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MPAVILION 2019 BY GLENN MURCUTT AO

"Architecture is an instrument of place-making. Australian architecture can only come out of understanding the site, the climatic conditions, where the sun comes from, the flora, the fauna, hydrology, geology, and topography. They all are totally interrelated – and they are really important elements of architecture. My buildings are a result of looking at where I'm living, not trying to design an Australian architecture but trying to design an architecture of where I am."

Glenn Murcutt AO, MPavilion 2019 Architect

MPAVILION

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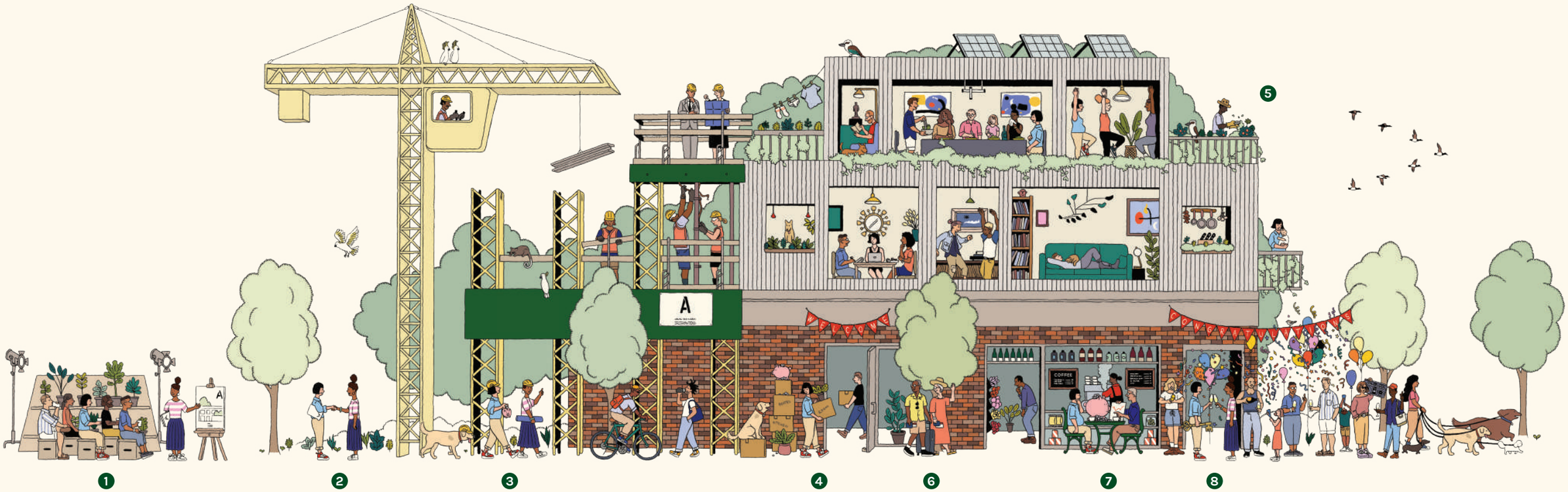

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Assemble Papers is located on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay our respects to elders past and present, and extend this respect to other Indigenous Australians.

Issue 11: Transitions

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WORDS BY JANA PERKOVIĆ & CAT MCGAURAN
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"Less, but better."
– Dieter Rams

Transitions

In the final months of 2018, scientific reports were being released almost weekly in the international media, revealing the severity of the threats we face from climate change. The frequency of reports was matched only by the number of floods, wildfires and extreme weather events we were reading about. It brought home the urgency and the necessity of acting now.

The future looks uncertain. For the first time in more than a century, the next generation will be financially worse off than their parents. Rates of home ownership are dropping, and a growing portion of us will be lifelong renters (see Alexis Kalagas' investigation on p–50). Work and education are changing beyond recognition. And disasters, both natural and manmade, invite reflection (see artist Miso's work on disaster zones on p–44).

Ours is a society, and a planet, in transition: from low to high density, from carbon to renewables, from manufacturing to knowledge economies, from nature-as-resource to nature-as-building-material; and from climate as 'background' to climate as breaking news. It is an opportunity to reconnect with what really matters; to remember the words of legendary designer Dieter Rams, urging us to produce and consume less, but better.

Tackling these urgent problems requires new ways of thinking: profit and self-interest can no longer be our driving forces. Instead, we have to learn to act from a place of altruism. In this issue of *Assemble Papers*, we connect to thinkers across disciplines, urging us to see things differently. Artist Yandell Walton (p–74) uses art to bring the realities of climate change closer. Designer Mary Featherston (p–60) has made the critique of our learning environments her life's work. Lesley Lokko (p–30) tackles the hard work of decolonising the architecture education. And Jax Jacki Brown makes us look at liveability from the point of view of someone seated in a wheelchair (p–56).

Some of the necessary changes are happening slowly, while others need to happen fast. In this issue, we visit Holzmarkt in Berlin, where a new approach to ethical property development puts community benefits before profit (p–22). We go to Kolenkit, 'Amsterdam's worst neighbourhood', which has been gentrification-proofed with love and community (p–66). We look at the new generation of artists and creatives reviving Sarajevo's spirit (p–36), and we encounter the visionary gardener who has transformed New York's public spaces (p–14). In these stories, places have been profoundly transformed by the work of a few tireless individuals. But heroic transformation often starts with small, courageous steps. In suburban Fawkner, we visit Gregory Lorenzutti, who has transformed his home and life with permaculture gardening (p–88). And in the inner-city suburb of Richmond, young architect Jack Chen's award-winning transformation of a small-footprint apartment shows a new way to appreciate the 'six-pack', Australia's unloved apartment typology (p–80).

In the face of profound and inevitable change, we need to recognise that our planet must come first. It will require that we act from a place of altruism, not greed. Old power dynamics must shift and, for the first time in a long time, profit cannot be our sole motivator. As Naomi Milgrom urges us on p–8, we must embrace dialogue across difference, and have the courage to dream a little bigger. ⬢

WORDS BY JANA PERKOVIĆ

Nurturing Collective Creativity

Naomi Milgrom

ASSEMBLE PAPERS

Melbourne has a reputation of being Australia's arts capital. Architecture capital – less so. The country's key architectural landmarks are in Sydney; for the longest time, Melbourne's key contribution to architecture has been a slim booklet defining the national ugliness. However, Naomi Milgrom may be pushing Melbourne to the forefront of Australia's design conversation.

PREVIOUS: Naomi Milgrom. Photo by Steven Chee.

ABOVE: Westside Circus kids' workshops in Carme Pinós' 2018 MPavilion. Photo by Marie-Luise Skibbe.

RIGHT: Saskia Sassen speaking at Living Cities Forum 2018. Photo by Tom Ross.

In 2014, the newly established Naomi Milgrom Foundation provided funding for a series of high-profile architecture commissions of temporary pavilions to be built in Melbourne's Queen Victoria Gardens. An architect is appointed each year, and each spring a new, remarkable architectural design is erected in the Gardens. The commissioned architects have varied widely in their (hotly debated) approach, ranging from the Dutch postmodernists OMA to Carme Pinós' critical regionalism. A free public program in the MPavilion lasts throughout summer, before the temporary building is taken down and given a permanent home elsewhere in the city.

In the five years of its existence, the Foundation has single-handedly 'seeded' buildings by luminaries such as Amanda Levete and Bijoy Jain throughout Melbourne – a remarkable achievement in an era when the shape of our cities is increasingly a reflection of capital flows, rather than public concerns. At a time when it seems harder than ever for architecture to play a civic function, MPavilion has become an event of public city-building, energising the conversation around design, and simultaneously demonstrating its civic value.

"Design can reflect the social, political, economic and environmental issues of our time, and it can promote new ways of seeing and new ways of doing," Naomi says. "I have a great love of the arts, and I don't distinguish the potential of design from the potential of any artistic form."

Coming from a family of fashion entrepreneurs and benefactors to the arts (her grandmother Faye Gandel founded the fashion brand Sussan in 1939; her parents are philanthropists Marc and Eva Besen), Naomi cannot remember a time when design and communication were not important to her. "My interest in architecture and design has so much to do with how inspiring I find these practices as means for communication, and as living aspects of contemporary culture, a way for us to come together and relate to each other."

Communication, she says, is integral to her life. Naomi's studies were in language and the arts; she worked as a special education teacher, then in publishing and marketing, before returning to the family business in 1993. Now an active philanthropist and arts patron, she maintains a hands-on approach that looks to create a societal dialogue and shared ownership of creative projects. "I've always believed in collective creativity: bringing people together to discuss, debate and design is more enriching and productive than following just one direction. I'm passionate about advancing talented individuals, but collaboration and shared purpose always take the Foundation's work to another level."

Connecting citizens with design, across demographics and individual interests, is at the core of Naomi's interest in collaboration. She notes that this isn't to say that there will always be agreement on what makes good design: "There will be projects and approaches that generate opposing views and debate, but disagreeing is also part of a healthy dialogue. What's important is how willingly we listen to each other, remain curious and open to ideas, and continue to cooperate and strive for excellence."

Right from the start, MPavilion was envisaged as a modern-day agora; a democratic, freely accessible meeting place with coffee, morning yoga, children's activities and a down-to-earth-ness that can be all too rare around capital-A architecture. "It certainly is my intention to create a space in which architecture and design could be recognised," Naomi says, "and accessible to those who might not have previously felt it is relevant, or felt confident to engage with designers and architects. We all live in the designed world, and we should all feel invested in it and be able to question it."

In a certain sense, every MPavilion design interrogates our assumptions around public space: what is a meeting place and how should it be designed to hold us well? For Australian architect Sean Godsell, who designed the inaugural MPavilion, it meant an attentiveness to the climate, and a sensitive design that would create comfort even in sweltering heat. For Indian architect Bijoy Jain, it meant an open and collaborative process, with MPavilion engineers learning traditional bamboo construction in India, and building the pavilion in situ without the dictates of a completed architectural design. For OMA, it meant returning to the classical Greek geometry of an amphitheatre, with contemporary twists such as a

polycarbonate translucent roof, and a movable seating bank to open the circle outwards. "Being able to welcome the perspectives of leading architects from around the world to Australia has been a rich and meaningful way to demonstrate the impact of design in how we go about our everyday lives," says Naomi. "For instance, OMA's MPavilion, which was loved by so many people in 2017, challenged the ways we congregate as a community, whereas last season's MPavilion by Carme Pinós sought to inspire inclusion and a connection with nature."

Using design and art to foster place-making is something of a passion, reflected in Milgrom's other roles: as commissioner for the Australian representation at the 57th Venice Biennale, member of Tate Museum

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Yoga in Bijoy Jain's bamboo MPavilion (2016); Dhungala Children's Choir singing in the traditional language of the Boon Wurrung people in AL_A's digital forest MPavilion (2015); the opening of OMA's MPavilion (2017); Trisha Brown Dance Company performing some of the legendary choreographer's early works in frony of Sean Godsell's inaugural MPavilion (2014); Naomi Milgrom and Virginia Trioli in conversation with Rem Koolhaas and David Gianotten of OMA (2017). Photos courtesy of MPavilion.

London's International Council, judge for the World Architecture Awards and recently as chair of the design jury for Powerhouse Precinct at Parramatta: "[It] reflects my interests in creating precincts that involve people in the city, provide access to the arts, and align our industries for social good."

In Australia, design is often seen as a question of ornament rather than substance, and a matter of personal taste. Refreshingly, Naomi is deeply interested in design as a kind of collective intelligence. She points to Melbourne's rich heritage of craft, design and industry as a secret ingredient behind its liveability: "Melbourne traditionally has been Australia's creative city. It's inherent in its DNA – fashion, industrial design, our universities, museums and galleries: our creative industries are a pillar of the city. We should be proud of how connected and supportive we are across industries and sectors. On a world scale, Melbourne excels at connecting the dots and supporting new initiatives, new talent and innovative approaches. We're risk-takers, and many of those risks have paid off."

If MPavilion created the architecture for a city-wide dialogue, Living Cities Forum took the project one step further. Kicked off in 2017 as an annual symposium, and now expanded to Sydney, LCF was, in Naomi's words, a forum "initiated to interrogate the meaning of liveability and to explore what makes a city a good place to live". A city that has economically blossomed over the past decade thanks in no small measure to its ranking in the international liveability charts, Melbourne is a city where quality of life and good urban design are matters of key political and economic interest. Every year, leading international thinkers and practitioners across urban theory, design and research come to LCF to speak about liveability – but also social inclusion, equity, global housing finance, and the transformative power of design – in front of an audience that includes everyone from architects and policy-makers to graphic designers and passionate citizens. For Naomi, the program reflects an interest in "how we make our cities and the kind of future we want to build for ourselves and for those who come after us". The guests have ranged from globalisation scholar Saskia Sassen to British 'horizontal' architecture collective Assemble; from Ryue Nishizawa of SANAA, to Arup urban strategist (and influential blogger) Dan Hill.

"In Australia we are great learners, and we can take these ideas and apply them in our local context," Naomi says. The theme of the 2019 LCF is 'Future Needs', a reference to the cluster of climate change-related challenges that the world, and Australia, is increasingly being called on to address: "A natural progression, I think, is to now consider how we are planning for the future, and to bring together people who are really provoking new ideas globally around city-making."

The interrogation that starts mid-year with the Forum will continue with MPavilion, which in 2019 will be designed by Glenn Murcutt AO, Australia's only Pritzker Prize winner, renowned for his environmentally sensitive house designs. Naomi, who has known Glenn for many years, speaks passionately about the ethical nature of his architectural practice: "With design comes responsibility. Given the challenges we face in terms of population density and climate, and the attendant social problems, we are necessarily looking to the particularities of our place, our landscape, and our built structures. Glenn's thoughtful approach to environment and landscape continues to be highly relevant to our consideration of present and future movements in architecture and urban planning."

Extreme weather, demographic shifts, energy transitions, the war on waste. This vast scope of change, Naomi notes, requires moving beyond the known and expected voices and formulas for leadership: "Things happen much faster and have greater impact on our families, communities and countries than ever before. We need to be smarter about how we keep all voices at the table, be open to the ideas and perspectives of people who have traditionally been given less power to lead and influence. I think people are waking up to that."

One of the great privileges of initiating MPavilion and the Forum, she says, has been the ability to drive creative experimentation in joint programs with their many collaborators (the Foundation has more than 500 partners). "No great idea exists in a vacuum, so it's wonderful that the projects have inspired ongoing and tangible action, and further cultural exchange." After all, Naomi adds, it is only by taking calculated risks that a society secures positive progress:

> **"Through experimentation you allow yourself to dream a little bigger.**

"You allow a variety of voices to come to the fore, different leaders to take the reins and start new actions and tell new stories – and not only across genders, but across cultures; promoting the voices of First Nations peoples, promoting young and emerging voices. I'm interested in the flexibility of practices that acknowledge difference. We are in a time where coming together – as cultures, communities and thought leaders – is the only way we can build prosperous and cohesive societies." ⬢

WORDS BY ELLIET SPRING
PHOTOS BY TINA BERARDI

Greening NYC: Piet Oudolf's New Perennialism

Everyone has a sense of **New York:** rows of brownstones, frosty mornings in **Central Park**, lovers holding hands on **Brooklyn Bridge**, the **Staten Island Ferry** powering past the **Statue of Liberty.** Having lived in New York for most of my twenties, I really felt I knew its character, even though I had only returned for sporadic and often fleeting visits. So, it was a surprise for to me to revisit New York in late 2018 and find the city quite different from what I remembered. While, of course, the city has grown – the result of too many urban renewal projects to list – what struck me most was a **new layer of urban greening**, a new planting character clearly derived from the hugely influential **New Perennial Movement.**

PREVIOUS: Tree growing through the gaps in the High Line, carefully designed to mimic the natural growth that overran the viaduct while it lay abandoned in the 1990s.

ABOVE & BELOW: The renovation of the High Line, by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, honoured the layers of built history. Piet Oudolf's New Perennialist planting was a critical element of the design, which called for mosslands, tall meadows, and woodland thickets.

I first noticed this as I was approaching Brooklyn Bridge from downtown Brooklyn one morning. Instead of squeezing though the concrete cattle chute, as it was aptly known, to access the bridge's famous pedestrian boardwalk, I noticed I was enjoying a generous pedestrian path, with rich and dense planting separating me from the roaring traffic to either side. The planting was a layered palette of perennial grasses, yellow cone flowers, roses and pin oaks, reminding me instantly of the High Line and Gardens of Remembrance at Manhattan's The Battery, both planted by Dutch superstar garden designer, Piet Oudolf.

As I proceeded across the bridge, I stopped to take in Brooklyn Bridge Park below, which had evolved in the years since my last visit to New York, when the planting was just establishing itself. Now, from this vantage point, I could see clouds of brown switchgrass interrupted by yellowing chestnut oaks and black tupelos. When I visited the park a few days later, I was struck by the similarities between the naturalist approach to planting taken there and that of the Brooklyn Bridge walkway, The Battery and the High Line. Had Piet done it again? Had he installed himself in the New York Parks Department and single-handedly redefined the city?

In fact, I was wrong; neither Brooklyn project was the work of Piet. But perhaps that makes it more pertinent: whether designed by Piet or not, his New Perennial style of planting has clearly captured the imagination of New York's planting designers. A new planting character has emerged.

Piet Oudolf was born in 1944 in the Netherlands. Originally educated in the broader design of landscape spaces, he found himself fascinated by the intricacies of different plants: their structures, colours, leaf shapes and scales. Interested in experimentation, and keen to source plants not commonly used in the Netherlands at the time, Piet and his wife Anja moved to Hummelo, a village around 100 kilometres east of Amsterdam, where they found the space they needed. The pair opened their own nursery where they started to experiment with different plant varieties; in particular, perennials.

Unlike annuals and biennials, which live for only a year or two, perennials are plants that live for a number of years (anywhere from three to over 100 years). While a tree is technically a perennial, Piet, following in the footsteps of Dutch garden designer Mien Ruys, focused on herbaceous perennials, which die down to the ground over winter and emerge in the spring.

LEFT TOP & MIDDLE: The Battery in winter and spring.

LEFT BOTTOM: Gardens of Remembrance at The Battery, Piet Oudolf's first work in New York, are North America's largest perennial gardens.

BELOW: Cycling down The Battery Bikeway in summer. All photos are courtesy of The Battery Conservancy.

Piet used his own nursery to familiarise himself with perennial lifecycles, enjoying the way flowers would wilt and brown before dissolving throughout the year. This approach to gardening is inherently more sustainable than the annually renewed planting that has been favoured by many garden designers, particularly in civic settings.

Piet started to celebrate the lifecycles of native perennials in his private garden designs, and later large public parks in Germany, Sweden and England. After making his name in the United States as part of the winning team for the design of the Lurie Garden at Millennium Park in Chicago (designed in 2000, opened in 2004), Piet was visited in Amsterdam in the summer of 2002 by Warrie Price, founder of The Battery Conservancy. Impressed by Piet's work, Warrie invited the garden designer to embark on his first trip to New York later that year, commissioning him soon after to complete a horticultural master plan for The Battery at the southern tip of Manhattan.

With over 18,000m² of planting, Gardens of Remembrance at The Battery, which opened in 2003, are regarded as the largest perennial gardens in North America, free and open to the public every day of the year. Fifteen years later, they are still a perfect example of the New Perennial Movement, with swathes of native grasses and flowering perennials lining the water's edge, bowing in the wind and changing with New York's famously distinct seasons.

The gardens at The Battery also exemplify Piet's 'matrix' approach to design. Where, traditionally, 20th-century garden design relied on simple, graphic blocks of single-species planting (the so-called 'block planting' style), the New Perennialists took a more naturalistic approach, repeating monocultural drifts to create a rhythmic pattern.

As his career progressed, however, Piet embraced the matrix style, where a limited palette of visually quiet plants, such as grass, is mass-planted, with more visually dominant species, or primary plants, scattered throughout. In his book *Planting, A New Perspective*, he makes an analogy with the fruitcake, where the dough is the matrix plant, and the fruits and nuts are primary plants.

James Corner, of James Corner Field Operations, was struck by the new planting at The Battery and, in 2004, included Piet, along with Diller Scofidio + Renfro, in the winning team for the renewal of the High Line. From the beginning, Piet's planting was a critical element of the scheme: the evocative original renders called for mosslands, tall meadows, woodland thickets

ABOVE: Signs of spring in The Gardens of The Battery.

LEFT: The High Line in winter.

BELOW: The Battery, on the southern tip of Manhattan. The area has been known by this name since the 17th century. Photo courtesy of The Battery Conservancy.

and mixed perennial meadows. Piet's scheme for the High Line referenced the wild plants that self-seeded and naturally emerged after the viaduct was decommissioned in 1980.

Since the first stage of the project opened to the public in 2009, the High Line has become one of the world's celebrated urban renewal projects, and Piet's planting now has a global fan base of its own.

With over five million visitors walking the High Line each year, and countless Instagram posts, it is hardly surprising that Piet's philosophy, and that of the New Perennial movement, has inspired garden designers in New York, and around the world. His revolutionary approach to landscape design has also been the subject of a 2017 documentary, *Five Seasons: The Gardens of Piet Oudolf.*

Acknowledging the different microclimates punctuating the 2.3 kilometre linear park, Piet's scheme for the High Line incorporates approximately 400 plant species in 13 garden zones. These zones include grasslands, such as the Chelsea Grassland, where prairie grasses form a matrix for spectacular primary plants including copper irises and sunflowers; wetland gardens, such as the Diller-von Furstenberg Sundeck at 14th Street, which is lined with water channels, filled with native mallows, cattails and milkweeds; and woodlands, such as the Gansevoort Woodland, which is distinctive for its shiny white-trunked birches and serviceberry shrubs. Shallow soils have proven challenging, with trees limited to four distinct sections. Shade is in abundance, however, with the increasing number of high-rise apartments along the length of the famous walk. This shift in the microclimate is distinctive and must be accounted for as the landscape and plant palette evolves. The gardens require relatively little maintenance: plants change throughout the seasons, wilting and crumbling over winter, before a team of gardeners descends, each March, cutting around 100,000 plants to the ground in preparation for spring.

The New Perennial Movement is intrinsically place-specific, favouring native plants and the biodiversity they support. While these new planting designs might be mimicked elsewhere, New York's new green character is, by its nature, unique. Even so, as I wandered the Piet-inspired landscapes during my short trip, I thought of my own tiny New Perennialist–inspired garden in inner Melbourne – a hardy, sustainable garden, reflecting the principles I learned in this city. Suddenly, it occurred to me that this time it would be easier to step on the plane for the long flight home. As much as I would miss the city, now I had a small piece of New York at my front door. ⬢

WORDS BY MANUEL ZABEL
PHOTOS BY TJAŠA KALKAN

Holzmarkt

Practical thinking on urban design, from the physical to the psychological space of cities

How ‘Business Hippies’ Reinvented Berlin

On the banks of the river **Spree**, in the centre of **Berlin**, rises a city quarter that depends less on property yield than on the **value of civic participation**. Its location is exceptional, its concept remarkable. The development of **Holzmarkt** has shown that Berlin is capable of both imagining and creating places of social cooperation.

PREVIOUS & ABOVE: An entire neighbourhood mixing work, home, pleasure and play, Holzmarkt is being put together with the hands of many artists, builders, citizens and DJs. The patchwork of worldviews and lifestyles that meet here is reflected in the design.

Berlin's housing policy, one of the most progressive today, has been cultivated over decades. Even large-scale neo-liberal urban renewal policies in the early 1990s could not change this, though their effect on Berlin has been growing steadily. This is how city planner Ingrid Krau described that time: "After the fall of the Berlin Wall, everybody seemed to believe that the market economy had finally won the day. With abolished social housing and the backup of the federal legislation of a unified Germany, the Berlin senate administration sold off the family silver, so to speak."

In recent years, urban conflicts in Berlin have largely centered around the right to develop land of importance, as portions of formerly public land have become private or semi-private property. These activities have encountered resistance: grassroots movements have managed to return many contested areas to the public, virtually toppling the course of urban development. A prominent example is the struggle over Berlin's Tempelhofer Feld, where Berliners successfully stood up to commercial redevelopment of the former airport by forcing the city senate to a referendum in 2014 (although the area continues to be under pressure to develop).

While investors have been busily pulling up corporate headquarters and office lofts, hotels and multi-purpose halls on recently privatised land on both sides of the Spree, the gaps between commercial projects have been filling with innovative, informal urbanism. Holzmarkt, often referred to as Berlin's largest urban experiment, is a model of urban generation that has helped launch a small revolution in urban planning.

East of Alexanderplatz central square, along the former Berlin Wall, the land on which Holzmarkt sits at first appears completely unremarkable. The 12,000m² lot is cut in two by the passing city railway tracks, with a number of work and leisure spaces built on both sides. The northern part, underneath and behind the railway bridge, features co-working spaces, and was meant to house the now-cancelled temporary residential area Eckwerk. Serving as a cultural area open to the public, the southern part is a platform for local entrepreneurs, and includes a restaurant, café, bakery, various studios, workshops and a day-care centre. Even the alternative nightclub Kater Blau, subject to a stringent door policy at night, at times opens up to a wide audience during the day, with theatrical performances or exhibitions by refugees.

Holzmarkt roughly translates to 'timber market', and the site lives up to its name. The space is designed according to a collaborative model of co-creation. There are buildings made of concrete, stone and wood, as well as wooden hut-like structures, partly self-contained and interlaced. Construction trailers, stacked on top of each other, quite beautifully embrace the site's aesthetics.

This innovative village has roots in one of Berlin's most notorious clubs, Bar25, which operated on the premises for seven years.

In 2004, a small group of friends parked a GDR-era VW Kombi van on a strip of uncultivated land, fitted it with a sound system and began to sell drinks. They soon assembled huts and shelters from materials collected in and outside of Berlin, and moved onto the site, throwing semi-illegal parties lasting several consecutive days and nights, occasionally as fundraisers for progressive causes. This strange idyll resembled both a rave and a trailer park, without quite being either. The audience grew, and the Bar25 squad did too – eating, drinking, working and living together like a family.

What the site offered in terms of public entertainment steadily expanded over time, with a restaurant, theatre and cinema, guesthouses and a swimming pool. The credo for the community behind Bar25 became a culture of togetherness and creativity, breaking away from social conventions and designing new, self-sufficient ways of life – and their voice became a substantial part of Berlin's urban subculture. "We are not a political club," Steffi-Lotta, one of the founders, clarified. "But, of course, we have an opinion, and we state it openly."

The popularity of Bar25 and other clubs in the area led to an attempt of the city government to commercialise development in the area under the moniker Mediaspree. "But we did not want anything to be built there that had nothing to do with the community," recalls Juval Dieziger, veteran of the club and village leadership. Juval and other Bar25 co-founders led the resistance to the commercialisation and privatisation of the Spree riverfront, supporting the right to (continued) public access to the waterfront, with varying degrees of success. Amid the battle to 'sink Mediaspree', the club's temporary lease was terminated. In September 2010, after a long battle in court, the club left the premises – memorably closing with a five-day party.

Soon, though, Bar25 moved to the opposite side of the river, where it stayed for two years, reincarnated as KaterHolzig. Economically, the new club gradually moved away from its subcultural beginnings. Soon there was talk of 'business hippies' – a term approved of in Holzmarkt circles. The focus, affirms Juval, remained

counter-cultural: covering costs rather than maximising profit; and utilisation of the property, not the property itself. The founders, and a tight-knit group of collaborators, remained as close as a family. “You simply don’t let each other down,” remarked Hannes Husten as he took me through the site. The son of one of the original team members at Bar25, who is now a board member of the Holzmarkt co-operative, Hannes too works at Holzmarkt, as studio manager and PR.

The group was still hoping to return to their home location, and give the city more than ‘just’ a club. Protracted negotiations with the city took place. But the owner of the land on which Bar25 had stood, the city-owned Berlin Municipal Sanitation, was selling the property to settle debts. And so, one of the most desirable open spaces in the city became the object of a bidding contest, which was finally resolved in 2012.

Miraculously, alternative project developers trumped established real estate companies: the founders of Bar25 had bought back the site they had made famous. The land is said to have cost over €10 million; it is worth many times more than that today.

The details of the winning bid became known in 2013, when the construction of the new Holzmarkt neighbourhood began. The Bar25 team had partnered up with the Swiss pension fund Abendrot, which bought the property and thus blocked speculation. The land was given over to the newly formed Holzmarkt 25 co-operative on a 75-year leasehold basis. The co-operative has since been responsible for developing and leasing the land.

Today, Holzmarkt 25 is made up of 13 co-founders and a large number of different actors, each bringing their own expertise to the table. The Genossenschaft für urbane Kreativität eG (GuK – Cooperative for Urban Creativity) is meant to be the cornerstone of a sustainable financing model, designed to be as transparent as possible and to facilitate the exchange of information between participants. The poster in the entrance area reminds Holzmarkt visitors, “Big dreams need space and courageous investors”. The latter are organised in several investor, leasehold, operating and district co-ops that provide capital. It is their sheer number that protects Holzmarkt from collapsing should the individual parts fail. Several dozen entrepreneurs from the creative and retail industries occupy the facilities. In order to be admitted, they were all required to explain how their participation would contribute to the common good. And, last but not least, representing the interests of approximately 700 participating citizens, the civic association Mörchenpark takes care of the open space, offering gardening workshops for kids and school classes.

LEFT: Street views and sky walks.

RIGHT: Holzmarkt faces right onto the river Spree, which flows through the centre of Berlin. The neglected natural environment is being revegetated, and landscaped with a distinct handmade aesthetic.

BELOW: Boating for techno: summer 2008 river protests against the commercialisation of the Spree river banks. Photo by Ulrich Hofmann and Adrian Lang (CC license via Wikimedia).

LEFT: Holzmarkt from the riverside.

RIGHT TOP: The colourful street facade of HausDampf hides a collection of creative businesses, some grown out of Bar25, others like-minded operations.

RIGHT BOTTOM: Looking back over the Spree (spy the crane to the right, towering over the former KaterHolzig site).

The alternative club has grown to be a multi-million-euro company. “If that had not been the case, we would have disappeared many years ago, just like many other groups trying to do similar things,” says Hayk Seirig, an early member of the Bar25 crew, now chef at the on-site restaurant Katerschmaus. For Ingrid Krau, the growth of Holzmarkt “should be considered against the backdrop of land prices rising to astronomical heights. Even if public land was given to co-operatives today, hardly any of these groups have at their disposal the resources needed to cover the high costs involved.” What helped Holzmarkt attract funding from a wealthy investment fund was its own financial assets, and an established structure, capable of protecting both investors and employees.

Not everything has gone according to plan. Recently, the development of the northern corner of the site has dramatically stalled. The proposed Eckwerk was to provide free space for students and researchers, artists, craftspeople and start-up entrepreneurs, bridging temporary living and working – just like in the days of Bar25, except on a larger scale. There was talk of five towers interconnected with green footpaths. The project started in partnership with Gewobag, the state-owned housing association. However, disputes over priorities led to such litigation between the city and the developers, as well as delays and costs, that Abendrot got involved in 2017, separating the land from Holzmarkt’s purview.

With Bar25 and KaterHolzig both victims of the speculative real estate market, Eckwerk was one of the strongest new ideas for Berlin’s urban development in a long while. Its failure to come to life, confirmed by 2018, was experienced by many as a disappointing déjà vu. Indefinitely put on hold, Eckwerk bears resemblance to the original Bar25: at first well received, and used by the city of Berlin for its own marketing campaigns, but not sufficiently supported when the political backing was most needed. Its failure showed city bureaucracy at its most inflexible.

At a PINC conference in the Dutch city of Zeist in 2015, Juval Dieziger spoke out in favour of creative bureaucrats, as he called them: open to new ideas, letting citizens participate in the urban development. Back when Bar25 was first being assembled, city authorities were in unchartered waters themselves. Due to a lack of appropriate regulations, they waved through development plans that would not be approved today. At Holzmarkt today, the focus has shifted: while the outcome of ongoing negotiations between remaining and new partners is uncertain, the creation of new ideas seems to have receded into the distance, while the need for defending the old may now be more important than ever.

Cities can take on paradoxical features, from enormous wealth to glaring poverty. Global capital can spread conformity. Yet where there is gentrification, there is also experimental living practices, often side by side. And while (pockets of) cities are run by powerful interest groups, at another time they become the birthplace of democratic achievements.

Berlin is no exception. Time will tell whether Holzmarkt can be implemented on a grand scale or whether it remains a (best-) practice example that can only function locally. For some, Holzmarkt is nothing more than an institutionalised embodiment of party culture, acutely hypocritical, pretending to be committed to a subcultural attitude even though it has long arrived into the world of mainstream development – and benefitted from it. But for others, like Hannes Husten, member of the second generation Holzmarkt community, the evolution from the former Bar25 notoriety to a public-spirited small business “has great emancipatory power”. ⬢

Lesley Lokko

Decolonising Architecture

Just over 2000 years ago, Pliny the Elder uttered: “Ex Africa semper aliquid novi” (“Out of Africa there is always something new”). No-one is perhaps better equipped to discuss this idea than **Professor Lesley Lokko.** Currently Head of the G**raduate School of Architecture (GSA)** at the University of Johannesburg, Lesley’s perspective is at once critical and confident, exuding the optimism found in the latent potential of her students, yet acutely aware of the varied challenges they face beyond the safe space of her classrooms. **Danielle Mileo** caught up with Lesley after her lecture **‘What Pliny Said’** at the World Architecture Festival in Amsterdam late last year, to discuss the challenges around **decolonisation and pedagogy** in architectural education on the African continent.

PREVIOUS LEFT: Lesley Lokko. Photo courtesy of EMAP Publishing Limited.

PREVIOUS RIGHT: GSA Reviews, GSA MAIN, Johannesburg, 2018. Photo by Lesley Lokko.

RIGHT: GSA Summer Show, GSA MOAD, Maboneng, Johannesburg 2018. Photo by Tristan McLaren.

DANIELLE MILEO

Your lecture today got me thinking about the relationship between South Africa and Australia. You spoke about the difference between African and English novelists, in that African novelists are constantly glancing over their shoulders looking for approval from elsewhere. Historically speaking, Australian architects – and perhaps architects from other countries, like South Africa, with a history of European colonisation – are doing the same thing; that is, trying to situate ourselves within a European context from the outside. How does that differ from countries that didn’t have the same kind of European settlement, like Ghana or Senegal?

LESLEY LOKKO

We often speak of ourselves as being part of the post-colonial world, but there was a real distinction during the British Empire between dominions and colonies. Dominions were settled by Europeans; colonies were simply ruled. I’m from Ghana, West Africa, which was a colony, not a dominion – no Europeans ever came to Ghana to become Ghanaians – so we didn’t have the same issues of language and blood and land and belonging as, I think, Australia, and particularly South Africa, do. But there is something about the insecurity of being mentally and emotionally away from the ‘centre’, or the mother country, that is very, very similar.

In Ghana, we speak English – it’s the official language – in the same way that English, French and Portuguese are the official languages of the African Union. So, here you have a situation where the official, public language is English, but in private we speak our own languages. Our public persona is always constructed in the image of someone else – it’s a bit like having double vision. You may look at yourself, but you’re also looking at other people looking at you, which is unsettling. The ‘self’ to which you refer is both your real self and this imaginary, European self who represents your aspirations, your ambitions, often in a deeply insecure way. And, in that regard, I think Australia is probably slightly ahead of South Africa, partly because the relationship between its Indigenous population and its settler population is the opposite.

South Africa is 8.9 percent minority white population and 90.1 percent black. But that struggle to find oneself, to find one’s bona fide identity, is something that really connects the two places, and, in a way, this umbilical cord that we all have towards this other place is very difficult to cut.

I think that same sense of insecurity permeates almost everything. For example, most African cultures are oral, not written. If you’re an African writer, therefore, your readership is largely elsewhere, a readership that often knows nothing of the context or topics that you write about. For an African writer interested in exploring his or her sense of self or his or her place in the world – which is what most writers do – it’s complicated by the fact that you have to first explain who you are to your reader before you’re able to explore anything. And that’s the double bind – you can’t explore and explain simultaneously. I think Australia is possibly like that as well. That you’re trying to explain your identity at the same time as you construct it.

DM That’s it – it’s an interesting place to exist as an architect or novelist, but perhaps especially as an educator. I understand that at the GSA, of which you are Head, the curriculum is constantly developing to deal with this idea of decolonisation, what it means and how you redefine it. What is decolonisation in practice, as a pedagogical approach, and how is it helping to deal with some of these issues of identity for your students?

LL I think that, at the moment, decolonisation is a political statement, it’s not yet a pedagogy or a curriculum. We don’t know what a decolonised pedagogy looks like. The first metaphorical bullets have been fired – particularly the student protests in 2015 and 2016 [at South African universities], which said, “Look, we need to deal with this, urgently.” In South Africa,

decolonisation is linked very closely to transformation, which in that context means greater representation of Africans, and greater representation of our histories and our canon.

But deep, real and meaningful decolonisation, I think, is a really interesting intellectual endeavour, which will take time. To be angry, to want to change things, is only the first step in a very, very long journey.

You need the anger to sustain the energy when the going gets tough, because it's not easy, it's not something to be undertaken lightly. Re-thinking the canon is also about re-making the canon and that's not a single-generation project. In South Africa's quite volatile political situation, there's a danger that the anger becomes the only thing that remains, and the deep work of trying to understand how one constructs a new identity (what are the steps that you take? Where do you go for your source material? What are the processes involved in translation?) doesn't get done, because it's not sexy, it's not headline-grabbing.

DM So, do you see the school as getting under, or perhaps behind, the anger and pushing it further?

LL Absolutely, and for me that's the pedagogical experiment – to go beneath the surface, underneath the skin of things, no pun intended. It's interesting because sometimes it's work that borders on the edge of unethical, often disturbing. In the South African context, issues of 'race' and identity are incredibly emotive and emotional issues.

DM It sounds like a very different educational experience. What do you see as the key differences at the GSA compared to other architecture schools?

LL The modernist education system was assumed to be universal, so all students basically studied the same things: the same history, same precedents, same technological approach. There was little room for experimentation, but also, whenever you steered off the beaten track of the colonial canon, there was a huge insecurity about what to do with that. Everyone's keen to see or understand what 'African' architecture might look like, but not so keen to allow the space for the answers to develop.

From my perspective, the system I found when I arrived in 2014 was quite repressive. Yes, it might have been considered complete, or grounded, or secure in its mimicry of a European tradition, but the context in Africa is so different. Where the unit system differs is that it takes the authority of education and breaks it down. It's partly to do with personality, partly to do with the tutor's own lived experience, but it's also partly to do with the experimental relationship between student and tutor, which is very different from the old master–pupil relationship. So, while it's a system that evolved in London in the 1970s that I don't think was ever designed for this context, 50 years later, in a completely different kind of territory, it's been liberating. And it's partly been because so much of what you teach is up for questioning. [Our] school really is a school of formulating questions, it's not in the business of formulating answers yet. We're still too early at the beginning of that process. Along the way, you do make attempts at answering, but the idea that you should know immediately what African architecture is, what identity means, what black space is – these things are premature.

DM You once said, "Apartheid couldn't have happened without the complicity of the architectural profession..." What are some concrete examples of that complicity? And what elements of that heritage are still around; what has survived?

LL There are two ways. One is to do with what you call 'spatial practices', where you carve up, literally, the landscape into areas for blacks, areas for whites.

No-one ever speaks about it, but the spatial planning required to ensure that as a white South African, you can live in a white suburb, get onto a white freeway and go to a white business district and never see another black person – that's skill. At an engineering level, how do you design a city around those principles?

Who was responsible? In some ways, I think of the Holocaust – someone designed the gas chambers; someone designed the concentration camps. They didn't just 'happen'. In the same way, some architect designed the NE-52 township house. It stands for 'non-European 52', the 'model' house for an African. Some architect put their name to that child's image of a house – a rectangular box with a door and two windows – and that model was rolled out across the entire South African landscape. So, for 90 percent of the population that's the image of home. At both a macro and a micro level, architecture was deeply complicit, but we don't speak about it.

Now, the new rhetoric in South Africa is all around social justice and social responsibility, and poverty reduction and so on, but in my mind that's equally racist. Why do black students have a reduced diet of what is architecturally appropriate? For many of the black students, the last place they want to go is a township. They've spent a generation trying to get out of it.

I think architecture has had such a deep and embedded relationship with spatial practices – colonisation, settlement, dispossession. If you don't teach students to question it, you're ignoring a huge part of what the profession does. There's an almost inbuilt resistance in South Africa, because people don't equate architecture with progressive thinking, or with optimism, or with aspirations for a better future. Architecture is associated with the very worst. We have to somehow undo that damage, and part of that is giving students agency to say that my history, my experience, my language, my culture, has something to do with this discipline.

DM Has there been any kind of adaptive reuse or reappropriation of these houses in a positive sense?

LL I think the housing question is a real pressing question, because on one level there's an incredibly basic need. The pressures of urbanisation are real. There is a generation of architects, between the ages of 30 and 40, who are really trying to address questions like, what does it mean to dwell? What is a home? What are those constructs? Unfortunately, the pressure of rolling out housing, I think, simply replaced the NE-52 with a brick model that looks no different. And there just hasn't been the room for experimentation that allows people to say, "Look, if I'm a rural Zulu person who's come to the city, what am I looking for in a home? How do I embody my cultural practices?" How do you embody polygamy, for example, in a two-bedroom house? It's those sorts of questions no-one speaks about.

DM And within the school context?

LL We're starting to. But I've been told point-blank by white colleagues that what the school is doing is incredibly irresponsible, because there's no point in teaching black students to dream, they need to go out and get jobs, earn money and support their families. And I'm like, please, really? So, you know, it's a complex situation.

DM For me, architecture school is all about dreaming, and thinking bigger and doing all the things you can't do once you get into practice.

LL Exactly, live out your imagination and not just your history.

DM You've spoken and written a lot about the idea that one's primary identity can be defined by a lack of something. Do you think a lack of an architectural identity – and here I mean an overarching 'school' or 'style' borne specifically from your locality and considered local – has an impact on the way young architects position themselves in the world?

LL At a very subliminal level, architecture tells a very important story about one's place in the world, literally. So, it's not just about your aspirations, it's about your rootedness – 'this signifies something about who I am'. What's interesting in these newer contexts is that the question of 'who I am' is emergent – there's no definitive answer. I see that as an optimistic space, but that's because I'm in education. If I were in practice, there would be an incredible impatience about, you know, get me to that style, get me to that form, get me to this materiality that says something about who I am. We're playing a long game here, and the long game requires an awful lot of patience and an awful lot of sometimes-getting-it-right and sometimes-getting-it-wrong. But I can't think of any other architectural space that is as dynamic. So, it's frustrating and empowering at the same time.

At a basic level, every act of architecture is a proposition. You can't only be critical, otherwise you'd be critics or historians or writers.

In the act of design there is an implicit faith in the idea of something that isn't yet here, something that's about to come. In these emergent economies, where everything is up for grabs, it's a great discipline to be aligned with that potentiality. The difficult thing has been to know where to draw the boundaries, because too much freedom can also result in anarchy. I have no children, so I don't have an innate sense of how to set boundaries with a younger generation. And, you know, on one level architecture is all about drawing lines, but I've also found that often the lines are porous. ⬢

ABOVE: A student presents at International Critics Week, GSA MOAD, Maboneng, 19-22 September 2018. Photo by Katherine Krone.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ENNIS ĆEHIĆ

Sarajevo In Times of Now

For some reason, I thought it was at the top of the sloped street. I held onto the green railing beside the pedestrian walkway, trying not to slip on the freshly frozen snow, and climbed all the way towards the **Soviet-style blocks** before I realised that I was way off; I was looking for an **Austro-Hungarian** apartment block.

PREVIOUS: Facing towards the Baščaršija Mosque on Ćurćiluk Veliki, one of Sarajevo's historical streets once used to house the city's leatherworkers and now opening doors to a new generation of designers & craft shops.

BELOW: Slow morning coffee on Kovači Street in Sarajevo at the Ministry of Ćejf café. 'Ćejf' is the Bosnian word for slow, silent, deeply personal enjoyment of someone or something.

ABOVE: Looking down on Vijećnica, Sarajevo's city hall, which was reopened in 2014 following years of restoration.

ABOVE: Inside the contemporary art gallery Brodac which focuses on new and emerging local artists, on Brodac Street, behind Vijećnica.

Mikica welcomed me on the fourth floor outside the apartment I came to inspect. Her short red hair was dyed, but it made her look younger, and opened up her optimistic, motherly grin. She ushered me inside to get out of the cold foyer, and within a few minutes, as she showed me the bathroom and the bedroom that came off the hallway, I learnt more than I intended to about Mikica's life. This was her son's apartment. "He works at the Bosnian embassy in Germany now," she said with a mother's pride. Her son is married to Sharif, a woman who is Syrian from her mother's side. They have two kids and come to stay with her in summer. By the time we got to the living room, Mikica told me she had lived in the apartment on the corner of the same floor since she got married in the early 1960s. "This," she said poignantly, pointing at a small, still-life of cherries on the wall in the living room, "is my work. My husband said art will be the thing I leave behind after I die." She opened the French doors that led into a small dining space off the living room, and drew the curtains aside, revealing large, open windows with 180-degree views of Mejtaš, the mahala (neighbourhood) of Sarajevo that led up the sloped street I walked on earlier. Miljenko Jergović, one of Sarajevo's famous authors, calls Mejtaš "a square above the city": it is considered one of the city's most pristine neighbourhoods. A week later, I moved in.

Like Mikica, people are always telling you stories in Sarajevo. The city is steeped in narratives, legends and tales. Even its birth has a story. Founded originally by the Ottoman Empire in the 1450s, Sarajevo lies in a scenic valley in the middle of the Dinaric Alps. The cemetery Ravne Bakije, on top of the mahala Sedrenik, is located where legend tells us the great Sultan Mehmed II, enchanted by the view of the valley, dismounted his horse and exclaimed, "Bak, bak!" ("Look, look!"). This ancient anecdote, a minuscule slice of the biography of Mehmed the Conqueror, the Ottoman Sultan who occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina and changed its history forever, is the one I like the most.

When I first came to Sarajevo on a holiday in 2013, it had been 21 years since the war had exiled my family out of our homeland. I hoped returning to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its capital would represent a cultural reconnection, but it also represented an emotional, heartbreaking journey. While the mahalas line the valley like a protective armour, the mountains tower over the pulse of the city below. When one realises how open and susceptible it is to attack, it makes one recoil at the reality of the siege that occurred here between 1992–95, when Serbian soldiers encircled it from the mountains, shooting down and shelling.

Now, in 2019, my reason for coming back is entirely different. After selling my apartment in St Kilda East in November 2018, and receiving an award to write my first book in the same month, I decided to move here. It's a change I looked forward to with great curiosity.

I was transitioning to having no day job, with my entire time devoted to my writing practice, so immersing myself in the capital city of my motherland felt like the right thing to do. After all, you can't know yourself if you don't know your own history.

There was a period in my life when I listened more to reply than to understand. Now, it's the opposite. Since I've arrived, I've noticed how Sarajevo seeks out my attentiveness. It's as if people see that I am lingering for narratives, for stories. Each time I leave my apartment, I sense my body moving at a slower pace, as my feet saunter aimlessly through the streets. Almost weekly, I discover new cafes, historic buildings, bookshops and stores I previously never encountered; and with most stops, I discover something about Sarajevo.

At the Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque and fountain in the Baščaršija, I smile when I think of the old song that asserts that once you drink Baščaršija water, you never forget Sarajevo. This story is told to travellers to the city, to remind them that, one day, despite what they might think, they'll return.

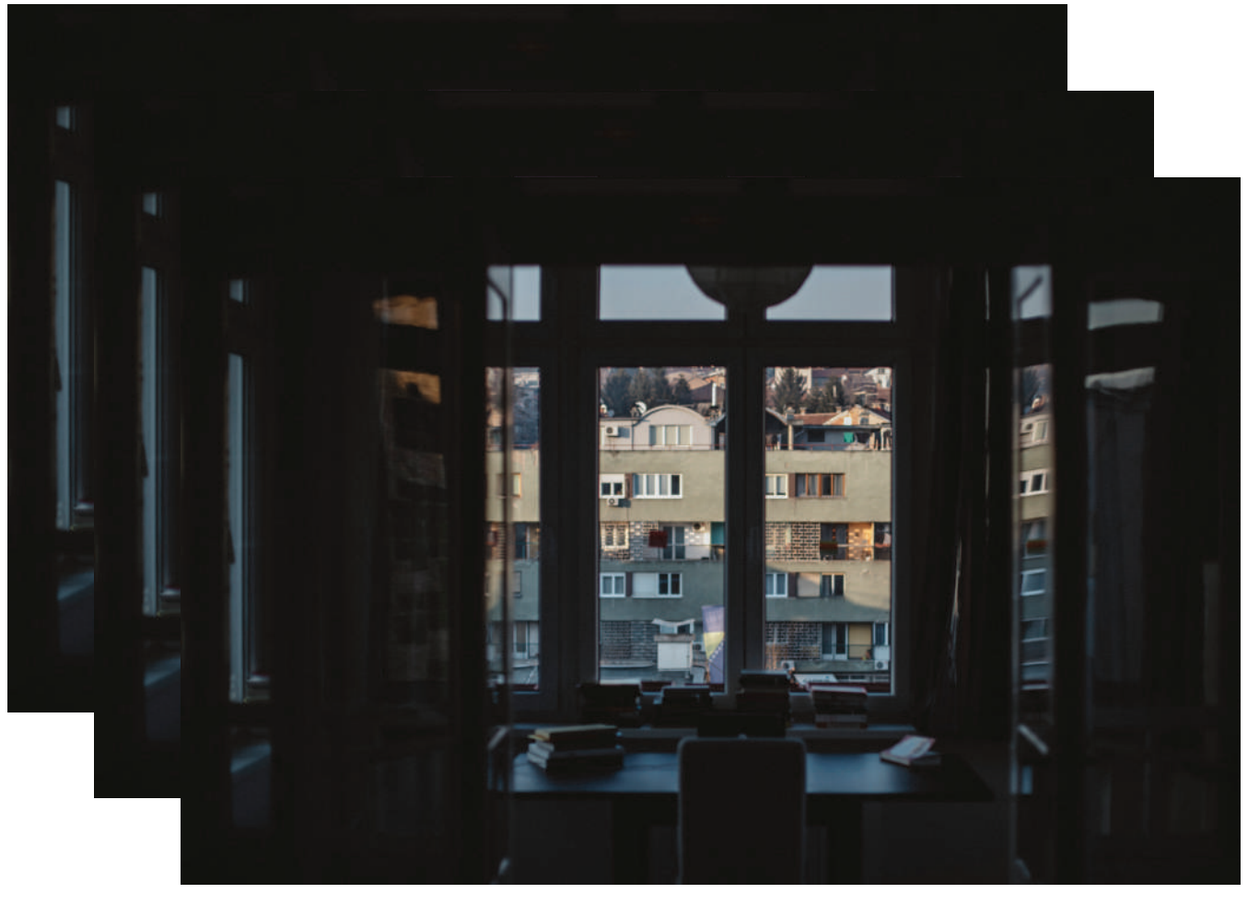
"Have you heard the one about McDonald's?" said a waitress recently. Supposedly, a local, carrying a full plate of ćevapčići, the traditional Bosnian street snack, entered the fast-food store when it opened in 2011 and handed the plate over to the staff, wishing them well and welcoming them to the neighbourhood.

After the first month of being here, I also heard a great deal of Sarajevo's famous war tales. The square in front of the National Theatre is named after Susan Sontag, who, in 1993, in the middle of the siege, staged the play *Waiting for Godot* here. When the creeks dried up and the rivers became polluted, and both water and power lines were sabotaged, Sarajevska Pivara, a brewery located atop an underground natural spring, pumped water and distributed it to locals who arrived with buckets and whatever else they could carry, hiding from snipers.

But in the five years I had been absent, I also noticed that many new buildings had been erected and institutions re-opened. The city hall Vijećnica, the most famous of Sarajevo's buildings, designed by Czech-born architect Karel Pařík, who spent most of his life in Sarajevo, re-opened in 2014. This was a historic moment for the city, as Vijećnica housed the country's entire historical archives, and had been burnt down during the siege. The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina opened its doors again after an embarrassing period of closure between 2012–15, due to disagreements about funding. After a 26-year hiatus, the famous Trebevićka žičara, a cable car that leads people up to Mount Trebević, finally re-opened in 2018.

RIGHT: Front of Zana Karkin's local design and crafts concept store, Bazerdžan.

BELOW: Ennis Ćehić's writing studio in Mikica's 19th-century apartment overlooking Mejtaš, one of Sarajevo's most elegant neighbourhoods.



Other developments, such as the Sarajevo City Centre, a shopping complex and hotel in Marijin Dvor, which opened in 2014, brought the world closer, with fashion conglomerates such as Zara coming to Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time.

Transitions, I noticed, always have a catalyst point; a beginning, from whence adjustment and transformation occurs. Sarajevo's catalyst is the siege that occurred here, considered the longest and worst in European history since World War II.

The city exists before and after the war, both in its stories and in its urban texture. "What was it like before?" is a question many tourists ask the local tour guides. I had asked my parents this same question, too young to know what it felt like to live in the Federation of Yugoslavia. Those who had experienced Sarajevo before the war always spoke of it nostalgically. They recalled the greatness of a remarkable music, literature, art and film scene – especially of the 1980s, when Sarajevo hosted the winter Olympics.

It's obvious that the city doesn't let go of the marks of the siege – the scars I see across the neighbourhoods on my walks are constant reminders. There are still remnants of the war, wounds from shells and bullets, that have not been tended to. If they have been nursed and patched, it's been done with minimal effort – blotches and splashes of concrete – as if the city wants you to remember the terrible fate it endured. And yet, these remnants are starting to become part of the new urban fabric. As I stroll through Baščaršija, Ferhadija and lead outwards into the newer territories like Čengić Vila, the transition isn't visible only in the new buildings, state-of-the-art offices, great restaurants and the appearance of fashion conglomerates. It is most vividly present in the youth, in their optimism. The young people I meet for coffee and chat to about Nick Cave, Virgil Abloh and Drake are not stuck in 'Yugonostalgia'. Instead, I sense a desire to move on from the war and its ramifications: they want to further the city's current uniqueness, its revival as a modern capital.

Zana Karkin, a young fashion entrepreneur, opened up Bazerdžan in 2016, a concept store that exclusively offers designer wares and products made by Bosnian makers. "We have a team of artists working in the shop, who all contribute creatively to the process. We work with over 40 traditional craftsmen and new, young designers to create products that speak of our Bosnian story with modern interpretations," she told me. Ministry of Ćejf, the first specialty coffee roaster and café in the city, has brought Melbourne-inspired coffee culture. The owner, Reshad Strik, is an Australian-Bosnian who moved here a few years ago.

BELOW: Many of the scars left from mortar shelling of Sarajevo during the siege have been filled in with red resin, creating subtle memorials for the lives lost. There are about 200 such ‘Sarajevo Roses’ around the city.

RIGHT: The famous Sarajevska žičara (cable car), gliding above the rooftops on the way down from Mount Trebević, reopened in 2018.

RIGHT INSET: Reshad Strik, an Australian-Bosnian actor, preparing tea in front of his café, Ministry of Ćejf.

While these initiatives might seem small, they are great leaps for a place that is still soaked in post-war suffering. They might be the early, pioneering inspiration the city needs to peel away the layers of its gruesome past.

The other day, I had coffee with Damir Imamović, a singer and songwriter of sevdah music. Many consider Damir to be the leading figure of the emerging New Sevdah movement, which uses modern interpretations and instrumentation of this traditional Bosnian folk music. We met at Delikatesna Radnja on Obala Kulina Bana, across from the Miljacka River. It was a warm winter’s day, and the bar was full of people. As I began to tell him how much I’ve come to adore this city, Damir leaned back into his small armchair and remarked how it’s never been greater: “There’s never been this many film directors, writers, musicians, a film festival, theatre and literature with so much international recognition in Sarajevo,” he said. “We didn’t have this before the war.”

After he left, I looked around at the buzz of the bar – the fashionistas in Adidas tracksuits and fur jackets, and the cool, Berlin-like décor. Perhaps Damir was right: cruelties of the war may have catalysed an international interest in Sarajevo that has spawned a new age.

I headed home. Inside Mikica’s dining room (converted into my writing studio), I looked through the windows. The snow had melted off the rooftops in Mejtaš, and now it was only visible up further, in the mountains. I reflected on Sarajevo’s identity, how individual it has been throughout history, born from the harmonious co-existence of the monotheistic religions that exist here.

Every journey we take in life is a journey within. We look outwards for clues, but the resolute verdict we discover comes from within.

This city has always been a beautiful concoction of East and West, and the music of sevdah has captured this wonderfully. And much like the progressive, musical changes that sevdah is experiencing, so is this city refashioning itself. Its ‘before the war’ motifs are no longer what’s pulling the strings of my curiosity. I'm not as interested in the stories of before; like many others, I am enticed and captivated by the Sarajevo of now. ⬢

WORDS AND PROJECT BY STANISLAVA PINCHUK (MISO)

Borders

What interests me, above all, is how the landscape is changed within war or conflict zones. How does topography hold the memory of a political event? How does ground provide evidence? **Ruins tend not to lie.**

Mapping land began a little without my realising it. At first, while living in Tokyo, it was informal, a way of recording myself in a huge, metabolic city. Plotting, dancing and drinking; lapses of memory. Then, while I was in Japan, my home, along the Ukraine's eastern border, was invaded in an act of civil war. It was an experience that remains beyond words for me. Distant borders were shifting, and, with it, the potential threat to my citizenship. The ground beneath my feet suddenly felt like a strange fabric made of not knowing.

So, I began to survey, to collect data and preserve the land as digital meshes, to turn into white drawings. The drawings are plotted pin-hole by pin-hole, processed into the computer and then sewn into needlework by hand. Pain every step of the way.

Some years and projects later, I was working in Paris. Sensing the lead-up to, then witnessing, the forced evacuation of the Calais 'Jungle' migrant camp in 2016, I began to think of the ways immigration directly changes the shape of land. As an immigrant

myself, I wondered how – or even if – my own path had left any physical remnant on any piece of ground along the way.

In all its iterations across roughly 17 years, Calais was a mostly informal settlement. It was not a camp built with the idea of containment or protection, but one based on the chance to make an escape from it, every night, into a ferry or lorry bound for England, from France's closest geographic point on the other side of the Channel. But within the camp's informality, the Jungle was an incredibly dense and layered social ecosystem. It housed supply shops and kiosks, numerous bakeries, restaurants and tea houses, libraries, a childcare centre, mosques and churches. The bonds between residents were tight, especially between the young men who had worked their way across Europe alone. But, above all, it was a place where many lone migration paths of multiple directions, lengths, reasons, demographics and levels of bureaucratic documentation – and paths often made relatively discreetly – collided to suddenly leave a deep mark on the land, right by the grey beach of Dunkirk.

I often wondered if here was some geographic peculiarity; a hardness doomed to repeat itself for generations of young men.

The data drawings, an analogy for its modern reputation for political borders, are plotted into pieces of Calais lace (the tradition for which the city is known). Both lace and borders, it goes without saying, are often objects of intense human desire and longing.

In mapping the six months following the forced and sudden evacuation, you can see the demolition lines made by the tractors and bulldozers across the entire camp. Among the smaller works is a map of perhaps the most callous act of the evacuation: the burning of the ground by the French authorities, which appeared to have no practical reasoning, other than the savagely symbolic. This micro-topography hangs among that of a trampled prayer mat, tent and shotgun shell, as well as a hiding hole, dug into a hill for a stealthier run-up for a passing lorry.

In all my mapping work, I never interfere with the ground. The land is there to be documented, just as it appears. Nothing is added, and nothing is taken. Nothing is swept, moved or edited. The ground is simply surveyed, and recorded in its exact state.

And yet, Calais took me aside. In most places of my previous work, especially in the Fukushima Daiichi and Chernobyl nuclear exclusion zones, the subtleties in landscape change are minute, and a challenge to attune to, even for the trained eye. But in Calais, the Jungle was a landscape of thousands of objects trampled into the ground, a mosaic of overwhelming information as far as the eye could see; something between an archaeological dig and a terrazzo floor.

So, for the first time, I broke my rule. On the very last days of the camp's razing, and my very last stretch of surveying its topography – a bitterly cold day, between two snowfalls – I collected the last remaining 20 kilograms of the campsite for preservation. Tents, shoes, shotgun shells, watch straps, shaving cream, kiosk tiles and plastic plumbing. Nutella lids, watch straps, buttons, electronics and blankets.

Over seven hours, I scraped, excavated and sifted through the debris and hauled my collection onto a late-night train to Paris. I scrubbed it all clean in a bathtub, with vinegar coating the shotgun residue of all the objects. I packed everything like drugs. Fearing the loss of these last, irreplaceable remnants through a courier service, I carried them with me across nine destinations, from France to Spain, through the Sahara desert and Atlas Mountains. I was stopped at every border crossing, searched and questioned; miraculously, I made it through Australia's strict customs most easily of all. (If you must know, the secret is a decoy top layer of declarations: Saharan honey jars, Tangier's finest straw baskets, and underwear.)

In Melbourne, every object was immaculately photographed and documented – and then pulverised, irrevocably set into sculptural terrazzo blocks.

Crushed and trampled all over again, the objects were colour-coded and arranged with just enough cues on the outside edges to catch the eye: the shine of a rough-cut aluminium tent pole, or the smooth edge of a plastic drink lid. Pulling in even closer, you would be able to see the shape of a watch strap, a toothbrush handle or half a razor, gleaming from the block just as they did on the campground in the frost.

Removing the sculptures from their moulds was where the works really began to make sense. Here were slightly boring blocks, plain on the surface at first, like samples in an architect's office. And that was exactly the power of terrazzo for me – a building material full of recycled elements, used for both interior and exterior spaces.

It seemed so fitting, given not only the material recycling and resourcefulness of the Jungle's dwellings, but the very public nature of the domestic lives within the camp. Here were thousands of parts, mixed together into one amalgamated whole. ●

EYES

Redesigning Realities

WORDS BY ALEXIS KALAGAS

Practical thinking on urban design, from the physical to the psychological space of cities

SOFTWARE AS A SERVICE
LIGHTING AS A SERVICE
CONTENT AS A SERVICE
PRINTING AS A SERVICE
WARDROBE AS A SERVICE
FURNITURE AS A SERVICE
JET ENGINE AS A SERVICE
TIRES AS A SERVICE
MOBILITY AS A SERVICE
HOUSING AS A SERVICE
SPACE AS A SERVICE

In mid-January, co-working giant WeWork announced a $2.8 billion cash infusion, doubling its valuation in a little over twelve months. Nine years after launching with a single site in lower Manhattan, WeWork is the largest real estate tenant in both New York and London, and operates a network of 425 locations spanning 27 countries. Today, it is believed to be one of the most valuable privately held venture-backed companies in the world – part of a rarefied club that includes Uber and its Chinese ride-hailing rival DiDi. All three are major players in the rise of the 'access economy': selling the convenience of frictionless access to services, versus the burden of owning and maintaining tangible property.

Salesforce first popularised the 'software-as-a-service' model at the tail end of the 1990s dot-com boom, offering enterprise clients on-demand access to applications running on remote cloud-based infrastructure, rather than individual licenses. The 'as-a-service' terminology has since evolved into generalised shorthand for moves away from simply selling products to providing bundled services (and locking in recurring revenue). Increasingly, this means combining physical and digital systems, developing integrated platforms to support two-way engagement, and leveraging data to understand how products and services are consumed, in order to continually improve and personalise customer experience. We see this shift in everything from music (Spotify), to high-end clothing (Rent the Runway), printers (Xerox), lighting (Philips), and even jet engines (Rolls-Royce).

At its core, WeWork's business model is pure arbitrage: lease space in bulk from building owners and carve it up into smaller pieces to sublet at a premium.

But the company is also engaged in the first large-scale experiment in 'space-as-a-service': applying the principles of flexibility and user experience to a growing network of fixed real estate assets. A suite of memberships caters to the fluid requirements of freelancers, start-ups and large corporations alike, while tricked-out common areas, free-flowing craft beer, and in-person and online community management are meant to foster social interaction. WeWork claims the insights gleaned from observing user behaviour en masse allows it to further optimise and customise space.

In April 2016, WeWork unveiled "another layer of [its] platform". A handful of upper floors at its 100 Wall Street location had been converted into 200 residential units. WeLive is part of a rapidly expanding group of ventures offering 'co-living' in various forms. Many of these developments are an incongruous mash-up of Bay Area 'hacker houses', decades-old Nordic co-housing ideas, traditional serviced apartments, rooming houses, and Airbnb-style short-stay accommodation, designed to cater to the plug-and-play lifestyles of a new generation of itinerant professionals. Marketing tag lines invariably invoke a blend of convenience, comfort and community. This largely entails flexible leases, furnished spaces, event programming, dedicated digital portals, and flat-rate pricing that bundles utilities, high-speed internet, cleaning and rent in all-inclusive plans.

So far, three versions of commercial co-living have emerged. The first is pitched at 'digital nomads'. Roam operates properties (often converted hotels) in places like Bali and Miami, which combine communal living with co-working facilities in a 21st-century spin on the 'live/work' formula coined to market artist lofts in 1970s Soho. The second is closer to an institutionalised version of the share house. LifeX, for instance, manages a network of large apartments

(300–350m²) in European capitals like Berlin and Copenhagen. What were once luxury homes for couples or families are converted into curated flat shares for four to eight approved members. Common and Starcity scale this approach to an entire branded mid- or high-rise building, either purpose-built or retrofitted.

Operators like WeLive and The Collective split the difference. Both offer access to co-working facilities and a range of hotel-style amenities – spas, gyms, a 24/7 concierge, chef's kitchens, bars and restaurants – but also target longer-term residents. WeLive provides only a limited short-stay option (up to 30 days), while standard leases at The Collective generally run 9 or 12 months. Almost all forms of co-living involve an explicit trade-off: reduce your private footprint in exchange for higher-quality shared spaces. The Collective Old Oak was billed as the largest project of its type when it opened in northwest London in May 2016. Repurposing an office block into a hulking complex of 546 micro-units, a 10m² room currently sets you back an eye-watering $500 per week.

It's no coincidence that co-living start-ups have gravitated to cities like Berlin, San Francisco, London and New York. Ostensibly 'winning' the battle for capital and talent, they are urban testing-grounds, where rootless and cashed-up tech workers, heated real estate markets, and rising housing pressures add up to a recipe for experimentation. Co-living has attracted legitimate criticism. In particular, the pretext of 'community' is often invoked to shrink private space and boost yields, commodifying shared lifestyles for an exclusive market. But, in another sense, these models – and the new generation of build-to-rent projects they have inspired – are also questioning the landlord–tenant relationship, rethinking development approaches for the private rental sector, and adapting existing buildings to respond to changes in how we live.

In Australia, the superiority of homeownership has long been elevated to an article of faith. Speaking to building industry representatives in Sydney in 1992, John Hewson, then the federal leader of the opposition, claimed notoriously, "In any street… it's always easy to tell the rented houses. They're the ones where the lawn isn't mowed, the plants aren't watered and the fences aren't fixed." Kick-started by Robert Menzies during the post-war boom, governments on both sides of the aisle have continued to support a range of policies that overtly, and tacitly, promote homeownership over other forms of housing tenure. Three-quarters of respondents in a 2017 ANU housing affordability poll strongly agreed that owning your own home is part of the Australian way of life.

The first legislation governing residential tenancies was only introduced in Victoria in 1980. Until then, aside from a brief window of rent and eviction controls imposed as a national security measure during World War II, the relationship between landlords and tenants had been shaped by archaic common law principles with roots in feudal England. The onus was on renters to ensure that legal protections were specified in the terms of their lease, including in relation to repairs, cleaning, rights of entry, and security deposits. As two reports from the ground-breaking 1975 Commission of Inquiry into Poverty observed, this assumed equal bargaining power and the possibility of negotiation.

In reality, landlords offered lease agreements on a 'take it or leave it' basis.

Years later, Adrian Bradbrook – a lead author of both reports – likened renters to consumers, as they "consume space and services". But almost four decades into the consumer-oriented regulatory era he helped bring about, and amid the rollout of Victoria's latest 'Rent Fair' reform package, we're only just beginning to rebalance the system to better protect and serve tenants, rather than reduce a large swathe of the population to sources of yield for a cottage industry of two million 'mum and dad' investors. Meanwhile, the private rental sector is the fastest expanding segment of the housing market. Between 2006 and 2016, it increased at twice the rate of overall household growth, and is now home to more couples, more children, a greater mix of incomes, and a widening pool of long-term renters.

The Canadian urbanist Richard Florida has argued that similar shifts in the United States point to a "great housing reset", part of the transition from an industrial to highly clustered knowledge economy. Co-living start-ups certainly believe long-run trend lines are moving in their favour, with some harbouring totalising visions. The former chief operating officer of The Collective mused publicly about eventually offering free housing by monetising its residents (that is, selling data and privileged access to third parties), while Miguel McKelvey, co-founder of WeWork, says the company aspires to be nothing less than "a holistic support system or lifestyle solution". (Although it has diversified further into gyms [Rise By We] and primary schools [WeGrow], WeLive has fallen far short of initial projections outlined in a leaked 2014 investor deck.)

Demand notwithstanding, if co-living is the most fully realised version of a 'housing-as-a-service' approach to date, it's only one of many possible futures for a reimagined rental experience. New models will need to strike the right balance between mobility and agency, between quality and affordability, and between community and autonomy. And they will need to apply creative strategies to realise the latent potential in the rental stock that already exists. This means engaging simultaneously in spatial design, service design and strategic design. It also means thinking in terms of the 'extended home' – not just what can be shared or networked within a single house or building, but also the kinds of collective resources that could be activated on a neighbourhood level.

The real question is whether this is possible without a transition to more institutional involvement in the sector. Australia has become a nation of landlords, with tax concessions encouraging a narrow focus on capital gains over long-term returns.

Incipient forms of 'housing-as-a-service' already exist – witness the rapid growth of student accommodation – and others are on the way. In February, Singapore-based Hmlet entered the Sydney market after acquiring Caper Co-Living, while a flurry of developer-led build-to-rent projects are in the pipeline. But one need only look to cities like Zürich, where 90 percent of residents are tenants and the largest non-profit housing cooperatives manage portfolios of more than 5000 apartments, to see a professionalised, socially-oriented vision at scale. Tweaking the user experience of this model through community-driven digital innovations could offer an alternative path.

Crucially, the social dimension here encompasses more than approaches to financing and affordability. Like co-living developments, the new generation of Zürich cooperatives are experimenting with how to provide a range of shared amenities in a rental context: from yoga rooms, to roof terraces, restaurants and crèches. But instead of looking inward, embracing the 'hotelisation' of housing and a vertical form of gated community, recent projects have aspired to an openness and permeability in their design and mix of uses that recreates the diversity and dynamism of urban life in microcosm. As the rental sector emerges as the site where labour market, demographic and technological shifts converge, it may also offer the best hope for our housing stock to catch up with social reality. ●

PREVIOUS & ABOVE: Office and bed nooks in Studio+, in WeLive Wall St. Photo courtesy of WeLive/WeWork.

Sporadic but timely ideas, essays, reviews and opinions on cities and contemporary culture, from the hyper-local to the internationally relevant

WORDS BY JAX JACKI BROWN
ILLUSTRATION BY JESSICA MEYRICK

Disability Design

Who Has Access to the City?

I am waiting at the lights. I feel his eyes on me, watching me, wondering...

He takes the plunge. "What happened?" he asks.

"What?" I reply as though I haven't heard the question or am unsure of his meaning. In truth, I know exactly what he means.

"Was it an accident? I broke my leg once and was in a wheelchair for a bit, it sucked. It must be tough."

I beg for the lights to change so this conversation will end. I want to tell him disability is not what he thinks it is. That my life is not what he has been told it must be: tragic or, conversely, inspirational. I want him to know that **my life is rich, full and complex, just like anyone else's.**

The lights change. The little green man signals to walk.

He asks if I want a push. "No, I'm fine. I've got it, mate," I say.

"OK," he replies. "It's important to try and stay positive, hey," and he sprints to the other side. I wish I was quick-witted enough to quote Stella Young and yell after him, "No amount of smiling at a flight of stairs has ever turned it into a ramp!" But he's gone.

Disability is a design problem, not a personal issue of the body or mind. Let me unpack that for you as I wheel my way home.

I get to the other side of the road and the curb cut is steep, really steep. I push hard and make it onto the footpath. Now, for my favourite bit of the journey home: going down the hill towards the tram stop. I feel the soft *tuk, tuk, tuk* as my wheels roll over the joins in the pavement, my fingers running over my smooth wheel rims, expertly steering my wheelchair. I know this metal, this frame; it's like a second skin. My wheelchair and I have lived together, every day, for over seven years, spending each moment touching, moving. My wheelchair forms a big part of how I am seen in the world, how others relate to me, and how I see myself. It is a huge part of how I experience places and spaces, and I know how the power of design can include or exclude people.

I wait at the tram stop for a wheelchair-accessible tram. At peak hour, they arrive every few minutes, but at other times the wait can be 20 or 30 minutes, while inaccessible, old-style trams regularly arrive and depart. An accessible one arrives, and I push onto it as we head towards Flinders Street Station. This tram goes to the top of my street but there is no 'super stop', so I cannot get off there (a super stop has a raised platform that is level with the low-floor trams). We arrive at Flinders Street and the doors open. There is a small drop from the tram to the platform, and there's a gap between them too, big enough that I've got my small front caster wheels stuck in it before. It is not safe for many other people with various disabilities and mobility equipment. It used to be level before the platform was upgraded. This is a violation of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA), making an existing service no longer fully accessible, but challenging it would require individual cases filed by people with disabilities. The process of lodging a complaint is arduous and rarely results in action taken.

Melbourne's tram network is a prime example of how people with disabilities experience discrimination in the built environment. Trams are the quickest and easiest way to get around, but for many people they remain largely inaccessible.

Planning around super stops and accessible trams can add hours to a person's day, because most stops and trams are not accessible for people using mobility devices. While able people navigate this city with ease, taking it for granted they can take the quickest, simplest route, I often have to take two or more trains or buses where others can take a single tram ride to reach the same destination. Sometimes, I watch able people jumping on and off trams and trains and dream of a world where I would be able to take access for granted; where I would be able to get the tram directly to my place of work from home, instead of wheeling to the accessible station in the rain, and then wheeling another 10 minutes at the other end.

Melbourne was voted the world's most liveable city by the Economist Intelligence Unit for seven years in a row, before losing the title to Vienna in 2018. But it begs the question: liveable for whom? Under the EIU assessment, liveability is assessed across five categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. In 2018, Melbourne scored maximum points in the infrastructure category. This demonstrates that true, universal accessibility is not given equal weight to other considerations when cities are being designed, assessed, built. There are many public buildings I cannot access because there is no ramp, or the doorways inside are too narrow. Further, there is often no accessible toilet, which is a basic requirement to make a building useable for someone with a disability. I know where Melbourne's accessible toilets are, the way non-disabled people know the city by its famous landmarks or good restaurants.

The DDA protects the right to access buildings, yet no law requires buildings to be accessible. The Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010, as part of the Building Code of Australia (BCA), set out accessibility standards for new buildings. However, compliance is not mandatory. Organisations can claim that providing access in accordance with the DDA would cause 'unjustifiable hardship'. The main factor the Federal or Magistrates' Court will consider in assessing unjustifiable hardship is financial; would, in the circumstances, providing access cost the person/organisation too much money? They also consider technical difficulties, the intended use of the building and any impact the changes might have on heritage features. The BCA has a similar unjustifiable hardship clause. Combined, these provisions weaken the DDA and the BCA, meaning that access to the built environment is not safeguarded for people with disabilities.

How do we, as a society, balance the tension between wanting to preserve the history imbued in our heritage architecture with a push to provide greater access and universal design principles? Inaccessible buildings hold a certain history for people with disabilities. There was a time, not so long ago, when people with disabilities were locked up in institutions. This exclusion is chiselled into the architecture of buildings we cannot access. Our city holds so much history, but history tends to highlight the dominant narrative (white, able-bodied) and obscure marginalised voices. Now, the vast majority of people with disabilities are no longer in institutions and we ask to be afforded the same rights and access which non-disabled people take for granted.

Disability is not a personal problem, but a socio-political question. A question of who is included and who is excluded.

If we are to create a society that is truly inclusive for everyone, we need to ensure that all people can participate fully. That means being able to access the city – its buildings, public transport, parks and footpaths – with dignity. Will our architecture and urban design continue to perpetuate these power imbalances, or seek to redress them and create a society which is accessible and inclusive for everyone? ⬢

WORDS BY CAT MCGAURAN

The Slow Evolution of School

Mary Featherston

ABOVE: Mary Featherston at home, sitting in her own design, the iconic b150 ‘Obo’ chair (1974), a precursor to the bean bag. Photo by Tom Ross.

ABOVE INSET: Objects of inspiration in Mary Featherston’s home. Photo by Tom Ross.

Over the last three decades, technology has fundamentally changed society – from our sense of time, to how we work, relax and engage with each other. Yet the **school system and its associated physical environments** are very similar to how they were 150 years ago: teachers up the front, students absorbing text-based information at desks in 40-minute blocks. Designer **Mary Featherston** has been researching and developing learning environments for more than 40 years and passionately believes that young people deserve more from the education system. Creating the **Children’s Museum** at the Museum of Victoria in 1985 and leading the way in developing alternative learning spaces in all levels of schools, she is excited that the way we perceive school is finally starting to change.

Every one of us has spent many years at school, and Mary believes this is a key reason the system is slow to evolve. “School is common ground for everyone, because we’ve all experienced it,” she says. “Architects, people in education departments, designers, teachers – everyone. It’s so firmly entrenched in our psyche, its form is almost unconscious: separate classrooms linked by corridors, with some specialist facilities, if you’re lucky, and a bit of a playground. It makes it very easy to replicate, or hard not to replicate.”

Australia inherited a school system that was designed to prepare workers for the industrial revolution, where manual skills, linear cognitive skills and repetition were highly valued. “You could say that the original classroom is a perfect piece of design for its purpose, which was to focus attention on the teacher,” Mary says. “Everything is geared towards reducing distraction. For example, the windowsill is just above sitting eye level, so that kids can’t look outside. And we know that kids get bored, so the classes are limited to around 40 minutes. It’s linear, and it’s a fixed, text-based view of learning.”

It also takes a very passive view of the child/student. “It’s teacher- and adult-controlled,” Mary says. “The kids have very little say in the content or method. Ask a child about their favourite place at school, and they’ll say the playground, because it’s active, and they have some agency.” However, Mary says that over the last 20 years educators are starting to see the divide between the school system and modern life.

A recent study in the Australian Journal of Teacher Education found that, by the time students reached year 9, only 55 percent found school engaging. Mary suggests that the disconnect between the structure and content of school with the outside world may be a major factor. “The world isn’t experienced in separate subjects, and not all kids like to learn using texts and writing,” she says.

“Children are highly capable and curious, and in their early years they spend a lot of time playing, asking questions and doing things together. Then, suddenly, we flick a switch when they start school, and say, ‘OK, now you have to sit down and sit still, because that’s how you’ll learn. And we’ll keep testing and testing you.’”

This idea is supported by a study from the World Economic Forum, which found that, by 2020, the most desired skills in the workforce will be complex problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity. It is difficult to see how these skills are taught and encouraged through a teacher-led, text-focused curriculum that privileges standardised testing.

Mary Featherston’s illustrious design career, including in partnership with husband Grant, had always been based on design for social good. As an extension of her practice, in the early 1970s she turned her attention to designing for children’s learning environments, starting with the community childcare movement. It was there that Mary first approached the question from the perspective of the child, asking ‘What does the child need?’ rather than ‘What do adults need?’ Seeing a lack of applied research into the design needs of children, Mary successfully applied for a federal government grant to research children’s play and learning environments in 1972. In 1976, Grant and Mary travelled to Sweden where they were influenced by the thoughtfulness of the learning spaces, and, soon after, the Reggio Emilia education movement.

In Reggio Emilia, North Italy, Mary found an impressive philosophy that strives to support all types of learners. Developed by pedagogist Loris Malaguzzi post–World War II, the pedagogical approach in Reggio Emilia sees learning as a social experience first, aimed primarily at developing good citizens.
“A democracy requires active, critical thinking, the very opposite of passivity,” Mary says. “They started by observing children and thinking, ‘How do they like to be in the world?’

“What they discovered was the curious, capable child and, as a result, developed long-term enquiry projects which tap into children’s interests. They can go on for weeks, months or even a year. The teachers and young people create curriculum together based on their interests.”

Having worked on such projects in local schools, Mary has seen how excited children get about learning, which she says is truly inspiring and joyful for everyone involved. “It gives kids the time to plumb their ideas in depth, and, in doing so, they realise that learning is boundless,” she says. “It allows kids to express their ideas and understandings in a way that suits them. Not all children like using words. Here, they can paint, model, draw, create animations, play-act, et cetera. When they are learning in a context that’s relevant to them, they’ll really take that learning on.”

Mary believes that one of the key roles of school is to prepare children to become positive members of society, which is why it is so important to get learning environments right. “School is the perfect place for kids to experience things like trust and respect,” she says. “Of course, you can do it in the home, but it’s not the same. At school, you have different groups of people coming together. If learning can happen in groups, where kids can share their skills, backgrounds and interests, you are setting them up to apply those skills beyond school.”

If school is framed as a social experience, a place to learn how to value difference in all forms, then how does its built environment need to change? Mary’s first attempt to tackle this question was at Wooranna Park Primary School in Dandenong, Victoria as part of an action research project together with school leadership. “We started by asking the children what experiences they were having at school, and I looked at ways to divide them into spaces, or settings, that would support those [experiences],” says Mary. “We came up with a dozen spaces: a wet space connected to outside, and a dark studio for working with light and recording. We painted a big white square on the wall so they could project big pictures.” Mary says that none of this cost a lot of money: they took advantage of the attributes of the existing building.

It was important that kids could work quietly and alone, or in groups. “What we ended up with was a heterogeneous space, really an assemblage of spaces: the home base for a group of children and their teachers, a learning community.” The areas were partially enclosed, some with glazed walls. “That way, you keep visual contact, but the noise is reduced. It’s all possible; it just requires planning and thinking through.” With a lot going on at once, the spaces become very busy. However, Mary points out, that is more reflective of real-world situations. “You could say that contemporary office design is like this too,” she says. “Small meeting rooms, large areas, places you can go and eat. Interestingly, restaurants and hotels aren’t just a sea of tables either: you can sit at a bar, at the courtyard, on a couch. And think how the family kitchen and living room has changed. But the majority of schools still have traditional classrooms.” According to Mary, this is truly human-centred design, that can be applied to any learning environment.

“Even as we densify and vertical schools become more common, we have to think carefully about what we do. Once the buildings are constructed, they’ll be there for a hundred years,” she says. “We need to think carefully so that the pedagogy can evolve. We need simple buildings, with strong character, that allow for a more complex interior fit-out with a variety of furnishings: tables of low and writing height, work benches, spaces for finished work and work in progress. Spaces for relaxation, areas for food preparation.” Mary says that architects and designers are more than capable of coming up with excellent solutions, but their focus needs to be on the nature of the experience, how many people will be involved and the services they will need.

“I am confident now, I see this happening,” says Mary. “Victoria needs to build many more schools in the next few years, so it’s in the interest of the government to research, and get it right. I am confident that they will.” ●

CHAPTER START: Wooranna Park Primary School was the first school Mary Featherston worked with to create a learning space that was inspired first and foremost by how children learn. The big learning area must have spaces for quiet learning, as well as activities that are louder, messier and involve large numbers of children. Photo by Dianna Snape.

ABOVE: Wooranna Park. Having worked on many projects, Mary Featherston says fitouts are not complex and do not need to be expensive; rather, they require careful consideration of the activities that will take place in the space. Photo by Dianna Snape.

WORDS BY ROBERT SNELLING

Cascoland Kolenkit

Global Issues, Local Contexts

Surrounding the outskirts of **Amsterdam** sits the A10 ring motorway. Intended as a piece of infrastructure to connect a growing capital, it equally symbolises a divisive **physical barrier between two different cities.** To the circle's inside lies the type of Amsterdam found on tourist brochures; to the outside lies the rest.

LEFT: Kolenkit Skate Rink (2012 – 2013). Photo courtesy of Cascoland.

RIGHT: Mobile Chicken Coop (December 2010 – April 2014). The four coops, housing 12 chickens, turned a vacant park into a green meeting place for the neighbourhood. Photo by Mark Weemen.

PREVIOUS: Mobile Chicken Coop. The residents wanted chickens, the municipality demanded a maze of legislation. Solution: mobile trailers, which could be placed in any location, without a permit. Photo by Mark Weemen.

ABOVE: StayOver House (February 2011 – ongoing). The neighbourhood guesthouse managed by local residents is still going after eight years! Photo by Mark Weemen.

BELOW: Gascoland BreadDigester (March 2014 – March 2016). To tackle excess waste bread, BreadDigester turned old bread into bio-gas, which fuelled the neighbourhood bread oven, producing fresh bread. Photos by Oski Collado.

The Kolenkit neighbourhood belongs to the latter. After the fallout of the 2008 recession, it was characterised by high levels of poverty, unemployment rates above 10 percent and significant numbers of high-school drop-outs. So much so, the Dutch Minister of Housing declared Kolenkit to be "the most problematic neighbourhood" in the Netherlands.

To improve on the neighbourhood's title, the municipality involved the international art, architecture, research and design group Cascoland. Led by community artists Fiona de Bell and Roel Schoenmakers, Cascoland was brought in to introduce various small, site-responsive ground-up movements.

"It was a crisis situation," Roel recalls, "but also one open for opportunity." The municipality had big challenges to address, but little funds following the recession. Duly, Cascoland was given accommodation, a small budget, and eight months.

The work conducted by Cascoland, however, is not resource-intensive. Rather, the group executes precise-yet-effective design interventions that rely on community engagement. Casco is Dutch for 'frame': as the name suggests, they provide an empty frame for the community to fill in.

Upon arriving in 2011, every Thursday Cascoland re-purposed a room in their supplied accommodation for group use. The gatherings were designed to help meet with the community, with uses varying from a restaurant to an indoor football court. However, Cascoland soon observed consistent fatigue among the children. Much of this was due to the community's predominantly Moroccan and Turkish migrant background: when family guests visited, the child's bedroom was offered to guests, designating the child to the couch. "In migrant or migrating communities, hospitality may be the highest good," Roel clarifies. This cultural norm negatively impacted the children's sleep quality, affecting the ability to attain good grades, and therefore employment in the long term. To address the challenge, the Cascoland team offered to re-purpose one of their rooms into a communal guesthouse, ensuring a good sleep for all. With the success of such simple yet powerful interventions, Cascoland's tenure has been continuously extended – and they are still operating today.

Over eight years, Cascoland has implemented many small design interventions at Kolenkit. For one, Cascoland observed yesterday's bread being strewn onto the streets. Due to the religious significance of bread for traditional Muslim residents, old bread cannot be thrown away. However, to give the bread new life, Cascoland developed the Gascoland BreadDigester, whereby bread is collected and processed into bio-gas to bake new bread, creating a self-sustaining system. Mobile Chicken Coop elegantly addresses competing demands: residents expressing interest for chicken coops in an area where legislation prohibits this. The coops are designed as 'mobile trailers', manoeuvring around local laws and satisfying both parties.

The success of each of Cascoland's proposals lies in a consistent design process applied to new contexts: Roel describes it as a 'guerrilla' approach. It is an open-ended method without a prescribed outcome, with short research interventions to draw feedback from their users, hence establishing an immediate and nimble feedback loop.

One of Cascoland's more recent experiments is Kas-coland, a glasshouse resting on the pavement, nestled underneath the A10 ring road. The structure's significance lies in its programmatic variability: it has been used as a community radio station, a repair workshop and a musical performance space. The building is owned by the community, with seats, tables and various tools housed inside.

Like everything in Kolenkit, Kas-coland is an experiment seeking to answer a particular problem, in this case looking at how global trends play out in local contexts. In 2015, the economic crisis was declared 'over' and the perception of what a city's function is shifted. Across Amsterdam, developers started building, and public spaces started to disappear. Kolenkit was starting to acutely face the challenges of redevelopment and the risk that local communities would be broken up and displaced.

To mitigate this, Cascoland presented the idea of the community-owned glasshouse to developers, to install within their projects as a place to gel old and new communities. Developers were initially sceptical. Yet with the success of the project in bringing the community together, the conversation has shifted: developers are now promising to implement such glasshouses into future projects.

In our conversation, the Cascoland founders noted that creative industries are often blamed for gentrifying processes, by creating desirable places before developers move in and sell out. Yet it is precisely through their art that Cascoland is challenging that notion. They have been working closely with developers in Kolenkit to ensure existing residents gain first preference for new housing developments. Whereas typically redevelopments displace 70 percent of the existing residents, Cascoland has helped flip the numbers: now only 25 percent leave the neighbourhood.

ABOVE: Kas-coland (March 2017 – ongoing). Classroom, library of things, restaurant, repair cafe, and a transparent meeting place for the neighbourhood – the multifunctional glasshouse was an immediate hit. Photos by Oski Collado.

LEFT: Neighbourhood chickens. Photo by Mark Weemen.

BELOW: Kolenkit Skate Rink (February 2012 – February 2013) brought winter wonder to Jan van Schaffelaar Park, with free rental of ice skates. Photo by Iris Vetter.

Elsewhere in Amsterdam, a different suburb, Van Deyssel, now carries the dubious title of the city's worst neighbourhood and is soon to be renovated. Cascoland have been called in as artists-in-residence for the coming years, invited by the Rochdale housing corporation that works across both suburbs. Just as with Kolenkit, their focus is to improve the community's quality of life, yet retain the existing social connections. This time, however, they hope to undertake the work more quickly.

In our conversation, Cascoland expressed hope that a new type of city will evolve in response to Amsterdam's rapid changes. Recent political events already indicate a shift. In Amsterdam's 2018 municipal elections, the GreenLeft party – not long ago a sideline party – won the most seats, strongly campaigning for equitable cities. There is hope and momentum that initiatives like Cascoland will continue to prompt policymakers to consider what their future cities can look like.

Cascoland's successes have come through the durability and versatility of their design approach that can be applied to each context. Their designs are humble, nimble projects that respond to global trends playing out in local contexts. Above all, Cascoland addresses global urban issues but at the local scale, without a need for exhaustive resources. Creativity springs from limited supplies, thereby embodying a pertinent logic for a contemporary context: never waste a good crisis. ⬢

LEFT: Temporary Public Gardens (June 2011 – April 2012), completely managed by local residents. Photo by Martin Effert.

LEFT INSET: BuurtMoesBinnenTuin (April 2012 – ongoing). The great popularity of temporary mobile gardens (above) led to the residents petitioning the housing association for a permanent vegetable garden. Success! Photo by Paul Fennis.

WORDS BY EMMA MCRAE

Social Change, Small and Large

Yandell Walton

Melbourne projection artist **Yandell Walton's** ephemeral installations probe the impermanence at the very heart of existence. Always responsive to the architectures they inhabit, her works invite viewers into speculative scenarios that allow us to see and experience things we otherwise could not. In a series of new works presented as part of the **Art+Climate=Change 2019** festival, Yandell explores the impact of human society on the ecological systems of the planet. Occupying **The SUBSTATION** galleries, the exhibition will present visions of a future world filled with debris, water, rubbish, cyborg remains and digital trees – a speculative world, devoid of human life, but created by humans if we fail to effectively address the crisis of climate change.

PREVIOUS: *Uprise* (2019), 4-channel immersive projection with sound.

RIGHT: Yandell Walton. Photo by Artdocumentation.com.au

When I visit Yandell at her Collingwood studio, she has just returned from walking her two whippets, Sanchez and Desi, through the streets of Collingwood and Abbotsford, down to Dight Falls and along Merri Creek. On these walks, Yandell often picks up pieces of rubbish she finds lying in the streets and gutters. "It's a wind tunnel down here and the rubbish gets pushed down and clogs up the gutters. Yarra City Council collects the rubbish and sweeps the streets, but there's still so much." Representative of our over-consumptive 21st-century lifestyles, this excess of waste has inspired one of the new works Yandell is developing for her solo exhibition at The SUBSTATION.

Titled *Shifting Surrounds*, the exhibition is a series of six new site-specific works that transform the gallery, throwing visitors into a time warp. The first thing visitors encounter is *The Deadline*, a red digital clock sitting in a pool of black water and displaying what Yandell says is "a hypothetical date in the future, when the world is uninhabitable due to climate change". This date is taken from the report released by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2018, which tells us that "at current levels of greenhouse gas emissions, we could pass the 1.5°C marker as early as 2030, and no later than mid-century".

"Those figures were alarming to me and this red digital countdown clock really represents that alarm."

For most people, a visual countdown stirs a rising sense of discomfort, anxiety and possibly panic. "It's alarming because we all know this is happening, but we're not really doing anything about it. And there is an end date, especially if we keep going the way we are." Panic is increasingly becoming the necessary response to climate change, as 16-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg told world leaders at the World Economic Forum in January: "I don't want you to be hopeful," she said. "I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act."

Yandell has been driven by the need to increase awareness of our impact on the planet since she visited a landfill site in 2010. "I was commissioned to make a work in Albury, so I went up there and visited the local tip. I'd never been to a landfill before, especially on foot, and it was incredible. The mass was overwhelming. I was blown away by it and created a work titled *Landfill* for that commission." This was followed by *Human Effect*, an interactive public artwork. "[It is] very accessible and quite beautiful, but also very confronting; because as you approach the plant life, it dies in front of you." Then, in 2016, she created *1500 per second* during a residency with Digital Graffiti in Alys Beach, Florida, a digital projection work referencing the number of plastic bottles used in the United States.

Yandell has always been drawn to the temporal nature of projection – the way it merges the actual with the virtual to create immersive environments.

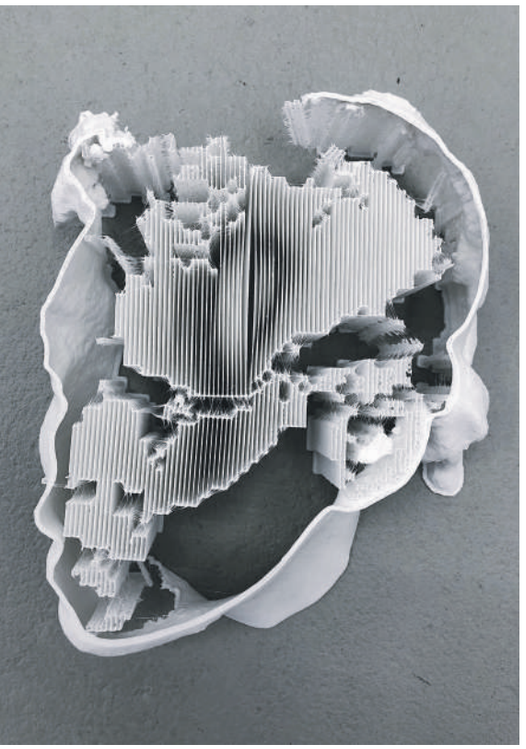
"I'm very interested in the tension between the ephemerality of projection and the solidity of the architectural form. Most of my work is site-responsive because, with projection, the space or object you're projecting onto merges with the moving image and becomes part of the artwork."

It seems fitting, then, that *Shifting Surrounds* is taking place in one of Melbourne's oldest substations. Built in 1915 by Victorian Railways, Newport Substation provided electricity to the new electric suburban trains in the early 20th century and is a symbol of Australia's optimistic embrace of new technologies at that time.

Yandell's own use of emerging technologies – scanners, drones, 3D printers and digital animation, including the failed 3D prints and incomplete scans – echoes our continuing obsession with gadgets, as well as the failure of advanced technology to solve all our problems. The digital enables us to speculate on alternative futures and try things out.

ABOVE: *Connecting Systems* (2019), 10-channel video installation with sound.

RIGHT: *Phasmid residency* (2018) (studio still).

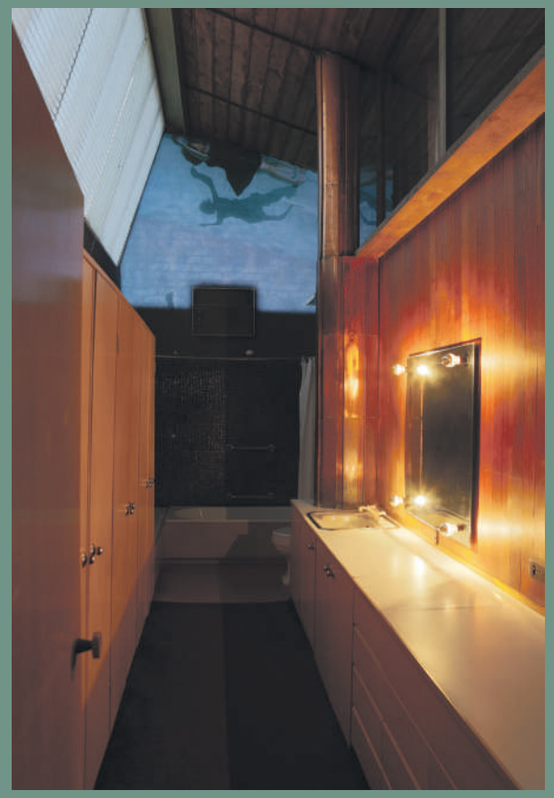


LEFT: 3D test print for *Traces* (2019).

ABOVE: *Human Effect* (2012–2017), Melbourne Arts Festival (2012), public projection. Photo by Artdocumentation.com.au

ABOVE: *Human Effect* (2012–2017), Melbourne Arts Festival (2012), public projection. Photo by Artdocumentation.com.au

RIGHT: *Submerged* (2017), projection installation, Robin Boyd House in Walsh Street Melbourne. Photo by Artdocumentation.com.au



But, Yandell says, "it also creates a disconnect between nature and humanity. This body of work investigates how we are disconnecting from nature more and more: not thinking about the bigger picture, not thinking about the world." While exploring how advances in technology have allowed us to do so much, Yandell also contemplates: what is the dark side?

"I have always made work about the impermanent nature of our existence and in this project the impermanence is definitely darker. It's about a potential loss of our surroundings, of other animals, of life as we know it."

These tensions – between the natural and human-made, between fragility and power – resonate in the exhibition, with works including *Connecting Systems*, a forest of digital trees as a high-definition yet diminished version of a nature that might soon not exist; *Uprise*, a digital tsunami that floods across the walls and down the stairs; *Traces*, an industrial wasteland littered with the remains of post-human bodies; *Internal Current*, a river of refuse flowing down a drain. And, finally, *Oblivion*, a projection of NASA footage showing the now-familiar yet always wondrous sight of our planet floating in space, partially obscured by a piece of junk that will orbit Earth long after the clock reaches the deadline. In this context, the seeming insignificance of one Tetra Pak thrown in the bin (or the gutter) is transformed into a slightly comical, yet profoundly disturbing spectre of a wasted future, recalling collective visions of human vulnerability from films such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* or *Gravity*. But, in Yandell's images, humans are absent and all that remains is the rubbish. "We have to question," she says, "how effective our recycling methods are when 79 percent of our plastic waste is accumulating either in the world's landfills or as litter in the natural environment, and contributing to ocean garbage patches, like the one in the Pacific Ocean, which is estimated to be 1.6 million square kilometres or three times the size of France."

In *Shifting Surrounds*, Yandell paints a dark picture of our possible future world, in the hope that immersion within these speculative scenarios can have a trigger effect that results in action. "Art is just a catalyst to encourage people to think about these ideas. It's part of a discussion." At the end of the day, Yandell looks to social rather than political action, as the arena of change. "If you're looking at the statistics and what has actually happened in the last 50 to 100 years, it's very hard to feel hopeful. But social action is the only thing that can create change – because small change is going to end up being large if we're all focused on it." ⬢

WORDS BY JANA PERKOVIĆ
PHOTOS BY TOM ROSS

Type Street

Six-pack Living

The **six-pack** is the unsung hero of Australia's vernacular architecture. The humble walk-up apartment building, with that distinctive boxy, **Lego look** in red or cream brick, first started springing up in the 1930s around Australian suburbs – wealthy, poor and middling alike. The construction of six-packs reached its crescendo in the postwar period, when thousands of owners replaced the footprint of a detached house on a single lot with a long and thin two- or three-storey apartment building, always sans elevator. It is not quite clear where the name comes from: the six-window facade to the street, the footprint of six flats per level, or the uniform look of **tightly packed flats of monotonous design**; but the name, unreferenced, persists both in informal conversations and theory books.

RIGHT: Green wall and warm timber for a jungle bathroom.

CHAPTER START: The unremarkable 44 Type St is one of the thousands of ‘six-pack’ apartment buildings built in the Australian suburbs in the 1960s and the 1970s.

ABOVE & BELOW: Jack Chen has transformed his one-bedroom 1970s flat into a beautiful open-plan den.

The no-fuss design was a by-product of planning regulations that didn’t differentiate between single- and multi-family dwellings, regulating apartment buildings only by site coverage, setback and height.

The typology was a huge money-maker: it could fit eight to twelve families where before there was one, even if the apartments themselves were the epitome of modest. So many were built so quickly in St Kilda that they increased the population of the suburb by 10,000 in one decade.

“Walk-ups are the most common apartment format in Australian cities and towns,” writes Charles Pickett, curator at Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. Despite this, they have rarely been appreciated. Architectural historian Miles Lewis called them “the worst disaster ever” to blight Melbourne’s residential landscape, dismissing the whole period of the 1960s in architecture as “the reign of the six-pack”. Writing in 1979, Harry Seidler noted: “The total effect of this demolition of individual houses for replacement on the same site by now quite standard three-storey flats is truly horrifying. The results are barrack-type buildings, their long dimensions filling the depth of the narrow allotment. What used to be yards at the back and on the sides... are denuded of vegetation and paved for cars.”

The six-pack flats, however, have remained an affordable and popular entry point into the property market – particularly with the introduction of strata title laws in the 1960s. Although larger apartment buildings, equipped with elevators, have become more common in recent years, the walk-up format, says Charles, “has proved a surprisingly tenacious survivor”. As Melbourne has seen a boom in apartment construction in the past decade – many of them of extremely low design standard – the humble six-pack has also been increasingly appreciated for its solid build (usually double brick and concrete) and good-sized apartments.

“Over the years, I’ve come to appreciate their dorky, humble charm,” says Assemble director Quino Holland, whose architecture practice Fieldwork recently completed a project designed in direct homage to the six-pack. “Their funny proportions, daggy brick colours, external stairs, funny little decorative flourishes and clunky-but-honest construction. Their sweep through the inner suburbs in the 1970s left a significant mark on the urban landscape. I think it is time to take a fresh look at the six-pack, and see what we can learn from their 80-year history.”

Rare is the Melburnian who never lived in a six-pack building, be it for a solitary PhD experience, as a stopgap between more luxurious living situations, or as their first purchased property. Jack Chen’s experience is a common one: when the architect first moved to Melbourne from Sydney four years ago, renting a flat in an unassuming six-pack building in Richmond was an easy way to land. A year later, another apartment in the building came up for sale. “I already knew what to expect, the flaws and the advantages,” he says. “It was an easy decision.”

Jack has since renovated the apartment to maximise the qualities of the 33m² floorplan, turning what used to be a typical 1970s flat into a veritable jewel box. The sensitive redesign brings the warm texture of wood into the services area of the apartment, and an interplay of multiple functions to the living spaces. “Two thirds of the renovation budget went to one third of the space,” he says. “It created a sort of cabin feel.”

In Type Street apartment, surfaces fold, bend, slide out and disappear seamlessly. An extra timber partition slides out to become a dining nook, with foldable stools stored in the wall cabinet. An office corner can be pulled out in minutes. The TV and appliances are stored out of sight, and the hallway coat and shoe rack doubles as a wine rack. The glass wall between the galley kitchen and the bathroom can change transparency at the touch of a remote, providing privacy when needed, borrowed northern light at other times.

“It’s mostly off-the-shelf technology and appliances,” Jack tells me. A first-time home owner, Jack had a limited budget, but plenty of design know-how. Much of the furniture, lights and appliances are store-bought: Bunnings features heavily in the fittings, as does Ikea.

The carpet flooring is humble office floor material, synthetic and easy to clean. “It comes in tiles, so it’s easy to rip out and replace. Sections of the flooring were damaged during the renovation – I just took the damaged part out and bought a new one.” The only real splurge is the sofa and the modular armchair, which were shipped from Sweden.

Replacing the wall between the kitchen and the bathroom with glass was the only structural change to the apartment, keeping the renovation budget small, and the original floorplan intact. And yet, the transformation is profound. Inside, the space resembles the beautiful, multi-purpose architecture of FujiwaraMuro’s skinny houses in Japan, the apartments of Taiwan’s A Little Design, or Gary Chang’s celebrated 32m² ‘Domestic Transformer’ apartment in Hong Kong. Yet, step outside, and we are on that familiar external walkway of a 1970s six-pack, with views of the Melbourne Central Business District just visible to the west.

Humble six-pack apartments are still rarely accorded the same careful design attention that one sees in cities where space is at a premium. (Indeed, properties below 50m² are still seen as a high-risk

investment. Only one bank would offer a mortgage to Jack.) Jack's is the only fully renovated apartment in the building, inhabited by a mix of rotating renters and owners, as well as social housing residents.

The modest shared laundries on each floor and the ample, unnecessary car parking on the ground floor point to an absence of aesthetic vision for the building. Built quickly and speculatively, six-pack buildings were rarely designed to maximise shared spaces, and this building is no exception. For a diverse but fledging community of long-term and short-term residents, there are very few spaces to meet. "We meet on the staircase," Jack says, "The couple next door sit outside and watch the sunset. It's a wonderful view of the city."

But the opportunities are there. With only 12 apartments, a six-pack is a boutique-sized development. The common staircases naturally form a safe public–private space, with many occasions to meet the neighbours. In a future 'version 2.0' of the apartment, Jack would love to create a skylight to the shower: "That kitsch idea of showering under the stars," he says, self-deprecatingly. Potentially, he wonders if strata titling makes it possible to buy the roof and create a rooftop terrace or garden that could be used by the residents.

As the city continues to densify, apartment living becomes more normalised, and space continues to be at a premium, six-packs offer ready-made resident communities of a very manageable size. In time, Jack has a vision of a spectacular building coming to life: "We could put in vertical planters, remove all this excessive, unused parking – there is so much potential to build a community." ⬢

BELOW: The office comes out of the wall, when needed.

RIGHT: One man and his castle.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY GREGORY LORENZUTTI

Sustainability, environmental affairs and design innovations for urban living, now and future-forward

The Outer and Inner Landscapes

ENVIRONMENT

For the last four years, photographer and dancer Gregory Lorenzutti has been living in Fawkner, a northern suburb of Melbourne that was cattle country right until the 1940s. In the postwar area, the suburb was subdivided for housing for returning servicemen, but most of the houses in the area were built in the period 1950-1970, as detached brick homes for Ford factory workers. After a heartbreak, Greg moved into one of the original Ford houses with a garden, and has given it a new life.

PREVIOUS & ABOVE: Gregory Lorenzutti and his mum Paulina in Greg's garden.

It was a hot summer's day in 2014. I arrived on my bike to an empty house in Melbourne's northern suburb of Fawkner. It belonged to a friend of mine, but it was abandoned and lifeless, and its huge backyard desolate and overrun by weeds. I had just broken up with a long-term partner, having only moved to Australia from Brazil 24 months prior. I knew I needed space to allow for change. Rental opportunities in my price range were limited, so I took up my friend's offer to move in. And so began my journey with a house and backyard that mirrored exactly how I was feeling inside: bereft and in need of renewal.

Decluttering and cleaning the land was the starting point. As I dug the soil and removed tough weeds, a mixture of sweat and tears streaming down my face, I started experiencing lightness and hope. Each day, I had to face this blank canvas, not knowing much about gardening, but following my intuition and recalling childhood memories of my grandmother and mother working in their productive gardens. It was such an experience to contemplate an 'empty' backyard, completely dormant and full of potential, just waiting for the right time to burst into life.

This was also an opportunity to deepen friendships. I invited new people in my life to work the soil, build garden beds and compost bins with me; we'd talk over hard work and enjoy a glass of wine at the end of the day. I began to feel a little more open, a little clearer in my head and heart.

I nurtured and fed the concrete-like soil, adding a lot of organic matter to it, creating layers of mulch, manure and compost. I started my journey into the gripping world of composting, doing a lot of 'chop and drop' with anything organic I could find.

After attending a course at CERES in East Brunswick, I got to know an inspiring community of people changing the way we garden. My approach to gardening changed significantly. Learning and applying techniques from permaculture, Hugelkultur and regenerative agriculture, I developed a personal system. I felt a sort of calling; it all made so much sense.

It took some time, but the soil started to change. It was fascinating to watch as it slowly loosened and deepened in colour and texture. I could see the organic matter building, the network of mycelium expanding its filaments, bacteria and nematodes busy doing their important work. Eventually, the soil food web was booming and the seeds were ready to meet the earth. As soon as temperature and moisture levels were right, nature set to work at a frantic pace, and magic happened. I was amazed to discover seedlings growing overnight, ornamentals invigorated by the day. It was a full display of nature's capacity to regenerate.

I understood then that soil is a living community.

Over time, I observed the return of insects, birds, animals, small invertebrates and life in the soil. Bees and native wasps were dancing on top of flowers, pollinating what later would turn into food. While the garden was suddenly alive with new sounds, sights and movement, I found myself starting to welcome new experiences and feelings in my personal life as well.

I continued working the soil, sowing seeds and planting seedlings in the fresh new veggie patches. It became a profound exchange between myself and the ecosystem I had been nurturing for so long. Our emptiness and sadness gave space to excitement and fulfilment. It was the most intimate relationship with nature I had ever experienced, and for the first time I understood fully nature's healing capacity. While getting to know the plants and how they grew, I came to know myself better and see how I was growing. Then there was the unparalleled joy of walking inside the house carrying a basketful of goods that would become my dinner. Nothing like it!

For the past four years, I have called this garden home and seen so many changes in the landscape. Many crops have grown and trees have reached new heights, while grasses come and go, following the seasons. A new great love has come into my life, too. My partner and I harvest close to 80 percent of our fresh food from our backyard, eating more and more according to the seasons. We feel our health improving as we learn more about our relationship with the land, its natural rhythms, and the art of preparing homegrown food.

Today, I see the garden as an extension of who I am, with a deep understanding of our interdependence with nature and the land. Every plant's desire to thrive and experience life resonates in each step I take in my morning walks around the garden.

The garden has provided me not only with food and discovery, but with love and new friends. We often invite people around, sit out on the lawn surrounded by flowers and vegetables, and share a laugh together. People even want to get married here! It's astonishing to think how much transformation has taken place since I first arrived in this house. My senses could have never predicted how much new, abundant and sustaining life could grow here. I have learnt so much about the potential of the inner and outer landscapes to restore themselves. And I am so excited to see what the next four years will bring. ●

Join our next community in Kensington

Around the corner from our project at 393 Macaulay Rd, the next Assemble project is under way.

15 Thompson St, Kensington will be more than just a building. Our vision is for a truly diverse, forward-thinking and socially connected neighbourhood. A hub for residents and the wider Kensington community.

To find out more please register your interest via assemblecommunities.com

Help shape 15 Thompson Street

Whether you're a Kensington local or interested in becoming a resident of 15 Thompson Street, we'd love to hear your thoughts to help shape the vision for the project.

What do you love about Kensington? What functions, retail or public spaces are missing or would you like to see more of? How can we create a neighbourhood that's a great place to live and makes a positive contribution to the area?

Take the survey via bit.ly/thompsonst

ASSEMBLE

assemblecommunities.com

@assemble.communities @assemblecommunities

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Tom Ross grew up on Victoria's surf coast, always carrying a camera, but never considering it a career. He started out studying marine biology, but a seven-month road trip around Australia caused him to reconsider his path. Graduating from photography at VCA, with a stint at Massachusetts College of Art, Tom has since begun a full-time commercial career in photography, specialising in architecture and editorial work.

Tina Berardi is a New York-based illustrator, photographer and technology enthusiast, with a BFA in Illustration from the School of Visual Arts. When she's not illustrating *Star Wars* for Lucasfilm, she can be found traipsing around Italy, photographing Florence, her spiritual home.

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Kat Chadwick is a Melbourne-based illustrator who loves hand-drawn lines, especially inky ones! With a background in both fine arts and graphic design, illustration combines her favourite aspects of these two disciplines: image-making and the creative problem-solving required by a client brief.

Ennis Ćehić is a writer and creative from Melbourne. His writing focuses on themes of creativity, place, existentialism and displacement. In 2018, Ennis became a recipient of Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter Writing Award and is currently writing his debut short story collection, 'SADVERTISING', under the mentorship of author Nam Le.

Gregory Lorenzutti is a Brazilian-Australian artist working between the spaces of photography and dance. He is interested in the relationship between movement, photography, cultural identities, gender and the history of the body, developing projects in dialogue with other artistic fields, especially performance, blurring the borders of style and artform.

Emma McRae is a writer and curator whose work explores contemporary living through the convergence of nature, technology, humanity and creativity.

Originally from the city of Bristol, **Jessica Meyrick** graduated from Falmouth University with a first-class degree in illustration in 2016. Jess's minimalist watercolour work, with the use of bold colours and intricate details, follows themes of mental wellbeing; diversity and mindfulness. Jessica currently works and lives in Sydney, Australia.

Danielle Mileo is an Amsterdam-based artist and exhibition designer with a passion for the presentation and preservation of art and artefacts. Trained in both sculpture and architecture, she is committed to using architectural design as a means through which to communicate the cultural, historic and social importance of art objects, ideas and artefacts. In her spare time, she practises the delicate Japanese art of kintsugi.

Tjaša Kalkan holds a Masters in photography from ADU Film and Theatre University in Zagreb. She has exhibited at seven solo and over 20 group exhibitions, and worked as a set photographer on several international films, as well as frequently collaborating on theatre, dance and music projects.

Alexis Kalagas is an urban strategist and writer. Previously a foreign policy advisor, and editor of a Geneva-based media start-up, he spent four years at the interdisciplinary design practice Urban-Think Tank, working on housing and inclusive urban development projects in Europe, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa. In 2018, he was awarded a Richard Rogers Fellowship by the Harvard GSD.

Stanislava Pinchuk (Miso) is a Ukrainian artist working with data, mapping the changing topographies of war and conflict zones. She has just topped the Forbes 30 Under 30 List, as well as being selected to represent the month of December in the Truck Sluts Magazine calendar.

Robert Snelling is a Melbourne-based Master of Architectural Engineering student, working at the intersection of sustainability, community and technology. He is a sub-editor for *Failed Architecture* and a breakfast radio presenter for 3CR. When not writing and exploring our cities, Rob indulges in some rejuvenation in nature, accompanied by a yoga mat, a curious mind and a nice warm cup of coffee.

Elliet Spring is an architect and urban designer with a passion for gardens and horticulture. She spent much of her twenties and early thirties living and studying in New York and Norway before returning home to Melbourne. She is particularly interested in how we can live better together in an urban context.

Rest assured, **Manuel Zabel** isn't stuck in infancy (though his capacities as editor, sound guy or 'manager' don't always fully live up to this claim). Currently managed to shipwreck in Berlin (and still in tune), he keeps dipping into all sorts of stuff, some of which may yield a few really nice things in the long run. Rumour has it, hope dies last!

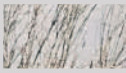
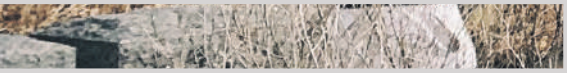
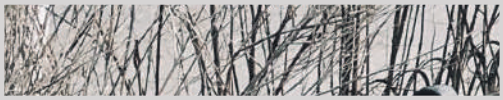


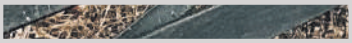






TRANSITIONS

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