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**PRICKLY MOUNTAIN & THE DESIGN/BUILD PHENOMENON:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A HANDS-ON, LEARNING PEDAGOGY**



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Since emerging in 1965, the design/build movement has received much attention, especially in Vermont, from both the design profession and academia regarding its hands-on, learning approaches. This paper will discuss the progression of the design/build phenomenon, reflecting upon the pedagogy that emerged through new methods that turned away from the traditional practice of architecture. I will address the following questions: *What is design/build? How did it originate? What has it evolved into?* But specifically, *what have I learned from it?* Additionally, this paper will propose that the use of the design/build approach in architectural education can be a fundamental and meaningful teaching methodology, while addressing what I have come to learn about it through a personal narrative of my semester at Yestermorrow Design/Build School in fall 2015.

Today, the role of the architect has changed. The profession has evolved, with design/build emerging as a relatively new opportunity that revitalizes an architect's undertaking with that of a builder's. Moreover, architectural education has shifted beyond the "two types of institutions" that were introduced in Europe in the late nineteenth century.¹ Most architectural programs continue taking place in these two types of institutions, polytechnic institutes and art schools, "leading to a professional degree and licensing," model of education. In this system, students are often taught through a pedagogy that consists of a design studio in which students are assigned imaginary projects for which they must develop floor plans, elevations, sections, and perspective drawings, either by hand or with the use of computer software, in order to enhance their drafting skills.² Given that this form of educational program "omits most of the real conditions a designer would face on a real project, such as a real client, and the other members of the design/building team, such as engineers and other consultants, contractors, permitting agencies, and cost estimators," a new format has been recently adopted and implemented in some schools.³

Architecture has been defined as a "collaborative discipline that engages architectural teams with clients, consultants, engineers, builders and developers, and numerous government agencies;" it is a multifaceted and integrative field of study that requires collaborative effort, plus an understanding of the realities of design and construction.⁴ The need for design/build is simply manifested by the "disconnect from academia to practice from design to construction,"⁵ thus educators are looking for new ways to "engage experiential education in the classroom," by incorporating a design/build curriculum that will enable students to partake in a new forum of learning that consists of a "decision-making process, techniques for collaboration, fabrication skills, and logistical planning," in order to create a usable product through community building.⁶

Apparently in the United States, there is a "long-standing perception that the graduates of most accredited schools of architecture are poorly prepared to be fully-functional employees in an active architectural firm," which is specifically a result of the way architects are trained.⁷ This perception has demanded a call for change and has altered twenty-first-century architectural practice and education. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) has suggested that "the levels of engagement with the 'realities of professional practice' should be raised and that students should be immersed in a learning environment that is responsive to the diverse

¹ Sim Van der Ryn, "Lifetime Learning Design," in *Design for an Empathic World: Reconnecting People, Nature, and Self* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013), 71.

² *Ibid.*, 72-73.

³ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁵ Matthew Gines, "Practicing Design Build," in *2015 ACSA/AIA Intersections Proceedings* (Washington, DC: ACSA Press, 2015), 14.

⁶ Matthew K. Sutter, "Design/Build in Architectural Education: studying community-focused curriculum" (Master's Thesis, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2015), 2.

⁷ Chad Schwartz, Laura Morthland, and Shannon McDonald, "Building a Social Framework: Utilising Design/Build to Provide Social Learning Experiences for Architecture Students," *Architectural Theory Review* 19, no. 1 (2014): 77.

and constantly changing environments of the contemporary construction industry.”⁸ Thus, one of the strategies for embedding such immersion is through community-based design/build projects, “a branch of architectural study in which students conceive, generate, and actively participate in transforming a design into a real structure or space.”

⁹ This approach is not necessarily new, but it is increasing in mainstream popularity as more and more design/build programs are underway across the United States.

Several decades ago, in Vermont, a group of “renegade, entrepreneurial young architects and architecture students” began to meet in “the foothills of Vermont’s Green Mountains” to seek “creative, professional and economic freedom in inexpensive land and distance from the country’s urban areas.”¹⁰ In 1964, three friends from the Yale School of Architecture “conceived a plan to become developers, designers, and builders of ski cabins” while skiing at Sugarbush, in Warren, VT.¹¹ At the time, land was reasonably priced and skiing was gaining more recognition and popularity, therefore these young architecture students presumed that by taking the chance to build “speculative projects,” they could sell them for a profit, hence David Sellers and William Reineke invested on a piece of land near Warren, which later became established and recognized as Prickly Mountain, while Peter Gluck launched his own design/built projects in Bolton, VT.¹² This became the precedent for a new architectural movement catering to a new way of making architecture. They envisioned a movement in which one would have the ability to “control the economics and construction of their buildings, as well as the design,” changing how architecture was practiced along with the way that buildings can be made.¹³ Ultimately, this became the new design culture of Vermont, which continues to live on to this day while being duplicated in several other locations across the United States.

Prickly Mountain has had a lasting impact due to the early architectural projects that now serve as artifacts of what was then a “new and experimental way of making buildings.”¹⁴ Projects such as the Tack House, the Sibley/Pyramid House, the Dimetrodon, or even the Goddard College Design Center, Sculpture and Painting Buildings, are all foundational examples that have been used to explain the history behind the design/build movement, including its progression throughout the years, when originally the idea behind the launching of these projects revolved around “business ventures” that ultimately ended up granting architects “independence and artistic freedom” to “pursue architecture in a new way.”¹⁵ By seeking an alternative method to make buildings, Sellers and Reineke hoped to be more involved in all aspects of the construction, something that they had not necessarily been exposed to during their time at the Yale School of Architecture. As they began to explore this non-traditional approach with their first experiment, the Tack House, the architects recognized the disparities in their architectural education and training. The use of this alternative approach turned out to be fundamental and meaningful in comparison to the traditional one since Sellers and Reineke not only continued to endorse it in other projects following the Tack House, but even managed to transform the way architects made architecture by starting a phenomenon that ultimately changed Vermont’s design culture. The intentionalities that this new approach offered are ultimately more preferable than the ones provided by the traditional approach.

Despite the fact that there are a limited number of studies that have investigated the topic of design/build, the majority claim that design/build has more to offer because of its “unique and complex interdisciplinary practice” that makes its pedagogy relevant to other disciplines and authorizes future architects to become

⁸ *Ibid*, 77.

⁹ *Ibid*, 78.

¹⁰ Janie Cohen, *Architectural Improvisation: A History of Vermont’s Design/Build Movement 1964-1977* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 10.

¹² *Ibid*.

¹³ *Ibid*.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

informed based on the learning experience that is granted through this approach.¹⁶ Today, design/build is simply defined as a “pedagogical alternative to the theoretical, desk-based, and media-driven (drawings, models, digital models) design process commonly featured in design schools” that instead combines the design and construction entities in order to “extend student’s design skills by making a stronger link with material experimentation and construction,” referred to as “hands-on learning, learning-by-making, learning by building, 1:1,” and is seen as a “variant of experiential learning” where students are literally introduced to the art of building.¹⁷ Being that construction is an entity that is not often taught in traditional architecture school programs, design/build aims to help students gain exposure to it. Not only does this exposure grant students the opportunity to “demystify the construction site,” but also “realize what is involved in taking architecture from a drawing to a building,” through a process that requires physical labor.¹⁸ In this approach, students gain an understanding of construction as they build.

Apart from gaining exposure to construction, design/build programs also “expose students to a broader range of architectural practice” that is disregarded and uninstructed in academia.¹⁹ This includes all aspects of the design and construction process such as “dealing with clients, codes, inspectors, contractors,” or even “product suppliers,” and without this knowledge, most students are not being prepared nor trained adequately to be a fully-functional employee in an active architectural firm.²⁰ Internships can be eye-opening to a certain extent, providing students with some architectural practice experience, but one ultimately gains more out of a design/build program, especially when encountering issues that will come up if and when one has become employed at a firm.

Being a collaborative discipline, collaborative work is a necessary and significant component of most design/build programs. Steve Badanes, founding member of the Jersey Devil design/build practice, discussed that “design-build is by nature a group project that benefits from collegiality and diversity and that working well together with your teammates is of no less importance as working with your clients and neighbors.”²¹ Group projects not only provide a sense of camaraderie among the people that create and work together, but also provides an opportunity to expose others to different ideas and skills as a form of engagement. Through collaborative efforts, it is easier to execute the large projects that are featured in design/build programs, but that is all based upon team integration, as opposed to the individual projects that one is assigned in design studio at most traditional architectural education programs. Success is “directly dependent upon the ability of the entire team to work together collaboratively.”²²

On top of all that, design/build programs also allow students to explore new methods of project delivery where they are given the opportunity to explore new ideas through different approaches to best produce a design that is suitable and in correspondence with the clients wants and needs. Planning how to tackle the project requires a lot of effort and time, thus making it important to evaluate several options, ideas, and concepts when considering the design, the materiality, and construction required to successfully deliver a project.

In sum, design/build enables students to be directly engaged through processes that allow them to think and do.²³ Students have become “frustrated with theory-driven virtual architecture and a profession that works at

¹⁶ Vincent B. Canizaro, “Design-Build in Architectural Education: Motivations, Practices, Challenges, Successes and Failures,”

Archnet-IJAR 6, no. 3 (2012): 34

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 20-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

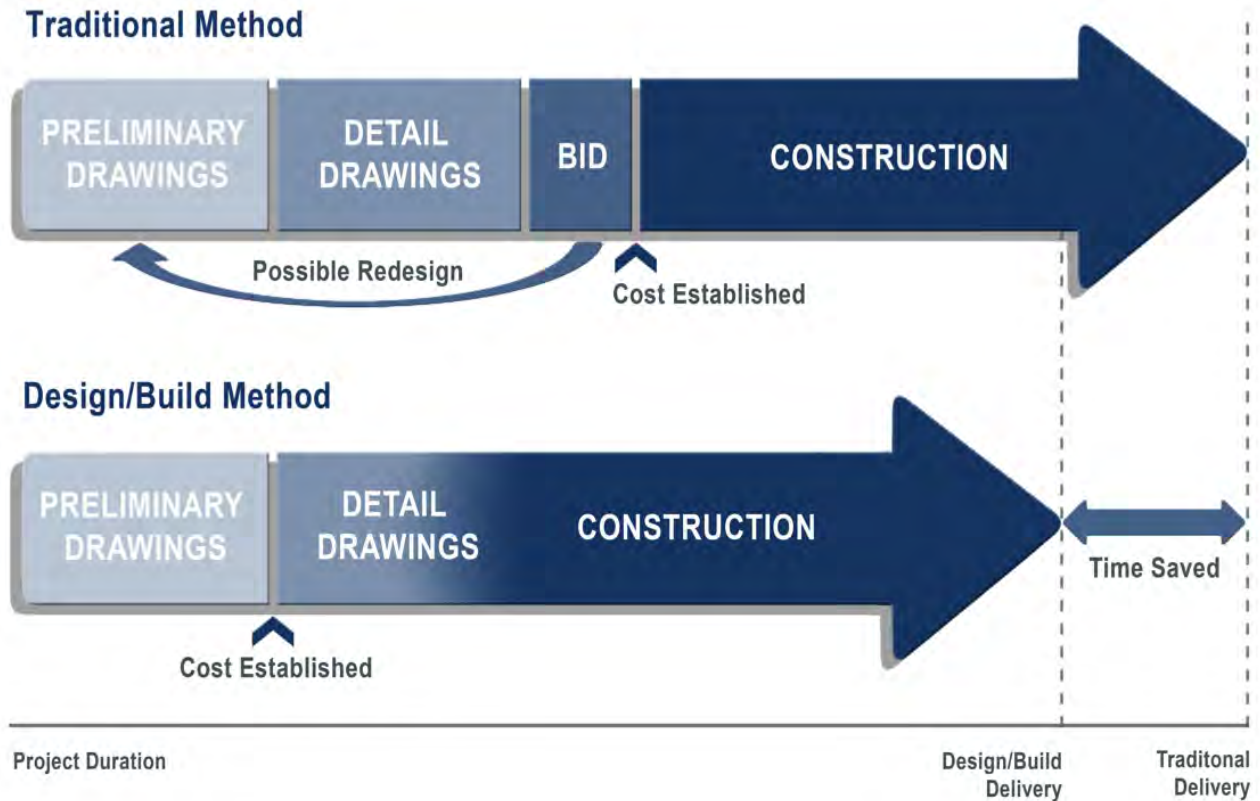
²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ *Ibid*, 25-26.

²² Design-Build Institute of America, *Design-Build Done Right: Universally Applicable Best Practices Applying to Any Project Type, in Any Market Sector, of Any Size* (2014): 8.

²³ Canizaro, 24.

the top of the food chain,” thus they are “pushing for outreach, hands-on experiences because they want meaning in their lives and want it to be embodied in their education.”²⁴ As I look back at my own college journey studying architecture, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to partake in a design/build program at the Yestermorrow Design/Build School.



²⁴ Steve Badanes, “Design/Build: Let Them Build It, They Will Come,” *Architect*, last modified December 09, 2009, http://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/design-build-let-them-build-it-they-will-come_o.



Tack House, 1966



Dimetrodon, 1971



Temple of Dindor, 2011



Archie Bunker, 2013



Client: Janaki Natarajan, director of the M.A.T. in Teaching for Social Justice program at Marlboro College

Yestermorrow-UMass Semester in Sustainable Design/Build -- Fall 2015
(A Personal Narrative of my Experience at Yestermorrow Design/Build School)

August 14, 2015:

As I'm packing my bags the day before heading out to Vermont, I cannot help but wonder what I will encounter within the next 4 months that I will be away from home and away from Connecticut College in what seems like the middle-of-nowhere Mad River Valley, studying in Waitsfield, VT at the Yestermorrow Design/Build School.

I just completed a rigorous seven-week fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University, taking intensive graduate-level courses while engaging in discussions with professional public servants and partaking in career prep workshops that ultimately provided me with continued learning experiences and strengthened my passion for public service, thus I am hoping that my next journey will be as exciting, as enjoyable, and as educational as this previous one.

This is bound to be my first time traveling to Vermont, so I am anticipating countless hiking trips, stunning scenery, tall mountains, lush green trees, covered bridges, maple syrup, local farmers' markets, autumn foliage, and of course, the brutal winter that everyone keeps warning me about. It seems as if the opportunities for adventure are endless in Vermont. I cannot wait to see what is in store for the next upcoming months. It shall be a thrill!

August 15, 2015:

Today has been quite a hectic day simply trying to make it to the Yestermorrow campus. Not only did I miss my bus to Vermont, but I was stranded in Boston for quite some time, frantically reaching out to Eric Cook, director of the semester program, for help. Luckily, he managed to find another student in the program to give me a ride, but first I had to make my way to Portsmouth, NH in order to meet up with her. While on the bus, I became incredibly nervous about my journey thus far. I was very apprehensive about the way things were going, plus I was hoping that Zoe would not be bothered by the fact that we had to tag along to get to Yestermorrow. Meeting people has never been an easy task for me, but I tried my best to start a conversation with Zoe in order to get to know her better as we drove to campus. Growing up in an urban setting such as Houston, it was quite a shift to drive through New Hampshire and into Vermont where there was nothing but green land and mountains along the road. What felt like an endless road trip ultimately came to an end as we approached Yestermorrow, just in time for the communal dinner with the rest of the semester gang. We went around the table, introducing ourselves and just finished learning about our upcoming camping trip to Groton State Forest. As I pack for the upcoming weekend, I'm getting more and more pumped about being here, in a completely new environment, surrounded by new people. I can't help but appreciate this opportunity that I've been provided with. This is just the beginning (a chaotic one)... YAY!

August 20, 2015:

We are back at Yestermorrow after "glam-ping" (glamorous camping) at Groton State Forest this past weekend. This has been thus far the best camping experience ever simply because it was amazing driving down the Vermont countryside and camping near Kettle Pond Lake where we had the opportunity to get to know each other a little better through a series of group activities such as blind canoeing, where two people in one canoe were blindfolded and guided by another canoe as an attempt to start developing group communication, which by now has become obvious that it will play a significant role throughout the semester.

The first day of class was spent sitting around the tables in studio where we were introduced to the Yestermorrow faculty, given a tour of the Yestermorrow campus, established ground rules, discussed traits of

good and bad group dynamics, discussed our goals for the semester, and shared what sustainable design/build means to each of us. Much to our excitement, we also chose our studio desks (ended choosing mine first based on a number drawing) and dove straight into our first exercise at the drafting tables. After being sedentary for most of the day, some of us headed down to Warren Falls to celebrate Zoe's birthday and test our fear of heights.

As the day is finally coming to an end, many of us are currently sprawled out in the main room of the ski house (where half of the group will be living for the semester) completing the first reading for tomorrow's discussion. Thus, my first full day at the Yestermorrow campus has been thrilling. I cannot wait to get the ball rolling with a few more drafting exercises before actually designing this semester's group project.

August 22, 2015:

It's my first weekend at Yestermorrow, and I'm just taking the time to think about the next 4 months. I can honestly say that we've got a big challenge ahead of us: 15 students + 15 weeks + 1 client = adds up to the development of an amazing project. I cannot imagine what that will look like, but I can definitely say that this will be worth reminiscing about years to come.

15 people working on one project; it will be a tough thing to work with so many people, and as recent events have shown, even the smallest decisions take an immense amount of time to reach consensus. It's a challenge for sure, but not one that cannot be met. As each of us moves towards learning how we work as an individual part of a dynamic whole, we are bound to learn more about ourselves, our strengths, and our place in this project. A group as large and diverse as ours holds an enormous amount of ideas, skills, and vision waiting to be shared, and by channelling the energy in the group we will produce something beautiful.

As I spend time getting to know each member of the team, I only become more and more impressed by them and am truly honored to get the chance to work and learn with everyone. What an amazing opportunity! What an amazing school! What an amazing place to be!

Together, we are bound to create the greatest thing on this planet.

August 24, 2015:

Today, we (finally!) met our client. The amount of preparation that went into this meeting was surreal; I did not expect this process to be exceptionally time-consuming and long.

For this client meeting, we were taking on the important task of querying our client to develop an architectural program that best resonated with her needs to successfully execute one of her lifelong ambitions. This task required all 15 of us to format a meeting that would allow us to gain as much useful information to best provide what our client sought.

To begin, each one of us had to develop a list of at least 15 questions that would extract programmatic information from the client. Ultimately, we managed to create a concise and well-structured agenda from a list of 225+ questions for our first project milestone.

In all, we were able to learn a lot about our client. She is a very passionate, wise woman named Janaki. She brought with her two of the women that she works with (and a terrific toddler) to consult and offer insight into what drives this project and how it was all inspired.

We asked a variety of functional, practical questions, but the ones that gave us the most insight and inspiration were the ones that delved into the motivations and life experiences of the three fantastic women that sat in front of us. Every question we asked was answered with respect and depth. Their responses will most likely prove to be more of a guide in the months to come.

I'm still in awe with Janaki. I respect her for primarily entrusting us entirely with the creation of one of her lifelong ambitions while making it extremely clear that she hopes to make this a learning experience for us just as much as she wants it built. I do not know anyone else who would be willing to contribute \$60K to 15

non-experienced students in order to build her a structure that she could utilize to continue her praxis. I just met her, but I consider her one of my biggest inspirations and role models, simply because of who she is, which is ultimately everything I want to be. I'm beyond excited to begin designing for her.

August 31, 2015:

This past weekend we ended up traveling south for an inspiration trip to get our creative juices flowing as we begin to collaborate on different schematic designs to propose to Janaki.

Our first stop on the trip was none other than Janaki's property in Putney, VT, where we got to explore the site where our design would be placed after its completion. It was here where we made one of our first group decisions regarding the location of our project. Ultimately, we ended up voting on a spot that we believed would permit privacy, as it's hidden behind a cluster of sumacs, and would provide a great view of the meadow and barn across the main road, which were some of Janaki's requests when discussing further plans for her project.

Our next stop happened to be at Bennington College, where we continued to explore Vermont's vernacular architecture. I personally believe that BC has a diverse college aesthetic simply because of its mixed architecture styles that are spread throughout campus. I really enjoyed looking around campus; it was incredibly beautiful

The following day, we got to explore around the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA), followed by a visit to 2013's semester project, and a tour of UMass-Amherst Associate Professor Ray Mann's house. I enjoyed seeing what the other group accomplished during their semester program due to how it allowed me to put things into perspective and come to a realization that we are seeking to do the same thing within the next 15 weeks. I still cannot comprehend the idea behind this program, but this visit gave me a better understanding of what could be attained if we manage to successfully execute Janaki's dream.

I do not want to sound redundant, but I am really excited about this journey!

September 19, 2015:

During the past three weeks, LOTS has happened.

This past Friday, we presented our third round of schematics for our client, Janaki, and her two friends at Marlboro College, where we had the opportunity to meet some of the Spark students who are working towards receiving their masters and teaching certification to teach social justice in the State of Vermont (such an awesome graduate program!).

After quickly introducing one another, we split up into groups and were tasked with labeling a series of world maps with their corresponding country, followed by a discussion on how 'teachers' and 'builders' play a role within recent social justice issues such as #BlackLivesMatter or climate change. It was interesting to hear what each and every single group discussed during this activity, especially when we have been dealing a lot with architectural-related topics in class that it felt great to move away from that for a few minutes.

After lunch, the room became filled with a mixture of excitement and anxiety as each group prepared to present their schemes. Despite the craziness (i.e. meltdowns and breakdowns) that is dealt with throughout the week prior to presentation time, the critique is the one thing we all look forward to the most, especially because we are eager to see the reaction others will have in regards to the design that each group has developed, hoping that each group receives feedback.

In all, Janaki and her friends enjoyed the three different schematics that were presented to her, for she wished that we could actually build all three designs, but due to a few constraints such as money and time, all three groups will come together next week to design the structure that Janaki has asked us to build for her. I know that I'm speaking for everyone when I say that we're pumped for our last round of schematics, as all 18 of us

(including Eric, Vince, and Jess) work together to design a structure for our client. Soon, we will start putting our knowledge into action as we begin to get our hands dirty constructing Janaki's dream structure from scratch.

September 21, 2015:

And so begins, the collaborative group design phase of the project... ALL 18 OF US, hurray! I guess this could be considered as another milestone, since this is a moment that we have all been looking forward to since we began designing this semester's project.

Despite the excitement, I am extremely apprehensive about this phase due to my experience during the previous schematic design rounds. I am not entirely enjoying the design process simply because of all the decision making that must be made as a compromise between all 18 of us. I appreciate the fact that we all have different ideas, and are open to listening to each and every single one of them, but I'm starting to realize how those with more architectural knowledge are often the ones who partake more in this process by always having something to say. Personally, I lack confidence when sharing my own ideas because I have trouble explaining what I envision, especially to teammates who potentially know whether or not my ideas are conceivable and could actually work. I don't want to be told that my ideas are unreasonable or stupid, thus I remain quiet throughout most of the decision-making process, unless I am asked otherwise to share my opinion on a vote.

I can say that I'm more eager to begin using my hands to start building.

September 30, 2015:

Today was a particularly momentous day in the world world of the Yestermorrow semester program: we have made the first cuts & hammered the first nails of our floor-pack.

Up to this day, we have been doing a ton of fine-tuning & decision making, all in preparation to begin building. With 11 weeks left (may seem like a lot of time), I'm glad we were able to get it in just under the gun, having started, technically, in September. We broke off into groups of three, working on various aspect of the building: residence, study and book shelves (with mudroom), site planning, windows, and materials. We have chosen to break it up so that we can cover more work at once, but have made an active effort to pull all of the spaces together. More important than anything else is that we got the supplies for our floor-pack in this week so we were all hands on deck for our, mostly ceremonial, christening of the shop.

Needless to say, we were pretty enthusiastic, even if we misjudged a few cuts and nail placements. I feel that I can speak for everyone when I say that despite the change in the weather, we are chomping at the bit to get out and work.

October 7, 2015:

After a first full week of construction, not only have we managed to build our first floor-pack (soon to be the library space), but also frame and lift our very first wall. YAY!

Just a week ago, we started banging the first nails in, yet it is amazing to see the progress we have made within a week. We successfully hung all the joists, insulated the floor-pack, put on the subflooring, framed a wall, sheated the wall, and finally lifted the wall, all of which I enjoyed very much since this was the kind of action I have been anticipating since I first learned about Yestermorrow's Semester Program. In academia, we do not necessarily learn about the process that follows the development of a design. We only get to see one side of the profession, while at Yestermorrow, we're able to engage in that procedure by actually getting our hands dirty with some building. Based on the progression of this project, I know we are all hoping to accomplish this project within the next ten weeks. Despite it being the biggest project Yestermorrow has ever undertaken, I know we are all capable of producing something incredible for Janaki.

October 23, 2015:

This past week, we got back into the groove of things after taking a little break for fall break. Despite the fact that our progress was hindered by the arrival of the corner brackets, we have actually made some serious progress, not only starting the installation of each and every single one of those corner brackets, but also getting our budget worked out, developing ideas for lighting fixtures, nailing all of our roof rafters in the library space, and finishing the second floor-pack just in time before the weekend. I'm not too happy about the weather... winter seems to be arriving a little too early this year, and unfortunately it is time to start layering up in order to go outside to help with the building. Let's see what the future holds for all of us.

November 02, 2015:

These past couple of days have been filled with nothing but festivities. The gang decided to throw a Halloween party at the chalet, and I can honestly say that I had the time of my life being corn on the cob (also ended up winning the BEST COSTUME award). Now that we are basically working outside for the majority of the day, it was amazing to simply relax and have fun on a Friday evening with the rest of the team, still getting to know each other despite working together for about three months. The following day, I traveled down to Connecticut College to celebrate my 22nd birthday with all my camel friends. I wasn't too happy about the speeding ticket I received as I was leaving Mad River Valley, but in all, the weekend turned out to be incredible and a great break from everything.

As of today, after working on construction for over a month, the roof for in our library has been sheathed and we have begun spreading common rafters for our resident space, all while sheathing the library and resident space walls, and now moving on to the mudroom. It is awesome to see the space being actualized after months of arduous designing and thoughtful planning. The scale of this project has become a reality. Despite some hiccups along the way (those darn corner brackets!), I believe we are keeping a good pace, plus moral seems high. I am personally excited to see all of the side explorations being spearheaded by members of the team: concrete countertops, interior lighting, and pallet manipulation - a few of the side projects that are being approached with careful consideration as well as wild experimentation.

I am now starting to appreciate this alternative pedagogy called "design/build". I am not entirely sure where else I could obtain this opportunity; it is honestly a once-in-a-lifetime thing that will allow me to say that I have contributed to the design and construction of a project that simply started from scratch, especially in my early 20s and within 4 months.

Is it too soon to start a countdown? I will wait.

November 07, 2015:

This week may have been the most exciting and satisfying week of the semester due to how we got in a full week of construction work in beautiful 60 -70 degree weather (GLOBAL WARMING IS NO JOKE, but thank you, Mother Nature!), plus I happened to enjoy celebrating my birthday at the chalet with my amazing team, eating my favorite kind of cake, Tres Leches.

We started the week realizing that one of the buildings is slightly "wonky" (aka the walls aren't exactly the same measurements). Instead of letting this hold us back, we compensated for it (that's just what you do when design-building... you just roll with the punches).

We also managed to get the mudroom floor and walls up, just in time for us to begin placing roof rafters in the mudroom in order to soon start roofing it. This task was mostly managed by Jussi, Ander, and myself, although I practically moved on to another project in spite of the frustration I was feeling towards the two as we failed to convey a plan on how to tackle the task efficiently and smoothly without any miscommunication. Looking back, I probably should not have abandoned the team, especially when we were nearly finished placing

all of the rafters, and instead, I should have come up with ways to talk things out with the guys in order to successfully complete the task, but I ultimately chose the easy way out by simply walking away and taking on a different task to complete.

Apart from sheathing and lifting all the exterior walls of the building, the interior walls have also gone up and are now ready for plumbing, these mainly included the walls in the resident space, which simply divide the public space from the private space.

Roofing is advancing. Rafters are on, and at the moment, Nate, Connor, Gwen, and Zoe are beginning with the sheathing before finishing it off with some PBR-styled metal roofing.

Windows are finally here! The decision-making process seriously took a long time to resolve as we debated on the number of windows, the size, the kind, and even the color we should order, due to having to change certain aspects of our design along the way. Eric even managed to squeeze in a quick, short demonstration on how to install a window so that we could start doing that very soon. Might get started on that tomorrow, yay!

We also had a few visitors throughout the week:

- Danny Sagan, an architect practicing in Vermont, Associate Professor of Architecture and Program Director in the School of Architecture and Art of Norwich University, researcher and author of *Architectural Improvisation*, an essay that discusses the beginnings of the design/build movement in Vermont, is primarily the inspiration behind my SIP simply because I've learned a lot about this new form of pedagogy from reading his work. He stirred my curiosity.
- Jan Ruta, a professional electrician, came in to teach the group in charge of the electrical tasks how to begin wiring the house, which ultimately ended with a tour by none other than Olivia, informing us about every single outlet, its placement, and what it would be wiring once it was all installed.

It's crazy to finally see how much we have gotten done since we begun, but even then, there is still a lot more that must get done and we only have about a month left. I do not want to freak out, but I truly hope that we get close to completing this project before delivering it to Janaki.

November 27, 2015:

I'm currently in Hartford, apartment-sitting for a friend who went back home to Chicago for Thanksgiving Break. You have no idea how good it feels to take a break from all the crazy madness that we have experienced these past couple of weeks. SO MUCH has gotten accomplished, and only TWO weeks remain until our deadline (YIKES!)

The whole structure's roof has been sheated, the fascia and soffits now make our roofline look a little more finished, and upon our return, Nate, Connor and Gwen will start applying the metal roofing onto it... SO EXCITING!

All of the windows have been installed, and we have also made, painted and hung up the window boxes that correspond to each window, followed with the trim that will mark our horizontal, continuity band which will run across the entire building and mark the difference between the materiality that we have chosen for our exterior siding.

We have finished blowing the cellulose insulation into all of the interior wall cavities, and even finished insulating the exterior with Roxul (very itchy stuff!) On top of that, furring strips have been screwed on, and soon we will begin cladding the exteriors, but first we must stain each board in order to waterproof it and to guard it from UV rays. Hopefully that does not take long.

Ander and I have applied wallboard onto the library walls, and have taped all the seams and screw openings with mudding. I chose dedicate my time mostly to this task primarily because I have prior experience with drywall being that my father is a drywaller himself and as I was growing up, he would always take me to work with him so that I could help him out. Not only would I be helping move the process a little faster by assisting with something I know how to do, but I saw this as the perfect opportunity to teach others how to apply the material. I'm glad Ander was curious enough to want to learn. Not going to lie, he is a pretty quick learner.

And after all this time, we finally got to meet the man who started this whole phenomenon back in the 1960s, Mr. Dave Sellers. I never imagined being able to meet him, but I am glad that I did. The fact that he invited us over to his studio (Temple of Dindor) and the Archie Bunker was a great way to learn more about his philosophy behind this alternative pedagogy while also learning about some of the projects he built throughout his time. I do not think anything else beats that... I will forever remember this phenomenal moment.

For now, I will make sure to enjoy my Thanksgiving Break before our long, last stretch. 2 weeks before this is all over. It is starting to feel a little bittersweet.

November 30, 2015:

We are back and time's still ticking. T-minus 11 days until open house and graduation day

Today we accomplished to get a lot minor things out of the way. Our exterior corner trims are finally installed, and we have began discussing ideas for the interior trim that will primarily go around the windows. On top of that, our first piece of exterior siding is up.

Wall board has been installed onto the library walls, taped, and even mudded. They are now ready to be painted, plus Ander & I have begun installing the wallboard in the residence.

The roof squad has begun installing some PBR-styled metal roofing, and it looks great!

Doors have finally arrived, yet we're still struggling to make a decision on the color we will be painting them... it is small decisions like this one that bring out the worst in this group. Deciding on the aesthetics for our exteriors turned into a huge brawl between some of the group members, I am really hoping it does not turn out the same way when deciding on the color.

We have finally experimented with concrete countertops. I cannot wait to see what Anita, Zoe, and Brandon were able to produce. I know those countertops will come out looking great!

December 02, 2015:

9 days and counting [sigh].

After quite a long discussion about doors, we have succeeded in choosing the colors for each of the doors in our design. In order to settle a tie between two options, we went ahead and flipped a board of fiber cement, instead of a coin. In all, it made the process of determining our colors completely easier and saved us a lot of energy that would have gone into fighting.

It is very satisfying to see so many finished materials going up, ultimately making the structure looked more finished. Door are now being painted, window trim is being cut out and installed, exterior cladding is finally going up, the ceiling in the resident space has been taped, mudded, and texturized with a sponge, the ceiling in the library space is also being installed, and last but not least, people have began building the cabinetry. We should be seeing some big changes within the next few days as we continue to work on the house.

I am trying to sustain my excitement.

December 04, 2015:

Today has been the most exhausting day thus far. The interior cladding is now being installed. Ander and I have managed to start installing wallboard in both bathrooms, while Connor and Sydney have begun installing wooden board in the residence.

The library is almost done. The ceiling is finally covered with wooden pine boards. At this point, we are just missing minor things (or at least I think they are minor tasks) such as painting the walls, covering up all the electrical outlets, installing the window trims, building the pallet door for the entrance, installing flooring, and ultimately hanging up the light fixtures.

As for the exteriors, everyone is chugging along. The fiber cement we used for our siding is all up; we are now just a few boards away from having all of the exterior finished. I am really happy with the aesthetics of this design. It looks soooooo good!

The cabinetry team is still building the kitchen cabinets, while the electrical team is putting together the light fixtures we will use for the library space. It is all coming together.

December 07, 2015:

T-minus 4 days. The more the clock ticks down, the more the pressure intensifies, thus a lot of us came down to the site during the weekend to keep advancing on the construction. A lot got done, and although we do not have much time, it seems like we will get to a very good spot.

Exterior cladding for both buildings is finally complete. We just have to finish up the mudroom, which should not take too long. As for the interior cladding in the residence, that is also almost complete... there is shiplap here and there. It is everywhere!

In regards to the bathrooms, all of the walls and ceilings are installed. We even managed to have a little dance party in one of the bathrooms to celebrate how fast we were moving along with the construction process these last couple of days.

Jan Ruta, the oh-so-wonderful professional electrician made another visit to check up on all the wiring that was installed by the electric team. She gave us the approval, and thus we were able to install the very first light fixture in the library.

The doors are finally being installed, and I can only imagine the view that one will be able to experience from the french doors that prop open in the library space. Brandon and Kelly have begun working on the pallet door that we all agreed to use as the library's entrance door. Each one of us has been provided with a piece of pallet wood to customize it so that we can display it. I have chosen to use a wood burner to carve "In Lak'ech" onto my board. This is a statement that references and symbolizes unity and oneness. Together, as one, we accomplished designing and building a structure that will hopefully one day serve as a place for everyone to come together and work together, despite one's differences, just as Janaki wanted.

And to conclude this entry, I must state that tomorrow we will finally be able to start installing one of the most anticipated task: flooring. YAY!

December 09, 2015:

We are flying through our to-do list, but somehow it never quite feels fast enough. We have gone from having eight exterior walls sided to all ten completed. Jussi and Nate managed to come up with the design to our entryway, which honestly came out better than we all expected. We also finished the window trim in the library, cladded another interior wall in the residence, visited with Jan again, got the appliances delivered, finished the door jamb for the pallet door, and started planning where each decorated pallet would go on the door.

Right now, painting the library, finishing the interior cladding, and starting the flooring seem to be our biggest goals. How fast can we achieve them? In two days, we'll find out.

December 10, 2015:

T-minus one day and here we are, checking off the last few items on our list before revealing the grand finale to Janaki at tomorrow's open house.

The bathrooms continue to look ever more finished, with the public one fully cladded and painted, while the wet bath is still being covered in fiber cement board.

The residence walls are now fully cladded, and all of the window trim has been installed.

Maybe our biggest difference, however, is the floor which now covers about half the library. Floors are one of the last things to be put down, and thus would be one of the first things pushed off the list if we resigned ourselves to not having a finished-looking building by the open house. Installing them is a good omen, a sign that we can do what we set out to do.

I am really hoping Janaki loves what we've come to design and build for her. We have not seen her since our last round of schematics, when we visited Marlboro College months ago, and it is completely nerve-racking just thinking about the way she will react. We will have to wait to see it all happen tomorrow night. One more day... but we got this!

December 11, 2015:

The day is finally here and we have yet to get a few things done before tonight's open house. By this point, we are aware of the fact that we will NOT complete the entire project like we hoped to, but for being the biggest project a semester program has undertaken, we got pretty close to it. We have basically built something double the size of previous projects, and knowing that we accomplished a whole lot feels extremely good (pats back).

We have finished installing flooring in the library, and have very little left in the residence. The private, wet-bathroom is almost complete as well. We just need to finish installing flooring and move the bathroom cabinet and sink inside. The pallet door is completed, but yet has to be installed. Brandon and Kelly did such a great job with it. Light fixtures for the library space are currently being hung up, and we hope to turn them on at tonight's open house to illuminate the space. Cabinetry has been successfully built by Sonja and Emma, and will be installed in a bit along with the corresponding appliances we bought for the kitchen.

Apart from all that, we also have to start cleaning up the site to make it look presentable. It's crazy to see the transformation from what first started on paper and now is actually built.

I AM SPEECHLESS.

Reflection

As I sit here finalizing my Senior Integrative Project, I cannot help but look back at my experience and be forever grateful to have had this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity thanks to Professor Morash and Professor Alchermes, who helped me discover the program and constantly supported me throughout this endeavor. This is indeed a time that I will forever cherish and reminisce about in the time to come simply because of the unique experience I was able to endure while exploring a completely new environment and class setting different from what I have been used to back at Connecticut College. The things I managed to learn at Yestermorrow are completely different from everything I have learned through our architectural studies program, and in actuality, a much better pedagogical approach that ultimately inspired an even greater passion for architecture. Being able to work with my hands, whether it was hammering nails, plastering mud and tape, hanging rafters, installing windows, painting the exterior siding, or even hanging up light fixtures, allowed me to acquire new skills that I did not have when I first arrived, and even gave me a new outtake on architecture and construction, which I have come to appreciate a whole lot more because I have for once seen all the HARD WORK that goes into this type of work. Just knowing that I am a little more competent to build something if I was given the opportunity to do so makes me feel a little proud of myself and my new capabilities as an experienced builder. In the end, I got so much out of this project, including but not limited to long-lasting friendships, exposure to the architecture and construction profession, plus, a place to always stop by if I ever find myself back in the Green Mountain State, Vermont.

As for my SIP, I am glad to be able to close this chapter of my life by dedicating my last year of undergraduate to this project. Prior to this experience, I was very ignorant about Vermont, its vernacular architecture and the design/build phenomenon. Partaking in a semester-long study away program at Yestermorrow not only opened my eyes to new things, but also raised a lot of curiosity, thus I chose to focus primarily on the evolution of the design/build movement to connect its history and its progression to my personal experience at Yestermorrow. I have learned so much from simply participating in the Vermont lifestyle during the four months I was there, and I hope to come back in the future to hopefully build my own tiny house in the middle of nowhere.

As for the next chapter of my life, as a middle school teacher, this program and SIP have taught me the importance of different pedagogical approaches that are used to enhance one's learning experience. As humans, we all learn differently, thus it is essential to keep that in mind when teaching a lesson plan. I have to start being considerate of other's learning abilities, and make sure that as a teacher I can guide my students through the process until they feel competent enough to try it on their own. Once I have completed my journey with Teach for America, I hope to go back to school to attain my master's in public policy with a concentration in education, poverty and urban planning, in order to learn more about up-and-coming tiny house villages for the homeless, and work towards fabricating better policies and solutions to end homelessness in the United States. I might have the proper knowledge to build a tiny structure, but I want to be even more educated on the issues of poverty and inequality so that I can provide the proper public services for those in need. These are the 'blueprints' to my life for the next five years. I am not entirely sure where I will end up, but sure can hope that it is something relevant to teaching and/or building for the sake of others. Anything I do, I do it for others rather than myself.

Many several thanks to Janaki for entrusting us entirely with the creation of one of her lifelong ambitions while making it extremely clear that she hoped to make this primarily a learning experience for us just as much as she wanted it built. The same goes for Patrice and Mikaela, two of Janaki's closest friends and colleagues. They

are mainly responsible for encouraging Janaki to reach out to Yestermorrow, and without that support, this whole project would not have been possible.

I want to thank the gang for an amazing four long months. Each and every single one of you has inspired me one way or another. From canoeing blindfolded at Kettle Pond to even helping me take care of Little Lou (pet hamster) as we kept her a secret from Eric and the housekeeping lady, at the chalet, it has all been immensely memorable and such a great time. I cannot wait to one day reunite with all of you in the beautiful building we managed to build.

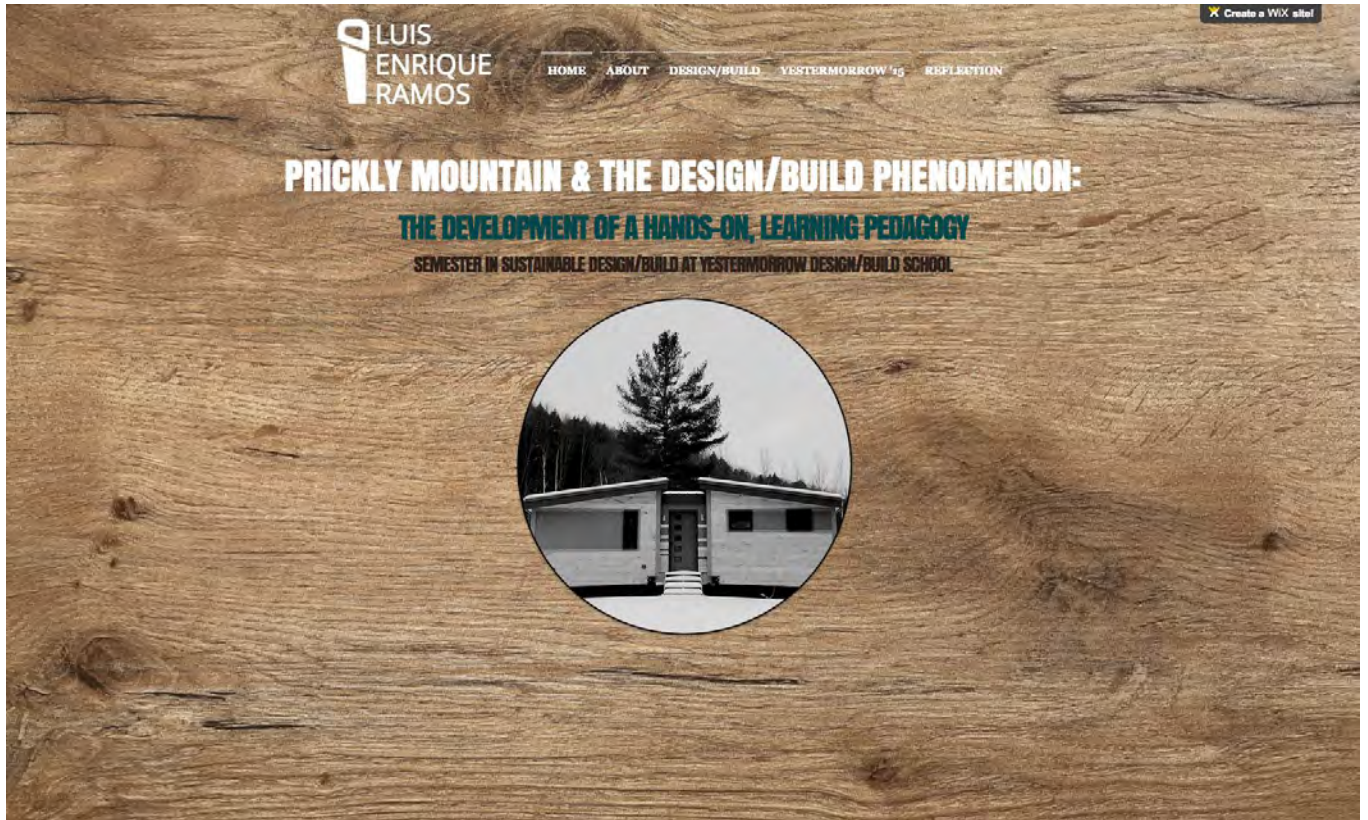
As for my instructors, Eric and Vincent, thank you for being incredibly laid-back, but always attentive and helpful throughout this entire process. I definitely learned a lot from each one of you, ultimately making me a better builder. And last, but not least, Jess, or as we like to call her, INTERN OF THE YEAR, thank you for always having our back, especially when driving to places to purchase our building materials (or to even get free popcorn) at Bisbee's. Without you or that Yestermorrow truck, who knows if we would have been able to build something.

I am glad this whole experience turned out to be better than I had expected, and I am glad that our building is finally on site as of recently. I cannot wait to visit soon. In all, this has been a tremendous undertaking and a pleasure to be a part of. Go, Team Y!

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WHO AM I?



A fourth-year undergraduate student at Connecticut College fulfilling a B.A. in architectural studies and sociology, combined with a certificate in public policy from the College's Holleran Center for Community Action and Public Policy.

I came to Connecticut College as a prospective architectural studies major, but little did I know that this experience would ultimately be incredibly eye-opening and transformative. Over the course of four years, I've come to have a better understanding of what architecture is; it is beyond designing.

During the fall semester of 2015, I embarked on a journey where I enrolled in a semester program at Yestermorrow Design/Build School, located in Waitsfield, VT, just four hours away from Connecticut College, where I had the opportunity to immerse myself in a new format of learning provided by the alternative pedagogy that has been implemented at some architectural education programs known as "design/build." The ability to translate theory into practice, ultimately building an architecturally innovative high-performance structure of our own design, inspired my Senior Integrative Project (SIP), which focuses on the development of the design/build phenomenon, specifically in Vermont.

Since emerging in 1965, the [design/build](#) movement has received much attention, especially in Vermont, from both the design profession and academia regarding its hands-on, learning approaches.

This site will discuss the progression of the design/build phenomenon, reflecting upon the pedagogy that emerged through new methods that turned away from the traditional practice of architecture. I will address the following questions: *What is design/build? How did it originate? What has it evolved into?* But specifically, *what have I learned from it?* Additionally, this site will propose that the use of the design/build approach in architectural education can be a fundamental and meaningful teaching methodology, while addressing what I have come to learn about it through a personal narrative of my semester at Yestermorrow Design/Build School in fall 2015.

Today, the role of the architect has changed. The profession has evolved, with design/build emerging as a relatively new opportunity that revitalizes an architect's undertaking with that of a builder's. Moreover, the architectural education has shifted beyond the "two types of institutions" that were introduced in Europe in the late nineteenth century (1). Most architectural programs continue taking place in these two types of institutions, polytechnic institutes and art schools, "leading to a professional degree and licensing," model of education. In this system, students are often taught through a pedagogy that consists of a design studio in which students are assigned imaginary projects for which must develop floor plans, elevations, sections, and perspective drawings, either by hand or with the use of a computer software, in order to enhance their drafting skills (2). Given that this form of educational program "omits most of the real conditions a designer would face on a real project, such as a real client, and the other members of the design/building team, such as engineers and other consultants, contractors, permitting agencies, and cost estimators," a new format has been recently adopted and implemented in some schools (3).

Architecture has been defined as a “collaborative discipline that engages architectural teams with clients, consultants, engineers, builders and developers, and numerous government agencies;” it is a multifaceted and integrative field of study that requires collaborative effort, plus an understanding of the realities of design and construction (4). The need for design/build is simply manifested by the “disconnect from academia to practice from design to construction,” (5) thus educators are looking for new ways to “engage experiential education in the classroom,” by incorporating a design/build curriculum that will enable students to partake in a new forum of learning that consists of a “decision-making process, techniques for collaboration, fabrication skills, and logistical planning,” in order to create a usable product through community building (6).

Apparently in the United States, there is a “long-standing perception that the graduates of most accredited schools of architecture are poorly prepared to be fully-functional employees in an active architectural firm,” which is specifically a result of the way architects are trained (7). This perception has demanded a call for change, and has altered twenty-first-century architectural practice and education. The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) has suggested that “the levels of engagement with the ‘realities of professional practice’ should be raised and that students should be immersed in a learning environment that is responsive to the diverse and constantly changing environments of the contemporary construction industry” (8). Thus, one of the strategies for embedding such immersion is through the use of community-based design/build projects, “a branch of architectural study in which students conceive, generate, and actively participate in transforming a design into a real structure or space” (9). This approach is not necessarily new, but it is increasing in mainstream popularity as more and more design/build programs are underway across the United States.

Several decades ago, in Vermont, a group of “renegade, entrepreneurial young architects and architecture students” began to meet in “the foothills of Vermont’s Green Mountains” to seek “creative, professional and economic freedom in inexpensive land and distance from the country’s urban areas” (10). In 1964, three friends from the Yale School of Architecture “conceived a plan to become developers, designers, and builders of ski cabins” while skiing at Sugarbush, in Warren, VT (11). At the time, land was reasonably priced and skiing was gaining more recognition and popularity, therefore these young architecture students presumed that by taking the chance to build “speculative projects,” they could sell them for a profit, hence David Sellers and William Reineke invested on a piece of land near Warren, which later became established and recognized as Prickly Mountain, while Peter Gluck launched his own design/built projects in Bolton, VT (12). This became the precedent for a new architectural movement catering a new way to make architecture. They envisioned a movement in which one would have the ability to “control the economics and construction of their buildings, as well as the design,” changing how architecture was practiced along with the way that buildings can be made (13). Ultimately, this became the new design culture of Vermont, which continues to live on to this day while being duplicated in several other locations across the U.S.

Prickly Mountain has had a lasting impact due to the early architectural projects that now serve as artifacts of what was then a “new and experimental way of making buildings” (14). Projects such as the Tack House, the Sibley/Pyramid House, the Dimetrodon, or even the Goddard College Design Center, Sculpture and Painting Buildings, are all foundational examples that have been used to explain the history behind the design/build movement, including its progression throughout the years, when originally the idea behind the launching of these projects revolved around “business ventures” that ultimately ended up granting architects “independence and artistic freedom” to “pursue architecture in a new way” (15). By seeking an alternative method to make buildings, Sellers and Reineke hoped to be more involved in all aspects of the construction, something that they had not necessarily been exposed to during their time at the Yale School of Architecture. As they began to explore this non-traditional approach with their first experiment, the Tack House, the architects recognized the disparities in their architectural education and training. The use of this alternative approach turned out to be fundamental and meaningful in comparison to the traditional one since Sellers and Reineke not only continued to endorse it in projects following the Tack House, but even managed to transform the way architects made architecture by starting a phenomenon that ultimately changed Vermont’s design culture. The intentionalities that this new approach offered are ultimately more preferable than the ones provided by the traditional approach.

Despite the fact that there are a limited number of studies that have investigated on the topic of design/build, the majority claim that design/build has more to offer because of its “unique and complex interdisciplinary practice” that makes its pedagogy relevant to other disciplines and authorizes future architects to become informed based on the learning experience that is granted through this approach (16). Today, design/build is simply defined as a “pedagogical alternative to the theoretical, desk-based, and media-driven (drawings, models, digital models) design process commonly featured in design schools” that instead combines the design and construction entities in order to “extend student’s design skills by making a stronger link with material experimentation and construction,” referred to as “hands-on learning, learning-by-making, learning by building, 1:1,” and is seen as a “variant of experiential learning” where students are literally introduced to the art of building (17). Being that construction is an entity that is not often taught in traditional architecture school programs, design/build aims to help students gain exposure to it. Not only does this exposure grant students the opportunity to “demystify the construction site,” but also “realize what is involved in taking architecture from a drawing to a building,” through a process that requires physical labor (18). In this approach, students gain an understanding of construction as they build.

Apart from gaining exposure to construction, design/build programs also “expose students to a broader range of architectural practice” that is disregarded and uninstructed in academia (19). This includes all aspects of the design and construction process such as “dealing with clients, codes, inspectors, contractors,” or even “product suppliers,” and without this knowledge, most students are not being prepared nor trained adequately to be a fully-functional employee in an active architectural firm (20). Internships can be eye-opening to a certain extent, providing students with some architectural practice experience, but one ultimately gains more out of a design/build program, especially when encountering issues that will come up if and when one has become employed at a firm.

Being a collaborative discipline, collaborative work is a necessary and significant component of most design/build programs. Steve Badanes, founding member of the Jersey Devil design/build practice, discussed that “design-build is by nature a group project that benefits from collegiality and diversity and that working well together with your teammates is of no less importance as working with your clients and neighbors” (21). Group projects not only provide a sense of camaraderie among the people that create and work together, but also provides an opportunity to expose others to different ideas and skills as a form of engagement. Through collaborative efforts, it is easier to execute the large projects that are featured in design/build programs, but that is all based upon team integration, as opposed to the individual projects that one is assigned in design studio at most traditional architectural education programs. Success is “directly dependent upon the ability of the entire team to work together collaboratively” (22).

On top of all that, design/build programs also allow students to explore new methods of project delivery where they are given the opportunity to explore new ideas through different approaches to best produce a design that is suitable and in correspondence with the clients wants and needs. Planning how to tackle the project requires a lot of effort and time, thus making it important to evaluate several options, ideas, and concepts when considering the design, the materiality, and construction required to successfully deliver a project.

In sum, design/build, in all, enables students to be directly engaged through processes that allow them to think and do (23). Students have become “frustrated with theory-driven virtual architecture and a profession that works at the top of the food chain,” thus they are “pushing for outreach, hands-on experiences because they want meaning in their lives and want it to be embodied in their education” (24). As I look back at my college journey studying architecture, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to partake in a design/build program at the Yestermorrow Design/Build School.



1. S. Van der Ryn, "Lifetime Learning Design," in *Design for an Empathic World: Reconnecting People, Nature, and Self* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2013), 71.

2. *Ibid.*, 72-73.

3. *Ibid.*, 72-73.

4. *Ibid.*, 74.

5. Matthew Ginn, "Practicing Design Build," in *2015 ACSA/AIA Intersections Proceedings* (Washington, DC: ACSA Press, 2015), 14.

6. Matthew K. Sutter, "Design/Build in Architectural Education: studying community-focused curriculum" (Master's Thesis, University of Massachusetts - Amherst, 2015), 2.

7. Chad Schwartz, Laura Morthland, and Shannon McDonald, "Building a Social Framework: Utilising Design/Build to Provide Social Learning Experiences for Architecture Students," *Architectural Theory Review* 19, no. 1 (2014): 77.

8. *Ibid.*, 77.

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10. Janis Cohen, *Architectural Improvisation: A History of Vermont's Design/Build Movement 1964-1977* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2008), 7.

11. *Ibid.*, 10.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 11.

15. *Ibid.*

16. Vincent B. Canzaro, "Design-Build in Architectural Education: Motivations, Practices, Challenges, Successes and Failures," *Archnet-IJAR* 6, no. 3 (2012): 34.

17. *Ibid.*, 20-21.

18. *Ibid.*, 22.

19. *Ibid.*, 24.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 25-26.

22. Design-Build Institute of America, *Design-Build Done Right: Universally Applicable Best Practices Applying to Any Project Type, in Any Market Sector, of Any Size* (2014): 8.

23. Steve Badanos, "Design/Build: Let Them Build It, They Will Come," *Architect*, last modified December 06, 2009, http://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/design-build-let-them-build-it-they-will-come_a.

24. Canzaro, 24.

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(THE YESTERMORROW GANG)

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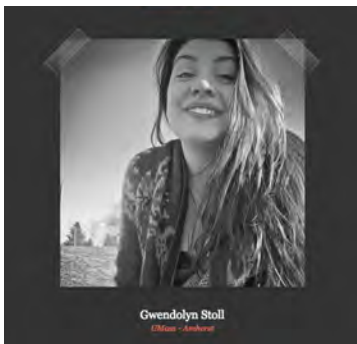
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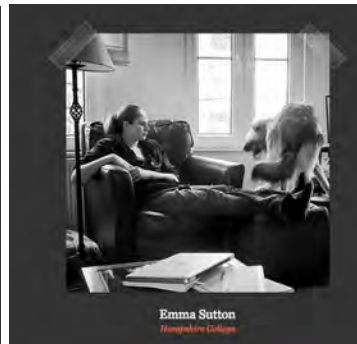
Luis Ramos
Connecticut College



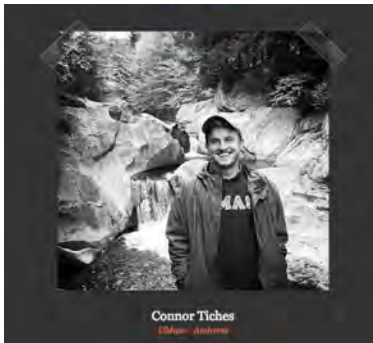
Gwendolyn Stoll
UMass - Amherst



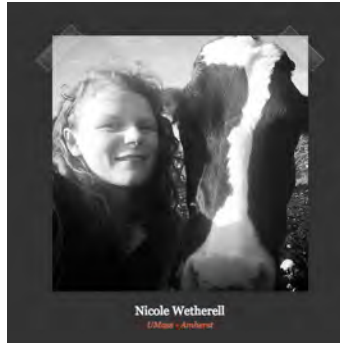
Jussi Sulliman
Tufts University



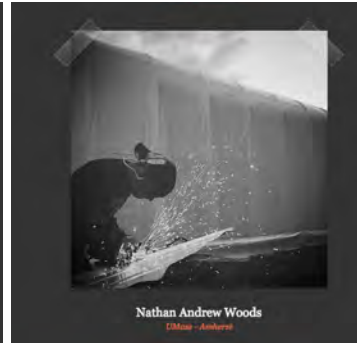
Emma Sutton
Hampshire College



Connor Tiches
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Nicole Wetherell
UMass - Amherst



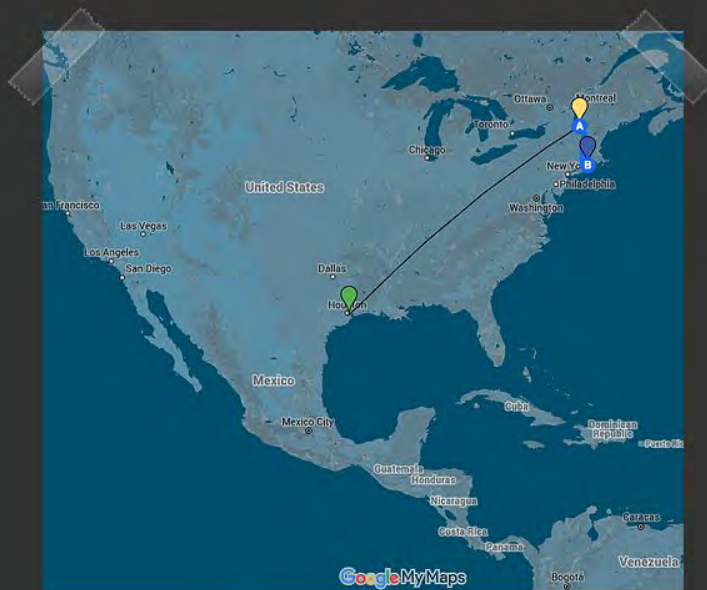
Nathan Andrew Woods
UMass - Amherst

AUGUST 14, 2015:

As I'm packing my bags the day before heading out to Vermont, I cannot help but wonder what I will encounter within the next 4 months that I will be away from home and away from Connecticut College in what seems like the middle-of-nowhere Mad River Valley, studying in Waitsfield, VT at the Yestermorrow Design/Build School.

I just completed a rigorous seven-week fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University, taking intensive graduate-level courses while engaging in discussions with professional public servants and partaking in career prep workshops that ultimately provided me with continued learning experiences and strengthened my passion for public service, thus I am hoping that my next journey will be as exciting, as enjoyable, and as educational as this previous one.

This is bound to be my first time traveling to Vermont, so I am anticipating countless hiking trips, stunning scenery, tall mountains, lush green trees, covered bridges, maple syrup, local farmers' markets, autumn foliage, and of course, the brutal winter that everyone keeps warning me about. It seems as if the opportunities for adventure are endless in Vermont. I cannot wait to see what is in store for the next upcoming months. It shall be a thrill!



AUGUST 15, 2015:

Today has been quite a hectic day simply trying to make it to the Yestermorrow campus. Not only did I miss my bus to Vermont, but I was stranded in Boston for quite some time, frantically reaching out to Eric Cook, director of the semester program, for help. Luckily, he managed to find another student in the program to give me a ride, but first I had to make my way to Portsmouth, NH in order to meet up with her. While on the bus, I became incredibly nervous about my journey thus far. I was very apprehensive about the way things were going, plus I was hoping that Zoe wouldn't be bothered by the fact that we had to tag along to get to Yestermorrow. Meeting people has never been an easy task for me, but I tried my best to start a conversation with Zoe in order to get to know her better as we drove to campus. Growing up in an urban setting such as Houston, it was quite a shift to drive through New Hampshire and into Vermont where there was nothing but green land and mountains along the road. What felt like an endless road trip ultimately came to an end as we approached Yestermorrow, just in time for the communal dinner with the rest of the semester gang. We went around the table, introducing ourselves and just finished learning about our upcoming camping trip to Groton State Forest. As I pack for the upcoming weekend, I'm getting more and more pumped about being here, in a completely new environment, surrounded by new people. I can't help but appreciate this opportunity that I've been provided with. This is just the beginning (a chaotic one)... YAY!





Beautiful sunset at Kettle Pond.

The first day of class was spent sitting around the tables in studio where we were introduced to the Yestermorrow faculty, given a tour of the Yestermorrow campus, established ground rules, discussed traits of good and bad group dynamics, discussed our goals for the semester, and shared what sustainable design/build means to each of us. Much to our excitement, we also chose our studio desks (ended choosing mine first based on a number drawing) and dove straight into our first exercise at the drafting tables. After being sedentary for most of the day, some of us headed down to Warren Falls to celebrate Zoe's birthday and test our fear of heights.

AUGUST 20, 2015:

We are back at Yestermorrow after “glam-ping” (glamorous camping) at Groton State Forest this past weekend. This has been thus far the best camping experience ever simply because it was amazing driving down the Vermont countryside and camping near Kettle Pond Lake where we had the opportunity to get to know each other a little better through a series of group activities such as blind canoeing, where two people in one canoe were blindfolded and guided by another canoe as an attempt to start developing group communication, which by now has become obvious that it will play a significant role throughout the semester.



Warren Falls, Warren, VT.

As the day is finally coming to an end, many of us are currently sprawled out in the main room of the ski house (where half of the group will be living for the semester) completing the first reading for tomorrow’s class discussion. Thus, my first full day at the Yestermorrow campus has been thrilling. I cannot wait to get the ball rolling with a few more drafting exercises before actually designing this semester’s group project.

AUGUST 22, 2015:

It's my first weekend at Yestermorrow, and I'm just taking the time to think about the next 4 months.

I can honestly say that we've got a big challenge ahead of us:

15 STUDENTS + 15 WEEKS + 1 CLIENT = (ADDS UP TO) THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AMAZING PROJECT

I cannot imagine what that will look like, but I can definitely say that this will be worth reminiscing about in years to come.

15 people working on one project; it will be a tough thing to work with so many people, and as recent events have shown, even the smallest decisions take an immense amount of time to reach consensus. It's a challenge for sure, but not one that cannot be met. As each of us moves towards learning how we work as an individual part of a dynamic whole, we are bound to learn more about ourselves, our strengths, and our place in this project. A group as large and diverse as ours holds an enormous amount of ideas, skills, and vision waiting to be shared, and by channelling the energy in the group we will produce something beautiful.

As I spend time getting to know each member of the team, I only become more and more impressed by them and am truly honored to get the chance to work and learn with everyone. What an amazing opportunity! What an amazing school! What an amazing place to be!

Together, we are bound to create the greatest thing on this planet.



AUGUST 24, 2015:

Today, we (*finally!*) met our client. The amount of preparation that went into this meeting was surreal; I did not expect this process to be exceptionally time-consuming and long.

For this client meeting, we were taking on the important task of querying our client to develop an architectural program that best resonated with her needs to successfully execute one of her lifelong ambitions. This task required all 15 of us to format a meeting that would allow us to gain as much useful information to best provide what our client sought.

To begin, each one of us had to develop a list of at least 15 questions that would extract programmatic information from the client. Ultimately, we managed to create a concise and well-structured agenda from a list of 225+ questions (featured below) for our first project milestone.

Pre-Design Meeting Agenda <small>August 24, 2015</small>	
> Time Keeper: Sonja > Scribes: Gwen, Ander, Olivia	
Introductions & Personal Relationship to the Project	
The Story of the Space	
Design, Aesthetic, & Mood	
Goals & Visions	
Function & Use	
Sustainability & Environmental Concerns	

In all, we were able to learn a lot about our client. She is a very passionate, wise woman named Janaki. She brought with her two of the women that she works with (and a terrific toddler) to consult and offer insight into what drives this project and how it was all inspired.

We asked a variety of functional, practical questions, but the ones that gave us the most insight and inspiration were the ones that delved into the motivations and life experiences of the three fantastic women that sat in front of us. Every question we asked was answered with respect and depth. Their responses will most likely prove to be more of a guide in the months to come.

Getting Acquainted:

- What has driven you to do the kind of work that you do?
- What are your visions and expectations of the final projects?
- Tell us the story of your need of the building.
- Will this building be run by an individual or an organization?
- How did you get the idea or desire to create this space?
- What are some challenging aspects of your work?
- What elements of your past that can influence the project or space?
- What is the easiest way for you to keep this dialogue open during this process?
- How do you define a safe space? How do you see people using tech in the space, and will it impede on your safe space?
- Have you ever worked with a design build group before?
- Are there any spaces or programs that would inspire the space?
- Are there any art or movements that you want reflected in the space?

Story/Intent of Space (Genesis/ Future):

- For how long do you think this space will function?
- Are you anticipating a change in ownership and of function as time goes on?
- Where do you think your relationship with the building will be in 5, 10, 50 (recycle, dismantled)?
- What is the story of the land and will it influence the space?
- What is the story of the space, how did you come up with it?
- What are you most excited about?
- What are your fears or concerns of this project?

Feeling/Mood of the Space:

- Do you want the space to evoke a certain emotion?
- Would you say you are more traditional when it comes to your design taste? Or more modern?
- How open do you intend the study area to be to the public? How much privacy are you looking for in the residence?
- Is there a certain type of material that you like?
- How do you define a safe space?
- What are the certain aspects of your own home that you like?
- How important is light?
- Can you provide a phrase or word for the general feeling of the space?
- How do you want the two halves to be connected?
- Which functions of the house do you want to be emphasized? What do you want to eye to be drawn to?
- What physical attributes create a safe space for you?
- What the most important thing that you see when you walk into the entrance of a building or room?
- Is there a color palette that you are drawn to? Do you like natural tones or artificial colors?
- Are there aspects of the surrounding environment (the plot of land, the town, Vermont, the U.S., etc)

Essentials/Necessities:

- Are there any design aspects that you like or dislike?
- What do you not want?
- Are there any materials that you do not want to use?
- Are there any materials that you would like us to use only in limited quantities?

Function/ Use/Goals :

Looking for insight into what she hopes to accomplish in the two spaces & how we can design them to accommodate those goals.

- Why are you opening this space and what are you intending to do with it?
 - *Space and Time*
 - Are there any specific hours of operation, time of day and year?
 - Would you like any specific part of the building to be facing a certain direction?
 - Morning sun in the east or setting sun in the west?
 - Is there a particular view that you would like to encapsulate?
 - What kinds of accessibility do you want to the outside land?
 - Open doors, big windows, skylights
 - How flexible should the space be?
 - Would you want anything to be modular?
 - *Occupants and Accessibility*
 - How open to the public will this space be?
 - What kinds of people and age groups do you imagine being here?
 - Are you planning on children using the space often?
 - If so, would you like to add a strong dimension of whimsy to the space?
 - Do you want this to be wheelchair accessible, how accessible?
 - Would you like this space to accommodate to anyone specific?
 - How many people should the space fit?
 - Is there any specific part of the residential side that you want to be more pronounced?
 - What do you want it focused on?
 - What are you hoping the people, who come and live in the space temporarily, will get out of it?
 - How long will they stay for?
 - *Storage/ Work Space*
 - What are your hobbies and do they require specific storage spaces?
 - What do you plan on storing?
 - Do you need specific shelves for books?
 - Do you need work tables, if so, how many? Do you want a personal desk?
 - Are there any sight lines that we can accommodate to with the interest of lecturing?
 - *Technology*
 - Will you need a projector?
 - Do we need to pay extra attention to the acoustics of the space for voice or sound to carry?

Sustainability/Environmental Concerns:

- Where do you stand with the environmental footprint of the building?
- What does sustainability mean to you?
- Do you have any processes, systems, or materials that you would like us to implement?
- How much effort are you willing to put in to maintain a sustainable building?
- We understand that you are supportive of social justice, in what forms?
 - Are you interested in environmental justice, if so what aspects of it are you passionate about?
- How much importance do you place on sustainability?
- Would you rather have recycled materials or natural materials?
- How willing are you to invest in sustainable systems and also are you looking for any monetary return?
- would you be willing to compromise comfort or beauty for sustainability?

I'm still in awe with Janaki. I respect her for primarily entrusting us entirely with the creation of one of her lifelong ambitions while making it extremely clear that she hopes to make this a learning experience for us just as much as she wants it built. I do not know anyone else who would be willing to contribute \$60K to 15 non-experienced students in order to build her a structure that she could utilize to continue her praxis. I just met her, but I consider her one of my biggest inspirations and role models, simply because of who she is, which is ultimately everything I want to be.

I'm beyond excited to begin designing!

AUGUST 31, 2015:

This past weekend we ended up traveling south for an inspiration trip to get our creative juices flowing as we begin to collaborate on different schematic designs to propose to Janaki.

Our first stop on the trip was none other than Janaki's property in Putney, VT, where we got to explore the site where our design would be placed after its completion. It was here where we made one of our first group decisions regarding the location of our project. Ultimately, we ended up voting on a spot that we believed would permit privacy, as it's hidden behind a cluster of sumacs, and would provide a great view of the meadow and barn across the main road, which were some of Janaki's requests when discussing further plans for her project.







Our next stop happened to be at Bennington College, where we continued to explore Vermont's vernacular architecture. I personally believe that BC has a diverse college aesthetic simply because of its mixed architecture styles that are spread throughout campus. I really enjoyed looking around campus; it was incredibly beautiful.



The following day, we got to explore around the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (Mass MoCA), followed by a visit to 2013's semester project, and a tour of UMass-Amherst Associate Professor Ray Mann's house. I enjoyed seeing what the other group accomplished during their semester program due to how it allowed me to put things into perspective and come to a realization that we are seeking to do the same thing within the next 15 weeks. I still cannot comprehend the idea behind this program, but this visit gave me a better understanding of what could be attained if we manage to successfully execute Janaki's dream.









2013's Semester Program.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015:

During the past three weeks, LOTS has happened.

This past Friday, we presented our third round of schematics for our client, Janaki, and her two friends at Marlboro College, where we had the opportunity to meet some of the Spark students who are working towards receiving their masters and teaching certification to teach social justice in the State of Vermont (such an awesome graduate program).

After quickly introducing one another, we split up into groups and were tasked with labeling a series of world maps with their corresponding country, followed by a discussion on how 'teachers' and 'builders' play a role within recent social justice issues such as #BlackLivesMatter or climate change. It was interesting to hear what each and every single group discussed during this activity, especially when we have been dealing a lot with architectural-related topics in class that it felt great to move away from that for a few minutes.

After lunch, the room became filled with a mixture of excitement and anxiety as each group prepared to present their schemes. Despite the craziness (i.e. meltdowns and breakdowns) that is dealt with throughout the week prior to presentation time, the critique is the one thing we all look forward to the most, especially because we are eager to see the reaction others will have in regards to the design that each group has developed, hoping that each group receives feedback.

In all, Janaki and her friends enjoyed the three different schematics that were presented to her, for she wished that we could actually build all three designs, but due to a few constraints such as money and time, all three groups will come together next week to design the structure that Janaki has asked us to build for her. I know that I'm speaking for everyone when I say that we're pumped for our last round of schematics, as all 18 of us (including Eric, Vince, and Jess) work together to design a structure for our client. Soon, we will start putting our knowledge into action as we begin to get our hands dirty constructing Janaki's dream structure from scratch.



SEPTEMBER 21, 2015:



And so begins, the collaborative group design phase of the project... ALL 18 OF US, *hurray!*
I guess this could be considered as another milestone, since this is a moment that we have all been looking forward to since we began designing this semester's project.

Despite the excitement, I am extremely apprehensive about this phase due to my experience during the previous schematic design rounds. I am not entirely enjoying the design process simply because of all the decision making that must be made as a compromise between all 18 of us. I appreciate the fact that we all have different ideas, and are open to listening to each and every single one of them, but I'm starting to realize how those with more architectural knowledge are often the ones who partake more in this process by always having something to say. Personally, I lack confidence when sharing my own ideas because I have trouble explaining what I envision, especially to teammates who potentially know whether or not my ideas are conceivable and could actually work. I don't want to be told that my ideas are unreasonable or stupid, thus I remain quiet throughout most of the decision-making process, unless I am asked otherwise to share my opinion on a vote.

I can say that I'm more eager to begin using my hands to start building.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2015:

Today was a particularly momentous day in the world of the Yestermorrow semester program:

WE MADE THE FIRST CUTS AND HAMMERED THE FIRST NAILS OF OUR FLOOR-PACK

Up to this day, we have been doing a ton of fine-tuning & decision making, all in preparation to begin building. With 11 weeks left (may seem like a lot of time), I'm glad we were able to get it in just under the gun, having started, technically, in September. We broke off into groups of three, working on various aspects of the building: residence, study and book shelves (with mudroom), site planning, windows, and materials. We have chosen to break it up so that we can cover more work at once, but have made an active effort to pull all of the spaces together. More important than anything else is that we got the supplies for our floor-pack in this week so we were all hands on deck for our, mostly ceremonial, christening of the shop.

Needless to say, we were pretty enthusiastic, even if we misjudged a few cuts and nail placements. I feel that I can speak for everyone when I say that despite the change in the weather, we are chomping at the bit to get out and work.





OCTOBER 07, 2015:

After a first full week of construction, not only have we managed to build our first floor-pack (soon to be the library space), but also frame and lift our very first wall. YAY!

Just a week ago, we started banging the first nails in, yet it is amazing to see the progress we have made within a week. We successfully hung all the joists, insulated the floor-pack, put on the subflooring, framed a wall, sheated the wall, and finally lifted the wall, all of which I enjoyed very much since this was the kind of action I have been anticipating since I first learned about Yestermorrow's Semester Program. In academia, we do not necessarily learn about the process that follows the development of a design. We only get to see one side of the profession, while at Yestermorrow, we're able to engage in that procedure by actually getting our hands dirty with some building. Based on the progression of this project, I know we are all hoping to accomplish this project within the next ten weeks. Despite it being the biggest project Yestermorrow has ever undertaken, I know we are all capable of producing something incredible for Janaki.







OCTOBER 23, 2015:

This past week, we got back into the groove of things after taking a little break for fall break. Despite the fact that our progress was hindered by the arrival of the corner brackets, we have actually made some serious progress, not only installing each and every single one of those corner brackets, but also getting our budget worked out, developing ideas for lighting fixtures, nailing all of our roof rafters in the library space, and finishing the second floor-pack just in time before the weekend. I'm not too happy about the weather... winter seems to be arriving a little too early this year, and unfortunately it is time to start layering up in order to go outside to help with the construction. Let's see what the future holds for all of us.



The infamous corner brackets we've all been waiting for.





Installing corner brackets in between the floor joists and on each corner of the floor-packs.



NOVEMBER 02, 2015:

These past couple of days have been filled with nothing but festivities. The gang decided to throw a Halloween party at the chalet, and I can honestly say that I had the time of my life being corn on the cob (also ended up winning the BEST COSTUME award). Now that we are basically working outside for the majority of the day, it was amazing to simply relax and have fun on a Friday evening with the rest of the team, still getting to know each other despite working together for about three months. The following day, I traveled down to Connecticut College to celebrate my 22nd birthday with all my camel friends. I wasn't too happy about the speeding ticket I received as I was leaving Mad River Valley, but in all, the weekend turned out to be incredible and a great break from everything.



Channeling my inner Vermont. I've always wanted to be corn on the cob!

As of today, after working on construction for over a month, the roof for in our library has been sheathed and we have begun spreading common rafters for our resident space, all while sheating the library and resident space walls, and now moving on to the mudroom. It is awesome to see the space being actualized after months of arduous designing and thoughtful planning. The scale of this project has become a reality. Despite some hiccups along the way (those darn corner brackets!), I believe we are keeping a good pace, plus moral seems high. I am personally excited to see all of the side explorations being spearheaded by members of the team: concrete countertops, interior lighting, and pallet manipulation - a few of the side projects that are being approached with careful consideration as well as wild experimentation.



Library (right) is fully sheathed, including roof. Residence (left) is still in the sheating process. Mudroom will go in between the two.

I am now starting to appreciate this alternative pedagogy called “design/build”. I am not entirely sure where else I could obtain this opportunity; it is honestly a once-in-a-lifetime thing that will allow me to say that I have contributed to the design and construction of a project that simply started from scratch, especially in my early 20s and in 4 month.

*Is it too soon to start a countdown?
I will wait.*

NOVEMBER 07, 2015:

This week may have been the most exciting and satisfying week of the semester, due to how we got in a full week of construction work in beautiful 60 - 70 degree weather (GLOBAL WARMING IS NO JOKE, but thank you, Mother Nature!), plus I happened to enjoy celebrating my birthday at the chalet with my amazing team, eating my favorite kind of cake, Tres Leches.

We started the week realizing that one of the buildings is slightly “wonky” (aka the walls aren’t exactly the same measurements). Instead of letting this hold us back, we compensated for it (that’s just what you do when design-building... you just roll with the punches).

We also managed to get the mudroom floor and walls up, just in time for us to begin placing roof rafters in the mudroom in order to soon start roofing it. This task was mostly managed by Jussi, Ander, and myself, although I practically moved on to another project in spite of the frustration I was feeling towards the two as we failed to convey a plan on how to tackle the task efficiently and smoothly without any miscommunication. Looking back, I probably should not have abandoned the team, especially when we were nearly finished placing all of the rafters, and instead, I should have come up with ways to talk things out with the guys in order to successfully complete the task, but I ultimately chose the easy way out by simply walking away and taking on a different task to complete.



Nathan, modeling the mudroom for us.

ALL of the WALLS have been framed, sheathed, and raised. HOORAY!

Apart from sheathing and lifting all the exterior walls of the building, the interior walls have also gone up and are now ready for plumbing, these mainly included the walls in the resident space, which simply divide the public space from the private space.

Roofing is advancing. Rafters are on, and at the moment, Nate, Connor, Gwen, and Zoe are beginning with the sheathing before finishing it off with some PBR-styled metal roofing.



Nathan and Gwen, claiming their title as Roof King & Queen for being the most dedicated people to work on the roof.

Windows are finally here! The decision-making process seriously took a long time to resolve as we debated on the number of windows, the size, the kind, and even the color we should order, due to having to change certain aspects of our design along the way. Eric even managed to squeeze in a quick, short demonstration on how to install a window so that we could start doing that very soon. Might get started on that tomorrow, yay!

We also had a few visitors throughout the week:

Danny Sagan



Architect practicing in Vermont

Associate Professor of Architecture & Program Director in the School of Architecture & Art at Norwich University

Researcher and author of *Architectural Improvisation*

([Essay that discusses the beginnings of the design/build movement in Vermont](#))

He is primarily the inspiration behind my SIP simply because I've learned a lot about this new form of pedagogy from reading his work. He stirred my curiosity.

Jan Ruta



Professional Electrician

She came in to teach the group in charge of the electrical tasks how to begin wiring the house, which ultimately ended with a tou by none other than Olivia, informing us about every single outlet, its placement, and what it would be wiring once it was all installed.

It's crazy to finally see how much we have gotten done since we begun, but even then, there is still a lot more that must get done and we only have about a month left. I do not want to freak out, but I truly hope that we get close to completing this project before delivering it to Janaki.

NOVEMBER 27, 2015:

I'm currently in Hartford, apartment-sitting for a friend who went back home to Chicago for Thanksgiving Break. You have no idea how good it feels to take a break from all the crazy madness that we have experienced these past couple of weeks. SO MUCH has gotten accomplished, and only TWO weeks remain until our deadline (YIKES!)

The whole structure's roof has been sheated, the fascia and soffits now make our roofline look a little more finished, and upon our return, Nate, Connor and Gwen will start applying the metal roofing onto it... SO EXCITING!



All of the windows have been installed, and we have also made, painted and hung up the window boxes that correspond to each window, followed with the trim that will mark our continuity band which will run across the entire building and mark the difference between the materiality that we have chosen for our exterior siding.





We have finished blowing the cellulose insulation into all of the interior wall cavities, and even finished insulating the exterior with Roxul (very itchy stuff!) On top of that, furring strips have been screwed on, and soon we will begin cladding the exteriors, but first we must stain each board in order to waterproof it and to guard it from UV rays. Hopefully that does not take long.





Ander and I have applied wallboard onto the library walls, and have taped all the seams and screw openings with mudding. I chose to dedicate my time mostly to this task primarily because I have prior experience with drywall being that my father is a drywaller himself and as I was growing up, he would always take me to work with him so that I could help him out. Not only would I be helping move the process a little faster by assisting with something I know how to do, but I saw this as the perfect opportunity to teach others how to apply the material.

I'm glad Ander was curious enough to want to learn.
Not going to lie, he is a pretty quick learner.





And after all this time, we finally got to meet the man who started this whole phenomenon back in the 1960s, Mr. Dave Sellers. I never imagined being able to meet him, but I am glad that I did. The fact that he invited us over to his studio (Temple of Dindor) and the Archie Bunker was a great way to learn more about his philosophy behind this alternative pedagogy while also learning about some of the projects he built throughout his time. I do not think anything else beats that... I will forever remember this phenomenal moment.

For now, I will make sure to enjoy my Thanksgiving Break before the last, long stretch.
2 weeks before this is all over. It is starting to feel a little bittersweet.

NOVEMBER 30, 2015:

We are back and time's still ticking.

T-minus 11 days until open house and graduation day (AHHH!)

Today we accomplished to get a lot minor things out of the way. Our exterior corner trims are finally installed, and we have begun discussing ideas for the interior trim that will primarily go around the windows. On top of that, our first pieces of exterior siding is up (and let me tell you, I am totally loving the fiber cement!)



Wall board has been installed onto the library walls, taped, and even mudded. They are now ready to be painted, plus Ander & I have begun installing the wallboard in the residence.

The roof squad has begun installing some PBR-styled metal roofing, and it looks great!



Doors have finally arrived, yet we're still struggling to make a decision on the color we will be painting them... it is small decisions like this one that bring out the worst in this group. Deciding on the aesthetics for our exteriors turned into a huge brawl between some of the group members, I am really hoping it does not turn out the same way when deciding on the color.



We have finally experimented with concrete countertops.
I cannot wait to see what Anita, Zoe, and Brandon were able to produce.
I know those countertops will come out looking great!



DECEMBER 02, 2015:

9 days and counting [sigh].

After quite a long discussion about doors, we have succeeded in choosing the colors for each of the doors in our design. In order to settle a tie between two options, we went ahead and flipped a board of fiber cement, instead of a coin. In all, it made the process of determining our colors completely easier and saved us a lot of energy that would have gone into fighting.

It is very satisfying to see so many finished materials going up, ultimately making the structure look more finished. Door are now being painted, window trim is being cut out and installed, exterior cladding is finally going up, the ceiling in the resident space has been taped, mudded, and texturized with a sponge, the ceiling in the library space is also being installed, and last but not least, people have begun building the cabinetry. We should be seeing some big changes within the next few days as we continue to work on the house.

I am trying to sustain my excitement.







DECEMBER 04, 2015:

Today has been the most exhausting day thus far.

The interior cladding is now being installed. Ander and I have managed to start installing wallboard in both bathrooms, while Connor and Sydney have begun installing wooden board in the residence.



The library is almost done. The ceiling is finally covered with wooden pine boards. At this point, we are just missing minor things (or at least I think they are minor tasks) such as painting the walls, covering up all the electrical outlets, installing the window trims, building the pallet door for the entrance, installing flooring, and ultimately hanging up the light fixtures.





As for the exteriors, everyone is chugging along.

The fiber cement we used for our siding is all up; we are now just a few boards away from having all of the exterior finished. I am really happy with the aesthetics of this design.

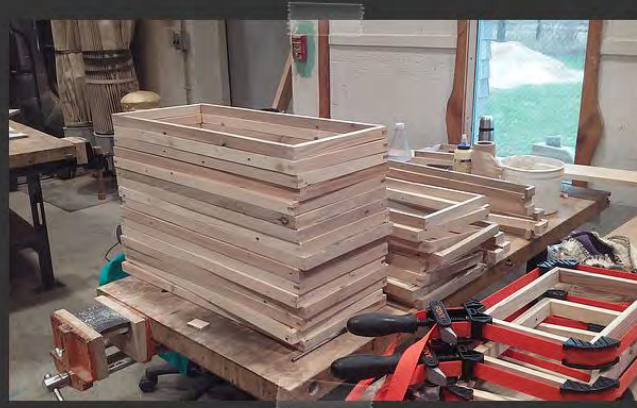
It looks soooooo good!





The cabinetry team is still building the kitchen cabinets, while the electrical team is putting together the light fixtures we will use for the library space. It is all coming together.





DECEMBER 07, 2015:

T-minus 4 days.

The more the clock ticks down, the pressure intensifies, thus a lot of us came down to the site during the weekend to keep advancing on the construction. A lot got done, and although we do not have much time, seems like we will get to a very good spot.

Exterior cladding for both buildings is finally complete.
We just have to finish up the mudroom, which should not take too long.





As for the interior cladding in the residence, that is also almost complete... there is shiplap here and there.

IT IS EVERYWHERE!



In regards to the bathrooms, all of the walls and ceilings are installed. We even managed to have a little dance party in one of the bathrooms to celebrate how fast we were moving along with the construction process these last couple of days.

Jan Ruta, the oh-so-wonderful professional electrician made another visit to check up on all the wiring that was installed by our electric team. She gave us the approval, and thus we were able to install the very first light fixture in the library.

The doors are finally being installed, and I can only imagine the view that one will be able to experience from the french doors that prop open in the library space. Brandon and Kelly have begun working on the pallet door that we all agreed to use as the library's entrance door. Each one of us has been provided with a piece of pallet wood to customize it so that we can display it. I have chosen to use a wood burner to carve "In Lak'ech" onto my board. This is a statement that references and symbolizes unity and oneness. Together, as one, we accomplished designing and building a structure that will hopefully one day serve as a place for everyone to come together and work together, despite one's differences, just as Janaki wanted.



And to conclude this entry, I must state that tomorrow we will finally be able to start installing one of the most anticipated tasks: flooring. YAY!

DECEMBER 09, 2015:

We are flying through our to-do list, but somehow it never quite feels fast enough. We have gone from having eight exterior walls sided to all ten completed. Jussi and Nate managed to come up with the design to our entryway, which honestly came out better than we all expected. We also finished the window trim in the library, cladded another interior wall in the residence, visited with Jan again, got the appliances delivered, finished the door jamb for the pallet door, and started planning where each decorated pallet would go on the door.





Right now, painting the library, finishing the interior cladding, and starting the flooring seem to be our biggest goals. How fast can we achieve them? In two days, we'll find out.

DECEMBER 10, 2015:

T-minus one day and here we are, checking off the last few items on our list before revealing the grand finale to Janaki at tomorrow's open house.

The bathrooms continue to look ever more finished, with the public one fully cladded and painted, while the wet bath is still being covered in fiber cement board.



The residence walls are now fully cladded, and all of the window trim has been installed.

Maybe our biggest difference, however, is the floor which now covers about half the library. Floors are one of the last things to be put down, and thus would be one of the first things pushed off the list if we resigned ourselves to not having a finished-looking building by the open house. Installing them is a good omen, a sign that we can do what we set out to do.



I am really hoping Janaki loves what we've come to design and build for her. We have not seen her since our last round of schematics, when we visited Marlboro College months ago, and it is completely nerve-racking just thinking about the way she will react. We will have to wait to see it all happen tomorrow night. One more day... but we got this!

DECEMBER 11, 2015:

The day is finally here and we have yet to get a few things done before tonight's open house.

By this point, we are aware of the fact that we will NOT complete the entire project like we hoped to, but for being the biggest project a semester program has undertaken, we got pretty close to it. We have basically built something double the size of previous projects, and knowing that we accomplished a whole lot feels extremely good (*pats back*).

We have finished installing flooring in the library, and have very little left in the residence.

The private, wet-bathroom is almost complete as well. We just need to finish installing flooring and move the bathroom cabinet and sink inside.

The pallet door is completed, but yet has to be installed.
Brandon and Kelly did such a great job with it.

Light fixtures for the library space are currently being hung up, and we hope to turn them on at tonight's open house to illuminate the space.



Cabinetry has been successfully built by Sonja and Emma, and will be installed in a bit along with the corresponding appliances we bought for the kitchen.



Apart from all that, we also have to start cleaning up the site to make it look presentable.

It's crazy to see the transformation from what first started on paper and now is actually built.

I AM SPEECHLESS.

As I sit here finalizing my Senior Integrative Project, I cannot help but look back at my experience and be forever grateful to have had this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity thanks to Professor Morash and Professor Alchermes, who helped me discover the program and constantly supported me throughout this endeavor. This is indeed a time that I will forever cherish and reminisce about in the time to come simply because of the unique experience I was able to endure while exploring a completely new environment and class setting different from what I have been used to back at Connecticut College. The things I managed to learn at Yestermorrow are completely different from everything I have learned through our architectural studies program, and in actuality, a much better pedagogical approach that ultimately inspired an even greater passion for architecture. Being able to work with my hands, whether it was hammering nails, plastering mud and tape, hanging rafters, installing windows, painting the exterior siding, or even hanging up light fixtures, allowed me to acquire new skills that I did not have when I first arrived, and even gave me a new outtake on architecture and construction, which I have come to appreciate a whole lot more because I have for once seen all the **HARD WORK** that goes into this type of work. Just knowing that I am a little more competent to build something if I was given the opportunity to do so makes me feel a little proud of myself and my new capabilities as an experienced builder. In the end, I got so much out of this project, including but not limited to long-lasting friendships, exposure to the architecture and construction profession, plus, a place to always stop by if I ever find myself back in the Green Mountain State, Vermont.

As for my SIP, I am glad to be able to close this chapter of my life by dedicating my last year of undergraduate to this project. Prior to this experience, I was very ignorant about Vermont, its vernacular architecture and the design/build phenomenon. Partaking in a semester-long study away program at Yestermorrow not only opened my eyes to new things, but also raised a lot of curiosity, thus I chose to focus primarily on the evolution of the design/build movement to connect its history and its progression to my personal experience at Yestermorrow. I have learned so much from simply participating in the Vermont lifestyle during the four months I was there, and I hope to come back in the future to hopefully build my own tiny house in the middle of nowhere.

As for the next chapter of my life, as a middle school teacher, this program and SIP have taught me the importance of different pedagogical approaches that are used to enhance one's learning experience. As humans, we all learn differently, thus it is essential to keep that in mind when teaching a lesson plan. I have to start being considerate of other's learning abilities, and make sure that as a teacher I can guide my students through the process until they feel competent enough to try it on their own. Once I have completed my journey with Teach for America, I hope to go back to school to attain my master's in public policy with a concentration in education, poverty and urban planning, in order to learn more about up-and-coming tiny house villages for the homeless, and work towards fabricating better policies and solutions to end homelessness in the United States. I might have the proper knowledge to build a tiny structure, but I want to be even more educated on the issues of poverty and inequality so that I can provide the proper public services for those in need. These are the 'blueprints' to my life for the next five years. I am not entirely sure where I will end up, but sure can hope that it is something relevant to teaching and/or building for the sake of others. Anything I do, I do it for others rather than myself.

Many several thanks to Janaki for entrusting us entirely with the creation of one of her lifelong ambitions while making it extremely clear that she hoped to make this primarily a learning experience for us just as much as she wanted it built. The same goes for Patrice and Mikaela, two of Janaki's closest friends and colleagues. They are mainly responsible for encouraging Janaki to reach out to Yestermorrow, and without that support, this whole project would not have been possible.

I want to thank the gang for an amazing four long months. Each and every single one of you has inspired me one way or another. From canoeing blindfolded at Kettle Pond to even helping me take care of Little Lou (pet hamster) as we kept her a secret from Eric and the housekeeping lady, at the chalet, it has all been immensely memorable and such a great time. I cannot wait to one day reunite with all of you in the beautiful building we managed to build.

As for my instructors, Eric and Vincent, thank you for being incredibly laid-back, but always attentive and helpful throughout this entire process. I definitely learned a lot from each one of you, ultimately making me a better builder. And last, but not least, Jess, or as we like to call her, INTERN OF THE YEAR, thank you for always having our back, especially when driving to places to purchase our building materials (or to even get free popcorn) at Bisbee's. Without you or that Yestermorrow truck, who knows if we would have been able to build something.

I am glad this whole experience turned out to be better than I had expected, and I am glad that our building is finally on site as of recently. I cannot wait to visit soon.

In all, this has been a tremendous undertaking and a pleasure to be a part of.

Go, Team Y!



