



Empty Room

EMPTY ROOM

Empty

Adjective

1. The void within which the infinite potential for creative endeavor lies

Room

Noun

1. Space, specifically space designated 'of architecture' and therefore 'of humanity'

Empty Room

Statement of Purpose

1. Critique of the the soul-less and (attempted) environmental isolation exhibited by a number of contemporary and Modern modes of architectural development

2. The potentials left for the development of a new mode of dialogue with the biosphere enabled by re-assessed cultural attitudes of nature and the practice of Minor modes of development that enact sustainable, ethical futures.

Content:

0.1 My Professional Aspirations

Opposite: Fig. 1.1 The Cover of Laugier's *Essai sur L'Architecture*

The major proportion of the Architectural profession has been willfully (if subconsciously) complicit to the culturally collective state of denial that enables unsustainable contemporary modes of development. Enabled by globalization, the most recent evolution of Western philosophical traditions, the majority of humanity has adopted a philosophy based upon the foundational principle of a human ability to control Nature – a false belief founded on nothing more than arrogant conceptions of anthropocentrism. I believe that only by the revolution of values can humanity correct its present philosophical, psychological, and cultural attitudes towards the rest of the biosphere.

My desire is to dispel the concept of a divinely righteous humanity from its dominant cultural position through the reconsideration of human self-identification, brought on by the elevation of cultural values that relegate humanity to a (correctly) minor role in its position in the biosphere. I believe that this will enable a truly sustainable future for humanity on Earth.

The simultaneous exploitation of the (few) opportunities offered by the current degraded state of ecological diversity on Earth, and working with the potentials afforded in the wake of Modern, industrial development, I wish to employ Subnatural* formations as the medium by which I realize a sustainable human future.

*Subnature is a term coined in 2009 by architectural theorist David Gissen. Gissen describes Subnature as those forms of nature which are perceived as threatening to the inhabitants and material formations of architecture. The primary modes he describes are: Dankness, Smoke, Gas, Exhaust; Dust, Puddles, Mud, Debris; and Weeds, Insects, Pigeons, Crowds.

I wish to combine the potentials of Subnatural forms with my own conception of nature as the collective cultural Other that humanity constructs in order to both situate itself in relation to the rest of the Biosphere, and to subsequently enable ethical modes which allow for the exploitation of other forms of life on Earth.

In this union lies the potential for the development of architectural philosophies and products which alleviate the ecologically taxing effects of industrial and post-industrial landscape types, as well as to create collective realizations of the potentials afforded by other forms of life on the planet. This will, through the affordance of effective alternatives, disabuse humanity of its false conceptions of nature and cause the (subconscious) re-allocation of humanity's species self-identification to a modest, realistic, and Minor position.

The wise man must realise how ghostly it will be
when all the wealth of this world stands waste.
as now here and there throughout this middle-earth
walls stand blasted by wind,
beaten by frost, the buildings crumbling.

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Fig. 1.2 Excerpt from *The Wanderer*, an Old English Elegy

A black and white photograph taken from a dark, narrow perspective, looking into a brightly lit room. A person with long hair, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark pants, stands in the foreground, their back to the camera, looking towards a large, bright projection on the wall. The projection depicts a scene with numerous figures, possibly a crowd or a group of people, in various poses. The room is sparsely furnished, with a simple chair and a dark, cylindrical object (possibly a trash can) visible on the floor. The overall atmosphere is one of observation and contemplation.

Epimetheus

Epimetheus

Noun

1. Meaning “hindsight”, literally “afterthinker”. The foolish brother of Prometheus (meaning “foresight”, literally “fore-thinker”). Together, they are the pair of Titans who act as representatives of mankind. Pandora, the girl who released all the evils of the world unto mankind, and the progenitor of the human species, was a direct descendent of Epimetheus.

2. Thought after production; regret. To build and expand unsustainably and exponentially for generations, blind to hubris, even as it creeps ever closer.

Hekatonkheires

Noun

1. The three “hundred-handed” beasts of immeasurable power who helped to overthrow the Titans and later became the guards of the gates of Tartarus, the prison of the Titans.

Humanity

Noun, Adjective

1. To be gaoler and prisoner. To be of Epimetheus, and to have become the Hekatonkheires. To possess immeasurable power, and to lack the foresight to see its dooms. To be human, trapped by our own ability.

Content:

0.2 My Professional Aspirations and Me

0.3 Challenges Facing My Professional Aspiration

Contemporary, post-industrial, globalized attitudes exist at the intersection of illusions of human autonomy from the Earth's other life forms and ecological systems, and the increasingly apparent contrary realities of a Biosphere sustained through complex systems of interdependence that cannot sustain our present modes of development. These attitudes are the most recent evolutions of Western philosophies founded on principles of Rationalism, Dualism, Positivism, Objectivism, and Reductionism. These attitudes form our species' dialogue to the Earth and its other life forms - to Nature. This is not sustainable, within this lies a hubris that can be found as early as 5th century BC in Athens, Greece. Deforestation of the surrounding landscape to fuel Athenian social institutions, architecture included, led to massive soil erosion, causing irreparable damage to the Athenian economy and ending The Golden Age of Athens. This same Hubris can be found again and again, in the Roman Empire, in Renaissance Venice, and, most relevantly, in immediately pre-Industrial Britain.

In the early 18th century, mass deforestation of the British landscape led to the necessity of new technologies to sustain present modes of development. Huge reserves of coal within the British landscape enabled the invention of steam power in the form of the Newcomen steam engine. This prevented the flooding of mines, enabling more coal extraction. Subsequent exponential technological developments accelerated production, and revolutionized existing economies. This enabled the Industrial Revolution. The hubris that had felled previous civilizations that had overtaxed the lands on which their economies were built was temporarily dodged by the Britains, and we have relied on this convenient twist of fate ever since. We have used it to fuel humanity through Industrial economies and up to our contemporary Post-Industrial service economies.

Hubris cannot be avoided indefinitely.

The illusion of the infinite potential of mankind has been perpetuated by the Rationalist and Positivist attitudes which rose rapidly immediately after the Industrial Revolution. However, as global climate change becomes increasingly apparent and exponentially worse, it has become clear that not only is Fate not to be cheated indefinitely, but cannot even be cheated any longer. Humanity must change. And in those changes, humanity must not fall into the same traps it has throughout history. It has become more necessary than ever to depart from those (primarily) Western traditions which perpetuate the increasingly worsening state of the Earth's Biosphere

America's Revolution never happened. The colonists fought a war against England all right, and they won it. But it was not a war of independence that was won, because we are not free; nor was even succession the outcome, because we have not departed from the conditions England lives under, either in our literature or in our political and economic lives.

Fig. 2.2 Excerpt from *Senses of Walden* by Stanley Cavell (1972)

The foundations of contemporary ideologies dealing in what constitutes nature and how to approach a dialogue with those natures must be changed. The collective cultural realization of the actual effects of our present social institutions on the Earth and the creation and presentation of effective alternatives, I believe, presents the best path forward to realize a sustainable future for mankind.

The primary requisite factor to the realization of this path is education of humanity at a major scale.

Education is humanity's last, best hope. Cultural inertia desires that the status quo be maintained, even as inevitable ends encroach ever closer. However, by educating all levels of society towards the flaws of our present mode of development, fundamental change is possible. However, even once made possible, for change to be realized, two flaws must be avoided. The first is what I consider to be the most sinister aspect of Capitalism: its ability to co-opt any form of resistance to it. The second is the all too popular trend in academia to fall into Heidegger's school of thought and believe that, "Only a God can save us" (1966).

The necessary revolution of values is not fundamentally opposed to capitalism, however it cannot enact itself in contemporary modes of capitalistic developments which call for perpetual economic growth and constant consumption. And my call to revolution is not the first of its kind. There have been countless attempts at resistance to our present capitalistic modes, and while all suffered from different short-term failings, the eventual result was the same: the absorption of attempted rebellion into capitalism and the devaluation of resistance into nothing more than products to be bought and consumed.

The contemporary environmental movement originated in the 1970s and achieved some degree of immediate success, even if it failed to achieve widespread cultural awareness due to the social isolation of Communes. However, it has since been devalued into contemporary Green trends which offer sustainable goods as products to be bought by the Upper and Upper-Middle classes to grant them feelings of moral superiority and righteousness. True sustainability cannot be measured by economy and must not be a good solely for the consumption of the rich - the group with the least need of it.

Punk ideology promoted the anarchistic principle of a society without rulers and the empowerment of the individual to personal responsibility. And while some of these principles have endured to present from Punk's origins in the 1970s and 80s, the large part of contemporary "punk" has been co-opted into an aesthetic to be bought into, betraying the foundations of Punk and preventing the realization of the revolution called for in its original ideology.

The education of all persons aligned with contemporary sustainable revolution towards this reality of capitalism will, simply by knowledge of the existence of this pattern, prevent the collapse of the movement into another product or aesthetic to be purchased.

Martin Heidegger, on September 23, 1966, in an interview with the German publication *Der Spiegel* claimed that Only a God could save us. Heidegger believed that only a figure of divine proportion could enable the necessary degree of change to realize true social revolution. I believe that Heidegger is wrong, and that his philosophy cannot enact any real change, only perpetuate the present circumstances it supposedly decries.

The seductive aspects of Heidegger's call to action cannot be denied. The acceptance of these beliefs by contemporary thinkers such as James Wines, Brian Edwards, and Chrisna du Plessis reveal this. There is a great temptation to believe that the increasingly secular culture of today's developed nations could be responsible for a lack of respect towards the natural world, but this is simply not true. The development trends that led us to our present state have functioned for centuries, in societies both secular and orthodox. In fact, in many religious traditions, Christianity most notably, promotes ideas of a divinely-endowed right of mankind's dominion over nature have enabled some of our most unsustainable trends. To fall to the trap of holding some divine figure as the moral inspiration of a new mode of life not only ignores the impossibility of the creation of a new theology and culture, but also only creates conditions which would enable the displacement of responsibility of the dominion of the Earth from humanity, its most destructive inhabitants, to some deity or series of deities.

The displacement of responsibility from the individual to any authority allows for the autonomous action of the authority, without the individual feeling any sense of responsibility to the authority's actions. This is enabled by the individual's creation of a Social Self, an aspect of one's mind that functions independent to what one considers to be their true self by self-identification. The Social Self, while physically the individual, is perceived by the individual to be separate from themselves because the responsibility of the Social Self's actions is believed to lie with the authority on whose behalf the Social Self was created. This allows for actions that violate one's own sense of morality to happen without any feeling of betrayal of ideology. With a deity, this is especially dangerous as the deity's intangibility prevents even a patsy to be held responsible.

Thus, the development of new cultural modes and ideologies must not rely on religious foundations. Rather they must rely on Punk foundations, in which the individual holds themselves responsible for their own actions, and whatever degree of authority exists, will not allow for the moral betrayal of self on its behalf. One of the most important aspects towards this goal is the empowerment of the individual with design potential.

Design offers the potential for the development of creative solutions to the complex problems that face humanity and all its institutions. Through the education of all peoples towards the contemporary issues that face them, they become better equipped to develop effective and socially conscious solutions to those problems. If effective, those designed solutions, by the principles they express, educate all people with whom they interact. This creates a cycle by which design continually empowers peoples to more responsibly situate themselves in the world around them.

It is for this reason, that I will enact my career and beliefs through my designs. I believe that by engaging the biosphere, especially the Subnatural aspects of it, in a respectful way, I could use design to educate people to the potentials of the natural world, and actually realize the futures that will afford the human species a sustainable mode of living with the Earth.



Subnature

SUBNATURE

Sub- *Prefix*

1. Secondary in rank, perceived as lesser - insignificant enough to escape notice.

Nature *Noun*

1. The human construction of an Other by which humanity may situate itself in the biosphere by relative comparative; enabling ethical justification to the exploitation of other forms of life by the attempted isolation of humanity from them.

Subnature *Medium*

1. David Gissen's theory of forms of nature which are perceived as threatening to the inhabitants or material formations that constitute architecture

2. The medium by which I will attempt the realization of my convictions

Content:

- 0.4 Three Stories of Professional Aspiration
- 0.5 Success: a Personal Vision
- 0.6 Success: a Professional Vision
- 0.7 Existing Practices
- 0.8 Evidence

Opposite: Fig. 3.1 *I'm Lost in Paris* by R&Sie(n)

Storytelling

Worst Case

Present modes of human development continue unchanged. The potential of contemporary landscape projects goes unnoticed and unrealized on any scale significant enough to enact any real mode of cultural change. Furthermore, poor design and legislation cause those spaces which are constructed to become areas feared and avoided by most people. On a global scale, the ecosystems upon which all human economies and institutions are constructed, fail. And, in worst cases, Humanity is reduced to minor modes of dwelling and development and all the beauty realized by thousands of years of human institution is relegated to artifacts of an old world.

Fig. 3.2 Bryant Park in the 1970s



Pack up again, head to the next place
 Where we'll make the same mistakes
 Open one up and let it fall to the ground
 Pile out the door when it all runs out

Fig. 3.3 *Lampshades on Fire* by Modest Mouse (2015)

Storytelling *Best Case*

A series of designs emerge from a few (radical) landscape and architecture firms within the United States that realize the potentials of Subnatural formations within urban contexts. All the peoples of the world realize the flaws of our present modes of living and radical and rapid change to the development and maintenance of human institutions is realized across the developed and developing worlds. Humanity elevates the modes by which it dialogues with the rest of the Biosphere to a sustainable and ethical level, and humanity adopts a path that can sustain all the life-forms of the Earth forward into futures beyond our imagination.

Fig. 3.4 *The Garden Bridge* by Heatherwick Studio



As long as the Earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.

Fig. 3.5 Excerpt from the Christian Bible, Genesis 8:22

Storytelling *Realistic Case*

A few designs emerge from those landscape and architecture firms within the United States that realize the potentials of Subnatural formations within urban contexts. They gain moderate attention within the architecture and design communities and garner some minor attention in academia. While the impacts of the work are not immediate enough to register the necessary change to prevent significant ecological damage, later generations reflect on those projects, and combined with the pressures brought on by increasingly degraded ecological conditions caused by global climate change, force the realization of these earlier projects at a major cultural scale.

Fig. 3.6 *The High Line* by Diller Scofidio with Field Operations



The acceptance of certain realities does not preclude idealism. It can lead to certain breakthroughs.

Fig. 3.7 Rem Koolhaas in an interview with Archinect

Existing Precedents: Projects

Fresh Kills Park

Located on Staten Island on land owned and operated by the NYC Department of Parks & Recreation, James Corner's proposal for the Fresh Kills Park comprises the revitalization of over 1,000 acres of closed landfill and 450 acres of wetland framing spectacular views of downtown Manhattan. The masterplan uses systems of adaptive ecology to develop the land from former landfill towards a mature and self-sustaining biomatrix. I believe that James Corner's attitudes towards the adaptive development of ecosystems with high thresholds of tolerance within dense urban landscapes compliments my own attitudes, and I would be a design asset for F.O..

Fig. 3.8 A rendering of the ultimate vision for *Fresh Kills*

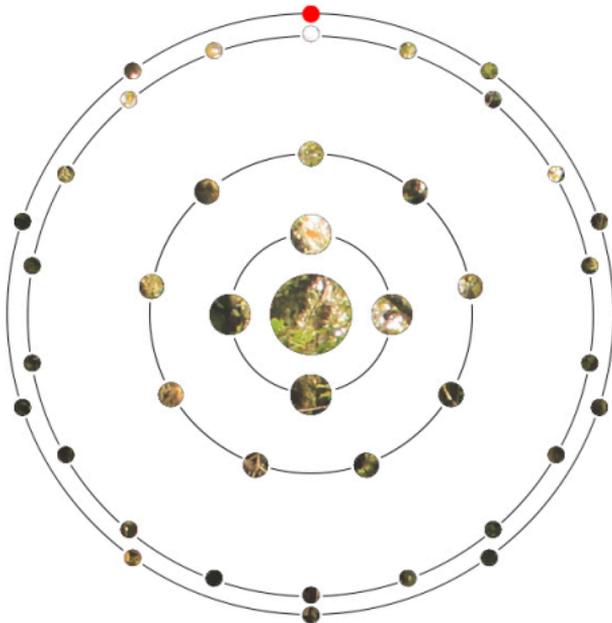


Existing Precedents: Firms
James Corner Field Operations

5 Principals Including James Corner
9 Directors
18 Associates
10 Designers

Field Operations employs a highly organized hierarchical management model. James Corner operates at the center as Founder and a Principal. 9 Directors, managing the firm's 18 Associates and 10 Designers report to him and the four other Principals, maintaining clear lines of communication.

Fig. 3.9 Diagram of the employee hierarchy of *Field Operations*



Existing Precedents: Projects
MAK t6 Vacant Lot

A theoretical proposal for the revitalization of the Schindler House in West Hollywood as a proposed solution to the slow death of the house's gardens brought on by the construction of high-rise condominiums on the surrounding blocks, and the construction of a vertical garden. Working with Juan Azulay, Fletcher developed what they termed an, "organic-inorganic time machine." Their proposal called for a matrix of cable growing structures to guide strangler fig vines to tear apart the existing Schindler House before growing into one another and form an elevated tabula rasa upon which the fractured debris of the house could be re-assembled, this time in sunlight.

Fig. 3.10 A rendering of the vines beginning to grow into one another



Existing Precedents: Firms

Fletcher Studio Landscape Architecture

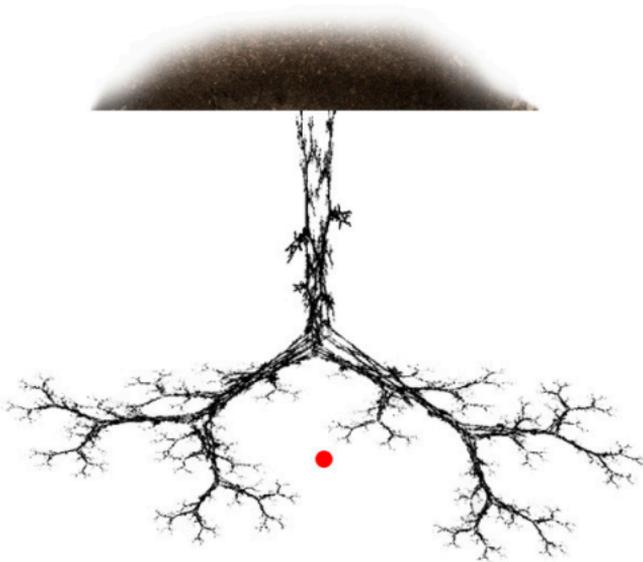
1 Principal - David Fletcher

1 Director

Joint Teams of Associates and Designers

The studio operates under Principal David Fletcher, who uses his background in academia as a professor at the California College of the Arts to develop projects both built and theoretical. A primary Project Director beneath him, and teams of associates and designers reporting upwards to them. I believe my knowledge for theory and my desire to build tangible finished products would make me an asset of Fletcher Studio.

Fig. 3.11 Diagram of the employee hierarchy of *Fletcher Studio*



Existing Precedents: Projects

I'm Lost in Paris

A radical intervention of a privately owned research laboratory cloaked in vegetation that defies its Parisian context by the injection of hydroponically grown ferns that simultaneously represent a more ancient, primitive Paris, and a more sustainable and green Paris of tomorrow. The realization of such a revolutionary proposal in an urban setting in itself is impressive, but the incorporation of a facade that affords the necessary degree of enclosure and privacy for the research within while sustaining itself solely off of rainwater realizes both a beautiful and sustainable design that supports the building's more visceral intentions.

Fig. 3.12 The interior of the structure, showing details of the facade

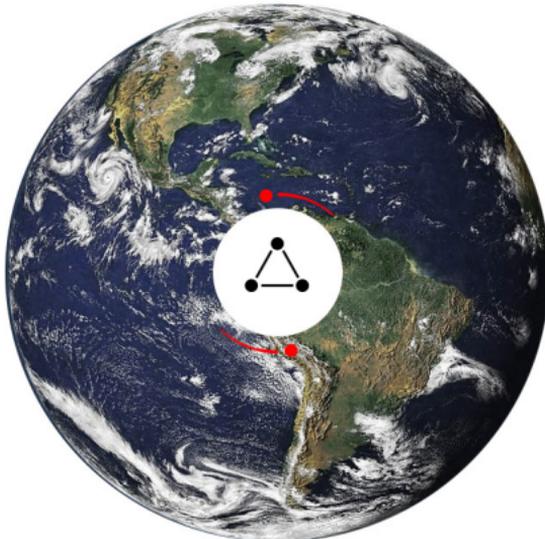


Existing Precedents: Firms
*R & Sie(n) - *Disbanded**

3 Founders and Principals

R&Sie(n) is now disbanded, and its founders, Francois Roche, Stephanie Lavaux, and Jean Navarro are each doing their own work. While their firm was still in operation, the three principals worked in collaboration to one another, designing primarily in theory and academia, slightly separated from the world at large. I believe that as Francois Roche continues to develop radical urban interventions that evoke nature conquering human institution, I could be of value in developing these endeavors towards more tangible results.

Fig. 3.13 Diagram of R&Sie(n)'s founders relationship to the world



Existing Precedents: Projects

Hardberger Park

Located on 311 acres of former agricultural land north of San Antonio, Hardberger Park has a program requiring open acres of recreational space for active use by the surrounding communities, but Bargmann went beyond and realized a hybrid landscape that works to regenerate the site's degraded soil compositions through passive planting strategies. Bargmann's ultimate goal was the creation of a "passive landscape of learning" that would educate visitors to the potentials of landscape design and while still meeting the needs of the people and ecosystems of San Antonio, simultaneously realizing goals of social and ecological justice.

Fig. 3.14 A diagram of the land-use goals of Hardberger Park

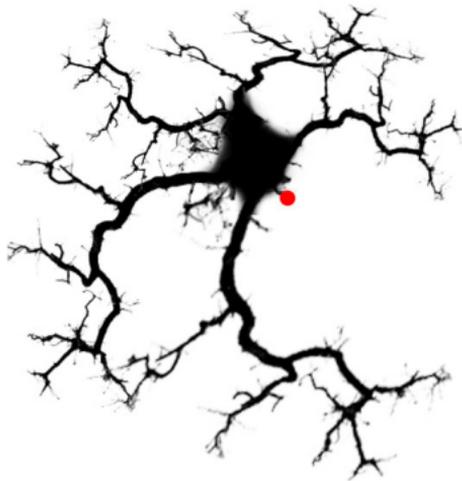


Existing Precedents: Firms

*D.I.R.T. Studio**Founder and Principal Julie Bargmann*

D.I.R.T.'s commitment to an agenda of social justice and passive education through landscape design realizes the complex needs of ecological interventions in the post-industrial sprawl-cape of the contemporary United States. Bargmann's works are the closest thing to a realized mode of my visions of the future as exists now, and if I were to have the opportunity to collaborate on D.I.R.T.'s designs, my contribution would be towards developing more complex spiderwebs of interactions between series of interventions across urban landscapes.

Fig. 3.15 Diagram of the work hierarchy of *D.I.R.T. Studio*



Success

Goal

1. The achievement of a favorable or desired outcome by effort.
2. To have realized one of the paths to becoming a successful designer of Subnatural forms. To have enabled a better future by my actions, in whatever scale of degree. To have inspired people by my work, and allow for the passing of the torch to younger generations to carry on fighting for more sustainable modes of human living. To allow myself to relax into my twilight years, living on an Earth that might still allow for the continued existence of humanity into futures beyond all visible horizons. To have faced the crises of my day and age and dynamically worked to confront them without backing down.
3. To have lived in such a manner that I can reflect on my life with pride. To have found some small measure of love and peace. To never compromise my Self, or my truest beliefs, whether my gender, my philosophies, my work, or my relationships to those most important to me.
4. To remain culturally relevant and active throughout my life. To reinvent myself and my work to whatever challenge I face. To practice the same mode of living as all those whom I most admire: to reject the status quo and instead assert individuality of such sincerity that I might realize a life of a genuine quality that would have been otherwise impossible.

PART THREE

Here comes success, here comes success
Over my hill, over my hill
Here comes success, here comes success
Here comes my car, here comes my car
Here comes my Chinese rug, here comes my Chinese rug
Here comes success, here comes success

Fig. 3.16 *Success* by Iggy Pop from *Lust for Life* (1977)
Iggy mocks that type of success which I seek to avoid.

Fig. 3.17 David Bowie, a personal hero of mine and model of true success



Success (Professional)

Necessity

1. The achievement of a necessary outcome by design.
2. The realization of necessary changes to contemporary social institutions and the attitudes that they are founded upon. The relegation of humanity to a (rightfully) modest role in its perception of itself within global ecological systems. The realization of both the unsustainability and dangers of present modes of human development and the realization of the attainability of sustainable alternatives.
3. The revolution of social values in post-industrial, globalized civilizations away from the myths of Western philosophical tradition and towards a more realistic and humble view of human civilization and all its aspects.
4. The realization of Subnatural potentials within the sprawlscapes and rustbelts of the post-industrial world to elevate those spaces to more sustainable modes and reconnect them to greater ecological systems on a major level.
5. To have my work retain cultural relevance through time. To have my work possess enough social value to be retained by future generations and continually inspire those same generations and peoples to live more sustainably and realize better futures for humanity through design.

This 'mission' calls for a commitment by societies everywhere to unite in a common cause and connect to the natural environment on a more profound philosophical, psychological, and cultural level. Otherwise, the basic incentives for survival may be defeated by a diversionary proliferation of remedial mechanisms that do not address the deeper social conflicts caused by a collective state of denial.

Fig. 3.18 James Wines in *Green Architecture* (2000)

Fig. 3.19 The Lowline by James Ramsay and RAAD Studio



Evidence

Statement

1. The available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid.
2. As pictured opposite, a studio design project completed with Elle Yihan Bai for a combined landscape and housing development. The project juxtaposes traditional American conceptions of that which we culturally define as natural against the post-industrial context of the site, an open riverside lot located in Pittsburgh's Strip District. The project sought to explore how the popular and desired housing typology of suburban living might be unified with more sustainable modes of living. Working from the ideological framework of Walden, Thoreau, and other American authors, we sought to balance natural refuge and retreat with the convenience and necessity of city life in the 21st century.

Working with the Hunt Institute of Botanical Documentation and the Phipps Conservatory Archives, a strategy for the development of the site into an urban forest. Within that forest, then, spaces were carved which define the paths of the public and the site's residents, and varying degrees of privacy therein.

The most identifying aspect of the site is an overhead screen element made from cor-ten steel harvested from the remains of the Strip Districts former industrial identity. Harmonizing with the topography of the site, the screen reinforces the site's circulations and privacy conditions. The screen merges with the ground and planting strategies, at points acting as a shading device, at other points, as a growing structure or boundary.

Fig. 3.20 Project Rendering



Fig. 3.21 Site Plan



Fig. 3.22 Site Section



Evidence

Fabricated Commission

1. A partner assignment with Victoria Yong, a detail component of a design for a Camera Obscura in the Friendship neighborhood of Pittsburgh was created with the McKamish Company as fabricators. The component selected is a clamp which acts as the joint between a glass wall and a vertical growing wall. The piece bolts onto a glass backing piece and holds together the greater wall using a system of spider clamps. A woven cable structure ties onto the piece to create the base for a vertical growing wall. The structure captures the images of the surrounding neighborhood using natural sunlight and projects them onto the glass and vegetation beyond, tying together the imagery of the exterior - primarily repurposed automobile dealerships - with an intimate experience with nature, creating an experience of Pittsburgh's ultimate past and futures.

Fig. 3.23 Axonometrics of the Piece in Context

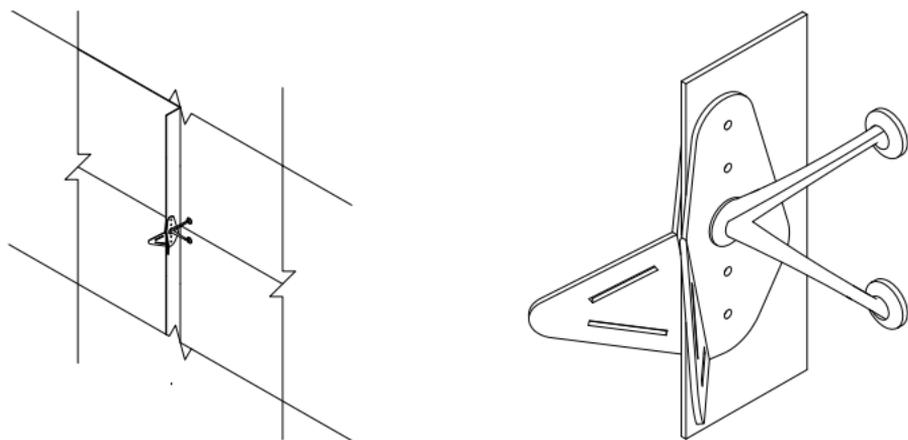


Fig. 3.24 Opposite: Process from prototype to shop drawing to fabrication

Evidence

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