

## Abstracts

### FRIDAY MORNING

**10:15 Gabriel Diaz Montemayor** Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture, School of Architecture at the University of Texas Austin *Rearguard: The Emergent Urban Design of (Mexican) Urban Peripheries*

The XXI century marked the arrival of a large scale, low income, and subsidized housing program in Mexico. Millions of homes were built. These were grouped into subdivisions that occupied, diluted, and expanded -formerly agricultural- urban peripheries with low real state value. The provision of the minimum necessary infrastructure and land uses did not keep up with the construction of housing. It became clear, very rapidly, that these new urban territories were destined to be incomplete and inefficient urban environments. Then came the violence and crime accelerated since 2006, and those living in isolated, territorialized by mafias, quasi-communities either left, abandoning millions of dwellings, or persisted. In year 2012, the federal government announced a new housing policy which will try to shift development from centrifugal to centripetal, pushing itself farther away all those now left behind. Those who stayed have started to adapt their environment in ways that are not acknowledged by those who create public policy and administer urban development. This paper demonstrates by a series of mapping, photography, and diagrammatic exercises how these resilient practices point at bottom-up, socially determined, retrofit of these peripheries. There is one particular aspect explored, and it is the great potential found in the relationship between landscape, or large vacant lands which dominate these territories, and urban connectivity/accessibility. Speculative landscapes have and can be integrated in temporary/ephemeral ways as the city as planned, given decreasing demographic and economic growth rates, will not happen.

The Mexican suburbs provide with emergent solutions which would probably be culturally unacceptable in more developed countries. However, with inequality rising worldwide, the informal, improvised, recycled, approach to a collective construction of urbanism is nowadays as critical globally as it is for small groups of individuals living in marooned communities that find ways to improve their quality of life.

**10:45 Joshua Nason** Assistant Professor of Architecture, School of Architecture, University of Texas Arlington  
*Anomalic Urbanism*

"The city is an enigma." A professor once explained, as if to speak of "the city" not as an actual place, but an idea of place. So simply describing the notion of place as existential, inexplicable, experiential, and most certainly variable due to personal understanding, this description – simultaneously inadequate and encompassing – sparked an insatiable inquisition of urban definition. Not in an attempt to define what the ideal city is or should be, but instead what a personal relationship with a city could precipitate as an individual reading of the place. And while experts the world-over, throughout history, have labeled, assorted, and catalogued cities into compartments, cities (the world-over, throughout history) continue to evade absolute definition and classification; particularly as they evolve and complexify in the face of increasing urban populations and at the hands of frenetic technological advances – always equating to more than the sum of their respective parts. However, no matter how evasive urban environments become, they remain readable in very tacit ways through more discrete means of analysis. At moments when data fails to encapsulate them and master plans lack the robustness to wholly choreograph their workings, cities reveal themselves to individual citizens through seeming whispers of personalized experience. It is through these intimate, haptic reciprocities that the city reveals itself to those intent enough to listen.

The trick then, to truly understanding cities, is to learn to 'listen' to them as flawed, idiosyncratic, synthetic, and vacillating associations that refuse to be pinned down through generalizations or measured against unattainable prototypes. Understanding place-ness as evidence of locational identity, one can begin to accept the inseparability of colliding and inflecting contextual layers as manifestations of unique urban ecologies. Such ecologies – comprised of nature, topography, climate, architecture, infrastructure, politics, boundaries, economies, cultures, and innumerable other influences and components (all of which are continuously changing) – become home to environments and events singular to their respective constraints, giving stage to particular urban anomalies that build the character and reveal the qualities of that place. In thus lies the predicament of how to gain insight into such multivalent and volatile relationships. Through mapping the misunderstood, colliding social strata of a place, one can begin to draw out (literally) from the context these anomalic moments that identify place-ness while not hindering an malleable understanding of the place's innate adaptive tendencies.

This paper and presentation will not only discuss the interrelationship of urban ecologies, anomalies, and city-identity – it will visually explore methods of mapping such interdependence in order to introduce a more flexible form of urban analysis.

**11:15 Kees Lokman** Assistant Professor, Landscape Architecture, SALA, University of British Columbia  
*Cyborg Landscapes: On Infrastructures, Emergence and Resilience*

As suggested by Antoine Picon (2014) "science and technology now surround and support nature instead of the reverse."1 Infrastructure has become the backbone of contemporary society, linking the human body to expansive technological networks. Within this context, the urban can be understood as a process of socio-ecological change in which infrastructures act as conduits whose "origin, movement, and position [are] articulated through complex political, social, economic, and cultural relations."2

Matthew Gandy and others have used the term cyborg to conceptualize the hybridized social-ecological landscapes that are produced as a result of urban infrastructures (see Haraway, 1991, Swyngedouw, 1996; Meyer, 1997; Picon, 2005; Gandy, 2005). This paper continues this line of inquiry and aims to explore the relationship between the notion of cyborgs on the one hand, and concepts of emergence and resilience on the other. As an interface between nature and technology, cyborgs can be seen as mechanism for controlling, delaying, redistributing, or propelling processes of emergence. The idea of emergence thus becomes fundamentally linked to cyborgs and the complex socio-metabolic interactions that have shaped our environment in diverse, historically dependent ways.

After tracing a historical trajectory of the cyborg concept and its relations to contemporary understandings of emergence—including ideas of disturbance, uncertainty, self-organization and resilience—I will focus on the current need to re-envision urban infrastructures. On the

one hand, we have potential catastrophic environmental and socio-economic consequences of continued underinvestment in physical infrastructures in developed nations, and at the same time we see the rapid expansion of infrastructural networks in emerging economic powers. Here, the concept of cyborgs as hybridized social-ecological infrastructures that “do not simply adapt to their environment; they also affect that environment in various ways by affecting change in it,”<sup>3</sup> have the potential to produce new social and physical milieus with distinct qualities.

As such, the final part of my paper will discuss a number of recent examples of how cyborgs are being deployed in architectural design proposals. These projects illustrate the capacity of infrastructures to be networked, and act simultaneously on local scales as well as to extend their reach over larger territories. Taken together, the cyborg is used as an interpretive analytical framework as well as a concrete and imaginary tool to open up new ways of thinking about infrastructure, emergence and complex non-linear interactions that shape our environment.

1 Antoine Picon (2014), “Nature, Infrastructure and Cities,” in *The Return of Nature: Sustaining Architecture in the Face of Sustainability*

2 Erik Swyngedouw (2006). “Circulations and metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) cities,” *Science as Culture*, 15:2, 105-121

3 Ibid.

## FRIDAY AFTERNOON

**15:00 John Kerner/Justin Wang** Intern Architect at Substance Architecture Interiors Design, Des Moines, Iowa

### ***Chamber Memoriam an Evolution of a Seed Drying Bin***

“Topographical inscriptions give evidence of previous enactments, but they also indicate those that are still occurring and may unfold in the future.” (Leatherbarrow, 2004, pg. 13)

Chamber Memoriam is a reoccupation of an empty building set within Iowa’s industrial landscape. This installation and memorial focuses on the act of making and curating temporary assemblies within a dormant and forgotten space. Our study intends to provide an opportunity to make full-scale inquiries that move beyond representation and into construction of an aesthetic phenomena. The inquiry is set in a derelict seed-drying chamber south of Ames, Iowa, on the Black’s Heritage Farm. Conceptual explorations invoked dialectic continuities between the past and present, known and unknown, remembered and forgotten.

“The impact of farming development has been even more apparent whereby vacant farm sites along the various roads are a common scene.” (Goché, Evolution of the Iowan Landscape, pg. 1)

The defunct nature of the chamber brought into question changes that have taken place in the agricultural industry of Iowa. Larger populations and higher demand for food has made it impossible for family-sized operations to continue, resulting in leftover spaces like the seed-drying chamber. A shift in scale from family farming to corporate farming has caused disconnect between production and consumption. The Black Seed Farm, which was once the largest parent seed company in the nation, is obsolete as a result of this shift in scale. On a deeper level the inquiry provides exposure to an intimate scale of production and experience. The installation and interpretation allows us, and participants, to move beyond typical prescriptive means of architectural pedagogy to explore the relationship between representational space and aesthetic phenomena. This obsolete chamber, forgotten and neglected, and converted into a space for remembrance, is a culturally consequent spatial container for experience and remembrance. Memorials are often made to keep memories alive and to pay respect to the dead or the forgotten. Let us not forget the meaning nor the value of the seed drying bin and small farms that still fight to survive.

#### Selected References

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**15:30 Joshua Nason** Assistant Professor of Architecture, School of Architecture, University of Texas Arlington

### ***Place Pavilions: Habitation Through Active Mapping***

The Place Pavilions are individually scaled assemblages built as maps and mapping devices, simultaneously. Affording inhabitants the opportunity to experience their environment actively by framing the sensory perception of surroundings, the pavilions reveal through regulation, stimulate through stipulation. By restricting the customarily pervasive experience of a place, the pavilions allow one to focus on specific elements (which is usually ignored) that emerge from their surroundings. They offer habitation through fostering an interaction of person and place. Thus allowing the map to be experiential and the reader to be informed through the map's generative and constructive nature and its cultivating of action.

Projective maps as designed entities have been a topic of interest for the likes of Guy Debord, Jean Beaudrillard, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, James Corner, Petra Kempf and many others. Yet we, as an active, map-using population, continue to drastically underutilize their potential. Even in academic and design circles, where projective drawings are employed daily in order to describe action, they usually engender little. When active, maps can vividly reveal the unknown. What if we used maps to understand our place in (and therefore relationship/responsibility to) context rather than just our placement in it? What if the map was something we looked through, rather than at? What if the map was a designed, engaging and haptic experience?

If we are to tap into new understanding, we must employ new methods. An example of this is found when considering the possibilities of maps operating at dimensions greater than two – maps to be inhabited. Maps that thereby frame, generate and inspire unfamiliar spatial

awareness and activation embedded in the built environment. Maps that activate through experience thus generating transformation from information.

The Place Pavilions accomplish this by translating map readers into actors. These pavilions, as designed and built experiential devices, tectonically mediate between the reader and the read in a haptic and individualized, participatory manner. The goal is to introduce viewers to atypical readings of their surroundings by presenting to them detailed, specific, loaded and yet personalized views of what they otherwise take for granted. This paper relates the theoretical and pedagogical basis as well as the practical deployment of such pavilions as instances through which contextual understanding is engaged and therefore engaging.

## **SATURDAY MORNING**

**10:45 204 Design Collective** Winnipeg

### ***Disobedient Spaces: The Aesthetics of Civic Spaces***

This paper interrogates the aesthetic and political transformation of civic spaces during times of citizen protest and civil unrest. When divested from their original designed function, these spaces become disobedient as they are used to advance a particular political platform. Disobedience in this case, emerges with the intersection between activist/policing bodies and the spaces that they occupy and appropriate. The architecture of civic spaces become integrated within a citizen's struggle for social change, to their benefit or their detriment. These spaces are instrumentalized as political agents either working in favor of social reform, or in favor of the state.

The aesthetic change that these spaces take on become a reflection of human and spatial interaction, where the individual or collective lived experience of a space ultimately determines its broader social and political function. This paper will use incidents of political protest as well as those of police kettling as precedents in order to demonstrate the agency of civic spaces that emerges from these political interactions. These include, but are not limited to, the 2010 Toronto G20 protests, the 2010 London student protests and the 2013 Taksim Square protests in Istanbul.

**11:15 Elizabeth Dahab, PhD** Professor, Department of Comparative World Literature and Classics, California State University, Long Beach

### ***Emergence of Contrapuntal Spaces***

On the Canadian literary immigrant landscape, the Lebanese-Canadian writer, Rawi Hage, (recipient of the 2008 International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award) brings to the fore enclaves of cosmopolitan characters living locally and transnationally in North American cities. This paper will engage Hage's 2008 novel, *Cockroach*, and his 2012 novel, *Carnival*, whose settings are, respectively, Montréal and an unnamed city, possibly Toronto. *Cockroach* conveys a sample of the hardships of daily life in some of Montréal's struggling communities. The topology of this metropolis, from the student ghetto around McGill University to the wealthy neighborhood of Mount Royal is brilliantly portrayed in this novel, which brings into collision the opposing layers of stereotype versus reality by portraying the hardships and violence experienced by some (mostly members of a marginalized, Anglophone enclave of Iranians) in a Montréal unfamiliar to those who connect it solely with beauty and culture. In this novel, the metaphor of the global positioning system and the plunge into an alternative space, a metaphorical underground, encompasses transnational as well as linguistic and racial boundaries in a city that delineates a geography of despair. The all encompassing allegory of the protagonist's ambivalent humanity (half-human and half cockroach) is a contrapuntal echo of this despair.

On the other hand, *Carnival's* narrator is a misanthropic taxi driver, who, in his flights in his cab/flying carpet discloses exiles living a psychedelic cosmopolitanism in an atmosphere of contrapuntal restlessness. I will remark that the chaos *Carnival* portrays suggests that beneath its civilized veneer, that nameless city hides in its bosom, literally and figuratively so, a dog-eat-dog mentality, and where those who suffer the most are often the ones made more vulnerable by poverty, injustice, abused childhoods, or simply consumerist greed. Like its predecessor, *Carnival* taps into the compassionate stance towards the down-and-out, except that here it does so more intensely and in a more focused manner than in *Cockroach*, occasionally in eloquent, heated, lyrical diatribes. I will argue that in the 2012 novel, we are in the presence of a transplanted Orient locally experienced within a cosmopolitanism wrought with tension. Hage says about *Carnival*, "Like all my novels there's a multiplicity of geographies in it. There's always a va-et-vient."<sup>1</sup> I will further posit that in his endeavors, Hage has managed to deftly establish some reconciling spatial correspondences between exile, transnationalism, and migration in the otherwise seemingly chaotic universe he has created.

<sup>1</sup> Interview with the author, February 2013

**11:45 Jeffrey Thom Garcia** Sessional Instructor, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

### ***Berlin: Cadavre Exquis***

"[H]orror is the truth about abstraction...[it] prods the bounds of the thinkable. [Horror] presents the world as it might be. It is utopian without utopia, planning without plans. It speaks of the present in the future tense, and through a kind of inversion."

(Joshua Comaroff and Ker Ong, *Horror in Architecture*. (California: ORO Editions, 2013), 7-8)

Berlin revels in its dualities. It is a city of conflict and remediation, optimism and sorrow, cohesion and dissolution, East and West, and the prefixes of temporality: "Pre" and "Post". With a city defined by its indomitably value of perpetual self-actualization, speculated futures are not only embedded into its identity, it is a requisite element for the coalescence of its collective reverie. But with every dream there is halting sobriety, and this is the condition that is currently confronting the city. The movement towards "Retro-Reconstruction" as exemplified by the former Berliner Stadtschloss/future Humbolt-Forum, is necessitating an evaluation of how to best mitigate a history within a milieu desperate for cultural reclamation, historical remediation, and socio-economic amelioration.

Another value has to be proposed that projects beyond the sincere comforts that emanate from the truisms of Beauty. Emergence occurs within the contours of provocation. Horror and Ugliness are conjoined ambitions that lavish in its altruism. Unbounded by canonical obligations, they necessitate alternate realities buoyed by queerness and temporality.

Confronting the placid monotony of what is correct, upright, and appropriate doesn't require radical insurgence, like Narcissus, it simply needs to be lured into its own reflection. Within the depths of its longings, certitude will be subsumed by the ferocious desires of indeterminacy.

Historical truth is unrelentingly fastidious in its self-conception, yet it does not, nor does it often accompany, the qualifications for authenticity. The hegemony of absolutes needs to be assuaged with opportunities to dissent. The asymmetry of horror and ugliness needs to be wielded to upend the dogmatism of a univalent vision of Berlin's identity, an impotent simulacrum that aborts the city's perpetual state of liminality. Rather than the pluralism that would animate the city like a willfully rambunctious Surrealist Exquisite Corpse, the evocation of nostalgia has insinuated itself into its architectural ambitions, trussing the detritus of a displaced cadaver into a parody of historicism.

## **SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

**14:45 Eduardo Aquino, PhD** Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba  
***Beachscape Atmosphere***

The urban beach circumscribes a type of space endowed with a flexible mechanism for negotiation between people and places, economies and cultures, architectures and the city, differentiating from more stable urban structures defined by buildings or infrastructure. The city organization and enhancement of the urban experience can find more resources in the fluxes located on the beach. Fluidity, mobility, spontaneous feedback, and nonlinearity offer alternatives to the stability, predictability, and rationality of the city. Beachscape identifies a territory characterized by a dynamic space, where human actions are in constant transformation, generating a field of possibilities in the face of the stagnation of urban life.

Considering the complex situation of the beach experience this presentation proposes the hypothetical matrix for new directions of urban design as spontaneous tactics, challenging the conventions of traditional practice. The beach here is understood not as typology, but as a complex system, an integral part of the city, promoter and organizer of life, expanding and shrinking while human experiments are in constant motion. With reference to some specific attitudes of the 20th century vanguard the work points to a number of strategies for reordering the contemporary city and its related professional practices. Relationally engaged in the locus of the beach, such practices can be categorized into two types: one operates directly on the beach; the second, seizing upon the dynamics of the beach, looks back to the city, and through the concept of beachscape envisions a strategy to propose another design, another public space.

**15:45 Cedric Bomford** Assistant Professor, School of Art, University of Manitoba  
***Deadhead***

Deadhead is a floating art installation realized by the collaborative team of Cedric, Nathan and Jim Bomford. The project consists of an ad hoc installation constructed primarily of reclaimed materials mounted on a World War II era barge.

Deadhead is constructed using a methodology we call 'thinking through building' in which traditional linear processes of planning, design, engineering, construction etc are broken down and collapsed into the same moment of building. In this approach modeling and drawings are avoided as much as possible. We consider models to limit the creative potential of building, binding one to illustrating preconceived ideas. Likewise drawings constrict thinking and doing, robbing the act of construction of its creative potential. In our work drawings take the form of sketches on a piece of scrap wood or a page of a logbook and are used to figure out complicated construction details or how different elements should be configured. In its finished state the work exists as a full-scale prototype, an embodiment of thought rather than as a polished whole.

Deadheads are logs that have broken free from a log boom, cast offs from the industrial production cycle of the coastal forest economy. They drift around at, or just below the surface of the water, hanging vertically and quietly threatening to puncture the hull of an unsuspecting boat. The Deadhead run of a commercial vehicle (airplane, boat, train, truck etc) is necessitated by scheduling or logistics but does not serve a direct economic benefit. Deadheading a plant entails removing dead or unwanted foliage in order to aid in growing the desired flowers, fruit etc.

In this presentation I will introduce the Deadhead project and discuss some of the conceptual underpinnings of this specific work and its relation to what could be thought of as an emergent artistic practice.

**15:15 Shawn Stankewich** Swift Company, Seattle

***Emergent Knowledge: Fostering Ecological Literacy Through Landscape Architecture***

The *Chambers Online Dictionary* defines the act of emerging as coming out from hiding or into view, becoming known or apparent, or surviving a difficult or dangerous situation (Chambers, 2014). David Orr describes ecological literacy as the ability to comprehend the complex relationships of one's surrounding landscape and thus live life with greater environmental sensitivity (Orr, 1992). Didactic landscapes are integral to generating greater public cognition of both human and natural systems - of ecological knowledge becoming apparent through the orchestration of environmental shifts. This emergent knowledge is linked closely to understanding sites and situations through the act of engagement.

The development of a programmatic framework and set of guiding principles for fostering ecological literacy through landscape architecture provides a basis for exploring the emergence of a greater sense of regional and local identity. Using the performance standard of revealing the cultural and natural identity of sites to drive landscape architecture facilitates emergence in design by reducing reliance on permanence and allowing for diversity and change over time. Furthermore, the concurrent explication of ecological factors may foster greater environmental awareness - or ecological literacy.

The purpose of this presentation is to discuss these frameworks and guiding principles through a series of exhibited works. Using precedents from ecological design as well as personal examples from both academic studies and landscape architectural practice, the idea of emergence will be discussed as it relates to generating ecological literacy and forming stronger connections between human and natural systems. In practice, the concept of emergence is carried out in a number of projects with the common thread of embracing evolution over time in different ways. Varied examples from Manitoban wetland, creek, and forest environments, to highly trafficked urban arteries will demonstrate the importance of fostering the emergence of life and knowledge through spatial design.

References:

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**Scott Irvine** Graduate Student, Department of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba

***Inherent Instability: Processes, Connectivity, Causality***

Design interventions occur within environments that are assemblages of continuous and contiguous processes operating at all possible physical and temporal scales. Those processes, in simultaneous flux, can be understood as conditions operating with radical dependency and openness (Bernstein, J. 2011; Silva, J. 2012; respectively). The intense connectivity of myriad disparate processes creates conditions that are inherently unstable, though when viewed as snap shots, appear steady. That disparate nature applies to the breadth of systems at play. Financial, moral, and cultural systems, that appear falsely stable by their continual presence, work equally to create the conditions experienced in any given place, while contributing to a lack of fixity.

These factors remain at odds with normative modes of understanding and representation, despite immediate and comprehensible consequences. Designing with deliberate instability requires representation not only of processes, but visualization of their connectivity and causal links. It must be an integral form of design, more than an analysis phase, something done first then often forgotten.

Interventions into inherently unstable environments must be made without seeking an artificial fixity; interventions must be understood as catalytic for new and existing processes, and acting as disturbance regimes (after Burkholder, S. 2012).

An exploration of how interventions are to be situated within environments and conditions that lack fixity will be made by arguing that designing within a framework of deliberate instability is beyond a functional requirement, but a moral necessity. This is to be considered in a definite manner by investigating processes, connectivity, and causality within a physical place located amid highly transitory conditions. This argument will be built upon works such as *Emergence* (Johnson, S. 2001), *Emergence in Landscape Architecture* (Barnett, R. 2013), the aforementioned works, and on the spatial conditions of post-industrial landscapes by such authors as James Corner, Mark Davis, and C.S. Holling.