ MUSEUM? ✕

ALBERTO MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA

In recent years, art museums in New York City have expanded their exhibition space or are in the process of doing so. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Frick Collection are just a few examples of cultural institutions that are significantly increasing their display area. The New Museum recently joined this pattern after reopening following two years of renovation and an expansion by OMA, led by partners Shohei Shigematsu and Rem Koolhaas. ¶ The museum's expansion, branded as the New New Museum, offers some reflections that can be summarized in two ways: a significant success in its formal and spatial design, resolving some weaknesses of the original building by SANAA; and the corroboration that enlarging the art museums of New York City are less about experiencing art and more about creating spaces of gathering and consumption. ¶ From a formal perspective, expanding the existing staggered-box building was not easy. Its iconic form required a building that was both different and integrated with its mass. OMA's project does exactly this with a faceted building that resembles Hugh Ferriss's paintings, following the setback principle of the 1916 Zoning Law. However, the characteristic OMA irony in how they usually address building form is also present in the New Museum, as the building is set back not only on its upper floors but also at ground level. The result is a sharp angle strategically located at one of the vertices of the existing building, creating a visual tension between the two. ¶ The faceted exterior form shapes a sculptured staircase in the interior, aiming to improve the spatial and circulation limitations of the SANAA structure. In the old building, to move between floors, one had to take the freight elevator or use the small fire staircase, creating an awkward experience for visitors. The new

faceted staircase faces the street and offers partial views of it, and enables smooth movement between levels and exhibition rooms. This staircase also demonstrates OMA's design ability and reminds some of the best projects of the firm, like the Kunsthal Museum in Rotterdam and the Casa da Música concert hall in Porto. The whole staircase is covered with a seamless metal mesh, lit from behind, while each triangular space between the facade and the circulation, interior, and terraces features different materials, emphasizing its various programs, including light blue plywood for the small auditorium and a black-pigmented sprayed concrete for the terraces. Artificial and natural light, reflections, exterior views, and people's movement create an experience that the old New Museum lacked. ¶ Nevertheless, this experience is compromised by the new capacity of the museum, which creates overcrowded spaces and makes it difficult to enjoy the artwork. While writing these lines, I see a story shared by the OMA New York Instagram account with a quote of Shohei Shigematsu stating the "museum is evolving into a more community-based exchange place rather than just a gallery space." This is a generous way to say that the museum, like many others, is moving toward consumption and flaunting power in the art world rather than experiencing art. This tendency is evident not only in the forthcoming ground-floor restaurant but also in the curatorial approach of the opening exhibition, New Humans: Memories of the Future. The galleries are densely packed with works spanning more than a century, making both art appreciation and circulation difficult. This is not an argument against expanding access to art. But the combination of rising ticket prices and an emphasis on quantity over coherence raises a critical question: why do we need a New, bigger, New Museum if experiencing art is, in fact, deteriorating?

THIRD PLACES 3:

MOVIE MAGIC

JESSICA KONG

¶ It's Saturday night. You're looking for something, anything, to do. Maybe you're in the mood for the newest A24 movie, a few casual rounds of bowling, or just a place to spend time with friends that isn't your home. That shouldn't be a difficult ask. But, in New Haven, it often feels as such. ¶ It's not that there is nothing to do. There are bars and restaurants, some nice trails, the occasional event, even a skating rink if you're willing to plan for it. But that's part of the problem—most of what exists is either expensive, alcohol-centered, or requires a level of effort, turning spontaneity into a chore. Take something as simple as going to the movies. The nearest theater from downtown is about a 15-minute drive. That's manageable...if you have a car. Otherwise, it's a two and a half hour walk or an hour-long bus ride you have to plan your entire evening around. ¶ In 2023, Bow Tie Criterion, New Haven's only remaining cinema, closed down due to pandemic-related revenue declines and changing consumer interest. Now the only public film screenings in the city are based out of the Yale Film Archive. But where can we go to see the recent Oscar-nominated film? Or dare I say, the newest Marvel film? The transportative nature of cinematic magic perfectly encapsulates the effervescent energy I crave from every third place. Planning, anticipating, and finally gathering in one space where individuals from all across the city can share a special collective memory and experience. The excitement and togetherness you feel after the film ends and you can finally debrief with your friends. You never think about the desire for that energy, until you are deprived of it. ¶ New Haven doesn't necessarily lack activity per se, it lacks accessibility to said activity. We need more places that define the city's soul. The casual, low-pressure, yet transcendental third places where you can show up spontaneously. We are desperately in need of those magical third places.

Third Places is a recurring column documenting, analyzing, and understanding third places in New Haven. It aims to question how these spaces are essential to the health of our souls.

THE FREIGHT ELEVATOR?

Response to David Gissen:
"From Rehabilitation Architecture to the
Anti-Eugenic City"

ZACH SUNDBORG AND SHRESHTHA GOYAL

¶ David Gissen's lecture traced a throughline between radical disability politics and broader anti-capitalist critique, centering groups like the Socialist Patient Collective (SPK). Emerging from 1970s anti-institutional movements, SPK reframed illness as a systemic condition produced by capitalist society, radicalizing the "medical" model that disability movements had operated within. Rather than rehabilitating individuals to fit the workplace, SPK called for dismantling the economic structures that produce alienation, drawing explicitly on Karl Marx. In this view, psychiatry and medicine function less as neutral sciences and more as tools of normalization, where even "treatment," including medication, can become a form of institutional control. ¶ A central thread of the lecture was how disability and governance intersect in the United States and Japan, resisting eugenics, institutionalization, and state control over bodies, advocating instead for patient-run care, collective living, and what we might now call crip-technoscience. Parallel movements, including Japan's Green Lawn movement and affiliations with the Black Panther Party, extended these critiques globally, advocating for patient-run care and collective living, even as they faced repression. It's important to remember this, especially now, that if creativity can serve as political rhetoric, it can and should also serve as a force for resistance. ¶ Entangled with histories of measurement, performance testing, and eugenic thinking, the built environment begins to feel less like a neutral base and more like an opinionated bouncer, deciding who gets in and who doesn't. The irony of hosting such a lecture in an inaccessible space like Hastings Hall at Yale underscored the persistence of structural barriers—I thought, as I rode the freight elevator with a group of disabled people to leave Hastings Hall.

COHORT UPDATES

Ethan's Update

MAGGIE HOLM
M.Arch I '28

"The second half of the second half of the academic year is well underway. First years are learning about dimensional lumber and Hull's is running to the bank. Collective housing is getting designed on an unusual Fair Haven site in the year 2040; Luddism is in the air tectonically, programmatically, and representationally. A sizable subset of the first-years are taking L-theanine in an attempt to abate stress dreams about their summer plans. Future first-years arrive in two days to become indoctrinated in our concrete energy vortex: this time we will not get banned from Partners. The denizens of the sixth floor look forward to warm East Rock braais."

– Ethan Lamping

Last Lasts

TONY SALEM MUSLEH
M.Arch I '26

The last quarter leans heavy,
models, drawings, presentations.
Ambition translating into hours,
into the quiet subtraction of lectures.

The last last quarter leans heavier,
resumes, leases, interviews.
The transition of becoming is loss:
the loss of time that once felt endless.

Time, once expansive, closes in,
nostalgia arriving as we depart.
Lectures, theatre, philharmonic,
let us enjoy while it still lasts.

Exhale

MARUSYA BAKHRAMEEVA
M.Arch II '26

For a couple of seconds, the body is relaxed,
and the shoulders are down; however, in 3, 2, 1,
they start to rise again. Exhale.

We've presented the thesis, and each one of
us created a special atmosphere in the room
where we gather our working documents, at
least for a day. Every one of us was bathing in
the worlds we've created until we had to pin
down the exhibition. Exhale.

Now that all the life we postponed can't wait to
gain our attention - other classes, jobs, friends,
family calls. However, for a little while, we can
relax and exhale.

Tapped Out

TIAN HSU
Undergraduate

With the last kiss of winter giving way to spring, the senior community is very much tapped out of the studio. With professors praising voyeuristic bathrooms—four walls of glass through which one can clearly see in—seniors are left confused as to why the final models of our four years at Yale center on shitting and showering. Nevertheless, we remain hopeful for an adjustment to the assignment.

The juniors have finally been given a project with a site—the Mill River—a location that ticks the box of a classic YSoA site. We are excited to see how the fundamental lessons gleaned from abstract aggregation assignments translate into a more concrete project.

Signs of Spring
SHRESHTHA GOYAL
M.Arch II '27

With M.Arch II second-year presentations this week, it was so inspiring to see projects evolve from early ideas into fully realized, cohesive bodies of work, growing from seed to something so expansive. Amid the rush of deadlines, spotting the first skunk cabbage of the season was the highlight of my week, a green rebel pushing through the earth, an important reminder that growth often happens quietly, in its own time.

Sharing Research
ALBERTO MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA
Ph.D

In March, Ph.D candidate Lisa Beyeler-Yvarra and Gabrielle Printz presented their current research at the "Unearthing the Earth: Architectural Histories of extractivism" symposium hosted by Cornell AAP. Furthermore, we already have a date for the annual Kurt W. Forster Public Defense and Reception for Graduating Ph.D Students in Architecture on May 6.

Soup, More lectures, and What's Ahead
LAYNA CHEN
M.E.D

It's been a full week for the M.E.D classes of '26 and '27. The group recently welcomed Mahdi Sabbagh for their annual M.E.D Working Group lecture. Iskander Guetta made posters, sent emails, and treated classmates to a homemade soup, served with olive oil and bread. Others contributed introduction speeches, bowls, forks, and spoons to make it happen.

Looking ahead, second-years have a deadline approaching in two weeks. And, on April 2, prospective students will visit for Open House.

Special Snowflakes
SUSAN SONTAG
M.Arch I '27

Cobbling together a measly amount of sleep, all systems integration teams do a mad dash towards midterms after being lambasted all semester. Only to be told we are equally beautiful, smart and charismatic.

HEADLINES

3/23

ISKANDER GUETTA cooks up a fire (and delicious) bissara ahead of MAHDI SABBAGH's talk, presented by the MED Working Group.

3/24-25

The M.Arch II cohort goes hard on their final thesis presentations—possibly breaking records for the sheer number of models produced. Truly post-pros.

MICHELLE LI
AND ANSON LEUNG

GARDEN OF FRACTAL PLANTS

FORAGING

A bloom from the desert out west.
A green feather from Isabella's.
A seedpod from glaciated ground.
Dregs of a tea reading.
Clippings from an evergreen.
Grass like a fox's tail.
A branch of pine.
Handful of hibiscus. Rose buds. Strands of yellow.

Each object carries a story,
the meeting between plant and person and place.

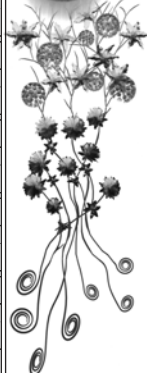
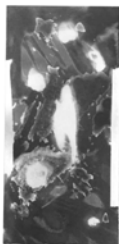
CONJURING

light the candle

Gather close
as those might in a séance.

Take up the brush.
Brush back and forth.
Let the pulp and paper saturate yellow.

Lay the plant upon the page and
call forth the artificial sun.
Wait. Watch.
Yellow darkens to bronzy blue.
Shadows bleed white and press themselves onto the page.



Submerge. Agitate. Rinse.
Phantoms emerge from photogenic blue.

From these ghosts, we listen to their calling,
Making marks —
elongating into stems and roots,
morphing into leaves, buds, flowers, fruits.

We circle.
Once, then again, then eight times.
Ink. Pigment. Wax.
Coming forth,
One fairy,
four butterflies,
twenty bulbs,
thirty-two blooms —
one after another, the fractal takes shape.
Neither flower, nor a weed—

A hybrid plant of becoming.

blow out candle

FABULATING

In the thousandth year of drought, bulbs uncoil towards a single droplet of water,

From their spirals, star-shaped flowers bloom,

morphing into butterflies, dancing their brief lives in scorched air.

At the spring ceremony, the community harvests the butterfly fruit, pink crescents

to scatter around the stump of a sacred tree, home once to a fairy,

Above blooms the water blossom, thickening liquid to jelly,

feeding a fire-breathing weed,

where a new flower can emerge from the ashes.

This is the myth of a fractal plant. Conjured from fragments, inconsistencies, glitches, patches, and disturbance. The fractal gathers scattered matter. Found flora collected by hand. Sun prints. Tarot cards turned over one by one. Scrolls of exquisite corpses. Blender magic. Disjointed words strung onto sentences like beads on a cord. Voices over voices over voices. The plant is not created once or thrice; it assembles through its telling and retelling. The story finds its own form, petal by petal, line by line, leaf and letter appearing in sequence. Worlds are made with words. Incrementally, a polyphonic myth is made.

We care about what buds bud buds. What seeds seed seeds. The fractal plant breeds and crossbreeds ways of knowing that are partial, situated, and relational. It photosynthesizes, reproduces, fruits, disperses in the wind.

Exhale.
Release.
The story moves on.

The fractal plant was brought into being by fourteen collaborators at the Harvard Graduate School of Design during a J-term course titled *Abracadabra Botanica: Crafting with Plants*.

Lombok

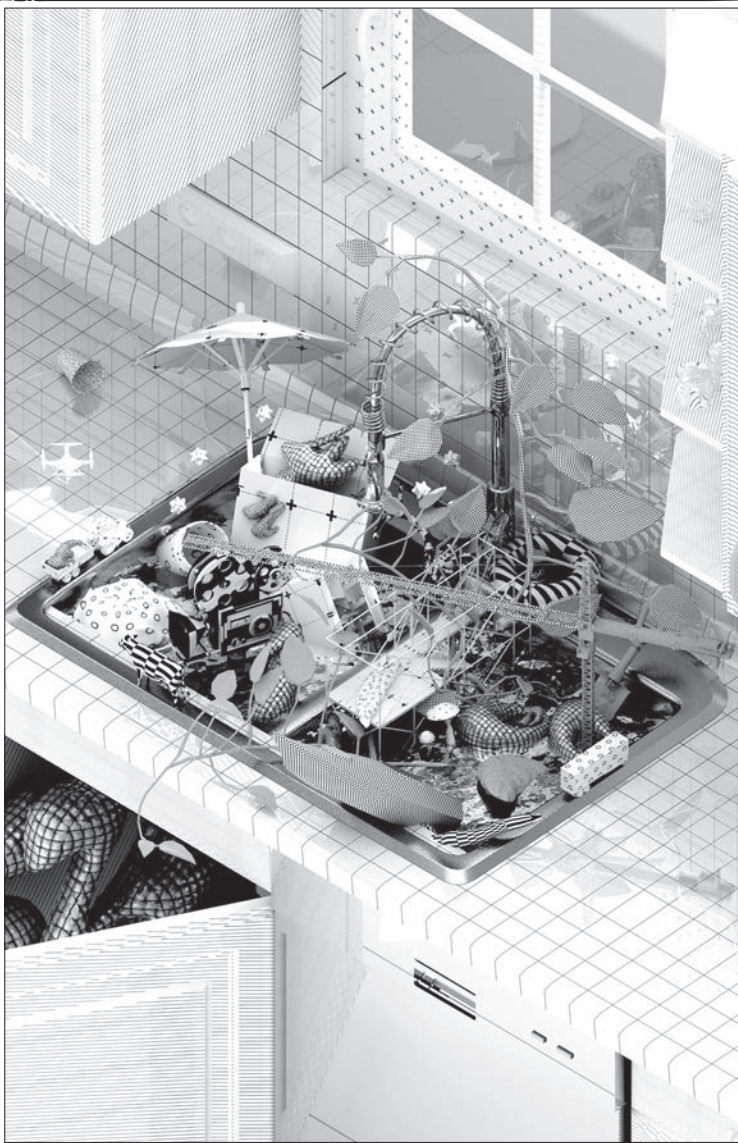
Layna Chen

Peat is very good for fish," or so fishermen say. ¶ Lombok," is the name of the hole left behind after fire has burned through the underground layers of peatland. The surface of peat is composed of a dense matrix of wet leaves and roots. After an underground peat fire has run its course, the network of roots and leaves collapses inward. Sudden downpours occur frequently in the tropics, and it is not long afterwards that rainwater will fill the hole. Red tannin from surrounding rainforest trees colors the water an orange-red hue. Upon becoming filled with water, the farmers would find fish swimming in the pond, although none had been brought in. ¶ The earth is not empty. Within the waterlogged, moist ground of Indonesia's peatlands, endemic, eel-like fish can swim through the earth. Species such as harumei, haruan, and some catfish have adapted specialized respiratory systems to survive in low-oxygen peat swamps. Their bodies are long and cylindrical, with small fins, and black-red bodies. They coat their bodies with a layer of mucus to burrow into the cooler mud. Their lungs have long adapted to the poorly oxygenated environments of acidic peat water, and they can survive for days in mud and moist soil. ¶ Architects working in peatland in the middle of a city mentioned that when they excavate the soil for concrete foundations, they often uncover fish. In recent years, as fires rage through the forests above, these fish have burrowed beneath the peat to escape

the heat, waiting until it was safe to come out. ¶ In deep forests where peat can reach over 12 meters deep, fishermen have even claimed that they could read the fertility of the land by the color of the fish in the water. They say that fish that live deep in the blackwater swamps have darker bodies and indicate the presence of sour land, or "tanah masem." ¶ After interviews and talks with scientists from the local university, I accompanied professors and teachers to these restaurants. One of the professors had grimaced slightly at my order of Nila. He, instead, ordered a plate of harumei. ¶ I later learned about the introduction of nila to the river ecosystems in Borneo. Since the early 1970's, in response to food shortages, the government has been importing tilapia, or "nila" in Bahasa Indonesia, from North Africa. Now, in the small roadside eateries, or warungs, and the larger restaurants in the city, nila and harumei occupy equal spots in the menu's offerings. "Nila" is cheap, hardy, and has a firm flesh that travels well to markets. Yet, unlike the fish species endemic to Borneo, the body of the nila fish is covered with thick, bony scales. While it can swim in muddy waters and survive in low-oxygen environments, they cannot cover themselves with mucus and escape underground. Yet, they spawn and breed aggressively, outcompeting native fish for both food and resources, gradually disrupting the relationship between fish and soil and displacing the fish that once moved through it.

Yale School of Architecture, M.E.D. 2026

EVERYTHING BUT ~~~~~ [IN] ~~~~~ THE KITCHEN SINK

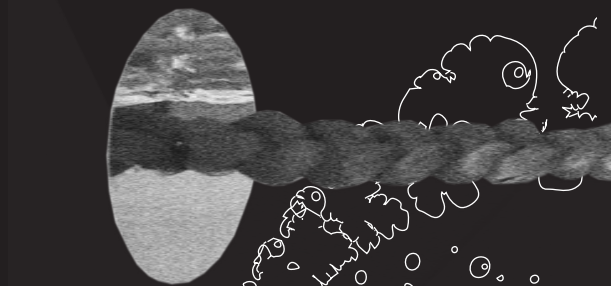


EILÍS FINNEGAN
Assistant Professor ENVD, Auburn University
CAD/C

¶ What if the kitchen sink — ordinary, recessed, obedient — was quietly repurposed as a site of planetary calibration? ¶ In this version of the domestic world, the sink does not simply collect what remains after use; it hosts a small but restless cosmology of found things. The basin becomes a sink-scape: a staged micro-world where chrome faucet "stems" sprout perforated leaves, surveillance lenses nest beside patterned teacups, and inflated mesh creatures lounge in the sudsy shallows plotting their between-wash shenanigans. These unlikely inhabitants gather around the canonical fixture, turning the sink into a choreography of care, clutter, maintenance, and quiet domestic mischief. ¶ Set within a hyper-textured, gridded kitchen landscape, the world resists tidy resolution. Instead, it performs a playful inversion of the phrase "everything but the kitchen sink." Here, everything is IN the kitchen sink, even you. The basin becomes part garden, part archive, part soap slick, part glitch field — each identity interfering with the last, flickering in and out of hatched resolution. One must take caution wading through the thickets of garburator e-waste, dodging striped ceramic vessels as they bob beside camera modules, foam-speckled platforms on their own drift, and robotic vegetable fragments sopping through the dishwasher. As such, the drain behaves less like an endpoint than a portal, pooling rinsed pigments, stray fibers, fragments of patterned packaging, and drifting packets of "homegrown" metadata. Microbial logics mingle with machinic sensing, forming a feedback loop between what is being cared for and what is quietly being contaminated. ¶ Over time the sink thickens into a soft archive of domestic surplus. Scaffolds colonize the basin, mesh organisms curl along the rim, and blue inflatable forms nap beside checkerboard cups and wandering gadgets. The sink becomes an improbable compost heap where matter and information — soap bubbles, crumbs, sensors, scraps — slowly reorganize themselves. Designed less for human users than for the organic and machinic inhabitants of distant kitchen worlds, this sink-scape proposes a tiny but exuberant infrastructure of excess and upkeep. ¶ And so the sink, long treated as a site of disappearance and ritual cleansing, re-emerges as a bustling planetary laboratory: a place where umbrellas shade drifting robots, plants grow from plumbing, and the smallest act of rinsing quietly reorganizes the architecture of the world.

SEARCHING FO

¶ Two worlds exist side by side. One is our own. It is filled with light, often insufficient to maintain attention on the present moment and peace. Even in illuminated spaces, inner light can begin to fade. The second is a realm of spirits and beings.



¶ This braid is called Kosa. It offers support to the inner light until it



¶ Among these beings is Svetilo, a spirit composed entirely of inner light. When Svetilo senses its weakening in our world, it responds by extending a braid through a portal between the two realms.



OUR INNER LIGHT

steadies once again. When this balance is restored, Svetilo withdraws the braid, and the passage closes without a trace.



¶ Kosa reaches our world through the portal and shines-shines-shines until we feel better. To the right, there is a scaled model of the creature Svetilo, who is a source of inner light from the parallel world.

Yale School of Architecture, M.Arch II 2026

MARUSYA BAKHRAMEEVA

✕ THEATER ✕

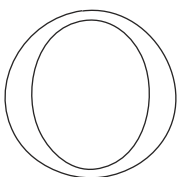
OF THE MIND

¶ Imagine there are people living on a moon whose only means of connection with the people on the planet they orbit is through dreaming of the planet without ever being there. At a quick glance this moon architecture is normal; if studied, it is a blurry facsimile, a dreamlike blur of buildings on the planet.¹ ¶ Not many contemporary Dungeons and Dragons campaigns happen in dungeons. And, while dragons are common, it is not a given to encounter them. What every campaign does have, is worldbuilding. Many people are drawn to the game because it fosters community; players gather around a table to share food, collectively tell stories, and build worlds. The term 'theatre of the mind' is common around DnD tables; players are asked to imagine gameplay and roleplaying scenes, often simply by descriptions provided to them by the Game Master (GM) without any imagery to support it. Outside of worldbuilding in movies, books, video games, or other industries, this could be the most approachable way to realize the magical world in one's mind, and share it. The DnD format allows you to see people interact with the world, and even have them change it. I wanted to explore some of these worlds, so I reached out to GMs at Elm City Games and PunkOuter Games. ¶ One GM² told me of a world where the ancient architecture of the place was derived from sacred geometry and magical utilitarianism. Imagine form-follows-function masses in the landscape; a magic-first, people-second approach to designing buildings expresses the boom of magic, not too dissimilar from the industrial boom in the real world. Contrasting this barren image, the architecture built more recently is painted lavishly and exhibits elaborate stained glass. In this world, flowers keep evil at bay, so architecture has an emphasis on saturation and flora. The tectonics become the magical defense system. ¶ Another GM³ built a world where the form behind ancient and current architecture are coincidentally similar to the previous. Although here, the older buildings are meant to evoke a minimalism that dictates a lack of magic, emphasizing the straightforwardness of fantasy-free construction. Though something mysterious affects the structures, they

do not decay how one would expect and maintain an ethereal, abandoned-yesterday feel to them. The contemporary buildings of the world are haphazardly and precariously dangling on cliffs over water. The buildings look as if they are built by magic: fluid, colorful, and dense. The tectonics are the process of creating magic, connected by magnificent bridges to make them make sense. ¶ I have played in campaigns based on the two worlds described above, but I did reach out to another GM⁴ who I have never met before. They approached their world with less in-game historical rigidity; the interesting part lies in how the architecture is built. The players are asked to imagine the average medieval city with a twist, where the walls have unrealistic angles and materials shift unexpectedly. It is what architecture would look like if one drew it with their eyes closed. The deconstructivist structures defy gravity. Where one would expect columns, they find nothing except some faint runes etched by wizards holding houses afloat. ¶ Whether it is an appropriately magical alteration of Gaudi's houses, a finished and expanded version of Rossi's San Cataldo Cemetery, or a medieval take on a more structurally audacious recreation of Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao, there is architecture out there that might fit nicely in this theatre of the mind. Every person sitting at that table has an idea of what these worlds look like, and it doesn't have to be an exact match to their neighbor. ¶ What I love about the game is that it allows people to imagine architecture that doesn't exist, yet they still get to walk through it and tell stories that are shaped by it. One day, when they travel to a city in the real world, they might come across something that inspired their GM to design the world they have been playing in for years. The magic found in a world of wizards and dragons doesn't seem far off from the magic found in already-built architecture around the world. ¶ There are myths, there are stories, and there is so much lore that informs our collective worldbuilding. DnD seems like a way to explore the wondrous magic of real world architecture around a table full of snacks and laughter. And above the table, it lets you see magic in the cities you explore.

MELOS SHTALOJA
Yale School of Architecture, M.Arch I 2027

An Extraordinary World on Ordinary Ground by Devin Jernigan



On May 5, 1926, on the unpaved ground in North Philadelphia between North 11th Street and West Erie Avenue, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Combined Shows established a space separate from the urban environment. ¶ From the air, two different spatial arrangements coexisted on the same land—one orderly, the other irregular. The tents transformed this transitional space, bordered on the north and west by trolley and railroad tracks and a lumber yard, on the east by the backs of rowhomes, and on the south by an open, undeveloped area leading to the street, disrupting the urban grid. The neighborhood and infrastructure pressed in on all sides. ¶ The Ringling show, like all traveling circuses, used tents to create a repeatable spatial operation that could move. Trains arrived early in the morning to set up, perform, pack up, and head to the next city. The layout of the circus lot was developed over decades through repetition, competition, and progress. ¶ By the 1920s, the circus lot design could adapt and transform to fit any site it could occupy. The circus did not conform to the city; it imposed its own order on whatever ground the advance agents could secure. Contracts were signed, and the circus filled the space with its own world. ¶ Inside the lot was a socially rich yet stubbornly hierarchical community. A cast of characters of its population included managers, performers, roustabouts, canvasmen, candy butchers, and agents. Some say this community was more like a family; they lived, moved, and performed together. ¶ The lot was divided into societal zones and thresholds. Visitors first encountered the Midway, where they could see sideshow “freaks,” buy tickets and concessions for the main tent, and experience an indescribable otherworldliness. The air on the Midway was full of sweet and earthy scents, with brass march music inexplicably drifting from the tents. The Midway and main tents served as the front of house, while behind the three performance and exhibition tents, the back-of-house tents and ground were where performers and staff ate, prepared for shows, and relaxed when they could. ¶ Michel Foucault proposed the heterotopia as an “effectively enacted utopia,” a real counter-site, a physical “world.” The traveling circus was an “absolutely temporal” heterotopia, characterized by its impermanence and its ability to construct a world in an instant. It existed in one place for less than 24 hours, leaving only trampled dirt. ¶ The circus tents, even in the photograph above, appeared pristine. However, the canvas touched the ground numerous times throughout the season. The soil from previous lots became embedded in the canvas as it was laid out, raised, and lowered. By the end of the season, the circus had carried dirt from over a hundred cities. This creates a contradiction and reveals its heterotopic nature: the pristine image was its aspiration, a utopian vision, but the material record tells a different story. It shows that this world was real, not just a figment of many children’s imaginations. The circus brought with its well-worn canvas that disrupted the urban landscape wherever it traveled, only to vanish before the ground could dry.



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