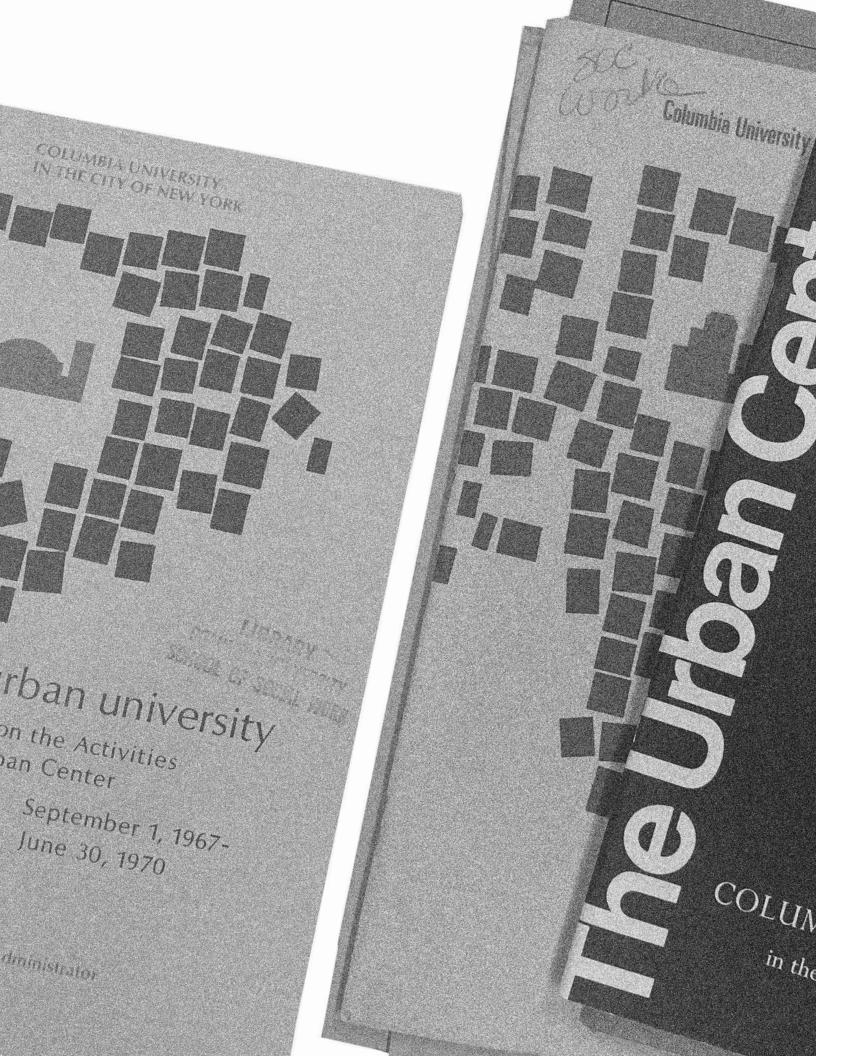


INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUES + NEW PARADIGMS



The Legacy of the Urban Center and the Struggle Toward Institutionalization

Course:

University + City

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Term: Spring 2025

This paper examines the legacy of the Urban Center through the Faculty-Student Technical Assistance Project (FSTAP) at the School of Architecture, which ran from 1970 to 1973. It highlights numerous efforts made, primarily by minority students of the time, to institutionalize this grassroots engagement into lasting change.

The paper begins by examining how FSTAP reimagined Columbia's relationship with Harlem during a moment of political unrest and growing criticism of the university's role in urban displacement. It then traces the project's decline in the School of Architecture following the expiration of Ford Foundation funding, using archival evidence to document how efforts to institutionalize community engagement ultimately unraveled. In its final section, the paper reflects on what remains of this experiment today in the School of Architecture – now known as GSAPP – by identifying both the surviving traces of FSTAP's legacy and the structural barriers that have prevented its renewal. It argues that without sustained resources, shared power, and long-term commitments to community-led work, institutional gestures toward change remain largely symbolic. The paper concludes by calling for models of engagement rooted not in temporary experiments, but in justice, solidarity, and the redistribution of institutional power.

A Model for Change: The Origins of the Urban Center and the Promise of the FSTAP

In the late 1960s, Columbia University found itself at the center of growing public scrutiny over its role in the worsening conditions of New York City's Black and brown neighborhoods, particularly in Harlem. Long-standing issues of racial segregation, housing discrimination, police violence, and urban renewal had already fueled waves of community-led protest and rebellion. Columbia, located just blocks from these struggles, faced mounting pressure to move beyond academic detachment and leverage its institutional power to address what had become widely recognized as the "urban crisis."

In October 1966, Columbia University received a \$10 million line of credit from the Ford Foundation, aimed at pushing the University to take a more direct and substantial role in addressing the urgent urban and racial crisis unfolding in New York City and across the country. Columbia's then president, Grayson Kirk, appointed a "Committee on Urban-Minority Problems", consisting of faculty and administrators from the Teacher's College, Economics, Journalism, Public Administration, and School of General Studies.¹ The committee recommended the establishment of a "Center for Urban and Minority Affairs", which would subsequently be named "The Urban Center". From the outset, the Urban Center did not run its own programs. Instead, it aimed to enhance the ability of other University departments to engage with community needs by appointing liaison staff—urban affairs specialists—within various schools, including the School of Architecture, to facilitate this work at different levels.

Framed as both an academic and community-facing intervention, the Urban Center aimed to position Columbia as a national leader in urban and minority affairs. Its mandate was to fund and support a range of experimental initiatives designed to address urban inequality through partnerships with community organizations and academic departments. These early projects included initiatives in community education, economic development, and public policy, with the School of Architecture (SOA) receiving nearly half a million dollars in direct support, making it one of the largest recipients of Center funding.³

> "Framed as both an academic and community-facing intervention, the Urban Center aimed to position Columbia as a national leader in urban and minority affairs."



Professor of Political Sciene and Urban Center Fellow Introduces Mrs. Coretta Scott King to his students in the class "Nonviolent Social Change," a course examining the life and philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Source: A Five-Year Report on the Activities of The Urban Center: July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1973

The Urban Center's five years of activity unfolded in two distinct phases: the "Catalyst of Change" phase (1968-1970) and the "New Directions" phase (1970–1973). 4

In its early years, the Center operated primarily as a funding body, providing seed support for projects across various schools at Columbia with the expectation that these efforts would become self-sustaining. However, this hands-off strategy quickly revealed its limitations.

By 1970, recognizing the need for a more direct role, the Center shifted toward a targeted, operational approach—focusing its remaining resources on a smaller set of strategic initiatives that sought to promise deeper and more lasting institutional and community impact. One of the most significant of these initiatives was the Faculty-Student Technical Assistance Project (FSTAP),6 an interdisciplinary work-study program anchored in the School of Architecture (SOA). Designed as a "link between minority graduate students and several community organizations in Black Harlem," FSTAP sought to expand and institutionalize hands-on, community-

based training for minority students across Columbia's professional schools —including Architecture, Business, Journalism, Law, and Social Work.

Importantly, FSTAP emerged not only during a period of institutional reckoning for Columbia as a whole but also at a moment of transformational change within the School of Architecture itself. Historically an elite space serving primarily white, wealthy students, the School experienced a rapid demographic shift between 1967 and 1970, with minority student enrollment increasing from just three students to over seventy.⁷ This change reflected broader social movements and new federal investments in urban renewal, which expanded educational access for students historically excluded from the design professions. With this new generation of students came new demands—not just for academic inclusion, but for education that was directly relevant to the struggles of their communities. FSTAP was, in part, created to meet that demand.

How the SOA Began to Redefine

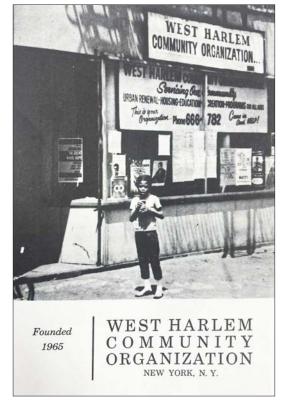
"With this new generation of students came new demands-not just for academic inclusion, but for education that was directly relevant to the struggles of their communities."

- 1. Lloyd A. Johnson, rep., A Five-Year Report on the Activities of The Urban Center: July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1973 (New York, NY: The Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 3.
- 3. Lloyd A. Johnson, rep., A Five-Year Report on the Activities of The Urban Center: July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1973 (New York, NY: The Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 37.
- 4. Ibid. 9-10.
- 5. Ibid.
- Vernon Ben Robinson et al., rep., Rhetoric or Programs? A Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance to West Harlem and South Jamaica (New York, NY: Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 8
- 7. Harold K. Bell and Vernon Ben Robinson, rep., Partnership of Equals: An Action Research Report For Urban Affairs Executives of Universities, Corporations, Governments & Community Organizations (New York, NY: Urban Action & Experimentation Program School of Architecture, 1971), 2.

Columbia's Relationship with Harlem

The activities of the School of Architecture—particularly through its Division of Planning—offer a critical lens for understanding both the promise and the limitations of the Urban Center's legacy. While the Urban Center was envisioned as a university-wide initiative, it was within the School of Architecture that some of its most ambitious community-engaged work took shape. This was not incidental. The School of Architecture, as Dr. Sharon E. Sutton recalls in When Ivory Towers Were Black, had become a leading force in recruiting minority students and transforming its curriculum to reflect humanistic, justice-oriented values.⁸ Central to this transformation was a growing recognition that architecture and planning education could no longer serve only the interests of wealthy clients but needed to prepare students to work with the communities most affected by systemic inequality.

FSTAP's origins were deeply rooted in community struggle. In 1968, the West Harlem Community Organization (WHCO)—through the West Harlem-Morningside Park Committee—led a successful campaign, in coalition with Columbia's minority students, to stop the University's controversial plan to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park. This victory marked a turning point in Columbia's relationship with Harlem, forcing the University to publicly reckon with its role in neighborhood displacement and sparking a wave of student and community organizing. Following this victory, WHCO began to build more formal working relationships with Columbia, particularly with the Urban Center and the Urban Action and Experimentation Project (UAEP) based in the School of Architecture. 10



Cover of Promotional Material for the West Harlem Community Organization.

Source: Rhetoric or Programs? A Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance to West Harlem and South Jamaica

"What made FSTAP particularly significant was its reimagining of Columbia's relationship with Harlem. Rather than treating the community as a passive beneficiary of academic expertise, FSTAP sought to build ongoing, reciprocal partnerships grounded in the priorities of Harlem's residents."

This growing partnership set the stage for the development of FSTAP. Building on the School's earlier work through the Institute of Urban Environment and UAEP, FSTAP was proposed as a formal mechanism to link minority graduate students with Harlem-based organizations in the form of a work-study program. Supported by UAEP, ARCH (Architect's Renewal Committee in Harlem), WHCO, and student leaders, the proposal secured \$400,000 in Ford Foundation funding through the Urban Center's "New Directions" phase. Launched in 1970, FSTAP positioned minority students as both learners and leaders in advancing community-defined planning and development efforts.

What made FSTAP particularly significant was its reimagining of Columbia's relationship with Harlem. Rather than treating the community as a passive beneficiary of academic expertise, FSTAP sought to build ongoing, reciprocal partnerships grounded in the priorities of Harlem's residents. At the heart of this work were the students themselves, many of whom were recruited, supported, and organized through the Black and Puerto Rican Student-Faculty-Administrator Organization (BPRSFAO). These students were not just participants; they were key agents in shaping the direction of the program and ensuring its alignment with community needs. Hired into paid positions to support WHCO's neighborhood revitalization work, they took on roles such as Urban Development Coordinator, Housing Researcher, UDC Information Specialist, and Day-Care Center Coordinator. 12 Through these positions, students provided critical technical assistance while gaining valuable experience that connected their academic training to the real-world struggles of Harlem's communities, demonstrating that community engagement could be both educational and transformative when led by those most directly invested in the work.

Though designed as a university-wide initiative, FSTAP was largely governed by the School of Architecture, which provided much of the leadership and direction for the program.¹³ This made the School not only a key site of action but also a revealing case study in the larger institutional tensions surrounding community engagement. FSTAP represented one of the more ambitious attempts to institutionalize community-based practice at Columbia, yet it remained structurally vulnerable, dependent on short-term funding and never fully integrated into the university's long-term mission. Tracing the story of FSTAP, therefore, exposes not only the possibilities of university-community partnerships but also the recurring pattern of experimental programs that are ultimately abandoned, leaving behind an unfinished legacy that continues to shape Columbia's relationship with Harlem today.

"At the heart of this work were the students themselves, many of whom were recruited, supported, and organized through the Black and Puerto Rican Student-Faculty-Administrator Organization (BPRSFAO)."

- 8. Sharon E. Sutton, When Ivory Towers Were Black: A Story about Race in America's Cities and Universities (New York, New York: Fordham Universitv Press, 2017), xvi.
- Vernon Ben Robinson et al., rep., Rhetoric or Programs? A Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance to West Harlem and South Jamaica (New York, NY: Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 22.
- 10. Ibid.
- 11. Ibid. 67.
- 12. Ibid. 79.
- 13. Ibid. 14.

A Fragile Infrastructure: Struggles for Institutionalization

As expected, the Ford Foundation's monies were exhausted by the summer of 1973. In Urban Center's final Five-Year Report, Urban Center Director Lloyd A. Johnson wrote that "provisions [had been] made for most of the Center's recent activities to be continued through other divisions of the university."14 He added that the future of the remaining activities would depend on the findings of a newly formed Presidential Task Force, expected to deliver its report by November 1, 1973. Yet no such report is explicitly available in the Urban Center's archives, nor is there any evidence that its findings were ever shared with the community partners, students, or faculty most invested in the work.

Around the time the Urban Center was dissolved, internal instability at the School of Architecture further weakened efforts to sustain its community-focused programs. According to accounts described by Dr. Sharon E. Sutton in her book "When Ivory Towers were Black", faculty turnover, failed tenure cases, and the collapse of the Institute of Urban Environment left the Division of Planning without leadership or resources. 5 Meanwhile, the University quietly restructured its urban agenda, distancing itself from the Urban Center's hands-on community work. Despite public praise for the School's success in minority recruitment, administrators sidelined planning in favor of a new social policy program focused on law, business, and political science. The Urban Center itself was reduced to a minor student support office with little institutional power or funding, signaling the University's retreat from its earlier commitments to urban and minority affairs.16

Yet the struggle for institutionalization did not end with the collapse of funding. Archival evidence shows that minority student-technicians and members of the SOA's Black and Puerto Rican Student-Faculty-Administrator Organization (BPRSFAO) emerged as a leading force demanding accountability and sustained university support. Through letters, proposals, and public statements, these students advocated not only for the continuation of FSTAP's work but for broader structural changes at the School of Architecture. Some notable examples of this struggle present in the University Archives include the following:

- "Yet the struggle for institutionalization did not end with the collapse of funding. Archival evidence shows that minority student-technicians and members of the SOA's Black and Puerto Rican Student-Faculty-**Administrator Organization** (BPRSFAO) emerged as a leading force demanding accountability and sustained university support."
- (1) Records from the Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance Program show that the BPRSFAO detailed a proposal for the creation of a Center for Urban and Environmental Research to consolidate all research activities at the School of Architecture into a permanent, communityengaged hub. Building on the legacy of the Institute of Urban Environment, UAEP, and FSTAP, the proposed center aimed to sustain applied work on urban issues while advancing theoretical research in architecture and related fields. 17
- (2) In a letter dated May 24, 1973—just weeks before the Ford funds expired—an attorney representing the BPRSFAO wrote to Dean James Polshek, raising serious complaints about the administration's handling of student and faculty concerns. While the letter does not specify every allegation, it likely reflected growing frustration over issues such as the mishandling of faculty tenure reviews, the dismantling of the Division of Planning's leadership, and the loss of funding for key community-focused programs in the SOA. The letter requested a meeting to resolve these issues but warned that legal action would be pursued if the administration failed to respond. 18

- (3) Over a year later, on November 26, 1974, six members of the BPRSFAO sent another letter—this time to President William J. McGill—urging him to reject recommendations to end university funding for urban projects. They argued that Columbia had both the responsibility and the capacity to continue supporting work that improved urban life, insisting that such efforts were not acts of "charity" but central to the University's educational mission. Citing the worsening social conditions that had fueled the unrest of the 1960s, they called for renewed leadership and long-term institutional accountability. Their letter outlined several clear demands: (1) that the findings of the long-promised Urban Task Force report be made available to all interested parties; (2) that deans and university leaders be held responsible for ensuring their programs meaningfully address urban and community needs; and (3) that no urban programs be eliminated until a comprehensive, university-wide urban development strategy was established. Through these demands, the BPRSFAO called on Columbia to move beyond short-term initiatives and commit to a lasting, structural role in advancing urban justice. 19
- (4) The BPRSFAO, along with other minority student organizations across Columbia's professional schools, recognized that their long-term impact depended on building structures that could outlast temporary funding cycles. Understanding the importance of formalizing their advocacy and organizing efforts, members of the BPRSFAO drafted incorporation papers as a nonprofit organization with a mission focused on educational, scientific, and literary advancement. While it remains unclear whether the organization was ever officially incorporated, the effort itself reflected a broader strategic vision: students understood that formalizing their presence was essential to securing long-term resources, legitimacy, and institutional recognition. This mirrored the work FSTAP student-technicians were doing with Harlem community groups, helping them establish nonprofit and for-profit entities to sustain their work.²⁰

Despite these efforts, the momentum built by FSTAP and its student leaders ultimately failed to secure a permanent place within the University and the School's long-term commitments. The exhaustion of Ford Foundation funding, coupled with internal restructuring and administrative resistance, signaled the end of this ambitious experiment in communityengaged practice. Yet the archival record makes clear that students and community partners did not quietly accept this outcome—they fought to institutionalize the work, formalize their organizations, and hold Columbia accountable to the communities it had long marginalized. Their vision of sustained, communitycentered scholarship remains a powerful counterpoint to the University's retreat. The question, then, is what remains of this vision today in the School of Architecture?

"Despite their efforts, the momentum built by FSTAP and its student leaders ultimately failed to secure a permanent place within the University's and the School's long-term commitments."

- 14. Lloyd A. Johnson, rep., A Five-Year Report on the Activities of The Urban Center: July 1, 1968 to June 30, 1973 (New York, NY: The Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 2.
- 15. Sharon E. Sutton, When Ivory Towers Were Black: A Story about Race in America's Cities and Universities (New York, New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 133-135.
- 16. Ibid. 135.
- 17. Vernon Ben Robinson et al., rep., Rhetoric or Programs? A Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance to West Harlem and South Jamaica (New York, NY: Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 117-125.
- 18. Fred Samuel to Dean James Stewart Polshek, "Correspondence from Attorney Fred Samuel" (New York, NY, May 24, 1973).
- 19. BPRSFAO to President William J. McGill, "Correspondence from the Black/Puerto Rican Student, Faculty and Administrators' Organization of the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning" (New York, NY, November 26,
- 20. Vernon Ben Robinson et al., rep., Rhetoric or Programs? A Three-Year Summary of the Technical Assistance to West Harlem and South Jamaica (New York, NY: Urban Center at Columbia University, 1973), 127-131.

Echoes and Absences: Tracing the Unfinished Legacy of FSTAP

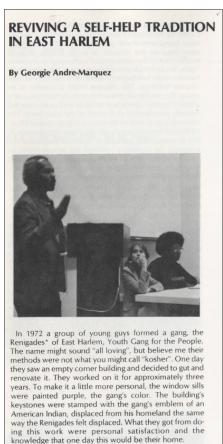
It is difficult to fully trace the legacy of the Urban Center's initiatives. While the Center represented the most coordinated institutional effort in Columbia's history to engage with Harlem and address urban and minority issues, its impact has not been consistently sustained. Overtheyears at the School of Architecture—now known as the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP)—similar efforts have resurfaced from time to time, occasionally taking on new forms within the school itself. However, history shows that without long-term financial investment, administrative oversight, and institutional accountability, such initiatives eventually tend to collapse. More often, the collective memory of these initiatives tends to fade, remembered as isolated experiments rather than as part of a larger institutional narrative.

Even so, archival and institutional records reveal periodic moments of renewed momentum—times when new efforts emerged that closely echoed the spirit of the Urban Center. These moments are visible both in the initiatives that continue to appear—through community partnerships, technical assistance programs, and student-led advocacy—and in the barriers that persist. Yet despite their promise, these efforts remain fragmented and largely unsupported at the institutional level. What endures is a pattern of short-lived engagement, interrupted by structural obstacles that |--! prevent long-term investment and accountability. The gap between the university's stated commitments and its sustained actions continues to define this unfinished legacy.

(1) Funding Models and the Question of Sustainability One of the earliest examples of a potentially sustainable funding model emerged from the Urban Action and Experimentation Program's (UAEP) first major effort in 1970—a citywide Colloquium Series that brought together corporate business executives, university faculty, and Harlem community leaders to confront the urban crisis. Out of these meetings, corporate partners not only committed to participating in action projects but also began contributing funds to UAEP. These funds were used to provide technical assistance and small loans to support community-led housing and economic development initiatives.²¹

This model—leveraging private sector investment alongside university expertise to support community-led action—suggested a promising path toward sustained engagement. Yet, like so many other efforts connected to the Urban Center, this momentum proved difficult to maintain beyond its initial success. What remains is the question of how such partnerships might have evolved if they had been treated as longterm commitments woven into the School of Architecture and the university's ongoing mission.

"What endures is a pattern of short-lived engagement, interrupted by structural obstacles that prevent long-term investment and accountability. The gap between the university's stated commitments and its sustained actions continues to define this unfinished legacy."



Excerpt from the first issue of "Point: A Journal of the Minority Student and Faculty Organization."

(2) The Minority Student and Faculty Organizations The legacy of the Black and Puerto Rican Student-Faculty-Administrator Organization (BPRSFAO) can be seen in later organizing efforts by minority students and faculty at the School of Architecture, particularly through the Minority Student and Faculty Organization. In the spring of 1983 and 1984, the organization published two issues of "Point: A Journal of the Minority Student and Faculty Organization", continuing the work of making minority voices and communitycentered projects visible within the school.²² ²³ The journal spotlighted people, projects, viewpoints, and places that advanced work with and for marginalized communities in architecture, planning, and historic preservation. While short-lived, Point stands as a direct continuation of the advocacy and cultural work first carried forward by the BPRSFAO, demonstrating that, even in the absence of larger-scale institutional support, students and faculty continued to document and advance the mission of connecting the school's work to the struggle for social and spatial justice.

(3) Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP)

Established in 1995 and running until about 1998, the Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP) emerged as part of Columbia University's renewed commitment to service in the life and development of New York City, supported by the University's Strategic Initiatives Program.²⁴ Led by Lionel McIntyre from GSAPP's Urban Planning Program, UTAP built on the legacy of the FSTAP of the 1970s, reviving the model of direct community engagement. Like FSTAP, UTAP prioritized grassroots partnerships with local community organizations and maintained a storefront office in West Harlem, which provided off-campus space for collaboration between faculty, student interns, and community partners. However, UTAP marked a shift toward more technically specialized support, focusing on the use of advanced technologies like Geographic Information Systems, spatial analysis, and digital visualization tools to produce data-driven assessments of neighborhood conditions and development strategies.

(4) Community & Capital Action Research Lab

Established in 2007 under the leadership of Stacey Sutton in Columbia's Urban Planning Program, the Community & Capital Action Research Lab (C2ARL) carried forward the spirit of the Urban Center's community-engaged mission. Like the FSTAP and the later UTAP, C2ARL positioned itself at the intersection of university research and community action. With a mission to support progressive approaches to local economic development, community planning, and decision-making, the lab focused on neighborhood retail dynamics, alternative economic models, and civic capacity, working in partnership with researchers, civic organizations, and municipal agencies committed to equity-driven development solutions.²⁵ Though not a technical assistance program like UAEP, FSTAP, or UTAP, C2ARL operated as a research lab with a broader, more global scope. Its work was not community-directed, but it nevertheless contributed to the university's local engagement by producing research on economic development and neighborhood change in New York City and Harlem. Records show that the lab may have dissolved around 2013, just six years after it was established.

- 21. Harold K. Bell and Vernon Ben Robinson, rep., Partnership of Equals: An Action Research Report For Urban Affairs Executives of Universities, Corporations, Governments & Community Organizations (New York, NY: Urban Action & Experimentation Program School of Architecture, 1971), 1.
- 22. Elmo L. Baca and Craig Evan Barton, eds., Point: A Journal of the Minority Student and Faculty Organization 1, no. 1 (1983): 1-21.
- 23. Joanne Meijas, Point: A Journal of the Minority Student and Faculty Organization 1, no. 2 (1984): 1-41.
- 24. "Urban Technical Assistance Project," Columbia GSAPP, 2006, http://www.arch.columbia.edu/ UTAP/HTML/overview/overview.html
- 25. Stacey Sutton, Community & Capital Action Research Lab, accessed May 10, 2025, http://www. columbia.edu/cu/c2arl/about.html.

(5) Renewed Advocacy from Black Students and Faculty in 2020

One of the most visible recent echoes of FSTAP's unfinished legacy emerged in 2020, when a new generation of Black students and faculty at GSAPP publicly demanded that the school confront its role in perpetuating systemic racism. These demands came at the height of a nationwide racial reckoning, sparked by the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others. As in the 1960s, mass protests forced universities across the country, especially those with deep ties to urban displacement and gentrification, to reckon with their complicity in structural inequality.

On June 25th, 2020, the Black Student Alliance at GSAPP (BSA) led this charge through a public statement titled "On the Futility of Listening." Addressed to the Dean, faculty, and program directors, the statement condemned the school's "intolerable lack of vision, awareness, and imagination" in addressing anti-Blackness.26 It criticized GSAPP's long-standing practices of performative listening, tokenization, and reliance on external consultants, calling instead for real accountability and transformative change.

The statement concluded with twelve demands, several of which echoed earlier calls made by the BPRSFAO in the 1970s. These included long-term financial investment in anti-racist work, structural accountability, and a comprehensive review of GSAPP's relationship to Harlem, reviving the unresolved questions of the school's responsibility to the communities surrounding it.

Just days later, on July 1, 2020, eight Black faculty members at GSAPP released a second statement titled "Unlearning Whiteness," calling on the school to confront its role in perpetuating white supremacy and anti-Black racism. Framing this as an open-ended intellectual and institutional project, they urged GSAPP to commit to the difficult but necessary work of reflection, action, and structural change—especially given its location in Harlem. Their statement outlined a series of institutional actions aimed at transforming GSAPP's culture, curriculum, and public engagement. These included conducting a comprehensive review of the school's relationship to race and the built environment, reassessing programs for their complicity with white supremacy, developing resources and curriculum to challenge whiteness, and funding this work as an ongoing, school-wide commitment. They further called for public programming, greater accountability to Harlem and other marginalized communities, and the transformation of GSAPP's internal culture to prioritize care, equity, and antiracist practice at all levels.²⁷

Together, these two statements prompted a series of institutional responses. Yet, like the advocacy of the BPRSFAO before them, these efforts were met with familiar structural barriers despite initial momentum. The remaining examples detail some of these challenges.

"One of the most visible recent echoes of FSTAP's unfinished legacy emerged in 2020, when a new generation of Black students and faculty at GSAPP publicly demanded that the school confront its role in perpetuating systemic racism."



"Living Document" of GSAPP's Anti-Racsim Acion Plan, which as not been updated since 2021.

Source: https://www.arch.columbia edu/anti-racism-action-plan

(6) The Anti-Racism Action Plan: A School-Wide Effort

What followed these public statements in 2020 initiative GSAPP had ever undertaken to address systemic racism. Unlike earlier efforts like FSTAP sought to engage the entire learning community students, faculty, staff, and leadership alike.

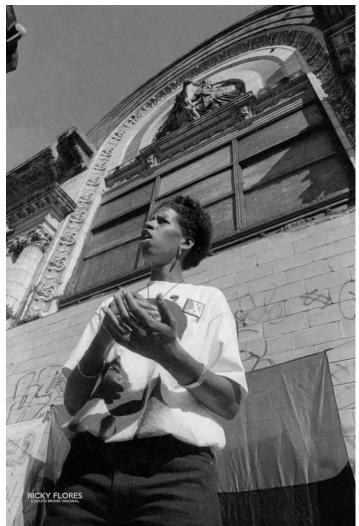
Launched during the 2020-2021 academic year, While its scope and ambition exceeded that of previous concrete institutional commitments. On December across all areas of the school's work (1) Introduce all incoming students to anti-racism principles and the complexities these issues present in the built environment; (2) Encourage all faculty to integrate anti-racist thinking into their teaching, research, and practice; (3) Facilitate meaningful engagement with Harlem and other local communities; and (4) Promote cross-cultural competency both in the classroom and in international student experiences.28

The resulting Anti-Racism Action Plan, last updated in May 2021, detailed commitments across twelve strategic areas: school culture, admissions, financial aid and was arguably the most comprehensive, school-wide resources, faculty and staff diversity, curriculum and pedagogy, community engagement, public programming, alumni networks, external partnerships, public or the Urban Center, which were limited to specific communications, and internal reporting. Framed as a programs or student groups, the Anti-Racism Task long-term commitment, the plan declared that "engaging Force and its subsequent Anti-Racism Action Plan in active anti-racist practices" would lay new foundations for imagining and building a more equitable future for the built environment.

the Anti-Racism Task Force was charged with initiatives like FSTAP, the Action Plan's success, like translating the demands of students and faculty into those before it, ultimately depends on whether GSAPP sustains this work beyond moments of crisis. Whether 21, 2020, the Task Force published four key this plan can avoid the fate of earlier efforts and become recommendations designed to embed anti-racism a lasting, structural part of GSAPP's identity remains an open question.

- 26. "On The Futility of Listening: A Statement from the Black Student Alliance at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and *Preservation,*" On the Futility of Listening, July 23, 2020, https:// web.archive.org/web/20210928223812/https://onthefutilityoflistening.cargo.site/.
- 27. "Unlearning Whiteness," Unlearning Whiteness: A Statement from the Black Faculty of Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, July 1, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20200701004558/https://unlearningwhiteness.cargo.site/.
- 28. "A Message from GSAPP's Anti-Racism Task Force," Anti-Racism Action Plan - Columbia GSAPP, December 21, 2020, https://www.arch.columbia.edu/anti-racism-action-plan/taskforce-201221.

Institutional Critiques and New Paradigms 17



(7) GSAPP's Community Fellowship Program

In response to the GSAPP Student Task Force's 2020 recommendation to move beyond models of "technical assistance" and instead invite community members into the school and its curriculum, GSAPP launched a Community Fellowship Program. This three-year initiative was committed to awarding two \$20,000 fellowships annually to local practitioners of color, with the goal of strengthening educational ties between GSAPP and the surrounding communities of Harlem and Upper Manhattan. Fellows are invited to participate in lectures, programs, and classes across the built environment disciplines.²⁹

One of the inaugural fellows, Najha Zigbi-Johnson, a Harlem native and former Director of Institutional Advancement of the Malcolm X and Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center, used the fellowship to expand her preservation work. As the center's sole employee, she leveraged the fellowship to further protect and activate the legacy of Malcolm X

Protester in front of the Audubon Ballroom in September 1990 to oppose Columbia and the Port Authority's plan to demolish the historic site where Malcolm X was assassinated.

Source: Ricky Flores, https:// rickvflores.com/

> at the historic Audubon Ballroom, once threatened by Columbia's own development plans in the 1990s. Her project, Mapping Malcolm, published by Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, brought together artists, organizers, and scholars to explore Black spatial politics in Harlem through reparative, anti-imperialist frameworks. Through this work, Zigbi-Johnson not only contributed to the cultural preservation of Harlem but also reimagined how Columbia could engage with Black history and community memory as part of its educational mission. 30

> Despite Zigbi-Johnson's success, other fellows struggled to fully benefit from the program, largely due to the lack of meaningful integration into GSAPP's learning community. Without adequate structures to support sustained engagement, the program quietly faded from view before the three-year period ended another example of a promising initiative left to dissolve without long-term institutional commitment.

(8) The Rise and Decline of Black Student and Faculty Presence

One of the most visible outcomes of the anti-racism efforts between 2020 and 2022 was a temporary surge in Black student and faculty presence at GSAPP. In 2020, GSAPP created a new position—Assistant Dean of Recruitment, Diversity, and Inclusion—a role that echoed the position once held by Hiram Jackson in the 1970s as Assistant Dean for Minority Affairs. 31 Though this position existed for just four semesters, it helped facilitate what would become the school's largest Black student enrollment since the Urban Center era.

"This pattern raises the question of whether GSAPP will continue to treat racial equity as a reactionary, time-limited project or whether it will finally commit to embedding these values as lasting, structural priorities. It is this unresolved tension that continues to define the unfinished legacy of the Urban Center and its descendants."

In Fall 2021, GSAPP admitted its largest cohort of self-identifying Black students in decades, including approximately 15 Black students in the Master of Architecture program alone, compared to the usual 2 to 5 in previous years. While this represented a major demographic shift, the majority of these students were Black Americans from outside New York City, unlike the Harlem-connected student populations of the 1970s. Despite this influx, many students reported feeling that the recruitment surge was not matched by sustained cultural or institutional support.

During this same period, GSAPP saw a peak in Black faculty participation, with new courses, lectures, and public programming focused on race, space, and the built environment. Faculty were awarded Unlearning Whiteness Curriculum Development Awards, Anti-Racism Curriculum Awards, and Dean's Research Awards to develop anti-racist pedagogy and scholarship.³² However, these efforts, while impactful in the short term, were never positioned as permanent features of the school's curriculum. Many of the faculty brought in during this period stayed only briefly, as the school's strategy appeared to center on a temporary surge rather than a long-term commitment to retaining diverse faculty and courses.

By May 2024, the majority of the Black students recruited during this period had graduated, leaving the population of Black students once again at an unacceptably low level. Without meaningful structural changes to recruitment, financial aid, retention, and curriculum, the surge in Black student and faculty presence proved to be temporary, yet another rise and fall in GSAPP's long history of shortlived diversity efforts.

This pattern raises the question of whether GSAPP will continue to treat racial equity as a reactionary, time-limited project or whether it will finally commit to embedding these values as lasting, structural priorities. It is this unresolved tension that continues to define the unfinished legacy of the Urban Center and its descendants. Despite early momentum, much about these recent efforts—including their funding sources—remains unclear. The Anti-Racism Action Plan, while comprehensive, may have proven too ambitious for a school still unable and unwilling to commit the long-term resources and leadership needed to sustain it. The nine-month leadership gap between deanships, followed by the appointment of Andrés Jaque, himself a former member of the Anti-Racism Task Force, briefly suggested renewed possibility. Yet in the years since, the plan has quietly faded from view, slipping into the same cycle of institutional forgetting that has defined so many of GSAPP's previous attempts at change.

- 29. "Columbia GSAPP Community Fellowship Program," Anti-Racism Action Plan - Columbia GSAPP, 2022, https:// www.arch.columbia.edu/anti-racism-action-plan/community-fellowships.
- 30. Kelsey Jewel Jackson and Najha Zigbi-Johnson, Griot of Avery Hall Interview with Najha Zigbi-Johnson, personal,
- 31. Jennah Jones et al., Griots of Avery Hall Interview with Alade McKen, personal, 2024.

Beyond Symbolic Gestures: Toward a Politics of Redistribution and Accountability

The story of the Urban Center and its descendants—from FSTAP to the Anti-Racism Action Plan—reveals a persistent pattern of ephemeral institutional gestures. Each wave of student and faculty advocacy has sparked temporary programs, short-term hires, or experimental initiatives that appear promising in the moment, only to fade quietly as leadership changes, funding dries up, or institutional priorities shift elsewhere. What remains is the question of whether GSAPP—and Columbia more broadly—will continue this cycle of reactionary, time-limited responses, or whether it will finally commit to building lasting, structural change.

Ultimately, the revolutionary work of communityled, justice-driven practice cannot be absorbed into institutional frameworks designed to resist it. Universities like Columbia may gesture toward change when under pressure, but without sustained financial resources, power-sharing, and long-term accountability to communities like Harlem, such efforts remain symbolic at best. The repeated rise and fall of initiatives like FSTAP, the Community Fellowship Program, and the Anti-Racism Action Plan make clear that symbolism without redistribution of power and resources is not transformation—it is maintenance of the status quo.

We are living in a moment of intensified erasure, where histories of marginalized people are increasingly under threat, and institutions continue to prioritize abstraction over accountability. In this political climate, the urgency to build alternative infrastructures of resistance, memory, and solidarity is greater than ever. Moving forward requires rejecting the notion of community engagement as a temporary project or branding strategy. It requires bold, sustained models of practice rooted in justice, solidarity, and the redistribution of institutional power models that do not just respond to moments of crisis, but build lasting partnerships that center the knowledge, leadership, and futures of the very communities universities have long exploited.

This unfinished legacy remains not just a history to be studied, but a mandate to be acted upon. The work of building truly accountable, community-centered institutions remains ahead.

" ...the revolutionary work of community-led, justice-driven practice cannot be absorbed into institutional frameworks designed to resist it. Universities like Columbia may gesture toward change when under pressure, but without sustained financial resources, power-sharing, and long-term accountability to communities like Harlem, such efforts remain symbolic at best."



Griots of Avery Hall Documentary

Student Organization:

Black Student Alliance + GSAPP

In Collaboration With:

Jennah Jones and Jake Robbins, with assistance from Fukunda Mbaru, Teonna Cooksey, and BSA+GSAPP Members

Advisor:

Justin Garrett Moore

Term:

Fall 2023 - Spring 2025

Fifteen griots uncover 50 years of the Black experience at Columbia GSAPP. We hear from people who have been credentialed, disillusioned, radicalized, rebirthed, and galvanized by the institution. People whose relationships with the institution have become increasingly more complicated. People who were moved to build community within, outside, despite, and because of the institution. Griots of Avery Hall presents the story of hands that have shaped GSAPP, and offers a roadmap for institutional change.



In 2021, Columbia GSAPP admitted the largest population of Black students since the 1970s. In both instances, a major swell in Black student demographics followed national calls for institutional racial reckoning, precipitated by the civil rights movement of the 1960s and the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020.

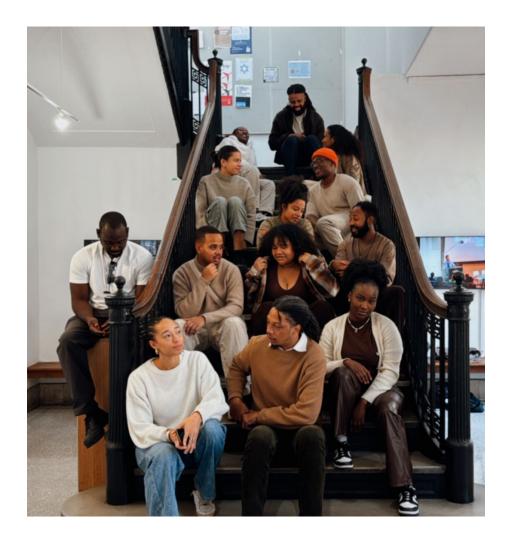
In May 2024, most Black students who entered GSAPP in 2021 graduated, bringing the Black demographic back down to an inappreciable low.

We are a group of student leaders from the Black Student Alliance at Columbia GSAPP (BSA+GSAPP), who recognized the significance of this pivotal moment in the school's history. During the 2023-2024 academic year, we dedicated ourselves to ensuring that the presence and influence of a strong Black Student Alliance would endure, regardless of the number of Black students enrolled in GSAPP's programs.

To create a lasting legacy, we formed committees focused on key areas such as alumni engagement, financial wellness, and political action, launching various initiatives. One notable initiative was an oral history project to preserve GSAPP's Black history.

Recognizing the richness and importance of these interviews—especially after the schism our campus experienced at the end of the 2024 spring semester—we felt a responsibility to respond to the cyclical nature of institutional change unfolding before us— We were called to action! We decided to transform the interviews into a format that could resonate with a wider audience: a documentary.





In this documentary, we present the story of hands that have helped shape Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP). Our griots— Black students, alumni, faculty, and local community members—have generously shared their personal stories, weaving a rich, collective tapestry of Black institutional memory that spans from the late 1960s to the present day.

We hear from native New York City residents, whose relationships with Columbia University have evolved as they shifted from outsider to insider. With the historically Black neighborhood of Harlem as its backdrop, 'Columbia University – The Real Estate Enterprise' has relentlessly pushed to consume and exploit the neighborhood's landscape for its own capital gain. Our griots tell stories of their continued fight towards spatial, environmental, economic, and social justice and collective liberation in Harlem and beyond.

We hear from past and present faculty, administrators, and community partners of varying hierarchical rankings, whose experiences reveal the potential and limitations of institutional change and the hidden power structures that govern them. We hear from alumni who audaciously challenged these power structures as students. We hear stories from griots who transgressed their prescribed roles and responsibilities to support GSAPP's learning community, setting a precedent for new institutionalized roles and offices.





























We also hear from those who were welcomed into the institution via GSAPP's Anti-Racism Action Plan established in response to the racial reckoning that swept the nation in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd. Their narratives harken back to the transformative years following 1968, when Columbia's campus was thrust into a state of precarity, prompting GSAPP to embrace experimental and unconventional approaches to architectural education. Our griots recount how they've reshaped curricula, challenging the school to confront and transcend its deeply ingrained supremacist foundations.

We hear from people who have credentialed, disillusioned, radicalized, rebirthed, and galvanized by the institution. People whose relationships with the institution have become increasingly more complicated. People who were moved to build community within, outside, despite, and because of the institution. People whose identities shaped and were shaped by these ivory towers.













30 Griots of Avery Hall



2023 - 2024 BSA+GSAPP E-Board



2024 - 2025 BSA+GSAPP E-Board



Troubled Waters Unearthing Colonial Fantasy, Reclaiming the Waterway

Course:

ADV VI - AFTERTHEEND

<u>Professor:</u> Mario Gooden

Term: Spring 2025

The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, once forcibly displaced from their coastal territory and confined inland to rocky swampland in southeastern Connecticut, now proudly anchors its sovereignty to a colossal enterprise: The Foxwoods Casino and Resort. Within this constructed landscape, sovereignty is controlled by a regime that corrupts sacred relations to land and recasts it as a site of fantasy, extraction, and unending cycles of domination.

Their Lake of Isles Golf Course — located just beyond the bounds of the Mashantucket Pequot reservation — epitomizes this regime. Wrapped around an artificially expanded lake, the 36hole resort course stages a landscape of fantasy and appropriation. It is sustained by extractive systems and engineered spectacle, cultivating a sense of ownership, fondness, and nostalgia that conceals the ongoing violence of colonial occupation.



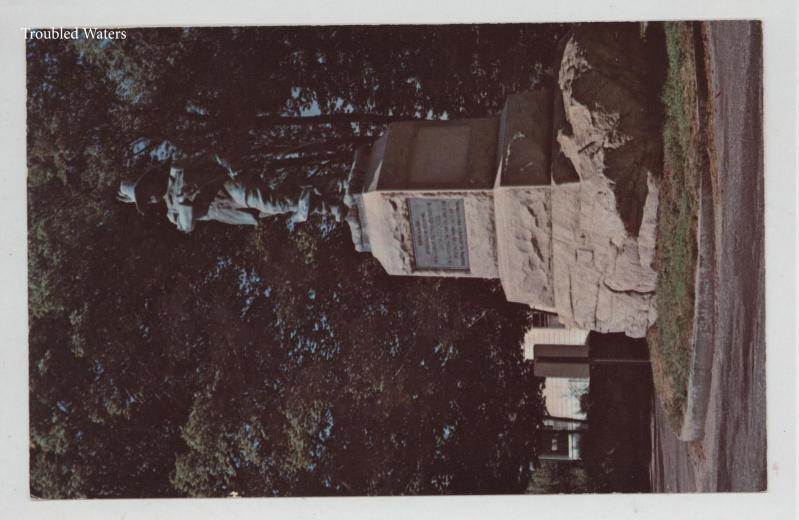
On May 19, 1637, English forces led by Captain John Underhill carried out what became known as the Mystic Massacre, killing hundreds of Pequot men, women, and children. Underhill's published account, Newes from America (1638), framed this atrocity as divine victory, celebrating the massacre as a moment of territorial conquest. In the months that followed, the English hunted down the remaining survivors, selling many into slavery or forcing them to assimilate into other tribes.

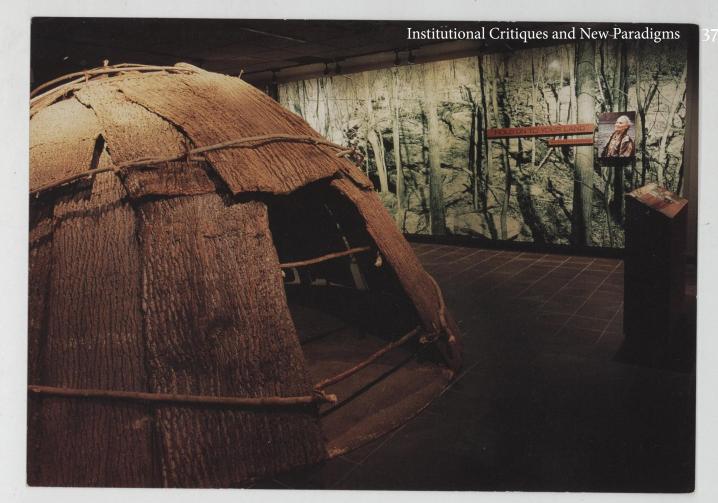
Today, the site of that massacre is marked not by a monument to conquest, but by a single, out-of-place Monkey Puzzle tree. Installed after decades of protest and the quiet removal of a bronze statue of Major John Mason, the tree stands as an unsettling reminder of the violence that occurred there. Its sharp, unyielding form refuses easy reconciliation, offering instead a quiet disruption of the heroic narrative once cast in bronze.

Just eight miles inland, however, the legacy of this violence takes a different form. The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, once forced onto rocky swampland, has rebuilt itself as a major economic power through Foxwoods Casino. Hailed as one of America's "greatest comeback stories," the Tribe now operates one of the world's largest casinos and is one of Connecticut's largest employers.

Yet this success is not without contradiction. Within this constructed landscape, sovereignty is mediated by a capitalist regime that transforms sacred land into spectacle recasting territory as a site of fantasy, extraction, and economic dependence.

This project confronts the Lake of Isles as a site of ongoing catastrophe. It proposes spatial and material interventions to expose the layers of colonial imagination that shape the site, disrupt the affective machinery of nostalgia, and reclaim the waterway as a living site of Pequot sovereignty beyond colonial regimes





On Pequot Hill, Mystic, Ct. stands the statue of Major John Mason at the spot where on June 7, 1637 he with 90 colonists and 100 Mohegan Indians burned to death 600 to 700 men, women and children of the warlike Pequot Indian Tribe.

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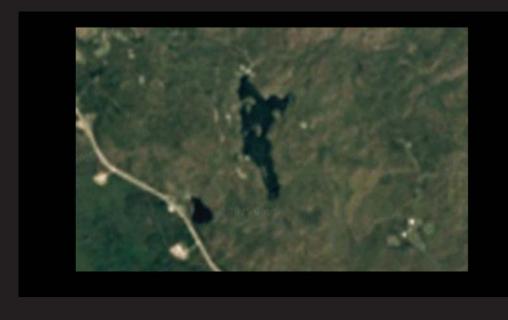
The Lake of Isles in North Stonington, Connecticut, is not just a landscape—it is a constructed fantasy. Over the past century, layer by layer, the land has been reshaped to serve the evolving desires of the colonial imagination.

What began as a small pond was dammed in 1920, renamed to evoke a mythic wilderness, and framed as untouched nature. By 1960, it became a stage for the Boy Scouts to perform invented "Indian" rituals and rehearse colonial masculinity, reinforcing settler fantasies of dominance and survival.

Meanwhile, the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe, long displaced from their land, rebuilt their community across the highway. The opening of Foxwoods Casino in 1986 brought economic power, but also deepened the Tribe's entanglement with a spectacle-driven economy that profits from selling an illusion of place, while masking the land's real histories.

In 1998, casino revenue funded the Mashantucket Pequot Museum an important site of cultural preservation, yet one made possible through the very capitalist systems that constrain tribal sovereignty.

Finally, in 2002, the land was blasted and rebuilt again—this time as a luxury golf course designed to stage elite leisure. Today, the Lake of Isles stands as both a monument to Indigenous resilience and a living archive of how colonial fantasies are constructed, layer by layer, through land manipulation, cultural performance, and commodification.



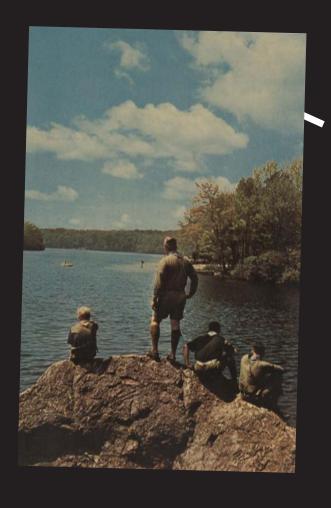


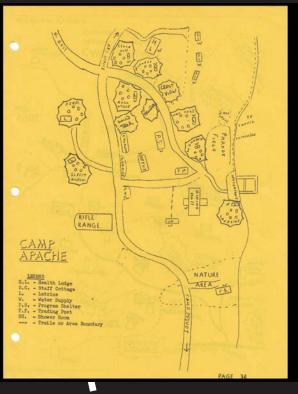


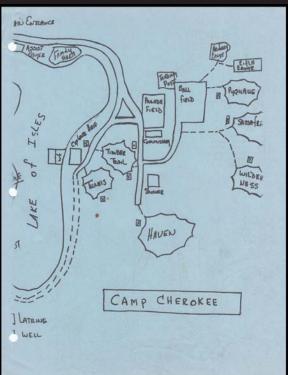














 ${f R}$ ees Jones is no stranger to dynamite. The award-winning golf course architect did such an enormous amount of blasting at his stunning Cascata outside Las Vegas that it is said to be the most expensive course ever built. Now, braced against the chilly New England fall and far away from the canyon lands of the Southwest, he is once again blowing things

Amid explosions, Jones, clad in mud-encrusted work boots, surveys his latest gem, deep in the Connecticut woodlands, while orchestrating an army of bulldozers, backhoes and detonators. Below the soil lies endless acres of granite ledge, which Jones is shaping to his will. And once again, the money faucet is open.



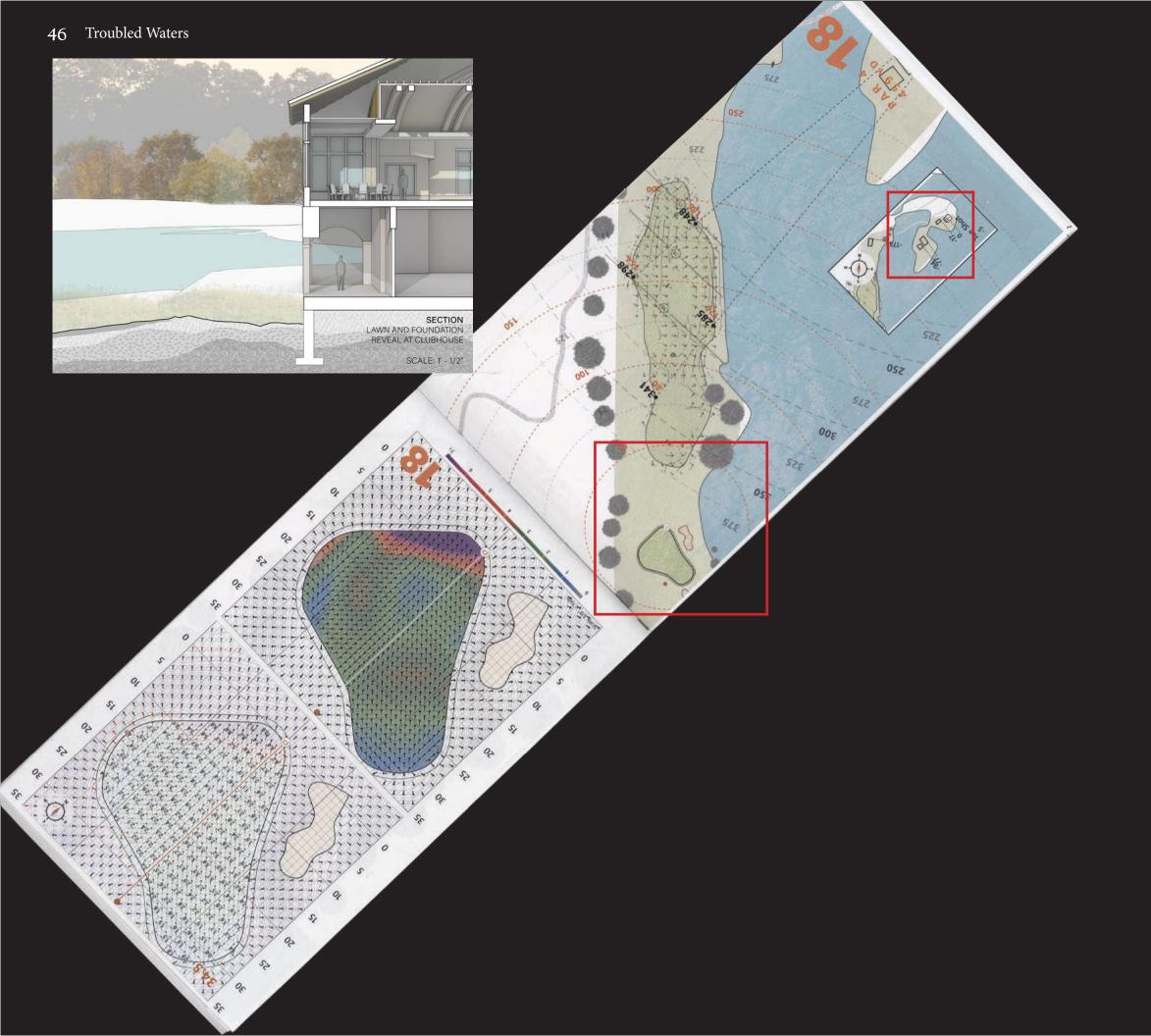
This intervention confronts the Lake of Isles as a site of ongoing catastrophe, proposing a process of unearthing the land's layered fictions and reclaiming its living presence beyond colonial spectacle.

The intervention begins by disrupting the very structure of leisure. The 18th hole of the Public North Course—once the final moment of gameplay—is deliberately broken. The round ends unfinished at the 17th hole. What was once the Boy Scout chapel and parade ground is no longer a field of play, but a site of interruption. Visitors are guided on a reverse procession, moving from the clubhouse toward the former 18th hole. This route crosses engineered turf and curated views, confronting visitors with the artifice of the landscape.

At the former tee box, the ground is cut open. The manicured green is excavated to reveal its gravel foundation. Irrigation systems are removed. Blasted granite—once buried beneath turf resurfaces as the exposed, fractured ground. Visitors walk not on smooth grass, but on stone, unsettling the expectation of leisure and performance.

At the water's edge, a platform made of pine extends over the lake. Stone-framed steps invite direct contact with the water, transforming the shoreline from a distant view to a site of engagement. Here, members of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation may gather, speak memory into the land, and reclaim the shoreline through the carving and launching of mishoon canoes—an embodied spatial practice that rewrites the site in movement and water.

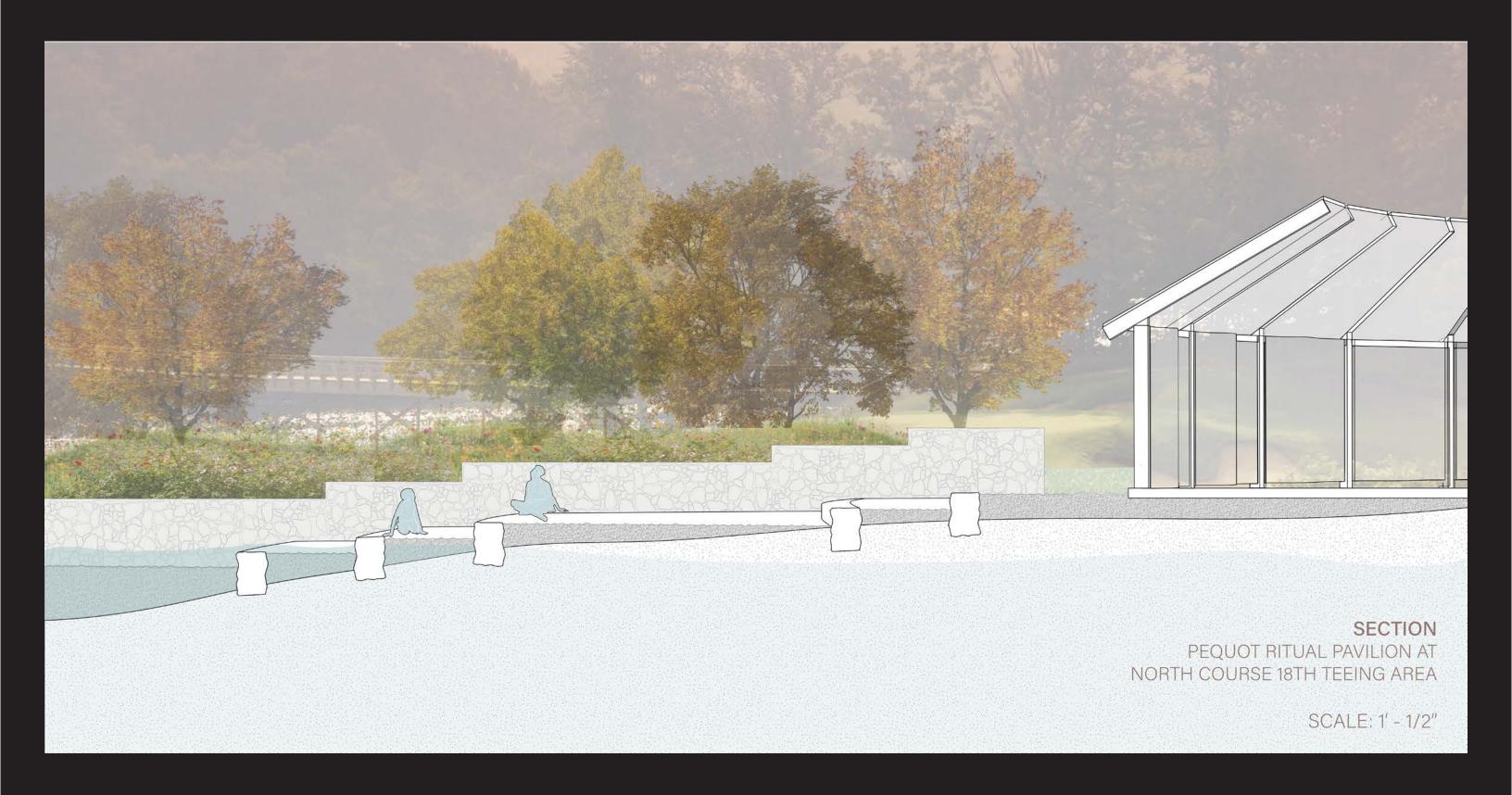
By refusing closure, this intervention breaks the fantasy of completion that golf embodies. It opens the land to ongoing ceremony and relation. In this unfinished ground, a new site of sovereignty emerges—not as spectacle, but through unearthing, gathering, and return.







48 Troubled Waters

























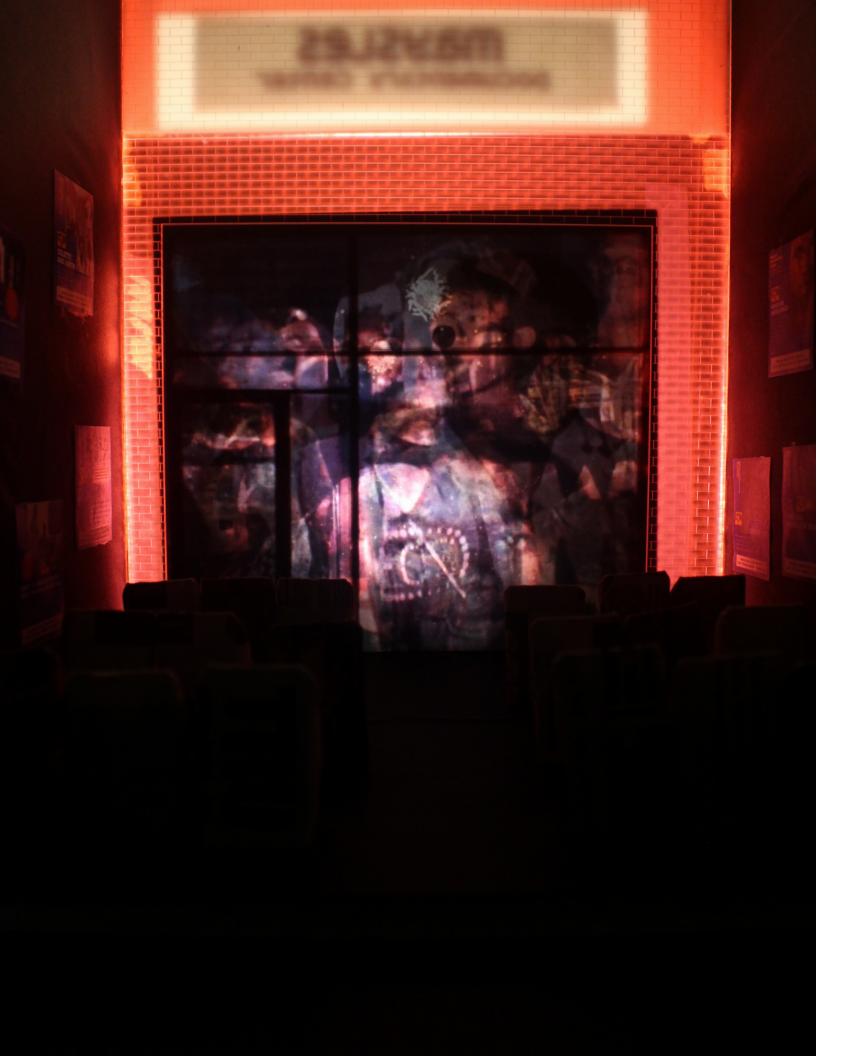












The Power of Institutional Smallness An Analysis of Maysles Documentary Center

In Collaboration With: Olivia McCloy

Course:

Power Tools

Professor: Jelisa Blumberg

Term: Spring 2025

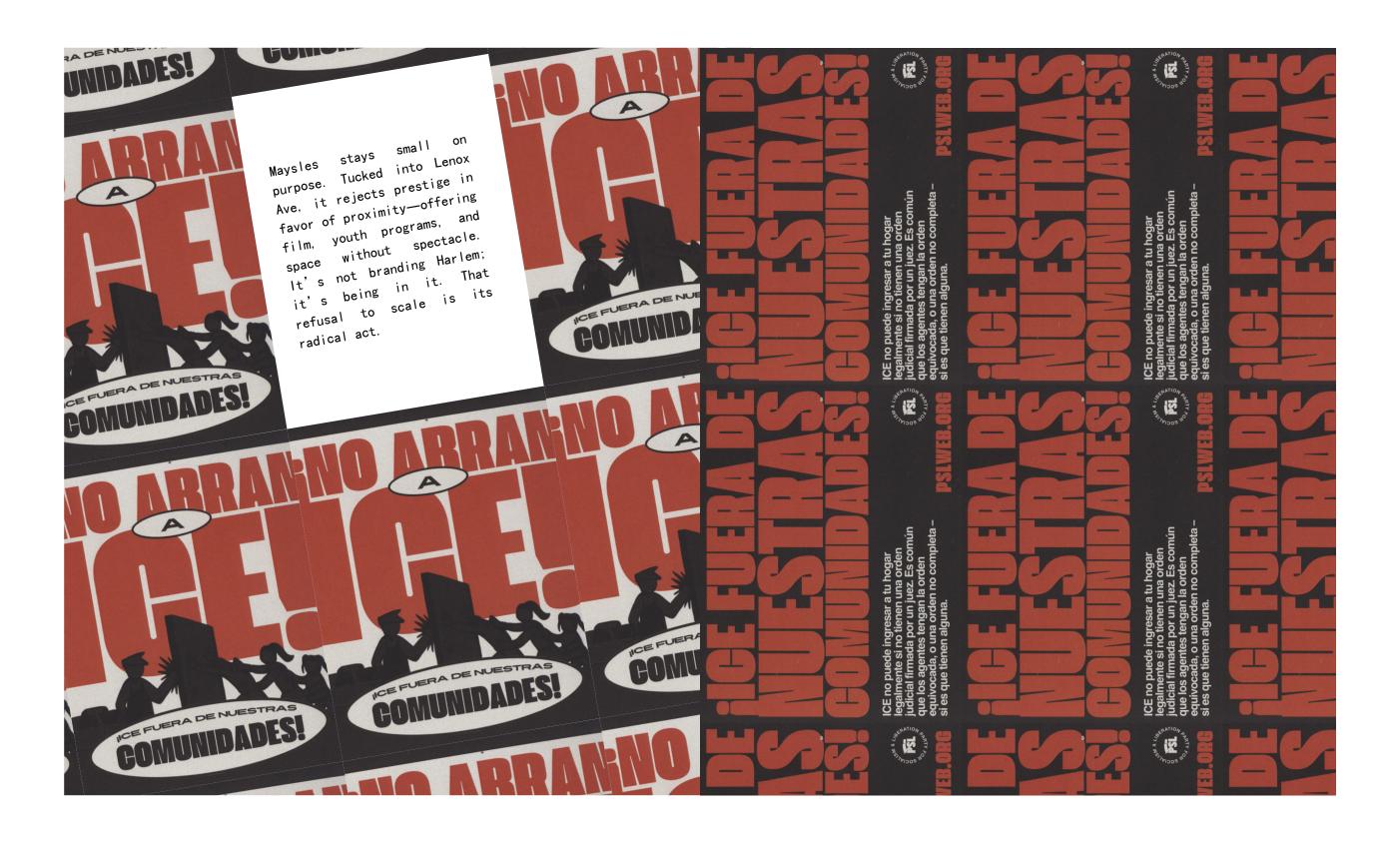
In an attempt to bridge the curiosities between power and art in Harlem, this work offers a resource roadmap, tools, traces, and text for the reader. The research was sparked by The Cut article titled "The Women Who Run Harlem", which mapped how women sustain the neighborhood's major cultural institutions with flyers; the ephemera from the institutions we visited. Each page reflects on the levers and archives that sustain their own educational foothold. We then focus on Maysles' documentary film center. Drawn to their small-scale vision of education and storytelling...to host without extracting; to teach without claiming; to hold space without flattening? This is not a guidebook but rather a choreographed questionnaire: where does power play?

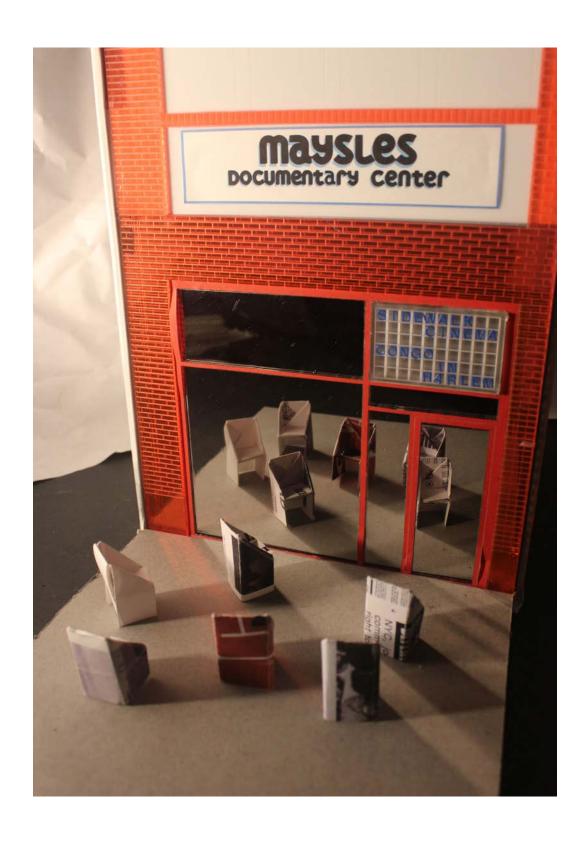
The Article

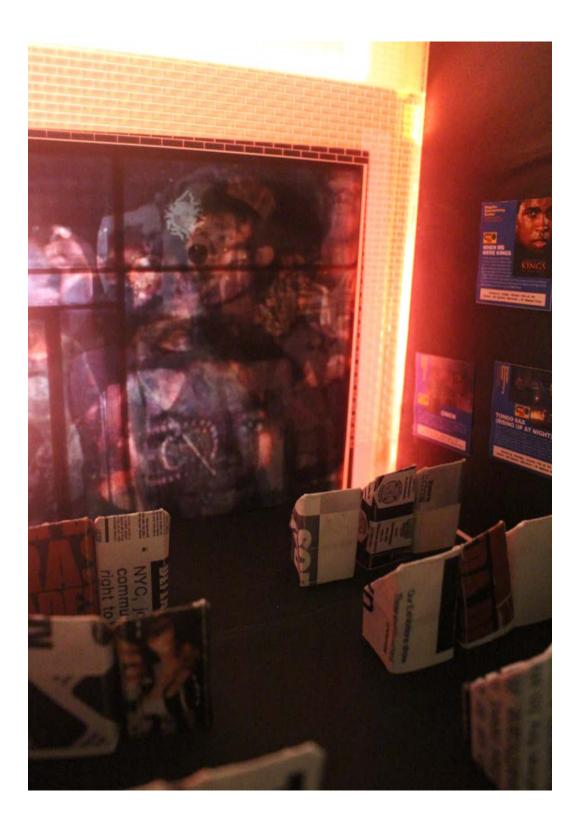


This page situates Maysles within a broader critique of cultural capital and scale, drawing on The Cut's portrait of Harlem's institutional leadership to question who cultural work is for—and who it's built on. By contrasting the grassroots ethic of Maysles with the expansionist logics of larger institutions, we introduce a critical lens that prioritizes presence over prestige. This framing is essential to unpack how small—scale, care—driven spaces challenge dominant metrics of success in arts and planning.

60 The Power of Institutional Smallness Institutional Critiques and New Paradigms 61







64 The Power of Institutional Smallness Institutional Smallness



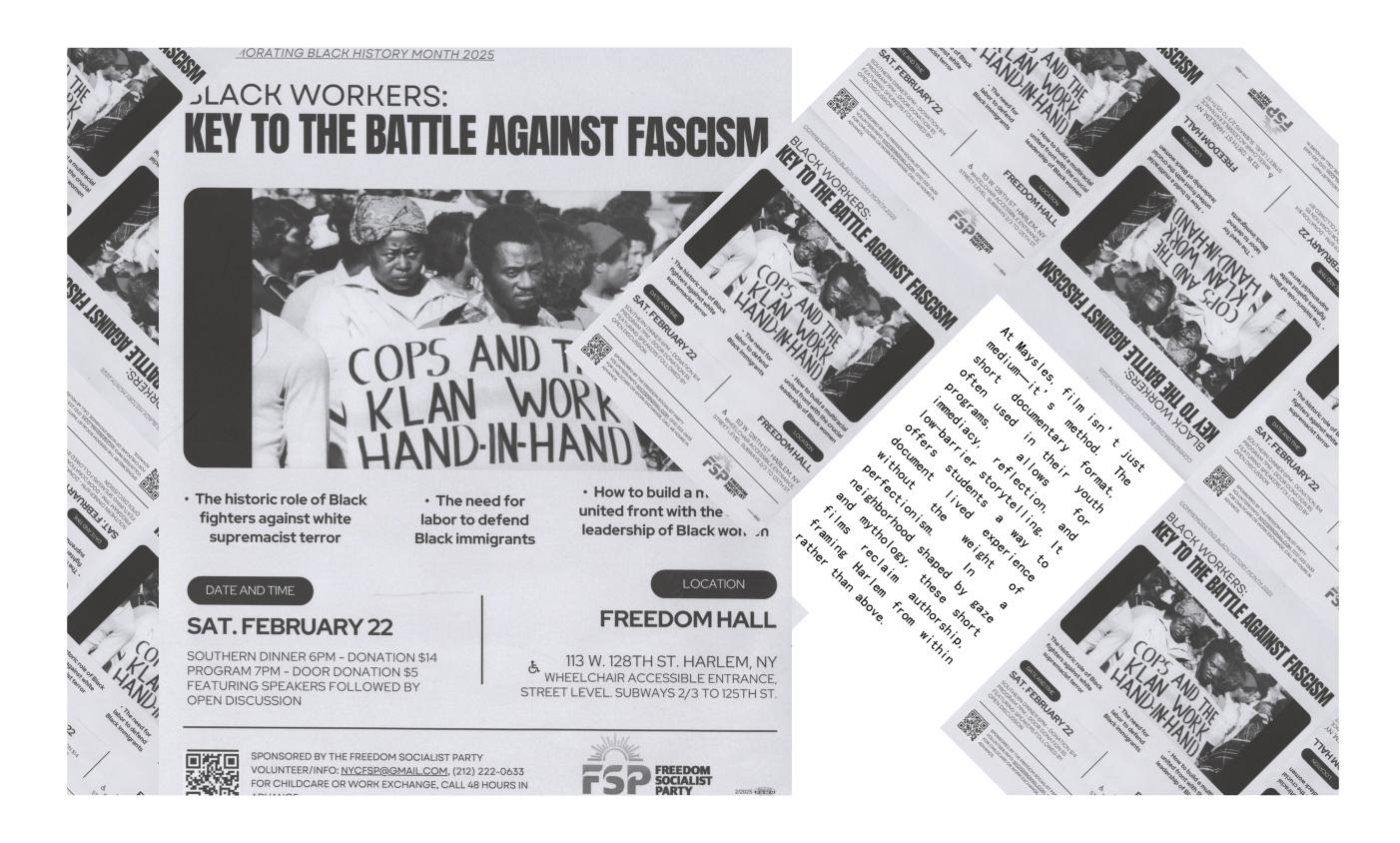
66 The Power of Institutional Smallness 67





68 The Power of Institutional Smallness

Institutional Critiques and New Paradigms 69



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| 474 | African Print Jumpsuit (Folklores) | Clothing, Shoes & Accessor | | |
| 475 | Black, White, and Brown Striped Jumpsuit (Pull&Bear) | Clothing, Shoes & Accessor | | |
| 476 | Blue and Black Sparkly Jumpsuit | Clothing, Shoes & Accessor | | |
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Collections

In Colalboration With: Jess Kuntz

Course: WASTE/WORKS

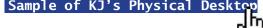
Professor: Amelyn Ng

Term: Spring 2025

This project explored our roles as self-proclaimed semi-conscious consumers by inventorying every object in our bedrooms—cataloguing, categorizing, and writing diary entries to trace emotional and aesthetic attachments. Inspired by the Y2K aesthetic and its ties to nostalgia and early internet optimism, we reflected on how design and memory shape the way we assign value. Our findings were abstracted into a collaborative web-based interface, transforming our personal archives into a shared digital landscape. The process helped us confront how and why we acquire, keep, and discard material things.

74 Collections For the Love of Archives 75

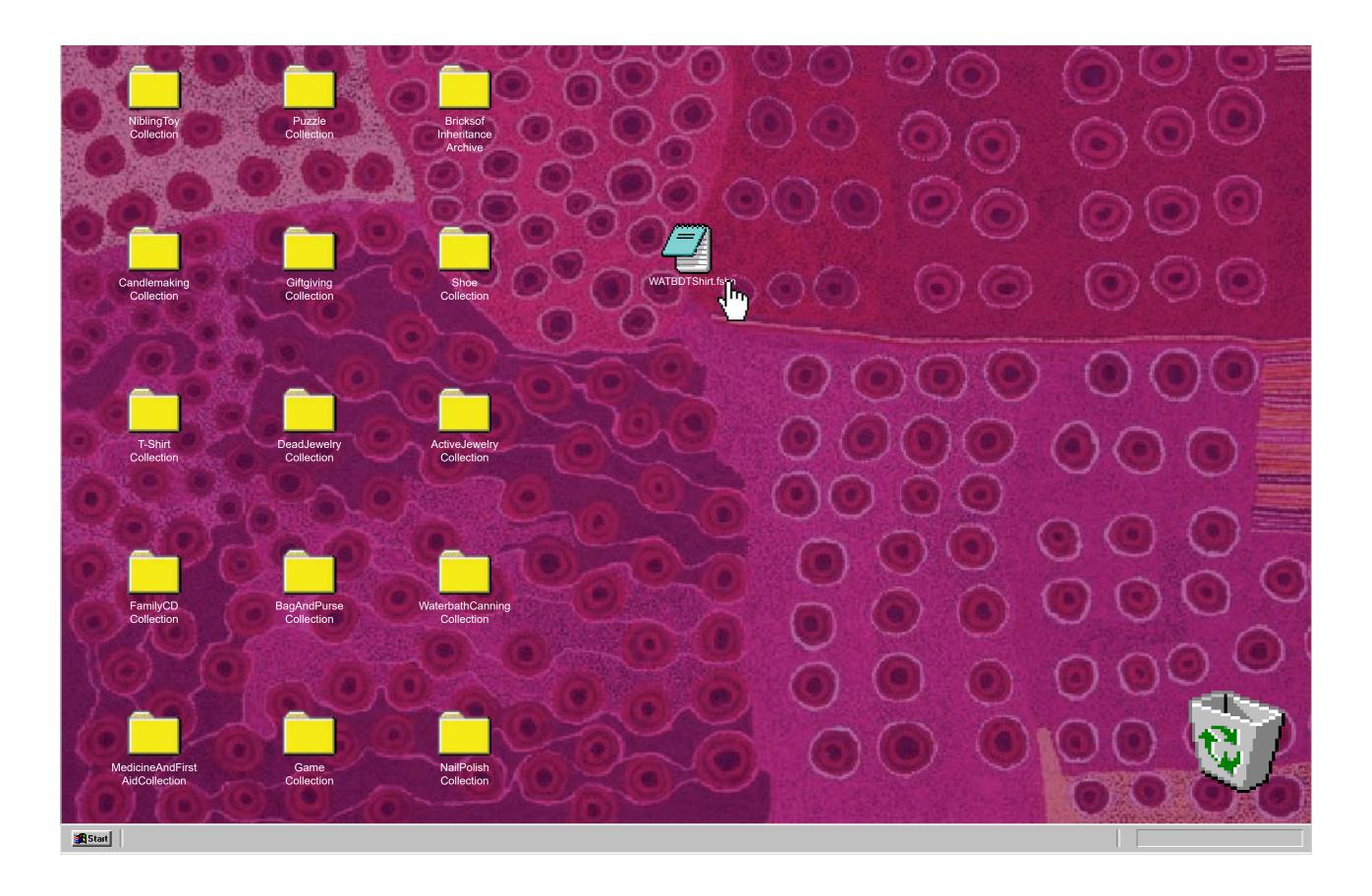






Sample of JK's Physical Desktop

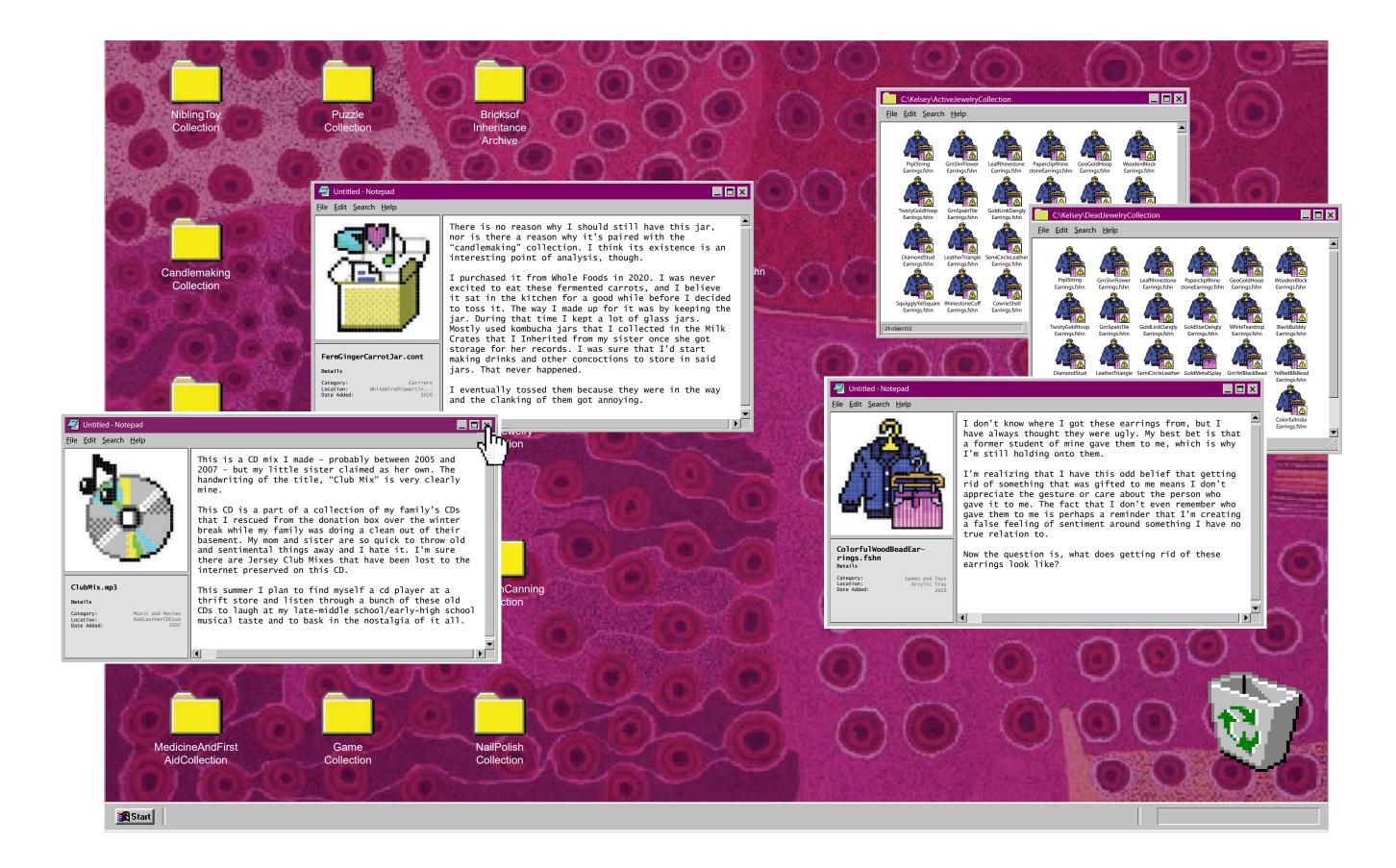
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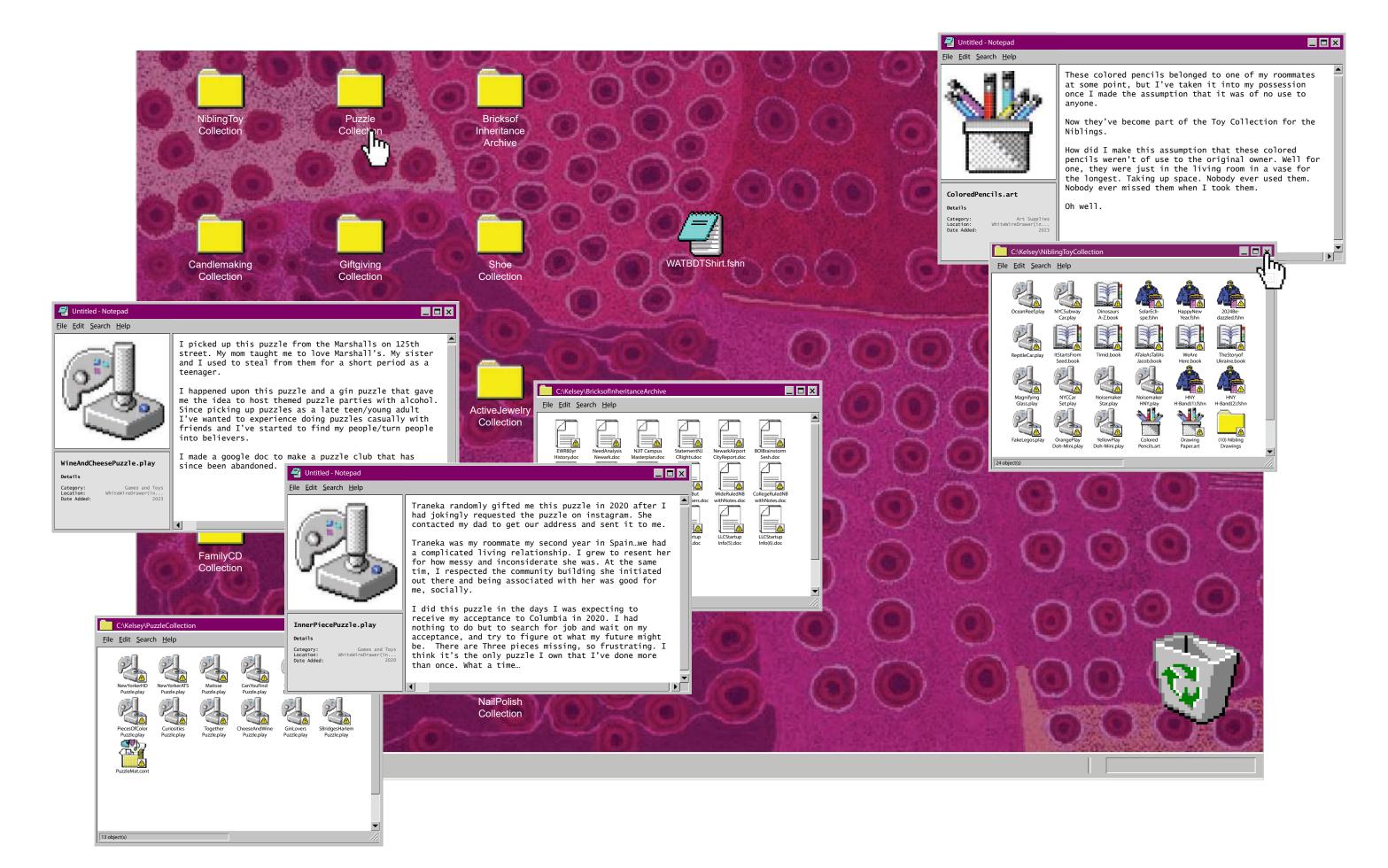


78 Collections 79

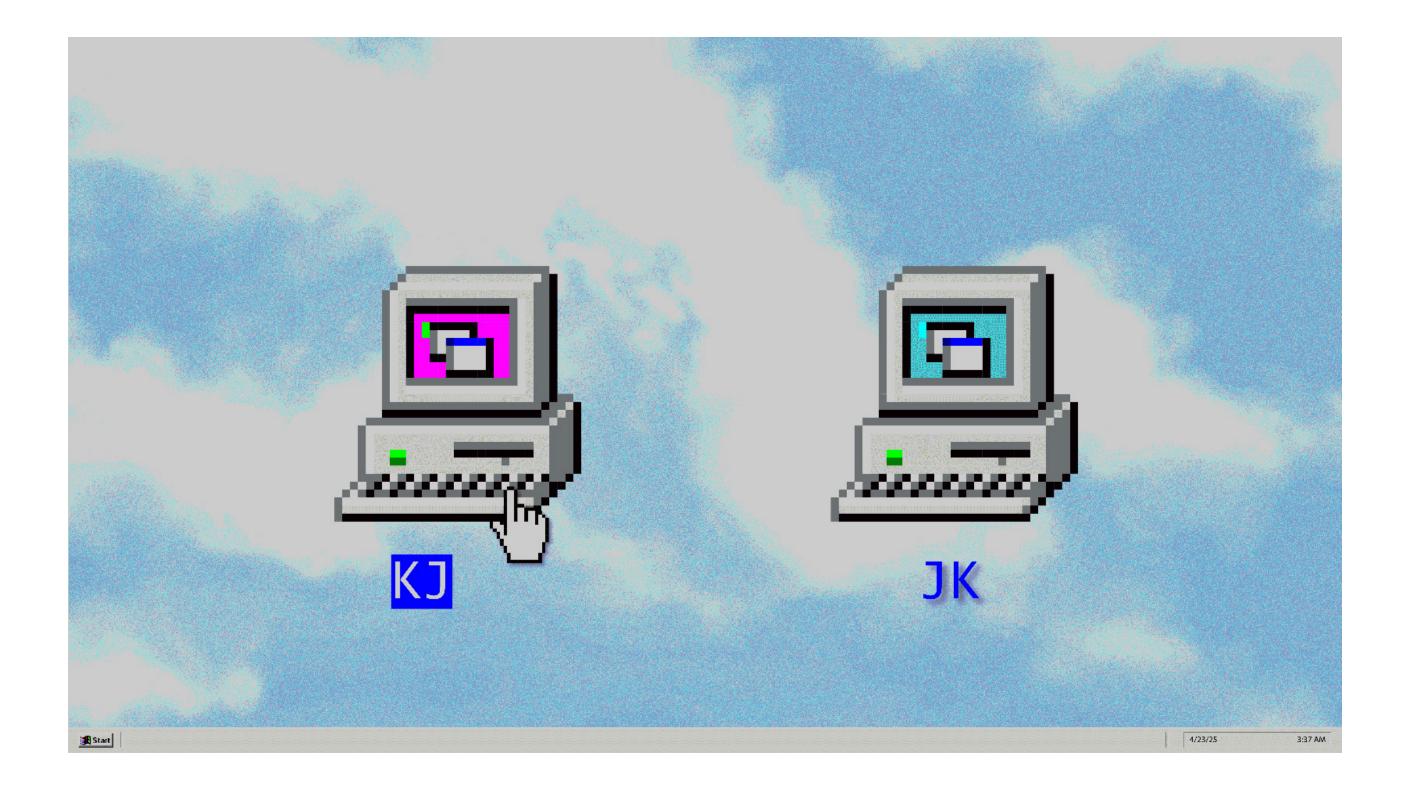


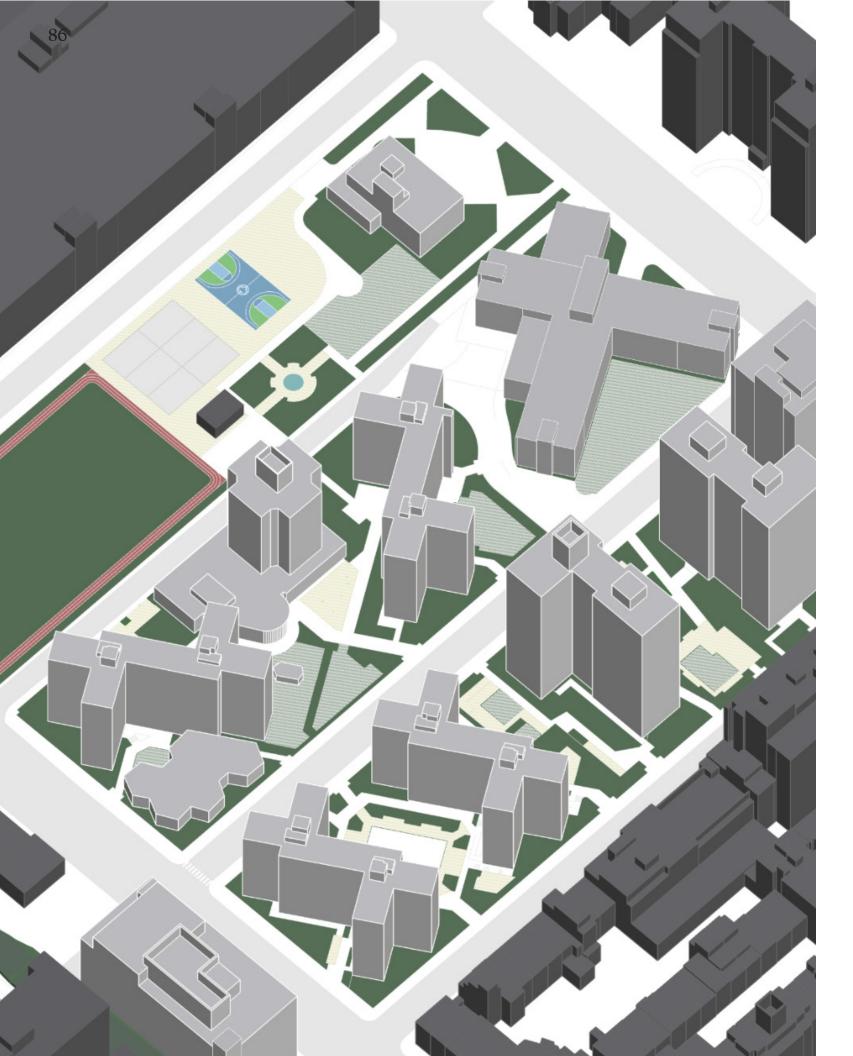
80 Collections For the Love of Archives 81





For the Love of Archives 85





Waste Not A Case for Preserving Public Space

Course:

ADV V Architecture Studio

Professor:

A.L. Hu

Term:

Fall 2024

In the heart of an increasingly privatized and tourism-centric Chelsea lies a campus with a rich and hidden history. This historic campus is a lifeline of vital public resources Preserving the entire campus in the face of mass privatization and gentrification would serve as a bold model for protecting equity and public spaces in New York City.

This is an actionable proposal for a decade-long strategic process that seeks to redefine preservation of public housing as a collective effort extending beyond NYCHA residents in Chelsea. It's rooted in the belief that careful, collective stewardship eliminates waste in all its forms and taps into the innate resourcefulness of New Yorkers to create resilient, selfsustaining communities.



PHASE ONE: MUTUAL AID (2-3 YEARS)

A NYCHA resident sits in their kitchen, a space they've made their sanctuary despite decades of deferred maintenance requests. Around them are building neighbors gathered not out of frustration, but determination. After months and years of anti-demolition advocacy work, these neighbors have begun to shift their efforts. A table that has been used for morning coffees now serves as a space for strategizing how to deal with the uncertainty surrounding the "what," "how," and "when" of their housing future.

In building lobbies and playgrounds, these neighbors come together bringing whatever they have access to: folding chairs and tables, food packed in aluminum pans and lit with sternos... These gatherings are spaces of resourcefulness, where trust is built, and are sites where a collective vision begins to take

They begin to ask each other, "What if we pool our resources to address immediate in-unit concerns?" Inspired by precedents like NYC's Grand Bazaar—a flea market started in the 80s by parents to raise funds for their children's schools—they envision a similar collective effort.

Neighbors contribute handmade items, household donations, and baked goods to sell at flea markets. The proceeds fuel a collective pot, which would fund the beginnings of a tool library where residents have free access to repair essentials—a wrench, a drill, a sewing machine.

A group of neighbors trained in janitorial, construction, and pest control through NYCHA's established Resident Training Academy (NRTA) begin sharing their knowledge with neighbors, empowering them to tackle everyday repairs and maintenance. A broken sink becomes a group's shared project, transforming small in-unit fixes into powerful acts of collective action.

Over two to three years, this mutual aid model grows. Residents realize they don't have to wait on external solutions—they are the solution. Power dynamics shift as alternative forms of leadership take root, and the community's sense of agency grows. At this point, the groundwork is laid for a future where NYCHA residents reclaim not only their homes but their collective power.

PHASE TWO: ALLYSHIP (2-4 YEARS)

As the mutual aid model grows, NYC's enormous bank of resources become increasingly accessible. Connections to local organizations, city agencies, advocacy groups, and grant and fellowship opportunities allow residents to scale up their interventions.

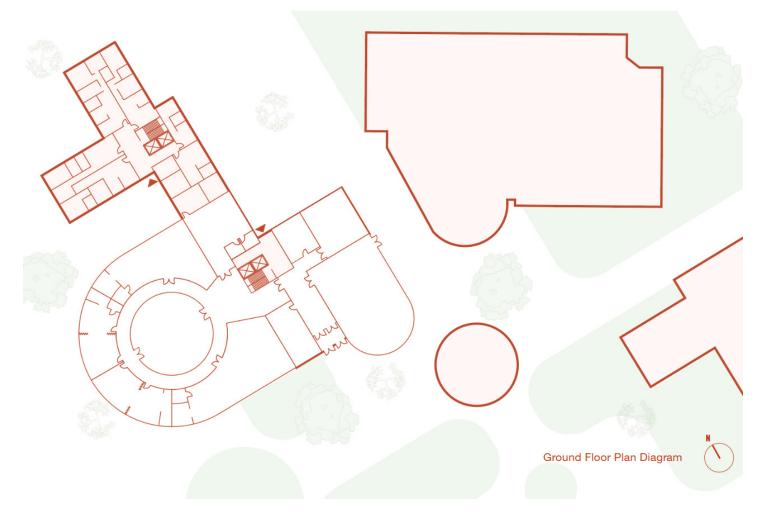
At the heart of this phase is the philosophy of turning observers into supporters. As Metin N. Sarci, a strategic projects manager at NYCHA, has said: "NYCHA needs a radical reformation one that requires the authority to turn observers into **supporters."** The value of this public land resonates beyond residents, becoming a shared priority for the broader NYC community.

After recognizing the potential of the flea market as a viable fundraising option, residents figure out how to bring the market to the campus as a community staple. They reference El Rastro Street Market in Madrid to learn how to prevent such an effort from feeding the gentrification and tourism in the area.

Residents learn that West 26th Street could be closed to vehicular traffic weekly to accommodate the flea markets. This effort would be facilitated through partnerships with Hudson Guild, Chelsea Flea, and the NYC Department of Transportation. The market would transform West 26th Street into a hub of activity, a testing ground, and a space where NYCHA residents and Chelsea neighbors can connect, breaking down social and class divides.

Residents find ways to expand their funding model to establish the tool library they've started. Their intention is to expand access to resources and to support residents' capacity to preserve their community. Regular "repair cafe" programming offers resources for residents to repair, maintain, and improve their homes and personal items while reinforcing community bonds. Case studies from the Greenpoint Library & Environmental Education Center in Brooklyn inform these strategies, proving that community-focused programs can sustain themselves while encouraging resident agency.

Sarci, Metin N. "Opinion: Reimagining NYCHA for the 21st Century." City Limits, 12 Sept. 2024.



PHASE THREE: PERMANENCE (3-6 YEARS)

Phase Three is about permanence. It is the moment when the vision of a revitalized campus becomes a tangible reality. By this stage, tenants and community partners have built the trust and systems needed to expand their ambitions. The focus shifts to transforming public spaces into thriving, permanent hubs of connection, culture, and community support, while ensuring the built environment serves long-term needs.

The most extensive symbol of this transformation is the redesign of West 26th Street into a pedestrian corridor. Redirecting traffic creates a vibrant, car-free space for gathering, commerce, and movement, linking previously disconnected areas across the campus.

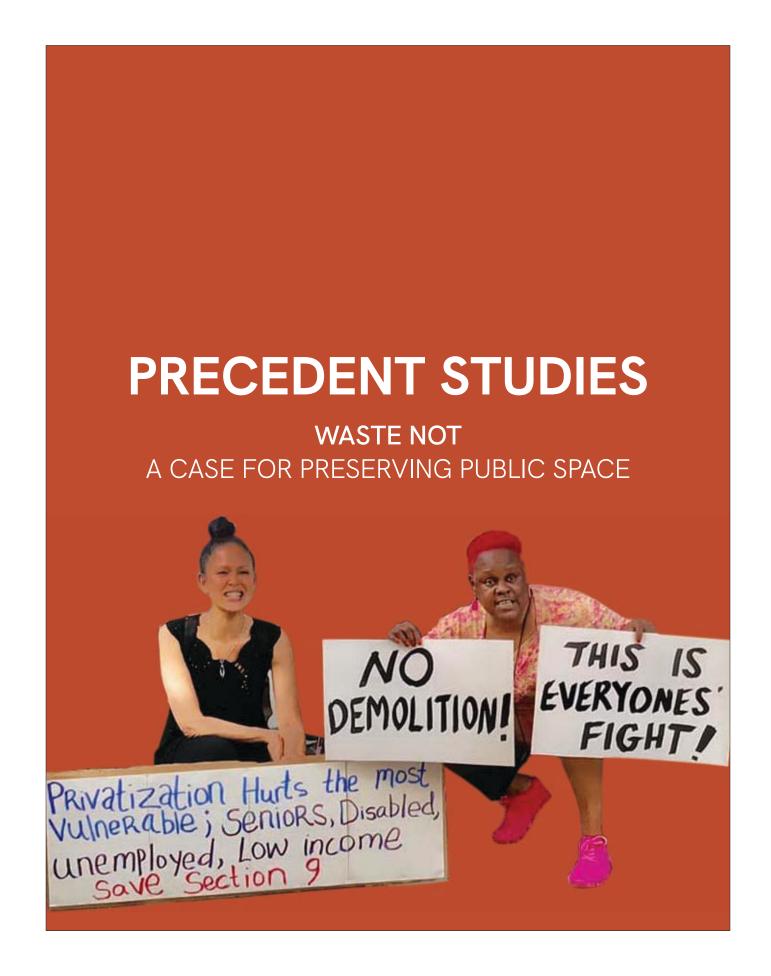
This phase also deepens residents' partnership with Hudson Guild. As Hudson Guild prepares to renovate and expand their existing space in Elliott House, they decide to allocate square footage for a tenant-run space.

Recognizing the value of tenant leadership, Hudson Guild engages the residents in a participatory design process. These residents go on to shape their vision for:

- » A **2,400-square-foot assembly space** for gatherings, cultural events, and workshops, accommodating up to 500 people standing or 170-350 seated.
- » An 830-square-foot office for tenant organizing and leadership efforts.
- » A **560-square-foot storage area** for tools, flea market supplies, and shared resources.
- A public restroom, addressing a critical community need

Hudson Guild optimizes its capacity by redesigning its children's center with added administrative offices. A central courtyard playground better consolidates the children's center spaces and meets the need of a protected play space.

Financed as a model for public-private cooperation that prioritizes community-driven development, Phase Three solidifies the campus as a blueprint for building collective strength and creating spaces that reflect and serve the people who call them home.



PUBLIC LAND IS NOT EXPENDABLE

This plan challenges the notion that public land is expendable and asserts its value as the foundation of a sustainable, equitable Chelsea.

GOALS

- To prioritize resourceful renovation options that create opportunities for stewardship of public land.
- » To safeguarding these structures, ensuring they endure as symbols of the longevity of public buildings.
- To celebrate and amplify the memories, traditions, skills, and contributions of people who live in public housing.
- To fortify the mutual support networks that bind NYCHA campuses and its surrounding community, serving as a critical counterbalance to rapid gentrification.

TAKEAWAYS

» Related and Essence's PACT proposal is the most radical one seen in NYCHA history. The key to truly preserving these communities lies equally radical, community-driven stewardship.

PRECEDENT STUDY: NYC'S GRAND BAZAAR. UPPER WEST SIDE, NYC.

THE ECONOMICS OF RUNNING A CHARITABLE WEEKLY FLEA MARKET IN NYC



PRECEDENT STUDY: NYCHA RESIDENT TRAINING ACADEMY (NRTA). ACROSS NYC.

A LOOK INTO NYCHA'S "CARETAKER" TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



ABOUT:

The Grand Bazaar NYC (originally GreenFlea Market) started in 1979 as a simple yard sale organized by parents to raise funds for their children's schools. Today, it is the city's oldest, largest, and most diverse curated weekly market.

As NYC's only purpose-driven market, it donates 100% of its profits to four public schools, funding arts, enrichment programs, and classroom essentials for over 2,000 children. The market is held at P.S. 334 Anderson School, one of four beneficiaries of the funds raised.

The market also provides much-needed affordable retail space to local independent artists, designers, craft-makers, vintage and antique dealers, and artisanal food entrepreneurs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- » https://grandbazaarnyc.org/
- » https://www.greenfleamarkets.com/index.shtml

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- » I used publicly available data to estimate the weekly revenue generated from vendor rents at the Bazaar.
- » The Bazaar operates year-round across 43,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space, hosting over 200 vendors during peak season.
- Vendor rents range from \$40 to \$140 per day, varying based on plot size, location, and season. With these rates, the market has the potential to generate an estimated gross revenue of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per week!
- » This model demonstrates the viability of flea market fundraising and could inspire similar initiatives.

IMAGE: Aerial view of the outdoor market, located in the school's enclosed playground. SOURCE: Grand Bazaar NYC.

ABOUT:

The NYCHA Resident Training Academy (NRTA), funded by Robin Hood, provides NYCHA residents with employment-linked training and job placement in construction, maintenance, and janitorial fields. Robin Hood's mission to elevate New Yorkers out of poverty aligns with the NRTA's focus on supporting career paths that lead to self-sufficiency.

Graduates receive job placement assistance through NYCHA's Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability office (REES) office, with many securing "caretaker" positions at NYCHA or with contractors and affordable housing developers.

The NRTA aims to provide motivated individuals with the skills needed for a successful career in the construction industry, promoting upward mobility and long-term economic empowerment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- » https://opportunitynycha.org/workforce-development/ nycha-resident-training-academy/
- » https://robinhood.org/
- » https://dol.ny.gov/location/new-york-city-housingauthority-nycha-resident-training-academy

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- » Programs like these create economic opportunities for unemployed and underemployed NYCHA residents while addressing critical repair and maintenance needs.
- » The pro-demolition narrative fails to recognize programs like these, overlooking how PACT proposals could integrate with or reduce the need for them.
- » Learning about these initiatives raises questions about the collective impact of the programs, resources, and efforts that support and sustain NYCHA housing.
- » What have been the experiences of "caretakers" who completed this training and now work to maintain NYCHA properties? How has the program impacted their financial stability, social connections, and leadership roles in their communities?

IMAGE: An NRTA trainee demonstrates how to use a circular saw at a showcase at Brooklyn's City Tech. SOURCE: Mary Frost from BrooklynEagle.com.

PRECEDENT STUDY: EL RASTRO STREET MARKET. MADRID, SPAIN. HOW A STREET MARKET PRESERVED - AND GENTRIFIED - A HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD



PRECEDENT STUDY: THE GREENPOINT LIBRARY & ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER. NYC. RECTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE IN GREENPOINT WITH TOOLS FOR CHANGE





ABOUT:

El Rastro, Madrid's historic open-air market, has been a cultural cornerstone of the La Latina neighborhood since the 18th century. It attracts locals and tourists alike with its antiques and crafts, fostering community and supporting local businesses.

However, its popularity has contributed to gentrification, driving up rents and displacing long-term, working-class residents. Traditional shops are being replaced by upscale boutiques, cafes, and short-term rentals, shifting the area's focus from locals to tourists.

El Rastro highlights the complex balance between preserving cultural heritage and managing the effects of gentrification, as La Latina's identity faces pressures from modernization and rising costs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- » https://www.themakingofmadrid.com/2021/11/03/a-briefhistory-of-the-rastro/
- » https://www.nakedmadrid.com/2020/03/04/rastropolitical-market-madrid/

ABOUT:

The Greenpoint Library & Environmental Education Center (GEEC), part of the Brooklyn Public Library system, serves as a full-service library and community hub for environmental education and activism.

Their Tool Library, part of the Repair Hub project, supports environmental health by making repair and maintenance resources accessible. Tools available range from power tools to bike repair kits and gardening tools. GEEC also hosts events like the Repair Fair, where neighbors can receive repair guidance from skilled volunteers.

GEEC's construction, operations, and programming was made possible through the Greenpoint Community Environmental Fund, a \$19.5 million grant program created by the State of New York with monies obtained through a settlement with ExxonMobil over its Greenpoint oil spill.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- » https://www.bklynlibrary.org/locations/greenpoint
- » https://www.bklynlibrary.org/tool-library

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

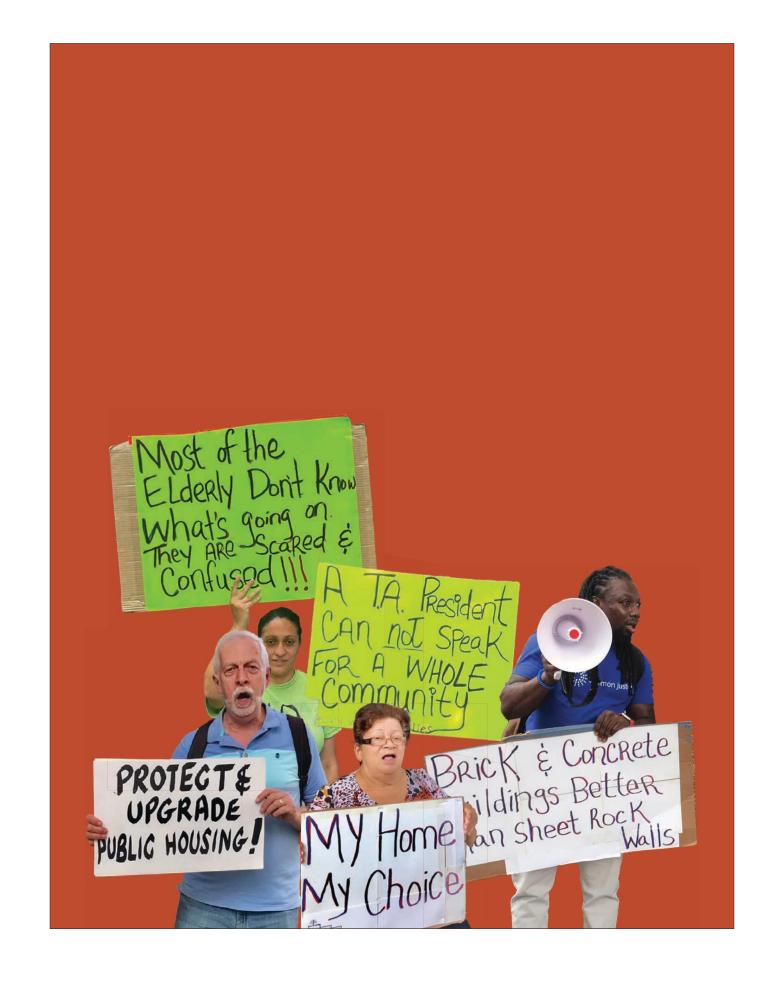
- » Measures must be taken to protect the site from tourism and gentrification. Popular community events or spaces often risk being co-opted to drive further gentrification.
- » The High Line serves as a cautionary tale—a successful adaptive reuse project initially driven by community activists, now contributing to neighborhood gentrification.
- » The key challenge is shifting from voyeurism to allyship, ensuring that revitalized spaces serve the community without displacing it.

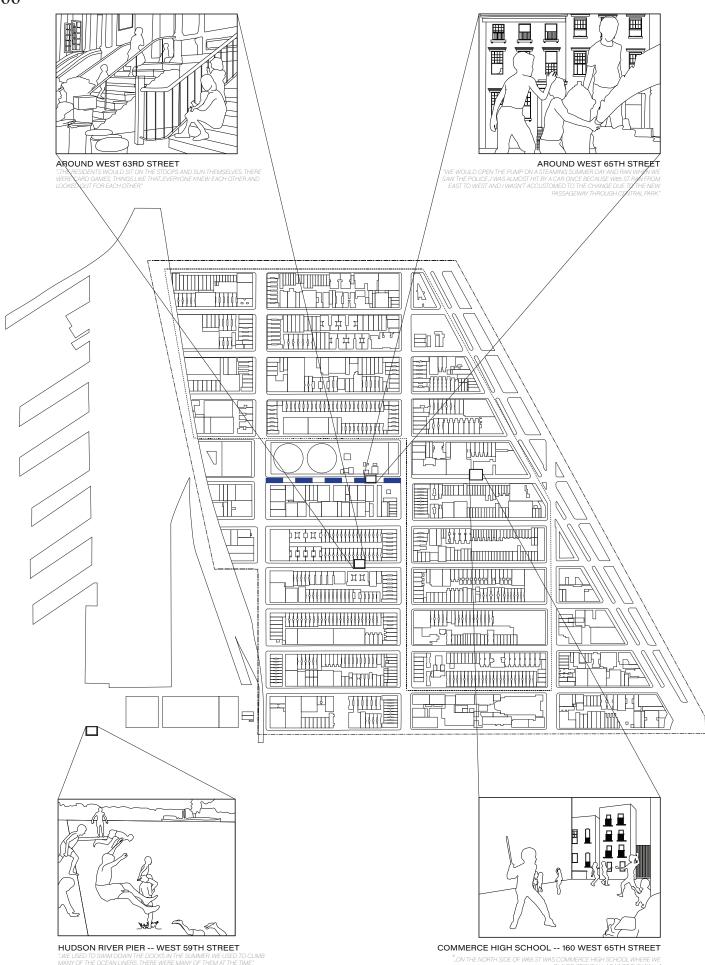
IMAGE: Vendors and shoppers along El Rastro's main corridor. SOURCE: The Making of Madrid.com

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- » The Greenpoint settlement shows how residents can take legal action and use settlement funds for community initiatives. It highlights the potential to leverage environmental and corporate accountability to support housing preservation and prevent displacement.
- Partnering with established institutions like the public library system can strengthen these efforts, as libraries are crucial, equalizing resources in NYC.
- This precedent demonstrates that residents can reclaim control over their neighborhoods and drive long-term positive change.

IMAGE: (Left) View of the building's entrance. The library was opened in 2020. (Right) Library employees celebrate the opening of the tool library. SOURCE: (Left) Michael Moran/ OTTO, (Right) Greenpoint Library & Environmental Education





Long Gone San Juan Hill

Course:

Core I Architecture Studio

<u>Professor:</u>

Anna Puigjaner

Term:

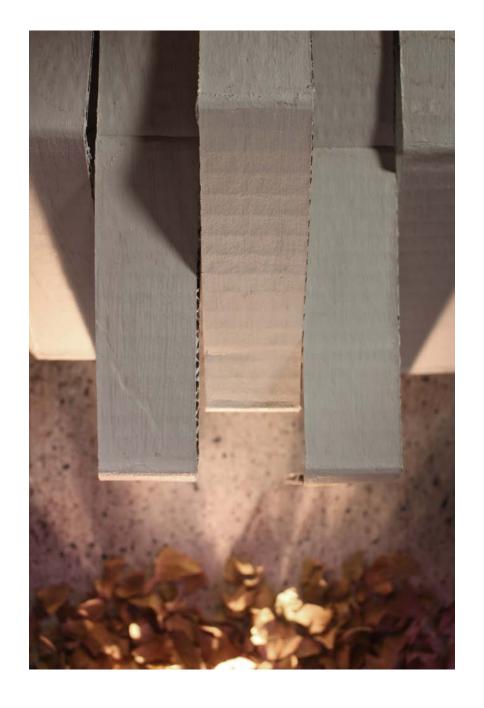
Fall 2021

San Juan Hill was once a vibrant, working-class neighborhood shaped by Black, Puerto Rican, and immigrant families—until urban renewal projects, from the Amsterdam Houses to Lincoln Center, cleared the land and erased generations of life and memory. This project centers the voices of former residents whose stories reveal both the life that once filled this place and the gaps left behind. It creates space for memory to shape how the neighborhood continues to evolve.

This intervention reclaims West 65th Street as a space for memory, gathering, and collective authorship. Stretching from Amsterdam to West End Avenue, it connects students, elders, performers, workers, and neighbors across the boundaries of five buildings. The street becomes a living archive where stories are recorded, shared, and experienced through sound, projection, and gathering. The structures are intentionally open to negotiation, inviting people to shape and co-author the space together, even as this kind of shared agency can bring friction and conflict. Still, the design resists closure, offering no fixed monument, but a shifting space where memory remains alive, messy, and continuously remade by those who gather.

104 Long Gone San Juan Hill



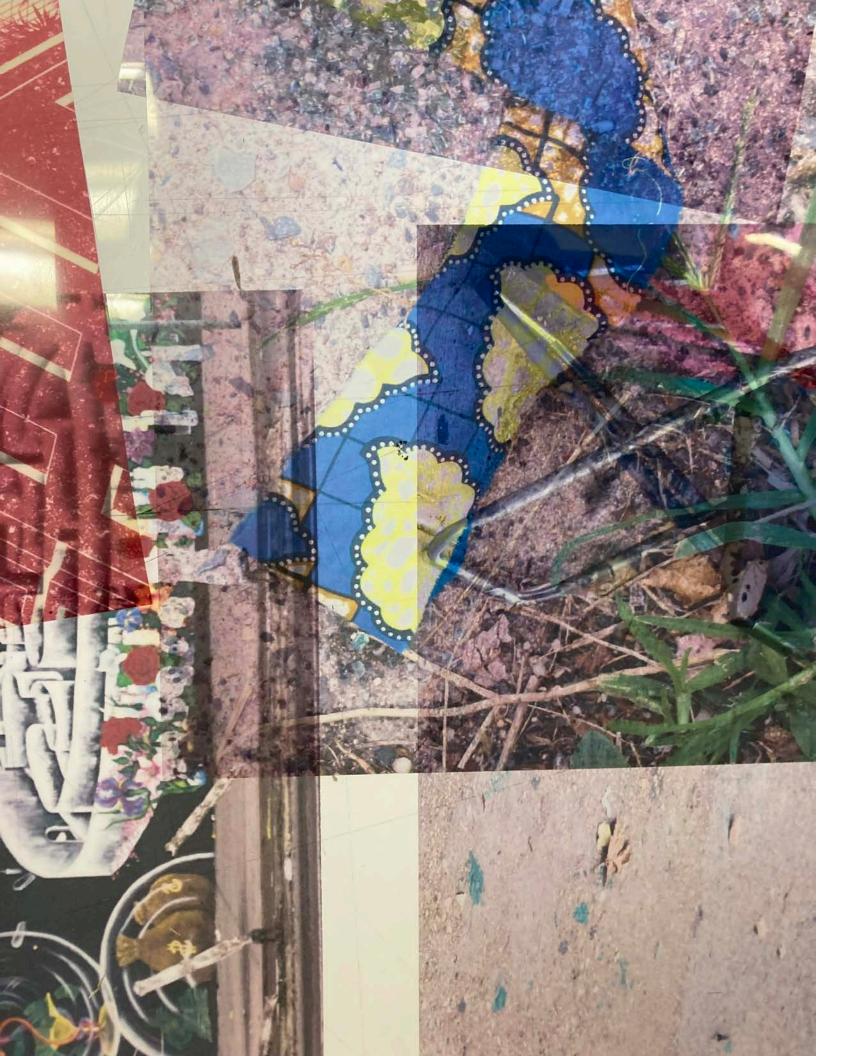


106 Long Gone San Juan Hill





GROWING UP IN CITIES



Creative Grounds

In Collaboration With: Teonna Cooksey

Course: Core III Architecture Studio

Professor: Benjamin Cadena

Term: Fall 2022

Creative Grounds is an artist residency for practicing artists with children. Its mission establishes and maintains a stable art community while promoting equity-sharing among existing residents in the South Bronx. The complex features commercial spaces that are owned and operated by "anchor residents" -- the prime stakeholders of the development. In Contrast, "transient residents" (artist-residents and their families) are given access to space, resources, and community support to offset their families' unique challenges. The development of the site activates the relationship between the artist and the community by creating "zones" that address the targeted needs of the community.

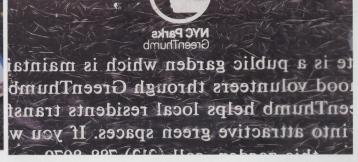






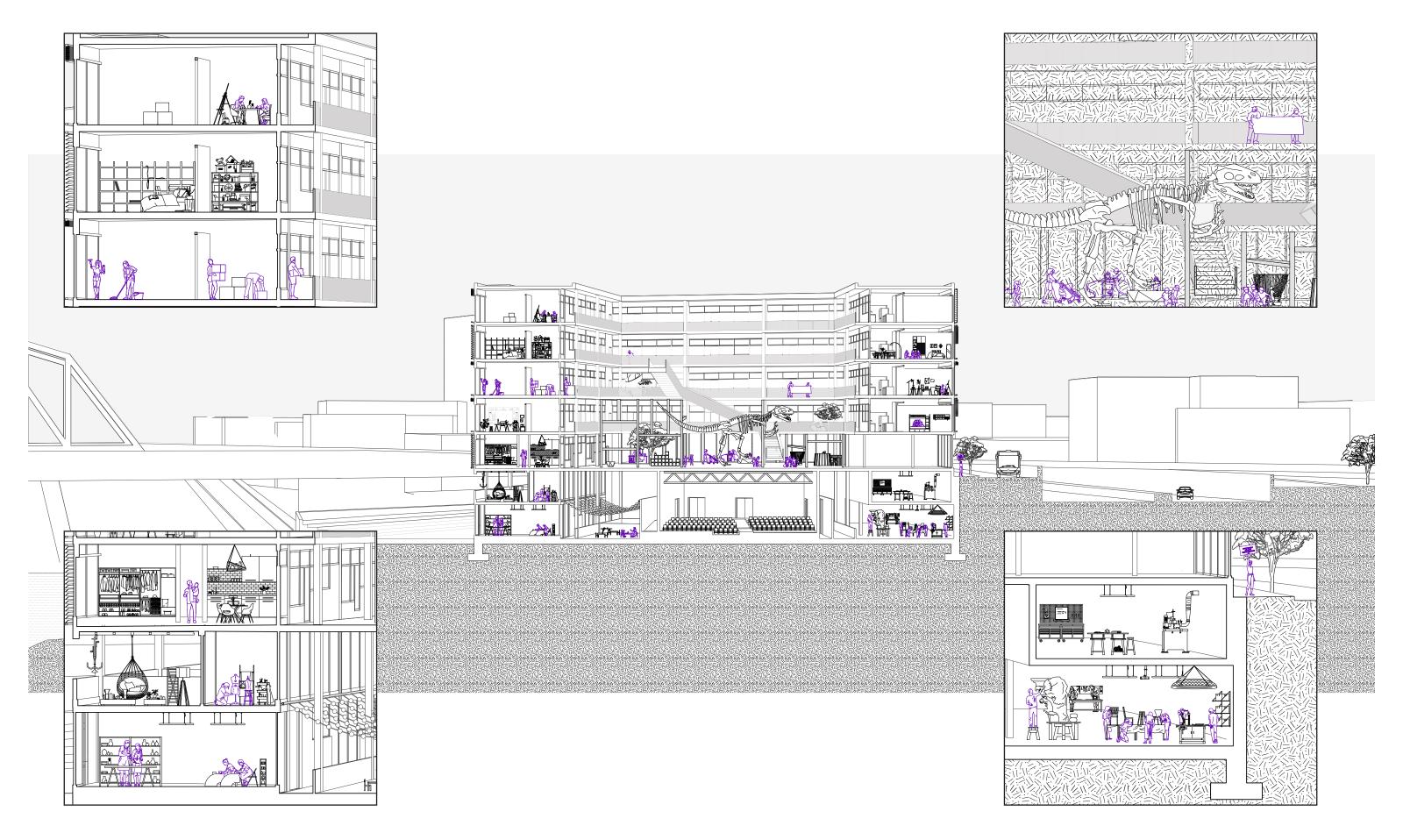








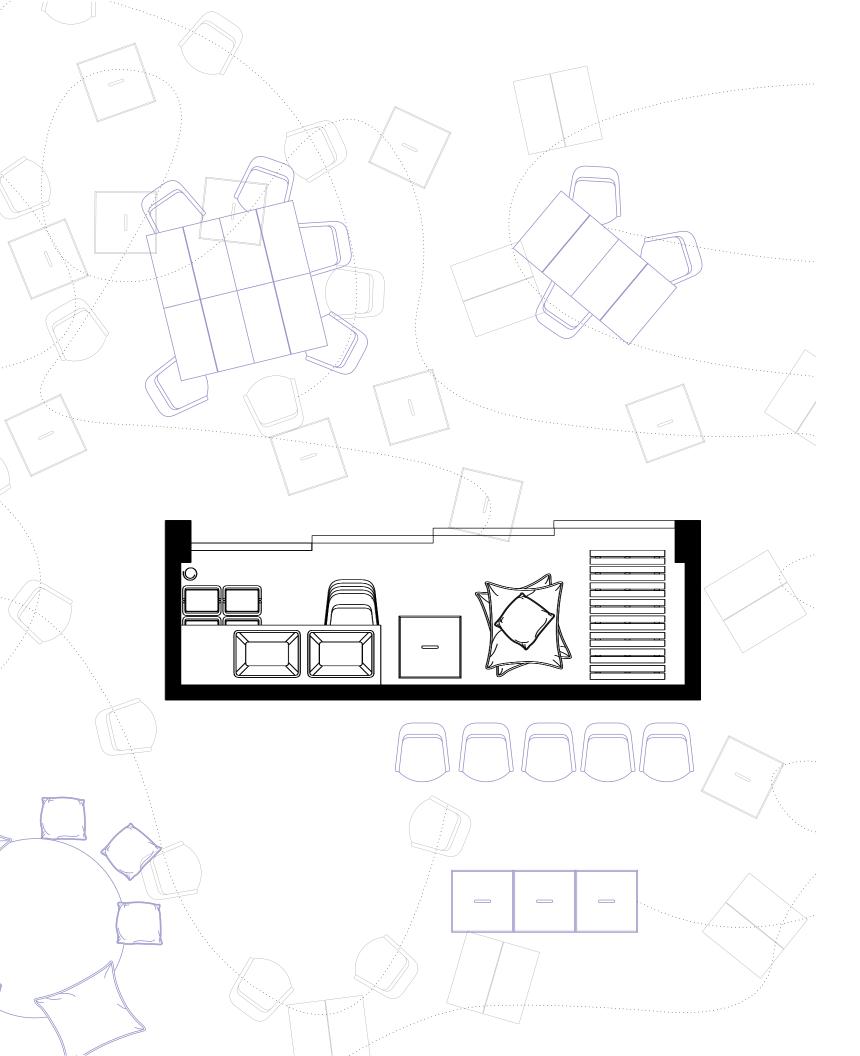












Interwoven Interaction

Course:

Core II Architecture Studio

Professor:

Karla Rothstein

Term:

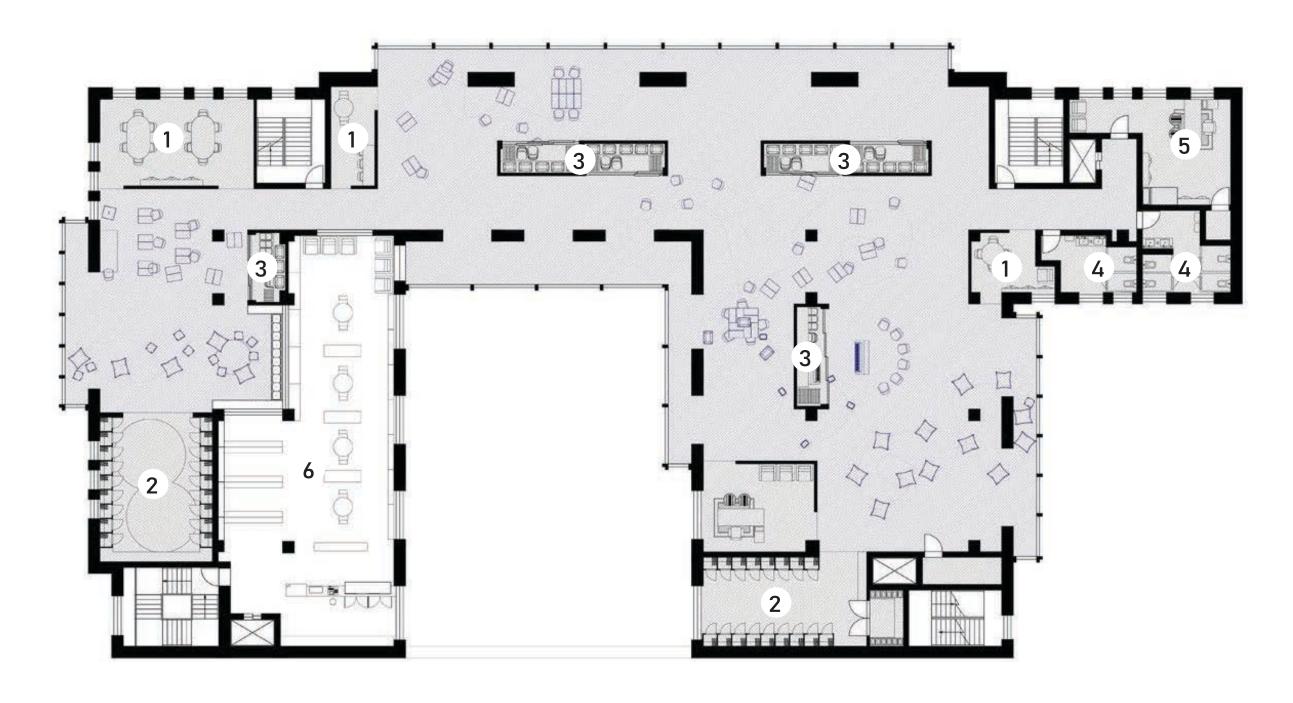
Spring 2022

Defined by interwoven relationships within and between community and environment, both the school and the urban network offer comforts, challenges, and boundaries to the child. These elements shape a child's sense of security and permanently influence the ways in which they interact with the world as they develop.

This school is a microcosm, separate from, yet entangled with the larger urban network. It is an urban laboratory where the child can independently and securely exercise their agency and distinguish their roles within greater networks.







1 Teacher Support Areas

3 Material Storage

5 Nurse's Office

Second Floor Plan
Not to scale

2 Student Locker Rooms

4 Student Bathrooms

6 Public Bookstore



