

**Zeitschrift:** gta papers  
**Herausgeber:** gta Verlag  
**Band:** 7 (2022)

**Artikel:** Caregiving as method  
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**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1046644>

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## Caregiving as Method

Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, Can Bilsel, Ana Miljački, and Garnette Cadogan, with Javairia Shahid

"Caregiving as Method" is an articulation emerging from the intellectual preoccupations of those whose domesticities center on the care of others. We are scholars and people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ people, subjects of the postcolonial world, and, for most of our careers in academia, have identified what Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey call the "undercommons."<sup>1</sup> In 2021, Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi invited eleven colleagues to extend mutual concerns and ongoing conversations with one another by producing a proposal for a wider discussion through the platform of the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) in the United States. With the support of the SAH, she organized a digital workshop in September 2021, convening this group of twelve scholars, who are situated in institutions in Singapore, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States and who hold direct professional and personal commitments to various parts of the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia, as well as broader ecofeminist political commitments to the world and many unwritten corners within it.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the problems and compromises that we have experienced in the academy's broad adoption of the medium of Zoom, including its suppression of Palestinian speech, enabling of the exploitation of workers involved in academic instruction, and flattening of the embodied experience of discourse, we maximized its capacity to fabricate simultaneity in order to converse with one another.<sup>3</sup> Across three sessions, we offered brief presentations and a roundtable discussion on the themes of care (presentations by Itohan Osayimwese, Kush Patel, and Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, moderated by Garnette Cadogan), repair (presentations by Lilian Chee, Delia Wendel, and Jay Cephas, moderated by Ana Miljački), and method (presentations by Ikem Stanley Okoye, Peg Rawes, and Elis Mendoza, moderated by Can Bilsel). Such multiplicity and collaboration are inherent to the practice and methodology we wish to cultivate.

We opened each session by asking all attendees to write down the name of someone in their

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano Harvey and Fred Moten, "The University and the Undercommons," *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Brooklyn: Minor Compositions, 2013), 22–43.

<sup>2</sup> *Caregiving as Method*, Society of Architectural Historians (SAH Connects) workshop, September 10, 17, 24, 2021, video archived at <https://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/sah-connects/2021/caregiving-as-method> (accessed February 28, 2022). In addition to the current text, versions of "Caregiving as Method" will be published in the online journal *Platform* and aired on the radio show and podcast *Conversations on Care*. The article(s) in *Platform* will contain an edited version of the discussion following each session, and *Conversations on Care* will focus on the audio material for each session, preceded by introductory discussions between the radio host, Ana Miljački, and the series organizer, Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi.

<sup>3</sup> See Bill V. Mullen, "The Palestinian Exception in the Age of Zoom: A Bellwether for Academic Freedom," *American Association of University Professors Journal of Academic Freedom* 12 (2021), 1–17.



4 As examples of starting points, a collaboration such as this owes intellectual debts to Christina Sharpe, Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart, and Tamara Kneese on radical care as praxis, to bell hooks and Audre Lourde on self-care and self-love, to Angela Davis and Silvia Federici on labor and housework, to Sarah Ahmed on affective economies, to Miriam Ticktin on state-imposed care regimes and a feminist commons, to Menna Agha on "the emotional as a placemaking regimen," to Maria Puig de la Bellacasa and Joan Tronto on ethics, ontologies, and sciences of care, to Donna Haraway and Elke Krasny on ecologies of care, to Virginia Held and Sara Ruddick for philosophical analyses of care, and to Alice Walker on an epistemology of sisters, mothers, and grandmothers. Christina Sharpe, "And to Survive," *Small Axe*, no. 57 (vol. 22, no. 3) (2018), 171–80; Hi'ilei Julia Kawehipuaakahaopulani Hobart and Tamara Kneese, "Radical Care: Survival Strategies for Uncertain Times," *Social Text*, no. 142 (vol. 38, no. 1) (2020), 1–16; bell hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000); Audre Lourde, *A Burst of Light* (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988); Angela Davis, "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective," in *Women, Race, and Class* (London: The Women's Press, 1981), 222–45; Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1975); Sarah Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text*, no. 79 (vol. 22, no. 2) (2004), 117–39; Miriam Ticktin, *Casualties of Care: Immigration and the Politics of Humanitarianism in France* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011); Miriam Ticktin, "Building a Feminist Commons in the Time of COVID-19," in "Complexities of Care and Caring," special issue, *Signs* 47, no. 1 (Autumn 2021), 37–46, <http://signsjournal.org/covid/ticktin/> (accessed February 28, 2022); Menna Agha, "Emotional Capital and Other Ontologies of the Architect," *Architectural Histories* 8, no. 1 (2020), 23; Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (London: Routledge, 1993); Donna J. Haraway, "Making Kin: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene," in *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 99–103; Elke Krasny, "Radicalizing Care: Feminist Futures for Living with an Infected Planet," in Elke Krasny et al., eds., *Radicalizing Care: Feminist and Queer Activism in Curating* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021), 28–37; Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (1989), 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); and Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens" (1972), in *Within the Circle: An Anthology of African-American Literary Criticism from the Harlem Renaissance to the Present*, ed. Angelyn Mitchell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 401–409.

lives whom they wished to honor. Valorizing others by name, a feature of both recent radical and early modern scholarship, served as a productively contradictory starting point for our discussions. This practice was intended to extend our methodology of collaboration and collectivity across borders of time.

Our purpose is to open a discussion, both in architectural history and in our individual fields of scholarship, on the problematics and methods of critically merging our work as scholars and our work as carers. We perceive these two very special kinds of work as coexisting and intersecting, yet we are often made to hold them separate. Addressing the ways in which the act of caregiving informs and inflects methodological approaches to scholarship, we built a discussion around three themes to theorize architectural history and caregiving together. Among us, we care intimately and unrelentingly for elders, children, community members, relatives, and partners, while developing and teaching the history and theory of architecture. The twelve of us—collectively (in the workshop discussions) and uniquely (in our interventions presented below)—find that our work intersects in *caregiving as method*, a subsidiary of a broader theory about the overlaps of architecture, history, and power.

Our collaboration addresses issues of *caregiving*, yet we note feminist approaches to *care* and acknowledge intellectual debts to theorizations that make substantive openings for our work. 4 The questions raised in these theorizations—on labor and work, ecologies, taxonomies, and epistemologies of care, state-sanctioned versus autonomous care, and the ethics and science of care—lie squarely within our considerations. To that end, our focus is not merely on caregiving but on its methodological applications to histories of architecture, constructed environments, art, aesthetics, and sociospatial and ecological relations and inhabitations. Each of our interventions takes on a methodological issue, translating theory into praxis and vice versa.

As the nine presenters in the workshop discussed, our intent is to study the impact of domestic caregiving on our scholarly questions and orientations, as well as the shape of scholarly caregiving

and intellectual society writ large within the domestic spaces of a pandemic. As we noted in our prompt,

*"We begin by asking how caregiving intersects with social constructs of identity, and how these constructs shape our research questions, understandings of evidence, approaches to authorship, and the format and language of research products. We examine the visibility and invisibility of labor in history writing, considering how to develop an ethos of mentorship and collaboration in order to make intellectual production more horizontal — indeed, how to build networks and entanglement with others in our work. We turn to interrogations specific to the pandemic and an imagined post-pandemic world, thinking about how caregiving during this time has impacted or changed our scholarship and the historical understanding of our topics and subjects of interest, for example, articulating which voices we now give space to and why. Methodologically, we identify to what extent caregiving in our scholarship is a biographical enterprise and to what extent it concerns other (scholarly) subjects. We attempt to theorize how methodologies that have emerged in our own particularistic experiences sit in relation to other pressing issues in architecture or architectural history."* <sup>5</sup>

As a means to propose that architectural historical work is fundamentally enriched by empathy and entanglement with the care of others and that the process of profound domestic caregiving is not only germane but pivotal in bringing forward theory, we used the tactic of posing questions that, for us, have not been part of a discursive field and, moreover, have rarely been encouraged. In the workshop, we discussed, largely in terms of our individual experiences, how theory is generated. <sup>6</sup> We believe that audience members and readers should inhabit these questions and layer their own experiences upon those we offered. As a critical starting point, we proposed the specific intertwining of two critical terms, *caregiving* and *method*, so as to extend and give form to understandings of histories and futures, and we proposed the analytic of "caregiving as method" to produce a value shift, naming an intertwined praxis of domestic and scholarly caregiving from which theory might spring.

Our workshop was animated by a collective desire to "support careers driven by forces other than generally recognized forms of achievement, while also examining the fine grain of collaboration and care that inform scholarship"; to "drive cultural change in our discipline and support academics living under various signs of difference, who are caregiving within a variety of modes of kinship"; and to make space "to consider how scholarly and domestic caregiving together find a way to extend into social

<sup>5</sup> Jay Cephas, Lilian Chee, Elis Mendoza, Ikem Stanley Okoye, Itohan Osayimwese, Kush Patel, Peg Rawes, Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, and Delia Wendel, "Caregiving as Method," Society of Architectural Historians (SAH Connects), 2021, <https://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/sah-connects/2021/caregiving-as-method> (accessed February 28, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Jay Cephas, Lilian Chee, Elis Mendoza, Ikem Stanley Okoye, Itohan Osayimwese, Kush Patel, Peg Rawes, Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, and Delia Wendel, "Caregiving as Method," edited by Kush Patel and Delia Wendel and prepared by Javairia Shahid, Platform.



7 Cephas et al.,  
"Caregiving as Method"  
(2021).

worlds that restrict or oppress," attending to "profound domestic caregiving in contexts in which it is seen as normative and others in which it is seen as non-normative" — naming, in particular, "BIPOC parents nursing or homeschooling in a pandemic, immigrants caring for elders at home or elsewhere, queer and trans communities producing care structures within or outside national law, and scholars subjugating individual interest to mutual aid." <sup>7</sup> We carried out this practice via a politics of representation, thoughtfully assembling ourselves as people crystallizing certain symbolic and embodied positions in the academy. We leaned on multivocalities, requesting interventions from each presenter in the form of word and image and reflections from moderators, who themselves brought freight to the discourse. We limited the time on Zoom to three one-hour discussions, each separated by one week during which participants could reflect. We tried to bring love into the room: for each other, for our work, for the audience, and for our cherished ones, who inadvertently occasioned this conversation. Ultimately, we hope this conversation and its spirit will extend into many communities and ecosystems of thought.

8 The following paragraphs draw from unpublished writings and spoken interventions by Garnette Cadogan, Ana Miljački, and Can Bilisel.

Caregiving as method hinges on the three thematic frameworks of "care," "repair," and "method," which we enfolded in a discursive arc. In bringing these themes to their fullest fruition, we benefited from the participation of Cadogan, Miljački, and Bilisel, each assigned a thematic panel, each cross-referencing all the panels, and each helping to build over time, as Bilisel noted, "a new conversation about agency, vulnerability, and the anguish of writing." <sup>8</sup> Each term carries different burdens in the different parts of the world and institutions into which we seek to intervene. Nevertheless, each concept focuses on a problem related to "caregiving as method" that illuminates its thorny and vibrant potential.

On care, Cadogan gathered the provocations that Osayimwese, Patel, and Siddiqi presented on the conceptual frames of vernacular and community engagement. He located these framings in architectural discourse and pedagogy in North American contexts, questioning, for example, the conceptual limitations of categories such as "vernacular architecture" and the manifestation of the design-build studio and its products. He also opened onto repair and method. He confounded expectations by conflating a discussion of the preventative possibilities of care with the redressive capacities of repair. Articulating what might be described as "community-engaged history," he asked what methods community engagement requires of historians and how these delineate practices of care. In response, he reflected on time as a conceptual through-line in the consideration of care:

*"We think of care as a reparative act, as a way of countering neglect. In your discussion, care is not merely care about space. So often when we think of care, we think of space, of infrastructure — whether a physical or social infrastructure. But in your work there is also the understanding of care as embrace. What does it mean to think of care as a way of putting others closer to you? What does it mean to do so in a way that you not only inhabit time more intimately, but inhabit time more repetitively, such that repair emerges from that embrace? There is the idea of shared space in your discussions, but also a way of sharing time and a way of inhabiting time differently, more intimately. How are you seeing and thinking of care as an embrace and how are you thinking of time differently? In architecture, we speak of care as a kind of labor. Instead, what does it mean to think of care in terms of time, as something other than just the measure of labor?"* <sup>9</sup>

On repair, in the second session, Miljački took up these very questions, underscoring *affective labor*, *intimate historiography*, and *critical closeness* as three key terms for review:

*"Though they may do so differently, in different ratios perhaps, they each contribute to a triad of epistemological, political, and personal forms of repair. All require what Wendel has called 'emotional labor,' but also specific narrative choices. She spoke of time lapses in her story, an intimate history that foregrounds individuals affected by trauma, and by places shaped by loss and activism. Chee's story is a collection of intimate micro-ethnographies, whose very writing is validating for those it involves, producing a reversal resulting in 'observant participation.' Cephas' 'critical closeness' implicates the historian in the writing in a way that may indeed transform both."* <sup>10</sup>

In addition to attempting to inscribe a lexicon culled from the dialogue, Miljački catalogued the labor performed by images and visual languages in each provocation. She remarked that Chee's work brought into view and acknowledged affective and transient domestic labor through formal drawings and grids of seeming programmatic permanence. For Wendel and Cephas, the presence and absence of images, respectively, had provoked criticism from previous audiences, forcing each author to absorb reproof even while electing to include or exclude an image precisely to return or repair the humanity and citizenship of those pictured. Within conventional academic discourse, the presence or absence of certain images offers audiences a formal and low-stakes means to take issue with work whose high moral content prevents its critical discussion; the presence or absence of certain images, which may skirt or suggest the obscene, can also provoke outrage. Neither option made the "establishment" comfortable.

<sup>9</sup> Garnette Cadogan, "Caregiving as Method: Care," Society of Architectural Historians (SAH Connects), 2021, <https://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/sah-connects/2021/caregiving-as-method> (accessed February 28, 2022).

<sup>10</sup> Ana Miljački, "Caregiving as Method: Repair," unpublished notes, 2020.



Miljački drew upon her embodied, autobiographical connection to the interventions to raise the notion of the emotional labor of memory. She reminded us that in studies of the transition from socialism to capitalism and in modern East European histories of the Second World (especially Yugoslavia), historian Tanja Petrović proposes a method of affective history that involves the labor of memory.<sup>11</sup> With regard to this historical and geographical context, Miljački writes,

*"Affective history invites a specific kind of embodied knowledge of socialism to play a role in its historical description. This is intended to combat, and possibly repair, the overwhelming Cold War, Western, neoliberal narrative of that history, but also, and especially in Yugoslavian studies, it is directed at a kind of validation of the experience of socialism and of the Yugoslavian project, and thereby also at the repair of that project. In writing about this, Tanja Petrović emphasizes the way that (for various reasons) negative memories of the socialist experience have had greater impact on the production of historical narratives than the positive experiences of the same."*<sup>12</sup>

On method, in the third session, Bilsel built the sinews between this condition of embodied knowledge and its specific historiographic orientations by discussing vulnerability. "We have reflected on vulnerability," he reminded us, "beyond the masculinist notions of helplessness and victimhood, challenging the paternal assumption that vulnerability requires protection, refuge, humanitarian aid, or forensic analysis to administer 'justice.'"<sup>13</sup> Vulnerability appeared in many forms in our talks; for example, the researcher putting herself at risk to share the lives of those she is writing about. (A photograph with Siddiqi in the United Nations Dadaab refugee camps powerfully captures this.) To be able to write is to be admitted to a "sovereign" domestic space. The interlocutor is acknowledged as the architect of her space, which also offers a narrative. Caregiving places the subject somewhere between "acting and suffering," beyond the conventional historical and ethnographic models of research.<sup>14</sup> Caregiving, in both the literal and metaphoric sense, offers a new way of looking at domestic spaces. We discussed invisible labor and the anguish inflicted on others in domestic spaces, as well as in academic settings, where we participate in defining the conditions of employment and the lives of others. Then, there is the anguish of writing about someone, a space most writers are intimately familiar with. The effect of the image goes beyond the evidentiary nature of Western art-historical analysis: the images we see—and the images that are hidden from us—offer something else, perhaps mourning and catharsis. One more thought:

<sup>11</sup> Tanja Petrović, "Towards an Affective History of Yugoslavia," *Filozofija i društvo* 27, no. 3, (January 2016), 504–20, here 506.

<sup>12</sup> Miljački, "Caregiving as Method."

<sup>13</sup> Can Bilsel, "Caregiving as Method: Method," unpublished notes, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> See Zeynep Gambetti, "Risking Oneself and One's Identity: Agonism Revisited," in Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, eds., *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 28–51.

caregiving is timely but is not confined by topicality. The projects that are shared here are the signposts of multigenerational and decades-long commitments to acknowledging what Ikem Okoye calls, after Elisabeth Grosz, “the possibility of a different inhabitation.”<sup>15</sup> We believe there is also reason for optimism about the future of African, Indigenous, and diasporic experiences: a new approach that does not reify architecture in the spatial fixity of “buildings to be preserved” but one that cherishes *relations* across archipelagos of the desert and sea.<sup>16</sup>

Bilsel found intimate, embodied, and tactical spaces in the individual and collective interventions by Okoye, Rawes, and Mendoza. Examining two sides of the contemporary in Okoye’s mapping of the rarefied “biennale art” and the diasporic vernacular (which sometimes sit side by side in the same city), Bilsel recalled how, according to Okoye, contemporary art and an African “transnationality” may be produced and represented, asking whether we need distinctions between larger public works and “whimsical, diminutive work,” such as that of Sokari Douglas Camp, whose work Okoye was forced to rethink when he became a parent. In examining Rawes’s work (applying her earlier critiques of the biopolitics of mapping to her writing about the artist Tom Corby’s daily “affect-data” in the artwork *Blood and Bones*), Bilsel returned to questions of time, to how the daily registry of “affect” co-opts medical data into a tactical practice that unfolds time as precious, limited, and boundless for both the person living with disease and the caregiver.<sup>17</sup> In response to Mendoza’s desire to build a “community of care and solidarity” and interrogate the enforced “separation of academic work and praxis,” Bilsel observed that cooperative work and solidarity are often erased from architectural histories and replaced by a history of authors, and how we might counter this erasure by building methodological foundations of care, for example, acknowledging Fred Cuny’s coworkers Pedro Guiza and Jinx Parker, as well as rescuing Cuny himself, from his own hagiography.

The themes of vernacular architecture and community solidarity raised in the first session returned, like a poetics that cannot be denied, in the rhythms of the third session. Questions of intimacies, affect, and visual rhetoric in historiography echoed across the discussions, as did the technicalities and precisions of caregiving as method, both as the measure of the relation between historian and subject and between the collective historical project and its objects. These are the echoes and traces that we hope this adventurous experiment sets into motion—or rather, registers and extends. The following texts compile the provocations presented in the workshop, preserving the order of

<sup>15</sup> Ikem Stanley Okoye, “Elusive Things: Materialities and Spatialities in the Vicinity of Nigér” (lecture, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, November 12, 2020).

<sup>16</sup> See Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); and Bilsel, “Caregiving as Method.”

<sup>17</sup> See Rawes’s text in this issue. Also of relevance is Peg Rawes, “Biopolitical Ecological Poetics,” in Peg Rawes, Timothy Matthews, and Stephen Loo, eds., *Poetic Biopolitics: Political and Ethical Practices in the Arts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), 11–23.



presentation of the three sessions; the ensuing discussions and their interpretations will appear in forthcoming publications. We hope that in engaging them, the reader is spurred to formulate her own interventions, to design her own methods, and to interpolate caregiving into all the scholarly attentions she may be privileged to demonstrate. This is only one step, we hope, of many.

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**fig. 1** A triple-decker apartment building, 1959–1963, Boston, MA. Photograph: unknown. Source: Northeastern University Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Box 75, Folder 2922, A003688, <http://hdl.handle.net/2047/d20156360>

**18** See Ester Conesa, “How Are Academic Lives Sustained? Gender and the Ethics of Care in the Neoliberal Accelerated Academy,” *LSE Impact Blog*, March 27, 2018, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2018/03/27/how-are-academic-lives-sustained-gender-and-the-ethics-of-care-in-the-neoliberal-accelerated-academy/> (accessed February 3, 2022); Karyn Miller, “The Ethics of Care and Academic Motherhood amid COVID-19,” *Gender Work Organ* 28 (2021), 260–65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12547>; and Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

**19** See <https://www.citeblackwomenscollective.org/> (accessed February 3, 2022).

**20** With three main floors and an attic, the triple-decker typically has three or four apartments, while the double-decker has two or three apartments (on two main floors and attic). Despite differences in size, the triple-decker and double-decker belong to the same building type. “Triple-decker” continues to be used to describe both types.

## Caregiving in the New England Triple-Decker Itohan Osayimwese

In December 2012, my father, who could no longer find his keys and was forgetting to turn off the stove, was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Since my siblings and I all lived hundreds of miles away and since my parents had relocated permanently to the United States only in 1997 and had not found a support network in the southeastern Pennsylvania town where they lived, I invited my parents to live with me. I envisioned a duplex in which I would live on one side and they on the other. The idea was that by living in such close proximity, I could provide emotional and hands-on support to my parents.

This article focuses on one instance of African-Caribbean immigrant caregiving and academic life in the United States. Caring as living with elderly family members is a social practice that continues to sustain many African and Caribbean societies. Comments from friends and colleagues highlight the unusualness of this practice in the context of the demographics of academia in the United States. But, if care is “an activity of relationship, of seeing and responding to need,” and if an “ethic of care” places care at the center of life, then it is imperative that we give credit to those who work to create an intellectual space where we can have a conversation about a topic that would, to many scholars, seem unworthy of intellectual investigation. <sup>18</sup> One principle of caregiving as method is for caregivers—especially those of us (people of color, women, immigrants) who are conditioned by society not to do so—to claim credit for our work even as we bring out of the shadows those who walked before and alongside us. <sup>19</sup>

Living with my parents has led me down a path of discovery. Little did I know that Providence, Rhode Island, and the wider New England region has a long history of multifamily housing—the double-decker and triple-decker. <sup>20</sup> **fig.1** Built from wood,



these houses have an identical apartment on each floor: a large porch out front and, on either side of a hall, two to four bedrooms, a parlor, living room, bathroom, and kitchen. From 1880 to 1930, sixteen thousand triple-deckers, housing about 192,000 people, were built in Boston.<sup>21</sup> As late as 1972, triple-deckers housed one-third of the population in Worcester, Massachusetts.<sup>22</sup> But double-deckers and triple-deckers also became symbols of debates about national identity and the future of the United States. They had been built as housing for European immigrant workers in New England's industrial belt. Rather than renting, however, these immigrants soon started to buy these houses: they would live in one apartment and rent out the others to pay the mortgage. Their aspirational activities brought about a predictable political reaction: by the 1910s, anti-immigrant feeling had morphed into anti-triple-decker feeling. In Providence, city leaders spoke of "the triple-decker menace," and reformers in Boston called it a "weed" in need of eradication.<sup>23</sup> Cities across New England imposed zoning ordinances to limit the construction of triple-deckers and slow the upward mobility of immigrants. Triple-deckers deteriorated but experienced a renaissance in the 1980s as housing demand grew and prices skyrocketed.

As I looked around for a duplex, the Providence double-decker appeared as a possible solution. My realtor tried to dissuade me by saying, "Portuguese families often live there." I would later find out that "Portuguese" referred to the tens of thousands of Cabo Verdeans and Azoreans who have migrated to New England since the eighteenth century.<sup>24</sup> By the twentieth century, this housing type had lost its previous association with Irish and French immigrants and acquired a new reputation as the type typically occupied by immigrants from Cabo Verde, the Dominican Republic, Vietnam, and other non-European nations.<sup>25</sup> These "new" immigrants and their triple-decker lives became the latest target of anti-immigrant and, often, anti-Black rhetoric.<sup>26</sup>

But the double-decker's separate front doors and shared back stair met my need for private but conjoined space. Unlike other examples of urban multifamily housing in the Western world, the double-decker masquerades as a single-family house in its gable-roofed massing even as its internal layout meets the bourgeois middle-class ideal of domestic privacy for each family living in separate apartments.<sup>27</sup> Full of contradiction, the double-decker also prioritizes community through its shared back stair and multiple porches that function as a visual extension of public space. As my father's health deteriorated, the double-decker made more and more sense: I sat with my father on the porch, found solace in gardening with my mother, popped into my parent's apartment for

<sup>21</sup> See "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Triple Decker," New England Historical Society, last updated in 2021, <https://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/rise-fall-rebirth-new-england-triple-decker/> (accessed February 21, 2022). The only major texts on the triple-decker as a housing form are Kingston William Heath, *The Patina of Place: The Cultural Weathering of a New England Industrial Landscape* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2016); and Kingston William Heath, "Housing the Worker: The Anatomy of the New Bedford, Massachusetts, Three-Decker," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 10 (2005), 47–59.

<sup>22</sup> "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth."

<sup>23</sup> "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth," Providence Chamber of Commerce; "Housing Conditions in Providence," *Providence Magazine*, February 1917, 79–96; and James C. O'Connell, *The Hub's Metropolis: Greater Boston's Development from Railroad Suburbs to Smart Growth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 84.

<sup>24</sup> See Waltraud Berger Coli and Richard A. Lobban, *Cape Verdeans in Rhode Island: A Brief History* (Providence: Rhode Island Heritage Commission, 1990), 7.

<sup>25</sup> See Marc Levitt, *Triple Decker: A New England Love Story* (film, forthcoming).

<sup>26</sup> Though perceived as such in the twentieth century, Cabo Verdeans were, in fact, not new immigrants to the United States.

<sup>27</sup> On the bourgeois ideal of domesticity in U.S. architecture, see Gwendolyn Wright, *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873–1913* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).



a quick check-in before falling into my own bed. While he was able to walk unaided, the compact, one-level layout of the apartment eased his movement around space. As his illness worsened, we converted one of the bedrooms into a sick room, avoiding hospitalization for as long as possible and minimizing the disorientation that many Alzheimer's patients suffer when placed in unfamiliar environments such as memory care facilities. The double-decker was as functional and socially sustainable in 2018 as it was in 1890. As an academic with an immigrant background, peripatetic obligations, and no other family within a two-hundred-mile radius, my double-decker became a mini universe of care.

It did not always work. I often felt that I was falling short of providing enough care due to the demands of being an untenured college faculty member. But even with the severe time constraints I faced, the double-decker, through its design, encouraged a praxis of care. It also reoriented my scholarly practice. After leaving home for college at age seventeen, living with my parents in my forties provided an opportunity to reencounter their lived experience as knowledge. From a batik textile hanging on my parents' wall that led to an article in *African Arts* about my aunt, Ifueko Osayimwese Omigie, who was a batik artist and likely the only female member of the Zaria Art Society in 1950s Nigeria, to an essay on homemaking and gardening among West Indian women immigrants in 1970s Nigeria, from a counterhistory of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew's University of Ibadan campus based on the memories of generations of West African faculty families, to a book on migration and remittance properties as the primary route to full emancipation for African-descended people in the Anglo-Caribbean, caring for my parents in the double-decker led to new questions and methods. As Saidiya Hartman said, "the autobiographical example" is "about trying to look at historical and social process and one's own formation as a window onto social and historical processes."<sup>28</sup> So I offer another principle for caregiving as method: *write what you know not because you want to reify the sign of difference under which you may live but because you will do less harm and may even do the work of repair.*

<sup>28</sup> Conversation between Saidiya Hartman and Patricia Saunders, cited in Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 8.

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<sup>29</sup> Kush Patel, Twitter, July 19, 2018, 6:28 AM, <https://twitter.com/kshpatel/status/1016267821276250112> (accessed March 3, 2022). *Oṭḷa* is the Gujarati term for a raised platform typically in stone that serves as a threshold between the street and the house interior.

## Kinship as Keyword Kush Patel

*"Every evening, Madhuben sits on the oṭḷa and goes over her grandchildren's homework, asking them to talk about their day lessons. She makes sure they follow time, participate in the arts, remain curious in school, and eat lunch from their tiffin boxes. She doesn't read or write."*<sup>29</sup>

"For years, Leelaba has blessed me with utmost love and care. At 80 years old, she still sits up when I visit her, holding my hand tightly as we talk, and asking her grandchild to sit with us as I share my university experiences with them. She doesn't read or write either." <sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Kush Patel, Twitter, July 19, 2018, 6:29 AM.

"My mum continues to share with me the brilliance and care of her mum and other women in the family. Her affirmations, critical insights, and self-discipline are life-giving. She couldn't pursue higher education, but her everyday feminism informs my world view." <sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Kush Patel, Twitter, July 19, 2018, 6:40 AM.

I posted this thread of tweets during my visit to India in the summer of 2018. I was preparing to travel back to Michigan, when I found myself reflecting on connections that I had seen my mother nurture throughout my growing-up years. Madhuben and Leelaba were chosen family across historically persistent class and caste divides. A sister to my mother, a caregiver to my maternal grandmother, and a friend to me, Madhuben saw education as the only means to dignity in society. As mutual carers through sickness and copresence, Ba (as I affectionately called Leelaba) and my paternal grandparents modeled a form of friendship that affirmed collective well-being. Together, these experiences constituted the starting points of my notes on chosen kinship at the 2021 Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) Connects virtual workshop "Caregiving as Method," <sup>32</sup> where I recounted one of my last meetings with Madhuben, who passed just days after the conclusion of the three-part series, on the morning of September 29, 2021, in her home village — and beside her grandchildren.

<sup>32</sup> "Caregiving as Method" was organized by Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi and hosted by the SAH in three online sessions, September 10, 17, and 24, 2021. For details, see <https://www.sah.org/conferences-and-programs/sah-connects/2021/caregiving-as-method> (accessed March 3, 2022).

bell hooks's *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* was one of the first texts that explained to me my own lived difficulty with the limits of academic language in bringing us — "the members of oppressed and/or exploited groups as well as those radical visionaries who may have race, class, and sex privilege" <sup>33</sup> — closer to kin and communities. Language as discourse and material praxis separates classes but also holds the potential to counter hegemonies and oppressive boundaries of how we know and with whom we come to know the world. Such a praxis of *knowing with* acknowledges the centrality of one's background and makes visible the connection of scholarship to deliberate kinships.

<sup>33</sup> bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989), 81.

For several years, as part of my public scholarship practice in architecture and the digital humanities (DH), I have been involved in framing care-centered pedagogies that ask what it means to learn across differences of "class and education" while honoring long-traveled solidarities. <sup>34</sup> To critically reflect on the meaning of the word *kinship* in such a framing is to begin by

<sup>34</sup> bell hooks, *Talking Back*, 12.



35 bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria Books, 2014), 25.

36 This undergraduate urban humanities studio for the 2019 semester nine pre-thesis cohort at the Avani Institute of Design, Calicut, was entitled, "Cities for Whom? Caring for Infrastructural Lives in Vizhinjam, Kerala." My co-instructors in this studio were Nimisha Hakkim and Mithun P. Basil. Situated within the communities of Madhipuram and Kottapuram in Vizhinjam, the studio made visible the otherwise palpable infrastructures of access, equity, waste, economy, and climate change involving the local fisherfolk's lived realities. Vizhinjam is a port community located toward the south of Trivandrum with a history of growth and displacement since the 1960s. Today, the livelihoods of these fisherfolk face new uncertainties from the construction of another project: the International Transshipment Terminal, currently being built near the villages toward the south. See Kush Patel, "Queer Disclosures, Queer Refusals: Notes on Survival Praxis in Architecture and Academia," in Kush Patel and Soumini Raja, eds., *Gender and Academic Leadership in Architecture in India: Research Symposium Proceedings* (Calicut: Avani Institute of Design, 2021), 119–29, here 125.

**fig. 2** Neethi Mary Regi, Raania Mohammed, Aysha Ansari, and Rizwa Kallada, and community participants in the fishing village of Madhipuram, Kerala. 2019. Photographer: Kalyani Menon

naming the "Savarna merit" that constituted my access to education in India and the United States and that continues to afford me a comparatively safe space for queer life in the academy. "Savarna" is a marker of caste dominance and mobility that is sustained by Hindu social structures both in India and among members of the South Asian diaspora. Naming this location of power and privilege is essential for me, because, as bell hooks asks, "how can we organize to challenge and change a system that cannot be named?"<sup>35</sup> Following bell hooks, and learning from my mother's revisioning of community networks, to center care in scholarship is to practice a vocabulary that helps us analyze the dominance of cis-hetero patriarchy and its intersections with caste in knowledge mobilization — a vocabulary that may allow us to queer kinship against its endogamic histories. In short, if kinship has meant a structured, affective, and generational articulation of casteist patriarchy and cis-heteronormativity, what might change as we build its relationship with knowing in the world differently?

Figure 2 shows a photograph taken in 2019 by undergraduate student researcher Kalyani Menon in the fishing village of Madhipuram, located south of Trivandrum in Vizhinjam, Kerala.<sup>36</sup> **fig. 2** It features her classmates Neethi Mary Regi, Raania Mohammed, Aysha Ansari, and Rizwa Kallada, as well as our community interlocutors, who asked not to be identified to protect themselves amid tensions with vested political power interests in the region. "We are safe," read Kalyani's text message to our messenger group. The studio community was out in the field, working and braving the sudden weather change from warm to brutally stormy. Text messages kept us together despite our dispersal along the mighty Arabian Sea coast and amid rains and the flooding that followed. The "we" in Kalyani's message, however, was not just a reporting back of individual well-being but rather an accounting of a way of *being with* individuals in a complex landscape. That my students and I were outsiders in an environment with a limited communications infrastructure was apparent. That we were simultaneously also modeling reciprocity across this digital and social divide required ongoing translation. For us — the local fisherfolk and studio participants — the study of community infrastructures made fragile by settler colonial technologies was also a study of how to structure the ownership of research and knowledge around language. Following bell hooks, "it is important that we know who we are speaking to, who we most want to hear us, who we most long to move, motivate, and touch with our



words.”<sup>37</sup> How might we bring this lived politics into a methodological view?

<sup>37</sup> bell hooks, *Talking Back*, 78.

My research and teaching remain structured around a shared interest in analyzing socially just infrastructures — understood as relational embodiments of a place inscribing minoritized histories and as scaffolds of community-engaged knowledge creation in and with the digital. This approach has enabled me to move the historical and theoretical analysis of architecture, space, and the city from critique to praxis, as well as to learn collaboratively, coalitionally, and pedagogically not just in analog, physical space but in digital environments and organizing. As cofounder of the Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed Collective,<sup>38</sup> for example, I work within cross-disciplinary DH frameworks to reconceptualize how we might approach the ethics of creating stories and constructing archives through computer-based platforms in distinct community contexts. With Kalyani, Neethi, Raania, Aysha, Rizwa, and other student members of the studio, we positioned our firsthand recordings of the place, including testimonies, oral histories, and digital photographs, as *terra communis*, not *terra nullius*; as sovereignty, kinship, and collective, not frontier land or empty land to be charted. Specifically, we located this work in discussions of intimacy, or the microspatial histories of intimate care and conflictual repair tied simultaneously to individual self and collective struggles of everyday survival. The photograph I share in this brief article serves both as an embodiment and a translation of this care work. Thus, how I access my sources and material finds, how I see them as narrative and community data, and how I use digital tools to imagine the possibility of archiving and documenting on community terms together represent an epistemological process to inquire not just into the relationship between the researcher and researched but also to explore the implication of self in knowledge-making.

<sup>38</sup> With Ashley Caranto Morford and Arun Jacob, I cofounded Pedagogy of the Digitally Oppressed, a digital humanities collective that is committed to rethinking the boundaries and possibilities of un-, re-, and co-learning digital research and pedagogy along deliberate queer, feminist, and anticolonial lines. Our partnership is a result of our respective and interconnected place-based public scholarship careers in India and territories that are colonially called Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Ontario, with ongoing involvement with networks within, across, and beyond these regions. Paulo Freire’s writings on the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1967–1978) are foundational to the naming and structuring of this collective. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970).

## Scholarship as Mutual Aid

### Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi

A photograph taken near Dadaab, Kenya, in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ Dagahaley camp, shows me showing a group of children a photograph of my four-year-old son on a small digital camera. <sup>fig.3</sup> “Waa magaciisa? [What is his name?],” they ask in Somali. “Sahil,” I reply. They recognize the name; it is close to that of one of their friends. The photograph was taken in 2011 in the vicinity of these children’s homes. It was taken with the permission of their families, who are standing just outside the frame. I share it here because the children are now grown and cannot be recognized. I will not share their names.



People have been living in the refugee camps at Dadaab since 1991. I had the privilege of visiting them as part of my doctoral research at New York University and as a member of a team of researchers working for the Women's Refugee Commission on a report studying the connections between gender-based violence and livelihoods in the camps. This research and advocacy organization based in the United States is affiliated with the International Rescue Committee, the humanitarian nongovernmental organization implementing services in the camps that facilitated the visit of our team, which included me, an Indian-born US citizen, and my colleague Bethany Young, a Jamaican citizen and student at Columbia University, who took the photograph. The children are among the third generation of people raised in the Dadaab refugee camps, although they are members of more recently displaced communities. Some were born in southern Somalia and traveled to Dadaab with their parents as a means of coping with the social breakdown and militarization that made living at home untenable. While that armed conflict is often narrated as internal to Somalia, it is directly related to US militarism in East Africa, the actions and inactions of the United Nations, and the geopolitics of the security state apparatus in which the government of Kenya participates. These forces refuse to allow young people, such as those who surrounded me and my son in this photograph, the emancipatory possibilities of being aspirational, caring people and instead consign them to a subjecthood of humanitarian need, confinement, and settlement.

In this short contribution, I discuss the impacts of caregiving upon scholarship; in particular, how *scholarly conceptualization* may grow out of extreme forms of domestic caregiving. My scholarship examines a refugee camp as a heritage architecture, not only a humanitarian one, and takes migration as an epistemic problem, not only a sociopolitical one.<sup>39</sup> I worked in several refugee camps to make an archive of architectures of forced migration, ultimately focusing on the object lessons offered by Dadaab and the many concept histories that converge within it. While I do not compare my experience to that of people living in the camps, I acknowledge that in doing this research I assumed personal, existential, and financial risk. Over the course of twelve years, I have talked to approximately three hundred people living or working in Dadaab or connected to it, most of them women. As an architectural historian, I asked people about design, construction, craft, landscape, ecology, settlement, urbanism, and territory. As a mother, I asked them how they made their homes. Where did they get food, water, milk? The aid agencies distributed foodstuffs and even utensils for cooking but

39 Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, *Architecture of Migration: The Dadaab Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Settlement* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming 2023).

not fuel. Who, if anyone, cared for the children when their caregivers traveled to find kindling? When they foraged for firewood outside the camps, putting themselves at risk of sexual violence and hyena attacks, did caregivers have any choice but to take their children with them?

Hearing women discuss their lives and livelihoods was perhaps possible only because I was asking questions about their labor, work methods, and how they built things. I was a woman talking mostly to women about gender, politics, homemaking, and camp-making. I was also a mother talking to mothers whose



sons had been abducted and conscripted into armies and who had fled home for the safety of all the others they needed to care for. I was forced to come to terms with the asymmetries in my scholarship, precisely concerning the relative safety and security of my own child, who I nevertheless ached for during our separation.

**fig.3** Children in Dagaheley. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Dagaheley camp, 2011. Photograph: Elletra Legovini. Archive of Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi

These experiences and my orientations led to writing a history of significant architectures created by people who were mothers and forced migrants. My commitment, including assuming risk in spite of my own responsibilities as a primary caregiver, grew out of a political solidarity with the migrations and urgencies of my interlocutors. However, the empathies and comprehensions of what I was seeing and studying stemmed from my role as a primary domestic caregiver during all the years of my research—from my first day of PhD coursework to the day I submitted a book manuscript to a publisher—with all the demands and desperations the work of caregiving produces in any situation.

This double work of scholar-caregiver added nuance to my theorizations. Understanding how a refugee camp was built, by whom, and under what historical conditions gave way to questions of how, in emergencies, homes are recovered or constructed and, similarly, how, in migration, histories are recovered or constructed. I started to see how personal an archive can be, how it can be a life force for a child or a family fleeing from harm. On a day when the census was being taken by humanitarian workers in Dagaheley camp, journalist and refugee Musa Adan Mahmud discussed with me the camp's spatial arrangement and assignment of plots. **fig.4** They embodied the refugee census that was predicated upon them, impacting political consolidations and representative voting for leadership and policies in the camp. For Mahmud, neither the census nor the spatial layout of the camp was an abstraction,



**fig. 4** Musa, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Dagaheley camp, 2011. Photograph: Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi. Archive of Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi

nor did any dwelling operate merely as shelter. Each element of the built environment acted as a conceptual archive of the lives lived in Dadaab, in turn, becoming monuments to the futures of the children who surrounded us, playing, as we talked — racing, spinning, chasing, fighting, and laughing.

People in emergencies are forced to live *out of time* and also to live *with time* in unsettling ways. Their experiences of presents, pasts, and futures become inextricably and unrelentingly entangled. Even those of us in arenas of privilege have experienced the unruliness of timespace after March 2020, when the daily markers of work and school evaporated. The experience is amplified when time is tethered to a responsibility for the life of another. Time becomes pregnant. Caregiving becomes an extreme experience of time, embodied and urgent. A response to this extreme condition that emerges organically is the straightforward act of mutual aid, a form of ethics that we do not often associate with scholarship.

I have been thinking about an ethic of scholarly caregiving and the forms of mutual aid that scholarship can provide. People displaced in emergencies need food and water and the architectures that provide them, but as they shelter they also need the intangible horizon beyond. They need the assurance that histories and narratives can remain intact in their custodianship and that the people under their care can hear, value, and build futures from them. Thus, studying an architecture of emergency, of migration, has the epistemic power to construct a scaffold for futures. As I have explained elsewhere, I have practiced an ethic of scholarly caregiving by trying to write with people, literally and metaphorically, toward a common future.<sup>40</sup> I aim to build an epistemic scaffold together with others. I have begun to comprehend this practice as a form of accountability, sometimes to people I will never meet again, which is, in part an acknowledgment of a position of producing scholarship within the US academy and thus of benefiting from various forms of oppressive power. However, I have come to regard this accountability — which is at the base of forms of mutual aid in scholarship — as a competency to be valued and a value to be cherished. Such accountability demonstrates that scholarly work is mutually indebted; it conditions relations between the scholar and the subjects and objects of scholarship as they co-constitute methods:



**40** Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, "Writing With: Togethering, Difference, and Feminist Architectural Histories of Migration," in "Structural Instability," ed. Daniel A. Barber, Eduardo Rega, *e-flux Architecture*, July 2018, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/structural-instability/208707/writing-with/> (accessed Aug. 22, 2022)

all constructing an ethics of research aimed toward reparation and restitution as forms of knowledge and understanding.

This thinking ultimately stems from my concern with the embodiments and entanglements that carers inhabit. In the simple act of revisiting a photograph of my child every day, sometimes in the company of other people's children, I began to understand how caregiving acts as a germ for scholarly empathy, imagination, and collaboration—with figures in the present and the past. Caregiving, both laborious and life-giving, impacts not only what and why we study but how we decide to understand, feel, and narrate. By contributing to the construction of an ethic in this way, scholarly caregiving creates epistemic power through a scholarly practice of mutual aid and, from that foundation, scaffolds futures.

## Insinuating the Invisible

Lilian Chee

"What interests the historian of everyday life is the *invisible*." <sup>41</sup>

Cecil Asong is a thirty-nine-year-old woman from the small township of Zarraga (population 27,000) in the Province of Iloilo in the Philippines. She has two teenage daughters—the younger, in secondary school, is still doing home-based learning, and the elder has just begun her tertiary education. The girls have no internet access at home. They make do by sharing the service with a neighbor. Cecil's husband is a farmer of a smallholding. He grows vegetables, and they have two pigs. Cecil's mother-in-law stays close to help with the girls. They are a close-knit family. Cecil is intelligent, resourceful, tenacious, and reliable. She is good with children. I know all this because she has been living with my family in Singapore for the last eight years as our domestic helper. Without her labor I would not be able to write this brief statement about caregiving and the significance of "repair" in an academic context. With my adult asthma risks and the family choosing not to go out so as to minimize my chances of falling seriously ill during the pandemic, she has also been staying at home with us since March 2020. We owe her a huge debt of care.

I begin with a brief biography of the foreign domestic worker, an essential component of affective care work in Singapore. On arrival in Singapore, these women are trained to assimilate and adapt to local conditions. The list of words in Figure 5 is an excerpt from a vocabulary sheet given to them by their local agents. <sup>fig.5</sup> They are encouraged to learn local dialects and languages, practice social etiquette, intuit instructions, and anticipate needs. The high wages are enticing enough for them to leave behind their own children, spouses, previous lives, and histories. Subsequently, they live within an impasse, <sup>42</sup> with a contracted

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<sup>41</sup> Paul Leuilliot, preface to Guy Thuillier, *Pour une histoire du quotidien au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Nivernais* (Paris: Mouton, 1977), xi–xii, cited in Michel de Certeau, Luce Giard, and Pierre Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 2, *Living and Cooking* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>42</sup> Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2011).



sense of personal space and sociality. We, in turn, know little of their lives, loves, dreams, and desires.

The active import of foreign domestic workers to Singapore began when local women were encouraged to join the manufacturing workforce in the 1970s. <sup>43</sup> In 1978, the Foreign

**43** See Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, "Foreign Domestic Workers in Singapore: Social and Historical Perspectives" (2016), National University of Singapore, [https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/case-studies/fdws\\_in\\_singapore.pdf?sfvrsn=2ac5960b\\_2](https://lkyspp.nus.edu.sg/docs/default-source/case-studies/fdws_in_singapore.pdf?sfvrsn=2ac5960b_2) (accessed February 12, 2022).

**fig. 5** Vocabulary sheet for foreign domestic workers. Source: Anthea Phua, "How to Live with Another" (Master's thesis, National University of Singapore, 2021)

**44** See Theresa W. Devasahayam, "Placement and/or Protection? Singapore's Labour Policies and Practices for Temporary Women Migrant Workers," *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy* 15, no. 1 (2010), 45–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13547860903488229>.

**45** Yufeng Kok, "Businesses, Families Would Have Been Severely Hit if Singapore Had Closed Borders to Migrant Workers: MOM," *Straits Times*, May 18, 2021.

**46** In older public housing, the ground floor covered open space (called "void decks") that had amenities such as benches, tables, and the area around the (now defunct) public phone. These were occupied by domestic workers. For a discourse on the void deck, see Lilian Chee, "Keeping Cats, Hoarding Things: Domestic Situations in the Public Spaces of the Singaporean Housing Block," *Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 6 (2017), 1041–65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2017.1362024>.

**47** Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 89.

SALAM / UCAPAN					
BAHASA INDONESIA	BAHASA INGGRIS	BACAAN MANDARIN	BAHASA KANTONESE	BAHASA BOKKIAN	BAHASA MANDARIN
Apa Kabar	How are You	Ni Hau	Nei Hou	Li Ho	您好
Maaf	Sorry	Tue Pu Jhi / Pau Chien	To Em Ji	To Em Ju	对不起
Permisi/Terima Kasih	Excuse Me	Ching Wen	Em Koi	Chia Meng	請問
Sampai Jumpa ...	See You ...	Cai Cien	Coi Kin	Cai Kien	再見
Selamat	Congratulation	Kong Si	Kung Hei	Kiong Hi	恭喜
Selamat Datang	Welcome	Huan Ying	Fun Ying	Fan Ying	歡迎
Selamat Jalan	Goodbye	Man Cou/ Cai Cien	Man Man Hang	Man Man Kie	慢走 / 再見
Selamat Makan	Have Nice Meal	Jing Man Yong	Jing man-mao shi	Chin Jai Clak	請隨意
Selamat Malam	Good Evening	Wan An	Man On	Mi Si Ca	晚安
Selamat Pagi	Good Morning	Cau An	Cou San	Dhau Ca	早安
Selamat Siang	Good Afternoon	U An	Em On	E Po	午安
Selamat Tahun Baru	Happy New Year	Sin Nen Cin Pu	Sen Nin Failok	Sin Ni	新年進步
Selamat Tidur	Good Night	Wen An	Co Dao	Al Qun	晚安
Selamat Ulang Tahun	Happy Birthday	Sen Re Kwai Lok	Sang Ya Failok	Sin Lik	生日快乐
Silahkan	Please	Ching	Jing	Jia	請
Tak Apa-apa	Nevermind	Mei Kuan Si/ Pu Yau Ching	Mo Man dai	Bo Wa Kin	沒關係 / 不要緊
Terima Kasih	Thank You	Sie Sie	To Chie	To Sia	謝謝
Terima Kasih Kembali	You Are Well Come	Pu Ghe Jhi/ Pu Kan Tang	Em Sai Hak He	Mien Ghe Ghi	不客氣

#### Chinese words maid must know:

Mop the floor	抹地 (ma di)
Sweep the floor	掃地 (sao di)
Cooking	煮食 (coo fan)
Fold Clothes	折衣服 (ze yi fa)
Iron Clothes	燙衣服 (tang yi fa)
Shower/Bathe	沖凉 (cong liang)
Sleep	睡覺 (shui jiao)

Wash clothes	洗衣 (xi yi)
Washing Machine	洗衣機 (xi yi ji)
Wash dishes	洗碗 (xi wan)
Wash hands	洗手 (xi shou)

Cut fruits	切水果 (qie shui guo)
Eat	吃 (chi)
Water	水 (shui)
Salt	鹽 (yan)
Sugar	糖 (tang)

Keep	收 (shou)
Push	推 (tui)
Pull	拉 (la)
Open door	開門 (kai men)
Close door	關門 (guan men)
Lock the door	鎖門 (suo men)
Open windows	開窗 (kai chuang)
Close windows	關窗 (guan chuang)

Living Room	客厅 (he ting)
Dining Room	飯厅 (fan ting)
Bed Room	房 (fang jian)
Table	桌子 (zao zi)
Bed	床 (chuang)
Chair	椅子 (yi zi)
Tissue	紙巾 (zhi jin)
Wet Tissue	濕紙巾 (shi zi jin)

Morning	早上 (zao shang)
Afternoon	下午 (xia wa)
Night	晚上 (wan shang)

Go upstairs	上樓 (sang lou)
Go downstairs	下樓 (xia lou)

#### Number

1. li	6. lo	11. Cai Gien
2. di	7. ci	12. lau Etem cai
3. sa	8. pa	
4. si	9. kau	
5. so	10. cap	

#### Teochew Words

Learn	學 (o)
Car	車 (pue)
Chopsticks	筷 (te)
Bowl	碗 (vda)
Spoon	匙 (tem ci)
Fans	扇 (huang si)
Light	燈 (keng)
Shower	淋浴 (chang e)
Up stairs	上樓 (lau ting)
Down stairs	下樓 (lau e)
Iron	熨 (keng)
Chairs	椅 (i)
Table	檯 (gheng ting)
Door	門 (nung)
Windows	窗 (tang mung)
Go shop	去 (keng) the tiang
At Home	在家 (nia lai)
Go out	出 (chu te)
Orange	橙 (huam ka)
Play	玩 (pai pe bong)

#### TEOCHIEW WORDS

Fish	魚 (he)
Vegetable	菜 (cai)
Apple	蘋果 (pang guo)
Orange	橙 (cha)
Fruits	水果 (shui guo)
Chicken	雞 (kue)
Paste	粉 (sak)
Pore	毛孔 (te box)
Go (walk)	去 (te ca)
Pass water	倒水 (pang xio)
Pass motion	動 (pang sai)
Cat	貓 (cau peng)
Cat porridge	貓粥 (miao zhou)
Morning	早晨 (cha si)
Afternoon	下午 (e kua)
Night	晚上 (he kua)
Off the light	關燈 (kue tiang)
On the light	開燈 (kai tiang)
First Floor	一樓 (it lau)
Third Floor	三樓 (sa lau)
Second Floor	二樓 (ji lau)
Wash cloth	洗衣 (sok sa)
Mop the floor	拖地 (te to e)
Iron the cloth	熨衣 (ue sa)
Ground Floor	樓下 (lau e)
Drink Water	喝水 (kup cai)
Shower	淋浴 (chang e)

Domestic Worker Scheme was introduced with five thousand women enrolled from overseas. <sup>44</sup> In 2020, despite travel restrictions, 247,400 foreign women – mostly from neighboring South-east Asian countries, including Indonesia, the Philippines, and Myanmar – worked as domestic helpers in Singapore. <sup>45</sup>

The reality is that the Singaporean "family unit" is increasingly incomplete without a domestic helper. Housing 82 percent of the resident population, the Housing and Development Board's incessant research into occupancy configurations (nuclear family, extended family, aging householders, and singles, although marriage remains a precondition for subsidized private housing) has far-reaching outcomes. Yet, these women do not figure as residents in the official statistics. Sleeping on roll-up mattresses, pull-out or foldable beds in shared bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms, and illegally in windowless bomb shelters, they are still accommodated tenuously, consistent with their moniker, "transient foreign worker." <sup>46</sup>

In *How to Live Together*, Roland Barthes states that reciprocity, such as feelings of attachment or friendship, can exist only within the same social rank and class. <sup>47</sup> I am painfully aware that my need for paid help at home both sustains Cecil's family and curtails her freedom. No matter how long a helper stays with the family, or even when she becomes co-opted as a beloved member, an unbridgeable gulf remains, cut deep by profound differences in education, class, and racial discrimination.

Perpetuating a colonial legacy of “servants,” the figure of the domestic helper is not new. British expatriate families had live-in local servants. Subsequently, wealthier Chinese families employed poorer families as domestic help.

The repair work in this specific instance first involves recognition and inclusion — that is, naming the persons we rely on and making space for them reciprocally in the knowledges we create. Action can be taken in how I, as an academic, designer, mother, and employer, choose to talk about and to include Cecil and her fellow workers in the stories I tell, the classes I teach, the design projects I supervise, and the research I conduct. <sup>48</sup> **fig. 6** Second, repair can be sustained at the level of embodied and lived knowledge creation. The insertion of the domestic helper into architectural scholarship requires tactical intervention and invention. I borrow from Michel de Certeau and Luce Giard, who argue that the study of the everyday ordinary (for this is where we find the missing helper) is a “practical science of the singular,” emphasizing particularity and concreteness of situations over abstractions made from research tools ill-suited to capture the “inventive proliferations” of everyday domestic life. <sup>49</sup> In defining the tactical (as opposed to “the strategic”), de Certeau gives the French example of *la perruque*. *La perruque* is when the worker steals time in the course of their work by improvising with leftovers to create something that cannot be economically or financially quantified. <sup>50</sup> De Certeau’s “economy of the gift” and “ethics of tenacity” are insightful. <sup>51</sup> I interpret these as the creative clearing of domestic time and space for the mutual exchange of talents and, with that, the beginnings of solidarity.

Cecil and I have a shared interest in plants. Planting edible crops between ornamental plants in our small, walled, urban



garden has yielded surprising harvests of basil leaves, limes, and water spinach. Between house chores, she teaches me how to mend broken branches and rejuvenate orchids. Working together in our jungle-garden has nurtured friendship and healing. Through

cooking, we discover shared ingredients, cooking methods, and necessary improvisations for heirloom recipes. Cooking revives family stories — hers and mine. She creates, mends, and makes at a domestic scale. Her sustainability is actionable, grounded,

<sup>48</sup> See Anthea Phua, *How to Live with Another* (2021), <http://www.presidentsmedals.com/Entry-56191> (accessed February 12, 2022). See also Lilian Chee and Silvia Federici, “We need forms of reproduction that do not separate us from each other,” in “Contemporary Feminist Spatial Practice,” special issue, *Arch+* 246 (February 2022), 66–75.

<sup>49</sup> De Certeau, Giard, and Mayol, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol 2, 256.

<sup>50</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 25–26.

<sup>51</sup> De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1, 26.

**fig. 6** Cecil and George harvesting herbs in the back garden during the covid pandemic. Photograph: Lilian Chee, 2020



and real. She influences us. While it may not be the sort of transgression that de Certeau intended, these micro-tactics upend household routines and social hierarchies because they are creative, generative, and generous.

This version of *la perruque* changes the worker and her employer. At the same time, this discourse must also insinuate itself into wider public practice — it must change the way we think about design, transform the making of policy, become intrinsic to our pedagogy, and figure in our writing. Caring for the stranger without draws one closer to one's own past. Perhaps this is the most significant threshold that we need to mentally overcome before reparation can begin, for everyone.

## Unruly Sites of Repair: Rwanda, 1994–2019

### Delia Duong Ba Wendel

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I am an architectural historian and cultural geographer who explores the spatialization of peacebuilding in relation to unresolved histories of harm and the legacies of uneven redress. I work primarily in Rwanda, where I have been reflecting on the unruly nature of repair after the 1994 genocide. *Repair* implies efforts to mend or compensate for harms that result from crimes and a range of wrongs not necessarily recognized by law, including psychosocial injuries, nonprosecutable forms of state terror, and structural oppression. Repair is both an individual matter and a fundamentally social dilemma concerned with issues of redress for whole groups of people. Forms of repair range from material payments and redistributive policies to truth-telling and forms of recognition, mutual aid, and the restoration of relationships. Repair is no easy task; it is unruly. Nonetheless, individuals and communities seek repair to fulfill the possibility to endure; to feed bodies in need of some measure of acknowledgment of wrongs, restitution, and perhaps healing. Endeavoring to repair recognizes both the impossibility and necessity of that task.

A memorial can be a potent act of communal repair. Memorials also resist notions of repair as inevitable, immediately accessible, or achieved through techno-scientific acts of reconstruction. Rwanda's genocide memorials are distinct sites: they conserve places of killing and victims' remains in attempts to materialize collective memory of Tutsi survival and erasure. Among them, the Murambi Genocide Memorial is prominent for its display of mummified genocide victims at the massacre site. Attempting to understand the ethical and political motivations behind the conservation of genocide victims and sites compels engagement with the views and experiences of individuals who did that memory work. Doing so has led me to an intimate historiography of repair. 52

52 My approach to writing what I call "reparative histories" (Delia Duong Ba Wendel, *Rwanda's Genocide History: Between Justice and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, forthcoming 2023)) is informed by the work of Yvette Abrahams, Ariella Azoulay, Catherine Hall, Saidiya Hartman, and Toni Morrison.

On April 21, 1994, state-sponsored militants attacked the Murambi Technical School and killed an estimated 35,000 people who had sought refuge at the complex.<sup>53</sup> The next day, local authorities disposed of the evidence, throwing bodies into newly dug mass graves. The following year, an iterative process of exhumation, conservation, memorialization, and reburial was initiated by a local community group and, later, by the Genocide Memorial Commission. The commission was convened and funded by the postgenocide governing regime. At Murambi, its charge was to conserve victims' remains and the weapons and place of massacre and to make that genocide evidence available to view, creating a memorial site that was at once commemorative and a justice-seeking corrective. Work was led on-site by a Rwandan archaeologist, Dr. Célestin Kanimba Misago, and a Chilean United Nations human rights worker, Mario Ibarra. The commission's work was complicated by the divergent aims of the new regime, whose interest in genocide memorials was as much about justice as about securing national sovereignty and quieting dissent.<sup>54</sup>

Two photographs taken by Ibarra near Murambi engage what it was like to conserve evidence of the genocide in 1996. *fig. 7 a, b* In one, a woman's arms gently encircle a child who watches an infant playing with the grass at their feet. Blankets to keep the pair warm are close in case comfort is needed. The woman is resting and looking off to the distance, where another woman sits partially out of frame. She holds a baby to her chest, nestled in a blanket on her lap. In a second photograph, the camera centers on a multitude of hands suspended over a sheet of plastic that tenuously holds soapy water. They rub human skulls to wash the dirt and remaining bits of hair, blood, and flesh from genocide victims found in a mass grave. Several groups are at work conserving hundreds of bones and skulls, some for display at the Murambi Memorial and others for burial in consecrated graves. Photographs of the "backstage" work of conservation and mothering challenge a reading of those memorials solely as commemorative monuments, inviting questions about the politics and emotional labor of repair.

The majority of conservation workers at Murambi were young women whose children accompanied them as they did their work. Most survived the genocide yet lost their family members. Vestine featured in numerous photographs of Murambi conservation work in 1996. When I spoke with her in 2018, she described what it was like to conserve bodies and bones. The conservation of killing sites was gruesome, difficult, and emotional. She said that she and other genocide survivors were still sad and grieving. The stiff, withered bodies were inordinately heavy and smelled

<sup>53</sup> The estimated number of individuals killed at the Murambi massacre on April 21, 1994, varies according to the account. In 1996, the Genocide Memorial Commission estimated that 35,000–40,000 people were killed at the site, based on the 20,154 dead bodies found in area mass graves and witness testimonies. See Genocide Memorial Commission, *Rapport Préliminaire d'Identification des Sites du Génocide et Des Massacres d'Avril-Juillet 1994 au Rwanda* (Kigali: MINESUPRES, Feb 1996), 55. By contrast, subsequent African Rights and government reports identify 50,000 dead at the site. See African Rights, *Murambi: "Go. If You Die, Perhaps I Will Live"* (Kigali: African Rights, 2007), 134, <https://francegenocidetutsi.org/MurambiGikongoroAfrRights.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2022).

<sup>54</sup> Research on the government control of genocide memorials is exhaustive, represented partially by the following: Jennie E. Burnet, *Genocide Lives in Us: Women, Memory, and Silence in Rwanda* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012); Héléne Dumas and Rémi Korman, "Espaces de la mémoire du génocide des Tutsis au Rwanda: Mémoires et Lieux de Mémoire," *Afrique contemporaine* 2, no. 238 (2011), 11–27; Nigel Eltringham, "Bodies of Evidence: Remembering the Rwandan Genocide at Murambi," in Nigel Eltringham and Pam Maclean, eds., *Remembering Genocide* (London: Routledge, 2014), 200–218; Timothy Longman, *Memory and Justice in Post-genocide Rwanda* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Olivier Nyirubugara, *Complexities and Dangers of Remembering and Forgetting in Rwanda* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2013); and Claudine Vidal, "La commémoration du génocide au Rwanda: Violence symbolique, mémorisation forcée et histoire officielle," *Cahiers d'études Africaines* 3, no. 175 (2004), 575–92.



**fig. 7 a, b** Residents living near Murambi, Rwanda, employed by the Genocide Memorial Commission, care for their children and clean the bones of genocide victims found in area mass graves, 1996. Photograph: Mario Ibarra, personal archive, Chile







of decay. Yet, Vestine cleaned the bodies of the dead to bring her kin some measure of dignity. She continues to care for them today, returning to the school buildings every day for the last three decades to clean the grounds and the bodies in one of the classrooms. This despite being laid off for a time by the memorial managers, and the recurring migraines and high blood pressure that doctors explain as trauma-related. She did the work despite all this because the job provided her and her two surviving children with some income, and, as she said, "they were our people."

These efforts of repair are oriented to what I call an ethics of non-erasure, which holds that the very representation of genocidal crimes helps to counter the intended obliteration of a people. Acts of recognition train the averted gaze back to that which it seeks to evade and tells otherwise ignored or hidden truths. This is a form of memory justice, one that bears witness to erasure. In Rwanda, the views of those involved in early genocide memory conservation demonstrate that it was not exclusively government directed. The conservation of bodies, bones, and massacre sites developed from local initiatives motivated at least in part, as Vestine helps to highlight, by care for those killed. As unruly sites of repair, genocide memorials refuse closure. The sites are simultaneously state symbols of power and hold contested memories, providing windows onto marginalized remembrance.

What might architectural historiography learn from unruly sites of repair — as a matter of epistemology, method, and subject of focus — that it could then use to reckon with its own historical omissions and the dispossession, marginalization, and oppression enacted through built environments? Considered as a method for writing history, Vestine's approach to repair — that is, her caregiving — might be described as one that intervenes directly in the violence of historiographical omission by seeking to recognize lives lost and by recalibrating the ways in which genocide histories are narrated. Architectural historians attentive to those dynamics participate in parallel acts of repair, activating both a politics of recognition and forms of scholarly care. The latter emerge from a radical seeing and listening that refuses to turn away, that is attentive to Vestine's agency and struggle.

In my research in Rwanda, I am undoubtedly an outsider. My privilege as a foreigner with the ability to travel and ask questions and my disadvantages as a foreigner who has none of the knowledge and expertise possessed by Rwandans were raised by nearly everyone I spoke with. I sought to balance my outsider status in the country by gaining Kinyarwanda language proficiency and, where local dialects challenged my understanding, by partnering with a Rwandan translator (who prefers not to be identified).

Though certainly more familiar with the culture and language than I, they, too, were a relative outsider to the communities we visited, for they did not grow up in those places. I describe our collaboration as one animated by questions about interpretation, un/ease, what was narrated, and what was possibly left unsaid. Without their humanity and insight this work would have been both less joyous and less meaningful. Forging some measure of intimacy with individuals and images in the course of writing this history has produced a body language of welled up feeling that always catches me by surprise. I hear continuities of the past in the passion, heartbreak, resolute determination, and resignation to larger forces in those moments when photographs were explained or experiences relived. I endeavor to see and hear despite my own substantial distance from the experiences relayed.

My research has also confronted another, unexpected outside: an aversion, particularly within forums related to architecture and architectural history, to engage with images that document genocide massacres and memory work. The most extreme of such reactions occurred in 2019 in a remote conference hosted by a European university. Halfway into my presentation, the panel moderator turned off my presentation screen, removing my slides from the audience's view. At another conference, in a panel on architectural histories of conflict, a senior professor expressed significant unease with the images I showed. Audience members at both conferences challenged my intent in relation to the triggering effects they experienced. I had been most concerned with describing the traumatic experiences and memory activism of those represented in the photographs. Images of violence are never easy to receive and are furthermore overlaid with issues of vantage and power that can reproduce pain and harm. However, I present my research frequently within African studies conferences and seminars and in those settings have never confronted refusals to engage.

Declaring the visual and spatial evidence of violence as outside the purview of architecture and its history has significant consequences for those seeking to confront the damage done to marginalized communities by design and planning. Prevalent abstractions of violence typically refer to dispossession as reform policies and to acts of enclosure as modernization. Such abstractions rarely allow for causal relationships between policies and the loss of life and other forms of violence, and they render damaged homes and the destruction of civic space as if they were mere symbols of war. My hope is that an intimate, reparative history of genocide memory work will help to inform the design and planning fields struggling to come to terms with the



violence they have perpetrated and reproduced. A reparative historiography resists abstraction. It engages both repair and care as method to represent unruly sites of memory and the complex personhood of individuals. In doing so, a reparative historiography foregrounds people and places that are erased and misrecognized, enabling discussions around topics otherwise wrapped in silence. Writing an architectural history from Rwanda's genocide memorials in this way requires that I confront, and not seek to resolve, the justice, politics, and trauma of memory work. It begs the intimacy that grows from attempted, close understanding, and a learning from — a transposition of — efforts of repair in the world to reparative representations of the past.

## A Critical Closeness

### Jay Cephas

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**55** See Belgin Turan Özkaya, "Visuality and Architectural History," in Dana Arnold, Elvan Altan Ergut, and Belgin Turan Özkaya, eds., *Rethinking Architectural Historiography* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 183–99.

**56** Claire Zimmerman, "The Monster Magnified: Architectural Photography as Visual Hyperbole," *Perspecta* 40 (2008), 136–47, here 136.

**57** Nana Last, "Thomas Struth: From Image to Archive to Matrix," *Praxis: Journal of Writing and Building* 7 (2005), 78–87, here 78.

**58** Mark Wigley, "Unleashing the Archive," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 2, no. 2 (Winter 2005), 10–15, here 11.

Research in architectural history has long relied on visuality as both an object and mechanism of historical analysis. <sup>55</sup> Photographs in particular have served as important visual evidence of architectural production, and they have in turn positioned the architectural image as a "critical collaborator" in producing an architectural subject that consists not just of buildings but also of "perceptions, opinions, effects, spatial constructs, utopian realities, [and] subsequent histories." <sup>56</sup> The architectural image makes its way into presentations and texts as evidence of the condition under study with the image itself as demonstrating "specific knowledge about a subject." <sup>57</sup> Conspicuously missing from the architectural subject and its archive is the human subject. If the archive "exists outside of time" in its effort to preserve historical documents, <sup>58</sup> then what happens to the researcher who enters this timeless space?

The primacy of the image in the production and dissemination of architectural research is without question. However, I would like to put it into question, not with the aim of removing images as a primary source of analysis but for the purpose of understanding a formative relationship between the central role of visual evidence in architectural research, the relative absence of human bodies in that visual evidence, and how the discipline of architectural history conceives of the relationship between the architectural historian and the work of architectural history.

My research engages with the fact of laboring bodies as spaces of social production, and through various projects I have encountered a difficult tension between the visioning of architectural production required by the field of architectural history and the often messy and difficult entanglement of bodies, buildings, and practices that constitute my subject of inquiry. One such example arose when I had been deep in the archives of the

Ford Motor Company, sifting through the records of the industrial hospital located within the Ford River Rouge automobile factory just outside Detroit. Housed within what was widely believed to be the largest factory in the world at the time in the 1920s, the Ford factory hospital saw thousands of cases per

month — of workers with grave and disturbing injuries. At one point, I was focused on just the records from the department of ophthalmology, which detailed the hundreds of workers it saw *each week* with severe eye injuries — burns, lacerations, ulcers, contusions, and infections, among others. Some of these workers were as young as sixteen years old. Almost all of them were recent migrants, from rural Eastern Europe and from the rural southern United States. The hospital fixed them up,

fig. 8 This space intentionally kept blank

then discharged them — from the hospital and also from their jobs and livelihoods, only to be replaced by other workers out of the thousands waiting for employment and eager to risk severe bodily injury or even death in exchange for a living wage.

Reading through the details of mangled bodies, some deceased, and seeing the images of severe burns and eyes lacerated and pierced was difficult. Also difficult was the expectation that I, as a researcher, was not to acknowledge this difficulty or even feel emotionally affected by the conditions faced by the subjects of my research. So it was with great relief that I engaged in discussion with my office mate at the time, Delia Wendel, about these research challenges. I told her about the difficulty I was having reading through these records and seeing these images, and she told me about the difficulty she was having with her own research in contending with the evidence of the genocide in Rwanda following the 1994 civil war. What we experienced as researchers and readers of these archives cannot compare to the conditions that the subjects of our research actually lived through and experienced. But that was a part of the conversation as well. A sort of emotional restoration emerged from these conversations, and I began to question the methodological gaze of the scholar and the expected distance between the researcher and the subjects of the research.

Around the same time, I gave a conference talk on a different research project that took a related but divergent approach to understanding spaces of embodiment. In this project, I examined the spatial performance of hunger strikes by analyzing how bodies served as the site of public discourse when dissidents were forcibly removed from the public square. The hunger strikers



in question — who were in India resisting British colonization in the 1930s and in Northern Ireland advocating independence in the 1970s — were imprisoned and thus removed from public view, which meant that the condition of their deteriorating, starving bodies was not viewed directly by the public. However, the discourse prompted by their embodied political action created a new public square, one sited within their absent bodies. To exemplify this bodily absence, my presentation slides consisted of blank images, just pure white pages that I scrolled through as I read my paper. fig. 8 The blank slides represented the bodily absence of the hunger strikers in the public discourse they generated about their respective conditions. I also abstained from using images of the hunger strikers because I had become increasingly frustrated with how bodies — especially Black and Brown bodies — appeared in academic presentations as illustrations accompanying intellectual ideas. Simply put, I refused to serve up Brown bodies for visual consumption or as tools to support my argument. Following my presentation, I received significant and intense criticism for not showing images. In fact, the ensuing discussion centered entirely on my decision to not show images, with no response to the actual work I presented. A point that came up repeatedly was of critical distance. Audience members sensed that I was uncomfortable with images of the hunger strikers and assumed it was because I was “too close” to the subject of my research. And they were correct. I was deeply emotionally affected by the images of starving, emaciated bodies, and my emotions about these bodies entered into my research and shaped my analysis.

Critical distance posits that to be true to both the subjects and intentions of research we must be removed from them to some degree. This removal can range from observing and understanding the conditions under study independent from oneself to isolating the subject and conditions of research entirely. Critical distance is typically presented as a way to ensure the validity of research — that the research is not simply a rendering of one’s own opinion but emerges from a thorough and rigorous process that yields relevant insights. Critical distance has typically protected against undertaking research “close” to the researcher in any personal way, instead arguing that the intellectual objectivity necessary for analysis can be attained only if the researcher can approach the work as a condition unfamiliar to them in some way. In archival research, such critical distance arguably allows for a presumed objectivity that can allow for documents and artifacts to be read purely within their own historical context and for that context to not be confused with the conditions within which the researcher finds themselves. While notions of critical distance often

emphasize the distance between the researcher and the subject, ultimately it is the “critical” part that is important here more so than the “distance” — that criticality means always having a questioning and analytical eye toward the subject matter.

Instead of enacting a critical distance, what would it mean to be critically close? To normalize the study of things physically close — such as the places in which we have lived — and things emotionally close — such as the stories of our ancestors? To embrace the subjects of our research with care and criticality? To treat the archive as not an arrest of time but as a continuously unfolding present? A critical closeness would emphasize self-reflexivity on methods and approaches as a means to not only allow ourselves to be emotionally affected by the subjects of our research but also to understand and analyze how that affective engagement can shape the framework for analysis. Notions of what I call “critical closeness” are not new. In the early 2000s, Loïc Wacquant urged ethnographers to shift away from participant observation in favor of what he called an “observant participation” that would locate the researcher as part of the social scene under study. Wacquant came to this position when he began training at a local boxing gym while doing a sociological study of Black Chicagoans, which led to a personal transformation that shifted his research project into an ethnography of boxing.<sup>59</sup> This immersive approach to research drew from 1960s critiques of the white gaze in sociological research and from 1970s feminist critiques of geography, such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands*, that embraced embodied experience as a method of analysis.<sup>60</sup>

A critical closeness would not only allow for an intimate connection to archival material but also recognize the emotional labor of research and allow that affect to enter into and shape one’s research method. Recent scholarship on urban repair and maintenance emphasizes ties between the care of place and the care of community.<sup>61</sup> Critical closeness as a mode of integrating the practices of everyday care into research could similarly build ties between expressions of care and compassion for the subjects of research and expressions of care of self and community. Such a “politics of care” pushes beyond the sequestering of affect into the private sphere of the home to instead allow emotional engagement to be present in the public life of research: in the lab, the office, the conference, and the archive.

I am interested in the potential of critical closeness as both an intellectual method and a reparative exercise for and within architectural history. As a method, it might mean recognizing one’s own experiential framework and how multiple, intersecting identities shape analysis, understanding that the acknowledgment

<sup>59</sup> Loïc Wacquant, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> See Tom Hall and Robin James Smith, “Care and Repair and the Politics of Urban Kindness,” *Sociology* 49, no. 1 (February 2015), 3–18, here 3.



of one's subject position(s) can allow for richer interpretations while contributing to both a disciplinary and an individual repair. As a reparative exercise, it might challenge the role of presumed objectivity in architectural history analysis to instead question the subjectivities involved. I cannot help but wonder whether the relative lack of human subjects in the primary evidence of architectural research — the image — contributes to an emphasis on a critical distancing between the researcher and the subject of research. Are we analytically treating the bodies of human subjects just as we treat the bodies of architectural subjects, as mere evidence of the work of research and as objects of analysis for the architectural-historical gaze? If, as Shannon Mattern suggests, "to study maintenance is itself an act of maintenance," then perhaps being critically close to research can similarly stand as a form of self and disciplinary care. <sup>62</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Shannon Mattern, "Maintenance and Care," *Places Journal*, November 2018, <https://doi.org/10.22269/181120>.

## Caregiving, Scholar-Parenting, and Small Works Ikem Stanley Okoye

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The 1988 catalog of Nigerian-born Afro-British sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp's first exhibition under the auspices of the British Arts Council, *Echoes of Kalabari*, has on its back cover a photograph of the artist reclining in a hammock, clearly an expectant mother. I cannot recall whether baby had arrived by the time I visited (or was a toddler already), but the pregnant photograph came to help me, much later, make sense of what at the time were rarely exhibited artworks distributed across the modern house shared with her husband — white, English architect Alan Camp. <sup>63</sup> Diminutive, whimsical objects, they appeared playful, decorative, not demanding any particular contemplation. I did not photograph them, but the work titled *Family*, dated 1990, may have been one such work. <sup>fig. 9</sup> About 12 inches high and 14 inches long, it shows a woman walking, three shopping bags in hand, pushing a stroller while occupied with a protesting baby even as she grasps her four- or five-year-old, who calmly walks beside her. A familiar childcare scene in the urban universe of a London where help with such tasks is usually forsaken because it is unaffordable. *Family* is in marked contrast to some of the public work Camp was producing at the time, such as *Rosie and Vi* (1990), in which life-size adult figures stand together at a London market, and even larger work, such as "*I accuse the oil companies of practicing genocide against the Ogoni people*" (2007), which is too large to be contained within the ordinary room heights of most museums.

The small works were not maquettes for Camp's larger works, I presume, because they were carefully placed around

<sup>63</sup> The artist had given me access and free range to her house sometime in 1994.

the house in ways that suggested intimacy and significance for the artist, as they were visible only to close friends who might come to dinner. I wondered at the time, *Was she hiding these works?* Why? Why were they not in the few exhibitions she was lucky enough to show in?

In my subsequent writing on Camp, I did not mention these works, nor did I raise the questions they brought up. Instead, I favored her more public works. This outcome was partly because of an event held at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin before I began writing about the artist. Simon Njami and Okwui Enwezor were cospeakers. I presented Camp's more public work and distinctly recall Enwezor casually if playfully dismissing it.<sup>64</sup> There was something harsh about the dismissal, because few UK-based Black women artists were allowed any reputation whatsoever; moreover, in this period Camp was hardly attended to by the fledgling Black art scene in London.<sup>65</sup> I suspected that Camp's quiet likely had more to do with the consuming demands of childrearing and caregiving than with either the failure of her work or her unproductiveness as such, but I had no way to speak to this.

As an untenured assistant professor, I later published critiques of Camp's life-size work from the late 1980s in chapter contributions to two anthologies (edited by Nkiru Nzegwu), considering them foundational for insights into the meaning of her work.<sup>66</sup> Yet, the memory of the diminutive work I had seen in her home continued to haunt me. Enwezor's comment, and



Camp's retreat into what turned out to be a momentary invisibility did, however, start to make sense to me a few years later, by which time I was myself already a few years into the work of caregiving. Encountering difficulties juggling the impossible demands of care and career, I noticed I was experimenting with a new strategy. I started producing small, playful, polemical work as a kind of guerilla

tactics for survival. I produced about fourteen such works over the next decade, distributed across an unlikely disciplinary range, from contemporary African American art to critiques of modern African literature, a tactic that seemed the only ground of possibility for continuing an increasingly precarious scholarly career—since I was intent on a full and present experience of parenting.<sup>67</sup> Now recognizing this move as a methodic tactic

<sup>64</sup> Enwezor was still relatively fresh from the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale, and I was still enjoying the afterglow of curating a small London exhibition of Japanese architect Takamitsu Azuma. See *Tageszeitung*, July 4, 1997.

<sup>65</sup> She was hardly alone in this: the same befell other artists who have since become well known such as Keith Piper, Lubaina Himid, and Mona Hatoum, who once exhibited only in community-run, financially precarious, small, privately owned borough-funded spaces in Brixton and Finsbury Park.

<sup>66</sup> See Nkiru Nzegwu, ed., *Contemporary Textures: Multidimensionality in Nigerian Art* (Binghamton, NY: University International Society for the Study of Africa, 1999); and Nkiru Nzegwu, ed., *Issues in Contemporary African Art* (Binghamton, NY: University International Society for the Study of Africa, 1998).

**fig.9** Sokari Douglas Camp, *Family*, 1990, welded steel, 33 × 35.6 × 15.2 cm. Private collection. Image source: Invaluable LLC

<sup>67</sup> In my case, childrearing (bottle feeding, baths, nappy changing, bedtime storytelling, school runs, nanny management, cookery, "floor time," worrying, anxiety, after-school activities and clubs, PTA meetings, et cetera, et cetera), albeit in that role as a cisgendered male father operating within a heteronormative immigrant household.



68 Barbara Kutis, *Artist-Parents in Contemporary Art: Gender, Identity, and Domesticity* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

69 I have published several short essays (none addressing the topic of the present article) that are polemical, whimsical, and future-imagining. See Stanley Ikem Okyoe, "Tribe and Art History," *Art Bulletin* 77, no. 4 (December 1996), 610–5; and Stanley Ikem Okyoe, "Linger or Flee? Pieter Aertsen, 'Iguegha Uhe,' Michel Leiris," in Mariët Westermann, ed., *Anthropologies of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 59–88.

70 I produced such work for publication, aware it was far less strategic for an early career academic. In humanities academia, sustained studies unfurling a significant object, after one's doctoral dissertation, is the only sure bet for work security (tenure). This valuation structure is not necessarily maintained in other academic fields.

71 These ranged from a peripheral landscape design for a beer garden in Abuja, Nigeria, to producing a credible building proposal for a company's headquarters in Boston, Massachusetts—the sole purpose of which was to secure a parcel of land from the state for a Black business (the project was limited because the client understood it was not likely ever to be built).

72 Together, these arrangements meant I was allowed to continue modeling the space of a "dad at work," while also allowing the children to play safely. I could start and stop work easily because small projects can be disrupted and re-engaged quickly.

different from but related to what Barbara Kutis, writing about artists such as Elżbieta Jabłońska, describes as artist-parents, 68 caregiving as a Black scholar-parent led me not just to make new kinds of work to meet skeptical professional demands but produced a richer critique of Camp's overlooked whimsy. 69 Which brings me back to those diminutive works.

It has dawned on me that the small whimsical works I saw scattered through the house were in fact the artist's own version of continuing to make art while fully caring for her newborn. By making art that incorporated or depicted "childish" themes, or in some way invoked or commented on caregiving, Camp was not working in the manner of, say, Kutis's subjects (e.g., Jabłońska or Guy Ben-Ner), whose art (typically performative) incorporates the actual presence of the child and its care needs. Rather, the subjects of Camp's works of this period operate within the headspace required of a caregiver who is trying to remain in practice—in her case, it seems, the work is either a comment on the overburdened mother (*Family*, 1990) or, more typically, seeks to engage and experience the light, the awe, the world through the eyes of a child, to revisit the "childish" wonder and magic that progressively gets erased and replaced as the pessimism of adulthood inevitably sets in. Her success as an artist today—bestriding serious themes, from Sigmund Freud to racism to environmental struggles to political repression in the Niger Delta, while remaining accessible to ordinary British people—is likely a product of a sensibility developed through imagining and making those small private works while a caregiver.

As I grappled with my increasingly complex caregiving obligations, a personal dilemma drove some of my intellectual curiosity about how Camp worked. If in the late 1980s I had lived between architecture as both a practice and an intellectual inquiry, twelve years later I had in addition become caregiver to two small children in a situation sometimes requiring me to be the sole caregiver for forty-eight-hour periods or even, atypically, for weeks at a time. I revalued Camp's small works and their distribution across the intimacy of her home as much as my memory allowed—recognizing, in part, that her approach suggested new possibilities for my situation. I begin to place value on the briefer but more condensed work that I, too, was already producing with some hesitancy. 70 I became more insistent on not giving up architecture as a practice and started soliciting clients for small-scale projects. 71 I engaged such projects, moreover, while working from the small basement of my home that doubled as a creche. 72

Inadvertently, these experiences led to me revalue my own work and recognize that small works can be all-consuming,

difficult, challenging, and fulfilling. They are not inferior. My experience has also led to an awareness and connection to other kinds of architecture and spaces, including that of the Niger Delta to which Camp's work often turns, but often extended across West Africa, drawn to the traditional tiny buildings. My research proposals also came to speak, with ease, of



"diminutive architecture," recognizing that such architecture was often more significant than the large buildings in the same locales. Small architecture and the intimate spaces that constructed their legibility held a special meaning

**fig. 10** Robert Sutherland Rattray, *Whitewashing the Molded Walls of a Model Building – Crate and Bucket*, ca. 1921–1932. Photograph: courtesy Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford

for African societies, and I have since tried to understand not only the care involved in producing them but the social mechanisms that produce their value. **fig. 10** I took to them questions such as, *Can one know whether this is a building or a sculpture?* If buildings can be tiny and inhabited by small sculptures that are themselves regarded as actual beings, or if the very same societies resist attempts to describe or become attuned to both of them, then the scale of the world is suddenly opened to questioning and to the radical instability that can still produce change.

## Dex Stories: Living-with, Working-with, Vulnerability Peg Rawes

From the scale of the home to the city, inequalities of care have become even more entrenched in recent years. They have been embedded into everyday corporeality. The Coronavirus pandemic has led to the rapid national and international redesign of soft and hard architectures of life. The result has been new hospitals and vaccine technologies – but also unequal access to core treatments and failures in the supply of oxygen, together with the repurposing of existing drugs. One example of the latter is Dexamethasone, a cheap corticosteroid with anti-inflammatory properties used in blood cancer treatment. Today it is being employed to assist the ventilation of COVID-19 patients. An immunosuppressant, "Dex" has long been used to augment chemotherapy drugs. But it produces unpleasant side effects, including increased blood pressure, appetite and weight gain, nausea, insomnia, and fierce mood swings.

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I have been "living with" Dex for the past ten years. I am not a medic or pharmacologist and do not take it myself. Instead, it has been one of my domestic "agental relations" in caregiving since Tom Corby, the artist I live with, was diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer. Judith Butler describes "living with" as "a relation to a field of objects, forces, and passions that



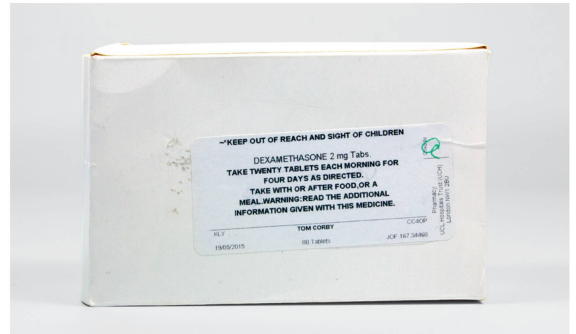
<sup>73</sup> Judith Butler, "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance," in Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, eds., *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 12–27, here 25.

<sup>74</sup> Gillian Howie, "How to Think about Death: Living with Dying," in Victoria Browne and Daniel Whistler, eds., *On the Feminist Philosophy of Gillian Howie: Materialism and Mortality* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016), 131–44.

**fig. 11** Dexamethasone, May 2015. From Tom Corby, *Blood and Bones: Metastasising Culture*, University College Hospital, London, 2019

impinge or affect us in some way." <sup>73</sup> These lived experiences could also be understood as living with a proximity to vulnerability. In "How to Think about Death: Living with Dying" (2012), the philosopher Gillian Howie examines life-limiting illness, arguing that bringing critical thinking to such life stories demystifies ignorance and discrimination of the vulnerable and can simultaneously affirm the singularity and collective agency of those who live such lives. <sup>74</sup>

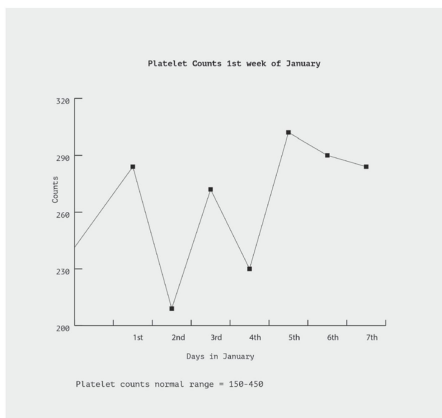
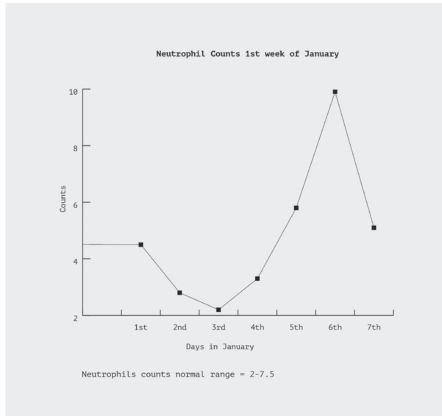
Corby's art practice examines the environmental and expressive intersections of bodies, environments, climates, and their data. Within this practice, Corby's research project and exhibition *Blood and Bones: Metastasising Culture* (2013–2019) charts his body's affective, psychological, and physiological "data" during six years of oncology treatment, which included a



stem-cell transplant and extended periods of self-isolation akin to COVID-19 shielding. Using diary entries, graphic visualizations, photography, and drawings, Corby shows the physical, temporal, and emotional experiences of "living with" the illness and the impact of lengthy treatments. These include the ongoing presence of Dexamethasone, used to treat the cancer in combination with chemotherapy and immunomodulatory drugs and to enhance their efficacy. **fig. 11** Two graphs show the daily rise and fall of Corby's immune system and blood platelet production during a treatment known as "PAD," a combination of three drugs, Bortezomib, Doxorubicin, and Dexamethasone, which preceded a stem-cell transplant and, during this period of treatment from 2012 to 2013, required him to self-isolate for six months. **figs. 12 and 13** Three drawings of chemotherapy infusions prior to the stem-cell treatment are shown. **figs. 14–16**

Corby's artful expressions of "living with" dis-ease now resonate afresh with our present-day architectures of vulnerability and care in the pandemic. Returning to look at Corby's visualizations of cancer treatment in light of the daily corporeal architectures of COVID-19, which have been streamed into our homes via public health briefings since spring 2020, reveals new multiscale experiences of the dis-ease of living with life-limiting illness. While the topic of life-limiting illness may be too painful for many of us to dwell upon, the pandemic has brought our vulnerabilities sharply into focus and shown the extent to which our bodies and our relationships are composed of social, environmental, and biopolitical understandings of ourselves. Most immediately, the images

preview the experience of self-isolation by those who have been classed as “vulnerable” during the COVID-19 pandemic. Second, they show the dis-ease of living with a life-limiting illness and the pharmaceutical impact of the drugs on the self and his body. In addition, Corby highlights the biopolitical nature of “life” in which the artist’s body is not only a producer of data or information — a record of contemporary National Health Service healthcare provision in the United Kingdom and its close interaction with the pharmaceutical industry — but also a deeply personal record of his experiences. In this respect, *Blood and Bones* provides us



**fig.12** Neutrophil counts, first week of January 2013. From Tom Corby, *Blood and Bones: Metastasing Culture*, University College Hospital, London, 2019

**fig.13** Platelet counts, first week of January 2013. From Tom Corby, *Blood and Bones: Metastasing Culture*, University College Hospital, London, 2019

with the potential to learn from vulnerability and to also understand the management of health and of illness on an individual basis and through an advanced Western healthcare system (now also highly vulnerable to extractive corporate interests).

Howie’s thinking about living with life-limiting illnesses, or alongside someone with such a diagnosis, resonates powerfully here with its attention to experience that comes from vulnerability. She recognizes how feelings of self-grief that such a diagnosis produces can lead to mental and physical time and space becoming finite in distressing, fearful, and isolating ways. For some, however, the trauma of a diagnosis not only makes work but can also be put to work. If an individual can live

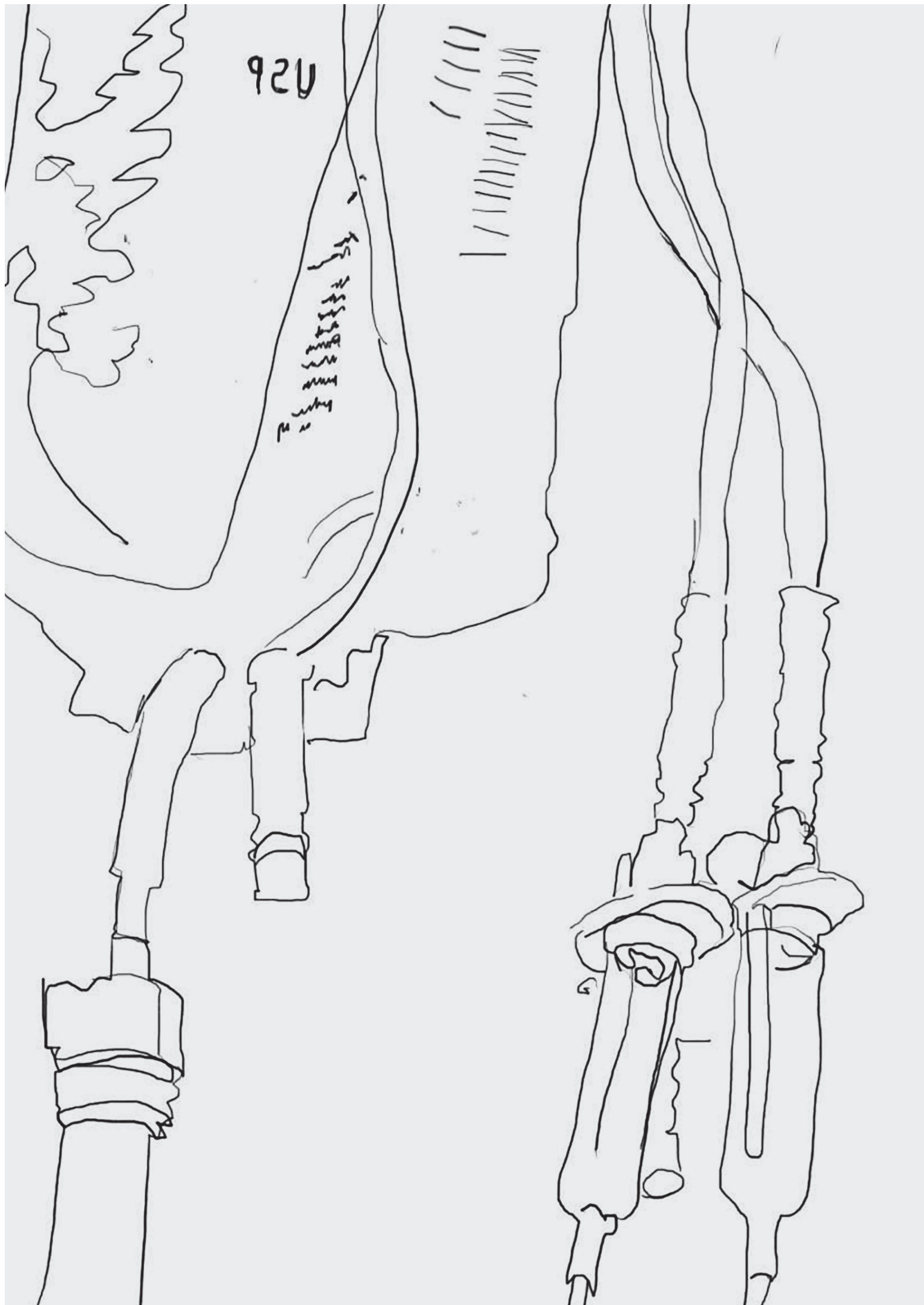
through (bear) these intense states of alienation, at other times dis-ease may enable engagement in one’s own and others’ worlds: of self, work, family, community, friendship, politics, and poetics. Time is lived differently: not “having time” means that powers of self-determination are intensified.<sup>75</sup> And, for those of us who give care, this may also require learning to create “holding” relations rather than relations of touch, especially when the dis-ease is too painful for the individual who is ill.

Corby’s, Howie’s, and Butler’s examinations of vulnerability therefore help show us how caregiving can be an artful — rather than governmental — practice. While they each address specific lived experiences of vulnerability, together they offer important understandings of care that extend into our interpersonal, social, professional, and community relations more broadly.

<sup>75</sup> Peg Rawes, “Unusual Alliances?,” *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 2 (2018), 122–4.

**figs.14–16** *Drip*, 2013; *Inject*, 2013; *Hand and cannula*, 2013. From Tom Corby, *Blood and Bones: Metastasing Culture*, University College Hospital, London, 2019 → p. 118, 121, and 122





## Tracing Humanitarian Work: Caring about the Gaps in Documenting Knowledge Production

Elis Mendoza

For a long time, I consciously separated my academic job from my praxis as if the two were incompatible. On the one hand, I had been repeatedly told that scholars who are activists are not taken seriously. On the other hand, I had been repeatedly advised to “package” my work into attractive maps, sections, and 3D models that could be exhibited in biennials so that my work would become a visible part of my scholarship. Wishing to avoid extractivist practices, I have refused to do the latter; however, I still aim to find a way to bridge both sides of my work and thus convey my research as part of a communal effort in the search for justice using the tools of history and design.

What would happen if we dropped the assumption that ideas are generated by a brilliant but solitary mind and instead recognized that knowledge is created through our relationships, experiences, and communities? If we wrote about groups, communities, and collaborators instead of valorizing single figures who are already in a position of power, perhaps we could start thinking about our own scholarly production in terms of collaboration. This mindset would allow us to create healthier and more collaborative relationships with our peers—relationships based not on hierarchies or competition but on generosity. What kinds of histories would this produce?

For the past few years, I have been writing a history of the first generation of designers to be influenced by counter-cultural architectural experiments on housing and the development agenda of the 1970s.<sup>76</sup> At first, my project centered on Fred Cuny, a Texas urban planner who became an influential disaster and humanitarian specialist after founding Intertect, a consulting company. By any metric Cuny is a fascinating historical character, a sensible choice through which to study the humanitarian system at large. He acquired a reputation for having a vast knowledge of disasters, working on every significant emergency from 1968 to 1995 by consulting with the main voluntary agencies (now referred to as nongovernmental organizations, or NGOs) active in the humanitarian system of the period. Intertect was admired for its capacity to intervene in multiple missions simultaneously. As an agency, it developed training courses and operational handbooks for international aid practitioners that have been fundamental in developing disaster response guides. Nonetheless, I struggled to portray Cuny in ways that did not simply mimic the hagiographies through which humanitarians who have died in the field are usually canonized. So I set out to assess his work

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<sup>76</sup> This research is part of my dissertation, “From Refuge to Shelter: Frederick Cuny's Humanitarian Architecture as Deferred Utopia.”



through a critical lens, attempting to distinguish institutional narratives from political strategies and personal choices.

This research shifted in meaning after the COVID-19 pandemic threw many of us into invisibility, and we found ourselves spending even more of our time in caregiving, inside and outside academia. This forced isolation, however, also made us reach out virtually and inspired discussions of the deeper meaning of our scholarship and our responsibilities in building a different post-pandemic world. After the forced hiatus imposed by closed daycare centers and archives, I began revisiting my research through a new perspective, looking for the voices that had been forgotten or effaced in the archives I had already consulted. Even before this, when I had written about the people who worked with Cuny, I noticed myself describing their interactions as encounters rather than moments of collaboration. These encounters, as I portrayed them in my writing, were often asymmetric, even extractive—a pattern that persisted even when all the actors involved were different.

Where were all those actors in supporting roles who enabled characters like Cuny to have such an expansive practice? Cuny advocated leaving the decision-making processes during an emergency to those who were under distress, as they were the ones who understood their own needs better than anyone else. He believed in the horizontal transmission of knowledge and the use of local technologies. How then to explain the protagonistic inclination of someone known as an advocate for communal agency? Cuny was attempting to subvert the largely bureaucratic systems that he criticized as being the main obstacle in effectively solving crises. Dealing with paperwork, hierarchies, and *realpolitik* was a burden that did not need to be shared with collaborators. Conversely, this often meant their names did not always end up in the institutional archives. Intertext archives are erratic, and the names of some collaborators are traceable as authors and coauthors of Intertext's reports. However, some names have not received the due they should, especially those of local collaborators and women in supporting roles.

In following the thread of collaborators, I found the work of Pedro Guitz, a trainer of *extensionistas*, local farmers who travel through small communities to teach agricultural practices that will yield better crops and preserve the land. Guitz worked on a development project with World Neighbors in Guatemala before the 1976 earthquake. <sup>fig. 17</sup> In analyzing the causes of the structural failure of houses in the San Martín region, Cuny noticed Guitz's house had survived. According to Ian Davis, Guitz had reconstructed his house a few years earlier by applying structural







principles he had learned during research in his local library. <sup>77</sup> As part of Oxfam and World Neighbor's Kuchuba'l program, Guitz worked with Cuny in developing new building strategies. Invited to continue his work coordinating the model house program throughout the country, he visited nearly fifty sites, training people in small villages to salvage materials and reuse them to produce structurally sound houses. He worked with Cuny, World Neighbors, and Oxfam to develop comics that acted as building manuals, and together they built a series of model houses throughout Guatemala. The houses were conceived as living examples of

<sup>77</sup> Ian Davis and David Alexander, *Recovery from Disaster* (London: Routledge, 2015), 241–2, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315679808>.



diverse building strategies but quickly turned into meeting points where Indigenous groups could discuss ideas of land tenure and *campesinos* rights. Using the strategies he developed with these foreign institutions, Guitz often travelled by himself to instruct people in other villages

**fig. 17** Pedro Guitz training *extensionistas* for Oxfam's Kuchuba'l project. Guatemala November–December 1976. Photograph: Peter Stalker for Oxfam. Oxford Bodleian Libraries, MS Oxfam COM/5/2/2/58 Folder 1

that fell outside the areas covered by the aid programs that had hired him. He would also train new aid workers freshly arrived in Guatemala as part of relief projects. After the civil war started a few years later, many of the *extensionistas* and locals he had trained as part of the Kuchuba'l program disappeared. <sup>78</sup>

Another important name is Jean Parker, who appears in several documents as a manager, a secretary, and the main contact at Intertect. Historians and humanitarian practitioners have often described Cuny's agency as a one-man show in which, although other specialists were hired on a per project basis, everything stemmed from Cuny's genius and his celebrated capacity to elicit information. Parker, however, was much more than the titles given in the documentary record might suggest. In my interviews with Cuny's close collaborators, she was described as "the other half of Intertect." <sup>79</sup> Parker was Cuny's secretary, yes; she also oversaw the celebrated Intertect information center and coordinated most of the agency's missions from offices in Dallas. <sup>80</sup> She also made sure that Cuny was healthy, ate well, had a place to stay, and stayed connected with his son. These types of care labor are rarely recognized and assigned space in institutional archives, and therefore rarely make their way into academic writings that give archives a central role.

<sup>78</sup> Paul Thompson, phone interview by the author, February 19, 2020.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Thompson, phone interview by the author, February 19, 2020; and Volker Hartkopf, phone interview by author, February 22, 2019.

<sup>80</sup> After Cuny's death, Parker founded Parker and Associates, an agency specializing in international disaster mitigation.

Since I began to pay increased attention to marginal notes and the desires and concerns of refugees, migrants, and women, the polyphony of their voices has substantiated my research and writing. Humanitarian history is not the only one to canonize and



aggrandize male figures and use them as anchors in its construction; architectural history knows this method all too well.

The exercise in self-reflection brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously made me reassess my professional career. For the past seven years, I have run a parallel research practice using the tools of architecture and my training as a historian to work with segregated and Indigenous communities on legal cases involving human rights violations. My work has led me to get deeply involved with the communities I serve. I have worked with victims of sexual violence during war, mothers searching for their disappeared children who have become forensic experts by necessity, and victims of state violence—all of them women, forming a community of care and solidarity.

My practice has been strongly delineated by my work in the Sepur Zarco case in Guatemala, where survivors of sexual and domestic abuse during the civil war took their case to the Court for Vulnerable Victims after more than thirty years. The legal strategy, designed by *Mujeres Transformando el Mundo*, a feminist NGO, taught me the importance of establishing close, horizontal relationships with those at the center of the claims and the specialists working on the case. Through this lens I can situate my work as providing a tool that can aid survivors in revealing and giving shape to information that would otherwise remain hidden to the naked eye. I have assisted in crafting the narratives and visualizing the evidence presented in human rights courts in Guatemala and Mexico.

My desire is to find ways to translate to academia the spirit of horizontal work and generosity I have seen while working with those pursuing justice for human rights violations. I hope that the isolation we have been through and our need for community will, in time, translate to a more inclusive way of practicing scholarship.