

# “VIEWS

*George's Hamburgers*

*Gary, He PhD Candidate*

One does not have to write a dissertation on ancient projectiles in order to have a relationship with modern ones. At a high school in Fullerton, California, students are reminded yearly that the campus sits on an earthy mound directly adjacent to a major U.S. military contractor specializing in missile defense, and that therefore, in the event of a ballistic attack on the neighboring facility, the pitched reinforced roof structures of the classrooms are designed to collapse downward onto the walls and (safely (?) enclose the students below until aid may arrive.

The combination of these elements inspired not so much existential fear in the students but rather a profound hunger in the belly which could not derive comfort and satisfaction from the second-hand<sup>(?)</sup> fares served at the canteen, requiring, therefore, an original supplement. The answer stood near the corner of Idaho and Commonwealth avenues not more than a mile from the school at an establishment signified on its exterior only by a large yellow sign: GEORGE'S HAMBURGERS. The building which housed the small diner was but a modest roadside hut, a decades-old and rather poor example of the California chariot-stop which retained the bare outlines of a modernism seemingly fashioned from the engine block of west-coast automobile culture.

Inside, the first thing one notices is the curious phenomenon of English, Spanish, and Korean languages simultaneously spoken not as a mixture of heterogeneous tongues but as hybrids of one another. "Hola-hello,<sup>(?)</sup> what would you like," is the standard greeting at the ordering window from a thin woman in her mid-thirties wearing a white polo shirt: the same woman would appear minutes later wearing instead a blue shirt, or on some days a pink or black one, then back to white again. The twins were so identical that they seemed to be literally the copy of the same individual, until there emerged a third identical copy – a brother who worked mostly behind the scenes in the kitchen. He was the master craftsman of what was for all intents and purposes the only item on the menu, an item locally synonymous with the name George's, which has deceptively nothing to do with hamburgers at all.

If the burrito is a typological staple in the world of both more and less authentic Los Angeles Mexican restaurants, no previous experience could acclimate one to the culinary phenomenon of the burger shop breakfast burrito, for it has nothing to do with the usual style-type chart of tortilla-based meals. It must be eaten on the spot; hash browns, scrambled eggs, bacon, onions, and cheese are grilled until scalding hot, then doused with cold fresh salsa and wrapped before the two extreme temperatures have a chance to negotiate any sort of reasonable median. Ranch? one is asked, to the confusion of many a newcomer, yes ranch, lots of it, though there are at least two schools of thought regarding its proper usage, loosely articulated as the camps of pouring or dipping (and never shall they cross paths). This place is serious business; it is not where you go to have a first date, but rather to gauge the potential for the healthy development of something more.<sup>(?)</sup>

One should read the section through the burrito carefully and note the even distribution of crispy to soft, expansive and compressive, hot and cold elements, solids which have turned to liquid, and its coloration of whites, yellows, reds and speckles of green, the combination of which is appropriately concocted daily only until 11:30 AM and not five minutes later.<sup>(?)</sup> To consume one whole burrito, which weighed solidly upward of one pound (453.6 grams) was to submit oneself to the contemplative mood of an afternoon necessarily devoid of any and all rigorous physical activity, opening up a natural path to philosophical inquiry as one begins the feeble attempt of placing the morning burrito in its proper genealogical place in the fast food canon. One begins to scour the streets looking for predecessors, antecedents, copies, before realizing that George's was the genuine article, the Urplafnce of breakfast burritos, the one which contained the rest, the nominal burrito, the burrito-an-sich, except it was real.

Nestled in an increasingly derelict industrial zone between a gentrifying downtown and middle-income suburbs to which the nearby high school belonged, the shop resembled a kind of beacon in its context of car dealerships upon car dealerships, a utopia for hungry savages, nothing noble about us, fulfilled and transformed by the particular and uncanny mix of cultures which came to singularly define a place. Like the unexpected and thoroughly delectable mix of sensory ingredients brought together in each and every bite, the "vernacular" of George's can perhaps be best expressed in the response to the greeting: Ho-la-hello, one breakfast burrito, please!

<sup>(1)</sup> Reheated meals purchased wholesale from chain restaurants.

<sup>(2)</sup> One word.

<sup>(3)</sup> The word "healthy" should be read here in the strictly metaphysical sense.

<sup>(4)</sup> To miss this deadline was a sad, sad affair.

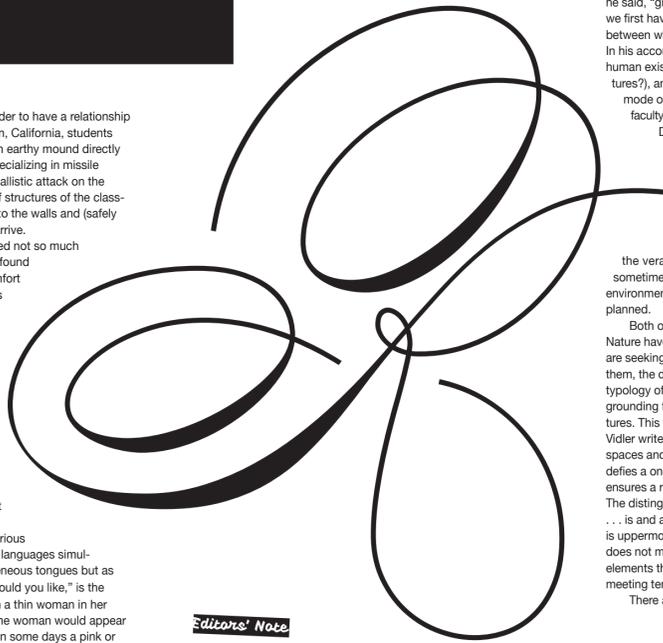
*Can I get uh... Crunchwrap Supreme, Cheesy Potato Griller... and a Baja Blast Freeze*

*Zelig Fak M, Arch 1 2019*

Cheesy Gordita Crunch, Doritos Locos Tacos, and Mountain Dew slushies: there are endless combinations of processed cheese, refined sugar, ground beef, and tortillas that one can get at the Tex-Mex fast food joint that has a reputation for giving you a run for the facilities. Yet, despite its affiliations with aggressive bowel movements, Taco Bell has quite a following with a diverse range of customers: late night graveyard shift workers, long distance truckers, those seeking a budget meal option, or college students with late night munchies. As a part of the latter group, I have had my go-to order since 2012 (see title). As quoted from the Yale Daily News: "Neche Veysal '20 has gone to great lengths to satisfy her cravings for dollar-menu Tex-Mex cuisine. On occasions, she has even rented a Zipcar to reach the nearest outpost – but no longer."

Downtown New Haven's Taco Bell on Chapel Street is a welcome addition to the promenade of semi-niche fast food restaurants; however, its placement and aesthetic are not exactly what comes to mind when one thinks of Taco Bell. Transcending the typical decorated shed off an interstate or in suburban limbo with a weird orange and blue veneered particle board interior, New Haven's very own is closer to a boutique hotel lobby bar in Williamsburg intersected by a Chipotle. Featuring a transparent garage door, graffiti motifs, and a bar, this Taco Bell is branded as a Cantina, part of *Yum!* Brands' plan to upscale fast food chains such as KFC, Pizza Hut, and Long John Silver's.

Straddling the invisible border between New Haven and Yale, it is quite odd that something that teeters between junk food and a quick meal has become a feature piece and gathering place for an institution that supposedly exudes sophistication. Down the street, a Subway with the brand's typical aesthetic sits on the corner of Chapel and Temple. While it is of similar tier food, Subway seldom has as many customers compared to the adjacent Chipotle, and also lacks an interior aesthetic that would distinguish their New Haven location from its franchises in airports and shopping centers; perhaps the Cantina and its dressed up siblings imply an underlying statement about aestheticized, and/or privileged unhealthy foods. Yet, on the other end of Yale at Whalley Avenue stands Popeye's, an establishment enjoyed by both New Haven locals and Yale alike, that is honest about their inexpensive \$5 Boxes and signature cartoon orange aesthetic. What is more interesting is that Taco Bell is not exempt from the unspoken social dichotomy between local New Haveners and affiliates of Yale, but a direct reflection. It is important to note that Taco Bell's site is similar to many downtown New Haven lots, a row house-like storefront



## Editors' Note

In the spirit of Virgil Abloh we put quotation marks around the word "vernacular," asking students and architects to reevaluate a concept just as vague as it is in vogue. Often used in conjunction with "primitive" and "traditional," the definition of "vernacular" architecture has long been confined by its regressive associations, admired but held apart from the formal Architecture of modern discourse and practice. Part of this issue seeks to reset the boundaries of "vernacular," challenging the fast-and-loose manner in which we reduce and instrumentalize the architectures of entire cultures.

At the same time, we hope to use this space to look at narratives of the "vernacular" that may have escaped our unquenchable Pinterest appetites. This issue presents opportunities to learn from "vernacular" design that may not have made it into our textbooks. In an inverse exercise, we take a look at overexposed examples of "vernacular" architecture, questioning their ubiquity in architectural education. What are the implications of considering Laugier's primitive hut as the basis of architecture? What is left out or unquestioned in the adherence to this origin myth and the canon from which it stems?

*"No one can say what will become of our civilization when it has really met different civilizations by means other than the shock of conquest and domination. But we have to admit that this encounter has not yet taken place at the level of an authentic dialogue. That is why we are in a kind of lull or interregnum in which we can no longer practice the dogmatism of a single truth and in stepped."*

*- Paul Ricoeur (Universal Civilization and National Cultures, 1961)*

Decades into the process of decolonization, we remain in a lull. But until the imbalances of architectural history are acknowledged, engaged with, and adjusted, skepticism must reign.

with an awkwardly deep interior. Based on the handful of times I've visited, the divide between locals and Yalies is immediately obvious. Parallel to the dividing line of College Street, the order counter and bar acts as a partition between the two demographics: members of Yale linger at the front of the restaurant, and New Haveners at the back. Even stranger is that there are undergraduates with their MacBooks and their iPads submitting their reading responses or cramming for their midterms, while locals pass through for a quick meal. Combined with the assortment of neon beer signage, alcoholic license, and the club-like projection of the Cantina logo on the sidewalk, New Haven's treasured new fast food restaurant is a corporatized pastiche of millennial culture, totaling to a truly uncanny dining experience.

Credit must be given to *Yum!*'s attempt at upscaling the fast food vernacular, typically peppered alongside truck stops and rural American landscapes. They have transformed a transitional non-space for fulfilling basic human needs to a space for lingering, and a nicely furnished one at that. It brings to question whether the contemporary vernacular of downtown New Haven is a semi-accidental attempt at a sort of social neutrality between Yale and New Haven through fast-casual food establishments. The long-term outcome of New Haven's Taco Bell is yet to be determined, but I, for one, am definitely interested in its future. In the meantime, *Live Más*.

## The Third Typology

*David Schaengold M, Arch 1 2020*

In his 1977 essay "The Third Typology," Anthony Vidler proposes that three typologies have "informed the production of Architecture" since the 18th century. Vidler uses the word *typology* in an unconventional way in this essay. When architecture students think of typologies, we usually imagine formal-programmatic examples like the Bungalow or Tower Block, or sometimes purely formal examples like the Greek Cross or the High Rise. What Vidler means by typology is something more like a grounding, or justification; this sense is present in the normal usage as well, of course, but in this essay the three typologies are far more abstract: Nature, the Machine, and the City. Vidler's essay was about formal, Western Architecture, but Nature and City, understood as typologies in Vidler's sense, can also help us better understand vernacular architectures.

Nature, the first typology, is illustrated by Abbé Laugier's *Essai sur l'Architecture*. Laugier's treatise, with its famous frontispiece image of the primitive hut, attempts to justify the evolution of the classical forms of column and pediment as an evolutionary outgrowth of initially non-human forms like tree trunks. Though not discussed in Vidler's essay, Nature can also be used as way of dividing Architecture from not-Architecture. In Hastings Hall in the fall of 2017, for instance, Mario Carpo offered some remarks concerning Nature to the first-years taking Peter Eisenman's Formal Analysis class. "A Gothic cathedral," he said, "grows out of the earth like a potato. It is not until Alberti that we first have Architecture." Professor Carpo was proposing a boundary between what humans do *qua* animals, and what they do *qua* humans. In his account, the Gothic belongs to the natural, animal aspect of human existence (don't termites also make impressive-looking structures?), and it took the geniuses of the early Renaissance to invent a mode of building whose main sphere of action is the uniquely human faculty of the intellect.

Discourse about vernacular architecture regularly deploys both Laugier and Carpo's concepts of Nature. At YSoA we frequently hear contemporary architects invoke the vernacular when they are discussing how to build in harmony with local climates; Sean Godsell, in his lecture on October 18th, spoke in the tradition of Laugier when he discussed the importance to his own work of the ventilation and shading properties of the veranda as found in Southeast Asian vernaculars. We are also sometimes invited to consider the contrast between "organic" urban environments that "crop up" unplanned and those that are "rationally" planned.

Both of these ways of identifying Vernacular Architecture with Nature have positive and pejorative uses, but even when architects are seeking to learn from vernacular traditions rather than dismissing them, the dominance of Nature as a typology is limiting. The titular typology of Vidler's essay provides a different and, I think, superior grounding for architects who want to understand vernacular architectures. This typology is the city. Vidler writes: "In the accumulated experience of the city, its public spaces and institutional forms, a typology can be understood that defies a one-to-one reading of function, but which, at the same time, ensures a relation at another level to a continuing tradition of city life. The distinguishing characteristic of the new ontology . . . is that the city . . . is and always has been political in its essence." For Aldo Rossi, who is uppermost in Vidler's mind here, the city in this typological sense does not mean urbanism but an assembly of formal and semantic elements that are meaningful for political communities: public squares, meeting tents, steeples and minarets, stepwells and aqueducts.

There are many ways architects can draw on the idea of vernacular architectures as cities (whether urban or not), but what they will all have in common is an understanding of vernaculars as constructed traditions. Like the tradition of formal, Western Architecture that we study at Yale, every vernacular is a deliberately created, transgenerational artifact. Vernaculars are not like termite mounds (nor, for that matter, is the cathedral of Amiens), built purely to regulate climate for their inhabitants. They are rather, like all important human artifacts, addressed to the minds and bodies of other humans, inevitably embodying the specific values and power of particular communities.

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*Issue Editors Alex Pineda Jangeward, Maya Sorabjee*

*Graphic Design Jiru Hong*

*Coordinating Editors*

*Andrew Economos Miller,*

*Katie Lau,*

*X, Christine Pan*

*Publishers*

*Matthew Wagstaffe,*

*Dina Taha*

*Web Editor Seth Thompson*

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*Please send comments and*

*corrections to*

*paprika.ysoa@gmail.com.*

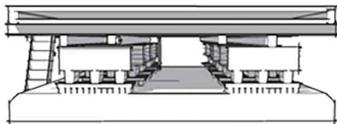
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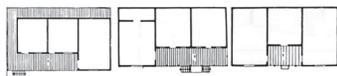


Foundation: To prevent humidity and moisture from entering the building, the entire structure is lifted off the ground. The first layer is a cement pad foundation, with individual footers for layers of timber beams rotated 90 degrees and stacked on each other to build height. The size of the timber increases from the bottom to top to account for the structural loads.



Room: In this climate, rooms have changeable functions. One single room can be a bedroom, living room, dining room, or even kitchen. The rooms are seasonal, meaning that one room can be a bedroom and dining room during the cold season, but when it becomes warm again, all these activities might move to another space, like into the *ivan*.

*Iwan: An iwan* is a semi-open hall which connects open to enclosed spaces, and prevents rain from getting on the building's inner, porous facade. The main *ivan* is bigger than any other room in the house and it serves as the living room. It is primarily located on the east or south side of the building and is often raised to provide better views and ventilation. The depth of the *ivan* is such that it can avert the undesirable sunlight in summer without blocking it in winter.



Peripheral passage: These are exterior spaces with two rows of columns. They serve several environmental as well as circulatory purposes, protecting from rainfall and direct sunlight during the warm season, providing a shaded space and allowing natural ventilation in the summer, and allowing a connection between the larger *ivan*.

Balcony: *An iwan* on the second or third floor functions as a balcony. Usually the balconies are raised above the *ivan* and the space beneath is used for storage.

Attic: A room adjacent to the balcony, usually for guests. Because of its location, it receives the best ventilation and view and has individual access to *ivan*.

Sloped Roof: Due to near-constant rainfall, roofs in this region are sloped. The empty space between the ceiling and sloped roof is designed to assist air flow and ventilation, and it is a suitable place for storing food during the year. Wood and natural fiber are the main construction materials in this architecture. Dense forests and rice farms are major sources for building materials. Areas that have access to clay incorporate the material into the roof for durability.

Gazebo: Gazebos are semi-open triangular or trapezoidal porches at the back or side of a building, created by the extension of the roof towards the end of the *ivan*. Traditionally used as a service space, a gazebo is located on the sides that receive most of the autumn and winter winds, and protect the house from heavy diagonal rainfall. The space below the gazebo is suitable for keeping livestock. Usually, there are no windows, thus preventing thermal exchange in the winter.

Gilan is one of the northernmost provinces of Iran. Tucked against the Caspian Sea, Gilan is so humid and has such high yearly rainfall that Rasht, the capital, is known internationally as the "City of Silver Rains." In the south, the Alborz Mountains trap the humidity and steam produced by the sea. Gilan province consists of two parts: the mountainous, forested southern areas and the plain of the Northern coastline. These geographic conditions have defined the architecture of the province. Many traditional and climate-responsive solutions have been devised to efficiently prevent moisture and humidity, provide natural ventilation, and navigate rainfall.

By studying the vernacular of this region, we can learn how architectures like this have engaged with their environments and how the people of these places have designed unique strategies for thermal comfort. In order to make the best use of natural ventilation and avoid having stagnant moisture, each element of a building is located apart from the others. In addition to being an effective sustainable architecture, this approach to design has resulted in an aesthetically-satisfying built environment with comfort and convenience for the people of Gilan. Generally, open peripheral spaces and sloped roofs are the most notable features of this architecture. Semi-open spaces and vivid layers of facades blend the outdoor and indoor, developing a close relationship between the residents and their surrounding environment.

As Gilan remains temperate but moist for most of the year, reducing humidity in residential buildings is key to providing comfort. Thus, enabling free air and wind circulation around the human body and environment is crucial. Design and construction in this region require meticulous solutions that can resist moisture penetration through the floor and ceiling. The vernacular buildings often employ the same key features of construction. Detailed below, these spaces and techniques illustrate the strong focus on environmental engagement in the architecture of Gilan.

*The Vernacular Architecture of Gilan*

*Arghavan Taheri M, Arch 1 2020*

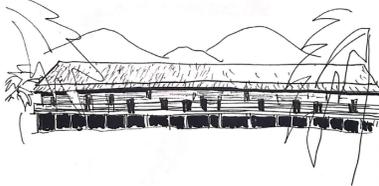
## An Ethnographic Walk in Hutong

### Jingqiu Zhang MED 2019

This issue's call for proposals included an invitation to reinvent the infamous Primitive Hut, asking contributors to either speculate on a different starting point for architecture, critique Laugier's proposition, or simply offer an alternative for their personal backgrounds. Scattered throughout this spread are the submissions we received.

Serena Cheng

Multifamily (ban longhouse (rumah panjang) in Sarawak, Malaysia.



### "Vernacular" In Practice: Questions for Architects

Practitioners around the world are grappling with the role of vernacular architecture in their work, confronting the building traditions of foreign countries in addition to those of their own. We approached some firms with a few simple questions. Below are the answers we received.

What does "vernacular" architecture mean to you?

### Lara Bruz + Patricia Bascanos, Social Practice Architecture (SoPA):

Vernacular architecture is what architecture is in its essence. It is the answer to the necessity of having a place to shelter, for which in each case you have a certain number of constraints, such as available materials, weather, or cultural traditions. All these give as a result a construction that is adapted to the place where it is built and that satisfies the necessities and expectations of the people who will occupy it. For us, any other architecture that does not accomplish this is the one that should have a suffix such as fetish or any other similar adjective. Therefore vernacular architecture is a practical source that can never be arbitrary or replicated without questioning and adapting to the new site conditions.

### Michael Daane Bolier:

The beauty of not being architecture.

### Jurriaan van Stige (LEVS Architecten):

Basically the approach of LEVS Architecten always starts with where we design and build. Not only of course, the style but the real elements like anthropology, cultural habits, material use, climate etc. that define for example the way houses are built, streets are made, or the way we deal with private and public space and the in-between space. That doesn't mean that we go back to the past and make historical architecture but we try to analyze the meaning of these elements and connect them with this era. There is nothing bad about looking back into history but we build for the future and for that reason, for instance, sustainability has also an important impact on our work and approach as for example new possibilities in building methods.

Is it a practical source or a stylistic fetish, neither, or both?

### LEVS:

It is clearly a source but has never the meaning of a style. Architecture is about the connection it can make between people, their background and culture, etc. and a new interpretation.

### Bolier:

Neither, it is something that can only be approached on a conceptual level.

Does it play a role in your work as a designer? If so, in what way?

### SoPA:

Vernacular architecture has a key role in our work. When developing a project, we always seek to get inspired by the local identity of the place, the existing resources and craftsmanship, and the site conditions. The new building must be an element of appropriation and participation of the community, a place where the users can express their necessities and whose benefits must eventually return to them. We try to combine European contemporary methods of architecture, which we have gained during our studies and professional experience, with traditional local building techniques. We adapt each to the other, both the modern and the traditional, to create something innovative and suited to its specific location.

### Bolier:

Yes, sometimes it does, with our project in Sri Lanka for instance. In Sri Lanka, vernacular architecture is the dominant architectural style. An architecture born out of an exciting cultural period when – in part coerced by scarcity of self-reliance policies of the 70s – an avant garde group of artists and architects rediscovered local building traditions that offered an alternative to the dominant tropical modernism of the 50s. But as things go, this vernacular architecture became commodified only to represent the country as a "tropical paradise." Vernacular architecture as an ersatz authenticity to be consumed by tourists.

This understanding of Sri Lankan architectural culture informed our approach. Rethinking what it meant to build in a country that is suffering from the violence of third world capitalism. Thus, for us vernacular in this context was not the temple but the shed, not the sinhala roof tile but corrugated roof sheet, architecture not as a pristine image but as the result of scarcity and unskilled labor.

Would you consider yourself a "critical regionalist"? Does the term require redefinition?

### LEVS:

I think the definition of Kenneth Frampton comes most close to our work and approach but the writings of Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefevre are also an inspiring source for us.

### SoPA:

In terms of sustainability and value of cultural background and heritage, we may consider ourselves as defenders of a critical regionalism, since it is meaningful and ecologically worthwhile to consider the specifics of the site and the region. Beyond the consideration of basic surrounding conditions (climate, light, topography, etc.) – generally taken into account by all architects – and specific historical and geographical tradition (construction techniques, arts, crafts, etc.), "critical regionalism" should be redefined to not only promote the global-local combination, but also to take awareness of the specific time and the specific people

"This city can be known only by an activity of an ethnographic kind: you must orient yourself in it, not by book, by address, but by walking, by sight, by habit, by experiences: here every discovery is intense and fragile, it can be repeated or recovered only by memory of the trace it has left in you." - Roland Barthes (Empire of Signs, 1982)

"Vernacular" does not only refer to physical building forms, but also the human actions that animate them. The dynamic interrelationships between daily spatial practices of people and forms of space differentiate the "vernacular" from dull authoritarian master planning. When forms, behaviors, and meaning collapse in those unique spaces, as Roland Barthes says, the rich experience can only be captured through fully immersing oneself. Sounds, smells, textures, movements, and rhythms imprint exquisite traces on both the physical landscape as well as the visitors' psychological landscape.

The hutong, narrow alleyways formed between lines of traditional courtyard houses, are an urban vernacular in Beijing that have indelibly imprinted their traces on my mind. The seemingly chaotic and ugly environment they create captures my attention not because of its nostalgic atmosphere but because of its humane quality. To depict it, neither objective descriptions nor critical discussion is enough. However, a walk through the hutong is probably a good place to begin.

Noon, August Eighth, 2018.

Harsh sun, the air is dry with no wind, typical summer day in Beijing.

At this moment, I am stuck in the modernists' "dead street", an almost

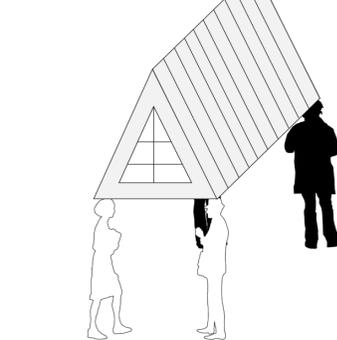
50-meter-wide road with six automobile lanes. Empty is a suitable word to describe the place. Besides several cars passing by, there are only a few people struggling to hail taxis. Robert Venturi once said "Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect." I ask myself: as an architect, can I learn from this particular "landscape" or is there something that can be revolutionary? The freshly-painted white fences divide the street into isolated parcels to stop pedestrians from crossing the road for "safety reasons." Faint smells of paint and exhaust mix together in my lungs. Across the road, a bulldozer is rumbling. The place used to be a quite dense hutong neighborhood. Now the life here is gone. Only two houses remain. "Quite lonely," I say to myself. Among this vast land of ruin in the city center, both the bulldozer and the houses it intends to demolish seem miserably tiny. After

Dominique Cheng

What is it made of? Soft, durable fabric; shapeable.

How is it built? Conventional binding, stitching, hemming, pleating, and rucking for structural integrity.

Who and What is it for? A loner; nomad with no material possessions; for solitary confinement or meditation.



Rukshan the 27th

Shed

involved and addressed to. By this means "critical regionalism" may provide the chance for contemporary – yet based in tradition – proposals that are framed in a specific place and time, with all the past and present socio-cultural connotations (migration, cultural exchange, socio-digital transformation, etc). Without falling into an exaltation of identity (so potentially hazardous in diverse political and social fields nowadays) "critical regionalism" should be steadily attending to update what "local" actually means.

### Bolier:

We hope to be critical and universalist. For instance our project for the UNESCO world heritage site Kinderdijk – hopefully completed next year – engages its context by transcending the local and traditional by constructing a narrative of the universal, of modernity.

Do you think there is such a thing as a "digital vernacular" today?

### SoPA:

Technological development raises new questions and provides new opportunities worldwide, also as far as architecture is concerned. The fact of having new technological and digital tools can enable new ways of doing and may support a progress in certain processes, techniques, or crafts. Some examples of "digital architecture" (referring here for instance to curvilinear, fluid, extravagant formal outcomes) are often whimsical results of computer programming, far away from a sensitive answer to the function, the place, or the user. Nevertheless "digital vernacular" is possible and advantageous in the sense that digital tools can support and facilitate the design and construction of an architecture guided by vernacular principles. "Digital" may offer new chances to improve vernacular based architecture.

### Bolier:

No idea. Hope not.

### LEVS:

From 1984, I have been working with computers and our office was and is in the Netherlands a frontrunner in using the computer as a tool to make our projects better. We never used it as "a fun instrument" to show off or to make buildings like Zaha Hadid, UNStudio, etc., just for the fact that we can make blurry architecture that in my opinion is maybe impressive but doesn't deliver a contribution to what is really needed. Of course we use the latest BIM technology, Grasshopper, Saffra, etc. for making smarter designs, but always based on our belief that it should make buildings that are contributing to the most simple questions like reducing energy, livable cities, humanism, etc. So I have no idea how digital and

only 15 minutes of walking, I feel that my physical efforts and attentions have been consumed by the "landscape."

I turn right and accelerate a little bit to escape from the imposed scale and the joyless atmosphere. I turn right again and finally dive into the hutong neighborhood that I was searching for. In contrast to the enormous road, this intimate space is perfect for walking. It's around five meters wide, a dimension that puts a car at risk of getting stuck in certain corners. If *Learning from Las Vegas* suggests "big spaces, high speeds" and "an architecture of bold communication rather than subtle expression,"<sup>[1]</sup> the space here is about narrowness and enclosure, moving slowly with speeds of 30-meters-per-minute. A walk in a hutong reveals subtle textures that can only be discerned if one reads with enough proximity and attention.

I look around. Two walls of grey brick frame the space. Windows punctuate the "frame" with a constant rhythm. They are the expressions of life behind the wall, the life within those subdivided and high-density shieluan. Standing on tiptoes, one might accidentally get a glimpse of people's living rooms or kitchens. Sometimes, windows are covered with translucent curtains or carefully decorated with lace, to prevent accidental visual intrusions while allowing light to enter the interior. Noises and voices are leaking from individual households' window, and doorways. A television broadcasts news about the stock market on my left, the bubbling sound of a cooking pot on my right. . . I hear murmurs between children and parents, and sometimes tweets of the birds raised by the residents.

As architects, when designing a building, we always talk about the boundaries between private and public, solid and void, figure and ground, building and environment. So what are the differentiations between them here? The fact is that in the hutong, building forms and walls do not set the definition for space, as the edges are easily blurred by apertures, sounds, smells, and the individuals' modifications on details. Multiple dimensions of spatial practices aggregate in this single alleyway. As I am walking, I find the lines between them are rather difficult to draw. They vary all the time, just like the ever-changing zone between riverbank and riverbed.

Perhaps, in hutong, due to the density and the relative freedom from strict building regulations, I begin to understand space differently. It is the residents' behavioral patterns that overpower the building forms here. The brick courtyard walls, gables, and tiled roofs sink into the background, becoming the invisible stage for the dramas of daily life. During my short walk, the framed alley has already changed its functions as its users and their "props" change.

As the journey continues, I realize the hutong is not merely the space for ventilation or circulation as it was originally planned in Yuan Dynasty, nor is it a commercial space like the other streets nearby. I observe how residents treat the place as their living room, laundry room, and nursery, instinctively extending their private lives to the street. In one corner, wires and climbing plants extend from individual households. They organically cover the mottled plasters of the wall. Consequently, they become the essential infrastructure and texture of the hutong. Clothes and bedding are hung on the wire, with its one end tied to the wall and the other tied to a pole. The dimensions fit within the environment perfectly, almost as if it was carefully measured and designed beforehand. In the next corner, when there is a pocket space and shade, several old people pull out their in-house chairs and even sofas, sitting comfortably in the street. They are having a nostalgic conversation about the diminution of the old part of Beijing. Meanwhile, their grandchildren are running around in this historic framework.

As I keep walking, I start to understand the diverse communal life that might be borne out of necessity instead of intentional design. A lack of indoor space urges residents to figure out ways to utilize places outside their houses. Their repetitive daily spatial practices form distinct patterns that we might call "vernacular."

I hear the whistling sound of cars, and realize I am approaching the end of the hutong neighborhood. What just happened was like drifting in a river of life. I passed by nine conversations, four gatherings and five individuals contemplating their cigarettes and their lives. Each corner and pocket contains interventions quietly done by the residents. Sometimes a tiny garden of vegetables, sometimes a careful extension of the eaves. I can easily understand the reason and aesthetics behind those details. When I read and think about them, I shall either call them the wisdom of life or perhaps "design." But the term given to such spatial practices doesn't matter. What matters is the authentic experience this urban vernacular condition creates and the process of learning from the existing but threatened hutong "landscape."

[1] Robert Venturi, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge: M.I.T press, 1986), 8.

### On the ground

10/25 Thursday  
"The Le Croix burst open . . . anyone want to shotgun it" – Zelig Fok Omar Ghandi's studio produces a very big site model. It is very big.

10/26 Friday  
"What you have drawn is a sex palace" – said to Dimitris Hartonas during mid-review. This year's art and architecture Halloween party is themed "Consumer Nightmare." "I was genuinely terrified when they brought the boxes down . . . this party is too alternative for me" – SOM student

10/27 Saturday  
The Planning and Development site visit to Long Island City was cancelled due to "bad weather." We all know the real reason. Both Iven and Rukshan accidentally slept through the Halloween party.

10/28 Sunday  
The editors of *Paprika!*: Halloween II host a pumpkin carving fund-raiser. Tayyaba and Luke use a dremel to create their trypo-phobia-inducing gourd. Spooky. Lamberto Bava's "Demons" screened in Hastings Hall. Thomas Mahon searches for beloved big and black jacket (with a sticky plastic waterproof sheen), lost at the Halloween party.

10/29 Monday  
Environmental Design guest speaker Ning Xiang keeps students on their toes with his unexpected exclamations throughout the lecture "AHHH." Ann Murrow Johnson delivers her talk "World Building: Designing Experiential Stories at Disney" as part of the Brown Bag Lunch series.

Humans of the early millennial period were known to occupy InstaHuts, or iHuts, basic shelters made of LED panels that glowed at night with live streams of rendered architectural images. An operable roof allowed for periodic air exchange and improved WiFi signal. Anthropologists suspect that the size of the iHut may have been determined by that of the human in fetal position, a bodily format assumed for the nightly ritual of "bedtime scroll."



vernacular have a connection. Maybe it's *Blade Runner*, *Star Wars*, or other ideas that we as human beings all of a sudden wake up and become happy in this kind of clean or desolate cities, as if pollution and noise took over, or desert-like areas with shining glassy buildings that look like untouchable cars.

## Southern Hospitality

### Page Comeaux M.Arch I 2020

The State of Louisiana has a long and tumultuous history. Before the near extermination of native peoples by European settlers, six cultural and linguistic groups – the Atakapa, the Caddo, the Tunica, the Natchez, the Muskogean, and the Chitimacha – inhabited the region, each having many subsets of tribes with their own names and identities.<sup>[1]</sup> Later, the territory changed hands between the French, the Spanish, and the English before it became a state, but it was first colonized in the late 17th century and named *La Louisiane* in honor of King Louis XIV.

Early French settlers in Louisiana quickly came to the realization that the methods of European construction they were familiar with would not perform well in the subtropical climate of this newly "acquired" colonial outpost. They looked to the methods of construction in colonies in the West Indies and throughout the Caribbean, systematically changing their European forms to better fit local conditions.<sup>[2]</sup> These changes included lifting the structures off of the ground to increase airflow, incorporating large overhangs for shading, and altering their material composition altogether.

By the time that Louisiana was purchased from France by the United States in 1803, these design strategies, paired with a reverence for classical architecture and growing wealth among farmers, led to the appearance of plantation homes that remain preserved throughout the American South. Today they play host to joyful, albeit ironic, weddings that take place on the same premises where brutal acts were once committed against enslaved peoples.

Frederick Luke Olmsted observed on his travels as a young journalist to the "Seaboard Slave States" that the plantation homes had living spaces for the family raised an entire story above the ground – effectively a *piano nobile* – and had by then incorporated large galleries and "french doors" for shading and natural ventilation. While this development in construction was primarily meant to increase thermal comfort within, it served a dual purpose for the plantation owners, becoming a platform from which they could surveil a thriving agricultural machine of slaves and indentured servants.<sup>[3]</sup> The stature and positioning of these homes on the plantation in relation to the slave quarters also ensured the masters' dominance over their human "property." The designation of plantation was given to any farm that held 20 or more slaves. Of the estimated 46,200 plantations known to exist in 1860, 20,700 had 20 to 30 slaves and 2,300 had a workforce of 100 or more.<sup>[4]</sup>



I attended college at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where the original Art Center (pictured left), built in 1967, is a 1:1 scale model of one such plantation. Hermitage Plantation<sup>[5]</sup> (pictured right) was built in 1812, and is located two hours away from the University in Darrow, Louisiana. A tourism website for Hermitage boasts: "The beauty and grace of the Old South are reborn again at Hermitage Plantation, Louisiana's earliest known Greek revival mansion."<sup>[6]</sup> The glorification of these homes in the form of a tourist destination or an art museum by a famous local architect<sup>[7]</sup> entirely removes the practice of slavery from the conversation about the architecture that enforced it.

Similar homes and their architectural devices are embedded deeply within Southern culture. I grew up in the city of New Iberia, founded during Spanish rule, where one of the Weeks family plantation homes stands on Main Street. Once overlooking a profitable sugarcane plantation and 40 of the family's 300 total slaves,<sup>[8]</sup> it now serves as the backdrop for the annual Mardi Gras parade and life in the city's downtown. Part of the plantation homes' educational value may still reside in their response to a harsh climate, but their persistence in Southern culture is not based on how well they handled the sweltering summer months. This persistence is instead because they represent "the Old South," a long-forgotten time when America was great for some and fatal for others (to paraphrase a recent campaign slogan).

Eduardo Mouhtar Rafeh

If all buildings are truly descendant from Laugier's hut, then it could only mean that the notion, "vernacular" transcends the formal, and aesthetic arguments, and revolves around a more sincere response to the particular relations between man and his most basic needs. For that matter, today's primitive hut is closer to an informal settlement's house made from brick and zinc, than to any other obscure premise. Today's primitive hut is still the need for shelter.



My Primitive Hut, Warren, Ohio.



To vilify these structures would be to enliven support for them amongst the same faction that resists the removal of monuments to the Confederacy. However, since the homes do hold a trace of architectural value, the education surrounding them must include the broader picture. When this type of architecture can no longer be separated from its past, then we may be able to have a conversation about where its vernacular should stand in contemporary architectural discourse. Herein lies the ethical conflict of appreciating the environmental design of plantation homes whilst ignoring their function and context. We must begin to acknowledge the history of this architecture; until then, our environmental design textbooks will continue to praise how well the French Louisiana plantation houses were adapted to a very humid climate.<sup>[9]</sup>

[1] Judith Kallisher Schaffer, Edward F. Haas, and Michael L. Kurtz, *Louisiana: A History*, 6th ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014).  
[2] Jay D. Edwards, "Upper Louisiana's French Vernacular Architecture In The Greater French, via. final.pdf."  
[3] Bernadette Stadler, and Sarah Atkinson, "ARCHITECTURES OF CONTROL: Spatial Incarceration, https://statesofincarceration.org/story/architectures-control-spatial-struct-16-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-24-25-26-27-28-29-30-31-32-33-34-35-36-37-38-39-40-41-42-43-44-45-46-47-48-49-50-51-52-53-54-55-56-57-58-59-60-61-62-63-64-65-66-67-68-69-70-71-72-73-74-75-76-77-78-79-80-81-82-83-84-85-86-87-88-89-90-91-92-93-94-95-96-97-98-99-100-101-102-103-104-105-106-107-108-109-110-111-112-113-114-115-116-117-118-119-120-121-122-123-124-125-126-127-128-129-130-131-132-133-134-135-136-137-138-139-140-141-142-143-144-145-146-147-148-149-150-151-152-153-154-155-156-157-158-159-160-161-162-163-164-165-166-167-168-169-170-171-172-173-174-175-176-177-178-179-180-181-182-183-184-185-186-187-188-189-190-191-192-193-194-195-196-197-198-199-200-201-202-203-204-205-206-207-208-209-210-211-212-213-214-215-216-217-218-219-220-221-222-223-224-225-226-227-228-229-230-231-232-233-234-235-236-237-238-239-240-241-242-243-244-245-246-247-248-249-250-251-252-253-254-255-256-257-258-259-260-261-262-263-264-265-266-267-268-269-270-271-272-273-274-275-276-277-278-279-280-281-282-283-284-285-286-287-288-289-290-291-292-293-294-295-296-297-298-299-300-301-302-303-304-305-306-307-308-309-310-311-312-313-314-315-316-317-318-319-320-321-322-323-324-325-326-327-328-329-330-331-332-333-334-335-336-337-338-339-340-341-342-343-344-345-346-347-348-349-350-351-352-353-354-355-356-357-358-359-360-361-362-363-364-365-366-367-368-369-370-371-372-373-374-375-376-377-378-379-380-381-382-383-384-385-386-387-388-389-390-391-392-393-394-395-396-397-398-399-400-401-402-403-404-405-406-407-408-409-410-411-412-413-414-415-416-417-418-419-420-421-422-423-424-425-426-427-428-429-430-431-432-433-434-435-436-437-438-439-440-441-442-443-444-445-446-447-448-449-450-451-452-453-454-455-456-457-458-459-460-461-462-463-464-465-466-467-468-469-470-471-472-473-474-475-476-477-478-479-480-481-482-483-484-485-486-487-488-489-490-491-492-493-494-495-496-497-498-499-500-501-502-503-504-505-506-507-508-509-510-511-512-513-514-515-516-517-518-519-520-521-522-523-524-525-526-527-528-529-530-531-532-533-534-535-536-537-538-539-540-541-542-543-544-545-546-547-548-549-550-551-552-553-554-555-556-557-558-559-560-561-562-563-564-565-566-567-568-569-570-571-572-573-574-575-576-577-578-579-580-581-582-583-584-585-586-587-588-589-590-591-592-593-594-595-596-597-598-599-600-601-602-603-604-605-606-607-608-609-610-611-612-613-614-615-616-617-618-619-620-621-622-623-624-625-626-627-628-629-630-631-632-633-634-635-636-637-638-639-640-641-642-643-644-645-646-647-648-649-650-651-652-653-654-655-656-657-658-659-660-661-662-663-664-665-666-667-668-669-670-671-672-673-674-675-676-677-678-679-680-681-682-683-684-685-686-687-688-689-690-691-692-693-694-695-696-697-698-699-700-701-702-703-704-705-706-707-708-709-710-711-712-713-714-715-716-717-718-719-720-721-722-723-724-725-726-727-728-729-730-731-732-733-734-735-736-737-738-739-740-741-742-743-744-745-746-747-748-749-750-751-752-753-754-755-756-757-758-759-760-761-762-763-764-765-766-767-768-769-770-771-772-773-774-775-776-777-778-779-780-781-782-783-784-785-786-787-788-789-790-791-792-793-794-795-796-797-798-799-800-801-802-803-804-805-806-807-808-809-810-811-812-813-814-815-816-817-818-819-820-821-822-823-824-825-826-827-828-829-830-831-832-833-834-835-836-837-838-839-840-841-842-843-844-845-846-847-848-849-850-851-852-853-854-855-856-857-858-859-860-861-862-863-864-865-866-867-868-869-870-871-872-873-874-875-876-877-878-879-880-881-882-883-884-885-886-887-888-889-890-891-892-893-894-895-896-897-898-899-900-901-902-903-904-905-906-907-908-909-910-911-912-913-914-915-916-917-918-919-920-921-922-923-924-925-926-927-928-929-930-931-932-933-934-935-936-937-938-939-940-941-942-943-944-945-946-947-948-949-950-951-952-953-954-955-956-957-958-959-960-961-962-963-964-965-966-967-968-969-970-971-972-973-974-975-976-977-978-979-980-981-982-983-984-985-986-987-988-989-990-991-992-993-994-995-996-997-998-999-1000-1001-1002-1003-1004-1005-1006-1007-1008-1009-1010-1011-1012-1013-1014-1015-1016-1017-1018-1019-1020-1021-1022-1023-1024-1025-1026-1027-1028-1029-1030-1031-1032-1033-1034-1035-1036-1037-1038-1039-1040-1041-1042-1043-1044-1045-1046-1047-1048-1049-1050-1051-1052-1053-1054-1055-1056-1057-1058-1059-1060-1061-1062-1063-1064-1065-1066-1067-1068-1069-1070-1071-1072-1073-1074-1075-1076-1077-1078-1079-1080-1081-1082-1083-1084-1085-1086-1087-1088-1089-1090-1091-1092-1093-1094-1095-1096-1097-1098-1099-1100-1101-