



## EDITORS' STATEMENT

When we sent out the call for this issue, we did not anticipate how far the theme would travel, nor the intensity of responses we would receive from places far beyond Rudolph Hall. Yet *Best Before* carries its own quiet magnetism. It hints at urgency and anticipation, but also at the subtle anxieties that accompany the instructions about time—how much of it remains, how much has already slipped away, and who has the authority to decide. Beneath this sits a quieter fear: that something, or someone, might lose value simply by continuing to exist. A best-before date not only marks a threshold; it denotes a relationship—between certainty and doubt, trust and suspicion, preservation and loss.

What surprised us most was how expansively contributors interpreted this theme.

The writings in this issue capture the dilemmas embedded within *Best Before* and reflect a wide range of responses—whether focused on an architectural typology (Marcos), a reading of a film about architecture (Will), first-person experiences of being a student and practitioner of architecture (Linh and Julia), a philosophical engagement with the theme itself (Alex), or reflections on the broader socio-economic and political mechanisms that shape our built environment and ways of living (Lisa and Angela).

One word appears again and again: *perishable*. Across the seven pieces gathered here, perishability emerges not as a simple marker of decay, but as a lens through which to understand the physical environment, labor, migration, memory, and the intimate terrains of the body. Together, these essays suggest that perishability is never merely biological—it is political, infrastructural, economic, and emotional.

As the semester approaches its end, it feels as if everyone's life is revolving around ticking clocks, to-do lists, and final deadlines—a collective reminder that all this chaos will, eventually, end in the nick of time. In such moments, it becomes valuable to step back and consider what truly matters. Perishability, after all, is not solely a story of endings. What is perishable may also be *cherishable*. This issue is, in that spirit, an invitation—to look closely, to care urgently, and to ask what and whom we choose to treasure while they are still with us.

Yue Zeng & Lanna Yang

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## LECTURE RESPONSES

### DIGGING DEEPER: AN INTERVIEW RESPONSE TO AMIN TAHA: "THE MEASURE OF ARCHITECTURE"

Tian Hsu

Having grown up in London and seen Amin Taha's work displayed in the Design Museum, I was curious to learn more. Admittedly, I was a little disappointed by the lecture's focus on stone as a material, as opposed to Taha's design philosophy—more practical than even last week's designated "practical architecture lecture." Nevertheless, having bagsied writing the lecture response for Taha earlier in the semester, I followed up by conducting an interview with him via email, reproduced here in condensed and edited form:

**Tian Hsu:** The lecture preceding yours, by Patrick Bellew, addressed sustainability through high-tech innovation. You engage with sustainability through a "low-tech" shift from brick to stone construction in the UK. Who is right?

**Amin Taha:** Patrick would likely concede that, in temperate areas, low-tech passive environmental controls outweigh high-tech mechanical controls, which are required in more extreme environments. We would both agree on high-tech soft(ware) solutions with low-tech / low-embodied carbon physical installations.

**TH:** Is the substitution of low-carbon materials a cure for all aspects of the ethical crisis in architecture? *Utilitas, firmitas, et venustas*... do any elements remain unaddressed?

**AT:** Certainly not answering all ethical questions. Of the many I listed—from fire and structural safety, cost control for clients, equity from the design studio to community engagement and to construction and operation—the lecture went on to focus on sustainability.

The studio begins from there, then moves onto broader ethical outcomes outside a client redline property boundary, that can also be triangulated as better value for a client.

The easiest example is the brief from a secondary school for a new dining hall and library building. They expected it to be located in the middle of the campus, but we placed it instead on the property boundary line so that the building form would complete the adjacent high street. Doors faced both the school and the high street, so the building opened into campus during school hours, and then turned to open to the public on evenings and weekends. The school gained, locals gained, the high street was enlivened. And the library and dining hall looked lovely too.

**TH:** You mentioned that stone is a luxury in the UK but a commodity in Italy and France. How does this difference translate into the architecture of those countries? Does it lead to a more rigorous or more diverse use of stone in their built environments?

**AT:** Unfortunately, by ubiquity and skill normalization, the Corbusier (and Max Dubois) Dom-Ino concrete slab remains the default system even where stone is cheap. Go to Ghana and poorer locals will use handheld saws and wheelbarrows to extract basalt blocks, while middle classes wait for concrete and steel to be shipped across the seas to complete their "modern" homes. We evidently need a turnaround, not least in the perception that modern progress exists in high-carbon materials and structure.

**TH:** You've spoken for *Constructs*, The Architecture Lobby, in Hastings Hall, and now for *Paprika*! Is there anything about yourself you haven't yet said publicly that you'd like people to know? Now is your chance!

**AT:** I could start but wouldn't know where to stop. Just to reiterate:

- While architecture might be your passion, you can look around at your non-architect friends and find ten years or more have passed and the meagre architect's income has somehow frozen you in a twenty-something flat-share lifestyle. Have parallel Plan B. Whatever it is, allow it to supplement and probably exceed your passion income.
- Design and build beautiful things that give you and those living there pleasure. We need more beautiful environments, not more drones sitting in offices.
- Whether side hustling as developer, practicing as an independent architect or employee, apply some core beliefs to your work, too. Discuss and develop them with friends and colleagues. Agency to change means understanding the issue and learning what tools are needed and how to use them. Otherwise it's hot air, likely to irritate and compound the problem.

**TH:** How has teaching at Yale differed from the RCA?

**AT:** After Harvard GSD, Yale and the RCA are surprisingly similar. Friendly and supportive, which I keep putting down to luxuriant carpeting. Can't think of another institute that has it, so must be it.

**TH:** Thoughts on your lecture's cocktail of the night: the Stone Sour?

**AT:** Loved it, could have had several more but had to have dinner early to leave for an absurdly carbon-heavy conference tour to Hong Kong and Dubai and London to proselytize on low-carbon construction!

## ON THE GROUND

### 3RD YEAR, 1ST THANKSGIVING

Tony Salem Musleh M.Arch I '26

If drawings only end once manifested in concrete, PCs run until the render becomes a photograph. Let me know how Rudolph smelled in late November. I know only the smell of Lantana's.

I'll buy you eyedrops for broken vision.

If drawings only end once manifested in concrete, then let me tell you—there are no construction workers. I see only emptied vessels.

Bottomless bottles are nothing but alliteration.

### NOT QUITE PROFESSIONAL

Shreshtha Goyal M.Arch II '27

Thanksgiving break gave us a moment to catch our breath. Some travelled, some caught up with work, and some simply remembered what a normal circadian rhythm feels like. Now we're all back on campus, pretending architecture "isn't a professional degree," The irony is hard to ignore. While the degree may not technically confer professional status, it shapes who gets access to the field, what skills are considered legitimate, and whose voices are heard. Despite the fact we're once again living among buzzing 3D printers and laser cutter fumes, with the next two weeks promising intensity, caffeine, and questionable decisions involving plywood.

## NEWS STORIES

### SUMMER TRAVEL 2026 LOTTERY

Majdi Alkarute

Galicia, Spain led by Ana María Durán and Hawaii led by Dominic Leong replaced Tatiana Bilbao's Mexico City this year.

Durán's Spain trip promises to immerse students in the forests around the famous pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela, in collaboration with Chipperfield's 9-year-old non-profit foundation, Fundación RIA. Students will be focusing on the "long-term sustainability of both the built and natural environment," according to the foundation. Durán suggested the students could build an animal shed, but encouraged students to develop their own projects.

Leong's Hawaii trip was the least popular of the options, possibly because there was extremely limited information about the trip. Even the dates were not announced until a day or two before lottery. Leong said that, although he doesn't have many details ironed out, his intention is to match the needs of local groups with the skillsets of YSoA students. Previous students have had very positive reviews of Leong's teaching, and they described his prior advanced studio trip to Hawaii as a lot of time spent with "champagne on a boat."

Rome was the most popular as expected, but Galicia was almost equally oversubscribed in polling, indicating that students are as interested in the sustainable and experimental as they are in the historic and formal.

## BIOS

**Alex Yu** is an M.Arch I student at the Yale School of Architecture whose work centers on architectural theory and philosophy. He has practiced as an architect on projects ranging from cultural to public across China. In parallel, collaborating with Tongji University as a research assistant, he has contributed to studies on countryside development, industrial heritage regeneration, and Asian urbanism.

**Marcos Escamilla-Guerrero** is a Mexican architect, designer and a researcher whose work investigates the role of design in addressing societal challenges. Currently, he teaches at Cornell AAP as a Visiting Critic while directing MEAL, where he explores the intersection between architecture, urbanism, geospatial analysis and social justice.

**Lisa Beyeler-Yvarra** is a PhD candidate in the School of Architecture and the Department of Religious Studies at Yale University. Broadly, her work explores the spatial politics of religious institutions in modern and contemporary East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania.

**Angela Alissa Keele** is a New York City-based architectural researcher, writer, and educator. She has collaborated on a number of projects ranging from ecological research, community planning, and urban-infrastructural interventions across New York, Italy, Oregon, and Texas. Her projects and writing have been featured in "Architecture as Commoning Practice", The Architect's Newspaper, AXIOM, and the Architectural Association's "Architecture & Ecriture". She has taught at Columbia University GSAPP, Barnard College, NJIT, and The American School in Switzerland.

**Linh Mai** is a Vietnamese third-year M.Arch I student at Yale University. Her work centers on exploring multiplicity and diversity within architectural expression while engaging with interdisciplinary perspectives, including economics, culinary arts, and environmental studies. She is committed to creating and collaborating in ways that broaden the architectural discourse and its connection to other fields.

**Julia Strömland** is an architect based in Zurich, CH. Through practice, teaching, and writing, her work explores the entanglements of bodies, materials, and the built environment.

**Will Fu** is a Vancouver based architect, writer and illustrator. He holds degrees from Princeton University and the University of Waterloo.



## THE SHELF LIFE OF MARITIME FUTURES

Lisa Beyeler-Yvarra



A car drops me off on Gov. A. Pascual Street in Navotas City. As I wait to meet Terence Repelente, a fisherfolk rights organizer, a glimmering object catches my eye. A red San Miguel Pilsen bottle cap lies discarded on the ground. I bend to pick it up. Stamped over its logo, the same coat of arms bestowed to the city of Manila by Philip II of Spain, is a date: 05.JAN26.

"Our mussels were the sweetest and most delicate in the Philippines." *Ate!* Gina rubs my arm, interlinked with hers, as she guides me through the narrow streets of Navotas. Terence leads us from a distance, just out of sight. The tight thoroughfares end at the harbor's edge, and we step out onto the concrete breakwater. She points out to Manila Bay: "We had to watch the excavators uproot our *tahungan*."<sup>2</sup> *Ate* Gina presses my hand, "We can rebuild our mussel farms. But then they started dredging the seabed. Everything is dying."

Navotas was the historic fishing capital of the Philippines. For generations, fisherfolk in this northern Metro Manila city—over seventy percent of its inhabitants—derived their livelihoods from the fertile eastern shores of Manila Bay. Many households inherited their trades through an unbroken lineage of maritime traditions. These practices encompass the entirety of the fishing trade: from mussel farming and net mending to seafood harvesting and the production of local staples, notably fish sauce (*patis*) and shrimp paste (*bagoong*). "We were fishermen since we were born," mourned *Ate* Gina, "It's our culture. We don't know how to do anything else."

In February 2024, the local government handed removal notices to Navotas mussel farmers, clearing the area for the San Miguel Corporation's Navotas Coastal Bay Reclamation Project (NCBRP). Fisherfolk were issued a seven-day ultimatum to self-demolish their *tahungan* before demolition crews from NCBRP razed their farms. "They were only given one week to harvest an entire season of mussels or risk losing ninety percent of their income," Terence said bitterly, "One community member died from the stress." The eviction order took effect during Holy Week, the peak season for harvesting. All mussel farms were destroyed. Navotas fisherfolk received no compensation.

The NCBRP is part of a larger infrastructure of reclamation projects in Manila Bay that will cover approximately 30,000 hectares, nearly half the size of Metro Manila, affecting an estimated ten million families and innumerable bio-diverse areas. It is spearheaded by the San Miguel Corporation, one of the largest conglomerates in the Philippines and responsible for many public-private development projects in Manila, including the New Manila International Airport. The NCBRP will connect the airport to the city center via a mega-expressway cutting through Navotas waters. But its flagship product is San Miguel Beer, one of the best-selling beers in the world.

*Ate* Gina and I retrace our steps from the breakwater into Navotas City. Even as she steers me over puddles and stairwells, the landscape is defined by the San Miguel Corporation. Stacks of beer crates, stray bottles, and faded San Miguel food wrappers serve as a constant visual reminder of the conglomerate's reach.<sup>3</sup>

"What is this all for?" Terence asks when we reach the headquarters of *Pamalakaya-Navotas*, a collective advocating for genuine fisheries reform. The *Pamalakaya* office is a still structure decorated with protest signs in the shape of mussel shells. One sign declares: SAN MIGUEL PAHIRAP SA MANGINGISDA ("San Miguel, Torment for Fishermen"). I look out the window and see backhoes and construction cranes framing the horizon. "The airport is set to sink in thirty years," Terence quips, then pauses, "We are losing our homes, economies, recipes, and ecosystems for a project that's not even long-term."

That night, I turn the San Miguel bottle cap in my hand as I walk home. "Our lives stopped entirely," *Ate* Gina told me as I left Navotas, "we can't afford my son's school tuition." I think of the definitive foreclosure of futures in the Navotas littoral zone, where generations of maritime life-worlds are being erased by the San Miguel Corporation. I think of the inescapable ubiquity of San Miguel products and how the fisherfolk of Navotas have no alternative but to ingest their own destruction.

I flick the bottle cap into a garbage can nearby.

1. *Ate* Philippine kinship term in reference to an older female relative or respected friend, meaning "sister."
2. *Tahungan*: mussel farms. At Navotas, bamboo poles were anchored to the seabed and provided substrate for mussels to attach and grow. It is a traditional method of Philippine aquaculture.
3. San Miguel Corporation manufactures and distributes food from PureFoods, Kambal Pandesal, Magnolia, Treats, San Mig Super Coffee, Monterey, Great Food Solutions, SPAM, and Star Margarine.

## RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Linh Mai

Time stamps my body like an entry visa, each seal another countdown. In the shifting tides of a new administration, policy becomes weather: sudden, merciless, always above me. I move through airports like hourglasses, my presence measured in grains of legality and uncertainty. My passport carries more questions than answers, organizing my life not by seasons but by expiration dates. Overstay one, and risk unraveling everything.

This fragility is not mine alone. International friends confide in me the same dimmed existence, lives arranged around renewal cycles, milestones missed because paperwork ruled the calendar. While classmates book trips with ease, we collect biometrics appointments, consulate visits, and "additional processing." Entire geopolitical histories crystallize into a single moment at a border, where a passport's color becomes a proxy for trust.

I've spent months shuttling between consulates in Boston and New York just to participate in the summer programs others enter freely. I imagine a world with a global citizen pass, mobility unshackled from birthplace, travel without justifying one's humanity.

For now, I comply with lists and bullet points, an annual ritual etched into my sense of self. I am a student, a human being, yet beside those with stronger passports, I feel the quiet hierarchy of who is allowed to move, and who must continually prove.

Now, as graduation looms, the clock's hands tighten. The visa's ink begins to fade, and I am left wondering: stay and live with the fragility of permission, or leave and begin again on another timeline?

Somewhere between arrival and departure, I exist, stamped, scanned, and waiting to be renewed.

## DEAD LINE

Alex (Yicheng) Yu

Expired food is certainly a pity, but would you really want one that never expires? That idea seems even more disconcerting: it mimics the form of food but refuses to fulfill the life cycle of nourishment, consumption, and decay, as its death becomes indefinitely postponed. Here, *Best Before* is no longer an objective but a sublime object that drives us to act. This is what Lacan calls "death drive," or what Heidegger describes as "being-toward-death." Death, paradoxically, becomes a form of relief. It drives us by its ultimate finality and, while generating anxiety, it simultaneously gives shape to the very meaning of our actions. Without a limit, the sense of urgency disappears, and so does the motivation to act. We are compelled to act in advance—traveling, refilling prescriptions, sending messages—constantly chasing the illusion that everything must be completed before the end.

In this framework, the drive becomes trapped at the moment of expiration, while desire is propelled by the lack present before the deadline.<sup>1</sup> Hysterical desire always seeks, yet only leads to missing out, because desire delivers too little pleasure. It pursues jouissance, since desire can only be satisfied through obtaining its object, while the drive circulates endlessly around its self-designated object.<sup>2</sup> So the question is: Are we truly responding to our genuine desires, or simply obeying the command of "don't miss out"? Do you really want to eat the food, or are you merely trying to consume it before it expires?

The exit from this loop lies in what Lacan distinguished as two deaths—the physical death of the body and the symbolic death of the subject—and specifically, in the space between them: the Antigonean death<sup>3</sup>, the grace period from "best before" to actual spoilage. This is not a "living dead" state but a mode of existence that transcends the definitions imposed by symbolic order. To exist at the boundary between the Imaginary and the Symbolic is to move beyond the constraints of the Big Other. "The boundary is not where a thing ends, but where it begins to appear." Before the *best-before* date, a product exists in a permanent, idealized state. After the date, the boundary shifts us from passive reliance on the label to an active perception of its essence—its color, its scent. "Too late" can only be perceived in retrospect: only when a thing begins to decay does its essence come into being. Therefore, this interval is not merely a form of punishment or a transitional state but a mode of authentic existence. By actively dwelling in this realm outside the symbolic order, while physical life has not yet ended, the individual attains a freedom that transcends symbolic definitions and allows their essence to manifest for the first time.

So, after all that philosophy, the answer is embarrassingly simple: the best time to plant a tree was ten years ago; the second best time is now.

1. Drive explains why we hover around the expiration point of "eat or not eat"—it is a repetition centered on the symbolic. Desire explains why we act frantically before expiration: it is driven by lack, pointing toward a future that can never be fully fulfilled.
2. *Objet petit a* is the remainder of desire after need has been satisfied. In this case, the need is to eat food, but desire is the enjoyment of a flavorful meal. Even after the need is satisfied, desire continues because it is structured around a persistent sense of lack. This desire is structured around a fundamental lack, which ensures its continual reproduction and prevents any possibility of complete fulfillment.
3. "Antigonean death" refers to the active choice a person makes between biological and social death. When Antigone defied the laws of the city-state to bury her brother, she was both stripped of her social identity and had not yet experienced physical death, remaining precisely at this critical juncture.

## DUE DATE: ON PERISHABLE BODIES AND ARCHITECTURAL LABOR

Julia Strömland

"I'll be one of those hard bitches who takes thirty-six hours of maternity leave, enrolling through my vanity caesarean!" —Shiv Roy, *Succession* (Season 4, 2023)

Architecture values the endless laborer: the sleepless, ageless, disembodied worker. It worships endurance, feeding on all-nighters, bottomless over-hours, competitions that consume weekends. The perfect architect is defined by relentless energy, total devotion, suspended in a timelessness where sacrifice becomes proof of worth. The body is a tool for production, never a site of change, tiredness, or fertility. Pregnancy shatters this myth. It is slow, unpredictable, impossible to schedule. The body swells, leaks, disrupts. As



Sofia Aguirre. Dismount of FEX shelter in Mexicali, Mexico. August, 2025.

Once dismantled, its components are stored or discarded, ready to reappear elsewhere and repeat the cycle of emergency and erasure.

This condition is not exceptional.<sup>2</sup> Across Mexico, migration management unfolds through infrastructures that mimic detention centers tectonic yet lack permanence or oversight.

The tent becomes a political device, deployed to relieve pressures and to display action without committing to continuity.

If architecture is a negotiation with permanence, humanitarian design rejects that pact. It erases itself before it can decay. Yet in doing so, it also erases memory. The FEX tent was not simply an object of care; it became an instrument of forgetting.

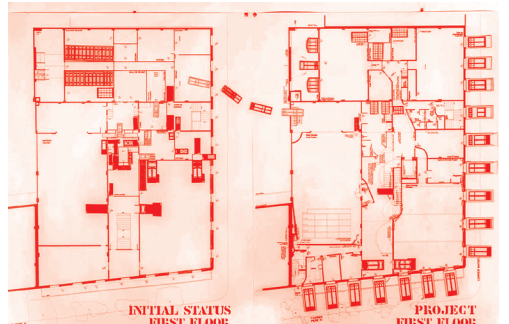
Every tent has its best-before date. What follows is not renewal but silence.

1. Humanitarian design refers to the use of architectural and design practices to address conditions of crisis (e.g. natural disasters, displacement, or poverty) often under the banner of "doing good." While it aims to provide urgent relief, critics have pointed out that it frequently reproduces precariousness and aestheticizes emergency. See Andrew Herscher, "Humanitarian Design and the Politics of Relief," in *Disaster-Drawn: Visual Witness, Comics, and Documentary Form* (Stanford University Press, 2017).
2. As WOLA (Washington Office on Latin America) reports, migrant shelters across Mexico, (whether state-run or improvised) frequently operate with precarious infrastructure, limited oversight, and rapid cycles of opening and closure, reflecting a broader pattern of impermanent migration management. See WOLA, "A Trail of Impunity," Washington Office on Latin America, 2023.

## ACTING TOGETHER

Will Fu

It is rare to catch a drawing in rehearsal. Yet, that is exactly what Flores y Prats' film *44 Doors and 35 Windows for the new Sala Beckett*, captures. It gives viewers a backstage pass past the curtain of drafting conventions to a more intimate act of architectural analysis and placemaking. The setting "*Paz y Justicia*" was originally built through the volunteer efforts of its members on weekends and holidays; itself functioning as a social stage offering its members a place for meetings, play, and daily necessities at subsidized prices. The film celebrates this collective effort, following the migration of salvaged doors and windows from the neglected Worker's Cooperative to new set roles in the Sala Beckett Performing Arts Centre.



Screenshot from the film "44 Doors and 35 Windows for the New Sala Beckett" by Flores & Prats (2016-2017).

Through stop motion, they glide and shuffle across fixed plans to their new marks. Some change color, while others adorn a new costume altogether, given appendages to comfortably fit into their new roles. The objects feel lively, playful and sometimes mischievous. Always between boundaries, they entice guests to imagine alternative pasts and lost stories, turning the film into an exercise of material empathy. With a maximum runtime of 3 minutes, I cannot help but admire the painstaking process taken just to usher these shy elements along and document their journey frame by frame. One can sense the invisible gentle hand that had to position and adjust each element, checking the viewfinder, and clicking the camera just to capture a single frame. The film plays out accepting uncertainties and detours as welcome opportunities in the exact same way the elements are reintroduced into the built project, where contractors set up shop room to room making precise measurements and adjustments to perfectly locate each element in their instructed place. The film technique and assets exude an honest warmth, where material imperfections and animated stutters mark a rich working process. Heritage here does not subject material realities to stratified timelines, often cleaned up to stand as a symbolic petrified carcass. The project asks the ruin, what would you like to do now? Nothing is finished, and all is welcome to participate, be worked on, and worked with.<sup>1</sup>

As film directors, Flores y Prats capture the magic of the existing fabric, making precise cuts and alterations to the footage of the past with the aim to stitch it all back together again.<sup>2</sup> Remastered, the "finished" Sala Beckett is a comforting motion picture for all ages. It is a story about working together to reflect and give dignity to aged spirits, where preservation is not exclusively for the exuberant or monumental but all sites that accumulate meaning through use.

1. Liliane Wong: Adaptive Reuse Extending the Lives of Buildings, Basel 2016
2. Ricardo Flores & Eva Prats : Sala Beckett, Barcelona 2020

languages of Syria and Lebanon."

Ham's life span varies by the ten different forms the USDA has outlined; if it is fresh, uncured, and uncooked you may refrigerate it for three to five days. But if it is canned, labeled "keep refrigerated", and unopened, it can last in the fridge for six to nine months.

An average of six to nine months pass between each visit home, depending on the political situation. 9000 kilometers to reach apricots that go bad in two days time. The tree, *Prunus armeniaca*, takes five to eight years to produce fruit.

Our neighbor has a sweet habit of dropping a basket down from his balcony unannounced, each day filled with something new from the land—cherries, figs, apricots, and walnuts (along with the hammer to crack them open).

Canning fruit in a factory takes an average of an hour. The preserved fruit itself lasts up to two years.

Some U.S.-style supermarkets have popped up, and they have started spraying pesticides instead of using ladybugs as natural pest control. But for the most part we still see the labor of our fruit; sometimes we find our neighbor scaling his apricot tree and we still order our groceries by shouting down from the balcony.

Early November of 2025, USDA's official website reads, "Senate Democrats have voted 14 times against reopening the government. This compromises not only SNAP, but farm programs, food inspection, animal and plant disease protection, rural development, and protecting federal lands. Senate Democrats are withholding services to American people in exchange for healthcare for illegals, gender mutilation, and other unknown 'leverage' points."

38 days into the longest government shutdown in U.S. history.

143 days since I have had an apricot.

730 days until my canned corn expires.

## ERECTED EMPTIED ERASED

Marcos Escamilla-Guerrero

In early 2025, the Mexican government inaugurated what it called a "temporary shelter" for migrants in Mexicali: a massive white tent erected at the FEX (Ferias, Eventos y Exposiciones) fairgrounds, capable of housing more than two thousand people. Within months, it was dismantled. Once a symbol of humanitarian readiness, it now survives only as a faint trace in a few press photographs—a structure built to disappear. The tent was a typical logistical assembly—the kind used for fairs or emergency operations: a pitched-roof prefabricated structure of high-strength aluminum or steel covered with white PVC-coated fabric. Diffused light entered through the membrane, but there was no natural ventilation. The ground was covered with synthetic turf, and rows of bunk beds filled the interior. Its architectural ambition stopped at containment: it sheltered without inhabiting and housed without dwelling.

The FEX mega shelter perfectly illustrates the prescribed temporality of humanitarian design.<sup>1</sup> Born out of urgency and celebrated as an efficient response to crisis, it soon became obsolete. Its life cycle was predetermined, designed to expire. In that sense, humanitarian architecture is not merely temporary; it is perishable. Its value peaks before it is inhabited, when it still belongs to the realm of promise. Once deployed, it begins to deteriorate physically, politically, and ethically.

As Andrew Herscher suggests, humanitarian architecture carries a "better-before" condition, where the gesture of care is undermined by its own ephemerality. The FEX tent embodies this contradiction. Designed for mobility and neutrality, it leaves no trace, no history, no accountability.

not me, that is past due.

Nearing the end of pregnancy, architecture might still not know what to do with me. But perhaps my leaking, swelling body can begin to imagine a profession that finally makes space for bodies—all bodies—that need to rest, change, and grow. Perhaps pregnancy offers a new narrative, not of expiration, but of fermentation: a slow, fertile transformation.

## KEEPING TIME

Angela Alissa Keele



Man pushing cart of fresh produce; cantaloupe, cherries, plums. Tripoli, Lebanon, Photograph by Angela Alissa Keele. Circa 2008, summer.

Late-August of 2008: photograph taken from a balcony 6 stories above shows a man pushing a cart of produce—cherries, cantaloupe, plums—down a street in Tripoli, Lebanon. The photo was exhumed from a forgotten CD in my uncle's home, amongst dozens of other over-saturated, early-2000's scenes of grape leaves, tabbouli, and an eleven-year old me pulled over on the side of the road, picking apples fresh from an orchard.

Late-October of 2025; the USDA official government website reads "The Radical Left Democrats shutdown the government. This government website will be updated periodically during the funding lapse for mission critical functions. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people." Thirty days into the second longest government shutdown in U.S. history.

This same USDA tells us that leftover pizza has a life span of three to four days refrigerated. An opened package of hot dogs can survive one week refrigerated or one month frozen. If canned, meat can last up to five years.

But food used to be a tree in Lebanon, and I would smell its bark on my walk to my room. No barcode etched into its flesh. No date prompting us to eat. We knew how soon to finish food because we were all sitting together, and war makes us cherish the time we gather around this table as if it were our last.

Canned food emerged as military-grade equipment to withstand the duration of war under Napoleon—"an army marches on its stomach"—he famously coined, offering 12,000 francs to anyone who could come up with a food preservation system that would sustain the French troops. Decades after the invention of the can, the opener that we know today did not appear until 1926, when Charles Arthur Bunker filed for the patent of his stand-alone, rotary-wheel opener.

Around the same time, the League of Nations placed Lebanon under French military mandate; dictating amongst 19 other articles that "French and Arabic shall be the official