

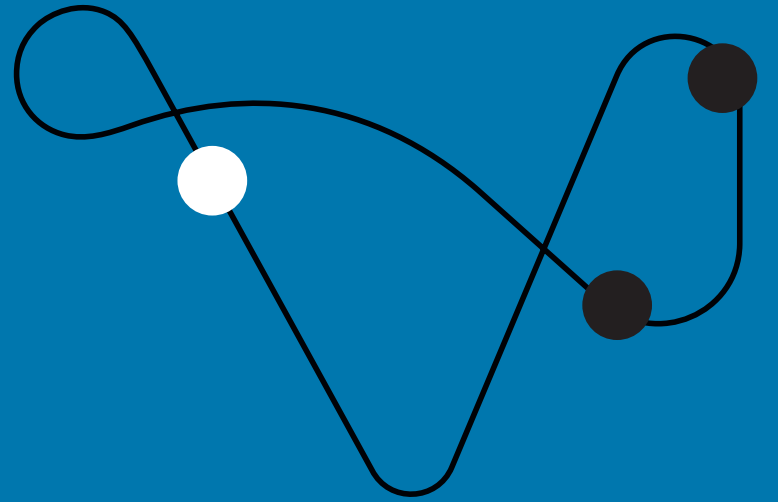
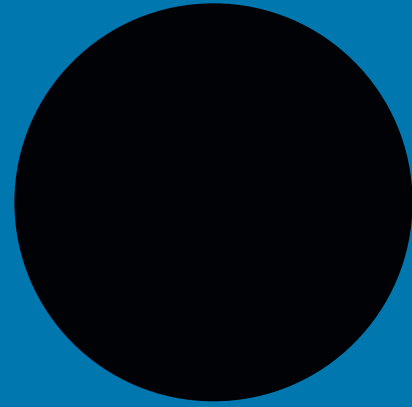
A thesis exploring themes of

place
mapping
power
disregard
care &
growth

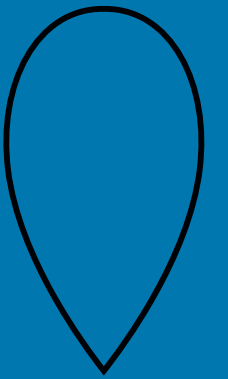
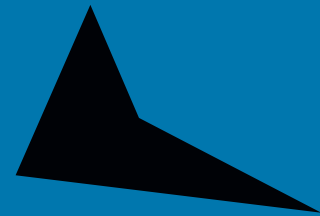
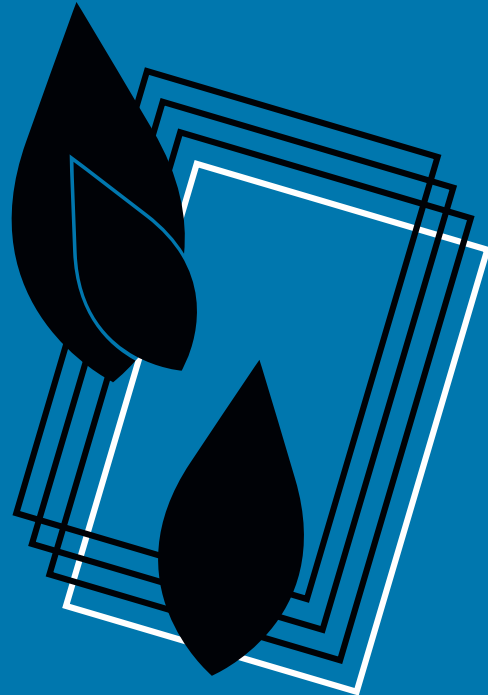
place

fulness

Ellen Christensen



placefulness



placefulness

placefulness

OPPOSING
forgetfulness

AIMING FOR
hopefulness

ADJACENT TO
playfulness

DISTANT FROM
placelessness

Ellen Christensen

RISD GD MFA 2018

placefulness

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts in the Department of Graphic Design of the [Rhode Island School of Design](#), Providence, Rhode Island.

Ellen Christensen

2018

APPROVED BY MASTERS' EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

John Caserta

Associate Professor,
Department of Graphic Design
Primary Advisor

Douglass Scott

Senior Critic,
Department of Graphic Design
Secondary Advisor

Alicia Cheng

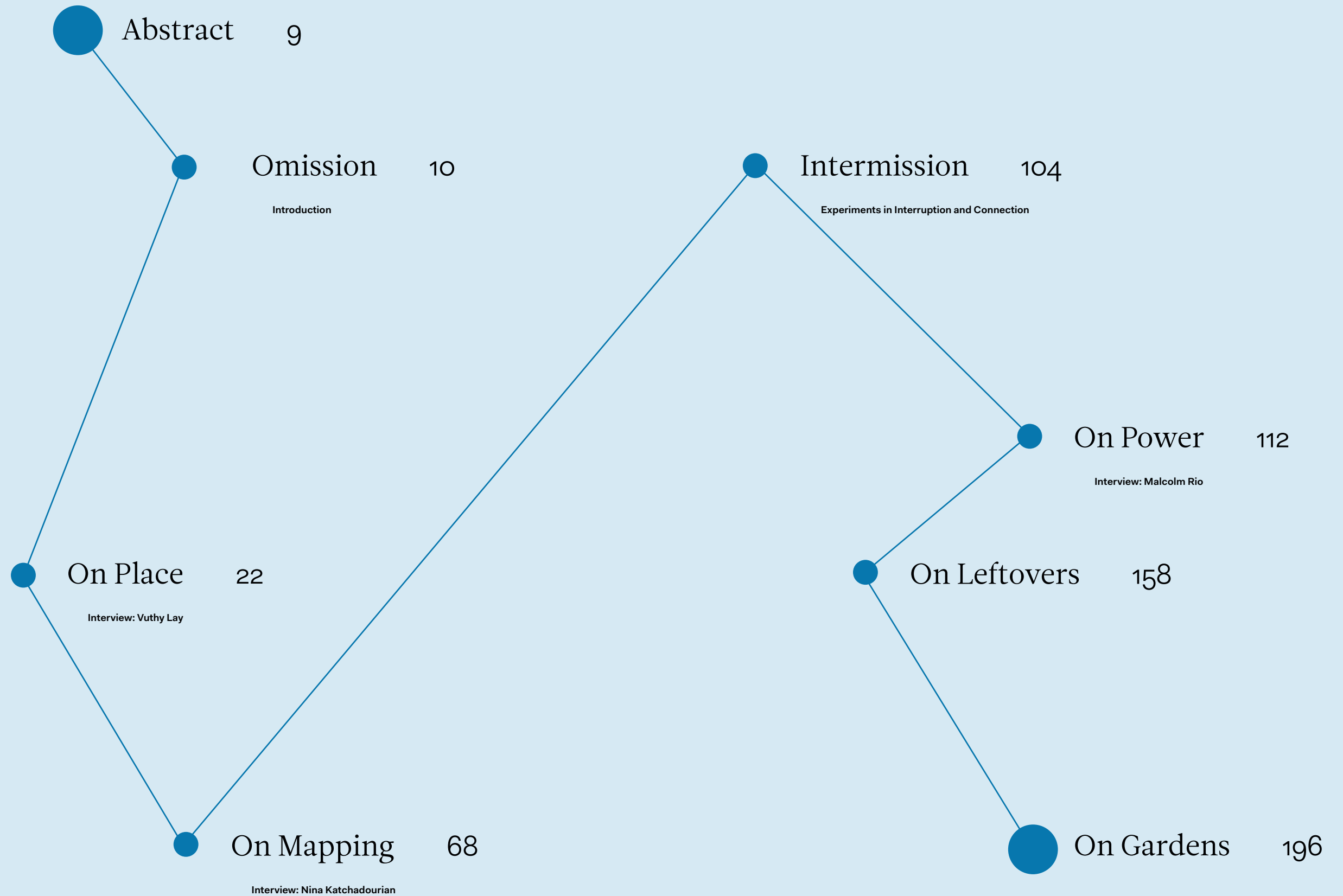
External Critic,
MGMT Design
Tertiary Advisor

Bethany Johns

Professor,
Department of Graphic Design
Graduate Program Director

Contents

FOR FINDING
A ROUTE
THROUGH
THIS BOOK



Abstract

FOR FILING
THIS THESIS
BOOK ON A
LIBRARY SHELF

placefulness

Graphic design has been referred to as a tool of inquiry—a method of thinking visually. Design can polish, beautify, hierarchize, eliminate, prioritize, propagandize, or disseminate. Using spatial inquiry as a primary mode of investigation, I argue that graphic design is also a process of attention and care. How can graphic design be a tool of expansion and inclusion?

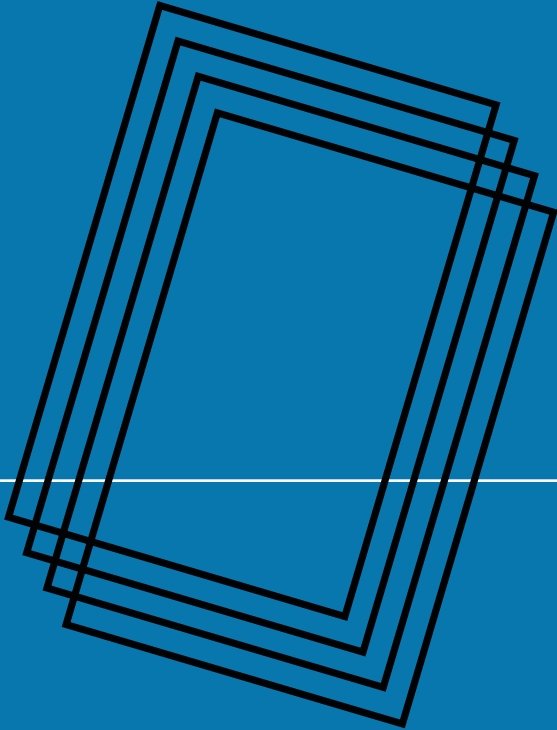
By encouraging spaces of attention and listening within the built environment and virtual worlds, we can think critically about power dynamics, interiority and exteriority, and subjectivity and objectivity. Within this phase of late capitalism, I focus on leftovers, scraps, and the historically unpictured to experiment with methods of interruption and connection.

In **Placefulness**, I take on the role of the radical cartographer¹ in order to map landscapes of imagination and amplify under-projected narratives. Through examination and recombination of often invisible lines of inclusion and exclusion, I draw attention to historic and local multiplicities of experience in order to advocate for a more just future. By interrupting the dominant narrative signals of historic 'place,' **Placefulness** prioritizes an immediate sense of the lived and local.

¹ Officially, radical cartography is the work of Yale historian and cartographer Bill Rankin and presents “an alternative to the typical, seemingly neutral vision of geographic space as a static field of mute infrastructure and unquestioned boundaries.”

“Radical Cartography,” National Education Association, accessed April 2018, <http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/52184.htm>.

Om



ission

“In Congress, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous
Declaration of the
thirteen united
States of America.”



A Declaration of Independence pendant that can be easily purchased [online](#).



A Declaration of Independence tie sold through the National Public Radio online shop.

This imperfect nation began in situ, with the setting of a scene, behind closed doors.

It began through a collaborative process of democracy put forth through graphic design and the written word on paper. With determination and flourish, signee names were joined together by swash signatures curling around the bottom of the parchment.

The original Declaration of Independence, now housed in the National Archives, is faded and illegible from years of public display. And while its lofty language has been memorialized in the national imagination, the original page has become a ghost sign, a trace of a particular meeting in a particular place, now preserved as carefully as possible.



Nina Katchadourian.
Coastal Merger.
Reconstructed paper
map, 1993. 22 1/2 x 14 3/4."

The most widely circulated version of the document is an 1823 reproduction, a print made from a copperplate engraving by William J. Stone.² Engraver Stone gained a degree of subtle authorship in the document through his printing process. Time continues to slowly fade the original and diminish its aura, while giving power to Stone's many reproduced iterations through their relative permanence. The original page, visually punctuated with emphatic renditions of the word "We," is a reminder of the collective power of a unified group of individuals.

The [place](#) for this one document becomes multiple when imagining its afterlife and dissemination. When this declaration first coming into creation in 1776, as each word was painstakingly inscribed on the page, it occupies one [space, on a desk](#) surrounded by contributors. It occupies yet another [space, on the printing press](#) and in duplicates [around the engraver's room](#), in 1823.

In this phase of late capitalism, the image of this document hangs from key chains in theme park gift shops [around the country](#), [next to a reproduction of the Liberty Bell](#), and is simultaneously suspended permanently [in the virtual realm of the internet](#).

Conceptualizing this vast and growing archive of multiple reproductions of such a lofty document allows speculation on the need for an alternative; for a possibility of understanding this never ending image dissemination as oppressive, top-down, and incomplete.

The more the voices of historical and contemporary underdogs can be elevated to the stature of the original founding fathers, the more we are able to challenge the implications of a "unanimous" Declaration of Independence. And by doing so, to come to terms with the ultimate irony of this visionary document being penned by male slaveholders and signed in gorgeous individualized handwriting while their slaves were listed [in record books](#) as nameless property.

² Catherine Nicholson, "The Stone Engraving: Icon of the Declaration," *Prologue Magazine*, Fall 2003, Vol. 35, No. 3, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/fall/stone-engraving.html>.

Today's political climate is heightened and thematically dark, but it is not a narrative twist. It builds on histories and legacies of inequality and racism [in this country](#) that must be fully acknowledged in order to collectively progress. The ideal of [America](#) presented in official narratives is not the lived experience of many. Individual and collective stories that run counter to monolithic, top-down simplifications can inspire solidarity and add complexity of understanding.

By focusing on counternarratives and the often disregarded, multiplicities of lived experience are prioritized. Individuality and difference can be emphasized in order to acknowledge inequalities and ultimately serve as a path to a more expansive "we" than the mythical one inscribed [behind closed doors](#).



A historical redlining map of [Providence, Rhode Island](#). Federal Home Loan Bank Board. Home Owners' Loan Corporation, ca. 1935. Series: Residential Security Maps. Accessed from <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/6103893>

Graphic design is imbued with power through its capacities to polish, beautify, hierarchize, eliminate, prioritize, propagandize, and disseminate.

It is valued by corporations and advertising agencies as a tool to further consumerism for profit. Because of design's hefty potential for persuasion, it can easily be used to underscore the party line.

Design has also been referred to as a tool of inquiry—a method of thinking visually through

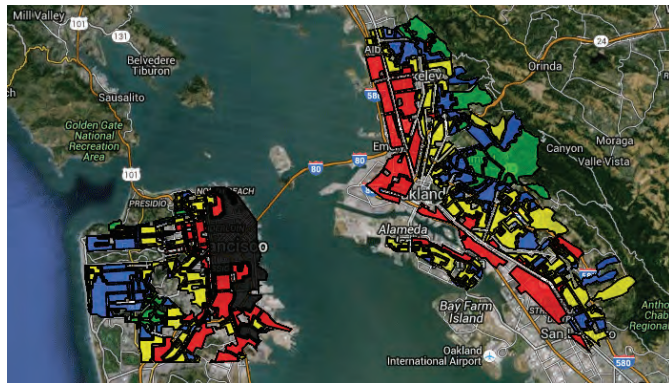
experimentation. This is the way that I choose to apply design in my own practice. I've also come to believe design has the potential to be a tool of care, through processes of focus and attention—through the perspectives and projects we choose to take on, and by forefronting often overlooked imagery.

The impulse to search for who and what is missing brings us into [real places](#). As a fundamental part of my practice, I believe in research into [location](#).

This manifests in traditional research and a grassroots approach to [place](#) that prioritizes [pedestrian and communal spaces](#). This daily process of observation, conversation, and communication prioritizes listening.

By utilizing design as a tool of care, we are able to search for who is missing as well as what is missing.

And by listening to those who traditionally have had less of a platform for their ideas and experiences, we can become more thoughtful designers.



Josh Begley. A historical redlining map of the [San Francisco Bay Area](#), overlaid with Google Maps. From the [Redlining California, 1936–1939](#) series.



Josh Begley. [Archives + Absences](#). An iPhone App.

This exploratory process is allied with radical cartography, a term coined by [Yale](#) historian and cartographer Bill Rankin.³ Radical cartography bridges art and design, geographical and urban studies, and activism. In thinking critically about [place](#), it is my intent to advance new understandings of power networks and representations.

Although at this point I recognize the great potential of design to unite, disorient, distract, or divide, I began with a much simpler understanding of design. I often traced the images from my favorite books when I was little into my giant tracing paper notepad using different colors of ballpoint pen, and by so doing, re-assembled these assorted characters into one [space—the page](#). The overlapping translucent pages created new juxtapositions of imagery through creation. This [space](#) of my traced captures and the original book pages together fed into the [space of imagination](#) and a love of [imagined worlds](#).

³ Bill Rankin, "Radical Cartography," accessed April 2018, <http://www.radicalcartography.net/>.

I continue to associate design with trace, and this emphasis on trace and memory can be integrated into new spatial thinking.

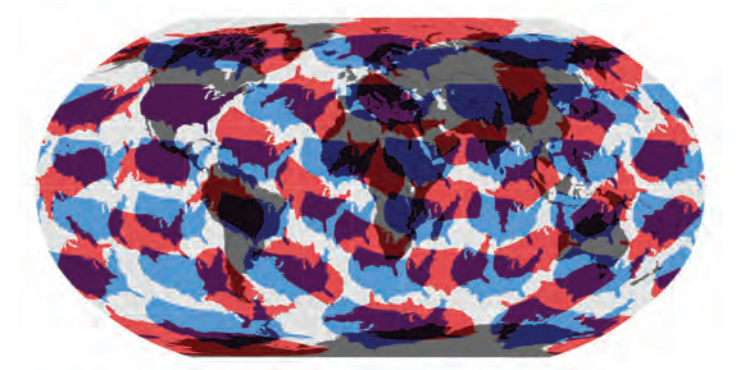
I prioritize observation and imagination as I travel through **pedestrian routes** of the **built environment**—a **cultural landscape** shaped by capital, power, and historically unjust practices like redlining.

This lens can also apply to traditional image making, inspiring criticality about who has traditionally been excluded from image making, who continues to be excluded, and who the implied audience for a specific design piece is or is not. Untold stories can be traced and re-mapped from the most **everyday environments** and ephemera.

Through a focus on scraps, leftovers, or discards, the imaginative potential of these fragments encourages humanist alternatives to one monolithic imagined nationalist narrative of a continual march of progress.

Rather than a sleek, fast-paced Futurist vision of the future, detail, subjectivity, and individuality are emphasized.

By reimagining design as a process of inquiry, attention, and care, it gains greater potential for imagining a more inclusive, collaborative, and equitable future.



Bill Rankin. *The Wandering 48*. 2010. The map is a “jab at the tendency for the **United States** to sometimes project its own values and solutions all around the **world**.”

A map from *Radical Cartography*, the work of Yale historian and cartographer Bill Rankin.

Radical Cartography focuses on how maps can reveal everyday practices of power and present alternatives to the “typical, seemingly neutral vision of **geographic space** as a static field of mute **infrastructure** and unquestioned **boundaries**.” <http://www.radical-cartography.net/> Accessed April 2018.



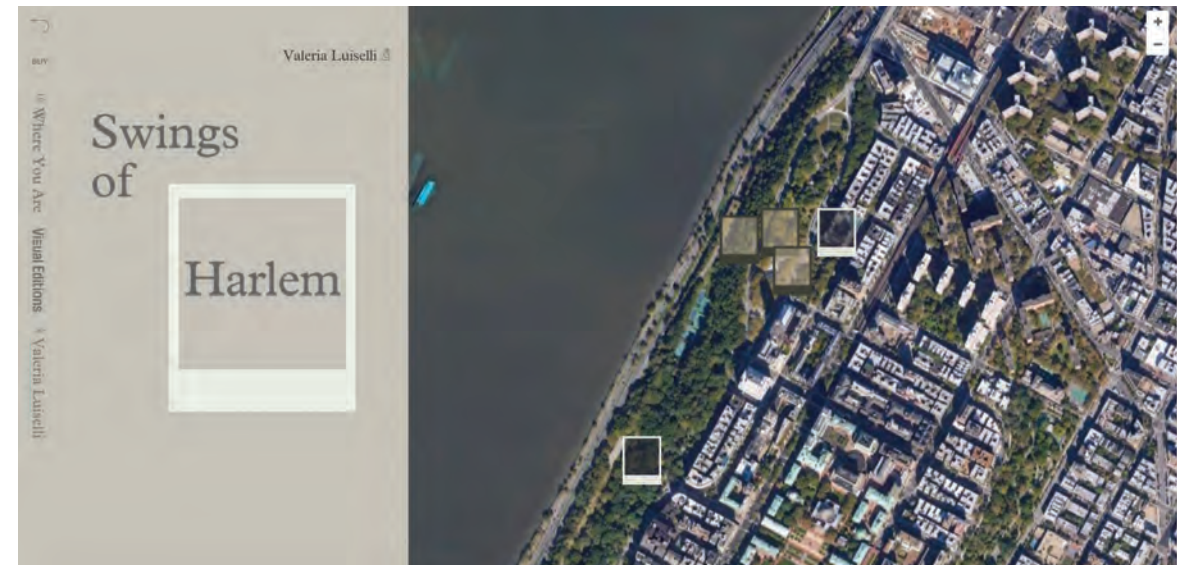
Nina Katchadourian. *Hand-held subway*. Cibachrome, 20 x 13 1/4 inches, 1996. Dissected paper map of the **New York** subway system.



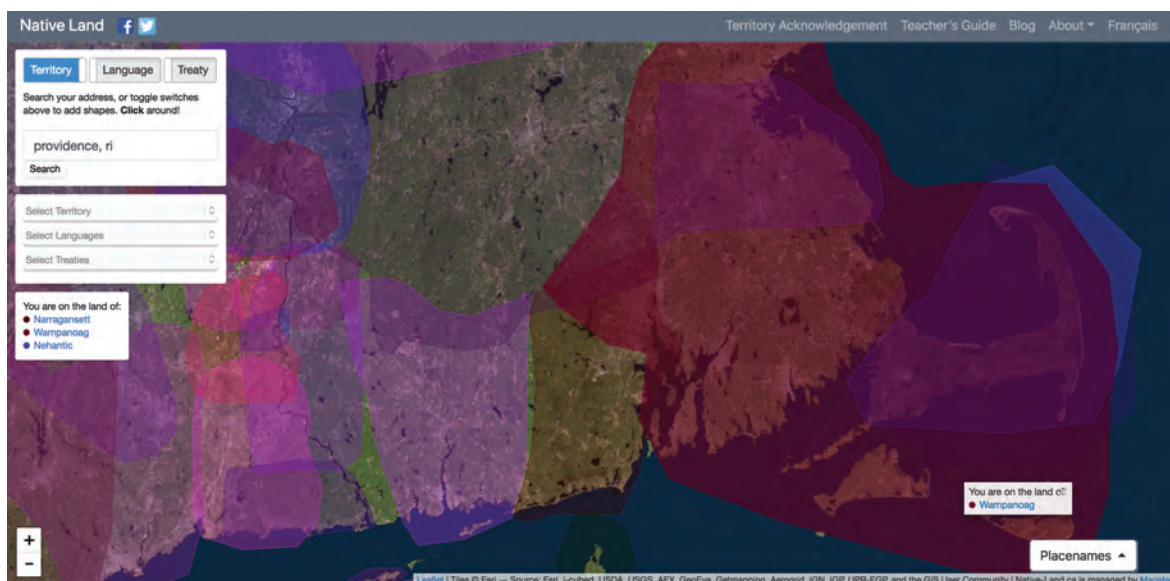
Deborah Song. “On Gaston Bachelard’s ‘The Poetics of Space.’”



Queering the Map is a community generated mapping project that geolocates queer moments, memories and histories in relation to physical space. <https://www.queeringthemap.com/> Accessed 4-24-2018.

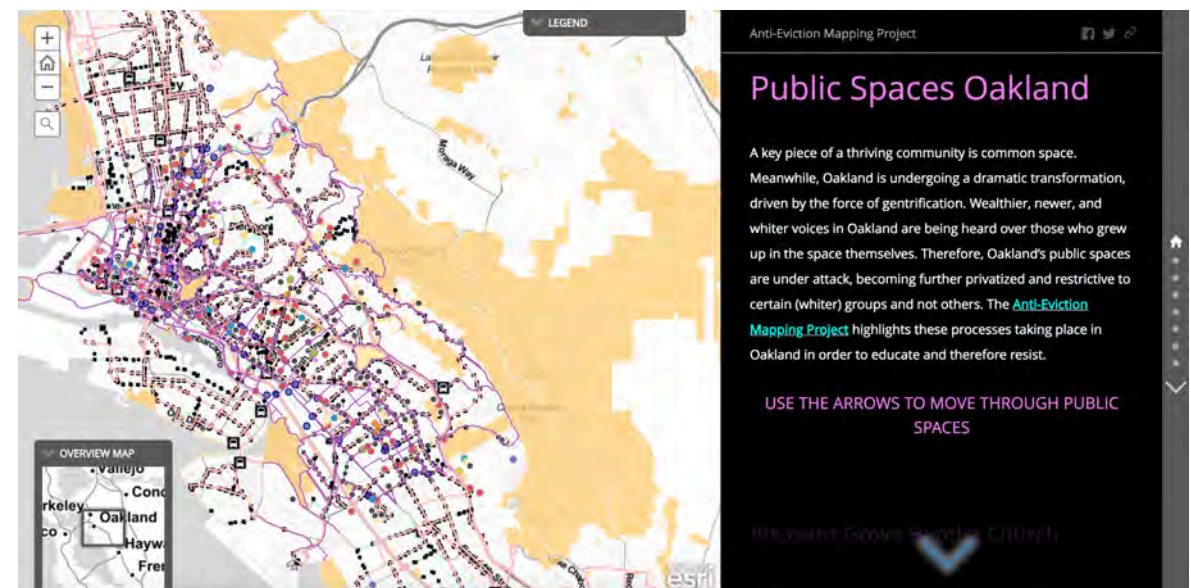


Swings of Harlem, a visual essay by Valeria Luiselli, from Where You Are (Visual Editions). <http://where-you-are.com/valeria-luiselli> Accessed 4-24-2018.



Native-Land.ca is run by Victor G. Temprano. The maps are constantly being refined from user input, and are meant to get people interested and engaged. <https://native-land.ca/about/> Accessed 4-24-2018.

Temprano says, "I feel that Western maps of Indigenous nations are very often inherently colonial, in that they delegate power according to imposed borders that don't really exist in many nations throughout history. They were rarely created in good faith, and are often used in wrong ways."



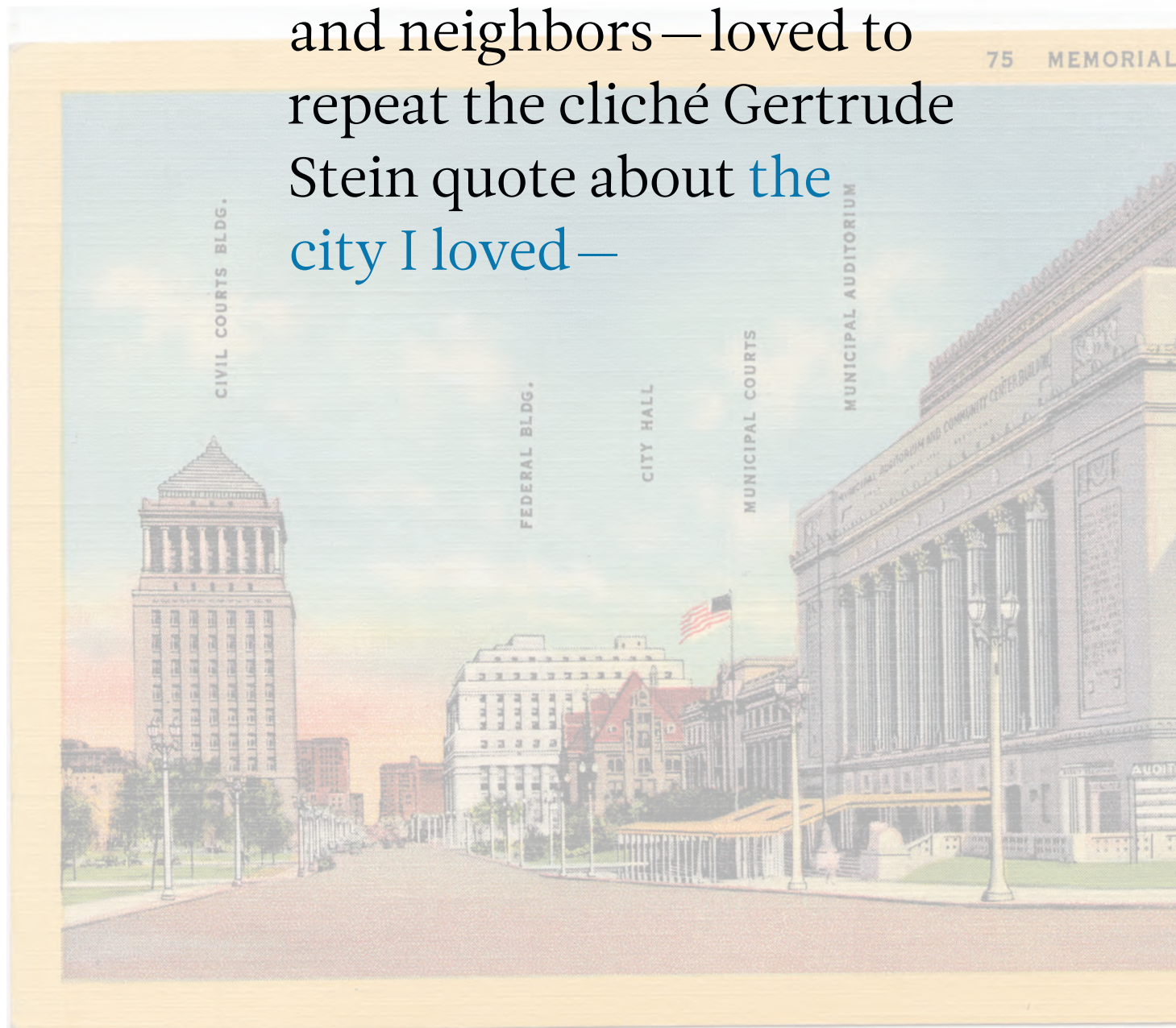
Public Spaces Oakland, a map of shrinking common spaces within the city of Oakland, just one of a series of mapping projects produced by the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project. <https://www.antievictionmap.com>. Accessed 4-24-2018.

On

 Place

“there is no there there.”

During the six years that I lived in Oakland before coming to grad school, certain types of writers and residents – newspapers and neighbors – loved to repeat the cliché Gertrude Stein quote about the city I loved –



Stein’s prose is often shared out of context,⁴ without her thoughts about revisiting the house she grew up in:

“It is a funny thing about addresses where you live. When you live there you know it so well that it is like an identity a thing that is so much a thing that it could not ever be any other thing and then you live somewhere else and years later, the address that was so much an address that it was like your name and you said it as if it was not an address but something that was living and then years after you do not know what the address was and when you say it is not a name anymore but something you cannot remember. That is what makes your identity not a thing that exists but something you do or do not remember.”

So, Stein’s thoughts on there – or no there – are really about memory, and are largely misremembered posthumously. The individual memory is loaded with meaning that cannot be shared, and stands in contrast to grand narratives of place. The anecdote is telling about the nature of history and its potential to be distorted over time. Stein’s personal intent was subsumed into a cultural representation of place unconsciously crafted through shared assumptions. Stein’s original meaning can be said to reside “in a shadow of the beyond of the real past.”⁵

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes,

“At times we think we know ourselves in time, when all we know is a sequence of fixations in the spaces of the being’s stability – a being who does not want to melt away, and who, even in the past – when he sets out in search of things past, wants time to ‘suspend’ its flight. In its countless alveoli, space contains compressed time. That is what space is for. And if we want to go beyond history, or even, while remaining in history, detach from our own history

⁴ Matt Werner, “Gertrude Stein Puts the ‘There’ Back in Oakland,” *Inside Google Books Search*, February 3, 2012, accessed April 2018, <http://booksearch.blogspot.com/2012/02/gertrude-stein-puts-there-back-in.html>.

⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 93.

the always too contingent history of the persons who have encumbered it, we realize that the calendars of our lives can only be established in its imagery.”⁶

Imagery can be viewed as a tactic of resistance to those who hold power in space. Space contains compressed time in that any aspect – object, site, person, etc. – of any given space has a rich life previous to the current moment, and these presences can be explored in any number of ways. They can also be hinted at through absence.

Personal memory, rather than running contrary to broadly accepted memory as in Stein’s example, also have the potential to contribute to collective memory when shared. Places hold multiple layers of history and meaning. Children on a schoolyard playground create their own jump rope rhymes – vernacular folklore shared only through this specific type of location. And monuments to Civil War figures are new battlegrounds against white supremacist groups. My friend Maggie is currently navigating through exhibit design committee the tricky territory of the new adjacent museum to Monticello acknowledging its legacy of slavery. And nearby in Bristol, Rhode Island, no plaque acknowledges the profoundly horrific number of slaves who were brought into this country through the town’s small and initially charming port.



Detail of a collaged postcard as part of the process for This is Some Place.

The Lettrist International, an artistic and class conscious social movement that turned into the Situationists, and which drew influence from the Dada and Surrealist movements, advanced the term *mythogeography* in the journal *Potlatch* in 1954 – in the years leading up to the Paris ’68 protests. Lettrist International member Guy

⁶ Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 89.

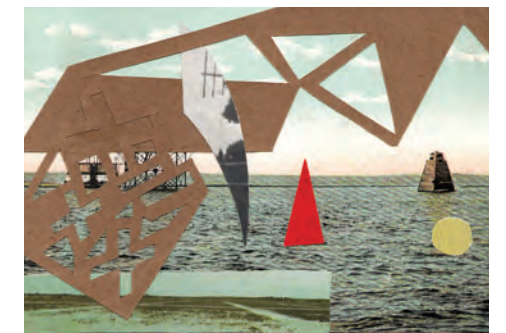
Debord put forth the idea of the *derive*, or drift, as a revolutionary strategy. The Situationist International believed in “a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities... just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.”

Mythogeography includes the notion that any given place, whether a city transit center or an auto shop on a decaying 1950s main street now rendered useless by a new freeway onramp, holds multiple histories and narratives beyond its most immediately recognizable one. This idea goes hand in hand with the idea that creativity and thought can reimagine the cultural landscape. Ivan Chtcheglov in the 1953 manifesto for “unitary urbanism,” *Formulaire pour un urbanisme nouveau*, argued for the potential of imagination to rebuild cities in ways that would inspire new possibility:

“All cities are geological. You can’t take three steps without encountering ghosts bearing all the prestige of their legends. We move within a closed landscape whose landmarks constantly draw us toward the past. Certain shifting angles, certain receding perspectives, allow us to glimpse original conceptions of space, but this vision remains fragmentary. It must be sought in the magical locales of fairy tales and surrealist writings: castles, endless walls, little forgotten bars, mammoth caverns, casino mirrors.”⁷

The surrealist impulse of magical realism goes hand in hand with *mythogeography*. Imagining the rich potential in mundane spaces is another method of recognizing that places hold more beyond what might initially meet the eye.

In mythogeographic thinking, even something as official as a state-sanctioned monument can be seen as more than just a tourist draw: the official statue or plaque holds additional complexities of meaning around its production, installation, and daily relation to its site and audience.



Collaged postcard as part of the process for This is Some Place.

⁷ Ivan Chtcheglov, “Formulary for a New Urbanism,” *Internationale Situationniste no. 1* (October 1953).

The audience aspect of this idea was explored by Marc Choi (RISD MFA GD '11) in his thesis *UnMonumental*,⁸ which posed the idea of an emphasis on people as a counterpoint to authoritarian monumentalism.

While the monument is typically caught in stasis, people have the ability to move, alter direction, and interact around these [stationary places](#). This process of motion and decision making every moment results in vibrant interactions through movement and absorption of the daily. In *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics*, Rebecca Solnit argues for the [radical space](#) to move and imagine new cartographies:

“One of the functions of [landscape](#) is to correspond to, nurture, and provoke exploration of the [landscape of the imagination](#). [Space to walk](#) is also [space to think](#), and I think that's one thing [landscapes](#) give us: [places to think longer](#), more uninterrupted thoughts or thoughts to a rhythm other than the staccato of navigating [the city](#).”⁹

By becoming *flâneurs*, we have no end destination [in sight](#), and [the site we are in](#) becomes the focus. The interplay of [space](#) and human interaction is a rich [area](#) for creativity and inspiration. A project that reminds me of the potential of this imaginative cartography is Valeria Luiselli's gorgeous polaroid mapping of swingsets of Harlem, NY in the recent collection of cartographies designed for screen and hand, *Where You Are*.¹⁰

Sukhdev Sandhu writes in the *Telegraph UK* about “All Power to the Imagination!” a 2008 multi-site, two-month [London](#)-based tribute to the [Paris](#) '68 protests,

“One could argue that, for artists as much as students, 1968 represented a battle over [space](#). They wanted to free the imaginations of their fellow citizens, whose eyes they hoped to open to the increasingly homogeneous and consumerist nature of the society around them. This, as reflected in the Situationist slogan “*Sous les pavés la plage*” (“*Underneath [the pavement](#), [the beach](#)*”), was a bold, almost surreal project. It also involved coming up with a new [geography of struggle: the barricade, the commune, the squat](#) — semi-autonomous zones that allowed for both self-emancipation and collectivist social models.”¹¹

The slogan also expresses the idea that underneath any seemingly dull or concrete surface is a rich reserve of potential. One of the tenets of unitary urbanism is a rejection of hegemonic art and architecture that is detached from its [surroundings](#). Instead, a focus on the collective and specific is prioritized. At its best, this interaction between people from all walks of lives can become its own art form and a natural form of community making. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs describes a street scene that has its own rhythm as an intricate ballet:

“This order is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of [the city](#) [...] an intricate ballet in which the individual dancers and ensembles all have distinctive parts which miraculously reinforce each other and compose an orderly whole. The ballet of the [good city sidewalk](#) never repeats itself [from place to place](#), and [in any one place](#) is always replete with new improvisations.”¹²

It is the imperfect and imprecise daily movements of a multitude of individuals that create beauty through unexpected harmony. Jacobs emphasizes that one of the fundamental aspects of [city](#) living is interaction with strangers.¹³ A humanist perspective recognizes and amplifies the positive potential of this daily reality in order to acknowledge that each person's lived experience of [space](#) is valuable and important and can serve as a point of connection.

By understanding the ballet of people within [public space](#) as multi-faceted and complex, we can begin to discover and share the small stories, found [in the shadows of the monument](#) and [outside of polished or sterile sites](#).

Because there *is* a there there—
to be remembered.

⁸ “The class: Marc Choi” *This is the 2011 RISD Graphic Design MFA Thesis Website*, Accessed March 2018, http://archive.risd.edu/MFA/2011/the_class/marc

⁹ Rebecca Solnit, *Storming the Gates of Paradise: Landscapes for Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 288.

¹⁰ Valeria Luiselli, “Swings of [Harlem](#),” *Where You Are*, Visual Editions, Accessed April 2018. <http://where-you-are.com/valeria-luiselli#m/marcus-garvey-park-1>.

¹¹ Sukhdev Sandhu, “May '68: The Legacy of 1968,” *The Telegraph UK*, April 12, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/starsandstories/3672503/May-68-the-Legacy-of-1968.html>.

¹² Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 50.

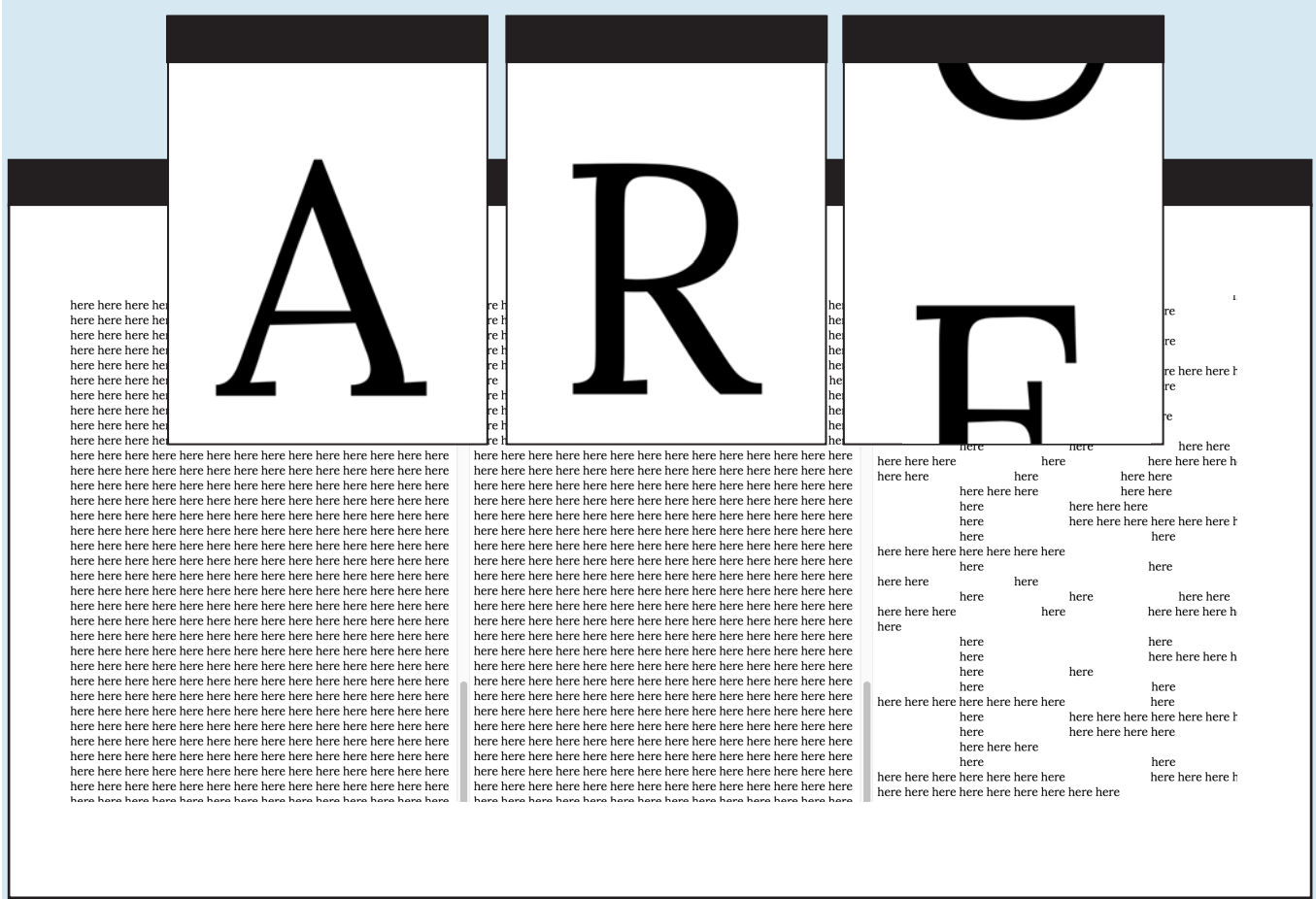
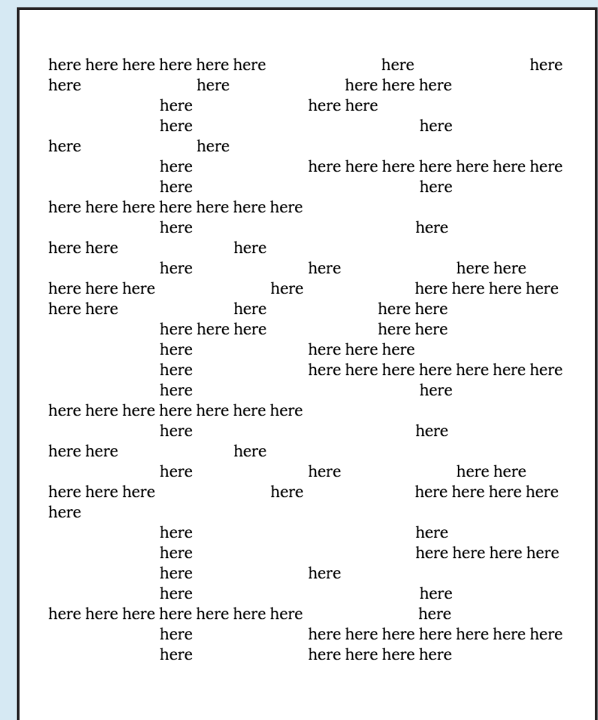
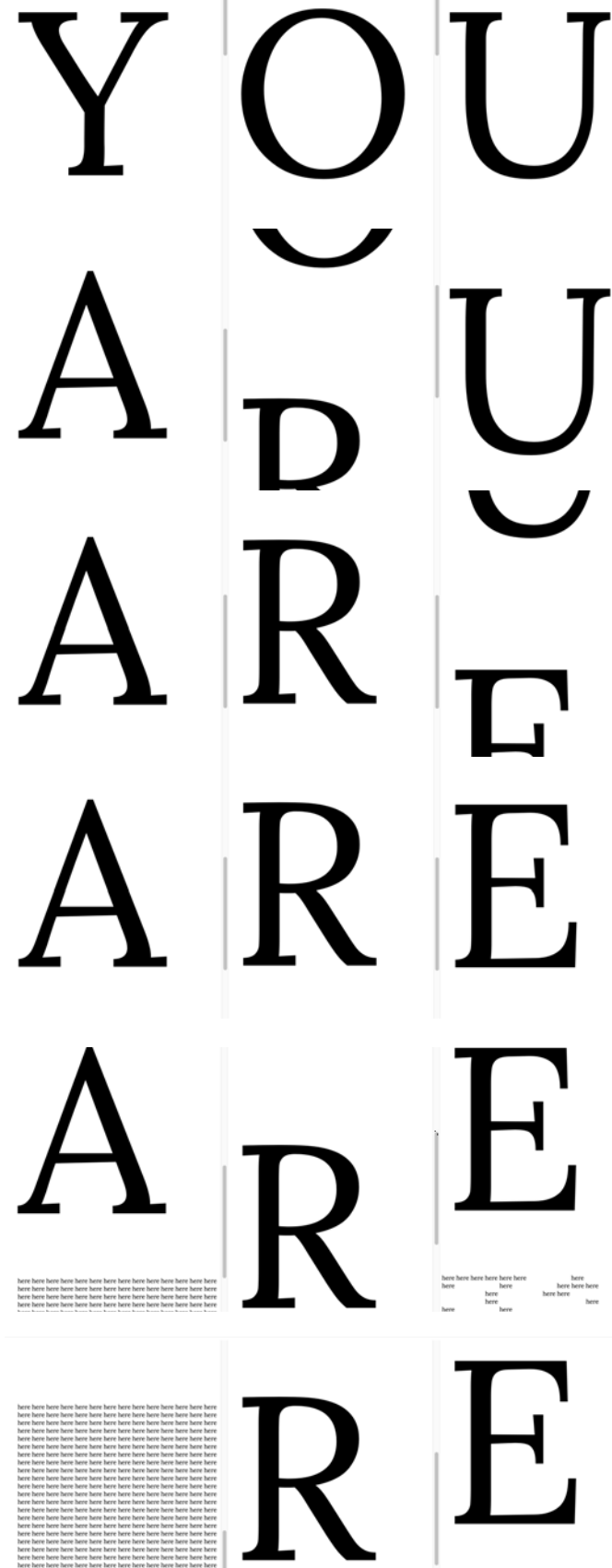
¹³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 30.

You Are Here

You Are [Here](#) is an explorer of the [web browser](#) as an abstracted [place](#) that invites playful audience interaction.

The phrase "You are Here" is split up into three [windows](#), which can be scrolled through according to the page visitor's whimsy. Each word of the phrase is presented sequentially as the page scrolls downward, with every letter of "You" and "Are" within a different window, allowing for extremes of clarity or obfuscation.

The final word, "Here," is presented in multitude, with varying levels of word density in order to visually express collective and individual experiences of [space](#). Missing words within the least dense layout of "here" hint at unrepresented possibilities of spatial experience, presence, and absence.



Detail of three scrollable screens [within the web browser](#) for You Are Here.

This is Some Place

This is Some Place is a book archiving old postcards postmarked in the Boston area from the 1890s to the 1930s. The book focuses on small details of the original ephemera and presents these moments of mail exchange as important methods of communication and interaction during the period. The messages from a set of postcards purchased from the Rhode Island Antiques Mall are presented in a contemporary, legible typeface alongside the images of places long since changed.

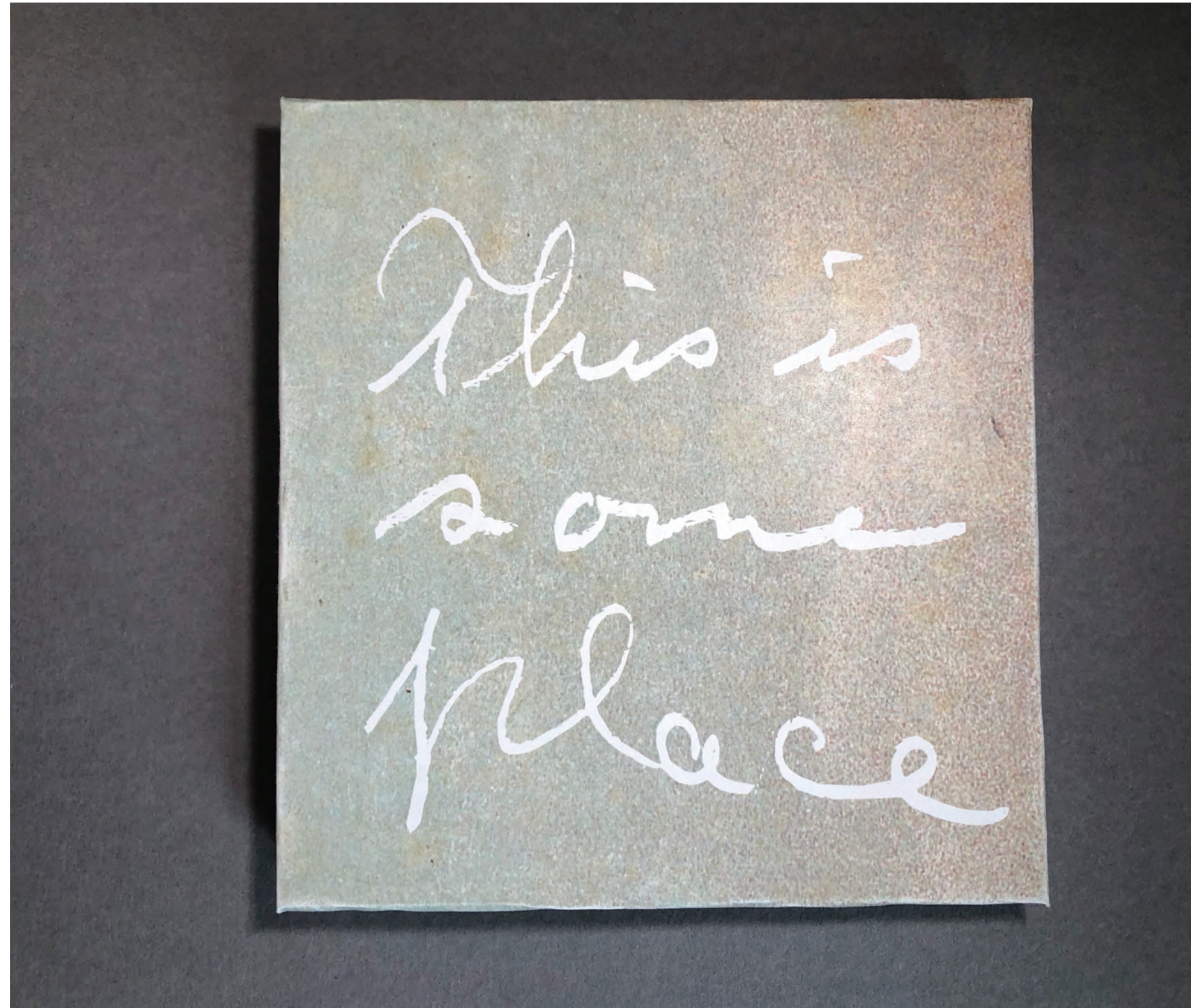
The colorful details of the postcards include the official postage stamps, the handmade postal marks, small mysterious drawings and symbols by the sender, the lines printed on the original postcards, and the tinted photos on the front.

The first person text on the original postcards is paired with text from Gunnar Björling's modernist poetry book "You Go The Words." The essence of Björling's style was a use of the most common and meaningful words used in language, and the same words are often used in these very minimal postcard correspondences. The written messages are the equivalent of today's text messages. Postcards were often sent out with messages so brief as "Be at the train at 3."

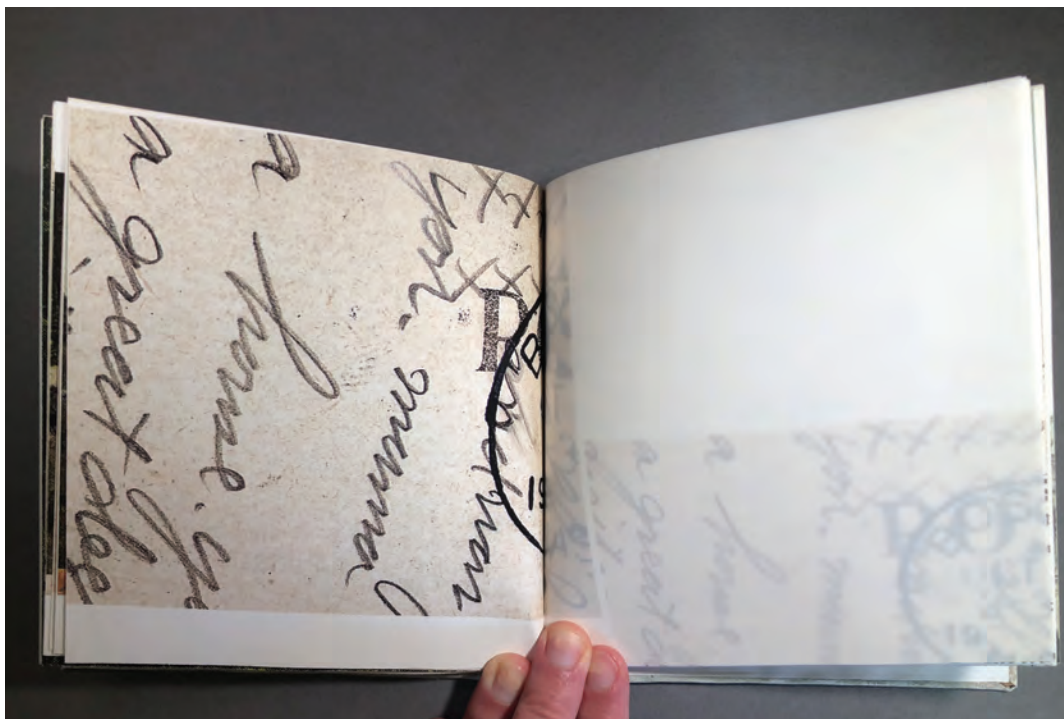
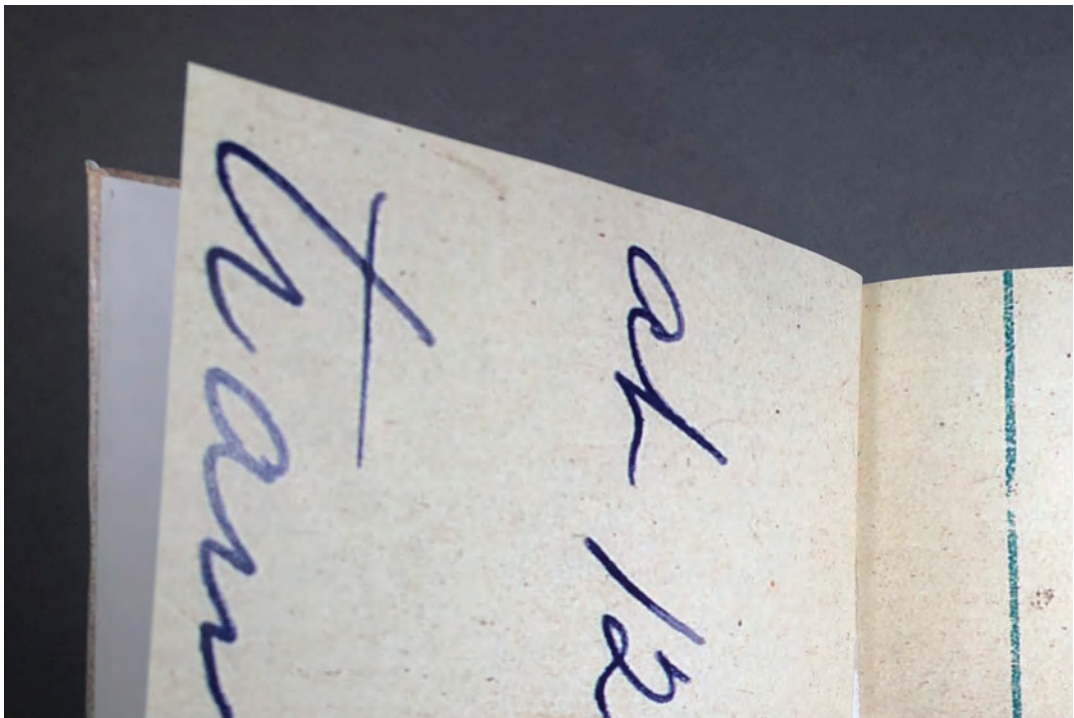
The postcard imagery is organized by the local railroad station on the postal route where these postcards were picked up, presenting an alternative map of lost personal experiences of places surrounding Providence.

This is some
place

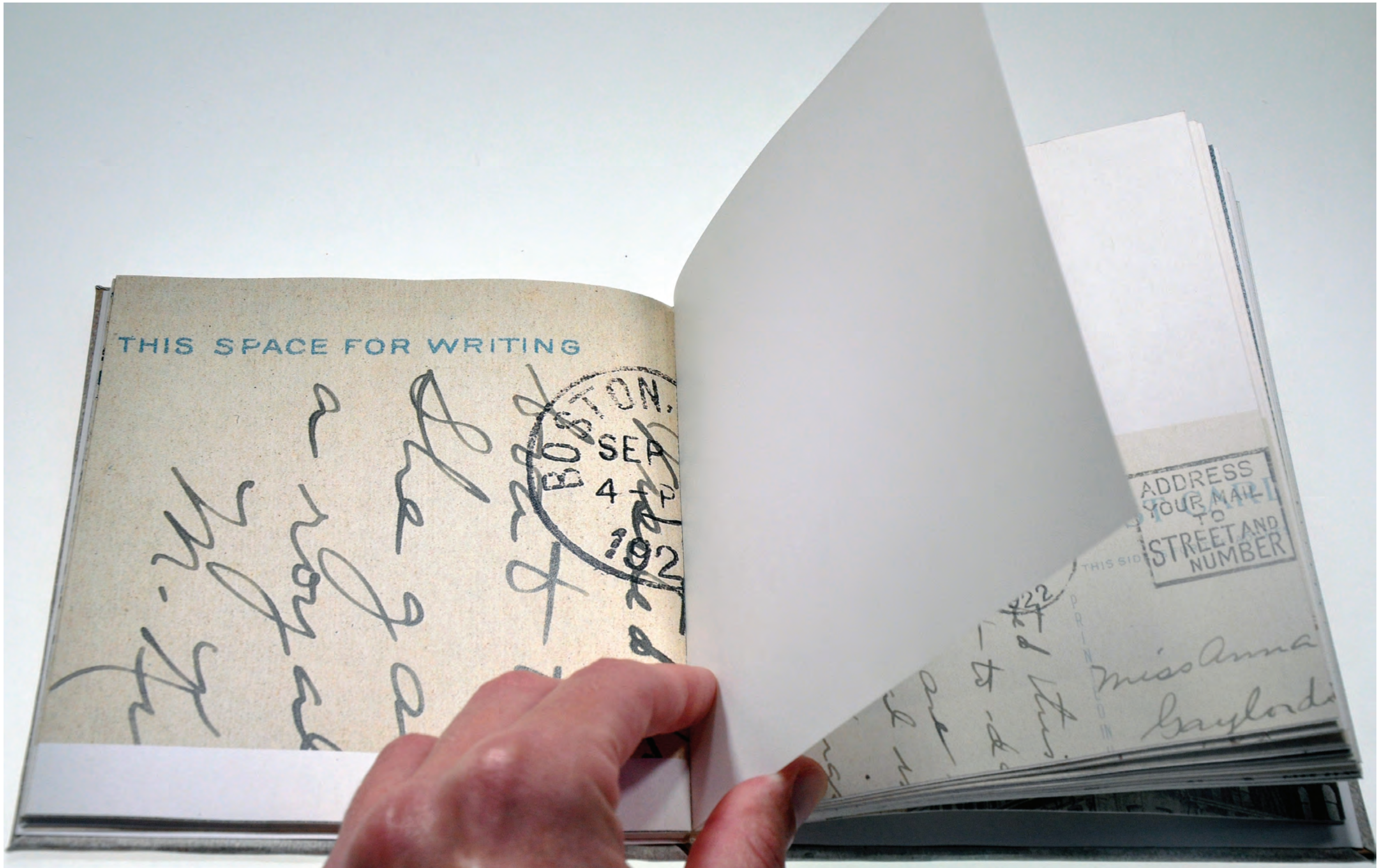
Rose



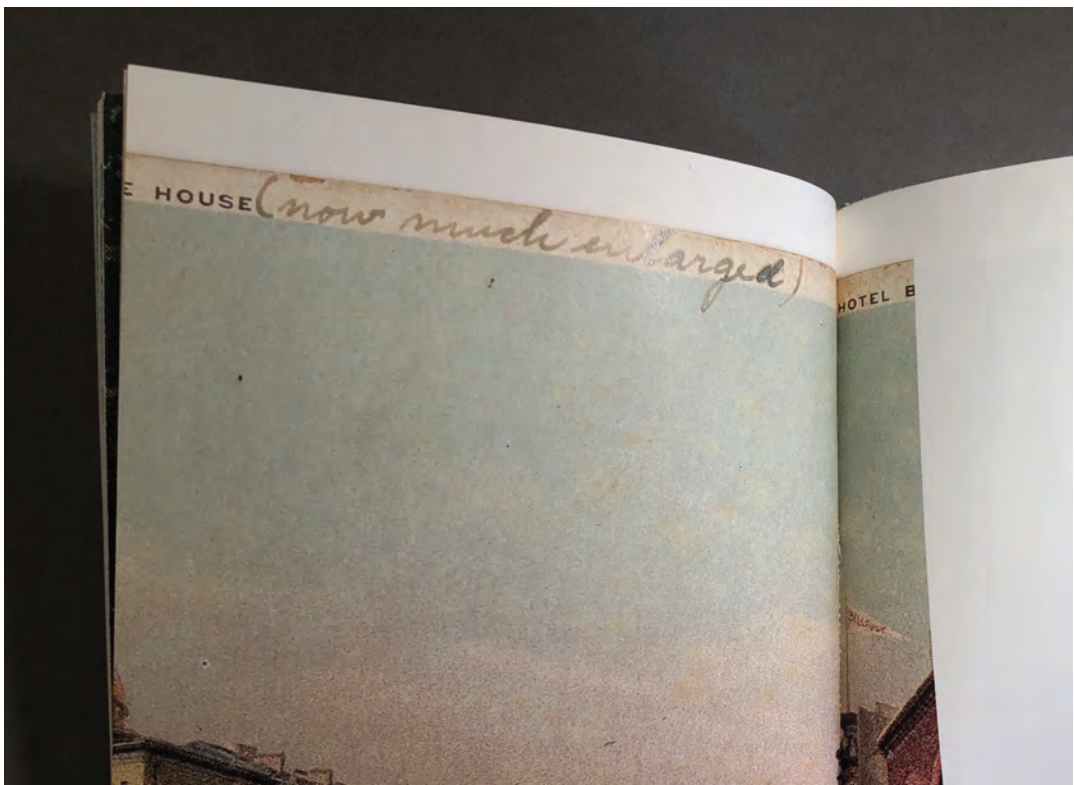
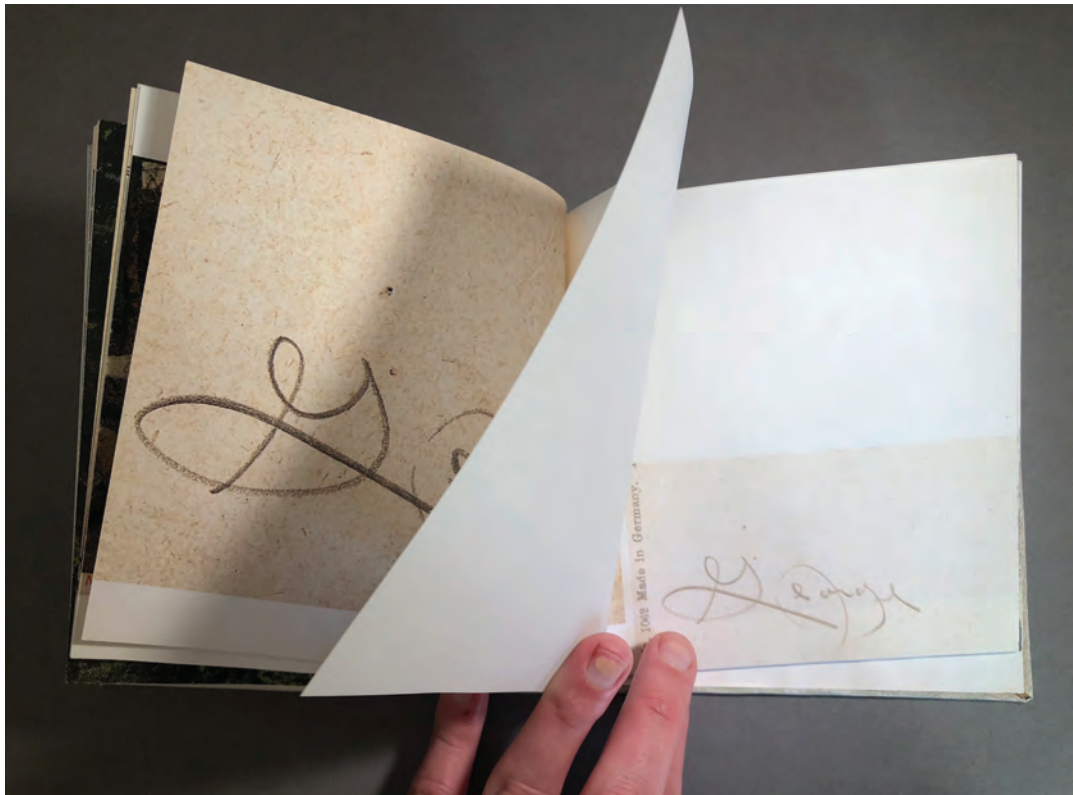
Cover image for This is Some Place. Title and handwriting sample taken from an old postcard sent within the Providence area.



Interior spreads for [This is Some Place](#). Vellum was used to overlay some of the interior pages of the book to create partial translucency over handwritten messages that were part of larger personal narratives that have mostly been lost to history.



Interior spreads for [This is Some Place](#). I was interested in the way that parts of the postcard pages were marked as reserved for "writing" or "communication." The people who sent these postcards often ignored the printed instructions and wrote their messages in margins, scrawled on top of pictures, and in other unexpected [places](#) on the postcards.



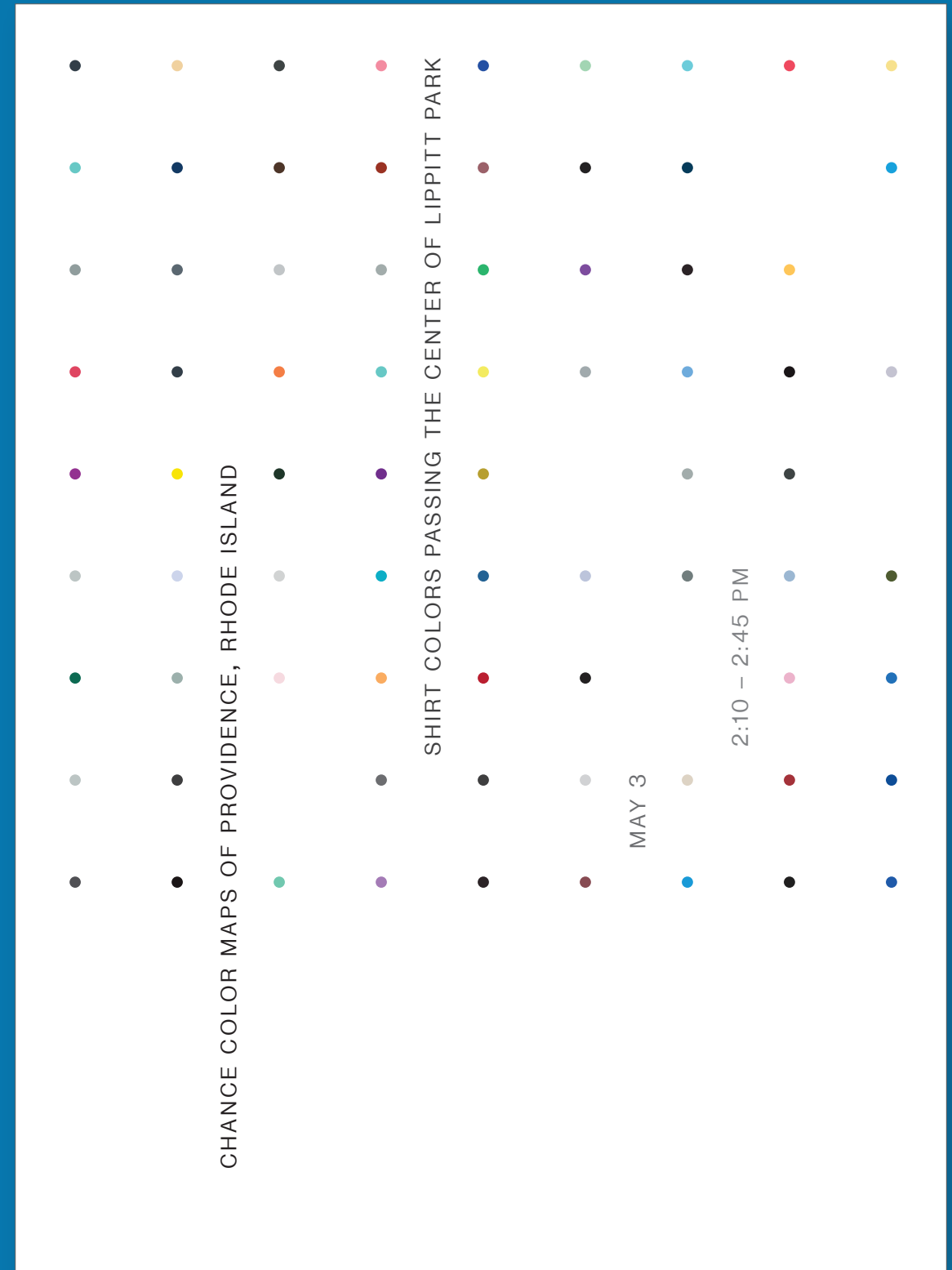
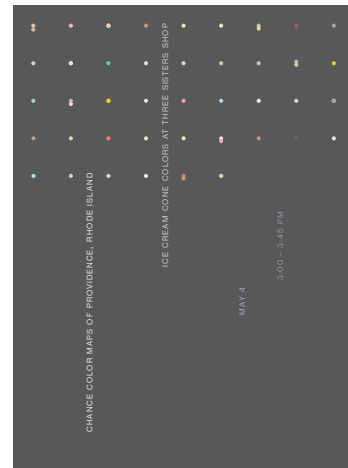
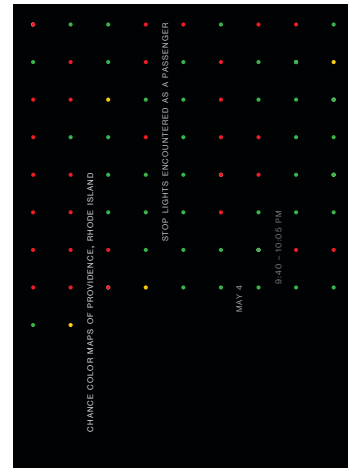
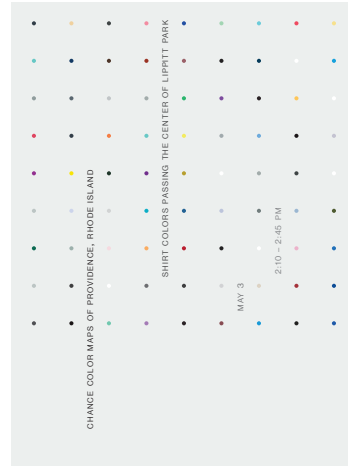
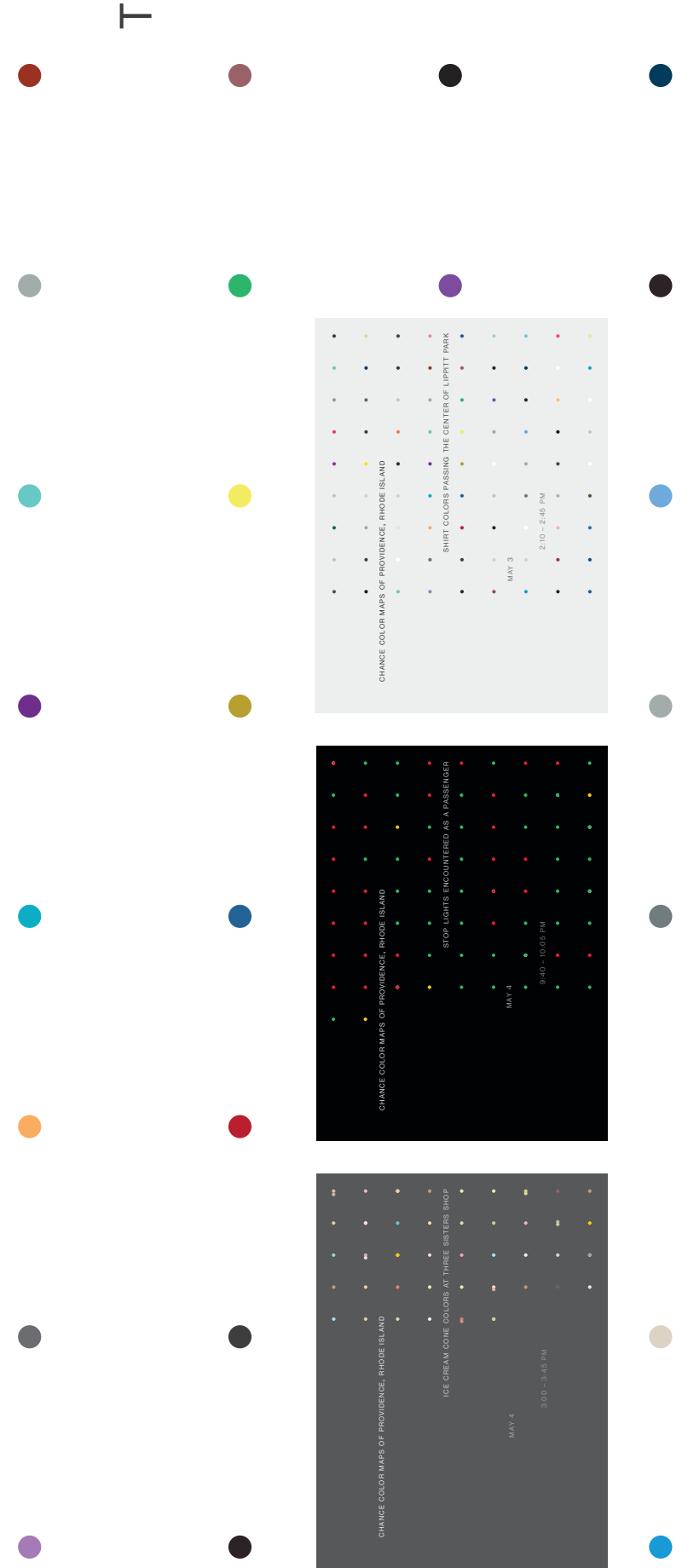
Chance Color Maps of Providence

Chance Color Maps of Providence is a set of posters using an alternative system of mapping based on chance happenings at various locations within the city of Providence, Rhode Island.

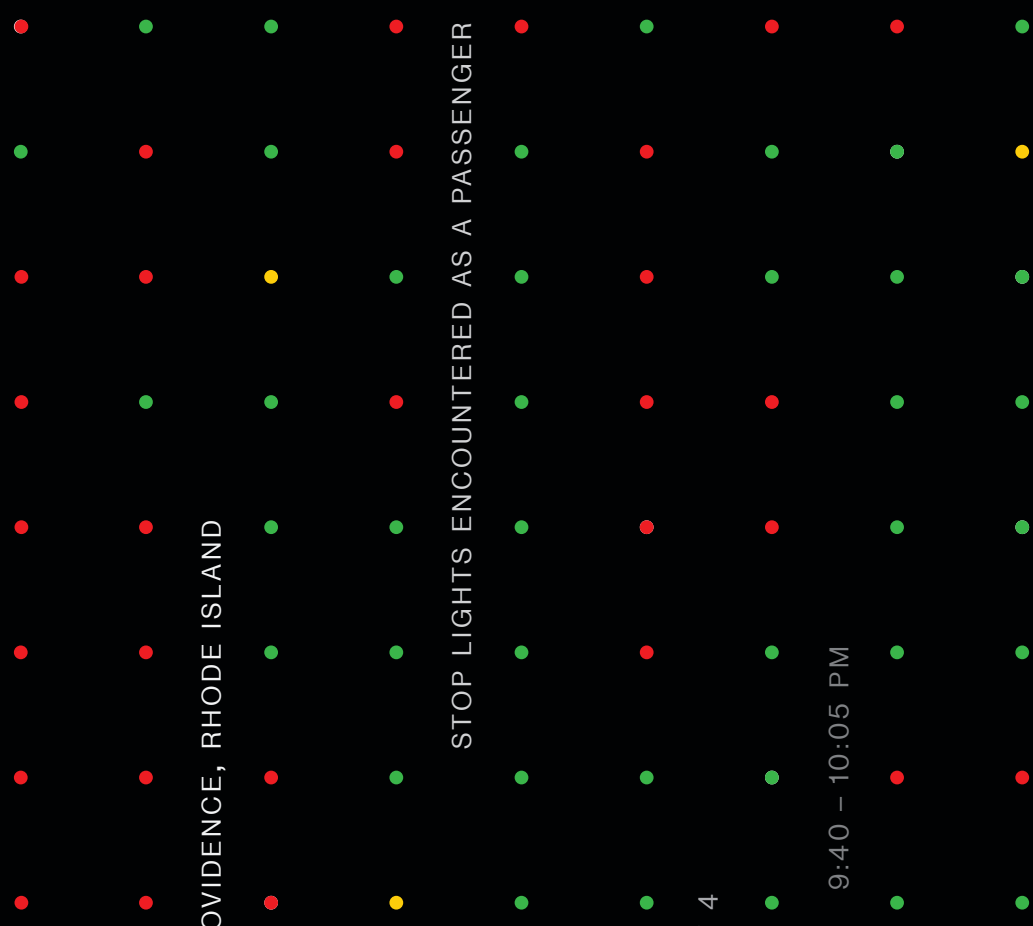
Inspired by John Cage's chance experiments, the series used predetermined arbitrary time periods of careful color observation. Data was visualized using the same pattern language of gridded circles of color.

The first poster in the series collects shirt colors passing by a static position in the center of a local park. The second poster visualizes the frequency and sequence of red, green, and yellow stoplights on a ride through Providence as a passenger. The third shows the colors of ice cream cones purchased during a certain time period from a busy ice cream shop, with double scoops represented by two overlapping circles. Together, the posters in the set reflect careful attention and present an alternative way of thinking about movement through space.

Each of the three posters created for the series Chance Color Maps of Providence. I matched each location's colors using a Pantone booklet and then replicated the colors onscreen, before printing again. Each resulting color printed is a gesture at the original color observed in the world.



CHANCE COLOR MAPS OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

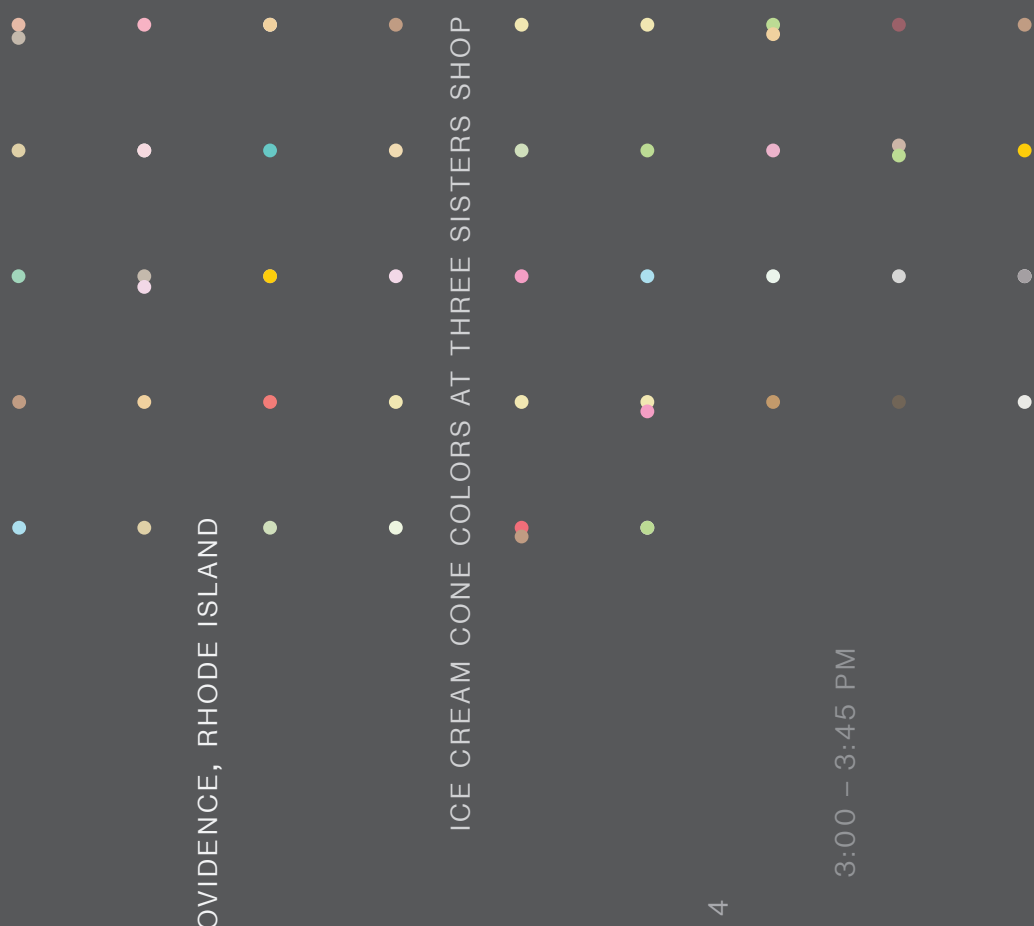


STOP LIGHTS ENCOUNTERED AS A PASSENGER

MAY 4

9:40 – 10:05 PM

CHANCE COLOR MAPS OF PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND



MAY 4

3:00 – 3:45 PM

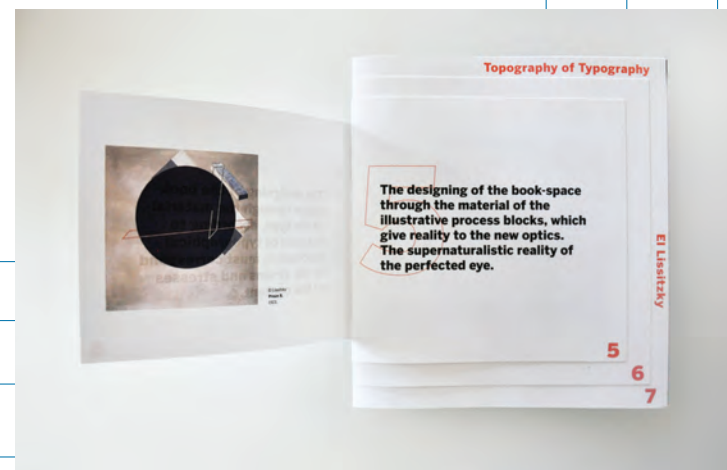
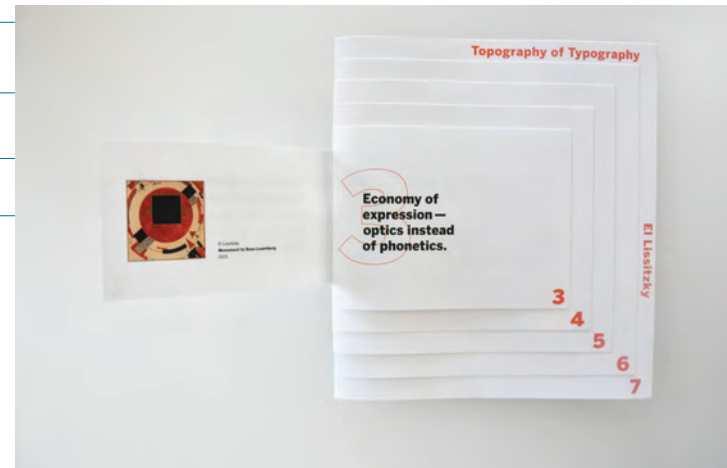
ICE CREAM CONE COLORS AT THREE SISTERS SHOP

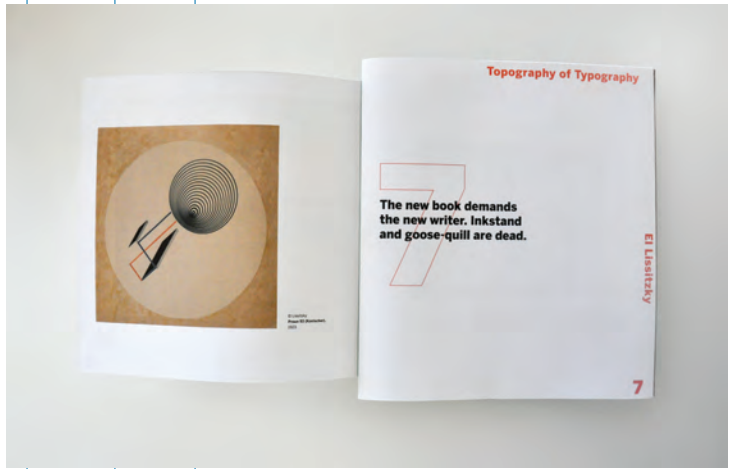
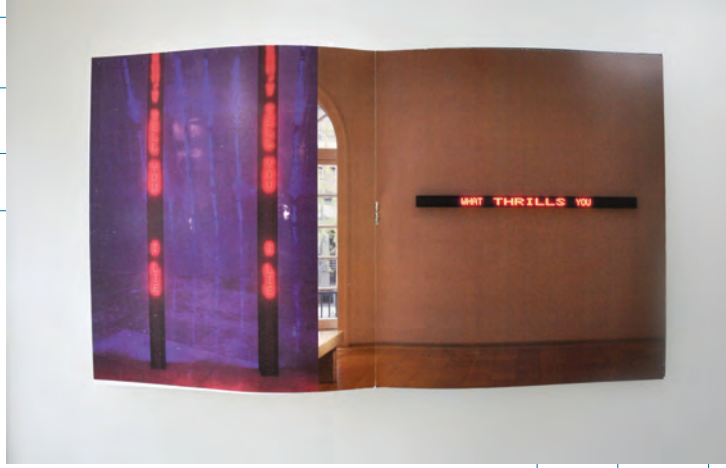
Topography of Typography / Typographical Facts

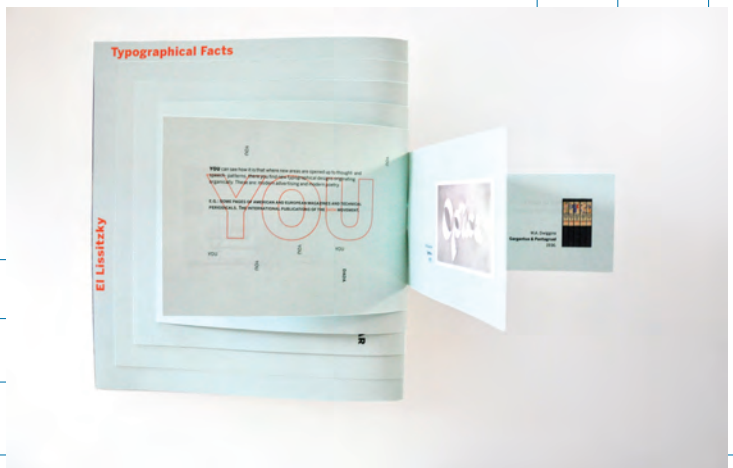
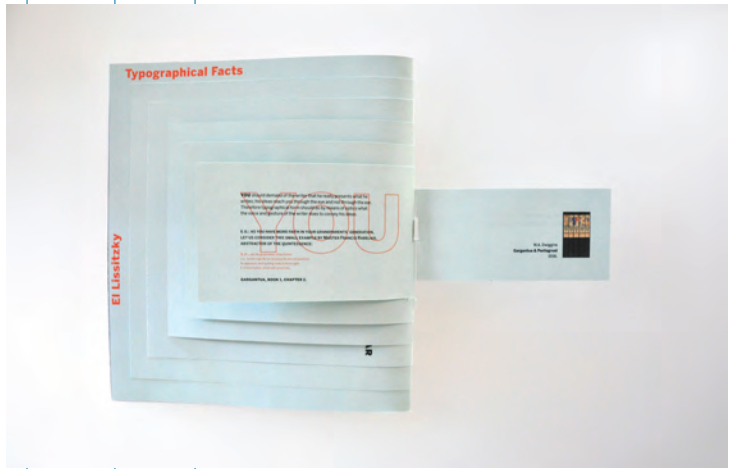
Topography of Typography / Typographical Facts is an experimental book design for two El Lissitzky essays originally published in 1925. The format of the book playfully reinterprets a dos-à-dos binding, conceptualizing the book space as a two-sided topographical map. Each page increases a step in size according to the numbered sequence of items within the essay "Topography of Typography." Full bleed images of Jenny Holzer pieces are used in the middle of the book as a visual segue between the essays, leading into pieces by other contemporary artists and designers.



The first pages of **Topography of Typography**, for Doug Scott's Type III class. The pages increase in size as you flip through. The images for this sequence are all by El Lissitzky.



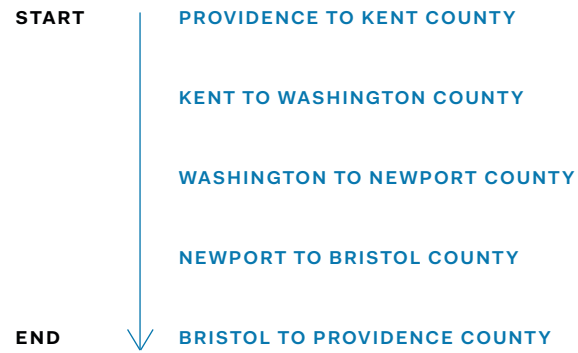




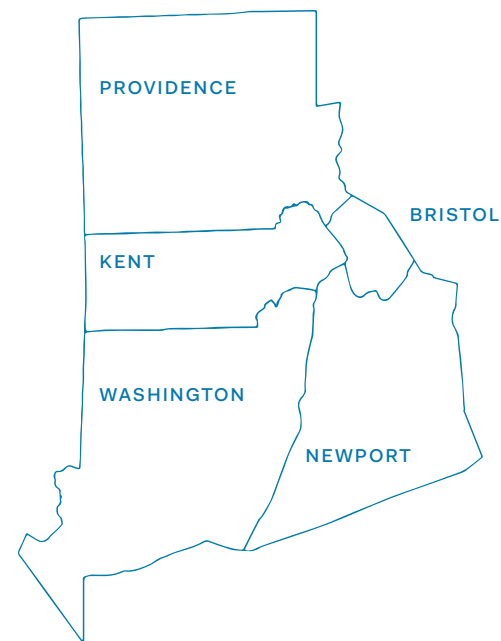
County Lines

County Lines is a video piece exploring the arbitrariness of land divisions that have been forgotten for all practical purposes but which were historically marked out by those wielding political power. The video focuses on my own feet as I step over **every county line in Rhode Island** in a circuit of intentional travel and conceptual exercise.

Because the territorial lines marking each of Rhode Island's five counties were unmarked on residential sidewalks, in a warehouse district side yard, aligned with bodies of water, or cutting through a strip mall parking lot, their invisibility is the focus of the video, which adds these invisible lines marking power and ownership back in by insertion of text.



COUNTIES OF RHODE ISLAND



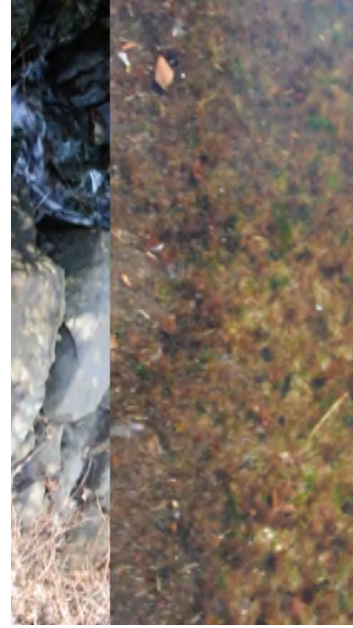
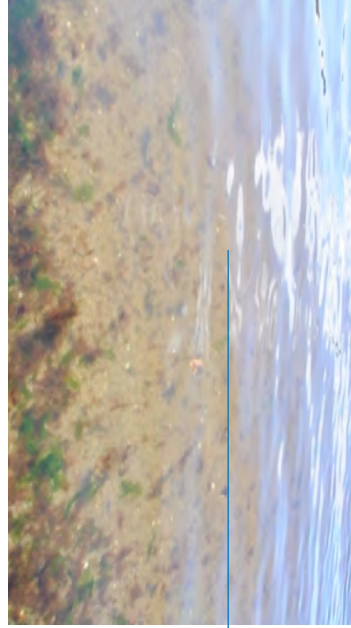
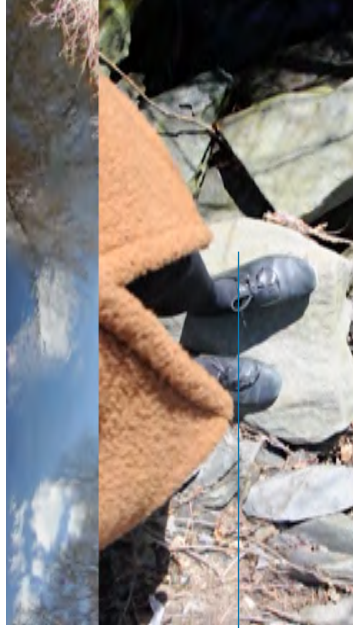
Video stills of walking over each of the five county lines in Rhode Island. I arranged the videos in a continuous walk through the screen, which resulted in juxtapositions of sidewalk, water, grass, waves, and rocks.

PROVIDENCE TO KENT COUNTY

KENT TO WASHINGTON COUNTY

41°45'18"N x 71°26'22"W

41°38'09"N x 71°27'28"W



WASHINGTON TO NEWPORT COUNTY

41°31'29"N x 71°23'31"W

NEWPORT TO BRISTOL COUNTY

41°38'13"N x 71°15'10"W

The final county line ran perpendicular to a strip mall sidewalk. The cracks in the sidewalk eventually led to the invisible county line.

BRISTOL TO PROVIDENCE COUNTY

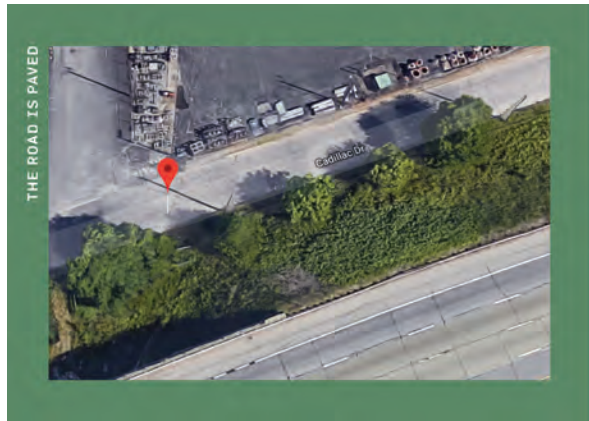
41°45'35"N x 71°20'29"W

Paved with Good Intentions

Paved with Good Intentions explores the implications of **street** names within **Providence, Rhode Island**. Using Google Maps Satellite View, I created spreads of images that expand on linguistic and historical meaning when read as a combination.

I set the pairs up as a commentary on the many evocative **street** names within **Providence**, like **Hope Street** and **Power Street**. Many of the **street** names gesture at idealism, because of the historical founding of the area as a religious sanctuary by Roger Williams. The pairs are set up to provoke thought about the ways that power inequities and injustices cause societies to fall short of these ideals.

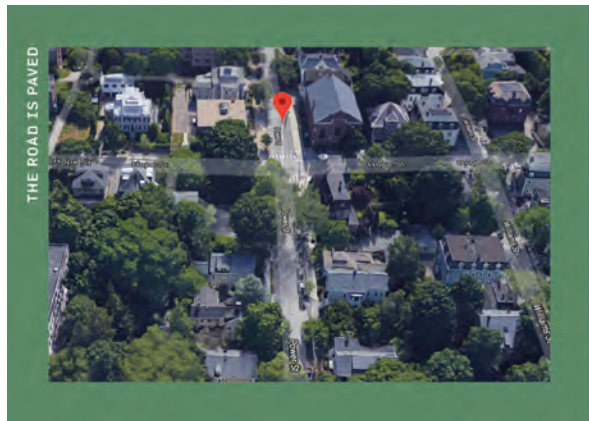
The pair were selected to play up the contrast between two ideas or words. For example, **Cadillac Drive** is paired with **Chapel Street**, **Lynch Street** is paired with **Freeman Street**, **Fleet Street** is paired with **Dove Street**, and **Diamond Street** is paired with **Colonial Road**.



CADILLAC DR.



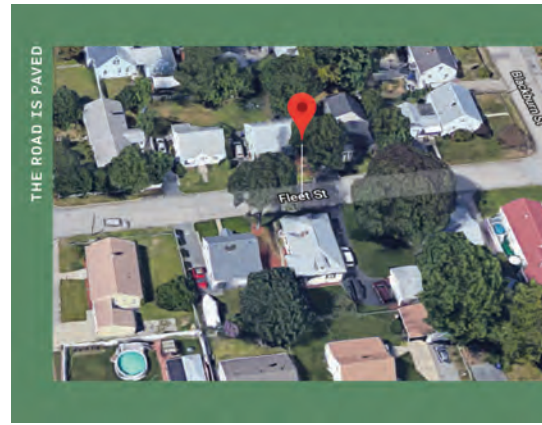
CHAPEL ST.



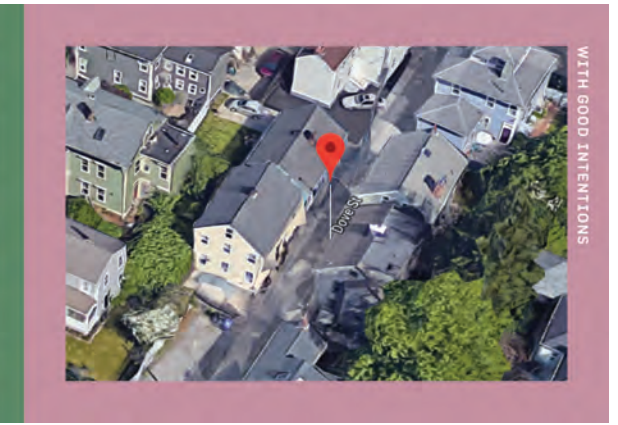
POWER ST.



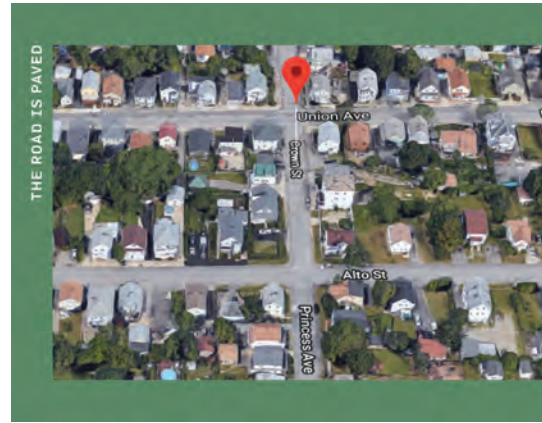
PLENTY ST.



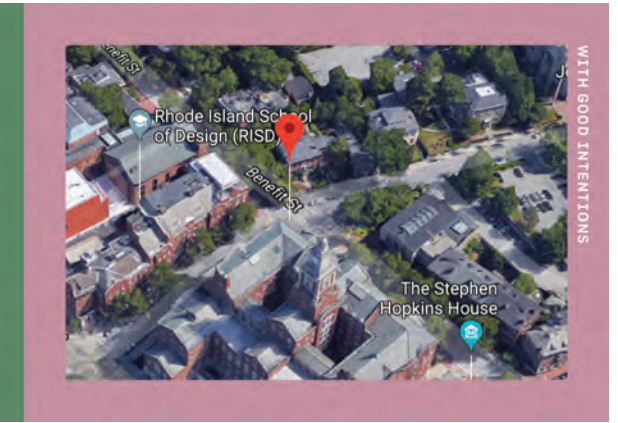
FLEET ST.



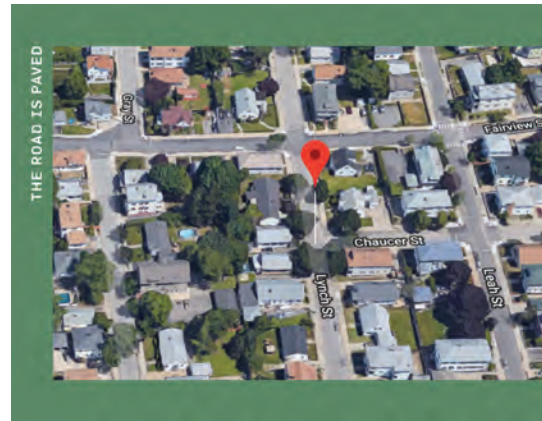
DOVE ST.



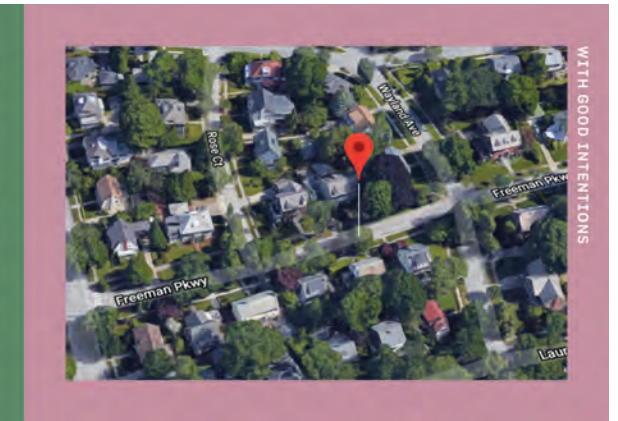
CROWN ST.



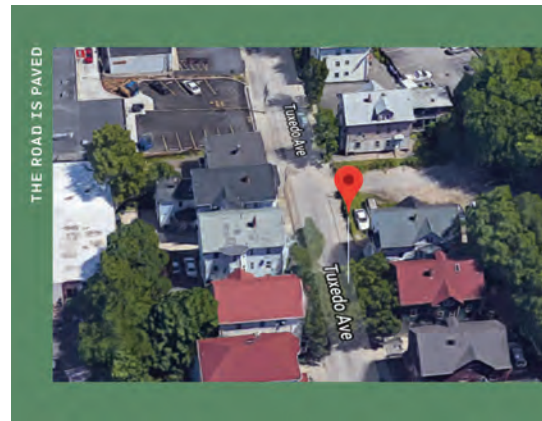
BENEFIT ST.



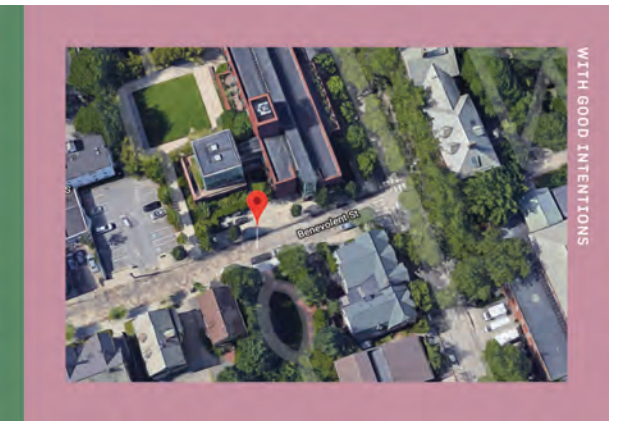
LYNCH ST.



FREEMAN PKWY.

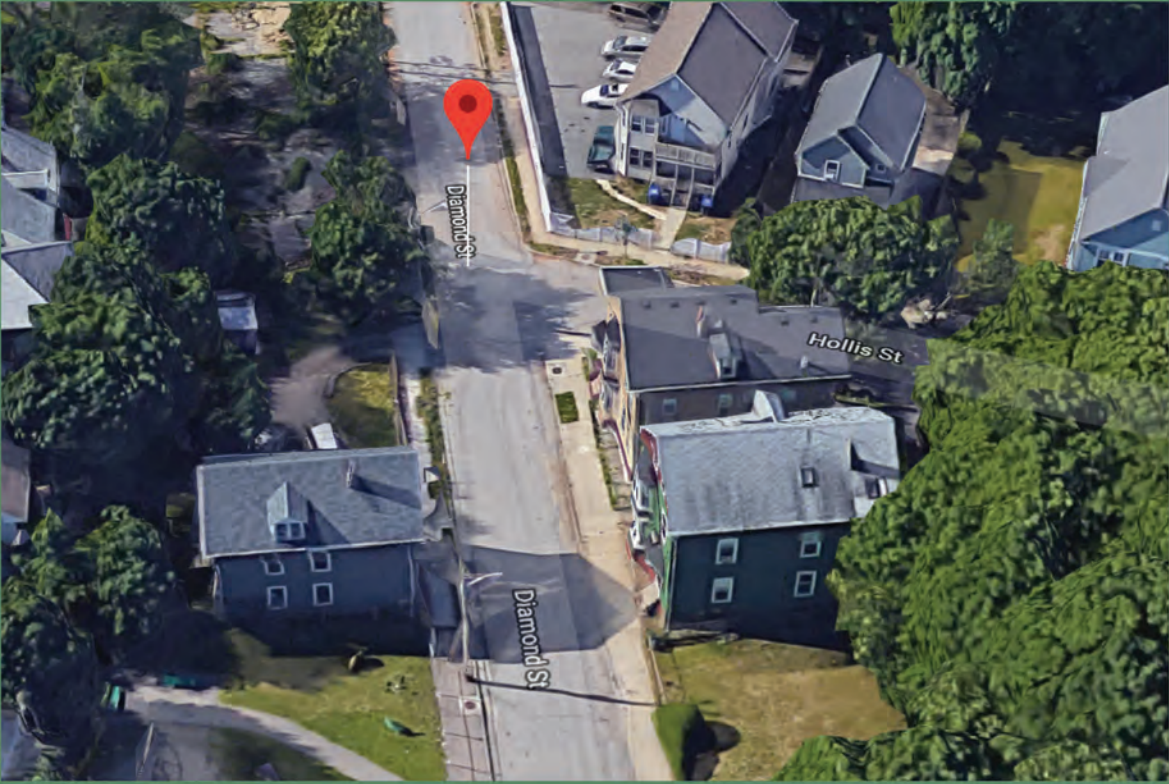


TUXEDO AVE.

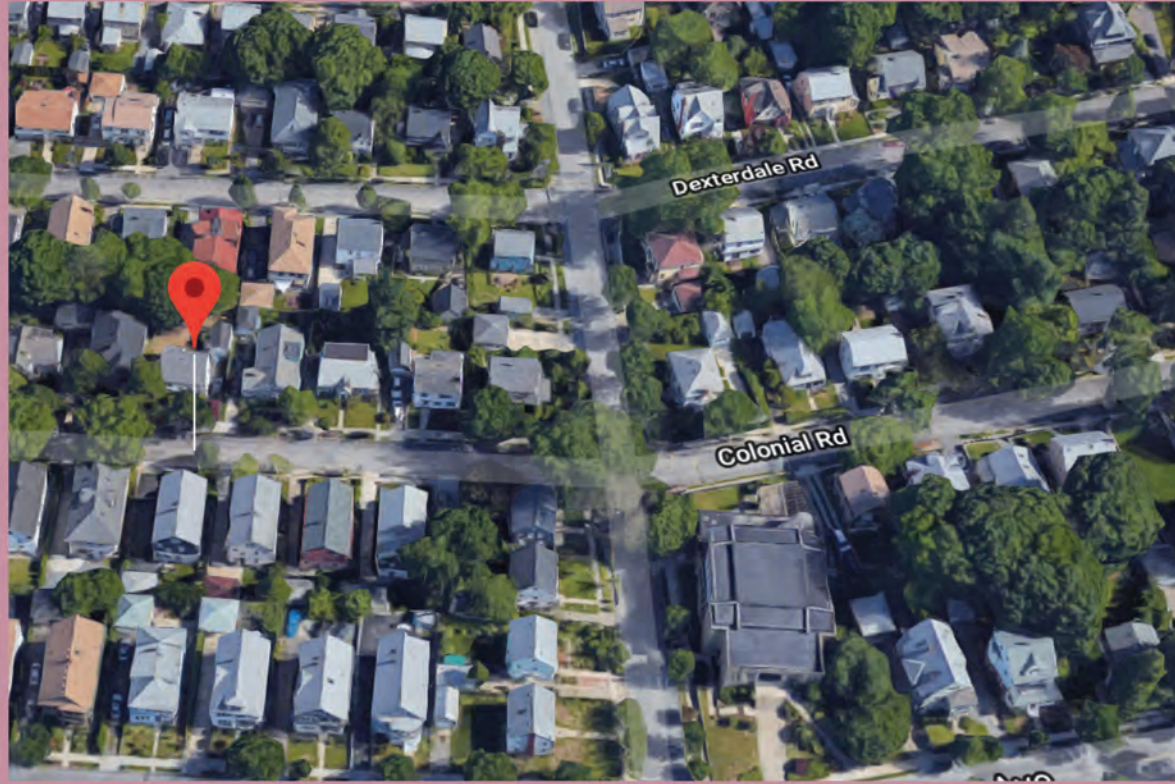


BENEVOLENT ST.

THE ROAD IS PAVED



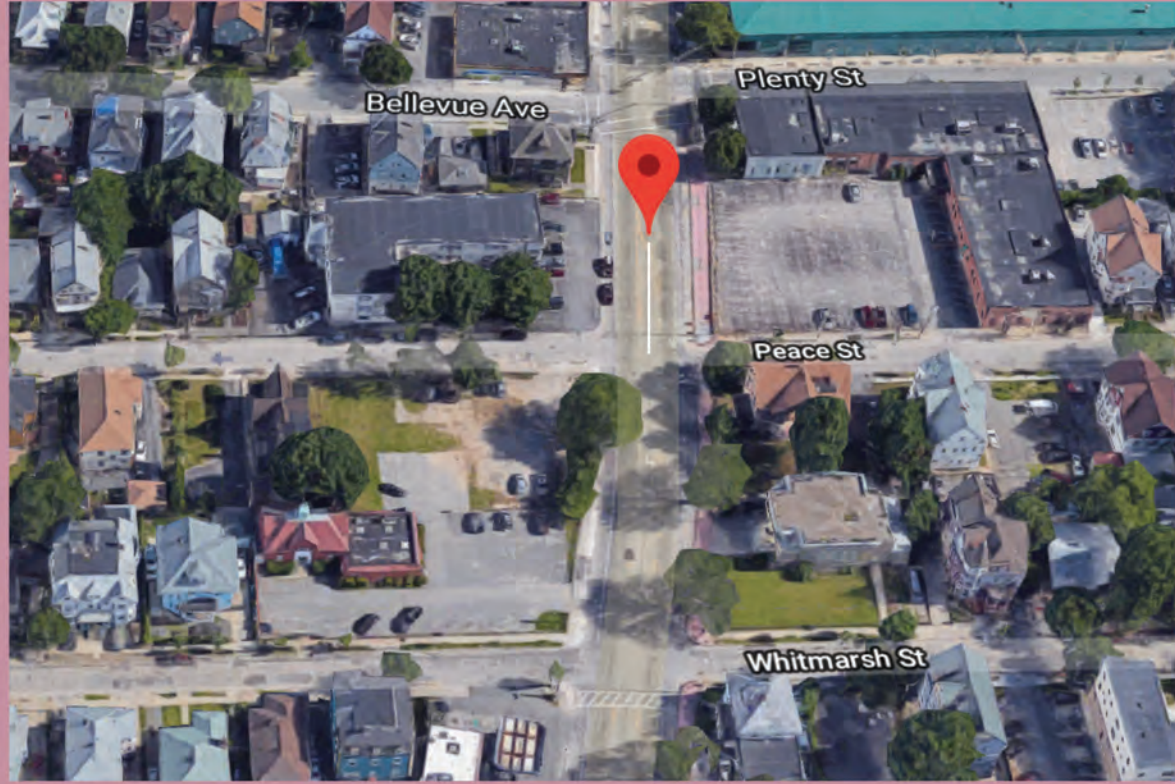
WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

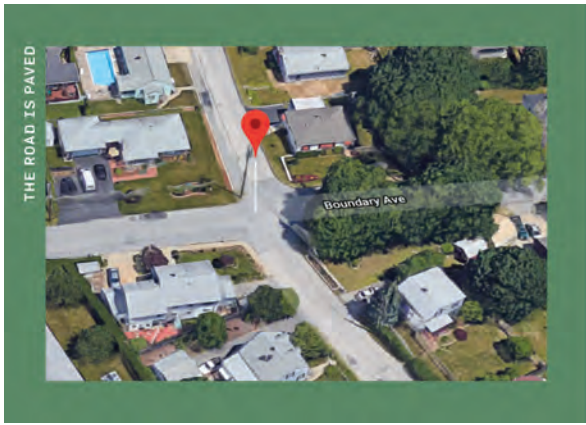


THE ROAD IS PAVED

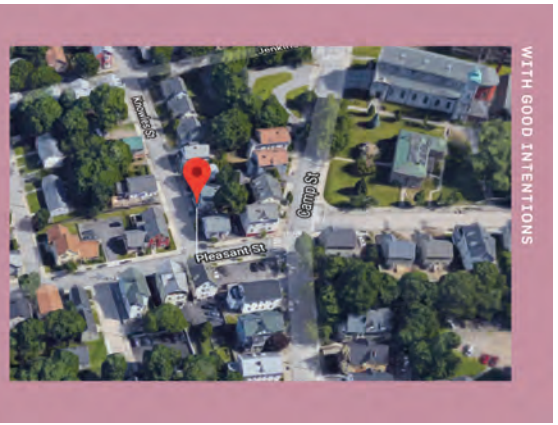


WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

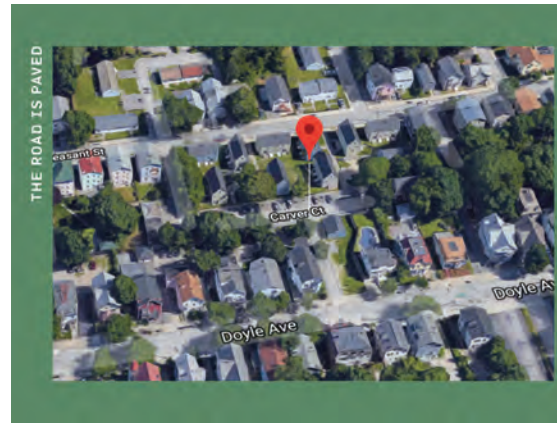




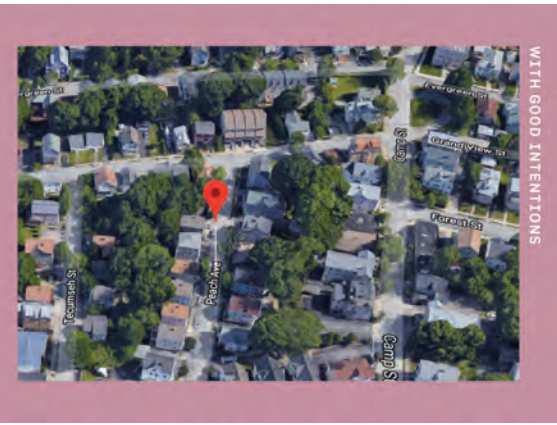
BOUNDARY AVE.



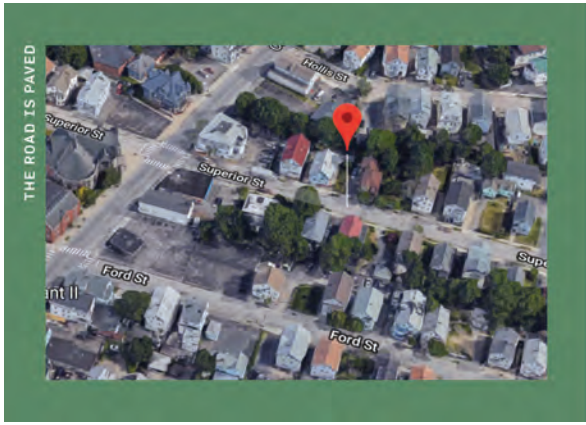
PLEASANT ST.



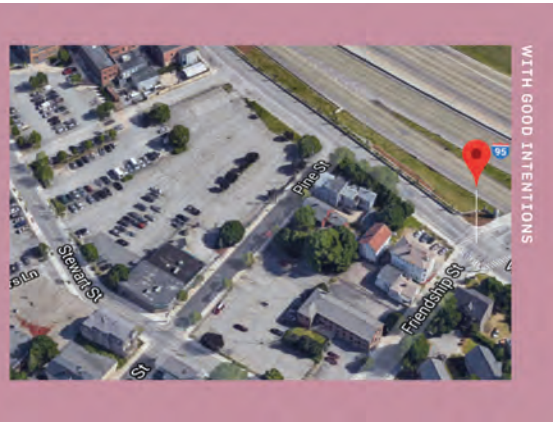
CARVER CT.



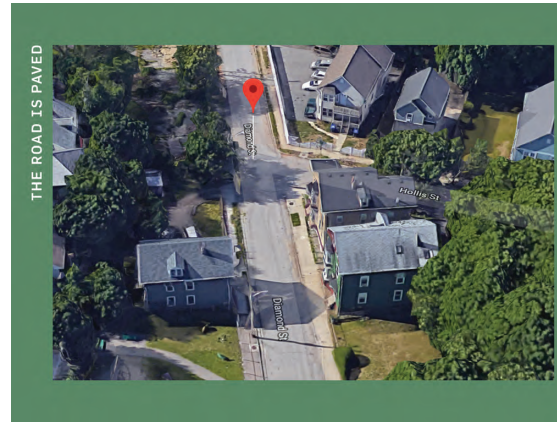
PEACH AVE.



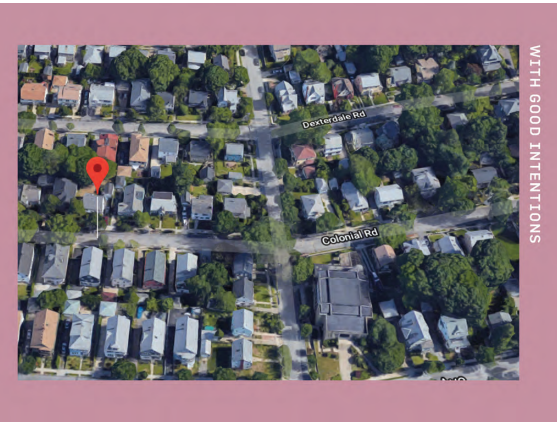
SUPERIOR ST.



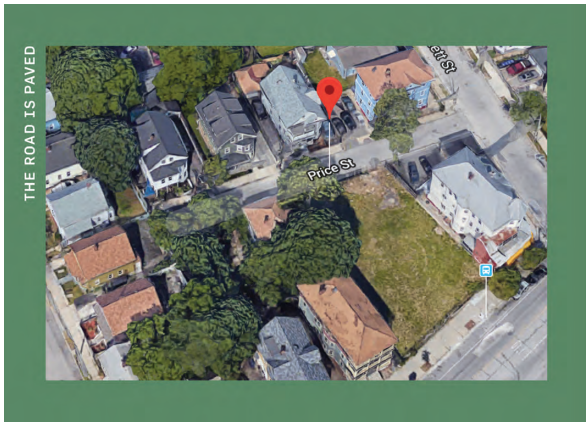
FRIENDSHIP ST.



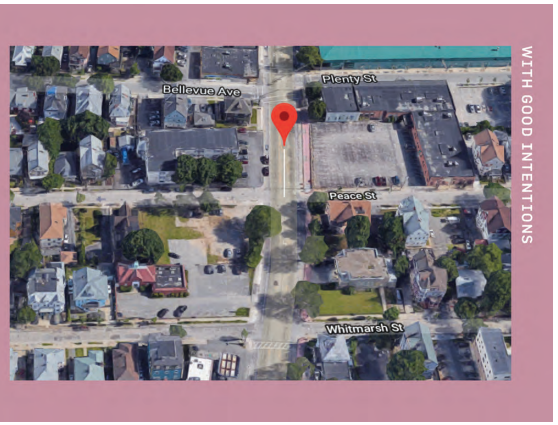
DIAMOND ST.



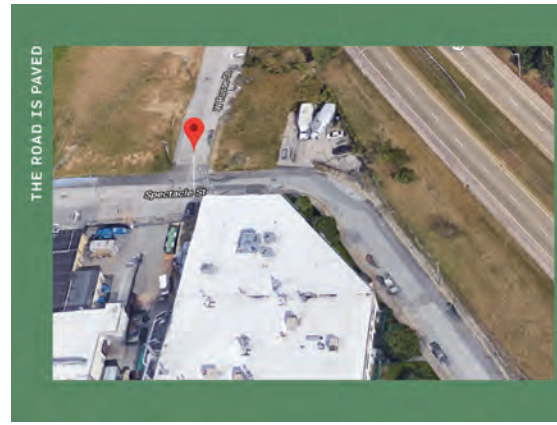
COLONIAL RD.



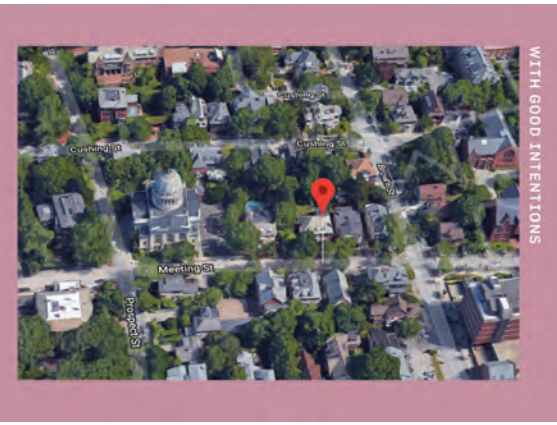
PRICE ST.



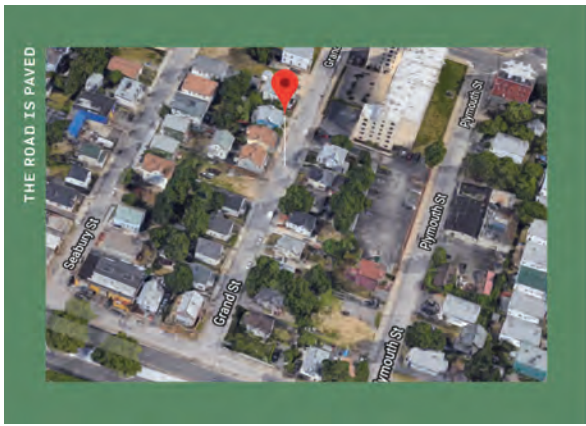
PEACE ST.



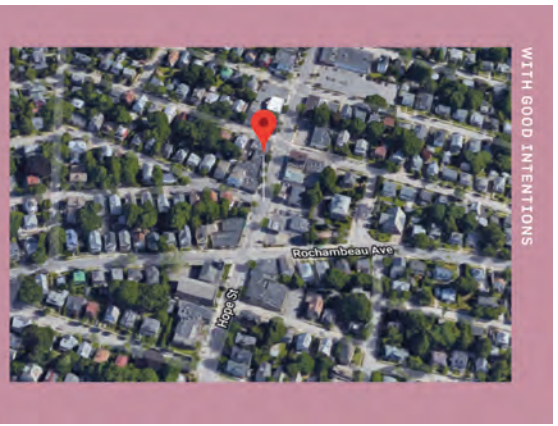
SPECTACLE ST.



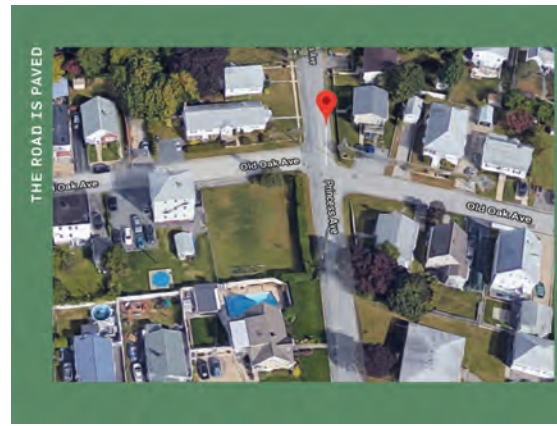
MEETING ST.



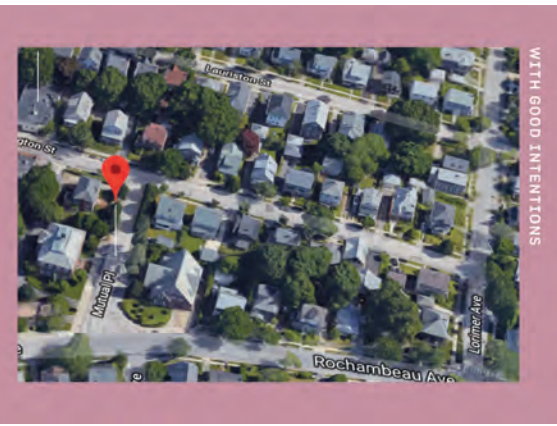
GRAND ST.



HOPE ST.



PRINCESS AVE.



MUTUAL PL.

Interview

Vuthy Lay (BFA Architecture 2018) grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, was a participant in RISD's Project Open Door, and is a mentor at New Urban Arts.

Vuthy Lay



Wat Thormikaram Cambodian Khmer Temple
178 Hanover St, Providence, Rhode Island
(as pictured on Google Street View).

How many monks do I have to house in my home in order to become a religious institution?

How many books do I have to display in the open to become a public library?

How could I use the zoning code to my advantage to create density of function within a residence?

Interview

Vuthy Lay

EC: Can you talk a little bit about where you grew up and what it was like?

VL: I bounced around a few different places but I was born and raised in Providence, Rhode Island. I grew up on the West End, near the Armory district. I've always been in that neighborhood. My father gained political asylum from the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, first in Lowell, Massachusetts and then in Providence. My mom is from Poissy, France and Paris, so I bounced in between those two. In the summers, I'd go to France a lot as a kid, but for the most part, I grew up here.

EC: How did your experiences in the Project Open Door program shape your idea of RISD?

VL: I started doing Project Open Door my junior year of high school. I actually was a really bad Project Open Door student when I was there. I didn't go as consistently as I should have. I think the biggest thing that Project Open Door gave me was the bus pass and the RISD ID, aside from documentation help. It's a great program simply for connecting students to resources and bringing them into spaces they wouldn't normally be able to get into, or feel comfortable being in. But it does put RISD on a pedestal for these kids who are applying to college, and once it's so high on a pedestal and you don't reach it, you feel crushed for a long time. I don't really know to address that, but it's an issue. People get traumatized. There are other options for college, but maybe those other options could be made clearer and more appealing.

EC: What was your experience like when you first got to RISD as an undergraduate?

VL: I was pretty resistant to trying to be part of the RISD community, just because I had a lot of friends and support outside the school already. I was thrown aback because the studio culture I was used to was at New Urban Arts, where it's very different. Everyone comes and goes, everyone shares materials, everyone's comfortable talking to each other even if they don't know each other. And so when I got here...blank walls, everyone quiet and kind of judging each other silently, because we have the reputation as the best art school. So you assume everyone is the best artist representing their hometown. I was in competition with my head a lot and I think being in that space transitioning from what I was used to wasn't initially resonating with me. I spent a lot of time with local friends because I needed breaks.

EC: So you were a student at New Urban Arts at the same time that you were doing Project Open Door?

VL: Yes, and now I mentor there. I've been mentoring there since my sophomore year at RISD. The Architecture department at RISD is very intense and there's a certain mentality and culture that for me and a lot of people I think gets very draining, so just to be in a familiar space and hear some goofy shit from time to time is helpful. The kids I have the privilege of mentoring are very crucial to my own mental health; just being in that space feels good. Even though we're a generation apart, it's very refreshing and nourishing. It doesn't seem to directly connect with my discipline, but the beautiful thing about being in contact and in dialogue with that space is that it reminds me every week who

I'm designing for in my head. And who it is that I have in mind when I picture my proposals. It helps me get back to that.

EC: How do you see, understand, or think critically about the relationship between RISD and Providence as a whole?

VL: Man, that is a loaded question. It's easy to say that RISD doesn't do enough, which it doesn't. But it is interesting to see the indirect impact it has had. A lot of the mentors at New Urban Arts who were very crucial to me being where I am today were RISD alums and in contact with the institution. I give RISD credit in that respect, in producing alumni who are dedicated to giving back to the communities they are part of or that the institution draws from. It just should be more explicit, not that by chance people stay.

It's great that the people who stay found love in this place, but there should be a stronger institutional stance.

I got really pissed off during the Not Your Token protests when Project Open Door was brought up as an example of RISD participating in the community, because from my experience in Project Open Door both as an alum and as a staff member, to my understanding the only thing RISD had contributed was its name and a space. When I was in Project Open Door, we were in the basement of the Prov / Wash building which was awful. No windows... but it was still a space. It was just not a place you would really want to spend your Saturday mornings as a high schooler. And it felt skeezy to me that Project Open

Door got tacked onto the Not Your Token conversation as something that RISD was doing toward that issue.

Specific to Architecture, I've been thinking about how whatever our proposals are, whatever our sites are, they're mostly in Rhode Island.

But when we invite government officials or private investors into our crits to see our projects, we are unconsciously pretending that the Architecture department doesn't have any pull in the imaginary of the public or private realm. And the fact is that a lot of the people currently involved in creating this imaginary are not local, and there is no dedicated effort by the institution or by the department to create a pipeline for those who are local, who have a stake in this, who've grown up with certain understandings of the city, to play a part in this creation of the imaginary.

ec: How do you think that there could be a better effort to have people that are local involved?

vl: I don't have the answer to that question. I don't know what the answer is. I think that there need to be more local students in architecture and other design disciplines within this institution. It's hard, because you can't make a kid grow up to want to do that. That wasn't my original mission when I entered RISD. I just knew I liked drawing and model making, so I decided to do Architecture. I was fortunate enough to have parents who were paying attention when I was growing up, to get me into the right communities and the right conversations and proximities. After coming into contact with all of this, I've become aware of the institutions and critical of them. I just wonder how we could make this process more direct.

I think Architecture accelerated this consciousness of the spaces I'm in, and my privileges growing up in that I've come to the understanding that Architecture is inherently political. It dictates where land is, who owns the land, and what gets to be built on the land. When you start using that framework of understanding to analyze the sites within Providence, you start to have ideas and apply them. For me, I was applying those ideas to my home, so that accelerated that process of critique. There's something in there that I feel would enrich the practice or the discipline, but the conversations are just starting.

I'm hopeful about people of our generation who came through these programs and who are just starting to understand their own position in all of it and to vocalize that understanding. That's why I have a lot of faith in these kids. When I see the new kids in New Urban Arts, I'm just so blown away by their potential. They are producing things I couldn't have dreamed of in high school. I don't want to frame it as inevitable that something will change. It will have to be the result of consistently pressing for change.

ec: It sounds like you're interested in the idea of a group of people pushing the architecture world within Providence to do more. Where do you picture yourself after graduation?

vl: I don't think I'll ever lose a connection to Providence. I spend a lot of time at New Urban Arts and I could always spend more time, but I think this will be my last year mentoring, even though I want to keep going. I just need to focus wholeheartedly on my thesis. I want to keep developing my skills so that I can figure out different ways that I can give back past what I currently do now. That being said, everything's pointing to me digging further into Rhode Island, just because of how much I've invested in and know the community here. I have a lot of attachment to this place, which also biases me, and there's baggage. I'm looking at internships around the country based on where family is, and abroad, just so I can learn to love a new place, although not to the same degree. Not with the attitude of going to help a community, but with the goal of "what can I learn elsewhere to bring back?"

ec: What is your thesis about?

vl: It's a rough idea. I've been thinking about it loosely. Theaster Gates' renovation of the bank building in Chicago was really interesting to me because of his use of urban planning knowledge, and manipulation of something as mundane and banal as the zoning code. I see that precedent as really crucial to anti-gentrification theory. I want to work toward developing discourse around that. My house, that my parents just paid off, that I'm currently living in, is on the same street as a Buddhist temple and a black Methodist church and the Center for Southeast Asian Socioeconomic Development. So I ask questions in my head:

How many monks do I have to house in my home in order to become a religious institution?

How many books do I have to display in the open to become a public library?

How could I use the zoning code to my advantage to create density of function within a residence?

But I was also thinking of Chinatown and how its gates have been able to stave off gentrification by keeping it very visibly Chinese. How many gates would I have to throw up in Providence to protect a certain portion of the West End? How can I make it so this building that was a typical residential typology actively nourishes the community and can't so easily be claimed? There could be a museum function of turning my house into a gallery space too. I could see it very easily hosting exhibitions of other artists of diasporic experience, because my neighborhood's traditionally a transition neighborhood for immigrants. So also it would be a way of

measuring rates of transience. I could actually be testing this in my home, and I could see it very easily becoming one of those things where it is my thesis, but I might have to just run with it afterward.

ec: How do you conceptualize placemaking as an architect?

vl: I feel like I take up a lot of space because I always carry tons of shit and always have most of what I need on my back. So when I do root down, I usually am carrying my place with me.

I always judge a firm or a person in their design practice by what a residence looks like to them. Whether a residential project is single family or a large urban scale residential building can tell you a lot about a person's sensibilities and their understanding of how people should live in a space. Community centers often rub me the wrong way, because I'm often suspicious of when people present spaces like those as the be-all end-alls for solving the issue of resiliency within a community.

ec: How does travel around Providence impact your work when you get to the studio?

vl: I usually bike the same path, or some derivative of it. I find it very helpful to do that. I usually come to school and leave school at the exact same time, but I notice small things every day. I'm always analyzing the mundane—like, oh, that new shop popped up! Just trying to be aware of my community keeps me focused. After you've run the same route so many times, the minute of the banal helps me zoom in when I'm thinking about design.

Ideally, those will be the things I refer to later on as memories.

There's a good quote my professor says.

Sometimes when you're just starting to draw the first plan for a building, you'll accidentally draw the floor plan to your old house. Your memories and your sensibilities will come through automatically. Just take a step back sometimes to see whether or not you're doing that, so you can recognize the intention behind it.

EC: If you could imagine an alternate map of Providence, what do you think it would be?

VL: When people ask me how to describe the various parts of this city, I always say to ignore all the townships and the city lines. Those don't matter in my head. I usually go off of police jurisdictions. I think of those as the most accurate way to understand atmosphere changes between different neighborhoods within the city. I wouldn't want it to be drawn like that. It's probably my privilege, being able to blend in and head out so easily, but I've always thought of this city as a giant playground. I very much enjoy how you can change your scene and go through multiple conditions quickly.

EC: How do you think about leftovers, trash, scraps, reuse, or sustainability in Architecture?

VL: Sustainability is still not being given the proper attention and rigor it deserves in studios even though it's been a buzz word for a while.

In my practice, I try to make my buildings responsive to the environment and responsive to the context, because I think that's half the job of the architect, to not just place a contextless building in space. Although sometimes that does work, depending on what your agenda is for that project. I try not to buy supplies. I find picking through stuff to be the way I obtain materials more often.

Most of my stuff came from RISD garbage. Actually most of my clothes even. Move out day at the end of the semester has always been a big thing in my head. Even in high school, we would always raid the RISD dumpsters. You could find 12 fairly full bottles of screen printing ink or tons of textiles. Also my parents raised me with the mentality to never waste my food, so I never had a problem picking through, but I know that's not people's deal all the time.

I try to think about for a design proposal what materials would be around locally, what knowledge base is around locally, what's within the realm of the local vernacular. So it's not just concrete steel every time. I still think you can pull magic out of simple sticks and cardboard. Last semester I really fancied myself to not use the laser cutter as much as possible and instead hand cut as much as possible. Coming back from Cambodia, I was in the mentality that there are no laser cutters or any of the same resources that I'm used to there like 3d printers, laser cutters. I was trying to privilege my hand and develop my hand skills just so I

wouldn't be caught like that. Developing hands, eyes, and mind was the thing I was hoping most to get out of college beside the degree.

EC: What can we do as designers, architects, and artists to better serve communities? How can we strive for more mindful practice?

VL:

I think listening is important. And not just listening to respond, but listening to try your best to understand what the need is of that person from the community you're trying to design for. I think we get lost a lot in concept and theory, whereas we need to think about how a building actually does affect a person's day to day life. What is it that is directly pressing to them now and what might be in the future?

It's the balance between knowing now, predicting the future, and building something in between that can satisfy those two points in time.

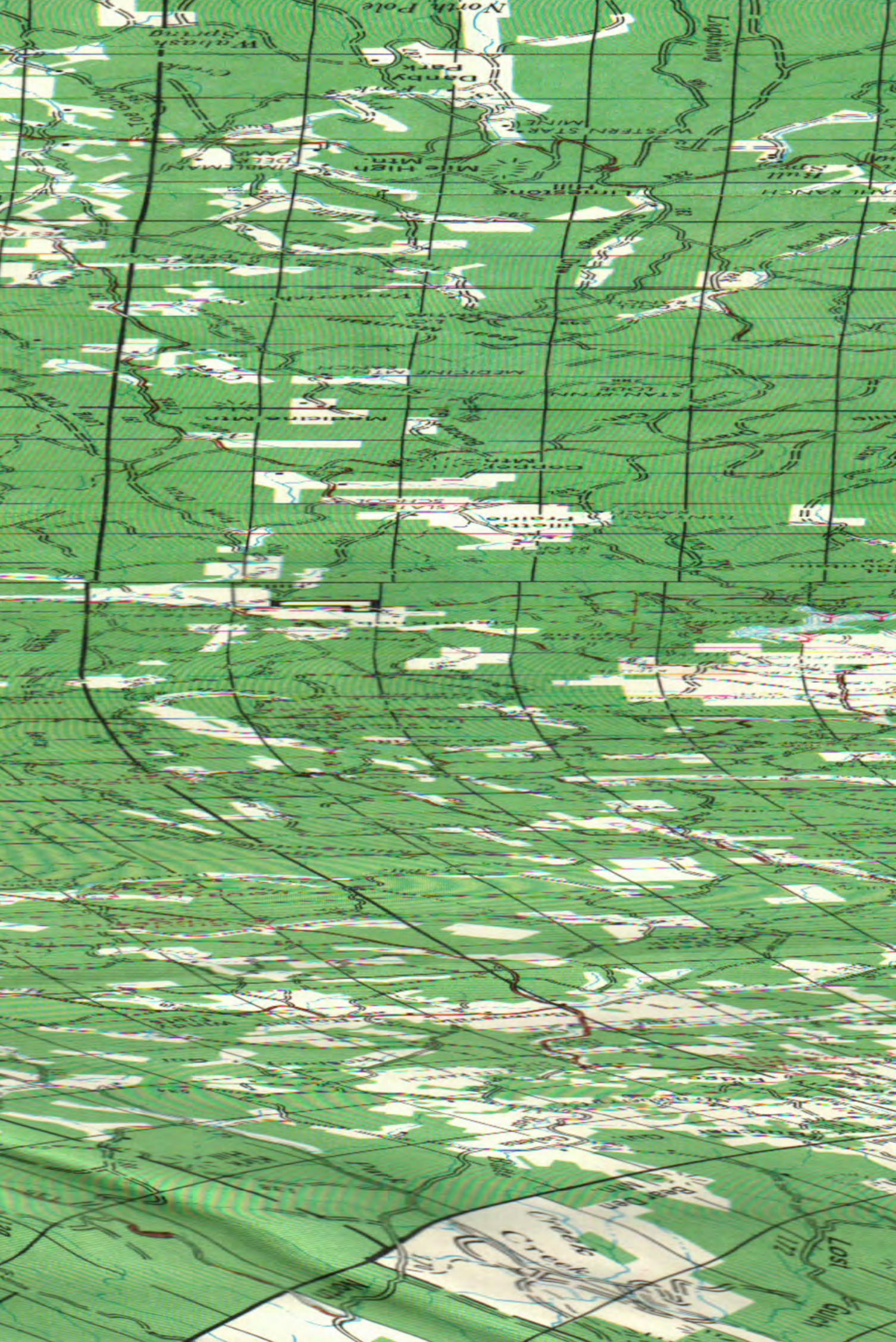
I think there's a lot to be said in projectively building for a community, but being careful not to impose. Just placing yourself lower in the hierarchy of the conversation around that space. And to never feel satisfied. The moment you're like, damn this building is done, we're fine, we're done, that's dangerous.

A project should be just a point a time, but building off a larger series of questions.

On

Mapping





placefulness

A word I coined during my thesis research

the opposite of [placelessness](#);
not forgetfulness;
encouraging of hopefulness;
adjacent to playfulness

Space is understood in new ways in a [globalized world](#). Poverty and urban studies scholar Ananya Roy spoke in a 2013 TED talk at [UC Berkeley](#) about the idea of "distant neighbors," of the poor [nearby](#) being overlooked in favor of a detached view of a global poor [in another country](#).¹⁴ How can design function as a tool of attention to alternate narratives? How can it function as a mode of connection?

In "Preparing for the Not-Yet," Jeanne van Heeswijk argues for a [local](#) focus on agency, by going from:

"passive consumers to active producers of our everyday condition. [...] [The local](#) is the scale at which this is possible, where we might be able to understand new social, political, and economic relationships. It is [an open public arena](#) where you meet the other, smell the other, taste the other. Where you are able to confront the other through actively engaging in presenting, discussing, and demonstrating, in the sense of making visible and tangible what you can bring to that arena. [...[the local](#) is not] [a specific place](#), but a condition that embodies [global conditions site-specifically](#)."¹⁵

Distorted scan of a vintage map of [the black hills area of South Dakota](#) my mom gave me prior to my road trip across [country](#) to [Providence, Rhode Island](#).

¹⁴ Ananya Roy, "(Un)Knowing Poverty," TEDxTalks, filmed April 20, 2013 at TEDxBerkeley, Berkeley, California, video, 19:10, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pKASroLDFoM>.

¹⁵ Jeanne Van Heeswijk, "Preparing for the Not-Yet," Slow Reader: A Resource for Design Thinking and Practice, ed. Ana Paula Pais and Carolyn F. Strauss ([Amsterdam](#): Valiz, 2016), 47.



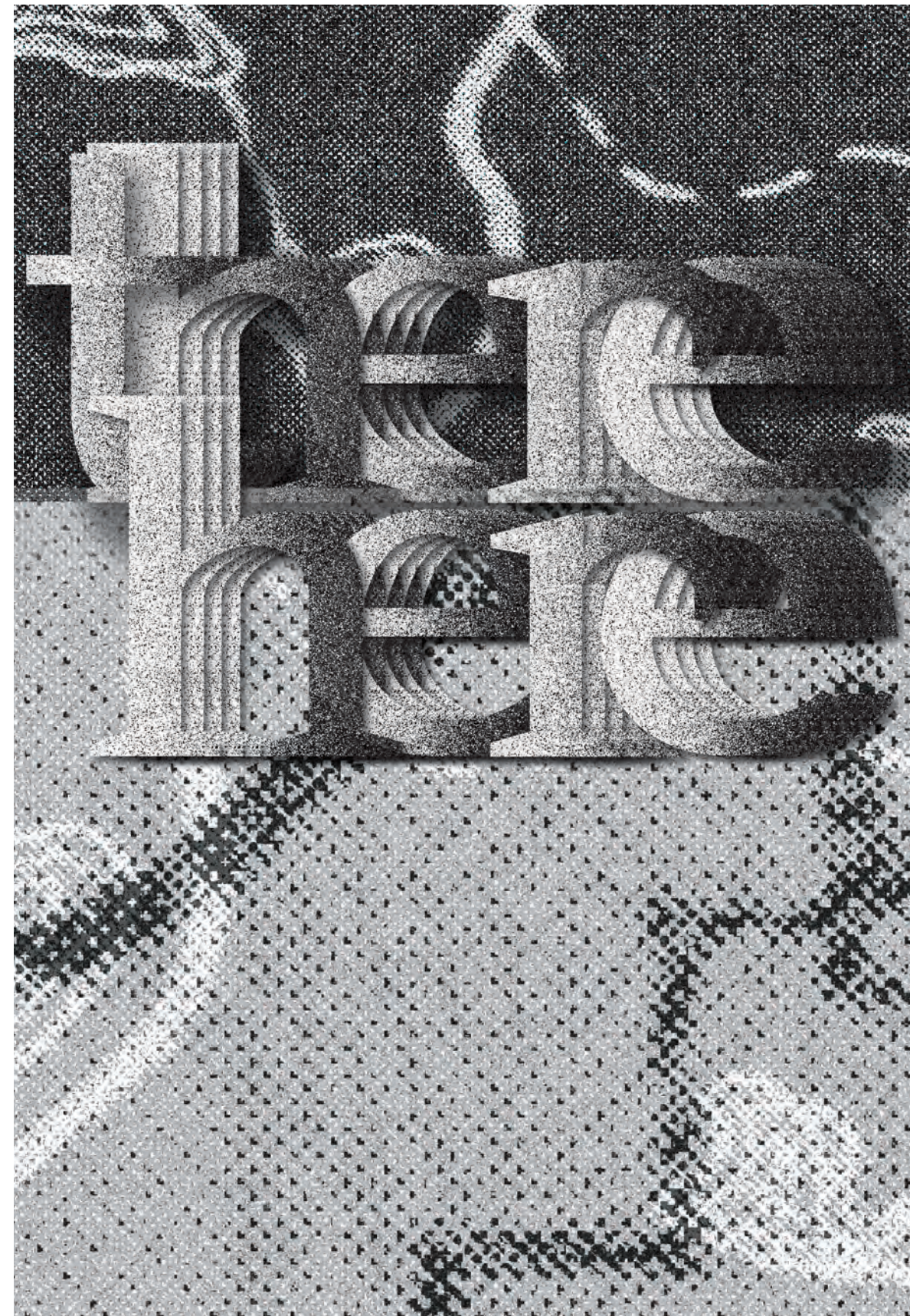
Distorted scan of a vintage map of the [Yellowstone National Park](#) that my mom gave me to prior to my road trip across country to [Providence, Rhode Island](#).

By mapping hidden stories, we encourage empathy. In Part 2 / [Here](#), of John Berger's *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos*, he writes:

“The visible has been and still remains the principal source of information about [the world](#). Through the visible one orientates oneself. Even perceptions coming from other senses are often translated into visual terms [...] It is thanks to the visible that one recognizes [space](#) as the precondition for physical existence. The visible brings [the world](#) to us. But at the same time it reminds us ceaselessly that it is [a world in which we risk to be lost](#).”¹⁶

We wander, are lost, explore. While thesis-traveling, I have carried with me a belief in the power of visual connection and a desire to give attention to narratives and [areas](#) less frequently charted.

¹⁶ John Berger, *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* (New York: Vintage International, 1981), 50.



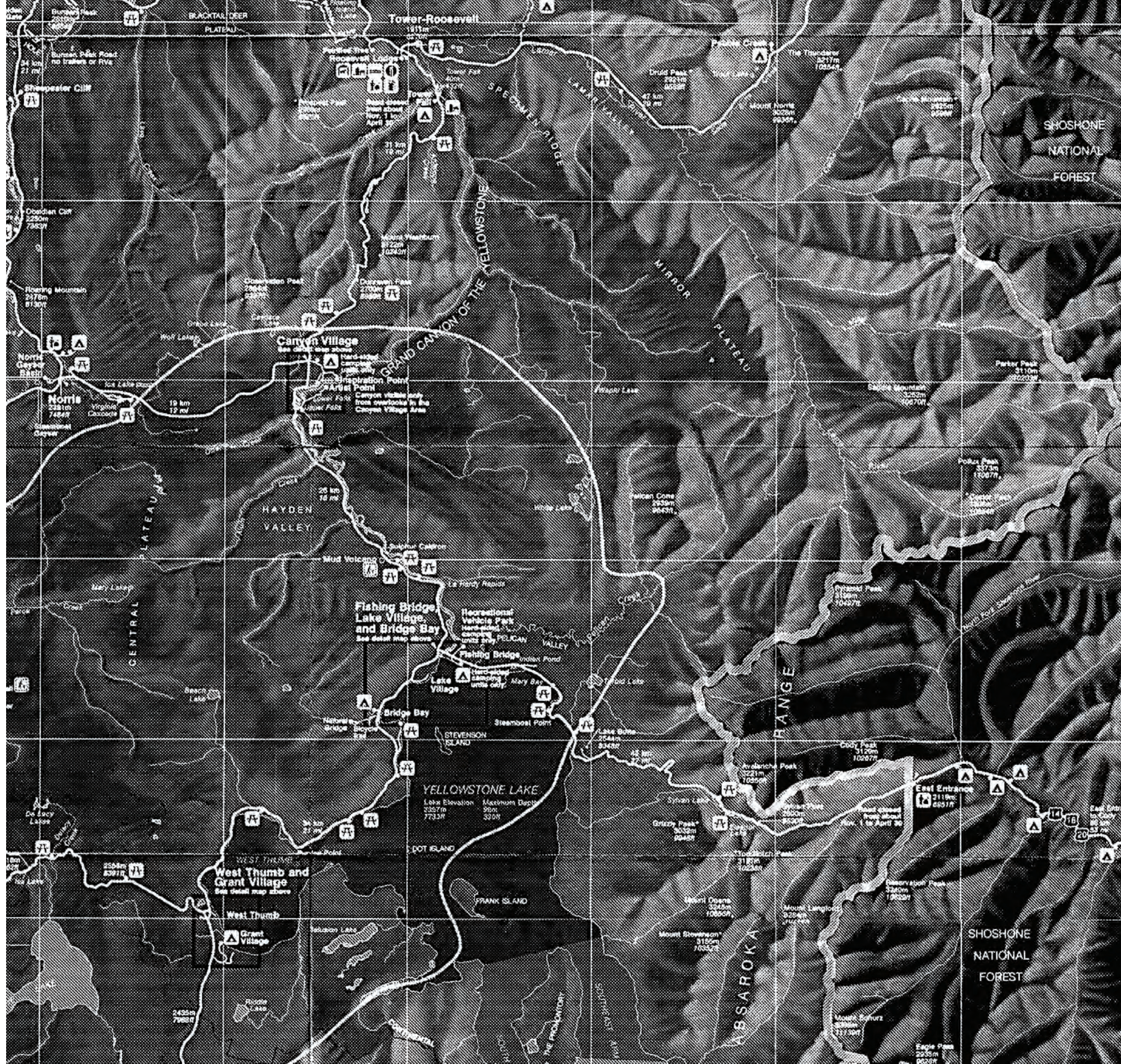
Poster design incorporating bitmap map imagery and wordplay in my typeface *Anais*, designed for Anais Nin's book *Collages*.

Project

Bitmap Maps

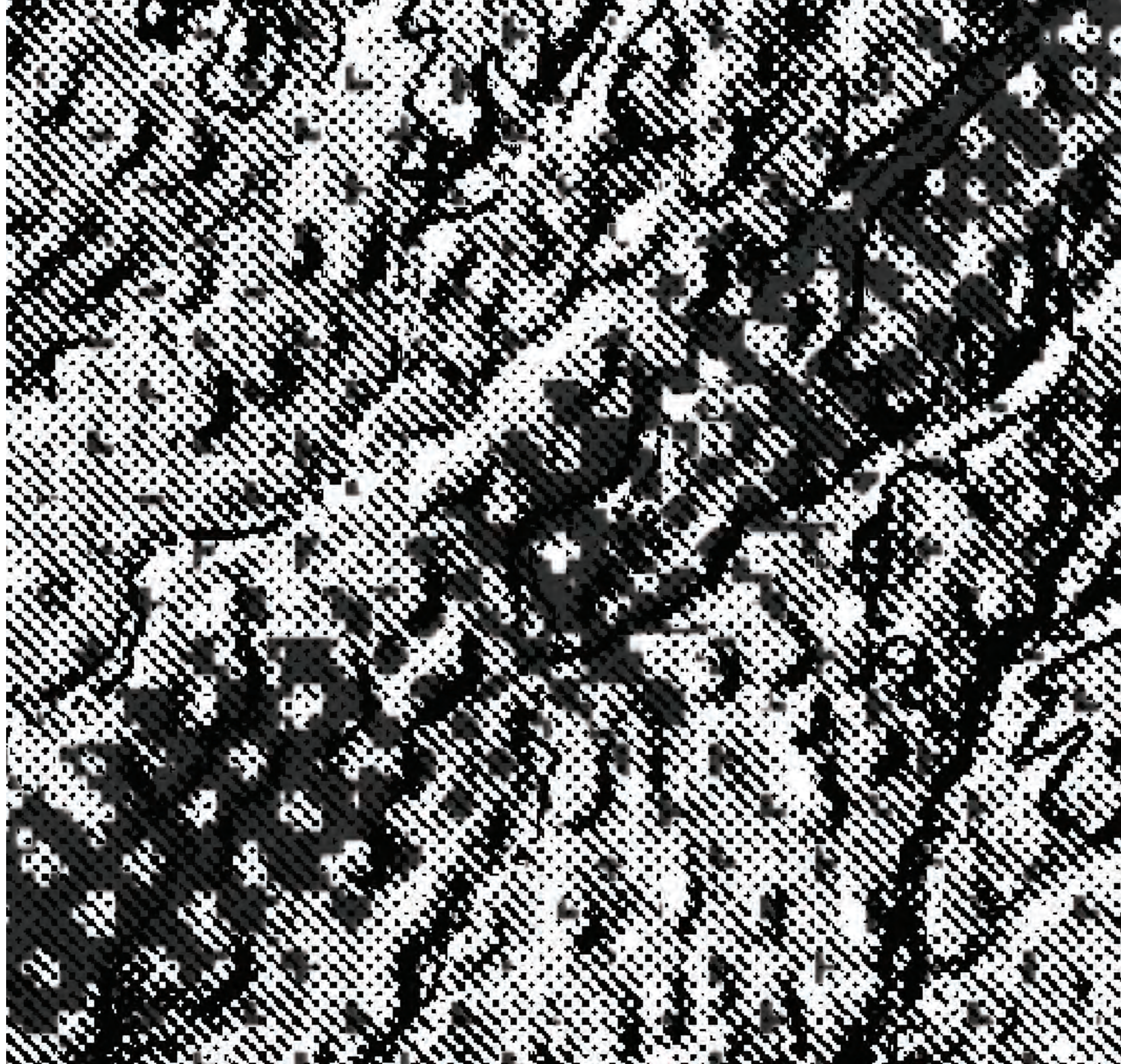
Bitmap Maps is a joyful animation experiment reinterpreting old maps into bitmap image formats, playing with the limits of distortion and scale to create **place-based** abstractions of form.

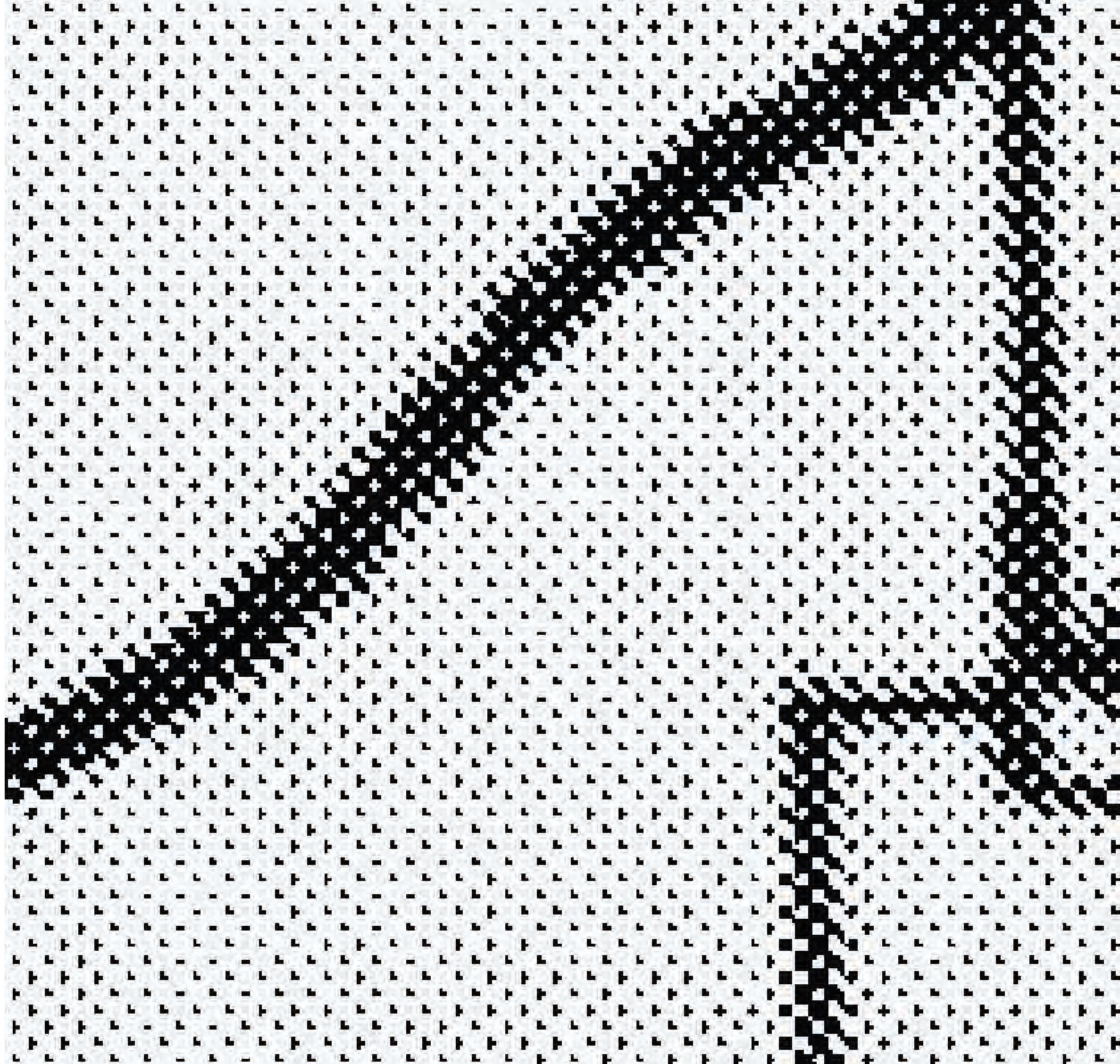
The map imagery featuring organic lines, gridded icons, and topographic land forms is distorted through a series of scale shifts. The bitmap version of the maps are magnified to extreme degrees, rendering them more playful than informational.



Bitmap version of a map of [Yellowstone National Park](#) at a scale with some level of legibility.

A bitmap version of a map of [Yellowstone National Park](#) zoomed in to an extreme and illegible degree. The lines and organic shapes at this scale appear pattern-like.





A bitmap version of a map of [Yellowstone National Park](#) further magnified to create interesting contrasts of positive and negative space.

Impossible Transit for Possible Publics

Impossible Transit for Possible Publics

is a speculative radical mapping project that reimagines the San Francisco Bay Area's BART public transit system through a series of animations. The project responds to skyrocketing housing and cost of living expenses in the area as a result of a housing shortage and increase in residents, resulting in increased gentrification of outlying areas.

Each existing color-coded BART route is remapped to go sequentially from the wealthiest areas to the poorest areas. The inefficient route lines that result from this thought exercise are a commentary on lengthy and rapidly increasing commute times—often two or three hours each way—for lower income residents in the region whose jobs are still in metropolitan centers. The new routes visualize inequality through the lens of the existing transit system.

The history of the original BART lines, with residents in wealthier areas refusing to allow their stations to be connected to stations in lower income areas, was a key factor that motivated me to reimagine the routes thematically to question the demographics actually interacting within the shared public space of the BART cars.



The official San Francisco Bay Area BART transit system map, which I reinterpreted.

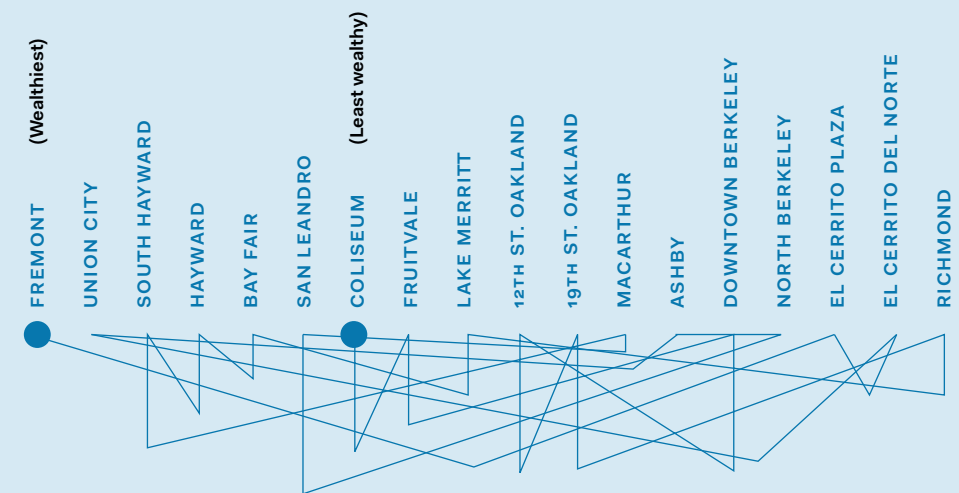


Full overlay of all impossible routes (mapped from stations in areas of highest wealth to stations in areas of lowest wealth) of the San Francisco Bay Area BART transit system.

Actual Fremont—Richmond BART route.



Revised Fremont—Richmond BART route showing the complexity of travel from the station in the area of greatest wealth (Fremont) to the station in the least wealthy area (Coliseum), according to the most recent census data.



All revised BART lines overlaid as an impossible transit map.



Revised Daly City—Fremont BART Line



Revised Richmond—Daly City / Millbrae BART Line



Revised Pittsburg / Bay Point—SFO / Millbrae BART Line



Revised Dublin—Pleasanton BART Line



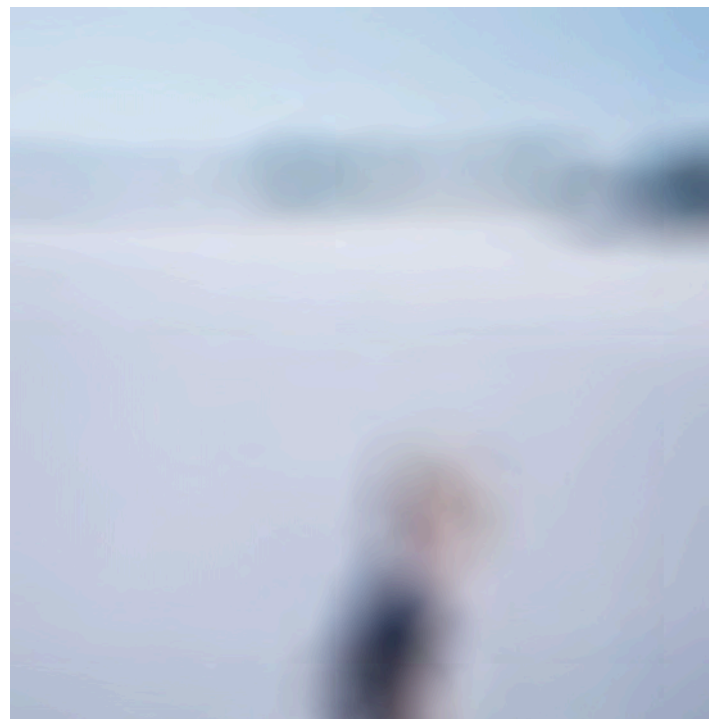
Revised Richmond—Fremont BART Line



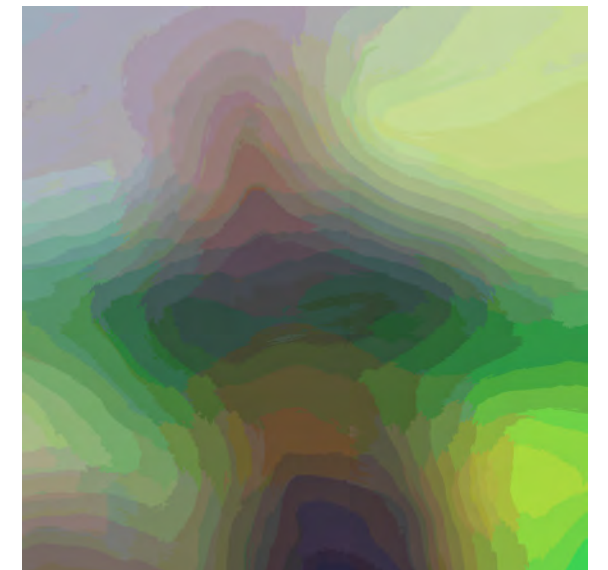
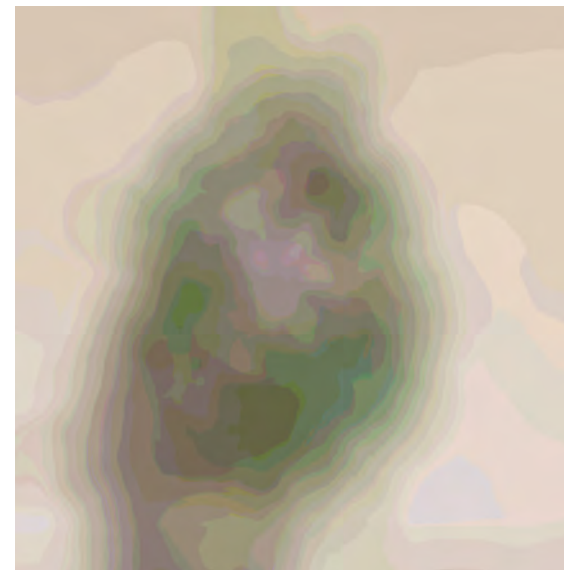
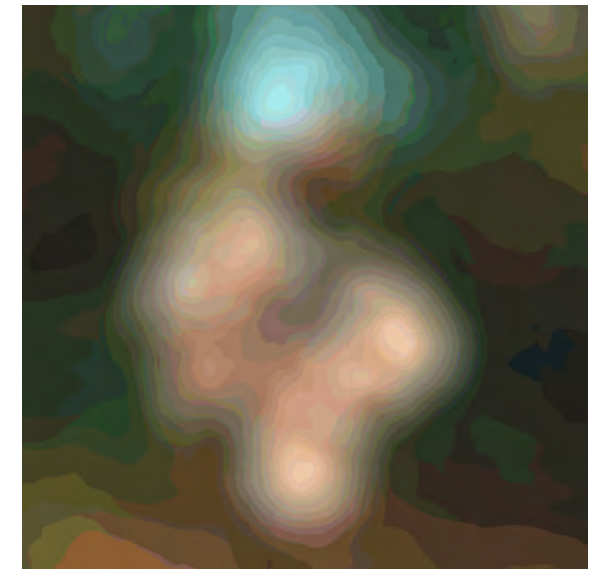
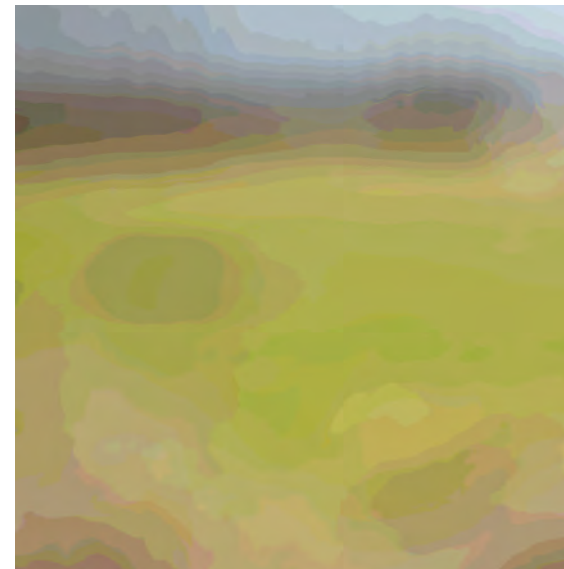
Color Memories

Color Memories is a series of animations created from photos shared on Instagram with the hashtag #memory. I blurred the original images so the pictured memories were further obscured. By blurring these images and reducing their recognizable subjects, the pictured images began to feel interchangeable in a way that gestures at what it means to share a memory, or to be unable to share the emotional impact of that memory with [the world](#).

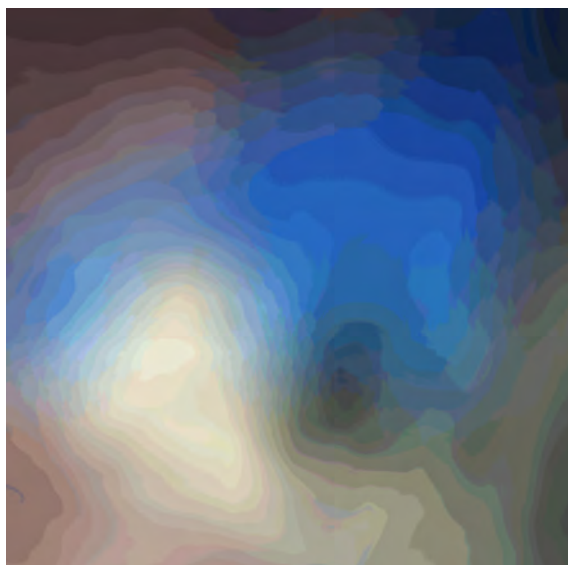
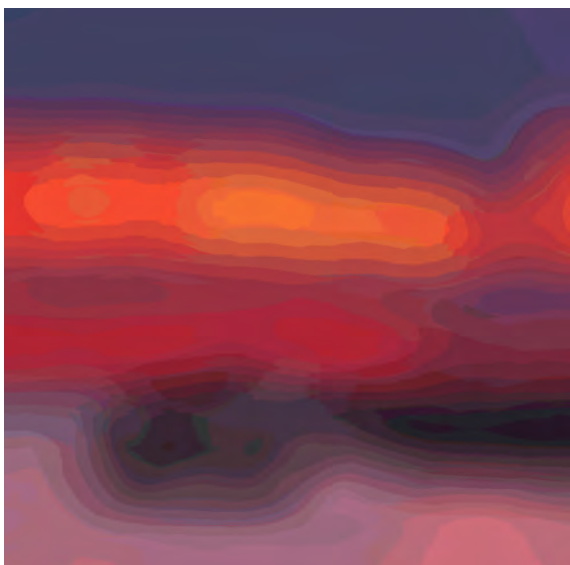
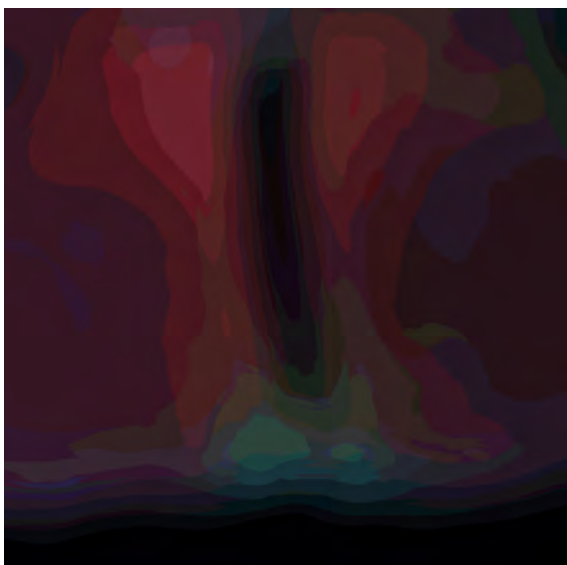
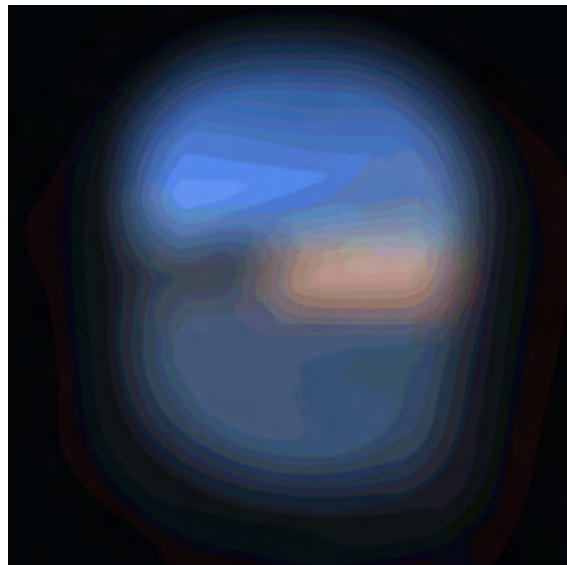
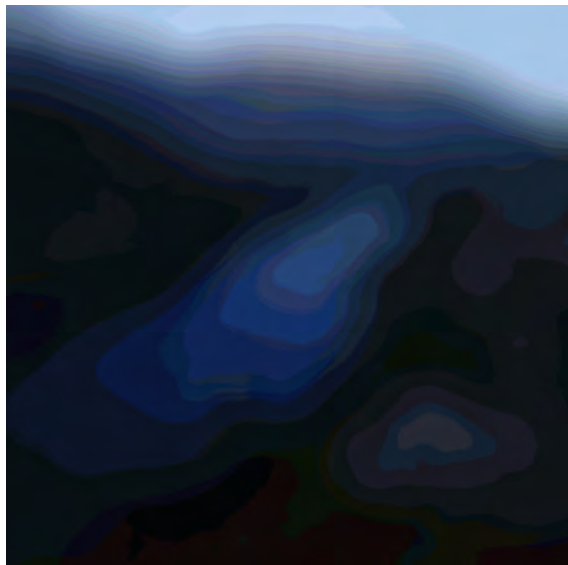
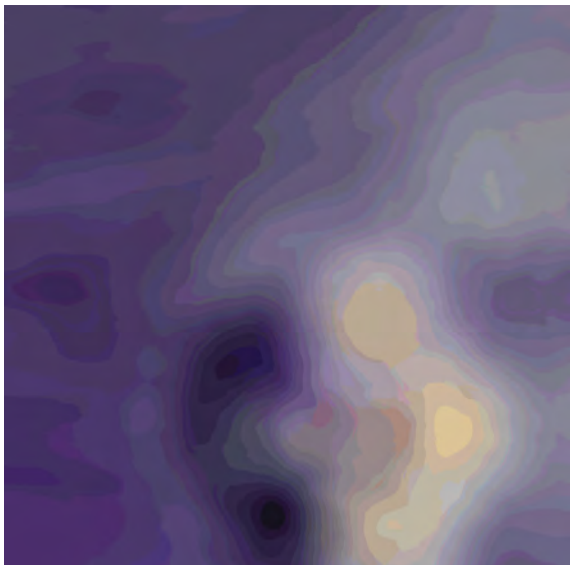
The intent was to create a feeling of universality around how we understand memories. I sorted the images I collected by color, in order to create moving "memory maps" of green memories, yellow memories, blue memories, etc. The blurred images in movement strongly resemble dynamic, always changing topographic maps.



The image of the person above is from the first stage in obfuscation of the photo posted online. It was then combined with several other images of the same color and animated.



After collecting the images tagged with #memory, I categorized them by color and created topographic "memory maps" in the form of animations. These images are removed once again, stills pulled from moving images. Together, they convey abstracted green #memories.



Abstracted purple #memories.

Abstracted blue #memories.



Nina dropped her postcards in a Deutsche post letterbox in [Berlin](#) similar to this one. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Interview

Nina Katchadourian

Nina Katchadourian (BA Brown University 1989, MFA UCSD 1993) is an interdisciplinary artist whose work includes video, performance, sound, sculpture, photography and public projects.

Her video "Accent Elimination" was included at the 2015 Venice Biennale in the Armenian pavilion, which won the Golden Lion for Best National Participation. Group exhibitions have included shows at the Serpentine Gallery, Turner Contemporary, de Appel, Palais de Tokyo, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Turku Art Museum, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, ICA Philadelphia, Brooklyn Museum, Artists Space, SculptureCenter, and MOMA PS1.

Katchadourian's work is public and private collections including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Blanton Museum of Art, Morgan Library, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Margulies Collection, and Saatchi Gallery. She has won grants and awards from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Anonymous Was a Woman Foundation, the Tiffany Foundation, the American-Scandinavian Foundation, and the Nancy Graves Foundation. Katchadourian lives and works in Brooklyn and Berlin and she is an associate professor on the faculty of NYU Gallatin.

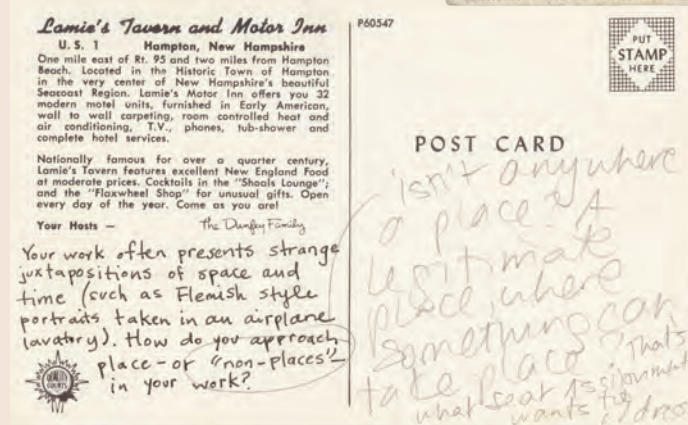


Interview

Nina Katchadourian

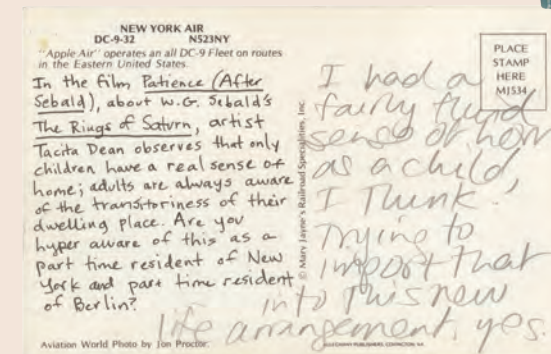


Lamie's Tavern and Motor Inn • FOOD, DRINK & LODGING • U. S. RT. 1, HAMPTON, N. H.



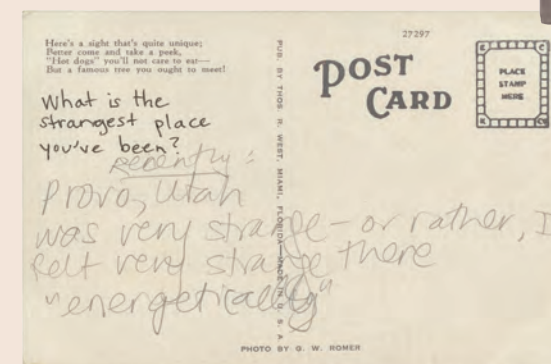
EC: Your work often presents strange juxtapositions of space and time (such as Flemish style portraits taken in an airplane lavatory). How do you approach place—or "non-places"—in your work?

NK: Isn't anywhere a place? A legitimate place, where something can take place? That's what "Seat Assignment" wants to address.



EC: In the film *Patience* (After Sebald), about W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*, artist Tacita Dean observes that only children have a real sense of home; adults are always aware of the transitoriness of their dwelling place. Are you hyper aware of this as a part time resident of New York and part time resident of Berlin?

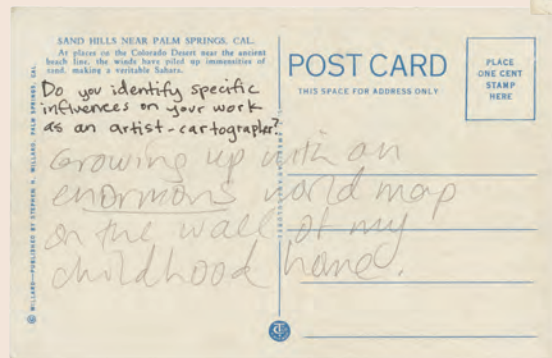
NK: I had a fairly fluid sense of home as a child, I think. Trying to import that into this new life arrangement, yes.



EC: What is the strangest place you've been?

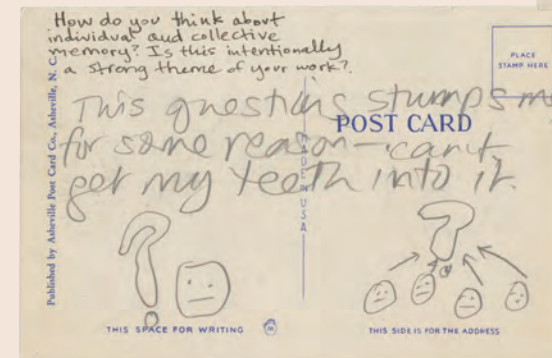
NK: Recently:

Provo, Utah was very strange—or rather, I felt very strange there "energetically."



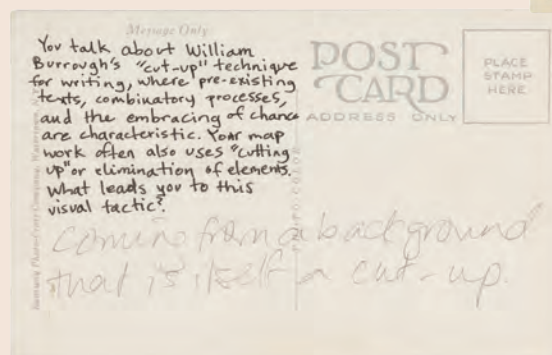
EC: Do you identify specific influences on your work as an artist-cartographer?

NK: Growing up with an enormous world map on the wall of my childhood home.



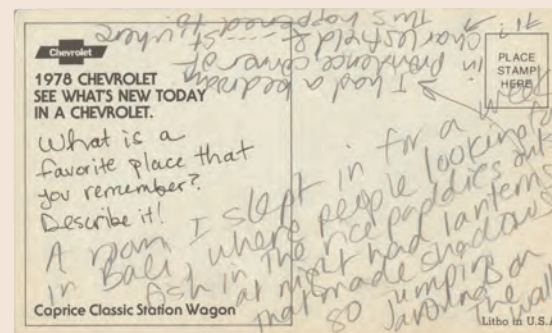
EC: How do you think about individual and collective memory? Is this intentionally a strong theme of your work?

NK: This question stumps me, for some reason—can't get my teeth into it.



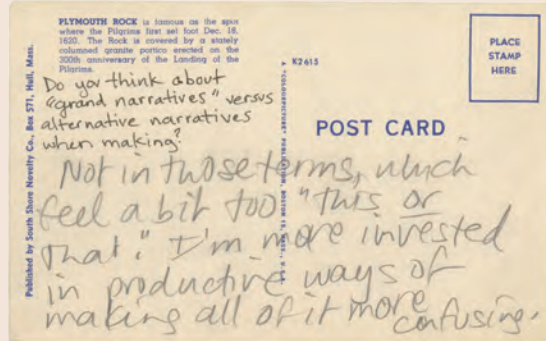
EC: You talk about William Burroughs' "cut up" technique for writing, where pre-existing texts, combinatory processes, and the embracing of chance are characteristic. Your map work often also uses "cutting up" or elimination of elements. What leads you to this visual tactic?

NK: Coming from a background that is itself a cut-up.



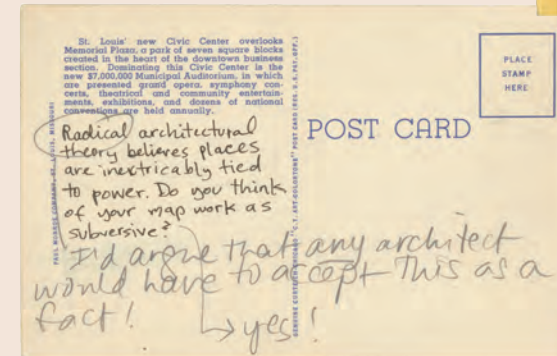
EC: What is a favorite place that you remember?

NK: A room I slept in for a week in Bali, where people looking for fish in the rice paddies at night had lanterns that made shadows jumping around on the walls. I had a bedroom in Providence corner of Charlesfield & ---- (71?) St., where this happened too.



ec: Do you think about "grand narratives" versus alternative narratives when making?

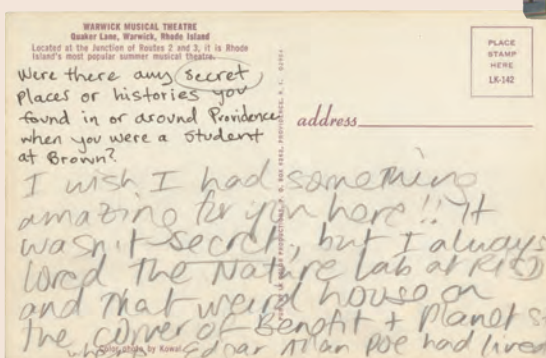
nk: Not in those terms, which feel a bit too "this or that." I'm more invested in productive ways of making all of it more confusing.



ec: Radical architectural theory believes places are inextricably tied to power. Do you think of your map work as subversive?

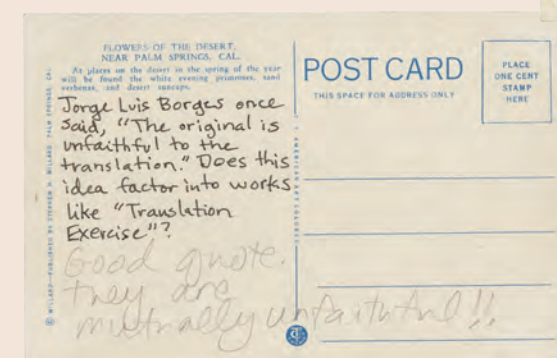
nk: I'd argue that any architect would have to accept this as a fact!

Yes!



ec: Were there any secret places or histories you found in or around Providence when you were a student at Brown?

nk: I wish I had something amazing for you here!! It wasn't secret, but I always loved The Nature Lab at RISD and that weird house on the corner of Benefit + Planet St. where Edgar Allan Poe had lived.



ec: Jorge Luis Borges once said, "The original is unfaithful to the translation." Does this idea factor into works like "Translation Exercise"?

nk: Good quote. They are mutually unfaithful!



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APPROVED

What books do you love?
 "Survive the
 Savage Sea"
 "Stiff"
 "The Great Gatsby"

POST CARD

PLACE
 STAMP
 HERE
 MADE IN U. S. A.

Ec: What books do you love?

NK: "Survive the Savage Sea"
 "Stiff"
 "The Great Gatsby"



Published by Asheville Post Card Co., Asheville, N. C.

What words do
 you love?
 -Uvula
 -Ululate
 -Tunapuna
 (a tuna in Trinidad)

And hate:
 -whimsical
 -quirky
 -webinar

POST CARD

PLACE
 STAMP HERE

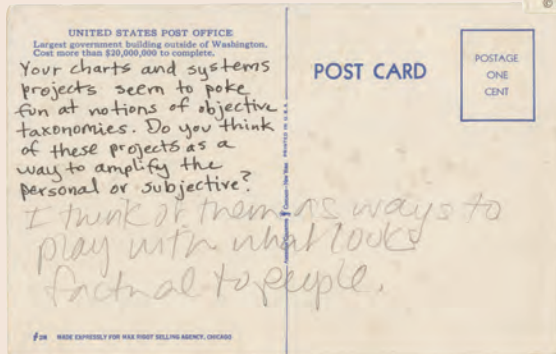
THIS SPACE FOR WRITING

THIS SIDE IS FOR THE ADDRESS

Ec: What words do you love?

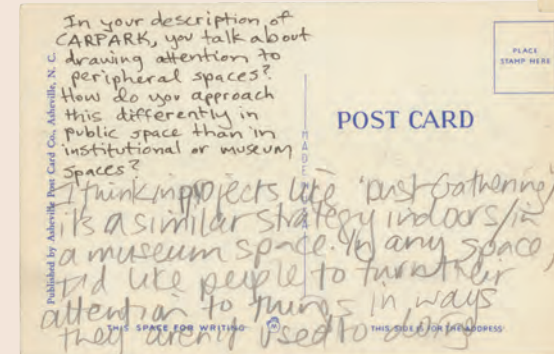
NK: -Uvula
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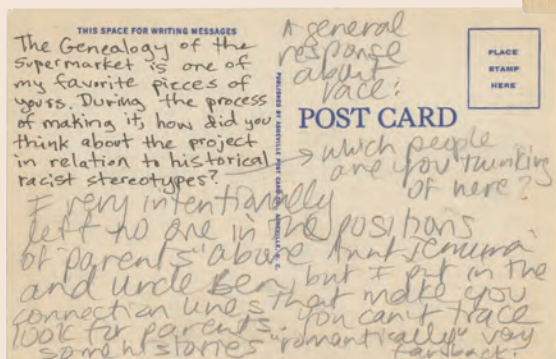
EC: Your charts and systems projects seem to poke fun at notions of objective taxonomies. Do you think of these projects as a way to amplify the personal or subjective?

NK: I think of them as ways to play with what looks factual to people.



EC: In your description of "CARPARK," you talk about drawing attention to peripheral spaces. How do you approach this differently in public space than in institutional or museum spaces?

NK: I think in projects like "Dust Gathering," it's a similar strategy indoors / in a museum space. In any space, I'd like people to turn their attention to things in ways they aren't used to doing.



EC: "The Genealogy of the Supermarket" is one of my favorite pieces of yours. During the process of making it, how did you think about the project in relation to historical racist stereotypes?

NK: Which people are you thinking of here? A general response about race: I very intentionally left no one in the positions of "parents" above Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben, but I put in the connection lines that make you look for parents. You can't trace some histories "romantically" very far back.



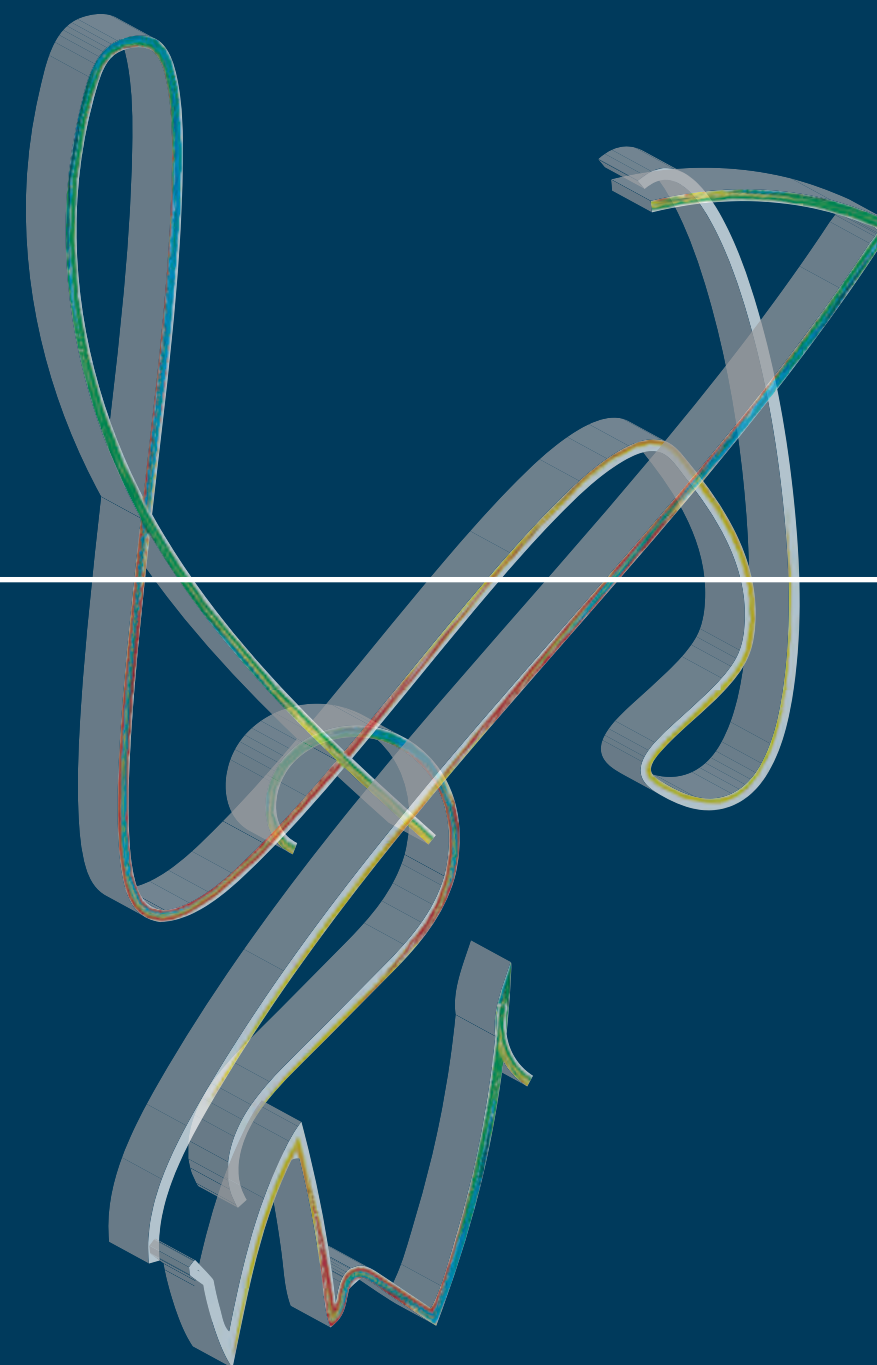
EC: Do you feel more connected to strangers through your work's focus on unexpected connections?

NK: Not particularly. But people generally interest me.

Inter

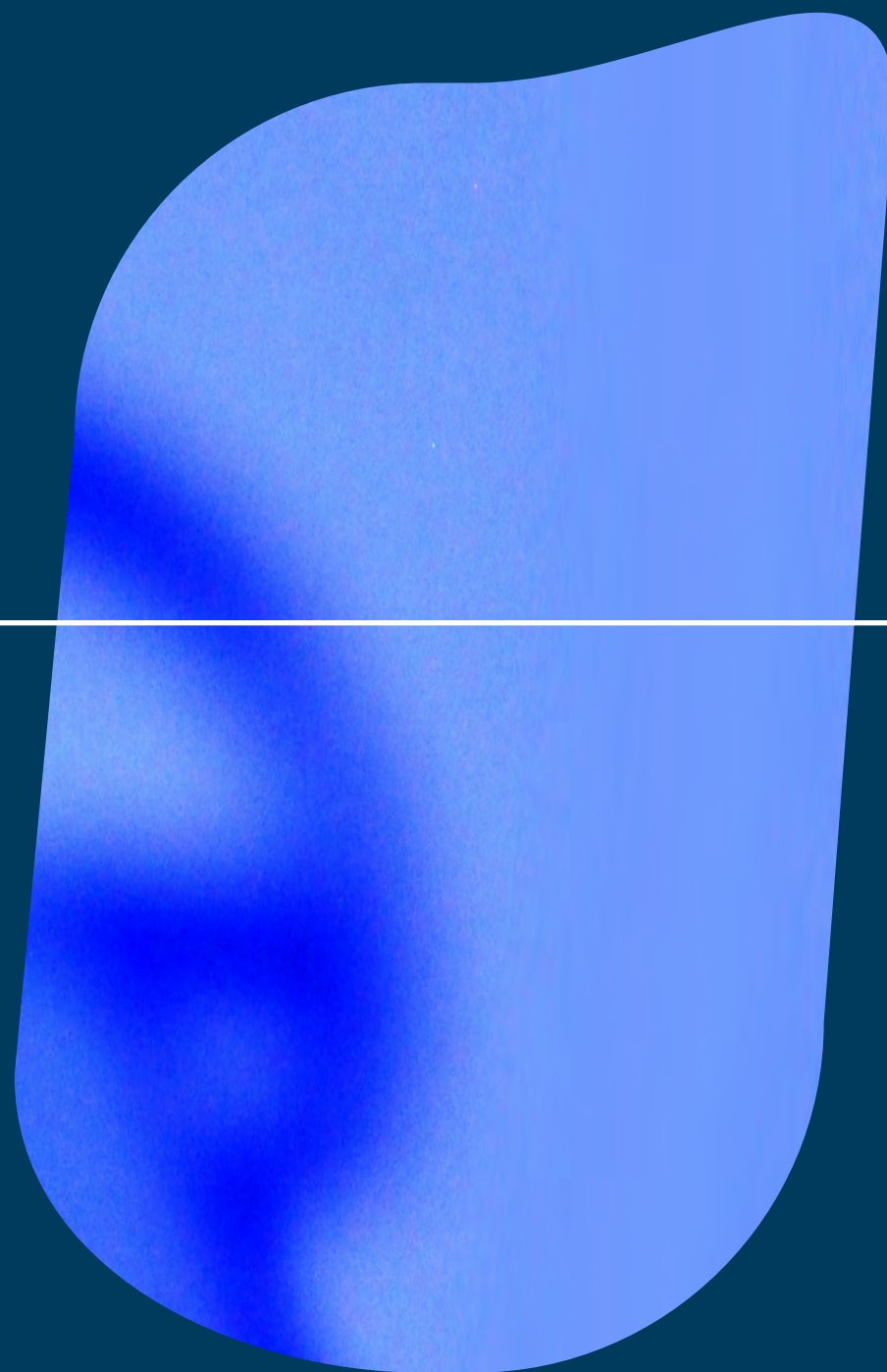
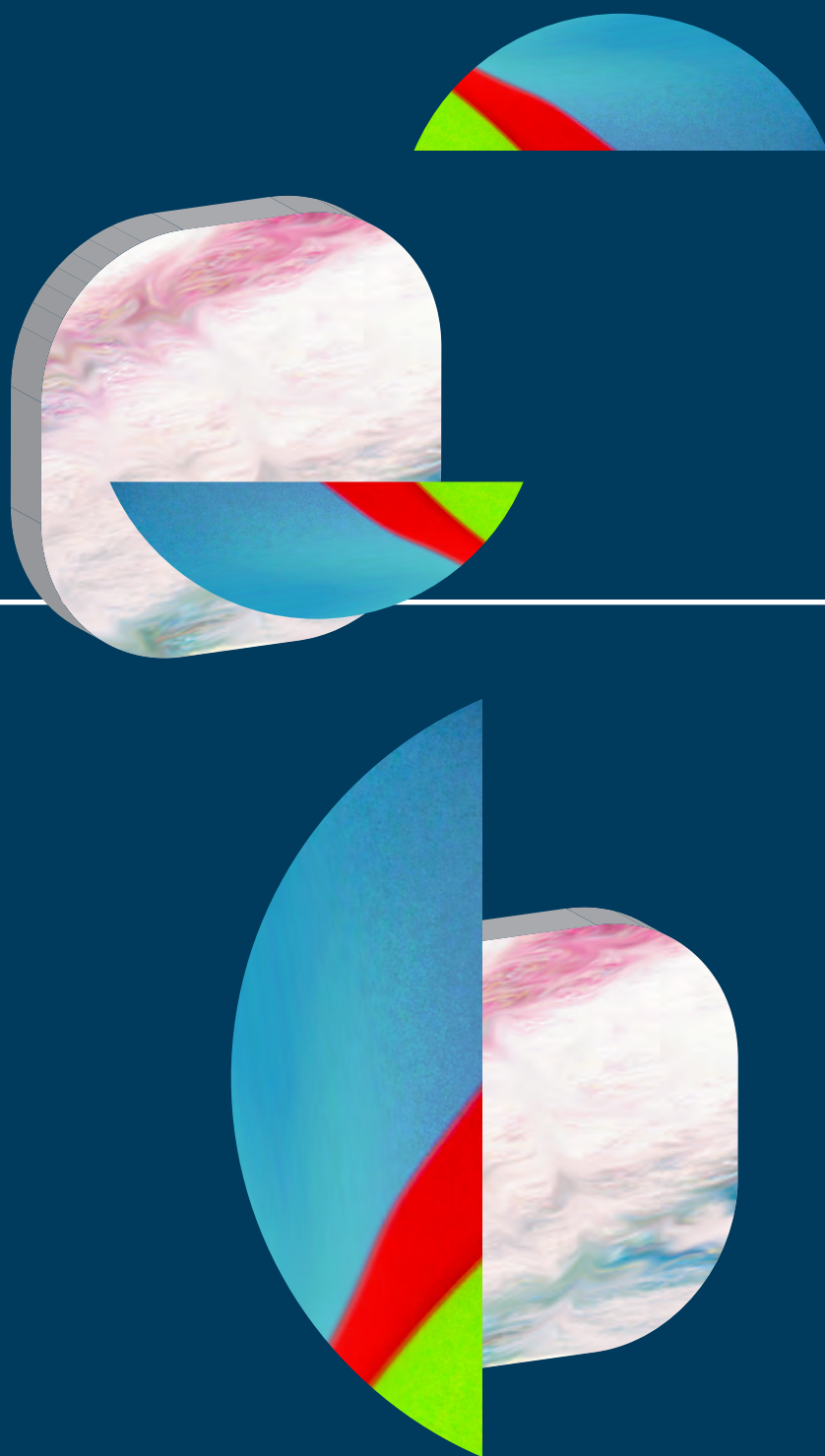
“It’s human nature to associate, to draw connections. No matter how distant or disparate the relationship between two images, articles, objects, or ideas, the ability to identify shared characteristics or affiliations will always exist. It may be true to say that it is more of a challenge not to find a connection between any two given articles than it is to find a connection: irrespective of their history, heritage, or **place in the world**, or how improvised or random their selection.”

—Ryan Gander Pegboard
Social Medium: Artists Writing, 2000–2015



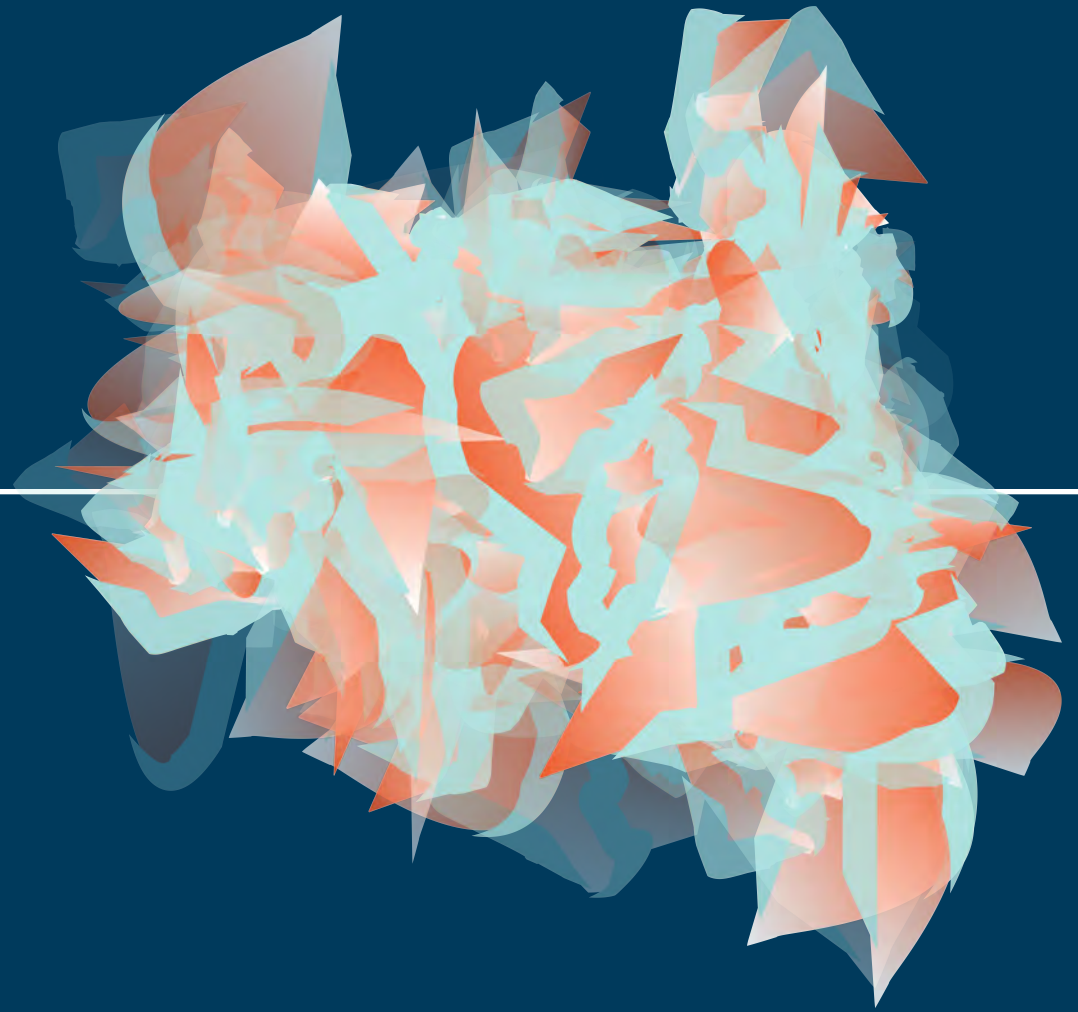
Formal play experimenting with broken and overlapping lines.

Formal exploration into splitting up color and texture between several distant forms.



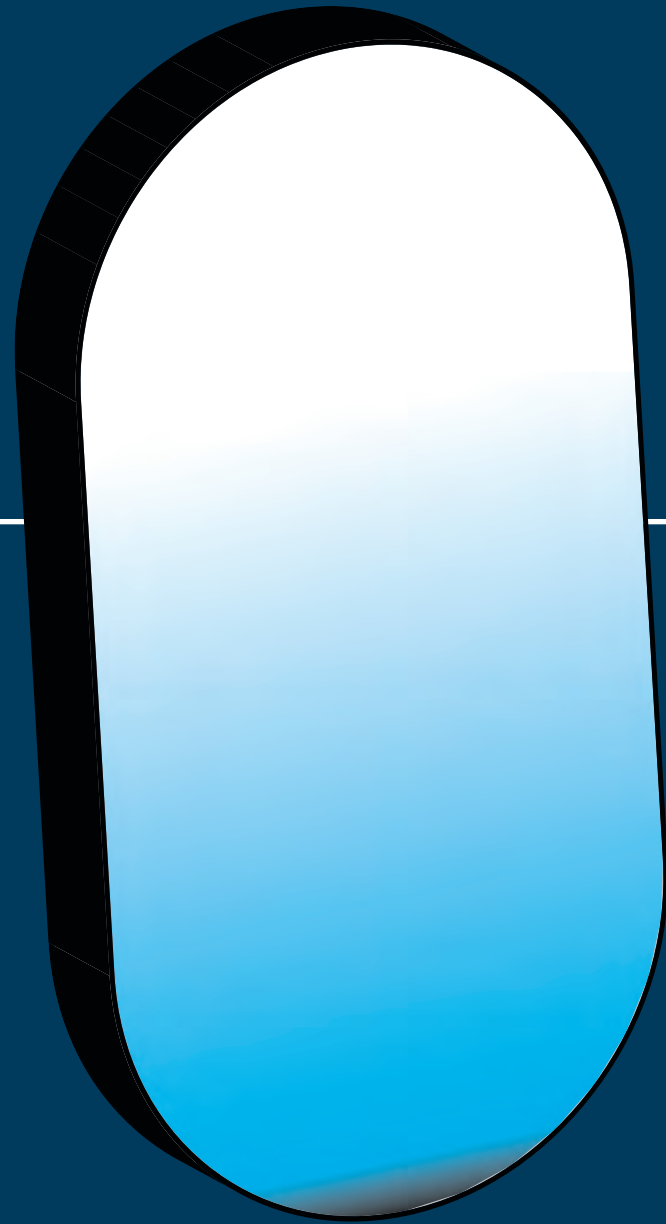
Formal exploration into obscured form extending past the side of a view portal.

Formal exploration into distorted paper forms. The orange within the form was originally composed of folded paper, then photographed and abstracted further in Photoshop, and finally reinserted into additional form shapes within Illustrator.



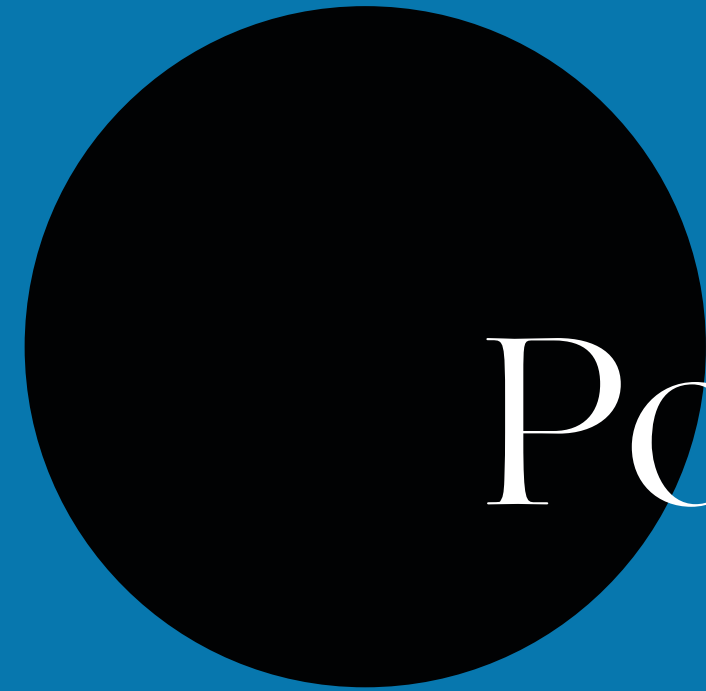
Form iteration using a two color formal shape created in Illustrator, then extended using an Illustrator script gifted from J.K. Keller and Keetra Dean Dixon.

Formal experiment with a simple shape that through color application hints at mirror-like dimensionality beyond the shape itself.

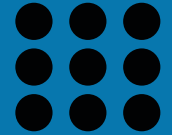


mission

On



Power



“Architecture is nothing but organized stone [...] Should a stone get distracted and prefer to deviate, why not listen to it? Did you forget that history is nothing but a collection of stories dancing together?”

Unfortunately, if you tell a story long enough, and write it down in enough **places**, it becomes true. The history of **America**, for one, began thousands of years before its official story says it did.”¹⁷

—Anthony Huberman

More than a decade ago, after the brief drive back to **the town I grew up in**, I tagged “don’t give up” in blue graffiti on **an unused building of my junior high school**, hoping to inspire some of the current students to keep going despite the many obstacles facing them at a **severely underfunded and unorganized public school**. My friend and I felt free and couldn’t stop laughing. A week later, **the building** was burnt down in a student arson.

Attending **two of the worst junior high and high schools in California** changed the way I think about **place** and opportunity. On these two **campuses** for six years, we were prohibited from wearing red and blue, gang colors. I barely ever think about this prohibition now, years later, when using these two colors liberally in my design work, happily comparing pantone swatches and paper colors. The demographics of **the schools** I went to were almost utopian in their diversity. My **high school** student body was 44% Hispanic, 24% Black, 12% Asian, 9% White, and 7% Filipino. 70% of students were low income. Because of the asbestos **in the ceiling** and the dirty water **in the water fountains**, lack of resources and untold other difficulties for the student body, the day to day experience was far from utopian. My English teacher wrote a cheesy poem about the growth he saw in students **within the “dark dank windowless” room 308**. I was and still am constantly aware of my own privilege, and I am always obsessed with the deep irony of excessive resources **within this country** that are allocated in inequitable ways.

I was also disoriented when I reached **RISD**, my first experience with **a private school**, and **a school** where the majority of students and teachers are white. The differences between the prestigious program I was accepted into, through some sheer stroke of luck, and my earliest educational experiences were striking and sometimes unsettling. My partner, a **public school** teacher who works with autistic children, now goes each weekday morning to help children still drinking dirty water in a **Central Falls elementary school** where 78% of the students are Hispanic, while I guiltily eat free pizza in **beautifully designed spaces**, complain about my luxurious academic workload, and wonder how to reconcile my life experiences and career choice.

¹⁷ Anthony Huberman, “Jimmie Durham: For the Price of a Magazine,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press on behalf of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, Summer 2012): 28–37.

In “Envisaging Spatial Crisis: ‘On Capital and Territory’ and the Diagnosis of the Present,” Mari Paz Balibrea reiterates the Marxist and Lefebvrian¹⁸ position, which intertwines space with capitalism, and therefore power: “Capital reproduces itself by appropriating space, [...] space is produced and subject to strict regulation, which has a determining impact on the particular circumstances of the everyday life of those who inhabit it; consequently, that all politics is spatial; and that it is inhabitants and social movements that must change and reframe power relations with respect to the production of space.”¹⁹

I revived hope in three places last year. Firstly, by observing the designers Jane Androski and Emily Rye (both RISD GD MFA ‘11) of Pawtucket-based studio Design Agency. Every day, they work with local non-profits and community groups in a direct and communicative way. Secondly, I began listening and brainstorming with other community members, talking and doodling on post-its on the ground in a small room of City Hall as part of the newly formed Providence Racial and Environmental Justice Committee. Lastly, by sharing food at a backyard potluck picnic of Meghan Kallman, a generous community leader who opened her house to music, discussion, and activism. The backyard space for this gathering was treated communally, with home cooked dishes and direct introductions under the shared assumption of neighborhood—a spatial relation that implies good will by its nature.

While walking to and from the bus stop on the way to studio or other campus locations, I try to always pay attention and listen, and treat this as part of my thought and making process—at least when walking is not interrupted by winter snowstorms. This belief is backed up by others engaging in similar practices, like Eduardo Molinari’s Archivo Caminante (Walking Archive), which “comprises walking as an aesthetic practice” that explores:

“dominant historical narratives; the processes of the construction of memory, singular as well as collective, and actions against the mummification of social and cultural memory: walking, as artistic practice, defines both its form and content, and walking writes the text at the same time that it searches for its subject. Archivo constantly asks itself: Who is speaking? How? From where?”²⁰

These questions were reiterated in two *Un-Silencing the Canon* workshops taught by Malcolm Rio this past winter session, *Radical Pedagogies* and *Shared Governance*. Classroom discussions ranged from readings of Paolo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and bell hooks essays to personal experiences of students on campus.

In the second workshop, Rafael Sergio Smith shared his work with the non-profit branch of Ideo exploring perception bias and including social design projects like one assisting low-income students in Chicago public school districts with money management. Rafael encouraged us to think about how designing solutions or improvements to the prison system in this country is radically different from imagining a society without incarceration. This application of speculative thinking to specific problems felt essential.

However we go forward as thinkers, artists, designers, community members, and—first and foremost—as people, I think it will be through small steps and associations of like spirit in shared spaces. As Molinari says,

“Perhaps this is the challenge: to create a territory of positions that are capable of shifting between the land on which they are fixed and the force field the collective generates. And to issue clear signs that we don’t accept any more exclusions and that we are politically capable of constructing new folds, new territories, maps, and institutionalisms.”²¹

¹⁸ See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) and Henri Lefebvre, “The Right to the City,” *Writings on Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

¹⁹ Mari Paz Balibrea, “Envisaging Spatial Crisis: ‘On Capital and Territory’ and the Diagnosis of the Present,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press on behalf of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, Summer 2012): 39–50.

²⁰ “A Conversation between Eduardo Molinari and Nuria Enguita Mayo.” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press on behalf of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, Summer 2012): 65–88.

²¹ “A Conversation between Eduardo Molinari and Nuria Enguita Mayo.” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 30 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press on behalf of Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London, Summer 2012): 65–88. Blackwell, 1996).

Website

The Muting of Underserved Voices

The Muting of Underserved Voices is a website design for journalist Tracie Powell's contribution to the Nieman Journalism Lab's 2018 Future of Journalism predictions.

The article is an argument for the preservation of net neutrality. Powell voices concerns about the loss of net neutrality's impact on marginalized communities, activists, and independent content creators who may have less power than giant media conglomerates.

The [site](#) design visualizes the article content through javascript roll overs which erase words and phrases relating to those who would have diminished agency without net neutrality. The design advocates for preservation of net neutrality as essential to a fair democracy.

<http://ellenjchristensen.com/mutingintro.html>

The background image for the website is a distorted scan of an image from an old book of European ornaments. The images in the book are primarily of wealthy porcelain-skinned figures with painted lips in ornamental garb. I appropriated and distorted the images to challenge historic white hegemony.

NiemanLab - Predictions for Journalism 2018

The Muting of Underserved Voices

NiemanLab - Predictions for Journalism 2018

TRACIE POWELL

Activists, independent journalists, and other content creators not connected to corporate media conglomerates will be disadvantaged in the coming year if net neutrality is done away with altogether.

The internet ushered in an explosion of opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in national and global conversations they had been largely left out of before. Not only did these communities have a seat at the table – an

The internet ushered in an explosion of opportunities for marginalized communities to participate in national and global conversations they had been largely left out of before. Not only did these communities have a seat at the table – an open accessible internet allowed them to actually have impact and change the dialogue around social justice issues, media stereotypes, and more.

In 2018, marginalized voices could face diminishment in the level of access, empowerment, and impact they have, including those who already have online platforms and those who may want them. Although they will not totally disappear, and won't be muted at the levels that they once were, the Federal Communications Commission decision last week to repeal Obama-era internet protections will no doubt hamper the kinds of reach and access marginalized communities gained by leveraging digital platforms when net neutrality rules were in place.

Activists, independent journalists, and other content creators not connected to corporate media conglomerates will be disadvantaged in the coming year if net neutrality is

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But Pai's assertion isn't fully true. No net neutrality would be especially harmful for

It features Still in its infancy, it will be that much harder for Spencer's startup to stand on the strength of its own legs, and reach

Or founders like Spencer could be handicapped by pay-to-play internet access in which web companies would pay for priority fast lanes on an ISP's network.

Some state attorney generals are gearing up to fight the FCC's repeal of net neutrality. Some journalism funders are also working to figure out ways to better support

(more on that later). So there is hope for but no guarantee.

Forty-three percent of Americans get their news online, and this is especially so for young people and people of color. For them, removing net neutrality rules means not only stifling

but also restricting Pai's video (which also features a Pizzagate conspiracy theorist) does not address

Metacom Avenue

Metacom Avenue is an exploration of the history of slavery in [Rhode Island](#). I was stunned when I learned that the most slaves in [United States](#) history were brought from [Africa](#) by the deWolf family through their main port in [Bristol, Rhode Island](#).

I was stunned at the implications of [a town](#) I had been initially charmed by playing a huge role in the institution of slavery, without even a plaque up in town.

The overlooked history of slavery within [this town](#), and in [Rhode Island](#) in general, seemed clearly expressed to me through three transportation modes: the [many historic stone walls built by slaves throughout the state](#), the red white and blue stripes painted along the [median strips of the town of Bristol](#) (known for its famous 4th of July parade), and the social routes of the [underground railroad](#).

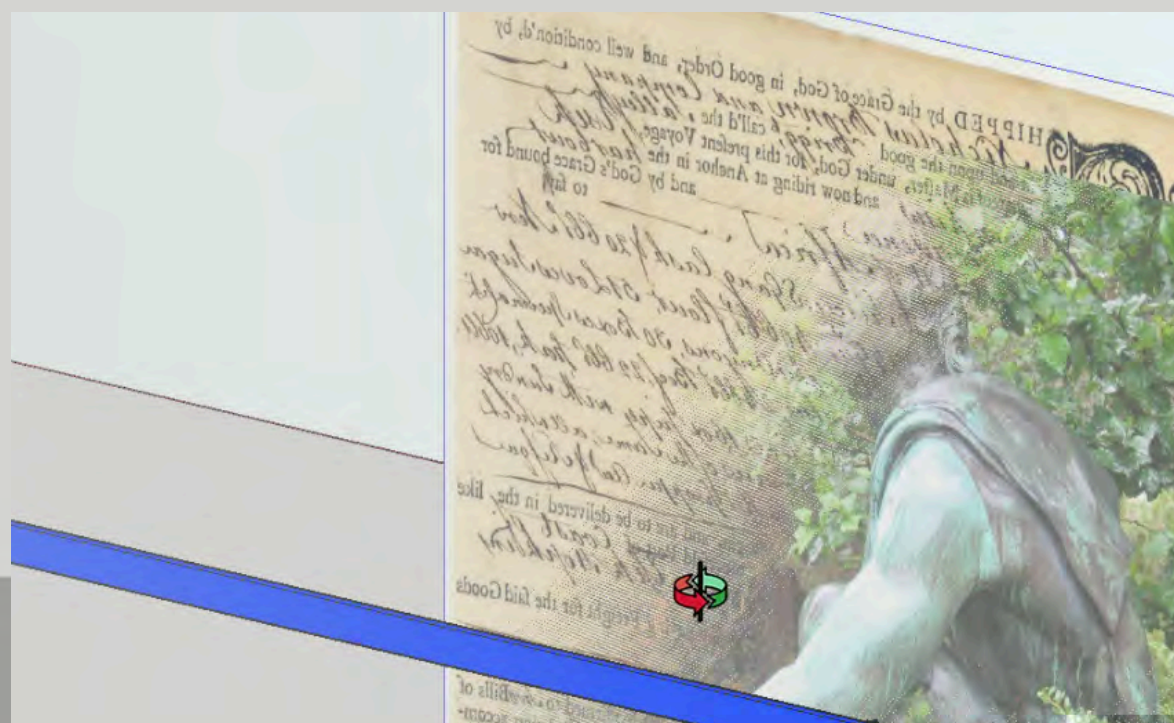
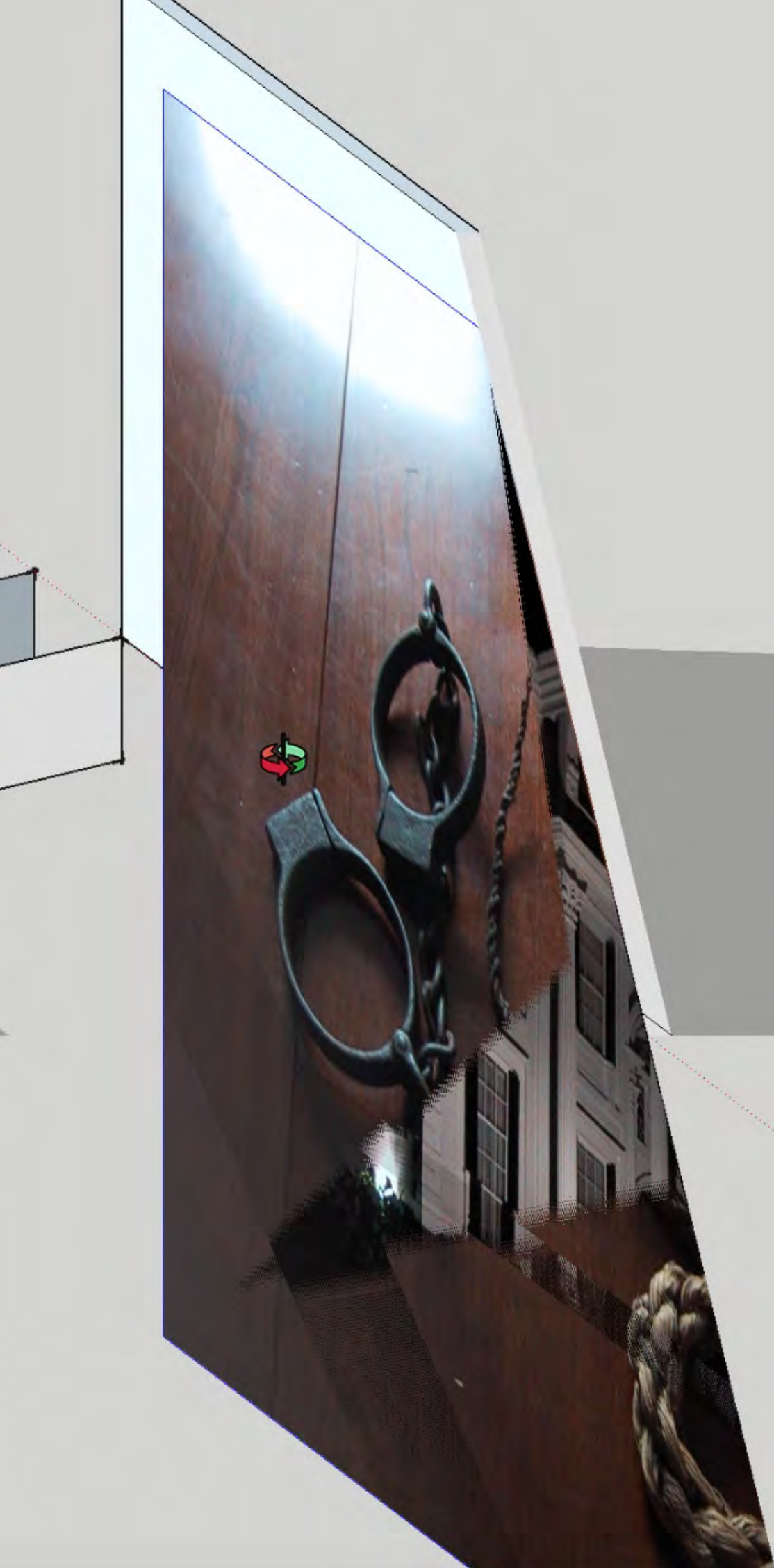
The project looks at the deep irony of a [town](#) most known for celebrating liberty being a site of imprisonment and injustice.

Within Sketchup, I created imagined versions of each metaphor: [wall](#), [median](#), and [railroad stop](#). Combined with these elements, I used images from the deWolf archives, such as a photo of a pair of shackles found in [their basement](#), and a photo of the gorgeous embellished facade of [their mansion](#), to comment on what was hidden behind a respected facade.

I exploited a glitch of the program that allows two layered images to flicker between one and the other, allowing for revealing and distortion.

By placing images like the shackles and [mansion](#) on top of each other, I created a layered image world that draws attention to first appearances and underrepresented histories, within an [abstracted virtual space](#).





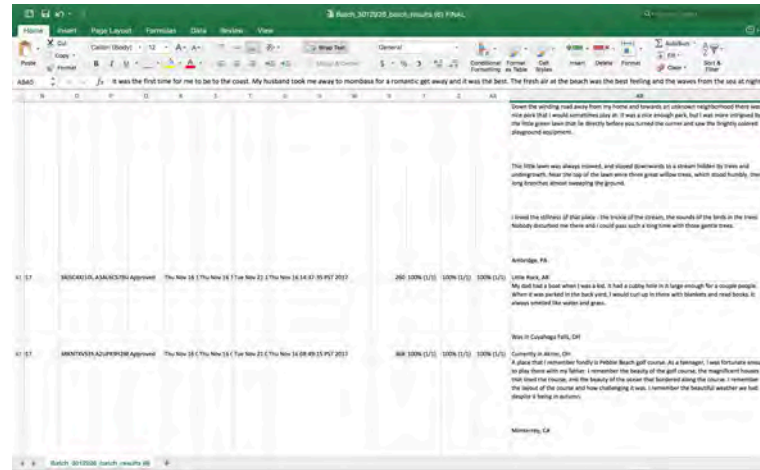
Details of [Metacom Avenue](#) virtual spaces.

No Mechanical Workers

No Mechanical Workers used Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk website which hires out anonymous labor, which Amazon refers to as "Artificial Intelligence."

I was inspired by a project by Clement Valla that used Amazon's Mechanical Turk website for iterative form. I decided to explore the nature of the site itself, and try to learn who the workers employed by the site actually are.

I also was motivated by previously working in the publishing industry for several years and having only impersonal, spreadsheet-based interactions with anybody at Amazon. I was very familiar with how Amazon bullies and intimidates publishing companies, and the company, owned by the richest man in the world, is known for its problematic labor practices and inhumane warehouse conditions.



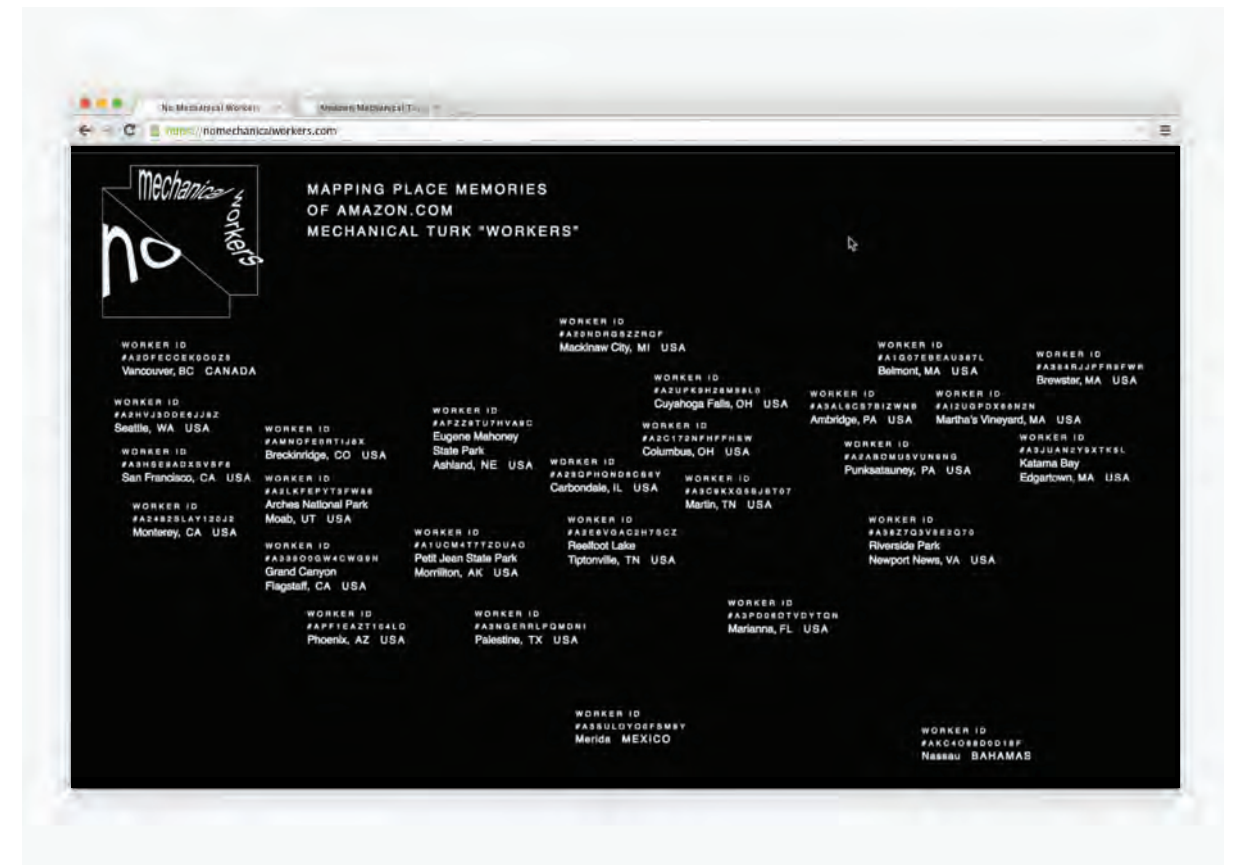
An example of the data spreadsheet results I received from Amazon when each task was completed. I approved the labor of each anonymous worker by marking (Y) on each spreadsheet.

In Marxist theory, the worst forms of Capitalism necessitate the dehumanization and anonymization of workers. I decided to challenge the manifestation of this on the Mechanical Turk website by asking the people who responded to my task their location and to describe a favorite place they remember.

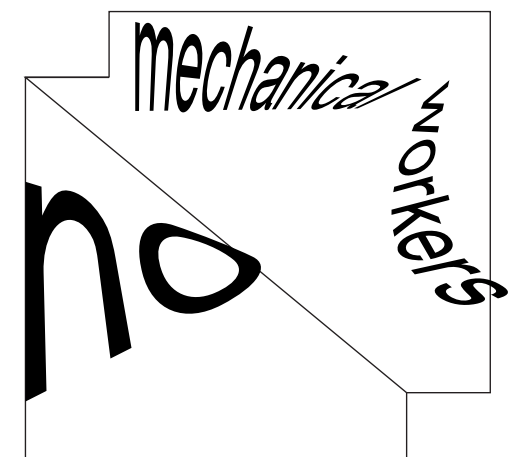
I then mapped these place memories in a website, according to the place of their memory, and according to their "Worker ID" number.

The place memories I purchased for \$.10 were incredibly diverse and some were very touching. I asked my friends, family, cohort, and professors to record a memory each, so that each time the mouse cursor rolls over one person's place on the map, a recording of the memory of that place is played.

The IDs grow in scale on mouse over to emphasize the contrast between the generic number of each "worker" and the personal memory shared.



Introductory navigation for No Mechanical Workers—Mapping Place Memories of Amazon.com Mechanical Turk "Workers." The locations are mapped according to a map of the United States, but without country or state outlines, to suggest hyper-space interaction and labor, and actual physical locations of the people performing that labor.



The logo for the website is treated like a propagandistic slogan and is intentionally distorted to feel less mechanical.



The worker IDs grow in scale on mouse over to emphasize the difference between the generic number attached to each "worker" and the personal memory that is shared.

A favorite [place](#) of mine used to be in [my backyard of my childhood home](#). I remember how much wonder and excitement I experienced playing in [my backyard](#) for hours at time.

I recall when my father took down [the old wooden play structure](#) (which had a [really cool fort](#)) and put up a new metal one. I remember the fun new swings this metal structure had and how much time my siblings and I would play on these.

Later, my father installed [a see-saw](#) and [a sandbox](#) for us to play on as well. One of my fondest memories is of collecting caterpillars during the Springtime and how we would create habitats for them [in jars](#). I recall during the fall how we would play [in the brightly colored leaves](#), with the smell of crisp and biting air around us as the temperatures got lower.

The very first bookstore I ever visited was in an old building in the run down section of town. As I inhaled the scent of books as I walked in the door I felt a rush of pure excitement. I must have stayed for a couple of hours at least just wandering through the aisles before I managed to even decide which books to buy.



Power Swap

In **Power Swap**, I decided to explore my own role in projects interacting with workers on [Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk website](#) and the exploitative quality of this role. Although I originally started mapping Mechanical Turk [place](#) memories as an attempt at humanization of those exploited by the site, I began to feel conflicted about my own role on the site and within the dynamic of labor relations detached from [place](#).

I wanted to speculatively switch the relationship between the people employed for tasks and myself as the task employer. I decided to ask the people I was interacting with what they would ask me to do if they could ask me to do anything. I paid .10¢ for each answer and attached this hypothetical value to the task they would have medo, as well.

I organized the responses according to four categories of task: social, financial, physical, and educational. The answers were surprisingly altruistic and society-oriented. The strange tension of our roles in this exchange was revealed by many people responding that they would ask me to tell my own life story or explain my motives for the request.

Mechanical Turk #
AYD2LKV6C5F2S,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

SOCIAL

Be kind to others.

Mechanical Turk
#A1I4ATPNZBOA16,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

SOCIAL

I would ask you what drives
you? And what do you want
out of life? And to work out
the small steps that you could
take now to get there.

Mechanical Turk
#A1oCLUSRQDKJBH,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

SOCIAL

I'd ask you to tell me your life story. The fun parts and sad parts. How you've changed over the last years, what your current goals and aspirations are, and your perceived strengths and weaknesses.

Mechanical Turk
#A1MURUJBBDJWM6,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

SOCIAL

If I could ask you to do anything, I would ask you to give a quick autobiography of yourself. Obviously, something has led you to this point in life where you have posted this request, and it's rather curious.

Mechanical Turk
#AVQGY7FCU8oXP,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

SOCIAL

Be good to others and good to yourself.

Mechanical Turk
#A2Vl55LKT5L4KB,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

SOCIAL

Anything you can do for the betterment of our society, country, community or whole world. Please think from the position in which you are at present, with your position, your talent, your skill, your social work. It would be a proud moment for us both.

Mechanical Turk
#A15FXOOCN5RT0,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

SOCIAL

Would you give me a hug?

Mechanical Turk
#APRZ7BR8CoZMQ,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

FINANCIAL

I would ask you to give me
10 million dollars.

Mechanical Turk
#A2UUKFTDoVUX2S,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

SOCIAL

Be good always.

Mechanical Turk
#A3CF8ULBSE8MTL,

If you could ask me to do
anything for .10¢, what would
you have me do?

FINANCIAL

Buy me a car.

Mechanical Turk
#A3BD4HSBURZSIT,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

FINANCIAL

May I ask you for a \$200,000 grant to help me with student loans and personal debt?

Mechanical Turk
#AGRKG3YT3KMD8,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

PHYSICAL

I would like you to heal all of my illnesses.

Mechanical Turk
#A2BZY06YRWGEDL,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

PHYSICAL

If you would work for me today because I don't feel very good.

Mechanical Turk
#A3OC6FSWRKFH4W,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

PHYSICAL

If you were local I might ask for you to help me move or if you have any particular skills I could ask you to help me in your specific field.

Mechanical Turk
#A37oSFHTRCD23o,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

PHYSICAL

I would ask you to help me muck the chicken coop. I can use all the help I can get with all my farm animals as I am the only one in the house that does the farming thing.

Mechanical Turk
#A1NG6N2ZS58Q5O,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

EDUCATIONAL

I would ask you to teach me how to draw like a pro.

Mechanical Turk
#ADIAEAPYR18CK,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

PHYSICAL

Take a picture of me with my daughter using my phone. I have a lot of her, but not many of us together.

Mechanical Turk
#A14WLAP6TCEKOo,

If you could ask me to do anything for .10¢, what would you have me do?

EDUCATIONAL

I would ask you to teach me how to drive and how to tie a tie.

Newsprint publication

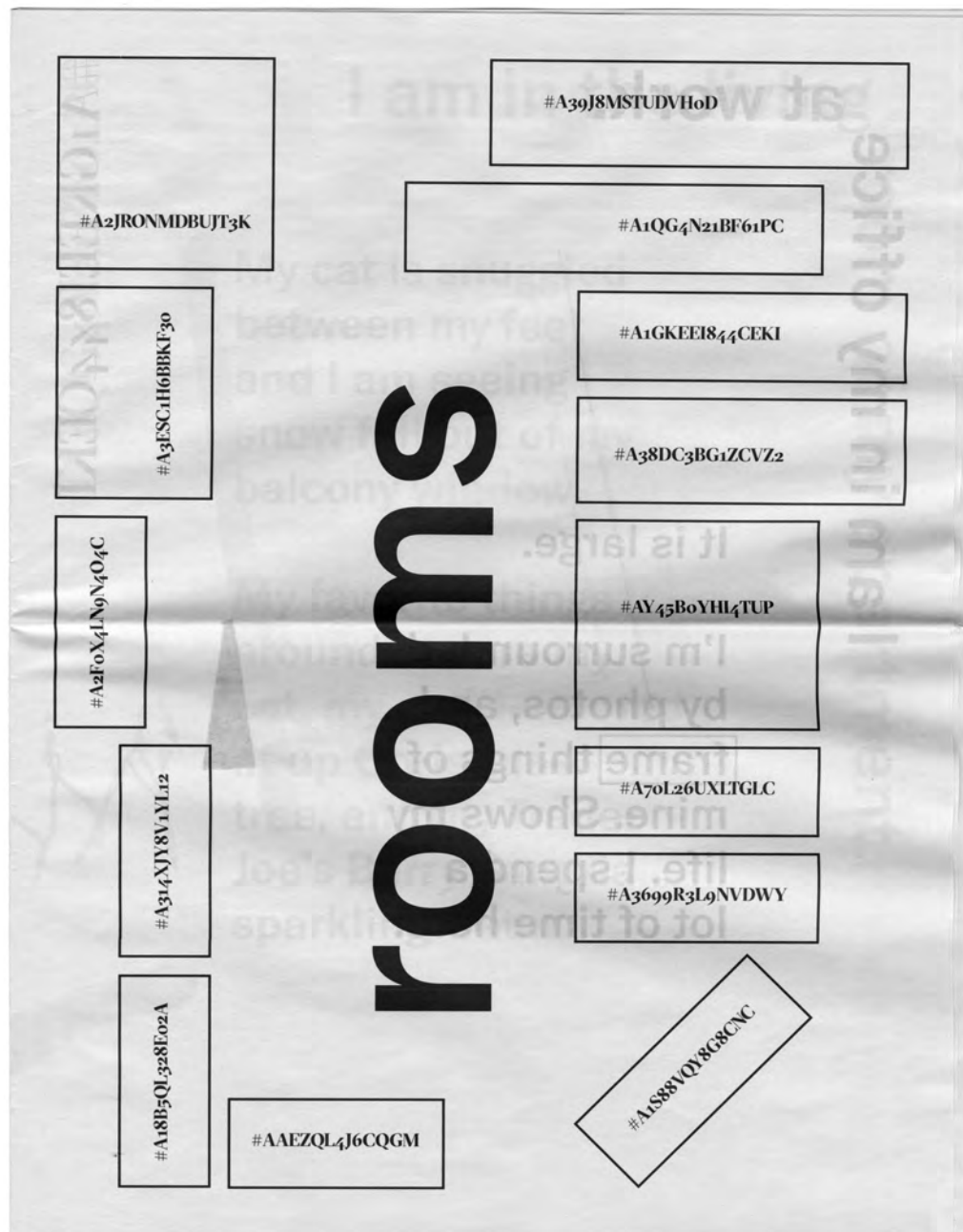
Rooms

Rooms is another iteration in the Mechanical Turk series of projects. I asked Mechanical Turk workers to describe [the room they were currently in](#). The rooms were sometimes shared [offices](#) and sometimes in [homes](#), but always were described with a level of human-centric detail that created emotional resonance above the minute details of the task. Although this Mechanical Turk assignment sounded interesting on paper, the end result veered too closely to voyeurism for me to be completely comfortable with it, and called into question my role [on the site](#).

The finished project was a tabloid publication on newsprint culled from each person's writings about [their room](#) and accompanied by generic google image search results for the specific items they identified as important to them [within the space](#).

A detail shot of the newsprint publication shows the worker ID each person is identified by on [the Mechanical Turk site](#).



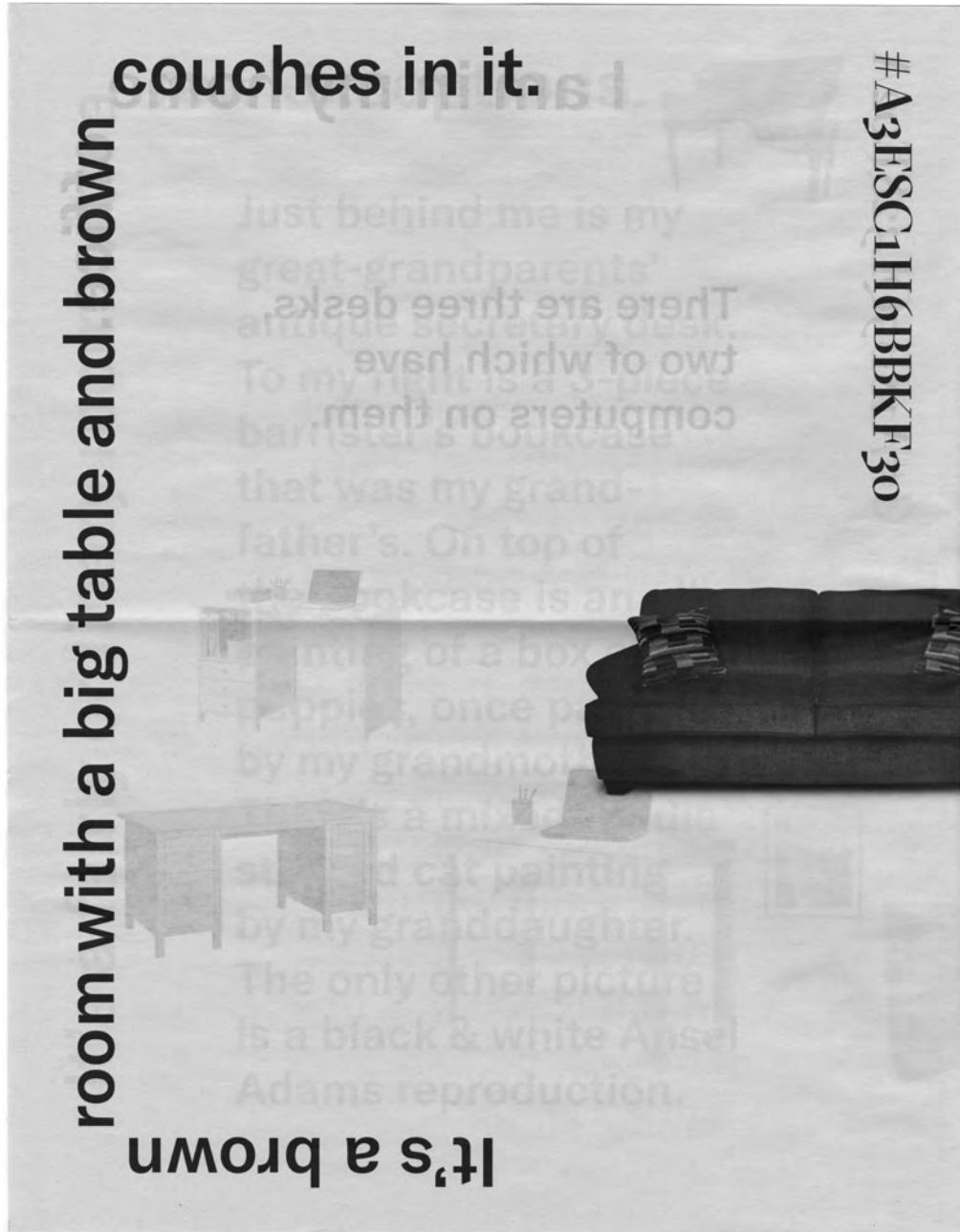


The front of a newsprint publication of collected place-based responses.

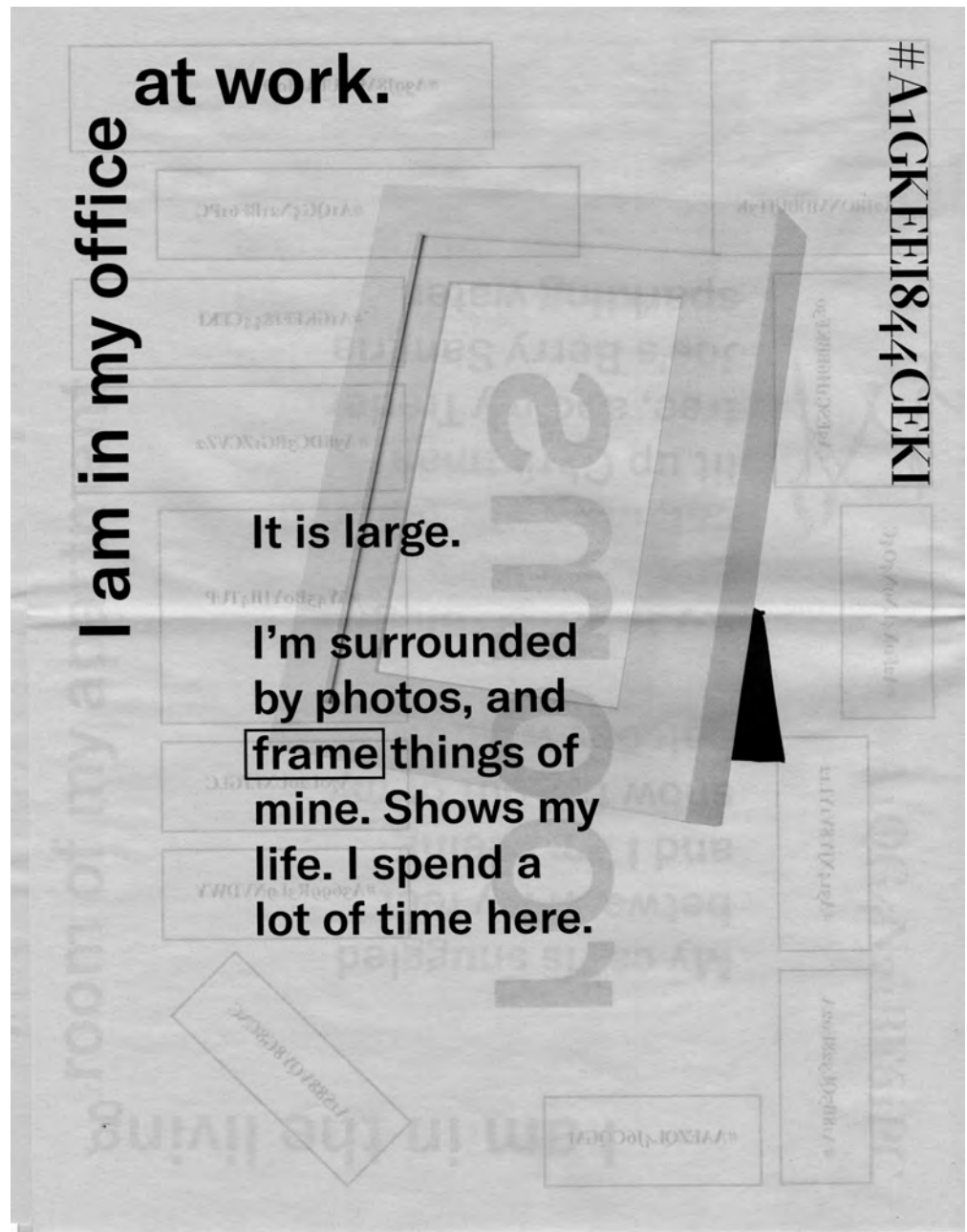


The back cover of Rooms, listing the "Worker IDs" of the people who responded, as well as the task I listed and payment for the task.

palace but is a small
palace with a lot of
happiness inside. It
place. It gives lot of
happiness, peace,
sleep, and everything.
I try to keep my room
so clean but fail daily.
If my room has tears,
it will cry for hours
I think. Everyone like
my room to stay,
dance, sleep.



The show through of the newsprint emphasizes universality of [workspaces](#).



The marking and dividing of [space](#) is a key interest of the project.

Room for Improvement

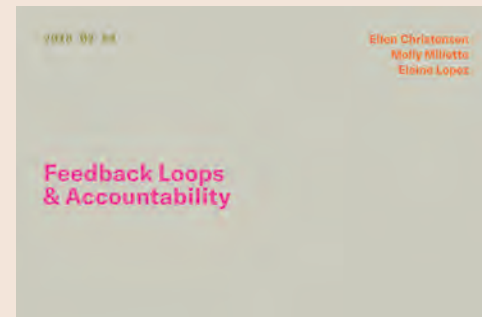
Rooms for Improvement is a collaborative project / proposal with fellow GD grad Elaine Lopez and Molly Millette. The project was a result of the wintersession workshop **Un-Silencing the Canon: Shared Governance**, taught by Malcolm Rio. Rafael Sergio Smith of Ideo.org led the design thinking portion of the 2-day workshop. Our group was tasked with coming up with possible solutions to lack of accountability and feedback loops for students and administration [on campus](#).

We combined several ideas and prototypes into an entire system to create a culture of feedback [on campus](#)—both quick feedback and more extensive. We were aware that not all students would be comfortable with the same feedback method, so we suggested several different types of information collection. Our idea was that quick feedback would be collected when students leave [a room in the building](#), and more extensive systems of feedback allowing for privacy would be implemented in [physical stations around campus](#).

Within the "Rooms for Improvement" in [physical locations](#), there would be snacks and other incentives, as well as computers hosting [a feedback website](#) (that could also be accessed remotely). The site would assess each student's needs and if it was an emergency, the student would be put in contact with a real person through audio or video immediately.

These sites would also be built to collect daily student feedback about campus life. If students opted to have their responses matched to their student ID number, it would track their responses over time, allowing a larger picture of overall satisfaction in different areas throughout students' years at RISD.

An independent research group would be used to collect and interpret the quantitative and qualitative data gathered [on the site](#).



The current protocol for reporting concerns with a class, professor, or peer is to talk to your department head and hope that they take action. Feedback for specific classes is given at the end of the semester and has little impact on the current experience.

How might we make reporting and micro-aggressions and inappropriate conduct feel safe and easy?

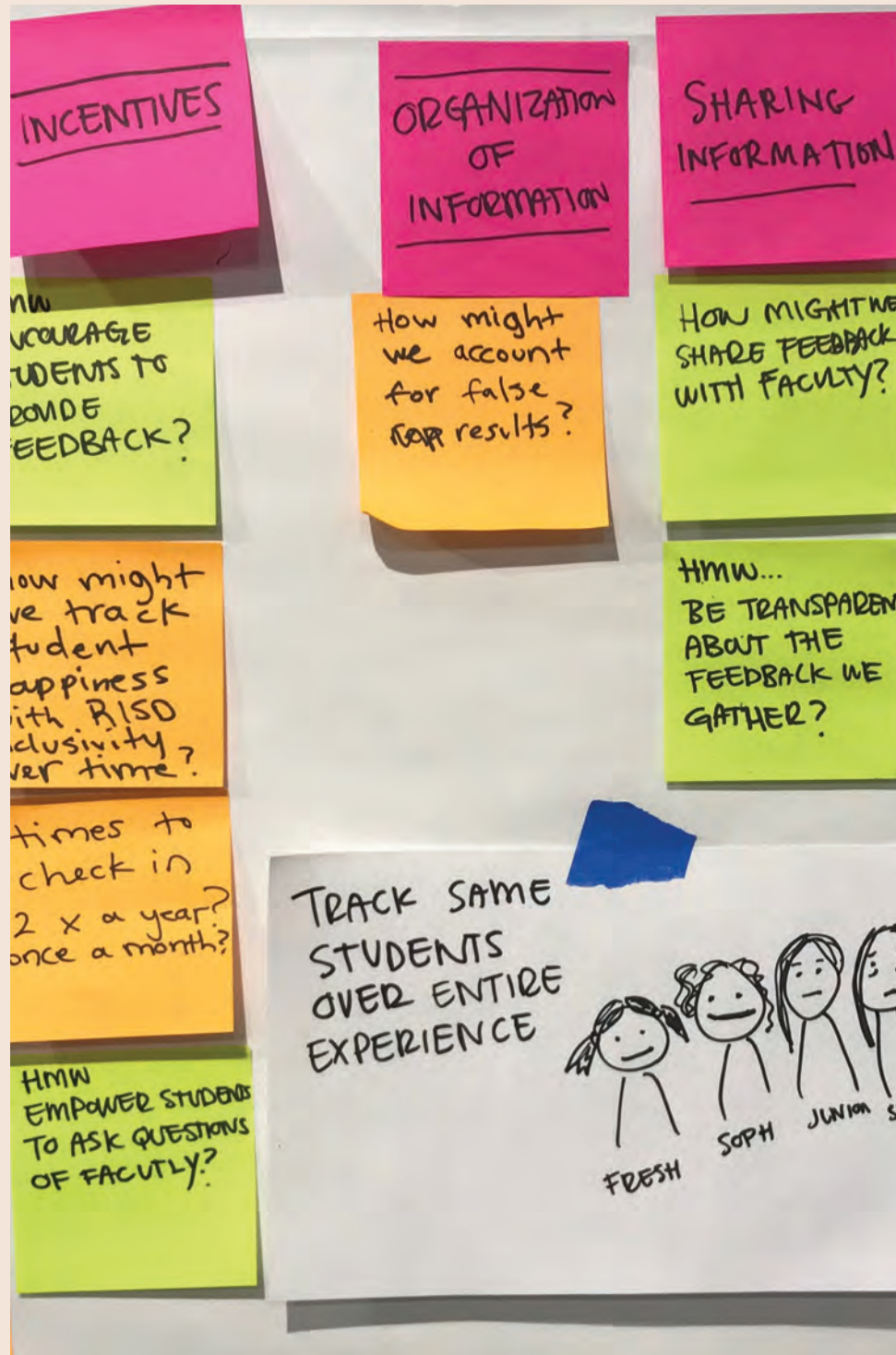
How might we create feedback loops between students and faculty?

How might we create models of restorative justice in dealing with transgressions by students and faculty?



RISD Room for Improvement is a Research and Mediation department that collects student feedback and addresses concerns in real time. This department will bridge the gap between student experience and the administration by facilitating communication and collecting data.

A series of slides from our group proposal Room for Improvement, focused on improving accountability and feedback loops [on the RISD campus](#). The group project was a response to the Shared Governance section of the Wintersession course Un-silencing the Canon.



Interview

Malcolm Rio

Malcolm Rio is a graphic and architectural designer and thinker from Amherst, Massachusetts currently pursuing his Master of Science in Architectural Studies (SM.ARCH.S), Urbanism, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Rio obtained his Master of Architecture (M.ARCH) from the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) in 2015, and his Bachelor of Science in Philosophy and Bachelor of Fine Art in graphic design from Towson University in 2012.

Prior to attending MIT, Rio was an inaugural AICAD teaching fellow positioned at the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) in Baltimore, Maryland, where he taught graphic design, architectural design, and foundation courses. During his tenure at MICA, Rio's research focused on the class and racial exploitation of mobile network technologies that hollow out the transit systems of medium-sized cities in the United States post-industrial landscape.

His current research (in partnership with Aaron Tobey, ysoA) investigates the relationship between data analysis and urban planning to produce new forms of subaltern or "blackened" citizenship. Their recent work, *Bias By Design*, was presented at the "Architecture, Natures & Data: The Politics of Environments" conference in Estonia.

Rio is the acting Vice-Chair of Outreach for the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee (DIS) at MIT.

Interview

Malcolm Rio

EC: Can you talk a bit about your switch from Graphic Design to Architecture and how you see the two disciplines overlapping? Do you draw connections between the two types of thinking or think of them as very separate disciplines?

MR: During my undergrad, I majored in both philosophy and fine arts. I had always regarded my studio classes in the arts as a medium in which to practice my philosophical interests, namely, the role visual culture plays in the production of subjectivity, notions of the self, and notions of the Other. By the time I was reading post-colonial and post-modern theory, it became apparent to me how much space and the environment played into the production of identities. I was also frustrated with the overtones of professional practice in the field of graphic design and had naively thought that a switch in discipline would resolve this.

The two disciplines have strong overlapping formal language (gestalt, composition, hierarchy, etc.), but this made the transition from 2D (Graphic Design) to 3D (Architecture) actually harder, because I had to unlearn an implicit understanding of my formal language and re-learn it within a more spatial understanding. I have heard 3D to 2D can be easier than 2D to 3D, which is possibly why so many architects later flirt with graphic design but not the other way around.

Overall, both have to utilize and consider a multiplicity to tools, mediums, and constraints, and in this sense the two could be considered similar, but from my experience, I find the connections between the two not as forthright as one may consider. I think this was most apparent in learning how to draw through orthographic projection. A line on a piece of

paper in one plane could be a variety of forms once three dimensionally rotated (a curve, a parabola, a collection of segmented lines, etc.) which has fostered a particular way of seeing not apparent from my Graphic Design training.

EC: Do you apply architectural thinking to design, and if so, how?

MR: Yes, all the time. There were so many new tools, methods, and design processes that opened up to me when transitioning to architecture and I often find myself more comfortable doing Graphic Design projects in programs like AutoCAD or Rhino for tasks I would once have executed in Illustrator.

EC: Do you apply design thinking to architecture, and if so, how?

MR: I think it's impossible not to bring a level of design to architecture. 85% of architecture is truly graphic design, from the development of diagrams, to the production of drawings and of presentation boards. I believe the main difference is the way in which formal elements are read, which can make architecture somewhat pompous and exclusive at times. Architects are (truly) not known for being inclusive and are often defensive over their purported territories or knowledges.

EC: Why focus on space?

MR: In a book by Michel Serres, *Malfeasance: Appropriation Through Pollution?*, he makes a convincing argument that architects have less of a mastery over space than Graphic Designers. I do believe architects do not have any special claim to a knowledge of or mastery over space than any other discipline. Even within its own discipline there are contested claims of "mastery" or "truth" over space.

The discipline is notorious for dismissing forms of knowledge that challenge its canonical bedrock. It's more than common to hear, "that's not architecture, that's art" or "that's not architecture, that's graphic design," "that's not architecture, that's political science," "that's not an architectural thesis, that's anthropology." And through these often-touted dismissive claims in attempts to establish Architecture (with a capital A), I think architects do not actually focus on space but rather the means of legitimizing Architecture as a valid discipline separate from other disciplines with its own particular and unique form of knowledge and Truth. (Insert massive Eye Roll.)

EC: How do theoretical frameworks like Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* or the idea of praxis play into your work? What is your process of creation?

MR: The bulk of my work and research at MIT (and hopefully as a future PhD student) has been on this issue of disciplinarity and the boundaries they ascribe in order to maintain itself as a relevant discipline with its own sovereign-thought. Paolo Freire offers a strong criticism to this issue.

EC: How do capitalism and power work together to deny agency to the historically oppressed? How is agency being reclaimed in creative ways by those without wealth and power?

MR: I do not know if this answers your question, but one of my frustrations about MIT (and many Ivy League / prominent institutions) is the way it goes about supporting students. Under the guises of equity and meritocracy, the department ends up giving large or full-funding packages to students who have economic privileges. I have peers at MIT who receive full departmental support while

also driving Mercedes-Benzes or BMWs or live in luxury lofts while other students are working two Taships and constantly applying to grants or loans agencies to meet the high costs of being here. This is one way in which Power constantly engages in my daily life, where the systems of support meant to ease the stress and burden of graduate life at MIT are often given to those who have had a legacy of economic privilege that has allowed them to accumulate works of merit. The metrics that distinguish works of merit are skewed in favor of those who have had the time and ability to put all their effort into their work. It is not that there are no students with financial need receiving departmental support, but there is a noticeable trend of throwing money at those who already have money, and whose work is about the further betterment of means to accumulate money. A lot of the work towards racial, gender, or economic equity at this institution is often done for free as additional labor to their studies by these very students who are financially struggling.

EC: What inspired you to go into academia?

MR: My mother is an academic and I grew up within academic environments, so there is a level of comfortability and "home-ness" being within academia, but the better opportunities throughout my life have been in academia. After RISD, I was offered a few low-income architectural jobs in NYC and the AICAD Fellowship. Comparing the two routes, I chose AICAD because I knew I would never get another opportunity to teach at a prestigious school like MICA with full-faculty status at my age, fresh out of graduate school. After MICA, I realized I was lacking a lot of architectural knowledge and returned to school to complement RISD's formal-artistic architectural education.

EC: I went to a majority-minority public high school in Richmond, California and was stunned by how white the student and professor population at RISD is when I first arrived here. How can we improve academia and push for more diversity?

What practical tactics do you see as most effective?

MR: It's hard to answer across the vast range of academic disciplines and education models, but within architecture there is a definite lack of racial representation. Only ~1.3% of all licensed architects in the U.S. are African-American. This number drops to just 0.3% when looking at licensed architects who are also African-American women. Jonathan Massey, professor and dean at Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning at University of Michigan has dedicated his professional life to answering this question. He recently made a visit to MIT to talk about the racial problem within the discipline, and noted that architecture's educational climate can be quite alienating and elitist, which is a major contributor to students of color leaving to pursue another discipline.

EC: Your research at MICA was about class and racial exploitation of mobile network technologies that hollow out the transit systems of medium-sized cities in the U.S. post-industrial landscape. Can you talk about this work and which cities you were focusing on? Why transit systems?

MR: A quote:

Properties, prisons, borders: it is through the prevention of motion that space enters history... with the prevention of motion, force—in the most literal sense, of applying physical pressure to bodies—assumes a special kind of necessity. Quite simply, being in a place is something you do with your body—nothing else—and therefore, to prevent your motion from one place to another, your body must be affected. The history of the prevention of motion is therefore a history of force upon bodies: a history of violence.

(NETZ 2009, xi–xii)

I was only focused on Baltimore. It was the city I was living in and this allowed me to live what I was writing about. Though it was written as an academic paper, it was also very much a personal testimony of my frustration with Baltimore. I never really expected to write about transit, but after living in Baltimore again, with a new understanding of space from my time at RISD, and without a car, it was so clear to me how the lack of urban transit played a critical role in urban poverty and its

correlated consequences. Like the human body: when one has bad blood circulation or has a problem with their nervous system, larger systems get affected and it is critical. Urban transit is like blood flow...if a city has poor circulation the entire body suffers.

EC: How do you balance studio work and interaction with communities outside of the studio?

MR: I do not. My entire waking life goes toward my studies at MIT. Sadly, I have returned to an academic bubble.

EC: What organizations or individuals do you think are really forward-thinking about designing for more equitable societies?

MR: I am currently writing a paper about alternative economic practices in Baltimore City and how these models help foster urban solidarity. I would take a look at what is happening in Baltimore in regards to worker-cooperatives and alternative currencies. Jonathan Massey is another person you could put on that list. Dayna Cunningham is a professor of Urban Planning here at MIT and Executive Director of CoLab—she does awesome work. Bryce Detroit is another interesting person. He is a Music and Cultural Curator of Oakland North End's (O.N.E.) Mile Project. His focus on Black representation through music and media, as well as his collaborations around the Detroit area are really interesting. Malkit Shoshan would be another person to add to this list. I got to know her when I took her class this semester at Harvard GSD. She is extremely invested in these topics, and the class I took with her was called Spaces of Solidarity.

EC: How do you stay hopeful about the potential for change? What can we do on a daily basis and in the long run as designers and architects in order to create more equitable futures?

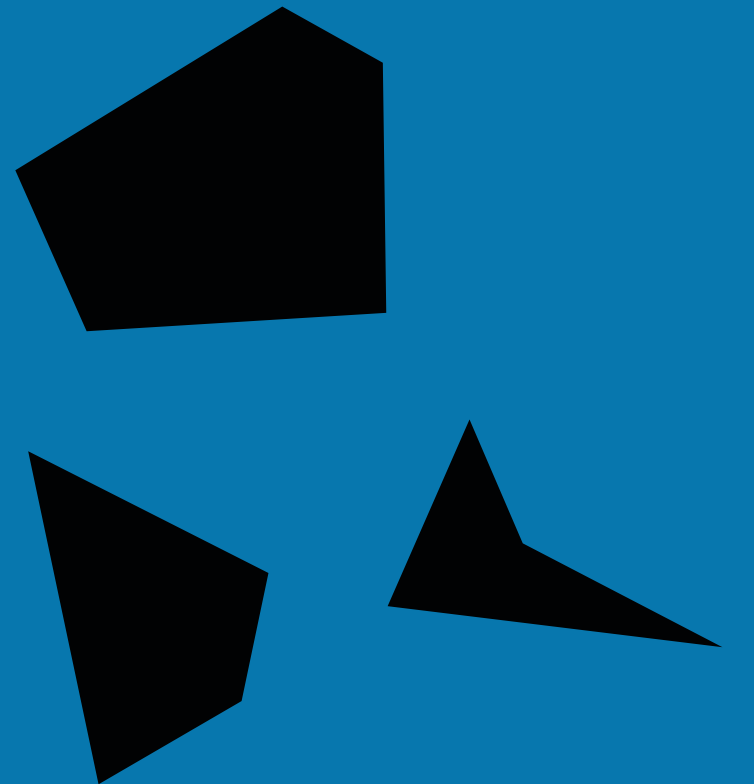
MR: When I was working at MICA as an AICAD fellow, I had the opportunity to listen to Melissa Harris-Perry speak. At the end of her talk, she ended with an Ella Baker quote: "We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes." It reminds us that change is always necessary and that there is no utopian end / end to the Hegelian dialectic. This is why attempts at diversifying institutions like RISD cannot come from admitting more students of color or hiring more faculty of color. Sadly, the typical attempts by institutions to diversify themselves—from tech companies, university and colleges, to labor work forces—are often more a means to get over a political and ethical annoyance than real systemic change. Many institutions approach the need for equity and diversity as a necessary obligation while refraining from truly questioning their internal structure and constantly having to (re) evaluate and (re)structure themselves.

EC: What issues do you think are really pressing as design challenges that will impact real life in the future?

MR: I am going to answer in an overly simplistic way: class, and individual and collective political agency. Class underlies many of the unequal qualities of relations people face and this has a direct effect on who is able to obtain political agency either as an individual or as a community.

On

Leftovers





On November 8, 2017, I sent out a strange request to my [studiomates](#):

If you have leftovers from food either cooked [at home](#) or take out, anytime between now and the end of the semester, it would be wonderful if you could take a quick photo of these partially eaten leftovers ([in your tupperware](#), [on a plate](#), [in the take out container](#), [staged within a sparkly set](#), whatever) and send the photo along to me.

I didn't yet know what I would do with these requested images, but I knew I wanted to gather them [in one place](#) to be preserved.

As one member of [studio](#) responded: "leftovers is how I make life happen, I got you!" Tired and hungry grad students unite through food, and especially over readily available food that has already been purchased. The images that flooded my inbox in the following weeks varied in lighting, photographic staging care, presentation, nutritional benefit, and descriptive detail. In one photo, a tupperware brimming with bare spaghetti noodles sat distant from its neighbor tupperware of tomato sauce. In another, a beautiful shade of purple gruel is photographed from directly above and captioned:

purple mashed potatoes with rosemary and moose sleeper cheese, [at home on my counter in tupperware](#).

made 11.07.17



OLIVIA DE SALVE VILLEDIEU
Leftovers 11/7/17

TATIANA GOMEZ GAGGERO
Leftovers 11/26/17

["From my mom's kitchen."](#)

Each member of [our studio](#) carves out a small assigned [space](#) within [a large room](#), but there are also moments like these that happen before entering [this communal space](#), when a designer reaches into their fridge for this tupperware of sustenance.

To designers, determining what is essential and what is unnecessary is a constant concern. What can be cropped out? What is ornamental?

What to do with all the leftover paper scraps after making a cut? Straight to [the recycling bin](#) or woven into strips, re-purposed into a rough textural collage of registration marks and misprints?

Leftovers are caught in a moment of stasis. Was the container full a day before, or a week before? Was the meal shared or solo? Will the container be empty the following day? In some ways, leftovers are the exact opposite of design's emphasis on presence and presentation.

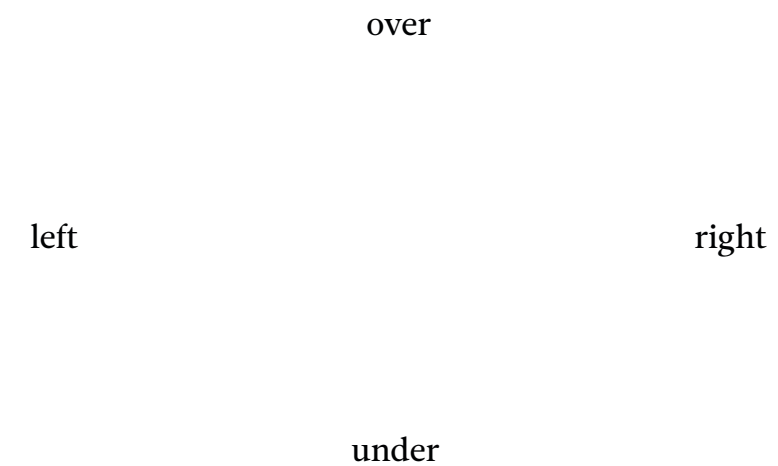
The half eaten casserole dish prepared by someone's mom over Thanksgiving is a trace, the absent part of a sign's presence after it has been present. The trace is defined by difference, and by presenting itself, has become erased. The signifier can be neither entirely present or entirely absent. What has once been present, possibly the warmth of a shared meal prepared with love and attention, is still inherent in a leftover dish's refrigerated state. And a photo of a leftover [in someone else's fridge across town](#) before encountering them is a reference to a difference of state prior to meeting them that day. When this photo is shared and collected with others, what does it mean?

I grew up in an area of [Richmond, California](#) that was surrounded by an [unincorporated circle of land](#) named [El Sobrante](#)—Spanish for “[the leftovers](#).” Cobbled together from [land left over after claims were staked](#), and with no official [city](#) council or government, [the area](#) was in some ways gritty and ungoverned. People who grew up there shared a scrappy sense of pride about coming from the scraps.

If leftovers are a trace, can [land](#) leftovers be mapped in a way that acknowledges the absence in their presence? Can self-identification of difference be a point of commonality? And how do we design inclusively with an awareness of many types of “otherness” in mind?

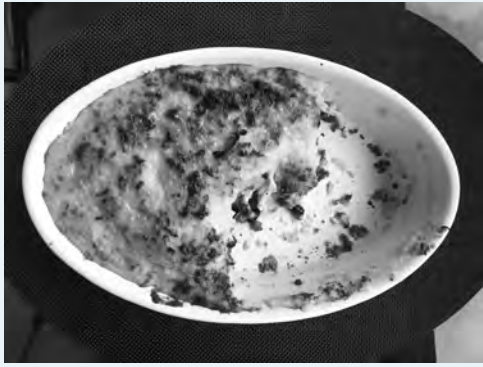
The term leftover immediately marks [its own place](#) as [directly outside of the frame of action](#). Left / over is in binary linguistic opposition to right / under.

The directionality of this dichotomy can be traced back to Latin linguistic origin of the words “left” and “right.” Left, *sinistra*, means sinister, subversive; while right, *dextra*, means correct, authoritative. So in essence the word marks every direction of the compass:



What can be mapped with this leftover compass?

What can be underwritten?



TATIANA GOMEZ GAGGERO
Leftovers 11/26/17



HILARY DUPONT
Leftovers 11/9/17

"Some very appetizing pictures for you!"



NICK ADAM
Leftovers 12/1/17



AMY AUMAN
Leftovers 11/27/17



MARIE OTSUKA
Leftovers 11/8/17

"Not sure if this would be useful, but I did a project on people throwing away food at Portfolio Cafe. Feel free to use!"



JENNIFER LIVERMORE
Leftovers 11/17/17



TATIANA GOMEZ GAGGERO
Leftovers 11/26/17

Ban the Bag

Ban the Bag is a propaganda poster created for Thomas Wedell's Poster Design class which explored the use of expressive typography. The type for the poster was made out of plastic bags and twisties.



A process shot for the finished poster showing the dimensionality of the bags.

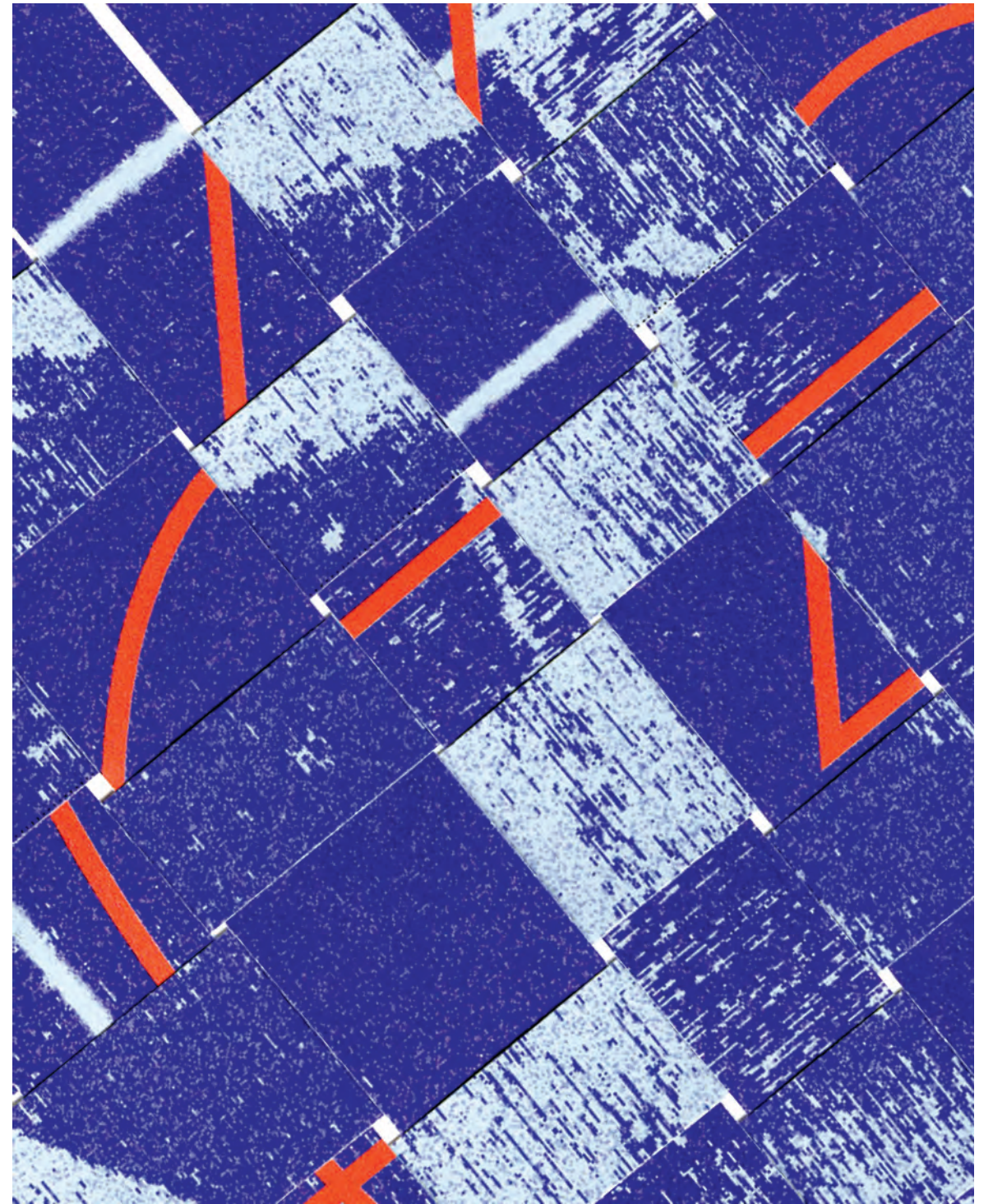
The background image for the poster uses both the blue color of the original fabric background, and an image overlay of water, to hint at damage to the environment that results from plastic usage.



Poster

Woven Paper Scraps

I started weaving uneven paper scraps from [the grad studio recycling bins](#) together as a way to think formally about leftovers; some are more aesthetically pleasing than others but all were fun to make.



Woven form created out of the discards of a color form piece by Nick Adam.

Formwork

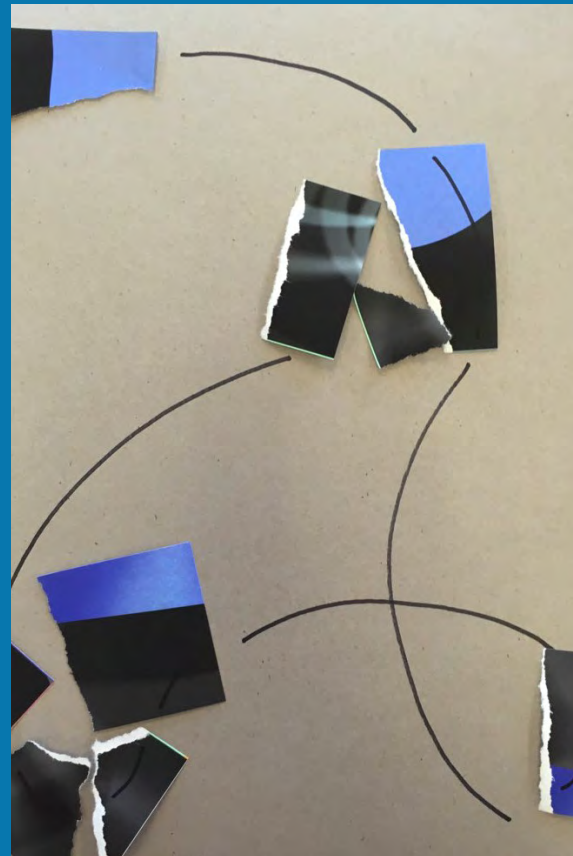
Extended Scraps

For the final project of Keetra Dixon's Formwork class, we offered our form in a new way to others. I printed thumbnails of details of hundreds of my form experiments and cropped them with a set of instructions for others to choose from and recombine with as they wished.

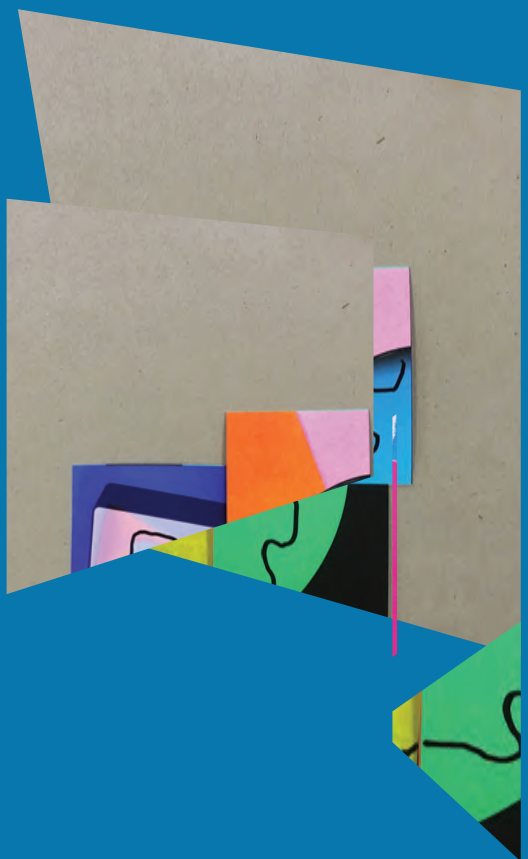
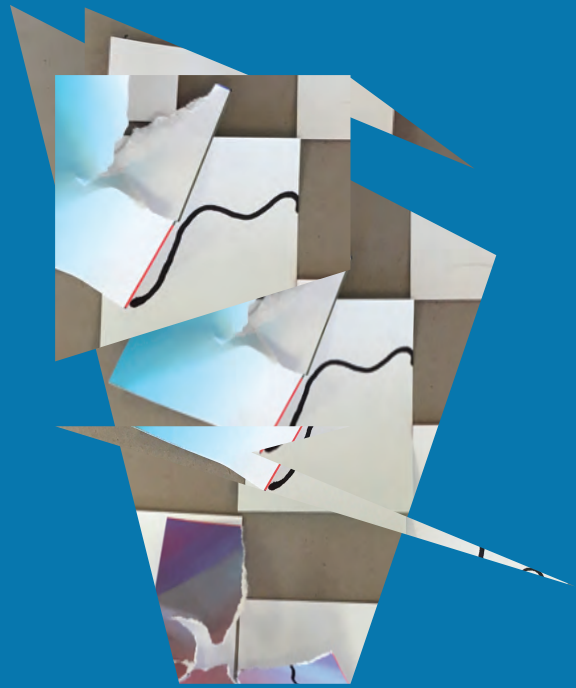
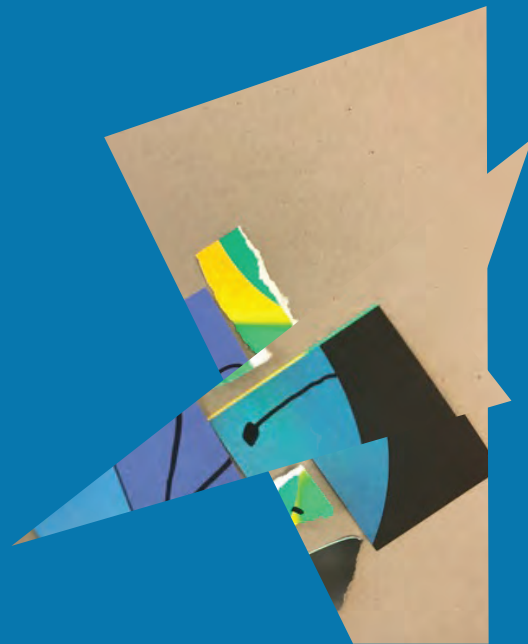
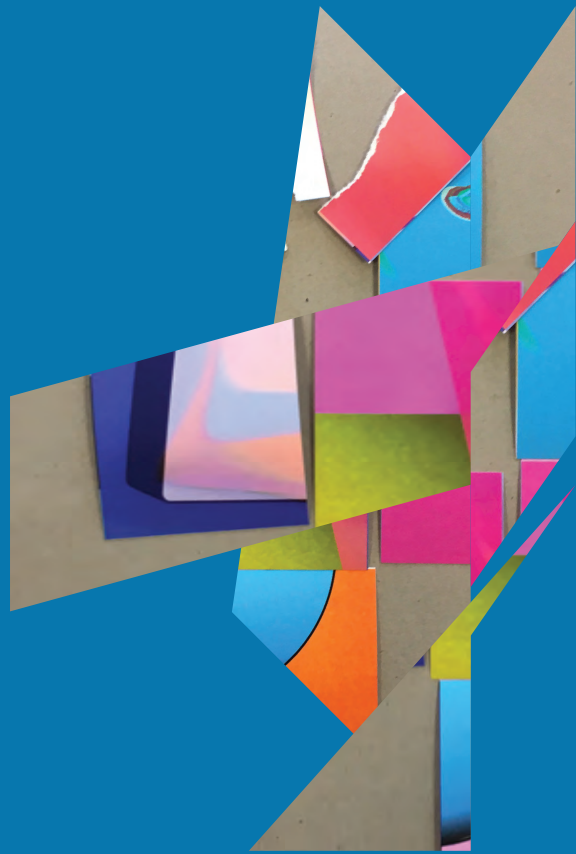
As part of the instruction set, I asked my classmates to break the grid, tear the scraps, and mark on some of the thumbnails with a sharpie. I took photos of the results and recombined them into new form as part of the collaboration process.

Detail of my form thumbnails printed, cropped, and given to classmates for recombining into new form.





Recombined form scraps after classmates followed a series of my instructions.

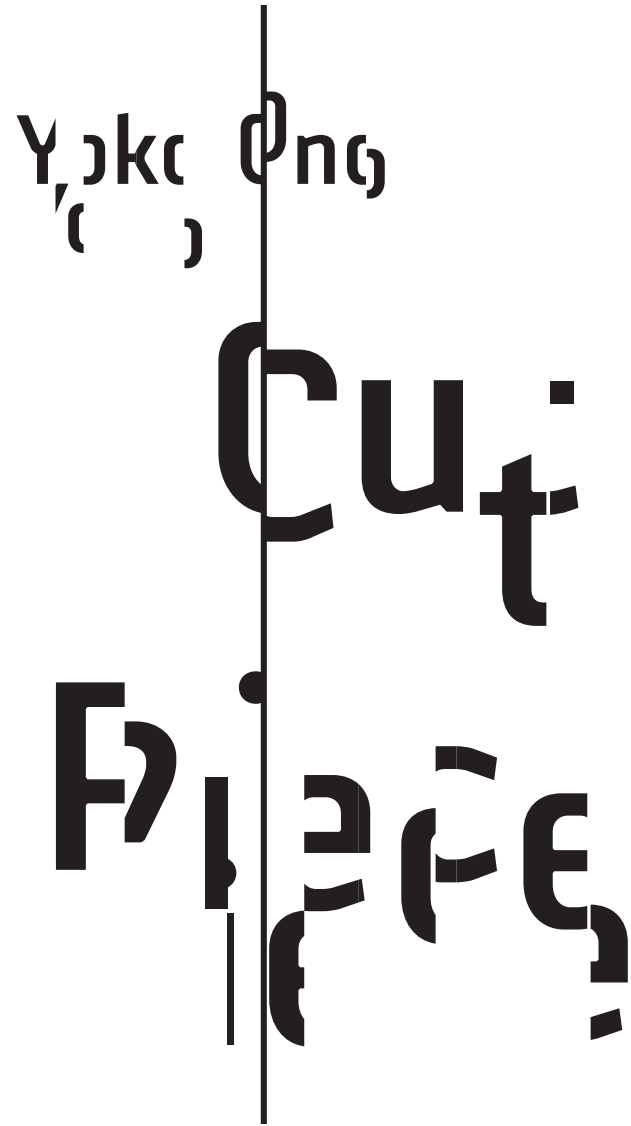


My new form created out of form given back to me by my classmates, completing the circle of form collaboration.

Cut Piece

Cut Piece is a two-color poster screenprint design for Yoko Ono's 1964 "Cut Piece," a landmark performance and video exploring power dynamics between performer and audience through Yoko's invitation to cut pieces of her clothes off her [on stage](#).

The tactic of removal is a key element of the piece, and the screenprint design also utilizes this as a visual tactic. The poster letterforms are intentionally misaligned to create a collaged, disjointed feel. The poster was printed in blue and black on four different paperstocks.



Detail of two-color screenprint design for Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, printed in blue and black on four different paperstocks. The text uses intentionally misaligned letterforms to create a collaged, disjointed feel.

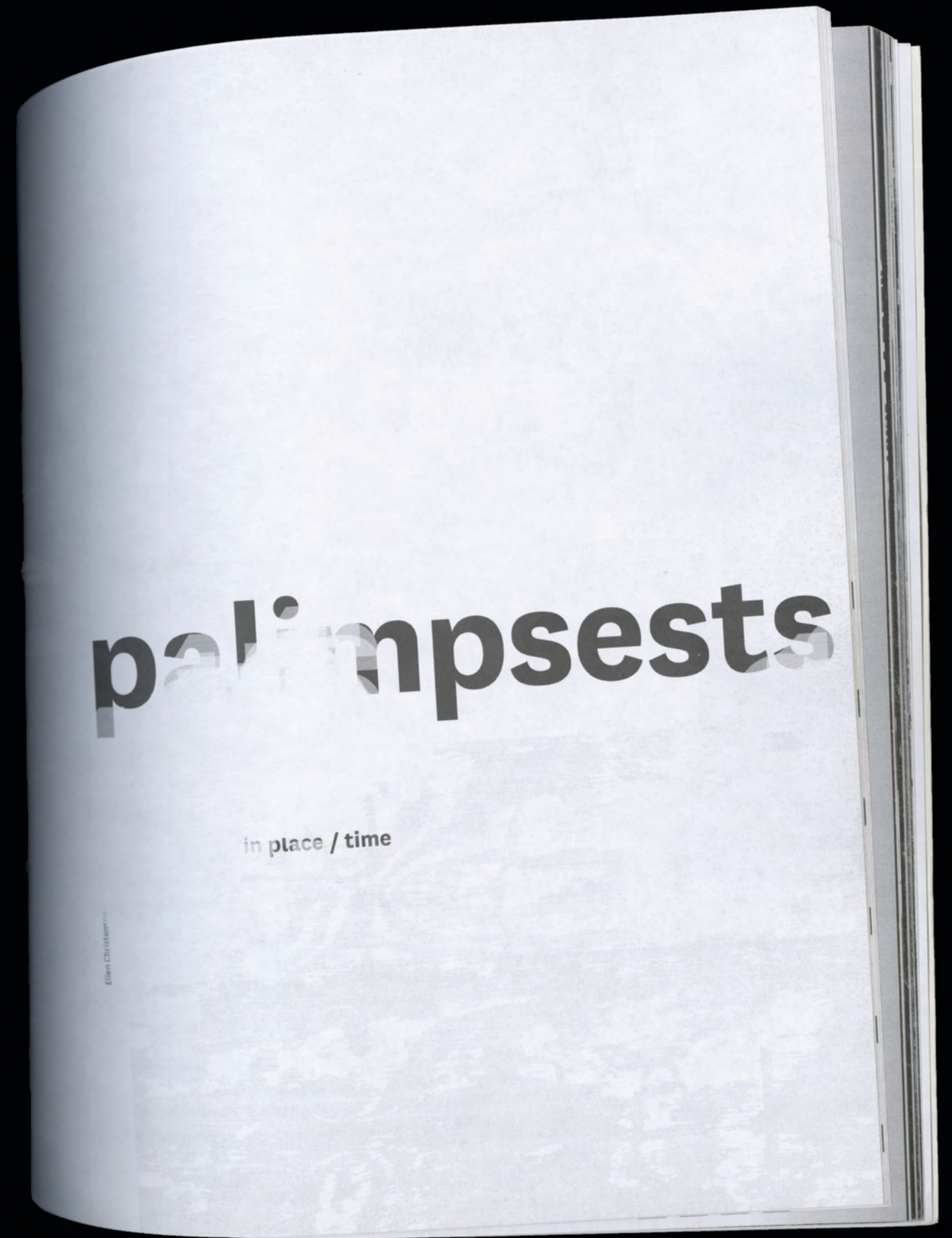
Atlas

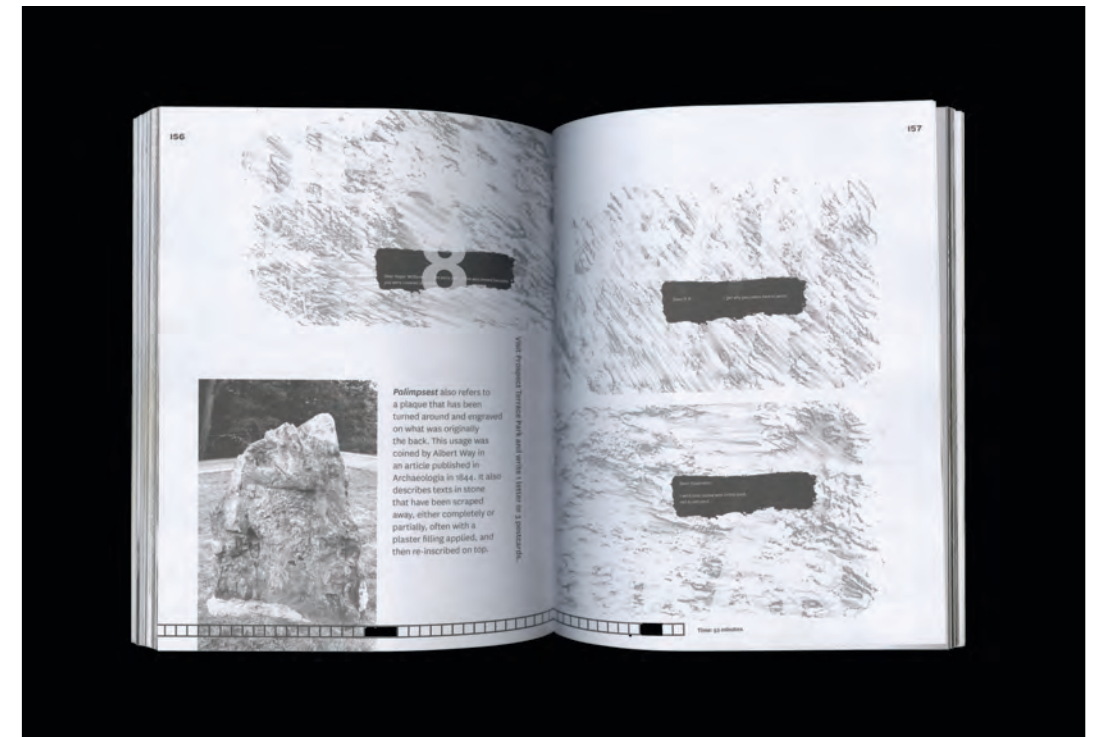
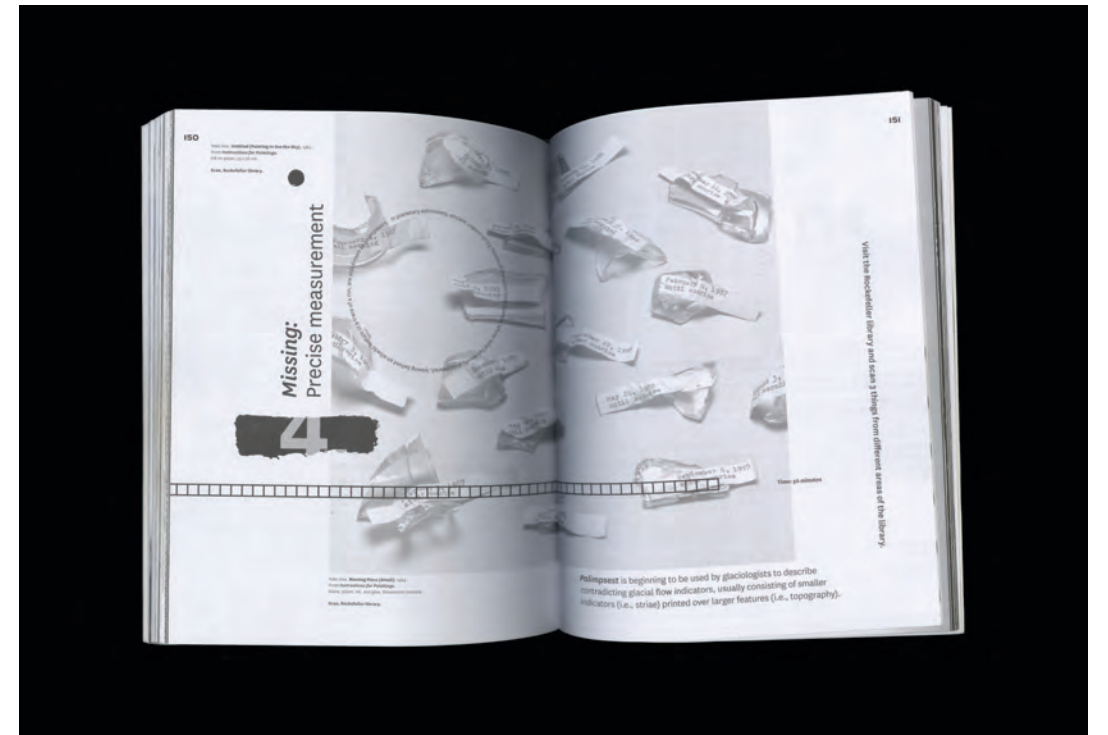
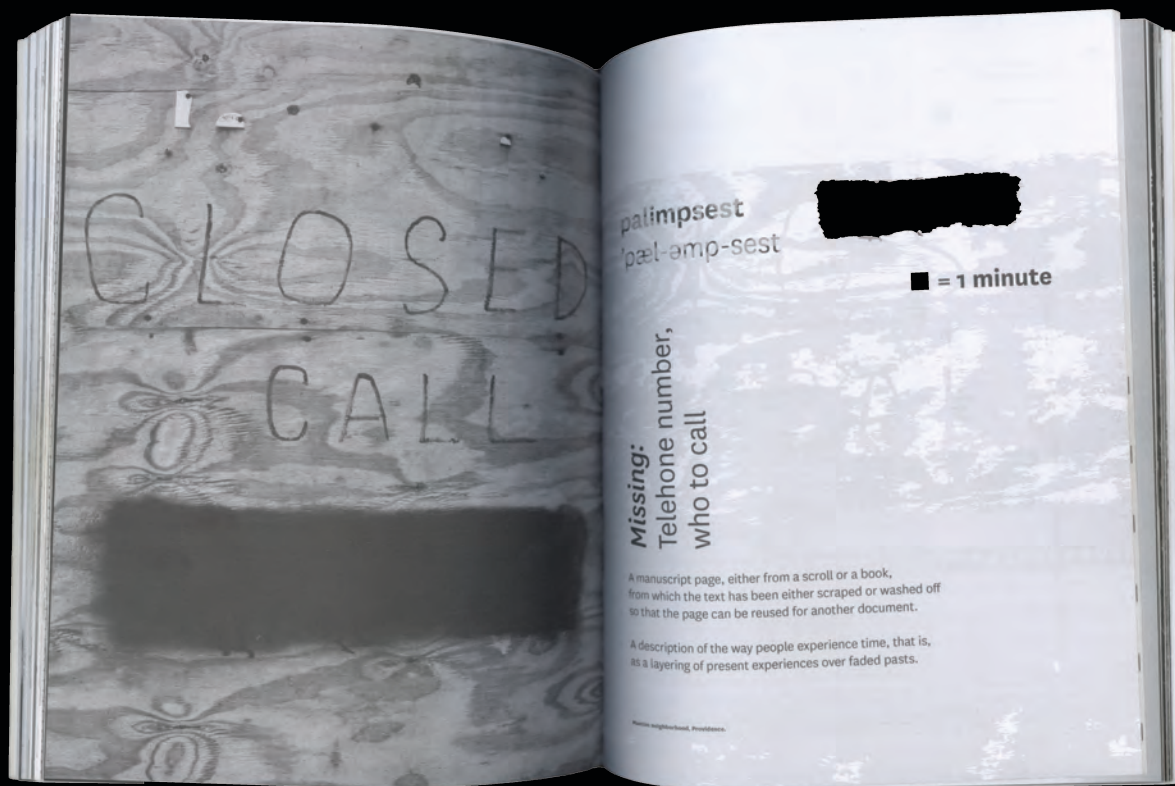
Our collaborative group **Atlas** for Design Studio I provided a chance to get out and explore [Providence](#).

My spreads within the final book focused on missing things, things left behind, and palimpsests. These included papers stapled to a telephone pole, now torn and rendered useless, and a rubbing of a missing plaque in [Prospect Terrace Park](#).



The first page of my section of spreads in the collaborative book focused on erasure and specifics of place.





Subsequent pages featured images of urban palimpsests such as signage where an element was missing, businesses that had closed, and absent plaques.



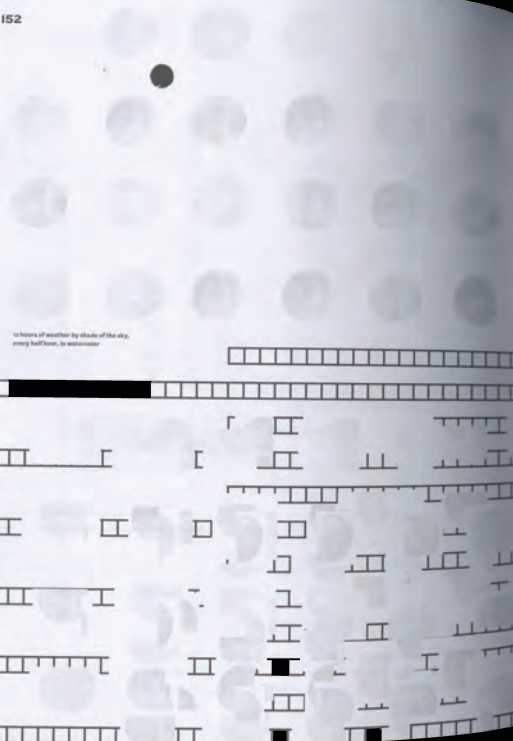
Missing:
Telephone number,
cause of wreckage, "we"
Full collection of photos



Visit 1 of Providence's 25 neighborhoods & spend 15 minutes documenting it.

Palimpsest is used in forensic science or forensic engineering to describe objects placed over one another to establish the sequence of events at an accident or crime scene.

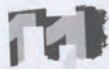
Time: 15 minutes



10 hours of weather by blocks of the city every half hour, in real time.

Missing:
Experience, feel,
detail, dimension.

Temperature,
precipitation,
humidity.



Document 12 hours of weather.

Time: 700 minutes

Set of cards

Ship (Glyph)

Ship (Glyph) is a set of ten double sided 9" x 6" cards within a colorful, abstract wrapper.

The set presents phrases and images from a collection of 1860s whaling journals.

The words featured on the cards were the most commonly occurring words within a broad swatch of these historic journals: day, ends, struck, light, **ship**, steer, strong, hours, whales, and wind. The words seemed telling of the day to day mindset of the sailors [on these vessels](#), and the type of information which was privileged by the journal keepers [on the voyage](#). Together, these key words paint a picture of the repetitive daily rhythm of lengthy amounts of time isolated [at sea](#).

The only imagery on the cards is magnified pen ink blots, often intersecting with blurred handwriting beneath to create abstract shapes. I chose ten of the most striking ink and handwriting collisions to feature in the set as a sequence of invented glyphs. The word frequency studies led me to imagine a set of glyphs where the handwritten shapes and ink blots, which often naturally corresponded visually with one of the words, could stand in for one of the journal words. On the back of each card, I recontextualized phrases from a particular journal, substituting the ink glyphs I created for the frequently occurring words.

Because of the way each glyph is seen in use on the back of its own card, the set as a whole can function as a sort of riddle for the viewer, who turns over and interacts with the cards in order to understand the newly introduced glyph language. The journal phrases beg to be deciphered, using the fronts of the cards as a key. The process forces an interactive experience of delving into [a particular historical place](#) and time.

Ship (Glyph) encourages user participation in its own reading and interpretation, while exploring how a language system is created—or how a forgotten language archive can be reinvented through strategic contemporary moves.

hours

ends

day

light

steer

ship

struck

whales

strong

wind

The ink blot forms taken from the original whaling journals were paired with the words used most frequently in a selection of whalers' journals.



struck

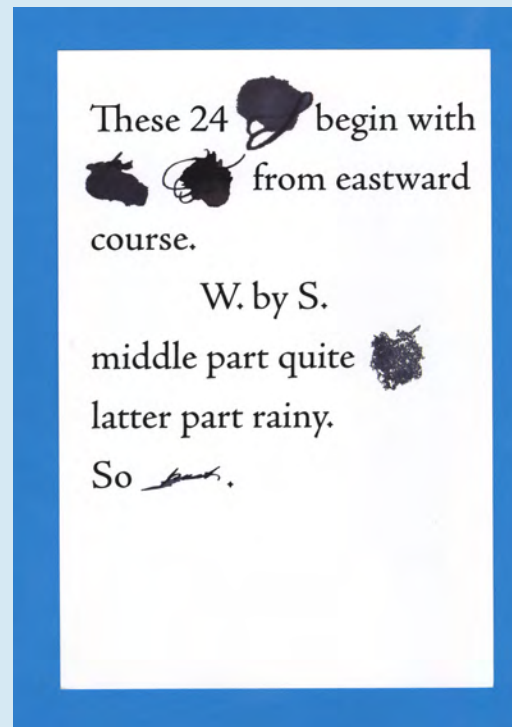
action: to harpoon



The handwritten ink blots of the original journal entries adds a human element.



The full set of cards and wrapper.



The back side of the cards features the shorthand system within sentences from the original journal entry.

C C

st sc

Th wi

Th wi

This with

These comm

This ~~X~~ begins with fine and pleasant

E

st we

Th ha

This still

gales / breezes from the N. head N.W. middle and latter

tl tl la

an ge

sta in

goin part weather continues

S e a

pa in

an 10

much the same.

n

ag S

T So

So ~~part~~ this ~~X~~.

ch w

n

ar

Early Venetian Printing & Today's Graffiti

A Visual Comparison of Early Venetian Printing & Today's Graffiti is an essay examining similarities between the political climate in the [United States](#) that led to the rise of graffiti culture, and that of 15th century [Venice](#) during a landmark period in graphic design. The essay design emphasizes visual similarities between graffiti letterforms and early Venetian printing marks and draws a parallel between [the urban wall](#) and [printed page](#). Stylistic "leftover" elements and historic marginalia are used ornamentally, often running off [the sides of the page](#).

The first page of my section of spreads in the collaborative book was playful and expressive.





books shipped from England on a Venetian vessel [...] The of Marcantonio Morosini and Daniele Renier provided text Aldo Manuzio's press. Cardinal Bessarion donated his family of Greek manuscripts to Venice in 1468. Bernardo Bembo [...] includes a copy of Leonardo Bruni's translation of Plato transcribed and annotated by Bembo himself when not yet

The nature of disseminated knowledge and writing during this period was, rather than being monolithic and non-personal, the way we often think about history, individualized and the relationships between a group of people who lived in a specific time—people with disparate views and temperaments and similar interests.

Graffiti culture today is similarly a site of grassroots styles and forms and styles, and subject to disputes and egos. Like the world of the Venetian Renaissance, the world of graffiti is primarily dominated. Jealousies are apparent in the communications of Venetian scholars as well. "All my letters are abject, ugly, rough, poorly thought out, without learning," wrote cleric Zane to Maffeo Vallaresso, whose letters were enviably elegant. While today's graffiti world is largely a youth culture, in the Renaissance, elders controlled Renaissance culture. Margaret King writes that when corseted, the passions of youth were suspect. The youth were barred from government in Venice, while the most important offices were reserved for the old whose experience in state was of wisdom." However, King also hints that there were much discontent about this, "'There are no wise men who are not young," wrote Domenico Morosini, adding sourly, 'and even then,

Yoav Litvin argues that "street art is rebellious and poses a challenge to our capitalist society [due to] the mere fact that it is viewed as an alternative to the consumerist agenda and is not controlled by the endless array of commercials we're all exposed to." Litvin says, "What is impressive is to see that this style has spread across geographic homogeneity through Los Angeles county, where each gang, each territory tries to have its own 'corporate' style through lettering details inside the Cholo script rules. [...] that these letterings are illegal is essential; *pixações* from Brazil can be seen as an alphabet designed for urban invasion, a 'total coverage' system. So both the *pixações* and Cholo lettering can be seen as an expression of the consequences of the 21st century urban conditions on the drawing of letterforms, as an evolution of the Latin alphabet."

However, many would argue that the original political function of graffiti when it evolved in the 1970s has been co-opted by corporations. (As Steven Heller notes, "Graffiti is now so closely tied to branding products that it has lost its edge.")



The relationship between culture and political power during the Renaissance period was a tenuous one — an interplay just as troubled as the relation of graffiti to corporate culture today.

Christian Acker says, "Graffiti's origins, like so much of 20th-century youth culture, seems to have emerged in the wake of the economic boom that followed World War II. Changes in income and socioeconomic lines led to more free time for youths, allowing for greater educational opportunities, as well as more time to pursue art and music — or to get in trouble."

Indeed, many of the priorities of postwar America harken back to the culture of the Renaissance. Both periods were times of great social control and demonstrations of political and military power, as well as extensive propaganda and festivals at home. Margaret King writes, "At the brink of the age we call the Renaissance... a constitution was administered effectively, on the one hand, by a delimited and hereditary ruling class whose interests in maintaining as well as exploiting their city. These noblemen ruled Venice with a citizen navy and rented troops. They decided policy in large councils and select committees. They protected food supplies and administered strict justice. They fostered festivals and rituals that promoted cohesion among the people devoted to the city. They pursued their ends by more subtle means as well. They were conscious of trends in the world of ideas and would threaten or promote civic stability. At the dawn of the 16th century, they appropriated the humanist movement, novel in its origins among the mix of the intellectual traditions of the preceding Italian Renaissance."

The impetus for scholars of the Renaissance to rapidly create new typefaces and experiment with new methods of printing and information dissemination during a dynamic historical period can be likened to the graffiti community constantly inventing and subverting type forms to assert the place of sometimes over-represented factions of society. The element of play and invention is key to the areas of visual culture, with a grassroots transmission of ideas and variations of forms being shared by individual creators. The similarities in visual style between many early Venetian printed pages and graffiti forms today may be a result of the similarities of the social and political precursors out of which these new forms developed. The influence of handwriting and calligraphy imbued type design in the Venetian period with a unique and playful character similar to that of graffiti today. Humanist emphasis on dissemination by the masses is also clearly mirrored by the graffiti community.

An interesting contrast between Venice during the Renaissance and the graffiti culture of post-war America is the role of the blank space. Graffiti writing is inherently intended for the public

and dependent on the existence of a wall, billboard, or building as blank space for writing. Venice was a city without walls.

Margaret King writes, "Venice, a city without walls, was anomalous." "Miraculous that she was founded only on water, without walls," wrote Antonio Broianico. The graffiti world's awareness of safety, danger, and conflict entirely depends upon the idea of the wall. The act of writing graffiti on public walls is itself dangerous. Unofficial lines of safety and danger for both individuals and gangs are expressed through drawn marks on walls. In Venice, Bernardo Giustiniani comments that the city stood secured despite having "no walls, no gates, no fortifications." "The citizens," wrote Guarnerio d'Artegna, "are the walls of the city on which the republic depends." The written page, culture, and government all contributed to the imagined safety of Venice during the 15th century, and similarly, in graffiti culture, graffiti writers form a community and each graffiti artist looks out for his or her allies. The idea of imaginary walls is an interesting one and opens up another conversation about the relation of blank wall to blank page and the role of each in history.

TOP LEFT: Early Venetian Printing (Illustrated, p. 206)
BOTTOM LEFT: Graffiti Alphabetum
A-Z Letters by Thomas Hooply
MIDDLE TOP: Graffiti Alphabetum
A-Z Letters by Thomas Hooply
BOTTOM RIGHT: Early Venetian Printing (Illustrated)

DALMACIA. GR
TVTTI LI INFID
PER LO EXCE
SERE MARCO
BELLICO. E
TE PER M
SCONTE
CTO CA
CON
ET
LE

Book Peripheries

Book **Peripheries** is a poster series isolating only **the words around the edges of the first and last page** of books. The gesture hints at the full narrative by presenting new juxtapositions of text fragments.

The first and last words on the first and last page of the book are given extra emphasis for the additional narrative that can be found across the scope of a single page.

Now a traveller must make his way to Noon City by the best means direction Turpentine door for Sam these pretty this where are water on of silent pinewoods. Two from the both and scattered NEHI ning rumble of hogs and cows roam the roads at will;

Other
Other
Truman
first pg.

Chuberry next-bound truck, for cars Also, hollows there marsh movement chimney bird, deserted one as though field for Pepper, span-tribes herds now and then a

he looked back, some magic would have taken place: perhaps Street, why and slower der-dark hats they magic about stood traced began It at now with His for culous rippling one They blinding as face ed afraid, where, looked

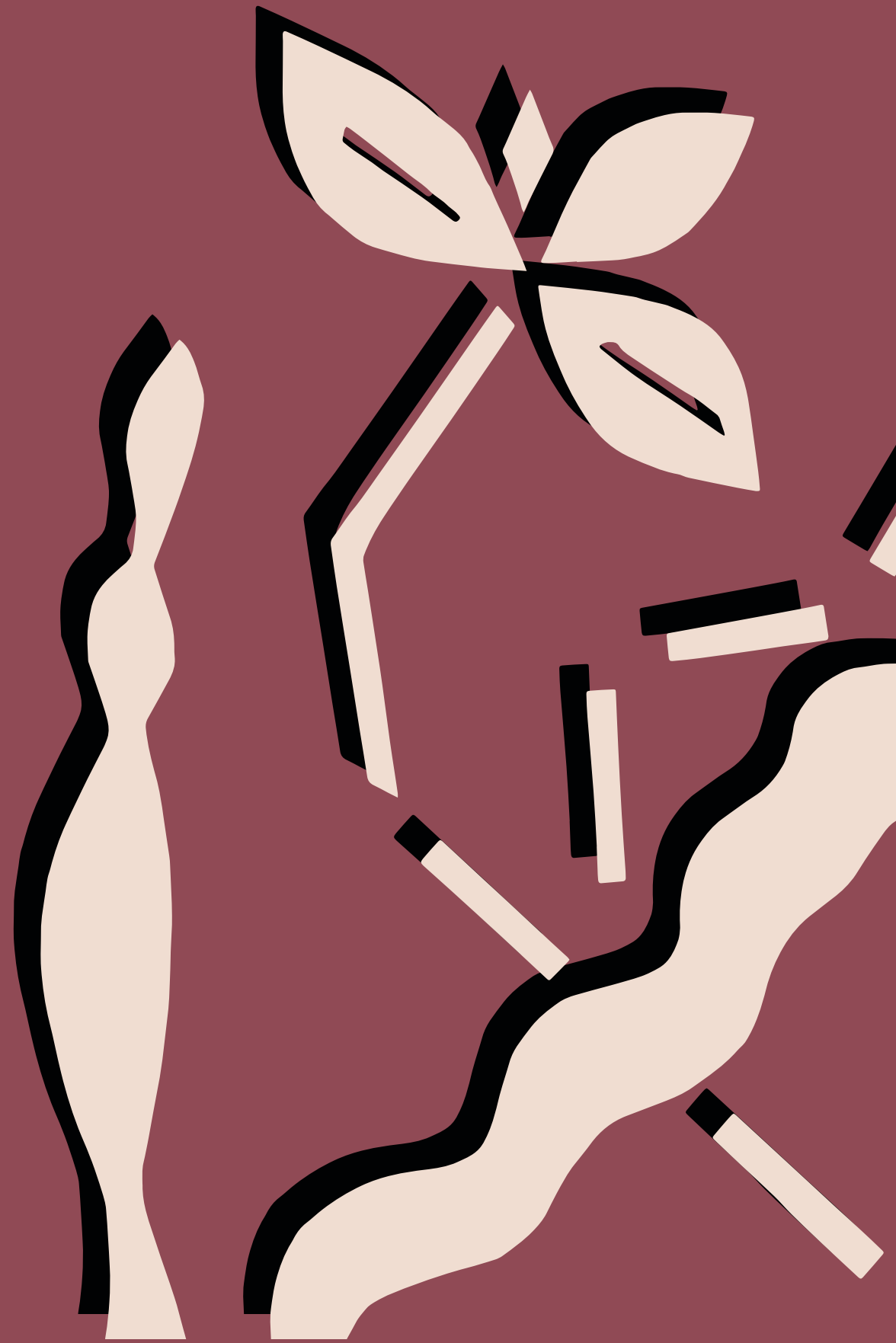
Deval Nemo: same travelled thun-panama when No was him hour garden arriving thought: level waiting meti-were some-eyes. the was a beckon-un-edge and boy he had left behind.

Voices
Rooms
Capote
last pg.

On

Gardens





One color screenprint from cut paper.

Dutch landscape architect Piet Oudolf is a founder of the “New Perennial” movement and the thinker behind, among other [public parks](#), [New York’s Highline](#), that coffee-cup-ridden, busy quick-walking conveyor [above city streets](#). In another life, Piet could have been a graphic designer. Structure, planning, texture, rhythm, and sequence are considered in each [meadow](#) or [parkland](#) design.²² Thinking always of the winter of a [garden’s](#) life, he designs each [collaborative garden](#) around the structure of each plant and how it fits into the whole. Color of spring or summer growth is secondary to the “skeleton” of each plant. And the plants used [in each plot](#) are planted in a poetic, free-flowing way on top of a strict gridded base. Piet is a structural designer in collaboration with chance and the environment, and in a way, ultimately concerned with what is left behind. When the stalks are brittle and bent, they also work in harmony. I admire his work because of the balance between the spirited and the rational.

During my entire time at [RISD](#), I’ve lived [next to an empty lot](#). I love it for its wild potential. My [front yard](#) is in [Pawtucket](#), and the [backyard](#) touches [the boundary of Providence](#). Little wonder that arbitrary [divisions of space](#) fascinate me. The [abandoned, overgrown lot next door](#) is another [arbitrary land division](#) with so much potential. [The empty lot](#) is the result of an intentional fire that a crazed man set in his own elderly parents’ [house](#) years ago. This is the type of violent and extreme display, whether understood or not, that can result in [a space left untended](#). One mailbox stands [out front](#), only occasionally receiving a misdirected letter that raises its stubborn flag. Because of the volatile history of the family that still owns [the lot](#) and the legal conditions around [the site](#), and after several calls to [City Hall](#), I’ve resorted simply to throwing “seed bombs” and quietly planting starts [along the edge of the property](#). I can’t help but think of this act in relation to the work of architect-turned-artist Gordon Matta-Clark. For his *Fake Estates* project in [Queens, New York](#), Matta-Clark bought tiny, seemingly unusable [portions of land, alleyways, and the sides of lots](#). The deeds to [these lots](#) were bought at auction for \$25 each, and framed next to photographs and maps of the [fake estates](#), a commentary on the power vested in [arbitrary land divisions](#) and legal documents.²³

²² Piet Oudolf and Noël Kingsbury, *Planting Design: Gardens in Time and Space* (Portland: Timber Press, 2005).

²³ Jeffrey Kastner, Sina Najafi and Frances Richard, editors. *Odd Lots: Revisiting Gordon Matta-Clark’s Fake Estates* (New York: Cabinet Books / The Queens Museum of Art / White Columns, 2005).



Flowers planted in potholes, filling in gaps of care. Image from TwistedSifter.com.

The idea of [public garden space](#) is fundamentally radical, in its creation of public space not for profit—but for pure enjoyment, health, socialization, and contemplation. The smell of the dirt and cheer of the sky-bent plants can provide spiritual benefit. Frederick Law Olmsted, chief architect of [Central Park](#) from 1858–1861, responded to the soot and [crowded quarters](#) of increasingly industrialized [New York](#) with a plan that he believed would create more of a feeling of community for people from all social classes and backgrounds.²⁴ The dream was of a [public garden space](#) as a unifier, designed as a [center of democracy](#), and not limited to a public who would be allowed to enter through [the gilded gates of a great estate](#).

[The lot next door to me](#) changes dramatically throughout the year and I've come to appreciate all of its seasons. Snowdrift expands in the winter give way to overgrown [meadow](#) plants and native weeds, some with yellow flowers taller than a human in August—before [the city](#) eventually sends someone to cut them down, citing ticks, bees, and many other nuisances, at the end of the summer. I think this process of slowing down and noticing small changes in your environment can be a beneficial part of the design process. During my time [here](#), I've been involved off-and-on with [Farm Fresh RI](#), a [local](#) non-profit that aims to bridge the food equity gap. When thinking about my experience of fresh food as delight—husk cherries from my veggie box a few weeks each year—it seems obvious that everyone should have access to this delight.

Although my larger dream is to find a way around the constraints of [the lot next door](#) and turn it into a true [community garden](#), the thesis version of this dream has been to work on a guide and map to all the wonderful [community gardens already existing in Providence](#)—a love letter to many people's hard work in creating [these spaces](#), often on [abandoned land](#).

Now when I drop off food scraps for composting at [City Farm](#) on [the Southside of town](#), I know that design, with all its fluid purposes, can also be a tactic of amplifying the [public](#) presence of existing projects and advocating for [more spaces like these unruly, idealistic lots](#) full of plant starts jostling to be shared when the time is right.

²⁴ Melvin Kalfus, *Frederick Law Olmstead: The Passion of a Public Artist* (New York: NYU Press, 1990).



Photo of an apricot branch being illegally grafted on a flowering plum tree in San Francisco by the Guerilla Grafters. The Guerilla Grafters graft branches of fruit-bearing trees onto other trees in public spaces, to provide easy access to food for all. Photo by Guerilla Grafters.



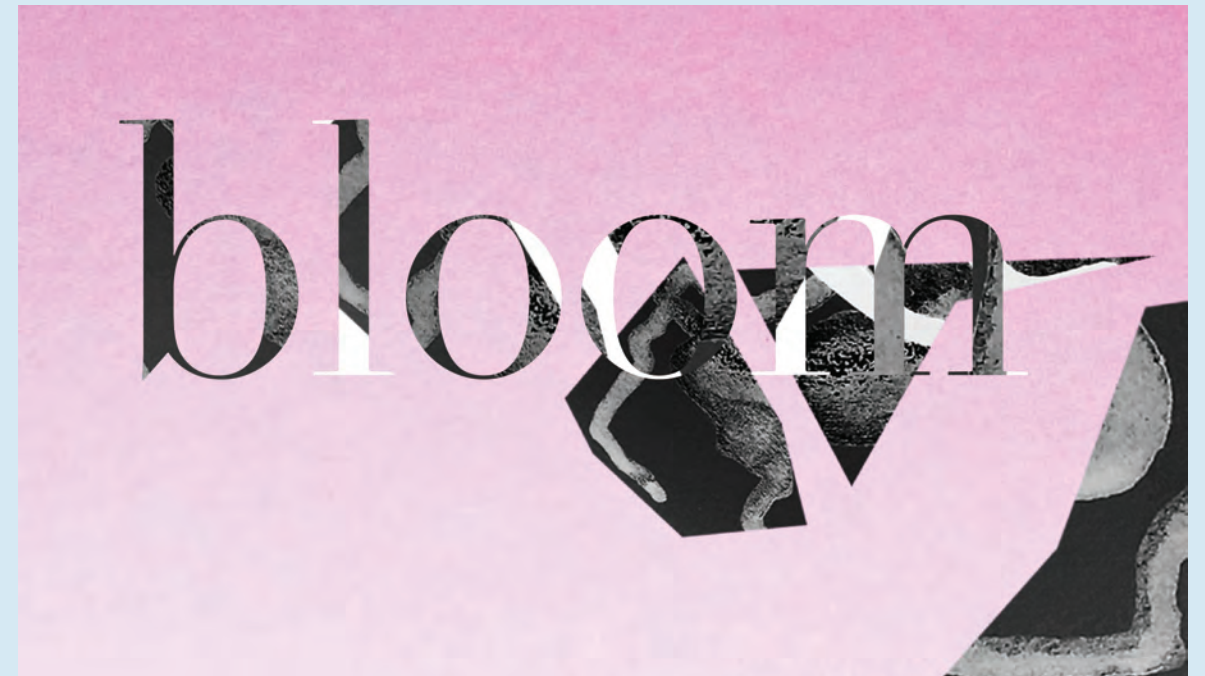
The lot next door to my apartment.

Bloom

Bloom is a spot illustration designed to accompany the *New York Times* opinion piece "In My Mother's Garden," by Kaitlyn Greenidge, originally published March 26, 2016. Created for Keetra Dean Dixon's FormWork class.



Spreads of the original article by Kaitlyn Greenidge laid out for as a journal publication featuring the spot illustration.



The original article is written from a first person perspective about a garden plot in the ghetto cared for by the author's mother. The illustration is designed to juxtapose the themes "bloom" and "break."



Iterative form that led to the final illustration.

Poster

Providence Community Gardens

Providence Community Gardens is a two-sided poster that celebrates **community gardens** in Providence. The front side showcases a selection of photographs of **City Farm** and **Somerset Community Garden** by photographer Lucas Foglia (Yale MFA Photography 2010). The photos are from his series "**The Garden**." Foglia photographed the two urban farms over several years and says:

"The families who garden there are of African-American, European, Cambodian, Dominican, Hmong, Laotian and Liberian origin.

On one level, these photographs document the practical function of **the garden**: to allow gardeners to produce food for their families and for sale to **local markets**.

But the function of **the garden** is more complex: **the garden** fosters dialogue between cultures and enables its gardeners to retain their cultural traditions.

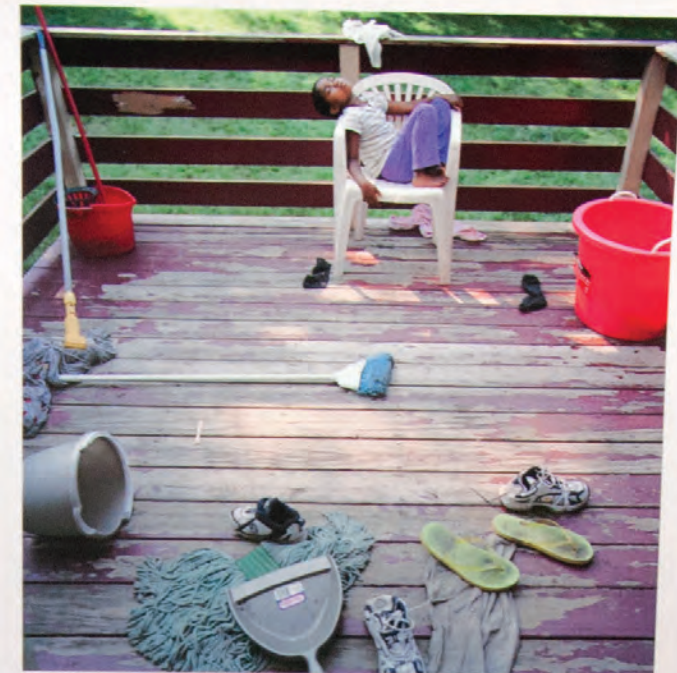
The garden becomes a metaphor for **the neighborhood** and a window into the lives and cultures of the people that it serves."

The photos are arranged according to formal relations and thematic imagery. The underlying grid of the document is made visible to hint at the marking of **garden plots**.

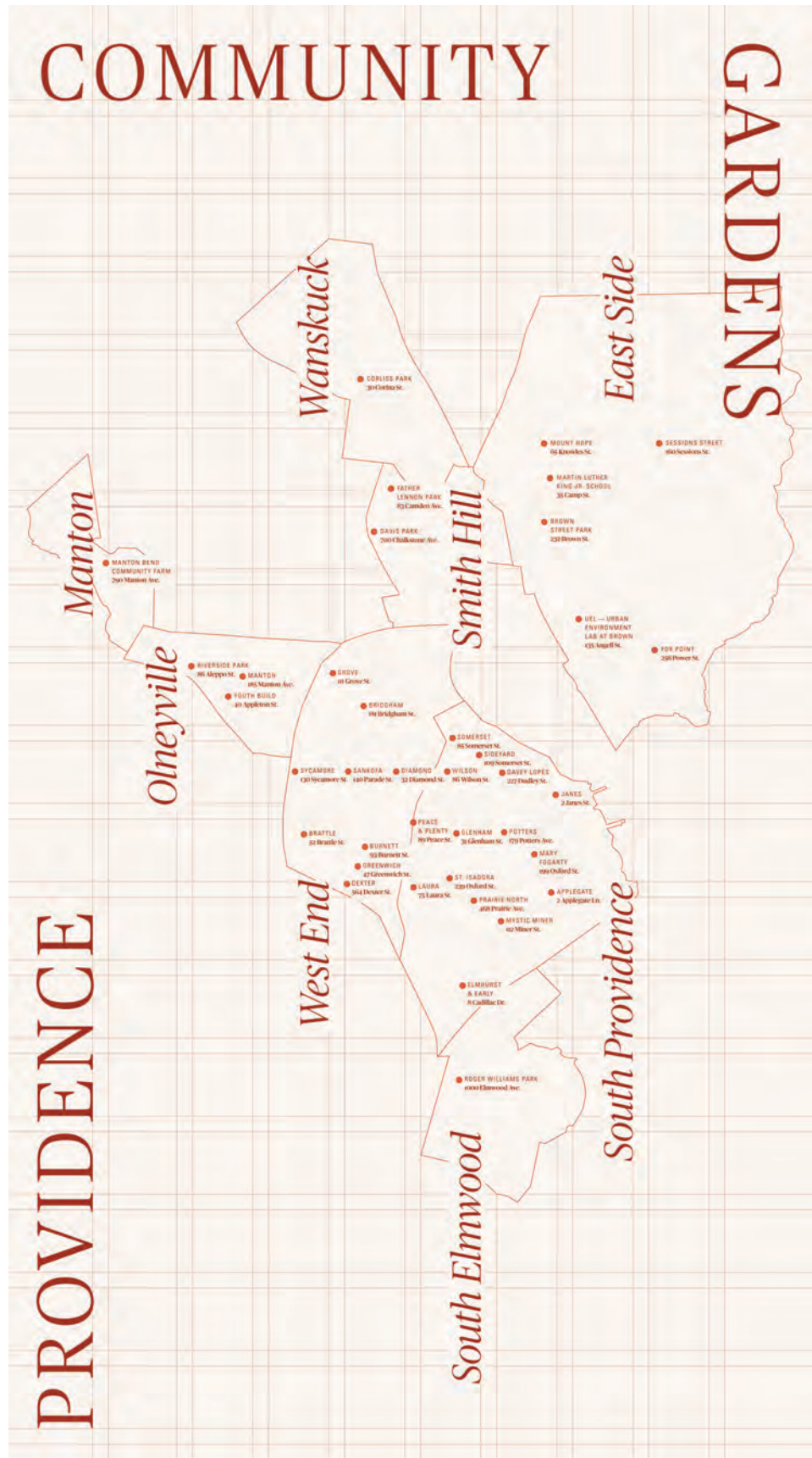
The back of the poster features a map of the **community gardens** in Providence. It is organized by **neighborhood** and is designed to emphasize the quantity of these **urban farms within the city**.

The map celebrates people's ingenuity in reclaiming **abandoned spaces for community**. It is also meant to refute the idea that areas **in the city** other than the affluent **East Side** have no greenery.

More work by Lucas at LucasFoglia.com.



THE GARDEN



Map of the community gardens in Providence arranged according to neighborhood.



Detail view of the map side of the poster.



Photographs
by Lucas Foglia

of Somerset Community
Garden and City Farm, RI



THE GARDEN

Photographs
by Lucas Foglia

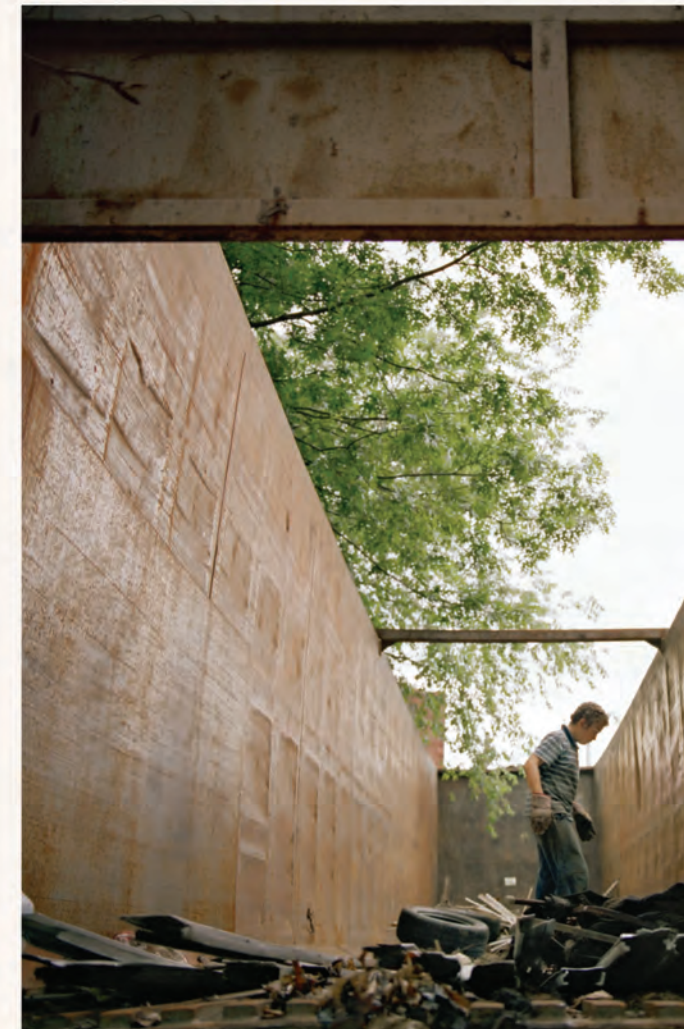
of Somerset Community
Garden and City Farm, RI

The reverse side of the poster features Lucas Foglia's photographs of Providence urban gardens City Farm and Somerset Community Garden.

Detail view of the photographic side of the poster.



Detail view of the photographic side of the poster.
Photos by Lucas Foglia.

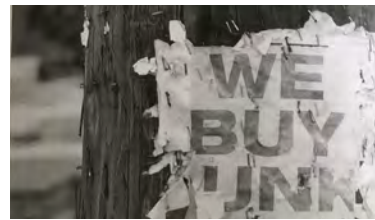


Detail view of the photographic side of the poster.
Photos by Lucas Foglia.



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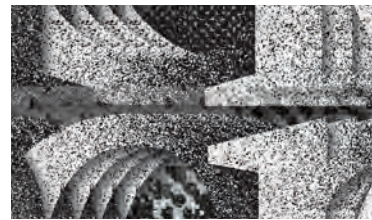
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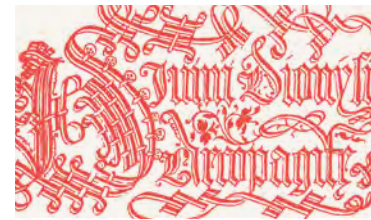
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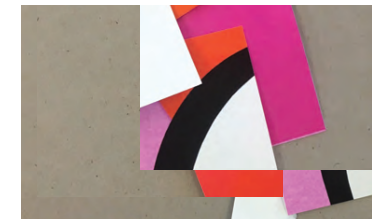
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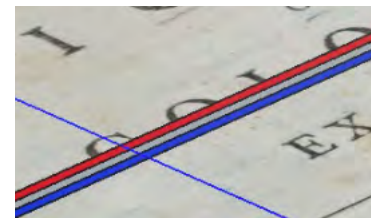
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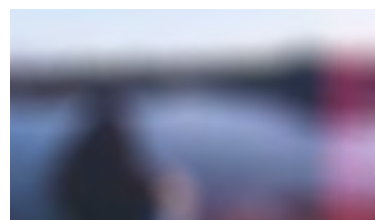
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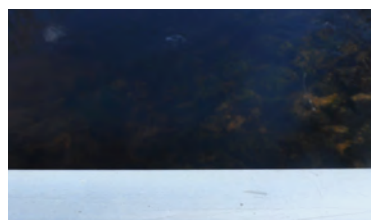
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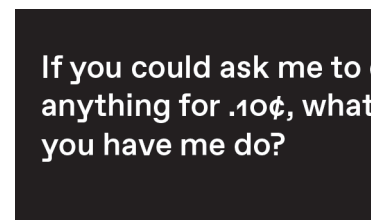
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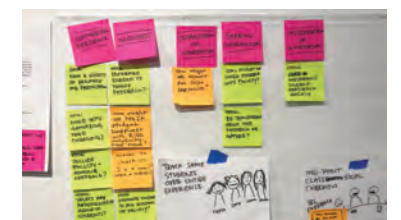
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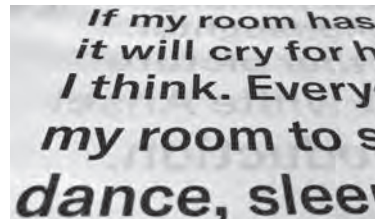
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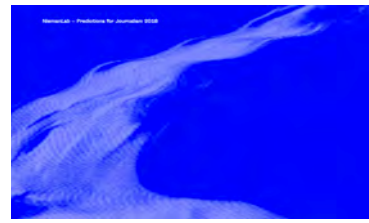
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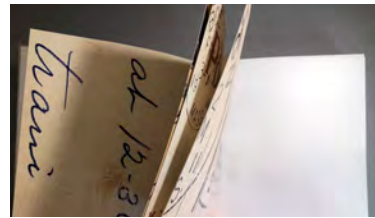
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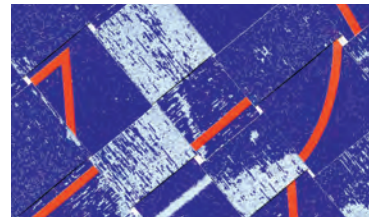
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Acknowledgements

FOR THOSE
WHO MAKE
THIS PLACE
AND OTHER
PLACES

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Colophon

Printed by Puritan Press in [Hollis, NH](#) with special thanks to Richard Denzer.

This book is set in Fakt, Leitura, and Ogg.
It is printed on Mohawk Superfine Eggshell
White 80#Text and #80 Cover.

Fakt is a geometric / grotesque typeface designed by German type designer Thomas Thiemich in 2010 and available from OurType.

Leitura News is a serif typeface designed by Portuguese type designer Dino dos Santos and released through DSType in 2007. It was designed for editorial use and to look crisp at small sizes.

Ogg is a calligraphic serif typeface designed by [San Francisco](#)-based designer Lucas Sharp and published by Village in 2013. The design was inspired by the hand lettering of 20th century calligrapher Oscar Ogg.



Avocados Mushrooms [Oakland](#).
Taken with a Mamiya C330. 2010.

