

^[8]
SPATIAL CONTAGIONS
 Rachel Valinsky is a curator, writer, and researcher based in New York. She is a co-founder of Wendy's Subway, for which she currently serves as Artistic Director, and is completing a PhD in Art History at The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

Wendy's Subway is a non-profit reading room, writing space, and independent publisher. The editors of CO— meet with Valinsky to talk about Wendy's Subway's work at their reading room in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The full conversation is available online at *www.gatepaprika.com*.

CO—: So much of [Wendy's Subway's] work is done coordinating with collaborators that sort of come and go, and I think that presents a lot of opportunities to make this not only the space itself, but also the development of a network. Have you seen Wendy's become a road map for other communities? Has it germinated in that way?

Rachel Valinsky: Definitely. I think that in some way the residency program is the most dedicated initiative within Wendy's that hosts different communities on a rotating basis.

The residencies offer different publishers, collectives, organizations, and artists opportunities to do focused research and work here, but then also to bring in audiences that their projects can't otherwise assemble because of lack of space and resources. So I think that in this way, Wendy's Subway has really acted as a container for different ideas, different projects, different audiences. What's really exciting is when those things start to cross over and when we start to see people coming back for programs that they might not have encountered [outside of Wendy's]. While we remain flexible and open, acting as a container, we hope our programs still have an internal coherence that audiences can trust will offer them something of interest, even if it's not in their immediate purview...

CO—: The space kind of becomes a physical document of a lot of the history that's taken place here, which I think is fantastic.

What came up in Wendy's Subway's first issue of PEER REVIEW was this idea of “holding space.” And it makes sense in a place like this. There's no sole ownership of it, but it's something that is able to be temporarily transferable to whoever is coming in to have their voice be represented. What does the term “holding space” mean to Wendy's Subway?

RV: It's really at the core of everything that we do. “Holding space” is a phrase I've encountered in many different contexts, from facilitating discussion, to allowing for certain kinds of unforeseen possibilities. It sort of gets to the openness of what we're trying to do—that space can be occupied by any number of people, but there's still a job of facilitation, administration, and care that goes into that. That's very important.

We also hope this can happen on the other end. We entrust the audience to hold space for someone presenting, and we hope that there is that dynamic that takes place as well. Wendy's has, for many of us, become a kind of platform for our own professional and creative developments too. In that sense, over a longer period of time, it has held space for what we want to achieve for other people and what we want to achieve for ourselves.

I think that's important, and it doesn't, to my mind, belittle at all the fact that we aim to be a community-based reading room. Wendy's Subway also serves a purpose for the people who run it, and I think this is very important because it is a labor of love. [laughing] On many levels.

And I think the day that such space is no longer required, that people don't feel the need for it—whether that's us or our audiences—will be the day that I feel very happy to close. There are some really practical questions that I like to keep close at hand, so that we continue to consider the urgency of all the things that we do, and why we need to do them.

CO—: And also, other organizations would want to “scale, scale, scale” and expand. But I think this scale is important for [Wendy's] to work this way.

RV: Yeah, we talk about that a little bit here. We are a non-profit. There is, I think, a push within the non-profit world to keep growing in certain ways. And as the volume of work that we do grows, I certainly feel like the funds that we have available to do that work need to grow as well, so... yes, our capacity keeps growing. But to me, that doesn't need to be tied to over-scaling of the space in any way. And I wouldn't want to make any kind of scale jump unless we were all feeling the absolute need for it. In some way, what's much harder is to “maintain” and to plateau, actually—to plateau without falling into obsolescence. That's a more interesting model to me. It's one that rejects the kind injunction to overproduce.

CO—: Maybe scale is not the correct question. I'm going to steal a term from my program director, Keller Easterling, who talks a lot about the “multiplier;” contagious ideas and contagious formats. So rather than this necessarily being something that has to expand but—this is going back to this issue of the model—that it presents a model for like-minded actors to produce similar kinds of spaces that operate not as one single massive scale operation but as a kind of a conglomerate of networks that are allied but not necessarily explicitly in partnership.

RV: Our first resident here was the Free Black Women's Library. It was started by one woman, OlaRonke Akinmowo, who had a collection of books by black women that she would put up on her stoop in Crown Heights or in Bed-Stuy on various Saturdays and have book swap sessions. That's how it started. Now she has an enormous collection. There are chapters of this library now in other cities. But it all started with her individual initiative. I have gone to her house to get the books there and they're in boxes all over the place. The structure is very personal, yet there are chapters all over the place—in Los Angeles, in Detroit...

This kind of contagion is really exciting—the lack of proprietary-ness, the desire to share, instead. If you're not interested in that, then you can't really hold space. You can't. It's beside the point.

CO— *Paprika!* Volume 05 Issue 13, February 6, 2020

Issue Editors: Alex Kim, Julia Schäfer, Mark Anthony Hernandez Motaghy

Graphic Designers: Jinu Hong, Julia Schäfer

Coordinating Editors: Angela Lufkin, Adam Thibodeaux, Sarah Weiss, Max Wirsing

Publishers: Audrey Tseng Fischer, Morgan Kerber, Liwei Wang

Web Editor: Seth Thompson

^[9]
GOVERNMENT (RE)DESIGNED

When the National Endowment for the Arts is annually threatened with elimination by Donald Trump, it's difficult to imagine the federal government and the arts as collaborators.¹ The budget for the NEA as a percentage of the total federal budget has been gradually decreasing since the mid-1970s.² The belief of the current president is that the arts should only be funded by private donors. In this hostile atmosphere, artists and designers are forced to advocate for the value of art and design, and the necessity of its public sponsorship. But the arts and the U.S. government have not always been at odds. Looking back almost fifty years, we can find such a collaboration in the Federal Design Improvement Program.

In May of 1971, Richard Nixon sent a memo to the heads of federal departments encouraging engagement with the art and design community. The following year, Nancy Hanks (chairman of the NEA) established the Federal Design Improvement Program (FDIP) to improve design within the government. The FDIP wasn't the first nor the last effort to revamp the image of government (the WPA in the 30's and the Obama-era push to redesign government websites are two other examples), but it is notable for its collaborative approach. The first key element of the program was to establish design assemblies, bringing together government officials and the design community through a series of conferences.³

The NEA participated in inter-agency charrettes including repurposing the Pensioner's Building as the National Building Museum with the General Services Administration and trying to improve low-income housing with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).⁴ While the mandate that authorized these assemblies came from the top, the program encouraged collaboration between individual agencies and its constituent designers. The FDIP may be remembered for its iconic logos (such as the USPS, PBS, NASA and the EPA), but its success came from fostering a relationship between the government and designers. Nancy Hanks brought this idea of collaboration to both the FDIP and NEA as a whole, writing in 1968, “The support required for the arts, for the improvement of our cities . . . will come from a myriad of individuals, foundations, corporations, as well as governments.”⁵

The two major organizations created under the design improvement program were for architecture and graphic design. The Task Force on Federal Architecture included members such as Charles Eames and Henry Weese, and it reinvented the guidelines for federal buildings from 1962. One change was the allowance of combining government and private functions as a way to better integrate buildings into their communities. The task force also held design charrettes and led the charge to both renovate existing federal buildings and propose new buildings.⁶ One project coming out of these charrettes was for a new transportation system in Morgantown, West Virginia. The proposal was to build a Personal Rapid Transit System (PRT) which connected three West Virginia University campuses. The project was a collaboration between Boeing and the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, and it responded to the need of 11,000 students. This system is still in use today.⁷ The FDIP produced more than a series of design solutions, it established a method of cooperation between government entities, private stakeholders and the public. While partnerships such as this come with their own set of issues, they were a way to rethink the top-down approach set by the WPA.

The graphics portion of the program intended to create a simplified and clear visual language, both iconic logos and ubiquitous conventions. While government agencies were getting an updated look, road and pedestrian signage was standardized. Some of the more radical designs have changed since the 1970s, but the legacy of the FDIP is evidenced by the many logos and standards from this program that are still in place.⁸ This is both a testament to their effectiveness and the growing indifference of the government since then towards art and design.

A 1973 New York Times article on the program reads, “the undertaking is said to represent the first time that the Government—the country's largest planner, builder, landlord and printer—has recognized its responsibility to provide the country with the best possible design environment.”⁹ Two words stand out from this statement. The first is “environment.” The government set out to create a space for design and foster relationships. That's not to say there was no top-down decision making, but the central tenet of the program was to make room for collaboration with designers. The second word that stands out is “responsibility.” Art, graphic design, industrial design, architecture, and landscape architecture are not frivolities that should be left to the auspices of wealthy patrons, but are the responsibility of the government on behalf of the people.

^[1]Stollas, Helen. 2019. “Trump wants to axe the NEA. Yes, again.” The Art Newspaper, March 18.
^[2]Boyd, Brent. 2017. “The battle to save America's arts endowment from Trump's axe.” Apollo, January 30.
^[3]“Settling the Standard: the NEA Initiates the Federal Design Improvement Program. Accessed January 20, 2019. https://www.arts.gov/about/40th-anniversary-highlights/settling-standard-nea-initiates-federal-design-improvement-program.
^[4]Bauerle, Mark, and Ellen Grantham. 2006. National Endowment for the Arts. A History 1965-2008. Washington, D.C.: the National Endowment for the Arts. https://www.arts.gov/art-work/201/Thinking-design-necessity-good-government.
^[5]Puttli, Lorraine. 2017. Making Design a Necessity for Good Government. Accessed January 20, 2019.
^[6]Boyd, Brent. 2017. Nixon, NASA, and How the Federal Government Got Design. March 6. https://www.factopony.com/2006/02/nixon-nasa-and-how-the-federal-government-got-design.
^[7]Boyd, Rita. 1973. “Fresh Look is Due in Federal Design.” New York Times, February 12.


JANUARY 29 Winter blues officially descend upon YSOA:
“It usually starts as self care and quickly turns into depression,” Rachel Mulder, March 1 2021, on taking a day off from studio.
With five major due dates over an eight-day period, first years are overheard discussing their plan to send a strongly worded email/cry for help to the combined Building Project and studio faculty—eerily reminiscent of last year. Will the M.Arch I second semester ever not feel like too much?
JANUARY 30 Jonathan Toews had to leave the undergraduate Scales of Design review early after cutting his finger on a piece of broken glass from one of the projects. Fortunately, no stitches were required and the fourth floor first-aid kit got its first use of the semester.
“Something in here—with the corn dogs next to the Russians next to the Copenhagen warming huts—is your architecture,”—Aniket Shahane, reviewing his second-year urban studio.
JANUARY 31 After being featured in last issue's “On the Ground,” @deskcrit ups the journalistic rhetoric of its captions. Yeah, we're watching you.

In a slip of the tongue during Renaissance and Modern II, Peter Eisenmann inadvertently coins the term “re-Loos-tionship.” Who doesn't love a good dad joke.

FEBRUARY 2
After a site visit to the Bronx, second-years wonder if J.LLo's half-time show at the Super Bowl counts as research for their developing projects.

Entomological update: days after the first-year biome projects review on Thursday, a rogue silkworm is found cocooning in Taku Samejima's model, sparking conversation about adaptive reuse.

FEBRUARY 3
Following last semester's unprecedented trend of all-cream outfits on reviews, Spring/Summer 2020 suggests a move towards shades of orange. Off-paprika might be the new off-white.

FEBRUARY 4
Advanced studios prepare for travel week by avoiding all coronavirus coverage on the news.

P.S.
A random note shows up on a CO— editors' table: “Sorry architecture for eating all your 6 on 7 pizza.” GD, YSOA



Architecture has always been social. As the legend goes, according to Vitruvius, the beginning of collective meeting and domesticity came about because of the discovery of fire—so he described the first act of building. One can speculate from this that the first assembly was not the construction of a personal, private dwelling, but a fire around which a community could grow, and from which the history of labor emerged. A constructed fire and a huddle of beings around it might demonstrate the first collaborative environment.

But what is often overlooked and erased across the many millennia between that first act of community building and the downtown towers, suburban office parks, and our own institutions that make up the creative/collaborative spatial landscape is that a good fire takes stoking. Community requires an ongoing engage-

Larissa Belcic,^[4]
 Dana Karwas,^[7]
 Brian Orser,^[11]
 Laura Pappalardo,^[8]
 Leo Shaw,^[2]
 Michelle



Shofet,^[4]
 Rachel Valinsky,^[8]
 Rukshan Vathupola,^[5]
 and Shelby Wright^[9]



ment, both in the physical management of facilities and the collective stewarding of identity, relationships, and resources.



For this issue of *Paprika!*, we invited contributors to interrogate this as broadly as possible by starting with a basic etymological unit: *CO—*. Thanks to the landlords and corporate executives that have made ill-fated attempts to repackage and sublease our own collectivity back to us, *CO—* has become an empty prefix for superfluous buzzwords and amenities like rooftop yoga and synergistic thinking.



The included authors offer frameworks, precedents, and proposals for radical collectivity through an array of alternative tactics: spatial co-ownership, expanded communication, co-publishing platforms, shared commonalities, and more. In its design and organization, we explore this issue as a medium for extra-institutional community that we hope sustains an afterlife through new kinships and networks. At its origins, the fire is not just an event but a continuous process of maintenance and care.

[1] DESIGN WON'T CHANGE WHO WE ARE
American purveyors of European food culture have popularized the image of an old-world inn, filled with long wooden tables around which gathers a community of rustic gastronomes. In the *brasseries* and *trattorias* across the U.S. today, the long table seems to invite, even compel, an experience of collectivity rooted in communal enjoyment of food. It says, “Come rub elbows with strangers and eat this crusty bread.” By its very shape—that rousing length—it suggests something beyond the nuclear family, beyond the identity of the consumer, beyond business. It suggests new social possibilities, disrupting our expectations in exciting ways, like purple potatoes or rosemary olive oil ice cream. In cafés and coworking spaces too, the long table is a common fixture, a clear illustration of the collectivity and collaboration those spaces offer, ostensibly to counteract the atomizing tendency of precarious self-employment.¹

A long table *symbolizes* togetherness, even when no one is sitting there. In the absence of a culture of collective living, the long table may express a memory of, or wish for, such a culture. The table operates as a sign of community—a system of meaning. And by allowing the physical proximity of individual bodies, the table works physically, as a shared space, to potentiate community. The form of the table begins to project, but cannot independently realize, both the symbolic and physical conditions of community-making.

Yet, in the examples so far, the table has not produced anything we can call real community. The effects are transient and psychological, not deeply social. In fact, contrary to the claims of coworking’s proponents, in a recent study “most coworkers did not define coworking as an opportunity to collaborate or mentoring in an open-ended, collaborative, or community-based project.”² Similarly, in the open office plan, sold as a progressive reform promising collaboration and creativity, is now being revealed as a failure—the literal togetherness of bodies in space actually reduces productivity and collaboration.³

In the examples so far, the table has not produced anything we would want to call real community. The effects are transient and psychological, not deeply social. In fact, contrary to the claims of coworking’s proponents, in a recent study “most coworkers did not define coworking as an opportunity to collaborate or mentoring in an open-ended, collaborative, or community-based project.”² Similarly, in the open office plan, sold as a progressive reform promising collaboration and creativity, is now being revealed as a failure—the literal togetherness of bodies in space actually reduces productivity and collaboration.³

Yet what about the case where the table expresses and makes manifest an existing culture of collective living? In this case we find a *consonance* between the formal structure of the table and the social structure of the table’s context. The ancestor of your favorite café’s long table, perhaps standing in a 19th century roadside inn in the French countryside, existed as an accessory—a tool for maintaining the collective culture among working classes of a farm, what today we call a “community signal” collectivity,” but it made manifest in its form the social structure and cultural context of togetherness out of which it had evolved.

“In that sense, over a longer period of time, it has held space for what we want to achieve for other people and what we want to achieve for ourselves.”

In the absence of a culture of collective living, how could a long table produce anything other than temporary social effects? In the U.S. today, what are the conditions of a long table have in producing a new, collective culture? Co-ownership of the long table, and the space in which it stands, is a tool capable of generating a robust collectivity, activating social relations and sparking their transformation.

Imagine a very long table in a room that is not a restaurant, not a café, not a coworking space. This room, and the table inside it, are collectively owned, legally, by everyone who lives within a quarter mile. While the length of the table will allow it to be used by many people at once, it is the collective *ownership* of the table which will activate as an agency of change. Co-ownership produces a structural equality among the stakeholders, which will make possible a coming together as peers, as full individuals. That is quite unlike the togetherness of the café or commercial coworking space, which demands a relative homogeneity of values, behavior and agendas, a direct result of the transactional nature of entry into the space.

The owners, a group united only by their neighborhood, must agree how to share the table, what uses are appropriate, how to regulate the space’s availability and how to maintain the space. This conversation will necessarily lead to discussion of purposes, values, and agendas that will vary drastically from person to person. Confronting and working to coordinate these varied agendas, purposes and values is the key to a deeper reality of collectivity and collaboration. This process will reveal a heterogeneity of aims and subjectivity which are excluded by the kinds of togetherness we may experience as co-consumers in a café or restaurant.

Architecture cannot determine social forms. Interaction and relationship do not depend on a continuous surface of wood to connect two people—conversely, a continuous tabletop devoid of a communal context is no guarantee of any kind of meaningful interaction or shared experience. As Georg Simmel observed, the issue with modernity is the existence of strangers as an urban category to begin with, certainly not what kinds of tables they are seated at.⁴ A piece of furniture, and by extension architecture itself, can symbolize and facilitate certain social realities. But it can do little to transform social relations unless that transformation is already well under way. Co-ownership of space and the objects within it is one way to activate the environment’s potential for social transformation.

[2] TRANSCENDENT NETWORKS
Community is the watchword of the networked era. “Building global community” is Facebook’s supposed credo. WeWork continues to claim that “community is our catalyst,” though its founder Adam Neumann torched most of its value. Another coworking club, The Wing, provides “community and coworking for women.”

Although corporations use this language cynically, there’s no denying that it resonates with those whom the platform economy has isolated and atomized. This tension of any kind spatially in co-working offices, co-living apartments, business incubators, coding boot camps, and art residencies. People who have had the social fabric pulled out from under them by austerity are liable to rent a replacement from VC-backed platforms who stand to profit from their precarity.

But is the movement toward co-everything so new? Instead of speculating on the dystopian future, we might do better to trace the roots of this relationship through the upheavals and discourses of the last few centuries. If we push back the so-called “rise of the networked society” by a hundred years or more, and consider the spatial history of social networking on this continent, we might bring a different set of assumptions to the problem of community as commodity.

Consider a group like the Freemasons. Though it sounds musty today, Freemasonry functioned as a kind of post-Enlightenment cross between Soho House and Arpanet: a network of highly coded spaces for manufacturing group identity. Masonic lodges themselves were designed around theatrical rituals involving elaborate costumes and ceremonies. Most importantly, each one was linked to a wide-ranging world of Masonic thought supported by its own media infrastructure. Freemasonry is best understood, as Jan Jansen writes, as a “largely understudied system of networks along which people moved, got into contact, and interacted with each other over long distances within the Atlantic world.”⁵

Similar precursors of digital infrastructure appear in the spatial practices of 19th-century evangelicals. In the early decades of American Methodism, preachers in the West were known as “circuit riders” because the church dispatched them on horseback to rural communities. One preacher in New Mex-

ico traveled to head north “until you meet a Methodist coming this way,” which was his signal to reroute dynamically like a packet over a network.⁶ Other traditions mounted multi-day “camp meetings” where marathon sessions attracted enormous crowds. These temporary gatherings were fueled by viral communications that could permeate the social graph of an entire region: an 1804 meeting in Kentucky drew 20,000 people, about twice the population of New Orleans at the time.⁷

The same century also saw Utopian socialists and millenarian religious sects establish communes whose social systems were encoded in their design. Like the open plan or the Wellie-dorm, these spaces configured their inhabitants in a certain image of “communism.” Architectural historian Irene Cheng writes that “reformers who concocted eight-sided vegetarian cities and circular institutions of non-capitalist commerce were proposing forms of social organization different from the status quo. The plans were forms of rhetoric as much as, perhaps more than, they were functional blueprints.”⁸

The fever for communitarian spatial practices emerged in a society experiencing the dislocations of new media, the booms and busts of an extractive economy, the horrors of slavery, and an ongoing crisis of national institutions. And like today’s disruptors, these spaces applied a wide range of politics to the fragmentation of the day.

Most associations originating in elite circles further programmed the logics of colonization, white supremacy, and patriarchy into the fabric of American society. Communes sprang up on stolen land and were in some cases governed through mass sexual abuse. White fraternal organizations formed the basis of the Klan and other anti-Black terrorist groups. To the extent that we observe how corporate planning and real estate networks launders the same violence through the concept of “community” today, we should recognize its deep roots in the American imagination.

Yet this history also illuminates liberatory forms of association and powerful networks of solidarity. Unlike their white counterparts, Black fraternal orders formed extensive infrastructures which provided mutual aid, launched institutions such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and convened the Black legal circle which launched the early court battles of the civil rights movement.⁹ In Boston, the Transcendentalist writer Margaret Fuller held an ongoing series of open “Conversations” for feminist women. She took pains to replace the hierarchy of the intellectual salon with a participatory atmosphere, writing: “I do not wish any one to join who does not intend, if possible, to take an active part.”¹⁰

If, as Melanie Hoff says, we are “always already programming,” then our society has likewise always been networked. Spatial practices have provided the scaffolding for “a nation of joiners” to forge far-reaching systems in the name of community—both oppressive and emancipatory. As new platforms and networks challenge this perennial project, we would do well to mind its histories.

[3] YOU ARE INVITED
This is an invitation to start communicating with objects and materials.

Instead of speaking on the phone, ask your phone: *Dear phone, where does your material come from? Do you sit in my pocket, I carry you around every day, and you’ve lost me naturally because an extension of my body. But I never ask you: how do you work?*

One of the longest conversations I’ve had with my phone was about its material origins. *My Tin screen, my Lithium battery, and my Collan micro-capacitors were all extracted from Xinjiang and other desert, Xinjiang is the heart of the world of the Congo.*¹¹ Then my phone advised me to watch the movie “The Congo Tribunal,” or even to ask tower climbers, since cell tower maintenance is considered one of the most dangerous professions in the United States: “workers typically have to climb, hand-over-hand, up precarious ladder rungs and support structures for anywhere from 100 to 1,000 feet or more, all while carrying equipment and climbing gear.”¹²

If speaking to your phone goes too far for you, perhaps you might try another approach. For instance, I advise you to, at least once in your lifetime, invite some materials for dinner. When I invited concrete for the first time, concrete told me that it was upset with the History of Architecture and Technology professor Antoine Picon after reading his piece “Construction History: Between Technological and Cultural History.”¹³ Concrete discovered something outrageous in the text: the premise that one type of matter is considered materials, and another is not, is a complete invention. Concrete quoted Picon precisely, “The very notion of material is actually dependent on cultural factors.” So, concrete then asked, crying, *would this mean concrete could at some point, lose its position on the congress of materials?*

Concrete was also very afraid of yet another existential problem—whether its name would still remain concrete if the day arrived when its composition might no longer contain sand. Did you know that fifty billion tons of sand and gravel are used around the world every year? To help you understand, you could build a 35-metre-high by 35-metre-wide wall circling the equator with this amount of sand.¹⁴ Concrete continued: *Unfortunately my memory fails when it comes to your cement components origin. After going through chemical reactions, and releasing approximately 750 kg of CO2 for each ton of cement produced, imagine the side effects, my memory was completely erased.*

The concrete I went to dinner with composed the walls of Lina Bo Bardi’s *Sc Pompieta*. That night I discovered that windows also like to talk. They told me their minimalist friends are the window cleaners, and the majority of the windows I spoke with confessed they prefer to have an almost monogamous cleaning relation. They like to know the weight of the hand that is coming to clean it. Since different buildings have different windows, their opinions and interests might diverge. For instance, in Dubai, the Burj Khalifa’s windows revealed to me that, in order to clean the 282-story tower, it takes a team of 36 window cleaners three months of work at the heights of 2000 feet and covering 40 stories each.¹⁵ Some windows agree they should learn how to clean themselves: *Window cleaners risk their lives for earning on average \$10 to \$25 per hour.*¹⁶

This communicative openness I invite you to try never ends. You may even start from small details, some of those who never end, as an architect, thought to remodel our small house in Phoenix when my little sister was born. There were six of us so we needed “more space for everything.” I was told, A bigger kitchen for the baking of bigger cookies. My own room for my own toys. In the old house all of our rooms were interchangeable, there were two of them and four of us. Sometimes it was two and two, sometimes three and one and one time all four of us in one room, while the other one was just a storage space. The room that was sometimes storage had a slanted floor, since our house survived the Chicago Fire, according to some legends. Both through the process of creating topiary and in the act of walking amongst them, we reconstitute our relationship to “nature” and invite new creatures to populate our landscapes and cultural imagination.

Imagine this: you are picnicking on a blanket in a park. Mutant toy plants punctuate the lawn around you—towering, green obelisks with rogue branches emerging from smooth, shaved planes. Lying at the foot of one of their bodies, you reach your hand to caress the ample spheres of yew at its base. Your eyes find that they soon give way to smaller spheres of moss-encrusted polymeric forms. Your gaze and the creature both reach evenly towards our new strange sky.

[5] BOSNIA’S SHADOW
From the 18th century, as countries broke free from colonial and imperial powers, the emergence of nationalist movements necessitated the embrace of architectural expressions to reflect these new national identities. In the Balkans, the heritageization of regional forms was used as one of the clearest manifestations of a local culture against larger forces of empire, as well as other competing nationalistic forces. The desire to insulate the vernacular architecture established a rallying force for national movements across Bosnia to unify around. Typologies such as the Balkans House emerged and were rapidly embraced by the Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, and Macedonian national movements as belonging to their individual architectural traditions. This ubiquitous residential form found across the Balkans was defined by a closed two storey plan with a rubble first floor and a protruding timber framed second level topped by a four-sided slate and tile roof with a slight curve. However, the embrace of these competing national histories mattered most: the architecture of the region as belonging to separate and isolated cultural and ethnic narratives. When in reality the vernacular of the Balkans has constantly been in dialogue with each other and in contact with the larger international forces of aladura, the East, and alafanga, the West. And throughout the centuries the identity of the Balkan has constantly been shaped by expansionist powers ranging from the Romes, Byzantine, Austro-Hungarian, and to the Ottomans.

The modern Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian national identities originated from the waves of Southern Slavic migrations

and territorial invasions into the Balkans during the twilight of the western Roman Empire.¹⁷ Soon after, with the rise of Christianity and Islam, peoples around the Mediterranean began to adopt different faiths through the forces of missionary conversion, cultural assimilation and military proliferation. However, it would be reductive to define the populace of the Balkans as possessing a singular cultural identity divided by religion—majority Roman Catholic for the Croats; Eastern Orthodox for the Serbs; and Sunni Islam for the Bosnians.¹⁸ Ranging from instances of clear cultural distinction to times where ethnic, cultural, and religious identities begin to blur, making clear demarcations between groups difficult. Throughout history there have persisted minorities of Catholic and Muslim Serbs, Orthodox and Muslim Croats, as well as Orthodox and Catholic communities across Bosnia and the greater Balkans.

The modern Bosnian national identity has its roots in the Banate of Bosnia, a medieval vassal kingdom that emerged in the mid 12th century. Interestingly, the kingdom also came to consecrate its own separate Bosnian Church for a time, in opposition to the doctrinal influences of Constantinople and the Holy See.¹⁹ This distinct religious and cultural history, coupled with the remote mountainous terrain of the region, allowed Bosnia to begin to develop its earliest national sentiments in spite of competing international interests. Soon wooden peasant typologies such as the brvnara, built by the rural populace began to emerge throughout the countryside. Found across Bosnia and modern day western Serbia these were single story log homes, with sharp four sided roofs and low eaves, centered around a central fireplace.²⁰ Over time this developed into the bondraka, and is closer to the modern Balkans House typology. The bondraka is a two-story wooden frame home with stone rubble composing the first floor walls and plaster on the second story.²¹ The relative isolation during this time was eventually overturned with the Ottoman conquest in 1463, which brought Islam and Islamic architecture and urban design into Bosnia.

With the conquest, a gradual Islamification of the Balkans began, with almost 3/4 of people in Bosnia converting to Islam over the next few centuries.²² Through this assimilation, Bosnia adopted an identity of belonging to the greater Islamic world. In turn, they were given a greater range of rights and legal privileges by the central Ottoman authority. Soon, different neighborhoods emerged, each with their own mosque, to migrate into Bosnia. This ranged from the Vlach, pastoral warrior nomads originating from Albania extraction, to tradesmen and rural artisans from Orthodox and Greece as well as Spanish Muslim and Jewish refugees from the Reconquista in 1492.²³ Soon, the city of Sarajevo was consolidated under an Ottoman model of narrow streets joining two distinct zones. The center of the city would be based on a bazaar district with artisan workshops and markets to facilitate trade and commerce throughout the greater Empire.²⁴ Then there was the residential quarter, where each neighborhood would contain ethnic enclaves with their own mosques. In addition to these were also separate religious neighborhoods established for the minority Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities in Sarajevo.²⁵ The new mosques in these centralized urban centers expressed a distinct and overarching Ottoman and Byzantine material influence.²⁷ Many such as the Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque completed in 1532 were constructed out of stone block with columns, arches, a separate minaret structure, and a central dome in the fashion of historical gables, suburban front yards, or the home decorating aisles of the residential houses. We speak of course, not topiary.

So much of contemporary landscape architecture deals with the project of remediation, naturalizing or covering up the impacts of the built environment. The dominant aesthetic paradigm represented in this work is rooted in the replication of a “nature” undrrupted by the human hand. Ironically, these landscapes are often constructed atop layers of geofabricks, planted in engineered soils bejeweled with hydrogels, and fed through snaking polyethylene irrigation systems. What happens under the ground is, in many ways, more honest about the entanglements that characterize our day than the curated facade above. Practices that combat the built world to contain ethnicity of the landscape blind us to the complex, interconnected mesh of systems and agents that make up our world—a web that we must actively learn to attune.

Instead, in this essay we champion the use of alternative aesthetic paradigms within the landscape arts that can guide us in the task of awakening to and living with the material promiscuity that marks this new era. One such paradigm already holds potential to fill this role, though today it is mostly relegated to historical gardens, suburban front yards, or the home decorating aisles of the residential houses. We speak of course, not topiary. With lineages in the garden traditions of multiple cultures, topiary is the long-duration shaping of perennial plants into forms that are in clear aesthetic contrast to the plants’ innate growth patterns. In the European tradition, topiaries have served as expressions of human dominance over plant-life—baroque displays of our ability to contort living systems into domesticated, Euclidean geometries. The topiary’s documented history as an art form stretches at least 2,000 years, and throughout, it has retained its role as a site for the blurring of distinctions between “natural” and “artificial.” The very act of conforming a plant’s intrinsic desire to those desired by humans celebrates the mutant synthesis of organic life and exuberant artifice, hinting at the fallibility of those categories. Further complicating these distinctions, contemporary topiaries can be equally plants or plant-simulating plastics.

While it is true that traditional topiary is rooted in practices of domination, its embrace of material promiscuity reveals its potential as a gardening practice for the current age. Topiary offers us an entry point into a space where binaries of plant/human, natural/artificial, synthetic/organic can blur. We propose topiary as an agency of change, one that does not attempt to resolve the categories it more firmly belongs to, but maintains its ambiguity as a point of celebration. As an interspecies conversational practice, topiary can bring us into a deeper relationship with plants, with synthetics, and with ourselves as ecological creatures.

In order to tap into its potency, though, we must redefine our cultural relationship to topiary from one of domination to one of intimacy and co-creation. Rather than denoting a prescribed outcome of the plant’s form, this allows for a dialogue

“Holding space” is a phrase I’ve encountered in many different contexts, from facilitating discussion, to allowing for certain kinds of unforeseen possibilities.”

to unravel between plant and sculptor, inviting a dynamic of mutual pushing and pulling, and embracing an expanded material spectrum beyond plant matter and plastics.

If we let it, the topiary can be a guide in this new era. By teaching us to celebrate ambiguity, it strengthens our ability as humans to relinquish resolution in favor of the joy of the in-between. Both through the process of creating topiary and in the act of walking amongst them, we reconstitute our relationship to “nature” and invite new creatures to populate our landscapes and cultural imagination.

Imagine this: you are picnicking on a blanket in a park. Mutant toy plants punctuate the lawn around you—towering, green obelisks with rogue branches emerging from smooth, shaved planes. Lying at the foot of one of their bodies, you reach your hand to caress the ample spheres of yew at its base. Your eyes find that they soon give way to smaller spheres of moss-encrusted polymeric forms. Your gaze and the creature both reach evenly towards our new strange sky.

[6] CO-CHAIN REACTION:
A COLLABORATIVE WRITING EXERCISE
The white wall. How old I can’t remember. I was sitting on my bed with my brown blanket. The blanket was covered with grey elephants and illustrated desert trees. I looked at the white wall, the wall of my room with lined wooden lath. I wasn’t alone, surrounded by a former forest. Not knowing who I am, knowing I’m not alone. I asked questions towards the wall. Hot tears were rolling over my cheeks, filling up my right ear with salty water. White is not nothing.

Concerning the white wall: we often meet at art exhibitions, where I’ve seen a group of artists, on a wall, painting and coloring modes of artistic pieces. Nowadays the gallery or museum walls, originally light grey, chamois, or chalky white, are being changed for every show in significant hues, even very dark shades, due to a curatorial idea. Well, sometimes it works, sometimes it has a strong impact on the objects. As Zeus would say: “More light!”

“More light!” one might say, but can you be a perfectionist pluralist? What about a singular pluralist? Is it even productive to practice pluralism by yourself? I’m driving my social self into the ground with the way that I’m collaborating, or better to say, not collaborating. I know that I’m talking too much—know that I’m prioritizing my voice. I’ve read that I want to get better at something, a quick way is to fail at it and fail hard, and I think that’s what I’m making myself do, in the hopes of future improvement. But for right now, if these walls could talk, they’d tell me to shut up, and then we might hear from someone different and also see something different. From exhibition walls to the exterior of the built form a whole myriad of tones and mixtures. “More light, more light,” the building might say and the cast of shadows change in seconds of the day.

My dad, an architect, thought to remodel our small house in Phoenix when my little sister was born. There were six of us so we needed “more space for everything.” I was told, A bigger kitchen for the baking of bigger cookies. My own room for my own toys. In the old house all of our rooms were interchangeable, there were two of them and four of us. Sometimes it was two and two, sometimes three and one and one time all four of us in one room, while the other one was just a storage space. The room that was sometimes storage had a slanted floor, since our house survived the Chicago Fire, according to some legends. Both through the process of creating topiary and in the act of walking amongst them, we reconstitute our relationship to “nature” and invite new creatures to populate our landscapes and cultural imagination.

Imagine this: you are picnicking on a blanket in a park. Mutant toy plants punctuate the lawn around you—towering, green obelisks with rogue branches emerging from smooth, shaved planes. Lying at the foot of one of their bodies, you reach your hand to caress the ample spheres of yew at its base. Your eyes find that they soon give way to smaller spheres of moss-encrusted polymeric forms. Your gaze and the creature both reach evenly towards our new strange sky.

Western ideology has long upheld a binary distinction to keep the powerful safe, fed and pleased: on the one side, humans, and on the other, everything else. This “everything else” largely consists of resources to be exploited for economic and material gain, and of “nature”—a world of landscapes and creatures untouched by the human hand, a source of pleasure, comfort, and retreat. These are both distancing concepts, predicated on separation and hierarchy between humans and our companions in Earthly existence. These ideas are implicated in the twin forces of colonialism and capitalism, wielded as tools that enable exploitation. Conceptions of the nonhuman as resource grants permission for wealth-building via extraction and control, while the ideas of “nature” insultate us from the destructive consequences of these actions, reassuring us with visions of a pristine, untouched world “out there.”

As we settle into an epoch defined by the unraveling influence of the human hand, it becomes harder and harder to hold on to these distancing conceptions of the nonhuman. Today, images of “nature” grievously tarnished by human influence confront us constantly. Where there were once perceived divisions between zones of domination and reserves of pristine “nature,” there seems now to be only an inescapable ooze of interconnectivity. Each action we take implicates us further and further in a web of painful horrors—extinctions, wildfires, bird bellies full of plastic.

As dreams of “nature” fall away, so too do ideas of “natural.” In their place bubbles up a materially promiscuous bisque wherein human influence, the organic and the synthetic entangle endlessly into strange new ecosystems, weathers, creatures, soils. Moving forward from this moment necessitates the practice—individually and societally—of being with the feelings that emerge as we become acquainted with the freak landscapes and systems of our making, and of embracing these entities as the realities that populate our strange new world.

So much of contemporary landscape architecture deals with the project of remediation, naturalizing or covering up the impacts of the built environment. The dominant aesthetic paradigm represented in this work is rooted in the replication of a “nature” undrrupted by the human hand. Ironically, these landscapes are often constructed atop layers of geofabricks, planted in engineered soils bejeweled with hydrogels, and fed through snaking polyethylene irrigation systems. What happens under the ground is, in many ways, more honest about the entanglements that characterize our day than the curated facade above. Practices that combat the built world to contain ethnicity of the landscape blind us to the complex, interconnected mesh of systems and agents that make up our world—a web that we must actively learn to attune.

[7] THE EXPANDED NATURE OF COLLABORATION

Dana Karwas is the Director of the Center for Collaborative Arts and Media (CCAM) at Yale University and a Critic at the Yale School of Architecture. She is an interdisciplinary arts-based researcher.

1 Pevsner, Grig De, Nicole S Cohen, and Francesca Saraco. “The Ambivalence of Coworking: On the Politics of an Emerging Work Practice.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20, no. 6 (November 2017): 657–206.

2 Splanitz, Clay. “Working Alone Together.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 26, no. 4 (2012): 399–441.

3 Bornstein, Ethan, Tobias, Stephen. “The Impact of the ‘open’ workspace on human collaboration.” *Philosophical Transactions R. Royal Society B*, 375: 20170203 (2018)

4 Simmel, Georg. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” In *The Sociological City*, 118–19. Wiley-Blackwell, 2002.

5 Jansen, Jan C. “In Search of Atlantic Scalability: Freemasons, Empire, and Atlantic History.” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 52 (2015): 21.

6 Simpson, Robert. “Circuit Riders in Early American Methodism.” General Commission on Christian Unity and Interchurch Relations, 2008. Accessed January 20, 2020. <http://www.gcu.org/archives/story/circuit-riders>.

7 Santillo, Leo. *Wicked World: The Mississippi When It Last Ran Wild* (New York: Vintage, 2011).

8 Cheng, Irene. “The Shape of Utopia: The Architecture of Radical Reform in Nineteenth-Century America.” PhD thesis, Columbia University, 2014.

9 Trotter, Joe W. “African American Fraternal Associations in American History: An Introduction.” *Social Science History* 26, no. 3 (2004): 369–399.

10 Robinson, David M. “The Movement’s Medicine: Public Emerson, and the Dial.” *Revue Française des Études Américaines* 140 (2014): 24–36.

11 “An ugly trash bin had ‘violent conversations’.” *Washington Post*, last modified 2018.

12 “Dial takes a closer look at the most dangerous job in America.” *Pacific Standard*, last modified 2017. <https://www.pacificstandard.com/news/dial-takes-a-closer-look-at-the-most-dangerous-job-in-america/>.

13 Antoine Picon, “Construction History: Between Technological and Cultural History,” in *Construction History*, Vol. 4 (2016), 15.

14 “The search for sustainable sand extraction is beginning.” *UN Environment Program*, last modified 2014. <http://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/search-sustainable-sand-extraction-beginning>.

15 “Burj Khalifa: window cleaners to spend months on world’s tallest building.” *The Telegraph*, last modified 2010. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/worldwide/14094325/Burj-Khalifa-window-cleaners-to-spend-months-on-worlds-tallest-building.html>.

16 “Window Washers defy death but can start of making just \$12 per hour.” *abc news*, last modified 2014. <http://www.abcnews.com/news/now/news/window-washers-defy-death-can-start-making-just-12-per-hour/>.

17 Martov, Iohannes. “The ‘Balkan House’: Interpretations and Symbolic Appropriations of the Ottoman Era Vernacular Architecture in the Balkans.” *Eastlight Histories of the Balkans: Volume Four: Knowledge Lives* NY, London, 2011.

18 “Towards a Comparative Study of the Balkans and the Middle East.” Edited by Iyad Nassif and Rana Khatib. *Agencies in the Contemporary Mediterranean*. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016.

19 Ardens, Iginis. Iginis Ardens: A Partial Examination of the Bosnian Church. Oakland University, oakland.edu/Assets/igpinis/ardens/WRET-Cat-3, 1st-place, James K. Hanney, 2014.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

birthdays (he undoubtedly hated it and yet we did not even discard it after her death). My grandfathers hunting knife—I don’t think he ever hunted in his life. Things no one should have an extra set of shower caddies, rotary telephones, Lamps, records and other objects from my parents former homes deemed too funky or cheap to display in the current home but too sentimental to discard. Old power tools, abrasive cleaners and fireworks, objects that my parents deemed too dangerous to use in everyday life, but due to their strong sense of environmentalism were unable to discard.

But I was powerfully to the architecture of the storage room, an aspect that was certainly the reason why it was always the launching point of the repeating dreams, was that it had rooms within it. It was a room with a door that closed, but within it was another door that led to another even less finished room, which inside held yet another door to the large cedar closet with hanging wool clothes from previous generations I had never seen anyone wear. Nested rooms like this do not tend to exist within an American suburban home, although entering into someone’s bathroom off a bedroom suite will give you a taste of this feeling. Inner sanctum never has been a selling point in tract housing.

“This kind of contagion is really exciting—the lack of proprietary-ness, the desire to share, instead. If you’re not interested in that, then you can’t really hold space. You can’t. It’s beside the point.”

The dream would begin in the storage room. I quietly move past the familiar familial objects and open the door, moving into a deeper room. From here passageways unfold. My pace quickening, I travel up stairs, down narrow hallways, and through endless windowless wood panel rooms. The walk is always a search, usually for a private safe place. I never am scared of becoming lost but never can recall the route. Recollection is the guide in my navigation of this psychic storage room. I am looking for a place I have been before.

The connection to the actual storage room feels clear to me, but I wonder why my psyche so insistently presents itself as suburban and domestic. A friend of mine wrote a series of poems *This is a Window Not a Door* that explore a mental landscape of a house from the perspective of peering through a window. The poem is listened to over the phone, and stanzas are navigated through touch-tone dialing. The concept behind the piece resonated intensely with me, however it seems my own mental house has no windows at all. Now living in New York I look up at the high-rise condos that sprout up everywhere. What is the psychic house of the child that looks through the window of the 85th floor of 432 Park Avenue? A window through which no one can look back at you. The harsh light of the upper atmosphere shines down and in this moment there is in fact a straight line between the only-sun and the only-sun.

With six, or a thousand, light sometimes needs to make space for darkness. Is it possible to find darkness in a half-house with a half-kitchen and half-garage? Do the things that matter most live best in the light or in the dark? Sometimes when I didn’t like one of my drawings, I would stand a little closer to the window and let my shadow erase it.

I returned to play with shadows from a young age. The sun that birthed us was cruel and narcissistic.

O R E N E N T I P
O R E M N I P
E N T,
harrowing, vindictive. She built me before the others, and thus built me the LARGEST, an

O R E N E N T I P
O R E M N I P
E N T,
harrowing, vindictive. She built me before the others, and thus built me the LARGEST, an

to worship her own body and being, an obelisk void of other figures or shapes to commune with, save herself. The woods and lakes were too far to see clearly, and my s-t-l-f-f-e-n-d body couldn’t bend down to touch them. But when she would sleep, I could

breath

With her back turned the light was soft, angular. It would play light on one half of my rigid being, extending my form down to Earth, down to meet the curious creatures who touched my soft shadow. The shadows grew space for fellow. And my heart lightened. We laughed, sang, loved. We felt each other each other each other—the first time I was ever touched by something that didn’t hurt.

But she was vindictive. On her return she realized that my attention and love was elsewhere. So she aimed to remind me. She burned me. She screamed, heat on my face, lashes of flame. She aimed to scar me as a reminder, a warning engraved on my skin.

But I am a mountain of scars. I have been hardened with time. This is nothing. She could feel my resolve, so she moved closer. She came so close to my world that her flames burned to death all who had touched my shadow. I watched and cried. I was not to clean the process of creating topiary and in the end, she be demolished, we drew on the walls with crayons at a time that felt like way past midnight. Our shadows shaded in the outlines we scribbled upon them.

We moved into an apartment on the thirty-eighth floor of a condo building. It was one condo building in a six block radius of other condo buildings. Apparently when the owner bought it you could see clear out the lake. Now, you still can, through the corridors of the other forty-story buildings. The walls are still primer-white, never fully painted, and the windows are too large—when