Archis is RISD

The following pages show the results of an experiment. What would happen if you sidestepped the usual role of a school as the prologue of reality and the role of a magazine as the epilogue of that reality? What if you went beyond the schism between education as the preparation and criticism as the aftermath of what is in the middle, design itself? What could you expect if a reflexive and activist medium connected with reflexive and activist teaching? These were the questions we posed to the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island, USA, to stimulate ideas:

'*Archis*, magazine for architecture, city and visual culture, is preparing an issue on design and vitality and is seeking your intelligence. We would like to present a series of mature projects, either conceptual and generic or very material and site-specific, which can be seen and examined as strategies of vitalisation, revitalisation and other forms of giving life and breaking through the status quo. We are thinking of projects that imply a strong, albeit subtle, intervention to fight death, stupidity, waste, decay, demoralisation, exhaustion, laziness, meaninglessness, self-evidence, fatigue, matter-of-factness. Design not as an accomodation, a facility or a beautifier, but design as an energizer, social interface, as an act. Design as a life-saver, so to speak. Design also not as a product of education but as a consequence of a vision. *Archis* would like to present vitality as a key topic in a cultural debate which suffers from top-heavy theories on the one hand and cynicism on the other. But most of all, it aspires to show how vitality can be practised.'

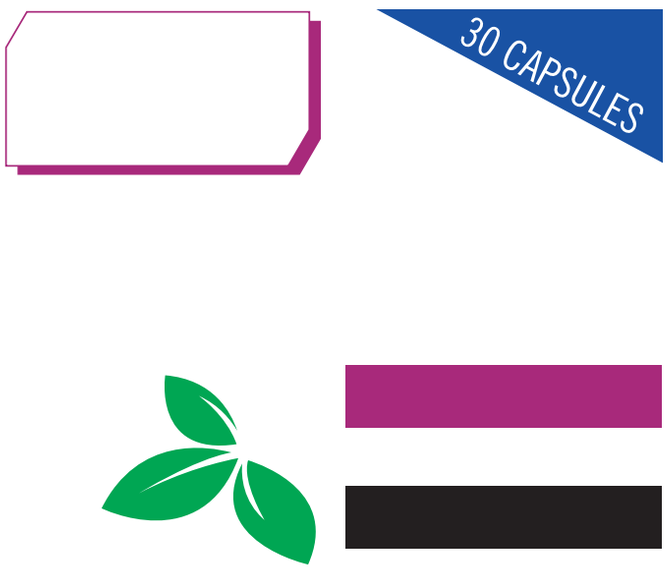
The Rhode Island School of Design is an interesting partner for this experiment. Part of the school's mission is to go beyond the boundaries of conventional educational logic. It also has a comprehensive disciplinary breadth across 23 academic departments in design and fine arts. So, we were very happy to be able to establish this collaboration. We were equally satisfied with the actual participation of a very diverse mix of backgrounds and visions. Faculty and students worked autonomously towards the final submissions. Most importantly, they all produced more than just ideas. The proof of the pudding is in the making, and that's exactly what the following projects reveal.

There are a few observations that emerged during the deliberations to select projects from among dozens of entries. What is strikingly present in all the work selected is the belief that design makes a difference in the world. All of the entries suggested a certain responsibility for what's going on in a variety of cultural and social realms: in the public domain, in science, on the web, in youth culture, in street life. The chosen works reveal a high degree of criticality. They are aspirational, purposeful, engaged. Despite the current repoliticization of our culture, this demonstrated dedication and commitment are still pretty remarkable after years of philosophical topsy-turveydom and top-heavy design theories. What we see is design not just reflecting social issues, not just detecting them, but making realizable proposals and suggesting resolutions to these issues. Is this a coincidence, a peculiar strain of New England liberalism, or is it the voice of a new generation? Or perhaps all three? Most importantly, these projects raise the issue of optimism and design's engagement with it.

Ole Bouman

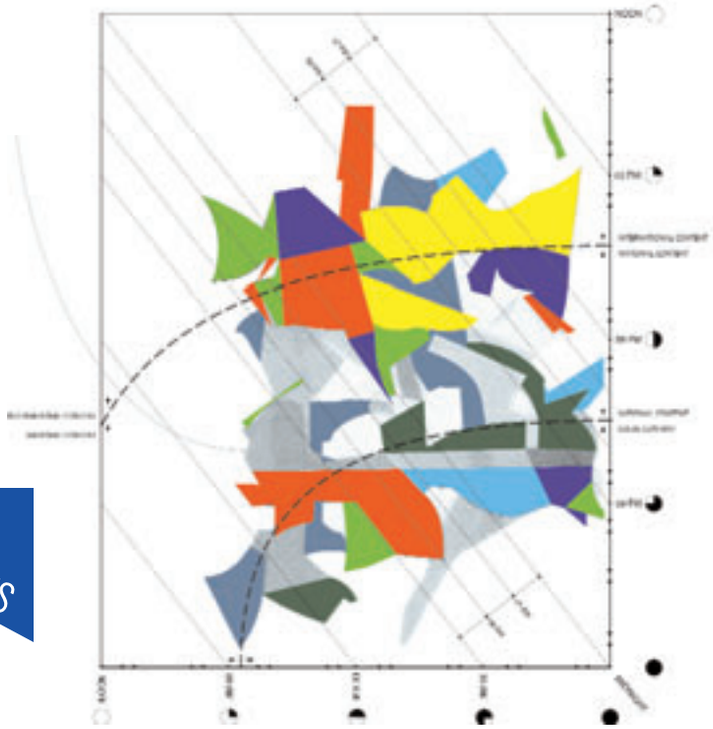
The projects included here were selected by:
Catherine Andreozzi, Dawn Barrett, Ole Bouman, John Dunnigan, Brian Goldberg, Lucinda Hitchcock, Enrique Martinez, Bob O'Neal, Lynnette Widder and Peter Yeadon.

The following persons worked on projects for this theme:
Sean Brennan, student of the Industrial Design Department
Charlie Cannon, assistant professor in the Departments of Landscape Architecture and Industrial Design
Nico Kafi, student in the Architecture Department
Enrique Martinez, assistant professor in the Departments of Architecture and Industrial Design
Robert O'Neal, professor in the Industrial Design Department
Thomas Ockerse, head of programming for the Masters course in Graphic Design and professor in the Graphic Design Department
Rachel Schauer, student in the Architecture Department
Sydney Schremser, student in the Architecture Department
Peter Yeadon, assistant professor in the Interior Architecture Department



RESEARCH IS

30 CAPSULES



ACTIVATION IS VITAL

PROJECT
ENRIQUE MARTINEZ

30 CAPSULES

Adsum Tower is a model for the activation of public spaces.

It channels urban communication flows into an artifact capable of transforming public space into civic space.

It is urban and civic: Adsum Tower is the link between urbs (the city's built presence) and civitas (the city's human presence).

It is a vehicle for public expression and the presentation of public content.

It claims public space in the same way that public performances, demonstrations, happenings, political discourses, ideological battles, etc., expand the static notion of the built urban environment using cultural and socio-political content as a medium to reclaim the city's vitality.

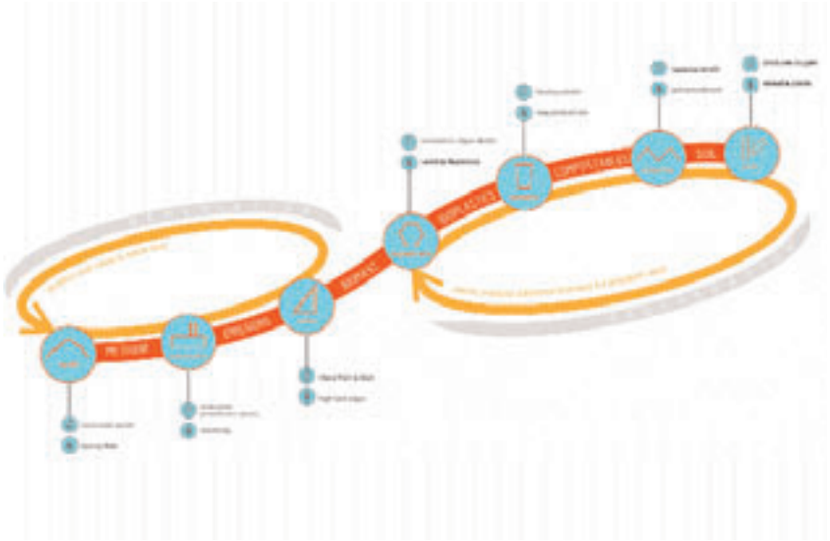
Adsum, a Latin word that could be translated as to be at hand / to come / to be in attendance, perfectly describes the project's claim that public space is a reality that requires active collective involvement: being vital requires active engagement with public space.

Adsum Tower is the agent through which urban communication flows activate public space.

The Tower's materiality is the projective space of the content it displays: information (public space = the space of updates), education (public space = learning space), culture (public space = the space of expression) and leisure (public space = the space of escaping).

DEVELOPMENT

GARBAGE IS GOLD



PROJECT
CHARLIE CANNON

1.

The Rhode Island Central Landfill accepts 3,500 tons of waste per day, servicing about 96% of the state's residents.

30 CAPSULES

Burying garbage is the waste. Landfilled trash threatens the ground-water, releases toxic compounds and contributes to global warming. Landfilling lays waste to productive lands and abandons the energy and precious raw materials invested in every product we produce.

There is an alternative: don't throw garbage away – redeem it. With active recycling, material can be recovered, energy reclaimed and products remade.

Traditional recycling operations are single-minded, processing only a single material, such as paper or plastic. An ecological approach suggests that grouped operations can be far more efficient, both ecologically and economically. Industries located in the same place can act symbiotically, using each other's wastes as raw materials, sharing common systems, and reducing transportation costs.

In its proposal for an eco-industrial park, the Innovation Studio takes the idea of industrial ecology to the next level. The proposed industrial complex repairs and regenerates damaged ecosystems around an existing landfill while developing new, renewable industries whose products won't need to be landfilled at all.

While developed for a particular place, this proposal is broadly applicable – communities around the world share the same problem – land, air and water is too valuable to be wasted by throwing things away.

PROJECT
In 'Designing a New Model for Industry', the Innovation Studio proposes an industrial park whose goal is to divert as much waste from the Rhode Island Central Landfill as possible. Because of the range of materials in the waste stream, the Studio has developed a series of interlocking industrial ecologies to recycle and reprocess garbage.

By interlocking these manufacturing concerns, each operation may produce products and raw materials for adjacent ones. Further, because these facilities are located near one another, they can efficiently share filtering systems to clean toxic emissions.

The industrial ecologies proposed by the Studio include: expanded plastics recycling and the production of composite building materials; a new leachate and water treatment system for the landfill and adjacent industrial parklands; a waste-to-energy system; and the two linked ecologies published here.

The first ecology actively remediates the negative impacts of the existing landfill by using an algae-based filtering system to clean emissions from a methane co-generation plant (which makes energy from the greenhouse gases creat-

The Power Plant. A methane-fired power plant produces 13.6-megawatts, enough power to supply approximately 18,000 homes in Rhode Island.

The Filter System. The filter is a bioreactor that uses sunlight, water and algae to consume about 40% of the carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions from the power plant.

Bio-Plastic Production. Algae grown in the bioreactor is used to produce bio-plastic starches, generating an income of $1.2 million per year.

Packaging Facility. An on-site packaging facility produces compostable packaging for Dunkin Donuts, a Rhode Island Company, that sells between 7 and 8 million (disposable) cups of coffee a day.

ed by the landfill) and from landfill itself. The filter system is mounted on the capped portions of the landfill, using space that is otherwise unsuitable for building on.

The second ecology uses the algae produced in the filtering system as a raw material for the production of bio-plastics and compostable packaging. In time, this integrated bio-plastic – packaging – composting operation could reduce the amount of garbage being landfilled by more than 30%.

Melissa Arminio, Dan Batt, Cathryn Brown, Erica Chunng, Lene Foder, Whitney Gould, Elizabeth Greenleaf, Nicole Kleman, Gabe Lloyd, Farida Pramita, Giorgiana Penon, Tiina Reiter, Cole Slater, Roberta Wright.

Composting Operation. Through compostable packaging and other initiatives, 30% of the Rhode Island waste stream could be diverted from the landfill to composting.

TRANSGENIC ZOO

PROJECT
PETER YEADON

The Transgenic Zoo must be situated in downtown Toronto, where a rail and road tunnel is planned.

My work argues that architecture can no longer ignore the achievements of disciplines that are creating new forms of life and are altering the fundamental properties of matter. It exposes my research interests in the architectural potential of new materials and techniques that are emerging from the laboratories of nanoscience and the biosciences. It also uses the means of the architect, representation, not building, to submit this argument to the scrutiny of my peers. What are we approaching? We have passed through the Industrial Age, the Age of Electricity, the glorious Machine Age, the Space Age, the Digital Age, and the Information Age. But none of that has prepared designers for acts of innovation that are as spectacular as the creations of our contemporary molecular scientists. This is a new epoch. New beings are being made. New atomic elements are possible. The challenge of our time is to think small, infinitesimally small. Scheerbart was stirred by glass, Le Corbusier by aeroplanes, Fuller by the cosmos, and Asymptote by information. As in the past, the technological innovations that surround us now will imminently inspire a new spirit in architecture. Distinctions between living and inanimate matter are no longer certain. Declare it! Envision a vital, living architecture.

The Transgenic Zoo 2020 is an assiduous research project that will not be complete for some years to come. It posits the birth of an entirely new architectural epoch, one that envisions an architectural interface with new forms of life and new properties of matter. These are species and materials that never existed before our time. They are of our own making. We

The architecture of the Transgenic Zoo does not represent life, rather, the architecture of the Zoo is life. It is alive.

30 CAPSULES

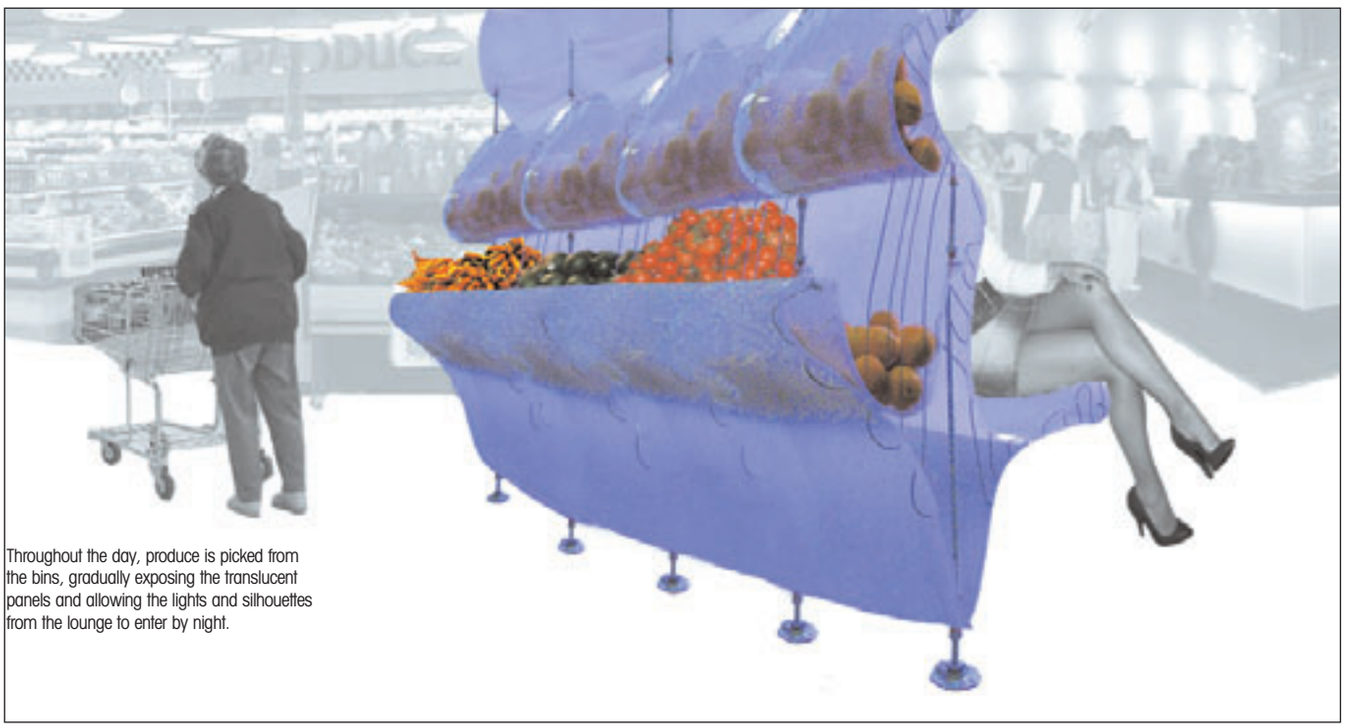
In 'Polymer theories' fingernails are grown for a nailstudio in the Zoo (above)

High buildings surround the Zoo. The vertical transport is not accomplished with lifts, but with self-climbing elements on the outside.

made them possible, or at least we found out how their creation might be possible. The Transgenic Zoo would feature bioengineered plants and animals, a stock of genetically modified species that are available to us today, and will be customarily near tomorrow. These are the sublime species that strike us, at once, with magnificence and terror. These are the glow-in-the-dark trees and trotters that are the result of recombinant DNA practices. These are the beings that exhibit accelerated growth and, consequently, demonstrate accelerated death. These are the prized few that grow human organs for us to transplant, and the new masses that secrete materials for our captains of industry to harvest. These are the "designer" plants and animals of our time, those that have been purposefully assigned a use and, hence, have been given a reason for being. The Transgenic Zoo includes architectural environments wherein humans live, work and play alongside animals in their contrived habitats. Here, as it has been in the history of architecture, presented analogies result in disparities between natural and artificial compositions. However, the architecture of the Zoo is quite unlike architectural analogies to nature in the past, such as the symbolic Orders of Architecture or the metaphoric works of Calatrava. The architecture of the Zoo is to be made of biomaterials that support living cells.Therefore, the architecture of the Transgenic Zoo does not represent life, rather, the architecture of the Zoo is life. It is alive.

BETWEEN WORLDS

PROJECT
RACHEL SCHAUER



Throughout the day, produce is picked from the bins, gradually exposing the translucent panels and allowing the lights and silhouettes from the lounge to enter by night.

For decades, the supermarket has been considered a gender-specific place—the realm of the Housewife—where women go to gather food for their families. With this in mind, the sensuality of food has often been used by advertisers to entice women to the supermarket in search of sexual fulfillment. Numerous ads in women's magazines, for example, cater to the sexually unsatisfied Housewife by offering the solution to her sex life in the form of food—what the husband cannot give, yogurt and chocolate cake can.

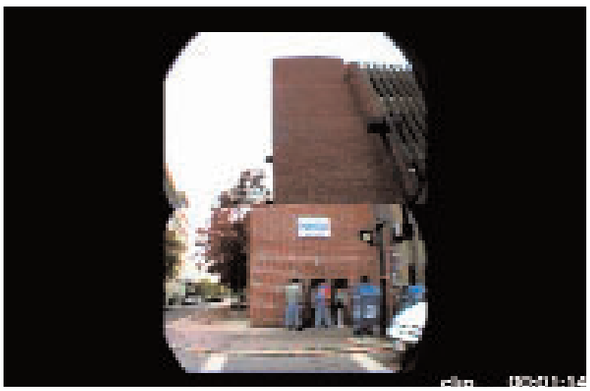
This method of seduction would seemingly make the supermarket a highly charged, sexual space. Yet, through daily routine, it has been stripped of all its liveliness, to the point that most people would never associate sex with the supermarket.

Proposing a juxtaposition of nightclub and supermarket programs, the interface is designed as a way to introduce the sexuality back into grocery shopping. It is intended to allow the energy of visceral nightlife to seep into what we perceive as a sterile environment and add a new dimension to the sensual pleasure of food by using shadow, color and form of both the human body and food.

The rewriting of spaces typically taken for granted becomes a means to fight complicity within the capitalist patriarchy, so that we don't allow ourselves and our spaces to be controlled—sterilized to the point of invisibility—by an institutionalized system whose main goal is to make a quick dollar. By freeing up restrictions on how they are expressed, gender and sexuality move from simply being tools of manipulation to become vehicles of expression.

CO-EXISTENCE

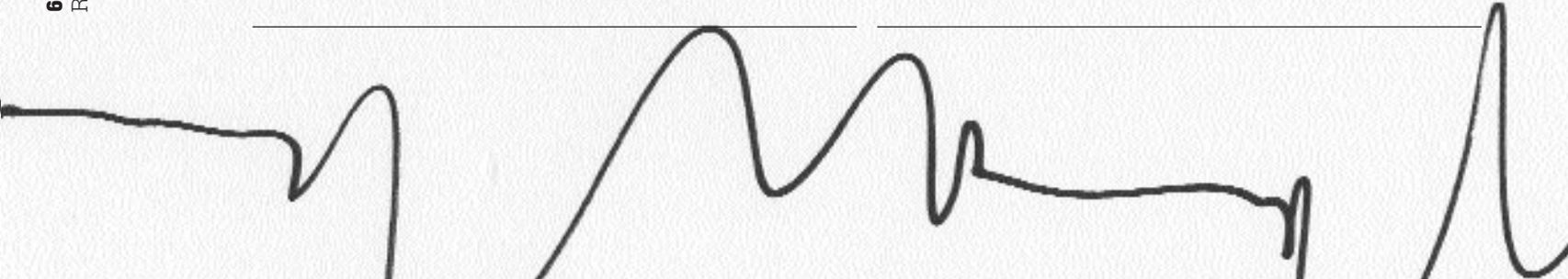
PROJECT
NIKO KAFI

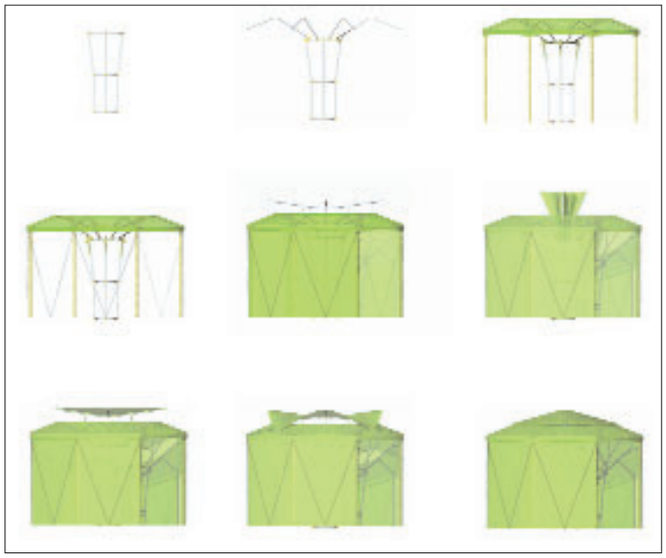


There seems to be a fine line between what appears vital and what is excessively prosperous. Vital in itself implies a difficult status between too extremes; what is lacking and what is excessive. 'Necessary to the maintenance of life', like vital organs, that which is vital is a fragile thing perhaps seen only between, on the brink of, need and surplus.

Prosperity is associated with growth. In a city, which is already built, its borders hemmed, growth no longer means the physical expansion of its boundaries but the growth of its economy and the upkeep/replacement of its buildings and infrastructure. Although the two are intimately tied and one leads to the other, I will make the assumption that growth with respects to Downtown Providence does not imply the proliferation of skyscrapers across the Woonsocket River or towards the highway. Downtown Providence is or has been on some kind of brink. Not getting any 'bigger', one can imagine that growth will involve its financial health. Somehow kept in suspension, frozen, its assets are starting to be unveiled through restoration and insertion. It is a strange thing to witness having come to know the life that exists independent of the efforts to instill a new life. Perhaps it is an obscure thing to want to protect, but Downtown even as a ghost town had its life. New life requires integration with, careful layering upon, and likely and required friction against the old to create a co-existence that is vital and not artificial in nature.

An analysis was conducted, concentrating on the stretch of Washington Street that runs through Downtown Providence from Kennedy Plaza to the junction with Route 95. Two complete loops of video footage were taken driving up and down Washington Street, one of the lower portion of the street including sidewalk and pedestrians and the other of the upper portion. The result is a welded image with a seam, a mid-rift, often appropriate to the existing division between ground level façade and the less familiar upper stories. Often out of sync. The video highlights the disjuncture between what one experiences walking with a goal in mind, eyes fixed, versus perhaps what one could perceive as an urban loiterer with time to spare. Thus, two worlds are captured in one image: the modern city where concrete cues for site intervention lie all around, and the growth city of the past with its symbols of prosperity and capital.





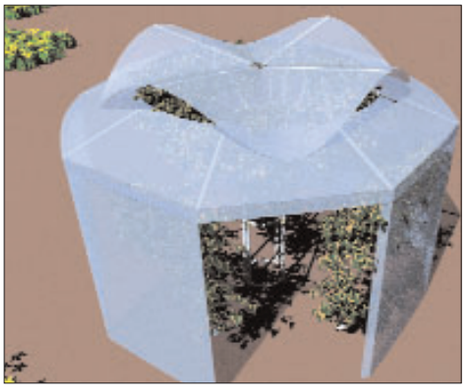
UJIMA SHELTER/ VITAL CONNECTION

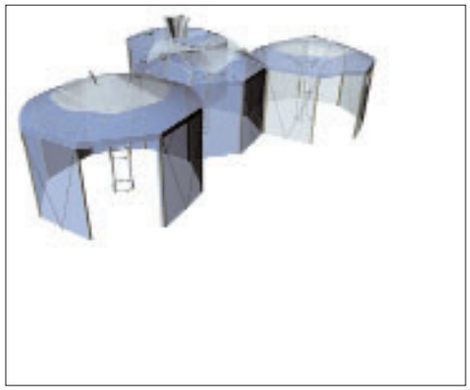
PROJECT
ROBERT O'NEILL

The Ujima Shelter gives a quality of support and vitality that brings renewed life to those living within a displaced community setting. It provides support for the cultural values and the unique living environment of its users through a comprehensive design concept. The relief support furnished by traditional relief agencies consists of plastic sheeting and water storage containers providing only for basic survival needs. This minimal level of support only serves to reinforce the dire reality of the users' situation and a sense of frustration with their inherent plight. While relief extension is well intended, this minimal response helps emphasize the inhumanity of effort for the intended user and a sense of false empowerment for the providers of the relief.

Ujima Shelters go beyond providing for the basic needs of shelter and protection. They approach emergency conditions from a systems viewpoint where the relationship of both culture and functionality are considered. The physical structure of the shelter is adaptable and capable of modification in response to each particular user group. This ability to customize the shelters both symbolically and functionally can help facilitate a sense of belonging and vital connection to an otherwise insecure and marginal existence.

Currently, the ways the shelter can be culturally responsive involve the use of different materials, patterns, and openings to the exterior skin of the shelter. The utility services of the shelter can include solar energy generation, conservation of wastewater, water purification and growing of produce. These internal, sustainable assets combined with the external capabilities all add to





30 CAPSULES

a well designed and vital living environment. The shelter's direct link to vitality comes from its vision of reconnecting refugees and displaced peoples with their normal routine of daily living that has been disrupted by traumatic events, either man-made or natural. Engaging design into these environments of chaos brings a feeling of vitality, which is possible even in the most desperate of conditions.

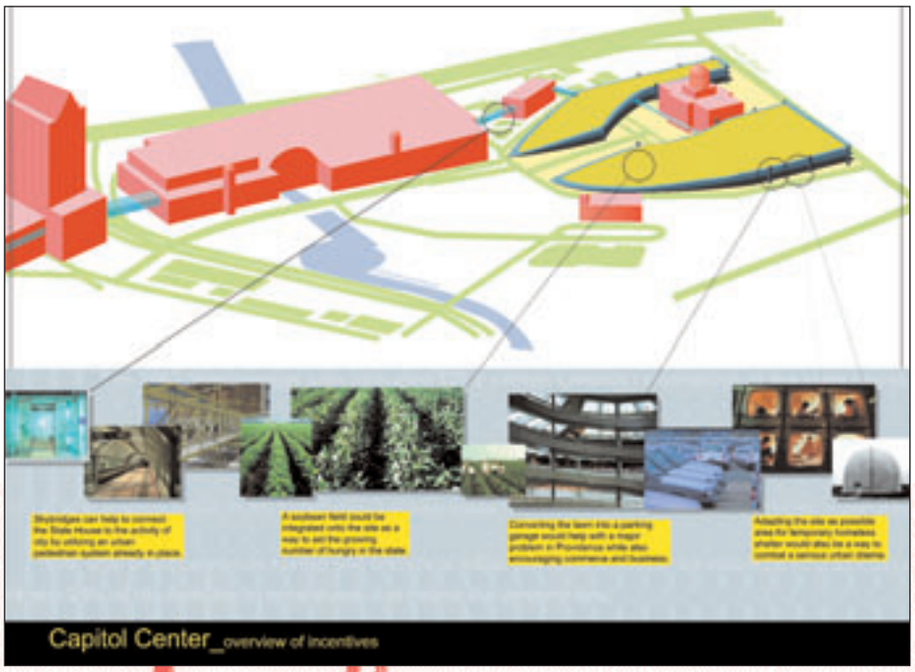
Project Ujima was created with the underlying concept of embracing and sustaining the primary social unit of the family. Providing the means for basic survival within a systematic and sustainable environment, which is responsive to the needs of its users, is directly linked to a regenerative, renewing quality of life.

Anthony Green, Ken Hunnibell, Palo Hawken, Jordan Meadows, Denham Fassett, Robert Moorhead, Falza Khanani, Kirstin Childs, George York, Rebecca Taylor, Simone Meyer, Greg Dinderman, Adam Smith, Lisa Versci, Allen Farago, Lothar Windels, Keith DiMuccio, Jeremy Knapp, Lames Marschbank, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Rafiq, Juan Lopez, Matt Maleska, Gay Dolittle, Ezra Smith, Micky Ackerman, Sherrill Hunnibell, Vincent Vijsma, Sascha Kaposi, Brandy Westerman, Matthew Schwartzberger, Peter Lewis, Douglas Stearn, Misbah Najmi, Rick Paris, Ecem Elci, Mark Pont, Paul Stumpf, Robert O'Neal, Judy Samelson, Bill Schawbel, Michael Schrader, Roger Mandle, Marc Delany, Kevin Gallagher, Riddell Roper.

OPPORTUNITIES OF OUTRAGE

30 CAPSULES

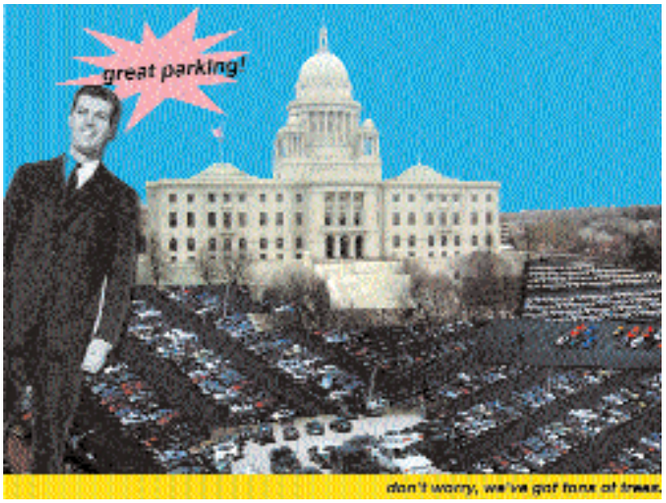
PROJECT
SEAN BRENNAN



What would occur if a maintained public space such as a city park were to be converted into a large parking complex or soybean field? This course of action would undoubtedly alleviate the stress of congestion around the area or feed the homeless, but would more importantly create the opportunity for public outrage as a result of the change.

When talking about inserting vitality into public spaces, especially in an urban context, there is the assumption that work needs to be applied to destitute areas of the city in order to make them attractive again. Revitalization, however, does not mean making an area seem more attractive; this should be the consequence of revitalization. Cities continually make the same mistake of trying to revitalize on the superficial level, through new shopping areas, hotels, and parks. These additions are appealing and certainly bring life to cities, but only up to a point. What civic government needs to begin doing is thinking how to revitalize the community. Reawakening people within cities to both the troubles and benefits of their specific location will create a public that is both informed and involved.

Proposals to change the public spaces of a city can be revealed through the media as testing grounds to spark debate. Each debate is an opportunity for outrage and with outrage comes involvement and change. Suggesting irreverent solutions to civic problems, such as the converting of parks into parking lots, can lead to more viable solutions created by the citizens themselves. Being part of the political process will make these citizens more apt to accept, and embrace (and pay for) future revolutionary civic developments that may follow. The future of urban revitalization will be a collaborative effort, directed by government, but managed by people.


great parking!
don't worry, we've got tons of trees.


SOY!!
"11,000 Rhode Island households experience hunger each month."
"One acre of soybeans can furnish 594 pounds of edible protein and sustain an individual for 2,224 days."
Providence saw a 12% increase in requests for emergency food assistance and a 22% increase in requests for emergency shelter.


Much bigger than i thought, and warmer than the streets!
"Almost 25% of the families in Providence live below the poverty line."
More than 2000 people stayed in homeless shelters last year in Providence.
The death toll of homeless people, in Rhode Island, from exposure and terminal illness ranges between 10 and 15 people a year.
5,440 individuals used RI shelters (year ending June 30, 2002) an increase of 23% in one year.
children living in povery increased 33.6%, from 30,022 in 1990, to 40,117 in 2000.

DECAY IS VITAL

PROJECT
SYDNEY SCHREMSER

Decay is the natural decline, decomposition, and wasting away of matter. To understand the process of decay according to this definition alone is to grasp but half of its significance as part of a larger cycle. Decay fosters growth and prosperity. This design intervention proposes to reconsider the treatment of urban decay as a source of vitality.

Under the guise of an 'amusement park' for a public gathering, the proposal functions as a way to reunite disparate fragments within an urban fabric. The source of this initial rift was the result of an obtrusive elevated highway. The isolation that the highway imposed on the street level below created a kind of dead zone that served as a catalyst for decay.

A simple gesture of making a small eight-foot incision within the highway allowed life to germinate within the world of decay below. The gradual increase of light that occurs in the transition from the darkness below the highway to the overstimulating character above evoked a poetic, mythological interpretation of decay. Physical growth evolved into mythical growth, much like the myth of Dante's journey from hell to paradise.

Like Dante, the proposal is organized as a procession through three distinct 'rooms' that serve to connect space as well as people as life harvested from ruin. The symbolic references of the journey are as follows: An inscription room carved into the earth represents 'hell'; a vertical transition between the highway exists as 'purgatory'; and a gathering platform hovering above everything serves as 'paradise'. The journey ends with a reemergence into reality as a sharp contrast to the fantasy-"life" experienced above.

In the reality that is life on earth, one's witness of decay is not to be seen as despair but rather as a glimmer of what yearns to be born.

30 CAPSULES

DYNAMIC MAPPING

TEXT
THOMAS OCKERSE

www.archis.org/CW

The Project Dynamic Mapping: a digital experience of the Collective Wisdom Field. This project responded to the question "How do we come together in order to touch, or be touched by, the intelligence we need?"—a question vital to the efforts of a Fetzer Institute-sponsored group called The Collective Wisdom Initiative. Although the design could simply have mapped out the group's published research, the design team envisioned a vitalizing experience: a dynamic map. The protein quality of consciousness made it necessary to think of a new way to look at the interface as experience. Most interfaces are didactic and linear in design and function because their goal is to disseminate information to the user in a convenient manner. This practical approach is quite suitable for many types of content, but when content is of a social or experiential nature, this type of methodology does not work. The design team considered the perceptual engagement with words and images as a "poetic" partnership, a gentle co-motion in time and space to stimulate a deep sense of consciousness—of imagination, broadened perspective, and heightened meaning. Poetics offers the user vitality via the power of grace. Grace invites a suspension of the ego, permitting receptivity and inspiration (being in spirit). From that unfolds the energy of awareness, of intelligence and the feeling of abundance. The design is a non-hierarchical, non-linear structure—of center-points in which each "cell" is an organized principle that acts as both microcosm and macrocosm. This holistic conception applies to the entire design interface language, from its largest structure to the smallest component. Interaction is with objects in constant flux. Links are programmed to randomize the parts along with a few controls so the viewer discovers new and unexpected relationships. That dynamism empowers the participant with possibilities and co-creation. In paying attention there is the possibility of surprise, which stimulates spontaneity and play. Every experience therefore enables fresh insights. The key is to participate with a contemplative attitude, leaving out expectations, and letting happen whatever happens. The true depth of what the map has to offer lies in the poetic grace of the haiku-like experience itself, of being in the moment as an active participant and co-creator, and not in the world of expectation and passive consumption. "Poetry is not an expression of emotion but an escape from emotion"! (TS Eliot)

RISD's Creation Team:
Designers: Danniel Gaidula, Stephanie Grey and Soe Lin Post (graduate students in Graphic Design)
Digital Programming and Development: Danniel Gaidula
Design Assistance: Ho Eun Ahn (graduate student in Graphic Design)
Design Direction: Thomas Ockerse (Professor, Program Head, Graduate Studies in Graphic Design)
Thinking Partner: Anne West (Adjunct Faculty, Graduate Studies)
In concert with Sheryl Erickson, the Fetzer Institute, Collective Wisdom Initiative, Project Director.




VITAL SIGNS

TEXT
DAWN BARRETT

The metamorphic and transformational aspect of vitality ought not to be minimized. In that realm of creative production, where the whole is mysteriously greater than the sum of its parts, 'vitality' is a rather good phenomenon to consider – not only in the sense of 'being alive' (instead of dead), but also in contemplation of what constitutes or sustains 'aliveness' in the first place.

Although difficult to reduce to an absolute essence, identifying relevant aspects of 'vitality' seems far more reasonable than defining sister intangibles like vision, alchemy, magic or anything with squishy, spiritual properties. The philosophical notion of 'vital force' (a force independent of chemical or physical forces, and a causative factor in the development of living organisms) is an intriguing concept that may be particularly germane to design's facility in transforming meaning as well as matter.

Recognizing a force that enables change of material state as well as the metamorphosis of form, function, or behavior suggests the power of design to shape the experience of, and by, the living. By virtue of its organic nature (but concurrent absence of materiality or form), using 'vital force' as an alternate, ethical indicator for the strength or sustainability of design proposals could nicely escape the clichéd leap onto an ecological green-train.

Education can be understood as an undertaking in essential vitality: the breathing of life into nascent capabilities and fledgling ideas. To describe education institutions (especially those in architecture, design or the arts), the incubator, greenhouse and nursery are often invoked. A good design project or institute organizes resources and processes for generative and transformative purposes. Institutions of design education are valued for their ability to construct and maintain critical, nurturing environments for growth, learning and experimentation. It's an admittedly artificial but none-the-less life-sustaining system where the incompatibilities of ideation and material reality must somehow be envisioned and reconciled in order to be (trans)formed.

Although The Rhode Island School of Design enjoys many external research partnerships, the *Archis* collaboration was especially inviting as a match to our predisposition for design challenges of a complex, diverse nature not readily answered by formulaic or discipline-bound methodologies. Being conceived as an organized gathering of design intelligence, the vitality issue provided a curation opportunity that fortuitously reflects our premise that worthwhile design investigations and research are situated outside of the narrow definition of design as 'problem-solving' or the pursuit of design-for-hire research to address the financial 'problem' of maximizing profit.

Design research at RISD is individually directed but institutionally supported, and can be characterized by methodologies that fuse material research with critical thinking and making. Adhering to the principle that ideas are only as good as their manifestation in concrete or communicable form, design pedagogy at RISD insists that concepts are developed beyond their value as critique or commentary alone. To realize their objective in the specification of visual representation, model or object, successful concepts must be negotiated through the complexities of context. Technologies must be skillfully applied to the obdurate properties of material and form-making.

Representing only some of the 19 disciplines at RISD, this work provides a select, but accurate view of RISD's educational mission and commitment to design as a culturally productive investigation conducted in a social and political context. Characteristic of the institution itself, the work is diverse not only in discipline, but also in attitude and methodology. Valuing diversity, not only for the sake of variety or exoticism, is more akin to the strategy of biological diversity: having a multiplicity that protects against systemic collapse. Diversity in learning organizations is invaluable as intellectual insurance against the complicity of sameness, the dogma of successful formulae, and stagnation of the status quo. A consciously designed mix of discipline, orientation, media and methodology counters the narrow-mindedness of fanatical specialization. Lastly, it is satisfying to observe that these projects presuppose a vitality outside of themselves and do not posit design as an ultimate solution or, for that matter, as an end in and of itself.

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